Winners of OTM India’s Top 100 Travel Producers Award 2016 have been finalised.

The award was instituted this year by the OTM and its sister publication Travel News Digest. The nomination and voting process for the 2016 awards was very well received and over 1,000 trade members responded as soon as the voting lines opened. The nominations were restricted to travel producers based in India, with high buying potential of outbound or domestic products for their Indian clientele.

A list of about 500 nominees was prepared from desk research and industry feedback. The nominations were restricted to travel producers based in India, with high buying potential of outbound or domestic products for their Indian clientele.

In addition to the above, applications for hosted buyer status are invited through the website: www.otm.co.in/hb

OTM Mumbai’s hosted buyers will have privileged access to the entire exhibition area with VIP Pass, invitations to all parallel events including International Tourism Summit and Top 100 Travel Producers Awards, educational sessions, destination briefings and other networking programmes. They will also have access to online meeting scheduler for making appointments.

OTM Mumbai launches India’s biggest ever Hosted Buyer Programme

OTM Mumbai, India’s biggest travel show has launched country’s largest ever Hosted Buyer Programme for 2016. About 500 qualified buyers from major cities in India are being offered free return tickets or free hotel accommodation to attend OTM Mumbai 2016, under the programmes branded as Fly Free to OTM© and Free Stay at OTM©. These will add further to OTM Mumbai’s committed audience of over 10,000 registered trade attendees.

Unlike other hosted programmes, OTM’s offers are based on pre-qualification. The invitees do not need to fill any large forms. Instead, the 500 hosted buyers were carefully hand-picked, based on desk research and industry feedback.

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OTM India’s Top 100 Travel Producers Award winners selected

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A list of about 500 nominees was prepared from desk research and feedback from the industry. It was then put to poll by thousands of industry thought leaders. Additional nominations were simultaneously invited. A final round of polling was conducted thereafter. The top 100 winners and runner ups were selected on the basis of the number of average votes secured.

“This recognition is only one of its kind to give travel producers in India an annual opportunity to celebrate success and more importantly, to highlight the important role they contribute to the travel industry. I am very happy to see the huge response from the travel fraternity and we are committed to keep the standard of the awards high and in fact push it even higher next year,” explained Sanjiv Agarwal, Chairman & CEO of Fairfest Media and the Editor & Publisher of Travel News Digest.

The awardees and runners-up have been offered VIP Hosted Buyer status. They will proudly walk the show and will be featured in a special issue of Travel News Digest. They will also have access to online meeting scheduler for making appointments.

Barbados and Samoa join UNWTO

MoT constitues Medical and Wellness Tourism Board

Thailand still has much more to offer for Indians, says TAT Dy Governor

Jordan becomes the first Arab country to launch a tourist pass

Monaco Tourism targets new age young Indian travellers

Tourism in Peru to grow by 40% between 2011-2016

Tourism New Zealand showcases for corporate travellers in India

MTPA conducted 3-city luxury road show in India

Qatar Tourism Authority’s strategy for sustainable development

TripAdvisor to launch instant hotel booking feature in India

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OTM is a very good platform where we improve every year. We have been participating at OTM since many years. At OTM, TAT brings private exhibitors from Thailand including big sellers because this is where you do business at large.

Soraya Homchuen
Director Tourism Authority of Thailand (Mumbai)

In OTM the kind of industry people we meet are top professionals, to the point and not time-wasters. They know exactly what to ask, what they want from us and we are very happy to provide them information about our destinations. We are visiting OTM for the second year after getting success from the last year.

Razvan Marc
Director (UK, Middle East and India)
Romania Tourism

We have joined OTM since 2010 and this is our 6th time attending OTM. For us, it is a great platform to promote the Philippines. We expect more and we get more with the support from the travel trade in OTM.

Glen Agustin
Chief Tourism Operations Officer
Market Development Group
Department of Tourism, Philippines

For us it is very important to be at OTM because India is a very important market for Argentina. OTM is a very good platform for the ministry of tourism as well as for the private sector, and our DMCs and agencies are very happy to be at OTM.

Roberto Palais
Executive Manager
Argentina National Institute of Tourism Promotion

We have started participating in OTM since 2010 and we are growing year-on-year - last year we have crossed few milestones. OTM is a mix of B2B and B2C which works very well for a tourism brand like ours.

Lubaina Sheerazi
India Representative Ministry of Tourism, Sultanate of Oman

OTM Mumbai is a very big event and the kind of people who participate is a feather in the cap of its organisation. Every year new products are evolving which means everybody in the travel industry is looking for new products, and it is here at OTM where you will find those new products.

Guuldeep Singh Sahni
President
OTOA (Outbound Tour Operators Association of India)

OTM is the leading tourism event in India, and Mumbai is the biggest source market of the country. We participate as Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Turkey together with the private sector, and we get very good B2B interactions with the Indian travel agents and tour operators.

Ozgur Ayturk
Coordinator
Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey

OTM Mumbai is a very big market for China Tourism, and we promote China here very effectively to attract more and more Indian visitors. This year we celebrated ‘Visit India’ year in China as well which we officially launched in OTM.

Li Qianguo
Director
China National Tourist Office (New Delhi)

The Indian market is very important for us. Though we are returning to this market after a few years, we have been pleasantly surprised at OTM this year – many people already know about us and there is very good interest from the Czech Republic.

Tereza Matejkova
Head of Trade Fairs
Czech Tourist Board

OTM is very well organised and my expectation to network with as many travel agents as possible, and expose our beautiful brand of Macau to the travel industry was very productive.

Subhash Goyal
President
IAATO (Indian Association of Tour Operators)

The role played by OTM is very important in guiding outbound travellers. OTM is a great opportunity to increase our knowledge and knowledge is power.

Arzan Khambatta
Head of India Representative Office
Macau Government Tourist Office

OTM Mumbai business prospects are very promising and high quality, and it is a very important market for us.

Ismael A Hamid Amer
Egyptian Tourism Counselor (Mumbai)

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Ibrohim Radi
Chief Tourism Executive
Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey

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**TTF pre-Diwali series gives a strong fillip to the travel market in the festive season**

The Diwali season heralds the beginning of a high season of leisure travel for domestic and outbound sectors. There are several getaway opportunities in the season, ranging from the long haul, to short haul, and even weekend gateways. As the festival is closely followed by the winter season and the New Year period, there are multiple opportunities for Indian travellers to take a break. The Diwali season travel is somewhat unique and high in Western India, which is why TTF hosts blockbuster shows in Ahmedabad, Surat, Mumbai and Pune in four consecutive weekends before Diwali for perfect travel planning.

Over the last 25 years, TTF has successfully offered great networking opportunities for travel trade in and around top Indian cities, promoting interaction with their counterparts from India and abroad as well as consumers. Later this year, TTF is scheduled in Guwahati, and next year in Chennai, Bengaluru and New Delhi (Jan-Feb ’16). During this year’s TTF West Series, there were over 800 exhibitors from 15 countries and 30 Indian States and Union Territories participating in four events setting up colourful pavilions to sell variety tourism products. Participants included state tourism boards, national tourist offices, hotels, airlines, tour operators and travel agents, online travel companies, railways, cruises, accommodation providers and other travel marketers.

Countries represented were Thailand, New Zealand, Oman, Maldives, UAE, China, Nepal, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Bhutan, South Africa, Kenya, Singapore and Hong Kong eyeing for the booming Western outbound market. Besides Ministry of Tourism, Government of India pavilion, States and UTs represented were Andaman and Nicobar, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and of course the Host States of Gujarat and Maharashtra, to cater to the local tourists.

To enhance and showcase their respective offerings, aside from attractive and elegant stalls, participating states and countries presented daily cultural events and marketing presentations to trade visitors and the media. The TTF series has important value additions like pre-registration for trade visitors, more travel trade engagements, focus on B2B, etc. The specially branded section, Outbound Village @ TTF helps expand the outbound presence.

**Big Bangkok city promotion at TTF Mumbai**

The star attraction of TTF Mumbai was Bangkok Metropolitan Administration promoting authentic Thai food, Bangkok’s world famous shopping malls, and traditional Thai medical treatments, and value for money deals to tourists. Live performances, art and handicraft demonstrations and sampling of dried fruits etc were additional activities that drew crowd’s attention to Bangkok city pavilion. The Culture, Sport and Tourism Department of the Bangkok city, which organised all of these activities, were very enthusiastic to meet Indian travel trade as well as consumers.

**TTF has been organised in the best possible way and the numbers of participating tour operators are quite a lot. TTF has done a marvellous job in helping our tour operators develop tie-up with tour operators from other regions. This is how the travel trade develops.**

Nityanand Srivastava
Managing Director
Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited

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**Thailand always gets good business from TTF. A very good number of travel agents came to our stall and got a lot of information and we did good business as well. We would like to promote Thailand more among the women travellers. As Indians love beach, we are promoting a new destination for wedding and honeymoon called Trang, situated in the southern part near Krabi. The speciality of Trang is underwater wedding, and last year we had one Indian couple experiencing that.**

Soraya Homchuen
Director
Tourism Authority of Thailand (Mumbai)
Lose your heart to a place you’ve not yet discovered!

Explore the unexplored parts of Himachal

Come discover serenity and peace at places where nothing comes between you and nature.

Prashar (Mandi)

Barot Valley (Mandi)

Paragliding at Bir-Billing (Kangra)

For all accommodation requirements & packages visit www.hptdc.gov.in; www.himachaltourism.gov.in

Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Block No. 28, SDA Complex, Kasumpti, Shimla-171009
Ph.: 0177-2625864, 2625611, 2623959, 2625924 • Fax: 0177-2625456 • E-mail: tourismmin-hp@nic.in
Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) knows that the Indian market is quite big. There are lots of people who are willing to spend and explore new experiences in and around Bangkok. It would be a very good chance to promote Bangkok as one such destination, to give more information about Bangkok city giving both the travel agents and individuals with new choices. The first comment about our participation in TTF is that it is a successful mission in Mumbai. We had a big number of travel agents and tour operators coming in to our pavilion and meeting with us during the three days of the fair, and we hope to do good business with them now. The way organisers of the fair helped Bangkok Metropolitan Administration in connecting with all concerned, we are very happy and BMA would now seriously consider participating in the next fairs in the near future.

Kanokrat Phannara
Musical Director, Culture, Sports and Tourism Department
Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
I have been coming to TTFs for the last few years and I have seen it growing every year. This year we have found a very high quality crowd coming in with a lot more countries and good agents participating in. TTF is always there to promote our products and give all the updates to our travel partners out there. It is value for money to be here at TTF.

Khalid Gori
Chief Operating Officer
Ark Travels

TTF is the best platform for any travel industry person to meet all the travel agents and different suppliers. At TTF, we not only meet a lot of people, hoteliers, travel suppliers, but also a big number of out-station travel agents. With the biggest event OTM in Mumbai, for us it is like heaven, a platform where you meet everyone.

Manvendra Singh Vaghele
AVP Sales - India & Middle East
Star Cruises

TTF Ahmedabad is quite big this time and I was pleasantly surprised to see the amount of suppliers here. I am quite pleased that so much interest has been generated in Gujarat and very happy to see all of them here. We had considerable number of good meetings with all the agents who came to meet us and we collected lots of data for our franchise as well.

Meeta Shah
Director
Flamingo

We have been part of TTF since 2011 and we have participated in almost all the TTFs in different cities. Ahmedabad is definitely a special city as the general people from Gujarat love to travel a lot, so we get to showcase our product here and get the exposure in the particular market as well. We did very good business here.

Sudeep Mehta
President - Sales and Marketing
The Tree House Resort

For the first time we are participating in TTF Ahmedabad and it has been excellent. There is a lot of footfall and we generated good business leads, so overall the response is very positive.

Siddharth Bhatia
Director
FSR Travels

OYO Rooms is India’s largest branded network of hotels and to be the exclusive hospitality partner of TTF is a pleasurable experience for us. Also, it came naturally to us to partner with TTF as travel and hospitality go hand-in-hand. OYO’s fundamental is to make quality stays accessible for everyone who needs a place to stay and TTF has greatly helped us with that. It has provided us great visibility in the travel trade market. The response from consumers, travel agents and hoteliers has been inspiring. Through TTF, we have been able to tell people about what OYO stands for – predictability, affordability and availability of comfortable stays.

Anuj Tejpal
Chief Business Development Officer
OYO Rooms

Since TTF happens in key cities across India, therefore it makes better business sense for us to partner with TTF. It is also a platform where we can network with partners from travel trade and being a chain of hotels we get to meet good buyers and discuss potential business. We have always felt that TTF is a great marketing and branding platform wherein we get an opportunity to showcase our existing hotels as well as our upcoming hotels to our channel partners, and in addition it gives us an opportunity for direct interaction with our channel partners and customers and provides us a platform for showcasing our hotels.

Vikas Khazanchi
General Manager - Sales
The Pride Hotels

I am very happy that participation has increased even more in this year’s TTF and the quality of footfall is also very high. We are very happy with the turnout. Gujarat has such a big B2B market, where small town players also play strong. It is a high season time for Guajaratis and TTF is having the fair at the perfect time. It gives us good mileage and good platform to do even better business. Next year, I will come with a bigger stall with new ideas and new concepts.

Himanshu Kapadia
CEO
Hallmark Tours

We have been participating in TTF for quite a long time and the experience and business development have been very good. This year, TTF has grown even bigger with very high quality footfall. TTF helps us meet our agents and give the general people the information about our products which are equally important for us.

Manisha Sarkar
Manager - Cruise Marketing
Vivada Cruises

In TTF we always get very good business and excellent response. TTF helps us to meet with a lot of new travel agents and tour operators to promote our property.

Gursharan Singh
General Manager
Hotel Le ROI

Since TTF is growing every year. We see a lot of new people coming in, a lot of new travel agents even from outside the main cities as well. Our business is going good and we are taking stalls in every TTF. TTF shows a lot of new avenues and we are really doing well. We are also expecting lots of direct clients as we are promoting newer destinations. People are not aware of such places and through TTF we are promoting such destinations directly to them as well.

Naresh Arora
CEO & MD
Trulyy India Hotels and Resorts
We participated in TTF last year also and the business had been really good. The response this year also is very satisfactory - we are happy with the location of our booth also, it makes a difference. The meetings were very good as we saw a lot of domestic agents with great potentials and it really made a difference for our business.

Gita Chaudhry
Partner
Evooque Hotel Marketing

We have participated for the first time in TTF and it was an awesome experience. We have received a very good response. We have launched a new product and we are getting a good response to that. Here in TTF we got a good business and we have also got some good queries. Our agents supported us very well and gave us some bookings as well.

Sagar Raval
Director
Sherji Tours

This edition of TTF was very satisfactory. We have got great business queries especially on MICE. For us travel agents are more important and we have met a lot of them here. Through TTF we got to know and connected with more travel agencies than we expected.

Pankaj Kondiekar
Regional Sales Head
Leonia Holistic Destination

We are participating in TTF for the first time and we found it is a very useful platform for us. We got very good response from hotels as well as travel agents. We are targeting corporate as well as domestic and inbound markets including leisure. Participating in TTF is helping us grow better.

Gaurav Tuteja
Associate Account Director
Zo Rooms

TTF is a one stop shop for everyone. It not only gives us an opportunity to interact with the travel trade but also at the same time, people can come and talk to us about their queries. For us it is important to be present in B2B and B2C surface. This is our third time participation in TTF Ahmedabad and Ahmedabad has always been a promising market for us. There is a very crème crowd of about 2-5% what we are targeting towards and if it really interests them they know where to come and that’s the very reason we are in TTF.

Karl Boga
Marketing Manager
Oman Tourism

We have been participating in TTF since last three years and TTF Ahmedabad has always been very good. Our business has been growing and our meetings have been very fruitful. We are very happy with the overall response we received from TTF.

Krishna Pal Singh
Vice President – Sales & Marketing
Samode Hotels

This is the first time we have participated in TTF and received a very good response. I met a lot of travel companies and got very good business leads. I am very satisfied with the overall experience.

Sonam Phuntscho
CEO & Founder
Bhutan Norter Adventures

We are participating for the first time in TTF here and as we are in B2B business, our participation has been quite fruitful. There has been substantial good footfall of travel agents and tour operators and we are hoping good business from here.

Ashwin Negi
Owner
The Departures

TTF has been very good and useful platform for us where we meet all the people we need under one roof. We have received a very good response and overall we are very happy with the experience.

Dheeraj Saundh
Co-founder
Chutney Hotels

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Krishna Pal Singh
Vice President – Sales & Marketing
Samode Hotels

TTF is a very useful travel trade fair beautifully planned and organised event held in Surat every year with participation from different states and countries. This includes participation from Gujarat Tourism and Ministry of Tourism, Government of India as well. TTF helps people to get sufficient information and contributes a lot to promote the travel industry in Gujarat. TTF’s success shows that it is welcomed and appreciated by the people of Surat. People do get lot of information from here. People from Surat and Gujarat do like to travel a lot - nationally as well as internationally and TTF is an endeavour from where they get all these information easily.

Niranjan Zanzmera
Mayor of Surat
J&K Tourism promotes 40% flat discount at TTF West Series

Jammu and Kashmir Tourism participated in TTF West Series with much enthusiasm and the delegation comprising high officials and private tourism players was led by R K Varma, Director Tourism (Jammu). In a road show meant for top travel trade and media of Gujarat region, held at Pride Hotel of Ahmedabad, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism officials interacted with the local travel agents and tour operators and discussed matters of mutual interest and concern.

R K Varma, Director Tourism (Jammu) said, “Gujarat has been our primary market and always one of our top focus when it comes to marketing our tourism products. Group tours and lately we have seen many adventure lovers especially bikers from Gujarat are coming to Jammu and Kashmir. TTF is the biggest travel show network of India and participating in these shows strengthen our age-old trade relations besides developing fresh business relations.”

“We are committed to providing the best tourist facilities at all our destinations to the tourists who are visiting our state,” Varma informed. He further explained that all premium tourist destinations of Jammu and Kashmir remained unaffected during last year’s floods.

During the autumn season, visitors to Jammu and Kashmir will be given a flat 40% discount on accommodation in all government and private establishments. The Jammu and Kashmir Tourism pavilion witnessed huge response from both travel trade as well as general visitors during all the days of TTFs.

Participating in TTF has always been fruitful and productive for us and it has gone a long way in promoting Jammu and Kashmir as an independent and distinct tourism destination. Our participation in TTF also helps us to dispel the negativity of the calamities like flood that happened last year, and matters related to security issues. We got good business through the B2B meetings and the tour operators who came with us are quite upbeat and hopeful that they will get more business and business partner tie ups after TTF.

R K Varma
Director Tourism (Jammu)
Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Adlabs Imagica has been built with a lot of passion and the way we deliver the experience is what makes us stand out. Today we have placed ourselves as an international standard destination in India taking care of cost-effectiveness as well. 60% of our visitors say that they have been recommended by someone else who had previously visited. People had not seen a theme park or a theme destination in India, so they don’t understand much with a commercial ad of 15-20 seconds or a print ad. So you need a lot of word of mouth support to be able to transfer that experience. TTF&OTM is one of the best forums available and that’s why it is the only one we partner with for exhibiting Adlabs Imagica. They serve our purpose, help us reach out to B2B and B2C audience both in a best possible combination. It is a respected exhibition that grows, travels across the country. We are able to select, pick and choose and work with the same set of people more closely. They have started understanding us, we have started understanding their formats. So it is helping us well, the footfalls are very nice. We see quality people coming in.

Gujarat has become very strong market for us, but with TTF we see ourselves going to other parts of the country as well. We went to Kolkata, the response was nice. We have done enough dipsticks, spoken to people who matter in this industry and we have heard equally from them that TTF is perhaps the best platform to get the most of. Thanks to the platform, it is doing great for us.

Harjeet Chhabra
Chief Marketing Officer
Adlabs Imagica
TTF Award for Contribution in Tourism for Gujarat region held in Ahmedabad

The TTF Award for Contribution in Tourism was instituted by Fairfest Media to recognise leading travel producers and buyers, regionally. The regional award programmes were held in TTF Hyderabad and TTF Kolkata in previous months. Awardees of Gujarat region received the recognition and walked the show on the inaugural day of TTF Ahmedabad. In addition, an equal number of sellers participating in the shows were awarded, on the concluding days of all the TTFs in the West series. The awards were given by Nityanand Srivastava, Managing Director, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited and Rajiv Agarwal, Joint Managing Director, Fairfest Media – organiser of TTF.

List of Awardees (in alphabetical order)
- Alka Airlink
- All Four Seasons Travels
- Dakshin Vacations Private Limited
- Dattu Tours & Travels
- Harsh Travels
- Om Holidays
- Pathfinders Holidays
- Travel Designer
- Travel Designer India Private Limited
The Union Ministry of Tourism launched several new initiatives on the occasion of World Tourism Day. The Union Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), Culture (Independent Charge), and Civil Aviation, Dr. Mahesh Sharma announced the constitution of the Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board at a function in New Delhi. The Board has been formed to tap the potential and advantages that India has in the field of medical and wellness tourism. The Centre of Excellence in Hospitality Education to operate from Hotel Samrat in New Delhi was also inaugurated at the same function.

Release of Tourism Vision Document 2030, launch of the revamped website of Ministry of Tourism, (tourism.gov.in) which has now been made bilingual, release of Audio Visual Presentation ‘Introduction to India’ and a seminar on the theme of World Tourism Day 2015 ‘One Billion Tourist, One Billion Opportunities’ were some of the other highlights of the function on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Mahesh Sharma said that low cost medical facilities are India’s strength and we must take advantage of the same for the purpose of promoting tourism. It is for this reason that the Government took the important decision of setting up the Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board. The Board will have a corpus fund of `2 crore initially, the Minister disclosed. Dr. Mahesh Sharma said that the AYUSH facilities will be promoted along with regular medical facilities.

Dr. Mahesh Sharma also announced Discover India fares of Air India. Under the scheme, a tourist can discover India in one or two weeks at a reasonable travel cost. A tourist can buy 5 coupons for `32,500 (15 days validity) or 10 coupons for `60,000 (30 days validity) for exciting Indian destinations, serviced by Air India and Alliance Air without worrying about ticket price fluctuation. In another initiative, Air India will introduce Incredible Air India holiday packages from December 1, 2015. Air India will also launch Delhi-San Francisco flight from December 2, 2015 onwards which will fly thrice a week, Dr. Mahesh Sharma announced.

Vinod Zutshi, Secretary, Tourism; Umang Kumar, CMD, ITDC; Ashwani Lohani, CMD, Air India and other senior officials and members of the travel industry attended the function.

Details of the new initiatives launched are as below:

**Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board:** The Board will provide leadership of the Government within a framework of prudent and effective measures, thereby enabling promotion and positioning of India as a competent and credible medical and wellness tourism destination. The Board will be chaired by the Union Tourism Minister and consists of members representing the related government departments, tourism and hospitality sector and experts in the medical, wellness and yoga fields.

**Ashok Institute of Hospitality & Tourism Management – Centre of Excellence:** The Ashok Institute of Hospitality & Tourism Management is part of the HRD division of India Tourism Development Corporation Limited (ITDC) a PSU under Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. As part of its contribution towards supplying trained manpower to the hospitality industry, ITDC has envisioned to set up a Centre of Excellence in Hospitality Education at Hotel Samrat, New Delhi. The courses offered by AIIHT&TM are a blend of the rich heritage and culture of India and hospitality management education system. It provides the students with a world class contemporary education to have an edge over others in the field.

**Tourism Vision Document 2030:** The document goes into the challenges for the sector and details the way towards Vision 2030. ‘Tourism Vision 2030’ has been commissioned by the Experience India Society and prepared by KPMG.

Launch of bi-lingual website of Ministry of Tourism: The official website of MoT (tourism.gov.in) has been revamped and translated in Hindi. This administrative website contains the activities and information of all the divisions of the Ministry including the web-based E-Recognition system for recognition of travel trade service providers and approval and classification of hotels.

Audio Visual Presentation ‘Introduction to India’: The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), the apex body of tourism industry promoting inbound tourism to our country has produced a six minutes AV presentation depicting all tourism products of India and an element of human engagement with the various tourism products. This video presentation is to be used by IATO in all its promotional activities including road shows, international travel marts and other industry interactions.
The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee presented the National Tourism Awards 2013-14 at a function held at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi.

Speaking on the occasion, the President congratulated the award winners and said that these exceptional individuals and institutions who have been felicitated have distinguished themselves through their dedication in promoting India as a tourist destination. He said that broader social contacts between tourists and receiving communities go a long way in enhancing mutual understanding, tolerance and awareness between peoples. India offers one of the best tourism experiences in the world, he added.

Highlighting the contribution of tourism to the economy, the Union Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), Culture (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, Dr Mahesh Sharma said that the country earned $23,000 crores of foreign exchange through tourism last year. It contributes 6.8% to the GDP. Tourism, he said, being an ‘Industry of Smiles’ and the Government gives top priority to tourism last year. It contributes 6.8% to the GDP. Tourism, he said, being an ‘Industry of Smiles’ and the Government gives top priority to tourism.

Among the important recipients of awards include the state of Gujarat, the Best Heritage City, and others.

Tourism Minister launches special cleaning campaign at Assi Ghat in Varanasi

The Union Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge) and Tourism (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, Dr Mahesh Sharma launched a special cleaning campaign at the recently renovated historic Assi Ghat in Varanasi. Launching a cleaning drive at the excavated and restored historic Assi Ghat, the Union Minister inaugurated a world class Sulabh public toilet on the occasion. Dr Mahesh Sharma while lauding the effort of Sulabh called upon other organisations to come forward to adopt and clean other ghats. He said a plan is being drafted to clean garbage by using boats as garbage disposal is a major problem in the historic city due to narrow lanes. Now boats will ferry garbage to dump at certain points.

Dr Mahesh Sharma said that a comprehensive plan for the all round development and beautification of the Ghats of Varanasi and cleaning of River Ganga is underway to fulfill the wishes of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. He announced introduction of a special project for restoration and beautification of the Ghats. The Minister said a plan has already been finalised to hold light and sound shows at Assi Ghat soon.
Vinod Zutshi, new Secretary Tourism

Vinod Zutshi, IAS, has been appointed as the new Secretary, Tourism, Government of India. He succeeds Dr Lalit Panwar, who retired from service in July. A Rajasthan cadre 1982 batch, Zutshi was Deputy Election Commissioner in the Election Commission of India prior to his elevation as Secretary-Tourism. A post graduate in Business Administration and an MBA, Zutshi started his career as an SDG in Rajasthan in 1984 and had been Managing Director, Industries, Secretary for Education, Agriculture, etc. in the home cadre Rajasthan. He was also Secretary Tourism, Rajasthan and Chairman, Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) between 2004 and 2007 in Rajasthan. On Central deputation since 2009, Zutshi has been OSD and subsequently Deputy Election Commissioner in the Election Commission of India.

Rajasthan Tourism unveils marketing campaign in Delhi

Rajasthan Tourism has launched an aggressive marketing campaign along with a new logo of Rajasthan Tourism in New Delhi recently. The news of the launch was first revealed by Sanjay Pande, Additional Director (P&D), Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, during his address at the recently concluded IATO Convention in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

Sunil Gupta, Vice President, Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTFR) and General Manager, ITC Rajputana, Jaipur, informed that the new logo is a significant step in the national capital and in Chandigarh as well with a focus on Domestic Tourism. While road shows have been also planned in Mumbai (October 24-25), Pune (October 27-28), Chennai (December 7-8), Bengaluru (December 10-11), Kolkata (January 8-9), Guwahati (January 10-11) and Hyderabad (February 11-12), Pande, throwing light on tourism projects, informed that they are in the process of recognising major fairs and festivals of Rajasthan, such as the Pushkar Fair. Locally known as Pushkar ka Mela, the fair is an annual five-day camel and livestock fair held in the town of Pushkar. Pande also added that in order to increase the overnight stay of tourists in the state, Rajasthan Tourism is promoting Night Tourism during summers at Amer Fort and is looking to replicate the same in other parts of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur.

West Bengal Tourism conducts 7-city road show

West Bengal Tourism conducted 7-city B2B road shows in Indore, Nagpur, New Delhi, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, and Surat throughout the month of September.

Surajit Bose, WBICS (Exo), Joint Director, West Bengal Tourism, said that the state tourism board aimed to familiarise the tour operators in the said cities with the new and unique offerings of West Bengal Tourism.

Also, a new advertisement campaign is being designed by Ogilvy & Mather (O&M), which will be out by November this year, along with a television commercial starring the brand ambassador, Shah Rukh Khan, who will be seen welcoming travelling newcomers to West Bengal.

Bose also informed that the dream tourism projects of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, such as Jharkhali in Sundarban, are in process. The bid has been floated for the Gajoldoba project in North Bengal, while Sabuj Dwip in Hooghly will be developed by a private player in the next two years, he added. Also, cottages are being built at Jhargram Rajbari in Jangal Mahal, which will be ready in the coming months, Bose said.

About tourist arrivals to the state, Bose stated, “We are already witnessing good traffic from the key source markets of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi-NCR but wish to increase them. Globally, footfalls from China, Sri Lanka and South east Asian nations have increased due to the proximity and options for air travel. Foreign language guides are also being trained to leverage these markets further.”

Kuoni-SOTC launches India Holiday Report 2015

Kuoni-SOTC revealed the findings of its India Holiday Report 2015. The study was conducted by Nielsen with 900+ Indians across six cities - Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai in the age group of 18 to 35 to understand the mindset and behaviour of the Indian traveller towards holidays.

Speaking on the report launch, Vishal Suri, CEO - Tour Operating, Kuoni India said, “The Kuoni-SOTC India Holiday Report for 2015, research for which has been conducted by Nielsen with an objective to understand and obtain insights of the Indian Leisure Traveller and their travel behaviour. At Kuoni-SOTC, it is always our endeavour to continuously offer great value to our customers and cater to their needs. The insights from this study will further help us move in this direction, making holidays a priority for Indians.”

Rajeev Wage, Managing Director Kuoni India said, “The launch of this report underlines our commitment and our unyielding passion for making more and more people see a little bit more of the world. There is a lot in store for our esteemed customers and partners here at Kuoni India. My sincere thanks and gratitude to the support contributed by the partners to the growth of Kuoni India’s business achievements. We are counting that this esteemed partnership we share further deepens and continues to prosper in all our future endeavours.”

KUONI-SOTC presents Winter Holiday Bazaar

Kuoni-SOTC gives the perfect opportunity to plan your holiday with Kuoni SOTC’s Winter Holiday Bazaar. Kuoni-SOTC recently presented an array of holiday options – international and domestic – on offer at Sofitel Hotel Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai.

An innovatively one day one road show initiative offered best deals to travel enthusiasts with the support of various International Tourism Boards, cruise and attraction companies.

Vishal Suri, CEO - Tour Operating, Kuoni India said, “Our annual Holiday Bazaar Road Show presents us with an excellent opportunity to engage, interact and apprise our customers with our various offers. Year after year, the road show receives a warm and enthusiastic response in every city that we visit. We are pleased to be able to make holiday planning a smooth and effortless activity for our valued customers.”
The Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge), Tourism (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, Dr. Mahesh Sharma chaired the meeting of the National Steering Committee (NSC) of the Mission Directorate on Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD Schemes of the Ministry of Tourism in New Delhi. The meeting was held to step up inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination for speedy implementation of the two schemes. Officials from 12 ministries participated in the meeting and gave their views on how their ministries can help to promote tourism in India through expansion of Infrastructure, Road and Transport Facilities, Railways, Civil Aviation and Skill Development training among others.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Mahesh Sharma said that if the various ministries coordinate and work hand in hand, then Indian tourism can grow by leaps and bounds. Dr Sharma took suggestions from the representatives of the 12 ministries on tourism promotion and assured that the Ministry of Tourism will act on the suggestions. Some of the important suggestions by officials included connecting important destinations of the Buddhist circuit like Gaya and Varanasi by helicopter services, special coach for tourists in trains to important tourist destinations, training local people, especially women as tourist guides to help generate employment, and improving basic infrastructure facilities like transport and accommodation in tourist areas among others.

The Secretary Tourism, Vinod Zutshi sought the support of various ministries to make the schemes and initiatives of MoT a success.

Tourism granted industry status with new Gujarat Tourism Policy 2015-20

With the aim of establishing Gujarat as a vibrant tourist destination, the state government announced a new Tourism Policy 2015-20, awarding the ‘industry status’ to the sector for the first time.

Saurabhbhai Patel, Minister for Tourism, Government of Gujarat said, “It is for the first time that tourism sector has been granted status of an industry under the leadership of Chief Minister Anandiben Patel. With this initiative, tourism sector will now get all the benefits that industry gets.” The policy proposes a 100% reimbursement on stamp duty along with exemptions on luxury tax, entertainment tax and electricity duty. A major incentive will be a 15% capital subsidy to be provided to upcoming tourism ventures with an investment of up to 50 crore or more with an employment capacity of over 150 persons, with tax exemption for seven years.

The objectives of the policy would be directed at promoting tourism for all sections of society, encouraging self employment opportunities, skill development, providing advanced tourism infrastructure with ICT technologies through forms of virtual tourism like mobile applications or social networking, while enabling framework for public-private partnerships in developing tourism facilities. Efforts will be made to set up ‘Tourist Police’ department for the safety of tourists.

In the policy, World Travel and Tourism Council data estimates a total investment potential of $4 billion (approx ₹26,000 crore) by 2025 with an employment potential of 3 million people and five percent contribution to GDP. “In attracting domestic tourists, Gujarat stands at 8th position, with 3 crore domestic tourists visiting Gujarat every year. With 2.25 lakh international tourists, we rank 16th in India in getting foreign tourists,” recounted S J Haider, State Tourism Secretary. The policy would operate to bring Gujarat within the Top 5 Indian states in the tourism sector.

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With more than 2500 Exhibitors from 79 countries and 36 Indian States / UTs, and more than 186,000 visitors combined, TTF is the largest network of travel trade show in India.

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- Add 10% for Corner, 20% for Peninsula and 30% for Island Stand.
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Participation Package

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* Service Tax extra.
* Payment is due at the time of booking.
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Indians have so far only skimmed the surface of Thai destinations; we have a long list to offer

Sugree Sithivanich, Deputy Governor for Marketing Communications, Tourism Authority of Thailand spoke to Travel News Digest during his recent visit to India
Korea Tourism Organisation woos Tollywood in Kolkata

Korea Tourism Organisation participated in IIFTC Round Table held recently in Kolkata. The event was organised by India International Film Tourism Council and top Film fraternity from Tollywood Film. Kolkata attended the event. Tollywood actor Prosenjit Chatterjee participated as Chief Guest for the evening and Shrinkant Mohota, Venkatesh Films and President, EIMFA was invited as Guest of Honour.

Korea Tourism Organisation launched new promotional video during the event and presented various aspects of Korea including seasons, connectivity, commuting, stay, food, locations – modern and traditional, beautiful cinematography, modern lab facilities, visual effects and film infrastructure from a shooting perspective. Korea Tourism Organisation highlighted information on up to 30% grant being offered by Korea Film Council along with the incentives given by 10 Regional Film Commissions which made leading Directors and Producers very excited.

“It was quite surprising to know that Tollywood Film Kolkata is doing many film shooting in outbound destinations with very high budgets. Kolkata is a very important market for us to penetrate and through this event Iwanted to welcome Tollywood Film Fraternity in Korea and showcase our beautiful country through their experience,” said Byungsun Lee, Director, Korea Tourism Organisation in India.

Hong Kong Tourism Board successfully concludes its India travel mission

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HTKB) has successfully concluded its India travel mission recently in India. The mission witnessed the participation of more than 40 delegates representing Hong Kong’s top land operators, hoteliers and popular family attractions like Ocean Park Corporation, sky100 Hong Kong Observation Deck, Ngong Ping 360 Limited and PMQ Management Co Ltd.

The delegation visited Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi and met with over 800 trade representing more than 600 companies across these cities.

The mission also included exclusive MICE and Cruise sessions, highlighting the diverse venues in Hong Kong for meetings and incentive groups. Besides HTKB, the Royal Caribbean International and Star Cruises were co-presenters for these sessions. Harbour City sponsored the luncheons in all the cities during the session to help broaden the dynamic of shopping experience in HK.

Leveraging the 14-day visa free facility for Indian passport holders, the number of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong has reached 276,387 in the first six months for this year, showing a significant increase of 6.2% over the same period last year.

The Indian trade buyers were also encouraged to register at PartnerNet (PartnerNet.hktdc.com/in), a B2B interactive platform dedicated to tourism trade partners, to avail exclusive benefits by joining as a Trade Partner member.

Tigerair announces special inaugural fare for Lucknow-Singapore flights

Tigerair, leading Singapore-based budget carrier, announced its special fares starting from ₹1,999 inclusive of taxes as an inaugural fare on its new non-stop flights from Singapore to Lucknow beginning December 3, 2015.

Operating three days a week, on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday through Singapore, Tigerair’s new flight is the only scheduled non-stop service between Singapore and Lucknow. To celebrate the launch of this new route, Tigerair offered special introductory fares of ₹11,999 round-trip, which was available for purchase from September 1, 2015 to September 13, 2015, for travel between December 3, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

“We are offering an unbeatable travel deal between Lucknow and Singapore, combining a great price with convenient departure and arrival times, our award-winning in-flight service,” said Teh Yik Chuan, Director – Sales and Marketing, Tigerair Singapore. “We are opening up this market to a whole new segment of travellers who might previously not have been experiencing direct connectivity to Singapore from Lucknow and nearby cities. We look forward to providing this important link between Lucknow and Singapore as well as connections to the many Southeast Asian countries we fly to.”

“We are confident we will be able to meet and exceed the expectations of our passengers in Lucknow with Tigerair’s brand of quality service,” added Yik Chuan.

Tigerair currently operates a total of 41 weekly flights to Singapore from five Indian destinations. The airline also connects to Bali, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Perth, Taipei via Singapore, the gateway to amazing destinations in Asia Pacific and connect to Sydney, Gold Coast and 11 more destinations with 59 weekly flights via Singapore in collaboration with Scoot.

Maldives launches global advertising campaign with BBC

Maldives Marketing and PR Corporation (MMPRC) have launched a global advertising campaign with BBC in order to promote the Maldives as a tourism destination and the upcoming Visit Maldives Year 2016.

The campaign that would run from September 1 to October 31, 2015 will feature the unique aspects of the Maldives tourism product in a new 30 second commercial under the tag line ‘Sunny side of life’, along with 15 second teasers reaching a worldwide audience across important regional markets of Europe and Asia Pacific.

In addition, the advertisement will also be screened on the website bbc.com, video on demand section, with a target impression of 1,200,400.

The advertising campaign intends to raise the profile of the Maldives as a world class destination appealing to affluent travellers by reminding them of Maldives as a holiday destination and promote the upcoming Visit Maldives Year 2016.

The Visit Maldives Year 2016 is a marketing campaign by MMPRC, with an objective to reach the goal of increasing tourist arrivals to 1.5 million with a significant increase in tourism receipts. The vision of the marketing campaign is to market the destination by strengthening the brand and positioning Maldives as an exclusive tourist destination by showcasing the islands’ diversified tourism product. This would also foster better solidarity, harmony and wellbeing for the people of Maldives.

Vietnam visa centre likely to open in India

A new Vietnamese Visa Application Centre is expected to open in India. The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) disclosed that the new office would be operated by Kuoni’s visa specialists VFS Global. Although details of the centre, including the location, are yet to be confirmed, VNAT said that it will discuss plans with the Vietnamese Embassy in India.

VNAT Director-General, Nguyen Van Tuan, who met with VFS Global in Beijing, said that India is one of the most important markets of Vietnam’s tourism industry. In recent years, VNAT has organised a series of promotional activities in India and the tourism board would participate in PATA Travel Mart in Bengaluru.

It is also planning to conduct an event in Mumbai to promote tourism to Vietnam, which could see input from VFS Global.
India & Indian Sub-continent

Etihad Airways appoints Neerja Bhatia as Vice President India & Indian Sub-continent

Etihad Airways has appointed Neerja Bhatia for the position of Vice President India and Indian Sub-continent (ISC).

Bhatia joined Etihad Airways in 2004 as Sales Manager Western India, shortly after the airline had launched its flights to Mumbai, its first Indian destination. She then progressed to become Manager for Western and Southern India, before being appointed as General Manager India in 2007.

Danny Barranger, Etihad Airways’ Senior Vice President Sales said, “Neerja has played a key role in the expansion of Etihad Airways in India during the last 11 years and has a wealth of experience in the expansion of Etihad Airways in India during the last 11 years and has a wealth of experience. She then progressed to become Manager for Western and Southern India, before being appointed as General Manager India in 2007.

Danny Barranger, Etihad Airways’ Senior Vice President Sales said, “Neerja has played a key role in the expansion of Etihad Airways in India during the last 11 years and has a wealth of experience and expertise which will be key to the continued alignment of our activities together with our strategic partner Jet Airways in this important geographical area. “We are delighted that Neerja will take up her new role, based in Mumbai, to lead Etihad Airways’ commercial activities across the region as we look to expand our sales operations in India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Seychelles and Sri Lanka.”

Qatar Airways to deploy Dreamliner service to Kolkata

Qatar Airways has announced that it intends to deploy its Boeing 787 Dreamliner to India. The airline will launch services to and from Kolkata starting December 1, 2015. The introduction of the service is due to the increase in demand for travel to and from the region and the airline’s commitment to the Indian market.

The new addition would have an additional capacity of more than 76% in comparison to the A320. Qatar Airways’ daily seat capacity to Kolkata has nearly doubled from 144 seats on the A320 to 254 seats on the 787 Dreamliner aircraft.

Qatar Airways presently operate the 787 Dreamliner twice daily to Delhi. The airline also recently announced further expansion with plans to re-launch operations in Nagpur, with daily flights from December 1, 2015.

Outbound tourism in Lebanon increases by 80%

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan has launched a unified ticket for tourists under the name ‘Jordan Pass’, which enables tourists to visit various tourist sites, historic locations and museums in the Kingdom at a price of JD70 (around $99).

The ticket is aimed at encouraging tourists to visit several attractions in Jordan and easing their movement between the various locations.

Dr Abed Al Razzak Arabiyat, Managing Director, Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) added, “JTB would be carrying a comprehensive campaign in order to market the Jordan Pass across the globe and among all concerning markets, encouraging all tourists to buy the pass before their planned arrival to the Kingdom.”

The idea behind the ticket is to encourage tourists to visit a large number of historical sites, shed some light on lesser known tourist attractions, and to make their trip easier with suggested itineraries, said Nayef H Al Fayez, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities. Adding,

“Working together with the various Ministries and the Travel and Tourism Agencies as the reason behind the increase. Of these, the most important programme was ‘Dubrovnik’, which has seen high demand. The President of the Association explained that the number of travellers abroad amounted to approximately 230,000 passengers during 2015 as the registration rate reached 12%, mostly by the Syrians who were travelling abroad.

The Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut also reportedly spent the highest number of guest nights. From these nationals, Asians and Africans were the UAE, followed by the GCC, Asian and African countries, other Arab countries and Russia. From these nationals, Asians and Africans reportedly spent the highest number of guest nights in the emirate, followed by other Arab countries, Europe, the UAE and GCC.

During the meeting, Hind Al Marzooqi, Head of Tourism Development and Marketing, ATDD, addressed that the total revenue for the hotel and hotel apartments in Ajman rose by 14% in the second quarter of 2015 compared to the corresponding period in 2014.

At the same time, Director of Tourism Development and Marketing, ATDD, Khulood Khaled Al Nuaimi shed light on the hotel industry statistics which showed a rise of 40% in the number of guest nights.

During Q2, Ajman had a total of 3,420 rooms and units, which is an increase of 14.5%. The emirate’s top five markets during this period were the UAE, followed by the GCC, Asian and African countries, other Arab countries and Russia. From these nationals, Asians and Africans reportedly spent the highest number of guest nights in the emirate, followed by other Arab countries, Europe, the UAE and GCC.

During the meeting, Hind Al Marzooqi, Head of Marketing and Tourism Section, ATDD, outlined the status of the 2016 marketing plan for Ajman’s tourism industry. The department is currently working on phase two of the plan which calls for the development of strategies to be executed as part of the marketing plan.
Monaco Tourism targeting new age young Indian travellers

The Monaco Government Tourist Bureau recently joined with the Lakme Fashion Week Winter/Festive 2015 where designer - Narendra Kumar displayed his collection inspired by charismatic fashion character and style of the destination of Monaco. Speaking at the sidelines of the event, Rajeev Nangia, Director, Monaco Government Tourist Bureau said, "We are targeting the young and new-age Indians who have a taste for the best. The Lakme Fashion Week gave us the perfect platform to showcase the destination through Narendra Kumar’s designs. He has blended his collection with the Indian taste, but has not compromised on elegance, glamour and opulence which Monaco is known for. We wanted to showcase Monaco to the discerning audience who are inclined towards travelling in style."

He further added that destination weddings have become a recent trend among Indians. “Monaco has hosted few Indian weddings in the past and we want to reach out to the consumers who are looking for newer and luxurious destinations,” said Nangia.

The collection was titled as ‘Monaco Diaries’ by the designer, whose clothing line was about destination wedding and the journey. Speaking on this occasion, Kumar said, “Monaco encompasses heritage, luxury and elegance and it is an appropriate collaboration as these characteristics reflect in my own sensibilities interpreted through modern silhouettes combined with traditional craftsmanship and sharp tailoring.”

Crowne Plaza to offer guests helicopter tours of the city

Guests of the Crowne Plaza London Heathrow can arrange a tour on a private helicopter basis to a tour of the capital, taking in sights such as London Bridge, HMS Belfast, the Palace of Westminster and Tower Bridge.

Departing directly from the hotel, guests can fly above the city for 45 minutes to enjoy an exciting bird’s eye view of London’s landmarks, or arrange a tour of their own choosing.

Crowne Plaza London Heathrow, which is managed by Redefine BDL Hotels, is the only hotel in London to offer guests the chance to explore the skies from its grounds.

The flights, which cost £230 per passenger, would soon be available subject to availability and weather conditions. While, bespoke tours of London can be arranged for a price of £2,000 per flight.

Martin Vann, General Manager of Crowne Plaza London Heathrow said, “Being so well-situated for the airport, our guests usually don’t have a lot of time to spare to get out and explore London on foot. We understand this, and decided that our guests should not miss out on the stunning sights of our beautiful capital city.”

The Nazi Gold Train: A new tourism attraction in Poland

The Nazi gold train could possibly become a new tourism attraction in Poland. It might possibly contain the legendary Amber Room, presented to Tsar Peter the Great by the King of Prussia. Meanwhile, the Polish have lawyered up, staking a claim to the finds.

The story of the train, which was lost to the world for 70 years, does seem to be real, according to official Polish claims, which follow reports by two treasure hunters. Not only the fortune seekers, but the Polish authorities as well, have been on the hunt for the legendary treasure for decades.

However, the find’s authenticity remains in dispute. Despite wide accusations that recent claims were a hoax, Piotr Zuchowski, Head of national heritage at Poland’s Culture Ministry, said he has seen a geo-radar image of what is claimed to be the discovered train. As shown in the picture, it would be more than 100 metres long. The data was presented by the lawyers of the two men who say they found it.

Local tales claim that the train had vanished near Ksiaz castle, about two miles southeast of Walbrzych.

But according to Tom Bower, a prominent British investigative journalist and author, the discovery could contain an even bigger prize. Bower expressed hopes that the room, which was comprised entirely of intricate amber designs, but looted by the Nazis during WWII, could be hiding inside the train. The chamber was decorated with amber panels, complete with gold ornaments and mirrors. A carefully-restored replica unveiled in 2003 is currently housed in its rightful home – Catherine the Great’s palace in Tsarskoye Selo, south of the city of St. Petersburg.

Referred to as the Eighth Wonder of the World, the room, originally designed as a study, was presented by Prussia’s Friedrich Wilhelm I to Russian Tsar Peter the Great in 1716. It was looted by the Germans sometime in 1941, who then took it to Koenigsberg – now Russia’s Baltic exclave, Kaliningrad.

All traces of it have since been lost.

The Polish are not giving up so easily, warning people that Russia was allegedly trying to lay claim to the mystery train’s contents as war reparations. The World Jewish Congress has also joined the list of would-be claimants, although an analysis of the allegedly found train’s contents would have to be carried out to determine if anything inside had belonged to Jews persecuted by the Nazis.

The Polish government has asked the people not to jump to conclusions, as it will still be “a few months” before workers find out what’s inside, according to Zuchowski.

International law has it that the contents belong to the territory from which they were taken.

Czech Republic launches its first visa application centre in India

The Czech Republic has officially opened its first Visa Application Centre (VAC) in India, in Mumbai with VFS Global. H.E. Milan Hovorka, Ambassador Designate for the Czech Republic in India and Bhutan, inaugurated the centre, along with Rashmi Jolly, Consul for the Czech Republic in India and Bhutan.

The second VAC of the European country has also been officially unveiled in New Delhi. The second VAC of the European country has also been officially unveiled in New Delhi.

Hovorka, who is presently on a visit to India after taking over as Ambassador Designate recently, said, “I am extremely honoured and privileged to represent the Czech Republic in India, and I would be more than keen to take bilateral relations between our two countries to the next level. I will becoming to Mumbai on a regular basis. India is an important country and Mumbai is an important part of this nation. We are interested in strengthening ties with other parts of India as well and definitely we would like to promote people-to-people contact.”

About the new VAC, he said, “The new visa facilities demonstrate a continuous commitment of the Czech authorities to improve quality of service for visa applicants. Their opening provides the right answer to the substantially increased interest in visiting the Czech Republic. I invite all to benefit fully from this new service.”

Vinay Malhotra, COO – South Asia and DVPC, VFS Global said, “We are honored to partner with the Embassy of the Czech Republic in India in providing services to facilitate the visa process to this beautiful European country that is fast emerging as a popular destination for business and tourist travellers alike. We are committed to provide professional and convenient services to applicants and are confident of delivering an efficient, world-class service that is safe and secure.”

Hovorka, while talking about the segments that Czech Republic wishes to tap, he mentioned Wellness (spa), Golf, Group Tours, Destination Weddings, and Bollywood. He believes that Bollywood can facilitate people-to-people contact, which is why it is an important segment. He also stated that the Czech Republic government provides incentives to the Bollywood industry to shoot films in the country.
Tourism in Peru to grow by 40% between 2011-2016

Perú’s Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism (Mincetur), Magali Silva recently announced that the country has been steadily growing and has reached its tourism sector which is expected to grow by 40% between 2011-2016. The forecasts suggest that the numbers could reach four million next year.

This year, between January and July, the number of tourists arriving to Peru increased by 8.4% since the same period last year. During that period the number of visitors exceeded two million, with the most coming from Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Germany.

In total 2,007,141 tourists arrived in Peru between January and July, reports the National Superintendency of Migration. Of the countries, which experienced a great increase in tourists to Peru, was Brazil. In the month of July, Brazilian tourist increased by 39% compared to the same month last year.

As for Colombia, Chile and Mexico, tourists from those countries arriving to Peru increased by 12.6%, 12.5% and 0.6% respectively.

Germany leads the European market with a growth of 9.4%, followed by France (6.9%), Italy (5.7%) and Spain (5.4%).

Silva affirmed that the decisive lines adopted by Peru in terms of national tourism development are consistent with the strategic objectives proposed by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) on competitiveness and sustainability of the sector for the 2016-17 period.

To improve competitiveness in the tourism industry of its member states, UNWTO proposes to promote quality, innovation and excellence of tourism policy and destination management.

As for sustainability in tourism development, UNWTO established the promotion of ethical policies, practices and behaviours by improving the management of resources, increasing accessibility for all and promoting tourism’s contribution to peace, development and poverty eradication.

Emphasis is also directed on the preservation of cultural heritage and natural surroundings, especially with regard to the fight against climate change, and the full integration of tourism into local economies, ensuring equitable distribution of the sector’s benefits among receptive communities.

Tourism in Chile operating normally after earthquake

The Chile Tourism Board informed that the major tourism destinations in the country are operating normally following the September 16 earthquake. This information is based on a preliminary assessment made by the country’s undersecretary of tourism in conjunction with the National Tourism Service.

The earthquake measuring 8.4 in magnitude, with its epicentre located more than 260 miles from the capital Santiago, mainly impacted the northern Chilean cities of Talcahuano and Illapel.

Chilean tourism authorities say the country’s major tourism destinations, including the Antofagasta region, San Pedro de Atacama and its surrounding areas, including the Atacama desert area of country in Patagonia, are operating normally and have not been negatively affected. Regions including O’Higgins, Maule, Biobío, Aisén, Los Ríos, Los Lagos and Chiloé, Patagonia, location of Torres del Paine National Park, are fully operational.

Chile’s capital city of Santiago, and its surrounding areas, including Valparaíso and wine regions, are operating normally and have not been affected by the quake.

Airports throughout the country, including Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport in Santiago, were operating normally.

In other related news, Chilean Tourism Minister María Emilia Eyzaguirre announced that Chile is waiving visa requirements for visitors from China, provided that they have a visa for the United States or Canada.

Virgin America and Rocketrip form a partnership to serve business travellers

Virgin America and Rocketrip have announced a new partnership to serve their shared customers. Under the new partnership, business travellers would now be able to convert their Rocketrip rewards into frequent flyer miles with Elevate, Virgin America’s loyalty programme. Along with that, Rocketrip users can also earn extra points for enrolling in Elevate and for flying Virgin America on business trips.

Rocketrip encourages business travellers to save money on trips by rewarding them with points, which can be redeemed for gift cards, cash cards and now Virgin America perks. For every trip, Rocketrip generates a personalised ‘Budget to Beat’ based on real-time prices of flights, hotels, trains and rental cars. When employees book under the budget, they split the savings with their company and earn Rocketrip points.

Business travellers now also have the opportunity to enrol Virgin and火箭rip to announce Elevate points. If they redeem 5,000 Rocketrip points they will be granted Elevate Silver Status and if they redeem 10,000 points they will earn Elevate Gold Status, Elevate Platinum and Elevate Diamond. They will be able to make a selection at booking, complimentary upgrades, free checked bags, priority check-in, security and boarding, and much more.

Rocketrip travellers who sign up for Elevate will receive a complimentary 500 Elevate points, and when Rocketrip travellers fly Virgin America, they will also earn 500 extra Elevate points per booking, up to 2,000 per year. The current Rocketrip 2,500 points are enough to book a reward flight with Virgin America. Travellers’ earn an average of 1,190 Rocketrip points per trip on top of these bonus Elevate points, Rocketrip and Elevate points can be combined towards the goal of enhancing local tourism’s quality service.

The partnership to serve business travellers is part of Elevate’s strategy towards the goal of enhancing local tourism’s quality service, PRTC has developed a media campaign, which includes press advertisements on radio, TV and social media that will highlight examples of how to be ambassadors of quality service to visitors.

The training phase includes initiatives to promote excellence in service and would begin with a series of workshops for employees and management teams of government agencies and would continue with training opportunities for restaurant staff, hotel owners and operators to provide them with the tools needed to reach a quality excellence level that will boost new visits in the near future.

The third phase augments the importance of recognition and will include the relaunching of PRTC’s Quality Awards with a new logo, new categories and regional awards. PRTC’s personnel will also be recognised in this phase. All these strategies will run under the ‘It’s Our Time to Shine!’ slogan.

Puerto Rico Tourism Company introduces new quality service programme

The Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC) launched the celebration of the International Tourism Month with the presentation of its ‘Quality Service Programme’, which is a key aspect of Executive Director, Ingrid I Rivera Rocafort’s strategic plan for the agency. The programme comprises several elements which make a difference in the reputation of a destination.

PRTC’s Quality Service Programme focuses on three key areas: the celebration of the International Tourism Month under the ‘It’s Our Time to Shine!’ slogan. TRAVEL NEWS DIGEST  |  OCTOBER 2015  | 22

The programme comprises several elements which make a difference in the reputation of a destination.

PRTC’s Quality Service Programme focuses on three key areas: the celebration of the International Tourism Month under the ‘It’s Our Time to Shine!’ slogan. TRAVEL NEWS DIGEST  |  OCTOBER 2015  | 22
Tourism New Zealand showcases its offerings for corporate travellers at 3-city road show in India

At the recent Experiential Planner MICE Road show in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, Tourism New Zealand boasted its various offerings for corporate travellers across regions in North and South Island. The event was attended by over 200 event planners. The road show provided the perfect platform for Tourism New Zealand to meet with MICE planners in India.

During the session, Country Manager – India, Tourism New Zealand, Neha Bhola, made a presentation on the offerings of Auckland, Waiheke, Rotorua, Waitomo, Queenstown, Wanaka and Christchurch. The attendants also engaged in teambuilding activities, and were taken through the venues/accodmodation, adventure and food and wine available in the regions.

Tourism Australia collaborates with SilkAir to provide special air offer to travellers

Tourism Australia has tied-up with Tourism and Events Queensland to promote Cairns, Brisbane and the Great Barrier Reef region. The promotion involved a tie up with SilkAir, the regional wing of Singapore Airlines (SQ), to provide special, all-inclusive return economy fares into Cairns and Brisbane from India starting from 97,000 Rupees. The special offer, was advertised on print and digital platforms, until September 30, 2015 and valid for travel till March 31, 2016, subject to applicable terms and conditions.

SilkAir had launched its inaugural flights into Cairns, in May 2015. Bookings for this special offer can be made to Brisbane on Singapore Airlines and Cairns on SilkAir.

Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef is the only place on earth where two World Heritage listed icons meet – the Great Barrier Reef and the ancient Daintree Rainforest. From kangaroos to diverse marine species, bun- gee jumping in the middle of a rainforest to unwinding in the lap of luxury on an island, Cairns is the perfect holiday that you deserve.

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager, India & Gulf, Tourism Australia said, “Tourism Queensland and Singapore Airlines / SilkAir, we are happy to bring this opportunity to potential travellers to visit one of the most iconic travel destinations of the world – the Great Barrier Reef, whose natural beauty is unparalleled. We hope that Indian travel enthusiasts will utilise this exciting opportunity to book their next holiday Down Under!”

As per the latest statistics of Tourism Australia, 220,000 Indian travellers visited Australia for the year ended June 2015 which is an increase of 19% over the same period of the previous year. For the six months to June, Australia received 122,900 visitors from India, a 24% increase relative to the same period of the previous year. India is currently Australia’s 9th largest inbound tourism market.

Qantas pilots FlyPink for breast cancer research

Qantas Group pilots have started to Fly Pink from October 1, swapping out their normal gold epaulettes (shoulder stripes) for pink epaulettes, to show their support during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The Australian-first initiative was started by QantasLink Captain Susan McHaffie. She said that together with Qantas, it is her goal to raise $20,000 for breast cancer research.

QantasLink Chief Pilot, Captain Nathan Miller said Qantas was proud to get behind all its pilots and the FlyPink initiative, which will see pilots donate money to don the pink epaulettes when they sign on for flying duty.

“Qantas is really proud to show our support for breast cancer awareness, and most importantly help raise vital funds for research,” said Captain Miller. “As a global carrier, we hope we can help our pilots take the Fly Pink initiative from Australia to the world and are challenging other airlines to join us.”

National Breast Cancer Foundation Chair, Elaine Henry, welcomed the initiative and said the proceeds from the Qantas Fly Pink campaign would go directly to life-changing breast cancer research projects around Australia.

“Every day in 2015, 42 women in Aus- tralia are diagnosed with breast cancer, and it is still the biggest cause of cancer-related death in women globally. We believe that research is the key to erad- icating the disease, and credit research with the many advances that have been made in breast cancer care and treatment over the past few decades,” she said.

Australia to star in new TV drama aimed at capturing Brazilians’ growing desire for Australian holidays

Tourism Australia has teamed up with Brazil’s leading TV network Globo to produce Australian episodes of its new TV drama – Totalmente Demais – helping to further boost Brazil’s growing desire for holidaying in Australia.

The visit, which is being conducted in partnership with Destination New South Wales and Tourism and Events Queensland, will see four episodes of the Brazilian telenovela (TV drama) filmed against a backdrop of some of the most iconic attractions of Sydney and The Whitsundays.

Tourism Australia Managing Director, John O’Sullivan said Brazil was a fast growing emerging tourism market for Australia and the show will help to further boost the attractiveness of Australia as a travel destination.

“Australia is a destination that is now being discovered by Brazilians – we have seen Brazilian visitor arrivals and spend quadruple in the past to years and what’s more the market is also one of the top three lux- ury markets for Australia behind the USA and China,” O’Sullivan said.

“Globo TV is a market leader in Brazil and famous for its telenovela productions. At any single moment of the day, close to 22 million Brazilians are tuning in of these shows. Their reach and impact is huge.”

“We expect that having spectacular images of Aus- tralia broadcast on screens across Brazil to millions of viewers will help to further boost the attractiveness of Australia, which Brazilians already consider as one of the ‘hottest’ destinations in the world to visit right now,” O’Sullivan said.

NSW Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, Stuart Ayres said, “Sydney is Australia’s most popular destination for visitors from Brazil and showcasing the harbour city’s iconic landscape and attractions to millions of TV viewers will provide Brazilians with even more incentive to visit NSW. Brazil is the State’s largest South American visitor market and the number of vis- itors to NSW in the past financial year grew by 25%, a trend we want to see continue.”

Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) Chief Executive, Leanne Coddington said Queensland was an aspirational destination for Brazilian travellers who love our lifestyle and beach culture.

“TEQ has stepped up its focus in the Americas in recent years to maximise opportunities out of the emerging South American market,” Coddington said.

The episodes of Totalmente Demais, which translates to ‘Totally Awesome’, being filmed in Australia will star Juliana Paes, named as one of the 100 Most Sexy personalities in the world by USA magazine People, who plays the role of Carolina and award winning actor Fábio Assunção, who plays the role of Arthur.

In the past year, the number of Brazilians that vis- ited Australia grew 19% to 46,400 and grew spend grew 11% to $322 million.

Speaking about the event, Steven Dixon, Regional Manager – South and South East Asia, Tourism New Zealand said, “We have received a great response from the Experiential Planner MICE Road shows and look forward to more partnerships like this that help us build awareness of New Zealand as a busi- ness events destination in India. We aim to high- light New Zealand as a destination that is diverse, yet accessible, through the range of activities it offers.

We are pleased to see an increase in preference for New Zealand among corporate travellers and hope to keep up the momentum.”

For Tourism New Zealand, the Indian market is growing at 25.4% with 42,896 arrivals in the year till July 2015, with an increased holiday arrival of 23% in the previous 12 months.
MTPA conducted 3-city luxury road show in India

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) conducted 3-city luxury road show recently in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi. MTPA attracted 56 tour operators, such as Air Mauritius, Top Luxury Hotels, DMCs and activity companies participated in this event. The objective of the event was to create a platform where the Indian travel trade partners could interact with the stakeholders and understand the destination better.

This initiative, led by Arnaud Martin, Chairman of MTPA, was an enthusiastic participation from the top tour operators in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi. Speaking on the occasion, he said, “From January to July this year we had a tremendous growth of 21.5% as compared to a similar period last year and we expect to close the year at over 70,000 tourists from India. Mauritius represents a very fertile ground for future growth and we expect it to become the source market in the next five years.”

With India emerging as the sixth source market in Mauritius, the island nation has been witnessing a growth, with 45,797 Indian tourist arrivals during the first seven months of the current year. The MTPA is looking at positioning the country as a natural destination for Indian travellers. “We are bullish about the Indian market. We receive between 7 and 10% of the total tourist arrivals from the Indian market. India has the potential to double this figure in the foreseeable future. This year we are standing at 20% growth from India. We are looking at sustaining this growth for three years. Mauritius is an ideal playground for the Indian market, considering the geopolitical ties, and geographical location,” Martin added.

Through this edition of the 3-city luxury road show, MTPA is looking at tapping the weddings segment from the India, given the proximity of Mauritius to India. “Mauritius as a destination has a lot to offer to Indian travellers. We want to go a notch higher and are targeting Indian weddings because Mauritius is a party destination. We are also targeting golf and families,” said Martin.

Zambia Tourism conducts maiden FAM trip for Indian travel agents

Zambia Tourism Board in association with Kenya Airways recently organized a familiarisation trip to Zambia for prominent tour operators from India. The seven days tour to Zambia showcased Kenya Airways’ flights and the sights and sounds of the destination.

Zambia Tourism Board hopes to capitalise on the growing inflow from India and increase tourist arrivals to Zambia. Felix Chaila, Managing Director, Zambia Tourism Board said, “India is an emerging market for us and we want to see a positive growth from this market. This FAM was conducted so that Indian travel trade can get firsthand experience of the wonders of Zambia and can promote the destination further in their own country. We hope they will create customised itineraries to Zambia and promote it as a stand-alone destination or as an addition to Kenya and South Africa itineraries.”

The familiarisation trip consisted of agents from Cox & Kings, Beacon Holidays, The Wanderers, Iripr Holidays, JTB travels, Destination Management and World of Vacation along with Lubina Silverzai, COO, Blue Square Consultants. The group visited Lusaka, Livingstone, South Luangwa & Lower Zambezi National Parks and enjoyed activities like canoeing in the Zambezi River amongst hippo and crocodiles, day and night game drive in South Luangwa and Lower Zambezi National Park, cruise on African Queen, bush breaks fast in South Luangwa National Park and dinner on Royal Livingstone Express Train. Some of the partners who provided support to the FAM include Bushtracks Africa, Sun International, Royal Zambezi Lodge, Mfuwe Lodge, Kafunta River Lodge, Flatdogs Camp, Chiawa Camp, Sausage Tree Camp and the air-flight Pufalight Zambia.

Zambia Tourism Board hopes to create more familiarisation trips, focused on the fast-growing Indian market, to showcase Zambia as a premier destination. Zambia Tourism Board said, “India is an emerging market for us and we want to see a positive growth from this market. This FAM was conducted to give Indian travel trade an opportunity to see the destination for themselves and to understand the destination better.”

Nairobi is set to become East Africa’s culinary hub

Two unique awards programmes, which aim to catalyse Kenya’s culinary and beverage service industries to globally recognised and competitive levels, have been launched in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi.

In the spirit of re-branding Nairobi, the County Executive of Trade Industrialisation, Cooperative Development & Tourism, Anna Othoro, mentioned the need to differentiate “Nairobi as a Brand” and explore the “Luv-Love Nairobi” campaign through culinary tourism.

Following the hugely successful first chapter of the Chefs Delight Awards programme in 2012/2013, International Quality Awards Ltd (IQAL) and Go Places, the country’s authoritative hospitality and tourism marketing brand, officially announced the commencement of the 2nd chapter of the awards programme, at the Louis Leakey auditorium at the Kenya National Museum, Nairobi.

Mansoor Jiwani, Group CEO of International Quality Awards Ltd, who is also a former Kenya Utalii College chef, formally announced the start of this year’s awards programme.

In his speech, Jiwani said, “When International Quality Awards first began its journey, we had a noble goal in mind and set out to do what no other awards programme has ever done before. Having worked as a chef myself in the industry very many years ago, I asked our IQAL awards teams to create an unbiased industry awards programme that would continually help build and enhance our culinary and beverage service sector to internationally-accepted levels - one where participating establishments and their service teams could fairly compete to be the best and where the awards recognise the true ‘artistry’ of our local talent. We aimed to create an unbiased industry awards programme that would continually help build and enhance our culinary and beverage service sector to internationally-accepted levels – one where participating establishments and their service teams could fairly compete to be the best and where the awards recognise the true ‘artistry’ of our local talent.”

Alongside, this year’s International Quality Award, another corresponding industry awards programme the Bar & Mixology Awards 2015, would run side-by-side complimenting the Chefs Delight Awards.

Kenya Tourism Board’s representative, Oruomoi Tajeu Jonah, said that there was a need to drive and support the effective marketing of Kenya’s tourism products professionally and transparently while enriching the lives of Kenyans, recognising food and beverage as an important player in displaying Kenya’s diversity, culture and creativity.

Reunion Island celebrates 5 years as UNESCO World Heritage Site

To celebrate the five years of being recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, the island’s government on September 20 opened a permanent exhibition, to showcase, loosely translated, “Reunion – Nature in Harmony with Mankind.” The exhibition offers a virtual journey across the island, showing off the mountains, valleys, gorges, lakes, and waterfalls several of which are thousand feet high.

Turned into an interactive exhibition, visitors to the exhibition can enjoy 3D sights, apart from the more conventional multimedia and DVD shows, and pictures taken by some of the finest photographers in Reunion Island.

The exhibition is open between Monday to Saturday from 8:30 am until 12:30 pm and again from 1:30 pm to 6:00 pm, it is closed on Sundays and public holidays.

The location of the exhibition is the National Park House, 236, rue de la Republique, 97431 La Plaine-des-Palmistes.
Barbados and Samoa join UNWTO

The 21st UNWTO General Assembly welcomed Barbados and Samoa as new Full Members of the organisation, bringing its total member count to 158. As for the majority of their fellow Small Island Developing States (SIDS), tourism is the main economic activity for both Barbados and Samoa, creating a significant amount of job opportunities and bringing in important income and foreign exchange earnings.

UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said that the conference is important for travel for the region’s premier tourism event, and out of Curacao on October 24, so as to facilitate in Willemstad.

“Very much welcome Barbados and Samoa as UNWTO Full Members. Their decision to join is a clear testimonial of the importance of tourism for island states, and I look forward to working even closer together to raise awareness of the unique relationship between sustainable tourism development and socio-economic prosperity in SIDS,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

Barbados has won the bid to host one of the world’s leading yachting events in 2017. The OK Class World’s travels to various destinations around the world each year, and it is expected that this event will attract 100 of the world’s best sailors to compete against each other in Carlisle Bay. These sailors are known to travel with their families and companions, which will be of direct benefit to local accommodation providers, restaurants, car rental companies and other industry players.

William Griffith, CEO, Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc (BTMI) accredited the win to the significant support of partners, who have helped to make hosting the event in Barbados a tempting proposition.

“Through the invaluable support of Geest Shipping, which continues to be a loyal partner in getting the boats here, as well as Mount Gay Distilleries and the Barbados Port Inc, Barbados is once again in the limelight as a premier yacht-friendly destination. We will continue to build on our strong reputation as a preferred host country on the international yachting circuit having already hosted the Fireball Barbados World’s in 2010, which was followed by our most successful event to date, the 505 International Barbados World’s in 2013,” said Griffith.

2017 will also play host to the popular Finn Masters World’s. That event will feature races among a class of heavier dinghies as seen in the Summer Olympic Games. It is expected that the latter event would attract as many as 200 boats and some 500 sailors and their families and friends. Altogether, with the arrivals projected for the OK Class World’s, Barbados is expected to welcome over 800 visitors to the island through this sports tourism niche over a three-week period.

Trinidad hosts world premiere of Kabir Bedi’s movie, Bazodee

Bollywood superstar Kabir Bedi was in Trinidad for the world-premiere of the movie Bazodee. Bedi stars alongside Trinidadian soca artiste Machel Montano in the feature film Bazodee, which premiered recently in Trinidad. In addition to his busy schedule of public appearances in promotion of the new movie, Bedi graciously accepted the Tourism Development Company’s (TDC) invitation to tour some places of interest in Trinidad.

Bazodee is one of the films being featured at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival (ttFF) 2015. The ttFF partnered with Monk Pictures, Indiepelago Films and FilmTT to bring Bazodee and members of its stellar cast to a T&T audience, for the premiere of the film at the historic Globe Cinema in Port of Spain. The screening was followed by an after-party at Aria Lounge on Ariapita Avenue, Woodbrook and included a short set by Machel Montano.

Bazodee is a musical drama about a rugged soca singer who falls for a beautiful young Indian woman. The movie also features acting talents of a number of other T&T actors.

Curacao’s national carrier to add capacity for the upcoming Caribbean conference

Curacao’s national carrier, InselAir, has announced additional seats into the country for the upcoming Caribbean Tourism Organisation’s (CTO) State of the Industry Conference (SOTIC), which is scheduled for October 21 to 23 at the World Trade Centre in Willemstad.

The airline has agreed to add capacity from St Maarten and Trinidad into Curacao on October 19 and out of Curacao on October 24, so as to facilitate travel for the region’s premier tourism event.

The airline’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Albert Kluyver said that the conference is important for regional tourism, so the airline felt it necessary to help make it easier for delegates to attend.

“InselAir has always stressed the importance of working together with airports, governments and other parties to the benefit of the local economies and the development of tourism, on which most of the Caribbean countries rely. The SOTIC 2015 is a great opportunity to share insights, knowledge, trends, developments and address issues in order to constructively work together for the benefit of the industry and our countries,” Kluyver said.

InselAir has a good relationship with the CTO and has contributed to SOTIC in the past. The CTO’s Secretary General Hugh Riley welcomed the airline’s gesture, along with other developments which aid the process of getting the word from the conference.

“We are extremely happy that regional and international carriers have come together to make a way for people who are coming to the conference in Curacao to get there more efficiently, more conveniently and hopefully more cost effectively. Altogether we are all making a statement that it is important for the carriers to make sure that Caribbean people can travel around the region more efficiently for whatever reason – for vacations, for business, for conferences – we need to be able to travel and stay in the Caribbean when we are attending Caribbean events,” he said.
UNWTO launches Global Report on Shopping Tourism

Shopping tourism has emerged as a growing component of the travel experience, either as a prime motivation or as one of the major activities undertaken by tourists at their destinations. UNWTO’s recently released Global Report on Shopping Tourism analyses the latest trends in shopping tourism, providing insight into key success factors for destinations aiming to develop this segment.

UNWTO’s Global Report on Shopping Tourism offers a series of practical guidelines and principles for all destinations interested in developing shopping tourism. The report includes a wide range of case studies by UNWTO Affiliate Members and other tourism stakeholders from around the world.

Presenting the report, UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said, “Few sectors can boast of their power to inspire growth and create jobs as tourism sector can. If we can jointly harness this, we can have an immense impact on a destination’s brand and positioning.” UNWTO’s Global Report on Shopping Tourism also shows how public-private collaboration can channel the innumerable powers of public-private collaboration and partnerships.

UNWTO’s Secretariat-General, Taleb Rifai, noted, “As part of the UNWTO Cities project, the Report explores the economic impact of shopping tourism and provides an overview of strategies and priorities employed by tourism stakeholders in order to foster sustainable growth and development of the tourism offer in destination type cities.”

The report is the eighth volume of the UNWTO Affiliate Member Reports, which address critical areas for the tourism sector against the backdrop of social transformation. In Colombia, so much so, tourism is the second largest source of foreign exchange, surpassed only by oil. Indeed, it is falling prices in oil that replace the income from these smokestack industries with more environmentally friendly ones, such as tourism.

Tourism’s ability to foster inclusive development and social transformation was the focus of the 22nd Session of the UNWTO General Assembly meeting in Medellin, Colombia (September 12-17, 2015).

The Assembly took place at the most dynamic time for the tourism sector. With five consecutive years of robust growth, tourism has been a major contributor to the economic recovery in many parts of the world, generating foreign earnings, employment and investment. In 2014, despite several challenges, international tourism reached new records with 1.133 million tourists travelling the world and contributing $6.1 trillion in exports.

Colombia hosted the UNWTO General Assembly for the second time, following the 2007 UNWTO General Assembly in Cartagena de Indias. The event gathered over 600 delegates from UNWTO Member States, the private sector and academia.

In his opening speech, President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos emphasised Colombia’s vast tourism offer and the country’s commitment to share it with the world in a sustainable manner.

“With five consecutive years of robust growth, tourism has been a major contributor to the economic recovery in many parts of the world, generating foreign earnings, employment and investment,” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

“Tourism offers a series of practical guidelines and principles for all destinations interested in developing shopping tourism. The report includes a wide range of case studies by UNWTO Affiliate Members and other tourism stakeholders from around the globe.”

“UNWTO’s Global Report on Shopping Tourism analyses the latest trends in shopping tourism, providing insight into key success factors for destinations aiming to develop this segment.”

Corporate travel buyer study affirms NDC need: IATA

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced the results of a study of global corporate travel buyers showing that while the vast majority maintain a neutral opinion concerning the New Distribution Capability (NDC) they recognise the opportunity the standard offers. Moreover, the study found that there is a strong desire among travel buyers for greater in-depth knowledge about NDC and the implications that it will have for their business activities.

The study was conducted by Festive Road on behalf of IATA. It is based on interviews with 17 corporate travel buyers from five continents representing direct responsibility for in excess of $3 billion per annum in business travel expenditure including an estimated $1.9 billion in air travel.

“We have an opportunity for greater interaction with the business travel market, who are key partners in the travel value chain. The newly-formed IATA Travel Manager Advisory Group will help us to build a better understanding of the capabilities of NDC and the concerns of corporate travel buyers. By enabling access to airline content that currently is available only on airline websites, NDC will add much more value to the services that travel buyers provide to their companies,” said Aleska Popovich, IATA Senior Vice President, Financial and Distribution Services.

The report also identified six current “pain points” corporate travel buyers say impact their effectiveness in managing travel for their businesses:

- Data: Buyers often feel frustrated that they lack concise, accurate data on actual expenditure.
- Communication: Concern over supplier-direct communication with travellers was most commonplace, as was the use of airline and hotel loyalty programmes, to facilitate supplier-traveller direct communications.
- Distribution and Content: Friction with the content provided to their companies was cited. Issues ranged from content being unavailable through indirect channels and available nowhere to travellers, to the challenges surrounding fare and ticketing rules.
- Intermediaries and Content: Issues with the self-booking tool experience and concerns over the future viability of travel management companies and GDSs in their current form were mentioned.
- Traveller and Booking Experience: Buyers increasingly have to respond to the desires of the traveller rather than spend their time focusing on the needs of the corporation across sourcing, policy and compliance.
- Costs: In addition to significant increases in hotel costs and a focus on non-air costs, buyers also referenced a reduced sense of leverage.

Tourism continues to consolidate the positive performance it has had over the last five years and to looking for development and economic opportunities worldwide,” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. “As UNWTO met in Medellin, Colombia, for its 22nd General Assembly, this is the appropriate moment to call for a stronger support to tourism as the sector has the potential to deliver on some of the most pressing challenges of our time, namely job creation, economic growth and social inclusion,” he added.

According to the UNWTO forecast issued at the beginning of 2015, international tourist arrivals are expected to increase by three percent to four percent worldwide for the whole year, in line with the long-term forecast of an average growth of 3.8% a year set for the period 2010 to 2020.

UNWTO General Assembly held in Medellin, Colombia

“We give tremendous importance to tourism in our development plans and in our economy. The participants gathered here know more than anyone how tourism can boost countries and be an agent of social transformation. In Colombia, so much so, that tourism is now our second largest source of foreign exchange, surpassed only by oil. Indeed, it is falling prices in oil that replace the income from these smokestack industries with more environmentally friendly ones, such as tourism.” UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, praised Colombia’s commitment to tourism in addition to the country’s remarkable transformation into one of the Americas’ fastest growing tourism destinations.

Rifai highlighted how tourism, alongside its economic weight, also has the power to generate significant social benefits: “Only those that understand the connection between travel and peace can appreciate the real value of travel and tourism,” he added.

Talking about financing of tourism in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Ambassador Yvette Stevens, Chair of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Board, highlighted the support provided to LDCs by the EIF in the preparation of integrated trade strategies, while Ambassador Dho Young-shim, Chair of the STED Foundation, stressed the role of tourism in poverty alleviation.

Closing the event, the Vice-Minister of Tourism of Colombia, Sandra Howard, called upon UNWTO to give tremendous importance to tourism in our development plans and in our economy. The participants gathered here know more than anyone how tourism can boost countries and be an agent of social transformation. In Colombia, so much so, that tourism is now our second largest source of foreign exchange, surpassed only by oil. Indeed, it is falling prices in oil that replace the income from these smokestack industries with more environmentally friendly ones, such as tourism.”

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UNWTO General Assembly held in Medellin, Colombia

Tourism continues to consolidate the positive performance it has had over the last five years and to looking for development and economic opportunities worldwide,” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. “As UNWTO met in Medellin, Colombia, for its 22nd General Assembly, this is the appropriate moment to call for a stronger support to tourism as the sector has the potential to deliver on some of the most pressing challenges of our time, namely job creation, economic growth and social inclusion,” he added.

According to the UNWTO forecast issued at the beginning of 2015, international tourist arrivals are expected to increase by three percent to four percent worldwide for the whole year, in line with the long-term forecast of an average growth of 3.8% a year set for the period 2010 to 2020.
TripAdvisor to launch instant hotel booking feature in India

GoDaddy helps an Indian adventure travel website find new global customers

TravRays launches unique B2B travel technology platform in UAE

Goibibo introduces flights + hotels booking facility on its Android and iOS app

Online travel discovery platform, TripAdvisor is set to start hotel bookings on its iOS platform, like its competitors MakeMyTrip and Cleartrip. Up till now, the company only allowed viewers to search and find travel packages and hotels, and compare prices. But now, through its instant booking feature, which has been launched in the U.S. last year, the company will enter the travel e-Commerce market in India.

The online hotel booking industry that is estimated at a billion dollars is expected to become a $1.8 billion industry by 2016. For online travel agent (OTA) companies like MakeMyTrip (MMT), hotel booking accounted for 48% of revenue in the first quarter ending June. In the same period, MMT’s rival Cleartrip saw a 83% rise in hotel search, and 120% rise in room nights booked.

This is what TripAdvisor wishes to capitalise on. “We are itching to launch it everywhere in the world, but the fact is that this is for the first time that we have got into transaction area and India is definitely in the pipeline,” said Helena Egan, Director of Industry Relations, TripAdvisor. “This is the first time we are processing credit card payments on our platform.”

TravRays, a Dubai-based travel technology company, has launched a complete end-to-end technology platform which encompasses an advanced Booking Engine using multiple sources of air and non-air content, combined with customer profiling, comprehensive reporting and management capabilities, thereby addressing the need of travel suppliers / consultants and key decision-makers to have a single window to address the needs of their travel agency allowing the administration of the travel agency allowing the administrator’s consultants and key decision-makers to have complete control of their business.

TravRays is currently focused in the UAE, and it will expand to GCC markets (MMT), hotel booking accounted for 48% of revenue in the first quarter ending June. In the same period, MMT’s rival Cleartrip saw a 83% rise in hotel search, and 120% rise in room nights booked.

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GoDaddy, announced that it is empowering The Great Indian Adventure (GIA), a travel business, to reach more customers internationally by helping them create a professional online identity at thegreatindianadventure.com.

GIA, which was established in 2008 by a former New York banker Pranav Chandra, creates tailor-made Indian travel experiences. GIA’s knowledge and customised approach has made it a popular choice among travellers. Although, GIA’s primary source of new customers has been through word-of-mouth referrals, Chandra set up the company website in 2009 to expand GIA’s reach to a global scale.

“By taking GIA online, we wanted to create a unique platform to provide the Insider’s India experience (without the hassle) on a platter to travel seekers around the world,” said Chandra. “GoDaddy’s superior customer care, coupled with ease of use and value for money made me choose GoDaddy. GoDaddy’s 24×7 customer care team provided me with quick and easy resolution for any problem I faced along the way.”

Cleartrip proposes increase of listings and cities on Activities app

Goibibo has launched the ability to book ‘Flights + hotels’ in a single cart on its mobile app. With this the travel portal becomes the first of its kind on the mobile platform.

While searching for flights between origin and destination, travellers would now be able to add a hotel on a real time basis. The bundling provides the travellers with an advantage of significant price saving, along with a simple two tap process of checkout and payments.

The details of the hotel such as pictures, location, room details, breakfast price saving along with Go Reviews and ratings of the hotel can easily be viewed by the travellers before they proceed with the booking. The mobile flow also facilitates consumers to view other hotels that they can bundle with the flight by simple left swipe of the hotel.

is all geared up to provide solutions and manage business requirements to multiple opportunities that exist in a market place. The systems act as a platform where travel agents, travel suppliers such as airlines, car rentals and hotels can be both a supplier and a customer at the same time.

He added, “With our professional experience of 20 plus years in the industry, we understand the importance of delivery and customer satisfaction. Our team and the core engine are committed to service round the clock. TravRays platform is ready to integrate with any travel supplier within the UAE and beyond. We have beta-tested with over 75 travel agents and our clientele base is increasing day by day.”

R Sankaranarayanan, Founder of this technology, said TravRays offers a single window to address the needs of the travel agency allowing the adminstrators’ consultants and key decision-makers to have complete control of their business.

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WTM London 2015 will be opened by David Gill, former Chief Executive of one of the world’s most valuable and well known football clubs Manchester United. Gill will open WTM Leaders Lunch, which will host 200 of the industry’s most senior executives. This year’s lunch is organized in association with Mexico Tourism, WTM London’s Premier Partner. During the lunch, BBC presenter Stephen Sackur will interview Gill about his career in the football business as well as his previous experiences within travel, which will offer the senior travel industry inspiration and practical advice as to how they can run their own businesses.

WTM Buyers’ Club being sponsored by India Tourism

India Tourism is the sponsor of prestigious WTM Buyers’ Club 2015 as it looks to promote India, to the global travel industry as a safe and year-round luxury destination. In 2014, 7.2 million tourists visited India, a growth of more than 10% from 6.97 million in 2013. In the first six months of 2015, India has welcomed 3.85 million tourists, up to 3.4% on the same six months in 2014. The key to India’s strategy is to focus on a variety of niche products including rural, wellness, medical, adventure, golf, MICE and cruise tourism to overcome the aspects of ‘seasonality’ and spread tourists around the country by promoting India as a 365 days destination and expanding out from its most popular period of October to March. India’s most popular destinations are Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, popularly known as the Golden Triangle, Rajasthan, Goa, Kerala and Kashmir. However, a greater focus is being put on Northeast India. India will also showcase its fast growing cruise industry with leading cruise operators including Indian ports in their itineraries. A string of luxury global hotel chains are scheduled to open a number of hotels in India in the next two years, further enhancing India’s position as a luxury destination. The United Kingdom is India’s second largest source market for tourists with 810,000 people visiting in 2014. India will look to sign deals at WTM 2015 with UK tour operators that will see the number of visitors from the country increase to one million in 2016. Key to the strategy of increasing tourists from the UK is for India to expand its campaign to people living outside of London.

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WTM London 2015 has linked up with Worldwide Kids Company to host a seminar giving hotels and resorts detailed advice on how to appeal to high-spending families. The seminar will look at how it is changing and what hotels and resorts can do to take advantage of the opportunities. Worldwide Kids Company, a childcare consultancy for hotels and resorts, has been in operation for 30 years. The session will share best-practice examples of how to deliver an exceptional family holiday experience. Case studies will highlight how investment in the luxury family product can generate significantly higher revenues for hotels and resorts.

Focus on profit from upmarket family travel

Google and Yahoo! executives will speak on SEO

The Travel Tech Show at WTM 2015 is host to a variety of new companies within the New Exhibitor Pavilion. Top executives from the world’s leading search engines, Google and Yahoo! will advise delegates on how to improve their rankings. Anna Chomse, Industry Head at Google Travel and Andrew Jones, Head of Search Account Management at Yahoo! will offer valuable knowledge to keep the industry up to date; delving into the right tactics to increase search engine optimisation. E-commerce specialist Frosmo, based in Finland is sponsoring the Travel Tech Theatre, part of the Travel Tech Show at WTM 2015.

Responsible Tourism Programme

In a year where countries have struggled with the impacts of growing numbers of tourists in their destinations, a considerable focus of this year’s WTM Responsible Tourism Programme looks at how the industry might best address these issues. A high level panel will meet to discuss Destination Partnerships, and they will be focussing on the examples of iconic destinations, Barcelona and Venice. Using the examples of these two cities, the panel will discuss how positive change can be achieved for the benefit of destination communities, their natural and cultural environments and the tourists who visit them.

New Wellness Lounge

The inaugural WTM Wellness Lounge has generated interest among the exhibitors from Iceland to India. Among the 25 exhibitors are Blue Lagoon – one of Iceland’s most famous attractions and well known for its geothermal seawater, and India’s award-winning Somatheeram Ayurveda Group. According to Global Spa & Wellness Economy Monitor 2014 Report, the global wellness market is now valued at $3.4 trillion and is growing fast, as more people want to improve their physical and mental well being during their leisure time.

2016 edition will be a three-day event

WTM London 2016 will be revamped as a 3-day event following exhibitor and visitor feedback. WTM London 2016 will take place between November 7 to 9 with the opening hours extended from 10 am to 7 pm for all three days, giving exhibitors and visitors extra time to negotiate and agree business deals, while reducing the ancillary costs of exhibiting. The WTM International Press Centre has been moved from the Platinum Suites on to the exhibition floor to increase the networking opportunities between exhibitors and over 3,000 international media in attendance. Furthermore, a new amphitheatre seating up to 300 delegates will join the Global Stage on the exhibition floor, meaning the majority of the thought leadership sessions will be adjacent to the exhibition pavilions and stands. Moving the UNWTO and WTM Ministers’ Summit to Wednesday gives ministers the opportunity to attend WTM Festivals that evening – the end of event celebrations across the exhibition floor which will close WTM London 2016.
Bengaluru hosts PATA Travel Mart 2015

Karnataka played the role of Host State for PATA Travel Mart 2015 (PTM 2015) which took place from September 6 - 8, 2015 at the Bangalore International Convention Centre. The inaugural ceremony was hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The event was generously hosted by the Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka attracting over 1,000 visitors. According to PATA statistics, there were 456 sellers from 265 organisations and 28 destinations, along with 242 buyers from 233 organisations and 50 source markets. Dignitaries present at the inaugural programme were Ananth Kumar, Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Government of Karnataka; Umashree, Minister of State for Women and Child Development; Empowerment of the Differently-abled and Senior Citizens and Kannada and Culture, Government of Karnataka; R V Deshpande, Minister for Large and Medium Scale Industries and Tourism, Government of Karnataka; PATA Chairman Kevin Murphy; PATA CEO Mario Hardy; members of the PATA Executive Board and other distinguished guests from India and overseas.

PATA Chairman, Kevin Murphy used the opportunity to thank Christ University, Bengaluru for hosting the PATA Youth Symposium. The event was generously hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of Karnataka; Umashree, Minister of State for Women and Child Development; Empowerment of the Differently-abled and Senior Citizens and Kannada and Culture, Government of Karnataka; R V Deshpande, Minister for Large and Medium Scale Industries and Tourism, Government of Karnataka; PATA Chairman Kevin Murphy; PATA CEO Mario Hardy; members of the PATA Executive Board and other distinguished guests from India and overseas.

Bengaluru hosts PATA Travel Mart 2015

Jakarta, Indonesia to host PATA Travel Mart 2016

Indonesia is gearing up to host the 65th Annual Summit of PATA in Jakarta on September 7-9. The hand-over from India (Host Country of PTM 2015) was held on a two-day dinner at Vivanta by Taj Hotel, Bengaluru on September 6, 2015. During the dinner, Jakarta’s traditional dancers performed to attract 500 invited buyers and members of the industry. They enjoyed Indonesian dance and cultural performances for about an hour.

Arief Yahya, Minister of Tourism of The Republic of Indonesia gave a presentation about Indonesia as the Host Country for PATA Travel Mart 2016. He said, Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world, comprising more than 13,000 tropical islands with white sandy beaches. Among the most well-known islands are Bali, Java, Kalimantan (formerly Borneo), Papua, Sulawesi (formerly Celebes), Sumatra, and the Maluku Islands (or better known as Moluccas, the original Spice Islands). The destination offers richly diverse cultures and heritages, beautiful beaches and eco-tourism along with green rain forests to trek through, deep blue pristine seas to dive and swim, and the warmest and most hospitable people on earth to welcome tourists and visitors.

Before the end of this year, Indonesian government will give free visa extended to 30 countries including India. To attract 10 million international tourists in 2015, Indonesian government encourages three Greats - such as Great Bali, Great Batam and Great Jakarta. The destinations of Great Bali consist of Surabaya, Bali, Lombok, and East Mau Tenggar. The destinations of Great Batam consist of Batam, Medan, and Padang. While Great Jakarta consists of Jakarta, Bandung, Puncak and Yogyakarta.

Negombo, Sri Lanka to host PATA Annual Summit 2017

Negombo was chosen out of the four options given – Negombo, the Cultural Triangle, Kandy and Bentota / Beruwala. Due to the destination’s rich and colourful history, the proximity to the airport, the event will be held at Jetwing Hotels, the single largest accommodation provider in Negombo.

The Annual Summit is a 3-4 day programme consisting of the association’s executive and advisory board meetings, annual general meeting; PATA Foundation charity and gala dinner. The one-day conference agenda addresses major relevant issues impacting travel and tourism business environment and preludes with the PATA chapter meetings. The Annual Summit will be held at local locations and to be held in Guan in 2016, sees travel and hospitality professionals from all over the globe gather together.

Tumon, Guam to host PATA Annual Summit 2016

The PATA Annual Summit 2016 will take place at the Dusit Thani Guam Resort in Tumon, Guam in May. The summit, hosted by the Guam Visitors Bureau, will include a one-day conference, the PATA Youth Symposium, the PATA Executive Board and Committee meetings, and Annual General Meeting 2016. Governor of Guam, Eddie Baza Calvo and PATA CEO Mario Hardy announced the summit at a press conference in Adelup, Guam.

PATA CEO Mario Hardy added, “Founded in 1951, PATA will be holding its 65th Anniversary next year and with Guam as one of its founding members, I am delighted that we have the opportunity to host the event in this island paradise. We have plans to add more value to this event for our delegates and we are excited to be working with the wonderful people at the Guam Visitors Bureau, who I know will help deliver a truly successful event.”

Governor Calvo welcomed PATA representatives and shared the importance of holding the summit in Guam. “We are glad to host PATA and its anniversary celebration. This event will precede the Festival of Pacific Arts, which will be held in May 2016. It will be another opportunity for Guam to demonstrate its ability

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EVENTS  •
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WTTC calls for sustainable tourism businesses to share their best practices

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) calls for Travel & Tourism businesses to showcase their sustainability best practices to educate governments and tourism organisations alike.

"WTTC announces the opening of the Call for Entries for its Tourism for Tomorrow Awards 2016. David Scowsill, President & CEO, WTTC said, “WTTC works to promote the sustainable growth of the industry. It is an extremely important time with the launch of the United Nation Sustainability Goals at the end of September and the Climate Change COP 21 meet-in Paris in December.”

"The Travel & Tourism sector has been consistently improving its sustainability practices. It is our responsibility to and to plan this growth sensitively for the long term.

“Through our Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, we celebrate best practice in travel and tourism businesses, encouraging them to share their well-executed efforts to educate governments and other travel businesses.”

Fiona Jeffery OBE, former Chairman of World Travel Market (WTM) and Founder and Chairman of the international water aid charity Just a Drop, will be Chairing the Awards for the second time following last year’s success.

Jeffery said, “Tourism is a force for good as it brings together people and cultures from all over the world, creating greater insight and understanding. However, if we do not focus on preserving our natural environment, look after our cultural heritage and ensure equal opportunity to local communities, our industry can do a lot of damage.

“We are calling on all individuals and businesses to apply for this prestigious Award scheme and show the wider industry how tourism businesses can add real value through their effective business practices, bigger than ourselves – that is to supercharge our industry’s challenges.”

Lead judge, Professor Graham Miller, chair in sustainability in business at the University of Surrey in the UK and director of the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, will oversee the three-step judging process, ensuring independence and transparency.

American Express Global Business Travel releases its first Global Corporate Social Responsibility Report

American Express Global Business Travel has announced the release of its inaugural corporate social responsibility (CSR) report, GTB’s Commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility 2014. The report describes the company’s commitment to responsible, sustainable and ethical processes and practices in five key areas of focus: governance and ethics, employees, customers, community and environment. The 2014 report also includes plans to improve and expand GTB’s efforts in future.

“In 2014 American Express Global Business Travel became a standalone company, focused exclusively on corporate travel and related services and backed by 100 years of experience in the industry,” said Bill Glenn, President and Chief Executive Officer, American Express Global Business Travel. “This is the perfect time for us to take a more dedicated and focused approach to our global CSR activities. We are committed to integrating our CSR priorities into our newly evolving business objectives, and expanding upon our efforts over the coming months and years.”

Air New Zealand introduces Sustainability Framework

Air New Zealand has launched a new Sustainability Framework as part of its commitment to help supercharge the nation’s success.

The airline’s Chief Executive Officer Christopher Luxon unveiled the framework along with several sustainability initiatives at an event for business leaders in Auckland.

“We see the success of our business as being inextricably linked to the success of our country – Air New Zealand needs a strong and prosperous New Zealand and in turn, New Zealand needs a successful and thriving national airline,” said Luxon. “Given the significance of this business to New Zealand we have signed ourselves up to a mission and purpose bigger than ourselves – that is to supercharge New Zealand’s success socially, environmentally and economically.”

The airline’s new Sustainability Framework establishes how it will contribute to supercharging New Zealand’s success. The economic, social, and environmental pillars of the framework are supported by six key focus areas – the airline’s people; the communities it operates within; carbon, nature and science; tourism and trade and enterprise.

Luxon said Air New Zealand recognises that to be successful in its sustainability journey the airline needs advice from global experts, so it has formed a Sustainability Advisory Panel made up of New Zealand and international experts with specialist knowledge. They are:

• Sir Jonathon Porritt, Co-Founder and Director, Forum for the Future (United Kingdom)
• Dame Anne Salmond, New Zealand anthropologist, writer and distinguished professor of Maori Studies, University of Auckland (New Zealand)
• Rob Fenwick CNZM, entrepreneur, director and conservationist (New Zealand)
• Derek Handley, social entrepreneur, Founder of Aera Foundation (New Zealand)
• Suzanne Hunt, Founder and President, Hunt-Green LLC & biofuels expert (United States)
• Brian Pearce, Chief Economist, International Air Transport Association (Switzerland)
• Luxon and Air New Zealand’s Chief Flight Operations and Safety Officer, Captain David Morgan, who have responsibility for sustainability at the airline, will also sit on the panel.

Qatar Tourism Authority’s strategy for sustainable tourism development

Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) wants a “sustainable tourism calendar” intended at further attracting more visitors from different parts of the world.

“We want to bring in entertainment and highlight what we are offering as a tourism industry,” QTA Project Manager Mashal Shahbik said on the sidelines of the annual Framework Summit.

The annual events and festivals planned by QTA include Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha celebrations, the Qatar Summer Festival and the Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) in partnership with Qatar Airways.

Shahbik noted that QTA has recorded an overall increase of seven percent in the number of visitors from January to July compared with the corresponding period in 2014.

“This is an indicator helping us to know that we will meet our target of three million visitors this year,” she observed.

According to the QTA official, the festivals, the tourist attractions and wide marketing promotions, in the region and internationally, have been helping to achieve the number.

“Each festival and event has its own objectives,” she stressed. “Collectively, we are trying to have a sustainable one.”

Shahbik mentioned the success of the QIFF which attracts a large number of visitors at the Museum of Islamic Art Park every March.

Besides food, the event also focuses on elements such as the promotion of culture and heritage, entertainment shows for all ages, promotion of tourist destinations, and raising public awareness on healthy living and an active lifestyle.

“We launched the Qatar Summer Festival in 2014; every couple of years we are trying to have an important festival on our annual calendar,” Shahbik said.

In the 2015 edition, QTA joined forces with its Saudi office to market the event by doing outdoor advertising campaigns and mall promotions.

“The festivals, you want first the local people to interact with it, then you promote it regionally and then internationally when it is matured enough,” Shahbik pointed out. “In the first edition we promoted heavily in Qatar to boost domestic tourism.”
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