



# FICCI

## Tourism E-Conclave

29-30 JULY, 2020

A R E P O R T

# FICCI - Tourism E-Conclave Panelists



**Shri Prahlad Singh Patel**

Hon'ble Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (IC), Government of India



**Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi**  
Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Odia Language, Literature & Culture, Government of Odisha



**Shri Tamradhwaj Sahu**  
Hon'ble Minister of Public Works, Department Home, Jail, Dharmik Nyas and Dharmasv, Tourism, Government of Chhattisgarh



**Shri C T Ravi**  
Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Kannada and Culture, Youth Empowerment & Sports, Government of Karnataka



**Shri Vasantbhai Ahir**  
Hon'ble Tourism Minister of State, Government of Gujarat



**Sushri Usha Thakur**  
Hon'ble Minister Tourism, Culture & Adhyatm Government of Madhya Pradesh



**Kadakampally Surendran**  
Hon'ble Tourism Minister Of Kerala



**Shri Vishal Kumar Dev**  
IAS Commissioner Cum Secretary, Tourism Department and Sports & Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha



**Shri Anbalagan P.**  
IAS, Secretary, Tourism, Government of Chhattisgarh



**Meenakshi Sharma**  
Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India



**Smt. Rupinder Brar**  
Additional Director General, Ministry Of Tourism, Government of India



**Mr. Sachin Ramchandra Jadav**  
IAS, Director - Tourism, Government of Odisha



**Mr. Cyril Diengdoh**  
IAS, Director - Tourism, Government of Meghalaya



**Mrs. Shubhda Chaturvedi**  
Head Communications & Senior Coordinator, Marketing & Promotions, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board



**Mr. Sujit Banerjee**  
Secretary General, WTTCII



**Mr. Vinod Zutshi**  
IAS (Retd.) & Former Secretary, Ministry Of Tourism, Government of India



**Suman Billa**  
Director, United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNTWO)

## FICCI MEMBER



**Dr. Jyotsna Suri**  
Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee & CMD, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group



**Mr. Dhruv Shringi**  
Co chairman FICCI Tourism Committee & Co-Founder & CEO, Yatra Inc



**Mr. JK Mohanty**  
Co Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee & CMD, Swosti Group



**Shri Dipak Deva**  
Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee and Managing Director, SITA, TCI & Distant Frontier



**Shri Souvagya Mohapatra**  
Co-Chairman, FICCI Eastern Region Tourism Committee & Executive Director, MayFair Hotels & Resorts



**Shri Dilip Chenoy**  
Secretary General, FICCI



**Mr. Ankush Nijhawan**  
Co Chairman FICCI Travel Technology Committee, Co-Founder TBO Group & Managing Director, Nijhawan Group



**Mr. Ashish Kumar**  
Co Chairman, FICCI Travel Technology Committee & Thought Leader

# Travel & Hospitality: What's next?

## Pandemic affects a paradigm shift

Tourism contributes a significant 9.2% of India's GDP, a neat sum of Rs 16.91 lakh crore in 2018, as stated by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). Given the enormous bank of human capital the economy is reliant on, this labour-intensive service industry provides 8.1% of total jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic has dented an industry that supports 42.673 million jobs.

The tourism and hospitality industries have been worse-affected, vis-à-vis other sectors, by the outbreak. 'Work from Home' isn't an option for the two industries in its traditional avatar. The organised hospitality sector has 160,000 rooms; the unorganised sector, depending on the study you refer to, ranges between 500,000-700,000 rooms.

The industry has both, homegrown and international chains vying for a piece of the pie. They have contributed immensely to India's economy's growth story, which is dependent on creating world-class infrastructure. But the present situation has brought the industries to a virtual halt and pushed it to ground zero.

The unprecedented situation created by COVID-19 has inspired the two industries to reinvent themselves. As India and the world gradually open up, hoteliers and tourism drivers are developing new synergies.

The outbreak has necessitated a paradigm shift in our journey to a new normal. In the last few months of lockdown, the industry has had the opportunity to pause, rethink and refocus its strategy, both statewide and collectively.



**Mr. Sajeev Kurup**  
President, Ayurveda Promotion Society & Managing Director, Ayurvedamana Hospitals



**Mr. Suyash Keshari**  
Wildlife Presenter & Filmmaker



**Ranveer Brar**  
Renowned Celebrity Chef



**Mr. Anshul Gupta**  
Industry Leader - Travel & Hospitality, Accenture



**Mr. Rohit Kapoor**  
CEO - India & South Asia, Oyo Hotels & Homes



**Ms. Ritu Mehrotra**  
Country Manager, India, Sri Lanka & Maldives, Booking.com



**Ms. Roma Datta**  
Director - Travel, BFSI, Classifieds, Gaming, Telco & Payments, Google India



**Mr. Nandivardhan Jain**  
CEO, Noesis Capital Advisors



**Mr. Naveen Kundu**  
Managing Director, EBIXCash Travel & Holidays



**Mr. Zubin Saxena**  
Managing Director & Vice President - Operations, Radisson South Asia



**Ms. Kerrie Hannaford**  
Vice President - Commercial, South Asia, Accor



**Mr. Deep Kalra**  
Founder & Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip



**Mr. Deepak Lamba**  
CEO of Worldwide Media (WWM), President - Times Strategic Solutions, Mentor at Times Centre for Learning Ltd



**Mr. Ajay Jadeja**  
Former Captain, Indian Cricket Team



**Ms. Divia Thani**  
Editor Conde Nast Traveller



**Ms. Deepali Nandwani**  
Editor, Travelgram



**Ms. Rupali Tewari**  
Media Professional & Consultant



**Mr Prahlad Singh Patel**  
Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture

*“Many states in the country have begun opening up to tourism, which is a very good sign. All stakeholders—private and government—should join forces to understand what needs to be done on priority, to ensure a revival.”*

**Prahlad Singh Patel**  
Minister of State (I/C) for Culture and Tourism



**Meenakshi Sharma**  
Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India



**Rupinder Brar**  
Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

### The tourism e-conclave

FICCI hosted a two-day Tourism E-conclave, ‘Travel and Hospitality: What’s Next’ on 29-30 July, supported by the Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture’s platform Incredible India, and the states of Odisha and Chattisgarh. The first-ever virtual meet had policymakers, leaders and experts from the industry, as well as celebrity stalwarts, present their perspectives on the path ahead, post COVID-19.

Several stakeholders—Mr Prahlad Singh Patel, the Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture; Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson and Managing Director of Bharat Hotels Limited and Head of the Committee of Tourism, FICCI; Dilip Chenoy, Secretary-General, FICCI; and secretaries of various state’s tourism boards, hoteliers, travel industry representatives—offered their opinion, advice and road map on what can be done and needs to be done.

### What the industry agreed on

It was an appropriate platform to explore the tourism potential of lesser-known northeastern states, as they unveiled their hidden treasures. Among the elements all stakeholders agreed on: There is no better time than now to ‘Discover India’ and put out the red carpet for domestic tourists. The industry has come to terms with the fact that the impact of the outbreak is here to stay for some time. So, the challenge lies in tapping the latent demand that is curtailed for the moment due to lockdown restrictions and fear of travelling.

The insights emphasized on one crucial fact: the need for social and physical distancing has catapulted technology to the forefront, across all tourism and hospitality segments. The stakeholders have to up their game. The two industries, besides a stimulus package, require a spell-out of the SOPs being put in place across the country to ensure hygiene and regain the confidence of the people. There was also near-unanimous agreement that all states need to synergise and evolve uniform SOPs and policies to make it smoother for the travel and hospitality industries to function.



**Shri Vishal Kumar Dev**  
IAS Commissioner Cum Secretary, Tourism Department and Sports & Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha

*“Safe bubbles converging states such as Odisha, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh, which have fared relatively well in the management of COVID-19, are just the initial steps on the road to revival.”*

**Vishal Kumar Dev**  
Shri Vishal Kumar Dev, IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of Tourism & Sports & Youth Affairs, Govt. Of Odisha



**Shri Anbalagan P.**  
Secretary, Tourism, Government of Chhattisgarh

How do you revive the two industries and draw a balance between post-lockdown craving for travel and essential safety norms? How do hotels shore up their ravaged balance sheets as the economy opens up? What is the impact on hotels competing in the same space? How will the scattered industry evolve to meet the unprecedented challenges brought on by the pandemic? “What next?” pinned the pulse of a troubled industry struggling to keep its head above troubled waters.

## Day One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6hAyqbEPDU&t=467s>

Dilip Chenoy, Secretary-General, FICCI set the tone for the e-conclave, lauding the tremendous response they have received. He welcomed the discussion on how the industries, raring to get back, were preparing to meet the challenges of the changing environment.

Dr Jyotsna Suri, Past-President, FICCI, Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee & CMD, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, in her inaugural address, agreed with Chenoy that tourism would be the torch-bearer for the economy. The far-reaching, all-encompassing crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, never encountered in the last century, has brought everything to a grinding halt.

In the introductory session, the panellists discussed what would it take for the industry to revive, recover and to stay alive. Dr Suri pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s urging to citizens to explore domestic travel and sustain local businesses is far more relevant today, with the country’s borders closed and international tourism at a standstill.

While outbound travel would eventually revive, domestic tourism has to take off first. The 28 states and union territories need to forge synergy to enable smooth movement of domestic

travellers to gradually get tourism on track. Dipak Deva, Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee and Managing Director, SITA, TCI and Distant Frontier took over the moderating of the sessions. What ensued was an informative conversation with over 2000 participants tuned in.

Anbalagan P, Secretary, Tourism, Government of Chhattisgarh aptly referred to a truism, “Extraordinary situations call for extraordinary solutions”. He stated he was eager to promote the 10-year-young state’s lush forests to bring in domestic tourists. Like his neighbouring states, Chattisgarh has mooted developing

*“Extraordinary situations call for extraordinary solutions. There is a need to create tourist circuits with standardised SOPs that would enable people to travel easily. The state has approved guidelines to showcase ethnic and ecotourism with enhanced transport connectivity to help people explore the land full of surprises.”*

**Anbalagan P.**  
Secretary, Tourism, Government of Chhattisgarh

regional-level collaboration. There is a need to create tourist circuits with standardised SOPs that would enable people to travel easily. The state, on its part, has approved guidelines to showcase ethnic and ecotourism with enhanced transport connectivity. The plan is to get people to explore “the land full of surprises”, referring to Chattisgarh’s natural beauty and its tribal populace.

Vishal Kumar Dev, IIM IIT, IAS Commissioner cum Secretary Tourism Department and Sports & Youth Services Department and Sports & Youth Services Department, Government of



**Dilip Chenoy**  
Secretary-General, FICCI



**Dr Jyotsna Suri**  
Past President, FICCI & Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee & CMD,  
The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group



**Shri Dipak Deva**  
Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee and Managing Director, SITTA,  
TCI & Distant Frontier

*“There is a need to address psychological barriers and build the confidence of travellers who are hungry for different travel narratives. The government is keen to provide incentives and coordinate with state governments to boost travel.”*

**Meenakshi Sharma**  
Director General, Ministry of Tourism

Odisha, rightly pointed out, “Zero tourism scenario has forced the industry back to the drawing board. The pandemic has allowed us to get to the planning stage for the state and the country.” Concurring with his fellow panellists, Dev spelt out that domestic tourism would be the priority for the next few years at least. People are “itching” to travel and it is imperative to assure them that protocols are in place. Safe bubbles converging states such as Odisha, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh, which have fared relatively well in the management of COVID-19, are just the initial steps on the road to revival.

This triangle of states is blessed with wildlife reserves that are ideal for parameters of physical distancing. The direction points towards drivecations and staycations, with emphasis on eco-retreats, like that of Konark.

Come October, longer interstate road itineraries to Visakhapatnam are on the anvil. Be it a culinary trail or an archaeological one, the promotion of the Rann of Kutch is a benchmark for new offerings such as luxury river cruises in the beautiful backwaters, for a state like Odisha.

The panellists referred to the theme of the last FICCI conclave, which exhorted the industry to “Revive, Strive and Thrive”. The panellists used the platform to collectively exhort Mr Prahlad Singh Patel, Union Minister of State - Tourism and Culture (I/C) to initiate a coordinated approach to smoothen the path for these

measures. The minister was hopeful of 1/4th of the earlier footfalls targeted but cautioned that it might be possible to get 90% recovery by next year.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-UGyU79G0I&list=PLDVwLoQHbdQemHWM3GU1E1M2lk7GhGHAI&index=2&t=3648s>

In the valedictory session, Dr Suri highlighted the unequivocal conclusion that domestic tourism will lead to the revival of the industry. India, like other world economies, relies on tourism for employment and growth. It is vital to redress the present anomaly caused by the outbreak. Moderator Rupali Tewari, the media professional and consultant, drew insights from the decision-makers of the sector.

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, zeroed in on the need to organise the sectors. The dialogue for regulation has begun and needs to be taken forward. While the need for standardisation of protocols is a given, the ministry agreed that the Incredible India platform has to include all states. Plans are afoot to create a ready reckoner of hidden gems in all states. This is a period to fire the spirit of innovations, with a focus on destinations that are naturally social-distancing friendly.

The ministry is working on creating 52 short-distance overnight itineraries. These will be out on the website, calendars in print,



**Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi**  
Minister of Tourism, Odisha

mobiles applications and promotional material, in collaboration with all important organisations and local chapters associated with tourism. The use of social media to engage audiences and webinars continue. The tried and tested method of firing the imagination of children and women so that they are motivated to travel is the way to make an inroad into families.

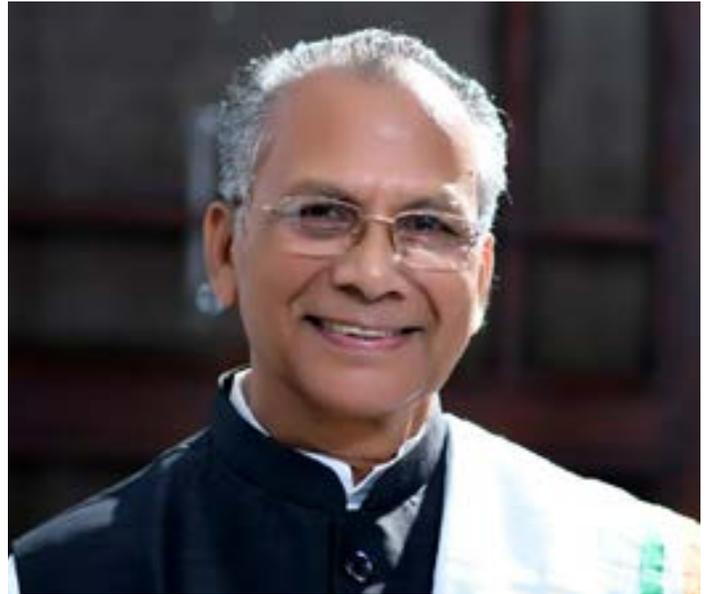
Shushri Usha Thakur, Minister of Tourism, Culture & Adhyatm, Government of Madhya Pradesh, enlisted the measures put in place with due safety compliance. Yoga tourism occupies pride of place in the effort to be self-reliant, she said.

With an eye on the best practices abroad, the reopening of tourism requires harmonious movement between neighbouring states and showcasing of the endless possibilities that people are surprised and enthusiastic about in Madhya Pradesh. The protocols have to find a balance between safety and comfort.

Vasanbhai Ahir, Tourism Minister, Gujarat, spoke of the efforts made to showcase its ancient archaeological sites, Lothal and Dholavira, the Somnath Temple, rural homestays, the development of the white sand beach coastline, as well as the signature Kutch campaign. From the Statue of Unity of inspirational ironman, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, to yoga tourism and its jungles, the state

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**Rupinder Brar**  
Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism



**Tamrathraj Sahu**  
Minister of Tourism, Chattisgarh

***“The far-reaching crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, never encountered in the last century, has brought everything to a grinding halt. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s urging to citizens to explore domestic travel and sustain local businesses is far more relevant today, with the country’s borders closed and international tourism at a standstill.”***

**Dr Jyotsana Suri**  
Chairperson and Managing Director of Bharat Hotels Limited and Head of the Committee of Tourism, FICCI

promises to hold a tourist’s interest by offering marvels, one for each day of the month.

Tamrathraj Sahu, Minister of Tourism, Chattisgarh, highlighted the unspoilt tourist attractions and the measures taken to keep the state Covid-19 guidelines compliant. Chattisgarh offers skill development training to migrant workers who have returned from other states, to provide them with employment in hotels and the tourism sector.

Kadakampally Surendran, Minister of Tourism, Kerala, spoke of the requirement of a roadmap of unified guidelines to enable them to collaborate with other states. Out-of-box ideas and marketing digital content to woo tourists, were just some strategies that were brought into force.

Using the crisis management lessons learnt during the 2018 floods and NIPA, Kerala tourism is putting its best foot forward. The state has assisted all stakeholders by drawing up several schemes. The minister spoke of promoting Ayurveda for wellness, besides eco and adventure tourism. A strong synergy between public and



**Vinod Zutshi**  
IAS (Retd.) and Former Secretary, Ministry Of Tourism



**Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav**  
Director - Tourism, Government of Odisha

***“The acceleration of tech will be a boon for tourism. Eco-systems will improve as people learn to accept that a fair price has to be paid for services. Those operating on reasonable margins have tided over this period.”***

**Dipak Deva**

Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Director and MD, Sita, TCI and Distant Frontiers

private sectors will be the key driving force on the road to recovery.

CT Ravi, Minister of Tourism, Karnataka said the state had everything but snow to offer tourists. It contributes 14.5% of the total GST, which has flattened due to the outbreak. Besides formulating SOPs, the state has proactively launched a campaign, ‘Love your native land’ to boost home tourism, besides a video on the safety precaution protocols for tourists. Government properties are running at 50% occupancy. He calls for a joint promotion between neighbouring states in the forthcoming phase.

Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Minister of Tourism, Odisha, Odia Language, Literature & Culture, spoke of how the tourism budget for the state has seen a fourfold increase. In place is an MOU with a neighbouring state just as the lockdown struck. Odisha has used the lean season for product enhancement and maintenance. Digital marketing will help deal with the fear factor.

Souvagya Mohapatra, Chairman, FICCI Eastern Region Tourism Committee & Executive Director, MayFair Hotels &

***“The industry was the first to suffer and will be the last to recover, but its resilience will ensure a bounce back. Regional cooperation is the solution and safety will drive visitors towards road trips in self-owned transport, post-December.”***

**Souvagya Mohapatra**

Chairman FICCI Eastern Region Tourism Committee & Executive Director, MayFair Hotels & Resorts

Resorts stated that the industry was the first to suffer and will be the last to recover, but its resilience will ensure a bounce back. Regional cooperation is the solution and safety will drive visitors towards road trips in self-owned transport, post-December.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3y5wMM78Nw&t=10s>

The Day One e-conclave warmed up to the first plenary discussion on “Future of Travel & Hospitality: What lies Ahead?”, moderated by Divia Thani, Editor, Conde Nast Traveller. Thani steered the conversation to throw light on overall global trends and analysis of the travel & tourism sectors, with learnings for the Indian tourism industry.

A positive sign for how the path will evolve is the concept of “Revenge Travelling”, a term inspired by people vocalizing their pent-up desire to travel, as indicated by a CNT survey. It also unfolded that there has been a 100% increase in digital consumption. This tool is apt to satiate readers’ curiosity with information and consciously reinforces travel and responsible tourism, with a popular series on how to become a better traveller. On the supply side, it would fillip



**Souvagya Mohapatra**  
Chairman, FICCI Eastern Region Tourism Committee & Executive Director, MayFair Hotels & Resorts



**Ashish Kumar**  
Co Chairman, FICCI Travel Technology Committee & Thought Leader



**Deep Kalra**  
Founder & Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip

*“There is need to create uniform travel experiences in tandem with government’s continual backing. WTTCII has presented a paper on reforms to tweak policies across all travel segments, to the Indian government. Europe has opened up and India needs to take a leaf from the continent’s book. Creating demand is essential for revival.”*

**Sujit Banerjee**

Secretary-General, The World Tourism and Travel Council, India (WTTCII)

best practices in eco-tourism, with not just an increase in footfalls but a move towards sustainable tourism.

Meenakshi Sharma, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, emphasised the need to address psychological barriers and build the confidence of travellers who are hungry for different travel narratives. She said that the government was keen to provide incentives and coordinate with state governments to boost travel.

Suman Billa, Director, United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNTWO), Technical Cooperation & Silk Road Development cautioned that with a drop of one trillion dollars and 100m job losses, the bounce-back will be prolonged way into 2021. This is the time to work on strategies on how to open the sector without a definitive vaccine. The key is to assure the strong base of travellers with a strong protocol of hygiene, as an answer to anxiety and negative perception, a sentiment echoed by all panellists. He called on the sector to work on a value-based reset, be it jobs, homestays or other parameters. The lockdown has a captive audience of four million Indian outbound travellers, who could be diverted to spend in the domestic sector.

*“Our love for exploration will help us seek out real experiences. Micro-travel will help us appreciate our roots and explore our backyards.”*

**Chef Ranveer Brar**

Sujit Banerjee, Secretary-General, The World Tourism and Travel Council, India (WTTCII) felt the death knell to mass tourism would consequently change the nature of tourism. He emphasised the need to create uniform travel experiences in tandem with the government’s continual backing. WTTCII has presented a paper on reforms to tweak policies across all travel segments, to the Indian government. Europe has opened up and India needs to take a leaf from the continent’s book. Creating demand is essential for revival.

Deep Kalra, Founder & Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip was instrumental in the development of the Aarogya Setu app. Kalra suggested that travellers should present a pragmatic Responsible Tourism Society-kind of a single-norm certificate, 48 hours before boarding, to avoid cross-border confusion. This would also keep flight capacities viable. As tech-based company zones in on the trend of drivecations, Kalra claimed better search facilities would enhance the options for travellers.

Dipak Deva, Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Director and MD, Sita, TCI and Distant Frontiers reiterated that the acceleration of tech will be a boon for tourism. Eco-systems will improve as people



**Suman Billa**  
Director, United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

*“With a drop of one trillion dollars and 100m job losses, the bounce-back will be prolonged way into 2021. This is the time to work on strategies on how to open the sector without a definitive vaccine. The key is to assure the strong base of travellers with a strong protocol of hygiene, as an answer to anxiety and negative perception, a sentiment echoed by all panellists.”*

**Suman Billa**  
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learn to accept that a fair price has to be paid for services. Those operating on reasonable margins have tided over this period.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=of61xITBhqE&t=14s>

The second session of Day One, ‘Traveling with the Pandemic’, brought in the refreshing perspective of the end-user, the traveller. Deepali Nandwani, Editor, Travelgram, got Ajay Jadeja, former India cricket team captain, to cross the pitch and share his travel adventure over 5,000km, amidst the lockdown. The drive from Delhi to Dwarka offered a new dimension of travel to the celebrity. He echoed the sentiment of most travellers, that he would shun flights for the moment. He suggested now is the best time to hit the road, when destinations are at their uncrowded best.

Travel as a necessity for visiting family and work has required the much-travelled cricketer to constantly live out of his suitcase. Jadeja saw the future opening-up for community travel, perhaps, with a golf partner. The change he envisioned is that of the mindset, hence gaining the trust of travellers in areas of a safe environment was paramount.



**Sujit Banerjee**  
Secretary-General, The World Tourism and Travel Council, India

Celebrity chef Ranveer Brar focussed on the heart of F&B. Food is an offshoot of every culture. He believes that deeper processes will reflect respectful adaptation and mindfulness. Covid-19 has tied us to each other and knowing we are interconnected carries a sense of responsibility. Sustainability has been genetically encoded in Indian culture, reaffirmed Brar. Our love for exploration will help us seek out real experiences. While Brar claimed that micro-travel will get us to appreciate our roots, the creation of bubbles is as dangerous as blanket bans and will not work. The future looks interesting for small food businesses that are flexible and nimble.

Deepak Lamba, CEO, World Wide Media (WWM) and President, Times Strategic Solutions, mentor at Times Centre for Learning Ltd. forecasted travel based on 3 Ss — Safety Sensibility and Sustainability. The travel horizon indicates hyper-local and micro-community travel that meets the criteria of exclusivity. Travellers will opt for alternate means of transport and homestays. We have to keep our privilege aside and adhere to the universal concern of safety. With affluence, we have moved away from sustainability. This time brings us to use things optimally and necessitates invention and reinvention. In this time, he said, travel writing has taken the virtual route with tips, guidelines, sensible travel options, etc.

The session wound off with Dr Suri referring to the question uppermost on the industry’s mind: How do we gain people’s confidence to travel without fear? “These sessions are providing us with some insights.”

**Day 2**  
<https://youtu.be/WY09C5fjWg0>

The first session of the day and the third of the e-conclave, “Spotlight on hidden tourism jewels of India - Exploring the unexplored tourism potential”, was an eye-opener for avid travellers. Each



**JK Mohanty**  
Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee & CMD, Swosti Group



**Jaspreet Singh Bhatia**  
Founder, Ice Cubes Holidays



**Ajay Jadeja**  
Former India Cricket Team Captain

panellist had to compress the myriad reasons to travel to their state. Be it environment, culinary, Ayurveda and wellness, adventure and wildlife, or culture and heritage tourism—the offerings are uniquely exhaustive.

Vinod Zutshi, IAS (Retd.) and Former Secretary, Ministry Of Tourism, the moderator for the session, emphasised that India is still in the midst of a crisis. With the aggressive promotion of protocols, the government could focus on the relatively safer destinations. The Chattisgarh-Odisha -Meghalaya triangle has had relatively lower morbidity during the pandemic. The focus on domestic tourism will continue much after the outbreak wanes.

Randhir Vikram Singh, Co-Chairman, FICCI Rajasthan State Council, General Secretary – Indian Heritage Hotels Association & Joint Managing Director - Hotel Castle Mandawa, welcomed the panellists to unfold how each of their states had developed niche segments in the new ecosystem.

Sachin Ramchandra Jadav, Director - Tourism, Government of Odisha delved deep, to unearth ‘The Best Kept Secrets’. From historical Buddhist and temple sites to marine life and the state’s abundant forests to Glamping at eco-retreat Konark, cruising on the backwaters, festivals and culinary odysseys, the state has a treasure trove waiting to be discovered. It has gone the extra mile to boost tourism by backing road circuits with medical facilities and helplines. It has trained guides and naturalists and mentored homestay operators. It has eased land allocation for hotels on par with industry standards, and a single-window system for easy facilitation for infrastructural development to keep pace. There is good reason to be optimistic as Odisha is driven to retain the identity of its communities and plough back 50% of the profit for their development.

JK Mohanty, Co-Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee & CMD, Swosti Group, listed the state’s natural attractions from Mangalajodi, Nalabana Bird Sanctuary bird paradise to the

***“This is the best time to hit the road, when destinations are at their uncrowded best. There is a need for a change in mindset and gaining the trust of travellers by promising a safe environment is paramount.”***

**Ajay Jadeja**  
Former Indian Cricket Team Captain

temple abode of Goddess Kaijal in the sea, the Taptapani hot sulfur springs, the blackbuck reserve at Vetnai, the Bhitarkanik dense mangrove reserves with world’s largest crocodile reserves, and the wonderous Jirang monastery at Chandragiri. Mohanty’s hotel chain has a resort with an enviable view on the brackish water of Chilka Lake.

Cyril Diengdoh, Director - Tourism, Government of Meghalaya shared attractions such as the 42,000-years-old Meghalayan age caves. While Chattisgarh and Odisha, too, shared an abundant cave heritage, Diengdoh highlighted the longest caves in the world, living root bridges, and ecotourism under the VI schedule maintained by the community. The state is upscaling its connectivity and infrastructure and introducing personalised guides. On the anvil is a 100-room hotel taken over by Taj Vivanta, with views of pristine waters. Music aficionados seek out Meghalaya for their festivals, he said.

Shubhda Chaturvedi, Head - Communications & Senior Coordinator, Marketing & Promotions, Department of Tourism, Government of Chhattisgarh extolled the gems of the state such as exotic caves with stalagmite and stalactite formations in southern Bastar and cave paintings with a history of 12,000 years. Rural tourism, forests with indigenous flora and fauna, abundant with medicinal plants and herbs, virgin tribal circuits, the third-largest

Ganesha idol in the world, carved from single sandstone and, in the pipeline, the Ramvan Ganapati festival to recreate Lord Ram's exile spent in the state, arts and crafts dating back to the Harappan civilization, and Bastar Dassera celebrated for 75 days to worship the region's goddess Danteshwari Devi, are exclusive attractions. Chaturvedi said the state is targeting intra and interstate travellers in the first phase.

Jaspreet Singh Bhatia, Founder, Ice Cubes Holidays, pointed out that waiting for the outbreak to die out is not an option. He listed the positives of the new pattern of travelling, which included individual accommodation, fewer people, and day and short distance trips.

Sajeev Kurup, President, Ayurveda Promotion Society & Managing Director, Ayurvedamana Hospitals, Kerala, relevantly offered a key to what people are seeking in healthcare. All set to open with special packages for domestic travellers in Munnar and Thekkady, Kurup expects a turnaround in January 2021. The focus will be on detox and immunity-building programmes. The state has been hit by floods again this year but Kerala's disaster management is giving its best to keep its chin up.

Suyash Keshari, Wildlife Presenter & Filmmaker, who grew up in MP and Chattisgarh, spoke about the virtual safaris he hosts, aimed at getting people to fall in love with rural, raw India. His series fulfils people's insatiable need to devour content during the lockdown.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LflnX-VuxBg>

The fourth plenary focussed on the lifeline of the lockdown:

***“It is time to view the bigger picture. This is the time to marry the customer base and brand with technological solutions. It is about the mindset; one has to keep evolving, engaging and sustaining customer interest with online content and prepare him to travel with products such as insurance.”***

#### **Dhruv Shringi**

Co-chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee & Co-Founder & CEO, Yatra Inc.

‘The Role of Technology & Innovation’ to revive travel & tourism and the emergence of new workforce models. These elements have taken centre-stage, with virtualization and remote working being the order of the day. As the moderator, Ashish Kumar, Co-chairman, FICCI Travel Technology Committee and thought leader stated there is no playbook guide in this unusual scenario. The takeaway from this session is the change in consumer behaviour, indicating a massive move towards digitisation.

Innovations in the sphere have been driven by the need to find virtual solutions like wider use of bots. Data is the cheapest in India. It could explain the penetration of technology, which

***“There is need to leverage data. It will necessitate greater literacy and fluency for the teams, as technology becomes even more pervasive. Measures such as safety videos will be effective as the acceleration of digitisation. As organisations turn nimble, they present opportunities.”***

**Anshul Gupta**, Industry Leader – Travel & Hospitality, Accenture

jumped to 82% from 22% for the captive lockdown audience.

Dhruv Shringi, Co-chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee & Co-Founder & CEO, Yatra Inc called for viewing the bigger picture, suggesting IRSTC promotes the sale of seats, instead of competing with OTAs for minuscule bookings. This is the time to marry the customer base and brand with technological solutions. It is about the mindset; one has to keep evolving, engaging and sustaining customer interest with online content and prepare him to travel with products such as insurance.

Rohit Kapoor, CEO – India & South Asia, Oyo Hotels & Homes agreed that while tech has been fundamental to how the business is built, the outbreak has pushed them to a point of inflexion. The disproportionate increase in the share of retail online sales matches that of the entire decade. First-time users across categories have adopted digital transactions, curating packages for themselves. Low touch has become the new luxury. It is a seminal moment for check-ins, with every point of interaction and back-office operations revamped. The scenario will see M&A acceleration, with everyone watching options.

Ritu Mehrotra, Country Manager, India, Sri Lanka & Maldives, booking.com said that the pandemic has accelerated the digital shift that began a while back. New possibilities encompassing VR, bots, machine learning, blockchain and distribution, greater options on the booking funnel with deep learning and personalised options, were integral to cater to the traveller. Travel will be relevant to the process of knowledge gaining and self-discovery. Technology will address barriers, help gain travellers' confidence, particularly with mobile interface in India that stands at 90% penetration. Technology will add transparency to sustainable environmental practices.

Roma Datta, Director – Travel, BFSI, Classifieds, Gaming, Telco & Payments, and Google India mentioned the trend of domestic traction, with priority being given to visiting family rather than holidaying and staycations. Google has built models to assist small enterprises. Specific measures, like how a lobby desk will look in a post-COVID world, car rentals, and measures for sanitisation would help generate demand.

Anshul Gupta, Industry Leader – Travel & Hospitality, Accenture indicated that leveraging data is important. This will necessitate greater literacy and fluency for the teams, as technology becomes even more pervasive. Measures such as safety videos will



**Dhruv Shringi**  
Co-chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee & Co-Founder & CEO, Yatra Inc



**Ankush Nijhawan**, Co-chairman, FICCI Travel Technology Committee, Co-Founder, TBO Group and Managing Director, Nijhawan Group



**Zubin Saxena**  
Managing Director & Vice President - Operations, Radisson South Asia

***“The Indian government needs to look at the tourism sector as a priority. There should have been incentives like a travel holiday, soft loans and assurance of bank guarantees for supply chains. Important are basics such as clarity, the opening of bars in hotels, and pro-people approach like Canada. It is hoped that the forthcoming package will be more accessible to smaller hotels in the fraternity.”***

**Ankush Nijhawan**

Co-chairman, FICCI Travel Technology Committee, Co-Founder, TBO Group and Managing Director, Nijhawan Group.

be effective as the acceleration of digitisation. As organisations turn nimble, they present opportunities. Gupta highlighted that while hotels will be intent on optimising customer expectations, the same care will be expected by employees.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0V2YGsFKfY&list=PLDVwLoQHbdQemHWM3GU1E1M2lk7GhGHAI&index=5&t=0s>

Session five dealt with the new normal for the industry: Change in consumer expectation and leveraging the same for demand creation. It addressed the challenge of creating demand and channelising changed consumer behaviour. What are the innovations and strategies a company should adopt to create demand?

Moderator Nandivardhan Jain, CEO, Noesis Capital Advisors session asked for government intervention, particularly concerning clarity on SOP guidelines. While there are inbuilt bottom lines to tide over, the force majeure clause has knocked off the industry's socks, with supply chains going bust. The industry is sparing no effort to get on track and cash in on travellers, hungry to travel, but the sector requires nurturing.

The cash flows have started trickling in with travellers back, though in small numbers, and should improve once international flights open up. For facilities mandated as quarantine facilities, the fixed operating costs have been hedged and manpower retained. Technology has gone into an advanced mode, with the need to maintain contactless interactions, and will play a role in operating levers for demand creation.

While downsizing teams will cut the personal touch, hoteliers would look at a new matrix without diluting the core hospitality matrix. Each panellist rooted for a united front to see the crisis through and move on to the healthy competition.

Ankush Nijhawan, Co-chairman, FICCI Travel Technology Committee, Co-Founder, TBO Group and Managing Director, Nijhawan Group read the trend optimistically. With the IPL announced, Manesar booked for the weekend, and Mumbai and Delhi curve flattening, he said the worst was behind us. The Indian government needs to look at the tourism sector as a priority. Nijhawan said there should have been incentives like a travel holiday, soft loans and assurance of bank guarantees for supply chains. Important are basics such as clarity, the opening of bars in



**Kerrie Hannaford**  
Vice President - Commercial, South Asia, Accor

***“Accor Group has put in place 16 new SOP procedures to make every corner of the hotels safe. The management looks out for green shoots and the staff is trained to carry the measures right up to a guest’s passage back home. Work stations follow a safe environment protocol universally, across Accor’s 5500 hotels worldwide”***

**Kerrie Hannaford**  
Vice President - Commercial, South Asia, Accor

hotels, and pro-people approach like Canada. It is hoped that the forthcoming package will be more accessible to smaller hotels in the fraternity.

Technology will play a role in operating leverages and the creation of demand. You have to take into consideration 65% of urban India is below 35 years of age, and young India is big on technology. While WFH is the norm, scalability will only be possible with digitisation in all functions. Health and certification are a given, and the industry can be counted on for their inputs. Alliances will happen and in two years, people will forget the pandemic and compete for market share. The alliances will continue. The need of the hour is clarity on protocols to boost demand. Zubin Saxena, Managing Director & Vice President - Operations, Radisson South Asia, said that numbers indicate things are moving back to normalcy. The occupancy rate till March was about 70%, crashed to 0 in the third week of March, and now stands at 24%. Some of the hotels have up to 90% occupancy, as they offer quarantine facilities. The trend indicates unconventional demand and the emergence of new segments and consequently, new destinations. This is a great opportunity for the unorganised sector to migrate to the organised sector. An Incredible India campaign

would help rebuild confidence and demand. Leisure travellers need to ease travel and despite the pain of operating costs, hotels need to keep their doors open.

Naveen Kundu, Managing Director, EBIXCash Travel & Holidays asserted that the government needs to offer clear guidelines for a calibrated opening to tourism and help ease cash-flow issues. Given India is a domestic tourism-driven market (87%), with current intent and sentiment favouring travel, the industry is looking at rejigging its operations to meet the needs of the domestic tourists until outbound travel opens up. Messages in the media under a unified umbrella would encourage travel. IPOs are postponed to the second quarter of 2021 and it will take at least a year for forex operations to step up.

Kerrie Hannaford, Vice President - Commercial, South Asia, Accor, says the group has put in place 16 new SOP procedures to make every corner of the hotels safe. The management looks out for green shoots and the staff is trained to carry the measures right up to a guest’s passage back home. Work stations follow a safe environment protocol universally, across Accor’s 5500 hotels worldwide.

It’s the chefs who, interestingly, have an entirely new safety recipe to follow. Operational consistency is what a guest needs. AccorHotels launched the campaign, ‘Let us take care of you’ recently. It hit 500 bookings in the first week and a phenomenal 1000 in the second, across all verticals. Accor is working with travel agencies and all major clients to bring home the demand. Hannaford advocated partnerships, standing united, lobbying with the government and participating in industry panels to beat the situation created by the pandemic. Retaining the younger generation of the industry, and solutions such as multitasking are critical for resource development. •



# Conclusion



## TRAVEL AND TOURISM: THE GROUND SITUATION

The impact of COVID-19 on such a staggering scale is completely unprecedented. Governments across the world are struggling to find ways to keep people safe even as they keep their economies afloat as the pandemic-induced restricted border movements continue, except for essential movement of goods and services. This has sent several sectors and industries into a tailspin. Among the worst affected is travel and tourism due to restriction of movement, cancelled flights and suspension of visas.

For India, the industry holds great value. Growing at a rate higher than the global travel and tourism industry (3.5%), at 4.9%, India's travel and tourism industry contributed USD 194 billion to the Indian economy in 2019, which helped it gain the 10th spot globally, in terms of contribution to GDP. The industry also created about 40 million jobs i.e. 8% of its total employment, according to data by WTTC.

Before the onset of the pandemic, the Indian travel and tourism industry was expected to witness an annual growth rate of 6.9% during 2019-2028 to reach USD 460 billion, approximately 9.9% of India's GDP in 2028.

### **The way forward: FICCI's recommendations for the survival and revival of the travel and hospitality industries**

- The six month moratorium granted to the industry ended in August 2020. In view of the current situation, the moratorium on all working capital, principal, interest payments, loans and overdrafts needs to be extended by another 1 year.
- **RBI's resolution framework:** One-time rescheduling of principal and interest dues of borrowers in the hospitality

sector may be permitted in line with the revised estimated cash flows of each project. While the proposed capping of extension in repayment tenor is two years based on the assumptions on which the projections are made, if the situation does not improve as expected, a provision should be made to extend this to 3-4 years. Further, the requirement of additional provisioning should be linked to the tangible security available with lenders, viz., additional provisioning at '5%' for Security Cover more than/equal to 1.5-Times.

- Allow restructuring for companies that have defaulted for upto 60 days.
- Given the current situation and the future of the hospitality industries, we request if banks can be mandated to reduce the interest rate of borrowing to between 7-8%.
- At the end of the tenure of the restructuring, the interest that has accumulated should be converted into a **Funded Interest Term Loan (FITL)** and the payment schedule of the principal will continue as scheduled over the remaining period of the loan.
- In case of projects under implementation: The sudden nation-wide lock-down and subsequent migration of labour has seriously hindered on-going construction work of various projects. Considering the locked-down period and the remobilization efforts, the Banks/FIs may be permitted to extend the DCCO by 1 year without treating it as restructuring (in addition to the time period already allowed).
- There needs to be a stimulus package offered to stabilize and support the sector in the near term, including a workforce support fund to ensure that there are no job losses.

- Lending to MSMEs in the hospitality sector may be treated as 'Priority Sector lending', which will enable increased access to bank finance. GOI may consider supporting borrowers in the hospitality sector with payment/ reimbursement of six months' interest and providing 5% interest subventions for the coming two to three years to ensure continuity in business operations/ survival of players in the hospitality sector.
- **Electricity and water** to tourism & hospitality units across all states/UTs should be charged at a subsidized rate and on actual consumption against fixed load.
- The Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS) scrips, which is due to the tour operators for the financial year 2018-2019, must be paid at the earliest. This is only possible if the Government starts accepting the forms. This amount of SEIS will help all destination management companies in tiding over the crisis with the much-needed working capital.
- Restoration of SEIS scrips for duty credit of 10% to Tourism, Travel & Hospitality Industry.
- **Create a separate Tourism fund under the aegis of Ministry of Tourism** to support the hospitality and travel Industries. The fund should be accessible to the Industry as a collateral free 10 year loan. The first two years should be interest free and thereafter, a minimum rate of interest should be applicable for the remaining 8 years. This will help businesses to stabilize till Tourism gets back on track.
- Grant **infrastructure status to all hotels** to allow them to avail electricity, water and land at industrial rates as well as better infrastructure lending rates with access to larger amounts of funds as external commercial borrowings. It will also make them eligible to borrow from India Infrastructure Financing Company Limited (IIFCL). This has been a long-standing request of the industry and in 2013, the Government granted infrastructure status only to new hotels with a project cost of more than Rs 200 crore each (excluding land costs). However, the status should be given across all hotels so that every hotel benefits from this status.
- All hotels should open – hotels have hosted doctors, passengers returning on Vande Bharat flights and have followed all required protocols. They would be in a position to host the public as well. Allied services of hotels like restaurants, spas, bars should also open. Hotels should be given permission to host all kinds of banquets and conference in the hotel, with a **ceiling of 50% of venue capacity** and maintaining social distancing norm to allow hotels to earn some revenue when other source of business has dried up.
- We need to address both sides of supply and demand. While the unlocking and opening up of the states, the supply side is showing good signs of coming back on track, but for the businesses to show signs of recovery we need to focus on the demand by addressing the safety concerns and build on a positive campaign.
- The Government should provide tax rebate of upto rupees 1.5 lakhs for spending on Domestic holidays in the lines of the Leave Travel Allowance (LTA).
- Dekho Apna Desh is one great campaign that has captured and engaged with the audiences all across. A brand ambassador can be appointed to spread positive messages and overcome the safety concerns.
- A national tourism policy should be issued by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India which covers common protocols for entry of a tourist into a state. This will act as a uniform guideline for all states to follow!
- All the states and union territories should work in complete co-ordination with each other and the Centre under your leadership with a clear cut date to announce when they will open up the tourism activities so that this also gives time to the stakeholders to prepare themselves accordingly. The entry process and requirements for tourists to any state and union territory should be uniform and standard. A common national travel advisory on safety measures and protocols for all tourists visiting any state in India will have a positive impact and encourage people to travel.
- The pandemic has caused a major shift in the tourism Industry, and it has to accept and adopt technology to run its businesses. Digital communication is the way forward both for the consumer as well as the supplier.
- The states and union territories should have a targeted marketing campaign to communicate the safety measures taken by the Government at various tourist attractions and the private stakeholders to ensure the safety of the tourists when travelling to the destination.
- India should enter into a travel arrangement with Russia i.e. **a travel bubble specifically between Russia and Goa**, wherein people can fly in on a charter, stay in Goa and then fly back. Going by the number of Russians that come to Goa (almost 1.3 lakh in 2019-2020 out of the 2.1 lakh foreign arrivals) it would be a win-win situation for all as the state has the hotel inventory as well as the flight inventory to cater to these tourists. There are 11 Russian regions from where we get the maximum number of tourists and the bubble can be specifically created these regions and Goa: Moscow, Kazan, Perm, Ekaterinburg, Ufa, Rostov, Samara, St Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Krasnodar and Krasnoyarsk.
- There should be no quarantine. Travellers should be required to bring with them a COVID-negative test report, which would be good enough for them to board the aircraft. We can also incentivise it either by granting free visa to the first 1,000 tourists or anybody who arrives between October and November can be offered visas free of cost. •



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Government of India



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