



IAAI Newsletter

October 2016 — IInd Fortnight Issue

Index

Content	Page No.
From the President's Desk	2 & 3
Aviation News	4 to 7
Hospitality News	8 to 10
Photo Feature (Plateau de Valensole, France)	11
Open Space	12
IAAI Director Board	13

From the President's Desk

BSP Link Charges



It is both disheartening and disappointing to see that IATA is withdrawing part of the free BSPlink facilities offered to IATA-accredited Travel Agents since 2011 and are now being partially shifted to a new "Enhanced User Account" thus making them chargeable.

From January 2017, an Agent has to pay annually US\$238 for IATA accreditation and US\$360 for this BSP linkage per location to IATA for servicing the 'zero' commission airlines operating in India. In other words, the Agent, for his survival, has to generate INR 48139 totally per annum for the issuance of the 'zero' commission airlines' tickets through BSP. This will ultimately pave the way for the Agent

to violate the National Law and other Government of India regulatory directives that prohibit Travel Agents from collecting any additional charges over and above the ticketed amount.

The IATA circular dated 31st August 2016 clearly proves the nexus in APJC-India - that IATA, in coordination with TAAI and TAFI, had arranged to organize briefing sessions in various cities in India to provide IATA-accredited Travel Agents with familiarization on BSP reports. Interestingly, during these BSPlink training program, the BSP Representative had highlighted the possibility of charges being levied and told the Travel Agents that IATA will revert soon with its applicable charges. This very evidently proves that IATA had the pre-clearance and approval from APJC-India on shifting of Refund Accounting to the 'Enhanced User Account' module.

As per Res 818g, IATA or BSP cannot unilaterally introduce any commercial charges in any country without the approval and authority of the respective APJC of that country. Hence, it is obviously clear that the average and ordinary Travel Agents are being sold out by our own agent representatives in APJC- either knowingly or unknowingly.

The TAAI circular addressed to their own members (TAAI/(AC-AS)/293/2016, dated 22nd October 2016) shows the apparent objections raised by TAAI to Ms. Yeoh, IATA Regional Director based in Singapore, on shifting of RA facilities. And TAAI successfully received an instant reply from IATA which has been categorically quoted in the same circular. It shows that IATA had emphatically rejected TAAI's objections and it is even mentioned by Ms. Yeoh that Mr. Rodney D'Cruz of IATA had discussed the matter with them. Strange indeed! Now, one has to think about Mr. Rodney's role and mission in India when APJC-India is the ONLY IATA Regulatory Authority to decide on such matters.

Hence, according to our Representatives in APJC-India, shifting of RA facilities to the "Enhanced User Account" has now been clarified, justified and made accountable. A well planned gimmick meant to mislead the entire Travel Agents Fraternity.

Continue on Page 3...

From the President's Desk

Out of 3000 IATA-accredited Travel Agents in India, TAAI & TAFI represents around two-thirds and the rest are almost with IAAI. The first and foremost responsibility and the very purpose of IATA is to educate and liaise with Travel Agents on its regulatory systems and procedures and to create co-existence and harmony within the industry. Contrary to the very purpose of IATA's policy of neutrality and its Resolutions, IAAI is still bring kept out of the APJC-India whereby the regulatory rights of one-third of the accredited Travel Agents in India are being denied, ignored and neglected, which means that discussions or decision taken by APJC-India can only be termed as biased, illegal, irregular, unilateral and arbitrary.

The basic functions being offered free under "Basic User Account" will not be sufficient for the survival of the ordinary IATA Travel Agent as the most necessary and vital activities under RA facilities are being shifted to "Enhanced User Account" which is chargeable.

Consequently, this will pave the way for these Travel Agents who are currently fighting for their very survival to violate the Indian National Law and other Government of India regulatory directives that prohibit them from collecting any additional charges over and above the ticketed amount. Ultimately, irrespective of the Travel Trade Associations they belong to, almost 90% of the small to medium Travel Agencies would also be forced to down their shutters owing to the impracticability of running such a business with 'zero' commission on one hand and mounting IATA fees on the other.

On behalf of the IATA Travel Agents Fraternity of India, the IAAI National Management Committee has decided to approach IATA with a request that all the present functions and facilities accessed through BSPlink as per provisions of BSP Regulatory Manuals, including the Refund Accounting, must be retained under the "Basic User Account".

Hence, IATA should forthwith desist from shifting the 'ear-marked' basic functions to the chargeable "Enhanced User Account" as it would definitely affect the very survival of the average and ordinary Travel Agents in India. And it is our responsibility to safeguard the Members and also the Fraternity at large.

Air India Express plans Delhi-Tehran flight soon



Air India's low-cost arm Air India Express Ltd (AIEL) plans to launch four-times-a-week flight from Delhi to Tehran from early next year. The flight is expected to be launched in March-April next year. The airline is also looking at a tie-up with Air India so that passengers have the option of taking domestic flights from Delhi to Goa, which is a popular tourist destination among Iranians. The flight is also likely to appeal to Iranian students, many of whom are studying in Pune.

AIEL, which operates a fleet of Boeing 737-800 aircraft, also plans to launch four-times-a-week flight between Kolkata and Singapore from November 18. The flight will offer passengers from Singapore the option of flying from Singapore to Dhaka via Kolkata as the airline will launch a Kolkata-Dhaka return flight.

The Air India group is looking to launch the new flights to enhance its international footprint. As part of this initiative, Air India plans to launch a Delhi- Birmingham-Toronto flight and a service linking Delhi- Cochin-Dubai. Both these flights are expected to be operated with a Boeing 787 aircraft and are expected to start in February. In addition, a flight linking Chandigarh-Singapore- Bangkok is also proposed from March. Incidentally, Air India operated a flight on the Delhi-Amritsar- Birmingham-Toronto route which was later withdrawn.

Air India launches new Mobile App to enhance e-commerce



Air India has launched new mobile application with updated features to enhance their e-commerce platform. Developed by SITA, and built on their iTravel platform, the new Air India app offers the ability to book and pay for a flight and fully manage bookings from customer's mobile device, including scanning passport securely, select seats, making changes in itinerary, buying additional services including meal, tracking the flight timings, baggages, etc.

Oman Air introduces Business Class upgrade to Business Class & extra legroom service



Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, will be launching two new initiatives at the end of October. The initiatives include a paid seat upgrade and extra legroom service for economy tickets that will offer customers the opportunity to increase their in-flight comfort levels even further.

The new initiatives underline Oman Air's ongoing commitment to improving the travel experience of all customers and are in line with the airline's continued push for excellence at every level. Oman Air's loyal customers will easily be able to pay to upgrade their economy tickets and experience Oman Air's award-winning Business Class. On top of offering seat upgrades, Oman Air will also offer its customers in economy the chance to pre-purchase seats with extra leg room.

Vistara announces Affordable Luxury suite of offers



Vistara, announced the launch of its "Affordable Luxury" suite of offers, designed especially for the discerning leisure travellers who are willing to plan and book early. The scheme is for Premium Economy and Business Class travel across Vistara's entire network, with Premium Economy fares starting at INR 2,560 and Business Class at INR 5,650 one-way respectively, excluding taxes and fees.

"Affordable Luxury Weekdays" scheme offers up to 60% discount relative to last minute fares if booked 30 days or more in advance. Similarly, "Affordable Luxury Weekdays" offers up to 40% discount for Premium Economy relative to last minute fares if booked 30 days or more in advance. For travel on weekends, Vistara's "Affordable Luxury Weekends" fares for Business Class are for travel all-day Saturday and for departures up to 4pm on Sundays.

This scheme offers up to 60% discount relative to normal Business Class fares if booked 15 days or more in advance, and up to 40% discount even if booked at the last minute. For those wanting to get away with their spouse or loved ones in style, Vistara is also offering a 'Friends and Family' discount of up to an additional 10% for two or more passengers travelling together and booking seven days or more in advance.

Hahn Air Group adds 40 new carriers into its global network



Hahn Air

Hahn Air announced that this year it has already integrated 40 new carriers into its global network of more than 300 air, rail and shuttle partners. With its ticketing solutions, the German IATA airline facilitates global business between travel agencies and airlines. Its global infrastructure consisting of connections to all major Global Distribution Systems (GDS) and memberships in almost all Billing and Settlement Plans (BSPs) enables 95,000 travel agents worldwide to issue transportation services of Hahn Air partners on the HR-169 ticket.

Of the 40 new partnerships, 20 are new interline agreements with airlines that are now available on the HR-169 ticket under their own designator. Among them are Air Corsica (XK), CityJet (WX), Blue Air (OB), Jetstar Group, People's Viennaline (PE), FlyOne (5F) and Myanmar National Airlines (UB).

In addition, the Hahn Air Group welcomed 20 new partners of the consolidation service Hahn Air Systems. Under the reservation codes H1 and 5W, travel agents can book transportation services of partners that do not have a GDS presence of their own and can issue them on the HR-169 ticket. 2016 saw agreements with Borajet Airlines (YB), JetAir operated by Titan Airways (ZT), T'way Airlines (TW) and SpiceJet (SG), to name a few.

Jet Airways to operate wide body jets on domestic routes

JET AIRWAYS



Jet Airways is set to introduce wide-body services on the country's busiest domestic routes. Beginning October 30, Jet Airways will expand its wide body wings by operating an Airbus A330 on the Mumbai-Delhi-Mumbai and the Delhi-Kolkata-Delhi routes. Introducing the A330 will nearly double Jet Airways' current capacity on the fast growing Delhi - Kolkata - Delhi route. The A330 as compared to the narrow body B737 can accommodate over 100 more passengers. Deploying A330s on domestic flights will allow Jet Airways to offer its guests a considerably luxurious and comfortable flying experience equivalent to international standards, including its famed 'bed-in-the-sky' lie-flat beds in Premiere and ergonomically designed seats that offer greater legroom in Economy. Complementing the enhanced connectivity between Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata, will be a completely new non-stop flight that will connect Kochi with Delhi, aside from additional frequencies that will connect Bengaluru and Delhi with Kolkata.

THAI Smile Airways to connect 4 Indian cities with Bangkok



THAI Smile Airways has started operating flights from Bangkok to Gaya and Varanasi from October 1, while the airline will connect to Jaipur from November 15 and Lucknow from December 1, 2016. THAI Smile makes it more convenient and effective in terms of tourism; segments like weddings, corporate entities, family, luxury travellers and commercial trades will be benefited.

The flights will operate with an A320 aircraft which will offer a Premium Economy Class (12 seats) and Economy Class (154 seats) and in-flight entertainment experience and specially designed Indian cuisine & beverages. All passengers of Royal Orchid and Premium Economy Class can enjoy a privilege lounge at Suvarnabhumi.

Korean Air to start the direct flight service to Delhi



Korean Air will be launching nonstop service between Delhi's Indira Gandhi Airport and Incheon International Airport beginning December 2016. Delhi will be the second destination for Korean Air following Mumbai in India. The inaugural flight will take place on December 1, with service aboard an Airbus A330-200 aircraft capable of seating 218. The aircraft is equipped with Korean Air's newest seats in both first and prestige class and cutting edge AVOD system.

KE481 will depart from Incheon airport at 12:45 and land in Delhi at 18:20. The return flight, KE482 will depart from Delhi at 19:40 and arrive in Incheon at 5:50 next day.

Tajik Air to double Delhi-Dushanbe flight frequency from Nov 1

The national carrier of Tajikistan – Tajik Air is all set to increase its frequency between Delhi and Dushanbe from once a week to twice a week (Tuesday and Friday) from November 1 onwards. The 2.15 hr flight duration is almost like domestic travel from India. Even the weather is the same as in India. At this point in time, when travellers are reluctant in travelling to Kashmir, Dushanbe can be a great option. The natural beauty is as untouched and pristine as in Kashmir. The Delhi-Dushanbe connection by Tajik Air has been on from over three years now. Birla adds that they have been observing an average load factor of over 60% on the route. From India to Tajikistan, the travel is dominated by students, tourists and business travellers.

Maharashtra Govt to open up some jails to tourists



Jail tourism is a growing fad around the world and is now coming to Mumbai. Maharashtra home department plans to throw open its jails to the common public keen on a taste of history. The department is working on a 'jail tourism policy' which will allow common people access to certain jails in the state. They are in the process of formulating which jails and what part of the jail premises would be given access under the scheme. They are also planning a jail museum which would house articles written by the prisoners jailed there. They are also planning to put up for sale handmade items made by prisoners, which visitors can purchase as momentos.

There are over 30 jails in Maharashtra but not all of them will be opened up for visitors under the new policy. Jails that have some history will be opened up first after the security arrangements are looked into. The fact that several historic figures, and also serial killers, terrorists and celebrities had made jails across the state their home might interest people. Prisons like Yerawada in Pune will be a hit with the public as leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Veer Savarkar had been housed there during the freedom struggle. Actor Sanjay Dutt too was imprisoned there. There are a lot of articles and letters written by freedom fighters to their families. These could be kept for display.

The architecture of these jails too can be a point of interest for visitors. Filmmakers too can use this opportunity to show the real interiors of the jails. The tourists would get the real feel of a prison as they will be told about the routine of a prisoner. Arthur Road jail too can be a popular spot with people wanting to see where the Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab was kept.

JW Marriott enters East India; opens in Kolkata

JW Marriott Hotels & Resorts continues to expand its luxury portfolio with the opening of its eighth hotel in India, JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata. The first hotel in Kolkata and East India by Marriott International is located in the heart of the city, minutes from the old central business district. Comprising 281 spacious rooms, the hotel boasts of the largest ballroom in the city. In a first for the city, the hotel features a unique bridal room, offering brides an exclusive, private space available for pre-wedding preparations. In addition to 38,370 square feet of indoor and outdoor event spaces measuring, the hotel offers five intimate studios for meetings, each one equipped with cutting-edge facilities.

Marriott International plans 165 hotels in three years



Marriott International will be coming up with five new hotels in the mid scale and resort & spa categories by December end this year. The hotel chain, which operates in an asset light model, has 80 operating hotels presently in the country under 14 different brand names. A high end spa and resort will open in Goa and Jaisalmereach while Fairfield hotels will come up in Indore, Belgaum and Amritsar. Further, the group plans to open up 85 new projects in the next three years. In West Bengal, the hotel chain will open a second hotel in Siliguri in the northern part of the state. The Marriott group recently launched its luxury brand JW Marriott in Kolkata where it has claimed to have received 50 per cent occupancy rate in the very first month of its opening. The hotel chain, which has become the worlds largest, after the acquisition of the Starwood group, is relying on the SME segment to drive its business vertical as well as bank on the travel and tourism sector to drive room occupancy.

Hyatt to introduce new global loyalty program “World of Hyatt”



Hyatt Hotels Corporation unveiled World of Hyatt, Hyatt’s new global loyalty program, which will launch on March 1, 2017. World of Hyatt is about building community and engaging with high-end travellers. World of Hyatt is about celebrating Hyatt members by understanding the people, places and experiences at the heart of their world.

A bold, modern and confident platform, the program’s three elite tiers – Discoverist, Explorerist and Globalist – reflect the aspirations of the World of Hyatt community as they travel and expand their world. In the new program, members will receive more rewards as they advance through the three elite tiers based on Qualifying Nights or Base Points.

The Hyatt Gold Passport program will remain in effect through February 28, 2017, at which time it will transition to World of Hyatt. Between now and then, members can continue to achieve and enjoy tier status in Hyatt Gold Passport and earn and redeem points as they always have. Qualifying activity beginning January 1, 2017 will also count toward earning status in World of Hyatt when the program launches on March 1, 2017.

IRCTC to operate restaurant “*The Rails*” at National Rail Museum



The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) will manage and operate “The Rails”, the newly constructed swanky restaurant at the National Rail Museum (NRM), New Delhi, designed to attract visitors and tourists with an array of sumptuous cuisines. The restaurant, which is to be made operational soon, has a replica of the Central Dome portion of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), Mumbai, which is a UNESCO World Heritage building.

The elegant eatery is part of the Railway Ministry’s plan to develop the rail museum as a prominent evening tourist destination in the national capital. Plans are also afoot to develop some other facilities at the museum, including Light & Sound Show and vintage hotels on ‘Palace on Wheel’ coaches. A prominent feature of the restaurant is the depiction of formation of Indian Railways through unification of a large number of independent rail companies.

It also possesses a unique ‘serving train’, which was recently showcased in a Bollywood film. The restaurant, with a-la-carte dining options for the upmarket segment, has the potential to generate revenues for the railways as tourists and visitors will find it an attractive place for having food and also as a relaxing place during their visit to the rail museum. The museum has a footfall of about 2,000 on weekdays and 5,000 on weekends and holidays. With likelihood of installation of light and sound show and operating existing fountain and indoor gallery during evening hours also, “The Rails” can play a major role in repositioning the National Rail Museum as a prominent evening destination in the tourist landscape of Delhi.

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Plateau de Valensole, France



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Valensole plateau is situated at an altitude of 500 metres in the south of the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, near Digne-les-Bains and the Verdon gorges, and covers an area of 800 km². Fields of lavender, the famous Provençal scented plant, abound here, alongside wheat fields and a host of charming villages such as Saint-Martin-de-Brômes, Riez and Esparron-de-Verdon. The best time for lovers of typical Provençal landscapes to visit is July, when Valensole plateau is awash with beautiful blue lavender in bloom. Foodies should head to the village of Valensole, famous for its subtle- and delicate-tasting lavender honey. Several lavender-related festivities are organised in the area: the Fête de la Lavande in Valensole in July, and the Corso de la Lavande and Foire de la Lavande in Digne-les-Bains in August.

Lighter Moments

A married couple, both 60 years old, were celebrating their 35th marriage anniversary.

During their party, a fairy appeared to congratulate them & grant them each one a wish.

The wife wanted to travel around the world.

The fairy waived her wand & poof — the wife had tickets in her hand for a world cruise.

Next, the fairy asked the husband what he wanted.

He said, “I wish I had a wife 30 years younger than me.”

So the fairy picked up her wand & poof — the husband turned 90 years.

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Thought for the Fortnight

The strength of the team is each individual member, the strength of each individual member is the team.

— Phil Jackson

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Newsletter Editor	Asst Editor
Devendra Ghule	Saras Deshpande
Sudin Travels & Forex Pvt Ltd., Pune	

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