

# MYSTIC EAST

...an unexplored horizon

A bi-monthly magazine by HRAEI | Vol 4 | Issue 2 | January - February 2018



## BRAND INDIA SURGING AHEAD

India is emerging  
as a large market  
for a diverse  
portfolio of niche  
hospitality products



## VISION

- ✌️ Make the Eastern Region comprising 12 States and a Union Territory a flourishing destination for domestic and foreign tourists by projecting their captivating tourism assets.
- ✌️ Promoting best industry practices and setting benchmarks for industry constituents.

## MISSION

- ✌️ A common voice for hotels, restaurants and associates for unhindered progress of the hospitality industry in the country's Eastern Region.
- ✌️ Create value for members by ensuring government policies remain supportive of tourism and the industry.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE



“

There are more than two dozen of licences or certificates needed to start a hotel. Despite repeated appeals by us, there has been little change

”

Dear Fellow Members,  
Ever since the government took over in 2014, the buzzword in different sectors of business has been 'Ease of Doing Business'. The Centre has set an ambitious target to reach the 50th rank in the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business' global ranking. The good news is that India has been able to move up more than 30 points in the last three years, to reach the 100th spot.

But the bad news is that even though tourism & hospitality is a crucial sector in the world today, recognised for its potential to drive foreign exchange, create employment opportunities in the hinterlands, and drive inclusive growth, in the Indian context, it is still not considered a pillar of industry. The percentage of expenditure on tourism by Indian states is still below 1%. And unfortunately, the hospitality sector gets a rare mention in the country's annual financial budget.

Yet the hospitality industry is still highly regulated and 'Ease of Doing Business' is still a far cry in most of the States. There are more than two dozens of licences or certificates required to start a hotel. Despite repeated appeals by multiple associations, the governments have yet to change their regulatory mechanism. Almost in all the states in Eastern region it takes too long to issue bar licenses. Moreover, our appeals to offer incentives to help start small hotels in big and small cities have not been effective.

**Sudesh Poddar**  
President, HRAEI

## MYSTIC EAST

A BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE BY HRAEI  
Vol 4 | Issue 2 | January - February 2018

### EDITORIAL BOARD

**SUDESH PODDAR**  
PRESIDENT, HRAEI

**MS. BIRGIT ELLY HOLM**  
SPECIAL INVITEE, HRAEI  
HYATT REGENCY KOLKATA, GENERAL MANAGER

**MR. S. H. RAHMAN**  
SPECIAL INVITEE, HRAEI  
THE PARK, CORPORATE DIRECTOR,  
SALES & MARKETING

**MR. GOPAL DAS AGARWAL**  
MANAGING COMMITTEE MEMBER, HRAEI

**EDITOR**  
ATIKRAM GUPTA

**EDITORIAL CONSULTANT**  
SUSMIT BARMAN

**CHIEF DESIGNER**  
SOMU DUTTA

'Mystic East' magazine is printed and published by Atikram Gupta on behalf of Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India.

Printed at CDC Printers Private Limited, No.45, Radha Nath Chowdhury Road, Tangra Industrial Estate-II, Kolkata, West Bengal 700 015

Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India,  
18A/1, Everest, 18th Floor, 46C,  
Chowringhee Road, Kolkata- 700 071;  
Telephone- +91 33 2288-1742/43, 40035993.  
E-mail: info@hraei.co.in  
Website: www.hraei.co.in

### THIS ISSUE OF MYSTIC EAST CONTAINS 56 PAGES INCLUDING COVER AND BACK COVER

All information in Mystic East magazine is derived from sources we consider reliable and a sincere effort is made to report accurate information. The publisher regrets that he cannot accept liability for error and omissions contained in this publication that might have crept in inadvertently. Similarly, opinions/views expressed by third parties are not necessarily shared by the magazine. However, we wish to advise our readers that one or more recognised authorities may hold different views than those reported. Material used in this publication is intended for information purpose only. Readers are advised to seek specific advice before acting on information contained in this publication which is provided for general use, and may not be appropriate for the readers' particular circumstances..

No part of the magazine may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form without the permission of the publication in writing. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication. An exemption is hereby granted for the extract used for the purpose of fair review, provided two copies of the same publication are sent to us for our records. Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission could face legal action. The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning any material, solicited or unsolicited, nor is he responsible for material lost or damaged.

## SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



“  
There is an utmost  
need to innovate a  
compact, safe, cooked  
food sterilizer  
and make it  
available in all hotels  
”

Dear Fellow Members,

Indians waste as much food as the whole of United Kingdom consumes – a piece of data that may not so much indicate our love of surfeit, as it is of our population. Still, food wastage is an alarming issue in India. Our streets, garbage bins and landfills have sufficient proof to show it.

Wedding halls, canteens, hotels, social and family functions, households spew out so much food. According to the United Nations Development Programme, up to 40% of the food produced in India is wasted. Last year, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern about wastage of food in his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio programme, there was an effort to fix portion sizes of dishes served by star hotels and restaurants. The ministry started drafting a questionnaire for hotels and restaurants to explain what dish sizes they should serve to a customer. However, the move was dropped when there were strong criticisms as the proposal to fix portions served at hotels to curb food wastage was deemed to be an effort to micro-manage businesses.

The hospitality industry must take adequate self-regulatory steps to stop food wastage. Ultra-violet treatment of the food on buffet can easily prevent the massive spoilage. There is an utmost need to introduce a compact, safe, cooked food sterilizer and make it available in all hotels. And the hospitality industry must invest on such equipment as a corporate social responsibility.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pranav Singh'.

**Pranav Singh**  
Secretary, HRAEI

# Cover Story

January - February 2018

# 39

## BRAND INDIA SURGING AHEAD

India is emerging as a large market for a diverse portfolio of niche tourism products - cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, eco-tourism, film, rural and religious tourism



# 7

### NEWS

Baan Thai at Oberoi Grand in Kolkata features among the top global restaurants

# 9

PM Modi says Mizoram has the potential to become a model tourist destination

# 12

Advantage Assam generated a mammoth Rs 100,000 crore worth of MoUs



# 13

Bengal is fast emerging as an all-weather MICE destination, thanks to the new Biswa Bangla Convention Centre

23

▪ **FORTUNE IN HOURS**



Micro-stay is a concept which allows hotels to sell their inventory on an hourly basis

33

▪ **CHEF'S CORNER**



Chef Alok Anand's personable nature lends itself perfectly to the set-up of JW Marriott, Kolkata



36

▪ **INDUSTRY ANALYSIS**

The Annual Trends & Opportunities Report for 2017 – HVS



44

▪ **ROOM BASICS**

Top 10 things that should be there in every hotel room



49

▪ **AWESOME ASSAM**

Assam's rich potential as a top tourist destination of India remains untapped

# INDIA'S 50 FINEST PREMIUM RESTAURANTS



**C**ONDÉ Nast Traveller and Himalayan Sparkling lists top Indian restaurants. Delhi and Mumbai take pole position with 10 winning restaurants in each city

The Condé Nast Traveller and Himalayan Sparkling Top Restaurant Awards 2017 has recently announced India's first-ever definitive list of the country's 50 finest premium restaurants. The judging panel included 100+ food writers, critics, influencers, serious foodies, and all-round taste-makers from across the country, key criteria being none of them own/co-own a restaurant in India. Deloitte

Touche Tohmatsu India LLP was the process advisors and official tabulators for the Top Restaurant Awards, ensuring that the process was fair and the list authoritative and credible.

Hosted by hospitality sector experts Rahul Akerkar and AD Singh, the Condé Nast Traveller and Himalayan Sparkling Top Restaurant Awards saw Delhi and Mumbai take pole position with 10 winning restaurants in each, followed by Bengaluru, Chennai, and Goa with seven winning restaurants. Kolkata and Hyderabad with three restaurants each and Jaipur, Kochi, Pune with one winning restaurant in

each completed the list of 50.

The Top 50 Premium Restaurants winners of the Condé Nast Traveller and Himalayan Sparkling Top Restaurant Awards 2017 are- Indian Accent, New Delhi; The Bombay Canteen, Mumbai; The Table, Mumbai; Bomras, Goa; Bukhara, ITC Maurya New Delhi; Wasabi by Morimoto, The Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai; Masque, Mumbai; Artusi Ristorante e Bar, New Delhi; The Spice Route, The Imperial New Delhi; Gunpowder, Goa; Trishna, Mumbai; Yauatcha, Mumbai; Dum Pukht, ITC Maurya New Delhi; Toast & Tonic, Bengaluru; China XO, The Leela Palace Chennai; Le Cirque, The Leela Palace New Delhi; La Plage, Goa; Karavalli, The Gateway Hotel, Residency Road Bengaluru; Aada, Taj Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad; Bastian, Mumbai; The Black Sheep Bistro, Goa; Gajalee, Mumbai; The Flying Elephant, Park Hyatt Chennai; Paragon, Kochi; Yeti, The Himalayan Kitchen, New Delhi; Thai Pavilion, Vivanta by Taj – President, Mumbai; Baan Thai, The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata; Caperberry, Bengaluru; Wasabi by Morimoto, The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi; Soda Bottle Openerwala, Hyderabad; DIVA - The Italian Restaurant, New Delhi; 1135AD, Jaipur; Mum's Kitchen, Goa; Blue Ginger, Taj West End, Bengaluru; Indigo, Mumbai; Olive Beach, Bengaluru; Mocambo, Kolkata; Palácio do Deão, Goa; A Reverie, Goa; Wild Garden Cafe, Amethyst, Chennai; Bohemian, Kolkata; EDO, ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru; Southern Spice, Taj Coromandel Chennai; Simply South, Hyderabad; The Fatty Bao, Bengaluru; Royal Vega, ITC Grand Chola, Chennai; Avartana ITC Grand Chola, Chennai; Spectra, The Leela Palace Chennai; Neung Roi, Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport; Savya Rasa, Pune.

# FSSAI SAYS CAG IGNORED THEIR POINTS WHILE COLLATING PERFORMANCE REPORT



**F**SSAI to set up more Referral Labs for dispute redressal terming most of the negative observations that the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has made in its Performance Report of Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) tabled in the Parliament yesterday as “lack of proper understanding” and without considering explanations offered by FSSAI, Pawan Agarwal, CEO of the apex Authority said that the food safety ecosystem in the country is safe and robust and on the right path to be globally benchmarked. Agarwal was speaking after announcing the partnership that FSSAI has entered with the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) for its National Street Food Festival in New Delhi between January 12 -14.

Answering each point raised by CAG in its report, Agarwal said that the Food Testing infrastructure in the country has improved a lot in the last couple of years. “Overall lab capacity is not a ma-

major issue,” he said. From just about 82 accredited labs two years, the number of accredited labs in the country has gone up by 152, he said. While conceding that the foods labs in the States are devoid of proper facilities, he said that the process of upgrading around 45 identified labs are underway with an estimated investment of INR 450 cr. “NABL accreditation takes at least two years’ time to complete,” he said.

He said that FSSAI is upgrading its own Food Lab in Ghaziabad on Private partnership model, and if it is proved to be successful, the same model will be replicated for the proposed labs in JNPT Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

He said that the Authority will be empanelling at least 6 to 8 labs as Referral Labs so that right testing methodology can be developed as well as proficiency of testing and training of staff for food labs can be done.

On the issue of formulation of standards and notification of regulations,

which was a major point in the CAG Report, Agarwal said that a robust system is in place as far as formulations of standards and regulations are concerned. He said that many new standards have come up in the last one year by which product approvals are not even required for many items. The entire observation on product approval by the CAG is wrong and lack of proper understanding, Agarwal said.

He said that FSSAI works under lot of constraints as far as human resource is concerned compared to regulatory systems in matured markets like the US or Canada are concerned. He said that lot of efforts have gone into capacity building over the last couple of years.

In order to improve the standards of lab tests and bring consistency, Agarwal said that an online India Food Lab network has been developed so that uniform procedures and testing parameters are followed to avoid inconsistency in results.



# MIZORAM HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A MODEL TOURIST DESTINATION: PRIME MINISTER



**P**M says the new NESIDS scheme will fill the gap in creation of physical infrastructure in sectors like tourism

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that Mizoram has all the potential to emerge as a model Tourist Destination in the North East considering its advantages such as high literacy rate, scenic beauty and availability of large English-speaking population. The Prime Minister was speaking at Aizawl, Mizoram after dedicating the

Tuirial Hydro Electric Power Project to the nation.

The State offers significant scope for adventure tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, wild-life tourism, and community-based rural tourism. If developed well, tourism can emerge as the biggest employer in the state, Prime Minister said. The Union Government has sanctioned two tourism projects worth Rs 194 crore for Mizoram in the last 2 years, to promote eco-tourism and adventure tourism. The Central

government has already released Rs 115 crore for implementation of these projects, he informed.

The Prime Minister also spoke on the government decision yesterday to launch a 100% Centrally funded Infrastructure development scheme, North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) to fill the gaps in creation of physical infrastructure in key sectors including tourism, water supply, connectivity, etc.

# MAKEMYTRIP GROUP TO SELL OYO AGAIN



**R**EVERSING its strategy towards budget accommodation aggregators, MakeMyTrip Ltd., India's leading online travel company, has decided to work with country's largest budget accommodation aggregator OYO. MakeMyTrip had delisted OYO from its platform couple of years ago. According to MakeMyTrip, the Group will offer OYO inventory to over a billion people.

Rajesh Magow, Co-founder & CEO India, MakeMyTrip Ltd. said, "We are committed to bring the best of travel experience to our customers, it's why we offer them a variety of options across price segments, particularly in the fragmented economy and mid-segment hotels, where there is a greater need to build assurance around stay experience. With OYO's evolution as a

full-scale hospitality company, we are excited to offer their award-winning chain of hotels in the value economy and mid-market category through MakeMyTrip and Goibibo platforms."

Welcoming the partnership, Ritesh Agarwal, Founder & CEO - OYO, said, "With OYO, we've created a brand that resonates quality for both our customers and hotel partners. Being a full stack hospitality tech company, we have built capabilities to run quality-ensured accommodations across different formats and placing them in the hands of travellers who are constantly on the lookout for unique experiences. We are excited to extend our offerings of beautiful living spaces to them through MakeMyTrip and Goibibo."

OYO has grown phenomenally over

the last couple of years increasing their network of hotels and inventory into more than 230 cities across India, Nepal and Malaysia. The company has over 70,000 rooms spread in over 8,500 network hotels claiming to have sold 15 million room nights annually.

The new Scheme will be 100 percent centrally funded as against the NL-CPR, where 10 percent contribution had to come from the State Governments. The Central Government will be providing Rs 5300 Crore to North Eastern States under the Scheme over the next three years, the PM said.

The act will apply to shops, residential hotels, restaurants, theatres and amusement places, places to which the Factories Act does not apply, said The Indian Express.



## CLUBS IN BENGAL BID DRY DAYS ADIEU THIS HOLI

**K**olkata's clubs celebrated their first "wet Holi" after a Bengal government decision to scrap dry days altogether from these establishments.

Bengal now has the lowest number of dry days in the country following a 2016 circular that reduced the number of days when alcohol cannot be

sold from 12 to only four-and-a-half (Independence Day, Republic Day, the 10th day of Muharram, Gandhi

Jayanti and Dol Jatra, when outlets open after 4pm).

But, with the government following up on that circular by bringing clubs entirely out of the purview of dry days, 2018 is the first year when they do not have a single no-alcohol day. Members of most clubs said the state government decision has done away with the hassle of having to stock up on liquor before a dry day.

Most clubs, encouraged by their

members' response, are making full use of this opportunity and have lined up a host of special programmes — accompanied by food and liquor — on March 1.

Not having a dry day makes business sense for clubs, but some clubs are wary of the steep hike in licence fees and hope that this does not offset the gains from the zero-dry-day rule.

Source: The Times of India

# ADVANTAGE ASSAM



**T**he first ever investment promotion and facilitation initiative by the Government of Assam, 'Advantage Assam – Global Investors' Summit, 2018' generated a mammoth Rs 100,000 crore worth of MoUs being signed over the two days of the summit in early February. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi's thrust on the Act East Policy, Assam is swiftly becoming the most advantageous destination for all businesses aiming to connect with the ASEAN and BBIN nations.

Over the two days of the summit, delegates from Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, Cambodia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, UAE,

UK, USA and Vietnam exchanged ideas with industrialists from across the country and shared their valuable insights with the Government of Assam for evolving business relations in the state.

Day one of the summit saw companies like Oil India Limited investing Rs 10,000 crore, Indo-UK Institute of Health Rs 2,700 crore, Century Ply has shared plans of investing 2,100 crore, Spicejet outlined plans of Rs 1,250 crore worth of investment for Assam through sea planes boosting the tourism sector besides connecting Lakhimpur and Jorhat under the Udaan Scheme.

Tourism sector which is one of the key focus areas of the Govt. of Assam saw an investment proposal in concurrence of around Rs 736 crore.

Infrastructure sector a prime determinant of progress saw a total investment proposal worth Rs 2,347 crore.

Day two of the summit witnessed ministers from different ASEAN and BBIN nations taking the stage to discuss North East Indian economic ties with the respective nations in the august presence of several Union and state ministers. It also witnessed primary focus on sectors such as IT & ITeS, Handloom, Textiles and Handicrafts, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Tourism, Civil Aviation, River Transport and Port Townships, Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices and a special session on the opportunities in Bamboo. There were also two country sessions by the representatives from Bangladesh and Czech Republic respectively

# BENGAL, AN EMERGING TOURISM HUB



**B**engal is fast emerging as an all-weather destination, welcoming tourists on business, social, and leisure trips throughout the year. This was evident at the inaugural Session of the Destination East-West Bengal Tourism Summit 2018 – at the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre in Kolkata, early this month. Tourism stakeholders from 30 countries, including the US, UK, Russia, Australia, Turkey and many South East Asian countries gathered at the meet.

The world class convention centre has a 100-key property will be jointly branded with the State government's flagship 'Biswa Bangla' and Apeejay Surrendra Group which runs The Park.

The New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA) is developing New Town as a leading Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE) destination of South Asia. New Town has an area of about 7,000 acres which is designed for a population of over 10 lakh. The township is 5

minutes from the airport is being connected with metro rail. The authorities have introduced bike taxis, Wi Fi system on the Biswa Bangla Sarani and have recently introduced GPS enabled smart bicycle riding system.

In terms of tourist footfall, West Bengal has grown at a CAGR of 26.5% between FY 2011 and FY 2016, against a CAGR of 14.5% between FY 2001 and FY 2010, he said. The Durga Puja festival is a major draw. Atri Bhattacharya, state Home secretary in charge of Hill Affairs and Tourism, said that the biggest festival in Kolkata, the Durga Puja, is one of the largest such events in the world, which attracts around 13 million visitors over the 10-day period. "The state plans to organise home stays for tourists to cater to the huge demand, as hotels mostly remain full during the period," he said.

According to Dipak Haksar, Chairman, CII National Committee on Tourism and Hospitality and Chief Executive of ITC Hotels and Welcome Hotels, its strategic location holds

Kolkata in good stead to become the next important MICE destination in the country, that will in turn lend strength to hospitality as a whole.

"Kolkata definitely has the potential to build and create an identity as a Gateway to the North East," he said, adding that with the unveiling of the New Tourism Policy in the state and the government's commitment towards infrastructure development, availability of land, incentives and tourism-friendly policies, it is an ideal time to invest and be part of the Sustainable Tourism Development of the state," he said.

According to Sudesh Poddar, President, HRAEL, West Bengal offers a variety of choices to a traveller, from being the sweetest state to culinary, cultural, spiritual, film, wildlife and adventure tourism. "The focus of Destination East is to promote West Bengal Tourism with Kolkata as the gateway; as a world class tourist destination among international buyers," he added.

## MALAYSIA BAGS GOLD AT YCO18



► Dr Subarna Bose, founder and chief mentor of IIHM, and Chef Sanjeev Kapoor hands over the Young Chef Olympiad Trophy to Lai Jia Yi from Malaysia at the 4th edition of the "world's biggest culinary battle of student chefs" in Kolkata

**M**alaysia bagged the gold trophy and USD 10,000 at yet another sizzling and nail-biting competition between 43 countries at the 4th IIHM International Young Chef Olympiad (YCO) 2018 in early February. The award was given away at a grand and colourful ceremony organised at Wet-o-Wild, Nicco Park on February 2.

Twenty-one-year old Lai Jia Yi is a final year student of Bachelor of Culinary Arts and Foodservice Management (Hons) at Taylor's University. India's Surya Shekhar Roy Chowdhury, a student of IIHM, Kolkata, made the country and his institution proud by bagging the silver trophy. The bronze was jointly won by Henry

Lee of Hong Kong and Keith McCafferty of Scotland.

The 4th IIHM International Young Chef Olympiad 2018 organised from January 28 to February 2 was as big and glamorous as is promised year on year. Almost 50 countries were united by food, in India. The colourful opening ceremony at Talkatora Stadium, Delhi was held on January 28. The ceremony was a convergence of the world with 43 participating nations gathering at what is undoubtedly the world's biggest culinary event. From Armenia to Zimbabwe, the participants and mentors got to meet their competitors. The budding chefs mingled, bonded and shared their ideas

and cultures before descending into the biggest culinary battle of the world.

YCO contestants take an oath before they descend into the battle arena and this year India's Surya Sekhar Roy Chowdhury, Scottish mentor Gary MacLean and judge Andreas Mueller took the oath on behalf of the contestants, mentors and judges respectively. The final torch-lighting ritual declared the Olympiad open.

IIHM YCO 2018 saw three rounds of competition between five groups. The countries had earlier been divided into groups at a Lucky Draw held in November in London. Two rounds of the cook-off for all the groups were



► **Conceptualised and executed by International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM), Young Chef Olympiad 2018 was held across New Delhi, Bengaluru, Pune and Kolkata over a period of six days in end-January**

held at Delhi, Pune, Bangalore and Kolkata. The grand finale was held in Kolkata followed by the Grand Closing Ceremony on February 2.

11 talented finalists were selected after tough competition in Rounds 1 and 2. The lucky finalists were Scotland, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, India, Armenia, Iceland, New Zealand, Ireland and England. The final cook-off took place on February 2 morning where Principal judge and mentor Sanjeev Kapoor and celebrity judge Ranveer Brar were present along with other celebrity judges to mark the finalists. "Practice is the mantra of YCO. You cannot stop practising. Those who

have reached the finals are talented and lucky. They are trying to achieve their goal through sheer hard work," said Sanjeev Kapoor.

"IIHM YCO is more than just a culinary competition. Its all about friendship, bonding and camaraderie among nations unified through food. It is the biggest culinary event of the world where the best talents from around the world have come forward to represent their nations and exchange ideas and cultures and most importantly, their traditions which are best expressed through food. After four years of organising this competition, today we are celebrating the grand success of YCO," said Dr Sub-

orno Bose.

"IIHM YCO has grown bigger and better over four years. This year's IIHM YCO competition level has been twice as better than last year. IIHM YCO is today has achieved the necessary success and fame which will go forward and only get bigger and better every year," said Padma Shri Sanjeev Kapoor.

The other awards given away at the ceremony were Dr Zenobia Award for the Most Outstanding Young Chef Ambassador that went to Travis Kyle Lindeman- Collins of Australia. The Sakuntala Devi Award for Best Vegetarian Creation went to ack Gameson of England.

# GLOBAL HOTEL FIRMS FIND A SHORT CUT THROUGH INDIA'S RED TAPE



**C**APITALISING on distress in the Indian hospitality sector, international operators such as Starwood and France's Accor SA are teaming up with investors to acquire hotels from debt-laden domestic owners and re-open them under their own corporate banners.

Such conversions can help global players expand more quickly in a country where hotel construction has slowed since the downturn in 2008 as developers shun capital-intensive projects often delayed by bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles.

"This is the first time we are seeing a reasonable number of assets on the market at the same time," said Gaurav

Bhushan, chief development and investment officer for Asia Pacific at Accor. "There have been hotel assets for sale in the past but they have been more sporadic," he said.

Slowing economic growth, an increase in the supply of hotel rooms and growing competition from foreign operators is hurting local chains such as Hotel Leelaventure Ltd, Royal Orchid Hotels Ltd and Kamat Hotels (India) Ltd, which are selling assets to ease debt in a country with high interest rates.

"In India, some people are seeing the writing on the wall and are trying to get ahead of that," said Nikhil Manchharam, vice president of acquisi-

tions and development for South Asia at Starwood. "The debt stress levels are getting higher, triggering existing owners and operators to look for options," he said.

International operators hope to succeed where local players have stumbled because they have deeper pockets and economies of scale that allow them to wait longer for an economic recovery. India's growth likely slowed to a decade low in the fiscal year that ended in March.

Early this month, Starwood, in partnership with Samhi, a Delhi-based hotel investment firm backed by US real estate investor Sam Zell, launched its first conversion property in India - a





104-room hotel in Ahmedabad under its Four Points by Sheraton brand.

Starwood and Accor are leading the hunt for conversion opportunities in a country where the hospitality sector is expected to grow to \$36 billion (Rs. 1,96,002 crore) by 2018 from \$17 billion in 2008, according to research firm Technopak Advisors.

"You haven't seen these conversions in India before because there wasn't enough existing supply. The more mature a market becomes and the greater the supply added to it, you will see more opportunities for a brand change," said Accor's Bhushan, who has worked on similar transactions elsewhere in Asia.

Compared with building hotels, which can take three to six years in India, buying and converting them can take less than a year, reducing development risk, although conversions also require the new operator to be flexible in terms of building design. Sometimes costly improvements are needed.

In India, the supply of hotels coming onto the market tends to be best-suited to the mid-market brands

of global players.

Accor's Bhushan said speed comes with a trade-off.

"You have to balance that to make sure the property is consistent with the brand you represent and operate in the country or it can have a negative impact," he said.

### Buy versus build

On April 1, the purple Royal Orchid sign on the Ahmedabad hotel came down to make way for the Four Points by Sheraton logo. Samhi bought the hotel from Royal Orchid last April for Rs. 67 crore at a yield of 10.5 per cent and agreed with Starwood in February to convert it.

A yield is the hotel's annual income divided by the cost of the asset.

By comparison, the average yield on prime hotel assets across Asia-Pacific was 5.8 per cent, according to a report by Savills, a UK-based property consultant.

Samhi is spending another Rs. 5 crore to refurbish the hotel, enhancing fire, safety and security standards and upgrading the rooms, which will be completed by the end of June.

"There is a shift from greenfield development to acquisition and if this experiment is successful there will be a flood of opportunities," said Ashish Jakhanwala, CEO of Samhi, which has built four hotels in India and plans to develop 18 more.

Samhi is in talks with another hotel owner to take a 50-year lease on a property in the Delhi region, and another in the resort state of Goa. It is in separate discussions with Starwood and Accor to refurbish and convert the locally-branded hotels.

Return on capital employed - a measure of profitability in the hospitality sector - on acquisitions is about 13 per cent over two years, said Jakhanwala, whereas in new development projects it takes five years to earn 15 per cent.

Accor, which wants to add 10 hotels a year in India, said it is in talks with hotel owners in the west and south of the country to convert properties to its mid-market Mercure brand.

Starwood, which also plans to add 10 hotels a year in India, said it can quicken that pace by 20-30 per cent if it can find the right properties for conversion. It has looked at 30 to 40 potential hotels since January but is in talks with owners of just two, one in the Delhi area and another in Gujarat.

"There is an opportunity for sure but when you roll up your sleeves and start digging, it gets quite complex and it does not always fit the bill," said Starwood's Manchharam.

In some cases the quality of construction is poor or it is badly designed, and Starwood often has to upgrade fire and safety systems to meet its standards.

"A conversion is never going to get you 100 per cent of what you want. It is always going to be a compromise," said Manchharam. "You need to see what you are willing to compromise without it having an impact on your brand."

Source: Reuters

# HOTEL ROOM RATES TO REVIVE AFTER A DECADE AS OCCUPANCY RISES



**A**s occupancy levels across hotels in the country stabilise between 65% and 68%, the Indian hospitality industry is hoping for a revival in room rates that have largely remained subdued since past many years. The sector, according to industry experts, has witnessed tough times between 2009 and 2015, and things have finally started to look up now.

Patu Keswani, Chairman and MD, Lemon Tree Hotels told that for the first time in 2017 occupancy levels across hotels in India hit 65%, which is very critical for the industry. "This year, as per Howarth HTL India, occupancy levels will hit 68%. And over the next five years, they will shoot over 70%, which is like revisiting the glorious years between 2004 and 2008.

This means room rates, which have been under pressure and remained stagnant, will finally start moving up," said Keswani, whose LemonTree is expected to come out with an initial public offer (IPO) to raise INR 1,000-1,200 cr.

According to H1 2017 preview report by hospitality consulting firm Howarth HTL India, the revenue per available room (RevPAR) growth across 15 markets ranged from 1.3% (in the case of Delhi NCR) to 36.6% (in the case of Ahmedabad).

While six out of the top 15 markets suffered year-on-year ADR decline, only six markets achieved double-digit RevPAR growth, mainly based on occupancy and partially supported by rate growth in some business cities,

the consulting firm noted in its report.

And with the industry nearing the end of the traditional tourist season starting October 2017 and ending in April 2018, the hospitality, travel and tourism trade is hoping to continue the growth momentum, witnessed during the first five months of the season, in March as well.

Karan Anand, Head - Relationships, Cox & Kings Ltd., said, "We have seen a growth throughout the year and we are confident that this will continue."

On being asked, how is the market looking for the summer months starting March going on till May-June, Vishal Kamat, CEO, Kamat Hotels, said that depending from one market to another, room rates will remain same or increase in some cases even during summer months. "While leisure travel takes a hit initially, the gap gets filled by business travellers (because March is the last month of the financial year for a majority of the Indian and international companies).

Thereafter, domestic leisure travel starts picking steam leading to increased tourist traffic across key holiday destinations in the country," said Kamat.

Room rates, according to Anand, are likely to remain stable in March and in some places may decline due to the off-season. "However, since the peak season for domestic travel begins in April, the room rates are likely to rise slightly towards that month. Domestic travellers are now the backbone of the hotel industry. Today, even the five-star hotel chains depend on the domestic tourists to fill their rooms."

(Source: DNA Money)

# ACCOR HOTELS INITIATES SALE OF MAJORITY STAKE IN ACCORINVEST



**U**NDER the terms of the agreements, AccorHotels would initially sell 55 percent of AccorInvest to Sovereign Funds, namely the Public Investment Fund (PIF) and GIC, Institutional Investors, namely Credit Agricole Assurances, Colony NorthStar and Amundi, and other investors.

AccorHotels announces that it has signed agreements with a group of international investors with a view to selling a majority of the capital of AccorInvest. Under the terms of the agreements, AccorHotels would ini-

tially sell 55 percent of AccorInvest to Sovereign Funds, namely the Public Investment Fund (PIF) and GIC, Institutional Investors, namely Credit Agricole Assurances, Colony NorthStar and Amundi, and other investors. For AccorHotels, the sale would result in a cash contribution of €4.4 billion.

Sébastien Bazin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of AccorHotels, said: “These agreements represent a key milestone for the Group. Following the separation of AccorInvest into a stand-alone legal entity

last summer, we are now gathering a round-table of leading investors, on the basis of a valuation that fully reflects its global leadership and the quality of its assets, while building a long-term relationship between AccorHotels and AccorInvest. These elements were essential to make this operation a success for all stakeholders: teams, partners, as well as present and future shareholders of both entities. The entry of new shareholders and the deconsolidation of AccorInvest will provide AccorHotels with substantial leeway to enhance our dynamic growth and innovation strategy and create value for shareholders. For its part, AccorInvest will take advantage of its new powerful shareholders’ support, as well as a strengthened financial structure to execute its roadmap and continue to reinforce its portfolio of assets.”

The AccorInvest hotels would be operated by AccorHotels under very-long-term contracts, namely 50 years (including a 15-year renewal option) for luxury and upscale hotels and 30 years on average (including a 10-year renewal option) for hotels in the mid-scale and economy segments. The management contract terms that have been negotiated between the parties are in line with market practices.

With close to 30,000 employees and operations in 27 countries, AccorInvest is the world leader in hotel real estate, with a current portfolio of 891 hotels. The majority of these hotels are located in Europe, in the economy and midscale segments. Of the total, 324 are owned and 567 are operated under fixed or variable-rent leases.

# INDIA TO BE ONE OF THE FASTEST-GROWING TOURISM ECONOMIES BY 2028: WTTC



**A**CCORDING to a report by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), India will add around 10 million jobs in the travel & tourism sector by 2028. WTTC forecasts that the total number of jobs which are dependent in some form on travel & tourism will increase from 42.9 million in 2018 to 52.3 million in 2028. Gloria Guevara, President & CEO, WTTC, said “Travel & tourism creates jobs, drives economic growth and helps build better societies. This is particularly clear in India which is forecast to be one of the fastest-growing tourism economies in the world over the next decade adding 10 million jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars to the economy by 2028.”

Currently, India is currently the 7th largest travel & tourism economy in

the world. Overall, the total contribution of the sector to the economy was INR 15.2 trillion (USD 234 billion) in 2017, or 9.4% of the economy once its direct, indirect and induced benefits are taken in to account. This is forecast to more than double to INR 32 trillion (USD 492 billion) by 2028.

“There are some extremely proactive steps which have been introduced by the Government to increase the number of international visitors and to position itself as a destination of choice among travellers worldwide. Particularly, we recognise the introduction of e-Visa for 163 countries and the launch of Incredible India 2.0 Campaign with major improvement in the marketing and PR strategy. Looking to the future, India can strategically lead travel facilitation within the SAARC region by

introducing a standard technological solution, modern technology and biometrics. This will enhance the travel & tourism economies in the region,” Guevara said.

Moreover, the WTTC chief suggested on revision in GST rates for the hospitality sector to make it more competitive. Guevara stated, “While the country-wide change to GST is a welcome move, the Indian Government could consider looking again at the level of GST in the hospitality sector to make it more competitive with other countries in the region.”

As far as the aviation market is concerned, WTTC is of the view that infrastructure still remains a crucial issue for India to reach its full potential. “The Indian aviation market is expanding with rapid advancement in connectivity within India. Indian airlines have booked 900 plus new aircrafts to add capacity and expand operations over next couple of years. However, airport capacity remains an issue, so we would recommend greater adoption of secondary airports across cities with multimodal connectivity between the existing and secondary ones for better passenger facilitation.”

“We would also urge the public and private sectors to work together to prepare crisis management plans so the country is fully prepared with proper systems and processes in place, that can be deployed, should there be a crisis,” Guevara said.

Every year WTTC produces the definitive research into the economic impact of travel & tourism across 185 countries and 25 regions.

Source: HBI News

# TAJ DEBUTS WITH LUXURY RESORT IN ANDAMANS



**L**EADING Hospitality Company in South Asia, Indian Hotels Company Limited, has just announced the opening of Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Andamans located on the crescent-shaped Radhanagar Beach.

Taj has constructed the 72-villa world-class resort spread across 46 acres of forest and mangroves while preserving the fragile eco-system of the island.

Speaking about the new addition to the Taj portfolio, Puneet Chhatwal, MD and CEO, Indian Hotels Company Limited said, "Taj Exotica Resort & Spa is a milestone launch for us. Taj has been instrumental in developing India's tourism potential in Rajasthan, Kerala and Goa and putting them on the global map. With the

opening of this resort, IHCL's position of pioneering destinations and having the largest network of leisure hotels gets further strengthened. Known for its virgin white sand beaches and tropical forests; Andamans is poised to be one of the top places to travel to in 2018. The hotel has been enveloped in the island habitat with focus on sustainability to create minimal footprint on the natural ecosystem. We look forward to extending the legendary Taj hospitality to our guests in the Andamans."

Talking about the resort's unique offerings Abnash Kumar, General Manager, Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Andamans said, "From elevating the local cuisine to empowering locals through employment - the all new

Taj Exotica Resort & Spa will offer guests a culturally and environmentally uplifting experience. I am looking forward to welcoming our guests to this spectacular new resort with its exclusive villas, secluded beaches and immersive culinary experiences." Commenting on the development of the project he added, "We have constructed this resort on the land leased to us by Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited (ANI-IDCO) who have provided unstinted and whole-hearted support in creating a world-class beach resort located on Radhanagar beach, voted as one of the best in Asia."

Source: Hospitality Biz india

# IMPACT OF GST ON MUMBAI, BENGALURU RESTAURANTS POSITIVE: SURVEY



**T**HE restaurant industry in Mumbai and Bengaluru feels the impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been largely positive, but lack of clarity on regulations remains a major hurdle, according to a survey.

More than 70% of the restaurant owners in the two cities believed GST is a positive decision for the industry, while 68% businesses felt it will ease compliance since it is backed by technology, said the survey by Grant Thornton India, a leading assurance, tax and advisory firm.

High rentals and difficulty in retaining experienced staff are key challenges faced by the restaurant industry in Mumbai and Bengaluru, said the survey titled 'Bon Appetit – Emerging

trends, opportunities and challenges in Indian restaurant industry'.

Lack of clarity on regulations has also been mentioned as an area of concern, it added.

The Grant Thornton's Bon Appetit survey was based on findings from 35 (Mumbai) and 29 (Bengaluru) owners and Key Managerial Personnel (KMPs).

Like GST, demonetisation has also affected the restaurant industry, the survey revealed.

The impact of demonetisation appeared to have been more in Bengaluru, where only one-third of the respondents said there is no impact, compared to Mumbai, where it was 60%, it said.

This is also as cash is still a predominant mode of payment and accounts for 20-30% of receipts in a restaurant, it said.

M-wallets have just started picking up and account for 4-5% of the collections, it added.

"The Indian restaurant industry has evolved and grown significantly over the past two decades and continues to grow at a steady pace. This can be attributed to the changing demographics, increase in disposable incomes, urbanisation and growth of organised retail. The market is highly segmented on account of varying income levels and age bracket of the population," said Dhanraj Bhagat, LLP Partner, Grant Thornton India.

The survey revealed that quality of food emerged as the key driver for growth of restaurants, followed by location and pricing.

For Mumbai respondents, having organic food is more important than concerns related to pricing and cuisine preference, while affordability was highlighted as the key emerging trend in consumer preferences in Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, the respondents said pan-India or regional expansion was the primary strategy for growth.

In Mumbai, respondents said global expansion and cuisine addition are two other crucial strategies for increasing footprint.

When it comes to funding these expansions, Mumbai respondents preferred private equity firms, whereas Bengaluru saw bank loans as the primary source, the survey added.

Source: Indian Express

## MARKETING STRATEGY

# FORTUNE IN FEW HOURS

Micro-stay is a concept which allows hotels to sell their inventory on an hourly basis, rather than on a fixed check in and check out regimen. This can be a market to capture for hotels

**W**HAT if a guest walks up to your hotel reception and asks you to check him in for couple of hours? It may raise a lot of suspicions in your mind but it should not be misconstrued for romantic as-signations. There are many business travellers and jet ladders seeking accommodation on hourly basis.

The concept of providing hotel room to guests on hourly basis is called micro-stay. Based loosely on the concept of capsule hotels, micro-stay is also referred to as day-stay, short-stay or capsule stay in many countries. Micro-stay concept became famous in Europe during the economic downturn when fewer people were travelling. This concept is now catching up in America and India.

Hotels have started selling rooms to travellers who seek accommodation for a few hours. Micro-stays work best for guests with a long transit lay-over or business travellers who have scattered meetings. Many hotels lo-

cated near the airport and stations in Europe offer these concepts as these guests are willing to pay to spend few hours in a hotel rather than using the lounge. Many hotels have dedicated rooms & housekeeping to cater to these guests.

### New operators

Many popular hotel sites like modstay.com, slicerooms.com, frotels.com, mistay.in and alostay.com list hotels that offer rooms for certain hours & cater to the traveller segment. These rooms are mostly given at discounted rates from the usual daily fare. These rooms act as a second office (for travellers seeking rest between meetings) or second bed (for jet lagged travellers seeking rest between flights).

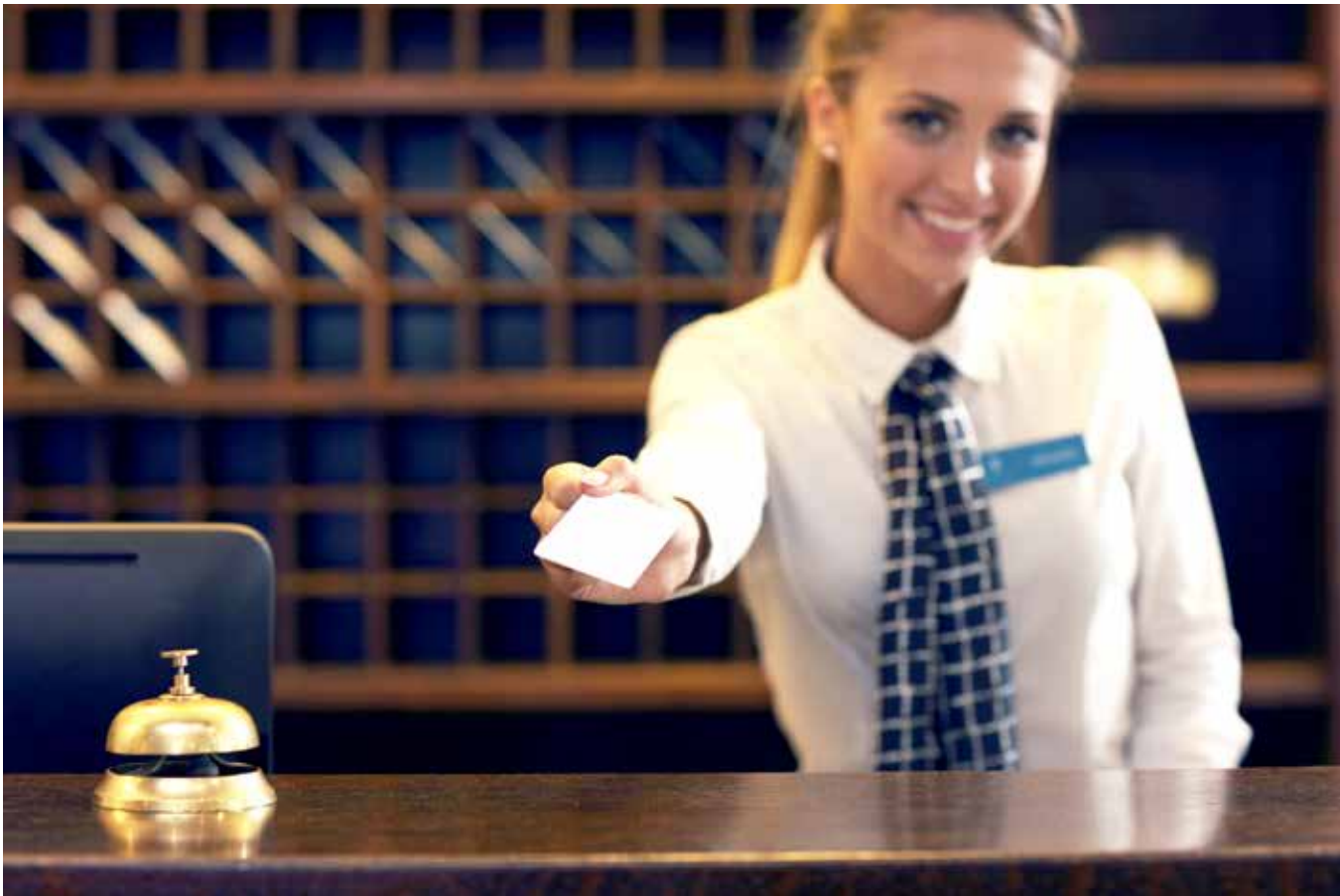
This is a market segment hotels must tap rather than keeping the inventory vacant expecting a guest who may or may not turn up later in the day.

In India, the concept of booking a

hotel room on hourly basis is often perceived negatively. Misconceptions like these not only affect the revenue of hotels, but travellers also suffer because of the age-old, rigid style of hotel bookings that has been continuing over many years. The micro-stay model will be a breather of fresh air for travellers and can prove to be a profitable business for hotels once it is implemented thoroughly.

The concept is quite new to India and therefore it is natural that it will take some time to get the acceptance from the industry. There are also perception issues associated with micro stay in India. A big part of the hotel industry is yet to accept and implement micro-stay concept as they perceive this might attract unmarried couples as primary customer, while for some hotel chains, the concerns include the operational dynamics and additional logistics of managing micro-stay bookings.

But, at the same time, several mid-



► **The micro-stay concept will facilitate the hotel to make use of the under-utilised room time**

range hotel chains, such as Lemon Tree Hotels, Ginger Hotels & Keys Hotels are understood to be promoting their day-use packages and are offering micro-stay directly through their website. Some of the hotel chains such as Pride Hotel, Mango Hotel, Keys Hotel and Sarovar Hotel are partners of Mi-Stay and are offering micro-stay and many others are in the process of getting onboard.

Consumers (business and pilgrimage travellers) whom I and my team met by and large are overwhelmed with this concept, according to the owner of SliceRooms, but the industry as such as usual is taking time to accept it, he believes. The reason

could be the usual reluctance of accepting new things in India.

### **Sell a room thrice**

In this fast evolving and highly competitive hospitality environment, concepts like micro-stays will help hotels to rake in more revenue as they can sell the rooms twice or thrice a day. Micro stays will attract more travellers and visitors to hotels as they will prefer spending their time in rooms taking a nap, shower or freshen up for their travel instead of vigorously waiting at airports, railway stations or bus stands to kill time.

Micro stay makes absolute business sense for hotels given the opportunity it provides to the hotels to optimise their

inventory and increase their revenue. With an average occupancy rate standing as around 60%, a lot of rooms goes unsold. Through micro-stay, a new demand is being created; travellers who might not have booked a hotel room otherwise can now book as they only have to pay for the hours they stay.

Where an environment is highly competitive, the profitability can be questioned. This micro stay concept will facilitate the hotel to make use of the un-utilised room time and eventually leads to additional revenue for the room. In general Industry norm is 70% to 80% of the published tariff is projected as the budgeted ARR (maintaining an average discount of





### ► Short-stay is most suitable for business travellers

20% to 30%, both FIT and CVGR). An additional sale of rooms @30% of the published tariff will be an added feather to the cap thereby enhancing the projected ARR. This makes a business sense through short-stay.

Micro stay is a feasible option for people who travel to and fro to different cities for meetings and have to return on the same day or for pilgrims etc. Even the same yardstick applies to pilgrims at destinations.

Stakeholders also confirm this trend. The target customers must be business travellers who travel same day back to the originating location or travels to the different locations same day and pilgrims who covers multiple temple

in same day. Apart from the above same day business and pilgrims travellers, corporates also can avail these, capsule or micro stay for their short meetings and Skype meetings, which has probabilities and possibilities to increase the other outlet sale such as restaurant, coffee shop and bar.

Corporate tie-ups to manage the overall employee accommodation needs of company by pack of hours will be a key channel to reach this segment. Apart from that, strategic tie-up with airlines, hospitals, etc., can be instrumental in reaching the other customer segment. Content marketing will also play a critical role in popularising the concept directly among the consumers.

## Log on for micro-stay in India

**www.modstay.com:** We encourage property owners to rent out property on hourly, day/night, daily, weekly or monthly basis to get most of it. So no matter our guest is male, female, family or unmarried couple we have a comfortable stay with their choice.

**www.slicerooms.com:** It is observed that many of us need hotel rooms and services only for few hours yet end up paying more on many occasions for hours we hardly use. This formed the basis for a venture like Slicerooms which gave online access to customers who were looking for flexibility in check-in and check-out timings without any compulsions of customary hotel norms

**www.frotels.com:** Who doesn't like the idea of saving money while travelling, especially if the travel duration is a short one? Well, with Frotels, you have the benefit of paying only for what you use when it comes to Hotel booking. It certainly does not cost you a fortune. When you book your Hotels Online through Frotels.com, you have more advantages and privileges when compared to the other travelers. Other travelers pay the accommodation charges for the entire day even if the utility is only for a few hours. However, at Frotels, you can simply pay as per the usage based on the number of hours.

**www.mistay.in:** Have a long layover before a connecting flight/ train and wondering if you could book hotel rooms by hour? Do you travel often on business trips and require a room only to freshen-up before the meeting or conference? Reached city early morning and want to check in early? Have a flight late evening and do not want to check-out early? You no longer need to struggle to find a 24 check-in hotel. At MiStay, you get flexible check-in & check-out times.

**www.alostay.com:** We are talking about the 'hourly concept', born out of the query: Have you ever thought you could offer your rooms on hourly rates. Not such a brilliant idea you say! Really? We feel this idea is borne out of necessity and from our



RIVER CRUISE

# AND QUIET FLOWS THE GANGES

A slew of river cruise vessels and itineraries being introduced on the Ganges as well as on some of India's lesser-known rivers open up a huge opportunity for the hospitality industry

**F**ROM Rudyard Kipling to Mark Twain, the serene and smooth luxury of a river cruise was not missed on anyone. While colourful life along the world's great rivers like the Nile, the Mississippi, the Volga, the Amazon and the Mekong have added vibrancy to such cruises, in India, the Ganga provides more than just a smooth sailing along its course.

The colonialists had fathomed the depth of the Ganges and plunged in its serenity centuries ago. But in the recent years the river cruising world began to notice the potential of India's Ganges River again. Think ancient Hindu temples and serene village hamlets along with the remnant

of colonial port towns dotted by the river banks, not to mention the other-worldly holy city of Varanasi. The rediscovery of the ancient river has seen the introduction of several river cruise and tour operators jump on-board.

Among the most prominent players in this Ganges River renaissance has been Haimark. Two years ago, the company began doing test sailings along the Ganges to gauge the river's prospects, and the outcome was the decision to build two luxury, all-suite vessels for the Ganges.

Launched by Heritage River Journeys Pvt Ltd (HRJPL), a Delhi-based company, along with the US incorporated Haimark, one of the leading river cruise companies in the world, the ship set sail from Kolkata three years ago.

Meandering through the river's bends, the seven-day journey will take visitors all the way to Murshidabad, once the capital of Bengal, stopping by at various sites of historic interest on the way. And the trip will be held in the lap of ultimate luxury as Ganges Voyager, the vessel, which will host guests on this trip, is nothing less than a floating five-star hotel.

Like vessels Haimark operates in other parts of South Asia, the river ship Ganges Voyager will provide its guests a journey into the "soul of each storeyed setting, visiting cherished and iconic sites by day and enjoying five-star hospitality and luxury by night". Aboard the Ganges Voyager, guests will be able to enjoy the sanctity of a private suite and world-class dining. The trip, however, is meant

JOIN US AT PETER CAT  
FOR A MEAL PREPARED  
IN THE TRUE HONOURED  
TRADITION OF INDIA. BEGIN WITH  
A FISH MAKHMALI AND A  
TANDOORI BROCCOLI FOLLOWED  
BY THE MOUTH WATERING DUM  
KI RAAN. A PORTION OF  
VEGETABLE MALAI KOFTA  
OR IF YOU PREFER OUR  
CHICKEN RISHMI BUTTER  
MASALA. THEN OUR SIGNATURE  
ORIGINAL CHELO KEBAB AND  
LAST BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST  
A MERINGUE WITH ICE CREAM  
AND HOT CHOCOLATE SAUCE  
TO MAKE YOUR LUNCH AND  
DINNER COMPLETE EVERY  
COURSE A SPECIAL TREAT.  
EVERYDAY AT PETER CAT.



18A, PARK STREET, KOLKATA-700016, INDIA  
+91-33-22298841, +91-33-22172942  
INFO@HERITAGEDINING.IN

# IN CALCUTTA THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE MEAN BY A WELL-BALANCED MEAL



*Mocambo's*

SIZZLER  
SPECIALITIES

- BECKY STEAK
- CHICKEN GARLIC STEAK
- VEGETABLE STEAK
- CHICKEN CHOCOLATA
- SUBB AND TURB

JOIN US AT MOCAMBO  
FOR A MEAL PREPARED IN THE TRUE  
HONOURED TRADITION OF EUROPE.  
BEGIN WITH A DEVILLED CRAB,  
GARLIC HERB PRAWNS, FOLLOWED  
BY A CHICKEN PAPRIKA, CHICKEN TIRAZZINI  
AND ASPARAGUS CREAM, ELSE A VEGETABLE ALA KUV  
OR IF YOU PREFER OUR BECKY MEUNIER,  
LOBSTER THERMIDOR, AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST  
A BAKED ALASKA TO MAKE YOUR  
LUNCH AND DINNER COMPLETE.  
EVERY COURSE A SPECIAL TREAT.  
EVERYDAY AT MOCAMBO.

*Mocambo's*

25B, PARK STREET, KOLKATA-700016, INDIA  
+91-33-22290095, +91-33-22654300  
INFO@HERITAGEDINING.IN

## RIVER CRUISE



► The last word in luxury is the Maharaja suite on the upper deck

for a lucky few as its 28 suites accommodate 56 people. “We’ve pioneered cruising on the Ganges after 200 years. After the railroad came into India in the 1800s, transportation shifted and almost all river navigation disappeared,” said HRJPL Chairman Raj Singh.

Going by information available from Heritage River Journey officials and the official Haimark website, the first trip was pre-booked by months and bookings not easy to come by. A joint venture between the private firms and the West Bengal government, the luxury cruise is expected to add value to the state’s growing tourism sector. Kolkata got its first glimpse of the river ship at the Millennium Park jetty on December 30, in the presence of senior ministers and bureaucrats, four days before it steamed off in the direction of Murshidabad.

According to Heritage officials, while most tourists availing the luxury cruise are foreigners, it has already become so popular that the trip has been booked for the next four years. While the trip comes at a pretty penny, Singh, who is Haimark’s India-based partner, pointed out that staying in any five-star hotel during this peak season will not cost any less. “This floating luxury liner offers all the facilities that five-star hotels offer. There are multi-cuisine restaurants and super luxury cabins along with lounges, dining rooms and conference facilities,” he said.

For years tourism in Bengal has remained stuck at Kolkata, ignoring other sites, which have been former colonies of the European powers in Bengal. But now, such is the demand that new vessels had to be commissioned another vessel. Company officials said that while the Ganges

Voyager is already a hit, the Ganges Voyager-II will be launched by the end of this year to ensure more interested tourists can be accommodated.

Throughout the trip, guests will enjoy accommodation aboard the Ganges Voyager, which embody the grace and style of the British colonial era, incorporating modern conveniences and luxuries available in finest hotels. While the ship boasts of 28 spacious, well-appointed suites, the last word in luxury is the Maharaja Suite on the upper deck, which features floor to ceiling glass doors that open onto a French balcony with panoramic views of the passing landscape. The Viceroy Suite, along with Heritage and Colonial suites also open doors to similar kinds of luxury.

Besides the luxurious suites, the Ganges Voyager also boasts of the East India dining room, which is a tribute to the local cuisine, where

# Aminia

THE TASTE YOU LOVE



## New Market

6A, S. N. Banerjee Road, Kolkata - 700087

## Golpark

57, Ballygunge Gardens, Kolkata - 700019

## Nager Bazar

166, Jessore Road, Kolkata - 700055

## Rajarhat

Chinar Park, Rajarhat, New Town, Kolkata - 700136

## Shyam Bazar

95, Bidhan Sarani, Kolkata - 700004

## Behala

54, Diamond Harbour Road, Kolkata - 700060

## Barrackpore

62 (35) S.N. Banerjee Road, Barrackpore, Kolkata - 700120

## Dhaka (Bangladesh)

House no. 54, Road no. 4, Sector 3, Uttara, Dhaka-1230

Dial Home Delivery Number

**8100 666 444**

and follow the IVR

 [info@aminia.co.in](mailto:info@aminia.co.in)

 [aminia\\_mughlai](https://twitter.com/aminia_mughlai)

 [AminiaRestaurant](https://www.facebook.com/AminiaRestaurant)

 [AminiaRestaurant](https://www.instagram.com/AminiaRestaurant)

We undertake Indoor / Outdoor Catering (all types of menu), provide customize Corporate Orders

# Valet Parking available at our restaurants

## RIVER CRUISE



► **The cruise line is equipped with all modern amenities**

guests will enjoy meals as they watch the world pass by. The other highlight is the Governor's Lounge, which provides a venue to gather with fellow guests, sipping on cocktails and fine wines. The ship also has a sun deck which provides the perfect place to have a cup of tea, relax with a book, or watch the sunset.

Travelling along the river, guests spend the days soaking in local culture, visiting some of India's oldest urban settlements, villages, temples and forests and at night they will relax in luxury aboard the Ganges Voyager, dining on cuisines inspired by local and Western tastes, reminiscing the day's experiences with fellow passengers, or just gazing along the gently passing riverbank. Starting from Kolkata, the seven-day journey will also end at the bustling metropolis.

Heritage officials said that on day

one, guests will board the ship for lunch and then taken an afternoon excursion of Kolkata, visiting various tourist sites. As the ship takes off and moves upstream, sailing past areas where British, Dutch, Portuguese, French and other European settlers set up shop since they discovered India. The stops, where guests will disembark to visit sites, will include Bandel, a Portuguese settlement set up in the 16th century, Kalna, famous for its temples and Matiari, a traditional centre for handcrafted brass artefacts, to reach Murshidabad. The trip moves onward to Mayapur, headquarters of ISKCON and to the French settlement of Chandernagore, before returning to Kolkata.

Such river trips open up a tremendous opportunity for the hospitality business in Kolkata and other ports in eastern India.

**Travelling along the river, guests spend the days soaking in local culture, visiting some of India's oldest urban settlements, villages, temples and forests and at night they will relax in luxury aboard the Ganges Voyager, dining on cuisines inspired by local and Western tastes**

# Along the mightier one



**A**LTHOUGH it's associated with India river cruises, the Brahmaputra River passes through several countries and has been given many names.

It is known as the Yarlung Tsangpo where it arises in Tibet's Angsi Glacier on the north side of the Himalayas; in the Arunachal Pradesh region of India it's called the Dihang and the inhabitants of Bangladesh know it as the Jamuna River.

It is only when it passes through the lush Assam valley in the northeast corner of India that it becomes the Brahmaputra, or 'Son of Brahma,' in tribute to one of the greatest Hindu deities.

Being named after a male god gives

this rather special river a most particular distinction; it is the only 'male' river in India and a potent counterpart to the Great Mother Ganges, with which it conjoins toward the end of its 1,800-mile journey, just before both rivers spill out into the Bay of Bengal.

While not as famous as 'Mata Ganga,' the Brahmaputra River can also take cruise passengers to historic palaces, forts and temples, and offer them a fascinating glimpse into the daily lives of remote tribes whose customs have prevailed for centuries.

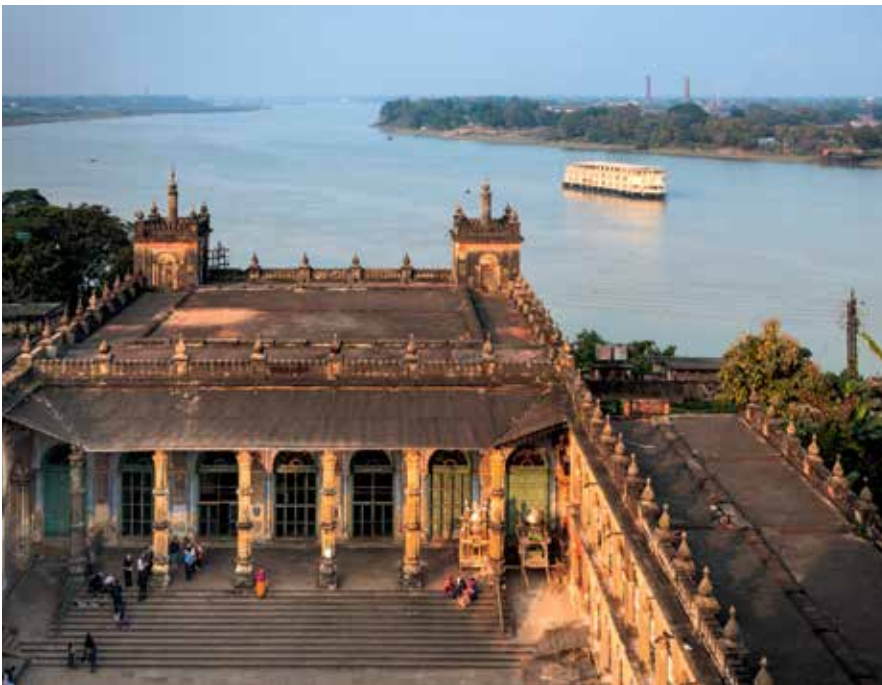
But on top of all that, its shimmering sandy banks offer peace, tranquility and access not only to verdant tea plantations but also to one of the

world's great wildernesses, Kaziranga National Park, where placid elephants carry travelers through shoulder-high grass to watch wild swamp and hog deer and white rhinos grazing with their young and, occasionally, to spot -- if their eyes are sharp and they're lucky -- a magnificent tiger or leopard hiding in the foliage.

The secret when sailing along the Brahmaputra is to look up as well as down, for the vivid colours of Assam's birds must be seen to be believed; they flit overhead like feathered jewels, in flashes of gold, ruby red or sapphire blue – and it's easy to see what inspires the local weavers to produce such colourful and brightly embroidered bolts of fine silk.

# FLOW LIKE A RIVER

Raj Singh



► River cruising involves sightseeing of monuments, ghats and local craft



"The Ganga to me is the symbol of India's memorable past which has been flowing into the present and continues to flow towards the ocean of the future," said Jawaharlal Nehru, First Prime Minister of India.

India: full of mystery, enchantment, intrigue and beauty in every direction. It's all here in the ornate sacred spaces, the vivid sarees you pass on the

street, and the warm, gracious smiles that greet at every turn. India and the Ganges River are a magical destination and Heritage River Journeys, the pioneer of river cruising in India, is proud to introduce to avid travelers.

Whether you are an experienced river cruiser, or this is your maiden voyage, we invite you on this unique expedition along this most sacred of Indian rivers, Mother Ganga.

Ganga, the holiest river in India and one of the biggest waterways in

the world, is highly revered by Hindu devotees. It is believed that a holy dip in river Ganga can wash away all sins. While sailing on its holy waters, one can see pilgrims on the banks the river, known as the ghats, offering flowers, vermilion, sweets, etc.

In India while boat rides and day cruises have been a popular hit with the tourist masses, overnight sailing trips or river cruising is relatively a niche product. But it has had a spectacular start with the few luxury cruises that were launched in the last decade. Boutique river cruises provide travellers with an opportunity equal to none to observe the astounding geography of the region.

River cruising is coupled with sightseeing of monuments, ghats, village life, local crafts, aquatic and avian life. It becomes a new way to discover a region not on the usual tourist circuit in the comfort and safety of well-designed and experienced crew.

Heritage River Journeys is proud to introduce the all-suite M.V. Ganges Voyager and M.V. Ganges Voyager II, each respectively launched in 2015 and 2016. Exquisite and ever-changing, watch the tapestry of life along the Ganges River unfold before your very eyes in sublime comfort and elegance aboard these elegant ships.

These cruises may vary from a few hours to four-to-five-day experience on Ganga's waters. Being associated with extraordinary natural beauty and religious values, the river offers glimpses of majestic mountains, beautiful valleys, waterfalls, ancient temples and various prominent pilgrimage sites.

*After having played a key role in the successful introduction of luxury train tourism to India, Raj Singh, a renowned authority on Indian wildlife and a travel industry pioneer of river cruising on the Ganges in eastern India.*





**CHEF'S CORNER**

# KOLKATA IS INDIA'S FOOD CAPITAL

**CHEF ALOK ANAND** has been spreading happiness with his culinary skills since 1994, after completing his graduation from the Institute of Hotel Management, Ahmedabad. He was a part of Oberoi School of Hotel Management which is now the Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development, where he did an advanced management program. In a career spanning over 22 years, he has developed his own standard of cuisine with a deep commitment to hospitality.

Chef Alok has worked with the Oberoi Group at their various units like Oberoi Bombay, New Delhi, Raj Vilas in Jaipur and Udaivilas in Udaipur after which he joined JW Marriott Mumbai and then The Imperial New Delhi. He then began his stint with the Taj Group with Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi & Taj Coromandel, Chennai.

Chef Alok is a self-motivated, creative, versatile and meticulous individual with great love and passion for food. He has developed custom-designed menus for heads of states, corporate czars and internationally-known celebrities through the course of his experience at Taj Hotels, Resorts & Palaces.

He is credited with the re-creation of the iconic restaurant – Southern Spice - with a better experience, better cuisine and luxurious feel. He and his team travelled extensively throughout the interiors of the four southern states, venturing into local homes, and even sampling fare from roadside stands – to capture long-forgotten and little-known recipes and bring them to the forefront of high-end cuisine.

Chef Alok has also led the team of chefs at Golden Dragon, the signature Cantonese and Schezwan cuisine restaurant, on an innovative culinary journey to curate a unique vegetarian menu that features timeless recipes created with ingredients that mimic non-vegetarian flavors and textures - faux meat dishes for vegetarians.

He is known to add his touch of individuality and distinctive style to the flavor and presentation of food. He has commendable team player spirit and profound potential to set high standards for the team and himself. Chef Alok's personable nature lends itself perfectly to the set-up of JW Marriott, Kolkata, where guests can actually watch him prepare his dishes in the open kitchen at times. He has won swag of awards, and has also cooked for an impressive list of food critics from around the world.

In his current role, as the Executive Chef at JW Marriott, Kolkata, Chef Alok's main responsibilities include mentoring a comprehensive team, overall management of the food and beverage outlets and introduction of new trends of food presentation and dining concepts.

He spoke to Mystic East in an exclusive interview. Excerpts:

**You've been in JW Marriott, Kolkata for nearly a year. How has been the experience so far?**

It has been an excellent experience. I have had the opportunity of meeting very hospitable people and learn the unique gastronomic delights of Bengal.

**How different is this experience compared to that in other top hotels across India? What made you say yes to Calcutta?**

People here are very sweet and friendly. The place is home to some of the best and most diverse food in the country.

I have studied in Ahmedabad, worked in Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Udaipur, Chennai, Bangalore and everywhere I have learnt about the culture and cuisine. Coming to Kolkata helped me in enhancing my gastronomic learning.

Kolkata is the Food Capital of India. Eating out is serious business here. Even working lunches run in six to eight courses. People here are very passionate and obsessed with food. They love food unabashedly.

**Which is the most popular restaurant in the hotel? What has been your major contribution to the menu?**

Both our Restaurants – JW Kitchen and Vintage Asia are very popular. I have introduced some unique dishes on the menu.

**What is the signature dish at JW Kitchen? And what's the signature dish at Vintage Asia?**

Signature dishes at JW Kitchen: Figs, goat cheese & Quinoa salad; Curried pumpkin and sage ravioli, saffron butter; Dak Bungalow chicken curry, Chingri Malai Curry, Chhannar dalna

Signature dishes at Vintage Asia: Edamame and truffle Dim Sum; Pork Xiao Long Bao; Wok Tossed Peruvian

**Kolkata is the Food Capital of India. Eating out is serious business here. Even working lunches run in six to eight courses. People here are very passionate and obsessed with food. They love food unabashedly**

an White Asparagus, Edamame, lime butter; Stir Fried Lotus root, Snow peas, Black Fungus; Chiang Mai Prawn Curry; Gai yang (Country style Roast Chicken from Northern Thailand); Spiced Caramelized Pork Belly, Pineapple, Crispy Garlic; Fried rice, Edamame, Vegetable, Toban sauce; Tub tim krob

**What is the most popular/in-demand cuisine at wedding banquets at the hotel?**

Apart from Indian cuisine, Asian cuisine is very popular as we also have the award winning restaurant - Vintage Asia at our hotel

**Have you ever eaten out in Calcutta?**

Yes. I love to explore local flavours. Now I have been in all the four parts of the country and it is wonderful to learn about our diverse cuisine.

**What's your favourite street food?**

My favourite street food in Kolkata are: Ghugni chaat, Aloo Kabli, Machher Chop, Dimer Devil, Chhannar Jilipi, Hinger kochuri, Ghoti Gorom,

**What's your opinion about Bengali cuisine? Any personal favourite dish?**

Bengali cuisine is multi-course like the French cuisine. Dishes are eaten course wise – Beetroot or Kachumber salad, Tele bhaja / Chop / Begun Bhaja, Laal Shag Badam Diye Bhaja, Chholar Dal with Loochi, Shukto, Machher Jhol, Kosha Mangsho, Murgir Jhol, Aloo Posto with Misti Pulao or Steamed Rice, Papad, Chutney, Desserts selection – Sandesh, rosogulla, Pantua, Chhannar jilipi, Mishti Doi, Paan

Few of my favourite dishes are: Kosha Mangsho, Chingri Malai Curry, Ilish Paturi

**Who are the celebrities you have cooked for in Calcutta? In your earlier assignments outside Calcutta?**

In Kolkata few of the celebrities I have cooked for are: Sourav Ganguly, Rituparna Sengupta, Prosenjit Chatterji, Shahrukh Khan, Anushka Sharma, Yuvraj Singh.

In my earlier Assignments, I have cooked for Hillary Clinton, Amitabh Bachchan, Sachin Tendulkar, Mukesh Ambani, Anil Ambani, Bonnie Kapoor, Sridevi

**What are your 5 favourite picks JW Marriott A La Carte menu?**

Figs, goat cheese & Quinoa salad; Black pepper crusted Salmon; Dak Bungalow chicken curry; Edamame Truffle Dumpling; Caramelized Pork Belly, Pineapple, Crispy Garlic

**Where do you see yourself in the next five years? Do you ever wish to be a restaurateur or entrepreneur?**

In the next five years I wish to be at the helm of setting up unique culinary concepts.

I would like to be an entrepreneur known for launching unique F&B concepts.



# Gondhoraj Royal Cake

Unique creation of Chef Alok Anand, Executive Chef, JW Marriott Kolkata

## Ingredients

- For the Mousse
- Water – 240 gms
- Sugar – 640 gms
- Egg Yolk – 640 gms
- Dark Chocolate – 1680 gms
- Gonghoraj Lemon Rind – scrapped off 1 lemon
- Whipped Cream – 2400 gms

## For the Praline Crunchy

- Praline Hazelnut – 1500 gms
- Dark Chocolate – 375 gms
- Milk Chocolate – 150 gms
- Paillete Feuilletine (Fragments of thin pancakes for praline) – 600 gms
- One layer of Dacquoise Biscuits

## Method

### For the Mousse

- Melt the chocolate in double boiler
- Meanwhile, prepare the casserole with water and sugar in it and boil it to 120°C
- In the mixing bowl, whisk the egg yolks at maximum speed and pour on it the hot sugar mixture
- Allow it to cool down for a while then pour it in the melted chocolate and mix vigorously
- Add the Gondhoraj Lemon Rind and mix well
- Following this add the whipped cream

### For the Praline Crunchy

- Put one layer of dacquoise biscuit within a mould on a tray.
- Mix the melted chocolate with the praline hazelnut.
- Add the paillete feuilletine and mix properly then pour it inside the tray and spread it evenly
- Add the dark chocolate mousse on top
- Refrigerate for minimum one night before you unmold and cut it
- Garnish with Choice of yellow Edible flower and Gondhoraj Lemon Rind. The cake is ready to serve

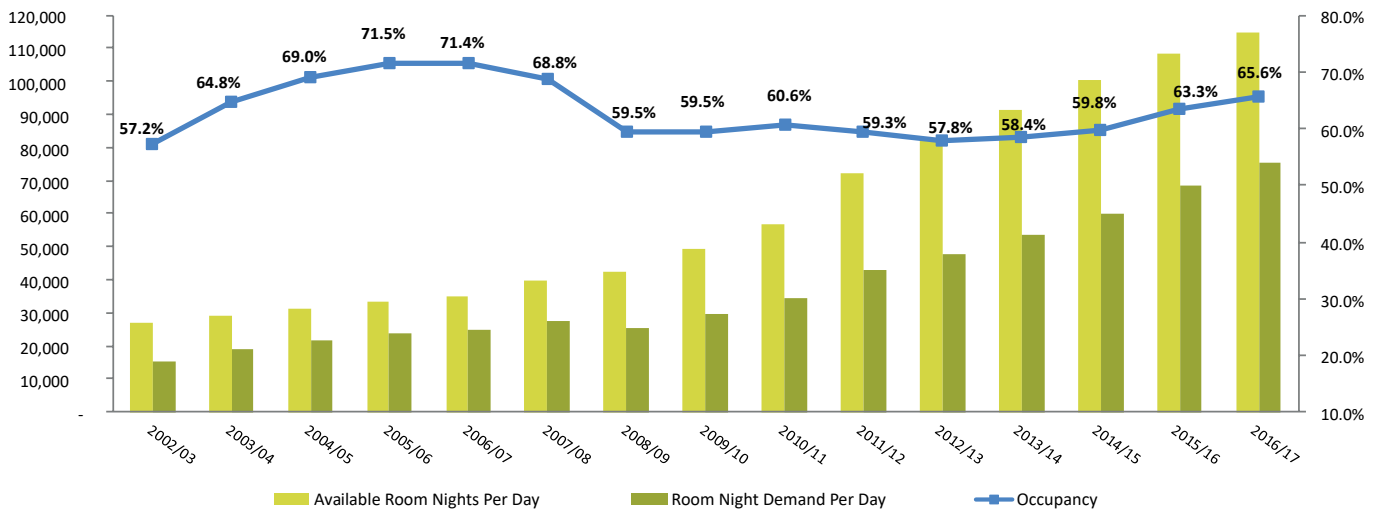
# The Annual Trends & Opportunities Report for 2017 – HVS

**T**HE annual Trends & Opportunities Report for 2017 on Indian Hotel industry by HVS India has revealed nationwide and category-wide growth in terms of hotel occupancies and Average Room Rates (ARRs) for hotels in India during 2016/17. The performance of hotel industry during 2017 in terms of key growth parameters like occupancies and ARR has been the highest since 2008, the report says. The highlights:

Nationwide occupancy crossed the 65% mark for the first time since 2007/08, with hotels clocking an overall weighted occupancy of 65.6% in 2016/17, an increase of 3.5% over the previous fiscal. The increase in



## ROOM NIGHT DEMAND VS AVAILABLE ROOM NIGHTS (2002/03 – 2016/17)



\* 2015/16 performance has been modified to remove the performance of irrelevant supply  
Source: HVS Research

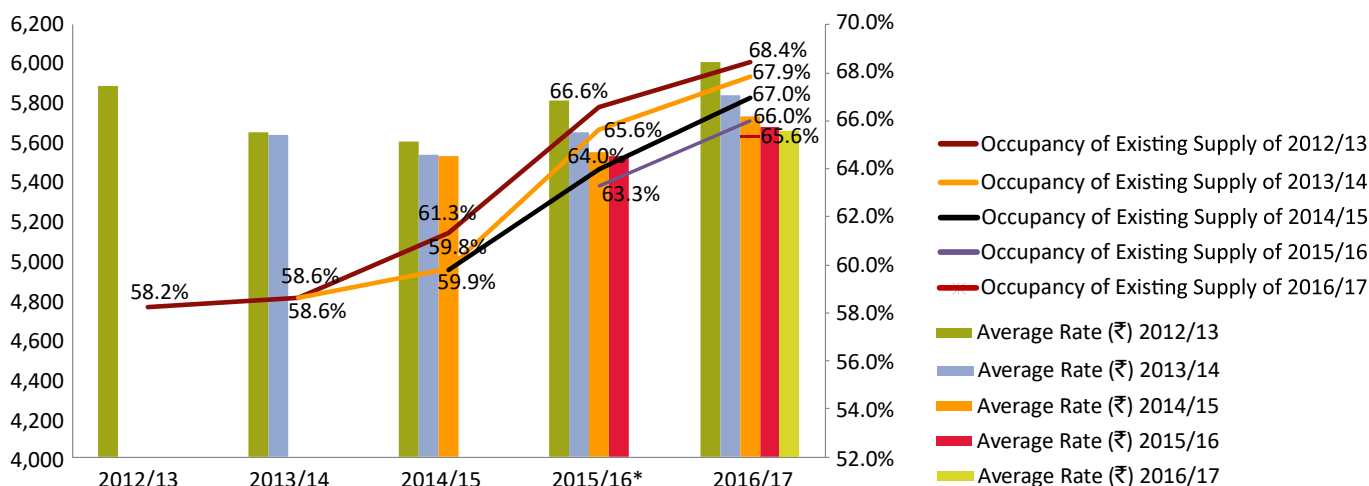
occupancy was complimented with an increase of 2.4% in weighted average rate (INR 5,658) during the same period. The growth in both occupancy and average rate resulted in the nationwide RevPAR rising by 6.0% over

the previous fiscal to reach INR 3,709, the report says.

The report says that the overall supply-demand scale is currently tilted in favour of growth in demand outpacing supply and most conducive for

significant rate growth. The average rate growth of 2.4%, the report says is marginal compared to the opportunities. The demand-supply equation today as well as in the next 48 to 60 months is more than likely to present

### PERFORMANCE OF EXISTING HOTELS (2012/13 – 2016/17)



\* The 2015/16 supply has been modified to exclude the performance of irrelevant supply.

Source: HVS Research

## Kolkata: On a positive note

Kolkata, exhibiting a 5.2% RevPAR growth in 2016/17, witnessed its first positive RevPAR growth in four years following the industry up-cycle.

Despite an 8.4% increase in supply, the city registered an occupancy of 70.2% and an average rate of 5,818. Kolkata's eastward expansion has enabled the creation of distinct micro markets, dividing room supply between the CBD at one end and, Salt Lake City, Rajarhat and the EM Bypass at the other, leading to redistribution of demand within the city.

Consequently, market performance, in the face of new supply, has been market distinction streamlines demand patterns and, developments like the Kolkata International Convention Centre establish themselves, we anticipate the city to achieve some balance between demand and supply. That being said, short-to-medium term pressure on occupancy is likely 2016/17 over last fiscal and were the highest in four years. Though this increase was expected to occur, the degree to which rates have grown continues to be marginal.

# INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

## EXISTING SUPPLY ACROSS MAJOR CITIES (2007/08 – 2016/17)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16**	2016/17	12-Month* ChangeG	Compounded rowth
Agra	1,336	1,419	1,439	1,439	1,739	1,299	1,293	1,755	2,036	2,092	2.8%	5.1%
Ahmedabad	675	800	1,521	1,785	1,975	2,477	2,777	2,944	3,054	3,117	2.1%	18.5%
Bengaluru	3,456	3,889	5,597	5,947	7,713	8,536	10,162	11,117	11,539	11,995	4.0%	14.8%
Chennai	2,826	3,307	3,806	4,066	4,904	6,330	7,105	7,444	7,585	8,332	9.8%	12.8%
New Delhi***	9,019	8,625	8,129	9,111	10,697	11,338	12,370	13,193	14,142	14,296	1.1%	5.3%
Gurugram			1,980	3,246	3,782	4,559	5,190	5,323	5,117	5,263	2.9%	15.0%
NOIDA			300	351	527	841	1,239	1,322	1,322	1,422	7.6%	24.9%
Goa	2,768	2,795	3,288	3,375	3,885	4,406	4,703	5,298	5,574	6,400	14.8%	9.8%
Hyderabad	2,554	2,761	3,782	4,036	4,797	5,411	5,734	5,954	5,992	6,254	4.4%	10.5%
Jaipur	1,556	1,683	2,472	2,554	3,054	4,129	4,523	4,822	4,931	5,058	2.6%	14.0%
Kolkata	1,396	1,373	1,520	1,588	1,787	2,163	2,243	2,701	2,701	3,199	18.4%	9.7%
Mumbai	8,454	7,948	9,877	11,303	12,052	12,807	13,022	12,865	13,054	13,494	3.4%	5.3%
Pune	1,346	1,518	2,672	4,691	5,672	5,317	6,159	6,137	6,108	6,445	5.5%	19.0%
Other Cities****	11,596	12,357	15,412	18,039	21,729	24,642	24,657	26,820	28,445	31,852	12.0%	11.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,982</b>	<b>48,475</b>	<b>61,795</b>	<b>71,531</b>	<b>84,313</b>	<b>94,255</b>	<b>1,01,177</b>	<b>1,07,695</b>	<b>1,11,600</b>	<b>1,19,219</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>10.9%</b>

\* Change in 2016/17 expressed as percentage of the figure for 2015/16

\*\* Supply tracked in 2015/16 has been modified due to the removal of irrelevant supply

\*\*\* Delhi NCR data (Shaded Portion), rest New Delhi (excluding Gurugram, NOIDA and Greater NOIDA) data

\*\*\*\* Other Cities includes all other hotel markets across India

Source: HVS Research

an opportunity for substantial average rate enhancement and hotel operators who “draft strategies to seize the occasion” will be at an advantage, the report notes.

When the new supply growth in the branded and organised segment was 5.9%, the demand grew by 9.6%. Last time the nationwide occupancy breached the 65% mark was in 2007/08. When viewed by positioning, five-star deluxe and three-star hotels clocked

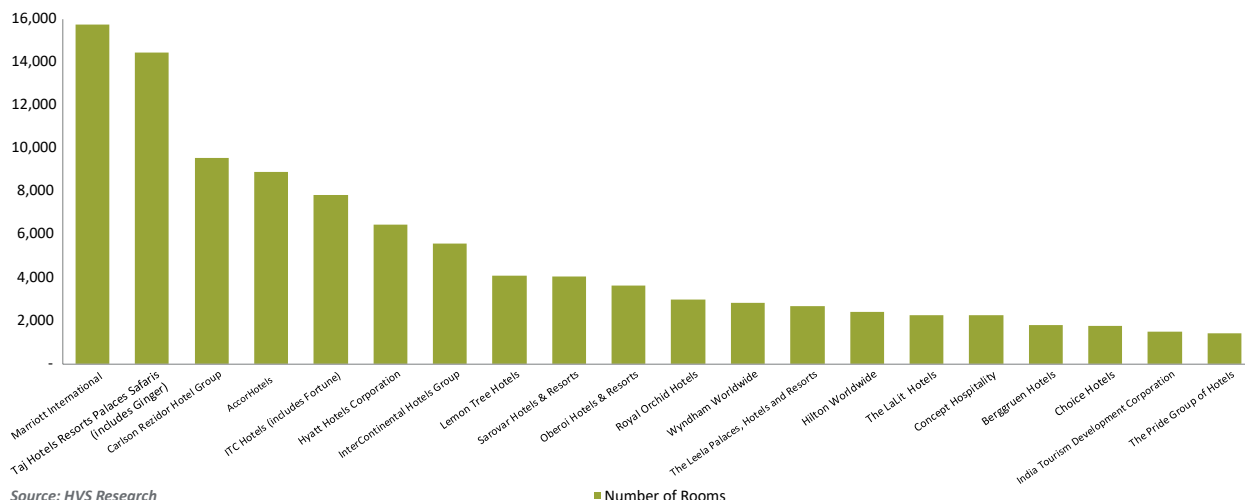
66.5% occupancy 2016/17, while four-star hotels achieved 65.6% occupancy; five-star hotels were just shy of the 65 mark and closed at a nationwide occupancy of 64.6%, whereas two-star hotels managed 62.7%. Therefore, it is apparent that hotels across all positioning benefited from the supply-demand gap in the year 2017, the report says.

Among the cities, Mumbai continues to lead in terms of both occupancy (74.2%) and average rate (INR 7,693)

for the third year running. Noida displayed the lowest occupancy (56.9%), and Ahmedabad, the lowest average rate (INR 3,840).

However, all major markets witnessed an increase in RevPAR in 2016/17 except for Agra. Interesting to note, Noida (including Greater Noida) saw the highest year-on-year growth in RevPAR (16.0%), followed by Hyderabad (11.4%) and Ahmedabad (10.7%), reveals the report.

## TOP 20 HOTEL BRANDS BY EXISTING INVENTORY (AUGUST 2017)



Source: HVS Research

■ Number of Rooms



COVER STORY

# BRAND INDIA SURGING AHEAD

India is emerging as a large market for a diverse portfolio of niche tourism products - cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, eco-tourism, film, rural and religious tourism



► **GOI's 'Incredible India!' and 'Athiti Devo Bhava' provide an impetus to growth**

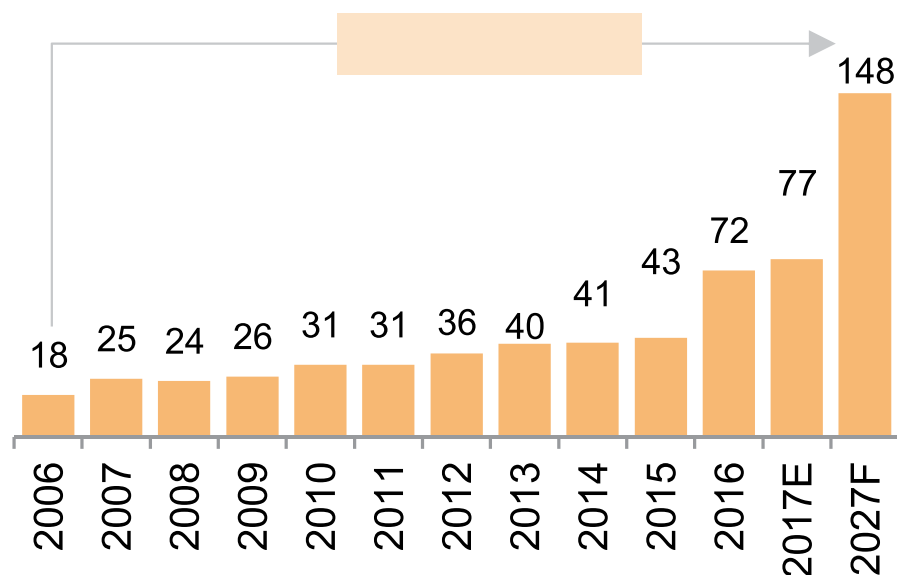
**T**he Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector in

India. Tourism in India has significant potential considering the rich cultural and historical heritage, variety in ecology, terrains and places

of natural beauty spread across the country. Tourism is also a potentially large employment generator besides being a significant source of foreign



## Direct contribution of tourism and hospitality to GDP (US\$ bn)



► **Government of India's 'Incredible India!' and 'Athiti Devo Bhava' campaigns have provided a focused impetus to growth**

exchange for the country. India's Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) increased 20.4 per cent year-on-year between January-November 2017 to US\$ 24.655 billion.

India is a large market for travel and tourism. It offers a diverse portfolio of niche tourism products - cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, eco-tourism, film, rural and religious tourism. India has been recognised as a destination for spiritual tourism for domestic and international tourists.

Total contribution by travel and tourism sector to India's GDP is expected to increase from US\$ 136.3 billion in 2015 to US\$ 275.2 billion in 2025. India ranked third among 184 countries in terms of travel & tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2016. Travel and tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for India. A sum of US\$ 27.693 billion was earned under foreign exchange through tourism during calendar year

**Total contribution by travel and tourism sector to India's GDP is expected to increase from US\$ 136.3 billion in 2015 to US\$ 275.2 billion in 2025**

2017. The employment in the sector is expected to rise to 46.42 million by 2026. During calendar year 2017, 10.177 million foreign tourists have arrived in India. The Government of India has set a target of 20 million foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) by 2020 and double the foreign exchange earnings as well.

The launch of several branding and marketing initiatives by the Government of India such as 'Incredible India!' and 'Athiti Devo Bhava' has provided a focused impetus to growth. The Indian government has also released a fresh category of visa - the medical visa or M visa, to encourage medical tourism in the country. Incredible India 2.0 campaign was launched in September 2017.

The Government has also been making serious efforts to boost investments in tourism sector. In the hotel and tourism sector, 100 per cent FDI is allowed through the automatic route. A five-year tax holiday has been offered for 2, 3 and 4 star category hotels located around UNESCO World Heritage sites (except Delhi and Mumbai). Total FDI received by Indian hotel & tourism sector was US\$ 10.6 billion between April 2000 and September 2017.

### Market Size

India is the most digitally-advanced traveller nation in terms of digital tools being used for planning, booking and experiencing a journey@, India's rising middle class and increasing disposable incomes has continued to support the growth of domestic and outbound tourism.

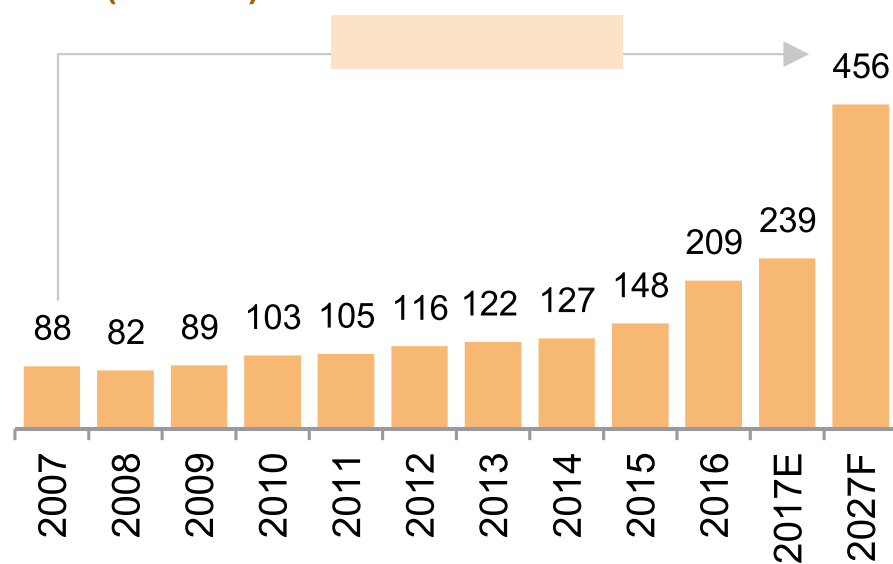
Domestic Tourist Visits (DTVs) to the States/Union Territories (UTs) grew by 15.5 per cent y-o-y to 1.65 billion (provisional) during 2016 with the top 10 States/UTs contributing about 84.2 per cent to the total number of DTVs, as per Ministry of Tourism.

Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in

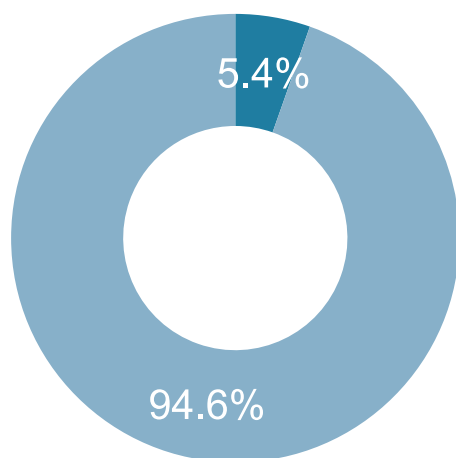
A photograph of a hotel room featuring a bed with white linens and a green blanket. A dark grey text box is overlaid on the right side of the image. The room is lit with warm, yellow light from a bedside lamp.

**India is the most digitally-advanced traveller nation in terms of digital tools being used for planning, booking and experiencing a journey. India's rising middle class and increasing disposable incomes has continued to support the growth of domestic and outbound tourism**

## Travel and tourism's total contribution to GDP (US\$ bn)



## Segment - wise revenue share (2016 E)



■ Domestic spending ■ Foreign visitor spending

Note: E - Estimated

India increased 14.4 per cent year-on-year to 1.005 million and the number of FTAs on e-tourist visa increased 56.2 per cent to 214,000 in November 2017, as per Ministry of Tourism,

Government of India.

India is expected to move up five spots to be ranked among the top five business travel market globally by 2030, as business travel spending in

the country is expected to treble until 2030 from US\$ 30 billion in 2015.#

International hotel chains will likely increase their expansion and investment plans in India, and are expected to account for 50 per cent share in the Indian hospitality industry by 2022, from the current 44 per cent.\*

### Investments

The tourism and hospitality sector is among the top 10 sectors in India to attract the highest Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). During the period April 2000-June 2017, the hotel and tourism sector attracted around US\$ 10.48 billion of FDI, according to the data released by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).

### Government Initiatives

The Indian government has realised the country's potential in the tourism industry and has taken several steps to make India a global tourism hub.

Some of the major initiatives planned by the Government of India to give a boost to the tourism and hospitality sector of India are as follows:

The Government of India signed a loan agreement for US\$ 40 million with the World Bank for the Uttar Pradesh Pro-Poor Tourism Development Project aimed at developing tourism facilities in the state.

### Road Ahead

India's travel and tourism industry has huge growth potential. The tourism industry is also looking forward to the expansion of E-visa scheme which is expected to double the tourist inflow to India. India's travel and tourism industry has the potential to expand by 2.5 per cent on the back of higher budgetary allocation and low cost healthcare facility, according to a joint study conducted by ASSOCHAM and YES BANK.

Source: India Brand Equity Foundation (<https://www.ibef.org>)



**TOP 10  
THINGS  
THAT  
SHOULD BE  
IN EVERY  
HOTEL  
ROOM**



► Sometimes guests find it extremely difficult to operate a sophisticated shower

**T**HERE are some people who spend well over 100 nights a year in hotels. We spoke to five of them--of the millennial generation-- and put together a post with their thoughts about what every hotel room should offer (and what they definitely should not) in addition to all the basics like free WiFi, good personalized A/C and heating, and, you know, running water.

Some of these are obvious – with the proliferation of lightweight laptops, smartphones, tablets and more, every hotel room should have an abundance of power outlets – while others might be more TPG-specific. However, these are things I'd like to see in every hotel room I book in the future, and feel free to share your own wish list below.

**1. Power outlets galore:** We all

travel with tons of gadgets these days, from computers and tablets to phones, cameras, music players and more, and the one thing they all have in common is that they must be charged. So it's astonishing how many hotels still lack more than one or two outlets for guest use – you know, where lamps, phones and other odds and ends aren't already plugged in. Not only that, but every hotel room

## ROOM BASICS



► **Don't forget to put in an electric kettle along with some tea bags and coffee sachets**

should have bedside outlets. So many people tote their computers to bed to work while on the road for business, and so many use their Smartphones as alarm clocks (probably because hotel alarm clocks can be so byzantine to operate) that it just makes sense to have outlets near the bed that you can access without ripping the mattress away from the wall. Tons of lamps even come with outlets in their bases to make things easier. Hotels, take note, this should be a standard fea-

ture in your rooms.

**2. An electric kettle:** Many of the whiz kids are coffee addicts. Every hotel room should have some sort of miniature coffee or espresso machine. Oftentimes, that's all one wants in the morning before grabbing something on the go from a lobby shop or a nearby cafe. They just want to be able to enjoy the first cup of the day in the room as they go through emails and the day's to-do list without having to get dressed, leave the hotel and pick

up coffee somewhere else. Or tea. Put in an electric kettle and some tea bags for the tea-drinkers out there. Who knows, maybe they might be feeling so productive they'll order room service and up the revenue with a full-on breakfast if they feel like getting a lot of work done.

**3. Simple shower:** A shower that doesn't take advanced calculus to figure out how to work. Hotel showers can be glorious. Indoor showers, outdoor showers, showers with 12

showerheads, steam showers, rainfall showers...they're all just wonderful. Except for one thing: so many of them are impossible to operate! An old-fashioned, one knob for cold water and one for hot and you turn them to adjust the pressure and balance of temperature can work fine. But so many hotel showers these days have temperature controls, pressure controls, controls to determine which showerhead is operating...one may often find getting blasted with a rocket of cold water from one direction and volley of scalding drops from another. So please make these things easier to operate so that one can get in, clean up and get out?

**4. Toothbrush and toothpaste:** Call it a symptom of always being on the road, but many of them forget a toothbrush and toothpaste a lot while travelling and it would be such a nice surprise to find a mini travel kit in the hotel room at arrival. If airlines can do it in amenity kits – and not just talking business and first class ones here, but some airlines offer it in economy as well – then hotels can provide a mini oral hygiene set to guests.

**5. Free water bottles:** It's midnight. You're off a really long flight. You're parched. All the stores are closed. All you want is a bottle of water, especially if you're in a place where the water might not be potable for you. Any water will do – it doesn't have to be Evian – but your only choices are in the minibar and they each cost Rs 100. Why is that? Hotels need to start offering guests two free water bottles per day (that's the other thing – even if you get a couple free bottles, it's a one-time thing with a lot of hotels – once you drink them that's it!). Every one would appreciate it, and it's such a simple provision.

**6. Handy room service menu:** A room service menu that doesn't take 20 clicks on the TV screen to navigate and order from. This is another old-fashioned quirk of mine, but as

much as one loves new technology, sometimes just having a paper menu and calling down to room service is just so much easier than trying to learn to navigate a hotel's "state of the art" television ordering system. If you're going to put such a system in place, put an iPad in the room and let guests order from there, which is so much easier.

**7. Blackout drapes:** While many appreciate a good fabric pattern as much as the next guy, when it comes to draperies, the one thing people are unwilling to compromise on in a guest room is blackout drapes. Especially if you've flown overnight and arrive very early in the morning and need a few hours of sleep during daylight, blackout drapes can be a godsend to getting on the right time zone. Even if you're not travelling far, sleeping in a new place can throw you off, so having a dark, undisturbed place to sleep is a good way to make sure you get the rest you need.

**8. No decorative bed pillows:** Ev-

ery hotel room these days seems to be operating with a white-on-white palette...well, maybe with a shade of beige or taupe thrown in. Decorative pillows can be a nice way to add a splash of colour to the room...but before you go plumping yours up, think about this: you can't wash a decorative pillow. That's right – those pillows have been sitting there since the day they were put in the room, and goodness knows how many germ-covered hands have handled them, if they've been thrown around the room or tossed on the floor, or what. So I wish hotels would just use washable decorative covers on their regular-size pillows and leave the little pillows to private homes.

**9. A decent luggage rack:** It seems like it's been a while since we were all bombarded with alarmist stories about bedbugs invading the major metropolises of the world – and many obsessively check luggage and clothes for the little critters for a while there. These vermin are still a threat, so everyone thing would like to see in every room is a full-size luggage rack, preferably built into the closet. Many times one has to put the suitcase on the floor, or just on a folding rack in the middle of the room when it should have been possible to make a shelf in the closet for my suitcase...all a safe distance away from any possible bedbug infestation.

**10. Abundant hangers:** Some of these youngsters are a bit of a clothes horse and need to hang them up so they don't get wrinkled, but it seems like every hotel has decided that they will only have approximately 4 hangers in the closet. Not only that, but some hangers these days don't even come off the bar – like, at all – so one might end up having to contort the clothes just to get them on in the first place. Just put a bunch more--even these happen to be made of cheap PVC material--and make sure they're user-friendly!

**We spoke to  
some people of  
the millennial  
generation who  
spend over 100  
nights in a hotel  
room and found  
out their thoughts  
about what every  
hotel room should  
offer**







## STATE SURVEY: ASSAM

# AWESOME ASSAM

Cradled by the mighty Brahmaputra, Assam's natural beauty and tea gardens make the state a kaleidoscope of colour and culture. But its rich potential as one of the top tourist destinations of India remains largely untapped

**A**SSAM, the heart of India's Northeast, is a land of abundance. It is well blessed by nature and it lies at the centre of one of the world's richest bio-geographic areas—with the Himalayas to the north, the river valley and the world's largest riverine islands at its heart, and to the south, hills that are a continuation of the South Indian plateau region. It is a treasure house of various economic resources, such as, valuable reserves of oil, natural gas and coal; it also has over tea-estates, vast swathes of fertile alluvial soil and large tracts of forests. The state's rich cultural and ethnic heritage is famous all over the world.

Little wonder that the state makes an ideal destination for tourists with a wide variety of options. To visit Assam is to embark on a journey that is guaranteed to celebrate the senses and nurture the soul: to drink the best tea in India, to feast on exquisitely flavoured cuisine, to celebrate the

rhythms of the seasons, to the drums of the Bihu festival amid dancers dressed in silks and trees covered in silken orchids.

Tourism has the greatest potential for generating income and employment opportunities in Assam. Its wildlife sanctuaries at various places of Assam can attract the tourists all over the world. Further, tea tourism and golf tourism of Assam can draw many more to its verdant lawns. Let us explore the potential of the state from the perspective of tourism and hospitality and discuss the ways to further economic development of the state through these sectors.

Current scenario: Today's Assam is composed of 27 districts. Despite the abundance in natural resources it happens to be one of the most backward states in the country. Growing political instability, insurgent activities, ethnic classes, frequent violation of human rights coupled with maladministration and corruption are the



► Resorts in Kaziranga and Manas are big draw for tourists

socioeconomic realities of Assam. Moreover, prevalence of mass illiteracy, social taboos, superstitious belief and traditional methods of production plagues the state. It is characterized by low per capita income, poor rate of capital formation, heavy population pressure, lack of infrastructure, excessive dependence on agriculture and very backward transport and communication. All these make Assam an extremely backward state.

Though Assam is a very backward state in the whole country, yet it has a great potential to develop the state

**Though Assam is an economically backward state, yet it has a great potential to be developed into a potent force through tourism industry**

into a potent force through tourism industry. Currently some of the tourist spots draw a huge number. For example, the national park of Kaziranga in the district of Golaghat is a gift of nature which covers approximately an area of 429.93 sq. km. situated on the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra. It is a heavenly place for the tourists because of its world famous one-horned rhinoceros. Herds of rhinoceros, vast grassy and green forests of the park can easily enamor any tourist of the world. Besides Kaziranga, there is the Manas riverine sanctu-



► **Kamakhya temple attracts millions of tourists every year**

ary situated towards the western part of the district of Baksa. It is extended to both the banks of the river Manas and covers almost an area of 519 sq. km. It is especially famous for its wild buffaloes and also for other animals and birds. Besides Kaziranga and Manas sanctuaries, the wildlife sanctuaries of Pobitora and Orang can attract the tourists all over the world. Moreover, the golden langour pygmy hog and other endangered species can easily enchant wildlife lovers.

Chakrashila is a newly declared wildlife sanctuary in lower Assam un-

der Kokrajhar district with an area of 45.66 sq. km. This sanctuary is a hilly tract running north-south. The lower reaches are covered with Sal coppice regeneration while middle and upper reaches are covered with mixed deciduous forests. Chakrashila is well known for existence of golden langur. It is a segregated habitat from main Indo-Bhutan habitat in the north. The important sites to visit are Sikhrisikhla, Bhalukjhora, Baokhungri Peak, Dibil Thakur Beel, Anthai Gufur, Goshain Bhita, Jarnagara etc. Dheer Beel, Diplai Beel are other attractive

tourist spots to visit nearby Chakrashila wildlife sanctuary.

Besides the animals and the birds in the vast green forest, the state has many ornamental fish, rare plants, medicinal herbs and exotic orchids. It has many tranquil lagoons and reverie locations like Deepar Beel, Barnadi that will attract the tourists for angling and boating. There are many other wonders and important things for the tourists in the state. For example, even today, when science and technology have achieved miraculous success in unearthing the hidden things of the world it has totally failed to unearth the mystery of the Jatinga Hill where thousands and thousands of birds commit suicide every year. This mysterious hill is a great source of attraction for the tourists all over the world.

Moreover, the world's largest river island 'Majuli' will encourage tourism industry in Assam to a great extent. The various historical monuments and places like 'Rangghar', 'Karengghar', 'Joysagar', 'Joydoul', etc. will encourage tourism in Assam. Besides these, the various historical places like Sonitpur (at present Tezpur)-the capital of Ban Raja, Garhgaon the capital of the Ahoms, Jerangapathar will attract the tourists. Moreover, the various religious places and temples like Kamakhya temple, the Umananda temple, the Agnigarh and the Mahabhairavi temples, the Mahamaya temple etc. will encourage tourism industry in Assam.

Besides this the wooded hill stations like Haflong, Badarpur etc will attract the tourists for hiking, trekking and camping. Further, tea tourism and golf tourism of Assam will attract the tourists. Assam is also very rich in cultural heritage. It is a heavenly abode of various tribes, castes and communities having their religious and cultural festivals, the 'Bihu' for the Assamese, the 'Bathou' for the Bodos and so on.



► **Tea tourism and golf tourism of Assam can draw many more to its verdant lawns**

Hurdles for tourism: Even though tourism has a great potentiality for generating income and employment opportunities in Assam the full potential hasn't yet been tapped due to some problems. The main constraints that are coming into the way of its development are self-explanatory which can be identified as: (a) Lack of infrastructure, (b) Communication bottlenecks, (c) Geographical isolation, (d) Ethnic clashes leading to political instability, (e) Growth of insurgent activities (f) Lack of fund (g) Absence of leadership and entrepreneurship

**Despite the abundance in natural resources it happens to be one of the most backward states in the country**

ability, (h) Indifferent attitude of the Government both at State and Central level (i) Defective socio-economic and political set up (j) Lack of a proper tourism development policy of the Government (k) Lack of people's co-operation and consciousness, (l) Lack of proper friendly investment atmosphere (m) Absence of congenial atmosphere to attract the tourists and such many other factors.

What can be done: In spite of the constraints as listed above, Assam is still maintaining a bright prospect of economic development in terms of



► **The national park of Kaziranga is a gift of nature**

tourism industry. But for this, some immediate as well as long term measures, as mentioned below, are to be adopted:

i) A strong political will is of excessive in need for the restoration of peace and political stability in the area with a whole hearted efforts including political dialogue with the various insurgent groups working in Assam should be made to redress their grievances within the framework of Indian constitution in a democratic manner

ii) Government should make huge investment to break the geographical isolation and remove communication-bottlenecks from Assam

iii) Planned efforts are to be made by the Government to build up the required infrastructure of the state

iv) Proper tourism development policy is the need of the hour and for this Government should make a thorough survey in the state

v) Moreover, maintenance of a friendly investment atmosphere is very important for attracting foreign investors as well as the tourists. International and national confidence is to

be restored for attracting the national and foreign tourists

vi) Planned, sustained and well-thought long term efforts are to be made by the Government to improve the socio-economic and political set up of Assam

vii) Above all, people's consciousness to develop their own area through the development of tourism-industry is a great need of the hour. People should voluntarily come out and desist the terrorists from doing anti-national activities

viii) In short, restoration of peace and tranquility to attract the foreign tourists is of utmost importance for the development of trade and tourism in Assam

However, though the process of economic liberalization could not create any impact on the economy of Assam, yet it has widened the scope of the development of tourism industry in Assam. For example, the signing of the MoU with the USA based company "Ogden Energy of New Jersey" by the government of Assam for taking over a lease of the Bongaigaon Thermal

## Tea City Dibrugarh

Tucked away in the upper part of Assam, Dibrugarh is the second largest and one of the most urbanized cities in the state. Renowned for its massive tea plantations, Dibrugarh is often referred to as the Tea City of India. With massive industrialization and mega projects such as the Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Ltd. and India's longest rail-cum-road bridge of Bogibeel bridge, Dibrugarh is transforming into a vibrant city. Visitors can bask in a unique blend of a variety of tourist attractions such as the soothing serenity of lush green tea estates, the rich history, the diverse cultural heritage and the adventurous wildlife, in this beautiful city of Dibrugarh and its surrounding areas. Jokai Botanical Garden cum Germplasm Centre, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Jeypore Rainforest, Koli Aai Thaan, Dehing Patkai Wildlife sanctuaries, and Lekai Chetia Maidam are some of the most visited tourist spots in Dibrugarh. Whether you are looking for a thrilling holiday, a peaceful solo long weekend enjoying the picturesque sceneries or a romantic walk down the beautiful landscapes with your spouse; Dibrugarh is the place for you



► **The rhythm of the Bihu dancers can mesmerize tourists from India and abroad**

Power Station (BTPS) for its renovation, submitting proposals by another US based company named “American Power Gen System Association” for setting up a 300 MW coal based power project at Borgolai, inauguration of NEDFi at Guwahati, entry of some new Indian Company for promoting industrial projects like Premier Cryogenics Ltd., Reliance Industries Ltd., etc. are, no doubt, a strong indication of the restoration of national and international confidence.

According to an international agency named “Coopers and Lybrand Report”, Assam has the potential to emerge as a strategic base for foreign and domestic investors for two reasons.

Firstly, it is argued that the foreign as well as the domestic investors would be encouraged to set up their export-oriented industries in Assam to enjoy the vast potential of contiguous markets of ASEAN countries namely Myanmar, China, Malaysia, Thailand, Phillipines, Cambodia,

Indonesia, etc. which are regarded as the fastest growing regions in the world and secondly, to utilize its rich and abundant natural as well as human resources. Now it is expected that with the arrival of the region as well as domestic investors in Assam, there will be an influx of tourists into the region from various parts of our country as well as from abroad. Thus, it is expected that the influx of these tourists will directly give a big push to the growth and development of the tourists industry in the state.

According to Mr. K. P. Singh, the President of the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India, Assam has the 17 domestic tourists create one job for Assam’s people. Hence, it is very important to attract the foreign tourists into Assam from the economic point of view. At present 5 million foreign tourists come to India annually and soon it is expected to increase a large percentage of these tourists can be attracted to Assam by

restoring national and international confidence.

Conclusion: Thus, the development of tourism industry Assam largely depends upon the formulation of a proper tourism development policy and people’s co-operation and consciousness. The High Powered Shukla Commission has recommended for establishing a North-East Tourist Development Corporation to develop tourism in the region. It has also recommended to issue Inner-Line Permits relax the Restricted Area Permits as well as to introduce Charter Flights for NE Package tours etc. Moreover, an honest and strong will of the government coupled with people’s hearty co-operation will definitely boost up tourism industry in Assam in near future.

Source: Prospects and Problems of Tourism Industry in Assam by Surjya Chutia Assistant Professor, Dept of Economics, Tinsukia College, Tinsukia, Assam, India



An invitation to become a member of  
Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India

*Yes, the benefits are  
Royal*

- 👑 Immediate information of all changes/amendments in laws, bye laws and statutory orders relating to the hospitality industry
- 👑 Regular updates of happenings in the industry
- 👑 Participation in conventions, seminars and symposia
- 👑 Speedy accreditation of star category by the Government of India
- 👑 Redressal of day to day problems and grievances of members
- 👑 Receive complimentary issue of HRAEI bi-monthly magazine Mystic East
- 👑 Access to membership of FHRAI
- 👑 Two 20% and 30% discount cards for use at any member establishments of HRAEI and FHRAI, respectively



For more details contact : Atikram Gupta - 8585015172  
**HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF EASTERN INDIA**  
18A/1 Everest House, 18th floor, 46C, Chowringhee Road, Kolkata - 700071  
Phone: +9133 2288 1742, e-mail: info@hraei.co.in

# Expand your Reach



Reach out to a captive audience of major hotel and restaurant owners in 12 states and a union territory

Advertise in

## **MYSTIC EAST**

HRAEI's bimonthly journal

Colour Ad Size	Rate (₹)
Inside Full Page	10,000
Inside Half Page	5,000
Back Cover	20,000
Inside Back Cover	15,000
Inside Front Cover	15,000

For advertising contact : Atikram Gupta - 8585015172

**HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF EASTERN INDIA**

18A/1 Everest House, 18th floor, 46C, Chowringhee Road, Kolkata - 700071

Phone: +9133 2288 1742, e-mail: info@hraei.co.in