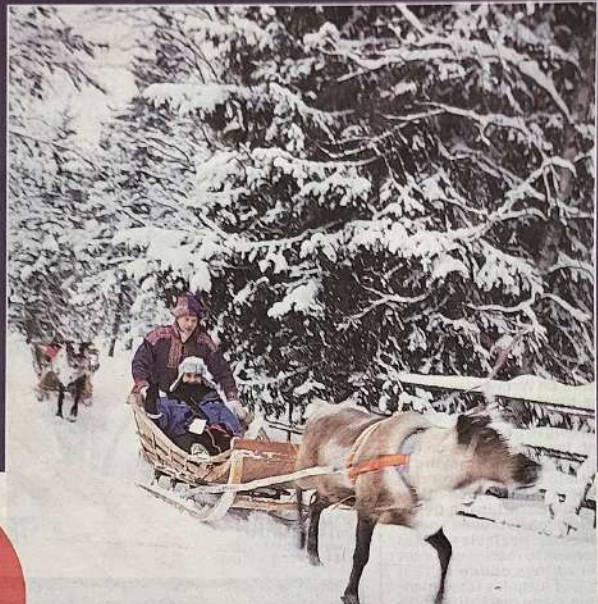


Shopping has ceased to excite Indians travelling overseas as much as new experiences such as going on a cruiser holiday to the Arctic

Outbound India Seeking Newer Experiences



Now travel agents take travellers to the Arctic in cruisers equipped with ice-breakers.

By Sourish Bhattacharyya

OUTBOUND travel is one area where the India Growth Story shows no signs of abatement. In 2014, nearly 18 million Indians, up from 16 million in the previous year, travelled overseas and spent \$13.4 billion (₹80,400 crore) on their foreign jaunts, according to the Travel & Tourism Intelligence Centre. That makes India an emerging superpower among the world's leading outbound markets.

It was to discuss the nature of this wandering republic that the Mail Today Tourism Summit 2015 featured a panel discussion on 'India Outbound: The New Travelling Superpower', where Arjun Sharma of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), India Initiative, said the Indian traveller was being wooed more than ever after the collapse of the Russian economy and the slide in European outbound travel because of the weakening of the euro against the dollar. "Everyone's out here to woo the Indian traveller," he said.

There's a good reason why more than 60 national tourism offices were active in India, as pointed out by Rajeev Nangia, COO, TRAC Representations. As Guldeep Sahni, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), stated it when he said, "The number of Indians travelling abroad will keep going up as more and more of us rise from the lower to the upper middle classes." Outbound Indians are not only growing in numbers, but



With the Russian economy's collapse and the slide in European travel, the world is here to woo the Indian traveller.

— ARJUN SHARMA, World Travel & Tourism Council, India Initiative

their aspirations are rising in tandem. "Experiential travel", therefore, is the new buzz phrase in the trade. "Indian travellers are not only looking at new destinations, but also seeking out newer experiences," said Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Marketing.

"It has compelled travel agents to build new experiences into packages," Vohra said. Sahni added: "Travel agents now have to think faster than the Internet."

To cater to this emerging class of experience-seeking Indians, the

outbound division of Arjun Sharma's company, Le Passage to India, has floated packages such as 'Make Pizza like an Italian in Italy' and even taken some of the more intrepid souls to the Arctic in cruisers equipped with ice-breakers.

Shopping used to top the must-do list of every Indian overseas traveller, but today, we are seeking out difficult terrains, engaging in deep sea diving and paragliding, spending more on boutique hotels, and heading out to newer destinations such as Seychelles and Pacific Islands.

₹80K crore

Money spent on foreign jaunts by the 18 million Indians who travelled overseas in 2014

Outbound Indians are not only growing in numbers, but their aspirations are rising in tandem

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offering all-inclusive promotional fare from ₹1,700 on the New Delhi-Bengaluru and Goa sectors.