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67th TAAI Convention
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Vice President

Jay Bhatia

Hon. Secretary General

Bettaiah Lokesh

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Sameer Kamani (Mumbai)

R Venkatachalam (Trichy)

Kulvinder Singh Kohli, New Delhi (Co-opted)

Bahram P. Zadeh, Pune (Co-opted)

TAAI Secretariat, Mumbai

2-D Lawrence and Mayo House, 276,

DR. D N Road,

Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.

Phone: +91-22-2207 4022 / 8184

Fax: +91-22-4083 6767

Email: taai@taai.in

TAAI Office, Delhi

212, New Delhi House, 27, Barakhamba Road,
New Delhi - 110001.

Phone: +91-11-2335 1801/ 6813 / 5389

Email: delhioffice@taai.in

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or advertising in the magazine, please
Email to: namastaai@taai.in

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Dear Members and Esteemed Partners,

As I pen down this message for NamasTAAI, I am filled with a mix of pride, gratitude, and determination. The path we've embarked upon has been both challenging and rewarding, and the milestones we've achieved together are a testament to our collective spirit.

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to each one of you for the overwhelming success of our 67th TAAI Annual Convention — "Transcending Borders – Transforming Lives" in Sri Lanka this past July. It was not just an event; it was a manifestation of our shared vision and commitment to the future of travel. The convention was graced by the presence of the President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, who highlighted comprehensive plans formulated to enhance Sri Lanka's appeal as a tourist destination.

President Wickremesinghe further emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts among all the BIMSTEC countries. His vision of developing the BIMSTEC region into a thriving tourism hub, transcending national borders, resonated with all of us. Such collaborative endeavours are the way forward, ensuring that tourism becomes a catalyst for regional growth and prosperity. He stressed that promoting tourism could significantly increase per capita income, transforming the economic landscape of the nation.

On the bilateral front, the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Gopal Baglay, made significant announcements that promised to strengthen the ties between our nations. He announced the expansion of flights between Chennai and Jaffna, which, until now, operated only four times a week. These flights will commence daily operations, enhancing connectivity and fostering closer relations. Furthermore, Mr. Baglay mentioned ongoing efforts to resume the long-discontinued ferry service between India and Sri Lanka. This service, inactive for several decades, once symbolised the deep-rooted connections between our countries. Sri Lanka, with its enchanting beauty and rich heritage, is once again opening its arms to the world. Our convention, coupled with these bilateral initiatives, is a beacon of renewed hope and collaboration.

Another major highlight of the TAAI Convention was the launch on our online technology platform – NexTAAI, which is the first ever initiative ever taken by an association in India. This revolutionary online platform will help our members boost their business and make use of technology to reduce their man hours on curating itineraries as per the customer's wish. The respective Chapter heads are holding exclusive workshops for the members in their region to help them adapt to the facilities offered by NexTAAI.

Meanwhile, back home, the G20 India Summit event has further positioned India on the global tourism map, not just as a host nation but as a destination teeming with potential. G20 discussions and resolutions have paved the way for significant economic reforms, ensuring a more robust and resilient economy, which in turn boosts the travel sector. The spotlight on India has led to an influx of foreign investments, especially in the tourism sector, rejuvenating the industry and ensuring its growth. During one of the G20 meetings in India, wherein I was invited to make a Presentation and share my inputs – we had

shared some suggestions, which we were happy to note have been adopted by the Government. The launch of SDG Dashboard serves as a comprehensive online public platform, amalgamating the collective knowledge of the G20 Tourism Working Group. Some of the most significant outcomes have been the introduction of e-visas, the formation of policies on Films, Adventure, Sustainability, MICE & Cruises. All these were made with our inputs under the FAITH banner.

However, as we bask in these successes, we also brace ourselves for challenges ahead. Effective from October 1, 2023, the TCS rate on foreign remittances made through the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) will increase from 5 per cent to 20 per cent, except in specific cases, only if above 7 lakhs per annum. This is set to impact overseas travel as the higher TCS rates increase expenses for Indian tourists, making international travel less accessible and forcing travellers to reconsider destinations and itineraries. In addition, TCS implementation adds administrative complexities and compliance requirements for travel agencies and tour operators. I assure you, as your representative, I am actively engaging with relevant authorities to address these concerns.

The path of travel and tourism is intertwined with the stories of countless individuals, businesses, and communities. Rest assured, TAAI remains committed to championing the cause of its members and the industry at large. With unity, resilience, and adaptability as our guiding stars, I am confident we will navigate these times and emerge stronger. Let's continue to forge ahead, hand in hand, crafting success stories and setting benchmarks for the world to see.

Best Regards,

Jyoti Mayal

President, TAAI



Dear Industry Colleagues, NamastAAI!!

Tourism into India is seeing a huge increase in the coming days ahead with the recently concluded G20 India Summit, whereby all eyes were on India, its heritage, culture, hospitality and the developing infrastructure. Domestic and inland tourism too has seen a substantial growth due to the economic growth and India soon approaching the 3 trillion-dollar economy.

With regards to outbound, India has become one of the largest source markets for most of the countries. Roadshows and promotions by global tourism authorities are being conducted across India and most of them in association with TAAI and/or are ensuring that TAAI members partner with them to enhance outbound travel.

We, however have a big challenge with regards to TCS being levied on passengers which shall be 20% if above the LRS limit of INR 7lacs. Indian consumers being luxury travellers shall have to face the brunt on this TCS, to which multiple representations were made by TAAI to the Finance Ministry, upto the PMO as well, but in vain.

On the brighter side, the 67th Indian Travel Congress – The TAAI Convention was held in Columbo, Sri Lanka to a overwhelming response with over 550 participants and champions of the Indian Travel Trade were present to discuss positive growth and how to enhance business in the coming years to and from India. It was a great honour for India and TAAI when the inaugural session for the convention was held in Colombo's BMICH convention centre which was addressed by HE Ranil Wickremesinghe – The President of Sri Lanka along with senior ministers from the country, including the Tourism Minister.

The enchanting landscapes and unparalleled hospitality of Sri Lanka set the stage for this monumental gathering for which we thank SLTPB and SLAITO who played great hosts to our delegates. B2B sessions were held on 2 days wherein over 200 Sri Lankan tourism representatives interacted with TAAI delegates.

During this significant Convention, we proudly launched NexTAAI, a testament to our commitment to innovation, technology and excellence. This initiative is a clear signal of our intent to ensure that the travel agent community remains at the pinnacle of the industry. The birth of NexTAAI at the convention is symbolic of our unwavering dedication to progress, leadership, and the future of travel. This technology which creates itineraries using artificial intelligence, has been tried and tested and well accepted by the membership. Realtime rates of hotels, activities, car rentals, fixed departures and series flights have been offered on the platform. Presentations for the same have been conducted by TAAI across its 20 Regions and Chapters in the last 2 months and we have been receiving a fantastic response to the same.

We are also be working along with IATA and the airlines on a security model, which shall be protecting the agents against airline defaults and winding ups. Furthermore, the Joint Bank Guarantee Program of TAAI has seen a substantial growth in participation by small and medium size agent members of TAAI, enabling them to conduct their airline sales with IATA with ease.

We hope that the current issue of NamastAAI shall give you good update and highlights of the recent activities of TAAI.

Happy Reading!!

Warm regards,

Jay Bhatia
Vice President - TAAI



Dear Esteemed Members, Partners, and the Wider TAAI Family,

Warm greetings from the office of the Secretary General! The world of tourism, as we've known it, has undergone seismic shifts, especially in the wake of the recent pandemic. Yet, as the Hon. Secretary General of TAAI, I remain steadfast in my belief that the future of tourism is not just resilient but also radiant.

The pandemic, while challenging, has also been a crucible for innovation and adaptability. It has taught us the value of collaboration, the importance of sustainability, and the need for agility. As we navigate this new landscape, it is imperative that we harness these lessons to redefine and rejuvenate the tourism sector. The future beckons us with promises of experiential travel, digital innovations, and a renewed focus on eco-conscious and local explorations.

We took a great leap with our 67th TAAI Annual Convention, which deliberated the future of travel and tourism and its stakeholders. I am filled with a sense of anticipation and hope. The world presents us with a unique opportunity. As borders reopen and travel restrictions ease, there is a palpable yearning among people to explore, connect, and experience the world anew. This pent-up demand, if channelled effectively, can usher in a golden era for tourism.

The recent G20 India Summit has further bolstered our optimism. The deliberations and outcomes of the summit have profound implications for the travel and tourism industry. The global spotlight on India and the collaborative spirit of the G20 nations signal a renewed commitment to reviving tourism on a global scale. The emphasis on sustainable and inclusive growth, coupled with initiatives to bolster international cooperation, sets the stage for a tourism renaissance.

At TAAI, we are committed to facilitating this resurgence by fostering partnerships, advocating for supportive policies, and empowering our members with the tools and knowledge to thrive in this new reality. In conclusion, while the challenges of the past have been daunting, they have also paved the way for a brighter, more promising future. As the adage goes, "After the darkest night, there's a bright day ahead." Let us embrace this dawn with open arms, fortified by our collective spirit and the boundless possibilities that lie before us.

Here's to a resplendent future, filled with exploration, connection, and boundless horizons!

Warm regards,

Lokesh Bettaiah
Hon. Secretary General



Dear Esteemed Members and Valued Partners,

As I sit down to share my thoughts with you through this esteemed magazine, I am enveloped by a profound sense of gratitude and responsibility. Being entrusted with the financial stewardship of TAAI is both an honour and a commitment that I hold close to my heart. The recent 67th TAAI Annual Convention in the picturesque landscapes of Sri Lanka was nothing short of a landmark event. It wasn't just a convention; it was a confluence of ideas, aspirations, and shared visions. The pristine beauty of Sri Lanka, coupled with its warm hospitality, served as the perfect canvas for our gathering. Over a thousand travel agents, both from India and Sri Lanka, converged to not only celebrate our shared successes but also to chart out the roadmap for our collective future. The insights shared, the collaborations forged, and the memories created are a testament to the strength and vitality of our association. Despite limited resources, we had put together a grand show with maximum participation from India and Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Government welcomed us with open heart.

During this convention, the unveiling of NEXTAAI marked a pivotal moment. This initiative, while promising technological advancement and operational excellence, also underscores our commitment to keeping TAAI at the vanguard of the travel industry. As the Treasurer, I can vouch for the meticulous planning and financial prudence that has gone into shaping this visionary project, ensuring its sustainability and success.

However, the path ahead is not without its challenges. The introduction of the TCS is a significant development that has financial implications for our industry. I want to assure you that we are not only closely monitoring its impact but are also proactively engaging with stakeholders to advocate for the best interests of our community.

On a brighter note, the G20 India Summit has spotlighted our nation on the global stage, heralding a new era of opportunities for the travel sector. At TAAI, we are strategically positioning ourselves to leverage these opportunities, ensuring financial growth and stability for our members.

In conclusion, the 67th TAAI Annual Convention was more than an event; it was a reflection of our collective spirit and financial resilience. As we embark on this exciting journey, I am filled with optimism. Let's navigate the financial landscapes together, ensuring that TAAI remains fiscally robust and continues to set industry benchmarks.

Together, towards a prosperous future!

With warm regards,
Shreeram Patel
Hony. Treasurer



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TAAI Convention in Colombo concludes on a highly successful note

The 67th TAAI Convention and Exhibition that recently concluded in Colombo, Sri Lanka was a resounding success. Never in history has the President of the host country been a part of the Convention, as was the case this time. The Sri Lankan hospitality was at its best and they left no stone unturned in organising a wonderful and memorable experience for all the delegates. The insightful and invigorating Business Sessions kept the audience captive as they

listened in rapt attention to the suggestions and viewpoints of their industry colleague.

The inaugural function of the 67th Conference of TAAI commenced at the BMICH in Colombo, setting the stage for an awe-inspiring opening ceremony that left the audience captivated. The conference centred around the profound connection shared by India and Sri Lanka, showcasing the vibrant essence of Sri Lankan culture through a mesmerizing

performance by the renowned Channa Upuli Dance Troupe. Nishad Wijetunga, the President of SLAITO, extended a warm welcome to the distinguished delegation. Both Jyoti Mayal, the President of TAAI, and Gopal Baglay, the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, addressed the gathering, emphasising the significance of India-Sri Lanka relations in the context of tourism. The Chief Guest of the evening, His Excellency President Ranil Wickremasinghe, further reiterated the



profound bond between the two nations with a brilliant speech that highlighted the awe-inspiring sights found in Sri Lanka. Mr. Lokesh Bettaiah, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI concluded the evening with a Vote of Thanks, honouring the esteemed dignitaries, TAAI delegates and most importantly the Sri Lankan officials, who had played a crucial role in making the Convention possible.

The Day 2 of the 67th TAAI Convention kick-started with a houseful of travel and hospitality professionals, eagerly waiting for engaging business sessions followed by a B2B session showcasing the best of Sri Lanka's Accommodation Providers and Destination Management Companies. Mr. Harin Fernan-



do, Honourable Minister of Tourism and Lands, Sri Lanka

The Session on India Tourism Vision 2047: A Transformed Landscape of Experiences and Connections witnessed an exciting discussion between Arvind Singh, former Secretary Tourism, Government of India; Madhavan Menon, Managing Director at Thomas Cook India Limited; Mr Nipun Agarwal, Chief Commercial and Transformation Officer, Air

India; K.B. Kachru, Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor – South Asia, Radisson Hotels Group and moderator Ashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH. Insightful presentations were made by Pieter Elbers, CEO Indigo and Tisum Jayasuriya, Chairman Sri Lanka Convention bureau. An interesting discussion on potential of aviation was moderated by Kapil Kaul, CEO and Director, CAPA India with panellists Amitabh Khosla – Country Director

– India, IATA; Praveen Iyer – Co-Founder & Chief Commercial Officer, Akasa Air; Rajeev Bhatia – Chief Commercial Officer, Amadeus India; Vinay Malhotra – Head of Global Sales, Indigo and Richard Nuttall – CEO, Sri Lankan Airlines.

Adding a stimulating perspective to travel were two intriguing sessions. One was a detailed presentation on Experiential Travel – A Paradigm Shift in Tourism by Dr Navina Jafa, Expert Cultural Skills



& Sustainable Development and other was a motivational story of a true journey by Ajeet Bajaj and daughter Deeya Bajaj on climbing the Seven Summits – The Trailbalzers' journey!..... A brilliant evening to cap off an enthralling Day 2 was held at the Cinnamon Grand. Following a Sri Lanka Theme, the event was named "an evening in Colombo" and featured captivating dance performances, oriental music and delicious meals & drinks. The evening was graced by the presence of Hon. Minister of Tourism & Lands Mr. Harin Fernando and the Chief Guest Hon. Speaker Mr. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, who both gave exhaustive speeches highlighting the importance of India market for Sri Lanka. Besides cultural affinity, both countries share crucial tourism ties too.

Sharing her thoughts, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal said, "For us it was important to stick to our commitment of holding the Convention in Sri Lanka. I personally believe that Sri Lanka as a destination has much to offer and as a neighbouring country, we must do everything in our power to help the country come out of the economic crisis. India's relationship with BIMSTEC countries presents a significant opportunity for enhancing tourism ties and



we all must work upon it. We are thrilled to be hosted by Sri Lanka and completely overwhelmed by the warm response that we have received. I am confident that this Convention will prove to be a milestone in the India – Sri Lanka relations and also the country's tourism graph."

During the course of the evening, the Hon. Tourism Minister also shared his opinion. He said, "We have a target of 4 million tourists and we are confident of achieving it because India is out No.1

source market. We are not just a beach destination but also a beautiful island that is brimming with touristic offerings – we are a 365 days destination. Sri Lanka is called the Pearl of the Indian Ocean for its beauty and multitude attractions." The Minister also spoke highly about TAAI, especially President Jyoti Mayal, who has remained a loyal friend of Sri Lanka and stuck to her commitment of holding the Convention in the country, obstacles notwithstanding. The closing

speech was given by Chairman Organising Committee Maahen Kariyawasam followed by the Vote of Thanks by Vice President TAAI Mr. Jay Bhatia, who applauded the efforts of his peers and acknowledged that the Sri Lanka Tourism went out of their way to make the TAAI Convention a grand success.

The Day 3, the final day of the TAAI Convention took delegates to a new venue – The Shangri-La Colombo, which is one of the poshest hotels in the city.



The morning started with the signing of the MoU between Nexus DMC CEO Vinay Gupta and TAAI President for its new landmark website – NEXTAAI. "The total size of the Global Tourism sector is 8 trillion and with NexTAAI we have combined the strength of people + innovation + experience + relations. This is the first time that an association has taken such a move for its members," said Vinay. Giving real-time presentation to the audience, he explained how TAAI members can make use of this new portal to create flawless itineraries in a short span of time and also do easy follow-ups and changes. Mr. Amish Desai, Member Managing Committee, TAAI was the key person from TAAI overseeing this new technological breakthrough. Keeping the energy momentum going, Yogesh Chhabria, author, speaker and founder of The Happionaire Way stepped in and motivated the gathering to always have a positive and 'I can do it' attitude towards everything in life.

Roping in international viewpoint, the session on Transcending Borders – Strengthening International Relations for a Transformed World brought together Ms. Ho Thi Thanh Truc, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Sri Lanka; Mr. Paul Stephens, High Commissioner, High Commission of Australia, Sri Lanka; Mr. Katsuki Kotaro – Charge D'Af-



sessions was followed by a B2B session showcasing the best of Sri Lanka's Accommodation Providers and Destination Management Companies.

A stunning end to the TAAI 67th Convention with a night of scintillating entertainment at the beautiful Heritance Negombo. Set overlooking the beautiful golden beaches of Negombo, the TAAI delegates were treated to the very best of English, Sinhala, Tamil and Hindi entertainment with the likes of Umara, Roy Jackson, Judy De Silva, Jacqueline Hettiarachchi, Danu Innasithamby, Ricky Bahar and many more. The performances were complimented by dances, fireworks and delicious food and drinks. Plenty of Lucky Draws ensured that the delegates went back happy after having attended a landmark TAAI Convention.

fares, Embassy of Japan, Sri Lanka; Mr. Fakhri Alivev – Charge D'Affaires, Embassy of Azerbaijan, New Delhi and Mr. Maged Mosleh – Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sri Lanka. Any noteworthy discussion on tourism is incomplete without discussing how Technology has upped the game in travel. Titled Differentiating Travel – Perspectives from Industry Experts, the panellists included Dev Karvat – Founder and CEO, Asego Travel LLP; G B Srithar – Regional Director, India, Middle East & South Asia, Sin-

gapore Tourism Board; Commander Nevil Malao – Senior Vice President, JM Baxi & Co.; Noel Swain, COO – Passport, eVisa, Identity & Citizen Services, VFS Global and was moderated by Ashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH. Rounding off the three hectic days of the Convention, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Hon. Treasurer, TAAI in his concluding Vote of Thanks acknowledged the Supporters, Speakers and Delegates of the Convention while extending a special thanks to the host country.

Another day full of engaging business

TESTIMONIALS

'For a wonderfully hosted TAAI Convention & gracious host country'

The 67th TAAI Convention held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from July 6–9, 2023 was a huge success. What made it even more significant was the presence of the President of Sri Lanka His Excellency President Ranil Wickremesinghe at the Convention. Informative business sessions, great networking and the overall experience made this Convention truly memorable for all the delegates and members. Some of the TAAI National Managing Committee Members share their experiences about the Convention below.



DR. P. MURUGESAN
Managing Committee Member Chairman–
Legal & Grievances Committee

The convention featured a diverse and insightful agenda. Notable sessions included discussions on India's tourism vision for 2047, the evolving landscape of experiential travel, the growing significance of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), and the ever-expanding digital opportunities within our industry.

Throughout the convention, industry leaders and travel professionals from both India and Sri Lanka shared their expertise and knowledge, explored new partnerships, and actively contributed to mutual business growth. This collaborative spirit underscored the congress's role in not only strengthening ties between India and Sri Lanka but also envisioning a prosperous future for tourism in the Asia Pacific Region.

As a Managing Committee Member of TAAI, it's worth noting our commitment to organising more such historic congresses in the future. We believe that these events hold immense potential for the benefit of TAAI and the broader travel fraternity in India.

In conclusion, I extend my sincere appreciation to all who contributed to making this event a resounding success. It is our collective efforts that will shape the future of the travel industry, fostering innovation, cooperation, and sustainable growth.

The three-day convention was marked by its star-studded guest list, which included distinguished individuals such as Sri Lanka's President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, the High Commissioner of India, Gopal Baglay, TAAI President, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, and several esteemed Managing Committee Members. Additionally, the event saw participation from over 500 delegates, with 50 media professionals in attendance.

One of the primary objectives of the congress was to create a platform for collaboration and to nurture numerous industry opportunities between the Indian and Sri Lankan travel fraternities. In this regard, the event exceeded expectations, solidifying its position as a premier travel event in the Asia Pacific Region.



KULVINDER SINGH KOHLI
TAAI National Management
Committee Member

lot about what tourism means in their country. His sincere thanks to India whom he related as the one of the first countries to offer help during the Sri Lankan crises, are words that will always be remembered by all of us at TAAI as we usher in this huge increase of tourism between India and Sri Lanka. The theme of the convention could not have been more appropriate considering the turmoil the world is facing, especially after the unforgettable Covid period. Truly the words of our Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi – 'One Earth, One Family, and One Future' were heard not only during the various Business/Awareness sessions but also in the corridors of the venues. Last but not the least, our TAAI President Mrs. Jyoti Mayal and her team organized one of the best TAAI Convention covering all themes which are very much a call of the day.

At the very outset, I would like to compliment and once again express my gratitude on behalf of TAAI to the Sri Lankan Government, especially Honourable President of Sri Lanka Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe who took out his valuable time (especially at a crucial stage through which Sri Lanka is going through). His presence speaks a



SAMEER KARNANI
TAAI National Management Committee Member

TAAI 67th Convention at Sri Lanka was one of the best conventions that I have attended in years. Before departing, there was a lot of confusion and speculation in minds about the service levels and facilities that we will be getting in Colombo looking at the turmoil that Sri Lanka has gone through.

It was a real surprise with the President of Sri Lanka himself present at the opening ceremony

of the event. Apart from the Government, even Sri Lankan travel trade was there to take care of even the smallest needs during the Convention. The Hotel selections, transfers, Business sessions, evening dinners and entertainment at these events were all top class and to a different level.

Overall, a good fruitful convention with great participation from India and Sri Lankan travel trade partners.

Luxury Glamping Tents: A Sustainable alternative to concrete buildings

Eco tourism is a matter of great concern at the movement. All around us, fragile destinations are turning into concrete jungles because of overflow in demand. Sameer Baktoo, Convenor of the Eco Tourism Society of Kashmir, drafts an article on promoting responsible tourism by medium of luxury Glamping, which is a growing trend in the global tourism market.

In an era where responsible tourism and eco-consciousness are gaining prominence, the concept of luxury glamping tents is emerging as a game-changer. These innovative accommodations are redefining the way travellers experience nature while respecting the delicate balance of eco-sensitive zones. In this article, we explore why luxury glamping tents are the perfect fit for ecotourism initiatives in such areas.

A Greener approach to Hospitality

Eco-sensitive zones, known for their pristine beauty and fragile ecosystems, have long been a challenge for the hospitality industry. Traditional concrete structures can disrupt local ecosystems, harm wildlife, and contribute to habitat degradation. Luxury glamping tents, however, provide a sustainable solution.

These tents are designed with minimal environmental impact in mind. They are often erected on raised platforms, leaving the natural terrain beneath them untouched. This not only preserves the local flora and fauna but also allows for rainwater to permeate the ground, maintaining the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

Reduced Carbon Footprint

One of the most significant advantages of luxury glamping tents is their reduced carbon footprint compared to permanent buildings. Constructing traditional hotels or lodges in eco-sensitive zones often requires extensive infrastructure development, including roads, utilities, and sewage systems. In contrast, glamping tents are self-contained and



best of both worlds – luxury and nature conservation.

Supporting Local Communities

Luxury glamping often goes hand in hand with supporting local communities. Many glamping sites collaborate with indigenous or local communities, providing them with employment

opportunities and a stake in the tourism industry. This symbiotic relationship helps these communities preserve their cultural heritage while benefiting from responsible tourism.

A Bright Future for Eco-Tourism

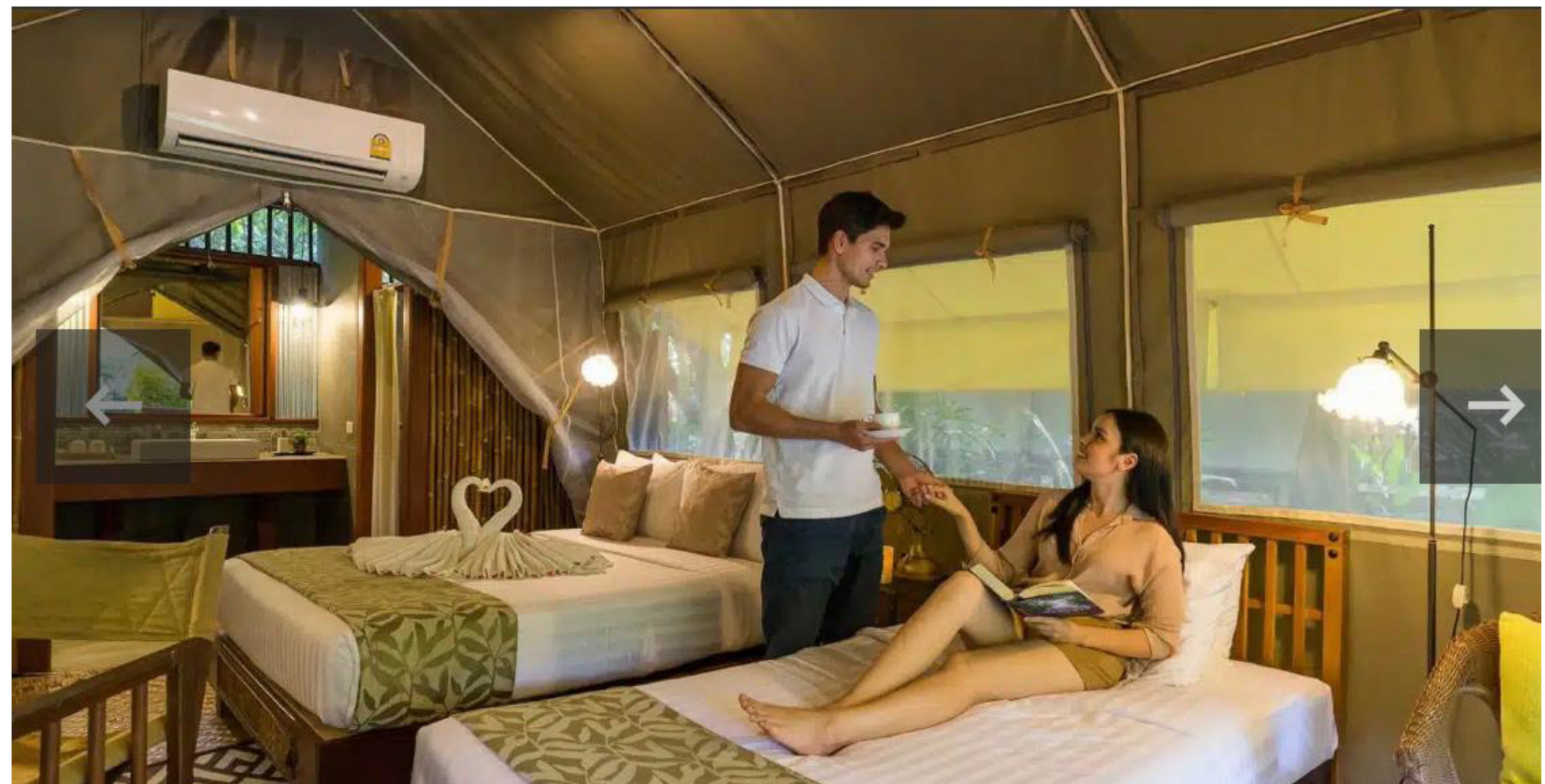
As the world embraces a more sustainable approach to travel, luxury glamping tents are poised to play a pivotal role in the eco-tourism landscape. They offer a luxurious, yet environmentally responsible way for travellers to explore and appreciate the beauty of eco-sensitive zones.

By minimising their impact on the environment, reducing carbon footprints, and actively involving local communities, luxury glamping sites represent a blueprint for responsible tourism. As we

continue to prioritise the preservation of our planet's most precious natural areas, these innovative accommodations are a beacon of hope for a sustainable future in tourism. In conclusion, luxury glamping tents are not just an alternative to concrete buildings in eco-sensitive zones; they are a testament to our commitment to preserving and cherishing the wonders of nature. As travellers seek unique, sustainable experiences, these tents provide a bridge between luxury and environmental responsibility, promising a greener and brighter future for eco-tourism.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the Department of Tourism should prioritise the promotion and support of eco-friendly camping resorts as a viable alternative to the construction of concrete hotels

in Kashmir's eco-sensitive hill stations. In doing so, the government should incentivise such individuals and businesses seeking to invest in eco-friendly glamping solutions. Providing single-window clearance and offering a guiding hand to these eco-conscious entrepreneurs will not only foster a surge in eco-tourism but also contribute significantly to the conservation of Kashmir's natural treasures. This initiative holds the potential to restore balance in our densely populated and overdeveloped hill stations, (Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonmarg) offering a harmonious blend of tourism and environmental preservation for the benefit of current and future generations. Let's champion this sustainable approach to protect the delicate ecosystem of Kashmir's hills stations.



NEXTAAI: A Game Changer technology introduced for the TAAI Members

The 67th TAAI Convention successfully concluded in Colombo, Sri Lanka. One of the major highlights of this Convention was the launch of 'NexTAAI' which is a path-breaking initiative undertaken by TAAI. Amish Desai, Managing Committee Member and Chairman of the Technology Council, TAAI has played a pivotal role in conceptualising and executing this technological platform in collaboration with Nexus, which will be of great benefit for all the TAAI members. Presentations based on NexTAAI are being held across all the states so that the members can get acquainted with the use and advantages of using this newly launched platform. Every field is being revolutionised with the integration of AI (Artificial intelligence) and technology and the Travel Trade sector is no exception. NexTAAI is a technology platform designed exclusively for TAAI members which will help the members in planning and creating itineraries in a short span of time with real time pricing which is the USP of this platform. Along with this, members can also make hotel, airline bookings and a lot more.

Here are the views of not just the man behind the vision – the founder of NamasTAAI and the Chapter Chairpersons across various states to hear their opinions on NexTAAI and here is what they have to say.

Mr. Vinay Gupta, CEO & Founder NEXUS

Nexus DMC and TAAI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the 67th TAAI Convention in Sri Lanka. The purpose of the MoU was to combine the best of individuals, innovation, experience, and relationship. This is the first time that an association has taken such an action on behalf of its members. The TAAI members may now make use of the new site (<https://www.nextaa.com>) to generate faultless itineraries as well as simple follow-ups and revisions quickly and easily as a result to this collaboration.

High-calibre employees, innovation, cutting-edge technology, a wealth of subject-matter expertise, accumulated experience, and world-class partnerships with clients and the business community are the foundation of our collaboration. We engage closely with each of them to assemble the most complete supply in the world, handling first-class purchasing and first-class service internationally, making it simple to fulfil any request, receive global instant support, and have total insight into clients' journeys.

We have a very simple goal for all our TAAI members i.e. to add

10X value to their business. And in order to achieve the goal we have 3Ps – Platform, Product & Price.

People fail but the system won't. The system is our "Platform" which is the best in the world. Working on our platform is so user friendly for our members that will save their time because one can customize each component of package tour at no time. This is going to increase their output ten times.

The "Products" in the platform will make work easy. One can customize any itinerary as they wish for any conventional destinations of the world. We showcased most popular fixed packages so that our members just pick from the store and send to their customers at no time. And also, we have fixed group departures with curated tour plan and best competitive price with quality service. All these three sectors have a good market share in India. So, our TAAI members, which ever sector they are working in, can get their product of choice at our platform.

Last but not the least is "Price" that can make or break any business in this perfection competition market. Our



collaboration helps us to act as DMC for any destination and we are locally present so that we can offer the best price for our members.

Furthermore, when it comes to the features and advantages, each TAAI member receives a specialized Key Account Manager (KAM) to support them for their business and assist in their success. Starting with supporting with their website, employee training, talking about growth strategies, and putting marketing activities into action. A time that is convenient for them are chosen

by our KAM to organize the training.

Moreover, we offer quotes and vouchers that features the name and logo of their firm. Furthermore, to address their concerns about data security, the platform stores all client data that they enter in an encrypted format that is only accessible to them through their login.

We also assist those who are new to the sector with their website. 'My Website' is an option that can be seen

in the menu after logging in that allows individuals to control their website. Additionally, we have a staff available to assist in setting up and designing their website. Likewise, they will be able to connect their payment gateways to their websites; our team help them do so.

NexTAAI will focus on enabling each one of them to come onto the platform, and increase staff efficiency and their revenues. It will help them in

building individual strategies to grow their business and clout. Right from setting up of their login, staff logins and controls, to helping them move deeply into the tourism world in a big way, through constant training and fam tours for them and staff. When first class people, technology and innovation hit the road with finest service and delivery, leadership is the only path, lets lead us into the future!



Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI

NexTAAI is a fantastic product for the small and medium travel agents who are members of TAAI who will benefit from the ease of doing business specially for packages and creating new avenues to develop their businesses. People are very happy about the product and they are still registering. They are

trying to make use of the product and since it is a small amount that needs to be paid of Rs. 7500 on a one-time basis for the usage and Rs. 4000 will be credited to the wallet of the members who are using it. This is an exclusive product only for TAAI members and it is Artificial Intelligence driven.

Amish Desai

National Managing Committee Member and Chairman of the Technology Council, TAAI

NexTAAI is a technology platform, which has been created exclusively for TAAI members. The rationale behind it was that we wanted to give to our members a technology that will help them the most in terms of tourism, in terms of planning of itineraries and through this platform our members can create even complex itineraries in a matter of minutes with real-time pricing. The platform does have facilities for airline bookings, hotel bookings etc. but the real USP is the itinerary builder with real-time pricing which helps our members to quickly respond to queries of their clients and in converting them. There are many other features of 'NexTAAI' which only when one sees and goes through

it would one really understand which includes making a transactional website for holidays which includes a CRM. There is also marketing material which is available on the platform. The idea basically was to enable our members to become experts in tourism to increase their sales in terms of tourism and this is the thought process behind it. It has been received pretty well since the time of the Colombo Convention when it was launched. We have about 400 members who have already registered. We are currently going around the country to almost every region and chapter of TAAI making presentations and demos for them to get a look and feel of the platform.



Pooja Jham

The TAAI convention in Sri Lanka was a super successful star-studded event. As a travel agent, it was exciting and empowering to meet industry leaders and travel professionals from both Sri Lanka and India. Such conventions are an ideal platform to strengthen our international relations for the journey ahead in the travel industry. I came back to the beautiful country of Sri Lanka with an all women group in September.

The Nagpur TAAI chapter is

growing remarkably under the able leadership of our Chairperson Mr. Irshad Mehdi. He truly is a futuristic and optimistic person and a great problem solver too. This year the chapter had organized a very informative session on TCS and VFS. The NexTAAI presentation and the various Roadshows by tourism boards and DMC's were a huge success too. Wishing bountiful business to the travel industry for the coming holiday season.



Mr. Hemendra Singh Jadon

Chairman –TAAI MP & CG chapter

NexTAAI, the cutting-edge technology platform by TAAI, stands as a game-changing solution for travel enthusiasts. The collaboration with Nexus, a renowned travel solutions provider, marks a significant stride towards holistic travel services. Having witnessed the MOU signing at the 67th Sri Lanka Convention, Mr. Gupta's compelling presentation has left me convinced. Eager to share this innovation,

I organized a NexTAAI presentation on August 24th, drawing an enthusiastic crowd. The system's speed, extensive travel products, and competitive rates impressed attendees, prompting keen interest in registration. Personally enrolled and utilizing NexTAAI, I affirm its efficiency. I am anticipating top-tier support for all TAAI members through this platform. Kudos to this progressive leap!



Mr. S.V.Chidambaresh, Chairman-TAAI Karnataka Chapter

We have used the NexTAAI recently and it is very simple to use and we can get the quotes immediately without waiting for the suppliers to revert. It is very useful and we can give the quotes within minutes to the clients and it increases the chance of conversions as we can get different options in seconds. Recently, we have used and made a booking and clients also have travelled and given a good opinion on their services. We are going to register for it.



Mr. Manav Soni, Chairman, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) - Eastern Region

TAAI convention in Colombo- Sri Lanka was one of the landmark conventions till date. It also marked the launch of NexTAAI, a technology platform developed to support and aid TAAI members. Secured Technology platforms are the need of the hour, enabling the agents to be effective, prompt and updated. This platform integrates tools which would be helpful for the member users. It definitely is in an infancy stage hence it would be early to comment about the competitiveness of the products offered in sense of pricing, sourcing as well as delivering but am sure it would be very effective and time saving for its users. I even learned that the Data Security / protection agreement has been signed and taken care of by TAAI, hence making this platform not only effective

but secure too.

In times to come more and more users would be confident in using this platform only if :

- The Data of the users is protected.
- The platform provides competitive pricing.
- The services and deliverance of the product/s booked is prompt.
- Last, but most important is the regular updating of the information in the platform about the products offered.

I am sure if these are taken care then every user would be happy and satisfied using this platform. Wish success to the team and appreciate the efforts put behind developing this platform.

Mr. Rajesh Poddar, Chairman- TAAI Western Region

We had a demo for the Western Region on 31st August. There were about 65-70 members present for the same. I had registered for the same in Colombo itself and we are using the platform since then. We are quite happy with the system, response for most of the search is quite fast. Our turn-around time to our clients has improved. USP is that there is someone to assist us and put clients 24 X 7 which helps especially when they are travelling.



Mr. Irshad Mehdi Chairman-TAAI NAGPUR CHAPTER

It's a great revolutionary product that increases the productivity level of our team members and we are able to give quotations within a few minutes. We have registered for it and we have started using it. The team is also well-updated about the product and its implementation.



Mr. Ather Yameen Narwari, Chairman - TAAI J&K Chapter

At the 67th TAAI Convention which was held in Sri Lanka, TAAI Introduced NexTAAI for their members which is a needed technology for tourism solutions nowadays as we all are well aware of the current tourism scenario. When the world moves every day, we need to move too and we need to stay ahead. Staying ahead is not a choice anymore. It is a basic requirement which is the main motto of NexTAAI. It was indeed a wonderful presentation where almost 80 TAAI and NON TAAI members participated in the said event which took place on 2nd Sep 2023 at Hotel Solar Residency Srinagar. Mr Amish Desai is the Head of Technology Counsel and National Committee member of TAAI and Mr Amit Kumar Sharma, Head Air products Nexus presented a wonderful presentation about the benefits of NEXTAAI to the Chapter members.

1. As we all are well aware of the fact that the internet has a powerful impact on hospitality and tourism. A customer's first experience with your business is a visit to your website.

This includes looking at pictures and reviews from past guests. It is vital for a business to effectively utilize online advertising, social media, blogs, and online purchasing to help convenience their customers, especially when your competitors are doing the same thing. Mobile tablets and smartphones have replaced large desktop computers, making them virtually extinct. This is helpful because many travellers take some type of mobile device with them on a trip. This helps hospitality businesses keep customers advised of changes and delays to their reservations, offer deals, and advertise by using GPS tracking. Connectivity: We hope and believe that NexTAAI will help improve the services that are provided in tourism technology in reducing costs in tourism, enhancing operational efficiency, and speeding up the operations, NEXTAAI also helps in achieving great customer satisfaction, providing relevant and accurate data to the people and avoiding customer service issues.

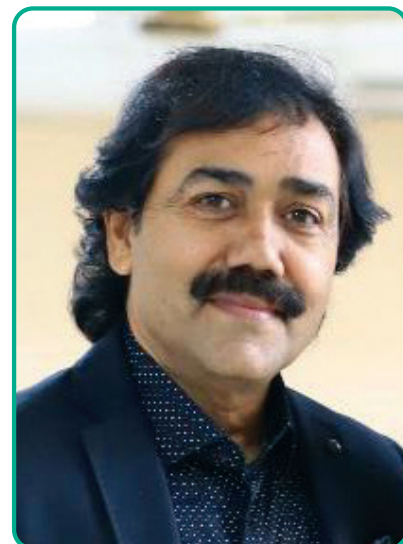


Mr. Manoj Sogani, Chairman - TAAI Rajasthan Chapter

I met Mr. Vinay of NexTAAI for his impressive presentation at Colombo airport while coming back to India. I invited him to come to Jaipur to let us know much more and explain how this platform will work to my members who were not in our Convention in Sri Lanka. We later met Amit on 6th September, 23 when we mutually decided this date for their presentation on NexTAAI. Addressing a decent number of willing members, that too in a mid-day session on a holiday in Jaipur was well appreciated by all of us. Finishing the presentations, I also explained and convinced my members to get the maximum benefit by on spot registration. The response I got from my members to get on the spot registration shows that this initiative of TAAI is going to reach new heights when we, the community of TAAI actually opts

for this and gets used to NexTAAI for our day-to-day business surpassing old tools. In my view and opinion this will be a milestone for all of us who are facing issues with our business in this era of technology.

It is now simple to make a booking, instantly give a quote to our customers, 24 x 7 virtual assistance by features like telegram, CRM and above all handsome margins on a few clicks in minutes unlike what we were doing until now like cut paste rates which are depending on our DMC etc. All of it seems like the old day's story now. If properly executed, then I am pretty confident that this NexTAAI will work well and we can also get new quality members in TAAI as new membership. Team TAAI under the leadership of our beloved, hardworking President Mrs Jyoti Mayal has done fantastic work.



Mr. Sainath Dharwatkar Chairman –TAAI Goa Chapter

On behalf of TAAI Goa Chapter I take this opportunity to thank our L.T. ably led by our President Mrs. Mayal for working tirelessly towards the membership in resolving all the concerns related to various issues such as Visa, Airlines, Embassy, Ministries etc. & working towards ease of doing business. One of the initiatives taken up was introducing a technology platform which could assist the member agency with generating tour itineraries with quotes, Visa, Hotels etc. at ease & thus giving the client the necessary information instantaneously. In Goa we have had the NexTAAI presentation on 10 August.

Majority of our members attended the same & all of them expressed satisfaction about the worthiness of the product & almost all got themselves registered the same day. I have personally registered immediately after returning from the TAAI Convention & am quite happy with the efficiency of the same. I have been able to design personalized packages with quotes to my guests intending to go on a holiday & have been able to close on the business. The rates are very competitive & with days to come we are sure to have lots of additions to the product with respect to other services and overall functioning of the platform.



Mr. Nagesh Pampati

Chairman-TAAI Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Chapter

It's the digital age. It is time that every stand-alone agent must have an online, presence since it is the need of the hour. To exist in the present and future online is the mantra to be in market with changing times and also to serve the young clients who are the future of India. I am happy

that our national leadership took this as a priority to empower our TAAI members with an online platform. This will help all TAAI members become online agents and serve the clients effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Virendra Shah

Managing Partner Chairman - TAAI Gujarat Chapter

Future of Travel industry is Technology only!! AI will also play vital role in influencing traveller's decision. TAAI is the only association which is walking with the need of hours and NexTAAI is perfect example of this claim. It has made the life of members very easy. Now the time has gone, where we need to respond to

client's query in 24hrs to 48 hrs. With this powerful technology, members can respond within 10 to 15 minutes!! It's indeed a miracle and revolution in travel industries. Kudos to TAAI team; who have thought and implemented NexTAAI technology platform for the ease of members!!





TAAI delegation meets Consulate General of Poland

A meeting with the Consulate General of Poland to India Mr. Damian Irzyk, was held on August 28, 2023 in Mumbai, to discuss the enhancement of tourism between the two countries address the challenges faced on visas. The Consulate General assured that he would connect

TAAI with the Polish Tourism Board and work jointly to ease visa challenges for business and tourists. The meeting was led by Jay Bhatia (Vice President) along with Anoop Kanuga (Chairman - Tourism Council) & Sameer Karnani (Chairman - Visa Services Council) from TAAI.



Myanmar will soon offer Visa on Arrival for Indian citizens

Myanmar has introduced visas on arrival for Indian and Chinese tourists, aiming to welcome foreign visitors and their spending. The trial period's start date will be announced soon, allowing visa holders

to explore all sites except restricted areas for security reasons. Previously, citizens of India and China needed to apply for tourist visas online or at a Myanmar embassy. Myanmar currently faces internal tensions stem-

ing from the 2021 coup, leading the United States and Australia to advise against travel to the country. However, India and China, neighbouring Myanmar, have maintained relations with its leadership.

Qatar Tourism leads hospitality delegation for a two-city roadshow



Qatar Tourism led a high-profile delegation of 40 hospitality partners in a roadshow across Mumbai and New Delhi, anchoring Qatar's commitment towards the Indian travel market. The roadshow took place from August 8 – 10, 2023 with over 200 Indian travel companies in attendance across the two cities. The roadshow highlighted Qatar's dynamic tourism offering and aimed to position Qatar as a leading tourism destination with world-class hotels and resorts, premium leisure and entertainment venues, and a rich cultural tapestry that together create an unparalleled holiday experience. India is one of Qatar Tourism's 15 priority markets identified in its long-term strategy which aims to make Qatar the fastest growing tourism destination in the Middle East by 2030.

Thailand mulls easing visa rules to lure Indian, Chinese tourists



Thailand is likely to ease visa rules for Chinese and Indian travellers and allow longer stays for visitors from all nations as new Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin looks for ways to boost tourism revenue to nearly \$100 billion next year. Chinese — the largest group of visitors before the pandemic — face a costly and cumbersome visa-application process,

which has been a drag on the tally this year, according to the premier. Meanwhile, travellers from India must pay 2,000 baht (\$57) for a 15-day visa on arrival. Srettha said he wants the list of visa-exempt countries expanded as well as increased stay limits for most international travellers, with caps of 15 days or 30 days for many nationalities.

3.06 lakh Indian travellers are expected to visit New York this year

New York City is hoping to welcome 3.06 lakh travellers from India this year as the city witnesses economic recovery that has helped the growing momentum in tourist footfalls, New York City Tourism and Conventions EVP, Global Communications, Tiffany Townsend has said. "The pace of tourism's rebound helps fuel New York City's economic recovery, having

supported approximately 3,40,000 jobs in the full leisure and hospitality sector, more than USD 40 billion in direct visitor spending and approximately USD 60 billion in total economic impact for 2022. NYC expects to welcome 11.4 million international visitors this year, including 306,000 travellers from India," Townsend told PTI in an emailed interaction.



Wonderful Indonesia hosts a multi-city roadshow in India

In a bid to captivate the Indian traveller market, Wonderful Indonesia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia, recently concluded a dynamic multi-city roadshow across India. The Wonderful Indonesia Roadshow made its mark in Hyderabad on September 11, 2023; Mumbai on September 13, 2023; and Ahmedabad on September 15, 2023. With 37 stalls featuring participants promoting Indonesia as a travel destination and attracting approximately 120-140 participants from the Indian travel and tourism industry, among the prominent participants was Tria Uma Wisata Tours & Travel, a Destination Management Company (DMC) with a dedicated focus on Bali and Indonesia.



Ras Al Khaimah has recorded the highest ever half-yearly arrival numbers

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) announces a record-breaking first six months, with the Emirate reporting its highest ever half-year arrival numbers. The impressive performance saw Ras Al Khaimah welcome 600K visitors between January and June 2023, a total increase of 14.8% versus H1 2022 and the highest ever tourism-related revenue achieved for a half-year period. Reinforcing its position as a destination of the future, the results follow a series of strategic investments, partnerships and initiatives to boost tourism, setting a path for continued growth in 2023 and beyond.



Tourism Seychelles showcases Tropical Splendours in three city roadshow

Tourism Seychelles recently hosted a three-city roadshow in India between July 31 and August 4, 2023, showcasing Seychelles' unparalleled beauty and offerings as an exquisite leisure and luxury destination. The roadshow, held in Mumbai, Delhi, and Ahmedabad, was a key step towards strengthening ties between Seychelles

and the Indian travel trade. With the tourism industry emerging from its most challenging years, the roadshow focused on bringing together key tourism partners to interact and showcase the destination product via one-on-one meetings with over 180 leading travel agents and tour operators across India.



Rome's historic Palatine Hill palazzo opens to tourists again

As per the latest development, an ancient Roman imperial palazzo atop the city's Palatine Hill was reopened to tourists on Thursday, and that too nearly 50 years after its closure for restoration. The nearly 2,000-year-old Domus Tiberiana used to serve as home to rulers in the ancient city's Imperial

period. The vast palace offers sweeping views of the Roman Forum below. Reports add that the public will now be allowed to tour it, following decades of structural restoration work. Excavations that were carried out here, uncovered artifacts from centuries of Roman life following the decline of the empire.



Singapore becomes the latest addition in the 'Blue Zone'

Singapore is the newest entrant to the Blue Zone, and has become the world's sixth. This is as per Dan Buettner, a journalist and researcher who popularized the use of the term to describe regions in the world where people live healthier and longer lives. As per the reports, people living in these regions

have several traits in common that lets them achieve longevity, which include moving regularly, depending on a plant-based diet, and living with purpose. The original five Blue Zone regions include Okinawa in Japan, Sardina in Italy, Ikaria in Greece, Nicoya in Costa Rica, and Loma Linda in California.

Dubai surpasses pre-pandemic international visitation levels

Dubai's resurgent tourism industry is celebrating a successful first half of 2023, after welcoming a record 8.55 million international overnight visitors, compared to 8.36 million tourists in H1 2019. Surpassing pre-pandemic visitation levels and further bolstering the city's bid to become the world's most visited destination, the latest data published by Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) represents the industry's best ever H1 performance.

More than 1.5 lakh Indian tourists have visited US this year

More than 1.5 lakh Indians have visited the United States so far in 2023, the US department of commerce's International Trade Administration data showed. Indians were the second largest overseas visitors to America, next only to the UK, during this peak summer travel month of June — despite sky-high airfares and visa processing backlog. According to the data, international visitor arrivals to the country in June 2023 was 49.9 lakh, almost a quarter more than the same month last year. The top two countries for inbound visitors were Canada and Mexico with which the US shares a land border.

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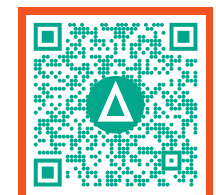
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