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Dear Friends,

As travel evolves, so do the conversations around it. This issue spotlights the voices helping us see this evolutionary journey.

Luxury today is no longer just about the price tag; it is about story, purpose, and authenticity. We explore the transformation of luxury travel through the lens of those who define and curate it: luxury tourism experts, representation businesses, and bespoke travel designers.

With the monsoon around the corner, hoteliers share their mood-driven strategies designed to entice guests with local flavour, comfort, and creativity during the rains. Our loyal travel trade partners offer valuable feedback on our TTJ TRAVMART, highlighting tangible ROI and strong buyer-seller engagement, further affirming the platform's growing impact in today's competitive B2B travel space.

We also bring you an in-depth report on the Fiji Tourism Exchange (FTE) and inspiring FAM trip features from South Africa, Abu Dhabi, and Thailand. We spotlight international events like BITM Nepal and diverse global hospitality brands shaping the travel industry.

Brimming with insights and inspiration, this issue makes for compelling reading, best enjoyed with a steaming cup of masala chai!

Happy Reading!



Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma
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Editor's Desk

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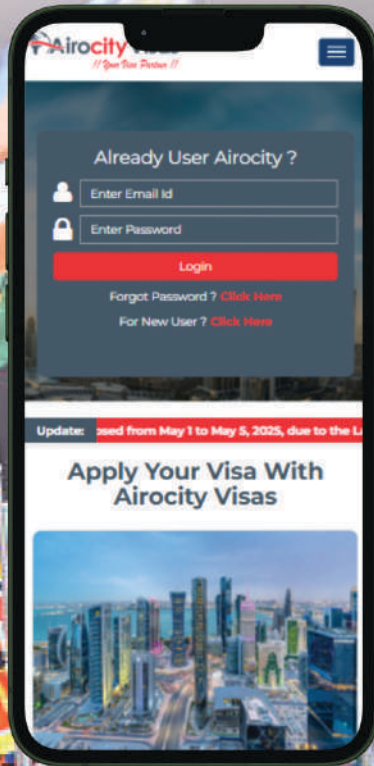
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Air India launches ‘There is an Air About India’ campaign



Air India has unveiled a new campaign, ‘There is an Air About India’, a tribute to the new India that is bold, joyous, confident, and resoundingly vibrant. The campaign, which includes an OOH segment, print ads, and a stunning digital film, captures the essence of a nation on the rise that Air India is proud to carry around the world.

Conceptualised and produced in partnership with creative agency McCann, the digital film’s centrepiece is the rap-style soundtrack composed by renowned music director Sneha Khanwalkar, with vocals by emerging rap artist Aarya Jadhao. The film blends rhythmic storytelling, sharp transitions, and stunning visuals, capturing the soul of India, from bustling metros to remote heartlands.

Each beat and verse weaves together the diverse cultural fabric of India, its colours, cuisines, communities, and ambitions. From traditional performances and spiritual motifs to modern skylines and global aspirations, the narrative culminates in a powerful refrain, ‘There is an Air about India’ and that Air India is proud to carry it around the world.

Indonesia mandates in-person visit to immigration office for stay permit extensions



Foreign nationals in Indonesia, including VoA and e-VoA holders, must now visit an immigration office in person to extend their stay permits. The policy, outlined in Circular Letter Number IMI-417.GR.01.01/2025 by the Directorate General of Immigration, requires in-person photo capture and interviews during the extension process. Prior to visiting, applicants must register and upload documents at evisa.imigrasi.go.id. The move aims to prevent misuse of stay permits and ensure better immigration oversight.

Acting Director General of Immigration, Yuldi Yusman, noted the change was prompted by increasing stay permit abuses. In Q1 2025, 546 foreign nationals were apprehended for stay permit misuse, and 215 companies had their business licenses revoked. Vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, pregnant women, and those in urgent situations, can complete the process directly at immigration offices. Minister of Immigration and Corrections, Agus Andrianto, said the new measures strengthen immigration supervision and compliance with legal requirements.

US halts new student visa interviews amid plans to expand social media vetting


U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has ordered U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide to halt scheduling new student visa interviews amid plans to expand social media screening for applicants. A cable obtained by POLITICO directs consular sections to suspend adding new student and exchange visitor (F, M, J) visa appointments until further notice, as the Trump administration looks to tighten vetting protocols. The move follows President Donald Trump’s criticism of universities, accusing them of fostering left-leaning ideologies and antisemitic behaviour. Some universities, including Harvard, have faced enrolment restrictions for international students, though court orders have blocked certain measures. A memo seen by CBS News confirms that unfilled appointments are to be removed while existing ones continue. State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce stressed the administration’s commitment to thorough vetting. Meanwhile, the U.S. Embassy in India has issued a fresh advisory to students on social media, reminding them to comply with visa terms to avoid revocation and future visa ineligibility.





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Disney announces its first Middle East theme park in Abu Dhabi



The Walt Disney Company has announced a partnership with Miral, Abu Dhabi’s leading developer of immersive destinations, to bring Disney’s first theme park resort to the Middle East. The new waterfront resort will be built on Yas Island, a premier entertainment hub connecting travellers from around the world. It will be Disney’s seventh global theme park resort and the first in the region, blending Disney’s iconic stories and beloved characters with Abu Dhabi’s vibrant culture and stunning architecture.

The project will be fully developed and built by Miral, while Disney and its renowned Imagineers will lead the creative design and operational oversight to ensure a world-class experience. The resort will offer signature Disney entertainment, themed accommodations, unique dining and retail experiences, and immersive storytelling that celebrates both Disney’s heritage and Abu Dhabi’s futuristic vision.

“Bringing a Disney theme park resort to Yas Island marks a historic milestone in our journey to further advance the island’s position as a global destination for exceptional entertainment and leisure. Together, we are creating a place of boundless innovation, where the vision of our leadership continues to inspire the world,” said Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi, Group CEO, Miral.

Think Strawberries to represent Six Flags and Aquarabia Qiddiya City in India



Six Flags and Aquarabia Qiddiya City have appointed Think Strawberries as their official India representative to expand their presence in one of the fastest-growing travel markets. Six Flags Qiddiya City will feature 28 rides across six themed lands, including five record-breaking rides such as Falcons Flight, the world’s tallest, fastest, and longest roller coaster. Adjacent to Aquarabia Qiddiya City will be the largest water theme park in the Middle East, with 22 rides and unique experiences like Aquaticar, an underwater ride. Under this partnership, Think Strawberries will handle trade, marketing, and public relations to promote both parks in India.

“India is a pivotal market for Six Flags and Aquarabia Qiddiya City as we look to broaden our global footprint. We believe this partnership will allow us to create tailored offerings that resonate with the diverse preferences of Indian families, giving them the opportunity to experience the same iconic thrills and immersive lands that our visitors around the world enjoy. Think Strawberries brings a wealth of experience in travel representation and marketing within India,” said Brian Machamer, Park President of Six Flags and Aquarabia Qiddiya City.

Balitrip Wisata marks 10 years with soft launch of ultra-luxury brand Maharaya Chambers

Balitrip Wisata marked its 10th anniversary last month with the soft launch of Maharaya Chambers, its new ultra-luxury travel vertical, during a grand event at Queen’s Tandoor in Seminyak. The celebration brought together over 60 top-tier hotel partners and showcased the company’s bold step into elite hospitality.

Maharaya Chambers aims to redefine luxury for discerning global travellers, with a strong focus on the Indian outbound market and growing outreach in the Middle East and Europe. Featuring a curated portfolio of Bali’s most exclusive properties, it promises tailored, immersive experiences that exemplify sophistication, privacy, and world-class service.

The event welcomed distinguished partners representing hospitality excellence, including globally renowned names such as Cicada Autograph Collection by Marriott, Kamandalu Resort, the Ritz-Carlton Group, Royal Pitamaha, Aman Group, Alila Group, Hyatt Group, Marriott Group, IHG Group, Viceroy Bali, W Bali, TRM Hospitality, K Club, and Renaissance Uluwatu.

With the market heating up and the demand for elite experiences on the rise, Balitrip Wisata is set to unveil the full Maharaya Chambers officially this month.



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Legends of Lake Lucerne: The Ultimate Cruise Experience in Switzerland

Set against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks and sapphire-blue waters, Lucerne's newest luxury cruise experience, Legends of Lake Lucerne, offers an unforgettable blend of fine dining, scenic splendour, and rich storytelling aboard the historic steamship Gallia. This intimate five-hour journey through Switzerland's most enchanting alpine lake landscape offers a magical way to discover Lucerne's iconic lake and surroundings in unmatched style and serenity.

Prashant Nayak

Lucerne, located in central Switzerland, is one of the country's premier tourist destinations. Known for its stunning cityscape along the shores of Lake Lucerne and its beautifully preserved historic Old Town, the city captivates visitors with its charm and cultural richness. In addition to its many iconic landmarks, Lucerne serves as the perfect base for exploring the surrounding Lake Lucerne region, offering countless opportunities for unforgettable experiences.

The Unmissable Lake Lucerne Cruise Experience

No visit to Lucerne is complete without a scenic boat cruise on Lake Lucerne. The lake is a breathtaking blend of natural beauty and diversity; its deep-blue waters surrounded by majestic mountains, charming villages, and the historic city of Lucerne create a truly captivating setting. A cruise unveils a landscape of idyllic bays, dramatic fjord-like

cliffs, and crystal-clear waters, all set against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks. This unique combination of elements makes a boat trip on Lake Lucerne an unforgettable and inspiring experience.

'Legends of Lake Lucerne' Cruise Journey Aboard Gallia

With a wide range of services, the Lake Lucerne Navigation Company offers the perfect cruise for every taste. The company has officially launched its latest premium tourism experience, 'Legends of Lake Lucerne', offering guests an exclusive voyage aboard the historic steamship Gallia. This new experience offers an unforgettable combination of gourmet dining, stunning vistas, and captivating stories, designed to delight both local and international travellers.

Limited to just 65 guests per sailing, the five-hour cruise is designed to ensure an intimate and immersive experience. Highlights include a gourmet five-course menu featuring regional Swiss specialties, complemented by a curated selection of beverages, including champagne, wine, and locally sourced drinks.



Scenic Beauty and Captivating Stories

As the Gallia navigates the crystal-clear waters of Lake Lucerne, passengers will be treated to panoramic views of the iconic Swiss Alps, including Mount Rigi, Pilatus, Bürgenstock, and the fjord-like Urnersee. The experience offers complete freedom for guests to explore the ship's various decks and vantage points, ensuring every angle of Switzerland's breathtaking landscape is captured.

Beyond its culinary offerings, Legends of Lake Lucerne will engage guests with captivating stories about the region, exclusive behind-the-scenes insights, and personal encounters with the ship's captain and crew, making it a unique cultural journey.

The new experience is also offered at a special discounted rate for Swiss Travel Pass holders, adding even more value for travellers seeking a premium Swiss lake cruise adventure.





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AI IS TAKING OVER TRAVEL FASTER THAN YOU THINK



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the global B2B travel trade. It is bringing new efficiencies and capabilities in how companies plan, book, and manage corporate travel within an industry driven by complex logistics and vast datasets, including flight schedules, hotel rates, and corporate travel policies.

Vartik Sethi

AI-driven tools are helping travel providers and corporate travel managers make smarter decisions. This analytical overview examines how key AI innovations are transforming business-to-business travel services today and what future developments lie ahead. The content explores generative AI chatbots for trip planning, intelligent itinerary optimisation, agentic AI systems capable of autonomous action, and emerging concepts set to transform travel procurement and service delivery. Throughout, the focus is on how these technologies enhance personalisation, efficiency, and strategic decision-making in corporate travel management.

Generative AI and Chat-Based Travel Planning

One of the most visible advances has been the rise of generative AI in travel planning. Generative AI models (such as GPT-based systems) can understand natural language queries and produce human-like responses. In the travel context, this enables chat-based planning tools where users can converse with an AI assistant to research and organise trips. For example, a travel manager or employee might type, “Find me a three-day itinerary in Singapore with client meetings, and suggest evening networking activities.” The AI can instantly parse this request and provide tailored recommendations, drawing on vast travel databases and contextual knowledge. This chat-driven approach makes trip planning more interactive and intuitive than traditional keyword-based search forms. It feels akin to consulting a knowledgeable human agent, except that it is available 24/7 and can sift through far more options in seconds.

Recent industry analyses indicate growing adoption of AI planning tools among travellers and travel managers. Many business travellers, especially younger professionals, are experimenting with AI chatbots to plan trips or seek advice during travel. Travel management companies (TMCs) are also piloting AI-driven chat interfaces in their online booking tools. While this trend is still in early stages for corporate programmes, it mirrors the enthusiastic uptake seen in the consumer travel sector. The promise is that chat-based AI planners will reduce the time spent researching trips and empower employees to handle simple arrangements themselves, freeing human travel consultants to focus on more complex or high-value tasks.

AI-Driven Itinerary Creation and Optimisation

Beyond chat interfaces, AI is being leveraged to create and optimise travel itineraries automatically. An AI trip planner can take a set of parameters, such as destinations, dates, meeting times, budget constraints, and traveller preferences, and construct an optimal itinerary in moments. This involves complex decision-making that AI excels at: selecting flights that minimise total travel time, choosing hotels that balance cost with proximity to meeting venues, scheduling ground transport, and accommodating any required layovers or rest periods.

AI itinerary tools are also improving travel procurement by analysing historical trip data. They can identify patterns such as frequently visited city pairs or seasonal spikes in travel, and then optimise future itineraries accordingly.

By crunching big data on past travel, AI helps travel managers refine their travel programmes with evidence-based insights. Overall, AI-driven itinerary creation not only saves time but ensures each trip is as cost-effective and smooth as possible, benefiting both the traveller’s experience and the company’s bottom line.

Agentic AI

As AI capabilities advance, the concept of agentic AI has emerged; AI systems can act autonomously across platforms and travel APIs to execute tasks without needing step-by-step human instructions. In corporate travel management, agentic AI refers to an intelligent assistant that not only makes recommendations but also carries out travel tasks end-to-end. This is revolutionising how travel bookings and changes are handled behind the scenes.

The agentic AI approach goes beyond reactive assistance; it anticipates and manages needs. Because the agent operates via APIs, it can interface with various systems, including airline reservation systems, hotel booking platforms, rideshare apps, expense management software, and more. This interconnectedness enables it to perform complex cross-system tasks, such as synchronising travel booking details with expense reports or calendar entries, without human intervention.

However, adopting autonomous AI also calls for careful governance. Travel policies, preferred suppliers, and duty of care considerations must be coded correctly into the AI’s decision logic. The balance may shift toward greater autonomy, but in the interim, the collaboration of AI speed with human judgment defines the best practice.

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Travelebrium to foray into the B2B travel space with focus on tech-enabled growth

Aditya Darooka, Founder and CEO, Travelebrium, takes us through the company's evolution and future roadmap. From its strong foundation in corporate, leisure, and sports travel, Travelebrium is now embracing technology and personalisation to redefine holiday planning. Its latest move, acquiring GottaHoliday, reflects a bold step toward delivering smarter, tailor-made experiences for today's global travellers.

Prashant Nayak

Travelebrium, established in 2008, has grown into a multi-vertical travel company. It operates across three major verticals: corporate travel, leisure travel, and sports travel. Their comprehensive services include air tickets, hotel bookings, visa assistance, travel insurance, holiday packages, passport support, event planning, and MICE. The Travelebrium team is composed of seasoned professionals with extensive experience in management, operations, and technology, thus effectively managing complex travel requirements and navigating the wide range of challenges that such endeavours often present.

Acquisition and Evolution of GottaHoliday

In 2024, Travelebrium acquired TripDarwin from Darwin Travel Tech, which was subsequently rebranded as GottaHoliday. We asked Aditya about the reason behind the acquisition and rebranding and how GottaHoliday fits into Travelebrium's larger vision. He explained, "After years in customised travel, we saw travel agents struggle due to heavy reliance on DMCs to build personalised itineraries, causing delays and unmet needs. TripDarwin was created to empower agents with a platform that enables real-time design of personalised tour packages, eliminating dependency on external vendors and improving efficiency."

However, during their journey, they also discovered that technological limitations and gaps in destination knowledge made it challenging for travel agents to create truly bespoke itineraries, even with a custom trip planner tool. This insight inspired them to adopt a hybrid model that combines technology with human expertise. "With GottaHoliday, our vision is to bring customised holiday planning to life, ensuring every traveller enjoys a trip tailored to their unique preferences," conveyed Aditya.

Customised Travel, Simplified

Today, whether it is a romantic getaway,



▲ Aditya Darooka

an exciting adventure, or quality family time, travellers seek experiences crafted to match their unique desires. GottaHoliday meets these evolving needs with smart and innovative technology and personalised service, positioning itself as the go-to international trip planner for discerning travellers.

Aditya also shared, "GottaHoliday's clientele primarily consists of HNIs and UHNIs. Since Travelebrium already works closely with corporates and senior executives, we believe GottaHoliday can benefit from this established client base and Travelebrium's deep expertise in the space."

GottaHoliday specialises in delivering customised and personalised leisure holidays across more than 100 countries. According to Aditya, Europe is currently the most popular region among their customers. However, what sets GottaHoliday apart in the competitive customised holiday space is its extended engagement with clients, spanning 30 to 60 days from destination selection to planning, execution, and in-trip support. Due to its trusted supplier network, GottaHoliday is well-positioned to provide high-quality experiences across diverse geographies.

Ready to Leverage AI

GottaHoliday is looking forward to introducing an AI tool that builds real-time itineraries along with costings. However, the tool is still in beta testing. Aditya conveyed, "We believe both B2C and, more importantly, B2B travel agents globally will benefit from this. Globally, travel agents could use our technology to create customised packages instantly. This will help them save manpower costs on packages that do not get converted. Typically, travel agents have a conversion rate of four to five per cent on leads. The effort required to service all leads is enormous. With our technology, the effort will be reduced significantly. We expect a conversion of 20 per cent."

With AI and personalisation transforming the travel industry, GottaHoliday is preparing to stay ahead of the curve. Another aspect Aditya pointed out was, "Personalisation is the need of the hour. We cannot sell Disneyland to an old couple. GottaHoliday understands this, and based on the inputs received from users, the itineraries will be designed accordingly."

Expanding Markets, Innovating Travel Across Verticals

Looking ahead, Travelebrium aims to deepen its presence in India while expanding into Southeast Asia, leveraging its cost-efficient manpower model to compete effectively in international markets.

For corporate travel, the company plans to manage global corporate travel operations with India as a central servicing hub. In sports travel, Travelebrium intends to grow its portfolio by onboarding more teams. For leisure travel, the focus will be on expanding the customer base through advanced AI-driven tools for customised holidays and integrating with ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce). Meanwhile, in the MICE segment, Travelebrium plans to attract more clients by offering unique, theme-based event experiences such as a 'Singham-style' award ceremony, designed to add creativity and impact to corporate gatherings.



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Fiji eyes inclusive tourism growth and stronger ties with India

Fiji’s tourism sector stands as a pillar of its economy, contributing nearly 40 per cent to the national GDP. In an exclusive conversation with Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) during the Fiji Tourism Exchange 2025, Hon. Viliame Gavoka, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Fiji, offered a comprehensive perspective on Fiji’s growth trajectory.

Sonika Bohra



▲ Hon. Viliame Gavoka

Expanding the Footprint

Tourism plays a vital role in Fiji’s economy, currently contributing nearly 40 per cent of our GDP. Hon. Gavoka emphasised, “However, much of this activity is centred in just two provinces: Nadroga-Navosa and Ba. With Fiji consisting of 14 provinces, our goal is to extend the benefits of tourism more equitably across the entire nation.”

The roadmap to achieving this inclusivity lies in the Sustainable Tourism Framework launched last year. “By 2027, we are forecasting around 1.25 million visitors and an economic contribution of FJ\$4 billion. For a population of under a million, this is significant, and we still have room to grow without facing the risks of overtourism,” he added.

Using Denarau Island as a case in point, a region that transformed over 50 years into one of Fiji’s most developed integrated resorts, the minister expressed confidence that similar long-term growth stories are possible in less-developed provinces.

From Sun and Sand to Cultural Immersion

While Fiji remains synonymous with pristine beaches and azure waters, the tourism narrative is steadily evolving. “Sun, sand, and sea are still central, but today’s traveller seeks more. ‘Experiential travel’ is the new frontier,” Gavoka noted.

Fiji is diversifying its offerings from tourism retreats designed for rest and recovery to immersive community experiences. Govoka also mentioned, “Authenticity is our strength. Guests often ask, ‘What else can we do here?’ We are responding with meaningful experiences that immerse them in our way of life.”

The India Opportunity

With India poised to become the world’s fifth-largest outbound travel market, Fiji is making strategic moves to deepen ties with this emerging powerhouse. “Currently, 45 per cent of our tourists come from Australia and 25 per cent from New Zealand. To drive new growth, we must look toward long-haul markets, and India is a natural fit,” Govoka affirmed.

Having visited India multiple times since

2005, Govoka acknowledged the transformative rise in Indian outbound travel and emphasised that Fiji is well-positioned to attract Indian tourists across multiple segments. “We are targeting niche areas like weddings, honeymoons, and even film shoots. Indian wedding planners have found local Fijian operators who understand the scale and specificity of Indian celebrations,” he shared.

“Our six and seven-star resorts offer the privacy and luxury that discerning Indian honeymooners and celebrities seek. Many of them come here incognito,” he added.

Building Market Presence

Fiji’s concerted marketing efforts are beginning to bear fruit in India. Campaigns like the Loloma Hour, which emphasise the warmth and emotional resonance of the destination, and the Fiji Matai Specialist Program, which trains Indian travel agents to become destination experts, have received encouraging feedback.

“Matai means ‘expert’ in Fijian. We want Indian agents to be experts on Fiji. We target key operators, train them, and equip them with the tools to sell the destination authentically,” said Govoka.

Fiji has allocated a dedicated annual marketing budget for the Indian market,

and the budget will increase in tandem with increased air capacity. Govoka explained, “Everything we do is closely aligned with our national airline, Fiji Airways, which plays a critical role in supporting our marketing activities.”

Currently, Fiji Airways operates flights to all major cities in Australia: Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, and Adelaide, each of which sees growing Indian inbound traffic. “Indian travellers arriving in these cities can easily connect onward to Fiji, making us an increasingly accessible long-haul destination,” Govoka added.

Sustaining Culture through Tourism

A core pillar of Fiji’s tourism philosophy is the preservation and celebration of indigenous culture. “The future of tourism globally lies with indigenous communities. Much of the world remains unexplored in this sense,” Gavoka noted.

The minister shared an example of how tourism in Fiji is playing a vital role in preserving intangible cultural heritage. Recalling a recent visit to a village launching a new tourism project centred around a waterfall, he recounted a moving cultural moment.

“As part of the opening, they held a traditional welcome ceremony for me, as the visiting dignitary. What made it extraordinary was that the ritual they performed hadn’t been seen or practiced in over 50 years. Fortunately, there was an elder in the village who still remembered the exact customs and sequence. He was able to guide the younger generation in reviving it,” Govoka shared.

He further emphasised, “Tourism does not just boost the economy, it helps preserve our traditions, keeps stories alive, and allows communities to take pride in their heritage.” This is especially relevant as visitors increasingly seek immersive, community-led experiences. Fiji is fortunate; its culture is not confined to museums. It is how they live, how they welcome, and how they share.

Come, Be Spoiled in Fiji

Reflecting on his visits to India, Govoka shared, “When I visit India, I am always spoiled by the warmth of your people. In return, we hope to spoil Indian visitors in Fiji with the same love.” Extending a warm invitation to Indian travellers, he added, “Fiji is a small nation in the vast Pacific, but it is big on heart. Come visit, and you will understand why so many return.”

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Classic Holidays ready to empower and drive India's inbound travel resurgence

Classic Holidays, a well-known B2B travel consolidator in domestic tourism, is now strengthening its inbound focus with a commitment to personalised service, quality, and innovation. Shilpa Luthra, Senior Vice President of Strategy and Business Development, Classic Holidays, highlights how the brand is adapting to traveller trends, leveraging technology, and curating seamless, diverse experiences for travellers across India.

Prashant Nayak

Established in 1997 and based in Mumbai, Classic Holidays offers personalised travel services across India. With a focus on transparent pricing, quality, and reliability, it provides diverse accommodations from resorts to villas. Now, the company is poised to expand into the inbound travel market with confidence and expertise.

Adapting to Shifts in Inbound Travel

Inbound tourism to India is steadily rebounding, and the past financial year proved to be a successful one for Classic Holidays. Shilpa has noticed a clear trend toward last-minute bookings across diverse traveller segments. She explained, "We are seeing international families finalising their itineraries just weeks before travel. There is also a noticeable rise in last-minute wellness trips, particularly among solo female travellers. Additionally, spiritual tourism is experiencing a surge in interest, largely driven by media influence, which has led to a spike in spontaneous inquiries and rapid booking requests."

Another key trend that Shilpa notes is India's growing prominence in global collaborations, and at Classic Holidays, they have seen a rise in inbound corporate travel. "This is where our online platform, Tripmax, is playing a pivotal role, offering instant hotel bookings and real-time solutions for business travellers," asserted Shilpa.

Classic Holidays remains agile, with teams equipped to manage both planned and last-minute bookings. Their upgraded online tools enable quick decisions and instant confirmations.

Unique Approach to Inbound Tourism

Classic Holidays' extensive pan-India network allows them to showcase the rich diversity of India through a wide array of inbound travel packages. They offer everything from luxury escapes and wildlife safaris to spiritual journeys,



▲ Shilpa Luthra

wellness retreats, culinary experiences, and adventure tours, ensuring there is something for every type of traveller.

Shilpa further emphasised, "Our strength lies in our ability to personalise each itinerary. Our experienced inbound team specialises in curating unique, off-beat and experiential programmes that go beyond the typical tourist trail, whether they seek luxury, cultural immersion, wellness, or thrill-seeking adventures. No two travellers are the same, and we pride ourselves on crafting itineraries that reflect their individual desires."

Building Success Through Trust

For Classic Holidays, inbound tourism is one of their rapidly growing verticals. While domestic travel has always been their core strength, their expanding portfolio enables them to offer business to a diverse range of properties across all categories, including hotels, resorts, and villas, pan-India.

Shilpa highlighted, "Our long-standing relationships with hotel partners have been built on trust, transparency, and consistent business delivery. A key pillar of this success is Sanjeev Sood, our Head of Contracting, based in our Delhi office. A respected veteran in the travel trade, his

hands-on approach to negotiations ensures that we secure the most competitive rates without compromising on quality."

Focus on Quality and Care

Customisation and a personal touch define Classic Holiday's inbound tourism approach. Every aspect of a guest's journey is carefully planned and executed. Shilpa added, "We take quality very seriously. Our team regularly inspects vehicles, guides, and on-ground services to ensure the highest standards. There's no room for compromise."

While Classic Holidays primarily operates in the B2B segment, it extends personalised care to every guest, treating them as its own. Representing their international partners with unwavering professionalism, the team upholds the Indian ethos of *Atithi Devo Bhava* 'The guest is God,' a principle they embrace with sincerity and dedication. Shilpa opined, "In today's market, where travellers seek authentic and meaningful experiences, customisation is not just important; it is essential. It helps us build trust, create lasting impressions, and drive repeat business for our partners."

Tripmax: The Cutting-Edge Platform

Tripmax is Classic Holidays' travel and holiday management platform, and its technology is being strongly leveraged to enhance inbound operations. Shilpa shared, "Spearheaded by the vision of our Managing Director, Rishabh Doshi, Tripmax was designed to revolutionise the B2B travel space, and it is already making a strong mark both domestically and globally."

Currently focused on hotel bookings, Tripmax enables instant confirmations and real-time access to the best available rates, eliminating the need for human intervention, making the process highly efficient and error-free. However, Shilpa mentioned, "Despite its tech-forward approach, we understand the importance of human support. That is why we maintain a dedicated offline team ready to assist with any complex or customised requirements."



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THE QUIET EVOLUTION OF LUXURY TRAVEL

Change is the defining force of our times, reshaping geographies, generations, and geopolitics. In the world of tourism, too, change is the only constant. Luxury travel is also undergoing a silent shift and is being redefined beyond opulence. Are today's high-end travellers looking for something less material and more purposeful? Are the old markers of luxury being reimagined? In this evolving dimension, TTJ attempts to explore a pertinent question: What does luxury travel mean in today's times?

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

This simple yet powerful question lies at the heart of our exploration into the changing landscape of luxury travel. For some, luxury may still be defined by five-star service, private jets, and lavish design. For others, it is about having the freedom to disconnect, slow down, and experience a destination in a deeply and authentically

meaningful way. It could mean the silence of a remote retreat, a bespoke journey curated to personal passions, or the rare privilege of access to the unexplored. Posing a leading question to the brightest minds in travel leads to new avenues of discussion, and each thought sparks innovations and shapes transformative journeys for tomorrow's traveller.

From Tangibles to Transformative Experiences



▲ Christine Galle-Luczak

To begin unpacking this evolution, we start with Christine Galle-Luczak, CEO, Heavens Portfolio, a luxury hospitality representation company. She observes that luxury is no longer defined solely by extravagance but by authentic, personalised, and meaningful experiences that resonate with guests on a deeper level.

Christine says, "Luxury has evolved beyond its traditional association with tangibility and extravagance. Today, it is about

creating unique, memorable value where the essence lies in how it makes people feel, not just what it costs."

India's outbound luxury travel is booming, driven by a new generation of travellers in their 20s and 30s who show a strong inclination and ability to spend on luxury experiences. These younger travellers, alongside seasoned high-net-worth individuals, seek exclusivity and experiences that align with their personal values, rather than merely ticking off a bucket list.

The wellness segment is also thriving, with longevity emerging as a key focus. Christine notes, "Annual wellness getaways have become the new norm, and our clients like Chiva-Som and Lanserhof are seeing strong demand from India. For these travellers, time, privacy,

and the opportunity to reconnect with themselves define true luxury."

The power of storytelling and personalised curation helps travel brands build a unique emotional connection with their guests. One of their clients, Capella Hotels and Resorts, is a masterclass in curation. The Capella Culturists, part neighbourhood expert, part intuitive mind-reader, deeply engage with each locale, uncovering heritage, meeting locals, and crafting 'Capella Curates', a collection of experiences designed to become lifelong memories.

For Christine, the essence of luxury is the human touch. AI can help understand preferences, but personalised care remains irreplaceable. She shares, "Luxury travellers today are moving away from traditional status destinations in search of privacy and authenticity, with elite properties like Cheval Blanc Randheli and Baur au Lac catering to this desire. The White Desert's Whichaway Camp, a climate-neutral retreat, is coveted by discerning explorers.

Hotels are embracing local identity, as seen in Château Saint-Martin and Spa and Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, which showcase art collaborations. Historic icons like Badrutt's Palace and Le Bristol Paris retain their regal charm, while Capella Bangkok, recently named the world's best hotel, exemplifies bespoke hospitality."

Looking ahead, she highlights an emerging frontier of 'regenerative travel,' experiences that actively improve the environment, local communities, or cultural heritage. This means giving back more than one takes through initiatives like coral reef restoration or reforestation supported by luxury resorts. Examples include Chiva-Som's mangrove preservation efforts and The Residence Maldives' participation in the Protect Maldives Seagrass initiative.

“The essence of luxury now lies in how it makes people feel, not just what it costs.”

Emotional Shift in Luxury Travel



▲ Radhika Khanijo

Drawing on her extensive experience in luxury travel, Radhika Khanijo, Private Travel Designer and Founder and Managing Director, Welgrow Travels, says the preferences of today's astute travellers are undergoing a significant shift. She says, "The traditional idea of opulent and exclusive luxury is evolving into meaningful, transformative experiences focused on sustainability, wellness, and hyper-

igloos in Lapland, or gorilla trekking in Rwanda or Uganda are far more valuable to today's client than traditional symbols of opulence," Radhika reveals.

Radhika identifies three distinct segments of today's luxury traveller: the 60 to 70 age group, who seek luxury with comfort; the 30 to 40 set, chasing expedition-based adventure; and the 50 to 60 bracket, travelling for celebrations, often in women-only groups or men travelling with their buddies.

She notes that even in an increasingly algorithm-driven world, technology is just a tool for the experienced curator; the human element remains irreplaceable. With her experience, she asserts that true hyper-personalised luxury experiences are created with individual knowledge and exposure to products and places.

personalisation that often take travellers far beyond the grid."

This evolution is steering high-end travel away from material indulgence towards rare, personal experiences. Luxury clients are magnetised by detailing, from handwritten notes to a vegetarian bush dinner or an anniversary wish on an Antarctica cruise. She emphasises, "High-end clients don't scroll endlessly or chase hashtags; they are drawn by reputation and word of mouth alone." This desire for unique and enriching experiences results in seeking immersive stays and experiential destinations far removed from typical tourist trails. "Staying in a Ryokan retreat in Japan, visiting Korea for skincare rituals, hiking in Chile, sleeping in

“High-end clients don't scroll endlessly or chase hashtags; they are drawn by reputation and word of mouth alone.”

When it comes to the brands setting the standard, Radhika points to a roster of ultra-luxury names she works with that continue to define excellence. "We are preferred partners with some of the world's most iconic luxury brands, from Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental, and

Jumeirah to The Peninsula, Accor, Preferred Hotels, Address Hotels, Leading Hotels of the World, and Stars & Luminous; our associations span the globe's finest hospitality names," she shares.

As for what is next? She points to the rising demand for private villas, private flights, and private chefs, hallmarks of a luxury that is no longer about being seen but about living the moment.

Curated Connections



▲ Bhairavi Lilani

Guided by a deep understanding of shifting travel aspirations, Bhairavi Lilani, Founder, Erawan Travels, curates journeys where luxury is measured not by stars but by stories, redefining indulgence for a new generation of global travellers.

Luxury travel today is no longer defined by bling or brands; it is about experiences, authenticity, and wellbeing. As Bhairavi puts it, "Clients seek unique, story-worthy moments rather than just five-star stays,

fall under the 'luxury' bracket. Raised on five-star travel by their families, they are prioritising adventure, activities, and food instead.

Luxury is veering toward unique and offbeat destinations. Erawan recently sent over 70 guests to South America and is building customised trips to Namibia and Botswana. There is high traction for Chiva-Som in Thailand, with Erawan being its top producer in India for two years. A group of 80 is now planned for Mongolia, while a Rotary group trip to Bulgaria and Romania was just completed. Even in well-travelled countries like Switzerland, clients prefer less-crowded gems like Bad Ragaz, Vevey, and Spiez over the usual tourist hubs.

Hotel preferences are also evolving with a noticeable shift from big-name chains to unique boutique properties. Brands under Preferred Hotels Platinum and SLH are gaining popularity, and Hyatt Prive's Unbound Collection sees more bookings than standard offerings.

be it a private dinner with a local historian, a behind-the-scenes tour of a monument, or a wildlife encounter with a renowned conservationist. The goal is to access unrepeatable, highly personalised moments and memories worth sharing. Living in 5-star hotels and suites ONLY is not classified as Luxury anymore."

“Living in 5-star hotels and suites ONLY is not classified as Luxury anymore.”

At Erawan, the core luxury traveller is 40 to 50-plus. These are individuals who once saved for future generations but now choose to invest in themselves, whether on wellness, fine dining, or far-flung destinations like South America and Antarctica. Many enjoy travelling with peers or bringing younger generations along, indulging them in handpicked stays and immersive experiences. In contrast, the younger segment travels often but does not always

Additional rising trends include group and multigenerational travel, Michelin-level food itineraries, and travelling for festivals such as Snowbombing in Austria, Yacht Week in Croatia, and music concerts. To meet the surging demand for transformative wellness stays,

Bhairavi has launched a new vertical called RIKA Retreats, a global marketplace of curated wellness resorts.

"ChatGPT has raised expectations, with clients coming with specifics, making local insight critical. Hotel relationships now unlock the extras that online bookings cannot. While a room size under 25 sq mt is a hard no!" she notes.

The New Language of Luxury is Personal and Profoundly Human



▲ Meha Vashi

With a clear pulse on what today’s travellers truly seek, Meha Vashi, Director, Nivalink, champions a vision of luxury that is immersive, intimate, and rooted in authenticity.

For the seasoned high-net-worth traveller, privacy, flexibility, and emotional resonance are now the benchmarks of indulgence. Meha observes, “Luxury, going forward, will belong to those who seek to collect memories, not things; whether it’s dining with a winemaker in his private Tuscan

She says, “It is not about ticking boxes but about creating a narrative that reflects the traveller’s identity. Holidays are mindfully curated by listening deeply to clients’ needs and designing every detail with intent. From a sunrise breakfast with an art historian in Florence to stargazing with a local astronomer in the Atacama, the journey becomes a personal chapter. When done right, luxury is not just consumed, it is felt.”

Ultimately, luxury is becoming more human-centric and emotion-led, and this sentiment is echoed in the growing expectations of today’s ultra-premium clients, who are well-informed, socially aware, and increasingly conscious of the impact they leave behind. So, from buying a package, due to social media and AI, the traveller is now fully invested from ideation to actual travelling.

Meha believes Luxury is moving away from overexposed destinations and leaning into the undiscovered. Private islands in Indonesia, eco-

retreats in the Arctic, and remote vineyards in South America are redefining the map. Even within known regions, travellers are craving unseen corners, like Ravello over Positano on the Amalfi coast and hidden forts and boutique havelis in Rajasthan.

Design-wise, it is less about marble bathtubs or butlers, and more about sensorial minimalism, sustainability, and soulful architecture. Properties like Aman, Six Senses, Rosewood, Belmond, and One & Only Gorillas nest Rwanda now tell a story through their design, and guests are tuning in.

Looking ahead, Meha notes that we are only scratching the surface of what luxury travel can be. With transformative wellness and ‘no-tech’ holidays gaining momentum, the future of luxury travel lies in meaningful disconnection and purposeful exploration.

estate, attending an after-hours museum tour in Paris, or learning to cook from a local grandma in Kyoto.” In response to this demand, Nivalink crafts travel itineraries that are immersive, hyper-personalised, and deeply authentic.

Once synonymous with wealth alone, luxury today also includes the corporate elite. The new luxury traveller is often a well-travelled head honcho who seeks unique, meaningful experiences beyond the mainstream. She adds, “Many of them come from middle-class backgrounds and now use travel to fulfil childhood dreams; whether it’s watching a Premier League match of their favourite team or going on an African safari.”

The focus is shifting from what money can buy to how time is spent.

“When done right, luxury is not just consumed, it is felt.”

The New Luxury is Purpose Driven



▲ Sara Sodhi Juneja

A sharp observer of global travel shifts and a strategic consultant to some of the world’s elite hospitality brands. Sara Sodhi Juneja, Founder and CEO of Sara Consulting Services, is at the forefront of redefining what luxury means in a world of conscious, curated travel.

Today’s traveller wants to feel that their journey matters.

or family legacy, but they spend for meaning, not show. They crave local cuisines, immersive activities, and authentic exchanges and are reshaping luxury travel into something far more personal, transformative, and responsible.

Today’s premium journey is narrative-rich. It is not just where you go; it is why you go and how you feel through it. Storytelling is not just marketing; it is memory-making that gives you a story worth revisiting for years. Ethical travel is both a buzzword and a business imperative that enables luxury brands to not only sell products but also cultivate loyalty through purpose.

Sara acknowledges the potential of AI but adds a caution button.

She notes, “The future of luxury travel lies in smart data paired with deep human curation that enables hyper-personalisation, but only when paired with emotional intelligence and brand insight does it excel. Social media is both a driver and a disruptor. Visual storytelling fuels desire, but without trust, it erodes quickly.”

For Sara, the future of luxury lies in exclusive destinations, discreet design, and soul-soothing environments that are not rooted in opulence but in emotional resonance, responsibility, and rare beauty. Destinations like the off-grid Octola Private Wilderness in Finnish Lapland redefine luxury through complete silence, pristine snowfields, untouched boreal forests, and accessibility via private transfer, setting the tone for true blue luxury in 2025 and beyond.

“Today’s luxury travellers are not just visiting, they are participating in a story crafted just for them, often returning with a shifted mindset or renewed perspective.”

Values of social responsibility and ethical practices are no longer optional; they are expected. She says, “Luxury shifts away from branded indulgence to curated, meaningful moments that resonate long after the trip ends. Every detail is tailored to reflect the guest’s unique story and identity. A growing emphasis on wellness has transformed holistic mental, physical, and spiritual well-being into a cornerstone of luxury, often expressed through immersive retreats that combine yoga, therapy, and nature.”

According to Sara, the new luxury travellers are in their 30s or early 40s, globally minded, and ethically engaged. She explains that they have spending power from new wealth, entrepreneurship,

Experience is the True Luxury



▲ Lubaina Sheerazi

One of the most articulate voices redefining luxury travel today, Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO and Co-founder of BRANDit, a destination and hospitality representation company, brings a clear and insightful perspective on what luxury truly means in 2025 and beyond.

What was once defined by opulence is now being reframed through the lens of purpose, access, and authenticity. As Lubaina puts it, "Traditional extravagance is not disappearing

luxury wasn't just seeing them but having the means, time, and agility to be there precisely when nature staged its grandest show. This 'Nowness/Promptness' of seizing such opportunities is the new currency."

More profoundly, she identifies health as the ultimate luxury, not just spa treatments, but the profound luxury of 'unburdening'. Digital detoxes in Japanese forest monasteries and wellness retreats in Kerala, which reset the nervous system, are growing in demand. When mind and body are clear, even a simple sunrise feels extraordinary.

She believes technology may aid logistics, but human intuition creates wonder! While social media still drives desire, true luxury today lies in unshareable moments: stargazing in Seychelles or dining in silence with a Kyoto master. Storytelling is not just marketing; it is giving a destination its soul. It is what built Oman from a 'labour hub' to

a luxury frontier. "For the Seychelles, we shifted the narrative from 'honeymoon-only' to family adventures, resulting in a significant growth in Indian arrivals. Luxury travellers do not want itineraries; they want emotionally charged chapters in their life's story. If the story does not resonate, the luxury falls flat," she says.

Lubaina identifies the popular trends that will shape the future of luxury travel. She observes, "The rise of 'anti-itinerary' travel chooses spontaneity over

structure. 'Ethical access' ties top-tier luxury to conservation efforts like Bhutan's carbon-negative stays. 'Radical simplicity' removes distractions like the Six Senses' tech-free Bali villas or Iceland's glacial pods with zero light pollution that exist purely for raw connection with nature. Finally, 'heritage hacking' enables ultra-luxury brands like Aman and Six Senses to weave the cultural DNA of a particular destination into every brick and beam of their new properties. It is no longer about importing marble or replicating palaces; it is about architecture that tells a destination's untold stories."

by any means, but it is evolving. Luxury shopping in designer boutiques in Doha and butler service in Seychelles remain relevant, but the same guests also seek a conservation impact. Luxury is not about shedding indulgence; it is about making indulgence meaningful."

She adds, "Of course, world-class amenities are expected, but the goal is different. It is about barefoot luxury, stripping away the unnecessary to connect more deeply with nature. For some, luxury is the silence to hear the waves with toes in warm Seychelles sand on your own private cove after a guided conservation walk; for others, it means exclusivity tied to ethics, staying at a luxe Thai eco-reserve that funds reforestation."

Lubaina describes true luxury in 2025 as what you cannot replicate at home. Explaining it succinctly, she says, "It is exclusive access, not just to a place but to a moment; it is a feeling, a transformation. Think of the Northern Lights at their 2024-2025 peak intensity: the

“Luxury travellers do not want itineraries; they want emotionally charged chapters in their life's story. If the story does not resonate, the luxury falls flat.”

Luxury with a Conscience



▲ Priyanka Nijhawan

Another leading name in luxury travel representation, Priyanka Nijhawan, Director – Representations, Nijhawan Group, notes that today's luxury lies in refinement that is subtle, not showy, and where purpose-driven journeys, quiet elegance, and immersive global narratives take precedence over excess.

“Luxury travellers do not just want a place to stay; they want a narrative that unfolds with every moment.”

According to Priyanka, 'Quiet luxury' is on the rise, with elegance, not excess, where comfort, craftsmanship, and exclusivity discreetly command attention.

She observes, "The modern affluent traveller is not chasing glitter; they are seeking depth in experiences that nourish the soul and reflect their values, such as silent yoga retreats in the Himalayas or intimate vineyard dinners in Tuscany." Young millennials and Gen Z prioritise experience over material acquisition. With over 86 per cent of Millennials and 88 per cent of Gen Z influenced by travel creators online, itineraries are often

built on social media trends but shaped by authenticity and aesthetics.

She further emphasises, "Luxury travellers do not just want a place to stay; they want a narrative that unfolds with every moment. Travellers want journeys that unfold like a story, with emotional arcs, cultural immersion, and mindful curation. Every detail, from local cuisine to architectural design, becomes part of the guest's chapter."

Sustainability is no longer a buzzword; it is a benchmark. Transparency, conservation, and social impact are now integral to the luxury sector. AI is enabling real-time personalised, curated itineraries, smart room automation, and even predictive wellness solutions. Meanwhile, social

media continues to shape travel decisions, trends, and perceptions. Travellers are drawn to wellness-oriented spaces, biophilic architecture, and local materials. It is about creating sanctuaries that calm the senses and connect to culture.

Priyanka concludes by saying, "At Nijhawan Group, our luxury portfolio, from the tranquil Heritage Aarah

Maldives to the timeless elegance of Kempinski, embodies quiet luxury. These properties offer immersive experiences grounded in wellness, sustainability, and cultural depth. Whether it is the agritourism charm of Castelfalfi or the urban sophistication of Address Hotels, each reflects exactly what today's traveller values: authenticity, purpose, and stories worth sharing."

Luxury is Felt, Not Flaunted



▲ Vinitaa Rawat

With a nuanced understanding of evolving travel preferences, Vinitaa Rawat, Founder and Director, Amazing Vacations, offers a fresh perspective on what luxury truly means today.

As high-end travel moves beyond glitz and glam, she explores the many new facets of luxury in 2025 and beyond. She elucidates, “Luxury is moving away from what traditional luxury travel meant. Earlier, we would think of luxury as being associated with five-star hotels.

Now, luxury could mean the luxury of time, like slow travel; the luxury of space with larger, upgraded rooms; the luxury of being connected with tech-savvy amenities; or the luxury of choice, such as opting for sustainable, environmentally conscious travel. Luxury means different things to different people.”

According to Vinitaa, today’s luxury traveller is much younger, often in their thirties, with inherited wealth or backgrounds in successful start-ups and unicorn businesses. These young individuals truly understand what luxury travel stands for. She notes

a clear shift from material indulgence to meaningful experiences. “We are seeing more travellers seeking something different, something that adds value. Not just a seven-star resort, but it is about cultural immersion, wellness, or self-discovery.”

She points out that storytelling plays a different role for different

“Luxury means different things to different people.”

clients. While some guests appreciate personalised touches such as branded water in

their suites, for others, it is the backstory and the bespoke nature of the experience that holds real appeal.

While AI-driven planning is still in development in the luxury space, social media plays a significant role. Vinitaa warns of the perils of social media traps and says, “It is easy to get a generic travel suggestion online. However, you need curated, thoughtful advice to make it a reality. Social media can inspire, but it can also mislead.”

She notes that for many, luxury is synonymous with exclusivity, citing examples such as Belmond’s luxury trains or the Orient Express by Accor. Wellness tourism is also booming, especially in India, where age groups from six to 70 are embracing experiences rooted in Ayurveda, yoga, and holistic healing traditions.

From Opulence to Authenticity



▲ Loveleen Arun

In an age where the very notion of luxury is being challenged and redefined, few voices capture its evolving essence as eloquently as Loveleen’s. As the Founder Director of Panache World, for Loveleen Arun, luxury is no longer a monolithic concept; it is a profoundly personal, ever-shifting experience.

The definition of luxury is constantly evolving, and every client has their own interpretation of it. She observes, “There is a long-tail definition of luxury

these days. How one adapts to the client’s definition of luxury is the measure of success for a travel advisor. From opulent suites in iconic cities to minimalist eco-camps in remote wilderness, luxury today spans a broad spectrum. While some seek cutting-edge connectivity, others long to go completely off the grid. The segment may be dominated by middle-aged, urban, upper-middle-class or high-net-worth individuals, but we are often surprised by the expectations and spending power of millennials and Gen Z. The evolved Indian traveller has delightfully moved beyond doing things just for the ‘Gram,’ now seeking experiences that truly resonate with who they are.”

Today’s indulgent luxury experiences can range from running a

marathon in Norway’s Arctic to taking scuba lessons in Raja Ampat, or planning culinary sojourns in Bangkok, Paris, and Dubai.

Loveleen offers a realistic perspective on sustainability and notes, “Many travellers are becoming more mindful, but when budgets come into play, cost often takes precedence over being mindful. However, the younger generation is increasingly choosing more sustainable experiences that directly benefit local communities. We need to carry this messaging to our clients, so at some point in time, we will succeed in at least getting this important message across.” She further adds that AI is here to stay, and travel advisors must utilise it to draft

“The evolved Indian traveller has delightfully moved beyond doing things just for the ‘Gram,’ now seeking experiences that truly resonate with who they are.”

itineraries, but a good advisor is still needed to identify and address the flaws.

Luxury hospitality is becoming more layered, immersive,

and refined. Loveleen always advises her clients to see a hotel as a way to explore art, design, texture, fragrance, and food, and connect with the destination. She identifies The Lana in Dubai, The Imperial in New Delhi, Six Senses Lodges in Bhutan, and Evolve Back Resorts in Karnataka as true-blue centres of refined luxury.

My Take on Luxury Travel

Listening to the experienced voices of such creative and powerful women, I find myself reflecting on my own idea of luxury. I think for me, luxury resides in that fleeting and deeply moving moment when a wave of pure joy washes over me. A joy that feels almost rare in today’s loud, chaotic world, where everyone seems to be demanding


a part of me. But in that quiet, sacred pause, I feel truly alive, perhaps even briefly in sync with the universe. That, to me, is luxury, to be gently cared for in a faraway destination, wrapped in a cocoon of kindness, and given the rare permission to simply be. To feel free again, like a child, unburdened, unguarded, and utterly at peace.



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Discover an Authentic Maldivian Escape at *Coco Bodu Hithi*

Nestled in the turquoise expanse of the North Malé Atoll, the Coco Bodu Hithi resort offers an idyllic retreat to travellers looking for both tranquillity and adventure. Just 35 minutes by speedboat from Velana International Airport, the island sits quietly away from the noisy grip of the city, offering a tranquil tropical escape that lulls the senses with its island rhythm and makes time slow to a gentle pace.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

A jewel of the Coco Collection, a premier Maldivian-owned hospitality brand, the Coco Bodu Hithi reflects the island's spirit in every dimension, showcasing the mystery of the house reef and the elegance of pristine palm-fringed beaches. It offers a gentle invitation to its guests to reconnect with themselves, their loved ones, and the wonders of the natural world. It truly embodies what travel should feel like: a happy, laid-back daily life within the embrace of nature while being well looked after.

Breathe in the crisp ocean air. Let your toes sink into the sun-warmed sand. Swim alongside manta rays and hawksbill turtles,

or marvel at the native nurse sharks. Coco Bodu Hithi doesn't just promise an escape, it delivers a soulful reconnection with the natural world.

Whether it's a sunset cruise across crystal-clear waters or a vibrant underwater ballet among the reef's kaleidoscopic residents, every experience here speaks of wonder and awakening.

The Villa Collection

The resort offers a collection of five distinct villa categories, thoughtfully designed to harmonise traditional Maldivian aesthetics with modern comforts. Whether surrounded by lush tropical greenery or floating above the



Beach villa



Coco Residence



Coco Residence



Beach villa

crystal-clear lagoon, each villa is a private sanctuary, promising serenity, style, and spectacular views.

The Island Villas (19) are cocooned by lush greenery just steps from the shore, offering guests a secluded slice of paradise. With open-air showers, private sun decks, and direct beach access, they provide a grounded yet luxurious island experience.

For those drawn to the call of the ocean, the Water Villas and Escape Water Villas (16 each) stretch elegantly across the lagoon. Suspended above the water, these villas offer uninterrupted views of the horizon and the peaceful lull of the sea, a perfect backdrop to awaken each day.

The crown jewel of the resort, the Coco Residences (24), forms an exclusive enclave on the island’s northwest tip. These expansive 184-square-metre overwater villas feature private pools, panoramic vistas, and elevated privileges, including a dedicated Mithuru (personal host), Champagne sunset cruises, cocktail soirées, and wine tastings hosted by the resort’s resident sommelier. From arrival to departure, every detail is meticulously attended to, ensuring a stay that is as effortless as it is extraordinary.

Introduced in January 2025, the 22 Beach Villas with Pool offer the newest expression of barefoot luxury. Spanning 188 square metres, these villas are built amidst lush greenery and open directly onto powder-white sands. Featuring sunken living areas, private pools, and sun decks with loungers and daybeds, they blend privacy and comfort to create the ultimate tropical escape.

Signature Island Experiences

Coco Bodu Hithi offers its trademark thoughtful indulgences, from a dine-around



Escape Water Villa

breakfast to a floating breakfast served in-villa, complete with a photographer to capture the moment. Guests can also enjoy a daily replenished minibar, stocked with beers and soft drinks, while residence guests are treated to exclusive bar privileges, ensuring every sip comes with a view to remember.

Wellness lies at the heart of the resort’s philosophy, seamlessly woven into the island’s gentle rhythm. Surrounded by the serene beauty of the Maldives, guests are invited to reconnect with themselves through sunrise and sunset yoga sessions overlooking the ocean. For deeper relaxation, the signature Coco Fusion Massage and soothing Balinese Massage provide a holistic escape that rejuvenates both body and soul.

Adventure also finds its rightful place in this island sanctuary. From exciting dive sessions to exhilarating water sports and thoughtfully curated signature experiences, the resort delivers both thrill and indulgence. Whether absolute beginners or seasoned divers, guests can explore the Maldives’ colourful coral reefs and marine life under



Dining Experience

the expert guidance of the resort’s resident ocean team.

For mindful travellers who value sustainability and cultural exploration, the island welcomes visitors to connect more deeply with its land and heritage. Guests can engage in Coral Planting initiatives alongside the resident Marine Biologist, contributing to marine conservation, or immerse themselves in the spirited rhythms of Boduberu, a traditional Maldivian drum performance that brings the island’s heritage to life under a starlit sky.

At Coco Bodu Hithi, every moment is wrapped in thoughtful luxury, and every experience is deeply rooted in nature and culture, offering you a gentle escape from the daily grind. Whether the quest is romance, adventure, or pure relaxation, this island sanctuary offers the perfect relaxed holiday.

Accolades That Reflect Excellence

Celebrated as the Best Luxury Honeymoon Resort in the Maldives by the prestigious Seven Stars Luxury Hospitality and Lifestyle Awards 2024, Coco Bodu Hithi has firmly established itself as one of the Maldives’ most romantic and refined escapes. This recognition, particularly valued by discerning travellers from India and the Middle East, honours the resort’s seamless blend of intimate charm, exceptional service, and unforgettable experiences for couples.

Further cementing its reputation, the resort has also been honoured with the Condé Nast Johansens Award for Excellence 2025 and the Condé Nast Traveler Readers’ Choice Award 2024, reinforcing its status as one of the most inviting and luxurious destinations in the Indian Ocean.



Coral Planting Initiative

Ravi Gosain Takes the Baton, Steering IATO into a New Era

As the newly elected President of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Ravi Gosain brings a forward-looking agenda rooted in inclusivity, digital transformation, policy reform, and stronger global visibility. In this TTJ exclusive, he outlines his strategic priorities and shares his ambitious vision.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

Acknowledging the dedication of Rajiv Mehra, the outgoing President of IATO, Gosain says, “Mehra has set a very high benchmark, and fortunately continues to guide us with his experience.” With the baton now passed, Gosain emphasises it is time to move IATO forward with fresh energy, new ideas, and a different thought process, with a key focus on faster decision-making. He is forming six committees of 10 members each, bringing 60 more members into active participation beyond the core EC team.

The Presidential Agenda

IATO is ramping up nationwide engagement and transparency with quarterly VCs and a new digital portal offering members personalised access to updates and resources. “We are building a more connected IATO where every member feels seen and heard,” says Gosain.

Skill development is also a key focus, starting with First Responder Training in cities like Chennai, Cochin, Varanasi, and Jaipur. On the global front, Gosain adds, “With limited budgets, collaboration is key. We are creating strategies so even small members can have a voice in international outreach.”

Strengthening Regional Participation

Gosain emphasises the need for strong handholding support for small and mid-sized tour operators, who often lack the resources that larger players possess. While the association continues to solicit input from major operators, its focus will now shift to empowering smaller members.

To tackle key issues swiftly, IATO has established dedicated task forces in addition to regular committees, ensuring prompt and focused action. “We now have a grievance task force for hotel and airline issues, while others will focus on leadership, tech, AI, and management training for mid-to-senior professionals. The goal is to help our members scale up with expert-led programmes.”



▲ Ravi Gosain

Strengthening IATO-Government Collaboration

Gosain emphasises that policy advocacy must extend beyond the Ministry of Tourism to include Civil Aviation, External Affairs, Home, and other relevant departments. “We have formed an Advisory Board to engage each ministry with detailed policy papers for focused discussions,” he says. He also stresses the need to balance infrastructure with promotion, saying, “You cannot just build, you must also motivate visits through effective marketing.” IATO is engaging with Indian missions abroad to enhance global visibility, regularly supplying them with promotional materials to better represent India, especially where tourism expertise is lacking.

Drive Digital Integration and Innovation

Technology is transforming lives by providing instant access to information that surpasses what newspapers have ever offered. “If we don’t evolve and adapt with technology, we risk becoming obsolete,” says Gosain. Focused on helping members understand and embrace digital tools, they are negotiating for affordable, industry-relevant software,

such as CRM systems, to offer as common platforms. Gosain clarifies, “While not a service provider, IATO acts as a facilitator, providing training and leveraging collective strength to bring reliable tools at better prices.”

India’s Global Tourism Profile

Expressing strong emotion, Gosain notes, “Since COVID, government overseas promotion has been minimal. Today’s business is driven largely by the relentless efforts of our members, despite their limited resources. They have been true ambassadors of India. If the pre-COVID marketing had continued, we would easily be doing double the business today.” India lags behind neighbours like Sri Lanka and Vietnam in global visibility. To bridge this gap, IATO is actively lobbying the ministry. He stresses, “Visibility matters and consistent, powerful promotion and strategic marketing sparks curiosity and attracts tourists.”

As one of his first actions as President, the association has written to the Prime Minister, urging the allocation of ₹1,000 crore for the Incredible India campaign and the creation of an India Tourism Board under his leadership. Gosain adds, “When global trade is facing unprecedented disruptions due to tariff wars and geopolitical shifts, tourism exports remain unaffected by such constraints. Unlike goods, India’s tourism exports, specifically the spending of foreign tourists in India, are non-tariff-based and generate direct foreign exchange earnings for the country. This positions inbound tourism as a stable, sustainable, and immediate contributor to India’s current account, providing valuable foreign exchange, employment generation, and balancing of the forex trade deficit. Yet, regrettably, the country is lagging in its efforts to attract foreign tourists.”

He also called for simplified visa processes, expanded e-visa coverage, group visa facilitation, selective visa fee waivers, and improved air connectivity to Tier 2 and Tier 3 destinations.



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IATA AGM 2025 highlights India's strategic role in global aviation

The 81st IATA AGM 2025 and World Air Transport Summit (WATS) held from June 1 to 3 in New Delhi marked a defining moment for India's ascent in global aviation. This was the first time in 42 years that India hosted the prestigious global aviation gathering. Organised under the aegis of IATA and hosted by IndiGo, the event brought together around 1,700 senior representatives from airlines, governments, international organisations, and the media from around the world.

Prashant Nayak

The high-level IATA gathering in New Delhi made it unmistakably clear: India is no longer on the sidelines of the global aviation industry. It is actively shaping its future.

PM Modi Affirms India's Aviation Ambitions

During the plenary session, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, Minister of Civil Aviation, signalled India's clear intent to position itself as a major aviation hub, driven by strong domestic demand, robust infrastructure development, and a focus on sustainability and innovation.

With India now ranking as the world's third-largest domestic aviation market, the country aims to double its annual air traffic to 500 million passengers by 2030. A key highlight was the emphasis on India's Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) ambitions, alongside the growing investment opportunities in the Indian civil aviation value chain.

IATA's Strong Financial Outlook Amid Global Challenges

IATA released its updated 2025 global airline industry outlook during the event, projecting a net profit of \$36.0 billion for the year, an increase from \$32.4 billion in 2024. Despite being slightly below previous projections, the industry is on a path of gradual recovery, with the net profit margin anticipated to rise to 3.7 per cent.

The financial optimism, however, came with caution from the IATA Director General, Willie Walsh. He stated that the industry continues to operate on tight margins, with profitability susceptible to market shocks, regulatory changes, and cost pressures, especially from rising fuel prices and geopolitical uncertainties.

The CEO Panel at WATS

At the WATS Summit, a CEO panel featured dynamic discussions around operational challenges, notably the delays in aircraft deliveries and the impact of grounded



fleets. Global airline leaders applauded India's consistent progress in infrastructure, particularly its aggressive pace in airport construction, adding nearly nine airports annually and upgrading several others. In contrast, airport development remains sluggish in many parts of the world.

Revenue Repatriation and SAF Adoption

Another major point of discussion was the issue of blocked airline funds globally. As of April 2025, approximately \$1.3 billion in airline revenues remain blocked by various governments. While this represents a 25 per cent improvement from October 2024 levels, IATA continues to advocate for unrestricted repatriation and adherence to international agreements.

On the sustainability front, Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) took centre stage. SAF production is expected to double to 2 million tonnes (2.5 billion litres) in 2025, accounting for just 0.7 per cent of total fuel demand. Despite the increase, SAF remains a costly alternative, adding approximately \$4.4 billion to the industry's fuel expenses globally. While Europe currently leads in SAF deployment due to regulatory mandates, India is poised to become a future frontrunner in biofuels.

Strategic Alliances and Global Expansion

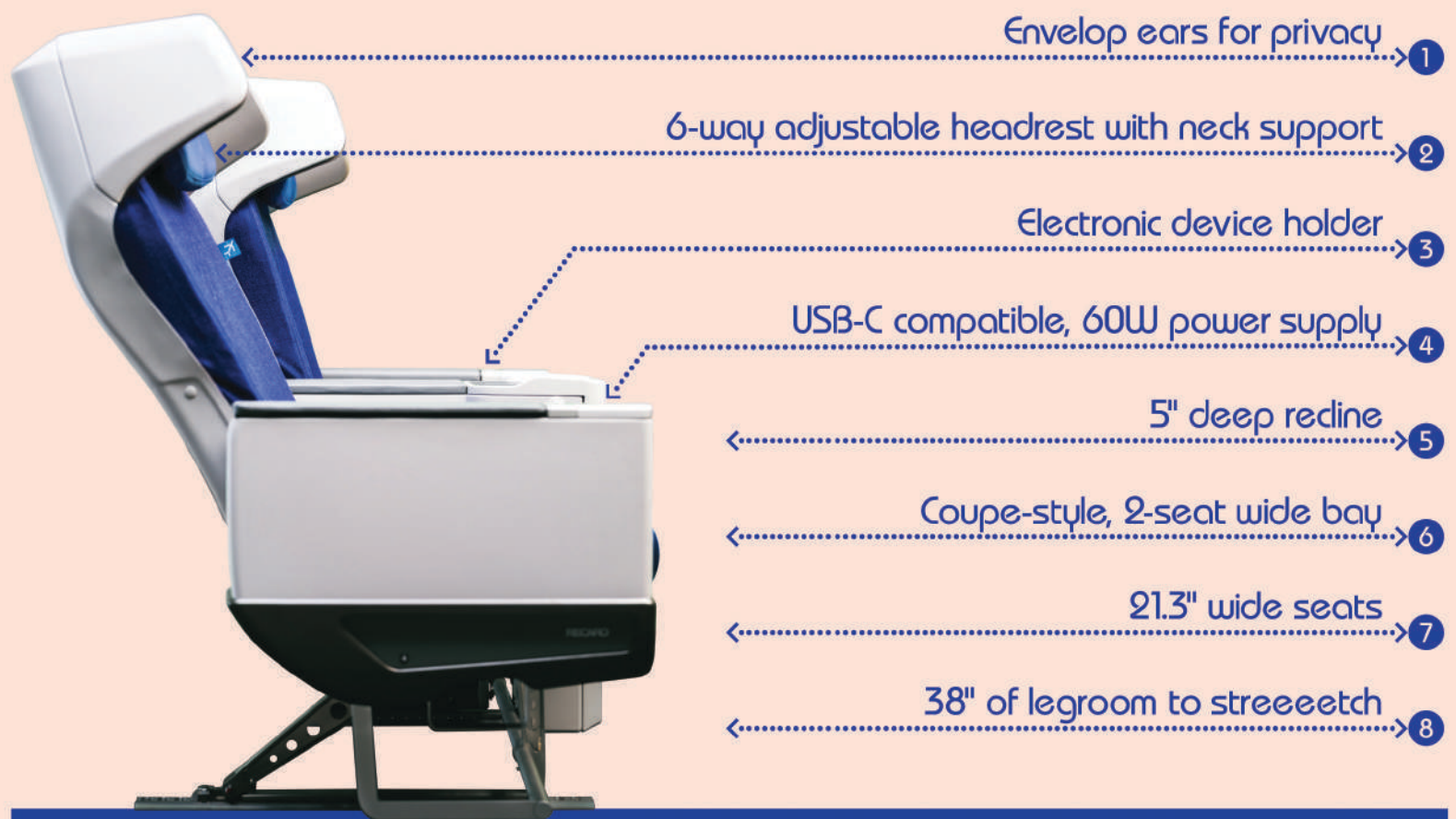
On the sidelines of the AGM, Air India expanded its global footprint through new interline and codeshare agreements with Air Mauritius, Icelandair, airBaltic, Bulgaria Air, Cyprus Airways, and Uzbekistan Airways, enhancing its global connectivity. IndiGo also signed an MoU with Delta Airlines while expanding its partnership with Air France-KLM and Virgin Atlantic. Additionally, IndiGo has entered into a new codeshare agreement with Garuda Indonesia.

New Leadership and Recognition

The AGM also witnessed a leadership transition at IATA. Luis Gallego, CEO, International Airlines Group (IAG), has assumed the role of Chair of the IATA Board, succeeding Pieter Elbers, CEO, IndiGo, who will continue to serve as a board member. The IATA Diversity & Inclusion Awards were presented during the WATS summit, celebrating the industry's efforts to foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace.

The momentum now shifts to South America, as the 82nd IATA AGM will be hosted by LATAM Airlines Group in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2026.

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The Clarks Hotels and Resorts moves forward from Domestic Diversification to Global Expansion

Since its inception, The Clarks Hotels and Resorts has emerged as one of India’s most dynamic hospitality brands, building a legacy through strategic growth and innovation. As the group now sets its sights on international markets, Rahul Deb Banerjee, Chief Operating Officer, shares insights into the brand’s journey, its unique market positioning, tech-forward philosophy, and the bold roadmap for global expansion.

Prativa Vaidya Bhalla



▲ Rahul Deb Banerjee

The Clarks Hotels and Resorts strives to redefine Indian hospitality with a global perspective. Rahul says, “We are committed to transforming the brand into a premium experience provider both within India and internationally. Our five-year growth strategy includes deeper penetration in Sri Lanka and expansion into key markets across Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa - while staying rooted in operational excellence and trusted partner relationships.”

Strategic Diversification

The Clarks Hotels and Resorts began as a domestic success story, steadily building a reputation through a sharply focused, asset-light expansion model. “Our evolution is one of India’s most compelling hospitality narratives. We have consistently achieved high net room growth of 14 per cent through strategic diversification across segments,” Rahul reflects.

In 2024, the group expanded its portfolio by signing 33 new hotels and entering 30 new destinations, including 14 spiritual hubs. It added 1,854 keys and saw a 10 per cent increase in occupancy. Over the next six months, The Clarks is set to open 20 new properties in destinations such as Lonavala, Gir, Pangot, Munnar, Basti, Dhanbad, Mohali, and Sri Lanka. This steady growth has strengthened The Clarks' position in the Indian hospitality market, marking a competitive position among the top five fastest-growing hotel chains in India by the number of signings.

The Clarks USP

A key strength of The Clarks Hotels and Resorts lies in its diversified portfolio that spans every price point from premium luxury to affordable value stays, with over 133 hotels across 110+ destinations. With a strong presence in Tier-I to Tier-IV cities, the brand ensures it remains accessible and relevant to a wide range of travellers, positioning itself as a 360-degree partner support system.

Rahul explains, “Our goal has always been to create a portfolio that resonates with all kinds of guests. Whether it’s a business traveller in a metro, a family on a spiritual journey, or a couple seeking a luxurious retreat, we have something for everyone.”

Technology and Consistency

One factor that differentiates The Clarks is its focus on operational precision and guest satisfaction. The brand uses the latest cloud-based audit tools and real-time monitoring systems to ensure consistent service delivery across all properties.

“Every aspect of our operations is meticulously planned and regularly reviewed. From visual audits to performance benchmarks, we leave no stone unturned in maintaining brand standards,” says Rahul.

The group also integrates cutting-edge CRM platforms and online

reputation management tools to monitor guest feedback across OTAs, Google, TripAdvisor, and offline channels. This tech-enabled approach ensures that guest experience remains at the forefront of its strategy.

Sustainability and Partner-Centric Growth

In addition to guest-centric operations, The Clarks Hotels and Resorts places a strong emphasis on sustainability and franchisee support. The brand offers comprehensive operational guidance, marketing support, and technology solutions to its partners ensuring that growth is collaborative and future-ready. The brand is also actively engaged with global hospitality consultants and real estate partners to ensure local adaptability while maintaining international standards. Moreover, The Clarks has demonstrated consistency in hiring from local markets, actively engaging with the local community for upskilling, and supporting the employment of differently-abled individuals across several units.

Rahul adds, “Partnering with The Clarks has been transformative for its stakeholders. Our operational support and brand visibility in the market have significantly boosted business and profitability for respective stakeholders.”

Scaling Beyond Borders

With a strong presence in India, The Clarks Hotels and Resorts is now looking to expand internationally. Rahul adds, “We are committed to positioning The Clarks among the top global hospitality brands. Over the next five years, we are charting an ambitious path of international expansion across key markets including Sri Lanka, Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. While The Clarks has traditionally been recognised as a strong mid-segment player in India, our vision is to transform it into a premium, globally admired brand, synonymous with exceptional service, distinctive marketing, and memorable guest experiences. This strategic evolution reflects our unwavering focus on quality, innovation, and global relevance.”



THE RAJ PACHAR

॥ पचारोऽस्मि ॥

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Prativa Vaidya Bhalla

My South African story of exploration begins in the historical city of Johannesburg, which has seen enough upheavals during the apartheid years with Nelson Mandela, yet it stands tall and proud as an example of justice and freedom. It is bustling with the agenda of a busy metro and is the nerve centre of business in South Africa. It is packed with history, culture, heritage, and gourmet cuisine, including an array of Indian restaurants easily available on a quick Google search.

Our merry bunch of journalists, fresh from the Meetings Africa convention (a 3-day conference organised by South African Tourism to promote MICE in the region),

come together from different countries across the world: France, Ireland, Kenya, Botswana, Hongkong and India to discover the Rainbow nation. Whether we arrive as first-time visitors or returning travellers, everyone shares the same excitement thanks to South Africa's incredible range of tourism experiences.

The Spectacular Kruger

My first glimpse of the rich safari heritage of Africa begins at Kruger National Park. We take off on a 40-seater aeroplane from Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg and land in Mpumalanga Skukuza Airport, right inside the national park! The airport feels more like a cosy resort than a traditional terminal, a quaint hut that immediately sets the tone for the adventure ahead. The high ceilings, crafted from bamboo, wood, and straw, allude to its distinct rustic charm. The baggage claim is not a conveyor belt laden with tumbling suitcases, but a door that opens to have attendants hand-deliver our luggage! There was no mistaking it, my South African safari has officially begun.

As we drive out of the airport and take a turn on the park road, we see a stunning sight - a magnificent giraffe awaits, chewingly nonchalantly on his lunch, utterly unbothered by us gawking from the confines of our car. Further ahead, we spot groups of antelope clustered in their little groups; the females with their elegant stripes and the males showing off their majestic horns.

Patrick, our friendly guide, regales us with enchanting tales of Kruger's rich history and

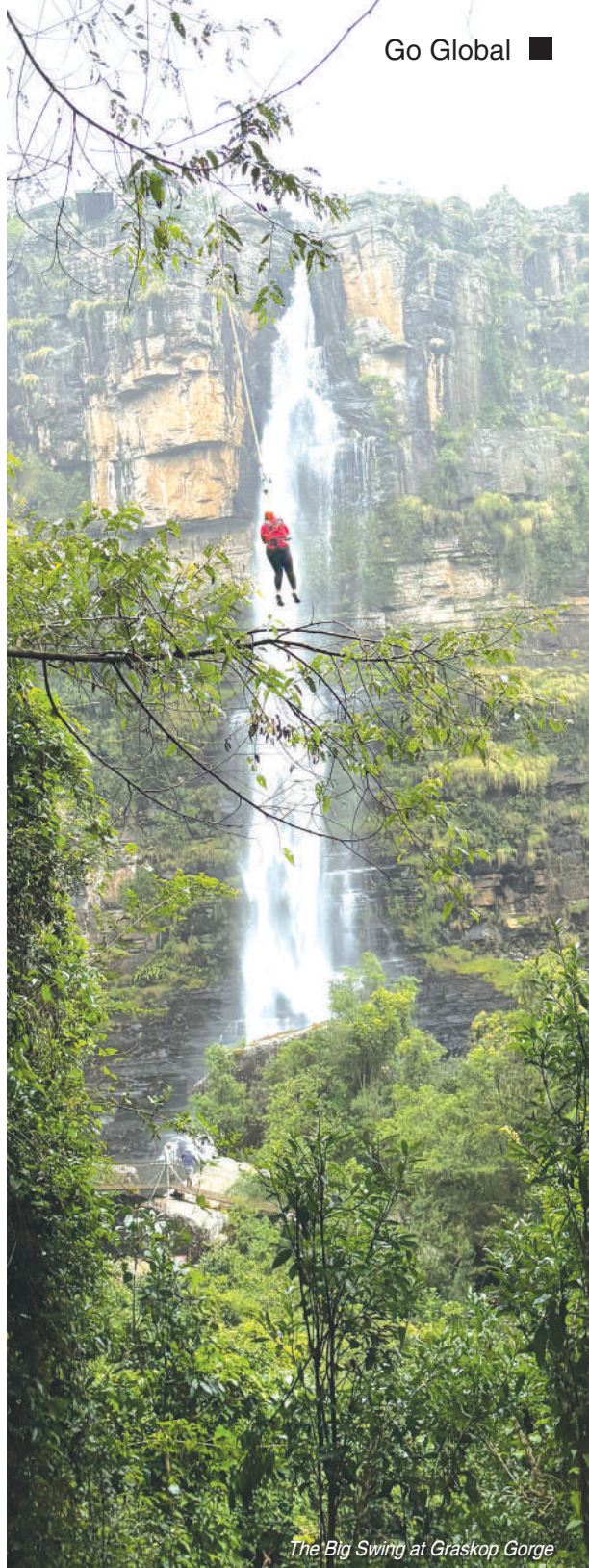




Kruger Shalati - The Train on the Bridge



Bourke's Luck Potholes



The Big Swing at Graskop Gorge

Quad Bike on the Dunes



the fascinating behaviour of the park animals. He speaks about the cruelty of elephant poaching, and with their powerful memory banks, if elephants witness the killing of their kin, the trauma lingers, often turning into rage against humans. The best we can do is admire the wild from a respectful distance and protect it from our own intrusion.

Next, we head to an extraordinary experience at the Kruger Shalati - The Train on the Bridge, perched high above the Sabie River. This historic bridge once hosted the park's first visitors, who stayed in train carriages, and today it is home to a fully equipped, accessible hotel housed in an actual train. The design pays tribute to the 1920s rail safari, blending vintage charm with contemporary African style. From the pool deck, we are treated to breathtaking views of the rolling Kruger landscape with the river Sabie gently meandering through the bush, serving as a watering hole for magnificent wildlife. The stay is indulgent, immersive, and unforgettable. It is no wonder that Kruger Shalati gets booked months in advance.

The Anew Resort Hazyview, nestled just outside the park, is our quiet, comfortable base for the night. Its lush gardens and warm hospitality are perfect for winding down after a day at the park.

The Panorama Route

Day 2 dawns cloudy and serene, and we set off on the picturesque Panorama Route towards our first pitstop - God's Window, perched high on the edge of the Mpumalanga escarpment, offering sweeping views of lush forests, deep valleys, and the vast Lowveld stretching out below. Unfortunately for us, after hiking through the mist up to the lookout point, which truly felt like walking through clouds, God's Window remained shut for us. To our utter disappointment, the entire view was covered with thick rolling mist. However, as the old saying goes, 'when God closes

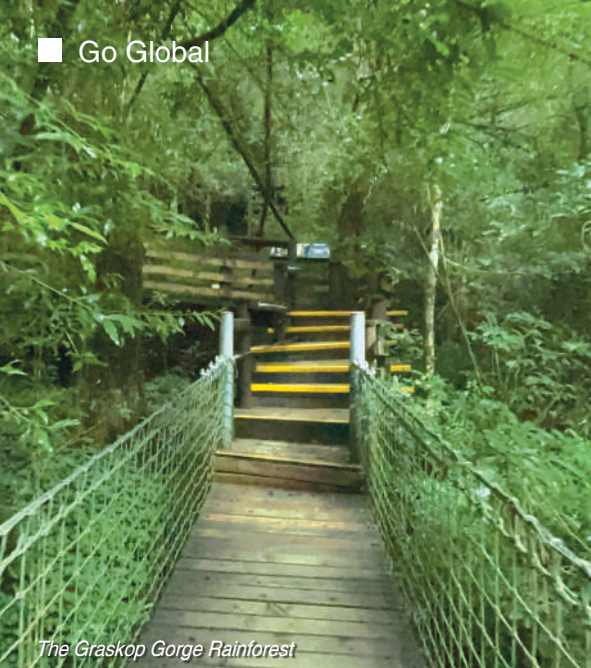
one window, he opens another,' to our utter delight, our next stop proves just that!

The spectacular Bourke's Luck Potholes, one of Mpumalanga's true geological wonders, has been formed over centuries at the meeting point of rivers Treur and Blyde. The swirling brown waters have carved out dramatic, moon-like rock formations, embellished by small waterfalls along the way. It gives me an odd sense of calm to be in the presence of such beauty, almost akin to being in a hushed art gallery admiring the great works of the masters. Following it up with a stop at Harrie's Pancakes is perfect. Though a tad bit touristy, the pancakes are worth it, and the accompanying chocolate store is a delight.

Our next pitstop on the panorama route takes us to Graskop Gorge, a natural marvel that has to be experienced to be believed. We step into a camouflaged world of lush greenery and rich biodiversity on a 600-metre forest walk through the Graskop Gorge. The elevated trail over a suspension bridge winds through the indigenous ecosystem, which seems to pulsate with life. We take the Graskop Gorge Viewing Lift and descend into the underbelly of the rain forest that whispers the secrets of the jungle. The glass-fronted elevator, a first-of-its-kind experience in Africa, invites visitors to descend 51 metres into the heart of the ancient Afromontane Forest and provides stunning views of the Drakensberg Escarpment as you gently glide down the cliff face. The mighty waterfall cascading down the gorge adds just the right amount of drama to the visceral beauty. For seasoned adrenaline junkies, the Big Swing, offers a 70 metre bungee jump down the waterfall, while the zipline soars 120 metre across the gorge.

Captivating Cape Town

From the thrills of Mpumalanga, we head to Cape Town, a city layered with a colonial



The Graskop Gorge Rainforest



Boschendal Wine Tasting

past, tracing back as one of Africa's earliest European settlements. Beneath the timeless echoes of that heritage beats the pulse of a modern, defiant, and fiercely indigenous spirit that reflects in the architecture of the city. What strikes me most is its people, inarguably the warmest and most welcoming that I have met on my travels. Conversations with strangers seem to unfold effortlessly, people meet your gaze with warmth and genuine curiosity, eager to hear your story and share theirs. In today's fast-paced, digital world, this kind of connection feels real and priceless.

On Cape Town's exhaustive list of amazing experiences, the definite first is a visit to the mighty Table Mountain, a world heritage site, that towers like a guardian angel over the city. The ride up the craggy, unyielding mountain face is smooth and almost vertical on the gliding cable car, rotating smoothly to allow us breathtaking 360-degree views. The Devil's Peak and Lion's Head flank the Table Mountain like formidable generals that protect the northern end of the Cape Fold Mountain range. At 3,563 ft above sea level, the air turns chilly, and I wish to stay longer, undisturbed, admiring the sweeping views of Cape Town stretching into the Atlantic Ocean, but my next adventure is calling my name!

This one is for the racing aficionados, and surprisingly, even for a cautious explorer like me, I cannot wait to race down the Atlantis dunes on ATVs (All-Terrain Vehicles). The high-octane thrill of gripping the quadbike and trying not to fall off as I zoom over dunes is no match for the scorching sun beating down on us, definitely trying to take us down before the dunes get us! The expert guides are part daredevils and part ace photographers who keep easily-lost bikers like me on a tight leash, lest I get lost in the treacherous shifting sands.

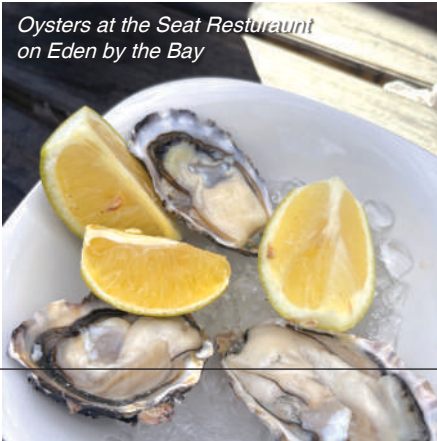
After all that adrenaline, a slower, more indulgent rhythm was just what the soul needed. Boschendal's award-winning wine tasting and picnic is the perfect farewell to the beauty that is Cape Town. Set in the heart of Franschhoek, the estate greets us with its distinct European elegance, rolling

vineyards, dreamy cottages, and effortless countryside luxury. As we sprawl out on the lawns with picnic boxes full of homegrown cheese, berries, cold cuts, and sip on their signature house wines, the afternoon unfolds slowly, deliciously. We also learn to identify the subtle hints that make the wines of this region truly unique, and nobody wants this magical afternoon to end.

The Capital 15 on Orange makes for a perfect stay in Cape Town, with Table Mountain and Lion's Head quietly looming in the backdrop. From the sleek, state-of-the-art lobby to the spacious rooms, everything feels polished and luxurious. Watching the sunrise right outside my window is an extra-special indulgence. I enjoy my coffee every morning, gazing contentedly at the mammoth mountain and reliving my Cape Town adventures.

Cape Town's Culinary Extravaganza

Mention must be made that this city is a gourmand's paradise, where every meal is a full-blown experience. From the lively buzz of Mojo Market with its live music and a mouth-watering selection of global flavours to the relaxed seaside charm of The Seat at Eden on the Bay, serving fresh seafood with Table Mountain as a backdrop, the Cape Town dining experience is exquisite. For an unforgettable evening, The Gold Restaurant delivers a fully immersive, authentic African culinary and cultural experience that is unforgettable. I am as amazed by the 14-course set menu as I am by the sheer experience of the Djembe drumming, traditional face painting, and storytelling through music and dance. Carried away by the sheer magic of the evening, I even



Oysters at the Seat Restaurant on Eden by the Bay



find myself on stage, matching steps with the master of ceremonies, swaying to the haunting African beat.

As my South African journey draws to a close, I find myself carrying home more than photographs and souvenirs, I take back a kaleidoscope of memories; my first taste of oyster, the thrill of the dune race, the damp scent of the rainforest and the laughter shared with strangers who now feel like old friends. South Africa may be best known for its legendary safaris, but its true magic lies far beyond the wild. South Africa charms you at first glance, and before you know it, you have fallen for it hook, line, and sinker.



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Dep. dates Dec 15, 2025 to Mar 02, 2026
(Every Monday)

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Dep. dates: Dec 12, 2025 to Feb, 27, 2026
(Every Friday)

Port to Port: Abu Dhabi (UAE) - Dubai (UAE) - Sir Bani Yas Island (UAE) - Abu Dhabi (UAE)

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Dep. dates Dec 13, 2025 to Feb 21, 2026
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Fiji Tourism Exchange 2025 Highlights

Strong Appeal for Indian Market

At the Fiji Tourism Exchange (FTE) 2025, TTJ spoke with key stakeholders shaping the country's tourism narrative for global and Indian travellers. From luxury hotel offerings to immersive cultural adventures and community-led experiences, Fiji is making a strong case as a destination that blends natural beauty, cultural depth, and warm hospitality, with a particular eye on the Indian market.

Sonika Bohra

The 2025 edition of the Fiji Tourism Exchange (FTE), the region's flagship tourism trade event, was held from May 10–13 at the Sheraton Fiji Golf and Beach Resort. Celebrated as one of the most influential B2B platforms in the South Pacific, the two-day marketplace brought together global travel professionals to strengthen business ties and explore Fiji's diverse tourism offerings.

This year, the event drew over 550 participants from 19 countries, including 138 international buyers, 84 sellers, and 10 leading global media outlets. A record-setting 4,300 pre-scheduled business meetings were lined up, fostering opportunities for collaboration, new partnerships, and promoting innovative travel products.



Marriott International: Five-Star Comfort Across Fiji's Best Landscapes



▲ Javed Shameem

Marriott International is strategically positioned to cater to all kinds of travellers, families, honeymooners, wellness seekers, and culture lovers.

Javed Shameem, Market Director, Sales and Distribution, Fiji and Samoa, Marriott International, shared, "In Fiji, we have five Marriott properties: three Sheratons, a Westin, and the Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay. You will find a 'stay-in-one, play-in-four' concept on Denarau Island, just 25 minutes from Nadi International Airport. Guests can move between the Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort, the Sheraton Denarau Villas for longer stays, and the Westin, which is set to reopen in December 2025 after a multimillion-dollar transformation."

Together, these properties offer 10 swimming pools, 15 restaurants and bars, and an 18-hole championship golf course. "It is like walking through a floating cruise ship on land," he added.

For travellers seeking seclusion, the Sheraton Tokoriki Island Resort offers the ultimate 'flop and drop' experience, with tranquil beaches and world-class snorkelling. Meanwhile, the Fiji Marriott Resort Momi Bay, located in an expansive lagoon setting, delivers sensory luxury through its 'resort within a resort' concept, offering



Sheraton Resort & Spa, Tokoriki Island, Fiji

everything from family-friendly rooms to overwater bungalows, some of the very few in Fiji.

The culinary experience is equally immersive. "We run weekly farm-to-fork table tours, allowing guests to visit our five-acre farm, plant trees, learn about Fijian medicinal herbs, and participate in the unearthing of a traditional lovo meal. This is paired with cultural performances and storytelling, an unforgettable fusion of food, heritage, and soul," said Shameem.

Marriott also understands the cultural preferences of Indian travellers. "With 42 per cent of Fiji's population being of Indian descent, we offer an impressive variety of Indian dishes, from Goan halwa to rasmalai. We have even introduced a gulab jamun cheesecake. Guests from India feel right at home here," he added.

Tour Managers Fiji: Pioneering the Indian Travel Segment



▲ Damend Gounder

As one of the first operators to target the Indian market, Damend Gounder, Managing Director, Tour Managers Fiji, believes the potential is only beginning to be realised.

“India is not yet Fiji’s top source market, but it has everything needed to become one. We have invested early, partnered with Iris Reps in India, and offer full support to travel agents, tailor-made

itineraries, vegetarian and Jain meal options, and service aligned with the Indian time zone,” said Gounder.

Tour Managers Fiji curates itineraries far beyond standard sightseeing for honeymooners, FITs, groups, and MICE travellers. Each programme is thoughtfully designed to incorporate authentic Fijian experiences rooted in culture, community, and sustainability, allowing visitors to truly feel the heartbeat of the islands.

Gounder also reflected on the deep historical ties between India and Fiji. “This year, Fiji marks 140 years since the arrival of the first Indian community here. Combine that with the warmth of Fijians and the richness of both cultures; you have an unbeatable offering for Indian travellers,” he said.

The Pearl Resort: Comfort in Pacific Harbour



▲ Natalie Marletta

Nestled in Pacific Harbour, widely regarded as Fiji’s adventure capital, The Pearl Resort and Spa offers an ideal blend of relaxation, romance, and thrill-seeking. With 210 stylish rooms, the resort provides the perfect base for travellers looking to experience the diverse range of activities the region offers.

Natalie Marletta, General Manager, The Pearl Resort and Spa, Fiji, shared how important FTE 2025 is to the property’s outreach, “FTE plays a big part

in our marketing strategy. It is a fantastic platform for us to connect with agents, PCOs, and tourism stakeholders from all over the world. The diversity of participants is incredible, and we love the opportunity to update the trade on our offerings and showcase what Pacific Harbour is all about.”



The Pearl Resort and Spa, Fiji

Go Dirty Tours: Off-Road, All-Weather, All-Senses Adventure



▲ Anand Achari and Liz Scott

Go Dirty Tours Fiji delivers exactly what the name promises: mud-splattered, adrenaline-pumping, all-weather adventure. But beyond the thrill, it offers an immersive look at the real Fiji.

Liz Scott, Marketing and Communications Manager, shared the philosophy behind the brand: “We started Go Dirty Tours for two main reasons. First, to take people out of the typical resort zones and show them a completely different side

of Fiji, the stunning landscapes, the mountains, and the natural beauty you do not usually see in tourism campaigns. Second, we wanted to offer an all-weather adventure. Whether sunny or rainy, you can still go out, splash through the mud, and have fun. We really do live up to our name!”

She added, “It is all about creating a sensory experience. When riding through a village, you can smell firewood cooking, see the children playing, and truly absorb the atmosphere. It is not a staged



Play Dirty ATV Tour

show, it is authentic, grassroots Fiji.”

The company offers five different tours, ranging from two to five hours. Options include quad biking through scenic terrain, visits to remote villages for cultural exchanges, and even combo adventures with helicopter rides and zip lining. Prices start from FJ\$279 per person for shared quads and FJ\$349 for solo riders.

“This is not just about adrenaline. It is about connecting with the soul of the place, while having a blast,” said Scott.

Fiji’s Indian Connection: A Cultural Bridge, Not Just a Market

All stakeholders TTJ spoke with at FTE 2025 agreed on one key message: The Indian market is not just commercially viable, it is culturally aligned with Fiji. Whether through cuisine, language, festivals, or shared values of hospitality and family, Fiji resonates deeply with Indian travellers.

As Javed Shameem summed it up, “Fiji is a feast for your senses, whether you are seeking nature, culture, or connection. With the Indian community already woven into our social fabric, there is a natural affinity that Indian travellers instantly feel.”

Tourism Fiji: Strengthening Trade Through Real Experiences



**Brent Hill, CEO,
Tourism Fiji**

“ FTE was fantastic this year, celebrating all things Fiji and, of course, setting the tone for the rest of the year and into next year. We welcome tourists from around the world, including India. We know the big thing that will move the needle for us in India is going to be air connectivity. That’s where we are putting all of our

efforts over the next year, to improve that. We are really looking forward to seeing more people from India here, and we look forward to welcoming Indians with open arms at the 2026 FTE.

**Sunil Menon,
Country Manager –
India, Tourism Fiji**

“ FTE 2025 has been a very successful event for Tourism Fiji. This annual event brings together our global partners and offices for three days of focused interaction. Last year, Fiji recorded one of its highest tourist arrivals, crossing the one million mark globally. This year, we were pleased to host a select group of luxury travel partners from across India. Our goal was to engage a small but high-impact group, and I am confident they will return with memories and strategies to drive more Indian travellers to Fiji.



Indian Buyers Applaud FTE 2025 and Fiji’s Potential



**Yasmin Ikrami,
Founder and CEO,
JourneyLabel**

“ Attending FTE 2025, representing JourneyLabel, a luxury travel company, was truly inspiring. It was wonderful to see how the Fiji travel industry is focusing on personalised, sustainable, and meaningful experiences. I was also inspired by how the tourism industry in Fiji came together

to make the event a great success. At JourneyLabel, we are excited to bring these ideas to our Indian travellers and continue offering unique, responsible travel experiences.

**Shanam Jain, Head of
Product at Marketing,
Maurya Travels**

“ My experience with FTE 2025 has been very, very good. The show was extremely well-organised with the right mix of products, and it served as a platform from which we could take away a lot of meaningful insights. Fiji has immense potential for the Indian market, especially for the kind of clientele we cater to, those looking for something unique, exciting, yet relaxing. Luxury travellers, in particular, will love the concept of the outer island resorts and Fiji’s signature ‘slow living’ style, known as Fiji Time.

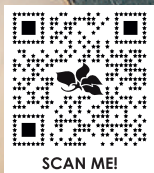


**Vikash Manohar,
Founder, Tour On**

“ FFTE 2025 exceeded expectations with well-organised meetings and inspiring insights. I had viewed Fiji mainly as a water sports destination, but this trip revealed its diversity, from the Coral Coast and Suva to the islands, offering enough for a 10-night itinerary. Fiji’s

premium experiences like river safaris and helicopter rides have strong appeal. More importantly, the warmth of the people makes it truly special. With improving connectivity via Singapore Airlines and Fiji Airways, Indian travellers can now plan multi-stop itineraries. If clients have 12 to 15 days of vacation time, we can combine Fiji with a stopover in Singapore, Australia, or New Zealand, rather than flying only to Fiji and back. This flexible routing offers better value for money and makes the destination more versatile. Fiji is not just tropical, it offers diverse terrain, lush waterfalls, and offbeat experiences that set it apart from typical beach destinations. I sincerely thank Tourism Fiji and Sunil Menon for this opportunity. This trip has helped me understand the destination deeply and confidently promote it to Indian travellers.

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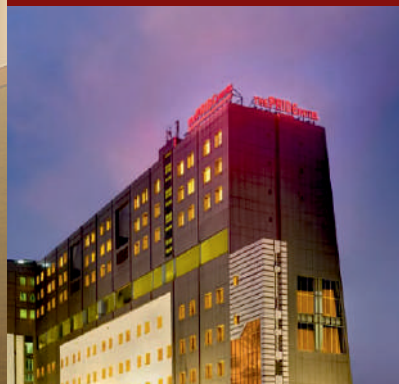
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Jetwing Hotels: A Legacy-Driven Brand Showcasing the Finest of Sri Lanka

With over five decades of heritage woven into Sri Lanka’s hospitality story, Jetwing Hotels continues to evolve while staying true to its roots. Hashan Cooray, Director, Marketing and Development, Jetwing Hotels, offers a deep dive into the brand’s journey, its iconic properties, its focus on Indian travellers, sustainability-driven growth, and a vision shaped by legacy and innovation.

Prashant Nayak

Pioneers of Sri Lanka's hospitality and tourism industry, Jetwing Hotels comprises over 30 unique resorts and villas spread across 12 incredible destinations on the emerald isle of Sri Lanka – from the golden sands of the coastline and the mist-laden hills of Sri Lanka to the cityscapes of Colombo and the wilderness of Yala.

Carrying the Legacy Forward

Jetwing Hotels began as a modest six-room property on the golden shores of Negombo, but from those humble beginnings, a legacy was born. Hashan Cooray’s grandfather, Herbert, founded Jetwing in 1973, and the company has grown to become one of the most respected hospitality brands in the country, a leader in sustainable tourism, with over 50 years of experience in delivering authentic Sri Lankan hospitality to travellers from around the world. Despite the growth, they never strayed from the core vision that Hashan’s grandfather laid down: to care deeply for their people, their communities, and every guest who walks through their doors.

“Hospitality, for us, goes beyond comfort; it is about creating service that becomes legendary. That ambition to consistently deliver something remarkable is what drives every Jetwing experience today,” asserted Hashan.



▲ Hashan Cooray

As a third-generation hotelier, Hashan’s journey has been about moving forward while staying grounded in the legacy he has inherited. He shared, “We are proud of our 52-year legacy, but we have never been static. Our focus has been on adapting to modern travel trends, whether in design, digital presence, or experiences, while consistently showcasing the best of Sri Lanka. We evaluate each decision through one guiding principle: preserving our soul even as we transform.”

Jetwing's New Portfolio Structure

Jetwing properties are known for their individuality and immersive experiences in diverse regions. They recently announced a strategic portfolio restructure, introducing four distinct categories to better reflect evolving traveller preferences. Hashan explained that this shift was driven by the brand’s rapid growth over the past decade and a desire to offer greater clarity to both partners and guests. He mentioned, “Many in key markets like India only associated Jetwing with larger hotels, unaware of our growing portfolio of boutique hotels, villas, and other specialised properties. This new categorisation into distinct tiers helps articulate our breadth and assures travellers that Jetwing delivers the best of Sri Lanka across every segment.”

To elaborate, Jetwing Luxury Reserves epitomise indulgence. Crafted for discerning travellers seeking unparalleled exclusivity and personalised experiences, this segment features their five-star flagship properties, such as Jetwing Saman Villas, Jetwing Vil Uyana, Jetwing Jungle Lodge, Jetwing Surf and Safari, Jetwing Lagoon, and the recently opened heritage boutique villa Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa in Rambukkana, etc. Jetwing Premium Hotels is a collection of elegant four-star and five-star properties, including Jetwing Blue in Negombo, Jetwing Colombo Seven, and Jetwing Jaffna, among others. Each offers full-service accommodation and modern amenities. Their categories of Select Hotels, on the other hand, bridge the gap between value and comfort, while Essentials cover budget-friendly travel.





Jetwing Surf and Safari

Making Indian Travellers Feel at Home

With travel between Sri Lanka and India becoming more accessible and frequent, Indian travellers are emerging as one of Jetwing’s most valued guest segments. We asked Hashan what truly resonates with these guests when they choose to stay in Sri Lanka. Hashan responded, “Indian travellers are highly discerning, and they particularly value our service, which is warm, intuitive, and consistently respectful of their food preferences and cultural sensitivities. But beyond that, it is the diversity we offer: romantic escapes, family-friendly retreats, scenic hideaways across beaches, tea country, paddy fields, cultural hotspots, and wildlife parks. Every Jetwing property tells a different story.”

With Sri Lanka emerging as a preferred destination for Indian weddings, Hashan recommends some exceptional properties for couples planning their big day. He shared, “For intimate, one-of-a-kind weddings, Jetwing Saman Villas in Bentota is unmatched; it is romantic, exclusive, and particularly appealing to the Indian audience, having featured in The Night Manager with Anil Kapoor and other stars. For grand beachfront celebrations, Jetwing Lighthouse in Galle and Jetwing Blue in Negombo are excellent choices. If couples want a lush, inland setting, the lakeside lawn at Jetwing Lake offers something uniquely serene.”

Jetwing Vil Uyana



Finding Growth: India and Beyond

India remains one of Jetwing’s top priority markets, both from B2B and B2C perspectives. The brand works closely with its Sri Lankan DMC partners to ensure the Indian travel trade receives the most competitive terms, building confidence and encouraging strong promotion. Jetwing’s approach is rooted in long-term relationships and mutual growth, supported by targeted campaigns and consistent engagement with key Indian partners across various cities.

Beyond India, Jetwing is also witnessing encouraging growth from markets such as Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Malaysia, regions that historically contributed less traffic. Improved air connectivity, combined with growing awareness of Sri Lanka’s rich diversity, is helping convert these into high-potential, short-haul markets. They are promising markets for continued expansion.

Holistic Approach to Tourism

While each property under the brand is built on the promise of providing the finest Sri Lankan hospitality with authentic island experiences, Jetwing is committed to community empowerment, ensuring sustainability remains at the core of its philosophies.

Hashan shared, “Sustainability



Jetwing Jungle Lodge



Jetwing Jafna

for us is not just environmental. It is also deeply social. Our Jetwing Youth Development Project (JYDP) is one of our proudest initiatives, having trained nearly 1,500 young people from underprivileged communities at no cost, empowering them with careers in hospitality. On the environmental side, our investments in green technology, from vapour absorption chillers and biogas to over 2.6 MW of solar installations, now power nearly 70 per cent of our entire group’s energy needs.”

From coastal retreats to cultural heartlands, Jetwing Hotels has travelled across the island and discovered some truly spectacular locations that deserve to be shared with the world. He added, “Our strategy is to bring sustainable tourism to lesser-known areas, helping distribute economic benefits more equitably and easing pressure on over-touristed spots. Whether it is restoring a colonial mansion or building a beachfront escape from scratch, we want each project to reflect its surroundings authentically.”

Looking ahead, Jetwing is expanding into lifestyle offerings, including a flagship beach club and a residential coastal development near Negombo, ideal for travellers, especially Indians, seeking a second home with the spirit of a resort.

WIDENING THE UMBRELLA

HOW HOTELS ARE CATERING TO EVERY MONSOON MOOD

As monsoon clouds gather over India’s diverse landscapes, an unexpected opportunity arises for the country’s hospitality sector. Once viewed as an off-season, the monsoon now inspires immersive experiences blending nature’s lush beauty with local culture and wellness. From rain-kissed shores to the misty hills, hotels are crafting sensory escapes that celebrate the magic and rhythm of the rains. TTJ connects with four hospitality heads to explore how their properties are embracing the monsoon.

Prashant Nayak



▲ Babita Kanwar



▲ Nikhil Gandhi



▲ Ganeshram Iyer



▲ Harinath M

While the rains may deter some travellers, a growing number of hotels and resorts are embracing the season, reimagining it as a time for quiet luxury, natural beauty, and sensory indulgence. From curated spa rituals and seasonal cuisine to immersive nature walks and cultural touchpoints, monsoon is being transformed into an experiential offering that speaks to the soul.

Embrace the Magic of Monsoon Travel

Often typecast as a sunshine destination, Goa takes on a quieter, more introspective charm

during the rains, and some hoteliers believe this is when its true soul is revealed.

With a central location that balances North Goa’s energy with tranquil coastal pockets, Le Méridien Goa, Calangute, encourages guests to embrace a slower pace. “At Le Méridien Goa, Calangute, the monsoon season unveils a magical side of Goa that many do not expect. The palm trees sway in the rain, the aroma of fresh earth fills the air, and our property transforms into a serene haven. The monsoon breathes life into the Goan countryside, from cascading waterfalls and blooming tropical flora to misty mornings along the coast. Whether you are sipping a hot brew at our

Longitude 73 café or enjoying the rhythmic sounds of nature from your room’s balcony, the monsoon here is revitalising. We invite our guests to unlock a new perspective of Goa, where the monsoon becomes part of the journey, not just the backdrop,” said Babita



Kanwar, General Manager, Le Méridien Goa, Calangute.

This sentiment is also echoed by Nikhil Gandhi, General Manager, Grand Hyatt Goa, located at Bambolim Bay, as he shared, “During the rainy season, our 28 acres of tropical gardens and rolling green lawns transform into a vibrant oasis. The private balcony of every room transforms into an idyllic spot with a stunning view to experience the monsoon in all its glory. Guests can indulge in our renowned Sunday brunch or the theatrical 3D dining experience at Le Petit Chef. Our 35,000-square-foot Shamana Spa, featuring Goa’s only 25 mt indoor pool and halotherapy studio, becomes a true sanctuary during the monsoon. With monsoon-themed kids’ programmes and immersive nature experiences, we offer a vibrant, soulful escape that truly comes alive in the rainy season.” Beyond aesthetics, the resort elevates the rainy-day stay with comfort cuisine and rejuvenation.

For travellers looking to swap beachside rain for cultural calm, ibis Styles Mysuru offers a more grounded, nature-centric retreat. “Our property becomes an oasis of tranquillity during the monsoon. As the rains rejuvenate Mysuru’s landscape, nearby attractions like the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary come to life. Guests can witness migratory birds thriving in their natural habitat, a rare and peaceful sight. Our sustainable initiatives ensure that guests can enjoy the season’s beauty without impacting the environment. It is a delicate balance of immersion and responsibility,” said Ganeshram Iyer, Hotel Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru. Positioned with an emphasis on eco-friendly hospitality, the hotel integrates monsoon awareness into its operations.

The Indian monsoon is not just a seasonal experience; it is a mosaic of richly diverse, regionally distinct phenomena, and no brand reflects this better than Sterling Holiday Resorts, with stays in serene mist-laced hill stations, lush forests, and vibrant valleys.

“Our resorts are nestled in some of India’s most scenic monsoon-friendly destinations, where nature thrives in its most vibrant form during the rains. From the lush tea gardens of Sterling Munnar to the dramatic skies over Sterling Lonavala, the monsoon here is more than a backdrop; it is the main event. Each property is designed to



immerse travellers in seasonal wonder. The rhythmic patter of rain, gushing waterfalls, and earthy aromas create a magical ambiance that is perfect for slow travel and soulful getaways,” said Harinath M, Senior Vice President, Marketing, Sterling Holiday Resorts.

Catering to Monsoon Moods

Though traditionally seen as the off-season, the Indian monsoon is now being embraced as a season of unique appeal. Far from being niche, monsoon tourism now cuts across generations and motivations. At Le Méridien Goa, Babita describes a heartening variety of travellers. She said, “The monsoon season attracts a wonderfully diverse mix of guests, each seeking a unique experience that this time of the year beautifully enhances. Couples come to immerse themselves in the romance of Goa’s rain-drenched beauty. Cosy corners, intimate dining settings, and the soothing rhythm of rainfall create the perfect ambiance for reconnecting. However, it is not just about romance. We also welcome families looking to spend quality time together with engaging indoor activities for children and curated local experiences that reveal a more authentic, cultural side of Goa. Weekend travellers and urban explorers are drawn to the region’s scenic views, culinary delights, and vibrant monsoon festivals like Sao Joao and Bonderam.”

That same spirit of seasonal diversity is evident at Grand Hyatt Goa, where lush surroundings and tailored experiences attract a wide array of guests. “We welcome couples seeking romantic escapes, families creating lasting memories, wellness seekers rejuvenating their minds and bodies, and weekend travellers looking for a refreshing break. We even cater to pet parents with thoughtfully designed pet-friendly experiences, making it a true retreat for all members of

the family,” said Nikhil. With its bay-side location and rich mix of wellness and leisure offerings, Grand Hyatt Goa positions itself as a monsoon destination with something for everyone.

In the heritage-rich city of Mysuru, the monsoon draws in a similarly wide spectrum of visitors. Ganeshram mentioned, “Couples enjoy cosy stays and intimate rooftop dining at KA16, while families appreciate our spacious rooms, kid-friendly amenities, and rooftop pool. Business travellers find it an ideal place to unwind after meetings, and weekend guests love exploring the cultural richness of Mysuru amid the freshness of the season.”

Meanwhile, at Sterling Holiday Resorts, Harinath M reported that the monsoon is now one of their most versatile travel periods. He shared, “Couples are drawn to hideaways like Sterling Munnar, Lonavala, or Kalimpong for misty balcony views and in-room dining experiences. Small families choose places like Sterling Rudraksh Jaisalmer, where the monsoon brings a welcome respite from the heat, making heritage sightseeing more enjoyable. Weekenders from metros flock to Ooty, Kodaikanal, or Shimla for quiet reconnects with nature, waterfalls, and colourful street shopping. The monsoon becomes a natural invitation for introspection and healing. Perhaps the most mindful monsoon guests are the wellness seekers. Destinations like Sterling Palm Bliss - Rishikesh and Lake Palace Alleppey are favoured for Ayurvedic treatments, yoga, and spa therapies.”

Rain-Ready Retreats

Across India, hotel brands are leaning into the romance and rhythm of the monsoon with carefully designed seasonal offerings. At Le Méridien Goa, Calangute, monsoon stays are designed around small yet meaningful indulgences that reflect the mood of the season. Babita highlighted two key experiences that capture the spirit of Goa in the rains. She shared, “Our Members’ Exclusive Offer includes



Grand Hyatt Goa - Bay View

complimentary breakfast and 10 per cent off BAR rates. Also, there is something magical about sipping hot chai while watching the rain. Guests can enjoy local teas and street food at our Longitude 73 and Latest Recipe outlets.”

At Grand Hyatt Goa, monsoon stays are crafted to help guests slow down and reconnect with nature through immersive, family-friendly experiences. As part of the GoanHYline – Hyatt Hideaways campaign, the hotel offers long-stay packages featuring activities such as aqua zorbing, birdwatching, canvas painting, and puppet shows, alongside access to The Galleria for indoor games and VR fun. Wellness seekers can try Elemental Yoga, a blend of aqua, aerial, and hatha yoga. “Our monsoon offerings are designed to balance indulgence, exploration, and rejuvenation. Guests enjoy daily breakfast, complimentary dining for children under six, Camp Hyatt access, and 20 per cent off spa and laundry services, making every stay seamless and restorative. With pet-friendly options, an on-site casino, and curated cultural touchpoints, Grand Hyatt Goa delivers a sensorial escape that celebrates the monsoon’s lush charm,” emphasised Nikhil.

The ongoing third edition of the GoanHYline campaign – Hyatt Hideaways, which offers immersive and enriching experiences in Goa, includes Grand Hyatt Goa, Alila Diwa Goa, and The Diwa Club, Ronil Goa – a JdV by Hyatt Hotel, Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa, and Hyatt Place Goa Candolim.

At ibis Styles Mysuru, monsoon stays are infused with sustainability and local flavour. Guests can explore the city’s lush surroundings in eco-friendly electric vehicles, adding an environmentally conscious twist to sightseeing. “Our monsoon experiences are designed to help guests unwind while connecting with nature. From rejuvenating treatments to curated local outings, we offer comfort with

a conscious touch,” mentioned Ganeshram.

The hotel’s restaurant, The Verandah, features seasonal delicacies crafted from local monsoon produce, creating a flavourful culinary journey. Guests can also take advantage of the Hotel Escape sale, offering 20 per cent off on stays of two nights or more. The offer is valid for bookings made between May 28 and July 31, 2025, for travel until September 30, 2025, with added benefits for all and Accor Plus members.

Sterling Holiday Resorts offers thoughtfully curated monsoon experiences across its scenic locations. From plantation walks and spice trails to bonfire storytelling and indoor cultural showcases, each property embraces the season’s charm. “Our ‘What-A-Trip’ packages are specially designed for the rains, with tailored activities like waterfall trails, monsoon treks, and culinary sessions that celebrate seasonal ingredients. Also at Sterling Alleppey, guests can enjoy houseboat stays with traditional Kerala meals, while Sterling Munnar features tea-blending experiences and chai trails set against a lush, misty backdrop,” informed Harinath M.

How Monsoon Room Sales Are Evolving

Over the past few years, monsoon season room sales have shown varied trends across different properties, reflecting regional dynamics and strategic initiatives.

At Le Méridien Goa, Calangute, the rains still pose a challenge for sales. “We have observed a consistent dip in both occupancy and ADRs during the monsoon season, particularly in July. However, the last two weeks of June tend to perform relatively well, largely driven by transient demand due to school vacations. Demand typically softens in July, but we start to see a gradual recovery in August, supported in part by the Independence Day weekend,” shared Babita.

Meanwhile, Grand Hyatt Goa reports an upward trend. “Over the past few years, we have seen a steady and encouraging rise in room sales during the monsoon, with a notable narrowing of the demand gap compared to peak seasons. Domestic travellers seeking peaceful getaways and curated seasonal experiences have been key drivers,” highlighted Nikhil.

For ibis Styles Mysuru, this monsoon marks its debut season. While historical data is not available, Ganeshram is optimistic. He conveyed, “With tailored experiences and offerings that highlight the charm of Mysuru during the rains, we are confident we can create memorable stays and lay the foundation for lasting seasonal traditions.”

Sterling Holiday Resorts has seen more consistent gains. “We have witnessed a steady increase in monsoon bookings, particularly for destinations like Munnar and Wayanad that flourish during the rains. An early onset this year has led to stronger early interest. Our monsoon-specific packages and early-bird deals continue to drive this momentum,” noted Harinath M.

Prepared for the Downpour

While rains bring lush landscapes, cooler air, and a romantic charm, they can also arrive with force. Sometimes, downpours are heavy enough to disrupt travel plans or, in some regions, even cause landslides that bring everything to a standstill. However, they all assured that across all properties, guest safety during the monsoon remains a top priority. From 24/7 staff readiness and backup power systems to emergency response protocols, real-time updates, and medical support, each hotel is well-prepared to handle heavy rains or natural disasters. Measures such as flood protection, coordination with local authorities, and assistance with travel or evacuation ensure that guests feel secure and supported, regardless of the weather.

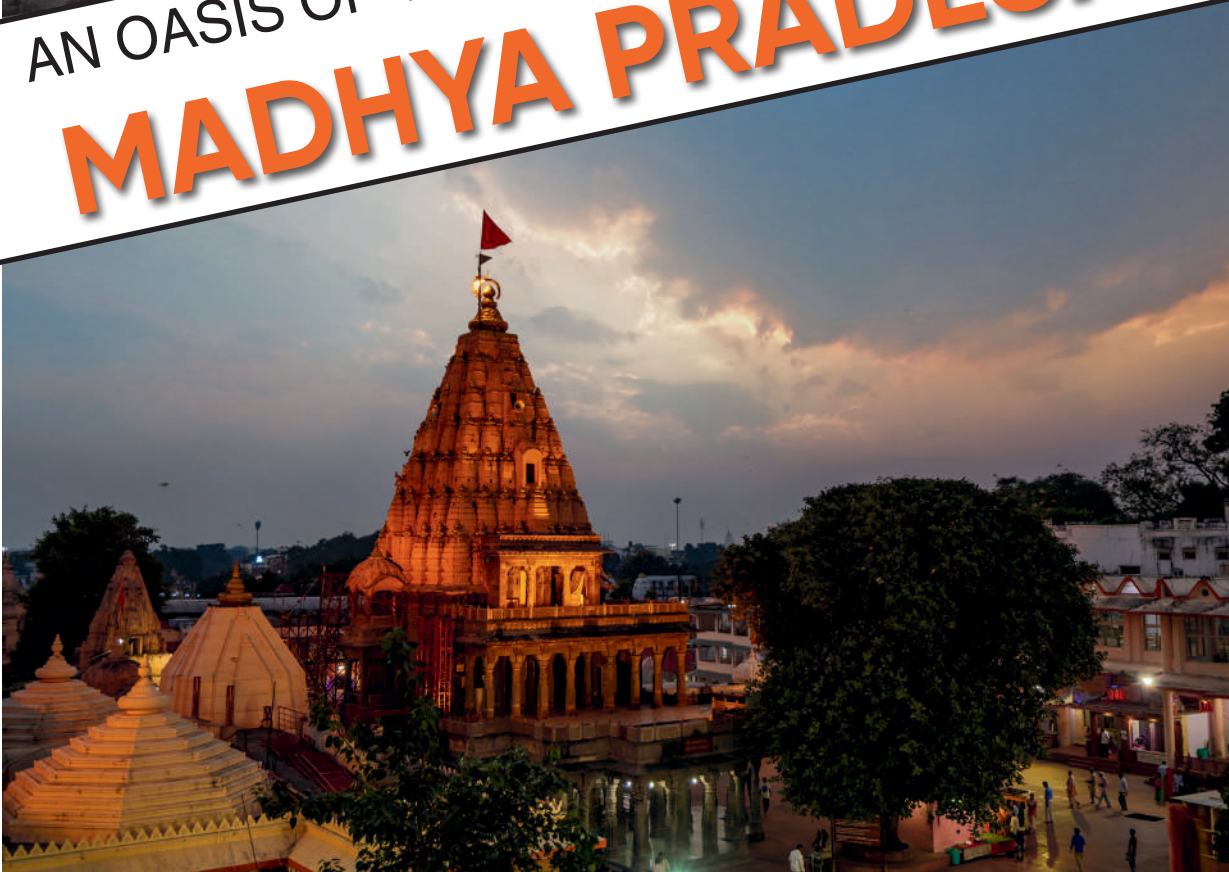




Transition from the stress of urban chaos to a mindset of serenity. Close your eyes and let your senses breathe clean air while listening to the wind blowing through a forest. Set your own pace exploring a hidden heritage site far from the maddening crowd. Soak in the atmosphere of a spiritual destination. Pamper yourself at a rural homestay. Or simply lie back and do nothing! For those seeking a wellness break on the eve of World Yoga Day, Madhya Pradesh presents a rich variety of destinations to rejuvenate.

AN OASIS OF TRANQUILITY IN THE HEART OF INDIA

MADHYA PRADESH



Divine journeys to the Jyotirlingas

Connect with the divine in the Bhasma Aarti, early on a crisp Ujjain morning at the iconic Mahakaal Temple. Allow yourself to be touched by the spiritual light of the Shiva Linga and come out with an energy only the truly faithful have experienced. Close your eyes and become one with the cosmic consciousness at the island-shrine of Omkareshwar. Or join a Yoga session on the banks of the Narmada.

Immortal peace at Amarkantak

Follow the footsteps of Sant Kabir and meditate close to the mouth of the Narmada. Enjoy a picnic at one of the gigantic waterfalls or be startled by one of the many strikingly attractive temples here, such as the

Shri Yantra shrine. Spend time at a natural tree grove dedicated to the Goddess Narmada.

Village Visuals: Taste the rural way

Immerse yourself in a rural community. Discover the warmth of rural Madhya Pradesh through a range of charming homestays. Feast on traditional meals to nourish the soul, dive into pottery and local sports, or volunteer in inspiring grassroots projects. It is more than a stay—it is a soulful journey! Enjoy retail therapy at places like Art Ichol in Maihar and interact with skilled artisans. These unforgettable moments will forever echo in the heart of India—and yours. Simply choose to embark on the journey, and you may find yourself never wanting to leave.

Sanctuaries for the Soul

Perhaps nothing detaches the mind from stress as much as watching a mighty tiger prowling around its habitat or zooming in to admire the antics of a rarely sighted bird, or merely having a slow day watching creatures frolic in the stunning landscape of a sanctuary's buffer zone. With nearly three dozen sanctuaries and national parks, such as Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Pench, Kuno, Pachmarhi, and others, visitors can take their pick for a holiday that is a balm for the soul.



Balmy by the Betwa

Wander through the timeless portals of Bundela palaces at Orchha. Watch the Betwa gently go past the memorials of long-forgotten kings. Admire striking murals inside a temple that acts as a medieval art gallery. A place so relaxed that even Lord Rama is worshipped here not as a god, but as a king.



Tranquil Temptations at Tamia

Mountaintop Tamia combines with the horseshoe-shaped Patalkot Valley below, creating the state's best-kept secret in the Satpura Hills. Untouched forests and little-visited mountains form a perfect setting for treks and long walks. Be amazed at how the Gond and Bharia tribes live in harmony with nature, making it central in everything from their art to medicines.



Monsoon Magic in Mandu

Put away those cameras and listen to the drumming of incessant rain atop the Mandu plateau. Meander through monuments in India's original City of Joy and allow yourself to be soaked. You might be tempted to shed your inhibitions and start dancing in the rain!

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ABU DHABI'S TOURISM

STORY WITH CRUISE, CULTURE, AND CLASS

Abu Dhabi has long appealed to travellers seeking both indulgence and cultural experiences. An emerging highlight and focal point of Abu Dhabi's tourism strategy is the Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminal at Zayed Port. This modern cruise facility is pivotal to Abu Dhabi's ambition of becoming the Arabian Gulf's leading cruise port.

Vartik Sethi

Abu Dhabi is a multifaceted destination that seamlessly blends luxury, heritage, and connectivity. With its world-class facilities and capacity, Abu Dhabi's cruise terminal is poised to serve not only regional Gulf cruises but also to act as a home port for voyages catering to Indian travellers and other long-haul markets. At the same time, landmarks such as the Grand Mosque, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Heritage Village, and the Abrahamic Family House reflect a destination that honours its rich heritage while embracing global culture.

A Growing Cruise Tourism Hub



Zayed Port's cruise terminal, inaugurated in late 2015, features state-of-the-art infrastructure that can accommodate three mega cruise vessels. Inside the expansive terminal, visitors find an airy, contemporary space that blends local character with modern convenience. The facility boasts

dedicated Etihad airline check-in counters, immigration facilities, duty-free shops, restaurants, and majlis-style waiting lounges, ensuring a seamless experience for cruise passengers from ship to city. In 2023, it was named the "World's Best Cruise Terminal" at the World Cruise Awards, reflecting operational excellence on par with the finest ports globally.

Abu Dhabi's cruise terminal serves as an ideal gateway driven by its location as it is just a 20-minute drive from the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and around the same distance to Saadiyat Island's attractions, enabling shore excursion programmes that cover headline experiences with ease. The port visit highlighted how cruise passengers can disembark and explore the Louvre Abu Dhabi or marvel at the Grand Mosque's domes shortly thereafter, a strong selling point for cruise lines and tour operators.

Abu Dhabi's strategic location opens up exciting possibilities for longer cruise itineraries linking the Gulf and South Asia. With major Indian ports just a few days' sail across the Arabian Sea, the India-UAE cruise market is a key area of potential growth. India is already Abu Dhabi's largest source market for visitors on land, with Indian hotel guest numbers surging 37 per cent year-on-year in early 2024, and this interest is beginning to translate into the cruise arena as well.

Cultural Immersion in the Capital

Abu Dhabi's cultural exploration (for most travellers) begins at the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, the city's most iconic monument. Gleaming in white marble and inlaid with semi-precious stone patterns, the Grand Mosque can accommodate 40,000 worshippers and is equally welcoming to visitors of all faiths. Walking on the world's largest hand-knotted carpet under Swarovski chandeliers under 82 elegant domes and countless columns is an experience second to none. This architectural masterpiece offers insight into the UAE's Islamic heritage and commitment to grand, inclusive design, that resonates with culture-oriented travellers.





Chandeliers at Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque

To delve further into Abu Dhabi’s local culture, Heritage Village on the Abu Dhabi Corniche breakwater has plenty to offer. This open-air heritage museum, run by the Emirates Heritage Club, recreates a traditional Emirati desert village, giving visitors a glimpse of life before the oil era. Walking through the modest mud-brick houses and Bedouin tents, one can observe artisans demonstrating traditional crafts like pottery, metalwork, and weaving. An old fort and a souk (market) area display typical architecture and handicrafts, while a small museum showcases artefacts such as antique jewellery and pearl diving equipment. From the Heritage Village, the modern skyline of Abu Dhabi looms across the water, a striking contrast that underlines how far the Emirate has come.

As the first universal museum in the Arab world, Louvre Abu Dhabi has put Abu Dhabi on the global arts map since opening in 2017. Under Jean Nouvel’s futuristic dome that lets in a ‘rain of light”, one can wander through galleries that intertwine civilizations and eras, viewing everything from ancient Egyptian statues to Van Gogh and Mondrian. The museum’s presence illustrates Abu Dhabi’s drive to become a world-class cultural capital. It also provides a unique selling point for cruise excursion schedules and land itineraries: few cruise stops offer such high-calibre art experiences within minutes of the port.

To make the most of the visit, Fouquet’s Abu Dhabi, a fine-dining French brasserie within the Louvre, is an experience not



Delectable dessert at Fouquet’s Abu Dhabi



Church, Synagogue, and Mosque at Abrahamic Family House



to be missed. An offshoot of the famed Parisian restaurant, complete with a menu overseen by Michelin-starred chef Pierre Gagnaire, dining on French haute cuisine amid artworks adds a luxe touch to the cultural outing, reinforcing how Abu Dhabi interweaves art, culture, and luxury.

Another new cultural landmark that captured attention was the Abrahamic Family House, which recently opened in 2023 on Saadiyat Island. This remarkable complex comprises three equally sized houses of worship: a mosque, a church, and a synagogue within one site, embodying the UAE’s ethos of tolerance and interfaith harmony. The complex offers free guided tours to educate visitors on the shared values and distinct traditions of the three Abrahamic faiths.

Sustainability and Nature in Focus

Beyond urban pleasures, Abu Dhabi also encompasses sustainability and nature-based experiences, as evidenced by a relaxed afternoon exploring the Jubail Mangrove Park. Tucked between Yas Island and Saadiyat Island, this mangrove sanctuary showcases a lesser-known side of Abu Dhabi’s landscape. Paddling through calm channels flanked by mangrove trees, small fish dart beneath the clear water,



Kayaking at Jubail Mangrove Park

giving a sense of serenity and connection with nature that one might not expect so close to the city. The Jubail Mangrove Park also features an extensive boardwalk, where the guides explain how mangroves act as natural coastal protection and a carbon sink, aligning with global conservation goals. Importantly, the mangrove experience ties into larger sustainability initiatives in the UAE. The country has made ambitious pledges to safeguard its environment, such as committing to plant 100 million mangrove trees by 2030 to expand coastal habitats. Jubail Mangrove Park was the launch site of the Abu Dhabi Mangrove Initiative in 2022, which sees local authorities partnering with global experts to research and conserve mangrove ecosystems. The mangroves of Abu Dhabi, much like the country’s deserts, are a natural asset being opened up responsibly for tourism.

It is fascinating to note that one moment you are exploring a mangrove forest echoing with bird calls, and shortly after, you can be back in a five-star hotel or visiting a museum. Few destinations offer such diversity within easy reach.

Luxury Hospitality on Saadiyat Island

Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Villas on Saadiyat Island sets the tone of luxury and warm Arabian hospitality. Saadiyat Island, fringed by a protected white-sand beach and the turquoise Arabian Gulf, is known for its upscale resorts and cultural institutions. Breakfast at Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Villas is a refined affair. Served at The Café, the buffet features a wide selection of international favourites, from freshly baked pastries and tropical fruits to Arabic mezzes and made-to-order dishes. Overlooking the gardens and pools, it offers a wholesome setting and a luxurious start to the day.

Beyond the resort’s confines, Saadiyat Island itself added context to the luxury experience. The Saadiyat Cultural District is just minutes from the hotel and is home to world-class museums and institutions (including the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the upcoming Guggenheim). This proximity means visitors can indulge in beachside relaxation and high culture on the same day. Thus, the hotel offers sun and sand and convenient access to Abu Dhabi’s cultural core.



Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Villas



Exploring the timeless charm of BANGKOK and PHUKET with VIETJET THAILAND

There are trips you plan, and then there are journeys that surprise you, gently unfold, and leave their mark. My recent trip with Vietjet Thailand was the latter. In April 2025, the airline flew about 16 Indian travel media and influencers to unveil its Mumbai–Bangkok flight, and explore curated itineraries across Bangkok and Phuket. The journey spanned vibrant cityscapes, cultural gems, island adventures, and culinary highlights across both cities, offering a perfect snapshot of Thailand’s charm, hospitality, and its ever-growing appeal to Indian travellers.

Prashant Nayak

Phuket had long been on my bucket list, and thanks to Vietjet Thailand, I finally had the chance to explore this dreamy destination. Bangkok, of course, is always a favourite, a flamboyant, easy-going city that pulsates with energy and charm, loved by travellers from around the world. Our journey took off with a smooth five-hour flight from Mumbai to Bangkok aboard Vietjet Thailand. While known as a low-cost carrier, Vietjet Thailand’s SkyBoss premium economy experience came as a delightful surprise. The seating was cosy, the service efficient, and the journey comfortable, a wonderful start to the adventure.

Wild Encounters at Khao Kheow Open Zoo

Upon touching down in Bangkok, our Thai adventure began with a scenic drive to Khao Kheow Open Zoo, nestled in the lush landscapes of Sriracha, about two hours away. Verdant landscapes gently unfolded on either side, setting the tone for the day ahead.

Khao Kheow Open Zoo is a sprawling, well-maintained sanctuary offering a blend of open enclosures and immersive wildlife experiences. Touring the park, partly by safari vehicle and partly on foot, felt like stepping into a live wildlife documentary. Sunbathing iguanas lounged lazily on

warm rocks, while the expansive African Savanna zone buzzed with life, giraffes stretching skyward, zebras grazing beside wildebeest, and majestic rhinos moving with slow, ancient grace, flamingos stood in pastel-pink harmony amid dazzling flutters of blue butterflies. The zoo’s main attraction, the pygmy hippos, charmed us, and the penguin enclosure was a refreshing surprise in the tropical setting. A regal Bengal tiger stared back at us with calm intensity, but the highlight was spotting two endangered White-Cheeked Gibbons, thus ticking off a long-time dream on my gibbon bucket list. The zoo also features interactive shows, bird enclosures, and elephant feeding, making it a delight for kids and families.

Dining Beside the Big Cats

Lunch was served at the Royal Bengal Tiger Restaurant, located right next to the Tiger Topia Zoo entrance. With floor-to-ceiling glass walls offering a close-up view of tigers roaming just outside, dining here felt like



Vietjet Thailand A320

a scene from a wildlife thriller. We were treated to a delectable spread of Indian and Thai specialities, carefully curated to suit diverse palates. Good food in such a unique setting made for an unforgettable afternoon.

Comfortable Stopover

Our overnight stay was at the Courtyard by Marriott Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport, a modern and welcoming property conveniently located near the airport. The hotel boasts 454 well-appointed rooms and 14 spacious suites, offering views of the city skyline, serene canals, and the inviting poolside. Ideal for both business and leisure travellers, the property features a range of versatile venues, from sleek indoor meeting rooms to lush outdoor spaces along the canal. Whether you are hosting a corporate event or a grand celebration, the Grand Ballroom is a standout, with the capacity to accommodate up to 800 guests.

Floating Feast in Phuket

We caught an early morning Vietjet Thailand flight to Phuket, a quick and easy hop of about an hour and a half. As soon as we landed, our stomachs led the way, straight to one of the island’s most unique dining spots, Kruvit Raft Floating Seafood Restaurant. Located between Laem Hin and Coconut Island, approximately 20 km from Patong, it is accessible via a short five-minute boat ride from the mainland. Once aboard, you are welcomed by panoramic views, a gentle breeze, and incredibly fresh seafood. We enjoyed a delicious seafood and vegetable set menu, but diners can also choose a meal live from the restaurant’s own seafood ponds, and they’ll cook it up fresh on the spot.

Soaking in Phuket’s Vibe While at Cassia Phuket

Next, we explored Phuket Old Town, a



White-Cheeked Gibbon at Khao Kheow Open Zoo



Pygmy Hippos



Group at Khao Kheow Open Zoo

charming area rich in history, culture, and culinary gems. Compact yet full of character, it is perfect for a half-day wander. After soaking in the old-world charm, we checked into Cassia Phuket, part of the Banyan Group: a trendy, waterfront apartment-style hotel near Bang Tao Beach. With its modern design and lively vibe, it is ideal for both leisure and business stays. The upscale Laguna area adds to its appeal.

As the sun dipped, it was time for one of Phuket’s most iconic experiences, Simon Cabaret. Running for over 33 years, this dazzling hour-long show is packed with elaborate costumes, upbeat performances, and pure entertainment. It’s easy to see why people from all over the world flock to it night after night. Dinner was at Tandoori Flames in Patong Beach, which serves a wide range of North Indian favourites alongside local dishes. I can vouch for the authenticity of several Indian specialities.

With the night still young, a few of us headed to Club Bollywood, a lively disco spot in Patong. The thumping desi beats and high-energy vibe created an atmosphere that was both familiar and festive, drawing in a crowd of locals and tourists alike.

Postcard Moments at Phi Phi Islands

The next morning, we set off on a 90-minute boat ride to Phi Phi Islands, with a quick stop at the iconic Maya Bay, the stunning setting for Leonardo DiCaprio’s The Beach. Although packed with tourists, the beach, with its dramatic cliffs nearby and turquoise waters, impresses everyone.

At Phi Phi Islands, we enjoyed a relaxed lunch, followed by some shopping, and then continued by boat to explore nearby spots, including Pileh Lagoon, Viking Cave, and Monkey Island. Some of us even snorkelled in the azure blue waters,



Maya Beach



Kruvit Raft Floating Seafood Restaurant



Old Phuket Town

soaking in the vibrant marine life. Despite the heat, the natural beauty of the Andaman Sea was truly breathtaking. On our return boat journey, a sudden burst of rain added a refreshing twist to the day's adventure.

Back at Cassia Phuket in the evening, we wrapped up our day with a self-service barbecue and hot pot dinner, lovingly curated by a few from our group. An excellent spread of meats and vegetables, paired with the perfect wine or beer, made it the ideal way to unwind, share stories, and savour one last taste of Phuket's warm hospitality.

Bangkok Finale

Before boarding our flight back to Mumbai, we were treated to a shopping experience at Siam Paragon, one of Bangkok's most iconic malls. Whether you're into luxury brands or hunting for great deals, the mall has something for every taste and budget. And when hunger strikes, you're spoiled

for choice with a fantastic variety of cafés, restaurants, and food stalls offering global flavours.

Beyond shopping and dining, Siam Paragon houses popular attractions like SeaLife Bangkok Ocean World, one of the largest aquariums in Southeast Asia. It is a must-visit for families and experience seekers, offering immersive, educational, and interactive encounters with fascinating marine life.

To make our visit even more exciting, Siam Paragon gifted each of us a 5,000 Baht shopping voucher. With limited time before the flight and so many tempting options, it was a mix of chaotic decisions and pure joy as we dashed through select stores trying to make the most of it. In the end, we all left Thailand with bags full of goodies, hearts full of memories, and smiles that said it all, grateful for an experience that was as vibrant and warm as the country itself.



Cassia Phuket



Snorkelling near Phi Phi

Vietjet Thailand Brings Mumbai Closer to Bangkok

Vietjet Thailand entered the Indian market on December 23 with the launch of its daily direct service between Mumbai (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport) and Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi Airport).

Flight VZ761 departs Mumbai at 00:45 AM and arrives in Bangkok at 06:25 AM. The return flight VZ760 leaves Bangkok at 09:05 PM, landing in Mumbai at 11:50 PM (all local times).

The route is served by an Airbus A320,



Vietjet Thailand Skyboss and Economy Seats

offering 180 seats across Economy and SkyBoss (Premium Economy). While inflight entertainment is not available, passengers can purchase and pre-book meals.

This new route strengthens India-Thailand connectivity and expands travel options for both leisure and business travellers. From Bangkok, passengers can conveniently connect to 11 domestic Thai destinations including Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phuket, Krabi, Surat Thani, and more. Cross-regional flights such as Phuket to Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai also enhance flexibility.

Vietjet Thailand, established in 2014, cooperates closely with Vietjet to grow its network across Asia-Pacific, linking Thailand to Vietnam, China, Japan, Taipei, Cambodia, and other top regional destinations. The airline is known for cost-efficient operations and flexible fare options, providing affordable travel with quality service and a customer-friendly experience.



Siam Paragon

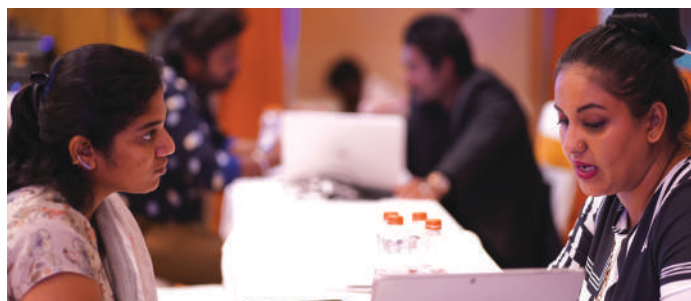
Tatabye Tours organises four-city Maldives roadshow across South India

Tatabye Maldives (Tatabye Tours), a Destination Management Company (DMC) specialising in premium island getaways, successfully concluded one of the largest-ever Maldives roadshows in India by a DMC. Held from May 12–16, 2025, across Kochi, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru, the event was endorsed by Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) / Visit Maldives.

The roadshow attracted over 450 travel agents and professionals, facilitating direct engagement with 22 leading Maldivian resorts. Key segments promoted included leisure, luxury, weddings, and MICE.

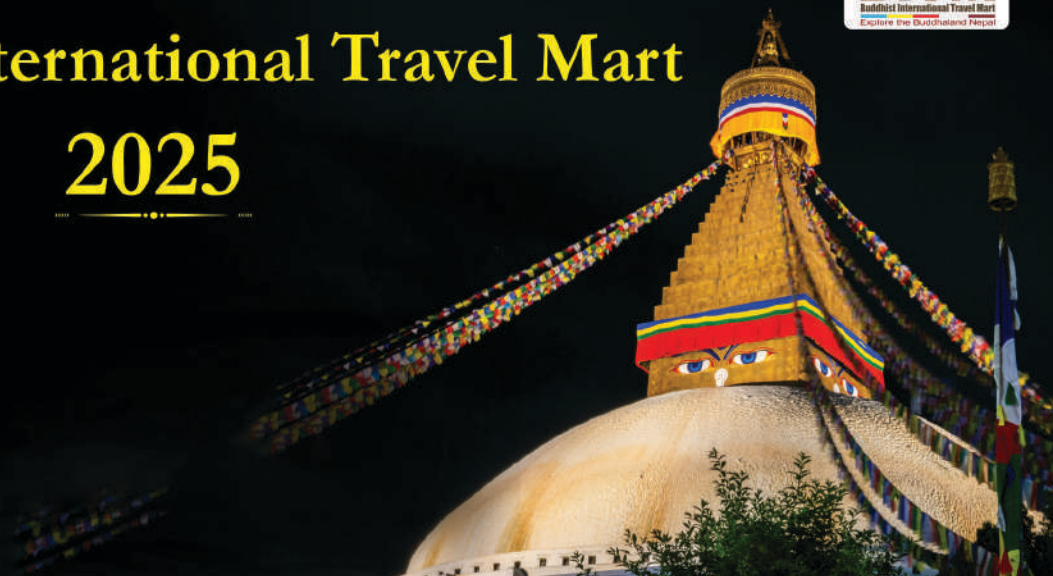
The grand finale in Bengaluru saw the highest turnout, with special awards and lucky draws hosted in all four cities. Participating agents won luxury two-night, full-board stays with transfers from renowned resorts like Furaveri, Medhufushi, Le Meridien, Adaaran Select Huduranfushi, Universal Resorts, Centara Ras Fushi, Dusit, and dusitD2.

Commenting on the roadshow's success, Roshan Jain, Founder and Director of Sales and Marketing at Tatabye Tours, said, "The success of the roadshow surpassed expectations. Buyers were particularly impressed by the extensive showcase of resorts, which was a first for the South Indian market. We look forward to bringing the next roadshow to West and North India, focusing on tier 2 and 3 cities where we see the greatest potential."



Buddhist International Travel Mart

2025



Nepal reaffirms its place on the global spiritual map at BITM 2025

BITM 2025, held recently in Kathmandu and Lumbini, highlighted Nepal's growing leadership in global Buddhist tourism. The event brought together international delegates, scholars, and industry leaders for B2B meetings, panel discussions, and spiritual experiences. Showcasing Nepal's rich heritage and new tourism offerings, BITM 2025 reaffirmed the country's role as a hub for mindful, cross-border pilgrimage and cultural travel.

Team TTJ

The third edition of the Buddhist International Travel Mart (BITM), held from May 23 to 25, 2025, across Kathmandu and Lumbini, concluded with resounding success. Organised by the Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA) in collaboration with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and other industry partners, the event highlighted Nepal's spiritual richness and its growing leadership in global Buddhist tourism. It also promoted innovative tourism products from local entrepreneurs. This year's milestone dual-venue format showcased the Vajrayana traditions of Kathmandu and the sacred birthplace of Lord Buddha in Lumbini.

Hosted at Hotel Soaltee, Kathmandu, BITM 2025 welcomed over 60 international delegates from key Buddhist countries and more than 65 exhibitors, facilitating B2B sessions, panel discussions, and immersive familiarisation tours. The event united tourism leaders, Buddhist scholars, international buyers, and spiritual pilgrims

with a shared vision: to promote peace through mindful travel.

The Grand Opening in Kathmandu

The event commenced with a vibrant ceremony at Megha Malhar Hall, The Soaltee Hotel. Traditional mantra chanting by venerable Khenpos set a spiritual ambience, followed by keynote addresses from tourism leaders and the ceremonial lighting of the Panas. Highlights included cultural performances, the launch of a commemorative souvenir, and the presentation of the BITM Special Award to three former NATTA presidents for their lasting contributions.

Engaging panel sessions explored both the commercial and cultural aspects of Buddhist tourism. With participation from global experts and organisations such as IATO from India and TCT from Thailand, discussions like "Investing in Buddhist Tourism" and "Nepal's Tourism Through Diplomatic Eyes" provided valuable

insights into cross-border collaboration and destination growth.

Spiritual Grounding in the Land of Buddha

On May 24–25, the journey transitioned to Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha. Delegates experienced the tranquillity of the Maya Devi Temple, reflected during meditation and dharma talks. The spiritual exploration continued with site visits to Tilaurakot, the ancient capital of Kapilvastu, and Ramgram, home to one of the Buddha's relics.

A special B2B session in Lumbini connected international buyers with local stakeholders, reinforcing Nepal's role as a spiritual and commercial hub.

A Meaningful Conclusion in Lumbini

In the serene surroundings of Hotel Siddhartha Vilasa, the closing ceremony welcomed esteemed figures, including the





Chief Minister of Lumbini Province, mayors of key municipalities, and international hosted buyers. Presentations focused on future plans for cross-border Buddhist tourism, the Greater Lumbini Vision, and the symbolic unveiling of the Queen Maya Devi Maternity Route. A significant milestone was the signing of a new MOU between NATTA and UMTA (Myanmar), reflecting growing regional cooperation.

Building a Shared Future for Spiritual Tourism

BITM 2025 showcased Nepal's role as a spiritual hub and cultural crossroads in South Asia. The presence of scholars like Prof Dr Basanta Bidari, tourism pioneers like Bikram Pandey, and media representatives from across the region added depth and credibility to the event's vision. The Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) served as the international media partner for the event.

With B2B meetings, cultural immersion, and strategic partnerships, BITM 2025 laid a robust foundation for sustainable Buddhist tourism. As the sounds of dharma chants faded and the incense trails lingered, one message remained clear: Nepal is ready to lead the way in mindful, meaningful travel.



Kumar Mani Thapaliya,
President, NATTA

This edition marked a milestone as we expand to both Kathmandu and Lumbini, offering international delegates a deeper, immersive experience of Nepal's rich Buddhist traditions. BITM is strengthening Nepal's identity as a spiritual destination while encouraging partnerships across borders and communities. BITM 2025 went beyond a trade event—it has

become a platform for cultural diplomacy, spiritual dialogue, and sustainable tourism partnerships. As interest in mindful travel grows globally, Nepal stands ready to inspire the world through its timeless message of peace, compassion, and unity in today's divided world.

Jiswan Tuladhar
Shrestha, BITM Convenor
and Senior Vice
President, NATTA

Tourism is no longer just about destinations, but also about purpose. Buddhism is a living tradition that speaks of sustainability, compassion, and inner development. By promoting Nepal through the lens of Buddhist values, we are fostering responsible, purposeful travel among a new generation. We acknowledged the efforts of national leaders, the tourism fraternity, and the youth and encourage them to carry Nepal's spiritual legacy forward with pride and dedication.



TTJ TRAVMART

The Win-Win Business Partnership

Since 2016, TTJ TRAVMART has revolutionised B2B networking in India’s travel sector, empowering Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets. With the launch of new regional editions, such as EITM, SITM, and WITM, the platform focuses on quality buyer-seller engagement, regional expansion, and impactful knowledge sessions, delivering unmatched business and high-ROI networking opportunities across the travel and hospitality industry.

Gurjit Singh Ahuja

In the year 2016, the team at Sampan Media Pvt Ltd, the holding company for TTJ (Travel Trade Journal), set sail on a new voyage to create a meaningful business networking platform for the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry professionals in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities of India to interact directly with the airlines, tourism boards, cruise lines, hotels, DMCs and visa experts from the comfort zone of their home cities.

Bridging Travel Trade Across Cities

Raipur was chosen as the launch venue for the first TTJ TRAVMART, and the overwhelming response received set the course for the future in stone. Currently in its eighth edition, TTJ TRAVMART, with around 65 successfully organised events to its credit, has grown from strength to strength, covering cities like Lucknow, Surat, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Bangalore, Cochin, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Pune, Jullundur, Kolkata, and Chennai. Initially, a one-day networking event featuring 20 sellers has grown to include over 55 sellers and more than 250 pre-qualified and registered buyers.

Regional Expansion with EITM, SITM, and WITM

Market feedback and demand initiated the launch of the first EITM (East India TRAVMART) in Kolkata in 2023. EITM was a bold step forward, given its two-day format with meaningful knowledge sessions with panel discussions, lectures by domain experts, product presentations, and business networking spread over three sessions, combined with camaraderie, bonhomie, and bonding over gala evenings.

2024 saw the addition of SITM (South India TRAVMART) at Chennai, and 2025 saw the induction of WITM (West India TRAVMART) at Pune. The uniqueness of the events lies in the mandatory screening of all registered buyers who are qualified by the buyers' committee.

TRAVMART is not just for local buyers; it welcomes both local and outstation buyers, with 40 to 75 hosted buyers invited from different cities and regions, depending on the event’s location, making it a diverse and impactful networking platform.

From Events to E-Connect: TRAVMART Marketplace

The TRAVMART Marketplace is a novel initiative to extend business relationships into the online world. TRAVMART exhibitors and buyers can now register on the platform and interact with each other, raise enquiries, and close business online. This opens a new channel for business and helps forge long-term partnerships beyond the physical TRAVMART.



What Exhibitors Say About TTJ TRAVMART

As we head further into the year with the calendar resuming on July 09, 2025, with Chandigarh, we spoke to some of our exhibitors and partners who have experienced and benefited firsthand from the networking opportunities and their ROI from joining forces with TTJ TRAVMART.



Rajeev Nangia, COO, TRAC Representations

TTJ TRAVMART has provided a valuable platform to strengthen our presence in the South Indian market, helping us reach new agents and create relevant business leads for both Jamaica and Cheval Collection.

The programme is well-structured, efficient, and professionally executed, ensuring smooth interactions and optimal use of time for both exhibitors and attendees. We successfully initiated promising leads and follow-up discussions with key South India agents, with whom we interacted during SITM – South India TRAVMART, and have since progressed toward potential business opportunities. The online TRAVMART Marketplace, a platform launched by them, is a useful complement to in-person engagements, and we plan to increase our activity on it. We look forward to continued participation, with a focus on further expanding our brand reach and deepening partnerships in our priority regional markets.



Basant Kumar Giri, Founder & CEO, Ren Tours & Trek, Bhutan

We are a Destination Management Company (DMC) for Bhutan and have been exhibiting and showcasing Bhutan to tour operators and travel agents in India for over 10 years at various events throughout the country. We came across TTJ TRAVMART in a chance meeting at the last moment, which led to an opportunity to exhibit at the South India TRAVMART in Chennai in 2024. After Chennai, we have been with them at the WITM in Pune and TTJ TRAVMART Lucknow.

We applaud the team at TTJ TRAVMART for their flawless arrangements and execution of the event; the visiting agents were business-oriented and not the usual visiting card collectors. We successfully forged new partnerships with many of the visiting agents and had a great opportunity to showcase Bhutan to them. Absolutely positive and fruitful exhibitions; the fact that we have booked a place with them for their entire series in 2025 and the beginning of 2026 speaks volumes about the great job they do.



Priyanka Puri, General Manager, Island Life, Maldives

TTJ TRAVMART has provided us with a great platform where genuine B2B players have the opportunity to connect with productive agents, especially those who do not have access to big consolidator partners for the Maldives. It is an excellent opportunity for agents to interact with us and gain a deeper understanding of our product. The event flow is seamless, and we had enough time for one-on-one networking with agents. During the event, we met some agents who requested rates from us, which we shared. We now conduct regular business with them.



M. Maruthi, CEO, Hyderabad Tours & Travels

We are a DMC for South India. During a sales visit to Kolhapur, one of our local partner agents informed us that he was attending WITM Pune as a hosted buyer. We immediately contacted TTJ and confirmed our participation as an exhibitor. It was our first experience with TTJ, and we received a great response over the two-day show. We collected over 120 buyer agent business cards at our desk and were fully satisfied with the response and ROI. Many new agents are now in touch with us, and we have already confirmed our participation in the upcoming TRAVMART in Surat and Indore later this year.



Amit Soni, Managing Director, Infinity Adventure Travel & Tour, Dubai

“Partnering with TTJ TRAVMART has significantly elevated our business visibility and market penetration. Their extensive B2B network and strong presence in the travel and tourism industry have enabled us to connect with new travel agents that were previously beyond our reach.

With the TTJ TRAVMART platform and promotional efforts, we have seen a measurable increase in enquiries, bookings, and brand recognition across multiple regions. It is a highly strategic alliance for scaling our growth in a competitive market. The sessions are well-structured, ensuring a good balance between networking opportunities, business interactions, and presentations. Overall, it is one of the more effective trade platforms in the travel industry.



Dheeraj Ranjan Kumar, Founder & Director, Balitrip Wisata

“TTJ TRAVMART has provided us with focused access to genuine B2B buyers across multiple regions. It has allowed us to connect directly with serious agents, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, where we have seen noticeable growth in Bali package bookings.

The face-to-face format strengthens trust and recall for our brand. The format is crisp, time-efficient, and well-structured. The event flow is seamless, with a good mix of networking time and pre-scheduled meetings. The quality of buyers is consistent, which makes the experience productive. We have already started transactions with multiple new agents we have met here during our interactions.



Pranay Nath, Director, I Love Japan

“Our partnership with TTJ has been enriching. We regularly participate in TRAVMARTs organised by them to reach out to new and emerging markets in India’s heartland. This year, we received an overwhelming response at the Raipur TRAVMART. The WITM in Pune was a grand event held at an excellent venue and proved to be very productive. Lucknow, too, was rewarding.

The hosted buyer programme, which brings in agents from other cities, extends our reach far beyond the event’s location and ensures strong ROI. Japan and Korea are destinations suited to seasoned travellers, and our product has garnered significant interest among TRAVMART buyer agents.

By introducing our journey in TTJ’s print edition, we received the right exposure, with the correct message being positively conveyed to our target audience. Agents are now relating to our brand and associating us with Japan and Korea. We look forward to continuing our partnership with TTJ and will be present at all forthcoming TRAVMARTs, as well as the MICE Mart in New Delhi in October 2025.



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

“We are a DMC specialising in Nepal and Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. Since partnering with TTJ, we have connected with numerous potential agents, some of whom have already started sending us business after meeting at TTJ events. While one-on-one interactions at the shows are excellent, we find that the two-day events allow us more quality time with buyers. We receive genuine inquiries and even secured a bulk booking of over 1,500 pax at the WITM in Pune. We have full confidence in TTJ’s ability to deliver and look forward to a long-term partnership.



Rakshit Kansal, Founder & Director, SR Destination

TTJ TRAVMART has been instrumental in expanding our market visibility across India. The focused B2B networking opportunities have allowed us to connect with serious travel partners, resulting in quality leads and valuable long-term collaborations. As a DMC specialising in Vietnam and Azerbaijan, this platform has helped us position SR Destination effectively among the right target audience. The TTJ TRAVMART format is highly efficient, well-structured, and time-optimised. The pre-scheduled B2B meetings, combined with excellent on-ground management, ensure that every participant maximises their networking opportunities. The event flow is smooth and professionally executed.

During one of the recent TTJ TRAVMART editions, we initiated a dialogue with a prominent outbound travel agency, which later converted into a successful series of group departures to Vietnam. The initial meeting at the event laid the foundation for a fruitful partnership that continues to grow. We plan to actively participate in all upcoming TTJ TRAVMART events across key Indian cities. Our focus is on promoting customised group tours and experiential travel packages for Vietnam and Azerbaijan, and we look forward to deeper engagement through these platforms. We have also started exploring TRAVMART Marketplace, and it presents a promising digital avenue for continuing conversations and nurturing relationships beyond physical events.



Jitender Choudhary, Founder, AV DMC

TTJ TRAVMART is a one-of-a-kind event designed to create cost-effective and hassle-free business opportunities, and we appreciate their commitment to providing a dynamic platform for all travel trade partners. With the opportunity to engage in 90 to 100 targeted business meetings, we directly connected with prospective partners. The networking experience was further enriched with cocktails and dinner, allowing participants to foster relationships beyond business discussions. Additionally, we had the exclusive chance to present our brand and services to a captive audience. We suggest that you join TTJ TRAVMART and take your business to new heights.



Sanjeev Gosain, CEO, Yorker Holidays Services

We have been very closely associated with TTJ TRAVMART since its very inception. We have seen their footprint grow and extend to newer markets year after year. From just a dozen sellers per show, we have seen TTJ now grow to almost 55 sellers.

Innovation is key to their success, and their format has now expanded to include two-day shows, namely East India, South India, and West India TRAVMART. These events come with value-added hospitality suites for hosted buyers, as well as knowledge sessions and panel discussions. They have also adopted automation, which aligns with our company's direction. Their TRAVMART Marketplace is an excellent initiative at just the right time. TTJ TRAVMART is our partner in growth, extending our market reach, penetration, and brand recall, keeping a keen eye on optimising our ROI.



Amit Shrivastava, Founder & CEO, Be Happy Travel & Tourism LLC

TTJ TRAVMART has truly helped us connect with travel partners and grow our B2B network. The event feels more like a community than just a trade show – every edition gives us fresh leads and lasting relationships. We are excited to continue being part of it and are now exploring the TRAVMART Marketplace as well.

GAEHP networking night welcomes new leadership and partnerships

The Global Association of Events and Hospitality Professionals (GAEHP) recently convened a networking evening at Hard Rock Café, Delhi, bringing together key stakeholders from India's tourism and hospitality sectors, marking a night of strategic partnerships, inspiring addresses, and a shared vision for the future.

Delivering the welcome address, Rajesh Arya, President, GAEHP, acknowledged the collective efforts of all present, expressing deep gratitude for their continued encouragement and partnership. "We are proud to create spaces where professionals can connect, collaborate, and contribute meaningfully to the future of tourism and hospitality," he said.

At the gathering, Rajesh Arya also welcomed Subhash Goyal, an industry veteran and icon, as the Chief Patron of GAEHP; PP Khanna as the National Advisor (Domestic); and Ravi Sharma, Editor-in-Chief and Publisher, Travel Trade Journal (TTJ), as the Mentor of GAEHP. Earlier, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between TTJ and GAHEP. Under this collaboration, TTJ will be the exclusive knowledge partner for the association.

In a thought-provoking address, Dr Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel and Air Charter Groups and a respected veteran of the industry, called on Indian tour operators and travel agents to realign their destination marketing strategies in the national interest, particularly urging a boycott of Turkey and Azerbaijan. "Indian tour operators and travel agents hold the power to influence tourism flows globally," he emphasised. Dr Goyal also commended GAEHP for its impressive progress and impactful initiatives within a short span.

Echoing the sentiment, PP Khanna, Director, Advaita Showbiz, congratulated the GAEHP team on their dynamic growth. "Platforms like these empower the next generation of tourism leaders," he said, lauding GAEHP for fostering a culture of collaboration and growth in the industry.

Rajesh Arya also introduced the entire GAEHP Team: Amninder Garg, Sr Vice President; Shishta Sharma, Vice President; Pranav Bansal, General Secretary; Babita Sharma, Treasurer; Sandip



Shaw, Executive Director; Geeta Maheshwari, Director PR and Liaisoning; Pratibha Arora, Director of Events; Harjinder Singh, Director Outreach and Strategy; Gulshan Banga, Chapter Chairman Haryana; Rahul Kalra, Chapter Chairman Punjab; Davinder Singh Bhatia, Advisor North India Chapter; Mahender Singh, Chapter Chairman Rajasthan; and Riyaz U C, Chapter Chairman Kerala.

Jamaica Tourism took centre stage as the title sponsor for the evening, with Anuraga Palace (Rajasthan) and Cholan Tours (Tamil Nadu) lending their support as associate sponsors.

EgyptAir celebrates its 93rd anniversary in Delhi

EgyptAir celebrated its 93rd anniversary with a special evening on May 23, 2025, at Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi. His Excellency Kamel Zayed Kamel Galalour, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to India, was the guest of honour for the evening and was welcomed by Amr Aly, Country Manager for EgyptAir, and the EgyptAir team. The event featured an engaging product presentation and an award ceremony honouring top-performing travel agents from across India. The highlight of the evening was a captivating Egyptian Tanoura dance performance.





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2025

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09**

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29-30**

**SOUTH INDIA
(CHENNAI)**

**SEPTEMBER
19-20**

**EAST INDIA
(KOLKATA)**

**OCTOBER
30-31**

**MICEMART
(DELHI)**

**NOVEMBER
19**

SURAT

**DECEMBER
17**

INDORE

2026

**JANUARY
16-17**

**WEST INDIA
(PUNE)**

**MARCH
11**

RAIPUR

**MARCH
28**

BENGALURU

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.

Rayna Tours expands UAE presence with new office in Ras Al Khaimah



Rayna Tours has expanded its footprint in the UAE with the launch of its newest branch in Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), marking the company’s third office in the country following successful operations in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Strategically located on Oman Street, near Al Sindabad Restaurant in Al Araibi, the new office aims to enhance accessibility and convenience for travellers in the northern emirate. The Ras Al Khaimah branch will serve as a comprehensive travel solutions hub, offering a wide range of services including curated holiday packages, cruise bookings, UAE activity arrangements, visa assistance, and flight and hotel bookings.

Commenting on the expansion, Senthil Velan, CEO of Rayna Tours, stated, “Our mission is to make travel more accessible, rewarding, and personal.”

Echoing this vision, Deepak Hiranandani, CCO of Rayna Tours, added, “With this new office, we’re bringing the full Rayna experience to RAK and introducing unmatched travel deals with exciting prizes.”

Air Cambodia appoints Aeroprime Group as its exclusive GSA in India



Air Cambodia has appointed Aeroprime Group as its exclusive pan-India passenger General Sales Agent (GSA), further cementing a relationship that already covers the airline’s cargo operations. The formal signing ceremony took place on June 1, 2025, at The Leela Palace, New Delhi. The partnership will officially take effect on July 1, 2025.

This appointment marks a significant expansion of the existing partnership between Air Cambodia and Aeroprime Group. In addition to serving as the Exclusive Pan India Cargo General Sales and Service Agent (GSSA) for Air Cambodia, Aeroprime Group will now manage both passenger and cargo sales, operations, and related services in the Indian market.

Air Cambodia, formerly known as Cambodia Angkor Air, operates a modern fleet and serves 33 international, domestic, and codeshare routes from its primary hub in Phnom Penh. The airline is recognised for its commitment to safety, reliability, and traditional Khmer hospitality, making it a preferred choice for both travellers and cargo partners in the region.

Taj enters South Africa with three luxury wildlife lodges in Kruger National Park

The Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has signed three luxury wildlife lodges under its iconic Taj brand in the Balule Game Reserve, Kruger National Park in South Africa. This signing marks IHCL’s entry into luxury wildlife hospitality in South Africa. Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, IHCL, said, “As the demand for purpose-led travel continues to grow, Taj, with its differentiated offerings, brings exceptional safari experiences where expert-led jungle drives, community engagement, and conservation-led design come together to create unforgettable journeys. Our foray into Kruger National Park builds on this legacy, offering travellers an authentic connection with nature through a responsible tourism approach.” The three luxury lodges, the 30-key Taj Lion Kings Hilltop Tented Camp, the 6-key Taj Lion Kings Bush Lodge, and the 6-key Taj Lion Kings River Lodge, will be set amidst the wilderness and offer elevated safari experiences. Each lodge will feature an all-day dining restaurant, spa, swimming pool, and recreation areas, blending comfort with the authenticity of the African wilderness.



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