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SEPTEMBER 2022



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# Discover how Riya Visa Services can benefit corporate travellers

*Exclusive interview with Mr. Sushil Aggrawal, Head Riya Visa Services on special initiatives for business travellers and best practices for visa.*



## ► What are the special initiatives that you have undertaken to enhance customer experience?

Riya Visa Services have undertaken several initiatives in recent years. It includes the launch of our specialised visa desk for corporates and leisure travellers across India in 40 plus branches. Introduction of a dedicated desk for senior leaders with sensitive or critical visa requirements. Incorporation of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) in our visa tracker to eliminate manually typing the passport details. In association with insurance underwriters, we also introduced Visa Assurance that enables refund in case of Visa Rejection. We periodically share visa updates with our customers via our newsletter – Visa Bites. During the two years of COVID, we ensured our connections were aware of domestic and international travel guidelines through our constant advisories. Our team constantly endeavours to keep introducing such initiatives to enhance customer delight.

## ► What is the strength of your team in India?

The average work experience of our team in India is over seven years with expertise in visa business. The leaders in the team bring their valuable knowledge of managing large volumes, large groups of 7,000 plus passengers, and ability to deal with diplomatic missions as well as their logistics partners. Today, we have a team of 300 plus highly skilled experts in managing complex visa cases including visa applications that have been rejected by the respective Consulates or Embassies or High Commission. All our team members are on our payroll and we don't hire with any third party contractual or outsourced staff.

## **Please share the growth journey of Riya Visa Services in the last four years.**

During the last four years we invested in people who are our assets and technology that enables them to do their job. The visa team improvised the internal tools including visa tracker. We also focused on service delivery and added many large corporate as their visa clients. The attention on customising client needs helped us in growing our client base as well as the revenue.

## **To which industries do you cater?**

The visa team caters to multiple industries that includes IT, ITES enabled services, Pharma, Life Sciences, Banking, Consulting firms, Entertainment, Shipping, Aviation and many more industries. This enables the visa team to understand the dynamic requirements of all types of clients and industries. The team also has a specialised desk that manages travellers with sensitive needs or CXO's, MD's and other senior leaders.

## **What are the challenges in facilitating visa requests since the opening of international travel?**

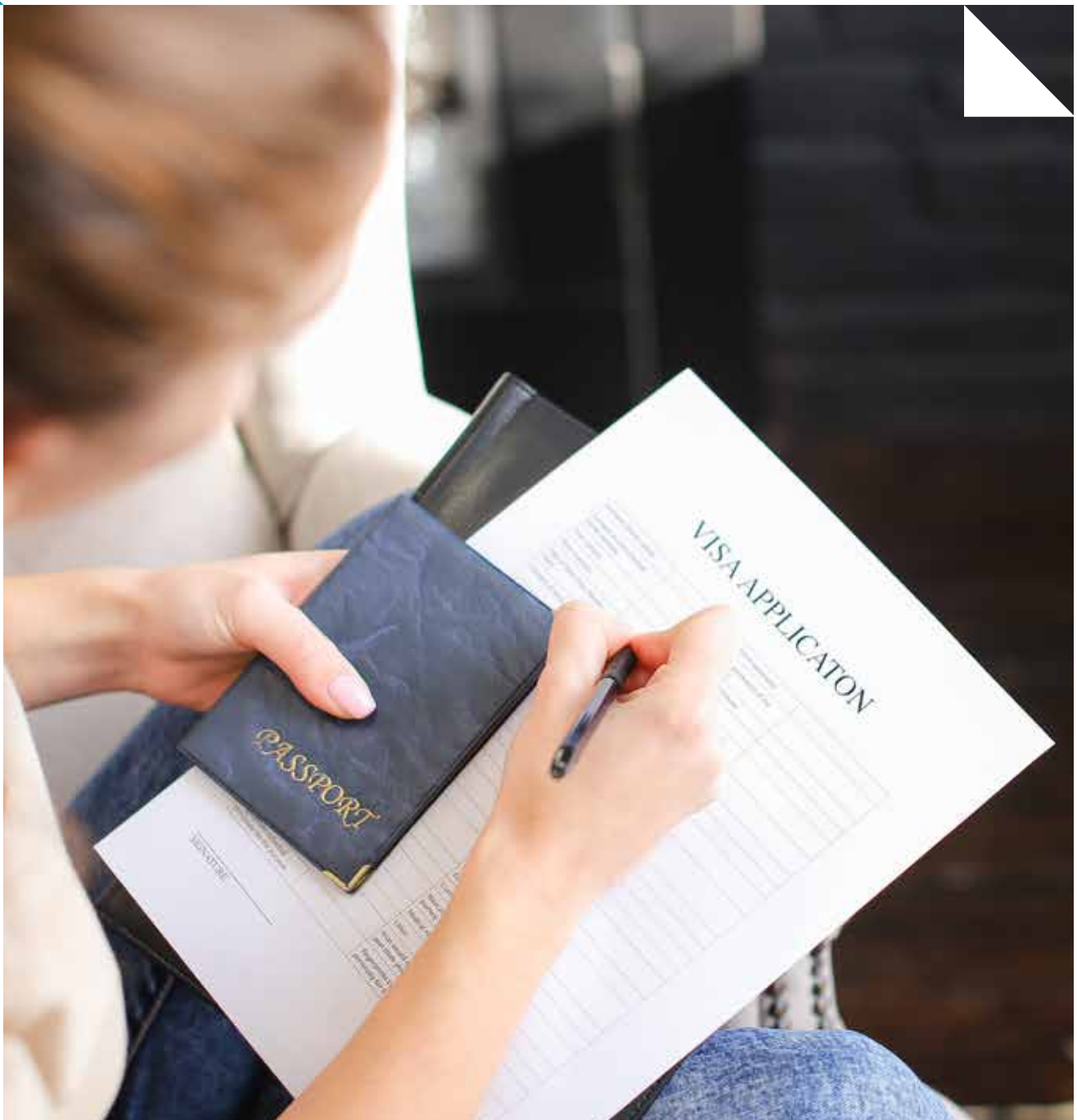
The processing time has increased for most diplomatic missions and their changing requirement has been a concern. We have been monitoring the changes and have been sharing the same through our monthly Visa Bites newsletter (Monthly Visa Update). The visa team tracks the processing time and advises the traveller the minimum experiential processing times, the same may vary due to travel history or even with planned travel date. It enables them to plan their trip accordingly.

## **What are your recommendations for best practices for a smooth visa process?**

Gathering client profile details and travel requirements is an important part of the visa assistance for any visa professional. Keep the information short and crisp in the covering letter, filling in the correct name, passport number, and date of birth according to your passport is very important. Maintaining consistency in your documents i.e cover letter, invite letter, ticket, hotel booking and other documents is also important.



Going through and adhering to the checklist will ensure a seamless experience allowing you to focus on planning your trip and packing your bags for the journey.



**Riya Travel makes history  
with a hat-trick win**

*Riya*  
the travel expert!

# INDIA'S LEADING TRAVEL AGENCY 2022

**IT'S A HAT-TRICK!**



**Riya Travel wins again at  
World Travel Awards**

Thank you for all your support



Riya Business Travel's parent company, Riya Travel was voted India's Leading Travel Agency 2022. This win was possible thanks to the votes from our stakeholders and reiterates the trust they have in us.



## Meet Riya Business Travel's global travel partners – **ATG**



*Riya Business Travel is an official partner of ATG global in India. It is a strategic partnership and with the help of ATG, we work in 140 plus countries globally.*

ATG Travel Worldwide, B.V., headquartered in Utrecht, Netherlands, is a global travel and expense management leader. A technology product powerhouse, offering a revolutionary combination of high touch service and innovative and proprietary robotic booking solutions, centralised global quality control, data management insights, a true global user platform and a suite of human resources products. ATG is also a global international franchise of market leading travel management companies. ATG offers regional, company-owned offices in The Americas (USA), Europe/Middle East/Africa (Frankfurt, Germany) and Asia Pacific (Shanghai, China) and franchise partner offices covering 140+ countries with 7,800 global employees and a worldwide turnover representing over \$7.2 billion. To learn more, visit [atgglobaltravel.com](http://atgglobaltravel.com) and [www.linkedin.com/company/atgworldwide](https://www.linkedin.com/company/atgworldwide)



# Domestic airfare caps removed from August 31st

The government has removed the fare caps it imposed on domestic airlines in 2020 during the pandemic at the end of August, the country's civil aviation ministry said, lifted restrictions to allow carriers to raise fares as well as offer deep discounts.

The government, in a rare move, imposed minimum and maximum fares based on a flight's duration to prevent ticket prices from spiking when air travel was reopened following the lockdowns in 2020.

"After review of the current status of scheduled domestic operations, viz-a-viz passenger demand for air travel in terms of purpose specified in initial order... it has been decided to remove the fare bands notified from time to time regarding the airfares with effect from [August] 31," said the aviation ministry's order.

Union minister for civil aviation, Jyotiraditya Scindia said the decision was based on market trends. "The decision to remove air fare caps has been taken after careful analysis of daily demand and prices of air turbine fuel. Stabilisation has set in and we are certain that the sector is poised for growth in domestic traffic in the near future," the minister said in a tweet.

Aviation industry groups said the decision will lead to cheaper tickets. "CAPA India welcomes the decision to remove price floors and caps. This was long overdue. We hope that all carriers will maintain a sensible pricing regime and not revert to loss-leader fares. But yield dilution is inevitable despite airlines wanting a rational market," said Kapil Kaul, chief executive officer of Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA India).

When asked if the removal of the cap would lead to an increase in airfares, Kaul said: "I expect fares to fall because maintaining pricing discipline is very tough — increasing air fares is not feasible given that demand is soft."

IndiGo, India's largest airline by fleet size and passengers carried, said: "We are strongly supportive of this move as free market economics are good for both our customers and our investors".

People in the travel booking business said the effect will need to be watched. "We look forward to the response of the removal of fare caps as this will rationalise the demand and supply. The fares will now be regulated by the market and consumers will be presented with competitive prices, hence normalising it for them. We hope this announcement will help the industry gain momentum in terms of growth and scalability.





# Akasa Air enhances its network with debut services & additional daily flights on existing sectors

- Adds Chennai to the network with daily flights between Mumbai and Chennai
- Connects Ahmedabad with Bengaluru
- Adds additional flights to the Mumbai-Bengaluru route

Akasa Air, India's newest airline, has announced Chennai as the fifth destination in its network, in addition to the existing destinations of Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Kochi, and Mumbai. The newly commencing daily flights between Chennai and Mumbai will start from September 15, 2022. In addition to this, strengthening its pan-India network connectivity, the airline has also added a new route between Ahmedabad and Bengaluru.

Earlier, in keeping with a phased approach to growing its network, Akasa Air had announced its daily direct flights between Bengaluru and Mumbai in August. It is now ready to enhance the capacity in this sector with additional daily flights, commencing August 30 and September 19 respectively.

Commenting on Akasa Air's network expansion plans and increase in flight frequencies, **Praveen Iyer, Co-founder and Chief Commercial Officer, Akasa Air**, said, *"With the first flight which took off on August 7th, we have seen tremendous response for booking from travellers and our first flight got sold out within a day of going live. With an aircraft arriving every fortnight, we are delighted to augment our network to meet our commitment of progressively adding more cities along new sectors to establish a strong pan-India presence, with a focus on the metro to tier 2 & 3 route connectivity"*.

On July 22, 2022, Akasa Air opened bookings for ticket sales of its first commercial flight and unveiled its customer experience strategy with several category-first services and product choices for a happy travel experience that is tech-forward, inclusive and environmentally progressive.

Flying with the airline code QP, Akasa Air has begun commercial operations with two aircrafts. It will add an additional two aircraft each month and by the end of 2023, it will have inducted 18 aircraft. It plans to add another 12 to 14 planes every 12 months, which will make up its order of 72 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, delivered over five years.



# Government of India sets target to operationalise 100 airports under UDAN by 2024

The Government has set a target to operationalise 100 airports by 2024 subject to the availability of supporting infrastructure such as land, statutory approvals, etc.

Officials said that nearly 68 airports have been operationalised for Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)-UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) flights since inception of UDAN scheme.

Selected Airline Operators (SAOs) have operationalised 425 UDAN routes involving 68 airports/heliports/water Aerodromes across the country. SAOs have been operating many routes even after completion of three years of exclusivity period under the scheme.

However, COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the aviation sector, including domestic RCS flight operations. Suspension of scheduled commercial operations in view of COVID-19 posed several challenges. Passenger demand came down drastically making the operation of flights unviable.

Moreover, financial health of the airlines was impacted given the collapse of revenue streams coupled with high fixed costs resulting into a liquidity crunch. The Government introduced certain policy reforms for sustainability of operations of RCS-UDAN post COVID 19. These operational and financial flexibilities/relaxations and economising measures are deemed mutually beneficial for all stakeholders by maintaining the benefit of air connectivity to passengers.

Regional Connectivity Scheme is a market driven scheme. Under the scheme, airlines assess demand and nature of supply required on particular route and based on their analysis participate in the bidding process to be conducted from time to time.

A recent Parliament reply said the primary objective of RCS is to facilitate/stimulate regional air connectivity by making it affordable. Promoting affordability of regional air connectivity is envisioned under RCS by supporting SAOs through concession by Central Government, State Governments/UTs and airport operators to reduce the cost of airline operations on regional routes and financial (Viability Gap Funding or

VGF) support to meet the gap, if any, between the cost of airline operations and expected revenues on such RCS routes. Central Government and State Governments share Viability Gap Funding (VGF) in the ratio of 80:20 whereas for the States in North-Eastern region/Union Territories (UT"s) the ratio is 90:10.



# Aviation industry reducing its environmental footprint

Our world is in a state of profound transformation. Not long ago, millions of people around the world took to the streets to call for stricter climate measures, triggering tectonic shifts in the approach to sustainability by both governments and businesses. The European Union answered the call just weeks later and passed the European Green Deal, which set a 30-year deadline for climate neutrality on the continent. Last year, major players in Asia, including China, Japan and South Korea, followed suit. Now, more than 100 countries have set targets to achieve climate neutrality over the next several decades. In the private sector, companies like BP and Microsoft are setting their own emissions targets. Shell CEO Ben van Beurden declared 2019 the year of peak oil production, marking the dawn of a post-oil world.

## Why do we need sustainable aviation?

With the global growth in air travel, the aviation industry is investing in alternatives to fossil jet fuels to reduce flight emissions. One innovation is sustainable aviation fuels, which are jet fuels created from waste products and other sustainable feedstocks that have the potential to reduce emissions by 80%.

## Sustainable Aviation Fuels

Aviation currently accounts for approximately 2% of

global greenhouse gas emissions but is expected to increase to 5% by 2050. Demand for air transport is expected to increase by 4.3%, on average, each year for the next 20 years. The aviation industry has committed to several carbon emission goals, including reducing net aviation emissions to 50% below 2005 levels by 2050, to maintain growth while also addressing environmental impacts. While most industries have several low-cost carbon-reduction options, aviation does not. For the foreseeable future, there is no substitute for liquid fuels in jet aircraft.

Substituting sustainable aviation fuel for conventional, fossil-fuel-based jet fuel is the single most significant opportunity to decarbonize air travel (SAF). However, the commercialization of SAFs is still in its early stages, and the industry is currently facing several economic and market challenges. The high cost of SAF is the primary reason for the slow uptake and resulting lack of large-scale manufacturing capacity. Despite government subsidies, SAF still commands a significant price premium. Airlines operate on profit margins; with fuel being the single most considerable expense, their ability to absorb these additional costs is limited.





# Future of work – live and work anywhere

Enabling people to travel and work simultaneously, the concept of workcation appeared during the Covid-19 pandemic. Now, more people are accepting the idea and are choosing to 'live and work from anywhere'. According to a YouGov survey, commissioned by Airbnb, 87 per cent of Indians are planning to work while travelling or living elsewhere. Amanpreet Bajaj shares insights on this rise of remote working from a destination of one's choice.

The pandemic has led to the emergence of a new world of travel. Since the onset of the pandemic, we've seen fundamental and enduring shifts in the way people are approaching travel, living and working. Remote work has untethered many people from the need to be in an office every day.

As a result, people are spreading out to thousands of towns and cities, staying for weeks, months, or even entire seasons at a time. This has opened a new horizon of possibilities. Remote work has become the new normal, as companies have embraced hybrid work models that are helping people in combining their passion for work with travel. Bringing the best of both physical and digital worlds together, people are now choosing to 'live and work from anywhere'.

Indians are also embracing this shift and we've been seeing a constant increase in people taking workcations. A YouGov survey\*, commissioned by Airbnb, showed that 87 per cent of Indians are planning to work while travelling or living elsewhere. Travellers are increasingly treating their travel destinations as their extended homes, and have shown a preference for laptop-friendly desks, WiFi and kitchens.

Travellers are now staying longer, working and essentially living from locations across the world. Globally, long-term stays on Airbnb were at an all-time high in Q1 2022, more than doubling in size from Q1 2019, and continue to represent around one in every five nights booked. And almost half of the bookings on Airbnb in Q1 2022 were for one week or more. This, combined with a rising inclination towards exploring newer, offbeat destinations for work has stimulated tourism in Tier-II and Tier-III cities in the country.

The rise of remote working has also given birth to an entirely new segment of travellers – digital nomads. These emerging travellers hail from diverse backgrounds, seek longer stays and want to work from destinations across the world. As such, people are now taking frequent and longer trips and travelling to far-off locales to completely immerse themselves in new experiences and combine work and play.

More and more countries are now introducing remote work visa options to lure travellers for extended stays. For example, Indonesia announced that the country is developing a new visa that would be effective for five years-longer than any other digital nomad visa currently available. To date, more than 40 countries are issuing digital nomad visas.

With the future of work having already arrived for many of us, it's important we continue to work together to help ensure as many people as possible can share in the benefits.





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