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Dear Friends,

Wishing you all a fantastic and fulfilling New Year!

With expectations riding high on a successful 2024, we cannot wait to see what 2025 holds for us. In the past year, while outbound tourism surged with Indians travelling to every corner of the world, domestic tourism thrived with Indians rediscovering hidden gems in their own backyard. Inbound tourism also made a strong comeback, with steady growth signalling renewed global interest in India's travel offerings.

As TTJ celebrates 15 remarkable years in 2025, we look back with pride at the strides we have taken and the friends we have made. We look forward to reporting many more industry achievements in the years ahead.

TTJ annual edition features engaging interactions, expert opinions, valuable insights, and future expectations from national tourist offices, travel representations to cruises, DMCs, and tour operators. We have also explored captivating destinations like Seychelles, Uzbekistan, and Taiwan while covering exciting new hotel openings, attractions, and trade events shaping the future of tourism.

As we enter 2025, we remain optimistic about the travel industry's growth and expansion. Here's to a year of remarkable victories, exciting journeys, and unparalleled success for the global travel community.

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma
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Romania and Bulgaria become full members of EU's Schengen zone



Romania and Bulgaria officially joined the EU's Schengen free-travel area on January 01, 2025, removing land border controls and enabling passport-free travel across an expanded bloc. Fireworks marked the occasion near Bulgaria's Ruse border as interior ministers raised the barrier on the Friendship Bridge over the Danube River, a key transit route often plagued by bottlenecks.

"This is a historic moment," said Bulgarian Prime Minister Dimitar Glavchev, celebrating the seamless travel now possible from Greece to Portugal. Land border checks persisted until Austria lifted its veto, citing migration concerns.

Schengen, established in 1985, now includes 25 of 27 EU states, including Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. Ireland and Cyprus remain outside the zone. The move follows lifting air and sea checks for Bulgaria and Romania in March 2024, marking a significant step in expanding the EU's borderless travel network.

Germany launches online portal for visa applications



Germany's Foreign Ministry launched a Consular Services Portal on January 01, 2025, allowing global online visa applications. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock hailed it as 'a real administrative revolution' to simplify work, study, and family reunification visa processes. The platform offers 28 visa categories and addresses a critical shortage of 400,000 skilled workers annually.

Following two years of preparation and pilot projects at three visa sections, the system is now live in all 167 German visa offices worldwide, eliminating physical document submissions and cutting waiting times.

The portal benefits individuals and businesses by reducing logistical challenges and supports applications for employment, studies, training, and family reunification. Future updates will enable joint submissions by families, groups, and authorised representatives, further enhancing accessibility. This initiative marks a significant step in modernising Germany's immigration procedures and attracting skilled talent efficiently.

Tourism Malaysia hosts Appreciation Night, recognises TTJ for continuous support

Tourism Malaysia Delhi hosted an Appreciation Night on December 19, 2024, at QBA Lounge, New Delhi, to celebrate the support of Indian travel stakeholders in promoting Malaysia. The event, attended by tour operators, media, airlines, influencers, and golf organisations, highlighted the milestone of over 1 million Indian travellers visiting Malaysia this year.

The High Commissioner of Malaysia to India, His Excellency Dato Muzafar Shah Mustafa, expressed gratitude for the Indian travel industry's contributions and emphasised the strong Malaysia-India tourism partnership, especially with Visit Malaysia Year 2026 approaching.

The event served as a platform to express Tourism Malaysia's gratitude to the Indian travel agents and airlines for their continued collaboration. The Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) was recognised for its unwavering support of Tourism Malaysia. The award was accepted by Ravi Sharma, Editor and Publisher of TTJ, highlighting the publication's role in strengthening tourism ties between the two countries.



Tourism Malaysia remains committed to strengthening its presence in the Indian market and fostering closer ties with the travel community. With a growing interest in Malaysia's diverse cultural, natural, and sustainable tourism offerings, the organisation is focused on providing more opportunities for collaboration and growth in the coming years.

The evening concluded with a toast to strengthening tourism ties and future initiatives to attract more Indian travellers to Malaysia.

The Swiss Chocolate Craftmanship



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A Delectable Journey for Travel Enthusiasts

InterGlobe Air Transport appointed as the exclusive General Sales Agent (GSA) for Oman Air in India



InterGlobe Air Transport Limited has been appointed as the exclusive General Sales Agent (GSA) by Oman Air for the entire territory of India. The partnership will leverage InterGlobe Air Transport’s extensive network and expertise to strengthen Oman Air’s presence and enhance customer service across the Indian market.

Oman Air, renowned for its exceptional products and services across the Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, Asia, and Europe, currently operates over 90 weekly flights to 10 Indian cities from its hub in Muscat. To bolster Oman Air’s Indian operations, InterGlobe Air Transport will provide comprehensive sales and service support, including passenger airline management, sales and marketing, reservations and ticketing, and contact centre operations. This strategic partnership aims to redefine and elevate air travel between India and Oman by combining InterGlobe Air Transport’s extensive industry knowledge and Oman Air’s world-class hospitality. Passengers will get a superior travel experience through enhanced connectivity, streamlined booking processes, and comprehensive customer support.

Air Cairo appoints Aeroprime Group as its exclusive Passenger GSA in India



Aeroprime Group has been appointed the exclusive Passenger GSA for Air Cairo in India, managing sales, marketing, and promoting the airline’s routes and fares.

This collaboration marks a significant milestone for Aeroprime Group, enhancing Air Cairo’s visibility in the Indian market and supporting its global expansion plans. By promoting connectivity from India to Air Cairo’s network, Aeroprime Group aims to broaden its market reach and provide Indian travellers seamless access to numerous destinations across Europe and Africa.

Air Cairo operates a modern fleet of 37 aircraft servicing numerous destinations across the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its extensive network includes over 50 cities across Europe, with over 10 cities in Germany and Italy and multiple cities in France, Spain, Turkey, and beyond. This partnership will enable Indian travellers to access a variety of destinations within Air Cairo’s network, facilitating seamless travel experiences to popular locations worldwide. Additionally, Air Cairo has an extensive codeshare partnership with Egypt Air that further enhances its service offerings and network.

UAE launches world’s first VAT refund system for e-commerce purchases by tourists

The UAE has launched the world’s first VAT refund system for e-commerce purchases by tourists. This innovative system, developed by the Federal Tax Authority (FTA) in partnership with Planet, allows tourists to claim VAT refunds on eligible online purchases during their stay.

Building on the fully digital VAT refund system introduced two years ago; the new system streamlines the process with a paperless platform. Tourists can scan their passports, complete purchases, and receive digital invoices, ensuring fast, seamless VAT refunds.

The initiative includes e-commerce platforms registered with the FTA, enabling tourists to apply for refunds during online order fulfilment by verifying their identity and travel details. This system enhances the UAE’s global digital competitiveness, supporting its leadership in tourism and e-commerce. It aligns with the country’s vision for innovation and excellence in government services, offering visitors a modern, user-friendly experience.

H.E. Khalid Ali Al Bustani, Director General of the Federal Tax Authority, stated, “The Federal Tax Authority provides a unique experience for users through the comprehensive ‘VAT Refund for Tourists on E-Commerce Purchases’ system. It allows tourists to recover refundable VAT on all their purchases during their stay in the UAE, whether from traditional stores or e-commerce platforms registered with the Authority...This contributes to boosting tourism prosperity and fostering the growth of both e-commerce and traditional trade in the UAE.”



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Fortune Hotels opens beachfront retreat in Puri



Fortune Hotels, a member of ITC's hotel group, has unveiled Fortune Beachfront Puri, its second property in Odisha, located along the tranquil coastline of the temple town. Just a few kilometres from the revered Shree Jagannath Temple, a Char Dham destination, the hotel combines beachside serenity with spiritual exploration, offering an ideal retreat for leisure travellers.

The sea-facing property features well-appointed guest rooms and suites, many with panoramic ocean views, along with modern amenities like an outdoor pool, spa, and gym. Guests can indulge in diverse dining options, including Zodiac, the all-day multi-cuisine restaurant, and the upcoming Sea & Spice, showcasing fresh seafood specialties. Fortune Deli offers light bites, pastries, and beverages for quick cravings.

Fortune Beachfront Puri also caters to events and celebrations, offering venues like manicured lawns, a soon-to-open banquet hall, and poolside spaces for weddings, social gatherings, and corporate events.

Conveniently located near Puri Railway Station (6 km) and Biju Patnaik International Airport (65 km), the hotel provides access to attractions like Konark Temple, Chilika Lake, and Lingaraj Temple, making it a perfect base for exploring Odisha's cultural and natural wonders.

Sterling Holiday Resorts unveils its latest property, Sterling Brookstone Coorg



Sterling Holiday Resorts has introduced Sterling Brookstone Coorg, a serene retreat nestled in the lush landscapes of the Western Ghats. Surrounded by coffee plantations and fruit orchards, the resort offers a perfect blend of modern comfort, natural beauty, and the cultural charm of Coorg, catering to travellers seeking relaxation, adventure, or unique experiences.

Located near Madikeri, the resort provides easy access to iconic attractions like waterfalls, coffee plantations, and panoramic viewpoints. Its year-round pleasant climate and stunning vistas make it an ideal getaway. Guests can enjoy villa and cottage-style accommodations, a swimming pool, banquet hall, and the soon-to-open spa. The in-house restaurant, Planter's Kitchen, serves authentic Kodagu cuisine alongside regional and international dishes.

Sterling Brookstone Coorg also serves as a base for exploring local treasures such as Abbey Falls, Madikeri Fort, Raja's Seat, Dubare Elephant Camp, and the Namdroling Buddhist Monastery. With its harmonious blend of nature, luxury, and local heritage, the resort promises an enriching escape for every traveller.

Accor and Dangayach Group partner to launch Raffles and Fairmont Hotels in Goa

Accor has partnered with Dangayach Group to develop Raffles Goa Shiroda and Fairmont Goa Shiroda, two luxury hotels set to open by 2030 in the thriving tourism market of Goa, India.

The Raffles Goa Shiroda will feature 120 luxury villas across 27+ acres, offering Raffles' renowned butler service, elegant accommodations, and signature Long Bar. The Fairmont Goa Shiroda, spanning 56+ acres with 400 rooms, will showcase Fairmont's heartfelt service, striking public spaces, and locally inspired cuisine. Both hotels will share a private beachfront club and offer world-class amenities, including wellness centers, dining venues, ballrooms, and retail spaces.

"This dual-branded project presents a wonderful opportunity to grow our luxury hospitality offerings in the region, and to work with Dangayach Group, an exceptional and well-established partner. Together, we are confident that these new luxury resorts will add excitement and new frontiers for travellers as well as locals," said Omer Acar, CEO, Raffles and Fairmont.



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The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts Embarks on 2025 with Commitment to Elevate Guest Experiences

Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Executive Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, reflects on the evolving landscape of hospitality in 2024 and shares his insights into the group's strategic direction for 2025. With a focus on experiential travel, sustainability, and luxury, he highlights how The Leela is adapting to changing guest preferences and the increasing demand for personalised, immersive experiences. His vision for 2025 promises continued innovation and growth in guest offerings and operational efficiency.

Prashant Nayak



▲ Anuraag Bhatnagar

At The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, each property is a celebration of its unique location, art, culture, and cuisine, offering thoughtful services, celebratory rituals, and immersive experiences. Embodying the essence of true Indian luxury hospitality, The Leela is dedicated to providing guests with unforgettable stays in environments that beautifully capture the spirit and heritage of India.

Embracing Constant Change

In 2024, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts saw a significant shift in guest expectations, with travellers increasingly seeking authentic, immersive experiences prioritising culture, wellness, and sustainability. "Guests today are looking

for more than just luxury; they want experiences that reflect India's rich heritage while aligning with their sustainability and well-being values," says Anuraag.

The Leela adapted its offerings to meet these evolving demands by blending modern luxury with traditional Indian hospitality. The brand introduced bespoke culinary journeys, wellness retreats, and cultural experiences celebrating India's diverse art and traditions. With its expansive accommodations, award-winning dining, and wellness sanctuaries, The Leela created a holistic ecosystem where guests could relax, rejuvenate, and immerse themselves in India's cultural fabric.

Leading the Way in Sustainability

In 2024, sustainability continued to be at the forefront of The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts' strategy. Across properties in Bengaluru, Chennai, Jaipur, New Delhi, and Udaipur, 51 per cent of the electricity consumed was sourced from renewable energy, marking a significant step in their commitment to environmental responsibility. With a near-zero waste-to-landfill goal, 98.9 per cent of waste was successfully recycled, including an innovative collaboration with 'Phool' to upcycle 2.3 metric tonnes of floral waste into charcoal-free incense sticks and cones. This sustainable initiative, which began in 2023, was continued in 2024, further elevating the brand's eco-conscious practices.

Anuraag adds, "In guest experience, we introduced sustainably packaged amenities certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and reduced plastic use by an estimated 33.8 metric tonnes through our in-house water bottling process. Our properties have also incorporated EV charging stations at 58 per cent of our hotels, supporting green mobility. These efforts, alongside advanced water-saving measures like smart irrigation and rainwater harvesting, were recognised with multiple certifications, including Platinum Ratings from the Indian Green Building Council and accolades for energy efficiency across our properties."

Anticipating Demand in 2025

Looking ahead to 2025, Anuraag believes the hospitality industry is expected to witness increasing demand for sustainable, personalised luxury experiences. Guests will continue to seek high-touch services tailored to their specific needs, with a growing emphasis on wellness, spiritual tourism, and branded residences. These trends will be fuelled by India's strong economic growth and a rise in affluence. He notes, "Additionally, the revival of MICE and large-scale events will further enhance the demand for premium hospitality offerings."

Innovative Offerings for 2025

To cater to the increasing demand for luxury, experiential travel, and workations in 2025, The Leela plans to expand its focus on offering bespoke experiences that combine modern luxury with rich cultural heritage. The brand will expand its focus on luxury experiential travel by offering bespoke experiences such as immersive heritage stays and wellness retreats. "Our properties, designed as modern palaces, already cater to a diverse clientele seeking exclusivity and cultural richness. For workations, we are enhancing our offerings with technology and flexible meeting spaces, ensuring guests can seamlessly blend work and leisure. Our asset management initiatives will continue to drive innovation and operational efficiency," says Anuraag.

Expanding Presence

In November 2024, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts expanded its footprint with the opening of its 14th property in Hyderabad, a 156-room hotel in the prestigious Banjara Hills. Its other award-winning properties are spread across key cities and leisure destinations in India, including the flagship hotel in New Delhi, as well as properties in Bengaluru, Chennai, Udaipur, Jaipur, Gurugram, East Delhi, Mumbai, Gandhinagar, Kovalam, and Ashtamudi. With a strong pipeline of upcoming projects, The Leela continues to solidify its presence in India's luxury hospitality landscape.

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EaseMyTrip Offers Smart AI Solutions to Ride the Global Travel Boom

As Indian travellers redefine global tourism with record-breaking outbound journeys, EaseMyTrip stands out as one of the country's most trusted travel platforms. In this exclusive interview, Rikant Pittie, CEO and Co-Founder, EaseMyTrip, offers invaluable insights on tapping into Artificial Intelligence to personalise and customise travel while empowering Indians to travel smarter.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

EaseMyTrip, one of India's leading online travel platforms, is revamping the traditional travel experience for Indian travellers by offering a comprehensive suite of 'end-to-end' travel solutions. Recognising the complexity of trip planning, EaseMyTrip simplifies the process with its user-friendly interface, ensuring that travellers can easily find deals that match their needs.

Year of Unprecedented Growth

Explaining this phenomenal growth in hard numbers, Rikant says, "The Indian outbound tourism market demonstrated remarkable growth in 2024, with 15 million Indians travelling internationally in the first half of the year alone. This represents a significant 16 per cent year-on-year increase and, notably, a 14 per cent growth compared to pre-pandemic levels of 2019. India's position as the world's most populous nation, with its young demographic of potential travellers and its expanding middle class equipped with higher disposable incomes, directly translates into increased international travel spending."

Challenges Are Opportunities in Disguise

Travel disruptions and visa queries are the most common challenges that are best handled with a combination of technology, collaborations, and customer support, according to Rikant. He shares, "Our platform provides real-time updates on flight schedules and potential delays, enabling travellers to rebook or adjust plans seamlessly. Partnerships with airline partners ensure swift solutions during disruptions, including flexible rebooking and refund options. Our support team remains available to offer comprehensive step-by-step visa assistance."

As a digital platform, EaseMyTrip rises to the challenge of crafting dynamic and exciting itineraries by leveraging advanced technology and maintaining a strong customer-first approach. Rikant notes, "At the core of our innovation is



▲ Rikant Pittie

our Gen AI-powered chatbot, designed to streamline customer interactions, resolve queries efficiently, and enhance itinerary customisation. This advanced system continuously learns and adapts, delivering increasingly personalised travel recommendations that evolve with each user's preferences and needs. Our digital platforms now allow customers to tailor every aspect of their holiday packages, including flight timings and accommodation preferences, alongside making real-time booking modifications, supported by 24/7 customer assistance. Beyond traditional packages, we have expanded our offerings to include bespoke components like flight upgrades, specific room categories, local cultural experiences, and comprehensive ground transportation solutions, all accessible through an intuitive platform."

Travel Favourites of 2024

Based on travel search patterns, several emerging destinations gained popularity alongside traditional favourites. Rikant highlighted, "Azerbaijan led the emerging destination surge with a 248 per cent increase in travel searches, while Malaysia doubled in interest with a 100 per cent increase. Traditional favourites in Southeast Asia maintained their strong appeal, with

Singapore continuing to attract Indians with its blend of modernity and traditional Asian values. At the same time, Thailand and Bali retained their popularity with a combination of beaches, temples, and vibrant street markets. The UAE continued to appeal to luxury travellers, while Vietnam and Turkey recorded significant double-digit growth in travel searches."

Exciting New Trends

Rikant noted a substantial shift towards sophisticated and immersive experiences, "There is a growing appetite for premium experiences, high-end accommodations, and quality-focused travel. European countries offering family-friendly packages and interactive cultural experiences are witnessing increased popularity." Rikant highlighted a 35 per cent rise in solo travel bookings compared to 2023, though couples getaways and multi-generational family trips remained the dominant segments. He noted, "Destinations offering diverse activities for all age groups, like European countries with family-friendly packages and cultural experiences, are gaining popularity. There is also a shift toward wellness tourism and experiential travel, as tourists now seek serenity, immersive cultural activities, outdoor adventures, and culinary exploration, moving beyond traditional sightseeing to prioritise authentic and meaningful experiences over conventional tourism."

Travel Predictions for 2025

EaseMyTrip is poised to ride this wave of growth into 2025 and predicts that some of the top destinations this year will be Abu Dhabi, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Dubai, to name a few. Rikant concludes, "Indian travellers are now spending up to \$7,000 on international trips, with experiences alone accounting for 12 per cent of tourism expenditure. The overall overseas spending in 2024 reached an impressive \$31.7 billion, marking a 25 per cent year-on-year increase. This showcases the tremendous potential of this sector."



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Schilthornbahn 20XX

Experience the World's Steepest Cable Car in the heart of the Swiss Alps

On December 14, 2024, the world's steepest cable car commenced operations, marking a key milestone in the Schilthornbahn 20XX project. The new direct connection between Stechelberg and Mürren villages in Switzerland's Bernese Alps is now operational. Alan Ramsay, Head of Markets for GCC and Asia-Pacific at Schilthorn Cableway Ltd, who has been with the company for a decade, shares insights into the charming old cable car system and the vision behind this remarkable new project.

Prashant Nayak

Nestled in the Bernese Alps of Switzerland, Schilthorn offers breathtaking views and exciting activities. Famous for its revolving restaurant, Piz Gloria, featured in the James Bond film, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, it provides panoramic vistas of over 200 alpine peaks, including the Eiger, Monch, and Jungfrau. The journey begins with a scenic cable car ride from Stechelberg, passing through picturesque villages like Gimmelwald and Mürren. Thrilling attractions like the "Skyline Walk" and the exhilarating Thrill Walk offer stunning vistas. At Piz Gloria, guests can enjoy a meal while taking a 360-degree view as the restaurant slowly rotates. Schilthorn is the perfect destination for adventure seekers and those looking to relax amidst the natural beauty of the Swiss Alps.

A Dream Turned Reality

Alan reflects on the origins of the Schilthorn, sharing the inspiring story of its inception. He says, "Under the leadership of Ernst Feuz from Mürren, a visionary group of pioneers faced significant financial and technical challenges. In 1967, they succeeded in making the Schilthorn summit accessible to the public



▲ Alan Ramsay

with the construction of the world's longest aerial cableway. While most would have considered this a monumental achievement, Ernst Feuz was driven by a greater ambition. He envisioned creating a truly unique experience for visitors, allowing them to immerse themselves in the breathtaking

alpine scenery. Feuz's revolutionary idea was to build the world's first revolving restaurant at 3,000 meters—an idea many thought was madness. But against all odds, he made his dream a reality."

The 007 James Bond Saga

It was at Schilthorn where James Bond made his unforgettable entrance. In the late 1960s, a German location scout was tasked with finding the perfect mountain peak for the film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, based on Ian Fleming's novel. The scout needed a dramatic alpine setting for Blofeld's secret hideout, where he was developing a deadly virus. After searching Italy, Germany, and Austria, he arrived in Grindelwald, where a hotel concierge suggested Schilthorn. Upon visiting, the scout immediately called producers Cubby Broccoli and Harry Saltzman, confirming he had found the perfect location. Though the building was still under construction, EON Productions agreed to finance the remaining work in exchange for input on the design and the rights to film there. In 1968, the iconic 007 film was shot at Schilthorn, and the movie was released in 1969, cementing the mountain's place in cinematic history.

Alan further shares, "Piz Gloria, our revolving restaurant, also opened in the same year, and Schilthorn gained global exposure thanks to the 007 film. The mountain has long been celebrated for its breathtaking views, drawing climbers for centuries to experience its unique 360-degree panorama. While it has always been a favourite among Swiss locals, its fame skyrocketed internationally after being featured in the Bond film. In winter, Schilthorn boasts the highest ski slopes in the Bernese Oberland, making it a crucial destination for skiers locally and abroad. We are able to guarantee skiing every winter, thanks to snow farming—preserving snow from the previous season to ensure excellent conditions, regardless of the weather."

Schilthornbahn 20XX Project: Revolutionising the Cable Car Experience

The new direct connection between Stechelberg and Mürren is the steepest cable car in the world, boasting a gradient of 159.4 per cent. The classic aerial cableway now transports visitors from the valley floor to the car-free village of Mürren in just four minutes, scaling the dramatic Mürrenfluh cliffs. The cableway covers a height of 775 mt over a distance of 1,194 mt. With two Carvatech cable cars from Oberwies, Austria, each carrying up to 85 passengers or 6.8 tonnes of cargo, it can transport 800 people per hour at full capacity. Alan shares, "The Schilthornbahn 20XX project is set to modernise and enhance the cable car system connecting Stechelberg to Schilthorn mountain. Led by CEO Christoph Egger, the project began in the second half of 2021 with approval from the board of directors and is expected to be completed by summer 2026. The project will enhance comfort for visitors, allowing them to reach the peak of Schilthorn from the Lauterbrunnen Valley, known as the Valley of Waterfalls, in much less time. It is truly an experience worth capturing and writing home about."

The First Funifor Cable Car in Switzerland

The opening of the world's steepest cable car coincided with another milestone: the launch of the first Funifor cable car track in Switzerland. This innovative cableway connecting Mürren and Birg marks the debut of its kind in the



country. During the winter months, both the old and the new cableways will operate side by side in this section to guarantee the transport capacity during the ski operations. The opening of the second Funifor track is planned for November 2025.

"The Funifor cable car features supporting cables that are as wide as, or even wider than, the cable car itself. This design offers significantly enhanced stability during the strong winds often encountered in mountainous regions. As a result, it significantly increases the likelihood of safely transporting customers from the valley floor to the mountain peak—and, most importantly, back down again," informs Alan.

Schilthorn: A Year-Round Destination

Switzerland has long been a favourite destination for Indian tourists, and Schilthorn has enjoyed a long-standing presence in the Indian market. Alan believes that their new cableway—the world's steepest cable car—has a unique offering that will attract even more visitors from India and around the world. Alan highlights, "Tourists will be amazed by the 360-degree panoramic restaurant, with views stretching to Mont Blanc in France and the Black Forest in Germany. For an adrenaline rush, they can experience the Skyline Walk and Thrill Walk on Birg, offering breathtaking views from the cliffs. Visitors can also explore the car-free village of Mürren, with its 400 inhabitants, two churches, and three stations, all offering stunning views. For those feeling adventurous, a 45-minute walk downhill to Gimmelwald provides spectacular views of the Lauterbrunnen Valley, with a final cable car ride down to Stechelberg."



Schilthorn is open year-round, making it a captivating destination in every season. Visitors can enjoy skiing and snowboarding in winter while hiking and paragliding are classic summer activities here. In Mürren, visitors can also enjoy tennis on some of the most spectacular courts in the world. According to Alan, with the faster cable car system, visitors can save time and explore more, including the Lauterbrunnen Valley, famous for its 72 waterfalls, rather than just stopping to see Staubbach Falls and heading back to Interlaken. With enthusiasm, Alan concludes, "We have many exciting plans to further enhance our appeal to both locals and international tourists, though we cannot reveal them just yet."

As the conversation turns toward future plans for Schilthorn, particularly in attracting tourists from emerging markets like India, Alan, channelling the wit of a true James Bond enthusiast, delivers a playful twist. "We have plenty of plans for enhancing our appeal to locals and international tourists," he teases, "but if I told you about them, I would have to kill you! Hahahaha!"

While he keeps the specifics under wraps, his humor and enthusiasm hint at exciting developments on the horizon.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Elevates its tourism appeal with strategic promotions

Breathtaking landscapes and unforgettable adventures, showcased through landmark tourism events and innovative campaigns, have propelled Western Australia (WA) into the global tourism spotlight, solidifying its position as a premier travel destination. Anneke Brown, Acting Managing Director, Tourism Western Australia, shares the pivotal tourism milestones that have fuelled this growth and unveils the exciting line-up of events for 2025.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

As one of the world's most captivating frontiers, it offers boundless adventures and immersive experiences that leave everlasting impressions. By leveraging its unmatched appeal, WA has successfully hosted world-class tourism events highlighting its natural wonders, cultural richness, and commitment to inclusivity and sustainability. Guided by a forward-thinking policy of curating impactful events, it is en route to positioning itself as a key player shaping global tourism.

Spotlight on WTTC 2024

Sharing insights into the meticulous groundwork behind the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Global Summit 2024, Anneke said, "Preparations began months in advance to leverage the massive international stage the Summit offered, which included discussions with global decision-makers on inbound trade and product investment in WA; new inbound aviation routes to Perth/Boorloo as Australia's Western Gateway; and opportunities for high-value tourism accommodation and infrastructure development across the state. These Summit priorities align with Tourism WA's 10-year Western Australia Visitor Economy Strategy 2033, which is focused on achieving \$25 billion in annual visitor spend by 2033 through supporting investment in innovative tourism experiences, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering sustainability, ensuring we meet the needs of both visitors and our local communities." To further enhance the experience, several familiarisation trips were organised across the state, showcasing its diverse and unique



▲ Anneke Brown

offerings that highlight its tourism potential.

Anneke highlighted its broader implications, "WTTC provided an unprecedented platform to demonstrate our economic ambition and showcase tourism investment opportunities. The benefit of being a destination host came not only from immediate economic benefits through delegate spending, job creation and media coverage but also through long-term advantages that come from positioning WA on the global stage, attracting investment, and stimulating future tourism. Hosting WTTC saw over 750 in-person attendees, including over 10 global government leaders, nearly 80 senior government decision-makers from 18 countries, and representatives from nine airlines, with more than 80 journalists covering the event from 24 countries."

Perth says 'G'Day Australia'

The G'Day Australia campaign in Perth served as another powerful platform to showcase WA's unique tourism landscape to a global audience. Anneke explained, "The recent G'Day Australia event in Perth provided an opportunity to celebrate the state's rich tourism offerings. The event brought around 300 'Aussie Specialist' travel agents from across the world, giving them a chance to experience the state first-hand. Agents visited destinations like Perth, Broome, and Margaret River, gaining a stronger ability to sell Australia to prospective travellers."

Reflecting on its success, she remarked, "G'Day Australia has also delivered a significant impact through the 'Aussie specialists' agents, who are estimated to sell an additional \$30 million in holidays to Australia over the next 12 months. Enhanced global visibility is expected to increase visitor numbers and build WA's reputation as a premier destination, further contributing to its economic growth."

Upcoming Events

Sharing the plan of action, Anneke revealed, "To build on this success, WA is gearing up to host Routes Asia 2025, a prestigious aviation trade event expected to generate over \$6 million in delegate expenditure. While the ongoing marketing in key international markets leverages the momentum from the WTTC Summit and 'G'Day Australia. In 2025, WA is hosting an exciting line-up of major sporting events, including the Bledisloe Cup, State of Origin, British and Irish Lions Tour, and The Ashes. These globally renowned



Matagarup Zip Climb

© Tourism Western Australia



Quokka, Rottnest Island

© Tourism Western Australia

events provide an incredible opportunity for visitors to experience the thrill of world-class sports against the backdrop of WA's breathtaking landscapes and vibrant culture."

Targeted Focus on Indian Market

India is a priority market, with 35,000 visitors arriving in WA and spending \$118 million in the year ending June 2024. Research shows that around 44 per cent of visitors from India come to visit friends and relatives, leading to extended stays. They also seek natural beauty, wildlife, safety, and value for money in a holiday — all of which WA offers.

Anneke explained, "We work closely with leading Indian influencers to promote the state. The March 2024 campaign with Burda Media and Bollywood celebrity Rashmika Mandanna in Perth for the Lifestyle Asia and Travel + Leisure India and South Asia magazines garnered over 15 million reach on each publication. A key part of our strategy includes targeted marketing, such as our recent 'Drive the Dream' campaign featuring cricket legend Adam Gilchrist. It coincided with the recent record-breaking Border-Gavaskar Trophy (or 'West Test') at Optus Stadium and highlights the appeal of road trips from Perth, tapping into the nation's passion for cricket and using paid media to reach high-value travellers."

Emphasising the significance of building

connections, she stated, "We work closely with our travel trade partners, conducting joint marketing campaigns and providing regular training to boost their product knowledge. Given the enormous growth opportunities in the market, we remain dedicated to delivering direct aviation access between India and WA and to enhancing our overall connectivity. While a direct service is still in development, we are collaborating with airlines like Batik Air Malaysia, Jetstar, Malaysia Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and Scoot on marketing campaigns to boost bookings via one-stop services through Kuala Lumpur and Singapore."

Top Travel Picks

Sharing top recommendations, Anneke mentioned, "The Matagarup zip + Climb in Perth is no ordinary walk up a bridge — this is a true climb with 31.4 steps on a 45-degree angle and a shimmy, slide, and squeeze through tight spaces to reach the Sky View Deck overlooking the glittering Swan River and award-winning Optus Stadium. At the nearby Rottnest Island, take a beach tandem skydive from 15,000 feet, enjoying unparalleled views of its pristine bays, meet our friendly quokkas, and here, dolphin sightings are virtually guaranteed. Travelling north of Perth, visitors can experience the desert in the Pinnacles and stargaze at night,

or head inland into the east to experience the Swan Valley just 30 minutes from Perth and savour the food and wine region."

Future Prospects

As the state charts an ambitious path for its tourism sector, Anneke pointed out, "The future of WA tourism is bright as we continue to establish the state as a premier destination for unique, transformative experiences. Guided by our Western Australian Visitor Economy Strategy 2033 (WAVES), we are focused on achieving \$25 billion in annual visitor spend by 2033, supported by investments in innovative tourism experiences, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering sustainability, ensuring we meet the needs of both visitors and our local communities."

Spotlighting India as a priority market, Anneke summarised, "India is one of the key international markets driving this growth, with a rising demand for experiential and sustainable travel that aligns perfectly with WA's offerings. Tourism Research Australia forecasts Indian visitors will grow at an average annual rate of 10 per cent from 2023 to 2028. WA is ready to meet this demand with improved connectivity, expanded offerings, and targeted campaigns. By tapping into these opportunities, we can strengthen our global tourism reputation and deliver long-term economic and cultural benefits."



Granite Skywalk, Porongurup National Park

© Tourism Western Australia



The Pinnacles, Nambung National Park

© Tourism Western Australia

Top Tech Tools

Transforming the MICE Industry

As we bid farewell to an illustrious 2024 and step into a promising 2025, it is time to embrace the transformative technologies reshaping the global MICE landscape.

Shekhar Grover

The MICE industry is undergoing a technological renaissance. As event organisers seek to create unforgettable experiences while addressing evolving client demands, tech tools have emerged as indispensable allies. From Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Augmented Reality (AR), these innovations are not just enhancing efficiency—they are reshaping how events are imagined and executed. Let us delve deep into the technologies, transforming the MICE landscape.

Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR): Immersive Engagement

Imagine offering a client a virtual walk-through of a conference venue in Melbourne while sitting in an office in Mumbai. That is the power of VR and AR in the MICE industry. With virtual venue tours, event planners can now inspect venues remotely, saving both time and resources. Additionally, immersive experiences such as AR-powered product demonstrations or VR networking lounges can be integrated into the event.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Smart Event Management

AI is no longer a buzzword but a game-changer in the MICE industry. Its ability to analyse data and automate tasks makes it a valuable asset for event organisers.

Personalised marketing is one such application where AI algorithms analyse attendee data to create tailored marketing campaigns for specific attendee groups. Chatbots provide instant responses to attendee queries, enhancing engagement. Another key benefit is predictive analytics, which helps event planners anticipate attendance trends, optimise scheduling and streamline logistics.

Comprehensive Event Management Software: Streamlining Operations

Managing a large-scale MICE event involves juggling countless details. Event management software centralises and automates processes through task scheduling and team collaboration. It also simplifies delegate registration, ticketing, and agenda planning. Additionally, it allows for real-time tracking of event performance and attendance.

Mobile Event Apps: Enhancing Delegate Experience

Gone are the days of printed agendas and static maps. Mobile event apps are now integral to engaging attendees before, during, and after events. They give real-time updates informing delegates of any changes. Also, enable live polls, Q&A sessions, and feedback collection through interactive features. They also help attendees connect through in-app matchmaking tools.

Data Analytics Tools: Measuring Success

Post-event analysis is critical to understanding what worked and what did not. Data analytics tools help organisers capture meaningful insights and make informed decisions for future events. These tools offer the ability to measure attendee engagement through session tracking; by analysing feedback and ratings, organisers can refine content and delivery. Also, these tools help forecast trends and behaviours, enabling better planning.

Wearable Technology: Seamless Connectivity

Wearable tech is enhancing both attendee convenience and event management. Smart devices like badges and wristbands enable frictionless participation. They offer simplified check-ins via RFID badges, ensure cashless transactions for food, merchandise, and services, and provide access control to restricted areas and session tracking.

Live Streaming and Hybrid Event Solutions: Expanding Reach

With the rise of hybrid events, live streaming and virtual solutions have become indispensable. They allow events to reach a global audience, enabling participation without geographical barriers.

Why is it Important? Increased accessibility allows participants who cannot attend in person to still engage virtually, while extended content lifespan ensures that recordings of live sessions can be repurposed for future use.

Sustainability-Focused Tech: Greening Events

Sustainability is a growing priority in the MICE industry. Technologies that reduce environmental impact are being embraced globally. Digital tickets and agendas replace paper, AI tools optimise energy usage and waste management, and virtual and hybrid events reduce carbon footprints.

What is Next for MICE Technology?

As technology continues to evolve, the MICE industry will see even more innovative solutions in the years ahead. Emerging trends include exclusive event experiences and AI-powered predictive tools for ultra-personalised attendee experiences.

Key Takeaway

While India may take a while to adopt these technologies, one aspect is clear. The integration of technology is no longer optional; it is essential. As these tools continue to evolve, Indian MICE professionals must stay agile, adopting and mastering the platforms that best suit their unique needs. These tools can not only enhance operational efficiency but also create memorable, impactful experiences for their attendees.

Ready to future-proof your MICE events? Start integrating these tech tools today!

About the Author: Shekhar Grover is the Editor and CEO of MICE INDIAA, an author, a speaker, and a MICE coach. He is also the director at Luxury MICE Travel.



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VFS Global ready to cater to the growing outbound demand in 2025

Yummi Talwar, Chief Operating Officer, South Asia, VFS Global, outlines the company’s remarkable growth trajectory in 2024 and its innovative services and strategies aimed at driving expansion in 2025.

Team TTJ

Outbound travel is expected to grow significantly in 2025, riding on the momentum of 2024, when a record number of Indians travelled overseas. In line with these projections, at VFS Global, in the first six months of 2024, the applicant count grew by 11 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2023. This growth has been consistent for the rest of the year.

VAYD Boosts Convenience

Among its innovative products, Visa At Your Doorstep (VAYD) has been widely popular. Yummi shares, “VFS now offers VAYD for 17 Schengen member states and the UK in India, referred to as On-Demand Mobile Visas. VAYD is the preferred choice for MICE operators, offering the convenience of expedited visa processing at a location of their preference. We anticipate growing demand for services like VAYD, as individuals increasingly opt to complete their biometric enrolment and visa applications at a time and place that suits them best.”

Expansion of UK Visa Services

To cater to the increase in demand for UK visas, the company opened Temporary Service Points for UK Visas in 12 locations in 2024, covering Amritsar, Kozhikode, Guwahati, Indore, Ludhiana, Mangaluru, Mohali, Nagpur, Nashik, Noida, Shimla, and Visakhapatnam. It plans to extend the service to seven more locations in early 2025. “The company is also working on a pre-application service and hybrid application journey where customers need to visit application centres only for biometric enrolment,” reveals Yummi.

Strengthening Trade Partnerships

VFS Global works closely with travel agents and tour operators in India, and last year, it conducted over 12 roadshows across the country. It remains committed to ongoing engagements with the travel trade industry to emphasise the importance of booking appointments early and to caution against entities falsely promising visa services.



▲ Yummi Talwar

Yummi states, “VFS will continue to invest in and upgrade its Visa Application Centres (VACs) to accommodate the anticipated increase in our applicant count.”

Vietnam's Ninh Binh Province awaits TAFI Convention 2025 delegates

Excitement is in the air as The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) Convention 2025 is set to take place from January 17–20, 2025, in the picturesque Ninh Binh province of Vietnam. Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, shares the latest updates on the upcoming event.

Prashant Nayak

Vietnam is a beautiful country that has become a popular destination for Indian travellers in recent years. Elaborating on the choice of destination, Ajay says, “Ninh Binh is a fascinating and stunning place and is ideally suited for families as well as young couples. The ecotourism zone at Thung Nham, the boat tour through the caverns at Trang An, and the vibrant waterfront in the old town of Ninh Binh are all a delight.”

Ajay continues, “However, Ninh Binh province remains relatively unexplored by Indian tourists. As always, TAFI seeks to introduce our members to newer, lesser-known destinations. It reinforces our belief that tourism must move beyond the usual popular spots. It is a destination waiting to be discovered by Indian tourists.”

Regarding the theme of the convention, Tourism for Tomorrow: Protecting the Planet, Ajay states, “Our industry is people-centric, thriving on the natural beauty and diversity of the world, but it also has a responsibility to protect the planet. TAFI will lead efforts to sensitise our members, who, in turn, will guide their clients toward responsible tourism practices.”

The TAFI Convention 2025 will provide members and delegates with an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions on the future of tourism. As of this interaction, around 330 members have registered, with more expected as the registration deadline has been extended to January 7, 2025. Ajay also mentioned that there will be a B2B interactive session with over 50 Vietnamese travel companies participating.



▲ Ajay Prakash

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FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION

2024's Success Powers Global Destinations Toward Bold 2025 Growth

In 2024, global tourist destinations saw a significant rise in Indian visitors, driven by evolving preferences for experiential, adventure, and cultural tourism. TTJ interacted with several National Tourist Offices based in India, where they highlighted their diverse offerings—from sports tourism to offbeat adventures and sustainability initiatives. Looking ahead to 2025, these offices plan to build on this momentum with targeted campaigns, strategic partnerships, and unique experiences, aiming to engage India's growing traveller base further and offer personalised experiences that resonate with Indian tourists.

Prashant Nayak

Australia to Capitalise on Cricket to Promote Unique Experiences



Nishant Kashikar
Country Manager,
India & Gulf, Tourism Australia

The increasing affluence and travel aspirations of Indian travellers are driving demand for high-end travel experiences. We anticipate continued growth in Indians exploring international destinations, driven by increasing disposable incomes and a desire for experiential travel.

Event and Sports Tourism, the New Trend: The growing trend of event globetrotting is driving Indian travellers to seek out collective experiences like sports events, immersive culture and art and music festivals. Sports tourism now has become a popular way to explore new places, experience different cultures, and participate in sports activities. The Border-Gavaskar Cricket Test Series is one such example.

Leveraging Cricket Fever: As we witness increased arrivals from India, we are leveraging this cricket fever to showcase Australia's diverse offerings through a range of activities, positioning it as an ideal holiday destination for Indian travellers. We have collaborated with Australian cricket stars like David Warner and Pat Cummins, the current Test cricket captain, to invite more Indians to experience the Land Down Under. Additionally, we have hosted Bollywood and TV celebrities in Australia to showcase the country's experiences.

Moving Forward: Tourism Australia will continue to capitalise on the India opportunity through a three-pronged strategy of, a) Driving consideration for Australia through a range of marketing and PR initiatives, leveraging the power of advocacy; b) collaborating with our key distribution partners and Aussie Specialist Agents to drive conversions; and c) improving access by working closely with our key airlines and the department of home affairs promoting our competitive and efficient visa offering.

Spain to Showcase Unique, Sustainable Journeys for the Affluent Indian Traveller



Elena Orland
Director, Tourism Office of Spain, Mumbai

In 2024, the Tourism Office of Spain focused on promoting Spain as a diverse travel destination appealing to affluent Indian travellers. Our campaigns emphasised Spain's rich culture, art, gastronomy, and luxury while highlighting emerging trends in wellness tourism, eco-tourism, and active exploration. We have aligned our marketing with the growing interest of Indian millennials and Gen Z travellers in immersive, sustainable experiences.

Focus on Unique and Sustainable Experiences: Spanish tourism is embracing nature-based trips, gastronomic experiences, and itineraries centred on local festivals. We have integrated sustainable tourism into our strategy, ensuring that our offerings not only benefit travellers but also preserve Spain's cultural and natural heritage. The emphasis on sustainability will continue into 2025, supporting local communities and eco-conscious tourism.

Collaborating with Indian Partners: We actively collaborate with Indian tour operators, media, and travel agents to strengthen Spain's position as a prime destination. Our partnership with Spain's Convention Bureau has led to organising familiarisation trips for travel agents, and we have press trips for journalists to provide firsthand experiences. Influencer campaigns will engage younger audiences, increasing Spain's visibility and enabling our partners to promote the destination effectively.

Highlighting Lesser-Known Regions: In 2025, we will spotlight Spain's lesser-known regions like Cantabria, Asturias, Galicia, and Basque Country, along with interior areas such as Extremadura and Castilla y León. Simultaneously, we will continue promoting iconic

regions like Madrid, Catalonia, and Andalusia. A special focus will be on offering fresh, unique experiences in well-known destinations, such as exploring the Sierra de las Nieves National Park in Marbella and attending musical concerts in the Drach Caves in Mallorca.

Dual Year India-Spain in 2026: Looking ahead, we are already planning for the Dual Year India-Spain in 2026, a collaboration focused on tourism, culture, and AI to further deepen the cultural and tourism ties between our countries.

Tourism Fiji to Unlock Tier 2 and Tier 3 Markets for Sustainable Growth



Brent Hill
CEO, Tourism Fiji

In 2024, Tourism Fiji strategically aligned itself with two of India's most influential cultural pillars—Bollywood and cricket—to enhance visibility and connect with the Indian audience. Hosting Bollywood celebrities in Fiji and launching targeted campaigns during the IPL helped amplify Fiji's appeal to millions. These efforts ensured significant media coverage and positioned Fiji as an attractive destination.

Strengthening Trade Relationships: Tourism Fiji focused on strengthening its relationships with Indian travel agents through seminars, training sessions, and FAM trips. These initiatives provided agents with firsthand knowledge of Fiji's offerings, ensuring they could effectively promote the destination. Collaborations with key partners further amplified the messaging and facilitated bookings, solidifying Fiji's position as a top destination for Indian travellers.

Promoting In-demand Experiences: Fiji's offerings align well with the growing demand for wellness tourism, eco-tourism, and cultural experiences among Indian travellers. The destination's focus on wellness retreats, sustainable resorts, and nature-focused activities resonates with the desire for enriching, responsible travel. Tourism Fiji also highlights cultural immersion opportunities, connecting travellers with local traditions and cuisine to enhance their travel experience.

'Happy Passports' Campaign: In 2025, Tourism Fiji will focus on strengthening its presence in India through the launch of the 'Happy Passports' campaign. This initiative aims to inspire Indian travellers to explore Fiji for unforgettable experiences. Exclusive training for tour operators, seminars, and media partnerships will amplify the campaign's reach, ensuring

that Fiji remains a top-of-mind destination for both honeymooners and families seeking immersive and enriching travel.

Targeting Tier 2 and Tier 3 Markets: Tourism Fiji plans to tap into the growing potential of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Indian markets, where rising disposable incomes are driving demand for unique international travel experiences. By emphasising wellness, eco-tourism, and cultural immersion, Tourism Fiji aims to position itself as the go-to destination for Indian travellers seeking both adventure and relaxation.

Long-Term Growth and Sustainability: Tourism Fiji is committed to building long-term relationships with Indian travellers and the travel trade, ensuring sustainable growth in bookings, and establishing Fiji as the ultimate destination for unique, culturally enriching experiences.

Singapore to Celebrate 60 Years of India-Singapore Relations with Exciting New Attractions



Markus Tan
Regional Director, IMESA,
Singapore Tourism Board

In 2024, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) successfully increased awareness and attracted a record number of visitors from India, surpassing 1 million visitors by October—two months ahead of 2023. This was driven by Singapore's strategic approach to offering diverse experiences bolstered by strong air connectivity between the two nations.

Targeted Campaigns: STB tailored its campaigns to appeal to different Indian traveller segments. The 'Made in Singapore' campaign, launched in March 2024, reimagined the 'Passion Made Possible' brand by showcasing Singapore's ability to transform ordinary moments into extraordinary ones. A significant partnership with Bollywood actress Ananya Panday introduced hidden gems in Singapore through a four-episode series, further strengthening the destination's appeal.

Strategic Partnerships: STB formed key partnerships to boost inbound travel. Collaborations with MakeMyTrip and PhonePe facilitated cross-border transactions and curated holiday packages for Indian travellers. The 'Family Playdates. Made in Singapore' campaign, with partners like Singapore Airlines and Sentosa Development Corporation, offered exclusive deals for families, driving family tourism.

New Offerings in 2025: Singapore continually reinvents its offerings to attract travellers. 2024 saw major attractions, such as the Harry Potter exhibit at Sentosa and international music performances by Taylor Swift and Coldplay. Looking forward, eco-friendly and wellness experiences, like the Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree (opening April 2025), highlight Singapore's commitment to sustainability. Additionally, the Rainforest Wild Asia zoological park, set to open in 2025, will provide an immersive experience in conservation and wildlife.

Focus on Indian Travel Trade: STB is committed to strengthening relationships with the Indian travel trade. In 2025, STB will host a multi-city roadshow in Bengaluru, Chandigarh, and Mumbai, showcasing Singapore's attractions. Workshops, seminars, and educational programmes for Indian travel agents will continue to equip them with the knowledge to effectively promote Singapore.

Celebrating 60 Years of India-Singapore Relations: 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of India-Singapore cultural relations. In January, STB plans special offers and experiential trips alongside events like Singapore Art Week to commemorate this milestone. With an exciting array of new attractions, including the Minion Land at Sentosa and the expanded S.E.A. Aquarium, Singapore aims to remain a top destination for Indian travellers in 2025.

Malaysia to Prepare for Visit Malaysia Year 2026, Targeting Indian Tourists



Noriah Jaafar
Director, Tourism Malaysia, Mumbai

Malaysia continues to grow in popularity among Indian tourists, thanks to its affordability, accessibility, and wide range of attractions that cater to every kind of traveller. Whether you are a family looking for fun-filled experiences, a solo traveller seeking adventure, or a business traveller attending a MICE event, Malaysia offers something for everyone. With its vibrant cities, pristine beaches, natural reserves, and rich culinary landscape, it is easy to see why Malaysia has become a top choice for Indian tourists.

Targeted Campaigns and Roadshows: To further boost the number of Indian visitors, we have been proactive in our marketing efforts. These include product briefing seminars, webinars with state tourism boards, and participation in key travel marts like OTM and SATTE. Additionally, we have organised B2B roadshows in Tier 2 cities, with more than 35 delegates participating from Malaysia. These events have been crucial in increasing awareness and driving bookings, enabling us to connect directly with travel agents and tour operators across India.

Catering to Evolving Tourism Segments: Post-COVID, we have noticed a growing interest in female-centric tourism, with more women seeking safe, enjoyable, and culturally enriching travel experiences. Malaysia is increasingly becoming a preferred destination for bachelor groups who enjoy vibrant nightlife and beach destinations, with spots like Langkawi, Penang, and Kuala Lumpur leading the way. We also continue to see Malaysia as a hub for educational tourism, attracting international students to affordable higher education institutions like Universiti Malaya.

Offbeat and Adventure Tourism: Another exciting trend is the rise of offbeat and adventure tourism. More Indian travellers are seeking secluded, tranquil destinations away from the crowd. Areas like Cameron Highlands, Tioman Island, and Borneo have gained popularity for their natural beauty and serenity. Borneo's lush landscapes and pristine beaches have become a hotspot for adventure tourism, offering trekking, water sports, and opportunities to explore rich sea beds.

2024 Achievements and Plans for 2025: In 2024, we successfully welcomed 1,009,114 Indian tourists, surpassing our target and achieving a 47 per cent growth compared to 2019. As we look ahead to 2025, we are committed to maintaining this momentum. We will focus on joint promotions and tactical campaigns to further boost Indian arrivals. We are also excited to prepare for Visit Malaysia Year 2026, which will serve as a cornerstone for our future tourism initiatives, aiming to attract more visitors from India and worldwide.

Visit California Aims to Position the State as the Ultimate Road Trip Destination



Caroline Beteta
President & CEO, Visit California

California has long been the top US destination for Indian travellers, and Visit California is working to maintain this momentum. In 2024, the state introduced its new global branding, positioning itself as 'The Ultimate Playground' for travellers seeking a wide range of adventures and experiences. Through media campaigns, trade integrations, and social media promotions, Visit California aims to highlight its playful lifestyle, luxury offerings, family-friendly attractions, and diverse cultural experiences that resonate with Indian travellers.

Trends in Indian Travel: Research indicates that Indian travellers are increasingly opting for longer, more frequent visits with flexible, customised itineraries. There is a rising demand for exclusive luxury and culinary experiences and a growing interest in major events. Visit California is responding by offering more immersive, culturally rich experiences, focusing on the state's world-class accommodations, easily accessible attractions, and close-knit diversity of experiences.

Marketing Strategies and Partnerships: Visit California's marketing strategy emphasises California's unique appeal, highlighting cultural and culinary offerings. The California Star training programme continues to engage travel agents by educating them about the state's varied attractions. Partnerships with key trade, airline, and media entities help amplify California's position as the premier destination for Indian travellers.

Looking Ahead: In 2025, Visit California plans to launch a refreshed road trip campaign that provides Indian travellers additional inspiration, tools, and itineraries. This campaign will further establish California as the ultimate road trip destination, with a special focus on the centennial celebration of the iconic Route 66 in 2026, reinforcing the state's reputation as a must-visit destination for adventure and exploration.

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Philadelphia to Leverage its Vibrant Culture to Attract Indian Travellers



Svetlana Yazovskikh
VP - Global Tourism,

Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau

India continues to emerge as one of the most significant contributors to global tourism. The increasing affluence and evolving preferences of Indian travellers are driving demand for unique, culturally rich, and immersive travel experiences. Today's Indian traveller is confident, curious, and eager to explore destinations that offer more than just traditional landmarks. As disposable incomes rise and experiential travel becomes a priority, Indian tourists are venturing beyond well-known spots, and Philadelphia is positioned as an ideal destination for these travellers.

Experiential Travel: The shift towards experiential travel is reshaping how Indian tourists plan their holidays. They are seeking authentic experiences that immerse them in local culture, history, and creativity. Philadelphia, with its rich historical heritage, dynamic arts scene, and vibrant neighbourhoods, provides a wealth of experiences that resonate with this growing trend. From the iconic Liberty Bell and Independence Hall to the murals of the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, Philadelphia is a city that offers much more than just the typical tourist attractions.

Strategic Partnerships: To reach this market, we have actively collaborated with Indian travel agents, media, and influencers to promote Philadelphia's distinct offerings. By working with well-known Indian personalities, we have showcased the city's cultural and historical richness, engaging Indian travellers in a relatable and authentic way. These partnerships have helped establish Philadelphia as a must-visit destination, highlighting its blend of history, culture, and arts.

Engaging Indian Sports Fans: With sports tourism rising, we are also capitalising on major upcoming events like the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

These events provide an excellent opportunity to promote Philadelphia as a prime destination for sports enthusiasts, offering world-class sporting action and cultural immersion.

Welcoming More Indian Visitors: In 2025, our focus will remain on deepening engagement with the Indian market through targeted campaigns and collaborations. We are excited to welcome more Indian travellers to Philadelphia, offering them unforgettable experiences that combine culture, history, and world-class hospitality.

Immersive American West Experiences Await in Utah



Rachel Bremer

Director, Tourism Global Markets,
Utah Office of Tourism

As we look ahead to 2025, Utah is poised to continue its impressive growth in international tourism, with the Indian market playing a key role in this expansion. In 2024, we saw record-breaking visitation and visitor spending, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Visitor spending in Utah reached over \$12 billion in 2023, and Indian travellers contributed significantly, spending \$16.7 million, placing India 12th among global markets. The forecast for 2025 is even more promising, with continued growth in both visits and spending.

Immersive and Unique Experiences: Our goal is to ensure that Indian visitors are well-prepared to fully enjoy Utah's diverse landscapes, which range from majestic national parks to scenic byways and stargazing spots. Whether trekking in the Wasatch Mountains, skiing in Park City, or exploring the red rock formations of Arches National Park, we want visitors to appreciate Utah's natural beauty to the fullest. One of the highlights we are excited to share with our Indian visitors is Utah's growing collection of International Dark Sky Places. We recently designated Castle Dale as our 26th Dark Sky location, which adds to the state's already impressive range of stargazing opportunities. Utah, home to the world's highest concentration of dark sky parks and reserves, is a dream destination for night sky enthusiasts. Visitors can enjoy unique experiences like glamping and guided dark sky tours, particularly at our national parks.

Film Tourism: Another growing trend is the rise in 'Set Jetting,' where travellers visit iconic film locations. Utah has long been a destination for filmmakers, with its dramatic landscapes inspiring hundreds of films over the years. In 2025, visitors can

follow the Utah Film Trail, exploring film locations like Dead Horse State Park (featured in *Thelma & Louise*) and Coral Pink Sand Dunes (seen in *Westworld*). This trend ties perfectly with the return of the Sundance Film Festival in January and February 2025, drawing film lovers from around the world.

Expanding Utah's Brand Awareness in India: The potential for growth in the Indian market is enormous. We anticipate more than 200 per cent growth in visitor spending and over 100 per cent in visits from India between 2019 and 2028. As we expand Utah's brand awareness in India, we aim to position Utah as a key destination for travellers looking to explore the American West. Whether for a road trip with family and friends or to discover the state's natural wonders, Utah offers a wealth of experiences that will appeal to the adventurous Indian traveller. We look forward to welcoming more visitors from India to Utah in 2025 and beyond.

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FROM BREAKTHROUGH TO BOOM

India's Outbound Travel Set to Soar Higher in 2025

As we embark on 2025, the Indian travel industry reflects on a transformative year. In the past year, India emerged as a global powerhouse in outbound travel, with the world eager to tap into its potential. Driven by innovation, adaptability, and shifting preferences, the industry saw unprecedented growth. With anticipation building for the year ahead, TTJ presents insights and predictions from outbound stakeholders and decision-makers, offering a glimpse into India's exciting future in global travel.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

From record-breaking revenue figures to shifting traveller preferences, let us explore the factors driving the surge in outbound travel and how the trade is adapting to evolving demands, from personalised itineraries to emerging destinations, setting the stage for a new era in global travel.

A Year of Remarkable Recovery

In a year defined by a resurgence in global travel, Travstarz achieved significant milestones across destinations and partnerships. Pankaj Nagpal, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group, a Trip.com-invested company, proudly reflected on a milestone year that marked remarkable growth and strategic partnerships. He shared, "2024 has been a tremendous year for us in terms of our growth, especially as we restarted our full operations in 2022 itself. We achieved 60 per cent YOY growth in Gross Revenue compared to



▲ Pankaj Nagpal



▲ Rakshit Kansal



▲ Naisarg Shah



▲ Kanishka Khimani



▲ Vinay Arora



▲ Meha Vashi



▲ Deepak Anand



2023. Despite the ongoing war situation in West Asia, we crossed 1,000 passengers to Egypt. The numbers for Turkey and Vietnam stood at over 1,500 passengers each. Baku registered over 1,600 passengers. We added Greece, Georgia, Oman, Qatar, and Japan to our list of destinations.” Travstarz has renewed its Joint Marketing Partnership with Tourism Boards, including Abu Dhabi and Oman.

Rakshit Kansal, Director and Operation Head, SR Destination, stated, “We demonstrated a strong recovery, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Indian travellers were eager to explore international destinations after extended travel restrictions in previous years.” Naisarg Shah, Director, Mellow Tours, echoed this statement, adding, “With over 15 million Indians travelling overseas, the growth represents a strong 12 per cent increase compared to India’s pre-pandemic figures.”

Kanishka Khimani, Director, Carving Journeys, identified 2024 as a pivotal year, reflecting India’s evolving travel aspirations. She said, “With a move toward personalised and high-value experiences, Indian travellers are redefining global tourism trends. Sports and event-based travel saw a surge like never before, while global concerts and major sporting events drew massive Indian crowds, showcasing a shift towards themed and purpose-driven travel.”

Vinay Arora, Director, ATG Holidays, highlighted the impressive trajectory of India’s outbound tourism market reflected in a growing appetite among Indian travellers for international experiences, driven by increased affluence and a thirst for unique adventures.

Meha Vashi, Co-founder and Director, Nivalink, notes the steady rise in demand for more personalised and adventurous outbound travel. This shift is reshaping how Indians approach travel, opening up new opportunities and experiences.

Deepak Anand, Founder and CEO, TripHunter, shared that India’s outbound tourism market reached \$18 billion with a projected CAGR of over 11 per cent, leading to remarkable growth in 2024.

What is Driving India’s Travel Boom?

India’s outbound travel boom is being powered by an intricate mix of transformative factors, as listed by our featured respondents, that are central to this extraordinary growth. Post-pandemic travel has emerged as a key focus for discretionary spending among Indian consumers, driven by shifting socio-economic dynamics. The rise of the urban middle class, coupled with a predominantly young population of travellers, has significantly fuelled outbound tourism.

Enhanced air connectivity and the abundance of low-cost carriers have made international travel more affordable, while streamlined visa policies, including e-visas and visa-on-arrival options, have made international travel much more accessible for Indians.

An increasing preference marks this growth for experiential journeys, with more travellers seeking luxury, adventure, wellness, eco-conscious accommodations, and cultural explorations. Social media, celebrity endorsements, and digital platforms have played a transformative role, propelling offbeat destinations into the spotlight as travellers increasingly seek unique, once-in-a-lifetime adventures beyond traditional hotspots. Improved connectivity from Tier 2 cities has also made international travel accessible to a broader audience, contributing to exponential growth in outbound trips.

Affluent travellers are gravitating towards luxury tourism, which is marked by a surge in demand for ultra-luxury hotel stays and high-end bespoke experiences. Financing options like ‘travel now, pay later’ schemes have made international vacations more feasible, with many Indians now taking two overseas trips annually. This shift towards value-for-money destinations and unique experiences reflects the evolving aspirations

Top Travel Picks of 2024

The international travel landscape for Indian tourists witnessed radically new emerging destinations gaining traction alongside traditional favourites. Kanishka shared, “Our clients exhibited a growing affinity for Scandinavian countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Finland, especially for the Northern Lights, stunning fjords, and Arctic adventures. Switzerland and France remained hot traditional favourites for luxury, culinary and cultural experiences, while Spain attracted more visitors for its food, history and vibrant cities.” She further pointed out the rise in popularity of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan for their heritage and affordability. Japan and South Korea gained traction due to the popularity of anime and K-pop tourism. Australia saw growth for India from a long-haul perspective while Turkey fascinated clients with its history, bazaars, and scenic beauty.

Nivalink saw a healthy mix of traditional favourites and emerging destinations gaining prominence. Meha outlined the hot favourites, “Chasing the Northern Lights in Norway, Finland, and Iceland became highly popular this year, the Border-Gavaskar cricket series and other events attracted a significant number of visitors to Australia, while South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania drew attention for their wildlife safaris and immersive cultural experiences. Europe attracted an experiential travel fanbase to Switzerland Italy, and central European countries, while the Arctic and Antarctica cruises gained traction as travellers sought extraordinary, once-in-a-lifetime adventures.” Destinations like Vietnam, Thailand, Bali, Azerbaijan, the United States, and Dubai performed exceptionally well.

For ATG Holidays, Indian travellers showed consistent interest in destinations such as Dubai, Singapore, Thailand, Bali, and the Maldives. Vinay noted, “Vietnam gained immense traction, thanks to its cost-effectiveness and enhanced connectivity with India. Turkey became a go-to alternative to Europe due to quick visa processing and its historical sites. Japan also captured attention, with travellers drawn to cherry blossoms, Bullet Train rides, and Mount Fuji’s breathtaking views. Abu Dhabi, while often overshadowed by Dubai, experienced a remarkable surge in popularity in 2024, thanks to its unique attractions such as Yas Island’s entertainment hub and the serene conservation park on Sir Bani Yas Island.”

New Experiences and Emerging Destinations

As Indian travellers clocked record travel numbers in the past year, they leaned increasingly towards diverse experiences and new destinations. Even though traditional locations witnessed a steady, noticeable shift, travellers increasingly sought unique and offbeat experiences within familiar locations.

At TripHunter, Deepak observed a rise in young Indian travellers gravitating towards immersive group trips, with international music festivals like Tomorrowland in Belgium and Coldplay concerts across Europe often paired with classic European itineraries. He said, "People want to combine fun with traditional itineraries, seeking events aligned with their interests. Finland and Norway remained top choices for Northern Lights and Arctic adventures. Many travellers flew to Dubai and Abu Dhabi just to attend events or to celebrate anniversaries and birthdays at ultra-luxury hotels."

Deepak also highlighted the growing appeal of Baku, Azerbaijan, for its historical charm and European vibe at an affordable price while Greece, Bali, Europe, Seychelles, Australia, and New Zealand remained perennial favourites among honeymooners. He further noted that Cappadocia, Turkey, emerged as a popular choice for honeymooners and pre-wedding shoots due to its Instagram-worthy landscapes while seasoned travellers ventured to newer destinations like Japan South Korea and Croatia during Yacht Week.

For Mellow Tours, Naisarg, observed a broader travel preference diversification: "In 2024, Dubai, Azerbaijan, Germany, Malaysia, London, Thailand, and Indonesia gained more popularity due to improved connectivity and favourable travel policies amongst the others."

Rakshit highlighted the growing appeal of destinations like Vietnam, Azerbaijan, Turkey, the Maldives, and the UAE, attributing their popularity to their unique cultural experiences, affordability, and accessibility. He further added, "Europe's Schengen countries remained popular, especially Switzerland, France, and Italy, with honeymooners and luxury travellers flocking to these destinations. Southeast Asia saw continued popularity for family and leisure travellers, with Thailand, Singapore, and Bali offering affordability and easy visa access." Meanwhile, countries like Nepal and Bhutan emerged as favourites for adventure and spiritual tourism, and the Middle East recorded increased visitations in Dubai and Saudi Arabia, benefiting from cultural festivals, events, and the ease of travel.

Quest for the Perfect Adventure

The quest for the ultimate 'A-ha!' moment defines today's travellers, inspiring journeys to the farthest reaches of the world. With fresh experiences popping up every day, crafting unique itineraries has become an art form. Sharing insights on what fascinates her guests, Meha said, "Japan has been a showstopper, not just for its iconic cherry blossoms, but also for our fall tours that showcase the country's breathtaking autumn colours. We have gone beyond the usual to include traditional activities like tea ceremonies, sake tastings, and stays at authentic ryokans. Guests specially request onsen ryokan accommodations typically located in the mountains, where the onsen water directly comes from the mineral-rich waters of natural mountain springs."

Nivalink curated another atypical itinerary for six French travellers on a 15-night bespoke holiday in Thailand, designed for an immersive experience blending culture, cuisine, and relaxation. It featured dining at Michelin-starred restaurants, attending a Thai boxing match, and exploring UNESCO-listed Sukhothai, including activities like cycling and kayaking. The trip wrapped up with a tranquil beach stay, perfectly balancing adventure and leisure. Meha noted, "We are currently curating a trip for a leading orthopaedic doctor from Mangalore. He just returned from the Christmas market in the Alsace region of France and will be travelling with five friends on the Ghan, a luxury train passage from Adelaide to Darwin, passing through the Red Centre and the Outback. Another guest couple is headed for the Antarctica cruise at the end of this month, following a 10-day exploration of Chile." Demand for hitherto unknown experiences reflects the shift in post-COVID travel preferences, with customers seeking new, unique, and unforgettable adventures.

Meha emphasised the importance of curating bespoke itineraries, including food tours, wellness retreats, adventure trips, and local cultural immersions. She explained, "We need to keep up with the preferences of our evolved clientele, seasoned explorers who have visited 30 to 40 countries and take multiple holidays each year, sometimes as many as six."

Mastering Disruptions

Handling travel challenges and navigating visa complexities have become critical aspects of ensuring seamless experiences for travellers. Naisarg emphasised the importance of structured strategies to mitigate disruptions, noting, "At Mellow Tours, we closely monitor visa regulations and travel advisories to keep our clients updated while our dedicated team is trained to address unforeseen travel disruptions, from rescheduling flights to providing alternate accommodations, in case of sudden cancellations. We also encourage our clients to stay informed about destination-specific requirements."

Sharing the importance of planning strategies, Rakshit said, "We provide end-to-end visa support, ensuring accurate submissions to avoid delays. A dedicated team monitors travel advisories, visa policies, and regulations, and we offer Crisis Management Plans for disruptions like flight cancellations or geopolitical events."

Pankaj explains geopolitical challenges, "The transition to a new US administration raises expectations for a more stable world and resolving conflicts, which would positively influence the travel industry. The concern remains the steep depreciation of the Rupee against the US\$ which seems to be in a free fall, and this may have a short-term negative impact on outbound travel."

Expansion Strategy for 2025

As India's economy thrives, the outbound tourism sector is positioned for remarkable, sustained growth. However, to fully capitalise on this momentum, it is crucial to maintain a steady trajectory of success by continuously offering innovative itineraries and exceptional experiences that meet the evolving demands of Indian travellers.

Sharing an optimistic projection, Rakshit noted, "We anticipate continued growth in 2025, with an estimated 15-20 per cent increase in overall numbers. Destinations like Vietnam and Azerbaijan will gain further recognition. We are expanding our portfolio by adding more destinations and niche experiences while investing in technology and building collaborations with airlines, hotels, and tourism boards. Most importantly, we are upskilling teams to offer better personalised and multicultural service."

Outbound travel is expected to grow with a rising demand for luxury, experiential, and sustainable tourism. Kanishka surmised, "Travellers will seek offbeat destinations, with increased interest in countries like Iceland, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bhutan, Morocco and Portugal. Adventure, wellness, and culinary tourism will see strong growth, while event-based travel, including global concerts and sports tournaments, will remain popular."

Vinay forecasts a surge in outbound travel for Indians in 2025 to long-haul destinations, with a growing interest in unique experiences such as wellness vacations. He asserted, "To meet the demand for meaningful travel experience, we are offering tailored travel plans, forging partnerships with airlines and hotels for better deals, and prioritising eco-friendly travel options." ATG Holidays is doubling down on digital marketing to connect with younger travellers, using social media campaigns and influencer collaborations to capture their attention. The focus is clear—adapting quickly to the changing landscape and providing customised solutions for the evolving needs of today's travellers is the need of the hour.

As outbound tourism from India continues to evolve, Travstarz has focused on maintaining high service delivery standards. Pankaj shared, "With RezB2B Inc. the US-based subsidiary of Trip.Com, acquiring a stake in our company in 2024, we have gained access to advanced technology and an extensive online inventory in our back-end systems. This has enhanced our ability to offer competitive pricing and improved delivery standards." He outlined their expansion policy: "As of 2024, we have added five new DMC locations and intend on adding Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Kenya and Morocco in 2025. This will take our total DMC locations to 26 and cover most parts of the world for travel from India."

Key to Staying Ahead of the Curve

Adapting to the ever-changing travel landscape with innovative solutions is key to staying ahead. Naisarg elaborated on strategic priorities, "For 2025, we are diversifying our portfolio to include emerging destinations and niche experiences to cater to evolving demands. Personalised itineraries powered by advanced AI will allow us to tailor travel plans to individual preferences, creating unique journeys for each traveller. We are further strengthening partnerships with global suppliers, aligning with the sustainability movement, investing in technology to offer 24/7 seamless support and further investing in unique marketing campaigns to ensure we stay ahead of the curve."

Meha foresees an ongoing surge in travel demand, noting, "While traditional destinations like Dubai, Singapore, United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia remain strong, emerging destinations such as Japan, Peru, Brazil, New Zealand, Norway, Iceland, Finland, and Morocco are capturing increasing attention from travellers offering authentic travel experiences." To leverage this shift, she advocates the need to streamline the travel experience by simplifying visa processes, promoting destinations that offer easy access and building strong partnerships with local suppliers to offer off-the-beaten-path experiences. She further noted the importance of regular in-house training, refining digital marketing strategies and utilising customer feedback and data analytics to enhance service.

Highlighting the importance of catering to younger travellers, Deepak said, "At TripHunter, we are constantly innovating to meet the needs of these dynamic travellers by blending classic itineraries with modern experiences like adventure tourism and lifestyle events, to create unforgettable travel journeys that will resonate with the next generation."

As travellers become more discerning, all segments of the market are poised for growth, with many planning vacations up to six months in advance, conducting extensive research to curate the perfect trip. Deepak pointed out, "Traditional itineraries are still in demand, especially among first-time travellers. However, a new wave of Gen Z and Millennials in their 20s, 30s, and early 40s is shaping the market, gravitating toward unique experiences such as cruise vacations, adventure sports, self-drive tours, and events at nearby international destinations."

As India's travel sector emerges as a significant driver of economic growth, 2025 promises to be a pivotal year. While the world is increasingly wooing Indian travellers, India is slowly but surely strengthening its position as a global tourism powerhouse while carving a more influential role in the international economy.

Representation Businesses Stay Ahead of the Curve with Forward-Thinking Approach

As India's travel market continues to evolve, representation businesses are adapting to meet the growing demand for personalised, sustainable, and immersive experiences. These companies leverage innovation, partnerships, and deep local insights to navigate challenges, anticipate emerging trends, and ensure their clients stay competitive in a dynamic and rapidly changing market. Let us hear from some representation stakeholders about their key challenges and milestones in 2024 and what they foresee for 2025.

Prashant Nayak

Collaborative Approach to Boost Visibility



Pranav Kapadia
Director, Global Destinations

Navigating 2024 Challenges: Competing in the global travel market demands constant innovation. At Global Destinations, we focus on forming strong partnerships with airlines, trade organisations, and local tourism partners. This collaborative approach boosts visibility and allows us to create immersive travel experiences that resonate with Indian travellers. Understanding market nuances ensures our clients stay competitive with insights that meet evolving needs.

Emerging Trends in 2025: The Indian travel market is undergoing a transformation, with a clear shift toward more personalised and immersive experiences. Indian travellers seek more profound connections with destinations and engage with local cultures authentically. Sustainability is also rising in importance, with eco-friendly stays and responsible travel choices becoming top priorities. The middle class, which refrained from travelling in 2024, is expected to drive significant growth in 2025. We are preparing by offering strategies that align with these trends, helping clients cater to this demand for intentional travel experiences.

Beyond Traditional Representation: Going beyond traditional representation services is imperative in today's fast-paced travel industry. At Global Destinations, we build long-term relationships with DMCs, hotels, and tourism boards. These connections enable us to deliver consistent value, and our market understanding allows us to design customised strategies tailored to our client's goals. Initiatives like our Global Destinations roadshow and valuable market insights ensure that our partners maximise their presence in India's vibrant travel market.

A Dual B2C and B2B Strategy: India's vast and multifaceted market requires a comprehensive approach. I advise international tourist offices to develop a strategy that blends B2C and B2B efforts. Connecting with consumers through captivating marketing campaigns is essential, but

engaging with the travel trade community is equally important. At Global Destinations, we ensure our clients not only spark interest but also equip the Indian travel trade with the tools to convert that interest into bookings. This dual approach builds visibility, trust, and long-term success for our clients in India.

Strategies that Blend Sustainability, Innovation, and Cultural Insight



Hemant Mediratta
Founder, One Rep Global

Addressing Challenges in 2024: At One Rep Global, we stayed ahead of the competition by expanding beyond traditional traveller segments. We identified emerging interest groups, such as younger audiences seeking shopping, wellness, and adventure experiences. We helped our clients tap into new opportunities by tailoring strategies to these demographics. With personalised travel growing, we adapted by launching innovative campaigns on social media. We also addressed cultural alignment issues by providing training and creating region-specific marketing materials to ensure authenticity. External challenges, like visa delays, were mitigated by our proactive approach, ensuring continued success for our clients.

Trends for 2025: Looking ahead, the Indian travel market is being reshaped by its young population, with 65 per cent under 35. Gen Z and millennials are driving new travel preferences, prioritising personalisation, sustainability, and authenticity. Gen Z primarily seeks adventurous, culturally immersive experiences. Younger travellers balance affordability with enriching, value-driven travel. Sustainability and wellness are key priorities, with eco-conscious travellers favouring green destinations and wellness tourism. Social media plays a dominant role in travel inspiration, making digital-first campaigns essential. We use data-driven research to anticipate market shifts and craft tailored strategies to meet these evolving preferences.

Differentiation in a Competitive Landscape: To differentiate ourselves, we work closely with clients to craft strategies that blend sustainability, innovation, and cultural insight. We guide clients in adopting eco-conscious practices, exemplified by Potato Head Bali's zero-waste philosophy and Botanic Sanctuary Antwerp's green initiatives. These efforts attract eco-conscious travellers and position clients as leaders in sustainable tourism. We also

prioritise digital engagement, helping clients adopt advanced booking systems and AI-driven personalisation. Combining storytelling with actionable insights ensures our clients build strong, meaningful brands that resonate with modern travellers.

Advice for International Tourist Offices: India's diversity requires a localised approach. Replicating global strategies does not work; cultural and economic nuances must be considered to build authentic connections. With over 700 million internet users, India's digital market is essential for reaching younger demographics. At One Rep Global, our hub-and-spoke model covers 25 key cities across India, offering deep local insights. By leveraging our network of agents and influencers, we help international tourist offices craft relevant campaigns that cater to regional preferences while maintaining a cohesive national presence. Focusing on localisation, digital engagement, and sustainability ensures international offices tap into India's potential successfully.

Focused on Innovation and Customisation for the Dynamic Indian Market



Priyanka Nijhawan

Director-Representations, Nijhawan Group

Key Challenges in 2024: In 2024, the need for constant innovation in trade engagement, evolving traveller preferences, varied segmentation and newer trends called for dynamic strategic activations to touchbase on key needs of the Indian travellers while at the same time educating the travel trade on our latest product offerings. To stay abreast of these ever-changing needs and stay ahead in a competitive landscape, we tailored our initiatives to highlight the USPs of our clients by organising focused roadshows, bespoke events, webinars, trainings and expanding engagement with MICE and wedding partners.

Strategies to Capitalise on Emerging Trends: The Indian travel market is rapidly evolving with a growing demand for family getaways, short-haul trips, eco-friendly travel, immersive experiences, and new traveller segments such as women-only groups, DINKs, senior citizens, solo travellers, and millennial/Gen-Z audiences seeking music festivals and concerts. To accommodate these changing tastes, our clients, including Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Kempinski Hotels, and others, are creating customised experiences to meet traveller expectations while tailoring amenities for Indian tourists, such as a wide variety of food options and multi-generational lodgings. To meet these new demands, our strategy prioritises leveraging influencer relationships, executing digital campaigns, and expanding our reach to luxury travel partners in Tier II and III cities, recognising their growing economic importance and contribution to the Indian outbound travel market.

Differentiating Services to Strengthen Market Position: Our strategy centres on customisation, local outreach, and innovation. By delivering bespoke solutions, exploring growth markets, and leveraging analytics, we help clients achieve distinct recognition. Programmes like agent loyalty rewards, interactive online promotions, and positioning sustainability as a USP enhance our

value. Clear reporting builds credibility and showcases results. With offices in Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, and Mumbai, and plans to expand into Tier I and Tier II cities, we tap into emerging opportunities. Our blend of dynamic young talent and seasoned professionals with over 25 years of experience sets us apart in the industry.

For a Stronger Foothold in the Indian Market: India's rapidly changing travel industry, demands constant innovation and localised strategies. As a representation partner, we provide our partners market insights, facilitate trade engagement, and manage 360-degree campaigns that involve regular sales calls, on-ground marketing activations, influence campaigns, media relations, online trainings, webinars, bespoke networking events, trainings over lunch, festive gifting for relationship building, flash sales and offers. By organising FAM trips and representing clients at flagship events like SATTE and OTM, we act as an on-ground ally, ensuring visibility and seamless execution. To keep our international offices ahead of the curve, we also design offers and seasonal packages tailored to the Indian festive/holiday calendar.

Adaptation to Emerging Trends and Consumer Preferences in 2025



Alefiya Singh

Director, IRIS Reps

Challenges in 2024: Iris Reps tackled challenges last year by focusing on education and innovation. A key challenge was ensuring that travel agents understood the unique offerings of our represented destinations. We addressed this by conducting targeted training sessions, webinars, and one-on-one meetings, empowering agents to promote our products confidently. As Indian travellers sought more experiential journeys, we adapted by adding trending, immersive experiences to our portfolio. Our participation in trade shows and exhibitions enhanced visibility and strengthened our network. We also added exceptional properties like NOOE Resort in the Maldives to meet the growing demand for upscale travel.

Emerging Trends for 2025: Looking ahead to 2025, there is a shift toward wellness retreats, adventure tourism, and family vacations among Indian travellers. In response, we introduced tailored packages to cater to these preferences. Strategic collaborations with airlines, DMCs, and associations like UTEN and OTOAI helped us engage a wider audience through FAM trips, roadshows, and webinars. Our sales strategy also focused on expanding into Tier II cities, tapping into their growing potential. Globally, we bolstered our presence by participating in trade shows like ATM and WTM. We also launched Green Meetings for Regal and Regala Hotels in India, aligning with the rising trend of sustainable travel.

Tailored Experiences: In a competitive market, Iris Reps differentiates itself by offering highly personalised, tailored travel experiences. We focus on expanding our portfolio with unique, lesser-known destinations and sustainable travel options. By offering customised itineraries for wellness, adventure, and family travel, we cater to specific demands. Strengthening partnerships with airlines, DMCs, and tourism boards ensures comprehensive,

seamless travel solutions. Increased visibility through digital campaigns and influencer collaborations will further connect us with Indian travellers in innovative ways.

Embrace Local Insights for Success in India: Understanding local preferences and cultural nuances is essential for international offices seeking to strengthen their presence in India. Personalisation and tailored travel experiences are key. We offer valuable local insights, industry connections, and market trends to help international brands succeed. Our expertise in promotional strategies and established relationships with local stakeholders ensure international offices adapt to Indian travellers' evolving needs.

Advancing Through Technology and Data-Driven Insights



Prabhakar Kamat
Business Head, Red Dot Representations

Key Milestones in 2024: In 2024, Red Dot Representation made significant strides by expanding its portfolio with new destinations that cater to evolving Indian traveller preferences. A significant milestone was the successful launch of our experiential roadshow, which connected international partners with Indian travel agents and fostered valuable collaborations. Additionally, we strengthened our digital marketing efforts, creating tailored campaigns that boosted engagement and bookings. These milestones ensured optimal visibility and success for our partners.

Impact of Evolving Demand for Outbound Travel: The growing demand for unique outbound travel shaped how we supported our clients. We introduced customised packages focused on wellness retreats, adventure tourism, and cultural experiences tailored to Indian visitors. We also began offering virtual destination showcases and leveraged data-driven tools to predict traveller preferences, helping clients craft offerings that resonated with their target audience. We ensured our clients remained competitive through training sessions and workshops with travel agents.

Differentiation in a Competitive Market: What sets Red Dot Representation apart is our personalised approach and deep cultural understanding of Indian travellers and international destinations. We craft strategies that highlight each destination's unique appeal, offering long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes. Our strong network within the travel trade ensures seamless collaborations, while our use of digital tools enhances visibility for our partners. By building genuine relationships with clients, we become trusted partners in their growth, positioning us ahead in a competitive sector.

Priorities for 2025: Our focus this year will be on expanding into emerging markets while enhancing offerings in established destinations, with a strong emphasis on sustainable and experiential tourism.

We aim to support clients in creating eco-conscious and personalised experiences that align with changing consumer values. We are investing in technology such as AI-driven insights and data analytics to address industry challenges, predict trends, and optimise offerings. We will continue fostering collaborations with the travel trade through workshops and events, ensuring we remain adaptable in a dynamic tourism landscape.



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Electronic device holder → 9

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12 cm (5") deep recline → 11

96 cm (38") of legroom to stretch → 12



THE BEST KEPT SECRETS OF *Seychelles*

The boat gently sways on the undulating waves of the calm and unending Indian Ocean, schools of colourful fish swim by without a care, and the sun blazes down on you while you relax blissfully, mulling over your life choices. Seems like the picture-perfect vacation? Well, it is exactly that, yet so much more. Welcome to Island life in Seychelles!

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

An archipelago of 115 islands just off the coast of East Africa, Seychelles is instantly recognisable for its bright blue waters, white sandy beaches, smooth granite boulders, and the native Coco de Mer palm. It offers the perfect ingredients for a beach holiday with sunshine, warm waters, and endless relaxation. Seychelles welcomes Indian travellers with visa-free entry, needing just a travel authorization letter that's usually processed within a day for a nominal fee, though it might take up to 72 hours in some cases. The islands embrace a blend of cultures, and Creole, English, and French are spoken widely.

Eden Bleu Hotel

When I land at Seychelles International Airport in Mahé, I am greeted by its laid-back island vibe—a perfect introduction to paradise. A quick 10-minute drive later, I arrived home at Eden Bleu Hotel. Located on Eden Island, close to all major attractions, the hotel felt like an oasis of calm. Its airy, high ceilings and open design seamlessly blended the outdoors with the indoors, with tranquil water features adding to the serenity. Beyond the lobby, the property opens up to a chic international marina, flanked by a heated swimming pool and lounging areas that offer the perfect mix of sophistication and relaxation.

A Family of Islands

The islands of Seychelles are like a large extended family—each unique, with its distinct character and charm, yet all bound by the same

breath-taking beauty. With 115 islands scattered across an expansive 1.4 million square km of ocean, a whole world is waiting to be discovered. The islands are grouped into two distinct clusters, with the 41 'inner' granite islands forming the epicentre of the nation's tourism. They are easily accessible with a smooth-running frequent network of catamarans and are perfect for easy day excursions. Meanwhile, the more remote 'outer' coral islands require an overnight stay.

Day Cruise to Moyenne Island

My first day begins with an exhilarating promise: snorkelling! Not even my total inability to swim could dampen my excitement. With a trusty life jacket as my companion, I was ready to take the plunge and embrace the adventure. We set out into the open ocean on a glass-bottomed boat bound for Moyenne Island. As we drop anchor in the middle of the deep blue sea, the glass bottom reveals the spectacular jewels of the sea. Rows and rows of corals are named according to their shapes - brain corals, finger corals, and flower corals that transform the ocean bed into a veritable Garden of Eden! Schools of brightly coloured fish swim in and out of the corals, and as the boat crew teaches us how to identify them, whoops of delight echo across the boat as the guests quickly learn to identify the underwater beauties. Snorkelling is an unforgettable experience as I lay on the calm waves bobbing up and down, feeling wild abandon and peace at the same time!

The ocean's cool spray refreshes our sun-kissed faces as we glide across the shimmering waves toward the island. Scores of fish join us, performing an elegant display of synchronised swimming. Tossing in bits of bread, we watch in utter delight as the fish leap and swirl to catch the bread, in a dazzling aquatic ballet. I know, this will become a core memory I will enjoy each time I think back to this magical moment.

Tucked away in the shimmering waters of the Ste. Anne Marine National Park lies Moyenne Island, which may be the world's smallest national park and an absolute must-visit. A hike



up the hills reveals stories of the historic first settlers of the island, and we meet the adorable current settlers of the island in the shape of giant tortoises. After a delicious local meal, the crew brings out the drums for some traditional dancing, and we all get lost in the spirit of the - Seggae beats. As a perfect farewell, we wade through the shallow ocean beds to explore tiny nearby islands. The fish dart gracefully around us, their playful movements making us feel like mermaids.

The Iconic Coco de Mer

Vallée de Mai on Praslin Island is the perfect place to discover the iconic Coco de Mer palm. This enchanted forest feels like a living relic of prehistory in which mammoths and dinosaurs perhaps lived. Often called the original Garden of Eden, this UNESCO World Heritage site is home to the endemic Coco de Mer nut. Its striking resemblance to the human form, with its impressive size and shape, has made the Coco de Mer a long-revered symbol of fecundity, wrapped in fascinating myths. To our guide's surprise and our sheer delight, we were lucky enough to spot the coveted Seychelles black parrot, tiger chameleon, and tiny tree frog, all in one extraordinary visit! Standing beneath these towering palms, reaching high into the sky, I feel like a diminutive Gulliver, completely in awe of the giant beauty around me.

La Digue Island

The fourth-largest island in Seychelles, La Digue, welcomes you via the quaint La Passe jetty. The moment you step onto the island, you can feel that it holds on to the old ways—single-story homes, local restaurants, buggies, and bicycles are the preferred modes of transport, and where time seems to have stood still.

The island's east coast is lined with stunning beaches, where the sand is a perfect white, and the ocean stretches out in every shade of blue. We spent a blissful afternoon at Anse Source d'Argent beach, famous in pop culture for its giant, smooth granite boulders that look as though they were placed in careful symmetry by a talented landscape artist. Here, the perfect view is not from the shore towards the horizon but from the calm waters, where corals lie, and colourful fish swim near





your feet – towards the stunningly beautiful beach. I cannot help but marvel at the untouched beauty of it all. It feels almost spiritual—like a moment of peace for the soul.

Takamaka Rum Distillery

An afternoon at the Takamaka Distillery is a delightful mix of storytelling, rum-making alchemy, and pure fun. Retha D’Offay takes us on an enchanting journey, weaving her family’s tale of how a modest dream grew into one of Seychelles’ most celebrated brands, now a proud ambassador for the islands worldwide. Her passion is infectious as she guides us through the finer nuances of crafting rum, all set against the backdrop of what was once an old plantation—now beautifully restored and brimming with charm.

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort and Casino

We end our five-day trip with a stay at the Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort and Casino, one of the grand old institutions of hospitality in Seychelles. Running to full capacity, the sprawling property has its fan following and is frequented by mostly Europeans who have been coming for years with their families. Berjaya also houses the very popular Indian restaurant, Parrot, serving delicious Indian Tandoori fare.

Beyond Beaches

Seychellois cuisine was a revelation with cleverly hidden bursts of flavour, masterfully blended spices, and locally sourced produce - sometimes straight from trees just outside! Though the cuisine is predominantly seafood-oriented, delicious vegetarian options of colourful salads and rich, flavourful curries will speak to Indian taste buds. There is a hint of familiarity, but the spices in Creole cuisine sing their own songs of local flavour.

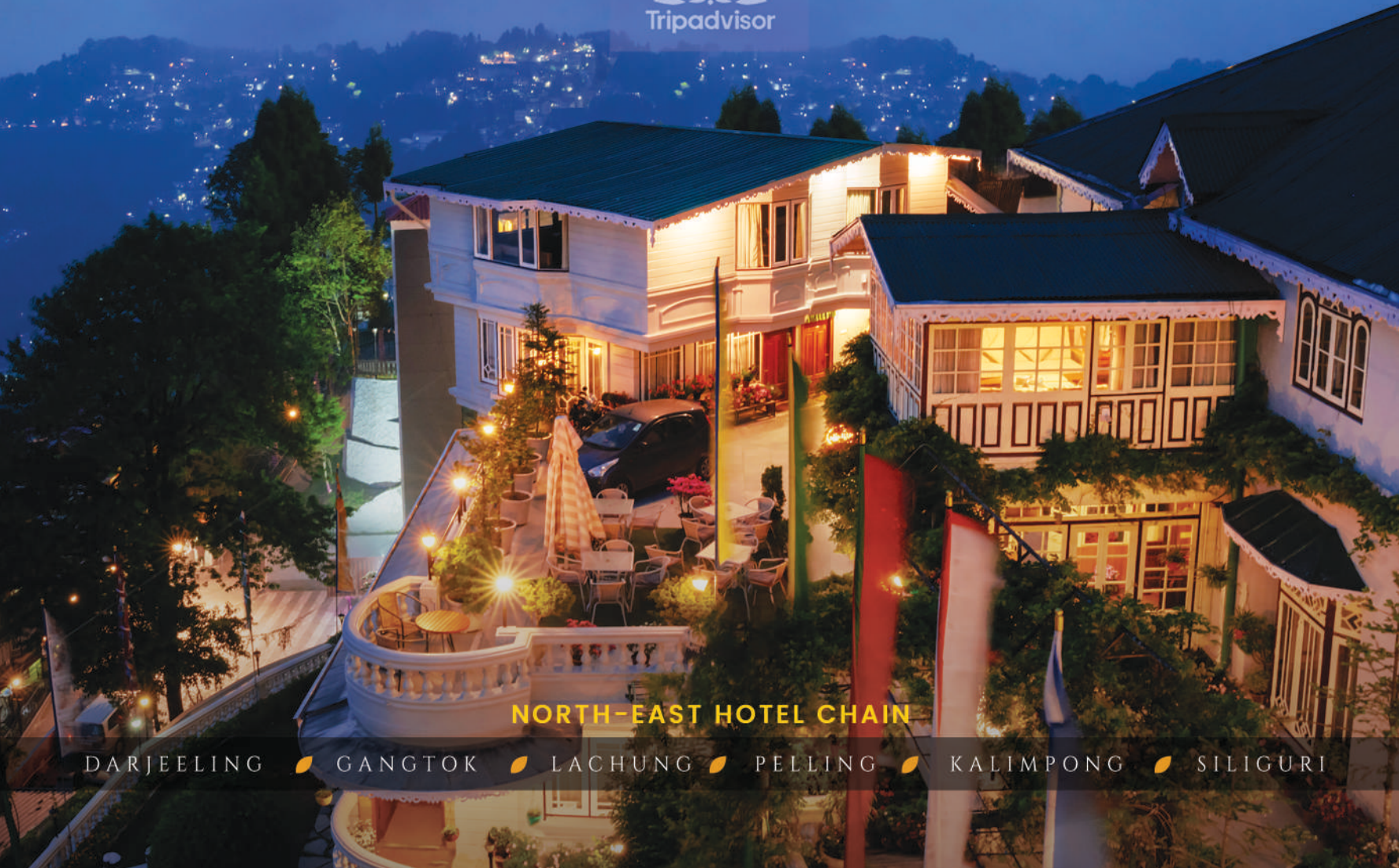
When you think of Seychelles, you might picture endless days of relaxation on pristine beaches, and while that is definitely part of the charm, what truly took me by surprise was the sheer variety of things to do across its islands. From rich local history to stunningly unique flora and fauna, innumerable experiences await discovery. Whether chasing sunsets, seeking adventure, or simply craving tranquillity, Seychelles has something for everyone.





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Ras Al Khaimah

A Convergence of History, Thrills, and Modern Indulgence

Ras Al Khaimah, the northernmost emirate of the UAE, is a treasure trove of experiences that seamlessly blend history, adventure, and modern indulgence. From wandering through ancient villages that echo the stories of pearling communities to soaring over mountains on record-breaking zip lines, the emirate offers a diverse palette of activities for travellers seeking something extraordinary.

Sonika Bohra

Al Jazeera Al Hamra – A Glimpse into the Past

A journey into Ras Al Khaimah’s past begins at Al Jazeera Al Hamra, a village known as the “Red Island,” thanks to the reddish glow cast by the setting sun. – Once a vibrant pearling hub inhabited by the Al Zaabi tribe. The village played a significant role in the region’s maritime trade. With discovery of oil, many families move to larger cities like Abu Dhabi, leaving behind a village steeped in culture and history

Walking through Al Jazeera Al Hamra feels like stepping into a different era, where buildings from the 16th and 17th centuries stand testament to a once-thriving trade. The architecture reveals hints of Emirati heritage, with larger homes indicating the prosperity of pearl merchants. As you stroll through, you will uncover the beauty of these structures and witness how people here once lived off the sea, earning the nickname ‘people of the sea.’ Despite the passage of time and changing landscapes, Al Jazeera Al Hamra remains a living museum that captures the essence of a bygone era, preserving the legacy of Ras Al Khaimah’s rich heritage.



Suwaidi Pearls – Discovering the UAE’s Pearling Legacy

At Suwaidi Pearls, the legacy of pearl diving lives on. The tour begins with a tranquil boat ride through Al Rams Lagoon, where you might spot camels on Hale Island, the UAE’s tallest mountains, and mangroves teeming with life. Once on the floating platform, you will learn about the intricate history of the UAE’s pearling industry and the artistry of cultivating pearls today.

Visitors can handpick their pearl from an oyster for a memorable keepsake—a thrilling moment that embodies the spirit of adventure. You can even have the pearl set into a pendant on-site. The tours are timed throughout the day, with each time slot offering something unique: morning tours often feature flamingos, afternoons might reveal camels on the beach, and the 3 PM slot promises stunning sunsets over the lagoon.



Conquer the World's Longest Zip Line

For thrill-seekers, Ras Al Khaimah is synonymous with Jebel Jais, home to the longest zip line in the world. At 2.83 km, this exhilarating ride takes you soaring through the mountains in a 'Superman' position, arms stretched forward, like Iron Man! Starting from the top, you will zoom down at speeds influenced by your body weight—the heavier you are, the faster you go, making each rider's experience uniquely thrilling.

The adventure does not end with the zip line. The ride is split into two segments, with a quick pause at a suspended platform offering a breathtaking view before a second, shorter zip line ride. Cameras capture every moment of the experience, with options for either a scenic mountain view or a face-forward shot so you are the star of your video. After the ride, a QR code lets you download your video instantly, providing a lasting memory of conquering one of the UAE's most daring adventures.

The Jais Sledder: A Roller Coaster in the Mountains

If the zip line ignites your inner superhero, the Jais Sledder turns



you into a mountain racer. This Alpine coaster is a gravity-driven ride that combines speed, control, and breathtaking views for an unforgettable experience. Covering a winding 1,840-mt track, the sledder reaches up to 40 km/h speed, with a convenient braking system allowing you to customise your pace.

The journey is thrilling as you race down the track, manoeuvring sharp hairpin bends and dips with the majestic Hajar Mountains as your backdrop. The ride is approximately eight minutes of pure fun, leaving you with a sense of exhilaration that rivals even the zip line.

I found the Jais Sledder to be the surprise highlight of my trip. There is something undeniably joyous about controlling your speed and leaning into each curve, with the wind rushing past and nature all around.

Dining in the Sky: 1484 by Puro

After all the excitement, there is no better place to unwind and refuel than 1484 by Puro, a restaurant perched 1,484 meters above sea level. The name reflects its lofty altitude, and the dining experience is just as elevated as its location. Overlooking the UAE's highest peak, this eatery offers stunning views of Jebel Jais, especially during sunset.

The restaurant's menu is a curated selection of international and local dishes, perfect for satisfying your post-adventure appetite.





Registan, Samarkand

Epic discoveries on the ancient Silk Route

Unveiling Uzbekistan's timeless legacy

In November 2024, Uzbekistan Airways took us, an exclusive group of B2B travel media from Mumbai, on an unforgettable familiarisation trip to Uzbekistan in collaboration with AsiaLuxe Travel Uzbekistan and Arya Enterprises, Delhi. Every moment felt like a journey through time as we explored cities like Tashkent, Khiva, Bukhara, and Samarkand. What was truly remarkable was being at the heart of the ancient Silk Road, with each destination a gem to marvel at.

Prashant Nayak

Uzbekistan, nestled in Central Asia, is an Islamic country brimming with history, culture, and natural beauty. Once a vital hub on the Silk Road, it holds a legacy of majestic cities, striking architecture, and vibrant heritage. Historic gems like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva captivate with their stunning Islamic designs, grand mosques, madrassas, minarets, and mausoleums, many proudly listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Our Uzbekistan Airways flight from Mumbai to Tashkent on the A320 Neo was seamless and comfortable. The almost five-hour journey was cosy, despite being a full flight with many Indian students heading to Uzbekistan and onwards to Russia for studies. The airline's warm hospitality and smooth service set the tone for an unforgettable trip. Nearing Uzbekistan, we

were treated to breathtaking views of the Hindu Kush and Tian Shan mountains, setting the stage for the magical experience ahead.

Tashkent: A Blend of History and Modernity

Upon arriving in Tashkent, we headed straight to Tashkent's Magic City, often dubbed Uzbekistan's Disneyland. Opened in 2021, this modern amusement park offers attractions ranging from children's rides and a laser cinema to live performances in a grand amphitheatre. Central Asia's first aquarium adds to its allure. Despite the cold evening, the park buzzed with families and couples soaking in its lively ambiance. Beautifully designed buildings, themed areas, and elegant fountains created a magical experience for visitors of

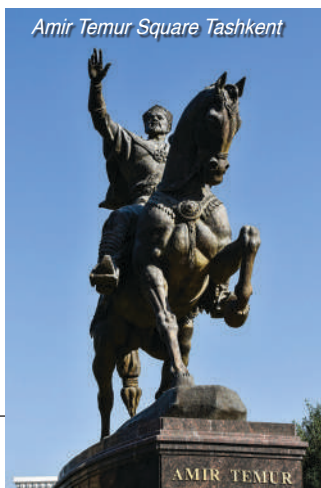
all ages. Later, exploring Tashkent's vibrant city centre, with its illuminated buildings, bustling streets, and a blend of modern and traditional architecture, was a delightful way to end the night.

Tashkent City offers an immersive journey through history, with elegant European-style buildings from the Turkestan Governorate General era, imposing Soviet-era structures, and the iconic blue domes of mosques and madrasas. A key highlight is Amir Temur Square, dedicated to the legendary conqueror Timur (Tamerlane), surrounded by impressive architecture. The bustling Chorsu Bazaar is another must-see, where fresh produce, traditional crafts, and authentic Uzbek cuisine fill the air with vibrant energy. A more emotional stop was the Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial, honouring India's former Prime Minister, adding depth to the visit.

While exchanging money at Hotel Uzbekistan, we unexpectedly encountered a lively wedding celebration. Though our time there was brief, it offered a fascinating glimpse into the vibrant and joyous traditions of Uzbek weddings. Later, we enjoyed a lively dinner with Uzbek folk singers, discovering that some of the musical notes closely resembled those in Indian music, adding another layer to our cultural experience.



Magic City Tashkent



Amir Temur Square Tashkent



The Islam Khodja Minaret, Khiva



Muhammad Amin Khan Madrasa Khiva



Mir-i-Arab Madrasa in Bukhara

Khiva: An Impressive First Glimpse of the Silk Road's Gem

From Tashkent, we took a 90-minute domestic flight with Uzbekistan Airways to Urgench, followed by a scenic drive to the enchanting city of Khiva. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Khiva is known for its well-preserved Islamic architecture and historical significance as a key Silk Road hub and the capital of the Khiva Khanate. The heart of the city, Itchan Kala, is surrounded by impressive mud-brick walls and is home to landmarks like the Kunya-Ark Citadel, the Juma Mosque with its 218 wooden columns, and the Kalta Minor Minaret, famed for its unfinished design and vibrant tiles.

Khiva's architecture blends Turkic, Persian, and Mongol influences with stunning blue and green tiles, courtyards, and intricate woodwork, reflecting its cultural and commercial importance. As a historic oasis city, it remains a hub for local craftsmanship, including silk weaving and pottery. Preserving its heritage, Khiva invites visitors to explore its charming streets, ancient sites, and vibrant markets. The Old City, home to about 2,000 people, offers a peaceful, walkable experience, with tourist accommodations and restaurants blending into the timeless beauty of this Silk Road gem.

Step Back in Time at Bukhara

The next day, we drove 450 km to Bukhara through the Kyzylkum Desert, once a crucial Silk Road route. Situated between the Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers, the desert offers a glimpse into ancient caravan routes and serai. During the road trip, I spotted crested larks, doves, wagtails, rooks, and even a ground squirrel. We passed several villages and yurts, imagining the brave traders who crossed this vast desert on Bactrian camels, weeks away from civilisation.

Bukhara, an ancient trading hub, impresses with its elaborate mosques, winding alleys, caravanserais, and grand madrasahs. A walk through the city reveals gems like the Ark of Bukhara, the city's oldest structure, dating back to the fifth century. This fortress, housing museums, and the 17th-century Juma Mosque symbolises resilience. Nearby, the tranquil Bolo Hauz Mosque, named after a small artificial pond, offers peaceful respite. The Poi-Kalyan ensemble, with the blue domes of the Miri-Arab Madrasah, Kalyan Mosque, and Kalyan Minaret, forms the city's spiritual heart. The Abdulaziz Khan Madrassah and Lyabi Khauz, a central square with a pool, add to Bukhara's architectural splendour and vibrant atmosphere.

From My Bucket List: Samarkand

We took the Afrosiyob high-speed train from Bukhara to Samarkand, a city renowned for its stunning architecture and rich history as a key Silk Road hub. Samarkand offers a deep connection to Central Asia's heritage, where history and culture intertwine.

Registan is truly a marvel. We visited it twice, once under the vibrant daylight and later for its enchanting light show at night. Other must-see sights include the Ulugh Beg Observatory, a 15th-century astronomical centre that revolutionised our understanding of the stars, and the Shakhi Zinda Necropolis, a sacred site with beautifully adorned mausoleums believed to house the tomb of Prophet Muhammad's cousin. Lastly, the Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum, the final resting place of Timur (Tamerlane), stands as a striking example of Timurid architecture and a testament to his legacy.

The Silk Road Samarkand Tourist Complex, set along the scenic rowing canal, offers eight hotels, a congress centre, an ancient bazaar, and 40 craft workshops showcasing Uzbekistan's traditional crafts. At the marvellous Eternal City, we visited a few workshops here, including paper making, and even tried making a vegetarian version of Plov, a rice dish closely associated to the



The Ark of Bukhara



Bactrian camels have been essential to Central Asia's nomadic cultures for millennia



Uzbek Bread (Non)

country. The vast tourist complex is a top destination for MICE and corporate events, blending culture, commerce, and history in one captivating location.

A Perfect Snowy Ending

As our journey drew to a close, the past six days gifted us unforgettable memories to cherish. We boarded the Afrosiyob high-speed train back to Tashkent, readying ourselves for our flight to Mumbai. Before leaving, we attended the Tashkent International Tourism Fair (TITF 2024) at CAEx, which is a large-scale travel event of Uzbekistan. The next day we ventured two hours away to Amirsoy Resort, perched amidst the breathtaking Tian Shan Mountains. The resort's stunning vistas, especially from the cable car, were unforgettable. Freshly fallen snow blanketed the landscape, infusing the serene surroundings with a magical touch. Known for its tranquil ambiance and winter sports, Amirsoy is a haven for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts alike.

We also visited Pyramids Resorts, idyllically set by the Charvak Reservoir. With its four-star accommodations, seasonal outdoor pool, lush gardens, and private beach area, it offered a perfect retreat for relaxation and recreation. The serene waterfront setting was the ideal way to conclude our incredible journey through Uzbekistan.

The Catalysts for the Epic Discoveries

Exceptional Stays: Our stay in Tashkent was at the Azimut Hotel, offering modern amenities and a central location. In Khiva, the only luxurious five-star Hotel, Farovon perfectly blends traditional architecture with modern comforts. Bukhara's Sahid Zarafshon combined traditional charm with contemporary luxury. In Samarkand, Savitsky Plaza provided elegant accommodations near the tourist centre, offering easy access to the city's major attractions. Each hotel ensured a peaceful, relaxing atmosphere, making our stays memorable and rejuvenating.

Memorable Meals: Uzbek cuisine is a rich fusion of Silk Road, Islamic, Mongolian, and Russian influences, known for its



Amirsoy Cable car

hearty dishes, fragrant flavours, vodka and distinct bread. While meat dominates, many restaurants offer vegetarian options like pizzas, burgers, and sandwiches. Salads and fresh fruits are staples, and Indian food is widely available. In the four cities, we had memorable meals at The Curry Culture, The Indian Kitchen, Old Bukhara Restaurant, Zahrafun, Avyon, Sim Sim, Le Café, and Theresa Café, each offering a unique take on local and Indian-inspired dishes.

Expert Guidance and Enriching Journeys:

English-speaking guides from Asialuxe Travel made a huge difference, helping us understand the history and cultural significance of each monument. Their expertise, knowledge and friendliness enhanced our experience, making it easier to appreciate the rich heritage of Uzbekistan. Also, their excellent vehicles and helpful drivers ensured a smooth and enriching journey.

Cultural Connect: Tashkent is a vibrant city where Indian culture thrives, with a growing number of Indian students, popular Indian restaurants, and English learning centres where Indian teachers enrich the local academic landscape. For Indian visitors, the strong Russian influence also adds depth to the experience, acknowledging the emotional ties between the two nations.

Shopping Galore: Get ready with an abundance of Uzbek Soms, the local currency, as you can explore a wide array of souvenirs during your Uzbekistan trip. Each



Eternal city Samarkand

city in Uzbekistan offers something unique—from intricate silk fabrics and handwoven carpets to antiques, vibrant ceramics, freshly baked breads, and a variety of small memorabilia.

Flights Connecting India to Uzbekistan:

With its A320 Neo, Uzbekistan Airways operates daily flights from Delhi, bi-weekly flights from Mumbai, and from MOPA (North Goa), connecting travellers to 58 destinations in 29 countries. The aircraft offers 12 business class and 138 economy seats with excellent leg space. Arya Enterprises manages the airline's sales and distribution in India, making travel to Uzbekistan and the CIS region more accessible.

Uzbekistan has the power to impress history buffs and offers a unique allure for travellers eager to discover off-the-beaten-path destinations. Additionally, with the addition of infrastructure, Uzbekistan has significant potential to emerge as a prime MICE and events destination.



Afrosiyob high-speed train



Uzbekistan Airways A320 neo

Cathay Pacific reinforces its reputation as an innovative global airline

Anand Yedery, Regional Head of Customer Travel and Lifestyle - South Asia, Middle East, and Africa at Cathay Pacific, shares insights into the airline's growth trajectory, innovative inflight offerings, expanding network in India, and its commitment to seamless connectivity.

Prashant Nayak

As Hong Kong's homegrown airline, Cathay Pacific plays a pivotal role in solidifying the city's status as a global aviation hub, connecting Hong Kong, mainland China, and the world. Currently, the airline operates 31 weekly return flights across four Indian cities: Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, and Mumbai.

Elevating Travel and Connectivity in 2024

2024 has been a standout year for Cathay Pacific, marked by innovations that redefine the inflight experience. Notably, the Aria Suite, an all-new business class cabin on the Boeing 777-300ER, offers unmatched comfort, privacy, and space. Additionally, the new Premium Economy cabin on retrofitted Boeing 777-300ERs sets a new standard with enhanced seating, amenities, and 4K ultra-HD screens with Bluetooth streaming, elevating the mid-tier travel experience.

Cathay Pacific also focused on expanding its network and enhancing services in 2024, solidifying its position as a leader in global connectivity. Anand says, "For the India market, the resumption of direct flights from Chennai to Hong Kong after a four-year hiatus has been a major milestone, catering to the resurgence of leisure, business, and student travel. In addition, the introduction of the Premium Economy cabin on the Chennai-Hong Kong route marks a key enhancement in Cathay Pacific's offering, delivering greater comfort and convenience for travellers."

Unmatched and Award-Winning Experiences

In addition to its Aria Suite and Premium Economy seating, Cathay Pacific's award-winning inflight entertainment system and diverse dining options further set it apart. The airline's focus on offering a broad selection of high-quality entertainment and curated culinary experiences, combined with free inflight Wi-Fi for



▲ Anand Yedery

business class travellers and Diamond members, enhances the overall journey, ensuring that passengers are consistently satisfied both in the air and on the ground.

Cathay Pacific has remarkably risen to fifth place in the prestigious Skytrax World Airline Awards and has been recognised with three prestigious awards at TheDesignAir Awards 2024, including Design Airline of the Year, Asia, with an impressive overall Design Score of 81.9. The airline won Best New Business Class for its Aria Suite and Best New Premium Economy, both introduced in October 2024 on its retrofitted Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

Seamless Gateway to Greater Bay Area

Indian travellers can benefit from Cathay Pacific's strategic focus on the Greater Bay Area (GBA), which significantly improves connectivity and provides easy access to key destinations across the region.

With seamless intermodal connections via ferry and coach from Hong Kong International Airport's SkyPier Terminal, the airline offers a hassle-free and efficient travel experience. Anand adds, "Cathay

Pacific also unveiled its first-ever lounge outside of an airport to guests at the Shekou Cruise Home Port in Shenzhen. Cathay Pacific customers can now enjoy effortless transfer using its codeshare ferry services to go directly from the Shekou Cruise Home Port to the SkyPier Terminal at Hong Kong International Airport."

Pazhou Ferry Terminal, Guangzhou, is the top-selling intermodal destination due to its proximity to Canton Exhibition Hall. It serves as a great alternative to the limited flight connections into Guangzhou from India. On this, Anand shares, "In 2024, we witnessed a huge demand from Indian travellers to Guangzhou and noticed an uptick in Indian customers opting for the Air+Sea codeshare options provided through Cathay Pacific."

India: Route Expansion and New Offers in 2025

Cathay Pacific is set to further expand its presence in India with the launch of non-stop passenger service to Hyderabad starting March 30, 2025. Operated by Airbus A330-300 aircraft, this service will initially run three times a week, increasing to five times a week by September 2025. The service aims to cater to both business and leisure travellers while also addressing the increasing demand for student travel.

Cathay Pacific has committed to offering tailored services to students to meet the evolving needs of this segment. "Cathay Pacific is offering exclusive student discounts for travellers flying from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai, with bookings open till March 31, 2025. Students can enjoy 10 per cent off on economy class tickets to select destinations in Taiwan, the Philippines, China, Australia, and New Zealand. Additionally, the airline provides a special checked baggage allowance of up to 23 kg for students travelling to the United States, Canada, or other destinations depending on fare types- Essential and Flex," concludes Anand.



Mandapa, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve

to amplify 'Disconnect to Reconnect' programme for Indian market in 2025

Located in the cultural and spiritual heart of Ubud, Bali, Mandapa, a Ritz Carlton Reserve lies peacefully in the lush rainforests with the majestic Ayung River flowing through. This green haven invites guests on a sensory journey, blending wellness and nature in perfect harmony. Ariek Mahardika, Director of Sales and Marketing, Mandapa, a Ritz Carlton Reserve, shares the property's story, vision, and importance of the Indian market.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

Designed by renowned architect Miles Humphreys and featuring interiors crafted by Jeffrey A. Wilkes, this exclusive retreat draws inspiration from the timeless charm of a traditional Balinese village. It features 35 opulent suites and 25 private pool villas, including a stunning three-bedroom pool villa celebrated as one of the largest in the region. Exceptional dining options include all-day dining, an authentic Indonesian restaurant, a 10-course dinner experience, and a Japanese fusion bar. Central to the Mandapa experience are bespoke immersive journeys and rejuvenating spa treatments designed to offer unparalleled relaxation and enrichment.

The Mandapa Touch

A sanctuary for the mind, body, and soul, the property offers spiritual well-being, health programmes, and activities to suit travellers of all ages. Ariek says, "Mandapa is thoughtfully built around three essential pillars of wellness, gastronomy, and sustainability that seamlessly entwine to deliver a holistic and deeply immersive experience for guests."

Highlighting the charm of Ubud, he adds, "Unlike other areas in Bali, known for their

bustling party scene and shopping, Ubud's essence comes from its deeper connection to healing and rejuvenation. The name 'Ubud' is derived from the Balinese word 'ubad', which means 'medicine'- symbolising its role as a place of restoration for the spirit. The premium location, with its natural surroundings, rainforest greenery, and unique hilltop layout, further enhances the resort's exclusivity and serenity. There are no neighbours, only peace and privacy for our guests."

As part of the Ritz-Carlton Resort brand under Marriott International, the Ubud location promises an elevated experience that transcends the ordinary, inviting guests to explore an enriching and exclusive world.

Human Connection Is Paramount

Elaborating on its unique selling point, Ariek notes, "What sets us apart is our commitment to delivering the finest personalised service. Our 24-hour dedicated personal assistants, known as 'Patih' (the King's attendant), are dedicated to curating a truly unique experience tailored to each guest's individual purpose for travelling. This attention to detail and our 24-hour assistance ensures no request goes unanswered, providing you with

the peace of mind to unwind and enjoy your time with us. This human connection fosters strong relationships, and our return guests often request to work with the same Patih. This personal attention and loyalty level sets us apart in today's competitive landscape."

The Mandapa Guest Profile

Why do guests choose Mandapa over other renowned resorts? "This question drives our commitment to offering something truly unique, a blend of quiet luxury and meaningful experiences," Ariek points out.

He explains, "Our guests rarely document their stays with photos or videos, choosing instead to immerse themselves in moments of undisturbed peace. We also align with modern travellers' values by focusing on sustainability. Through thoughtful initiatives, we contribute positively to the community and the environment. At Mandapa, we refer to our guests as 'experience collectors,' individuals who are not just looking for a place to stay, but a transformative journey that offers personal growth."

Elevated Offerings

The three core pillars of wellness, gastronomy,



and sustainability form the foundation of guest experiences, creating a holistic journey that nurtures the mind, body, and soul. Ariek elaborates, “Wellness is at the heart of our offerings, ensuring that we are known for guest experience rather than just rooms and rates. Our spa and wellness services are crafted to align with our guests’ purpose of travel. Our unique kids’ club reimagines childhood fun through the lens of Balinese traditions. Children can feed cows, ducks, and chicken, learn how to plant paddy, and engage in activities inspired by Balinese village life—without a PlayStation or Xbox in sight.”

Wellness has become a popular theme in resorts, but what sets Mandapa apart is its digital detox programme, ‘Disconnect to Reconnect,’ which helps guests disconnect from the digital world, allowing them to experience true silence and recharge.

Listing the various programmes, Ariek mentions, “Other therapies offered include sleep therapy, sound healing, quantum healing, and mandala art. Watsu is a unique form of guided yoga that is done while floating in water.

Holistic

healing programmes like natural medicine creation, using ingredients such as ginger, turmeric, and cucumber to alleviate common ailments like migraines and stomach discomfort, are also offered.”

Disconnect to Reconnect

The travel experience for guests from bustling cities like Mumbai and Delhi has evolved significantly. These travellers now visit places like Ubud with a purpose—it is no longer about sightseeing or posting selfies on social media. Post-COVID, the focus has shifted toward achieving personal growth, wellness, and inner peace.

Ariek says, “We recognise this change as an opportunity to cater to these evolving needs. In 2025, we will amplify our ‘Disconnect to Reconnect’ programme, which is popular with Indian guests.” The programme offers a daily selection of 20 carefully curated activities, ensuring guests experience a diverse array of wellness practices throughout their stay. He elaborates, “For families travelling together, while the children are engaged in tailored activities, the parents experience the sleep therapy and wellness programmes, helping them reconnect as a couple.

Even honeymooners from India are

embracing wellness programmes beyond romance to create opportunities for personal growth and connection.” As slow tourism gains popularity, especially among those in high-pressure jobs, travellers no longer just want to escape; they want to achieve something meaningful in their time away. Recognising India as one of their largest markets, Ariek concludes, “We are ready to provide travellers with an experience that nurtures both their bodies and minds.”

Looking ahead, Ariek highlights plans to launch Wellness Programme 2.0 in 2025, tailored to meet the evolving needs of their guests. He states, “A key focus for 2025 will be sustainability. We are partnering with a renowned university to develop a sustainable garden that will harness energy and resources in an eco-friendly way.”

Ariek concludes, “Our message to potential guests is simple: if you seek to reconnect with yourself, Mandapa is the perfect place. It is more than a destination; it is a sanctuary where your mind, body, and soul can truly relax and find harmony.”



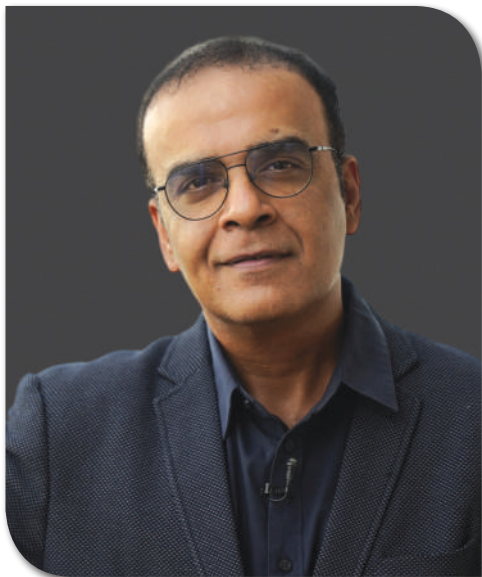
Indian Cruise Market Set for Unprecedented Growth in 2025 with New Launches and Expanding Demand

In 2024, the Indian cruise market experienced significant growth, driven by rising awareness and demand for luxury and experiential travel. In this article, we engage with key cruise stakeholders, including a cruise ship company, a cruise representative, a GSA, and an online cruise consolidator, to highlight the evolving trends, challenges, new sailings, and strategies shaping the market. With exciting new ship launches and innovative offerings, the cruise industry is set for even more significant expansion in 2025, catering to the growing preferences of Indian travellers.

Prashant Nayak

The cruise market in India has been witnessing steady growth in recent years, reflecting the increasing interest of Indian consumers in cruise vacations. As more Indians have the financial means to afford luxury travel experiences, the cruise market is expected to continue its upward trajectory.

Promising Year Ahead for RWC to Tap into India's Growing Fly-Cruise Market



▲ Naresh Rawal

For Resorts World Cruises (RWC), the demand for the Fly-Cruise segment from India in 2024 has been strong and on an upward trend. Naresh Rawal, Senior Vice President—Sales, India and Middle East, Resorts World Cruises, highlights that the growing awareness of cruise products across diverse demographics is driving the company's growth. This expansion is particularly notable in emerging segments like MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) and among younger travellers and families. Also, with Fly-Cruise options from go-to popular cities like Singapore with the cruise ship *Genting Dream* and the *Resorts World One* in Dubai, many Indians are drawn to the appeal of extending their vacation with a pre- or post-cruise to visit neighbouring destinations.

Speaking of key challenges in growing the cruise market in India, Naresh mentions, "Creating top of mind awareness among consumers on the available options and benefits of cruising is a constant challenge. Though we see increasing demand, penetration of the total population is still at its minimum, which is not necessarily bad, as the potential 'pie' remains enormous. We aim to continue working closely with our travel partners to reach a wider market across India and target more segments. We also continue to explore new distribution channels that will allow us to increase penetration and create greater awareness."

Resorts World Cruises has announced its third cruise ship, the *Star Scorpio*, to join its flagship, the *Genting Dream*, and *Resorts World One* to commence operations in Q1 2025. With three ships, they will continue to cater to different growing markets in the region, including the luxury segment with their iconic 'Palace' offerings. Naresh further informs, "The *Star Scorpio* will start operations from March 26, 2025, onwards with multiple homeports in Singapore, Jakarta, Bangkok, Melaka, and Ho Chi Minh City, offering a series of three–five-night cruises to Southeast Asia. The *Genting Dream* had also announced her homeport deployment from Singapore throughout 2025 and Q1 of 2026, offering two- and three-night cruises to favourite destinations like Phuket, Melaka, and Penang. *Resorts World One* will continue her Dubai deployment to the UAE, Doha, and Qatar before proceeding to Taiwan in late April to sail to Japan."

Griffon Cruises Expands Luxury Offerings, Opens New Horizons for Indian travellers



▲ Vivek Jain

Griffon Cruises represents renowned European cruise companies such as Cunard (UK) and Miray (Greece), offering voyages across Europe and around the world. However, Vivek Jain, Managing Director, Griffon Cruises, highlights that visa approvals constitute a significant challenge. On a positive note, he adds, "As Indian travellers increasingly recognise the advantages of cruise holidays, the market continues to grow year after year."

With the rising demand for experiential luxury cruises, Cunard strategically positions its ships in various regions to align with the most popular seasons. For example, ships are stationed in Japan during cherry blossom season, in Australia during the summer, and in Norway and Iceland during the midnight sun period. Vivek shares, "Cunard offers world cruises, allowing travellers to explore multiple countries and experience diverse destinations all in a single voyage. Miray Cruises are among the leading and most reliable cruise companies, offering unique experiences and specialised services in the most beautiful places in Greece and Turkey."

Sharaf Travel Expands Cruise Partnerships, Strengthens Portfolio for 2025



▲ Leena Brahme

Sharaf Travel established its presence in India in 2012, starting with MSC Cruises as its first representation. Over the years, the company quickly expanded its portfolio, building strong partnerships with a variety of travel products. Today, Sharaf Travel proudly counts Costa Cruises as its latest channel partner in India, further strengthening its position in the market.

Leena Brahme, Business Head, Sharaf Travel, Cruises, says, “We aim to engage more partners in offering Sharaf Travel India with MSC and now with Costa Cruises. We have been able to leverage travel trade partners who have been old hands in the field on support and guidance as we push both brands out through them. Those have been our key drivers for consistency.”

Leena highlights those key challenges stemming from the taxation system, as the end consumer must bear both the GST and TCS. She explains, “The amount can be steep when one talks about a trip for four family members towards Europe/US. This tax regime can be a bit of a deterrent as it will limit the otherwise robust demand for Europe/US sailings.”

With MSC launching yet another spectacular ship, MSC World America, in April 2025 at Sharaf Travels, they are excited to introduce a vessel that combines lower-emission fuel technology with unparalleled sophistication. Leena shares, “MSC World America will sail through the East and West Caribbean, offering exclusive access to Ocean Cay, the private MSC Marine Reserve. Similarly, Costa’s newest and largest flagship, Costa

Toscana, embodies the ‘Art of Living on the Sea’ as it sails into the most renowned Italian regions. This remarkable ship is truly a ‘Smart City’ on the Ocean, blending art, culture, and luxury.”

TBO.com Set to Lead the Charge in India's Expanding Cruise Market



▲ Aarish Khan

As we understand the growing Indian cruise market from others, TBO.com has been at the forefront of this growth by expanding partnerships with domestic and international cruise lines.

Aarish Khan, Chief Commercial Officer, TBO.com, says, “In 2024, the Indian cruise market experienced significant growth, and TBO has seen a similar positive trend, driven by several key factors. One of the primary drivers was the increased awareness and demand for cruise vacations, particularly among the luxury and experiential travel segments. Additionally, TBO focused on expanding partnerships with both international and domestic cruise lines, enabling us to offer a broader range of products catering to clients’ diverse tastes and preferences. The percentage of first-time cruisers is steadily increasing, which is a promising sign for the cruise industry, as repeat rates in this sector are typically high. Moreover, 73 per cent of cruise travellers prefer to book their cruises through travel agents, which presents an exciting opportunity for TBO.com.”

Aarish also notes that Indian customers have a late booking tendency compared to other markets, which results in higher fares and limited availability of preferred cabins at the time of booking. “To address this, we, in collaboration with cruise lines, run early booking promotions to encourage customers to make reservations in advance through travel agents. Additionally, visa-related concerns often put cruise guests in a dilemma about paying, as cancellations may occur if a visa is refused close to departure. To mitigate this risk, we encourage agents to offer cancellation protection plans to their

clients, ensuring their money is protected in case of visa refusal or delays,” opines Aarish.

At TBO, they are leveraging digital tools and technology to streamline the cruise booking process for travel agents, including features such as sharing itineraries, providing quotes, and holding bookings. Aarish further shares, “Our vision is to make the booking process more convenient, efficient, and accessible. The TBO portal offers travel agents access to a wide range of domestic and international cruise options, complete with real-time availability and pricing. By showcasing dynamic cruise promotions online, travel agents can easily select the best options for their clients based on preferences and choices. Additionally, our TBO Academy feature enables travel agents to complete training modules for various cruise lines, further enhancing their expertise and capabilities.”

As a B2B platform, in 2025, TBO will focus on offering both luxury and experiential cruise options. With many newly built ships, such as NCL Aqua, Star of the Seas, MSC World America, and others debuting this year, the Caribbean will be a key focus for cruise destinations. Additionally, the Mediterranean remains a favourite among cruise clients, mainly focusing on West Med, East Med, North Europe, and Iceland sailings. Alaska and Antarctica are also emerging as popular cruise destinations.

Aarish also highlights, “Disney Cruise Line’s new ship, Disney Adventure, departing from Singapore, is generating significant interest in the B2B market and presents an exciting opportunity to diversify cruise offerings in the Singapore market. Additionally, we cannot overlook Cordelia Cruises, our very own domestic cruise line, steadily growing its base of first-time cruise clients in India.”

A Divine Confluence

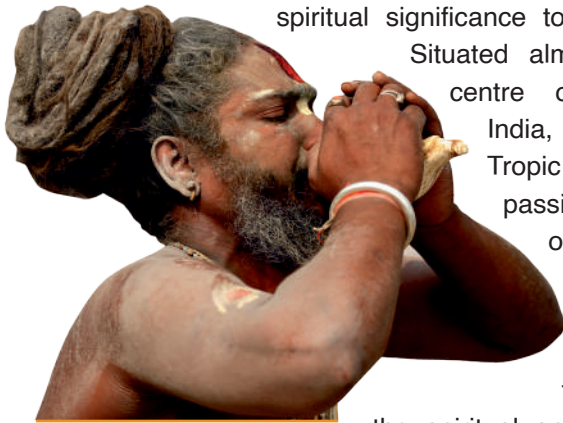


In a spectacular display of faith and tradition, Prayagraj is preparing to host the Maha Kumbh 2025, one of the world's largest religious gatherings that occur once every 12 years. This grand spiritual congregation, deeply rooted in Hindu mythology, draws millions of pilgrims from across the globe to the sacred confluence of three rivers: The Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati. The event, which marks a rare celestial alignment, brings together Hindu devotees from across the country, who bathe in the river to symbolically cleanse the soul and wash away sins.

A Sacred Geography

Prayagraj's unique geographical location adds spiritual significance to the event.

Situated almost at the centre of northern India, with the Tropic of Cancer passing directly overhead, the city's position is believed



to enhance the spiritual and medicinal benefits of bathing in the Triveni Sangam, especially during the Maha Kumbh. Bathers who take a dip in the holy Ganges during this time believe that the direct rays of the sun have disease-preventing and life-enhancing properties.

The Spiritual Heart of India

The Maha Kumbh is more than a religious gathering; it represents a transformative spiritual journey as well. Devotees believe that taking a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam during this

auspicious period cleanses the soul, washes away sins, and leads to spiritual salvation.

Sacred Rituals and Celebrations

In January 2025, Prayagraj will once again host this remarkable event after a gap of 12 years. The last such event took place in 2013. For two months in early 2025, Prayagraj will transform



into a temporary mega-city, hosting various Akhadas spiritual monastic orders, including Mahanirvani, Atal, Niranjani, Anand, Juna, Avahan, and Agni Akhadas. The event will witness a host of religious rituals with deep spiritual meanings. The Yajnas (sacred fire rituals) performed during Mahakumbh by the Akhadas are deeply spiritual and carry a sankalp (resolution) for the greater good of society. These rituals aim to promote harmony, well-being, and global peace. Among other events during the MahaKumbh are the Shahi Snans (Royal Baths), conducted on astrologically determined auspicious dates. These ceremonial baths see participation from sadhus (holy men) and pilgrims alike.



Local Heritage and Tourist Attractions

Beyond its spiritual significance, Prayagraj offers visitors a rich cultural experience. Visitors participating in Maha Kumbh can explore traditional handicrafts such as moonj weaving, which is known for creating beautiful baskets and home decor items. Those who love to savour local food should not fail to try delicacies like chaat, kachori, jalebi, and other regional specialities.

Moreover, there are several nearby attractions to discover, including historic sites, serene ghats, cultural hubs, and temples, each contributing to an enriching experience. Some of the major tourist attractions are:

The Hanuman Temple near Allahabad Fort features a massive 20-foot-long reclining idol of Lord Hanuman and 108 Shivalingas.

The serene Narayan Ashram on the Ganges' banks, known for its intricate stone carvings- The Mankameshwar Temple is famous for its self-manifested Shiv-linga.

The ancient Kalyani Devi Temple is a significant Shaktipeeth.

Finally, the Shri Venkateshwara Swamy Temple represents the harmonious blend of North and South Indian spiritual traditions.

Modern Amenities and Adventure

The 2025 Maha Kumbh combines traditional spirituality with modern amenities and adventure opportunities. Visitors can enjoy helicopter joy rides that offer breathtaking aerial views of the Kumbh Mela grounds and the sacred Sangam. Water sports activities along the riverbanks provide another exciting dimension to the spiritual journey.

Infrastructure and Preparations

Government authorities are working round-the-clock to ensure world-class infrastructure and safety measures for the millions of expected visitors. The preparations encompass modern amenities, accommodation facilities, and security arrangements to create a comfortable and secure environment for pilgrims and tourists from diverse backgrounds. The Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (UPSTDC) is establishing a "tent city" at strategic locations, including Arail Ghat, Parade Ground, and Jhunsi, with 2,000 tents of various categories to accommodate the massive influx of pilgrims and travellers.

Prayagraj, a part of Uttar Pradesh's Spiritual Triangle

Prayagraj, known as one of the 'Saptapuris' or the seven sacred cities in Hinduism, also forms the spiritual triangle in Uttar Pradesh. Other than Prayagraj, the spiritual triangle includes Ayodhya and Varanasi. While Prayagraj is the place where the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers converge, forming the Triveni Sangam, Varanasi, known as Kashi, is considered the holiest city in Hinduism, as the place where Lord Vishwanath (Shiva) is said to dwell and Ayodhya is known as the birthplace of Lord Rama, holding immense significance for devotees, symbolising the values of dharma and devotion. They celebrate a rich heritage of rituals, festivals, and timeless wisdom. The triangle reflects the essence of devotion, faith, and unity, fostering spiritual growth. Each city, with its distinct aura, invites reflection, offering a profound connection to India's cultural and spiritual roots.

Tourist Destinations Nearby



Prayagraj to Shringverpur

(31.2 km) Via NH-330 and NH-30



Prayagraj - Mirzapur

(88.9 km) Via NH-19



Prayagraj to Chitrakoot

(134.4 km) Via NH-35



Kumbh Administration



Emergency Assistance



Hotel and Food



Achievements of UP



Maha Kumbh Tent Booking



Maha Kumbh Mela App



Whatsapp Chat



Uttar Pradesh Tourism App



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Rajasthan Tourism on a transformative path to global recognition under Minister Diya Kumari

Ravi Jain, Secretary of Tourism Rajasthan, shares insights into the remarkable evolution of the state's tourism sector under the leadership of Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari. With a focus on innovation, heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism, Rajasthan is poised to become a global leader in the industry. From major international events like the IIFA Awards 2025 to significant infrastructure investments, Rajasthan is redefining its tourism landscape.

Team TTJ

Rajasthan is a land of vibrant culture, exotic architecture, rich wildlife, and warm hospitality. Known for its majestic forts, palaces, and havelis, the state offers a glimpse into India's royal heritage. Rajasthan's colourful festivals, unique handicrafts, and delicious cuisine make it a shopper's paradise. Despite its arid climate, it is a wildlife haven, perfect for tiger sightings and birdwatching. The state's heritage hotels provide an unforgettable experience with exceptional hospitality.

A Visionary Approach under Deputy CM Diya Kumari's Leadership

The tourism sector of Rajasthan is undergoing a dynamic transformation under the strategic leadership of Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari. Ravi Jain says, "The Deputy Chief Minister's visionary approach and deep understanding of the sector have positioned Rajasthan as a prominent player on the global tourism map. With her personal association with the tourism and hospitality industry, Diya Kumari has brought fresh energy to the sector, setting new standards in development and innovation."

The upcoming IIFA Awards 2025, scheduled for March 7-9 in Jaipur, is expected to elevate Rajasthan's international appeal. This high-profile event will promote local art and culture while contributing significantly to the state's economy and film tourism. According to Jain, the Deputy Chief Minister's vision is to establish Rajasthan as a leading global tourism



▲ Diya Kumari



▲ Ravi Jain

destination while increasing its contribution to the state's GDP.

Rajasthan is known for its historical landmarks, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Ramsar wetlands, and wildlife sanctuaries such as Ranthambore and Sariska and is much more than a tourist attraction. It is a unique blend of tradition, culture, and modernity. These attractions draw visitors from across the globe and contribute to biodiversity conservation.

Jain informs that the state has allocated a budget of Rs 5,000 crore to promote cultural heritage and sustainable tourism. He states, "This fund will accelerate the

conservation of heritage sites and initiate new projects. Implementing a single-window clearance system has simplified processes for stakeholders, enhancing the ease of conducting business in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Under the Deputy Chief Minister's leadership, Rajasthan Tourism is advancing with a clear focus on heritage preservation, sustainable practices, and innovation, paving the way to become a global leader in tourism."

Investment Highlights from Rising Rajasthan Summit 2024

The recently held Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit underscored the growing



importance of tourism in the state's economy. Highlighting Rajasthan's tourism potential, a special session focused on encouraging investment in heritage sites, eco-tourism, and innovative travel experiences. Jain says, "The department is prioritising the development of tourism infrastructure, job creation, and strengthening Rajasthan's global presence."

The summit attracted widespread interest from domestic and international investors. The tourism department signed 1,320 MOUs worth Rs 96,967.61 crore, with the potential to create 202,607 jobs. These investments span various sectors, including hotels, resorts, entertainment parks, eco-tourism, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions), and wellness tourism. Proposals for film cities, ropeways, and heritage projects were also received, indicating a diverse range of opportunities.

Innovative Initiatives

Rajasthan Tourism has launched programmes like Cultural Diaries, a bi-weekly event at Albert Hall showcasing folk art and culture. Additionally, the department has supported 26 film and documentary shoots and organised roadshows across destinations such as Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Kumbhalgarh, and Ranthambore. "Efforts to boost both domestic and international tourism have gained momentum, with a particular emphasis on religious tourism and

cultural exchange," informs Jain.

Religious tourism in Rajasthan received a significant boost when Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a laser water show at the iconic Sanwalia Seth Temple and laid the foundation stones for tourism development projects at key sites such as Keshoraipatan in Bundi and the Karni Mata Temple in Deshnok, enhancing the state's appeal as a major religious destination.

International tourism in Rajasthan saw a remarkable boost as the state hosted the prestigious Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) in Jaipur, attracting 242 foreign tour operators (FTOs) from 52 countries and 300 sellers from across India, showcasing the state's potential as a global travel destination. Meanwhile, domestic tourism flourished with the Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) held in Jaipur, which saw participation from 650 tour operators and facilitated over 13,500 B2B meetings, strengthening partnerships and creating new opportunities in the tourism sector.

Jain further shares, "Additionally, the Wed-In Expo showcased Rajasthan as a premier wedding destination, while a grand cultural programme on Republic Day welcomed the President of France in Jaipur, underlining the rich heritage of the state."

Safety and Skill Development

Safety for Travellers: The Tourist Assistance

Force has been addressing issues such as harassment since its launch on February 15, 2024, ensuring a secure environment for women and solo travellers.

Skill Development: The state's Tourism Skill Development Program aims to train 20,000 youth and folk artists over the next two years. Training programmes in guiding, hospitality, and traditional arts are already underway, with 261 individuals trained through Jawahar Kala Kendra and 214 artisans under the Intangible Cultural Heritage Promotion Project.

Recognition and Accolades

According to Dalip Singh Rathore, Deputy Director of the Tourism Department, Rajasthan's tourism efforts have garnered national and international recognition. The state has received several prestigious awards, including Best Wedding Destination by Travel + Leisure, Best Domestic State Award by Travel Leisure, Favourite Road Trips Destination by Condé Nast Traveller, Pilgrimage Destination of the Year by IITM Bengaluru, Most Promising Wedding Destination by the Travel and Tourism Fair in Patna, Best Heritage Destination by the Gujarat Travel Fair Expo, Best Wildlife Hotel Award for RTDC's Castle Jhoomar Baori at Sawai Madhopur, and the Best Digital Marketing by State Award at IATO's 39th Annual Convention in Bhopal.



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Moscow unlocks new opportunities for India's MICE movement

TTJ met with Evgeny Kozlov, Chairman, Moscow City Tourism Committee, during the second edition of the Meet Global MICE Congress (MGMC): BRICS Edition in Moscow. In this insightful interview, Kozlov discusses Moscow's key attractions, the growing appeal of the city as a prime destination for both MICE and leisure tourism from India, and future initiatives. As Moscow embraces India's expanding MICE presence, the future looks promising for further collaboration and mutual growth in the tourism sector.

Prashant Nayak



▲ Evgeny Kozlov

What key experiences and attractions make Moscow appealing to Indian travellers?

Moscow, a city with a long and rich history, boasts over 8,000 preserved cultural heritage monuments, including apartments of poets and composers, estates, monuments, churches, and temples. The city is home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Kremlin and Red Square Ensemble, the Church of the Ascension in Kolomenskoye, and the Novodevichy Monastery Ensemble. Some of the most popular tourist attractions include the Moscow Kremlin, Saint Basil's Cathedral, Red Square, the Bolshoi Theatre, the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, the

Tretyakov Gallery, Zaryadye Park, Gorky Park, Arbat Street, and the GUM Department Store.

A must-visit is VDNH (Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy), the world's largest exposition, museum, and recreational complex. It is an ideal destination for families with kids, particularly the Cosmonautics and Aviation Centre at VDNH, where children can explore over 120 aircraft and spacecraft, step into the role of a mission control specialist, and learn about space through interactive game quests. In winter, the area also hosts the largest skating rink in Moscow, along with activities like laser tag, bowling, hockey, and performances by famous figure skaters.

Moscow is a green city, with about 50 per cent of its area consisting of parks and gardens. Indian and international tourists enjoy exploring its lush green zones, with the Kuskovo Estate being a prime example. This historic estate features a vast park, French gardens, ponds, lakes, and sculptures.

Moscow also has a vibrant Indian diaspora of 14,000 people. Indian culture, religion, cuisine, and art are increasingly popular, making Indian tourists feel more connected to the city. A new guidebook from the Moscow City Tourism Committee highlights restaurants offering Indian cuisine, high-class hotels, and city attractions tied to India's history and outstanding figures.

Which segment, MICE or leisure, is currently driving more tourism to Moscow, and what factors influence this trend?

The Moscow City Tourism Committee has recognised India as a priority market and actively works on initiatives to attract both leisure and MICE travellers from the region.

While most tourists visit Moscow for cultural, educational, and entertainment purposes, the city has also been focusing on expanding business tourism, which is now a significant contributor to the local economy. Currently, one in five adult tourists comes to Moscow for business. The main flow of business travellers is from other regions of Russia, but there has been a growing number of visitors from BRICS countries, including India. Notably, about 40 per cent of those visiting Moscow for business return later for leisure trips, often bringing their families.

In 2023, Moscow welcomed 3.7 million business tourists, marking a seven per cent increase compared to 2022. By 2030, the number of business travellers is expected to rise to 8 million, with a substantial portion coming from India.

Moscow offers a modern infrastructure for hosting various business events and ample opportunities for accompanying cultural programmes. Visitors can enjoy historical landmarks like the Kremlin and Red Square, attend performances at world-renowned theatres, shop in contemporary malls, or experience the vibrant nightlife. Moscow tailors cultural experiences to meet the specific needs of international business travellers.

The city also hosts large-scale festivals at hundreds of venues,

such as "Moscow Estates" and "Journey to Christmas." With more than 350 events held daily, Moscow offers a rich and diverse agenda for residents and visitors alike.

What are the platforms/programmes available for Indian travel agents to help them stay abreast of Moscow's new tourism products?

We prioritise the Indian market and organise international events and programmes specifically for MICE professionals from India. For instance, the "Shaping MICE Future" conference, held in Delhi this spring, was organised by the Moscow City Tourism Committee and successfully brought together over 100 professionals from various fields. It served as an important platform for the Indian MICE industry. We also participated in major Indian events like BLTM, SATTE, OTM, and MILT Congress. The insights gained from these events help us launch projects tailored to the needs of our target audience.

A key initiative for positioning Moscow as a top-tier MICE destination for the Indian market is the Moscow MICE Ambassadors programme. This programme consists of five comprehensive modules, each designed to familiarise participants with Moscow's MICE capabilities, highlighting its rich cultural heritage, historic landmarks, and architectural legacy. Upon completing all modules and assessments, participants receive the Moscow MICE Ambassador certificate, demonstrating their programme expertise.

On November 1, 2024, the second batch of the online certification programme for Moscow MICE Ambassadors concluded successfully, with over 200 professionals from India's MICE industry graduating. Selected graduates were invited to

attend the award ceremony, travel to Moscow, and participate in the Meet Global MICE Congress. This programme provided them the opportunity to evaluate the city's MICE potential, visit venues, explore accommodation options, ensure service quality, and experience Moscow's cultural offerings.

What are the 2024 statistics on Indian tourists visiting Moscow? Are there new initiatives for the Indian market in 2025?

In 2023, India emerged as one of the leading non-CIS countries in tourist arrivals to Moscow. This upward trend continued in 2024, with the first half of the year witnessing a 1.5-fold increase in Indian visitors compared to the same period in 2023—totalling approximately 28,500 travellers.

A key factor contributing to this growth is the introduction of an e-visa system for Indian travellers on August 1, 2023. This streamlined process has significantly simplified the entry requirements for visiting Russia, eliminating the need for invitations or confirmations. The e-visa application is completed entirely online, with processing taking no more than four days.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Moscow City Tourism Committee plans to deepen its collaboration with India in the MICE sector. Past experiences demonstrate that such events significantly enhance business tourism between the two countries. The number of Indian business travellers visiting Moscow continues to rise, with substantial growth potential. While Moscow is already recognised as a premier destination for hosting business events, efforts are ongoing to increase awareness of the diverse programmes available, as well as the city's rich cultural experiences and seasonal festivals.



DISCOVER The Beauty of Uttarakhand WITH DMC UTTARAKHAND

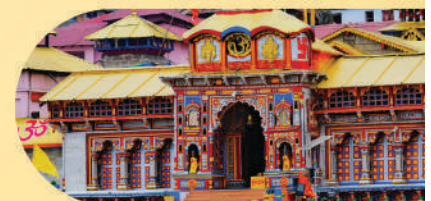
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The Formosan Dream

Riding Taiwan's Waves of Wonder

Although relatively small on the map, Taiwan brims with diverse experiences, including captivating street art and tea gardens to lively night markets and world-class museums. I recently accompanied a travel delegation on a journey that wove through central and northern Taiwan. The route showcased many facets that appeal to both leisure explorers and business travellers: easy transport links, top-quality hospitality, and a variety of attractions reflecting Taiwan's heritage.

Vartik Sethi

Taichung's Creative Heart

The city of Taichung was my first taste of cultural immersion, where I was eager to explore an unassuming yet extraordinary enclave known as Rainbow Village. Originally a military dependents' settlement slated for demolition, this tiny neighbourhood was saved by the creativity of one retiree who transformed its simple walls into a kaleidoscope of colourful murals. Each lane felt like a living artwork, with cartoonish tigers, bold flowers, and playful human figures covering every surface. Despite its small scale, Rainbow Village is capable of making a grand impression and rendering countless memories.

When hunger set in, I discovered that Taichung's dining scene extended well beyond its familiar local delicacies. Thanks to the

city's multicultural profile, Indian visitors can sample their own cuisine in Taiwan. Mayur's Indian Kitchen laid down an extensive menu of North and South Indian dishes; the restaurant offered everything you would think of eating back home – options range from lip-smacking panipuri and delectable samosa chaat to pillowy naan and paneer tikka.

The Heart of Tea Culture

Venturing southward, I left the urban life behind and entered Nantou County, a rural region famed for tea farms and mountain vistas. The contrasting scenery became immediately apparent as city skyscrapers gave way to rolling hills and plantations.

My next stop featured an immersive look at Taiwanese tea culture. At the Tan Jia Lang tea garden, local experts demonstrated the time-honoured methods of

planting, harvesting, and roasting tea leaves. I even tried my hand at leaf-picking, a slow, deliberate process that fosters respect for the labour behind each cup of oolong or black tea. The tasting session that followed offered a meditative interlude as I learned to appreciate the nuances in flavour, aroma, and brewing times.

Nearby, a tea culture centre, further enriched my knowledge of this centuries-old tradition. Housed in a welcoming facility, the centre displayed curated exhibits on tea cultivation and the island's tea history, from its introduction in the 19th century to modern export strategies. The Songboling Tea Culture Centre is where tea transcended its familiar role as a simple beverage and became a profound, multi-sensory ritual. I began by sipping the tea, savouring each subtle layer of flavour, while the gentle fragrance enveloped me in a soothing embrace. Next,



Rainbow Village



Tan Jia Lang





Songboling Tea Culture Centre



Boat Excursion at Sun Moon Lake



Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall



Chefs at Work, Din Tai Fung

I allowed the warm steam to open my pores and ease the tension from tired skin. The experience deepened as the helpers carefully applied a tea-based compress around my eyes, its naturally calming properties offering instant relief. Finally, I took tea's rejuvenating qualities one step further with a gentle facial massage, enhancing circulation and leaving my skin feeling nourished and refreshed. In these moments, tea felt like a holistic elixir, tending to body, mind, and spirit alike.

Encountering Sun Moon Lake's Serenity

Continuing on, I checked into the Wyndham Sun Moon Lake Lili Hot Spring Hotel, overlooking Taiwan's best-known alpine lake. Each room comes equipped with a private hot spring bath, sourced from the region's mineral-rich waters, a unique feature that distinguishes it from standard accommodations.

Sun Moon Lake, known for its panoramic beauty, is a core attraction in central Taiwan. Each vantage point revealed an interplay of deep-blue waters and surrounding hillsides draped in lush forest. Temples at scenic bends and local fishermen boating slowly reminisced of a bygone era. I also wandered through a nearby village where indigenous traditions are presented through music, handicrafts, and culinary treats.

I then took a cable car, moving from the lake to a cultural village dedicated to aboriginal communities, enriching my perspective further. An entire day is not enough to explore the exhibits that trace local history at the Formosan Aboriginal Village, sampling indigenous-inspired recipes, and absorbing tribal dance shows that recount ancestral legends. Later, I retreated to Taiyi Red Maple Resort, a fairly large leisure property in Nantou County. The resort is known for its extensive grounds and on-site recreational options, which include

do-it-yourself (DIY) workshops, honey-tasting sessions, and nature walks near a small river stream that runs through the premises. My room came with an in-room hot spring facility - a notable addition for travellers seeking both relaxation and convenience.

Urban Contrasts in Taipei

An experience in itself, Taiwan's High Speed Rail is a great option for travelling from Taichung to Taipei, and it proved both efficient and comfortable. Travelling at speeds of up to 300 km per hour, the train covered the distance in roughly 45 to 50 minutes. Taipei's cityscape rose into towering skyscrapers, neon lights adorned busy streets, surrounded by a cosmopolitan vibe. My introduction to the capital included an exclusive look at the National Palace Museum, sometimes referred to as Taiwan's 'Forbidden City.' The National Palace Museum houses a vast collection of Chinese imperial artefacts, from intricate jade carvings to ancient scrolls.

The capital's historic landmarks also made a lasting impression. One such monument honouring a pivotal figure in Taiwan's modern history, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, stands in a vast plaza with white marble architecture. Hourly guard-changing ceremonies add a dash of pageantry, cementing the site as a symbol of Taiwanese resilience and reverence. Even for travellers not deeply versed in the region's political history, the visual spectacle and grand design remain awe-inspiring. This is one of many corners in Taipei where history and city life converge.

As dusk settled, I turned towards Taipei's famed skyline, crowned by the once-tallest building in the world. From the observation deck of this Taipei 101, the city glimmered under orange and pink hues, skyscrapers, and mountain silhouettes gently framing the horizon. Such juxtapositions are quintessentially

Taiwanese; it is a place that seamlessly marries modern progress with deep-rooted traditions and untouched nature.

Before retiring for the evening, I relished a meal at a renowned dumpling restaurant celebrated worldwide. The delicate folds of their soup dumplings exhibit a culinary artistry that Taiwan has perfected. Din Tai Fung's international branches have garnered Michelin recognition over the years! Equally impressive were the vegetarian options, steamed and seasoned to perfection, ensuring inclusivity for diners with diverse dietary preferences. The restaurant's swift and polished service was further enhanced by robots, which deftly delivered orders and cleared tables with effortless efficiency.

Taipei 101 through Christmas decorations



Formosan Aboriginal Village





Putrajaya Marriott Hotel's bold transformation reinforces its MICE and leisure appeal

In mid-November, the Putrajaya Marriott Hotel revealed its refreshed and modernised look, ushering in an exciting new chapter for this iconic property. Focused on sustainability, modern luxury, and personalised guest experiences, the hotel is set to cater to both MICE and leisure travellers in the years to come. Nikie Mok, General Manager, Putrajaya Marriott Hotel, believes this transformation represents their dedication to exceeding guest expectations and maintaining the hotel's status as the premier destination in Putrajaya for both business and leisure visitors.

Ravi Sharma



▲ Nikie Mok

What inspired the bold transformation of a 20-year hospitality icon?

The decision for a major renovation stemmed from our desire to stay relevant and continually elevate the guest experience in a competitive hospitality landscape. As Malaysia's first Marriott hotel and a key property within IOI Resort City, it was essential to honour our legacy while aligning with modern traveller expectations. After over 20 years, it was time to refresh our spaces to meet the evolving demands of business, leisure, and blended travellers. The renovation was about refreshing aesthetics and incorporating modern luxury with Malaysian heritage, upgrading facilities for seamless hybrid events, and enhancing amenities like the family splash zone and redesigned dining venues. Moreover, this renovation was part of the owner's decision to convert the franchise contract into a management agreement, enabling better alignment with Marriott's global standards.

What innovative room and infrastructure upgrades have been incorporated into the hotel?

The relaunch of Putrajaya Marriott Hotel signifies a major transformation, blending modern innovations with timeless elegance to deliver an outstanding guest experience. Our 487 smart guest rooms now feature a mix of modern comforts and traditional Malaysian elements, such as songket-inspired accents. These rooms are equipped with smart technology, allowing guests to control lighting, temperature, and entertainment with ease. Villa 101, the 3-bedroom private villa overlooking the central park, provides an exclusive retreat for families or small groups, offering privacy, stunning views, and personalised service.

The rebranded Marriott Putrajaya International Convention Centre (MPICC) now boasts a pillarless ballroom, advanced audiovisual systems, high-speed internet, and hybrid event capability. A new Welcome LED Panel will allow event organisers to feature digital content as a custom welcome backdrop, enhancing event personalisation.

How does the hotel's location in IOI Resort City enhance its offerings for both MICE and leisure guests?

Putrajaya Marriott Hotel's location within IOI Resort City provides a distinct advantage, offering easy access to amenities and experiences for both MICE and leisure guests. For MICE visitors, IOI Resort City is just 30 minutes from Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and Kuala Lumpur City Centre, with excellent highway connectivity, including direct routes from Singapore. The hotel also provides daily airport shuttle service with a stopover at Putrajaya Sentral for added convenience.

For leisure guests, the hotel is situated within a vibrant resort city that includes IOI City Mall, Malaysia's largest shopping destination, offering luxury retail, entertainment, and diverse dining options. The nearby Palm Garden Golf Club and scenic walking trails provide tranquil retreats, while families can enjoy the splash zone or explore Putrajaya's cultural landmarks.

Can you share more about the dining experiences offered at the hotel?

Dining experiences at Putrajaya Marriott Hotel have been enhanced as part of the renovation. Zest Lifestyle Restaurant, our all-day dining venue, offers a welcoming, vibrant environment with a diverse selection of local and international cuisines. Breakfast features dishes from Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Indian cuisines, with vegetarian options available.

Our Chinese restaurant, Summer Palace, and Midori Japanese Restaurant have introduced exciting new menus that celebrate authentic flavours using premium local and seasonal ingredients. For a more relaxed atmosphere, D'Oracle and the Lobby Lounge have been revamped to offer signature drinks and light music, ideal for unwinding or informal meetings.

We have added plant-based dining options catering to guests with dietary preferences or sustainability goals to align with current trends. Additionally, guests can dine at other IOI Resort City hotels, offering a variety of culinary experiences in one destination.

What unique leisure experiences await families and relaxation seekers at Putrajaya Marriott Hotel?

Putrajaya Marriott Hotel offers a variety of leisure activities for families, couples, and solo travellers. The newly introduced kids' splash pool and extended play zone, featuring the hotel mascot, Owen the Owl, make it an ideal spot for family fun. Guests can also enjoy scenic trails for jogging or leisurely walks around the hotel and IOI Resort City. The nearby Palm Garden Golf Club provides a serene escape for golf enthusiasts, combining sport and relaxation.

For those seeking relaxation, the hotel's spa offers rejuvenating treatments, and wellness activities like yoga and sound baths are available as part of tailored packages. Located within IOI Resort City, the hotel is also a gateway to IOI City Mall, where guests can shop, dine, and remain entertained. Putrajaya's iconic attractions, such as the Botanical Gardens and Millennium Monument, are also nearby, allowing for easy exploration of the city's cultural and natural beauty.

Post-Renovation, how is Putrajaya Marriott Hotel expanding its appeal, especially to the Indian market?

Putrajaya Marriott Hotel is strategically expanding its reach to both traditional and emerging markets. While we continue to attract MICE and leisure travellers, we are focusing on opportunities



Grand Ballroom



Family Setup Deluxe Twin

within the regional and international segments. The upgraded MPICC, with hybrid event capabilities, makes the hotel appealing to Southeast Asian businesses seeking modern facilities and seamless connectivity. Also, our luxurious rooms and versatile event venues are perfect for weddings and special occasions.

The Indian market is particularly important, given its growing outbound travel segment. With strong cultural ties and direct connectivity to Malaysia, we see significant potential to cater to Indian guests across various segments, including MICE, corporate events, destination weddings, and leisure travel. Our recent renovation ensures that we provide tailored experiences for Indian tourists and Marriott Bonvoy members, ensuring their stay is both memorable and rewarding.

Looking ahead to 2025, what are your key expectations for the growth of Putrajaya Marriott Hotel?

Looking toward 2025, our vision for Putrajaya Marriott Hotel is centred on growth, innovation, and exceptional guest experiences. Following our successful renovation, we aim to solidify our position as a leading destination for MICE and leisure travellers in Malaysia and Southeast Asia.

With the reimagined MPICC, we expect to host more high-profile events, regional conferences, and hybrid gatherings. Strengthening connections with key markets like India, Singapore, and other ASEAN countries will be a priority, leveraging our location, connectivity, and culturally tailored packages. We anticipate a continued focus on sustainability and enhancing the overall guest experience to maintain our reputation as a premier destination for both business and leisure travellers.

Yorker Holidays Services in an Overdrive

Since its inception in 2012, Yorker Holiday Services has charted an impressive course in the travel industry, evolving into a prominent B2B player with a specialised focus on cruise consolidation and Destination Management Company (DMC) services. Headquartered in New Delhi, with a network of multiple international offices and a staff strength of over 100, the company is optimistic about reaching a turnover of 150 crores in the current financial year, exhibiting a 30 per cent growth rate. Vineet Srivastava, Managing Director, Yorker Holidays Services, spoke with TTJ about their current achievements and plans for the future.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Yorker Holidays Services is a rapidly growing B2B consolidator specialising in leisure travel, MICE and cruises while offering a comprehensive range of international and domestic travel services. These services bring significant value to travel agent's businesses, designed to be easy to sell while providing high margins.

Known for its expertise in delivering comprehensive travel solutions, Yorker Holidays Services has firmly established itself as a key player in the industry. The company boasts a team of professionals with profound knowledge, highly skilled in understanding agent's requirements and providing personalised services tailored to meet their preferences.

The Road So Far

Focusing exclusively on the B2B segment, Yorker Holiday Services has successfully carved a niche in India's Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, leveraging its deep understanding of these dynamic markets.

"Building relationships is key in our business. What matters is our commitment to our partners, fast turnaround times, and complete product knowledge," says Vineet. "At Yorker, we take pride in offering a comprehensive bouquet of services within a strict timeline, which gives us a competitive edge."

This commitment has propelled Yorker into the international arena, with operations spanning the Maldives, Bali, Thailand, Dubai, Baku, and now the United Kingdom, marking its strategic entry into Europe. By combining a strong partner-focused approach with a wide array of services, Yorker has positioned itself as a trusted player in the global travel market.

Evolving and Growing

With the Dubai deployment of Resorts World One, Yorker has secured an exclusive ship charter and finalised two wedding groups of 400 passengers each

in January and February 2025. "Our business mix is evolving," says Vineet. "From a 95 per cent cruise and five per cent destination business, we are now at a 40 per cent cruise and 60 per cent destination business." He further adds, "Yorker is now the PSA for Resorts World Cruises, NCL, and Cordelia. We are also among the top consolidators for RCCL and our numbers speak for themselves."

Vineet continues, "Our partners trust us because we deliver, whether for regular FIT business, high-net-worth clients with special requirements, or large MICE groups. Our team is trained to handle complex queries and requirements in our areas of expertise."



▲ Vineet Srivastava

Encashing the Domestic Opportunity

Post-COVID-19, India has seen a sustained surge in demand for domestic travel, whether for leisure, staycations, or religious tourism. Hotels are experiencing an all-time high demand, with average room rates soaring. Yorker has capitalised on this surge, generating strong business in Kashmir, Leh-Ladakh, the Andamans, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

Recognising the growing demand for religious tourism, Yorker has established an office in Varanasi, catering to pilgrimages inspired by the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor and the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. "This year's Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj presents us with another great opportunity. We are holding 4,000 room nights to meet our partners' demands for Kumbh," shares Vineet.

Eyeing the Hinterland

With an established understanding of the nuances of the Indian B2B market and a

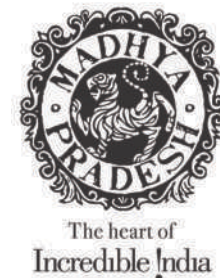
solid presence in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, Yorker now aims to expand into Tier 4 and Tier 5 markets. Vineet explains, "The rapid adoption of smartphones across the country has changed how products and services are searched for and purchased."

He adds, "Social media has also significantly created aspirational demand, but last-mile fulfilment remains a challenge. We are rolling out a roadmap to create franchisees with standardised guidelines and operating procedures in Tier 4 and Tier 5 cities through a hub-and-spoke model, where our Delhi office acts as the nerve centre, servicing and fulfilling demand generated by our franchisees. This will extend our market penetration and provide a competitive and qualitative product to the end user through their local, trusted vendor."

In conclusion, Vineet states, "Our dynamic organisation, keen market insights, strict expense management, and commitment to delivering what we promise are the key factors behind our success."

MADHYA PRADESH: A TREASURE TROVE WITH SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

The latest set of TV commercials is bound to touch every heart, even as they take you on a journey into the heart of India



Madhya Pradesh is the heart of India, not just on the physical map but also in its essence. The latest TVC (Television Commercial) Moh Liya Re campaign starts with current Bollywood sensation and acclaimed actor Pankaj Tripathi inviting everyone to come to MP – *Aap bhi Hindustan ke dil mein aayein aur apne dil ke saare kirdaar nibhaaiye*. He invites everyone to come and explore the state. Discover MP and discover yourself. Extolling its diversity, Tripathi refers to the romanticism of Khajuraho, the spiritual vibes of Ujjain, the grand palaces, intricately carved temples, and cenotaphs Orchha- in essence, there is something for everyone here.

For nature enthusiasts, there is Kanha Tiger Reserve and Bandhavgarh, Pench, Panna, Satpura, and much more. The 2023 campaign- *Jo Aaya So Wapas Aaya, Yeh Hai MP Ki Maya* uses animal imagery moving through different cities of MP, and everything is depicted in Gond painting- *Tiger banke Pench dekhein, langur banke Panna, Titli banke Bandhavgarh, Jatak Satpura, Mor banke Khajuraho, Maina Mandu, etc.*



If you are looking for love and romance, lose yourself in the intricate erotic sculptures of Khajuraho, which offer a romantic getaway for couples. If you are an art lover and passionate about learning history, many places, like Sanchi stupas, will draw your interest. The 2018 TVC "Memory of Destination" (is like a traveller's diary offering a quirky account of how diverse people tend to come to the state for diverse reasons ranging from heritage to honeymoon, spirituality to shopping (such as for Chanderi sarees to handicrafts and textiles) to cuisine, craft, and culture.

The traditional toy-making crafts are an integral part of MP's cultural tapestry. Gwalior Terracotta toys, Indore's wooden and lacquered toys, and Tikamgarh wooden toys are part of the state's famous toy traditions.



In the 2016 campaign, *Dil Hua Bachche Sa* uses bobblehead dolls and adorable tin toys and talks about how MP rekindles the child-like qualities in people.

The 2013 *Rang Hai Malang Hai* campaign showcases how MP is a state of vibrant colours with every hue or emotion ranging from tradition to devotion to conservation being represented here.



The 2010 *MP Ajab Hai, Sabse Gajab Hai*, is a legendary campaign that will go down in history books as one of the best-ever TVCs. It uses the traditional technique of shadow dancing involving intricate hand movements to create themes depicting mesmerising facets of the state - all this in the voice of talented artist Raghubir Yadav.

The 2006 *Hindustan Ka Dil Dekha* campaign is all about conveying the spirit of MP through the expression of eyes. The focus is mainly on UNESCO heritage sites and ancient historical places in MP.

Finally, the first TVC of MP Tourism was launched in 2004, *Til Dekho Tad Dekho*

which became extremely popular as it took viewers on a vintage journey through a bioscope.

There is something for everyone in this state – the inherent message of these TVCs. MP provides a multi-sensory experience, and some aspect or the other is bound to touch your heart and move your soul.

PS: All TVCs can be seen on the MP Tourism official YouTube channel

MGMC advances Business Tourism with over 1,300 attendees in Moscow

The second edition of Meet Global MICE Congress (MGMC): BRICS Edition, which took place in Moscow on December 16-17, 2024, brought together over 1,300 representatives of the business tourism industry from BRICS countries — including Russia, Brazil, India, and China — as well as nations from the Global South.

Team TTJ

This year, MGMC saw its participation and expert presence double, firmly establishing Moscow as a pivotal hub for fostering interaction, building connections, and creating new business opportunities among representatives. The congress has become the largest Russian event for an international audience in this particular sphere.

Strengthening Global MICE Connections

The core theme of this year’s business programme was ‘Global Challenges and Trends of the MICE Industry: Towards Sustainable Development through the Prism of Experience and Knowledge of BRICS Countries and the Global South’. Participants explored the major transformations shaping the global MICE market and discussed strategies for ensuring sustainable development within the industry.

The programme included sessions addressing key issues relevant to both the public and private sectors. Topics ranged from developing congress and exhibition infrastructure to leveraging new technological solutions like big data and artificial intelligence.

With 13 business sessions featuring over 50 Russian and international experts, the congress saw high-profile contributions from figures such as Dmitry Vakhrukov, Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Russian Federation; Evgeny Kozlov, Chairman, Moscow City Tourism Committee; Amaresh Kumar Tiwari, Immediate Past Vice Chairman, India

Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB); and Masood Ahmadvand, Cultural Counsellor, Embassy of Iran in Moscow. Renowned Russian TV presenter and producer Andrey Malakhov also spoke, offering a universal recipe for successful event planning.

During the B2B session, foreign delegates conducted over 2,000 meetings. Many participants acknowledged the congress as a significant platform for strengthening cross-border industry relationships, paving the way for more international events to be hosted in Moscow in the near future. The event also saw the signing of several agreements for future collaborations.

Uniting Culture and Business

For the first time, the congress combined cultural and business programmes, reflecting modern MICE industry trends. The venue featured unique exhibits such as the 'Moscow Tea Time' and 'Made in Moscow' projects, alongside 18 themed lounges from Russian regions and BRICS countries. These lounges showcased regional MICE opportunities and facilitated new business connections. Attendees also enjoyed live performances by musical groups, highlighting the cultural diversity of BRICS nations.

India's Strong Participation at MGMC

The congress saw strong participation from India, with delegates from associations such as NIMA, ICPB, Tourism India Alliance, and ATOAI. Some of these delegates, including Gajesh Giridhar, President, NIMA, and Amaresh Tiwari from ICPB, were speakers at the plenary sessions. The Moscow City

Tourism Committee also brought in MICE professionals from India, who had earned certification through the Moscow MICE Ambassadors programme. This event provided these MICE ambassadors with a valuable networking opportunity to connect with global peers, further strengthening Moscow's position as a MICE leader within the BRICS nations. A select group of Indian media representatives, including TTJ was given the opportunity to explore Moscow's beautiful attractions and food culture, while all delegates had the chance to experience the winter wonderland of the city.

Moscow: A Rising Global Business Tourism Hub

As a modern capital of business tourism, Moscow boasts world-class infrastructure, including cutting-edge congress and exhibition venues, over 22,000 dining establishments, and advanced technological services. By 2030, the city anticipates welcoming up to 8 million business tourists annually. Business travellers contribute significantly to the local economy, with their average spending often 1.5 to 2 times greater than leisure tourists. Furthermore, 40 per cent of business tourists who visit Moscow return later for leisure trips with their families, underscoring the city's appeal as both a business and leisure destination.

The Meet Global MICE Congress was first held in Moscow last autumn, attracting more than 300 experts in the business tourism sector. Since then, the event has grown exponentially, reaffirming its status as a premier gathering for the global MICE industry.



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Pema Khandu, Honorable Chief Minister, Arunachal Pradesh



Panel Discussion on Future of Adventure Travel in Arunachal Pradesh

ATOAI's 16th Annual Convention shapes India's next frontier of adventure tourism

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) hosted the prestigious ATOAI Awards 2024 at its 16th Annual Convention in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, from December 03 - 08, 2024. The convention brought together adventure travel heroes and government policymakers to champion responsible tourism in Arunachal Pradesh while redefining India's position in the world of adventure tourism.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

Established in 1994, ATOAI serves as the national voice for adventure tourism operators across the country, uniting the industry and advocating for its growth. The six-day convention in Tawang witnessed adventure tourism professionals from across the world come together to explore and highlight Arunachal's immense potential as India's next premier adventure destination. ATOAI successfully brought Arunachal Pradesh into the spotlight by attracting a significant gathering of stakeholders who will now play a crucial role in shaping the state's tourism future.

The First Shangri La

Nestled amidst breathtaking landscapes steeped in history and natural beauty, Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, provided a perfect setting for the prestigious convention. This region of lush greenery and majestic mountains is home to over 26 tribes and 100 sub-tribes, each with their unique language, coexisting harmoniously across a vast untraversed territory with a section of the Arunachal Himalayas passing through it. Amid the diversity of languages spoken by each tribe, Hindi acts as a unifying thread, bridging gaps and promoting mutual communication and understanding. The quiet presence of the Indian Army in various bases and cantonments is a poignant reminder of the region's strategic significance in the Indo-China War of 1962. A deep-rooted connection to the land, a profound respect for history, and a fervent pride in their rich culture are evident in the warm hospitality and unwavering

determination of the Arunachalee people to safeguard their unique heritage.

The convention advocated border tourism, offering delegates exclusive access to strategic and historically significant sites like the Bumla Pass, which is steps away from the China border with patrolling soldiers. The state remains untouched by modern consumerism and transactional tourism and is a welcome relief from overcrowded hill stations bursting at the seams with visitors. There is a deep respect for the environment; an iron will to protect the ecological balance, and a strong commitment to preserving it for future generations. Initially dubbed the 'Last Shangri La,' the convention culminated in a decisive shift in perspective. Recognising the successful dissemination of information and awareness championed by ATOAI, participants unanimously declared Arunachal Pradesh 'The First Shangri La,' acknowledging its pioneering role in sustainable and responsible tourism.

Convention Highlights

Under the dynamic leadership of President Ajeet Bajaj, ably supported by Senior Vice President Vaibhav Kala, Vice President Arshdeep Anand, Hon Secretary Ronny Singh Gulati, and Hon Treasurer Nirat Bhatt, the convention was a resounding success. The seamless execution of the event was a testament to the dedicated efforts of the ATOAI administrative staff and the unwavering support of Paras Loomba, Founder of GHE, and his dynamic team.

Aligned with ATOAI's commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism, the 16th

Adventure Convention prioritised a net-zero impact, reducing its environmental impact while empowering local communities. The 'Exploring Arunachal Adventure Travel Roadmap And Tool Kit' was introduced at the Convention, which outlined processes to sustainably open and develop adventure tourism in the remote, pristine landscapes of the state while empowering local communities and ensuring geopolitical awareness.

Shri Pema Khandu, Honorable Chief Minister, Arunachal Pradesh, and Shri Pasang Dorjee Sona, Tourism Minister, Arunachal Pradesh, inaugurated the convention. It was attended by a distinguished gathering of government officials, leaders of travel associations, representatives of state tourism boards, prominent travel operators, media representatives, and renowned experts in tourism and adventure. The event seamlessly transitioned through a rich line-up of insightful panel discussions and knowledge-sharing sessions led by eminent speakers and industry experts.

Prestigious awards were presented to leading visionaries, pioneers, and organisations across categories such as Excellence in Adventure Tourism Practices, Pathfinder, Champion of Sustainability, and Trailblazer. Special recognition was given to those championing responsible tourism practices, highlighting



Discussions on Carbon Credits



Distinguished members of panel discussion

ATOAI's unwavering commitment to innovation and environmental protection. Each award category celebrated exceptional dedication to sustainability, unique, innovative approaches, and transformative advancements shaping the future of Indian adventure tourism.

Exploring Arunachal

The state's spectacular beauty enthralled visitors and introduced many first-timers to its vast tourism potential. Entry to this region of India requires an Inner Line Permit (ILP) valid for 15 days from the issue date. Arunachal Pradesh showcases immense geographical diversity and is a treasure trove of untamed nature. From densely forested hills with exquisite wildlife and challenging hiking trails to mighty rivers perfect for rafting, the terrain culminates in a breathtaking panorama of snow-capped peaks along the borders of Tibet, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

The Familiarity (FAM) tours to Shergaon-Chug Valley and Zemithang introduced participants to the sheer beauty of the region. Sightseeing tours to the serene Tawang Monastery, the snow-laden Bumla Border, the peaceful shores of Sungster Lake, NIMAS at Bhalukpong, Sela Pass, Jaswant Garh Memorial, Jang Water Falls, Tawang War Memorial, Major Bob Khathing Museum of Valour, and the Urgelling Monastery in Tawang,

the birthplace of the 6th Dalai Lama fascinated visitors. Visitors enjoyed the rich Monpa culture with colourful traditional dances and indulged in the delicious flavours of the local cuisine.

The Passion and Camaraderie

The people of Arunachal Pradesh are eager to embrace tourism but on their own terms. They envision a future where tourism contributes to a thriving economy while preserving the delicate ecological balance of their environment and cultural heritage. Overtourism is not their goal; instead, they seek to cultivate 'high-value, low-volume' tourism experiences. Adventure tourism holds immense potential towards this goal by attracting discerning travellers willing to pay a premium for immersive experiences in niche sectors, such as hiking, angling, river rafting, or mountain climbing. These travellers understand and prioritise responsible tourism and cultural sensitivity while directly empowering local communities to foster a more equitable and sustainable tourism model.

What stood out at the convention was the sheer passion and the single-minded focus on realising the potential of border tourism in Arunachal Pradesh. A meticulously crafted strategy, guided by transparent, achievable objectives and firmly supported by the Arunachal Pradesh government, is now in motion. This initiative aspires to showcase



Dorjee Khandu Memorial Visit



Passing Through Sela Tunnel to Tawang.



Cultural Evening

Arunachal Pradesh to the world—not as a hidden gem waiting to be discovered but on its own unique and carefully defined terms. The camaraderie at the convention was delightful as valuable business relationships were being built and meaningful friendships were being formed. The sweet spot of success for any business is generating revenue while making a positive impact, and ATOAI exemplifies that ideal business model.



Climbing Activity at NIMAS



Shri Pasang Dorjee Sona at the Q&A session



Exploring Tawang



Participants at ATOAI Convention 2024



Jaswant Garh War Memorial



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TTJ TRAVMART in Indore thrives with more impact

TTTJ TRAVMART Indore once again proved its stature as a premier travel industry event, held at Sayaji Indore on December 12, 2024. Marking the grand finale of its seventh edition, the event witnessed the participation of 40 sellers, including five tourism boards, airlines, cruise lines, hotel chains, and DMCs, engaging with 155 pre-registered hosted and local buyers. Over 2,000 business meetings showcased the event's thriving network and significance in the travel trade.

With Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board as the Gold Sponsor, Sharjah Tourism as the Silver Sponsor, and Rajasthan Tourism sponsoring the dinner, the event reflected a strong commitment to collaboration. Detailed presentations by Madhya Pradesh, Sharjah, Rajasthan, Experience Kissimmee, Celestyal Cruises, Bali DMC, and TRAVMART Marketplace further enriched the platform, offering valuable insights to attendees.

Exciting lucky draws added to the vibrant atmosphere, with hotel stays from Chocolate Hotels and Clarks Hotels and Resorts and smartwatches by Sampantech delighting participants.

Supported by travel industry stalwarts such as TAAI, TAFI, ADTOI, and IATO, the event also recognised the invaluable contribution of local chapter leaders, who were honoured with mementos by TTJ TRAVMART management.



Vikas Kandel
Managing Director, Airwings Tours & Travels (Nepal)

TTJ TRAVMART proved to be an excellent platform for us, providing the opportunity to meet new buyers and expand our business. We look forward to participating in more events organised by TTJ.

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Nirmalya Chaudhuri

Director, Chocolate Hotels

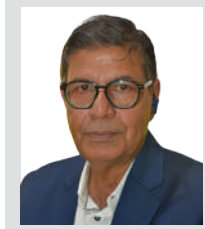
I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire TTJ TRAVMART Indore team. The response from the Madhya Pradesh market was phenomenal. This was our first time reaching the MP market through TTJ, and I am very hopeful that this marketing activity will eventually lead to increased sales.



Mazin Mohamed

Founder, Islandlife Travel

The event was well-organised and successfully brought travel professionals together under one roof. It provided excellent opportunities to meet and connect with potential agents. The organising team did an outstanding job in making this event a resounding success.



Sanjay Bhalla

VP (Business Development), Balitrip

The TTJ Indore event was exceptionally well-organised, and the quality of travel partners from Indore and surrounding cities was impressive. They were well-informed and eager to learn about Bali as a destination. As a destination management company, we introduced new products for the upcoming honeymoon season, which generated excitement and surprise for our innovative itinerary.



Vaseem Parvez

Chief Operating Officer, Fly24hrs

It was a true pleasure collaborating with TTJ, and I am thrilled to say that the TTJ Indore event was a resounding success. Despite being a one-day event, the turnout and enthusiastic response exceeded our expectations. My heartfelt thanks go to Team TTJ for their dedication and excellent management in organising the TTJ TRAVMARTs across various cities.



Amit Soni

Managing Director, Infinity Adventure Travel & Tour, Dubai DMC

TTJ TRAVMART Indore was a well-organised and insightful event, offering excellent networking opportunities for travel industry professionals. The venue was spacious, conveniently located, and easily accessible. The B2B meetings were efficiently arranged, fostering valuable partnerships. Overall, the exhibition served as an outstanding platform to explore and connect.





Hotel Partner



EVENT CALENDAR

2025



MARCH

08

RAIPUR

MARCH

26-27

WEST INDIA
(PUNE)

APRIL

17

LUCKNOW

JULY

09

CHANDIGARH

AUGUST

22-23

SOUTH INDIA
(CHENNAI/HYDERABAD)

SEPTEMBER

12-13

NORTH INDIA
(DELHI)

OCTOBER

30-31

EAST INDIA
(KOLKATA)

NOVEMBER

19

SURAT

DECEMBER

17

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The above schedule may change due to unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances.
If there are any changes, they will be communicated 30 days prior to the event.



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Karnataka's Golden Chariot luxury train resumes operations after six years

Karnataka's luxury tourist train, the Golden Chariot, resumed operations on December 21, 2024, after a six-year hiatus. Departing from Bengaluru's Yeshwanthpur Station, its inaugural five-day journey to Kochi was flagged off by Karnataka Tourism Minister H K Patil.

"This train offers a unique travel experience, showcasing the cultural and scenic beauty of Karnataka and South India," Patil said, expressing confidence in its global appeal.

Owned by KSTDC and operated by IRCTC, the train now features upgraded amenities and new itineraries across Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. It offers three packages and includes 11 heritage-themed coaches named after historic dynasties like the Kadambas and Hoysalas.

With accommodations for 88 passengers, luxury offerings include four-room coaches, gourmet restaurants—Ruchi and Nalapaak—serving Indian and Continental cuisine, free Wi-Fi, a lounge bar, and a fitness centre, enhancing the experience of exploring South India's treasures.



Indiatourism Delhi organises FAM tour to Rakhigarhi Mahotsav

Indiatourism Delhi (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India) organised a FAM tour to Rakhigarhi in Hisar District, Haryana, on December 20, 2024.

The tour brought together travel and tourism stakeholders, including MOT-approved tour operators, tour guides, tourism media, and influencers, with the goal of showcasing the rich heritage and historical importance of Rakhigarhi. The tour was organised in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Haryana, and the Haryana Tourism and Heritage Department.

The delegates also attended the first-ever Rakhigarhi Mahotsav, held from December 20–22, 2024. The event celebrated the heritage of the Harappan Civilisation, promoting Rakhigarhi as a premier tourist destination. Highlights of the event included heritage walks led by archaeologists, pottery and ceramic painting workshops, "dummy excavation" experiences, traditional folk performances, and exhibitions featuring local crafts and self-help group stalls showcasing Haryana's vibrant traditions.



Dr. R. K. Suman, Regional Director (North), Ministry of Tourism; Dr. Sunil Kumar, Principal Secretary of Tourism, Government of Haryana, and Managing Director, Haryana Tourism Corporation; and officials from the Ministry of Tourism, Haryana Tourism, and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) were present at the event.

Believed to surpass both Harappa and Mohenjodaro in scale, Rakhigarhi is considered the largest Harappan site in the Indian subcontinent. The FAM tour successfully raised awareness of Rakhigarhi's archaeological significance, allowing stakeholders to experience the site firsthand. This initiative aims to position Rakhigarhi as a must-visit destination for travellers interested in rich history and culture.

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