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## Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

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A vibrant, stylized illustration celebrating Spanish culture. The central text "SAVOUR MICE IN SPAIN" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Surrounding the text are various colorful icons and figures: a flamenco dancer in a red dress on the left, a bull's head on the right, a soccer ball, a paella pan, olives, a fan, a tomato, a guitar, and a cathedral. The background is black, making the bright colors stand out.

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the business travel magazine

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# editorial

the business travel magazine  
**MICE**talk  
Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

Dear Reader,

Accessibility is a strong point for MICE tourism from India to Spain. As per the International Congress & Convention Association, Spain ranks fifth in the world in terms of international meetings organised in 2016. All Spanish destinations have a wide range of special venues, historic or landmark buildings where social events, welcome cocktails or gala dinners can be held. In our cover story, we explore the destination, which will soon host FITUR, a global meeting point for tourism professionals and the leading trade fair for inbound and outbound, in detail for MICE. The MICE segment has overtaken the business trip segment and has a 54 per cent market share. We bring you an engrossing panel discussion on Meetings Incentives Conferences and Events (MICE), which brought together different stakeholders of the MICE industry to share key inputs on experiential MICE.

Planning a wedding is now a very crucial arm of the hospitality industry and hotels are now going out of their way to make this day the most special one for newlyweds and their families. With many couples valuing experiences, it has been observed that there is an increase in demand for destination weddings at exotic locations. This rise in the number of destination weddings serves as a growth driver for hospitality chains. Our feature on weddings will give you more insights.

With improvement in connectivity, many Indian cities are now spreading the red carpet for MICE crowds. Madhya Pradesh, a central Indian state, has recognised this potential and several Tier-II, III cities of the state are now being converted into MICE hubs.

Availing skill programmes builds a positive work environment and a happy workforce who are comparably more productive than the rest of the industry. Shivani Misri Sadhoo shares tips on how an organisation can develop a culture of learning and growth and invest in employee skill development.

Beginning the year on a fresh note, here's wishing all our readers a very Happy New Year!

Keep reading and giving your feedback to us at:  
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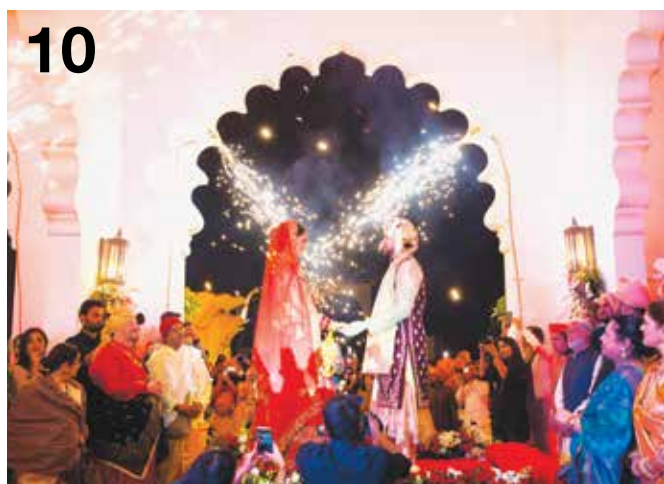
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Cover Design  
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# NEWS

## NORTH INDIA

### UP to host International Conclave in 2018



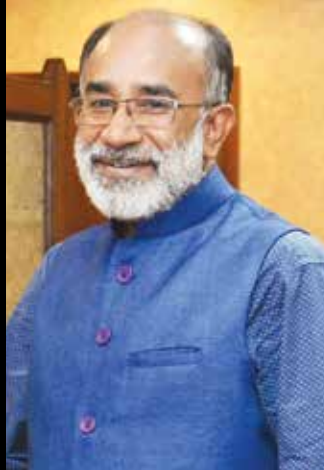
Government of Uttar Pradesh is set to organise International Conclave from February 20-22, 2018, in Lucknow. The conclave's aim is to develop the state and promote the tourism avenues of Uttar Pradesh on the global map. A meeting of stakeholders chaired by **Akhand Pratap Singh**, IAS Special Secretary, Department of Tourism, Govt. of U.P. & Managing Director, UP State Tourism Development Corporation was held on November 29, 2017 at Paryatan Bhawan, Lucknow.

**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, Uttar Pradesh Hotel & Restaurant Association (UPHRA) who is also Hony. Secretary of FHRAI and HRANI with the fellow hoteliers and stakeholders attended the meeting to discuss the roadmap of the event.

## GLOBAL

अतुल्य भारत  
Incredible India.org

### India to shut down tourism offices in seven cities, to open a new one in Moscow



The Ministry of Tourism has decided to close its foreign offices at Los Angeles, Toronto, Sydney, Amsterdam, Paris, Milan and Johannesburg. **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism, confirmed the news saying that they will be closing a few international offices in the near future. According to an official release from the MOT, the ministry will open a new office at Moscow. Thus, the Ministry of Tourism will now have offices at New York, Dubai, Frankfurt, Moscow, Beijing, Tokyo, Singapore and London. India offers a different aspect of her personality – exotic, extravagant, elegant, eclectic -- to each traveler. Laced with glorious culture and breathtaking attractions, India is a dream destination for all seasons. India is the richest land in terms of dense greens, forests, vegetations and exotic wildlife. It offers a altogether different experience.

## PAN INDIA

### ICPB along with MOT to conduct roadshows: Mansharamani

India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) has been striving hard to build a holistic framework for the convention segment of India to be on a par with the international standards. To implement the same, ICPB shall be working towards adopting a very aggressive approach and to have a new strategy in place. According to **Chander Mansharamani**, Vice Chairman, ICPB, "A new Board shall work towards marketing India as a preferred convention destination." A few activities planned for next year are that ICPB will be bidding for International Conferences in 2020. Skill development shall also be given prominence. Also, ICPB in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism for the first time will be organising international roadshow in the cities where most of the world organisations have their headquarters, mainly Geneva, Brussels and London. Mansharamani states: "Handling an international event requires trained manpower

who could provide the services of international standards. We had in the past organised two very successful certified programmes in collaboration with ICCA and SITE, the same we will be taking forward by organising series of guest lectures by international faculty and certified training programmes in collaboration with international agencies like ICCA and MPI to enhance the professional handling of the event."

He added, "The other priority area for us in ICPB is to create Chapters. As of now the plans are to open four Regional State Chapters in Mumbai, Begaluru, Kolkata and Jaipur. To initiate the process, we are planning to have roadshows in the above cities. The first roadshow has been planned in Kolkata. The other purpose of the event is to create a business platform for our members to interact with potential conference organisers of the state."





## EUROPE



## Norway to continue visa processing with VFS

■ The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has awarded VFS Global an extension to its global contract for visa processing services in four regions: Asia and Oceania, Europe and Russia, Middle East and Africa, and the Americas. VFS Global currently operates 101 Visa Application Centres across 39 countries for Norway. VFS processes approximately 260,000 Norway visa applications globally each year and travellers from China, Russia, Thailand and India account for most of the inbound traffic into Norway. **Chris Dix**, Head – Business Development, VFS Global, remarked, “This is not only commercially important for VFS Global, but also in demonstrating the Norwegian government’s trust in VFS, further reinforcing our company’s position as the leading visa services partner to Schengen member states and to 57 client governments worldwide.”

## PAN INDIA



## UAE to open consular offices, visa centres in India

■ Boosting bilateral engagement with India, the United Arab Emirates will open several new consular centres in India. “Under the present circumstances, if people from Chandigarh, Chennai and Hyderabad want a visa to the UAE, they have to travel to either Mumbai or Delhi or Kerala,” said **Dr Ahmed Albanna**, Ambassador of UAE. The UAE will be investing \$75 billion of its sovereign wealth fund in the country. The announcement on expanding consular footprint of UAE came even as diplomatic sources confirmed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Abu Dhabi in February 2018. Expansion of consular services of UAE will help the Indians in the country who constitute one of the largest overseas Indian populations.

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

## Philippines, Singapore Airlines join hands to boost India arrivals

■ The Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines has signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Singapore International Airlines (SIA) on December 12 to perk up a significant increase in Indian arrivals into the Philippines. Through the one-year collaboration, DOT and SIA will undertake joint marketing initiatives that will implement activities to promote the Philippines to the Indian market through social media, familiarisation tours, roadshows, among others. The agreement was signed by **Benito Bengzon Jr.**, Under Secretary, DOT and **Campbell Wilson**, Senior Vice President for Sales and Marketing, SIA at the Makati Diamond Residences, Philippines. “This joint agreement is envisioned to sustain and further strengthen this growth in the coming years,” said Bengzon. According to Wilson, this mutually beneficial agreement will pave way for a positive impact on the country’s tourism industry. “We are confident we can increase visitor arrivals,” he said.



## WEST INDIA

## CAPA India Summit in Januray 2018

■ Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) India has announced the dates for its annual meeting of aviation industry leaders with an interest in India. Now in its 14th year, the CAPA India Summit will be on January 30-31, 2018 in Mumbai. This year CAPA has added a third day dedicated to airports and airspace opportunities. Titled CAPA India Airport & Airspace Summit, this will be held on 1 February, 2018. The association expects participation from every airline and airport operator in the country.



# NEWS

## SOUTHEAST ASIA



### Vietnam extends e-visa to India

■ Vietnam has expanded its e-visa scheme to cover visitors from six more countries, including major tourism markets Australia and India, taking the total number of countries now to 46. Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the UAE are the other four. Vietnam began allowing tourists from 40 countries to apply for e-visas last February, with China, Japan, South Korea, the US, the UK, Germany and Sweden — all major target markets for its tourism sector, among the 40. Of the six new additions, Australians are the seventh biggest group of foreign arrivals and among the top spenders. Visitors can apply online for a 30-day, single-entry visa by paying a non-refundable application fee. It will take applicants three working days to find out if their visa applications have been approved. Visitors with e-visas can enter through eight international airports, 13 international border gates on land or seven ports.

## EAST INDIA

### Thomas Cook India targets Odisha for forex

■ Thomas Cook India has identified Odisha as a significant growth market for its foreign exchange business. To leverage this opportunity, the company has



opened two forex counters at Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar, Thomas Cook India said in a BSE filing. **Mahesh Iyer**, CEO, Thomas Cook (India), says, "Bhubaneswar has been identified as a prime growth driver for Thomas Cook India and continues to deliver strong growth of 32 per cent YoY for our foreign exchange business." The two new airport counters takes the company's foreign exchange distribution in Odisha to a total of three outlets and further augments its network in east India to a total of 23 consumer access centres.

## EUROPE-INDIA

### Jet, Air France-KLM sign partnership for Europe-India operations



■ Air France-KLM and Jet Airways have signed a landmark 'Enhanced Cooperation Agreement' for the development of their operations between Europe and India. The agreement aims to strengthen the partnership built between the three airlines since 2014. This cooperation was expanded in 2016 with an extensive code-share agreement for connections between Europe and North America and Jet Airways' hubs at Mumbai and Delhi in India via Air France-KLM's hubs at Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam-Schiphol. **Jean-Marc Janailiac**, Chairman and CEO of Air France-KLM, says, "We are innovating within the airline industry by offering connections between two partnerships for the first time: our enhanced cooperation agreement for India – Europe with Jet Airways and the Air France-KLM and Delta Air Lines' Europe – North American joint venture. Jet Airways, Air France, KLM, and, Delta Air Lines will thus connect India to a vast transatlantic network via the Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam-Schiphol hubs."

## GLOBAL

### ITB Asia's pact with ACTE

■ ITB Asia has inked an agreement with global corporate travel leader, the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE). "Through this strategic alliance and partnership for ITB Asia 2018, we look to strengthen the participation numbers in our corporate sector," said **Katrina Leung**, Executive Director of Messe Berlin (Singapore), the organiser of ITB Asia. **Kurt Knackstedt**, President of ACTE, added, "ACTE will undoubtedly foster another unprecedented horizon in our vision for global education in the corporate travel and MICE sector." ACTE will be the official partner in organising the ITB Asia Business Travel Day during ITB Asia 2018.



**NORTH INDIA**

## Air India to fly non-stop from Birmingham to Amritsar

■ Air India plans to introduce two non-stop flights per week to Amritsar from Birmingham Airport. This new route to Amritsar, home to the Golden Temple, will be served twice a week direct from Birmingham Airport, the only UK airport to operate non-stop services on this route. The Boeing 787-8 series aircraft has 256 seats in a split cabin, consisting of 18 business class and 238 economy seats.

**Pankaj Srivastava**, Director – Commercial and Board Member of Air India said, “We are delighted that we are able to announce that we are planning to commence non-stop services between Birmingham and Amritsar twice a week, starting early 2018, recognising the consumer demand from the Midlands’ region to Amritsar, Punjab.”

**NORTHEAST**

## Air Deccan to connect the North East via Udan

■ Air Deccan is all set to start flight operations under the regional connectivity scheme, also known as Udan (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik), from December 15 this year, informed Shillong airport officials. Air Deccan will use Shillong as a hub and Udan flights from there will connect to other destinations in the northeast such as Agartala, Aizawl and Imphal, according to a top official of the Shillong airport. The airline will also operate flights between Kolkata and Agartala. Under the government’s Udan regional connectivity scheme, air fares are capped at ₹2,500 per person for an hour’s flight to Tier-II and Tier-III cities in which the government will provide subsidy for flying with such low fares.

**GLOBAL**

## Ethiopian Airlines goes live with mobile app

■ Ethiopian Airlines and SKYTRAX certified Four Star Global Airline has launched a brand new mobile application, which encompasses mobile features to enhance customers’ travel experience with simplified options for flight booking and management. **Tewolde GebreMariam**, Group CEO, Ethiopian Airlines, remarks, “With this new application, customers will be able to use their mobile devices to book their flights, do their flight check-in, issue their boarding pass and self-board their flights, check the status of flight, get actual arrival and departure times of ET flights.” Ethiopian customers will enjoy 10 per cent discount on all bookings made through the new mobile app.

**GLOBAL**

## AVANI launches AVANIme for experiential travellers



■ AVANI Hotels & Resorts has introduced an outreach marketing strategy to engage with travellers. The campaign, named AVANIme, is a wired-in experience for modern explorers, giving insight into local culture, cool hotspots and travel tips about urban cities and in some cases, off-the-beaten track destinations. **Alejandro Bernabe**, VP, AVANI Hotels & Resorts said: “We understand that travel isn’t only about where you stay. It’s also about experiencing the destination.” A series of #24HRSWITHME Youtube videos are being filmed with local well known personalities.



# Say, 'I DO' like royalty in UDAIPUR

Radisson Blu Udaipur Palace Resort & Spa provides a beautiful backdrop for weddings and events. **Poonam Agarwal Nair**, Regional Director of Sales, Radisson Blu Udaipur Palace Resort & Spa, talks about the business and wedding facilities available here



Poonam Agarwal Nair

**What kind of conferencing and banqueting facilities do you offer?**

We have a plethora of indoor and outdoor banqueting options. Our grand ballroom offers 6000 sqft with a pre-function area of 2200 sqft and extended banquet garden of 4800 sqft. We have a boardroom and four more meeting rooms with varying capacity for 16 to 100 people. Besides this, we have two grand lawns, a roof top banquet called Dome, and a poolside. Another magnificent option is the Udaichowk, which overlooks the

palace while being a royal backdrop to host wedding events.

**What kind of specialised services do you offer for conferences and weddings?**

We specialise as a wedding and MICE hotel, 60 per cent of our overall revenue is garnered through these two segments. Hence, we invest in taking care of the finest details to ensure a seamless event. We are a one-stop solution for weddings and conferences, right from the hotel booking,







venues and functions finalisation, menus, theme décors, logistics, event handling, booking of artists for entertainment, booking of artists for mehndi, salon, spa, we do it all.

We have a specialised team of people who shadow the wedding client and guide them through the entire journey. We appoint personal butlers for the immediate family, bride and groom to ensure all last-minute running is taken care of and offer a stress-free experience. Likewise, for our conference right from hotel booking, conference planning, audio visuals, logistics, conference set up, organising of cocktails events, award ceremonies etc, we do it all.

#### How has the Occupancy, ARR and RevPAR been for you in 2017?

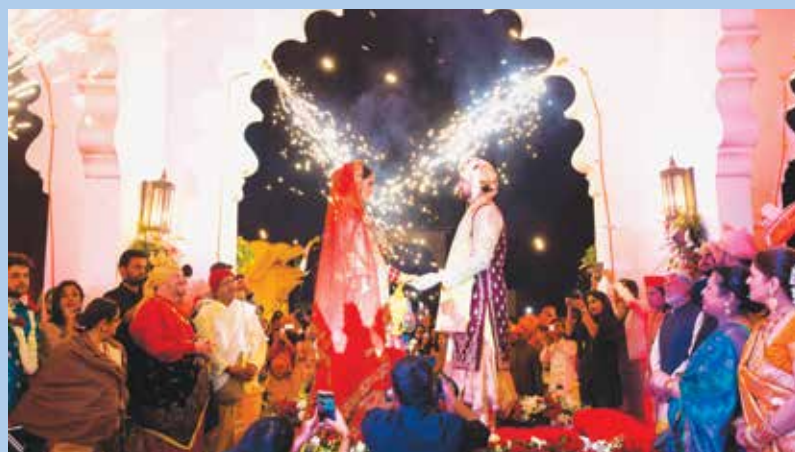
The year 2017 has been a spectacular year, though the hotel has potential for more. However, overall it has been a good year with some great number of weddings and MICE movements from across all segments. We anticipate closing at nearly 75 per cent occupancy with a 15 per cent growth in ARR and 10 per cent growth in RevPAR. We have seen a good segment mix this year contributed by weddings, MICE, inbound and domestic agents, TPI's etc.

#### What are your expectations from 2018?

We are a business hungry hotel and have been persistent in offering the best and upgrading the product and services with time. The hotel has undergone renovation this year and a fresh look has been imparted to our public areas, restaurants, ballroom, lobby and rooms.

A lot of refurbishment has been carried out to impart a more royal look and feel to the hotel. With this, we are all set to welcome 2018 and it already looks like an optimistic year with the increasing popularity of the city, the hotel, the influx has been huge from all segments.

**“We have a boardroom and 4 more meeting rooms with varying capacity for 16-100 people”**



#### How is Udaipur developing as a market for MICE as well as for hospitality? Is there any challenges, changes in governmental policies required?

Udaipur is a beautiful city, also described as the 'Venice of the East'. A city which still preserves its rich heritage and tradition, the grand palatial structures give the feel of the ancient times. Owing to the serenity of the place and these attributes, a lot of tourism is attracted from all corners of the world. Its growing popularity as one of the preferred cities for destination weddings, fascinates clients not just from India, but, also from Gulf, Middle East, the UK, etc. Owing to proximity, a lot of MICE is attracted from Gujarat, Delhi, Jaipur and Mumbai. Even the flight connectivity from these cities has improved over last two years. Direct flights from other bigger cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata etc. could add to the influx and demand of the city. Also, tax policies issued by the government should ensure focus on promoting tourism on a whole.








# Hola, says Spain to MICE!

Apart from being a world class leisure destination that attracted more than 75 million tourists in 2016, Spain is also a world congress destination, read on to explore more about what the destination has to offer to MICE travellers...

**Kanchan Nath**



As per the International Congress and Convention Association, Spain is the fifth country in the world in terms of international meetings organised, 533 in 2016. In addition to excellent air connections, it has a strong circuit of hotels and alternative accommodation (over 16,000) intended for MICE. The entire sector makes more than 350,000 hotel beds available to the market. Of particular interest is the Parador Network. There are 90 unique charming hotels distributed across Spain. The country itself is well connected with a high-speed rail network known as AVE and other train services, frequent buses, excellent road infrastructure and several ports for cruises.





### DID YOU KNOW?

Spain is one of the top ten countries in the world with the best quality infrastructures as per the World Economic Forum

Moreover, Spain has the latest equipment in the MICE segment and a highly professional tourist industry. Spain's diversity is its biggest USP and a major attraction for MICE from India. Nightlife, beaches, gastronomy, history, art and culture, adventure, landscapes, wineries, deserts, mountains, various forms of entertainment, etc, you name it and Spain has it all!

### ACCESSING SPAIN

Spain is very well connected to India, with one direct flight that connects Delhi to Madrid via Air India, while several other international airlines offer excellent connections from various cities across India to different points in Spain. There are frequent connections with Emirates Airlines, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways (codeshare with Jet Airways), Lufthansa, Swiss Air, KLM/Air France, British Airways and Turkish Airlines.

Other emerging airlines are Saudi Arabian Airlines, Aeroflot, Finnair. There are several daily flight options from India to Madrid

and Barcelona, the two main cities of entry to Spain and to other cities such as Valencia, Málaga, Santiago de Compostela and Bilbao. From India, the maximum number of flights to Spain are from Mumbai and Delhi.

The other main cities from where there are flights to Spain include: Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Cochin, amongst others. The airline connectivity from India to Spain is expanding rapidly. Qatar Airways will launch flights to Málaga in 2018.



### MADRID

Professional events can be held in Madrid thanks to its cutting-edge conference venues, its specialised, professional services, its efficient transport network and its excellent hotel industry. There are more than 100,000 hotel beds in 1,145 hotels in the city and the surrounding region. Madrid is the fifth European city in terms





**North Convention Centre:** Located in the building at the North Entrance with an area of 10,000 square metres, possesses a total of 20 rooms, 18 of which are on the first floor.

It is found through a grand entrance hall filled with natural light, and its size makes it the ideal space for exhibitions of up to 468 square metres net, or for providing catering services during the event. Rooms N101+N102 and N105+N106 are multi-purpose as they have separating panels, allowing the hosting of events from 100 to 480 people. Joined together, N103 and N104 comprise the North Auditorium, which holds 1,100 seats. The remaining 12 rooms (N107 to N118), with capacities from 70 to 200 people, may be paired to better adapt to the needs of the event. On the second floor, the Colón and Neptuno rooms boasts of large open-air terraces.



of hotel beds (European Cities Marketing) – and with 3.2 million inhabitants, it is the third largest city in the European Union. Some 71 museums, including the Prado Museum, was named as the most highly rated cultural institution in Spain by the Culture Observatory.

There are about 17,271 catering establishments (restaurants, cafés, bars, and discos), four large convention, conference, meetings and trade fair venues and six world heritage sites less than one hour from Madrid (Alcalá de Henares, Aranjuez, Ávila, El Escorial, Segovia and Toledo).

### Main Event Venues:

#### IFEMA

IFEMA Congresses and Events Madrid, is a division specialised in managing space for trade fairs, events and congresses. For events, the five types of space available at FERIA de Madrid, an exhibition complex which is characterised by excellent functionality, modern design and multi-purpose, well-equipped and versatile installations, are a suitable option.

**“Madrid is the fifth European city in terms of hotel beds and the third largest city in EU”**

**South Convention Centre:** Located in the Feria de Madrid Building's South Entrance, this centre boasts of an auditorium which can host 600 people. The spacious entrance hall leading to the auditorium is the perfect venue for cocktails and coffee breaks. There are another 20 small rooms close to the auditorium.

**Hall Rooms:** The offer of space for meetings at FERIA de Madrid is completed with 45 rooms. These rooms are perfectly adequate as working rooms and for small meetings. They are located in two areas. 35 of them, holding between 12 and 120 people, are situated in La Avenida (the Central Avenue), in the mezzanines of halls 1-10.

#### SANTIAGO BERNABÉU STADIUM

Real Madrid CF offers the best facilities for any kind of event, whether it is a small 10-person



affair or a large gathering of more than 80,000. The Santiago Bernabéu Stadium and sports complex at Valdebebas are unique, large, well-lit, versatile and, above all, exclusive venues. The Real Madrid brand guarantees that your event will always be remembered. The venues can hold product presentations, conventions, work meetings, lectures, galas, concerts, matches on the pitch, etc, whatever the client decides!



## BARCELONA

Barcelona is the southern gateway to the European market, the centre of an emerging economic Euro region, the capital of the Mediterranean Euro region (with a market of 461 million consumers) and bridge to North

“Barcelona has within 5 km, one of the main multi-mode harbours in the Mediterranean”



Africa and Latin America. It is also the only city in Southern Europe which has, within 5 km, one of the main multi-mode harbours in the Mediterranean, a high-speed train station, a large intercontinental airport, a full network of motorways connected to Europe, the second largest trade fair venue in Europe, and one of the largest logistics areas in Southern Europe.

## FIRA BARCELONA

Centrally located and easily accessible with a wide range of hotels, shops, restaurants and bars nearby, against the backdrop of the iconic and beautiful Montjuïc fountains, the Barcelona Conference Centre has positioned itself as a clear favourite among business and organisations that need a central, spacious and versatile venue for their trade exhibitions and scientific and cultural meetings. The most outstanding features of the conference centre are its auditorium seating 1,100 people (it can be

reduced to 800 people approx.), exhibition room covering a surface area of 3,500m<sup>2</sup>, and superb terrace with stunning views of the iconic Magic Fountain, together with its strategic location.

The big event held was the Audi Summit in July 2017 and Mobile World Congress (annually in February-March).

## FC BARCELONA / CAMP NOU

FC Barcelona is now offering its facilities in the most unique of settings. The Camp Nou and the rest of the club's facilities offer a wide range of services, different spaces and experiences. One can make the most of new rooms and spaces, like the recently-built Auditorium 1899, or a dream event overlooking the Camp Nou turf. Choose the option that best suits the needs, whether for a business or private event. One can witness different packages and activities by the meetings and events department.



## NEW CITIES FOR MICE SEVILLE

Seville is a top global tourist destination, with a vast historic, monumental, and cultural heritage. The city has been a crucible and meeting point for different civilisations that for centuries settled by the Guadalquivir river. Seville's beauty, magic, and duende have made it into one of the most beautiful and surprising cities in the world. Tradition and modernity go hand-in-hand in Seville, whose millennial past enthusiastically meets a promising future through such measures as tourism plans for improvement, the launch of cycling lanes, the underground and the opening of pedestrian areas.

Seville has a good communications network, with the high-speed train, San Pablo International Airport, an extensive motorway network and a modern river harbour, which welcomes cruise ships. Its venues for meetings include the Palacio



## DID YOU KNOW?

Spanish gastronomy has become one of the most renowned globally. The basis of Spain gastronomy is the Mediterranean Diet

de Congresos y Exposiciones de Sevilla Fibes, which currently has the largest capacity at 3,500 seats and is regarded as the largest auditorium in Spain. This venue has a number of modules and multi-use áreas, which together with the three main halls, showcases Seville as one of the largest and most modern venues for meetings and exhibitions in Europe.



## MÁLAGA

The city of Málaga has cutting-edge facilities that make it the ideal location to host international events. The Palacio de Ferias y Congresos has consolidated the quality of its offering. In addition, there are various singular spaces, ranging from one of the main botanical gardens in Europe to historic buildings and flagship museums. Moreover, the city's hotel capacity is vast and has quality facilities. Málaga also stands out for

entertainment options.



## VALENCIA

The accessibility, spectacular contrasts between tradition and the avant-garde, a unique gastronomy, an excellent quality-price ratio, a vibrant agenda, a green attitude and a changing, dynamic scene turn Valencia into an irresistible destination for a business break.

Early this year, the city opened its gates to the sea with the inauguration of the Marina Beach Club on the beach and the relaunch of the Veles e Vents buildings, where such cutting-edge restaurants as La Marítima can be found – venues with a spectacular location and ambience. It seeks sustainability for citizens as well as for events, crystallised in an extensive range of sustainable spaces which the city uses to provide services: Km 0 catering, bike tours, recycled materials,



its connections. The city is the hub of a large network of communications and infrastructures, so it is easy to reach from anywhere in Europe, as its airport is directly linked to more than 100 different destinations.

Washed by the Mediterranean Sea, the Costa del Sol extends along more than 150 kilometres of coastline in the province of Málaga. Its name "Coast of the Sun" is not due to mere chance: with over 325 days of sunshine and a benevolent climate, it is paradise with beaches and pristine waters.

A large percentage of the total accommodation available in the region of Andalucía is concentrated on the western Costa del Sol. There are many tourist services of all types, including berths for sporting boats at 13 marinas and yacht clubs, as well as golf courses, all types of sports facilities, casinos and a myriad of leisure and



**“Palacio de Congresos y Exposiciones de Sevilla Fibes, is the largest auditorium in Spain”**

bicycle transport, and venues built of recycled materials or with photovoltaic roofs. The options for those who seek singular experiences in a privileged climate all the year round include, walking or cycling through the Turia Gardens (the former river bed, now turned into a vast eight-kilometre garden that crosses the city), an outing in a catamaran from La Malvarrosa beach, a paella show cooking in La Albufera, or an incentive trip among orange trees in the lush Valencian orchards.

To these attractions is added a range of cutting-edge meeting venues to hold conferences, meetings, and other events. These include the Palacio de Congresos, Centro de Eventos de Feria Valencia and various venues in Ciudad de las





“Bilbao Exhibition Centre has an available area of over 150,000 square meters for any event”

Artes y las Ciencias, such as the Oceanogràfic and the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia.



The city is easy to access. Its excellent road network, its port, and above all its international airport, 10 km from the city centre, offer direct connections to the main cities in Spain and the rest of Europe. Its diversified infrastructures include a hotel offering of more than 5,000 rooms in the metropolitan area. Walking and cycling around the city is easy, although modern, efficient, and sustainable transport systems are also available. The strategic location of its venues and its extensive range of services turn Bilbao into a destination that brings together excellence and professionalism, with a lifestyle and culture that captivate visitors. With an available area of over 150,000 square meters, Bilbao Exhibition Centre is one of the best place to hold and organise any event. The venue, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, is capable of suiting the MICE interests, both in space and in any required feature.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

The regions with the highest number of Michelin stars restaurants are Catalonia, Madrid, Andalucía, Galicia and the Basque Country

#### IBIZA

Ibiza is an internationally renowned destination to hold meetings, conferences, incentive trips,



product presentations and any other corporate events. Easy to reach: just a two hours' flight away from the main European cities, the island's size makes it possible to reach any destination in less than 30 minutes.

**Meeting venues:** Ibiza offers a Palacio de Congresos in a privileged location, a few metres





away from the sea, in a natural environment within a pine forest. It has 14 meeting rooms and an auditorium that seats 437 people. It is currently being enlarged to offer new multi-function rooms in an annexe. The FECOEV Trade Fair centre offers a total of 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>, ideal for large events and strategically located in the centre of the island.

**Great hotel offering:** The island has a top-level hotel offering, with more than 8,000 rooms in 4- and 5-star hotels, 70 per cent of which opened in the last five years.

### TENERIFE (CANARY ISLANDS)

The island receives 80,000 participants in the approximately 900 conferences, incentive trips, and product presentations which it hosts every year. Tenerife's nature, its mild climate throughout the year and a wide range of outdoor activities or in singular venues make the island a location increasingly in demand to organise professional trips. Incentive trips have experienced significant growth on the island. Likewise, large events are increasingly frequent and are good evidence that selecting Tenerife means guaranteed success.

The Tenerife Convention Bureau brings together a large number of companies, including many agencies specialised in the design and implementation of tailored programme. A capacity of around 85,000 rooms distributed across the tropical island, Tenerife is a great destination for MICE.

### SAN SEBASTIÁN

With 186,000 inhabitants, it holds the same position as Los Angeles, Belfast and Strasbourg in the ICCA global ranking. Of great natural beauty, San Sebastián boasts of three beaches, three mountains, one island, and the incomparable La Concha bay, as well as a privileged location, only 20 km from the French border. Gastronomically, the town has the largest number of Michelin stars (17) per square metre in the world and Best Food Destination in the World 2017 according to a major study commissioned by British catering service Caterwings.

San Sebastian is an ideal destination for the MICE market: landmark venues to hold meetings facing the Bay and the sea: historic buildings such as Palacio Miramar, San Telmo Museum, and the Victoria Eugenia Theatre, where history is experienced in every corner; modern, innovative architecture such as the Kursaal Congress Center, two translucent cubes facing the sea, with a maximum seating capacity of 1,806; and the Basque Culinary Center, the first Faculty of Gastronomic Sciences and Centre for Research and Innovation in Food and Gastronomy in Europe, to hold meetings and events with a culinary touch. More than 1,600 rooms are available in fully renovated four-star hotels in the town centre. There were opening of four new hotels in the town centre in 2017 and up to six more hotels are upcoming. The town has good connectivity to the Madrid airport with seven daily flights and through Bilbao Airport to the main European capitals. In the last five years, more than 570 meetings were held in the town



## India in FITUR

This time we are participating at FITUR in a big way. We are the partner country there and hence we will be building up to the mart. In fact, a lot of publicity campaigns will be run in and around Madrid during that time. One week ahead of the mart, we will start these publicity campaigns and we will be running them throughout that period. We are giving a lot of importance to FITUR this time, because we see these countries as big emerging markets for India. Thus, we will be sending a very high level delegation comprising of 3-4 delegates from the Ministry as well to participate in FITUR.

**Rashmi Verma**  
Secretary, Tourism, Govt. of India



**“ San Sebastián Tourism and Convention Bureau works with more than 300 partner companies ”**

and more than 160,000 participants have enjoyed San Sebastián. The San Sebastián Tourism and Convention Bureau is the perfect partner to hold a meeting, as it works with more than 300 partner companies, including infrastructures, hotels, restaurants, conference services, etc. It offers qualified, impartial information, professional advice and extensive experience in the MICE sector, since 1988.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Two Spanish cities, among the top 10 of the ICCA Ranking: Barcelona #3 and Madrid #7 in 2016

### POPULAR DMCS

The Convention Bureaus of every respective destination are the right point of contact to get in touch with DMCS. These bureaus provide a list of local DMCS that agents/tour operators can work with for their MICE requirements. Some of them have been working with the Indian market since many years and are very well acquainted with the Indian travellers' needs. They have built their expertise in catering to the Indian traveller and can provide a repertoire of tourist products and services for small as well as big incentive groups.



Following are some examples of DMCS in Spain that have established a strong foothold in the Indian market:

**Across Spain:** Created in 2004 it has two offices, in Barcelona and Madrid. Specialises in catering the needs of corporate customers (incentives, meetings, congresses, events, etc.) for the past 25 years in Spain. It also holds an official license to distribute football tickets, being sourced directly from football clubs such as FC Barcelona, Atlético de Madrid, Real Madrid etc.

**Century Incoming:** Has been in business since 2002 and has extensive experience of successfully handling incentive and corporate events, tailor-made to suit the client's needs.

**Warq Events:** Based out of Barcelona, their USP is to understand the requirements of Indian clients better. Their expertise lies in offering customised packages for high-end FIT and MICE groups.

**Premium Incoming:** Over 20 years' experience with headquarters in Madrid. Can cater to groups of any size, tailor-made services,





solutions for meetings, incentives, conventions and events.

**TopTourisme:** Based in the heart of Barcelona, TopTourisme specialises in sports events and cultural events. They are the official agency of FC Barcelona as well as the Circuit de Catalunya and PortAventura World. Their main USP is to provide clients with the best experience in events such as F1, La Liga, Rugby, Moto GP, Handball Tennis, concerts and themeparks.

**Terramar Group:** Professionals at organising MICE events, special offers for VIP clients and a wide spectrum of B2B programmes.

**Spain on your terms:** This DMC is more focused on small and exclusive business groups. It caters to the high-end travellers and all those wanting a unique experience.

## NEW TOURISM PRODUCTS

New tourism products have been introduced to the MICE industry such as: 'Workshops over a martini' or 'barbeques on the beach,' balloon flights over World Heritage Sites, participation in popular festivals, gastronomic tours and cooking

demonstrations/workshops. Special activities include being a shepherd, farmer or wine grower for one day, sailing races, extreme driving lessons and several other adventure sports, new clubs/lounges to enjoy the vibrant nightlife, street life, entertainment and wine tasting at new wineries.

## VEGETARIANS DELIGHT

In the main cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, most restaurants serve vegetarian dishes. There are also plenty of Indian restaurants to choose from. Nowadays, the concept of veganism has become very popular across Europe including Spain, therefore, there will be restaurants serving only vegetarian food as well. Andalucía, Valencia, the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands also have plenty of options for vegetarians.

The North of Spain although predominantly known for its seafood dishes is also opening up to the concept of vegetarianism and has started to cater to vegetarians. The hospitality in Spanish restaurants is very warm. Upon request, they will modify the dish by changing the ingredients as per the individuals requirements.



# Growing meetings in **SPAIN**

Spain guarantees effective organisation of high-impact meetings which maximise participants' experience and satisfaction. In an interview, **Ignacio Ducasse**, Director- Tourism Office of Spain in India, tells us more



Ignacio Ducasse

**Kindly share the latest statistics about the Indian MICE travellers to Spain?**

Every year, we witness more MICE travellers travelling to Spain. In 2009, the percentage of MICE travellers to Spain were about 15 per cent from the total number of Indians travelling to Spain. This incremented to about 25 per cent in the subsequent years between 2011-2015. Recently, MICE travellers constitute 35 per cent of our total number of travellers from India which means that around 35,000 travellers out were that of MICE.

**What is the innovative marketing strategy that your MICE bureau has taken up?**

Our marketing strategy entails in continuous support and contact with the MICE agents and tour operators in India, creating awareness about new MICE destinations, giving presentations in various cities, this year being Mumbai and Bengaluru and most importantly, educating the travel trade what Spain has to offer. It is also of great essence, the B2B sessions allow MICE agents and tour operators to learn more about the



destination. Another key element of our marketing strategy is organising FAM trips exclusively for MICE. This year, we sent several travel trade professionals for a FAM trip to Valencia. These educative trips give the agents/tour operators the chance to experience the MICE offerings that our destination can provide their customers.

**What is the average length of stay for a MICE/business delegates in Madrid/Spain? What is the average amount that they spend?**

The average length of stay for MICE/business delegates trip to Spain from India is about four days. The average spend is around €100-€200 euros per day.

**From where do you receive the maximum traffic for MICE in Spain? Which are the new market opportunities and challenges for MICE in India?**

We receive maximum traffic from Delhi since we have the greatest seat capacity from the city, closely followed by Mumbai which competes with the capital for an increased connectivity. Emerging cities such as Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai are new market opportunities with tremendous potential to grow and a robust demand to travel to Spain. We are also experiencing growth from Tier

II cities such as Nagpur, Ludhiana and Amritsar. New airlines are now thriving to penetrate into these cities and capture a sizeable share of the market. As far as challenges are concerned, the issuance of visas remains a hindrance for MICE especially in the wake of stronger immigrations policies implemented across Europe, however, we are hoping that this will smoothen out over the next few years.

**How was the year 2017 been for you? How was 2017 vis-e-vis 2016. What main events, convention and exhibitions do you have lined up for the coming months in 2018?**

The year 2017 fared well for us so far and we have crossed 100,000 arrivals by the end of October 2017. We received until October 31, 2017, some 107,888 Indian tourists which indicates an increment of 16.3 per cent vis-à-vis 2016. We are very positive that the MICE segment will continue to grow in 2018 as well. FITUR 2018, the largest tourism trade fair, organised in Spain is being held from January 17-21, at IFEMA in Madrid, where India has been invited as the partner country. In 2017, FITUR had beaten the participation record with 9,893 exhibiting companies from 165 countries/regions, 135,858 trade participants and 107,213 people from the general public. Among

**“Until October, 2017, some 107,888 Indian tourists were received, increment of 16.3% vis-à-vis 2016”**

the participation figures of note was the increase of 18.8 per cent of international trade visitors compared to the previous staging. Moreover, the volume of agendas organised by FITUR within the different B2B has reached 6,800 business appointments.

**Which is the largest MICE group that you have had from India so far?**

The largest group that we have received from India were over 20,000 people that travelled to Spain for the IIFA Awards, celebrated in Madrid from June 23-26 in 2016.

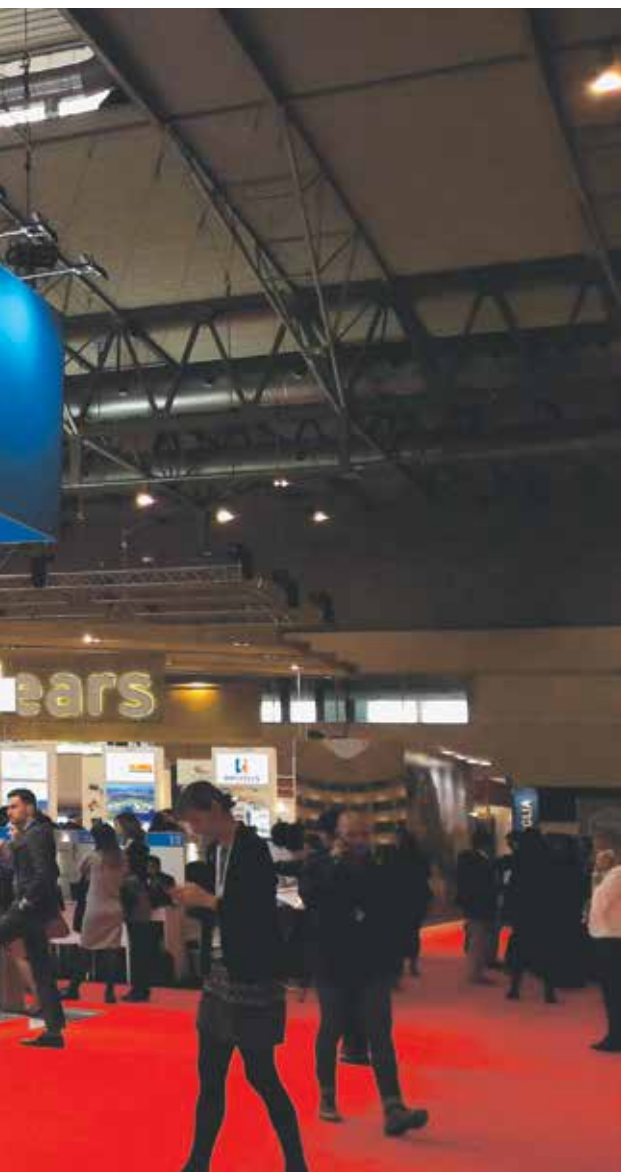
**What kind of incentives do you offer to big corporate groups from India?**

One of the main incentives we offer big corporate groups from India is the liaison with the convention bureaus of different destinations across Spain. These bureaus offer free advisory services to organise meetings, congresses or events in their respective cities. They advise on a spectrum of services such as the most suitable venue to host an event to cost effective accommodation, fun filled activity programmes, city tours and excursions at an attractive price, coordination of inspection visits and more. Everything is seamlessly put together. These 56 destinations, distributed across Spain, have sufficient human and technical means to organise meetings and events at a large scale.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Spain is the third country in the world in terms of number of UNESCO World Heritage sites with 45 sites in total and 15 World Heritage Cities







# Focusing on FITUR

**Ana Larrañaga**, Director, FITUR, shares insights on the most important business fair for Spain, which will be held from January, 17- 21, 2018 in Madrid



Ana Larrañaga

**Kindly tell us a bit about FITUR. How many exhibitors and buyers are expected? What is to be the format of the business meetings?**

FITUR will open the international tourism trade fair calendar and allow professionals to establish the working lines that will set the pattern for the entire year. We closed the participation figures at the end of the month. We aim to grow in destinations and companies and exceed last year's 9,893 exhibitors. In line with the industry's robust health, as reflected by the UNWTO's figures of 4-5 per cent growth, we are confident of having a highly dynamic edition and of exceeding the 244,972 trade visitors from the last edition.

As for business meetings, the format contemplates holding a series of B2B and B2C previously scheduled meetings between FITUR exhibitors interested in forming part of this activity and a selection of more than 200 international hosted buyers, tour operators, travel agencies, etc. These working meetings, which amounted to 6,800 last year, will be held on January 18 and 19

in Hall 9 of FITUR. We have also developed the PEP (Professional Encounter Point) application through which exhibitors and visitors can freely schedule initiatives seeking to professionalise the trade fair and facilitate meetings.

**Are there any seminars planned during the conference? If yes, kindly tell us about them?**

We will have varied activities starting on Tuesday January 16, the day before the opening of FITUR, with the staging of the Exceltur Forum and the Latin American Conference for Tourism Ministers and Businessmen, CIMET. In addition, during the first three days of the trade fair, which are exclusively devoted to trade visitors, we will have conferences, presentations and knowledge and innovation forums in each one of the specialised sections: FiturtechY, Fitur Health; Fitur Know-How & Export, Fitur LGBT, Fitur Shopping and, as a novelty this year, Fitur Festivals. FITUR will host different activities organised respectively by the UNWTO, Investur Africa, Casa Asia as well as sessions and presentations by various

business associations, tour operators, carriers and technology companies, among many others.

During the weekend, the days when the trade fair opens its doors to the public, hundreds of entertaining and interactive activities have been scheduled.

**Which new exhibitors should one really look out for at the event?**

For us the entire FITUR offer is of great interest, but if we focus on this edition's novelties, I would highlight the presence of India as FITUR's partner country and consequently the wide array of proposals for promoting the destination that will be staged by this Asian power. The India Hall is in fact registering an overall increase of 35 per cent in participation, with the presence of more regions and business.

Other novelties we should not lose sight of are those involving technology, specifically the presentation of 5G prototypes for the tourism industry, as a result of the work being undertaken since September by a team of researchers in the IFEMA LAB 5G. It is offering a vision of a not very

disposal and therefore to gather around FITUR the broadest representation of international industry, both public and private. This is all packed into five days of intense activity in which we situate the entire national and international tourism offer in a highly dynamic showcase of extraordinary visibility and of course with major business potential. As for trade fair growth, we expect to exceed the five per cent figure.

**What is Spain planning to showcase during FITUR 2018?**

FITUR will echo the broad and diverse Spanish tourism offerings in the halls occupied by all of our country's autonomous communities and regions as well as the numerous stands of tourism companies specialising in fields such as transportation, accommodation, tour operators and, of course, technology. A comprehensive offer that in 2017, and for the second consecutive time, has positioned the Spanish tourism industry as the most competitive in the world, according to

**“ The India Hall is in fact registering an overall increase of 35 per cent in participation ”**



distant future that will completely transform the way we experience and manage tourism, thanks to access to virtually unlimited communications, data and computing services in real time.

Lastly, I would highlight the incorporation of the new FITUR Festivals section, which will showcase the potential for the tourism industry of festivals and the destinations that host them.

**How has FITUR helped to increase inbound as well as outbound tourism to Spain over the years? How has the show grown in stature?**

Our task is to place the best platform for professional and trade meetings at the industry's

the report issued every two years by the World Economic Forum. In this regard, FITUR visitors will view a comprehensive display of the coastal and inland tourism typologies offered by our country, its natural resources, gastronomy, cultural offering, music –in the new FITUR Festivals section, tourist services and infrastructures, airport and port connections, health tourism – in FITUR Health, shopping tourism in FITUR Shopping, Gay tourism in FITUR LGBT, security and preparedness for ICTs, among many other proposals. Plus, as I already mentioned, FITUR will anticipate the future with a pioneering experience that will provide an overview of the potential of 5G technology for the tourism industry by presenting



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Spain is the third country in terms of tourists per year and the second leading tourism brand in the world





**“Madrid was recently chosen as the best MICE 2017 destination, as per IBTA”**

a series of really interesting prototypes. We will also have technology as the connecting thread in the FiturtechY section, which will showcase the innovations that are transforming the industry.

**How is the MICE industry doing in Spain? Which important international conferences are lined up for 2018?**

MICE tourism is, without a doubt, a key resource in the continuing expansion and quest for improvements in our country's meetings industry. In fact, Spain holds on to fifth place in the 2017 ranking of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and Madrid –the site of FITUR– was recently chosen by industry professionals as the best MICE 2017 destination, according to the Iberian Business Travel Association – IBTA; a recognition that puts the finishing touch on the positive balance with which the capital closed 2017 and on which IFEMA's activity made a special impact, both in regard to the organisation of trade fairs, conventions and congresses area. Several important international congresses and the return to IFEMA of the largest world gathering of the pharmaceutical ingredients industry, CPhI, with Feria de Madrid facilities and with more than 35,000 attendees arriving from around the world, confirms 2018 as a record year.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Spain has the fourth highest life expectancy of all the OECD countries – a life expectancy of 82 years

**How has inbound tourism to Spain grown? From where does Spain get its maximum tourists? Where does India stand?**

Tourism in Spain enjoys very good health; in 2016 it received 75.3 million travellers and is one of the three most visited countries in the world according to the UNWTO. The largest number of tourists received last year came from the EU, mainly United Kingdom, France and Germany, and this year it expects to break a new visitor record according to forecasts of our country's Ministry of Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda. Regarding tourists from East Asia, and India in particular, increases were also registered which, according to the UNWTO, stood at 18.42 per cent in 2016.

**Madrid seems to have overtaken Paris as the gastronomic capital of the world. Your comment on this.**

In effect, a Spanish city, San Sebastián in the Basque Country, was chosen the World's Best Gastronomic Destination according to an international survey that also places Barcelona and Madrid in fourth and seventh place respectively. Product quality and culinary variety are undoubtedly some of our country's major tourist attractions and we will confirm this at FITUR not only at the Basque Country stand but also in those of the rest of the regions, which have an equally powerful gastronomic offer that at this time is another of the major motivations for travelling.



# A SHOPPER'S paradise

An Indian international trip can never be complete without a bagful of international goodies. Whether its fashion, food, jewellery or antiques, Spain has a lot to offer

## ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR INDIANS

There are guided tours offered in various cities for those who would like a unique shopping experience. These tours will take you to a range of stores to experience a myriad of products from different categories. One can shop for leather (which is of the best quality in Spain) such as jackets or shoes, fashionable clothes at branded stores such as Loewe, Zara or Mango; handicrafts (ceramics, shawls, fans etc.) in Andalucía, mainly in Sevilla, food products that are produced in Spain (olive oil, olives, wines, cheese, saffron, etc.), jewellery, watches, antiques and gifts to take back home for family and friends.

## SOUVENIR'S GALORE

One of the Spanish fans makes a great souvenir for ladies to take back home and is distinctive of the culture in Andalucía. A Flamenco CD is also a characteristic souvenir to reminisce the popular music and dance of Spain. Food items that will not disappoint are: a fine olive oil, manchego cheese or a bottle of Spanish wine. To take back something more exclusive, some options are: sherry, cava or txakoli.

## HOP ON TO SHOP

'El Corté Inglés', the biggest department store in Spain is without a doubt the most recognised shopping spot across the country. Located in the central district of each city, it is easily accessible via foot and any other mode of transport since it is always in the heart of the city.

## EXPLORE FLEA MARKETS

'El Rastro' is a popular flea market that is held every Sunday or festive morning in an authentic historic district in Madrid. 'Els Encants Flea Market' in Barcelona opens everyday and offers antique furniture, jewellery, crafts amongst other things. The colorful 'Mercadillo de los Jueves' (Thursday's Flea Market) in Seville has become a meeting point for tourists that are looking for antiques, photographs, paintings and much more. These are also easily accessible by cab, metro or bus and not too far from the city centers.

## BARGAIN BUYS

The best factory outlets for bargain buys are 'Las Rozas Village' at Madrid and 'La Roca Village' at Barcelona. They offer top brands' boutiques and stores where visitors will always find special



“*El Corté Inglés, the biggest department store in Spain, is the most recognised shopping spot*”



discounts, promotions, privileges and extended opening times until late even during winters.

## SHOP TILL YOU DROP

With just two hours to spare, one can go shopping in the main commercial districts of each city. In Madrid, the most exclusive shops lay across the Golden Mile at Barrio Salamanca while Paseo de Gracia is its Barcelonan counterpart. For vintage clothes, Fuencarral (Madrid) and the surroundings of La Rambla (Barcelona) are a must, both located at the city center allowing visitors to extend their shopping time to include souvenirs, local goods and crafts.



Elaborating on different skills required for experiential MICE, different stakeholders of the MICE industry gave their perspective during the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Travel Business Show. Here are some excerpts...

**Kanchan Nath**

# Gathering EXPERIENTIAL



The panel discussion was moderated by **Priti Khanna**, Director, DDP Publications and the eminent panelists included **Tekla Maira**, Director Luxury Sales –India, AccorHotels; **Homa Mistry**, CEO, Trail Blazer Tours; **Kiran Thomas**, AVP, Administration and Global Travel, Sutherland Global Services and **Ismail A Hamid Amer**, Regional Director, Egyptian Tourism Counsellor.

Initiating the discussion, Khanna elucidated on the growth trends in the MICE segment. She said, “Globally, the MICE segment has overtaken the business trip segment and has a 54 per cent market share. The FICCI-MRSS report released earlier this year states that for MICE it is essential to curate experiences than just tourist spots. The success of any event hinges on the attendee experience. Attendees come in a variety and with varying expectations and motivations that affect how they experience an event. This makes MICE even more challenging as there are large numbers involved.”

## TAILORING MICE EVENT APTLY

The discussion throws light on how destinations are culling out experiences that are exclusively curated for the participants. Elaborating on the same, Mistry said, “Deciding a destination purely

depends on the corporate’s budget. If the budget is 40,000 per person, you pretty well know its going to be Sri Lanka, Dubai or Thailand. If the budget is a lakh plus, then you are talking Europe. It’s the budget and it’s the date which takes us forward to see which country and where we are going to go. Our role comes in when we get a brief from the client on what they want to achieve.”

The client and experience shall reap its benefit only when the company knows the exact requirements of their customers, adds Mistry. “If it is just a tour he is giving to dealers to go for and enjoy well, you look at it differently. If there is a theme to it, for example, if there is a product launch, then everything changes depending on the theme. Theme takes you across to what the exterior should be. What exactly the corporate wants? What is the final achievement? Is the corporate looking at increasing the sales or is it looking at a brand which is being launched?”

Elaborating on the growing importance of incentives, Maira stated, “MICE is really a big piece and the ‘I’ in the MICE is what is dominating the segment. When you are looking at a MICE movement there are a number of stakeholders. There is the intermediary (DMC or agent), the corporate end user, each one has something



*The FICCI-MRSS report released this year states that for MICE it is essential to curate experiences*





“

*A well designed rewards or incentive programme can have a quantifiable impact*

”

# MICE Skills

where their success hinges on. It is important to understand how we can help them to succeed. That is why I always urge our travel partners, take us with you to your end user corporate, so that we can understand what do they actually want.”

It remains important and pertinent to comprehend what the dealers/ sales people are trying to achieve. “We need to understand what is the corporate looking for today, if your taking a dealer incentive, what is it that’s going to wow them. Is it the meeting facility, is it the room, is it the food? Once we understand that we can bring success.” “We had a group staying with us in a hotel in Abu Dabi, they all had sea facing rooms, so on the last day when the event was ending, we wanted to do something special. Each of the corporates had a sea facing room, after the event on the last morning, when they looked outside, we had the logo of the company on the beach, that said ‘thank you so much for staying with us’. These are very small things and they make a big difference,” adds Maira.

## COMPONENTS OF DESIGNING THE INCENTIVE PROGRAMME

A well designed rewards or incentive programme can have a quantifiable impact on the core objectives of the organisation be it generating

more revenue, creating brand loyalty, employee recognition or addressing HR issues. The discussion pertained to highlighting the parameters to decide on a venue. Thomas opined, “From the corporate point of view, when you talk about an incentive, variety is what we aim to offer employees and one of them is travel. You can have a cash incentive or a gift incentive. There are a lot of options available for a corporate to decide, like the special offerings to be given to the employees. The second thing would be to what my Return on Investment shall be. So, if I am willing to spend a 1000 rupees on MICE, I will look at what I am going to reap out of it. What is going to make that employee motivated, for him to come back and sell more of my products? It is vital to make sure at what is that they are looking at. Like a common country used for MICE, that would not really motivate or give a special experience for MICE. So, it will be depending on what is the trend in the market currently and which new destinations are being explored. Then comes the experience with a personal touch.”

## EXPERIENCING MICE

The experience for a MICE participant/attendee begins from the time an event is announced and continues till closure, be it the communication, follow-up, destination accessibility, visas, safety,





hygiene factors, attitude of people in the host country, on ground delivery, post event closure. The discussion pointed to the elements that enhance the overall experience.

Maira added, "I think its very important to be clear in the communication right from the beginning. What mars everything at the end is the payment process. But if you have not been clear about the payment process, it does lead to unpleasantness. Whether it's the agency, hotel or corporate, we need to keep a transparency with each other."

According to Mistry, "We should not over promise and under deliver. As a DMC the most important thing is commitment, once you know what your client wants, one should deliver it opitmally. If the client gets return on investment, we are a part of the journey and they come back to us. Most of us have few clients and we want to hold onto them."

It is important to understand the client requirements and go through the checklist thoroughly. Adds Kiran, "We have to be transparent on the quality and the service that we are going to offer. I can think of 40 to 45 days window would be the right thing to plan a MICE trip from the corporates side." A destination that has a DMC, which, is well controlled and supervised, is a crucial component so that the scope for error is reduced. Adds

Amer, "In Egypt, all the DMCs are enrolled in the Egyptian tourism federation and are paying big insurance to secure the transactions. The second step is to have a concrete accurate contracting system with your partner in the destination. Whether it is a full package and empty package, all needs to be stipulated and mentioned in the contract.

Talking about big groups, he adds, "A DMC from Egypt can fast-track the immigration process as well as create an immigration counter at the airport. Indians are a very friendly community and an experience can be shared very easily. This is already there not only in the airport but also in all the sightseeing. For if you are doing ticketing for 100 to visit the temple or museum for instance, you need to have the experience to handle big groups. There are DMCs who can handle big groups, because big groups require special teams. So, you have to talk to the DMCs who work in that particular segment."

All the DMCs are enrolled in the website of Egypt, so we can shortlist some of the DMCs. We are a very open community, and everything can be checked though our office here as consultants. The other is word of mouth, I believe the Indians are a very friendly community and experience can be shared very easily. The third thing is the reviews of clients and guests online. I think its also an open community. There are many ways that information can be ascertained."

“

*It is important to understand the client requirements and go through the checklist thoroughly*

”



“

*Food availability for Indians is far more difficult than the visa, as they have numerous preferences*

”

### DOCUMENT IT RIGHT

There is a huge amount of documentation work that is required for MICE movements. The panelist elucidated on how the process of documentation is dealt in a holistic manner.

People nowadays are well travelled and are not first timers. Mistry adds, “The popular embassies take 15 working days. Documentation has become better, the outer limit is 15 working days. So, if your systems are in place and if you have been clear in saying what are your requirements, if your follow-up is there, then everything falls in place. Today embassies are coming forward, a lot of financials are not required if a company signs a letter. Earlier, first timers used to have a problem. Nowadays, there are huge numbers that are revisiting the US, because the systems have become less cumbersome. Corporates expect such efficiency.”

Talking about the choice of a destination by travel agents, Mistry said, “If it’s a large group, I will first see air connectivity, because there are two types of groups. One is where we get money and give experience. The other is the, ‘damaad group’ which means you have to treat the guy like a son-in-law. That one is a difficult. One needs to see how Tier-2, Tier 3 are connected. We try our best to give the best possible solution among what is available.”

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Providing healthy and culturally relevant food

and beverages is engaging but for an Indian group, the availability of a good and hot Indian food at the destination is a major ingredient in the overall experience, panelists share more. Talking about the dynamics of working out the food details for the Indian client, Mistry said, “I think availability of Indian food is far more difficult than the 10-year US Visa. It can make or break a MICE movement. When we try and explain that to a FBO he does not understand. In India, if you talk about food, it pertains to regions as well. If I have a large group of 300 people, there is bound to be inquiries for a Jain, Gujarati and Marathi cuisine.

It will be different from other colleagues coming from the southern part of India. Once you have catered to all four directions then one has to deal with the vegetarian and non-vegetarian part. Nowadays, vegetarians have gone to the next extent, of being vegan as well. For non-vegetarians, there is also an option of egg eaters, or who are particular of just consuming either chicken or fish, ‘never pork and beef’ And the ones who mention that ‘we don’t make non-veg at home, but we eat outside everyday’. Once you think you have dealt with all that and that is when the days are thrown into you. The specifications of a Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday because people do not consume non-vegetarian during those times. Finally, if we do manage to do all of this, the demand of variety is there. Food is far more difficult than the visa, but we manage.”



# That SPECIAL DAY at a SPECIAL VENUE

Hotels are looking at the weddings segment, not just as a revenue earner but also as a way to win over guest loyalty by ensuring that the W-Day is emotionally satisfying. To achieve this, more and more hotels are investing in skilled personnel and upgraded venues for big ticket events

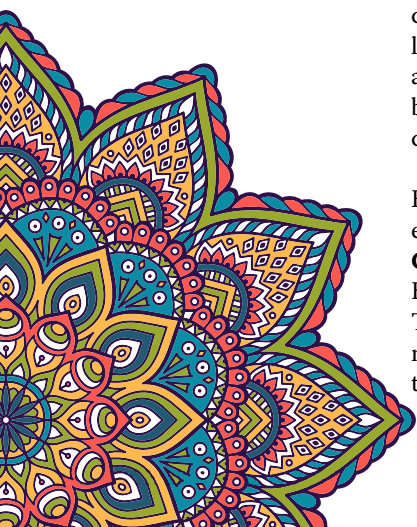
Hazel Jain

Planning a wedding is no longer a generic event for hotels that can be clubbed with MICE. It requires specialised and delicate treatment in order to ensure that the wedding planner as well as the clients is won over by a perfectly-orchestrated happy ending. Take for example the Taj Wedding Studio that was launched recently just in time for this wedding season. This initiative was in direct response to a call for a specialised team that can completely devote itself to the clients' needs. Its like the Taj's special team that guides planners and clients on the latest trends, innovations in banqueting, destination planning and wedding curation. What more could one ask for?

Expertise is what is being demanded and expertise is what hotels are now seeking to offer. **Chinmai Sharma**, Chief Revenue Officer, Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris, says, "With the Taj Wedding Studio, we will address the growing need for customisation of weddings and live up to the Taj promise of inspiring creativity in every

aspect of celebration." Other hotel chains are also investing in this segment. Marriott International unveiled its biggest partnership of the year titled 'Shaadi by Marriott' with India's leading designer duo Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla and strengthened its commitment to creating a superlative wedding experience from ideation to execution.

On this, **Sharad Dutta**, General Manager, The Westin Mumbai Garden City, says, "The wedding business can only grow in India thanks to the high emotional quotient attached to weddings. Hotels can offer options of all services required to deliver such an experience under one roof and we have taken a lead with 'Shaadi by Marriott'. Other hotel chains are increasingly investing in this segment too. With the increased awareness and willingness to spend, the ease of conducting weddings in quality hotels will be a big draw and should result in double digit growth of this segment year on year." In order to achieve satisfaction, hotels need to be flexible. This is







## The WEDDING USP

### LORDS HOTELS & RESORT

Many of the Lords Hotels & Resort properties have an advantage of being favourably located. All its hotel properties have an inbuilt gazebo.

### WESTIN MUMBAI GARDEN

The Westin Mumbai Garden City has an outdoor space called 'Westin Woods'. Heavenly Spa by Westin offers tailor-made packages.

### ANDAZ DELHI

Andaz, Hyatt's luxury lifestyle brand, was launched in 2016. Andaz Delhi has an Elephant Path and enhanced spaces for dramatic weddings.

seconded by **Vishal Jamuar**, General Manager, Radisson Blu Resort & Spa Alibaug. He says, "Today is an era of customisation which means that we need to be flexible.

There are guests who like to book the rooms and the food part with us but plan the rest of the arrangements like the welcome of the guests, the in-room hampers, decoration, etc. themselves which works fine with us as we are left to focus on what we do best." The hotel recently underwent a huge upgradation of its rooms and other facilities.

These include a complete upgradation of the Spa villas with the Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing (MEP) service, new bathroom fixtures, a revamped main lobby, and an Olympic-size swimming pool. The hotel has also focused on its F&B offering. While most weddings come through referrals, Radisson Blu Resort & Spa Alibaug does have a dedicated team that handles everything related to the event with a one-point contact for the planner/client.



# Hotelier **SPEAK**

Top hoteliers share view on the wedding trends in today's time



“We try to dedicate ourselves to designing a wedding. Our professional staff is determined to create a memorable and elegant wedding experience. We are planning to launch Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty, towards the end of 2017.”

**Harleen Mehta**  
Vice President, Sales Operations - India,  
Hyatt Hotels and Resorts



“With the Taj Wedding Studio, we will address the growing need for customisation of weddings and live up to the Taj promise of inspiring creativity in every aspect of celebration.”

**Chinmai Sharma**  
Chief Revenue Officer,  
Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris



“GST, while it had affected the hotels' wedding business to an extent, we are coping by offering additional services within the standard packages. Lords Hotels & Resorts, as a chain witnessed a major slowdown in July.”

**Shamitav Jana**  
Associate Vice President  
Lords Hotels & Resort



“With the increased awareness and willingness to spend, the ease of conducting weddings in quality hotels will be a big draw and should result in double digit growth of this segment year-on-year.”

**Sharad Datta**  
General Manager  
The Westin Mumbai Garden City



“Today is an era of customisation. There are guests who like to book the rooms and the food part with us but plan the rest of the arrangements themselves which works fine with us as we are left to focus on what we do best.”

**Vishal Jamuar**  
General Manager  
Radisson Blu Resort & Spa Alibaug

## **TOP 4** hotels around



### **BALI**

#### **KOMANEKABISMA, UBUD**

**Location:** 10 minutes from Ubud Market

**Why:** It has a terrace restaurant and mini amphitheatre for live music, pool villas overlooking river valley and rice fields

Venues apart, the themes also need to pack a punch. According to **Shamitav Jana**, Associate Vice President, Lords Hotels & Resort, weddings these days are being planned around concepts or themes. Some concepts are as elaborate as setting up the wedding venue like a palace and every element, including the utilities and the attendees, must look the part. “Top3 Lords Resort in Bhavnagar has built a reputation for itself as a wedding destination of sorts. We are a premium mid-market chain of hotels which presently is the biggest segment of hotels in the country. We foresee the mid-market segment hotels to remain the preferred choice for events,” he says.

Speaking about GST, Jana adds that while it had affected the hotels' wedding business to an extent, they are coping by offering additional services within the standard packages. “Lords Hotels & Resorts, as a chain witnessed a major slowdown in wedding bookings right after GST came into effect in July. However, the wedding season has only begun and we are yet to realise any adverse impact,” Jana says.

Meanwhile at Hyatt, weddings are a tailor-made, personalised experience. Over the years, the weddings market has become a significant contributor to the businesses of a number of Hyatt properties in India. **Harleen Mehta**, Vice President, Sales Operations - India, Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, says that this year too, they have indications of a robust wedding season, especially at some of the Grand Hyatt, Andaz, Park Hyatt, Hyatt and Hyatt Regency branded hotels in key destinations such as Goa, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Gurgaon, Hyderabad and Kolkata. “We



# the world for **WEDDINGS**



## **MALDIVES**

### **ADAARANHUDHURANFUSHI**

**Location:** Near Kani Beach on Lhohifushi Island

**Why:** Cool breeze, sound of ocean waves, Uber cool villas with private sundeck and 24-hour access to the surrounding ocean



## **UDAIPUR**

### **RAMADA UDAIPUR RESORT AND SPA**

**Location:** Near Sajjangarh Fort (Monsoon Palace), Lake Pichola

**Why:** 10 venues with traditional stonework, a central courtyard and lawns on three levels



## **GOA**

### **RESORT RIO**

**Location:** 5-minute drive from Baga Beach

**Why:** Ayurvedic and herbal treatments at Zaara Spa, yoga centre, in-house salon with mineral makeup products

Source: MakeMyTrip Expert

try to dedicate ourselves to designing a wedding. Our professional staff is determined to create a memorable and elegant wedding experience and the highly skilled wedding planners with us are trained to assist guests at every step, from wedding room to tabletop set-up and menu selections. Our different properties in India provide a range of customized wedding packages,” Mehta says.

She claims that Hyatt continues to witness an incremental rise in wedding booking in two locations: Mumbai and Goa. “We are therefore planning to launch Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty, a waterfront urban resort which has a large convention centre towards the end of 2017 to make the most of the wedding extravaganza,” Mehta adds. In India, wedding ceremonies have always been lavish and are increasingly becoming exclusive, highly experiential events. With a large number of couples valuing experiences, it has been observed that there is an increase in demand for destination weddings at exotic locations.

This rise in the number of destination weddings definitely serves as a growth driver for hospitality chains. Also, more and more people are now planning the entire wedding process at hotels including pre-wedding shoots, photo shoots at different venues, wedding rituals and the final reception. There is also a high degree of personalisation, with people inviting a limited number of guests and spending more on enhancing the individual guest experience.

Speaking on the impact GST has had on the wedding business, Mehta opines, “With the flattening of multiple taxes involved in

“*The wedding business in India seems to be recession-proof. It grows in size every year*”

banqueting post the implementation of GST, we expect wedding bookings for hotel chains to rise across the country. The crème de la crème hotels have been sought-after for their wedding-related expertise in India, even before the introduction of GST and all it entails. The wedding business in India seems to be recession-proof. The Indian weddings business grows in size and grandeur every year and along with it, so do the ancillary businesses— wedding planners, designers, caterers. The weddings are just as grand in the smaller cities of Raipur and Ludhiana like in the big cities of Mumbai and Delhi.”

Radisson Blu Resort & Spa Alibaug has a ‘Shubhamangalam’ package which includes all arrangements with respect to a wedding in addition to room and food. For instance, the hotel will do the guest hampers, welcome the guests with traditional dhol, mehendi, mak-up, etc. The Westin Mumbai Garden City, on the other hand, has packages customised to complement and celebrate the uniqueness of each families, bride and groom.

Lords Hotels & Resort, over the years, has developed a rapport with many of the event planners and works on mutually favourable agreements. The hotel reaches out to event management companies in the business capitals like Mumbai and Ahmedabad through its regional offices. Other recreation activities that are offered as part of the package include swimming pools, spas and beauty salons.



# MICE goes APP-Y

Having started operations in April 2017, Foxtrot Interactive, a white-labelled event app targeted at the MICE industry, has seen sales of ₹8.8 million from 23 corporate customers and 37 projects and will be launching two new products in the new year. Co-founders of the app, **Unmesh Vaidya** and **Naasir Merchant**, talk about their journey...

**Peden Doma Bhutia**

## How did Foxtrot come into being?

In November of 2016, both of us realised that there is ample scope to pioneer how the MICE industry uses technology. Between the two of us, we had 25 years of experience in the travel and sales domains, and in organising conferences, meetings and incentives for corporates. We realised that what we had in mind was something the MICE industry desperately needed, so we decided to take the plunge and Foxtrot Interactive was born. What also aided us was the fact that the country was seeing an increasing number of smartphone users, more people on social networks and alternative communication platforms and more clients willing to go the digital way.

## This is not a very easy domain, with the kind of coordination that is needed at various levels and keeping so many clients happy. How difficult was the journey?

When both of us had the idea of getting into the tech side of MICE, lot of people rebuked as to how can two sales guys get into a domain which they don't have any expertise in. We realised that this was our biggest challenge and we decided that the first step is to get a Chief Technology officer (CTO). We got a CTO who took the challenge of making a team ready to hit the market with the entire backend process.

Two of us were purely involved with the frontend and making a team of desired individuals who are well versed with the travel industry. There was some competition from IT players but we wanted Foxtrot to be a one-stop Technology Applications organisation of, by and for MICE individuals. There were initial talks of making a DIY panel and selling the same to corporates as well as travel agencies, but then we did adequate research and figured out that any SaaS software today in any domain requires a lot of handholding in the beginning. The general tendency in India of tech-



related products is that the end user does not like to do anything on their own but want everything to be managed by someone who specialises in that domain. Understanding this, we got in content and creative personnel as well as data feeding resources to help a travel agency or a corporate which would make life simpler for all concerned and add a lot of value to our products.

We realised with so many parties, resources and personnel being involved, we need to have SOPs in place to manage things, scale as well as keep clients happy. As one would expect we faced some teething problems, but today we can proudly say we work like a well-oiled machine.

## How would you say you are different from your competitors who have similar event apps?

We are not just selling to every new corporate. With every new app, we bring about a small



“*Foxtrot is coupled with intuitive user-interface and accessibility across mobile systems*”



innovation to the UI or the design interface. Our application is robust and coupled with its intuitive user-interface and accessibility across different mobile operating systems, it is rapidly emerging as the go-to solution for large-scale event organisers or corporates to plan their group travels and conferences. Foxtrot's biggest difference from the competition is our frontend and backend personnel who are from the industry and understand the nuances, intricacies and dynamics of the trade which gives the clients a breather than going to "just an IT Player".

**Between the two of you, you have a good amount of experience in the travel and sales domains, and in organising conferences, meetings and incentives for corporate. How does your own work experience help you in this sphere?**

Having 25 years of combined experience between the two of us and at least 50 years of blended experience in the team that works on the front end, it gives us a sharp edge when we go to corporates. MICE continues to remain one of the most unorganised and cluttered space in travel with a new company being born every month. Our experience gives us a huge advantage when we set foot in the market with smaller and minute details being taken care of. In certain cases when we sell our apps, we keep that window open to customise tabs in the app as per the client's requirement. We understand and are able to predict the pain points which leads to increased operational efficiency of the travel agency or the coordinator from the corporate's end.

**What are your expansion plans? You've been talking about developing a payment gateway on the app, is that available now?**

In a short span of eight months, Foxtrot has seen

**“Foxtrot has seen sales of ₹8.8 million from 23 corporate customers and 37 projects”**

sales of ₹8.8 million from 23 corporate customers and 37 projects and will be launching two new products in the new year. Our client list includes Axis Bank, Kotak Life Insurance, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Akbar Travels, JSW Steel, Crompton Greaves, Bajaj Electricals, Bajaj Allianz, St Gobain, Prudent Advisory and EAI Systems, among others. We have incorporated a payment gateway for corporates and travel agencies who need it as per their app customisation. Other important features that we have in the app currently are uploading of documents, especially for countries with E-Visa facilities.

A passport copy being uploaded is of utmost necessity for ticketing and taking visa appointments for Schengen and other countries. We are based out of Mumbai, but have sales offices in Pune and Bengaluru. On the international front, we have tied up for distribution with a company in UAE and Sri Lanka and our app will be sold in the markets from January 15, 2018. Thailand, Malaysia & Indonesia (specifically Bali) are the next set of countries that we are in talks with partners to distribute the App. Also on the product front, we had a soft launch of our wedding management app called "Grace" which is a customised app for destination weddings. Since this is a pure B2C product, come January, rampant online marketing efforts will be used to get in sales and we have hired a specialist Wedding Planner to distribute this. Also in the offing is our campaign management app, "Step Up" which was soft launched in Bengaluru in September 2017. We have got quite a few pre-orders and delivery will commence from February 2018.





# Digital innovation to assist BUSINESS TRAVELLERS

United Airlines completes a decade of its non-stop daily services from Mumbai to New York/Newark, which underlines India as an important market for the airline, especially for its Polaris service. Phase one is already operational in India

Hazel Jain



Marcel Fuchs

United Airlines' decade-long journey in India has been a successful one, says **Marcel Fuchs** - VP Atlantic and Pacific Sales, United Airlines, who was in India recently to celebrate this milestone with the trade partners. "The Indian market is important to United and we are proud to have offered non-stop services. The popularity of our daily services from Delhi and Mumbai to New York/Newark reflects the demand from travellers wishing to fly to the US. Only this month we marked 10 years of our Mumbai-New York/Newark service," he adds.

## UNITED'S POLARIS SEATS

Since December 1, 2016, United Polaris business class service has replaced United Business First service on international flights, and United Polaris first class service has replaced the current United Global First. He highlights the airline's Polaris service, phase one of which is already operational in India. "The Polaris which is exclusive to United offers our passengers the luxury and comfort of a premium hotel while flying. United has re-imagined in-flight dining service that offers seasonal culinary preparations, created in partnership with

chefs from The Trotter Project as well as custom Saks Fifth Avenue luxury bedding and exclusive amenity kits with products from Soho House & Co's Cowshed Spa. This takes luxury to a new dimension," Fuchs says. United currently has plans to retrofit about 90 aircraft with the Polaris business class seat over the coming years whilst the Boeing 777-300 and 787-10 will be delivered with the Polaris seat on board. Exclusive to United, the seats are individual suite-like pods. They also include features such as forward-facing, all-aisle-access for every passenger.

### LOYALTY REAPS REWARDS

Fuchs adds, "Our business customers will surely love the luxury of the United Polaris service with its customised amenities. We are also offering the 'Partner Plus Benefit' programme which allows our business customers to earn valuable Benefit Points when flying with United Airlines as well Air Canada, Lufthansa, Brussels, Eurowings, Austrian Airlines Group, SWISS and additional Partner airlines. Customers can take advantage of the extensive 'Partner Plus Benefit' bonus programme in place with a range of awards on offer including flights, upgrades, airport parking, and limousine transfers."



### DID YOU KNOW?

United Airlines operates up to 500 weekly flights across the Atlantic from 29 cities in 15 countries in Europe, Middle East and India to its hubs in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York/Newark, San Francisco and Washington, D.C., with onward connections to more than 300 cities throughout the Americas. It operates the Boeing 777-200 aircraft on its Delhi and Mumbai routes

### MOBILE 'APP'ROPRIATE

Apart from these exclusives, United provides Wi-Fi on all international aircrafts. United Airlines has also enhanced its mobile app that allows users to manage their reservations on-the-go. With the newest version of the United app, customers will be able to change and cancel flights in the app, add their MileagePlus and United Club cards to the Apple Wallet and access other travel tools. These updates build on the airline's recent announcement to allow customers to access boarding passes for 19 other carriers through its mobile app.

The airline has carried over three million customers on more than 12,700 flights between India and the US over the past decade. "We expect our non-stop India-US flights to continue







“United has a modern fleet and is the most fuel-efficient among US network carriers”

### POLARIS' PRIVACY AND COMFORT

For its business customers in particular, United introduced United Polaris in December 2016, replacing the United Business First service on international flights. The first phase is now available onboard its flights from India. The focus is on providing travellers with better sleep in the sky. The main features of the Polaris service include exclusive United Polaris lounges with new rest spaces and high-end pre-flight dining options; and a custom-designed personal onboard suite with added privacy, among other things.

to perform well. Load factors on our Indian routes are broadly in line with those for our trans-Atlantic routes as a whole – about 75 per cent for October 2017,” Fuchs reveals. When asked whether United is planning to add another city or expand its current frequencies, he says that while United monitors the demand in all the markets it serves and reviews potential new-route opportunities on an ongoing basis, the airline has no further new-service announcements to make at present in India.

Fuchs also underlines the role that the travel trade community plays in its India sales. “Our team in India, led by Harvinder Singh, has long-standing



relationships with the community. We continue to engage the travel trade community across India. In my recent visit to India to celebrate our 10th anniversary for our Mumbai – New York service, I met a number of our business partners. It was clear to me that these relationships are vital to us as we build greater success for United in the market,” Fuchs adds.

### MODERN, FUEL-EFFICIENT FLEET

United has a modern fleet which, Fuchs claims, is the most fuel-efficient among US network carriers (when adjusted for cabin size). The airline is converting 100 aircraft of its current MAX order to Boeing 737 MAX 10s, making it the largest MAX 10 customer in the world. “We have 161 737-MAX aircraft on order. Deliveries of our 100-MAX 10s will start in late 2020. In addition, we have confirmed orders for four additional Boeing 777-300ERs, three of which will be delivered and in operation for summer 2018 and the fourth of which will be delivered in late 2018. In 2017, we have received four more 777-300ERs, one 787-9 and four 737-800s.”

# Delivering **EXCELLENCE** for **EVENTS**

In an interview, **Ashish Jagota**, Executive Director, Concept Conferences, tells us more about his company and 2018 plans

## What is your USP?

Concept Conferences, headquartered in New Delhi is India's leading and award-winning MICE organiser providing end-to-end delivery right from concept to implementation seamlessly under a single umbrella. Concept Conferences specialises in strategically conceiving and executing every aspect of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events, in the shortest turnaround time possible and at the core enrolling the objectives required to be achieved respectively. As a detail oriented



event management company, we understand the importance of quality, and hence the word 'ordinary' does not figure in our dictionary. Right from high quality projectors, sturdy podiums, and microphones that offer impeccable sound, we do not stop at anything when it comes to delivering excellence during high-end events.

## How was 2017 for you, what have been the main challenges?

India has observed recommendable growth in MICE 2017 as compared to earlier years. We are adapting

new technologies and trained team to meet the present demand and future need of the industry. In earlier times, the conventions used to rely on accommodation, connectivity and attractiveness of the city but the biggest challenge now is to manage the rise in expectations and demands which seems possible by making utmost use of the technology and state-of-the-art softwares.

## What have been the trends as far as incentives for corporates are concerned for 2017?

Incentive is being used as a non-cash reward by many corporation from past couple of years. We experienced that various firms in the country are spending significant amounts of time and energy trying to understand the law and the repercussions that it will have for their incentive and recognition programmes. Organisations are ready to incur huge expense to create a motivational factor among its members and employees.

## Which are the main corporates that you work with and which MICE events do you have lined up for 2018?

We work with an array of clientele, from medical associations, educational institutions, real estate developers and other corporates. The industry is getting more structured and organised with the government rolling out more and more dedicated schemes and creating a conducive 'ease of operating' environment in recognition of the economic impact the sector delivers directly or indirectly to the spectrum of stakeholders integral to the ecosystem. For Concept, 2018 looks very promising as we already have our calendar marked for our upcoming events.



Ashish Jagota



*Organisations today want to create a motivational factor among its members and employees*







# NOVOTEL-IBIS means BUSINESS

**Daniel Chao**, Area General Manager, Novotel & ibis Chennai OMR and Novotel Chennai SIPCOT talks about the new opening of the combined property, Novotel & ibis Chennai OMR, and shares his views on the city's myriad offerings for business travellers



Daniel Chao

## Jessy Iype

**Kindly elucidate on the room infrastructure and the MICE facility of this new property for your business and leisure guests?**

Novotel is 153 rooms, while ibis is 189 rooms property. We have a main ballroom in Novotel, Cappucinno, which can accommodate 250 people. We have five breakout rooms in Novotel which can be reconfigured in different ways so we can accommodate 3-5 breakout meetings or smaller meetings. ibis also has a meeting room that can accommodate upto seven people.

Both properties have F&B room service, room dining and very talented kitchen team that can offer many different styles of cuisine be it North Indian, South Indian, fantastic pan Asian, Mexican food, which is very well defined. The team is very creative and thrives on challenge. We offer great menu options, theme dinners,

theme breaks, theme parties, theme breakfast, theme meetings. A lot of creativity can be dashed into these.

**Nowdays hotels across have incorporated contemporary technological trends, what are your offerings in your hotel?**

We offer a full gamut of audio video services that are fully up-to-date, we are lucky to be in a market that is large enough in case of special, extraordinary needs and have lot of talented partners to work with. One of the great advantage is our large network of the 7 hotels here, where we can negotiate based on volumes and business to accommodate anything and at a competitive price.

**What will be the focus of clientele for this property?**

For this property, because of the nature of



the market, it is primarily suited for business travellers and Indian national, young middle-age professionals across many industries. Chennai has a variety of market be it automotive, IT, hardware and software, among many more diverse kinds of industry.

**What incentive options do you have for MICE groups?**

We are still developing. We have a good opening offer for our individual guests, 'Stay three, Pay Two', although we are still developing on our MICE offers. For example, we can organise conferences then plan a tour of the city for MICE groups.

**What kind of different cuisines do you plan to offer to your guests?**

Chennai is an interesting city that offers vibrant food and beverage scenario. One has to be competitive and innovative in that kind of market. We have suitable North and South Indian cuisine offers, for world cuisines and new style of presentations and innovations. We have larger teams and so the options to have more specialists is an advantage.

If you have maybe 6-7 people in your kitchen, then you have less scope to hire a specialist be it an Asian specialist or dessert specialist or pastry one.

**Can you elaborate on environment friendly measures taken in the property?**

Accor as a group is heavily focused on environmental concerns. We have a worldwide environmental programme, 'Planet 21' and we as managers are evaluated on our performance with respect to environmental protection. 'Planet 21' helps us in succeeding in meeting our energy saving goals, our recycling goals, conservation goals and CSR and also from a personal perspective, it's always been a big part of my management as well. I think we are trained early on. In this hotel, we have incorporated smart lighting systems because we intend to conserve energy.

Our water distribution in the room includes water recycle, we also have a very sophisticated air conditioning system which is designed to minimise energy consumption, solar panels on the roof, are some examples of our environment friendly measures. We have done some heavy investments on them.

**What is your vision for the hotel and what marks your USP?**

The USP of our hotel is difficult. But, I would say our brand and the strengths that goes with it, whether it is our loyalty programme or our worldwide network and expertise, our combo aspect of the property is a huge USP, because it offers a choice possibilities for our guests. Our focus on our people, our size in Chennai and worldwide gives us the leverage to invest more in training, to hold onto people who aspire for a career as we offer tremendous potential for growth.





# A slice of MICE

A key revenue generator, MICE is a segment that has seen substantial investment from industry players and entry of new ones over the past few years. In this article, we take a look at MICE in Madhya Pradesh, a state gaining traction in the segment

Tripti Mehta



Kalyani Daagar

Indian cities that earlier depended merely on hospitality and foreign tourist arrivals have now understood that MICE, too, holds great potential for business. Madhya Pradesh, a central Indian state, has recognised this potential and a number of Tier-II and III cities of the state are now being converted into MICE hubs. The country's growing presence in this segment only proves that the government here is leaving no stone unturned in capturing a bigger market share.

## MICE VENUES

Orchha, a town on the banks of Betwa River, houses the Orchha Palace & Convention Centre, a property that offers an ideal venue for holding seminars, receptions, weddings, and celebrations with a seating capacity of 1000 guests.

With 100 well-appointed rooms, the property provides its guests with the best of modern amenities for a comfortable stay. Orchha provides MICE guests with experiential tourism, ensuring that not a minute goes waste while they are there. "Orchha itself provides very different

experiences to guests. On the one hand, guests can enjoy adventure tourism by way of river-rafting, boating, etc., while on the other, they get a chance to experience religious tourism because of Ram Raja Temple, a must-visit for travellers to Orchha," says **Kalyani Daagar**, General Manager (Sales & CRS), Orchha Palace & Convention Centre. Another key city of MP, modern-day Bhopal is gaining traction in MICE.

**Gaurav Rege**, General Manager, Jehan Numa Palace, Bhopal, while sharing his opinion on MICE at the hotel, says, "We have been catering to the absolute elite of the region for over 30 years. Over time, we have been able to create a niche for ourselves and are today synonymous with any luxurious event associated in this region. Away from traditional décor and settings, the hotel focuses on giving guests tailor-made, personalised experiences with the sole aim to ensure repeat clientele."

Jehan Numa Palace is spread over seven acres, with flexible indoor and outdoor venues for functions, board meetings, conferences, and social events. The hotel has over 20,000 sqft of banqueting space that can be mixed and matched as per a client's need.

**“Orchha is picking up as a destination for small MICE activities and tours”**



## GST AND BUSINESS

Implementation of the Goods and Services Tax has impacted business overall, but a number of hotels and convention centres in the state haven't been privy to it. "As far as MICE is concerned, there was no impact of GST on it. We still had a lot of conferences, incentives, and weddings," says Daagar. Rege has a different take on the matter.

"The GST definitely impacted us. While business revenues and projections were good, rate of growth slowed against what we achieved in the pre-GST era. While corporates understand that they can get Input Credit for all expenditure, the leisure clientele is seen changing his booking preferences. Recovery is an ongoing process and we are using this time to ensure that the service levels provided are constantly improving, justifying our higher rates against competition," he says.

## PERFORMANCE AND FORESIGHT

The previous year was a turbulent one for the industry. A number of policies were brought in by the government, giving the industry more than it could cope with. While some MICE venues and hotels could mitigate the impact, several of them couldn't.

An optimistic Daagar says, "We started our property in mid-2016 and in the first year we did exceptionally well. We would like to maintain the same pace in 2018 with more concentration on conventions."

"For a 35-year-old hotel we have recorded a very healthy growth rate despite the initial inhibitions of demonetisation, GST, etc. Having said that, the feedback from consumers in the local market and travellers to the city has not been encouraging. Two out of five business have been affected with lower sales and reduced margins, while others have had stagnant business levels. There have been very few who have claimed to have exceeded growth targets.

The strategy is to get the guest to spend more at the hotel. Where the city ARR was roughly ₹5,000 a couple of years back, as a strategy we have stopped targeting that price segment and now focus on higher paying guests, who spend more at our restaurant and bar," says Rege while giving us an insight into the MICE space in the city.

Talking about trends, Daagar says, "As far as MICE trends for Orchha are concerned, it is picking up as a destination for small MICE activities as well as incentive tours. It has already gained a good name in the mid-segment for destination weddings."

Rege believes that MICE travellers definitely want to explore newer destinations now. Jehan

Numa Palace has received requests for itineraries that combine half a day's conference with nature visits. Personalisation for each and every traveller along with co-ordinated theme dinners and an emphasis on outdoor activities has also been seen. "Non-traditional meeting spaces, understanding and experiencing local culture and cuisine, and trying things away from regular routine broadly sum up the type of demands seen in this segment," he iterates.

## MP ON MICE

Daagar believes that Madhya Pradesh has great potential for MICE. "Indore has very good scope and already has a lot of MICE venues and events. Orchha has some constraints related to connectivity as the nearest airport is in Gwalior, which is around 120 kms away and does not have many flights. The nearest railway station is in Jhansi, but again there aren't good trains for



Gaurav Rege

**“Opportunities are immense and the sky is the limit for a MICE organiser in MP”**



sectors such as Gujarat and Rajasthan. We did try to tap Gujarat's pharmaceutical companies but failed because of connectivity," she shares.

Fervently backed by innovative government initiatives, Madhya Pradesh is steadily making a mark in MICE, but there is still a lot that needs to be done.

"MP is virgin territory. Completely unexplored and untapped, the region boasts of the best natural parks, great roads, and public infrastructure. With all this at a guest's disposal, opportunities are immense and the sky is the limit for an imaginative and resourceful MICE organiser. While the will exists and the resources are available, the real need of the hour is to create the right awareness and recall in the mind of MICE agents," concludes Rege.



## A play of IMAGINATION

Bringing in classic Italian desserts, IRIIS Food evokes an exquisite sense of international taste. Base Millefoglie by Forno Bonomi is a stellar product amongst IRIIS Food's international gourmet grocery. These thin puff pastry layers serve as a base for your imagination. So go on, get your artistry playing and enjoy the classic mille-feuille cakes.



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# MUST-HAVES

We unravel some suitable MICE products suited for the business travellers

## Connect SMART

Häfele introduces connect lighting, making the integration of lights in any design concept a tangible reality. This is possible because the LED technology has limitless possibilities of integrations and connections. Taking advantage of this flexibility, Häfele has designed a solution for your residence or business through Häfele Connect. The application connects itself to Connect BLE boxes via Bluetooth. It provides a comprehensive range of control options, including control of the light colour with RGB lights or adjustment of the colour temperature with multiple white lights. Different lights can be grouped together, allowing many scenarios to be stored and time-controlled or called up with a simple finger press.



## GO MORE MILES

Lufthansa Group has announced change in the award miles credit to participants in the frequent flyer and reward programme, Miles & More. From the advent of March 2018, the number of award miles that are credited will be based on the price of the flight. Miles for tickets booked before March 12, 2018 will be credited according to the present system.



## An app for MICE events

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau or TCEB has unveiled two new mobile applications, Smart BIZ Event and Smart BIZ Organizer. The strategy is aimed to stimulate the growth of MICE events in the country by using innovation to create differentiation. Users will be able to get real-time updates.

# Visa Requirements



## Spain

- ✓ **Passport:** Original Passport with validity of minimum three months and two blank pages for visa stamping.
  - a) Photocopy of all the pages of the passport (even the blank pages)

**Please Note:**

- a) Passports issued beyond 10 years will not be accepted by the Embassy.
- b) Attach all your old passports (if any).
- c) Handwritten passports will not be accepted.

- ✓ **Schengen Visa Application Form :** Three visa application forms duly filled and signed on column 37 and 38 in Blue ink only. The following form also need to be duly filled, signed and submitted along with the application.

- a) Spain Authorization Form
- b) Declaration Form

**Please Note:** Applicant mobile number should be mentioned in visa form as Embassy / Consulate can contact the applicant at any point of time during visa processing.

- ✓ **Photo Specification:** Three recent passport size photographs with matt or semi matt finish, 60-80 per cent face coverage, white background and without border (Size: 35mm x 45mm).

**Please Note:** Photograph should not be more than three months old, scanned/stapled and should not be used in any of the previous visas.

- ✓ **Covering Letter :**

- a) Covering letter from company with naming list & passport details of all applicants. The letter should be duly signed by the authorized signatory & taking the guarantee of all applicants that they will return back to India before the expiry of visa issued to them.
- b) Covering letter from applicants individually on company's letter head.
- c) A brief company profile.

**Please Note:** The letter should be addressed to The Visa Officer, Embassy of Spain, New Delhi.

- ✓ **Financials:**

- a) Company's updated bank statement for last three months till date mentioning the Bank's name, Bank's Telephone Number clearly.
- b) Company's ITR for last three years.
- c) Company's Registration Certificate.

- ✓ **Proof of Occupation:**

**Student**

- a) An NOC from school on letter head with travel dates. Parents ID proof and student's Id card copy accompanied by financial document. The NOC should have phone number and address of school

**In case of Minor (Age < 18 yrs):**

- a) Application form to be signed by both the parents.
- b) Copies of passports of the parents attested by a notary.
- c) If travelling with one of the parents a NO Objection Affidavit from other parent must be provided.

**Self Employed**

- a) Company Registration Certificate / Certificate of Incorporation.
- b) Company's & Personal Bank Statement for last three months till date with bank seal and signature.
- d) Proof of Proprietorship / Partnership (In case applicant is Proprietor / Partner in a firm).
- e) Company's & Personal ITR for last three years.
- f) Dealership proof for all if dealers.

**Employed**

- a) Salary slips for last three months with company stamp.
- b) NOC from Employer on letterhead with travel dates.
- c) Personal bank statements for last three months till date with bank seal and signature.
- d) Personal ITR for last three years.

- ✓ **Proof of Accommodation:** Hotel confirmation on letter head for all Schengen countries to be visited and a letter from the tour organiser along with the naming list and passport number of all applicants and mentioning that they are doing hotel, ticket, insurance for all the passengers.

**Please Note:** Hotel should match the ticket dates and maximum stay should be in Spain.

- ✓ **Airline Reservation:** Air Ticket and day to day itinerary with proper dates mentioned on it.

**Please Note:** Ticket should be presented with the gap of 15 calendar days from the date of submission.

- ✓ **Travel Insurance:** Original and Copy of Medical Insurance for the stay duration amounting to 30,000 Euros. The validity of the travel insurance must be at least 15 days longer than the period of stay and must cover the whole Schengen territory.

**Please Note:**

- a) Insurance to be done by the Authorized Insurance Companies for the Schengen States.
- b) Insurance should match with travel dates.

- ✓ **New Procedure for Schengen Visa Applications:** With immediate effect, Indian citizens travelling to Schengen countries for short-term (max 90 days in 180 days) will have to visit BLS Spain visa application centre personally to provide biometric data (fingerprints and digital photograph). For subsequent applications within next 5 years the biometric data will be copied from the previous visa application included in the VIS.

Source: Udaan



# The **WILL** to master a **SKILL**

Updating employees' tech skills is generally observed as an excellent business strategy, feels counsellor **Shivani Misri Sadhoo**



**Shivani Misri Sadhoo**  
Founder  
Saarthi Counselling  
Services

“

*Promoting current employees to new technical roles saves company's recruitment costs*

”

**A**vailing skill programmes builds a positive work environment with happy workforce and who are engaged and comparably more productive than rest of the industry standards. When an organisation tries to develop a culture of learning and growth and invests in employee skill updation – it sends a strong message to the world that it's an employee friendly corporation, it cares for its people and it's in good revenue shape. This reduces the rate of attrition and attracts better talents.

At a micro level, procuring tech skill programmes improves employees' technical abilities that equip employees with the skills they need to meet their performance expectations. Employers that provide their employees with skills training can assign job duties and responsibilities more appropriately knowing that employees actually have the skills necessary to do the work. Within the context of employee development, improving skills and abilities also prepares employees for internal promotion or career advancement.

The major advantages on procuring tech skill programmes are:

**EFFICIENT AND FAST  
EXECUTION OF BUSINESS PLANS**

Giving everyone in the company a foundation of latest technical skills puts everyone more or less on the same page. This allows the employees to take more informed decisions and perform better teamwork. For example, in a software company after up-gradation of technical know-how and skills of particular software development, both the designers and marketers develop a basic understanding of coding and that allows them to work directly with the software developers and helps the managers to make better estimates of the time needed to complete the projects.

**PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR INTERNAL MOBILITY AND  
BRING DEVELOPMENT IN-HOUSE**

By upgrading employee's skills and capabilities, the organisation reaches at an advantageous position where they enjoy a pool of highly-skilled employees with experience specific to their needs. At the same time promoting current employees to new technical roles saves company's recruitment costs and loss of productivity and salary – since old employees would not require low productive familiarization time that a new employee may require. Companies that create internal hiring programs see an increase in employee career satisfaction and retention - which is always a good thing.




**JANUARY 2018**

MEETINGS MOROCCO MARRAKECH	Morocco	11-12
IITM	Kochi	11-13
IITT (INDIA INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM EXHIBITION)	Mumbai	11-13
GPS	Nagpur	15-17
IITT (INDIA INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM FAIR)	Ahmedabad	16-17
FITUR	Spain	17-21
OTM	Mumbai	18-20
JHARKHAND TRAVEL MART	Ranchi	19-21
ASEAN TOURISM FORUM CHIANG MAI	Thailand	22-26
DUSIT INTERNATIONAL INDIA OFFICE ROADSHOW	Mumbai	29
DUSIT INTERNATIONAL INDIA OFFICE ROADSHOW	Bengaluru	30
TOURISM EVENTS QUEENSLAND	Chennai	30
TOURISM EVENTS QUEENSLAND	Bengaluru	31
SATTE	Delhi	31-Feb 2

**FEBRUARY 2018**

IBTM ARABIA	Abu Dhabi	5-7
CONVENE	Vilnius – Lithuania	14-15
MCE CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE	Zagreb, Croatia	18-20
PATA ADVENTURE TRAVEL AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM CONFERENCE & MART (ATRTCM)	Abu Dhabi	21-23
BUSINESS TRAVEL SHOW	Olympia, London	20-22
ACE OF MICE	Istanbul, Turkey	23-25



## ACE of MICE to be held in Turkey

The fifth ACE of MICE exhibition is going to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from February 21-23, 2018

Organised by Turkish Airlines in Turkey, it is the third largest congress of meeting and events exhibition in the world. The city of Istanbul will once again become the focus of the international MICE industry. The event will be held at Istanbul Congress Center with the motto of previous year 'MICE industry convenes with all of its colours!' Held every year by the Tourism Media Group organisation, the exhibition will see 746 hosted buyers from 39 countries flock to the city. Over 9,791 business to business (B2B) meetings have been arranged, along with 220 national and international exhibitors, 19 sessions, 35 speakers, 160 sponsors at the event. Over 15,000 domestic and foreign visitors are expected to witness the event. According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), Turkey is among the top ten of the world's meeting destinations. The country ranks 18th globally as a growing destination for MICE tourism. Turkey is exceptionally well positioned as a destination for the MICE industry, both in terms of trade and culture. There will be many sessions related to 2018's event technology trends and brand new technological developments such as virtual reality/augmented reality, wearable technology, meaningful use of data, event software and flexible display technologies. While the event and meeting industry are preparing for the year of 2018, participants will have the opportunity to meet the professionals of the global MICE technology industry in the first quarter of the year.



# movements



**Jiali Wong**  
Regional Manager for Asia  
Cruise Lines International  
Association (CLIA)

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Asia has appointed Jiali Wong as its new Regional Manager for Asia, based in Singapore. With almost 10 years' experience in tourism, Wong will be responsible for growing industry engagement in the region and supporting the continued growth of cruise. This includes responsibilities for event development and growing CLIA's Executive Partner programme in the region. Wong is seconded from the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and most recently headed the Cruise Business Development team at STB.



**Bruce Ryde**  
Asia-Pacific Vice-President  
for Luxury Brands  
and Brand Marketing  
Marriott International

Marriott International has appointed Bruce Ryde as Asia-Pacific Vice-President for Luxury Brands and Brand Marketing. Ryde will be based in the company's Asia-Pacific Continent office in Hong Kong. In this new role, he will own the luxury brand strategy in the Asia Pacific, driving appropriate representation and brand preference for Marriott International luxury brands which comprises The Ritz-Carlton, Ritz-Carlton Reserve, St. Regis, EDITION, JW Marriott, W Hotels, The Luxury Collection and Bulgari. He will also be working in partnership with continent leadership to maximise guest experience and build brand preference.



**Gurinder Bawa**  
Vice President  
Travel Dynamics India

Gurinder Bawa has been appointed as Vice President at Travel Dynamics India. He has moved on from International Travel House Limited, after having a long stint of more than 25 years, while working in various positions, and finally looking after All-India operations of Outbound, Inbound, Domestic holiday packages and MICE International as General Manager – Leisure. Bawa carries a rich experience of more than 28 years in travel industry. Bawa in the role of General Manager looked after All-India operations of Outbound, Inbound, Domestic holiday packages and MICE International.



**Ghanshyam Arora**  
Managing Director  
Travel Dynamics India

Ghanshyam Arora has joined as the Managing Director at Travel Dynamics India. He has moved on from International Travel House Limited, after having a long stint of more than 34 years, and working in various positions, from Finance to Operations and finally as Senior Executive Vice President - Operations. Arora is a commerce graduate from Delhi university and carries a rich experience in travel space in India as well as internationally, wherein he worked closely with GlobalStar Travel Management as Global Board Member, in forming alliance with ITH and carrying it forward with international systems and technology.



**Puneet Singh**  
General Manager  
Grand Hyatt Mumbai

Grand Hyatt Mumbai has appointed Puneet Singh as General Manager for the multi-dimensional lifestyle complex in the heart of Mumbai. With over 25 years of experience across International Luxury Hotels spanning four continents & 10 countries including China, Germany, Turkey, Russia, Tanzania, UAE and Egypt, to name a few, he is a veteran hotelier known to be the game changer in each of his distinct assignments. In his new role at Grand Hyatt Mumbai, Singh will be leading a team of more than 1000 associates taking care of 547 rooms and 110 apartments, award winning restaurants & lounges and the majestic event venues on property.



**Sharad Datta**  
General Manager  
The Westin Mumbai  
Garden City

Sharad Datta has been appointed as the General Manager of The Westin Mumbai Garden City. Datta brings over two decades of rich experience in Hotel management with brands of great repute like Marriott International, Hyatt International and Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. He commenced his career with F&B operations before his first assignment as General Manager with Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. Prior to joining The Westin Mumbai Garden City, Datta was the General Manager at Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Courtyard by Marriott Hyderabad.

# Mark your Calendar

for

# Travel Shows 2018

# Travel

# LUXURY SHOW

**April 7-8, 2018 (Sat - Sun)**  
**Delhi NCR**

# Travel

## WEDDING SHOW

**July 7-8, 2018 (Sat - Sun)**  
**Delhi NCR**

# Travel

## BUSINESS SHOW

**December 1-2, 2018 (Sat - Sun)**  
**Delhi NCR**

**To Exhibit, please contact:**

**Punam Singh:** punam@travelshow.world, +91 98111 58785

**Sarika Bhambhani Rawal:** sarika@ddppl.com, +91 98101 91852

**Sonia Guru:** [sonia.guru@ddppl.com](mailto:sonia.guru@ddppl.com), +91 8800396009





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# MICE AWARDS



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The MICE industry in India is a prominent segment of the booming tourism and hospitality industry. Seen as a lucrative arm that incorporates the meetings, incentives, conferences and events, the sector is a perfect amalgamation of exhibiting trends, infrastructure and packages for MICE groups in the tourism industry. As a tribute, India MICE Awards recognises the achievers of the MICE and the tourism industry, who have worked steadfastly towards enhancing the environment to allow the growth of the MICE wing in the country.

Our topmost honour, the Gold Maya, is awarded to those stalwarts who have shaped the industry to the way it is today and created innovative ways and products to take this sector a notch higher. We also honour young guns who are paving the way forward for the industry with their innovative thinking and proactiveness.

At the black-tie, Silver Service event, various performers enthral and amuse the audience. The first edition of India MICE Awards in Delhi ensures the beginning of a new journey of long-term associations.

India MICE Awards will be travelling to various other cities in India in its subsequent editions. Thus we take it upon ourselves, in our own small way, to revive and enhance MICE in India and award these who are taking this industry to a greater height.

SanJeet

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# India MICE Awards debuts in Delhi

A first-of-its-kind, India MICE Awards, made its debut at The Lalit New Delhi on November 27, 2017. The award ceremony, which had the Tourism Minister **Alphons Kannanthanam** and Tourism Joint Secretary, **Suman Billa** as the Chief Guest and Guest of Honour respectively, left no stone unturned in keeping the guests engaged.

**Kanchan Nath**

The delightful awards ceremony highlighted the growing importance of the Meetings, Incentive, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector. Gracing the evening as Chief Guest was **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India. In his address to the audience, he said, "The MICE sector creates a lot of employment and at the end of the day as a tourism minister, I am concerned about employment generation; this sector does both. Since hospitality plays such an important role, we have to go out of our way to promote such functions. Also, MICE attracts people who are interested in doing

serious business. This sector brings in people and creates jobs - a mandate for the development of the tourism industry." The Ministry of Tourism is focused in its approach to the tourism and hospitality sector and is willing to undertake initiatives that will help broaden its spectrum. Elaborating on this, Kannanthanam said, "We will be coming out with a tourism policy in 2018; it has to go to the cabinet for the approval, we are in the process of drafting and finalising that. The whole objective is to create the right infrastructure, milieu for people to visit our country and for Indians to travel around. The idea is to make it a happy experience for them."

Informing on the soon-to-be launched website of Incredible India, the minister

said, "The objective is to have a comprehensive website which will be useful to the traveller. Also, we are coming up with a new website that would show India comprehensively to the travellers. It will be in user-friendly languages, formats, fonts, etc. Travellers who wish to know more about the country shall witness a seamless experience through the website."

**SanJeet**, Mentor, India MICE Awards, said, "We are glad to create an all-India platform to recognise those behind the success of the MICE industry and to make them feel like achievers. We are happy and proud to announce the India MICE Awards as an exclusive one-of-its-kind event. The award ceremony will be held annually."



(L-R): Nitin Shankar Nagrale, Dilruba Pandey, Jyotsna Suri, Alphons Kannanthanam, Suman Billa, Marisha Kaul and SanJeet



## Chief Guest |

### ALPHONS KANNANTHANAM

The Chief Guest of the glittering awards, **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, expresses, “Initiatives like India MICE Awards are great because this is one sector which showcases tremendous potential. It results in long-stay guests and occupied hotel rooms. Therefore, we need to focus on how to bring in more of MICE into the country, because they are huge money spinners.”

► **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, recieved the award for Chief Guest and was felicitated by **SanJeet**, Mentor, India MICE Awards; **Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson and Managing Director, Bharat Hotels and **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.







## Guest of Honour |

### SUMAN BILLA

Tourism policies and procedures are undergoing continuous change. Speaking about the induction of single-window clearance for group visa in the new tourism policy, Guest of Honour, **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, says, "We are still in talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs because even though we have e-Visa, it does not apply to conferences. Firstly, we want to electronically upgrade the conference visa, secondly, we want to initiate group clearance for conferences." "We want to harness the growth of the MICE industry. We want to set up convention promotion bureaus at various destinations and at state levels. We also want the ICPB board to become the mother body," concludes Billa, while speaking about the potential of the MICE industry and how it can be made competitive.

► **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, received the award for Guest of Honour and was felicitated by Team, India MICE Awards.





## Gallery of Legends |

### AMAN NATH

Awards received, should impel one to work and grow even more, feels **Aman Nath**, Founder and Chairman, Neemrana Hotels. He further says, "We at Neemrana are passionate about what we do. We want to be in every state and touch every ruin. We want to bring employment and empower people, that's our aim." Elaborating on the awards, he says, "I receive this award in humility. I think that in the journey of karma, an award is just a milestone, it's not the destination, because you never know how far you are going to travel. Receiving an award should not be an impediment and one should try and achieve more. The journey is continuous."

► **Aman Nath**, Founder and Chairman, Neemrana Hotels, received the award for **Gallery of Legends**

## DDP Game Changer |

### SUNIL GHADIOK

Commenting on the awards' evening, **Sunil Ghadiok**, Chief Executive Officer, Nidra Hospitality (a part of Shanti Hospitality Group), says, "I think DDP puts in a huge amount of effort, which is commendable. I think it's a huge process in selecting the right and the most deserving people. To reward them is a great encouragement, not only for all the players in the industry, but also the people who have put in effort into making what MICE is in India today."

► **Sunil Ghadiok**, Chief Executive Officer, Nidra Hospitality, received the award for **DDP Game Changer**



## DDP Trailblazer |

### HIMMAT ANAND

He left the corporate world to pursue his decade old dream of creating a hospitality brand. **Himmat Anand**, Founder, The Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels, shares, "The awards, which begun a few years ago are an amazing success story. The fact that you have taken it pan India and diversified it to not just tourism and travel, but other segments as well. The awards recognises the best of the best. I wish the team all the best."

► **Himmat Anand**, Founder, The Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels, received the award for **DDP Trailblazer**





## Guest of Honour

### MARISHA KAUL

**M**arisha Kaul, Gladrags Mrs. India-North 2017, expresses, "It was indeed a pleasure being present at the India MICE awards as the guest of honour. Kudos to the organisers for taking up the initiative to recognise, honour and encourage all those behind the success of this industry and organising the event so well. I feel a prestigious recognition of this kind will stimulate much more talent in the years to come."

► Dr. Marisha Kaul, Gladrags Mrs. India-North 2017 being honoured with Pearl Trophy 'Maya' for her support to India MICE Awards

## Best MICE Hotel

### CROWNE PLAZA, GREATER NOIDA

**C**rowne Plaza Greater Noida boasts of being more than just a hotel, with the most versatile meeting spaces, including indoor and outdoor options, magnificent and functional venues, personalised service and exceptional food. They are always "one step ahead", says **Greesh Bindra**, Regional General Manager, North & West India IHG and General Manager Crowne Plaza Greater Noida. "Winning this award is like a testament of our claim to be the most preferred international hotel brand for business, events and celebrations. The inaugural edition of the India MICE Awards was truly grandeur as it brought the entire hospitality industry together," he adds.

► The award was given to **Crowne Plaza, Greater Noida** and received by **Nivesh Bhagtani**, Duty Manager and **Greesh Bindra**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida



## Best Experiential MICE Agent

### BLUE MOON TRAVELS

**S**tating that MICE is the only way to grow in this competitive trade, **Vijay Dadhich**, Managing Director, Blue Moon Travels, says, "We believe we need to raise our bar. For MICE, we have done all shapes and sizes of people. We have been the official travel partner for IFFA for the past 10 years. We have done MICE from Las Vegas, to Europe to Asia, all the way to Australia, and within India. We have always been looking for an experiential journey for our customers. The awards ceremony was wonderfully executed. Sanjeet always felicitates people who do good work in the industry."

► The award was given to **Blue Moon Travels** and received by **Sachin Varma**, Manager, Business Development and **Vijay Dadhich**, Managing Director



## Best Organizer of Conferences - Domestic | ICE GROUP INDIA

Thrilled to have received their first award, **Disha Shah**, Director, ice Group India, expresses, "It was a good evening and a well organised event. We are very thrilled to have received this award. We will keep doing the hard work and hope to be here again next year. It was the first MICE awards and I must compliment the organisers."

► The award was given to **ice Group India** and received by **Disha Shah**, Director and **Mohit Khanna**, Managing Director

## Best Business Hotel | CROWNE PLAZA NEW DELHI MAYUR VIHAR

The hotel is at a short distance of 20 minutes from the commercial hub of Noida. The destination provides an excellent base for guests travelling to key business districts such as Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Jasola and Nehru Place. Corporate travellers can appreciate amenities including the 24-hour business centre with free high-speed internet access.

► The award was given to **Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar** and received by **Vikas Oswal**, General Manager and **Veenu Rastogi**, Area Director - Sales & Marketing, North & West India



## Best MICE Operator - Domestic | COX & KINGS

Be it a business executive, a frontline salesman, a neighbourhood retailer or a business agent, there are a few things that drives one to perform at their peak. Cox and Kings ensures its customers some extraordinary offerings that exhibits excellence. The company surpassed its performance to win the recognition of Best MICE Operator - Domestic at the India MICE Awards.

► The award was given to **Cox & Kings** and received by **Nagender Panwar**, Head Operations

## Leading MICE Company | CONCEPT CONFERENCES

Grateful to his team for their contribution, **Ashish Jagota**, Executive Director, Concept Conferences, says, "It's amazing to receive this award. It's not just an award but a responsibility to go on. I am thankful to my team for getting us to this platform. These awards are a good appreciation for our clients who we work with. It's a good recognition in the industry."

► The award was given to **Concept Conferences** and received by Executive Directors, **Venessa Williams** and **Ashish Jagota**







## Best MICE Travel Agency of the Year

### TED TRAVEL & EXPERIENCES

Stating that the event goes a long way in promoting the industry, **Manoj Raina**, Domestic Operation – Head, Ted Travel & Experiences, shares, “This is a good event, we should do such programmes often, just to promote our industry. We are just a two-and-a-half-year-old company and have been doing good business, domestic as well as international. We have achieved a 100 crore business in the last two years.”

► The award was given to **Ted Travel & Experiences** and received by **Aakash Tufchi**, Manager Sales, **Manoj Raina**, Domestic Operation - Head

## Best MICE Destination

### NBTC HOLLAND TOURISM

**Pooja Sabharwal**, Account Director, Destination Holland - India, says, “It is such a proud moment for NBTC Holland Tourism to receive the award for Best MICE destination. Year 2017 was a great year for Holland not only with respect to leisure tourism, but also with respect to being pitched as a top European destination for meetings, incentives, conferences and events. Being the proud recipient of ‘Maya’ was possible due to the continued commitment of our travel partners to promote the MICE facilities in Holland amongst Indians.”

► The award was given to **NBTC Holland Tourism** and received by **Pooja Sabharwal** Account Director and Team



## Best MICE Start-up

### TENTH PLANET GROUP

**Tenth Planet Group** is a leading digital technology company from Mumbai. **Shivdutt Das**, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Tenth Planet Group, on receiving the accolade says, “We have been nominated because we are one of the most promising start-ups today and are working a lot in the digital space. The kind of footprints we have created in the past one year is remarkable and that’s what brought us here.” Expressing on the ceremony, he said, “I think the ceremony has opened a door of opportunities. The recognition makes us more responsible towards our customers.”

► The award was given to **Tenth Planet Group** and received by **Shivdutt Das**, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder

## Best Customized Tour Operator

### MYUZ HOLIDAYS

Encouragement through awards can be a great motivating factor, feels **Ripos Das**, Managing Director, Myuz Holidays. He further shares, “This is the first time for us and its very special. For the last seven years we are delivering in the service industry. The accolade is amazing and encourages us to provide better services to customers. We are further motivated to improve our services.”

► The award was given to **MYUZ Holidays** and received by **Ripos Das**, Managing Director





## Best MICE Resort - 4 Star |

### POOVAR ISLAND RESORT

Unspoilt and unexplored, enveloped by the most serene backwaters, and opening out to the Arabian Sea, Poovar Island Resort is truly a window into paradise. Built on 25 acres of lush green coconut gardens alongside the beach, the resort comprises of elegant land based superior rooms, and is unique for the floating cottages and villas. Located 30 kms from Trivandrum International Airport, the resort is accessible only by a 10-minute boat ride on the river.

► The award was given to **Poovar Island Resort** and received by **S. Jaykumar**, General Manager (extreme right)

## Best Emerging MICE Travel Agency |

### MADRAS TRAVELS & TOURS

Privileged and excited to have won the recognition, **Vatsala Subramanian**, COO, Madras Travels & Tours, Chennai, says, "I am feeling highly energised, motivated and encouraged after receiving this award. In the last six to eight months, we have done quite a few groups, ranging group size from 35 to 300 to various destinations, due to which we were nominated. I think it's a wonderful initiative. We are thankful to DDP publication. It not only encourages and motivates us, it's a milestone and we hope to cross many more year-after year."

► The award was given to **Madras Travels & Tours** and received by **Vatsala Subramanian**, Chief Operating Officer



## Best Conference Venue |

### 18.99 LATITUDE BANQUETS

Elated to witness MICE being recognised through this one-of-a-kind platform, **Shantanu Wagle**, Regional Sales Head - West, 18.99 Latitude Banquets, says, "We are a one-year-old organisation based in Mumbai, which is blessed with an ideal location, completely suited for the discerning corporate and social requirements. It is pleasing to see that MICE category is being recognised on such platform. We are witnessing collaboration with all kinds of players. I think the future is very exciting for the industry and such gatherings will only encourage the industry to grow swiftly."

► The award was given to **18.99 Latitude Banquets** and received by **Rajneesh Wakhloo**, Regional Sales Head - North and **Shantanu Wagle**, Regional Sales Head - West

## Fastest Growing MICE Travel Agency

### FRONTIER HOLIDAYS

Award functions always excite everyone because of the appreciation for the hard work that is put in. When it is organised as well as the India MICE Awards, it is a great to participate in them, says **Bharathi Shetty**, MD & CEO, Frontier Holidays. "This award has set a higher benchmark for us, as a team to deliver more. We wish to bring the hidden treasures, well informed and ever demanding traveller needs. We at Frontier always believe in being a go getter and for us the sky is the limit," adds Shetty.

► The award was given to **Frontier Holidays**







## Best Meetings and Conventions Hotel | LULU INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER & GARDEN HOTELS

Awards empower those who work behind the scenes, constantly contributing to a company's success, shares **Jose Sebastian**, General Manager, Lulu International Convention Center & Garden Hotels. He says, "These awards are important for the companies who exhibit their performance at the national level."

► The award was given to **Lulu International Convention Center & Garden Hotels** and received by **Reji Mathew**, Assistant General Manager and **Jose Sebastian**, General Manager

## Best Event Organizer | WIZARD EVENTS & CONFERENCES

From one of the leading MICE agencies in the fraternity, **Kapil Arora**, Director- Sales & Operations, Wizard Events & Conferences, on receiving accolades shares, "It's a good initiative and MICE itself is a very big industry, so, it needs to be differentiated. It was a good initiative by DDP. The awards showcased good players who are helping to grow this industry well."

► The award was given to **Wizard Events & Conferences** and received by **Kapil Arora**, Director- Sales & Operations



## Best Convention & Exhibition Centre | CLARKS EXOTICA CONVENTION RESORT AND SPA

The glittering ceremony saw exceptional work being recognised on an industry platform. **Varun Sharma**, Director - Food & Beverage, Clarks Exotica Convention Resort and Spa, shares, "The event was organised 'flawlessly'. This platform aims in developing innovative, creative hoteliers who stand the chance to become global players."

► The award was given to **Clarks Exotica Convention Resort And Spa** and received by **Varun Sharma**, Director - Food & Beverage and **Ramachandra Bhat**, Director - Finance



## Best MICE Concepts | EPIC INDIA TOURS & EVENTS

Epic India Tours and Travels believe that their faith in 'Hard Work comes with a price, Work Smart' culture gets them closer to perfection everyday. **Pankaj Malhotra**, Director, Epic India Tours & Events, shares, "India MICE Awards was a well organised and very professional curated event along with the element of wit, which took it to a different level."

► The award was given to **Epic India Tours & Events** and received by **Pankaj Malhotra**, Group Head, **Rahul Dham**, Associate Director - MICE Operations, **Nupur Sood**, Director, **Kapil Dev Chhawary**, Assistant Manager - MICE Operations



## Best Debut Hotel - MICE | EFCEE SAROVAR PORTICO, BHAVNAGAR

The awards give you a benchmark to improve yourself further, feels **Komalkant Sharma**, Chairman & Managing Director, Efcee Sarovar Portico, Bhavnagar. He further states, "We are from Leela group of companies, primarily into ship breaking and construction. It's our maiden property and a year has been completed. These awards for sure are motivational. Also, it generated a good networking platform for newcomers like us."

► The award was given to **Efcee Sarovar Portico, Bhavnagar** and received by **Komalkant Sharma**, Chairman & Managing Director





## Best Organizer of Conferences - International | **PARRY TRAVELS**

A well organised event can be a pleasure for all to attend. Talking about recognition through the awards, **Laxmi Angara**, BU Head, Parry Travels, says, "We are more specialised in international exhibitions and annual conferences, more of MICE events. We also do trade shows, buyer-seller meets. The evening was very well organised, the flow of the event was awesome. We are proud to receive the award."

► The award was given to **Parry Travels** and received by **Laxmi Angara**, BU Head

## Best Hotel and Event Facilities | **UDAY SAMUDRA LEISURE BEACH HOTEL & SPA**

UDS located at the famed beaches of Kovalam, just 15 meters from the sea, is an exclusive 5 Star leisure beach hotel - a destination by itself. The setting, facilities, people, spa, cuisine and its whole philosophy is dedicated to one's personal wellness in a luxurious environment. The landscaping has its own serenity, a harmony of a defined architecture, spacious lawns, blue water pools and soaring coconut grooves all set in four tranquil acres by the sea.

► The award was given to **Uday Samudra Leisure Beach Hotel & Spa** and received by **Raja Gopal Iyer**, CEO



## Best Destination Management Company | **STHI HOLIDAYS INDIA**

The Leaf Holidays has been established by a group of experienced professionals with a deep knowledge of the hospitality industry, spearheaded by finest individuals from the trades of the hotel/ travel industry. The team guarantees the best services at all times. The Leaf Holidays Singapore has its branch office in Malaysia, Dubai and India.

► The award was given to **STHI Holidays India** and received by **Krishan Gupta**, CFO and **Vinil Kumar**, IT and Admin Head

## Best Conference Hotel | **CROWNE PLAZA NEW DELHI ROHINI**

Winning the accolade highlights our dedication towards the services and facilities that we provide to our guests, says **Sarad Upadhyay**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Rohini. "We direct our efforts towards making each guest feel at home and ensure that they enjoy their time with us. We aim to work hard and look forward to achieving many more," he adds.

► The award was given to **Crowne Plaza New Delhi Rohini** and received by **Srishti S. Narula**, AM - PR & Marketing and **Sarad Upadhyay**, General Manager



## Best Strategic Business Unit | **PACIFIC WORLD**

"We received the recognition due to the kind of work we have done in the MICE business," says **Naveen Rizvi**, Regional Director India & Indian Ocean, Pacific World. He added, "I think receiving the award will help us take the company forward. This will add credibility to our business."

► The award was given to **Pacific World** and received by **Naveen Rizvi**, Regional Director India & Indian Ocean





## Best Organizer for Incentive Programme

### HI WALK TRAVELS

**Rajesh Gupta**, Founder, Hi Walk Travels, while receiving the award shared that it was Hi Walk's ability to display creativity and imagination, while servicing its incentive clients, which was the key reason for garnering the prestigious recognition. Apart from thanking clients, he says, "DDP did a fantastic job, the event was extremely well structured and precise. The award reassures us that we are on the right track."

► The award was given to **Hi Walk Travels** and received by **Rajesh Gupta**, Founder

## Best Small Hotel for Meetings & Incentives

### SAROVAR PORTICO JAIPUR

The corporate traveller will find the state-of-the-art business facilities and conference rooms exceeding his expectations at this hotel. On receiving the award, **Rahul Sinha**, General Manager, Sarovar Portico Jaipur, says, "The MICE award is a good recognition, for a hotel like us. The accolade showcases to the world, our numerous offerings on the MICE segment."

► The award was given to **Sarovar Portico Jaipur** and received by **Sharafat Ali**, Sales Manager, **Rahul Sinha**, General Manager



## Best MICE Operator - International

### ADIONA TRAVELS

Incentive travel is a global management tool, it uses exceptional travel experiences to motivate participants for increased levels of performance in support of organisational goals. **Pawan Kharab**, Director, Adiona Travels, shares, "I appreciate the award ceremony. It was fantastic. Recently, we organised MICE tour of 700 people to Thailand and 500 people to Australia for which I feel we have been recognised. It's a great feeling when you get an award, especially in your own field, it's always a double pleasure."

► The award was given to **Adiona Travels** and received by Directors, **Lalit Sharma** and **Pawan Kharab**

## Gold Partner

### ASPRI SPIRITS

**Aspri Spirits** today represents some of the finest brands in the world of wines, beer, cider and spirits and has emerged as the top player in the alcoholic beverage segment. The company with its commitment to ensure highest quality standards focuses on the sales, marketing and distribution is dedicated to building premium international brands in travel retail and domestic markets across the Indian sub-continent.

► The award was given to **Aspri Spirits** and received by **Sachin Abrol**, Controller Sales - North & East



## Hospitality Partner

### THE LALIT NEW DELHI

**Keshav Suri**, Chairperson and Managing Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, says, "For any hotelier, it is a matter of pride and honour to be nominated and to win. I would like to congratulate the team for carving this niche and also thank them for recognising the initiatives we have taken at The Lalit and awarding them."

► The award was given to **The Lalit New Delhi** and received by **Vishal Sharma**, Head of Sales Banquet and **Vijay Bhalla**, National Head - Corporate Sales





# GLIMPSES of India **MICE** Awards





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