

1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP

SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

ddppl.com

TRAVTALK®

TravTalkIndia.com

Scan & Share



ASEGŌ
Global Assistance & Travel Insurance

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East



API/XML SOLUTIONS
The way to go digital



www.fly24hrs.com

Grow Your Business With
The Fastest Growing Company

REGAL RIVERSIDE HOTEL
with 1000+ Rooms

Regal Riverside Hotel: A Perfect Blend of Tranquility and Modern Luxury in Shatin - Ideal for Indian Travelers Seeking Comfort and Convenience in the Heart of Hong Kong!

1147 Guestrooms	19 Suites	11 Restaurants & Bars	13 Function Rooms
--------------------	--------------	--------------------------	----------------------

Book Now through IRIS REPS

Delhi: M. +91 99326 81848 E. salesdel@irisreps.in
Mumbai: M. +91 99802 27381 E. salesm@irisreps.in
Bangalore: M. +91 99458 42223 E. salesbr@irisreps.in

REBOOT YOUR BUSINESS!

GRIN

GLOBAL RESERVATIONS NETWORK

THE FUTURE

STARTS NOW!





Speedbird

TRAVELS



Design your tour within 3 minutes

All Your Favourite Travel Platforms Combined

www.SpeedbirdTravels.com

Flights	Hotels	Transfers	Activities	Trains	Cruises
 +NDC's & LCC's	 	 	 	 	

Learn to design your holiday in 3 minutes - Join our daily 10 minute Webinar.

Agent? - Great prices and earning potential. Create a Login.

Have Travel Selling Experience? - Work from home options available. Talk to us.

Need Travel Planning Assistance?
Talk to us.



✉ Hello@SpeedbirdTravels.com

☎ +91-9623671110



32 of the Best Cruises

Book yours now....

RealTime!



✉ Cruise@speedbirdtravels.com

☎ +91-9623671110





fly24hrs
One Step Ahead...

Application Programming Interface

API/XML SOLUTIONS
The way to go digital



START
YOUR TRAVEL BUSINESS
WITH API

POWERD BY FLY24HRS

MAKE YOUR OWN BRAND

GO ONLINE NOW!



Go online with our
API/XML



Your customer can directly
book on your portal



Easy to use and scale
up your travel business

🌐 www.fly24hrs.com

✉ apisupport@fly24hrs.com

☎ 011-69122424



Indo Jaya Travel
BALI



Indo Jaya Travel Roadshow Bali 2025

- 17th March - Kolkata
- 19th March - Surat
- 20th March - Ahmedabad
- 21st March - New Delhi
- 22nd March - Jaipur
- 24th March - Indore
- 25th March - Bangalore

DOUBLE-SIX LUXURY HOTEL - SEMINYAK	MERCURE HOTEL BALI LEGIAN	 PRAMANA EXPERIENCE	NOVOTEL BALI UBUD RESORT	 THE ROYAL SANTRIAN luxury beach villas Nusa Dua - Bali	 ANANTARA ULUWATU BALI RESORT
BALI Dynasty RESORT SOUTH KUTA - BALI	 MAHARAJA THE ROYAL DINING LEGIAN, BALI	 Pita Maha A Tjampuhan Resort & Spa	SADARA RESORT	 TARANTULA ADVENTURE	 REAL BALI SWING
 iNi ViE Hospitality	 visesa UBUD RESORT	PEPPERS SEMINYAK - BALI	STHALA UBUD BALI TRIBUTE PORTFOLIO	Fairfield BY MARRIOTT BALI LEGIAN	Bhu-Zea RESORT BY DOUBLE-SIX <i>Bliss Out!</i>
 MUTIARA SPA	Salt. EXPERIENCE HINDIAN FOOD IN YOUR PLATE	 bali Mandira BEACH RESORT & SPA	 The Amazing TAMAN SAFARI BALI	 K-CLUB	Sanctoo

Call Us
+918448106123

Follow Us
indo jaya travel bali

Visit Us
www.indojayawisataku.com

1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP

SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

adppl.com



TRAVTALK[®]

TravTalkIndia.com

Scan & Share



Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

Reach over
6,00,000
Trade professionals daily

Advertise now
www.travelTVIndia.news

'India tourism to create ripples with infra boost': Shekhawat

India's tourism industry is undergoing a transformative phase, with rapid growth in infra, MICE tourism and aviation. Government is taking initiatives to develop new destinations and experiences, says Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Tourism Minister, GoI.

Surbhi Sharma

Highlighting the evolving nature of India's tourism industry and its emerging position as a major global tourism market, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Tourism Minister, Government of India, said that the country is no longer just a destination for travellers, but it is becoming a vibrant hub for tourism, driven by robust growth in various sectors, including MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism.



Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
Tourism Minister
Government of India

Shekhawat further mentioned the rise of domestic trade and the growing disposable incomes of Indian citizens, playing a key role in boosting the tourism industry. "As investments pour into tourism infrastructure, the sector is expected to create a ripple ef-

As investments pour into tourism infrastructure, the sector is expected to create a ripple effect across the economy, driving growth in related industries

fect across the economy, driving growth in related industries, such as hospitality, transport, and services," he said.

With new opportunities emerging across various segments in India, MICE tourism stands out as a key driver of growth, offering immense potential for economic

impact. Highlighting this potential, the tourism minister stated, "The future holds significant promise, particularly with the rise of MICE tourism, which necessitates robust infrastructure across the country. New tourism segments are emerging, with MICE tourism being the most critical. The development of infrastructure in Delhi, Mumbai, and other cities underscores India's strong potential in this space. There is a need for discussions on how India can position itself as a leading centre for MICE tourism. Several global events could be calendarised and brought to the country."

Looking ahead, the tourism sector is projected to grow at a CAGR of 24 per cent. With this accelerated growth, Shekhawat believes that India's tourism landscape is poised for a transformative journey, with immense potential to contribute to the country's economic development and global tourism stature. "Besides being a destination, India is also becoming a big tourism market with a great future in the tourism sector," Shekhawat said.

"We are no longer just a destination but a rapidly growing tourism market. The country's expanding infrastructure, including the construction of state-of-the-art complexes, indicates that India stands at the threshold of immense possibilities in the tourism sector," he said. The minister emphasised the need for comprehensive infrastructure development across the country to support this surge.

The aviation sector is also set for substantial growth, with the number of aircraft in the country expected to triple in the coming years, catering to both domestic and international travellers.

The Indian government is fully aligned with this growth and is actively working with state governments to develop 40 new tourist destinations across the nation. Additionally, the government is encouraging the creation of unique tourism experiences that highlight India's cultural and geographical diversity.

In recent years, India has witnessed a notable increase in the number of hotels and accommodations to meet the rising de-

OBITUARY



Kesari Patil
1935-2025

Kesari Patil, founder of the leading travel company Kesari Tours, passed away in Mumbai on 15 February. He was 90 years old. Patil, a true visionary, sparked countless travel dreams. He won the 'Gallery of Legends Award' by West India Travel Awards in 2015. His legacy passes on to the next generation, led by his son and daughters.

Kesari Patil, fondly called 'Bhau', was born in 1935 in Mathane village of Palghar district in Maharashtra. In early years of his life, he worked as a teacher. Later, to fulfil his dream of making travel affordable to middle-class families, he established 'Kesari Tours' in 1984 when he was 50 and settled in Mumbai with his family. He started the first office of Kesari Tours in the Dadar-Mahim area. The company today has expanded its offerings, organising domestic and international tours across the globe. He was honoured with several national and international awards for his contributions to the tourism industry.

Devendra Fadnavis, CM, Maharashtra, expressed his condolences, calling him a "bold and enterprising personality" who not only put Maharashtra's tourism industry on the global map but also created countless business opportunities. "Kesari Bhau Patil will always be remembered as an entrepreneur who introduced opportunities in the tourism sector and showcased Maharashtra's entrepreneurial spirit to the world," Fadnavis said in his tribute. "His contributions inspired generations to enter the tourism industry," he added.

CONNECTING INDIA TO OVER 140 DESTINATIONS WORLDWIDE
MUMBAI | DELHI | CHENNAI | BANGALORE



Book | Pay | Check-in Online
www.ethiopianairlines.com

Ethiopian
የትምህርት
THE NEW SPIRIT OF AFRICA
ASTAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

EXPANDING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES GPS 2025-2026

REGISTRATIONS OPEN

APP FEATURES



 GLOBAL SIM	 TRAVEL INSURANCE	 NEWS ROOM	 LATEST OFFERS	 MARKET PLACE
 VISA INFO	 CURRENCY CONVERTOR	 LANGUAGE TRANSLATOR	 CARD EXCHANGE	 EVENTS DETAILS
 ADD DOCUMENT	 CONNECTIONS	 TAX UPDATES	 TOURISM UPDATES	 MAPS

Download GPS iCONNECT App and register to enjoy premium event experience



DOWNLOAD GPS iCONNECT APP TO REGISTER FOR RESPECTIVE EVENT
(If you have ever registered and attended GPS events since 2013 try logging in using your email and use default password as 123456 and update your profile and select the event you want to attend.)

GPS 2025

 BENGALURU 18-19 Mar 2025 The Chancery Pavilion	 AHMEDABAD 11-12 Jul 2025 Hyatt Vastrapur	 CHANDIGARH Jul 2025	 PUNE Sep 2025	 KOLKATA Sep 2025	 KOCHI Oct 2025
--	--	----------------------------	----------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------

GPS 2026

 NAGPUR *TBA 2026	 HYDERABAD *TBA 2026	 GUWAHATI *TBA 2026	 AHMEDABAD *TBA 2026	 INDORE *TBA 2026	 KOLKATA *TBA 2026	 JAIPUR *TBA 2026	 KOCHI *TBA 2026
----------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------------

Exhibitor enquiries:

Call: +91 9225248070, +91 9820224272 for details email: harmandeep@gps-india.com | madhu@gps-india.com

EDWIN PARTNER TURESPAÑA	EDWIN PARTNER Andalucía	AIRLINE PARTNER IndiGo	GST CONSULTING PARTNER GMJ	GLOBAL CRUISE PARTNER NORWEGIAN	NDC PARTNER VERTEIL	GLOBAL CELLULAR PARTNER next OneSIM	TECHNOLOGY PARTNER influence	B2B PARTNER TDO	MICE PARTNER AVNI	DOMESTIC CRUISE PARTNER CORONA	TRAVEL INSURANCE PARTNER STAR	
WHATSAPP COMMERCE PARTNER DoubleTick QuickSell	LUXURY PARTNER JASTANS	MARKETING PARTNER EntReps	EDWIN PARTNER TARGO	EDWIN PARTNER Ethiopian	GDS PARTNER ITQ	VISA INFO PARTNER CIBANK	CHARDHAM PARTNER TTP	GPS INITIATIVES CLUBMIX EDWIN 10X ECOCONNECT EdLux				

Kerala to spend ₹80 cr on int'l markets

Kerala witnessed more than 2 crore domestic tourists in 2024. The state aims to leverage the tourist offerings in its Northern region with advance infrastructure and new products, such as caravan parks and heli tourism, to further boost the numbers. Sikha Surendran, Director, Kerala Tourism and Managing Director, KTDC shares details.

 Amita Pandey

Announcing ₹385 crore for the tourism sector in the state budget for 2025-26, Kerala is optimistic that domestic tourist arrivals will get further boost. Ahead of the summer holidays, Kerala Tourism has rolled out an enticing collection of products to ensure that the destination has something to offer for every season.

During the recent Kerala Tourism Partnership Meet in Delhi, **Sikha Surendran**, Director, Kerala Tourism and Managing Director, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC), said, "Kerala Tourism has been conducting business-to-business meetings in major cities (of India) to drive tourist inflow from the traditional markets into Kerala. Delhi is already the traditional market for Kerala, and it is one of the major contributors to domestic tourist inflow. We have come with 45 trade partners from Kerala to meet tour operators, DMCs and travel agents from the NCR region."



Sikha Surendran
Director, Kerala Tourism & MD,
Kerala Tourism Development Corporation

New products

This time Kerala is making efforts to highlight hidden gems in the Northern region of the state, especially Bekal, Wayanad and Kozhikode, with vastly improved infrastructure, logistics and digital connectivity. Surendran pointed out, "Generally, tourists would

come to the centre and head to the south and go back. As you see Kerala is a coastal state, right from the north to south we have the pristine beaches, serene backwaters and hill stations. These multifarious tapestry is not exclusive to South only, even North Kerala has a lot to offer. Hence, we are bringing up more investments,

especially in the room inventory to northern Kerala."

Footfalls

Underlining the success in drawing a noticeable number of tourists into the state last year, Surendran revealed, "In 2023, we had 6.49 lakh foreign tourist arrivals and 2.19 crore domestic tourist arrivals. In 2024, the domestic tourist numbers reached 2.22 crores, which is all-time high. In fact, in H1 2024 only, Kerala witnessed the arrival of 1.09 crore domestic tourists."

She added, "Multiple initiatives by the state played role in this success. One such specific project called 'Exploring the unexplored' significantly highlighted the offbeat gems in the state. Additionally, Kerala dedicated a particular fund for this purpose."

Weddings & MICE

Without specifying how many

weddings and MICE events took place in the state after Kerala's effort last year to sell it as premier destination for the same, Surendran said, "Many weddings are happening in Kerala; even international couples are choosing the state. As state, Kerala has the potential to create memorable experience for the wedding segment due to the majestic landscape present in the state. One can mix this experience with the traditional art forms, cuisine, and sometimes even the dress."

International markets

When asked which international markets are going to be on Kerala's radar after the state government allocated ₹80 crore for global promotions in the annual budget, she said, "We will continue to focus on our traditional global markets: Europe, North America and South America. We are also eyeing Southeast Asia. Additionally,

last year saw a rise in arrivals from Australia, so we are going to focus on it as well. We will be conducting roadshows in these markets and leveraging digital promotions."

TOURISM ALLOCATION

- ❖ Introduction of loan schemes of up to ₹50 crore for hotel construction, with ₹20 crore allocated for interest subsidies
- ❖ ₹80 crore has been set aside for international marketing
- ❖ Under UDAN, ₹20 crore to boost tourism connectivity through seaplanes, heliports and airstrips.
- ❖ ₹50 crore for seaplane aerodromes and small aircraft landing sites

REVENUE DATA FOR 2023

5,245 cr
foreign exchange earnings

33,962.5 cr
direct earning from domestic tourists

43,621 cr
total revenue





For Gen Z, it's beaches vs mountains

Gen Z is defining the travel trends. Agoda, a digital travel platform, reveals top five travel habits of India's Gen Z, revealing a generation that finds inspiration in the digital realm, embraces spontaneity, and values shared experiences.



Beach getaways and island retreats are preferred choices for the young generation travellers, reveals a recent survey conducted by Agoda, a digital travel platform.

The survey shared the top five travel habits of India's Gen Z, revealing a generation that finds inspiration in the digital realm, embraces spontaneity, and values shared experiences. The survey highlighted key insights into the preferences of young Indian travellers aged 18-27, shedding light on how they are setting the stage for future generations.



of these digital sources, nearly 15 per cent of Gen Z in India still rely on recommendations from friends and family.

Spontaneous spirit: Last-minute bookings are on the rise. Gen Z embraces the thrill of spontaneity, booking flights and accommodations at the last minute more than any other generation. Over 30 per cent of Gen Z travellers book their flights less than a week in advance, and 44 per cent make last-minute hotel bookings, showcasing their flexible and adventurous approach to travel.

Travelling in tandem: Partnered adventures take the lead. For Indian Gen Z, travel is a shared experience, with 41 per cent preferring to explore the world with a partner. Group trips with friends (23 per cent) and family vaca-

Gen Z is taking to social media for travel inspiration, with Instagram emerging as their go-to source (28%), as per the report from Agoda

generational shift from Millennials, who prioritise family trips over other travel styles.

Cost-conscious journeys: Spending habits align across generations. Budget-friendly travel is key for Gen Z, with 64 per cent aiming to keep their accommodation costs under Rs 4,200 per person per night and 24 per cent willing to spend Rs 4,200-8,400 per night. Millennials follow closely, with 52 per cent sharing similar spending habits. This approach reflects a preference for value-driven travel, where younger generations prioritise experiences over luxury.

Krishna Rathi, Senior Country Director for India Subcontinent

and MEA at Agoda, said, "Gen Z travellers in India embrace spontaneity, seek special experiences, and use digital platforms for inspiration. At Agoda, we are committed to providing them with the best deals across accommodations, flights, and activities, ensuring every trip is accessible, seamless, and affordable for this new generation of explorers."

The Gen Z Travel survey was conducted via the Agoda platform between 10 to 31 January 2025, with over 15,000 participants from markets, including Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

COST-CONSCIOUS TRAVELLERS

64%
Gen Z travellers aim to keep their accommodation costs under Rs 4,200 per person per night

24%
willing to spend ₹4,200-8,400 per night

52%
millennials share similar spending habits



Sustainability has a cost

Sustainable tourism is often hailed as the future of travel, but is India truly ready to walk the talk? The Goa Roadmap, introduced after the G20, lays out an ambitious vision—green tourism, digitalisation, skills development and MSME empowerment. The plan is comprehensive, but the real question is: How much of it is actually being implemented?

Yes, states like Kerala, Sikkim and Rajasthan are leading the way with eco-friendly resorts, community-led tourism, and conservation programmes. Initiatives like 'Travel for LIFE' are encouraging responsible travel. But let's be honest—sustainability isn't just about intention, it's about execution. Waste management remains a nightmare in many tourist hotspots. Over-construction continues to threaten fragile ecosystems. And then there is the elephant in the room—cost.

Sustainability isn't cheap. Can small businesses afford the transition? Will tourists be willing to pay extra for responsible travel? Right now, the cost burden largely falls on businesses trying to do the right thing, while mass tourism continues unchecked. Without strong incentives, why would a budget hotel invest in solar power or a travel operator prioritise carbon-neutral experiences?

India has the potential to lead in sustainable tourism, but roadmaps and policies need teeth. The government must provide subsidies, tax breaks, and financial aid to help businesses transition. Tourists too need awareness campaigns to make eco-conscious choices the norm rather than a luxury. The Goa Roadmap is a solid starting point, but without cost-effective solutions and stricter enforcement, it risks becoming just another well-intended document. The future of Indian tourism depends on balancing growth with sustainability—not just in theory, but in real, measurable action. The question is: Will we rise to the challenge, or will sustainability remain just another buzzword?

<p>DDP PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LIMITED CIN: U22210DL2012PTC230432</p>	<p>Sanjeet Editor & Publisher</p> <p>Editorial Team: Devika Jeet Nisha Verma Sushil Kumar Harsh Jain Janice Alysius</p> <p>Design Team: Sudhir Mudgal Nityanand Misra</p> <p>Production: Anil Kharbanda Ramesh Gupta</p>	<p>Advertising Team (Delhi) Nikhil Jeet Anumita Gupta Jaspree Kaur</p> <p>Advertising Team (Mumbai) Suchita Saran Haarsha Ashar Samantha Pereira</p> <p>Advertisement Designers Nitin Kumar Aditya Pratap Singh Anil Khatri Chhetri</p> <p>Circulation: Ashok Rana</p>	<p>DDP is a publication of DDP Publications Private Limited. All information in DDP is derived from sources, which we consider reliable and a sincere effort is made to report accurate information. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. The publisher regret that he cannot accept liability for errors and omissions contained in this publication, however caused. Similarly, opinions/views expressed by third parties in abstract and/or in interviews are not necessarily shared by DDP. However, we wish to advise our readers that one or more recognised authorities may hold different views than those reported. Material used in this publication is intended for information purpose only. Readers are advised to seek specific advice before acting on information contained in this publication which is provided for general use, and may not be appropriate for the readers' particular circumstances. Contents of this publication are copyright. No part of DDP or any part of the contents thereof may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form without the permission of the publication in writing. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication. An exemption is hereby granted for the extracts used for the purpose of fair review, provided two copies of the same publication are sent to us for our records. Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission could face legal action. The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning any material solicited or unsolicited nor is he responsible for material lost or damaged.</p>	<p>This publication is not meant to be an endorsement of any specific product or services offered. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw, amend or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation.</p> <p>All advertisements must comply with the Indian and International Advertisements Code. The publisher will not be liable for any damage or loss caused by delayed publication, error or failure of an advertisement to appear.</p>	<p>DDP is printed, published and edited by Sanjeet on behalf of DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd., printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001 Ph.: +91-9818767141, +91-9850399920</p> <p>MUMBAI: 504, Marine Chambers, 43, New Marine Lines, Opp. SNTD College, Mumbai - 400 020, India, Ph.: +91-22-22070129; 22070130</p> <p>MIDDLE EAST: Durga Das Publications Middle East (FZE) 21-02, PO Box: 9348, Saif Zone, Sharjah, UAE Ph.: +971-6-5528954, Fax: +971-6-5528956</p>
---	---	--	---	---	---

Demand-supply imbalance a barrier for inbound growth

Despite its diverse range of offerings, India is still facing challenges in reviving its inbound tourism fully. While airlines are rapidly expanding and new destinations are emerging, the shortage of accommodation remains a significant hurdle.



Janice Alyosius

India's inbound tourism sector is facing significant hurdles that are limiting its potential growth. While the country offers rich cultural experiences and luxury accommodations, rising hotel prices and a shortage of hotel rooms in key destinations are creating barriers for international visitors. One of the core issues behind rising hotel prices in India is the free-market system, where prices are dictated by supply and demand. **Deep Kalra**, Founder and Chairman, MakeMyTrip, explains, "The reality is it's a free market. When hotel occupancy is high, the rates will go up. When occupancy is low, the rates will come down. But travellers tend to crib when prices go high, not when they get cheap rates."



Deep Kalra
Founder and Chairman
MakeMyTrip



Arjun Sharma
Chairman
Select Group

erators, like Abercrombie & Kent, report that their clients are willing to pay premium prices for exceptional service. He believes India's hospitality sector stands out for its service quality, explaining, "Indian hospitality is probably among the

inbound tourism. **Homa Mistry**, CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India, explains, "We have business coming in for January, February, and March, but there is no availability. We can't bring in people because there is simply not enough supply." Mistry proposes that the government could facilitate solutions by promoting homestays.

How GST affects prices

Sanjay Basu, Chairman, Far Horizon Tours, raises another key concern of taxation. With an 18 per cent GST on hotel bookings and an additional 5 per cent GST on tour packages, the cost of accommodation becomes even steeper for tourists. "The 23 per cent combined GST on hotels and tour operators is definitely having a negative impact. The price is high enough, and adding this tax burden makes it even harder for India to compete globally," he opines.

Basu argues that one solution could be to reduce GST rates. He suggests, "The 5 per cent GST on tour packages could be reduced to 1.8 per cent, as the margins for tour operators are already slim, at best 10 per cent. This would help ease the cost pressure and make India more attractive to international visitors." Additionally, he believes, that offering tax incentives, similar to those given to the manufacturing sector, could stimulate growth in the hospitality industry.

Homestays as an alternative

While new hotel development takes time, Mistry proposes an alternative solution that could address the immediate accommodation shortage - promoting homestays. "If the government has a good policy for homestays and makes it easy for people to open their homes to tour-

ists, a large part of the supply can be handled this way," he suggests.

Expanding hotel supply for long-term solution

Beyond homestays, industry leaders agree that the long-term solution to India's accommodation shortage is the expansion of hotel infrastructure. "The only real solution is a rapid increase in capacity. The government could play a role by offering relief in GST and providing incentives to grow the sector," Basu suggests. He highlights the need for more investment to meet the growing demand for tourism, especially in regions that are currently underserved.



While the country offers rich cultural experiences, rising hotel prices and a shortage of hotel rooms in key destinations are creating barriers

Basu also advocates for a global publicity campaign to showcase the diverse range of tourism experiences India offers.

Addressing challenges

The challenges of high hotel rates, limited supply, and taxes are real obstacles to India's inbound tourism growth, but they are not impossible to overcome. By taking steps to lower taxes and increase accommodation options, India can create a more welcoming environment for international tourists. With the right investments and policies, India can continue to grow as a top destination, offering visitors exceptional service, diverse experiences, and unmatched cultural richness.



Homa Mistry
CEO
Trail Blazer Tours India



Sanjay Basu
Chairman
Far Horizon Tours

Kalra highlights that while travellers may feel dissatisfied when prices surge, this is a fundamental aspect of the free market. "You can't have a free economy and then cap rates on the upper end. If that happens, hotels and airlines would also demand caps on the lower end," he reasons. His advice to tourists is: "Book in advance to get the best rates."

High prices are not unusual as per global standards

Arjun Sharma, Chairman, Select Group, also admits the increase in hotel rates but argues that India's prices are in line with global standards. "The amount of investment that goes into building a hotel is absolutely phenomenal. Even when they speak of high prices, these are normal prices from a global standard," he says. Sharma highlights that international luxury tour op-

top five experiences in the world. You can't match the level of service you get in India anywhere else, not in Europe, not in Australia."

While Sharma acknowledges that some areas in India face supply constraints, such as Delhi and Mumbai, he also points to the growth of peripheral destinations. "There is supply coming into the market. For instance, Manesar, just 45 minutes from Delhi, has seen a good demand, and the occupancy rate is around 60 per cent year-round," he says, adding that some markets are tight, but others are expanding and this will address the supply-demand gap.

Supply shortage roadblock for inbound tourism

Despite these insights, the reality of limited accommodation availability continues to create problems for

Travel

WEDDING SHOW

Save The Date

Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur

22-23 March 2025

Fresh Ideas. Bold Moves. Big Wins

devika@ddppl.com | ritul.malhotra@ddppl.com +91 9810191852
www.travelshowindia.com

Hospitality Partner

ANANTARA
JEWEL BAGH JAIPUR
HOTEL

TourismNews

- Air India and Lufthansa Group expand codeshare; pave way for 60 additional routes across 12 Indian and 26 European cities
- Rajasthan considering ₹975 crore worth tourism projects, says Diya Kumari
- GRNConnect unveils new logo, revamps platform with all-in-one offering for faster processing
- Andhra Pradesh aims for 15% employment contribution from tourism: Tourism Minister
- IHCL plans two properties in Lakshadweep; first hotel to open in June 2025
- West Bengal gets ₹5,600 cr tourism investment; 70 projects to be developed in 2025-26
- India leads aviation market in Asia-Pacific; domestic count reaches 13% over 2019: OAG
- Odisha allocates ₹820 cr for tourism in budget

Andhra gives policy boost to tourism

Andhra Pradesh aims to revolutionise its tourism sector with the new policy, granting industry status to tourism activities. The policy initiatives, planned over next 5 years, aim to attract global investors, create employment, and promote sustainable growth, positioning the state as a premier global tourism hub.

Janice Alyosius

In a strategic move to boost tourism and attract global investors, the Andhra Pradesh government has rolled out the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-29. The new policy aims to position the state as a premier tourism hub while fostering economic growth, employment generation, and sustainable development.

Kandula Durgesh, Tourism Minister, Andhra Pradesh, emphasised the state's commitment to welcoming investors, tour operators, travellers, and other stakeholders. "Andhra Pradesh is fully prepared to welcome all the investors, tour operators, travellers, and other stakeholders to the beautiful place of Andhra Pradesh," he said.

A significant highlight of the new tourism policy is the granting of industry status to tourism-related activities, which will provide an



Kandula Durgesh
Tourism Minister
Andhra Pradesh

impetus for investment and economic expansion. "The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-29 has granted industry status to tourism, which gives a significant boost to investors, encouraging them to participate in the state's tourism development," Durgesh explained.

This policy move is expected to attract large-scale investments

and enable businesses to leverage incentives and benefits, making Andhra Pradesh a lucrative destination for tourism entrepreneurs.

The Andhra Pradesh government has set a clear objective to enhance the state's employment contribution through tourism. "We feel that by the end of 2025, our tourism sector will contribute at least 15 per cent of the total employment generation in the state," said Durgesh. This aligns with the government's broader economic vision to create jobs and empower local communities through tourism-driven opportunities. With a vision to establish Andhra Pradesh as a premier tourism hub, the government is focusing on various segments, including spiritual, coastal, ecological, adventure, and wellness tourism. "Our state offers a multitude of tourism experiences that not only attract travellers but also empower local communities and promote sustainable development," the minister added.

The state's rich cultural heritage, pristine coastline, lush green landscapes, and adventure tourism potential make it an attractive destination for both domestic and international tourists. Sustainability and digitalisation are central to the

ity, public-private partnerships, and innovative tourism solutions," noted Durgesh.

By integrating smart technology and sustainable practices, Andhra Pradesh is ensuring that its tourism sector grows responsibly while preserving its natural and cultural assets. With strong leadership, a robust policy framework, and a commitment to sustainability, Andhra Pradesh is poised to become a leading tourism destination in India.

Andhra's new tourism policy is expected to attract large-scale investments and enable businesses to leverage incentives & benefits

new tourism policy. "With sustainability and digitalisation as core agenda items, the policy aims to develop and enhance anchor hubs by focusing on mass connectiv-



India tourism shines at BIT 2025

BIT 2025 concluded successfully at Fiera Milano – Rho, reaffirming its status as a leading platform for global tourism innovation. The event attracted industry leaders, policymakers, and professionals from across the world, with a notable focus on India's evolving role in international travel. Discussions covered AI-driven personalisation, sustainable tourism, digital nomadism and emotional tourism.



TAAP draws plan to protect members

Travel Agents Association of Pune, one of the oldest local associations in India, has appointed a law firm to prepare 17 different documents that they need to use in order to protect themselves from dishonourable clients. They have also written to the Minister of Civil Aviation raising concern over high airfares.



Hazel Jain

Nilesh Bhansali, President of Travel Agents Association of Pune (TAAP) since December 2024, is working hard for his members. TAAP, one of the oldest local associations for Pune agents, currently has about 125 members and a waiting list of 175 members.

Pointing out to the small membership base, Bhansali says, "This is because we have stringent policy for agents to become TAAP members. We check their basic documents like GST, their Udyam Aadhar, and whether they are filing their GST and income tax regularly, their minimum turnover, if they have their own office space whether rented or owned, etc. So, these are our basic criteria. We then shortlist the agents. Even when it comes to the DMCs who apply for TAAP membership to become a patron member, we don't approve every



Nilesh Bhansali
President, Travel Agents Association of Pune (TAAP)

application. We have some criteria, and only if they fit those criteria, they can be our members."

Speaking about empowering its members, Bhansali shares, "We have appointed a legal firm that is creating 17 different legal agreements to protect our agent members. Nowadays, we are observ-

ing that a lot of clients are taking undue advantage of their position as a client. So, to make travel agents legally strong, the firm is working on different agreements,

Since TAAP is known for its trendsetting activities, the association has started making its members digitally advanced

and maybe in next two months, we will ask all our members to start using them in order to protect themselves, not just from clients, but maybe also from DMCs and even airlines."

Since TAAP is known for its trendsetting activities, the association has started making its members digitally advanced. "We have recently given out NFC smart business cards to our members, which has a barcode with their agency details," informs Bhansali.

High airfares a challenge

Underlining a long-standing issue faced by all agents – high airfares – Bhansali shares that the association has written a letter to the Civil Aviation Minister highlighting many of its challenges, especially the high airfares. "On one hand, the government is emphasising on 'Dekho Apna Desh' but on the other the airfares within the country are so high. How does that make sense?" he asked.

Another challenge his members face is a flood of DMCs. "Often, we see some individual doing 10-20 packages and then calling

themselves DMCs. For us, it's a big challenge to identify the right company to work with. Then, there are some DMCs who are also doing B2B and B2C business where they are taking our database and connecting to our clients directly. So, it's one of the biggest challenges. My client is my client, and DMCs cannot get in touch with them. So, now all the agents from Pune are refusing to work with DMCs who are also doing B2C. They want to deal only with the pure B2B agents," Bhansali explains.

TAAP is also focusing on selling atypical, offbeat destinations and is in talks with many NTOs like Utah, Japan, Korea, Georgia for product training. Bhansali adds, "We are educating our members to prioritise and support airlines and hotels that are genuinely committed to working with the travel trade. We believe in building partnerships with entities that are willing to col-

laborate and grow together for a win-win situation. Unfortunately, many airlines and hotels today want business from agents but fail to offer reciprocal support. These entities are heavily marketing direct bookings with better deals, inclusions, and benefits, making it difficult for agents to compete. Why should we promote and work for them? We only want to work with those who are agent-friendly and prioritise the protection of travel agents' interests."



Implement tourism plans: IATO

IATO pushes for tourism circuits, urging the government to kickstart implementation. 'Even if just 10 circuits attract strong tourist footfall, it would be a game changer,' says Rajeev Mehra, President, IATO.



Amita Pandey

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) recently hosted its Annual Day (Carnival) at Karma Lakelands, Manesar in Gurugram. The event buzzed with exciting games and interactive activities. It also presented an opportunity for the association members to network with other industry stakeholders.

In a conversation with **TRAVTALK**, **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO, shared that there is a vision behind the annual event. "We organised this event to bring together IATO members and their families, and everyone in the trade. The event is important for all of us, as we are mostly busy throughout the year, and we do not get time to enjoy with our families. So, this event gives us a moment to breathe and interact with stakeholders in the trade and also with their families and make our bond stronger."

When asked how IATO is planning to increase its membership this year, Mehra replied, "Membership is increasing day by day with the activities IATO is doing. Our elec-



Rajiv Mehra
President IATO

tions are going to be held soon and once the new team resumes office, their focus would be to have more interactions with the government, with the state governments and among us also."

Speaking about the development and promotion of recent tourist circuits announced by the Union government, Mehra pointed out, "All circuits are equal, they all need to be developed. So, these 50 circuits that were announced recently need to witness the ex-

ecution of plans by the government. Even if 10 circuits can see a good tourist inflow, it would be a game changer for the industry. Our target is to tell the government, whatever plans you have decided, please implement it."

He added, "IATO is in touch with government for many things, but the problem is once they have taken our input, it needs to be implemented because we are not here to implement things. Implementation is their part. Our humble request to them is that whatever has been decided by the honourable finance minister must be done as soon as possible now."



Media Partner **TRAVTALK**

The gateway to global travel and tourism growth

arabian travel market
DUBAI
28 APR - 1 MAY 2025

REGISTER NOW

#ATMDubai

Part of:

Destination Partner:

Official Partners:

www.wtm.com/atm

Italy eyes growth in India market

Italy is strengthening its engagement with Indian travel agents through targeted roadshows and sales missions to drive inbound tourism growth. ENIT is actively promoting weddings, MICE, and luxury travel from India, focussing on expanding regional tourism beyond traditional destinations, says Alessandra Priante, President, ENIT SPA.



TT Bureau

Italy has long been a favoured European destination for Indian travellers, with its rich cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and world-class hospitality. **Alessandra Priante**, President, ENIT SPA, recently shared her insights on Italy's strategy for the Indian market, highlighting the country's growing appeal as a wedding and luxury destination, its commitment to promoting lesser-known regions, and the opportunities for collaboration with Indian travel agents.

Priante's connection with India goes beyond business. Having visited Indian destinations multiple times, including Mumbai, Delhi, and Kerala, she has personally experienced India's culture and Ayurvedic wellness offerings. "I absolutely adore India," she said, adding that she is a "strong believer in Ayurvedic medicine." Her admira-



Alessandra Priante
President
ENIT SPA

tion for India's diversity translates into her professional outlook, where she acknowledges the unique travel preferences of Indian tourists.

Italy has emerged as a top choice for Indian travellers, particularly among younger generations. According to Priante, Indian tourists are drawn to Italy's diverse cultural experiences, luxurious offerings,

and breathtaking destinations. "Italy has shown to be one very important destination for the Indian generations, especially the new generations, the younger Indians," she noted.

One of the biggest trends in recent years has been the rise of Indian weddings in Italy, with regions like Puglia gaining immense popularity due to high-profile weddings. "We became an event destination for Indians who tend to choose Italy to get married," Priante emphasised.

Apart from weddings, Italy is also targeting Indian MICE tourism, ensuring that regions beyond traditional hotspots like Rome, Venice, and Milan are marketed effectively. "We are trying to cater groups as well from India, and I think we are marketing ourselves very well because of our diversity, our large culture, and the fact that we offer a lot of luxurious destinations," she explained.

Italy is implementing a robust marketing strategy to attract more Indian travellers. Priante emphasised that the focus is on segmenting and promoting different regions individually while keeping them under the

need to promote Rome, Florence, Venice, Naples, Milan, you know, everybody knows it," she said.

In India, travel decisions are largely influenced by travel agents and tour operators, making them crucial partners in Italy's promotional efforts. While ENIT does not have a dedicated strategy for travel agents, it integrates the private sector through Club Italia, an initiative that brings together various stakeholders, including tour operators, guides, and travel agents, under a single framework. "We cannot be selective. We are the state agency to promote Italy as a brand, so we cannot be selective," Priante clarified.

While Italy currently does not have an ENIT office in India, Priante expressed hopes of reopening one soon, acknowledging India's potential as a crucial outbound market. For Indian travellers, Italy offers a combination of cultural immer-

sion, shopping, and gastronomic delights. Priante highlighted the top three must-do experiences: "Visiting world-renowned sites such as the Colosseum, Vatican City, and Florence's Uffizi Gallery," she said, adding that shopping and culinary experiences such as "truffle hunting in Piedmont to wine tasting in Tuscany" are also key attractions. As Italy continues to strengthen its presence in the Indian market, ENIT plans to enhance engagement through roadshows, sales missions, and Fam trips.

One of the biggest trends in recent years has been the rise of Indian weddings in Italy, with regions like Puglia gaining immense popularity

broader Italian tourism umbrella. While mainstream cities continue to be popular, ENIT is actively promoting regions such as Puglia, Sicily, and Lombardy. "We need to promote the inside. We don't



Indian MICE priority for Moscow

Moscow is reinforcing its status as a premier destination for leisure and business tourism. The destination saw a 1.5-fold rise in Indian travellers in H1 2024, compared to the same period in 2023. Introduction of e-visa system in August 2023 played a pivotal role in driving this growth, thereby making India a priority market for Moscow.



Hazel Jain

After 2020, India has been among the leading non-CIS countries sending tourists to Moscow, a trend that continued into 2024. The first half of 2024 saw a remarkable 1.5-fold increase in Indian travellers to Moscow compared to the same period in 2023, amounting to 28,500 visitors. This growth was driven primarily by the introduction of e-visa system in August 2023, which made travel for Indian passport holders more accessible and boosted MICE traffic from India to Russia.

With a longstanding partnership built on strategic, cultural, and economic cooperation, Moscow recently participated in trade shows in India to strengthen ties and gain insights into the preferences of Indian travellers. Leading the delegation from Moscow was **Evgeny Kozlov**, First Deputy



Evgeny Kozlov
First Deputy Head of the Office
of the Mayor and the Government of Moscow

Head of the Office of the Mayor and the Government of Moscow, and Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee. He said, "We aim to target both leisure and MICE tourism through tailored business missions, familiarisation trips to Moscow and B2B negotiations. While most tourists visit Moscow for cultural, educational, and entertainment purposes, the city has

also been focusing on expanding business tourism, which is now a significant contributor to the local economy. By 2030 the number of foreign tourists is expected to reach 6 million people, mainly with travellers from the CIS countries, the Asia Pacific region, India, and the Middle East."

Apart from participating in trade events, Moscow City Tourism Committee also hosted a gala dinner, brought together more than 170 key partners, including prominent associations like TIA, OTOAI, NIMA, MICE agencies, tour operators and travel agents, along with delegates from Moscow, to celebrate the strengthening bond between India and the Russian capital. Moscow has also signed an MoU with Thomas Cook India aimed at promoting Moscow as a key destination for leisure and business tourism across India's key metros, mini-metros, and emerging tier II and III source markets.

Specialist programme

Moscow also has an online 'Moscow Ambassadors Programme' to showcase the tourism and MICE products of Moscow. "We have our special website discovermoscow.com, where travel

e-visa system introduced in August 2023 made travel for Indian passport holders more accessible and boosted MICE traffic from India to Russia

agents can see the link to this specialist programme to become the Ambassadors of Moscow tourism and for Moscow MICE tourism in India. And we have

the special platform cooperation called RusPass that also has the link to this programme. We welcome agents to start their training here. Thanks to our federal government and our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we have the option of e-visa for Indian tourists which takes only four days to process after filling the electronic form. You can get an e-visa for your clients without going anywhere," Kozlov said. **Himanshu Patil**, President, OTOAI, commented, "Moscow is a safe and culturally rich destination. With the simplified visa process, we expect a significant rise in travel interest from India to Moscow."

In addition, an agreement was signed between Moscow and Maharashtra Tourism at OTM, aimed at developing and promoting tourism between Moscow and Mumbai. **Rajeev Kale**, President & Country Head - Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India), said,

"On behalf of the Thomas Cook India Group, I am delighted to announce our strategic long-term and multi-pronged partnership with Moscow Project Office for tourism and hospitality development that extends across our range of segments - including MICE and leisure."

MOSCOW NUMBERS

1.5-fold increase in Indian travellers to Moscow in H1 2024, compared to the same period in 2023

28,500 Indians visited Moscow in H1 2024

6 million number of foreign tourists is expected to reach by 2030

Green measures meet traditions

Weddings in India have always been a blend of grandeur and tradition. Now, the wedding industry is evolving in exciting ways, with eco-friendly means, tech innovations and culinary preferences adding to the celebrations. Industry experts provide insights into the latest trends and tips for planning memorable wedding celebrations.



Surbhi Sharma

The Indian wedding industry is evolving in exciting ways. Whether you dream of a luxurious affair or a budget-friendly gathering, there is a vibrant landscape of choices for every couple. While talking about the wedding trends, **Chetan Vohra**, Co-Founder & Director, Weddingline, says the wedding industry is increasingly merging opulence with sustainability and 2023-24 showcased two distinct styles: lavish multi-event weddings and intimate, personalised celebrations. "Going ahead, sustainability will play a bigger role in 2025, not just in materials but also in sourcing locally," he says, citing that couples are gravitating toward eco-friendly decor, locally sourced food, and sustainable practices that reduce the environmental impact without compromising on the grandeur.

Abhishek Poddar, CEO, Colossal Weddings & Events, highlights the growing trend of eco-conscious celebrations. "We recently organised a wedding with a zero-waste policy, reflecting couples' increasing mindfulness about sustainability," he shares.

Vikas Suri, Vice President (Operations & Development), Lords Hotels & Resorts, observes a rise in intimate weddings at spiritual destinations, such as Nathdwara and Dwarka, where smaller guest lists enable curated, meaningful experiences. "Culinary trends are also evolving. Themed menus, vegan options, and interactive food stations are becoming pivotal in enhancing guest experiences, showcasing a shift toward personalisation and innovation in wedding catering," he adds.

Rachit Jain, Director, Rashi Entertainment, says Indian weddings are known for their emotional significance, traditions, entertainment and substantial spending. He said post-COVID, weddings have become even more extravagant."



Chetan Vohra
Co-Founder & Director
of Weddingline



Abhishek Poddar
CEO
Colossal Weddings & Events



Vikas Suri
Vice President (Operations & Development)
Lords Hotels & Resorts



Rachit Jain
Director
Rashi Entertainment

Going ahead, sustainability in wedding celebrations will play a bigger role in 2025, not just in materials but also in sourcing locally

Popular wedding destinations India continues to be a hub for both domestic and international wedding celebrations. Iconic destinations, such as Rajasthan and Goa, remain favourites, but lesser-known locations like Jaisalmer and Kishangarh are gaining traction due to improved connectivity and coming up hotels. "Heritage properties in these regions are being converted into boutique venues, ideal for exclusive weddings," Suri informs. For international celebrations, destinations, such as the UAE and Maldives, are emerging as top choices. "Their proximity to India, coupled with seamless logistics, makes them attractive," says Vohra. Poddar says couples favour destinations with direct flights and hassle-free arrangements. "Thus, Jaipur and Goa are still leading the destination market, whereas places like Mahabalipuram, Puhulam, and Pochin are trending nowadays."

We recently organised a wedding with a zero-waste policy, reflecting increasing mindfulness of couples about sustainability

He adds, "Internationally, Vietnam and Thailand remain popular, offering breathtaking locales and cultural richness at competitive prices. However, there has been a shift in demand for domestic destination weddings."

Culinary trends are evolving. Themed menus, vegan options, and interactive food stations are playing key role in guest experiences

wedding planning process, particularly in its early stages. "Applications and e-invites have revolutionised traditional methods. From managing guest lists to coordinating logistics, digital tools ensure efficiency and sustainability by re-

Weddings in India have become increasingly competitive, with families striving to outdo each other. I have noticed this personally

ence by ensuring smooth execution of pre and post-wedding activities," he says.

GoI efforts Emphasising India's unique cultural and historical offerings for wed-

engagements. This initiative builds on the success of the Incredible India platform and is now gaining momentum with active dialogues and forthcoming announcements for public-private partnerships."

Reiterating the government's focus, Poddar highlights its strategy to attract foreign guests during India's off-season, from March to October. "However, partnerships between the government and private industry players are still limited. The government is planning to attract overseas customers during the off-season, but we have not seen much private-public collaboration yet," he says.

Impact of 'Wed in India' The launch of 'Wed in India' campaign by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already shown results. "We were fortunate to organise one of the first few weddings post-launch—a couple from California got married in Rajasthan," Vohra shares, adding that the season has just begun, but there is a noticeable increase in inquiries, particularly for cross-cultural weddings.

Jain said, "Weddings in India have become increasingly competitive, with families striving to outdo each other. I have noticed this personally. People are looking for something new and unique."

Experts' advice Planning early is key. "Book your venue as soon as possible," advises Poddar, pointing out the high demand for premium venues. Vohra emphasises the importance of having a clear vision. "Couples should articulate their dream wedding on paper. A clear plan makes the process smoother and ensures the celebration is truly memorable," he advises.

Future of weddings in India The Indian wedding industry is poised for robust growth, driven by a mix of tradition and innovation. Eco-conscious celebrations, tech-savvy planning, and unique destination weddings are shaping the future. "The essence of weddings lies in joy and togetherness. While trends evolve, the heart of the celebration remains constant," says Vohra. As couples prepare for their big day, they can look forward to a landscape rich with opportunities to craft unique, unforgettable experiences.



Tech in wedding planning Technology is transforming the

ducing paper usage. Pre-wedding planning has seen the greatest impact, with online tools simplifying everything from venue selection to vendor management," says Vohra.

Poddar highlights the role of technology in streamlining guest accommodations and transportation. "While the main wedding events still rely heavily on personal touches and traditional aesthetics, digital tools enhance the overall experi-

dings, Vohra, says, "The Indian government is actively promoting the country as a prime destination for weddings, leveraging its rich cultural and historical heritage. It is pushing a huge emphasis on 'Wed in India' as a key platform for wedding tourism." He explains, "A dedicated body has been constituted, working in collaboration with industry experts to identify culturally significant venues like temples, museums, and heritage sites for social

Trends

- Sustainability will play a bigger role in 2025
- Eco-conscious celebrations
- Rise in intimate weddings at spiritual destinations

Popular destinations

- **Domestic** - Rajasthan, Goa, Jaisalmer, Kishangarh, Jaipur, and Mahabalipuram
- **International** - UAE, Maldives, Vietnam, and Thailand

Key takeaways

- High demand for premium venues
- Accurate budgeting
- Tech-savvy planning
- Utilisation of comprehensive wedding planning services



The heart of
Incredible India



Madhya Pradesh beckons film-makers & investors

Single-window clearance & incentives to boost film production

Madhya Pradesh is known for its culture, wildlife, history, and temples. With a view to cash in on this treasure trove, the state government has announced a new Film Tourism Policy, which aims to develop the cinema industry and generate employment.



Marbles Rocks Bhedaghat

Madhya Pradesh, aptly named the "Heart of Incredible India", is a treasure trove of tourist attractions. This central Indian state caters to every traveller's taste, boasting ancient temples, majestic forts, breathtaking natural landscapes, and abundant wildlife sanctuaries. Nature enthusiasts find themselves in paradise amid the state's numerous national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, including Kanha National Park, Bandhavgarh National Park, and Pench Tiger Reserve.

History buffs can delve into India's rich heritage at UNESCO-listed sites like Khajuraho's temples, Gwalior Fort, and Sanchi Stupa. Pilgrims can seek spiritual solace at sacred sites, such as Ujjain's Ma-



Sheo Shekhar Shukla
Principal Secretary, Tourism, Culture and Religious Trusts & Endowments Department and Managing Director, MPFB

hakaleshwar Temple, Omkareshwar, and Amarkantak. For those seeking adventure, the picturesque landscapes of Pachmarhi, Satpura,

and Mandu offer thrilling opportunities for trekking, camping, and immersing oneself in nature's beauty.

Madhya Pradesh has firmly established itself as a prominent hub for film tourism and production, drawing the attention of international and domestic filmmakers. With its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and well-developed infrastructure, the state has become a sought-after destination for film shoots.

Recognising this potential, the Madhya Pradesh Film Tourism Policy 2025 aims to further enhance the state's appeal to filmmakers while fostering investment and employment opportunities in the industry.



Gwalior Fort



Maheshwar Fort

with its conducive film policy and multi-faceted tourism offerings. In just five years, over 350 projects have contributed ₹700 crore to the economy while successfully catering to Hindi cinema. With Bollywood at its core, the Film Tourism Policy - 2025 now specifically focuses on attracting international and Indian regional filmmakers. Through the Film Tourism Policy, the goal is to drive investment, create jobs, nurture local talent and showcase the rich tapestry of regional storytelling.”

Vision for a film-friendly destination

The Madhya Pradesh Film Tourism Policy 2025 has been strategically designed to make the state a film tourism-friendly destination. Under this policy, the government is prioritising the holistic development of the film industry, nurturing local talent, promoting regional languages, empowering women, and strengthening infrastructure. A single-window clearance system for film shooting permissions, incorporated under the Public Service Guarantee Act, has been introduced to streamline the approval process.

Encouraging regional and women-centric cinema

The policy focuses on the promo-



Lalbagh Palace

tion of regional and tribal languages, offering an additional 10 per cent grant for films made in dialects such as Malvi, Bundelkhandi, Baghelkhandi, Nimadi, Gondii, Bhili, and Korku. Similarly, children's films and women-centric films will also benefit from an additional 10 per cent grant, ensuring that diverse storytelling and representation flourish. To further support

regional cinema, films produced in Marathi and Bengali will receive an extra 10 per cent financial incentive. This initiative will not only preserve linguistic diversity but also encourage filmmakers to explore local narratives and cultural heritage.

Financial incentives to boost film production

The Madhya Pradesh government is offering substantial financial grants to attract filmmakers and create employment opportunities. The incentives include:

- ❖ **Feature Films:** Up to ₹2 crore
- ❖ **Web Series:** Up to ₹1.5 crore
- ❖ **TV Shows/ Serials:** Up to ₹1 crore
- ❖ **Documentaries:** Up to ₹40 lakh
- ❖ **International Films:** Up to US \$1.3 million (₹10 crore)
- ❖ **Short Films:** Up to ₹15 lakh

To avail of these grants, filmmakers must ensure that at least 75 per cent of their total shooting days take place in Madhya Pradesh, reinforcing the state's commitment to becoming a premier filming destination.

Recognition for film industry and economic growth

The state's proactive approach has already earned it the “Most Film-Friendly State” award in 2022. Over the past five years, Madhya Pradesh has successfully hosted over 350 film projects, significantly boosting its economy. The financial assistance of approximately ₹21 crore granted to various film projects has resulted in an economic contribution of ₹700 crore to the local economy, generating over 1.5 lakh temporary employment days.

Madhya Pradesh has a history of iconic films

Madhya Pradesh has played host to several popular Hindi films and web series, further solidifying its position in the industry. Notable productions filmed in the state of Madhya Pradesh include *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, *Stree*, *Dunki*, *Ponniyin Selvan*, *Gullak*, *Kota Factory*, *Citadel (Honey Bunny)*, *Panchayat*, *The Railway Men*, *Fukrey 3*, *Laapata Ladies & Zara Hatke Zara Bachke*.

Madhya Pradesh, with its diverse locales, has become a favoured destination for filmmakers. Numerous films have been shot across the state, including in Bhopal, Raisen, Mandu, Orchha, Khajuraho, Panna, Ajaygarh, Gwalior, Rewa, Amarkantak, Patakot, Pench, Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Jabalpur, Dhar, Omkareshwar, Ujjain, Asirgarh, Burhanpur, Dewas, Maheshwar, Indore, Pachmarhi, Tawa, Bhojpur, Sanchi, Bhimbetka, and Islamanagar (Jagdishpur). The state's varied landscapes and historical sites provide a rich backdrop for a wide range of cinematic narratives.

ligious Trusts & Endowments Department and Managing Director,

Film projects shot in the state in recent years have contributed ₹700 cr to the local economy and generated over 1.5 lakh temporary employment days

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board MP, said, “Madhya Pradesh has emerged as a true ‘Film Paradise’

Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Tourism, Culture and Re-



Raja Mahal Orchha

Green future, a reality for India?

India's diverse destinations are captivating the hearts of inbound visitors. As the country's tourism landscape continues to evolve, India is poised to become a global leader in sustainable tourism, offering a unique blend of natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and immersive experiences that cater to the growing demand for eco-conscious travel. Experts express their views on the issue.



Rajiv Mehra
President
IATO

“Madhya Pradesh presents a wealth of sustainable tourism opportunities for travel agents, integrating eco-tourism, heritage conservation and community-based experiences. The state's commitment to respon-



Sanjeev Mehra
President, Skål International India & Director, Aaryan Leisure & Holidays

“World Economic Forum has listed Indian cultural heritage having the 8th greatest potential, natural heritage and Indian cultural heritage having 8th and 6th greatest potential respectively for inbound tourism to India. India has



K Ranga Reddy
Chairman, IATO Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Chapter

“Post-COVID, Indian tourists are embracing wellness, adventure, and cultural tourism, and a surge has also been witnessed in spending on holidays by them. On the other hand, corporates are also ready to increase

“India offers a wealth of emerging destinations that captivate inbound visitors. The pristine beaches of Gokarna in Karnataka provide a tranquil alternative to Goa. In the northeast, Meghalaya's living root bridges and breathtaking waterfalls offer unique eco-tourism experiences. Additionally, the cultural richness of Varanasi, coupled with river cruises on the Ganges, presents an immersive spiritual journey. Ayodhya has become the spiritual hub.”



Sheo Shekhar Shukla
Principal Secretary, Tourism and Culture, Dept. of MP & MD, MPTB

sible tourism is evident in recent developments, such as Sarsi Island Resort, Gandhisagar Tent City and the Chanderi Eco Retreat, offering luxurious glamping experiences.”

“Sustainable tourism is no longer a niche concept, it is the future of global travel. As travellers become more conscious of their environmental and cultural impact, India has a golden opportunity to position itself as a leader in responsible tourism. For Indian tour operators, this shift unlocks exciting new avenues, particularly in the Northeast and other emerging destinations. Northeast India is fast becoming a hotspot for sustainable travel.”



Rajnish Kaistha
Sr. Vice President
IATO

42 UNESCO World Heritage sites and counting, and it shall touch 50 soon as more tourist sites are in various stages of application. That is key to attract more foreign tourists.”

“India's vast cultural heritage and diverse ecosystems make it a prime destination for sustainable tourism. As global travellers seek eco-conscious experiences, Indian travel agents have an opportunity to craft low-impact, immersive journeys that benefit both the environment and local communities. Agents can curate organic farm stays, and responsible wildlife safaris to meet the demand for ethical tourism.”



Nitin Mittal
National Co-ordinator, NIMA & CEO, Hotel n Apartment

their budget for domestic MICE. The popular trends and destinations are luxury and wellness retreats with places like Kerala and Rishikesh offering yoga and ayurveda experiences.”



Khushvinder Sarna
Owner
The Federal Travels & Tours

“There is growing awareness in India regarding sustainable tourism, with states actively promoting eco-friendly practices. Travel agents conducting tours in India are aligning with socio-economic and



Farida Attarwala
Director
Butterflyers Holidays

“India's inbound tourism has always thrived, with the Golden Triangle of Delhi, Jaipur, and Agra being a major draw for visitors. The rich history, iconic landmarks like the Taj Mahal and Amber Fort, and deep cultural roots



Neeraj Malhotra
Chairman
TAAI Northern Region

“India's significant geographical advantage with presence of mountains, rivers, valleys, deserts and deep seas creates a great potential for adventure activities. India is an adventurer's paradise offering unlimited adventure

“Sustainable tourism is no longer a choice but a necessity, and Indian travel agents, destinations, and stakeholders have immense opportunities in this space. From eco-conscious itineraries to responsible wildlife tourism, regenerative travel, and heritage conservation, the industry can lead the way in offering meaningful experiences while preserving the environment and culture. Indian states are promoting sustainable tourism.”



Hari Kishan Valmiki
Founder & Managing Partner,
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

environmental sustainability standards. This includes quality control and sustainability audits of transportation, hotels, tour guides, and restaurants.”

“I am excited to highlight some of India's emerging destinations and experiences for inbound visitors. Wellness resorts are gaining popularity, offering exceptional services and holistic treatments at competitive prices. Additionally, clients from the Middle East and Africa are drawn to Kashmir in winter for winter sports. Temple tours in both South and North India remain favourites. Wildlife tours also have a good share in the market.”



Karan Vakharia
Chief Operating Officer
Pathfinders Holidays

make this route an essential part of any first-time visit to India. But beyond these popular destinations, I have seen places like Kerala become favourites for their stunning backwaters and landscapes.”

“Sustainable tourism is a growing focus for India's travel industry, offering immense opportunities for travel agents to promote eco-friendly and responsible travel practices. As a representative of India's oldest travel trade association, I believe India's diverse landscape—from the Himalayas to coastal regions—presents unique potential for sustainable tourism. States like Kerala, Sikkim, and Rajasthan are already embracing eco-tourism initiatives.”



Rajeev Kale
President & Country Head - Holidays,
MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India)

experiences that give an adrenaline rush. Some of the adventure activities in India include paragliding, trekking, zip lining, white-water rafting, rappelling, and wildlife safaris.”

Compiled by TT Bureau

Visit Malaysia takes off in style

The Visit Malaysia 2026 launch was a spectacular evening filled with camaraderie, inspiration, and celebration. Held in New Delhi, the event brought together industry leaders for a night of meaningful presentations, engaging conversations over cocktails and dinner. From exciting insights into Malaysia's future in tourism to networking with esteemed colleagues, the evening was a true success.



Exploring the Sacred Temples of Vrindavan:

A Journey of Devotion



Uttar Pradesh
Tourism App.

Vrindavan, a sacred town in Uttar Pradesh, holds a deep spiritual significance for devotees of Lord Krishna. Believed to be the place where Krishna spent his childhood, the town is deeply rooted in Hindu scriptures. Dotted with numerous temples, each radiating its own divine charm, Vrindavan attracts millions of pilgrims seeking a profound spiritual experience.

One of the most revered temples in Vrindavan is the Banke Bihari Temple, dedicated to Lord Krishna. The temple follows a unique tradition where the curtains before the deity are drawn every few minutes to prevent prolonged eye contact, as Lord Krishna's gaze is believed to be too powerful to endure. The atmosphere here is filled with ecstatic devotion and devotional music.

The ISKCON Temple, or Krishna Balaram Mandir, built in 1975, is a major hub for Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The temple houses beautifully crafted idols of Krishna and Balaram, along with Radha and other deities. The melodious kirtans and spiritual discourses make it a centre for learning and devotion.

The Prem Mandir, a magnificent temple built of white marble, is dedicated to Radha-Krishna

and Sita-Ram. Intricate carvings, light displays, and animated depictions of Krishna's pastimes enhance the spiritual experience. The temple is a visual delight, attracting devotees and tourists alike.

Among the ancient temples, the Radha Raman Temple holds special significance. Established in 1542, it houses a self-manifested idol of Krishna. Instead of a separate idol of Radha, a silver crown beside the deity symbolizes her presence. The temple is known for its strict adherence to traditional rituals.

The Madan Mohan Temple, situated on a small hill, is one of the oldest in Vrindavan. Originally established in the 16th century, the temple is revered for its historical and spiritual importance, offering a tranquil setting for meditation and devotion.

Vrindavan's temples, with their divine ambiance and devotional fervour, transport visitors into a realm of love and spirituality. Whether one seeks enlightenment, architectural beauty, or devotion, Vrindavan provides a transformative journey into Krishna consciousness.



Uttar Pradesh

UTTAR PRADESH TOURISM

Rangotsav

Celebrating the Vibrant Festival of Colours in Braj Region.

Holi, one of the most vibrant festivals in the world, is celebrated with grandeur in the Braj region of Uttar Pradesh. Known as Rangotsav, this unique celebration in Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, and Nandgaon extends for ten days, offering an unparalleled cultural and spiritual experience. Rooted in Hindu traditions, the festival commemorates the love of Lord Krishna and Radha, where colours symbolize joy, devotion, and spiritual ecstasy.

A major highlight of Rangotsav is the famous Lathmar Holi of Barsana and Nandgaon. According to legend, Krishna and his friends would visit Radha's village to play Holi, where the women of Barsana playfully chased them away with sticks. This tradition continues today, creating an electrifying spectacle of colours, music, and chants of "Radhe Radhe" and "Jai Shri Krishna." Vrindavan and Mathura host equally mesmerizing celebrations. The Banke Bihari Temple in Vrindavan begins the festivities with Phoolon ki Holi, where devotees are showered with flowers. In Mathura, the Dwarkadhish Temple hosts grand processions, kirtans, and Rasleela performances, re-enacting the divine love of Radha and Krishna.

A new addition to Rangotsav celebrations is the Widow's Holi in Vrindavan, where thousands of widows now partake in the celebrations, breaking age-old societal taboos. This event signifies inclusion and the triumph of love over social norms.

Another unique celebration in the Braj region is Laddoo Holi, observed in Barsana and Nandgaon. In this joyous tradition, devotees shower each other with laddoos (sweet Indian delicacies) as a gesture of love and festivity. This event, filled with laughter and merriment, symbolizes the playful spirit of Lord Krishna and adds a delectable touch to the celebrations. The sight of devotees playfully throwing laddoos while singing devotional songs enhances the festive atmosphere, making it a delightful experience.

Beyond colours, Rangotsav is a feast of folk music, devotional songs, and festive delicacies like thandai, gujiya, and malpua. The streets of Braj resonate with dhol beats and Krishna-centric performances, blending festivity with devotion.

Rangotsav transcends religious and cultural boundaries, showcasing India's rich heritage. The Braj circuit transforms into a vibrant canvas of love, unity, and spirituality, making it a truly divine experience.



Uttar Pradesh
Tourism App.

Would NDC Kill GDS?

New Distribution Capability (NDC) has been a contentious topic in the travel and tourism industry despite airlines and Global Distribution Systems (GDS) providers positioning it as the future of retailing. Industry leaders recently gathered for a discussion to explore NDC's role in transforming the sector.

 Nisha Verma

New Distribution Technology (NDC) has been dreaded by the travel industry ever since it was introduced, despite airlines and providers of Global Distribution Systems (GDS) saying otherwise. Despite being in existence for a decade, NDC remains misunderstood, with many travel agents hesitant to adopt it.

The big debate

A major concern in the industry has been whether NDC will reduce reliance on GDS. **Manoj Samuel**, CEO & Director, Riya Group, said, "NDC is the new constant for the travel fraternity. Around 30 per cent of our international business has moved to NDC. However, it will not completely replace GDS. Some airlines will remain on both. Many functions we performed on EDIFACT will shift to NDC, and we must embrace this change."

Samual Machado, MD India & South Asia, Sabre, said, "NDC is not a product but a way to deliver content. GDS is part of the consumption process. NDC makes content available directly by eliminating intermediaries, allowing airlines to present content in a user-friendly and real-time manner. It also structures data, enabling pricing, schedules, and consumer preferences to be processed separately. The idea that NDC will eliminate GDS is incorrect; rather, it will help airlines remain relevant in the long term."

Air India & NDC

Manish Puri, Head of Sales, Air India, emphasised that change takes time. "NDC is a new way of



Manoj Samuel
CEO & Director
Riya Group



Samual Machado
Managing Director India & South Asia
Sabre

selling. We don't want to do away with GDS. GDS is a platform, while NDC is a new technology for distributing content. If we don't adapt, we will perish. The world is moving toward retailing, and airlines must change to remain relevant. If we don't, Amazon will."

He added, "Air India is one of the fastest airlines in the world to adopt NDC. As our content becomes available, the share of international business via NDC will increase significantly. With our fleet expected to grow to 400-500 aircraft in the next three years, the ratio of bookings through NDC will shift. Technology and ease of adaptation will evolve, and Air India offers multiple ways to access NDC. Travel agents must start working with it."

Managing NDC with GDS

Ronald Lim, Head of Account Management - South East Asia, Travelport, noted, "NDC strengthens both GDS and airlines. Achieving interlining has always depended on carrier agreements and technology. Travelport is focused on normalising NDC content into

agency workflows. Though NDC is over a decade old, its adoption is still at an early stage. As more airlines join, interlining agreements will follow."

Level-playing field

Asked whether all airlines offer NDC content to Indian travel agents, Machado explained, "All



Manish Puri
Head of Sales
Air India

GDSs have a fair number of airlines available. Airlines decide which markets to open NDC to based on

dynamics and costs. Important airlines like Air India are already on board. The travel fraternity must push airlines to open NDC access for Indian consumers, making it a collective effort."

Adapting to consumer needs

Puri emphasised the need for airlines to evolve with changing consumer expectations. "We have to give unbundled or bundled products to our customers to make a choice. Things are moving fast—if we have Wi-Fi on board and I want to sell it, but 90 per cent of my content is on a GDS today, I cannot sell it. The differentiation comes when my website sells it, while agents on EDIFACT cannot. This is often seen as airlines taking customers away from travel partners, but in reality, it's about offering what the customer demands."

Need for aggregators


Lim highlighted the appeal of ag-



Ronald Lim
Head of Account Management - South East Asia, Travelport

gregators in NDC distribution. "With new technology, we are always open to exploring possibili-

ties. Aggregators promise speed—the speed at which they roll out and distribute airline content. GDS, however, is not just about selling content; we focus on the entire workflow, meeting the expectations of travellers and travel agencies."


NDC is a data exchange format based on offer and order management processes for airlines to create and distribute relevant offers

He noted that while aggregators quickly push content, GDS ensures a structured approach. "Once airlines scale up, GDS will catch up with aggregators in speed and capabilities. The importance of GDS will resurface, reminding all stakeholders of its role in the travel ecosystem."

Sharing his views on the issue, Samuel said, "Aggregators are the third piece in this whole discussion. However, I think they might not be able to scale the way the GDS gets scaled. Plus, they don't have the distribution capacity that GDS has." Machado clarified, "There is a misconception—GDS itself is an aggregator, bringing together full-service carriers, low-cost carriers, NDC content, hotels, and more. GDS now provides a seamless content pipeline at a reasonable price, so businesses can focus on creating AI-driven layers on top. AI simulates human intelligence, but it cannot yet perform logical reasoning or problem-solving without structured, granular data. NDC enables this, offering the next generation of businesses a faster way to innovate using AI."

NDC training must

Samuel acknowledged the internal challenges of transitioning from EDIFACT to NDC. "We have around 1,200 staff internally, and for them to move away from EDIFACT is a big challenge. We have been conducting continuous training for the past year. Additionally, we have started smaller sessions for our partners, helping them adapt to

portals and multiple API content."

Machado urged agencies to engage more actively. "We are spending millions on education, yet getting appointments for NDC demonstrations remains a challenge. The industry must act now because AI, which builds on NDC, is coming fast."

Lim highlighted technological integration. "We are normalising NDC with EDIFACT, reducing training needs. Travelport users will soon see a seamless experience, ensuring easy adoption."

Puri emphasised on awareness. "Many agents don't fully understand NDC, but it's the future. With multiple access points now available, adapting to it is essential."

A boon or a bane?


Machado compared NDC's evolution to cloud migration, noting, "Some companies have fully moved, while others still operate in hybrid mode. Similarly, some airlines have embraced NDC, while others are yet to release their specifications. The question is—are we preparing enough?"

Samuel highlighted India's rapid adoption. "Post-pandemic, NDC has accelerated, and India is the fastest to adapt. It will move even faster next year, with Indigo and Air India coming on board," he said.

Emphasising its necessity, Lim said, "NDC is a standard language for the industry to remain competitive. It won't disappear if we focus on what truly matters."

Framing it as inevitable, Puri said, "Just like WhatsApp, we must decide if NDC is a boon or bane. Closing our eyes won't stop its progress. As retailing expands, we must adapt, or automation will take over. NDC and APIs are essential for innovation, and collaboration is key to success."



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

AIR INDIA 

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED INDIA'S ONLY PREMIUM ECONOMY?

Starting at Economy + ₹599, enjoy an exclusive cabin and get a lot more for a little more. Now flying to 36 destinations across India.

EXPERIENCE MORE

-  Priority Check-in, Boarding & Baggage
-  Extra Legroom and Comfort
-  Hot Gourmet Meals
-  Non-stop Entertainment
-  Earn up to 12% Maharaja Points

Limited time offer.
Taxes extra. T&C apply.



MARCH 2025

Date	Event	Time
3-6	SITE Global Conference	9:00 am
4	Israel Tourism Webinar	12:00 pm
4-6	SPICE Sri Lanka 2025	9:00 am
4-6	ITB Berlin	9:00 am
7-9	India Travel Mart-Dehradun	9:00 am
7-9	India International Travel Mart-Ahmedabad	9:00 am
13	Switzerland Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
14-16	Tourism Fair Jaipur	11:00 am
17-19	Pacific Asia Travel Association Annual Summit	9:00 am
18	TourFox Webinar	3:00 pm
18-19	GPS-Bengaluru	10:00 am
20	LA Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
21-22	Holiday Expo-Vadodara	9:00 am
21-23	Travel & Tourism Fair-Chennai	10:00 am
21-23	India International Travel Exhibition -Vijayawada	10:00 am
21-23	India Travel Mart- Goa	10:00 am
22-23	Travel Wedding Show	10:00 am
27	LA Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm
28	Switzerland Tourism Webinar	3:00 pm

Oman takes India-centric initiatives

Oman is positioning itself as a leading destination for Indian travellers. In an exclusive interview with **TRAVEL TALK**, Shabib Al Maamari, MD, Visit Oman, outlines strategies, including the promotion of Oman as a wedding destination, to attract Indian visitors.

Dr Shehara Fernando

Oman is rapidly gaining traction among Indian tourists due to its geographical closeness, cultural connections, and bespoke travel experiences. **Shabib Al Maamari**, Managing Director, Visit Oman, emphasised the significance of Indian market, describing the Indian middle class as a highly desirable segment due to their frequent travel and spending power. "The Indian middle class is one of the most sought-after segments for every inbound destination. They travel frequently, spend generously, and truly enjoy their experiences," he stated.

Cultural affinity between India and Oman plays a crucial role in this strategy. "There is a lot of influence when it comes to history, when it comes to food and even language and terminologies, and to me, this is something that we need to take advantage of and introduce the right kind of product for India," Al Maamari said.



Shabib Al Maamari
Managing Director
Visit Oman

Oman is also promoting itself as a premier wedding destination. "The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism did a very good job promoting Oman as a wedding destination. This helps in marketing the destination. You get a group of people for a few days, but the amount of money they bring in for a single event is massive," he explained. This strategy not only drives immediate revenue but also enhances Oman's global image as a luxury destination.

Beyond leisure, Visit Oman is keen to grow its MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) segment. "There is a very good chance

Indian middle class is one of the most sought-after segments for every inbound destination, as they travel frequently, and spend generously

align with their preferences. Facilitating travel is a priority for Visit Oman. The online visa application system simplifies the process for Indian visitors, and the organisation also offers case-by-case assistance for added convenience. Regular roadshows and strategic partnerships with online travel agencies further strengthen Oman's outreach. Through these targeted initiatives, Oman is poised to capture a significant share of the Indian travel market, offering a seamless, luxurious experience while setting new benchmarks in regional tourism.

that Oman becomes a serious market for Indian MICE operators. We would like to activate that," Al Maamari shared.

Efforts are underway to customise experiences for Indian operators and travellers, ensuring that Oman's offerings



Dedicated platform for biz events

IBTM@ATM is set to debut at Arabian Travel Market 2025, offering a dedicated platform for the booming global business events sector. This new zone will foster strategic connections, industry insights, and innovation, reinforcing Dubai's role as a hub for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions.

TT Bureau

With the global events industry projected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.8 per cent between 2024 and 2035, IBTM@ATM is set to be a key gateway to the business events sector at the 32nd edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM). Taking place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from 28 April to 1 May 2025, this newly introduced zone



Arabian Travel Market (ATM) will be organised at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from 28 April to 1 May 2025

creating a dynamic community where suppliers and buyers can engage in meaningful networking, business exchange sessions, and a high-impact content

Last year's edition saw more than 7,000 attendees, 1,500 buyers and 400 exhibitors showing interest in the business events sector



will cater to the surging demand for business events and networking opportunities.

IBTM@ATM has been established in response to significant industry growth and the rising interest from ATM visitors. Last year's edition saw more than 7,000 attendees, 1,500 buyers and 400 exhibitors showing

interest in the business events sector. Designed to facilitate strategic connections, impactful collaborations, and data-driven insights, IBTM@ATM is a dynamic addition to ATM 2025.

Aligning with ATM 2025's theme, 'Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow's Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity', IBTM@ATM will

connect suppliers and buyers through scheduled appointments and business exchange sessions. A newly introduced Business Events Stage will feature a diverse programme, addressing the future of business travel, technological advancements, and socioeconomic growth, reinforcing ATM's role as a global hub for networking and innovation.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said, "This year's theme of enhanced connectivity is particularly relevant to the evolving business events sector, which thrives on strategic partnerships, knowledge exchange, and innovation. Through IBTM@ATM, we are strengthening our commitment to adding value to our exhibitors and attendees by

programme. By leveraging our unique insights, we aim to facilitate connections and unlock new opportunities that drive long-term growth within this thriving market segment."

Spotlight on GPS Nagpur 2025

The host city of GPS 2025 set the stage for impactful connections, insightful discussions, and unforgettable moments over two days. From industry leaders to emerging trends, Nagpur proved to be the perfect hub for travel innovation. The show saw around 40 exhibitors gather at Hotel Centre Point to meet more than 650 pre-registered buyers, industry leaders and innovators under one roof.



MOVEMENTS

WELCOMHERITAGE

New Delhi

WelcomHeritage has appointed **ASHUTOSH CHHIBBA** as the CEO. With over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Chhibba is poised to lead WelcomHeritage into an exciting new era of growth, innovation, and operational excellence. An alumnus of the Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata, and a graduate of the Welcomgroup Management Institute, Chhibba began his career with ITC Hotels in 1992. Over the decades, he has held key leadership roles, driving success at iconic properties, such as the erstwhile Welcomgroup Chola Sheraton, ITC Kakatiya, ITC Maurya, and ITC Mughal.



THE WESTIN SOHNA RESORT AND SPA

New Delhi

The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa appoints **UTSA MAJUMDER** as the General Manager. A dynamic and visionary leader, Majumder brings over two decades of experience in luxury hospitality, distinguished by her expertise in operational excellence, guest-centric service, and strategic leadership. An alumnus of St Xavier's Institution, Kolkata, Majumder began her hospitality journey with Hyatt Hotels, dedicating nearly two decades to hone her craft across diverse leadership roles. Her career spans key assignments at Hyatt Regency Kolkata, Hyatt Regency Pune, Park Hyatt Goa Resort & Spa, and Hyatt Place Hampi, among others.



TAJ CORBETT RESORT & SPA

Jim Corbett (Uttarakhand)

Taj Corbett Resort & Spa has appointed **NIVEDAN KUKRETI** as the General Manager. Kukreti has 21 years of experience and is known for his visionary approach and strategic solutions. With a diploma in hotel management from IHM Lucknow, Kukreti began his hospitality journey in 2003. His professional expertise includes leadership roles at renowned hotels, such as Shangri-La, The Lalit, Radisson Blu, and Taj Hotels. In his new role, he aims to establish Taj Corbett Resort & Spa as a premier destination for luxury, nature, and wellness tourism, blending exceptional hospitality with local experiences.



MELUHA THE FERN

Mumbai

AMEET WAGH has joined Meluha The Fern as the Director of Sales and Marketing. He has been associated with the hospitality industry for more than two decades. He has worked with some of the best hospitality brands, including Intercontinental Hotels, Sarovar Hotels, Pride Hotels, and Sun and Sand Hotels. Wagh started his career at Sterling Resorts and worked his way up the hierarchy. A hardcore salesperson, he has been heading the responsibilities of driving up the room revenues and overall numbers of hotels across all segments in several big hospitality chains in the country.



CONRAD BENGALURU

Bengaluru

Conrad Bengaluru appoints **RESHAM GUPTA** as the Director of Human Resources. With over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Gupta brings a wealth of expertise in talent management, employee engagement, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture. She began her professional journey as a Management Trainee at Radisson Alibaug and went on to gain experience in HR roles at ITC Fortune and Travel Food Services. She then spent eight years at Taj Hotels, holding managerial roles and serving as Head of Department (HOD) for four years across two properties.



NOVOTEL MUMBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mumbai

Novotel Mumbai International Airport has appointed **MAHIPAL JAIN** as the Director of Finance. With over 12 years of experience in the hospitality industry and a strong financial background, Jain brings a wealth of expertise to his new role. Jain, a seasoned Chartered Accountant, has successfully led financial operations, optimising cost efficiencies across food & beverage, utilities, finance, administration, manpower, and engineering. In his new role, Jain will be responsible for driving financial excellence, optimising resources, and contributing to the overall growth and profitability of the hotel.



CLINT RODRIGUES has joined Meluha The Fern as the Director of Food & Beverage. In his current position, he is responsible for managing the entire F&B operations of the hotel, including the 24-hour coffee shop Tiara, the lounge bar Vandal, and Parabola. Rodrigues is a seasoned F&B operations person and has two decades of experience under his belt. Before joining Meluha, he was associated with Park Inn by Radisson (RHG) Bournemouth, UK. He has also worked with reputed brands like The Resort (Chalet Hotels) and Holiday Inn (IHG Hotels), in Mumbai.



SAYAJI HOTELS

Indore

Sayaji Hotels has appointed **JAMALUDDIN KHILJI** as the General Manager Corporate Head HR. The strategic move aims to further enhance the company's leadership team and strengthen its framework to drive organisational growth and employee engagement. In his new role, Khilji will spearhead HR strategies across Sayaji Hotels, focusing on talent acquisition, management processes, leadership development and workforce planning to align with the company's overall business objectives. With 24 years of experience in Human Resource Management, Khilji has worked with leading hospitality brands.



NHCC & HICC

Hyderabad

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) has appointed **PRASANNA VENKATESH** as the Director of Operations. A seasoned professional with over 20 years of global hospitality experience, Venkatesh has a proven record of driving operational excellence and delivering exceptional guest experiences. His journey spans renowned hospitality brands, such as Westin, Hilton, and Accor. Venkatesh has been instrumental in turning around F&B venues, optimising service delivery, and spearheading high-impact events.



ACCORD HOTELS & RESORTS

Delhi

HIMANSHU BAHUGUNA has been appointed as the Cluster Director of Sales - Delhi. He will lead the sales strategy and drive revenue growth for Accord Hotels & Resorts in North India, and will be based out of Delhi. He is a seasoned Sales & Marketing professional and brings 17 years of experience in hospitality with prestigious brands, including RHG, IHG, Jaypee Hotels, and The Grand, New Delhi. He is a graduate from the Institute of Hotel Management, Bhopal, with a Master's degree in business administration from the Apeejay School of Management.



HILTON GURUGRAM BAANI CITY CENTRE

Gurugram

Hilton Gurugram Bani City Centre appoints **SHRUTIKA PURI** as the Director of Human Resources. With over 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry and a long-standing tenure at Hilton since 2011, Puri brings deep expertise in talent management, employee relations, and HR strategy. In her new role, she will lead all HR initiatives at the property, focusing on improving team member satisfaction, minimising turnover, and aligning HR strategies with business objectives to ensure the continued delivery of exceptional service by a motivated team.



BENGALURU MARRIOTT HOTEL WHITEFIELD

Bengaluru

Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield has appointed **SUJIT KUMAR GIRI** as the Food and Beverage Manager. With over 15 years of experience in the hospitality realm, Giri brings an exceptional blend of operational expertise, strategic vision, and leadership to his new role. He started his career in 2008 as a Trainee captain at GRT Grand, Chennai. His career spans renowned hospitality brands, including Taj Lands' End, Mumbai. In his new role, Giri will head the F&B operations and implement industry standards to elevate the hotel's culinary offerings.



The business travel magazine

MICetalk

India's #1 MICE Magazine, Trusted by

3,80,000+ Readers!

India's first and only MICE magazine, delivering exclusive insights, trends, and updates on Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions. Trusted by top corporate leaders and industry professionals.

Harshal: +91 9619499167 | harshal@ddppl.com, Meetu: +91 9650911399 | meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com

10th Travel MICE & Corporate Show

Balancing PROFIT - PLANET



SCHILTHORNBAHN 20XX

Schilthorn
Piz Gloria



Open **365** days a year!
www.schilthorn.ch

Simplifying train travel bookings for Europe

Björn Bender, CEO, Rail Europe, speaks to **TRAVELTALK** about the company's focus on simplifying train travel bookings across Europe for Indian travel agents, new products they can promote and the growing trend of slow travel among Indian travellers.

 Hazel Jain

How important is India as a market for Rail Europe?

India is one of Rail Europe's most important markets, and my visit aims to strengthen relationships with trade partners, explore growth opportunities, and gain deeper insights into the evolving preferences of Indian travellers. The focus is on collaborating with the Indian travel industry to simplify train travel bookings across Europe, ensuring seamless experiences for Indian tourists, with the help of technology.

Europe is seeing a spree of new trains like ÖBB. Tell us why this revival in train journeys?




Rail Europe's global customer support hub is strategically located in the Mumbai office, underscoring the company's commitment to prioritising customer needs

Yes, there is a lot going on in the European rail industry with billions of euros invested into the infrastructure, and we are happy to see that there are new launches coming into the market. For instance, there are two new day train connections between Munich and Amsterdam, and Paris and Berlin with a day high-speed train. I would also like to highlight the reopening of the Milan-Paris route, which is huge considering its popularity among Indian travellers.

Do you see a growing trend of Indians wanting to travel sustainably today?

Yes, what is really driving this revival of trains is a growing desire for sustainable travel. As travellers become more eco-conscious, rail offers an attractive alternative to short-haul flights. Trains allow passengers to relax, enjoy beautiful landscapes, and reduce their carbon footprint all at once. With so many new and revamped services, we are thrilled to see more travellers choosing rail as

their preferred mode of transport across Europe, and Rail Europe is here to help them experience it all. Sustainability is at the core of Rail Europe's mission, as train travel

 **Rail Europe has been enhancing its B2B platform to provide trade partners with seamless booking tools, better personalisation, and competitive pricing**

significantly reduces carbon emissions compared to other modes of transport. Rail Europe also offers personalised solutions, such as the Eurail Pass and Swiss Travel Pass, catering to Indian travellers seeking flexible, scenic, and eco-friendly journeys. With access to over 200 rail operators, Rail Europe ensures that Indian travellers can discover Europe in a sustainable and convenient way.

Any new updates and developments from Rail Europe, especially for trade partners?

Rail Europe has been enhancing its B2B platform to provide trade partners with seamless booking tools, better personalisation, and competitive pricing. Recent partnerships, such as with iryo and RegioJet, have expanded our offerings. Additionally, the introduction of Protection Plans addresses the increasing demand for flexibility in travel bookings. We have seen B2B growth of 23 per cent over 2023.

What other trends do you see among Indian travellers?

We can say it used to be 70 per cent travel from March to June, but now we see more travel outside of the spring/ early summer break, especially on shoulder season.

One product that is getting popular in India and one product that has a lot of potential?

The Swiss Travel Pass continues to be a favourite among Indian travellers, especially for iconic routes like the Glacier Express and GoldenPass. On the other hand, regional passes, such as the Germany-Austria Pass and Benelux Pass, hold significant potential.





**CROSS PAASHA
BALI
SEMINYAK**





sales@crosshotelsandresorts.in,
+91 9599076699


buzz travel marketing
managing your destinations' image
CIN: MHCADOL2004PTC123836

Claim Your FREE COPY

Stay updated with the latest in the hospitality industry. Subscribe to HotelTalk for exclusive insights, trends, and expert opinions-absolutely FREE!

To receive your monthly edition, email hoteltalk@addppl.com with the following details:
Name | Designation | Company | Email | Mobile Number | Full Postal Address



THERE'S ONLY ONE

— ★ ★ ★ —

WASHINGTON, DC

Travelling to the USA? Discover Washington, DC with Red Carpet Travels.

r.kakade@redcarpet.travel | www.redcarpet.travel



📍 National Mall

WASHINGTON
DC
WASHINGTON.ORG



USA
GoUSA.in



MORE included. MORE value. MORE to enjoy.

When it comes to a holiday, your clients deserve it all.



— INCLUDES —
UNLIMITED OPEN BAR
SPECIALTY DINING
EXCURSION CREDITS
WI-FI PACKAGE
EXTRA GUESTS FREE



Norwegian Joy[®], Alaska

experience
MORE
at sea[™]

21 Ships • 400+ Destinations Worldwide • Overnights & Late Stays in Port[†]

<p>7-Day Hawai'i Round-Trip Honolulu: Inter-island Pride of America[®] Departing every Saturday year-round</p>	<p>8-Day Asia From Tokyo (Yokohama) to Tokyo: Taipei, Okinawa & Ishigaki Norwegian Spirit[®] 26 Apr 2025</p>	<p>9-Day Alaska Round-Trip Seattle: Glacier Bay, Skagway & Juneau Norwegian Joy[®] Apr - Aug 2025</p>	<p>10-Day Europe From Istanbul to Barcelona: Athens & Salerno (Amalfi Coast) Norwegian Pearl[®] 24 Oct 2025</p>



Call +91 22 7127 9333 to book today



[†]Applies to select sailings. ^{*}More at Sea includes unlimited open bar & more; exclusions apply. Offers are non-transferable, have no monetary value and are valid for new bookings only. Offers are subject to change or withdrawal at any time and compatibility with other promotional offers is subject to change. Other restrictions may apply. For full terms and conditions visit ncl.com. All rights reserved. ©2025 NCL Corporation Ltd. Ships' Registry: Bahamas and USA. 2141255 02/25