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Airports reinventing from gateways to getaways

The airport of the future is no longer a mere transit point but the first chapter of your journey. As these hubs evolve into vibrant lifestyle destinations, a new era of travel is emerging — one that is seamlessly personalised, digitally driven, and deeply engaging. This transformation positions travel agents as essential experience curators.



Jaal Shah
Founder, RezLive.com &
Group MD, Travel Designer Group

“ As airports evolve into lifestyle destinations, the traveller experience will become more immersive, personalised, and tech-enabled — blending retail, wellness, and cultural touchpoints into the journey. **Over the next five years, we expect a shift from transactional travel to experiential engagement.** In this context, demand for concierge services will grow significantly. ”



Adhip Nath Palchaudhuri
Chairman & MD
Balmer Lawrie

“ **Agents play a vital role in shaping a traveller's airport experience, often serving as the first point of contact before a journey begins.** From sharing documents and guiding on airport procedures to briefing clients about services that may incur extra charges, agents help ensure a seamless start to any trip. They must be sensitive to travellers with special needs. ”



Abhishek Goyal
CEO & Executive Director
Aeroprim Group

“ **Modern passengers value their time and expect a seamless journey from the moment they enter the airport.** Platforms such as Encalm and other airport-specific service providers are helping the cause. Their services not only reduce stress but also create a sense of exclusivity, transforming airports into destinations rather than mere transit points. They represent the intersection of hospitality, efficiency, and personalisation. ”



Jay R Bhatia
Managing Director
Tulsidas Khimji Holidays

“ **We foresee growing demand for concierge-style services, not just lounges, but assistance with fast-track security, baggage handling, airport transfers, and curated shopping or dining,** along with spa and salon appointments to name a few. These services will appeal to premium, and even leisure travellers, who value time and comfort. ”

Contd. on page 11 ▶

Do we need to rebrand travel?

Experts feel that the travel and hospitality industry need to undergo a strategic rebranding to overcome its reputation for high pressure and outdated practices.



Abbas Moiz
Owner
Shoiz Travels LLP

“ The talent shortage will be more pronounced in the coming years. In our office, our hiring is based on qualification — either IATA or an institute/college tourism related diploma, as a basic prerequisite. **The only reason the next generation or this one thinks about a career in travel is because they may not have any other option, or there is a family connection to the travel business.** The investment to project travel as a career is meagre. ”

“ **Turespaña promotes education and the development of young talent through initiatives, such as a scholarship programme offering 36 paid internships** in Spain's international tourism offices and at the Madrid headquarters. In addition, the Spanish State Secretariat for Tourism offers a training programme for tourism professionals, Anfitriones. Formación y Talento Turístico includes over 90 free online courses covering areas like digitalisation, sustainability, and quality management. ”



Elena Orland
Director
Tourism Office of Spain in India

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Mélange's sustainable model wins

Mélange 2025, organised by the Mumbai Travel Fraternity, has been hailed as a monumental success. Not only did it draw participants from six continents, it gave birth to a sustainable model for trade exhibitions in the country with its innovative and standardised plug 'n play floor plan. The team now sets its sights on an even grander edition at Jio Convention Centre.



Hazel Jain

The MTF Co-founders — Pradeep Saboo, Rajat Bagaria, and Sameer Karnani — reveal the strategic choices that fuelled the success of Mélange's second edition — from closing registrations early to ensuring a global mix and hosting a buyer programme that saw overwhelming demand. **Pradeep Saboo**, Co-founder, Mumbai Travel Fraternity (MTF), says, "We were overwhelmed with the support we received from the industry for Mélange 2025. We saw some fabulous suppliers from all over the world — from six continents covering South America,

Canada, Morocco, Japan, Korea, Greece and Africa."

One of the defining features of Mélange has been its curated, spaced-out format with controlled numbers, which allowed participants the opportunity for substantive discussions rather than just card exchanges. "Our aim was to clear every small and big pain point any exhibitor faces during big shows. This means building the stalls, having the same booth design for every category. The idea was to standardise the design, so the spending on the design and the build-up of the booths for exhibitors was eradicated. So, there is a uniformity, there is no super spends," he elaborates.



(L-R) Sameer Karnani, Rajat Bagaria, and Pradeep Saboo

"We also had a fantastic range of buyers from all corners of the country — Guwahati, Kochi, Ludhiana. We hosted about 350 buyers," he adds.

Rajat Bagaria, Co-founder, MTF, says, "This year, we started the hosted buyers programme in

June, and we had to close it within 20 days because our expected number was already met. We had around 350-plus buyers from places like Siliguri, Kolkata, Delhi, Punjab, Gujarat, and even Pune." Their vision is firmly set on expanding the event's reach beyond the metros.

"Tier II, tier III city markets are where a lot of tourism boards do not reach out for their roadshows. So, our interest is definitely to tap those markets," he says. But what truly signalled the event's value, according to Bagaria, was the number of professionals who were willing to invest their own money. "There was also a large chunk of people from Gujarat, Pune, Nasik, and many other cities who visited the show at their own cost. When you are offering quality exhibitors, people are ready to spend," he adds.

Sameer Karnani, Co-founder, MTF, says, "We recorded almost 375 exhibitors and almost 3,000

buyers this year, forging more than 250,000 meaningful connections on our app. There was an agent whom we facilitated yesterday, had 160 meetings in one day. We also had a good mix of airlines like Emirates, Air India, IndiGo, Singapore Airlines, OmanAir, and Fly91.

NEXT EDITION

- ❖ **Mélange 2026**
- ❖ **26-27 Sep 2026**
- ❖ **Jio Convention Centre, Mumbai**



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Travellers have changed. Have we?

If there is one thing the travel industry agrees on, it is that change is not coming — it is already here. From new traveller mindsets to digital reinvention, the way India moves, books, and experiences travel is undergoing a remarkable reset. The latest 'How India Travels 2025' report by Booking.com paints a fascinating picture. The Indian traveller today is guided less by price and more by purpose. Social media shapes choices, spontaneity fuels planning, and value now means meaningful experiences.

The rise of experiential stays and the idea that 'the stay is the holiday' reflects how hotels and homestays are transforming into destinations themselves. Guests want more than a room — they want stories, design, and a sense of place. As smaller towns emerge as travel hotspots, tier II and III India are no longer waiting in the wings. They are headlining the show.

Technology, too, has become the invisible engine powering this transformation. AI-led trip planning, seamless payments, and super apps are redefining convenience — and with it, traveller expectations. At the same time, the buzz around GST changes has added another layer of reflection. The sentiment across the trade is mixed — cautious yet hopeful. Everyone is asking the same question — How can we find clarity, consistency, and collaboration in policy that matches the industry's pace of innovation?

In this issue, we have tried to capture that spirit of reinvention — from rebranding travel careers to spotlighting the next phase of hospitality growth. The traveller is not waiting anymore. They are already on the move. And that is the cue for all of us in the trade. It is time to match their pace, rethink how we engage, and lead with ideas that inspire. Because in this new era of travel, staying relevant is not just about keeping up — it is about staying ahead, together.

'Inclusive tourism can build loyalty, lead to biz growth'

Neil Patil, Founder, COO & CTO, Veena World, and Winner of India Travel Awards 2024, shares his perspective on how we as an industry can build a travel industry for all that will not only benefit the community but the company as well.

In today's travel landscape, inclusivity is no longer a niche concept or a "nice to have". It has become an essential driver of growth, loyalty, and long-term success. Travellers today are more diverse than ever — spanning different ages, abilities, cultures, budgets, and personal needs. Their expectations go far beyond seeing beautiful destinations; they want experiences that feel safe, welcoming, and designed with them in mind. For Indian travellers, this shift is especially significant.

India's outbound tourism market has evolved from a small, homogenous segment to a vibrant mosaic of first-time flyers, seasoned globe-trotters, senior citizens, solo women travellers, adventure seekers, and families spanning three generations.

Each brings unique needs, and for many, the decision to book hinges on knowing these needs will be understood and met without compromise. In my opinion, inclusive tourism is about breaking down barriers — physical, cultural, or economic — so that everyone can participate fully in the joy of travel. And in doing so, it unlocks not only new markets but also deep, lasting relationships with guests who value being seen and understood.

The real definition

For the Indian traveller, inclusivity starts with the comfort of being understood, culturally and practically, no matter where they are in the world. It's the reassurance that a senior citizen will have enough rest breaks during a European tour. It's knowing that vegetarian, Jain, or halal meals will be available without a fuss in Tokyo or Toronto. It's a Hindi-speaking tour manager

in the heart of Italy who can explain history in a way that feels familiar. It's having kid-friendly itineraries for families, or safe, structured group tours for solo women travellers venturing abroad for the first time.

Inclusive tourism also recognises India's grow-

Expectations of travellers go far beyond seeing beautiful destinations; they want experiences that feel safe, welcoming

ing diversity of travel profiles. Professionals who want short, high-energy getaways; retirees with time for slow travel; young couples seeking immersive cultural experiences; and students travelling on tight budgets. It's about removing both visible and invisible barriers, whether that is ensuring airport assistance for first-time flyers, providing clear visa guidance, or designing payment plans that make big trips financially accessible.

The business case

India is now one of the fastest-growing outbound travel markets in the world. But behind those numbers lies a crucial truth: this market is not monolithic. It is a wide mix of preferences, needs, and expectations, and travel brands that embrace inclusivity are the ones positioned to capture its full potential.

Market potential: The Indian middle class is expanding rapidly, and so is its appetite for travel. Se-

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ❖ **Inclusivity is a Business Imperative:** Inclusivity is no longer a 'nice-to-have' but a core driver of growth
- ❖ **It's About Removing Barriers:** Main goal of inclusive tourism is to break down physical, cultural, & economic barriers
- ❖ **The Indian Traveller is Diverse:** The Indian outbound travel market is no longer homogenous. It now includes seniors, solo women, and multi-generational families

niors make up a growing share of outbound tourists. Young professionals are seeking quick, well-curated escapes. Families are travelling in larger, multi-generational groups. By catering to these varied segments

thought of everything, so you can just enjoy" holds a decisive edge in the market. This is where inclusivity becomes more than a value; it becomes a differentiator that competitors cannot easily replicate.

India market is not monolithic. It is a wide mix of preferences, needs, and expectations, and travel brands that embrace inclusivity

Long-term growth: Inclusivity is not a one-off marketing campaign; it's a growth strategy. Brands that build inclusivity into their DNA today will be the ones growing alongside their customers tomorrow.

The future of tourism will belong to the brands that make inclusivity their default, not their differentiator. The more we design with that in mind, the more we move from simply being in the travel business to being in the business of changing lives.

through inclusive design, travel companies can tap into an enormous and still underserved demand.

Loyalty and word-of-mouth: In our culture, positive travel experiences are often shared widely, with extended family, friends, and social networks. When travellers feel understood and cared for, they become powerful brand ambassadors.

Competitive advantage: A company that can confidently say "We have



Neil Patil
Founder, COO & CTO, Veena World &
Winner of India Travel Awards 2024

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

Tourism share in India's GDP to grow @6.4% per year

According to the WTTC's 2025 Annual Research highlights, India's tourism sector is demonstrating remarkable resilience. Data reveals that the sector's GDP contribution is projected to grow at a robust 6.4% annually over the next decade, outpacing the global average. This growth is primarily fuelled by strong domestic demand, which constitutes over 83% of total visitor spending in 2024.

GLOBAL DATA

Total Travel & Tourism GDP Contribution				Total Travel & Tourism Jobs Contribution			
2019	10.5%	(Share of Global Economy) US\$ 10.3 TN		2019	10.7%	(Share of Global Jobs) 377.7 MN	
2024	10%	Annual Change 8.5%	(6% vs 2019) Economy Change YoY @2.6%	2024	10.6%	Annual Change 6.2%	(5.6% vs 2019)
2025 Forecast	10.3%	Annual Change 6.7%	(13.0% vs 2019) Economy Change YoY @2.5%	2025 Forecast	10.9%	Annual Change 4%	(9.9% vs 2019)
2035 Forecast	11.5%	CAGR (2025–2035) 3.5%	Economy CAGR (2025–2035) 2.5%	2035 Forecast	12.5%	New Jobs (2025–2035) 90.6 MN	

INDIA KEY DATA

Total Travel & Tourism GDP Contribution				Total Travel & Tourism Jobs Contribution			
2019	6.9%	₹17.4 TN (US\$ 207.9 BN) of Total Economy		2019	39.8 MN	= 9% (Share of Total Jobs)	
2024	6.6%	Annual Change 9.2%	(19.9% vs 2019) Economy Change = 6.6%	2024	46.3 MN	Annual Change 6.8%	(16.3% vs 2019)
2025 Forecast	6.6%	Annual change 7.8%	(29.2% vs 2019)	2025 Forecast	48.2 MN	Annual Change 4.1%	(21.1% vs 2019)
2035 Forecast	6.9%	CAGR (2025–2035) 6.4%	Economy CAGR (2025–2035) 6%	2035 Forecast	63.9 MN	New Jobs (2025–2035) 15.8 MN	

INDIA SECTOR CHARACTERISTICS

2019	2024	2025 Forecast	2035 Forecast
International Visitor Spending			
₹2.8 TN (US\$ 33.7 BN)	₹3.1 TN (US\$ 36.8 BN) Annual Change: 7.4% (8.9% vs 2019)	₹3.2 TN (US\$ 38.8 BN) Annual Change: 5.6% (15.1% vs 2019)	₹4.6 TN (US\$ 55.5 BN) CAGR (2025–2035) 3.6%
Domestic Visitor Spending			
₹12.7 TN (US\$ 151.9 BN)	₹15.5 TN (US\$ 185.6 BN) Annual Change: 9.7% (22.2% vs 2019)	₹16.8 TN (US\$ 200.8 BN) Annual Change: 8.2% (32.2% vs 2019)	₹32.7 TN (US\$ 391.2 BN) CAGR (2025–2035) 6.9%



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TRAVEL NEWS

Minor Hotels targets **50 new openings in India** over next decade, says Rohit Chopra

By 2030, Indians will make almost **5.2 bn trips**; hotels must meet momentum with intent: Booking.com

India's visitor spend in UK to touch **£1 bn this year**, 166 direct flights a week and growing: Gary Robson

About **59% of Indian travellers plan more international trips**, with searches for Luxembourg up a whopping 138 per cent: Google Think Travel report

Thailand eyes Indian weddings, wedding planners and influencers to boost tourism & investment

FLY91: Smart routing, distribution clicks

India's aviation market is rapidly expanding, but regional connectivity has remained largely untapped. FLY91 is focusing on underserved destinations and customer-friendly innovations. **Manoj Chacko**, CEO & MD, FLY91, in an interview with **TRAVTALK**, shares how the airline was conceived, its early success, and plans ahead.

Nisha Verma

The idea of FLY91 had been brewing for years but gained momentum post-pandemic. **Manoj Chacko**, CEO & MD, FLY91, said, "While everyone was focused on narrow and wide-body aircraft, nobody was looking seriously at turboprops and regional flying. India has over 1,500 aircraft on order, and none of them is a regional aircraft. We saw that gap as a sweet spot." Launching in March 2024, FLY91 began with Goa as its base. "Today, we operate into eight cities, run about 550 flights a month with three ATRs, and our fourth aircraft will be inducted shortly," he added.



Manoj Chacko
CEO & MD
FLY91

Early trade lead

In its first year, FLY91 operated more than 3,500 flights and carried 1.7 lakh passengers. Attributing this success to a disciplined approach, Chacko revealed, "We are not here for vanity. Our business is about building a professional air trans-

portation company. That means careful route selection and a very strong distribution system."

He believes that distribution has been a game-changer for them. "If your content is not visible, customers cannot find you. We worked hard to be present across OTAs, B2B platforms, and with local travel agents. Our commission structure is simple and transparent, and our refund process is automated. The trade now knows we are a serious, trustworthy airline," Chacko said.

Encashing routes

Proud of its distinctive network, the airline is clocking encouraging load factors. "Our sectors are

not just about metro connectivity. We fly to places like Jalgaon, Sindhudurg, and Lakshadweep. These

popular sectors like Goa-Pune or Goa-Hyderabad, it is 95-100 per cent. That shows the strength of regional demand," he said.

Future roadmap

FLY91 is taking a focused approach towards future. "In five years, we want to induct 30 aircraft across five bases, covering 50 cities," he affirmed.

If your content is not visible, customers cannot find you. We worked hard to be present across OTAs, B2B platforms

FACT CHECK - FLY 91

Launched: March 2024

Base: Goa (Mopa Airport)

Fleet: 3 ATR 72-600 aircraft (4th joining soon)

360° protection for cruise travellers

Cruises have transitioned from being a niche luxury option to a mainstream segment in the travel industry. For travel agencies and tour operators, this shift presents both a significant opportunity and a responsibility. Ensuring clients enjoy a seamless cruise experience now requires more than just booking the right cabin; it demands comprehensive travel protection.

TT Bureau

The Indian cruise market is projected to generate \$235 million in revenue by 2025, with expectations to reach \$418 million by 2030, growing at a steady 12 per cent CAGR. This expansion is supported by initiatives like the Cruise Bharat Mission, which aims to develop 51 new cruise circuits across 14 states and three Union Territories by 2027. This opens new avenues for tour operators and travel agencies to curate specialised packages while positioning themselves as trusted advisors in this evolving segment.

Passenger numbers in India have increased nearly five-



Dev Karvat
Founder and CEO
Asego

fold from around 100,000 in 2014-15 to nearly 490,000 in 2024-25, reflecting a broader demographic appeal. **Dev Karvat**, Founder and CEO, Asego, says, "With the rapid growth of the cruise industry, travel agencies play a crucial role in ensuring clients not only

have the right itinerary but also the right protection. Cruise-specific insurance is no longer optional — it's essential to guarantee a smooth and memorable experience. Agencies that proactively guide their clients in this area can build trust and long-term relationships."

Standard travel insurance, while useful for traditional trips, often falls short when it comes to cruise-specific situations. Trip cancellations, medical emergencies on board, and disruptions due to cabin confinement require coverage that is tailored to the cruise environment. Travel Advisors who educate their clients about the advantages of cruise-specific insurance — cover-

ing medical emergencies, trip interruptions, and lost experiences — can build stronger trust and deliver greater value. This proactive approach not only sets them apart from



competitors but also positions them as advisors who view traveller safety as paramount.

Cruise trips often come with their own set of challenges. Weather-related itinerary changes, mechanical delays, and high onboard medical costs can quickly disrupt a traveller's

experience. Additionally, lost or delayed baggage, or unexpected illness or injury, can prevent them from enjoying planned excursions. By recommending specialised travel protection, tour operators can help mitigate these risks.

Looking ahead, the cruise industry in India and globally is set to continue its rapid expansion, offering niche, personalised, and adventurous itineraries. Travel agencies that integrate flexible, cruise-specific insurance solutions and provide informed guidance will be well-positioned to capture this growing market. In 2025-26, the key to success is not merely selling cruises but ensuring that every traveller's journey is

protected, seamless, and memorable. Tour operators and travel agencies that

Travel agencies play a crucial role in ensuring that clients (travellers) not only have the right itinerary but also the right protection

master this balance will not only enhance client satisfaction but also strengthen their reputation and long-term business growth.

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'We must embrace flexibility & innovation'

► Contd. from page 3



Chef Eabin Mathew
Principal
BGSIM, Bangalore

“The talent shortage is real, but it is also an opportunity to re-examine working conditions and reimagine career paths. **For students, this means an opportunity to rise and define new standards.** Filling gaps needs strategies rooted in rebranding, reskilling, and reimagining the workplace. The next gen needs to see that hospitality offers not just jobs, but meaningful, global careers.”



Yash Vakil
Founder
Arago Travels

“Travel and hospitality is competing with tech, finance, and even startups for the same new talent. **The industry has not fully recalibrated to meet their expectations on pay, flexibility, or growth.** We invest in training people who may not come from travel but bring skills. Most of our hires are freshers with one thing in common: a curiosity to learn.”

“We recruit across a wide spectrum. **The industry is undergoing a natural rebranding, driven by evolving consumer expectations and the rise of experiential travel.** Careers in travel today go far beyond traditional roles; they now encompass creativity, innovation, and adventure.”



Manoj Singh
Country Head – India
Norwegian Cruise Line

“Staffing levels, particularly in frontline and operational roles, continue to lag. **We invest in our people through upskilling, leadership training, and cross-functional exposure.** We believe in empowering young, enterprising students with meaningful opportunities to learn and grow. We collaborate with tourism and hospitality institutes to build a strong pipeline of ready professionals.”



Alefiya Singh
Founder
IRIS Reps

“It’s time we broaden our perspective; candidates from other industries passionate about travel deserve a chance. That said, qualifications and formal training are still preferred. **The new generation brings with it a different mindset — one that is aspirational but disconnected from realities.** This shows a disconnect between expectations and actual demands.”

“Goa still faces challenges due to seasonal demand. To bridge gaps, **we rely on campus hiring and internships, cross-training existing staff, employee referrals, contractual and seasonal staffing,** retention through accommodation, welfare, and growth opportunities. Frontline and culinary roles are the most affected. Digital roles are affected to a lesser extent.”



Vishal Pathak
Vice President Operations
Alcon Real Estates



Ellona Pereira
General Manager
Aviareps India

“Staffing levels, particularly in frontline and operational roles, continue to lag. **We invest in our people through upskilling, leadership training, and cross-functional exposure.** We believe in empowering young, enterprising students with meaningful opportunities to learn and grow. We collaborate with tourism and hospitality institutes to build a strong pipeline of ready professionals.”

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IATO, stakeholders in talks for global push

An IATO delegation, led by **Ravi Gosain**, the National President, recently met with the Maharashtra Chapter members in Mumbai. The interactive session focused on key issues, such as the availability of tourist guides and rising hotel costs, while also outlining IATO's forward-looking plans, including a comprehensive AI training programme.



Hazel Jain

In a bid to foster closer ties with its members across the country, **Ravi Gosain**, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), along with three other office-bearers, met with the Maharashtra Chapter in Mumbai to discuss pressing challenges and share updates from the Ministry of Tourism.

"We as the national team want to interact with all our chapters — this is the third in a row after Kashmir and Andamans, and now Maharashtra," Gosain stated. "We want to make our members in Maharashtra aware about what is happening in in-

bound tourism on the national level. Also, we want to hear from them about their issues in Maharashtra, or their personal issues doing business. So, we will be catering to all those questions."

Embracing AI and technology

Highlighting a major national initiative, Gosain revealed IATO's focus on integrating technology into the tourism sector.

"Our convention in Bhubaneswar had a one-hour session on AI specifically. We think it's a moving forward thing for the tourism business. We are now rolling out our skill training programmes, and AI training is one of them," he said.



Ravi Gosain
President
IATO

"We will roll out an AI programme this month that will travel to different cities in India, including Mumbai. It will be a classroom-style full-day programme with 40 to 50 members in a batch. We want a comprehensive AI programme, not just an introduction, so that people can really

immerse themselves in this." The session will be led by Rocky Jagtiani, an AI Transformation Coach from Bengaluru who also trains government bodies, IIMs, and IITs.

New routes and inbound potential

Commenting on new opportunities, Gosain welcomed the recent launch of a direct flight between New Delhi and Manila.

"It will open up a new market for India because when there is a direct flight, the tickets get cheaper. The Philippines is a good market specifically for the Buddhist sector. With this flight, we will have more options to promote India in the Philippines,"

he noted. The association is "in discussion with the Union Ministry of Tourism, as well as Air India to or-



ganise a joint roadshow in countries where Air India is flying directly. And I think the Philippines will be one of them."

Challenges ahead

On the rising hotel costs, Gosain said, "India is getting expensive because most of the hotels during winters are busy with Indian weddings.

Regarding inbound traffic, Gosain acknowledged a current dip, partly attribut-



We will roll out an AI programme this month that will travel to different cities in India. It will be a classroom-style full-day programme

ing it to a "lack of promotions by the government." However, he expressed optimism about the Ministry's renewed efforts.

'Airports no longer just transit hubs'

► Contd. from page 3



Amit Thadani
Director
Nik n Ani Travels

"Airports are no longer just transit hubs; they are evolving into lifestyle destinations. **In the next five years, I see them offering more digital, seamless, and personalised experiences, from biometrics to wellness zones.** We see a demand for fast-track immigration, baggage assistance, and meet-and-assist and concierge services growing at airports."



Dheeraj Ranjan Kumar
Founder & Director
Baltrip Wisata

"In the next five years, airports will shift to being lifestyle destinations, with services like shopping, dining, wellness, and cultural experiences. **For travel agents, this means curating end-to-end experiences that start well before take-off.** Concierge services will see strong demand as travellers increasingly value personalisation and stress-free movement through airports."

"Apart from the usual frills — from lifestyle brands to wellness corners — the demand for facilities at airports



Reena Sachdev
Founder
Travel Arena

is changing. **Airport looks is a big market already with brands specialising in airport wear, travel-friendly essentials, to inflight care products.** The best place to source these would be airports."



Shrawan Bhalla
Vice President
OTOAI

"**Travel agents can act as navigators and educate clients beforehand to ensure a pleasant experience at airports.** First-time travellers often don't know where to go, while senior citizens may require services like wheelchairs from entrance to departure. To address this, agents share their knowledge, offering smooth airport experiences. VIP services, where available, help."

"**Airports are fast evolving into transit lifestyle hubs, integrating retail, wellness, and technology** to create comfortable and efficient experiences for travellers. Over the next five years, regional airports will offer digitally connected, service-oriented environments with personalised support. At FLY91, we are ensuring this essential evolution balances operational efficiency."



Manoj Chacko
MD & CEO
FLY91



Tejbir Singh Anand
Managing Director
Holiday Moods Adventures

"Offering seamless itineraries, and services like fast-track security, lounge access, and real-time flight updates, **travel agents play a pivotal role in enhancing airport experiences. Their expertise ensures smooth transition and reduced stress for travellers.** Clients, in turn, expect airports to deliver efficient check-ins, clear signage, clean facilities, and courteous staff."

Northeast beckons, but infra lags

A travel revolution is quietly unfolding in the Northeast. Bolstered by new air links and smoother highways, this lush, culturally rich frontier is more accessible than ever. However, the region faces a pivotal challenge — a critical shortage of branded hospitality and a compelling narrative on the world stage, leaving its vast promise still largely untapped.



Arjun Baljee
Founder, ICONIQA &
President, Royal Orchid Hotels

“Demand for quality stays in the Northeast region has gone up significantly. **That is why we believe it's the right time to strengthen our presence here.** At present, we operate two properties in the region, and we are actively looking at adding more in the coming year. We have seen traffic on these routes steadily rise.”



Gagan Sarangi
Director
Dove Tours

“A major milestone for Odisha this year has been the launch of the Adventure Tourism Policy. This will open new avenues for promoting adventure-based experiences in the state. **While domestic tourism in Odisha continues to grow, foreign tourist arrivals remain below expectations.**”



Bengia Mrinal
Director, BAC Voyages Tours,
Treks & Expeditions

“**I would like to highlight the need for better air connectivity to Arunachal,** particularly with flights from major Indian cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, and daily flights from Delhi. Enhanced accessibility is critical to unlocking the state's tourism potential while ensuring balanced regional development.”



Debjit Dutta
IATO Chairman – West Bengal
Chapter & Director & CEO,
Impression Tourism Services (India)

“The region needs to focus on transitioning from a growth-centric narrative to one rooted in sustainability, inclusivity, and deeper purpose through a meaningful dialogue. **Responsible tourism is no longer aspirational — it's essential.** Today's travellers seek emotional link, sustainability, and authenticity.”



E Banlumlang Blah
State Incharge IATO Meghalaya &
Proprietor, Clara Tours, Shillong

“**We need to take up the pressing issue of high domestic airfares, particularly on flights to and from the Northeastern region** of India. Affordable connectivity is crucial for promoting tourism in this region. Another issue is the complex socio-political situation, including ethnic tensions, in the region.”



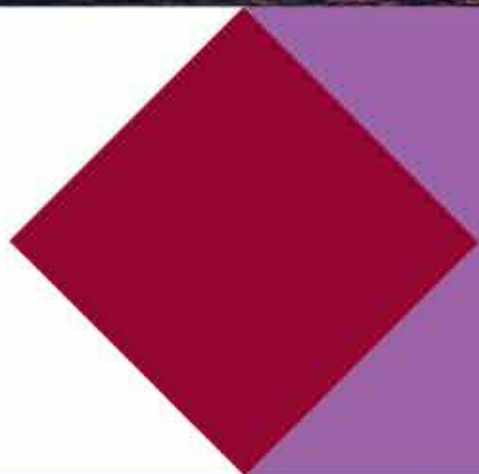
Manas Mukherjee
IATO State Chairman – Jharkhand
Chapter & Director, Jai Tours & Travels

“**Jharkhand was a Naxal dominated state but the situation has now improved** with the government taking steps to improve a few major destinations. On the other hand, the travel industry was not organised. After a long push, the process has started, and a few agents are registered now.”

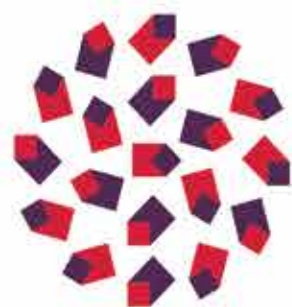
A night of strategic tie-ups in Mumbai

Sands Resorts Macao recently hosted over 150 leaders from India's travel trade and corporate sector for an exclusive VIP dinner experience in Mumbai. The evening's host, **Stephanie Tanpure**, Vice President of Sales, said that India is an important market for leisure and MICE customers, and they were honoured to be able to come back and visit key partners.





Experience
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TTE 2025: Exploring Tamil Nadu's

The 2nd Tamilnadu Travel Expo (TTE) came alive as a symphony of journeys in the temple city of Madurai, where more than 150 exhibitors and 250 buyers from the medical domain and the hospitality sector convened to explore Tamil Nadu's evolving tourism canvas. With the theme 'Explore Beyond Heritage', the event focused on boosting weddings, wellness, and new circuits in the state, along with harnessing the growing prowess, and immense promise, of medical tourism.



tourism canvas beyond heritage



GIAD achieves 10-year milestone

Girls in Aviation Day in India continues to be defined by 'Beti Ki Udaan, Desh Ka Swabhimaan'. What began in 2016 as a modest initiative has today grown into a nationwide movement that has transformed the way young girls view aviation — not as a distant, glamorous world, but as a viable and exciting career path. **TRAVTALK** is media partner in this glorious journey.



TT Bureau

As Girls in Aviation Day (GIAD) celebrates its 10th year, the impact of this programme can be felt across the country — from bustling metros to smaller towns, where for many girls, it has been their first brush with airports, aircraft, and aviation professionals. Over the past nine years, more than 50,000 girls across 30 Indian cit-



trainers, and HR professionals, who shared their personal journeys of resilience and success. Essay competitions, quizzes, and interactive sessions further encouraged girls to articulate their dreams and explore aviation as a serious career choice.

Collaborative effort

Over the years, GIAD has found unwavering support from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, state governments, and key industry stakeholders, such as



Radha Bhatia
President
Women in Aviation India

ies have participated in GIAD events, discovering opportunities they never imagined possible.

Bridging skill & opportunity gap

For **Radha Bhatia**, President of Women in Aviation India, the idea behind GIAD has always been rooted in empowerment through education and skill development. "It is our mission to change mindsets, overcome ob-

stacles of ignorance, inequity and drive change to create a new world of opportunities for women, especially in remote areas where education may have paved a way, but a noticeable lack of skill development and awareness persists. GIAD aspires to bridge this gap by encouraging, skilling, and empowering the youth," she said. The mission is to close that gap by creating early exposure and access to industry knowledge. "These events emphasise the importance of skill development as the only path to generation of career opportunities, that foster jobs, thus providing stability and security not just to one member but an entire family," Bhatia explained.

This focus on hands-on learning and exposure

ensures that young minds don't just dream but also learn how to translate those dreams into action.

Opening horizons

These events are aimed to give students a tangible sense of what the aviation world looks like. "GIAD events are held at schools, colleges, and even at airports, to provide students a glimpse of an aviation ecosystem," Bhatia said.

She added, "Our members from across India — a group of enthusiasts collectively representing multiple fields, interests, and diverse roles, such as pilots, astronauts, entrepreneurs, AMEs, air traffic controllers, academicians, journalists, drone pilots, flight attendants, airport managers, and ground handlers, meet and engage with the



young students. Across these events, engaging activities, including airport tours and demonstration of drones, are organised for providing a real-time experience and familiarising girl students with the aviation ecosystem," she elaborated.

Hands-on learning

A shining example of this experiential approach was the GIAD 2025 programme organised in partnership with GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL). More than 60 young girls from nearby schools toured the GMR Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility and the School of Aviation, where they witnessed aircraft operations and interacted with professionals in real-time. "The educational and empowering programme attempted to alleviate fears and anxieties due to lack of knowl-

edge and information and further help young minds understand the varied career paths thriving in

Our mission is to change mindsets, inequity, and drive change to create a new world of opportunities for women

Lockheed Martin, GMR, Blue Dart Aviation, Vistara Airlines, AirAsia, Airports Authority of India, IATA, KPMG, Bird Academy, BWFS, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, and major airports, including DIAL, BIAL, CIAL, HIAL, and Chandigarh Airport.

Decade of dreams taking flight

As GIAD enters its 10th year, its success is evident in the lives it has touched — young girls who have found inspiration, training, and jobs through this movement. With continued partnerships and the unflinching support of its members, GIAD 2025 will culminate later this year with the 'Giving Wings to Dreams Awards'. For Bhatia, the vision remains crystal clear — to see every girl child believe that the sky is not the limit, but just the beginning. 🇮🇳



TAAI raises the bar at Abu Dhabi convention

The 68th TAAI Convention in Abu Dhabi turned out to be a spectacular show of the destination's cultural offerings, state-of-the-art venues, and contemporary experiences. This was topped by several impactful sessions.



TT Bureau

The 68th edition of the TAAI Convention and Exhibition, held in Abu Dhabi from 17–19 September 2025, was a masterclass in excellence and execution. With over 540 delegates in attendance, the event was conceptualised, planned, and delivered in just six weeks — a feat that **Sunil Kumar**, President, TAAI, describes as “an astounding team effort that redefined what a convention could be.”

“We wanted to bring back the excitement that a TAAI Convention is known for. People must discover something different each time. This convention was designed and curated to offer delegates an experience of a lifetime, and I am happy that is exactly how they felt,” said Kumar.

Oriental, Abu Dhabi. The opening night saw senior executives from Department of Tourism & Culture Abu Dhabi in presence, including **Mubarak Hammad Al Shamsi**, Director, Abu Dhabi Conventions & Exhibition Bureau; **H.E. Saleh Mohammed Al Geziry**, Director General, Tourism Sector, DCT, Abu



Dhabi; and **H.E. Saeed Ali Al Fazari**, Executive Director — Strategy Affairs, DCT Abu Dhabi. They officially inaugurated the event alongside **Zubin Karkaria**, Chief Executive Officer, VFS Global, who was also presented with



Sunil Kumar
President
TAAI

in turbulent times. On the second day, **Alexis Guest**, Vice President, Global Operators, Travelport, shared valuable takeaways on tech, innovation, and the evolving traveller mindset. The event also saw the launch of the TAAI MarketPlace — powered by Amadeus, where **Sandeep Dwivedi**, Managing Director, Travel Sellers — India and Subcontinent, shared,

B2B buzz

Parallel to the convention was the much-awaited B2B India Travel & Tourism Expo, which turned out to be a full house. With 43 stalls and unprecedented participation, exhibitors lauded the engagement that the event generated.

Terrific tours

The central theme of the convention, “Business with Goodness”, came alive at the serene BAPS Temple Convention Hall, where His Holiness Swami Brahmaviharidas delivered a deeply inspiring address. Delegates explored Abu Dhabi's rich culture through exclusive tours to Qasr Al Watan Palace, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Louvre Abu Dhabi, teamLab Phenomena, and the National Aquarium, with a post-convention extension to Al Ain adding a relaxing finale.

Key takeaways

Reflecting on the event's success, Kumar highlighted, “One important lesson I take home is to emulate the evolution witnessed in Abu Dhabi over the last eight years. It is a destination that continues to innovate and inspire — and that is what we must do as an industry.”



The two days of knowledge sessions, hosted at the elegant Al Bateen Ballroom of Grand Hyatt Abu Dhabi, brought together an impressive line-up of speakers and industry leaders. The sessions were not just informative but transformational, setting a new benchmark for industry engagement.

Grand inauguration

The convention opened to huge applause at the Emirates Palace Mandarin

the Distinguished Leader Award of the Year by TAAI. **A Amarnath**, Dy Chief of Mission, Indian Embassy, Abu Dhabi, also addressed the opening ceremony.

Thought leaders' views

The knowledge sessions opened with a dynamic address by **Pieter Elbers**, CEO, IndiGo Airlines, whose insights into the airline's growth strategy and future outlook offered delegates a rare perspective on leadership and resilience

“We aim to make this marketplace the Amazon for the travel trade industry.”

Kumar claimed that this year's sessions broke the mould. “We had so many fresh faces, new thoughts and approaches. It was not just information — it was provoking thoughts. The speakers were not just known names, but individuals who brought new relevance and context, which made a huge impact on the audience.”

CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Over 540 delegates in attendance
- ❖ 43 stalls at the B2B India Travel & Tourism Expo
- ❖ Keynotes by Pieter Elbers (IndiGo) & Alexis Guest (Travelport)



Mohan NSN gets global role; elected as VP 2026

Mohan NSN has been elected as the VP 2026 and President Elect 2027 of Skål International, making him the 1st Indian to ascend to the organisation's highest office.



TT Bureau

Skål International India had a proud moment at the Skål International World Congress 2025, held in Cusco, Peru, from 25–30 September. **Mohan NSN**, Region 10 (India) Director and Deputy Vice President of Skål International India, was elected Vice President 2026 & President Elect 2027 — becoming the first Indian to ascend to the organisation's highest position. Mohan said, “This honour is not just mine — it belongs to every Skålleague in India who believes in friendship, leadership, and service. Together, we will build bridges across nations and prove that tourism, when rooted in sustainability and unity, can transform the world.”



Mohan NSN
Region 10 (India) Director & Deputy Vice President, Skål International India

talises the legacy of a true visionary. His contributions to Skål, Kolkata, and Indian tourism, will continue to inspire generations,” Mehra said. **Amin Asghar**, President, Skål International Kolkata, added, “This honour is

Mohan's victory is a defining moment for Skål International India. His leadership reflects our collective aspiration

Congratulating Mohan, **Sanjeev Mehra**, President, Skål International India, said, “Mohan's victory is a defining moment for Skål International India. His leadership reflects our collective aspiration — to position India as a beacon of Skål's core ethos, towards building a stronger global movement.”

Late Syed Hafizur Rahman: Honouring a legend

In a deeply emotional highlight, Late Syed Hafizur Rahman from Skål International Kolkata was posthumously recognised as Membre d'Honneur 2025, one of the highest honours within Skål International. “This recognition immor-

a proud moment for Skål Kolkata, for we carry forward the light of a legend. His vision and passion for Skål will forever guide our path as we strengthen our club and its role in the global fraternity.” Skål International India has showed its vision to serve the industry, promote business among friends, and lead by example.

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

EVENT TALK

Published from : India Middle East

NOVEMBER 2025

Date	Event	Time
3-5	Korea MICE Expo	10:00 am
4-6	World Travel Market London	10:00 am
7-8	Holiday Expo - Visakhapatnam	9:00 am
7-9	International Tourism & Travel Show - Canada	12:00 pm
7-10	Taipei International Travel Fair	10:00 am
9-12	Travel Exchange	9:00 am
11	Conztruct	4:00 pm
13-16	International Inland Tourism Fair	9:00 am
14-16	India Travel Mart - Jaipur	9:00 am
17	Belgium Travel Expo	9:00 am
18-20	IBTM World	9:00 am
20-22	International Travel & Tourism Fair	9:00 am
21	GBTA India Summit	8:30 am
22-24	India Travel Mart - Jammu	9:00 am
25	Arabian Travel Awards	6:00 pm
27-29	IITM - Pune	10:00 am

Rayna DMC boosts trade ties

Rayna DMC's 2025 roadshows across nine Indian cities brought travel agents and tour operators face-to-face with global exhibitors. The events strengthened trade tie-ups, showcased new offerings, and sparked strong interest in flexible departures.

Janice Alysius

Rayna DMC has re-inforced its presence in the Indian travel trade through a series of successful roadshows in 2025. According to **Ranjan Kumar Singh**, Country Manager - India, these events provided a valuable platform to connect with both new and existing partners.



Ranjan Kumar Singh
Country Manager - India
Rayna DMC



Jasmeet Singh Kohli
Trade Manager
Resorts World Sentosa

form to explore and book our products."

Looking ahead, Rayna DMC plans to continue engaging the travel trade with more roadshows. Singh said, "In 2025, we conducted three rounds of roadshows across nine cities. Building on this momentum, we will launch the next series in February 2026 to deepen our engagement."

"The roadshows provided an excellent platform to introduce Rayna DMC and 12 exhibitors from UAE, Singapore, and cruises to new trade partners while also re-engaging with existing ones. We showcased our latest offerings across Singapore, Thailand, cruises, and customisable fixed

departures. Face-to-face interactions allowed us to exchange views on industry trends and identify key market gaps, paving the way for stronger partnerships," said Singh.

This year, Rayna expanded its portfolio beyond Singapore to include Thailand,

giving Indian travellers more options. **Jasmeet Singh Kohli**, Trade Manager, Resorts World Sentosa, said, "Rayna's strong presence across tier I, II, and III cities gave us unparalleled access to a wide network of agents. It allowed us to connect with new partners and provide them a plat-



OBITUARY



Kamal Ramchand Jadhvani
(1964-2025)

Kamal Ramchand Jadhvani, ex-Vice President, TAFI and Director, Tulip Travel Services, passed away in Mumbai on 29 September 2025. His warmth, kindness, and unwavering love touched the lives of all who knew him. He will be deeply missed by family, friends, and everyone whose life he graced with his presence. His ever-smiling manner and contributions will always be remembered. We, at , mourn the loss caused to the industry from his demise.

Minar celebrates partnerships

Minar Travels hosted 'An Evening of Gratitude' in New Delhi recently, bringing together hoteliers, service providers, friends, and industry colleagues. It was an evening designed not just for celebration, but to reflect Minar's signature style: thoughtful, refined, and layered with meaning.



Webinar

Click here to register



Laax and Landquart Fashion Outlet

Switzerland is home to some stunning hidden gems and unique attractions.

Laax is one such destination!

Located on a sunny plateau in the Graubünden Region, this mountain village is famous for the Rhine Gorge, magnificent lakes and mountain panorama. The numerous experiences provided make it the perfect destination for outdoor enthusiasts, families and nature lovers.

And, located just 1 hr away from Laax by public transport, is the ultimate shopping paradise – Landquart Fashion Outlet. With over 180 brands at irresistibly low prices, this is the perfect place for all these outdoor enthusiasts, families and nature lovers to indulge in some retail therapy!

This webinar will showcase the various touristic offerings of Laax and Landquart Fashion Outlet.

Date	Day	Webinar	Time	Registration QR code
30 Oct 2025	Thursday	Laax and Landquart Fashion Outlet	3.00 PM IST	

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MOVEMENTS

RIDHIRA GROUP

Hyderabad

Ridhira Group has appointed **PHILIP LOGAN** as Group President to drive its strategic expansion and wellness-centric growth. In this role, Logan will lead the group's roadmap across hospitality, wellness communities, residential real estate, and life-style ventures. His mandate includes scaling wellness resort communities, launching master-planned developments, and embedding wellness-driven living into every project to create destinations that blend luxury, sustainability, and holistic well-being.



ATMOSPHERE CORE

India

Atmosphere Core has promoted **PRADIPTA KUMAR MOHAPATRA** to the position of Vice President – Development & Liaison for its operations across South Asia. In this new capacity, Mohapatra will work closely with the leadership team to drive the company's ambitious goal of signing 25 hotels in India by this year end. Additionally, he will oversee the establishment and maintenance of relations with government bodies, industry associations, and media houses.



ITC MUGHAL, A LUXURY COLLECTION

RESORT AND SPA

Agra

ITC Mughal, a Luxury Collection Resort and Spa, appoints **SANDIPAN BOSE** as General Manager. A seasoned luxury hospitality operator with over 25 years of industry experience, Bose brings with him deep operational expertise, strategic leadership, and a commitment to excellence in guest experience. In the proven journey through the growth of Mementos by ITC Hotels, Udaipur, he will now lead the dynamic luxury team at ITC Mughal.



ROSETTA HOSPITALITY

Bengaluru

Rosetta Hospitality has appointed **GAYATRI DRAVID** as Group Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing. With nearly two decades of experience in hospitality communications and brand strategy, Dravid steps into this role having championed marketing and PR mandates for some of the most renowned hospitality brands in India. In her new role, she will spearhead the group's marketing mandate: communications, public relations, and integrated marketing, overseeing all facets.



ANDAZ DELHI, BY HYATT

New Delhi

Andaz Delhi, by Hyatt appoints **ABHISHEK SABHERWAL** as the Director of Sales. With over two decades of diverse experience in luxury hospitality, sales, and business development, Sabherwal brings with him a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record of driving growth across leading hotel brands. He joins Andaz Delhi from The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences, where he held the role of Director of Sales. Over the years, he has successfully led high-performing teams.



MARRIOTT EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS, BENGALURU UB CITY

Bengaluru

Marriott Executive Apartments, Bengaluru UB City, has appointed **MAHESH KINI** as Director of Operations. With over 25 years of experience across India and the Maldives, Kini brings a wealth of expertise to the property. He has been instrumental in launching and relaunching award-winning dining concepts, including the successful revamp of Alba and UNO Izakaya at JW Marriott Bengaluru.



HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS

New Delhi

Holiday Inn Express has promoted **TARUN RATRA** to the role of Portfolio Operations Manager. Ratra has been an integral part of the Holiday Inn Express family since 2018, making a significant contribution to the brand's growth and success. In his new role, Ratra will be responsible for overseeing the operations of 12 Holiday Inn Express hotels across India — managed by SAMHI Hotels — ensuring consistency in operational standards, safety, and guest experience throughout the portfolio.



COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT BENGALURU HEBBAL

Bengaluru

Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal has appointed **VINEET KUMAR** as the Director of Rooms. With over 14 years of hospitality experience across leading international brands, Kumar brings a wealth of operational expertise and a strong acumen for delivering refined and thoughtfully personalised guest experiences. In his previous role, he worked as Rooms Division Manager at Sheraton Grand Palace Indore. His career includes leadership roles at esteemed properties.



Marriott Executive Apartments, Bengaluru UB City, has appointed **SHEEL JADEJA** as Director of Sales. Jadeja brings over 14 years of experience in sales and revenue management across luxury hospitality brands like Marriott, Leela Hotels & Resorts, and Taj hotels, driving consistent business growth and market expansion. At Marriott Executive Apartments Bengaluru UB City, he will spearhead market outreach strategies, partnerships, and revenue optimisation, positioning the property as the preferred address for extended stays and luxury experiences in Bengaluru.



THE WESTIN MUMBAI POWAI LAKE & LAKESIDE CHALET – MARRIOTT EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS

Mumbai

The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake and Lakeside Chalet – Marriott Executive Apartments has appointed **RONALD RAMIREZ** as the Head of Beverages, marking a strategic re-integration of a globally celebrated beverage visionary into the Indian hospitality landscape. With over two decades of experience, Ramirez's career spans multiple continents and iconic luxury brands, bringing with it a legacy of innovation, creativity, and excellence.



FAIRMONT AND RAFFLES JAIPUR

Jaipur

Fairmont and Raffles Jaipur have appointed **URVASHI JHA** as the Cluster Marketing & Communications Manager. With extensive global experience in luxury hospitality and brand communications, Jha brings a refined understanding of digital strategy, market positioning, and integrated brand storytelling to her new role. A graduate of IHM Ahmedabad with an MBA in Marketing from IMT Business School, Dubai, Jha is currently pursuing her PhD in Marketing at Symbiosis, Pune.



Marriott Executive Apartments, Bengaluru UB City, has appointed **SUNIL YADAV** as Director of Finance. With 19 years of experience across Marriott and Taj hotels, including international assignments in Bali, Yadav is known for his financial acumen, governance frameworks, and cost optimisation strategies. He has implemented robust audit systems, shortened debtor cycles, and ensured regulatory compliance while driving profitability. At Marriott Executive Apartments, Bengaluru UB City, he will lead financial strategy.



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India–Philippines partnership takes flight

Air India's direct flight between New Delhi and Manila is set to transform travel and tourism between India and the Philippines. Combined with the Philippines' 14-day visa-free entry for Indians, the move signals renewed momentum for leisure, business, and cultural exchange.



Janice Alyosius

The direct air connectivity between New Delhi and Manila has opened a new chapter in India–Philippines relations, marking a significant milestone for tourism, business, and cultural exchange. Speaking about the launch of Air India's direct service, His Excellency **Josel F Ignacio**, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to India, expressed optimism that this long-awaited development will accelerate the recovery of tourist arrivals from India and deepen bilateral ties.

"We launched the direct flight between India and the Philippines, between New Delhi and Manila. Before the pandemic in 2019, we were receiving 130,000 Indian tourists a year, and that number was on the upswing. We were optimistic it would double in the following years, but COVID happened. Now, with recovery well underway, we have moved from around 57,000 arrivals two years ago to about 78,000 last year. We feel confident that we will soon surpass pre-COVID numbers," he said.



Josel F Ignacio, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to India, at the launch of the New Delhi–Manila flight

14-day visa-free entry for Indian tourists and Air India's direct service between New Delhi and Manila.

"With these two elements on the table, we are certain that more Indian friends will visit our shores," he said.

Bridging the distance

For over a decade, travellers between India and the Phil-

With these two elements (visa-free entry and direct flights) on the table, we are certain that more Indian friends will visit our shores

According to him, two key enablers will drive this momentum, The Philippines'

ippines have had to transit through hubs like Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, or Hong Kong. The Ambassador described the direct route as a 'straight line' that symbolises not only geographic proximity but also diplomatic and cultural closeness.

"The benefits of a direct flight are clear — you save on hours, avoid transits, and enjoy greater convenience. The flight time is just

six and a half hours, which means travellers don't lose a day in transit. This ease of travel will encourage more Indians to discover the Philippines and vice versa," he said.

H.E. Ignacio noted that Indian travellers' decisions are often guided by two major factors — visa access and direct connectivity. "We have addressed both. The visa-free policy since June, and now a non-stop connection. These steps respond directly to what Indian travellers look for when planning trips abroad."

A destination with everything

Highlighting the Philippines' diverse offerings, H.E. Ignacio describes it as a destination that 'has it all'. "We have 7,641 islands, all tropical, with pristine beaches, world-class diving, and surfing. Beyond the coastlines, there are lush mountains, and for those who prefer urban experiences, we have the glitz and glamour of modern cities with some of the largest shopping malls in Asia," he said, adding, "There is something for everybody. Whether for leisure, business, or large-scale events."

Boosting MICE and film tourism

The Ambassador emphasised that the Philippines

is actively positioning itself as an attractive MICE destination and is exploring film tourism opportunities for the Indian market.

"At the Embassy, we are constantly improving services to support these segments. During my term, we implemented the electronic visa, and from there, we started exploring visa relaxation outright — which led to the visa-free regime. We continue to make recommendations to identify what more can be done to attract Indian travellers, event organisers, and film producers."

Invitation to Indians

H.E. Ignacio invites Indians to feel the warmth of Filipino hospitality. "We want to welcome all our Indian friends to visit the Philippines. Our slogan is 'Love the Philippines', and we are confident you will. It's a place of discovery and warmth, where English is widely spoken and where cultural familiarity meets new experiences."



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