

TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE BUSINESS, AVIATION, MICE & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

JUNE 2018 | ₹50

LUXURY
EXPERIENCES

CORPORATE
THINK TANK
WITH KENYA
TOURISM

ODISHA: MYSTICAL
TREASURE TROVE

ELYSIAN
MANIPUR

24 HOURS IN
ABU DHABI

**“INDIA SHOULD BE A
TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE”
— ALPHONS KANNANTHANAM
INDIA’S TOURISM MINISTER**

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Today's Traveller is published/printed by Kamal Gill on behalf of M/s Gill India Communications from Office No: 504-505, 5th Floor, Sheetla House, Building No. 73-74, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019

Printed at: Sonu Printer
B-180, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-1,
New Delhi - 110020
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ANDAZ RESIDENCES: REDEFINING URBAN LIVING

Andaz Delhi announced the opening of Andaz Residences, a sophisticated new concept in urban living. Located within the hotel complex, the full-service apartments come in configurations of one, two and three-bedroom options, in addition to duplex townhouses. Each of the residences provide all the benefits of home with the services, privileges and amenities of a unique world-class hotel, providing a carefree and effortless approach to living. The residences offer a unique social environment, where guests are encouraged to be part of a community. The public spaces are intimate and tastefully appointed to make them warm, inviting and, at the same time, fresh and timeless.

Speaking about Andaz Residences, Madhav Sehgal, General Manager Andaz Delhi, said, "Filled with casual comforts and affluent indulgences, Andaz Residences will be a new experience for the discerning travellers. At Andaz Residences, we offer innovative culinary options, a state-of-the-art spa and 24-hour fitness center, and an incredible modern luxury lifestyle."

Conveniently located in Aerocity, the Andaz Delhi Residences is designed to capture the spirit of Delhi. The residences integrate traditional Indian elements and colours into a modern design, inspired by the unique vibrancy of India. Andaz Delhi Residences opened with a partial inventory of 129 residential-styled serviced apartments.



TOURISM MINISTER UNVEILS GUIDELINES ON ADVENTURE TOURISM

The Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), KJ Alphons recently launched the Guidelines by the Government of India on Adventure Tourism in New Delhi. These guidelines on Safety and Quality Norms for Adventure Tourism have been formulated to make adventure sports safer.

Releasing the guidelines, the Tourism Minister said "India has immense potential for adventure tourism ranging from the Himalayas to the coastal regions. These guidelines serve to build adventure tourism in India so as to tap the whole potential offered. For India to be a well sought-after destination, the facilities and support staff should be of global standards."

The aim of this initiative is to help adventure tour operators understand and execute safety guidelines in a better manner. The guidelines have been framed for 15 Land Based, 7 Air Based and 7 Water Based activities, which cover the entire gamut of Adventure Tourism available in India and that the guidelines provide for details like safety precautions, training required, insurance, etc.

The information given covers some major areas such as the role of a guide, important equipment required, inspections and maintenance process, operating instructions, risk mitigation, medical safety, etc. It is imperative that all adventure tourism stakeholders provide for better vigilance and strict adherence to these guidelines.

THE PARK HOTELS: TO MANAGE THE DENMARK TAVERN IN SERAMPORE

Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd. has entered into an agreement with the Government of West Bengal to manage the historic The Denmark Tavern, the oldest hotel in India, in Serampore.

Denmark Tavern was established in 1786 (232 years ago) in what was then Fredricksnagore. The two-storey structure by the Hooghly is the place where the Danes kept their flagstaff and cannons. The Tavern was a place to meet and stay for traders, clergy and travellers exploring Bengal.



In 2010–11, more than 200 years after the Tavern's heyday, a group of restoration experts studied the building that stood in complete ruins surrounded by debris. It took around two years to restore the Tavern to its former glory. The refurbished building has a cafe, inspired by the double height central atrium of the Indian Coffee House in Kolkata and six high-ceilinged spacious rooms. The hotel is slated to open in September 2018. Priya Paul, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd, said, "The Park Hotels will build on the rich legacy of the Tavern and bring it and the area back to life. The hotel will soon be buzzing with guests enjoying a quiet break on the banks of the Hooghly and the sights and sounds of old-world Serampore and beyond."

ITC KOHENUR: FOR RARE AND PRICELESS EXPERIENCES

ITC Hotels announced the addition of ITC Kohenur, in Hyderabad as the 12th hotel to join its luxury hotel portfolio. Envisaged as a tribute to the traditions and distinct character of its locale, ITC Kohenur is a testament to the multifaceted rich heritage of the region. Located inHITEC city, overlooking the picturesque Durgam Cheruvu Lake, the hotel endeavours to create "Rare and Priceless" experiences through its super-premium offerings: 271 high-technology-enabled rooms, suites and service apartments; 6 culinary brands, reflecting ITC's tradition of culinary excellence; 9 state-of-the-art meeting and convention spaces, Kaya Kalp Spa and other well-being offerings, complemented by the customary warmth of ITC Hotels.

The architecture of the hotel mirrors the facets of the feted jewel by bringing to life art, culture, cuisine and heritage of the region in a contemporary milieu, matched by hi-tech accent on services to enhance guest experience. Inspirations range from the striking boulders of Hyderabad, to the famous Bidri work, a showcase of local arts and crafts to presenting the rich culinary legacy of the region. ITC's indigenous spa brand, Kaya Kalp Spa, finds resonance with an array of signature treatments that underscore a well-being philosophy.





ILEANA D'CRUZ KEEN TO EXPLORE AND PROMOTE FIJI

Surfing and diving are two new activities that actress and Bollywood star Ileana D'Cruz will be undertaking in Fiji this week. The Bollywood actress is in Fiji from 3 to 11 June to explore and promote Fiji to the Indian market. Whilst in Fiji, she will be visiting different regions including Savusavu, Nadi, Pacific Harbour, Coral Coast and the Mamanuca Islands.

In anticipation of her trip, D'Cruz said, "I'm looking forward to new adventures and yet another memorable stay in Fiji!"

Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources, Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya said, "The Indian market has the potential for long-term sustainable growth and is a strategically important market for Fiji. To realize this potential, we have engaged a highly respected star like Ileana with her 8.1 million Instagram followers to be our brand ambassador and the face of our marketing and promotional activities in the market."

The Indian market to Fiji has proven to be a lucrative one, noting significant increases in arrivals over the last 5 years. In this regard, Tourism Fiji will continue to work collaboratively with the Fijian Government and other key stakeholders to ensure increased exposure and arrivals from India.

INTERGLOBE HOTELS: NEW IBIS PROPERTY IN BENGALURU

InterGlobe Hotels announced commencement of construction of another Ibis hotel in Bengaluru. The property is being developed in the important suburban location of Hebbal, which over the last few years has transformed into a key hotel micro-market for the city.

The Ibis in Hebbal will cater to the hotel demand generated from both large IT parks such as Manyata Tech Park and Karle Town Centre and will feature 153 rooms and approximately 250 sq. meters of meeting space. Currently, IGH has 16 operational Ibis hotels in India with the Ibis in Kolkata set to launch later this year. With a total of 7 hotels now under development and planning, IGH's total inventory in India is projected to be 4,000 rooms by 2022.

JB Singh, President and CEO of InterGlobe Hotels, developers of IBIS Hotels, said, "With the commencement of construction our latest project in Bengaluru, our footprint in the city grows stronger with the addition of our third asset in the city."

LEMON TREE HOTEL, BANJARA HILLS: FOURTH HOTEL IN HYDERABAD

Lemon Tree Hotels announced the formal opening of Lemon Tree Hotel, Banjara Hills, their fourth hotel in Hyderabad.

Lemon Tree Hotel, Banjara Hills is strategically located adjacent to CARE hospital, in close proximity to major commercial hubs and popular malls. It is easily accessible from RGIA Airport, and is only a 45-minute drive from Hyderabad railway station. The hotel is conveniently located near popular tourist places and is at a short drive from the Secretariat, the Assembly and various heritage sites.

Commenting on the launch, Vikramjit Singh, President, Lemon Tree Hotels, said, "We are delighted to add a fourth hotel to our growing portfolio in Hyderabad. With this opening, Lemon Tree Hotels further strengthens its footprint in the city and looks forward to welcoming discerning guests here." The hotel will have 85 rooms and will cater to travellers looking for value-for-money accommodations. Each room has been tastefully decorated and suited to meet the specific needs of a business traveller. The hotel boasts of a vibrant atrium lobby, the innovative interiors and inspiring artwork, which make for a setting that is truly refreshing, contemporary and stylish.

ACTOR MILIND SOMAN SPENDS HIS HAWAIIAN VACATION WITH WIFE AT AIRBNB HOMES

Model-turned actor and India's Iron man, Milind Soman, recently chose Airbnb to spend his Honeymoon vacation with wife, Ankita Konwar, in Hawaii to enjoy the beautiful beaches, take a hike and follow his day-to-day fitness routine even while vacationing.

Speaking about his Hawaiian Experience, Milind Soman said, "Hawaii with its pristine beaches and mesmerizing beauty has always been on the top of our bucket list. Staying at the Airbnb home right by the beach, we spent our time exploring the cultural uniqueness and vibrancy of Hawaii while living like a local. Whether it was our early morning runs along the beach, hiking across a dormant volcano, or indulging in some amazing traditional Hawaiian food – this indeed was a memorable trip that we will cherish forever."



CANNY CRUSADER

India's Tourism Minister Alphons Kannanthanam's fundamental objective, that of making the world a happier place, translates into his entire modus operandi for India's tourism policy

KAMAL GILL

It's a venerable truism that most people are happier when they give than when they receive. Such people also seem to have a certain reverence for life, a certain moral integrity that consists in maintaining and enhancing life.

Gutsy crusader and firebrand bureaucrat politician, Tourism Minister Alphons Kannanthanam, is one such person – one, who, in his own words, dares to dream big, has an innate confidence, thinks differently and has the courage to stand by his convictions. In a comprehensive one-to-one with Today's Traveller, Alphons ruminates on his philosophy of life, his vision for India Tourism and long-term plans.

When questioned about what drives his thought processes, Alphons reveals, "I think what drives me is the fundamental belief that each individual is born to change the world and make it a happier place. So, everything about me – my entire outlook, the way I am linked to people, the way I communicate, the way I sort out issues – is geared towards the singular objective of making this world happier. I believe every human being can do that, it's just not me, just not I who can do it, everybody can do it in their own way."





Continuing, the intrepid politician emphasises the fact that the world needs to recognise India's incredible beauty and heritage: "It's my belief that India is an amazing country, it's the most beautiful country as far as I'm concerned and therefore we just need to make India very proud for the whole world."

Alphons explains how this idea can be taken forward and marketed. "We have more heritage sites than anywhere else in the world. We want people to come and see such sites," emphasises Alphons, reiterating that it is imperative to have an innate pride in one's country and to be able to convince the rest of the world so that it translates into commerce.

The intrepid leader is eloquent on what drives him: "My fundamental belief is that each of us – every human being – is born with intelligence and capabilities, so everybody can contribute and dream big. It's all about big dreams, so are we willing to dream big? That's the fundamental issue with each human being and that's where I like to motivate people to believe it. 'Yes, I can dream big' – it's possible, and though it may not

strictly pertain to my job, this is the overall philosophy that guides me."

As far as his vision for India is concerned, Alphons states categorically, "My vision is driven by Indian philosophy, which believes that the entire universe is one.

This is the foundation of my tourism promotion as well. For tourists, coming to India should be a transformational experience. You will never be the same again."

Extolling the benefits of India's age-old wellness practices, such as Yoga and Ayurveda, as being drivers of tourism, Alphons opines that they should be made appealing to the millennial generation as well. Also, India's treasure trove of historical sites – 36 UNESCO Heritage Sites and 6500 ASI-protected monuments – is guaranteed to attract tourist numbers.

When quizzed about how this vision would translate into numbers, Alphons responds, "We did very well in tourism last year. The number of tourists arriving in India went up by 15.67% and the receipts for tourism increased by 20.8%. We want the numbers to be doubled

“
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”

Alphons Kannanthanam,
Tourism Minister,
Govt. of India



in three years. In five years, I want tourism receipts to touch \$100 billion. While some would argue that such targets are simply impractical, I believe that in order to achieve big, you have to dream big. We have adopted a gamut of innovative marketing strategies, such as making promotional films in different languages. We will make a total of six films, all of which, we hope, would be huge hits like the one we made on Yoga, titled 'Yogi of The Race Track.' It garnered 20 million views in 25 days."

Enumerating on the subjects of the six films, the dynamic Minister says the first film was on Yoga, the second one will be on Ayurveda and plans are afoot to make films on Kaziranga National Park and on Indian heritage.

On the all-important issue of improving connectivity to various tourist destinations, Alphons informs that he has spoken with the ministers of Civil Aviation, Railways and

Roads Transport to improve connectivity, with all of them responding positively. While lauding India's excellent rail connectivity, Alphons stresses the need for timely running of trains and comfort for passengers.

On the subject of air transport, Alphons believes that although a number of destinations have been connected under the UDAAN scheme, those which cannot be accommodated by the same, could be handled by Air India. "For instance, Khajuraho, which has good hotels, has infrequent flights. So, we requested Air India to operate additional daily flights and promised to underwrite their losses due to low footfall," states Alphons, revealing that though the railway station in Khajuraho is beautiful, connectivity is poor and there are no luxury coaches. All such bottlenecks would need to be taken care of to ensure tourist arrivals.

The visionary leader also indicates that long-term visas



need to be implemented to attract tourists. Elaborating, Alphons says, "We do need to start issuing long-term, multiple-entry visas if we really want to attract more tourists. Several countries in the world do this and we need to follow suit. We have already initiated the practice of issuing e-visas since 2014, which has been immensely successful. Now, you can apply for your visa online and get it approved in 24 hours. As of now, we have extended this facility to 163 countries and we shall keep on adding to this list. We have already discussed the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the External Affairs Ministry, and both of them have given me assurance that they will provide me with whatever help I require."

On the anvil are plans to open up the Northeast to tourists and remove travel restrictions. The Home Ministry has already made it operational for Meghalaya, Nagaland,





Manipur and parts of Arunachal Pradesh. "We will continue to work towards making travel easier for everyone," reiterates Alphons.

When probed about China's burgeoning market and the efforts to tap into it, Alphons articulated swiftly, "But let me also tell you first, the way the world looks upon India has dramatically changed, and with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomacy, we're respected, hugely respected and which is we feel very proud to be Indian."

Continuing, Alphons explains, "As far as China is concerned, there is no doubt that it is indeed a huge market. Last year, the number of outbound tourists from China reached 122 million. However, India received only 2.5 lakh of such tourists. We are hoping to dramatically increase this number in the coming years. We are aggressively promoting India in the Chinese language media through print, television and digital advertisements."

As far as the question of directives issued by the Chinese government to tourists is concerned, it is a non-issue according to Alphons.

Opines Alphons, "The Chinese government has been very

liberal and we welcome that. However, there is a discrepancy between the number of Indian visitors going to China and that of Chinese visitors coming to India. We want to correct that. We are therefore focussing on our Buddhist Circuits in India. There

are almost 490 million people who follow Buddhism in China and for them these Buddhist Circuits hold a special attraction. We are hoping that they will throng to these places in huge numbers, once we have put the infrastructure and the connectivity in place."

The new highway coming up between Sarnath and Varanasi Airport is slated to further augment tourist flow.

Alphons apprises that "The Government is building roads and highways at lightning speed. The Eastern Peripheral Expressway has been completed in a record time of

17 months. Further, Phase 1 of the Delhi-Meerut Expressway has also come up. This has significantly reduced the travel time of people coming to Delhi. I think that this is quite remarkable," concludes the dynamic Minister, who, by his own admission, 'Dared to dream big. I didn't stop at that. Whatever I dreamt of, I worked very hard to realise it. Anybody can do whatever I did, if he/she wants to do it. But, they should want it desperately."

" We will make a total of six films, all of which, we hope, would be huge hits like the one we made on Yoga, titled 'Yogi of The Race Track.' It garnered 20 million views in 25 days."

***Alphons Kannanthanam,
Tourism Minister,
Govt. of India***

SAFFRONSTAYS LAUNCHES ITS PALATIAL PROPERTY IN GOA

Hidden amongst towering palms in the sleepy village of Cuelim, SaffronStays NossaBela Casa is one of the 40 Baroque homes of Goa, a 350-year-old mansion whose history is intricately woven with that of the tourist-favourite state. History reinvents itself in this home belonging to the Father of Goa Liberation – TB Cunha. Every section of the house tells a tale and has been expertly and beautifully restored by famed Goan architect Dean D'Cruze.

The six rooms are comfortably furnished with large beds, modern amenities and sitting areas. Each corner of the house is dripped in regal charm. The stately ballroom is perfect for pre-wedding functions and intimate celebrations given its vastness. While one chapel is dressed in shades of blue, the second chapel of the house, houses a Mother Mary imported from France, gold and marble work on the walls and cherubs on the altar.

Not part of the original house, the azure swimming pool was recently added when the old stately mansion was restored to its original grandeur. The nearby Velsao beach is a popular joint for locals and tourists alike. For those looking to explore the surroundings, a walk upto the Church of Three Kings – one that was built on land donated to the village of Cuelim by TB Cunha – is worthwhile. The Annual Feast of the Three Kings is held in January. It starts from the home and upto the church and must be witnessed in real life.



TAJ MAHAL PALACE: THE BEST IN BESTS

The iconic Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, has recently catapulted to the top spot, according to an evaluation by TrustYou – the world's largest guest feedback aggregator. A Media Promoter Score of 95 coupled with a strong customer validation through 9000 plus user reviews, the highest received by any city hotel globally, places the luxury address from Mumbai amongst some of the finest names in hospitality, including the Four Seasons' George V, Paris; the Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok and La Reserva, Paris.

Speaking on the recognition, Taljinder Singh, Area Director, Mumbai Hotels and General Manager, The Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, said, "This would have never been possible without the unmatched dedication of the entire team at the hotel and the patronage of our guests. The Taj Mahal Palace has always carved a niche for itself and chronicled several firsts. What makes the ranking even more special is the fact that it is guest feedback that has brought us the honour."

The hotel achieved the leading spot by virtue of evaluation across various parameters that culminate into the overall customer experience.

VIRAT KOHLI NOW AT MADAME TUSSAUDS DELHI

Virat Kohli's figure was unveiled today at Madame Tussauds Delhi. Kohli will join other sports sensations in his signature batting pose.

Virat's figure has been crafted from over 200 measurements and photographs taken during the sitting session. Fans will see Virat in his dynamic pose wearing the Indian cricket team jersey, ready to strike. The pose symbolises the achievements of Virat as an international cricket icon and will now win the hearts of his fans visiting the attraction.

At the unveiling of his figure, Indian Cricket Captain Virat Kohli said, "I sincerely appreciate the efforts and incredible work undergone in making my figure. Thanks to Madame Tussauds for choosing me for this lifetime experience. I am grateful to my fans for their love and support. This experience is going to be stored in my fond memories. Best wishes for this incredible craftsmanship and now awaiting to see reactions of fans."



VITS MANGO BLOSSOM, GURUGRAM: A NEW ENTRANT

VITS Luxury Hotels has unveiled 'VITS Mango Blossom, Gurugram,' a luxury corporate hotel located at the heart of the city. The hotel infuses a perfect blend of sophistication and functionality. Well-connected through railways, road and air to all major cities the hotel offers ease of travel and transit to all the corporate travelers.

Announcing the launch, Chandrakant Shetty, CEO, VITS Luxury Business Hotels, said, "Exponential growth prospects in Gurugram and high influx of business travellers have fueled the demand for upscale mid-market hotels in this region. We believe VITS Mango Blossom, as our first property in Gurugram and with its strategic location, imposing décor, banqueting and a host of other hospitality amenities, will appeal to both leisure and business tourists."

The well-furnished accommodation blends contemporary design with unmatched comfort. The 37 guest rooms comprise Deluxe rooms and Superior rooms and present a blissful corporate sojourn with impeccable amenities. Each room boasts of tastefully adorned décor, upscale comfort, luxury ambience and exclusive facilities.

VITS Mango Blossom, Gurugram offers a stunning array of facilities, which include multi-cuisine restaurants, an exclusive bar, a travel desk, a business centre, 24-hours room service, conference rooms and a banquet hall. The hotel also features a wide variety of lifestyle activities.



MICHTER'S BOURBON: TRENDING AMERICAN WHISKEY IN INDIA

Michter's Whiskey is witnessing an unprecedented growth in India. It has found great acceptance, amongst the bartending communities and whiskey enthusiasts within six months of its launch by



Cask Spirit Marketing LLP (CSM) in India. Michter's is now present in over 100 hotels, restaurants and bars across the country.

Michter's, the premium bourbon brand, claims a heritage that goes back to 1753. It has earned the respect of the whiskey industry and a fan base that's eager to snap up whatever it puts out, especially its aged whiskeys. CSM's partnership with high-end hotels, bars and restaurants, including Hyatt Regency, JW Marriott Hotel, The Lodhi, The Taj Mahal, The Oberoi, Taj Rambagh Palace, Umaid Bhawan Palace to name a few, is supporting the continued expansion of this global iconic brand in the Indian market.

Speaking on the collaboration, Sandeep Arora, Co-founder and Managing Partner, Cask Spirit Marketing LLP (CSM) said, "American whiskey category has been seeing a renaissance worldwide and India has been no different. In recent years, the pride and the exquisite experience of sipping premium bourbon blends has grown among Indian elites and millennials. It is heartwarming to see the response that Michter's Whiskey has received, in just six months of its launch in India."

Indian consumers are now considering American Whiskey for its taste, quality and the recall value that resonates with the brands. So, it comes as no surprise that Bourbon, America's favourite whiskey, is rapidly gaining popularity and exciting the palate of well-travelled Indians.

UDAY SAMUDRA INITIATES OCEAN CONFERENCE

June 8 is celebrated as World Oceans Day every year.

Uday Samudra at Kovalam hosted a seminar campaign against ocean pollution and pollutants by joining hands with coastal seaside hotel authorities, anti-pollution organisations



and the local residents. The auspicious event took place at Uday Samudra Leisure Hotel and was inaugurated by Principal Secretary, State Fishery and Ports, KR Jyothilal. The conference was attended by people from travel and tourism sectors, entrepreneurs, government organisations, NGOs, college and school students, defence forces and media personnel. The speakers expressed their views on the global marine pollution and the threat faced by the marine species: 2270 marine species are endangered or threatened with extinction. The event covered various topics about ocean cleanliness and was attended by LP Chithir, Clean Mission Director; S Rajasekharan Nair, UDS Chairman; Siju Kumar, Dean of Kerala University; Shibu K Nair, Director of Thanal; VK Varghese, Indian Coast Guard; and Dr Clement Lopez, Centre for Development. Ocean Love, Bond Safari and Green UDS joined together for the special day and initiated this program to save the ocean and spread the message across.

LEISURE CORP OFFICIAL TRAVEL AGENT FOR ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP, 2019

Leisure Corp has been appointed as the Official Travel Agent for the ICC Cricket World Cup to be held in England and Wales in 2019.



India's most admired and award-winning MICE operator in the country is now striving to become the most admired Sports Travel Hospitality brand. "At Leisure Sports Travel, our endeavour is to offer world-class spectator experiences to our corporate and leisure travellers," said Naveen

Kundu, Managing Director, Leisure Corp. Leisure Sports Travel specialises in creating tailor-made packages for sports enthusiasts. "Through our offerings at experiential and speciality travel, we believe we have always created value for our clientele and provided exceptional services.

Naveen Kundu added, "For ICC Cricket World Cup England and Wales 2019, we have designed packages that include a complete match experience including travel, match tickets, accommodation, transfers and hospitality." Naveen Kundu, further said, "Fans can select different packages, where they will have opportunities to have their photo taken with the ICC Cricket World Cup trophy, enjoy tours of the stadium with pitch access and Q&As with cricketing legends." awaiting to see reactions of fans."

ALOFT NEW DELHI AEROCITY: DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

Marriott International has opened its sixth 'Aloft' branded hotel in India with the launch of Aloft New Delhi Aerocity. Located in Aerocity, the hotel offers a vibrant and stylish atmosphere and is conveniently connected to major hubs in the city.

'Different by Design,' Aloft was created keeping in mind the needs of the next-generation traveller. The hotel has 253 guestrooms that are designed with a bold and contemporary tonality, reflecting the brand's philosophy. The urban design encompasses open spaces providing an environment of informality and opportunity for personal engagement.

"The Aloft New Delhi Aerocity is a significant addition to the brand's distribution in India. With the recent milestone of Marriott International celebrating 100 hotels in the country, we continue to see huge opportunity for growth, especially for distinctive brands like Aloft," said Neeraj Govil, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International. Govil added, "The brand's value proposition resonates with the new-age traveller who is looking for unique experiences and technological innovations that establish a 'connect' and make the stay match his lifestyle."





RAMZY FENIANOS has been appointed as Chief Development Officer of Radisson Hotel Group, Asia Pacific. Fenianos will be based at the company's Asia Pacific headquarters in Singapore. With more than 15 years of experience in the real estate and hospitality sectors, Fenianos has worked in key positions with several major companies, including Dubai Holding Group, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide and Minor Hotel Group. Most recently, he was Vice President, Development, EMEA, for Minor Hotels. In this key role, he will oversee all aspects of the group's regional development activities, including leading the Asia Pacific development team in identifying new opportunities to drive growth and strategic expansion of our hotel portfolio.



IGNACE BAUWENS has been designated as Regional Vice President of Wyndham Hotel Group for Middle East, Eurasia and Africa (MEA). Based out of Wyndham Hotel Group's office in Dubai, Bauwens has led the Middle East and Africa region since 2016. His newly expanded role underlines the Company's strategic plan to unite the broader region, in recognition of the

strong economic ties between India and the Middle East. In this new role, Bauwens will be responsible for driving Wyndham Hotel Group's continued growth in both established and new markets across this larger region. Bauwens has more than three decades of experience in hotel operations, having previously held leadership roles with Abu Dhabi National Hotels (ADNH), Accor and InterContinental Hotels Group.



PRANAY VERDIA has been appointed as the Multi-Property General Manager for three Marriott Bengaluru properties. Verdia has over 19 years of experience in hospitality and has been associated with various properties of Marriott International across India. Prior to joining Marriott, he has worked at Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai and Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa in different

roles. He started his journey in hospitality as a Front Office Associate at Hotel Sofitel Umed, Ahmedabad in 1998. Verdia's most recent assignment was at Goa Marriott Resort and Spa as General Manager.



DEVESH RAWAT has been appointed as the General Manager of Indore Marriott Hotel. His role includes overseeing and monitoring all departments, managing the commercial and operational strategy and performance of the hotel, ensuring full compliance to hotel operating controls, SOPs, policies, procedures

and service standards and safeguarding the quality of operations, both internal and external audits. Rawat has 18 years of experience in hospitality. He began his career at The Oberoi Raj Vilas, Jaipur. In his previous roles, Rawat has worked as F&B Manager, Assistant Director of F&B and Director of Restaurants and Catering. Prior to joining Indore Marriott Hotel, Rawat was with Sheraton Grand, Bangalore, at Brigade Gateway.



ASHWANI KUMAR GOELA has been appointed as the General Manager at Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport. He has 19 years of experience in hospitality and will oversee the complete operations of Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport. He started his career with Hotel Intercontinental, New Delhi. His last stint was with IHG, where he was heading Crowne Plaza Jaipur as Cluster General Manager, handling three properties. Ashwani's extensive experience in the hospitality sector, including his ability to drive performance, turn around assets and building great team will be very valuable for the hotel, as it looks to strengthen and expand its position in the market.



VIPUL MOHAN has been designated as the General Manager of Radisson Udaipur. He has over 15 years of experience and holistic understanding of hospitality business. Mohan brings with him hands-on experience in Sales and Marketing, Revenue Management, Quality Customer Relationship Management, Team Management and Preopening Hotels. His most recent tenure was with Ramada Plaza, Chandigarh as the General Manager. In his past assignments, he has been associated with IHG, Radisson Hotel Group and Wyndham Hotel Group with an extensive knowledge of the hospitality industry.



VIKALP RAJ has been designated as Director of Sales and Marketing of Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway. Raj has over 12 years of experience in sales and marketing domain with commendable knowledge and expertise. He will head Sales and Marketing vertical at the hotel, which entails increasing overall sales for the hotel. He will be responsible for managing sales activities, property's reactive and proactive sales efforts and executing sales strategies, along with innovative marketing concepts in order to meet business goals. Prior to this, Raj was with JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru for over 5 years.



CHARMAINE HUTT has been designated as Marketing and Communication manager at Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru. Hutt has over 9 years of experience. Prior to joining Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru, Hutt worked with The Park Bangalore and headed the PR department. In her current role at Radisson Blu Atria Bengaluru, Hutt will be supporting the team in enhancing the guest experience and maximising the hotel's revenues through various marketing platforms. She will be responsible for the internal and external communication, client communications, issues management, implementation of strategies and the large-scale campaigns on social media.

DESIGNED TO INDULGE

In conversation with Richard Barooah, General Manager, Ascott Ireo City Gurgaon

TT BUREAU

Ascott Ireo City Gurgaon brings the concept of serviced-residence apartments to Gurugram, with the intention of changing the way people experience hospitality at conventional hotels.

Give us a brief on Ascott Ireo City Gurgaon and its USPs as a new entrant in the Indian hospitality market?

Strategically located in the heart of Ireo City, Ascott Ireo City Gurgaon (AICG) epitomises the dynamism and affluence of a vibrant, modern city on the rise. The property is flanked by the up-and-coming Ireo City Central on Golf Course Extension Road and is easily accessible from Delhi International Airport, and is located amidst Gurugram's IT hub.

AICG offers choices of luxurious apartments to make every guest stay elevated and pampered. The apartments are tastefully decorated, keeping in mind the discerning international travellers. Every apartment is equipped with a fully functional kitchenette, with world-class crockery and cutlery, launderette and media hub for an out-of-the-world 'plug and play' experience.

Guests have wide options for dining, as the property offers in-house restaurants that will serve world-class cuisines. The property will have a 24/7 coffee shop and one specialty restaurant and an electrifying lounge to indulge and unwind after a long day. The property has an outdoor swimming pool built for a perfect lap, and a fully equipped gymnasium to keep you energetic throughout your stay.

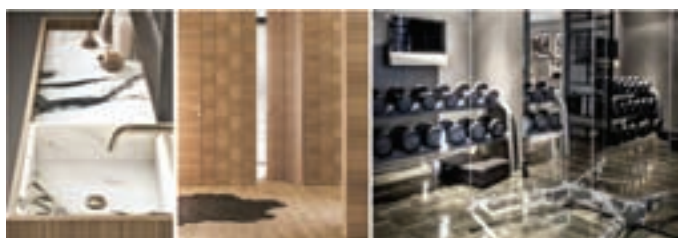


What will be the positioning of Ascott Ireo City Gurgaon?

Located in key gateway cities worldwide, the Ascott Residence is a premium and the most prestigious brand of the Ascott portfolio. AICG will be positioned as a luxurious hospitality project by Ireo, managed by 'The Ascott Limited.' As a luxury, serviced-residence product, AICG will predominantly focus on the extended stay segment. Being a world leader in the segment, the experience would be completely a home-away-from-home feel for all discerning business travellers.

What are the special facilities for corporates that set the property apart from conventional hotels in the Gurugram market?

Our serviced residences cater to the demand from expatriates and business travellers for a private, homely and spacious alternative to the typical hotel room. We also offer other essential amenities and facilities like other conventional hotels. The ambience of residences is more akin to a private apartment, with the services tailored to meet the needs of industry leaders,



featuring separate living, dining and sleeping areas and a fully equipped kitchenette and in-room launderette. So, this gives us an edge over conventional hotels, where our guests get add-on values. Our 'Ascott Lifestyle' programme that is incorporated across all our properties enables guests to continue living the lifestyle they are used to at home, even when they work and live away from home. Guests can be assured of a consistent quality in products and services, given by Ascott's proven track record.

How do you plan to encash on the long stay market in the Gurugram market?

Currently, it is seen that Gurugram has on an average 15-17 per cent of long-staying guests at conventional 5-Star hotels, which would be our prime segment.

While there is a demand for the product, the extended stay segment is still in an immature state in the Indian subcontinent, which can only be driven by offering the highest levels of comfort and personalised service. So, as a world leader, the Ascott brand is known to deliver the same around the world for its clientele.

What will be the displacement and retention strategies for the property?

The Ascott, as a hospitality company, believes in community living, and as part of our standard operating process, guests feel



at home in comparison to staying in the conventional hotel. As our products are always designed keeping in mind the luxury and the comfort of long-staying guests, so the feel home factor is always higher.

At AICG, we organise joint promotions with local partners, participate in key global trade shows and organise property show rounds for travel agents, corporate and the media houses. The product design, Ascott's brand philosophy and its operational concept and processes add more value to our guest features, making the displacement of guests easier.

What will be an indicative opening date of the property?

The property is opening in the Q1 of 2019. Ireo, being the parent company, is developing the asset and is known for its quality work, so every aspect is meticulously executed as per international standards. More importantly, this being the first Ascott property in South Asia, plenty of emphasis is being given to its look and styling as per the brand standard compliances.



EMPTY REAL RETREAT

Blending the desirable, contemporary style with the elusive, vintage charm, WelcomHeritage Gurkha Houseboats offer the best of luxury and comfort amidst the scenic splendour of Srinagar

ABHISHEK PATHAK

Situated between the Pir Panjal range to the west and south and the great Himalayan range to the east, the valley of Kashmir offers piquant allusions to the sonnets of William Wordsworth, evoking pleasing reveries, divine cadence and a multitude of sentiments.

Pristine natural beauty and unprecedented simplicity are intrinsic to Kashmir's vivid landscape, ranging from its snow-capped mountains, green pastures, vibrant lakes, glacier-fed rivers to coniferous-kissed hills. Hear your heart beats synchronise with the cascading waters travelling from the glaciers above, or watch the mellow-hued skies in the evening as the sun descends into the horizon leaving you completely mesmerised and at peace with yourself. These dreamlike visions tug at the eyes and heartstrings of the beholder.

Well, an often touted and a popular attraction of Kashmir are the houseboats that provide for a magical experience. Step inside in one of those houseboats and you would feel that you are in a world of your own, with only the lapping sounds of tranquil waters flowing below and whispering wind caressing your temples.

An epitome of 5-Star elegance and quintessential to Kashmir's sublime character, WelcomHeritage Gurkha Houseboats are a metaphor for luxury and comfort. These are a grand set of super deluxe houseboats on the pristine waters of Nageen Lake, offering guests with best of stylish living, heritage character, exclusivity, world-class cuisine and warm Kashmiri hospitality. The houseboats are tantamount to old world charm making you reminisce the bygone era, when Britishers used to arrive on a flotilla of houseboats to spend the dreary summers in the Vale of Kashmir, away from the tropical heat of the plains.

WelcomHeritage Gurkha Houseboats are designed blending the desirable, contemporary luxury with the elusive, vintage charm, keeping in mind the aesthetics that would appeal to your senses making your stay a truly memorable and an enchanting experience.

Perched on the quiet, opposite bank of the lake, these houseboats are equipped with world-class amenities and provide exclusive facilities to guests. Each houseboat has a separate, scenic garden area and an outdoor sitting space, along with a veranda, flanked by a cushioned balcony overlooking the bluish-green Nageen Lake, which makes



the houseboat worth opting for. All rooms and suites and common areas have heating, TV, large beds and attached bathroom with a bathtub. All houseboats have exquisite wood-panelled furniture and ceilings designed elaborately and daintily, with expensive Kashmiri carpets and rugs and intricate woodwork adding to Kashmir's rich tapestry.

Enjoy a great culinary expedition as you relish delectable Indian, Continental and Kashmiri cuisines served from the attached in-house kitchen on the houseboat. Try the traditional Kashmiri multi-course meal "Wazwan", a sumptuous delicacy, prepared by traditional cooks called "Wazas" and whose preparation is considered as an art and is a matter of pride in Kashmiri culture and identity. This signature dish is very peculiar in Kashmir and is savoured with gusto. Guests are served with scrumptious food in the houseboat's dining room.

The houseboat provides for an amazing vacation amidst the impressive and relaxed environs, a vista that offers a healing touch, and a spot from where leisure travellers can experience the picturesque details of Kashmir with photographic exactitude.

Experience the heavenly ecstasies of Kashmir as you admire the expansive, scenic vistas spread across



the windows of your houseboat. Or, enjoy the pictorial embellishments of the valley while sitting on the cushioned balcony of the houseboat, sipping from a hot cup of "kahwah" and munching on the evening snacks served by the houseboy attached to your houseboat.

Services offered at this houseboat are doctor-on-call, power back-up and money exchange facilities. Dal Lake – Srinagar's prime attraction – is located at a short distance from the houseboat.

A houseboat with its perfect setting amidst a placid lake embraced by blossoming trees is an ideal choice for stay, setting the tone and pace for a visit to the ethereal city of Srinagar. The WelcomHeritage Gurkha Houseboats on Nageen Lake are a concoction of all that is elite, exclusive and indulging in pampered comfort, elegant lavishness and timeless romance.

CORPORATE JET-SETTER

Geetha Arekal
Head – Mobility Services
Siemens Ltd, Mumbai

TT BUREAU

Q: Most memorable trip to any destination?

Since I was young, I dreamt of visiting Zurich and the Swiss Alps. The snow-laden streets, trees, houses, the crisp air and the natural surroundings seemed inviting. They provided for an amazing experience. The famous peak of Switzerland was simply breathtaking. The beauty it offered at -24 degree Celsius was unique.

Q: You dream of going to?

I have plenty on my bucket list, but my dream destinations include the Amazon River in South America, and Antarctica.

Q: Favourite airline and why?

Lufthansa, because it is a premium airline, which has good connectivity and warm services.

Q: Best hotel experience and why?

My best hotel experience was with Hilton Hotels at Istanbul. Prior arrival arrangements and the standard of service at all steps make Hilton my ideal choice. Their food and soft services are great. When I landed in Istanbul, they advised me on the weather, where to get help, what I can see and how I can manage, as it was my first visit. They also took care of my personal needs and accommodated my every request. This was done by the GM himself. While checking out, he sat with me to take my feedback. That was great on-the-ground action.



Q: A place you plan to visit again?

Paris. I still can't get over the first time I went there for holidaying.

Q: A family vacation that stands out?

Dubai. My daughter was influenced into becoming an architect after visiting this city. The country has advanced so much with the use of technology, eco-system and the organised way in which they have transformed a desert into a great city. It is a man-made marvel.

Q: Your best holiday with friends?

At South beach, Florida, because of its splendid scenic views.

Q: Great food you enjoyed and where?

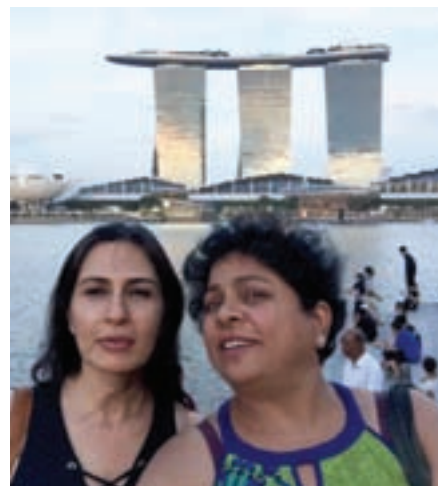
I enjoyed Thai food at Khao Yai, Thailand.

Q: What to watch out for while travelling?

"When in Rome do as the Romans do" is my mantra while travelling. I like getting acquainted with the local culture, heritage, handicrafts and cuisine, abiding by the laws and rules of the places to be visited, and adhering to the safety norms prescribed for sports and activities in such places.

Q: As a travel buyer, what's your philosophy?

My philosophy is to contain costs while organising a trip to a new place every year, which should be a memorable one.



ELYSIAN MANIPUR

Imbued with a rich cultural history and home to traditional folklores, Manipur is the land of hidden gems and unexplored territories, and the only place on mother Earth where the rare Shirui Lily grows in abundance

TT BUREAU

Tucked away in the Far East corner of India and bordering Myanmar, the Valley of Manipur is surrounded by fascinating scenery, blue water lakes, dense forests and the cascading clouds, and is rightly known as the most beautiful of the seven north-eastern states of India. Having as many as 20 epithets to describe its natural splendour, Manipur is famous for its contribution to the world of arts and culture, sports and folklores. In a candid interview with Today's Traveller, W. Ibohal Singh, Director (Tourism), Government of Manipur, talks about the rich cultural heritage of Manipur, slew of new initiatives and the long-term plans being taken to bring the spotlight on Manipur and its tourism sector.

Q. Manipur is a treasure trove of traditional indigenous Games of Manipur. Please tell us more about this.

A. The local sporting culture is one of the factors that has made the state a powerhouse of achievers in the field of sports. The state is regarded as the birthplace of modern polo and has the world's oldest living polo ground, Mapal Kangjeibung. Some other indigenous traditional Games of Manipur are our famous martial art Thang Ta that combines spear and sword skills; Yubi Lakpi – played with greased coconuts and is similar to rugby; Mukna Kangjei is a game where hockey meets wrestling; and Sagol Kangjei or modern polo, which is believed to have evolved from Manipur.

Q. The Art and Culture of Manipur has a distinct personality and style. Please share with us some key Manipuri dance forms and their significance.

A. The state's classical dance form, Ras Leela, famous all over the world, is quite unique when compared with other Indian dance traditions, and forms an important part of our cultural performances. It depicts the eternal love of Lord Krishna and Radha. There are also various other folk dances like the Kabui Naga, the Maibi, the Lai



Haraoba, and the Khamba Thoibi to name a few.

Q. What are the biggest assets that you believe Manipur has?

A. We have abundant resources, but we lack exposure. There are ancient caves, monoliths and megaliths and pre-historic sites in districts of Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul, which could be of interest to tourists. These are areas that are yet to be explored, as Manipur is an emerging tourist destination. Manipur's rich cultural heritage and ancient past, dating back to several centuries, has great potential of attracting foreign students interested in learning art and culture. Besides, there are many tourist attractions in our state, including Shree Govindajee Temple in Imphal, which is the most popular pilgrim centre of the Vaishnavite Hindus in the state. The other attractions include the rare Shirui Lily of Ukhrul



Promotion of rural tourism, development of homestay facilities and adventure tourism spots are some of the areas where we are focussing for the promotion of tourism in the state.

*W. Ibohal Singh,
Director (Tourism), Government of Manipur*

district, the Loktak Lake and the Keibul Lamjao National Park that needs no introduction. In addition to this, war memorial sites such as Maibam Lokpa Ching and Imphal War Cemeteries attract visitors from Japan and commonwealth countries, who pay floral tributes to their forefathers.

Q. What new initiatives have you planned for the future?

A. Promotion of rural tourism, development of homestay facilities and adventure tourism spots are some of the areas where we are focussing for the promotion of tourism in the state. Dzukou Valley in Senapati District, Zeilad Lake in Tamenglong and Loktak Lake for water sports are nature's gift to Manipur and remain yet to be explored.

The valley of Manipur was regarded as "a great highway" between Cachar and other parts of Assam, on one side, and the Kabaw Valley or the Kingdom of Manipur, on the

other side. The proximity of Manipur to Myanmar and neighbouring countries of South East Asia has blessed the state with a potential to be developed into a business hub, which could give a multiplier effect in generating employment in in the entire the North East region. Under the Act East policy of the Union Government, plans are underway to improve the road connectivity between Myanmar and Manipur.



CORPORATE THINK TANK

Powered by
KENYA TOURISM BOARD

Kenya Tourism Board successfully participated in Corporate Think Tank Sessions at Delhi and Mumbai to promote MICE in Kenya

TT BUREAU



With an endeavour to highlight Kenya as a preferred MICE destination, the Kenya Tourism Board partnered with OptiMICE Events Pvt Ltd to reach out to corporate travel influencers from India's major source markets through innovative Corporate Think Tank Sessions.

In an engagement with India's corporate travel market in Mumbai and New Delhi, Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) interacted

with 55 corporates, who are actively engaged in India's MICE market. India is Kenya's fourth largest tourism source market, accounting for 6.5 percent of tourist footfalls in Kenya as of December 2017.

Kenya's rich culture and natural beauty captures the imagination of many, as it is endowed with breathtaking landscapes, a splendid range of captivating wildlife, a beautiful coastline along the Indian Ocean that offers diverse magical





experiences, an array of enriching cultural encounters, delectable cuisine, vibrant cities and beautiful people that make it one of the most preferred destinations in Africa.

Indian MICE buyers want unique and enriching experiences that give them good value for money. Apart from this, good quality, capacity, flexibility and professionalism are some of the important aspects that Indian MICE travellers consider before selecting a MICE destination.

The Kenya Tourism Board participated in two Corporate Think Tank Sessions held on May 25, 2018 at Waterstones Hotel in Mumbai and on May 30, 2018 at Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi, respectively.

HIGH POWERED DELEGATION INTERACTS WITH CORPORATE DECISION MAKERS IN DELHI AND MUMBAI

The Corporate Think Tank Event at Delhi was graced by the esteemed presence of HE Florence Imisa Weche, High Commissioner, Kenya High Commission in New Delhi. The High Commissioner observed, "We had an engaging interaction with leading corporate travel influencers. Kenya has been at the

forefront in the recent past in hosting very big meetings. Some of these were entrepreneur meetings and some big events like the WTO meeting, which were hosted successfully. We want the corporate world in India to come and experience Kenya and this will also help boost tourist footfalls in Kenya. Kenya provides for a mix of business and leisure that leads to an enriching experience."

“ We had an engaging interaction with leading corporate travel influencers. We want the corporate world in India to come and experience Kenya and this will also help boost tourist footfalls in Kenya.

HE Florence Imisa Weche, High Commissioner, Kenya High Commission, New Delhi.



Heading the delegation from Kenya, Jacinta Nzioka, Director of Marketing, Kenya Tourism Board, addressed the gathering at Delhi and Mumbai with the destination offerings and shared KTB's vision for MICE Tourism and how it can help promote Kenya to India. While expanding on Kenya's MICE and leisure offerings, Jacinta Nzioka said, "We interacted with 55 corporates in Delhi and Mumbai from different industries. The key objective of this





“We realize that the Indian market has really been growing, and we are targeting the specific niche market of MICE. We want corporate bodies to consider Kenya as their preferred MICE destination.”

*Jacinta Nzioka, Director of Marketing,
Kenya Tourism Board*

meeting was to engage with the corporates to promote MICE Business to Kenya.”

She went on to say, “We realize that the Indian market has really been growing, and we are targeting the specific niche market of MICE. We want corporate bodies to consider Kenya as their preferred MICE destination. Through these interactive sessions, we have gathered tremendous information regarding issues of concern while considering Kenya as a preferred MICE destination. Our tourism board is committed to support and equip MICE travellers with necessary facilities and amenities that are required for organizing a successful MICE Event in Kenya. We look forward to engaging with them again.” She added, “For a while now, Kenya has been one of the most popular MICE destinations in Africa. The country has always been in high demand for organising various meetings, conferences and delegations from across the world. Many MICE buyers have taken advantage of their business visits to explore Kenya and its ethereal beauty.”

SESSIONS IN NEW DELHI AND MUMBAI HIGHLIGHT ISSUES OF INTEREST

The two Corporate Think Tank Sessions assisted Kenya Tourism Board to highlight its MICE offerings, to understand corporate requirements in India for MICE and to create a corporate database for sustained relationship in the India market.

The events enabled Kenya Tourism Board to directly interact with 25 to 30 select corporate travel decision makers in each city. With the one-on-one interaction with prequalified frequent MICE buyers, the Kenya Tourism Board created awareness among corporates on Kenya’s MICE facilities and addressed relevant concerns or queries.

The interaction in both cities enabled Destination Kenya to understand the preferences of the Indian MICE market and position Kenya as a MICE destination that offers not only the great outdoors but also the best of MICE facilities.

The sessions developed into brainstorming platforms, which delved into challenges and the modalities of holding conferences at the destination.

During the session, Kenya Tourism Board received many enquiries regarding Destination Kenya, both as a business and leisure destination. The delegation addressed several queries raised by buyers in both the sessions, on specific MICE requirements of Indian corporates in order to hold their conferences and meetings in Kenya.

ATTENDEES ENJOY THE KNOWLEDGE-SHARING PLATFORM

Interactions took place with senior leadership of various companies at Mumbai and Delhi, including Sharekhan Limited, Larsen & Toubro Ltd., Siemens Ltd., Reliance Industries Ltd., Ambuja Cements Limited, Reliance Infrastructure Ltd., RBL Bank and Kaya India Ltd, JK Cements Ltd, Relaxo Footwears, Schneider Electric, Fullerton India Credit Company Ltd., Goodyear India,

Indiannica Learning, Bangur Cement, nThrive, among others.

Attendees were delighted by the fact that Kenya enjoyed an even climate and is a year-around destination and that Indian food preferences are easily catered to. To tap the growing Indian market, the Kenya Tourism Board put the spotlight on Destination Kenya's magical natural assets – the bounteous wildlife and natural wonders. Such and other intriguing, MICE-related topics were the talking points of the discussion.



BEST FOR WORK AND PLAY

With its diverse range of avant-garde facilities, living, dining and lifestyle options, The Leela Mumbai is the ideal destination for discerning business and leisure travellers

INDIRA LAUL



A successful hospitality brand rests its laurels not only on its impeccable service and long-standing tradition, but also on the fact that it remains relevant for both business and leisure travellers, who value design aesthetics and high-tech amenities, along with the finest of gourmet cuisines. The Leela Mumbai is one such hotel, a brand that puts a premium on chic, modern aesthetics, along with a welcoming ambience and an extensive range of facilities to help both business and leisure travellers feel rooted while they are away from home.

It has been noted that when it comes to hotel selection, both business and leisure travellers hold the same perceptions towards the following factors – convenient location, quality service, high-tech business facilities, exemplary food, accommodation and recreation. The Leela Mumbai scores high on all these points.

Conveniently located, at a five-minute drive from the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport and a 15-minute drive from the domestic airport, The Leela Mumbai nestles amidst 11 acres of lush landscaped gardens, cascading waterfalls and a lotus fountain.

With 391 well-appointed rooms and suites to accommodate every mood and taste, the hotel manifests an intrinsic sense of





luxury. The design fundamental for the interior spaces is a perfect blend of tradition and modernity. This, together with impeccable service and avant-garde facilities, makes for an ideal urban getaway.

Check-in at the Royal Club, the epitome of a hotel-in-a-hotel, and enjoy an array of exclusive facilities and services, such as two-way limousine airport transfers, a dedicated check-in and check-out counter, round-the-clock butler service, concierge service, 24-hour access to the Royal Club Lounge and more. Avail a range of business services, like the complimentary usage of the 8th floor meeting rooms for two hours per stay, half-an-hour internet access daily, at the fully-serviced business centre on the eighth floor.

For delectable gastronomical experiences, visit Le Cirque Signature, the fine dining Franco-Italian restaurant, or dine under the stars and enjoy balmy evenings by the poolside with your favourite sundowner at Six Degrees, the hotel's cosmopolitan bar. Pamper your palate at the signature Indian restaurant, Jamavar, which dishes out authentic Indian cuisines. Savour world cuisine at Citrus, the all-day dining restaurant. Relish traditional Chinese flavours at The Great Wall, and meet a friend or business associate for tea, a light meal or a glass of wine at The Lobby Lounge.

De-stress at the hotel's luxurious spa, which combines the best of world therapies with the finest quality ingredients and skin care advances by ESPA. The spa offers a range of signature treatments, which are uniquely specific and tailor-made to suit individual preferences. Also on offer is an upscale beauty salon, a state-of-the-art gymnasium and an alluring outdoor swimming pool.

No matter what your requirement is, whether it's hosting a residential conference, a corporate event, or a meeting, The Leela Mumbai has it all. The impeccable banqueting facilities ensure every facet of comfort, high technology and grandeur, while the impressive Grand Ballroom and eight well-appointed meeting rooms are the cynosure of 'unrivalled congregational luxury'.

Sprawling over 11,742sq.m, The Grand Ballroom is ideal for large business meets and big corporate events. You could also choose from one of other well-appointed meeting rooms and boardrooms, as conferences and meetings are always customised to suit your specific requirements. A dedicated team of professionals will ensure that your event runs smoothly. Innovative gourmet creations and cuisines from all around the globe are offered by the hotel's experienced culinary masters.



EXPERIENCE IS THE NEW LUXURY

The luxury travel experience is all about exclusivity,
the human connect, style and inclusion

TT BUREAU

Consider this: You buy a bottle of Château Margaux 2009, priced at \$195,000, at the Le Clos wine shop in Terminal 3 of the Dubai International Airport. Along with it comes a package tour of its vineyard and cellars; a first-class flight to France to visit Château Margaux, including a tour of the vineyard and cellar, plus a dinner hosted by the Managing Director, Paul Pontallier. Welcome to luxury Experiential Travel, the latest buzzword in the travel industry.

For experience junkies, a laidback beach vacation or 'doing' a destination is ho-hum – millennials want to make the most

of their limited vacation time, so wildlife safaris, Arctic cruises, active travel, and trips with learning components, from cooking to photography to surfing are all on the travel agenda. So, how about a 2 ½ hour Martini Master Class at a luxury London hotel, or a private Diamond and Gemstone Experience in South Africa, or dinner in the Magma Chamber of a volcano in Iceland? They're all on the cards, if you have the time and the inclination.

AN \$80,000-A-NIGHT LUXURY SUITE IN GENEVA

For \$80,000 per night, join the ranks of Bill Clinton, the King of Saudi Arabia, Tony Blair, Bill Gates, Sir Richard Branson, and



Michael Jackson. Located on the shores of Lemman Lake and just steps from the most beautiful parks and boutiques of the renowned Rue du Rhône, Hotel President Wilson is one of the most contemporary addresses in Geneva, facing the magnificent panorama of the Mont-Blanc. Discover a culture of service reflecting the Geneva lifestyle and a fine Swiss heritage.

The Royal Penthouse Suite of the Hotel President Wilson is famous for being the largest one in Europe and the most luxurious Suite in the world, which has been awarded "World's Leading Hotel Suite," at the prestigious World Travel Awards.

Located on the entire eighth and top floor of the hotel with a panoramic terrace with breathtaking views over the lake, the Royal Penthouse Suite offers no less than 12 luxury bedrooms, including marble bathrooms, and bath products by Hermès. The two master bedrooms both have a vast walk-in dressing and a marble bathroom with Jacuzzi facing the lake, separate shower, steam and mirror TV.

With exceptional top-of-the range features, such as one of

the biggest TV screens in the world by the prestigious brand Bang & Olufsen, a Steinway grand piano, a 1930 Brunswick billiard table, a collection of ancient books, art pieces as well as a private fitness room, the suite leaves nothing to be desired. This truly unique suite stands for pure luxury with maximum security, from bulletproof windows, emergency alarm buttons and reinforced safe, to a private lift to take guests directly to their majestic living quarters.

DINNER IN THE MAGMA CHAMBER OF A VOLCANO IN ICELAND

The Thrihnukagigur Volcano, in the Southern Peninsula of





Iceland, may be dormant, but having dinner in its cavernous magma chamber is surreal. According to bespoke travel operators, the massive space inside could be all yours for one whole night.

Starting at \$14,000 you could take a privately chartered helicopter ride over Iceland's breathtaking terrain. Once you arrive at the cave-like magma chamber of the volcano, a pristine dining experience, complete with crystal glassware, gourmet food, and a possible glimpse of the Aurora Borealis awaits. The excursion includes luxury accommodations with breakfast, all private transfers, expertly guided tours, and customisable helicopter journeys over rarely seen Icelandic country.

A day's trip includes awesome sights of cascading waterfalls, tremendous geysers, black lava beaches, and the famous Jokulsarlon ice lagoon. Private tour companies offer Pick-up at your hotel in Reykjavik, all safety gear, helmets, harnesses, etc., guides with personal experience, exceptional volcano tours, traditional Icelandic fare, including Icelandic meat soup, coffee/tea, and vegetarian soup as well.

DIAMOND SAFARI IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Engaged, just married or want to celebrate an Anniversary in style? Embark on a Diamond Safari, which offers an incredible journey with a South African diamond, right from its discovery at the bottom of the ocean to its transformation into a sparkling jewel.

Your adventure begins with a comfortable transfer from



your choice of hotel to the airport in Cape Town. Take off in a private plane to the west coast, near the Namibian border and transfer to a luxury beach villa or hotel. Unwind and relax, partake of a sumptuous breakfast and an introduction to diamond diving. A private plane will take you to Port Nolloth, where a designated boat and diamond diver awaits you.

Drift away, then follow your diamond diver into the depths or watch as he brings up precious diamonds. Return to your villa or hotel, where a gourmet lunch awaits you. Later, that same day, you return to Cape Town by private plane.

YOUR OWN PRIVATE ISLAND IN LAUCALA ISLAND, FIJI

Located in the South Pacific, in the archipelago of Fiji Islands, Laucala Island is a private island set on 3,500 exclusive acres. You can now rent out the entire island for \$150,000 a night, with a minimum of 5 nights. The island can accommodate 72 people and includes all meals and drinks at the island's five restaurants and bars, and all menus can be tailored to your request.

Set amidst coconut plantations, sandy beaches, turquoise lagoons, rich green mountains and breathtaking natural beauty, experience true luxury in the privacy of the resort's 25 villas as well as the freedom to experience a variety of activities, ranging from golf to water sports to beachside horseback riding and more. The resort prides itself on an integral philosophy, incorporating elements of the entire island into each guest's experience, and offering products and ingredients raised and grown on the island.

Accommodation comprises 25 villas, with one, two and three-bedroom configurations, and each features its own pool, lush tropical garden and spacious indoor and outdoor areas. Each villa comes with all Food & Beverage services included, chauffeur, nanny, housekeeping, Tao service, laundry and dry cleaning and



both welcome and farewell gifts. Guests are also offered sports and activities, golf, tennis, horseback riding, biking, surfing, fishing and diving as part of their stay.

Tee off at the 18-hole championship golf course, which is set against the mountain and integrated into the old plantation area, where undulating fairways and challenging greens with strategic bunkers ensure a well-balanced course. PGA professionals are available to assist golfing guests.

Laucala Island's spa experience is unlike any other, offering treatments that translate into enchanting moments in a true island paradise. The spa features four couple treatment villas, each with a private treatment room, hot stone relaxation room, outdoor bathtub, and private changing room. Facial treatments, body treatments and rituals, massage therapies, and salon services are all available.

WHITE DESERT TRIP TO ANTARCTICA

The only company in the world to fly into the interior of Antarctica in a private jet, White Desert, which offers a one-day trip to Antarctica. At \$195,000, the trip kickstarts from Cape Town, from where you board a Gulfstream Private Jet and set off for the icy continent. Travellers have about eight hours to explore, ending in a gourmet champagne dinner and the entire

trip lasts less than 24 hours. The ultimate Antarctic experience, the trip includes a visit to a thriving colony of Emperor Penguins.

Once you get to Cape Town, get ready to take a 24-hour mind-blowing journey. Take off in a Gulfstream private jet and fly over the Southern Ocean, before landing on Ilvetanna Peak – or Wolf's Tooth, in Antarctica. Polar guides will then take you abseiling down glacial crevasses, climb sheer faces and explore blue grottos in the South Pole. Finish with a gourmet in-flight meal and year-old pure glacial ice.

White Desert also offers an eight-day trip combining the magnificent Emperor Penguins with a flight to the lowest point on Earth – the Geographic South Pole. You could also take the four-day adventure, which includes the dramatic Wolf's Fang peak and then on to the luxury camp, which is located at the bottom of a 200-ft icefall, and is the perfect base for your daily adventures.

Stay at the White Desert Hotel in Antarctica and enjoy incredible views. See how luxury prevails even in the remotest of holiday destinations.

Hotel White Desert in Antarctica is a favourite destination for the global elite and also one of the most expensive in the world. Among its guests have been Prince Harry and members of the Saudi royal family.



PM LAYS THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR DEOGHAR AIRPORT, JHARKHAND

Deoghar Airport is being developed to provide better services to the air passengers of the region. The foundation stone for the development of Deoghar Airport was laid by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India through a video link from an event in Sindri, Jharkhand, in the presence of other esteemed dignitaries, including Draupadi Murmu, Hon'ble Governor of Jharkhand and Raghubar Das, Chief Minister, Jharkhand. Deoghar Airport is being developed at an estimated cost of Rs. 401.32 crore.

Deoghar is a major religious tourist destination, famous for Baba Baidyanath Dham, which is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas and one of the 51 Shaktipeeths of India. The airport development project will give an impetus to local tourism, generate employment and improve the overall economy in the region.

The Terminal Building, equipped with state-of-the-art passenger facilities, will be a composite structure inspired by the shikharas of the Baidyanath Temple. The Terminal Building will have six check-in counters and two arrival belts, with a peak-hour handling capacity of 200 passengers. It will have an environment-friendly architecture and its interiors will depict local tribal arts, handicrafts, Madhubani artwork and pictures of local tourist destinations highlighting the rich cultural ethos of the region. Deoghar Airport will have a wide catchment area, including Northern West Bengal and South-Eastern Bihar. **tt**



JET AIRWAYS: DIRECT FLIGHT FROM MUMBAI TO MANCHESTER

Jet Airways announced that starting November 5, 2018, it will launch its first direct service between Mumbai and Manchester. Jet Airways will deploy its wide body A330-200 with 254 seating capacity for the service, which will operate for four days every week including Monday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. Manchester will become the 21st international addition to the Jet Airways' network and, with the introduction



of this new flight, the carrier's 5th non-stop service to/from the UK, Jet Airways will also become the largest carrier between Mumbai and the UK. The new service will complement the carrier's existing thrice daily, non-stop services between Mumbai – London Heathrow, and a daily service between Delhi – London Heathrow.

Vinay Dube, Chief Executive Officer, Jet Airways, said, "We are extremely pleased to begin a new chapter in our decade-long relationship with the United Kingdom. The new service will bring Manchester into our global network, reinforcing our footprint as well as expanding the choice of connectivity to/from the UK for our guests with the 4 days/week, non-stop service. With the new flight, Jet Airways will have over 8000 seats on offer

every week, making it increasingly convenient for both business as well as leisure travellers, travelling between India and the UK, deepening commerce as well as tourism ties between the two countries." Manchester Airport, CEO, Andrew Cowan, said, "This route will deliver a major boost to businesses looking to export to the world's fastest-growing economy, as well as helping to attract Indian visitors and investors to the North. We look forward to working with Jet Airways on launching the Mumbai service in the months ahead." Jet Airways' flight 9W 130 will depart from Mumbai at 0230 hrs (Local time) and will arrive at Manchester's Terminal 2 at 0755 hrs (Local time). The return flight, 9W 129 will depart from Manchester at 0935 hrs (Local time) and arrive at Mumbai's Terminal 2 at 0040 hrs (Local time). **tt**

ETIHAD AIRWAYS TO LAUNCH DIRECT FLIGHT FROM ABU DHABI TO BARCELONA

Etihad Airways has announced the introduction of a new scheduled service linking Abu Dhabi and Barcelona, effective November 21, 2018. The route will initially be operated five times a week by a two-class Airbus A330-200, before becoming a daily operation route from March 31, 2019 onwards. Barcelona will become the second city in Spain served by Etihad Airways, complementing the airline's existing daily service to its capital, Madrid. The new link will provide business and leisure travellers with convenient timings to travel between Abu Dhabi and Barcelona, also providing seamless onward connections through Abu Dhabi to major cities in the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, Korea and Australia. Peter Baumgartner, Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Airways, said, "We are now delighted to announce the first direct flight between Abu Dhabi and Barcelona. We are confident it will prove very popular with UAE and Barcelona-based customers, allowing us to extend our acclaimed in-flight service, hospitality and flair to this vibrant Mediterranean city, and to build on the flourishing cultural and commercial ties between the UAE and Spain." **tt**

JAL INTRODUCES NEW INTERNATIONAL LOW-COST CARRIER BUSINESS

Japan Airlines (JAL) announced the decision to establish a new low-cost carrier (LCC) business for the international market. The new LCC business will specifically feature international routes with medium- to long-haul flights and will aim to provide customers with new options when traveling to/from Japan.

The company will be a consolidated subsidiary of the JAL Group and plans to operate flights from Narita International Airport to select destinations in Asia, Europe and the Americas. In the first stages of its establishment, the carrier will operate two Boeing 787-8 aircraft and is targeting to launch commercial flights from the summer of 2020.

When JAL establishes the new LCC business, the company aims to create new demand, working along with the successful services provided by Jetstar Japan, which features domestic and short-haul international flights. Through these actions, the company will take on the challenge to deliver and meet the needs of diversified customer groups around the world. **tt**

THE EMIRATES VINTAGE COLLECTION: 15-YEAR-OLD CELLARED WINES

Emirates launched the Emirates Vintage Collection – a selection of fine wines from its cellar in Burgundy, which have been stored for up to 15 years. The four wines to be included this year are the Château Cheval Blanc 2004, Château Haut Brion 2004, Château Mouton Rothschild 2001 and Château Margaux 1998. Since 2006, Emirates has been buying wines for long-term storage. The Emirates Vintage Collection represents the most prestigious of these wines, a rare selection that is difficult to source. “We went direct to the winemakers, handpicked these vintages and then cellared them for up to 15 years in Burgundy. It has taken a great deal of patience, investment and long-term planning. Our aim has always been to surprise and delight our customers and they are in for a treat with this selection,” said Joost Heymeijer, Senior Vice President, In-flight Catering, Emirates.

The airline’s culinary team worked with its in-house sommeliers to develop dishes that would best complement the wines and offer a fine dining experience onboard. In keeping with its regionally inspired menus, a unique dish was chosen for each route and wine. **tt**



CSIA DONS CARNIVAL-LIKE LOOK ON PASSENGERS' DAY

GVK's Mumbai International Airport Private Limited (MIAL), the company that administers the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA), completed 12 years of taking over its operations and therefore celebrated it with great gusto and fervour. Passengers were treated with a multitude of fun-filled activities throughout the day at CSIA. GVK MIAL celebrated its Passengers' Day with a series of unique initiatives to commemorate the occasion with an array of exciting activities. Passengers witnessed live performances by musicians, jugglers and mime artists. CSIA also orchestrated a fun-filled evening for families by arranging a thrilling Indian Puppet Show. Keeping alive the interactive spirit, visitors got their caricatures made and engaged in exciting activities like Karaoke, Crazy Portrait and Jenga.

An electrifying atmosphere coupled with enthralling activities saw the Mumbai Airport come alive, witnessing magical revelry with its passengers. The last 12 years have been challenging as well as prestigious, bagging dozens of awards and accolades. Through providing an assortment of world-class facilities to travellers, CSIA has continually made a bid in rendering travel to Mumbai as the most desirable and enriching affair. **tt**

LUFTHANSA'S NEW IN-FLIGHT MENU: CHOICEST OF FOOD OPTIONS

Lufthansa India unveiled a brand new menu that has been curated in collaboration with The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts and its Master Chef Vinod Saini. Passengers travelling on Lufthansa German Airlines to/from India are able to order from an array of delectable meal options, offering a modern take on traditional Indian cuisine. Featuring exquisite dishes from across the country, which have been created using the freshest of seasonal ingredients involving modern food techniques, the in-flight menu ensures that passengers have access to a healthier and exclusive dining experience.

Wolfgang Will, Senior Director, South Asia, Lufthansa Group, said, “At Lufthansa, we are delighted to encourage the growing zeal of Indian travellers to explore the world. Our new in-flight menu reflects our understanding of changing passenger preferences and reaffirms our commitment of being ‘More Indian than you think.’” The new menu features dishes such as Martaban Gosht, Chandani Murgh Korma, Shalgam Gosht, roasted chicken slices and other such delicacies. To satisfy sweet cravings, passengers can choose from traditional classics such as Baked Rasgulla with caramel sauce, Kasi Halwa, Litchi Nariyal ki Kheer. **tt**



JET AIRWAYS CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Jet Airways celebrated the momentous milestone of 25 glorious years of service on May 5, 2018. Credited with transforming the face of Indian aviation, Jet Airways' first flight 9W321 took off on May 5, 1993 from Mumbai to Ahmedabad. From a fleet of 4 aircrafts serving 6 destinations in early 1993 to its current fleet of 119, serving over 450 destinations globally, Jet Airways has been privileged in contributing to the growth of the Indian economy.

The airline's unique service philosophy helped it emerge as an iconic Indian brand to create a name for itself in the global arena, providing guests the finest hospitality in the skies. On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary, Naresh Goyal, Chairman, Jet Airways Group, said, "This day represents an unforgettable milestone and is a mix of emotion and elation for us all. We are both humbled and honoured by the overwhelming trust, support and appreciation received from our guests over the years, as we fondly recall the first steps in bringing the Joy of Flying to millions of our guests. It gives me great pleasure to reaffirm our commitment to them and to our vision of connecting India to the world." **tt**

VISTARA: CHEF-ON-BOARD PROGRAMME

Vistara launched a Chef on-Board programme in partnership with Taj SATS Air Catering Limited. Chef-on-Board is an innovative and first-of-its-kind initiative in India. Chef Bansal will be available periodically on select flights across Vistara's network to ensure Vistara's in-flight catering remains the best food and beverage experience in the skies.

Commenting on the program, Sanjiv Kapoor, Chief Strategy and Commercial officer, Vistara, said, "Vistara has developed an enviable reputation for its

food, and with the Chef-on-Board initiative and the launch of our new menu, we intend to take the experience to a different level altogether. The new menu features all-time Indian, Asian and Continental



favourites. With Chef-on-Board, we want to ensure that the Vistara dining experience is even more fulfilling and memorable." Sagar Dighe, Chief Operating Officer, Taj SATS Air Catering Limited, added, "With Chef-on-Board, Vistara is giving us a novel opportunity to directly engage with customers and solicit their response on Vistara's latest menu." **tt**

LUFTHANSA OFFERS CHAAYOS MASALA CHAI: IN-FLIGHT EXCLUSIVITY

Lufthansa India has partnered with Chaayos, a Delhi-NCR-based Tea chain, to bring onboard special blends of the Indian masala tea, exclusively created for the airline. Effective May 2018, passengers travelling on Lufthansa German Airlines to/from India can savour the authentic Indian masala tea featuring a special blend of high-quality natural ingredients, including Assam tea, dried ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, black pepper and cloves, with no added artificial flavours. Wolfgang Will, Senior Director, South Asia, Lufthansa Group, said, "We are always looking for authentic culinary offerings in our in-flight services. Chaayos is an expert in customized tea and with our partnership, we look forward to our customers savouring the best of blends while onboard."

The initiative is an extension of the #SayYesToTheWorld campaign, which Lufthansa introduced in India recently to celebrate the zest of the Indian travellers to explore the world. Lufthansa's association with Chaayos started in 2015 as part of the Lufthansa Runway to Success initiative. In a short span of 5 years, Chaayos has become the market leader in the chai café space with cafés in Delhi, Mumbai and Chandigarh. **tt**

AAI SIGNS MOU FOR UDAN FLIGHTS TO STEEL CITIES



Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for enhancement of Regional Air Connectivity under RCS-UDAN at the SAIL-owned airports at Burnpur, Rourkela and Bokaro. As a result, the three steel cities in the states of West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand are soon likely to feature on the country's aviation map. The MoU was signed on April 23, 2018 by IN Murthy, Member (Operations), AAI and Atul Srivastava, Director Personnel, SAIL in the presence of Usha Padhee, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and other senior officials. As per the MoU, AAI as the implementing agency for RCS-UDAN will operate and manage airport operations (city side as well as air side) on the behalf of SAIL for three years. The arrangement will be reviewed after three years with mutual consent. The cost of terminal and airside maintenance/operations will be borne by SAIL directly except for ANS operations. As a part of this partnership, AAI will provide all the necessary technical guidance and support. **tt**

ROYALTY REVISITED

See how the many royal palaces around the world have stood their ground for centuries, with their sheer size, extravagance, magnificence, and value

TT BUREAU

Imagine the kings and emperors of yesteryear taking a stroll on their perfectly manicured lawns – no doubt conjuring grand visions for their empires. Over time, the majestic aura surrounding royalty dwindled significantly, the seat of power changed hands, but the mysterious charm prevailed.

The royal palaces around the world have stood their ground for centuries with their sheer size, extravagance, magnificence and value. Most countries and communities in the world are moving away from the monarchy system of government to other forms of elected governments, so most palaces are being transformed into museums and cultural heritage centres. Preserving these palaces is always in the best interest of every country that has them, since they are a testament to a rich history and amazing ancient architecture.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE, ENGLAND

What mortal is there who has come to England and has not heard of Buckingham Palace? This gigantic structure of grandiosity has served as the official London residence of London's sovereigns 1837, and today serves as the





administrative headquarters of the Monarch. Statistics concerning its architectural magnificence bring home the vastness of its proportions, it consists of 775 rooms, which include 19 State rooms, 52 Royal and guest bedrooms, 188 staff bedrooms, 92 offices and 78 bathrooms.

However, the palatial architecture is not just a venue for holding official functions, but, also has the imprints of family remembrances and histories embedded all over it. The State Rooms serve the purpose of reception for the visiting dignitaries who are received by the monarchs. Upon a visit to the 19 state rooms, one can witness a treasure of paintings ranging from the works of Van Dyck and Canaletto, sculpture by Canova, exquisite pieces of Sèvres porcelain, and some of the finest English and French furniture in the world.

MYSORE PALACE, INDIA

Mysore Palace is built in Indo-Saracenic style, and this tradition is reflected in the domes, turrets, arches and colonnades. A walk through the palace would reveal the hidden treasure of exquisite carvings and precious works, each a visual treat to stop and wonder upon. The Mysore Palace is also known as the Amba Vilas Palace, and was constructed by Henry Irwin, the British consultant architect of Mysore State. The majestic Durbar Hall, with its ornate ceiling and sculpted pillars, the Marriage Pavilion with its chandeliers and cast-iron pillars and the Belgian stained glass adorned with peacock designs on the dome ceilings, are the main attractions. Witness the magnificent jewel studded golden throne, the pride of



the Wadiyars and the symbol of their sovereignty, which are displayed for the public during the festival of Dasara in October. Walk your way amongst a row of souvenir shops, and you will come across the Residential Museum. It houses musical instruments, Tanjore and Mysore paintings, besides an array of personal artefacts belonging to the Maharaja's family.

GRAND PALACE, THAILAND

The land of Thailand is blessed by the gods themselves – the entire place is a happy conglomeration of culture, arts and festivals. And, nowhere is this festive spirit more reflected than the Grand Palace, which is believed to have been constructed during the reign of King Rama 1 of the Chakri



dynasty. The palace served as a royal residence until 1925, and now fulfils largely ceremonial purposes. The Outer Court is one of the zones of the Grand Palace, the major attraction of which is the Temple of Emerald Buddha, or Phra Kaeo Morakot, so named because it was carved from flawless green jade, situated amid gold-gilded sculptures and ornaments. At the centre of the Middle Court is the Chakri Mahaprasat Throne Hall, which reveals an outstanding combination of European architecture influenced from the Renaissance era and traditional Thai roof tiles and spires.

CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES, FRANCE

To witness the culture and arts of France in all its unlimited glory, visit the Château de Versailles, or, the Palace of Versailles. For well over 30 years now, this palace has occupied a respectable spot on UNESCO's World Heritage List, and is considered to be the one of the most marvellous achievements of 18th century French art. The history of the

palace itself is quite an interesting one, first serving as Louis XIII's hunting lodge, before being expanded and transformed by his son Louis XIV when he shifted the seat of power to Versailles. The Hall of Mirrors, the King's Grand Apartments and the Museum of the History of France has continued to leave the populace awestruck over the years.

The Grande Galerie, or, the La Grande Galerie, stretching across 73m, glorifies the economic, political and artistic achievements of France in all its splendour. The 30 compositions in the arch painted by Le Brun, highlight the glorious epoch in the reign of Louis XIV. The 357 mirrors adorn the 17 arches opposite the windows, highlighting that France was the undisputed economic power with its grand scale production of mirrors, while smashing the monopoly held by France. The artistic success is reflected in the Rance marble pilasters decorated with a model of gilded bronze capitals called "French order," which represent national emblems a fleur de lys topped by a royal sun between two French cockerels.



ODISHA: MYSTICAL TREASURE TROVE



Odisha is fast emerging as a significant Buddhist tourist destination, with its many landmark Buddhist sites, including Dhauri, the Diamond Triangle, among others

INDIRA LAUL

When it comes to a cultural and historical legacy, Odisha stands tall, dating back to a heritage that is more than 2000 years old. Though somewhat neglected in the past, Odisha's rich Buddhist heritage cannot be ignored. More than 200 Buddhist sites, scattered across the length and breadth of the state, bear testimony to the fact that Buddhism was predominant in Odisha, from the 6th century BC to 15th-16th centuries AD, while various archaeological finds at Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, Udaigiri and other locations prove that Odisha was influenced by Buddhist thought.

The Tourism Ministry is sparing no effort in luring tourists to the state and has launched a Buddhist Circuit, along with state governments and stakeholders. Buddhist Heritage Trails, which is a part of the Circuit, identifies 11 states which will be covered – Odisha being one of them.

The Buddhist connect with Odisha, the erstwhile Kalinga, can be traced back to the time when it was famously conquered by Emperor Ashoka and his conversion to Buddhism, following the bloody aftermath of the war.

All the major sites comprising the Buddhist Circuit in Odisha fall within 100km from Bhubaneswar Airport. The



most prominent of the Buddhist sites is the Buddhist Triangle, comprising Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri in Jajpur district. The State government is making a determined effort to develop the Buddhist sites to attract tourist from different parts of the world.

DHAULIGIRI: THE PEACE PAGODA

The Shanti Stupa or Peace Pagoda stands by the Daya River and represents the warriors who fought bravely to protect their land. It also symbolises the power of non-violence and a great king's remorse and subsequent conversion to Buddhism.

Built by the Japan Buddhist Sangh and the Government of Odisha, the monument houses four statues of Buddha in



different postures and in different directions of the Shanti Stupa. The walls of the Stupa contain information about the Kalinga War, inscribed in the form of statues or images. However, Dhauri's greatest significance, which most attract tourists, are the rock edicts of Ashoka. Ashoka expressed his remorse, and his intention to govern the kingdom according to the principles of his new faith, in a series of rock-cut edicts that he caused to be inscribed on over 100 monuments throughout his vast kingdom.

THE DIAMOND TRIANGLE

The most prominent of Buddhist sites in Odisha is the Buddhist Triangle comprising Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri in Jajpur district. Within a 100-km radius from Bhubaneswar, a determined effort has been made by the state government to develop these Buddhist sites to attract tourists from different parts of the world.

Ratnagiri, or 'Hill of Jewels, has the most extensive Buddhist ruins in Odisha and is of great importance as a Buddhist site. As Ratnagiri was a flourishing centre of Vajrayana, a Tantric form of Buddhism, the pantheon of Buddhist deities here received wide expression through the medium of stone. Images of the Buddha can be seen here in various poses, and those of Avalokitesvara, Khasarpana Lokeshvara, Manjushri and Tara are noteworthy. The colossal head of the Buddha, housed in an adjacent area to the site, inspires awe. Ratnagiri was said to be established as a Buddhist centre from the first half of the sixth century A.D. and Buddhism developed here unhindered up to the 12th century A.D.

Udayagiri, or 'Sunrise Hill,' is home to another large Buddhist complex in Odisha. It consists of a brick stupa, two brick monasteries, a stepped stone well with inscriptions on it, and numerous rock-cut Buddhist sculptures. A short distance away from Ratnagiri, it assumed importance after the excavation work, which brought to light a sprawling complex of Buddhist remains consisting of brick monasteries, a brick stupa, rock-cut sculptures and a stepped well with inscriptions.

Lalitgiri sings the glory of a past spanning from the third century B.C. to the 15th century B.C. Huge brick monasteries,



the remains of a Chaitya hall, a number of votive stupas and a renovated stone stupa at the top of the hill dominate the rural setting. The site museum of the ASI here displays a number of Mahayana sculptures, consisting of life-size figures, most of which have short inscriptions on them.

Excavation work at the Langudi hills, also in Jajpur district, has unearthed a treasure trove of architecturally rich Buddhist remains. The most remarkable and prized discoveries here, made in 2001, were two inscribed images of Ashoka.

KALEIDOSCOPIC KERALA

Engage your senses as you explore the effusive colours of the monsoon in Kerala this season

ABHISHEK PATHAK

Explore and experience Kerala like never before, with the onset of the one-of-a kind Neelakurinji season when the greenish abode of Munnar turns bluish, enjoy the boat race and the exquisite Kerala cuisine with Onam being celebrated in August, and indulge in 20 different activities at the newly opened Jatayu Earth Centre.

NEELAKURINJI SEASON

Once in every 12 years comes the blossoming season of Neelakurinji – a flower that grows in 40 varieties. The blue florets of Neelakurinji carpet the myriad blooming valleys and flower-laden grasslands of Munnar. This eye-catching, scenic landscape unleashes a stellar, visual extravaganza that enthralls tourists and botanists, when the Neelakurinji flowers bloom en masse.

The peculiarity of Neelakurinji in Munnar is its exclusivity. The valley of Munnar has a profuse spread of Neelakurinji, which sprawls magically across the green mountains of Munnar. During the bloom season, the Neelakurinji flowers take centre stage in Munnar. The flourishing azure flowers turn the place magical and the sight of the valley decked in blue is too spectacular to believe.

If you wish to discern the blue wonderment, visit Munnar from August to November, in 2018. As the monsoon clouds slowly recede, the blue florets can be seen carpeting the valleys, mountains, and grasslands of the quaint hill

station of Munnar. The peak blooming period would be in September and October.

ONAM

Come August 15, enjoy the colours of Onam and engage in the rituals and customs with full fervour and festivity as you relish the sumptuous Kerala cuisine made from local spices, to celebrate the onset of the harvest season in the state. Onam is an annual Hindu Festival dedicated to the mythical King Mahabali's homecoming. Each day has its own importance during the 10-day festival. It is the New Year day for Malayali Hindus and is observed with great pomp and show. The beginning of Onam is marked by a grand procession of elephants clothed in finery to mark the start of Onam celebrations in Kerala.

Onam celebrations include boat races, tiger dances, flower arrangement, tug of war, mask dance, plantain offerings, folk songs, dance and other celebrations. Sadya, an elaborate lunch meal, is prepared in every household and consists of a medley of 26 appetising food items served on a plantain leaf. Dessert is usually 'payasam,' – a sweet dish made of milk, sugar and other traditional Indian savouries.

People wear traditional clothes on this occasion, with women draped in the famous Kerala sari, and men attired in cream-coloured 'wrap arounds' and kurtas. From vivid, floral decorations to tantalising feasts, Onam is a time to indulge and revel in the sights, sounds, smells and flavours of the



true Kerala. God's own country becomes a canvas of colours during the 10 days of revelries, as the state comes alive with arts and music.

JATAYU ADVENTURE PARK

In the great epic Ramayana, the fabled bird Jatayu is portrayed as a venerable creature embodying audacity and courage. He died saving Sita from the clutches of the demon king, Ravana. The place where Jatayu fell came to be known as Jatayupara, and this is where the Jatayu Earth Centre, at Kollam, Kerala, is built, which is a beautiful amalgamation of all the revered qualities that the mythical bird possessed. The mammoth statue of Jatayu is a complete feast to the eyes of the beholder, and marks as a new entrant on the tourism map of India. The world's largest functional bird sculpture is a magnum opus recreation by Rajiv Anchal, combining artistry, mythology, technology, culture, adventure, leisure and wellness put together to provide a riveting experience. There is a museum dedicated to Jatayu, a food court, Siddha Cave Healing Centre and Heli Taxi service as well. It is an exemplary case of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism in India.

At Jatayu Adventure Park, you're in for a refreshing set of 15 – 20 adrenaline-pumping adventure sports amidst natural settings of being 1000ft above sea level and in diverse geographic features, ranging from hills, valleys, rugged rocks, caves to cultivable lands. The adventure sports include Rappelling, Trekking, Paintball, Boulderling, Jumaring, Burma Bridge, Wall Climbing, Hill Top Camping, Chimney Climbing, Log Walk, Valley Crossing, etc. Either trek or use the state-of-the-art ropeway to get to the top of the bird sculpture. Devour eye-catching views



while ascending through the ropeway and once atop the statue, be enthralled by the scenic quietude of the "God's Own Country" spread across the landscaped vistas.



CHASING THE RAINS

Savour the magic of the monsoons and experience nature at its best

TT BUREAU

Chilean poet Pablo Neruda once attributed his poems to the nature of his city. One of the factors he mentioned was that his poems took its voice from the rains. It is this quality of the rains that lends to its romantic disposition, creating a sombre mood. The rains bring relief from the summer heat, as nomadic clouds travel the great sky in search of parched lands, and the smell of wet earth churns the heart. The voice of the

rains is most distinct in the Indian subcontinent, starting from Kerala, moving upwards towards mainland India. Monsoons typically start from June and go on until September, before leaving the country to make way for autumn. Perhaps, the best way to enjoy monsoon is to stay indoors and watch the rain. This purpose is rightly served when you head to a monsoon paradise. Take a look at some of the most romantic monsoon destinations to visit this season.

MUNNAR, KERALA

The monsoons are truly magical in the state of Kerala, which is also popularly known as "God's own country." It is in Kerala where the rain begins to first show in the month of June, before moving on to other parts of the country. Munnar is a hill station located about 1,600m above the sea level, and is a popular destination for those looking for nature's grace. With sprawling tea plantations, winding lanes and beautiful locales, Munnar is simply out of the world during the monsoon season.

Monsoon Magic

Head to Munnar's very own Anamudi, the highest peak in South India.



Monsoon Magic

The beautiful man-made Kodai Lake, where tourists can boat and enjoy nature's offerings.

KODAIKANAL, TAMIL NADU

Situated on the Western Ghats, Kodaikanal is yet another glorious monsoon destination in South India.

The beauty of Kodaikanal lies in the fact that it is untouched by commercialism, while the valleys, waterfalls and grassy hills create a lasting impression.

A rain-drenched Kodaikanal is an enchanting experience and the beautiful misty hills have a magnetic force of their own.

When in Kodaikanal, one should visit the many waterfalls, such as Bear Shola and Silver Cascade. A quintessential Kodaikanal flora speciality is the Kurinji shrub, whose lilac flowers appear once every 12 years.

SHILLONG, MEGHALAYA

Dubbed as the “Scotland of the East,” Shillong comes alive during the monsoon season. The north-eastern hill town offers some splendid views and, together with the rains, it poses as the perfect romantic destination. The pleasant cold breezes that the place has to offer can make you forget all your worries. Experiencing Shillong during the rains means that dull rainy mornings will only make your heart grow fonder, as you sit in your hotel room watching the stunning valleys of Khasi and the Jayanti Hills in the horizon. While in Shillong, do not forget to try the authentic Khasi cuisine; you will definitely increase your stay.

Monsoon Magic

The Umiyam Lake, located 22km from Silllong, is a picturesque water body that is unlike any other.

Monsoon Magic

Abbey Falls, located 8km from Madikeri, with its vigorous roar and descending ferocity, is a sight to behold.

COORG, KARNATAKA

Locally called Kodagu, Coorg is one of the most popular monsoon destinations in South India. The undulating, lush, green hills, dotted with coffee plantations, tea gardens and orange groves are simply enchanting. Spot exotic birds in the Coffee Hills or satisfy the adventure buff in you by taking part in trekking, rafting and fishing. Even better, enjoy the beautiful Abbey Falls, which, with its vigorous roar and descending ferocity, is a sight to behold. The Kodavas, the local people of Coorg, are warm and welcoming. Spend a few days with them and get to know more about their local customs, dressing style and cuisine.

GOA

The coastal heaven of India, Goa is perfect for a monsoon retreat, and that is because you can have the beaches and the localities all by yourself. Hire a scooter and ride around beautiful Goa, explore old Goa, meet local Goans, and soak in the Portuguese flavours. August is also the time for the Bonderam Festival at the Divar Island, so you have all the more reasons for a Goan monsoon. The best part about Goa in the Monsoon is that the verdant greenery comes alive, and the influx of tourists reduces during this time. Also, you will get the best of rates during this time.

Monsoon Magic

The majestic Chapora Fort, below which lies the Chapora River which merges with the Arabian Sea.

ISLAND HOPPING IN INDIA

Take a trip to some of these islands and capture breathtaking moments and experiences that you will cherish for a lifetime

TT BUREAU

Islands are mysterious, enticing, and simply fun. It's not just their being encircled by a vast expanse of water, being isolated from the mainland, but their unfazed charm that endears them to a vast section of tourists. The lush cover of forests exuding an air of pleasant warmth and the soothing breeze playing a joyful dance on the senses, really makes every passing moment seem like an eternity. Many of these islands, embedded in vast layers of history, contain much that is left to be discovered, and much that remains to be seen. India has its own share of exciting islands which are frequented by discerning travellers, all of which possess an indelible charm that retains their freshness.

NEIL ISLAND, ANDAMANS

Located 37km south to the Andaman Islands, the tiny Neil Island is a delight. This place, otherwise known as the "vegetable bowl" of the Andamans, endears itself to visitors due to the pervading solitude and the serene environment,



which offers the perfect setting to unwind and relax for hours on end. The island itself is characterised by thick tropical forests and vegetation, many unexplored coral reefs and the wide ranging bio-diversity that contributes to its all-round organic development. You could cover the entire island in two hours by foot, with the widest part of the island being 5km in length. Scuba diving, swimming, snorkelling and cycling, in particular, due to the flat terrain presented by the island, remains a favourite with tourists here.

VIPER ISLAND, ANDAMAN

The history of Viper Island is embedded in the Independence struggle, as it was here that the British detained various political prisoners and other convicts. However, today, the sight that greets you is one of picturesque beauty, replete with numerous picnic spots and other historical remnants of a bygone age.

It's widely believed that this island derives its land from the vessel "Viper," the same one in which Lt. Archibald Blair visited Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in the year 1789. This island, which is also an abode of solitude the year round, is





accessible through a harbour cruise which originates from Aberdeen Jetty, at Port Blair.

KADMAT ISLANDS, LAKSHADWEEP

Kadmat Island has earned its reputation from the treasure it contains in the form of its marine wealth. Its topography is defined by its long and sandy beaches, which stretch up to impressive distances, the massive lagoons which flank it on the eastern and western sides and the beautiful corals that are reflected clearly in the blue waters. This island holds the privilege of being one of the largest islands in the Lakshadweep, extending up to 8km in length and 1804ft in breadth.

The only inhabited island in the region, it has a rich reservoir of marine wildlife and marine plants. Besides, there are a host of other activities that tourists can engage in, ranging from snorkelling to kayaking.

DIVAR ISLAND, GOA

Divar Island is dotted with many beautiful churches, and boasts year-round festivities, delectable cuisines and numerous scattered villages, the origins of which are as old as the history of the village itself.

Seated on the Mandovi River in Goa, the place gives an impression of being an odd amalgamation of various cultures, with the Portuguese influence on it standing out prominently.

The famous festival of Bonderam is celebrated here amid great fanfare and enthusiasm and is attended in large numbers by the locals.

The village of Piedade is a typically beautiful village of this region, and on top of its hill stands the grand Church of Our Lady of Compassion church, believed to be the first Christian structure built here, dating back to the 1700s.



24 HOURS IN ABU DHABI

Enjoy the Emirati warmth while savouring the highest high tea in the city where nothing stands still and where every experience is a contemplative moment

TT BUREAU



CORNICHE BEACH

Corniche Beach lies on the sweeping esplanade of Corniche Street. It is a public beach and a favourite spot for cycling, jogging, water sports and enjoying the panoramic views of the coastline. As a popular tourist spot, it offers picturesque scenes of the Gulf, gorgeous views of the manmade Lulu Island and the towering views of the city's skyline. The sun-soaked Corniche beach is segregated into several sections. Gate 4 leads to a plethora of cafés and restaurants to enjoy sumptuous world-class cuisines. Sample tasty food at classy restaurants and cafés, including Havana Club, The Third Place Café and The St. Regis Bar. Be sure to arrive early to rent the sun loungers and parasols.

OBSERVATION DECK AT 300

This chic café is located on the 74th floor in the Etihad Towers at 300 metres above the ground. The observation platform provides 360-degree, expansive and panoramic views of the city's skyline, its coastline, nearby islands, Emirates Palace Hotel, Corniche Beach and the Arabian Gulf. The stylish café-cum-lounge serves delicious fare, light snacks and delicious high tea. Be spoilt for choice as you savour the choicest of cakes, delicate tarts, scones, and scrumptious pastries, especially the chocolate choux pastry. Try the triple-deck tray of food for a heartening meal, or the trio of finger sandwiches for a delectable experience.





SHEIKH ZAYED GRAND MOSQUE

Built in a fusion of diverse Islamic architectural schools into an expression of art and beauty, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque reflects artistic, historical and architectural importance. The mosque features attractive mosaics, huge 24-carat gold glided chandeliers bedecked in Swarovski crystals, intricate and artistic Italian glasswork and the world's largest hand-knotted carpet. Redolent of the architectural splendour of the Taj Mahal, the 82 domes of the mosque feature white marble cladding, onion-shaped 'crowns' and crescent-shaped finials, embellished with gold-glass mosaic.

The colours of the walls, columns and the carpet are all harmonised to provide a symphony of hues and shades, which blends with the architectural grandeur of this mosque.

FERRARI WORLD

Known as the Disneyland for Ferrari lovers, Ferrari World at Yas Island is a Ferrari-branded amusement park for adrenaline junkies and speed addicts. Ferrari World offers everything from the toddler-friendly carousel to the cutting-edge racing simulators for adults. Enjoy a thunderous ride in the world's fastest rollercoaster, the Formula Rossa, launched at speeds of up to 240 kph. Experience mega doses of thrill, adventure, excitement and fun with 20 exhilarating and adrenaline-pumping rides. At Galleria Ferrari, discover Ferrari's enthralling history and admire the vintage and modern Ferraris.



MANGROVE BAY KAYAKING

Head out in a Kayak on a 2-hour-long narrated tour to explore Abu Dhabi's Eastern Mangrove Lagoon. The tour begins at Eastern Mangroves Promenade and heads into the mangrove forest tunnel. Experience the distinctive marine eco-system of Abu Dhabi with spectacular scenic vistas of mangrove forests while you paddle away and into the thick mangrove bay. Enjoy the beautiful aquatic scenery of the city while kayaking along the channel of mangroves. Savour the peaceful atmosphere as you waft through the tranquil waters of the turquoise lagoons of Arabian Gulf. Bob through a mangrove tunnel or watch for birds and marine life as you paddle through this haven of peace. The guided tour makes you learn about the rich marine life present in the area and its unique existence.



WHAT WHEN WHERE


WHAT: SECRET SOLISTICE FESTIVAL
WHEN: JUNE 21-24
WHERE: REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

Experience light all night during the Solstice in Iceland. The extraordinary venues being used to stage side events comprise a surreal concert in a lava tunnel, which can also be toured and DJ-led parties in a hollowed-out glacier. The main festival takes place across five stages and is easily combined with sightseeing in Reykjavik. The festival partners with a company that offers day trips for those with more time – to the Blue Lagoon spa or to a whisky distillery – as well as activities, such as ice walking and whale and puffin watching.

WHAT: TREK FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL
WHEN: JULY 13 – 15, 2018
WHERE: AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

First started in 2014, TREK, a delightful travelling food festival, has now been established with great success in nine major cities of the Netherlands. This July, the caravan will enter Amsterdam and The Hague with even more surprise, treats and entertainment for the young and old. A great diversity of mobile trucks will provide the tastiest dishes with love from the most original kitchen on wheels. Take a seat at the Chef's Table in one of the mobile food trucks, taste surprising ingredients or try out tasteful new dishes.


WHAT: DESIGN MIAMI/
WHEN: JUNE 12-17, 2018
WHERE: MIAMI, USA

Design Miami/ is the global forum for design. Each fair brings together the most influential collectors, gallerists, designers, curators and critics from around the world in celebration of design culture and commerce. Occurring alongside the Art Basel fairs in Miami, USA each December and Basel, Switzerland, each June, Design Miami/ has become the premier venue for collecting, exhibiting, discussing and creating collectible design. More than a marketplace for design, it is where the world's top galleries gather to present museum-quality exhibitions of 20th and 21st century furniture, lighting and objets d'art.



WHAT: CANNES LIONS
WHEN: JUNE 18 – 22, 2018
WHERE: CANNES, FRANCE

The 65th International Festival of Creativity, Cannes Lions has been championing creativity since 1954. Today, it's the world's biggest festival and awards for the creative and marketing communications, entertainment, design and tech industries. This year's Cannes Lions Programme features more brands than ever, hot topic debates, power hours, game shows, interactive sessions, creative legends on stage, five days of innovation and much more. Part of the fun of the festival is seeing things you didn't expect and discovering things as they happen.



WHAT: LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE
WHEN: JUNE 1-30, 2018
WHERE: LONDON, UK

The London Festival of Architecture celebrates London as a global hub of architectural experimentation, practice and debate. The festival returns to London with a lively and diverse programme of public events across the city, exploring the theme of 'Identity.' The festival attracts a vast public audience and a global media audience of millions. Most events are free and are staged by a core festival programming team working alongside architecture and design practices and practitioners.

WHAT: TITANIC DIVE TOURS
WHEN: MAY 2018 ONWARDS
WHERE: NEWFOUNDLAND, NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

For exactly \$105,129, you could participate in a dive tour of the Titanic. Luxury travel company Blue Marble Private, among others, offers diving expeditions to the world-famous Titanic wreck site. Tourists can explore the wreck off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada, during an 8-day expedition. Participants will descend more than 3.2 km below the surface of the Atlantic in a titanium and carbon-fibre submersible to see the shipwreck and surroundings. Blue Marble has further expeditions planned for the summer of 2019.



PICK OF THE MONTH

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



MUSIC: LIBERATION BY CHRISTINA AGUILERA

Liberation is the upcoming eighth studio album by American singer-songwriter Christina Aguilera scheduled to be released on June 15, 2018 by RCA Records. Aguilera took a career hiatus of almost 6 years to focus on family and music, and this album marks the beginning of her return to the centrestage. It features collaborations with Demi Lovato, Keida, Shenseea, Ty Dolla Sign and 2 Chainz. Aguilera released the first song from her new album, "Accelerate," co-produced by Kanye West and featuring Ty Dolla Sign and 2 Chainz. She recently performed "Fall in Line," her newly announced duet with Demi Lovato, at the Billboard Music Awards on May 20, 2018. She



CHRISTINA AGUILERA
THE LIBERATION TOUR

recently announced dates for a North American tour this fall, this being her first outing since 2008. The tour, produced by Live Nation, will launch on September 25 and hit 22 cities.

Genre (s): Pop

BOOK: INVITATION TO A BONFIRE BY ADRIENNE CELT

This seductive and tempting story revolves around the story of a dangerous love triangle, loosely based on the marriage of Vladimir and Vera Nabokov, and is a taut psychological thriller at its heart. This epistolary novel is told through the letters and diary entries of Zoya, a young Russian immigrant at an elite American girls' school, and Leo, a widely acclaimed Russian author teaching at the school. Their affair starts immediately, but their relationship is complicated by Vera, Leo's wife, who holds a menacing, smouldering sexual power over him—and who might just be the only member of this troubled trio to escape with her life. Dealing in issues of class distinctions, national allegiance, and ethical fidelity—not to mention the powerful magnetism of sex—*Invitation to a Bonfire* probes how one's individuality is formed, immutably, through a series of hasty decisions, including how to survive, who to love, and whether to pay the complicated price of happiness.

Genre (s): Literary Fiction



DVD: DARKEST HOUR

Directed by Joe Wright and written by Anthony McCarten, *Darkest Hour* is a war drama film starring Gary Oldman as Winston Churchill, and the starcast also includes Kristin Scott Thomas, Lily James, Ben Mendelsohn, Stephen Dillane, and Ronald Pickup. The film details the story of Churchill's early years of Prime Ministership, when in May of 1940, the fate of entire Western Europe was in his grip. It was he who was to decide whether to negotiate with Adolf Hitler, or keep on fighting the Germans knowing that it could mean a humiliating defeat for Britain and its empire. With the fall of France imminent, Britain faced its darkest hour as the threat of invasion loomed large. With the Allied forces being cornered on the beaches of Dunkirk, Britain appointed Winston Churchill as the new Prime Minister. It was expected of him to use his power and extreme manoeuvring skills to decide the course of action forward, to either shake hands with Adolf Hitler or to continue the fight against incredible odds.

Genre (s): War/Drama



GAMES: VAMPYR

Developed by Dontnod Entertainment and published by Focus Home Interactive, *Vampyr* is an action role-playing game. It was released for Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One in June 2018. The game takes you back to the World War 1 era, in the early 20th-century, where Jonathan Reid, a doctor, has turned into a vampire and is torn between the Hippocratic Oath and his newfound bloodthirsty nature. Some of the boss battles are compulsory, but most combat can be avoided and the player is under no obligation to kill others to complete the game. The whole action takes place in London during the 1918 Spanish Flu, and the developer has done great research for the setting of London of that time by consulting numerous history books and documentaries.

Genre (s): Action role-playing

