

the **INBOUND** business magazine

# M!CEtalk

A DDP Publication

Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

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Interview:  
**RAKESH KUMAR  
VERMA**

Staying  
**UNITED**  
to **SAVE**  
**BUSINESSES**



**WEDDINGS**  
**MADE IN INDIA**





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# contents

Summer 2020

the **INBOUND** business magazine  
**MICEtalk**  
Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events



## STATISTICS

The business of weddings is here to stay



## ANALYSIS

Staying united to save businesses



## HOTELS

Weddings made in India



## INTERVIEW

Growing MICE in India



## VENUE

MICE at Trulyy India

## PUBLISHER & EDITOR

SanJeet

## ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Kanchan Nath

## DESK EDITOR

Smita Kulshreshth

## DESIGN

Raashi Ajmani Girdhar

## ADVERTISING

Nikhil Jeet

Gaganpreet Kaur

Meetu Malhotra

## ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS

Vikas Mandotia

Nitin Kumar

## PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anil Kharbanda

## CIRCULATION MANAGER

Ashok Rana

## MUMBAI: ADVERTISING

Harshal Ashar

Priyanshu Wankhade

## Picture on the cover: Courtesy:

Renaissance Mumbai  
Convention Centre Hotel



DDP Publications Private Limited

**New Delhi:**  
72, Todarmal Road,  
New Delhi 110001, India  
Tel: +91 11 23234177,  
E-mail: [talk@ddppl.com](mailto:talk@ddppl.com)

**Mumbai:**  
504 Marine Chambers, 43 New Marine Lines, Mumbai  
400 020, India

Tel: +91-22-22070129, 22070130  
Fax: +91-22-22070131  
E-mail: [mumbai@ddppl.com](mailto:mumbai@ddppl.com)

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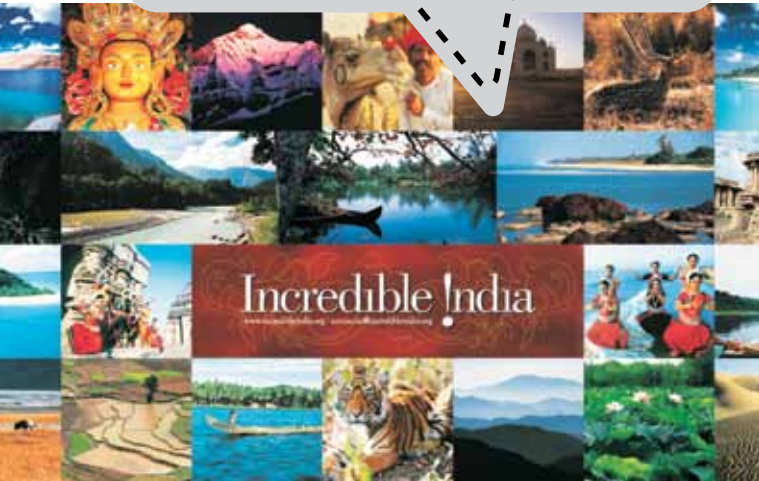
# NEWS

**Hotel Investment Conference - South Asia (HICSA) will be held from July 22-23, 2020 at Grand Hyatt Mumbai. The premier event HICSA is now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year.**



## India to record 11.5% annual growth rate of international arrivals

India is among the top 11 destinations in terms of International Visitor Arrivals (IVAs) in Asia Pacific, and will record an Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of 11.5 % between 2019-24, states a forecast by PATA



## MoCA launches first-ever thrice-weekly flight from Indore to Kishangarh

Under the UDAN scheme of Government of India, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) flagged off the first-ever thrice-weekly flight from Indore to Kishangarh (Ajmer, Rajasthan). In its constant endeavour to connect the unconnected regions, MoCA awarded the Indore-Kishangarh route to Star Air.



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Naveen Kundu  
MD, EbixCash,  
Travel and Holidays



## Amusement Parks attract over 30 mn annually

Amusement Parks in India attract over 30 million visitors annually. Children and youth constitute 50 per cent while adults constitute 50 per cent, visiting with their families or in corporate groups. India has 160 plus amusement parks and the growth of this sector is going to be in tourist destinations. These figures were revealed at the 20<sup>th</sup> IAAPI Amusement Expo 2020.

## Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia Resort to offer new 5,400 sq.ft. event space



Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia Resort has newly introduced the Salao De Cavelossim Convention Center, a one-of-a-kind event space under the state-of-the-art German tent. Spreading across 5,400 sq.ft., the new setup can host up to 650 people, making it an ideal place for a plethora of events like large-scale corporate conferences, product launches, fashion events, etc.



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# NEWS



Jean-Michel Cassé, COO, India and

South Asia, Accor Hotels, said,

“There has been visible and definite growth in the market. The market is

more evolved now – guests are demanding

varied services. M!CE is an important

aspect to help this sector grow.”



## Perfume Park and Museum coming up in Kannauj spread over 41.55 acres

Perfume Park and Museum is a skill development centre, designed as a part of the twin city agreement between the city of Grasse (France) and Kannauj. Perfume Park and Museum is spread over 41.55 acres along the 6-lane Lucknow-Agra expressway. The design brief focuses on the development of flower beds, perfume museum along with shops and a cafe, skill development centre and distilleries. Kannauj, also known as the ‘perfume capital of India’.

## Crowne Plaza Greater Noida launches world’s first hotel VR experience center

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida has launched the world’s first hotel virtual reality experience center, in association with VR-Tech startup, The Knotty Tales. The center allows users to indulge in an immersive 8K 3-d, computer-generated virtual environment.



## Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur launches its 3,000 sq. ft. event space Sky Greens

Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur celebrated the opening of its high-end luxury banquet Sky Greens, an all-new premium event space for social and corporate events, on February 1, 2020. Sky Greens can house up to 120 guests and is spread over 3,000 sq.ft. built-up area and has a climate-controlled glass gazebo. The rooftop terrace space at Sayaji Hotel Kolhapur has been created as a premium banquet space overlooking the horizon of the city at the 8<sup>th</sup> Floor level.



## OFR platform for hotels, M!CE planners

Onerate.com (OFR) is one-of-its-kind travel marketplace. It addresses the key pain points of both the M!CE bookers & hotels like lead generation, access & faster response times. The OFR team has developed complex algorithms that identify & match the bookers’ requirements with the availability & rates offered by hotels.

## Exhibitions industry creates business of over 3 lakh cr every year

Inaugurating the 35<sup>th</sup> edition of Aahar, L C Goyal, IAS, Chairman & Managing Director, ITPO, said, “Events like these, help promote and transform the various sectors of our economy.

Recent studies have indicated that Asia and India will be at the forefront of future growth of the global exhibition industry. The industry is creating a business of more than 3 lakh crore every year. It has a crucial role to play in achieving the target of a US\$ 5 trillion economy by the year 2024.



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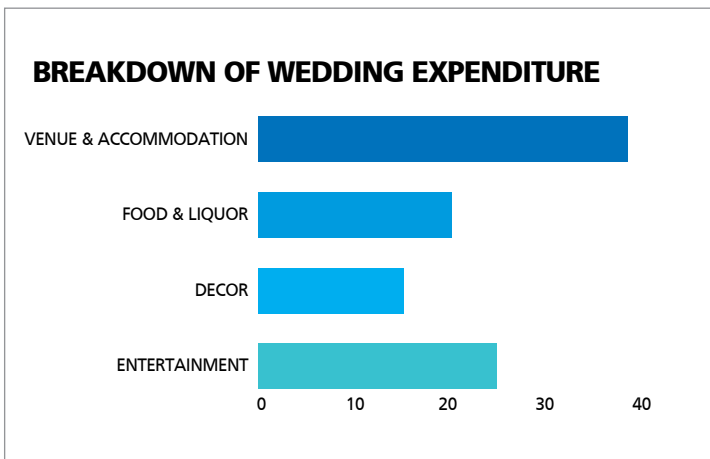


# The business of weddings is here to stay

In the current scenario many Indian weddings will move to domestic destinations. Top wedding destinations include Goa, Hyderabad, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kerala and Jaipur

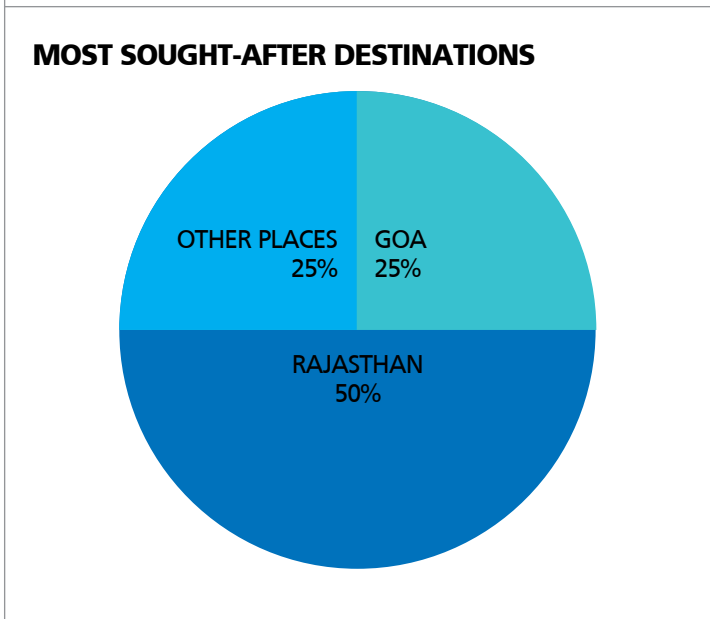


(Images are representative)



Rajeev Jain

The business of weddings is here to stay. India will keep on spending on weddings. In view of the current scenario many Indian weddings will move to domestic destinations (as per the coming auspicious dates).



Hot destinations in India include Rajasthan, which offers hotels like Fairmont & Marriott – Jaipur; Jagmandir, Zenana Mahal; The Leela and Udaivilas – Udaipur; Umaid Bhawan Palace, Hari Mahal, ITC – Jodhpur to Ananta & Taj Westin – Pushkar. Another destination is Goa with hotels like ITC Grand, Park Hyatt and Grand Hyatt & The Leela. Hyderabad has hotels like Taj Falaknuma Palace & Ramoji Film City while Kerala has Vivanta by Taj and The Leela – Kovalam. Delhi NCR has experiential properties around Delhi

In terms of expenditure, clients will spend more on entertainment in the coming season. The food spend will go up. The spend on clothes will increase. Due to domestic weddings, number of functions will increase, also new concepts will be introduced. Top wedding destinations include: Goa, Hyderabad, Jodhpur, Udaipur Kerala and Jaipur.

Source: Rashi Entertainment





# MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort, Kalimpong

*The Gateway to a Luxurious Experience of the Himalayas*

The hill town of Kalimpong for its pristine ambience and diverse tourism offerings has always been a paradise for nature lovers. The City which once used to be the hub of Trans-Himalayan trade between India and Tibet shares a fascinating history and a rich culture. It is said that every monument & building at Kalimpong has a story attached to it and so is equally true for the Majestic MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort that now crowns the glory of this beautiful city.

MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa resort with a legacy that dates back to the early 1900s is an exquisitely renovated version of the legendary Himalayan Hotel- the first Hotel of the Darjeeling Hills. Constructed by David Macdonald- the Britain's Political officer in Sikkim, the Himalayan Hotel had to its credit comprehensively transforming the tourism landscape of Kalimpong. From Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Edmund Hillary to Eminent Bollywood & Hollywood actors, the property intricately and passionately managed by the Macdonald & family remained, for over decades, the cherished and celebrated destination of one and all.



With a fascinating history that truly evokes a sense of nostalgia, when the last of the Macdonald decided to call it a day, MAYFAIR stepped in to infuse a new life in this Heritage property. Incorporating its benchmark standards in offering themed Hospitality experiences, MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort has been artistically designed to offer guests a history themed experience of Luxury.

For Nature Lovers who wish to have a luxurious Himalayan experience, MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort is the ultimate address. The Heritage Rooms named after the legends who graced it, the spacious Suites, the elegant Executive Suites, et al at the property promises guests an one-of-its-kind experience of Hospitality that remains a memory for life.

Savor delicious cuisines at Tiffany which also features an outdoor seating facility with breathtaking views of the Kangchenjunga. Treat yourself with the choicest of spirits at the Johnny's Bar named after John Macdonald- the first from the Macdonald family to come to the Kalimpong. Open your taste buds to the lip smacking Himalayan food at Mamma Mia- a bakery shop that serves freshly baked cakes, breads and pastries.

Hold a conference, corporate meetings or a grand wedding at any one or more of the multi-purpose and state-of-the-art splendid venues. Camelia, Kanchenjunga & Everest that ideally make up for the perfect choice for any event or celebration.



Thoroughly rejuvenate your body, mind and soul at MAYFAIR Spa that offers an exciting range of holistic treatments and therapies administered by expert masseurs.

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Bhubaneswar (Lagoon & Convention) | Rourkela | Puri (Heritage & Waves) | Gopalpur | Goa | Darjeeling | Gangtok | Raipur | Siliguri (Opening shortly)



# MOT's Champion Sector scheme launched

Rakesh Kumar Verma, IAS (PB: 1993), Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and Chairman, ICPB shares his vision and talks about M!CE industry evolving post COVID-19

Kanchan Nath

**Rakesh Kumar Verma**, IAS (PB: 1993), Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India, elaborating on the relevance of M!CE tourism said, "M!CE tourism is a very important component of tourism ministry and we are focusing on developing this sector. India has great opportunity for growing this sector. We have recently launched a Champion Sector scheme to give impetus to M!CE tourism. We are trying to improve our rank and increase the number of meetings which are happening in our country. As a Ministry we will facilitate the bureau in taking this sector forward. The scheme reimburses part of the expenditure on hotel stay by the foreigners during the event. We will start this scheme from April 1 this year. There are certain conditions but broadly for the first night's stay, the GST charged on the stay will be reimbursed to the customer."

"The convention centre in Dwarka will be ready very soon and it will be a big advantage to this sector and offer opportunities to organise large number of conventions in India. ITPO is also going in for a refurbishment, that will be a good addition. We are trying to develop these facilities at other locations also so that we can have a greater number of meetings and M!CE events in the

country." He further stated, "M!CE is one of the priority sectors in the new tourism policy 2020. We have a lot of provisions for M!CE tourism, so it will definitely get a very important place in our new policy."

On the impact of COVID-19, he said, "It's



Rakesh Kumar Verma

economy by 2025. How the segment of M!CE tourism can play a role in the same, is what we need to put our minds to. We need to look at our long-term goals, where we want to reach. We may be growing at 12 per cent, we may be at the 25<sup>th</sup> position, but what is our aspiration? In next five



definitely a challenging time for the industry, I am sure all of us together with the industry will do whatever is possible. When times are normal, we benefit from them, we come back with greater vigour and determination to succeed. These are the times when you are facing public health crisis and emergencies and you have to take tough decisions. I am sure we will get over this crisis and the future that awaits us is much brighter."

"We have set a very high target of a \$5 trillion

**QUICK BYTE** The scheme reimburses part of the expenditure on hotel stay by the foreigners

**M!CE is a priority sector in the 2020 tourism policy. We have a lot of provisions for M!CE tourism**

years we will want to be in top 10 or top five, obviously it has to be realistic but aspirational too. Our schemes have to match that vision. Also, when a country organises a high-level event, it raises the profile of the country, may that be Commonwealth Games or an important conference, there is huge dissemination of knowledge," he added.





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# Staying united to save businesses

Though a lot of events have been postponed, the meetings industry is readying to come back strong post COVID-19, members share industry trends and the way forward

**Kanchan Nath**



## **Naveen Rizvi**

**Executive Director**

**ICE- Integrated Conference & Event Management (A division of Le Passage to India)**

Most of the bigger events have been postponed, not cancelled as of now. We are reassuring participants that the conference is postponed to a particular date. This situation is affecting the globe, and today the world is more integrated. Now it's a global world so the effect is more. Of course, the industry will bounce back and it's all a

temporary phase. As you know nothing remains permanent, change is the only constant. This is the time to develop certain skills that we do not have. The focus is on training, people have been nominated for different kinds of training programmes. When business is in full swing you don't get time to train. Most of the events have been postponed to

September, as May, June and July are too hot. We need to be positive and use this time to develop skills. India by and large is not that badly affected, so we are promoting domestic tourism. Products are being launched, so everything has not stopped. People do not want to have mass gatherings but an event for lesser people can be managed.



## **Chander Mansharamani**

**Managing Director**

**Alpcord Network Travel & Conference Management**

Conventions business is not that much impacted, most of our convention business is up to March-end. In April we did have few conventions which have been postponed to November and December.

In the month of April, a lot of speakers were booked to come into India. Those losses are there, we are requesting the Govt. of India that airlines should refund the money that we have paid them for the

speakers to come into India. Most hotels and airlines are giving credit notes. We feel we have lost business; we are not sure what is going to happen. Corporate travel has gone down by 30-40 per cent.





## Amaresh Tiwari

### Vice Chairman ICPB

Hopefully, the self-quarantine till April 15 will make the country virus free. We are refocusing our strategy. We are concentrating on rebound strategy – how to create business and value for our members in the coming future.

Next year onwards we will start focusing on the short



haul, once the pandemic is over. In 2021, we will look at having roadshows in the neighbouring countries and will look at promoting India aggressively.

Even if we get 3-4 per cent of China's outbound share it will be a big boost for tourism, once the crisis is over.



## Girish Kwatra

### CEO Meetings & More

Meetings are reported less in India. More meetings have been deferred rather than cancelled. There has been a meeting loss of 8 per cent to the whole of Asia Pacific.

This is data for international meetings. Out of this 6 per cent will bounce back. Meetings are either deferred, relocated or cancelled. As per ICCA, in terms of cancellation it is 1.5 per cent. The worry is



more rather than the numbers. We all need to be united, the business in the kitty is delayed

now for next few months. The domestic business is what we can bank on now.



## Rajni Nair Deb

### Director Sales & Marketing Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Center

The long-term businesses are robust, there have not been any cancellations. We all feel there will be an end to this virus and an opportunity in next six months. We will have to prudently look at smaller meetings and gatherings.

Safety first is the mantra we are following at the center. Safety overrides all concerns of greed or revenue. We as the meetings industry have to be with our clients. Empathy is the biggest rule of bouncing back when it comes

to client relationships. One of our main events has been postponed to June, it's not off our books but is a cancellation for this financial year. Some of our clients are holding back on decision-making.



## Chetan Gupta

### Director R G Destination

We all must stay united. Business will be slow for a few months, but it will definitely bounce back. Health is a major issue and a concern for everyone. I must congratulate

the government for taking quick steps. Business is at an all-time low in the history of the industry. Travel agents are suffering. Bookings for M!CE groups, leisure groups, cruises,

hotels and more have seen huge cancellations last month.

Whatever refunds we get from the airlines and cruises we will refund to our clients.



# Weddings made in India

Hoteliers take us on a journey of destination weddings in India sharing hotel capacity, trends – especially in the emerging hotspots, challenges faced by the wedding industry and more

Kanchan Nath



**Rohit Chopra**  
Regional Director Sales – India  
Accor Hotels and Resorts

## WEDDINGS@ACCOR

Some of our popular hotels which cater to weddings extensively are Fairmont Jaipur, Mövenpick Hotel Colombo, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, Novotel Hyderabad Airport, Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences, Novotel Goa Resort and Spa, and Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia.

- Fairmont Jaipur-

- Mövenpick Hotel Colombo
- Mont Blanc Ballroom: 150 pax.
- Vistas Rooftop (Destination wedding): 150 pax.
- Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre
- Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach
- Modern and versatile sea-facing banqueting facilities can hold large scale weddings up to 4,000 guests with ease. The hotel has over 31,500 sq.ft. of banqueting space in a single floor.
- Novotel Hyderabad Airport
- Two ballrooms measuring 4,500 sq.ft. each, out of which one is attached to a lawn and can accommodate around 400- 500 guests in floating crowd.
- The venue, which is an outdoor venue measuring 50,000 sq.ft. can accommodate 800-1000 guests.
- There are multiple smaller pockets that are available in the hotel and can be utilised for smaller wedding related events such as: *Haldi, Mehendi, Myra, Sangeet* etc.
- Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences
- Novotel Goa Resort and Spa- 350-400 pax
- Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia

and with many Indian and international cruise options available, this trend will see more takers. Pre-wedding functions were always a hit and now, we get many requests for post-wedding functions and parties. These are not to be confused with wedding receptions. Many couples also opt for eco-friendly weddings and minimalising the wastage especially in the food and beverage segment.

## CHALLENGES OF THE WEDDING INDUSTRY

Weddings are very special for families and couples. To make their occasion exclusive we need to ensure that our teams perform all the tasks diligently. Referrals and word of mouth plays a crucial role in this segment and any guest complaints can create a ripple effect for unpleasant reviews. Thus, we ensure to train our team members to manage weddings and hire employees who are experienced in the wedding segment.

## WEDDINGS IN INDIA

Goa, Jaipur, Udaipur, Kerala are some popular wedding destinations in India. The attendees depend on the kind of wedding. It could range from an intimate gathering of 50 to a lavish wedding with thousands of guests. The cost of every wedding varies as everyone has different set of demands in terms of food, decoration, music, rooms and so on. Indians love to spend on weddings and sky is the limit when it come to the cost of all the functions.

## QUICK BYTE Goa, Jaipur, Udaipur, Kerala are some popular wedding destinations in India



## TRENDS FOR INDIAN WEDDINGS

Couples and families are planning weddings, which are unique to them and the world. Guests are exploring adventurous ideas and mixing it with the traditional arrangement. Cruise weddings have become very popular



**Pradipta Mohapatra**  
Asst. Vice President (Sales & Marketing)  
Mayfair Hotels and Resorts

**WEDDINGS@ MAYFAIR**

Though all our 11 properties have state-of-the-art facilities and spellbinding settings to ensure a seamless wedding experience, the most popular amongst them are MAYFAIR Lake Resort in Raipur, MAYFAIR Lagoon and Convention in Bhubaneswar and MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort in Kalimpong. MAYFAIR Lake Resort with nine event venues has the capacity to accommodate 40 to 4,000 pax, MAYFAIR Lagoon with ten event venues has

culture. In response to the progressively rising demand for this segment amongst the millennials, we established an exclusive destination wedding cum MICE property in Raipur viz. MAYFAIR Lake Resort.

Similarly, in the face the rising popularity for micro weddings, we have extensively renovated and diversified our offers to cater to the requirements of couples who look forward for a modest yet fairy-tale wedding. Our properties at

manpower, event planners and most importantly, lack of dedicated Instituted offerings courses on event planning and management.

**DOMESTIC WEDDING DESTINATIONS**

So far the destinations like Goa, Mussoorie, Udaipur and Kerala remain the preferred choice



**QUICK BYTE** Our 11 properties have state-of-the-art facilities for a seamless wedding experience



the capacity to accommodate 40 to 2,700 pax, MAYFAIR Convention with four event venues has the capacity to accommodate 31 to 1,100 pax and MAYFAIR Himalayan Spa Resort with six event venues has the capacity to accommodate 20 to 150 pax.

**TRENDS FOR WEDDINGS**

Destination weddings and micro weddings are the new trends in India. Destination weddings are, in particular redefining India's wedding

Goa, Kalimpong and Gangtok offers the ultimate choice for this segment of wedding.

**CHALLENGES OF THE WEDDING INDUSTRY**

The emerging trend of destination weddings and the overall boom in wedding Industry has nonetheless come as a boon for the Industry but on its hindsight, it has brought along with it numerous associated challenges. Major issues that concern this sector are the lack of professional

for destination weddings. However with states like Odisha, West Bengal, Sikkim and the other North-eastern states aggressively focusing on promoting tourism in their region, we expect that this trend will gradually shift towards the eastern and North-eastern part of the India. Places like Gopalpur in Odisha, Kalimpong and Siliguri in West Bengal offer very picturesque settings for destination wedding and in the coming years, these will be popular destination.ã





**Sarbendra Sarkar**  
 Founder and Managing Director  
 Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

**WEDDINGS@ CYGNETT**

For destination weddings, our properties in Nainital (Cygnett Resort Mountain Breeze); Rishikesh (Cygnett Resort Grand Shiva); and Jammu (Cygnett Park Asia) are renowned for their location and amenities. While Nainital can accommodate upto 350 pax, the properties in Rishikesh and Jammu can accommodate upto 450 pax. From a city wedding perspective, our property in Lucknow, Cygnett Park Di-Arch is very popular. We also get a good amount of ‘wedding’



**QUICK BYTE** Nainital has capacity of upto 350 pax, Rishikesh can accommodate upto 450 pax

business in our Guwahati property (Cygnett Inn Repose).

**TRENDS FOR INDIAN WEDDINGS**

To start with edible flowers, grazing tables are still ‘in.’ Sustainability is the new ‘cool’—people are opting for a more rustic décor with branches, wheat grass, etc. with minimum floral patterns. In fact, dried flowers are now the new ask. Other noteworthy trends include: Custom illustrations: personalised wedding stationery and non-traditional food; curating a new dining experience for the wedding guests.

**CHALLENGES OF THE WEDDING INDUSTRY**

Budget versus the client expectation is one of the biggest challenges in the wedding industry. Most clients have zero understanding of the back-end activities that go into organising a wedding. They just lay down their wants (which mostly go way beyond the budget that they come with) and expect the moon! Aligning these expectations to the budget and getting the client to understand what they are in for is truly tough.

**FOOD WASTAGE**

In a country where poverty is a serious concern, weddings end

up contributing to the largest food wastage. In my opinion, to avoid this seated, served meals are best, but that comes as an extra expense and the larger audience does not opt for it. But considering that we talk about sustainability, one should look at allocating the budget wisely.

**WEDDINGS IN INDIA**

Among the top wedding destinations Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Goa, Rishikesh, Agra, Jaisalmer, are some cities that come to mind. Depending on how intimate or extravagant the families/the couple decide on how they want the wedding to be, it can range from 350 to 1000 pax. The cost again depends on the individuals and their families and on various factors like the number of guests, the venue, décor, theme, menu, etc. The length of stay can be upto 3 nights 4 days. The events/functions range from 2 to 5.

**RESILIENT WEDDING INDUSTRY**

According to a recent KPMG’s report, India’s wedding industry is estimated at \$ 50 billion, second only to the US wedding industry which is estimated at \$ 70 billion. Weddings will always be a big market in India and its growth positive, as it is interestingly competitive.



# Growing M!CE in India

In an interview, V Anbu, DG & CEO, IMTMA & BIEC and also the current elect President of UFI (The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry) shares more on the industry

## As UFI president elect what is your focus and agenda for the global exhibition industry?

Having had a long association with UFI which has a membership exceeding 800 member companies having partnerships with AIPC (The International Association of Convention Centres), and ICCA (The International Congress and Convention Association), etc., I will be furthering its mission and driving developments and working towards exhibition industry finding wider recognition and global acceptance. As the President of this august body my focus will be on building collaborations, developing UFI's work in various parts of the world, taking its research work to the next level besides building relations with exhibition industry stakeholders' one step further at a global level.

## What major steps are you planning to take to make India a major player?

India is advantageously placed for attracting big ticket events to its shores with the country aspiring to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25. Indian exhibition industry has been seeing some significant changes and promises to move up the S-curve. By disseminating information and networking we plan to reach out to more industry professionals than ever before. We hope to build exhibitions as a platform for exploring, exchanging

and reciprocity and make it the driving force for industrial development and manufacturing growth. It is extremely important to showcase to the world the potential of organising exhibitions and corporate events in India and for this we need to initiate regular exchanges between various



V Anbu



## QUICK BYTE M!CE tourism is among the niche tourism products identified to develop India

stakeholders to align interests in areas such as standards and codes, best practices, etc.

### Where would you rate India, on a global M!CE platform?

India ranks fifth in M!CE tourism in the Asia Pacific region behind Japan, China, South Korea and Australia. As per ICCA rankings India moved seven positions in 2018, hosting 175 meetings in 2017, as against 143 in 2016. M!CE tourism is among the niche tourism products identified by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India to develop India as a 365 days destination. M!CE industry in India is

undergoing changes with the exhibition industry growing at the rate of 10-12 per cent. New venues are being built across the country in many metro cities as well as tier-1, 2, 3 and 4 cities which bodes well for exhibitions and events. Existing venues on the other hand are enhancing their capacities to brace up to the demands of hosting grand-scale congresses, exhibitions and corporate events.

### Can you pick five key hurdles in positioning India as a top M!CE destination?

- We need to push the M!CE industry to become

more organised and recognised as a medium for development of trade and economy.

- Infrastructure and supporting systems are crucial for organising technical conventions. We need to create a well-defined ecosystem and supply chain for the M!CE industry to grow.
- Developing professional standards and code of ethics in the way data is gathered and disseminated, ensuring fairness in dealings, etc. is a challenge which needs to be overcome.
- Indian cities and destinations need to promote the comfort feel that they are great host cities / destinations.
- There are bandwidth concerns with the usage of smartphones and other electronic devices that require additional Wi-Fi. Connectivity is vital for the success of all exhibitions and corporate events and addressing this is a challenge.

Private investments alone will not suffice, central and state governments should accord M!CE industry its due recognition. All stakeholders should have an integrated approach towards developing event venues, hotels, skilled workforce and providing end-to-end solutions on important aspects for developing the M!CE industry in India.

# Celebrating destination weddings with Novotel

Manish Pathak, F&B Manager, takes us into the enticing world of weddings with modern, extensive and versatile sea-facing banqueting facilities at Novotel Visakhapatnam

**Kanchan Nath**

**What are the generic trends that you are seeing for weddings in India?**

A lot of people are opting for inclusion of technology in their weddings, like setting up a classy fog-screen magic curtain to make the wedding eye-catching and using projection mapping.

**Kindly share the capacity of event spaces at the resort.**

Our extensive, modern and versatile sea-facing banqueting facilities with 11 dedicated conference spaces can cater up to 1,250 guests and large weddings with ease. We have 11 dedicated meetings rooms with flexible options of venues like Coral Hall with capacity of 220 pax, Pearl with capacity of 50 pax, Summit with capacity of 20 pax, Eureka (boardroom) with capacity of 20 pax, Nautica with capacity of 200 pax and Avenue with capacity of 468 pax. V-Convention, one of the largest conventions in the state, facilitates 'Auto Expos' and 'Vehicle Launches'. The 11,200 sqft magnificently designed hall has modern equipment.

A few USPs include – over 56,000 sqft of indoor and outdoor space; sea-facing meeting rooms and banquet areas; meeting spaces with natural light; and dedicated parking space (for 350 cars and 500 bikes) with an exclusive banquet entry.



Manish Pathak

**Can you share the details of vendors that you utilise for weddings?**

Our courteous and committed team takes care of every detail to ensure guests have a hassle-free and memorable time. We have two empanelled vendors. Razzmatazz is a national meeting

**What are the weddings that have been lined up for the resort?**

We are lined up with at least eight destination weddings for 2020.

**How is Visakhapatnam developing for M!CE?**

The concept of a wedding is evolving from a social function involving more



**QUICK BYTE** Trends include going digital, embracing projection mapping & second screen tech



**Our 11 dedicated conference spaces can cater to up to 1,250 guests and large weddings with up to 4,000 guests**



and event management company with a fully staffed office in Visakhapatnam.

It also has representative units at Kolkata, Chennai, Cochin, Bhubaneswar, Goa and California, USA, while our other vendor, Roshanlal Entertainment, is a pioneer in sound and visual effects for all sort of events.

than 1,000 guests to a microcosmic bonding of families. Nowadays, couples prefer to make it an intimate gathering with a small group of 100 to 150 guests and later give a final reception back home for all other guests. For M!CE, Visakhapatnam is coming up with largest international convention centres. The city has immense potential to emerge as a leading hub for meetings, incentives, conferencing and exhibitions with world-class exhibition centres, shopping malls including a multiplex, leisure/amusement zone and multi-cuisine food courts.



# Weddings are fun with hukumkaro

Harsh Agarwal, Founder, hukumkaro tells us more about his company and trends in domestic weddings. Youngsters are keen on sustainable solutions for weddings

## What are the trends that you are witnessing for destination weddings in India?

Guests are opting for more sustainable and eco-conscious weddings that lay minimum wastage to food. They choose to donate the leftovers and have absolutely no animals (horse carts) and fireworks. We are at the forefront of such an undertaking and completely replace the venue's cosmetics with our own – all products are vegan, organic and cruelty free. Decoration elements that can be recycled or reused are becoming popular. For ex - Instead of cut flowers, potted plants are being used as centerpieces.

Personalization is key – invitations now come with a handmade pair of shoes for the bride squad and an organic cloth piece for the groomsmen's shirt. Perfume bars that help guests concoct their favored scent will be big. Wedding favors are shifting from the cliched silverware/sweets box to scented candles that smell like rustic books and roses – professing the couple's love for these products.

## What are the challenges of the destination wedding industry?

Most value for money state-of-the-art venues are booked up to a year in advance. So, finding the right suitability for guests is important. We look for



Harsh Agarwal

**A stress-free positive experience should be at the core while planning any wedding**



**RECYCLE** Decoration elements that can be recycled or reused are becoming popular

venues that not only offer great food and luxurious accommodations but also are a bang for the buck of our guests. Prior planning is imperative.

Next, flights and logistics. When working with a tier-2/3 wedding party, we're always concerned if their first flight is delayed, it'd impact the onward connection - opt for single PNR.

Lastly – knowing the destination/resort/palace and the local people is so important. One needs to know if there's unions in place, whom to contact for permissions and resources. These things are sometimes overlooked but can have huge repercussions on the overall experience of the guests. A stress-free positive

experience should be at the core while planning any wedding.

Hire a planner who knows his way around – you do not want to bother with these things when it's your/your child's most important day!

## How easy/difficult is it to arrange for vendors for Indian destination weddings?

I'd say difficult. Most wedding destinations have become extremely commercial these days, and any misdeed on part of a local vendor is bound to embarrass not only the event management agency but the parents of the bride and groom as well. We only work with vendors we've developed trust over all the events we've previously done. Quality is crucial, so is finding the right set of people – thankfully, we've been blessed with both.

## What usually is the length of stay and how many functions/events take place? What remains the range of expenses?

A 3-Day wedding is preferred by most families that includes up to six events.

Contrary to popular belief, destination weddings can turn out to be cheaper. Given the tariffs most hotels in metros charge, it really makes sense to have a private and more intimate affair in Goa, Rajasthan or Agra.

# M!CE at Trulyy India

Naresh Arora, Founder & CEO, shares insights on the M!CE facilities being offered by Trulyy India Hotels, Resorts, Camps and Safaris, at different domestic destinations

## Kanchan Nath

**Kindly share the capacity of event spaces that the main M!CE hotels of your brands offer. What is the USP of each venue?**

Most of our hotels can hold events as all of them have conference halls but our properties like Desert Palace Jaisalmer, Kumbha Residency Kumbhalghar, Tiger Roar Ranthambhore, The Maharana Bagh Udaipur have bigger room



Naresh Arora

which is reflected in all of our properties in India.

**What is the new kind of technology that your event spaces offer for M!CE events?**

Generally, for bigger events the whole property is given where different locations of properties are used to conduct events. If it's a small event, then the banquet or conference hall is booked.

destination weddings as it is culturally diverse and offers the best hospitality services.

**How do you provide special customisation for specific events? Can you share the details of vendors that you utilize for your events?**

Yes we do special customisations based on how our guest demands also we have different



**QUICK BYTE** India is doing extremely well in the M!CE sector and destination weddings

inventories. They also have conference halls, banquets and many outdoor locations to conduct events. Each conference hall can accommodate more than 200 pax. Banquets have capacity of more than 150-200 pax and the same goes for outdoor locations. The USP is that we have retained the cultural and heritage aesthetic of each destination,

**Banquets have capacity of more than 150-200 pax and the same goes for outdoor locations**



We believe in adapting to new technology, so we have the latest music system, projector lights, airconditioned halls and modern interiors.

**Kindly elaborate on how India is developing as a M!CE and wedding destination?**

India is doing extremely well in the M!CE sector and

vendors divided in panels as per location.

**What are the main corporate events/weddings that have been lined up for your main M!CE hotels?**

Yes we have 6 to 7 weddings booked in Desert Palace Jaisalmer, Maharana bagh Udaipur and Kumbha Residency Kumbhalghar.

**What are the latest trends that you have noticed?**

More events are destination based, people no more enjoy conducting events in the city in which they live.



# Movements in India



**Vachirachai Sirisumpan**  
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), New Delhi

Vachirachai Sirisumpan has been appointed as the new Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi Office. He has been with TAT for more than 20 years with experience of working in various divisions, including International Relations – Europe, ME & Africa markets, Domestic Marketing, and Policy & Planning. Prior to heading TAT Delhi Office, he was the Director of Southern Market Division, promoting Thailand's southern region for domestic tourism.



**Gaurav Singh**  
Multi Property Vice President East India & Bangladesh

Gaurav Singh is the Multi Property Vice President East India & Bangladesh and General Manager of JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata. Holding this pivotal designation entails him to oversee operational activities and be in charge of all the nine hotels under his region. Enhancing productivity, ensuring guest satisfaction & strategic initiatives are some of his key responsibility areas. In addition to the JW Marriott Kolkata, the other hotels in East India that he oversees are The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat, Courtyard by Marriott Siliguri and Fairfield by Marriott Rajarhat.



**Surinder Singh**  
General Manager  
Vivanta New Delhi, Dwarka

Vivanta New Delhi, Dwarka has appointed Surinder Singh as its new General Manager. Following a distinguished career in hospitality with over 30 years of experience, Singh has held leadership positions and has worked with renowned properties of IHCL. In the new role, he will be responsible for the continued success of the 250-room Vivanta New Delhi, Dwarka through his strategic leadership, and ensure margin enhancement and overall operational excellence.



**Fino Babu**  
General Manager, Crowne Plaza Pune City Centre

Crowne Plaza Pune City Centre has appointed Fino Babu as its new General Manager. Babu has been part of the IHG family for more than two years, having previously carried out the role of Executive Assistant Manager. His strength lies in being able to manage a team consisting of diverse departments and he possesses the mental alertness to find solutions to diverse issues. His new role encompasses responsibility for the entire hotel operations and will centre on contributing calculated inputs to attain the deep-rooted goals for the hotel.



**Ravi Dhankar**  
General Manager  
Pride Hotel Chennai

Pride Group of Hotels has appointed Ravi Dhankar as General Manager for Pride Hotel Chennai. Dhankar is a Hotel Management Graduate with over 14 years of hands-on experience in Hotel Operations, Client Relationship Management, Industry Engagement and Corporate Liaisoning with a blend of Sales and Marketing. Prior to Pride Hotels, he has also served with brands like Leela Palace, Taj, Lemon Tree and Sarovar Group of Hotels.



**Chandan Kr Chanchal**  
General Manager  
The Manohar-Hyderabad

Chandan Kr Chanchal has been appointed as General Manager for The Manohar-Hyderabad. He brings with him over 16 years of hospitality experience with core competency in Sales & Marketing. He has previously been associated with reputed brands like Hyatt, Radisson, Holiday Inn, Sarovar Hotels, and The Lalit etc. In his new role, Chanchal will oversee hotel operations by providing strategic guidance to the team. He has all the required skills and we wish him all the best in his future endeavours.



**Bjorn Fernandes**  
DOSM, Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel

Renaissance Mumbai has recently announced the appointment of Bjorn Fernandes as the Director of Sales & Marketing for Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai – Marriott Executive Apartments. Prior to this, Fernandes was appointed as the Market Director of Revenue Management – Mumbai Cluster for Marriott International. He has been a part of the Marriott family for a decade. He has all the required skills and he will fulfill his duties to the best of his abilities.

## Form IV

Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper MICEtalk to be published in the first issue every year after the last day of February

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Sd/-  
SanJeet  
Signature of the Publisher



the **OUTBOUND** business magazine

# M!CEtalk

A DDP Publication

Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

Volume XI Issue 1 April-June 2020 22 pages

**Corporate  
GIFTING**

**UNIQUE  
experiences  
with CROSS**



**GRAND WEDDINGS**





# Destination Events

- All - Inclusive Weddings
- Amazing Deals
- Up-to-date Trends
- Stress-Free Celebrations
- Wide array of options
- Extremely Customizable
- Express Ground Support



# Corporate Retreats

- Destination Knowledge
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- Corporate Deals
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- On-ground hospitality
- Express Response Desk
- Available 24\*7

**Expectations. Fulfillment. Stories. Relationships.**

These lay the cornerstone of any strong partnership. We establish these ideas in our core while curating personalized turnkey Destination Events and Incentive Corporate Retreats of international standards all across the globe.

A Result-oriented and flexible young team that understands the latest trends and improvises based on innovation and creativity is exactly what we provide. We work with partners of international acclaim to take away all your stress because you deserve to enjoy the most!

We don't mean to brag, you know, but guests have called us 'awesome', 'flawless' and 'amazing', and highlighted their experiences as 'perfect', 'fantastic' and 'fantabulous'. We have something for everyone - adults or kids alike. Head over to our Instagram @hukumkaro and find out more!



**Mr Divyam Singhania,  
Director, MMCP**

“We had a lot of fun on this tour. (Harsh) sorted out a mess which was not of his own making but he did it professionally. So I'm very happy with the services”



# contents

Summer 2020



INTERVIEW  
Wedding vows in Phuket



INTERVIEW  
Crossroads to Meetings



NTO  
Be a Penang Specialist



NTO  
Grand weddings in RAK Pg 14



DESTINATION  
Get married in Europe Pg 19



COUNSELLOR 17  
Shivani Misri  
Sadhoo shares  
tips for corporate  
gift-giving etiquettes  
for all occasions



EXPERT TALK 18  
Shital Kakkar Mehra  
shares tips on body  
language

Picture on the cover: Wedding  
Reception - Kursaal Convention  
Centre, Interlaken - Switzerland  
Courtesy: DWC Weddings



# NEWS



**ITB Berlin will now take place from March 10-14, 2021. More than 10,000 exhibitors from over 180 countries were expected to attend ITB Berlin 2020.**



## ATM from June 28 to July 1, 2020

Reed Travel Exhibitions has announced that Arabian Travel Market (ATM) will be held from June 28 to July 1, 2020, at the Dubai World Trade Centre in Dubai, U.A.E. Due to the escalation of the COVID-19 epidemic around the world, after consultation with all their stakeholders, the venue management, supporting associations, and in alignment with the advice from the UAE public health authorities regarding travel to and from impacted countries, they have taken the decision to postpone the event which was due to take place on April 19 – 22, 2020 in Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC).



## Mövenpick Colombo's M!CE offer

On its 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, Movenpick Hotel Colombo has introduced a M!CE offer for the Indian corporate traveller. While booking an event at the international hotel, guests will be given a list of items and they will have to choose three services based on their preferences.



**We have put together our COVID-19 liveblog to help global meetings industry professionals to find reliable information.**

James Rees  
President, ICCA



## Mario Hardy to serve as PATA CEO till December 31

PATA's CEO **Mario Hardy** has resigned after serving the association for six years. He will leave in December when his current contract expires. He is on a fix-term contract and simply decided not to extend it to another term. By the end of the year, it will be seven years spent at PATA (one year as COO and six years as CEO) for him.

**Tourist arrivals may decline by up to 3% says UNWTO**



UNWTO has revised its 2020 prospects for international tourist arrivals to a negative growth of 1-3 per cent, translating into an estimated loss of US\$ 30 to 50 billion in international tourism receipts. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, UNWTO predicted a positive growth of 3-4 per cent for this year. This first assessment expects that Asia and Pacific will be the worst affected, with an anticipated fall in arrivals of 9-12%.

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# Industry shows resilience

Monitoring the status of all 1,065 meetings in its database currently scheduled in Asia Pacific for 2020, ICCA reports that out of these only 44 meetings are affected by COVID-19

ICCA analyses COVID-19 global meetings industry impact. ICCA's Research Division is monitoring the status of all 1,065 meetings in the ICCA Association Database currently scheduled in Asia Pacific for 2020:

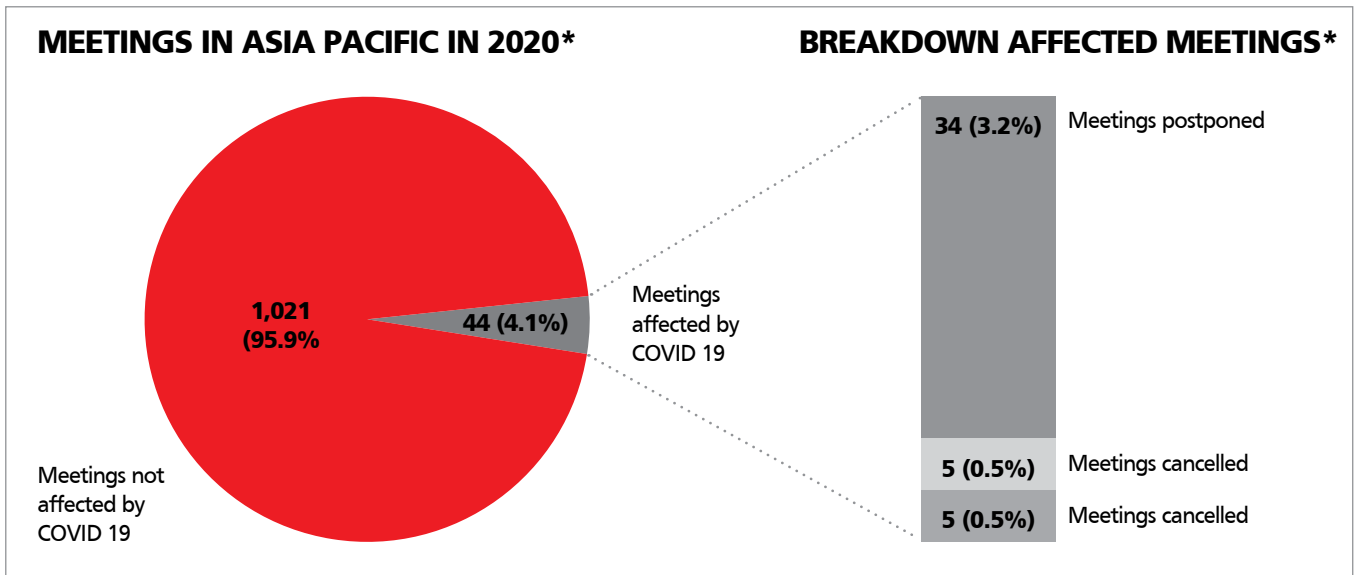
Only 44 meetings scheduled for Asia Pacific are affected by COVID-19 (4.1 per cent). Of these 44 meetings, 34 are postponed, 5 cancelled and 5 relocated.

Outside Asia Pacific, two meetings in Europe and one in Africa are

global ICCA community of meeting suppliers and associations."

"We believe the international meetings industry can play its part in finding a solution to the current COVID-19 outbreak. International meetings represent the best possible vehicle for addressing this and many other global issues. As an industry, we must demonstrate resilience and confidence by maintaining to the greatest extent possible our ongoing schedule of activities – and where this is not

possible, by working collaboratively to develop alternatives that help maintain the exchange of information and insights that account for the benefits we believe to result from this kind of engagement." ICCA - the International Congress and Convention Association - represents the world's leading suppliers in handling, transporting and accommodating international meetings and events, and comprises over 1,000 member companies and organisations in almost 100 countries worldwide.



\*The data includes all confirmed meetings in Asia Pacific (Asia and Oceania) scheduled in 2020 as recorded in the ICCA Association database on February 19, 2020

postponed. ICCA President, **James Rees**, said, "When facing uncertainty or crisis, identifying reliable and timely sources of information is critical to making responsible decisions. We have put together our COVID-19 liveblog to help global meetings industry professionals to find reliable information about the novel COVID-19 outbreak and to share meetings industry-related resources with the

## ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

- ICCA has received offers for meeting facilities from suppliers and requests for alternative meeting facilities from associations and is reaching out to associations who are looking to relocate their meetings to help them find new meeting facilities

The ICCA network not only enhances co-operation between members of the same profession in the sectors, it also enables them to work together with members - be regardless of, their sectors - in the same geographical areas. For this purpose Chapters, national and local ICCA committees have been formed. This element of the ICCA structure is based upon regional similarities in business matters such as marketing, market research and education. During recent years one aspect has dominated this regional co-operation, particularly at national and local level: the concerted promotion of the region as an attractive destination for international meetings.

**QUICK BYTE** The international meetings industry can play its part in finding a solution to the current COVID-19 outbreak



# STAY HOME SAFE

## DESTINATION WEDDINGS IN EUROPE

As wedding organisers for destination weddings its our sole business purpose to help our clients organise weddings abroad. But at the moment we stand with the world to fight the invisible enemy, the CORONA virus.

We wish you all a safe and healthy stay at home. We look forward to organising your dream wedding in one of the many enchanting cities in Europe, once we have together conquered this epidemic.

### **DWC WEDDINGS**

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# Wedding vows in Phuket

In an interview, Wutti Sanjorn, General Manager – Novotel Phuket Resort tells us about the M!CE facilities & popular trends among Indians looking at Thailand as a wedding destination

## Kanchan Nath

### Kindly share the capacity of event spaces that the resort offers.

Novotel Phuket Resort has five dedicated meeting room spaces which can accommodate upto 300 delegates. Our 312 sqm multipurpose meeting room with 5 m ceiling and natural light is ideal for all kinds of events. We offer the best location for meetings and incentive groups, combining stunning views over Patong Bay. The look of a meeting room's interior and exterior design gives a feel of the local culture. Along with the meeting rooms, we can also offer the open terrace as a dedicated area for networking over dinner / high tea / lunch for a corporate group of minimum 200 delegates. The open terrace area is perfect for a wedding venue / corporate networking party. It has a mesmerising view of the Patong Bay and Andaman Sea.

### What are the generic trends that you are seeing for destination weddings?

There is a latest trend in India mainly in the weddings segment. Indians are looking at a venue which is located a short trip away from India, offers intimate weddings at a dreamy beachside lawn or resort with as little as 10 guests all the way to a lavish gathering of 250 guests. The



resort is located either on a lovely hillside or overlooking a sea beach. Indians prefer resorts/villas to choose from, with private infinity pools, modern Thai architecture, breathtaking views and 5-star hotel services. They are willing to spend anything above 1800 USD per head and the decoration can be managed by the wedding planners. Also, the increase of direct flights from India is giving boost to turning Thailand into a preferred wedding destination.

### How do you provide special customisation for Indian weddings?

The biggest advantage of our resort would be the location and the view from every room. It is a perfect mix of traditional and modern architecture. The wooden



Wutti Sanjorn

structure of the resort gives the feel of the traditional Thai architecture, whereas the three-tier swimming pool and private pool which has a direct access from our deluxe pool access room gives a new trend for instagrammers. The open area banquet space has a capacity of more than 250 people and offers the most beautiful view of the Patong Bay and Andaman Sea. The dream wedding can turn into a reality under the clear blue sky. The tailor-made wedding party by our expert team will only add value to the whole ceremony. We can offer Indian and Thai cuisines prepared by the chef from India and our own chef.

### What is the new kind of technology that your spaces offer for M!CE events?

All our meeting rooms are equipped with Wi-Fi, built-in LCD projection facilities and multiple large-scale rolling screens, and high-tech lighting and sound system.

## EVENT SPACE

- Five dedicated meeting room spaces can accommodate upto 300 delegates
- Open terrace serves as a dedicated area for networking for a corporate group of minimum 200 delegates
- The open area banquet space has a capacity of more than 250 people

**TREND** Indians are looking at a venue which is located a short trip away from India



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# Crossroads to Meetings

In an interview, Paul Wilson, Executive Vice President – Commercial, Cross Hotels & Resorts, one of the fastest growing brands shares more about wedding & M!CE facilities



Paul Wilson

**Kindly tell us a bit about your brand.**

Cross Hotels & Resorts is one of the leading operators in APAC and is listed in the top three fastest growing brands. We encompass and follow what the M!CE industry is all about – being creative, thought-provoking and doing things differently.

**Which are the main wedding and M!CE hotels that your brand offers?**

A wedding space these days is a place to remember and that offers a unique experience. We have that in our Luxury by Design



brand X2 (pronounced Cross To), X2 Vibe caters to the young in mind while the Away brand is all about getting away.

**What is the new kind of technology that your spaces offer for M!CE events?**

Technology is all about simplicity and being workable. This is at the front of our minds in every space we build for our guests.

**What are the generic trends that you are seeing for destination weddings?**

Trends are all about going green and an even bigger focus on sustainability and local produce. We apply ‘Straw No More’ policy throughout our portfolio of hotels. Our X2 resort in Bali features a unique setting for destination weddings with special F&B options being vegan or vegetarian from local produce.

**TREND** Keepings things simple is the theme across all our M!CE events

**MAX CAPACITY**

- **153-key X2 Vibe Chiang Mai Decem:** Classroom 20 pax & Theatre 30 pax
- **136-room X2 Vibe Phuket Patong:** Theatre 140 pax; Classroom 70 pax; U – shape 40 pax; Round table 100 pax; Cocktail 140 pax
- **266-room X2 Vibe Bangkok Sukhumvit:** Theatre 80 pax; Classroom 40 pax; U – shape 40 pax & Round table 40 pax
- **104-key Away Kanchanaburi Dheva Mantra:** Classroom 160 pax; Theatre 250 pax; Round table 20 pax; & Cocktail 300 pax

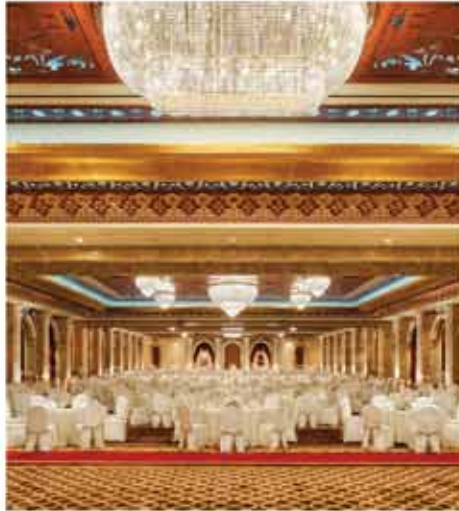
**What kind of special customisation can your hotels provide for Indian weddings?**

Again, remaining simple, we focus on the needs of Indian nationals. We can provide specialty chefs for all their needs and wants at a local level.

**What are the latest trends in technology for M!CE globally that you have noticed?**

Sound and connectivity is key. Our 57-all-pool-villa X2 resort in Bali is equipped with state-of-the-art sound system and the strongest Wi-Fi, making it the best venue for events. Keepings things simple is the theme across all our M!CE events and we emphasise on creativity in space, food and experiences.





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Among the incentives that the Penang Specialists can qualify for are special incentive for group sales of 100 pax and above, opportunities to attend PCEB's training and much more

**Manas Dwivedi**



# Be a Penang Specialist

The Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB) has launched the Penang Specialist Programme designed for the Indian market. The programme will equip select outbound travel, MICE, wedding and filming agencies with first-hand knowledge of Penang through a full day workshop conducted in each city concurrently with the B2B engagement session. The Certification of the Penang Specialist Programme is valid for three years upon which qualifying members will be invited for recertification. The workshop is conducted by Katharine Chua, Managing Director, Penang Tropical

Spice Garden. Sharing more information, **Ashwin Gunasekeran**, Chief Executive Officer, Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau said, India is one of the top five markets for Business Events in Penang, and over the past years, we have received encouraging interest from event planners and conference organisers.

In 2019, 4 per cent of Business Events of Asia Pacific origin were from India, contributing RM268.6 million or USD 65.89 million in estimated economic impact." He further said that the number of Indian travellers to Penang has also increased in recent years. "The Penang Immigration Department reported that



Ashwin Gunasekeran

for the period between Jan to Dec 2019, 61,847 Indian travellers visited via the Penang International Airport and Penang Swettenham Port (cruise liners) compared to 43,537 in the same period in 2018. This is a 42 per cent increase, making it one of the healthiest growths we have experienced."

PCEB has launched Penang 2020: BE UNFILTERED. This is a campaign for Business Events Penang, complimenting the state's efforts in further boosting Penang's tourism and

business events agenda. The campaign includes the launch of the PCEB App for Meeting Planners. Main features include information on Penang for delegates, a calendar showing upcoming events, and other supported Business Events happening in Penang. To further attract the Indian outbound meetings and conference market, PCEB introduced a new support package specially tailored for India.

The support packages start from as low as sponsorship of souvenirs and welcome luncheon for the organisers valued at RM3,500 (for confirmed meetings/ conferences of 50 to 100 delegates) to hosted site inspections, welcome luncheon for organisers, cultural performances and souvenirs valued at RM10,000 (for incentive groups of 501 delegates and above).

**STATS** In 2019, 4 per cent of Business Events of Asia Pacific origin were from India



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# Grand weddings in RAK

Raki Phillips, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority shares more on dream weddings and how RAK is being positioned as a discerning wedding destination in India

## How is Ras Al Khaimah developing as a destination for weddings?

Currently Ras Al Khaimah has seen majority of wedding tourism in the emirate coming from India. Some of emirate's iconic properties like the Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah and the luxurious Ritz-Carlton, Al Wadi Desert, have been home to some high-profile Indian weddings and Ras Al Khaimah is being positioned as a discerning wedding destination in India. We welcome about 8-10 weddings a year and the wedding size ranges from 200 to 550 guests. As part of our vision to attract 1.5 million visitors to the emirate by the end of 2021, India will be an important contributor, and is currently our second largest international source market. We have seen a growing trend from Indian inbound tourism for short leisure stays, MICE and weddings.

## What are the trends that you are witnessing for destination weddings?

People are now looking at unexplored destinations for weddings. While a lot of families prefer to have all functions in one hotel with different venues, some prefer to explore different venues in the destination so that their guests experience the destination offerings as well. There are 3-4 main functions which include the sangeet, mehendi, wedding and reception among smaller ones. The average length of stay for a destination wedding in Ras Al Khaimah is 2-3 nights. As our tourism offering



evolves in Ras Al Khaimah, we must ensure our destination is attractive to travellers who wish to explore beyond resorts and hotels. Our tourism strategy 2019-2021 is a comprehensive three-year programme that takes Ras Al Khaimah to the next level. We're delighted with the success our offering has had in our target markets to date, but with the destination strategy we aim to diversify and enhance visitors' experiences through differentiated product development.

## As a destination, what do you offer in terms of 'Duty of care' for those coming into your country?

The safety and security of all visitors to Ras Al Khaimah is of utmost importance and serves to support the success of any destination. Certainly, we are blessed with an abundance of natural assets, 64 km of pristine

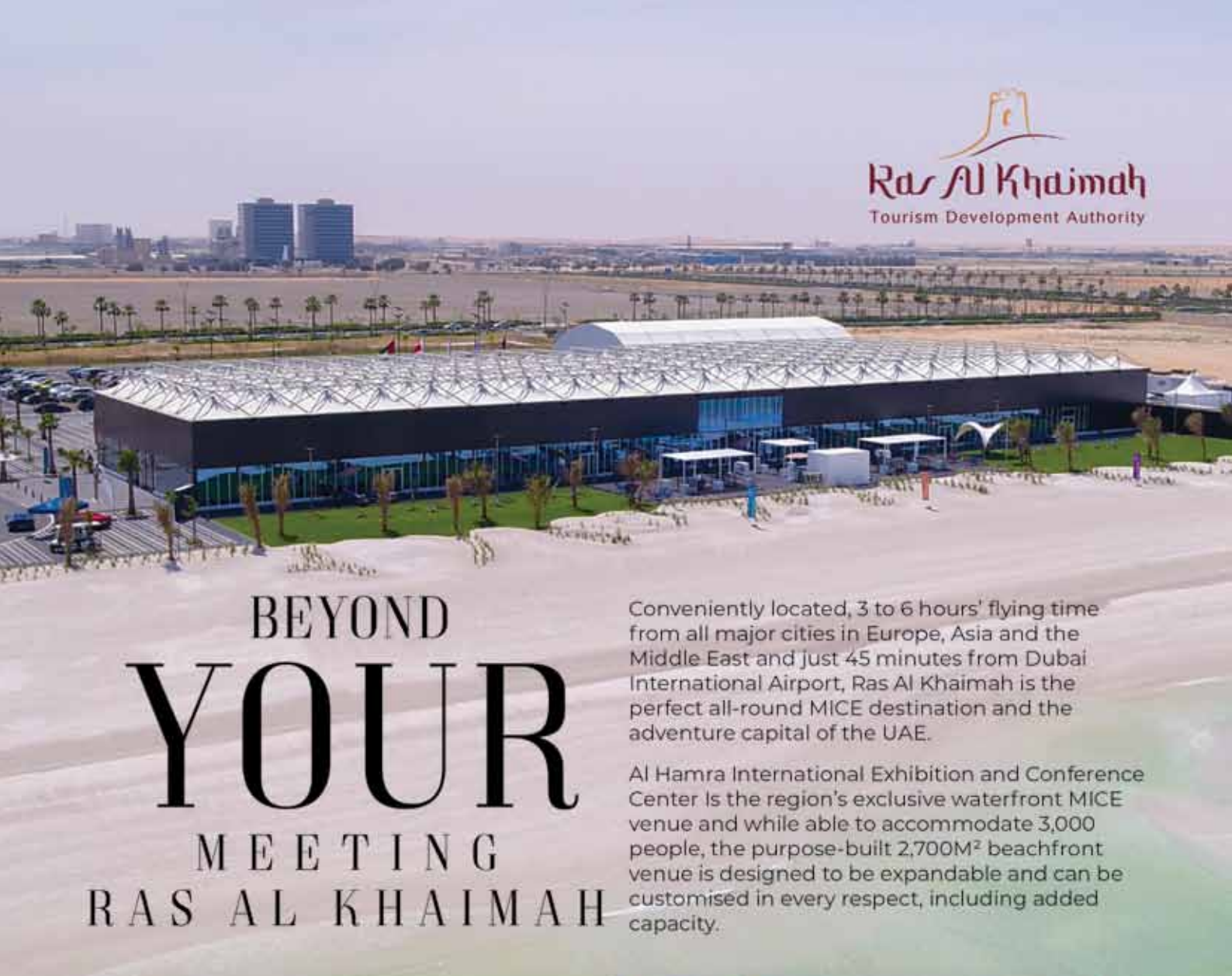
**QUICK BYTE** We welcome about 8-10 weddings a year and the wedding size ranges from 200 to 550 guests



Raki Phillips

beaches, more than 7,000 years of untouched heritage and culture, and the highest mountains in the UAE, which make Ras Al Khaimah a unique destination that appeals to all kinds of international and domestic travellers. This is coupled with the generosity and hospitality of the Emirati nation which also ensures a friendly and safe environment.





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YOUR  
MEETING  
RAS AL KHAIMAH

Conveniently located, 3 to 6 hours' flying time from all major cities in Europe, Asia and the Middle East and just 45 minutes from Dubai International Airport, Ras Al Khaimah is the perfect all-round MICE destination and the adventure capital of the UAE.

Al Hamra International Exhibition and Conference Center is the region's exclusive waterfront MICE venue and while able to accommodate 3,000 people, the purpose-built 2,700M<sup>2</sup> beachfront venue is designed to be expandable and can be customised in every respect, including added capacity.



Ras Al Khaimah's distinctive MICE offerings also include Emirati cultural and heritage activities at cultural venues, some of which host events and gala dinners, in addition to a range of scenic beach and desert venues and MICE-friendly hotels and resorts.



Well-known Jebel Jais is the highest mountain peak in the UAE and home of the world's longest zipline and the country's highest restaurant and is ideal for memorable incentive events or group activities for business teams involving exciting mountaintop adventure activities, including Jais Sky Tour with the country's highest sky bridge; Jais Sky Maze, a -35obstacle aerial rope course, and Jais Sky Jump.



# NEWS



## Singapore Tourism joins forces with Sheeraz Tours to capture UP market

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) together with 3 travel partners (Resorts World Sentosa, Dream Cruises and Royal Caribbean International / TIRUN Travel Marketing) took part in a trade engagement event organised by Sheeraz Tours in Lucknow on February 26. The session was held in Hotel Hilton Garden and was well attended by more than 100 tour operators and agencies from in and around the city.



## Accor Hotels Showcase in Delhi and Mumbai

The Accor Showcase took place at the Pullman New Delhi Aerocity on February 26 and Sofitel Mumbai BKC on February 28. Speaking at the event, **Jean Michel Cassé**, COO, Accor, India and South Asia, says, "It is now four years since we are conducting this exercise of the Accor Showcase. It is an opportunity for our hotels in India and across the world to come and present themselves to the Indian market. They come and showcase whatever products and services they have for the Indian market. It has been very successful in the last few years."

## ITB India to be held from April 7-9, 2021



The ITB India organisers have announced to postpone ITB India 2020 due to the rapid spread of COVID-19. Originally scheduled to be held from April 15-17, 2020 at Bombay Exhibition Centre, Mumbai, the show is now scheduled to

be held from April 7-9, 2021 at the same venue. The participants of the show can reach the organising team by sending queries with regards to ITB India directly to [exhibitor@itb-india.com](mailto:exhibitor@itb-india.com).

## Nepal to focus on M!CE and developing night tourism

Nepal will develop night tourism in Kathmandu and will be focusing on M!CE tourism from India, revealed **Lila Bahadur Baniya**, Officiating Director, Nepal Tourism Board, while addressing the delegates at the Nepal Sales Mission, organised by Nepal Tourism Board, the National Tourism Organization (NTO) of Government of Nepal, in Amritsar. Nepal Sales Mission travelled to nine Indian cities from January 6 to February 1, 2020.



Credit: Wikipedia

## Thailand is promoting its smaller cities for Indian weddings

Thailand is looking at attracting Indian weddings to its smaller cities, revealed **Chattan Kunjara Na Ayudhya**, Deputy Governor for International Marketing (Asia and South Pacific), Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). He said, "Thailand is the number one outbound wedding destination for Indians."



# Corporate gifting practices

Before buying gifts for your corporate clients, consider the following tips shared by Counsellor Shivani Misri Sadhoo for corporate gift-giving etiquettes for all occasions

**F**or most corporates or business owners, the festival season is mostly a time for purchasing gifts for clients, employees, partners - gifts for everybody who is part of your business throughout the year. However, it is vital to give gifts in a manner that would not offend or create awkward situations among those who are vital to your business.

## PLAN YOUR BUDGET CAREFULLY

Selecting an amount to spend on every gift is one of the challenging parts of corporate gift-giving etiquette. When it comes to buying gifts for your employees, it boils down to what you can afford. However, purchasing gifts for vendors, service providers, or partners outside of your business premises can be a bit sensitive. Some entities have restrictions on what they are allowed to accept. So, ensure you do not bypass these restrictions with excessive gifts. If you work inside a business or an organisation, obey the guidelines set by your leadership team for any gift exchange policies and spending.

## NEVER LEAVE ANYONE OUT

If you intend to give corporate gifts to your team, ensure you buy a gift for every team member. You must also try to purchase gifts of the same value as far as possible. However, it might be acceptable to spend a bit more on your senior leadership team. You could also spend more on team members who have been around for a long tenure. You must also apply this theory to partners or service providers outside of your business premises. Within an organisation, co-workers must also make sure to include everyone unless there is a secret Santa theme or some type of arrangement where you only have to buy a gift for one person.

## KEEP IT RATIONAL FOR VENDORS, CLIENTS AND OTHER PARTIES

Although it might be fun to give team members gifts that remind them of jokes or funny things that have occurred in the office around the year, it is not as easy to gauge how those outside of your business may perceive these types of gifts. Unless you have a very close-knitted relationship with

someone, it is normally wiser to choose things that are useful, like gift cards or office goods.

## PERSONALISE IF POSSIBLE

Every time it is not possible for business or corporate owners to buy different gifts for every partner or client. But if you have quite a short gift list, try to buy gifts that are relevant for every recipient. For instance, if you know that a specific client loves their morning tea or coffee, gifting them a coffee outlet's gift card instead of a generic one could mean a lot to them.

## DO RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS

If you have business internationally, your clients or partners could have different expectations when it comes to the etiquette of corporate gifting. You must research the holiday or festival customs in their part of the world before buying a gift.

## IF POSSIBLE, AVOID PROMOTIONAL GIFTING

It is quite common for several corporates and businesses to print their logos on products like bags, cups or pens that they give out as corporate gifts. While this is not mandatorily a no-go, you must try not to rely on gifts as a mere source of promotion. Do ensure they are useful for the recipient, which means they should be of fairly high quality and the logos must be small.

## EXPRESS YOUR APPRECIATION

This is the most important aspect to keep in mind. Have you received corporate gifts from team members, partners, or clients throughout the festival season? If yes, it is important to acknowledge them as early as possible. Try to send a handwritten thank you or appreciation note to the sender whenever possible. An email could be acceptable in some cases.



Shivani Misri Sadhoo  
Founder  
Saarthi Counselling  
Services




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If you have quite a **SHORT GIFT LIST**, try to buy gifts that are relevant for every recipient. Personalisation can make a difference





Many times, people try to read others through their body language and not the spoken words. Our expert Shital Kakkar Mehra shares tips on the same for our readers

# Body language blunders



Shital Kakkar Mehra  
Practitioner of Corporate  
Etiquette and International  
Protocol in India

**B**usiness and political leaders display strong body language as they are aware that their audiences are constantly judging them by these non-verbal signals. US Presidents retain experts during their election campaigns, who advise them on gestures that make them appear trustworthy and capable – traits that voters admire. In my experience, I have noticed the following body language blunders which dilute credibility and display lack of confidence in the boardroom:

- **Incessant nodding:** Nodding is an integral part of our culture and a nod signals at a non-verbal level “I am listening to you” or “I agree with you”, both conveying a strong positive message. However, this message can be negated with fast, repetitive nods which convey anxiety or show excessive eagerness to please. On the other hand, a slow, deliberate nod utilises body language to convey agreement in a confident way.
- **Poor posture:** Our sedentary lifestyles and constant use of technology gadgets have led to slouching and hunching for long hours. While walking with a book on your head is no longer practiced, bad posture conveys “I don’t care” or as the Gen Y says ‘Whatever!’ Sitting and standing upright when interacting with your

business associates shows “I am confident” and “I am motivated to be with you”, signals that clinch deals across the world.

- **Fidgeting:** Tapping your feet, drumming your fingers, doodling, touching your hair/ face - all convey the same message - “I’d rather be somewhere else”. Instead, minimise your body language gestures when you need to convey a powerful message with words, thereby ensuring your listeners are free to focus on the verbal and are not distracted by your non-verbal signals.
- **Reducing physical space:** People who are under-confident tend to shrink into their own bodies, reducing the space they take up physically and in the minds of their listeners. On the other hand, when making a presentation, enhance your physical space by spreading your belongings, moving around when presenting and using hand gestures, creating the visual of being much more powerful.
- **Clenching fists:** This closed signal conveys nervousness, being short-tempered or “I am not open to suggestions”. Force your hands open, as open palms show honesty, transparency and being at ease which are all positive signals.

Finally, don’t read from the slides. This enables people to focus on your ability and knowledge as a speaker. You are the biggest visual! Awareness of negative signals can assist you in ensuring that your personal impact is enhanced in the boardroom.

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Fast, **REPETITIVE NODS CONVEY** anxiety or show excessive eagerness to please. A slow, deliberate nod conveys confidence

# Get married in Europe

Shilpa Sukumar, Director – DWC Weddings shares trends of weddings in European cities – the most coveted destinations offering a once-in-a-lifetime experience for families

## What are the trends that you are witnessing for destination Indian weddings in Europe?

European cities are the most coveted destinations for luxury weddings. When we started operating in Europe from our Swiss office in 2013, destination Indian weddings in Europe used to be a rarity and the clients were invariably wealthy industrialists. But ever since the celebrity Indian weddings from Italy and Switzerland hit the mainstream media a couple of years ago, there is a sudden surge of interest from a wider spectrum of society. A typical client now a days is not just a wealthy industrialist but in many cases small business owners and sometimes even top executives of corporate houses.

## What are the challenges of destination weddings in Europe?

What will be a minor oversight in India will lead to chaos at a destination wedding in Europe. The challenges of providing the abundance that Indian weddings demand in countries where minimalism is celebrated, it doesn't take long for one to be overwhelmed. And let's not forget about the task of securing visas for all the guests and putting their paperwork together. Impeccable planning, preparing the client, managing their expectations and then delivering beyond their imagination are not only the challenges but also the reward for what we do at DWC Weddings.



## Which destinations in Europe are popular for Indian weddings?

Italy remains by far the most popular destination in Europe for Indian weddings. Within Italy the region of Tuscany is an all time favourite but recently Lombardy and in particular the city of Como have become very popular. A glorious history and direct flight connections to India have made Rome a popular destination as well. Beyond Italy nothing attracts the super rich the way Switzerland does. The city of Montreux and Interlaken have been popular in past but for the last few years St. Moritz has become particularly attractive. In France, Paris is a big draw but the countryside provides excellent settings with countless castles. Nouveau rich prefer the south of France though where they can fly in and out of Nice in their private jets or dock and party in Cannes on luxury yachts. Couples who prefer to maximize

## CHALLENGES We prepare the client, manage their expectations and then deliver beyond their imagination



Shilpa Sukumar

## CHANGING TRENDS

- A typical client nowadays is not just a wealthy industrialist, but in many cases small business owners and sometimes even top executives of corporate houses. This changing client profile has obviously led to a change in the kind of wedding one sees now in Europe as well

the value of their budget head to destinations such as Budapest in Hungary, Prague in Czech Republic or all the way to the edge of the Europe in Greece and Turkey. Sometimes it is the budget that dictates the destination and sometimes it is the theme that the couple has chosen for their nuptials. Similarly the number of guests depends on the budget but sometimes also on other considerations such as privacy. Now a days we tend to have shorter guests lists of as few as 50-150 as opposed to 400-500, even from celebrities. At DWC Weddings we advise our clients according to their wishes and budget. Different destinations in Europe offer different possibilities at different price points and flexible clients always find what they are looking for.



# Movements **Abroad**



**Ashok Pathirage**  
Chairman  
SriLankan Airlines, Colombo

Ashok Pathirage has been appointed as Chairman of SriLankan Airlines Group by its principle shareholder, the Government of Sri Lanka. Pathirage is a leading businessman and founder of Softlogic Holdings PLC, of which he is the Chairman and Managing Director. He is also Chairman and Managing Director of a number of reputed companies including Asiri Hospital Holdings PLC, Softlogic Capital PLC, Softlogic Life Insurance PLC, etc.



**Guy Hutchinson**  
President & CEO  
Rotana, Abu Dhabi

Rotana has announced that Guy Hutchinson, Acting Chief Executive Officer, has been promoted to serve as President & CEO to lead the company's next phase of growth. Hutchinson has held the position of acting CEO since January 2019. With 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, the seasoned executive joined Rotana as Chief Operating Officer in January 2014. Previously, he served various roles with Hilton Worldwide in markets as diverse as Japan, Australia, China, India and the UAE.



**Raj Rana**  
CEO  
Citymax Hotels, Dubai

Citymax Hotels announced the appointment of Raj Rana as its new Chief Executive Officer. Rana brings over 30 years of international hospitality experience and has held leadership positions in the USA, Europe, and Asia. Most recently, he was the CEO of the Radisson Hotel Group for South Asia with the responsibility for the region's P&L and growth. Rana will take Citymax hotels to new heights of success. He spent his early years in India.



**John Elieson**  
COO  
Travelport, Langley, UK

Travelport welcomed John Elieson as its Chief Operating Officer. He will be based in Travelport's global headquarters in Langley, Berkshire, UK. Elieson will be responsible for Travelport's growth strategy, sales organisation and M&A agenda. Before joining Travelport, he was President and CEO of Radixx International, which was recently acquired by Sabre. Previously, Elieson enjoyed a distinguished 30-year career with Sabre and its former parent company American Airlines.



**Christian Hoehn**  
General Manager  
The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi

The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Grand Canal has appointed Christian Hoehn as General Manager. Joining the luxury property from the W Paris where he served as General Manager since February 2018, Hoehn has been appointed to lead the team of exceptional 'Ladies and Gentlemen' as they deliver unparalleled service to their guests. Hoehn joins The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Grand Canal with over 23 years of experience in the hospitality industry.



**Hussein Al Kurdi**  
General Manager  
Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach

Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach has appointed Hussein Al Kurdi as General Manager. Kurdi will be responsible for the strategic vision of the hotel and overseeing the daily operations of Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach. He has a wealth of experience in Middle East region. Prior to moving to the UAE, he worked for luxury brands such as Kempinski and Four Seasons. During his early career, Kurdi gained invaluable experience within the Food & Beverage department. Kurdi is a passionate hotelier.



**Osama Ibrahim**  
General Manager  
Millennium Central Mafraq,  
Abu Dhabi

Millennium Central Mafraq, Abu Dhabi announced the appointment of Osama Ibrahim as General Manager. A Jordanian national, Ibrahim joins Millennium Central Mafraq with a wealth of 25 years of experience in hotel management and operations. In his new role, Ibrahim will be focusing on consolidating Millennium Central Mafraq's position as a preferred destination for both leisure and business travellers and will be responsible for elevating service levels, and maximising profitability.



**Nouman Irshad**  
General Manager  
Le Méridien Al Aqah Beach  
Resort, Fujairah

Nouman Irshad has been appointed as General Manager at Le Méridien Al Aqah Beach Resort, Fujairah. He has over 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry. His well-rounded experience of leading hotel teams, social initiatives as well as an inherent understanding of a multicultural environment will help Irshad bring out the best in his associates whilst exploring new revenue opportunities for Fujairah's favourite beach-side luxury resort. Owing to his unique combination of sales and extensive operations background, he will be a vital asset.



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Away Pranburi Beach Resort



Away Bali Legian Camakila



Away Kanchanaburi



X2 Bali Breakers Resort



X2 Chiang Mai Riverside Resort



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