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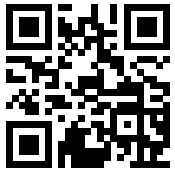
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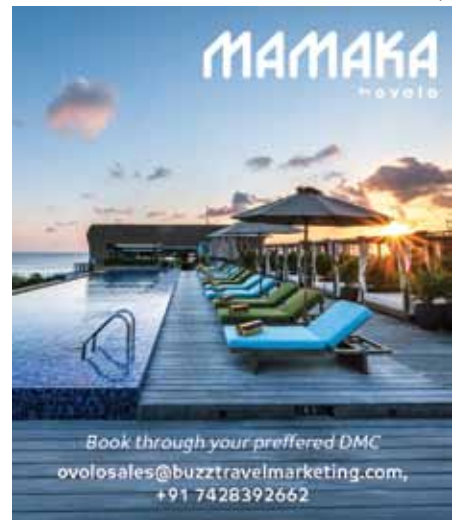
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# Build airports, but fuel them right

With India emerging as the fourth-largest economy globally, its travel and tourism sector is poised to become a key economic driver. **Julia Simpson**, President & CEO, WTTC, outlines how India's infrastructure growth can shape the industry's future.



Janice Alyosius

For India to fully capitalise on its tourism growth momentum, infrastructure remains key, claims **Julia Simpson**, President & CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). Speaking at her recent visit to the country, she said, India's tourism industry is in an upward trajec-



**Julia Simpson**  
President & CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)

Simpson said India must enhance seamless digital travel. She also suggested for incentivising domestic production of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).



**While domestic travel has remained a vital force, the revival of international tourism is now propelling the sector into a new era of growth**

just shy of 7 per cent of India's economy and over the next few years, it will grow to almost 10 per cent," she said. However, she added, for India to fully capitalise on this momentum and infrastructure remains key. "Some of the policies like expanding international airports from over 160 to 200, growing the high-speed rail network and improving roads are really significant. If new destinations are to be opened, this investment is essential," she elaborated.

"We need the Indian government to incentivise the local production of SAF. There is no point in Air India or IndiGo buying SAF abroad and flying it into India. The country has an opportunity to lead in sustainable travel," she concluded.

## When the Sky turned silent

*TravTalk stands with the nation in deep mourning*

June 12 will forever be remembered as the day of unspeakable sorrow. In an instant, dreams were shattered, families were torn apart, and lives were lost in the tragic Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad.

There are no words strong enough to ease the pain of those who have lost their loved ones. The grief is raw. The emptiness is immeasurable. And yet, in the face of this heartbreaking loss, we stand together — as a family, as an industry, and as a nation.

**TravTalk joins every grieving heart in silent prayer and profound sorrow.**

We mourn not just the loss of lives, but the countless stories that will now remain unfinished — the embraces never shared, the words left unspoken, the journeys that will never be completed.

To the families and loved ones who carry this unimaginable pain, we may never fully understand the depth of your loss, but we stand beside you with our deepest condolences, our tears, and our prayers.

May the departed souls find peace in eternity. May their families find the strength to endure this irreparable loss.

And may we, as one community, honour their memory by holding each other a little closer, by never taking a moment for granted, and by finding hope even in the darkest hour.

**Today, we do not simply mourn.**

**We weep together.  
We remember together.  
We stand together.**



tory and poised to play a greater role in the country's economic development. She pressed on the urgent need for strategic policy interventions. "India is now the fourth largest economy in the world, which is incredible. Its strong tourism sector currently represents

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# India to fly 500mn pax/yr by 2030

The IATA AGM, held in India, saw the world aviation community descend down to the country, wherein the industry mulled over aviation trends across all regions, as well as delved deeper into how to make SAF a reality and the way forward for green fuel in the overall aviation landscape. The event saw Prime Minister Narendra Modi also in attendance.



Surbhi Sharma

**Willie Walsh**, Director General, International Air Transport Association (IATA), speaking at the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the association, held recently at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, predicted higher growth for the domestic aviation market in India.

"If you look at the domestic markets from 2020 to 2024, both India and China have grown at the same pace - CAGR of 11.2 per cent - but going forward I think the rate of growth in India will be higher than that of China. China will



PM Narendra Modi at the 81<sup>st</sup> IATA AGM, held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi recently

still grow very strongly but, I believe, number one growth economy from an aviation point of view will be India," he said. He raised the issue of complex tax structure in India, calling it "one of the biggest challenges" to aviation growth.

"Issues related to taxation need to be addressed for India to fully exploit its potential and translate its vision into reality," he said. The IATA AGM returned to India after a 42-year hiatus. The three-day

global aviation conference witnessed the presence of more than 1,700 delegates, including representatives from over 200 airlines, governments and international organisations from across the globe, reinforcing India's stature

as a vital connector in the global aviation network.

### Numbers tell a compelling story

Delivering his keynote address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underscored India's role in the global aviation ecosystem, not only as a vast market but also as a symbol of policy leadership, innovation and inclusive development. "Today, India is emerging as a global leader in space-aviation convergence," he remarked.

Emphasising the UDAN scheme's success, he said, "Under this initiative, over 15 million passengers have benefitted from

affordable air travel. The country now handles 240 million passengers annually and this number is projected to reach 500 million passengers by 2030."

### IN NUMBERS

- 162**  
Airports in India in 2024, up from 74 in 2014
- 350**  
India plans to take up the airport count by 2047
- 240 million**  
passengers India flew in 2024

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## Aviation window is open: Execution will decide

India has made its intent clear.

The IATA AGM on Indian soil was more than symbolism - it marked a nation stepping forward to stake its claim in global aviation. Bold long-haul announcements, massive fleet orders, strategic codeshares, and visible political backing signal that India is no longer content with incremental growth. It wants leadership.

But leadership is not declared. It is earned.

Now comes the real test - operational delivery at scale:

- ❖ Can low-cost carriers build a sustainable premium product without compromising core economics?
- ❖ Will codeshare alliances evolve into true commercial advantage or simply remain bilateral press statements?
- ❖ Can India move beyond policy talk and become a serious player in the Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) space?

The external narrative has shifted.

India is no longer judged on potential; it is judged on its ability to deliver consistently, efficiently and competitively at global standards.

Structural challenges remain:

- ❖ Airport congestion.
- ❖ Tax and regulatory complexity.
- ❖ Gaps in infrastructure planning.
- ❖ Inconsistent passenger experience at scale.

The market opportunity is enormous. The ambition is undeniable.

But this next phase will reward precision, discipline and ruthless execution.

**In global aviation, ambition wins attention; performance builds leadership.**

**India has arrived - now it must deliver.**

# Volatile stock market impacts tourism business

During stock market volatility, tourism sector also feels the tremors. It not only leaves an impact on the sector but also affects consumer confidence and spending habits, highlighting trends like shorter trips and last-minute bookings.



A volatile stock market leaves a discernible impact on travel and tourism, particularly by influencing consumer confidence and spending behaviour. Travel, often viewed as a discretionary expense, is tied to how secure consumers feel financially and the stock market plays a central role in shaping that sentiment.

### Reduced spending on leisure travel

Stock market volatility tends to erode investor wealth, leading to a perceived or real decline in disposable income. This pushes consumers toward saving rather than spending, often reducing their appetite for non-essential expenditures like vacations. The psychological impact is equally significant—uncertainty in the markets breeds fear, and this translates into postponed travel plans for expensive or long-haul trips while opting for shorter trips and budget-friendly alternatives. When consumers are unsure of their financial future or investments, they are less likely to book vacations or big-ticket items like international holidays or luxury travel.

### Shifting travel trends and preferences

Economic uncertainty pushes travellers to be-



come more value conscious. Budget airlines, cheaper accommodations and affordable travel destinations gain popularity. International trips may be replaced with domestic ones, as travellers seek to cut costs and avoid potential currency exchange risks. They might take more frequent but shorter trips instead of longer, more expensive ones. Moreover, booking patterns shift. More travellers now prefer flexible booking and cancellation options and last-minute deals, reflecting a cautious, wait-and-watch approach in times of economic flux to mitigate risk.

### Exchange Rate Volatility also a factor

Volatility in the stock market often goes hand-in-hand with fluctuations in curren-

cy exchange rates. Volatility in exchange rates can make a destination more or less attractive. This has a two-fold effect. For in-

**Tour operators also consider exchange rate stability when recommending destinations to clients, as volatile currencies affect profitability**

bound tourism, a stronger rupee may deter foreign tourists due to increased costs. On the other hand, a weaker rupee makes outbound travel significantly more expensive for Indian travellers. Tour operators also consider exchange rate stability when recommending destinations to clients, as volatile currencies increase operational risk and affect profitability.

### Travel industry: Resilient yet reactive

Despite these challenges, travel and tourism sector of India has shown remarkable resilience. The desire for travel, especially among the growing middle

class and young aspirational consumers, remains strong. People continue to prioritise travel and experiences, even during economic headwinds.

While the travel industry in India continues to evolve and demonstrate adaptability, it cannot be entirely immune to the shocks of a volatile stock market.

The industry's fortunes are often reflective of broader economic sentiment reflected in the stock market. A cautious consumer is less likely to travel freely. However, by understanding these trends and proactively responding to shifts in traveller preferences, the sector can weather market fluctuations and continue on a path of growth.



**Naveen Kundu**  
Managing Director  
Ebixcash Travel Services

*(Views expressed are the author's own. The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)*





# International visitor spend in India touched ₹3.1tn

World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) research also reveals that India’s business travel is experiencing record growth, with combined domestic and international spending hitting ₹1.1 trillion last year, surpassing the 2019 peak by 2.6 per cent.



After a prolonged reliance on domestic travel spend following the pandemic, WTTC’s latest Economic Impact Research (EIR) reveals international travel is not only back; it’s stronger than ever, reaching unprecedented levels last year.

According to the data, while domestic travel has remained a vital force, with spending soaring to ₹15.5 trillion, 22 per cent above the 2019 levels, the revival of international tourism is now propelling the sector into a bold new era of growth.

Travel & Tourism contributed almost ₹21 trillion to the Indian economy last year, 20 per cent ahead of 2019, and yet with a young, educated population facing rapid automation through AI, the sector remains a critical source of employment and opportunity.

The sector also supported an all-time high of almost 46.5 million jobs, equivalent to 9.1 per cent of total employment across India.

The country also welcomed 20 million international visitors in 2024 - 2.3 million more than 2019, reaffirming the country’s status as a leading global destination and underscoring the renewed international confidence in its tourism offering.

## India Sector Characteristics

International Visitor Spending			
INR 2.8 TN (USD 33.7 BN)	INR 3.1 TN (USD 36.8 BN) Annual Change: 7.4% (8.9% vs 2019)	INR 3.2 TN (USD 38.8 BN) Annual Change: 5.6% (15.1% vs 2019)	INR 4.6 TN (USD 55.5 BN) CAGR (2025 - 2035): 3.6%
Domestic Visitor Spending			
INR 12.7 TN (USD 151.9 BN)	INR 15.5 TN (USD 185.6 BN) Annual Change: 9.7% (22.2% vs 2019)	INR 16.8 TN (USD 200.8 BN) Annual Change: 8.2% (32.2% vs 2019)	INR 32.7 TN (USD 391.2 BN) CAGR (2025 - 2035): 6.9%

To maintain this momentum, WTTC calls for continued investment and targeted policy support, and urges the government to reconsider its recent decision to reduce funding for



process. While visa-on-arrival and e-visa systems are in place, reciprocal policies and long delays for key markets like the US, where appointments are reportedly unavailable until 2026, continue to hinder tourists. Making it easier to visit India is one of the fastest ways to unlock further international arrivals and spending.”

To support this growth and ensure long-term resilience, WTTC has signed an MoU with WTTCII to amplify India’s tourism voice globally. The MoU combines WTTC’s international influence with WTTCII’s strong national presence. It will strengthen policy coherence and offer a model for global-local tourism leadership. The global tourism body’s research also reveals India’s business travel is experi-

encing record growth, with combined domestic and international spending hitting ₹1.1 trillion last year, surpassing the 2019 peak by 2.6 per cent.

## A look ahead to 2025 and 2035

WTTC has forecast another record-breaking year for India’s Travel & Tourism sector with its economic contribution set to reach over ₹22 trillion in 2025, whilst employment in the sector is expected to reach more than 48

Travel & Tourism sector in India contributed almost ₹21 trillion to the Indian economy last year, 20 per cent ahead of 2019

million. As the sector expands, there is a significant opportunity to foster homegrown entrepreneurship, particularly in luxury travel experiences.

International visitor spend is expected to reach ₹3.2 trillion, whilst spending from domestic travellers is set to hit ₹16 trillion. By 2035, Travel & Tourism’s contribution to the national economy is forecast to almost double.



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## Social Impact of Travel & Tourism (2023)

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(Direct) Share of Travel &  
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12.5%

Youth 15-24 Years  
Employment  
(Direct) Share of Travel &  
Tourism employment  
13.4%

High-wage  
Employment  
(Direct) Share of Travel &  
Tourism employment  
63.5%



TRAVEL NEWS

- Government and private exhibition industry must collaborate** to establish India as a centre of MICE tourism: GS Shekhawat
- IndiGo-TAT in talks for **direct India-Chiang Mai flights** to boost travel: Director, TAT, Delhi
- Uttar Pradesh government approves **Homestay and B&B Policy 2025** to boost tourism and jobs
- Puducherry Transport Department rolls out **caravan tourism** to increase tourists footfall
- Indian **hospitality industry revenue growth to normalise** at 6-8% in FY2026: ICRA
- Border tourism initiative** set to be launched in Himachal Pradesh by CM Sukhu

# Beige age is over for luxury travel

Luxury travel is shifting gears from lavish indulgence to meaningful, personalised experiences. High-net-worth travellers are planning an average of eight leisure trips this year, including three international getaways, with over half expected to outspend their 2024 budgets.

TT Bureau

**O**n an average, luxury travellers are planning eight leisure trips this year, three of which will be international, with over half expecting to spend more than they did in 2024, finds the first Luxury Travel Report 2025, released recently by Preferred Hotels & Resorts. This trend signals a strong rebound for the premium sector and opens the door for customised itineraries and elevated service offerings.

The report reveals a new breed of luxury consumer who values curated experiences, heritage-rich stays and the trusted guidance of travel advisors. For the travel fraternity, this marks



a timely opportunity to tap into emerging preferences of HNI travellers. The study identifies five key trends that are reshaping the luxury travel experience:

**Beige-ification is a wake-up call**  
According to the report, 70 per cent of luxury travellers have lost their soul due to

excessive standardisation. Today's travellers crave one-of-a-kind experiences.

**Legacy moments new luxury currency**  
Travellers are placing higher value on emotional impact over material indulgence. Over 80 per cent believe insider access leads to unforgettable moments and 64 per cent

favour advice from locals over AI-powered tools.

**Curation is the new standard of luxury**  
Effortless travel now means expert curation. About 84 per cent of luxury travellers are relying on trusted advisors over endless online research.

**Heritage is the new frontier**  
Cultural immersion is at the forefront of traveller expectations. Over 90 per cent seek deeper engagement with history, architecture and traditions.

**Loyalty programmes**  
Despite rising costs, 82 per cent of luxury travellers say loyalty programmes are essential to ensuring quality, while repeat visits

are often driven by stand-out past experiences.

**Lindsey Ueberroth**, CEO, Preferred Hotels & Re-

70 per cent of luxury travellers feel modern luxury hotels have lost their soul due to excessive standardisation

sorts, said, "We hope to inspire meaningful experiences that resonate with the luxury travel set."

# Eyeing top spot for India in adventure

**Ajeet Bajaj**, President, ATOAI, emphasising on India's goal to rank among the world's top 10 adventure tourism destinations by 2034, sheds light on the association's initiatives. With safety, sustainability and mega-trails at its core, ATOAI plans to launch Responsible Adventure Tourism Awards and RATG course this year, he informs.

Surbhi Sharma

**W**ith India's adventure tourism sector positioned on the brink of a major transformation, industry leaders set forth a bold, actionable vision - one rooted in sustainability, safety and scale - at the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Members Meet 2025, held recently in New Delhi.

Addressing the gathering at the meet, **Ajeet Bajaj**, President, ATOAI, said that due to continued hard work of the industry in the past, India's global ranking has increased to 38, but it is not good



Participants at the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) Members Meet 2025, held recently in New Delhi

enough given the potential. "Our goal is for India to be among the world's top 10 adventure tourism destinations by 2034," Bajaj said.

The meet put emphasis on four key pillars, comprising expanding adventure tourism responsibly, policy ad-

vocacy, member benefits and organisational capacity building, which define the association's strategy. Highlighting the need for robust safety frameworks, Bajaj expressed concern over unregulated operators compromising the industry's credibility.

Two government-backed mega trails - the Western Himalayan mega trail (from Jammu to Nepal via Ladakh, Spiti and Uttarakhand) and the Ganga Nature and Heritage mega trail (from Gaumukh to Gangasagar) - were unveiled at the meet. The 2,800-km long trails



aim promote immersive and sustainable travel and boost local economies.

Addressing the meet, **Arshdeep Anand**, Vice President, ATOAI, reiterated the association's commitment to sustainability, training and inclusivity by highlighting the successful initiatives taken by the association. "With robust state partnerships and an expanding member network, our presence is stronger than ever," she said.

The association plans to launch Responsible Adventure Tourism Awards, RATG course-New destinations in Pune from 18-20 June, and ATOAI-PADI partnership this year.

- MEGA TRAIL PROJECTS**
  - ❖ Western Himalayan mega trail (Jammu to Nepal border)
  - ❖ Ganga Nature and Heritage mega trail (Gaumukh to Gangasagar)



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# Personalisation is new luxury

With more income at disposal, the appetite for luxury travel among Indians is no longer limited to staying in a five-star hotel or fly in business class. A mix of increased purchasing power, social media influence, film-driven aspirations and a desire to experience the unexperienced has reshaped how Indians travel. Younger and experience-driven travellers now seek brag-worthy moments they can flaunt on social media platforms, fuelling demand for hyper-personalised journeys. Across a growing segment of HNIs, millennials and aspirational tourists, personalisation has become the new benchmark. From private vineyard dinners in Europe to silent retreats in Asia, luxury today is curated, not consumed. With real-time AI-driven itinerary updates and immersive, bespoke experiences offered by DMCs, the role of travel agents has shifted to that of storytellers and experience designers. As experts agree, the future of luxury lies in delivering moments that are deeply personal and immersive.



**Elena Orland**  
Tourism Counsellor - Embassy of Spain &  
Director, Spain Tourism Board

“At the luxury end, Spain continues to expand its offerings for high-end travelers; private yacht charters in the Balearic Islands, exclusive wine tastings at world-class vineyards, just to show some examples. At the same time, alternative travel styles like home-stays and rural tourism are gaining popularity.”



**Pritish Shah**  
Founder & CEO  
A Travel Duet

“The luxury traveller is evolving as they seek experiences rooted in slower plus more mindful quiet luxury. It's about opening doors where others cannot, like behind-the-scene tours with an expert at the Vatican or access to sold-out events. Our DMC partners are key to delivering seamless on-ground service.”



**Manish Kriplani**  
Managing Director  
BayWatch Stayzz

“Luxury travel today goes beyond first-class flights and five-star stays. Modern luxury travellers crave exclusivity, personalisation, and purpose-driven experiences. There is a shift toward curated moments like private vineyard dinners or cultural immersions and a preference for privacy through tailor-made itineraries.”



**Vikas Abbott**  
Owner  
Vasco Travel

“Luxury no longer means extravaganza - it means exclusivity, value and personalisation. What luxury means for a particular person might mean something else for another person. That is why personalisation is important. So, the industry should tap into this shift by creating tailor-made experiences.”



**Karan Agarwal**  
Director  
Cox & Kings

“Real growth in luxury space does not come from one-time commissions, it comes from building long-term relationships. When we deliver exceptional experience, client comes back, and importantly, refers us to others. Bespoke luxury experiences do carry higher margins, but trust is what drives growth.”



**Gurpreet Johar**  
Director  
Red Carpet Tours

“Modern luxury travellers are seeking more than just five-star hotels—they desire exclusivity, authenticity and curated experiences. At Red Carpet Tours, we focus on personalisation, offering immersive itineraries, private access, and seamless services tailored to individual preferences.”



**Pankaj Nagpal**  
Managing Director  
Travstarz Global Group

“Luxury travel is evolving rapidly, moving from traditional opulence to highly personalised, authentic experiences. Today's travellers seek bespoke itineraries that reflect their unique interests—be it wellness, gastronomy, adventure, or cultural exploration. Sustainability has become central.”



**Hari Kishan Valmiki**  
Managing Partner  
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

“The surge in spending power among Indian travellers, especially from Hyderabad, with HNIs, DINKS and elite clubs, driving demand for high-end FIT and MICE travel. From charter flights and yachts to luxury trains and polar expeditions, the appetite for unique and upscale experiences is growing.”



**Santosh Kanchan**  
Country Head - India  
Cozmo Travel

“Luxury is not merely defined by extravagance, but by personalisation, seamless execution and the emotional richness of an experience. Increasingly, we find clients asking for 'luxury on a budget'. We do offer premium experiences tailored to modest budgets — be it upgraded stays or personalised events.”



**Alefiya Singh**  
Founder  
IRIS Reps

“Luxury sells long-term. Higher value means higher margins, but more importantly, it earns us loyalty. When we deliver those elevated experiences, our travel agent partners trust us more, and that builds into repeat business. Commissions are healthy, of course, but the relationships are even more valuable.”



**Vikram Trivedi**  
CEO  
My Tour Box

“Luxury today is about intimacy and meaning, rather than extravagance. Travellers now seek authenticity, discretion and experiences that mirror individuality. We respond with thought-led curation; slow travel, rare access and spaces with character. For B2B, the model has evolved from mere suppliers to storytellers.”



**Prateek Wadhwa**  
Director  
Dreamtrip4u

“Luxury travellers seek exclusivity and comfort without overspending. Preferences include fast-track entries, private sightseeing cars, pool villas and sunset yacht cruises. Dreamtrip4u curates such thoughtful experiences, blending convenience, privacy, comfort and elegance.”

Compiled by TT Bureau



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# Longer Euro trips for Indians now

Indians are beginning to opt for mono-destinations in Europe now – a sign of maturity – which would mean immersive and longer stays with higher spend. This makes **Elena Orland**, Tourism Counsellor - Embassy of Spain, Director of Spain Tourism Board, happy and she wants Indians to explore remoter regions and experiences that her country has to offer.



Hazel Jain

Promoting a product is easy when the product speaks for itself—and that is precisely the case with Spain, exclaims **Elena Orland**, Tourism Counsellor of Embassy of Spain and Director of Spain Tourism

Board, proudly. “Of course, we want to increase the number of Indians coming to Spain, but we also want them to get to know the country in depth. A visit to Madrid or Barcelona is not enough to understand and experience what Spain is, because Spain is diver-



**Elena Orland**  
Tourism Counsellor of Embassy of Spain  
and Director of Spain Tourism Board



of 2026 as the Spain-India Dual Year,” Orland adds.

Undoubtedly, the re-establishment of the direct flight between Madrid and Delhi – once a vital connection before the pandemic – and hopefully the addition of a second flight to Barcelona, will contribute to inbound numbers from India, she reveals. “From the rising demand for luxury and wellness retreats—particularly among HNIs and urban elites—to eco-conscious and community-based travel experiences favoured by millennials and Gen Z, the Spanish offer is broad. Indian traveller have a high spending capacity and share clear cultural affinities with Spaniards,” she adds. 🇮🇳

## EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL TAKES CENTRE STAGE

According to the India Holiday Report 2025 released by Thomas Cook (India) and its group company SOTC Travel, 26 per cent of respondents have been showing a growing interest in local gastronomy during their travels, especially in countries like France, Spain, Australia and Thailand, which are popular choices for those seeking diverse culinary experiences.

sity. For example, Spain is known for flamenco, but there are thousands of other ancient dances that are still danced throughout Spain. In this, we are also similar to India; the diversity is incredible. I believe the era of one-week trips to Europe has come to an end,” she says.

For her, India is one of the most promising travel markets in the short term. “An increasing number of Indians – especially millennials and Gen Z – are prioritising international travel. Tier II and tier III cities of India

are expected to emerge as source markets. Overall, Spain is perceived in India as an exotic yet accessible destination. This positive momentum of Indian tourism to Spain will be further boosted by the declaration

# ‘Aim to welcome 100k Indians by 2026’

Israel is witnessing early signs of recovery from India this year with 3,600 Indian tourists recorded between January and April 2025. Armed with e-visa for Indian travellers, better air connectivity and deeper outreach strategy for tier cities, the country seems to be well prepared for its target to cross 100,000 Indian arrivals by 2026.



TT Bureau

While 2024 saw a slower pace in inbound tourism from India to Israel with 9,600 arrivals, Israel Ministry of Tourism is seeing early signs of recovery with 3,600 Indian tourist entries recorded between January and April 2025.



**Amruta Bangera**  
Director of Marketing  
Israel Ministry of Tourism, India

**Amruta Bangera**, Director of Marketing, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India, says it has been noticed that Indians are staying longer and exploring deeper—often combining Tel Aviv with Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, and even the Negev Desert, Eilat, Haifa, and Akko.

“Their spending is also increasing, particularly in premium and curated experiences. Air connectivity remains strong as well via hubs like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Amman and Addis Ababa. Air India’s direct flights from Delhi

to Tel Aviv are currently suspended until June 2025. But with convenient layovers and competitive pricing, Israel is still very much within reach. We are in active discussions with airline partners to enhance direct connectivity. A second direct route—potentially from Bengaluru or Delhi—is currently being evaluated. While we can’t announce a launch date just yet, improving air access is high on the agenda,” she says.

The Israel Ministry of Tourism aims to cross 100,000 Indian tourist arrivals over the next two years, driven by improved connectivity, simplified

visa and curated experiences for families, luxury travellers and film tourism.

## E-visa pilot for Indian travellers

The e-visa pilot for Indian travellers was launched on 1 January 2025 with overwhelming response. It’s a completely digital process, eliminating paperwork and in-person visits. The processing time is 7-10 business days and can be submitted individually or as a family. It costs around NIS 100 (approx. ₹2,400). This has opened doors for last-minute travellers and first-timers - it’s already proving to be a game changer.

At the same time, the Israel ministry is also ramping up visibility across

both metro and tier II cities through immersive campaigns and activities.

## ISRAEL'S OUTREACH STRATEGY INCLUDES

- ❖ Webinars and training for the travel trade
- ❖ Influencer marketing with Indian creators
- ❖ Content collaborations tailored to different travel personas
- ❖ PR events and brand-led experiences in major metro cities
- ❖ Marketing activations in malls, cinemas and airports
- ❖ Fam trips for media and trade partners
- ❖ Roadshows and on-ground campaigns across tier I and tier II cities





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# WaitMate: Enjoy your flight delays

One in five flights globally experiences delays, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Asego WaitMate redefines the way travellers experience flight delays. They no longer have to suffer through uncomfortable waiting times. Instead, they can unwind with snacks, Wi-Fi and a peaceful place to work or relax in an otherwise stressful situation.



TT Bureau

Did you know that nearly 20 per cent of travellers worldwide experience flight delays? According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), one in five flights globally experiences delays. Travellers spend an average of 30 minutes to over three hours waiting in airports during peak seasons. However, this number can surge even higher, causing disruptions and frustration for millions of passengers. To put this into perspective, a delay of just one hour can result in approximately \$1.5 billion in lost productivity for the airline industry alone each year.



**Dev Karvat**  
Founder & CEO  
Asego

But what if this waiting time could be transformed from a stressful inconvenience into a moment of ease and indulgence?

With this vision in mind, Asego has recently launched a game-changing lounge access service designed to transform

the flight delay-induced waiting time into one of comfort, convenience and relaxation.

Asego WaitMate is a groundbreaking service that offers exclusive access to over 1,300 lounges across 500+ airports in more than 100 countries. Now travellers no longer have to suffer through uncomfortable waiting times. Instead, they can unwind with snacks, Wi-Fi and a peaceful place to work or relax in an otherwise stressful situation. Furthermore, with Asego WaitMate, customers can also include up to 4 additional passengers, which means you can share this experience with your loved ones, making it perfect for family or colleagues.



Here's how it works:

- ❖ Register at least 24 hours before your flight departure and receive a confirmation email.
- ❖ Get lounge access vouchers in case of a flight delay.
- ❖ Enjoy complimentary

snacks, beverages and even business facilities.

This innovation arrives at a pivotal moment for the travel industry, which is increasingly focused on enhancing the passenger journey. With the global airport lounge market projected to grow at

a CAGR of 7.5 per cent over the next five years, Asego is positioned to meet the

**Asego WaitMate is a groundbreaking service that offers exclusive access to over 1,300 lounges across more than 500 airports**

evolving needs of the modern traveller. So, the next time your flight is delayed, don't just sit there—take control and enjoy your wait with Asego WaitMate. 📱

## How seasonal business earns profit?

Indian travel agents are uniquely positioned to turn seasonal trends into high-conversion opportunities by blending data, storytelling and strategic partnerships. Key opportunities for the agents are in decoding emerging seasonal tourism trends like cherry blossom festivals, winter markets, or cultural carnivals, and crafting compelling journeys for niche travellers.



Surbhi Sharma

From selling destinations to curating distinctive and time-sensitive experiences, India's travel trade is undergoing a pivotal shift. This moment demands a smarter, more strategic approach from Indian travel professionals—powered by tech, insight and meaningful partnerships—to cash in on the opportunities.

### Tracking trends with intelligence

Emphasising the role of technology and market intelligence in spotting emerging seasonal tourism trends, **Nitin Mittal**, National Coordinator, NIMA



**Nitin Mittal**  
National Coordinator, NIMA & CEO, Hotel n Apartment

& CEO, Hotel n Apartment, said, "This enables to cater to niche customers who constantly seek new destinations and unique experiences. To stay ahead of the curve, travel agents and operators must integrate technology with market



**Guldeep Singh Sahni**  
Founding President, OTOAI & Managing Director, Weldon Tours & Travels

intelligence, segmentation strategies and innovative promotional tactics." By harnessing multiple data sources, monitoring trends highlighted and subscribing to tourism boards newsletters, they can proactively anticipate and re-



**Dheeraj Ranjan Kumar**  
Director, Balitrip Wisata

spond to shifting traveller preferences, he added.

### Offline wins with focused offerings

To stand out against OTAs, **Guldeep Singh Sahni**, Founding President, OTOAI & Managing Director, Wel-

don Tours & Travels, suggested that tour operators must become product experts. Deep knowledge of seasonal events, from Europe's festive markets to Japan's bloom trails, can be gained through webinars, tourism boards and travel media. Offering curated itineraries that prioritise immersive, unrushed experiences boosts conversions—especially for younger travellers seeking personalisation and adventure.

### Strengthening DMC partnerships

Underscoring the power of collaboration with DMCs and tourism boards, **Dheeraj Ranjan Kumar**, Director, Balitrip Wisata,

said, "Advance planning, transparent forecasting and joint marketing build trust and unlock better inventory, rates and access."

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ❖ Use data & trend analysis
- ❖ Craft visually driven itineraries
- ❖ Prioritise learning
- ❖ Forge DMC alliances
- ❖ Use early-bird offers strategically



# Shift to digital-first models needed

Agents must transition from traditional sales channels to digital-first models, says **CA Krishnan R**, Director & Chief Executive Officer, Unimoni India. To stay competitive today, travel companies must adapt technological advancements. Digital transformation is no longer optional—it is essential – and it is reshaping how customers access services, he adds.



Hazel Jain

**C**A Krishnan R, Director & Chief Executive Officer, Unimoni India, anticipates a 12-15 per cent annual growth over the next two years, purely fuelled by demand for hyper-personalised experiences. “Think sustainable eco-tourism, immersive cultural journeys and adventure-driven itineraries. Tier II, III cities are emerging as key growth hubs, with travellers seeking curated packages that blend affordability with value,” he says.

The Indian travel industry is attracting new players, intensifying competition. In this scenario, competitive advantage will come



**CA Krishnan R**  
Director & Chief Executive Officer  
Unimoni India

from innovation, agility and customer-centric strategies. To achieve similar growth and stay competitive today, Krishnan shares that travel companies must embrace technological advancements.

“Digital transformation is no longer optional—it

is essential. It reshapes how customers access services. With travellers becoming increasingly cost-conscious and presented with myriad choices, agencies must differentiate themselves by offering flexible booking options, personalised packages, AI-powered experiences and value additions. Strategic collaborations and partnerships can significantly expand portfolios while minimising operational costs. By leveraging such alliances, travel companies can drive sustainable profitability. By FY26, we aim to double our market share in emerging cities while maintaining a 20 per cent year-on-year growth in digital bookings,” he says.

As inventory and pricing become increasingly dynamic and demand-driven, traditional margins are likely to shrink. This

**Tier II, III cities are emerging as key growth hubs, with travellers seeking curated packages that blend affordability with value**

will push agencies to focus on higher volumes, repeat business and long-term customer retention to

drive sustainable growth. “Customers today demand quick service, intuitive platforms, 24/7 support and personalised experiences. Meeting these expectations requires robust digital infrastructure,” Krishnan says.

“Moreover, data analytics will play a pivotal role. Understanding customer preferences through data-driven insights will enable companies to tailor offerings, enhance service and make smarter business decisions. In summary, the future of travel agencies lies in embracing digital transformation, leveraging data, delivering exceptional customer experiences and staying agile in response to changing market dynamics,” he adds.

## UNIMONI MAKES NEWS

- ❖ It is launching region-specific packages tailored to tier II, III audiences.
- ❖ It is enhancing its AI-powered platform with predictive analytics and virtual reality previews.
- ❖ It is partnering with eco-conscious hotels and carbon-offset programmes to cater to Gen Zs.

## Aeroprime: Air Cambodia's GSA

Air Cambodia has appointed Aeroprime Group as its exclusive Passenger General Sales Agent (GSA) in India, expanding their existing partnership, strengthening its footprint in India.



TT Bureau

**I**n a significant development, Air Cambodia has appointed Aeroprime Group as its exclusive Passenger General Sales Agent (GSA) for India, effective 1 July 2025. This milestone marks a new chapter in the airline's India strategy, deepening an already strong partnership. Additionally, the group, which already serves as Air Cambodia's exclusive Pan India Cargo General Sales & Service Agent (GSSA), will now oversee both passenger and cargo sales, operations and related services across India.

### Strengthening bilateral travel & trade

Commenting on the tie-up, **David Zhan**, CEO, Air Cam-



Wendy YW Chen, Vice Chief Executive Officer, Air Cambodia and Abhishek Goyal, Executive Director & CEO, Aeroprime Group, signed the agreement

bodia, said, “We are delighted to strengthen our collaboration with Aeroprime Group. Their proven expertise and extensive network make them the ideal partner, as we continue to expand our footprint in this important market.”

Echoing the sentiment, **Abhishek Goyal**, Executive Director & CEO,

Aeroprime Group, said, “We are honoured to manage both passenger and cargo operations for Air Cambodia in India. Cambodia is an extraordinary destination—home to cultural marvels like Angkor Wat, the world's largest religious monument. Our goal is to make it more visible and accessible to Indian travellers.”

## Singapore gets new oceanarium

Set to debut in July 2025, the Singapore Oceanarium and its cutting-edge Research & Learning Centre mark a bold leap in marine education and conservation.



Janice Alyosius

**S**ingapore is poised to make waves in marine conservation with the grand opening of the Singapore Oceanarium on 23 July 2025. An ambitious transformation of the former S.E.A. Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa, the reimagined attraction represents a bold evolution into a world-class ocean institute committed to marine education, research and conservation.

### Three times bigger

Spanning 22 immersive zones, the Singapore Oceanarium is three times larger than its predecessor. It invites guests on a multi-sensory journey from shallow coasts to the deep sea and from prehistoric



oceans to modern-day marine ecosystems.

### Global benchmark for marine research

At the heart of the transformation is the Research and Learning Centre, opened in May 2025. This state-of-the-art institute solidifies the Oceanarium's status as a leading hub for marine science in

Asia. “Singapore Oceanarium represents the next frontier for marine education and sustainability,” said **Tan Hee Teck**, CEO, Resorts World Sentosa. **Lam Xue Ying**, Vice President, Singapore Oceanarium, noted, “This transformation from S.E.A. Aquarium to a purpose-driven institute has been years in the making.”



# Destination boycott emotional decision

While Türkiye and Azerbaijan have done predominantly well with the Indian MICE and wedding groups in the past, just one decision from their end changed everything. But one country's loss is another's gain. **TRAVTALK** speaks to key MICE players to find out how much business is moving away from the two destinations to which destinations?



Hazel Jain

It is estimated that in 2023 alone, more than 500 Indian weddings were hosted in Turkish locations, which means more than ₹1,500 crore flowed into Türkiye from India during the year. So, the decision of many travel trade members in India to stop sale to Türkiye and Azerbaijan after the recent India-Pakistan conflict is not about hate but about strategic responsibility.

**Nittin T Dubey**, Director, Seven Wonders Vacations, has done many weddings and social events in Antalya and Azerbaijan in the past. But his clients are now refusing to opt for them. "We are now suggesting

alternative destinations like Georgia because they offer similar culture and are close to each other geographically. We are also suggesting Uzbekistan. Both these destinations are also competitively priced. Corporates are also completely refusing to travel to Türkiye and Azerbaijan now. Until

the situation is resolved, people's sentiments will not change about this. This is an emotional decision," he says.

Antalya, Bodrum, Istanbul and Baku were on top of the list for my clients, says **Birju Gariba**, Founder & CEO, ISKRA Events. "But

this has changed now. Destinations like Vietnam, Dubai, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Thailand and Bali will clearly gain from this while we keep pushing destinations within India. Some of the more exotic weddings will now go to the European favourites like Italy and

France, but a big one to gain could be Morocco and Jordan as immediate replacements for Türkiye and Azerbaijan," he adds.

**Trishal Rao**, Chief Sales Officer, SKIL, has done about three to four MICE groups to Türkiye and Azerbaijan over the last

two years. "We had three to four inquiries worth ₹1-₹1.25 crore for these two destinations in recent months. However, due to the current situation, we are not pursuing these destinations," he says.

**Amit Thadani**, Director, Nik N Ami Travels, has been handling cancellations to the two destinations while offering alternative travel options. "While our DMC partners on the ground have been extremely supportive, challenges remain—particularly with some hotels not offering refunds for non-refundable bookings. We are addressing these complexities with our clients empathetically. We are promoting alternative destinations," he adds. 📌



**Nittin T Dubey**  
Director  
Seven Wonders Vacations



**Birju Gariba**  
Founder & CEO  
ISKRA Events



**Trishal Rao**  
Chief Sales Officer  
SKIL



**Amit Thadani**  
Director  
Nik N Ami Travels

## KTO showcases its MICE offerings

Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) India successfully hosted the Korea MICE Roadshow 2025 in Mumbai recently. Led by **Myong Kil Yun**, Regional Director, India & SAARC Countries, KTO, the roadshow highlighted offerings, including Korea's incentive support programme, MICE group visa facilitation and convention infrastructure.





# The Wait Ends



## 9 September 2025

**For further details please contact**

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# Agents to find their tribe @TMIndia

In an industry where competition often reigns supreme, TMIndia is redefining the narrative—fostering collaboration, trust and community. It has evolved into a movement that offers a space where travel professionals feel supported, connected and inspired. The event, scheduled from 28-30 June, will be unique and purpose-driven platform for travel agents.



TT Bureau

TMIndia, founded by Nidhi Hasija and Gaurav Hasija, provides a unique and purpose-driven platform for travel agents in India. Its inception was rooted in empathy and a desire to do things differently.

Sharing the idea behind its conception, **Nidhi Hasija**, Founder, TMI India, said, "TMIndia was born out of a simple yet powerful idea – that no travel agent should ever feel alone. The industry often projects competition as the norm, but we wanted to rewrite that script. For us, the 'C' in business has always stood for collaboration."

**Gaurav Hasija**, Founder, TMI India, added, "TMIndia was conceptualised as a safe space where travel professionals could connect, learn, support each other and build bonds that go beyond just business transactions. What began as a small idea quickly turned into a movement – a tribe that not only has each other's professional backs but shows up for each other on a personal level too."

## A curated experience

This year's event is designed to be intimate and impactful, revealed Gaurav. "It's not about numbers but about depth and relevance. Every person in the room matters. Every conversation counts," he shared.



Nidhi Hasija  
Founder  
TMI India



Gaurav Hasija  
Founder  
TMI India

Elaborating further, Nidhi said, "Unlike most industry events that are vendor-led, ours is community-led. The agenda has been designed by the members, for the members – focusing on solving real problems, answering real questions, and delivering real value. You will not just collect

visiting cards – you will go back with 8–10 meaningful business connections, clarity and inspiration to level up your work."

## Business with trust, not transactions

TMIndia has built an eco-systems for industry. "We have seen it year after

year – agents come in as acquaintances and leave as collaborators, co-hosts and sometimes even as co-founders," said Nidhi.

## Lifeline for agents

TMIndia isn't just another association, it's a feeling, said Nidhi. "It's the kind of space where, if you are stuck at 1 am with a group on tour – there is always someone in the community who will pick up your call and be beside you and help," said Gaurav. "We are proud of the culture we have built – one of honesty, warmth, respect and collaboration. This year's event is simply a celebration of that culture – and we are just waiting for people to experience it," she concluded.

## WHAT'S IN STORE?

❖ Post-event Fam trips to destinations

❖ 121 Conclave: curated one-on-one meetings that go beyond networking

❖ Cultural evenings with live band/ Sufi night, DJ party and cocktail dinners

❖ A chance to meet 200 curated travel professionals from across India

# Ties & clean skies in focus @IATA

IATA held its 81<sup>st</sup> AGM in India after 42 years, hosted by IndiGo, from 1-3 June at the state-of-the-art Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The event, which was marked by the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saw the aviation industry coming together to discuss global issues, trends, growth projections and the future of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).





# Social media powering bookings for trade

If you thought social media influencers and celebrities only reigned the B2C realm, you may have been living under a rock. They are fast spreading their influence even in the B2B world. Today, even the trade is tapping their undeniable power.

Hazel Jain

There is a quiet revolution happening in destination marketing - and it's powered by micro-influencers. When you work with creators who have 5K-50K truly engaged followers, you tap into tight-knit communities that care about the content they see. Those smaller audiences trust recommendations more, leading to deeper engagement and higher conversion rates for niche destinations. Micro-influencers live like local travellers, uncovering hidden gems and sharing genuine experiences. Their posts don't feel like ads; they feel like personal invitations.

Of course, big-name influencers come with big-name price tags! But they offer a smarter ROI: lower cost per campaign, more targeted audiences, and content that is highly sharable within specific travel niches. For destinations working with tight budgets, that makes all the difference.

For OA Globe DMC, partnering with micro influencers has transformed how they showcase destinations. **Vishal Somaia**, Director & Group CEO, OA Globe DMC, says, "Their authentic voice and niche followings drive meaningful engagement—far beyond traditional campaigns. We have embraced influencer partnerships to bring our destinations to life. We are proud to have renowned dancer and content creator Shakti Mohan as our brand ambassador. We have also collaborated with Curly Tales by Kamiya Jani as well as Krishna Jackie Shroff to spotlight our key regions."

**Agents as influencers**  
Travel agents, in many ways, are influencers



**Vishal Somaia**  
Director & Group CEO,  
OA Globe DMC

themselves and often drive bookings through their social media and their authentic storytelling. **Sheetal Munshaw**, Director (India), Atout France, says "The contemporary travel agent



**Sheetal Munshaw**  
Director (India)  
Atout France

a great family destination when he took his mother on a holiday on Mother's Day. **Hari Ganapathy**, Co-Founder, PickYourTrail, confirms, "Yes, we have collaborated with



**Hari Ganapathy**  
Co-Founder  
PickYourTrail

a soulful escape at Meraki, Goa by Tisya Stays and Kishwer Merchant at the beautiful Casa 2565 Villa, also in Goa. The traction and trust these moments generate are invaluable."

Even GSAs like Aeroprime Group have used influencers. **Abhishek Goyal**, CEO & Executive Director, Aeroprime Group, shares, "We have already seen the impact of micro-influencers who were on a Fam trip to Vietnam while



**Abhishek Goyal**  
CEO & Executive Director  
Aeroprime Group



**Gagan Chadha**  
Owner  
Travel2agent Oneworld

has now taken steps in this direction. For France, we have seen agents invited for our workshops/ Fam trips, whether in India or France, actively publish content about their experiences on their social media networks creating awareness about the destination and activities."

## Celebrities endorse

The up-and-coming travel company PickYourTrail has been using social media to its fullest. It often engages with micro-influencers to showcase destinations and experiences they sell, but it recently switched up the game to have the young actor Ishaan Khatter endorse a destination (Singapore) as

micro-influencers across sectors like lifestyle, travel and wellness, and we have seen first-hand the power of niche influence in driving awareness and building new reach."

**Alefiya Singh**, Founder, IRIS Reps, says, "Micro influencers are like trusted friends in the B2B travel world. For years, we have teamed up with everyone from emerging voices like Kishwer Merchant and Surbhi Jyoti to stars like Neha Dhupia and Bipasha Basu. Their content is not just promotional—it's personal. They bring to life everything from boutique villa stays to curated travel moments. Just recently, we hosted Vidya Balan for

**Big-name influencers come with big-name price tags! But they offer a smarter ROI: lower cost per campaign & audiences**

promoting Vietnam and its subsequent impact on the market. Even travel agents can be considered as 'influencers'. But there are some like **Gagan Chadha**, Owner, Travel2agent Oneworld, who don't think influencers can be friends of the B2B travel channel. "The influence of macro and micro influencers remains limited in the B2B travel space," Chada says.



## Skål International instals J&K club

Skål International recently inaugurated its Jammu & Kashmir club, heralding a new era of growth and collaboration.

TT Bureau

In a momentous occasion for the Indian tourism industry, the Skål International Jammu & Kashmir club was officially installed

Skål International Jammu & Kashmir. "Our aim is to foster a spirit of collaboration and innovation within the tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir." **Sanjeev Mehra**, President, Skål International



Abdul Wahid Malik, Farooq Ahmad Shah and Sanjeev Mehra

recently, marking a significant milestone in the organisation's expansion across the country. The installation ceremony, held in Srinagar, was attended by Skål International India board members and members of the J&K tourism community.

India, added, "The installation of the Jammu & Kashmir club is a game-changer for the region's tourism industry. It reflects our commitment to expanding Skål's presence across India and empowering local tourism professionals."

The ceremony was graced by the presence of **Farooq Ahmad Shah**, Member, Legislative Assembly, Jammu & Kashmir, as the Chief Guest. In his address, Shah said, "I am confident that this club will play a vital role in promoting the region's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty."

The installation of the Jammu & Kashmir club brings the total number of Skål clubs in India to 19. "We are thrilled to embark on this new journey as part of the Skål International family," said **Abdul Wahid Malik**, President,

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EVENT TALK		
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Date	Event	Time
17	Oman Tourism Roadshow- Bhubaneswar	10:00 am
18	Oman Tourism Roadshow- Kochi	10:00 am
20	Oman Tourism Roadshow- Goa	10:00 am
23	Israel Tourism Fair 2025	9:00 am
25-26	Travel Meet Asia	10:00 am
25-27	International Wellness Tourism Expo	10:00 am
26	PATA Webinar on Driving Sustainable Growth in Asia Pacific	4:00 pm
26-29	Peru Travel Mart	9:00 am
27	Turtle Down Under Webinar	12:00 pm
27-29	Beijing International Tourism Expo	9:00 am
28-30	TMIIndia Annual Event 2025	10:00 am
30-1 July	Seoul International Travel Mart	8:00 am
30-3 July	ILTM Asia Pacific	9:00 am
JULY 2025		
4-6	Tourism Fair Durgapur	1:00 pm
4-6	India Travel Mart- Shimla	9:00 am
11-13	Travel & Tourism Fair-Kolkata	2:00 pm

## Cross Hotels to open 2 properties in Bangkok

Cross Vibe Bangkok Srinakarin and Away Bangkok Sukhumvit, part of Cross Hotels & Resorts, are all set to open in July.

 Surbhi Sharma

**Chatchaya Glaiprayong**, Head of Global Sales, Cross Hotels & Resorts, sharing details about the two properties said that 196-room Cross Vibe Bangkok Srinakarin caters to the needs of today’s savvy travellers. With eight innovative meeting spaces, it is ideal for both business and leisure stays.

"On the other hand, Away Bangkok Sukhumvit offers 75-room urban retreat for guests which is a perfect escape from the everyday hustle with its blend of relaxation and activity," she said. About India market, she said, "We are cur-



Chatchaya Glaiprayong  
Head of Global Sales  
Cross Hotels & Resorts

rently collaborating with key OTAs, B2B aggregators, tour operators and DMC agents across, as well as local DMC and continue to expand ties this year through exclusive deals, packages, co-hosting events and joint marketing efforts."

## NEW OPENINGS

### Flights

**Route:** Bengaluru and Kathmandu, Nepal  
**Frequency:** Daily  
**Airline:** Air India

**Route:** Delhi to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
**Frequency:** 5 days a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sundays)  
**Airline:** Air India

**Route:** Solapur to Goa  
**Frequency:** 4 days a week (Monday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday)  
**Airline:** FLY91

**Route:** Bhubaneswar to Abu Dhabi  
**Frequency:** 3 days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday)  
**Airline:** Indigo

**Route:** Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh  
**Frequency:** Daily  
**Airline:** IndiGo

### Hotels

**Hotel:** Ramada Encore by Wyndham Chandigarh  
**Rooms:** 65  
**Brand:** Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

**Hotel:** Ramada by Wyndham Ranchi Bariatu Road  
**Rooms:** 66  
**Brand:** Ramada by Wyndham

**Hotel:** Ramada by Wyndham Ghaziabad, Vasundhara  
**Rooms:** 160  
**Brand:** Ramada by Wyndham

**Hotel:** Holiday Inn Express Kolkata New Town  
**Rooms:** 113  
**Brand:** IHG Hotels & Resorts

**Hotel:** Crowne Plaza Lucknow  
**Rooms:** 110  
**Brand:** IHG Hotels & Resorts

# Luxury cruising finds footing in India

As luxury cruising gains ground among Indian travellers, Cunard’s heritage of elegance and immersive experiences stands out. With a legacy of refined service and iconic ships, such as Queen Mary 2, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Victoria and the newest gem, Queen Anne, it offers travel agents a premium product that goes far beyond conventional cruise offerings.

 TT Bureau

With a rich legacy spanning 185 years, Cunard Line has long been a pioneer in luxury ocean travel, connecting continents and crafting memorable journeys across the seas. Founded in 1840, Cunard quickly became known for reliable transatlantic service and unmatched hospitality — playing a pivotal role in shaping global travel.

From transporting royalty and celebrities to hosting dream holidays for everyday adventurers, Cunard’s vessels are floating icons of elegance. Today’s fleet



Nishith Saxena  
Founder & Director  
Cruises Professionals

includes the majestic Queen Mary 2, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Victoria and the newest gem, Queen Anne. Each ship is distinctively designed, offering immersive experiences, exquisite cuisine and refined entertainment.

Cruises Professionals has been representing Cunard in India for close to two decades and has actively promoted the brand across trade platforms. **Nishith Saxena**, Founder & Director, Cruises Professionals, says, "Forget the impersonal and rushed experiences of ordinary travel. Cunard elevates service to an art form, where every interaction is friendly, sincere and perfectly tailored to your needs. It's a delightful blend of attentiveness and respect, ensuring you feel valued throughout your voyage. Therefore, Cunard's marketing communication in India is aimed at the travel agents



who understand luxury products and experiences, as the value this brings is far superior than any mass market cruise line, in terms of indulgence."

For the Indian travel trade, Cunard offers an enticing blend of tradition and sophistication —

ideal for luxury travellers seeking deeper cultural journeys and exceptional service. As cruising gains traction post-pandemic, Cunard remains a compelling option for clients looking for elevated experiences at sea. As the world reopens, the cruising company invites In-

dian travellers to explore the world with unmatched grandeur — where every

Cunard offers an enticing blend of tradition and sophistication, ideal for luxury travellers seeking cultural journeys and exceptional service

cruise is more than a holiday; it's a journey through history, comfort and timeless elegance.



# Say Hello to Amsterdam

Escape the heat this summer! Starting **1st July**,  
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Flight No.	From	Departure	To	Arrival	Days
WY 171	Muscat	13:10	Amsterdam	18:55	Tue ,Thu, Sat, Sun
WY 172	Amsterdam	20:25	Muscat	05:40	Tue ,Thu, Sat, Sun

\*Effective 1 July 2025



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# MOVEMENTS

## ACCOR India

Accor appoints **CYRUS MADAN** as Director of Development, India & South Asia. With nearly three decades of experience across hospitality management and hotel business development, Madan brings deep understanding of the industry and a strategic vision to his new role. He has held leadership positions across renowned hospitality brands, including Lemon Tree Hotels and Atmosphere Hospitality. He is an alumnus of the Welcome Group Graduate School of Hotel Administration.



## SABRE Dubai

Sabre has appointed **MANEESH JAIKRISHNA** as the Vice President & Regional General Manager of Airline IT Solutions for Asia Pacific. With almost 30 years of leadership experience in the airline and travel technology sectors, Jaikrishna possesses extensive knowledge of the Asia Pacific aviation industry, having worked extensively throughout this dynamic region. Additionally, he brings a valuable global perspective from his leadership roles in the Middle East and Africa.



## IATA Singapore

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has appointed **SHELDON HEE** as Regional Vice President, Asia-Pacific. Based in Singapore, Hee will lead IATA in the Asia-Pacific, a region covering 39 countries and home to 53 IATA member airlines. Hee brings over 25 years of experience in the airline industry. He has held various management roles at Singapore Airlines in Singapore, Japan, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Prior to this, Hee was the airline's VP for Partnerships and International Relations.



## THE LEELA PALACE JAIPUR Jaipur

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed **ANOOP PANDEY** as Vice President and General Manager of The Leela Palace Jaipur. Pandey joins the iconic palace property with over two decades of experience in luxury hospitality and a deep passion for crafting memorable guest journeys. An alumnus of the Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal, Pandey has held leadership roles across some of the world's most respected hospitality brands.



## SKYLANE Mumbai

Skylane, a B2G platform reimagining government visa systems, has appointed **VISHAL JAIRATH** as Chief Operating Officer and Head of the Government Vertical, effective July 2024. With over 30 years of cross-industry experience, including a two-decade tenure at VFS Global, Jairath brings deep strategic and operational expertise to Skylane's mission to revolutionise how governments manage global mobility through AI, automation and secure digital solutions.



## ENCALM HOSPITALITY New Delhi

Encalm Hospitality has elevated **VIKAS SHARMA** as the Group Chief Executive Officer. This milestone marks a new chapter in Encalm's growth journey, reinforcing its commitment to curating thoughtful, luxurious and transformative experiences for today's travellers. With over 25 years of leadership across globally renowned hospitality brands, Sharma brings a legacy of innovation, strategic vision and people-first leadership. He is an alumnus of INSEAD and IHM Gwalior.



## ANDAZ DELHI, BY HYATT New Delhi

Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt appoints **DEEPAK VERMA** as the Cluster Director of Sales & Marketing (Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt and Hyatt Delhi Residences). With a career spanning over two decades in luxury hospitality, Verma brings with him a wealth of experience. His impressive professional journey includes leadership roles at some of India's most prominent hotel brands, including The Leela Ambience Gurugram, The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace and Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity.



## ACCOR AND INTERGLOBE New Delhi

Accor, a global hospitality group, and InterGlobe, India's foremost travel conglomerate, have announced that **GAURAV BHUSHAN** will be the Chairman of their proposed joint hospitality enterprise in India. The new entity will bring together the development, operations and management platforms of Accor and InterGlobe in India and represents a bold step towards creating a market-leading player in one of the world's most dynamic hospitality markets.



## JIM CORBETT MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA Dehradun

Jim Corbett Marriott Resort & Spa has appointed **RAJESH KUMAR** as Director of Sales. With over 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Kumar brings a strong background in strategic sales planning, revenue generation and business development. He has been associated with renowned hospitality brands, including Leisure Hotels Group and DS Hotels, where he played a key role in driving sales performance, strengthening market presence and building lasting client relationships.



## MRG GROUP Bengaluru

MRG Group has elevated **NARAHARI RAO** to the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Rao, who has served as the group's Chief Financial Officer, brings over two decades of deep expertise in financial strategy, business planning and cross-functional leadership. At MRG, he has played a critical role in institutionalising financial systems, driving cost optimisation, strengthening governance frameworks and aligning capital strategies with business priorities.



## HYATT REGENCY TRIVANDRUM Trivandrum


Hyatt Regency Trivandrum appoints **NIBU MATHEW** as the General Manager. The move is expected to infuse fresh energy and strategic vision into the hotel's operations as it builds on its position as one of Kerala's premier urban luxury destinations. With over 20 years of cross-continental experience in the hospitality sector, Mathew brings with him an impressive portfolio of leadership assignments across some of the world's most iconic hotel brands, including Hyatt, Marriott, Starwood, Shangri-La and IHG.



## VEDIC VILLAGE SPA RESORT Kolkata

**RAJIB ROY CHOUDHURY** has been elevated to the position of Associate Vice President at Vedic Village Spa Resort. Building on his successful four-year tenure as Senior General Manager, Choudhury will oversee Overall Brand & Operational Alignment while driving multiple sustainable development initiatives across the group. With his professional expertise, he will champion operational excellence, brand consistency and innovative eco-friendly practices.





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# IndiGo strengthens its long-haul ambitions

**Pieter Elbers**, CEO, IndiGo, in an exclusive interaction with **TRAVTALK**, shares the airline's international vision, upcoming route map and the role of partnerships and the travel trade in IndiGo's transformation from a regional leader to a global force.

**Nisha Verma**

**"T**his is India's time!" said visibly energised **Pieter Elbers**, CEO, IndiGo, at the 81<sup>st</sup> IATA Annual General Meeting in Delhi, which marked a historic moment not just for India's aviation sector but for IndiGo, which played host for the first time. "It was an honour to be the host airline for IATA AGM 2024, especially with it returning to India after 40 years. It is a great moment of pride for us and for Indian aviation," he said.

The event brought over a thousand delegates from global airlines, regulators, and aviation stakeholders under one roof. For Elbers, the timing could not have been better. "We are transforming IndiGo into a global aviation player, and this was a great platform to show that," he shared.

## The long-haul map

One of the strongest signals of IndiGo's intent to go glob-

al is its expanding medium and long-haul international network. At a press conference before the IATA AGM, Elbers revealed that they are planning to add 10 new international destinations - in all directions from India - to IndiGo's network in the year to come, taking the total count to over 50 international destinations.

**It was an honour (for IndiGo) to be the host airline for IATA General Meeting 2024, especially with it returning to India after 40 years**

IndiGo has already announced commencement of long-haul operations with direct flights connecting Mumbai with Manchester and Amsterdam starting July 2025, respectively. As IndiGo's fleet of damp leased B787s expands later this year, the airline is planning to expand its long-

## RECORD AIRCRAFT ORDER

At the IATA AGM, IndiGo also made headlines with the announcement of enlarging its wide-body aircraft order by converting 30 of its purchase rights for 70 into a firm order. This is IndiGo's biggest step yet towards operating non-stop long-haul international flights independently. The aircraft will start joining the fleet from 2027 onwards and will allow routes beyond the reach of current codeshare models - potentially opening India-Europe, India-Asia and even India-US direct flights under the IndiGo banner.

haul network to London and Copenhagen. With the extended range capabilities of the A321XLR aircraft joining the IndiGo fleet, it will allow to further build its European network with direct connectivity to markets where Athens is planned to be introduced over the course of the coming year.

Four more Central Asian destinations will also be added to IndiGo's network and the airline will also reactivate services to Almaty and Tashkent with new non-stop services from Mumbai. Tbilisi will also see additional capacity with non-stop connectiv-

ity from Mumbai. Direct flights to Siem Reap will be IndiGo's foray into the India-Cambodia market, and yet another destination connected in Southeast Asia after the successful launch of services to Langkawi, Penang and Krabi last year. The airline will also add capacity to Denpasar Bali (Indonesia), as well as Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in Vietnam. While most routes will be operated under the codeshare umbrella, they are tailored for Indian leisure travellers, the Indian diaspora, and increasingly, outbound MICE traffic.

## Trade first

Elbers also stressed the airline's commitment to the travel trade community. "We have our own portal for agents, where they can log in and do their bookings. Across the world, the bookings are becoming online, and the same is going for India, but there are many traditional agents, and we keep working with them. Agents can connect directly on our website, which makes it offline as well as online," he underlined. And while the skies are getting busier and competition stiffer, IndiGo is clearly not in a rush—it's planning carefully, executing steadily and bringing the trade along for the ride.

## BOOSTING INDIGO'S GLOBAL REACH

IndiGo's latest strategic codeshare and interline agreement with Virgin Atlantic, Delta Air Lines, Air France and KLM is a game-changer. It allows IndiGo to connect Indian cities with over 80 trans-Atlantic and European destinations via these airline hubs. This cooperation helps fill IndiGo's long-haul network gaps and provides seamless, one-ticket connectivity with luggage transfers for Indian passengers travelling to the UK, US, Europe and beyond. For travel agents, this opens a broad new portfolio of international products.

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