



IAAI Newsletter

September 2014, IInd Fortnight Issue

Aviation News

Air India signs code-share agreement with Air Canada



Air India has signed a code-share agreement with Air Canada, its first with a Star Alliance member airline after joining the group in June this year. The code-share pact covers Air India's domestic flights and Air Canada flights to Canada from London, Paris, Hong Kong and Shanghai. This will boost Business Class occupancy on Air India

flights, which currently ranges from 45-50 per cent. Frequent flyer programme integration allows passengers to redeem miles on any of the Star Alliance airlines. Air India used to fly on Delhi-Toronto route but it withdrew the service two years ago due to a huge loss. Currently Air India connects Canada via its nonstop flights to the US.

Source : Business Standard

SpiceJet launches self-booking tool for SME business travellers



SpiceJet Ltd has introduced a self-booking tool, 'SME Traveller', exclusively for business travellers from the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). SpiceJet is the first airline in India to introduce a dedicated and seamless travel management platform for SME business travelers. SME business travellers can avail up to 10 per cent discount on fares. SpiceJet's new SME product allows qualifying

firms to manage their cost, schedule and overall travel requirements dynamically and proactively. This product enables individual business travellers of the registered SMEs to manage their travel needs on their own, while providing visibility and transparency to the SME business and travel managers. Spice Points, a new rewards scheme for travellers, allows upon each completed travel, simplified booking process and detailed travel and savings reports. Spice Points enables the SME traveller to obtain further discounts on their future travel. Each completed travel accumulates Spice Points, which are then reflected against future booking searches as well as in the traveller's profile. These Spice Points are as good as cash and can be redeemed by the SME traveller against subsequent booking(s). Also, customers travelling by SpiceJet can also pre-book their meals and can get to enjoy SpiceMax seats with significantly more legroom and priority check-in for an add-on fee if they so choose during the booking process or anytime after, using the manage my booking option. This option is also available for bookings made through travel agents. SpiceJet has recently waived off the convenience fee for customers using Internet banking to make payments through its website.

Aviation News

Air Seychelles to launch flights to Mumbai on Dec 2



Air Seychelles, the national airline of the Republic of Seychelles, plans to launch direct flights to Mumbai, on December 2, 2014. The new three-times-a-week service will be operated by a two-class Airbus A320 aircraft, configured with 16 Business Class and 120 Economy Class seats, subject to regulatory approvals. The flights from Seychelles International Airport in Mahé

will operate on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and the return flights will operate on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Flight No.	Origin	Departs	Destination	Arrives	Days
HM 0260	Mahé (SEZ)	20:45	Mumbai (BOM)	02:55	Tue, Fri, Sat
HM 0261	Mumbai (BOM)	04:00	Mahé (SEZ)	06:55	Wed, Sat, Sun

Jet Airways starts aligning operations into single full-service



In line with its recent announcement of a uniform 'single brand' entity, Jet Airways Ltd will start streamlining and aligning its domestic operations into a single full-service product to provide an enhanced and consistent product experience. As the first, of many upcoming initiatives, all guests booking flights on or after September 15, 2014, for travel on or after December 1, will enjoy the full-service experience onboard all Jet Airways and JetKonnnect-operated flights across the domestic network. The enhancement into a uniform, full-service single brand will include a complementary meal service onboard

all flights for travel effective December 1, and Sky Café, the buy onboard service will be discontinued. Jet-Privilege members will also earn JPMiles in line with the accrual structure for full service flights. Guests currently booked on JetKonnnect (buy on board flights) and holding tickets bearing flight numbers commencing with S2 and S2 for travel effective December 1, will continue to enjoy seamless service accompanied with a complementary meal service onboard all flights.

Aviation News

- Etihad Airways will start operating a daily non-stop service from San Francisco to Abu Dhabi on November 18, 2014. Etihad will operate a three-class Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, leased from their partner Jet Airways, offering 8 First Class, 30 Business Class and 308 Economy Class seats. San Francisco becomes Etihad's sixth destination in the USA complementing New York, Chicago, Washington, Los Angeles and Dallas (starting December 3 this year).



- Concerned about the risks associated with skydiving and the lack of a regulatory mechanism to prevent fatalities resulting from improper safety measures and reckless behaviour, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has formulated guidelines for adventure sports enthusiasts signing up to take the plunge. The aviation regulator has made it mandatory for skydivers and parachutists to be affiliated with organisations approved by the DGCA and follow a prescribed safety protocol.



- Jet Airways announced that it will start a daily direct flight service between Pune and Abu Dhabi from November 14. Guests travelling to Abu Dhabi will now have multiple options to travel to destinations of their choice to North America, Europe, Africa and West Asia in a seamless manner with our strategic partner Etihad Airways and other interline partners. Pune-Abu Dhabi flight 9W 514 will leave at 5.20 am & arrive in Abu Dhabi at 7.40 am. Abu Dhabi-Pune flight 9W 513 will leave at 11.30 pm & arrive Pune by 4.10 am next day. All timings given are local.



Aviation News

AirAsia India to start 'red eye' domestic flights early next year



Indian flyers will soon have the option of taking late night domestic flights for dirt cheap fares. AirAsia India plans to launch these red eyes—called so in the west because of the army of sleepy and watery eyes of passengers where they are very popular due to low prices—after the winter fog subsides early next year. It will increase aircraft utilisation for airlines. And for passengers, there will be other attractions apart from low fares, as people who do not want to spend on staying the night in a hotel can return to their home cities on these flights instead of waiting for the morning flights. Red eyes usually take off between 11 pm and 4 am and are a big hit abroad because of their very low fares. Most of the international flights out of India are technically red eye as they take off in the dead of the night. In fact, the concept of low-cost flying in India was started by Air India (international) about 25 years ago when it flew the domestic leg of its foreign flights late at night for very low fares. AirAsia India's plan for red eyes comes at a time when it has decided to expand its footprint in India and grow aggressively. The airline, which currently flies to six cities, will raise the number of points to ten by early next year. So the fleet, reach and number of flights would have become sizeable by the time it launches the red eye flights.

Source: The Times of India

THAI Airways raises checked-in baggage allowance by 10 kg



Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI) has announced a new baggage allowance policy for all classes of travel. In order to increase competitiveness and service level, the airline is implementing a new policy to allow an additional 10 kg of checked-in baggage for all classes of travel on all THAI flights, except on flights to and from USA. Royal First Class passengers may now check in 50 kg of baggage, from 40 kg previously. Royal Silk Class passengers are now allowed 40 kg, from 30 kg; while Economy Class passengers are allowed 30 kg, from 20 kg previously. Royal Orchid Plus members are also entitled additional baggage allowance based on their respective member status.

Railway News

First run of “*Mahaparinirvan Express*” for 2014-15 flagged off from Delhi



The first run of the Buddhist Circuit Special Tourist train, Mahaparinirvan Express, for the tourist season 2014-15 was flagged off on World Tourism Day (September 27) .

The special train provides an experience of the culture and spiritual heritage of India, covering the destinations that were visited by Lord Buddha.

The tour package of seven nights and eight days includes hotel accommodation, road transportation in AC deluxe buses, meals, sightseeing, entrance fee, tour guide service, travel insurance, onboard security, etc. The journey covers Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir, Sarnath, Varanasi, Kushinagar, Lumbini (Nepal), Sravasti, and the Taj Mahal in Agra.

More than 5,000 tourists and pilgrims from over 30 countries have travelled on the train in the last few years. Among the pilgrims, more than 38 per cent came from Thailand, while Chinese tourists accounted for 20 per cent and Taiwanese 16 per cent. Tourists from the USA, the UK and other European countries have also taken this train package.

Hospitality News

Le Méridien continues growth in India



Starwood Hotels & Resorts has confirmed the signing of Le Méridien Ahmedabad, a 200-room new build hotel slated to open in 2018. Owned by established real estate developer, Seven Leisure Private Limited, the hotel will be located within close proximity to the central business district and the Sanand Industrial Estate and will offer easy access to the main Gandhinagar Highway. Le Méridien Ahmedabad will be part of a mixed-use development, featuring unbranded serviced apartments and Club07, a fully equipped recreational facility, and the hotel will boast the city's largest convention center facility with 74,000 square feet of state-of-the-art meeting and event space. In addition to well-appointed, oversized rooms, signature amenities and personalized services, the hotel will also offer four restaurant and bar venues, including a signature all-day dining outlet and two specialty restaurants that will offer distinct culinary experiences for both guests and locals alike. Recreation facilities include a swimming pool and fully equipped fitness center.

ibis Delhi Airport now open



ibis, the international economy hotel brand of Accor has opened at Aerocity, the 43-acre hospitality and commercial precinct near Delhi International Airport. ibis Delhi Airport is the ninth ibis hotel in India with the largest inventory of 316 rooms. ibis Delhi Airport has introduced new features to suit the needs of the Indian traveller. The hotel features a heated swimming pool, a Sweet Bed by ibis and larger meeting spaces with break-out sessions for the business traveller. Spice It, the signature multi-cuisine restaurant at ibis Delhi Airport, will offer the Great Indian Breakfast, which is an eight-hour non-stop breakfast concept starting 4 am to 12 noon. These adaptations reflect the hotel's commitment to providing high quality services, customised to the needs of its local clients.

Hospitality News

Hotels Go All Out to Make Long-staying Guests Feel at Home



Hotels are going the extra mile to woo guests who stay for a month or, sometimes, even years. Hoteliers say demand for extended stays is being driven by executives who are on work assignments in far off cities, people travelling for medical treatments as well as those who are renovating their homes. While months of staying in swanky suites, trying multiple cuisines and raiding the mini-bar in the hotel

room sounds fun, it may leave you homesick. Hotels are now making the stay more home-like with simple home-style food and even going to the extent in making the room resemble like your home. With almost 4,000 room nights a year from extended-stay guests, JW Marriott Juhu recently opened studio apartments resembling homes -with a living room, bed room, kitchenette and wash area -in the hotel to cater to this segment. For one of its long-staying guest, it redesigned the living room of a suite to resemble what he has at home.

After understanding the cravings of its long-staying guests, Movenpick Hotel and Spa in Bangalore places a 'long stay hamper' in the rooms of these guests which includes quick eats like chocolates, cookies, cup noodle, corn flakes, milk and juice. While Westin Mumbai Garden City has 'nanny services' on hire, Sheraton Bangalore recently started a programme called 'Own a guest', where one hotel staff personally takes care of the guest needs throughout their stay. Hotels are taking special care of the food requirement of these customers. For instance, Eros Hotel in New Delhi, which gets 15% of its long-stay business from Japanese guests, has hired a Japanese chef to whip up new dishes for such guests. Hotel restaurants also create special dishes for the guests who would be tired and bored of the usual menu. Since these guests stay for longer duration, hotels customise the packages for each guest and offer around 10-20% discounted rates on stay, F&B, spa, laundry and health club.

Bangalore-based Movenpick Hotel -which receives long-stay guests from the nearby IT companies Concentrix, ABP, Philips, AstraZeneca, SLK and even the Indian defence forces -has seen its business from the segment almost doubling in 2014 from 2013. Hotels get a business of almost Rs.3-4 lakh from an extended-stay guest who checks-in for a month. And, "this segment is growing considerably faster than any contributing segment. Westin, in fact, has seen this segment grow 15-25% every year. Vivanta Hotels -the upscale brand owned by Taj Group -in Bangalore and Chennai create unique city-tours and travel experiences for its long-staying guests wanting to explore the local culture. Hotel executives say long-term visitors tend to spend more than the normal guests who stay for a day or two on hotel services, including restaurants, room service and spa appointments.

Source : The Economic Times

Visa News

Indian PM announces Long-term Visa for US tourists to India



Addressing an Indian American community at the Madison Square Garden in New York, Prime Minister (PM) announced a slew of measures to ease travel to India for US travellers as well as People of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI). These announcements came towards the end of his near hour-long speech. The major announcement was the new government's intention to facilitate long-term Visa for citizens of US for India. The PM said that Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) and Visa on Arrival (VoA) for US citizens are on the cards and will be implemented in the immediate future.

Another major decision which was received with a thunderous applause by the Indian community settled in the US was the PM's announcement to extend life-long Visa for PIO cardholders. Noting that there are certain differences between the PIO and OCI schemes, the PM said PIO cardholders will be granted Visa for life, and a new scheme will be announced soon, merging the two.

India introduced the tourist VoA scheme for citizens of five countries, and now, the facility is available for citizens of 11 countries—Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia and South Korea.

Industry News

State Bank of India & MasterCard introduced a Pre-paid Multi-currency Foreign travel card



State Bank of India & MasterCard introduced a Pre-paid Multi-currency Foreign travel card with which a traveler can carry up to 12 Foreign currencies. To begin with, SBI has made available four currencies—US dollars, UK Pounds, Euro & Singapore Dollars. Other currencies will be added in the time to come. The card, available in retail & corporate variants has a validity of five years & the minimum amount that can be added to the card is US\$ 200. The card can detect the currency based on location when inserted into an ATM. This card provides customers a convenience to use a single card to pay in multiple currencies & gives an option to load currencies of choice at SBI's branch network. The bank will also provide 24x7 global call centre assistance & emergency cash assistance for multi-currency card users. Given the security concerns, the data stored in the card is encrypted.

Interesting Photographs

Waitomo Glow Worm Caves *New Zealand*



Open Space

Lighter Moments

A Senior citizen called and had a question about the documents he needed in order to fly to China. After a lengthy discussion about passports, the Travel Agent reminded him that he needs a Visa.

'Oh no I don't, I've been to China many times and never had to have one of those.'

Travel Agent double checked and sure enough, his stay required a visa.

When the agent told him this he said,

'Look, I've been to China four times and every time they have accepted my American Express (card) !'

Thought for the Fortnight

It is not that you read a book, pass an examination & finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.

— J. Krishnamurti

IAAI Director Board

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