

TAAI's TRAVEL & TOURISM INITIATIVE

# NAMASTAAI

Vol. 1 No. 8 | DECEMBER - FEBRUARY 2018 | [www.taai.in](http://www.taai.in) | For Private Circulation Only

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CONVENTION  
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## THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*Growing as we grow...  
Can we stay out of "regrets"?*

Simon Sinek, author of "Start with Why", remarks "What good is an idea if it remains an idea? Try. Experiment. Iterate. Fail. Try again. Change the world."

The travel and tourism industry witnessed innovation heralding unprecedented approaches and incredible opportunities. We are presented with never before possibilities and potential. One cannot be a bystander without big accomplishments in this most exciting era. *As we grow, we must grow* can be the norm for our living.

To live purposefully is to consistently experience learning and growing. It encourages greater passion. The science of learning is interfaced with our sense of discovery. When the thrill of a discovery is lost, learning takes a back seat. Innovation supports excitement as we discover. Those who get trapped into a routine arrest growth but not age. 'Regrets' take over. We regret that we did not strike when we had to. Regrets play heavier on us as we grow older and we ponder why we missed those opportunities or shots that we did not take.

TAAI's leadership of 67 years reflects immense learning. We were challenged by the ups and downs of the industry. Currently, we continue to be confronted with newer challenges. TAAI's perspective is to offer impetus for broader visions and innovation to strengthen members in their resolve to sustain.



TAAI is organising its 64th Convention & Exhibition at India's most fantastic, scenic and serene valley city of India, Srinagar from March 27 to 30, 2018. Our previous convention was held here 31 years ago. The sights are amazing. The venues chosen are stunning. The content must inspire us with newer visions. Our convention theme's focus is on Incredible Tourism - Integration. Inspiration. Innovation. Do join us. We can re-imagine a newer way - forward.

Nobel Prize awardee Heinrich Rohrer said, Science means constantly walking a tightrope between blind-faith and curiosity; between expertise and creativity; between bias and openness; between experience and epiphany; between ambition and passion; and between arrogance and conviction - in short, between an old today and a new tomorrow.

We must strive to go far beyond today and be curious, creative, open, to discover, breathe passion and adorn conviction. We can be responsible for a superb future and a more living.

I firmly believe we can. For our industry. For ourselves. For the future. **Let's do it together.**

Sunil Kumar R  
President, TAAI  
[sunilkindia@gmail.com](mailto:sunilkindia@gmail.com)

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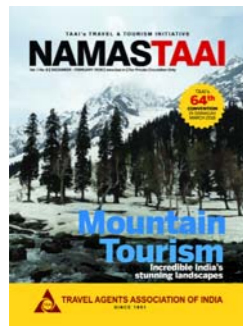
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## ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

Kashmir with its awe-inspiring views, engaging tourism activities and warm hospitality is the perfect annual convention destination for TAAI, as the Valley reinvents itself with exciting tourism attractions to attract both domestic and international travellers

## NAMASTAAI™

Vol.1 No.8

December - February 2018

Fully Owned Publication of

TRAVEL AGENTS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA  
www.taai.in; www.travelagentsofindia.com

### TAAI Mumbai Secretariat

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  
E-mail : taai@taai.in

### TAAI Delhi Liaison Office

212, New Delhi House,  
27, Barakhamba Road,  
New Delhi - 110 001.  
Phone : (011) 23351801 / 23356813  
Fax : (011) 23355389  
E-mail : taaidelhi@gmail.com

### President

SUNIL KUMAR R

### Vice President

SANJAY NARULA

### Hon. Secretary General

JYOTI MAYAL

### Hon. Treasurer

IMTIAZ QURESHI

### TAAI MANAGING COMMITTEE

ANIL KUMAR

ANOOB B. KANUGA

BHAGWAN T. RAMNANI

DEVAKI THIYAGARAJAN

GURMEET SINGH VIJ

RAJAN SEHGAL

P SARAVANAN

For responses, contributions, photographs for publication or advertising in the magazine please email to: namastai@taai.in

NAMASTAAI By TAAI  
Designed & Printed by  
The Indian Express (P) Ltd

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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

## First TAAI meeting with entire TAAI team



The year 2018 commenced on a high note at the TAAI meet with all its 60 members including MC Members, Chairpersons, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of all Chapters and Regions participating

The Managing Committee and Chairpersons laid out the strategy and the way forward plans for the coming term 2017-19. The main agenda for all

Regions and Chapters was to draw the attention of the State Tourism Boards to drive visibility.

Further to this, responsibilities were assigned to all members so as to assist them discharge their duties effectively for the term. A professional management consultant, G Balachandran was invited for a motivational session on leadership.

It was concluded that influential members from the Regions and Chapters will support the Committee in their plans, review and progress.

Matters on GST, Jet Airways discussion on commission fee, TAAI Joint Bank Guarantee programme, IATA discussion on insurance premium and IATA and NDC matters was also discussed during the meeting.



**“Let Jammu and Kashmir lead the way in the building of a new future for India. Let it set an example to the rest of India and the world by showing how the entire region can be transformed into a zone of peace, stability and prosperity ”**

*– Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India*

## TAAI & Department Of Culture & Tourism, Abu Dhabi launches nationwide training programmes

TAAI has been closely associated with Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority for several years, and more so during the 2016 TAAI convention held in Abu Dhabi. Both teams decided talking the relationship forward.

TAAI will be organising the TAAI-DTC Abu Dhabi Training Programmes in 16 cities in India, mostly in secondary cities. The first of these programmes was successfully held at Coimbatore on February 13, 2018. The training programme for personnel of travel and tourism agencies showcased the variety of experiences and tourism products the city has to offer.

This event was held at Radisson Hotel, Coimbatore. Bejan Dinshaw,



Country Manager, India, delivered a presentation giving us a deep insight on Abu Dhabi. It was an interactive workshop that led to extensive learning.

MC member and Chairman of Tourism Committee Anoop Kanuga in his address expressed his gratitude

to all the participants for making the entire event such a success. It received an overwhelming response from all the participants. MC Member from Southern Region P Saravanan and Chairperson of Southern Region K Shahul Hameed successfully coordinated the event.

## Message from DTC, Abu Dhabi

Over recent decades, Abu Dhabi as an Emirate has undergone a massive transformation of grand proportions, unprecedented economic growth and development saw the Emirate grow exponentially and become a sprawling metropolis. The Emirate has a lot to offer to all. It is a magnificent amalgamation of desert, sea, heritage, nightlife, making this cultural heaven a must-visit place for everyone. Its policies, plans and programmes relate to the preservation of heritage and culture, including protecting archaeological and historical sites and to developing museums, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Zayed National Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

The Department of Culture and Tourism supports intellectual and artistic activities and cultural events to nurture a rich cultural environment and honour the emirate's heritage. A key role played by the Department is to create synergy in the destination's development through close co-ordination with its wide-ranging stakeholder base.



The Department of Culture and Tourism have been associated with TAAI for a long time and the alliance has strengthened over the years. DCT, in collaboration with TAAI has organised a series of training workshops in tier 2/3 cities to update tour and travel agents about the destination so that they promote it further, thus helping the department to increase tourism to the Emirate.

We wish the association continues growing toward mutual benefit to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the Travel Agents Association of India.

# Sunil Kumar re-elected as UFTAA President

## UFTAA Congress & Annual General Assembly held in Tel Aviv – February 2018



The UFTAA Congress and Annual General Assembly was held from February 5 to 7, 2018, Tel Aviv, Israel with extensive coordination and organised in a most exclusive manner. Delegates from 21 countries attended this most memorable event.

The event was hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Israel and was co-hosted by the most popular IMTM 2018 (International Mediterranean Tourism Market).

Hon'ble Minister of Tourism Yariv



Levin was the chief guest at the Gala Dinner of the UFTAA Congress and appreciated the laudable role and leadership UFTAA offers to the world.



Some of UFTAA's mega achievements were highlighted which included the UFTAA Global Tourism Office at Istanbul, Turkey. The UFTAA Global Tourism FORUM will be the meeting place for education; networking and global connect. Tourism consultants of the world will be logged on to this Tourism initiative in this most evolving scenario that thrives better on dependable connect. The admission of about 25 countries of Latin America operating under the Banner COTAL into UFTAA and also the large China Association of Travel Services joining UFTAA was applauded.

The Gala Dinner featured an excellent opportunity for networking and saw some inspirational dance performances.

### The new UFTAA Board 2018-19

- **President :** Sunil Kumar Rumalla (India), TAAI
- **Vice President & Chairman Air Matters :** Yossef Fatael (Israel), IITOA
- **Vice President Finance :** S G KAKA (Kenya), KATA
- **Vice President Tourism :** Cetin Gurcun (Turkey), TURSAB
- **Director :** Madhusudan Acharya (Nepal), NATTA
- **Director :** Varsha Ramchurn (Mauritius), MAITA
- **Director :** Richard Lohento (Benin), ATOV
- **Director :** Zhang Lijun (China) CATS
- **Director :** Joe Olivier Borg (Malta), Olviar
- **Director :** Adriana Miori (Italy), MiiorandMore
- **Director :** William D'souza (Canada), Globe Travels, Ind.



The opening Board meeting of UFTAA in session



President Sunil Kumar and Vice President Sanjay Narula with Minister of Tourism of Romania



The new UFTAA Board



Minister Yariv Levin addressing UFTAA



UFTAA delegates at opening ceremony



Sunil Kumar presenting the UFTAA Award of Merit to Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Yariv Levin



Sanjay Narula with representatives of other Associations at UFTAA AGA



President Sunil Kumar, Minister Yariv Levin with the representatives of China Association of Travel Services – Han Toi and Edgar



## TAAI partners with IndiGo for the upcoming Convention in Srinagar



TAAI Convention in Srinagar is special in many ways. It is not only attracting huge participation but also offers an excellent opportunity to network and celebrate togetherness.

IndiGo airlines responded graciously with over 450 seat blocks and the delegates will receive special fares for the convention as discussed with TAAI.

Present on the occasion were TAAI

President Sunil Kumar; VP Sanjay Narula and MC Member & Chairman, Airlines Committee, B T Ramnani; MC Member Rajan Sehgal with Sanjay Kumar, Chief Commercial Officer; Sri Krishna and Niraj Batra from IndiGo.

## TAAI seeks support from Tourism Secretary for Srinagar Convention

TAAI's conventions have always been awaited amongst the tourism industry. With a purpose of continuing a strong and healthy relationship with the tourism minister, TAAI held a meeting with Rashmi Verma, Honourable Tourism Secretary on February 13, 2018 and sought her support for the upcoming Srinagar Convention. The minister highly appreciated this initiative.



## TAAI - SpiceJet meeting

TAAI Team continued its initiative to hold interactive meetings with airlines to hold discussions on various matters. An extremely successful meeting took place on February, 2nd, 2018 where President Sunil Kumar and Vice President Sanjay Narula interacted with Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, SpiceJet.



## TAAI at India International Travel & Tourism (IITT) Exhibition

The fifth edition of India International Travel & Tourism (IITT) Exhibition was organised from January 11 to 13 at Mumbai. IITT 2018 was a three day affair divided into two-days of B2B networking and one-day B2C event held at MMRDA Grounds, BKC. The fifth edition, spread across 20,000 sq ft exhibition area, welcomed more than around 28,000 national as well as international trade visitors which included more than 500 exhibitors and hosted buyers respectively from 20 countries.



IITT 2018 was inaugurated by Jaykumar Rawal, Minister of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra who was accompanied by Sunil Kumar R, President, TAAI; Karan Anand, Head of Relationships and Supplier Management, Cox & Kings; Jitender Paul Singh, COO, Cox & Kings; Saroja Sirisena, Consul General, Consulate General of Sri Lanka to Mumbai; Mahendra Vakharia, President, OTOAI; Guldeep Singh Sahni, Founder & Immediate Past President OTOAI; Pranab Sarkar, President, IATO; P P Khanna, President, ADTOI; Manish Gandhi, COO

& Executive Director, ABEC Exhibitions & Conferences and Mohit Mewani, Exhibition Director, IITT.

IITT saw over 3,000 pre-fixed meetings and two-day panel discussions focusing on key industry issues. On-spot meetings with 260 corporate and 160 wedding planners were also held at the Connect Lounge set up at the exhibition. The exhibition, supported by Incredible India saw participation from destinations like Malaysia, Egypt, Maldives, Seychelles and Israel and states like

Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. Sri Lanka was the MICE and wedding destination partner at IITT 2018 while Indonesia was the feature country. Maharashtra was the host state for IITT 2018 while Kerala was acknowledged as the partner state. Cox & Kings was the platinum partner for the exhibition.

The exhibition was also supported by TAAI and members of the TAAI Managing Committee attended this event in Mumbai.

## TAAI interacts with IATA in second MC meeting

TAAI Managing Committee meeting held on January 11, 2018 at Mumbai discussed at length and reviewed all the matters relating to IATA. The delegates had participated in the APJC meeting held at New Delhi on the January 10, 2018. TAAI maintained that it will assist members and handhold them on PCIDSS compliance and will also assist agencies in keeping them updated on the self-assessment questionnaire that they will be required to file. The deadline is fast approaching and members will have to meet the

compliance requirements by March 1, 2018, the compliance will vary as per the level of annual transactions (either more than 20,000 annual transactions or less than 20,000 transactions).

On the invitation of Sunil Kumar, President TAAI, Rodney D'Cruz - Assistant Director, Passenger & Cargo Services, IATA was also present during the MC meeting and was introduced to the newly elected TAAI members. TAAI suggested that IATA should have an additional insurance company on

board to cover financial security. One of the issues with insurance was the high costs of insurance premium. In order to address this matter, another meeting with IFCO TOKIO was organised in New Delhi on January 16, 2018 to reduce the percentage of insurance premium.

The TAAI Joint Bank Guarantee initiative with IATA will be renewed on July 1, 2018 for another year; the programme will be open to TAAI members.

## A glimpse of Luxurious Italy at ITALIA

Anoop Kanuga represented TAAI at the "ITALIA" ENIT Roadshow event on Framing Italy Luxuriously on February 8, 2018 at Trident, Mumbai along with the Italian State Tourism Board. At the event, Kanuga addressed the audience about the 'Luxury Holidays Segment In India: Trends and Opportunities'. He gave an overview of Italy as a destination and gave insights about the Indian luxury traveller.

A coffee table book was also launched at the event showcasing various attractions of Italy through descriptive images. A captivating video was also screened at the event that narrated Bollywood's connections to Italy since decades.



## TAAI's presence at SATTE 2018

South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE), the spectacular three-day business networking trade show by UBM in New Delhi took place during February 15- 17, 2018, saw its legendary 24th chapter this year and witnessed an overwhelming participation from 35 countries, 28 Indian states, approximately 20,000 travel trade attendees, over 30 international tourism boards and more than 850 exhibitors. The trade show received immense support from the Ministry of Tourism, Incredible India and United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), making SATTE a recognised outbound travel show in the country which covers all aspects of inbound, domestic and international travel. Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI was present for the inaugural ceremony.



President Sunil and members of TAAI TEAM with His Excellency, the Ambassador of UAE, Bejan Dinshaw and other leaders at SATTE

In the knowledge sessions held at SATTE, Sunil Kumar chaired the session on 'Visa Reforms & Tourism Growth'. Sharing the panel were His Excellency's Ambassadors of UAE, Turkey, Mauritius and President of OTOAI. The travel show witnessed several exciting partnerships and announcements that promised to augur in new trends in the industry. Visitors to the expo experienced a

number of features including a special pavilion of 12 start-ups and venture capital firms that will be on board to provide seed investments for innovative

ideas. The event also attracted many state tourism boards from India to conduct business and promote inbound and domestic tourism.

### KUDOS TO PAST CHAIRMAN DAR

Our past TAAI Chairman ( 2009 -2011 ) Haji Khazir Mohammad Dar of Khazir Travels was conferred with the State Award on Republic Day 2018 and presented a cash award of Rs one lakh, a medal and a citation for his contribution towards promotion of tourism in the state

### TAAI hails State award to Dar

**Rajeev Karam News**  
 Srinagar: Travel agents Association of India (TAAI) JK Chapter has congratulated Haji Khazir Mohammad Dar for being conferred with State Award.  
 TAAI also congratulated the state tourism minister and is taken keen interest in promoting tourism sector through innovative ways.  
 Haji Khazir Mohammad Dar who is proprietor of Khazir Travels was awarded for Lifetime Achievements.  
 TAAI Chairman of JK Chapter Zahoor Qari said Khazir Mohammad Dar has immense contribution to the tourism sector.  
 "He is a veteran in tourism trade has contributed immensely in the promotion of this sector. We hail Chief Minister for approving award to Khazir Mohammad Dar," said Zahoor Qari.  
 Khazir Mohammad Dar has also remained Past Chairman of TAAI JK Chapter during which time he also worked tirelessly to promote tourism.  
 "Recognising his achievements for tourism sector is a great honour for TAAI." Dar has also taken up many issues confronting tourism sector with the state authorities from time to time and also got them highlighted in media.



## TAAI at Open House with FM Arun Jaitley

President Sunil and Vice President Mr Sanjay Narula were invited to the select gathering of industry leaders as the Hon'ble Minister of Finance interacted at the Open House, on the next day of the Budget Presentation at Oberoi, New Delhi.



## Northern Region Badminton League

Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter of Travel Agents Association of India once again held TAAI Badminton League 2018 on January 7, 2018 at the renowned BBD Badminton Academy, Lucknow.

The Championship named as UP Tourism Cup was well publicised with the logo of Kumbh 2019 and tagline 'UP nahin dekha to India nahin dekha' recently launched by Hon'ble Governor of Uttar Pradesh Ram Naik & Hon'ble Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Registrations of number of players for the tournament from the travel agents, tour operators, families of Agencies' staff, Airlines, GDS, Travel Insurance, Hotels and Forex companies saw a whopping rise of 40 per cent over the last TAAI Badminton League held in September 2016.

The League was played under the categories Travel Agents - Singles Male, Travel Agents - Singles Female and Family - Singles, Airlines / GDS / Insurance / Forex/Hotels - Singles, Travel Agents - Doubles Male, Mixed Doubles & Kids under 18.

The dense foggy & chilling cold Sunday morning which turned bright and sunny by noon started with lots of enthusiasm especially from the family members & children of travel agency staff. The event was inaugurated by the most dynamic Principal Secretary & Director General UP Tourism, Mr. Avnish Awasthi.

The excitement kept growing as the day passed. While players were busy sweating it out on courts, outside courts saw lots of Lucky Draws with racquets from Decathlons and gift hamper. A sumptuous food court with mouth watering delicacies and photo-point to take ones pictures in action kept everyone amused.

Young Rahul Srivastava (Airosa International) in his late fifties defied all age barriers and turned out to be a hero of the tournament by winning Travel



Agents Men's Singles beating his own son Racheet Srivastava. Teamed with Amir Nazar (Travel Help) he again beat Faisal Khan & Rizwan Alam (both from Trawelltag). Once again partnering with Shazia Fuzail (Airosa International) he beat Mohd Abbas & Zoya Abid Zaidi (both from Nationwide Travels) to claim the Mixed Doubles title. In Airlines Category, Mahiraj Singh Pal (IndiGo) beat Mohd Qasim Rizvi (Saudia). In Travel Agents Female /Family, Shazia Fuzail (Airosa International) beat Varsha Shukla (Anupam Holiday Makers) and in Kids (under 18) Aaditya Srivastva (AKS Trip Experts) beat Zoya Abid Zaidi (Nationwide Travels)



The tournament was sponsored by UP Tourism and well supported by Oman Air, Scoot, Fly Dubai, IndiGo, Jet Airways, Vistara, Saudia, Asian Roots Tour, Royal Gulf Tourism Dubai, Decathlon, Udaan, TLC, Levana Suites & Hyatt Regency, Lucknow.

To give away the prizes Sunil B Satyawakta, Chairman; Anupam Shukla Hon. Secretary and Umair N Shah Hon. Treasurer of TAAI Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter were joined by Sameer Sharma DSM, Oman Air; Ashish Khanna, Fly Dubai; Udai Tandon, Jet Airways; Deepak Khare, IndiGo; Pankaj Mehrotra, Vistara and Nitin De, Saudia.

## Northern Region organises first members' meeting

The first Northern Region Members meet was organised on December 15, 2017 with Neeraj Malhotra, Chairman; Gaurav Dogra, Hon. Secretary and Gurdevinder Singh, Hon. Treasurer along with Rajan Sehgal, Managing Committee member. Office bearers, Sanjay Narula, Vice-President and Jyoti Mayal, Hon. Secretary General were also invited for the internal discussion. The discussions during the meeting were on the latest development on GST and Jet Airways. The office bearers also shared their views on the future plans for TAAI.





## Northern Region meets with Ethiopian Culture Centre

For the first time ever, dignitaries from Northern Region of TAAI were invited for a meeting with the Ethiopian Culture Centre. The members also got the opportunity through a special invitation to meet the greatly respected Queen of Belgium as she was on her official meet to India. Honorable Tourism Minister of India was also present at the event.



## Southern Region Indonesian Road Show



Indonesian Tourism Road Show held on December 29, 2017 at Hotel Radisson Blu, Chennai

## Eastern Region members meet with Fiji High Commission

Eastern Region TAAI members got the opportunity to interact with Azreen Khan, acting High Commissioner, Republic of Fiji and Harsh

Patodia, Honorary Consul - Designate, Republic of Fiji on February 6, 2018 at The Conclave, Kolkata. Members discussed the potential of promoting Fiji

as a high end tourist destination and gave their views on possible actions that Fiji Government could take to further enable the Indian travellers.



## President TAAI meets starts his new term interacting with members of Eastern Region

Sunil Kumar on his re-election as President of TAAI, started his visit to Regions & Chapters with Eastern Region on December 16, 2017 at Hindusthan International Hotel. The President interacted with the members about the vision for the new term and sought support of the Region. The members provided their valuable input and views on issues concerning the industry which TAAI could take up. The interactive session between the President and the members was very successful as they laid out plans for TAAI.



## Karnataka Chapter events

### EVENT 1

**K**ITE logo launch was on January 2, 2018 at Hotel Radisson Blu, Bangalore. Chairman and Hon Sec Karnataka at official launch of Karnataka International Travel Expo logo by Hon Minister, Priyank Kharge.



### EVENT 2

**C**hairman Karnataka addressing the gathering at the Jammu and Kashmir Road Show at Bengaluru. Amish Desai receiving a token of appreciation from Minister of State for Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir, Priya Sethi. J&K roadshow was on December 27, 2017 at Hotel Lalit Ashok.



## UP & Uttarakhand Chapter signs another MoU with a University

**T**AAI Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter recently signed a MoU with Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University, Faizabad, UP for tourism students. In last two years, this is the 3rd MoU signed by the Chapter with Universities, others being with Lucknow University and Benaras Hindu University earlier.



## MP & CG Chapter presentation on US visas

**M**P & CG chapter in association with US Consulate arranged a presentation on US B1 & B2 visas in Indore on Saturday December 16, 2017 for its members at Fairfield by Marriott, Indore.

Secretary Hemendra Singh Jadon gave the welcome speech while Chapter Chairman T K Jose and Treasurer Hariom Jhunjhunwala presented floral tributes to welcome the guests.

Daniel Fenech (Consul & Deputy Chief American Citizen Services & CIU) gave the presentation. Around 30 members attended and got an exclusive opportunity to interact and clarify their doubts directly with consular representatives.



**MP & CG CHAPTER branding at Indore Airport at both Departure & Arrival entrances on the occasion of Christmas & New Year**



## MP & CG Chapter organises first aviation conference

The maiden Madhya Pradesh aviation conference, "Connect Madhya Pradesh" was organised jointly by CII, Government of Madhya Pradesh and Airports Authority of India. TAAI (MP & CG chapter) was the associate partner for this consolidated effort to pave way for launching international flights from Indore city. The half day conference was organised at the Brilliant Convention Centre Indore. The chief guest was Principal Secretary, MP Govt and Aryama Sanyal, Director, Indore Airport.

Jyoti Mayal (Secretary General, TAAI) was among the eminent speakers. MP & CG Chapters office bearers T K Jose, Hemendra Singh Jadon and Hariom Jhunjunwala alongwith 45 agents of the state were present at the conference.



## MP & CG Chapter first meeting of new office bearers

Indore Airport Director Aryama Sanyal was the chief guest at the first meeting of the new office bearers of MP & CG Chapter. It was a fruitful interaction session for the travel agents. All the members attended the function and the dinner thereafter, along with family at The Pride Hotel & Convention Centre.

T K Jose, Chairman MP& CG Chapter welcomed Aryama Sanyal on behalf of TAAI and extended wholehearted support from travel agents to upgrade Indore Airport as an international airport. A copy of Namastai Magazine was presented to Sanyal by Jose. She assured that Indore will be upgraded to international airport by this year.



## Goa Chapter felicitates first Goan on Air India international posting

TAAI's newly elected Goa Chapter felicitated Manjiri Shirodkar, Station Manager of Air India. She is the first Goan to have been deputed by the national carrier on an international posting. She will be stationed at the Heathrow Airport in London. Members expressed their gratitude and wished her success in her new position. Message from Hon. Secretary General TAAI Jyoti Mayal was also conveyed to her. Members also requested her to push for a direct flight from London to Goa which will benefit the Goans settled in UK.



## Pune Chapter Egypt roadshow



An Egypt roadshow was conducted in Pune on January 22, 2018 at Westin Hotel. Bahram P Zadeh, Chairman TAAI Pune Chapter along with Hon Secretary Shaishav Parekh and Hon Treasurer Mehboob Shaikh attended the roadshow and addressed the attendees. Krishna Gopalan, past Chapter Chairman was also present. A good number of trade members attended the same. Ismail A Hamid Amer gave a detailed presentation on Egypt along with various

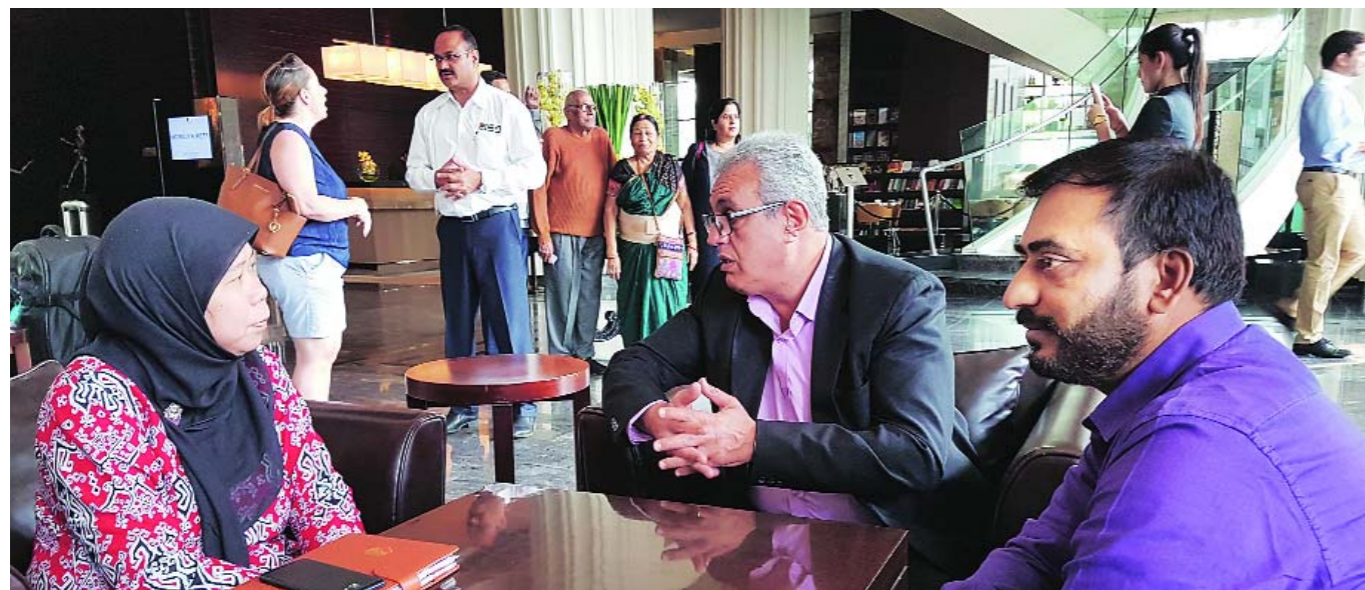


## Pune Chapter meets Consul General of Indonesia

TAAI Pune Chapter Chairman Bahram P Zadeh and Hon Treasurer Mehboob Shaikh met with Andini Fitrillah from Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia. They discussed the various offers to be

opened for TAAI members and more and more roadshows to be arranged with the help of the tourism office and airlines office pan India with the help of TAAI to provide more awareness of the products in Indonesia.

They also discussed that apart from Bali, Indonesia should promote other sectors with more promotions. This meeting was held in J W Marriott Pune on January 15, 2018.



## Rajasthan Chapter organises cricket match

Rajasthan Chapter organised a cricket match involving entire travel trade like travel agents, airlines, insurance companies, GDSs and leading hotels. Matches were exciting and full of thrills. There were lots of prizes, trophies for winners as well as man of the match and series. Breakfast, snacks, tea coffee and lunch were fully sponsored including ground and other arrangements.



## Rajasthan Chapter international meeting in Malaysia

Rajasthan Chapter Chairman Manoj Sogani planned an international meeting cum all inclusive FAM trip for Rajasthan Chapter from Feb 5 to 7, 2018. The meeting was held at Grand Season Hotel, Kuala Lumpur followed by a full day entertainment at Sunway Lagoon and sightseeing of the Petronas Tower and skywalk.

The all inclusive FAM was sponsored with stay at the best hotels by member Dushyant Choudhary on recommendation of D S Rathore. Zero fare return tickets for members were arranged by the Chairman.

The members also attended the inaugural function of Jaipur Kuala Lumpur flight of Air Asia at Jaipur Airport.



## Gujarat Chapter meeting at Hotel Rezaas, Ahmedabad

Gujarat Chapter organised a meeting at Hotel Rezaas in Ahmedabad. Chairman Paras Lakhia briefed the chapter members on the first Managing Committee meeting held in Hyderabad in December 2017. He informed the house that OBs of all chapters were invited for this meeting and all OBs of Gujarat Chapter participated. Sunil Kumar, TAAI President gave a motivational presentation about image building of TAAI. A management consultant G Balachandran was invited for a motivational session on Leadership and Motivation.

Natubhai Shah of Goodwind Travels mentioned, "When TAAI is planning to approach tourism boards for TAAI visibility, we should also approach Regional Chambers of commerce, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, etc too. Such bodies can recognise our existence and at the same time problems of the industry can be addressed to appropriate authorities through such important platforms."

Moving further about MC meeting's discussion on Jet Airways matter, Lakhia told the house that national committee has firmly put members concern to keep transaction fees at 3.5 per cent and not up to 3.5 per cent which was circulated by Jet Airways. He told that Jet Airways has agreed to do so and also agreed that ticket issued with 3.5 per cent OC tax will be shown with same fare on their website too. A discussion is on with GDS for fare guarantee due to such manual fare building and hoping for its quick resolution. Meantime, Chairman advised to keep screenshot of the guaranteed fares before manually entering the TF. Such a proof would be helpful to avoid any dispute relating to ADM raised by airlines for pricing matter.

Chairman also informed the house that the new TAAI-JBG scheme will be announced in the month of February 2018 which will be effective from July 1, 2018.



Chairman informed the house that the Convention is likely to held in Srinagar in end of March 2018. He told Members that the earlier announced convention destination of Kunming, China is likely to be held in later part of the year as there is a big issue of flights during March 2018.

New Active member Panache Travels' representative Amzed Shaikh was introduced to the members, increasing strength of Gujarat Chapter to 90 members. Poonam Sheth of Camaroo Travels drew attention of house that VFS is not sending mails directly to members for any changes and that's why members are suffering sometimes. She also said that VFS has started some Loyalty card programme for Regular Travellers/Corporate clients whereby they offer all personalised services to client including filling of form, free premium lounges, discounts on few other

travel products, etc and clients can also go for submission without any appointment. They are directly approaching Corporates for marketing this service and are promoting it to each applicant by giving the VFS magazine which highlights this offer. It's again a threat to the travel agencies.

Dipak Jaiswal of Jaiswal Enterprise (AIREO) raised concerns about unethical staff movement. Chairman told that this topic has been discussed many times in the past meetings. He said that all members should ask for a NOC & No due certificate of previous employer before recruiting. It's the moral duty of all members and one should at least check for the character/work ethics of this prospective staff with his previous employer. If this is followed, then it shall surely create a better and transparent working environment. Meeting was followed by High Tea.

## Gujarat Chapter organises 3rd skill training programme with TRS Skills Academy

**T**AAI Gujarat Chapter has strategically partnered with TRS Skills Academy, to provide training to its members every month covering soft skills, knowledge and behaviour.

In order to take forward this unique task of TAAI and after overwhelming response of first two programmes, Gujarat Chapter organised the third Skills Training programme on the subject - Prospecting New Customers (B2B) - at Radisson Blu hotel, Ahmedabad.

The travel business is a highly competitive business with each Travel Agency trying to woo clients and Prospect new Customer Relationships. The seminar Prospecting New Customers was organised to enhance your ability to understand the different stages of the Prospecting process and to maximise on the available opportunities in the business environment.

Business Travel is poised to grow in the current year and the seminar presented the required insights to the critical areas of Sales Process and how a travel agent can make the right impact to get new customers. The training style was interactive and based on situational reviews addressing the key areas of the prospecting process. The programme gave insights on:

- The critical components in customer prospecting
- Ability to develop a customer sourcing approach to target qualified prospects
- Ability to effectively negotiate to gain new customers
- Ability to formulate a pricing strategy approach to woo qualified prospects
- Ability to develop a response for proposal leveraging price & service and your agency selling proposition
- Understanding the implications of customer and market intelligence and its impact on prospecting
- Tools to pre-prospect and client profitability



- Understanding the prospecting key indicators
- The agency's corporate travel strategic plan

A Certification of completion, co-branded with TAAI was given to each attendee.

## Saurashtra & Kutch Chapter meeting in Sasan

**S**aurashtra & Kutch Chapter held their meeting recently at Woods at Sasan in Sasan Gir. Chairman Devendra R Shah welcomed all members as well as Imtiyaz Munshi from Air Arabia and Akash Bhandari from Royal Arabian Tours of Dubai. The hotel which partly sponsored the meeting, gave a presentation about the facilities. Harish Meena, Sales Head of the hotel was presented with a memento. Mementos were also given to Bhandari and Manish Patel of Karvat Cover-More Assist, Rajkot for being co-sponsors for the meeting.

After the meeting, members visited two more hotel properties in Sasan - Lord's Inn at Sasan and Greenwoods Resorts near Mendarda where lunch was arranged for the members. Kumar Soni, GM of the hotel did a property showaround and they were also presented with mementos.



# Standing tall

## Mountain Tourism - Fascinating Experience!

Mountains and their majestic heights have always fascinated man, whether for the thrill of adventure or for their beautiful landscapes. From the majestic Himalayas in the north to the Nilgiris in the south, India's mountains have long been popular mountain tourist destinations. With TAAI preparing to hold its Convention in Srinagar in March, this issue of Namastai focuses on the beautiful mountainscapes of India and the tourism opportunities they offer

On every continent we can find mountains, from the equator to the polar belt. And they are of different altitudes, different ecosystems and incredible biodiversity. For instance, Mount Kinabalu in Sabah Malaysia is estimated to harbour over 4000 plant species! Apart from scenic vistas, mountains also offer clean and cool air, and a the varied topography. No wonder then that mountain tourism has grown as a tourism product - be it for leisure or adventure as well as for wellness, meditation and rejuvenation.

What's more, the tourism business has brought immense benefits to mountain regions. Many Alpine valleys

in Europe have become accessible by modern transportation only as a consequence of the demand for accessibility for tourism activities. Tourism has also been responsible for opening mountain regions and many people in mountain regions owe their livelihood to tourism. Of course, mountain tourism also has its challenges. Mountains are huge but they are home to some of the world's most fragile ecosystems and it is essential to judge their carrying capacity to avoid an environmental disaster. Hence mountain tourism must strive to make judicious use of mountain resources and preserve their unique biodiversity while at the same time giving tourists reason to come

back for more. A responsibility that the tourism industry must see as priority. The travel agent fraternity must act as a catalyst to balance tourism with sustainability in the mountains.

In India, mountains are seen as the abode of the gods and many have religious significance, but they have also become popular for their breathtaking landscapes like in Leh, Ladakh and for the thrilling adventure sports opportunities they offer and as leisure destinations with their own hill stations, remnants of the British Raj. Apart from the mountains in Sikkim and the North Eastern states, in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, there are other highland ranges across the country that are very popular as mountain destinations.

The rocky Aravallis runs along the west between Delhi and Gujarat; the Vindhyas range extends east to west across the centre of the country, roughly from Gujarat to Varanasi; while slightly further south and running roughly parallel are the Satpura hills. Ranging south from West Bengal are the Eastern Ghats, and along the west of the country, from Maharashtra almost to the very tip of Tamil Nadu, are the Western Ghats and further south are the Nilgiri Mountains.

### THE HIMALAYAS

Stretching for more than 2,500 km from the East to West, and 250 km to 400 km from South to North, the Himalayas (meaning Abode of Snow in Sanskrit) are one of the natural wonders of the world. The Himalayas are home to some of the most famous peaks in India like the Kanchenjunga and Nanda Devi. The mountain range is world renowned for adventure activities like camping, rock climbing, trekking, nature walk, whitewater rafting and mountain biking. Mount Everest is the tallest peak and has been a mountaineer's most daunting challenge since time immemorial. The range has many glaciers which has challenged many a mountaineer. The glaciers in Kashmir and Ladakh will test mountaineering skills and is indeed an endurance test. The Siachen Glacier is regarded as the biggest glacier away



from the Arctic zones. India's rivers like the Ganga, Sutlej, Yamuna, Chenab, Ravi and Brahmaputra are fed by the melting snows of the Himalayan Mountain Range.

This mountain range is also a religious destination as it is home to many pilgrimage sites for Hindus, the trekking spots, and the beautiful valleys that offer breathtaking views that tourists come for.

Some of the important and popular mountain destinations in the Himalayas are Srinagar, Gulmarg and Sonmarg, Shimla, Ladakh, Manali, Kullu, Dalhousie, Dharamsala, Nainital, Sarahan, Rishikesh, Mussoorie, Darjeeling, Gangtok and Kailash Mansarovar. In Gulmarg, 60 kms from Srinagar is the Gulmarg Gondola, the world's second highest operating cable car. The two-stage gondola lift ferries about 600 people per hour to and from Kongdoori Mountain, a shoulder of nearby Afarwat Peak (4,200 m (13,780 ft)). The ropeway project is a joint venture of the Jammu and Kashmir government and French firm Pomagalski.

### ARAVALLI MOUNTAINS

Stretching for approximately 300 miles over Rajasthan, the Aravalli Mountain Range is one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world and protects the state from the harsh climate of the Thar desert. The highest point in the Aravalli Range is called as Guru Shikhar, which is located in Mount Abu in Rajasthan. These mountain ranges are dotted with many forts and palaces along with several historical towns like Pushkar, Udaipur, and Bundi. There are several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries that fall within the belt of Aravalli Hills. Sariska National Park, Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary and Mount Abu Sanctuary are among them. The Aravalli mountains offer some excellent climbing opportunities at Dhauj, Dumdama, and Nuh. The hard granite rocks of the Aravallis are just perfect for mountaineering. You even get the opportunity to make a visit to some of the most famous temples located here like Arbuda Devi temple.



and different types of water sports like white water rafting. Rishikesh and Haridwar are sacred pilgrimage sites as well as famous yoga and meditation centers. The Valley of Flowers National Park with its abundance of flowers is a popular trekking spot.

### MOUNTAINS IN SIKKIM

The mountain chains which run southwards from the main Himalayan range form the natural boundaries of Sikkim; the Chola range dividing it from Tibet in the Northeast and Bhutan in the Southeast, the Singalila range separating it from Nepal in the West with the Greater Himalayan range forming the barrier between Sikkim and Tibet in the North. Floating high over the cloud-covered lower Himalaya, Mt. Khangchendzonga dominates the landscape of Sikkim. At 27,803 ft is the third highest mountain in the world and the highest in India. But for the Sikkimese, Khangchendzonga is much more than a mountain and is revered as the abode of their guardian deity Dzo-nga. So sacrosanct is the mountain that successive mountaineering expeditions have climbed to within metres of the peak but left the summit inviolate in deference to local beliefs. The sacred mountain can be viewed from every corner of Sikkim. Mt. Thingchinkhang (6010 meters) and Mt. Jopunu (5936 meters) are situated in western Sikkim and falls under Khangchendzonga National Park. These two peaks have been declared by Sikkim Govt. as Alpine peaks in 2006.

### MOUNTAINS OF THE NORTH EASTERN STATES

The Northeastern States are also known as the Seven Sisters include Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Though the seven sisters have their own distinctive features, the presence of Himalayas is mostly felt in Arunachal Pradesh. There are unlimited opportunities for boating, angling, rafting, trekking, and mountain climbing. There are many national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, where you can see endangered species of birds and animals.

### MOUNTAINS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

As the name suggests (Him meaning snow), it is a land of snow-clad mountain peaks, snow-fed rivers and sparkling streams. Be it an easy-going trek for amateurs or high altitude arduous ones for skilled professionals, Himachal Pradesh offers a wide range of mountaineering options. Snow-covered peaks, deep gorges, green valleys, slow-moving glaciers, scenic lakes and gently sloping meadows make expeditions in Himachal Pradesh a must for every mountaineering enthusiast. Apart from mountaineering, the state also attracts a lot of leisure tourist because of its beautiful mountain and valley vistas.

Popular tourist destinations include Shimla, Manali (for adventure sports), Kulu, Kufri, McLeod Ganj, Dalhousie and Dharamsala (the official residence of the Dalai Lama).

### MOUNTAINS IN UTTARAKHAND

Mountains in Uttarakhand have gained popularity for a number of reasons including religion. The state is also known as "Devbhumi" and attracts travellers and religious devotees from all over India. The entire Uttaranchal consists of eight mountainous districts. The state is a haven for adventure sports including trekking, mountaineering, skating, skiing, aerial sports (paragliding and hang gliding)



**NILGIRI HILLS**

Nilgiri Hills, also known as the Blue Mountains are located in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in South India. Situated on the Western Ghats, the Nilgiris are one of the oldest mountain ranges in India. Doddabetta is the highest point in Nilgiri Hills at an altitude of 2,623 meters. Nilgiris comprises of many popular hillstations such as Ooty, Kotagiri and Coonoor. You can make an excursion trip to the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, which is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. Trekking in the Nilgiri Hills is a great way to venture through the forests of teak and rhododendron. Apart from trekking you can also try out fishing and angling.

**SATPURA RANGE**

Satpura Range is part of the Deccan plateau, western India. The hills stretch for some 560 miles (900 km) across the widest part of peninsular India, through Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The range, Satpura meaning Seven Folds, forms the watershed between the rivers Narmada in the north and Tapi in the south. With peaks more than 4,000 feet (1,200 metres) high, the Satpura Range includes the Mahadeo Hills to the north, the Maikala Range to the east and the Rajpipla Hills to the west.

**VINDHYA**

The Vindhya range is a complex, discontinuous chain of mountain ridges, hill ranges, highlands and plateau escarpments in west-central India. The second century Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemy called them the Vindius. The Vindhya Range, at an elevation from 1,500 to 3,500 feet (450 to 1,100 metres), gives rise to the main southern tributaries of the Ganges-Yamuna system, including the Chambal, Betwa, Ken and Tons rivers. The highest point of the Vindhyas is the Sad-bhawna Shikhar or Goodwill Peak which lies 2,467 feet (752 m) above the sea level. Also known as the Kalumar peak or Kalumbe peak, it lies near Singrampur in the Damoh district. Due to their horizontal sandstone topography, the mountains tend to be flat-topped and plateaulike. The range is regarded as marking the border between north and south India.

**Mountains of the world**

*The world's most awe-inspiring mountains are among the most popular tourism attractions across the world, with a range of activities which are as exhilarating as the spectacular views each offers*

**MT COOK**

Mt Cook called Aoraki by the local Maori, is the highest peak in New Zealand. Mt Cook National Park borders the Westland National Park on the west side of the mountain. It has the highest peak in Oceania and is surrounded by numerous glaciers and other spectacular ice formations. Scenic flights by fixed wing aircraft and snow landings by ski plane or helicopter are available from the Mt Cook airport and nearby Glentanner Park. Other activities include boat trips on the terminal lake of the Tasman Glacier, Lake Tasman and visit to Murchison Glaciers.

**MT FUJI**

At a height of 3776 meters, Mount Fuji is with Japan's highest mountain. The volcano has been worshiped as a sacred mountain since ancient times. The active volcano which most recently erupted in 1707. It can be seen from Tokyo and Yokohama on clear days. Another easy way to view Mount Fuji is from the train on a trip between Tokyo and Osaka. Clouds and poor visibility often block the view of Mount Fuji, and you have to consider yourself lucky if you get a clear view of the mountain. If you want to enjoy Mount Fuji at a more leisurely pace and from a nice natural surrounding, you should head to the Fuji Five Lake (Fujigoko) region at the northern foot of the mountain, or to Hakone, a nearby hot spring resort. Mount Fuji is officially open for climbing during July and August via several routes.

**MT KINABALU**

Mount Kinabalu in Sabah, Malaysia is located at the UNESCO World Heritage Site - Kinabalu Park. It is a

perfect destination for nature lovers who can witness the many variations of flora and fauna that are to be found on the mountain at different altitudes. Standing majestically at 4,095m (13,435 feet above sea level), Mount Kinabalu is the highest mountain between the Himalayas and New Guinea. It is one of the safest and most conquerable peaks in the world. The average climber will take two days to climb up and down Mount Kinabalu. Climbers can choose from two available trails to climb Mount Kinabalu—the Summit trail and the Mesilau trail. Other activities include guided trekking and visit to Mount Kinabalu Botanical Garden (Mountain Garden).

**MT EVEREST**

The world's highest mountain, Mount Everest rises to 8848 meters above the sea level. Travellers can opt for Himalayas helicopter tour with Everest Base Camp landing or mountain flights offering the closest possible aerial views of Mt. Everest, Kanchenjunga and the Tibetan Plateau. For those who are restricted by time or other considerations from going for a trek, these flights offer a panoramic view of the Himalayan in just one hour. Everest Base Camp treks have also become popular in recent years.

**TABLE MOUNTAIN**

Table Mountain in Cape Town is South Africa's most photographed attraction. The flat top peak of the mountain reaches 1,086 m above sea level and the cable car takes millions of people to its top. From here you can take breathtaking photographs of Cape Town. There are about 2,200 species of plants found on Table Mountain and

1470 floral species, including many endemic species. The Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens are found on the eastern foot of the mountain.

**MT KILIMANJARO**

At a height of 5895 meters Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania is the highest mountain in Africa and highest free standing mountain in the world. The mountain is part of the Kilimanjaro National Park and is a major climbing destination. There are seven official trekking routes by which to ascend and descend Mount Kilimanjaro. Hikers pass through five different ecosystems – from rainforest to alpine desert to Arctic snowcap, to reach the top. The dormant volcanic mountain has a wooden box at the top where summiteers leave their thoughts.

**MT TITLIS**

At 3,238 metres above sea level, Titlis is a mountain of the Uri Alps. It straddles the border between Obwalden and Berne. The Titlis Rotair cable car rotates its way up towards its snow-covered summit – it revolves 360 degrees during the five-minute trip, treating visitors to idyllic panoramic views of steep rock faces, deep crevasses and distant snow-covered mountain peaks. On arriving at the summit, the route leads you through the glacier cave via an underground tunnel and on to the viewing platform. The suspension bridge stretches from here to the Ice Flyer glacier chair lift station. The Titlis Cliff Walk is just one metre wide and over 100 metres long. The views into the abyss below are breathtaking. Activities include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, rowing, hiking, etc.

**CHAMONIX MONT-BLANC**

Chamonix is one of the oldest ski resorts in France. Located on the north side of the summit of Mont Blanc, the summit itself are part of the village of Chamonix. The destination is renowned for its skiing. In the streets of this high-mountain town you'll hear languages from every corner of the globe. The sports and leisure activities include hikes in summer / winter, mountaineering, paragliding,



mountain bike, climbing, white water sports, and much more.

**CANADIAN ROCKIES**

The Canadian Rockies span the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. It is home to five national parks and quaint towns. Yoho National Park is home to the Takakkaw Falls. Other national parks are Jasper and Banff. Banff and Lake Louise is world famous for its vibrant turquoise lakes, dramatically beautiful mountains, and warm and vibrant community. It is a place which leaves a lasting impression. The jaw-dropping views of the mountains; a hike through the glowing larch trees of fall; a delicious dinner in front of a crackling fire; spotting a grizzly bear feasting on berries; these are memories that will last forever.

**DENALI (MOUNT MCKINLEY)**

Mount McKinley is located in Denali National Park, a four to five hour drive from Anchorage, the capital of Alaska. It is the highest mountain peak in North America, with a summit elevation of 6,190

m above sea level. Flightseeing tours leave from Anchorage, Talkeetna, or Denali Park and fly over the mountain, around it, or up to its edge; either way, you'll get up close to its snowfields, alpine glaciers, deep crevasses, and sheer granite walls. You can even select a flight with a glacier landing, where you'll land on a glacier and walk through Denali's icy alpine world. In a couple hours you'll probably see more beautiful, dramatic, and savage mountain scenery than anywhere else in your life.

**HUAYNA PICCHU, PERU**

Huayna Picchu is the highest peaked mountain of Machu Picchu with Inca structures on the top, at 2,720 m. The hike takes about 50 minutes to reach the top of the mountain. From the summit you can see the main square of Machu Picchu about 600 meters down and the Urubamba canyon all around. South America's number one trek and one of the most popular treks in the world is the Classic Inca Trail. The Inka Jungle Tour, The Salkantay Trek, The Lares Trek are a few other activities.

# Convention Destination: The Crown of India

After 31 years, TAAI decides on the spectacular valley city – Srinagar as the Destination for the 64th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI. The TAAI Convention, also known as, Indian Travel Congress, is being organised in association with Ministry of Tourism, J&K. Kashmir with its awe-inspiring views, engaging tourism activities and warm hospitality is the perfect annual convention destination for TAAI, as the Valley reinvents itself with exciting tourism attractions to attract both domestic and international travellers



**Y**ou can't have enough of it! Whether you call it Paradise on Earth or the Crown of India, the Valley will mesmerise you. Be it its breathtaking landscape, majestic hills, snow-capped mountains, train journey through mustard oil fields, a visit to handicraft showroom that sells art and craft carved by aged artisans, a night stay in a houseboat moored on one side of the shimmering Dal Lake away from the hustle of the city, a romantic joy ride in a Shikara, or the sumptuous Wazwaan prepared by the ever welcoming and hospitable Kashmiri host, your trip to Kashmir is bound to be one of its kind to be remembered for all times.

## SRINAGAR

Srinagar - the summer capital of the J&K state - will great you with a pleasant weather that is neither hot nor cold. On any summer day, the temperature will hover around 15 degree Celsius to 25 degree Celsius. It may cross maximum to 33 to 35 degree Celsius however it won't be too long that the showers or mild breeze will moderate the temperature to make it soothing to move out in open sky.

From the airport, your first stop will be at a houseboat in Dal Lake which is just 30 minutes driving time. A perfect place to unwind after a hectic day of travelling. The houseboat owner will welcome you with a cup Kashmiri Kehwa tinged with spicy saffron and grated almonds which you can sip on the deck of this magnificent boat floating on the vast lake with majestic snow-capped mountains staring at you. A leisure evening shikra ride will set the tone for a perfect dreamy trip ahead to a golden triangle – Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg.

Wherever you go mountains, rivers, lakes, vast meadows, high rise conifers will be your companion. The next day trip should ideally be to Pahalgam – the Valley of Shepherds.

## PAHALGAM

Pahalgam is 45 km from district Anantnag in the south Kashmir and 95 km from Srinagar. This town is the most beautiful tourist place of the



## KEY FEATURES OF 64TH CONVENTION & EXHIBITION OF TAAI

The 64th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI has many features to keep delegates occupied and offer them an experience of a rare kind.

- **Dates:** March 27 to 30, 2018
- **Convention Venue:** SKICC, Srinagar, J&K
- **TAAI Golf Tournament (Proposed):** March 27, 2018 at the Royal Springs Golf Resort
- **TAAI's ITTE:** India Travel and Trade Expo (A B2B Exhibition : Inauguration at 16.30 hrs on March 27, 28 & 29, 2018.
- **Convention Inaugural & Welcome Dinner:** March 27, at SKICC from 18.30 hrs
- **Knowledge Sessions & Presentations:** 10.30 hrs to 13.30 hrs on March 28 & 29 at SKICC
- **Namaste INDIA Dinner:** 18.30 rs onwards on March 28 (Venue TBA)
- **Gala Dinner:** 19.00 rs onwards on March 29
- **Pre-Post House Boat Stay:** One night overnight experience on March 26 & 30 (Limited numbers)
- **Pre-Post Tours:** 2 nights subsidised tour cost to Gulmarg & Pahalgam (March 25 & 26 & March 30 & 31)
- **Networking – Interactive Knowledge sessions – Entertainment – Gala Evenings** will continue to enthral delegates.

country due to its breathtaking views. The snow-capped mountains rise behind the lofty conifers. Its vast meadows, torrential flow of the river Lidder and healthy climate attracts filmmakers every year. The river flows down from the Kolahoi glacier and the glaciers from the great Himalayan.

**Parks:** The destination has beautiful parks through which the river flows. Abshar Park, Poshwan Park, Lidderview parks are in the Pahalgam within a walking distance.

**Places of worship:** Pahalgam Valley is home to temples like Gouri Shankar

and Mamleswara, a gurdwara and also a mosque - Jamia Masjid.

**Aru Villiage:** From Pahalgam tourists can visit Aru village which is 12 kms away from Pahalgam bus stand. The drive to Aru is also splendid which takes the visitors through narrow metallic road overlooking gushing streams, small meadows, villages and conifers. One fond of adventure can take paragliding flights here.

**Baisaran:** Baisaran is a vast meadow three km away from Pahalgam. The stream flows through the meadows and pine trees. Visitors can trek the distance or can hire pony to enjoy a refreshing horse ride to the place.

**Zoo:** The visitors can also get to watch different species of deer, leopard and bear. The zoo is one kilometre away from Pahalgam market.

**Betab Valley:** It is located at a distance of 15 kilometers from Pahalgam in Anantnag district. The destination reminds one of the famous scenes of the Bollywood movie Betaab.

**Tulian Lake:** Tulian Lake is located 16 kilometres southwest from Pahalgam. One can make a one day long trek to this enchanting lake which is surrounded by snow carpeted mountains. The ponies and the guides take visitors to the lake which is at an altitude of 4000 m.

**WHERE TO STAY AND EAT**

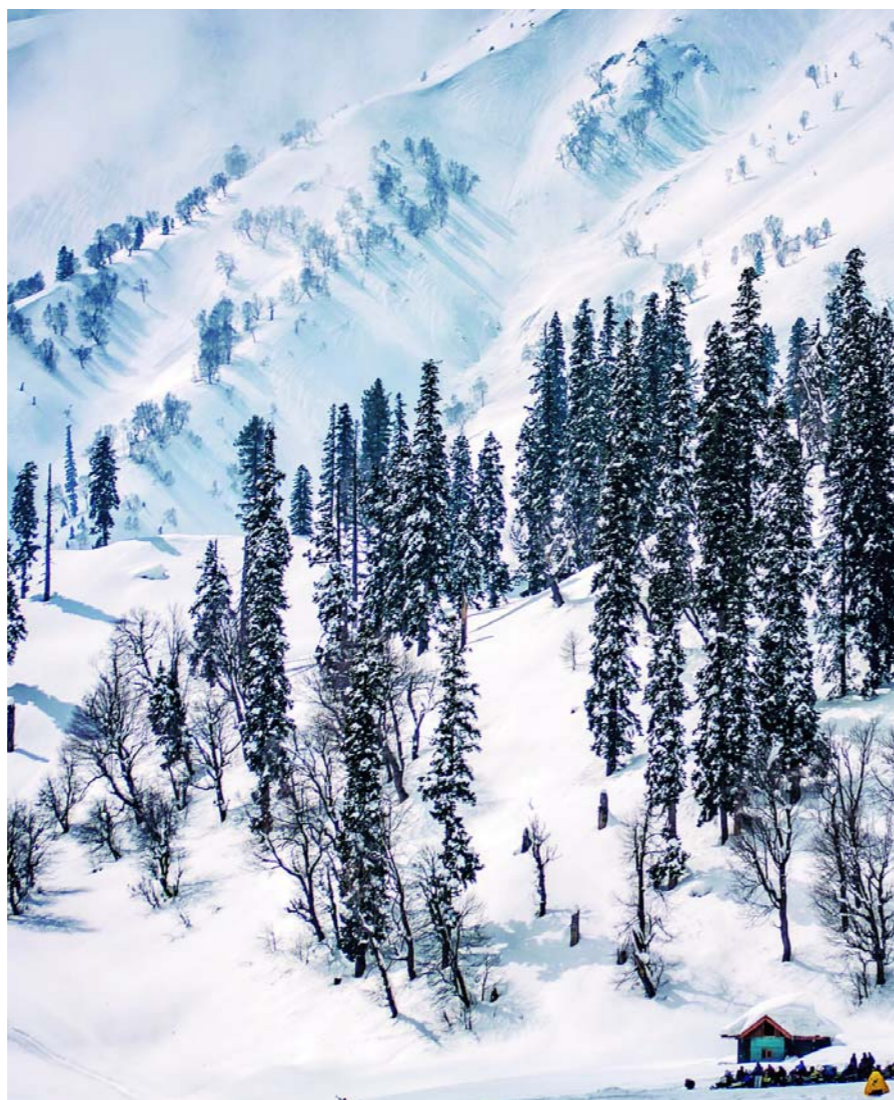
Staying in huts and lodges surrounded by majestic conifers offering fresh oxygen gives one a pleasing experience. There are government owned lodges and huts providing accommodation at economical rates. Besides, there are hotels and guest houses for all categories of tourists in Pahalgam and Aru Village. One should book the accommodation in advance.

**F&B:** Hotels and restaurants in Pahalgam serve all types of delicacies. One can order for a variety of continental and Indian food. Special Kashmiri cuisine (wazwan) is popular and served in all hotels and guest houses. In the main market of Pahalgam, restaurants offer fast a wide range of food and beverages.

**Activities:** Horse riding, golfing, fishing, white water rafting, trekking, zorbing, shopping for world famous Kashmir arts and crafts.

● **Golfing:** One and half kilometer away from Pahalgam market, its golf course has one of the best greens in the world developed by the Pahalgam Development Authority. Spread over 1175 kanals of land, the 18-hole Par 73 golf course amidst pine trees with refreshing air gives golfers the feel of real paradise. It has one of the best pro-shop and club available for golfers. Along with practice greens, there is a hutment area with six double bedroom huts. There are also 100 caddies and 10 pros to assist you in the sport. August

Destination	Direction	Distance
Jammu to Srinagar		303 km – 7 to 8 hours drive/ 30 min flight time
Srinagar to Pahalgam	South Kashmir	95km from Srinagar
Srinagar to Gulmarg	North Kashmir	55km from Srinagar
Srinagar to Sonmarg	North East	96km from Srinagar
Srinagar to Leh		430 km from Srinagar



to November is the best time to play golf in Pahalgam.

● **Fishing:** Pahalgam is also called the ‘anglers paradise’. Fishing in Lidder River is quite challenging. Visitors from

many countries make it a point to hire fishing equipments from Srinagar to enjoy this sport. Anglers should first obtain permits from J&K Fisheries Department in Srinagar. Best season for fishing is April to September.

**A TRIP TO HEAVEN – BY OLIVER UHRIG**

A trip to beautiful Kashmir, so it is said, is incomplete without the visit to one of Srinagar’s houseboats. When I came to the Valley for the first time, 20 years ago, I had no idea, that this journey was about to change my life.

After a lengthy journey I was greeted at the Tourist Reception Centre by a man who had turned up together with a driver and another boy, the latter transferring my luggage into the waiting cab. The man’s name was Majid and he was to be my host for the coming days. A couple of minutes later, we reached a Ghat near Nehru Park where a Shikara (water taxi) waited, ready to take me to a new experience of luxury and hospitality. “Relax,” Majid encouraged me, while we were setting out to cross the lake. “You are almost at home. Everything is going to be fine.” And that was just what I felt, being smoothly taken across the water, while the noise of the city slowly faded in the distance. Everything was alright, and I could actually feel the stress of a long journey reducing with every stroke of the boatman’s paddle.



We reached our destination, situated across the open lake behind Nehru Park. With a big smile he jumped ashore and invited me with a “Welcome sir,” to step ashore as well. My first impression, while being shown around the boat was: “Wow, is all that true?” There was a distinct aroma of deodar wood in the air; the floor being completely covered with oriental carpets. “This is your living room,” Majid explained on entering a room big enough to play soccer in. A crystal cantilever was hanging from the ceiling of the room; the wall was decorated with beautiful Mughal-style paintings. “Just feel like at home, we are at your service”, he added. I thought about throwing myself onto a big sofa, which looked as if it belonged to the Queen of England, but Majid had differ-

ent plans. “Let’s first have a look at the other rooms and your veranda,” he insisted.

He showed me the dining room, which was located behind the living room. A huge refrigerator stood in one corner to ensure that guests are always provided with cold juices and mineral water. A richly decorated table stood at the centre of the room, inviting the weary traveller to sit, dine and wine. “The boy here will see that everything is done according to your choice. Come and see your rooms,” Majid suggested. Rooms? How many rooms? I had requested for one room. Soon I understood why he had used the plural form. In the sleeping room I saw a king size bed, flanked by two small tables. Sofa chairs were standing in the corners and everything was made out of wood. Floral carvings covered every single inch of furniture and ceiling – truly a king’s worthy. A little dressing room was situated between the sleeping room and the bath, the latter being tiled nicely and with a bathtub, right besides the window so that I could lie in warm water while peeping out into nature. At that point I wondered how much an accommodation like this would probably cost in any continental hotel. I skipped the thought.

Later we sat on the veranda, at the front of the boat, where tea was served; Kehwa, with saffron and almonds. Majid told me about his family, about the long tradition of the houseboats, about the former guests – ambassadors, British officers. Sitting here and hearing all that was like history becoming alive. He enquired about my requirements, during my stay. My idea was to take the boat as a base from where to explore other places in the Valley. It turned out to be a good idea. Each morning saw me enjoying a sound breakfast, before visiting Pahalgam, the Mughal Gardens and the shrines of the Valley. Everything was perfectly arranged by my host, from taxis to lunch packets. In the evenings I would sit on the veranda or in the little garden, enjoying a truly heavenly tea and listen to the stories of Majid, before celebrating dinner in the boat’s mess. The last morning saw me a little bit sad, because it was time to leave. My taxi was waiting, my onward ticket was arranged. Finally, when I got on my bus to Jammu, I felt a great thankfulness; thankful for having been able to experience a hospitality and paradise-like landscape, that is hard to match.

It is true what people say: A visit to the Kashmir Valley is incomplete without having stayed on a houseboat. And for me? I have been returning to the Valley approximately 15 times, since my first visit; a visit that changed my life a bit.

*(Oliver Uhrig is a book author and freelance journalist. He works for several dailies and magazines. The article was published in Discover Kashmir travel magazine.)*



## GULMARG

The other most sought after destination for travellers is Gulmarg, famous as a ski resort. Located 56 km south west of Srinagar, it attracts travellers from across the globe during winter months for skiing, heli-skiing, snowboarding and ice-staking.

If you are a skier, Gulmarg offers you best and longest ski run, accessed by gondola. You will watch heli-skiers sliding down from the mountain peaks, kids sloping it along on the baby slope, burly boys running in shorts for rugby thrill on the beaten snow while the artists turn the atmosphere musical under sub-zero temperature at the wonderful natural setting of sprawling snow meadows at Gulmarg.

The resort destination is also famous because of its Gulmarg Gondola ropeway project. The ropeway, stretching 2.5 km connects the bowl-shaped Kongdoori valley with Afarwat. It's the world's highest cable car using gondolas and the only one in the world that takes skiers and tourists to a height of 4,390 m. The two-stage ropeway ferries about 600 people per hour to and from Kongdoori Mountain, a shoulder of nearby Afarwat Peak (4,200 m (13,780 ft)).

From November onwards, the snow turns the lush green meadows into a white carpet which accumulates as high as 8 ft by January and February. The extreme skiers board helicopter from the snow bowl and

fly to the peak of the mountain only to snake down while negotiating hundreds of snow-burdened conifers down the hill. The thrill can only be imagined.

The festive environment of the winter sports also attracts artists from the country who sing different musical notes to entertain tourists. Every year, Tourism Department of Kashmir makes elaborate arrangements for the winter sports and musical events at this world's most beautiful snow bowl.

During the festival, tuneful voices of Indian artists including the local Kashmiri bands warm the atmosphere while traditional artists entertained the audience with folklore, chakri, Rouf, ladishah and Sufiana kalam using traditional musical instruments.

Not only this, Gulmarg is perhaps the only place in Kashmir which has given new dimensions to adventure sports by introducing snow cycling, snow rugby and snow baseball.

## ACTIVITIES

● *Skiing, heli-skiing, snowboarding, ice-skating:* One can hire skis from ski shops of the Department of Tourism at very nominal prices. At around ₹300 you can take best ski or snowboard and enjoy freefall on the slopes. Besides, there is a ski rink, if you ever have wanted to zoom away on skates on frozen ice. For extreme skiers,

helicopter services are also available that will take you to the mountain peak for a thrilling ski run down to Tangmarg.

● *Golf:* In summer, the golf lover will be in for a treat to tee off at India's oldest 18-hole golf course in the bowl surrounded by snow-capped mountains from all sides. The historic Gulmarg Golf Club was started in 1911 by the British who used the place as a holiday resort. Since then it has seen over 100 years of tournaments of both amateurs and professionals. The redesigned golf course at Gulmarg was inaugurated in September, 2011. Besides, the tourists can enjoy horse riding, zorbing, trekking during summers.

## GETTING THERE

● *By bus:* Available from Srinagar, buses operate to Tangmarg which is just few miles away from Gulmarg. From Tangmarg there is a regular service of buses and taxi to Gulmarg. Tourist vehicle can also be hired at ₹2500 to ₹3000 per day.

● *By taxi:* Direct Taxi / MUV service is also available from Srinagar (Batmaloo/Parimpora). Prepaid Taxi / MUV is available from Srinagar International Airport and Tourist Reception Centre.

## SONAMARG

Sonamarg (3000 m) is another most sought after destination among travellers,



especially trekking buffs. Located 96 km northeast of Srinagar, this hill station is a quiet valley along the Srinagar-Leh Highway. Known as the 'Meadow of Gold', the valley is surrounded by mountains which are laden with snow most of the year. The drive to Sonamarg is spectacular as the road passes along gushing Sindh River, which catches your attention from Kangan (36 km from Srinagar).

Sonamarg is also a gateway to Ladakh through Zojila Pass. This hill resort is also base camp for trekkers to Great Lakes.

**Activities:** In Sonamarg you have a host of activities to do. Take a pony ride to Thajiwas Glaciers and waterfalls. The place is also frequented by adventure lovers for white-water rafting. Various local rafting championships are also held. Local companies offer raft rides in groups who can have an exciting 5 kilometres run on wild waters. Hundreds of domestic and foreign tourists make Sonamarg the base camp for trekking to Great Lakes.

**Shopping:** Kashmir is known for the world's best handicraft. Many shops in Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg markets sell unique Kashmiri arts and craft products like paper machie, wood carving, carpets, shawls etc.

**Incredible climate:** Weather in spring months remains cool. The temperature will be hovering around 15 to 25 degree Celsius

in April. Light showers are expected during this month and the visitors are advised to take woollens along.

**Spring:** April - May

**Average Temp:** Day 5C, Night -3C

**Summer:** June - September

**Average Temp:** Day 30C, Night 20 C

**Autumn:** October - November

**Average Temp:** Day 20C, Night 15C

**Winter:** December - March

Day Temp -5C and Night -10C

## GETTING THERE

Srinagar Airport (14 km from the city) is connected by air with all major airlines from Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and other major cities. Air India, Jet Airways, Indigo, SpiceJet, Go Air, Vistara, AirAsia have regular flights to Srinagar.

Jammu to Srinagar (302 kilometers) is six hours drive.

Travellers can also reach the valley by road from Jammu which is 302 km (189 miles) away. You can reach Jammu by air / road / rail services. Jammu Tawi and Udhampore railway stations receive dozens of regular trains and Holiday Specials from major towns. Kashmir Valley receives a major share of tourists by rail / road through Jammu - Srinagar Highway.

The drive to Srinagar from Jammu is also adventurous which passes through various mountain ridges. You will also get

to see Patnitop that offers breathtaking views of hills.

As many as 32 flights land in Srinagar during spring and summer months whereas in winter lesser number of flights operate due to low tourist footfall.

Flying to Srinagar is also an out of the world experience as you will get a bird's eye view of the snow-capped mountains. For around 20 minutes you will be hovering over towering mountain ranges carpeted with snow. The mountain peaks will be peeking out of the heavy clouds making the journey an unforgettable one.

## LEH

Srinagar to Leh road opens in May which remains under heavy snow during the winter months. Leh is connected with the country through flights by various .

While travelling to Srinagar, one will have to pass Zojila pass which is the gateway to Ladakh. Ahead of the trip, one will pass through a Drass at 148 km which the second coldest inhabited place on earth. No flights or train services are available from Srinagar to Drass. Visitors can hire a taxi at TRC Srinagar and board a shared taxi which plies everyday to Kargil and Leh. Drass is also host to the Kargil War Memorial built by the Army at the foothills of Tololing. From Drass, the next stop will be Kargil at 60 km distance.

# TAAI & our Annual Convention

## An introduction



TAAI Leaders with Secretary Tourism and Director Tourism of J&K

**T**ravel Agents Association of India (TAAI) was incorporated in 1951. Initiated four years after Indian Independence, TAAI continues to most effectively and actively support and lead the industry. TAAI has always been India's premier, nodal, largest and oldest travel and tourism association.

The new Managing Committee of TAAI has actively embarked on various challenges and opportunities in fulfillment of its objectives.

TAAI conventions, popularly known as 'The Indian Travel Congress' strongly connects TAAI with the industry. The distinguished media are always present at TAAI conventions. We had over 40 media representatives at 2016 TAAI Convention in Abu Dhabi and will have a large number at Srinagar too.

TAAI conventions are eagerly awaited and attract the attention of the industry,



Mahmood Shah, Director Tourism addressing the Conference

nationally and globally. ITTE - India Travel Trade Expo, a B2B exhibition is an integral part of TAAI conventions.

TAAI conventions are held in different locations of the world and in India. TAAI partners with tourism boards, NTOs, governments, hospitality leaders and travel and tourism associations to organise annual conventions. It has been established that post TAAI convention, the destination gets prominence and outbound increases. The benefit of greater visibility is immense.

### RECENT TAAI CONVENTIONS

- 1) 2016 : Abu Dhabi, UAE
- 2) 2015 : Bali, Indonesia
- 3) 2013 : Bengaluru, India
- 4) 2012 : Istanbul, Turkey
- 5) 2010 : Phuket, Thailand
- 6) 2009 : Dubai, UAE
- 7) 2007 : London, UK

TAAI serves the industry in various verticals. Tourism - Domestic and



President Sunil at the entrance of the most majestic "The LaLiT Grand Palace"

Inbound, Outbound, MICE and specialty events form large activity in our member profiles.

In association with the Hon'ble Ministry of Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir, TAAI is holding its 64th Convention & Exhibition at Srinagar. Over 30 years ago, TAAI's convention was held in Srinagar in the then brand new SKICC (Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre).

During the reception, our delegation visited several sights, venues and hotels. The incredible views the venues offer are superb. The Lalit & Vivanta by Taj are our main hotels. We will also be utilising the services of the top four-star hotels. Srinagar boasts off in addition to offering our delegates the experience of staying in some deluxe and luxury house boats.

*In association with the hon'ble ministry of J&K TAAI is organising some pre and post tours to Gulmarg and Pahalgam.* Thanks to the TAAI Jammu & Kashmir Chapter, led by Zahoor Qari, the Action Team along with the local associations have offered a free night experience to stay on the houseboats of Dal Lake and Nigeen Lake on March 26 and 30, 2018.



An interactive meeting with members of TAAI J&K Chapter



TAAI President & Vice President with Chairman, TAAI J&K Chapter and his members.



TAAI President Sunil; VP Sanjay and Chairman Zahoor with Tassaduq Hussain Mufti, Hon. Minister of Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir; Sarmad Hafeez, IAS, Secretary Tourism and Mahmood Ahmad Shah (KAS), Director Tourism at the Royal Springs Golf Course, Srinagar



Members of TAAI J&K Chapter with TAAI President; VP and Director Tourism at SKICC

# Convention Hotels

## The LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar



**T**he LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar is surrounded by the Himalayan mountain range and offers a scenic and picturesque view of the Dal Lake. It adjoins a golf course and is close to the international airport. The LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar offers 113 palace rooms and suites, including 10 cottages and offers over 4,000 square feet of banqueting space.

Since the time of Maharaja Pratap Singh, The LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar has welcomed guests from all walks of life into its elegant embrace. Historic and grand, the accommodation has seamlessly blended 5-Star amenities into an ambience distinguished by antique furniture and fittings, rich upholstery, ethnic carpets and handicrafts.

Combining the best of local Kashmiri culture and cuisine with culinary concepts from all over the world, the restaurants and bar at The LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar offers distinctive cuisines to choose from. It operates three restaurants, The

Chinar (which includes The Alfresco), The Chinar Garden and the Dal bar.

The LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar celebrates the tenets of traditional Indian hospitality while continually incorporating modern service

standards and latest technology. Enjoy round-the-clock attention from our friendly yet discreet associates. The LaLiT Grand Palace Srinagar received a special recognition under the “best luxury hill resort” category at the Outlook Traveller Awards in 2017.



## Vivanta by Taj Dal View, Srinagar

**P**erched on Kralasangri hill that captures finest panoramic view of the Dal Lake and surrounded by majesty of Zabarwan Mountains, Vivanta by Taj - Dal View, Srinagar, delights you with a nice new buzz that makes it high spot of style in the valley. Drive in just 20 km from Srinagar International Airport and find delightful backseat surprises along the way. As the road winds up to the main entrance check out the stunning views around every

bend. Get a bird's eye view of the spring-summer magical bloom of the Tulip Gardens, the snow-capped peaks of the Zabarwan range in winter, Gulmarg range in spring and the golden glow of the Chinars in autumn. Accented in copper, local timber carvings and warm earthy colours, the resort evokes the spirit and ethos of the valley.

The vibrant reception leads seamlessly to a tea lounge. Where you

can unwind in the company of specialty coffees and the famed Kashmiri herbal tea, Kehwa.

Spread across six acres, Vivanta by Taj - Dal View, Srinagar offers 81 rooms and three suites. All laid out with a variety of comforts in contemporary style with fancy flourishes of traditional Kashmiri design. It's where luxury meets practicality. Service that is personalised and crafted for your comfort.



**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**



**Travel Agents Association of India**

**India Travel Congress – 2018**

64th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI  
27 to 30th March, 2018 : *Srinagar, J&K*

*SKICC : Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre*

*ITTE : India Travel & Tourism Expo (An Exhibition at SKICC on 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2018)*

Time	Particulars	Dress Code	Venue / Hosts
<b>Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>			
All Day	Delegate Arrivals / Media Srinagar Airport	Reception Desk at Airport	
All Day	Airport – Transfers (Only to TAAI Convention Hotels)	<i>Airport to Convention Hotels is about 30-40 minutes driving time.</i>	
1030 – 1500	Convention Registrations & Kit collections	Respective Hotels Central Counter : SKICC	
1100	Tee Off - The TAAI GOLF TOURNAMENT	Royal Springs Golf Resort, Srinagar (Opp SKICC – 5 to 10 Minutes drive from most Hotels)	
1230-1400	PRESS CONFERENCE	Royal Springs Golf Resort	
1600 – 1730	TRANSPORT : Convention Hotels to SKICC	Transfers from Convention Hotels	
1630 – 1800	Inauguration of ITTE	SKICC	
1830 – 2030	Inaugural of 64 <sup>th</sup> Convention & Exhibition of TAAI	Formal Dark Suit / Saree or appropriate.	SKICC
2030 – 2300	Cocktails; Dinner and Entertainment	SKICC	
2200 – 2300	Transfers to Convention Hotels		

<b>Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>			
All Day	Registration & Convention Help Desk	SKICC	
0900 – 0915	Transport to SKICC	Transfers from Convention Hotels	
0930 – 1600	ITTE – B2B	SKICC	
0930 – 1315	Knowledge Sessions	Business Attire	SKICC
1315 – 1430	Networking Lunch	SKICC	
1400 – 1730	Discover Srinagar – City Tour	Departures from SKICC	
1730 – 1815	Transport from Respective Hotels to Venue: TBA	Transfers from Convention Hotels	

1830 – 2030	NAMASTE INDIA : THEMED EVENING	Venue : TBA	
2000 – 2300	Cocktails & Entertainment	Business or National Attire	Venue : TBA
2200 – 2300	Transfers to Convention Hotels		

<b>Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>			
All Day	Registration & Convention Help Desk	SKICC	
0900 – 0915	Transport to SKICC	Transfers from Convention Hotels	
0930 – 1600	ITTE – B2B	SKICC	
0930 – 1315	Knowledge Sessions	Business Attire	0930 – 1315
1315 – 1430	Networking Lunch	SKICC	
1400 – 1730	Discover Srinagar – City Tour	Transport from SKICC	
1730 – 1815	Transport from Respective Hotels to Venue : TBA	Transfers from Convention Hotels	
1830 – 2030	Convention Closing : Awards	Venue : TBA	
2030 - 2300	GALA FAREWELL Cocktails; Dinner & Entertainment	Formal Dark Suit / Saree or appropriate.	Venue : TBA
2200 – 2300	Transfers to Convention Hotels		

<b>Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>			
1000 – 1030	Departures for 2 Nights Post Tour	To Pahalgam / Gulmarg	
1000 – 1030	Departures for One Night House Boat Stay	From Respective Hotels or as Advised.	
ALL DAY	Transport from Convention Hotels to Airport	Transfers from Convention Hotels only – Confirm with our Help Desk	



## SKICC: Conferencing in Paradise

Kashmir is bestowed with natural beauty, hospitable people, world famous art and craft, and you can never ask for a better place than this 'Paradise on Earth' for attending or holding a business conference. Your conference will be an 'out of the world' experience when the venue is located at the most picturesque place on the banks of famous serene and shimmering Dal Lake in the backdrop of the majestic Zabarwan Hills. Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) spread over rolling acres of green carpet along refreshing boulevard is just 18 kilometers from Srinagar's Sheikh-ul-Alam international airport.

Presenting a blend of natural and man-made wonderful architecture designed by Joseph Stein, SKICC offers all the international standard facilities of modern conference at this beautiful venue. Undulating and artistically designed lush green lawns of the SKICC which are further ornated with the fragrant colourful flowers, makes conferencing a cherishable experience.

Even during the scorching heat of the summer in plains, Kashmir has a mild and pleasant temperature which makes conferencing at SKICC all the more a pleasing experience. The cold breeze never stops refreshing you. SKICC is now one of the country's most modern convention centers equipped to handle international conferences with ease and efficiency. The interiors of the center will enchant you with its antiquated wooden and stone designs. Beautiful pictures and paintings of famous artists on its walls depicts the Valley's beautiful landscape, rich art and craft. Besides enjoying the world class facilities and well trained staff, SKICC also offers you the authentic Kashmiri sumptuous Wazwaan prepared by famous chefs. The hi-tech business center has modern facilities to take care of your every need.

SKICC has already hosted many international conferences and its management was praised every time for best services. This international conference center faces world famous Dal Lake and Shikara ride will take you to a small island called Char Chinari- a famous landmark in Srinagar marked with the presence of majestic chinars. From the SKICC venue, your eyes will never miss the beautiful sight of a historic monument, Pari Mahal - 'The Fairies' Abode. It is a seven terraced garden located at the top of Zabarwan mountain range. From the east side of the venue, you will get to see another imposing marvel of the 18th century, Hari Parbat Fort. Post conference, you cannot miss to try your shot at the greens of the world famous Royal Springs Golf Course, which is at a walking distance. Conferencing in Kashmir at SKICC will also give you a chance to see the regalness of Mughal Emperors. In the evening, you can visit the three famous gardens in the Valley - Nishat Garden, Shalimar Garden and Chashme Shahi. The Mughal Emperors themselves made these regal and architectural marvels.

**Facilities:** The venue has a Plenary Hall, Winter Hall, Banquet Hall, Committee Rooms, and a VIP Lounge.

**Auditorium:** Delegate seating is for 650 persons, including two overhanging balconies to seat 100 each.

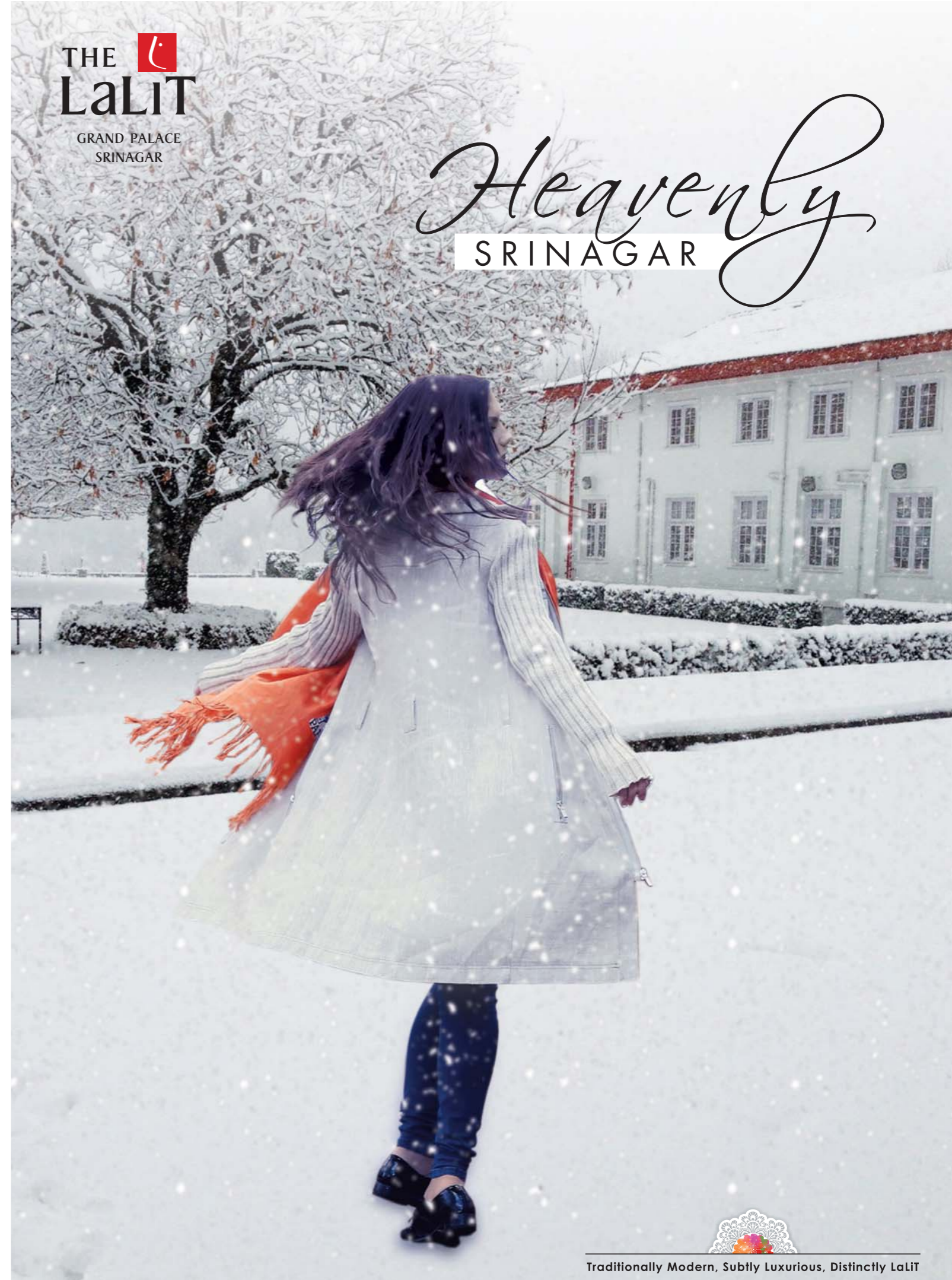
**Conference and banquets:** The spacious banquet hall is another attraction for hosting dinner, banquets for up to 600 people, divisible into three sections that can be used separately or at the same time. Two sections can seat up to 250 persons each and the third smaller section is for small intimate gatherings of up to 50 people. The whole conference hall can seat up to 1000 persons. For smaller meets, there are three meeting rooms, which can accommodate small conference of 20 to 60 persons each.

*Website: [www.skicc.in](http://www.skicc.in)*



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# Azerbaijan: Land of Fire & Stone

Azerbaijan, is not a commonly known destination, but let's take you on a journey that will leave you spellbound. TAAI has signed a MoU with Azerbaijan Tourism Association on February 1, 2018. The MoU highlights that both the associations will work towards promoting tourism and assist in the organisation and implementation of tourism activities between the two countries

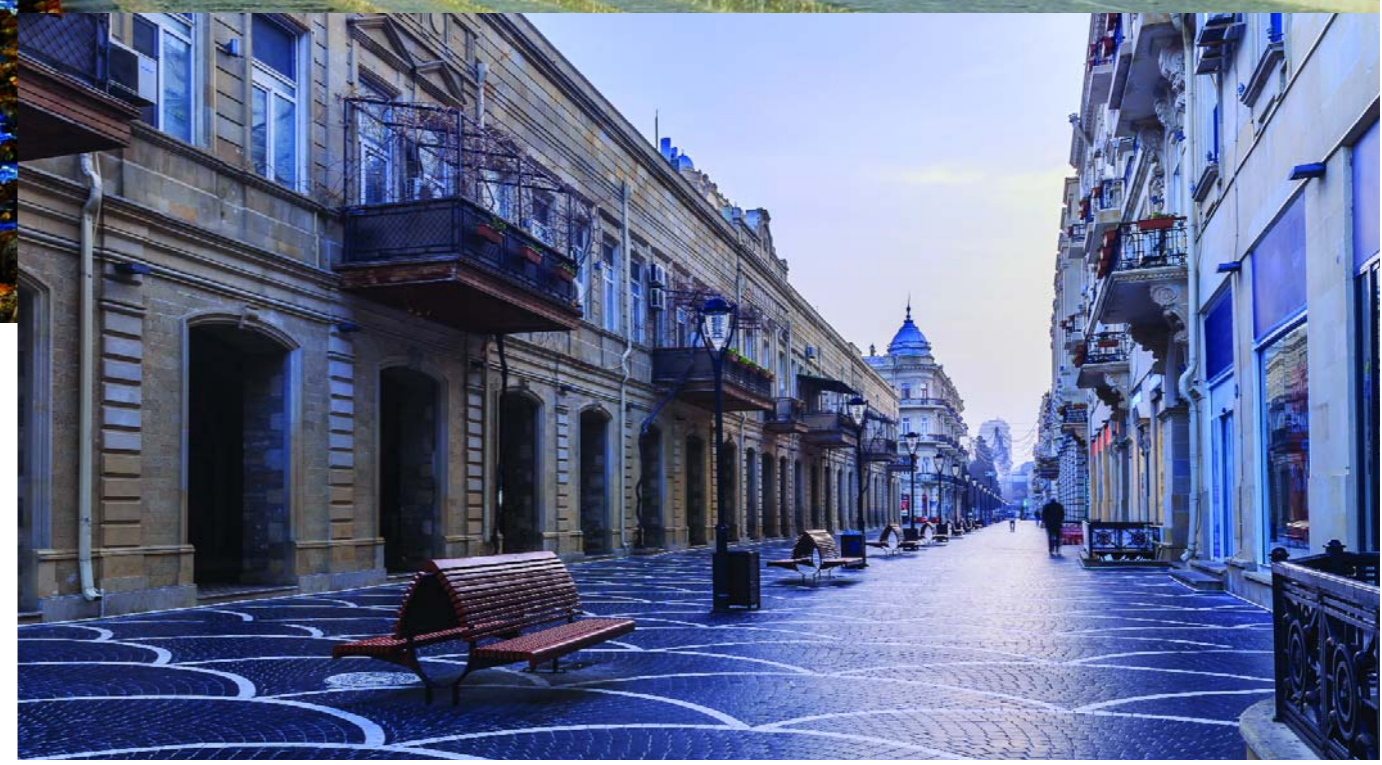
The mystical history of Azerbaijan will leave you mesmerized: Azerbaijan, an independent nation and former Soviet Republic with a population of 9.762 million, is bounded by the majestic Caspian Sea and the marvellous Caucasus Mountains, which spans across Asia and Europe.

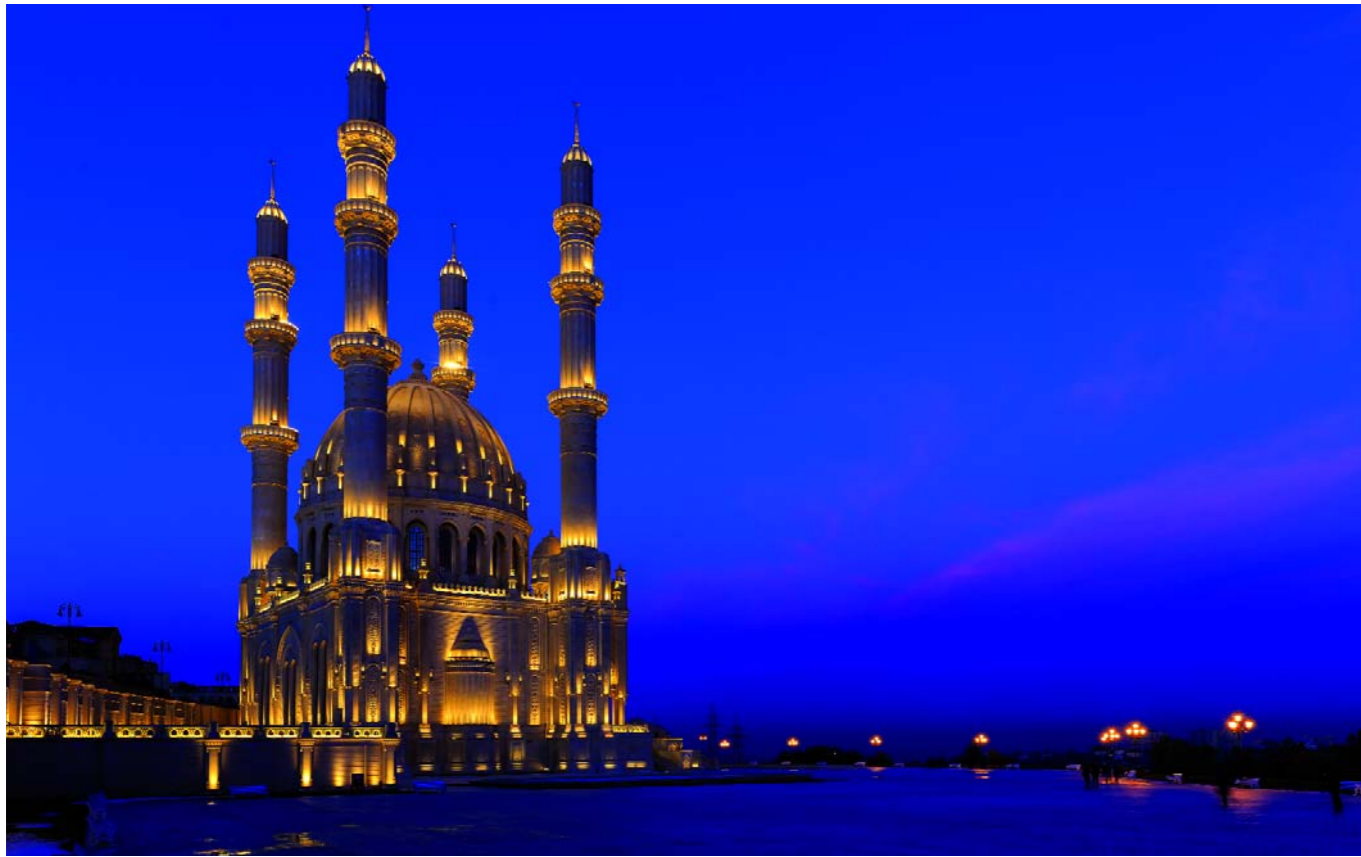
Azerbaijan gained its independence on August 30, 1991. This was the turning point for the country and its

contemporary history as a strong and independent nation. Heydar Aliyev managed to centralise power and lay the foundation for building a new and independent Azerbaijan. Oil-rich Azerbaijan has redefined itself over the past two decades from a struggling newly independent state to a major regional energy player. Azerbaijan has a population of 9.7 million people in 2016. The main religion is Islam and it is one of the few countries with a majority of Shiite population.

The country is popularly known for its Monuments of age-old architecture, mighty temples and magical mosques, ancient houses, cave paintings, temples of ancient deities and many more. The archaeological beauty will amaze any traveller and make him fall in love forever with the beautiful Land of Fire.

**WATCH THE WATER MEET THE SHORE:**  
The nature of Azerbaijan is partly wild





and deserted and partly covered with the remains of ancient forests, so serene and tranquil that it is a never-ending marvel for any traveller. The flora of Azerbaijan is exceptionally rich and vibrant. It spreads across as a large national carpet, due to its exceptionally bright and rich colours. The terrain of Azerbaijan is densely carved by many rivers and mountain streams, some of which form noisy waterfalls, echoing deep into the mountains, portraying its existence.

### THE PARADISE ON EARTH- BAKU:

Baku, a mesmerizing low lying city, also named as 'one of the most beautiful cities in the world' with an approximate population of 2.166 million and an area of 2,130 km square and a coastline along the pristine Caspian Sea. It is also the capital and commercial hub of Azerbaijan.

In this so called medieval city, resides the historic royal complex, where the legendary palace of the Shirvanshahs stands along with the Iconic Stone Maiden Tower. Contrasting this beautiful historic city,

the Zaha Hadid-designed Heydar Aliyev Center, and the Flame Towers, three pointed skyscrapers covered with LED screens, adds a contemporary vibe to Baku. Regardless of whether it is a business day or at the weekend, the cultural life of Baku, both residents and guests of the city are truly entertained and amazed with its broad-ranging evening programmes. From private exhibitions of popular artists, amazing performances and vintage theatres to art galleries and monuments for all local and international artists and tourists, it all resides in the amazing parks of Baku. These cultural arts create a blissful environment and act as a soul to the nation.

This is the city where unhurried clerks and restless night clubbers come together. At night, the windy capital turns into a kaleidoscope of dynamically changing scenes, with the ability to attract anyone into the whirlpool of evening entertainment.

Let loose and have some fun: You can find one of the biggest night clubs in the region, and stars from across

the globe who flock in numbers to perform on the stage of the 'Crystal Hall', a venue equipped with the state-of-the-art concert technology.

Tourists visit Azerbaijan to take part in such international events as the Eurovision Song Contest, the European Games, Formula 1 races and much more. Baku is also known for its gastronomic delight with a spread of restaurants, cafes, pubs, wine-bars and other venues that lights up during the evening.

### ENRICH YOUR TASTE BUDS:

Azerbaijani cuisine has probably gone around the world and back several times. Another delight to the travellers will be the numerous food delicacies and marvellous dishes offered from the local and international cuisines. The International franchises, authentic cafes and luxurious restaurants give the professional travellers a great environment for their respective meets and also allows tourists to fancy their taste buds and have some time of luxury.

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**OUR TRAILBLAZER MEMBER : CREATIVE TRAVELS, NEW DELHI**

# In a Creative world

Over 40 years of excellence, 6 countries, 63 international and national awards and a network all over the Indian sub-continent – Creative Travel has grown to become one of the region’s most prominent, respected and independent Destination Management Companies (DMCs) offering the finest of cultural experiences, personal immersions and natural wonders all over India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Tibet & the Maldives and is today India's largest family owned DMC

Creative was founded by Ram Kohli, who has many achievements to his accord. Ram was known for being a pioneer in the Indian tourism industry. He was also one of the founders of IATO, former Chairman of PATA, President of the International Chapters of ASTA and much more. Today, the company is run by his two sons, Rajeev and Rohit who are backed by a team of professional managers.

In the early 1960s, Ram Kohli was hired straight out of college by the then largest travel company in India.

Impressed by his dedication, his company sent him to Germany to open the first ever office of an Indian travel company in Europe. A young bachelor, he adapted well to a new world. Ram married Deepak in 1968 and soon Rajeev came along. But his company had greater plans and it was off to New York to repeat what he had done in Europe. Not only was Ram tremendously successful in building India as a major brand across the Americas, but also added one more member to the Kohli family in Rohit.

In 1976, he felt the tug of home. He impulsively quit his job and moved the

family back to India, a country that was deeply mired in socialist ideology and a backward economy. Rohit Kohli says, “We never really got around to asking him why he made the move back home when others from the developing world were trying to immigrate to the West. He was just driven in ways different from others. It takes a different kind of man to uproot his family from a comfortable life to start from scratch in a new world.”

In 1977, out of a garage at home, Creative Travel was founded. With nothing in hand, Ram spent months of the year travelling the world to create a following of partners and friends, many who still work with the company today. Rajeev Kohli reminisces, “We still remember the times when we would not hear from him for weeks and his coming home meant the arrival of great presents and many hugs. The travel industry was very different before emails or cell phones. Why we tell you this is because Creative Travel is not just a business. This is a family. A family of the Kohlis, a family of our team members, a family of our partners across the world.”

Rajeev says, “The company is best known for innovation in designing the consumers’ journeys. The cities may be the same, but every guest has a different experience. This region is a special place for travellers and our vast experience in handling guests from all over the world allows us to create the most memorable programmes for them.”

What makes Creative different? What makes them a preferred partner for some of

the finest travel brands across the world? Rajeev comments on this, “We could very easily say we provide the best of services or are most competitive in rates. We can boast of having superior relationships with hotels & suppliers and a great network of offices. But this is not what we would say.”

He adds, “Being family owned and driven, we have a unique perspective on what success is like. First, we are not Indian alone, but South Asian, a region that has the deepest of cultural & historical ties. We are not a simple inbound tour operator, but rather a super specialist Destination Management Company with multi-faceted skills, matched by few. Our existence is best summed up in our vision statement: ‘To truly be the best at creating memorable and authentic travel experiences in the regions we cover.’” The company does not aim to be the biggest or lowest priced DMC in India. Delivering consistent & dependable quality comes at a price. They are committed to a level of passion to ensure that whatever they deliver is filled with their love and pride for the countries they cover. As their mission statement says, ‘The foundations of our companies are based on being creative, innovative and dependable in all we do for our partners across the world. We are proud of our historical, cultural and social heritage and we work to showcase these in the most engaging and honest way we can. We aim to continuously exceed our guests expectations and ensure they return home as ambassadors of our region’. This was a statement that was written collectively by the team members of Creative Travel.

Rajeev emphasises on the company's ideology, “Over the years, we have grown as a family. Creative Travel is our core brand, but we have expanded into two other equally loved verticals. ‘Plan it! Meetings and Conferences’ is our super specialist PCO (Professional Congress Organiser) team. With a team of 20 professionals and congress specialists, the Plan it! Team organises association meetings across India and now the world. They have built quite a reputation for their professionalism and service delivery. About three years ago, we also decided to venture into the Outbound Travel segment, where many of our TAAI colleagues are already active. ‘Signature Tours by Creative Travel’ was then



Rajeev and Rohit with their mother Deepak

created. We are very conscious that this is a very crowded space, but equally conscious of the growing number and clout of Indians travelling abroad. We believe there is space for a niche quality player and that is where we are positioning. We know this team will take a bit more time to make a dent in the humongous market that India is, but we are confident of making it happen.”

The difference Creative Travel believes in their desire to present destinations through experiences. They recognise that gone are the days of travellers wanting to only visit museums and lifeless monuments. Displaying destinations through interactions, engagements and

other experiences that show the heartbeat of living and vibrant culture is the main plan. Rohit adds, “Be it through private visits, guest lectures, culinary treats, unique walks or just a visit to a hidden gem, our trips are sprinkled with unique features that are often not offered by others. This is fundamental to every programme we design. Whether a wellness holiday or a desire to discover the spirituality which is synonymous with India, a trek into the hills of the Himalaya, an exploration of culinary diversity of the country or a see some of the best wildlife India has to offer, discover the art, textiles, explore the palaces, meet the locals, whatever it is that you are looking for in



Ram Kohli



your particular holiday, we listen to what is required and plan accordingly.” Creative Travel believes that business is about building relationships and not making money alone. “We are known for our integrity and loyalty. We promise to stand by our partners, in thick and thin and believe that supporting our partners must come at any cost,” Rohit adds.

Creative Travel won its first national award in 1979 and today has emerged to be recognised by the likes of the World Travel Awards as Asia's Leading Destination Management Company, India's Leading Destination Management Company as well as India's Leading Luxury Agency. In 2017, the World Travel Awards named them again as India's Leading DMC and India's Leading Luxury Agency. They now have 17 World Travel Awards and in 2018, they received the 7th SITE Crystal Award for Excellence in Incentive Travel, affirming their position as South Asia's most awarded and recognised Incentives & Meetings team. The company was also recently awarded the SATTE Award for Excellence in Inbound Tour Operations

and won the National Tourism Award by the Ministry of Tourism 15 times. The team has over 63 rewards and recognitions that have been a result of the passion in the people who work for them.

One always must try to stay a step ahead of the competition. This is fundamental in operating any successful business. Affirming this, Rajeev says, “We often travel internationally to participate in seminars and conferences. We find listening to speakers from outside our space to be most insightful. Listening to world leaders in tourism share their mind, allows us to pick up small ideas to use back in the business. We pay attention to trends across the world. We listen to conversations in social circuits. All this adds to our understanding of how things are changing and allows us to brainstorm internally on balancing our business within those changing trends. Change is the only constant. We have to adapt to new scenarios. We have to be selective in the business we do. We never try to be everything to everyone. We have always recognized what our strengths are and

where we are weak. To be successful, an entrepreneur must play to their strengths and also appreciate their limitations. “

After having over 170 team members across the company's four operating brands late last year, it moved into new corporate headquarters. Rohit further states, “We are proud of the men and women who work for us. Our new home is much larger, much brighter and keeps the needs of a modern workforce in mind. The use of natural light and green walls has been an important element of the design. It is a greener, smarter building with many elements of recycling and waste management in place.”

The building has been designed to encourage creativity and with 10 meeting areas, discussions zones, an amphitheater for presentations, larger cafeteria and relaxation zone, the company has tried to create an environment that helps our team be more productive and more importantly happy. The team like to call it a 'Thoughtful Building' - A working environment designed with the occupier in mind.



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# GST analysis for travel industry by GST Guru

**Manish Gadia & Sumit Jhunjhunwala**

**W**e present the updates on GST for air ticketing and tourism industry – for our member agencies to refer to and be guided. Readers are requested to consult their own tax advisors / practitioners and what is given here is based on our GST Guru’s interpretation and cannot hold TAAI and GMJ responsible for any unintended mistake of interpretation or any action taken on the basis of this Note.

Ever since the introduction of GST from July 1, 2017, there have been quite a few changes in the legislation including changes in the procedure for compliances as well as rates of goods and services. In this edition we bring updates w.r.t some latest and important changes that are applicable for the travel industry.

## 1. Transportation of passengers by air on principal to principal basis

Air India vide its letter dated August 25,

2017 has communicated that solely for the purpose of GST, the agents of Air India may book the tickets on Principal to Principal (P2P) basis, wherein the agents shall take Input Tax Credit of GST (K3) charged by airline @ five per cent for Economy Class and 12 per cent for other than Economy Class. Thereafter the agents who book such air tickets on P2P basis may take Input Tax Credit (ITC) of the GST (K3) charged by the airline and charge appropriate GST to passengers on the taxable value.

However in the above P2P model, there are some challenges and possible issues that the agents may face if they choose to adopt the above model. Some of the critical challenges are listed below:

- Civil/Criminal liabilities of agents in case of any loss incurred by passengers due reasons including but not limited to; - *Fault/negligence of the airline. Eg: Loss of Baggage*

- *Non fulfillment of contractual obligations, Eg: Passenger denied boarding due to overbooking*

The above are only few examples of the many possible scenarios wherein the agent may be unwillingly dragged in the legal battles with the passenger and airline. In this regard, it would be advisable to enter into P2P model only if the airlines/ authorities clarify/indemnify the agent from any such liabilities. It would also be prudent for agents to consult their legal experts to make a conscious and sound decision.

- Non availability of ITC for advance booking of tickets. These situation involve booking of tickets for travel at a future date. Under the provisions of GST, it appears that the recipient of the supply (agents under the P2P model) shall be eligible for ITC of GST (K3) charged by the airline only when the

services of transport of passenger by air is received i.e. when the passengers commences the journey.

So in cases involving booking of an ticket for travel date two months later, the agent under his contractual agreement may be required to remit the value of air ticket including GST (K3) to airline / BSP / Consolidator immediately, but the cash flow of the agent shall be hampered for two months to the extent of ITC of GST (K3) since the government may allow ITC to agent only on commencement of journey by passenger.

To mitigate such difficulty, TAAI has already sought a clarification from the Ministry of Finance with regard to the time when ITC of such GST (K3) can be taken by agents under P2P model. Pending the clarification, it would be advisable for agents to not opt for P2P model as proposed by Air India.

- Loss of ITC due to incorrect classification of nature of supply and incorrect determination of 'Place of Supply' by Airline. It was seen that certain airline were determining the place of supply incorrectly and accordingly the nature of supply was also incorrect. Owing to this, the agents may stand to lose the ITC of GST (K3) charged by airline.

## 2. Tour Operator Service

A travel agent operating tour operator services was earlier subjected to stringent GST conditions i.e. pay GST @ five per

cent (with no Input Tax Credit) or pay GST @ 18 per cent (with full Input Tax Credit). In such a situation, the tour operator was in a fix since opting to pay GST @ five per cent meant rise in cost of Tour (due to non-availability of ITC on GST charged on purchase of tour package from another tour operator) and opting to pay GST @ 18 per cent meant increase in net price for end consumer since GST is cost to the consumer.

Now, pursuant to representations given

Description	GST Rate	Input Tax Credit
Transport of Passengers / Rent a Cab Services, with price charged for services	5%	ITC of GST charged by fuel cost included in the nother Rent A Cab Operator / Transporter of Passengers available. No other ITC available
	12%	Full ITC available
Transport of Passengers / Rent a Cab Services (with or without fuel cost)	18%	Full ITC available

by TAAI to the GST Council and other concerned officials in the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, the government has now permitted ITC of GST charged by a tour operator to another Tour operator under the five per cent GST

scheme. The present day GST rates in this sector are summarised below for reference;

## 3. Transportation of passengers by motor vehicle / rent a cab service

An integral part of travel agency business is passenger transportation or giving car on hire basis. Initially GST was levied on this segment @ five per cent (with fuel cost and no Input Tax Credit) or @ 18 per cent (with / without fuel cost and with

full Input Tax Credit). Thereafter there have been quite a few changes in this sector. The present day GST rates in this sector are summarised above for reference.

Description	GST Rate	Input Tax Credit
Tour Operator Service	5%	ITC of GST charged by another Tour Operator providing tour services available. No other ITC available*
Tour Operator Service	18%	Full ITC available

\* GST charged by hotels, cab operators, airlines, local guides, etc shall not be available as ITC to a touroperator who is paying GST @ five per cent on his tour services.

**Disclaimer:**  
The discussions and interpretations set forth in this material are based on the statutory laws and draft rules in public domain as of the date of this material i.e., February 10, 2018. If there is a change, including a change having a retrospective effect, in the statutory laws, the discussions and comments expressed in this material would necessarily have to be re-evaluated in light of the changes. TAAI and GMJ do not have responsibility of updating this note



# Three ways cruise line marketers can win with digital

Today's consumers have sky-high expectations. Whether they're calling a car, ordering groceries, or booking a cruise, people expect to find what they want, when they want it. And these rising expectations create an opportunity for cruise brands to build deeper customer relationships and elevate the customer journey

Booking a cruise is complicated. There are a number of factors to consider - ports, routes, meal options, on-shore excursions, and vast differences in a ship's room selection.

Understanding such a complex product is tough and takes a lot of effort for consumers. Plus, the average time

between when a person starts researching and actually books a trip is shrinking as people increase the amount of research they do across devices. Online research prompted more than 390 million visits to U.S. cruise line websites over the last year, which is more than 34X the estimated number of U.S. cruise passengers in 2016.<sup>2</sup>

With that in mind, here are three principles that can help cruise marketers raise the bar.

### VALUE EARLY ENGAGEMENT

First impressions matter, and so does your first engagement with a potential customer. As with many products, search is the go-to channel when people begin to explore a cruise.



70% of cruisers consulted a **cruise line's website** during the decision-making process for their most recent cruise vacation.

Cruise brands, destinations, and ports are among the most popular types of searches conducted related to cruises.<sup>3</sup> We've also observed that category searches for terms such as "Alaska cruises" and "best cruise lines" exceed that of any individual cruise brand by more than 2X.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that many travelers are undecided. If they're researching early enough, they may be more valuable than someone seeking a last-minute discount. It's vital to establish an engagement strategy that connects with these researchers early.

Berge & Meer, a German tour operator promoting package tours, including cruises, knew that customers conducted many searches before going on vacation. Travelers would often search with broad terms first such as "German vacation" or "cruise discounts," and not for their brand, leaving the company unsure of how to strategically market themselves in search. Berge & Meer worked with Google to implement a cross-device, data-driven approach to attribution and evaluate the impact that various

keywords had on a conversion. The result? Optimising its search strategy helped Berge & Meer grow bookings by 24 per cent on desktop and by as much as 26 per cent on mobile.

Investing in brand and category search terms gives cruise marketers an opportunity to capture interest in the early consideration stages and engage consumers further on their website or through a call center. If a consumer isn't exposed to your brand in the early stages, she may not seek you out when she is further down the research process.

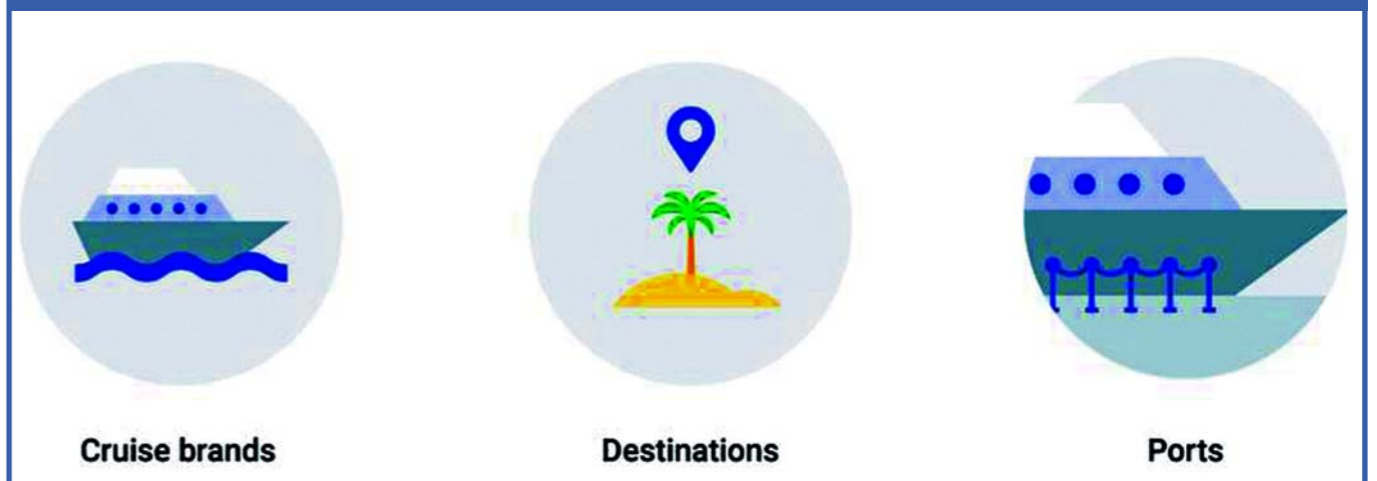
### MAKE IT EASY TO BOOK WITH FAST, FRICTIONLESS OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCES

Digital's influence in the travel research and booking process continues to grow, as 70 per cent of cruisers consulted a cruise line's website during the decision-making process for their most recent cruise vacation. Cruise research is also accelerating across devices: in the US,

cruise searches on mobile grew at least 5X faster year-over-year than those for hotels or air travel. And while travel agents are a vital part of the cruise industry, consumers' demand for direct online bookings is high. Among consumers who have been on a cruise, 47 per cent booked their most recent trip online vs 35 per cent who did so through a travel agent. Connecting with consumers online through channels such as search is the first step; having an easy-to-use website or app is next in moving them further down the customer journey.

Creating frictionless, comprehensive experiences across devices should be a priority for all marketers. But it's even more important for cruise brands due to the complexity of the product experience. People interested in booking a future cruise told us that pricing, destinations, entertainment, and dining options were among the leading components that would influence their choice of a cruise line, but the average cruise website doesn't facilitate easy comparisons between

## What people search for most when exploring cruise options



ships or even rooms.

Kathy Mayor, chief marketing officer of Carnival Cruise Line, is bullish on the importance of evolving digital experiences to meet consumer needs. “At Carnival Cruise Line, we believe in meeting customers wherever they are in their journey and providing them choices aligned with heightened expectations in this ever-evolving digital world,” she said.

Mayor continued, “For a cruise rookie that is looking to be both inspired and educated about cruising as an option for their next vacation. We evolved our website, [carnival.com](http://carnival.com), to offer visual-based search, which saw improved conversion during the peak booking period in 2017. For a customer already booked on a Carnival cruise, they now have a choice of booking their shore excursions both on the web and on the app, both pre-cruise and during the cruise. This is an early example of digital being a key channel for onboard experiences and services across the customer journey.”



new to cruise, or similar to them in demographics, marketers may be missing opportunities to grow brand awareness and share.

With digital, marketers have the opportunity to use data to understand customer intent, group customers according to lifetime value, and market to each segment accordingly. For instance, a first-time cruiser signaling interest in a Baltic cruise may provide more long-term value to a marketer than, say, an existing customer who shows annual interest in Caribbean cruises.

Machine learning will continue to fuel such innovations in targeting and automation, making it easier for marketers to reach and engage audiences. Still, the basics remain. People want to find information quickly, and they want their digital experiences to be seamless. If you can deliver that, you’ll be well-positioned to build a long-term relationship with your customers - and drive profitability while doing so.

Source: [www.thinkwithgoogle.com](http://www.thinkwithgoogle.com)

### AUTOMATE TO REACH ‘NEW TO CRUISE’ CUSTOMERS

The majority of cruise business is driven by experienced, or repeat, cruisers. However, travellers who are open to considering such travel should not be missed. The percentage of Americans who have never cruised but plan to do so in the future (29 per cent) exceeds the percentage of those who’ve cruised before and plan to do so again (26 per cent). By focusing exclusively on an engagement strategy to reach those

## What matters most to people interested in booking a cruise



Pricing



Destinations



Entertainment



Dining options

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# IATA Update

## Prohibition on Agency Credit Card Usage – Relaxed



It has been a long time since TAAI and UFTAA have been campaigning with IATA to change the Resolution 890 which prohibits the usage of their own credit cards in connection with the sale of Airlines tickets to any customer. APJC India which had sent proposals to several PA Conferences of IATA, was unsuccessful in getting the proposal amended.

Finally, during one of the recent PAPGJC Meetings, UFTAA once again insisted that the ban on Agency credit card usage must come to a halt in the current market scenario. Thankfully, TAAI's president, was also involved in the debate. The November PA Conference of IATA successfully adopted the resolution to allow agents to pay for tickets with their own credit

cards. However, this is only with the consent of the Airline.

IATA has published FAQ's that will help the Agency to understand the impact of the amendment approved. One must note that the earlier resolution had expressly prohibited the usage of the credit card. One can see the change now.

## FAQs

### Changes to Resolution 890

**Q. In November 2017, the Passenger Agency Conference (PACConf) adopted a new Resolution 890, which governs customer card sales. What has changed?**

A. The main changes to Resolution 890 are as follows:

- Updated wording which is in line with industry rules and best practices
- Amendments which allow use of Agent-own cards and Alternative Transfer Methods if permitted by the airline.

**Q. When does the new Resolution take effect?**

A. The new Resolution 890 will be effective globally from March 1, 2018.

**Q. What is an Alternative Transfer Method?**

A. An Alternative Transfer Method is a means by which an agent can remit monies received from customers (and held in trust) to the airline outside the BSP. Alternative Transfer Methods include physical cards, virtual cards, and virtual account numbers issued in the name of the agent or someone acting on behalf of the agent.

**Q. What does this Resolution change mean for agents?**

A. If an agent has obtained the explicit consent of an airline, the agent will be able to use Alternative Transfer Methods, including their own credit card, to issue tickets with that airline through the BSP.

**Important:** An agent may not use their own card unless consent has been provided by the airline prior to ticket issuance.



**Q. What if an agent wants to use their own credit card?**

A. Prior to an agent using their own credit card, the agent must consult with the airline in question and obtain their respective consent and/or payment acceptance policy.

**Q. What does this Resolution change mean for airlines?**

A. Airlines should share their explicit payment acceptance policies with their agent stakeholders so that travel agents can operate in full transparency. The Resolution provides a framework for airlines to make their own individual commercial decisions regarding the use of agent-own cards and Alternative Transfer Methods.

If an airline does not consent to use of agent-own cards or an Alternative Transfer Method, then there is no change. Airlines may also establish any applicable consequences in case of misuse of agent-own cards or Alternative Transfer Methods by an agent.



# Information on PCI DSS



vendors suggested by IATA as QSA (Qualified Security Assessor) who can support the agencies requiring respective levels of compliance.

## THE DEADLINE TO SUBMIT REQUIREMENT TO IATA : MARCH 1, 2018

The discussions with IATA revealed that there are broadly three categories:

- a) Agencies with NIL Credit Card Transactions have to file a declaration with IATA
- b) Agencies with fewer than 20,000 Credit Card Transactions, annually are required to file a Self Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)
- c) Agencies with more than 20,000 Credit Card Transactions may have to go through higher levels of compliance as required. There are different "Merchant levels" in this category and are required to consult a QSA to ensure they are on the right path

As part of this commitment, after a joint collaboration with global Associations of travel agencies and PCI DSS Security Council, IATA had signed an agreement with Trustwave, a Qualified Security Assessor (QSA) by the PCI Security Standards Council, for travel agents to attain PCI DSS certification. TrustKeeper PCI Manager will walk the travel agents through the steps that are appropriate for their transactional volumes, making it easy for them to understand what needs to be addressed, how to find the solution, and easily check-off the task once it is completed. This option is valid for those agencies that are processing fewer than 20,000 BSP card transactions per year. Many travel agents in India fall in this category. Besides Trustwave, IATA will also accept evidence of PCI DSS compliance from any other certified PCI Security Standards Council partners.

TAAI has taken up the task of discussions with QSAs operating in India and who are in the list provided by IATA to offer members with better pricing and hand-hold them through the complex filing system.

**There are different categories of SAQ levels, 'Panacea QSA & GIS Consulting' has offered special prices and will assist with the compliance. As per Panacea QSA & GIS Consulting, SAQ must**

**be attested for compliance and must be very clear about filling in correct details.**

- **COMPLIANCE, ALL PARTICIPATING MEMBERS SHALL GET THEIR GDS ENVIRONMENT VALIDATED AS PER CURRENT IATA MANDATE OF SECURITY UNDER APPLICABLE PCI DSS V3.2 SAQ C-VT BY MARCH 1, 2018**
- **MEMBERS HAVING MULTIPLE PAYMENT ACCEPTANCE CHANNEL APART FROM GDS SUCH AS POS/EDC/PG/PAYMENT LINK VIA WEBSITE /E-COMMERCE WEBSITE etc. MAY CONNECT WITH THEIR ACQUIRERS (LIKE BANK OR POS PROVIDER, PAYMENT GATEWAY, OTHER PAYMENT SERVICE PROVIDER) TO UNDERSTAND THEIR APPLICABLE PCI DSS COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT**

## IMPORTANT NOTE:

- a) Panacea QSA and GIS consulting have informed that for agencies using multiple channel for transacting cards, should fill SAQ-D which is comprehensive and covers all payment channels. Such merchants may also fill multiple SAQs based on requirements from different acquirers.
- b) Merchants storing card data must fill SAQ-D only, such merchants also have to be validated on other PCI DSS requirement such as application testing, network testing and other PCI DSS requirements.
- c) This is an introduction of QSAs given to TAAI, there are a number of QSAs available, members have the discretion to avail of any QSA as they chose fit
- e) In the sample attestations / certifications, it will require about 2 hours to interpret and file one SAQ. Timeline may be different for SAQ-A EP and SAQ-D as they have other requirements.

We have advised the consultant to be available since most members will immediately contact them and require assistance. The deadline to send the document to IATA is March 1, 2018.

**To go through PANACEA QSA and GIS Consulting** – There is a dedicated toll free number for TAAI members which is 18002001877 for special assistance and pricing. To register online at [www.panaceainfosec.com/iata](http://www.panaceainfosec.com/iata)

# PCI DSS FAQs

## 1) Why are there multiple PCI DSS Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SAQs)?

Every self-assessment questionnaire applies to a specific environment; hence, it is essential for all merchants and service providers to choose the right SAQ,

when they are going through the self-assessment process. In a lot of cases, companies will realize that they are not meeting all the necessary criteria for

the SAQ they want to fill in, and as a result they will find themselves encumbered with a number PCI DSS requirements that are hard to process.

This shows that it is important to determine which SAQ best fits the profile of your company.

## 2) Do we need to fill in a SAQ per individual IATA number or can we do it jointly per Head office and including all branches?

You can do it jointly for all those point of sales for which the head office has full financial responsibility. In this case, you are only required to validate once annually for all locations and submit quarterly passing network scans by a PCI SSC Approved Scanning Vendor (ASV) for each location, if applicable.

## 3) Why is the compliance Valid only one year and why should I not get PDI DSS compliance/ certification contract for more than one year?

As per PCI SSC guideline PCI DSS certification/ compliance is only valid for one year unless there is a major change in card data related environment. Multiple year contract has various ambiguities, please consider following before entering into multiyear contract:

1. PCI DSS compliance requirements may change after first year of certification/ compliance.
2. Current technology may get obsolete, what if GDS systems is replaced by another technology or system after first year compliance/certification?
3. Your business environment or business processes may change after first year compliance/certification.
4. What if the business comes to halt after first year of compliance/certification for any engaged parties? (such as travel agency or PCI QSA)
5. What if IATA discontinued the PCI DSS certification/compliance mandate in subsequent year?

Hence PCI compliance or SAQ's must be validated every year and one year contract are more feasible based on above points.

## 4) Once I get my PCI DSS compliance certificate from Panacea how do I send it to IATA?

Please note that IATA has advised that you will receive instructions form them on how and when it has to be submitted.

## 5) If I only accept credit cards over the phone, does PCI DSS still apply to me?

Yes. All businesses that store, process or transmit payment cardholder payment data must be PCI DSS compliant for every sales channel through which they engage in card transactions.

# Generational markets: Where are they headed in 2018

TrekSoft is a booking solution that provides tour and activity companies with the tools they need to sell, manage and grow most effectively. This trend report by TrekSoft studies the Millennial, the Gen Z and X and the Baby Boomer segments to help industry professionals stay updated with the current travel landscape and know where these segments are heading

## MILLENNIALS AND GENERATION Z

As the largest living generation at the moment, Millennials have gotten their fair share of focus from the tourism industry and any other that wants to buy into their attention.

Millennials remain the largest living generation in the United States and account for one-third of the current working force. They are spending on average US\$ 1,130 less on travel than their elders. When surveying Millennials in the US, UK and China, Airbnb revealed that most prioritised travel over purchasing a home, getting a car, or paying off debt. In that same survey, travel was also prioritised in China and the UK when it came to what Millennials put their savings towards. All three groups stated that their focus is local and personalised travel with at least 80 per cent of each group saying the best way to learn about a place is to live like a local.

### Most Millennial travellers are looking for:

- Services that are easy to find and book.
- Make sure your services are well-represented on review sites such as TripAdvisor. In a survey by Stride Travel in 2016, it was revealed that 95 per cent of travellers are more likely to trust reviews on a third-party site than on a destination or tour operator's site.

### Why it's important

At last estimate, these 22 to 31-year-olds are worth around US\$ 200 billion. In the annual study by Allied Market Research in 2016, it was estimated that by 2022, online



travel will be worth US\$ 1,091 billion. That's not a figure to take lightly. By 2025, Millennials will comprise three quarters of the global workforce, which will bring them into a new era of spending power.

### Operators who want to attract Gen Zers should:

Since the majority of Millennials are avid smartphone users, this means that you need to have a website that is both attractive and functional. Millennial customers should be able to learn about your offers and then purchase once they've come to the decision the easiest way possible.

### Changes and predictions (A star on the rise - Generation Z)

With all eyes on Millennials, the next generation is already buying in. Generation Z (those born between 1996 and 2010) is gearing up to take its share of the market.

With the oldest in that group starting to collect their diplomas this year, prepare to see what they bring to the table. As early adopters to social media and technologies that some companies are still dragging their feet over, these are the kids who will be showing up for your tours and activities as they take their first holidays into adulthood. According to the Digital Tourism Think Tank (DTTT), they are a quarter of the population and in two years, they could account for 40 per cent of consumers.

## GENERATION X

According to Millward Brown in their survey of China, Germany and the US, 68 per cent of Gen Xers are the chief shopper when it comes to big purchases such as travel and activities. 83 per cent are working full-time or part time and currently spend the most money on travel compared to their younger or older counterparts. On average, they will spend

US\$ 627 during each day of travel. 61 per cent of American Gen Xers have children at home, meaning that family life is very much a priority. The timing of their travel plans typically lines up with the school year. To this bunch, vacations and multigenerational travel are still very important. Along with Generation Z, Generation X (those born between 1965-1980) is currently sharing the spot for the third-largest generation. Notoriously overlooked, Gen Xers remain a demographic that has stayed out of the spotlight a fair amount. This could mean trouble for tour and activity providers who are looking to increase their revenue, as Gen Xers tend to have the most buying power and financial freedom of any generation right now.

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### Most Gen Xers are looking for:

- The ability to relax and unwind.
- Family or group-focused options.
- The option to work while on vacation.
- Uncomplicated travel. Xers are less likely to look for help from a travel agent, but far more likely to look for a nicer hotel, amenities, and plan their trips further ahead.

### Why it's important

Millennials are predicted to have the most buying power within the next five years, but Generation X is still the reigning big spender when it comes to travel. This could be due to more family-focused travel or relaxation trips that come with a few more amenities. Regardless of the reason, it's important to remember that with so much focus on Millennials right now, you may be missing out on some of your best customers.



### Operators who want to attract Gen Xers should:

- Make sure your offers are presented clearly and can be easily purchased.
- Ensure that you can accommodate all travelers that a Gen Xer might be travelling with.
- Be online. Make no mistake, Generation X can be credited for many of the advancements in technology and communications we enjoy today. Wikipedia, Google and Amazon are just some of the generation's impressive contributions to society so it's an understatement to say they'll be looking online and making informed decisions about which activity is right for them.

## BABY BOOMERS

What can we say about the seniors crowd? For starters, you may have caught on that the term "senior citizen" might not make your grandma very happy. The fact is that "old age" just isn't as old anymore. Studies show we're living longer, retiring later, and healthy enough to trade in Tuesday night bingo at the rec center for more active social plans.

### Most Baby Boomers are looking for:

- 57 per cent of Boomers travel to spend time with loved ones.
- 39 per cent take trips to step outside of their everyday life.
- Unlike in previous years, only 38 per cent of those surveyed are taking trips to relax and rejuvenate.

### Why it's important

The data from these surveys would suggest that Boomers (who have been long

been given the reputation of wanting to relax) are actually looking for more adventure than Gen Xers. As referenced in the previous chapter, the 30s to 50s crowd is looking for the most rest and relaxation while the 65+ folks are wanting to socialise and carve out some time for adventure.

### Changes and predictions

Some of the changes we've observed since the 2016-2017 data is that seniors are beginning to shift away from the traditional relaxation vacations we've long associated with the age group. Now is not the time to worry about whether or not this generation can keep up. Remember, your customers wouldn't book your tour or activity if they didn't want the experience. This applies to every age group and ability level. Sensible modifications and assistance should always be made available, but you don't need to completely change your itinerary. This only goes to show that the adage stands true, especially in adventure travel - it just gets better with age!

### Operators who want to attract Baby Boomers should:

- Avoid being patronising to your senior customers. If they are looking into adventure activities, they are most likely feeling fit enough to engage with the experience.
- For many people who are 65+, traditional communication channels are still quite effective. Brochures, newspaper advertising, and local radio ads can still grab the attention of this generation.
- In your promotions, the most important thing to do is find the balance between the two extremes of online and offline.

# Check your quickness with booking commands

## Travelport: Making life simpler

*In the fast changing environment of enhancing skills of travel consultants, it is imperative for all to upgrade their working approaches. Here is an update from ITQ (Galileo) which offers our consultants involved with member agencies handling bookings to be aware of these commands that may support faster and more effective way to close bookings. We acknowledge the contribution from ITQ for NAMASTAAI in supporting "knowledge development" of our personnel. Do write back to us if you find them useful and would like to have more of such features included in future NAMASTAAIs. Our goal is that NAMASTAAI must be the favourite among the travel and tourism magazines that reach your agency*



For most travellers, one of the crucial factors influencing their decision of travel is the fare charged for the journey. On Travelport Smartpoint, you can access all kinds of fares along with Travelport Merchandising Suite advantage that highlights the ancillaries available.

However, it is not always the traveller looking for cheapest ticket. There are leisure travellers who prefer

luxury class, corporate travellers who prefer business class or passengers flying in economy with special necessities. As a travel expert, you should always be ready with tools that offer best-suited options to your customers. Therefore, in order to offer better options to your customers on Travelport efficiently, here is a quick guide that helps you access all kinds of fare options.

The use of these commands help you offer best options in just a matter of few clicks on Travelport Smartpoint, where you can access matchless offering from 400+ airlines (including leading international low cost carriers & largest Indian LCC IndiGo), 650,000+ hotel properties, 35,000 car rental locations, 61 cruise & tour operators and 12 rail booking providers makes us stand out in the market. Happy Selling!

### THE QUICK COMMANDS FOR VARIOUS FARE DISPLAY OPTIONS ON TRAVELPORT

FD23DECBOMLHR/AI	Fare display from Mumbai to London 23DEC on AI
FD23DECDELX9W-M	Booking class modifier (MUST be accompanied by airline code) i.e. /9W-M
FN*2	Display fare notes by category menu
FN*3/ALL	Display all fare notes
FR*2	Display route information, line 2
FDC*2	Display booking codes for line 2
FDDELX9W-MINT:P	Private Fares with account code MINT
	Private Fares without account codes

### FARE QUOTE (H/FQBE)

FQ	Quote applicable adult fare for all passengers, all segments, in the class booked
FQBB, FQBB++-AB	Quote Best Buy, Quote as booked
FQBB++-PREMF / +++-FIRST	Premier First Class Cabin / First Class Cabin
FQBB++-BUSNS / ++-PREME	Business Class Cabin / Premier Economy Class Cabin
FQ**PTC	Quote a specify PTC irrespective of the level of fare
FQ-MINT	Quote lowest fares combination among Public fare, Private fare with account code or Private fares without account code, irrespective of account code used.
FQ-MINT:P	Quote lowest private fare combination among all private fares loaded in the PCC with or without account code
FQ-:MINT	Quote private fare with specified account code only

### FARE QUOTE - PRICING MODIFIERS (H/FQPM)

FQP2.5	Quote itinerary for passengers 2 and 5
--------	--

### HISTORICAL FARE QUOTE

FQ.T21MAY16	Historical Fare Quote with taxes as on date of ticket issue
FQ.T21MAY16.B20MAY16	Historical Fare Quote with taxes as on date, Date Of Issue 21st May with Booking Date as on 20th May
FQ.H10DEC16	Historical Base Fare & current taxes
FQ.B01JUN14	Booking date override for all segments in quote request. Booking date modifier can be used alone or in combination with the 'T' or 'H' historical modifier.
FQ*:BF1	Price by brand modifier may be used with or without an account code, price the lowest fare brand level

### FOCALPOINT SHOPPING WITHOUT A BOOKING FILE (H/FS)

FSCOK10JANX9	One Way journey
FSCOK10JANX9B20JANCOK	Round Trip journey
FSDEL11JUNLON19JUNDEL++D	Only Direct Flights
FSZRH11JUNLHR.M#20JUNZRH.E#	Morning Departure on 1st Sector and Evening on 2nd Sector
FSLAX11JUNLON19JUNLAX++/AA#	Only Preferred Carriers
FSSYD11JUNTYO/QF19JUNHKG/CX	With Preferred carriers
FSLON10JANX9B+TAHO4	Ticketing Agent -HO4

### FILED FARES (H/FQFD, H/FQFX)

*FF	Display a summary of all Filed Fares
*FF1	Display detailed linear fare construction for Filed Fare 1
FXALL	Cancel all Filed Fares
FX3	Cancel Filed Fare 3



# It's here: GPS for indoors!

Amadeus Ventures invests in Situm, an 'indoor GPS' startup for travellers at airports, train stations or conference centres

We are all familiar with arriving in a foreign airport, a huge conference centre complex or busy international train station and feeling lost. Signage doesn't always help, there's no one available to ask for help and it's difficult to spot knowledgeable locals.

Until now, indoor navigation – or “GPS for indoors” – was limited to physical signs, people and large format maps. No longer. With Situm, we can all benefit from our very own personal navigation assistant, on our smartphone or tablet device. So, whether we want to get to the departure gate on time, quickly find the panel session we're speaking at, or catch that last-minute train, we can do

Users can benefit from smartphone navigation wherever they are in the world, removing the fear of unfamiliar and daunting environments

so in the knowledge we won't get lost along the way.

The Spanish startup provides indoor positioning, tracking and navigation services for many different uses. For example, it can guide visitors inside a

large building, track the location of security staff in case of emergencies, or track moving objects inside factories. Situm is the latest startup to benefit from investment by Amadeus Ventures. Thousands of buildings around the world have already used its technology, which provides high location accuracy, up to 1 metre, with the lowest infrastructure investment and complexity for indoor services.

Situm's indoor positioning system (IPS) applies a unique location algorithm, able to use all available sensors in smartphones collaboratively (e.g. Wi-Fi, magnetometer, Bluetooth Low Energy and user movement prediction based on inertial sensors). Global navigation satellite systems

(GPS) often don't work indoors because the microwaves that GPS uses to identify locations are reduced and scattered by roofs, walls and other objects.

“When travelling, we often find ourselves in new places and unfamiliar surroundings, which can be daunting. By delivering a minimal-infrastructure solution, and harnessing the power of personal mobile technology, we can quickly give travellers reassurance that they can always get to where they need to be,” says Victor Alvarez, CEO and founder of Situm Technologies.

Travellers can download an application using Situm's indoor GPS to navigate around an airport, train

station, museum or gallery. For managers of airports, train stations, conferences or hotels, Situm allows real-time viewing of the staff movements, facilitates better allocation of resources to smooth passenger flow, improves security services, and offers better analytics to improve geo-marketing and targeting.

“Improving operations and performance across all parts of the travel sector is a key area of focus for us at Amadeus. By working together with our own teams, developers and startups, we are focused on developing new ways to relieve the tensions that exist for all of us when travelling. Situm offers a really powerful solution and we look forward to having it as part of our

investment portfolio and working together to solve some of these challenges,” says Katherine Grass, head of Amadeus Innovation and Ventures.

Amadeus Ventures has co-invested in Situm with Unirisco and Xesgalicia. Amadeus Ventures the corporate venture arm of Amadeus IT group, is a travel venture program which invests in start-ups sitting at the crossroads of travel and technology. Amadeus launched this initiative in 2014 and Situm is the latest addition to a portfolio that also includes start-ups such as Avuxi, Betterez, Bluesmart, BookingPal, Flyn and Yapta. Amadeus Ventures also invested in Cabify and successfully exited from its investment in 2015.

# The Travel Retailer of the Future

To help travel retailer customers define their business for the travellers of the future, Amadeus has developed some business disruption scenarios in collaboration with The Sustainable Design School (The SDS), based in Nice, France, which uses Design Thinking as a way to approach sustainable innovation



The objective of this research paper is twofold: To help travel retailers with physical stores attract younger generations who have never been inside a travel agency retail shop before and to inspire the travel retail world with innovative ideas and new perspectives.

## A NEW GENERATION OF TRAVEL STORES

When you buy an iPad or an iPhone, do you go to the Apple Store or do you go online? Some of you may answer online, but many still go to the Apple Store: why?

Because it's a convivial place where

you have access to experts who can give you all the information you need before making a purchase. Some stores even organise workshops on specific topics to help you find what you need, and to learn to use their products with ease and efficiency. It's all about enjoying the experience. This is what some players

in the travel industry, mainly retailers, have achieved with their new generation of concept stores. They've redesigned interiors to create a more modern look and feel coupled with new technology.

Experience stores offer a technological touch that appeals to a general sense of lifestyle by offering merchandise that matches customers' aspirations. They focus on new features including, for example, a cosy interior design, smells and sounds, workshop and conference spaces, food sampling and bookshops.

All of these features have a focus on blending a personal and human touch with digital technologies.

It's a growing trend in travel: Thomas Cook's research shows that two-thirds of those who research their holiday online go to travel retail stores, as they still value speaking face-to-face with a travel expert who can help them design a holiday that best suits their needs. TUI has refitted its stores adding digital and interactive screens (exit paper posters!) and more friendly, welcoming areas, in order to appeal to young travellers and help convert them into loyal customers.

A French tour operator should reach 120 stores by the end of 2017, versus just 40 last year. From a purely travel retailer viewpoint, Flight Centre initiated the same move with its "hyper stores", and STA

Travel completely refitted its stores to appeal to and inspire younger audiences. Another travel agency based in Madrid also offers a coffee corner, a place for travel conferences, and an exhibition space.

Most interestingly, we've noticed that many of the leisure online travel retailers have also embraced this trend. For instance, in France, a purely online player bought a French tour operator with retail stores.

MakeMyTrip, a leading online travel agency in India, is opening physical shops to increase its reach to

## THE SAMPLE REVEALED THAT:

- 77% of those interviewed had never set foot in a travel agency
- 20% occasionally visited one with their parents when they were younger
- 49% found travel inspiration primarily through their social network
- 32% found travel inspiration mostly from TV reports
- 14% found travel inspiration mostly from websites
- 6% found travel inspiration mostly from magazines
- 57% planned and organised their trip primarily on travel websites, while 43% planned activities by browsing non-travel specific sites on the Internet.

An important insight from this generation is that they don't want to look at brochures filled with pretty pictures that don't reflect reality- they prefer to see pictures taken by real people like their peers.

Source: The SDS

customers in areas without internet access but with high mobile penetration.

Travellers are embracing this new experience. After Havas Voyage redesigned its retail stores in France, it noticed that seven out of ten people who walked in purchased a trip with its agents, compared to only five out of ten before the refurbishment. In addition, the travel agency's new look attracted 25 per cent new visitors.

## IMPACT ON THE TRAVEL ECOSYSTEM

Most people below the age of 30 have never walked into a physical travel agency store before, and getting digital natives to show up in person rather than online takes some innovative thinking. Amadeus' joint research with The Sustainable Design School shows that there could be opportunities for online players to strengthen their brand by establishing

an offline presence grounded in travel.

To create this paper, Amadeus asked The Sustainable Design School to use scenario planning to map trends and devise potential pathways to create a picture tailored to customers' needs.

Amadeus strongly believes that travel agencies need to reinvent their in-shop experience and have a future strategy for seamless integration between physical and digital worlds.

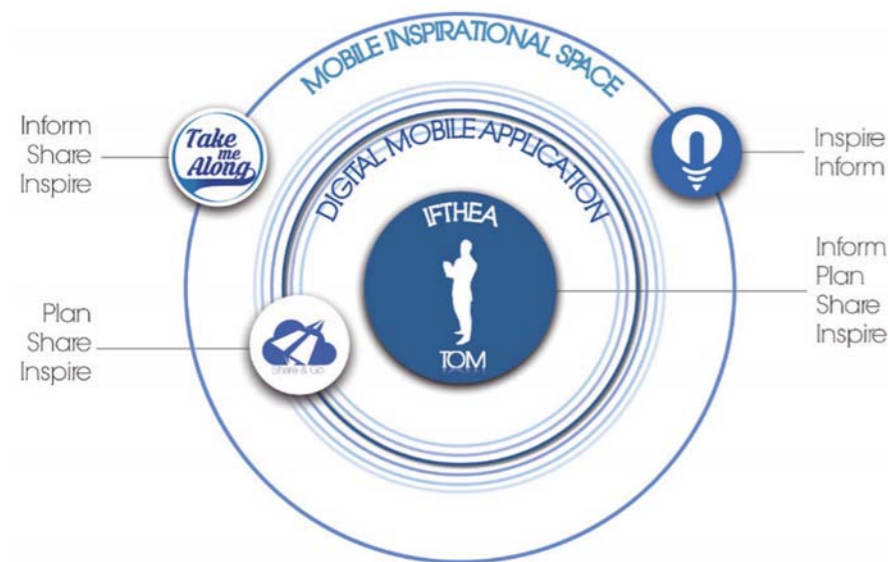
## A QUALITATIVE STUDY AT THE STARTING POINT OF THE ANALYSIS

The students conducted 30 primary research interviews in French cities and at airports. These results allowed them to create a questionnaire that they posted on social networks, and a total of 500 people throughout Europe completed this online survey. The outcome of this qualitative study was eye-opening.

**KEY FINDINGS AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS**  
**A TRAVEL CONSTELLATION WITH FOUR INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS: SHARE & GO APP, QUA, TAKE ME ALONG VAN AND IFTHEA**

In the middle, you have the TOM from the agency named IFTHEA (If the Agency...). Around it, you have a mobile application called Share & Go, which is the glue between the TOM and the travellers.

Then comes the concept of a mobile inspiration space, which enables the potential travellers and their TOM to meet up at different locations. For example, the TOM could meet students at the library during their lunch break,

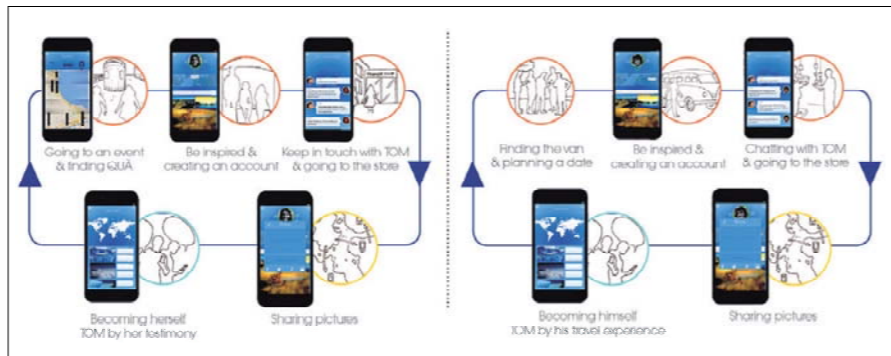


at a coffee shop near their home, or at any other location that is convenient for them.

This concept is very interesting: Generations Y and Z are less likely to go shopping in the city centre, but they go to parties at their friend's house or study at university. If they don't go to the travel agency, perhaps the travel agency can go to them.

**SHARE & GO**

Share & Go is the mobile application that links the traveller and the TOM. It can be downloaded from the mobile inspiration spaces. You can chat with



your TOM (face-to-face or virtually) at every stage of your travel. To make this app stickier we'll enable travellers to chat with other members of the community, finding new friends to travel with (the Meetic of travel?!). Travellers can post photos and members can give each other advice.

Once a certain level of advice and badges has been earned, we could imagine that the customer might



become a TOM.

**QUA**

**IF DIGITAL NATIVES DON'T GO TO THE TRAVEL AGENCY, LET THE TRAVEL AGENCY GO TO THEM**

QUA means "where" in Latin. The logo shows the picture of an inspiration bubble with the connection symbol at the bottom. Imagine QUA as a tiny travel agency; it's a solar-powered capsule that provides a virtual 360-degree experience, attracting your attention from the street thanks to interactive screens on the outside. The QUA will be located where students are, for example at a concert. The capsule can fit a maximum of two people.

Going further, you can schedule an appointment with your Travel Organisation Manager (TOM), staying connected to continue the experience on the interactive Share & Go app.

**YOUR NEXT TRIP STARTS RIGHT HERE**

Picture this: you're at a big concert of an artist you really like; as you step inside the immersive capsule, you discover interactive screens that will inspire you, help you gather information on your chosen destination and even help you find out where and when the

next performance will take place. You can even project yourself and live a full immersive experience at designated destinations of your choosing.

**TAKE ME ALONG**



The Take me Along van travels from a university to the nearest train or bus station. As pictured on the logo, you're embarking on an on-the-road journey. Students gather a group of friends, a maximum of six, and the van will take them on both a physical and virtual journey. It's more suitable for Victor, who's looking to travel with a group of friends. Inside, they discover panoramic screens with different atmospheres.

First, they'll be asked to fill in a questionnaire (on screen), which will help determine their profile, the kind of travellers they are, their preferences etc. The system offers different destinations based on their collective profile; the whole van is synchronised to reflect the destination.

There's information about the destination via various social networks, as well as personalised screens. The Share & Go app ensures they can continue to progress their travel plans with the agency's TOM.

Your travel starts here: Imagine you're at university and are waiting with your friends at the bus stop, when you see this van. You're curious but need to get to the station. The van can take you there, so you decide to use it. Inside, with your friends, you answer a questionnaire that defines which destinations best match your profiles.

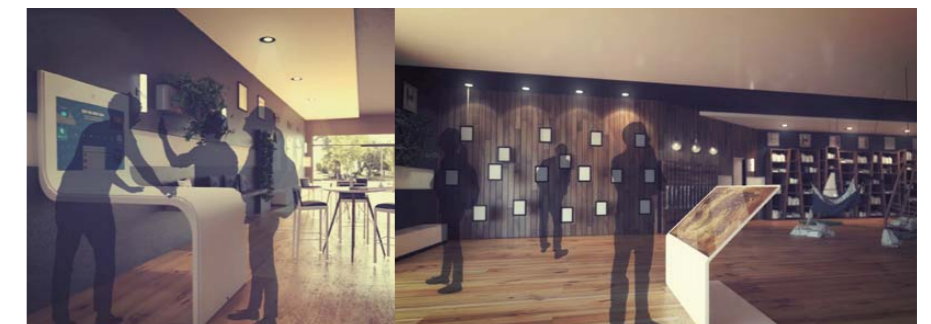
The quiz shows that Africa is a great destination for you all. During your journey to the station the screens

display pictures of Africa, moving at the same pace as the van. You can smell scents that project you into an African safari. It's as if you're already there.

After this remarkable experience,

you arrive at the station and are brought back to reality (grey sky, smelly city...). That's when you really need someone to talk to, to help you get going with your travel plans: you can stay connected via the mobile app with your agency buddy, the TOM!

**IFTHEA**



Imagine a new agency experience starting the moment you walk into the store, with interactive screens displaying different destinations. It's as though you're walking on the beach in Hawaii, snorkelling in Australia or skiing in the Alps. Sounds tempting, right?

Within the store, you'll find sitting areas, with hammocks for instance, and discover an interactive and sensory library which mixes sight, smell and touch to engage customers in a fun way. With interactive screens, you can share photos and organise your journey with your friends and your TOM, all in a cosy meeting place with coffee or fresh juice.

Like some well-known coffee shops, IFTHEA offers a place where people can relax, meet others, hang out, read books, or even work. There's nothing worse than an empty place, people attract people!

At the entrance of IFTHEA, you even have video portals (you see three of them on the wall in the picture below) that allow you to chat with people in different parts of the world; for instance, to a TOM in another country or to a group of travellers currently on an elephant trek, simply by using a webcam.

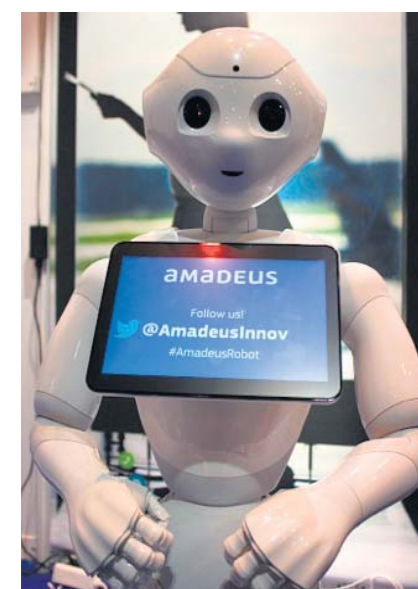
What's more, just like in the van, why not choose your favourite destination as a group, using the tablet. You can even find extra travellers that share your interests to join you on your trip.

In this cosy area, you can discuss your travel with the TOM, who will have access to various ideas on an iPad and will search for the best possible trip.

**TRAVEL RETAILER OF THE FUTURE, AND BEYOND**

Imagination doesn't stop here and more innovations are already in motion. For example, IA-TA, Amadeus' own version of C-3PO. He's actually a Pepper humanoid robot designed specifically by Softbank Robotics to interact with human beings.

For our first experiment, we programmed him to break the ice with customers in a travel agency and start collecting information on their preferences. IA-TA is able to read and understand people's reactions, allowing him to collect valuable insights for the travel agent.



Amadeus is evaluating technologies, which may have a huge relevance for tourism and travel in the near future. For instance, the HoloLens technology from Microsoft, could enable you to view the inside of a plane to choose your seat thanks to mixed reality smart glasses

The little assistant can not only engage in conversation but also show photos related to destinations such as landscapes, local foods, all kinds of photographs that can help inspire customers and qualify their needs. The deep learning algorithm processes the information before passing it on to the TOM who can now better target their offers.

Amadeus is evaluating technologies, which may have a huge relevance for tourism and travel in the near future. For instance, the HoloLens technology from Microsoft, could enable you to view the inside of a plane to choose your seat thanks to mixed reality smart glasses. In hospitality, the Oculus technology, could virtually put you inside a hotel room to get a feel for it prior to booking.

**CONCLUSION**

The consumer journey is on the brink of momentous change. Today's travellers expect answers that are faster and more relevant to their immediate needs, and they expect to receive them during the whole travel cycle. The travel market itself has changed, shaped by the digital revolution, with innovative technologies, such as chatbots and Artificial Intelligence, already part of people's lives. In such a fast evolving world, many players could be at a crossroads.

So how can traditional travel retailers adapt to new realities and newer generations to stay relevant to the travellers of tomorrow? Travel retailers now need to rethink their business, to re-invent themselves. They must engage with younger generations in a way that appeals to their lifestyle, and do so throughout the entire travel cycle - from inspiration, planning, during the journey and after it's over - and with a truly collaborative approach.

*Courtesy: Amadeus*



# MOST PEOPLE WHO TRY ONE CIGARETTE BECOME DAILY SMOKERS: STUDY

Over two-thirds of people who try their first cigarette go on to become daily smokers, at least temporarily, a study suggests

First time smokers become addicted to the habit. "We have found that the conversion rate from 'first time smoker' to 'daily smoker' is surprisingly high, which helps confirm the importance of preventing cigarette experimentation in the first place," said Professor Peter Hajek from Queen Mary University of London in the UK. The researchers searched the Global Health Data Exchange for relevant surveys from the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand that included questions about ever trying a cigarette and ever smoking daily.

The study from over 215,000 survey respondents provides strong support for prioritising efforts to reduce cigarette

experimentation among adolescents, researchers said. "This is the first time that the remarkable hold that cigarettes can establish after a single experience has been documented from such a large set of data," said Hajek. "In the development of any addictive behaviour, the move from experimentation to daily practice is an important landmark, as it implies that a recreational activity is turning into a compulsive need," added Hajek, who led the study published in the journal *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*. The team calculated that 60.3 per cent of respondents had said they had ever tried a cigarette, and among those, an estimated 68.9 per cent said they had progressed to daily smoking. Given the high conversion rate found in all existing

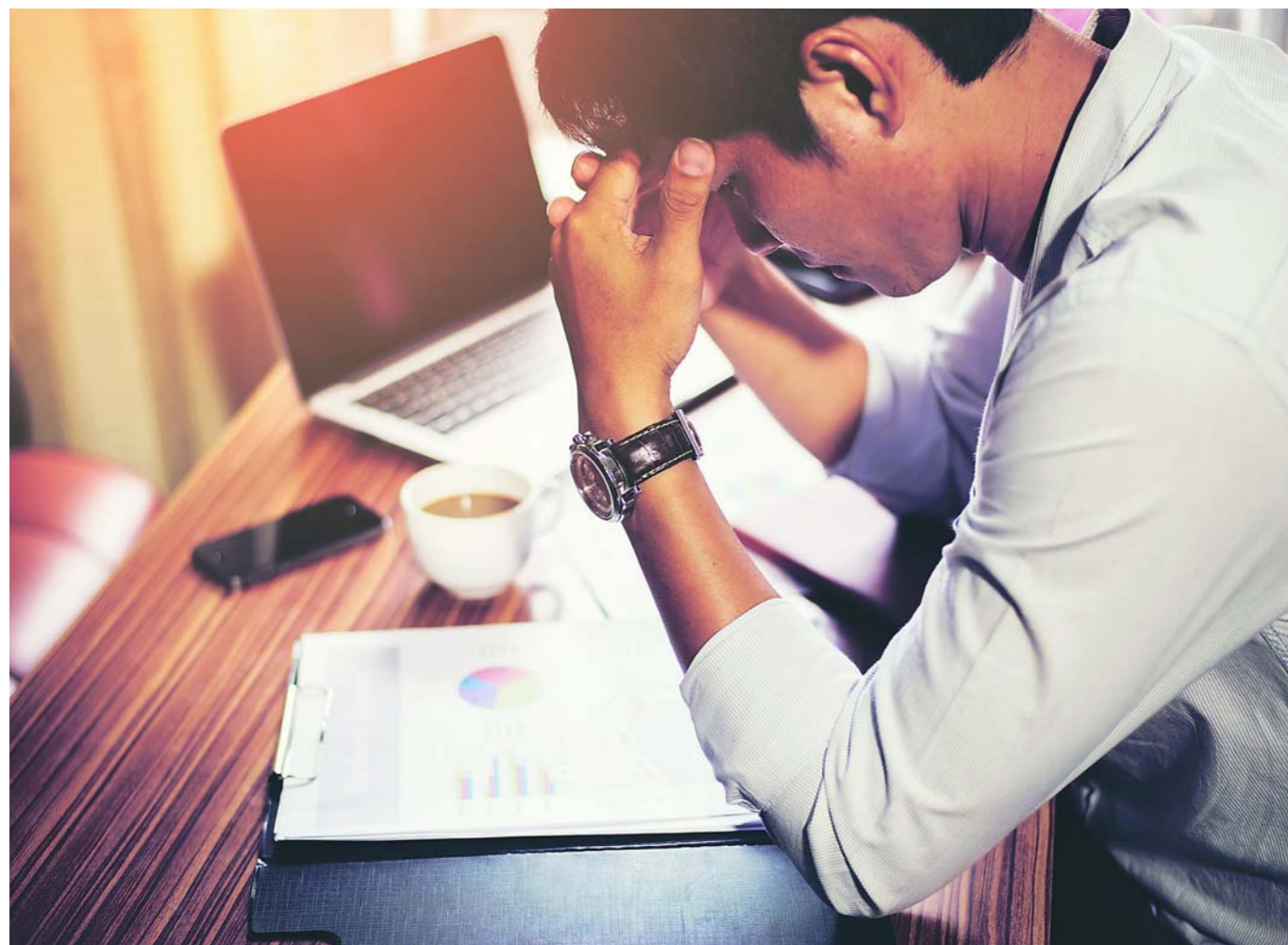
surveys, the researchers suggest that at least some of the reduction in smoking prevalence observed over the past 20 years is likely due to reduced experimentation with cigarettes among adolescents.

"Concerns were expressed that e-cigarettes could be as addictive as conventional cigarettes, but this has not been the case," Hajek added. "It is striking that very few non-smokers who try e-cigarettes become daily vapers, while such a large proportion on non-smokers who try conventional cigarettes become daily smokers. The presence of nicotine is clearly not the whole story," he said.

*(PTI)*

# HOW STRESS CAN MAKE YOU SICK

Researchers from the Michigan State University have done a study indicating how high stress levels adversely impacts our health



Stress can interact with immune cells and regulate how they respond to allergens, causing physical symptoms and disease, a study has found. Published in the Journal of Leukocyte Biology, the study showed how a stress receptor, known as corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF1) can send signals to certain immune cells, called mast cells, and control how they defend the body.

For the study, researchers from the Michigan State University (MSU) in the US compared the histamine responses of mice to two types of stress conditions – psychological and allergic – where the

immune system becomes overworked. One group of mice was considered “normal” with CRF1 receptors on their mast cells and the other group had cells that lacked CRF1.

“While the ‘normal’ mice exposed to stress exhibited high histamine levels and disease, the mice without CRF1 had low histamine levels, less disease and were protected against both types of stress,” said Adam Moeser, from MSU. “This tells us that CRF1 is critically involved in some diseases initiated by these stressors,” Moeser said.

The CRF1-deficient mice exposed to

allergic stress had a 54 per cent reduction in disease, while those mice who experienced psychological stress had a 63 per cent decrease. The results could change the way everyday disorders such as asthma and the debilitating gastrointestinal symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome are treated.

“This work is a critical step forward in decoding how stress makes us sick and provides a new target pathway in the mast cell for therapies to improve the quality of life of people suffering from common stress-related diseases,” said Moeser.

(PTI)

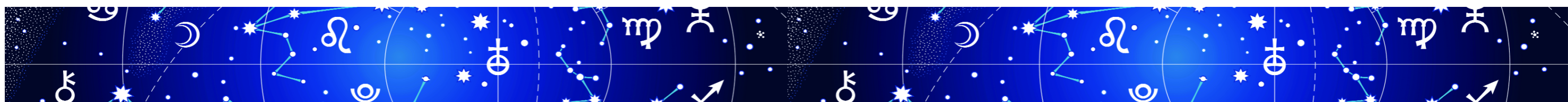
# Welcome to our New Members

TAAI continues to grow. More industry leaders from all segments of the industry embrace TAAI – for TAAI offers the unique opportunity to support stakeholders get connected and progress beyond.

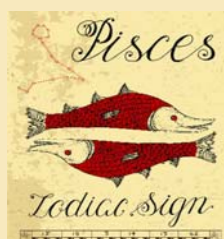
TAAI welcomes our new members. We have pleasure to invite these companies join us in our industry initiatives including training, learning from updates and getting connected through our networking opportunities with colleague agencies and industry leaders from all departments of our growing industry - travel, tourism, hospitality, travel technology, etc. TAAI offers three categories of membership – Active, Branch Associates and Allied.

NAME OF THE AGENCY	CITY	REPRESENTATIVES
1 Panache Holidays	AHMEDABAD	Ms. Khushnum P. Avari Mr. Amzed Sheikh
2 Magalan Travel And Tours Pvt. Ltd.	BANGALORE	Mr. Alexander P. V. Mrs. Beena Alexander
3 Silver Skies International	CHENNAI	Mr. David Thiagarajan Mr. R. Muralikrishnan
4 Santamonica Tours And Travels Private Limited	COCHIN	Mr. Bikash Babu Mr. Denny Thomas Vattakunnel
5 Srinagar Tour & Travels	JAMMU	Mrs. Reenu Bhat Mr. Ajay Kumar
6 ODG Leisure (P) Limited	KOLKATA	Mr. Abhishek Garg Mr. Abhinav Garg
7 Mindfresh Trips	KOLKATA	Mr. Soumitra Chandra
8 ACF Tourism	MUMBAI	Mr. Abbas Sundrani Mr. Mohammed Shaikh
9 Aruja Travels	MUMBAI	Ms. Dipti Goradia Mr. Hiren Goradia
10 Ezy Mov Solutions Private Limited	MUMBAI	Mr. Rajesh Patil Mr. Bennet Dcunha
11 Omotenashi Tours & Travels Pvt. Ltd.	NEW DELHI	Mr. Dharamvir Mishra Ms. Ratna Raj Laxmi
12 Splendour Exhibitions Pvt. Ltd.	NEW DELHI	Mr. Yadvender Singh Mankotia Mrs. Savita Mankotia
13 Tulip Travel Ventures	PUNE	Ms. Sayali Barve Mr. Manoj Barve





Believe in the fact that you have a divine life purpose and all the help that comes your way to achieve it is heaven sent, say the Angel Tarot and Oracle Cards for March and April 2018 By Sudipta Dev



**PISCES**

There is a lot that you have achieved in life and now is the time to plan your next move. Retrospect and also take advice from trusted people. You

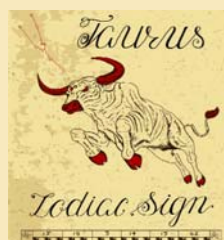
need to also understand what is your divine life purpose – everybody has one. Do not get distracted from focusing on this aspect, in pursuit of other targets.



**ARIES**

The path that you have chosen is the correct one, however there have been quite a few challenges enroute. You might have to rethink what

to do, and find another direction to reach your goals. Do not hesitate in making the necessary changes. Also, keep away from people who create drama in your life.



**TAURUS**

This is the time to enjoy all that you have earned with your hard work, and some luck on the way. Family and friends mean the world to

you, and you are the happiest sharing with them. Be proud of yourself for all your achievements, in personal and professional life.



**GEMINI**

Everyone needs the support of people who care for them, particularly when life is looking tough. Do not shy away from seeking help from

those who love you. This help is God's way of showing that he is taking care of the situation. The problems are temporary, so be a bit patient.



**CANCER**

Something new has come up which has brought about a lot of intellectual stimulation for you. New learnings are on the way, which might

lead to change of plans. You might meet a person who will bring about a lot of dynamism in your professional or personal life.



**LEO**

Heaven is sending many blessings your way, but you are oblivious of it. Notice the people around you who are there to support you always. You are not trusting enough – both the

opportunities and the help coming your way. Introspect to get clarity on what you truly want.



**LIBRA**

This is the time to celebrate – new projects / a wedding / an engagement / birth / academic or professional acclaim. Try to be in the

company of like-minded people / communities (yes, even online ones), for bringing more cheer into your life and sharing interesting insights. Any new beginning also brings an ending – so look forward to happening few months ahead.

**VIRGO**



Step into your own light. Your lack of belief in yourself is one of the key reasons holding you back. Focus on being more confident, and gather the strength

to say “no”, if the situation demands it. The call of the universe for you is to stand tall and be proud as an individual.



**SCORPIO**

You have always been blessed with an incredible intuitiveness, which actually connects you to your higher self. Believe in those

magical insights into your life and manifest your dreams. The time is now. No more waiting is required. God and the angels are guiding you all the way.



**CAPRICORN**

The tough times are over, particularly when it comes to the financial situation. Enjoy the luxurious moments of life that are coming your way

as you have truly earned it. This is the time to relax, enjoy and have fun – pamper and reward yourself.



**AQUARIUS**

It is an action filled time for you in the next few months, so buckle up for a roller-coaster ride of some serious work and fun. Your dreams

are within reach so do not hold yourself back. If you are thinking of starting a new venture then now is the time.



**SAGITTARIUS**

You have been pushing yourself to meet your professional and personal commitments. In the process your health

is suffering – both mental and physical. Open up the to accept help from others and reorganise your life. Prioritising will help you a great deal along with some discipline.

# Get Connected – Join TAAI Today!



Join TAAI and get prominently connected with industry leaders. About 2,300 companies / organisations / agencies make TAAI formidable and India's oldest and largest travel and tourism association. TAAI membership is open to all travel companies, Tour Operators, MICE Specialists, Airlines, Tourism Boards including National/ Regional Tourism Authorities, Hotels, Technology Companies, Transporters, Cruise Companies, Educational Institutions, Service providers in areas of Visas, Foreign Exchange, Consulting, Media and organisations involved with any activity that is related to travel and tourism industry. TAAI also offers 'Overseas Membership' to those beyond India get connected with the most trustworthy.



## Benefits of TAAI Membership

- Your company is no more a stand-alone one in our endeavour to strengthen Principal-Agency relationship.

- IATA matters – TAAI is on board of APJC and actively deliberates on behalf of travel agencies on all policy matters concerning day-to-day business activity. TAAI is in active relationship with IATA and helps formulate industry policies including training, settlement matters, accreditation policies, joint bank guarantee towards financial security, etc.

- TAAI is actively involved with United Federation of Travel Agents Associations (UFTAA). UFTAA is represented on PAPGJC (Passenger Agency Program Global Joint Council) where association matters pertaining to governing resolutions by IATA are taken forward.

- Through its programs TAAI helps promote highest standard of professionalism and ethics among

members in their dealing with the public and among each other.

- TAAI offers numerous opportunities in training, skill development and tourism certification including destination education – for owners, managers, frontline staff and all those who have chosen travel and tourism as their career.

- TAAI is active in updating members on evolving visa formalities and maintains a closer connect with embassies, high commissions & consulates in fostering learning.

- TAAI offers B2B opportunities through jointly held road shows and familiarisation trips in cooperation with Tourism Boards and National Tourism Organisations, through active networking at Conventions and through several events including active partnership and support status with trade exhibition organisers.

- TAAI's annual convention, popular as "The Indian Travel Congress" is an excellent opportunity for members to take home updates and learning through our business sessions, strong networking, interaction opportunities with overseas Destination Management Companies and invaluable connectivity that supports greater success in business.

- TAAI works closely with Government of India Tourism Offices and State Tourism Boards and is active in events/meetings organised to further the promotion of Indian tourism globally. TAAI is invited for 'Hotel Classification' and 'Airport Advisory'. TAAI also endeavours to closely work with Ministry of Civil Aviation, on aviation matters.

- There are more areas through which any industry stakeholder can immensely benefit by becoming a member of TAAI and join this most prestigious forum.

# ADVERTISE IN NAMASTAAI



Print media is an effective form of advertising. NAMASTAAI from TAAI is aimed at drawing the attention of our agency members and their personnel. NAMASTAAI is now before you to support you in reaching your target audience. NAMASTAAI has unique features that will reflect the strength of TAAI and its dynamics, combining quality of sound-byte editorial with the fascination of new happenings and topical news of the industry.

### DO JOIN US IN THIS FANTASTIC JOURNEY OF PROMOTING YOUR ORGANISATION

NAMASTAAI has high quality images for internal and external news represented with full colour and gloss, allowing a clearer picture of your product, giving the trade a better idea of your company and its portfolio. Be it any demographic, be ensured that NAMASTAAI will guarantee that your advertisement will reach your intended audience. And remember the Shelf Life! Exclusive magazines are typically kept for a longer period of time and re-read often because of their excellent printing quality and content.

### NAMASTAAI'S REACH

Over 4,000 copies of TAAI's NAMASTAAI are sent to key leaders of our Travel and Tourism industry, besides TAAI members.

Our reach includes Travel Agencies, Tour Operators (Domestic, Inbound & Outbound), National Tourism Boards, Airlines, Hotels, Excursion Agencies, Government Tourist Offices, GDS companies, Travel & Tourism Educational Institutes, Industry leaders in Government and Media.

There is an E-form of NAMASTAAI as well. It is placed on our popular website [www.taai.in](http://www.taai.in) / [www.travelagentsofindia.com](http://www.travelagentsofindia.com) to help our reach go beyond India and to our overseas members/partners including Tourism Authorities.

### ADVERTISING RATES

Here is a special offer for our Members

Back Cover :	Rs 2 Lakhs
Inner Covers :	Rs 1 Lakh each
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Half Page (Horizontal / Vertical) :	Rs 30,000
Quarter Page Box :	Rs 15,000

Special rate for a minimum of 3 issues; 6 issues; or 12 issues

### MAGAZINE ADVERTISING SPECIFICATIONS

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Non bleed Size :	18cm x 13.5cm
Colors :	Multi Colour Printing
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Cover :	250 gsm Art Card

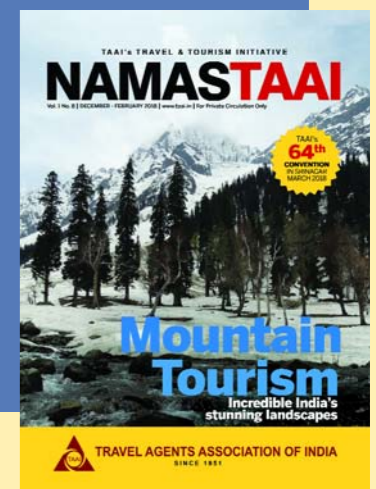
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**TAAI Mumbai Secretariat**  
**TRAVEL AGENTS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA**  
 2-D Lawrence and Mayo House, 276  
 Dr. D N Road, Fort,  
 Mumbai - 400 001.  
 Phone : +91-22-2207 4022 / 8184  
 Fax : +91-22-4083 6767. Email : [taai@taai.in](mailto:taai@taai.in)

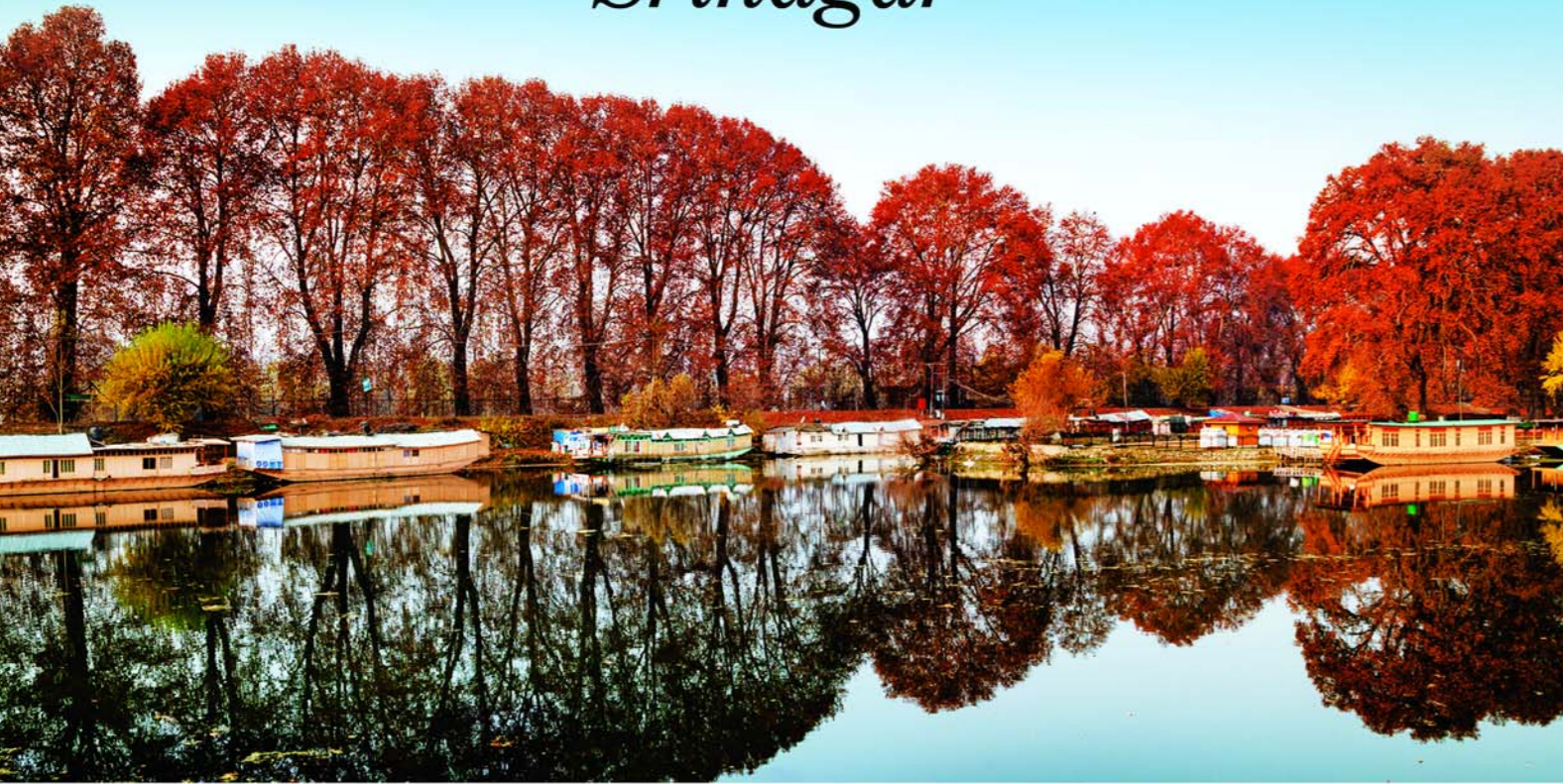


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 Reserve your space in advance to get the best position.

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 NAMASTAAI is your opportunity. Grab it!

# *TAAI Convention in India's enchanting Valley, Srinagar*



The **64th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI**, from **March 27 to 30, 2018**, will be in the most beautiful hill station of India, Srinagar, the summer capital of the '**Heaven on Earth**' valley of Kashmir, in association with the Hon'ble Ministry of Tourism, J&K

ITTE - India Travel & Expo B2B will offer an excellent B2B opportunity at this Convention.

More details and online Registrations at:  
<http://www.travelagentsofindia.com/ITC2018/#>

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