

Update on IATO Activities

(Monday, 1st November - 15th November 2021)

Dear Members,

Greetings !

Please find appended relevant activities of our association for the period (Monday, 1st November to Sunday, 14th November 2021)

Segments covered are

- 1. Communication / Letters that addressed key issues**
- 2. Webinars/ Panel Discussions/Circulars/Meetings/Chapter news**
- 3. Media Coverage**
- 4. Chapter News**

Request your feedback to further the content of our weekly report.

1. Communication / Letters that addressed key issues

Segment 1 update sequence by date:3,9,12,15November

Wednesday,3rdNovember

- **IATO apprised Ms. Gayatri Rathore, IAS, Principal Secretary (Tourism),Govt. of Rajasthan, regarding Pending Refund of its members towards advance paid for booking of Palace on Wheels for their foreign clients and bookings cancelled due to Covid -19**

IATO submitted a brief of the advance payments which have been made through Worldwide Rail Journeys to RTDC and pending for refund. There were total 5 such companies whose refunds are pending.

Besides, the above there was one company who had made advance payment directly to RTDC

IATO requested that necessary directives may be given to RTDC to make refund at the earliest and help the tour operators who were facing financial hardship and lot of challenges due to Covid-19. They were in need of funds to make refund to their foreign clients to maintain business relationship and to secure future business.

A Copy of the letter was marked to Managing Director, RTDC, Jaipur

Tuesday,9thNovember

- **IATO requested Sri Arvind Singh Secretary Tourism to appoint a Nodal Officer from the Ministry to help the foreign tourists in case of any exigency**

IATO apprised that with the opening of Tourist Visa including e-Tourist Visa, foreign tourists would start travelling to India and we would expect some kind of issues and problems coming up upon their arrival at various airports in India as every state has different SOPs for travellers. Therefore, to avoid any inconvenience to foreign tourists and avoid any negative publicity, it would be appropriate if MOT GOI could consider appointing a Nodal Officer who could assist the foreign tourists in case of any exigency upon their arrival at any airport in India and the Nodal Officer can help them and can deal with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Railways, state governments etc.

*A Copy of the letter was marked to **A.** DG Tourism and **B.** ADG Tourism.*

Friday, 12th November

- **IATO requested Mr Arvind Singh Secretary Tourism for Resumption of International Flights Operation as per bilateral agreement inforce before March 2020 due to high air fare presently available on air bubble flights.**

IATO mentioned that the airfare had increased 2.5 to 3 times more than the normal fare that were before March 2020. Foreign tourists would not travel to India for holidays on such high airfares. It is only the NRIs or Indians who are working abroad and had not met their families in last 20 months, would travel on these fares.

Further IATO brought to the notice of the Secretary Tourism that foreigners were not being allowed to travel to Sri Lanka on Air Bubble Flights and this might also be the case with flights to Kathmandu and Paro. This restriction needed to be lifted immediately

IATO requested secretary tourism to kindly impress upon the authorities in MHA, MEA and MOCA to resume normal international flight operation as per bilateral agreement that was before March 2020 so that inbound tourism could start to India.

*A copy of the letter was marked to **A.** DG and **B.** ADG Tourism*

Monday 15th November

➤ IATO offered Mr. G.D. Lohani, Joint Secretary (TRU-I), Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, Ministry of Finance Suggestions for Budget 2022-23 – changes in Direct and Indirect Taxes

Suggestions for amendment in GST law for growth of Tourism Industry

1. Tourism industry to be treated as deemed exporter at par with IT Industry under export of services

IATO Recommended that

The parameters / definition of “export of services” in section 2(6) of IGST Act, 2017 may be relaxed in the case of tour operators and the services of tour operators earning foreign exchange for the country may be accorded with the status of “export of services”. The criteria for determining the place of supply (POS) of services should be uniform between IT Industry and Tour Operators Industry. Further the criteria of determining place of supply of services based on performance as mentioned in section 13(3)(b) of IGST Act should be made inapplicable for the tour operators.

2. Removal of cascading effect of GST on Tourism Industry

IATO Recommended that

IATO suggested that either GST may be levied @ 18% on the 10% mark-up (deemed value) so that effective rate of tax on package cost works out to 1.8% of gross billing with no ITC. Alternatively, the gross value may be taxed at 18% GST and input tax credit on all input services including hotels and restaurants may be allowed on actual basis.

3. Removal of GST on services provided outside India to foreign tourists

IATO Recommended that

It was recommended that GST/IGST may be fully exempted on the services provided outside India i.e. in neighbouring countries even if package included India tour. As a result of tax exemption, bookings would come to Indian Tour operators instead of such bookings going in favour of local tour operators in neighbouring countries. This would add considerable foreign exchange for the country.

4. Small correction in the conditions prescribed against 5% GST notified for tour operators services

IATO Recommended that

- a. *The word “and” appearing between the words accommodation and transportation in condition No. 2 against Sl. No. 23 of CGST Notification No. 11/2017-CT(R) dated 28.6.2017 may be replaced by the word “or”.*
- b. *The Govt. may also clarify by way of circular that this was intent from the very beginning when GST rolled out so that the GST authorities should not raise objections from 01.07.2017.*

5. Refund of IGST paid by the tourists leaving India on supply of goods taken out of India -Tax Refund for Tourists (TRT) Schemeto be implemented.

IATO Recommended that

It was recommended that the Govt. should formulate the well-defined and simple procedure and user - friendly conditions / safeguards for allowing cash refund to the foreign tourists leaving India at the departure airport in respect of integrated tax paid by him on purchase of goods within India and those goods are being taken out of India as part of his baggage or otherwise. The procedure may be notified in the public domain at the earliest.

6. Reduction of GST on private ferry tickets at Andaman

IATO Recommended that

It was recommended that in view of the essential use of transport ferries, the GST rate should be nil or maximum 5% as in the case of ferry transport.

- **A separate letter was also sent to Mr. K.C. Varshney, Joint Secretary, Tax Policy and Legislation (TPL-I), Central Board of Direct Taxes, Ministry of Finance, Department of Revenue on Suggestions for Budget 2022-23 – changes in Direct Taxes**

IATO Recommended that

- *The provisions of TCS should be made applicable for persons' / companies resident in India and not to foreign citizens / foreign tour operators located outside India.*
- *The provisions of TCS should not apply in case the foreign tourist visits India and thereafter proceed to foreign country including neighbouring countries or vice versa such that it is combination of inbound and outbound tours package as composite package. Such a composite package does not qualify as “overseas tour program package” as defined in section 206C (1G) of I.T. Act, 1961.*

2. Webinars/ Panel

Discussions/Circulars/Meetings

Segment 2 update sequence by date:2,3,9,10,12November

Tuesday, 2nd November

- VP IATO at the Deepotsav at Ayodhya





Wednesday, 3rd November



Tuesday, 9th November

- Global Services Enclave was organized by SEPC on 9th November 2021. All Members were informed.

Wednesday, 10th November

- **All Members (Recognised by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India) were informed on the Loan Guarantee Scheme for Covid Affected Tourism Service Sector (LGSCATSS) reg.**

To click the below link to download the attachment.

[10.11.2021 Ncgtc letter to SCBs.pdf](#)

[10.11.2021 Updated guidelines of LGSCATSS by NCGTC.pdf](#)

Friday, 12th November

All Active Members (Recognized by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India) were informed on the Invitation for International Travel Mart from 27th to 29th November 2021 in Kohima, Nagaland organised by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India in collaboration with Department of Tourism, Govt. of Nagaland

3. Media Coverage

Segment 3 update sequence by date: 3,5,6,7,8,12 November

Wednesday, 3rd November



Turespaña to conduct discussion on Schengen visa for India, Nepal & Sri Lanka on Nov 9 at 3pm

The Tourism Office of Spain – Mumbai will conduct a 1-hour virtual panel discussion on Spain (Schengen) visa for travellers from India, Nepal & Sri Lanka on Tuesday, Nov 9 at 3pm. Speakers include Ambassador of Spain to India, Consul General of Spain in Mumbai and Director of Turespaña in India. Contact jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com or 9650196532.



Ayodhya lights up to prepare for Deepotsav programme

The Tourism Office of Spain – Mumbai will conduct a 1-hour virtual panel discussion on Spain (Schengen) visa for travellers from India, Nepal & Sri Lanka on Tuesday, Nov 9 at 3pm. Speakers include Ambassador of Spain to India, Consul General of Spain in Mumbai and Director of Turespaña in India. Contact jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com or 9650196532.



In 2019-20, total contribution towards employment in tourism came up to 15%, says Rupinder Brar

Rupinder Brar, ADG, Tourism, has said that the total contribution in 2019-20 towards employment in tourism came up to 15.34 % which broke into 6.69% of direct jobs and 8.65% indirect jobs. She shared these statistics during her presentation at the South India Tourism and Culture Ministers' conference in Bengaluru.



Ladakh's Hanle has been declared as Dark Sky Sanctuary

Hanle has been declared as a dark sky sanctuary. Ladakh's administration in association with the Indian Institute of Astrophysics is going to promote astro-tourism in the village of Hanle in the Union Territory.



COVID has accelerated rollout of technologies in travel sector: Madhavan Menon, Thomas Cook (India)

Madhavan Menon, MD, Thomas Cook (India), has said that COVID has accelerated the rollout of technologies in the travel sector, and thus has eased out ways in which people access hospitality services. He shared that swifter adoption of technology and shift in priorities of domestic travellers were some changes that the pandemic highlighted.



Cygnett launches its first hotel in Dehradun – Cygnett Inn Paras



36th IATO Convention: EM Najeeb is Chairman, Rajnish Kaistha & Randhir Singh Vaghela Co-chairmen

EM Najeeb, Sr. Vice President, IATO is the Chairman for the 36th IATO Convention scheduled from 16-19th December at The Leela Gandhinagar. Co-chairmen of the convention will be Rajnish Kaistha, Hony. Secretary, IATO and Randhir Singh Vaghela, who is also the Chairman, IATO Gujarat & Du Chapter, revealed Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO.



Hemant Mediratta joins Leela as Chief Advisor, International Leisure

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arumita.gupta@ddppl.com +91 96503 99908
www.tourismbreakingnews.com

For more news & updates please log on to 

Friday, 5th November

- VP IATO in Media (TOI) on the Ayodhya Deepotsav
<https://t.co/y9MvvGccJE>

Saturday, 6th November

- Travel Industry proposes Free Insurance to Foreign Tourists, restarting scheduled International Flights

➤ On DD NEWS

President, Chapter Chair Uttar Pradesh and JS Tourism



इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट पर रोक बढ़ने से मायूसी

जागरण संवाददाता, आगरा: दीपावली बाद पर्यटन के परवाज भरने की उम्मीद लगाए बैठे कारोबारियों को झटका लगा है। केंद्र सरकार ने इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट पर लगी रोक 30 नवंबर तक बढ़ा दी है। इससे पर्यटन उद्यमियों में मायूसी है। पूर्व में 15 नवंबर से फ्लाइट शुरू करने की घोषणा की थी।

कोरोना संक्रमण के दस्तक देने के बाद केंद्र सरकार ने मार्च, 2020 में इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट स्थगित करने के साथ ही टूरिस्ट वीजा सर्विस पर रोक लगा दी थी। डेढ़ वर्ष से इनबाउंड टूरिज्म (विदेशी पर्यटन का काम) पूरी तरह ठप है। पिछले माह केंद्र सरकार ने 15 अक्टूबर से चार्टर्ड फ्लाइट से आने वाले विदेशी पर्यटकों को टूरिस्ट वीजा देने व 15 नवंबर से इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट से टूरिस्ट वीजा देने की घोषणा की गई थी। अब केंद्र सरकार के ताजा आदेश से पर्यटन कारोबारियों की उम्मीदें फिर टूट गई हैं।

निराशा

- मार्च, 2020 से इनबाउंड टूरिज्म का काम है ठप
- 15 नवंबर से शुरुआत होने पर पर्यटकों के आने की थी उम्मीद

वीजा पाबंदियों से भी परेशान: सरकार ने वीजा देना तो शुरू कर दिया है, लेकिन कोरोना संक्रमण के चलते लगाई गई पाबंदियों से इनबाउंड टूरिज्म पर असर पड़ना तय है। इससे पर्यटन कारोबारी परेशान हैं। सरकार केवल सिंगल एंट्री वीजा (सिर्फ भारत में घूमने की अनुमति) दे रही है, मल्टी एंट्री वीजा (भारत व आसपास के देशों में घूमने की अनुमति) नहीं दिया जा रहा है। कई देशों को ई-वीजा नहीं दिया जा रहा है। वीजा की अवधि 90 दिन से घटाकर 30 दिन कर दी गई है।

दीपावली बाद इनबाउंड टूरिज्म का काम इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट की शुरुआत होने पर ही संभव था। सरकार ने इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट को 30 नवंबर तक स्थगित कर जोर का झटका दिया है। आखिर कब तक खाली बैठे रहेंगे।

सुनील गुप्ता, चेयरमैन, नार्दर्न रीजन इंडियन एसोसिएशन आफ टूर अपरेटर्स कुछ विदेशी पर्यटकों ने फ्लाइट की टिकट बुक कर यहां आना कंफर्म किया था। अब उनका यहां आना मुश्किल होगा। सरकार को इनबाउंड टूरिज्म पर आश्रित पर्यटन कारोबारियों की स्थिति पर विचार करना चाहिए।

संदीप अरोड़ा, अध्यक्ष, आगरा टूरिज्म डवलपमेंट फाउंडेशन

Monday, 8th November



'Hotels, better connectivity will propel Ayodhya tourism'

Neha.Lalchandani@timesgroup.com

Lucknow: The construction of the Ram Temple has generated immense interest in the ancient city of Ayodhya but it may take a few years before it joins the league of heritage and spiritual destinations like Varanasi, Prayagraj and Mathura. Tour operators visiting the city at the behest of the state government ahead of the Deepotsav have pointed out that the development of hotels, better connectivity, regulated temple visits and sanitation are

crucial in propelling Ayodhya as a city of repute on the tourism map.

On Tuesday, a team of 40 tour operators and travel bloggers visited Hanumangarhi, Ramjanmabhoomi, Kanak Bhawan and Saryu Ghat to get a sense of what Ayodhya has to offer to tourists. The state government has elaborate plans of developing the city as a major tourist attraction.

"We have already been promoting the sector among tourists for a while now. Till now it was a city for pilgrims and devotees but now tou-

rists also want to visit. However, it is important to retain the old world charm of the city. Old structures should not be demolished to modernise the city. People don't want to just visit the temple but also experience the old world charm, the local culture, its people," said Ravi Gosain, the vice-president of the Indian Association of Tour Operators.

RK Arora of Sona Travels in Delhi said that several more hotels were needed in the area, since people had to otherwise stay in Lucknow and travel 2.5 hours to visit Ay-

odhya. Proposing that Ayodhya should be made into a two-night destination, Arora said that a sector incorporating Lucknow, Ayodhya, Varanasi and Prayagraj should be developed, especially as Varanasi and Prayagraj are also linked to Khajuraho.

Relating how a lot of queries regarding Ayodhya had started pouring in from south India, from where a massive number of donations have also come for the construction of the temple, Ramananda of Hammock Leisure Holidays from Beng-

aluru said that it did not matter to people that the Ram Temple was still under construction as they believe in the sanctity of the city. Manoj Matta of Oriental Vacations and Journeys Pvt Ltd said that stepping foot in the Ramjanmabhoomi was more important than actually seeing the temple since there were several temples already present in the city.

Prateek Hira, CEO of Tornos, said that Ayodhya has always been a tourist destination and not dependent on the Ram Temple. A festival

is celebrated in the city, he said, 365 days of the year. "Now because of the hype around the temple, even normal tourists and not just devotees are getting attracted to it. There is massive scope around here like the presence of Chhaapia, the birthplace of Swami Narayanan of the Swaminath Temple, which is 40km away Patanjali was born in neighbouring Gonda. There is a famous mazaar here and Guru Nanak is believed to have visited Ayodhya. Swami Vivekanand has also stayed here," he said.

Agra, Varanasi attract tourists again

While the Taj city has become the favourite place for week-end getaways, foreigners are gradually arriving to keep tryst with Kashi ghats

Hemendra Chaturvedi /Sudhir Kumar

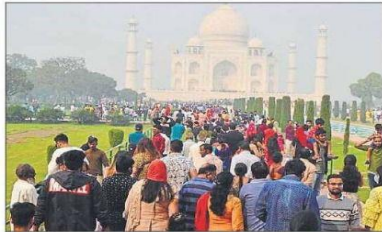
letters@htlive.com

AGRA: In the post pandemic period, outdoor activities are once again witnessing surging interest levels and tourism seems set to rebuild itself.

Agra and Varanasi, the two prime tourist destinations in Uttar Pradesh, are back under the spotlight. While Agra has become a favourite destination for week-end getaways, Kashi ghats are once again attracting foreign tourists.

Though there are no foreign tourists visiting Agra since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020, the city of Taj gets flooded with visitors from nearby areas seeking weekend getaways. Tourism trade pundits attribute 70% of the inflow from National Capital Region in and around Delhi. 'Unusual' jams on Yamuna Expressway on week-ends are ample illustration that Agra is definitely one of the most preferred weekend trip place after the second Covid wave subsided.

The extended Diwali weekend saw the city crowded with holiday-makers and on Sunday evening, the last day of holidays for Diwali, there was a kilometre-long queue at the toll plaza of Yamuna Expressway with a



Crowd of visitors at Taj Mahal on Diwali weekend. RANVIJAY SINGH

large number of vehicles heading towards Delhi from Agra. Authorities at ISBT, Agra too confirmed that the bus services for Delhi got affected because of jam on the Expressway on Sunday.

Availability of best connectivity (the 165-km Yamuna Expressway connecting Agra with NOIDA) and affordable accommodation also attract visitors from Delhi, Gurgaon, NOIDA, Ghaziabad and Faridabad etc.

"Visitors from these cities in NCR look for a couple of days' getaway in their own cars for a distance less than 200 kilometres and affordable rooms at quality hotels for family. Agra serves them all in this post second Covid wave scenario as hotels have shifted their focus from foreign tourists (altogether missing) to otherwise travel starved domestic crowd coming in abundance on week-ends to break the monotony," said Sandeep Arora, president of Agra Tourism Development Foundation.

"Easing of Covid curbs has made people think of travelling a reasonable distance but in their own vehicle. There were budget category visitors to Agra in pre-Covid days too but with presence of foreign tourists in abundance, the star category hotels focused on guests with high paying capacity. The budget category visitor preferred a day's visit only after returned the same day after visiting Taj and a few other monuments," said Sunil Gupta, regional chairman (North), Indian Association of Tour Operators.

"The absence of foreign tourists has led to star category hotels looking for domestic visitors and they have slashed prices, making them affordable for average domestic visitor looking for a couple of days away from home. The families from NCR region include religious tourism too in their travel and while staying in Agra visit the twin cities of Mathura and Vrindavan," said Sandeep Arora.

Travel bureau owner Sunil Gupta echoed similar sentiments, saying that 70% of visitors reaching Agra on week-ends and during holidays were those from the National Capital Region.

"One cannot take away the credit from Taj Mahal for its beauty and charm which makes the monument worth visiting on repeat occasions. Visitors on week-end and holiday get-away have to face chaos because of crowd at the gates of Taj Mahal and something should be done about it," he said.

"Interestingly, Agra is also linked with state capital Lucknow by an expressway but it seems that the week-end visitor prefers to travel less than 200 km in a day by his own vehicle which is easy using the 165 km-long Yamuna Expressway than the 305 km-long Agra-Lucknow Expressway," he said.

During the pre-Covid phase till February 2020, the Taj Mahal used to get 20,000 tourists per day with the average inflow falling to 10,000 in a day during summers and rising to 25,000 to 30,000 visitors per day in winters, revealed an official of the Archaeological Survey of India at Taj Mahal, preferring not to be named.

With the outbreak of Covid, Taj Mahal gates were closed on March 17, 2020 and opened on September 21, 2020 with capping on the number of visitors. Only 5,000 tourists were allowed in a day with two slots of 2500 each in earlier and latter half of day. However, as the situation eased, 10,000 and

then 15000 tourists were allowed by December 2020.

With the onslaught of the second wave this year, Taj Mahal was again closed on April 16, 2021 and opened two months later on June 16, 2021 but with capping of not more than 650 tourists at a time.

The curbs were again relaxed as the situation improved and average number of visitors increased to 12,000 to 15,000 in a day in October this year but number of visitors rises to 25,000 to 30,000 on week-ends and holidays.

The ASI official revealed that there were more than 25,000 tourists at Taj on Gandhi Jayanti and the number crossed 30,000 figure on Diwali holidays.

Foreigners back in Kashi

As life has returned to normal post the Covid-19 pandemic, it means the foreign tourists can once again keep their tryst with the ghats in Kashi.

Around 150 foreign tourists visited Varanasi in the last two months (September and October), according to a senior officer, department of tourism.

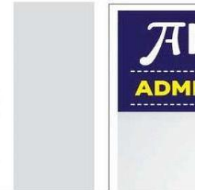
Most of the foreign tourists, who visited Varanasi during this period, were nationals of USA, England, Israel, Poland, Mozambique, Japan, Russia, France, Germany and Romania, the officer said.

"However, many of the tourists are travelling to Varanasi from cities like Rishikesh, Bangalore and Delhi where they were staying temporarily. They now prefer shorter journey as they got stuck in many cities when the Covid-19 had broken out over 17 months ago," said the officer.

According to the tourism department, many tourists also reached Varanasi via Nepal. Most of them spent around four to seven days and went back. At present, around 30 tourists are in Varanasi and they can be seen sitting on ghats.

On Monday, some foreigners were seen at Tulsī Ghat. They were enjoying traditional 'Naag Nathaiya Leela' being performed in river Ganga. It is held every year a few days after Deepawali. Naag Nathaiya depicts Lord Krishna's victory over serpent Kalia. A group of local artists of Kashi perform it in the middle of river Ganga.

Regional tourism officer Keertiman Srivastava said, "Post Covid-19, around 100 tourists have visited Kashi. Gradually, the foreign tourists have started coming to Varanasi but their number is very small. I hope more tourists will visit the city in near future." He said that before March 2020 (when Covid-19 outbreak occurred), on an average, over 35,000 foreigners used to visit Varanasi every month during the peak season which begins in September and ends in the first week of March.



4. Chapter News

Segment 4 update sequence by date:10, November

Wednesday, 10th November

- The google drive link to high resolution images of IATO Ayodhya tour. These are images from 1-3 November

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LshQWwwxJVile5mn4HyYFqGpHJ1eFCnc>