

# Hotel TALK

hoteltalk.in

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January-February 2024

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**PRADEEP  
SHETTY**

What industry  
status can  
**UNLEASH**

**JOSE DOMINIC**  
Trailblazer of  
**SUSTAINABILITY**



**SRI LANKA**  
FROM CRISIS TO COMEBACK





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# NILFISK

# Indian hospitality rides high into 2024



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*Technology, sustainability and product design will play a crucial role in keeping operators, marketing heads and designers on their toes.”*

T

he comeback is always stronger than the setback, it is said, and the Indian hospitality arena has proven it. We enter 2024 with new expectations and goals, though with the same vigour and energy. There is really no looking back as we unlock more opportunities for travel and hospitality, be it in the sacred city of Ayodhya or the beautiful beaches of Lakshadweep.

Researching interests and reshaping services to meet the expectations of future traveller is going to define the health of organisations. Technology, sustainability and product design will play a crucial role in keeping operators, marketing heads and designers on their toes.

In this relatively idyllic environment, we must not be oblivious to certain risks that could negatively influence business. While environmental issues continue to dominate our future strategies, unregulated artificial intelligence and the geopolitical situation in the Middle East could be detrimental too. Let this not be just a footnote for the strategists.

Dear readers, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families, the very best for 2024.

Cheers,  
**Sunil Ghadiok**



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INDIA  
YEAR BOOK**

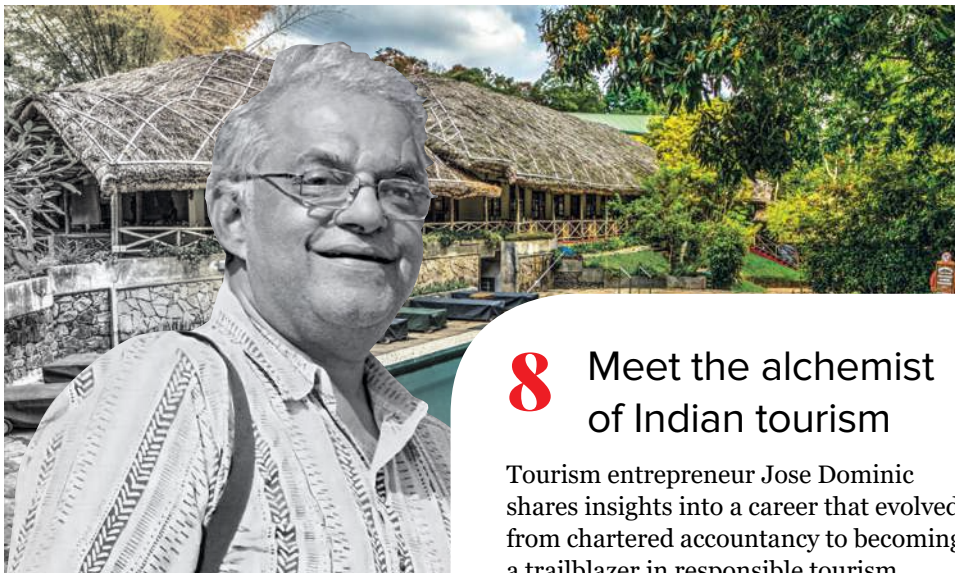
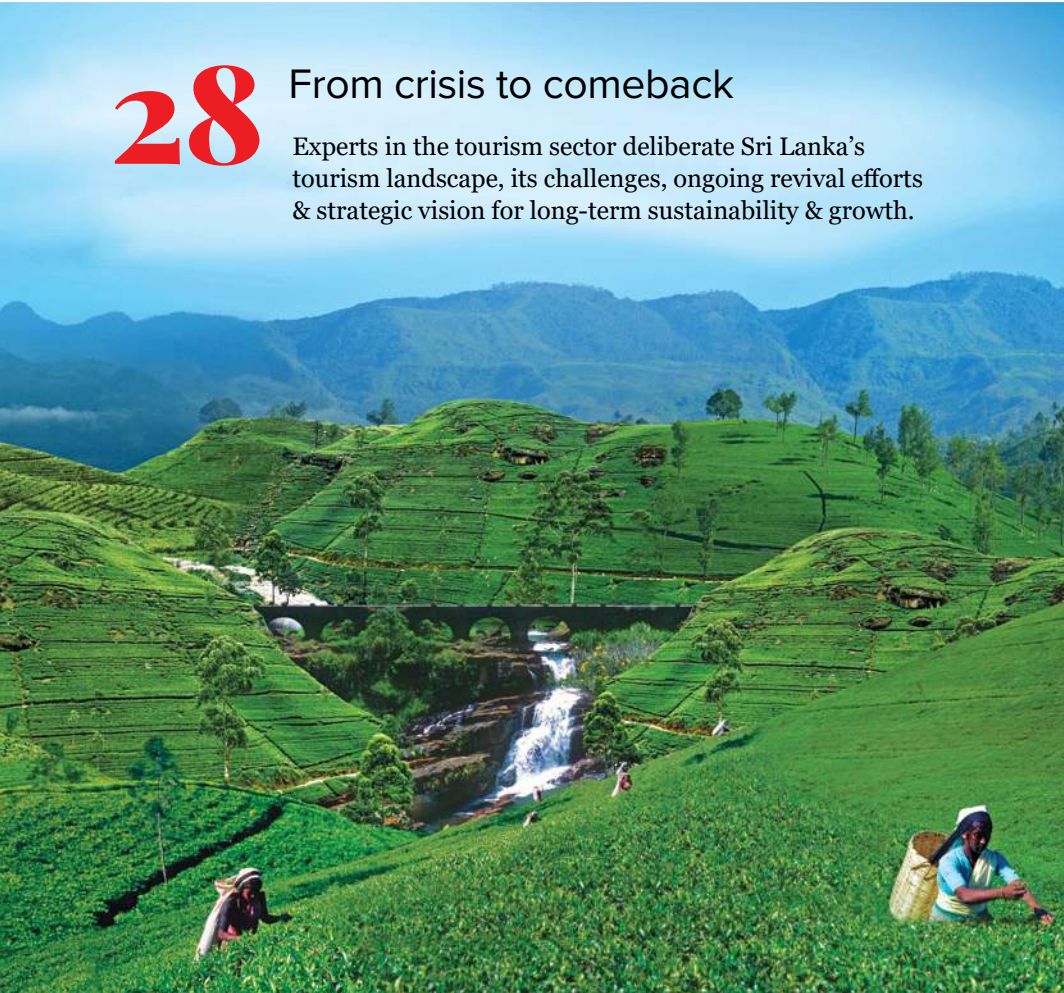
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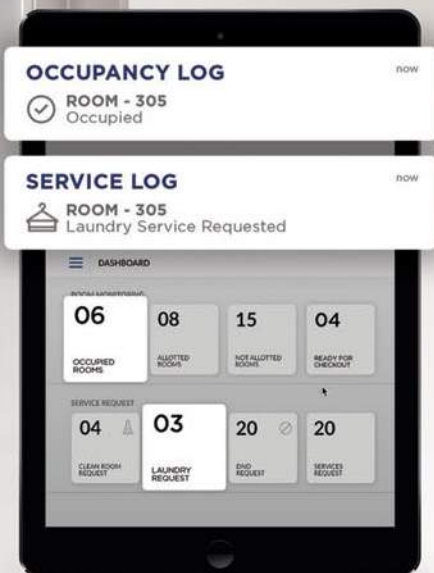
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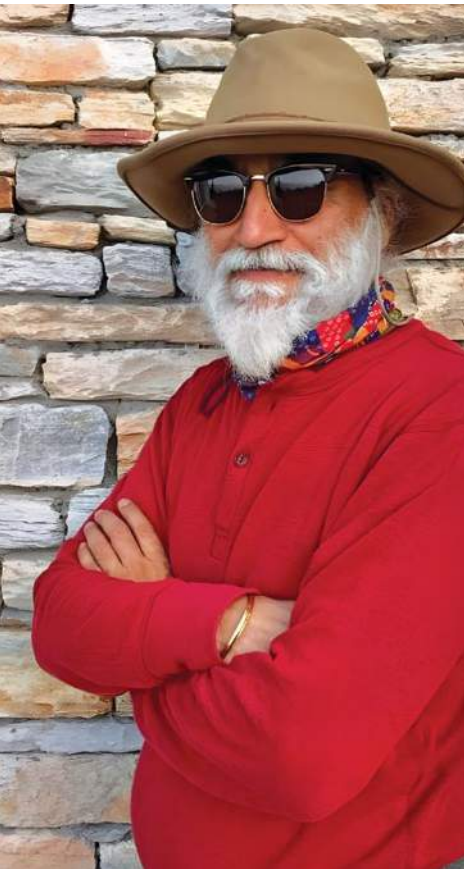
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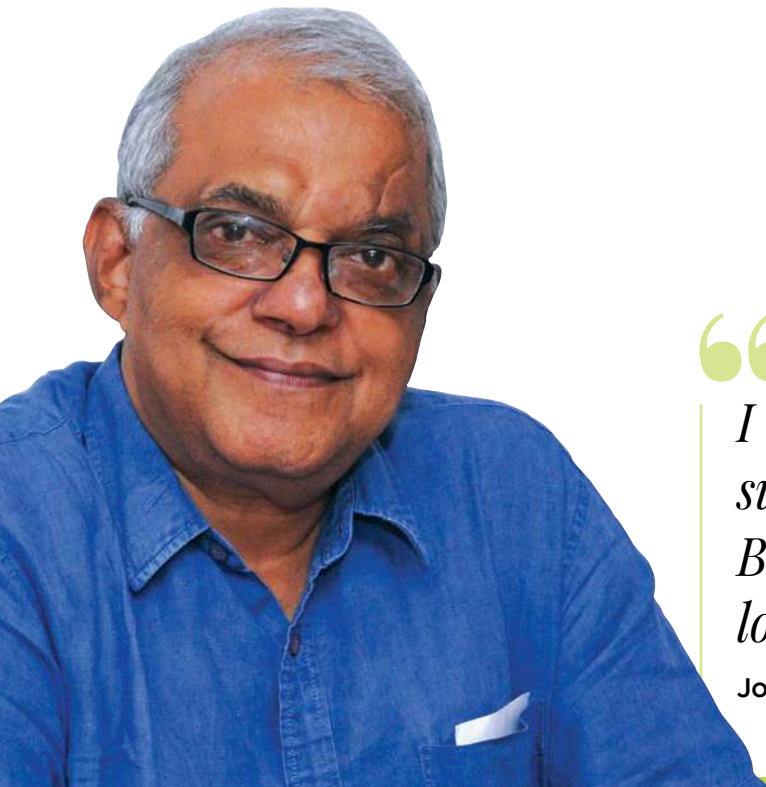
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Tourism entrepreneur **Jose Dominic** shares insights into a career that evolved from chartered accountancy to becoming a trailblazer in responsible tourism.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

# Meet the alchemist of Indian tourism



**Q: Give us a brief account of your journey in hospitality, highlighting special achievements?**

**A:** I started out as Chartered Accountant and worked with Ferguson and Company in Mumbai. I joined my father's hotel, Casino Hotel, in 1978 and worked on building the organization. In 1987, the Indian government decided to privatize the Bangaram Island in Lakshadweep. Despite competition from major players, Casino Hotel received

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*I introduced disruptive models such as Spice Village and Marari Beach. These properties embraced local architecture and culture.”*

Jose Dominic, farmer & tourism entrepreneur





an invitation to bid. I proposed a unique model emphasising the natural beauty of the island, offering non-luxurious accommodations. While the bid was not awarded, it laid the foundation for a new approach to hospitality. Following the Lakshadweep venture, I introduced disruptive models such as Spice Village, Coconut Lagoon, and Marari Beach. These properties embraced local architecture, culture and minimal environmental impact. I ensured the success of these models, challenging traditional pricing norms. The name of the group changed from Casino Group of Hotels to CGH Earth to reflect its values, becoming the Mother Earth. It emphasised a shift towards responsible tourism, catering to the alert independent traveller. The group expanded to 21 properties across peninsular India, maintaining its commitment to responsible and experiential hospitality.

**Q: What steps would you recommend for long-term benefits to the state and increased tourist arrivals?**

**A:** The success of Kerala tourism model

is attributed to factors such as the state's focus on human development, including education, health, and social equality. The 1957 Assembly polls brought in the first Communist government through democratic means, leading to land reforms. Kerala's high Human Development Index became a crucial factor in attracting tourists seeking responsible and community-centric experiences. The state's ability to support small local entrepreneurs in creating world-class offerings played a pivotal role in establishing its tourism dominance.

Kerala's partnership between private entrepreneurs and the state resulted in branding the state as 'God's Own Country'. This branding, along with the state's commitment to responsible tourism, had a profound impact on both the supply and demand sides of the industry. Tourism became a major contributor to Kerala's economy, constituting a significant percentage of its GDP and serving as a primary employment generator. The success story, however, faces challenges such as waste management, highlighting the





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*Demand for travel & tourism is increasing, with both international and domestic travellers seeking experiences as well as healthy eating habits.”*



need for sustainable practices to maintain Kerala's status as a top tourist destination.

**Q: Do you believe the hospitality industry is genuinely committed to embracing sustainable practices in real-time?**

**A:** Sustainability needs to be integrated into tourism. It goes beyond cleanliness and green initiatives. Local communities should be actively involved in creating a tourism product that reflects their culture. The expression of local ideas and empowerment of communities through tourism are considered essential for a sustainable model. The challenges faced by India in maintaining sustainable tourism, include waste management, inadequate social infrastructure, and climate change. There is a necessity of building public transportation systems and managing tourist destinations' carrying capacity to ensure their



longevity and attractiveness. There is a need for a shift in the mindset, from individual vehicle use to public transportation.

**Q: What are your thoughts on ‘Over Tourism’. What key challenges do you see in mitigating its negative impacts?**

**A:** The real problem lies in undermanagement. Proper management, including infrastructure development and technology utilization, can expand a destination’s carrying capacity and enhance the overall tourism experience. Preservation of the environment and local culture is also important. To preserve destinations and jobs, technology must be used to amend regulations and protect the environment.

In India, the biggest challenge is creating enough jobs and livelihoods. Tourism can help create jobs in far corners of the country, supporting local economies and preserving the environment. However, the current model of tourism must be radically shifted to focus on creating local livelihoods and supporting local economies. By promoting public transportation, preserving natural landscapes, and supporting local economies, tourism can contribute to job creation, economic development, and the preservation of indigenous cultures.

**Q: Could you provide insights into your new venture, AB Salem House, a project steeped in history?**

**A:** We are planning to reopen our hotel and cafe in two months. We are also focussing on re-opening old houses, which will be converted into luxury boutique properties. We will be offering a luxury buying price but concentrating on authenticity and providing a unique experience.

**Q: Is there a noticeable demand for luxury boutique properties?**

**A:** The demand for travel and tourism is increasing, with both international and domestic travellers seeking experiences and healthy eating habits. Travel is now viewed as a journey of learning and embracing the new world of learning. This paradigm shift is influenced by the current crisis of climate change, which calls for a more sustainable lifestyle. The public areas are increasingly using sustainable practices, such as Patch Coconut Patch, which avoids air conditioning, providing a sense of identity and comfort. This seismic shift is also a result of the need for a circular economy, where traditional skills are shared and resources are used more efficiently. This move is crucial for a more sustainable and prosperous future.

HT





# Shifting towards net zero model

RHG's strategy focuses on two main levers—switching to renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency of hotel buildings.

The sustainability goals at the Radisson Hotel Group (RHG) are aligned with Think People, Planet and Community principles. With a commitment to becoming a Net Zero company, it has set targets based on scientific validations through the Science Based Targets initiative. The brand aims to achieve Net Zero by 2050.


To reach sustainability goals, RHG is focusing on two main levers. Firstly, it is working on increasing the energy efficiency of hotel buildings. This involves implementing measures to reduce energy consumption and adopting innovative technologies for sustainable operations. Secondly, it is transitioning to renewable energy sources to minimising carbon footprint and contributing to a cleaner energy future.



**Inge Huijbrechts**  
Global SVP, Sustainability,  
Security & Corporate Communications  
Radisson Hotel Group



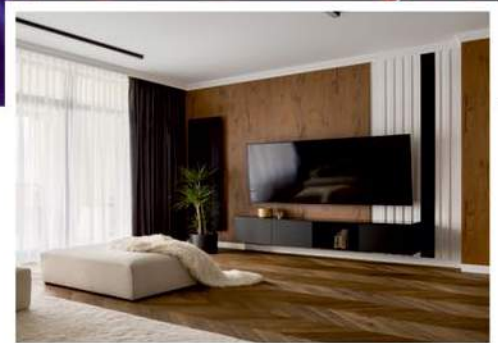
*As part of its journey to carbon neutrality, RHG is constantly increasing the number of green hotels.”*

As part of its commitment to responsible travel and meetings, RHG offers sustainable value propositions to its guests, which includes providing cent per cent carbon-neutral meetings and conferences. The Group is expanding the availability of EV charging networks in India and Europe. It is also engaged in industry-leading initiatives such as the Hotel Sustainability Basics and the Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality. These initiatives aim to drive sustainability practices and encourage positive environmental impacts throughout the hospitality sector. As part of its journey to CO<sub>2</sub> neutrality, RHG is increasing the number of green hotels, including the Radisson Resort & Spa Lonavala and Radisson Blu Hotel in Bengaluru, which not only runs on 100 per cent renewable energy but also is energy self-sufficient. 

*(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same)*



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#### Our Associates







# Always Two to Tango tourism & sustainability

In conversation with the exuberant **Mandip Singh Soin** on walking the talk around Responsible Tourism.

WORDS BY **DDP BUREAU**

**Q: What is your message to our readers?**

**A:** It will not be a surprise if as a reader, your eyes are already rolling, the moment you have read “Tourism Sustainability” as we have all heard it a lot over the decades be it from tourism professionals, government officials or the media.

This time, even though as a voice from within the industry, I am guilty as charged in contributing to the oft repeated mantra that we just cannot do without sustainable tourism, let me add a happy variation that has come

about to sit as the umbrella—and the magic phrase is Responsible Tourism.

But hey, before you can even think of taking a snooze over the next few lines, pay heed, as this umbrella has the potential of offering shade to all the stakeholders in the business of tourism as well as save the state governments from getting their destinations wet and muddy!

**Q: You have been deeply involved in bringing tourism and hospitality to adopt good environmental practices**

**for some time now. Where did this begin for you?**

**A:** In 1989, I took an Earth Pledge in an icy vastness, punctuated by the occasional howling wind in subzero temperatures of the Arctic. It was during a month-long environmental expedition at 80 degrees North not far from the North Pole.

We had just finished ascertaining with the help of the Canadian scientists at the weather station Eureka, that the Ozone hole was growing which would lead to faster warming of the Earth. We also found there were chemical pollutants in the pristine looking ice of the Arctic, coming from the industrial waste blown across and settling in the Arctic.

The big takeaway from that expedition was that since human beings made the problem, we could find a solution and that EACH ONE of us can make a difference!





**Q: How do we achieve some level of significance in this critical realm?**

**A:** Whilst there are some really amazing stories of individual hotels and lodges doing some great work, be it in the basic eco sensitive actions like not changing bedsheets and towels every day at the basic level, to the ones that go the extra mile to support local communities and offer employment and placements at higher levels too, to helping conservation by giving specialist gear and clothing to forest guards etc—this is still not enough. It is as the good ol’ saying goes “One swallow does not a summer make.”

So, if we want India to be a sustainable tourism destination, we all need to roll out of the darkness of our own silos which have the occasional iridescence. A lot of learning and sharing has been imparted since 2008, when the erstwhile Ecotourism Society of India was born, at the behest of the government. Whilst it morphed into the Responsible Tourism Society of India and had formal MOUs with the Ministry of Tourism and the United Nations Environment Programme, it helped with best practices within the industry as well as with policy with the government. A big achievement was to have helped the government bring

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*If we want India to be a sustainable tourism destination, we all need to roll out of the darkness of our own silos, which have the occasional iridescence.”*

**Q: What has been the learning at a macro level?**

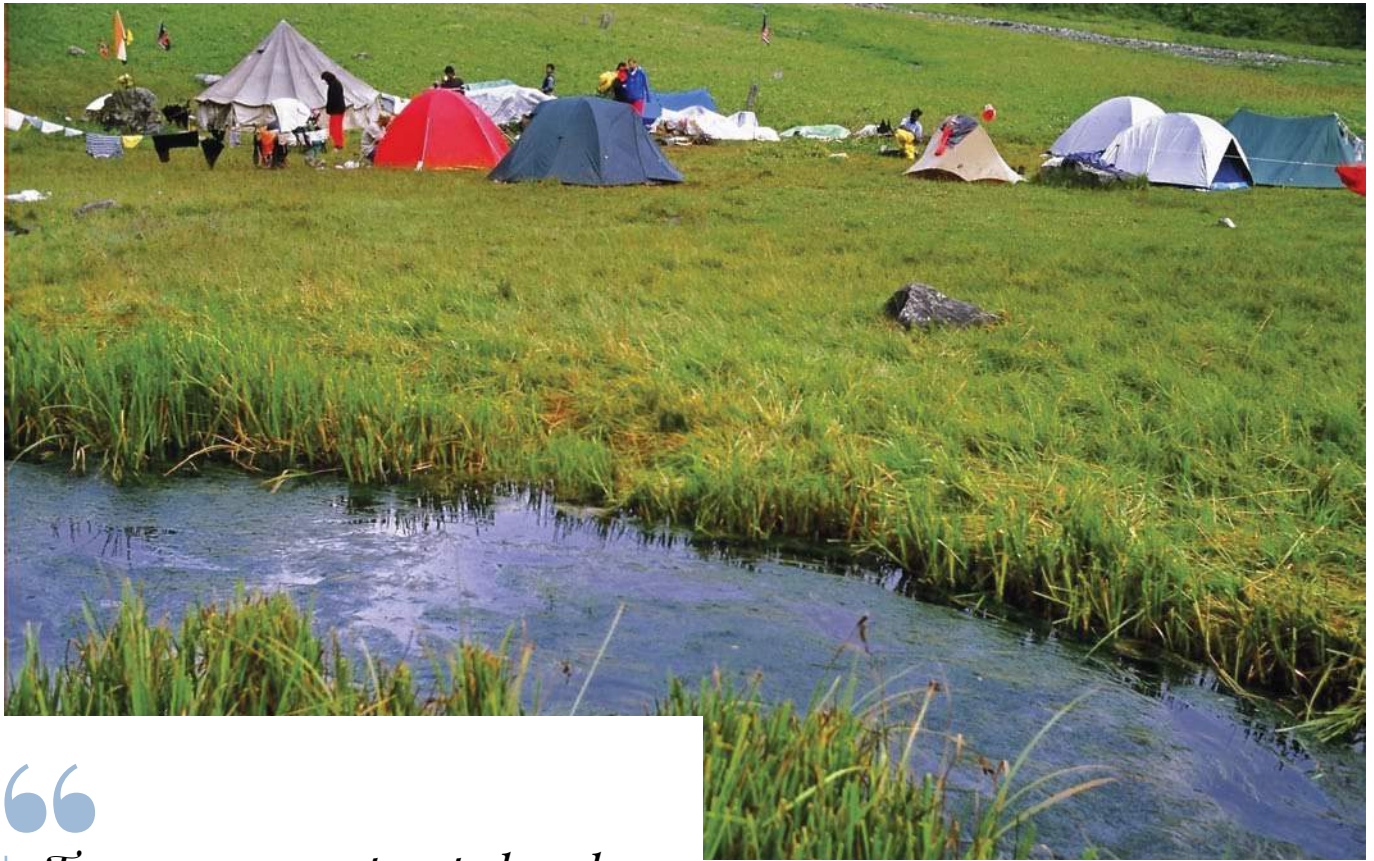
**A:** One learning all of us need to take up for starters—given that the accommodation sector comprises the largest slice in the tourism pie, is all that we need to come together for this wonderful feast and not just savour our own slice with watering mouths, even if we add one change from small dispensing plastic bottles of shampoo to glass dispensers. If you think I am being harsh, think of the wonderful inputs of traveller surveys, where time and again it is tumbling out that the new travellers will be more conscious about how they travel and who they use—and organizations not adopting responsible tourism practices in varying forms, will certainly feel it in the bottom line. An environment-conscious conscience needs to be developed and encouraged if we really want to preserve this planet for posterity.



**Mandip Singh Soin**

Founder & Managing Director, Ibex Expeditions and  
Founding President, Responsible Tourism Society of India





“

*To see over constructed and crowded hill stations is now almost the new normal—a visual pollution.”*

out the Sustainable Tourism Strategy as a good lodestone document.

Apart from shaping industry action and government policy, it is important to change the behavioural pattern of our travellers. The Responsible Traveller guidelines are simple to imbibe and adopt. Communication and regulation are key to successful implementation. The winner, of course, is doing away with single use plastic.

**Q: Your take on haphazard development in popular tourist destinations and Overtourism**

**A:** The one sight that hits us slap bang in the middle of our foreheads when we travel, especially in the hills, is the rather haphazard construction that is mushrooming completely out of consonance with its surroundings.

To see over constructed and crowded hill stations is now almost the new normal which constitutes visual pollution. So is it not time for us to play a more dominant role in raising our voices for architecture that is in sync with its immediate surroundings. Little wonder we are all so taken away by the harmony in architecture when one goes to Switzerland or even closer, to Bhutan!

Overtourism is yet another new phenomenon that is hitting us of late, especially in the rather inverted logic of the revenge tourism being fanned. So, certain honeypot destinations like Ladakh, are almost now on the verge of turning into honeytraps! The environmental impact through the sheer garbage generated by travellers that is not able to be disposed of properly and massive landfills that

are unsustainable, are making the entire customer experience annoying. Now, in the recent Sustainable Tourism Strategy of the MoT, there is an ask to get every destination, via state governments to have a tourism carrying capacity study done. Will the state governments be serious about this and will the industry be more mindful? Only the millions of Gods in India will probably know.

**Q: Any closing comments**

**A:** For once, we need to be the change we want to see, as Gandhiji would have remarked or as my co-founding member and operator of sustainable hotels, Jose Dominic, would say, “Let us leave our staid MBA learning and go from Consumer is King to Environment is King and then fashion our actions.”

If I have managed to keep your eyes open till here—then I am smiling, and the Responsible Tourism movement is winning.

If not, I think we will have to say it was the Indian tourism industry that continued to wade into the deep end with their eyes wide shut.

HT



# Equipso<sup>l</sup>

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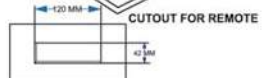
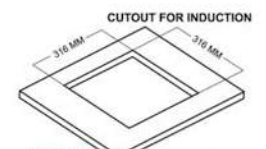
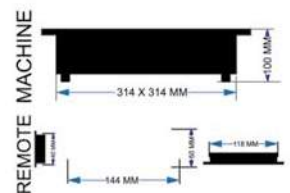
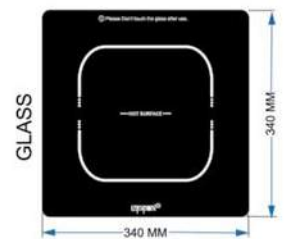
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# Grooming for **MICE** biz

Novotel Jaipur Convention Center intends to emphasize upon the increasing demand for inbound MICE business.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI



*We have the best infrastructure and are capable of handling large-scale MICE, social events, weddings and concerts.”*

**Manuj Ralhan**  
General Manager  
NJCC & JECC

demand for inbound MICE business, its target customers are pharma firms, manufacturing industries, apparel, automobiles, paint and cement companies, IT industry, BFSI, jewellery, PSUs and governments, associations, exhibitions, weddings and lifestyle events. “We will begin exhibiting at trade shows for ATM Dubai, ITB Berlin, SATTE and OTM Mumbai, among others, this year,” emphasized Ralhan.



A 226-key hotel in close proximity to a convention venue serves as a strategic alignment to enhance Accor’s ability to cater to the needs of business and conference travellers. Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre (NJCC) along with Jaipur Exhibition Convention Centre (JECC) is set to redefine the standards of exhibitions and convention space by offering ultra-modern facilities backed by excellent service. Calling it a ‘spectacular space’, **Manuj Ralhan**, GM, NJCC & JECC, said, “We have the best infrastructure and are capable of handling large-scale MICE events, social events, weddings and concerts, among others.”

Offering a comprehensive solution that combines high-quality

accommodation with world-class event facilities, it enhances Accor’s ability to cater to the needs of business and conference travellers. The hotel and exhibition centre is spread over 42 acres with South Asia’s leading pillar-less exhibitions-convention-entertainment facilities. It has 13 breakout meeting rooms, a VIP Lounge, two green rooms and a grand ball room with modern technology with 740 retractable auditorium—style seats, making it ideal for conferences, exhibitions, gatherings and weddings. With its 70,000 sq. ft. lawn, NJCC offers an exquisite venue for celebrations and special events and a major boost to the local economy.

While the brand intends to emphasize upon the increasing



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## HIGH SPEED STEAMER

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## HIGH SPEED STEAMER

INNOVATION REDEFINED

MONKFISH EN PAPILOTE  
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Dan Androne, Head Chef,  
The Forest Hotel:

" In the next ten years everyone will own a High Speed Steamer "

**HOBART**



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# Industry status unlocks growth potential

**Pradeep Shetty**, FHRAI's newly appointed President, aims to tackle legal issues such as music copyright, pending payments & significance of 'industry status' in hotel sector.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

**Q: What key legal issues you would like to take up during your tenure as President?**

**A:** As President, there are key issues I want to focus during my tenure. First and foremost, the pending legal matters at FHRAI are critical. A pressing matter demanding immediate resolution, which has been pending for some time, is the music copyright issue with unscrupulous copyright agencies. Numerous patent disputes are ongoing in various courts nationwide. Our concern lies in ensuring the current law is adhered to without insisting on charges for playing music at weddings and related events. Demands by copyright agencies and owners for charges related to these events are causing complications, placing hotels in a challenging position between these agencies and guests. To streamline copyright licencing practices, we have conducted several

meetings with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and the Government of India. Our aim is to establish either a unified single-window system or a single copyright society for specific classes of work. This initiative aims to prevent multiple agencies from causing unnecessary hardship and harassment to both the public and hotels.

Another issue is concerning pending payments owed to FHRAI members and other hoteliers seeking FHRAI's support in protesting against Oyo. We accord top priority to resolve this matter through legal recourse or mutual dialogue. We are concerned about the budget segment of hotels within our industry, emphasising the importance of ensuring a fair and level playing field between online travel agencies and hotels in terms of business practices.



**Q: How is the 'industry status' pivotal for the overall growth of the hotel sector?**

**A:** The demand for 'industry status' for hotels has been a longstanding request, with the initial notification coming through back in 1999 in Maharashtra. The rationale behind this demand stems from the significant role the hotel industry plays as a key economic driver in our country. It contributes a substantial percentage of revenue to the GDP, along with

**Q: How do associations such as FHRAI stay relevant in the changing times?**


**A:** FHRAI stays relevant in changing times through its commitment to representing and advancing the industry's collective interests. The federation plays a pivotal role in promoting and enhancing the hospitality and tourism sectors in the country. By actively engaging in policy formulation, FHRAI contributes positively to industry growth and assists

“

*To streamline copyright licencing practices, we have conducted several meetings with the DPIIT and the Government of India.”*

employing a wide spectrum of individuals, from gardeners to Harvard graduates. Recognising the sector's potential, states have acknowledged this need, leading to the accorded benefits and industry status. These benefits include reductions in electricity duty, deductions in electricity tariffs, property tax rates and GST rebates, among others. Such benefits are pivotal in facilitating the establishment of a greater number of hotel rooms.

members in adapting to evolving circumstances and acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge and education to overcome challenges.

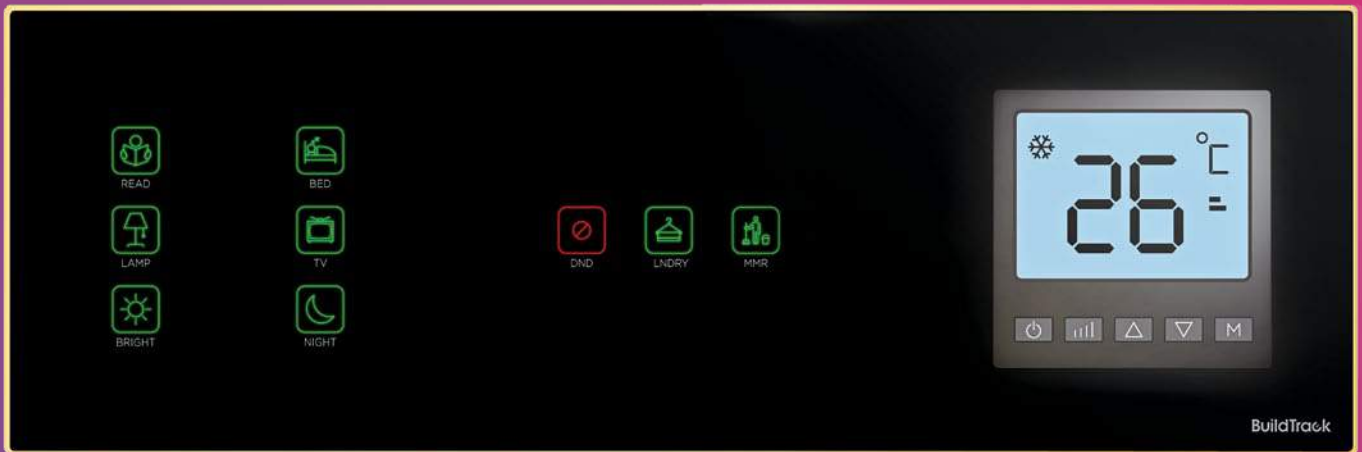
FHRAI's relevance lies in its proactive approach, constant support, advocacy and efforts towards skill development, thus ensuring it remains a pivotal force in promoting industry growth and adaptation to changing times. FHRAI focuses on skill development and training initiatives to nurture the talent pool. 





# PIONEERING sustainability in hotel automation

BuildTrack's solutions facilitate centralized monitoring of rooms based on occupancy.



***“Our smart hotel automation solutions extend across the range from guestroom automation to keycard-based control for greater energy efficiency.”***

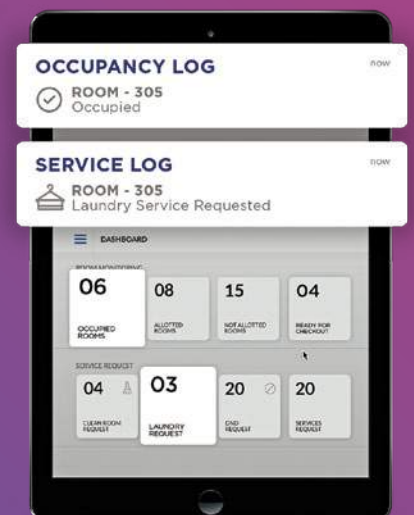
Mohd Syeed, VP, Enterprise Solutions, BuildTrack

In the ever-evolving tapestry of the hospitality industry, the quest for sustainability has emerged as an indispensable goal for hoteliers globally. At the forefront of this transformative journey is BuildTrack, an avant-garde provider of smart hotel automation solutions. With unwavering dedication, BuildTrack has spearheaded innovations aimed at positively shaping the guest experience while concurrently elevating operational efficiency for hotels.

“Our hotel solutions allow centralised monitoring of rooms for not only occupancy, but also to be aware of guest needs, be it for laundry or housekeeping. This allows hotels to optimise their resources, while at the same time enhancing their ability to be more responsive to their guests’ needs. The system has the ability to

give centralised applications to hotel stakeholders to monitor their chain of hotels all over the globe, so they can be managed effectively. Our smart hotel automation solutions extend across the range from guestroom automation to keycard-based control for greater energy efficiency, while uniquely enabling centralised monitoring of room occupancy and guest needs,” emphasised Mohd Syeed, VP, Enterprise Solutions, BuildTrack.

BuildTrack’s outdoor and indoor panels for guest rooms not only create an ambiance that reflects the hotel’s quality but also serve a crucial purpose in hotel operations. These panels enable centralised monitoring of room occupancy, providing the front desk with real-time awareness of the physical presence in each hotel room.











is needed the most. During COVID, confidence was the major factor. People showed confidence in the industry and started travelling with full fervour.” Indeed, the road to recovery would not have been possible without the travellers’ confidence.

Besides confidence, the hotel classification also serves as a trust factor for domestic and global guests when it comes to safety, hygiene and service quality. Stressing there is a need to expedite the process, he said, “Delegating responsibility to local authorities and agencies instead of centrally controlling the whole process can help. We can also think of

“*Star classification is a mark of quality & promise that a set of standards are being followed by hotel.*”



**MP Bezbaruah**  
Secretary General  
HAI

outsourcing the initial benchmarking to some of the recognised agencies who will do the first screening, and then the government agencies can come in and give the final certification. We need to think of out-of-the-box solutions as there has been so much backlog that the matter needs to be thoroughly investigated.”

# Industry status & standardisation go hand in hand

Linking them with ‘star classification’ will help elevate standards of hotel sector, says **MP Bezbaruah**.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

Infrastructure and industry status are top agendas for Hotel Association of India (HAI) in 2024. Both work as a big boost for the growth and development of the industry. Another factor that instills confidence in the sector is ‘star classification’. **MP Bezbaruah**, Secretary General,

HAI, said, “Classification is a time-tested procedure for the industry as well as the tourism industry. It is an essential step for it is a mark of quality and promises a set of standards being followed by a hotel. In fact, when a hotel has this mark from the government, it brings in a lot of confidence at a time when it



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# Infusing tech encounters into design

**Ganesh Madasamy**, Creative Director, Aston Design, discusses the evolution of Indian hospitality design, from classical 'Raj' interiors to contemporary classics.

**I**n the realm of hospitality interior design, Aston Design shines as a pioneer of innovation, bringing forth creative concepts that go beyond mere transformation of brands. At the helm of Aston Design's creative helm is **Ganesh Madasamy**, the Creative Director based in Singapore. Boasting a 22-year career in hospitality interior design, Madasamy has garnered acclaim for his excellence in both design and service. His career showcases a portfolio of award-winning projects that encompass diverse scales and styles across the APAC region.

In the tapestry of Indian hospitality, the transition from classical 'Raj' interiors to a

contemporary classic marks a journey that caters to travellers of all ages. Madasamy sheds light on this evolution, emphasising the infusion of technology into design, while upholding timeless principles.

Drawing inspiration from local conversations and the vernacular nuances of a place, designers find themselves immersed in the richness of culture and nature. The era of grandiose lobbies, once a symbol of ego pacification, is now a thing of the past. Recognising the value of real estate, owners are compelled to creatively optimize smaller spaces. The challenge lies in bringing out the best in tighter spaces rather than succumbing to



restrictions. The key to this challenge involves the strategic use of materials, creative planning, and out-of-the-box thinking. A critical question that resonates with designers is, “How to make a space look and feel bigger?” Madasamy emphasises the significance of using the right materials, adopting creative planning, and



“

*The era of grandiose lobbies, once a symbol of ego pacification, is now a thing of the past.”*



spatial connections and facilities to create a harmonious environment for both.

Sustainability is a non-negotiable aspect of modern design. The need for designers in the industry to champion sustainable luxury. Understanding the locality and tapping into locally available resources become vital elements in this commitment to sustainable practices. From the Ananda in the Himalayas to the regal Imperial in New Delhi and the recently inaugurated JW Gofshire in Bengaluru, each project tells a unique story. The award-winning JW Shenzhen Boan stands as a testament to seamlessly blending local culture with modern sophistication, capturing the phoenix story in a subtle and contemporary manner. HT

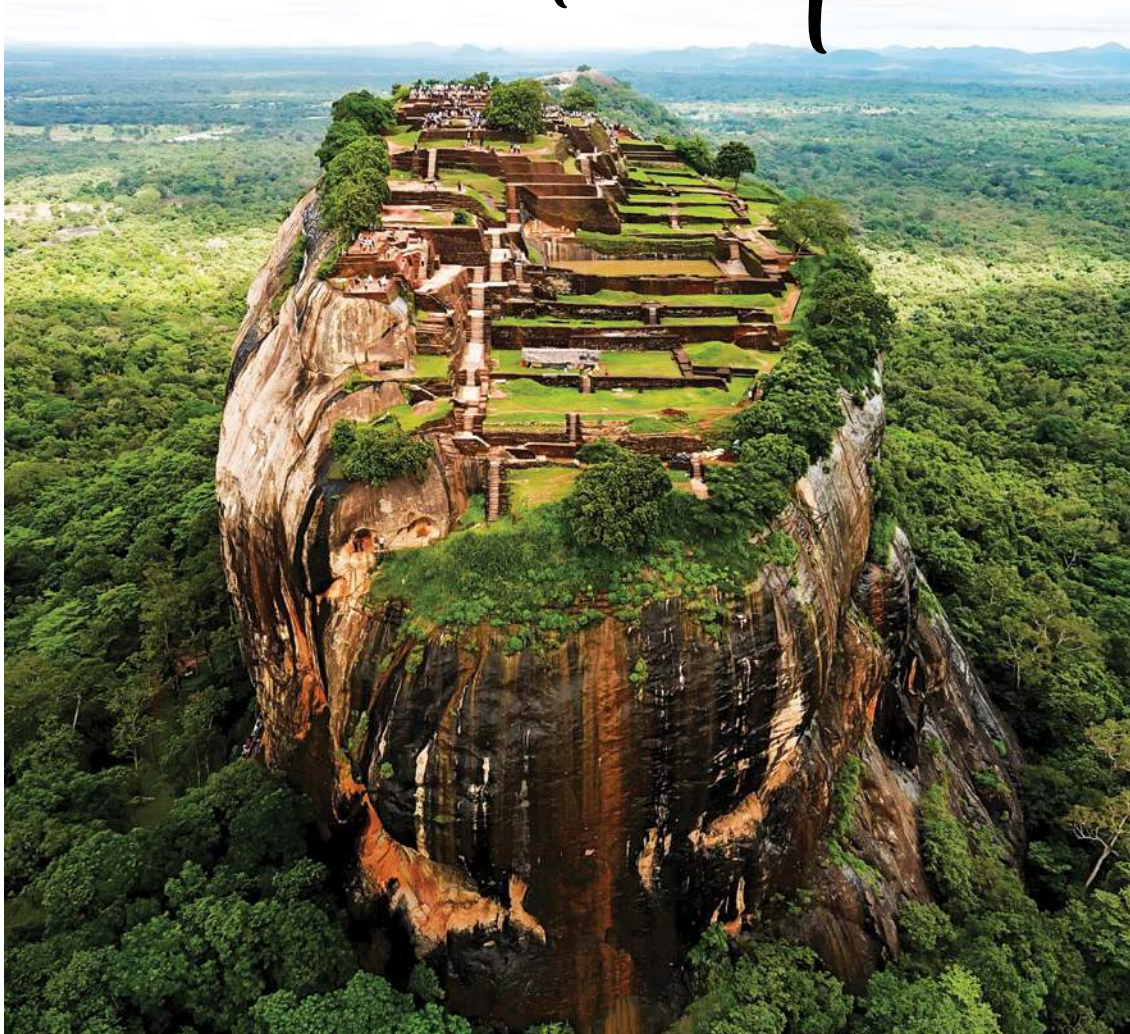
embracing unconventional thinking as the keys to unlocking the potential of confined spaces.

The continuation of this challenge involves considerations of budgets in the realm of tight spaces. He stresses the importance of designers commencing projects with a clear understanding of allocated budgets. He says good design emanates from a creative thinking process that incorporates local materials and leverages available workmanship quality. The term Bleisure introduces a paradigm shift in the way businessmen experience resorts or hotels. The concept envisions spaces catering to the needs of businessmen and the desires of their families. Madasamy explores various





# From crisis to comeback



Experts in the tourism sector deliberate Sri Lanka's tourism landscape, its challenges, ongoing revival efforts & strategic vision for long-term sustainability & growth.

WORDS BY SUNIL GHADIOK



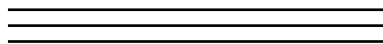


*Despite being faced  
with severe challenges*

in the recent years, Sri Lankan Tourism has shown remarkable resilience with unwavering propensity, in its effort to emerge successfully from this adversity.

A recent visit to the beautiful island nation was an eye opener. Everything seemed normal with business as usual, despite the ongoing economic crisis. The tourism sector is in a state of gradual recovery and from the first quarter of 2023 there has been a steady increase in tourist arrivals resulting in a positive effect overall.

We have stalwarts from Sri Lankan Tourism who have shared their explicit views on the current situation and plans for the future.





# Tourism revival gathers momentum

Priantha Fernando, Chairman, SLTDA

Sri Lanka has faced a decline in tourism since April 2019, impacting three million dependents in the sector. The revival began in January 2023, focusing on enhancing product quality and introducing new offerings aligned with global demand. The Sri Lanka Tourism

by 2029, with a emphasis on attracting 50 per cent high-end tourists. Recognising India as a pivotal tourist-generating market, Sri Lanka Tourism has intensified promotional activities across India. B2B promotions have been reinforced recently, with B2C planning slated for 2024.

considering operating day flights from markets like India and providing concessions to airlines operating at Mattala airport.

The current state of Sri Lanka Tourism is far from ideal; with arrivals remaining less than a third of the 2018 figures. The industry also grapples with debt, borne by the hospitality sector (85-90 per cent). Hoteliers recorded an average occupancy of under 25 per cent in 2022, and even with 1.5 million tourist arrivals, the sector is projected to achieve 35 per cent occupancy. The Sri Lanka Tourist Hotels Association and City Hotels Association have advocated for the revival of the MRR order. After, the MRR was reinstated, reducing the 5-star hotel rate—US\$130-US\$100, with 20 per cent commission on MICE tourism.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka acknowledges the need for a more investor-friendly environment. Both public and private investors are invited to buy shares, holding stakes in operational properties.

*“Of late, Sri Lanka Tourism has intensified promotional activities across India.”*

Promotional Bureau and the Sri Lanka Conventions Bureau are set to launch promotional drives, targeting key tourist-generating markets and diverse tourism segments, including MICE tourists. The goal is to position Sri Lanka as a premier tourist destination

Sri Lanka is existing airlines to expand their frequencies, while seeking the participation of new airlines and charter operators. Resumption of ferry service between the countries is likely improve, boost travel frequencies. The government is







## *Holistic approach to tourism development*

**M Shanthikumar**  
The Hotels Association  
of Sri Lanka

**S**ri Lanka is a country with an abundance of tourist attractions, including nature, culture and adventure. The 30-year civil conflict in the country did not have a growth in tourism, but the resilience of the nation and industry has allowed for no hotels to close operations during this period. Companies such as the Taj Group, Oberoi and Intercontinental have set foot in Sri Lanka, contributing to the country's socio-economic development.

Tourism became the second foreign exchange earner next to foreign remittances and is on its way to being ranked first. Just as the Sri Lankan borders opened

after COVID and flights started to resume, the political and economic crisis hit the country early 2022. Then the survival of the sector, especially the hotels, was due to the support extended by the government. The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau has identified tourism as a thrust

sector with to turn around the economy. The short-term goal is to target three million tourists with a new approach to target upper-scale foreign visitors.

In the short or long-term, the industry and SLTPB should be strategic in their approach to pushing the

*“The long-term goal is to reach five million tourists within the next five years.”*

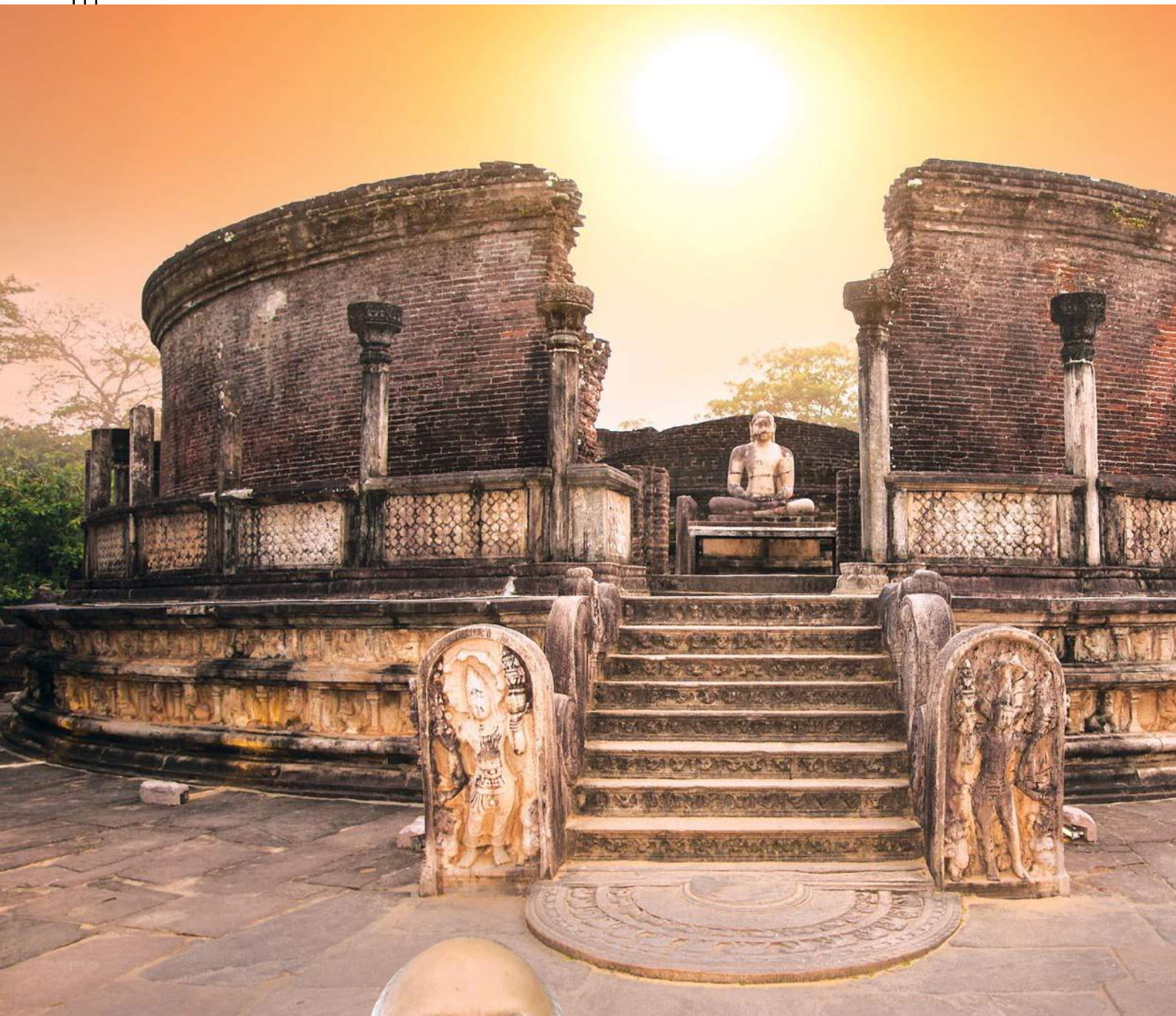


destination. Adhoc activities and promotions will not help.

The long-term goal is to reach five million tourists in the next five years. Sri Lanka must not aim for a large tourist flow as is done by certain East Asian destinations.

Also, MRR been introduced in Colombo, which has the highest number of rooms for any single region. Out-of-the-box thinking is a must to stabilise pricing, as falling rates can end up being a disaster for industry and the country.





*Rich tapestry of  
budget friendly  
delights*

**Suren Ediriweera**  
Managing Director  
Ceylon Tours





immersive experiences, connecting them to locals and communities. The Pekoe Trail, a 300 km long curated walking trail through South Asia's finest ecology and mountain terrain, is a recent addition to the island's portfolio.

The Sri Lankan Tourism Ministry is considering ways to make it easier for foreigners to stay longer on the island and invest in real estate and businesses. Current flight timings are not convenient, and more flights could help improve passenger convenience.

Flights to Trincomalee are not

multi-layer terminal likely to handle nine million passengers a year, increasing the airport's passenger handling capacity to 15 million passengers annually.

While Sri Lanka has high-end accommodations, exclusive experiences, and premium services to attract budget travellers. A hybrid approach comprising elements of luxury and mid and budget tourism is crucial to ensure that we understand and meet tourists' expectations. Sri Lanka surprises most of its visitors with the magnitude and diversity of its

*“The tourism ministry is coming up with ways to make foreigners stay longer on the island.”*

**S**ustainable and responsible travel has become the code word, with travellers seeking accommodations that have sustainability initiatives or certification. Sri Lanka should focus on these initiatives to ensure an impact on communities, cultures, traditions, and ecosystems.

Experiential travel is a growing segment, with clients seeking

frequent, and private choppers are doing well by charter—many new hotels in the area have helipads. The Trincomalee airport is geared up for small aircraft and not wide-bodied ones, making it unlikely the airports will be upgraded. The Bandaranaike airport in Katunayake is being expanded; one-fifth of the project has been completed. This project includes addition of a second

experiences, where travellers can enjoy so much in a short time.

Sri Lanka's focus on sustainability, experiential travel, and infra development positions it as a versatile and attractive destination in the global tourism landscape. A holistic approach that considering the diverse needs of tourists will contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the tourism industry. HT



# Diving into tropical bliss

A visa-free travel to Malaysia comes with immersive experiences of nature, culture, heritage, adventure, gastronomy and retail therapy.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

When it comes to travel and tourism, Malaysia knows how to do it right. Just in time for the holiday season, the country announced a visa-free travel for Indian travellers, causing quite a stir in the industry. Besides being a masterstroke in destination promotion, it came as a great opportunity for Indian travellers to explore Malaysia beyond its capital city of Kuala Lumpur. As of June 2023, around 283,885 Indian tourists visited Malaysia. In the pre-COVID period, Malaysia welcomed close to 750,000 Indian tourists and as of 2022, it was around 325,000 tourists.

Recently, Malaysia Tourism organized a FAM trip to Malaysia in conjunction with Miss SHOPhia Shopping Hunt 2023 – Penang Edition. The participants—locals



## Must-visit places

### Port Dickson

A sun, sea and sand paradise, the area is dotted with breathtaking premium pool villas. The Lexis Hibiscus is one such oceanfront resort offering coastal luxury.

### Sunway Lost World of Tambun

Set in a lush jungle, it offers natural hot springs, adventure activities and thrilling rides. The park also hosts business events in themed locations.



and international media—were encouraged to explore the surrounding on foot and identify the key tourist attractions in the city, highlighted with a hint. The hunt race was flagged off from TOP Komtar and the finale took place at the Gurney Paragon Mall. A novel idea, the event promotes Malaysia as a wholesome destination while also raising awareness about the charms of Penang.

Shopping is a vital component of Malaysia’s tourism promotion strategy, appealing to international visitors through a range of offerings. The country leverages duty-free zones such as Langkawi, cultural



“*A series of exciting events will be rolled out in a run-up to the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign*”

markets, and modern shopping malls to attract tourists seeking diverse experiences. Special events, digital marketing, and collaborations with retailers are employed to create excitement and showcase Malaysia’s unique shopping scene.

The strategically devised promotion aims to not only enhance the tourism experience but also boost economic growth through

increased retail spending by international visitors. As per the data available, the combined efforts have led to the arrival of 9.16 million tourists during the period from January to June 2023, generating receipts totalling RM 30.12 billion. Notably, shopping emerged as the second-highest contributor, accounting for 33.9 per cent of the total revenues (RM 3.1 billion).

The Malaysia’s tourism ministry aims to move to the empowerment and reinforcement phase beginning in 2025, where an estimated 23.5 million international tourist arrivals with tourism receipts of RM 76.8 billion is anticipated. A series of exciting events and happenings will be rolled out in a run-up to the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign. HT



### Banjara Hotspots

Exclusively for adults, it is a sanctuary of indulgence with 44 luxury villas. Its diverse offerings include meditation session in a 260-million-year-old limestone cave.

### Peranakan Mansion

A peek into the opulent lifestyle and legacy of Baba-Nyonya culture at this carefully preserved and managed mansion with a museum housing 1,000 antiques.

### Rainbow Skywalk, THE TOP @Komtar

At level 68, the Rainbow Skywalk allows visitors to walk on air 816 feet above sea level and enjoy breathtaking view of George Town and beyond.



# A taste of French Riviera



Whipping up an appetite for luxury gourmet experience, Oetker Collection brings flavours of the French Riviera to New Delhi.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

**A** taste for luxury is a crucial criterion for Oetker Collections, while contemplating growth and expansion in any part of the world. The German luxury brand is known for its iconic properties across Europe, the Caribbean and the USA. Recently, the brand's core team hosted—Riviera Culinary Odyssey—a gourmet experience by Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc and Chateau Saint-Martin & Spa, French Riviera, in partnership with the 360° restaurant, The Oberoi, New Delhi.

The culinary experience and partnership are a 'litmus test' to see and assess the Indian appetite for European luxury hospitality. "Indian guests travelling to our hotels want a wholesome food & beverage (F&B)



**Timo Gruenert**  
CEO  
Oetker Collection

experience. They are spontaneous and particular about what they want," says **Timo Gruenert**, CEO, Oetker Collection. Food, according to him, puts many things into perspective. He explained, "It is not possible to take



*The culinary experience and partnership are a 'litmus test' to see and assess the Indian appetite."*

a hotel room to a different country or continent. But with F&B, we can have our chefs from here. Guests can meet them and see what is on the plate. With this, we show what we can do at home." The culinary prowess



helps the brand create brand value and assist its travel partners in India in capitalising on brand awareness. It also helps the core team evaluate the possibilities of its India debut in the near future. **Philippe Perd**, Chief Development Officer, Oetker Collection, admitted, “Frankly, we initiated this partnership and food promotion to be able to test the Indian market. We realized that in the past three years, the Indian market share has gone up and there is a strong interest from Indian travellers. So, we are helping our Indian partners grow their interest in our collection. This is the first step. Let us use brand partnerships to be able to get better brand awareness in India about the collection.”

When asked about where and when the brand is making its India debut, Perd confides, “Today, I cannot give you a yes or no. It is too early to say, but it is worth exploring if an opportunity is presented to us. The sense of hospitality and the mindset that I experience here are exactly what we are looking for.” The brand wants to grow through hotel management contracts and continue with an asset-light plan, which includes a combination of the right destination and partner. “We are too small to make a destination. We would go to a region in India where there is a demand for luxury,” Perd said. In India, he believes destinations such as Kerala, Pondicherry and



Andaman & Nicobar would be ideal to introduce the brand’s signature European luxury hospitality.

Besides food and quality hospitality, he is also impressed with the talent pool India possesses. It is something his Michelin-starred chefs Sebastien Broda and Jean-Luc-Lefrancoi have been raving about, and he is keen to consider a internship programme in times when hiring talent is becoming more challenging. “It would work both ways—our staff can learn about Indian cuisine, and they can gain insights into European hospitality. It would be intriguing to host interns in the south of France during the season,” Perd said. HT



# Striving to achieve culinary supremacy

Firing up F&B battleground, five-star chefs are leaving no stone unturned to remain at the top of their culinary game & give standalone restaurants a run for their money.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI



**I**n the evolving world of F&B, success is measured in tangible (revenue) and intangible (experience) gains. The changing food space of India has become a startup magnet for many budding entrepreneurs and investors, driven by the desire to set up the next coveted dining place of the industry. A testament to this fact is the series of standalone restaurants joining this food bandwagon. Making this scene eclectic

is the enthusiasm of Indian diners to explore varied cuisines from across the globe. The growth of restaurants has prompted the chefs to push gastronomical envelope.

In this fight of flavours, and a desire to be 'talk of the town', 5-star kitchens find themselves competing with popular restaurants in the F&B space. From interiors to the menu, it is a close battle where one tries to maintain the legacy and the other looks

for starting one. While hotels take the lead when it comes to opulent spaces and premium service, restaurants score brownie points when it comes to ideas and innovations. Lending a new perspective to food and décor, they try to appeal to all the senses and thereby gain favour with Gen Z. But this doesn't mean hotels are lagging far behind. The 5-star kitchens are ramping up their game with culinary ingenuity and craftsmanship



# Keep evolving

## Sudhanshu Sharma

Executive Chef, The Suryaa, New Delhi

**H**aving worked with one of the biggest restaurant chains in India, Chef Sudhanshu Sharma knows how to run a standalone restaurant. “Here one has more freedom to play with dishes and presentation,” as compared to hotels where they have SOPs and constraints due to clients from all around the world. He said, “We focus on adding the X factor to our F&B, which includes some modern Indian food presentation, and some of the dishes with unique twists.” Staying relevant is a major challenge in the times of fast changing trends. For Chef Sharma the rule is simple, “you have to evolve yourself to compete and stay ahead in the market.” He advised, “We do a lot of pop-up menus and food festivals in a year at our F&B outlets for our clients. We also do our market survey and menu engineering and keep on updating our menu every year.”

### Price wars

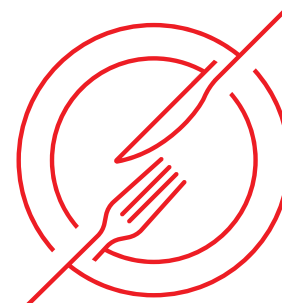
He said, “Pricing plays a vital role in the industry where the competition



is cutthroat. In our hotel, global travellers have a good spending ability. They know in a 5-star hotel they are in safe hands.”

### Retaining talent

He said, “The top chefs are opening



### Tantalizing the tastebuds

Pop-up menus and food festivals

### Go to F&B strategy

Update regular a la carte menu every year by adding the best dishes from the festival menus

### Team spirit

Take care of your team in their difficult time and they will take care of you

new restaurants and joining good brands, which is making our task.” He turns to his boss’s advice to hold onto his culinary brigade. “My boss always says, it is all about how you take care of them, how you nurture them to grow professionally and how you take a stand for them when they need it the most.” Indeed, the mantra of leading the team from the front has been working well for him, the Chef added.





# Innovate, collaborate & curate

Mario Caramella, Executive Chef, Grand Hyatt Gurgaon

In a city that is no less than a playground for restaurants, it could be tough to stay at the top. But that is not how Chef Caramella looks at the competition. He revealed, “Our approach at Grand Hyatt Gurgaon is to embrace the vibrant culinary landscape of Gurgaon rather than compete with it. We acknowledge the diversity and creativity that independent restaurants bring to the scene, and we strive to complement that by offering a unique and immersive dining experience within the hotel.”

Complementing meals with a transcendental ambience is precisely about crafting unforgettable culinary journeys for him.

## Price wars

Adding perspective to his plates that goes beyond price points is something that transcends a simple dine out into an unforgettable experience.



## Tantalizing the tastebuds

Curate an immersive culinary journey for your guests

## Go-to F&B strategy

Embrace the vibrant culinary landscape of the city rather than compete with it

## Team spirit

Foster a sense of belonging and purpose in your team



“Pricing is undoubtedly a factor in the competitive dining landscape, but at Grand Hyatt Gurgaon, we see it as an opportunity to showcase value rather than a barrier. Quality, authenticity, and innovation remains the top priority, ensuring that our guests not only enjoy a meal but an entire journey,” pointed out Caramella.

## Retaining talent

Retaining talent involves creating an environment where chefs feel inspired, he affirmed, “We offer opportunities for professional development and collaboration with renowned chefs. Additionally, our commitment to sustainability and community engagement resonates with chefs who seek purpose in their work.”





**Liang Xiao Qing**  
Chef, Yi Jing  
ITC Maratha Mumbai



## Local ingredients: new social media trends

**F**inding its place on almost every dining table during the Chinese New Year, the Wonton Soup is one of Chef Liang's most sought-after creations. The Wontons are delicately shaped like Ingots which resemble each one's willingness towards increased wealth and prosperity. A desire to constantly innovate and awe is the driving force behind Chef Liang's work at Yi Jing. He said, "At ITC Maratha, we are renowned for presenting the most exquisite culinary traditions, guided by the exploration of novel concepts within our acclaimed branded restaurants. Our dedicated team of culinary experts consistently crafts innovative menus that highlight a fusion of global and local flavours. Through the introduction of new and exciting dishes, our goal is to captivate the tastebuds of our guests."

### **Price wars**

While he agreed that pricing is a crucial factor in the hotel industry, he also added, "a delicate balance between setting competitive prices and providing quality services is essential for attracting and retaining customers." Introducing thoughtfully curated menus centered around special occasions allows his team to tailor their offerings to the celebratory nature of guests' stays.

### **Retaining talent**

While it has become an ongoing trend both in India and globally, he recognises the importance of nurturing and retaining skilled professionals to maintain the high standards. He explained, "Allowing our chefs the freedom to experiment not only keeps them engaged but also ensures a dynamic culinary experience for our guests."



### **Tantalizing the tastebuds**

Innovative menus that highlight a fusion of global and local flavours

### **Go-to F&B strategy**

Competitive prices & quality services are essential for attracting customers

### **Team spirit**

Freedom to experiment keeps them engaged



# Creating an exceptional overall experience



**Gaurav Paul**  
Executive Chef  
Hilton Bangalore Embassy Golflinks



**W**hile the competition is fierce, Hilton Bangalore Embassy Golflinks leverages its unique strengths—unparalleled standard of hospitality and flawless services—to solidify its position as a premier dining destination. “One inherent advantage that sets us apart is the continuous presence of in-house guests. This affords us multiple touchpoints to engage with our patrons, allowing us to cultivate lasting relationships,” affirmed Chef Paul.

To compete with independent dining establishments, he refers to a time-tested strategy consisting of commitment to excellence, personalised guest engagement, and a keen awareness of industry dynamics. “By consistently upholding the highest standards of product quality and delivering exceptional overall service, we aim to create memorable





### Tantalizing the tastebuds

A timeless recipe accompanied by classy and immersive atmosphere always works

### Go-to F&B strategy

Create multiple touchpoints to engage with your guests

### Team spirit

A collaborative workplace culture keeps the team motivated



dining experiences that resonate with our discerning guests,” he confirmed.

### Price wars

According to Chef Paul, in big cities, the cost of eating at a fancy standalone restaurant and a hotel falls pretty much in the same

ballpark. “Sometimes, dining at a standalone spot can be even fancier and pricier. Nowadays people often prefer these upscale standalone places for their cool vibes, music, and relaxed settings, especially when they are in prime locations or popular malls,” he pointed out. However, here comes the twist. He said, “We have noticed that folks who want a special and fancy dining experience tend to pick hotels. We make sure our prices match up with the awesome experience we offer—not just amazing food, but a classy and immersive atmosphere.”

### Retaining talent

Prioritising a nurturing environment that fosters creativity, growth, and recognition to encourage culinary talents, the hotel offers competitive compensation and professional development opportunities “Celebrating unique contributions of our chefs ensures they feel valued,” he said.

HT



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# Striking the right balance in India's room supply

India's hospitality industry has consistently faced challenges with room availability, leading to necessary adjustments to meet the increasing demand.

WORDS BY CHARMAINE FERNZ





**T**he conclusion of the recent ICC Cricket World Cup brought disappointment to the Indian team, yet it bolstered revenue for the hospitality industry in the chosen locations. This prompts the question of whether there were enough high-quality rooms available to accommodate such large-scale events. Furthermore, it is equally important to consider the G20 Summit that took place in various cities across India.

The availability of rooms has always been a matter of concern for India's hospitality industry. Despite the accommodations the country is making in terms of supply, can we meet the growing demand? There is a CAGR of 3.3 per cent in the number of hotel rooms by 2025. According to statistics, New

Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru are the top cities in terms of room supply. The growth of room supply is expected to increase across the country, particularly in tier II and III cities and across a range of socio-economic segments. This raises the question of whether India has enough room supply to compete on the global tourism map.

### The room gamble

**Manish Goyal**, Director, Stotrak Hospitality, is of the opinion the Indian hospitality industry has always evolved, and that is the reason it has been able to cater to the



**Manish Goyal**  
Director  
Stotrak Hospitality



*Number of rooms in major cities is rising, while homestays are carving out a sustainable niche."*

demand. Aligned with current trends, there is a rise in the number of rooms in major cities, while simultaneously, homestays are carving out a sustainable niche of their own.

However, **Nikhil Sharma**, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, said technology is the key driver. He explained, "The hospitality industry is adeptly addressing room demand shortages by prioritising technological integration. Leveraging mobile apps and other advancements, establishments ensure a seamless customer experience. This approach





**Nikhil Sharma**  
Market Managing Director  
Eurasia, Wyndham  
Hotels & Resorts



*Indian hospitality industry is adeptly addressing room demand shortages by prioritising technological integration.”*

not only streamlines booking processes, but also enhances overall guest satisfaction.”

**Varun Sahani**, SVP, Operations, Kamat Hotels India, is optimistic in his growth analysis, saying the Indian hospitality sector has adeptly evolved to meet the increasing demand for accommodations, driven by factors such as the growth of the MICE sector. To diversify their offerings, hotels are now embracing concepts such as boutique hotels, homestays, hostels and serviced apartments, catering to diverse traveller segments. This expansion goes beyond major cities, reaching tier II and III cities, aligning with burgeoning tourism

in smaller and offbeat destinations. Industry analysts, however, have different views.

**Mandeep S Lamba**, President, South Asia, HVS Anarock, felt the hotel sector is currently witnessing robust demand, fuelling double-digit growth in ADR and RevPAR. Despite a gradual decrease in revenge travel, the leisure segment continues to experience demand, and there are promising signs of a steady recovery in inbound tourism. The MICE and corporate travel segments are also rebounding, the face of the hybrid work culture, online meetings and higher airfares.

#### **The right balance**

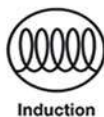
Recent mega events underscored the question: despite a supply of rooms, was there quality accommodation? Is there a focus on larger cities rather than smaller ones? Sahani reckoned, while major cities and tourist hubs may have surplus rooms, emerging tourist spots and smaller cities may face shortages due to regional disparities. Instances, such as the shortage of rooms during events such as the cricket world cup, highlight the need for a balanced supply of rooms. Challenges include market segmentation discrepancies, where the supply may not align with diverse traveller preferences, and insufficient infrastructure development in specific regions. Sharing statistics to assert growth, he said to meet this demand, the hotels are expanding their portfolios, particularly in smaller cities where





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**Varun Sahani**  
Senior VP, Operations  
Kamat Hotels India



*Equilibrium between oversupply and undersupply of rooms varies across regions & segments.”*

demand is surging. In the calendar year 2022, tier II, III and IV cities comprised 86 per cent of all brand signings by properties; 47 per cent of these were in tier III and IV cities, while 39 per cent were in tier II cities. While the share of tier I cities in total brand signings by properties declined from 22 per cent 2019 to 14 per cent in 2022. This trend continued the next year, with the smaller cities contributing as much as 82 per cent of signed properties from January to September 2023. It is clear bigger cities have the bulk, while smaller cities are catching up, but there is a long way to go.

Currently, the industry is bullish about growth, but the pertinent question is: do we have the right mix of room supply? Goyal felt the demand across India is based on seasonality; hence, a few cities have an oversupply of rooms. With improvements in road, air and rail connectivity, more offbeat locations are becoming closer and accessible, and this will be a key factor driving the shift in demand.

Sahani said equilibrium between oversupply and undersupply of rooms varies across regions. Stakeholders need to monitor market dynamics, adjusting to evolving consumer preferences and considering seasonal and various peaks. Decision-makers need to navigate these complexities to ensure an optimal balance between supply and demand.

HT



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# Revolution in hotel housekeeping

Responsible housekeeping is not just a practice, it is a core value shaping an exceptional and sustainable guest experience.

WORDS BY ANANYA KUKREJA

**I**n the ever-evolving landscape of global hospitality, the mantra of responsible housekeeping is echoing louder than ever. “Responsible housekeeping is about maintaining sustainable business practices, while considering environmental and social impact,” highlighted **Nithil Baskar**, Director, Operations, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. This thought goes beyond the conventional notions of cleanliness, diving deep into eco-friendly products, energy conservation, waste reduction and a commitment to the well-being of the guests and the broader community.

While the hospitality industry embraces this transformative ethos, a seismic shift is underway. According to the World Conservation Union, ecotourism is growing at a rate of 20-34 per cent annually. Currently, there are 30 certification programmes for sustainable and responsible tourism, allowing

travellers to identify eco-friendly havens and hotels to showcase their contribution. By January 2022, 400,000 accommodations globally, certified by agencies such as Green Key and LEED, stood out as beacons of commitment to sustainable and responsible practices.

In this pursuit, housekeeping emerged as a pivotal player, having the potential to not only uphold sustainability goals but also attract a discerning and educated audience.

**Sonpal Singh**, Executive Housekeeper, Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort, stressed the responsible housekeeping is not a practice, but a core value shaping an exceptional and sustainable guest experience.

Responsible housekeeping transcends the mere cleanliness of a room. The term encompasses a holistic approach respecting the environment, conserves resources, and ensures the well-being of the guests.





“

*Responsible housekeeping is about maintaining sustainable business practices, while considering environmental and social impact.”*

**Nithil Baskar**, Director, Operations, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar



## **Practices hotels now employ & many can adopt**

- Keep an eye on systems and processes to practice them conservatively.
- Creating a green team.
- Reducing carbon footprint— inhouse bottling plants —an initiative hotels are taking of late.
- Making the hiring and training process sustainable.
- Promote eco-friendly guest services, such as residential bathroom amenities and reusing linen, among others.
- Upgrade transportation offerings and services with sustainability in mind— electric vehicle charging stations are an example.
- Shopping local.
- Recycle and compost.
- Donating to the local community.
- Automating water and energy conservation.
- Invest in sustainable infrastructure— inhouse water treatment plants are an example.
- Reduce the use of single-use plastic.
- Make green decisions.
- Shop for certified green appliances.
- Optimal unitisation of HVAC systems.

### **Impact on hotels**

When we try to reduce wastage, we invariably allow the hotel to operate at a lower cost and contribute to its bottom line. “Efficient housekeeping practices such as scheduled cleaning, proactive maintenance and smart inventory control can reduce operational expenses, while maintaining high standards for the hotel,” said **Chayanika Nath**, Housekeeping Manager, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway. Proper resource management with the stringent practice of following operating procedures can reduce waste. Even the simple act of saving paper and moving to digital alternatives allows organizations to serve the environment, while streamlining and accelerating internal processes. A typical worker spends an estimated 30-40 per cent of his/her day searching for printed documents.





**Sonpal Singh**  
Executive Housekeeper  
Courtyard by Marriott  
Aravali Resort

“*Responsible housekeeping shapes sustainable guest experience.*”

It goes without saying that today’s educated audience respects organizations working towards the greater good.

**Gamechangers**

“Water consumption and wastage are matters of great concern,” said Manish Goyal, Founder, Stotrak Hospitality. Water harvesting, treatment and recycling must be given greater importance and investment. “Hydrogen energy used for vehicles should also be extended to the industry—this could really be a gamechanger when it comes to our energy needs and eco-friendly practices,” highlighted **Niraj Kumar Sinha**, Vice President, Operations, The Parterre, Ahmedabad. “There are some other gamechanging initiatives that government can help us with, which include subsidies for

procuring or generating green energy, taking actions and reinforcements with businesses and vendors that make and supply harsh chemicals for housekeeping practices, creating awareness campaigns targeting the hospitality and tourism industries, tax incentivisation for hotels using green practices of water consumption. Providing comprehensive training programmes and certifications serves as a valuable strategy to standardise eco-friendly practices within the hospitality industry. By doing so, it not only fosters a uniform approach to sustainable practices but also empowers guests to discern and choose eco-conscious hotels. Consequently, this initiative plays a pivotal role in actively promoting and advancing the cause of sustainable tourism,” advised **Sarbendra Sarkar**, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts. HT



**Sarbendra Sarkar**  
Founder & MD  
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

“*Providing comprehensive training programmes & certifications serves as a valuable strategy to standardise eco-friendly practices within the hospitality industry.*”



# Showcasing cutting-edge food tech

World Food India 2023 highlighted the role of collaborative efforts, particularly in the HoReCa segment.

WORDS BY **SUHANI SOOD**



The Ministry of Food Processing Industry organized World Food India 2023, focusing on innovation and sustainability. With a thematic focus on millets, this initiative aimed to propel India into the spotlight as a key export hub. Among the 200 exhibitors at WFI included names such as Bikanervala Foods, Bikaji Foods, Veeba, Gopal Snacks and Aurica.

## Collaborative efforts

The exhibition underscored the significance of collaborative efforts, particularly in the HoReCa



**Angshu Mallick**  
MD & CEO  
Adani Wilmer

segment. Exhibitors emphasised the necessity of partnerships to ensure sustainability in their business endeavours.

**Rishi Raj**, MD, Ritu Raj Agencies, representing the Naturin brand, stressed the role of associations with leading hotel brands, such as ITC, Radisson Hotel, Shangri-La, and Imperial in sustaining their business. He highlighted the interdependence between service providers and hospitality establishments.

**Angshu Mallick**, MD & CEO, Adani Wilmer said the company's products such as rice, oil and flour, among others, are vital for the HoReCa segment. "Our company caters to HoReCa segment. We have a separate team, which specialises in it and caters to this segment," he said.

## Indian market: A priority

International exhibitor, **Dinh Vinh Cuong**, President, Vietnam International Entrepreneur Networking Club, was excited to be in India for the first time. He expressed satisfaction at the potential the country holds for the foreign food products. Cuong revealed, "I am to represent our Arabica coffee to the Indian market. We already have interacted with some buyers, who have been interested in knowing about the product."

HT







## Sunlit comfort with Eris Home

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## Lucaris' Lavish Collection

Indulge in the ultimate luxury with Lucaris' Lavish Collection. The clean, sleek lines of the Lavish series bring a touch of sophistication to classic crystalware, seamlessly merging Asian craftsmanship with timeless designs. This Collection promises to elevate your wine and dining experiences.

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## King Ebony Tea Set

The Clay Craft King Ebony Tea Set brings a touch of opulence to any occasion. The ergonomic design of the teapot and cups ensures a comfortable grip, while the fine detailing reflects the brand's dedication to perfection.







# Invitation to join the **South African Tourism Roadshow** in India

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at The Lalit  
Jaipur

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## 13

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New Delhi

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## 14

February  
at Hyatt Regency  
Ahmedabad

Scan to register



## 15

February  
at ITC Gardenia  
Bengaluru

Scan to register



## 16

February  
at ITC Grand Central  
Mumbai

Scan to register



Registration time: 9:30 am followed by lunch

RSVP

Jaspreet Kaur: +91 96501 96532, jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com





## Showcasing enthusiasm for spirits

ProWine Mumbai in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, attracted trade visitors from various sectors, displaying India's fame in global wines & spirits industry.

WORDS BY **DDP BUREAU**

**P**roWine Mumbai, a joint event between Messe Düsseldorf India and All Things Nice, concluded its third edition on 24-25 November 2023. The event, part of the ProWein World, attracted trade visitors from various sectors, including hoteliers, restaurateurs, bar owners, importers, distributors, retailers, sommeliers, chefs, food and beverage teams, and consumers.

The event featured 164 companies showcasing 1,000 brands across 21 countries and 5,059 attendees from 24 countries. The event reflected India's appeal to the global wines and spirits industry.

The French Pavilion, led by Business France and country pavilions from Argentina, Australia, Chile, Italy, Northern Ireland, Portugal, and the USA, brought in their country wine makers to network with visitors.

The event also provided a platform to bartenders and spirit



brands through the ProWine Bartenders' Competition and ProWine Spirits Challenge. The event's success is reflected in the enthusiasm of attendees who are eagerly looking forward to the next edition.

ProWine Mumbai featured masterclasses, tasting sessions, and discussions led by experts. The highlight was the ProWine Spirits Challenge and The ProWine Bartenders' Competition, which revealed consumer preferences for spirits. They provided an opportunity for bartenders to showcase their skills and gain recognition. **Priyanka Mondal** received the 'ProWine Bartender of the Year' title.

The ProWine Mumbai Night was a networking event that brought together industry leaders, media persons, and key exhibitors. HT

“

*The event provided a platform to bartenders and spirit brands through the ProWine Bartenders' Competition & ProWine Spirits Challenge”*





**Aakriti Batra**  
CEO & co-Founder  
1524 Delhi

# Live like a LOCAL for a day

Hotelier **Aakriti Batra** talks about the cherished destinations that beckons her, and more...

**Q: A book that influenced your journey?**

**A:** As for the book, which influenced my journey is titled, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, by Richard Bach.

**Q: Your favourite holiday destination?**

**A:** There are too many; I will

mention the one I return to time and again—London.

**Q: The last destination you visited?**

**A:** My last journey took me to destinations such as Germany and Switzerland.

**Q: How do you plan your weekends or does the work spill over?**

**A:** During weekends, we make it a point to engage in activities within the city, exploring the various walks and trails in the many city forests and parks.

**Q: One change that you would like to bring to the industry?**

**A:** Changes I would like to see in

the hospitality industry is towards an emphasis on sustainable and eco-friendly practices.

**Q: How do you describe yourself as a traveller?**

**A:** As a traveller, I consider myself curious, versatile and adaptable.

**Q: Crisis management—what has been the biggest leadership lesson in this area?**

**A:** Ability to respond to challenges, make quick decisions and adapt strategies accordingly.

**Q What are your travel essentials?**

Lip balm and moisturiser, AirPods, a Kindle for reading on-the-go, and a reusable water bottle.

HT



# Movements



## Rohit Arora

VP, North & Goa Operations and Head, Leisure Sales, ASPHL

ASPHL has elevated Rohit Arora to the position of Vice President, North & Goa Operations and Head, Leisure Sales. He has been associated with ASPHL since 1988 and previously held the position of Area GM at The Park New Delhi. He has also successfully launched two premium hotels in Goa under ASPHL



## Amandeep Kaur

GM, ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru

Amandeep Kaur has been appointed the new General Manager, ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru. Kaur started her career at the ITC Grand Central, Mumbai as a member of the pre opening team before moving to the ITC Sonar, Kolkata and Sheraton and New Delhi as a part of the housekeeping team, a release issued here stated.



## Prasad Rao

GM, Courtyard by Marriott GorakhpurHebbal

Prasad Rao has been appointed the General Manager of Courtyard by Marriott Gorakhpur. In his new role, he will lead operational initiatives, oversee budgets, facilitate effective communication within the team, and ensure compliance with evolving regulations. He has 15 years of experience in the hotel industry.



## Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar

GM, Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal

Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal has appointed Kadambari Sabharwal Talwar as the General Manager. With a career spanning two decades in the realm of hospitality, Talwar has led through her innate ability to ensure smooth hotel operations, craft ingenious sales and marketing strategies.



## Dinesh Kesevalu

Resort Manager, Ramada By Wyndham, Yelahanka

Dinesh Kesevalu has joined Ramada By Wyndham, Yelahanka as the Resort Manager. In his new role, he will be responsible for overseeing daily operations, ensuring guest satisfaction and implementing policies, among others. He studied from Shevaroy's College of Hotel Management in Salem, Tamil Nadu.



## Nishal Seebaluck

Hotel Manager, The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore

Nishal Seebaluck has joined The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore as the Hotel Manager. With a career spanning 18 years, he has handled leadership assignments in F&B in Mauritius with Sun Resorts and The Oberoi Mauritius. Seebaluck is recognised for his leadership and commitment to operational excellence.



## Ashish Tiwari

F&B Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Bani Square Gurugram

Ashish Tiwari has been announced to have been promoted to the position of F&B Manager of DoubleTree by Hilton Bani Square Gurugram. Tiwari brings with him a wealth of experience, having been an integral part of the DoubleTree by Hilton Bani Square family since January 2020, a release stated.



## Pawan Kumar

F&B Manager, Courtyard By Marriott Shillong

Pawan Kumar has been announced to have been appointed the new F&B Manager of the Courtyard By Marriott Shillong. With a career spanning eight years in F&B segment, he has shown a commitment to financial and regulatory compliance objectives, while strategically planning and executing budgets and forecasts, a release stated.



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