

# Going beyond the brochure experience

Tour operators are providing inclusive experiences for clients seeking to go beyond the established itineraries. TRAVTALK finds out why niche tourism is the way forward for India.

**NISHA VERMA**

Today travellers like to get involved and experience a destination first-hand. Tailor-made, niche or experiential holidays are the way forward and India is not far behind. **Shoba Mohan**, Founder Partner, RARE India, says, "India's diversity is legendary

adventure, spa...it is just waiting to be listed among the top 10 in the world."

The perception of India has also changed with time, says **Amaresh Tiwari**, MD & CEO, A.T. Seasons & Vacations Travel. "At international exhibitions, people

**Shilpa Sharma**, Founder, Breakaway, claims, "India is waking up to the concept of niche and slow travel. There is a sizeable segment of travellers worldwide who want to be able to explore niche experiences and concepts in addition to sightseeing around the country."



**Homa Mistry**  
CEO  
Trail Blazer Tours India



**Vikram Madhok**  
Managing Director  
Abercombe & Kent

their interests, their motivations and the kind of travel they have done in India and other countries. A deeper understanding of their likes and interests allows us to be able to fine tune our offerings to fit their needs."

**Dipak Deva**, Managing Director, Travel Corporation India (Sita, Distant Frontiers & TCI), claims, "We have a team called the Destination Knowledge Centre, which is the first of its kind in the travel industry. Members of this team travel around the country to make friends with locals and then design unique experiences. Based on their travel, the team stitches their findings into beautiful itineraries."

Tiwari believes that it is the only way to move forward. "At international exhibitions, people ask us what different product we can offer. If you want to create your position in the market, you need to go for experiential tourism. This is the only way you'd survive," he opines.



**Shoba Mohan**  
Founder Partner  
RARE India



**Amaresh Tiwari**  
MD & CEO  
A.T. Seasons & Vacations Travel



**Shilpa Sharma**  
Founder  
Breakaway

and today more than any other time in history, the combination of technology and tradition paints curious views for visitors, which is intriguing. Add to this the myriad opportunities for wildlife, birding, culture, art,

ask us what different product we can offer. If you want to create your position in the market, you need to go for experiential tourism. This is the only way you'd survive," he adds.

**Homa Mistry**, CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India, says, "People no longer want to sit in a coach and look out of the window. All of them want to interact and be a part of the tour." However, Mistry says that

delivering such experiences is not easy. "The problem is in the private sector. Most of us are not creative enough. We have our mind set to sell the Golden Triangle. We are not going beyond due to various problems, one of them being infrastructure."

However, one must say that despite such problems, tour operators are trying to offer different experiences to international clients, and there is great demand as well. "India is a favoured niche tourism destination. Most of our guests come from Europe. Currently, their markets are under strain.

Once that is revived, the numbers would increase," says **Vikram Madhok**, Managing Director, Abercombe & Kent.

Tiwari adds, "We need to focus on holistic tourism, or inclusive tourism, where we can include all the stakeholders. Andaman is in great demand, and so is Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, UP, and Himachal. There is also rural and volunteer tourism, with so many people coming to teach in schools, work in hospitals, farms, NGOs, yoga and ayurveda training institutes."

Sharma says, "We speak with the client to understand

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