

# TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE BUSINESS, AVIATION, MICE & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

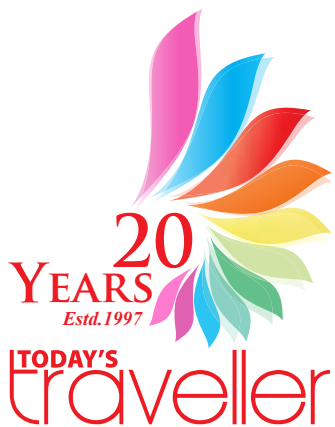
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# 11<sup>TH</sup> TODAY'S TRAVELLER ANNUAL AWARDS &

20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION OF TODAY'S TRAVELLER



**31 JULY 2017** DURBAR BALLROOM,  
HOTEL TAJ PALACE, NEW DELHI

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REDEFINING 28  
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## HALL OF FAME IN PR

In recognition of his exceptional services in the field of PR & Communication for over the last two decades, Sudhir Sobti, Chief Manager (PR & Publicity), Delhi Tourism & Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC), Government of Delhi, has been conferred the prestigious Hall of Fame award during the 11th Global Communication Conclave held in Bengaluru, Karnataka, organised by the Public Relations Council of India (PRCI).

The PRCI is a national-level registered body of professionals in the field of Public Relations, Communications, Advertising and allied fields. It organises a global conference every year where eminent professionals from India and overseas are invited to give talks and share their experiences. The theme of the conference this year was "Disruption".



Sudhir Sobti, Chief Manager (PR & Publicity), Delhi Tourism & Transportation Development Corporation, Govt. of Delhi, being conferred the Hall of Fame award by Priyank M Kharge, Minister for Tourism & IT, Government of Karnataka



## THE TAJ AND SHANGRI-LA ALLIANCE ANNOUNCED

Two of Asia's most iconic luxury hotel groups, Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts and Mumbai-based Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, announced they have formed a ground-breaking strategic alliance to broaden their reach and offer more unique experiences to guests across Asia and the world.

The alliance, which officially launched in March 2017 with the introduction of the "Warmer Welcomes" programme, integrates Taj Inner Circle and Shangri-La's Golden Circle guest loyalty programmes and will provide members reciprocal and seamless benefits at a scale never seen before under a hospitality alliance.

Rakesh Sarna, MD and CEO Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, said: "This is a strategic step in bringing greater synergies amongst two brands known for their legendary hospitality. This alliance will help drive deeper engagement for our most valuable guests and members as they will now be recognised seamlessly at some of the world's finest hotels across multiple geographies."

"As hotel owner-operators who share similar values and service philosophies, but have minimal overlap of properties, Taj and Shangri-La are in a unique position to establish a seamless alliance that goes beyond a marketing partnership or multi-hotel distribution platform," said Shangri-La Acting President Madhu Rao.



## SA SELLERS EXPERIENCE THE BEST OF SOUTH AFRICA

It all began with a contest. The Fastest 50 Challenge launched last year invited travel agents across India to sell 50 South Africa packages exceeding 9 days. The first 20 sellers stood to win an all-expenses-paid trip to South Africa, so that they could experience and celebrate the product they were selling.

Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager, South African Tourism India, said, "The response was astounding with applications pouring in from all over the country. Travel agents, large and small, put great efforts into increasing their South Africa sales and we're happy to say that we sent 20 top sellers on the trip. We are firm believers in incentivising and rewarding top performers. We encourage the Indian travel trade to continue to sell South Africa enthusiastically."

### SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM AND COX & KINGS OFFER SPECIAL HOLIDAY PACKAGES

South African Tourism has partnered with Cox & Kings to launch two special packages. The Best of South Africa package includes the mother city, Cape Town, adventure capitals Oudtshoorn and Knysna, and of course, unmissable South African destinations like Sun City, Kruger National Park & Johannesburg. South African Dhamaka takes travellers to Johannesburg, Sun City, Port Elizabeth, Knysna, Oudtshoorn and Cape Town in a customised 11-night package.



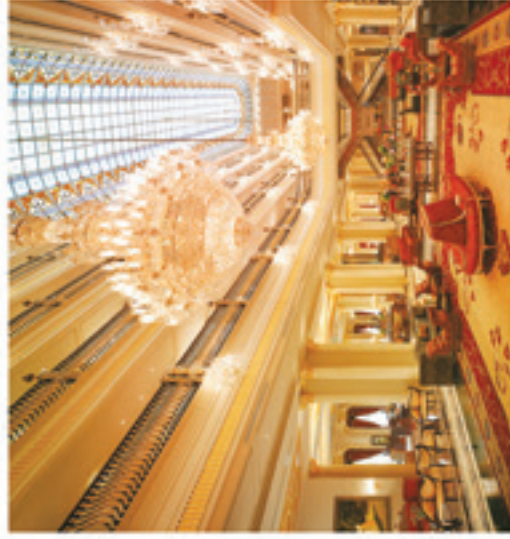




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## MUMBAI GETS ITS FIRST 'ICONIC FLOATING HOTEL'

**W**ant to dine on the ocean or spend a lovely evening on the sea waters? Here is Mumbai's first floating hotel – AB Celestial' – in the backdrop of the iconic Bandra-Worli sea link, where one can have a completely new experience. This new theme hotel is located at the Maharashtra Maritime Board's jetty at Bandra under the Bandra-Worli Sea Link.

WB International Consultants, Founder of AB Celestial, in association with Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) and Maharashtra Maritime Board, have opened this unique Luxury Floating Hotel. Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, inaugurated the hotel in the presence of Jaykumar Rawal, Minister of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, and other dignitaries.

Inaugurating AB Celestial, Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister, Maharashtra, said, "This floatel will offer a unique experience to visitors. The Government has been encouraging and supporting innovative concepts to bolster the tourism potential of this city and the State."

Commenting on the occasion, Jaykumar Rawal, Minister of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, stated, "The floatel concept was conceived and spearheaded by the State Tourism Department with numerous government bodies involved to make this a reality and jewel in the crown of Maharashtra."

Chetan Bhende, Managing Director and CEO, WB International Consultants, said, "We are happy to gift this novel concept to the people of Mumbai."

## GLIMPSES OF THE WORLD SACRED SPIRIT FESTIVAL IN JODHPUR

**T**he World Sacred Spirit Festival 2017 concluded recently in the city. For the past 10 years, the prestigious site of the Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur open their doors to an extraordinary sacred and historical musical journey. Known to present the most beautiful of sacred traditions from the Orient, the East and Africa, WSSF has taken a step further in enchanting its guests with an impressive line-up of artists in a stunning royal setting.

## TREAT FROM STREET @KITCHEN DISTRICT

**K**itchen District at Hyatt Regency, Gurgaon, will be transformed into a street food paradise every Saturday as it's bringing together the best street food dishes from around the world under one roof. Clearly a culinary extravaganza for all the globetrotting foodies, the newly curated fast-casual menu not only fills the bowl, but also feeds the soul.

Right from Old Delhi's tantalising chaat to the flavourful dosa delights of the South to Mumbai's iconic misal pav to Kolkata's dreamboat frankie – the best of India can be discovered at Kitchen District.

What's more? Kitchen District's master chefs will also be celebrating diversity with deliciousness by whipping up global gastronomical delights like pizzas, pastas, fish n chips, etc, all hawker-style. To wash it all down, there's a huge selection of beverages like aam panna, thandai, jal jeera and shikanji.

It's a perfect opportunity for foodies to not just travel to the food heaven, but also enjoy endless conversations with friends and family over an unforgettable lunch experience. After all, happiness is enjoying your favourite meal with your favourite people.

## RADISSON BLU ATRIA BENGALURU OPENS IN "THE GARDEN CITY"

**R**adisson Blu Atria Bengaluru launched its services in the capital of India's southern Karnataka state, Bengaluru, also known as, "The Garden City." An epicentre of economic activity and high-technology industry, the city is also renowned for its beautiful parks and dynamic nightlife. The newly-opened Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru is set to introduce the brand's internationally renowned, Yes, I Can!SM service philosophy with sophisticated design and premier accommodation.

"Bengaluru is a progressive market and continues to thrive on high economic activity, an international focal point of India's growth momentum. The opening of Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru is a testament of our footprint in the region and a reflection of the unique brand identity that we bring to the city. We are proud to be in partnership with A.S.K.Brothers Ltd. to launch this upper-upscale hotel," said Raj Rana, Chief Executive Officer, South Asia, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group.

Sunder Raju, Executive Director, A.S.K. Brothers Ltd, said, "Radisson Blu, a new addition to Bengaluru's hospitality landscape, brings fresh vibrancy to the marketplace. The brand stands out in creating experiences that constantly reflect the modern traveller's needs, desires and aspirations. We are pleased to collaborate with Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group and look forward to a mutually beneficial relationship in delivering hospitality services and enhancing the brand in Bengaluru."





## ITDC CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) organised various programmes across divisions, including a special health awareness workshop for all women employees of the corporation, to pay tribute to God's best creation – woman. In order to acknowledge the contribution of women to the organisation, ITDC organised a Health and Wellness Program for its women employees with Dr Geeta Asthana, a renowned Senior Consultant [Cardiology] with Fortis Escorts Heart Institute. ITDC's flagship property, The Ashok celebrated Women's Day by offering amazing discounts at all its restaurants (The Oudh, Frontier and Samavar – The Coffee Shop).

Speaking on the occasion, Piyush Tiwari, Officiating Chairman & Managing Director and Director (Commercial & Marketing), ITDC, said, "India has historically and traditionally accorded a very high stature to women as is evident from the symbolic control of Mental Strength, Physical Strength and Financial Strength being assigned to Goddess Saraswati, Goddess Durga and Goddess Laxmi respectively. Rather than women trying to prove themselves equal to men, it should be other way round, as women are considered far superior to men when it comes to managing and creating a balance between work and family life. Women have been outperforming men in almost every field and it's an honour for me to be present among all of you," he said.



## FORTUNE PARK HOTELS LTD UNVEILS FORTUNE MIRAMAR, GOA

Fortune Park Hotels Ltd, further expanded its bouquet of hotels with the opening of the brand's 46<sup>th</sup> hotel, 'Fortune Miramar, Goa'. This property is the third Fortune hotel in Goa, joining Fortune Acron Regina, Candolim and Acron Waterfront Resort, Baga. Owned by M/s Cosme Costa Hospitality Pvt Ltd, Fortune Miramar has been tastefully designed as an elegant and contemporary hotel that offers a wide range of guest services and facilities to the new-age traveller.

Commenting on the launch, Suresh Kumar, Managing Director, Fortune Park Hotels Ltd., said, "We are extremely delighted to launch our 46<sup>th</sup> property. The addition of Fortune Miramar expands the brand's presence in Goa and offers another exciting destination where our guests can create lasting memories. Fortune, member ITC's hotel group, is known for providing contemporary accommodation and great value for business and leisure travellers. Now among the largest growing chains in the country, Fortune Hotels caters to a wide spectrum of travellers through its various sub-brands. With the launch of this hotel, Fortune Hotels has further strengthened its position as a leading player in the first-class hotels segment."

## IHG INTRODUCES ITS FIRST HOLIDAY INN® HOTEL IN KOLKATA

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG®) strengthens its presence in the Eastern region of India with the introduction of its first Holiday Inn® hotel in Kolkata - Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport. With the opening of the 137-room hotel, in partnership with Jain Group, the total number of Holiday Inn hotels has gone up to 11 in India.

Shantha de Silva, Head of Southwest Asia, InterContinental Hotels Group, said, "Holiday Inn brand family is one of the growth drivers for IHG's expansion in India. We are proud to add Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport to our portfolio and look forward to expanding our footprint in West Bengal. We are delighted to be working with the Jain Group and look forward to offering business ready services to our guests in Kolkata."

Shrayans Jain, Vice Chairman, Jain Group, said, "We are very happy to partner with IHG and announce the opening of 'Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport'. Due to increased business activity in the state, West Bengal has become the gateway to Northeast India, enabling an upward swing for the hospitality sector. Strategically located near the airport, the hotel caters to the needs of guests visiting Kolkata for both business and leisure. We look forward to fulfilling our guests' expectations with services unique to a Holiday Inn hotel."







## FIJI BECOMES 'INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS' PARTNER

The International Day of Happiness is a United Nations initiative introduced in 2011 that recognises "the pursuit of happiness as a fundamental human goal," and has been celebrated around the world on the 20th of March ever since. Tourism Fiji is proud to announce an official partnership with the International Day of Happiness this year.

Matt Stoeckel, CEO of Tourism Fiji, says, "Fiji is the place where happiness finds you and the hospitality extended to its visitors is world renowned. Tourism Fiji recognises the synergies with the International Day of Happiness and through this partnership will showcase to the rest of the world what makes Fiji such a happy place."

International Day of Happiness Founder, Jayme Illien, says, "We are thrilled to partner with Tourism Fiji and Fiji in 2017. It's a natural partnership and we hope the rest of the world will learn a thing or two and take meaningful steps towards richer, happier lives. Importantly, we see this partnership as a long-term relationship and are confident it will act as a model for other partnerships going forward."

## YATRA SIGNS MOU WITH MADHYA PRADESH TO PROMOTE HOMESTAYS

Yatra.com has signed an MoU with the Government of Madhya Pradesh to jointly promote homestays in the region. The MoU was signed by Jaimon Mathew - GM Operations, MPSTDC, and Manish Bansal- GM Homestays, Yatra.com, in the presence of AMD MP Tourism, Tanvi Sundariyal. The partnership will enable Yatra to promote all the state tourism approved homestays, wherein travellers can rent a room in the home of a local family (host) or the entire house.

Speaking on the partnership, Sharat Dhall, COO (B2C), Yatra.com, said, "We are pleased to announce this partnership and aim to promote homestays in the state. We believe that this partnership will offer best-in-class stay experience for tourists visiting the state. Strengthening our eco-system for homestays, we are aggressively working towards promoting homestays across the country, which will also generate employment for the local population and help contribute to the economy of the nation."



## THE DISAPPEARING HOTELS OF WALES

Two hundred fortunate visitors will get a chance to book themselves in hotels which will vanish gradually. These boutique hotels will emerge at three spectacular secret locations across Wales. This unique concept is a part of Welsh Tourism Planner as part of the Welsh 2017 "Year of Legends".

The concept is a perfect blend of luxury and adventure, where eight bespoke cabins pop up in unheard of places; in the mystical and epic land of Wales. Only a select few will be able to access these privileged sites. Guests will be treated to exclusive Welsh experiences during their stay, inspired by their location, ranging from fishing, to beer tasting, to Welsh cuisine prepared by top chefs of the region.

The cabins are specially designed for the project by the most sought after designers of Wales, namely, Timber Design, Wales & Newcastle Emlyn's Rural Office for Architecture Ltd. The designs of each cabin are completely unique and speak of the famous legends and rich heritage of Wales.



## PHD 6<sup>TH</sup> INDIA HERITAGE TOURISM CONCLAVE

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised a press conference to create awareness about promoting the heritage of Khajuraho and bringing Khajuraho on the map of prominent heritage tourism destinations of the world. The chamber also highlighted their upcoming programme, the PHD 6th India Heritage Tourism Conclave – Sustaining Heritage Tourism of Khajuraho, which aims at highlighting the importance of the heritage city and its sculptures, which belong to more than 1100 years ago. This is PHD Chamber's 6th Edition of the series of Heritage Tourism Conclaves. The earlier editions were held in cities like New Delhi, Jaipur, Shimla, Ranchi and Patna.

The Conclave was inaugurated by Faggan Singh Kulaste, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India along with prominent dignitaries from Government of India, and Government of Madhya Pradesh also gracing the occasion. The officials who addressed the press were Igor Polikha, Ambassador, Embassy of Ukraine; Daniela Maria, Head, Culture Department, Embassy of Romania; Pushpendra Singh (Guddu Raja), President, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh; Archana Singh, Mayor, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh; Raja Bundela, Honorary Member, Media and Entertainment Committee, PHD Chamber; Anuj Gupta, Honorary Member, Tourism Committee, PHD Chamber and Yogesh Srivastav, Director, PHD Chamber.





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## SOTC LAUNCHES REVAMPED WWW.SOTC.IN

SOTC enters the Travel E Commerce space with an all-new sotch.in portal, offering exciting new features. The platform presents an experiential holiday buying experience for its customers with a new map navigation feature. With a more contemporary design, variations have been made to the site-wide navigation to help customers find the information they need faster. The website offers customers a more engaging user experience with enhanced search and navigation.

Speaking of the website launch, Vishal Suri, Managing Director, SOTC Travel said, "With the new design, our desire was to use technology to allow customers to engage seamlessly with us across our physical and digital platforms. The new website is built on SOTC's Omni-channel approach, which is customer-centric and helps us deliver an integrated digital experience to our customers."



## FIRST EVER POP-UP HOTEL DEBUTS IN TEL AVIV BEACH

The first pop-up hotel of its kind in the world opened in a lifeguard tower on Tel Aviv beach. The hotel opening is part of an international campaign by the Tourism Ministry and the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality #TAKEME2TELAVIV, which invites tourists to enjoy a unique experience in the city. The lifeguard tower, which is located on Frishman Beach, was inaugurated by the Mayor of Tel Aviv-Yafo Ron Huldai and the Tourism Ministry Director-General, Amir Halevi.

Said Huldai, "As with other areas, so it is with tourism in the city of Tel Aviv-Yafo – it was and always will be creative and ground-breaking. This lifeguard tower is an amazing opportunity to come and enjoy the city and our wonderful beach. I am sure that the guests in the lifeguard tower will share their impressions of the city with their friends all over the world".

Amir Halevi commented, "This is part of the Two Cities One Break campaign that encourages tourism to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and we will continue the marketing momentum in accordance with the policies and increased budgets that Tourism Minister Levin has secured."



## SPAIN CELEBRATES GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, BILBAO

Receiving a million visits per year, the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum is a symbol of Bilbao's transformation and its evolution into one of the avant-garde cities of the 21st century. A spectacular building and the importance of the works that it houses puts the city among the only five in the world that welcome the funds of this important collection. Designed by the American architect Frank O. Gehry, this magnificent building celebrates its 20th anniversary this year with a powerful and artistic programming.

To celebrate the anniversary, which will be held on October 19, 2017, the exhibition space in Bilbao will develop numerous activities over the course of 12 months under the motto, "El arte lo cambia todo" (Art Changes Everything), as through this iconic monument Bilbao accomplished an intensive change which appointed it as an international cultural destination.

The aim of the programme is to strengthen the position of Bilbao Museum in the European and international art scene, strengthen ties with the Basque artistic and cultural environment and consolidate its position as the economic engine of Bilbao and its surroundings.



## THE GRAND VENICE LAUNCHES TERRAZZO

The Grand Venice launched its ultimate food hub, the Terrazzo. Terrazzo has opened its doors to the public with some of the most exotic restaurants and has a string of exciting events lined up. The Grand Venice food court is a complete lifestyle destination catering to the growing need for a combination of fun and fine dining experience under one roof.

The Grand Venice Food Court Terrazzo is created on an area of 50,000sq.ft, which has a seating capacity of 1300 pax, and has restaurants and outlets such as the Old Delhi chain Karim's, Moti Mahal, Dakshin Xpress, Long Noodles, Chicago Pizza, Ever Green Chaat Café, Grill Inn, Kulfiano and Bikgane Biryani. Upcoming outlets include Rolls King, Thaliwada, China Wall, amongst others.

On the launch, Satinder Singh Bhasin, Managing Director, The Grand Venice, said, "We are excited to launch the largest Food Court in Delhi NCR. We believe in indulging our customers with not only the best cuisine, but also high quality service and an aesthetically pleasing decor."

"The Grand Venice has been designed as per international standards. It introduces the unique concept of Venetian architecture. The Grand Venice brings alive the magic of Venice in India, making it modern India's first mega tourist destination," said Queeny Bhasin, CEO, The Grand Venice.



# BONSAI: MINI MAGIC

Though growing Bonsai trees is a hobby practised by many people around the world, its Asian origin is still obvious

**TT BUREAU**

**D**erived from an ancient Chinese horticulture practice and redeveloped under the influence of Japanese Zen Buddhism, Bonsai is a Japanese term which literally translates to 'planted in a container.' Bonsai has been around for well over a thousand years and there are Bonsai trees that are hundreds of years old. As a hobby bonsai requires a lot of patience and time and can be very rewarding at the end of it. All one requires are a few basic materials and some basic tools. Moreover, one does not really have to buy a 'Bonsai tree,' because there is no such thing, it is the art of taking any type of tree or shrub and growing it and trimming it in ways so that it remains small, yet has the proportions and uncanny look of its larger counter parts. The ultimate goal of growing a Bonsai is to create a miniaturised but realistic representation of nature in the form of a tree.

Most commonly kept under four feet (or about a metre) in height, Bonsai are not genetically dwarfed plants. Techniques such as pinching buds, pruning and wiring branches, and carefully restricting but not abandoning fertilisers are used to limit and redirect healthy growth. However, plants with smaller leaves do make these compositions easier to design. In fact, any plant species that has a woody stem or trunk, grows true branches, can be successfully grown in a container to restrict its roots/food storage capability, and has smaller or reducible leaves, can be used to create a Bonsai.

The ultimate goal of Bonsai is to create a realistic depiction of nature. As a Bonsai gets smaller (even down to a few inches/centimetres) it increasingly becomes abstract, as opposed to resembling nature in a more precise way. Several classifications of Bonsai have been put forward, and although the exact size classifications are disputed, they help to gain understanding of the aesthetic and botanical aspects of Bonsai. The classifications are originally based on the number of men needed to lift the actual tree.

The containers for these trees could be of interest in themselves. Traditionally made in China and then Japan, these shallow containers of mostly fired earthenware are increasingly crafted by both professional and amateur artisans around the world. The matching up of a pot to a designed tree can be a wonderful challenge, for the pot must support the tree as well as be an attractive but non-intrusive frame to the Bonsai's picture.

The Indian Bonsai Association since 2013 has been hosting an annual Bonsai Exhibition at the National Bonsai Park, Lodhi Garden, New Delhi.







### 'POD HOTEL' LAUNCHES IN INDIA

Urbanpod – the first-of-its-kind Pod Hotel in India, indulges discerning travellers with a 'STAY SMART' option. With its GenNext & futuristic concept and catering to new-age travellers, business and leisure, Urbanpod is modern, stylish and minimalistic. It offers good value without compromising on comfort, quality and feel while offering a unique experience! What's more, the Pod-theme makes it a great place to network.

Hiren Gandhi, Co-founder & Director, Urbanpod, said, "New-age travellers look forward to places that are affordable, hygienic and provide safe accommodation at a centrally located place with a good ambience and feel, coupled with good internet connectivity and Urbanpod provides just the right mix!"



### MOROCCO JOINS UNWTO FOR INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR DEVELOPMENT 2017

Morocco has become the latest country to partner UNWTO for the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017. The commitment was delivered at the Moroccan Day of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism, held on 20 March, in Rabat.

"The commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco with the tourism sector is remarkable, not only by joining the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, but also by other gestures done in the past, such as partnering with the World Tourism Organization in promoting more responsible practices and leading the process of adoption of the African Charter," said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.



### HONG KONG DISNEYLAND RESORT DEBUTS DISNEY FRIENDS SPRINGTIME CARNIVAL

This spring, it's the more the merrier at Hong Kong Disneyland! More than 100 Disney Friends will gather to celebrate this first-of-its-kind Disney Friends Springtime Carnival. More than 30 Disney Friends will also take part in a brand new Disney Friends Springtime Processional every afternoon along the parade route. Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Daisy, Goofy, Pluto, Chip and Dale will arrive in their finest spring outfits to start the procession on a spring-themed train decorated with gorgeous flowers. They will be joined by Judy and Nick from the award-winning animation, "Zootopia," Alice and the White Rabbit from "Alice in Wonderland," Marie from "Aristocats," the Seven Dwarfs, and Tigger and Piglet. There will also be close to 50 dancers in the new parade, bringing even more excitement to guests this spring period.

The specially created Disney Friends Springtime Garden provides picturesque settings for guests to take in the spectacular colours of spring and snap photos of Mickey, Minnie and Donald in all of the garden's whimsical corners.

### GLIMPSES OF THE 21 GUN SALUTE INTERNATIONAL VINTAGE CAR RALLY & CONCOURS SHOW

The 21 Gun Salute International Vintage Car Rally & Concours Show made a buzz in Delhi NCR. The largest Vintage Car Rally of the country is poised to be on the Global Vintage Rallies map and is only getting bigger and grander every year. Besides showcasing the rich automotive heritage to the world, the rally has also taken up a social cause every year. Previous editions have supported the welfare of spastic and blind children, 'Save the Girl Child', etc. In keeping with this tradition, the 7th edition supported the welfare of spastic children.







# *Traditional Wonders*

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**SANTANU GUHA ROY** has been appointed as the General Manager at Radisson Blu Hotel Ranchi managed by Carlson Rezidor Group of Hotels. Roy has completed his graduation from Kolkata University in 1995 and Diploma in Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition in 1993 from IHMCTAN, Kolkata. With a broad spectrum of hospitality experience of over two decades, he has worked with several renowned hospitality brands such as The Taj Group of Hotels, Intercontinental Group of Hotels and has been with Carlson Rezidor Group since 2007.



**VISHAL JAMUAR** has been appointed as General Manager at Radisson Blu Resort & Spa Alibaug. He has graduated in Commerce, acquired Post Graduate in Marketing Management from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune. He is versatile, with specialised Sales & Marketing skills, an achievement-oriented professional with a career span of over 25 years that reflects pioneering operational expertise and year-on-year success in achieving business objectives, with various renowned brands of hotels, like Taj Group, ITC Hotels and Carlson Rezidor Managed Hotels with the Radisson Blu Brands.

## AP CONCLAVE 2017 WELCOMES INDUSTRY LEADERS

The Department of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, held its first Arunachal Pradesh Tourism Conclave 2017 in New Delhi. The Conclave was graced by Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of State for Home, Government of India, and PD Sona, Parliamentary Secretary Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, and witnessed a compelling programme of anchor events, content for new partners and delegate representation from the entire spectrum of the travel and tourism industry. The platform was part of the state government's efforts to boost domestic and international tourist inflow in the state, which received over 3.5 lakh tourists in 2016.

Speaking at the Conclave, Joram Beda, Tourism Secretary, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, said, "Arunachal Pradesh is investing to become the adventure and exotic tourism hub of India. We have been organising theme-based events like the Tawang festival, Ziro festival of music, Arunachal spring carnival, adventure at Mechuka, as also the Kameng river festival. The role of tourism partners in building awareness and being encouraging about the unique attractions this state offers is paramount. In 2017, we expect the number of tourist arrivals to grow exponentially. We thank our tourism partners and urge them to continue promoting the rich biodiversity and ecotourism attractions that Arunachal Pradesh offers".



## MUMBAI HOSTS POLO MATCH BETWEEN ARGENTINA & MUMBAI

The sixth YES Bank and the Consulate General of Argentine International Polo Cup at the Royal Western Indian Turf Club, Mahalaxmi Racecourse, featured a thrilling match between the Argentinean and Indian (Amateur Rider's Club) teams, both at 14 goals, that clinched in a tie for the first time. The event was organised by YES Bank, together with the Consulate General and Promotion Centre of Argentina, and the Amateur Riders Club. Hosted by Rana Kapoor, Managing Director & CEO, YES Bank, Alejandro Zothner Meyer, Acting Consul General and Suresh Tapuria, President, Amateur Riders Club; Rajashree Birla, Cyrus Poonawalla; Radha Kapoor Khanna and Aditya Khanna, were the Guests of Honour and also presented the

trophies to the winners at the prize distribution ceremony.

Acting Consul General, Alejandro Zothner Meyer, Consulate General, and Promotion Centre of the Argentine Republic in Mumbai, said, "We

hope to continue bringing polo players from Argentina that are the best in the world with an aim to share our sporting culture with India, and of course, to continue this six-year-long tradition that we have started."

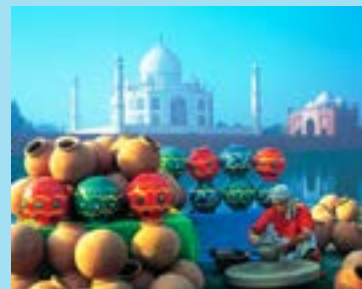


## OLA PARTNERS WITH 'TAJ MAHOTSAV'

Providing smart and sustainable mobility solutions to tens of thousands of visitors at this year's 'Taj Mahotsav', Ola partnered with the Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation successfully. As the festival's official mobility partner, Ola had rolled out several offers and discounts for commuters across Agra. Under this association, Ola launched dedicated 'Ola Zones' at the festival premises to facilitate mobility solutions to lakhs of commuters. Manned by Ola representatives, commuters were able to take assistance in booking a ride, thereby making the experience more convenient. 'Ola Zones' also worked as pick-up and drop-off points for customers and also had exclusive parking areas for Ola vehicles.

Dinesh Kumar, Secretary, Taj Mahotsav Samiti, Uttar Pradesh Tourism, said, "Attracting lakhs of tourists every year, Taj Mahotsav has emerged as an enormous success and its popularity has been increasing with each passing year. We would like to appreciate Ola for providing a seamless transportation experience to all visitors in our city and look forward to their participation in strengthening the mobility infrastructure of the city."

Deep Singh, Business Head - North, Ola, said, "It is a matter of immense pride for Ola to be associated with Taj Mahotsav, a festival that showcases the cultural diversity of the country to the world and attracts enthusiasts from the world over."





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CORPORATE



# A SKILLED STRATEGY

IHG plans include 150 hotels within the next 10-15 years in India. In the pipeline are nearly 40 hotels, which are slated to open within the next three to five years

## KAMAL GILL

It is a commonly known axiom that being good is not good enough – particularly in the fiercely competitive environment we exist in. An ability to excel is a major driver of business growth. Successful professionals, including those in the hospitality industry, have recognised that the concept of excellence is at best elusive, hard to define and even harder to realise, particularly in the hospitality industry.

However, many flourishing hotel brands have risen above the norm – they have translated their concept of excellence into reality through practical measures that stem from having a long-term vision for their hotel, supported by clear business goals. The Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) is one such hotel brand that has become a global benchmark in its own right. It has achieved this through strategic business choices, stressing on product quality and skilful human resource management.

Most importantly, an effective leadership is required on this journey to excellence, someone who must set the precedent and inspire a motivated and thoroughly dedicated team. Shantha de Silva, Head, Southwest Asia, IHG, fits the bill admirably.

InterContinental Mumbai Marine Drive



In conversation with **Today's Traveller**, Shantha de Silva speaks concisely and articulately about IHG's success, its USP and future plans. He begins by dwelling on IHG's growth trajectory over the past couple of years, particularly their performance in 2016, and the reasons for their spectacular success.

"A major strategy to generate high-quality growth focusses on strengthening IHG's diverse portfolio of differentiated brands," states De Silva. There is a fine portfolio of products belonging to the IHG brand in the country, which includes 11 Crowne Plaza, 11 Holiday Inn, two InterContinental and five Holiday Inn Express hotels, comprising about 5,500 rooms in all. With 29 hotels across India and a pipeline of 36 more hotels to come, IHG bags an impressive report card.

Moreover, with the launch of its 2017 Trends Report –The Uncompromising Customer: Addressing the Paradoxes of the 'Age of I'– at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, IHG is fully cognizant of the fact that as a global



brand it must address the complex, sometimes opposing needs of today's customers in order to fulfil their expectations. It does this with alacrity and delivers a superior guest experience as its key focus.

A significant milestone, informs De Silva, is the IHG Rewards programme, that helps attract guests to the hotels. "We have over 100 million guests who are registered loyal members of the programme and that helps us to bring our hotel to them and them to our hotels, which helps us drive performance. We have also launched our National Sales Office, so for the first time, we



have dedicated professionals selling our portfolio of hotels in India," says De Silva.

When questioned about the National Sales Office, De Silva explains, "The National Sales Office has been instituted to leverage the strength of the brand's portfolio, whose numbers have catapulted from four to thirty properties. It has been done so that customers can access one centralised source for their booking needs, to reach a wider audience and to help drive performance."

However, De Silva concedes that IHG's *piece de resistance* is its people. "IHG's talented personnel play a critical role in providing consistently high standards of guest service and delivering each brand promise, thus cementing a winning culture," he affirms. De Silva clarifies how this is initiated at every level. "At the recruitment level is the 'I-Host' programme, which inducts people into the industry after a 12-month training programme, after which they graduate as supervisors. An 'I-Grad' programme for graduates includes an 18-month programme, after which they qualify as assistant managers or managers," he shares.

Moreover, 30 IHG Academies across India have affiliated with educational institutions to impart training to people and encourage them to engage with the hospitality industry. Over 1,800 persons were trained last year alone. Maintains De Silva, "The strengths that we have in our people and the investment we have made in the development of their talents has helped





*Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre Guest Lounge*

room rates pose a challenge, De Silva is optimistic, saying that room rates would stabilise once occupancy stabilises. "It is also dependent on other factors, such as the proliferation of different kinds of hotels, as well as the summer versus winter demands," he asserts.

The future is bright for IHG. De Silva informs, "Our plans include 150 hotels within the next 10-15 years in India. In the pipeline are nearly 40 hotels, which are slated to open within the next three to five years."

What's more, De Silva sees an increase in international players in the Indian market and concludes on a positive note, maintaining that this will strengthen the industry, make it more robust and people oriented.

us in our performance, it has underpinned guest experience, employee recognition and also our revenue delivery. IHG was in the top spot in the list of great places to work in India."

Another feather in IHG's cap is a loyalty programme for corporates – the IHG Business Rewards, which rewards corporates, bookers and companies for their loyalty to IHG brands and hotels. "For outbound business and leisure travellers the IHG Rewards programme comes as a boon, as they can access nearly 5,000 hotels globally to receive benefits and recognition. The programme is member-friendly, in that the benefits that accrue to the receiver are not only through hotel stays, but a wide range of exclusive and attractive redeemable choices," he discloses.

De Silva throws light on IHG'S product line, which he says is a "mix of both business and leisure, with a healthy mix of domestic and international travellers. Key cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru would have 60-70 per cent international travellers, while secondary markets could have a 50-50 per cent ratio of international and domestic travellers."

When it comes to challenges faced by the brand, De Silva acknowledges, "Infrastructural development is a key challenge, but I am confident that the government's focus on new airports, amongst others, will help the industry to grow. Another challenge is the dearth of skilled talent, which we are addressing with our programmes for training personnel to be absorbed by the company."

When queried if depressed

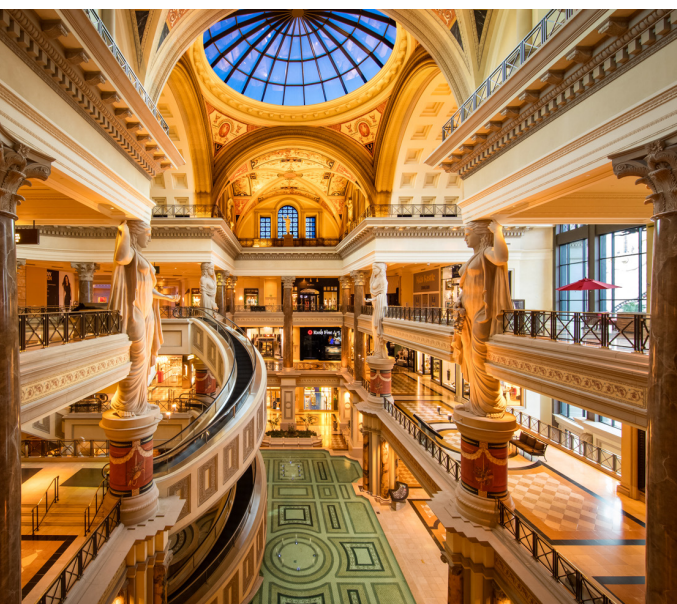


*A meeting room at Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park*



*InterContinental Mahabalipuram - Bay View Suite-Living Room*





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For more information, visit: [www.simon.com/travel](http://www.simon.com/travel)





# CORPORATE JET-SETTER

**MAHESH MADGAVKAR**  
**HEAD - GROUP ADMINISTRATION**  
**ACG WORLDWIDE**

## Most memorable trip to any destination?

There are many memories of my trip, as I am a wanderer. The best one was Tso Moriri Lake in the Ladakhi part of the Changthang Plateau.

## You dream of going to?

There is no limit, I want to see all parts of the world. And I enjoy each and every destination. Next destination on my list is Bali and some parts of Africa for this year.

## Favourite airline and why?

Emirates – It was my first International experience with this airline, so there's an emotional touch. Another reason is, this airline has the maximum Asian countries (around more than 140 cities) covered. Hence, one of the best airlines according to me.

## Best hotel experience and why?

Hotel W Singapore – Sentosa Cove is my international choice, while domestic my choice is Wild Flower, Mashobra, in Shimla.

## A place you plan to visit again?

Mussoorie

## A family vacation that stands out?

Kausani - 130km from Nainital.

## Your best holiday with friends?

Goa is the ultimate destination to be with your friends.

## Great food you enjoyed and where?

Asian Thupka on the Star Cruise liner in Singapore and Grilled Octopus in Pataya, Thailand.



## What to watch out for while travelling ?

Always travel light, While travelling International, there's no need to have your wallet full of currency – use plastic money, Always check the tourism website to know the best places to visit, Always be hydrated while travelling, especially when you are on an adventurous tour. Be alert and stick to your intuition, do not trust strangers – use your common sense, Always be guided by the locals and cross check twice with other sources before believing anything. Do not stretch yourself-after all it's a vacation and not a competition.

## As a travel buyer, what's your philosophy?

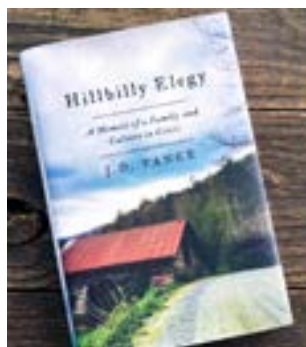
As a buyer, travel economies – 'Value for money' is something which is always on my priority list. I avoid a destination that has more than 1 hour of road travel from the airport. Safety and security cannot be compromised at any moment, reviews and references matters a lot. Finally, a "wow feeling" is something which will always be on my mind while selecting a destination.





# PICK OF THE MONTH

The latest collection of books, games, audio CDs and DVDs are here to keep you entertained for the month



## BOOK: HILLBILLY ELEGY: A MEMOIR OF A FAMILY AND CULTURE IN CRISIS JD VANCE

From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a probing look at the struggles of America's white working class through the author's own story of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town. Hillbilly Elegy is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis – that of poor, white Americans. The

disintegration of this group, a process that has been slowly occurring now for over forty years, has been reported with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. In Hillbilly Elegy, JD Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hanging around your neck. A deeply moving memoir, with its share of humour and vividly colourful figures, Hillbilly Elegy is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And, it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.

**Genre(s): Rural sociology, Poverty**

## MUSIC: THE AFTERLOVE JAMES BLUNT

The "You're Beautiful" crooner takes a risky but rewarding shift into pop territory with the help of Ryan Tedder and Ed Sheeran. The Afterlove is the fifth



studio album by British singer-songwriter James Blunt. It

was released on March 24, 2017, through Atlantic Records.

Blunt recorded the album between 2015 and 2016, before it was finished in early 2017.

"Time of Our Lives" was released on 14 February, 2017, as a promotional single

for Valentine's Day. This was followed by the release of "Make Me Better," on 2 March, 2017.

**Genre(s): Pop**



## DVD: ELLE

Michèle (Isabelle Huppert) seems indestructible. Head of a successful video game company, she brings the same ruthless attitude to her love life as to business. Being attacked in her home by an unknown assailant changes Michèle's life forever. When she resolutely tracks the man down, they are both drawn into a curious and thrilling game – a game that may, at any moment, spiral out of control. "Elle" is a high-wire act without a net.

**Genre(s): Drama, Thriller**



## GAME: RESIDENT EVIL 7: BIOHAZARD

The game is a survival horror video game developed and published by Capcom. While Resident Evil 7 draws from the series' roots of atmospheric survival horror, it also delivers a new level of terror. In the Resident Evil games of yesteryear, players braced for fear in the first-person via the creepy door-opening scenes, and Resident Evil 7 ramps up that tension. With one of the creepiest single settings since the Spencer Mansion and an enticingly bizarre mystery to unravel, this is the most fun you will have had with a Resident Evil game in years.

**Genre(s): Horror; Action**





# CORPORATE JET-SETTER

**GAURAV NAGWEKAR**  
**HEAD | CORPORATE TRAVEL**  
**RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LIMITED**

## Most memorable trip to any destination?

My most memorable trip was to Langkawi (Malaysia), which we (wife and me) had visited in 2011. Imagine being on your very own private island where the blue waters of the Andaman Sea flirted with the secluded beaches and vibrant jungles. It was like heaven on earth.

## You dream of going to?

Brazil – The Mecca of Football, as it is said – is also famed for its busy Copacabana and Ipanema beaches as well as its enormous, raucous Carnival festival, samba music and dance.

## Favourite airline and why?

Emirates – as they have a wide range of connections, their hospitality is very personal – they have a strong duty of care.

## Best hotel experience and why?

We have strong memories of Taj Rebak (Langkawi). It is situated on an island and we had to take a speedboat to travel to and fro to go into town. It was the closest to nature as we could ever be. Their hospitality was delightful and they made us feel at home, away from home.

## A place you plan to visit again?

I would say it would be Singapore – as it's a cosmopolitan city and their night life is similar to that of Mumbai's.

## A family vacation that stands out?

A trip to Rajasthan in January 2015. Its palaces and forts reminded us of the many kingdoms that were historically part of The Pink City,, Hawa Mahal, Amer Fort, Lake Pichola... were all mesmerising – as if we were travelling back in time!

## Your best holiday with friends?

I think Goa was the best holiday I had with friends, as it was followed by a close friend's beach wedding... Also, I come from the coastal belt – so i am at ease when close to the sea. What could be better than experiencing Goa with friends.

## Great food you enjoyed and where?

Though I am a foodie I don't like to experiment much. However, I am always game for good Fish Curry and Rice – and ofcourse – where else than in Goa!

## What to watch out for while travelling?

I think safety has taken precedence overall. We need to ensure that we are safe and well connected as and when we choose a destinations. Others things include pricing, best time to travel, etc.

## As a travel buyer, what's your philosophy?

As a travel buyer by profession – I would look at the following:

1. What the destination has to offer
2. Safety of the destination
3. Comfortable accommodation
4. Best / Economical airline tickets
5. Reliable ground transportation

Having said all this, I strongly believe that holidays are about memories and not cost – and we should ensure that we enjoy them.





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# ROYAL RETREAT



ITC Grand Bharat, Gurgaon is a perfect homage to the glorious Indian epochs, offering bona fide luxury and indigenous heritage to discerning travellers

## TT BUREAU

A true epitome of opulence and heritage, ITC Grand Bharat is India's first all-suites luxury getaway that has been setting new benchmarks in the country's hospitality industry since inception. Going by ITC's philanthropic ideology of celebrating heritage and culture, the ITC Grand Bharat endeavours to re-live India's rich inheritance in modern frames of luxury. The deluxe property has a backdrop of the never-ending stretches of the beautiful Aravallis, making the 1.2sq.km green estate look even more sprawling. A comfortable 44km away from Delhi, the majestic property is located in the lush green vicinity of the Mewat district in Gurugram.

Dedicated to the theory of slow tourism, the ITC Grand Bharat breathes in unhurried luxury, the kind which speaks of aesthetically designed exotic villas, royal holistic wellbeing, the Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf course and global culinary delights cooked to delight Indian palates.

ITC Grand Bharat thrives on traditional Indian heritage like no other in the business. The grand property has its construction framed as a confluence of different architectural styles that once shaped the residences of India's numerous historic rulers. Intriguing artistic patterns inspired from that of the country's four prominent

bygone dynasties – Mughals, Marathas, Cholas and the Mauryas, serve as headliners of its ultra-luxurious Presidential Suites.

ITC's sincerity in showcasing the best of Indian heritage is equally apparent on the exteriors as it in its interiors. Creators of the ITC Grand Bharat have given the heritage property a Mandala (circular) architectural design, signifying completeness, and thus majestically representing India's past glory. Contributing to the ambience are other structures like the central dome inspired by Odisha's Nagara-style of temple architecture, while the parapet, elevated columns and embankments resemble those of the Royal Palaces of Baroda, Stepped Well of Adalaj (Gujarat) and the Ghats of Varanasi respectively. Part of the prime facia, these structures beautifully represent the rich cultural heritage of India.

Designed as a tribute to India's rich architectural heritage, the luxury villas are crafted in such a way that the astonishing mix of traditional artistry and contemporary luxury never goes out of proportion. This is borne out by the interior decor of the suites, which, to a large extent, is dominated by thoughtfully designed embellishments, magnificent hallways, wooden domes, hand woven rugs and vibrant wall colours. And hence, gratifications of an art lover are very well taken care of.

Adding more richness to the living experience there is the ceremonial welcome, which guests are treated to at the very first instance. The moment guests step into the exclusive villas, high-end comfort becomes their all-time indulgence. As a part of the experience, guests are appointed with Retreat Hosts to take care of their requirements at a more intimate level.

The suites also vouch for a premium dining experience, the kind that is even relished by the best gourmets. ITC's constant emphasis on nourishing its culinary concepts looks prominent in





the hospitality of ITC Grand Bharat. This entails treating the guests with exotic and delectable cuisines in traditional servings.

The culinary concepts, which precisely are masterpieces of expert chefs, account for some of the best offerings at the ITC Grand Bharat. Its prime eating restaurants are The India Room, Aravali Pavilion, Verandah, Apas Promenade and Peacock Bar. Guests can even try their hand at cooking by enrolling into the in-house certification based programme named Cuisine Classica.

Besides, ITC's evergreen motto of 'Responsible Luxury' obligates localised



as well as a fresh and seasonable approach in the selection of culinary produce.

With their resplendent interiors, an in-house kitchen, well-stocked mini-bar, private deck, spacious dining space for 10 and ultra-lavish amenities, the Presidential Suites of the ITC Grand Bharat are separate luxury worlds of their own.

Other residences in this majestic heritage property comprise 100 Deluxe Suites that, like their parent units, also ooze authentic old-world charm of Indian history. Needless to say, comfort through modern amenities remains intact at these places as well. Distinctive features of these suites include the splendid bedroom décor as in the traditionally designed ceilings and resplendent diwans, which are fine examples of elegance redefined.

A fitting retreat for corporate heads and visiting dignitaries, the ITC Grand Bharat offers an unparalleled experience in fine living.



## NOTABLE MENTIONS...

*The hype surrounding ITC Grand Bharat was strong even in its pre-opening stage. So, when I finally had the opportunity of experiencing an overnight stay at the property...I wondered whether expectation and delivery would match.*

*I received a refreshing welcome...heralded by the beat of drums, a turbaned escort holding a ceremonial umbrella, a shower of rose petals and a walk under a royally embellished canopy as I entered the Palace-hotel. And here comes the surprise juxtaposition...you are taken straight from the traditional 'Maharaja-welcome' experience to the cosmopolitan Peacock Bar for a relaxed welcome drink and a warm greeting from the PR Manager and your own Retreat Host.*

*To seamlessly merge regal pageantry and modern chic is a tall order. Deepak Menzez, the General Manager, has managed to put the two together and deliver a seamless experience through artistic delivery of services.*

*I enjoyed the conjuring up of historical references and their intriguing interpretations in the architecture and artefacts, the romance of a medieval-castle ambience and an Evening Arti performed by a Pujari who helped us float little leaf 'diyas' in the waters and gave his blessings.*

*The pièce de résistance was a dinner in a traditional marquee setting with a regal tented ceiling, lanterns and candlelight 3-course d'hôtel dinner, complemented with Sufi music in the background and the blue waters of the pool reflecting the lights.*

— Kamal Gill



# GOLFING GREENS

Both professional and high handicappers can discover the joys and challenges of golf right here at ITC Grand Bharat

## TT BUREAU

While the modern game of golf originated in 15<sup>th</sup> century Scotland, its ancient origins are much debated. While some trace the sport back to the Roman game of “paganica,” others cite “chuiwan” as the progenitor, a Chinese game played between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

India was the first country in the world to embrace golf after the UK, the Calcutta Club being the oldest golf club in the world outside Britain. Today, India has numerous golf clubs, including the world’s highest 18-hole course in Gulmarg, Kashmir.

Adding to their number is ITC Grand Bharat’s very own 27-hole course. The golf course at ITC Grand Bharat comprises an 18-hole Signature Championship Course, a 9-hole Signature Canyon Course, as well as The Club House and Sports Complex that offers non-golfing sports and recreational activities. The Classic Golf & Country Club is exclusively a members-only club, open for their guests as well.

Created by Landbase India and following the design by Nicklaus Design, the result is a golf course that is one of its kind in South Asia – a 27-hole behemoth signature Jack Nicklaus Golf Course, with a one-of-its-kind Golf Academy for budding golfers.

## What to expect

The course offers 27 holes, each with its own design characteristics. Also, each set of nine holes have relative characteristics that are synonymous with their names.

## Ridge Nine (Hole 1-9) - 3541 Yards (Par 36)

Rewards accuracy more than distance. It is the first nine of the Championship Course. The fairways narrow down at shorter distances off the tees. Three holes have water bodies running along the fairways. The par 3s are comparatively shorter, and more undulating. As the name suggests – if you are walking along a ridge, you’ve got to be careful where you plan to put your next step!

## Valley Nine – (Hole 10-18) - 3573 Yards (Par 36)

The back nine of the Championship 18 course does provide the edge to the longer hitters. Fairways do relatively narrow down much lesser than the Ridge. The par 3 – hole No 11, consistently plays over par in the best of the events. It measures close to 225 yards off the black tees.

## Canyon Nine – (Hole 19-27) - 3135 Yards (Par 36)

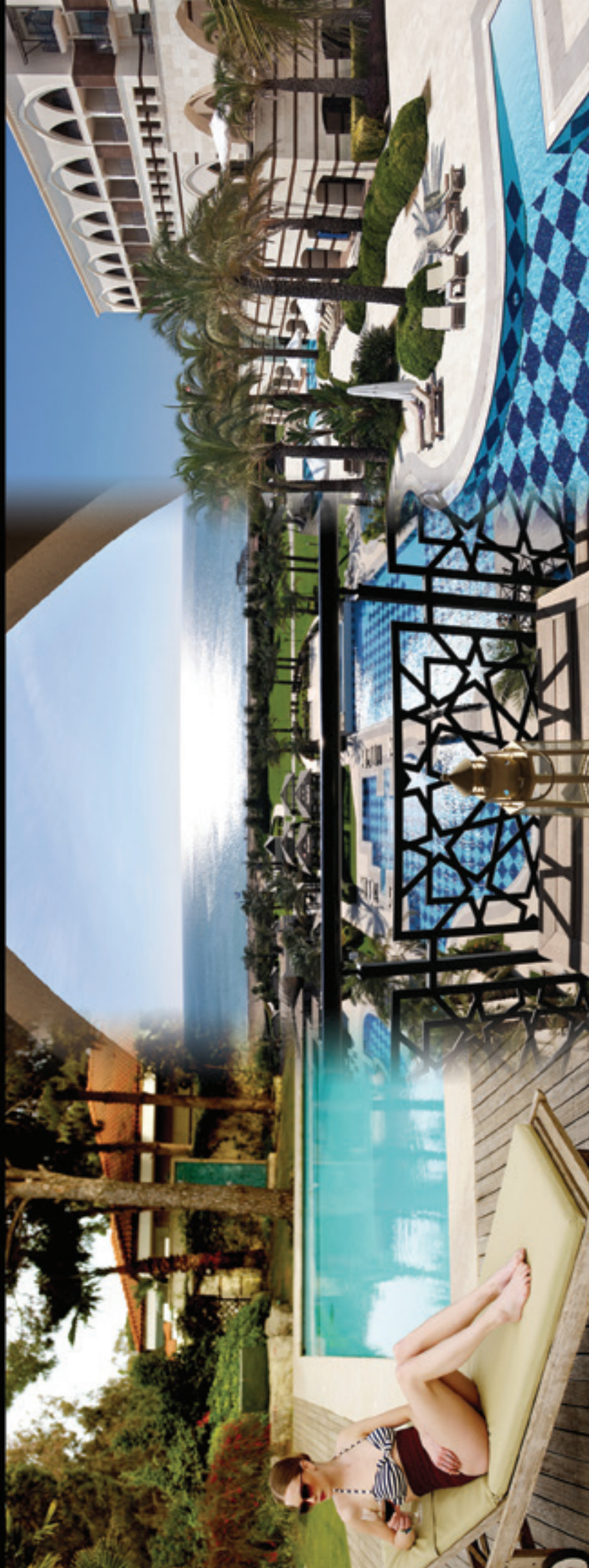
By far the most scenic nine holes of golf in the New Delhi Capital Region, the course is surrounded by the ranges from three sides – hence the nomenclature. This nine-hole course is a full-fledged par 36 set of holes. Some of the Par 4s are short and reachable. They are the “Classic Risk /Reward” holes.

Golf is a game of concentration, relaxation, sociability and bonhomie. And, ITC Grand Bharat is sure to redefine your golfing experience.





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# REDEFINING MICE IN INDIA



*The Ashok New Delhi*

Hotels and conventions are going the extra mile to ensure unforgettable experiences for discerning businessmen and corporates looking to mix business with leisure and style

## RAHUL SINGHA

**T**he MICE infrastructure in the country has been developing rapidly and convention hotels and conference and exhibition venues of international standards are being set up in cities across the country. There is a growing interest amongst tourists to experience the rich culture and heritage of India. With increasing opportunities for holidays and leisure, India is now becoming one of the leading venues for MICE in the region. Similarly, for exhibitions, India is now a potential destination in Asia, with more International Exhibition Organisers entering and introducing their exhibitions.

## DELHI NCR

Whether it is scenic spots, heritage locations or modern entertainment options, Delhi has it all tailor-made for MICE

visitors. Both pre and-post convention tours/activities can be designed around these attractions, which also help in conference branding. The national capital offers a gamut of unique experiences that can be planned around a convention venue. Undoubtedly a unique conference destination, Delhi offers cultural and heritage sites and excellent facilities, which can be combined as pre and post conference tours.

**THE ASHOK NEW DELHI:** Symbolising the traditional grandeur and hospitality of the historical capital city, The Ashok, New Delhi takes complete care of your conventions and meetings. From the fairly compact Ruby Suite to the spacious Convention Hall, the hotel offers all the specialised MICE facilities one could look for. The re-furnished Conference Hall measuring 16,435sq. ft, the largest in India, has special lighting effects and can seat



upto 2,500 people. Other Committee Rooms and Exhibition and Board Rooms of varying dimensions provide the perfect venue for ancillary functions.



**EROS HOTEL:** Whether you are a professional in search of an elite and efficient meeting room in Delhi, or on the lookout for the right venue for a celebration, Eros Hotel's services and standards make it an inescapable option. With the best of services, state-of-the-art technical capabilities, an experienced team as well as customised menus and innovative decorative themes, you can be sure of a seamless and memorable social event or business meeting.

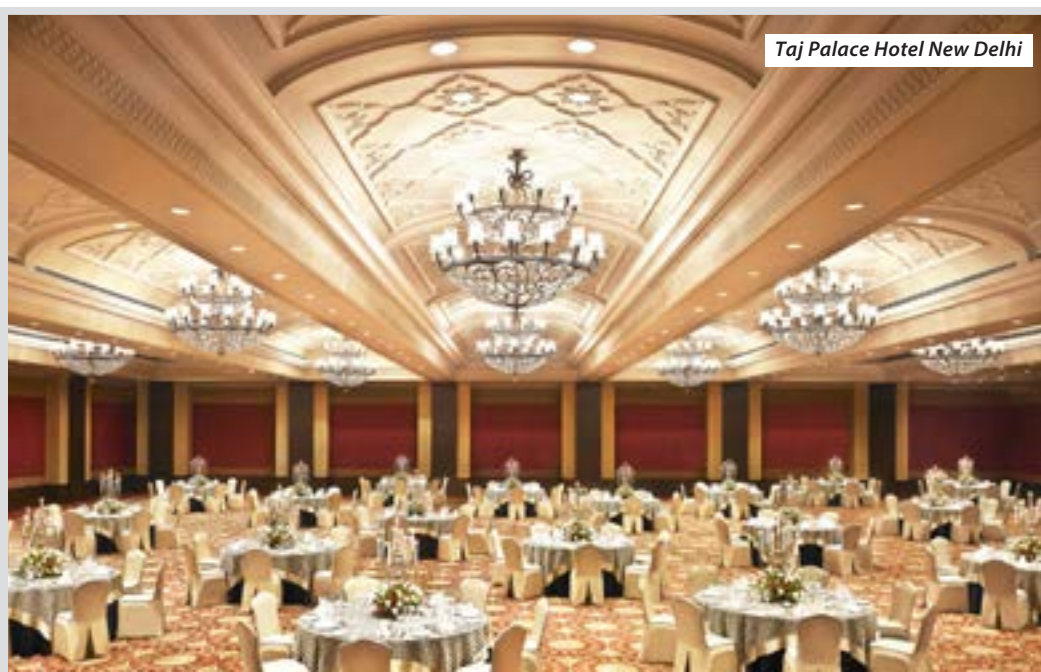
Whether your next event is a seminar, a product launch, a corporate get-together, a training programme, a press conference or a cocktail party, Eros Hotel's conference rooms in Delhi offer the finest support you can hope for.

Royal Ballroom at 8,316sq.ft offers an ideal venue for social gatherings as well as a conference room and has the capacity of hosting 1,000 participants. Lutyens Lounge at 1,400sq.ft is a suave and flexible setting, ideal for hosting conference and private events. Perfect for elite decision makers and bold entrepreneurs, Governors Room at 520sq.ft provides a corporate yet creative setting for successful meetings.

Other infrastructure highlights include Lutyens Boardroom for private meetings, Viceroys Room for product promotions, board room discussions and small training sessions and Poolside Lawn for grand events such as weddings and celebrations.

**TAJ PALACE HOTEL NEW DELHI:** Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi offers 40,000sq.ft of conference and banquets area with a spectrum of 11 independent, tastefully-appointed halls and two well-maintained lawns accommodating 500 people each. A perfect embodiment of world-class service and hospitality, the hotel has always been the first choice for international conferences, media conclaves, awards nights, product launches and exclusive Ministerial and Head of State meetings. Taj provides comprehensive state-of-the-art facilities equipped with wireless broadband Internet access, mood lighting, video conferencing and the ability to include simultaneous translation in all languages.

**THE LEELA PALACE NEW DELHI:** Working is a luxurious experience at The Leela Palace, New Delhi with one



of capital's most elegant indoor spaces to organise events, private parties and elite gatherings. Spanning over 5,000sq. ft, the banquets overlook the serene calm of celebrated artist Satish Gupta's 'Devi' sculpture nestled in the lush greens of the inner courtyard. The Grand Ballroom offers a bespoke royal setting with the 30ft ceiling adorned with the gold leaf dome and a contemporary, neutral color palette features two ornate crystal chandeliers from Istanbul.

Located on the lobby level, the Grand Ballroom and the Royal ballroom offer versatile event space and allows the guests



to enjoy the elegance of a bygone era teamed up with the modern and technologically advanced audio visual facilities. Level one of the hotel is equipped with eight state-of-the-art meeting rooms which have been impeccably decorated and have today become the preferred choice of global board meetings and distinguished movements of Heads of state. Featuring the latest in wireless, audio-visual equipment, each meeting room has been built with sound proof partitions that enable multiple meetings simultaneously. Whatever the occasion, the hotel's elegant ballrooms and landscaped terrace gardens, are the perfect venue for hosting pre and post wedding functions, anniversaries, special celebrations and meetings.

## MAHARASHTRA

The sheer size and diversity of Maharashtra will stun you. Enjoy the mountains that stretch out into the mist as far as the eye can see. Marvel at the numerous forts that stand proud and strong; admire the scores of temples sculpted into and out of basalt rock; soak in the diverse and colourful cultures woven into one whole fabric and enjoy the festivals that galvanise the sleepy thousands into fervent motions.

## JW MARRIOTT HOTEL MUMBAI SAHAR

The JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar inspires memorable, productive business meetings in Mumbai. From their pillar-less Grand Ballroom to elegant lawns, the hotel offers a total of 14,973sq.ft of event space divided between 11 event rooms for every type of gathering. The indoor and outdoor convention spaces available at JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar are spread over a large area with well-appointed meeting rooms with state-of-the-art conferencing facilities.

Another distinct aspect is the pillarless Grand Ballroom with

natural daylight filtering through the day and the mood lights which completely transform the venue for an evening event. The property also has the largest crew lounge, a duplex-styled Executive Lounge with exclusive meeting rooms and business facilities. The spacious JW Lawns and Dining Theatre are ideal for weddings and social gatherings.

## HOTEL SAHARA STAR, MUMBAI

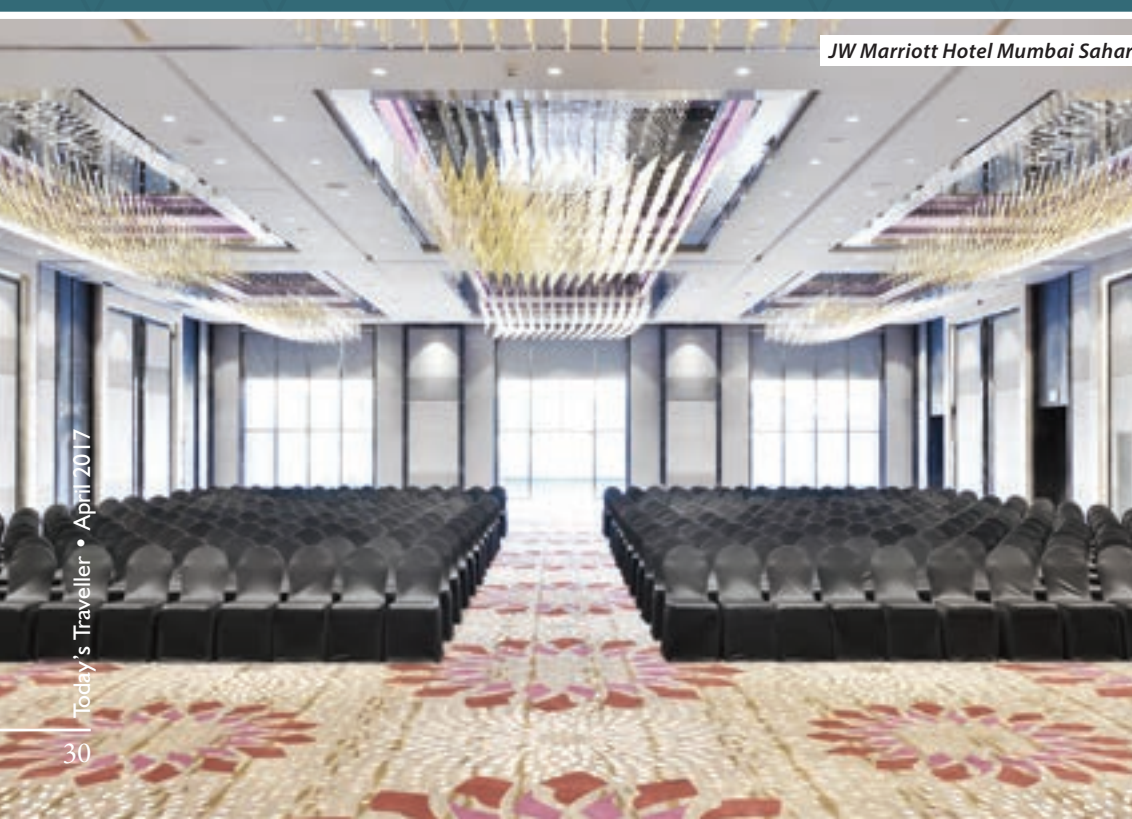
Sahara Star, Mumbai, by all definitions, is a great destination for MICE travellers. Close to Mumbai's Domestic Airport, the



Hotel Sahara Star, Mumbai

hotel has cutting-edge facilities and all modern amenities for guests. The hotel has six magnificent spaces for various uses, with Sahara Sapphire as the largest in the city, having a floor plate of 55,000sq.ft, and a 25-ft ceiling height. The central hall is 18,000sq.ft and includes two Annexe halls, 6000sq.ft each, while the pre-function area is all of 3000sq.ft. It can accommodate up to 2,500 people at a time.

The Jade Ballroom measures 10,000sq.ft, and is a pillarless ballroom that can host 1000 guests for an intimate party. The Presidential boardroom, known as Aces, is a technologically advanced boardroom that can host 77 people in it at once. The Oyster Banquet hall is 3,100sq.ft and plays host to every celebration. The Coral Banquet Hall has an area space of 2,800sq.ft and is an elegant play of style and design. Even small events can be well accommodated into it. There are four options in the Business Centre, with state-of-the-art meeting rooms, namely, Club, Spades, Diamonds and Hearts.



JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar



## ODISHA

Odisha has proved to be a significant MICE destination as it has much to offer by way of a vibrant tribal culture, ancient traditions, pilgrimages, beaches, wildlife sanctuaries and art forms. Hotels in Puri, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, and other major tourist destinations are equipped with all modern and contemporary facilities that are required to make business events successful.

### MAYFAIR CONVENTION, BHUBANESWAR:

This highly preferred event and conference venue is located conveniently right across from MAYFAIR Lagoon and is the favoured business hotel for corporate travellers visiting Odisha. There are 20 elegant deluxe rooms in the same category. The hotel can host huge gatherings and weddings as well as more intimate presentations and meetings. The venues at the hotel include state-of-the-art conference rooms with progressive facilities as well as some of the best banquet halls in Eastern India.

MAYFAIR Convention is well decked with various services and facilities that enhance the comfort level of the inhabitants and take care of their corporate get-togethers and social functions in Bhubaneswar. These facilities aim towards taking care of the guests in every possible way. From room facilities to business and leisure facilities; MAYFAIR Convention offers all.

### KIIT CONVENTION CENTRE, KALINGA: KIIT (Kalinga Institute



of Industrial Technology) provides excellent ambience for corporate meetings, with a convention centre, auditoriums and conference halls of international standards. Having a seating



MAYFAIR Convention, Bhubaneswar

capacity of 1,500, the KIIT Convention Centre is the largest in Odisha and one of the best in East India. The complex houses eight conference halls, well-equipped light and sound systems and a banquet hall. In addition, there are six conference halls located in different campuses of the university.

## TELANGANA

The historical state of Telangana, once ruled by great dynasties such as the Chalukyas and the Mughals, is a great MICE destination for corporates to indulge in business as well as leisure activities. The 29th state of India, Telenagna has everything that a tourist can ask for, from old forts and monuments to one of the finest film cities of the country.

### HYDERABAD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE:

Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) is managed by Accor and jointly owned by Emaar Properties PJSC Dubai and Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Ltd. HICC is the first all purpose-built and state-of-the-art convention facility, the first of its kind in South Asia. In every aspect, HICC compares with the best in the world, be it infrastructure, services or technology.

The Centre has won the 'Best Convention Centre' National Tourism Award by Incredible India for three years in a row. HICC is a perfect choice for hosting major conventions, trade shows, meetings and special events. A Green Globe certified





Hyderabad International Convention Centre

convention centre, HICC has an internal hall measuring 6,480sq.m, which can accommodate 5,000 guests and can be partitioned into six smaller halls. There is a spacious pre-function foyer area and 32 breakout rooms, including specialised meeting rooms, speaker preparatory rooms, boardrooms and VIP lounge.

## WEST BENGAL

The state has emerged as a leading destination from the business/MICE tourism viewpoint – thanks mainly to its amazing number of stunningly beautiful hill destinations, great socio-cultural background, sumptuous cuisines, religious shrines, and wildlife and nature spots, and of course, it's many luxurious hotels and resorts that offer first-rate business and conventions related facilities. Kolkata, Siliguri, Darjeeling, Mandarmani, Durgapur and Digha have wonderful hotels which are just perfect for hosting successful business meets.

### RABINDRANATH TAGORE CENTRE, KOLKATA:

Rabindranath Tagore Centre, Kolkata, is Indian Council for Cultural Relations' (ICCR) unique cultural centre. An architectural landmark, RTC, with its state-of-the-art galleries, compact auditorium with excellent acoustics, a conference centre with seminar and lecture rooms, fills an important need in the city, which does not have comparable facilities. These venues are also available to others for hosting of cultural programmes.



Science City, Kolkata

**SCIENCE CITY, KOLKATA:** Science City, the largest science centre in the sub-continent, under the National Council of Science Museums (the apex body of science museums/centres in India), consists of two facilities, the Science Centre and the Convention Centre. The Science Centre complex comprises Space Odyssey, Dynamotion, Evolution Theme Park, Maritime Centre and a Science Park.





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# ETAA DOMESTIC CONVENTION 2017

ARJUN GILL

The Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) successfully held its 2nd Domestic Convention 2017 from 3-5 March 2017 at Leonia Holistic Destination in Hyderabad. There were 225 delegates from all over India. The delegates came from not only the big cities but smaller cities as well like Varanasi, Ujjain, Siliguri, Surat, Udaipur, Haridwar, Jammu and Dehradun to name a few.

The convention was very well organised with informative business sessions and ample opportunities for networking.

On 3 March, there was a networking lunch at Grand Hall followed by a networking session with the exhibitors at Moon Valley. The Welcome Gala Dinner was a grand affair and was set outdoors at Geo-Garden. There was an entertainment program as well as participation from ETAA chapters.

On 4 March the Convention was formally inaugurated at Moon Valley. This was followed by business sessions. Then there was a networking session with the exhibitors with a working lunch. In the evening there was a Gala Dinner at Moon Valley.

On 5 March the delegates proceeded for Hyderabad Sightseeing tours. Telangana Tourism was the Host State. Leonia Holistic Destination was the Hospitality Partner. The Co-sponsors were DVPC, VFS Global and Fiji Tourism.









# iNFHRA FM EXCELLENCE AWARDS: CHENNAI CHAPTER

iNFHRA hosts  
Chennai's first ever  
FM Excellence  
Conference & Awards  
at Park Plaza, Chennai,  
on March 8, 2017

## TT BUREAU

The last in the series and Chennai's first ever FM Excellence Conference & Awards was organised at Park Plaza, Chennai, on March 8, 2017, and was well attended by over 100 corporates. The day was graced by the presence of Dr C Velan, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer, TRIL Infopark Limited, who spoke passionately on "The Need for Green Buildings in India."

Chennai also experienced its first ever Panel Discussion on CXO's Expectation from the FM & Admin Department. The CXOs who shared their wisdom and experience for the same were Satish Kamat, President, Sri City Operations; Saradha S, Chief Finance Officer, Technology Frontiers (I) Pvt Ltd; Prathibha Blessing, Chief Operating Officer, CAERE Pvt Ltd; Rajesh Munjal, Chief Operating Officer, CarzOnRent India; Rajat Chitravanshi, Chief Supply Chain & Project Officer, Ascend Telecom Infrastructure Private Limited; and Major Bijay Mukherjee, Head Workplace Services, Cognizant Technology Solutions.

The prominent jury comprised industry professionals from Alcatel-Lucent India, Bharti Airtel Limited, Chola Murugappa Group, CRISIL Global Research & Analytics, Hexaware Technologies, Intelnet Global Services, Larsen &



All Winners & Runners Up



Toubro Infotech, Sri City, Tata Consultancy Services, Technology Frontiers (I), VA Tech Wabag and some FM Professionals.

**Below are the Winners and Runners-up across various categories:**

**Corporate Real Estate & Space Management powered by TREEBO HOTELS**

**Winner:** PK Diwakar, Nittsu Logistics India

**1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up:** Ganesh Parameswaran, Merrill Technology Services India

**2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-Up:** Vinoth Kannan S, BankBazaar.com

**Corporate Travel, Transport & Logistics powered by VIA.COM, and supported by NEXA and OLA CORPORATE**

**Winner:** Preetha Kumari, Wipro Limited

**1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up:** Sushil Thomas, ISS India Facility Services (Barclays Shared Services)





Dr. C. Velan

**2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-Up:** G.S. Magesh, Larsen & Toubro Infotech

#### Ecological Sustainability powered by ARRAYSTORM

**Winner:** Tech Mahindra

**1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up:** P.G. Chandra Mohan, HCL Technologies

**2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-Up:** Rajesh Pongot, Faery Estates (Shapoorji Pallonji Investment Advisors)

#### Innovation & Technology powered by CARZONRENT INDIA

**Winner:** Preetha Kumari, Wipro

**1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up:** Mukesh Garg, AstraZeneca India

**2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-Up:** Srikanth Visweswaran, Matrimony.com

#### Safety & Security Award powered by INTERNATIONAL HOUSEKEEPING AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES

**Winner:** RMZ Millennia Business Park

**1<sup>st</sup> Runner-Up:** Mahindra Research Valley

**2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-Up:** Amarnath Mohanaragam, Firstsource Solutions

The awards were also supported by APLOMB Techsolutions, CAERE Pvt Ltd, Chai Point, DMS Design Consultants, Fuego Furniture, Writer Relocations, Testo India and Today's Traveller magazine. iNFHRA is organising their next conference in Bengaluru, on April 21, 2017, followed by Kolkata, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, Gurugram and Mumbai, from April 2017 to September 2017. For more information on the conferences and to associate with the same, kindly email on [support@infhra.com](mailto:support@infhra.com)



CXO Panel



Jury



# FOOD ON WHEELS

We bring you some food trucks that, apart from serving exciting food, make every visit worth remembering

## VISHWAJIT SHARMA

In recent years, food trucks have become increasingly popular. While no one can deny the pleasures of fine dining, a haphazard lifestyle presents its own challenges. A quick grab-a-bite seems to be a rising trend over the years, and it finds its fullest expression in the form of food trucks. Essentially, a food truck is a kitchen contained within a truck, ready to offer delicacies in the shortest time possible. However, there are some food trucks that endeavour to make every visit memorable – some through their cuisines and others by the themes defining their trucks. It's these peculiar qualities which enable them to stand out amongst the rest, and arouse the interest of the customer at first glance.

### MAXIMUS/MINIMUS, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

What's so unique about this one? Well, Maximus/Minimus in Seattle resembles a giant, moving pig-shaped vehicle and serves up spicy and savoury pork sandwiches while turning heads in the Emerald City. It had its beginnings as a small store front, which then became a catering truck, before morphing into a giant pig. However, to grab a bite from this hog on wheels, be sure to visit it during summer.



### GUATRUCK, MANILA, PHILIPPINES

Guatruck in Manila is a sleek food truck that is eco-conscious and provides a unique dining experience to residents of this island capital. From the floor to ceiling windows that provide views to drool over, to the LED energy efficient lighting systems in the trunk – everything has been created to leave its lasting impression on the customer. Also, after trying a Pork Adobo Burrito bowl, and you happen to come back for the second time, remember to bring along the sustainable packaging Guatruck uses, as the next meal is on the house.

### ROVING MAMMOTH, MAMMOTH LAKES, CALIFORNIA

Roving Mammoth in Mammoth Lakes, California, is one of the coolest and most unique food trucks one may ever come across. Roving Mammoth is built atop a snowcat and is capable of driving on snow and icy terrain. Hit the slopes while the sun shines and grab a burrito from this insane food truck for an experience that is uniquely Californian.







AVIATION





## CATHAY PACIFIC AIRWAYS AND LUFTHANSA GROUP FORM PARTNERSHIP

Cathay Pacific Airways and the Lufthansa Group will offer their passengers selected flights under their partner's flight number in future (code-sharing). For Lufthansa Group customers, this will significantly improve the connections available from Hong Kong towards Australia and New Zealand. A corresponding agreement was signed by Ivan Chu, Chief Executive Cathay Pacific Airways and Carsten Spohr, Chairman of the Executive Board and CEO of Deutsche Lufthansa AG.

Ivan Chu, Chief Executive Officer Cathay Pacific Airways, said: "This new codeshare agreement will offer Cathay Pacific passengers enhanced connectivity to destinations in continental Europe through flights operated by Lufthansa, Swiss and Austrian Airlines via our gateways in Frankfurt, Dusseldorf and Zurich."

Carsten Spohr, Chairman of the Executive Board and CEO of the Lufthansa Group, said: "Cathay Pacific Airways and the Lufthansa Group, two of the world's leading aviation groups, are forming a ground-breaking partnership. I am particularly pleased because it strengthens our global network of strategic partnerships and further improves our airlines' offering on Asian routes in the interest of our passengers." **tt**



## BRUSSELS AIRLINES CONNECTS INDIA WITH BELGIUM

Good news for the many thousands of Indians who travel to Belgium, both for leisure and for business. From now on, one of Belgium's leading airline, Brussels Airlines, connects Mumbai's Chhatrapati Airport to Brussels Airport with a direct flight. "Our new service received a warm welcome here in the Indian market. We see very encouraging booking results for travel to Belgium and many destinations beyond Brussels like Canada, the States, the UK, Spain, France and several African destinations." - Patrick Roofthoof, Brussels Airlines Director India and Commercial Development. **tt**



## BA TO BOOST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

British Airways launched its investment plans for customers, focussing on excellence in the premium cabins and more choice and quality for all. Alex Cruz, British Airways' Chairman and CEO, said, "We will invest and innovate where our customers value it most, and differentiate ourselves with a unique on-board experience and service. We're investing in Club World, focussing now on improved catering and sleep and in the future, on a new seat."

"We're investing in the best Wi-Fi in the sky, new lounges and direct access to security and our lounges for our First customers, via our new First Wing at Heathrow. We're also aligning our Business Class cabin and service across all our flights by introducing Club Europe on domestic flights," Cruz added. **tt**



Chef Paul Pairet of Ultraviolet Shanghai, one of The World's 50 Best Chefs, tries his luck at winning two Business Class tickets to anywhere in the Etihad Airways network by selecting a chocolate from an edible map of the world

## ETIHAD AIRWAYS PLAYS HOST TO WORLD'S 50 BEST CHEFS IN AUSTRALIA

Many of the world's best chefs and culinary media have experienced Etihad Airways' award-winning hospitality on their way to Australia for this week's announcement of The World's 50 Best Restaurants. As the Official Airline Partner of the 2017 event, Etihad Airways has had the honour of flying some of the biggest names in global gastronomy to Melbourne – the widely acclaimed food and wine capital of Australia – to participate in the week-long programme.

Patrick Pierce, Etihad Airways' Vice President of Marketing Partnerships, said the airline's partnership with Tourism Australia and The World's 50 Best Restaurants had proven to be a valuable investment."

John O'Sullivan, Tourism Australia Managing Director, said, "Etihad Airways has been an incredibly enthusiastic supporter of our Restaurant Australia programme and the natural choice as our international airline partner for The World's 50 Best Restaurants." **tt**



# escape

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## SINGAPORE AIRLINES AND SILKAIR TO CODESHARE ON VISTARA FLIGHTS



Singapore Airlines (SIA) and regional subsidiary SilkAir have signed an agreement to codeshare on Indian domestic flights operated by Vistara. Under the agreement, SIA will add its 'SQ' designator code to Vistara-operated flights beyond Mumbai and New Delhi to 10 destinations within India. SilkAir will add its 'MI' designator code to Vistara-operated flights beyond Bengaluru and Kolkata to six destinations within India.

"We are very pleased with our first codeshare agreement with Vistara, which represents a strengthening of our already

strong partnership," said SIA Senior Vice President Marketing Planning, Tan Kai Ping.

"We are delighted to establish our first code share partnership with Singapore Airlines and SilkAir. As we continuously work towards eventually becoming a globally renowned airline, codeshare partnerships will play a very important role in helping us get closer to realising that aspiration," said Chief Executive Officer, Vistara, Phee TeikYeoh. **tt**

### #VISTARAWOMANFLYER

In celebration of International Women's Day, Vistara launched another industry-first service, #VistaraWomanFlyer, designed for solo women travellers. As part of the new service, Vistara will assign preferred seats to women and will also provide baggage and transport assistance on arrival for women travelling alone. Deepa Chahda, Senior Vice President – HR &



Corporate Affairs, Vistara, said, "The heights that women around the world have scaled needs no validation. Women are a major force that make economies stronger and societies healthier, and Vistara is privileged to celebrate International Women's Day in their honour."

## AAI SIGNS MOU WITH DAMAN AND DIU

Airports Authority of India (AAI) has undertaken the Operations, Development and Maintenance of Diu Airport from Diu Administration. A Memorandum of Understanding demonstrating the responsibilities has been executed on March 20, 2017, between U.T. Administration of Daman and Diu and AAI. The airport operations were handed over to AAI on 10 March, 2017.

With this transition, AAI will provide required facilities, infrastructure and management at Diu Airport. Further, with the objective of upgrading the infrastructure and services at Diu Airport, the Planning Department of AAI will shortly develop the new design for the airport. At present, Air India operates scheduled movements four times a week on the Mumbai-Diu-Mumbai sector on Viability Gap Funding provided by Diu Administration. The Operations, Development and Maintenance of Diu Airport will now be led by AAI. **tt**



## AI MARKS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Celebrating International Women's Day in a historic way, Air India flew more than ten all-women crew flights on its international and domestic routes from 26 February to 8 March 2017. On this occasion, the incredible women of Air India operated all types of wide and

narrow body aircraft in its fleet. Not only this, Air India also organised a unique tour from Delhi to Agra for those women who have never flown in spite of their engagement with the aviation sector for many years. In the series to create history, Air India operated an around-the-world flight on the Delhi-SFO-Delhi sector. To celebrate this achievement, a ceremony was organised and crew members of these flights were felicitated by Air India.

Ashwani Lohani, CMD, Air India, said, "Each person and every society must respect women. It is a moment of absolute pride and honor for Air Indians that our women employees are writing their names in the annals of the aviation sector on a global scale. I would like to congratulate our women crew on creating history by operating first ever all women operated flight around the world and other flight on various routes." **tt**



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## TURKISH AIRLINES LAUNCHES AMATEUR GOLF COMPETITION

Turkish Airlines presents the fifth edition of Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup, the famous amateur golf tournament around the world. The global amateur golf competition, where thousands of participants will compete at qualifying events in 100 destinations worldwide, is one of the several international sports organizations backed by Turkish Airlines, the airline that flies to more countries than any other.

"We would like to offer our congratulations to everyone who made the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup qualifier in New Delhi on such a special day," said Mr Ozer Guler, General Manager for Turkish Airlines, North & East India. "It was a fantastic tournament day and well done to our winner, Navneet Singh. They still have so much to play for in Antalya, but everyone else will be looking forward to coming back again next year." tt



## SRILANKAN AIRLINES HOSTS AGENTS & CARGO AWARDS NIGHT IN CHENNAI & NEW DELHI

SriLankan Airlines, the national carrier of Sri Lanka, hosted two separate award ceremonies in North and South India to felicitate its best performing travel agents and cargo team in India. The awards were based on the performance of the agents over financial year 2015/2016.

The Tamil Nadu Agents Awards were held on March 3, 2017, at The Taj Coromandel Hotel, Chennai, and was attended by 258 guests while the Delhi Agents Awards 2015-2016 held on March 17, 2017, at ITC Maurya, Delhi, was attended by equal numbers of agents and the who's who of the travel fraternity.

CCO Siva Ramachandran, said: "Our heartiest congratulations to all of our Top Ten travel agents, who have been our valued partners for many years and play a vital role in supporting our country's travel and tourism industry." He further added, "SriLankan Airlines is fortunate to have such staunch support from our travel community and we look forward to many more years of fruitful partnerships with each of these travel agents." tt



## FLYDUBAI CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Flydubai celebrated International Women's Day with an all-female crew, operating flights FZ001/FZ002 between Dubai and Doha. Captain Isabel Gonzalez from Spain and First Officer Vaidehi Chavhan from India were joined by Cabin Crew from Korea, Moldova, Morocco, Tunisia and Zimbabwe in welcoming flydubai's passengers on board this special flight celebrating women in aviation.

"We celebrate women empowerment every day at flydubai and I am proud of all of our more than 1,400 female professionals who contribute to the growth and success of the airline. International Women's Day is a great occasion to thank the female work force in the airline for their hard work and dedication", said Ghaith Al Ghaith, CEO at flydubai."

More than a third of the 3,770 employees at flydubai are female with more than 1,000 female Cabin Crew members and more than 30 female Captains and First Officers. tt



## EMIRATES TURNS THE SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN

Emirates is giving centre stage to its women employees on the occasion of International Women's Day. Women make up close to 44 per cent of the airline's work force and have been an integral part of the success story of Emirates over the last 31 years.

Abdulaziz Al Ali, Executive Vice President of Human Resources at Emirates, said: "Emirates is committed to providing equal opportunities at the workplace for both women and men across all business functions. We are proud of our women colleagues and their immense contribution to the growth and success of the airline. We hope that they can continue to inspire and be role models for girls and women across the globe interested in pursuing careers in aviation." tt



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EXPLORER



# AWAY FROM THE SUN



Beating summertime blues has never been this sweet

## TT BUREAU

As summers approach, a vacation to somewhere cooler becomes the topmost priority for the urban class. More so in a tropical country like India, where the heat is on for four straight months, a holiday in the high altitudes seems to be the last resort. This season discover a destination that's beyond the clichéd guide book. Let 'Today's Traveller' be your go-to hub for exploring the unusual.

Go global and let your wishlist include unusual places where the experience quotient is high and the carbon footprint is low.

## SERIOUSLY NATURAL AT LAHAUL & SPITI

When temperatures rise, do what most people did earlier – take to the hills! And in India, what better place to cool off than the Himalayas! But, don't take the usual circuit, Instead, take off to some off-beat places like Lahaul and Spiti in the northeastern part of Himachal Pradesh.

Tucked in one corner of the state, Lahaul-Spiti, a haven for adventure and peace lovers gets a re-birth in summer. During this time, white gives way to lush shades of green (fields), an alluring brown (mountains) and azure blue (streams).

Unlike the other regions in Himachal, Lahaul-Spiti dons



an almost touch-me-not countenance, which to a great extent reminds me of the very barren Ladakh. This remote Trans-Himalayan region seems to rub shoulders with Tibet in terms of being distant from mainstream India. No wonder Rudyard Kipling described Spiti as "A world within a world", some hundred years ago.

Summers in Lahaul and Spiti open up numerous opportunities for various activities, all amidst natural surroundings and culture. Trekking being the favourite indulgence, travellers can explore rough nature trails (high





altitude Kunzum Pass, Chandra Tal), religious spots (Ki-Gompa, Tabo Monastery and Dhankar Gompa) and wild habitats (Pin Valley National Park). Besides, there is mountain cycling and river rafting for added adventure thrills.

### NATURE'S POETRY AT LAKE DISTRICT, ENGLAND

The greenest countryside of England, Lake District is blessed by the panoramic charm of rugged hill tops, scintillating blue lakes and patches of green, making it an apt nomenclature for the poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge and Robert Southey.

Preserved as a National Park, Lake District stretches a little less than 2300 sq. km in the north-western corner of Britain. Leisure bike rides and day-long hikes are routine indulgences at this nature's haven. As the name suggests, the prime attraction of this place are its spectacular lakes. This includes pristine water spots like Windermere and Coniston, located in the east, west and north of the valley.

En-route, travellers can have an amazing time exploring

the picturesque valley of the Great Langdale, where poets like Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter once had their residences. Besides, the nearby valleys of Buttermere, Borrowdale, Eden and Wasdale are certainly amongst the best places to explore the reputed fells of Lake District; the highest Scafell Pike being one of them.

Though the place is enjoyable in all seasons, unpredictability in terms of weather here must be given some thought before heading on.

### COOL OFF AT THE ICY REYKJAVIK

Capital of the sparsely populated Iceland, Reykjavik is an exemplar of 'how to enjoy modernity in the best of vintage



era'. The city is known to portray Iceland's historic and cultural traditions under Europe's cosmopolitan lights. However, contrary to Europe's grand urban appeal, Reykjavik is perhaps a little old-world, charming, nevertheless.

The largest city in the whole of Iceland, it has sprawling suburbs that are dotted with colourful residential





buildings, captivating art museums and trendy restaurants. Interestingly Reykjavik was never originally structured from the tourism point of view, so, a useful insight into the life of the Icelanders seems likely to be on the cards as well.

Iceland gives preference to its outdoors more than anything else. Which is why, the tour will feel incomplete if it ends without any mention of exploring the natural habitats around Reykjavik. Reykjavik, being the sovereign world's northernmost capital, offers tourists numerous opportunities to explore its Arctic side. Prominent activities include hiking tours to the glaciers, river valleys, whale watching excursions, a visit to the only beach Nautholsvik, and most importantly, the highly talked about Northern Lights viewing.

Though this eye-pleasing phenomenon is quite common in the whole of Iceland, Reykjavik grabs special mention. The greenish-blue hue of the Northern Lights has an awe-inspiring effect on all onlookers.

### BEACH FUN AT THE ELEGANT BIARRITZ IN FRANCE

An absolute incarnation of a luxurious beach holiday,



Biarritz in Southwestern France, is an ideal summer heritage retreat one can hardly find a replacement for. Ever since its inception in the mid-19th century, this coastal resort has been the hub of Europe's elite.

The award-winning leisure destination is reputed for its heritage Hotel du Palais hotel, which ideally stands as the frontal face of Biarritz. The beach-side hotel has its history dated back to the era of the last empress of France. Biarritz has a welcoming aloofness, unlike the glitz of the French Riviera, and is a quaint, though excellent, holiday choice.

However, travellers looking for some solitude must consider Biarritz's collection of unspoilt beaches - 'Plages', as the French would say. A beach-side stroll on Biarritz's







prime 'La Grande Plage', especially during sunset must include visits to the picturesque Rocher de la Vierge at one end and Point St Martin at the other.

Theoretically, the stroll ends at the beach's lighthouse, surmounted on a rocky crop. But, given the arrangement of its striking surroundings, things could get a little more demanding, as the beach offers exceptional experience in fine dining and wining. Apart from the Grande, one can also head to other less-crowded beaches like Miramar, Port Vieux and Marbella.

What makes the beaches more exhilarating is the fact that Biarritz is actually the birthplace of surfing in Europe. It started in late 50s, when the award winning screenwriter and author Peter Viertel visited Biarritz on account of shooting for the film 'The Sun also Rises'. Viertel had a keen interest in surfing since his young days in California. And so, he along with his pal, film producer Richard Zanuck, surfed regularly on Côte des Basques beach, whenever they had a day off from the movie shoot. It stirred the locals, which later on prompted them to take up the sport at a mass scale.

Côte des Basques may not be the best of the charmers Biarritz has in store for beach lovers, but it's certainly is the hub for surfers. Exposed to the ocean, the beach is perfect for professionals, and is suitable for surfing anytime of the year. Le Grande Plage, on the other hand, is more reliable for amateurs, as the waves are gentle.

These two seem to be the most preferred by visitors, so if, you wish to go for something private, head to Plage Marbella. Remotely crowded, the scenic beach is best known for high tide surfing.

### HIGH ON HERITAGE ISTANBUL, TURKEY

A city built on the crossroads of many cultures, Istanbul, in the Northwestern part of Turkey, is an ideal treat for lovers of art and architecture. The historic city witnessed the rise and fall of the Roman (Byzantine) empire and was later



developed by the Ottomans and the Turks. The narrative, thus includes Istanbul as a treasure trove that comprises countless historical churches, palaces, castles, mosques and synagogues scattered all over the city.

It's the cultural confluence of the East and the West, the juxtaposition of the old and the new, that have border-lined this ancient city from the rest in Turkey. However, Istanbul embraces this special reputation with a lot of ease in the chaotic cosmopolitan world of today.

Over the years, the city has blended itself with modernity without hampering its heritage image. First time travellers can start with exploring the prime attractions which are a mix of European and Islamic creations. This includes the 6th century Aya Sofya church, the more ancient Hippodrome, the majestic Ottoman-styled Blue Mosque, Istanbul Archaeology Museum, the dazzling Topkapi Palace, Suleymaniye Mosque, Chora Church, and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts.

Istanbul's ancient reputation also gives it the stature to house one of the largest and the oldest covered market place in the world the Grand Bazaar. Coyly nestled between two magnificent mosques, the Bazaar houses more than 3000 shops all under one roof.

The vibrant city also enjoys the reputation of being one that never sleeps. Its nightlife reveals some of the hottest bars and clubs that could easily outdo any of its European counterparts. If you happen to travel here in July, try catching the Istanbul Jazz Festival which has notable global musicians like Chick Corea, Al Di Meola and Jan Garbarek attending it as regulars.



# BIKING UPHILL AND DOWN



There's nothing more exhilarating than hopping on to a bike to explore some of the most exciting trails India has to offer

## TT BUREAU

The Himalayan bulbul is a species of songbird that resides in the great Himalayan regions of India. One can hear its mating call on a particularly bright and cold day, sitting amorously atop vibrantly coloured rhododendrons. Now, imagine biking past its sweet call, against the backdrop of the majestic Himalayas that have stood since the beginning of time.

Our relentless work-oriented life gives us scant time to observe the changing shades of nature, as we are lost amidst the urban legends of concrete and glass on busy city scapes where flowers come with a price tag. But, on the mountains and hills of India, flowers of every hue await you. All you have to do is to get your bicycling gear ready and get set for a biking trip to some of the most exotic hill stations of India. Take a look at some of your best options.

### GANGTOK TO DARJEELING

On the eastern part of India lie two hill station gems. While Gangtok is a part of the state of Sikkim, Darjeeling is the jewel in the crown of West Bengal. A trip from Gangtok to Darjeeling will unfold with tea gardens, waterfalls, toy trains, and a plethora of rare flora and fauna, with the majestic Kanchenjunga range in sight. While Sikkim has a rich monarchical history attached with the Namgyal dynasty, Darjeeling is a relic of the British Raj. Together, they present a cultural and traditional

diversity which is unparalleled. A fun way to explore the countryside, you can always stop to treat yourself with a steaming plate of momos, found all across the two hill stations.

**Route:** You could ride through Martam, Temi, Tashidang, Yuksam, and Pemayangtse from Gangtok to finally reach Darjeeling.







### MANALI TO LEH

A difficult route to take, but it can be one of the best experiences of your life. Manali, located in Kullu valley, in Himachal Pradesh, is a great tourist destination, while Leh in the Ladakh valley of Jammu and Kashmir, is every biker's dream. You will pass through lush green meadows and sparkling rivers to reach the enormous cold deserts of Lahaul, Spiti and Ladakh, which are decorated with colourful Tibetan prayer flags. Situated between the Karakoram Range and the Himalayas, Leh is a treat to the senses. Remember to stop by the tiny villages dotted across the hills for a closer look at the spirit of the hills. Stop awhile in the midst of all this and listen to the sounds of silence seeping through acres and acres of lifeless land.

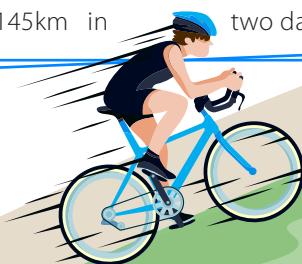
**Route:** You will cross four very high passes to enter Leh; these are Rohtang Pass (3,900m); Baralacha La Pass (4,800m); Nakee La Pass (4,850m); Lachung La Pass (4,800m); and the Tanglang La Paa (5,200m).



### THE WESTERN GHATS

Going down to the south of India from the Himalayas, the mystic Western Ghats that run for 1,600 km, are a hotbed of biodiversity and an absolute treat for nature enthusiasts. The Western Ghats run through the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You have mountain ranges, forests, lakes and rivers – a complete rider's delight. The Western Ghats are particularly sensitive to development, so nature is at its very best here. While riding through bumpy roads be sure to take in the mysticism of your surroundings. Nature here is pristine, and resonates with a certain melancholic dream. Also, it should be every visitor's responsibility to make sure that the Ghats remain untouched and unscarred.

**Route:** Pick the state of Karnataka for your cycling adventure. Start your trip from Bhagamandala in Coorg, then move to Bekal Fort, and reach Jalsoor. You will cover about 145km in two days.





# LIVE YOUR DREAMS

Today's Traveller brings you some of the best honeymoon hotels around the world

VISHWAJIT SHARMA



After a wedding, a honeymoon is the next big thing that newlywed couples look forward to. After all, it's supposed to be the holiday of a lifetime. Naturally, one seeks such destinations and hotels, which by their very extravagance, grace and splendour, befit the grand occasion. They are places that allow you to live out your wildest dreams and fantasies, stuff which you thought only belonged to your dreams. Indeed, there are luxurious hotels that present the perfect settings for a honeymoon couple, places where one wishes every moment lasted unto eternity.

## AYANA RESORT AND SPA, BALI

Award-winning AYANA Resort and Spa Bali is a world-class destination resort, located on 90ha of cliff-top land, perched above Jimbaran Bay, just 10km from Bali airport. AYANA's majestic sunsets and ocean-front views are complemented by a white-sand beach and shared facilities as Bali's only integrated resort with RIMBA Jimbaran BALI.

A honeymoon spent at AYANA provides an array of experiences, each more incredible than the next. Take a dip in all 12 swimming pools, surprise your better half with a romantic beach picnic, create something special at the Batik Painting class, or just lounge around in pyjamas, while the villa's discreet butler delivers a gourmet breakfast in true AYANA style.

Thoughtfully designed to promote a holistic experience, Spa at AYANA offers four indelible signature spa treatments. Some of the favourites here include the Hot Shell Massage to balance







the body's energy centres; AYANA Fusion healing journey to rejuvenate with steamed ginger herbal pouches; the exquisite Seven Chakra Dhara to renew your spirit with aromatherapy, gemstone therapy and chakra sound healing; and Lava Stone Reflexology to energise and relax with a therapeutic foot massage, followed by a deeply relaxing hand, arm, neck and shoulder massage.

#### BEYOND RESORT KHAOLAK, THAILAND

Everlasting memories for lovers are made here at this award-winning adults-only villa resort with its gorgeous setting on the white sands of Pakweep Beach. The 177 elegant villas feature a contemporary design with soft Asian accents, private pools and al fresco Jacuzzi options available. Nestled away in a jungle-like landscape, the villas offer an air of privacy and seclusion. Excursions to nearby islands or the extensive national parklands of Khaolak can be arranged.

Lounge all day by the landscaped pool, or indulge in one



of many soul enhancing treatments at Kanda Spa. Drinks and snacks are served poolside, there is a swim-up bar, beachside BBQs feature fresh local seafood, and fine Thai and international dining can be enjoyed in the restaurants or in the privacy of the luxury villa. On the white powder sand of Pakweep Beach, surrounded by unspoilt nature and verdant tropical greenery, the sky's the limit and the future is so bright you have to wear shades – especially on a bright sunny day by the pool at Beyond Resort Khaolak.

Beyond Resort Khaolak has recently been certified as Travelife Gold for Sustainability in Tourism by Travelife, the international sustainability certification scheme, for its successful environmental conservation and energy savings programmes.

#### KOMANDOO MALDIVES ISLAND RESORT

The Komandoo Beach Villas are spacious wooden retreats discreetly placed along the shore. Each villa has a wooden veranda where one can enjoy the sound of the ocean and a spectacular view of paradise. These elegant Maldives Resort villas provide the perfect place for a peaceful stay at Komandoo. Maldives is one of the world's top scuba diving destinations, and





the waters around Komandoo offer an incredible amount of fish life, dive sites and variety.

One of the most romantic experiences Komandoo has to offer is the candlelight dinner on the beach. Enjoy a fine dining experience in a temple of exquisite cuisine as reflections of the moon and stars shimmer on the calm waters of the lagoon. One has the option of customising the menu and selecting one's favourite champagnes and wines from the exceptional wine list.

The candlelight atmosphere is the perfect indulgence or romantic surprise for your loved one. Surprise your partner with a romantic bath prepared in your villa while you enjoy dinner in one of the hotel's many restaurants. Let the team at the hotel decorate the Jacuzzi and patio with candles and flowers. Then, from the comfort of your romantic bath, enjoy some fine sparkling wine and a selection of tropical fruits.

#### **SINALEI REEF RESORT AND SPA, SAMOA**

Spread across 33 elegantly groomed acres of lush vegetation, Sinalei Reef Resort and Spa creates an atmosphere of modern-rustic luxury, combined with raw untouched beauty. But, they



are more than what meets the eye. The resort is steeped in tradition and love, where the people of the villages and surrounding environment combine to create a truly unique experience for all. It is no wonder that Samoan kings and warriors of old would spend their time resting here in preparation for battle.

With your choice of garden, ocean or beachfront locations, Sinalei presents you with a romantic getaway, allowing you to be still and enjoy the beauty of the moment. The Samoa Honeymoon Luxury Resort creates a sense of synergy with the sea, the rain forests and the local culture. This authentic hideaway offers an atmosphere of pure bliss, creating the perfect location for you to celebrate your love.

At Sinalei, visitors get front row access to the best of the local breaks through their preferred surf excursion partner (Manoa Tours Samoa), whose operation is setup within walking distance of the resort. With their knowledge of local conditions, currents, wind and waves, one can be sure of being in the best hands possible. Proximity of breaks to Sinalei Reef Resort often means that the visitors here are the first to enter the water and the last to leave it.





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# 24 HOURS IN CHENNAI

With its incredible architecture, beaches, cuisine and much more, Chennai in Tamil Nadu, offers tremendous scope for a fun filled-24 hours

TT BUREAU

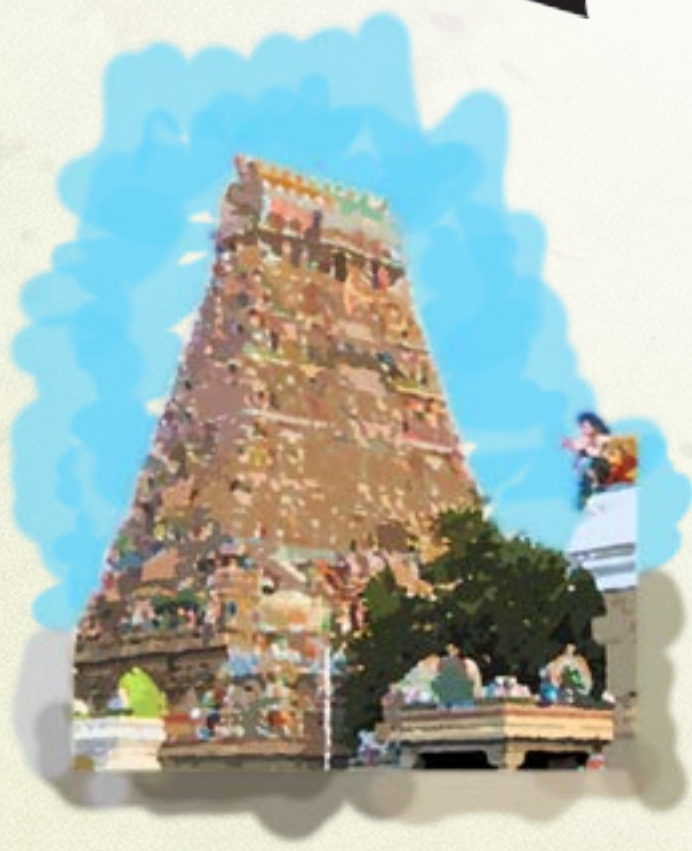


## VISIT THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

Government Museum, situated on Gandhi Salai, is one of the best museums in Chennai. The big highlight is Building 3, Bronze Gallery, which houses a superb collection of South Indian bronzes from the 7<sup>th</sup> century Pallava era through to modern times. While Building 1 represents all major periods of South Indian history, Building 2 contains the Anthropology Galleries, which trace South Indian human history back to prehistoric times, displaying tribal artefacts from across the region.

## SEEK BLESSINGS AT KAPALEESHWARAR TEMPLE

Chennai's architectural magnificence finds its fullest expression in Kapaleeshwarar Temple, and should find a mention in your list of must visits. It incorporates many elements of South Indian temples – a rainbow-coloured gopuram (gateway tower), pillared mandapas (pavilions), and a huge tank dedicated to the state's most popular deity – Lord Shiva.







### DINE AT ENTE KERALAM

To get the best experience of fine dining, visit Ente Kerala. Soaked in calm ambience, this elegant restaurant serves lightly spiced 'pachakkari,' vegetable stew with light, fluffy 'appam' (rice pancake), the Alleppey curry, which is rich in mango, besides plenty of fish dishes. For dessert, one is served a generous helping of tender coconut ice cream.



### SPEND A DAY AT MARINA BEACH

Marina Beach is a beautiful and mesmerising 13km stretch of beach from Fort St. George to the north of Besant Nagar. Known as the world's second largest beach the activities range from enjoying sunrise on clear days to playing different beach games, and enjoying mouth-watering delicacies of the eateries scattered around the beach. Children and youngsters can be seen enjoying a pony ride on the beach.



### TAKE A LONG DRIVE ON ECR ROAD

If you love long drives, then you should certainly head out to East Coast Road, also called ECR. Start your drive at Thiruvananthapuram and Mahabalipuram. The drive covers a 40km stretch in total, depending on the road and traffic conditions. Once the city is left behind, one can get magnificent views of the sea at many places along the road. And, if one is left with enough time to spare, one should walk around the World Heritage Site at Mahabalipuram.





**What: The Aoling Festival of the Konyak Headhunters**

**When: April 1-6, 2017**

**Where: Mon, Nagaland**

Marking the onset of spring and New Year for the Konyak tribe, the Aoling Festival is identified by traditional dances, costumes, food, music, drinks, animal sacrifices, and more, for days as well as nights. Not only does the festival gather a huge number of visitors, but also the uniqueness of the terrain and isolation of the area tends to cast a spell.



**What: Tulip Festival**

**When: April 1-15, 2017**

**Where: Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir**

The Tulip Festival in picturesque Kashmir attracts travellers from all corners of the globe to experience the mesmerising colours all around. The festival also features cultural programmes, Kashmiri folk songs and the sale of local handicrafts. While in Kashmir, one should not miss the traditional Kashmiri cuisine that is enjoyed worldwide.

**What: Kasauli Rhythm and Blues Festival**

**When: April 14-16, 2017**

**Where: Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh**

Held annually in the beautiful hills of Kasauli, this festival attracts the youth and musically connected from all over India. Blues, Jazz, Rock, Pop, Funk, Electro Rock and Fusion are just some of the concoctions on offer at the Kasauli Rhythm and Blues Festival. A lot of the proceeds from the event are directed towards underprivileged children who suffer from various health problems.





**What: Koningsdag****When: Apr 27, 2017****Where: Amsterdam, Netherlands**

In 2014, Amsterdam celebrated King's Day (Koningsdag) for the first time, after the inauguration of King Willem-Alexander on April 30, 2013 (which was celebrated as Queen's Day). King's Day (formerly Queen's Day) festivities invite locals and visitors alike to soak up Amsterdam's open-air fun. In the streets, canals, parks and everywhere in between, the city is painted orange as Amsterdammers enjoy the biggest street fest of the year. On King's Day, thousands of brightly decorated boats line the narrow Amsterdam canals. The next best thing to being on one of the boats is watching – and dancing – from one of the many bridges.

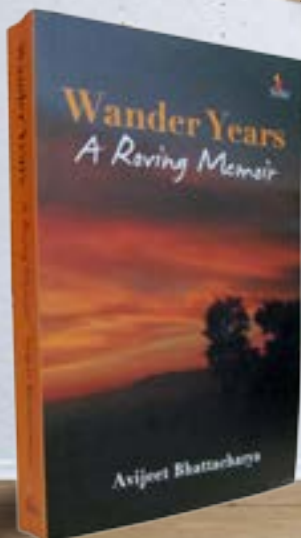
**What: Stagecoach****When: Apr 28-30, 2017****Where: Indio, CA**

Stagecoach first started on May 5-6, 2007, as a country music offshoot of its popular sibling festival Coachella: it takes place on the same grounds and is the brainchild of the same promoter, Paul Tollett of Goldenvoice. Stagecoach's expansive approach to country music ensures a wide variety of attendees and results in a decidedly laid-back, some might say a family-friendly vibe. In other words, Stagecoach doesn't seem to forget its roots. It understands that it's all roots music of some sort, so one would expect to see a legacy of artists spanning across various genres.

**What: Afrikaburn****When: Apr 24-30, 2017****Where: Calvinia, South Africa**

Afrikaburn was founded in 2007, on a private farm called Stonehenge, next to the Tankwa Karoo National Park, far away from civilization, in the northern Cape province of South Africa. The main sculpture at this art event is called the San Clan and it's designed to look like a San rock art glyph of a group of people and conveys a sense of unity at the event. Regardless of whether one finds oneself in a theme camp or not, one definitely feels a sense of community at Afrikaburn, some of it also arising from its intimate size.





# WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

INDIRA LAUL

Not a 'compulsive traveller' or an 'inveterate tourist' by his own admission, Avijeet Bhattacharya's *Wander Years* is an invaluable repository of information and personal experience. Using a popular genre, he decodes the cryptic puzzle that India is, as well as destinations abroad, with a discerning eye and a keen sense of detail. Throughout, the narrative is easy and unbiased and dwells not only on the geographies of the countries that he journeys through, but on charming anecdotes and personal experiences tinged with humour.

The reader is led through diverse and varied destinations, ranging from the deserts and forts of Rajasthan and the majestic palaces of South India to the formidable Himalayan ranges in Sikkim to the forests and backwaters of Kerala and to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to explore the habitat of ethnic tribes. The wanderlust in him takes Bhattacharya across the seas to the shimmering sands of Oman and the souks of Muscat and thence to the grasslands of East Africa, culminating with the great Kingdom of Thailand and ancient Siam.

Woven throughout the travel chronicle, like a leitmotif, are the gentle threads of the author's persona and the invincible bond that he shares with his wife, Neena (Sharda) and daughter Priyadarshini – the troika spin a winsome picture as they travel together. The author's assiduous research is evident. He presents a complete knowledgeable database for readers and a cultural background that makes it rich in content. Bhattacharya adroitly captures the sense of place as he covers local customs, traditions and lifestyle.

Endearing moments include Neena's birthday in Nakuru, Africa, where a group of tribesmen play their drums and sing 'Happy Birthday Saaradhaa,' in Swahili, followed by ululation. Or the time at the Periyar guest house in Kerala, when a wild, lion-tailed macaque takes off with daughter Priyadarshini's cherished diary which

contained her accounts of the day's adventures. Neena's presence of mind comes to the fore as she entices the monkey with a bowl of sugar and retrieves the precious cargo. Or again, Nina's dismay when she discovers rats on the Kerala Express and has rat traps positioned at strategic places in their compartment.

There are vivid descriptions of places – the stillness of forests, burgeoning green valleys, azure skies and turquoise waters, imposing mountains and statues; and urban legends comprising gargantuan malls and bustling city scapes – and people from all walks of life who have left an indelible imprint on the author's life.

Most rewarding travel, it is said, involves a certain dependence on the kindness of strangers, of perhaps putting oneself into unknown hands and trusting them implicitly. Bhattacharya's book explores this facet of travel well as he takes us through appealing vignettes of people throughout his narrative.

We have glimpses of his meeting with Neena, the love of his life, that was "destined to happen;" his stern and exact father-in-law, his fun-loving mother-in-law, his parents, sisters, nieces and nephews; the singleminded Mr A Srinivasan, the author's immediate boss when he was posted in Bengaluru; the young tribal Samaritan and kind woman at a tea stall in remote Vizianagram; Guruprasad, the sensible and proficient driver; the resourceful Roberto da Cunha, the man in Goa; Anindo, Tapan, Chaks, the handsome MEJ, all close and trusted friends in Port Blair, and many more.

Bhattacharya truly captures the essence of what it means to travel – the truths as well as the sights, the beautiful backdrops, the magical moments and the sad stories. If there is sadness, as in Neena's death, which is alluded to briefly, there is also hope, as Bhattacharya poignantly tells us. Because, tranquillity, as the author discovers, can be sought only through integration and not in isolation.

Book: *Wander Years  
A Roving Memoir*  
Author: Avijeet Bhattacharya  
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