




SalamAir is now operating from  
**8 cities in India**

- Delhi
- Jaipur
- Bengaluru
- Chennai

- Mumbai
- Lucknow
- Hyderabad
- Calicut

For Bookings, Please Contact  
[Res.del@salamair.com](mailto:Res.del@salamair.com)



# Travel Trade Journal




Complimentary  
**Sightseeing Cruise**

With every **Australian package** sold!\* \*T&C apply.

[sales@turtledownunder.com.au](mailto:sales@turtledownunder.com.au)



**fly24hrs**  
*One Step Ahead...*

**API/XML SOLUTIONS**  
The way to go digital

**START  
YOUR TRAVEL BUSINESS  
WITH API**

**POWERED BY FLY24HRS**

**Go Online Now!**





Go online with  
Robust API



Your customer can  
directly book on  
your portal



Easy to use and  
scale up your  
travel business

Website : [www.fly24hrs.com](http://www.fly24hrs.com) | Email : [apisupport@fly24hrs.com](mailto:apisupport@fly24hrs.com) | Call : 011-69122424

Does your client need a UK or Schengen visa for their next trip?

# You can now facilitate the application from the comfort of their home or office.

- ✓ Visa application submission
- ✓ Biometric enrolment (fingerprint & digital photograph)
- ✓ Passport collection and delivery



Book 'Visa At Your Doorstep' for your clients now  
Visit: [www.vfsglobal.com/visa-at-your-doorstep/](http://www.vfsglobal.com/visa-at-your-doorstep/)

For exclusive deals and incentives, write to us on:  
[b2bsales@vfsglobal.com](mailto:b2bsales@vfsglobal.com)



Scan to register

This optional service is known as **On-Demand Mobile Visa (ODMV)** for UK visas, and **Visa At Your Doorstep (VAYD)** for Schengen visas.



The world's largest outsourcing & technology services specialist for governments and diplomatic missions worldwide

**23**  
Years Since  
Inception

**68**  
Client  
Governments

**158**  
Countries  
of Operation

**3,558**  
Application  
Centres

Over  
**307 Million**  
Applications  
Processed

Over  
**157 Million**  
Biometric  
Enrolments

Over  
**12,400**  
Employees

**158**  
Nationalities



**Disclaimer:** Please note that the service is currently offered for select countries. Availability and the service charges may vary depending upon the country/location where it is procured. The choice of location for availing the service may vary depending on the concerned Embassy. The grant or refusal of the visa is at the sole discretion of the Embassy and availing above value-added service will not affect the processing time or decision of your visa as VFS Global is neither involved in the process nor is liable or responsible in any manner whatsoever for the grant or rejection of the visa application of any customer by the Embassy. For further information on the same, kindly refer to the VFS Global website. The above mentioned service is optional and will be charged in addition to the visa application fee. The customer hereby accepts and confirms that they, prior to availing the above mentioned service, have read, understood and agreed to be bound by, without limitation or qualification, all of the terms and conditions associated with the service. Statistics as on 31 January 2025.

### Team Sampan

Editor & Publisher	:	Ravi Sharma
Consulting Editor	:	Gurjit Singh
Director-Marketing	:	Sonika Bohra
Director-Tech	:	Arvind Shukla
Sr. Assistant Editor	:	Prashant Nayak
Assistant Editor	:	Prativa Vaidya Bhalla
Associate Editor	:	Sriparna Pal Bhattacharya
Sr. Correspondent	:	Vartik Sethi
Bureau Head (East)	:	Partha Chatterjee
GM-Strategic Partnerships	:	Debabrata Ray
Sr. Manager- PR & Strategic Alliances	:	Mohua Ghosh
Manager-Marketing Comm.	:	Yamini Sharma
Manager-Social Media	:	Khushi Bakshi
Manager PR	:	Ankit Dixit
Coordinator-Special Projects	:	Parth Sharma
Manager Administration	:	Kuldeep Singh
Art Director	:	Laxman Dass
Designer	:	Jatin Kumar
Circulation Manager	:	Sahil Nadeem
Sr. Developer	:	Ritu Pal
Assistant Admin	:	Isha Singh
Admin Marketplace	:	Satish Kumar
Accountant	:	Amar Gupta

Email: info@sampanmedia.com

Editorial and Marketing Office :  
Sampan Media Pvt. Ltd. B-20, First Floor, Nangal Dewat, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, 110070  
Ph: 9560264443, ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

All information in Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. Opinions / views expressed by third parties in abstract or in interviews are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced in whole or in part(s) without prior permission. The publisher assumes no responsibility for material lost or damaged in transit. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code. The publisher will not be liable for any loss caused by any delay in publication, error or failure of advertisement to appear.

Owned and published by: Ravi Sharma, Editor & Publisher, A-100, Upper Ground Floor, Nangal Dewat, New Delhi - 110070 and printed on his behalf at Polykam Offset, C-138, Industrial Area Phase I, Block C, Naraina Industrial Area Phase 1, Naraina, New Delhi - 110028.

Dear Friends,

In this edition, we explore the evolving trends in both inbound and domestic tourism as travel and hospitality stakeholders across India shed light on the current landscape of these sectors. We also feature insights from tourism officials of Goa and Chhattisgarh, who share the latest developments and initiatives in their respective regions.

On the international front, we take a closer look at international airlines actively strategising their expansion into the Indian market, exploring new opportunities and leveraging the country's growing aviation sector. We delve into their approaches and the exciting prospects this dynamic landscape offers.

The spotlight is on three Australian states, each offering a unique array of experiences for travellers. A special feature also showcases Tanzania Tourism's efforts to tap into the Indian market through its roadshows.

Furthermore, several hotels share their remarkable growth stories and the innovative offerings they bring to the table. With other exciting features included, we hope this issue provides valuable insights and inspiration as we continue to deliver engaging content for our industry friends.

Happy Reading!

*Ravi Sharma*

**Ravi Sharma**  
ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

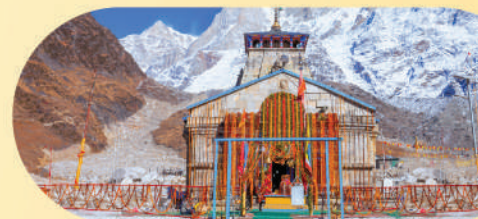
Editor's Desk



## DISCOVER The Beauty of Uttarakhand WITH DMC UTTARAKHAND

We specialize in providing

- Uttarakhand Customised Packages
- Chardham Yatra By Helicopter
- Chardham Yatra By Road
- Guide Service
- Taxi Service
- Hotel Booking
- Trekking tours



### CONTACT DETAIL :

call us on: +91-9897765888, 7668044099

mail us on: b2b@dmcuttarakhand.com

# Resorts World Cruises to transition back as StarCruises and Dream Cruises

Resorts World Cruises has announced the return of two iconic cruise brands: StarCruises and Dream Cruises. This three-month transition marks a return to the brand's roots after operating under the Resorts World Cruises name post-COVID.

Since launching in June 2022, Resorts World Cruises has welcomed nearly two million passengers. The rebranding reinforces StarCruises and Dream Cruises as pioneers in Asian cruising, offering excellence and innovation.

### Fleet and Itineraries

**StarCruises:** Resorts World One will be renamed Star Navigator, joining Star Voyager. Star Navigator begins 4-night sailings from Singapore on 7 March 2025 before an 8-month deployment in Taiwan. Star Voyager launches on 26 March from multiple Southeast Asian homeports.

**Dream Cruises:** Genting Dream, the flagship of Dream Cruises, will be homeported in Singapore all year round, offering itineraries to Malaysia and Thailand.

The transformation goes beyond a name change, as it is a declaration of excellence, innovation, and commitment to redefining cruising in Asia with unique, refreshed cruising experiences tailored to different markets.



## Therme Dubai – Islands in the Sky to transform Dubai’s skyline and wellbeing sector



Part of Dubai’s Quality of Life Strategy 2033, Therme Dubai – Islands in the Sky blends the city’s ambition to become an urban oasis with Therme Group’s expertise in wellbeing infrastructure. Designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, this iconic project in Zabeel Park, near the Royal Palace, will span 500,000 square feet, featuring a 100-meter-tall structure welcoming 1.7 million visitors annually.

Blurring nature and city living, the landmark will feature suspended botanical gardens, stacked terraces, and cascading thermal pools, offering breathtaking views and immersive wellness experiences. Cultural events and social spaces will further enhance the experience.

Committed to sustainability, Therme Dubai will recycle 90 per cent of thermal pool water, meet 80 per cent of cooling needs with clean energy, and integrate advanced resource management systems.

Construction will start in 2026 and completion is set for 2028. This visionary project redefines urban wellbeing, setting a new standard for sustainable, holistic city living.

## Atmosphere Core debuts in India with Sadar Manzil Heritage, Bhopal



Atmosphere Core has launched its first couples-only hotel in India, Sadar Manzil Heritage by Atmosphere, Bhopal, on February 22, 2025. Nestled between Bhopal’s historic Old City and vibrant New City, this restored 19th-century residence, once the grand hall of audience for the Begums and Nawabs, offers an exclusive retreat

The boutique property features 22 vintage-inspired rooms and suites adorned with antique furnishings in opulent turquoise and cream hues. Guests receive a regal welcome, including airport reception, a chauffeured city drive, and a rose-petal greeting.

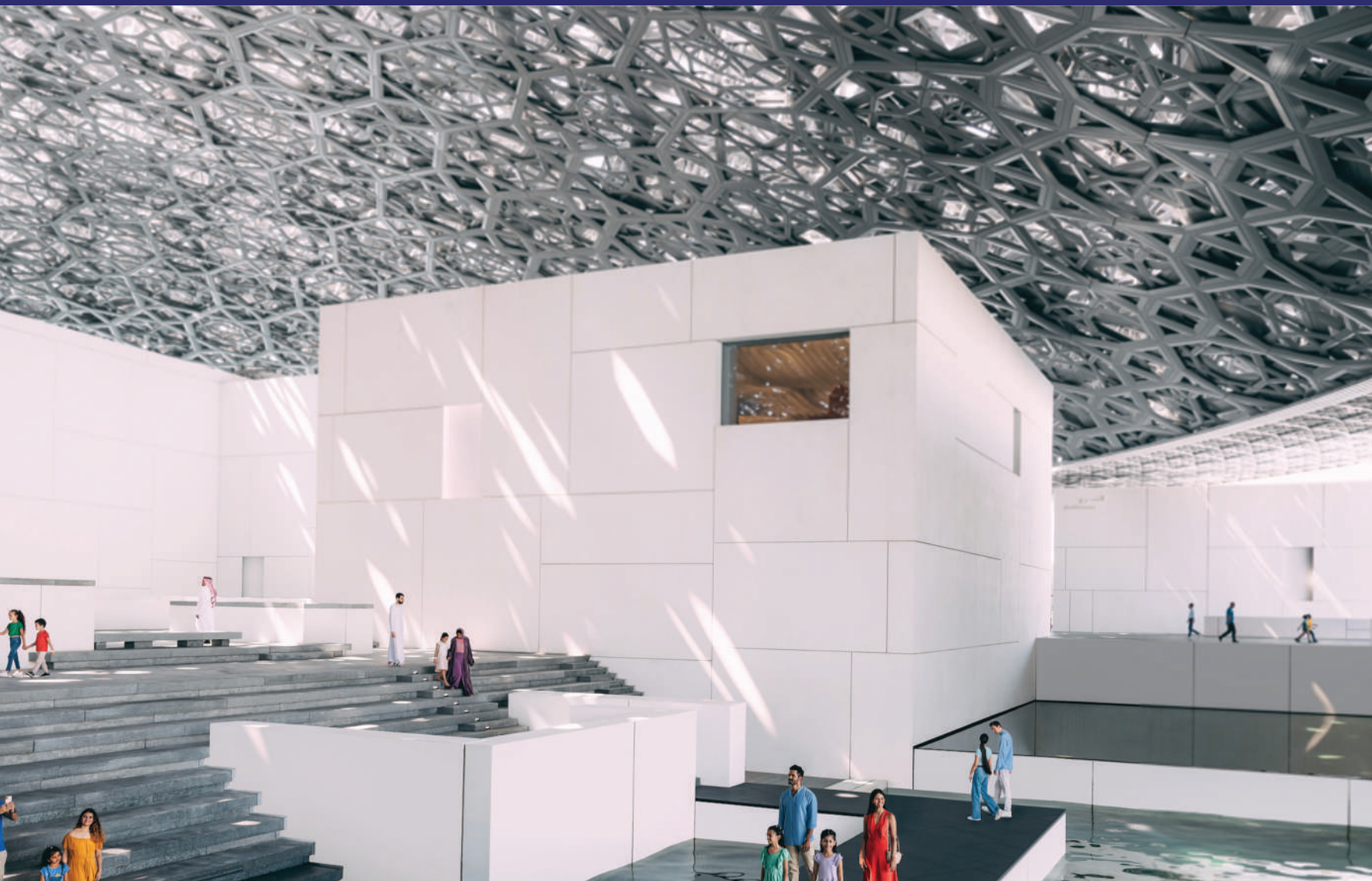
Tailored for India, Atmosphere Core’s Begum’s Plan offers luxury accommodation, airport transfers, vegetarian breakfast and dinner, unlimited premium spirits, hi-tea, live music, a champagne tour, and spa treatments. A full-board upgrade is available. Amenities include the ELEINA Ayur Spa, a library, a fitness centre, and a swimming pool.

## ABU DHABI SUMMER DEAL 4 NIGHTS FOR BEST B2B RATES!

 Travel: April 5 – May 15, 2025

4 Nights Stay + Breakfast  
2 Theme Parks of Choice  
Private Transfers & City Tour  
Top Attractions: Louvre, Grand Mosque & More!

\*TnC Applied



For more \*price information reach out at  
outbound1@tbo.com or contact us at +91-124-4998899

experience  
**abu dhabi**



## Ras Al Khaimah Tourism unveils new destination marketing film



The Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) has unveiled its latest destination marketing film, Not a Vacation...Our Vacation—a bold and witty take on what makes the emirate a truly unique holiday destination.

Offering a fresh perspective on the UAE's northernmost emirate, the film breaks away from conventional travel narratives. It redefines Ras Al Khaimah as a place where curiosity sparks unexpected discoveries and every experience feels refreshingly different.

As Ras Al Khaimah gains global recognition as a must-visit destination, the film's upbeat approach aims to reshape perceptions, challenge clichés, and spotlight the emirate's diverse offerings in a way that is fun, dynamic, and full of personality.

Its narrative cleverly juxtaposes the ordinary with the extraordinary, highlighting what sets Ras Al Khaimah apart. Here, travellers, not just tourists, venture beyond the usual to uncover hidden gems, rich traditions, and exhilarating outdoor adventures.

The film's experience-driven approach aligns seamlessly with 2025's emerging travel trends, as highlighted in Expedia's latest Unpack '25 report.

## UK launches visa fraud awareness campaign 'Visa Fraud Ton Bacho'



The UK Government launched the 'Visa Fraud Ton Bacho' campaign on 27 February to safeguard Indian citizens from visa fraud and irregular migration risks.

A dedicated WhatsApp helpline (+91 70652 51380) in English and Punjabi will educate individuals on scam tactics and provide official guidance on legal UK travel routes. The campaign was launched at Lovely Professional University (LPU), Jalandhar, in the presence of Dr. Ashok Kumar Mittal, LPU Chancellor and Rajya Sabha MP.

The initiative warns against fraudulent claims such as guaranteed UK jobs, IELTS exemptions, and excessive fees. Visa fraud victims often face debt, exploitation, and physical harm, with offenders risking a 10-year UK travel ban.

Under the Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreement, India and the UK reaffirm efforts to combat visa fraud. British officials emphasise the importance of safe, legal migration and urge communities to spread awareness, ensuring dreams are pursued securely and lawfully.

## Albatros Expeditions announces 'Chef on Board' offers exclusively for Indian groups

In a pioneering initiative tailored to the preferences of Indian travellers, Albatros Expeditions now offers Indian groups the exclusive opportunity to bring their own chef or Maharaj onboard, ensuring a customised culinary experience while exploring the polar regions.

Announced through STIC Travel Group, the official marketing and sales representative of Albatros Expeditions in India, this unique offering is garnering tremendous excitement among Indian travellers seeking comfort, familiarity, and personalised service on their expedition journeys.

With over two decades of excellence in expedition cruising, Albatros Expeditions continues to redefine industry standards by combining adventure with personalised experiences. The exclusive Chef-on-Board option allows travellers to savour home-style meals or gourmet Indian cuisine while exploring some of the world's most stunning and remote destinations.





Holland America Line®  
SAVOR THE JOURNEY

# Experience Europe

YOUR WAY



## TOP REASONS TO CRUISE EUROPE WITH HOLLAND AMERICA LINE

Carefully Crafted Itineraries • Extended Port Stays • UNESCO World Heritage Sites •  
Fresh Local Flavors • Immersive Shore Excursions • Perfectly Sized Ships

### NORTHERN EUROPE

7-NIGHT

#### FJORDS OF NORWAY AND ICELAND

PORT TO PORT: Rotterdam, The Netherlands to Reykjavik, Iceland



from \$171\* PP/N

2025: Jul 12

7-NIGHT

#### NORWEGIAN FJORDS WITH NORDFJORD

PORT TO PORT: ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS



from \$219\* PP/N

2025: May 24 | Jul 5

### MEDITERRANEAN

10 to 11-NIGHT

#### WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN MEDLEY

PORT TO PORT: BARCELONA, SPAIN



from \$171\* PP/N

2025: May 03, 14#

#10 Night

More itineraries and options available

Discover the World with us:

Alaska & Yukon | Australia & New Zealand | Asia & South Pacific | Canada & New England | Caribbean & The Bahamas | Mediterranean | Northern Europe & Baltic Sea | Hawaii & Tahiti | Mexico | Panama Canal | South America & Antarctica | Grand Voyages | California & Pacific Coast | Transatlantic Cruises

\*Itineraries may vary for different dates | Rates and itineraries are subject to changes/updates without prior notice | Terms & conditions apply

Please contact your travel agent or call us at ☎ +91 - 124 - 4595300 ✉ [cruises@sticgroup.com](mailto:cruises@sticgroup.com) 🌐 [www.stictravel.com](http://www.stictravel.com)



Branch offices: Ahmedabad & Mumbai - 9920688575, [hal.india@sticgroup.com](mailto:hal.india@sticgroup.com) | Bangalore, Chennai & Hyderabad - 9886618762, [vinod.sharma@sticgroup.com](mailto:vinod.sharma@sticgroup.com) | Delhi NCR - +91-9811283957, [gayatri.barman@sticgroup.com](mailto:gayatri.barman@sticgroup.com) | Jalandhar - 9872991144, [punjab@sticgroup.com](mailto:punjab@sticgroup.com) | Kolkata - 9830770999, [akash.saha@sticgroup.com](mailto:akash.saha@sticgroup.com); 9831018652, [jayanta.bera@sticgroup.com](mailto:jayanta.bera@sticgroup.com) | Pune - 9890831234, [pune@sticgroup.com](mailto:pune@sticgroup.com)

# INDIA'S INBOUND TOURISM

## Industry Voices from the Ground

In this special report, we attempt to uncover the ground realities of India’s inbound tourism market from experts on the front lines. Leading inbound travel agents share their perspectives on the factors impeding growth, expectations of international visitors, and what it will take for India to position itself as a more competitive global tourism destination.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla



▲ Ranju Joseph



▲ Nitin Sambhi



▲ Vishwas Makhija

India’s inbound tourism market is at a pivotal moment, brimming with potential yet facing complex challenges. While India’s rich tapestry of enchanting heritage, ancient culture, exceptional landscapes, and invaluable experiences inspires the world, the real question is: Are we fully capitalising on this potential?

TTJ goes beyond the numbers and reports to hear directly from the people shaping the inbound sector, travel agents and tour operators who navigate the realities of the inbound market daily. What is working? What is holding India back? How can the industry evolve to attract more international travellers? These questions often sear to the surface through heated debates with no definitive answers yet.



▲ Anil Dwivedi



▲ Munish Abrol

### India’s Tourism Paradox

India’s tourism sector has witnessed a steady post-pandemic revival. In 2023, India recorded 18.89 million International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs), while Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) stood at 9.52 million. The country’s Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) through tourism reached Rs 2,31,927 crore, while Domestic Tourism Visits (DTV) soared to an astounding 2509 million.

However, these figures barely scratch the surface of a country of India’s scale and potential. Despite its vast selection of tourism products, India has yet to unlock its true inbound potential, especially compared to the corresponding boom in outbound travel. As Indian travellers increasingly explore global destinations, driven by rising disposable incomes, improved connectivity, and heightened accessibility, international tourism boards are scrambling to tap into this lucrative market.

## Global Perception of India

'Incredible India' conjures up colourful images of a treasure trove of traditions, celebrations, wildlife adventures, culinary extravaganzas, and the nation's gracious hospitality mantra - 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (the Guest is God). While the country continues to enchant travellers, it also grapples with complex challenges that shape its global perception.

Ranju Joseph, Director and CEO, Pioneer Personalized Holidays, observes that foreign travellers often arrive with preconceived notions but leave with a newfound appreciation. He says, "My experience is that foreign clients are pleasantly surprised at how modern India is, even as traditions stay alive on the other side." This juxtaposition of the ancient and the modern remains one of India's most fascinating aspects.

Nitin Sambhi, Director, Terra Ignota Tours, highlights both the admiration and concerns that international visitors travel to India with. "While many see India as a vibrant and welcoming destination, concerns about safety, cleanliness, and pollution remain. We must address these issues through active sensitisation, which is crucial in reinforcing India's image as a safe and traveller-friendly country," he notes.

Munish Abrol, Chairman and Director, Incredible Voyages, has experienced first-hand the great awe that foreign travellers associate with India. However, he firmly asserts that India's urban landscape presents a challenge and says, "The untreated garbage on our streets tarnishes the country's image and often deters foreign tourists from booking trips to India. Cleanliness and urban management must be prioritised to enhance India's global appeal."

Vishwas Makhija, Founder and President, Luxury India Holidays, acknowledges the reservations many foreign travellers harbour about safety, hygiene, and poverty. He observes, "These mental barriers can deter potential visitors. I have seen many clients arrive with doubts, but when they experience India with boots on the ground, they fall in love with the country, its magic, warmth, and unparalleled hospitality."

Anil Dwivedi, Co-Founder, Quality India Tours, highlights the enduring impact of the nation's signature hospitality, which captures your heart and makes you yearn for more. He shares, "From the moment guests arrive, they are welcomed by warm hospitality, world-class accommodations, and a diverse array of experiences. They realise one visit is not enough and are always eager to return!"

## Suggested Strategies to Boost India's Inbound

As international demand remains fragmented and post-pandemic revival is still in process, the need for a strategic overhaul in marketing, branding, and global outreach has never been greater.

With over 35 years in the industry, Vishwas has witnessed various shifts in strategy and execution. He advocates for a pragmatic promotional plan positioning Incredible India as a year-round destination. He notes, "Our sheer size and diverse climate allow for tourism in every season. We need focused efforts to brand India as a safe, sustainable adventure travel destination, leveraging our vast portfolio of outdoor activities. Let us not forget—73 per cent of the entire Himalayan range lies within India." He further emphasises, "Selecting the right global media companies to actively support India's growth is essential. We must run campaigns across North and Latin America with strong visual storytelling." He also sees culinary tourism as an untapped goldmine in India. "We have not even scratched the surface of India's gastronomic depth. A focused push on culinary tours could open up brand new avenues for inbound tourism," he predicts.

Ranju highlights the role of government support. He says, "The inbound tourism fraternity needs backing through increased advertising in key markets, reinstatement of the MDA scheme, and Forex benefits like SEIS."

Emphasising the importance of extensive government-led publicity campaigns, Anil explains, "It is an accepted worldwide practice that governments allocate funds for tourism promotion through roadshows, advertisements in media, and branding in public spaces. Earlier, we held 'Festivals of India' across the world. These exhibitions, road-shows, and fairs showcased and promoted India's cultural and architectural heritage - Reviving such initiatives is crucial."

Further, he recommends the need for a well-structured participation strategy in international travel shows. "India Tourism must announce its annual calendar for events like ITB Berlin or WTM London a year in advance. This would allow stakeholders to prepare and provide incentives for those bringing Forex into the country, encouraging proactive marketing."

Conversely, Munish emphasises the need to reinvigorate India's tourism campaigns. "First and foremost, we need to kickstart 'Incredible India 2.0' internationally with renewed energy and a substantial budget. The Ministry of Tourism's investment has been negligible, and India as a brand is completely missing in action."

Nitin observes the lack of demand for India among international travellers. "In my frequent travels across Europe and the Americas, our partners consistently share feedback on India not being a sought-after destination post-pandemic. Most international tour operators do not have the bandwidth or enthusiasm to promote India in a low-demand scenario as they are busy selling destinations with higher traction." He insists on a macro-level rebranding effort to align India's tourism products with evolving consumer demands. "We need a robust, aggressive, and consistent digital marketing footprint alongside global promotions and events. Influential personalities, PR companies, and media collaborations can help create buzz around destination India. It would also be worthwhile to have a prominent face for our country's tourism, much like Lionel Messi for Saudi Arabia or Roger Federer for Switzerland."

## Engaging International Tour Operators to Boost Visibility

A targeted approach, and data-driven strategy is the need of the hour to increase India's visibility globally. Anil says, "The government must reopen tourist offices worldwide and revive roadshows, exhibitions, and cultural events to promote India. Massive advertising campaigns across print, digital, radio, and television platforms are crucial to increase visibility. If consumer demand rises, more tour operators will be driven to promote India. Simply put, 'Jo Dikhta hai, Wohi bikta hai' (What is visible sells)." He also highlights the broader economic impact of increased tourism, stating, "More tourists mean more business not just for us agents, but for hotels, transporters, restaurants, guides, and even auto and taxi drivers. It also translates to higher GST revenue and job creation."

Vishwas highlights the importance of proactive engagement with international tour operators (ITOs). "We need to bring ITOs on fully government-sponsored educational trips to India, ensuring a seamless, welcoming experience showcasing the best of what India offers. Stakeholders such as DMCs, hotels, and lodge owners—must collaborate to conduct extensive roadshows in key source markets managed by professional country-specific PR firms. Regular educational sessions for ITOs, along with DMCs, are essential to deepen their understanding of India's diversity and tourism products," He shares.

Munish stresses the need to spotlight India's emerging destinations. "With our expanded network of airports and newly built highways, we must highlight new destinations and encourage tour operators who have yet to promote India."

Nitin calls for direct government support for industry stakeholders. "Incentive plans and financial backup for major tour operators across markets are essential for promotional campaigns and FAM trips. Regular Destination India events and roadshows must be organised to create awareness and stimulate demand in overseas markets. Countries like Canada, Austria, Dubai, Qatar, France, and Spain consistently engage tour operators through networking events—yet India's tourism authorities remain hesitant. "I fail to understand why our tourism authorities shy away from this engagement, which is disappointing not only to us but also to the international tour operator."

Ranju focuses on the importance of promoting India's renowned signature tourism experiences. "We need to increase awareness about India in key international markets. Products such as India's Ayurveda and wellness tourism, in particular, should be aggressively promoted," he notes.

## Most Visited Inbound Destinations in 2024

India's inbound tourism landscape in 2024 has been shaped by traditional favourites and emerging trends. Munish states, "This financial year has seen a surge of interest in Prayagraj for Kumbh, which is well known. On the other hand, central India's wildlife parks and reserves have been a big hit with inbound tourists."

Noting that classic destinations continue to thrive, he says, "In the North, the Golden Triangle—Delhi, Jaipur, and Agra—along with Varanasi and Rajasthan, saw the highest tourist footfall in 2024. In the South, Kerala and Tamil Nadu were leading, while among NRIs, Ayodhya has seen a surge in demand." The current trend leans toward immersive experiences, with travellers opting for more extended stays in each destination. "The Northeast, especially Assam and Sikkim, is fast emerging as a popular traveller's choice

for authentic and sustainable travel experiences," he adds.

Nitin also acknowledges the enduring popularity of traditional destinations while observing shifting travel trends. "We have experienced a consistent footfall in the popular destinations of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, with a growing influx to Ladakh, Kashmir, Sikkim, and Karnataka."

Ranju has observed an attraction for the South, "The whole of South India has been popular with our partners. That trend seems to be continuing into 2025."

Noting the strengths of key states, he says, "Rajasthan has always done well, and Kerala has gone way beyond with its wellness story. Madhya Pradesh has put 'Heart of India' on the global map with its tiger story. The rest of the country has shown scattered results."

## Promising International Markets for India

While traditional markets like the USA, UK, and Western Europe remain strong, emerging regions present fresh opportunities.

Anil emphasises the need to attract high-value travellers to India, for which speedy infrastructural development is key. "Scandinavian and Eastern European countries have strong potential, and reopening tourism from China should be a priority given its proximity and traveller base. Commenting on the limited and expensive flights to India, he says, "We must encourage an open skies policy and bring in more international airlines. Direct flights save time and make India a more convenient destination." He also explains the importance of issuing long-term visas to international visitors. "Similar to the 10-year US visa, it will encourage repeat visits. India deserves many repeats - one for the North, one for the South, and one for Ladakh, if not a fourth for the Northeast!" Anil also shares his faith in the high potential of Incentive Travel to India and Wildlife Tourism, which can be a game changer in India's tourism story.

Nitin believes it is time we shifted focus from conventional markets to newer regions. He elucidates, "Our tourism authorities have concentrated on the USA, UK, Australia, Western and Southern Europe for years. It is time to target emerging markets like Latin America, Eastern Europe, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia."

Ranju mentions two key markets that demand greater focus, "Australia and the USA should be a top priority in India's inbound tourism strategy." With strong spending power and a keen interest in culture, heritage, and unique experiences, travellers from these regions represent a significant opportunity.

Vishwas also highlights the spending power and travel preferences of particular regions. "North America, the UK, and select Latin American countries show significant interest in India's mystical stories. These are high-spending travellers who prefer premium accommodations and unique experiences. Once they visit, they become India's best ambassadors. The UK, in particular, has a deep-rooted connection with India and a strong appetite for culture, nature, and wildlife."

Munish sees an untapped opportunity in the East European countries. "They hold immense potential, but India has not been easily accessible to them. With better airline connectivity and strategic promotions, these markets could drive a new wave of inbound travellers in the coming years," he shares.

## India's Tourism Future Hinges on Action, Not Potential

India's inbound tourism holds immense potential, but realising sustained success demands strategic action. To secure a larger share of the global tourism market, the country must go beyond effective marketing and actively reshape outdated perceptions that limit its growth. By offering compelling reasons for international travellers to visit, extend their stay, and return, India can fully leverage its unparalleled diversity to its advantage. However, potential alone cannot drive numbers. The way forward demands a synchronised effort between policymakers and industry leaders who truly understand and can deliver the magic of India.

Munish concludes with a candid call to urgently revive and revamp the Incredible India brand. He emphasises, "Without greater government investment, India risks losing its competitive edge. The responsibility of promoting the country globally cannot rest solely on inbound operators, who are already struggling with financial constraints from GST taxation and limited resources. If enhancing India's global image is left entirely to us, then only god can help us."

The message from industry leaders is clear: India must reclaim its global standing with a bold, government-backed push and make India truly incredible again!



# Trade traffic jams for train tracks— ride with LNER.

London ↔ York (1 hr 53 min)

Edinburgh ↔ Inverness (3 hr 34 min)

London ↔ Newcastle (3 hr 08 min)

York ↔ Aberdeen (5 hr 20 min)

London ↔ Leeds (2 hr 14 min)

York ↔ Edinburgh (2 hr 25 min)

Book your train journeys on [agent.raileurope.com](https://agent.raileurope.com)

📞 Rail Europe GSA

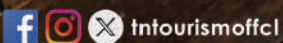
✉️ [sales@raileurope.com](mailto:sales@raileurope.com)



*"The Heart of Madurai, The Soul of Devotion"*  
**MEENAKSHI AMMAN TEMPLE**



[tamilnadutourism.tn.gov.in](http://tamilnadutourism.tn.gov.in)



Intourismoffcl



Tamil Nadu Tourism

CIRCUIT OF  
MADURAI - TIRUCHENDUR - RAMESWARAM

# Experience Tamil Nadu

LIKE NEVER BEFORE

**50+**

Hotels with  
High Class  
Restaurants  
across Tamil Nadu

**HOTELS & RESORTS**

**TOUR PACKAGES**

**50+**

Attractive  
Tour Packages  
to explore

**BOAT HOUSES**

**10+**

Amazing  
Recreational  
Boat Houses

**10+**

Astounding  
Conference Halls,  
Event Spaces &  
Lawns

**EVENTS & FAIRS**



**SCAN TO BOOK  
TOUR PACKAGES**

**WWW.TTDCONLINE.COM | 1800 4253 1111**



© Tourism Australia

# Australia Calling!

## Discover the REAL down under

In a strategic move to strengthen travel ties between Australia and India, three of the country's leading state tourism boards, including Tourism Northern Territory, the South Australian Tourism Commission, and VisitCanberra, recently brought a slice of Down Under to Delhi and Mumbai through an engaging series of roadshows. Speaking exclusively to T TJ, senior representatives from each board shed light on the strategic vision behind this collaboration, emphasising the rich diversity of experiences awaiting Indian travellers. They also highlighted the increasing role of the Indian market in shaping Australia’s tourism growth, reinforcing a shared commitment to fostering stronger tourism ties and seamless travel experiences between the two nations.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

The numbers tell a compelling story of India's rising importance as a key source market for Australia. Arrivals from India for the year ending November 2024 reached a record

434,000, reflecting a 12 per cent increase from the previous year. Additionally, Indian travellers spent A\$2.3 billion on Australian tourism experiences in the year ending September 2024, an 8 per cent rise

compared to the prior year. India retained its position as Australia’s fifth-largest inbound market for arrivals and spending, reinforcing its status as a dynamic and promising growth segment.

## Unlocking the Northern Territory's Potential in India



▲ Emily Hill

As global travel patterns evolve, the Northern Territory is turning its focus to new markets, with India emerging as a key priority. Emily Hill, International Markets Manager Tourism Northern Territory, noted, “Traditionally, our key visitors have come from Western countries like the UK, US, and Europe, but India, along with Japan and Korea, presents immense growth potential.” Indian arrivals to Australia surpassed pre-COVID levels at 483,000 last year, and though the Northern Territory currently captures only a small share of this market, Emily is optimistic that with the right strategy, this number will grow significantly in the coming years.

### The Regional Attractions

The Northern Territory is divided into two distinct regions. The Top End is tropical and lush, featuring stunning waterfalls, national

parks, and abundant wildlife. In contrast, the Red Centre offers a quintessential Australian outback experience, home to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Uluru National Park. Emily points out, “Easily accessible from Melbourne and Sydney, a two-night stay in Uluru allows visitors to explore The Rock by segway, camel, or bike, with breathtaking sunrises and sunsets. Dining under the stars with Indigenous cuisine is simply unforgettable. Three hours away, Kings Canyon offers the stunning Rim Walk—ideal for adventure seekers.” Emily suggests the must-visit wonders of Kakadu National Park, another UNESCO-listed location. It showcases breathtaking waterfalls, ancient rock art and immersive cultural experiences. The region’s deep-rooted Aboriginal heritage adds to its outback attraction. In the heart of the Red Centre, travellers can engage with the Anangu people, who bring their traditions to life



Darwin, Top End, Northern Territory

through storytelling and traditional art, offering an unforgettable connection to Australia's Indigenous culture.

Emily describes the Northern Territory as ideal for travellers seeking soft adventure. She explains, "It is for those wanting to get off the beaten path—self-driving, exploring national parks, and learning about our indigenous culture. It is less for shopping or city experiences but offers the true Australian outback." She believes it is the perfect attraction for Indian visitors looking for adventure, culture, and a better understanding of Australia's heritage.

### Indian Traveller Requirements

Emily recognised the challenges of accommodating Indian travellers' dietary preferences, stating, "We are fully aware of

this challenge. However, as a multicultural city, Darwin provides a diverse culinary scene with strong Southeast Asian influences, making it less of an issue. But vegetarian options are always available in more remote areas like Kakadu and Uluru National Parks, though traditional Indian cuisine can be harder to find," she noted.

Emily outlined the tourism board's efforts to educate local operators, saying, "While we cannot dictate the cuisine offered, we are working closely with key operators to emphasise the importance of catering to Indian visitors." She highlighted the focus at Uluru, noting, "We are specifically working with Voyagers at Uluru to ensure Indian cuisine is available, as we know many Indian travellers visit their five resorts."

### Reinforcing Trade Partnerships

Emily outlined a renewed focus on engaging Indian travel operators. She said, "Pre-COVID, we regularly visited the market for sales calls. Since then, we have only attended Tourism Australia's Marketplace. We need to educate our trade partners in India, attend events, conduct webinars, and run familiarisation trips (FAMs). Last year, we organised a FAM specifically for Indian trade to experience the Top End. Tourism Australia's Marketplace in August will be an important opportunity." Emily further emphasised the importance of Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs), noting that travel agents can only promote what is accessible through their ITO partners, making strong partnerships essential for the industry's success.

## South Australia 'Hits a Six' with Indian Tourists



▲ Martin Kaesler

South Australia is capitalising on India's cricket passion while offering a rich blend of cultural, culinary, and wildlife experiences. Martin Kaesler, Manager of Global Markets at the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC), highlighted India's growing presence in South Australia, with arrivals surpassing pre-pandemic levels. He shared, "We have recorded 25,000 Indian arrivals till September 2024, exceeding the 24,000 arrivals of pre-pandemic 2019." Fuelled by the 'visiting friends and relatives' (VFR) segment and growing connectivity, India's outbound to South Australia is on an upward trajectory. "The momentum is strong, and we expect continued growth as awareness and accessibility improve," Martin added.

### 'World's First' and 'Only-In' Experiences

Centrally located and well-connected, South

Australia is the perfect gateway to exploring the country. It is a given that the Adelaide Oval is the star attraction for most Indian visitors, but beyond its cricketing magic, it does have a lot more to offer. Renowned for its 'world-firsts and only-In experiences,' it is home to 18 renowned wine regions and also the birthplace of Australian wine, deliciously complemented by exceptional local produce. Travellers can sip century-old wine in the Barossa Valley or explore the avant-garde D'Arenberg Cube. Apart from its vineyards, the state offers unparalleled wildlife encounters, from koalas in the Adelaide Hills to open-range safaris at Monarto Safari Park, the only largest of its kind park outside Africa. The safari park is set to introduce luxury lodges and tented stays soon. Meanwhile, Kangaroo Island, a wildlife haven seven times the size of Singapore, features kangaroos, sea lions, lavender farms, and eucalyptus distilleries.



Beyond its landscapes and attractions, South Australia’s true charm lies in its people—passionate tourism operators dedicated to crafting authentic and unforgettable experiences.

Strategy for The Indian Market

South Australia is tailoring its approach to the Indian market by leveraging its strong cricket connection, self-drive experiences, and intimate tourism offerings. Martin highlighted Adelaide Oval as a significant draw for Indian visitors, with its rich cricket legacy, the Sir Donald Bradman Collection, and the thrilling stadium Roof Climb offering panoramic city views.

Self-drive tourism is a key focus, making South Australia ideal for first-time Indian travellers as the region’s well-connected road network encourages exploration. From gourmet picnics on Kangaroo Island to

boutique operators offering immersive nature and wildlife experiences, South Australia thrives on smaller, personalised tourism operators, ensuring deeper engagement. Beyond Adelaide, the Outback and Eyre Peninsula also provide unique adventure opportunities.

The state’s Indian diaspora plays a crucial role in promoting tourism. “They actively showcase South Australia to visiting friends and family, acting as our on-ground ambassadors,” Martin explained, making VFR (Visiting Friends & Relatives) travel a key growth driver.

Beyond leisure, South Australia is expanding into business events and incentive travel. “Adelaide offers diverse, easily accessible experiences, making it an attractive destination for larger corporate groups,” Martin added.

Strengthening Trade Ties

South Australia is strengthening ties with Indian travel operators, partnering with Tourism Northern Territory and VisitCanberra to reconnect with the market. Martin shared, “India is a key market with immense long-term potential. Hence, collaborations with inbound tour operators and DMCs are crucial in understanding this market,” To refine its approach, SATC supports Tourism Australia’s campaigns and the Aussie Specialist Program while enhancing airline partnerships, including Singapore Airlines, to boost connectivity.

SATC also invests in industry training through programmes like India Host with the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC), ensuring businesses are well-prepared to welcome Indian travellers. With a targeted, collaborative strategy, South Australia is building a strong foundation for sustained Indian market growth.

Weaving Canberra into the Itinerary



▲ Sarah Staruszkiewicz

As Indian travellers expand their horizons beyond Australia’s iconic cities and coastlines, Canberra is stepping into the

spotlight and emerging as a must-visit destination. Sarah Staruszkiewicz, Director International Partnerships at VisitCanberra, observed, “India is a key market for us. We saw strong growth before COVID-19, and now, as travel rebounds, the momentum is returning. What we offer truly resonates with Indian travellers as it provides an opportunity to see a very different side of Australia.” With a unique blend of culture, history, and nature, Canberra offers an enriching depth to any Australian itinerary.

The Australian Capital

Canberra, Australia’s capital, is unlike any major city. It is a meticulously planned urban centre, designed by American architects Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, who won an international competition. “Interestingly, Walter Burley Griffin is buried in Lucknow, India—so there is a unique connection between the two nations,” she noted. As the cultural heart of Australia, it houses national museums and galleries

that tell its unique story, with the Parliament House being one of the highlights.

Built around the Australian bush, Canberra blends nature with city life. “It offers a relaxed contrast to Australia’s bustling cities. With just 500,000 residents, it is easy to navigate, and visitors can pack a lot into their itinerary,” Sarah shared.

Canberra is rapidly emerging as an offbeat destination for Indian travellers seeking more than Australia’s major cities. “We offer a different side of Australia—immersive, authentic, and rich in culture,” Sarah noted. The city’s top attractions include Parliament House, where visitors can take guided tours and witness live sessions, and the National Gallery of Australia, home to the world’s largest collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation offers an immersive ‘Walk on Country’ experience, where visitors meet Elders, hear ancestral stories, and gain insights into Indigenous ways of life.



Australian Parliament House, Canberra

© VisitCanberra

Families will find plenty to do, from Tree Tops Adventure Park to the National Dinosaur Museum and Questacon. Canberra's skies come alive year-round with hot air ballooning, peaking in March during the Balloon Festival when 30 balloons take flight. For a unique vantage point, GoBoats on the lake provide a stunning waterside view. Sarah pointed out, "Canberra is a fantastic family-friendly destination with unique experiences and accessibility; the capital is becoming a must-visit for Indian travellers looking beyond the usual hotspots."

### Multicultural Culinary Excellence

Canberra's vibrant culinary ambience offers many regional cool-climate wines and exciting dining options, making it an ideal destination for Indian travellers with specific dietary preferences. "As Australia's capital, we host over 100 embassies and high commissions, which has shaped Canberra into a truly multicultural city. This cultural diversity is reflected in the city's food, where visitors can find an array of global cuisines, from fine dining to hidden gems in local neighbourhoods. So whether you are looking for vegetarian, vegan, or even halal options, Canberra has it all! From authentic

Indian eateries to international hot spots, the city ensures every traveller can enjoy a taste of home while exploring something new," Sarah observed.

### Beyond Trade Shows

Raising awareness about Canberra's tourism offerings requires a multi-faceted approach. "We already run a small brand campaign on digital channels in Bangalore, Mumbai, and Delhi," Sarah explained.

In addition, Sarah shared, "Canberra maintains strong engagement with trade partners and the media. We collaborate with the trade, establish strategic partnerships, and work with a dedicated PR agency in India. We continuously pitch ideas, host the media, and ensure Canberra stays top of mind." Concluding on an upbeat note, Sarah said, "Our objective is clear - When someone decides to visit Australia, we want them to think, 'I have heard of Canberra, and I want to see more!'"



Corin Forest, Canberra

© VisitCanberra



Weston Park, Canberra

© VisitCanberra

# Chhattisgarh on the path to becoming India's emerging tourism hotspot

Chhattisgarh has carved a niche on India's tourist map, positioning itself as a destination 'full of surprises' with a wide range of attractions and immense potential for tourism growth. Vivek Acharya (IFS), Managing Director, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, is on a mission to elevate the state's tourism to new heights, relentlessly shaping its success story with bold vision and ambition.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

**D**espite being a relatively young state, Chhattisgarh has seen immense development in its tourism sector and offers tourism opportunities for every kind of traveller. The state's exhaustive tourism offerings include ancient monuments, rare wildlife, stunning temples, Buddhist sites, waterfalls, caves, rock paintings, and dense forests.

## Tourism Focus

With nearly 45 per cent of its land covered in forests and home to 32 per cent tribal population, the state offers vast opportunities for niche Eco-Ethno, adventure, and cultural tourism. Acharya notes, "Religious tourism is emerging as a major attraction, with significant Buddhist, Vaishnavite, and Jain sites. A lesser known fact is that some of the most beautiful Jain temples in the country are found here."

Adventure tourism is also thriving. Acharya proudly remarks, "Dudhmaras in Bastar received the National Award for Best Adventure Tourism Village and is the only place in India recognised by the United Nations' upgrade programme. In 2024, It was selected as one of the 60 Best Rural Tribal Villages worldwide and is the only Indian village to make the list."

Additionally, thematic tourism is gaining traction, with Chhattisgarh's 'rich ethnic and tribal culture' drawing increasing interest. "In today's urban world, people seek authentic cultural experiences, and Chhattisgarh offers just that," Acharya noted. Film tourism is also rapidly expanding in Chhattisgarh, attracting filmmakers and offering fans a chance to visit iconic shooting locations.

## Charms of Chhattisgarh

According to Acharya, the state harmoniously integrates nature, culture, and wellness. He recommends, "Topping the list of must-see tourist spots include Chitrakoot Waterfalls, famously known



▲ Vivek Acharya

as the 'Niagara Falls of India' where visitors can stay right by the cascading waters for an unforgettable experience. Barnawapara, home to a thriving wildlife sanctuary, also houses ancient Buddhist monasteries and flourishing wellness tourism. The Five Lotus wellness retreat, known for its Ayurveda therapies, makes this a must-visit destination."

Next on the list is Saroda Dadar in Kawardha district, a scenic stopover from Raipur to Kanha. The hill station of Mainpat, often referred to as 'Chhota Shimla', is Chhattisgarh's only hill station. Amarkantak is a pilgrim town at the border of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, revered for its spiritual significance and breathtaking landscapes.

"Rajim stands out as the site of an annual Kalp Kumbh, similar to the one held in Prayagraj. This sacred town, located at the confluence of three rivers, attracts thousands of devotees each year, making it a significant pilgrimage hub," mentions Acharya. The list of things to see and do

in Chhattisgarh is exhaustive, and it is truly a land of diversity, from breathtaking landscapes to deep-rooted heritage," Acharya affirms.

## Serious about Sustainability

Kapoor emphasises its critical role in Chhattisgarh's tourism vision regarding sustainability. "Sustainability is our top priority. We follow strict eco-tourism guidelines, ensuring visitors 'take back only memories' while preserving our forests and water bodies. Development in eco-tourism zones is carefully regulated to protect their natural integrity. "These places are here to stay for generations, and we are very particular about maintaining them," Acharya affirms. Recognising the need for sustainable growth, Chhattisgarh Tourism integrates carrying capacity analysis to ensure responsible resource utilisation while preserving its rich natural and cultural heritage.

## The Business of Tourism

Acharya says Chhattisgarh is actively working to boost tourism by leasing out key assets to private players. He notes, "The biggest milestone is that tourism has been granted industry status in our state, making Chhattisgarh one of just 12 states in India to achieve this. We are offering subsidies to investors and have embraced the PPP model, inviting tourism-focused investors to partner in the state's development."

Among the key focus areas are wellness tourism, adventure tourism, and eco-tourism, which drive the state's tourism strategy. Acharya explains, "To promote these segments, we are running marketing campaigns, organising familiarisation trips, and hosting roadshows." Chhattisgarh is also making its presence felt globally. "We recently participated in FITUR in Spain and SATTE 2025 and will be attending other major international tourism events to amplify the state's tourism potential," he concludes.

# RANGOTSAV

*Celebrating the Vibrant Festival of Colours in Braj Region.*



Holi, a vibrant festival, is celebrated grandly in Uttar Pradesh's Braj region. Known as Rangotsav, the festivities in Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, and Nandgaon span ten days, honouring the love of Lord Krishna and Radha with colours symbolizing joy and devotion.

A highlight of the celebrations is the famous Lathmar Holi of Barsana and Nandgaon, where women playfully chase men with sticks, re-enacting Krishna's legendary visit to Radha's village. Vrindavan's Banke Bihari Temple opens with Phoolon ki Holi, showering devotees with flowers, while Mathura's Dwarkadhish Temple hosts grand processions and Rasleela performances.

A significant addition is Widow's Holi in Vrindavan, breaking societal taboos and promoting inclusion. Another unique tradition is Laddoo Holi, where devotees joyfully throw sweets.

Beyond colours, Rangotsav features folk music, Krishna-centric performances, and festive delicacies like thandai and gujiya. The Braj region becomes a vibrant canvas of love and spirituality, making it a truly divine experience.



**Uttar Pradesh  
Tourism App.**

# Goa offers travellers a richer, more immersive experience with hinterland tourism

In a conversation with Rajesh Kale, Deputy Director, South Zone, Goa Tourism, he discusses the state's evolving focus on hinterland and sustainable tourism. He emphasises initiatives to promote rural exploration and homestays while outlining strategies to manage over-tourism. Additionally, he shares insights into international promotions and charter tourism, all designed to diversify visitor experiences and elevate Goa's global appeal.

Prashant Nayak

Once synonymous with its beautiful beaches, vibrant nightlife, and party scene, Goa is now shifting its focus to promote its rich hinterland, wildlife, culture, and heritage, offering a more well-rounded and immersive tourism experience.

## Promoting Hinterland for Sustainable Tourism

The concept of "Beyond the Beach" tourism in Goa has gained traction in recent years as travellers increasingly seek more diverse experiences beyond the coastal attractions. Rajesh explains, "Goa has decided to shift its focus towards promoting the hinterland, which offers visitors a unique and enriching experience. We are actively encouraging homestays and hinterland tourism in Goa. This shift is in response to changing tourist preferences, with many travellers now seeking nature-based experiences. Goa's hinterland provides an incredible opportunity to explore a different side of the state."

Goa's diverse landscape extends beyond its beaches, offering rich hinterland experiences, including Sattari, Pernem, Bicholim, Canacona, Sanguem, Ponda, Quepem, and Sanvordem. Efforts are also being made to promote sustainable experiences, like spice plantations, wildlife sanctuaries, and rural villages, helping distribute tourism benefits to less-visited regions.

## Empowering Rural Goa

Goa's Homestay and B&B Policy aim to standardise services and boost rural tourism by offering visitors a chance to stay in calm, nature-filled environments. Homestays not only offer an affordable way for tourists to explore Goa's hinterland but also create job opportunities for locals, encouraging them to stay in their communities rather than migrate to cities for work. Rajesh adds, "We have schemes in place for homestay entrepreneurs. Once they register, they become eligible for monetary benefits



▲ Rajesh Kale

after a certain period. Many women entrepreneurs are also actively involved in this initiative. The government is also streamlining the registration process as part of its ease of doing business policy, ensuring compliance."

## Proactively Tackling Overtourism

While Goa's picturesque beaches remain a major attraction for many visitors, the state's tourism office is taking proactive steps to manage crowds and promote responsible, sustainable tourism practices. Rajesh explains, "Over-tourism is also one of the reasons we want tourists to explore the lesser-known, hidden gems of Goa and discover the hinterland, which is home to numerous rivers, waterfalls, and water bodies that are ideal for adventure activities."

The state is also closely monitoring beach activities, water sports, and adventure tourism, which often contribute to overcrowding at popular tourist spots. To address this, Goa Tourism is implementing measures to regulate the number of operators, limit certain activities, or relocate them to less-crowded areas. "We

have stopped registering new water sports activities for now. Our goal is first to assess the carrying capacity of our water resources. Once this assessment is complete, we will begin registering activities again. If some areas continue to be overcrowded, we will shift these activities to other, less populated locations," informs Rajesh.

## Goa's Global and Domestic Tourism Outreach

Goa has actively participated in numerous international exhibitions to promote tourism, ensuring its presence is felt globally. The focus is broad, targeting a variety of potential markets. Over the past few years, Goa has organised roadshows in cities such as Frankfurt, Vienna, Zurich, Warsaw, Almaty, Tbilisi, Doha, and Riyadh. Additionally, Goa Tourism actively participates in renowned exhibitions like IFMT Paris, ITB Berlin, WTM London, Singapore, FITUR Madrid, BTL Lisbon, ATM Dubai, and TITF Tashkent.

Rajesh states, "Goa participates in all major international events. For example, we just did a roadshow in Japan, and in March, we are organising a roadshow in South Korea. We will also be present at ITB Berlin, ATM Dubai, and MITT Moscow. Domestically, we organise numerous roadshows and attend exhibitions to attract more visitors to Goa, and we get tourists from all across the country. Goa is now an all-year destination, and its popularity is unmatched."

## The Growing Charter Flight Trend

Charter flights for tourism to Goa began in the early 1990s, marking a significant rise in international tourism. After a hiatus of nearly 22 months due to COVID-19, Goa welcomed its first batch of 159 foreign tourists in 2021. Rajesh says, "Now, we receive a substantial number of charter tourists despite the wars in West Asia and Europe. The schedule for new charter flights from Russia, Poland, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the UK indicates that Goa is a top priority destination for foreign holidaymakers."



## EXPLORING THE SACRED **TEMPLES** OF VRINDAVAN

# A JOURNEY OF **DEVOTION**

Vrindavan, a sacred town in Uttar Pradesh, holds deep spiritual significance as the childhood abode of Lord Krishna. Rooted in Hindu scriptures, it attracts millions of pilgrims seeking a deep spiritual experience. One of the most revered temples is the Banke Bihari Temple, where unique traditions prevent prolonged eye contact with the deity due to Krishna's powerful gaze. The temple resonates with ecstatic devotion and devotional music.

The ISKCON Temple, built in 1975, is a hub for Gaudiya Vaishnavism, housing idols of Krishna and Balaram. Melodious kirtans and spiritual discourses make it a centre for learning and devotion.

The Prem Mandir, built of white marble, features intricate carvings, light displays, and animated depictions of Krishna's pastimes, offering a mesmerizing experience.

The ancient Radha Raman Temple, established in 1542, houses a self-manifested Krishna idol. The Madan Mohan Temple, one of the oldest, provides a tranquil setting for meditation. Vrindavan's temples offer a transformative journey into Krishna consciousness.



Uttar Pradesh  
Tourism App.

# Air Astana's Direct Almaty-Mumbai Flights to Enhance Connectivity and Growth

Celebrating its 20th anniversary of flight operations between Almaty and Delhi in 2024, Air Astana continues to reinforce its position as a key connector between Kazakhstan and India. Alan Atamkulov, Country Manager for India and the Indian Subcontinent at Air Astana, highlights the airline's strategic expansion and growing presence in India. With the launch of direct flights to Mumbai, competitive fares, and enhanced traveller experiences, the airline is committed to making Kazakhstan a preferred destination for both business and leisure travellers from India.

Sonika Bohra

Since entering the market in 2004, the airline has steadily expanded its presence and is now set to launch direct flights between Mumbai and Almaty on April 20, 2025, further strengthening connectivity alongside its existing Delhi services.

The recent opening of the new international terminal at Almaty International Airport and the introduction of 'The Shanyrak,' an exclusive business lounge for Business Class passengers and Nomad Club elite members further elevate the travel experience.

### Excellence and Expansion

As the largest airline group in Central Asia and the Caucasus in terms of revenue and fleet size, Air Astana operates one of the youngest fleets globally, consisting of 58 aircraft. The airline group comprises Air Astana, a full-service carrier launched in 2002, and FlyArystan, its low-cost airline established in 2019.

Air Astana's network spans Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Far East, the Middle East, India, and Europe, offering scheduled and transit flights, along with cargo services. The airline continuously strengthens its fleet with new aircraft, driving operational growth and service excellence. "Air Astana has been recognised 12 times in a row as the 'Best Airline in Central Asia and CIS' at the Skytrax World Airline Awards and has earned a five-star rating in the major airline category by APEX," informs Alan.



▲ Alan Atamkulov

### Bridging Central Asia and India

Since its inaugural flight to India 20 years ago, Air Astana has witnessed steady growth and strong passenger demand. As of September 2024, the airline has served over 1 million passengers between the two countries, transported more than 9 million tonnes of cargo, and completed over 10,000 landings.

"We provide seamless connections for travellers from India to key destinations such as Bishkek, Tashkent, Baku, Tbilisi, and Batumi with competitive fares and the added advantage of visa-free entry into Kazakhstan," Alan shares.

"The visa-free policy for Indian citizens has significantly boosted tourism, making it easier for visitors to explore Kazakhstan year-round, whether for winter sports or summer adventures," adds Alan.

### Strengthening India-Kazakhstan Relations

The introduction of direct Almaty-Mumbai flights is a strategic move driven by growing market demand. Operating three times a week, the new route enhances connectivity between India and Kazakhstan, fostering trade, investment, and tourism.

The strengthening of economic and business ties between the two nations has unlocked new opportunities for commerce. Alan shares, "We believe that Mumbai's business community and tourists will enjoy Air Astana's award-winning in-flight service, seamless connections to its growing network, and access to Kazakhstan's rich cultural, historical, and natural sights. Moreover, the visa-free policy for Indian citizens, combined with a short 4.5-hour flight from Mumbai, offers added convenience for short visits and extended stays. We look forward to welcoming passengers on board this new route."

### Kazakhstan: A Diverse Destination for Indian Travellers

Kazakhstan is rapidly gaining popularity among Indian travellers, offering a unique mix of nature, adventure, history, and modern city experiences. With Air Astana Group's





Air Astana crew



Business Class



The Shanyrak Lounge

extensive domestic network, Indian tourists can seamlessly explore the country's most captivating regions.

Almaty, Kazakhstan's cultural and financial centre, is surrounded by the stunning Tien Shan mountains. Just a short 30-minute drive from the city, travellers can visit the renowned Shymbulak Ski Resort for winter sports or enjoy ice skating at the world's highest outdoor rink—Medeo. Almaty also offers fine international dining with a variety of Indian restaurants, shopping, and a cultural and nightlife experience. Astana, the futuristic capital, has striking modern architecture, including landmarks such as Baitebek, Khan Shatyr, and the EXPO complex. While ideal for business travellers, the city also offers rich cultural experiences, including the National Museum and Grand Mosques.

For those seeking history and heritage, Turkistan is home to the UNESCO-listed Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, one of Central Asia's most significant spiritual sites. Aktau, located along the Caspian Sea, offers a unique beachside experience and the surreal landscapes of the Mangystau area. Meanwhile, Oskemen is a paradise for nature lovers, featuring lakes, forests, and the beautiful Altai Mountain scenery, making

it a perfect destination for eco-tourism and adventure travel.

While Alan highlighted the above destinations, he also emphasised the airline's efforts in promoting the country. He says, "Air Astana actively promotes the country as both a travel destination and a transit hub. We collaborate with local and international tourism boards to enhance Kazakhstan's global visibility and highlight its diverse attractions to a wider audience through strategic partnerships, joint marketing initiatives, and promotional campaigns."

### Driving Growth

With direct flights, competitive fares, and a visa-free regime, Kazakhstan is gaining traction as an attractive destination for both business and leisure travellers. To further strengthen the country's global visibility, the airline collaborates with travel agencies, tour operators, and online travel platforms to develop tailored Kazakhstan travel packages for various traveller segments, including honeymooners, adventure seekers, business travellers, and luxury tourists. Almaty is also being positioned as a key MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination, with its modern infrastructure and stunning natural surroundings making it an ideal choice for corporate events.

"Air Astana is always exploring new opportunities to expand its network and is evaluating the potential for additional direct routes to key global markets. We remain committed to offering competitive fares with award-winning service, ensuring a seamless travel experience," states Alan.

### Evolving with Travellers' Expectations

Globally, the world is becoming more connected than ever, with countries introducing visa-free or visa-on-arrival policies to boost incoming tourism. Kazakhstan's visa-free regime for Indian travellers is a prime example of how nations are encouraging seamless travel.

"Travel is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity for business, education, and personal enrichment. As these trends continue, airlines will innovate and enhance the passenger experience to meet evolving expectations. Air Astana welcomes the opportunities in this dynamic landscape and remains focused on expanding our network, refining service quality, and making international travel more accessible for passengers from India and beyond," concludes Alan.



# Emirates builds on its strong foundations of world-class service and sustainability initiatives

Emirates continues to soar to new heights, blending impeccable service with groundbreaking innovations. Speaking with TTJ, Mohammad Sarhan, Vice President, India and Nepal, Emirates Airlines, unveils the airline's impressive achievements in 2024 and ambitious roadmap for 2025.

Prashant Nayak

In 2024, Emirates made significant strides by expanding its fleet with the fuel-efficient Airbus A350 and introducing a new Premium Economy class across key routes, which received positive feedback. The airline expanded its global presence by launching multiple Travel Stores, integrating advanced digital technologies for a seamless retail experience. Additionally, new Emirates Lounges opened at key airports, including London Stansted and Jeddah, while existing lounges, such as Paris Charles De Gaulle, underwent renovations. As part of its US \$4 billion retrofit programme, Emirates introduced Premium Economy cabins on more flights. The airline extended its partnership with the ICC for another eight years to further enhance brand visibility.

## Connecting Continents

In 2024, Emirates also launched operations to Bogotá, Colombia, and Antananarivo, Madagascar. The Bogotá route caters to high demand on the Miami-Bogotá route, with Emirates being the only airline offering First Class services. The Madagascar flight is linked via Mahe, Seychelles, allowing leisure travellers to plan vacations to two popular destinations in one trip. They recently introduced their newest Emirates A350 aircraft on the Mumbai and Ahmedabad routes. Mohammad shares, "These choices align with increasing passenger demand, trade relationships, and emerging tourism markets. The focus remains on enhancing connectivity and ensuring a seamless travel experience for our customers. In the coming months we are set to launch new destinations, further strengthening our global network."

## Unmatched Luxury, Seamless Connectivity

Emirates continues to enhance its services to meet evolving passenger needs. The airline's flexible booking options, such as the Flex Plus Fare, allow easy trip modifications, while their industry-leading hygiene protocols ensure high onboard cleanliness standards. The airline has elevated its in-flight experience with healthier, vegan meal options, advanced entertainment through a partnership with



▲ Mohammad Sarhan

Spotify, and improved connectivity. The new Emirates A350 features 4K screens and faster Wi-Fi. Emirates is also committed to accessible travel, working toward becoming the world's first Autism Certified Airline™, offering tailored experiences for passengers with autism and sensory sensitivities, ensuring a seamless journey for them.

Emirates differentiates itself through superior service, innovation, and an unmatched global network. In 2024, the airline once again won the 'Best Airline in the World' award at the prestigious ULTRAs. "Our commitment to stay at the forefront of customer experience, complemented by cutting-edge onboard amenities and premium lounges, ensures an unparalleled journey. We continue investing in fleet modernisation, digital transformation, and sustainability initiatives to maintain a competitive edge. Our customer loyalty programme, Emirates Skywards, remains a key retention driver, offering exclusive benefits that add significant value for frequent travellers," says Mohammad.

## Strengthening India Connectivity with A350

India remains a cornerstone of Emirates' global network, with substantial passenger traffic and trade links driving growth. They recently commenced their A350 operations

in Mumbai and Ahmedabad on Republic Day. Mohammad comments, "Both cities are among the few initial destinations the aircraft is being rolled out to, signifying how important India is to us. We hope to cater to the high-demand routes and explore additional destinations. We anticipate continued growth, fuelled by a rising middle class, strong business ties, and increased outbound leisure travel."

## Leading the Way in Sustainable Aviation Practices

Emirates is prioritising sustainability with several initiatives to reduce its environmental impact. These include investments in fuel-efficient aircraft, optimised flight routes, and single-engine taxiing to lower emissions. The airline is expanding the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) at major airports like London Heathrow, Amsterdam Schiphol, and Singapore Changi.

Mohamad mentioned, "We have also become the first international carrier to join aireg, supporting local SAF production in Germany. Additionally, Emirates fully acquired Bustanica, the world's largest indoor vertical farm, capable of growing over 1 million kg of leafy greens annually while using 95 per cent less water." The Emirates Group's ongoing environmental initiatives focus on reducing emissions, consuming responsibly, and preserving wildlife and habitats.

## Strategic Focus for 2025

Looking ahead to 2025, Emirates is focused on navigating challenges and seizing opportunities in an evolving travel landscape. Despite challenges like reducing carbon emissions, unstable supply chains, geopolitical uncertainties, and evolving regulations, the airline is prepared to address them with agility and strategic foresight. "Our 2025 strategy centres around four key priorities: fleet expansion, digital transformation, customer experience enhancement, and sustainability," says Mohammad. As part of their 'Fly Better' commitment, they look forward to another year of enhancing their products, services, and route network to connect Dubai to the world seamlessly.



# WHAT MAKES A CORPORATE EVENT TRULY UNFORGETTABLE?

It's not just about venues and itineraries,  
it's about experiences that inspire, connect, and drive success!

## GLOBAL CONNECT – THE MICE INDUSTRY LEADERS

From high-energy corporate retreats to power-packed business conventions, we turn ideas into extraordinary moments.

### GLOBAL CONNECT Travels Pvt. Ltd.

**Head Office:-** 302, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor DDA – 5 Building, District Center, Janak Puri, New Delhi - 110058.  
Tel.: +91 9711876000, +919873361557

**Branches:** Delhi | Mumbai | Bangalore | Telangana | J & K | Tamil Nadu | Haryana | Uttar Pradesh | Uttarakhand | Rajasthan | Kerala | West Bengal | Goa

[www.gctravels.in](http://www.gctravels.in) | [www.Facebook.com/gct2013](https://www.Facebook.com/gct2013) | [www.linkedin.com/company/globalconnecttravels](https://www.linkedin.com/company/globalconnecttravels)



## WHY CHOOSE US?

- ✓ Flawless execution across the globe. ✓ Trusted by top corporates & industry leaders.
- ✓ Custom-curated experiences for maximum impact.

## YOU FOCUS ON GROWTH, WE HANDLE THE REST!

*Let's make your next event exceptional!*



# Virgin Atlantic Demonstrates Confidence in India's Long-Term Potential as Global Aviation Hub

In an insightful conversation with Shivani Singh Deo, Country Manager, India, Virgin Atlantic, we delve into the airline’s bold expansion plans for 2025 and its deep insights into the Indian market. Virgin Atlantic is elevating the customer experience through cutting-edge fleet technology, personalized services, and a strong commitment to sustainable aviation, while further expanding its connectivity between India, the UK, and beyond.

Prashant Nayak

The year 2024 was a dynamic year for the Indian aviation sector, marked by a robust increase in both domestic and international travel. This positive momentum underscores India's resilience and potential as a key market for Virgin Atlantic.

### The India Growth Plan

Virgin Atlantic has ambitious growth plans for 2025, with a million seats available on India routes. Shivani says, “This reflects our confidence in the long-term prospects of this market. Last year, the launch of our direct flights from London Heathrow to Bengaluru and increased capacity for Mumbai further strengthened our network to the UK and the US, offering greater choice and convenience for our customers.



▲ Shivani Singh Deo

In March this year, we will further strengthen our network with the launch of a new direct route between Toronto and London.”

Shivani believes that 2025 will be a pivotal year for Indian aviation as it solidifies its position as a major global aviation hub, driven by increasing demand and infrastructure investments. She mentions, “We are committed to playing a leading role in shaping a more sustainable future for the industry, continuing to bridge cultures and economies between the UK and India and beyond to the US and Canada for years to come.”

### Commitment to Innovation and Premium Experiences

Virgin Atlantic constantly leverages technological advancements and innovations to enhance services and be sustainably profitable. Over the last decade, they have invested billions of dollars in fleet transformation. The airline now operates one of the youngest, cleanest fleets in the sky, with an average aircraft age of just under seven years and 70 per cent of the aircraft being ‘next generation.’ “This will increase to 100 per cent by the beginning of 2027 as we continue to welcome new aircraft such as the A330neo to our fleet. Whenever customers choose Virgin Atlantic, they can be confident they will fly on the most modern aircraft technology available,” Shivani adds.

Virgin Atlantic prides itself on delivering a premium, personalised experience at every stage of the journey. This commitment lies at the heart of their vision to become the most loved travel company, a standard they have set and upheld since day one. This dedication has been recognised through numerous awards. “With 25 years of experience flying to India, we have developed a deep understanding of the market and our customers' preferences. Our customers have always loved flying with us and frequently comment on the quality of service and warmth from our crew on the ground and in the air. They are always

eager for more opportunities to travel with us. We are thrilled to have expanded our presence in India, offering five daily direct services to London Heathrow,” opines Shivani.

### Exclusive In-Flight Comforts

Virgin Atlantic enhances the travel experience for passengers flying from India by ensuring the presence of Indian crew members who speak the local language, providing added comfort and familiarity. Additionally, their onboard menu celebrates India’s rich culinary heritage, offering a delightful fusion of Indian and British flavours at 35,000 feet. For customers’ convenience and entertainment, they offer onboard Wi-Fi, allowing them to stay connected throughout the flight. Plus, their loyalty programme, Flying Club, aims to build deeper, long-lasting relationships with customers by offering greater choice and flexibility, making it easier and more rewarding to fly with points, along with a range of other benefits. Their renowned Clubhouse provides an exclusive experience to all Upper Class and Gold Card members.

### Future-Forward Sustainable Approach

Virgin Atlantic uses technology and innovation to enhance the travel experience for its customers and ensure sustainable profitability. Shivani adds, “Over the past decade, we have invested billions in modernising our fleet with Boeing 787s, Airbus A350s, and A330neos. We are investing heavily in more fuel-efficient aircraft, exploring sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs), and partnering with organisations to offset our carbon emissions. We also utilise advanced flight management technology, including Noise Abatement Departure Procedures and Continuous Descent Approach, to optimise flight paths and minimise noise pollution over sensitive areas. We believe that flying can be both enjoyable and responsible.”

# Pleasure doing Business

IndiGoStretch - our new business cabin - now on Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru flights.



IndiGoStretch your body, mind and imagination.

Fares starting at ₹18,018\*

Book now [goIndiGo.in](https://goIndiGo.in)



T&C apply. \*Lowest all-inclusive one-way fare valid on limited seats.

# India to play key role in Royal Jordanian's strategy to position Jordan as a prime tourism destination

Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) has announced the launch of new non-stop flights connecting Amman with Mumbai in June and New Delhi in September 2025. Karim Makhoul, Chief Commercial Officer, Royal Jordanian, shares more about the airline's exciting plans for India and its efforts to promote Jordan as a unique boutique destination for travellers.

Prashant Nayak

RJ previously operated flights between Amman and Delhi until 2014, when it ceased operations due to high operating costs, fierce regional competition, and regional instability. After a hiatus of over a decade, the airline has now announced plans to resume flights to India in 2025.

## Shifting Gears for Tourism Growth

RJ has undergone significant transformation over the years. Three years ago, the airline implemented an ambitious growth strategy centred around two key pillars: focusing on tourism to Jordan and developing Amman as a leading gateway in the Levant region within the Middle East.

Opening new destinations from Amman, such as London Stansted, Manchester, Berlin, and Moscow, aligns with this strategy to boost tourism into Jordan. "Our newly developed 'Explore Jordan' brand has been instrumental in showcasing the variety and attractiveness of Jordan. In 2024, we welcomed the first five brand-new Embraer E2 jets, which have enhanced the customer experience and supported our sustainable operations," shares Karim.

## Strengthening Focus on India and Asia

Building on its success in promoting tourism to Jordan and establishing Amman as a key gateway, the airline is set to pivot its focus towards Asia in 2025. Karim explains, "Launching new routes from Amman to Mumbai and New Delhi is a key part of our strategy. We are particularly focused on attracting Indian tourists and positioning Jordan as a unique boutique tourism destination for the Indian market."

Karim elaborates on their India operations, "Royal Jordanian aims to double the number of Indian tourists visiting



▲ Karim Makhoul

Jordan in the next two years, from 70,000 to over 140,000. To achieve this, we will start with four weekly flights from Amman to Mumbai in June, followed by flights to New Delhi. I foresee daily services by 2026. Additionally, we are connecting all major cities in India through our interline cooperation with Air India to our new nonstop flights to Jordan."

## Comfort, Innovation and Flexibility

As a full-service airline with 61 years of history and a pioneer in the Middle East, RJ has consistently maintained a strong focus on delivering exceptional customer service at every stage of the journey. On their brand-new A320neo aircraft, along with new leather seats, RJ offers Wi-Fi and inflight entertainment programmes in both Economy and Crown Class and an exceptional onboard dining experience. On another note, Karim adds, "We are a travel agent-friendly airline and highly flexible with our tour operator booking

conditions, which align with our focus on tourism. In a nutshell, we are a boutique airline, representing and promoting Jordan as a unique boutique destination."

## Positioning Amman: A Leading Gateway to the Levant

The Levant region, home to over 120 million people in the Middle East, makes Amman a key gateway for travellers looking for a unique destination such as Jordan. The airline also offers seamless connectivity to more than 48 destinations across the globe. Karim explains, "Our strategy focuses primarily on tourism into Jordan, offering a unique differentiation from other airlines and serving as a key driver for our ambitious growth plans. By 2026, we aim for an average fleet age of under three years, which is crucial for our boutique product positioning and efficient operations."

Looking ahead to 2025, RJ is planning to grow by 25 plus per cent, which, according to Karim, they are likely to achieve with the opening of significant new markets, such as India in Asia and Washington in the US. Karim adds, "The introduction of nearly 20 new aircraft within the next one and a half years is the main priority, which will be the base and fundamental for our sustainable growth. Amman will continue to grow as a connecting hub, while Jordan remains a fascinating tourist destination with strong growth potential."

## Promoting Eco-Friendly Travel

While the airline remains committed to sustainability and eco-friendly operations, Karim highlights that its fleet renewal and expansion, including the A320 Neo family and E2 Embraer jets for narrow-body routes, alongside the new Boeing B787-9 for long-haul flights, will reduce its carbon footprint by over 32 per cent within the next three years.





## Discover. Explore. Experience.

Discover the Arabian Gulf aboard Celestyal Journey & Discovery. Enjoy comfort, authentic experiences, and warm hospitality. Your unforgettable adventure starts here!

**Upgrade Offer: Book inside cabin (IC-Category) & Free upgrade to Ocean View, at no additional cost.**



### 7 Night Desert Days from Doha

from only **US\$128 PP/N**

Doha (Qatar) - Dubai (UAE) - Sir Bani Yas Island (UAE) - Abu Dhabi (UAE) - Khalifa Bin Salman (Bahrain) - Doha (Qatar)

**Dep. dates 2025:** Dec 13, 20, 27

**Dep. dates 2026:** Jan 03, 10, 17, 24, 31 | Feb 07, 14, 21, 28 | Mar 07, 14



### 7 Night Desert Days from Dubai

from only **US\$105 PP/N**

Dubai (UAE) | Sir Bani Yas Island (UAE) | Abu Dhabi (UAE) | Khalifa Bin Salman (Bahrain) | Doha (Qatar) | Dubai (UAE)

**Dep. dates 2025:** Dec 08, 15, 22, 29

**Dep. dates 2026:** Jan 05, 12, 19, 26 | Feb 02, 09, 16, 23 | Mar 02, 09



### 7 Night Iconic Arabia

from only **US\$105 PP/N**

Abu Dhabi (UAE) - Dubai (UAE) - Sir Bani Yas Island (UAE) - Abu Dhabi (UAE) - Doha (Qatar) - Ras Al-Khaimah (UAE) - Khasab (Oman) - Abu Dhabi (UAE)

**Dep. dates 2025:** Dec 12, 19, 26

**Dep. dates 2026:** Jan 02, 09, 16, 23, 30 | Feb 06, 13, 20, 27



### 4 Night Iconic Arabia

from only **US\$115 PP/N**

Abu Dhabi (UAE) - Doha (Qatar) - Ras Al-Khaimah - Khasab (Oman) - Abu Dhabi (UAE)

**Dep. dates 2025:** Dec 15, 22, 29

**Dep. dates 2026:** Jan 05, 12, 19, 26 | Feb 02, 09, 16, 23 | Mar 02



### 3 Night Iconic Arabia

from only **US\$119 PP/N**

Abu Dhabi (UAE) - Dubai (UAE) - Sir Bani Yas Island (UAE) - Abu Dhabi (UAE)

**Dep. dates 2025:** Dec 12, 19, 26

**Dep. dates 2026:** Jan 02, 09, 16, 23, 30 | Feb 06, 13, 20, 27



### Celestyal One Fare includes:

- Celestyal One Fares include accommodation on board in the booked category
- On-board dining and complimentary selected non-alcoholic drinks and beverages during food service hours
- Entry level Wi-Fi package, entertainment program on board
- All Port Fees and gratuities

Please contact your travel agent or call us at ☎ +91 - 124 - 4595300 ✉ celestyal.india@sticgroup.com 🌐 www.stictravel.com

# Vietnam Airlines expands India network with Bengaluru and Hyderabad routes

In a conversation with Travel Trade Journal, Nguyen Trung Hieu, Country Manager India, Vietnam Airlines, and Abhishek Goyal, CEO and Director, Aeroprime Group shared insights on the airline’s strategic expansion in India.

Vartik Sethi

Vietnam Airlines is accelerating its expansion into India’s booming travel market with new routes to South India’s key cities. The carrier has announced direct flights from Bengaluru and Hyderabad to Hanoi, Vietnam as a strategic commitment to the Indian travel trade.

### New Routes and Fleet Expansion

Vietnam Airlines is set to commence two new direct routes linking Hanoi with Bengaluru and Hyderabad. This expansion comes on the heels of robust performance in its current India operations. The airline has maintained 14 weekly flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City since 2022, with seat loads consistently above 80 per cent. Encouraged by the results, the carrier is now moving into India’s southern gateways, offering more options for travellers and trade partners.

Alongside opening new routes, Vietnam Airlines is upgrading its fleet deployment on existing Indian sectors. The airline will introduce wide-body Boeing 787 Dreamliner and Airbus A350 aircraft on the Mumbai–Hanoi route, operating four flights weekly, in addition to already serving Delhi-Vietnam route with daily wide-body aircraft operations. These state-of-the-art jets significantly increase capacity and enhance onboard comfort with features like fully flat beds in business class and advanced in-flight entertainment. “Upgrading to the world-class Boeing 787 and Airbus A350 aircraft demonstrates Vietnam Airlines’ commitment to enhancing customer experience. We are proud to support Vietnam Airlines in its journey. With a strong and growing demand for this stunning destination, these upgraded operations will further strengthen connectivity and offer Indian travellers an unparalleled travel experience,” said Goyal.

### Strategic Focus on South India

Vietnam Airlines’ decision to prioritise South India, launching in Bengaluru and Hyderabad before other cities reflects a calculated strategy. These two urban hubs are among India’s fastest-growing outbound travel markets, fuelled by their booming IT industries, affluent middle class, and burgeoning corporate travel demand. By planting its flag in South India, the airline is tapping regions that until now had no direct full-service link to Hanoi.

While airlines have maxed out allocations on traditional metros, Vietnam Airlines identified



▲ Nguyen Trung Hieu

Bengaluru and Hyderabad as high potential markets that could be developed, primarily if classified outside the strictly capped routes. “We see tremendous growth potential based on our continuous evaluation of market demand in India. Expanding our route network in this fast-growing market is our priority alongside offering unparalleled Vietnamese hospitality and service,” said Hieu, emphasising the airline’s intent to serve more Indian cities.

### Passenger Segmentation and Market Growth

The expansion into Bengaluru and Hyderabad is tailored to cater to diverse traveller segments from India. Vietnam Airlines and tourism officials anticipate robust uptake across leisure tourists, the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) segment, and corporate travellers from these cities. In recent years, Vietnam has seen a surge in Indian leisure visitors drawn by its beaches, heritage sites, and cuisine, so much so that Vietnam was the ‘Most Searched Destination for Indians in 2023,’ according to Google Trends. Meanwhile, Vietnam’s emergence as a destination for Indian weddings, golf tours, and corporate offsites has spurred interest in MICE travel.

### Competitive Positioning and SkyTeam Alliance

Unlike its no-frills competitors, Vietnam Airlines offers full-service amenities. The airline recently introduced an Indian-customised in-



▲ Abhishek Goyal

flight menu (covering Jain, vegetarian, and regional cuisines) and heightened cabin crew training to cater to Indian passengers’ cultural expectations, further differentiating its product.

Another key advantage is Vietnam Airlines’ membership in the SkyTeam alliance. As the only SkyTeam member operating direct flights from India to Vietnam, Vietnam Airlines provides Indian passengers seamless access to a global network. “India is one of the most important markets for the airline. Vietnam Airlines is investing in the Indian market and offers a range of connectivity options,” Goyal noted.

### B2B Engagement and Trade Strategies

Recognising that travel agents and tour operators are key to driving traffic, the airline through its Indian General Sales Agent, Aeroprime Group, has been actively engaging the travel trade community. Its strategies include joint marketing campaigns, product presentations, and participation in high-profile industry events to raise awareness of Vietnam as a destination and Vietnam Airlines as a preferred carrier. “Education and partnerships are key,” Goyal noted as Aeroprime Group liaises with travel agencies on behalf of Vietnam Airlines. “We work closely with travel partners to ensure they have the knowledge and tools to promote Vietnam effectively, be it through special packages, familiarisation trips, or attractive incentive programmes,” he added.



Trulyy Jawai Leopard kingdom, Jawai

where *Luxury* meets  
*the Wild.*

Nestled in Rajasthan's rugged wilderness, Trulyy The Jawai Leopard Kingdom offers an extraordinary blend of luxury and adventure. Known as India's leopard capital, Jawai is home to these elusive big cats, thriving amidst granite hills and serene lakes.

This eco-luxe retreat features elegant cottages with private plunge pools, curated wildlife safaris, and immersive cultural experiences. Guests can witness leopards in their natural habitat, interact with the Rabari shepherds, and explore breathtaking landscapes. Combining conservation with comfort, Jawai Leopard Kingdom is a haven for nature lovers seeking an intimate, offbeat escape where wildlife and heritage coexist in perfect harmony.



Visit us on: [www.trulyy.in](http://www.trulyy.in)

Call us: +91 93280 16885/86/87 | +91 79 2397 7600



Our Destinations: Jaipur | Udaipur | Kumbhalgarh | Jaisalmer | Jodhpur | Ranthambore | Jawai | Sasan Gir | Velavadar

# TAMIL NADU TRAVEL MART 2025

CONNECTING  
OPPORTUNITIES  
SHAPING  
EXPERIENCES



Tamil Nadu Travel Mart (TNTM) 2025, scheduled for March 21–23, 2025, at the Chennai Trade Centre, promises to be a landmark event in India's tourism sector. This premier travel mart will bring together global and domestic tourism professionals to network, collaborate, and explore business prospects within Tamil Nadu's dynamic travel industry. From fostering connections with key buyers to showcasing investment opportunities and cultural richness, TNTM 2025 is a must-attend event for stakeholders looking to tap into Tamil Nadu's evolving tourism landscape.

## Why Tamil Nadu Travel Mart?

Tamil Nadu Travel Mart (TNTM) is the ultimate platform where destinations come to life, experiences take the spotlight, and the spirit of exploration flourishes. By linking the global travel industry with Tamil Nadu's extraordinary tourism offerings, TNTM seamlessly blends immersive cultural experiences with lucrative business prospects. This premier event unites industry leaders, travel professionals, innovators, and sustainability advocates, fostering an environment for meaningful networking and collaboration. Through interactive sessions, participants gain valuable insights into the region's rich heritage and distinctive charm, unlocking new opportunities and lasting connections. TNTM celebrates Tamil Nadu tourism and opens new avenues for sustainable tourism growth and innovative travel experiences.

**Engage with Tamil Nadu's Top Travel Professionals:** TNTM ensures that the participants interact with high-calibre buyers, travel agents, and tour operators who drive tourism.

**Cultural Immersion:** At TNTM, participants can discover the soul of Tamil Nadu through its time-honoured traditions, classical arts, and historical landmarks. They can experience first-hand the depth of its cultural richness and diversity.

**Local Expertise and Insights:** One can connect with industry leaders and tourism stakeholders, offering insights on Tamil Nadu's unique market dynamics and emerging trends.

**Regional Collaborations:** They can engage with local stakeholders involved in regional development, from smart city initiatives to heritage conservation, and gain insights into key collaborative projects shaping Tamil Nadu's future.

**Authentic Experiences:** Tourism professionals can participate in exclusive sessions featuring curated travel itineraries and immersive cultural workshops that spotlight the authentic Tamil Nadu experience, beyond the conventional.

**Investment Opportunities:** Tamil Nadu offers strong tourism investment opportunities in hospitality, ecotourism, MICE facilities, heritage preservation, and sustainable tourism initiatives. The Tamil Nadu Tourism Policy 2023 provides incentives for eligible tourism projects. TNTM offers a unique platform for businesses to engage with potential investors, government representatives, and industry leaders who are influencing the future of Tamil Nadu's tourism sector.

## Why Exhibit?

Participating as an exhibitor at TNTM 2025 provides an exceptional opportunity to engage with leading travel professionals and broaden business networks. Exhibitors can gain valuable industry insights through B2B interactions, strengthen their brand presence, and unlock new opportunities for collaboration and growth in the ever-evolving tourism sector.

**Networking Opportunities:** At TNTM 2025, participants will have the opportunity to connect with international and domestic buyers, reaching a global audience of influential travel professionals. The event also ensures that each buyer is pre-qualified through TNTM's robust screening process, guaranteeing that participants engage with individuals who possess strong purchasing authority, making networking more targeted and impactful for all involved.



**Business Showcase:** TNTM 2025 offers unparalleled global exposure, allowing participants to position their brand in front of key decision-makers at a premier event. It is the perfect platform to promote their destination, showcasing it as a top choice for leisure tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions).

**Additional Benefits:** TNTM 2025 also offers a unique opportunity to boost brand visibility and generate quality leads by engaging directly with influential industry professionals. Participants can participate in B2B meetings, workshops, and discussions, creating valuable touchpoints for business growth. The event also opens doors to explore new partnerships and collaborations.

How to Participate?

Register your interest to be an Exhibitor in TNTM 2025, and showcase your business to the tourism industry delegates gathering during this event <https://shorturl.at/6Blu9>  
For more details, write to [tntravelmart@gmail.com](mailto:tntravelmart@gmail.com)

Tamil Nadu  
A Land of Endless Possibilities

Tamil Nadu, India’s second-largest economy, stands as a dynamic powerhouse, contributing six per cent of the country’s population and excelling across primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. With strong industrialisation, robust exports, and investor-friendly policies, the State has achieved sustained economic growth, ranking third in the SDG India Index. Aiming to become a \$1 trillion economy by 2030, Tamil Nadu boasts modern infrastructure, world-class healthcare, and a business-friendly environment, positioning itself as the ‘gateway to endless opportunities’ for investors. Beyond its economic strength, the State is emerging as a premier global destination, focusing on attracting high-value, long-stay, and high-spending tourists. With its strategic vision and progressive initiatives, Tamil Nadu’s future is brimming with possibilities.

The Capital Chennai  
Culture, Commerce, and Coastal Charm

If you’re attending TNTM 2025 or visiting Chennai for the first time, prepare to immerse yourself in a city that pulsates with history and innovation. The city seamlessly integrates towering skyscrapers with majestic temples, where classical dance forms share the spotlight with contemporary art. Located along the scenic Coromandel Coast by the Bay of Bengal, Chennai is a thriving industrial and commercial hub and a major port city. With its delectable cuisine, rich heritage, and rapid development, it has earned its spot as one of India’s most



visited cities. Known as the ‘Detroit of India’ for its automobile sector, Chennai is also emerging as a tech powerhouse, making it a top IT destination.

Chennai offers a treasure trove of cultural and historical landmarks that captivate every traveller. Marina Beach, one of the longest urban beaches globally, provides a range of recreational opportunities, perfect for families, friends, and solo travellers. Alongside this, the city boasts several must-visit attractions, such as the ancient wonders of Mamallapuram, the sacred Sri Parthasarathy Temple, and the serene San Thome Church. Explore the Birla Planetarium, historic Fort St. George, Kapaleeshwarar Temple, and Thousand Lights Mosque. Nature lovers can enjoy Guindy National Park or visit the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust. For a peaceful retreat, visit Elliott’s Beach, Royapuram Fishing Harbour, the beautiful Valluvar Kottam, or the numerous divine temples, making Chennai a perfect blend of history, culture, and modernity.

Beyond Chennai

Beyond its bustling capital, Tamil Nadu unveils a treasure trove of experiences catering to every kind of traveller. Navigate through the tranquil backwaters of Pichavaram and Emerald Lake, or embark on a spiritual journey across the State’s awe-inspiring 33,000 temples that echo centuries of devotion and artistry. The sun-kissed Bay of Bengal beaches provide the perfect escape, while the breathtaking hill retreats of Ooty and Kodaikanal promise rejuvenation amidst lush landscapes. For wildlife enthusiasts, the Mudumalai and Annamalai National Parks offer a glimpse into Tamil Nadu’s rich biodiversity, while the cascading splendor of Hogenakkal and Courtallam Falls creates a mesmerising monsoon retreat. With an expanding footprint in sports, adventure, and MICE tourism, Tamil Nadu continues to cement its reputation as a dynamic and versatile travel destination.



# Let's Put Our Acts Together

## A Critical Commentary on Union Budget 2025

Despite the vast opportunities that inbound tourism offers, the budget has continued to underfund and overlook its true value for the past few years, leaving India's tourism aspirations unfulfilled and its global competitiveness at risk.

Prateek Hira

In recent years, global international travel has witnessed significant growth, and India is no exception, with outbound Indian travellers steadily rising year after year. However, the outlook is less encouraging when it comes to foreign tourists visiting India. Despite its vast potential as a premier travel destination, India continues to see lower-than-expected foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs), raising concerns about the country's inbound tourism sector.

### Incredible India's Inbound Tourism Stagnation

Indian inbound travel has not yet reached its full potential despite India's capacity and stature as an international destination. While successive governments have made efforts to promote tourism, these efforts have lacked consistency and have not yielded substantial results. The 'Incredible India' campaign was a game-changer, but it has outlived its effectiveness. Increased competition from other Asian destinations, changes in tourist demand, and the shift in demographics have made the campaign less impactful.

Consecutive union budgets have also been a setback for the inbound tourism industry. India has not prioritised inbound tourism as a key growth driver for some time. While India's domestic market offers a colossal consumption capacity for most industries, including tourism, the benefits of inbound tourism are unique and essential. Inbound tourism generates foreign exchange earnings, improves the balance of payments, and enhances India's international soft power. These benefits cannot be derived from domestic or outbound tourism.

India has estimated that by 2047, tourism will contribute around US\$3 trillion to its GDP. To achieve this aspiration, India must attract high-spending inbound tourists. India should view tourism not only as an economic activity but also as a tool for asserting its soft power. Only then will inbound tourism be considered a priority.

Unfortunately, the annual union budget rarely includes substantial allocations or mentions for the inbound tourism industry. This neglect hinders India's ability to attract inbound tourists, whose numbers have stagnated for a long time.

### Union Budget 2025: A Setback for Inbound Tourism Again

The Union Budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, while containing positive announcements such as relaxed visa regulations for some countries, a focus on 50 tourist destinations, and an infrastructure push, has also dealt a blow to the tourism industry, particularly the inbound sector. The budget includes only a slight 4 per cent increase in the allocation for tourism, which is less than India's inflation rate. Furthermore, the international marketing budget for tourism has been reduced to a mere Rs 30 million, a 97 per cent reduction of the already limited budget.

This move by the Indian government is perplexing and suggests a lack of interest in attracting inbound tourists or earning foreign exchange through tourism. It contradicts the government's stated goal of making India a global hub



and doubling foreign tourist arrivals. Yet again, this year's budget failed to mention the setting up of a tourism board, which could have addressed many issues, particularly unplanned marketing and India's renewed push in the foreign markets.

The Need for Effective Marketing and Market Research

Tourism, and particularly inbound tourism, hinges on effective marketing. Unfortunately, while seemingly effective, our current tourism policies lack clarity and a deep understanding of marketing principles. There is a noticeable absence of market research, which is crucial for understanding the market and formulating a successful strategy. These shortcomings need to be addressed to maximise the impact of our efforts.

Additionally, the allocation of infrastructure budgets has often been conflated with tourism budgets, undermining the importance of dedicated funding for tourism initiatives. The closure of India's tourism marketing offices worldwide and the transfer of this responsibility to Indian missions abroad have also been detrimental. While Indian missions are undoubtedly competent, they may not possess the specialised knowledge required for tourism promotion and are often burdened with other responsibilities.

**About the Author:** Prateek Hira is the President and CEO of Tornos and heads multiple tour companies in India and internationally. He chairs tourism associations and FICCI's Tourism Committee in Uttar Pradesh. An accomplished tourism researcher and educator, Prateek sits on the boards of various universities and teaches tourism management at institutions across India and the world.

Optimism for the Future

While many countries have surpassed their pre-pandemic tourism figures, India has yet to reach 2019 levels. This downtrend necessitates a more robust and aggressive strategy rather than the current approach of ignorance and denial.

In India, we often overlook the specialised nature of tourism as an economic activity. The recent focus on overall tourist numbers, without distinguishing between domestic and foreign tourists, further hinders our ability to develop effective strategies. Accurate data collection and analysis are essential for informed decision-making in the tourism sector.

Modern tourism extends beyond history and culture. Regardless of our rich heritage and attractive destinations, a well-planned and consistent marketing strategy is crucial for attracting international travellers to India. The Union budget is a critical first step in allocating funds and outlining a clear roadmap for tourism development.

Despite the challenges, the tourism industry in India remains optimistic, its optimism is of the level that in spite of tourism not being classified as an industry, calls itself an 'industry'. We enter another year with optimism and hope that it will pave the way for a brighter future for inbound tourism in India.

FLY24HRS weaves story of growth and commitment to the travel industry

Vaseem Parvez, Chief Operating Officer at FLY24HRS, is recognized as a dynamic leader who has played a pivotal role in the company's growth. Through him, we gain deeper insights into FLY24HRS' vision

Prashant Nayak

Exclusive airline partnerships and a vision to transform the travel trade formed the foundation of FLY24HRS. By leveraging deep industry expertise, strategic alliances and solutions, the brand equips travel agents with unbeatable deals, seamless technology, and exceptional opportunities to maximise earnings.

Tailored Solutions for Travel Agents

FLY24HRS sets itself apart from other travel booking platforms by offering a comprehensive range of services tailored specifically to the needs of travel agents on a single and fastest platform. As Vaseem puts it, "We offer competitive pricing on ticket bookings, hotel reservations, and holiday packages, along with exclusive partnerships with airlines and trusted vendors. This enables us to provide tailored travel solutions that meet every need. Our platform features an intuitive design, enabling travel agents to navigate a wide



▲ Vaseem Parvez

range of services effortlessly. With a user-friendly interface, they can make bookings in just a few clicks, streamlining their workflow and saving valuable time."

The OTA Outlook

With the travel industry continuously evolving, Vaseem shares his perspective on the trends shaping the future of online travel booking. He opines, "The future of online travel booking is incredibly bright as everything becomes increasingly digitised and user-friendly. OTA platforms are getting better at understanding user preferences and past travel behaviour, allowing for more personalised experiences. Also, new market players are focusing on offering eco-friendly travel options, according to the growing demand for greener travel."

Future Expansion

As FLY24HRS continues to grow, Vaseem shares what is next for the company. He says, "We are in full expansion mode with exciting projects ahead. We recently inaugurated new offices in Siliguri and Jaipur, and the momentum is stronger than ever. Our roadmap for the future is ambitious, and we will be bringing our services closer to customers in Lucknow, Mumbai, Patna, and Bangalore."



# LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts and AM Hotel Kollektion join forces for new era in boutique hospitality

Priya Thakur, Owner and Director, LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts, shared her inspiring journey with TTJ, from the brand’s humble beginnings in Manali to its transformative merger with AM Hotel Kollektion. In this conversation, she detailed the company’s expansion plans, its steadfast commitment to guest-centric hospitality, and its bold approach toward sustainable luxury and growth across India and beyond.

Prashant Nayak

LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts, which operates a growing portfolio of eight properties across India, has merged with AM Hotel Kollektion, renowned for managing 18 experiential boutique hotels. This strategic merger now positions the unified brand with an annual operating revenue surpassing Rs 100 crore, comprising 26 operational properties with 950 keys and an additional six hotels (120 keys) set to join the portfolio soon.

## Building a Legacy from Humble Beginnings

Priya Thakur’s journey into the hospitality industry began over a decade ago, when a simple visit back home to Manali sparked a deep desire to give back to her roots. In 2015, she took a leap of faith by building her first resort on her own land in Manali, thereby launching LaRiSa Resorts. This was just the beginning. The recent merger of LaRiSa Hotels with AM Hotel Kollektion marked a significant milestone, bringing together two brands with a shared vision of redefining the hospitality experience. From those humble beginnings, Priya now owns five properties and manages over 30 hotels and resorts across the region.

Priya’s passion for travel played a significant role in shaping her vision for LaRiSa. She says, “My travels also helped me understand what modern travellers truly seek—instead of city-centric hotels, they look for offbeat destinations where they can disconnect and



▲ Priya Thakur

unwind. That is why when I opened LaRiSa Resort Manali, I chose a location 14 km away from the main city, nestled within an apple orchard—a setting that offers a more immersive experience.” With the hotel, Priya also addressed the significant gap in the mid-boutique hotel segment with its well-curated, intimate stays that catered to travellers seeking peace, serenity, and unique locations.

## Overcoming Challenges to Achieve Guest-Centric Hospitality

One of the biggest challenges Priya faced when founding LaRiSa Hotels was ensuring that the right guests were matched with the brand’s offerings. She emphasises, “In hospitality, it is not just about selling rooms—it is about creating meaningful experiences for the right audience. If there is a mismatch between the guest’s expectations and the brand’s essence, it can lead to dissatisfaction on both sides. The right kind of guests also play a pivotal role in shaping the culture and vibe of a brand, making it essential to attract those who resonate with our ethos.”

To tackle the problem, Priya leaned into data-driven strategies, using technology and marketing insights to guide her efforts. “Our technology and marketing teams work in synergy to drive relevant traffic, ensuring that our brand-building efforts are a co-creation between the target audience and the service provider. By leveraging insights and analytics, we align our offerings with the expectations of our ideal guests, ensuring a seamless and fulfilling experience,” asserts Priya.

## The Essence of Sustainable Luxury

LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts stands out in the competitive hospitality industry by redefining luxury through a perfect blend of thoughtful hospitality and sustainable practices. Inspired by the Himalayan way of life, LaRiSa intertwines nature’s essence with modern elegance, creating spaces where guests can make unforgettable memories.

Priya believes that true luxury is not about material possessions but about the care, connection, and creativity shared with guests, the planet, and one another. What truly sets LaRiSa apart is its commitment to "affordable luxury." The brand focuses on offering high-quality experiences without compromising on quality. She remarks, "Our brand's essence lies in harmonising the elements: La-SKY | Ri-MOUNTAIN | Sa-EARTH."

A Strategic Merger Shaping the Future

Speaking about the merger between LaRiSa Hotels and AM Hotel Kollection, which marks a pivotal moment in the brand's journey, we asked Priya about the thought process behind integrating the strengths of both brands while maintaining the distinct identity of the AM brand. Priya emphasised that the goal of the merger is to combine the strengths of both brands, creating an experience that is unmatched in the industry. She explains, "The focus and goal of our merger is to be the best in independent and brand management as well as the most experiential hotel company in the industry for our guests, our employees, and the communities we operate in. Together, we envision an expansion in the coming years, bringing even more diverse, immersive, and transformative experiences to our guests."

Priya also envisions the merger with AM Hotel Kollection as a transformative step forward for LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts. For guests, the combined entity promises even more unique experiences and diverse locations, enhancing the brand's ability to deliver immersive, memorable stays. For employees, the merger opens up a wealth of growth opportunities, as the company adds more new hotels and projects into its portfolio. The merger also brings positive changes for local communities. Priya is also committed to employing locals whenever possible.

While the landmark merger solidifies LaRiSa's position in the hospitality industry, Priya believes that this move will shape the future direction of the company by allowing it to maintain AM Hotel Kollection as a sub-brand, preserving its unique identity while leveraging LaRiSa's broader vision and resources. She states, "Furthermore, it will drive greater success and provide the necessary



8fold by LaRiSa, Shimla

momentum for accelerated growth—giving the company an opportunity to participate in branded and co-branded ownership and management space. The combined centres of excellence will make it the property manager and employer of choice as it delivers improved and accelerated results focused on service to owners and hotel guests."

Driving Growth Through Three-Tiered Brand Strategy

Priya is also excited about the company's plans to launch a mid-market brand, seeing it as a natural extension of LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts' growth strategy. As part of its growth plan, LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts has envisioned a three-tier brand structure: LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts, AM Hotel Kollection, and 8fold by LaRiSa. Each brand is strategically positioned to drive segment-wise expansion, contributing to the overall growth of the company.

8fold by Larisa is a new mid-market brand designed to tap into the growing opportunities in India and the region. With a significant number of hotels being developed and operated by independent hotel owners, the need for organisation and standardisation is crucial. The 8fold brand will contribute to 50 per cent of the overall brand vision, which aims to contract approximately 100 hotels over the next three years. Priya mentions, "Currently, we are focused on stabilising our first three properties in Shimla, Bhimtal, and Goa, which will serve as flagship hotels for future developers. The product and services will be standardised to meet the expectations of the sub-USD 100 market."

This merger not only aligns with the new

entity's ambitious growth strategy but also expands its geographical reach into newer locations and niche markets where guests are looking for unconventional experiences. Priya explains, "Going forward, LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts will provide a wider range of specialised services while continuing to offer all services available before the merger. Its commitment to personalised service will now see AM Hotel Kollection strengthen its offering and continue to add to the portfolio by operating and managing independent properties while benefiting from Larisa's broader vision and resources."

Since the merger, the company has been working on launching six newly contracted hotels comprising 120 keys and is also evaluating international hotel management opportunities, especially to direct flight destinations in the region, as the first phase of international expansion.

Commitment to a Greener Future

LaRiSa Hotels and Resorts is also deeply committed to innovation and sustainability, with a strong focus on responsible travel. The company prioritises hiring local talent, ensuring that communities feel invested in the business. Priya adds, "We are actively working towards reducing our carbon footprint by sourcing locally and promoting responsible tourism. We are already collaborating with Healing Himalayas, an NGO, to adopt sustainable practices and improve waste management. We will continue to strive to be as eco-conscious as possible through rainwater harvesting, using solar energy for electricity and water heating, recycling and composting food waste, and reducing single-use plastics."



Jasminn Hotel, Betalbatim - AM Hotel Kollection



LaRiSa Resort, Ashwem, Goa

# Lily Beach Resort and Spa puts Indian guests at the heart of their luxury experiences

Desislav Gospodinov, Group Director of Sales and Marketing at Lily Beach Resort and Spa, outlined the resort’s unwavering commitment to delivering bespoke luxury experiences. He highlighted a range of tailored packages and strategic initiatives designed specifically to enhance the experience of Indian guests, ensuring every stay in the Maldives is truly unforgettable.

Prashant Nayak

Situated just a 25-minute seaplane ride from Malé, Lily Beach Resort and Spa is located on the exclusive private island of Huvahendhoo in South Ari Atoll. Surrounded by the serene, crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean, the resort offers an unparalleled all-inclusive experience in the Maldives.

## All-Inclusive Luxury

In the fiercely competitive landscape of Maldivian luxury hospitality, Lily Beach distinguishes itself with its pioneering Platinum All-Inclusive Plan. "At Lily Beach Resort and Spa, we pride ourselves on being the pioneers of the Platinum All-Inclusive Plan in the Maldives. This comprehensive package delivers exceptional value through premium dining options, an extensive selection of wines and spirits, and a broad array of activities that ensure a carefree and indulgent stay. Our commitment to excellence is underscored by numerous awards, including recognition as the Best All-Inclusive Resort in both the Maldives and Asia," Desislav explains.

The resort’s pristine house reef, teeming with vibrant marine life, offers guests unparalleled snorkelling and diving experiences just steps from the shore. With a thoughtfully designed layout that balances serene retreats with lively activity zones, Lily Beach caters to couples seeking tranquillity as well as families desiring engaging experiences. The dedicated team’s genuine warmth and attention to detail ensure that every guest feels welcomed and well cared for.

## Tailored Experiences for All

Lily Beach crafts bespoke experiences to suit every type of traveller. Couples and honeymooners can enjoy intimate private candlelight dinners on the beach, sunset cruises, and rejuvenating spa treatments at the overwater Tamara Spa. Meanwhile, the Sunset Water Suites and Water Villas provide secluded retreats with private pools and breathtaking ocean views.

Turtle Kids Club provides a range of supervised activities for families, from hermit crab races and crafts to watersport adventures and treasure hunts, ensuring the younger guests are entertained throughout their



▲ Desislav Gospodinov

stay. The resort also features family-friendly accommodations like interconnected Beach Family Villas and amenities like the kids' pool at Vibes Bar.

## Elevating the Indian Guest Experience

The Indian market holds a special place at Lily Beach. Over recent years, the resort has seen a steady increase in Indian guests drawn to its luxurious offerings and the natural allure of the Maldives. "Indian guests appreciate our diverse culinary options, including vegetarian and Jain specialties, as well as the extensive range of activities for both families and couples," Desislav notes.

Destinations like the Maldives experience

fluctuating demand from various international markets throughout the year. When discussing how they manage peak Indian holiday seasons, Desislav explains, "We strategically align our offerings with the holiday calendars of our key markets, including India. During these peak periods, we enhance our programming with special events, cultural shows, and themed dining experiences tailored to Indian travellers. Additionally, we offer flexible booking options and attractive packages to encourage travel during these times."

## Deepening Engagement with Indian Market

Looking ahead, Lily Beach aims to deepen its engagement with the Indian market through tailored packages that cater to the preferences of Indian travellers. This includes curated culinary experiences, Bollywood-themed entertainment nights, and wellness retreats focusing on yoga and Ayurveda. Desislav informs, "We are also exploring partnerships with leading travel agencies in India to offer exclusive deals and promotions. Our marketing strategies will focus on digital campaigns highlighting the unique experiences at Lily Beach that resonate with Indian guests, ensuring we communicate in a culturally relevant and appealing manner."

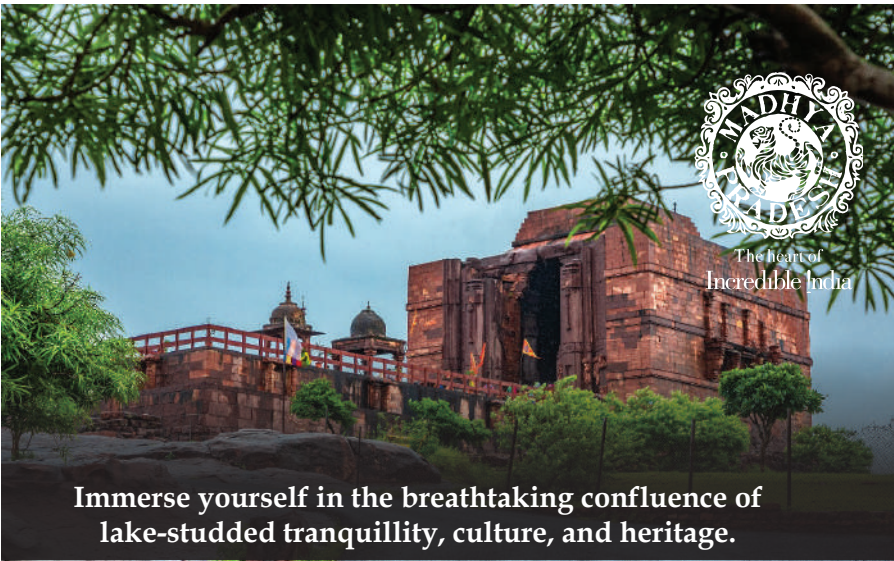
"The Indian market has shown remarkable growth in the luxury travel segment, and we anticipate this trend to continue. At Lily Beach, we are well-positioned to meet their expectations, providing bespoke services and curated journeys. We look forward to welcoming more guests from India and creating unforgettable memories in our island paradise," concludes Desislav.



# UNVEIL THE OFFBEAT DESTINATIONS AROUND BHOPAL

## A Gateway to Madhya Pradesh

Steeped in history, the heart of India is unfailingly a kaleidoscope of cultural wonders. From the grandeur of age-old temples and the serenity of majestic mosques to the opulent beauty of palaces and the imposing presence of museums, the state's architectural marvels offer a captivating glimpse into its rich heritage.



Immerse yourself in the breathtaking confluence of lake-studded tranquillity, culture, and heritage.



Imagine a place where history whispers through ancient monuments while nature casts a spell with the gentle waves lapping. This is Bhopal, the 'City of Lakes,' the soul of Madhya Pradesh. Nestled amidst stunning lakes, this 'City of Royals' beckons to experience a long, imperative history and a significant architectural and cultural legacy, truly embodying the heartland of India. Come and ascend the Gauhar Mahal for breathtaking panoramic views. Immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Madhya Pradesh at the State Museum, home to a vast collection of artefacts.



Glide through the composed Upper Lake, admiring the iconic Taj-ul-Masajid. Explore the opulent Shaukat Mahal, a testament to architectural brilliance. Explore the lively markets of Chowk Bazaar and New Market, then relax by the tranquil shores of Lower Lake. Do not miss Bharat Bhavan showcasing the best of Indian art and literature. Traverse through the State Museum, which stands as a gateway to Madhya Pradesh's rich past, housing ancient sculptures, rare manuscripts, and fossils that whisper stories of bygone eras. The Tribal Museum immerses its visitors in the lives of the region's indigenous communities with colourful displays of their art, traditions, and spiritual world. Experience

the unique tapestry of human history and culture at the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (National Museum of Mankind). The Mrignayanee Emporium in Bhopal offers exquisite Chanderi and Maheshwari weaves, tribal jewellery, and handcrafted artefacts boasting Madhya Pradesh's rich craftsmanship. To experience the royal legacy of an age-old tradition of beauty and finesse, explore the Jari Jardozi embroidery with its delicate gold and silver thread work. Discover the stunning Jagdishpur, experience serenity at the Moti Masjid, and escape the city bustle amidst the scenic backdrop of Van Vihar National Park. Seek a tranquil escape and authentic rural experiences at Khari village.

### EXPLORE BHOPAL'S ENCHANTING SURROUNDINGS

The city offers a perfect blend of urban life and natural beauty. But the real magic lies beyond its city limits. Explore and pick what intrigues you!

#### The Great Stupa of Sanchi:

Journey back in time and explore this UNESCO World Heritage Site, just 48 km from Bhopal. Marvel at ancient Buddhist stupas and monasteries dating back to the 2nd century BC, offering a glimpse into the rich history of Buddhism in India.

#### Udaygiri Caves:

57 km from Bhopal, explore a series of 20 captivating Hindu and Jain caves renowned for their historical significance and intricate architectural details.

#### Bhojeshwar Temple:

Witness the grandeur of this tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site, an awe-inspiring Shiva temple showcasing the architectural prowess of ancient India just 28 km from the city.

#### Bhimbetka:

Delve into prehistoric times at this

UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to the largest collection of rock art in India, located 50 km from Bhopal.

#### Ratapani Tiger Reserve:

Embark on a thrilling wildlife safari 70 km from the state capital and encounter majestic tigers and diverse wildlife amidst scenic landscapes.

#### Pachmarhi – Satpura Tiger Reserve & Narmadapuram:

Venture into the heart of the Satpura Range and explore another tentative UNESCO heritage site, Satpura Tiger Reserve, a paradise for nature lovers. Explore the scenic beauty of Pachmarhi and visit Narmadapuram, a significant pilgrimage site on the banks of the sacred Narmada River.



# Beyond resilience, India needs more strategic and innovative efforts to revitalise inbound tourism

The inbound tourism industry in India is facing mixed sentiments regarding its recovery. Although there are signs of recovery, especially in traditional markets, challenges like increasing travel costs, long-haul flight expenses, and the perception of India as a costly destination persist. However, inbound stakeholders remain optimistic and are actively innovating to attract international visitors and enhance India's accessibility.

Prashant Nayak

According to data from the UN World Tourism Organisation, foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India remained 8 per cent below pre-pandemic levels as of October 2024. Several factors have hindered India's inbound travel recovery in the post-pandemic era. While these challenges are undeniable, the question remains: Is India ready to turn the tables and reclaim its position as one of the top global travel destinations?

## Is There a Resurgence in India Inbound Travel?

India, with its vast cultural diversity and rich heritage, has always been a top destination for travellers worldwide. However, the global pandemic altered travel patterns, creating uncertainty in the tourism industry. As the world begins to recover, one question on many minds is whether inbound tourism to India is on the rise again.

Sejoe Jose, Managing Director, Marvel Tours and Regional Chairman, South India, IATO, a seasoned tour operator in South India, says, "The inbound tourism to South India has grown, but not quite as much as we saw before COVID. The biggest challenge is that the season is now limited to January and February, which used to span four months. The overall season is now compressed to just four months instead of six to eight months. The American and British markets are leading the charge, followed by the French and German markets. However, sustaining the team during the off-season with reduced revenue is tough. Thankfully, the domestic and NRI markets have filled in the gaps, keeping the hoteliers and transporters busy during lean months."

Ranga Reddy, Proprietor, Garuda Tourism and IATO Chapter Chairman, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, another prominent operator from South India, sees the past year as a time of significant growth. "Inbound tourism to India has experienced a resurgence, with growth from traditional markets like the UK, USA, France, and Germany. Emerging ones from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Australia, Latin America, Japan, and South Korea are



▲ Sejoe Jose



▲ Ranga Reddy



▲ Sunil Mishra



▲ Saurav Sankrit

showing increased interest, particularly in India's spiritual heritage and wellness tourism."

To keep up with the demand, Reddy elaborates, "We are focusing on customised experiences, enhancing air connectivity, streamlining e-visa processes, and implementing digital-first marketing strategies. India's cultural richness continues to captivate travellers, positioning it as a leading global destination."

In contrast to the optimistic growth patterns seen from other markets, Sunil Mishra, Managing Director, Cosmos Travels and Tours, believes there is more untapped potential. He says, "The resurgence of inbound tourism to India has been gradual, but we have not quite reached pre-COVID levels yet. However, Russia, in particular, is emerging as a strong prospect, as is the Chinese market, which was performing well before the pandemic." Sunil sees a

clear path for growth with direct flights to China and the reinstatement of e-visas on the horizon.

Saurav Sankrit, Director, Ghum India Ghum, highlights the broader trends shaping inbound tourism. "The combination of eased travel restrictions and renewed interest in cultural and wellness tourism has contributed to a noticeable uptick. While traditional markets continue to be strong, we are also focusing on emerging regions like Australia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia." According to Saurav, these markets show immense potential due to rising disposable incomes and an increasing desire to experience India's diverse cultures.

## Adapting to Inbound Challenges

Lately, there have been growing concerns about the rising costs of visiting India, coupled with long-haul flight expenses and the perception of the country as an increasingly expensive destination.

Sejoe shares, "We are a ground handling company, so we do not deal with direct promotions to international tourists. However, we hear from industry colleagues that the reduction in promotional efforts for India has made it harder to attract tourists." He notes that due to the impact on inbound tourism, the sector's response has been to diversify, with tour operators now engaging in domestic and outbound tourism to offset losses. He also conveys that IATO has been actively pushing the government to send officers to Indian embassies who can specifically focus on promoting India as a travel destination in international markets.

For Reddy, inbound tourism to India faces challenges like high fares, rising costs, and visa delays, alongside perceptions of India as an expensive destination. Also, changing demographics require more value-driven, comfortable experiences for older travellers. Reddy emphasises, "To tackle these challenges, we are building strategic airline partnerships to improve affordability and connectivity, offering tax incentives and off-season promotions to lower costs, and streamlining digital visa processes. Also, there is a focus on promoting budget-friendly, lesser-known destinations and enhancing tourism infrastructure through public-private collaborations."

Sunil also admits that India's rising costs are a critical challenge for attracting international visitors. The cost of international flights, combined with high hotel rates and surging transportation costs, has made India an increasingly expensive destination. To counteract these high costs, Sunil says, "Through IATO, we are urging the Ministry of Tourism to reduce taxes on inbound tourism, reintroduce incentives for

tour operators, and increase the availability of hotel rooms and flight connectivity." These efforts, he believes, will make India more accessible and competitive in the global tourism market.

Saurav offers another perspective. He shares, "For many travellers, especially older demographics, high long-haul flight costs are already a significant deterrent. The perception of India as an expensive destination only adds to the challenge." Saurav's solution lies in strategic collaboration and digital innovation. He explains, "We are working closely with airlines to offer more affordable flight options and greater connectivity. We are also developing budget-friendly travel packages that deliver high-quality experiences without breaking the bank."

To further address price sensitivity, Saurav's team is partnering with local businesses to provide special deals and discounts to international travellers, helping to reduce the overall cost of their trip. He mentions, "By enhancing our digital presence, we provide transparent information allowing travellers to plan cost-effective trips and make informed decisions."

## Curating New Experiences for Repeat Travellers

India's rich cultural diversity continues to draw repeat travellers, and the tourism industry is constantly evolving to keep these seasoned visitors engaged with fresh experiences. Sejoe emphasises that catering to repeat customers has been a focus for his company, with new itineraries based on customer feedback. He says, "We reimagine regular sightseeing by incorporating sustainable tourism products that benefit local communities. The demand for specialised tours—such as those focused on architecture, wellness, photography, dance, and history—is on the rise."

Ranga shares similar sentiments, highlighting immersive experiences that entice return visitors to explore offbeat destinations. "We are curating unique trails like Living Heritage in textile villages across Telangana, Odisha, and Gujarat; wellness retreats in Tamil Nadu and Sikkim; and culinary tourism in Hyderabad, Goa, and Nashik, providing a deep dive into India's diverse cultural landscape," Ranga explains.

Sunil, too, is focused on innovation. He notes, "India's diversity allows us to create fresh experiences, even for repeat travellers." His company has introduced specialised circuits such as Tribal Tourism in Gujarat and Odisha, new wildlife circuits in destinations like Jawai, and spiritual tourism with pilgrimages to places like Ayodhya. He

also points to the growing interest in festival tourism, especially around grand cultural events like the Mahakumbh, as a draw for returning visitors.

Saurav adds that promoting off-the-beaten-path destinations like Northeast India, the Western Ghats, and rural heritage villages helps create unique, immersive travel experiences. He says, "We offer curated experiences, including local festivals, homestays, and eco-tourism activities, allowing travellers to connect with India's authentic heritage." Collaborations with local artisans and cultural groups are also integral to these journeys, offering travellers a hands-on opportunity to engage with the communities they visit.

## Promoting Inbound Tourism Amid Limited Budgets

As the Ministry of Tourism faces limited overseas promotional budgets, tour operators are being strategic in their approach to attract international visitors. Sejoe notes that the central government relies more on state tourism boards to increase their promotional efforts. He points out, "Kerala, for example, has increased its budget for international and domestic promotions, focusing on attracting more MICE business by offering special incentives."

Ranga Reddy highlights the shift toward cost-effective digital marketing strategies. "We are using targeted digital campaigns, social media influencer partnerships, and AI tools to reach niche audiences at a lower cost." Ranga also emphasises the importance of virtual trade shows, FAM tours, and media engagements to showcase India's hidden gems, alongside leveraging the diaspora and cultural events abroad to amplify India's tourism appeal.

Sunil concurs, adding that industry stakeholders are adapting by engaging in international roadshows and B2B meetings. While state tourism boards are crucial in promoting regional tourism, Sunil advocates for more support from the central government to strengthen these efforts. He stresses, "We need increased budget allocation, greater participation in international fairs, and the reinstatement of key initiatives like Market Development Assistance (MDA) and Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS)."

Saurav also agrees with others that state tourism boards are essential in showcasing India's diverse regional offerings. Still, he also emphasises the importance of digital marketing and social media to maximise outreach. Saurav adds, "We are also participating in international travel fairs and strengthening collaborations with state tourism boards to promote regional destinations."

# India’s evolving hospitality landscape embraces luxury, sustainability and culture

With domestic travel on the rise and inbound tourism steadily picking up, several cities and towns in India are quickly becoming sought-after destinations for both leisure and business, combining luxury, culture, and sustainability. While some properties offer a unique blend of heritage and modern amenities, others shine with eco-friendly initiatives and business-centric services. Together, these hotels represent a new era of immersive, responsible, and personalised hospitality. We explore four properties across the country to understand what they offer and gain insights into the current inbound and domestic hospitality trends from them.

Prashant Nayak

Through interactions with these four distinct hotels, we uncover the growing footfalls of both international and domestic travellers, underscoring each property's rising appeal. Sustainability has become a key draw for today's eco-conscious guests, prompting these hotels to adopt green initiatives that align with guest values. Additionally, rich cultural experiences and diverse culinary offerings are now central to travellers' choices, ensuring these properties remain top-of-mind for those seeking a deeper connection with their destinations.

## Udaipur's Luxurious Blend of Heritage and Experiences



▲ Mahesh Singh Jasrotia

Radisson Blu Palace Resort and Spa in Udaipur has experienced significant growth in domestic and inbound tourism,

with domestic travel remaining the primary driver. Mahesh Singh Jasrotia, Vice President, Operations, Radisson Blu Palace Resort and Spa, Udaipur, mentions, “Destination weddings, corporate retreats, and weekend getaways have significantly contributed to our domestic occupancy. Inbound tourism has steadily risen, especially from Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. International guests are increasingly opting for longer stays, seeking immersive cultural experiences and weddings.”

The hotel has noticed distinct preferences between inbound and domestic guests. Inbound travellers are drawn to cultural experiences like heritage walks, royal dining, and wellness offerings, including Ayurvedic treatments and yoga sessions. In contrast, domestic guests focus more on luxury and convenience, favouring well-appointed staycations, family-friendly amenities, and regional cuisine. “Destination weddings and large-scale social gatherings have increased the demand for personalised services, especially from domestic travellers,” says Jasrotia.

With rising competition in the hospitality sector, Radisson Blu Udaipur stands out with its unique blend of luxury and heritage. Jasrotia explains, “Our lakeside location, combined with authentic Rajasthani hospitality, offers guests an immersive and memorable experience. To cater to inbound guests, we curate culturally rich experiences such as bespoke dining inspired by Mewar royalty and guided excursions of Udaipur’s historic landmarks. For domestic travellers, we provide tailored wedding and event packages, family-friendly activities, and premium F&B experiences.”

Sustainability is also a key focus, with both inbound and domestic guests increasingly prioritising eco-friendly practices. “International guests,

particularly from Europe and North America, are vocal about sustainability,” says Jasrotia. The hotel has introduced several green initiatives to align with this demand, including renewable energy from a solar power plant and water conservation measures. Jasrotia affirms, “Sustainability is not just part of our operations; it enhances the overall guest experience, ensuring that their stay contributes to preserving Rajasthan’s heritage and environment.”

## Mumbai’s Coastal Retreat with Local Flair and Culinary Diversity



▲ Amartya Chakraborty

Over the past year, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach has seen a balanced occupancy, with a surge in domestic guests, especially from nearby states, due to its prime location in the iconic Juhu area—home

to Bollywood. Amartya Chakraborty, Director, Sales and Marketing, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, shares, “Our hotel attracts both domestic and international travellers; however, domestic travel has significantly increased, particularly over weekends and holidays. Though inbound travel is recovering, we have optimised our stay packages to cater to both markets, ensuring a diverse and vibrant guest mix.”

Regarding amenities, the hotel observes a clear distinction in guest preferences. “Inbound guests often seek authentic cultural experiences and wellness offerings, while domestic travellers are more inclined toward diverse culinary options, particularly regional Indian cuisine,” mentions Amartya. With a variety of dining options like Bageecha for traditional Indian food, Sampan for Asian favourites, and Gadda Da Vida for sunset cocktails, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach offers something for everyone.

The hotel sets itself apart in the competitive hospitality market by highlighting its prime beachfront location, offering personalised service, and fostering a deep emotional connection with guests. “Our legacy in Juhu, combined with a mix of international standards and local flair, sets us apart from budget and luxury alternatives,” states Amartya.

Sustainability also plays a pivotal role in their operations. With increasing demand for eco-friendly practices, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach has adopted zero single-use plastics, offers an EV charging station, and runs its water bottling plant. “Both domestic and international guests are increasingly prioritising sustainability, and we are proud to lead in this area,” says Amartya.

### Hyderabad’s Hub for Business, Leisure, and Sustainable Luxury

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and HICC has become a leading name for both domestic and international travellers, with domestic guests accounting for 85 per cent of the hotel’s occupancy over the past year. The hotel’s seamless integration with the Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) has significantly contributed to its success, positioning the property as a prime destination for business and leisure.

“Hyderabad’s growing prominence as a business and tourism hub has played a pivotal role in our occupancy trends,” says Rubin Cherian, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and HICC. The HICC, as one of India’s iconic MICE venues, attracts large international events, ensuring the guests have easy access to business activities while enjoying leisure offerings. Rubin adds, “With 287 rooms directly connected to a state-of-



▲ Rubin Cherian

the-art convention centre, Novotel offers unmatched convenience for both business travellers and event delegates, making it a popular choice for those attending international conferences or exhibitions.

The shift in traveller preferences post-pandemic is also noticeable, as both inbound and domestic guests increasingly seek immersive experiences that balance work, leisure, and well-being. Rubin explains, “Our international guests appreciate the tranquil escape amidst greenery while enjoying authentic Hyderabadi cuisines or international fare. This blend of business excellence and rich cultural experience sets Novotel apart from typical business hotels.”

Amid rising competition, Novotel Hyderabad differentiates itself by integrating MICE facilities with luxury accommodations and a commitment to sustainability. “Our ability to offer world-class infrastructure, personalised service, and eco-friendly practices makes us a compelling choice for global business travellers and domestic guests,” says Rubin.

For Novotel Hyderabad, sustainability is not just a trend—it is a competitive advantage that aligns with the growing demands of today’s conscious travellers. Rubin opines, “Sustainability is a top priority, with the hotel’s operations focusing on eco-conscious practices like zero-plastic events and energy-efficient systems. Whether hosting global corporations or corporate retreats, sustainability remains a key decision-making factor.”

### A New Era of Comfort in Mysuru

Ibis Styles Mysuru, a newly opened



▲ Ganeshram Iyer

hotel in August 2024, has quickly gained traction among domestic travellers, with 95 per cent of its occupancy coming from local guests and 5 per cent from inbound tourists. “As a newly launched property, we have seen strong demand from Indian travellers, especially those seeking clean, modern accommodations and great service,” says Ganeshram Iyer, Hotel Manager, Ibis Styles Mysuru.

The hotel offers essential amenities like a swimming pool, speciality bar, gym, and multi-cuisine restaurant, catering to domestic and international guests. Ganeshram adds, “Since the pandemic, guests have become more discerning about available offerings. Clean rooms, exceptional food, and attentive service are now essential expectations for most travellers.”

In a competitive market, Ibis Styles Mysuru stands out by focusing on personalised service. The team ensures every guest’s needs are understood, and the hotel’s pet-friendly policy further sets it apart from other options in Mysuru.

Sustainability is also a core focus, with the hotel adopting eco-friendly practices like zero plastic, corn-starch bathroom amenities, water reuse programmes, and LED motion-sensor lighting. “Guests are increasingly prioritising sustainability, and we have aligned our operations to meet these expectations,” points out Ganeshram. Ibis Styles Mysuru also sources renewable energy and partners with waste management companies to reduce its environmental impact.

# Surge in domestic tourism calls for more sustainable and balanced approach to travel

Domestic tourism in India is experiencing rapid growth, fuelled by diverse travel preferences across the country. While popular destinations continue to attract high demand, challenges such as rising airfares, infrastructure limitations, and over-tourism in select locations persist. With TTJ, two travel stakeholders from different regions of India highlight the current trends in domestic travel.

Prashant Nayak

Recently, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, highlighted the impressive growth of domestic tourism in India. He projected that the sector is poised for exponential growth in the next five years, expected to outpace the nation's overall economic growth by 15 per cent, underscoring the growing appeal of India as a prime travel destination.

## Trending Destinations and Emerging Travel Segments

Kerala remains a top destination for both domestic and international travellers. Mahesh KV, Founder, AM Vacations, based in Kerala, says, "Our recent study shows that popular destinations include Goa, Shimla, Manali, Coorg, Jaisalmer, Ooty, Munnar, Alleppey, and Varkala. Travellers are drawn to beaches, hill stations, monuments, historical sites, and Ayurvedic experiences. Approximately 80 per cent of our tour packages are designed for families and couples, showcasing Kerala's diverse offerings—from its rich culinary and cultural heritage to its stunning landscapes, including beaches, hill stations, wildlife, waterfalls, and backwaters."

On the other hand, Rajesh Kumar Saraf, CEO, Connections Travel Services and Partner, Insta Holidays, based in Siliguri, West Bengal, observes a growing interest in offbeat and experiential destinations such as Meghalaya, Spiti Valley, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He adds, "There is also a steady demand for pilgrimage tourism to Ayodhya and Kedarnath, while adventure tourism in Ladakh and Uttarakhand continues to rise. Additionally, Kerala and Rishikesh are seeing an increase in wellness retreats, and cruise tourism is gaining traction along India's coastlines and in the Sundarbans."

## Challenges in Domestic Tourism

Mahesh KV highlights that while domestic tourism in India is on the rise, one of the biggest hurdles remains the surge in airfares. He conveys, "During the festive seasons, India witnesses a strong surge in air travel costs. This significant rise in airfares has left holiday goers and tourists worried about their travel budgets. Most of them finally postpone their travel plans due to the high airfares."

Rajesh Kumar admits that while the growth



▲ Mahesh KV

of domestic tourism is undeniable, several key obstacles need to be addressed. "Transportation infrastructure in remote and emerging destinations requires significant enhancement, and rising airfares, coupled with inconsistent rail connectivity, often limit accessibility. Moreover, while the number of accommodations has increased, there remains a noticeable gap in quality standardisation, particularly within the budget and mid-range segments. These issues collectively impact our clients' overall travel experience."

## Evolving Traveller Preferences and Industry Adaptation

Mahesh KV notes that post-COVID, the travel industry faced significant challenges, with many tourists initially hesitant to travel. However, tourism is now growing rapidly. Today, travellers prioritise quality services, food, and safety over budget and are willing to spend more for a better experience.

"To ensure the best-in-class tour packages, we focus on delivering top-notch services by carefully selecting hotels and resorts across various categories such as budget, deluxe, and luxury. Additionally, we prioritise professional drivers with multilingual capabilities, excellent etiquette, and neat, tidy vehicles. As the only DMC in Kerala offering packages with primary agent branding (logo), we take pride in providing personalised and seamless travel experiences for our clients," assures Mahesh KV.



▲ Rajesh Kumar Saraf

According to Rajesh Kumar, domestic travellers today are increasingly experience-driven. He shares, "While budget travel remains essential, there is a clear shift toward luxury, wellness, and sustainable travel experiences. This evolving mindset is driving the rise of eco-resorts and carbon-neutral travel initiatives, prompting us to adapt our offerings continually. We now curate customised itineraries that emphasise value-for-money and provide immersive, culturally rich, and responsible travel experiences."

## Over-Tourism and Sustainable Management

Mahesh KV points out that Kerala experiences a massive influx of tourists, especially during peak seasons from October to January. He says, "While major destinations have the infrastructure to manage the crowd, however, waste management, road facilities, and amenities for guests and drivers still need attention."

Rajesh Kumar also acknowledges the rise in domestic tourism, which has led to over-tourism in destinations like Shimla, Manali, and Goa. "It is imperative to implement sustainable tourism policies, including controlled entry, the development of eco-tourism zones, and improved waste management systems. Encouraging travellers to explore offbeat destinations can also help redistribute tourist traffic more evenly," says Rajesh.



# Putrajaya Marriott Hotel poised to shape the future of MICE events in Malaysia

The newly revamped Putrajaya Marriott Hotel, unveiled in November 2024, marks an exciting evolution in luxury, sustainability, and personalised experiences. With enhanced MICE offerings, state-of-the-art meeting spaces, and hybrid event capabilities, the hotel is set to cater strongly to the corporate and events segment. Its strategic location and commitment to sustainability position it as a premier destination for events in Malaysia.

Ravi Sharma

The recent renovations at Putrajaya Marriott Hotel have significantly enhanced the MICE offerings, making them more versatile, innovative, and aligned with the needs of modern event organisers. Here are some of the standout features:

## MICE USP

As part of IOI Resort City, the hotel benefits from a combined inventory of 1,472 rooms, enabling it to accommodate mega conferences while positioning Putrajaya Marriott Hotel as the host hotel. This unique proposition enhances its appeal as a premier regional destination for MICE. Putrajaya Marriott Hotel's 487 smart guest rooms now feature a mix of modern comforts and traditional Malaysian elements, such as songket-inspired accents. 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.

## Marriott Putrajaya International Convention Centre (MPICC)

The rebranded Marriott Putrajaya International Convention Centre (MPICC) now boasts a pillarless ballroom offering a spacious and flexible venue ideal for conferences, exhibitions, and gala events. It has advanced audiovisual systems, high-speed internet, and hybrid event capability. Additionally, the upcoming Welcome LED Panel at MPICC will allow event organisers to feature their digital content as a welcome backdrop, enhancing

customisation and impact. The upgraded MPICC, with hybrid event capabilities, makes the hotel appealing to businesses across Southeast Asia seeking modern facilities and seamless connectivity.

## State-of-the-Art Meeting Spaces

With over 20 adaptable venues, the meeting spaces are equipped with advanced technology, including high-speed internet, cutting-edge audiovisual systems, and LCD projectors. These spaces cater to events of all sizes, from intimate board meetings to large corporate summits.

## Hybrid Event Capabilities

To support the increasing demand for hybrid events, the hotel's facilities are designed to seamlessly integrate in-person and virtual participation. Features include high-definition video streaming, interactive tools for remote engagement, and reliable connectivity to ensure smooth collaboration between physical and virtual attendees.

## Tailored MICE Packages

Putrajaya Marriott offers curated packages that align with emerging trends, such as well-being activities, sustainability workshops, and team-building sessions. These unique elements allow organisers to create impactful, memorable events beyond traditional formats.

## Comprehensive Support Services

The hotel's dedicated events team works closely with organisers to customise setups, provide technical support, and ensure that



every detail is executed flawlessly.

## Connect Responsibly Program

The hotel participates in the Connect Responsibly program, which allows MICE organisers to receive a Meeting Impact Report (MIR) that evaluates their event's environmental impact, including carbon and water footprints. Event organisers can also purchase carbon offset credits to align their events with sustainability goals.

These features, coupled with the strategic location within IOI Resort City and easy access to key transport links, position Putrajaya Marriott Hotel as a leader in delivering exceptional MICE experiences in Malaysia and the region.



# Dubai's Ascent: From Big to Best in Economy and Tourism

Dubai's efforts to position itself as the world's leading commercial and investment hub, as well as a top tourism destination, stand out. The Emirate is leaving no stone unturned in its pursuit of global prominence, aiming to solidify its status as a significant economic powerhouse and a premier travel hotspot. Its singular goal is to enhance economic and tourism competitiveness, securing a position among the top three global cities over the next decade. The Dubai Economic Agenda (D33) aims to double the Emirate's GDP by 2033.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) is spearheading efforts to enhance the Emirate's service-based economy by attracting top talent, fostering a world-class business environment, and accelerating productivity. Dubai aims to become the world's top city for living and working by showcasing its diverse attractions, distinctive lifestyle, and exceptional quality of life.

## DBE Advantage: Clear Focus on MICE

DET serves as the principal authority overseeing the planning, development, and marketing of Dubai's business and tourism sectors. A key division of DET, Dubai Business Events (DBE), operates as the official convention bureau, with a primary mission to position Dubai as a premier business event destination. It supports international meetings, incentives, congresses, and exhibitions, ensuring seamless event planning and management.

As a member of the BestCities Global Alliance, DBE ensures top-tier service, offering expert support in bidding, convention management, and logistical planning. DBE has offices in Dubai,

London, Copenhagen, Moscow, New York, Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, and Mumbai.

In 2024, Dubai secured a record-breaking 437 bids to host flagship international conferences, congresses, meetings, and incentive travel programs in the coming years. DBE collaborates with hotels, venues, professional congress organisers (PCOs), destination management companies (DMCs), and service providers to showcase Dubai's extensive offerings.

DBE works with a team of people with highly specialised knowledge and local expertise about Dubai. They offer impartial advice, guidance, support, education, connections, tools, and resources to help event organisers plan more effective and successful meetings in Dubai.

## The Preference for Dubai

DBE has attracted key events to Dubai in the past few years across several priority sectors,



Museum of the Future

including healthcare, financial services, and technology. DBE's winning bids for business events in 2024 are set to attract an estimated 210,731 delegates to the city in the coming years.

Dubai ranked 2nd globally in the 2024 Expat City Ranking by InterNations as a destination of choice for international professionals and their families. 89 per cent of international attendees rated Dubai's leisure offerings as "exceptional" or world-class, positioning it 8th worldwide and 1st in the Middle East in the 2024 GPCI. Dubai welcomed 16.79 million visitors between January and November 2024, reinforcing its 'All-Season' tourism appeal and strong safety record.

Dynamic Expansion of Meeting and Exhibition Space

Always looking at growth and progress in its thought process, Dubai's dynamic leadership is constantly shifting the goalposts, setting its targets higher and higher. Expo 2020 created mega expositions, meeting spaces, and hotel projects; however, newer, fast-paced expansion plans are already underway to cater to enhanced future demand.

A AED 10 billion Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC) expansion project is in progress. Under Phase 1, 140,000 square meters of exhibition space is set for completion by Q1 2026. The expansion, approved in September 2024 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, will transform DEC into the largest indoor events venue in the region.

Once completed, the expanded DEC will enable Dubai to double its annual large-scale events from around 300 today to over 600 by 2033. This ambitious expansion is expected to triple the MICE industry's economic contribution to AED 54 billion annually by 2033.

By 2026, the total indoor event hosting capacity will reach 140,000 square meters, accommodating 50,000 visitors per day.

Venues Abound

**Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre (DICEC):** The region's premier purpose-built venue features 145,000 sq mt of versatile event space, 21 halls, and more than 40 meeting rooms.

**Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC):** A state-of-the-art exhibition centre in Expo City Dubai,



Atlantis The Royal

DEC is a premier destination for prominent national and international mega-events. Upon completion of its expansion, it will offer 180,000 sq mt of indoor exhibition featuring 26 halls accommodating one mega event or up to 20 simultaneous smaller events.

**Jafza One Convention Centre:** Dubai's premier business destination in the Jebel Ali Free Zone Area (Jafza) comprises a 1,000 sq mt partitionable function/ballroom hall, a 1,500 sq mt exhibition hall, a 600-seat auditorium that can be partitioned into a 300-seat independent auditorium, and 24 flexible meeting rooms.

**Museum of the Future:** The museum is an iconic Dubai landmark, described as one of the most beautiful buildings on earth. The 77-mt-tall building stands high without supporting columns with a façade made of stainless steel; the façade's 1,024 steel panels are illuminated by 14 km of LED lighting embedded within its iconic Arabic calligraphy engraved with quotes by HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The museum includes a state-of-the-art open space that can accommodate around 1,000 people. It also has an interactive auditorium for lectures and workshops, accommodating more than 300 people.

**Expo City Dubai:** This venue proudly hosted Expo 2020 Dubai and the COP28 climate summit. Conveniently located less than an hour from Dubai International Airport, it is also directly connected to the future Al Maktoum International Airport, poised to be the world's largest. It is future-ready to support the growth of the UAE's MICE sector—currently valued at around AED 20 billion and set to be worth AED 33 billion by 2030. Expo City is well-placed to host collectively up to 150,000 visitors at one time. In addition, Expo City offers large-scale venues such as Al Wasl Plaza, Jubilee and Al Forsan parks, and Expo City Arena for festivals and ceremonies; top-class facilities for

sporting events; and intimate outdoor stages for concerts and celebrations.

**Great Hotel Infrastructure:** Dubai boasts over 150,000 hotel rooms across 800 plus establishments, from luxurious beach resorts to budget-friendly lifestyle options complemented by world-class attractions and experiences unlike any other city. Dubai has a diverse range of venues that can be personalised to suit specific requirements. Iconic mega properties like Atlantis the Royal, Atlantis the Palm, and Hilton Dubai Al Habtoor City offer great venues and space for conferencing, meetings, and events.

Never a Dull Moment

Dubai is one of the world's top ten cities for foodies. The city has 19 Michelin-starred restaurants and over 14,000 F&B options. Visitors are drawn to Dubai's iconic buildings and mega malls. Burj Khalifa, the iconic landmark, offers a birds-eye view of the city and surrounding coastline.

A visit to the Al Shindagha historic district takes you on a stroll into the historical past, a legacy Land Rover desert safari followed by a falconry demonstration, and an evening in a desert camp gives you a feel of the traditional way of Emirati living, food, and culture under the starlit canopy of the night sky. The La Perle show at the Al Habtoor City will set your pulse racing for an awe-inspiring evening of breathtaking fusion of immersive artistic performances, imagery, and technology. The brand-new attraction at the Dubai Mall, "House of Hype," takes you to the next level of immersive and interactive digital and visual experiences and is an Instagrammable hotspot.

Dubai is on the move, growing by leaps and bounds in its quest to make the big even bigger, the better even better, and the best truly world-class.



Al Shindagha Museum



Dubai Exhibition Centre



# One Above Empowers B2B Travel with Innovative Solutions, Hosts Exclusive Delhi Event

One Above recently hosted an exclusive event in Delhi to celebrate its innovation and strategic partnerships. Attended by local and international partners and celebrities, the event showcased the company’s AI-powered platform, DMC BAZAAR, alongside its comprehensive services, emphasising its commitment to enhancing the travel experience. With a focus on technological advancements and strong industry collaborations, One Above continues to redefine travel solutions.

Team TTJ

One Above, a prominent global Destination Management Company (DMC) exclusively serving the B2B travel segment, has entered a transformative phase of growth, marked by technological innovation, strategic alliances, and an expanded service portfolio. To mark this milestone, the company hosted an exclusive event at Bizou Bizou in New Delhi, attended by acclaimed celebrities Rannvijay Singha and Aamir Ali, along with esteemed partners and industry stakeholders.

## Revolutionising B2B Travel

With a revitalised leadership team and enhanced market presence, One Above continues to reinforce its position as a trusted industry leader, providing travel agents with seamless booking experiences, competitive pricing, and unparalleled service reliability. The company is committed to B2B partnerships, focusing strictly on service excellence and long-term industry collaborations without engaging in direct corporate transactions. One Above’s DMC BAZAAR, an AI-enabled B2B travel portal, is set to redefine travel bookings with AI-powered itinerary customisation, instant confirmations, and seamless automation.

Additionally, its in-house service, “Get It Fast,” offers visa processing, travel insurance, and air ticketing, ensuring travel agents have an all-in-one solution to streamline their operations.

Irshad Dadan, Director, One Above, and Saranjeet Kaur, Director and Head of Sales and Marketing, One Above, stated, “As the industry evolves, so do we. Our unwavering commitment to innovation, trust, and service excellence ensures that our travel agent partners can access the best-in-class solutions. With AI-driven technology, seamless service integrations, and strategic collaborations, One Above is shaping the future of B2B travel.”



## Expanding Global Reach with Strategic DMC Partnerships

The DMC industry is shifting towards automation, AI-driven personalisation, and integrated service solutions, and One Above has strategically aligned with global industry leaders for year-round contracts, offering travel partners competitive rates and seamless availability. Strengthening its global reach, One Above provides expert DMC services across key destinations, including Vietnam, Hong Kong, Shenzhen & Macau, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Iran, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco, Canada, the USA, the UK, and Europe.

International partners in attendance also shared their perspectives. Mita Vohra, Board Director, Sarova Hotels and Resorts, said, "The travel industry thrives on strong partnerships, and One Above has continually demonstrated its leadership through reliability, innovation, and excellence. As a long-standing hospitality partner, we are excited to be part of this remarkable journey and look forward to continued collaboration."

"Africa is a rising star in the travel industry, and One Above plays a crucial role in promoting

it as a prime destination. Their expertise in destination management and commitment to seamless travel experiences make them an invaluable partner in showcasing the beauty and diversity of Africa," added Vinay Raj Theetla, General Manager, Karibu Camps and Lodges, Arusha, Tanzania.

## Travel Memoir with One Above

At the event, Indian film actor and TV host Rannvijay Singha shared a deeply personal travel story about his wedding at Sarova Whitesands Beach Resort and Spa Mombasa, a destination with sentimental significance for his wife. Having cherished the location since childhood, she had always dreamed of getting married there. Initially unsure of its importance, Rannvijay was soon captivated by the resort's beauty and warm hospitality, which extended beyond Mombasa to Masai Mara, Nairobi, and other parts of Kenya.

Reflecting on another memorable experience, Rannvijay recalled spending New Year's Eve in Nairobi. His family, including his children, spent 10 days there, marking their first-ever visit to Africa. On January 01,

they embarked on their first safari, creating an unforgettable experience. He described the awe-inspiring moment when his children saw lions, zebras, and giraffes for the first time, calling it 'an extraordinary memory.' One Above seamlessly arranged everything, and his family never needed to worry about any details. He mentions, "The service was impeccable, from being picked up at home to the safari experience itself." He expressed his gratitude to One Above for a well-organised and enjoyable trip.

Rannvijay strongly recommended Kenya as a must-visit destination. He said, "If you go to Kenya, you know who to go with: One Above and all the partners here."

As it enters this new phase of expansion, One Above reaffirms its commitment to service excellence, technological innovation, and industry leadership. From effortless planning with DMC BAZAAR to hassle-free visa, ticketing, and insurance with Get It Fast, they have got every journey covered. With a stronger team and a more profound market presence, One Above constantly empowers B2B travel agents to offer faster, more seamless, and more efficient travel solutions.



# TANZANIA ROADSHOW 2025

In Collaboration with



SWAHILI  
SAFARIS



The Tanzania Roadshow in India, held in early February 2025, highlighted Tanzania’s diverse tourism offerings and strengthened trade ties with India. The high-profile event brought together industry leaders and key stakeholders, featuring distinguished dignitaries such as Her Excellency Anisa Kapufi Mbega, Tanzania’s High Commissioner to India, Nkoba Eliezer Mabula, Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, and Ephraim

Mafuru, Director General of the Tanzania Tourist Board. Spanning three major Indian cities: New Delhi on February 4, Chennai on February 6, and Bengaluru on February 8, 2025, the roadshow facilitated meaningful engagements among professionals from the travel, tourism, and business sectors. These events aimed to position Tanzania as a premier destination for Indian travellers while fostering deeper collaborations between the two nations in tourism and trade.

## DELHI





CHENNAI







## TRAVMART

Connecting Travel Partners  
With New Opportunities



# 2025



# EVENT CALENDAR



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

**INDORE**

**BOOK YOUR SPACE**



+91 95602 64443



ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

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.

## Visa applications in India rise 11 per cent YoY in 2024

Outbound travel from India remained strong in 2024, with visa application volumes rising 11 per cent year-on-year and exceeding pre-pandemic (2019) levels by 4 per cent. This surge reflects the growing number of Indian travellers exploring international destinations. Top destinations included Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, the US, and the UK.

“India continues to show a strong demand for international travel, and it's clear that this robust momentum will persist in 2025. We encourage applicants to apply for their visas well in advance to avoid the last-minute rush and ensure a smooth travel experience,” said Yummi Talwar, Chief Operating Officer – South Asia, VFS Global.

Demand for tailored visa services has also surged, with VFS Global’s Visa at Your Doorstep (VAYD) service seeing a six-fold increase from 2019 and 21 per cent growth over 2023. VAYD, available for 16 countries, allows applicants to complete their visa process, including biometrics, from their preferred location.

## NIMA celebrates 10 years of excellence, announces leadership changes

The Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) celebrated a decade of excellence on February 7, 2025, marking its 10th anniversary. On this milestone occasion, NIMA also announced the reconstitution of its executive team with key leadership appointments. Dr. Nitin Mittal of Hotel N Apartment, Bengaluru, has been appointed as the National Coordinator, while Gajesh Girdhar of Paryatan, Muzaffarnagar, will serve as the Chairman of the Governing Council. The restructured executive team, comprising members from metro cities as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, reinforces NIMA’s commitment to inclusivity.

Dr. Nitin Mittal stated, “Technology will play a key role as an enabler, and at NIMA, we are committed to bringing futuristic tools that will empower our members to compete globally in the MICE industry.”

The new executive team aims to expand the association’s influence while maintaining its strict standards and onboarding high-quality members to strengthen its national presence. NIMA is also dedicated to supporting initiatives that involve educational institutions in the tourism sector. By forming strategic partnerships, NIMA seeks to provide students with practical knowledge, case studies, and hands-on experiences.



## MoT (Northern Region) spotlights Agra’s heritage beyond the Taj Mahal at Taj Mahotsav and Conference

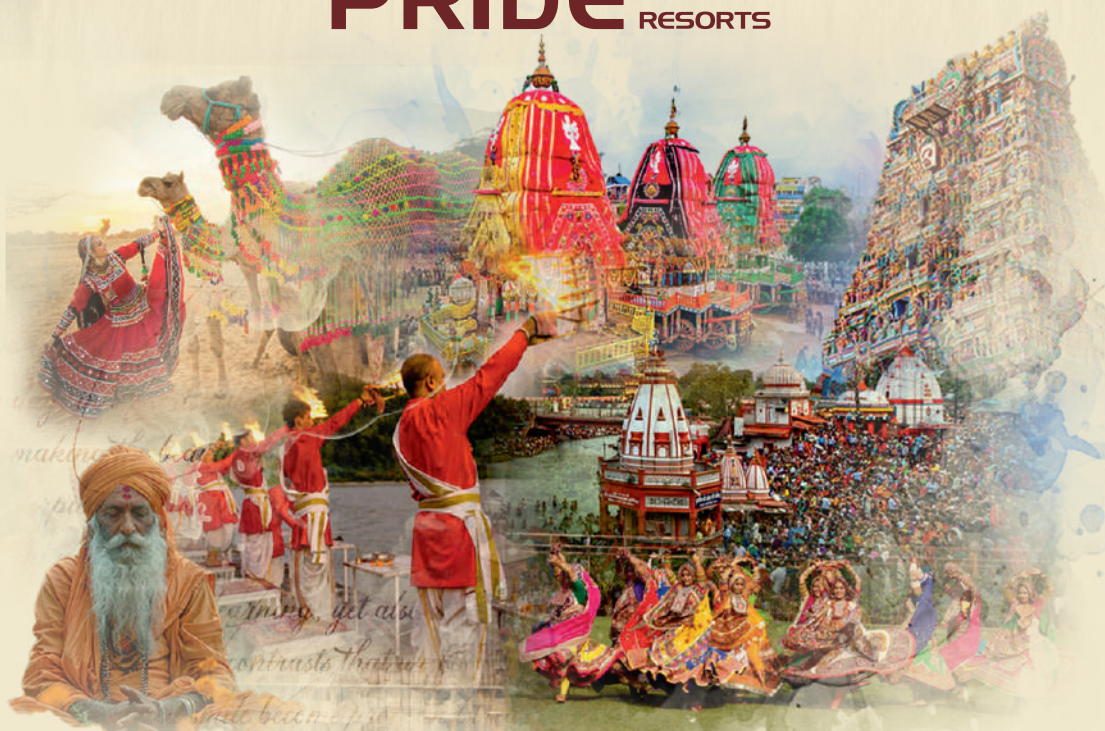
The Ministry of Tourism (Northern Region) actively engaged tourism stakeholders, media, influencers, and YouTubers at the ‘Taj Mahotsav and Conference – Agra Beyond Taj’, held at JP Palace Hotel and Convention Center. Organised by the Tourism Guild of Agra and SPHEEHA in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh Tourism, the event highlighted Agra’s cultural heritage beyond the Taj Mahal.

Dr. R.K. Suman, Regional Director (North), Ministry of Tourism, emphasized sustainable tourism and government policies. The conference featured insights from industry leaders, followed by an interactive panel discussion and Q&A session. Over 150 stakeholders from Delhi NCR and Agra participated.

Attendees visited Taj Mahotsav at Shilp Gram, experiencing cultural performances and handicrafts. The event concluded with a FAM tour to Fatehpur Sikri and Keoladeo National Park, promoting extended tourism in Bharatpur and Agra’s lesser-known sites.



# INDIAN HOSPITALITY, INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS EXPERIENCE CULTURAL ODYSSEY WITH



Embark on a soulful journey and immerse yourself in the grandeur of temples, rich cultural legacies, and timeless devotion.



**37 YEARS**  
OF PRIDE



**60**  
HOTELS  
33 OPERATIONAL  
27 UPCOMING



**5500**  
ROOMS  
3500 OPERATIONAL  
2000 UPCOMING



**100+**  
F&B OUTLETS



**79+**  
BANQUET VENUES  
20-2000 GUEST CAPACITY

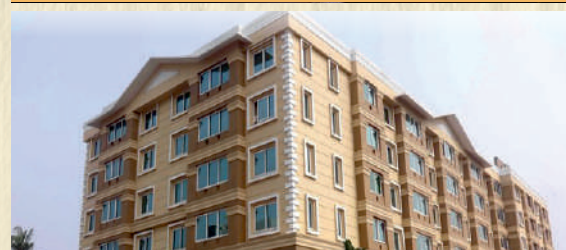
**PROMO CODE : INDIAWITHPRIDE**  
FOR AN EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNT

TRULY INDIAN. TRADITIONALLY LUXURIOUS

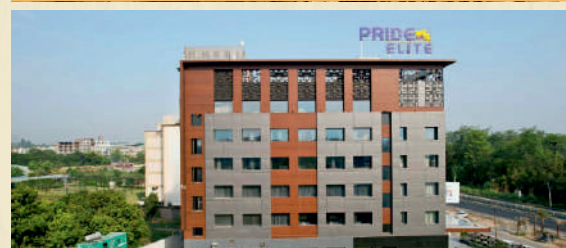
1800 209 1400 | pridehotel.com | centralreservations@pridehotel.com



PRIDE AMBER VILAS RESORT JAIPUR



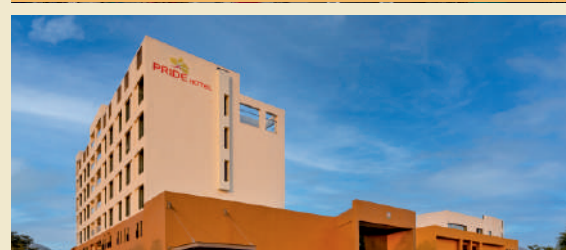
PRIDE ANANYA RESORT PURI



PRIDE ELITE HARIDWAR



PRIDE COMFORT DWARKA



PRIDE RESORT AMBAJI



BIZNOTE L BY PRIDE DEOGHAR



PRIDE HOTEL RISHIKESH

**PRIDE PLAZA**

Delhi | Ahmedabad  
Kolkata | Jaipur

**PRIDE PREMIER**

Bengaluru | Chennai | Pune | Indore | Nagpur  
Bhopal | Udaipur | Goa | Ranakpur | Puri  
Ambaji | Rajkot | Rudraprayag | Mussoorie  
\*Haldwani | \*Amritsar | \*Kanpur | \*Jim Corbett  
\*Bharuch | \*Greater Noida | \*Gurugram  
\*Bicholim | \*Gorakhpur | \*Moradabad  
\*Poloforest | \*Mumbai | \*Ghaziabad

**PRIDE ELITE**

Haridwar | Becharaji | Phaltan | Dwarka  
Rishikesh | Daman | Aurangabad  
\*Veraval | \*Jabalpur | \*Halol  
\*Nanital | \*Jodhpur | \*Jamnagar  
\*Alwar | \*Jaipur | Gandhinagar

**BiznoteL BY PRIDE**

Vadodara : Alkapuri, Manjusa  
Haldwani | Sasan Gir | Deoghar  
Bharuch | Motera | Digha  
\*Himatnagar | \*Surendranagar  
\*Wardha | \*Kalyan | \*Gangtok

## IndiGo to start direct flights from Mumbai to Seychelles from March 22



IndiGo has announced direct flights from Mumbai to Seychelles, effective March 22, 2025.

The airline will operate four weekly flights on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The Mumbai to Seychelles flight will depart at 07:20 and arrive at 10:35, while the return flight from Seychelles to Mumbai will leave at 18:15 and arrive at 00:35.

This new route will not only increase connectivity to this stunning holiday destination but also make it more accessible and affordable for Indian travellers. Seychelles, an archipelago off the coast of East Africa, is renowned for its breathtaking beaches, crystal-clear waters, and lush forests. This tropical paradise is a perfect getaway for honeymooners, families, and adventure-seekers alike.

## Air India unites travel partners, hosts maiden pan-India cricket tournament



Air India successfully hosted its first-ever pan-India cricket tournament, the Air India Super League 2025, bringing together over 500 participants from 48 leading travel partners spanning Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai strengthening its ties with the industry.

Designed as both a competitive sporting event and a dynamic networking platform, the Air India Super League 2025 aims to foster camaraderie between Air India and its valued travel partners, including Travel Management Companies and Online Travel Agents.

During the tournament, teams from various cities competed in regional Round Robin matches, with winners advancing to the National Finale in New Delhi. Air India flew down qualifying teams to the capital for the grand finale, held on February 9, 2025.

Team Travel High Titans (Travel High) won the first Air India Super League 2025 trophy beating Tripjack Warriors (TripJack) in a thrilling final match. Team Travel High Titans won by 62 runs.

The Round Robin Winner trophy was awarded to the top team from each of the four cities, while finalists competed for the ultimate championship title. Participants and winners were also recognised in multiple categories, including Man of the Match, Best Fielder, Most Catches in Air India Super League 2025, Player of Air India Super League 2025, among others.

## Tourism Malaysia unveils the Visit Malaysia Year 2026 campaign in Delhi

Tourism Malaysia recently unveiled its Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VM2026) campaign at the Malaysia Networking Dinner in New Delhi. Joined by distinguished guests from the travel trade, airline industry, and media, H.E. Dato' Muzafar Shah Mustafa, High Commissioner of Malaysia to India, and Ahmad Johanif Mohd Ali, Director of Tourism Malaysia Delhi, inaugurated the event.

A key highlight of the evening was the official unveiling of the VM2026 logo, featuring Wira and Manja, the Malayan Sun Bears as the campaign mascots. The vibrant logo symbolises Malaysia's rich biodiversity, cultural harmony, and deep-rooted commitment to sustainable tourism.

Visit Malaysia Year 2026 is an invitation to experience Malaysia's warmth, diversity, and natural wonders. India remains one of our most important markets, and we are committed to making Malaysia even more accessible and appealing for Indian travellers.

To further boost Indian arrivals, Malaysia has extended the 30-day visa-free entry for Indian nationals, making travel more convenient.








A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

**AIR INDIA** 

# HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED INDIA'S ONLY PREMIUM ECONOMY?

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

## EXPERIENCE MORE

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

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



WelcomHeritage

WelcomHeritage has appointed **Ashutosh Chhibba** as CEO. With over 30 years in hospitality, he has led iconic properties like ITC Maurya and ITC Mughal. His global experience includes launching Dumpukht in Riyadh. Chhibba specialises in managing owned properties and excels in revenue optimization, sales, and marketing. Backed by training from Cornell and IIM Bangalore, he is set to drive WelcomHeritage's growth, innovation, and operational excellence.



Brand USA

Brand USA has appointed **Leah Chandler**, CDME, as Chief Marketing Officer, effective March 17, 2025. With over two decades of experience in branding and destination marketing, she will lead global strategies to boost international travel to the U.S. Previously CMO at Discover Puerto Rico and Explore Branson, she drove record tourism growth. At Brand USA, she will oversee branding, advertising, content, digital marketing, and research efforts.



Tamarind Global

Tamarind Global has promoted **Louis D'Souza** to Managing Partner. A founding member, he now leads operations across India and overseas. With 18 years of expertise in tourism, events, and hospitality, Louis has driven innovation and personalised experiences. Under his leadership, Tamarind Global aims to expand its inbound business in Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia, strengthen its presence in Delhi-NCR, and grow its celebrations and corporate portfolio in the UAE.



Dynasty Korea

Dynasty Korea has appointed **Kundan K. Poddar** as General Manager – Trade Relationships & Marketing at its New Delhi office. With expertise in MICE, leisure, and marketing, he brings a strong network of trade partners across India. Previously with Korea Tourism Organization India and Zenith Holidays, he specialises in destination marketing. Poddar will focus on expanding Dynasty Korea's B2B presence, strengthening India-South Korea travel partnerships.



OA Global DMC

OA Global DMC has appointed **Saroj Jena** as Chief Operating Officer (COO). With 20 years of expertise in operations and sales management, he will drive growth and service excellence. Known for his collaborative leadership, Jena's strategic insights align with the company's vision of expansion and innovation. His appointment marks a new chapter for OA Global DMC as it strengthens operations and expands its global presence.



The Nautilus Maldives

The Nautilus Maldives has appointed **Adan Gomez** as General Manager. With a rich background in luxury hospitality, he has led at Canouan Estate Resort (St. Vincent) and One&Only Mandarin (Mexico). Known for strategic leadership and innovation, Adan excels in bespoke guest experiences and private luxury residence operations. His commitment to excellence and personalised service aligns with The Nautilus's ethos of unscripted luxury.



Kandima Maldives

Kandima Maldives has appointed **Dermot Birchall** as General Manager. With over 20 years of experience in luxury resorts across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, he excels in operational excellence and guest satisfaction. Dermot aims to enhance Kandima's playful, smart, and socially responsible ethos, elevating its unique blend of active, fun, and laid-back luxury while expanding innovative guest experiences and lifestyle offerings.



Taj Corbett Resort & Spa

Taj Corbett Resort & Spa has appointed **Nivedan Kukreti** as General Manager. With 21 years of experience, he excels in strategic operations, project management, and team leadership. Nivedan has held key roles at Shangri-La, The Lalit, Radisson Blu, and Taj Hotels. He aims to position Taj Corbett as a premier luxury, nature, and wellness destination, blending exceptional hospitality with local experiences and sustainability initiatives.



Then:

When Hanuman found Sita in Ravana's Palace, she was praying to Lord Rama to rescue her.

Now:

Feel their divine presence at the Sita Amman temple.



Relive the epic of  
**THE RAMAYANA TRAIL**

Book this once-in-a-lifetime experience today!

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





# MORE included. MORE value. MORE to enjoy.

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



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



Norwegian Joy®, Alaska

experience  
**MORE**  
at sea™

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

**7-Day Hawai'i**  
**Round-Trip Honolulu:**  
Inter-island  
**Pride of America®**  
Departing every Saturday  
year-round

**8-Day Asia**  
**From Tokyo (Yokohama) to Tokyo:**  
Taipei, Okinawa & Ishigaki  
**Norwegian Spirit®**  
26 Apr 2025

**9-Day Alaska**  
**Round-Trip Seattle:**  
Glacier Bay, Skagway & Juneau  
**Norwegian Joy®**  
Apr - Aug 2025

**10-Day Europe**  
**From Istanbul to Barcelona:**  
Athens & Salerno (Amalfi Coast)  
**Norwegian Pearl®**  
24 Oct 2025



Call **+91 22 7127 9333** to book today



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