

OUTLOOK RESPONSIBLE TOURISM SUMMIT & AWARDS 2021

THE SUSTAINABILITY
& TOURISM FOR
TOMORROW REPORT



indian responsible
tourism awards
2021





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Outlook Responsible Tourism Summit & Awards 2021

Sustainability & Tourism for Tomorrow

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Odia Language & Literature, Odisha

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Indian Responsible Tourism Awards 2021

SUSTAINABILITY & TOURISM FOR TOMORROW

CARBON

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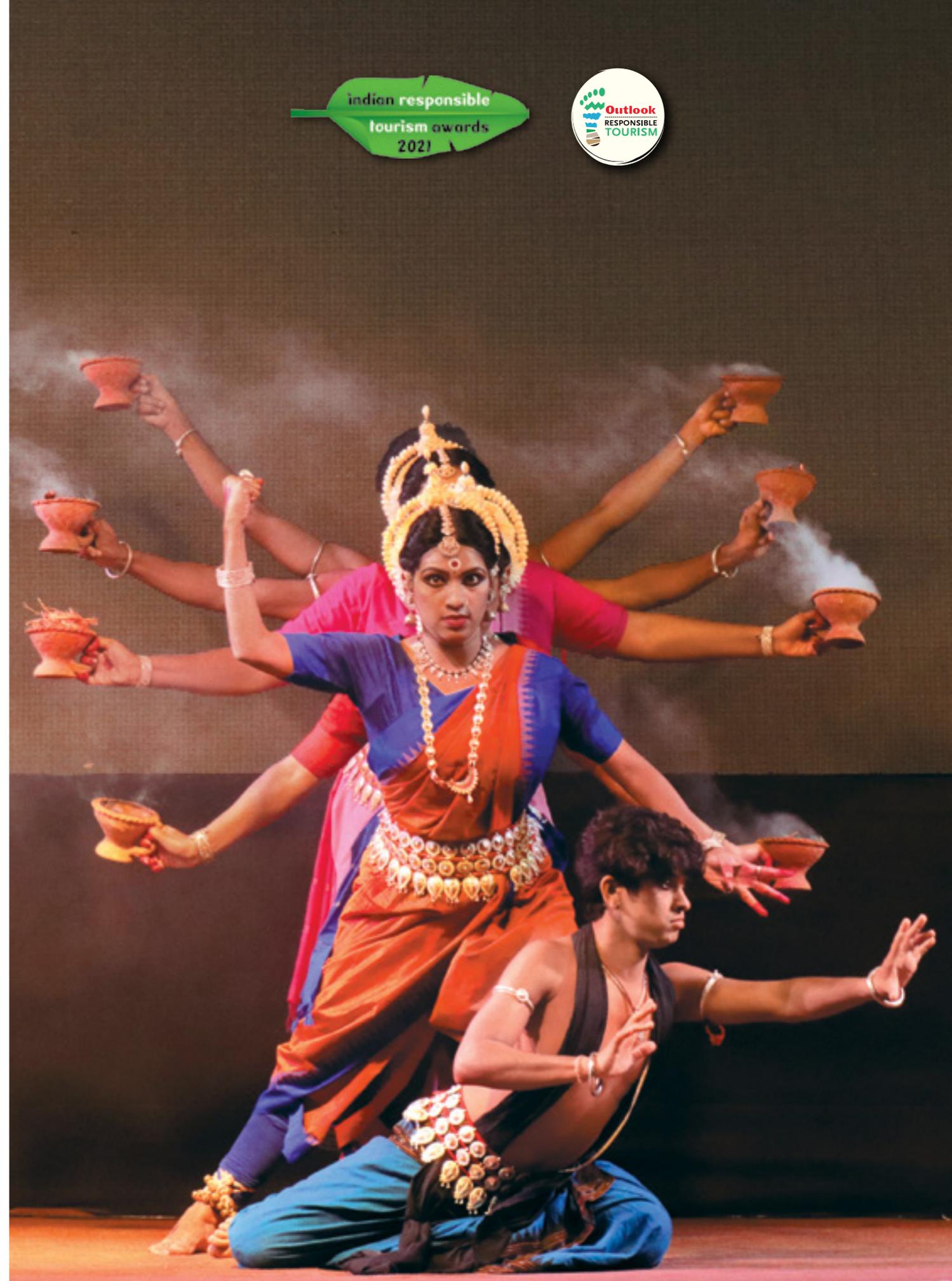
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Fiona Jeffery OBE, Founder & Chair, Just a Drop

Case Study

Manisha Shah, Manager Advocacy, Arghyam



keywords

While uncertainty remains around exactly when, where and how travel will open up, there is one thing we know for certain — travel will return. We know it is going to come back. And it will come back stronger, safer, more unified and more sustainably than ever before.

ZURAB POLOLIKASHVILI, Secretary General, UNWTO

Through local, state and national travel, we open up the supply chains. Economic activity kicks off again, allowing especially SMEs to start getting busy, recovering jobs, recovering economic momentum. And beautifully, by getting domestic travel going, we flatten out a lot of the seasonality curves that are dependent originally on international travel.

ANITA MENDIRATTA, Special Advisor to the Secretary General, UNWTO

It has been an interesting and very engaging experience to be part of the IRTA 2021 jury, and sharing the experience of the people who are on the frontline, dealing with such a difficult situation and yet coming out with innovative solutions. Responsible Tourism, which was an aspiration so far, seems to be transforming into reality [in India now].

MEENAKSHI SHARMA, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

One year has brought more changes than a century... But we should recognise cyclical patterns or traps of time, progress and decadence. I think it's better to be inspired by the past or continue to create intuitively... Too much exposure or [dependence on] design magazines, bring irrelevant architecture to the fore.

AMAN NATH, Co-founder & Chairman, Neemrana Hotels

Apart from memories and photographs, tourism had the potential to make people think about changing the way they lived, or conducted their business... We need to understand that if we own the problem, we also own the solution, and in an increasingly connected world, we could replicate solutions across geographies. India can own a plethora of solutions for sustainable development and become a Superpower of solutions.

HARISH HANDE, Co-Founder, SELCO, & Ramon Magsaysay Awardee

Climate change will affect the availability, quality and quantity of water for basic human needs... [The Transformational Triangle linking governments, businesses and not-for-profits] is about having a collective vision, demonstrating collaborative leadership and partnership, ensuring civil society and communities genuinely benefit.

FIONA JEFFERY OBE, Founder & Chair for Just a Drop

Eco-tourism will be a way by which we will be able to show how we can actually create circular economies and combat climate change.

BHARATI CHATURVEDI, Founder & Director, Chintan Environmental Research & Action Group

All forms of tourism can be more responsible, and many destinations are increasingly attracting market segments in harmony with local life, communities and culture.

DR HAROLD GOODWIN, Chair of the Jury, IRTA; Emeritus Professor at Manchester Metropolitan University; MD, International Center for Responsible Tourism; & RT Advisor, World Travel Market



Why can't we have a kind of circuit covering 2 or 3 States? That should be the spirit and the policy of tourism in our country... As for responsible tourism, we have very good examples of eco-tourism [in Odisha]. We ensure the involvement of the community. Whatever revenue is earned, we give back nearly 80% of that, and in a few cases, the communities earn up to ₹1 crore.

It's not a small thing. They are the core people in tourism...

JYOTI PRAKASH PANIGRAHI, Honourable Minister of Tourism, Culture, Odia Language & Literature, Government of Odisha

The story of Odisha for the last 20 years has been one of transformation. Tourism is now a priority sector, contributing 13% of the GDP. Keeping this in mind, the budget for the year 2021-22 has been almost doubled to about ₹500 crores. 2020 was a difficult year for all of us, but it was also a year of great learning. It gave us time to introspect on what it is we need to do. The next 4-5 years are going to be very exciting times, and our objective and vision is to be among India's top destinations.

VISHAL DEV, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Sports & Youth Affairs, Government of Odisha

Twenty years ago, Odisha was remembered for all the wrong reasons, like the super cyclone or starvation deaths. Now, Odisha has emerged as a model State in many aspects. It's one of the safest destinations, and among the first States to restart tourism [after the pandemic] on World Tourism Day 2020... Odisha presents a wide kaleidoscope of experiences for travellers, and has everything that India has to offer, and more.

SACHIN JADHAV, Director & Additional Secretary, Department of Tourism, Odisha

The Responsible Tourism objectives of Gujarat, underline the promotion of nature-based or non-consumptive tourism, facilitation of eco-tourism to experience and appreciate the beauty, serenity and the dynamic balance of nature, leading to an aware, informed and responsible citizen.

SANATAN PANCHOLI, Senior Officer, Department of Tourism, Gujarat

Innovation can come from anywhere, it doesn't have to be from one location or one entity. Invest India has created online platforms where people can come and collaborate with other startup entrepreneurs across the globe.

VARUN SOOD, Vice President, Invest India

Nature tourism, including bird tourism, is one of the fastest growing segments today... Conservation doesn't mean isolation. The right balance can be struck by promoting regulated tourism in natural habitats, with sustainable benefits to communities.

PANCHAMI UKIL & AVINASH KHEMKA, Founders, Song of the Wild Foundation

We are all intelligent enough to know that a lot is riding on responsible tourism today, and I feel very proud of the fact that we as a media group, at Outlook, we are not as noisy as the others... but we deal with a lot of substantive issues like this.

RUBEN BANERJEE, Editor-in-Chief, Outlook

The Pandemic has afforded India the ability to transform itself into a Responsible Tourism hub based on the principles of Sustainability, Resilience and Development... Sustainability is not a choice anymore, it has to be woven into the DNA of tourism, while development should embrace not just infrastructure, but the entire community, entire ecosystem at a destination. The pandemic has shown the resilience of communities, but we have to work further to ensure that livelihoods are not lost due to natural calamities, health and safety concerns or manmade disasters.

INDRANIL ROY, CEO, Outlook Group



What really counts...

It will take **2.5 to 4 years** for international tourism to return to 2019 levels, estimates the UNWTO. Asia is likely to jump from **3% by 2023 to 74% by 2024** in terms of arrivals

Impact of the pandemic is **11** times compared to 2009 economic downturn, putting **100-120 million jobs** at risk & costing **2 trillion dollars** in global GDP

With 80% SMEs in the tourism sector, it's a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as for social progress, says WTTC's Social Impact Report 2021

89% Indians want to start travelling again — **52%** want to take domestic holidays, **93%** rate health and safety as a key factor, **75%** want to take longer trips (4-10 nights), **71%** have more confidence in flying again, **85%** want to travel in small groups, according to a survey by Thomas Cook India and SOTC

1.45 lakh tons of waste generated in India every day, **70%** of it in megacities and towns, and that matters because about **80%** of Indians will live in urban areas before 2030



Keynote Address

Trends & Prospects for Revival & Recovery of Tourism

ANITA MENDIRATTA
Special Advisor to the Secretary General, UNWTO; Strategic Resource to the World Bank, WTTC, IATA and ATAG in Tourism, Aviation & Development; & Co-Creator and Co-Host of the Weekly Global Programme RISE

“We have an incredible opportunity to make travel stronger. We cannot and must not waste it”

Anita Mendiratta congratulated the IRTA 2021 team for continuing to focus on responsible tourism and celebrating those behind it. She also shared the greetings of the UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili, who sent a very warm namaste to the delegates, and said the restart of tourism cannot wait. Together, they reiterated that it's not only about the roll out of vaccines. There must be a wider, coordinated approach that includes vaccine certification, passes for safe cross-border travel, and ultimately, everyone taking care of everyone, whether they are the visitor or host, whether travelling local, state-wise, across the country or the world.

THE UNFOLDING OF A CRISIS

- This crisis was unique because it was touching every country and touching it invisibly. The degree of damage was 11 times compared to the 2009 economic downturn.
- The impact of Covid-19 on the travel industry — with steady rates of growth between 3 and 5% for last 10 years — is unprecedented and paralysing. Between 70 and 75% of international travel stopped in 2020. Tourism is back to the 1990s level, costing almost 120 million jobs around the world and 2 trillion dollars in global GDP.
- Interestingly, though, it has demonstrated as every crisis does, the value of an industry. And suddenly people are recognising that travel and tourism is about so much more than just the travellers — it is about places, the lives it is touching, the jobs it is creating, the investment it is inspiring. The way in which it is getting nationals to play a part in celebrating their culture, celebrating their communities, in a way that allows countries to compete and collaborate.
- As per, ICAO — an entity within the UN responsible for global aviation, at the height of the pandemic, 16,000 aircraft were grounded. Some were traveling because there were ultimately 6 million plus people stranded with the world locked down, and they needed to be repatriated home. Medical practitioners and medical supplies needed to be shipped.
- Covid-19 is a healthcare and a humanitarian crisis, which has created an economic crisis, which has created a travel and tourism crisis. But as long as we remain in a healthcare crisis, our borders and skies will be closed. Back in January 2021, we had 116 major restrictions in terms of countries for travel. Most of the world continues to be grounded.

BEYOND 2020

- All the work we need to do to get tourism back up in the air again is not just about aviation, it is about economic, social, cultural, and in many ways, spiritual recovery because of the degree of widespread fear and panic.
- If we look at recovery into 2019 levels of momentum, Asia throws up interesting statistics: 3% by 2023, jumping up to 74% by 2024. That is good news because it is all about domestic and regional travel.
- India in particular, the entire subcontinent is very blessed to have a strong domestic market. That allows for much better opportunity to recover than many other regions around the world.

HOME & AWAY

- Global spend is going to come through initially domestic and leisure tourism. We have been trained psychologically to stay apart from one another. To get back out again is going to take a lot of confidence building and trust.

- Domestic travel allows people to start opening up in their comfort zones. Through local, state and national travel, we open up the supply chains. Economic activity kicks off again allowing especially SMEs to start getting busy, recovering jobs, recovering economic momentum and beautifully by getting domestic travel going, we flatten out a lot of the seasonality curves that are dependent originally on international travel.
- Now we can get Indians traveling around India all year long. This is very important.
- Domestic business travel will take longer to bounce back, now that we have adjusted to doing business through our computer screens.
- International business and leisure travel will take a long time to recover, since it's linked to the revival of aviation.
- People are much more cautious now of how they are spending their tourist dollars, and many would rather stay at home and travel in their own country.
- Plus, the travelling process and planning has become much more challenging because there are so many factors to play.
- However, for as long as the world has been locked in, we have been dreaming about getting back out once more. We must never forget that.

THE NEXT (NOT NEW) NORMAL

When we do get out, it is not however going to be going back to normal. Or a new normal, where everything is the same. It is the 'next normal' because right now with the vaccine being rolled out, confidence is changing and protocols are changing. Once the roll out is done for a significant number of people, it will go into the next normal and regulations will change. So it will be the next normal after the next normal, after the next normal...

CELEBRATE GOOD WORK

Our world needs travel, and this is why it is so important that through the Outlook Responsible Tourism Summit & Awards, we are recognising the importance of building forward a better tourism industry that is responsible, celebrating the opportunity for communities, celebrating culture. It is about creating understanding across all of the industries in Incredible India and all of the people around the country and the world that want to travel again to discover Incredible Indians.

We have an incredible opportunity to make travel stronger. This opportunity, we cannot and must not waste.

The restart of tourism is in our hands. The future of tourism is not just about the travellers, it is about the magic, the power of travel and tourism as a genuine force for good for people and places around the world.

This is our opportunity to do all the things we worried about in the past, but didn't quite have time for — issues of sustainability, of overtourism, overcrowding, issues of looking at making sure that every single person in the destination not only benefited from tourism, but felt proud of what they as citizens could offer as part of the tourism experience. This is the time for us to really make responsible choices that are going to create an industry that we believe can fundamentally build a stronger future for everyone in our tourism world.

Future of Travel

S-P-A-C-E

S FOR SAFE DISTANCES

Space is not just about protocols. It is also about people feeling the need to move around again. Their need to stretch their bodies, their minds and their hearts, having been locked up for so long. This is good news.

It is about getting people outside Tier 1 cities. People want to explore, go into unknown, unlocked places. This is fantastic for all of us in the tourism industry to start opening up experiences and opportunities that are not originally on tourist maps, but where we wanted them to go to, because we wanted tourism to be able to touch those communities, exchanging those cultural learnings, and in a way, making sure that the benefits were shared all across the country, beyond the main destinations.

It also allows us to leverage the seasons. The interchanging seasons is a new opportunity to see different parts of the country, to explore festivals, to share the country as the country is moving through

the year. And it is an advancement of nature-based tourism, another beautiful opportunity.

Ultimately, SPACE is about simplifying the hardware and allowing people to experience all that is incredible in India in a way that is unique, and not what they were used to.

P FOR PREPAREDNESS

Travellers need to know the protocols, whether they are leaving their home to go to a local community or somewhere else in the country, or if they are leaving the country. They want to know the policies and the experience delivery. People in communities who are experiencing travellers coming in for the first time after COVID-19, want to make sure that they are safe as well. What is the opportunity here? It ultimately is about pre, during and post travel communication, focusing on the software, the care.

A FOR APPRECIATION

Recognising the blessing of being able to get back out again — to be able to make a difference. It is not just the value of travel, it is the values of travel which have

evolved. Which is why, now is the time to make a unique personal connection, now is the time to emphasise on the details.

C FOR CONNECTION

It is about recognising that the travellers now have a higher degree of understanding and appreciation of different lifestyles, traditions, values and cultural ways. All of us, as much as we are practitioners we are travellers as well. We have missed the opportunity to connect, to travel and help communities. We have missed the ability to make a positive impact.

E FOR EXPECTATION

There is a significant difference between our promise and our delivery now because of protocols. For this reason, we need to always remember, the emotional investment will always outweigh the financial. But as the UNWTO Secretary General said, while uncertainty remains around exactly when, where and how travel will open up, there is one thing we know for certain — travel will return. And it will come back stronger, safer, more unified and more sustainably than ever before.



AMAN NATH
Co-Founder & Chairman,
Neemrana Hotels

“Indians have an internal war against waste. We don’t waste things, especially in villages... But we have to define what is ‘enough’ for us...”

It’s better to be inspired by the past or to continue to create intuitively...

Too much exposure or [dependence on] design magazines, bring irrelevant architecture to the fore”



Keynote Address

Sustainability — Looking Back to Look Ahead

SUSTAINABILITY IS COMMON SENSE

There is no heroism in talking about sustainability, whether it is about the environment, built heritage or the intangible qualities, which vanish even more silently. It is pure common sense to not cut the branch from which you are hanging.

TWO FORTS, ONE STORY

In 1977, the 15th-century Fort Palace of Neemrana was in ruins. But we turned absolute waste into assets [for adaptive use], using what we could call jugaad in India. Many people thought it was an absolutely undoable job, including the Oberoi group. The moral of the story is that you shouldn’t listen to anybody except your inner voice.

The Fort at Tijara, with its hanging gardens and now restored rooms, was also a mound of rubble once. It was put to tender by the Government of Rajasthan as a PPP project, and there were 14 bidders for it, which included all the big names from India and some from Dubai. But when the time came to submit the tender, there was only one person who dared to do it. They all thought it was impossible. It was such an extraordinary ruin that it took three years for two JCBs to cut the rock, because this fort had never been completed. The Maharaja worked on it for 13 years, and there were master masons from Mughal Delhi and from Afghanistan. But then, he passed away.

We had to do a lot of training because we wanted to employ local people, and I do believe that the skill and smartness of an average Indian is better than an average person from any other country. Some traditions are timeless, in Rajasthan, for example, nobody will serve you water without touching his elbow because it is a symbol of respect. That cannot be taught in finishing schools.

THE STEPWELL EXPERIMENT

Sustainability comes in many forms. It is possible, for instance, to be sustainable even when one is building something ‘new’, using reclaimed bricks and building materials — such as this stepwell-inspired-spa, cheekily called ‘Wellness’, in Haryana, built over 20 years as a private work. There was a flat piece of land on which a well was dug. Floors were built and covered with earth, so that the whole building would be underground. It looks like a mound and on top of it is an octagonal opening. Light, air and water are used intelligently here and celebrated through vernacular idioms of architecture. Resources of all kinds have been conserved in this structure, and it doesn’t stand out or disrupt the aesthetic orientation of the place either.

It is possible to revive lost construction skills and techniques to build like we did before, and arrest migration to the cities as well.



PROGRESS VS TRADITION

In India we are still alive with a sense of nature, and in the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, which were the maritime centuries of colonization, development and industrialisation, we lost a lot of that. I think it’s better to be inspired by the past or continue to create intuitively, wherever we inhabit our planet Earth. Too much exposure or design magazines brings irrelevant architecture to the fore.

A house built on a 500 square yard plot in Haryana for a friend was sent as an entry to UNESCO. The evaluation committee said it was wonderful, but it was derivative. If an Indian builds a house which derives from the past, it is derivative, but if he makes a copy of a Singapore building with glass and chrome, it is not derivative because that is modern. Why should we accept that?

New regulations are sometimes difficult, for example, if the government decrees that 30% of all electricity generated at heritage hotels has to be solar energy. It will always be a problem at heritage hotels. Where can we place the panels? How can we solve the problem, without ruining the experience?

Sustainability exists beyond the margins of built-heritage too. Recalling a conversation with a taxi driver in Lucknow once, Mr Nath reiterated, “No matter where we go, three things shouldn’t change — bhojan (cuisine), bhasha (language) and bhes (attire). Sustainability is also about taking pride in what we have.

Do we really need to replace our traditions of leaving our shoes outside the door, for instance, or sit on the floor and have a hearty meal? We tend to treat our guests differently, but we really needn’t do that.

We need to celebrate local food. If we travel to Odisha, would we really want to eat pasta? Or fish curry and vegetables that the locals eat? Imposition of alien novelty cuisine is never a good idea.

There is a wonderful saying from Punjab which goes “Khao man bhaonda, pao jag bhaonda.” This means that you should eat what you want, and wear what the world wants you to wear. But because of colonisation and our whole complex of being underdeveloped, we tend to do the opposite. The indigenous is so important.

Indians have an internal war against waste. We don’t waste things, especially in villages... But we have to define what is ‘enough’ for us.

SUSTAINABILITY & A SENSE OF PRIDE

- There has to be a sense of pride in cleanliness and hygiene and we try to embody that in the villages around our properties. It will help if the government perhaps sets up competitions, to make local communities work at keeping their surroundings clean.
- We work on this by talking to the local people and we support the government projects.
- We tied up with Nerolac, and painted schools, where children come with great willingness now, and we also painted 800 houses in what is perhaps one of the sloppiest villages in Rajasthan.
- We also support schools and projects for differently abled children, and their creativity and passion are absolutely incredible to watch.



DR HAROLD GOODWIN
Chair of the Jury, IRTA,
Emeritus Professor at Manchester
Metropolitan University,
MD, International Center for
Responsible Tourism, & RT Advisor
to World Travel Market (WTM)

“While ‘sustainability’ is an aspiration, ‘responsibility’ is what you do to achieve it. It implies and requires action. Not only is it about having a sense of duty to deal with an issue or account for it, but also about a sense of self worth and empowerment, which is critical to bring about change.

We’ve known about the issue of sustainability for close to 50 years... And although there are many good examples now of ways to make things more sustainable, not enough people are implementing them”



Responsible Tourism has Spread Across India

TRUE RESPONSIBILITY

All forms of tourism can be more responsible, and many destinations are increasingly attracting market segments in harmony with local life, communities and culture. But sustainability has to be more than just lip service... At the heart of Responsible Tourism lies transparency – this can counter the green-washing and accurately report what is being done, why it’s being done, and its impact on livelihoods and the destination itself.

Next year, to mark 20 years after the first responsible tourism conference was held in Cape Town, World Travel Market (WTM) is already creating a draft platform promoting solutions, which will be launched in 2022.

THE INDIA ADVANTAGE

Never before have we been more deeply aware of the extent of the problems of carbon emissions, water scarcity and plastics and other kinds of waste. And though much has been said about the pandemic’s positive impact on the environment, we shouldn’t believe any of it. The problem is as large as it was before.

Fortunately, in India, organisations like CGH Earth Hotels have made many sustainable interventions, including a great system of water harvesting. In fact, responsible tourism has spread across India, since the awards were started globally, and further accelerated when the Indian chapter of the awards began five years ago. Some of the leading examples of best practices are from the subcontinent now. The new National Tourism Policy of India also prioritises responsible tourism. States need to learn from each other and adapt proven solutions, and this is already happening; Kerala and Madhya Pradesh recently signed an MoU, for instance.

INDIAN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AWARDS (IRTA) 2021

Tracing the history of the awards to 2004, when ResponsibleTravel.com ran it for the first time (after the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards were abandoned in 2003), and then, the passing of the baton in 2018 to WTM London, Dr Goodwin said that from the very outset, the focus of the awards was to celebrate individuals, businesses and destinations that had taken responsibility for problems, acted on them and reported their impact transparently. This resulted in finding many proven solutions that could be promoted and replicated. But a lot more needs to be done to encourage such replication.

Congratulating all the award winners of IRTA 2021, Dr Goodwin mentioned how impressive the applications were this year, not in spite of the pandemic, but because of it!



VARUN SOOD
Vice President, Invest India

“We need to convert job seekers into job creators, and this requires a huge mind shift”

THEN & NOW

More than 39 million jobs were created in the tourism sector in India, and globally, more than 30 billion dollars (₹2,100 crores) were generated by tourism in 2019. But 2020, of course, has been the toughest year in the history of tourism.

THE HOME RUN

Tourism is one of the most impacted sectors due to Covid-19, and more than 1.3 trillion dollars were lost during the last year, with India losing close to 5 lakh crores. Domestic tourism is now a bigger market opportunity than international tourism. The Swadesh Darshan and Dekho Apna Desh initiatives are working towards using this shift as an advantage for India.

INVESTING IN INDIA

The PM-STIAC Mission has set up committees and nine different missions, which includes electric vehicles, AI, quantum frontiers and bio science. The objective behind this mission is to ensure that innovations can get commercialised.

The Start-up India initiative was launched in 2016, and today, India has the third largest startup ecosystem in the world. This initiative aims to convert job seekers into job creators. Each start-up contributes close to 12 jobs and innovations have started moving to cities like Jaipur, Kochi and many Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. The fastest growing sectors for innovations are artificial intelligence, robotics, construction, and travel and tourism.

TAPPING INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Invest India has already set up more than 11



New Directions & Growth Drivers for 2030

international bridges with different countries. It has created online platforms where people can come and collaborate with other startup entrepreneurs across the globe. The Startup India website has over 1,50,000 people registered as entrepreneurs, and they can seek mentors, partners and co-founders to build up products and capabilities.

WHAT IS A STARTUP

A startup can be a private entity, an LLP or a registered partnership not exceeding ₹100 crores, and the nature of activity would revolve around innovation, improvement in process, scalability, job creation and wealth creation.

To make it easier for anybody to apply as a recognised startup, one can go online and within 15 to 20 minutes can upload supporting documents and get the application evaluation criteria done within 48 hours.

FUNDING

Registration gives access to ₹10,000 crores worth of funding, which the government has allotted for startups. An entrepreneur, who is looking to test their product or get the product in the market, can get any support between ₹20 lakh to ₹2 crores capital to deploy that product, do a proof of concept, build up prototypes, do the product trials, get incubator support to ensure that they can get to the market faster and quicker. Startup India has an online portal where more than 25 free courses are available. Invest India has top partners including Microsoft, UpGrad, Hubspot, to provide those services as well.





Sustainability
& TOURISM
FOR TOMORROW



CARBON



DR HARISH HANDE
Co-Founder, SELCO,
& Ramon Magsaysay Awardee

“Those who don’t have the privileges we have, don’t need our ‘help’ — they need partnerships...

Tourism has the immense power to take people to places where they have never been, and see ways of life they have never experienced before. Other than making memories, tourism has the potential to make people think about changing the way they live, or run their businesses... to make them think about sustainable energy practices, and reducing and managing waste”



India Can Be a Superpower of Solutions

TOURISM & RESPONSIBILITY

The pandemic has changed the world and affected every nation’s workforce in different ways. Working from home has become the norm – but in a country like India, 60% of the population didn’t have that option... So, while we look for solutions in a post-pandemic world, we must also ask how do we bring in inclusivity? How do we breach the barriers of wealth, education and language in our society? How do we bring in inclusivity in tourism as well.

With rising aspirations — thanks to access to information and mobility — India has to ensure that environmental and social sustainability work hand in hand. It has to ensure it doesn’t become the next Venezuela or El Salvador... Besides, why are we talking about responsibility? Why are we talking of carbon? About waste? Because somebody has screwed up. Who has screwed up?

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Responsible tourism practices have the power to influence people to do better... to go back and change the way their organisation works, or the way they live. They could influence businesses to change their water utilisation systems, pollution control systems, ensure green supply chains, and maybe ensure that 90% of the products in the supply chain come from rural areas. Not only will this create incomes and spark economic re-generation, but also lessen economic divides. Tourism has the power to bring the two worlds together.

90% of the innovations in the world happen for the top 10% of the population. Sure, innovation can be brought about in solar lighting systems and solar livelihoods, but it can also be brought in for roti rolling machines, butter churners or blowers for blacksmiths. Social sustainability and inclusivity have to be ingrained in our governance and conscience.

OWNING THE WORLD’S SOLUTIONS

When we own the world’s problems, we also own the world’s solutions, and in an increasingly connected world, we can replicate them across geographies. Problems of Manipur are similar to Tanzania and lower Argentina. Problems of upper Assam are similar to the Philippines and upper parts of the Nile [basin]. Karnataka is similar to central Ethiopia and drought-stricken places of Madhya Pradesh... We’re a democratic country with many educational institutions, a private sector, financial institutions, and at the grassroots level, the Panchayati system and rural banks. India can own a host of solutions for sustainable development and become a superpower of solutions. The tourism industry should also aim to create effective, development-oriented solutions.





JAIDEEP BANSAL
COO, Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE)

“It’s a two-way street. We share tech solutions with communities, and they give us experiences and memories of a lifetime... Ultimately, it’s about creating smart, sustainable destinations that draw travellers who leave behind a sustainable footprint and contribute to the overall development of the local ecosystem”



case study

Creating Carbon Neutral Destinations

WHO ARE THEY...

Over the last eight years, Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) has been using a combination of technology and clean tourism to bring sustainable development to the remotest corners of India. Committed to carbon neutrality and carbon offsetting in these fragile ecosystems, GHE’s mission is to leverage technology, create the spirit of entrepreneurship, and truly empower remote communities, while achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They were recently awarded the UN Global Climate Action Awards.

SOLAR ELECTRIFICATION

GHE has already electrified 140 villages, impacting the lives of 60,000 people, and offsetting over 35,000 tons of carbon emissions... But what does access to energy really mean to communities that have been using kerosene lamps so far? Imagine going into a dark room, switching on the light and just dancing! That is how locals react when their village is lit up for the first time.

Creating green technology solutions for places like Ladakh and Garo Hills in Meghalaya, GHE creates a skillshare chain — a local Ladakhi woman engineer from the GHE ecosystem electrifies villages and trains locals in Meghalaya; they in turn electrify and train locals in a remote border village in Nagaland... So a Buddhist lady electrifies a Christian village, a Christian villager electrifies another Christian village, and GHE’s core team has a Muslim lead engineer and a Sikh COO... That is how capacity development flows, irrespective of borders and religions!

Community empowerment is key — one has to handhold these communities at first, train them to become entrepreneurs, and let them own the systems to ensure that the impact is much more than just electrification.

DIGITAL EDUCATION

GHE sets up solar-powered computer labs in areas where there is no 4G or any mobile connectivity. This allows children to access offline content, new tools and resources, bringing these communities at par with the rest of India and providing them with equal access to opportunity.

Education centres set up by GHE double up as community training centres as well. Here, local men and women learn about complementary/new weaving and farming techniques, for instance, that they can put to use.

HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS

To bridge gaps in the existing healthcare systems in remote areas — now even more crucial in the light of the pandemic — GHE sets up solar-powered health centres and provides critical medical equipment that often cater to more than 20,000

people at once. They set up such a centre, for instance, in the Changthang region of Ladakh, home to the Pashmina herders and the famous Pangong Lake. While the centre was set up for the locals, it will also benefit tourist who come here.

GHE’s initiative Mountain Homestays has also developed a real-time health monitoring system called DEMETRA for travellers and local communities, with strong privacy measures. This won the Indian Responsible Tourism Award 2021 Gold in the Best Covid-ready Innovation category.

LIVELIHOOD GENERATION

None of these interventions can be sustainable, unless there is livelihood creation. GHE’s initiative, Mountain Homestays works with rural communities, invests in their capacity development, and sets up solar-powered homestays, so that travellers can also contribute to the development of these beautiful locations, help generate additional incomes, and ensure that local handloom and handicrafts are celebrated.

Remote, rural areas also have very clear night skies. By introducing Astro-tourism in some of these places — setting up telescopes and training locals to use them — GHE also gives travellers yet another compelling reason to spend the night at a destination, stargaze and spend locally.

OFFSETTING CARBON

GHE’s Impact Expeditions, where the expedition fee covers the cost of the the hardware, transportation, installation and training of village-scale solar micro-grids, are carbon negative. GHE calculates and offsets the emission, to ensure the expeditions are not just carbon neutral but carbon negative (taking back more carbon from the environment than they are releasing).

Apart from offsetting carbon through solar electrification, GHE is now pushing the envelope by building and sharing energy efficient chulhas that use up to 70% less firewood, without compromising on the authentic flavours of the local cuisines. This is especially useful to communities they work with in the North East.

LADAKH A Replicable Model

Sustainability is not just about reducing or offsetting emissions for GHE. It’s also about cultural preservation, and growth for the community and the destination. The villages of southeastern Ladakh — home to the nomadic Pashmina herding Changpa tribe — are perched next to blue lakes and streams in the mountainous Changthang region. GHE is developing these villages as carbon neutral destinations. This region has the potential to be a major tourist hub, as an alternative to the Pangong area.

Waste and Water

To avoid impacts of overtourism (witnessed around Pangong Lake), residents of local villages are working with GHE and the administration to create sustainable waste management systems. Currently, all plastic waste is burned. They are also figuring out the best way to use existing glacial streams as a source of clean water that can be provided to travellers for refilling.

Greenhouse Farming

GHE is also helping the locals set up greenhouses for organic farming, instead

of buying vegetables from Leh or Srinagar. These cater to local needs and also help in offering travellers a farm-to-table experience.

Solar Water Heaters

Post-Covid, everybody needs hot water now in the cold conditions of Ladakh to wash their hands. Instead of using fossil fuels or cow and yak dung to heat the water, GHE is harnessing the power of the sun, which shines for 300 days a year.

Cultural Interventions

Joining forces with the Ama Tsogpas, the local women’s self-help group, GHE are hoping to develop market-ready designs for Pashmina.

THE CARE FRAMEWORK

If we calculate our emissions, we can avoid and reduce them to a great degree. But there are some emissions that are unavoidable. And that is where carbon offsetting is crucial.

Calculate

There are many tools available online to calculate our carbon footprint. To attend the Outlook Responsible Tourism Summit & Awards, for instance, everyone has taken flights and cars to

reach Odisha, and are staying at the Eco-Retreat in Konark for two days. We have to map these emissions, which could, for example, measure around 40 tons.

Avoid

How can we avoid this? The Eco-Retreat Konark follows quite a few best practices — vehicles are not allowed inside, EV vehicles are used for internal transport, there are no plastic bottles, etc — these are small measures that go a long way.

Reduce

Can we use put up solar panels on each tent? Or use locally made products and locally grown food by working with communities nearby? Growing organic produce, buying local souvenirs or recycling material can help reduce carbon emissions.

Offset

Emissions that cannot be avoided must be offset. Offsetting emissions is a great way to finance future development projects. In Odisha, many communities use firewood — can you provide clean cook stoves to them? Hotels can also calculate the average emission of a traveller, offset that for a small fee and give her a carbon neutrality certificate.



WASTE



BHARATI CHATURVEDI
Founder & Director, Chintan
Environmental Research
& Action Group

Eco-tourism Can Be a Common Good

“Eco-tourism can demonstrate how to create circular economies and combat climate change. It can create models that will work not just for the travel industry, but for the wider world!”

THE BIG PICTURE

1.45 lakh tons of waste is generated in India every single day. Between 40% and 50% of this is recycled by a huge army of informal actors like the waste picker, *kabadiwala*, and sorters and recyclers. In fact, India has some of the highest rates of recycling. But what we don't know is when places are far away, lots of low value waste is not picked up and recycled. In the light of all this, how can we keep the footprint of tourism light?

THE URBAN BURDEN

70% of the waste comes from the really large cities and towns of India. And that matters because before 2030, about 80% of us will live in urban areas. So, we will generate more waste.

NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE

Globally 40% of waste is burnt, and according to the National Clean Air Plan by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change, waste is a significant contributor to air pollution. Researchers say about 29% of the global anthropogenic emissions of small particulate matter come from trash fires, and about 10% of all mercury emissions from open burning.

BURIED IN DEBRIS

There are many kinds of waste, including construction and demolition (C&D) waste, particularly relevant in the tourism sector. If you are building or expanding a cottage, or modifying a motel or guest house, you'll generate C&D waste. This gets into our lungs as dust, and goes into the ground, making the soil unproductive. Sadly, in India only 1% of C&D waste is recycled.

NEGLECTING WET WASTE

We shouldn't forget wet waste because: First, the process of rotting generates methane, which is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. Second, it disrupts the ecosystem; when we throw curries and pulaos out, animals and birds feast on them, causing illness in the local biodiversity. Third, it creates this unnatural dependence of local species on something that is not their food. And of course, there are other issues about dumping waste where it won't be collected, or dealt with.

THE PLASTICS PROBLEM

In a lot of eco-tourism zones, people still bring things like wet tissues, balloons, sequins, not realising they are plastics. Plastics, particularly single-use plastics, are a huge concern. The Ganges, for instance, is now the seventh biggest carrier of micro-plastics into the ocean. Data suggests we might have more plastics in the oceans than fish by 2050! This is complicated because there is chemical as well as physical pollution involved. And plastic is often cheaper than its alternatives.

THE WAY AHEAD

Eco-tourism is a business but it is also a common good, which may or may not be self-sustaining. There will be a gap, and that gap needs to be funded so that we can continue to travel. Obviously waste needs to be reduced but it also needs to be funded. Eco-tourism can demonstrate how we can actually create circular economies and combat climate change. It can create models that will work not just for eco-tourism but for the wider world.

THE DHANAULTI INTERVENTION

In Dhanaulti, near Mussoorie, an entire stretch of 2km is lined with vendors and restaurants. There are no 5-star or 4-star hotels here, but you'll see lots of simple accommodation, and it attracts almost 3,00,000 visitors annually. Chintan found that all the waste here was dumped in the forests and fields. This was affecting farmers. But many locals have opened up ancillary tourism-related businesses — rhododendron juice stalls, small eateries or shops — and were trapped in the cycle that brought in additional money, but also reduced their quality of life downstream.

Chintan helped create zero waste models, find livelihoods and handed it over to the community here. Starting with a paid doorstep waste collection drive, they even got the Vyapar Mandal, shop owners and vendors to join forces. Using over 40 composters, most of the wet waste is now composted. For dry waste, tie-ups were made with recyclers. Now there is 85% segregation and a huge amount of awareness in Dhanaulti. Almost all hotels and restaurants have replaced plastic straws and cutlery with reusables. In other parts of Uttarakhand, Chintan also engaged women's self-help groups to create *Bartan Bhandars* for communities to borrow utensils from during celebrations and ceremonies, instead of using Styrofoam.



CHIRAG MAHAJAN
Senior Manager, Communications,
Waste Warrior Society



**SHOMITA
BHATTACHARYA**
Project Manager,
Waste Warriors Society

“Clean ups are temporary. Changing behaviour is permanent, and that takes time, energy and effort”



case study Talking Trash

WHO ARE THEY...

Waste Warriors started as a practical NGO. They realised the importance of cleaning up, but over the time they evolved and pivoted because they understood that clean ups are temporary solutions. They are important because they represent the trust building that has to happen at a local community level. A lot of times people are desensitized to the reality of plastic, NLP, glass bottles, which are left by the thousands of tourists. But at the end of the day, changing behaviours is a more permanent approach, and that is how Waste Warriors evolved over the years. They operate in Dharamshala, Dehradun, the Corbett landscape and Rishikesh.

COMMUNITY AT THE CENTRE

With the exception of 2020, the Corbett landscape draws lakhs of tourists every year. There are hundreds of hotels here, and tons of waste is generated. This is where it is important to involve local communities who know all the trails, roads, forests and mountains intimately. Women like Lila Devi, one of the 19 members in five sets of groups around the Ramnagar hotel corridor, can be empowered to form self-help groups, take on these initiatives, be trained, segregate waste, run these micro-level decentralised units for waste management, which are then market-linked to aggregators and recyclers. That is the big picture vision. But we are not there yet.

THE HARD TRUTH

Tourist destinations, no matter how big or small, inevitably generate some amount of waste. This waste is not segregated in a majority of the places. Mixed waste is littered, dumped and burned, and there is a severe lack of disposal and collection infrastructure. Regardless of the presence of plastic and electronic waste management rules, or even the Swachh Bharat Mission, the reality of the situation is that the ground implementation of those policies is still quite weak, and we need to figure out a broader, faster plan in collaboration with both district and Panchayat level individuals to find sustainable solutions.

THE APPROACH

Waste Warriors follows a practical, integrated solid waste management approach. Their work is all about changing behaviour, which takes time, energy and effort. But it's key to the more permanent process of waste management and building waste infrastructure, strengthening partnerships with both ULB (Urban Local Bodies) and contractors, and also empowering waste workers. Waste Warriors does this from a tourism standpoint in the geographies where they operate, and engage a wide range of communities all the way from visitors and tourists to food and hospitality providers, waste workers, and self-help groups.



ECONOMICS OF WASTE

In terms of revenue, the complexity in waste management is multilayered. There is a user fee collection, there are Swachh Bharat Mission subsidies as well. Waste Warriors functions on a grant NEPR contract level, and also from proceeds of the sales of dry waste to recyclable aggregators. So far there are 15,000 people in four locations who are actively segregating or have participated in waste management initiatives. There are also 250 community ambassadors, who are inspired to share the work they do with their neighbours, and this word of mouth at a community level is really important.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

- * Waste warriors go door-to-door, collecting easily over 300kg of waste because it is really difficult for vehicles to reach some of the mountainous terrains of Dharamashala.
- * Tourists frequent these areas. There is value to cleaning up a dark spot, to cleaning up the trash left behind by tourists on a hike to Triund, or a visit to the Corbett Tiger Reserve.
- * Some user fees are also collected from businesses in these areas, where door-to-door waste collection services are offered.
- * Tourists go to these places because they are beautiful and remote, and there is no vehicle access. There are green workers in all locations doing operational, direct action work, and it is really important to partner with them.
- * Another great method of engaging local community members and tourists is through art, and Waste Warriors have been doing that in all their locations through wall murals, art installations and 3D structures made of single-use plastics.
- * Door-to-door waste collection is making community members and local businesses understand that they have to take some of the responsibility financially. Waste Warriors have also installed dustbins, which they maintain, and are usually sponsored.

FEET ON THE GROUND

- * Waste Warriors are now focused on empowering stakeholders, and on collaborating and partnering with some of the local agencies, from public officials to private associations of local tour operators, hotels and restaurants, and Vyapar Mandals. They conduct training and workshops for transportation providers, such as taxi and auto unions and bus operators, to make them understand that they have the power to say no to their customers. They are provided with awareness raising materials that they can install in their vehicles.
- * Buses are very important when it comes to anti-littering, and the Tour Operators of Dharamshala have been really active in this regard.
- * Waste Warriors works extensively with local resorts and small-to-medium scale restaurants in training their staff about source segregation and providing containers for dry waste.
- * There is a huge lack of enforcement of waste policies, and ironically, Himachal Pradesh is known for some of the most aggressive waste management policies.
- * Waste Warriors has been increasing government collaborations and administrative partnerships. The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department has recently banned camping on the mountains — this is not a solution. The problem of waste is just too big. Police checkpoints have been set up at the entrance of the trail, where they check the kind of disposable items hikers are carrying with them. Currently, Triund has practically no trash, and with the HP Forest Department, Waste Warriors is now trying to get the hikers to clean up after themselves. They are given a bag and gloves at the police checkpoint, and have to pay ₹100 as a security deposit, which is returned when the trash is brought down.
- * We all are associated with waste workers on the field. We need to know them, talk to them, and express our gratitude because they are the true waste warriors.



WATER



FIONA JEFFERY OBE
Founder & Chair, Just a Drop

We Need a Collective Vision

“Sustainable solutions are the only acceptable outcome while supporting the most vulnerable communities”

THE TAPS RUN DRY

Water is the springboard to so much more — better health, education, incomes, safer communities, gender equality, food security and poverty reduction. Currently, there's a downward spiralling effect due to population growth and economic and agricultural practices that are rapidly creating demand for water, and causing further environmental damage and climate change, which in turn will impact the availability, quality and quantity of water for basic human needs for billions of people. The pandemic, with mass migration from cities to rural areas, has put additional pressure on local water resources and crop production.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL TRIANGLE

It's possible to build better water security and resilience in communities. It requires the development of a simple, realistic and effective approach. It relies on people focusing on their areas of expertise, but in a way that's joined up, and this is 'The Transformational Triangle'. The protagonists are the government, the private sector and business community, and the third sector, national and international NGOs, who are required to work together with the communities, adhering to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The beauty of this is that the roles of each are clearly defined. Governments create policy frameworks for business and the third sector to operate efficiently. Businesses provide the engine and investment to affect change, which in turn is good for business. The third sector underpins effective delivery on the ground. It's about having a collective vision, demonstrating collaborative leadership and partnership to ensure everyone benefits.

SOLUTIONS FOR WATER SECURITY

Just A Drop, which works in six destinations across Africa, Latin America and Asia, including Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in India, undertakes a number of approaches which takes ahead a range of actions, including the hydrology, nature and volume of rainfall and type of soil. But it also maps the local political context, potentially conflicting water demands, and capacities of local organisations. Communities actively participate at all stages. Their feedback is gathered to encourage ownership and sustainability, and work is done collaboratively.

CREATING CHECK DAMS

Popular in India, check dams safely store thousands of gallons of water through the dry season, increase groundwater levels and strengthen water distribution systems in villages, using solar water pumps. They also help with soil conservation and support crop production, so communities can feed their families and use excess crops for income. They are encouraged to grow drought-resistant crops, and use less water intensive irrigation and organic farming techniques. They also create a nutritional garden for themselves.

SANITATION & HYGIENE

Just a Drop's sanitation program has helped reduce open defecation by building model toilets that include a private bathing area. Women love the privacy, and this has led to substantive behavioural change in both women and children who use them. Hygiene education also extends to menstrual hygiene, tackling ancient taboos and encouraging girls to stay in school when they get their periods.

THE PANARI PROJECT

Panari, a village in the Damoh District in Madhya Pradesh, has a population of 507 and 108 households. It has a high infant mortality rate, and over 50% of children under 3 are underweight or stunted. Here, deaths of children under 5 are attributed to diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and malnutrition. Women and children suffer the most due to inadequate water supply and sanitation facilities. They're responsible for fetching water, which takes 3-5 hours a day, and involves waiting in long queues, so girls can't attend school. They also suffer long-term health problems. Therefore, adequate water, sanitation and the promotion of key hygiene behaviours could make a huge impact on their health and economic conditions.

Just a Drop first created a Village Water and Sanitation Committee, consulted every step of the way, and a geological

and hydrological investigation was undertaken, and detailed designs were drawn out. Together, all the stakeholders agreed on:

- The building of a 300 feet deep well and submersible pump, a 40,000 litre water tank and pump house, twin pit toilets and bathrooms for two model families and 38 upgraded latrines, and repairing 3 existing hand pumps.
- The community was trained in good hygiene practices, including menstrual health and hygiene education.
- The school was upgraded with a sanitation block and new handwashing facilities to protect from risks of Covid-19.
- To offset the carbon footprint of the project, 5,000 trees were planted, which not only provide vegetation and fruit sources, but over a decade will capture enough CO₂ to make the project carbon neutral and ultimately, carbon negative.



MANISHA SHAH
Manager, Advocacy, Arghyam



KALYANI DAS
Krishi Mitra, Odisha Livelihood Mission, Karoda Village, Nayagarh

“Water is a finite resource, but you cannot really stop anyone from using it. It’s important, therefore, to have a collaborative approach to managing it”



case study

Communities are the Changemakers

WHO ARE THEY...

Bengaluru-based charitable foundation, Arghyam, is working in 22 states for over 16 years to address the issue of water security for vulnerable communities. Their work rests upon a personal endowment from Rohini Nilekani.

TOURISM & TAPS

Visibly highlighting the correlation between tourism hotspots in India and the growing water crisis, the Arghyam team superimposed maps showing ground water exploitation levels and water quality indicators on tourist destinations. They indicated the severe levels of groundwater exploitation in areas like Jodhpur, Jaipur, Kutch, Aurangabad, Mysore and Gaya.

In 2018, Shimla hit the headlines when it asked tourists to stay away due to water scarcity. Darjeeling has a growing tanker economy, so much so that tourists often find themselves stuck in jams because of the tankers. Ladakh’s fragile ecosystem is already under stress.

The tourism industry has to take the lead to see what they can do about conserving water before it gets worse.

WHAT IS WATER SECURITY

For sustainability, and for ensuring there’s enough water today and for future generations, we need:

Quantity Per capita access to 55 litres of water per day

Quality Water that is free of salinity, geogenic contaminants like fluoride, arsenic, and bacterial contaminants

Access Mechanisms to extract water

Equity A fair share for everyone

SCIENCE OF WATER

Water is a very complex resource, and it’s got a lot of competing users and uses. The largest chunk of that pie is taken by agriculture.

- * How do we ensure that there’s sustainable water access across sectors.
- * How do we ensure that whoever is provisioning this water resource across these uses, does it sustainably?
- * Can communities, if enabled with the right knowledge and skills, ensure their own water security?



THEORY OF CHANGE

More and more people need to understand the science of water, and once they understand it, they will take ownership and ensure that there is sustainability in the way it’s being used. This is the ‘Theory of Change’ that Arghyam believes in. Working with thousands of frontline workers across the states, they are able to demonstrate it in several places by:

- * Making community leaders understand why it’s important to look at demand management and why it’s important to optimise the use of water.
- * Demystifying the science of groundwater and understanding where water actually comes from.
- * Helping the community plan the provisioning of water sources such that everyone has access to them.

WHAT WORKS BEST

- * If you facilitate more and more interactions between the communities and experts, the likelihood that they’ll pick the science up and they’ll get more close to owning that resource is very high. They start getting into a problem solving mode because they understand that this is their water and ensure that they take ownership of how it’s being used.
- * Make sure that there is credible knowledge, easily accessible to everyone. Now that we’re in the digital world and everyone owns a smartphone, it’s become very easy for such kind of knowledge material to flow freely.
- * Make an investment once, and create 10 content pieces on, for example, Odisha, which talks about how to manage groundwater, and hand it over to a frontline worker or member of the community, who is able to share it over WhatsApp to the rest of the people in her village.
- * In everything we do, we have to make sure that we’re leaving a digital footprint, so that after 5 years if the Government of Odisha wants to come and do a program on water, they know where to find a particular resource person or frontline worker, and they also know what she’s trained for.
- * The partnership with Odisha Livelihood Mission and Foundation of Ecological Security, who are ‘for water’ partners of Arghyam in the state, have seen this transformation happen. A frontline worker gets empowered when they have the right knowledge. They start with a little bit of hesitation, but then slowly they find themselves elevated to a different level altogether.

OUTLOOK RESPONSIBLE TOURISM SUMMIT & AWARDS 2021

SUSTAINABILITY
& TOURISM
FOR TOMORROW



We're delighted to introduce the winners of the Indian Responsible Tourism Awards 2021, who saw the global pandemic not as an adversity, but as an opportunity to innovate and build resilient communities. Chosen after a six-month-long process by our eminent jury, they went home with trophies that we created with the All India Artisans & Craftworkers Welfare Association (AIACA), celebrating traditional Indian masks, in keeping with the spirit of the year... Each trophy was hand-painted in the Madhubani style by UNESCO award-winning artist Pradyumna Kumar from Mahrauli village, Muzaffarpur District, Bihar. The copper platter was made by Tambat artisans from Pune, who still practise a craft patronised by the Peshwas in the 18th century.



THE WINNERS

BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION

Gold Mountain Homestays

Gold Augtraveler

Silver Immersive Trails

One to watch Madhouse to Mudhouse, Nat Rural Agro Tourism

BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD

Gold Kaarwan

Silver Aathun

Silver Pashoo Pakshee

BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT

Gold Waste Warriors

Silver Kalap Trust

Silver Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES)

One to watch Chhotaram Prajapat Homestay

BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

Gold Delhi Food Walks

Silver Booking.com

BEST FUTURE FORWARD STATE

Gold Kerala

Silver Odisha

OVERALL WINNER

Delhi Food Walks



indian responsible
tourism awards
2021





why we did not pause...

2020 was a year that tested the travel community like no other, and at first, we were conflicted about whether we should hold the Indian Responsible Tourism Awards 2021 at all. But, as the Covid-19 crisis began unfolding in alarming instalments in mid-March 2020, and the world nearly stopped spinning on its axis, we watched in awe as the boldest and the bravest amongst us stepped forward to lend others a hand, even as their own incomes dried up overnight. From selling apples that were yet to blossom on the tree and hosting online shows for out-of-work folk musicians, to creating digital health solutions for rural India and yes, providing bags of rice where there were none, the community rallied together and how!

Counterintuitive though it seemed at the time, many also deep dived into the new challenges, only to emerge with pathbreaking innovations that could be adopted and replicated anywhere in the world! As we watched such transformations in the face of the severest adversity, how could we not acknowledge them, and celebrate them?

Now in its fifth year, the Indian Responsible Tourism Awards is proud to be the flagbearer of travel that is gentle on the earth and invested in the growth and happiness of the local communities across India. And we believe our role — of celebrating and supporting pathbreakers and leaders — is more crucial now than ever before!

The Covid-19 crisis may have thrown the travel industry into the deepest end of the adversity pool. But it has also shown us what courage, kindness and a sense of community can do.

BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD

Any low-cost, low-carbon, digital or offline project to help local communities dependent on tourism, pivot and find alternative sources of income, during the pandemic

BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION

Sustainable, replicable innovations to reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19 for travellers, staff and local communities as travel opens up

OUTLOOK RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AWARDS 2021



BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT

Any efforts during the Covid-19 crisis to support local communities directly or indirectly earning an income through tourism, or to support wildlife and habitat conservation

BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

Offline or digital communication campaigns that encouraged travellers to stay at home; promoted a destination during the crisis; raised awareness about safety protocols; highlighted the impact on wildlife and habitat conservation; or rebuilt trust of locals and travellers

BEST FUTURE FORWARD STATE

Any state that led from the front during the Covid-19 crisis by supporting the travel industry's revival and recovery through future-forward policies and trust-building interventions (chosen by nomination)

the Jury



DR HAROLD GOODWIN
Chair of the Jury, Emeritus Professor
of Manchester Metropolitan University,
MD, International Center for Responsible
Tourism & RT Advisor, WTM



MEENAKSHI SHARMA
Director General,
Ministry of Tourism,
Government of India



MARCUS COTTON
Owner and MD,
Tiger Mountain Pokhara
Lodge, Nepal



C B RAMKUMAR
Board Member & India Country
Representative, GSTC,
& Founder,
The Sustainability Partnership



RAJ BASU
Co-Founder, Help Tourism and
The Association for Conservation
& Tourism (ACT) in the East
Himalayas & Indo-Burma Region



our roots run deep

This was the 5th edition of the Indian Responsible Tourism Awards, which were first held in 2017. We're regional partners of the WTM Responsible Tourism Awards in London, which was originally founded in 2004 by Responsible Travel. It has now established itself as a global touchstone of responsible tourism with chapters in several continents.

In keeping with the international standards, the judging process for IRTA was intensive and rigorous, and spread over months... And the winners were chosen by an eminent jury of six this year! The jury spent a significant amount of time and effort on judging the Awards, and there were a lot of debates. We thank them for their incredible commitment and hard work.

how are the winners chosen

The judges expend a significant amount of time and effort on the judging of the Awards, and there is often robust debate. Later, the chair of the jury, Emeritus Professor Dr Harold Goodwin writes the citations for the Awards. The jury's reasons are specific, and it is important to note that few, if any, businesses or organisations are responsible in every aspect. None are perfect. But the ones selected by the judges this year are leaders — notwithstanding the pandemic — in responsible tourism, which is most succinctly defined as 'making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit'. We look for businesses and organisations that can educate and inspire others to make tourism better and offer experiences that attract more responsible consumers. The judges can only select from amongst those that apply — if you know of better, more responsible businesses, please encourage them to apply, or nominate your own business.



THE PROCESS

STEP 1. July 2020
Invited businesses to self-nominate for all but the Best Future Forward State category

STEP 2. September 2020
The Longlist: Only 10 in each category made it to the list. They filled out detailed forms created in consultation with our jury and industry experts, and provided documents and references to support their claims.

STEP 3. December 2020
The Shortlist: One (undisclosed) judge for each category combed through the documents and arrived at the Shortlist of 5.

STEP 4. December 2020
Jury Meet: Jurors, along with the Chair, met in the first ever virtual Jury Meet to discuss the final entries and pick winners. There was intense debate and discussion that lasted for over 5 hours.

STEP 5. January 2021
Authentication Process: We verified claims, and crosschecked facts through a network of journalists, industry experts and travellers.

STEP 6. February 2021
Winners List: It was released at the Outlook Responsible Tourism Summit & Awards held by the seaside at Konark. All Covid-19-related protocols were followed.



Overall Winner & BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

GOLD Delhi Food Walks

Delhi Food Walks was launched in 2011 to enable tourists, and later students and corporate groups, to experience the best street food that Delhi has to offer. They subsequently branched out to curate food festivals. More recently, they have extended their programme of culinary walking tours beyond the Capital city.

When Covid-19 struck, they restructured all their walks and tours to ensure their guides and clients' health and safety. Their website lays out clearly the Standing Operating Protocols from the contactless booking system, through expectations of tour guides, guests and food vendors. During the lockdown, Delhi Food Walks connected with those confined to their homes through a live Talk Series to acquaint and enrich people with India's vast and vibrant culinary and cultural heritage. As that series gained momentum, they launched their Stand With Street Food Vendors campaign and a Cook With Delhi Food Walks series. The presenter guides encouraged people to stay safe and practice physical distancing. Those from the health and fitness sectors shared tips and suggestions about leading a healthy lifestyle and tackling anxiety and depression. Their "motive was to cater to curiosity about culture, cuisine, history and heritage as they missed exploring it in the way prior to the pandemic." Simultaneously, telling them to stay safe at home because of the pandemic.

Their campaign to highlight the plight of street food vendors battered by the pandemic was particularly noteworthy. Using their online presence, they encouraged people to continue to support the vendors during and after the pandemic. This demonstrated immense responsibility on their part.





BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION
GOLD Mountain Homestays

Working with 15 health centres in 30 villages across Ladakh, Mountain Homestays has developed a real-time health monitoring system, DEMETRA, for travellers and local communities, with strong privacy measures. The health data is auto-deleted after 30 days, with strong controls to ensure confidentiality. Already pilot-tested, this scalable app enables travellers to receive current information on the health situation in the villages they are travelling to and enables local communities to health check their visitors. It also bolsters healthcare systems in remote locations, reducing the community's need to travel to health centres. Eventually, the team hopes to also monitor the health of the environment or sustainability indicators. Mountain Homestays is a livelihood generation initiative by Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE), which is also installing solar power and critical care equipment at local health centres in remote corners of the country.



BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION
GOLD Augtraveler

Augtraveler has combined Augmented Reality (AR), Geo-Fencing and Multimedia to provide an enhanced experience for travellers at UNESCO World Heritage sites in India through visitor interpretation created and curated by experts, while also providing opportunities for engagement with local communities. The judges were impressed by how this mobile app draws users' attention to engage with authentic cultural environments and purchase local arts and crafts. Craftspeople are trained to add their products and services on Augtraveler's Curated Online Marketplace, and its platform is open for other 'authored experiences' too. In the light of the Covid-19 crisis, Augtraveler facilitated individual self-guided touring and signposted opportunities to meet with and purchase from local people.



BEST COVID-READY INNOVATION
SILVER Immersive Trails

Immersive Trails is a research-driven company that runs guided walking tours of Kolkata (and beyond) for locals and tourists to connect with diverse communities, and support urban heritage conservation. When Covid-19 struck, they started offering free, live virtual events on social platforms. Their India's Oldest Chinatown Walk was converted into a virtual product by combining walkthrough videos and 360-degree photographs, apart from archival images, newspaper clippings, and documents for a global audience. Immersive Trails has been able to demonstrate scale, depth of audience engagement, and the ability to go beyond the geography they started in.



BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN
GOLD Delhi Food Walks

Delhi Food Walks has been helping travellers discover India's most delicious secrets for a decade now, starting with the Capital city and later expanding to several other parts of the country as well. They also curate food festivals. But when the pandemic forced them to rely entirely on their online platforms at first, they used the opportunity to run several campaigns and a Talk Series, most notable of which was the Stand With Street Food Vendors campaign, to highlight the plight of street food vendors battered by the pandemic and encourage people to continue to support them. They also restructured all their walks and tours to ensure their guides' and clients' health and safety.



BEST RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN
SILVER Booking.com

The judges wanted to recognise the contribution which Booking.com made through their 'Rebuilding Together' campaign working with customers and accommodation partners to make it easier for everyone to make informed and safe decisions and navigate the travel-related issues arising from the pandemic, and their 'Travel Rediscovered' campaign promoted domestic travel, reminding everyone that happiness cannot be measured in miles. But it was their 'The World is Waiting For Us' campaign, which encouraged travellers to make a wishlist and linked deals with it, that was particularly significant. This campaign helped keep hope alive and gauged where travellers were likely to go, when they got the opportunity to travel again.



BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD
GOLD Kaarwan Edu Travel LLP

Mumbai-based Kaarwan offers community learning opportunities for architects and other professionals, qualified or aspiring, to work with communities, often in remote areas, to share skills and learn about building techniques not covered in the formal curriculum. One of their referees wrote: "It amazed me how Kaarwan made travelling to a remote earthquake hit village with no electricity or internet to learn and build earthquake-proof structures from the local communities so much fun. We didn't just learn how to build a resilient structure; we learnt how resilient communities are built." When Covid-19 struck, they successfully pivoted to offer the same learning opportunities online and helped local communities create a digital presence and earn from it. Artisans continued to gain a sense of pride and confidence from promoting and sharing their skills online. Kaarwan has grown exponentially since, with a five-fold increase in Instagram followers.



BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD
SILVER Aathun, Rajasthan Studio

Aathun is a not-for-profit initiative run by Rajasthan Studio to preserve, support, and empower the folk musicians of Rajasthan, whose lives and livelihoods were disrupted by the pandemic. Largely dependent on earnings from tourism, they were now jobless and struggling. Aathun was launched in August 2020 as a response to enable folk musicians to earn from donations made directly to their accounts during online performances and through sponsorship. The judges recognise that these are very new initiatives but they show great promise and could be replicated. Like its parent outfit, Rajasthan Studio, a vibrant hub for online learning and cultural experiences, Aathun now has its own online platform to showcase the talent of unknown musicians and artists, and rare, forgotten folk instruments.



BEST ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD
SILVER Pashoo Pakshee

Pashoo Pakshee designs and retails craft products made by local, predominantly female, artisans from marginalised communities living in wildlife conflict areas. They work with Forest Departments and NGOs to develop skills and sustainable livelihood opportunities for tribal and underprivileged communities to reduce their dependence on the forest and enable them "to perceive wildlife conservation as an avenue for prosperity rather than a hindrance". Crafters are paid a stipend as well as for finished items. Prior to the pandemic, Pashoo Pakshee sold in the traditional way around the wildlife zones in hotels, lodges, resorts, park gate gift shops, and through tour operators. When Covid-19 struck, they pivoted from offline to online platforms and sales increased dramatically, enabling them to support more crafters, even as they listed products of three more NGOs.

ONE TO WATCH Madhouse to Mudhouse, Nat Rural Agro Tourism



BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT
GOLD Waste Warriors, Uttarakhand & Himachal Pradesh

Since 2009, with roots in volunteer-driven clean-ups in McLeod Ganj and Triund, Waste Warriors has grown to a team of a hundred, working to build sustainable, affordable, and replicable Solid Waste Management models in three different regions: urban Dehradun, hilly Dharamshala, and the rural forested landscape around Corbett Tiger Reserve. Although Waste Warriors is not a tourism organisation, they operate in tourist areas. The judges wanted to recognise their efforts to help waste workers cope with the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. They launched a relief fund and distributed over 2,000 dry food ration kits to support over 5,000 people in Dehradun and Dharamshala. In Dehradun, they distributed over 2,500 preventive care products to those who needed it, and provided refreshments to people travelling on trains and buses. Apart from providing protective equipment, they also conducted trainings and raised awareness, and sensitised drivers in the transport hubs to arrest further spread of the disease.



Photo Courtesy: Kaarwan



BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT
SILVER Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES), Assam

MMES is a community-based society for conservation and ecotourism. When Covid-19 arrived, they started a campaign to help the needy in fringe villages of Manas National Park. Using their own funds and contributions from the Ketto platform, the Bhutan India Friendship Association and WWF, they were able to provide relief parcels to 2,140 households in 24 villages, containing 20kg rice, 2kg dal, 1ltr oil, salt, soaps and sanitary napkins.



BEST STRONGER TOGETHER EFFORT
SILVER Kalap Trust, Uttarakhand

The Kalap Trust was registered in 2014, one of the first organisations to do development work in the upper Tons Valley, a remote, inaccessible and neglected region in Uttarakhand, working with 37 villages providing high-quality direct services in healthcare, livelihood development and education. The Trust is supported by Tons Trails Travel Services Private Limited, an ecotourism social enterprise that donates 10% of its annual profits. They provided vegetable seed and veterinary kits to assist in maintaining livelihoods through the pandemic and PPE for frontline workers. They also created opportunities for apple farmers to sell their produce long before the harvest season through an online campaign.

ONE TO WATCH Chhotaram Prajapat Homestay, Salawas, Rajasthan





On the shores of Konark... In the shadow of the Sun Temple

This was the sixth edition of the Outlook Responsible Tourism Summit & Awards. But this was the very first time that we were hosting it — as a hybrid event — outside our home base in Delhi, at Eco Retreat, Konark, a seasonal camp on the Ramchandi Beach.



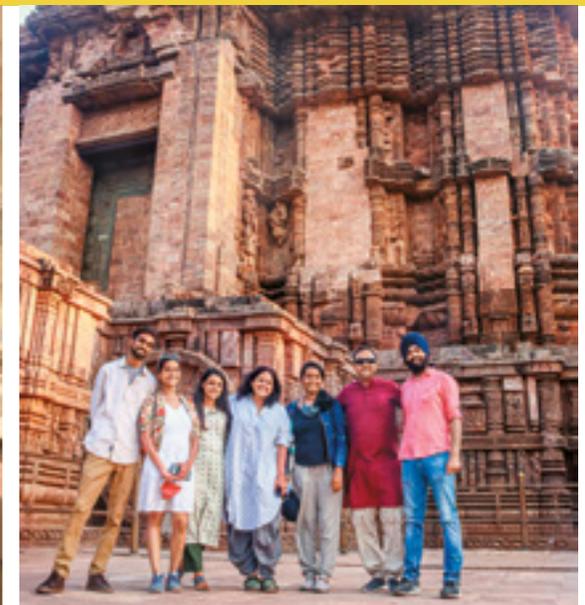
BEST FUTURE-FORWARD STATE GOLD Kerala

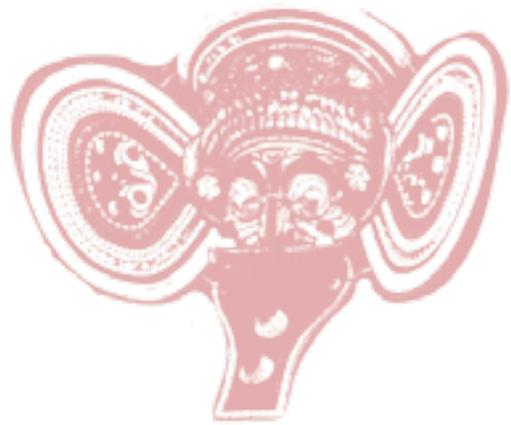
While Kerala's Responsible Tourism Mission has previously won the Indian Responsible Tourism Awards for many of its initiatives over the years, this award is specifically for the Department of Tourism's efforts to support the tourism industry during the pandemic. In addition to providing regular and detailed advice to all parts of the industry, there has been substantial financial support. In 2020, this was provided through the Chief Minister's Tourism Loan Assistance Scheme (CMTLAS), the Tourism Working Capital Support Scheme (TWCSS), Tourism Employment Support Scheme (TESS), Tourism Houseboats Support Scheme (THSS) and the Tourism Guides Support Scheme (TGSS). The State organised Kerala Travel Mart 2020 as a virtual trade show and ran social media campaigns #TripAtHome campaign, #TripOfMyLife, #StaySafe, #Travellater, #WorkAtHome, and promoted virtual travel videos by rural travel providers, craftspeople, artists, musicians and home cooks.



BEST FUTURE-FORWARD STATE SILVER Odisha

The judges recognised the efforts made by the state government through the dedicated Covid-19 Odisha State Portal to provide comprehensive health advice and information about registration procedures for people returning to or visiting the State, for migrant labour returning to the State, and guidelines for tourism service providers. Odisha's tourism website explicitly acknowledges that the guest's safety is the travel and tourism sector's responsibility with detailed advice for travellers on accommodation, natural environments, attractions, accommodation and public transport. Accommodation providers are featured with videos about their Covid-safe protocols. The state also ran several social media campaigns to raise awareness and keep up the spirits of travellers.





About Us

Outlook Responsible Tourism Initiative, an Affiliate Member of the UNWTO, is rallying to protect, preserve and celebrate India's heritage — be it a monument or an art form, an endangered bird or a musical tradition, out in the countryside or in our own backyard. We do it by celebrating and supporting people- and planet-friendly travel companies, hotels and homestays. We do it by telling travellers about the wonderful journeys they can take. We do it by mainstreaming thoughtful, immersive travel! Come along with us.





Photo Courtesy: Pashoo Pakshee



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