

# Express TravelWorld Awards celebrate innovators of the industry

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Dipanita Nath

Tags : GMR Express TravelWorld Awards, Jyotsna Suri, Lalit Suri

Posted: Thu Jul 28 2011, 02:00 hrs

New Delhi:

The late Lalit Suri, a pioneering hotelier who, even at the height of militancy in Kashmir, dared to operate the only five-star property in Srinagar, has won yet another accolade — the GMR Express TravelWorld Awards 2010-2011 for Lifetime Achievement for his vision and commitment to the hospitality industry. As his wife, Jyotsna Suri, and their son received the statuette, stalwarts of the Indian travel and hospitality sector who had packed the Taj Palace Hotel on Wednesday for the ceremony gave a standing ovation.

“I accept the ovation for Lalit,” said Jyotsna, “He deserves this award for it was his constant endeavour to promote tourism with complete faith.” The GMR Express TravelWorld Awards 2010-2011, given out by Express TravelWorld, a publication of The Indian Express Ltd, and infrastructure major GMR Group, sought to salute the most innovative practices that have taken the travel, tourism, hospitality and aviation industry forward. This is the eighth year of the Express TravelWorld Awards and, as Shekhar Gupta, Editor-in-Chief, The Express Group, pointed out, “The number of entries has been the highest this year for each of the 17 categories. Moreover, there is also a leap in the level of imagination and innovation.” Fittingly, chief guest, Union Minister of Tourism, Subodh Kant Sahai announced that India, despite its tourism potential, attracted only “half per cent of the world’s travellers”, and the ministry planned to double this number.

Kingfisher Airlines carried home two awards — Innovation in Operations, Full-Service Carrier Airlines segment and for Category of Customer Experience, Innovation in Airlines. Madhya Pradesh Tourism and Malaysia Tourism were the joint winners of the award for Innovation in Operations for Tourism Boards, while the prize for Innovation in Operations for Travel and Tour Operators went to IRCTC and Kuoni Travel (India). Innovation in Operations, Low-Cost Carrier Airline category went to Air Arabia. Carzonrent carried away the trophy for Innovation in Operations, Car and Bus Rentals; and Ibis, Gurgaon was awarded for Innovation in Operations, Hotels.

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In the category of Customer Experience, the award for Travel/Tour Operators went to Varun Worldwide Holidays, the one for hotels was won by Neemrana Hotels and the one for tourism boards went to the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, Dubai. The trophy in the car and bus rentals segment went to Priyadarshini Taxi Services.

In the category of Excellence in Personnel Welfare, Taj Gateway emerged the winner, defeating four other contenders. In the category of Innovation in Mobile and Web Initiatives, Andhra Pradesh Tourism pipped five others to the post while Our Native Village Eco Resort won for Excellence in Environment Protection. The LaLiT Temple View, Khajuraho, was recognised for Excellence in Corporate Social Responsibility. One of the most coveted awards, however, was the Editor's Choice — and the winner was India's popular online company MakeMyTrip. "This award is for the rest of the team," said founder and CEO Deep Kalra as he lifted his award.

After the award distribution, panelists Rajen Habib Khwaja, secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Rakesh Mathur, CEO, WelcomHeritage, Maj Gen (retd) LK Gupta, chairman of Intach, Francis Wacziarg, co-chairman, Neemrana Hotels, discussed on the topic 'Can Indian heritage unlock the future of tourism in India'. Even as Mathur stated that "tourism in this country is only about heritage", and Wacziarg pointed out how heritage hotels are located in remote areas and employed locals, there emerged an opinion on the need for a strong nightlife and cultural activities for the evening to balance the heritage appeal. Moreover, local people must understand the benefits of tourism to their economy for tourists to really enjoy the philosophy of atithi devo bhava.



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