

[TRADE]

TUI Travel India expands footprint to Western India

Launches concept store in Mumbai, its sixth outlet in India

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

TUI Travel India recently launched its first concept retail store in Mumbai, in Bandra. This is the company's sixth store in India, with five present in the Delhi/NCR region. The launch heralds TUI India's expansion plans, aimed at growing business in India over five years. The company is planning to set up similar concept stores in Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Chennai in the next few months. Damon Hill, former F1 racing champion, inaugurated the store. Situated on Linking Road in Bandra, the new store is a flagship concept store for TUI India. It is an extension of TUI India's concept store in Delhi. The flagship store is not just a retail selling outlet, but a place for travellers to meet, exchange stories and chalk out travel plans with the help of TUI's expert travel consultants.

The café will also support/host events like interactive talks and workshops by travellers, photographers and writers.

On the occasion, Arjun Sharma, Managing Director, TUI India/Le Passage to India, said, "Indian Outbound market is rapidly growing and we want to fuel this growth. TUI India is focused on expanding its presence in the country, and therefore the Mumbai expansion is a part of our overall growth strategy." Vishal Sinha, COO, TUI India, said, "This one-of-a-kind travel retail store captures our commitment to serve our customers in Mumbai who we see as an evolved market. A year ago we started European tours and the differentiator is we create value for our customers with unique products. We have also introduced EMI concept for the European Holidays in our latest campaign. Some of the new destinations that we have included in European fixed group departure tours are Copenhagen

and Oslo. We have also added packages to New Zealand in this category."

TUI India is looking to expand through retail and franchisee presence across key cities of India in the years ahead. The focus of the company is to grow its brand presence and increase market share. In the coming years, TUI India aims to replicate TUI Travel's global business model to serve the different needs of customers. Jeannette Linfoot, Director of Tour Operations - New Markets, TUI Travel PLC stated, "India is a very exciting market for us and is part of our global expansion strategy focused on new markets which along with India includes Brazil, China and Russia. We see tremendous growth potential in India and our focus will remain on exclusive and differentiated products or experiences and our intention is to create a diverse product portfolio by bringing some unique and specialist brands from TUI's global portfolio." ■



L-R: Vishal Sinha, Damon Hill, Jeannette Linfoot and Arjun Sharma

Civil Aviation Ministry lifts ban on jumbo jet Airbus A380

Ajit Singh, Minister for Civil Aviation, Govt. of India, has decided to remove restrictions on flights of Airbus A380 to India. Now, flights of A380 to India will be allowed to airports that are equipped to handle them. Currently only four airports, i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru have the required infrastructure for operations of A380s. The decision has been taken after due consultations with the Directorate of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Air India Ltd and Airports Authority of India (AAI).

India & Japan sign MoU for tourism

India and Japan have signed an MoU for strengthening cooperation in tourism. The MoU was signed between the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and the Japan Tourism Agency, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Govt. of Japan in New Delhi recently. Parvez Dewan, Secretary - Tourism, Govt. of India, in his capacity as Director General, Tourism, and Shigeto Kubo, Commissioner, Japan Tourism Agency, signed the Memorandum. The MoU is intended to serve as the key to greater action-oriented cooperation and further strengthening tourism partnership between the two countries.

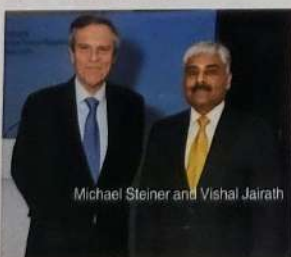
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Germany & VFS Global open 10 Visa Application Centres in India, 1 in Bhutan

Six more Centres to get operational in India within two months

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

GERMANY and VFS Global recently opened ten Visa Application Centres in India and one in Bhutan to speed up the visa application process. In India, the Germany Visa Application Centres (VACs) are operational in New Delhi, Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Jaipur, Gurgaon, Chennai, Hyderabad, Puducherry, Bengaluru and Mumbai, while in Bhutan, the Centre is functional in Thimphu. Within two months VACs will be operational in Goa, Pune, Ahmedabad, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Kolkata. VFS Global is the contract partner of the German Embassy.



Michael Steiner and Vishal Jairath

Catering to the growing demand of Germany-bound travellers in the region, the strategic move of setting up VACs is aimed at offering new services, facilities and benefits to applicants to support the growing demand in tourism, trade and investments, and strengthening bilateral ties between Germany and India. With the opening of the new VACs, travellers from India and Bhutan can save time and money in applying for a Schengen Visa (short-term visa) at the German missions.

The key features of the new VACs include convenient locations and easily accessible state-of-the-art VACs; longer operating hours; shorter waiting period between appointments and submission of applications; counters for applicants and travel agents/tour operators; secure handling of passports, documents and personal information; and online appointment scheduling, payment



L-R: Anil Katoch and Michael Siebert inaugurating the Germany Visa Application Centre in Mumbai

and tracking of application status. Michael Steiner, German Ambassador to India, said, "For most Indians and Bhutanese travelling to Europe, be it for business or leisure, Germany is high on the wish list. Therefore, the visa application process should be as smooth as possible. With our new policy, we take the visa application process to the people's door. This is good service and customer orientation at its best."

Vishal Jairath, Regional Head-South Asia, VFS Global, said, "VFS Global in association with the German Embassy New Delhi will bring convenience to all Indian business and leisure travellers." Inaugurating the centre in Mumbai at Express Towers last month, Michael Siebert, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Mumbai said, "This

new, stylish and appealing VAC will ideally serve the needs of the Indian business travellers and tourists. It can easily facilitate visa applications of travellers from Western Region, the economic powerhouse of India. Visas are processed on time and without customers having to stand in a queue. Germany — in the heart of Europe — with its strong economic ties with India and attractive destinations, is among the prime destinations for Indian travellers."

Speaking at the launch of the Mumbai Visa Application Centre, Anil Katoch, Head-South Asia, VFS Global said, "We are pleased to be the trusted partner to the Government of Germany in extending our services to facilitate visa application process for travellers across more locations in India. It is indeed a privileged moment for us to increase our services to 11 new locations in India and one in Bhutan. We are committed to provide quality services to all applicants in the region applying for a visa at the German VAC. This longevity of our association with the German government reflects their trust in our abilities. We are confident this association will reciprocate a long term partnership with The Federal Republic of Germany." ■