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TTJ

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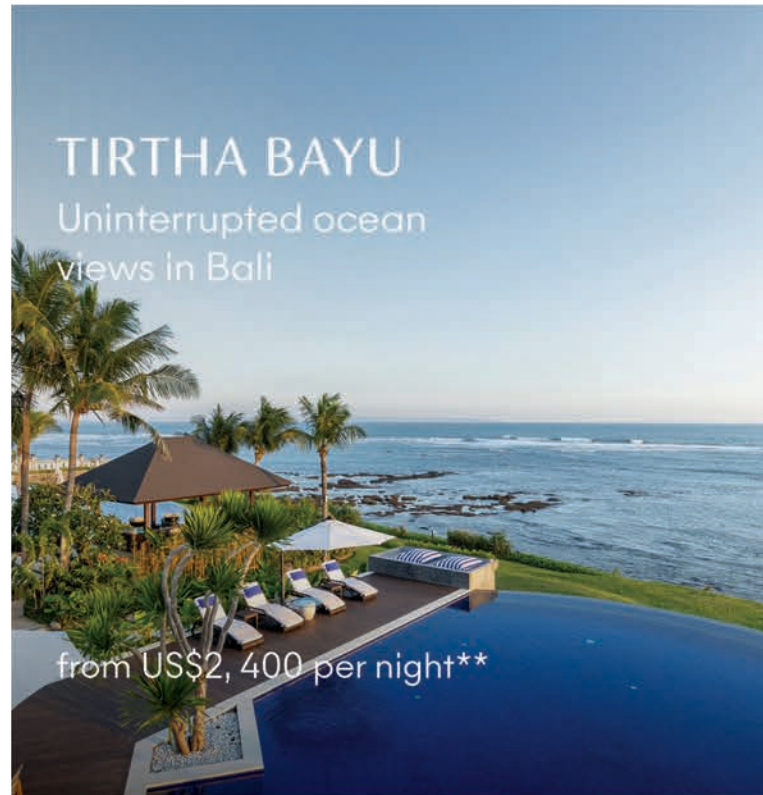
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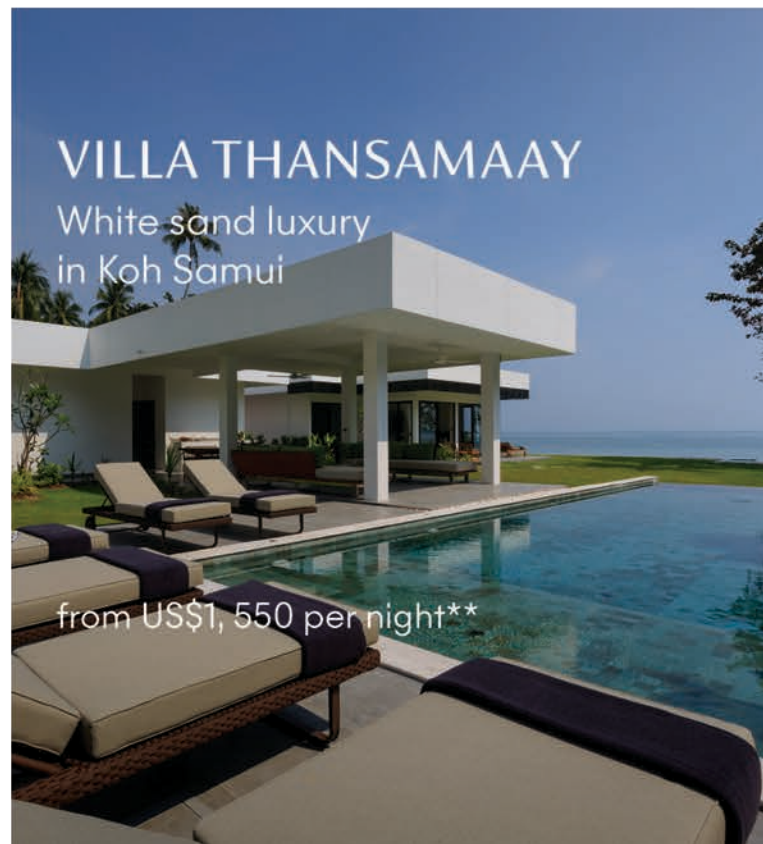
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Dear Friends,

The TTJ July issue is packed with novel features and insightful coverage. This month, our highlight includes the captivating world of film tourism, offering a compelling read. It features viewpoints from international and national tourist offices and inputs from leading film production houses, enriching the travel narrative with new insights and perspectives.

Additionally, we enter the realm of eco-tourism, which is experiencing remarkable growth. Along with highlighting a unique state that passionately promotes eco-tourism, our exploration focuses on aspects like emerging trends, the rising demand for eco-accommodations, certifications, and thoughts that prioritise sustainability, as shared by passionate advocates in the field.

In our commitment to comprehensive coverage, this issue also offers insights into the dynamic MICE sector, featuring interviews and updates from operators specialising in the MICE business. Furthermore, we bring you two exceptional FAM reports offering firsthand experiences from Dubai and Sri Lanka.

We invite you to immerse yourself in these enriching stories while exploring the diverse facets of travel and tourism with us.

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma

ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

Sun, Sand & 'I Do'

YOUR DREAM BEACH WEDDING AWAITS

Where your dream beach wedding comes to life across our three enchanting properties in Goa. With stunning locations in Mandrem, Candolim, and Cavelossim, we offer the perfect settings for unforgettable destination weddings. Each property is designed to provide a unique blend of Goa's natural beauty, rich culture and luxurious amenities, ensuring your special day is nothing short of magical.



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Air Astana Group bags multiple awards at 2024 World Airline Awards

The Air Astana Group was honoured with top awards at the 2024 World Airline Awards on June 24, 2024, at Fairmont Windsor Park, UK. Air Astana was named the Best Airline in Central Asia and CIS for the twelfth time and received the Best Airline Staff Service in Central Asia and CIS award for the eighth time. FlyArystan, Air Astana's low-cost carrier, won the Best Low-Cost Carrier in Central Asia and CIS award for the second time. The awards are hosted by Skytrax, an international air transport rating organization.

Peter Foster, CEO of Air Astana Group, expressed pride in receiving these honours, highlighting the dedication of the teams at Air Astana and FlyArystan to providing top-notch service. Edward Plaisted, CEO of Skytrax, commended Air Astana for its consistent high standards and praised FlyArystan's achievement.

The World Airline Awards, established in 1999, are known as 'the Oscars of the aviation industry.' The awards are based on a global customer satisfaction survey, with over 21.42 million entries from more than 100 nationalities in 2023-2024.



Australia tightens student visa application process; hikes fees by more than 125 per cent



The Australian Government has made significant changes to the Student visa program as part of its Migration Strategy. Effective July 01, 2024, the cost of visas for international students has been increased from AUD 710 (\$473) to AUD 1,600 (\$1,068).

Additionally, visitor visa holders and students with temporary graduate visas will no longer be able to apply onshore for a student visa. This measure addresses the issue of 'permanently temporary' former international students residing in Australia.

Temporary Graduate Visa holders must either leave Australia or seek skilled jobs and other visa pathways that may lead to permanent residency. Visitor visa applicants intending to study must apply for their Student visa from outside Australia.

The government assured that genuine Student visa applicants can still apply from offshore and those who meet the criteria will be granted the visa.

Air India's flagship A350 to fly twice daily on the Delhi-London Heathrow route from September



Air India is set to transform the onboard experience for its guests on twice-daily flights between Delhi and London Heathrow by deploying its brand-new Airbus A350-900 aircraft. Starting September 01, 2024, this route will mark the long-haul international debut of Air India's flagship product.

The A350-900 will replace the currently deployed Boeing 777-300ER and Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner on 14 of 17 weekly flights. As a result, an additional 336 seats will be available on the Delhi-London Heathrow route each week.

By September, Air India will have upgraded 90 per cent of all its flights to London Heathrow. From April 2024, Air India started deploying its recently inducted Boeing 777-300ERs with elevated cabin interiors on all flights across its Mumbai-London Heathrow route to provide upgraded cabin interiors and inflight entertainment systems while bringing First class back on the London Heathrow-Mumbai route.

The A350-900 will also introduce Premium Economy class on the Delhi-London Heathrow route, offering 24 wide seats in a 2-4-2 configuration in an upscale cabin. The A350 flights will feature new soft products and award-winning guest enhancements, including chinaware, tableware, glassware, bedding, and amenity kits designed by Ferragamo and TUMI for Business and Premium Economy guests.

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Outletcity Metzingen in Germany opens 'The Museum'



Metzingen, a town of 23,000 inhabitants, has gained international fame as a fashion hub. The Museum at Kanalstraße 6, which opened on June 25, showcases this success story, the city's history, and the mutual relationship between the destination and the city.

The museum sheds light on the history from three different perspectives. The exhibition can be experienced through various senses and is addressed to a wide audience. The information is presented on several levels.

The Museum is housed in a building constructed in 1877 that later became the Hugo Boss factory, which also housed the Boss and Holy family. In the 1970s, Germany's first Hugo Boss factory outlet opened and gained fame beyond the city's boundary.

The city's chronology is broken down into milestones that help to define the three threads of history selectively and is forcefully depicted in three colours. The history of Metzingen and Outletcity can be experienced through large-format pictures and small details, quotes, headlines of old newspaper articles, and an interactive media table that also shows a time warp of the city layout.

IndiGo announces direct flights from Bengaluru to Abu Dhabi from August



Commencing from August 01, 2024, the Bengaluru-Abu Dhabi flight will operate six times a week. With the launch of this new flight, IndiGo will now operate 75 weekly flights from Abu Dhabi to 10 cities in India, further strengthening connectivity to the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales, IndiGo, said, "We are pleased to announce direct flights between Bengaluru and Abu-Dhabi. Bengaluru is the 10th city on the IndiGo network to offer direct flights between Abu Dhabi and India. With the addition of these flights, IndiGo offers 75 weekly frequencies to Abu Dhabi and over 220 to the UAE. This new flight will further strengthen travel, trade, and tourism between India and the UAE by offering smooth and convenient business and leisure options."

Ras Al Khaimah offers complimentary visas for Indian MICE groups and wedding celebrations

The initiative by Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) will officially launch this month and run through March 2025, and will offer groups an even greater incentive to stage their wedding or corporate event in Ras Al Khaimah and experience the Emirate's breathtaking beauty while using its world-class facilities. Under the initiative, RAKTDA will provide free visas for Indian groups booking a minimum two-night stay in any of Ras Al Khaimah's world-class hotels. The offer is open to groups with at least 100 guests per night, with visa costs being covered by RAKTDA.

RasAlKhaimah offers stunning landscapes, world-class hotels, and unique venues, making it a preferred wedding destination for Indian couples. Notable resorts include Waldorf Astoria, Movenpick Resort Al Marjan Island, and Intercontinental Ras Al Khaimah Resort and Spa, to name a few.

The Emirate's unique venues, such as Al Hamra International Exhibition and Conference Centre, and historic sites like Al Jazeera Al Hamra and Dhayah Fort, provide picturesque event settings. For adventure seekers, the Jebel Jais Viewing Deck offers stunning views for an unforgettable celebration.

India is a key market for Ras Al Khaimah, with a 20 per cent increase in Indian visitors in 2023. The Emirate's accessibility from India via direct flights and proximity to Dubai International Airport enhances its appeal. New laws and streamlined wedding planner certifications further facilitate wedding arrangements.



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Brand Storii forays into West Bengal with Storii Devasom Spa and Resort, Kolkata

Strengthening its brand presence across India, Storii by ITC Hotels has launched Storii Devasom Resort and Spa in Kolkata, West Bengal. Spanning three acres, this resort is ideal for a relaxing staycation or spa holiday, catering to solo travellers, families, and celebratory gatherings.

Located in the South City Retreat District, a 20-minute drive from the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass, Storii Kolkata offers a tranquil escape from urban life with personalised, rejuvenating experiences.

Storii Kolkata boasts a mix of spacious rooms, suites, and villas, each offering stunning views of the lush surroundings and equipped with contemporary amenities. The resort's wellness centre, K by Kayakalp, provides a sanctuary of tranquillity with ancient Indian treatments, nature walks, calming therapies, and modern techniques.

The wellness centre includes 12 therapy rooms, a 'Yogashala', meditation spaces, a swimming pool, and a fitness centre, all designed for deep relaxation and revitalisation. Guests can enjoy the resort's culinary offerings, including the Breakfast ATM (Anytime), all-day dining with fresh local produce, the Storii Box regional thali, and local snacks and beverages through Ketli and Kahaani.



Uttarakhand cabinet clears amendment in state tourism policy



The Uttarakhand cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, approved an amendment to the state's 2018 tourism policy, specifying the SGST compensation periods for different industries. Under the new amendment, A, B, and B plus category industries will receive 100 per cent SGST compensation for five years, followed by 90 per cent, 75 per cent, and 75 per cent respectively for the next five years. Large, mega, and ultra-mega projects will receive 30 per cent, 50 per cent, and 50 per cent SGST compensation for ten years.

The original 2018 policy did not specify the compensation periods. The cabinet also decided to extend the service period of specialist doctors until the age of 65 and approved the introduction of a Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority Bill, modelled on Kerala's act, for urban transport system development.

Additionally, the cabinet amended cooperative committee rules to reserve 33 per cent of management committee posts for women, aiming to reduce nepotism and increase transparency.

The cabinet also approved relocation provisions for families around the Mahasu Devta temple as part of its redevelopment master plan to boost tourism and local employment. The Mahasu Devta temple is an ancient site located on the Tyuni-Mori road in Hanol, Dehradun district.

Fortune Hotels opens its third hotel in Goa, Fortune Select Candolim Goa



Fortune Hotels, a member of ITC's hotel group, has opened Fortune Select Candolim Goa, its third branded property in the state of Goa. This further strengthens its presence in India's most sought-after travel destinations.

Fortune Select Candolim Goa is home to 103 elegantly designed guest rooms and suites, each designed with the utmost care, providing a contemporary ambiance and warm comfort. Most rooms peep into spectacular views of the swimming pool, bringing the outdoors in.

To further rejuvenate the body, mind and soul the hotel's wellness facilities include a well-equipped gym and a soon-to-open spa that aims to spruce up the wellness quotient while its versatile banqueting and conferencing hall, complete with an exclusive pre-function area, readies itself to double up as an ideal venue for hosting corporate events, meetings, conferences, and social gatherings.

Conveniently located, Fortune Select Candolim offers easy access to Goa's rich Portuguese architectural heritage and key locations. MOPA Goa Airport is 34 km, while Dabolim Goa Airport is 36 km away, providing convenient travel options for both domestic and international guests.

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Charting a course, Yas Island aims for the top 10 global family destinations

Miral Destinations, the leading developer and operator of leisure and entertainment attractions in Abu Dhabi, UAE, spearheads the iconic destinations of Yas Island and Saadiyat Island. In this interview with Liam Findlay, CEO, Miral Destinations, we gain exclusive insights into Yas Island’s India viewpoint.

Sonika Bohra

Yas Island in Abu Dhabi is home to a variety of family-friendly attractions and games that offer an unparalleled blend of thrills and relaxation, making it a premier destination for travellers of all types. In addition to the attractions, Yas Island offers luxurious hotels, pristine beaches, extensive shopping, cultural and dining options, and various entertainment events aimed at ultimately delivering an unforgettable vacation for everyone.

Mirroring the Transformative Trend

Liam believes that the UAE, with its developments in Dubai or Abu Dhabi, has been a frontrunner in embracing change and modernisation in the Middle East region. In contrast to most of its neighbouring countries that have only recently initiated their transformation, the UAE has been engaged in this process for a considerably longer time. Yas Island, too, is experiencing significant growth, which reflects the broader trend of transformation in the Middle East.

The substantial and continuous investment in infrastructure, tourism, and entertainment on Yas Island exemplifies this progress, positioning it as a key destination within the UAE's evolving landscape. Liam states, "We are constantly evolving and growing. In the last couple of years, we have launched three more hotels: the Warner Brothers WB Hotel, the Hilton, and the Double Tree. Next year, we will launch the second big extension of Yas Waterworld and soon introduce Harry Potter at Warner Bros. World. There is no better place than Yas when you have brands like SeaWorld® Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, Warner Bros. World™ Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, Ferrari World Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, and Yas Waterworld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi. With our impressive array of top attractions, our enduring goal and ambition continue to focus



▲ Liam Findlay

on becoming one of the world's top 10 family destinations."

India - A Pivotal Market

Yas Island continues to experience substantial year-over-year growth in visitor numbers. India is one of the top markets for Yas Island. The island has been actively targeting Indian tourists due to its significant potential and the growing number of Indian travellers looking for family-friendly destinations. Yas Island's diverse range of attractions appeals greatly to Indian tourists. "India is our number one market. Last year, we saw 55 per cent growth compared to 2022 numbers and nearly 100 per cent growth compared to 2019 numbers. A 55 percent increase in our top market is significant for us," asserts Liam.

India - Major for MICE

The MICE segment holds particular significance and interest for Yas Island. It is one of the fastest-growing segments globally, with notable growth coming from India. Liam mentions, "For Yas Island, India is a major player in the MICE segment, with numerous groups visiting, and we do have incentives, like

the rebate specific to the island. There is also an additional incentive from Abu Dhabi, which can be combined. Also, there is robust air connectivity not just from Tier 1 cities but also from emerging Tier 3 cities throughout India and this aspect significantly supports MICE business from India." Yas Island also boasts approximately three and a half thousand hotel rooms, making it an ideal destination where substantial hotel accommodations can be easily arranged for MICE events.

Attracting Global Audience

For Yas Island, the strategy to focus on India as its number one market was implemented several years ago. Observing the double-digit annual growth in outbound travel from India, Yas Island believes India will remain its top market in the next five to ten years. Thus, efforts will continue to capitalise on India's burgeoning travel market to propel further growth. "For the same, Yas Island had strategically aligned itself with Ranveer Singh, who served as our brand ambassador for the past few years. Recently, we also hosted popular events such as Dancing with the Stars, with plans for more upcoming TV shows and exciting activations to be announced soon," says Liam.

Liam pointed out that, besides India, the GCC, Russia, China, the UK, and Europe are also their large source markets. To attract global tourists, Yas Island has recently appointed Deadpool star Ryan Reynolds as its new chief island officer, featuring him in their latest round of advertising campaigns. Liam claims, "For us, partnering with such an amazing brand like Ryan Reynolds gives great credibility." Overall, the Bollywood and Hollywood connections have achieved wide success and contributed to an increase in the number of tourists coming from India and global markets.



CLIMATE-FRIENDLY TRAVELLING IN SWITZERLAND

Sustainability in public transport

By public transport, guests enjoy carefree travel across Switzerland – and it is even climate- friendly. In addition to means of transportation that operate in an environmentally friendly way, there are many more examples of sustainable mobility. These help to turn travelling in and across Switzerland into a special experience.



Sustainable Travel Insights

Swiss Federal Railways:

The country's biggest transport company generates the electricity for its trains from hydropower, & this at the rate of 90%. Energy procurement for stations, offices as well as company & production buildings is already 100% CO2-neutral.

Funi – A Marvel of the Art of Engineering:

The "Funi" (short for "funicular") is Switzerland's last existing water powered funicular railway and only a few minutes' walk from the railway station Freiburg. The funicular is not powered by a motor but by residual water from the upper town.

MS Diamant – Climate Neutral on Lake Lucerne:

The modern motor vessel is a landmark achievement in Swiss navigation when it comes to quality & innovation. This boat is unsurpassed when it comes to technological finesse & luxury. It sets new standards as Switzerland's first climate-neutral regular service boat.

Rhaetian Railway - On Track with Hydropower:

Rhaetian Railway, the operators of the world famous Bernina Express, attach great importance to the origin of the energy they procure as well as further developments in the area of sustainability. Already since 2013, they have used 100% of hydropower for their locomotives and properties.

Solar Cableway Staubern – With Solar Power towards the Alpstein:

This public transport highlight impresses with environmentally friendly state-of-the-art technology. It is the world's first battery powered cableway that leads to the summit by relying exclusively on solar energy.

E-PostBus – Experiencing Interlaken Sustainably:

Experiencing Interlaken in no ordinary way: on the e-bus by PostBus, the holiday destination with its many mountains and lakes can be explored in comfort and in an environmentally friendly fashion to boot.

Stoosbahn – Recuperated Energy Heats Hotel:

The Stoosbahn is known for being Europe's steepest funicular, and its state-of-the-art energy concept has made headlines, too. On top of the Stoos, mesmerizing views of Lake Lucerne await, which can also be enjoyed from the recently opened hotel.

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BEHIND THE SCENES

The Intricacies of Filmmaking and Its Impact on Tourism

TTJ dives deep into the world of filmmakers and production houses to explore their unique perspectives on film tourism. Through firsthand accounts, we unveil the dynamics of filmmaking, showcasing the behind-the-scenes efforts that blend creative vision seamlessly with logistical challenges. As we understand the intricate synergy between cinema and travel, we uncover how movies leave an indelible mark on destinations worldwide.

Prashant Nayak



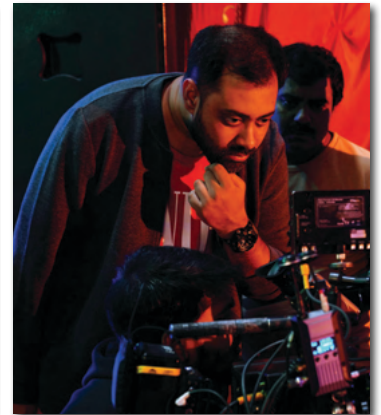
▲ Malvika Khatri



▲ Ankur Garg



▲ Ashvini Yardi



▲ Abir Sengupta

While filmmaking is often perceived as glamorous, it involves numerous challenges and complexities behind the scenes. Navigating this intricate landscape requires filmmakers to balance creative vision with logistical realities. Ultimately, their collaborative efforts result in impactful storytelling that resonates with audiences, leaving a lasting impression on both the global cinema and tourism industries.

The Art of Selecting Filming Locations

When selecting filming locations, filmmakers and production houses must prioritise multiple factors. Filmmakers consider the location to be of paramount importance, recognising

its crucial role in storytelling. Malvika Khatri, Head of Films, Roy Kapur Films, emphasises, "We assess the inherent visual uniqueness of the location, as these elements often contribute significantly to the narrative of our films. Locations enhance the aesthetics of film and immerse viewers in the story's environment." For production houses like Roy Kapur Films, choosing the right setting involves evaluating how well it aligns with the script and reinforces the story's authenticity.

Ankur Garg, Partner and Producer, Luv Films, echoes this sentiment, "We often scout for visually appealing locations, unseen and unexplored to the human countenance. The locations that we shortlist are the ones that align with the script and are logistically convenient for shooting. However, choosing a filming destination involves a careful balance

of artistic vision, practical logistics, financial considerations, legal constraints, and overall experience for the cast and crew."

Ashvini Yardi, Founder, Viniyard Films, adds another layer to the discussion, focusing on the emotional and practical aspects of location selection. She says, "First and foremost, the location should impart a feeling of directly being lifted from the script. Be it a cosy countryside or a bustling cityscape, it is imperative that a perfect match is achieved with the story's mood and characters." Ashvini emphasises the need to be smart with finances while maintaining quality, highlighting the challenge of finding a perfect shooting spot that blends script requirements with budget constraints. "In short, finding the perfect shooting spot is like uncovering buried treasure—it's exciting, it's challenging, and

when it all comes together, it's pure movie-making magic," opines Ashvini.

Abir Sengupta, Writer-Director-Producer, Jaadugar Films, brings a storyteller's perspective to the conversation, explaining, "Every story I tell demands a certain geography for it to be narrated in the best way possible. Likewise, every location tells a story of its own." Abir stresses the symbiotic relationship between a film's narrative and its filming location, underscoring how a well-chosen setting can elevate the storytelling experience.

Striking the Balance

For these filmmakers, the choice of filming location goes beyond mere logistics; it is about finding synergy between creative vision and practical execution. Malvika Khatri further elaborates on the complexity involved, "We carefully consider factors such as weather, tax rebates, travel costs, permit fees, accommodation, and local production expenses when evaluating potential filming destinations." This meticulous approach ensures that each location enhances the film aesthetically and fits within the production's budgetary and logistical parameters. Ankur Garg affirms the pivotal role of production schedules and budgets in location selection. "Strategic planning ensures alignment between location and project needs," he remarks, stressing the need for meticulous assessment to optimise outcomes.

Ashvini Yardi emphasises the intertwined nature of schedule constraints and budgetary parameters in their decision-making process. She explains, "When contemplating a summer shoot, for instance, attention is directed towards assessing the climatic conditions prevalent in potential regions. The budgetary framework stands as a cornerstone, delineating the parameters within which our choices must be made. Moreover, the accessibility of the chosen destination is of paramount importance. The availability of direct flights emerges as a critical factor, facilitating streamlined logistics for our actors and staff by circumventing the inconveniences associated with layovers and protracted road travel. Furthermore, the financial viability of our chosen destination is augmented by the potential for rebates and incentives."

Abir Sengupta provides insights into how budget considerations can alter filming plans. He says, "Cost-effective destinations can sway decisions, highlighting how fiscal constraints may necessitate compromises or strategic adjustments in location choices. Abhir also shares, "Sometimes, even if producers initially overlook a certain location, discovering that it offers substantial support and cost-saving



Andaman Islands served as the backdrop for *The Sky is Pink*

benefits can prompt filmmakers to adjust their scripts to fit that location."

Navigating Complexities and Challenges

Filming in any country often comes with its own set of logistical challenges and requirements. Getting the right permits and approvals can be complicated and time-consuming because every place has different rules. Malvika highlights the intricate logistics involved, from navigating complex permit processes to overcoming transportation and accommodation hurdles in remote locations. "Getting the right permits and approvals can be time-consuming," she notes, stressing the need for skilled local crews and specialised equipment.

Ashvini underscores the importance of comprehensive support from municipal and law enforcement authorities, particularly in sensitive border areas, reflecting on the complexities filmmakers face in certain regions. Ashvini mentions, "Collaboration with the armed forces may be necessary for added security measures." Abir voices concerns over bureaucratic delays and local mandates affecting crew hiring and impacting budgets and decision-making, advocating for merit-based selections to streamline operations. He points out that mandatory local crew hiring, regardless of competency, increases costs unnecessarily.

Filmmaking in India, renowned for its diverse landscapes and cultural richness, presents filmmakers with a tapestry of challenges and rewards. Ankur reflects on India's evolving infrastructure and support systems, noting improvements in handling logistical and climatic challenges. Ankur highlights advancements that have made shooting in India more efficient, "Local assistance and better facilities have transformed the filming experience."

Cala S'Almunia, Mallorca, Spain, served as the backdrop for *Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar*



Driving Destination Growth

Roy Kapur Films' *The Sky is Pink* showcased London and the Andaman Islands in a non-traditional light, drawing audiences with its authentic portrayal and subsequently boosting inquiries from other filmmakers. Luv Films' *Tu Jhoothi Main Makkar* significantly impacted tourism in Spain, showcasing its picturesque locales like Barcelona and Mallorca. The film's vibrant depiction sparked interest among viewers, leading to increased inquiries and visits to these locations, illustrating the role of cinemas in destination promotion.

Viniyard Films strategically highlighted Kashmir as a wedding destination in *Masaba Masaba*, leveraging Netflix's global reach to promote the region internationally. Ashvini emphasises cinema's potential to transform perceptions of destinations, akin to how Yash Chopra popularised Switzerland and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* boosted Spain's appeal. Jaadugar Films has shot three films in West Bengal in the past decade, showcasing the state from various perspectives, and attracting both visitors and filmmakers alike. Lamahatta, near Darjeeling, is a tourist hotspot.

Dil Dhadakne Do significantly boosted cruise tourism by showcasing the luxurious and adventurous lifestyle aboard the "Pullmantur Sovereign." The film's vibrant depiction of cruising, featuring picturesque destinations and top-tier amenities, led to a surge in interest and bookings for cruise vacations. It effectively positioned luxury cruises as an appealing travel choice.

These success stories underscore how films can serve as powerful ambassadors, reshaping global perceptions and driving tourism growth through captivating storytelling and visual allure.

Lights, Camera, Madhya Pradesh

Weaving Tourism Strategy in Magical Cinematic Tapestry

Madhya Pradesh, renowned for its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and historical significance, offers filmmakers a captivating canvas for film shoots. Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Tourism and Culture and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, illuminates the state's vibrant film tourism industry, highlighting its collaborative ethos, attractive incentives, and iconic filming locations, making it a premier choice for cinematic storytelling.

Prashant Nayak

In India, film-induced tourism has seen a steady rise, with a significant increase in both international and domestic tourists visiting locations featured in popular films. State governments across India are actively promoting film tourism, contributing significantly to the industry's growth.

Film-Friendly Policies

Madhya Pradesh is recognised as the most film-friendly state for film tourism. The state pioneered a progressive film policy in 2020, promoting ease of business for filmmakers through various initiatives. It is the only state to include film project permissions in the Public Service Guarantee Act, ensuring shooting permits are issued within 15 working days. Each district appoints an ADM-level officer as the nodal officer for filming permissions. Unique among states, Madhya Pradesh offers grants for web series, OTT content, TV serials, and documentaries.

“Our single-window facilitation system ensures efficient and timely shooting permissions, minimising bureaucratic hurdles. We assist filmmakers in finding ideal locations, from forts and temples to wildlife sanctuaries and natural landscapes, and connect them with local service providers for a seamless filming experience,” explains Sheo Shekhar Shukla.

Harnessing the Power of Films

Madhya Pradesh is renowned as an offbeat, diverse destination of choice. Shukla emphasises, “Films withhold a unique ability to act as a visual invitation, transporting viewers

to our breathtaking locations, igniting a deep desire to experience them in person. The cinematic portrayal of our stunning vistas, wildlife, historical sites, and vibrant culture serves as a compelling advertisement that highlights the beauty and uniqueness of Madhya Pradesh. This, in turn, can lead to increased tourism, contributing to the local economy and the global recognition of our state as a premier travel destination.”

Global Collaborations

Madhya Pradesh Tourism actively seeks opportunities to collaborate with international filmmakers and production houses, recognising the global reach and impact of international films in showcasing the state's unique locations. “Fostering such tie-ups can further elevate the state's profile as a global filming harbour. To facilitate these collaborations, we offer the same range of support and incentives to international production companies as we do to local ones,” states Shukla.

Several international films, documentaries, and web series have been shot in Madhya Pradesh, including *A Suitable Boy*, and *Kamasutra - A Tale of Love* by Mira Nair, *The Bear* by Shantaram, *Lion*, and *A Long Way Home* by Garth Davis, and *Perfumed Garden* by Jag Mundhra, among others.

A Cinematic Journey through Iconic Locations

Over the past five years, Madhya Pradesh has hosted scenes from more than 400 movies, OTT series, and TV shows. Gwalior Fort,



▲ Sheo Shekhar Shukla

featured in *Revolver Rani*, and Maheshwar Fort, the backdrop to *Bajirao Mastani* and *Neerja*, exemplifies its cinematic charisma. The serene landscapes of Pachmarhi appeared in *Asoka*, while Bhedaghats marble rocks and villages like Chanderi, Mahodiya, and Dhankhedi starred in productions such as *Sui Dhaga*, *Janhit Mein Jari*, *Maharani 3*, *Panchayat*, and *Lapata Ladies*. Ancient cities like Ujjain and Mandu are also featured prominently.

“Highlighting these locations in films enhances their appeal and attracts more tourists to our state. We aim to promote the state as a premier filming destination while also inspiring viewers to experience the enchanting beauty of Madhya Pradesh,” reveals Shukla.



Panchayat Series was filmed in Mahodiya village, located in Sehore district

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CAPITALISING CINEMA

Maximising Tourism with Film Collaborations

For Indians, films are not just a form of entertainment; they are a cultural phenomenon that shape dreams, aspirations, and craft travel itineraries. In this feature, we delve into the strategies employed by National Tourist Offices and International Film Commission Offices to attract film productions and propel tourism to their respective countries. Join us as we delve into the symbiotic relationship, uncovering the powerful dynamic transforming and reshaping Indians' choices regarding travel destinations. Discover how the cinematic landscape is instrumental in inspiring a new wave of travel trends in India.

Prashant Nayak

In India, cinema is more than just a form of entertainment; it is a passion that shapes our lifestyles, dreams, and travel choices. From the majestic landscapes showcased in Bollywood blockbusters to the quaint settings of regional cinema, the silver screen has a magical transformative effect, turning ordinary places into iconic destinations. These cinematic backdrops, from the snow-clad Swiss Alps in classic romances to the vibrant streets of Spain in enduring blockbusters, captivate audiences and ignite a deep desire to visit these stunning and picturesque locales.

Recognising this profound impact, National Tourist Offices,

and International Film Commission Offices leverage films to showcase destinations in their full splendour, enticing avid fans and curious travellers alike. They recognise the irresistible appeal of following in the footsteps of beloved stars or visiting the exact locations of iconic movie scenes, which act as strong motivators for travel. This symbiotic relationship between film and tourism not only raises awareness of lesser-known destinations but also creates unforgettable experiences for visitors. Through film tourism, destinations come alive on screen, inspiring Indians to embark on journeys that fulfil their cinematic dreams.

Utah's Cinematic Legacy



▲ Virginia Pearce

and more. A 2023 SMARI study estimated \$600 million per year in film-motivated tourist spending in Utah over the past 10 years, with 37 per cent of visitors indicating that a film or television series was among the primary motivators for visiting a particular destination in the state.

“Film tourism is a unique opportunity to introduce visitors to Utah’s remarkable landscapes,” says Virginia

Utah’s diverse landscapes, which include vast deserts, rugged mountains, and iconic rock formations, have provided ideal settings for countless Western and Hollywood films over the years. The state is renowned for its diverse and stunning landscapes, which have made it a prime location for filming movies,

TV shows, commercials,

Pearce, Director, Utah Film Commission, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Film Commission actively promotes these sites and provides support to filmmakers to encourage production in Utah. The state’s competitive incentive programme offers a fully refundable tax credit of up to 25 per cent on in-state spending, which helps a production cut costs without sacrificing quality. With Utah’s diverse locations, ample studio space, and a vast pool of professional crew and vendors, productions can find everything they need for any type of project, from independent films to television shows to major studio features.

Virginia highlights exciting projects including *Fallout*, adapted from a popular video game franchise, and *Horizon: An American Saga*, a Western epic by Kevin Costner premiering at Cannes.



Monument Valley, Utah

Utah anticipates these projects will attract significant attention and visitors to filming locations. Among the successful collaborations is Disney's *High School Musical* franchise, which debuted in 2006 and went on to become a worldwide sensation, spawning two sequels and a television series inspired by the story. The primary filming location, East High School in Salt Lake City, has become a popular destination for fans eager to visit the birthplace of *High School Musical*.

Virginia informs, "2024 marks 100 years since the first movies filmed in Utah premiered and also the 50th anniversary of the Utah Film Commission, formed in 1974. To celebrate, the Utah Film Commission is hosting a year of exhibits, events, and film screenings in cities around the state that share a part of our early filmmaking history. We invite visitors to celebrate the enchantment of people, places, and productions that have made Utah a hub of cinematic magic."



© Utah Film Commission

HBO series - Westworld

Bollywood's Spanish Sojourn



▲ Elisa Robles Fraga

Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara, a 2011 Bollywood film directed by Zoya Akhtar, has profoundly impacted Indian travel patterns and significantly boosted tourism to Spain. The movie emphasised the importance of living life to the fullest and experiencing new adventures, resonating deeply with the Indian audience.

Spain's rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes have served as the backdrop for numerous iconic films and have been pivotal in attracting filmmakers and travellers. The Tourism Office of Spain in India actively collaborates with the film industry to promote the country's unique charm. Filmmakers are provided with logistical support, access to landmarks and scenic locations, and streamlined permit procedures.

Elisa Robles Fraga, Director, Tourism Office of Spain (Turespana) in India, says, "Spain offers tax incentives for international shoots in the form of a tax rebate of up to 30 per cent, except for the Canary Islands, where it is 50 per cent."

The office is particularly excited about Galicia and the Basque Country as upcoming destinations. Galicia is highlighted for its blend



Pathaan

of Celtic heritage and stunning coastline, while the Basque Country is noted for its vibrant culture, futuristic architecture, and world-renowned cuisine. Elisa highlights, "Galicia offers a blend of Celtic heritage and stunning coastline, while the Basque Country enchants with vibrant culture, futuristic architecture, and world-renowned cuisine."

Promoting film locations involves a multifaceted approach, including digital marketing campaigns, social media, and collaborations with travel influencers. "We collaborate with local tourism boards to showcase and offer tailored experiences inspired by film locations, ensuring that destinations featured in films are effectively promoted and accessible to tourists," mentions Elisa. In collaboration with the film industry, Elisa says, "While *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* beautifully showcased the breathtaking landscapes and vibrant culture of Spain, attracting a significant influx of Indian tourists, the shooting of *Pathaan* in Spain has generated considerable excitement among Indian audiences and further reinforced Spain's allure as a preferred destination for filmmakers and travellers alike. Also, the filming of *Fast & Furious 6* in various locations across the country showcased Spain's dynamic landscapes and iconic landmarks to a global audience."



Filming in Fijian Paradise



▲ Robert Thompson

Fiji's tourism industry strategically harnesses the beguiling power of film to captivate Indian audiences and elevate its status as a premier destination. The allure of seeing Fiji's turquoise waters and lush landscapes on the big screen, especially in Bollywood movies, has proven to be a potent tool in sparking the desire among Indian viewers to experience this tropical paradise firsthand. Fiji boasts a diverse array of scenic locations, including

aquamarine seas, coral reefs, sandy beaches, lush tropical greenery, rocky hills, coconut groves, and sugarcane fields, all complemented by a significant population of Indian origin.

Robert Thompson, Executive Director of Regions at Tourism Fiji, highlights the profound and stimulating impact of film on Fiji's appeal. He says, "Imagine seeing Fiji's sparkling turquoise waters and lush landscapes come alive on the big screen in a Bollywood blockbuster. Beyond the ravishing scenery, films also showcase Fiji's rich cultural tapestry, resonating deeply with Indian audiences who value their own cultural heritage. This connection fosters a sense of affinity, making Fiji an even more enticing and captivating destination."

Tourism Fiji collaborates closely with Film Fiji and local organisations to facilitate movie productions, providing essential support such as location scouting and accommodation arrangements. They ensure that Fiji's natural beauty and cultural richness are effectively



showcased in films, enhancing its magnetic appeal as a filming haven. Robert emphasises, "We work to effectively showcase Fiji's natural beauty and cultural richness in films, attracting visitors to our country."

To support filmmakers, Tourism Fiji offers comprehensive on-ground assistance with logistics, relationship management, and introductions to local companies and suppliers. "Our team is dedicated to ensuring a smooth filming process for production companies interested in shooting in Fiji," adds Robert.

Successful collaborations between Fiji's tourism office and filmmakers have significantly boosted tourism. Iconic films like *Cast Away* and the long-running TV show *Survivor Fiji* have showcased Fiji's stunning scenery and diverse culture, leading to increased tourist arrivals. *The Blue Lagoon*, the 1980's blockbuster directed by Randal Kleiser, received many award nominations. *The Blue Lagoon* was filmed in the Yasawa Islands, while the second part of the movie, *Return to the Blue Lagoon*, was filmed in Taveuni. These productions highlight Fiji's romantic settings and adventurous trails, promoting the country as an ideal filming destination.

Endless Cinematic Possibilities in Morocco

Morocco has emerged as a cinematic gem, celebrated for its exquisite natural light, diverse landscapes, and rich cultural heritage. Over the years, it has served as the backdrop for numerous Hollywood blockbusters like *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Gladiator*, *The Mummy*, *Mission: Impossible—Rogue Nation*, *Black Hawk Down*, *Babel*, *Inception*, and *Napoleon*. Iconic TV series such as *Prison Break*, and *Game of Thrones* have also found their way to Moroccan settings, enriching their cinematic legacy. According to the Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNT), "Morocco has always been a land for filmmaking."

In addition to its appeal to Hollywood, Morocco has welcomed Bollywood productions, including blockbuster hits like *Tiger Zinda Hai*, *Thugs of Hindostan*, *Jagga Jasoos*, *Agent Vinod*, and *Jana Gana Mana*. This collaboration underscores Morocco's commitment



to showcasing its stunning locales to Indian audiences and bolstering tourism flows from India.

Recognising the potential of film tourism, Morocco actively supports filmmakers with attractive incentives. Productions spending at least 10 million dirhams (approximately \$1 million) and filming for a minimum of 18 days can benefit from a 30 per cent refund on local eligible expenses, including set building costs.

Morocco's diverse landscapes offer filmmakers a wealth of iconic locations. Ouarzazate, renowned as Moroccan Hollywood, boasts world-class film studios and historic sites like Kasbah Ben Haddou, which have graced screens in films inspired by biblical and Roman eras. Cities such as Casablanca, Tangier, Rabat, Fes, and Marrakech provide picturesque backdrops with their medinas, colonial architecture, and cultural landmarks. Additionally, the Sahara Desert offers breathtaking vistas of dunes and oases, ideal for capturing the essence of adventure and romance on film. "Every place in Morocco can be an iconic film location," asserts MNT.

Casablanca, Morocco



Azerbaijan's Silver Screen Allure



▲ Florian Sengtschmid

Azerbaijan sees film tourism as a significant avenue for promotion of its destination. With 9 out of 11 climate zones, the stunning natural landscapes of the Caucasus, the vibrance of the cosmopolitan capital Baku, and the historical richness of each city or village, Azerbaijan offers a year-round destination for filmmakers. “Our board collaborates closely with the film industry to facilitate

access to shooting locations and promote film-related tourism. We support local and international filmmakers by assisting in finding suitable locations and obtaining official permissions from governmental bodies,” says Florian Sengtschmid, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board.

The Azerbaijan Tourist Office offers various forms of support and incentives to filmmakers and production companies interested in shooting in Azerbaijan. This includes assistance in location scouting, obtaining necessary permits, and providing logistical support. Additionally, they may offer financial incentives or tax benefits to eligible productions. Florian adds, “In addition to supporting local filmmakers, we actively seek opportunities to throw in with international filmmakers and production houses. More than 10 Indian films have been shot in Azerbaijan in recent years, indicating a growing trend and popularity of Azerbaijan as a filmmaking destination in the Indian film industry market.”

The organisation also undertakes extensive promotional



Lahij, Azerbaijan

efforts to showcase Azerbaijan as a desirable filming destination. Florian shares, “We highlight iconic film locations and landmarks within Azerbaijan that are popular among filmmakers. For instance, classic *Soviet films* *Teheran 43*, *Amphibian Man*, and *The Diamond Arm* were shot in Baku, with the city taking on different identities for each film.”

Azerbaijan boasts several iconic film locations and landmarks that attract filmmakers from around the world. For example, the UNESCO-listed Maiden Tower and Shirvanshahs' Palace in Baku and the picturesque villages of Ilisu in Gakh, Lahij, Laza, and Klinalig have served as backdrops for numerous films. Visitors can explore these locations and immerse themselves in Azerbaijan's cinematic history while enjoying the country's stunning natural beauty and cultural richness.

Japan's Vision for Film Tourism



▲ Ryo Bunno

Inspired by Indian Bollywood cinema, many Indian travellers seek to visit locations they have seen on screen. Recognising this potential, the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO), Delhi office, actively collaborates with the Indian film industry to promote film-related tourism.

“Film tourism can indeed be a tool for leveraging the popularity of

Japan as a tourist destination among Indian travellers. As is widely acknowledged, the Indian film industry holds significant stature and wields considerable influence over its vast audience base, numbering in the millions,” says Ryo Bunno, Executive Director, JNTO, Delhi Office.

JNTO facilitates this collaboration by providing authentic information systems and support for filmmakers considering Japan as a filming location. This includes access to film commission

offices, local talent, resources, and logistical support tailored to each location. Bunno emphasises, “By making it attractive for filmmakers to shoot in our country, we boost tourism by showcasing our landscapes, culture, and attractions to a wider Indian audience. We welcome inquiries from the Indian film industry to maximise its potential for attracting Indian tourists to Japan and boosting the tourism economy.”



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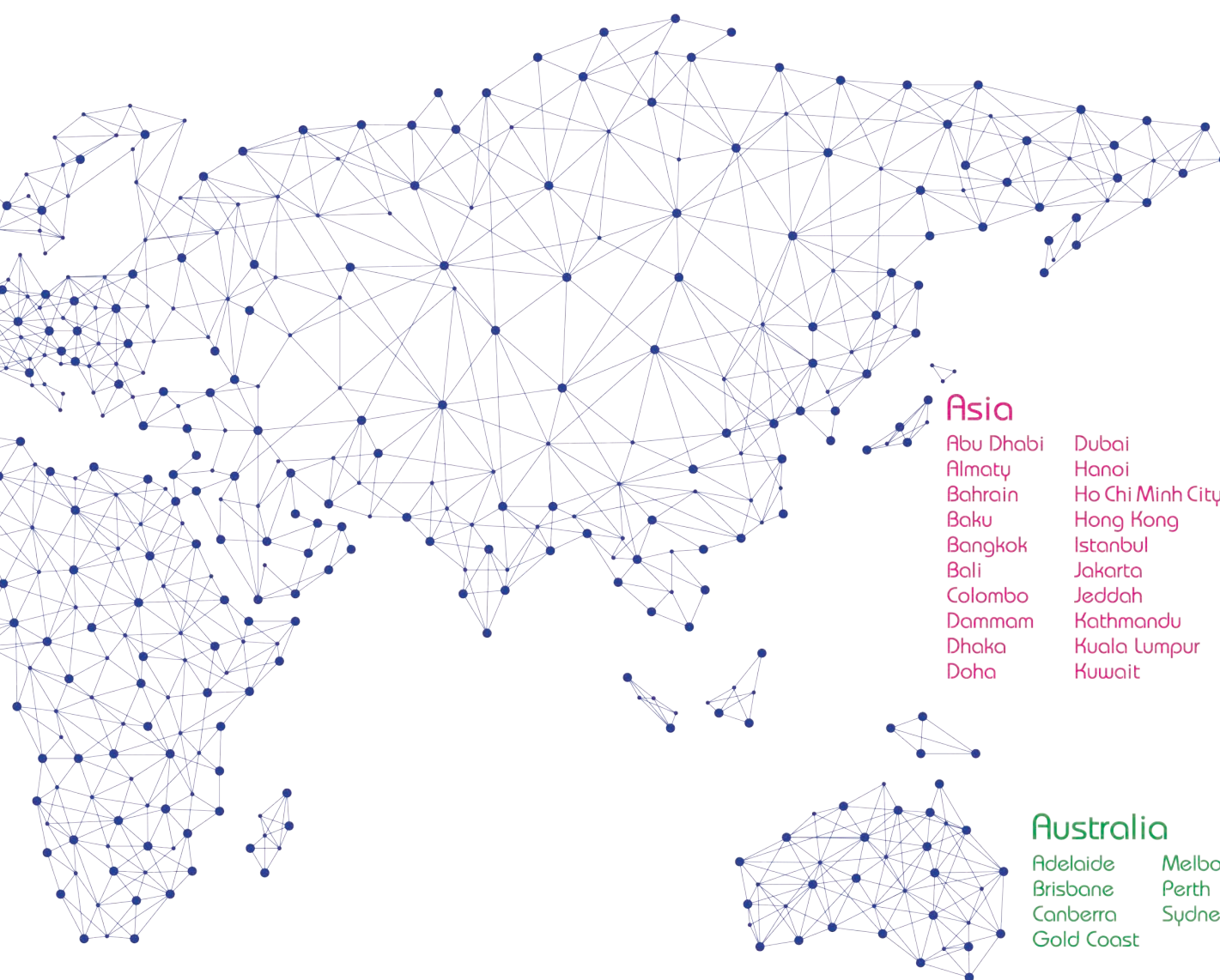
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Basel	Dublin	Helsinki	Manchester	Porto	Stockholm	Vienna
Birmingham	Edinburgh	Lisbon	Milan	Prague	Toulouse	Zurich



Asia

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Almaty	Hanoi	Muscat
Bahrain	Ho Chi Minh City	Phuket
Baku	Hong Kong	Ras Al-Khaimah
Bangkok	Istanbul	Riyadh
Bali	Jakarta	Sharjah
Colombo	Jeddah	Singapore
Dammam	Kathmandu	Tashkent
Dhaka	Kuala Lumpur	Tbilisi
Doha	Kuwait	

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Brisbane	Perth
Canberra	Sydney
Gold Coast	

India

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Agra	Bhopal	Diu	Indore	Khajuraho	Mangaluru	Raipur	Thiruvananthapuram
Agatti	Bhubaneswar	Durgapur	Itanagar	Kannur	Mumbai	Rajahmundry	Tiruchirappalli
Ahmedabad	Chandigarh	Gaya	Jabalpur	Kanpur	Mysuru	Rajkot	Tirupati
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Amritsar	Coimbatore	Gondia	Jaipur	Kolhapur	Nashik	Salem	Udaipur
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Ayodhya	Dehradun	Guwahati	Jammu	Kozhikode	North Goa	Shivamogga	Varanasi
Bagdogra	Deoghar	Gwalior	Jharsuguda	Kurnool	Patna	Shirdi	Vijayawada
Bareilly	Dharamshala	Hubli	Jodhpur	Leh	Port Blair	Silchar	Visakhapatnam
Belagavi	Dibrugarh	Hyderabad	Jorhat	Lucknow	Prayagraj	Srinagar	

The map above is for illustrative purposes and is not drawn to scale.
All IndiGo direct destinations in pink. All codeshare destinations in green.

The Explore Maldives roadshow signifies a promising chapter in strengthening tourism ties

Visit Maldives and Manta Air, in partnership with key resorts and guest houses, organised the ‘Explore Maldives’ roadshow in Bengaluru on June 26, 2024. Seizing this opportunity, TTJ interviewed Zihuny Rasheed, Deputy Managing Director, Maldives Marketing and PR Corporation (MMPRC), and Ahmed Maumoon, Deputy CEO, Manta Air, to understand their strategic mission and capture the essence of the event.

Sonika Bohra

The aim of the ‘Explore Maldives’ roadshow was to reignite Indian travellers' interest in the Maldives and provide the travel fraternity with an excellent networking opportunity. Zihuny Rasheed shared insights on the current trends and challenges in promoting the Maldives to Indian tourists. India has been a key source market for the Maldives in recent years, maintaining its position as the number one destination. However, it has now fallen to sixth place. This decline has prompted MMPRC to take action to stimulate the market.

Re-engaging Indian Market

“The Explore Maldives Roadshow is the first of many planned activities to re-engage the Indian market. In collaboration with the Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO) and the National Hotels & Guest House Association of Maldives (NHGAM), roadshows are further scheduled in New Delhi on July 30, Mumbai on August 01, and Bengaluru on August 03, 2024. There are significant opportunities in the Indian market that we aim to explore further,” said Rasheed.

One of the primary challenges the MMPRC faces is ensuring that precise and reliable information reaches the Indian market. The Maldives is often perceived as an expensive destination, primarily because of its luxurious resorts. While the Maldives boasts top-tier luxury accommodations, it also provides a range of more affordable options. By disseminating information and creating awareness in the market, MMPRC aims to expand the market's perception of the diverse offerings available in the Maldives. “Geopolitical factors influence Indian arrivals, but the positive relationship between India and the Maldives has enhanced views of the destination. Recent visits by the President



▲ Zihuny Rasheed, Ahmed Maumoon

of the Maldives to India have further strengthened this bond, creating a favourable environment for market growth,” Rasheed noted.

Rasheed highlighted several untapped opportunities in the Indian market, particularly in adventure tourism. “While families, honeymooners, and reef enthusiasts are well-catered to, there is potential in promoting activities such as diving, snorkelling, and surfing. By diversifying our tourism products, we aim to highlight the varied experiences the Maldives offers,” he said.

Manta Air's New Connectivity

With its recent launch of flight services to Bengaluru, the roadshow was crucial for Manta Air to establish connections within the Indian travel industry. Maumoon emphasised the benefits of the new connectivity. “Since COVID-19, we've seen significant demand from Indian travellers to the Maldives. Particularly in the Dhaalu Atoll, where Manta Air operates, there is a range of accommodations from ultra-luxury to budget-friendly options.”

Maumoon highlighted three main advantages for Indian tourists using Dhaalu Airport compared to traditional routes through Male. “First and foremost, travel time is reduced by four to five hours as customs and immigration processes at Dhaalu Airport are

faster. Next, with only Manta Air operating, queues are shorter, allowing passengers to reach their resorts quickly. And finally, on the day of arrival, tourists can enjoy a full day at the resort, and on the day of departure, they can spend the entire day at the resort before a late check-out at 10:00 pm,” he explained.

“Manta Air operates three weekly flights between Dhaalu Airport and Bengaluru on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays. We use ATR 72-600 aircraft, redesigned for comfort with 64 seats, including 16 premium economy and 48 economy seats, providing extra legroom and full meal service on board,” Maumoon detailed. Manta Air has collaborated with resorts like Kandima Maldives, Niyama Private Island, RIU Atoll, and others to offer tailored packages exclusive to Manta Air passengers. “These packages include airfare and are customised to meet Indian travellers' preferences,” he noted.

Anticipating Increased Tourist Arrivals

Maumoon anticipates a significant increase in tourist arrivals from India, especially with the upcoming holiday season. “The roadshow and other promotional activities aim to inform and attract Indian travellers, making them aware of the unique benefits of flying directly to Dhaalu,” he explained. While the current focus is on strengthening the Bengaluru-Dhaalu route, Manta Air plans may consider expanding to other southern Indian cities like Cochin and Coimbatore, depending on demand and performance.

Overall, the “Explore Maldives” roadshow has created the much-needed buzz to reignite interest among Indian travellers, especially during the upcoming Diwali and Dussehra holidays. Also, the roadshow represents a significant step in strengthening the tourism bond between India and the Maldives.



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Riya Group partners with Air India Express to ease visa applications for travellers

Riya Group has entered into a strategic alliance with Air India Express, a subsidiary of Air India. This enterprising collaboration integrates Riya’s comprehensive visa services on the airline’s website, enabling customers to promptly access and apply for visas to any destination worldwide.

Team TTJ

Riya Group’s established vertical Riya Visa Services aims to ease the pre-travel booking journey for customers with its extensive suite of services. This includes worldwide visa applications, processing of all visa types, checklist updates, status checks and much more.

Integrating a one-stop approach, this progressive step is conceived to ease the visa application process and enhance a traveller’s holistic booking journey on the Air India Express website. Passengers no longer need to navigate multiple websites to expedite their visa application process. This customer-centric outlook will enable users to browse flights and apply for their visas all in one place.



▲ Nitin John

Speaking on this lucrative partnership, Nitin John, Vice Chairman of Riya Group said, “Visa has been one of our most promising and fast-growing verticals. Even before Riya Group pioneered holistic solutions for travel partners, we offered extensive visa services to appease the growing demands in the 80s. Today, through this alliance with the esteemed Air India Express, we are excited to expand our reach and enhance traveller’s experience even before their trip begins. This strategic collaboration aims to curb the prevailing challenges a passenger undergoes in planning their journey. Hence, this integration of comprehensive visa services directly on the airline’s website is our progressive step towards easing a traveller’s visa processing experience.”

Asego and Ancileo’s strategic alliance to reshape future of travel insurance

The union of Asego’s seasoned prowess in global assistance and insurance with Ancileo’s cutting-edge tech solutions promises a paradigm shift in customer experience and market reach on a global scale.

Team TTJ

In June, Asego, a leading Indian provider of global assistance and travel insurance, and Ancileo, a provider of end-to-end tech solutions for travel insurance ecosystems, announced a strategic alliance. Through this partnership, both companies aim to reshape and enhance the travel insurance landscape by integrating and offering improved customer experience, innovative insurance products, and increased service efficiency to travellers, global distributors, and insurers alike.

The Jubilation

On the collaboration, Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO, Asego, expressed his excitement, stating, “This breakthrough collaboration will enable us to leverage Ancileo’s advanced technology and international insurer network to offer Asego’s innovative travel insurance products and services on a global scale.” Asego, headquartered in Mumbai, has a deep understanding of the unique needs of Indian travellers and caters to 18,000 plus travel trade partners across retail, e-commerce, and corporate verticals.



▲ Dev Karvat

Sharing his enthusiasm, Olivier Michel, CEO, Ancileo, said, “This collaboration with Asego marks a significant milestone in Ancileo’s mission to empower travel assistance and insurance ecosystems with advanced technology solutions. By combining our strengths, we are poised to provide our

partners with a flexible and battle-tested insurance solution in India and abroad.” Ancileo, a software-as-a-service platform for the insurance ecosystem, offers end-to-end technology solutions for managing travel insurance portfolios. Its core capabilities include API solutions, white label, agent portal management, claims automation, policy management, and localised payment solutions for travel insurance premium collection.

The Alliance Advantage

This partnership between Asego and Ancileo represents a strategic union aimed at bolstering market presence within the burgeoning global travel insurance sector. The collaboration provides Ancileo with a strong local partner in India and enables Asego to expand its presence in the global market. Further, it offers enhanced customer experience through streamlined processes, innovative products, and comprehensive support before, during, and after their travel.



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A Journey Marked by Passion

Creative Travel Shaping the Future of Incentive Travel Worldwide

Spearheading a company that is today probably India’s most globally awarded incentive travel company, Rajeev Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel and President, EUROMIC, and a leading light in the industry, speaks to the Travel Trade Journal. He shares his inspiration, learnings, challenges, and opportunities with us.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Creative Travel's commitment to its founding values has earned it 88 global recognitions today, including eight SITE Crystal Awards for experiential incentive travel, 27 prestigious World Travel Awards, and the honour of being named India’s Most Preferred Travel and Tourism Brand.

Setting Benchmarks

“It has taken years of hard work, investment in building skills, and determination to showcase the best of our region to the world,” explains Rajeev. He adds, “Delivering the finest in incentive travel and meeting experiences does not happen by accident. Each of the countries we cover has unique touchpoints that we have made our business intimately aware of. Everything we plan is done with a level of detailing matched by a few. We look at every project as an opportunity to help strengthen the relationships our clients have with their end customers. Our reputation, integrity, and goodwill give us significant influence and privileged access, allowing us to push boundaries.”

Meeting Client Needs

Delivering a unique experience every time is crucial. Rajeev explains, “Though it sounds easy, it is actually quite challenging. Our reputation for expertly handling complex and demanding projects precedes us. In fact, we often receive projects specifically because we are known for tackling the most difficult and unique challenges.”

Today's clients are very demanding, and Creative takes pride in being very thorough in its planning. Even its international clients appreciate this, having spent years understanding how international incentive buyers think and work. Rajeev adds, “We use all that knowledge in drafting proposals and sharing information that matches our client's expectations.”

Key Considerations

Understanding the client’s brief in minute detail is critical. Why are they considering a destination? What is their budget? What



▲ Rajeev Kohli

did they do on their last few trips? The selection of hotels, venues, and activities all come into play. Rajeev emphasises, “One key factor is the people we work with at these locations. The question is: Do our potential suppliers value our business? Can we get the personalised attention that we need from them? Then we look at factors like access, location, logistics of getting there, venue, and client engagement.”

There are several variables that operators need to look at before coming to the right balance for each option. “There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Our unwavering focus is on surpassing

the client's expectations with tailored precision,” notes Rajeev.

Operational Insights

According to Rajeev, a good operator needs to plan for the unexpected. “Things can and do go wrong, and we can’t anticipate every scenario. To handle unexpected deviations, a strong, trustworthy team is essential. This team must be empowered to make decisions and take swift action. In a top-heavy organisation, decision-making can render sluggish and hinder progress - Speed is critical,” stresses Rajeev. He also cautions, “Always be ethical, follow all laws, do not cut corners on small things like licenses, permissions, and hidden safety points. Cutting costs isn’t worth the potential risks.”

Collaborative Approach in Promoting India

Creative Travel participates in the biggest MICE shows in the industry—IMEX and IBTM—and is also a member of SITE, a body where the incentive travel industry congregates. Creative's global offices generate business, and word-of-mouth recommendations are a strong contributor. There is a clear focus on creating interest in India as a destination, a process where Creative joins forces with other colleagues in India from other companies. The SITE India chapter is cohesive and works together to help promote the brand ‘India’. “Cooperation is more crucial than mere competition in today's world,” asserts Rajeev. “It benefits us all.”



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MICE: The India Challenge and Opportunity

TTJ interacts with Amaresh Tiwari, CEO, Meetings and Incentives World and Vice Chairman of the India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB), to understand the market dynamics and evolution of the Indian MICE space.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja



▲ Amaresh Tiwari

The MICE sector in India is flourishing, driven by a surge in corporate events and international conferences. Thanks to an enhanced portfolio of world-class hotels, state-of-the-art convention centres, and versatile event and wedding venues, India has positioned itself as a premier destination for MICE activities. The diverse cultural landscape and growing infrastructure further enhance India's appeal, making it a great option for domestic and global business events.

Key Factors for Event Success

Being a MICE agent requires a very different mindset and skill set. Amaresh explains, "The customer today seeks an unbiased and honest opinion about the destination, product, services, and venue and needs support for planning, budgeting, and managing the entire event on their behalf. He desires true value for the money invested and keenly monitors his return on investments and the fulfilment of objectives."

Amaresh added that achieving these parameters requires in-depth planning and organisational skills to create a module that best suits the customer. Often, this module is tailor-made to

meet the customer's specific needs and demands. Selecting a venue or destination is critical for every event, and for an event to be successful, it is very important to select a venue that meets the event organisers' requirements.

Amaresh further elaborates, "Location, last-mile connectivity, traffic conditions, space, the distance between the conference hall and exhibition hall, public conveniences, fire safety, security, sustainable practices, meeting spaces, access by public transport like the metro and buses, availability of different categories of hotels in proximity, and pricing are very important factors to be considered while selecting and finalising a venue."

Challenges Aboard in India's MICE Industry

Challenges are constant, and each client's unique needs present specific obstacles that require tailored solutions. No two events, whether MICE or weddings, can be termed identical.

Last-minute changes or unexpected issues will always arise during events and involve fast thinking and instant solutions. Amaresh points out, "In India, we have a major problem of seasonality, black-out dates due to the peak season of weddings, and inbound tourism. VVIP movements and government events are sometimes announced very late or at very short notice, disturbing our event schedule and logistics. The lack of trained manpower is another challenge the industry faces."

Amaresh highlights several other challenges in the MICE industry. Seasonality complicates the arrangement and movement of high-quality vehicles while fluctuating airfares continually strain budgets. Securing licenses and NOCs from various government and non-government bodies introduces additional roadblocks. The industry also faces shortages of language interpreters, trained multilingual tourist guides, and facilitators. Furthermore, high GST rates exacerbate these difficulties.

Additional Challenges in India

India's diverse cultural landscape and governance influence the planning and execution of MICE events. Amaresh highlights, "Customers expect us to deliver the entire project smoothly and well-planned in advance, and sometimes decisions are made one to three years in advance. We prepare the budget and project estimation well in advance and convey them to the client. In India, a disconnect often arises between the operations of the central and state governments. Law changes frequently impact rules, prices, and taxes at the last moment, placing significant pressure on event planning and execution."

Amaresh notes that cultural practices vary greatly across states, affecting event planning. "Diverse cultural practices, like some states not permitting the serving or consumption of alcohol or non-vegetarian items, lack of single-window clearances, and varying timings and discipline, can sometimes give cultural shocks and are difficult to explain to clients," he explains. Despite these challenges, the company ensures smooth project delivery and incorporates client feedback to continuously improve services. He adds, "Customer feedback is an integral part of our success and growth as it keeps giving us inputs to improve upon. Based on clients' feedback, we keep updating our checklist and ensure that in future events, we apply those feedback for the betterment of events."

Generating Business

MICE is a very competitive business; as multiple options are available globally to clients today. Amaresh explains, "We are an ICPB member, and the association continuously updates us with the latest trends and information and provides us with business leads as well. We attend AIME Melbourne, IMEX Frankfurt, IBTM Barcelona, IMEX Las Vegas, and the Convention India Conclave organised by ICPB. These events help us connect with quality buyers and understand evolving market trends and client requirements."

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Geanis World's MICE expertise reflects its ability to excel in diverse environments

For over a decade, Geanis World has been crafting exceptional travel experiences for individuals, groups, and events. Dharmendra Kumar, CEO, and MD, Geanis World, shares the principles behind the company's stellar reputation, highlighting its personalised approach, meticulous planning, and unwavering commitment to exceeding customer expectations.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

With over 15 years of experience, Geanis World is one of the top players in event planning for its singular dedication to crafting immersive event experiences. Uniquely responsive to corporate needs, they create exceptional event engagements defined by high-impact moments. They ensure flawless execution, both domestically and internationally, delivering events on time and within budget while forging lasting connections.

Beyond the Conventional

The team thrives on creativity, attention to detail, and a passion for delivering cutting-edge events while navigating intricate client expectations from conceptualisation to execution. Dharmendra explains, "Our approach transcends conventional event planning. We do not just organise events; we curate moments that inspire, conferences that spark innovation, and exhibitions that leave a lasting impact. What sets us apart is our commitment to tailor-made solutions. We understand that each event is unique and pride ourselves on creating experiences that align with the client's objectives and values. Our track record speaks volumes; whether it is a corporate conference, an incentive trip, or a grand exhibition, Geanis World exceeds expectations."

Navigating Challenges

The brand tackles challenges with a meticulous, client-focused approach. It presents comprehensive proposals that outline venue selections tailored to client requirements, enriched with visual aids, virtual tours, and essential site visits to ensure that venues meet high industry standards and address potential concerns. Clear communication and collaboration ensure clients are informed at every stage, aligning with their expectations and promptly resolving issues to ensure smooth event execution. Contractual clarity is also crucial, covering pricing and cancellation policies to mitigate potential challenges.

Dharmendra remarks, "Another



▲ Dharmendra Kumar

challenge is understanding and respecting regional customs and protocols. This includes adhering to appropriate dress codes, dietary preferences, religious practices, and local etiquette. Event planners must navigate these aspects respectfully to ensure seamless execution." By addressing every detail and leaving nothing to chance, Geanis World executes seamless events.

India's Appeal

India's cultural diversity offers immersive options for venues, themes, programmes, and engagement opportunities that celebrate the country's profound cultural heritage. It significantly enhances the attendee experience by providing unique and memorable settings. Event planners have access to an extensive range of venue options, from modern convention centres in metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Delhi to heritage hotels and palaces in Rajasthan or Kerala. India's cultural diversity attracts international participants eager to explore the country's heritage while attending the event. Dharmendra points out, "Collaboration with local suppliers, vendors, and service providers who understand cultural nuances ensures seamless logistics and adds authenticity.

More importantly, such collaborations support the local economy and promote sustainable practices." He adds, "MICE events contribute positively to cultural preservation and tourism promotion and leave behind a post-event legacy that benefits the host region long after the event concludes."

Leveraging Feedback

A systematic approach to managing and leveraging client input incorporates real-time feedback mechanisms to address issues promptly. Feedback should be systematically aggregated and analysed to identify recurring positive and negative points. Areas requiring immediate attention, based on the severity and frequency of feedback, should be prioritized. Dharmendra observes, "Implementing changes on active timelines assures that the changes are put into practice, and the affected changes are expressly communicated clearly to all relevant parties in response to the feedback, which ensures repeat clients."

Staying Ahead of the Curve

Highlighting successful collaborations and client testimonials on the website and social media platforms generates strong leads, which are then efficiently converted into queries and bookings. Emphasising the role of digital media in marketing, Dharmendra notes, "We enhance our visibility through an optimised website and utilise platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to connect with potential clients by sharing industry insights, success stories, and regular updates about upcoming events, demonstrating our expertise and attracting engagement. We offer valuable content such as whitepapers, event planning guides, or exclusive discounts to nurture leads."

Aspiring to turn travel dreams into extraordinary realities, Dharmendra highlights the brand mission that drives every detail, "We are not just event organisers; we are architects of experiences that linger in participants' minds long after the event concludes."



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Alpcord Network's seasoned approach to ensure successful MICE event execution

Based in Delhi, Alpcord Network's customer-centric approach has propelled it to the forefront of the MICE industry. Chander Mansharamani, Managing Director, Alpcord Network Travel and Conference Management Company, elaborates on the factors that give the company a competitive advantage over its competitors.

Prashant Nayak

Alpcord Network, with its strong foundation in innovation and extensive expertise, a team of professionals that boasts over 38 years of experience in the travel trade, specialises in meetings, incentives, and conference planning.

Alpcord Network features two specialised divisions dedicated to the incentives and corporate meetings segments: the incentives and conference divisions. Each division is adept at addressing diverse client needs, offering meticulous planning and seamless execution to guarantee the success of every event. "Our focus has always been meetings, conferences, and conventions, both medical and scientific, and other sectors like energy, law, and space. We have been in the above segment for the last 20 years and have handled more than 2,000 conferences across India ranging from 200 to 13,000 delegates," Mansharamani explains.



▲ Chander Mansharamani

Mansharamani emphasises that venue selection is crucial for any event. It should focus

on space for delegates and parallel sessions, with a significant emphasis on exhibition space. Direct connectivity is paramount when choosing a destination. He notes, "The main challenge has always been the last-minute requirements and changes, but with our experience over the years, we have overcome such challenges and executed the event successfully."

Mansharamani underscores the critical importance of implementing aggressive marketing strategies. He points out, "Alpcord Network's marketing strategy is mainly through research, but we do follow sales visits and social media campaigns for effective reach. We have repeat conferences to our advantage as well. Today, India has a lot of advantages, with large additional convention centres like Mandapam, Yashobhoomi, and Jio Convention Centre, and also has world-class convention facilities compared to any country in the world. We only need to market them aggressively."

Trip Navigator showcases strength in ideation and customisation in MICE business

Abhishek Gupta, Co-Founder and Director, Trip Navigator, shares insights into his company's innovative approach to crafting tailored MICE experiences for elite corporate clients worldwide.

Prashant Nayak

With a primary focus on corporate clients, Trip Navigator, a boutique MICE company, tailors its services based on client briefs and understanding of destination and budget preferences. Trip Navigator exclusively collaborates with category A and A plus corporate clients.

Trip Navigator is guided by values like commitment, integrity, enrichment, and partnership. The brand envisions becoming the most respected corporate travel services and event company globally. "While we handle regular MICE events, our specialty lies in creating unique, tailored experiences and selecting offbeat destinations. During MICE events, quick on-site decision-making is often crucial. Our flat hierarchy during execution enables us to respond swiftly and efficiently to any situation. For both domestic and international events, we make it a point to have at least one team member travel with the group. This approach enables us to make immediate decisions on-site, ensuring seamless execution without any extra costs to the client," shares Abhishek.



▲ Abhishek Gupta

The team at Trip Navigator carefully selects venues, especially for incentive trips, understanding that MICE groups often consist of top-performing internal or external customers from the corporate world, making the experience crucial. Key factors include the venue's proximity

to the airport, its ability to accommodate meal preferences, the size and suitability of the ballroom, and its proximity to sightseeing destinations.

For Trip Navigator, the common challenges in India include last-minute planning, which affects flight prices, availability, and hotel or venue bookings. Visa procedures and rejections can also be problematic for certain destinations. Additionally, the Indian market is highly price-sensitive. They overcome these challenges through a proactive approach, efficient planning, strong negotiation skills, and maintaining flexibility.

Abhishek adds, "India's diverse cultural landscape significantly impacts event planning. For instance, metro cities are ideal for conferences, while Goa is popular for leisure events. Rajasthan and Kerala are preferred for luxury experiences. We gather feedback through our proprietary mobile app, which collects data from travellers at every stage of the event. This feedback helps us analyse strengths and areas for improvement, enabling us to continuously enhance our services."

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NIMA embodies a decade of impactful growth and influence in the MICE arena

In this exclusive interaction, Gajesh Girdhar, Founding Member and National Coordinator, NIMA, highlights the association’s role in advancing India's MICE industry. While empowering members and forging international alliances, NIMA remains committed to fostering growth and setting new standards in the MICE industry.

Prashant Nayak

The Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) is an alliance of MICE operators from across India, collaborating to advance and enhance the industry. This association, representing dedicated MICE operators in India, exemplifies an initiative conceived and developed under the leadership of its founding members: Gajesh Girdhar, Rakesh Arora, Vikas Khanduri (advisor), and Gurmeet Singh Chhatwal.

Pan-India Presence and Support

NIMA’s National Executive Committee comprises active MICE operators and SMEs from metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata to tier 2 and tier 3 cities like Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Bhubaneswar and even smaller cities like Yamuna Nagar (Haryana) to Tirupati, thus having a pan-India presence.

Over the years, NIMA has also created a symbiotic environment for small MICE operators and aspiring entrepreneurs. Girdhar says, “NIMA is an association that has 30 per cent of members operating from tier 3 and tier 4 cities in India. These operators operate small MICE groups consisting of 20 to 40 people. We connect these agents with corporate and advise them to move their small incentive tours to these areas.” NIMA has been empowering the MICE players, whether well-established or aspiring, with the knowledge and resources to grow their businesses and take them to the next level.

Decade of Distinction

NIMA marked its 10th anniversary in May 2024, celebrating a decade of notable achievements and progress within the MICE industry. “From its inception, NIMA made a pivotal decision not to levy any membership fees on its members, and now it has been 10 years since we have run the association without charging any membership fee, a unique aspect



▲ Gajesh Girdhar

that distinguishes NIMA and has earned widespread acclaim within the MICE community,” asserts Girdhar.

Committed to MICE

MICE tourism has gained momentum in India over the years. As infrastructural amenities in some metro cities now match those of developed countries, India is poised to become a prime destination for MICE events. However, Girdhar states, “The main challenge before the industry is the trained MICE professionals. In this regard, NIMA has taken the initiative by providing training to students studying tourism at various institutions. In the last two years, we have invited more than 300 students to large events and provided training by industry leaders.” The Government of India has also recognised the power of MICE tourism. Girdhar mentions, “From the government, the MICE industry wants to have a clear and transparent MICE policy, for which our delegation recently met Manisha Saxena, the Deputy General, Tourism at the Ministry of Tourism.”

Partnerships and Future Initiatives

NIMA has regularly collaborated with

tourism boards in Catalonia, Jordan, Cyprus, Taiwan, Kissimmee, Nepal, Singapore, and Moscow, to name a few. Girdhar says, “With our partner tourism boards, we arrange webinars, educational trips, destination showcases, and conventions. We plan to introduce new suitable MICE destinations to our members; for this, we recently arranged a webinar with the unexplored MICE destination, the Basque Country in Spain. More such webinars are in the pipeline.”

NIMA has been organising various events and conferences for its members to address contemporary industry issues like GST, TCS, and others. NIMA Connect is another initiative that brings young entrepreneurs and students into direct interaction with the tourism boards (both national and international), key industry partners like VFS, and allied professionals (tax and finance) to broaden their perspective beyond mere transactions.

Speaking on new developments at the association, Girdhar conveys, “We are planning to come again with the NIMA flagship event, MICE Forum, which was pending due to the General Elections, and we are looking for a suitable destination for this event. Further, we are also coming up with a few pilot projects in 2025 aiming to position India as a top MICE destination.”

Towards Global Recognition

Within NIMA, there is a steadfast commitment to assisting fellow members through a robust network, ensuring prompt access to essential information and resources. “For NIMA members, it’s a privilege to be part of India’s only elite MICE fraternity,” assures Girdhar. NIMA is also going international with its membership drive, aiming to become the first Indian MICE Association to go global! Girdhar concludes, “It is an initiative to boost inbound tourism and bring international conferences to India with the help of our global partners.”





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Tamarind Global setting standards for crafting bespoke wedding and corporate events

Louis D'souza, Managing Director, Tamarind Global, sheds light on the company's commitment to excellence and innovation, ensuring unparalleled experiences for every bespoke wedding and corporate event held locally or across international borders.

Prashant Nayak

For over a decade, Tamarind Global has been a preferred brand for hosting bespoke weddings and corporate events both domestically and internationally. Their comprehensive approach, thoughtful planning, bespoke solutions, and innovative services have positioned them at the forefront.

For Unforgettable Event Experiences

For MICE, Tamarind Global delivers immersive, contemporary experiences tailored to each client's unique set of expectations and diverse goals. Providing end-to-end solutions, from ideation to execution, that include venue selection, travel support, accommodation, and on-ground logistics, they use the latest technology to enhance the event experiences through virtual event platforms, interactive sessions, and new-age immersive AV setups. Louis says, "We are well-versed with the ongoing trends in the experiential corporate travel and weddings market, to learn and serve according to the pulse of the customers. Upholding sustainable practices that align with our clients' environmental consciousness yet again gives us leverage over the other players in the market."

In the selection process of the venues or destinations for their events, Tamarind Global takes into consideration several factors from the perspective of clients' expectations. These include the event's custom requirements like size, type, and format while also meeting the logistical aspects of ease of accessibility, accommodation availability, and infrastructure quality. "We also deeply evaluate the venue's ambience and how it would pair with the event's theme and diverse functions. To maximise the client's elemental experience, we conduct in-depth site inspections, know the local suppliers, and leverage our legacy industry experience. We realise our client's vision by keeping communication open and actively seeking their input throughout the planning process," explains Louis.



▲ Louis D'souza

Overcoming MICE Complexities Abroad

Destination weddings and MICE events, especially those hosted internationally, are faced with the common concern of the dynamic cross-border policy changes that impact the seamless planning of the events. Different regions across the country and globally have their own set of roadblocks, like complexities about multiple vendors, meeting tight schedules, and ensuring seamless logistics. Unforeseen situations like weather disruptions, technical failures, or last-minute changes in guest lists are also common. "In navigating the complexities of planning and executing destination weddings and MICE events, particularly those held internationally, we encounter several challenges. We overcome all these challenges through detailed planning, strong contingency strategies, and a nimble approach," asserts Louis.

Strategic Initiatives for Success

Tamarind's strategy encompasses a diverse range of approaches to effectively reach new clients and stay ahead in the competitive MICE market. Louis mentions, "We achieve a balanced approach to marketing by combining digital strategies, industry trade shows, networking events, and leveraging our

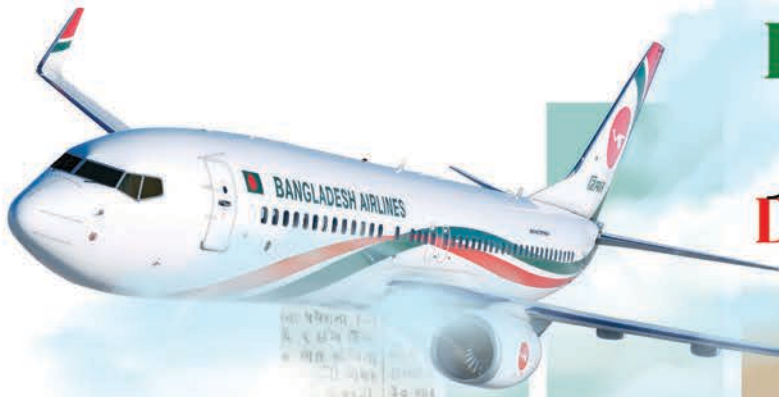
robust online presence through social media and our website. Sharing invaluable insights through content marketing, case studies, and success stories to showcase our expertise and capabilities is another way of sensitising our potential clientele. For hosting bespoke MICE events, we continuously explore new projects and initiatives, such as including modern technology in our events, expanding our global network of partners, and upgrading our sustainability practices."

Cultural Diversity in India Influencing MICE

India's rich and diverse cultural landscape significantly shapes the planning and execution of MICE events. Louis remarks, "India's rich cultural diversity keeps the country in a festive spirit all year round. We can reflect the regional traditions, cuisines, and community experiences that are seamlessly integrated into the event's themes and activities." Tamarind creates immersive experiences for its clients by drawing on this diversity, showcasing local customs and traditions. By improvising their services in real-time, they garner feedback from the client through various touchpoints like post-event surveys, direct feedback, and periodic review meetings. By analysing the detailed feedback, they improve their services and ensure that they consistently exceed the client's expectations.

Trending Destinations for MICE

Louis highlights that MICE events are particularly popular in major cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru within India. These cities are top choices due to their superior infrastructure, excellent connectivity, and extensive range of venue options. For weddings, destinations like Jaipur, Udaipur, and Goa are very popular for their exclusive cultural vibe and well-appointed hospitality options. Internationally, destinations such as Dubai, Singapore, and Bangkok are preferred for their state-of-the-art facilities, ease of accessibility, and different business and leisure environments. South-East Asian countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc., are also picking up traction to host Indian weddings.



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Crowne Plaza Greater Noida sets the stage for superlative MICE experiences

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida is committed to delivering customised experiences for events of all kinds, including corporate conferences, incentive trips, major exhibitions, and high-profile social gatherings. TTJ engages with Sharad K. Upadhyay, General Manager, to explore what makes this hotel a top standout choice and ideal venue for MICE.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Delhi, the capital of the country today, is dotted with many MICE venue options to cater to global conferences, conventions, and exhibitions. However, it is important to recognise that each event is unique, with varying sizes, requirements, and budgets. As demand increases, so do newer options in the Delhi-NCR. Nestled amidst the vibrant landscape of Delhi-NCR, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida emerges as a distinguished haven for MICE.

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida is set on an expansive 8.5-acre property, providing ample space for large-scale events. "Within Delhi-NCR, our tranquil setting is easily accessible via major highways and transportation hubs, including the much-awaited Jewar Airport," mentioned Sharad. This prime location ensures convenience for both local and international attendees.

The Venue

"As one of the largest properties in Delhi-NCR, we feature 398 rooms, 70,000 square feet of event space, and six award-winning restaurants offering Indian, Pan-Asian, Italian, and global flavours," Sharad highlighted. The hotel includes 17 break-out rooms, a newly launched spa with Ayurvedic treatments, an open sky pool, and a state-of-the-art fitness centre. These facilities cater to the varied needs of MICE clients, providing both luxury and functionality.

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida's expansive lawns are perfect for corporate team-building activities, fostering camaraderie and collaboration among participants. "At Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, every event is unique, and our commitment to customisation ensures your vision becomes a reality, leaving a lasting impression on every attendee," Sharad emphasised.

"Our hallmark is attention to detail and personalised experiences. Whether it's a corporate conference, wedding, or social gathering, we ensure every event is perfectly tailored," he added.

Challenges and Opportunities

Attracting events in a competitive market



▲ Sharad Upadhyay

like Delhi-NCR has its own challenges. ELEVATE, the property-specific customised programme, caters to the special needs of the global MICE industry. "Our DNA allows us to expertly handle weddings or MICE events of any sort. Customisation is key to meeting the diverse needs of our clients, from tailored menus to themed décor. By offering personalised experiences, we create unforgettable events. Strategic networking and partnerships with local businesses and event planners expand our reach and enhance our offerings. We position ourselves as the premier choice for events in Greater Noida," explains Sharad.

Leveraging Technology

Being part of the global hotel chain InterContinental Hotels Group, the property enjoys the benefits of the global network

and distribution system. Intricate revenue and distribution systems effortlessly reach anyone with a query regarding events. Crowne Meetings brand standards incorporate meeting success tools, including technology. Sharad further highlights, "Our convention centre and meeting rooms are equipped with top technology, aligned with IHG standards. Our collaboration with CISCO Meraki enhances connectivity and guest experience throughout the property. Additionally, our IHG app provides an easy-to-use interface, allowing guests to make inquiries, reservations, or amendments as needed conveniently."

Ingredients of a Successful Event in India

For hosting successful MICE or wedding events in India, Sharad emphasises his five-point mantra:

Leverage Ample Space and Customisation: Choose venues with expansive areas and the flexibility for extensive customisation to meet diverse client needs.

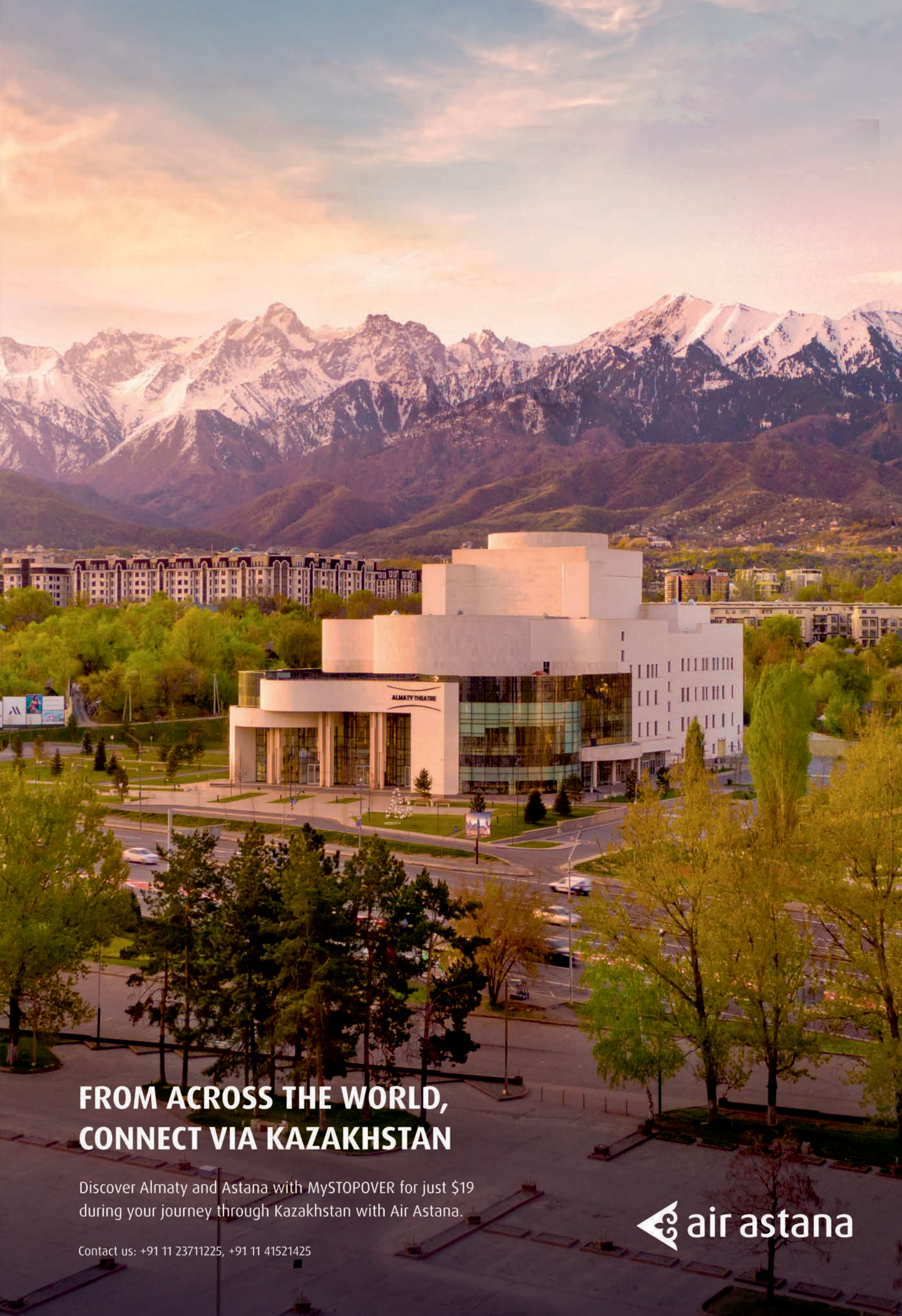
Highlight Tranquil and Accessible Locations: Select venues that offer a peaceful setting and are easily accessible via major highways and transportation hubs.

Focus on Personalised Experiences: Customisation is key to creating unforgettable events. Offer personalised experiences that exceed expectations.

Build Strategic Partnerships: Network and establish partnerships with local businesses and event planners to enhance your offerings.

Highlight Venue Advantages: Emphasise the unique advantages of the venue, such as ample space, customisation options, and a serene yet accessible location.





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ATM 2024 empowers innovation and growth, unveils the future of travel

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai has several special aspects and features that make it stand out as a premier event in the travel and tourism industry. This year, with over 46,000 industry professionals from more than 160 countries, including 33,500 visitors, ATM 2024 witnessed a 15 per cent increase in attendees compared to the previous year. This impressive year-on-year growth also underscores the strength, resilience, and momentum of the global travel and tourism sector.

Sonika Bohra

As a frequent visitor, I find the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai exceptionally vibrant and inspiring. It truly does offer a comprehensive and dynamic platform to explore the future of travel, foster global connections, and promote innovation and sustainability in the industry.

Setting the Stage for Tomorrow

This year's event embodied the theme "Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship." Aligned with the theme, over 2,600 exhibitors gathered at the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) to delve into the factors driving industry growth and uncover future opportunities in the global tourism sector. His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum approved significant transport and tourism-related projects, thereby reinforcing Dubai's future vision.

At the exhibition, the panel discussions and sessions were particularly eye-opening, offering deep insights into current trends and future possibilities. For the Middle East markets and the overall industry, the sessions offered profound perspectives on regional cooperation, redefining luxury at high-end hotels, exploration of opportunities and potential in the outbound markets of India, China, and South America, and the future of air travel.

Other notable highlights included sustainable tourism initiatives, the ATM Start-up Pitch Battle, which highlighted emerging talent, and dynamic networking events that fostered great connections. Also, the numerous exhibitors and their innovative stall designs left a lasting impression on me, highlighting the creativity and ingenuity propelling the travel industry forward.

India discussed at Global Stage

During the session "Unlocking the True Potential of Indian Travellers," Virendra Jain, CEO and Co-Founder of VIDEA, presented findings from the VIDEA 2023 Indian Traveller Behaviour and Insights Report. He emphasised that travel and tourism are moving beyond luxury and evolving into essential and integral experiences in the lives of the young Indian demographic. The primary motivator for these trips is the need for a break from daily life, with 33 per cent of travellers seeking leisure escapes. Numerous travel trends are shaping India into a dynamic source market for global tourism, necessitating targeted engagement strategies to capitalise on this growth.

At the India Market Insights Summit panel session, the speakers too emphasised the strategic importance of understanding and targeting the Indian travel market with innovative and tailored marketing strategies, focusing on sectors such as air travel, hotels, rail, and intercity buses.

Empowering Gen Z Travel

In an illuminating session titled "How to Build Influence with Gen Z in Just 30 Seconds," Marc-Antoine Simon, Industry Manager, Travel and Tourism, MENA, TikTok, shared cutting-edge insights for Gen Z travellers during a panel discussion at ATM 2024 Future Stage. He highlighted the profound impact of concise yet compelling video content, exemplified by platforms like TikTok, in shaping travel decisions. A standout case study discussed was Albania, previously overlooked as a tourist destination until it surged in popularity in 2022 owing to viral user-generated videos showcasing its tourism appeal.

The session also addressed how mobile and community-driven search platforms have dismantled traditional barriers to travel, revolutionising the pre-booking journey and making destinations go viral overnight. H.E. Whitbeck, Minister of Tourism for Guatemala, highlighted Guatemala's successful approach to attracting Gen Z tourists, emphasising sustainability and eco-friendly initiatives aligned with their values.

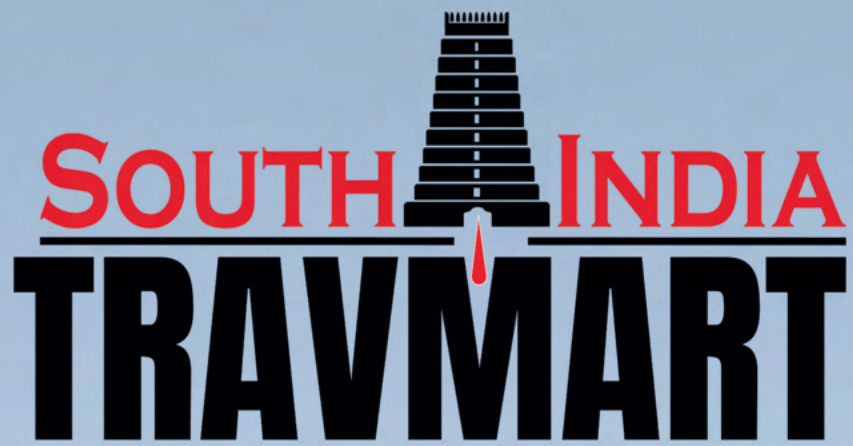
Hospitality Trends Driving Opportunities

In the session titled 'Trends Shaping the Future of Hospitality in the Middle East', slow travel emerged as a significant trend encompassing sustainable, mindful, and low-impact travel practices. The adoption of sustainable practices and leveraging AI and data to enhance guest experiences were highlighted as critical strategies for future-proofing travel and hospitality businesses in the region. Senior representatives from leading hotel groups also provided insights into industry challenges and opportunities.

In another session, panellists discussed strategies for luxury hospitality companies to distinguish themselves in a competitive market. They emphasised that high-end hoteliers in the Middle East's saturated luxury market can redefine luxury by integrating global expertise with authentic local talent. Adopting a hyper-personalised approach to guest experiences was underscored as pivotal for fostering customer loyalty and driving repeat business.

In summary, ATM 2024 not only set new records but also underscored its pivotal role in shaping a more efficient, collaborative, profitable, sustainable, and innovative tourism sector for future generations.





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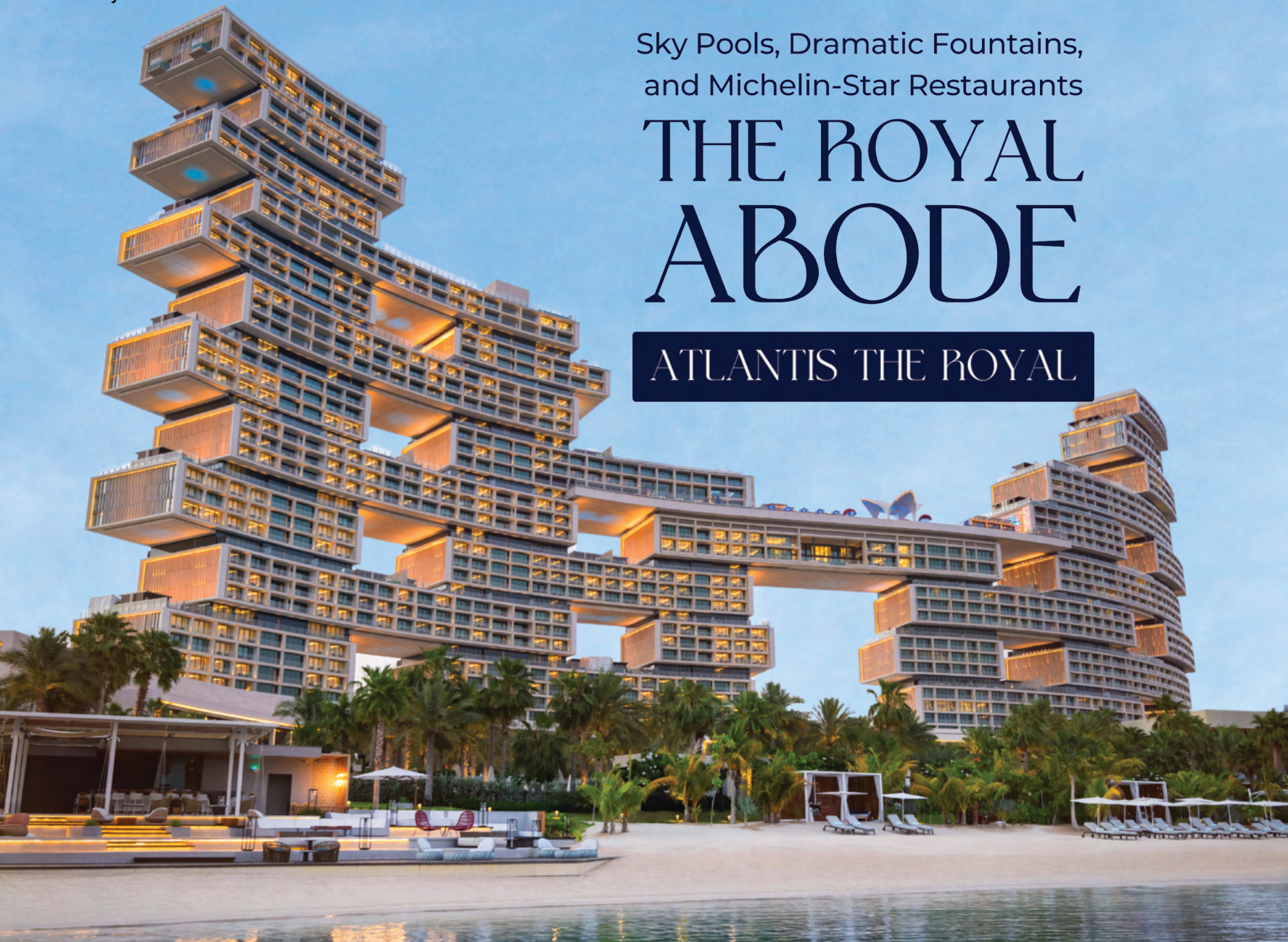
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THE ROYAL ABODE

ATLANTIS THE ROYAL



Opened on February 10, 2023, Atlantis The Royal has been meticulously crafted by some of the world’s leading designers, architects, and artists. It offers a wealth of experiences that cater to the highest echelons of luxury travel, promising unforgettable moments for even the most discerning travellers.

Vartik Sethi

Architectural Marvel and Design Philosophy

Atlantis The Royal exemplifies innovative design, harmoniously fusing contemporary luxury with cultural influences that pay homage to the region’s rich heritage. The resort’s design is heavily influenced by the Bedouin

tribes of the Arabian desert, celebrating the precious commodity of water through an array of water features and sculptures. Its structure, featuring sky pools and dramatic fountains, challenges conventional architectural norms. The Skyblaze Fountain, for instance, combines fire and water in a mesmerising and captivating display, making your clients wonder if they have stumbled into a grand Cirque du Soleil performance! The Cloud 22 Sky Pool offers guests the sensation of swimming in the clouds, with panoramic views of Dubai’s skyline.

The lobby area of Atlantis The Royal is designed to be an awe-inspiring introduction to

the luxury that awaits guests. Central to the lobby is a stunning water feature, “Droplets of Life,” designed and envisioned by the G.A Group. It symbolises the first drop of water in the desert, marking the underlying motif of the whole property.

The resort offers a variety of luxurious rooms and suites, including the Sky Pool Villa, Palmscape Penthouse, and Sky Terrace Family Suites. Each room is equipped with modern amenities such as gold-plated toothbrushes and Graff toiletries, ensuring a lavish stay. The rooms feature expansive terraces, private pools, and panoramic views of Palm Jumeirah and the Arabian Sea. Personalised butler service, high-end in-room technology, and exquisite furnishings are standard, providing guests with an exceptional experience of comfort and sophistication.

Droplets Sculpture at the Lobby





Palmscape King Room



Kebabs at Ariana's Persian Kitchen



Custom Printed Coffee at Gastronomy

Culinary Excellence

One of the most striking features of Atlantis The Royal is its unmatched culinary landscape. With more celebrity chef restaurants than anywhere else in the world, the resort stands as a premier gastronomic destination. Highlights include Ariana's Persian Kitchen, led by the acclaimed chef Ariana Bundy, offering modern twists on classic Persian dishes in an exquisitely designed setting reminiscent of her historic home in Kashan. Here, every dish has a story behind it, which is well communicated by the servers. They not only serve delectable dishes but also dish out stories and cultural tidbits, making the dining experience as rich as the food itself.

Another standout is Ling Ling, a contemporary Asian dining venue by Tao Group Hospitality. Located on the 22nd and 23rd floors, Ling Ling combines innovative Asian dishes with a high-energy atmosphere and breathtaking views of the Dubai skyline. It is designed to transition seamlessly from dining to a vibrant nightlife experience, making it a versatile choice for clients seeking both culinary and entertainment excellence.

Gastronomy at Atlantis The Royal is an experience in itself, featuring a breakfast buffet that is nothing short of spectacular. Inspired by the lively ambiance of a charming food market, this dining hall offers several live cooking stations catering to a diverse range of tastes. From freshly baked pastries and bread to a selection of cheeses and charcuterie, the buffet caters to every palate. Guests can enjoy a variety of international cuisines, including traditional Middle Eastern dishes, Asian delicacies, and European classics. You might run out of appetite, but you most definitely will not run out of having enough options to eat!



Gastronomy

While the culinary offerings at Atlantis The Royal are exceptional, those looking to explore beyond its confines must visit En Fuego at Atlantis The Palm. The ambiance at En Fuego is as dynamic as its cuisine, with live entertainment and a festive atmosphere that makes every meal a celebration.

The Dubai Balloon

The Dubai Balloon is one of the most exhilarating experiences offered at Atlantis The Royal. The hot air balloon is helium-inflated, securely tethered to the ground, and soars 300 meters high, equivalent to the height of a 100-story building. Strategically located at the edge of Palm Jumeirah, the balloon provides uninterrupted 360-degree views of the complete shape and structure of this man-made island. Suspended sky-high, guests can see the iconic Burj Al Arab and get a view of the palm islands and the distant downtown skyline on clear days.



Ling Ling

The Royal Club Lounges

The Royal Club Lounges offer exclusive benefits that enhance the guest experience. The lounges provide a serene escape within the bustling resort, from daily breakfast and afternoon tea to evening cocktails and all-day refreshments. The E-Butler service ensures that every guest's needs are met



Dolce & Gabbana x Ounass by Cloud 22



En Fuego, Atlantis The Palm

with personalised attention. For families, the Atlantis Explorers Club offers a range of activities for children aged 3-12. The resort's extensive facilities, including The Lost Chambers Aquarium and Aquaventure Waterpark, add to its appeal, providing endless entertainment options for guests of all ages.

Cloud 22

The saying goes, 'Money cannot buy you happiness', but experiencing Cloud 22 at the Atlantis comes quite close. Cloud 22 is more than just a pool—it is a luxurious sky-high oasis that redefines poolside relaxation. Perched high above the city, this sky pool offers stunning views of the Dubai skyline and the Arabian Gulf. The infinity pool seemingly merges with the horizon, creating a surreal experience of swimming among the clouds. Cloud 22 is equipped with duplex cabanas, including the VVIP cabanas that feature their own private plunge pools. The atmosphere is elevated by a sophisticated music selection, adding a lively yet relaxing vibe. Cloud 22, through an exclusive limited-period partnership with Dolce & Gabbana and Ounass, provides guests with an Italian-inspired experience. The interiors are adorned with Dolce & Gabbana's iconic blue majolica print, while the culinary offerings include signature dishes such as bruschetta with Oscietra caviar and Gillardeau oysters.



Nobu By The Beach

Cloud 22 is a destination in itself where guests can unwind in incomparable luxury, making it an essential experience for those visiting Atlantis The Royal.

Nobu by the Beach

Nobu by the Beach, the debut pool and beach club by the world-renowned Nobu brand, combines the minimalist elegance of Japanese tradition with the modern allure of beachfront luxury. Situated in the heart of Atlantis The Royal, Nobu by the Beach offers a lagoon pool, a Nobu restaurant, and an expansive outdoor bar overlooking the Dubai skyline.

It comes with stylishly appointed sun loungers, or for an even more exclusive



Japanese Delicacies at Nobu By The Beach

experience, one can upgrade to one of Nobu's luxury cabanas, two of which feature private plunge pools overlooking the Arabian Sea. To add to the culinary and relaxing experience at the beach club, there is an upscale bar that serves an extensive selection of crafted cocktails, sake, and beverages that complement the serene beach atmosphere.



Cloud 22

THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL IS GREEN

As the pressing challenges of climate change and environmental degradation become a hardened reality, the world is undergoing a transformative shift towards sustainability. In the travel industry, this shift is reflected in the remarkable rise of eco-tourism. India's diverse landscapes are becoming the backdrop for a new kind of tourism—one that harmonises luxury with sustainability. TTJ delves into the burgeoning eco-tourism sector in India by engaging in conversations with the pioneers of Eco-tourism in India.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

The sustainable tourism market is on a rapid ascent, with a report by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) projecting an annual growth rate of 6.7 per cent from 2023 to 2028. This wave has captured global attention, particularly within the travel industry, prompting more hospitality stakeholders to incorporate sustainability as a core brand value. While the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, through the Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI), promotes responsible and sustainable tourism practices, major players like Booking.com are prioritising carbon footprint reduction and fostering a culture of sustainability, reflecting the broader trend within the hospitality sector.

While universally valuable, translating the concept of responsible tourism into business gain is challenging. However, India's eco-tourism pioneers, having been in this niche business before the trend gained momentum, have successfully navigated the rise of sustainable travel. They provide high-quality immersive travel experiences while remaining

steadfast in their commitment to responsible tourism principles and are now reaping the benefits of success.

Increasing Demand

Contrary to the belief that premium service and sustainability do not mix, many high-end eco-resorts are successfully disproving this notion. This upswing is evidenced by the proliferation of new eco-retreats and the commitment of established hospitality chains to make sustainability a core goal. Many are investing in eco-conscious properties and adopting responsible travel practices, setting a new standard for the industry. Pointing out the reason for this change, Ram Pratap Singh, Owner, Mela Kothi, Chambal, explains, "The growing, and much-needed, conversations around climate change and the environmental impact of unsustainable consumption practices have resulted in heightened awareness of these issues across the globe. This is also reflected in travel - with questions being raised on the environmental impact and how best it can be mitigated. Discerning travellers seek sustainable options like never before,



▲ Aly Rashid

and we have seen the trend solidify into a movement post-pandemic."

Identifying the beginnings of this trend, Aly Rashid, Director and Field Naturalist, Jehan Numa Wilderness Lodges and Camps, says, "This trend started during the COVID pandemic when travellers wanted to go to smaller properties to stay away from the crowd. As more discerning people visit such destinations, the best form of marketing becomes word of mouth, and we have certainly benefited from this. The demand in the domestic market for sustainable high-end eco-lodges has gone up in recent years."





Mela Kothi



▲ Ram Pratap Singh

It is not always a rosy path, as sustainability comes at a high cost, and green initiatives increase the basic running costs of most establishments which can only be continued if the patrons support the cause. Highlighting this important feature, Manav Khanduja, Co-Founder, Pugdundee Safaris, asserts, “A recent survey report highlighted that a vast majority of those who travel are looking to do so more sustainably. But costs become an important aspect of influencing travel decisions. Our internal assessments indicate that travellers are likely to choose a greener travel option if it is available at a similar price. Most guests value eco-friendly initiatives, which ultimately foster customer loyalty.” Ratika S. Ramchandran, Co-Owner and Managing Director, Svasara Jungle Lodge, notices a significant increase in guests’ appreciation and awareness, “We have been in operation for almost 14 years now, and our interactions with guests indicate that there is a positive shift in the consciousness. Guests have always appreciated the luxuries they found at our remote location. However, now visitors appreciate responsible luxuries further more!”

Key Driving Factors

The founders of India’s premier eco-resorts have revolutionised eco-lodges, transforming them into fully sustainable havens, offering top-quality comfort, modern amenities, exquisite dining, and immersive adventures while prioritising

ecosystem protection and community support. Most importantly, they educate guests on sustainability principles and raise awareness. Aly identifies multiple factors driving this trend and explains, “With the pandemic, instead of international destinations, travellers discovered unexplored domestic regions suitable for discerning eco-conscious travellers. Further, for urban audiences who can afford high-end travel to eco-lodges amidst wilderness, it is a great stress buster. Finally, sustainability itself has become a part of people’s lives and they want to travel to places that can offer experiences that they relate to.” Ratika identifies an elevated concern for the environment as a driving force that encourages travellers to look for authentic experiences and show support for local community initiatives. She says, “The need for positive transformational travel experiences is an encouraging trend, and we can meet these preferences by remaining rooted to our destination.”

The game changer has been the ‘informed traveller’, according to Manav, and he indicates that the informed



Dining under the stars at Reni Pani Jungle Lodge by Jehan Numa Wilderness

traveller identifies his carbon footprint, along with comfort, as a key factor in the evaluation matrix while picking the hosting partner. He says, “It is good to see this trend picking up in India that promises a more holistically meaningful experience, empowers the local community, and preserves the cultural heritage.”

Drawing on years of expertise Ram simply states, “We have been at the forefront of sustainable, responsible travel from the word go since commencing operations in 1999 and have built a solid body of work and practices that have marked us as pioneers in this field. To ensure the authenticity of our approach we participate in an independent environment audit of the property and experiences every three years, as well as sharing scientifically validated data of the carbon footprint of all our consumption parameters.”



Outdoor Dining at the Teakhouse, Svasara Jungle Lodge



▲ Ratika S. Ramchandran



▲ Manav Khanduja



Lunch at Pench Tree Lodge by Pugdundee Safaris

us to improve our sustainability practices but also leads to recognition in the travel trade, eventually leading to more business. But our primary goal to get certification is to keep improving our sustainability best practices.”

Ram offers a clear perspective and candidly summarises the topic: “Eco-tourism certification is vital to help separate the wheat from the chaff. It is critical to prevent the rampant greenwashing that brings disrepute to us all and makes travellers wary. A creditable certification provides travellers with a tool to make educated decisions and leads to an increase in business for the property.”



Alfresco Dining at Tree House Hideaway Bandhavgarh by Pugdundee Safaris

Eco-tourism Certification

As eco-tourism grows exponentially and eco-friendly resorts proliferate worldwide, verifying their credentials becomes crucial. Eco-tourism certification plays a pivotal role by vetting these credentials, providing a legitimate stamp of approval that gives travellers peace of mind before booking. While good work often speaks for itself, the question remains: how does certification impact the business side of eco-tourism?

Ratika explains, “Certification of any kind guarantees the authenticity of the work that you do and helps to build confidence among customers to unhesitatingly pick you. It assures travellers that certified products are backed by a strong, well-managed commitment to sustainable practices and will provide a high-quality nature-based tourism experience.” Outlining the main reason for certifications, Aly says, “We have been certified by TOFTigers for almost 15 years now. Certification is very important because it not only enables

Next Step

The next frontier in eco-tourism involves quantifying the net benefits of sustainability practices, as many in the industry have adopted eco-friendly measures, yet tangible metrics are lacking. Seeking to mitigate this, Aly shares, “We are now working closely with ‘Indian School of Nature’, a non-profit organisation that will assist in calculating our carbon footprint at our lodges. We aim to quantify our activities through globally recognised parameters and then arrive at whether we are at net zero or carbon negative. Once we establish our positioning, we can communicate to our customers that they are doing a service to the environment by coming to us. This is the next goal that will drive sustainability to the next level.”

Ratika agrees, “Data analysis will be key to assessing efforts and to benchmark against best practices. It will be very important that government policies support and regularise sustainable tourism practices. There is a lot of positive work being done but there is a need for scientifically studying their

impact and documenting case studies for the benefit of the entire industry.”

Manav observes, “Just greenwashing will not work with the guests getting more educated on this subject; with the market maturing, businesses will have to show long-term commitment and impact on sustainability.” Emphasising consolidation, Ram summarises, “We continue to innovate and experiment, sharing best practices with our trade partners and fellow property owners. No property can work in isolation and sustainable travel is an ideal to be achieved across the entire travel space.”

In conclusion, eco-tourism in India is not just a trend but a pioneering force shaping a sustainable future. With eco-resorts leading by example in environmental stewardship and cultural preservation, India is poised to inspire global standards in responsible travel. By prioritising conservation and community engagement, eco-tourism is not only enriching traveller experiences but also safeguarding the planet for generations to come.





The World of Eco-Tourism Beckons

Karnataka's Unparalleled Natural Treasures

Karnataka, with its treasure trove of biodiversity, boasts a vibrant eco-tourism landscape where its richness unfolds in every corner of the state. Embark on an exciting journey with us through Karnataka's vibrant and dynamic eco-tourism, where every moment promises unparalleled discovery and exhilarating adventures.

Prashant Nayak

In recent years, Karnataka has emerged as a leader in sustainable tourism, particularly through its commitment to eco-tourism. The establishment of the Karnataka Eco Tourism Development Board (KEDB) in 2013 marked a turning point, catalysing a renewed focus on eco-friendly practices. The board's dedication has significantly enriched Karnataka's forests and ecosystems, creating a haven for travellers. Through sustainable practices and community empowerment, ecotourism initiatives have not only preserved the state's natural beauty but also uplifted local communities. Experience Karnataka's landscapes firsthand while actively supporting their preservation and the welfare of local communities.

The Unique Eco-Tourism Biodiversity

Karnataka is home to a significant portion of the Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its high levels of biodiversity. The Western Ghats are adorned with dense forests, cascading waterfalls, and diverse flora and fauna, making them



a prime destination for eco-tourism activities such as trekking, wildlife safaris, and birdwatching. Moreover, Karnataka's strategic location between the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats boasts a diverse and captivating landscape that blends elements of both regions, creating a distinct biodiversity hotspot. The state boasts several national parks and wildlife and bird sanctuaries, including popular ones like Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Bannerghatta National Park, and Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary. These protected areas provide opportunities for wildlife enthusiasts to observe a variety of species, including elephants, tigers, leopards, bears, reptiles, and numerous bird species, in their natural habitats.

Karnataka is also blessed with numerous rivers and waterfalls, offering opportunities for adventure and eco-tourism. Activities such as river rafting on the Kali River in Dandeli are thrilling experiences that allow visitors to appreciate Karnataka's natural beauty while engaging in adventure sports. Drawn by the allure of waterfalls like Jog Falls and Abbey Falls, eco-tourists flock to Karnataka to immerse in the mesmerising spectacle of cascading water amidst an untouched, serene landscape.

Karnataka is one of the largest coffee-producing states in India, particularly in regions like Coorg and Chikmagalur. Many



coffee estates in these regions offer eco-friendly accommodation options, such as homestays and nature resorts. Visitors can engage in activities like coffee plantation tours, nature walks, and birdwatching amidst the serene surroundings of lush coffee estates. The coastline along the Arabian Sea, from the tranquil shores of Karwar and Gokarna to the scenic beaches of Udupi and Mangalore, is dotted with picturesque destinations and adventure activities that attract eco-conscious travellers.

Several community-based tourism initiatives have emerged in Karnataka, offering visitors immersive experiences while contributing to local livelihoods and conservation efforts. Local communities play a significant role in eco-tourism activities, offering homestays, guided tours, and traditional experiences like dance and art forms, craftsmanship, festivals, cuisine, and spirituality that showcase the region's rich heritage and way of life.

The Gateway to Nature and Adventure

Karnataka Tourism promotes unique accommodation experiences such as tents, treehouses, and nature camps, which allow visitors to stay close to nature while enjoying activities such as trekking, birdwatching, and wildlife safaris. Along the coastal regions of Karnataka, tourists can find some exclusive beach resorts operated by Karnataka Tourism.

Jungle Lodges and Resorts is a government-owned eco-tourism company operated by Karnataka Tourism that runs eco-friendly accommodations in wildlife reserves, national parks, and other natural settings. These lodges, resorts, and nature camps all over the state offer a unique opportunity for visitors to stay amidst nature while contributing to conservation efforts. Eco retreats like Kabini River Lodge, Bandipur Safari Lodge, River Tern Lodge, Kali Adventure Camp, Devbagh Beach Resort, Hampi Heritage and Wilderness Resort, Dubare Elephant Camp, Old Magazine House, and many others offer diverse experiences amidst nature. Booking through junglelodges.com ensures a convenient and reliable reservation process.

Recommended Eco-Tourism Hot Spots

BR Hills, located at the north-west of the Western Ghats and the edge of the Eastern Ghats, is home to an ecosystem that is unique to both and supports a diverse flora and fauna because of the various habitats present. For adventure enthusiasts, BR Hills is a must-visit destination, offering abundant opportunities for trekking and rafting.

Chikmagalur is known as the coffee and spice district of Karnataka, and this serene town filled with stunning hills and valleys, including the famous Hebbe Falls, offers a lot of activities, from trekking to river rafting in the Bhadra River, and is also great for solo travelers. Kemmanagindi, a hill station



with scenic views and beautiful gardens near Chikmagalur, offers a perfect summer retreat for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts.

Coorg, also known as Kodagu, is a captivating destination that offers a perfect blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, adventure, and tranquility. It is a must-visit for travellers seeking an unforgettable experience in the lap of nature amid coffee plantations. Kote Betta, situated about 15 km from Coorg, is one of the three highest peaks in the region. In addition to being of significant importance in Hindu mythology, it is an excellent place for people who love adventure and exciting sports like trekking or rock climbing.

Nandi Hills is arguably Bengaluru's most



popular weekend destination. Once a summer retreat of the British and Tipu Sultan, people now come here for trekking, adventure sports, birdwatching, and visiting ancient temples.

The diverse landscape of Sakleshpur provides enough opportunities for trekking and hiking all across the town. The region also has a number of stunning waterfalls, such as Murkannu Gudda, Hadlu Waterfall, and Magajahalli Waterfalls. This is also a place of religious importance and has many mystic temples.

Known as the 'Cherrapunji of the South' due to its high rainfall, the Agumbe Rainforest in Karnataka is a haven for biodiversity. It is home to several species of flora and fauna, including the endangered king cobra. The Agumbe Rainforest Research Station plays a vital role in advancing scientific knowledge of tropical rainforest ecosystems, particularly in the Western Ghats region of India. The station also offers guided nature walks, workshops, and training programmes for individuals interested in rainforest ecology and conservation.





The Arabian Island Escape

What's New in BAHRAIN

Bahrain, a gem on the southwestern coast of the Arabian Gulf, is redefining Arabian island life with a slew of fresh, enticing offerings. From luxurious new accommodations to exciting cultural experiences, Bahrain's latest additions ensure an unforgettable journey through this enchanting archipelago. Comprising 33 islands surrounded by shallow, crystal-clear waters, Bahrain is a vibrant tapestry of culture, history, art, natural beauty, and delectable cuisine. We bring to you what's new and exciting in Bahrain for 2024.

Team TTJ

Bahrain unveils a series of luxurious accommodations, delectable dining experiences, and vibrant events, inviting travellers to experience the endless possibilities of Arabian island life. Here is a look at the new and exciting offerings in Bahrain this year.

Luxurious New Hotels

Over 20 hotels have opened in the last 12 months, offering visitors a plethora of stunning, luxurious accommodation options. Some of the most exciting new openings include:

Raffles Al Areen Palace (Opened in December 2023)

Imagine stepping into a sanctuary of pure luxury, where every villa is a private oasis. Raffles Al Areen Palace, an all-villa property, sits beside a lush wildlife reserve

near the Bahrain International F1 circuit. With 78 private pool villas, the resort is ostentatious and epitomises opulence. Adorned with neutral tones highlighted by rich greens and gold, they feature elaborate arches and intricate designs inspired by Islamic architecture, and each offers an intimate escape, blending traditional elegance with modern comforts.

Conrad Bahrain Financial Harbour (Opened in January 2024)

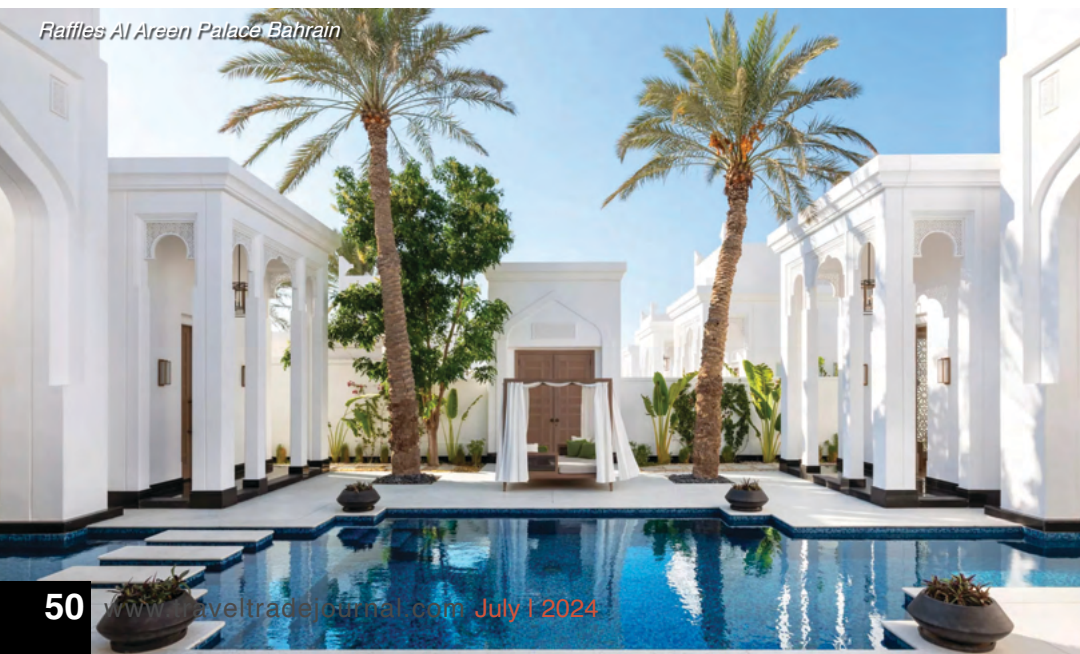
Elevate your stay at the Conrad Bahrain Financial Harbour, a towering 30-story property located right on the waterfront. Guests can indulge in panoramic views of Bahrain Bay from the comfort of their suites, each designed with floor-to-ceiling windows to maximise natural light and scenery. The rooftop pool offers a serene escape with unobstructed city views. Dining attains new heights at Sushi Samba, where guests can enjoy a fusion of

Japanese, Brazilian, and Peruvian cuisine while overlooking the stunning Manama skyline.

Hawar Resort by Mantis (Opening Q3 2024)

Discover the untamed beauty of Hawar Island with Mantis' first luxury resort in Bahrain. Hawar Resort by Mantis is more than just a place to stay; it is an eco-tourism experience. Located on the west coast of Hawar Island, a 30-minute boat ride from Bahrain's main island, this resort is set amidst a UNESCO-recognised natural habitat. Guests can explore the island's diverse wildlife, including sand gazelles, vibrant coral reefs, and endangered dugongs. The resort features 102 luxury accommodations, five distinctive dining venues, and a plethora of sports and leisure facilities, all designed to immerse guests in the natural splendour of the island.

Raffles Al Areen Palace Bahrain



Hawar Resort by Mantis



SUSHISAMBA



Byblos

Culinary Delights

SUSHISAMBA (Opened December 2023)

Perched atop the Conrad Bahrain, SUSHISAMBA blends Japanese, Brazilian, and Peruvian cuisines into a vibrant dining experience. Guests can enjoy a variety of sushi, sashimi, and ceviche dishes while taking in stunning views of the Manama seafront and Bahrain Bay. The restaurant's bold décor and lively music create an immersive atmosphere, perfect for a memorable dining experience.

Cipriani Bahrain (Opened November 2023)

Located in the prestigious Marasi Beach residential complex, Cipriani Bahrain offers a taste of Italy with its elegant and iconic dishes. Guests can enjoy classics like Carpaccio alla Cipriani and Baked Tagliolini in an intimate setting that combines classic and modern elements. The restaurant also features a pool, a beach area, and a spacious

outdoor terrace with privileged views of Manama's skyline.

Byblos (Opened in January 2024)

Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay has introduced a new and captivating gastronomy journey through Lebanese cuisine with its new restaurant, Byblos. The new eatery, by oriental specialty Chef Tony El Khoury, approaches Lebanese food from a modern angle, featuring vibrant mezze platters such as pesto hummus and beetroot carpaccio salad. The restaurant, nestled along the hotel's white sand beach, is reminiscent of the Mediterranean Sea. It is designed with turquoise and white tones and is complete with outdoor seating overlooking the shore.

Roka Bahrain (Opened April 2024)

After celebrating its 20th anniversary earlier this year, Roka launched its first

location in Bahrain last month. Found on the eighth-floor rooftop of Pearl House in Bahrain Bay, this sleek, award-winning sushi restaurant showcases a contemporary take on traditional Japanese cuisine. Designed with an alfresco terrace and Japanese paper cherry blossom hues, diners will also have front-row seats to the flaming theatrics of the robatayaki grill.

Time Out Market (Opening in this year)

Known for its expertly curated food and culture fairs across the globe, Time Out Market will make its debut in Bahrain later this year. Spanning over 35,000 sq ft on the top floor of City Centre Bahrain, the culinary hotspot will house 11 diverse kitchens, two bars, an outdoor rooftop, and over 900 seats on two levels. With an exhibition space and stage, the market will also be a hub for home-grown talents and artists.

Exciting Events

Celebrate Bahrain Season

(December 01-31, 2024)

The Celebrate Bahrain Season is an annual celebration that lights up December, aligning with Bahrain's National Day festivities. The jam-packed festival programme includes a wide variety of activities such as music concerts, live shows, games, carnivals, and colourful firework displays – not to be missed in any important celebration. The vibrant event offers the country's richest heritage, achievements, and community spirit through a diverse array of activities, performances, and events, bringing together locals and visitors alike in a joyous celebration. A selection of hotels and shopping centres offer special discounts and exciting prizes for both locals and visitors. Whether you're a music enthusiast, a family looking for fun, or someone who enjoys live performances, there's something for everyone at Celebrate Bahrain Season.

Autumn Fair (January 2025)

Bahrain Autumn Fair is an annual shopping extravaganza that presents diverse products from local and international businesses. The consumer exhibition is poised to showcase an extensive selection of products ranging from fashion and accessories to home décor and electronics. Visitors will have

the opportunity to indulge in delectable treats from numerous food stalls, be entertained by live performances, and partake in a variety of interactive activities throughout the event.

Embrace the limitless possibilities of Arabian island life and create unforgettable memories in this enchanting kingdom.



New Year's Eve

Paradise Found in *Sri Lanka*



Bentota Beach - Sri Lanka

From the bustling streets of Colombo to the serene beach town of Bentota, Sri Lanka is a kaleidoscope of breathtaking landscapes, refined hotel properties, tantalising flavours, exhilarating activities, and joyful, friendly locals. Join me as I recount my unforgettable adventure in this island paradise, where the warmth of the people and the richness of the experiences left forth everlasting memories.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

Famously termed as 'The Pearl of the Indian Ocean' and previously known as Ceylon, Sri Lanka's strategic location and deep harbours have made it a trading hub throughout history. Today, this enchanting island is a top tourist destination, drawing visitors from across the globe.

Arriving in the island nation aboard SriLankan Airlines, pampered by its business class hospitality, was an exceptional experience in itself. The FAM tour organised by SriLankan Airlines, provided a delightful introduction to the island's attractions. Renowned globally for its exceptional service, the national carrier, reaches 114 destinations across 62 countries. SriLankan Holidays is the

leisure arm of the airline that curates tour itineraries. Lulled by the warm service, delicious cuisine, and short-haul flight from India, I was perfectly poised for an exciting Sri Lankan adventure.

Colombo - The Gateway city

My first port of call was the lively capital city, where the luxurious Cinnamon Grand Colombo set the stage for exploring the island's rich culture and history. The invigorating wellness session at the in-house Niva spa, the delectable culinary offerings showcasing local and global cuisine, and the heartfelt hospitality left me excitedly anticipating my next visit. The trip to the Beddagana Wetland Park was nothing short of extraordinary. Nestled in the heart of the city, this sanctuary offers a haven for diverse

wetland flora and fauna. Amidst lush vegetation and serene ponds, including the stunning Diyawanna Lake, the park teems with vibrant life, making it a unique landmark. It serves as a living example of the crucial role wetlands can play in enhancing the quality of urban life, particularly in bustling cities like Colombo. The emerald green waters of the lake, the dewy lush surroundings, and the well-designed walking paths inspire a much-needed coexistence of nature and urban development.

Habarana - Wildlife and Heritage Hub

The charming city is an excellent base for exploring nearby attractions, such as Sigiriya Rock, Pidurangala trekking,



Hurulu Eco Park Safari Habarana



Elephants in Habarana



Dambulla Cave Temple



Anita Jain Shah, Managing Editor, The Digital Travellers at Galle Fort

Minneriya sanctuary, and the densely forested Habarana jungle, where mighty elephants roam unfettered and free. The Cinnamon Lodge Habarana is the perfect pitstop, surrounded by lush greenery, mimicking forest living amidst a cacophony of forest sounds.

I had a surreal rain-soaked safari experience at the Hurulu Eco Park with elephants peacefully lumbering at an arm's distance from our jeep without a care as the lashing rain brought the lush vegetation to life. Just as I thought that it could not get any better, the Dambulla Cave Temple complex unfolded as another mesmerising chapter. Located atop a hill for 22 centuries, this cave monastery has been a sacred pilgrimage site with its five cave sanctuaries. It houses 157 Buddha statues, each holding deep historical and cultural significance. The tranquil statues and vibrant ceiling murals softly tell stories of reverence from a bygone era.

The Koneswaram Temple in Trincomalee led us to the Ravana Abyss. According to legend, King Ravana, in a fit of rage, struck the massive rock with his sword, creating a flawless, deep cut that plunged 350 feet down to the sea. It is also known as 'Lover's Leap,' perhaps due to some ill-fated love stories that met their end here. As an endearing farewell, we enjoyed a cultural dance recital featuring the powerful Kandyan dance, known for its dynamic footwork and fire sequences. The Salu Paliya Dance featured masked performers who engaged the audience in a playful shawl dance and added charm to our evening.

Bentota - Serene Coastal Retreat

The last leg of my Sri Lankan odyssey took me to the smooth, sandy beaches of Bentota. At this magical spot, the Benthara

River winds through a mangrove lagoon to merge with the Indian Ocean. Situated along Sri Lanka's golden coastline in the deep south, Cinnamon Bentota Beach is one of the island's most iconic beach resorts. The super luxurious property is a piece of architectural art. The warm, friendly staff share heartfelt stories about the property, reflecting the genuine hospitality and essence of the Sri Lankan people.

Walk on the smooth, clean beach, relax by the pool, or unleash your wild side by indulging in exhilarating adventure activities, such as balloon boat or disco boat rides on the lagoon or the ocean. The mangrove boat trip was a tranquil adventure, requiring navigation through dense mangroves and careful ducking under perilous low-hanging branches. The accompanying naturalist pointed out fascinating flora and fauna, including a sleepy owl and an alert water monitor, perfectly camouflaged high up in the trees. It is indeed a world very different from ours, with its own complexity and rules of survival. A breathtaking drive along the winding coastal road brought us to Galle Fort, a place that transports visitors to a bygone era with its cannons still pointed ominously over the ramparts. Nearby, a charming shopping village reminiscent of small European markets offers fine gems and intricately carved wood items as unique souvenirs.

Basking in the tranquil ambience of 'Serendib,' the exclusive SriLankan Airlines lounge at Bandaranaike



Ravana Abyss, the Koneswaram Temple, Trincomalee



Bentota Mangrove Boat Ride

International Airport, crafted for premier customers, I reluctantly bid adieu to this glorious country. Sri Lanka offers a uniquely enriching experience, blending familiar Indian influences with its own distinct offerings. From rich cultural heritage and remarkable history to delicious cuisine and the warmth of its people, the island delights in sharing its abundance with visitors. Your time in Sri Lanka will leave you with cherished memories and a deep admiration for the locals' pride in their homeland, making you eager to return.



Sri Lankan Airlines, acclaimed for its superior service, comfort, safety, and reliability, is recognised as an award-winning leader in the global aviation industry. With an exclusive all-Airbus fleet, the airline offers 85 weekly flights, from nine key Indian cities: Chennai, Mumbai, Trichy, Madurai, Cochin, Trivandrum, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Bengaluru.

For further information, visit srilankan.com and srilankanholidays.com

Centara hosts Rewards & Recognition Night; unveils new resort in Maldives

Centara Hotels and Resorts recently organised a successful Rewards & Recognition Night in New Delhi and Mumbai, drawing over 100 key travel partners at each event. The evenings were highlighted by an awards ceremony recognising top-performing partners with trophies and certificates for their significant contributions.

Sonika Bohra

The evenings also marked the much-anticipated launch of the Centara Mirage Beach Resort Maldives, the Maldives' first fully integrated family destination featuring a water park. This new resort underscores Centara's commitment to providing unique and family-friendly vacation experiences, further solidifying the brand's position in the market.

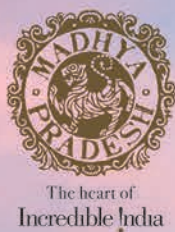
Jurairat Mongkolwongsiri, Corporate Vice President of Sales, Centara Hotels and Resorts, said, "We are projecting a 20 per cent increase in market share, reflecting the brand's growing popularity and the successful engagement with our partners. The Rewards & Recognition Nights reinforced Centara's dedication to its collaborators, showcasing its expanding portfolio of distinctive resorts designed to cater to families and adventure seekers alike."

In a significant development, Centara Hotels and Resorts has assigned its India GSA team to cover the GCC and South Asia markets. The team, comprising Moumita Paul Mukherjee, Director of Sales and Marketing - South Asia and GCC, and Hemant Jagtap, Senior Manager - South Asia and GCC, is anticipated to drive growth and enhance Centara's presence in these crucial regions by utilising their extensive experience and market expertise.

The event series not only celebrated the achievements of travel partners but also highlighted Centara's ongoing efforts to innovate and expand its offerings, ensuring that it remains a preferred choice for travellers seeking exceptional experiences.

As Centara continues to grow and adapt to the dynamic travel market, the company remains dedicated to fostering strong relationships with its partners, providing them with the resources and support needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive landscape.





THE ENCHANTING ITINERARY OF MADHYA PRADESH

OFFBEAT MULTISPECIALTY DESTINATION



GWALIOR – SHIVPURI – ORCHHA – DATIA – MORENA

Madhya Pradesh unveils an itinerary that oscillates through forts narrating tales of valour, temples resonating with devotional flavour, and natural reserves enveloped with wildlife.

Gwalior: Artistic Aroma

Inhale the splendour of Gwalior Fort, a sprawling citadel that guards the city. Dig out the historical and architectural narratives. Explore a maze of palaces, including the intricately carved Man Singh Palace, the opulent Karan Mahal, the majestic Vikram Mahal, the ethereal Jahangir Mahal, Saas Bahu Temple, and Teli ka Mandir. Feast on the beauty of the 18th-century Padavali Fort. Ascend the 100 steps to the Chausath Yogini Temple, a circular edifice nestled amidst verdant hills. The Museum at Gwalior Fort brings alive the artistic heritage of the city through a spread of sculptures, coins, and weapons. Brace yourself for a visual treat of the Garuda statue and the Salabhanjika - the 'Mona Lisa of India', the Saas Bahu Temples, and the rock-cut statue of Siddhanchal.



Cenotaph, Shivpuri

Shivpuri: Magical Moments

The Surwaya Fort here exhales a mystical past with weathered walls and remnants of temples. Explore the ecological terrain at the Madhav National Park and the colonial charm of George Castle. Enjoy the serenity of Badhaiya Kund and the splendour of Narwar Fort.



Jahangir Mahal, Orchha

Orchha: Heritage Hues

Immerse yourself in the grandeur of Raja Mahal, adorned with vibrant murals. Seek blessings at the intricately carved Laxmi Narayan Temple, known for its artwork. Inhale the beauty of ornately decorated cenotaphs or Chhatris, celebrating the Bundela kings and their families. The Jahangir Mahal, a fusion of Indo-Islamic architecture, will enthral you with its turquoise tiles, intricate carvings, and stunning balconies. The Ram Raja Temple, the only temple where Lord Rama is worshipped as a king, will transport you spiritually. Wind up by listening to the mellifluous music of the birds at the Orchha Bird Sanctuary, gliding along the Betwa River, and savouring the artistically knitted Chhatris.

Datia: Spiritual Sanctuary

Seek the blessings of Goddess Baglamukhi Devi at the Pitambara Peeth Temple, known for its imposing architectural and spiritual reverberations.

Morena: Wrap up

The National Chambal Sanctuary is a must-go place, especially for wildlife enthusiasts. The critically endangered gharial, the red-crowned roof turtle, and the Ganges river dolphin sum up the ecological

beauty of the place. The Bateshwar Group of Temples in the adjoining area is a heritage feast.

Delve into the cultural richness, enchanting and vibrant artistry, and creative wonders of Madhya Pradesh. This itinerary is a roadmap to a journey interspersed with bliss and adventure.

How to Reach

Cover the circuit at your convenience. Gwalior, Shivpuri, Orchha, Datia, and Morena

1. Gwalior:

Air: Raja Bhoj International Airport (GWL)
Train: Gwalior Junction Railway Station (GWR)
Road: Gwalior is well-connected by road

2. Shivpuri:

Train: Shivpuri railway station
Road: Shivpuri is 110 km from Gwalior.

3. Orchha:

Train: Jhansi Junction Railway Station (JHS) is 85 km from Orchha.
Road: Orchha is 170 km from Gwalior and 115 km from Shivpuri

4. Datia:

Train: Datia Railway Station (DTI)
Road: Datia is 70 km from Gwalior and 47km from Orchha.

5. Morena:

Train: Morena Railway Station (MOR)
Road: Morena is 128 km from Datia and 39 km from Gwalior.



Uttar Pradesh celebrates Buddhist Heritage with Bodhi Yatra Conclave in New Delhi

On June 28, 2024, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department organised the ‘Bodhi Yatra’ conclave in New Delhi to commemorate the extraordinary journey of Lord Buddha.

Team TTJ

Celebrating the profound legacy of Lord Buddha and showcasing the state’s rich Buddhist heritage, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department organised the ‘Bodhi Yatra’ conclave to highlight the state’s significance as a Buddhist pilgrimage destination and its immense tourism potential.

Prominent attendees included Union Minister of Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat; Uttar Pradesh Tourism and Culture Minister, Jaiveer Singh; Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, V. Vidyavati; Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, Durga Shankar Mishra; Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, Mukesh Kumar Meshram; Special Secretary of Tourism, Eesha Priya; Director General of IBC, Abhijit Halder; Former Deputy Speaker of CTA, Acharya Yeshi Phuntsok, and several international ambassadors from countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan, Japan, and more, reflecting strong global ties.

Special Secretary Eesha Priya presented the history and heritage of Uttar Pradesh’s six major Buddhist sites: Sankisa, Sarnath, Shravasti, Kapilvastu, Kaushambi, and Kushinagar. She emphasised the state’s investor-friendly tourism policies designed to attract foreign direct investment.

Mukesh Kumar Meshram, Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism and Culture, Uttar Pradesh, highlighted the importance of these sites, saying, “In Uttar Pradesh, we have six major Buddhist destinations, along with many additional sites for Buddhist tourism. If we showcase our market properly, we can attract more inbound tourists, especially from overseas. We plan to highlight these destinations by involving stakeholders like head priests

and Buddhist monks from various countries and organisations.”

Meshram further explained, “We also invited ambassadors and representatives from different countries to inform them about these sites. These areas have substantial and significant investment opportunities, supported by our attractive investment policies. The policies include both fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for developers interested in hospitality and infrastructure development. These areas are crucial for future development, and we organised the Bodhi Yatra to showcase UP Tourism to ambassadors and religious leaders from various Buddhist organisations.”

The conclave concluded with a cultural performance depicting Lord Buddha’s life, celebrating the spiritual and historical significance of Uttar Pradesh’s Buddhist sites and their role in boosting the state’s tourism sector.





TRAVMART



2024

JULY
27 CHANDIGARH

AUG
16-18 SITM
SOUTH INDIA TRAVMART (CHENNAI)

OCT
19 SURAT

NOV
20-22 EITM
EAST INDIA TRAVMART (KOLKATA)

DEC
21 INDORE

2025

JAN
17-18 WITM
WEST INDIA TRAVMART (PUNE)

MARCH
15 RAIPUR

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Oman Air's new upgraded retailing and distribution capabilities to transform travel agent bookings

Oman Air has unveiled a significant enhancement to its distribution capabilities, ushering in a new era of convenience and choice. Partnering with Accelya, a global leader in software and technology solutions, the airline has introduced cutting-edge functionality that will enable its trade partners to seamlessly manage their customers' travel needs. Part of the airline's ambitious retail transformation programme, it leverages the latest IATA New Distribution Capability (NDC) technology, representing a substantial advancement from the previous booking tools available to travel agents.

In addition to enhancing its distribution capabilities, Oman Air is bolstering its loyalty system, also powered by Accelya, with enriched customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities. This includes advanced campaign management features and a dedicated partner portal, enabling the airline to implement coalition loyalty programmes and unlock new revenue streams through loyalty points sales.

As an early adopter of NDC technology and a founding member of IATA's Modern Airline Retailing Consortium, Oman Air is at the centre of shaping the future of retailing technology. This partnership reflects the airline's broader strategy to solidify its position as a leading and innovative carrier in distribution strategy while enhancing its capabilities to provide a seamless and digitally-driven experience for partners and guests alike.



Azerbaijan Tourism Board appoints BRANDit as its India representative

The Azerbaijan Tourism Board has appointed BRANDit as its new representative office. This appointment highlights the growing interest of Indian travellers in Azerbaijan.



▲ Lubaina Sheerazi

"We are thrilled to partner with the Azerbaijan Tourism Board as part of BRANDit's growing portfolio. Our collaboration aims to unveil Azerbaijan's hidden treasures and connect Indians with its unique experiences and use our expertise in the Indian outbound market, travel trade, and media to capture the growing interest in the destination," said Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO and Co-founder, BRANDit.

The growing number of arrivals highlights Azerbaijan's emergence as a highly sought-after travel destination for Indian tourists. The increasing influx of Indian tourists to Azerbaijan underscores its rise as a favoured travel spot. This popularity is fuelled by its accessible flights, hassle-free e-visa process, and reputation as a vibrant cultural and business centre. E-visas, obtainable from evisa.gov.az within three days for just \$26 and non-stop flights, enable travellers to reach the Caucasus region's biggest city in just four hours.

Kazin DMC hosts the first-ever Indian wedding in Kazakhstan



Kazin DMC, a company specialising in Kazakhstan, has achieved a remarkable milestone by hosting and planning the first-ever Indian wedding in the central Asian country. The Indian wedding, held in the picturesque city of Almaty, featured a blend of traditional Indian and Kazakh elements, creating a unique and memorable experience for the couple and their guests. From vibrant ceremonies to luxurious accommodations and breathtaking backdrops, Kazin DMC meticulously planned and executed every aspect of the wedding.

Rohit Shorey, Founder and CEO, Kazin DMC, said, "Hosting the first Indian wedding in Kazakhstan is a significant milestone for us and the country's tourism sector. Kazin DMC has always strived to push boundaries and set new standards in the industry. Our comprehensive services and personalised approach ensure that every event we host is a seamless and unforgettable experience. We are excited to continue our journey in promoting Kazakhstan as a top destination for weddings, events, and tourism." This Indian wedding is a testament to Kazin's dedication to diversifying and expanding Kazakhstan's tourism industry.

IIFA UTSAVAM IS COMING TO ABU DHABI



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Thailand PM scraps controversial 300-baht tourism fee proposal

During a visit to Chiang Mai on June 8, 2024, Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin announced the government's decision to abandon the controversial 300-baht (US\$8.20) tourism fee. Initially proposed last year, the fee faced significant opposition from the private sector. Eliminating it could encourage higher tourist spending in other areas, thereby providing a more substantial boost to the economy.

Addressing concerns over Thailand's decline in the World Economic Forum's tourism and travel development index, where it now ranks 47th out of 119 countries, Srettha emphasised the importance of a constructive approach rather than assigning blame. He noted the consistent recognition of various Thai cities and islands as top global tourist destinations and urged a focus on promoting positive developments within the sector.



Megastar Chiranjeevi to be honoured with 'Outstanding Achievement in Indian Cinema' at IIFA Utsavam



Megastar Chiranjeevi will be honoured with the 'Outstanding Achievement in Indian Cinema' award at IIFA Utsavam in Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, this September. The recipient of India's Padma Vibhushan, Chiranjeevi has significantly contributed to South Indian cinema over four decades, with standout performances, dance routines, and fight sequences across various languages. His philanthropic efforts have also earned him national recognition.

Chiranjeevi expressed his gratitude, saying, "I'm deeply humbled by this incredible recognition and honour. Thank you, IIFA Utsavam, for bestowing upon me the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award. I am profoundly grateful for the unwavering love and support throughout my five-decade film journey. I've consistently tried to demonstrate my gratitude through my humanitarian endeavours."

IIFA Utsavam 2024, under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, is set for September 6 and 7. In partnership with the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi and Miral, the event will celebrate South Indian cinema by uniting Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada industries.

Wyndham Hotels and Resorts opens Ramada Encore by Wyndham in Udaipur



Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, the world's largest hotel franchising company, has more than 9,200 hotels in more than 95 countries and over 8,76,000 keys. It has opened Ramada Encore by Wyndham Udaipur Roop Nagar, marking Wyndham's 10th hotel in Rajasthan state and 60th hotel in India.

Ramada Encore by Wyndham Udaipur Roop Nagar is a design-driven stylish hotel featuring 75 keys, located opposite the Howard Johnson by Wyndham Udaipur Hotel. The hotel's host of amenities includes a lobby lounge, an all-day dining restaurant and bar, a health club, a spa, a rooftop swimming pool, and a business centre. For banqueting, the hotel is equipped with approximately 5,000 sq. ft. of events space with two banquet halls.

Ramada Encore by Wyndham Udaipur Roop Nagar provides connectivity and accessibility to many of the region's popular tourist spots, such as Maharana Pratap Palace, Lake Pichola, and Fateh Sagar Lake with the Aravalli Mountain Ranges as the backdrop. The hotel is conveniently located 8 km from the World Heritage Site of Udaipur Palace and 20 km from Maharana Pratap Airport.

Ace Connect wins representation mandate for PURE MOROCCO in India

Ace Connect, a B2B niche specialist in the travel and hospitality sector in India, has been appointed as the India representative for PURE MOROCCO. Ace Connect, known for its strong industry connection and respected reputation, will give PURE MOROCCO the desirable edge by offering the right connections among trade partners.

PURE MOROCCO is a full-service DMC based in Marrakech and Rabat, offering a wide range of comprehensive and hand-picked tours and experiences throughout Morocco.

Alpa Jani, Founder and CEO, Ace Connect, is confident that PURE MOROCCO is at the right place and at the right time. Throwing further light on the partnership, Jani says, "We at Ace Connect are driven by excellence and with a strong commitment to giving our partners a desired business reach in our focused market. Morocco has a unique charm to it and is blessed with a rich tapestry of culture, heritage, landscape and cuisine and we are so excited to open the box of experiences for our trade partners in India through our partner PURE MOROCCO. When it comes to Morocco, PURE MOROCCO should certainly be your primary choice to experience Morocco in its pure essence."



▲ Alpa Jani

The first Cambodia-India Tourism Year launched in New Delhi with a new direct flight service



The '1st Cambodia-India Tourism Year' was inaugurated in New Delhi on June 17, 2024, coinciding with the launch of Cambodia Angkor Air's direct flight service between Phnom Penh and New Delhi. The event was officiated by Manisha Saxena, Director General (Tourism) India, and Long Phirum, Secretary of State, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia.

Saxena and Phirum emphasised the significance of this initiative to government officials, tour operators, and businesspeople from both countries. Phirum highlighted 2024 as a 'significant milestone' for Cambodia-India tourism, celebrating the new air link.

Cambodia Angkor Air began its direct flights on June 16, 2024, operating four times a week. Many Cambodian delegates arrived in India on the inaugural flight.

The event was also attended by Cambodian Ambassador Koy Kuong and Seila Hul, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia. Saxena expressed optimism that the new flight and the 'Cambodia-India Tourism Year' would boost economic opportunities, rediscover common heritage, and enhance mutual prosperity and understanding.

ETAA North India Chapter hosts successful FAM trip to Vietnam



With a full house, 26 members travelled on this educational FAM trip to Ho Chi Minh City and Ho Tram, Vietnam, from May 24-27, 2024. Starting from the Sofitel Saigon Plaza in Ho Chi Minh City, where they were hosted, members explored iconic landmarks like the Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica, the War Remnants Museum, and the Reunification Palace before enjoying a rejuvenating spa session at the hotel.

In Ho Tram, known for its serene coastal living, pristine beaches, and luxurious resorts, they visited Melia and The Grand Ho Tram, experiencing luxury and meeting resort executives. Activities included a casino visit, live events, local excursions, and beach adventures. The trip concluded with a visit to the Cu Chi Tunnels and Jade Emperor Pagoda, followed by a farewell lunch.

A felicitation ceremony at the Sofitel Saigon Plaza celebrated the trip's success, highlighting future partnership opportunities. The ETAA North India committee aims to continue organising such enriching events for members.



Union Minister of Culture & Tourism

Jodhpur MP **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, previously the Jal Shakti Minister in the Narendra Modi government, has been appointed as the new Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, replacing G. Kishan Reddy. This is his third term in the House of the People. On his appointment, Shekhawat tweeted, "In fulfilling my duties with utmost sincerity, I will strive to ensure continuous progress in the culture and tourism sector, contributing to the development of India."



Union Minister of Civil Aviation

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader and newly elected Lok Sabha MP **Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu** has taken charge of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA). Recognised for his strategic thinking and innovative approach, Naidu is expected to bring fresh energy to the ministry. His leadership comes at a time when the ministry addresses airline crises, infrastructure development, and technological advancements. Naidu has taken over the ministry from Jyotiraditya Scindia, who is now in charge of the Telecom Ministry.



MMPRC

Ibrahim Shiuree has been appointed as the new Managing Director of the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC). At 40, he brings a wealth of experience and a diverse background, promising dynamic leadership to enhance the Maldives' reputation as a premier travel destination. Shiuree has served on the World Bank's Enhancing Employability and Resilience of Youth project as Vice President of the Table Tennis Association of Maldives and has led major airport development projects. His versatile expertise spans various sectors, including infrastructure and construction.



Tourism Malaysia

Tourism Malaysia has appointed **Ahmad Johanif Mohd Ali** as the Director of its New Delhi office. With over 34 years of experience in tourism promotion and international relations, Ahmad Johanif has received multiple awards, including the Silver Medal Award from the Governor of Sarawak. He has held several senior positions within Tourism Malaysia, most recently as the Senior Deputy Director of the Package Development Division. In this position, he supervised the Niche Tourism Product Team and led the Intelligent Unit to ensure positive industry development.



Fairmont Hotels & Resorts

Ilesha Nijhawan has been appointed as the new Cluster Commercial Director of Fairmont The Norfolk and Fairmont Mara Safari Club. With over 15 years of luxury hospitality experience, she joins from Waldorf Astoria Lusail, Doha. A globalist, Ilesha has lived in the UAE, Qatar, India, the UK, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Spain. In her new role, she will lead sales and marketing, enhance revenue, strengthen partnerships, and reinforce Fairmont's luxury reputation in Kenya.



Shangri-La Muscat

Shangri-La Muscat has appointed **Philippe Kronberg** as the new Resort General Manager for Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah and Shangri-La Al Husn. A French-Australian dual citizen, Kronberg brings over three decades of luxury hospitality experience. Joining from Shangri-La Sydney, where his leadership achieved record revenue, in his new role will oversee the strategic direction and daily operations of the resorts' 640 suites and rooms, spread across three distinctive hotels on 124 acres along the vibrant shores of the Gulf of Oman.



voco Jim Corbett

Suprabhath Roy Chowdhury has joined voco Jim Corbett as the General Manager. With an illustrious career spanning 24 years, he has excelled in various senior roles across prestigious hotel chains in India. In his current role at voco Jim Corbett, he will spearhead the positioning and operational excellence of IHG Hotels and Resorts' first voco property in India. His leadership will be pivotal in establishing voco Jim Corbett as a premier destination, focusing on delivering exceptional guest experiences, innovative service standards and sustainable practices.



Korea Tourism Organization India

Korea Tourism Organization India has promoted **Sonika Mendiratta** to Marketing Manager. Previously the PR Manager, she will now spearhead marketing strategies to boost South Korea's tourism in India and SAARC countries. With over nine years of professional experience, Sonika possesses extensive expertise in promotional and media relations, content writing, and stakeholder management. Her experience in travel representation will strengthen Korea's marketing and communication strategies, enhancing the brand's positioning.

ASEGŌ

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Redefining global travel assistance & insurance ecosystem!

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