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# M!CEtalk®

Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

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MoT GUNG-HO ON

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Summer 2023

ASIA'S leading business magazine  
**M!CE**talk  
Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

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## India high on incentives



# NEWS

## Corporate travel & M!CE segment continue to surge

Recently released  
HVS Anarock's  
Indian Hospitality



Industry Overview 2022 report has observed that resurgence of corporate travel and large-ticket conferences and events helped in reshaping the fortunes of commercial markets and popular M!CE destinations. "Buoyed by segments such as weddings and events, the hospitality sector continued its unabated growth in ARRs to recover in part the losses of the previous two years. Corporate travel recovered as well, contributing to the overall recovery of the sector. Also, the resurgence in corporate travel, large-ticket conferences and events and weddings, fueled the recovery in most commercial markets," the report stated.

## STIC Travel Group launches new M!CE brand

STIC Travel Group has announced a new M!CE brand,



StepUP Xperiences. It will basically cater to international M!CE requirements and will offer a complete range of services from travel logistics and accommodation to event planning and execution. Speaking on the occasion, **Subhash Goyal**, Chairman, STIC Travel Group said, "As the demand for outbound M!CE travel from India continues to soar, we recognized the need for a specialized brand that can cater to the unique requirements of Indian corporate clients. StepUP Xperiences is the result of our vision to create a dedicated and independent brand."

## KTDC convention centre wins applause



Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa has appreciated convention centre at KTDC. Applauding the efforts of the Kerala government, Kant said, "Kerala government has done spectacular work in constructing an eco-friendly convention centre at KTDC in record time. This convention centre has won huge appreciation on accounts of its architecture, design, sustainability, lighting and the usage of bamboo." Kant further added, "This convention centre will be a permanent asset for the backwaters of Kerala and will catalyze the emergence of Kerala as a M!CE destination."



## Cvent lists top performing M!CE hotels

Cvent, an industry-leading meetings, events, and hospitality technology provider, has released its lists of the Top Meeting Destinations and Top Meeting Hotels for Asia Pacific. These lists—which also include regional rankings for North

America, Europe and the Middle East & Africa—were compiled based on sourcing activity through the Cvent Supplier Network, one of the world's largest venue-sourcing platforms. The top 10 meeting destinations in Asia-Pacific listed by Cvent are Singapore, Sydney, Bangkok, Seoul, Melbourne, Tokyo, Bali, Kuala Lumpur, Gold Coast and Phuket while top 10 meeting hotels in Asia-Pacific are Fairmont Singapore, Hyatt Regency Sydney, Shangri-La Singapore, Conrad Centennial Singapore, Swissôtel The Stamford Singapore, InterContinental Singapore, Pan Pacific Singapore, Hilton Singapore Orchard, Parkroyal Collection, Singapore and JW Marriott Hotel Singapore South Beach.

## Corporate travel demand remains strong in Q1 2023



Q1 2023 corporate travel demand remained strong despite the mixed economic conditions, with securing options and booking lower prices driving corporate travellers to book online early, stated FCM Consulting's latest Global Trends Report. "Despite mixed economic conditions, corporate travel demand remained strong in Q1 2023. High global inflation rates continue

to put pressure on costs and the travel industry eco-system has reviewed operating costs, changed pricing, upgraded technology to drive efficiency to reduce underlying costs and removed disruption and risks," said **Bertrand Sallet**, Managing Director, FCM Asia.

## IHG holds roadshow to promote business travel in China

IHG Hotels & Resorts has launched its 2023 IHG Greater China Expo & Owner Roadshow with the theme of Go Beyond, hosting events in Shenzhen, Shanghai and Beijing to showcase the company's robust



development in the business travel market. **Rita Jiang**, Vice President, Commercial, IHG Greater China, said, "Along with the full economic recovery in China, business travel has finally resumed and entered a fast lane of development, bringing with it great confidence and motivation for IHG to expand the business travel and M!CE markets. This Expo showcases IHG's 12 unique brands in Greater China, and also provides an opportunity for offline communication between our hotels and business travel clients. It is the right time and place for business travel to grow, and this roadshow provides an opportunity for us to further explore markets and channels."

## Qatar sets agenda to become leader in business events

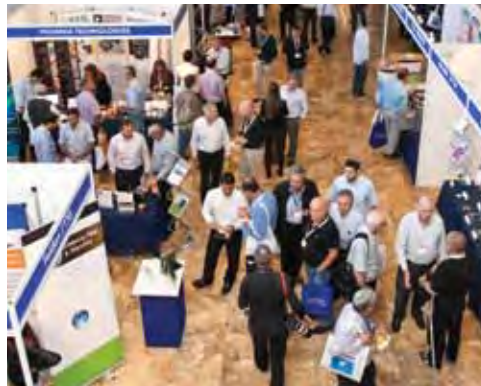
Qatar has set high goals to emerge as leader in business events. **Akbar Al Baker**, Chairman, Qatar Tourism and Group CEO, Qatar Airways, said, "Qatar has bold ambitions to become a global leader in business events, which Qatar Tourism views as



central to achieving its 2030 tourism goals. Qatar's strategic location, multi-award-winning airline and airport, open visa facilitation and industry-leading selection of conferencing and exhibition facilities, make it an ideal choice for seamless, productive, and enjoyable business travel." Echoing the same sentiments, **Berthold Trenkel**, COO, Qatar Tourism, said, "Last year, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 was not only a springboard, it catapulted forward and put Qatar on the map of tourism. M!CE is one of the pillars of tourism. We are now well established, we are here to 'rock and roll' and we are just getting started."

## Global M!CE set to reach US \$1,478 bn by 2032: Extrapolate

As per the recent research report published by Extrapolate, the global M!CE market is poised to experience robust growth and accrue a market size of US \$1,478 billion by 2032, exhibiting a



CAGR of 27.5 per cent between 2023 and 2032. This is a significant increase from the base market size of US \$506.1 billion in 2022, with the growing proliferation of event organizations. "The significant advancement in the use of technology for M!CE events is propelling the market further. With hybrid and virtual events being the only option for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions during COVID, several companies have shifted to this medium for every event," report stated.

## Business events industry continues to leap forward

A new research study titled 2023 Global Economic Significance of Business Events has revealed that in 2022, global business events recovered steadily at about 80 per cent of pre-COVID



levels. The study found that Middle East, North America and Central and Eastern Europe were the main regions which led the recovery. "Western Europe, Latin America, Asia and the Caribbean were the regions which witnessed a sluggish pace of revival but will see some of the strongest growth," the study stated. It also noted, "The reduction of business events due to COVID led to significant loss of innovation, with 65 per cent reporting a reduction in research and development prioritization." **Adam Sacks**, President, Tourism Economics, Oxford Economics, said, "The industry has made significant strides to recover losses. Two-thirds of global direct business event spending was lost in 2020. The three-year cumulative lost sales total \$1.9 trillion USD."



# MoT GUNG-HO ON M!CE BUSINESS

Ministry of Tourism plans a new digital campaign to boost M!CE tourism in big way after announcing dedicated fund for promoting the industry.



**Nisha Verma**

**R**akesh Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MoT), has said that the G20 Presidency of India is a great opportunity to present the country's M!CE potential. "We are going to step up our efforts to promote India as a M!CE destination. We are going to pick up all 55 destinations where G20 meetings are going to be held. We are also launching a major campaign around M!CE in digital marketing space, so that people come to know



**RAKESH VERMA**  
Additional Secretary,  
MoT, Govt of India

about it. The M!CE conferences, which are going outside, at least they will explore venues within India," he added.

MoT recently organized the second Tourism Working Group meeting in Siliguri. Verma gave a presentation on the proceedings of the event alongside Secretary, Tourism, sharing details on how the delegates attending the meeting, not only deliberated on the issues and topics at hand with each other, but also experienced the various facets of the beautiful destination. While Siliguri is not popularly known as a destination for M!CE events. Verma, however, conceded, "Darjeeling is an established destination, and it receives a lot of tourists and the entire

region of Siliguri, Darjeeling area has a lot of potential and we will continue to focus on this. There are a lot of adventure tourism opportunities. I am sure that this has got an impetus due to our

***Darjeeling is an established destination, and it receives a lot of tourists. We will continue to focus on it***

G20 meetings and we will focus on that."

## **NIDHI progress**

Speaking on the NIDHI portal, Verma said, "NIDHI portal has further grown. We are now putting a destination centric website view where you pick up one destination and you can get all hotels, tour operators, attractions and tourist guides also. We are trying to now make it more holistic. It has not yet been launched in a big way, but now that we have tried, tested and everyone is on board, we will have a launch of NIDHI in a big way." ➔





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# SETTING THE BALL ROLLING

Union Ministry of Tourism's recent Chintan Shivir in New Delhi deliberates & formulates programmes for advancing Tourism in Mission Mode in country.



**T**he two-day Chintan Shivir, attended by the states, industry associations and industry leaders, had 11 knowledge sessions covering a wide variety of topics. Addressing the gathering on Day 1, G K Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture & DoNER, said that the government's vision is to leverage tourism as a vehicle for socio-economic development, job creation and achieving sustainable development goals for the country.

He said that it is the most opportune moment to unveil a shared vision for future of India's tourism, guiding its course for next 25 years to make India as the most sought-after travel destination in the world when India celebrates 100 years of Independence in 2047. He pointed out the three key pillars of developing tourism in mission mode—active participation of the states, convergence of government programmes and public private partnerships (PPPs). He said that

one major step would be to develop national strategies and models for providing guidance to the states in developing their tourism potential. The Ministry has recently formulated national strategies for development of various tourism sectors such as rural tourism, adventure tourism, MICE tourism, ecotourism, and medical tourism.

## Green tourism is key

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, called Chintan Shivir a platform for

all stakeholders to conduct fruitful interactions and share good practices followed across the country and a stage to share unique ideas involving technological solutions in travel sector, sustainability in tourism and responsible travel with the aim to take the benefits of tourism to the grassroots level.

## Incredible India@100

On Day 1, the discussions were divided into six sessions, where participants deliberated on Incredible

## Key highlights of Chintan Shivir

- Industry aspirations for US \$3 trillion GDP in 2047
- Best practice for grant of Industry Status to tourism and hospitality sector by Rajasthan to be taken up for replication by other states
- A more focused State tourism policy benchmarking exercise will be taken up with less parameters and more rigour in analysis of state policies
- A working group to go into various aspects of Ease of Doing Business in Tourism and Hospitality
- Destination profiles to be created to attract private sector investment
- Lakshadweep as a success story for PPP to be used for replication
- India as a MICE and Wedding Destination - Launch of national marketing campaigns
- MICE - Hyderabad Convention Promotion Bureau is a good model for destination level convention bureau—to be studied in detail for replication
- Ministry to engage with UNWTO for capacity building tourism investment strategy
- Ministry to pursue strong engagement with startups in tourism and hospitality
- NIDHI plus will be positioned as National Tourist Services Portal and linked to incredible India for SEO
- ATITHYAM - is a major transformative initiative from Gujarat Tourism to be replicated at the national level
- Convergence - Inter ministerial working groups set up to develop convergence matrix in four areas of connectivity and infrastructure, tourism products and experiences, skill development, regulatory reforms and ease of doing business
- Homestays - one nation one registration to be pursued
- Centre of Excellence for Best Practices to be explored to benchmark, replicate and scale up best practices by the States and Industry
- Rural Tourism Cluster Development - model to be developed
- Mega Adventure Trails - to be developed in partnership with MoEFCC, MHA, Civil Aviation and States
- Model Law on Adventure Tourism - to be finalised expeditiously
- Adventure Tourism Rescue Centre to be finalised expeditiously
- Challenge mode for selection of 50 destinations as per budget announcement presented to the States.



India@100 – Shared vision of Central Government, States and Industry, Policy Benchmarking and Ease of Doing Business, Investible Projects and Public Private Partnerships, Global Best Practices and Capacity Building for Tourism Investments by UNWTO, Developing M!CE Tourism and Wedding Tourism and Innovation and Digitalisation and Startups in Tourism Sector. Some of the key speakers were representatives from the industry stakeholders, international organizations like World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the State Governments.

Rajasthan's presentation focused on granting of industry status to the tourism and hospitality sector along with benefits accrued to the industry from the same.

On the other hand, Government of Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh showcased the investible projects to attract investment

in tourism and hospitality sector. Union Territory of Lakshadweep Islands also shared successful case studies of PPP.

### **M!CE & weddings**

There was a separate session to deliberate on various policies, initiatives and strategies for development of M!CE tourism and wedding tourism in the country. M!CE tourism brings higher revenue and year-round business for the destination overcoming seasonality. At the same time, M!CE needs its own ecosystem before a destination can succeed as M!CE destination. Wedding destinations are also fast emerging segment in India. Telangana showcased how M!CE tourism in the state of Telangana was being developed and promoted via dedicated Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau.

The MoT facilitated the states to recognize the best practices

followed by them in six major categories under Swadesh Darshan Scheme. The government has recently announced to promote development of Tourism Sector in Mission Mode with active participation of the states and convergence of government schemes and PPP.

### **There was separate session to deliberate on various policies & strategies for development of M!CE tourism**

Chintan Shivir also offered an opportunity to deliberate on the strategies and preparations for the 1st Global Tourism Investors' Summit from 17 to 19 May 2023.

### **Day 2**

On Day 2, Reddy thanked the participants of the conference for sharing insightful thoughts and strategies that can be adopted nationally to implement Tourism in Mission Mode in India. Singh concluded the two-day Chintan Shivir talking about the upcoming 1st Global Tourism Investors Summit and the valuable inputs that have been received from stakeholders to carry forward the mission of growth in India's tourism sector.

### **Convergence is key**

The second day covered the issues related to Convergence of Government Programmes across multiple sectors. The stakeholders deliberated on several issues to build synergies in the plans of different ministries for development of connectivity and infrastructure to enhance the potential of tourist destinations. ➔



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# CLEAR CUT VISION

Newly appointed Director General, Tourism, **Manisha Saxena** outlines her priorities for M!CE sector & says sector will flourish banking on G20 events.



**Nisha Verma**

**M**anisha Saxena, Director General, Tourism, MoT, Govt. of India is not new to tourism, having served as the Principal Secretary, Tourism, Government of Mizoram, before moving to the central ministry in March. Sharing her views on the sector, she said, "I think there is an overall focus on tourism and the Hon'ble Prime Minister has been constantly underlining the need to develop India as a tourism hub, so that it can lead to better livelihoods and better jobs in this sector. The idea is to tell all those stories in a way that entices foreign tourists and encourage domestic tourists to see the country. Even one lifetime is not enough to see all of India. I think the sooner one starts, the better it is. I have been posted in Delhi, Goa and even Northeast. Thus, I feel that it is a country of such diversity that people living in one region cannot even imagine what the other region would be like. Hence, it will be good if everybody can

travel a lot and learn about the diversity in the country. My endeavour in this ministry would be to facilitate that process and become a part of it in whatever way possible."

## **G20 Presidency**

Talking about India's G20 Presidency, she shared, "It is a big opportunity to leverage tourism



**MANISHA SAXENA**  
Director General,  
Tourism, MoT, Govt. of India

as one of the foremost economic activities and let the world see what we have to offer. Accordingly, the strategy for G20 events has

been planned in such a way that we are going to 56 cities with so many events happening. Every ministry is doing an event in a new destination. Hence, I think it will be a huge showcase for the international community with the kind of efforts that are being taken. As part of G20 events, many cities are improving their infrastructure. It is not just one event. A lot of effort is being put into making that destination more beautiful, pre-sustainable, more attractive for all kinds of tourists."

## **Key focus**

In her new role, informed Saxena, "My focus would be to facilitate the tourism sector in as many ways as possible, as part of MoT's overall policy. I just want to be a part of the team which delivers tourism as one of the foremost economic activities in India."

## **Technology integration**

Talking about the power of technology in today's travel industry, she commented, "In earlier days,

when you planned a trip, you consulted a travel agent or you spoke to someone who has been on that side of the world. Now everybody just picks up their phone or laptop and browse. Hence, a digital presentation of your strengths is very important as a destination and a lot of states

***My focus would be to facilitate the tourism sector in as many ways as possible, as part of MoT's overall policy***

have done some good work on it. Almost everyone has a website and a tourism app. However, challenge of digitalization is how to combine all of it with the places where all the action is. I think, we are working keenly on it, and we will be able to bridge that gap." ➔





# REDEFINING MICE TO MISE

Pioneers in the Sports Travel, Hospitality & Experiences fraternity, DreamSetGo puts a sporty spin on the traditional MICE concept.



**M**ISE is a one-of-a-kind offering from the house of DreamSetGo, a company that specialises in sports travel and experiences. With its core expertise in sports travel, DreamSetGo is set to reinvent MICE to MISE (Meetings, Incentives, Sports & Experiences) for today's evolved business travellers. With the company's unique offering, DreamSetGo levels up the conventional MICE concept with a much more experiential offering that leaves you with memories of a lifetime.

Traditionally, the acronym—MICE stands for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions. Such business travel is highly regarded as a sub-sector that significantly contributes to India's tourism and hospitality economy. Having said this, after a two-year hiatus from travelling, there was a major shift in the mindset of the post-pandemic business traveller. Remote and hybrid work models led to the rise of travel trends such as revenge travel, bleisure, and work-cations. With pent-up demand, rising aspirations and disposable income, the high customer intent for experiential travel paved the way for business travel with a sporty twist. With DreamSetGo, business travellers now have access to experience MICE centred around sports.

## Adding value to MICE

It is a known fact that the lessons we learn from sports can be applied to the business world. Great teamwork can inspire and unite organisations to deliver value. Adding a sports element to business travel is a win-win situation. It helps build highly motivated teams and individuals, as well as provide rewarding experiences for employees, supporting retention as a great employee-first brand.

***At DreamSetGo, there has been an uptick in requests for MISE travel with corporates now seeking new ideas to reward their employees***

## Unique offerings

DreamSetGo is the luxury sports travel experiences platform from the house of DreamSports—India's leading sports technology company. Founded in 2019, DreamSetGo bridges the gap between Indian sports fans and global sporting events. While traditional MICE services like High-tea and gala dinners were always high up the list, but with the change in trend, the requirement has shifted and evolved from conventional offerings into extraordinary experiences. Picture a conventional English High

Tea being elevated to new heights, such as indulging in High-tea with the cricket legend Sourav Ganguly at Lord's, relishing a private yacht dinner with a sporting legend, or conducting board meetings with a breathtaking stadium view. These are just glimpses of the incredible experiences that await you.

## Standout brand

The exclusive tie-ups with global clubs, sporting bodies and DMCs across markets make them stand out. To list a few of the elite alliances, they have partnered with Manchester United, On Location, ICC Travel & Tours, and Rugby World Cup 2023. Last year in Cricket, DreamSetGo served as the 'Official Travel Agent' for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Australia 2022. In motorsports, it was the best seats at race tracks and exclusive behind-the-scenes access. They followed a similar suit in the biggest tennis tournaments and Rugby Events.

"Our product caters to the MICE audience. With MISE, it is tailored to deliver them a larger-than-life experience, celebrating in a sporty and unique way," said **Amit Vyas**, Head, MICE & Sports Travel, DreamSetGo.

Echoing the same sentiments, DreamSetGo CBO & Co-founder, **Monish Shah** said, "Indian sports fans don't have a reliable one-stop solution to witness LIVE sports. We try to make sports travel better for passionate



**AMIT VYAS**  
Head, MICE & Sports Travel,  
DreamSetGo

fans and corporate travellers, offering them tailor-made experiences to global sporting spectacles."

## Ample achievements

At DreamSetGo, there has been an uptick in requests for MISE travel with corporates now seeking new and innovative ideas to incentivize and reward their employees. Much of this has come post DreamSetGo curating official experiences at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Australia 2022 & VIP box experiences with Gujarat Titans. Apart from adding alliances like this, DreamSetGo also added another asset to their arsenal. It is getting Sourav Ganguly on board as their Brand Ambassador aka 'Super Captain' as he fondly goes by at DreamSetGo. Adding another feather to their hat was winning the ET Travel and Tourism Annual Conclave recognition award for Best Sports Travel Operator.

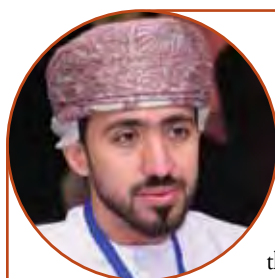
The norm will have you host MICE conferences in ballrooms in hotels. With DreamSetGo, your meetings become business at unimaginable stadiums and arenas. ➔

# CHAMPIONING BUSINESS OF TRAVEL

Travel M!CE & Corporate Show witnessed a huge gathering of professionals from airline, travel & hospitality industries, garnering over 1,000 business meetings.



MT Bureau



We are looking to incentivize some of the services to make our destination more attractive. We are excited to meet the top player of M!CE companies here.

**Mohammed Fayiz Al Jabri**

*Head, Business Development & Strategic Partnerships, Sultanate of Oman*



It has been a good experience for us, as in the last one year we have closed few M!CE and a few corporate deals also.

**Sameer K Sharma**

*Manager India, M!CE, Premium & Groups*



Insurance, agro-business and pharmaceutical are our key segment, which are driving the M!CE segment.

**Tushar Garg**

*General Manager, Ramoji Film City*



We met 50 of the top corporates who have potential for both FYT as well as M!CE business and the response so far has been tremendous.

**Kavinder Besoya**

*VP, M!CEVerse, India Representative, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism*



We are all aware, it is not as close to 2019. The business is going to boom back. We are getting good leads and we have already received the leads from this event. It has been pretty positive so far.

**Ragini Gongo**

*Account Director, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts*



We have seen big demand particularly in Bahrain from big M!CE & Wedding Groups from India.

**Tanzil Thakur**

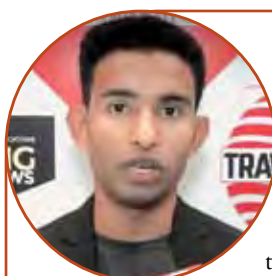
*Assistant Director, Sales, M!CE, The Diplomat Radisson Blue Hotel, Residence & Spa, Bahrain*



Most people who have come here are decision makers. We have thoroughly enjoyed talking to corporates here, discussing business with them.

**Rajesh Kattakam**

*AVP, Sales, South, Royal Orchid Hotels*



The platform brings opportunities to understand the demands from travel industry, especially for the M!CE Sector. According to corporates, they are looking for serviced apartments.

**Tinu Sebastian**

*Sales Manager, The Oterra*



Corporates are not bothered about commercials, they are bothered only about the service and excellent hygiene and safeguarding of supplies.

**Sridar Sathyamurthy**

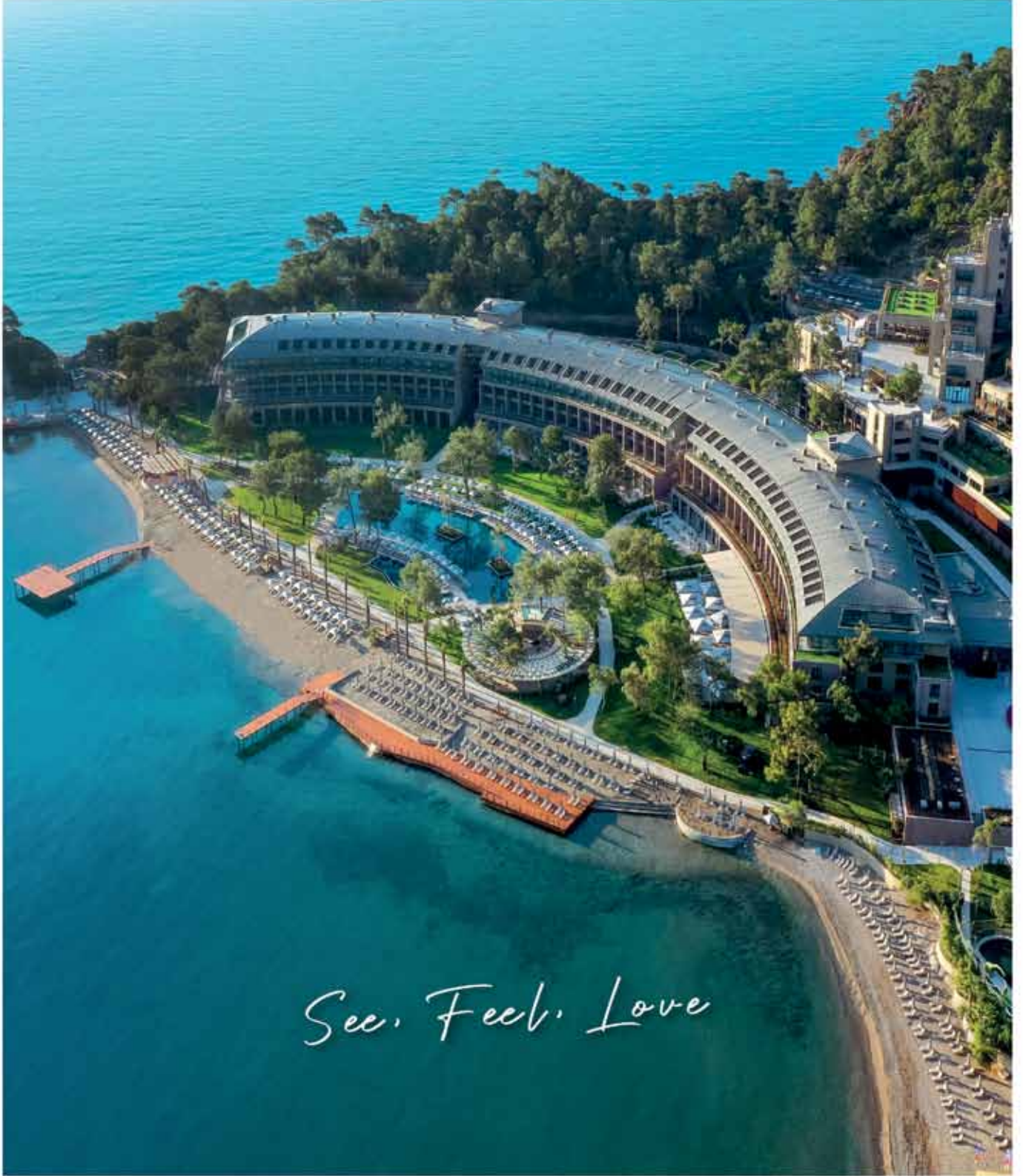
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# EXPANDING M!CE BUDGET

From exploring unique destinations to immersive experiences, corporates highlight top trends of M!CE sector at the 8th edition of Travel Corporate & M!CE Show on 18-19 March '23 in Chennai.



Well, I am attending the DDPPL event for the 2nd time. I have more relevant suppliers who are showcasing their products as I got

very good inputs from them, and a lot of things have changed in terms of hotels and services. I really see a good jump in terms of the holiday segment. Quite sure that travel will become a huge platform this year. We are anticipating a good jump in terms of travel, especially corporate travel.

**S Sriram**

*AVP, Global Travel, Hexaware Technologies*



I am attending this kind of event for the first time. Honestly, I see a huge difference and potential when it comes to this kind of event.

One-to-one interaction is very good for both suppliers and customers. Most of companies are looking for cost reduction and optimized solutions after COVID. It should be a win-win situation in terms of products, price and services.

**Pradeep Menon**

*Deputy GM, Facility Management (Travel & Expat Services), Renault Nissan Technology & Business Centre India*



This platform is very interesting and informative as we meet a lot of new people. A lot of travel technologies are coming

into the market, so we understand about the market. Availability is a big topic today. Demand is going up and hotels are in great demand. Sustainability is another major issue that is being focused on in many organizations. I prefer hotels that work the best when it comes to M!CE events.

**Riyaz Ahamed S**

*Managing Mobility Services Supply Chain Management, Siemens*



This is the first time I have been to this show and it has been a great experience in terms of travel exhibitions, and travel partners like hotels. It adds a lot of

value to the travel business. We have already crossed the pre-COVID levels. The numbers are increasing, and I can see potential growth. India has emerged as one of the leading M!CE & Travel businesses and entire world is looking at us and we are proud of that.

**Sagar Pawar**

*Manager, Corporate Travel, Reliance Industries*



I have come here for the second time and trust me all the sellers out here are really good. We are getting responses directly from the sellers, and building con-

nections with them instead of getting through DMC or TMC. We look forward to places where there is easy ticketing, visas and online services. There is a cost-plus model wherein we just deal directly with airlines and hotels.

**Khadija Bagasrawala**

*Manager Procurement, M!CE, Travel & HR, Cost Management, HDFC ERGO General Insurance*



Well definitely, I have learnt a lot of things here, and meeting different people gives me an edge to understand travel trends. There are other corporates also.

When we interact with them we get to know, what is the new market trend and accordingly how we can also fit in the market. Thanks, as the COVID has gone, and the market has opened up. Life is back to normal. M!CE is back again and I am excited for this year.

**Aditya Gupta**

*Sr. Manager, HR & GA, Panasonic Life Solutions*





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# EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS

## Travel M!CE & CORPORATE SHOW



Well, I have attended this show in the past. This is an interesting platform where we are able to communicate with people.

Meeting new people also helps us to plan our requirements. The cost escalations have gone up because of the losses, the suppliers and buyers have suffered during COVID. That is of course creating a little problem with the budget. We are trying to work out a solution that can be a win-win situation for both.

**Chaitanya Thakkar**

*Head, Commercial, Cadila Pharms Group*



It was completely shut for two years. I think there is a large scope and progression in the travel domain as such.

People are opening out that is a trend that I am seeing in this industry. It is a knowledge-sharing platform and I am happy to be a part of this. I want to recommend more travel managers to be a part of this.

**Beena Kokku**

*Director, Real Estate & Procurement, Ceredian*



DDPPL has hosted M!CE show, which is an amazing and fantastic platform to connect with people one on one.

This kind of platform is very rare where we have a personal connection with people whom we talk to. I have been to many other shows but this kind of connection and exchange of ideas is very rare. We can see some growth in momentum in the upcoming months maybe after the 2nd quarter.

**Jigar Joshi**

*Director, Samsera*



I have been associated with this show for two years now. It has always been wonderful as you get to see and meet many corporate friends and other suppliers. I think the show is wonderful where you update us with new trends. We are ready to pay even a little higher price if we get the services.

**Ankush Bindra**

*Regional Travel Manager, Cummins Business Services*



I have been associated with DDPPL since 2015. It is a nice platform wherein under one roof, we meet different people

such as travel agencies, suppliers, among others. This helps us a lot in thinking of new destinations. This is a platform from where you always gain something. We are in that stage where we are suffering and we have to pay whatever the rates the airlines are charging, whatever their policy changes.

**Meena Rawat**

*General Administration, Travel (Hotel/Ticketing/Visa), Tenova Technologies*



It is exciting and fascinating to be a part of this show. I get to know more people, more service providers, more peers who works on the same platform. Right

now we are seeing entire travel and hospitality industry coming back post-COVID. How do we simplify or how do we use the technology and how do we digitize our payments and all those aspects? I am sure we will be able to achieve the pre-COVID number or even higher.

**Muneerullah Baig**

*Manager, Travel Services, UST Technologies*



It is a great event. I think these events give us an opportunity to meet a lot of people especially post-COVID.

Travel is kickstarting again, so it is a great platform to meet a lot of people, learn new things and improve on our work as well. The focus for this year will eventually be sustainability what everybody is talking about these days. There will be more focus of sustainability this year as it is also a growing concern.

**Pradeep Kumar Jayaprakash**

*Travel Manager, APAC, PayPal*



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# M!CE TRAVEL REIMAGINED IN SINGAPORE

Firing up the imagination of corporate travellers, Singapore Tourism Board is reshaping the contours of M!CE travel with an array of well-crafted immersive experiences.



**A**t the 8th edition of the Travel M!CE & Corporate show in Chennai, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) showcased uniquely crafted experiences that the country offers to corporate and M!CE groups. Speaking on the sideline of the show, **Renjie Wong**, Area Director, India, South Asia & Middle East (Mumbai), STB said, “The Travel M!CE Show has

been an effective B2B event which enable us to meet quality buyers from all across the country. This time, we really loved being able to meet a lot of corporates based in and around Chennai and sharing the word about reimagining M!CE travel to Singapore.” This is the third time that STB has participated in Travel M!CE & Corporate show, after the editions in Delhi and Pune.

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***Big M!CE groups are back, and they are back with vengeance. Last year, Singapore welcomed two big corporate groups from India***

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Pushing the boundaries of imagination, the STB is taking bold steps to present the best immersive experiences for M!CE groups of all sizes. Casting away the inhibitions that M!CE industry had about recovery of big events post-pandemic, Renjie said, “Big M!CE groups are back, and they are back with vengeance. There were worries globally about the ability of the industry to manage big



group movements. I am very happy to share that last year, Singapore welcomed two big corporate groups from India—Herbalife (4,000 pax) and SBI Life (2,400 pax).” He fur-



**RENJIE WONG**

Area Director, India, South Asia & Middle East (Mumbai), STB

ther affirmed how good responses from the Indian corporates boosted the Singapore M!CE sector. “It is really with these mega movements, we were able to showcase the kind of possibilities that Singapore has as a leading M!CE destination to reimagine what M!CE can be for C-suites, dealers and their accompanying families who are on the trip,” he added.

The desire to dive into ‘reimagined experiences’ is firing up the corporates’ appetite for travel. He highlighted, “They want more than just clicking another selfie with landmarks or at tourist spots and look forward to immersing in the culture of the destination and it is customised M!CE experiences. These trends are what we have observed since M!CE travel has restarted. In March 2023, the STB launched a new platform called SingapoRewards. It is a scheme for all travellers, including business travellers, to Singapore who are eligible to pick one out of the close to 40 reimagined experiences and enjoy it for free.”

With an aim to spotlight the hidden gems of Singapore, the STB has been working relentlessly to curate out-of-the-box experiences for travellers that

help them explore the country in a different way. He explained, “It is really for us not just a way of welcoming the world to come and experience Singapore with a slew of new experiences but more importantly, understanding what we mean when we say ‘travel in a completely different way.’ For instance, a lot of these experiences are off the beaten path and very immersive. So, whether it is sitting down with one of Singapore’s most famous designers GINLEE and making one of her iconic pleated bags or going fishing in a mangrove swamp on a kayak with a trained naturalist, it is about being able to appreciate Singapore from a

completely different perspective. The ability to stir the curiosity and imagination of business travellers with unique experiences makes Singapore a leading M!CE destination.”

Over the last few decades, Singapore has established itself as a global business and leisure hub. The country hosted several M!CE events in 2022, including the Singapore Airshow in February and the Fintech Festival in November, which attracted a record turnout of more than 62,000 attendees from over 115 countries since its inaugural edition in 2016. Singapore also hosted some first-time events such as The World Stroke Congress held in October 2022. It was the largest

in-person delegation since the pandemic of over 2,000 people. Singapore continues to build up a healthy pipeline of significant M!CE events for 2023 and will host business events such as the Gastech Exhibition & Conference, which is the world’s largest gas and LNG exhibition.

In a move to reinforce its commitment to sustainability, Singapore has positioned itself as a green destination, perfectly blending biophilic elements with its urban cityscape so travellers can soak in the beauty of nature while in the heart of the city. In December 2022, STB and Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition



## **Singapore continues to build up a healthy pipeline of significant M!CE events for 2023 and will host many business events**

Organisers & Suppliers launched the M!CE Sustainability Roadmap to raise sustainability standards across Singapore’s M!CE industry, encouraging tourism stakeholders to incorporate elements of sustainability into their experiences. This year, Singapore became the first country in the world to be recognized as a sustainable destination by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, a significant step forward for Asia’s achievements in conscious travel.

With the modern-day travellers growing ever more tech-savvy and companies aggressively pushing their green credentials, the suite of reimagined experiences, embracing technology and Singapore’s recognition as a destination for sustainable travel have further burnished the country’s appeal to M!CE travellers. ➔

# IMMENSE POTENTIAL FOR EVENTS

**Manpreet Bindra** talks about how appetite for M!CE travel has increased post-COVID & how industry is poised to be major revenue generator in travel & tourism sector.

 **Suhani Sood**

**H**ow can M!CE segment help the economy grow and not just tourism?

M!CE industry is a billion-dollar industry not just in India but also globally. It is a segment which brings professionals from different industries together. This creates multiple opportunities for innovation and growth of the economy through the exchange of ideas, networking, collaborations, partnerships and more. Thanks to the leading role of India's tourism board which works closely with several chamber of commerce to support this vital segment and reflects the importance of the relationship between India's tourism sector and its economic growth. The M!CE segment also generates employment opportunities in various sectors such as hospitality, event planning, logistics and transportation. When we look to other successful M!CE markets in competition with India, like Singapore for example, this has been boosted by infrastructure investment and the construction of large exhibition halls and venues to support M!CE.

**Can you elaborate upon FCM's strategies to boost M!CE business in 2023?**

As a leading business in this area, FCM Meetings & Events India has several strategies in place which offers unique and memorable experiences



**MANPREET BINDRA**  
President, FCM Meetings  
and Events India

and products, using technology to enhance our customer experience for hybrid events or in person events and more. This is all underpinned by our amazing team. Having won Great Place to Work certification thrice, our people are at the core of everything we do. We have a team of highly experienced professionals providing high technology and high touch services to our clients, from initial meetings to project completion.

**Do you think M!CE industry has returned to what it was at pre-COVID levels?**

FCM Meetings and Events has achieved better performance than pre-COVID levels by more than 50 per cent. According to FCM Consultancy's Global Quarterly Trend Report Q1-2023, face-to-face meetings is the number one reason for corporate travel. This has resulted in a significant uptick for in-person catchups and events. Companies are also rewarding their employees for their hard work. Due to COVID, pause in travel for many companies, there was a backlog of product launches and business conferences which is now being fulfilled in a bigger and improved way. While 2023 travel uptick reflects the removal of country restrictions coupled with deep desire to travel, we envisage that as capacity and pricing stabilises, 2024 will be a better indicator of the true demand.

**When it comes M!CE venues, what are the expectations of M!CE agents?**

M!CE agents are always looking for venues with big spaces to accommodate their large number of attendees. These venues should be easily accessible with good transportation

**Overall, there are many options for larger M!CE groups, including premium venues for luxury clients and events that is gaining popularity**

facilities. Venues that provide all amenities required by M!CE events such as Wi-Fi, audio and visual equipment, catering, comfort and of course, value for money. Overall, there are many options for larger M!CE groups, including premium venues for luxury clients and events that is gaining popularity—this is all great news for our industry.

M!CE clients in India have different requirements which is why flexibility is key. Key cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and more already have an excellent M!CE infrastructure in place. We see opportunities for growth in secondary locations such as Raipur, Bhubaneswar and Lucknow. ➔

## Forging Ahead

### Top M!CE groups in 2022

Thailand: 4,785  
France: 1,400  
Greece: 1,500

### Int'l M!CE destinations trending

Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Australia, Baku, New Zealand, UK, Switzerland and France

### Domestic destinations in demand

Goa, Jaipur, Dehradun, Udaipur and Bengaluru

### Up-and-coming M!CE hotspots

Vietnam, Croatia, Finland and Qatar

### Corporates eyeing for

Visa, flexibility, experience, culinary curation, execution capabilities and seamless process.



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# ISRAEL EYES INDIAN GROUPS

With a boost in air connectivity between India & Israel, the middle eastern country is looking to leverage its M!CE destinations & attracting Indian groups.

 **Hazel Jain**

Israel welcomed 75,000 tourists from India in 2019, which fell to 31,000 in 2022 starting May due to COVID-induced lockdowns. But this year, the destination may just go beyond the pre-COVID visitor arrivals, thanks to the exceptional increase in air connectivity. Sharing more details, **Sammy Yahia**, Consul, Tourism Affairs, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India & Philippines, said, “We are aiming to cross the 1,00,000 mark in terms of visitor arrivals this year. We will have two carriers, EL AL Airlines and Air India flying directly from BOM-TLV. With this increase in air connectivity, tourism from India is expected to multiply.”

According to Yahia, “The new announcements from EL AL and Air India will boost tourism from and to Israel. The new air corridor over Saudi Arabia and Oman is likely to stimulate growth in the aviation sector. The airlines from India will be able to offer more competitive prices and reduce the flying time to five hours (direct flight) making it easier for passengers to travel. The statistics speak for themselves; the January and February 2023 numbers are 24 per cent better than the 2019 numbers.”



**SAMMY YAHIA**  
Consul, Tourism Affairs, Israel Ministry  
of Tourism, India & Philippines

## M!CE groups

Yahia shares that Israel has received the Young Presidents’ Organization

groups from various chapters and Entrepreneur’s Organisation groups from Hyderabad and Mumbai chapters. “There are many Indian government agricultural groups, pharma groups such as Theva, Tata Group, Reliance, Jindal and many more who have chosen Israel as their M!CE destination. Currently, our focus is on tier cities in India mainly Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Based on the numbers that we see for outbound, there is a natural curiosity to travel to Israel. The best bet is that the airlines such as Air India, EL AL, Arkia, Israil want to fly

directly from these cities,” he said.

The Israel Ministry of Tourism does not have a M!CE incentive programme, but it does have a marketing per pax agreement. This is still under review and will be released post-July 2023.

**Companies such as Theva, Tata Group, Reliance, Jindal and many more have chosen Israel as their M!CE destination**

## M!CE DESTINATIONS

**The Dead Sea:** The Dead Sea is not only a natural wonder but also a unique venue for M!CE groups. There are several hotels and resorts along the shores of the Dead Sea that offer conference and meeting facilities, as well as team-building activities and spa treatments. Some of the popular venues, include the Crowne Plaza Dead Sea Hotel, the Isrotel Dead Sea Hotel, and the Hilton Dead Sea Resort & Spa.

**The Tower of David Museum, Jerusalem:** The Tower of David Museum is a historical landmark located in the Old City of Jerusalem. It offers a range of event spaces that can be used for meetings, conferences, and special events. The venues, include

the outdoor Citadel Courtyard, the indoor Auditorium, and the rooftop Observation Point, which offers stunning views of the Old City. The venue is equipped with modern audio-visual equipment, catering services, and professional event staff.

**Masada:** Masada is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the Judean Desert. The ancient fortress offers a unique and unforgettable venue for M!CE groups. The venue can be used for team-building activities, outdoor events, and special dinners. The venue is equipped with catering services, professional event staff, and modern audio-visual equipment.

## Focus on metros

Yahia will focus on the metro cities, especially New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. “The minimum days recommended are five nights in Israel. Israel is a country of luxurious experience, hence the amount spent is totally depends on the choice of hotels, activities, among others. Our focus for the India market is leisure and M!CE. Wedding segment is still not yet a tapped market for the Indians. We will conduct virtual seminars, in-house presentations, and trade FAMs as we have adapted a more measurable approach,” he said. ➔





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# METAMORPHOSING M!CE INDUSTRY

From the integration of AR-powered mobile apps to the rise of hybrid events, the M!CE sector is witnessing a profound shift towards immersive experiences.



**Sakshi Singh**





**T**here is probably no industry on Earth that gives as much importance to human sensory experiences as the hospitality industry. From the feather-light pillows and warm white lights to the soothing aromas and beautiful interiors, everything is designed to enhance sensory experiences. In their pursuit of catering to human senses, hotels and banquets got a shot in the arm with the arrival of immersive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and holographic projection.

The adoption and utilisation of immersive and interactive technologies have been sudden and widespread in the hospitality industry. A while ago, large TV screens were the most common device at meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (M!CE). However, TVs are jostling for space with tablets, VR headsets and other projection devices these days.

There has been a marked change in the way brands want to communicate with their targeted audience and a similar story is playing out on the consumer's end. The transformation has had an impact on the way events are

designed and organized. Event organizers and companies are investing in technologies and capabilities that help in blending the physical and digital worlds for attendees. "Immersive

cent of consumers agreed that more of their lives and livelihoods are moving into the digital space. In the same report, 90 per cent of the retail executives said that they expect brands to merge the boundaries between the virtual and



**MOHAMMAD SHOIB**  
Director, Sales, JW Marriott Bengaluru  
Golfshire Resorts & Spa

technologies such as VR, AR, and holographic projection are witnessing organic demand in M!CE events. They provide enhanced experiences, engage attendees, and offer unique opportunities for branding and content delivery," said **Mohammad Shoib**, Director, Sales, JW Marriott Bengaluru Golfshire Resorts & Spa said.



**MEERA CHARNALIA**  
Executive Vice President & Head,  
MICE, Thomas Cook (India)

Fuelling the popularity of immersive technologies is its increasing reach in the hands of consumers. With the integration of new-age technologies in mobile apps, from shopping to home decor, people are using AR-powered apps in their everyday lives. According to the Accenture Technology Vision 2022, 55 per

## **VR, AR, and holographic projection are witnessing organic demand in M!CE events**

physical worlds making seamless navigation between the two a reality. The report holds vital lessons for the hospitality industry as it makes it clear that both brands and consumers are driving the demand for immersive technologies.

The immediate result of the surge in demand for experiential technology is hybrid events. "With hybrid events, companies can have an in-person audience and a virtual one. But it is not just a live-stream. Virtual participants should be able

## **Organizing immersive M!CE events in India, include technical expertise, among others**

to engage with speakers, participate in Q&A sessions, and network with fellow attendees," said **Sandeep Basu**, Associate Director, Development & Operations, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts.

Being at the core of any event, hotels and banquets too have been impacted by the rapid adoption of immersive technologies. Only a few years ago, the use of

these technologies required substantial investments in compatible hardware and software. With the technology becoming more accessible, it is gaining adoption across the M!CE sector. A major hurdle being faced by the industry while organizing experiential events is the lack of suitable professionals and infrastructure in India. “Some of the challenges which are faced while organizing immersive M!CE events in a hotel in India, include technical expertise, internet connectivity issues and additional charges for time taken for technical set up,” said **Meera Charnalia**, Executive Vice President & Head, M!CE, Thomas Cook (India). A slew of upgrades will have to be undertaken to make event venues immersive-tech compatible. “Technology upgrade and audio-visual systems, tweak the layout, enhance lighting and networking, add custom installations, and ensure accessibility upgrades. It is important to understand the unique needs and make the necessary tweaks,” Shoaib pointed out.

Supported by an improved learning environment, increased



**SANDEEP BASU**  
Associate Director, Development & Operations, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

engagement opportunities and remote attendee accessibility options, experiential marketing is gaining ground over typical marketing events. The cost of experiential events, though, would require some time to be on par with traditional events. The requirement of additional gear, increased data consumption, domain-specific hardware and customized venue make hosting immersive events relatively expensive.

Data analytics is a significant technological advancement that has greatly benefitted the M!CE industry. By utilizing data analytics, event organizers can obtain insightful information about attendee

behaviour and preferences, which enables them to customize their events to better meet their needs. For instance, through the analysis of attendee data, organizers can identify the most popular sessions, engaging speakers, and interesting topics.

With widespread adoption and major multi-nationals pouring billions into new-age technologies, the cost is likely to come down in the near future. Hotels, marketing agencies and event organizing companies are however, not losing any sleep on the cost as the benefits are apparent. “Despite the increased cost, many event organizers recognize the value of investing in immersive technologies to deliver a truly captivating and memorable experience for attendees. The potential benefits include enhanced attendee engagement and improved marketing outcomes,” Shoaib added.

While technologies like AR, VR and holographic projection have carved a predominant position in the experiential events sector, enterprising brands and organizers are constantly on the lookout for emerging technologies.

An overt reliance on limited technologies can be disruptive in the future. Technology experts say that these are emerging technologies and the ecosystem is under development. The final outcome would depend on consumer response and other factors. For instance, the success of VR relies on the investment and development of the Metaverse.

The concept holds immense potential for brands and advertisers. Attendees would be able to visit

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**One of the most significant contributions of technology to the M!CE industry is the introduction of virtual events**

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the venue virtually or check out the layout and offerings in the metaverse before deciding to attend. However, it needs to be seen how the final avatar pans out. It could have wide-ranging ramifications for hospitality and related industries. “One of the most significant contributions of technology to the M!CE industry is the introduction of virtual events. Virtual events have not only allowed organizers to reach a broader audience but have also reduced costs significantly,” Basu said.

Technology has played a crucial role in elevating the industry by providing innovative solutions to enhance the overall experience of attendees and organisers. With Artificial Intelligence taking centre-stage, newer immersive technologies are likely to emerge powered by AI. Hospitality players need to ensure they remain nimble and react to trends as they emerge. As Basu concluded, “Test, test and test again—it is vital. Pull off a hybrid event with minimal hiccups, and you could earn yourself repeat business.” ➔







# REDEFINING ADVENTURE TOURISM

Madhya Pradesh is fast emerging as subtle adventure tourism destination—enticing adventure lovers to explore activities such as sky diving, river rafting, trekking, zip lining, among others.

If you are really bored of those regular travel trips and are eager to try out some adventure activities, the heart of the country, Madhya Pradesh has a lot for you. The state offers many thrilling and soft adventure activities to tourists. From sky diving, scuba diving, rafting, trekking, jungle safaris, camping, and heritage walks to food walks, there is something for everyone.

Camping and adventure activities such as trekking, group games, safaris, among others are enjoyed by adventure lovers. Tourists experience stargazing, bonfire, dusk drive, swimming, riverside jungle trail with bird watching, and tribal cuisine with a barbeque in the jungles of Satpura. Apart from this, the travel bugs also enjoy various water sports activities in the heart of Incredible India.

## Tiger safari

Encounter tigers and other animals on a wildlife safari tour in six tiger sanctuaries in Madhya Pradesh namely Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Satpura, Pench, Panna and Sanjay Duburi. The only place you could find Cheetah in India is at Kuno National Park in Sheopur district.

## Sky diving

Every year in January, a sky diving festival is organized in Ujjain where visitors can sky dive from over 10,000 feet and enjoy the auspicious view of the religious capital of Madhya Pradesh.

## River rafting

River rafting is another exciting sport

that can be enjoyed by adventure seekers in Orchha's Betwa River. This activity not only gives you a thrill, but also offers a beautiful view of the royal Orchha-chatris on the exotic shores of the river. The best time to go rafting in Orchha is from August to February.

## Zip lining

The Kerwa Dam in Bhopal is known for its diverse activities. The most popular is the fly-

rocks for a closer look. The full moon makes sailing even more memorable as you witness the towering rocks naturally twinkle at night.

## Bicycle safari

Van Vihar National Park in the capital of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal, is blessed with the densest forests and abundant wildlife. Bicycle safari in Bhopal's Van Vihar National Park gives you the chance to experience the state's rich biodiversity.

Madhya Pradesh's most verdant charm Pachmarhi also known as Satpura ki Rani rules the range of Satpura. Nestled in the hills and filled with scenic beauty all around, Pachmarhi not only has spiritual spots and gushing waterfalls but also have a lot of adventure. Parasailing and paragliding are exciting and adrenaline-pumping sports. Other activities that fit into the landscape of Pachmarhi are rock climbing and trekking.

## Trekking trails

There are numerous treks developed for the tourists to enjoy camping in the nature, including the Forsyth Trek and Jatashankar trek of Pachmarhi, the Chidikhro trek in Narsingharh and the Janapav Trek in Indore. Other than these famous treks, camping sites are also developed at Orchha, Panna, Pachmarhi, Kanha and Indore.

## Mega festivals

MP Tourism conducts annual mega festivals at Hanuwantiya (Jal Mahotsav), Gandhi Sagar (Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival) and Mandu (Mandu Utsav) where various adventure activates and recreational activities are organized, including hot air ballooning, paramotoring, paragliding, parasailing, jet skiing, kayaking, among others for the visitors at the festivals. After the enormous success of these events MP Tourism is set to develop Orchha Kuno, Tamia, Ater, Bargi Dam and Chanderi for the conduction of these mega festivals in 2023-2024.

Get ready to discover some truly exciting and serene adventures to satiate your thirst in Madhya Pradesh!

## Boating & Kayaking

The best way to relax is on a boat surrounded by nature. Explore boating and cruising opportunities at Bhopal's Boat Club. Kayaking is another exciting water sport that requires a lot of skill to perform.

## Parasailing & paragliding

Situated at the mounting height,



ing fox zip lining. The zip line here is one of the longest double zip lines in India. So, why wait? Experience the thrill.

## Cable car

Viewing Marble Rocks and Dhuandhar Waterfall via Cable Ride from Bhedaghat is the most rewarding experience for any tourist. In addition to riding the cable car, you can also sail among the marble

# PIONEERING BLENDED TRAVEL

Richmonde Ananta Elite Goa, a swanky hotel focussed on blended travel concept offers a mix of Goan *joie de vivre* and all the contemporary amenities & comforts.



**C**ombining comfort of a home-away-from-home and luxury services of a resort, Richmonde Ananta Elite Goa is a strategic move towards expansion, taking Ananta Hotels & Resorts beyond Rajasthan. “As a brand, we have been primarily based out of Rajasthan. However, now we are fast growing to be a national player and Goa is one destination from where we thought to move ahead with our pan-India expansion vision,” said **Gagan Katyal**, VP, Sales & Strategy, Ananta Hotels & Resorts.

Katyal added, “Goa, which is one of the most preferred destinations for domestic as well as international travellers, has always been



**GAGAN KATYAL**  
VP, Sales & Strategy,  
Ananta Hotels & Resorts

the top pick to cast an impression on India about the growing presence of Ananta.”

The juggernaut of domestic tourism maintains its strong pull, driving occupancy across the country. “Domestic tourism continues

to be a high trend as Indians have started exploring the country. And they will continue to do so,” observed Katyal. Adding to it, he highlighted that bleisure has given way to blended travel. “Family & friends holidays and extended business stays are coming out as top travel trends at the moment. This apart, weddings have also been driving business for leisure properties throughout the year,” he said.

The luxury hotel, consisting of styled villas and apartments in Saligao, a picturesque village close to Baga beach in North Goa, is designed for a lifestyle of pure indulgence. Developed on the concept of home-away-from-home, the luxurious villas offer a blend of Goan *joie de vivre* and

all the contemporary amenities and comforts that one craves for. “We converted the villa residential complex with some apartments into hotel, which is the trend these days,” he informed.

Over the years, the demand for luxury villas as well as service apartments in Goa has seen a substantial rise. An increasing number of travellers are booking for extended stays. Agreed Katyal, “We have seen that the average length of stay in Goa is more than

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**Family & friends holidays and extended business stays are coming out as top travel trends at the moment**

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three nights. HNIs and domestic travellers are preferring to take on apartments and villas for their stay in Goa. This establishment is going to be the perfect place for travellers seeking an accommodation near the hustle and bustle of North Goa with all the modern amenities.”

The banquet facility is offered to cater to the ever-growing wedding segment, as Goa is also one of the top wedding destinations in the country. ➔





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# UNIQUE WEDDING VENUES IN DEMAND

Mementos by ITC Hotels, Ekaaya Udaipur, a lakeside resort is well poised to become the next hotspot for MICE & Weddings segment, reveals **Sandipan Bose**.



**W**hat are your key focus areas for now?

Being a part of 1st luxury brand managed by ITC Hotels and the debut hotel is exhilarating. Creating, establishing and opening our resort and watching the efforts of the team come to life when we serve our guests is a prize in itself. Our key focus area at Mementos Udaipur is ensuring the satisfaction and contentment of both our internal and external guests.

Mementos by ITC Hotels is a unique collection of luxury hotels focussing on modern marvels,



**SANDIPAN BOSE**  
General Manager, Mementos  
by ITC Hotels, Ekaaya Udaipur

hidden retreats to historic treasures. Every Memento hotel endeavours to create everlasting memories and special moments which become

prized mementos long after the guest's visit. Staying true to our promise, Memories Available, the brand focusses on constructing the residue of sensory experiences where everything during a guest's stay is intricately customized and curated to conjure a vivid picture of the past event. We are not just a brand but an experience that lives with you forever.

**How do you define your category & type? And what is your target audience?**

Mementos by ITC Hotels, Ekaaya Udaipur is a luxury resort. The hidden gem offering the unseen

Udaipur. Nestled away from the noise and chaos of city life, we cherish the serenity of the Aravallis, and the abundant beauty of nature that surrounds us. Our target audience is an intrepid traveller, a luxury connoisseur in the search

***Our target audience is an intrepid traveller, a luxury connoisseur in search for a haven of serenity***



for a haven of serenity. While your marketing strategies come hand in hand with every launch and sustenance, our purpose is to create guest loyalty through our team and the services that we offer. Forming an abiding emotional bond with the guest is our approach.

### **How do you plan to carve niche for debut brand in Indian wedding market?**

Weddings are a time of celebrations for everyone involved, including the teams helping the families to make their dreams come true. At our resort, whatever wedding the guest is dreaming of, we have the venue to cater to every request. Be it a glamorous big fat Indian wedding or an

### **Each Mementos Hotel offers true experience of destination, celebrating arts, crafts & cuisines of the region it belongs to**

intimate family affair. The backdrop of the Aravalli Hills, the skies from sunrise to sunset, the elysian views and surroundings not only offer the best décor but also helps you in controlling the cost of the décor. The extensive food and beverage expertise and offerings is a crowning achievement for all weddings and celebrations. The weddings for a buyout are from ₹1 lakh onwards, excluding taxes per room which also gets you our dedicated wedding team that goes above and beyond to corroborate ideas or desire.

### **Luxury travellers, today, are seeking unique, immersive experiences. How are you working towards this?**

Each Mementos Hotel is being designed to offer the true experience of the destination, celebrating the traditions, arts, crafts and

cuisines of the region it belongs to. At Mementos by ITC Hotels, Ekaaya Udaipur, each experience is thoughtfully crafted to offer inspiration and solace, whether you are here on business or simply seeking a reprieve from the monotony of everyday life. Being in the midst of the marvellous Aravalli Hills, paired with the luxury of bewitching views, there is no end to the things that can be offered. Be it a hike to the waterfalls, private dining options on a hilltop with a specially curated gourmet meal, stargazing or rejuvenating yourself with midnight Yoga on a full moon night, Mementos Hotel ensures all.

### **In your opinion, how can challenge of talent crunch & retention be overcome?**

The hospitality and service industry are led by the human touch. No matter how technologically inclined and progressive the world becomes, the soul of our industry lies in compassion, considerate behavior and kindness towards one another. If we can instill these qualities in our teams and the coming generations, the talent and passion for hospitality will continue to rise. The skillsets can be taught and practiced.

Driven by the purpose and values of ITC Hotels, we strive to



not only focus on retention but also drive talent to the brand. This is only possible when we create programmes to train and offer growth within our organizations. ITC Hotels was one of the very few companies to keep employment values intact during COVID and has earned an additional reason for being one of the sought after names to work in. Our effort at Mementos Udaipur in coordination and support with the brand is to create opportunities within the region and have consistent manpower for operational departments.

### **What are your leadership strategies as GM of debutant property?**

As a leader, for me the happiness

quotient of my talent and team is of utmost importance. A happy family at work directly results in great and exceptional service. Taking care of your internal and external guests is imperative. My focus here as a leader is to educate and promote sustainability and renewability not just within the resort and the team but also in our local areas. With the support of my team, we are also largely concentrating on building the infrastructure in the neighbouring areas of the resort. While the major revenue stream for any hotel continues to be rooms and food & beverage, we wish to offer designed experiences to stimulate all senses and create unforgettable memories. ➔



# BIG EVENTS DRIVE OCCUPANCY

G20 meetings provide powerful ammo to hospitality sector at right hour to clock double-digit growth in 2023, avers **Veenu Rastogi**.

 **Lipla Negi**

**T**raditionally, it is the time-tested room-driven strategy that largely dominated revenue generation target plans of IHG's subsidiary Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts. COVID, however, tweaked it slightly. "When it comes to exploring new segments for revenue growth, we are pulling up our F&B section across all our hotels, which includes driving outdoor catering business (OCB), packed lunch boxes, promoting conferences and getting into Weddings & MICE segment more effectively," said **Veenu Rastogi**, Area DOSM, IHG South West Asia and DOSM, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar Noida.

The gap between demand and supply, became more apparent post-COVID as vengeance travel became a top travel trend. Agreed Rastogi, "Especially from a leisure perspective, the demand has really gone up. It started post-COVID as the market opened and continues. But the supply has not gone up to that extent, which has created a demand-supply imbalance." Bringing favourable results, the occupancy rate and ADRs have already peaked now for all hotels. "If you see our numbers, we have



**VEENU RASTOGI**  
Area DOSM, IHG South West Asia and  
DOSM, Crowne Plaza New Delhi  
Mayur Vihar Noida

not just surpassed but gone beyond 2019-levels in terms of occupancy rate and ADRs," she shared.

## **G20: Big leap**

With G20 events coming up, Rastogi is confident that there is going to be a lot of demand, especially towards the third quarter of 2023. "In the past two years, big events were either cancelled or postponed. Thankfully, this year some big events like Auto Expo, SATTE, CPHI, etc., drove the occupancy in the city to full in Q1. And with G20, India is in the spotlight. Our strategic location, close to Pragati Maidan, Noida and Greater Noida, gives us an edge," she affirmed.



Underpinning vengeance travel as a leading factor driving domestic demand, the seasoned sales professional confirms that the pent-up demand from corporate is also increasing. "I was reviewing the trends of our corporate travellers, I observed that people who were doing eight visits in a month are now doing 12 visits," she says while highlighting the significance of physical meetings. According to her, "Events are back in full swing now. The participation level of people in events have gone up which is boosting the demand for hotels. The event calendar for Q3 and Q4 in 2023 is packed with large events."

## **Challenges ahead**

To tackle the challenge of attrition and talent crunch, Rastogi underlines the need for training programs that help employees grow within the brand. "Diversity and inclusion are in focus. IHG has also introduced career accelerating programs such as IHG Aspire and IHG Embark. These help

youngsters to gain managerial roles in 18-14 months of time, rather than waiting for 4-5 years to climb up in their careers." She also foresees a revision in remuneration for hospitality professionals. However, she is quick to add that passion for hospitality is a non-negotiable trait.

**Events are back in full swing now. Participation level of people in events have gone up which is boosting demand for hotels**

While the demand-supply has resulted in price surge, Rastogi feels that customization helps deal with it deftly. "When we customize it as per what they want, they are ready to pay. We try to make it more experiential when it comes to leisure demand and when it comes to corporate demand, we try to customize," she believed. ➔



# BUILDING UP PARTNERSHIPS

Rendez-vous en France strikes the right chord and holds 26,320 pre-scheduled business meetings at its 16th edition with focus on sustainable and inclusive innovations.



**R**endez-vous en France, a leading international trade show for agents and exhibitors from all over the world, was held on 21-22 March 2023 in Paris. During the show, 786 international tour operators met 660 French exhibitors. The show provided an opportunity for more than 250 international buyers to discover tourist destinations of France through 26 familiarisation trips across the country.

Atout France recorded €58 billion of international tourism revenue in 2022. **Caroline Leboucher**, CEO & Director General, Atout France, announced that the industry has recovered and exceeded the



**ANSHU TEJUJA**  
Managing Director,  
Ashoka Dream Holidays

**Virtual reality tour, more sightseeing and gastronomy experiences and USP of every region was outstanding**

ness, leisure, corporate and M!CE travel and represented the pan-India potential, as they came from varied source markets, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Pune, Chennai, Nagpur, Lucknow, Pune and Chandigarh. The delegates had a chance to meet with our partners who have been working in the market for many years and also those partners interested in foraying into the market.”

The Indian delegation found the event more evolved and productive as well. **Anshu Tejuja**, Managing Director, Ashoka Dream Holidays, expressed, “A lot of new attractions such as virtual reality tour, more sightseeing and gastronomy



**CAROLINE LEBOUCHER**  
CEO & Director General,  
Atout France

**Atout France recorded €58 billion of international tourism revenue in 2022**

experiences and USP of every region was outstanding. It is lovely how so much importance is being given to sustainability.”

**Naeem Khan**, Director, Mulberry Tours, added, “It was a very productive event. The interactions with partners added new insights and introduced us to new experiences to offer to our clients in the Indian market. Most of the Indian travellers have only been offered Paris, Nice or Champagne region at the most, but there is much more to France than these attractions. There are so many different experiences among vineyards, gastronomy, historical sites and many more regions to explore. ➔



**SHEETAL MUNSHAW**  
Director,  
Atout France India

**Our delegation had a formidable presence and was a good mix of agents and represented the pan-India potential**

pre-COVID levels. **Christophe Decloux**, Managing Director, Paris Region Tourism Board, said, “We believe that our international partners such as tour operators and travel agents are our first ambassadors to the final consumer. They propose and communicate the different offers that we have within the destination.”

Out of 786 international delegates from 67 nations, Atout France India hosted 34 representatives from the country. **Sheetal Munshaw**, Director, Atout France India, said, “India had a formidable presence in the form of 34 delegates. Our delegation was a good mix of agents who have as their core busi-



**NAEEM KHAN**  
Director,  
Mulberry Tours

**The interactions with partners added new insights and introduced us to new experiences to offer to our clients**

# INDIA HIGH ON INCENTIVES



Melbourne Convention Bureau is seeing huge traction from India market and its corporate incentive programme is driving even more traffic into Melbourne, explains **Joanna Garrie**.



**J**oanna Garrie, Director, Corporate Meetings & Incentives, Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), was in India recently to meet some of the key trade partners and corporate clients in Mumbai, Bengaluru and New Delhi. Speaking about the India market to M!CEtalk, she said, “We decided to significantly invest in the Indian market about a year ago. Coming out of COVID, we understood that there is a big opportunity for us here in India. We therefore decided to scale up what we were doing here. This is our first sales mission but we do have a representative agency in India.”

These three cities offer the most opportunities for MCB. “Maybe further down the track, we will expand into other cities. We have direct air services from New Delhi into Melbourne which makes it a very important market for us. Hopefully, we will have one out of Mumbai as well. Since we started our engagement last year, we have seen a huge success. We are a part of Visit Victoria which has been very active in the Indian



**JOANNA GARRIE**  
Director, Corporate Meetings & Incentives, Melbourne Convention Bureau

market through Beautiful Planet for many years,” Garrie added.

She explained that MCB noticed that the M!CE side of the business from India was starting to increase and the Bureau wanted to make sure that it got maximum business by being active in this market. “We get a lot of incentive interest from the India market. Multi-level marketing companies, insurance companies, car sales companies did quite well during COVID. We are also seeing a lot of interest by companies in rewarding their staff and they are looking for unique destinations to do that.

We have a financial incentive programme for corporate clients with 150 people or more. Australia is a long-haul destination and we do like to help offset the costs of travelling into Australia,” Garrie pointed out.

Troy Stasinowsky, Director, Sales & Marketing, MCG Events, was also part of the delegation. He

met M!CE agents and inbound tour operators to showcase the possibilities at the MCG for business events for international groups. “The stadium can be activated for business events apart from cricket matches. So, they can attend a cricket match here, do the famous tour of MCG but what we really want to make everyone aware of is

## Melbourne: Top global city for medical conferences

Melbourne continues to lead the way as the preferred destination for medical conferences, with the MCB securing a massive 48 events to take place within the next five years. Firmly placing Melbourne as a top global city for hosting conferences in the medical and healthcare sector, this impressive number of medical conferences is expected to attract 38,000 delegates to the city, an injection of \$225 million to Victoria’s local economy, and tremendous legacy opportunities for investment, collaboration and medical breakthroughs into the future.

***We are seeing a lot of interest by companies in rewarding their staff and they are looking for unique destinations to do that***

the different business events and experiences that we have created for the incentive market. We want to talk to them about the gala dinners they can hold across the multiple spaces within the stadium, the immersive tours, as well as the access to the Australian cricketers who can appear at their events,” he explained. ➔



# RECOVERING LOST GROUND



India has emerged as one of the most recovered destinations in the world in terms of tickets confirmed for international arrivals in the first half of 2023, states ForwardKeys' report.



**F**orwardKeys has revealed that India is one of the most recovered destinations, with tickets confirmed for international arrivals in the first half of 2023, which is only 18 per cent below pre-COVID levels.

"The APAC region continues in recovery mode, mostly driven by VFR travel. The latest forecast from ForwardKeys points to an overall recovery of international arrivals of 51 per cent of 2019 volumes in H1 2023. India is one of the most recovered destinations, with tickets confirmed for international arrivals in the first half of 2023 only 18 per cent below pre-COVID levels," said **Juan A Gomez**, Head, Market Intelligence, ForwardKeys.

"Most recovered international hubs in the region in Q2 versus pre-COVID, in terms of planned air seat capacity, include Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (-1 per cent) and Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (-9 per cent). India as a whole is just 9 per cent below 2019 levels," added Gomez.

India is the best-connected market in the APAC region		
Air Capacity for intraregional departure in Asia Pacific in Q2 2023, as scheduled on 20 March; vs 2019		
Origin markets*		Var vs 2019
India		-9%
Vietnam		-11%
New Zealand		-12%
Australia		-13%
Singapore		-16%
Philippines		-20%
South Korea		-24%
Indonesia		-25%
Malaysia		-28%
Taiwan		-33%
<b>TOTAL INTRAREGIONAL</b>		<b>-32%</b>
*With share in arrivals > 1.5% Source: ForwardKeys Air Tickets Data		

"As a source market, India has also managed to recover some ground and some regional leisure destinations are set to post-growth on arrivals from India in Q2 versus 2019: Vietnam (+121 per cent) and Indonesia (+3 per cent)," he shared.

The data showed a recovery in global international air travel that could reach 80 per cent of 2019

volumes by the end of the first half of the year. Not all destinations are set to reach pre-COVID levels, but some will certainly exceed 2019 numbers. In the report, it is mentioned that India is expecting a full recovery by the end of Q1 2023. "Although India's size as an international outbound market is largely attributable to its significant global diaspora, its middle-class population is growing, and the number

**Not all destinations are set to reach pre-COVID levels, but some will certainly exceed 2019 numbers**

of outbound leisure travellers from the country is increasing as a result. Moreover, while India's intraregional outbound travel market is relatively small, it had experienced more growth (+10 per cent) than any of the other major Asia-Pacific outbound markets—both inter-

national and intraregional—over the five years before COVID. Now that the country has fully reopened, ForwardKeys expects its development as an inter-regional outbound market to accelerate," stated the report.

The report lists six key trends and opportunities to look out for in 2023. ➔

The recovery of some destinations is still driven by VFR		
International arrivals in Asia Pacific in H1 2023, as of 14 March 2023; vs 2019 levels		
Destination countries*		Var vs 2019
Pakistan		-1%
Bangladesh		-1%
Maldives		-11%
India		-18%
Philippines		-32%
Indonesia		-34%
Vietnam		-37%
Japan		-41%
Singapore		-42%
New Zealand		-46%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>-49%</b>
*With share in arrivals > 1.5% Source: ForwardKeys Air Tickets Data		

# MARRIOTT'S DAZZLING PRESENCE

Marriott International holds event as part of its three-city The Exchange – India Roadshow 2023, bringing together its global representatives to share their ideas with the industry.



## All-pervading influence

Dusit International exhibits its worldwide properties, catering to weddings, business & leisure segment at India Roadshow 2023 at The Leela Palace in New Delhi recently.





# IHCL showcases its offerings

IHCL Connect, a B2B event, held in New Delhi on 11 April 2023 saw the participation of more than 2,500 attendees, including travel agents exploring biz opportunities.



## BOOSTING EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

5th edition of Trés showcased 60 of most impressive retreats, lodges, boutique hotels, camps and innovative travel concepts in luxury and mindful tourism segment.



# MOVEMENTS



**Jaideep Anand**

VP & GM,  
Leela Ambience Gurugram  
Hotel & Residences

Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences has appointed Jaideep Anand as Vice President & General Manager. Jaideep Anand is an industry veteran with over four decades of experience and has been associated with The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts since 1995. Prior to joining The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences, Anand held the position of Vice President and General Manager at The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre Complex. He has previously also worked with The Oberoi Hotels and Ananda in the Himalayas.



**Siddhant Salgaonkar**

Director, Sales,  
Hilton Goa Resort

Siddhant Salgaonkar has been promoted to Director, Sales, Hilton Goa Resort. As Director, Sales, Hilton Goa Resort, Salgaonkar's role will extend beyond merely overseeing all sales operations. He will also oversee a diverse portfolio that encompasses proactive sales, reactive/catering sales, reservations, and revenue generation. His mandate will be to align sales plans with the overarching business strategy, identify potential risks, and implement robust measures to mitigate any budgetary exposure. Additionally, Salgaonkar will be working hand in glove with the revenue strategy team to stay abreast of market trends.



**Saarang Vikas Amritkar**

Sales Manager,  
Courtyard by Marriott  
Pune Chakan

Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan has appointed Saarang Vikas Amritkar as the new Sales Manager. With over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, Amritkar brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his role at the Hotel. He has previously held sales positions at various hotel brands, including Radisson, Hyatt and others. In his new role at Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan, Amritkar will be responsible for developing and implementing sales strategies that drive revenue growth for the hotel.



**Sumeet Suri**

General Manager,  
The Westin Mumbai Garden City

Sumeet Suri has joined The Westin Mumbai Garden City as new General Manager. Suri brings over two decades of experience to the team. With his high caliber and passion for hospitality, he adds a new dimension to the leadership team. Suri's career began after graduating from the Welcomgroup Management Institute, post which he joined the ITC Hotels. He led the opening of a fine dining restaurant while overseeing the Food & Beverage vertical. Over the span of his career, he proved himself as a dynamic leader and a supportive mentor who understood the importance of leading by example.



**Srikant Kodali**

Director, Sales & Marketing,  
Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road

A graduate in Business Administration with a Master's degree, Srikant Kodali comes with over 11 years of experience in the hospitality industry. As Director, Sales & Marketing, Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road, Kodali will be leading the sales and marketing vertical. His core responsibilities will include planning and implementing of the hotel's sales and marketing strategy, maximizing hotel's revenues and exploring business development opportunities. In his last assignment, Kodali was the Director, Sales, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu, leading the sales center and proactive efforts at the hotel.



**Saravanan Jayaraman**

Commercial Director,  
Hilton Chennai

Saravanan Jayaraman has been appointed as the new Commercial Director, Hilton Chennai. Jayaraman will lead the execution of the commercial strategy, sales and marketing while supporting the hotel's mission to provide outstanding service to guests. Jayaraman holds 15 years of experience with a diverse portfolio in the hospitality industry and has worked with brands in India such as the Oberoi, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts and Marriott International. Jayaraman has vast experience in F&B, events planning and sales and marketing.



**Jaiveer Singh Rathore**

Director, Human Resources,  
JW Marriott Kolkata

JW Marriott Kolkata has announced the appointment of Jaiveer Singh Rathore as Director, Human Resources. He brings with himself over 16 years of experience in corporate experience in Human Resource, with a deep-rooted experience in developing, recommending and implementing Human Resource strategies with complete accountability of goal setting, leadership development, manpower and staffing. In his current role, he will be responsible for driving strategic HR initiatives and enhancing employee engagement in the pursuit of organizational objectives.



**B Prabhu**

Director, Engineering,  
The Den Bengaluru

The Den Bengaluru has appointed B Prabhu as Director, Engineering. He holds high level of property maintenance knowledge and overall knowledge in maintaining buildings, grounds, and physical plants with particular attention towards safety, security, and asset protection. Prior to joining The Den Bengaluru, Prabhu was the Director, Engineering, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield. He has also served as Director, Engineering, The Den Bengaluru, where he was involved in the pre-opening of this project. In addition, he has held leadership positions in Hyatt and Bharat Hotels.



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