

# 1 IN CIRCULATION &amp; READERSHIP

SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

ddppl.com

Scan & Share  
TravTalkASEGŌ  
Group Insurance  
Travel Insurance

# TRAVTALK®

TravTalkIndia.com

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

INSIDE

## Repackaging India inbound

## DigiYatra app for global tourists?

**EXPERIENCE FIJI**  
with the ones who know it best

Call: M: +91 99 02 81845 E: Prashant@irispkts.in  
Mumbai: M: +91 98109 70178 E: videsh@irispkts.in  
Bangalore: M: +91 98455 46220 E: adweek@irispkts.in

IRIS

**GRNCONNECT**  
GLOBAL RESERVATIONS NETWORK

**GLOBAL REACH  
LOCAL EXPERTS**

## WINTER BONANZA!

**BOOK MORE. EARN MORE.**

UAE PACKAGES  
STARTING FROM

**\$395<sub>PP</sub>**

USA PACKAGES  
STARTING FROM

**\$699<sub>PP</sub>**

**UAE PACKAGES:**  
Book 5 nights and get free tickets to Global Village.

**USA PACKAGES:**  
Book 3 nights and get a free ticket to Statue Of Liberty- Pedestal Reserve.

Login to **GRNconnect.com**

✉ packages@grndmc.com

☎ +91-9810897752 | +91-9911441140

experience  
**abu dhabi**



📍 Warner Bros. World™ Yas Island, Abu Dhabi

TM & © WBEL (s25)

## Abu Dhabi with Yas Island Adventure

05 Days from  
**US\$ 599\***  
per person

### Inclusions:

- ✓ 02 nights accommodation in Abu Dhabi City Hotel
- ✓ 02 nights accommodation in Yas Island Hotel
- ✓ Daily Breakfast
- ✓ Return Airport Transfers from Abu Dhabi International Airport on Private
- ✓ Inter City Transfer from Abu Dhabi City Hotel to Yas Island Hotel on Private
- ✓ Abu Dhabi City Tour with a stop at BAPS Hindu Temple tour on Private
- ✓ TeamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi Ticket Only
- ✓ Yas Island Any 2 Parks (Select from Ferrari World™ Abu Dhabi, Yas Water-world or Warner Bros. World™ Abu Dhabi or SeaWorld™ Abu Dhabi)

**Remarks:** Rates are based on DBL/TWN sharing basis. Rates & Offers are subject to change without prior notice & are subject to availability. Valid till 20Dec 2025 (Except Peak Season). \*T&C Apply.

### Ottila International Pvt. Ltd.

Mumbai (Registered Office & Corporate Headquarters) : 022 6720 5000

Ahmedabad: +91 93761 20982

Bengaluru: +91 96 0648 4185

Chennai: +91 44 4555 8582

Coimbatore: +91 99527 17750

Hyderabad: +91 88 8501 5970

Indore: +91 731 4911 374

Kochi: +91 75938 63903

Kolkata: +91 98301 19561

New Delhi: +91 11 4141 4242

Pune: +91 89 7636 5200

Nashik: +91 253 231 0044



For Enquiries & Bookings, please contact any of our offices | **B2B Portal:** [www.ottila.net](http://www.ottila.net)



**THE LEELA**

PALACES HOTELS RESORTS

# INDULGE IN A SENSORIAL DISCOVERY



## *The* LEEPA PALACE TRAIL

Breathtaking settings, ceremonial rituals, destination discovery, signature palace services, and the graciousness of Indian hospitality. Rediscover the art of royal living across eight magical palaces, hotels and resorts, only with The Leela Palace Trail.

For reservations: Call: 1 800 1031 444 | Email: [reservations@theleela.com](mailto:reservations@theleela.com) | [www.theleela.com](http://www.theleela.com) | @f@theleela

North India Palace Trail: The Leela Palace New Delhi, The Leela Palace Jaipur and The Leela Palace Udaipur  
South India Palace Trail: The Leela Palace Chennai, The Leela Palace Bengaluru, The Leela Hyderabad, The Leela Ashtamudi, A Raviz Hotel, The Leela Kovalam, A Raviz Hotel

Scan to  
know more



*Seen here, The Leela Palace Udaipur*

# Where Cherry Blossoms Meet Checkered Flags



**Daniel D'Souza**  
Co-Founder at DreamSetGo

At DreamSetGo, we've always believed that travel is far more than movement it's emotion in motion. Over the years, we've had the privilege of crafting experiences that go beyond the expected - journeys that connect travellers with the soul of a destination.

Our latest chapter unfolds in Japan, during its most poetic season - the Cherry Blossom bloom. It's a journey that brings together the grace of Zen meditation, the discipline of Kendo, the power of Sumo, and the thrill of Formula 1 at Suzuka Circuit. **Because at DreamSetGo, we don't just design holidays. We craft experiences that stay with you - long after you return.**

## Cherry Blossom with a LIVE Race Day in Suzuka - 9 Days



### Some Exclusive DreamSetGo offerings



Kendo Session with a master, Tokyo



Zen Meditation at a temple, Kyoto



Picnic under the cherry blossom, Tokyo

**INR 3,40,000** + LIVE Race Day at Suzuka FREE  
~~INR 3,60,000~~  
per person in twin sharing  
For first 100 customers

Attractive Commissions for Travel agents\*

Departure Dates: 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026

For more details contact - Anup Chetri

+91 8721067834

anup.chetri@dreamsetgo.com

Visit [www.dreamsetgo.com](http://www.dreamsetgo.com)

# 1 IN CIRCULATION &amp; READERSHIP

SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

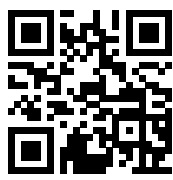
ddppl.com

SAY  
NO  
TO  
FAKE  
NEWS

TRAVTALK®

TravTalkIndia.com

Scan &amp; Share



Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

Special Holiday®  
Award winning international services

WellnessAyur™



info@specialholidays.net

## Rebrand India for global youth

The first edition of **ThinkTank**, held at Le Méridien New Delhi, gathered young brains from India's tourism industry to brainstorm ideas to transform India's inbound story.



Nisha Verma

**ThinkTank** aims to move industry conversation beyond panels into action. The inaugural session — 'Reimagining Inbound India: Making India the Must-Do Destination for a Younger Global Traveller' — brought together young practitioners who run DMCs, curate luxury



younger visitors to India. The roundtable at Le Méridien New Delhi was designed to surface immedi-

25–40-year-olds, who buy short, high impact trips and spend on experiences. As **Suyash Gupta**, Director, Travel Bureau, puts it, India's challenge splits in two — perception and prod-

**The perception game**  
Kickstarting the conversation, Gupta said, "First is the perception problem.



Harshvardhan Tanwar, Suyash Gupta, Akanksha Garg, Bjorn DeNiese, and Ruhani Duggal

travel, design community-led experiences, and strategise hotel brands. The idea was to identify what works, what doesn't, and what practical steps the industry can take to entice

ate, executable ideas rather than lofty manifestos. The room agreed on the core problem. About 63 per cent of India's inbound visitors are over 45. The world's growth is being driven by

India is considered slightly unsafe, not very organised, and people still believe that India is a country of snake charmers." Then he pointed to demand hiding

Contd. on page 6 ▶

## Europ Assistance Enters Travel B2B Market

The latest entrant in the Indian B2B travel space, Europ Assistance comes with an impressive international lineage. CEO **Ram Seethepalli** shares his perspective with **TRAVTALK**.



Hazel Jain

With a legacy of 100 per cent Generali ownership, Europ Assistance takes its responsibility to 'assist customers' seriously. **Ram Seethepalli**, CEO, Europ Assistance India & Middle East, explains, "We invented the assistance industry in 1963 in France and remain a global leader. A lot of people do not know of us in India because we are a B2B2C company. But our clients include India's leading banks, insurers, credit card issuers, automotive companies and the retail market. In travel, we have proudly protected over 1.7 crore travellers and assisted our customers in over 2.5 lakh cases, including travel inconvenience and international medical care. And no one else comes close to us on this scale. Our global networks, global reputation and capabilities — combined with our focus on really caring for end-customers — is

Ram Seethepalli  
CEO, Europ Assistance  
India & Middle East

our significant value-add to our partners." Europ Assistance counts Expedia, Airbnb, American Express, Visa, and AIG among its global clients.

For the company, India is a long-term growth market, underpenetrated, with a lot of room for many parties to win. "We are not out to go head-to-head with competition and we do not need to. There is plenty of space for everyone. And mostly, we are going to help our clients and partners. We have got a lot of value that we can provide

to them," Seethepalli says. Regarding the agent commission structure, he says the company will follow market best practices.

With its great lineage, Europ Assistance is internationally good at certain things, and travel is one of them. Seethepalli adds, "Our legacy is not the reason why travel agents should work with us. Our value proposition and what we can do for them today, our ability to strengthen the travel agent's relationship



with their clients, the quality of service and our world class customer experience, and our ability to truly take care of customers in their moment of distress and need is why travel agents should choose us."

Contd. on page 9 ▶

## ENJOY BALI WITH CROSS HOTELS & RESORTS

buzz travel marketing  
managing your destination's image  
The original tourism care

sandeep.raghav@crosshotelsandresorts.in, +91 9599076699

CROSS  
HOTELS & RESORTS

# Need to stop undercutting &



The panel for the TravTalk ThinkTank poses after an engaging discussion that delved deeper into how to attract young international travellers to India

► Contd. from page 5

in plain sight. "Concerts, cultural festivals, wildlife, and immersive educational travel bring young travellers when we package them right. Our company has been the official travel partner for Magnetic Fields music festival, in Alsisar, Rajasthan. That has attracted many foreign tourists for years. If we want younger visitors, we need to design an ecosystem for them. We must make this a social media campaign for the larger audience to create a bigger pie for everyone," he added.

**Ruhani Duggal**, Founder & Lead Curator, Vilasa Luxury Travel, underlined, "We have to understand that a country's product offerings and perception go hand-in-hand. Marketing alone is not enough to shift perception."

## Packaging is key

She further underlined that

India has depth, but it must be translated into an emotional language that resonates with a mobile, experienced, and expressive traveller cohort. Claiming that luxury is emotional precision, she used the examples of streetwear pop-ups, and beauty/Ayurveda trips to illuminate how heritage and modernity can be married to create new touchpoints for youth markets. "Today's travellers want experiences that remember them back," she underlined.

She added, "When it comes to Gen Z, we are seeing that now the travel designers are also younger and catering to a younger generation. This generation is looking for a DMC or a stakeholder who speaks their language. The Golden Triangle will be the same for first timers. The challenge is how to do it in Vilasa style, which is very experiential and immer-

sive," she said.

## All about storytelling

Taking the experiential momentum forward, **Harshvardhan Tanwar**, Co-founder, No Footprints, said, "Narrative is critical. We call ourselves the seriously fun people." He gave examples that clearly land with younger audiences. "We run a Queer Day Out. Not just queer friendly rooms. In Jaipur, we read the city through flowers. You go back with a story you can only get here," he shared.

It took **Akanksha Garg**, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Waxpol Hotels & Resorts, a long time to dispel misconceptions about Sundarbans. "Over time, through our own personal marketing and information, we could create a very small percentage of the market about Sundarbans. We also realised people do not want a safari every day. They want to live like a local Bengali in the Sundarbans for a day," she said.

She was candid about social media feed too. "Instagrammable matters! And like it or not, TikTok moves markets in countries where Instagram is not even used. If we want the young, we must show up where they live," suggested Garg.

## Brand matters

**Bjorn DeNiese**, Manag-

ing Director, Mayfair Elixir, suggested, "We must start with getting the brand right. What brand has been created by the previous gen-

well. A lot of new entrepreneurs are coming up with ideas. People are doing farm stays and village stays. We are opening a

es. What do we hear from the trade? Please reduce the rate. When I go abroad, all the operators want 5-star accommodation and rates. However, they are not willing to pay for it. We need to stop undercutting and standardise baselines — Five-star, four-star, three-star — clear rates, and clear quality of service that they would get."

Commenting on the DMC network, Gupta said, "The Indian DMCs at some level went into a price war, which was a lost battle for everyone. Everyone is cutting prices. No one is winning. Because of this, other countries boomed. You run a business to make revenue. One can go into community building, but across the board, 90 per cent of business has shifted to outbound, because that is where the money is."

## The big struggle

For Tanwar, the biggest challenge is distribution. "Unlike larger DMCs and OTA platforms, we don't have the distribution platform. We rely on them to showcase our experiences. We are paying 30 per cent to be on OTA because we just want to be relevant, despite it not being feasible monetarily," he highlighted.

"We participate in international shows, and see the Indian forum is empty and still we have to pay despite



**Suyash Gupta**  
Director  
Travel Bureau



**Ruhani Duggal**  
Founder & Lead Curator  
Vilasa Luxury Travel

If we want younger visitors, we need to design an ecosystem for them. We must make a social media campaign for that audience

We have to understand that a country's product offerings and perception go hand-in-hand. Marketing alone is not enough to shift perception

wellness and wildlife brand in Almora focused on nature and self reset. Wi-Fi exists, but disconnecting is part of the value."

## Price war is real

On her part, Garg voiced her frustration loudly, saying, "Africa sells a basic room for a thousand dollars a night. India has better products in many plac-

Are Indian hotel operators doing enough? He said, "There is a gap. However, it is being filled up very





# standardise baseline prices

being the only person trying to make a difference. I suggest that the government should just give it for free to 10–15 people who are talking for your country passionately. This industry works on passion; it doesn't work on money."

Skilling is his second crusade. "I think skilling is a big challenge and we honestly want to skill a lot more people so that they understand how to navigate through situations."

Scope for data

Garg takes the data to curate products for customers by interacting with DMCs. She shared that most of the people fol-



Akanksha Garg  
Founder & CEO  
Waxpol Hotels & Resorts

TikTok moves markets in countries where Instagram is not even used. If we want the young, we must show up where they live



Harshvardhan Tanwar  
Co-founder  
No Footprints

Lots of people have visited India. It's an opportunity to have ambassadors in every country for just promoting India

low what has clicked for someone else, instead of finding their own niche.

Duggal said, "One can't look at existing demand and complain. That means abandoning the mission. I believe in creating demand instead of fighting for it and getting into predatory pricing."

India aspirational?

Duggal underlined that the industry has not done a

Echoing the sentiment, Tanwar remarked, "PR kiya toh darna kya" — highlighting that India needs stronger, unified storytelling to beat the algorithm."

Safe destination

Garg underlined, "The only time India hits news internationally is when it comes to safety. But when there is an incident in the US or Europe, travel continues. India, however, faces advisories. The truth is, India is a safe country for women — we need to say that more often." Gupta shared, "I don't know anyone who has been to Rome and not had something stolen — we still go to Rome. Why not create a narrative that acknowledges the problem but shows that India is as safe as any global destination?"

Duggal revealed, "Like any other country, India has safe and unsafe ar-

eas. It's unfair to label an entire country unsafe."

Collaboration is key

Gupta suggested that he was ready to give a commitment for a one full day discussion with key stakeholders, where they walk out with a practical action plan.

Garg shared that, she would change how to reach out to young clients. "I will make my products more modern for Gen Z. Everybody in the industry must come together, so that we can do the one-day planning, discussion, or brainstorming, to come up with a single idea that we all can focus on — 'How do we make India great again for the international market?'"

DeNiese, commented, "We should not stop innovating. I think celebrating India and celebrating its people, culture and everything that is around

you. Perhaps in your own neighbourhood, you have a great chef or a great story that could bring 10 people to India."

Sharing that he has taken many famous people on walks, Tanwar



Bjorn DeNiese  
Managing Director  
Mayfair Elixir

concluded, "We have hosted Nigella Lawson, Zendaya, Tom Holland for our walks. We miss out on the opportunity that one sentence, from such people, makes a big difference. We have

never had an international brand ambassador. Lots of people have visited India. That's an opportunity to have ambassadors in every country for just promoting India, which is incredible."

Together, the panel called for an industry-wide effort to change perceptions, led

We must start with getting the brand right. What brand has been created by the previous generations is to get people in the door

by data, visibility, and storytelling from real women travellers and entrepreneurs who live and work across India every day.

ThinkTank: Ideas and outcome

| Focus Area                          | Concrete Idea                                                                                                                                                       | Purpose/Outcome                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| New itineraries for new audiences   | Curate pop-culture-based trips such as Sex and the City – India edition or Emily in Delhi, create Gen Z-focused products like streetwear pop-ups and beauty trails. | Make India relatable and trendy for younger travellers                            |
| Cash-in on sports & concert economy | Integrate major events like IPL, concerts, and music festivals into inbound itineraries with curated pre- and post-tours.                                           | Capture younger tourists who travel for experiences.                              |
| Local brand ambassadors by market   | Have a grid of credible content creators and influencers from each target market to represent India authentically.                                                  | Replace the "one-size-fits-all" India campaign with market-specific storytelling. |
| Safety through testimonials         | Invite existing foreign women travellers in India to record short testimonial videos about safety and positive experiences.                                         | Build trust through authentic peer-to-peer storytelling.                          |
| Better use of data                  | Publish a monthly micro brief across DMCs and hotels tracking real movement.                                                                                        | Create fast, actionable insights for the industry.                                |
| Digital visibility                  | Shared digital fund for DMCs, hotels, and operators to co-sponsor content on relevant platforms (TikTok, Weibo, etc.).                                              | Amplify credible stories across global social channels.                           |
| Value over price                    | Standardise rates by category, highlight benefits over discounts.                                                                                                   | Protect margins and raise perceived quality of Indian travel.                     |
| Skill development                   | Launch micro academies for guides and hosts focused on storytelling, safety, and empathy.                                                                           | Create a new generation of experience curators.                                   |



## Change starts with us

The first edition of **TRAVTALK** Think Tank proved what we have all known deep down. The travel industry is full of passionate, capable people with ideas that can transform India's image, if we simply start acting on them. Among the many insights that emerged, one struck a deep chord. It was about safety. Not as a policy discussion, but as a shared responsibility.

We often complain about how India is portrayed abroad, especially when it comes to women's safety. But here is the thing, the power to shift that perception doesn't lie only with governments, campaigns, or global media. It lies with us, with you, with every single person in the travel trade who interacts daily with visitors from across the world.

If you are a travel agent, tour operator, hotelier, or guide, you already have something the government doesn't — access to real travellers who have experienced India first-hand. Why not make that your tool for change?

When your next client is leaving, ask them: Did you feel safe in India? Jot down their testimonial. Post it on your website, social media, or WhatsApp group. Let their experience speak louder than headlines.

Imagine the impact if just a fraction of our industry made this a habit. If every operator hosting 50 travellers a month shared 10 genuine testimonials about how safe, welcomed, and cared for they felt here. We would have authentic voices telling the real story of India; not one filtered through fear or bias, but through lived experience.

Let's flood the internet with stories about the India we know — generous, chaotic, warm, human, and yes, safe. Things won't change overnight, but the world will start listening when we start speaking up through our travellers.

Change doesn't need permission. It needs participation. And it starts with you.

# Leveraging legacy to level the playing field

With its ancient soul and forward-looking vision, India is not merely participating in the evolution of global tourism and travel, it is poised to lead the charge. **Julia Simpson** President & CEO, WTTC, talks about how it can harness its cultural heritage and cutting-edge innovation to build a prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive future for all.

**T**ravel and tourism is one of the most powerful forces shaping our world today, connecting cultures driving economic opportunity, and fostering a deeper understanding between people. Across the globe, the sector is entering a transformative decade, defined by technological innovation, evolving traveller expectations, and a renewed commitment to protecting our planet.

India stands at the forefront of this change. With its vast cultural heritage, extraordinary natural landscapes, and an en-

than just numbers; they signal a renewed confidence in India as a destination and a testament to the sector's adaptability.

Equally important is the sector's role as a source of employment and opportunity. Travel & Tourism now supports more than 46 million jobs across the country. As the sector grows, so too does its capacity to bring prosperity to every corner of India, from bustling cities to remote rural landscapes.

### Innovation at the Heart of Experience

Tomorrow's travellers will expect more than a standard itinerary. They will look for journeys that are personal, immersive, and enriched by technol-

### IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Travel and tourism sector is entering a transformative phase, defined by tech and innovation
- ❖ With its vast cultural heritage, extraordinary natural landscapes, and entrepreneurial spirit India stands at the forefront of this change
- ❖ By 2025 end, the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP is set to reach an all-time high of ₹22 trillion

ogy. The development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) represents a pivotal opportunity. SAF has the potential to cut lifecycle carbon emissions from aviation by up to 80 per cent, and India is well-placed to become a regional leader in its production.

dium-sized enterprises, often family-owned, bring character and diversity to India's tourism offering. Supporting them through training, access to finance, and digital tools will ensure the benefits of growth are shared widely.

### India's Defining Decade

The coming decade presents India with a singular opportunity to lead by example on the world stage. By embracing innovation, championing sustainability, and ensuring inclusive growth, the country can set a standard for how Travel & Tourism can prosper in a rapidly changing world. The great Indian take-off is already underway. The challenge now is to sustain this momentum and to fly higher; with purpose, responsibility, and a shared vision for the future.

With its vast cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and an entrepreneurial spirit, India is setting new benchmarks



Equally important is tourism's role as a source of employment and opportunity. Travel & Tourism now supports 46 million jobs in India

trepreneurial spirit that is second to none, the country is setting new benchmarks for how Travel & Tourism can thrive in the twenty-first century.

### From Strength to Strength

The past few years have been a story of resilience and reinvention. India's tourism sector has moved from recovery into a period of record-breaking performance. By year's end, the sector's contribution to the GDP is set to reach an all-time high of ₹22 trillion, while international spend will surpass ₹3.2 trillion. These figures are more

ogy. Artificial Intelligence can curate experiences tailored to an individual's preferences in real time, while immersive tools, such as augmented and virtual reality, can offer a taste of a destination before the traveller even boards a plane.

India's thriving technology sector is uniquely positioned to lead in these developments. It can blend digital innovation with the country's rich tapestry of traditions, creating experiences that are both cutting-edge and deeply authentic.

### A Responsible Future

As the sector expands, sustainability must be at

Beyond aviation, investments in renewable energy for hotels, smart mobility in cities, and the protection of biodiversity will safeguard the environments and heritage sites that make India unique.

### Opportunities for All

Travel and Tourism has always been a sector by the people, for the people. The sector's growth should be inclusive, creating opportunities for women, young people, and entrepreneurs. Small and me-



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

# India’s multi-pronged facelift to woo more foreign travellers

From next-generation airports and luxury trains to expanded hotel footprints and immersive heritage experiences, the past year has seen India evolve into a destination of global significance where travellers finds a reason to rediscover Incredible India.

 Surbhi Sharma

In 2025, India’s aviation sector has taken significant strides to attract inbound tourism. For instance, IndiGo’s partnerships with Air France KLM, Virgin Atlantic and Delta Air Lines, enabled the airline to sell seats under its brand on routes from India to Europe and North America. Similarly, the aviation sector expanded with the launch of new airlines and increased regional connectivity under the UDAN scheme.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has incorporated 106 tourism-specific routes and plans regional connectivity to 120 new destinations. These developments expand the ‘gateway’ capacity of India and make inbound access easier for travellers around the world.

Marking a major milestone in India’s aviation infrastructure, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated Phase One of the Navi Mumbai International Airport in October. Built at a cost of ₹19,650 crore, the airport is expected to begin commercial operations by December this year.



### Rail & alternative connectivity infra

From a rail tourism perspective, 2025 has seen landmark projects. The Udhampur–Srinagar–Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) rail line, linking the Kashmir Valley to the Indian mainland, was inaugurated in June, featuring the world-highest arch railway bridge over the Chenab River and drastically reducing travel times. Also, the rapid-regional rail system extension from Meerut to Alwar via the Rapid Regional Transit System corridor was approved, enhancing connectivity across Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan.

### Hospitality & destination upgrades

On the hospitality front, global hotel chains are expanding aggressively

into India’s smaller cities. For instance, IHCL, Hilton and Marriott are planning multi-fold expansions in India. IHCL opened 26 hotels during the financial

  
New projects expand the ‘gateway’ capacity of India and make inbound access easier for travellers around the world

year, with several new properties in pipeline. Simultaneously, the government has placed on the

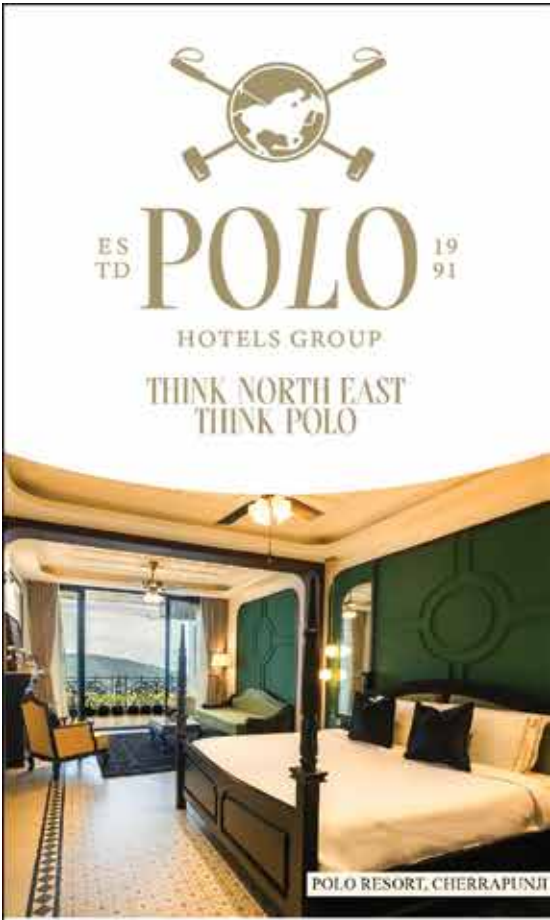
infrastructure list hotels in 50 newly identified tourist destinations, which will allow easier financing for hotel expansion.

### Attractions & experiential offerings

India’s tourism appeal has also been boosted by upgraded attractions and tourism experiences. One of the highlights is the move by the Centre and states to promote heritage, culture, and pilgrimage circuits with upgraded infrastructure under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 and PRASHAD schemes.

### Strategic govt & industry initiatives

The revamped digital platform ‘Incredible India Digital Platform’ is often cited as a tool for personalised travel-planning. 



## Europ Assistance: Built on Care Services

► Contd. from page 5

### Huge scope for partnership & growth

Europ Assistance’s in-house research indicates huge opportunities remaining in this niche with only a fraction of Indians having travelled. “India had three crore international departures in 2024 while China had 15.5 crore. With our

young population, growing disposable incomes, and the travel bug that is in most Indians, you can see why we are so excited to have a long-term view and to participate and contribute to this industry,” he says.

Europ Assistance has not yet actively sold its services through travel



partners. “However, we have been behind the scenes all this while, and now we are just adding a new channel — that of travel agents. In many parts of the world, we

play the full value chain. In India, we are moving into the insurance broker space. We will start engaging travel agents in major cities like New Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Punjab, and expect to grow rapidly from there. We are still, however, in the pilot phase,” Seethapalli shares. 

Call Now

+91 99867 02889

[www.polohotelsandresorts.com](http://www.polohotelsandresorts.com)

## TRAVEL NEWS

IATO to roll out **AI training programmes** across Indian cities to boost tourism skills; the association proposes '**Incredible India Endorsement**' programme, seeks joint promotion support for approved operators

**India's airport count reaches 163 in 2025**, country eyes 1.1 billion passengers by 2040

MoT advances cleanliness, governance, and efficiency via **SCDPM 5.0 campaign**

UDAN scheme to be extended beyond 2027; **120 new destinations** to be developed

76% of Indian hoteliers foresee revenue boost, as **gamification investments rise 15% in 5 years**: Accenture report

# New infra to charm global travellers

India is opening new doors for international travellers. Major investments in heritage sites, infra upgrades, and experiential tourism — from Sikkim's birding trails to Kerala's backwaters and UP's luxury forts — signal a strategic push to attract high-value inbound visitors and redefine India's global tourism appeal.

Janice Alyosius

India's inbound tourism is quietly gaining momentum. While domestic travellers continue to flood destinations across the country, the international market is waking up to India's rich heritage, festivals, and niche experiences. Regional operators and state governments are stepping up, creating new products, improving infrastructure, and making it easier for international visitors to explore beyond the usual landmarks.

### Northern India: Strategic investments

For northern India, which stretches from Jammu and Kashmir to Rajasthan, Himachal, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttara-



**Sunil C Gupta**  
Chairman, Northern Region Chapter, IATO

khand, the story is mixed. **Sunil C Gupta**, Chairman, Northern Region Chapter, IATO, paints a picture of resilience and opportunity. "Domestic tourism is booming, but inbound is a delicate business. Any negative news — whether it's landslides in Uttara-



**Prateek Hira**  
Chairman, Uttar Pradesh Chapter, IATO

khand or geopolitical issues in Kashmir — hits hard," he says.

Gupta stresses the need for a stronger marketing push. "India needs serious advertising and social media presence. Right now, even a small private company has a bigger promotion budget than

the government's ₹3 crore allocation." Yet he sees promise. "The government is waking up to tourism's potential — not just for jobs and foreign exchange, but also as a way to offset



economic challenges elsewhere. Look at UP, they are spending ₹75 crore on Mathura infrastructure, and Ayodhya had a ₹36,000 crore plan."

**UP: Heritage and pilgrimage tourism**  
**Prateek Hira**, Chairman,

Uttar Pradesh Chapter, IATO, describes a state rediscovering itself. "UP is focusing on Buddhism, new heritage experiences, and destinations like Kannauj, India's perfume capital. And it's not just about the Taj Mahal anymore — there are many mascots emerging."

He points to ongoing developments in Ayodhya, Vindhyachal, and other religious corridors. Airports in Lucknow and Jewar are expanding, which will soon be able to handle direct long-haul flights from Europe and the Americas. "UP is positioning itself as the gateway of India," Hira says, hinting at enormous opportunities for

Contd. on page 34 ▶

# World-class skiing at affordable prices

With early snow welcoming visitors and the Gulmarg Gondola system attracting fresh global interest, the region is doubling down on winter sports infrastructure. Ski tourism is rapidly shifting from seasonal novelty to serious business in Kashmir, as private investors join hands with the government to position the Valley as a year-round adventure destination.

Janice Alyosius

Tucked deep in the Himalayas, Gulmarg is no longer just a postcard-perfect valley — it's quietly becoming one of the world's most exciting and affordable ski destinations. For international travel planners and adventure specialists looking to expand their winter product line, Gulmarg's story offers compelling value: world-class powder snow, expanding infrastructure, and ski passes that cost less than a meal in the Alps. Over the past few years, this once seasonal hill resort in Jammu & Kashmir has seen a remarkable revival.



**Sameer Baktoo**  
Chairman  
J&K Chapter, TAAI

### Skiing at a fraction of global costs

**Sameer Baktoo**, Chairman, Jammu & Kashmir Chapter, TAAI, says, "Gulmarg is one of the best skiing destinations in the world because we have powder snow here — the



**Nasir Shah**  
Chairman  
J&K Chapter, IATO

kind that is rare even internationally." What's equally appealing, he adds, is affordability. "It's very cheap — you can ski world-class slopes without the price tag of Europe or Japan," affirms Baktoo. International skiers from Russia,



**Manzoor Ahmad Pakhtoon**  
Managing Director  
Silk Route Holidays

America, and Europe flock here for the slopes.

### Visitor surge

The numbers tell their own story. "Over 5 lakh tourists visit Gulmarg between December and March every year," says

**Nasir Shah**, Chairman, J&K Chapter, IATO and MD, Culture & Nature Expeditions Tours & Travels. "Nearly a thousand rooms are occupied daily during the season." The government and private sector are investing heavily to expand capacity. Additional ski lifts, chair cars, snow bikes, and ski scooters have been added in recent years. "We are also opening new slopes at Doodhpathri, while Sonamarg will soon have advanced ski lifts," reveals Baktoo. **Manzoor Ahmad Pakhtoon**, MD, Silk Route Holidays, notes foreigners from France, Italy, Russia, and New Zealand dominate inbound skiing groups.

### SKI PACKAGES IN GULMARG

- ❖ Gondola pass: ₹1.5k-₹2k/day
- ❖ Equipment rental: ₹500/day
- ❖ Ski guide: ₹1k-₹1.5k/day
- ❖ Budget ski package: From ₹25,000 (6-7 days)
- ❖ International package: £2,000 (₹2.35 lakh) per couple (6 nights, four-star hotel, guide, full inclusions)



40+ years of our founders' experience, 1000+ team members,  
380+ in-house tour managers, 32 sales offices, 100+ sales partners,  
1000+ associates, 8,80,000+ happy tourists

Group Tours | Specialty Tours | Customized Holidays | MICE | India Inbound | Forex



## Join Veena World – India's Leading Travel Company!

Be a part of the brand that's redefining travel - from Antarctica to Africa,  
Europe to South America - and everywhere in between.

Family Group Tours | Women's Special | Women's Special with Kids | Seniors' Special  
Honeymoon Tours | YOLO Outdoors | Couples-Only Tours | Road Trips  
Short Trips | Luxury Group Tours | Grandparents and Grandchildren Special Tours

Meet us at  
WTM London  
India Pavilion  
**N12, 412**  
**WTM**  
4-6 Nov' 25

## Partner with Veena World today!

Veena World invites sales partners, travel  
agents, and entrepreneurs to join our growing  
nationwide network. ☎ +91 887 997 9733  
Visit: [www.veenaworld.com/travel-agents](http://www.veenaworld.com/travel-agents)

 **VEENA WORLD**  
Travel. Explore. Celebrate Life.

Mumbai | Pune | New Delhi | Ahmedabad | Kolkata | Bengaluru | Hyderabad | Indore  
India Toll Free: 1800 313 5555 | India Inbound : +91 915 200 4511

# Make India year-long hotspot

Led by the Union Ministry of Tourism, State Boards, and industry associations, India is intensifying its global outreach to boost inbound tourism through a unified strategy. With revamped marketing plans, integrated pavilion showcases, and targeted engagement across key global markets, the country aims to project itself as a year-round, high-value destination blending heritage, wellness, and modern hospitality.



Surbhi Sharma

India is making a mark at international tourism shows, positioning itself as a 360-degree destination that embodies heritage, wellness, luxury, adventure, and modern hospitality. As **Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary & Director General, Tourism, Government of India, affirms, the Ministry's message this year is clear — India is a country of incredible diversity and limitless experiences, offering a seamless blend of tradition and modernity.

From Yoga and Ayurveda to MICE and luxury travel, the country's global tourism campaign showcases its transformation into a destination that is not just

historical but forward-looking, sustainable, and accessible. Through participation in leading global events such as WTM London, ITB Berlin, and IFTM Top Resa, India continues to project itself as an inclusive, culturally rich, and digitally connected tourism hub.



**Suman Billa**  
Additional Secretary & DG  
Tourism, Government of India



**Ravi Gosain**  
President  
IATO



**Sheo Shekhar Shukla**  
Principal Secretary, Tourism &  
Culture & MD, MPTB

## Revamped global promotion strategy

To strengthen inbound, the Ministry of Tourism will soon be launching a revamped international marketing and promotional strategy. A set of key overseas source markets, including the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, Germa-

ny, Japan, Singapore, and France has been identified for focused engagement. The Ministry plans to actively engage with outbound travel stakeholders in these prioritised markets, with implementation support being provided through Indian Missions abroad. State governments

are also being integrated into this vision.

## Global outreach through associations

Industry bodies like the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) are playing a key role in translating India's global exposure into business opportunities. "International exhibitions like WTM offer invaluable visibility and partnerships for our members," shares **Ravi Gosain**, President, IATO.

Positive feedback from international buyers and tour operators reflects country's growing professionalism and cohesive presentation. Consistency in communication, creative itineraries, and quick responsiveness are key.

"We align with the Incredible India vision to diversify source markets and project India as a year-round, high-value destination," adds Gosain.

States like Madhya Pradesh are complementing national efforts by aligning their campaigns with the India First narrative. **Sheo Shekhar Shukla**, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Culture and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, highlights how their participation in global trade exhibitions, such as WTM London, JATA, IFTM Top Resa, and ITB Berlin, have elevated the state's international visibility as well as strengthens India's collective presence on the global stage. 🇮🇳

# The Leela redefines inbound luxury

As India's inbound tourism evolves, The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts stands at the forefront of redefining luxury hospitality for global travellers. **Anupam Dasgupta**, Senior Vice President – Operations, North India and Head of Wellness, highlights how the brand's conscious luxury initiatives are shaping India's identity as a world-class destination.



Surbhi Sharma

Sharing how The Leela Palace continues to redefine inbound luxury through cultural depth, wellness, and conscious hospitality, **Anupam Dasgupta**, Senior Vice President – Operations, North India and Head of Wellness, The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts, brings the world's attention to the Leela Palace New Delhi — the initial touchpoint of most international travellers' India journey and often their first impression about Indian luxury. "This, along with the rest of our portfolio across India, has been positioned as a refined introduction to the country,

where India is celebrated through architecture, art, ritual and gracious service while maintaining world-class standards," he says.

"What distinguishes Leela Palace New Delhi is not just its splendour or address in the diplomatic enclave, but the way it frames the journey ahead, preparing the guest for Jaipur, Udaipur or the South through a first encounter with Indian luxury that is rooted, elegant, yet global at the same time."

## Inbound markets & experiential travellers

The brand continues to witness strong inbound demand from traditional mar-



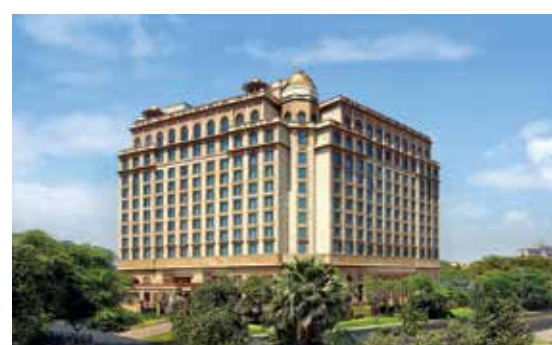
**Anupam Dasgupta**  
Sr VP – Operations North India  
& Head of Wellness, The Leela  
Palaces, Hotels & Resorts

kets, such as the US, UK, and the Middle East, with increasing traction from Europe, Asia Pacific, and Australia. However, Dasgupta highlights a shift in guest expectations. "Travellers are no longer coming for a hotel stay — they are com-

ing for a curated way of experiencing India," he explains. "This evolving mindset has given rise to new segments among inbound guests, including young luxury travellers, wellness seekers, and multi-generational families."

## Culinary and wellness experiences

Cuisine and wellness are central to The Leela's inbound experience, serving as gateways to country's philosophy of nurturing both body and mind. This approach is embodied in Aujasya by The Leela, the brand's signature wellness philosophy focused on vitality and joy. A highlight is the Aujasya Vitality Break-



fast, now available across all properties. Rooted in Indian ingredients and modern nutrition, it transforms breakfast into a mindful, gut-friendly ritual.

## Curated journeys

The Leela Palace Trail provides inbound guests with a structured yet highly personalised journey

across country's most iconic destinations.

## Sustainability

Conscious luxury lies at the heart of the brand's operations. At New Delhi hotel, this ethos is evident in its renewable energy initiatives, Aujasya and Leela Ke Phool, a floral upcycling tie-up with Phool.co. 🌱

60 Years of Friendship

# *Unlimited Privileges*

await Indian MICE groups!



Unlock exclusive privileges with Singapore Tourism Board,  
spanning travel, dining, luxury stays, and unforgettable experiences.

sentosa



RWS

MOUNT FABER  
Resort

Marina Bay Sands

SHANGRI-LA  
RESORT SINGAPORE

W  
SINGAPORE

AMARA  
SANTOSA

ROYAL TAJ  
HOTELS & RESORTS

SOFITEL  
SINGAPORE

THE  
EDITION  
SINGAPORE

ANDAZ  
SINGAPORE

MONDRIAN  
SINGAPORE DUXTON

Far East  
HOSPITALITY

GRAND  
COPTHORNE  
SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE  
AIRLINES

IndiGo

# Discover many Incredible Indias

India holds the richest library in the world, yet we compress this wealth into a single slogan, Incredible India, as if a single phrase could possibly encompass the entirety of our civilizational abundance, says **Shashi Tharoor**, former UN Under-Secretary-General. He underlines the three I's that India needs to address to welcome international visitors.



Hazel Jain

Tourism can only truly fulfil the role as a pillar of our progress for Viksit Bharat if we acknowledge and address the obstacles that hinder its potential. **Shashi Tharoor**, Lok Sabha MP & former UN Under-Secretary-General, call them the three I's. The first I is image. "India alas still suffers from being trapped in an outdated picture frame, one painted in the colours of poverty, squalor, and unsanitary conditions. Other images are unfair caricatures which we must urgently dispel. Too often the world remembers India for what is wrong rather than for what is wondrous," he says.

The second I is infrastructure. "We can take justified pride in the gleaming international airports that now welcome visitors with an ambience worthy of any global hub, including Mumbai. The rollout of new airports and the line-up of modern aircraft, and the new Navi Mumbai airport reflect a nation confidently taking flight into the future. But too often the sheen fades the moment one steps outside. Clean toilets at heritage sites are scarce. Roads to our hill stations and beaches remain pitted and potholed and connections to smaller yet spectacular destinations are woefully inadequate. Presenting our cultural treasures well is not just a matter of aesthetics, it is



**Shashi Tharoor**  
Lok Sabha MP & former UN Under-Secretary-General

above all a matter of national honour," Tharoor explains. Then there is a third I, immigration. The e-visas have been a leap forward, but the promise of digital convenience is too often soured by the reality at the counter. "If we are to aspire to global leadership in tourism, we must ensure

that the very first human interaction a traveller has on Indian soil reflects the hospitality we so proudly proclaim. As we chart our path forward, we must pay heed to the models our neighbours in Asia already exemplify," Tharoor says.

## Bhutan model

Tharoor picks Bhutan first, which has gained global recognition for its high value, low impact tourism model. By levying a sustainable development fee to fund conservation and community projects, Bhutan has limited visitor numbers while ensuring that tourism strengthens rather than strains its environment and culture. This strategy has helped it steadily increase foreign

exchange earnings without eroding its heritage in contrast to India where infrastructure gaps and the pressures of mass

of modest size but one that has made tourism a central pillar of its economy," he says.

Getting to the gist of it, Tharoor says that we should not speak of one Incredible India, but of many Incredible Indias. "When international tourists arrive in India, they should be invited to choose their own chapter in our vast epic, whether it's tracing the footsteps of the Buddha, watching the sunrise over the Ganga, or losing themselves in the colours of Holi. Ours is not one story but a thousand stories, not one experience but a million experiences. To the world we must say, come and find your India." 🇮🇳

Presenting our cultural treasures well is not just a matter of aesthetics, it is above all a matter of national honour

tourism make sustainable growth harder to achieve. "Take Thailand, a country

## Catering to the modern Indian traveller

Today's Indian traveller is no longer a one-size-fits-all demographic. They are experience-driven explorers seeking personal connection and genuine stories behind the brands they choose. This evolution demands a new approach to marketing — one that moves beyond generic campaigns to create meaningful, individualised conversations.



TT Bureau

The key to tapping the Indian market is understanding the modern Indian traveller who is informed, curious, and experience-driven and seeking authenticity and personal connection.

**Alefiya Singh**, Founder & Director, Iris Reps, has her finger on the pulse of this market. "At Iris Reps, we help our partners interpret and engage with this evolving audience through customised strategies that reflect each product's individuality. There is no one-size-fits-all formula — every brand deserves its own voice," she says.



*Iris Reps team, led by Alefiya Singh (in green)*

Iris Reps is a leading PR and Marketing firm based in India, with strong local representation in Delhi and Bengaluru. What began as a small team of three with a single product has grown into a passionate group of over 20 profes-

sionals, bringing more than a decade of expertise in sales, marketing, and brand representation across the hospitality and tourism industry.

Singh explains how one-size-fits-all doesn't work

in this market anymore. "For instance, in the Maldives, we position Makunudu Island as an intimate boutique escape, Nooe Maldives Kunaavashi as a vibrant new lifestyle resort under La Vie, and Barceló Whale Lagoon

as a premium experience for adventure and marine enthusiasts. In Mauritius, Beachcomber Resorts is showcased for its timeless luxury and beachfront heritage, while the Ninety-Six Collection captures the spirit of modern island-city living. At Iris Reps, we don't just connect — we create distinction," Singh says.

## Iris Reps and its philosophy

Over the years, Iris Reps has successfully handled campaigns for international hotel chains, boutique properties, and global tourism boards — delivering impactful results through roadshows, media familia-

risation trips, celebrity collaborations, and strategic marketing initiatives.

We help our partners interpret and engage with this evolving audience through customised strategies

In an evolving travel landscape, Iris Reps' strength lies in staying committed to the clients' goals. 🇮🇳

# INDIA'S WAY TO THE WORLD



World Class Travel Company



From iconic festivals and spiritual journeys to luxury escapes and wellness retreats we bring India alive. 41 years of expertise trusted by over 1 million happy guests worldwide. Wildlife, culture, royal heritage, serene backwaters North to South, India at its best.

**THINK TRAVEL  
THINK KESARI**

**41 Years**  
of Legacy

**700 +**  
Experts Team

**1M +**  
Satisfied Guests

**550 +**  
Tour Options



 [inbound.kesariselect.com](https://inbound.kesariselect.com)

 [wtm@kesari.in](mailto:wtm@kesari.in)

 +91 99 2030 5678

Kesari Tours Pvt. Ltd. Kohinoor Square, 31st floor, N. C. Kelkar Marg, Shivaji Park, Mumbai - 400 028, India.

# India ready for new markets

India stands at a crossroads in global tourism; its heritage, diversity, and hospitality continue to captivate the world, yet its global standing trails its true potential. From ancient wisdom and Ayurveda to vibrant festivals, royal palaces, and modern luxury, India offers an experience few destinations can rival. Industry leaders agree the time has come to reimagine 'Brand India' with unified global storytelling, stronger government-industry collaboration, and strategic promotion. With record-breaking arrivals and surging interest from markets like the USA, UK, and Australia — and growing momentum from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe — the country's inbound tourism is poised for transformation. By embracing digital-first campaigns and showcasing authentic local experiences, India can claim its rightful place.



**Homa Mistry**  
President, Skål International Delhi  
& CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India

“India is a truly unique destination, offering everything a traveller could seek — from culture and spirituality to nature, adventure, and wellness. While India's global tourism position remains underleveraged, its strong trade ties with markets like the USA, UK, and Middle East continue to drive steady inbound growth.”



**Sunil Kumar**  
President  
TAAI

“India's tourism potential is unmatched, yet its global tourism rank does not reflect its true potential. The countries that always come up are USA – Canada, Singapore, Nepal, and a few countries of Europe. With competitive service costs, skilled professionals, and diverse regional offerings, India has immense opportunity to attract travellers.”

“India today stands as a compelling global tourism hub, celebrated for its cultural depth, wellness heritage, and diverse experiences from spirituality to luxury and adventure. Key source markets like the USA, UK, Australia, and Southeast Asia continue to grow steadily. To diversify further, India should target emerging markets in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia.”



**Sanjib Acharjee**  
Founder  
Niljyoti Travel Agency

“Our strength lies in offering a holistic travel experience — from wellness and Ayurveda to adventure, cuisine, and heritage. The



**Mahendra Pratap Singh**  
Chairman, Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter, IATO

top source markets for inbound tourism remain the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, and Germany, but in recent years we have seen encouraging growth from Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.”



**Sudhir Patil**  
Founder Director  
Veena World

“India can diversify its inbound tourism by targeting emerging markets across Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe through tailored marketing, simplified visa processes, and improved air connectivity. By localising content, offering multi-language support, and promoting niche experiences like Ayurveda, adventure, and film tourism, India can capture these inbound segments.”

“In the current scenario, India's inbound position is slowly picking up. Possibly, we will achieve pre-COVID numbers by next year. Our key strengths are our culture, hospitality and natural beauty of the country. Top source countries are Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Japan. We must tap new markets for our adventure tourism and weddings.”



**Dharmendra Singh Chauhan**  
Chairman  
Maharashtra Chapter, ADTOI



**A Krishna Mohan**  
Managing Director  
Southern Travels

“India today holds a powerful position on the global tourism map — few countries offer such a rich blend of heritage, culture, wellness, gastronomy, and modern experiences. Our greatest strength lies in diversity, reflected in every guest experience at Le Meridien New Delhi. The USA and the UK remain leading source markets.”



**Meena Bhatia**  
Vice President & General Manager  
Le Meridien New Delhi

“India stands out as a global tourism powerhouse, not merely as a destination but as a tapestry of unparalleled experiences. India's appeal is its ability to offer authentic, transformative journeys.”

“Our traditional markets like France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and the UK continue to perform well, though overall numbers are slightly down due to reduced global visibility of Incredible India. Smaller European source markets, such as Czech Republic, Romania, and Bulgaria are showing promise.”



**Prabhat Verma**  
Executive Director  
Le Passage to India

“India today holds a strong position in the global tourism landscape, celebrated for its cultural richness, ancient heritage, and diversity of experiences. From wellness and spirituality to adventure, wildlife, and luxury travel, India offers unmatched depth for global travellers. Our key inbound markets remain the USA, UK, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.”



**Sumit Mitraka**  
CEO  
Summit Hotels and Resorts

“India has reached a defining moment in global tourism, surpassing pre-pandemic highs with over 20 million international arrivals and visitor spending exceeding ₹3.1 trillion. Our domestic market continues to thrive, and key inbound growth is led by the US, UK, Australia, and Canada, with Europe rebounding strongly. India must explore emerging markets to sustain this momentum.”



**Kartik Gaggar**  
CEO, Founder  
Slo Mo Experiences

The UK, USA, Australia, and several European countries dominate as top source markets for inbound tourism to India.”

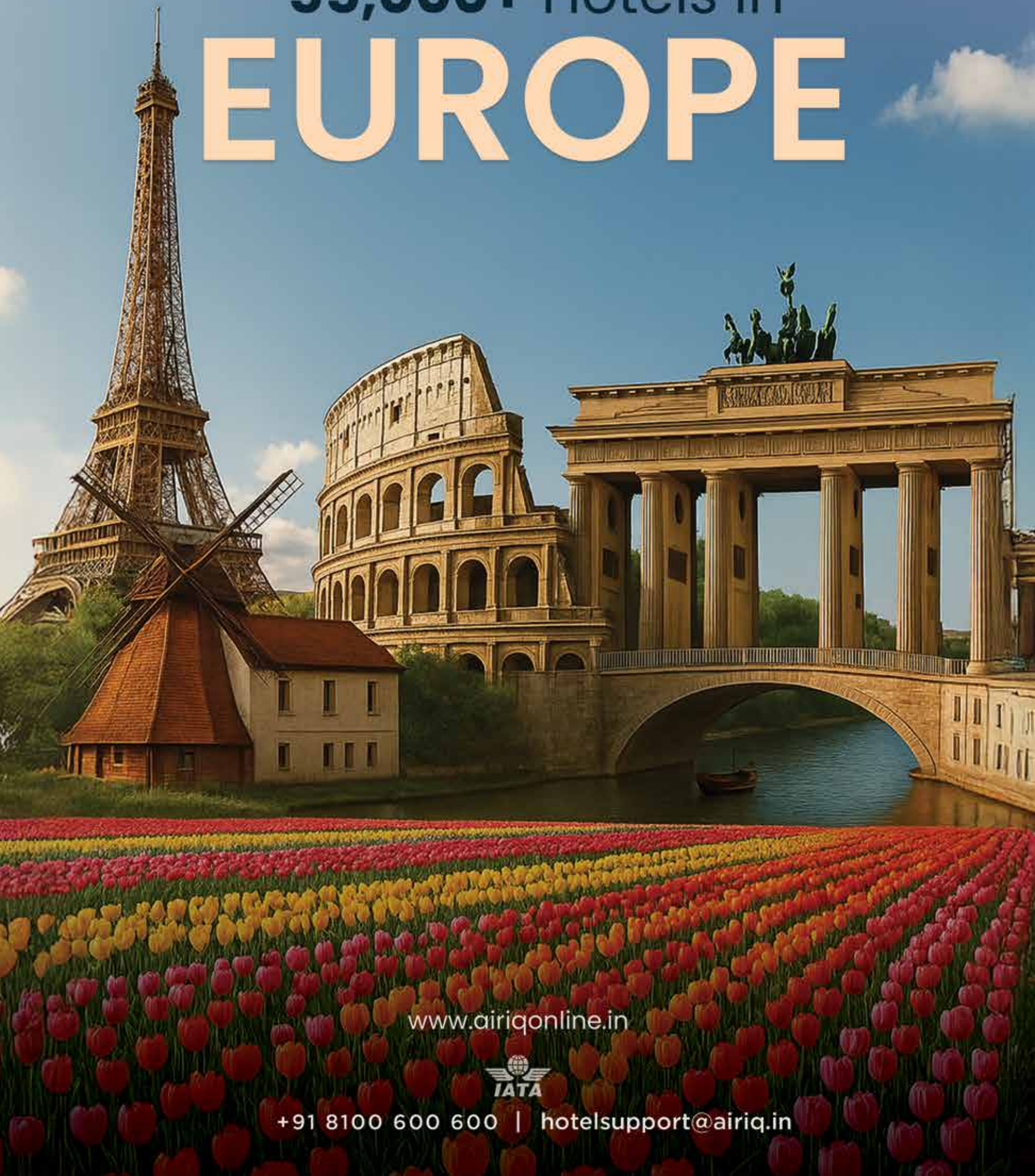


**Ruhi Singh**  
AVP & Head (MICE & Corporate Bookings), Balmer Lawrie

“India continues to stand tall as one of the world's most vibrant and diverse destinations — a nation where every region offers a distinct cultural, natural, and experiential tapestry. From the palaces of Rajasthan to the backwaters of Kerala and the Buddhist trails of Bihar, India's inbound appeal is unmatched. Our top source markets — the US, UK, Australia, and Canada — remain strong.”

**AIRiQ**  
[www.airiqonline.in](http://www.airiqonline.in)

**55,000+ Hotels in**  
**EUROPE**



[www.airiqonline.in](http://www.airiqonline.in)



+91 8100 600 600 | [hotelsupport@airiq.in](mailto:hotelsupport@airiq.in)

# Can 'Brand India' click globally?

At one of the sessions of the 55<sup>th</sup> FHRAI Annual Convention in Bengaluru, industry leaders explored how Indian hospitality can evolve into globally recognised brands. From leveraging cultural heritage to building world-class destinations, experts discussed strategies to strengthen Brand India, enhance guest experiences, and position Indian hotels as trusted icons on the global stage.



Lipla Negi

While Ayurveda has grown into a US\$ 9 billion business worldwide, India is yet to market its 5,000-year-old science to its fullest potential. Moderating the first panel discussion on Day 2 of the 55<sup>th</sup> FHRAI Annual Convention in Bengaluru, **Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT Hotels and Resorts, set the tone by spotlighting the need to market 'Brand India' more effectively. Cotah raised a pertinent question, "Are we, as a nation, shy about branding ourselves or simply poor at marketing?"

During the discussion, the panellists were joined by **V Vidyavathi**, **Secretary** Tourism, Government of India, who urged the industry to be co-creators of solutions. "How do we build India into a



In a dynamic public-private exchange, hospitality leaders and bureaucrats joined forces to shape Brand India's journey as a global hospitality powerhouse

look forward to your solutions, suggestions, and insights," she appealed.

Kickstarting the deliberation with striking comparisons, Cotah said, "Lululemon sells yoga pants worth millions of dollars. Yet, we cannot claim to have a single brand that truly represents our oldest and most precious tradition." Despite India's

ing developed in the same way, and why are so many hotels content flying international flags?

## Brands beyond logos

When asked to name one defining belief that will shape Indian brands as they step onto the global stage by 2047, **KB Kachru**, Chairman, South Asia, Raddison Hotel, said, "What really is significant

confidence in travellers. He explained, "When we put in a global brand, it ensures a worldwide traveller what to expect and what not to expect." According to him, global brands have a larger loyalty base, which brings

luxury" was coined and has since become synonymous with ITC Hotels. With younger generations prioritising sustainability, ITC's brand story, he noted, resonates deeply with them. "Today, we are the largest chain in the world where all hotels are LEED Platinum certified. Twelve are LEED Zero Carbon and nine are LEED Zero Water. The US Green Building Council recognises us for operational excellence," he shared.

When we deliver on expectations, the brand is not only consolidated but also elevated to a position of superiority



a lot of traction for their Indian partners. "When we deliver on expectations, the brand is not only consolidated but also elevated to a position of superiority," he said.

## It's your story

**Anil Chadha**, Managing Director, ITC Hotels, emphasised the importance of taking the brand story to the market. "You build it on predictability, promise, belief, and trust. You need to understand which segment you are pitching your brand to, and the entire culture of the organisation should live the brand," he said.

Chadha recalled how the phrase "responsible

to us they already know that they have thought it through, and that then becomes a brand promise."

## Partnering for storytelling

Sharing a bureaucratic perspective on state branding, **Amrapali Kata**, IAS, CEO, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority, emphasised the importance of consistency in communication.

You need to understand the segment you are pitching your brand to, and the entire culture of the organisation should live the brand

"The reason we all remember Kerala's tagline is consistency, and that is usually where states fall short in terms of branding," she noted.

Wrapping the session, the panellists echoed in unison that while Indian brands will eventually venture abroad, the immediate priority is to strengthen the domestic hospitality sector. "Indian brands will certainly go global — not just like Postcard, but also through wealthy Indians creating brands overseas. For now, though, the focus should remain on building within India," Chopra noted.



KB Kachru & Anil Chadha at the session

strong global brand in the tourism space? Beyond that, how do we create world-class destinations within the country? What does it take, what should our priorities be, and more importantly, how do we ensure effective implementation? What are the challenges we are likely to face, and how can we overcome them? These are some of the questions we continue to grapple with, and we

wealth of culture, heritage, and centuries-old traditions, Cotah pointed out the absence of an iconic Indian hospitality brand with global acclaim. "Thailand has Dusit Thani, Hong Kong has Shangri-La. But when we travel abroad, how many Indian hotel brands can we really stay at?" Cotah asked. He went on to challenge the industry with a thought-provoking query — why are not Indian brands be-

is the trust, promise, and consistency. It is ultimately a question of strategy and priorities. India is a vast market, and the exponential expansion of tier II and III cities post-COVID has changed the market dynamics. With rising disposable incomes, people are willing to spend more."

Praising Hilton's recent ad campaign, which earned 5.8 billion views, he opined that global brands instill

Underscoring that hospitality is ultimately a business of indulgence, Chadha posed a key question, "How do you make indulgence guilt-free?" He pointed out that 54 per cent of ITC's energy is renewable, reinforcing the brand's commitment to sustainable luxury.

## Build in India for the world

Tracing back the inception of Postcard Hotels, **Kapil Chopra**, Founder and CEO, The Postcard Hotel and Founder, EazyDiner, explained, "We take a very simple binary decision while building a Postcard Hotel — either it could be insanely great or it cannot be a Postcard hotel. When a customer comes

# Amplify your Tour Operations.

*Stop managing complexity. Transform your efficiency.*

**Facile** is the single platform that eliminates broken workflows, unifying everything from Content, Leads, Sales, Operations, Contracts and Finance to flawless Customer Experiences.

*Scan for a demo.*



[comtek-services.in/facile](https://comtek-services.in/facile)



**Comtek Services Pvt. Ltd.**  
Delivering Excellence since 1991.

[sales@comtek-services.in](mailto:sales@comtek-services.in)



# Empowering Travel Agencies Worldwide

## An Interview with Kimberley Long, VP Agency Distribution at Hahnair

**As the global travel market grows more competitive, agencies are seeking smarter and more flexible ways to serve their clients. Hahnair's VP Agency Distribution, Kimberley Long, discusses how Hahnair's free and easy ticketing solutions are transforming the way travel agencies do business.**

**Q:** Hahnair is a well-established name in airline distribution. How does your offering cater specifically to travel agencies?

**A:** At Hahnair, our mission is to empower travel agencies with the freedom to sell more and earn more, without complexities and without additional costs.

Our HR-169 ticketing solution opens the door to thousands of additional connections and carriers that may not be directly available in an agent's local BSP or GDS environment. Essentially, if an agent can't issue a particular airline, they can simply use Hahnair (HR) as the validating carrier and the ticket can be

issued seamlessly.

The Indian market is especially significant to us, and we deeply respect its technological advancements and innovation. We are excited to grow alongside this dynamic region and continue building strong partnerships as we expand together.

**Q:** What are the main advantages for agencies that ticket with Hahnair?

**A:** The biggest benefit is opportunity. Agents gain access to over 350 partner airlines, covering tens of thousands of routes and millions of flights, right in



their GDS. There's no additional training or fees involved. Our ticketing solution also allows agencies to combine airlines that wouldn't normally appear together on a single ticket. This means more options, better itineraries, and ultimately more satisfied clients.

**Q:** Can you explain what H1 and X1 flights are and how they benefit agents?

**A:** Absolutely. Our H1-Air and X1-Air solutions allow agents to issue tickets for more than 100 additional airlines that may not have their own GDS presence. These flights appear under the codes H1 and X1. For agents, that means more combinations, more booking possibilities, and a huge expansion of their offer, all with the same ease as issuing any other ticket on HR-169 stock.

**Q:** Many agencies value support and security as much as functionality. How does Hahnair address these needs?

**A:** We take pride in going beyond just providing a service, we aim to be a trusted partner. Our Service Desk operates 24/7, offering real-time assistance with ticketing queries.

At the forefront of our operations is a dedicated sales team equipped with the expertise to provide comprehensive support through trainings, webinars, and other essential resources.

We also offer free refund processing, typically within 14 days, and registered agents benefit from one ADM-waiver per rolling year. On top of that, every HR-169 ticket comes with Securtix®, our free insolvency protection, ensuring passengers are supported and reimbursed in case a partner airline ceases operations. It's peace of mind for both the agent and the traveler.

**Q:** What tools and resources are available to help agencies succeed with Hahnair?

**A:** Education and empowerment are core to what we do. We provide free webinars, step-by-step learning videos in the Hahnair Knowledge Centre, an easy-to-navigate website, and monthly newsletters. Whether travel agents are new to HR-169 or experienced ticketing professionals, our goal is to make every interaction effortless and beneficial.



**Kimberley Long,**  
VP Agency Distribution at Hahnair



### About Hahnair

Hahnair is a leading provider of distribution and ticketing solutions for travel agencies and airlines worldwide.

With access to over 350 partner airlines and a presence in 190 markets, Hahnair's HR-169 ticketing solution empowers agents to expand their reach, increase revenue, and ensure every booking is protected by Securtix® insolvency coverage.

# DigiYatra app for foreign tourists?

This could soon be a reality as Digi Yatra Foundation works on a pilot for electronic passport-based credential creation which is in the final phase of software testing. **Suresh Khadakhavi**, Chief Executive Officer, Digi Yatra Foundation, is not resting though — his team is working on rolling out DigiYatra at more airports across India as well as using the app for border-crossing.



Hazel Jain

From being one extra step for passengers between booking and boarding to being a means for smart travel, India's Digi Yatra app has been a big success. Digi Yatra Foundation, creators of the app, are currently trying to set up the facility at more and more airports, including all the new airports like the Navi Mumbai International Airport and Jewar Airport.

**Suresh Khadakhavi**, CEO, Digi Yatra Foundation, says, "We are currently at 24 airports and will add four more airports in the next month and another 13 airports in the next three to six months. That will take



**Suresh Khadakhavi**  
CEO  
Digi Yatra Foundation

the total to 40 airports across India, which will also cover tier one and tier two city airports."

Meanwhile, a more exciting news is brewing. Khadakhavi's team is already working on a pilot for electronic passport-based cre-

dential creation. "It's under User Acceptance Testing (UAT), which is the final phase of software testing where real users test the software. Post that, there are certain contractual obligations and contractual documents to be signed. After this, we should be able to actually have a process where anyone with an electronic passport can enrol into Digi Yatra," he says.

Digi Yatra also aims to conduct an international pilot project, enabling foreign passengers with electronic passports (e-passports) to experience its seamless ecosystem. "Border crossing is a sensitive topic. Therefore, we first need to align with various stake-

holders, like the immigration authorities, and ensure that it is acceptable to all stakeholders. Once the

**We have tied up with IndiGo by integrating our technology directly with IndiGo's app to enable travellers to enjoy faster check-ins**

electronic passport-based enrolment starts, the first step would be to make it available for international

passengers flying domestic routes," he says.

Khadakhavi says that the team's mission is to transform air travel into a seamless, secure, and paperless experience for every passenger. "We have recently collaborated with IndiGo by integrating our technology directly with IndiGo's app to enable travellers to enjoy faster check-ins and smoother boarding. We will continue to innovate India's vision for digital transformation in travel."

IndiGo flyers can now share their boarding pass directly with the Digi Yatra app by clicking 'Share with Digi Yatra' in the IndiGo app after completing their web

check-in. This will eliminate the need to manually scan the QR code on their physical boarding pass or upload them digitally.

## 14 MILLION USERS

DigiYatra has crossed 14 million users and has facilitated over 58 million journeys. The biometric-based passenger entry system has 30,000 new users signing up daily and adoption as high as 60% at some airports

REGIONAL MEET – AHMEDABAD | 3RD OCT 2025

## DRIVING EXCELLENCE, CONNECTING INDUSTRY

### Session 1 – Drivers' Training (3–5:30 PM)

Over 50 drivers empowered through hands-on CPR & First Aid training by expert Kushal Pal Raghav, earning Certificates of Appreciation and valuable skills for the road ahead.

### Session 2 – Awareness & Stakeholders' Meet (6–10 PM)

A vibrant evening of product showcases, cultural performances, and industry insights, graced by Mayor Smt. Miraben Patel and key transport leaders.

A day of learning, recognition & collaboration driving the future of safe and smart mobility!



### Get in Touch with ITTA

- ittaindia@gmail.com
- info@ittaindia.com
- +91 98114 50524



*This Festive Season, Swap the Ordinary  
for Bahrain's Magic!*

**Easy Visa | Short Flight | Endless Experiences**

**For Exclusive Festive packages, contact  
ONE ABOVE GLOBAL DMC**

**Sohini Ghosh**  
E: [ops.bahrain@oa-dmc.com](mailto:ops.bahrain@oa-dmc.com) | M: +973 3353 1156

# New routes = new travellers for India

India is turning its aviation map into a gateway for inbound tourism. In 2025, a wave of new global routes has connected India to countries that had no direct air links earlier. From the Philippines to Hungary and Seychelles to Kazakhstan, these flights are set to bring a new generation of travellers straight into India’s heartlands, without stopovers or detours.



**T**he new air connections of 2025 are not just about convenience; they are about access. For years, many potential visitors to India faced long, multi-stop journeys. That is now changing. With a mix of national carriers and low-cost airlines opening direct flights, India is signalling its intent to attract tourists from new and diverse markets.

Air India’s expansion has been particularly strategic. With new direct flights from Delhi to Dallas and Los Angeles, the airline is building a stronger bridge for the growing Indian diaspora and for American travellers seeking

ing authentic cultural and wellness experiences. The carrier’s launch of Delhi–Manila and Delhi–

With a mix of national carriers and low-cost airlines, India is signalling its intent to attract tourists from new and diverse markets

Jakarta services marks a push into Southeast Asia; regions with fast-growing outbound segments curi-

ous about India’s heritage and spirituality.

IndiGo, too, has reshaped the regional map. Its launch of direct Delhi–Bali and Mumbai–Seychelles flights opens doors for twin-destination holidays, making India part of larger travel circuits for sun seekers and honeymooners. The airline has also revived routes to China with new direct services from Delhi and Kolkata to Guangzhou after a five-year gap. This move is expected to boost not just business travel but also educational and medical tourism; sectors where India continues to draw interest from Chinese travellers.

For India’s tourism board and private sector, this

| Connecting destinations |                 |                                         |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Indian City             | Overseas City   | First Known Launch Date                 |
| Mumbai                  | Seychelles      | 22 Mar 2025                             |
| Mumbai                  | Almaty          | 20 Apr 2025                             |
| Mumbai                  | Krabi           | 23 Mar 2025                             |
| Delhi                   | Manila          | 1 Oct 2025                              |
| Delhi                   | Denpasar (Bali) | 24 Oct 2025                             |
| Delhi                   | Krabi           | 26 Oct 2025                             |
| Delhi                   | Manchester      | 15 Nov 2025                             |
| Kolkata                 | Guangzhou       | 26 Oct 2025                             |
| Mumbai                  | Budapest        | 2025 (expected)                         |
| Delhi                   | Guangzhou       | 10 Nov 2025 (other routes expected too) |
| Vijayawada              | Singapore       | 15 Nov 2025                             |
| Delhi/Mumbai            | Athens          | Jan 2026                                |
| Mumbai                  | Copenhagen      | June 2026                               |

new connectivity is a golden opportunity to market beyond traditional source markets like the UK and USA. With Southeast Asia,

Eastern Europe and Central Asia now directly connected, there is room to design campaigns that speak to travellers who might never

have considered India before. Each new flight is, in effect, a new invitation and in 2025, India has sent out several.

# Kesari Tours forging global tie-ups

The inbound travel market to India is poised for a powerful upswing, says **Himanshu Patil**, Director, Kesari Tours. In an exclusive interview with **TRAVTALK**, he reveals a consistent rise in foreign tourist arrivals, driven not only by established markets like the US and UK but also by growing interest from emerging regions like Eastern Europe and South America.



**H**ow is the inbound market for Kesari? The inbound market for Kesari is showing encouraging growth. While domestic travellers still make up a large share of our tours, we have seen a consistent rise in foreign tourist arrivals this year. Our key inbound markets are the US, the UK, Canada and Europe. We are also getting more interest from new and emerging markets like Eastern Europe and South America.

**How strong is India’s inbound potential?** India’s inbound potential is tremendous. The di-



Himanshu Patil  
Director  
Kesari Tours

versity of experiences we can offer — from culture and heritage to wellness and adventure — is unmatched. What is also exciting is how infrastructure is expanding across the country. With several new airports coming up and

better connectivity between key destinations, travelling within India is becoming much more convenient. The e-visa process has simplified entry for many markets, and with these continued developments, we see great momentum ahead. Seeing the government’s strong focus on tourism and domestic travel, we are confident this will translate into steady growth for inbound travel.

**How would you like to collaborate with international partners?** At Kesari, we already work with several trusted B2B partners who help us promote and operate inbound travel efficiently. We are

open to collaborating with more established and reliable B2B agencies that share our focus on quality,

Our aim is to build long-term partnerships that create value — combining our on-ground expertise in India with our partners’ market reach

service, and customer satisfaction. Our aim is to build long-term partnerships that

create value for both sides — combining our on-ground expertise in India with our partners’ market reach and understanding of their travellers. Together, we can offer seamless, well-curated experiences that showcase India’s best in a way that feels effortless and authentic.

**India has seen a spate of new connections to many countries this year. How do you think Indian operators can benefit from getting tourists from these countries into India?** Every new route opens up new opportunities. Direct connectivity builds accessibility and confidence, which naturally increases traveller

interest. Indian operators can benefit by promoting tailor-made itineraries for these new markets and working closely with airlines, tourism boards, and local agents. For example, travellers from Europe seek heritage and cultural depth, while those from Southeast Asia are drawn to spirituality and wellness.





**Travstarz Global Group**

A CTRIP® Invested Company

DMC || CONSOLIDATORS || VISAS || MARKETING



teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi

experience  
**abu dhabi**

# ABU DHABI

## SPECIAL OFFER

### INCLUSIONS:

- 04 NIGHTS STAY IN ABU DHABI CITY HOTEL
- DAILY BREAKFAST
- RETURN ABU DHABI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TRANSFERS ON PRIVATE
- ABU DHABI CITY TOUR WITH Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque
- VISIT ON SIC
- YAS ISLAND ANY 2 PARKS TICKETS ONLY
- (SELECT FROM SEAWORLD ABU DHABI OR FERRARI WORLD YAS ISLAND, ABU DHABI OR WARNER BROS. WORLD™ ABU DHABI OR YAS WATER WORLD YAS ISLAND, ABU DHABI)
- PARK ACCESS FREE | QASAR AL WATAN | BAPS ABU DHABI TEMPLE | MINIMUM STAY 4 NIGHTS

STARTING  
AT

**\$375**



**Book Now**

[bookings@travstarz.com](mailto:bookings@travstarz.com)

59A/2, 1st Floor, Kalu Sarai, Near Hauz  
Khas Metro Station, New Delhi 110016

+91 99711 04656

+91-11-45515907

[www.travstarz.com](http://www.travstarz.com)

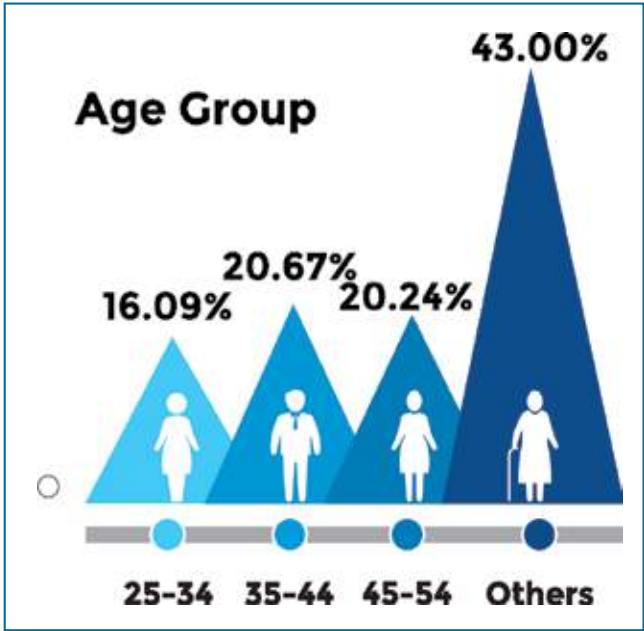
# How is India's inbound faring?

India's inbound tourism in 2024 tells a story of revival, resilience, and reinvention. Close to 10 million foreign tourists visited the country. While this marks a firm rebound since the pandemic, the numbers are still well below 2019's peak. The recent Tourism Statistics Compendium by the Union Ministry of Tourism reveals new travel patterns — longer stays, higher spends, diversified markets, and a strong shift towards digital and experiential travel.

India is no longer just welcoming visitors back — it is reshaping the way the world experiences its destinations

| Inbound Growth and Spending     |          |          |          |              |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Indicator                       | 2022     | 2023     | 2024     | Change (YoY) |
| Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) | 6.44 Mn  | 9.51 Mn  | 9.95 Mn  | +4.5%        |
| Foreign Exchange Earnings (₹Cr) | 1,31,543 | 1,77,530 | 1,94,881 | +10.1%       |

Spending by foreign tourists is growing faster than arrivals — signalling a higher-value inbound segment.

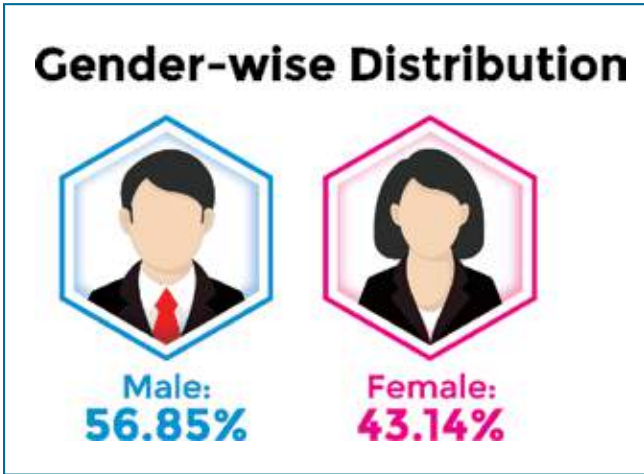


| Purpose of Visit                 |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Purpose                          | Share of FTAs (2024) |
| Leisure / Holiday                | 59.8%                |
| Business & Professional          | 16.4%                |
| Visiting Friends & Relatives     | 13.1%                |
| Medical Tourism                  | 6.2%                 |
| Others (Study, Pilgrimage, etc.) | 4.5%                 |

- Leisure reigns supreme, but medical and business segments are expanding steadily.
- Wellness and Ayurveda draw repeat visitors from Europe and Southeast Asia.

| Where They're Entering   |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Top Ports of Entry (Air) | Share of FTAs (2024) |
| Delhi Airport            | 29.3%                |
| Mumbai Airport           | 27.9%                |
| Chennai Airport          | 8.1%                 |
| Bengaluru Airport        | 6.7%                 |
| Hyderabad Airport        | 4.5%                 |

- Five airports handle 77% of inbound arrivals.
- Land borders like Attari, Haridaspur, and Petrapole contribute most traffic from Bangladesh and Nepal.



| Traveller Profile   |           |           |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Metric              | 2023      | 2024      |
| Average Stay        | 20.5 days | 21.3 days |
| Male : Female Ratio | 59 : 41   | 58 : 42   |
| Repeat Visitors     | 17%       | 19%       |

Most Active Age Group 25–44 years

- Longer stays and higher repeat visits suggest growing confidence and deeper exploration.

| Regional Spread of Foreign Tourists |               |                               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Region                              | Share of FTAs | Key States                    |
| North India                         | 38.2%         | Delhi, UP, Rajasthan          |
| West India                          | 26.8%         | Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa     |
| South India                         | 21.6%         | Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka |
| East & Northeast                    | 13.4%         | West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam    |

- Southern and Northeastern circuits are expanding, driven by wellness, eco-tourism, and improved air access.

| Average Spending Patterns            |                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Category                             | Share of Total Spend |
| Accommodation                        | 31%                  |
| Shopping                             | 24%                  |
| Domestic Transport                   | 17%                  |
| Food & Beverage                      | 16%                  |
| Others (Attractions, Wellness, etc.) | 12%                  |

- Average Daily Spend: ₹9,200
- Average Trip Spend: ₹1.95 lakh
- Top Spending Markets: USA, Germany, France, Australia, Japan

Purpose of Visits



# Golden Triangle still top circuit

The Digital Traveller: Visa Mix

| Visa Type                | Share (2024) |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| e-Visa                   | 44.7%        |
| Regular Visa             | 52.6%        |
| Visa on Arrival / Others | 2.7%         |

- Nearly half of all foreign visitors enter India digitally via e-Visa.
- Strong uptick seen from UK, US, France, and Germany.

Seasonality Trends

- Peak Season: October–February (54% of arrivals)
- Lean Season: May–August (14%)
- Emerging Trend: Summer traffic rising from the Gulf and Southeast Asia, focused on hill stations and Ayurveda retreats.
- Inbound travel is becoming less seasonal and more year-round.

Top Inbound Segments on the Rise

- Medical Tourism: +17% (Bangladesh, Nigeria, Kenya, Oman).
- Wellness & Yoga Tourism: +12% (Rishikesh, Kerala, Mysuru).
- MICE & Business Travel: +8%, driven by post-G20 momentum.
- Buddhist Circuit: +9% (Thailand, Vietnam, Japan).
- Northeast Adventure Tourism: +15%, fastest-growing region.

Regional Circuits in Demand

- Golden Triangle (Delhi–Agra–Jaipur): Still India’s top international circuit.
- Kerala Wellness Belt: Repeat visit ratio of 22%.
- Buddhist Trail (Bodh Gaya–Sarnath–Kushinagar): +9% growth.
- Northeast Discovery Route: +15% — fastest expansion among all regions.

Airlines Bringing the World to India

| Airline Type     | Share of Inbound Traffic (2024) |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Indian Airlines  | 52.3%                           |
| Foreign Airlines | 47.7%                           |

- Air India and IndiGo remain leaders among Indian carriers.
- Emirates, Qatar Airways, and Singapore Airlines top foreign carriers.



Accommodation Preferences

| Hotel Category           | Share of Foreign Guests (2024) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 5-star Deluxe & Heritage | 31.4%                          |
| 4-star & Boutique        | 23.8%                          |
| Midscale Hotels          | 26.5%                          |
| Budget & Guesthouses     | 18.3%                          |

- Boutique and midscale hotels are gaining ground — reflecting travellers’ preference for authentic and experiential stays.





Belair - The Global Travel Company, Since 1972

- The first IATA GoGlobal Accredited Travel Company & expanding Globally.
- IATA-Accredited in India, UK, USA, UAE & Singapore, with end-to-end Global solutions.
- Global truly “One-point-Online-Solution” for seamless flights solutions.
- Online integrated with NDC, Amadeus, Galileo, Sabre & LCC, solutions Worldwide.
- Belair has earned numerous awards including recognition as the “Best Performing Agency” by IATA & all Airlines.

GLOBAL PRESENCE

INDIA



UK



USA



UAE



SINGAPORE



Belair Travel & Cargo Pvt. Ltd. , Plot No.9, Sector 11, Dwarka, New Delhi -110075, India

www.belair.co.in | www.belairtrip.com | hdq@belair.in | +91-11-42521000





**55<sup>+</sup>**

Global 24/7 centers

**60<sup>+</sup>**

Years of market leadership

**400<sup>+</sup>**

Doctors & in-house medics

**12,000,000<sup>+</sup>**

Assistance interventions annually

**300,000,000<sup>+</sup>**

Customers protected

# Global Leader In Travel Care

Since 1963

Europ Assistance 

**We take care of your customers  
wherever they go.**



 **europ  
assistance**  
*you live we care*

# Indian luxury beyond 5-star stays

At the panel discussion 'India@2047 – Shaping India's Trillion-Dollar Experience Economy', industry leaders explored how the hospitality sector is evolving beyond traditional luxury. With a focus on experiential travel, public-private collaboration, and innovative use of tech, the session highlighted strategies to ensure that every guest, in every segment, can truly 'feel India'.



Lipla Negi

Despite being home to some of the world's most spectacular natural and cultural assets, India ranks only 39<sup>th</sup> in global tourism competitiveness. This contrast is striking for a nation that is already the world's fourth-largest economy and is soon expected to become the third.

Focusing on ways to elevate India's position on the global tourism index, a panel discussion on 'India@2047 – Shaping India's Trillion-Dollar Experience Economy' brought together key voices from hospitality and tourism.



India's top hoteliers deliberated on how experiential stays are transforming the way hospitality is imagined and delivered

cally to capture global attention. "India's strength in domestic tourism is undeniable but what is needed now is a decisive shift towards experiential travel." He underlined the need for iconic ideas to create experiential centres

unique. One does not find this level of warmth and personalisation elsewhere. Even in the most prosperous cities, despite the abundance of money, one does not see the kind of human touch that defines Indian hospitality."

## PPP's importance

Recounting the not-so-distant past, Saxena noted that even 10 years ago, hotel ownership and

bureaucrats or attended industry meetings can sense that there is a very positive and receptive attitude now."

expertise come together in harmony."

## AI vs humans

The discussion then steered towards the crucial topic of manpower. Sharing his experience, Kumar said, "If I look back or whenever I talk to my old batchmates, I often wonder — how many of us are still in the industry, serving after completing courses related to hospitality or tourism? Hardly five out of a hundred. So where are the remaining ninety-five?" He pointed out that a critical gap has persisted since the early 1980s, when the framework for developing skilled manpower in hospitality, and later in tourism, was first introduced.

As the conversation turned to AI, automation, and technology shaping the industry today, Sharma said, "We must ensure that we do not lose this essence. The personal, human-driven service that makes our region special must be preserved and leveraged to its fullest potential."

While the panellists agreed that AI is rapidly transforming guest experiences, whether it can ever replace the human touch in hospitality remains to be seen.



**Zubin Saxena**  
SVP & Regional Head  
South Asia, Hilton



**Dr Rajendra**  
Director, Tourism  
Government of Karnataka



**Nikhil Sharma**  
MD & COO, South Asia  
Radisson Hotel Group



**Vaibhav Jatia**  
MD & CEO  
Rhythm Hospitality



**Dr Bhupesh Kumar**  
Principal, IHM Ranchi and Member  
Secretary, IHMCT&AN (Jharkhand) Society

The session featured **Zubin Saxena**, SVP and Regional Head, South Asia, Hilton; **Dr Rajendra**, Director, Tourism, Government of Karnataka; **Nikhil Sharma**, MD and COO, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; **Vaibhav Jatia**, MD and CEO, Rhythm Hospitality; and **Dr Bhupesh Kumar**, Principal, IHM Ranchi and Member Secretary, IHMCT&AN (Jharkhand) Society. Moderated by **Aashish Gupta**, Consulting CEO, FAITH, the discussion explored how India can harness its potential to build a trillion-dollar experiential economy.

Calling tourism a "marathon, not a sprint", Dr Rajendra opined that India must accelerate strategi-

that become landmarks in themselves. Taking the example of Karnataka, which has more than 20,000 heritage monuments, 800 officially notified sites, and four UNESCO World Heritage sites, he said, "If people only stay without engaging, we lose an opportunity." Acknowledging the positive change within government to achieve the trillion-dollar economy goal, he said, "The focus is now on converting our assets into experiences. People should not just visit India — they should feel India."

Responding to the question on experiential hospitality, Sharma shared, "It is important to note that hospitality in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia, is truly

Underlining the "aspirational" and "experiential" quotient of hotels, he observed that hoteliers often tend to associate experiential stays only with luxury. He explained, "But that is not true. You can deliver luxury, memorable experiences even at midscale or budget hotels."

Talking about the rising demand for "experiential stays", Sharma added, "Brands used to aim for 50 or 100 hotels. Today, they are talking about 300 to 500 properties. That was unheard of in India. But the demand exists, especially in tier II, III, and IV cities. And it spans the full spectrum — not just luxury, not just midscale, but also budget properties."

hospitality investments were seen differently. "We have come a long way — from being viewed as an indulgence to now being recognised as one of the pillars of the economy."

**India's strength in domestic tourism is undeniable but what is needed now is a decisive shift towards experiential travel**

What is even more encouraging is the government's open-minded approach towards growing this sector. All of us who have interacted with

"From the visa-on-arrival process to the check-in at the hotel, every touchpoint needs to feel connected. The experience of India must flow effortlessly from one step to another. And that can only happen when the two sectors — public and private work in harmony." He further added that public-private partnership will define India's journey to becoming a trillion-dollar experience economy by 2047."

Citing the Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj as a shining example of what an effective public-private partnership can accomplish, Jatia said, "The digital and physical infrastructure created there gives me great hope. It demonstrated what India can achieve when its natural resources, spiritual heritage, and digital

## IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ India must accelerate strategically to capture global attention
- ❖ People should not just visit; they should feel India
- ❖ Demand exists in tier II, III, and IV cities

# Saudi, India forge new tourism chapter

**Ahmed Al-Khateeb**, Minister of Tourism, Saudi Arabia, believes the partnership between India and Saudi Arabia is not just about travel, it's about shared growth, mutual learning, and building bridges between two dynamic nations. In a conversation with **TRAVALTALK**, he explains what lies ahead as both countries open new chapters of collaboration.



Devika Jeet

When **Ahmed Al-Khateeb**, Minister of Tourism, Saudi Arabia, speaks about India, there is warmth and conviction. "India has been a close partner of Saudi Arabia for decades," he says. "Our nations share deep ties in the field of trade and culture." The connection, he points out, runs along routes that once formed the Silk Road. "We respect family, we love our spicy food, and we value relationships. In many ways, we are similar."

Today, the connection is evolving beyond trade and tradition. India's rapidly ex-

panding middle class has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing travel segments, and Saudi Arabia wants to be at the heart of this growth. With flight times of barely five hours and an expanding network of direct routes, the Kingdom sees huge potential in attracting Indian travellers seeking culture, heritage, and new experiences.

To tap into this potential, the Saudi Tourism Authority has opened a dedicated office in India. "We are aggressively promoting Visit Saudi," Al-Khateeb notes. "We have signed agreements with leading Indian and international travel agencies, including those



Ahmed Al-Khateeb  
Minister of Tourism  
Saudi Arabia

with a strong presence in India. The goal is to make it easier for Indian travellers to discover Saudi Arabia." One unique area of focus is the destination wedding market. "Indian weddings are grand celebrations. We saw an opportunity in AIUla

as it's stunning, historic, and deeply atmospheric. Many couples are now choosing it as their dream wedding destination," he says.

The Minister's passion extends to sustainability, a pillar of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. "We understand that rapid growth comes with environmental responsibility," he explains. He points to the Red Sea project, where development has been guided by conservation. "Out of 50 islands, we chose not to touch a few because it was a nesting site for birds. That is our commitment." Saudi Arabia is now home to the Global Tourism Sustainability Centre, established

to share best practices worldwide. "We look at sustainability from three angles — environmental, social, and economic," Al-Khateeb says. "Tourism is not only about protecting

coral reefs; it's about protecting jobs, empowering women, and creating long-term prosperity." Today, the sector employs one million Saudis, a number set to rise to 1.4 million by 2030. Major global events like the 2030 Expo and the 2034 FIFA World Cup, are expected to accelerate that journey. As Al-Khateeb puts it, "Saudi Arabia and India have always been partners. Now, we are becoming co-creators of the next great story in global travel." The message from the Minister is clear: "This is only the beginning of a long, thriving journey that brings the two nations even closer through the power of travel."

Tourism is not only about protecting coral reefs; it's about protecting jobs, empowering women, and creating long-term prosperity



Find your barefoot bliss  
- Only at Radisson Resorts Goa!



Radisson Blu Resort Goa Cavellolim  
CALL: +91 70300 28853  
EMAIL: reservations@rdresortgoa.com



Radisson Goa Candolim  
CALL: +91 (832) 6719800  
EMAIL: reservations@rdgoa.com



Mandrem Beach Resort  
CALL: +91 8766781561  
EMAIL: reservations@mbhgoa.com

# Vietnam courts India's MICE market

Indian travel is moving beyond the usual playbook. Vietnam is stepping up with serious capacity, cultural comfort, and sharp pricing that speaks to incentive planners, corporates, and wedding specialists. The destination is emerging as a standout option for Indian MICE travellers. **TRAVTALK** travelled across Danang and Hoi An to test the promise on the ground.



Jaspreet Kaur

Vietnam is no longer the quiet neighbour watching Thailand and Bali dominate the wedding and MICE market. It is stepping into the spotlight with a clear strategy, stronger hotel infrastructure, and a growing understanding of what Indian groups need. From beachside vows to incentive itineraries mixing business with discovery, the country is shaping up as Asia's most exciting new short-haul contender.

In 2024, Danang recorded over 222,000 Indian visitors, nearly half of all Indian arrivals into Vietnam that year. The city also hosted four Indian weddings totalling more than 1,200 guests. Those numbers, though small, mark a shift in regional travel patterns. Indian planners are looking for novelty and value without compromising quality, and Vietnam is fitting that brief.

Danang's transformation into a MICE and leisure hub has been driven largely by global brands expanding along its coast. Marriott International's cluster of properties, from city-centre business hotels to expansive resorts, has given the city the hardware and confidence to compete. "Da Nang is positioning as a premium venue for large-scale celebrations and incentive



**Stefano Maccagno**  
General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Danang Han River



**Laifong Yip**  
Cluster Director – S&M, Four Points by Sheraton Danang



**Piotr Madej**  
Complex GM, Danang Marriott Resort and Spa



**Piyoros Naronglith**  
GM, Renaissance Danang Hoi An Resort & Spa

travel," said **Stefano Maccagno**, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Danang Han River, one of the newest entrants. "Our modern facilities and versatile venues are built to support this demand."

## The new rhythm

The appeal of central Vietnam lies in its versatility.

**Indian planners are looking for novelty and value without compromising quality, and Vietnam fits the bill**

The Han River and My Khe Beach provide contrasting backdrops, while Hoi An's ancient lanes and Ba

Na Hills' Golden Bridge add cultural depth. For incentive groups, it means a complete programme within one compact region. Hotels have responded by blending local colour with international efficiency.

At Courtyard by Marriott Danang Han River, every stay begins with a river or city view and ends with a rooftop sunset. The hotel's ballroom, with its 8.5-metre ceiling, is the tallest in the city, and its 10 event spaces are designed for corporate meetings and social celebrations. Sustainability has been woven into the planning process — digital over print materials, recycled décor elements, and menus built on seasonal, locally sourced ingredients. A few kilometres away, Four Points by Sheraton Danang operates like a barometer of the city's rhythm: business travellers and MICE groups during the week, leisure guests on weekends.

The hotel has invested in upgraded AV systems for hybrid meetings and cultural-sensitivity training for its events team. Its beachfront location and

each bringing hundreds of delegates. Its 200 rooms and 39 villas allow for partial or full buyouts. "Vietnam is becoming a standout option for Indian MICE travellers

a steady flow of groups, supported by regular familiarisation trips organised with the Danang Tourism Department. Further south, Renaissance Danang Hoi An Resort and Spa has positioned itself between the modern and the timeless. It has hosted 30 incentive groups and executive retreats in 2025. "We weave cultural authenticity into every event," said **Piyoros Naronglith**, General Manager, Renaissance Danang Hoi An Resort & Spa.

## Takeaway for India

Capacity is here. Cuisine is sorted. Culture is integrated. Pricing remains



ocean-view terraces turn easily from corporate venues into festive settings for weddings or gala dinners. "With an Indian chef on our team and menus tailored for Jain, vegetarian, and halal guests, every group feels represented," said **Laifong Yip**, Cluster Director of Sales and Marketing, Four Points by Sheraton Danang.

## Indian connection

The learning curve for Vietnam's hospitality sector has been steep, but results are visible. At Danang Marriott Resort and Spa, several Indian expatriates now work in operations to ensure comfort and familiarity for visiting groups. The property has hosted major Indian events for Saint-Gobain, Castrol, and Orient Electric,

with authenticity, affordability, and venues that elevate business and leisure," said **Piotr Madej**, Complex

attractive against regional competitors. For Indian travel agents, MICE firms, and wedding planners, Central Vietnam offers a clear value.

**Danang's transformation into a MICE and leisure hub has been driven largely by global brands expanding along its coast**

General Manager, Danang Marriott Resort and Spa. The resort's partnerships with Indian DMCs such as Tamarind, Thomas Cook, and Hyperlink have secured

## THREE CRISP MESSAGES

- ❖ Vietnam can handle large Indian headcounts without losing charm
- ❖ Indian menus and rituals are delivered with confidence
- ❖ Multi-city contracting and rewards reduce admin drag



JOIN AN EXCLUSIVE GROUP  
OF PROPERTIES WORLDWIDE  
THAT SET THE GLOBAL  
BENCHMARK

# THE WORLD'S GOLD STANDARD IN HOTEL SUSTAINABILITY IS HERE

GSTC CERTIFICATION NOW IN INDIA

MORE GUESTS.  
LOWER COSTS.  
STRONGER BRAND.  
SMARTER SUSTAINABILITY.

+91 9871003279

AUDITED BY QUALSTAR, CERTIFIED BY UCSL



United  
Certification  
Systems



QUALSTAR.CO.IN

# Radisson bets big on India market

**Federico J González**, Chief Executive Officer, Radisson Hotel Group, believes India is not just an important market but a driving force in the company's global expansion plans. With its strong domestic demand, rising investor confidence, and a new generation of ambitious hoteliers, India embodies the future of hospitality, he says.



Devika Jeet

As the global travel and tourism sector surges ahead, Radisson Hotel Group is keeping its focus firmly on India. The company, which now operates over 1,500 hotels worldwide, continues to expand aggressively signing more than 300 new properties last year and 106 in just the first six months of this year.

For **Federico J González**, Chief Executive Officer, Radisson Hotel Group and Board Director of Louvre Hotels Group, this growth is not about speed, but substance. "The business is healthy, and our five-year roadmap is progressing exactly as planned," he said. "Markets like the Middle

East, Spain, and Italy are performing well but India is where we see some of our strongest, most promising momentum."

## India takes centre stage

Radisson's story in India has been one of steady expansion and deepening roots. It is now among the country's largest international hotel chains, with a presence that stretches from major metros to fast-emerging tier II and III cities. "India is our number two market globally in terms of international presence," González shared. "The scale is impressive, but what truly stands out is the spirit, the optimism, the innovation, and the hunger to grow." He believes India



**Federico J González**  
CEO, Radisson Hotel Group &  
Board Director, Louvre Hotels Group

reflects what the future of global hospitality should look like; local authenticity combined with international excellence. "There is a pride in service here that feels genuine," he said. "It's not just about efficiency or scale but about creating experiences that connect. That emotional

intelligence is what defines modern hospitality."

## Sustainability with purpose

González is equally passionate about sustainability not as a buzzword but as a business philosophy. "Our focus is built on three pillars: individuals, communities, and the environment. You can't claim to be sustainable if your own people aren't growing," he explained.

Radisson is one of the first few hotel companies that introduced carbon-neutral meetings 15 years ago, and today it leads the Hotel Sustainability Basics initiative with the WTTC. The group's first Net Zero pilot hotels, in Oslo and Manchester, are already

operational. "We are measuring the actual returns on sustainable investments," González said.

**It's not just about efficiency but about creating experiences that connect. That emotional intelligence is what defines hospitality now**

"We want to prove that being responsible is not only right but profitable."

## Investing in people

González emphasised that

people remain the cornerstone of every successful hotel. "If we are not sustainable with our employees, there is little else we can sustain," he said.

## Looking ahead

Radisson's next chapter will focus on expanding its branded residences, wellness resorts, and AI-enabled efficiencies, blending human warmth with digital intelligence. "AI should help us do what we already do better," González said. "But hospitality will always be about people, not programmes." As Radisson grows across continents, González sees India not as a market to manage but as a movement to learn from. "The best hotels are built on emotion, not marble," he concludes.

# Heritage, wildlife attracting inbound

► Contd. from page 10

international travellers interested in heritage and pilgrimage circuits.

## Experiences beyond the usual in South

The South India is witnessing a surge in both domestic and international travellers. **Sejoe Jose**, EC Member, IATO, explains, "In the past, North dominated with 70 per cent, South was 30 per cent. Now South is catching up fast — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka are all seeing strong growth."

Jose highlights some fascinating trends. British travellers are taking part in 'cemetery tourism', tracing ancestors' graves, while festivals like Kerala's Theyyam are drawing crowds. Visitors are increasingly looking for experiential stays — small villas

hidden in villages or forests rather than large hotels. "Infrastructure is a challenge. Roads are deteriorating in places like Kerala — what used to be a four-hour journey now takes six or seven," he says.

Weddings and MICE are also growing. "Hotels in Kumarakom and Kovalam fill up quickly for important dates. We also handle international incen-



**Dr Peter Lobo**  
Chairman, Sikkim and North Bengal Chapter, IATO



**Sejoe Jose**  
EC Member IATO

tive groups of 200–300 people, offering everything from backwater concerts to in-field motorbike tours," Jose shares.

## Eco-tourism push in Sikkim, North Bengal

**Dr Peter Lobo**, Chairman, Sikkim and North Bengal Chapter, IATO, highlights the untapped potential of Northeast India for international travellers. "North Bengal and Sikkim are

ideal for bird-watchers — whether general enthusiasts, those maintaining a life list, or visitors targeting specific species," he explains. Eco-tourism is growing steadily, often

**Right now, even a small private company has a bigger promo budget than the govt's ₹3 cr allocation for foreign promotions**

combined with cultural experiences, giving international visitors a chance to immerse themselves in local traditions while exploring pristine landscapes.

To support sustainable growth, Lobo and local authorities are rolling out skill-training programmes for guides and community-based tourism initiatives. These aim to involve local communities, improve service quality, and ensure that tourism benefits are widely shared. "If North Sikkim opens to inbound tourism, it could generate a remarkable flow of visitors," he predicts, signalling an opportunity for international travel agents to develop specialised itineraries centred on wildlife, birding, and eco-adventures.

## Looking ahead: Collaboration is key

Across India, the message is clear: inbound tourism growth relies on infrastructure improvements, targeted marketing, and local engagement. From Gupta's call for national campaigns to Hira's heritage-led initia-

tives and Jose's experiential offerings, the country is brimming with opportunity.

Gupta sums it up neatly, "Inbound is a challenge, but with willpower, government support, and collaboration among stakeholders, India can realise its true tourism potential."

## IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ UP boosts heritage forts and spiritual corridors
- ❖ Kerala & South India focus on festivals and backwaters
- ❖ Sikkim/North Bengal promote birding and eco-tourism

# Your Gateway to Europe begins in Hyderabad!



## Frankfurt

*Discover Germany's Cultural Gateway*

- Old Town, Römerberg square
- Wine tasting & timber houses
- Castles, vineyards, day trips



## Amsterdam

*Cycle Through Canals & Culture*

- Iconic canals & Culture
- Tulips, windmills, charm
- Vibrant street markets



## London

*Step Into Royal & Urban Legends*

- Buckingham Palace tours
- British Museum treasures
- Global cuisine hotspots

*Book your tickets with:*

**Lufthansa Airlines • KLM Royal Dutch Airlines • British Airways**

# Philippines steps up trade engagement

The Philippines is aligning its hospitality offerings with Indian preferences. 'We are working to develop customised travel packages and experiences catering to Indian travellers,' says **H.E. Josel Francisco Ignacio**, Ambassador of the Philippines to India. Both nations are set to announce new initiatives to encourage travel and strengthen tourism linkages.



Surbhi Sharma

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) of the Philippines recently hosted an 'Itinerary Workshop' in Delhi, bringing together leading luxury travel agents for an exclusive interactive session. The initiative aimed to strengthen tourism partnerships and equip Indian travel professionals with insights into the Philippines' diverse offerings. The event underscored the Philippines' commitment to positioning itself as a preferred destination for Indian outbound travellers, particularly as the two countries enter what **H.E. Josel Francisco Ignacio**, Ambassador of Philippines to India, calls



H.E. Josel Francisco Ignacio  
Ambassador of  
the Philippines to India

a Gold Deluxe Zone — a phase of perfect balance for tourism growth marked by visa liberalisation, air connectivity restoration, and strong bilateral cooperation.

**Growing arrivals & shared tourism goals**  
Emphasising that Indians

are emerging as the 5th largest outbound travel groups globally, Ambassador Ignacio said, "We want to capture the share of this rapidly expanding market. Adding to the momentum, Air India's direct Delhi-



Manila flights launched in October have proved to be a game changer, cutting travel time to just six and a half hours."

He revealed that the country welcomed 82,925 Indian tourists between January and September, a 7.93 per cent year-on-year

growth. In 2024, the country recorded over 78,000 Indian arrivals, up 12.4 per cent from 2023. Filipino

**Air India's direct Delhi-Manila flights launched in October have proved to be a game changer, cutting travel time to just six and a half hours**

visitors to India have also rebounded close to the pre-pandemic levels, underscoring growing recip-

rocal tourism between the two nations.

"This momentum is the result of a collective commitment by both governments and private sectors. We are at an unprecedented juncture in Philippines-India tourism relations," he said.

**Tailoring customised travel packages**

Ambassador Ignacio said that the Philippines is working to develop customised travel packages and experiences catering to Indian travellers, aligning its hospitality offerings with Indian preferences. Both nations are set to announce new initiatives to encourage travel and strengthen tourism linkages, highlighting the sec-

tor's immense potential and promising future.

He expressed optimism that ongoing initiatives like Fam trips, sponsored tours, and itinerary workshops will help Indian travel agents curate better experiences for a variety of traveller segments — from leisure and luxury seekers to film and MICE markets.



# Royal treatment for every traveller

Jagat Singh Hotels has emerged as a premier heritage retreat in Rajasthan, attracting inbound travellers seeking authentic cultural and spiritual experiences. Overlooking Pushkar Lake, the property combines regal architecture, warm hospitality, and curated heritage and wellness packages. Strong growth from the UK, Germany, France, and Italy underscores its appeal.



Surbhi Sharma

Jagat Singh Hotels has positioned itself as a premier heritage destination by blending regal Rajasthani architecture, cultural immersion, and luxury hospitality — making it especially attractive to international travellers seeking authentic experiences.

Under the stewardship of its Proprietor **Surekha Kanwar Rathore**, Jagat Singh Hotels has successfully positioned itself as a premier heritage destination for international visitors. "With its stunning lakeside views, ornate jharokhas, and tranquil courtyards, we offer guests



Surekha Kanwar Rathore  
Proprietor  
Jagat Singh Hotels

more than just accommodation — we provide a journey into Rajasthan's royal past," she said.

Complementing this are the Jagat Palace and Umaid Mahal Palace, set

against the backdrop of the Thar Desert and Snake Mountain, offering breathtaking vistas and an atmosphere of timeless charm. The combination of fair pricing, transparent rates, and personalised attention has made these hotels a favourite among inbound travellers from Europe and beyond, she added.

**European markets drive growth**

Highlighting that the European inbound market has shown remarkable growth, with the UK, Germany, France, and Italy emerging as top source countries, she noted that British travellers, in particular, are drawn to Pushkar for its



spirituality and authentic local experiences, while European guests appreciate Rajasthan's architectural grandeur and vibrant festivals. "To strengthen these markets, we have adopted a targeted marketing approach, collaborating with key travel bodies and operators. The properties are also aligning with

international tour itineraries," she explained.

**Catering to cultural & wellness travellers**

From hands-on art sessions to spiritual rejuvenation, the brand has curated experiences that resonate deeply with the experiential traveller. Guests can engage with local artisans

in pottery, block printing, and miniature painting, or explore the palatial interiors adorned with frescoes and antique decor.

**Participation at WTM London 2025**

Jagat Singh Hotels will take part in WTM London 2025, focussing on forging new alliances with international tour operators and DMCs. "The event serves as a strategic platform for us to showcase our boutique heritage offerings to the global travel trade. Our goal is to integrate our heritage-rich properties into curated Rajasthan itineraries that resonate with culturally curious and spiritually inclined travellers," she said.

AIR INDIA  
express

# XPLORE MORE XPRESS MORE

Every journey leaves an impression. As you Xplore More, you collect moments that stay with you. The warm smile that greets you, the hot meal that comforts you, the seat that feels just right. And as you Xpress More, you find yourself becoming a little Air India Express too.

## XPLORE MORE WITH AIR INDIA EXPRESS



500 DAILY  
FLIGHTS



60+  
CITIES



COMFORTABLE  
SEATS



HOT  
MEALS  
FROM ₹ 300\*

**Xplore More** destinations across South Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia

Abu Dhabi • Al Ain • Bahrain • Bangkok • Dammam • Doha • Dubai • Jeddah  
Kathmandu • Kuwait • Muscat • Phuket • Ras Al Khaimah • Riyadh • Sharjah  
Singapore • Agartala • Ahmedabad • Amritsar • Ayodhya • Bagdogra • Bengaluru  
Bhubaneswar • Chandigarh • Chennai • Dehradun • Dibrugarh • Dimapur  
Goa (Dabolim) • Goa (Mopa) • Guwahati • Gwalior • Hindon, Delhi NCR • Hyderabad  
Imphal • Indore • Jaipur • Jammu • Jodhpur • Kannur • Kochi • Kolkata • Kozhikode  
Lucknow • Mangaluru • Mumbai • Nagpur • Navi Mumbai • New Delhi • Patna • Pune  
Ranchi • Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair) • Srinagar • Surat • Thiruvananthapuram  
Tiruchirappalli • Udaipur • Varanasi • Vijayawada • Visakhapatnam

SCAN TO  
UNLOCK  
FAB DEALS.



\*Offers advertised are subject to availability on select routes.  
For detailed T&Cs, visit [airindiaexpress.com](http://airindiaexpress.com). Air India Express Ltd.  
is a Tata Enterprise.

GET READY FOR



GLOBAL PANORAMA SHOWCASE

# 2026



**NAGPUR**  
29-30 JAN



**HYDERABAD**  
13-14 FEB



**CHENNAI**  
6-7 MAR



**GUWAHATI**  
22 NOV 2025  
VIVANTA BY TAJ

**PATNA**  
25 NOV 2025  
TAJ CITY CENTRE

**VARANASI**  
27 NOV 2025  
TAJ GANGES

**BHOPAL**  
18 DEC 2025  
COURTYARD BY  
MARRIOTT BHOPAL

**DEHRADUN**  
20 DEC 2025  
HYATT CENTRIC

**TRICHY**  
11 FEB 2026  
TBA

**SURAT**  
11 MAR 2026  
TBA

**JAIPUR**  
13 MAR 2026  
TBA

Exhibitor enquiries

Call: +91 9225248070, +91 9820224272 for details email: [harmandeep@gps-india.com](mailto:harmandeep@gps-india.com) | [madhu@gps-india.com](mailto:madhu@gps-india.com)

# Tailormade for the great Indian wedding

From large-scale Indian weddings to global corporate conventions, Sheraton Grand Danang Beach Resort & Spa has built a reputation as Vietnam’s most versatile and culturally attuned MICE property. The resort combines world-class facilities with a deep understanding of Indian market needs, positioning itself as a preferred venue for Indian planners.

Jaspreet Kaur

Central Vietnam is fast emerging as one of Asia’s most sought-after destinations for Indian weddings and corporate incentives. With over 200 leads from the Indian market in 2025 alone for an individual hotel, the region’s blend of connectivity, infrastructure, and scenic luxury is transforming Vietnam’s coastline into a serious contender for high-profile Indian events.

“In 2025 alone, we have received nearly 200 leads from the Indian market, with a healthy conversion rate across both large-scale and boutique



Emilio Fortini  
GM, Sheraton Grand Danang Beach Resort & Spa

events,” says **Emilio Fortini**, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Danang Beach Resort & Spa.

At the heart of this rise is a property that has mastered the art of large-scale hospitality without losing

its local soul. Overlooking Danang’s pristine Non Nuoc Beach, the resort combines business precision with cultural warmth offering one of the largest purpose-built convention centres in the country. Fortini explains that the vision was clear from the start: to build a destination capable of handling grand celebrations and global conferences with equal ease. “We created an environment where business and leisure coexist harmoniously. Every event is supported by a team of specialists whose only job is to make sure things run flawlessly.”

Continuous investments in technology and partner-

ships with leading regional AV companies keep the property at the forefront of

**In 2025, we received nearly 200 leads from the Indian market, with a healthy conversion rate both across large-scale and boutique events**

MICE innovation. Its convention centre, opened in 2018, includes a pillarless ballroom for 1,000 guests,

an impressive lobby, and a series of breakout rooms tailored for multi-day events. Two Indian weddings stand out as milestones. The three-day celebration for an Indian couple in January 2024 saw a floating stage built across the resort’s 250-metre infinity pool overlooking the ocean, while the 2023 wedding of another couple fused Indian rituals with local Vietnamese décor, bamboo, rattan, and all. The resort employs a dedicated Indian chef and allows external specialists or imported ingredients for Halal, Jain, and strictly vegetarian menus. Collaborations with other Marriott properties ensure

authenticity across large banquets. With its vast facilities and proven experience in delivering Indian weddings and incentives, Central Vietnam’s hospitality landscape now stands on the cusp of something bigger; a transformation fuelled by 200 Indian leads, and the promise of many more to come.



## JAGAT SINGH HOTEL



UMAID MAHAL PALACE



HOTEL PUSHKAR PALACE



JAGAT PALACE



ROYAL DESET CAMP

Central Reservation Office: Umaid Mahal Palace, Motisar-Ganahera Road, Pushkar-305022 Rajasthan, INDIA  
T: +91-145-2772953, 2772954, 2772001 | M: +91-9001320753, +91 9828060601 | E-mail: hotelpushkarpalace@gmail.com, reservation@pushkarpalace.com  
Website: www.jagatsinghotels.com



# All-in-One platform

In a world where travellers crave simplicity and personalisation, AirAsia MOVE is rewriting the rules by providing a dynamic platform. By merging flight bookings, hotels, events, and community-driven experiences on one app, AirAsia MOVE is not just making travel easier; it's changing how the entire travel community connects, sells, and experiences journeys.



Devika Jeet

In an era where airlines are racing to evolve beyond ticket sales, AirAsia has taken a bold leap. With AirAsia MOVE, the brand has built what could become the future template for travel, an ecosystem where an airline transforms into a full-fledged Online Travel Agent (OTA), and eventually, a social travel app.

The journey began well before the pandemic. Originally AirAsia's digital marketing and technology arm, the team behind MOVE built and ran the airline's website and app. When COVID hit, they pivoted quickly, creating the AirAsia Superapp, a multi-service platform that offered food delivery and



Nadia Omer  
CEO  
AirAsia MOVE

ride-hailing to safeguard jobs across the organisation. Post-pandemic, the platform evolved into AirAsia MOVE, shifting focus entirely to travel and building a unified ecosystem for flyers across Asia.

As **Nadia Omer**, CEO, AirAsia MOVE, explains,

the idea came from a clear realisation. "Airlines were losing direct bookings to OTAs. Budget carriers, in particular, depend heavily on ancillary revenues like seat upgrades, meals, or baggage. When OTAs take over ticket sales, that revenue disappears. We wanted to change that model."

That shift has now given rise to one of the most ambitious airline-led travel platforms in the world.

MOVE sells not only AirAsia flights but also tickets from other airlines, hotels, and soon, events and experiences. It's a first-of-its-kind transformation for an airline evolving into a travel marketplace built on data, loyalty, and community.

At its core, MOVE is about shared value. "We want airlines to make money, but we also want them to share

**MOVE plans to expand its social travel features, allowing users to connect over shared interests from food to hiking to concerts**

the benefits," Omer says. The platform's algorithms predict what travellers are most likely to buy, achieving a 60 per cent ancillary

attach rate; double that of most OTAs. This means more value for airlines and a richer experience for travellers. The app already includes check-ins, duty-free pre-orders, and travel content from tourism boards. Next, MOVE plans to expand its social travel features, allowing users to connect over shared interests from food to hiking to concerts. Over a million users have already joined travel groups within the app, signalling what Omer calls "the future of connected travel".

India, too, is central to that vision. With a team in Bengaluru, AirAsia MOVE is working to localise payments and forge partnerships with local airlines and tourism boards.

## AIRASIA MOVE JOURNEY

- ❖ Began as AirAsia's digital arm, managing its website and app
- ❖ Pivoted during COVID as the AirAsia Superapp, safeguarding jobs
- ❖ Now a full-fledged OTA, focusing purely on travel
- ❖ Moving towards a social-travel app model

# Tapping into travel finance demand

Travel trade partnerships are central to Unimoni's growth and service philosophy. 'By working closely with tour operators, OTAs, and travel agents, we ensure travellers receive holistic and reliable financial support from currency exchange to international remittances,' says **Krishnan R**, Director & CEO, Unimoni. In 2026, the company plans deeper digital integration.



Surbhi Sharma

With its deep expertise in foreign exchange and cross-border payments, Unimoni plays a pivotal role in simplifying international travel transactions for individuals, corporates, and travel intermediaries. "The company has established itself as a reliable financial ally for both travellers and the travel trade. By combining decades of expertise with a strong pan-India service network, we provide seamless forex and remittance solutions that enhance the travel experience end-to-end," says **Krishnan R**, Director & CEO, Unimoni.

## Showcasing India's financial innovation

Participation in international travel exhibitions, such as WTM London and OTM, has allowed the firm to showcase India's evolving financial landscape to the world.

"Participation at international travel exhibitions positions us as a forward-thinking, technology-driven brand that not only supports India's outbound travellers but also connects seamlessly with the international travel and payments ecosystem," he opines.

## Driving innovation via digital & AI solutions

At the heart of the com-



Krishnan R  
Director & CEO  
Unimoni

pany's success lies a commitment to digital innovation and traveller convenience. From online forex booking and doorstep currency delivery to real-time rate comparison tools, the company has redefined the way travel-

lers' access and manage foreign exchange.

"A major milestone in this journey is the launch of Wizz Voyager, India's first AI-enabled multi-currency travel card powered by us in partnership with Visa. It represents a new era in smart travel finance," the CEO explains.

"It supports 25 currencies, including seven exclusive ones — such as the Chinese Yuan, Vietnamese Dong, Malaysian Ringgit, and Azerbaijani Manat — giving travellers unmatched global flexibility."

Beyond currency access, Wizz Voyager offers free

worldwide ATM withdrawals, travel insurance, global SIM connectivity, and premium airport lounge

**From online forex booking to real-time rate comparison tools, the company has redefined the way travellers' access and manage foreign exchange**

access. Its AI-driven engine optimises exchange rates automatically, help-

ing travellers save while they spend. For the B2B segment, the company's digital platform provides travel agents and OTAs with real-time rate visibility, seamless transactions, and simplified compliance management, ensuring frictionless operations for their clients.

## Charting the future

Unimoni plans to deepen its AI-driven personalisation and mobile-first capabilities. It is expanding the Wizz Voyager platform for students, corporates, and frequent flyers, while integrating intelligent customer support tools and advanced analytics into its service ecosystem.

# VOYZER

by **wizz**  
Financial

## India's first **Forex Card** with **25 Currencies**



### With 7 Exclusive Asian Currencies

 Chinese Yuan  Vietnamese Dong  Malaysian Ringgit  Georgian Lari  
 Philippine Peso  Indonesian Rupiah  Azerbaijani Manat & more...



**25+** years of  
experience



**5** Million Happy  
Customers



**316+** Branch  
Network

Powered By  
**unimoni**  
A wizz Group Company

**ORDER NOW**  
**999 55 666 77**

# Smaller Indian cities drive outbound

India's smaller cities are emerging as the new engines of outbound travel, says **Pankaj Nagpal**, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group. Destinations like Egypt, Morocco, Vietnam, Oman and Abu Dhabi are seeing strong demand in 2025, fuelled by easier visas, better connectivity and growing interest in premium experiences.



Janice Alyosius

**O**utbound travel from India's smaller cities is surging, driving strong demand for new destinations, such as Egypt, Morocco, Vietnam, Oman, and Abu Dhabi, says **Pankaj Nagpal**, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group. He noted that simplified visa procedures, better air connectivity, and evolving traveller profiles are reshaping India's outbound landscape in 2025.

"Egypt has done exceedingly well for us despite the geo-political situation in the area. Other than Egypt, Morocco, Vietnam, Oman, and Abu Dhabi have given us good numbers. The key factors driving growth are



**Pankaj Nagpal**  
Managing Director  
Travstarz Global Group

easy visa access and improved connectivity from India," Nagpal said.

## Tier II and III cities generating revenue

Nagpal said that a majority of Travstarz's business now comes from tier II and III cities, such as Jaipur, Lucknow, Chandigarh,

Ludhiana, Amritsar, Agra, Pune, Indore, and Nagpur. "We have been conducting networking events in these markets, and the response has been very encouraging. Senior citizen groups and ladies-only groups have become very popular, with most travellers now opting for luxury hotels," he said.

## New itineraries and agents' response

Travstarz has expanded its product portfolio with exciting new itineraries. "We launched 8-day itineraries for Egypt and 9-day fixed departures from August to December 2025, including domestic flights — and all are already sold out," Nagpal shared. Additionally, they have also introduced two new packages for Mo-

rocco, both of which have been well received by their agent partners.

**Simplified visa procedures, better air connectivity, and evolving traveller profiles are reshaping India's outbound landscape**

## Expanding global partnerships

In 2025, the group added Morocco to its DMC network, with itineraries ranging from 5 to 12

nights. "We have also soft-launched Australia and will soon be announcing a major new partnership," Nagpal revealed.

## Luxury, experiences drive travel demand

Travellers from smaller cities are increasingly seeking premium experiences. "Even for the MICE segment, groups now prefer four-star and above hotels and interesting, enriching activities," said Nagpal.

Travstarz's success in smaller markets is backed by strong collaborations with leading tourism boards. "We are promotion partners for Abu Dhabi Tourism, Oman Tourism, Bintan Resorts, Seychelles Tourism, and Thailand

Tourism. Our yearly calendar is packed with events in smaller cities, which now contribute over 50 per cent of our revenue," he said.

## TRAVEL TRENDS

- ❖ Tier II & III cities are driving India's outbound boom
- ❖ Abu Dhabi, Egypt, Oman, Morocco, and Vietnam lead 2025 demand
- ❖ Easier visas and improved air links spur growth

# Agents connect to GPS opportunities

The Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) in Kochi recently brought together travel agents from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with over 650 pre-registered attendees. Packed with interactive sessions, networking opportunities, and GPS iConnect app, the event offered exhibitors a dynamic platform to showcase products and explore the region's growing travel market.



# Your Global Destination Management Partner

## Travel Beyond Boundaries

Introducing your trusted travel partner for discovering the world's most inspiring destinations. We offer meaningful journeys with a personal touch and global excellence.



BALI



DUBAI



VIETNAM



- Tailor-made Leisure & MICE Solutions
- Expert Local Teams in UAE, India & Vietnam

- Competitive Hotel & Visa Support
- Own Fleet & Direct Attraction Access

# Simplifying UAE sales for agents

Dubai-based Travel Assistance Tourism LLC is scaling up operations with stronger tech integration, a growing fleet, and multi-destination itineraries linking Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Ras Al Khaimah. **Ahmed Khan**, Founder and COO, Travel Assistance Tourism LLC, says the DMC's goal is to empower Indian agents with direct access and faster, smarter solutions.



Janice Alyosius

In a market crowded with destination management companies, Travel Assistance Tourism LLC is carving a distinct identity through technology-driven solutions and complete in-house control of its products. The Dubai-registered DMC, which has already served over 50,000 travellers, is now focusing on expanding its fleet, assets, and destination reach to meet growing demand from India and beyond. "Our biggest USP is direct supply with owned assets," says **Ahmed Khan**, Founder and COO, Travel Assistance Tourism LLC. "This gives agents flexibility on pricing and timing, because they are not



**Ahmed Khan**  
Founder and COO, Travel Assistance Tourism LLC

dependent on third-party suppliers. Whether it's buses, seven-seaters, or our 350-passenger dhow cruise, these are all owned by us. That is why we can deliver on time and adapt easily to agents' needs."

The company also holds its own immigration card,

enabling it to issue visas directly. "When you control your assets and visa processes, you are able to give a faster, more reliable service," he adds.

## Technology at the core

Beyond logistics, Travel Assistance has invested heavily in B2B technology designed for travel agents across India, Bali, Vietnam, South Africa, and the Philippines. "We focus on technology that helps agents create and customise packages instantly. They can book transfers, hotels, or visas in real time, without waiting for manual quotes. Everything is automated and integrated — it's a mix of à la carte and full packages," says Khan.

## Evolving Indian market trends

The company has noticed a clear shift in the preferences of Indian travellers.

**Direct supply gives agents more flexibility on pricing and timing, because they are not dependent on third-party suppliers**

"Earlier, most packages included the classic trio — Dhow Cruise, Desert Safari, and City Tour. Now,

travellers are demanding Museum of the Future, Burj Khalifa, Global Village, and Dubai Frame — all part of more experiential itineraries. The average family package that used to cost ₹3–4 lakh has now increased to ₹7–8 lakh," explains Khan.

## Looking ahead

Travel Assistance is in expansion mode, scaling up assets from seven to 12 buses and strengthening supplier contracts. "2025 is shaping up to be another success story. The market response has been positive, and we are investing ahead to make sure our partners have everything they need to sell UAE seamlessly and profitably," Khan concludes.

## IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ **Own assets:** Fleet of buses, seater vehicles, and 350-passenger dhow cruise
- ❖ **Direct visa facility:** In-house immigration card for faster processing
- ❖ **Tech-driven B2B portal:** Real-time package creation
- ❖ **Expanding destinations:** Dubai–Abu Dhabi combos; RAK next

# A push for Western Region hospitality

The 20<sup>th</sup> Regional Convention of the Hotel & Restaurant Association (Western India) — HRAWI — ignited minds to give a push to the hospitality industry in India. Inaugurated at Taj Lands End, Mumbai, the event commemorated 75 years of hospitality excellence in the presence of industry leaders, government dignitaries, and hospitality stalwarts.



A Unit of GRT Hotels & Resorts

**Radisson** BLU  
HOTEL & SUITES  
GRT CHENNAI



## Chennai's Signature Meetings

**Book your next meeting with us and avail our special offer starting from INR 17,000 + Taxes per night on Double Occupancy**

Valid between 1st Oct - 30th Dec 2025 - Minimum 10 Rooms per night

Host seamless business meetings with our all-inclusive offer where productivity meets comfort in the heart of Chennai.

### **This offer is designed with the following features:**

Premium Room with Sunshine breakfast | Conference Hall with 02 Tea  
Coffee Breaks along with buffet lunch & dinner | Pool & Gym Access  
15% savings at Bodhi Prana | Earn Radisson Rewards Points

Upgrade your event to a **GReaT Green Meeting** - track your carbon footprint and offset it with sustainable solutions.

## FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

Call us at 0 80622 10101 | Email: [reservations@radissongrt.com](mailto:reservations@radissongrt.com)  
531, GST Road, St. Thomas Mount, Chennai – 600016, Tamil Nadu



\*T&C Apply



# unpacks future of travel tech

WTM London's much-anticipated Technology Summit returns on 5 November, uniting global travel tech leaders to explore how AI, data, and innovation are reshaping the industry. With a packed agenda of sessions led by global technology experts, the summit, to be organised on the Purple Stage, promises deep insights into the future of travel technology.



WTM London is setting the stage for an impactful Technology Summit this year, spotlighting the critical role of technology in supporting sellers and suppliers amid disruption and emerging challenges.

Scheduled for 5 November, the summit will take place on the Purple Stage from 10:45 am onwards, featuring a dynamic, three-hour line-up of global technology experts. The agenda reflects WTM London's overarching theme, 'Reimagining Travel in a Changing World', with 12 insightful sessions curated by **Timothy O'Neil-Dunne**, WTM's technology advisor



and Principal at T2Impact. The summit will open with a series of sessions exploring how technology and data can empower travel businesses. WTM's official Technology Partner, Holafly, will take the stage as CEO **Pablo Gómez Fernandez-Quintanilla** joins Timothy O'Neil-Dunne for a 20-minute discussion

titled 'Connected Futures: Tech, Data and the Power of eSIMs' at 1:50 pm.

One of the most anticipated sessions will debate whether Artificial Intelligence (AI) — despite all the hype — is travel's friend or foe. The discussion will feature **Stephen Joyce** from Prospect

Group and **Christian Watts** from Magpie Travel.

AI will feature prominently throughout the summit. **Rhys Griffiths** and **Farina Azam**, partners at travel law firm Fox Williams, will explore the legal and regulatory implications of widespread AI adoption. Meanwhile, **Andreas Nau**

from Ennea Capital Partners and **Min Liu** from Cambon Partners will share how the investment community is responding to AI-driven disruption across travel and tourism.

## Redefining roles through technology

As technology continues to transform the travel industry, one session will examine how AI is reshaping the role of travel agents. **James Lever** from Data-Art and **Gulce Rozenfeld** from Oojo.com will delve into how automation and intelligent systems are redefining customer engagement. Similarly, the use of video content in trip planning is on the rise. **Sally Bunnell** from NaviSavi will discuss how AI and video

integration are influencing traveller inspiration and decision-making.

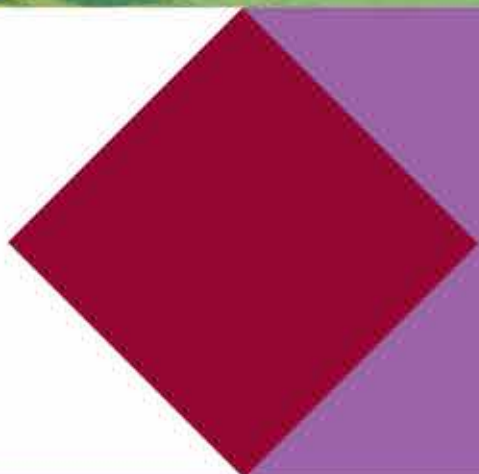
One of the most anticipated sessions will debate whether Artificial Intelligence — despite all the hype — is travel's friend or foe

**Dave Goodger** from Tourism Economics will explain how combining travel insights with economic data can help companies make smarter decisions.

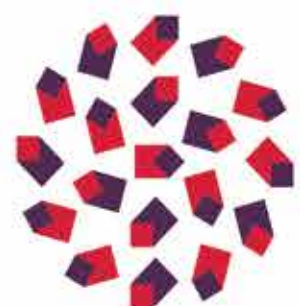
## Minor gets in meeting mode with trade

Minor Hotels brought its 3-city roadshow to India recently, showcasing its impressive portfolio of luxury properties with successful stops in Bengaluru, New Delhi, and finally Mumbai. Led by **Rohit Chopra**, Area Commercial Director – India, Minor Hotels showcased various brands, including Anantara, NH Hotels, and Avani from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.





Experience  
عُمان  
OMAN



# Festivals of India 2026

## A Year of Colour, Culture, and Celebration

India's festival calendar for 2026 is a ready-made invitation to the world. It's a celebration that stretches from the deserts of Rajasthan to the forests of the Northeast and the coasts of Kerala. For inbound tourists, the year offers an unbroken chain of cultural experiences — each festival a window into a different India, a different rhythm.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p><b>Bikaner Camel Festival</b><br/>Rajasthan<br/>January 11–12</p> <p>Camel parades, races, folk arts, handicrafts, fire dances, fireworks</p> |  <p><b>International Kite Festival</b><br/>Rajasthan, Gujarat<br/>January 14</p> <p>Kite flying contest, illuminated kites, performances, sweets, community events</p> |  <p><b>Rann Utsav</b><br/>Gujarat<br/>October 2025 – March 2026</p> <p>White desert glamping, music, dance, crafts, adventure sports</p> |  <p><b>Surajkund Craft Mela</b><br/>Haryana<br/>February 7–23</p> <p>World's largest crafts fair, global artisans, open-air theatre, cuisine, workshops</p> |
|  <p><b>Dong Sunrise Festival</b><br/>Arunachal Pradesh<br/>January 1</p> <p>First sunrise celebrations with tribal and eco-cultural events</p>   |  <p><b>Cherry Blossom Festival</b><br/>Meghalaya<br/>November 14–15</p> <p>Flower/forest walks, music, wine, food, city illumination</p>                              |  <p><b>Hornbill Festival</b><br/>Nagaland<br/>December 1–10</p> <p>Tribal culture, craft, food, dance, music concerts, local games</p>   |  <p><b>Jaipur Literature Fest</b><br/>Rajasthan<br/>January 30 – February 3</p> <p>World's largest lit fest, authors, readings, music, art</p>             |
|  <p><b>Mamallapuram Dance Fest</b><br/>Tamil Nadu<br/>December 22 – January 20</p> <p>Classical dance performances at historic temples</p>      |  <p><b>Pushkar Camel Fair</b><br/>Rajasthan<br/>October 28 – November 4</p> <p>Camel trading, music, dances, competitions, temple rituals</p>                        |  <p><b>Khajuraho Dance Festival</b><br/>Madhya Pradesh<br/>February 20–26</p> <p>Classical dances at UNESCO temple, global artists</p> |  <p><b>Kumbh Mela (Mini Kumbh 2026)</b><br/>Uttar Pradesh<br/>March – April</p> <p>Massive religious baths, processions, rituals</p>                      |
|  <p><b>Tulip Festival</b><br/>Jammu &amp; Kashmir<br/>March – April</p> <p>Tulip garden, local food, folk music, Kashmir crafts</p>             |  <p><b>Desert Festival Jaisalmer</b><br/>Rajasthan<br/>January 30 – February 1</p> <p>Sand acrobatics, camel rides, folk shows, longest moustache contest</p>        |  <p><b>Sangai Festival</b><br/>Manipur<br/>November 21–30</p> <p>Tribal dances, indigenous sports, adventure, crafts, culinary</p>     |  <p><b>Kochi-Muziris Biennale</b><br/>Kerala<br/>December 2025– March 2026</p> <p>Asia's top contemporary art gathering, installations, performances</p>  |
|  <p><b>Ziro Festival of Music</b><br/>Arunachal Pradesh<br/>September</p> <p>Indie/international music, camping in scenic valley</p>            |  <p><b>Thrissur Pooram</b><br/>Kerala<br/>April 26</p> <p>Elephant processions, percussion, fireworks</p>                                                            |  <p><b>Anthurium Festival</b><br/>Mizoram<br/>October</p> <p>Floral displays, music, sports, tribal cuisine</p>                        |  <p><b>Goa Carnival</b><br/>Goa<br/>February 14–17</p> <p>Parades, floats, international music, food, masquerade</p>                                      |
|  <p><b>Sula Fest</b><br/>Maharashtra<br/>February</p> <p>Vineyards, music performances, gourmet food</p>                                        |  <p><b>Udaipur World Music Fest</b><br/>Rajasthan<br/>February</p> <p>Global artists, lakeside venues, multi-lingual</p>                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## OUR BRANDS

ARMANI

BURBERRY

COACH

GUCCI

PRADA

RALPH LAUREN



UP TO  
**70%**  
OFF, ALL  
YEAR ROUND

# Hello to a World of style

SHOP LIKE ROYALTY, WITH OFFERS THAT KEEP YOU SMILING AT MCARTHURGLEN DESIGNER OUTLETS

## All the Luxury, all the Joy

Luxury services available at selected outlets, from VIP and Tourism lounges to Hands-free shopping. Elevate your day with a luxury private transfer available at all centres.



## Exclusive brands and services all in one place

Reach our designer outlets through booking your shuttle bus or private transfer direct through our McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Shuttle Hub online booking platform. Get to your destination quicker and with ease.

## Light up your Diwali with light and love

Come together for luxury shopping moments and unbeatable deals with Europe's favourite designers. Visit us to celebrate style, light and love and enjoy treats for the whole family this Diwali.



SCAN HERE TO REDEEM YOUR 10% DISCOUNT TODAY



23 Locations across 8 countries. Contact [Delhi@mcarthurglen.com](mailto:Delhi@mcarthurglen.com) or [Mumbai@mcarthurglen.com](mailto:Mumbai@mcarthurglen.com) to find out more

# 1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

EVENT TALK

Published from : India Middle East

NOVEMBER 2025

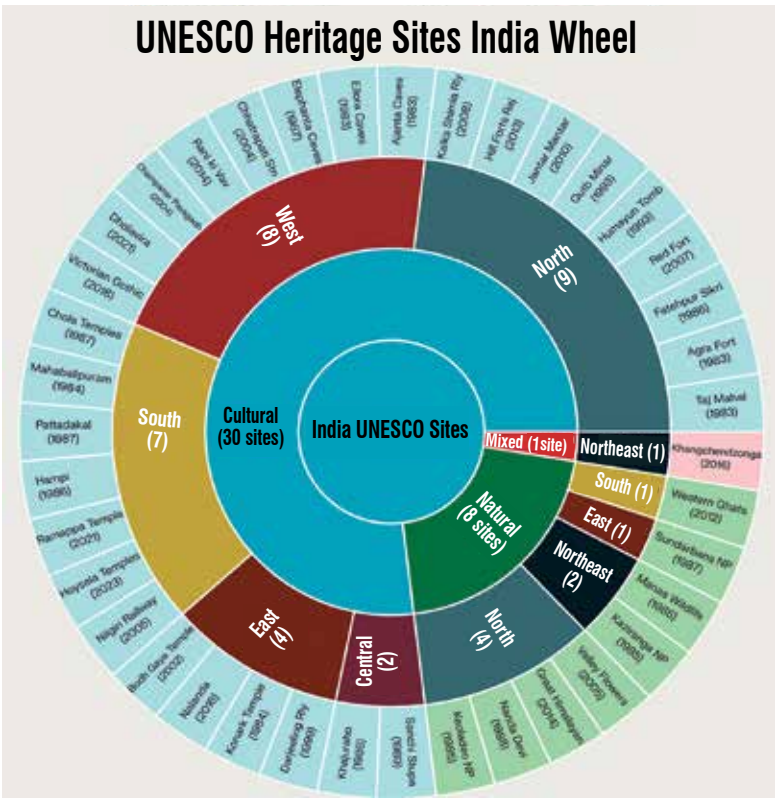
| Date  | Event                                  | Time     |
|-------|----------------------------------------|----------|
| 17    | STB Roadshow – Bengaluru               | 10:00 am |
| 17    | JNTO Roadshow – Delhi                  | 10:30 am |
| 17    | Belgium Travel Expo                    | 9:00 am  |
| 18–20 | Ibtm World                             | 9:00 am  |
| 19    | STB Roadshow – Mumbai                  | 10:00 am |
| 19    | JNTO Roadshow – Bengaluru              | 10:30 am |
| 21    | STB Roadshow – Chennai                 | 10:00 am |
| 21    | JNTO Roadshow – Mumbai                 | 10:30 am |
| 21    | GBTA India Summit                      | 8:30 am  |
| 22–24 | India Travel Mart – Jammu              | 9:00 am  |
| 24–26 | Qatar Travel Mart                      | 10:00 am |
| 25    | Arabian Travel Awards                  | 6:00 pm  |
| 25    | Business Events Expo                   | 9:00 am  |
| 27–29 | India International Travel Mart – Pune | 10:00 am |
| 28    | Turtle Down Under Webinar              | 11:30 am |

# India’s UNESCO treasures

With 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, India stands proudly among the world’s leading destinations for cultural and heritage tourism. From temples and forts to cities and forests, each site tells a story of civilization, creativity, and conservation.

India’s 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including temples, forts, forests, and cities of timeless beauty, reflects the diversity that defines the Indian subcontinent.

For travel businesses, these sites are not just icons of heritage but economic catalysts that drive sustainable tourism, regional development, and experiential travel growth. From the sacred ensembles of the Hoysalas to the wild serenity of Kaziranga, India offers partners in the travel trade a tapestry of immersive opportunities. As heritage-led travel experiences continue to shape global tourism trends, India’s cultural wealth invites collaboration — linking history with hospitality, and legacy with livelihood.



# AI-driven platform empowers trade

Comtek Services is helping the travel trade work smarter with Facile, its all-in-one platform. By simplifying operations, improving efficiency, and adding AI-powered tools, the company enables agents to focus on customer service, strategy, & business growth in today’s competitive market, says **Kevin Thankappa Reginold**, Senior Manager–Vision, Comtek Services.

Janice Alyosius

In a significant boost to the Indian travel trade, Comtek Services is helping travel agents and tour operators embrace digital transformation, enabling them to streamline operations, enhance efficiency, and elevate customer experiences. **Kevin Thankappa Reginold**, Senior Manager–Vision, Comtek Services, says the company’s solutions are increasingly becoming indispensable for travel businesses navigating a fast-evolving market.

“Comtek’s reputation as a trusted partner is built upon three decades of dedicated service in the B2B travel



Kevin Thankappa Reginold  
Senior Manager–Vision  
Comtek Services

sector. Our key differentiator lies in delivering a force-multiplier effect for clients — amplifying operational scale and quality — while ensuring industry-leading data protection and granular access control over sensitive information,”

Reginold says. For travel agents, this translates into tangible benefits. By leveraging Comtek’s flagship platform, Facile, agents gain a single, unified system to manage content, sales, operations, finance, and business intelligence. “We automate information security, internal task management, vendor communications, and regulatory compliance, freeing users to focus on business strategy and customer engagement,” Reginold explains.

### Tech adoption

Post-pandemic, the Indian travel trade has seen rapid adoption of API distribution models and headless systems, creating op-

portunities for more integrated collaboration across vendors and platforms.

By leveraging Facile, agents gain a single, unified system to manage content, sales, operations, finance, and biz intelligence

Comtek aligns with these trends by offering bespoke customisation and integration services within client-

specific ecosystems. “We are committed to fostering the industry’s collaborative spirit, actively seeking partnerships to craft market-wide solutions that deliver value to the end-user while remaining mutually profitable,” Reginold notes.

The integration of AI and automation is another game-changer for the sector. Reginold emphasises that Comtek’s approach is practical and utility-driven, “We implement AI and automation with genuine business utility as the primary focus. For example, we are piloting features such as automatic carbon emissions calculation for every tour registered on

Facile, giving agents actionable insights.”

### Plans ahead

Looking ahead, Comtek plans to introduce further innovations to keep the trade competitive. “We are expanding the footprint of meaningful AI utility and introducing new business verticals,” he shares.



# Travel

## MICE & CORPORATE SHOW

10–11 January 2026 | Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway



## INDIA'S MOST POWERFUL CORPORATE TRAVEL MARKETPLACE IS BACK

Two days of curated meetings, purposeful networking, and partnerships that last.



### What makes this show matter

- 2,000+ pre-scheduled B2B meetings
- 100% verified corporate buyers
- 25+ exhibiting brands and destinations
- 85% senior-level decision-makers
- Knowledge sessions, keynotes, and a networking gala dinner

**New ideas. Real business. Long-term growth.**

**Be part of India's most focused  
MICE & Corporate Travel event**

Let's build the future of business travel together.

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



# MOVEMENTS

## CATHAY PACIFIC

### SAMEA Region

Cathay Pacific appoints **PIYULI BHATTACHARJEE** as Regional Head of Marketing for South Asia, Middle East, and Africa (SAMEA) region. In her new role, she will lead regional brand marketing across passenger travel, cargo, and lifestyle business. With over 8-year experience spanning aviation, omni-channel retail, and brand strategy, she brings a deep understanding of digital strategy and integrated campaign planning.



**ARJUN BHATIA** has been appointed as Regional Head of Corporate Sales for the SAMEA region. In his new role, Bhatia will be responsible for driving strategic corporate sales initiatives, key account management, and revenue performance across markets. He previously served as Regional Head of Digital Sales for the region. With over nine years of cross-functional experience across hospitality, food & beverage, and digital business, he has held leadership roles at Zomato and The Indian Hotels Company Limited (Taj Hotels).



**VINOD VISWANATHAN** has been appointed as Regional Head of Trade Sales for India and Sri Lanka. Viswanathan brings over 15 years of experience in aviation, global distribution, corporate, and leisure travel. In his new role, he will focus on strengthening trade partnerships, driving strategic initiatives, and expanding Cathay's footprint across key markets. His prior experience includes senior leadership roles with Air Mauritius, Flight Centre Travel Group, British Airways, Oman Air, and Travelport.



## TOURISM AUSTRALIA

### India

Tourism Australia has appointed **MAISHAA MUKADAM** as the Business Development Manager – India. Mukadam is based in the Tourism Australia office in Mumbai. She brings over 17 years of experience in destination marketing, travel distribution, and business events (MICE) to the team. In her new role, Mukadam is responsible for distribution, partnerships with key distribution and aviation partners, business events, and the promotion of the award-winning Aussie Specialist Programme.



## WELCOMHOTEL JODHPUR

### Jodhpur

ITC Hotels has appointed **HIMANSHU BATRA** as the General Manager of Welcomhotel Jodhpur. A seasoned hotelier with a strong foundation in hospitality, Batra brings along operational expertise, strategic leadership, and a commitment to delivering best guest experiences. During his 17-year career, he has held leadership roles across several ITC Hotels, including ITC Narmada (Ahmedabad), ITC Grand Chola (Chennai), ITC Windsor (Bengaluru), ITC Mughal (Agra), and ITC Rajputana (Jaipur).



## ROSETTA HOSPITALITY

### Bengaluru

Rosetta Hospitality has appointed **POONAM TIPNIS** as Head of Sales for Rosetta Sakleshpur. With nearly three decades of experience in luxury hospitality, Tipnis brings in a legacy of strong leadership and a nuanced understanding of guest-centric sales strategies to the new role. Her career spans renowned hotel brands. In her new role, Tipnis will oversee Rosetta Sakleshpur's commercial strategy, driving value-led partnerships and bespoke guest experiences.



## ATPI

### India

ATPI has appointed **JEET SAWHNEY** as Managing Director, ATPI India. With almost three decades of experience in the travel industry, Sawhney has held senior leadership positions with KLM/Air France, VFS (as COO – Value Added Services), and Sabre (as Regional Director – South Asia). Most recently, he served as CEO of Tripjack. In his new role, Sawhney will oversee the company's overall strategy, operations, and performance, with a focus on reinforcing ATPI's market leadership.



## COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT KOCHI AIRPORT & PORT MUZIRIS, KOCHI, A TRIBUTE PORTFOLIO HOTEL

### Kochi

**ABHILASH MATAM** has been appointed as the Multi Property Hotel Manager for Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport & Port Muziris, Kochi, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel. Matam has expertise in strategic operations across luxury, midscale, and budget hotels. He has led international hotel management teams and is proficient in Rooms Division operations, ensuring the seamless day-to-day functioning of hotels.



## DOUBLETREE BY HILTON GOA, PANAJI

### Goa

DoubleTree by Hilton Goa, Panaji, has appointed **ASMITA TAMBOLKAR**–Umarye as Financial Controller. With over 15 years of experience in finance and hospitality operations, Umarye's appointment reflects her leadership, financial expertise, and commitment to operational excellence. She has built a distinguished career with leading hospitality brands. Her experience spans pre-opening finance operations, budgeting, statutory compliance, and strengthening financial systems.



## IMPRESARIO ENTERTAINMENT & HOSPITALITY

### Mumbai

**CHIRAG PUNJABI** has been elevated to the role of Chief Strategy & Finance Officer (CSFO) by Impresario Entertainment & Hospitality. He has been an integral part of Impresario's leadership team for the past five years. In his new role, Punjabi will oversee strategy, finance, and technology, ensuring stronger alignment across critical functions to power Impresario's next phase of expansion. He joined the company in December 2019 as Executive Assistant to the CEO and establishing himself as a trusted partner.



## DOUBLETREE BY HILTON PUNE–CHINCHWAD

### Pune

DoubleTree by Hilton Pune–Chinchwad has appointed **KRIKA ARORA** as the Human Resources Manager. With over a decade of experience in Human Resources, Learning, and Quality Assurance across leading hospitality brands, Arora brings a wealth of expertise in building strong organisational cultures, fostering employee engagement, and driving talent development. Her distinguished career spans key positions with Hyatt, IHG, Oberoi, and Pride.



## MARRIOTT EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS, BENGALURU UB CITY

### Bengaluru

Marriott Executive Apartments, Bengaluru UB City, has appointed **HEENA SHARMA** as the Director of Rooms. With 14 years of experience across Marriott Suites Pune, Port Muziris, and JLL (Accenture), Sharma is known for her guest-centric approach and operational expertise in front office management, facility operations, and revenue optimisation. In her new role, she will lead the Rooms Division.





**Sanjeet**  
Editor & Publisher

**Editorial Team:**  
Devika Jeet  
Nisha Verma  
Sushil Kumar  
Harshad Ashar  
Janice Alysius

**Design Team:**  
Sudhir Mudgal  
Nityanand Misra

**Production:**  
Anil Kharbanda, General Manager  
Ramesh Gupta, Manager

**Advertising Team (Delhi)**  
Nikhil Jeet  
Arumita Gupta  
Jaspreet Kaur

**Advertising Team (Mumbai)**  
Suchita Saran  
Harshad Ashar  
Samantha Pereira

**Advertisement Designers**  
Nitin Kumar  
Aditya Pratap Singh  
Anil Kharbanda

**Circulation:**  
Ashok Rana

CIN: U22210DL2012PTC230432

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.

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.

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.

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, +91-9650399920

**MUMBAI:**  
504, Marine Chambers, 43, New Marine Lines, Opp. SNTD College, Mumbai - 400 020, India, Ph.: +91-22-22070129; 22070130

**MIDDLE EAST:**  
Durga Das Publications Middle East (FZE) Z1-02, PO Box: 9348, Saf Zone, Sharjah, UAE Ph.: +971-6-5528954, Fax: +971-6-5528956

# NAMASTE RAJASTHAN



130x Weekly Flights to Rajasthan

## JAIPUR

BOM 28x weekly  
DEL 21x weekly

## UDAIPUR

DEL 21x weekly  
BOM 26x weekly

## JAISALMER

DEL 14x weekly

## JODHPUR

DEL 6x weekly  
BOM 14x weekly

## BOOKINGS OPEN

Contact your Air India sales representative  
for more information



# India inbound to benefit from infra boom

**Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Govt of India, said that the country's tourism sector is on the verge of a remarkable transformation, supported by infra growth, expanding domestic travel, and a strong focus on sustainability and investment.



Nisha Verma

Reminiscing about how strong inbound tourism was, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, said that the focus of Indian hoteliers was to appear in international travel guidebooks to attract foreign guests. "Those days, inbound tourists were the best paymasters. The property whose name appeared in such guidebooks was considered secure. But today, none of the hotelier is dependent on that. Indians are better paymasters now," he added.

He underlined, "Inbound tourism cannot be understood from the point of view of just numbers, nor can its possibilities be fully captured." Referring to the transformation of destinations like Ayodhya, he said, "When Radisson started the hotel in Ayodhya, ₹1 lakh was the room tariff per night. No foreign tourists in the world will give you ₹1 lakh for a day at such a destination. Even now, they are charging

₹35,000, and still there are no rooms available."

## Travel demand fuelling economy

Shekhawat linked the growth in domestic tourism to India's economic progress. "In the span of



**Inbound tourism cannot be understood from the point of view of just numbers, nor can its possibilities be fully captured**

10 years, we have grown from an economy of \$2 trillion to \$4.14 trillion. All analysts believe that India's economy is growing at the fastest rate in the world. If it grows at this rate, it will double every 7–8 years. By 2047, the \$4 trillion economy that we are talking about today will become a \$30 trillion economy," he shared.

He added that this economic momentum has given rise to a larger middle-income group. "Due to the precise power of implementation, 25–30 crore people have been able to get out of the poverty line and live the life of the middle class. The government has given tax rebates through the last budget — tax-free

income of ₹12 lakh — which has increased disposable income and contributed to increasing tourism opportunities," he said.

However, Shekhawat acknowledged that the supply of hospitality infrastructure has not kept pace with demand. "In the last 10 years, the way our demand has increased, the pace of supply is not up to the mark. Hence, there is mismatch of demand and supply," he noted.

## Infrastructure policy push for hospitality

Shekhawat revealed that they have taken steps to address the investment gap in hospitality. "We have created 50 iconic destinations, and apart from that, every destination with a population of less than 10 lakh has been granted

with all states. "We discussed the policies of all states that adopted the best practices, made a draft policy on that basis, and shared it on Tourism Day. We are working to give incentives to all states in the hospitality sector and for new hotel investments," he added.

Shekhawat emphasised that sustainability must guide India's tourism growth. He also identified wellness, medical, MICE and wedding tourism as emerging verticals. Addressing the industry, Shekhawat said the sector must collectively work. "We must discuss how we can reduce the cost of staying in our star hotels. If we don't address the rate hike, it will become a big challenge for us," he said.



**We discussed the policies of all states that adopted the best practices, made a draft policy on that basis, and shared it on Tourism Day**

infrastructure status. This will increase the flow of investment," he said.

He pointed out that nearly 18 states have now given industry status to tourism and hospitality. The Ministry has also shared a draft of national tourism policy

## IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

- ❖ Domestic travellers now drive India's tourism, supported by a stronger middle-income group and growing economy
- ❖ The government has identified 50 iconic destinations and granted infrastructure status to hospitality in smaller cities
- ❖ Focus areas ahead — sustainability, cost rationalisation, and coordinated public-private efforts for tourism growth

**(Fitur)**

is where  
global tourism  
begins each  
year!

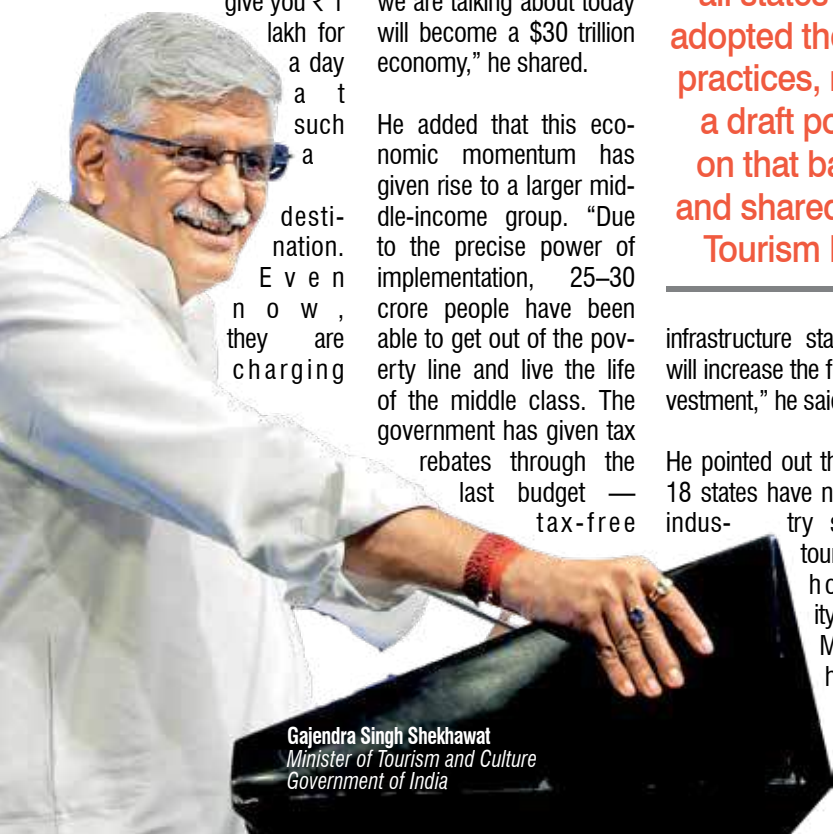
**Save  
the  
date**  
and join the  
world's leaders  
in travel.

**21-25  
January  
2026**

**Madrid, Spain**

For more information, please contact:

**devika@ddppl.com,  
+91 9818767141  
ritul.malhotra@ddppl.com,  
+91-9810191852**



**Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**  
Minister of Tourism and Culture  
Government of India

# Festive Flash Sale Upto 10% Off!

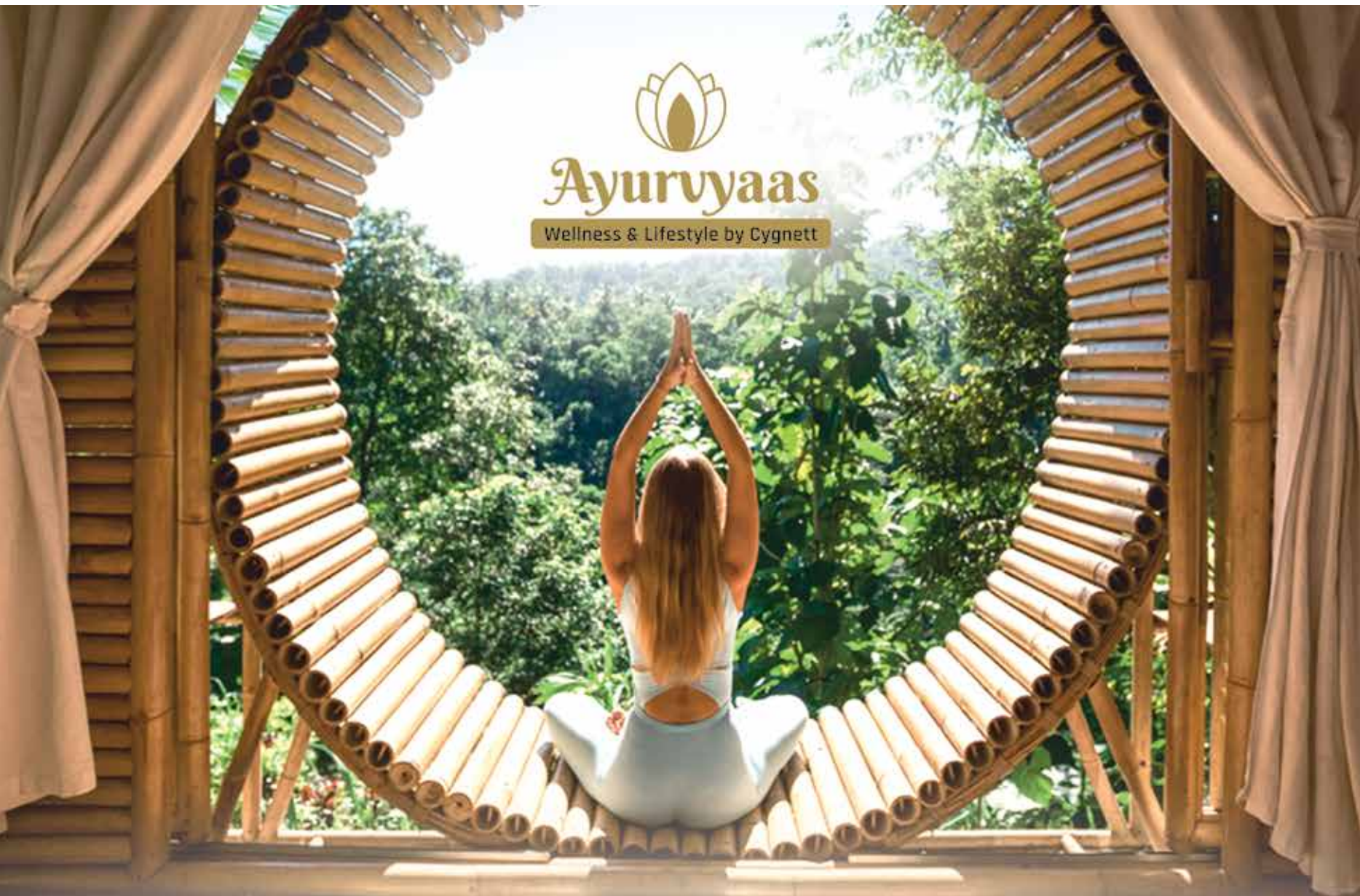
on Saudi Bookings!



9 BLVD WORLD, RIYADH

“I Came for football,  
I Stayed for more.”

T&C Apply



# Ayurvyaa

Wellness & Lifestyle by Cygnett

## Ayurvyaa — Wellness & Lifestyle by Cygnett

*A Sanctuary of Timeless Well-being*

Discover harmony where Ayurveda, Yoga, and mindful living come together. Rebalance your mind, body, and soul through curated wellness zones, holistic therapies, and wellness cuisine - all amidst the tranquil hills of Chail.

**Ayur (Life) + Vyaas (Expansion) — Expanding life into balance, vitality, and bliss.**

### Ayurvyaa Vihārs:

Curated wellness zones designed to heal, balance, and rejuvenate.



### Ayurvyaa Vaidic Concepts

Sampoorna Jeevan - Complete Life  
Panchamrit - The five nectars of holistic living  
Ananta Sutra - Health, wealth, love, and spirituality  
Swasthya Sampada - Wealth of holistic wellbeing  
Sarvānanda - Total or all-encompassing joy

### Sustainable Luxury:

Eco-conscious architecture embraced by the serenity of Chail's hills.



### Soulful Nutrition:

Wellness cuisine crafted with local, seasonal, and sattvik ingredients.

many more...

**For Any Query & Business Development: +91 88001 97480**

Corporate Office :

**Unitech Cyber Park, 606, 6th Floor, Tower-D, Sector 39, Gurgaon, Haryana 122003, India**

 [www.cygnetthotels.com](http://www.cygnetthotels.com)

 [www.ayurvyaa.com](http://www.ayurvyaa.com)



Scan To Know More