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bazaar'26*
26-28 April 2026 | Jaipur, Rajasthan

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Editors note

Dear Reader,

As we present the April 2026 issue of Travel Mail, this edition captures a month of strong industry momentum, global engagement, and evolving travel narratives. Our cover features Jaipur as a powerful backdrop to the Great Indian Travel Bazaar, one of India's most important platforms for inbound tourism.

Organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, GITB continues to play a pivotal role in connecting international buyers with Indian tourism stakeholders. It reflects a larger shift where India is not only attracting global attention but actively shaping travel conversations through its diversity, scale, and experience-driven offerings. Jaipur, with its blend of heritage and hospitality, stands as a fitting host to these engagements.


Within this issue, we bring together a wide spectrum of stories—from cultural festivals and destination developments to thought leadership and industry insights. Whether it is the rise of slower itineraries, the integration of technology, or the growing emphasis on meaningful travel, the industry continues to evolve with intent.

We also see sustained growth across hospitality, aviation, and tourism boards, reinforcing confidence in both domestic and international travel markets. These developments are not isolated—they are part of a broader transformation shaping how India connects with the world.

Welcome to the April 2026 issue.

Happy Reading!

Warm Regards,
Ajay Gupta
Managing Editor – Travel Mail



travel mail

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Managing Editor

Ajay Gupta

Associate Editor

Siddharth Gupta

Sub Editor & Creative Head

Rishika Gupta

Creative Designer

Amit Yadav

Marketing

Sharad Varshney

Circulation

Mukesh Kumar

Accounts

Mukesh Gupta

199, First Floor, CM - 1, Office Complex, Jhandewalan, New Delhi - 110055

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Editor: Ajay Gupta

For Press Release:
editorial@travelmail.in

To reach editor:
editor@travelmail.in

To Advertise:
advertise@travelmail.in

Phone no. 8448985513, 9810148601, 011-4513 2048

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JAIPUR TO HOST THE 15TH EDITION OF THE GREAT INDIAN TRAVEL BAZAAR FROM 26 TO 28 APRIL

Travel Mail Desk

ABOUT THE GREAT INDIAN TRAVEL BAZAAR (GITB):

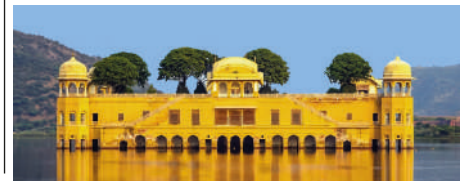
The 15th edition of the 'Great Indian Travel Bazaar' (GITB) is going to be organised in Jaipur from 26 to 28 April. The event will witness participation from foreign tour operators representing 50+ countries. The exhibition will feature the travel and tourism industry from Rajasthan and across India, including State Tourism Boards, Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and hotels. GITB is India's leading business networking platform for inbound tourism and has established a significant position in the tourism industry. The first edition of GITB was held in 2008, and since then, it has continued to grow stronger with each passing year.

INAUGURATION CEREMONY:

The inaugural session & cultural programme of GITB will be held on 26 April at 6:00 PM onwards. On 27 and 28 April, B2B meetings with foreign tour operators will take place at the Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC), Sitapura. The exhibition will be formally inaugurated on 27 April at around 10 AM by distinguished guests.

ORGANISERS:

GITB is jointly organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan; the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). The event is supported by prominent national and regional associations, including the Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO), Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) and Hotel & Restaurant Association of Rajasthan (HRAR).





STATE TOURISM BOARD DELEGATES WILL PARTICIPATE:

Representatives from various State Tourism Boards will also participate in the mart and showcase their tourism offerings. Participating states include Rajasthan (Host State), Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Punjab, among others.

OVER 10,000 + PRE-SCHEDULED B2B MEETINGS:

GITB 2026 will facilitate over 10,000 + pre-scheduled and structured B2B meetings over two days, enabling extensive networking and boosting travel business opportunities for both the state and the country.

BUYERS:

The travel mart will see participation from international tour operators representing more than 50 countries.

SELLERS:

Key participants will include leading luxury and heritage hotel chains and resorts, Indian State Tourism Boards, Destination Management Companies, adventure and wildlife tourism operators, luxury and MICE tour operators, heritage and wellness centres, travel technology companies showcasing a wide range of products and services.

FAM TOURS TO PROMOTE KEY DESTINATIONS:

Post GITB, familiarisation (FAM) tours will be organised to provide tour operators with an immersive experience of Rajasthan's key tourist destinations. International participants will be taken on curated itineraries across the state, including Jaipur. The tours this year cover 3 itineraries. First tour is 'Jaipur – Kota – Udaipur – Deogarh – Jaipur'. Second tour is 'Jaipur – Sariska – Sawai Madhopur – Jaipur'. Similarly, third tour is 'Jaipur – Jodhpur – Jaisalmer – Bikaner – Jaipur'.

PARTICIPATION:

Entry to GITB 2026 is strictly restricted to pre-registered foreign buyers and Indian exhibitors. The event is not open to general visitors.

QUOTES

"In Rajasthan, organising promotional international marts like the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) plays a significant role in unveiling the potential and prowess of tourism products. There will be structured B2B meetings between buyers and sellers facilitating meaningful engagements, while the State Tourism Department will showcase the diverse range of tourism products and infrastructure available."

- Diya Kumari
Deputy CM, Government of Rajasthan



"This edition of Great Indian Travel Bazaar will serve as a beacon of hope and a catalyst for the growth of tourism in the country. The GITB will provide networking opportunities for tour operators and travel agents, who play a pivotal role in shaping the travel experience for tourists. This platform offers a unique chance for industry professionals to connect, exchange ideas, and explore new business opportunities."

- Dr. Jyotsna Suri
Past President, FICCI; Mentor, FICCI Tourism Committee FICCI and CMD, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group



Porvorim Shigmotsav Celebrated with Great Fervour Showcasing Goa's Cultural Heritage

Travel Mail Desk

The vibrant spirit of Shigmotsav 2026 was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Porvorim, bringing together locals, visitors, and cultural groups in a grand display of tradition, music, and community participation. The celebrations highlighted Goa's rich cultural heritage through lively Romtamel performances and cultural showcases reflecting the pride and identity of the region.

The event was graced by several dignitaries including Shri Rohan A. Khaunte, Hon'ble Tourism Minister; Shri Kedar J. Naik, Chairman GTDC & MLA Saligao; Shri Kedar Naik, Director Tourism and Shri Kuldeep Arolkar, Managing Director GTDC. Also present were local representatives and community leaders including Shri Swapnil Chodankar, Sarpanch of Penha De Franca; Smt. Sonia Pednekar, Sarpanch of Socorro; Smt. Reshma Bandothkar, Chairman of North Goa ZP; Shri Sandeep Salgaonkar, ZP member of Penha De Franca; Shri Amit Asnodkar, ZP member of Socorro and other Zilla Panchayat and Panchayat members along with residents of Porvorim and Saligao.



Addressing the gathering, **Hon'ble Tourism Minister, Shri Rohan A. Khaunte** highlighted the importance of preserving and celebrating Goa's cultural identity.

He stated "In Saligao and Porvorim this year we have celebrated Shigmotsav in a big way, giving people an opportunity to be part of the celebrations. Last year, considering the ongoing flyover work and the sentiments of the community, we decided to celebrate Shigmotsav differently. With the new lane and the service road, we have now been able to begin the festivities together with the people. While keeping traffic considerations in mind and excluding the floats this year, we ensured that traditions such as Romtamel and the fancy dress presentations continue to showcase our culture, tradition and pride. These celebrations give our future generations the courage and inspiration to carry this heritage forward. Let us celebrate with great fervour and energy along with our people, as well as domestic and foreign tourists. Under the vision of Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant and through the 'Goa Beyond Beaches' initiative, we will continue to showcase Goa's true culture in its most authentic form."

Director of Tourism, Shri Kedar Naik also emphasized the significance of community participation in sustaining Goa's traditional festivals stating "Shigmotsav is an integral part of Goa's cultural fabric and celebrations like these reaffirm the strong community spirit that keeps our traditions alive. Through such initiatives, we aim to encourage greater participation from locals while also giving visitors an opportunity to experience the authentic cultural heritage of Goa."



The celebration witnessed enthusiastic participation from cultural groups and residents, with traditional performances and festive gatherings transforming Porvorim into a vibrant cultural hub for the evening. The event also drew the attention of tourists who experienced Goa's rich traditions beyond its beaches, reinforcing the state's vision of promoting cultural tourism under the Goa Beyond Beaches initiative.

Shigmotsav celebrations will continue across various locations in Goa over the coming days, with vibrant parades, cultural performances, and community festivities reflecting the enduring spirit of this cherished festival.

Host State



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Kaziranga Heritage Was Inaugurated in Assam Under New Tourism Project

Travel Mail Desk

Kaziranga Heritage, a heritage hospitality destination located near the Kaziranga landscape in Assam, was formally inaugurated by Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Assam, in the presence of government officials and industry representatives. Developed as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) between the Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) and Centre Point Hospitality Group, the project aims to strengthen heritage tourism infrastructure while highlighting the ecological and cultural legacy of Kaziranga.

Situated within the floodplains shaped by the Brahmaputra River and the Kohora River, the property has been designed to integrate with the surrounding landscape. The estate is anchored by Bonani Bungalow, the historic core of the property, with guest records dating back to 1938, making it one of the earliest documented hospitality structures associated with tourism in Kaziranga.



The estate comprises 28 rooms across several heritage-inspired spaces, including Bonani Bungalow with ten heritage rooms, Bonoshree with eight rooms designed as a cultural salon, six

Kohora River View cottages overlooking the floodplains, and four Kunjobon Presidential Suites and duplex units with private plunge pools and landscaped courtyards.

Architecture across the estate follows the traditional Assam-type style, featuring raised plinths, deep verandahs and sloping roofs suited to the region's climate and seasonal flooding.

The property also includes a 48-seat destination restaurant focusing on Assamese cuisine prepared using wood-fired cooking techniques. The design of the restaurant draws inspiration from the traditional Assamese Jaapi, with ceramic detailing created by Assamese ceramic artist Jaya Boro.

Kaziranga Heritage integrates art and history into the guest experience, featuring works by Assamese artist Mridu Moshum Bora and archival wildlife photographs associated with conservationist Edward Pritchard Gee. The property also pays tribute to cultural icons Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg.

With its combination of heritage architecture, regional cuisine and curated cultural experiences, the project aims to support sustainable tourism development in the Kaziranga region.

CzechTourism Deepens Engagement in North India, Targets Emerging Travel Markets

Travel Mail Desk



With the start of 2026 and a strong growth trajectory from India in 2025, CzechTourism is accelerating its on-ground efforts across key regional markets, with a focused push into North India. Building on increasing traveller interest and evolving travel patterns, the tourism board is expanding its outreach in emerging Tier II cities to deepen trade partnerships and enhance destination awareness.

As part of this initiative, CzechTourism engaged with the travel trade across key North Indian markets, positioning Czechia as a multi-experience European destination. This marks a strategic shift beyond metro-centric outreach, tapping into high-potential regional markets with rising demand for international travel.

A key highlight of this outreach was the dedicated trade workshop hosted in Chandigarh, where CzechTourism connected with over 30 travel agents from the region. The session focused on strengthening destination knowledge, showcasing experiences beyond Prague and enabling partners to curate more immersive itineraries for Indian travellers.



North India is increasingly emerging as a key growth region, driven by a mix of aspirational travellers, premium family segments, destination weddings and a growing appetite for experiential itineraries.

CzechTourism



Ms. Barbara Andelová, International Marketing Manager – New Markets, CzechTourism, said “Our engagement in North India reflects a clear shift in how travellers are planning their European holidays today. There is increasing demand for experience-led travel, particularly around gastronomy, beer culture and wine regions, which align well with Czechia’s strengths. Through our growing presence across key North Indian markets, we aim to position Czechia as a well-rounded, multi-region destination for Indian travellers.”



The workshop was also joined by **Hon. Major Guneet Chaudhary (Retd.), Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic in Chandigarh,** reinforcing the strategic importance of the region. **He noted,** “As outbound travel from North India continues to grow, there is clear potential to strengthen engagement across segments such as film tourism, MICE and destination weddings. Czechia’s combination of heritage, accessibility and production-friendly policies makes it an increasingly attractive choice for the Indian market.”

In addition to Chandigarh, CzechTourism conducted targeted sales calls in Amritsar and Jalandhar, further expanding its reach across emerging North Indian markets.

Morocco Promotes High-Capacity MICE Infrastructure during 3-City South India Roadshow



Travel Mail Desk

Following a 31% surge in Indian arrivals last year and an impressive 224% growth since 2019, the Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNTO) has concluded a strategic three-city MICE roadshow across Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru. The roadshows brought together over 80 travel trade professionals and Moroccan stakeholders, highlighting Morocco's growing appeal as a MICE and experiential travel destination.

With a robust inventory of 300,000 hotel beds and high-capacity venues like Marrakech's Palais des Congrès and the 30,000-pax Espace Bab Jdid, Morocco

is one of the few global destinations capable of hosting India's signature mega-incentives without compromising on luxury. This logistical powerhouse is supported by a deep understanding of Indian traveler DNA; the "Access Maroc" e-Visa platform ensures a seamless 3-to-7-day turnaround, while on-ground hospitality is enhanced by English and Hindi-speaking chauffeur services.

Recognising that culinary comfort is non-negotiable for Indian delegations, Morocco has also established a culinary brigade featuring Michelin-starred Indian fine dining at The Oberoi Marrakech and specialized Indian chef teams in Casablanca and Rabat. The wedding

segment is also seeing significant traction, with 2026 expected to be a landmark year as high-profile Indian weddings increasingly evolve into multi-day celebrations involving exclusive palace and resort takeovers. In the realm of Film tourism, the cinematic allure of Ouarzazate, the Hollywood of Morocco, offers a familiar, Bollywood-esque grandeur that serves as the perfect backdrop for high-impact corporate galas and celebratory events.

Commenting on the initiative, Jamal Kilito, Country Manager India, MNTO, said *"India is rapidly evolving into a high-intent, high-value market for Morocco. Our approach today goes beyond awareness, as we are focused on conversion, deeper partnerships, and building long-term preference. We are seeing strong momentum across MICE, luxury travel, and destination weddings, supported by growing media visibility and strategic collaborations. With significant investments made in preparation for AFCON 2025 and the FIFA World Cup 2030, Morocco is enhancing its infrastructure and event facilities, making it an ideal destination for international conferences, incentive programmes, and large-scale celebrations."*

Indian Travellers Drive Surge in Arrivals to Bintan as Short-Haul Demand Rises

Travel Mail Desk

Building on its growing appeal among Indian travellers, Bintan Island has recorded a strong start to 2026, driven by rising demand for short-haul & experience-led getaways. With an approx. increase of 94% in Feb 2026, v/s Feb 2025, Bintan saw marked a growth in both awareness and demand from India. Data also indicated an approx. 40% increase in arrivals in Feb 2026 v/s Jan 2026, reflecting Q1 travel trends from India.

As one gears up for the season and year, Bintan has increasingly been included as an extension to Singapore itineraries offered by TAs, offering a combination of two countries in a single trip. This mirrors the Indian outbound travel, where shorter, multi-destination holidays are gaining preference. Bintan Island represented in India by VFS Global, has been actively promoting the destination in key cities of India to strengthen awareness, improve product familiarity and introduce the right channels and partners within Bintan for easy access.



Travel intent among Indian outbound travellers is becoming increasingly occasion-led and experience-driven, with trips now planned around specific interests such as fitness, wellness and outdoor activities rather than standalone leisure. This is also reflected in a rise in short-duration, repeat international travel, with multiple industry reports indicating that Indian travellers are now taking 2-3 international trips annually, often

aligned with long weekends and seasonal experiences, said Mr Abdul Wahab, Chief Operating Officer, Bintan Resorts.

Bintan's growing calendar of signature events is aligned with this shift, offering structured travel triggers that go beyond traditional beach holidays. Events such as the Bintan Marathon, Bintan Regatta etc will not only attract niche segments but also contribute to longer stays and repeat visitation.

South African Tourism

Eyes 1 Lakh Indian Visitors by 2026, Strengthens India Outreach Through Multi-City Roadshows



Ms. Mitalee Karmarkar
Marketing and Communications
Manager (MEISEA)

Travel Mail Desk

South African Tourism has intensified its engagement with the Indian travel trade through a multi-city roadshow covering Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Delhi.

In an interaction with Travel Mail, **Ms. Mitalee Karmarkar, Marketing and Communications Manager (MEISEA),**

South African Tourism, shared that the organisation is targeting a return to pre-pandemic Indian visitor numbers – exceeding 1 lakh arrivals – by 2026.

A central pillar of South Africa's India strategy is visa simplification. Processing timelines for sticker visas have been significantly reduced from 15–20 working days to approximately 5–7 working days, addressing a key friction point for Indian travellers.

Further strengthening accessibility, 35 tour operators have been appointed as visa facilitators under the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme (TTOS), enabling smoother processing for organised travel groups. The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), initially launched as a pilot project, is now live and allows Indian travellers to apply online and receive digital approval, streamlining the application process.

Mumbai and Delhi continue to remain the top departure markets for South Africa from India. Discussions regarding the launch of direct flight connectivity are underway, with confirmation expected following consultations with relevant

authorities. Direct air access is anticipated to significantly strengthen demand, particularly across business, MICE and premium leisure segments.

The upcoming 2027 Cricket World Cup presents a significant tourism opportunity. South African Tourism is working closely with travel trade partners to develop match-linked itineraries that combine cricket viewing experiences with destination exploration. Engagements with cricket associations, media representatives, influencers and trade partners are also being explored to maximise tourism potential around the tournament.



Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance launches “Love Sri Lanka, Always” – showcasing Sri Lanka as a year-round destination with strong connectivity, with India as a key market

Travel Mail Desk

The Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance announces the launch of its new tactical campaign burst, “Love Sri Lanka, Always,” an evocative global initiative designed to reposition the island as a destination to discover and rediscover throughout the year across select international markets. With India continuing to be a key source market, Sri Lanka's short flight times, strong air connectivity, and extraordinary diversity of experiences, from wildlife and tea country to beaches and cultural heritage– make it an ideal destination for Indian travellers seeking both quick escapes and deeper explorations.

From vibrant festivals and cultural traditions to migratory wildlife gatherings and shifting monsoon landscapes, each time of year reveals a different side of the island. By highlighting these seasonal stories, the campaign promotes more balanced year-round visitation, unlocks lesser-known experiences, and supports tourism communities across diverse regions of the country.

The campaign also launches at a moment when Sri Lanka is experiencing renewed momentum as a global travel

destination. It highlights sustaining and stabilizing demand across markets throughout the year, as destinations, hotels and communities remain ready to deliver authentic Sri Lankan warmth, culture, and natural beauty. Tourism operations across the country are fully active, destinations are welcoming visitors safely, and communities are once again ready to share the warmth, culture, and natural beauty that define the Sri Lankan experience. Even during these challenging global times, Sri Lanka offers a stable, reliable, and inspiring destination for travellers seeking new experiences.

Delivered through a digital-first global rollout, the campaign combines high-impact visual storytelling, targeted performance marketing, and integrated media partnerships to reach modern travellers at key inspiration and planning stages. It also strengthens the Love Sri Lanka platform as the central gateway for discovery, inspiration, and trip planning for international visitors. At a time when global travel patterns remain unpredictable, Sri Lanka positions itself as a dependable and enriching destination, offering travellers both convenience and peace of mind.



“Discovering Maharashtra”

Across Time and Terrain



Travel Mail Desk

Maharashtra does not reveal itself all at once—it unfolds gradually. Within a few hours, travellers can move from the Arabian Sea to the forested Sahyadris, from UNESCO heritage sites to wildlife reserves, and from sacred pilgrimages to vibrant festivals. It is not a destination to rush through, but one that invites repeated discovery.

UNESCO Heritage – Where History Is Experienced

Across its diverse landscapes, Maharashtra’s UNESCO sites transform history into lived experience. The Maratha forts—Raigad, Shivneri, Pratapgad, and others—form part of the recognised “Maratha Military Landscapes.” Meanwhile, the rock-cut Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves stand as extraordinary records of India’s artistic and spiritual evolution.

In Mumbai, the Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai reflect a blend of European styles and Indian craftsmanship, while the Elephanta Caves showcase intricate rock-cut architecture. Parts of the Western Ghats further highlight the state’s ecological richness.

Sacred Routes & Living Traditions

Faith in Maharashtra moves beyond temples—it walks and sings. The state is home to five Jyotirlingas, including Trimbakeshwar and Bhimashankar, while the Pandharpur Wari remains one of India’s most significant pilgrimage traditions.

The Ashtavinayak circuit connects eight sacred Ganesha temples, while sites like Shirdi and the Shree Siddhivinayak Temple reflect enduring devotion. Festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Dahi Handi, and



the turmeric-filled Jejuri celebrations bring communities together in powerful expressions of culture and faith.

Coast & Natural Landscapes

With a 720-km coastline along the Arabian Sea, Maharashtra offers serene beaches, fishing villages, and temple towns. Blue Flag-certified beaches like Shrivardhan and Guhagar stand out for their cleanliness and sustainability.

Inland, the Sahyadris transform during monsoon into a haven of waterfalls and trekking trails, while regions like Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve and Pench National Park represent conservation-led tourism at its best.

Lakes, Adventure & Slow Travel

Destinations such as Tapola, Bhandardara, and the unique Lonar Crater Lake offer quiet, reflective escapes shaped by water and landscape. Adventure seekers can explore Sandhan Valley, Kolad’s rapids, or trek to forts like Rajmachi and Harishchandragad.

Caravan tourism is also redefining travel, allowing visitors to stay close to nature—from Malshej Ghat to the Konkan coast—while accessing remote locations with ease.

Experiences & Flavours of the Land

Experiential tourism invites travellers to engage deeply—through Konkan homestays, vineyard visits in Nashik, or agritourism in Baramati and Satara. Local crafts, cooking traditions, and village life add authenticity to every journey.

Cuisine in Maharashtra is deeply regional—from the coconut-rich Konkan dishes to Kolhapur’s fiery thalis and Vidarbha’s bold Saoji flavours, each meal reflects the land it comes from.

A Journey That Continues

Travel in Maharashtra is a dialogue between landscape, culture, and community. With growing emphasis on sustainable tourism—through homestays and community-led initiatives—the state encourages mindful exploration.

Ultimately, Maharashtra cannot be experienced in a single visit. It reveals itself in seasons—lush in monsoon, festive in winter, and serene by the coast in summer—ensuring that every journey returns with a new story to tell.

From Tokyo to The Thar

The Journey of “Mayumi” Becoming Rajasthani Madhu



Travel Mail Desk

On an evening shaped by the colours of Gangaur, where geet, ghoonghat and graceful movements fill the streets of Jaipur, a dancer moves with quiet certainty. Draped in leheriya and guided by rhythm, she blends into the celebration with ease. Few would guess she was born thousands of miles away in Tokyo.

Today, she is known as Rajasthani Madhu. Years ago, she was Mayumi of Japan.

Her story begins not in Rajasthan or in India, but inside a cinema hall in Japan. Watching an Indian film introduced her to a landscape she had never seen, yet somehow understood. The music stayed with her, and the visuals lingered long after the credits ended.

In 2009, curiosity led her to India, and eventually to Rajasthan. What followed was neither a short visit nor a passing interest. It became a process of learning and unlearning.

She sought out folk artists and began training in Kalbelia, Ghoomar, and Chari. Under the guidance of Kalbelia exponent Asha Sapera and through her exposure to the Manganiyar tradition shaped by Anwar Khan, she discovered that these art forms carried memory, emotion and identity within them. They were not performances to replicate, but traditions to live.

Time spent in Jaisalmer brought a quiet shift. The desert and its music and its people began to feel familiar. Somewhere along this journey, Mayumi became Madhu. The name did not mark reinvention, but recognition.



Back in Tokyo, her life reflects this dual belonging. By day, she runs a beauty salon, and by evening, she transforms her space into a small centre of Rajasthani culture. Three to four times a week, she teaches folk dance to Japanese students. The room fills with colour and sound, and steady footwork as Rajasthan finds expression far from its origin.

The path has not been simple. Introducing regional Indian folk traditions to a Japanese audience comes with its

own challenges, and there are days when only a few learners attend. Yet, her commitment has remained steady. Support from students and a growing digital audience continues to shape her journey forward.

Her connection to Rajasthan has also been acknowledged by the state tourism bodies, which have invited her to participate in fairs and cultural festivals. In these spaces, she is not seen as an outsider learning the culture, but as someone who carries it with sincerity.

Madhu describes Rajasthan as her second home, though the distinction feels increasingly subtle. Her journey reflects how culture travels, not as an export but as an experience that takes root in unexpected places.

From Tokyo to the Thar, her story speaks of a connection that goes beyond geography and beyond language. It is shaped by rhythm, memory and a sense of belonging that cannot be measured.

Why Slower Itineraries Are Emerging as the New Standard in Women's Travel



MIRA BID



LOUIS D'SOUZA



LEENA JHUGROO

Travel Mail Desk

Traveling used to mean having ticked every destination off of your travel list. Now, more women's travel plans are based on longer trips that allow them to be more mindful and comfortable while experiencing new things, and connecting to their well being as a person. This trend toward "slow travel" is encouraging women to take longer vacations; reduce the number of places they visit; and engage in a deeper way with local culture instead of rushing through sightseeing.

For many women, this way of traveling provides them with greater satisfaction, and also helps them feel safe in exploring the world.

» Prioritizing Comfort and Safety Over a Packed Schedule

Safety and comfort continue to be important considerations for women travelers. Fast-paced itineraries typically involve late night travel, unfamiliar travel routes and a short amount of time to explore each location, all of which contribute to unnecessary stress. When a woman travels slowly, she has the opportunity to stay in one place for a longer period of time; to get to know and understand the local environment; and to feel more confident moving from one location to another.

According to Mir Musa, Sales Director, Turalux DMC Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, "Women travelers today want to have confidence and be comfortable while they are visiting a destination. The slower pace of traveling helps women travelers to become accustomed to their surroundings and develop a better understanding of how to enjoy their travels without feeling like they are always on the go."

» Flexibility & Personalisation are Key as a Result of Taking Time to Travel

In general, taking the time to travel allows you to be more flexible and personalised with regard to your travel experience. Those who travel slowly do not have to

conform to specific schedules; therefore, you can base your travel decision on your interest, the way you feel, and on the suggestions of locals. The evolution of travelling means that nowadays more women are choosing to travel with slow itineraries; these itineraries create a safe, secure and more immersive cultural experience.

» Authentic Experiences Over a Tourist Check-list

More women travelers are moving away from the traditional way of traveling, which is to check off items on a list. Instead of moving quickly from one landmark to another, women travelers enjoy participating in activities where they feel they can truly connect with a destination – whether that be exploring cafes in the neighborhood they are staying in, shopping at local markets, or engaging in local cultural activities.

According to Mira Bid, Managing Director, Muthaiga Travel Limited, "Women travelers are becoming more inclined to make their travel decisions based on the authenticity of experiences they have, as they want to spend time discovering the culture of a destination, and interacting with the people of that culture, versus only visiting traditional tourist attractions."

» The Popularity of Smaller Communities and Off-the-Beaten-Path Destinations is Rising

Another trend that is continuing to grow is the movement toward smaller towns and lesser known destinations. Many of these places tend to be quieter and provide a more authentic cultural experience, as well as being less busy than larger metropolitan cities.

» Sustainable Travel Choices are Becoming More Important

Sustainability is greatly influencing how people choose to travel today. When a traveller spends less time traveling to different locations and instead, chooses to spend the majority of their time in just a couple of places over an extended period of time, they reduce the amount of transportation they need, and therefore

lessen the environmental impact they leave while traveling. Slow tourism provides opportunities for travellers to utilize local transportation, support local businesses, and travel in a more sustainable manner.

According to Leena Jhugroo, Managing Director, Travel Lounge Leisure & Tours Ltd, "More and more women are focusing on responsible travel. This is because the longer a traveler stays in one location, the more he or she is exposed to the local ecosystem as well as the people and culture of that location."

Culinary Experiences are Enhanced by Slow Travel

Culinary experiences are significantly enhanced through slow travel. Food is an integral part of any journey, and having the time to truly savour it allows travellers to engage more deeply with local culture rather than rushing through meals between activities.

"With slow travel, food experiences become far more immersive. Travellers have the opportunity to explore regional cuisines in depth, participate in cooking classes, and enjoy meals at a relaxed pace—something that is often not possible with tightly packed itineraries," says Louis D'Souza, Managing Partner, Tamarind Global.

Slow Travel Allows for Meaningful Social Connections

Slow travel also provides a great opportunity for building true and lasting connections. Travelling in one area for an extended period of time allows for increased opportunities for interacting with locals, other travellers and many of the people you meet from the community you are visiting. The research shows that taking the time to slow travel allows for people to make more meaningful connections to both the area they are in and the local residents.

How AI is Helping Budget Travellers Discover Hidden Destinations in India

Travel Mail Desk

Travel discovery in India is undergoing a quiet transformation. For budget travellers especially, the way destinations are explored and chosen is no longer limited to travel blogs, guidebooks, or recommendations from friends. Artificial Intelligence is increasingly shaping how travellers discover places, helping them uncover hidden destinations that were once overlooked in mainstream travel searches.

Traditionally, most online travel searches led travellers to the same set of popular destinations, Goa, Manali, Jaipur, or Rishikesh—largely because these locations dominate search rankings and social media visibility. AI-powered recommendation engines are beginning to change that dynamic. By analysing user behaviour, travel preferences, and search patterns, AI tools are able to surface destinations that align with individual interests rather than simply showcasing the most popular locations.

For instance, travellers searching for peaceful hill stations or nature-led experiences may now be introduced to destinations such as Vagamon in Kerala, Tirthan Valley in Himachal Pradesh, or Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh. These places, once considered niche or offbeat, are increasingly appearing on travellers' radars through AI-driven suggestions and personalised travel recommendations.

"AI is turning travel discovery from 'popular destinations' to 'personalised destinations,'" says Pranav Dangri, Founder of The Hosteller. "Earlier, travellers often ended up choosing from the same handful of places simply because those were the easiest to find online. Today, AI-powered recommendations are helping travellers uncover destinations that truly match their interests."

For budget travellers, this shift is particularly meaningful. Many emerging destinations are not only less crowded but also more affordable compared to traditional tourist hubs. According to industry insights, nearly 70% of Gen Z travellers prioritise experiences over visiting famous landmarks, making them more open to exploring smaller towns and offbeat locations.



Pranav Dangri
Founder of The Hosteller

This shift is gradually decentralising travel discovery in India, allowing smaller towns and lesser-known landscapes to find their place on the modern traveller's map. Beyond discovery, AI is also changing how travellers plan their trips. Many travellers now use AI tools to map out entire itineraries, from suggesting travel routes to recommending cafés, viewpoints, and local experiences. In many cases, travellers can plan trips almost hour by hour, receiving curated suggestions on what to do in the morning, where to explore in the afternoon, and how to spend the evening in a new destination.

AI-powered conversational search is also reshaping trip planning. Instead of typing generic queries like "best places to visit in India," travellers are increasingly asking AI tools more specific questions such as "affordable backpacking destinations in South India" or "quiet workation spots near Bangalore." These queries often generate curated recommendations that highlight hidden gems and lesser-known regions.

Another interesting shift is how AI is beginning to shape emerging travel trends. When travellers repeatedly search for slow travel destinations, remote workation spots, or quiet nature escapes, AI systems begin surfacing

similar destinations to other users with comparable interests. This creates a ripple effect where lesser-known places gradually enter the mainstream travel conversation.

For hospitality brands catering to young and budget-conscious travellers, this evolving discovery behaviour is becoming increasingly visible. The Hosteller has observed that travellers today are far more curious about emerging destinations and are actively seeking places that feel authentic, peaceful, and less commercialised.

"Young travellers today are looking for discovery, not just destinations," Dangri adds. "AI is making it easier to uncover places that feel local, authentic, and unexplored."

For many travellers, discovering a hidden destination also carries a sense of pride. Being among the first in their circle to visit a place that isn't yet crowded has become part of the travel appeal. In many ways, AI is helping restore the spirit of exploration—encouraging travellers to move beyond predictable itineraries and uncover the diverse, lesser-known destinations that India quietly holds beyond the mainstream travel map.

TRAVEL AS A TEACHER

How the world shapes the way we think, work and live



By Varun Chadha,
CEO, TIRUN Travel Marketing

What makes travel such a potent educator is its ability to reduce geographical and emotional distance. It provides an unparalleled opportunity to learn about other cultures through immersion rather than instruction. Conversations with locals dismantle preconceptions, while unfamiliar surroundings prompt reflection. This exposure cultivates a profound sense of humility, reminding us that our way of life is just one thread in a vast, diverse tapestry. It teaches us to listen more than we speak and to respect the rhythms of communities different from our own.

The lessons of travel do not arrive in neat chapters; they emerge through experience. Navigating an unfamiliar foreign market sharpens intuition, while a missed flight teaches adaptability. Life on a cruise offers its own unique curriculum, patience through the shared rhythms of life at sea and perspective gained from moving between destinations without the urgency of constant transit. Interestingly, cruising is often 30% cheaper than land-

based travel when factoring in the logistics of moving between multiple countries, making this global classroom more accessible.

For professionals navigating a changing environment, such learning is essential. Organizations value those who can collaborate across cultures and respond thoughtfully to new situations. Travel nurtures these qualities organically, turning each journey into real-world mentorship. It offers the space to reflect, reset, and return with renewed clarity.

As this mindset evolves, we see a clear progression in how people explore. Many begin with short, regional journeys that are familiar and easy. With experience, confidence grows, and so does curiosity.

Travellers eventually seek longer, more distinctive itineraries, moving from mere convenience toward intentional exploration. Families and young professionals alike are discovering that when approached with openness, travel does more than take us places; it expands how we think, how we connect, and how we grow. It is a reminder that the world remains the most accessible classroom for those willing to engage with what lies beyond the familiar.

Travel Mail Desk

Travel has always been more than simply moving from one place to another. It is one of our most effective teachers, quietly challenging our assumptions and shaping how we understand ourselves and the world. As travel becomes increasingly purposeful, its role as a source of learning feels more relevant than ever. Stepping into a new environment, whether a global city or a remote cultural landscape, naturally widens our lens, fostering a mindset that is observant, balanced, and open.

INTRCITY SMARTBUS LAUNCHES

Dedicated Traveller Lounge in Tirupati to Enhance Pilgrim Comfort

Travel Mail Desk

IntrCity SmartBus, India's leading tech-enabled intercity bus network, has launched a dedicated traveller lounge in Tirupati as part of its broader strategy to strengthen infrastructure across high-demand pilgrimage corridors. The facility offers luggage storage, shower facilities, and changing rooms, aimed at improving the travel experience for pilgrims.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, over 1.43 billion domestic visits to religious destinations were recorded in 2022, generating nearly ₹1.34 lakh crore in revenue, with more than 60% of tourism activity in India linked to religious travel. The sector is expected to grow significantly, with estimates suggesting it could reach \$59 billion by 2028, driven by improved connectivity, infrastructure development and rising interest in pilgrimage travel across destinations such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Tirupati.



Speaking on the launch, **Manish Rathi, Co-founder & CEO, IntrCity SmartBus**, said, "Travel demand is consistently high in pilgrimage corridors like Tirupati, particularly on overnight routes that connect significant cities. The opportunity to enhance the overall travel ecosystem surrounding these routes is increasing as more travellers transition to organised intercity bus networks. The Tirupati traveller lounge is a component of our endeavour to fortify

the infrastructure of traveller services in significant pilgrimage destinations."

IntrCity SmartBus currently operates on over 630 routes in 15 states, connecting numerous significant pilgrimage destinations, such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Shirdi, and Tirupati. In response to the increasing demand for technology-enabled and organised intercity travel, the company has been expanding its services along these routes.

Inner Balance Over Bucket Lists is the New Language of Luxury Travel

Travel Mail Desk

When was the last time you returned from a trip feeling refreshed rather than exhausted? If your answer is 'recently', then you are among the growing tribe of high-functioning traveller. As wellness gets redefined as restoration, it's time to find it in the right place.

Because timeless wisdom is as precious

So, if you have already chosen Thailand – and rightly so—and considering Krabi, you are perfectly placed for something transformative. Dr. Buathon Thienarrom, one of Thailand's most revered healers, is visiting Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.

What's so special, you ask? Her sessions feel less like treatments and more like intuitive recalibration that restore balance. Drawing from Taoist practices and Tibetan medicine, she works across multiple layers that includes physical, emotional, and energetic. Free from rigid structures, her approach gently restores balance, often leaving you with a sense of lightness you didn't realise you were carrying. In many ways, this is where true wellness begins.

Because true happiness is personal

An extensive Burda Luxury Report suggests that the future of luxury travel sits at the confluence of personalisation and purpose. And at Phulay Bay, these are not just buzzwords, but core philosophy. At the heart of Reserve wellness is Radhika Khemka, Phulay Bay's newly appointed Reserve Yogi and Wellness Expert. Each session is tailored to the individual. Not just your schedule—but your energy, your stress patterns, your internal pace.

Drawing from Indian classical yoga, Ayurveda, and nutritional science, she crafts wellness journey to restore mental clarity while awakening physical vitality. For Indian travellers increasingly moving away from one-size-fits-all itineraries, this kind of intuitive curation aligns with one's innate spiritual blueprint, creating space for renewal that lingers long after the practice concludes.

Phulay Bay's wellness philosophy honours a bespoke path to well-being, aligning ancient Thai wisdom with modern functional wellness practices. Every experience is tailored to the individual, guided by three essential pillars—vitality, clarity, and rest.



Because being closer to nature brings glow

Imagine gliding across the Andaman Sea in a traditional longtail boat, as the gentle rhythm of the water and sunlight filtering through lush canopies setting the pace? At Phulay Bay, days unfold through curated island-hopping experiences – snorkelling in clear waters, and lazing in some of Krabi's most unspoilt corner, from Bamboo Island to Hong Island and See Island. Or indulge in slow crafts like guided flower and leaf folding at the resort. Love elephants? Spend a day at the Krabi Elephant House Sanctuary near Phang Nga Bay, playing, feeding, and bathing the gentle giants.

Because modern wellness is pursuit of happiness

The days of the six-pack abs and size-zero ideals are slowly, and thankfully, fading away, replaced by a more meaningful pursuit of emotional ease. As we dwell in the post-pandemic world with modern life stresses, integrating mental agility is a necessity. Earlier this year, Phulay Bay collaborated with Phil Davies reflecting this very shift. Through therapies like EFT and clinical hypnotherapy, the focus moves toward subtle but powerful internal shifts—ideal for Indian professionals navigating high-pressure environments where burnout is often normalised. It also reflects that wellness is no longer performative, but deeply felt.

Club Med: The Art of Winter Escape, Redefined



Travel Mail Desk

Planning ahead for Winter 2027, Club Med, the pioneer of premium all-inclusive vacations, invites travellers to embrace the magic of the season in their own stride. From powder-perfect slopes to balmy beaches, the winter season presents myriad travel opportunities, where adventure, relaxation and reconnection unite under one global collection of experiences.

Be it families conquering snowy peaks in Japan, couples seeking barefoot bliss in the Maldives, or explorers uncovering the wildlife of South Africa, Club Med celebrates a season for every traveller.

Asia Pacific – Snow, Serenity and Soulful Adventure

In Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, snow lovers can look forward to powder-filled days and scenic alpine adventures. Club Med Tomamu welcomes guests to a lively mountain resort surrounded by fresh trails and après-ski delights, including the whimsical Ice Village and Mina Mina Beach indoor wave pool.

Club Med Sahoro offers a deeper connection to Japanese culture and heritage, ensuring an unforgettable holiday that caters to both adrenaline seekers and those looking for peaceful high-altitude relaxation. Club Med Kiroro Grand and Club Med Exclusive Collection Kiroro Peak extend the season until early May, offering family-friendly skiing and adult-only serenity respectively.

Across the sea, the wonders of China beckon with their own natural drama. Club Med Changbaishan, set within a

UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, pairs snow-covered forests and rejuvenating hot springs with views of the mythical Heavenly Lake.

Further west, Club Med Beidahu offers an intimate family retreat where gentle slopes, hearty northeastern flavours and panoramic winter landscapes promise a relaxed introduction to alpine life.

Europe – Timeless Peaks, Alpine Elegance

Europe's grand mountains continue to inspire, offering a seamless blend of sport, culture and indulgence. In Italy's Piedmont region, Club Med Pragelato Sestriere returns refreshed with new novelties and expanded experiences within the famed Via Lattea ski area. In Switzerland, Club Med Saint-Moritz Roi Soleil combines Engadin's legendary charm with cross-country skiing and horse-drawn sleigh rides through snow-clad valleys.

Over in France, Club Med Alpe d'Huez shines under 300 days of sunshine, with sweeping trails and panoramic terraces ideal for après-ski gatherings. Families will find warmth and elegance at Club Med Valmorel, while Club Med Val d'Isère – part of the Exclusive Collection – remains the jewel of the Alps, blending world-class slopes with spa serenity and gourmet artistry.

The Americas – Nature, Culture and Celebration

Perched on the slopes of Le Massif de Charlevoix, this stunning four-season Club Med Québec Charlevoix captivates guests with its unparalleled panorama

where the Laurentian forest tumbles down to meet the majestic St. Lawrence River. Guests can ski or snow-shoe through scenic trails, then unwind in Nordic spas and savour locally inspired gastronomy. Every stay offers the perfect balance of adventure and authenticity.

For travellers who prefer their winters at sea, Club Med 2, the brand's elegant five-masted French sailing yacht, seamlessly blends the charm of traditional sailing with the modern luxury and conviviality of a Club Med resort.

With a shallow draft allowing it to anchor in secluded coves unreachable by larger liners, and a complimentary watersports marina that unfolds directly into the sea, Club Med 2 offers guests an intimate and elegant way to explore the world's most beautiful destinations, from the sun-drenched Caribbean to the historic ports of the Mediterranean.

Sun Destinations – Warmth and Wonder Beyond Winter

For those chasing the sun, Club Med's tropical resorts promise endless summer even in the heart of winter. In the Maldives, Club Med Kani enchants with its turquoise lagoons and signature Manta Exclusive Collection overwater villas – a haven for couples and families to indulge in barefoot luxury and oceanfront dining beneath the stars. In Thailand, Club Med Phuket continues to delight families with its reimagined Family Oasis featuring redesigned family-themed rooms, a vibrant splash park and outdoor wellness activities along Kata Bay's golden sands.

In North Africa, Club Med Marrakech La Palmeraie immerses guests in Moroccan artistry and tranquillity. Between palm-lined gardens and hammam rituals, travellers can wander through medinas, join cooking classes or venture into the Atlas Mountains by camel for a taste of desert adventure. Looking ahead, Club Med South Africa Beach & Safari, the brand's much-anticipated opening, will offer a rare blend of coastal escapes and wildlife safari exploration – redefining the meaning of a winter getaway with nature and culture entwined.

With Club Med's premium all-inclusive packages, every detail is taken care of, leaving you to simply live in the moment. Book your holiday now and enjoy unbeatable savings of up to 20% off* for the ultimate winter getaway.

Kenya, Unscripted: 6 Experiences That Go Beyond the Big Five

Travel Mail Desk

For generations, Kenya has captured the world's imagination as the ultimate safari destination— a place where lions roam golden plains and elephants move in quiet procession beneath vast African skies. The allure of the Big Five has long defined the country's travel narrative.

But Kenya's story stretches far beyond the savannah. From ancient Swahili towns and volcanic valleys to jade-colored desert lakes and coral-fringed coastlines, Kenya offers immersive experiences that challenge expectations and redefine adventure, says Mira Bid, Managing Director of Muthaiga Travel Limited. For travelers willing to look beyond the iconic wildlife, a richer, more layered Kenya awaits.

1. Lamu Old Town: On Kenya's northern coast lies Lamu Old Town, the country's oldest and best-preserved Swahili settlement and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2001. Stepping into Lamu feels less like sightseeing and more like traveling through time. Narrow alleyways wind between coral stone houses built from mangrove timber, their intricately carved wooden doors reflecting centuries of Arab, Persian, Indian, and African influence. The scent of spices drifts through bustling markets, while the call to prayer echoes softly from historic mosques. Here, traditions endure not as performance, but as everyday life — from dhow-building to Swahili cuisine. In Lamu, history is not preserved behind museum glass; it is lived.

2. Hell's Gate National Park: Just 90 kilometers northwest of Nairobi, Hell's Gate National Park offers one of Africa's most unusual wildlife encounters: the chance to explore by bicycle or on foot. Cycling past zebras and giraffes across open plains delivers a rare sense of intimacy with nature. Towering volcanic cliffs rise dramatically along the Great Rift Valley, while geothermal steam vents hiss from the earth below. Deep gorges, carved over millennia, invite hikers to descend into a striking landscape shaped by time and tectonic force. Unlike the enclosed experience of a safari vehicle, Hell's Gate allows travelers to feel the terrain beneath their feet — and wheels — creating an adventure that is both active and deeply immersive.



Mira Bid
Managing Director of
Muthaiga Travel Limited

3. Lake Turkana: In Kenya's remote north lies Lake Turkana, often called the "Jade Sea" for its shimmering green-blue waters. One of the world's largest desert lakes, Turkana's stark, volcanic surroundings give it a haunting, almost lunar beauty. The region hosts three national parks and supports diverse wildlife, including large Nile crocodile populations and migratory bird species. Yet Turkana's global significance extends beyond its striking landscape. The nearby Koobi Fora archaeological sites have yielded fossils that continue to reshape our understanding of human evolution, making the area one of the most important paleoanthropological regions in the world. Visiting Turkana is not simply a journey into a remote landscape — it is a journey into humanity's ancient origins.

4. Swahili Coast: Far from the safari circuit, Kenya's Indian Ocean coastline reveals another dimension of the country's appeal. In Watamu and Diani, white-sand beaches meet turquoise waters rich with marine life. Snorkelers drift above vibrant coral reefs, sea turtles glide gracefully through protected marine parks, and traditional wooden dhows sail into glowing sunsets. Paddleboarding across calm lagoons and dining on freshly caught seafood by the shore offer a seamless

blend of adventure and relaxation. Along the Swahili Coast, cultural heritage and natural beauty intertwine — creating an atmosphere that is at once tranquil and deeply rooted in centuries of maritime trade.

5. Aberdare Highlands Trek: The Aberdare Mountain Range offers a dramatically different Kenyan landscape — one defined by moorlands, bamboo forests, waterfalls, and volcanic ridges. Entering through Shamata Gate, hikers can traverse windswept alpine terrain, climb peaks such as Ol Donyo Lesatima and Table Mountain, or stand in awe before Karuru Falls, Kenya's highest waterfall. The jagged formations known as the Dragon's Teeth rise sharply against expansive skies, providing breathtaking backdrops for trekkers and photographers alike. It is a place of quiet solitude and raw natural beauty, far removed from the more frequented safari routes.

6. Mount Kenya: Africa's second-highest peak, Mount Kenya, often lives in the shadow of neighboring Kilimanjaro. Yet many seasoned travelers argue it offers a more varied and intimate climbing experience. Routes ascend through dense forest and moorland into glacial valleys and high-altitude lakes. Trekkers aiming for Point Lenana are rewarded with panoramic views across valleys, volcanoes, and sweeping savannahs. For experienced climbers, technical routes provide an additional challenge. Camping beneath a canopy of brilliant African stars at altitude transforms the ascent into something profoundly personal — a reminder of nature's scale and serenity. Kenya will always be synonymous with extraordinary wildlife. Yet beyond the famed Big Five lies a country of ancient towns, dramatic geology, marine sanctuaries, highland forests, and cultural richness.

For travelers seeking more than a safari — those drawn to history, adventure, and meaningful connection — Kenya offers experiences that linger long after the journey ends. Because in Kenya, the true magic is not only in the animals you see — but in the landscapes you traverse, the cultures you encounter, and the stories you carry home.

Germany Welcomes Indian Travellers with a Spring of Discovery and Easter Celebrations



Travel Mail Desk

As the gentle embrace of spring unfurls across Germany, the country offers a perfect blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and festive charm for Indian travellers. The season, marked by the vibrant colours of blooming flowers and fresh outdoor adventures, is further enlivened by Easter celebrations that bring an added layer of joy to the travel experience. Germany invites visitors to embark on a journey that not only explores the countryside and picturesque towns but also celebrates the country's deep-rooted traditions in a spectacular way.

This spring, as Germany basks in the freshness of the season, Indian travelers are increasingly drawn to the country's diverse landscapes and regional cultures. With Easter just around the corner, Germany's quaint villages, charming towns, and scenic countryside come alive with lively festivals, local markets, and age-old traditions. It's a season that promises both serene escapes and cultural immersion, offering the ideal springboard for longer stays and more in-depth explorations of Germany's many regions.

A Spring Awakening Across Germany's Scenic Landscapes

From the fairytale turrets of Neuschwanstein Castle to the avant-garde art scene in Berlin, from scenic drives through the Black Forest to cutting-edge automotive heritage at the Mercedes-Benz Museum. Germany offers Indian travelers a mosaic of experiences that blend nostalgia with innovation.

Germany in spring is a visual feast. The air is crisp, the skies are clear, and nature blooms in a cascade of colors. The warm sun breathes new life into the idyllic countryside, making it the perfect time for

outdoor activities like cycling, hiking, and leisurely strolls. Whether it's discovering the enchanting forests of the Black Forest or taking a boat ride along the majestic rivers, spring invites Indian travelers to experience Germany's beauty in full bloom.

A Joyous Easter Experience with German Traditions

Spring in Germany isn't just about nature it's also a time for rich cultural festivities, most notably Easter. During this season, Germany's towns and villages transform into vibrant hubs of celebration. Easter markets spring up in many regions, filled with local crafts, traditional Easter eggs, and seasonal treats. Cities like Munich, Heidelberg, and Nuremberg host grand festivals, where visitors can experience time-honoured customs, from Easter egg hunts to intricate floral displays. These festive moments allow Indian travelers to dive into the country's cultural heart while enjoying the warm hospitality and seasonal delicacies.

regional diversity makes it possible to explore a rich tapestry of experiences in one journey. The country's excellent transport infrastructure allows Indian travelers to easily hop from city to countryside, from the lively cultural hubs to quiet, scenic retreats.

Germany's seamless connectivity means you can explore the vibrant streets of Berlin, the historic charm of Munich, or the peaceful beauty of the Romantic Road all in a single trip. With trains, buses, and even river cruises linking these regions, travelers can dive deeper into the heart of Germany's rich culture and nature without the hassle of long-distance travel.

Stay Longer, Explore Deeper

This spring, Germany encourages Indian travelers to stay longer and immerse themselves in the local cultures and landscapes that make the country unique. By extending their journey, visitors can venture beyond the iconic landmarks and uncover the hidden gems that



For those visiting during the Easter weekend, the experience is truly magical. You can witness centuries-old traditions like the "Osterfeuer" (Easter fires) or enjoy the sight of beautifully decorated Easter eggs hanging from trees in the town squares. These Easter celebrations add an unforgettable charm to the already captivating backdrop of Germany's landscapes.

Exploring Regions Beyond the Tourist Trail

While the major cities continue to attract attention, Germany's appeal lies in its diverse regions, each offering unique landscapes and cultural experiences. From the fairy-tale castles of Bavaria to the tranquil lakes of Swabia, Germany's

only a longer stay can offer. Explore the springtime vineyards of the Rhine Valley, stroll through the Easter markets of the medieval town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, or relax by the peaceful shores of Lake Constance.

Romit Theophilus, Director of Marketing & Sales Office, GNTO India commented on the growing trend "Indian travelers are seeking deeper connections with the places they visit, wanting more than just a quick getaway. Germany's regional diversity, paired with the allure of spring and Easter celebrations, offers the perfect opportunity for extended stays where visitors can explore not just the cities, but also the enchanting landscapes, local traditions, and festive experiences that are uniquely German."

Europe's Iconic Experiences, Thoughtfully Curated: **SOTC Travel on Experiential European Holidays**

Travel Mail Desk

Europe's allure continues to grow among Indian travellers – but the way people explore it has shifted. Gone are the days of ticking off just landmarks. Today's travellers want stories and moments: sunrise over glacial fjords, wine sipped with sunset views, historic quarters explored at twilight, and experiences that stay with you long after the trip ends. According to recent releases and package highlights from SOTC Travel, their European journeys are shaped around immersive experiences, curated comfort, and a rich blend of culture, nature and local living.

Norway, Finland & Iceland – Midnight Sun & Arctic Landscapes

The Arctic summer phenomenon of the Midnight Sun is inspiring aspirational travel to Lapland across Norway and Finland, along with Iceland's dramatic terrain. Extended daylight hours allow travellers to experience fjords, glaciers and geothermal landscapes in a truly immersive way. From scenic coastal drives to fjord cruises and nature-led explorations, the region offers a striking blend of raw beauty and curated comfort, making it a standout summer highlight.

Greece – Ancient Wonders & Santorini Sunsets

Greece continues to attract strong demand for its combination of classical heritage and island elegance. Visits to the Acropolis of Athens, Delphi and Olympia anchor cultural itineraries, while the iconic sunset views in Oia, Santorini provide one of Europe's most romantic and photographed experiences. The seamless pairing of history and Mediterranean leisure resonates deeply with Indian travellers seeking both exploration and relaxation.

Switzerland – Swiss Alps & Scenic Rail Journeys

Switzerland remains a cornerstone of European travel, driven by the majestic Swiss Alps and its world-renowned panoramic train journeys. Scenic rail routes wind through alpine passes, pristine lakes and charming mountain towns, offering uninterrupted views alongside comfort and efficiency. These journeys transform travel time into an experience

in itself, reinforcing Switzerland's timeless appeal.

Scotland – Highlands & Loch Ness Nature-driven itineraries in Scotland showcase the rugged beauty of the Highlands alongside serene experiences such as a cruise on Loch Ness. Dramatic terrain, historic castles and rich folklore create a compelling narrative for travellers looking to add depth and storytelling to multi-country European journeys.

France – Paris by Night & Culinary Indulgence

France captivates with its blend of culture, cuisine and romance. Evening experiences such as "Paris by Night," featuring the illuminated Eiffel Tower and Seine river cruises, offer travellers a refined perspective of the capital. Complemented by curated culinary moments and vineyard explorations, France delivers an elegant balance of heritage and lifestyle.



Italy – Amalfi Coast & Cultural Icons

Italy's enduring charm lies in its seamless fusion of art, history and coastal splendour. The Amalfi Coast remains a major draw, with scenic drives, pastel cliffside villages and azure waters creating an idyllic Mediterranean setting. Italian itineraries often balance iconic cities like Rome and Florence with leisurely coastal experiences, offering both cultural richness and relaxation.

Portugal – Porto & Algarve

Portugal is emerging as a favourite among discerning travellers. Porto's famed port wine tastings provide a distinctive

cultural touchpoint, while the Algarve's dramatic coastline and golden beaches offer leisurely coastal stays. Together with Lisbon's historic quarters and vibrant food scene, Portugal blends heritage with laid-back charm.

Spain – From Gothic Spires to Flamenco Nights

Spain's architectural marvels – from Barcelona's Sagrada Família to Granada's Alhambra – continue to draw culturally inclined travellers. Evenings enriched with flamenco performances in Seville add authenticity and emotional depth, creating journeys that go beyond sightseeing into meaningful cultural immersion.

Croatia – Medieval Marvels & Turquoise Waters

Croatia's natural beauty and historic cities offer a striking contrast. The cascading waters of Plitvice Lakes National Park provide serene, nature-led exploration, while walks along Dubrovnik's ancient city walls reveal sweeping Adriatic views. The destination appeals to travellers seeking both tranquillity and history.

Czech Republic – Bohemian Charm & Gothic Grandeur

The Czech Republic balances storybook charm with vibrant city life. Český Krumlov enchants with its castle skyline and cobblestone streets, while Prague's architectural landscape and cultural energy offer a dynamic urban counterpoint. Together, they create a well-rounded and visually captivating experience.

With travellers increasingly prioritizing curated experiences, scenic routes and seamless multi-country itineraries, European holidays are evolving into thoughtfully crafted journeys. From Arctic daylight to Mediterranean coastlines and heritage-rich capitals, SOTC Travel continues to design experiences that blend iconic highlights with immersive moments – delivering comfort, cultural depth and lasting memories for today's discerning traveller.

San Francisco Icons

Landmarks that Define the City

Travel Mail Desk



The city of San Francisco is home to landmark architectural wonders, world-class attractions, rich history, and a vibrant art and culture scene, making it one of the world's most compelling destinations. Moreover, for travellers heading to FIFA World Cup 2026, San Francisco's proximity to key venues offers the perfect opportunity to explore some of its most iconic sights.

Golden Gate Bridge – The Golden Gate Bridge, opened in 1937, is perhaps the city's most famous landmark. Stretching 1.7 miles with towering structures rising 746 feet, it connects San Francisco to Marin County and forms part of the historic U.S. Route 101. A global icon, it is popular with cyclists, runners, and photographers, with stunning viewpoints at Fort Point, Baker Beach, and Mile Rock Beach.

Alcatraz – Located about 1.25 miles from Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz Island has a rich past as a federal penitentiary from 1934 to 1963, housing notorious criminals such as Al Capone. Today, it is one of the city's most visited attractions, where guests can explore the preserved cellhouse, historic gardens, and immersive guided tours.

Coit Tower – Perched atop Telegraph Hill, Coit Tower rises 210 feet and has defined the city skyline since 1933. Its interior features striking murals created under a New Deal art programme, offering insight into life in 1930s San Francisco.

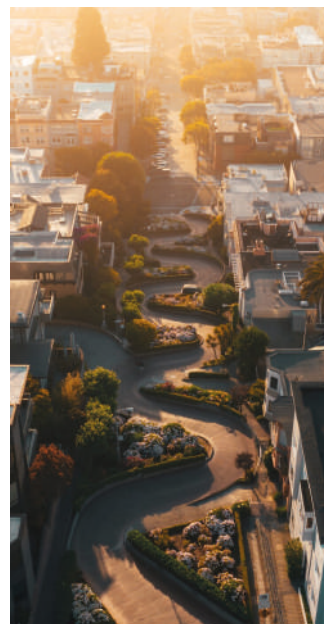
Lombard Street – Often called the "crookedest street in the world," Lombard Street is famed for its eight sharp hairpin turns and beautifully landscaped surroundings. It remains one of the most photographed and visited streets in the city.

Fisherman's Wharf – Fisherman's Wharf captures the city's lively waterfront culture with attractions at Pier 39, street

performances, shopping, and renowned seafood dining. It continues to be a must-visit hub for visitors of all ages.

Painted Ladies – The pastel-coloured Victorian homes known as the Painted Ladies, built between 1892 and 1896, are among the city's most iconic sights. Set against the modern skyline, they offer a picturesque glimpse into San Francisco's architectural past.

Cable Cars – No visit is complete without experiencing the San Francisco Cable Car System, the world's last manually operated cable car network. Dating back to 1873, it provides a unique and nostalgic way to explore the city's historic neighbourhoods.



Lisbon in Bloom: Why Indian Families are Trading the Alps for the Tagus This Spring

Travel Mail Desk

As the global travel map evolves, Indian families are increasingly looking beyond the traditional European circuits in favor of destinations that offer deep heritage and a slower pace of life. This year, Lisbon is emerging as a sophisticated choice for those seeking to avoid the mid-year tourist rush. While the early months of 2026 have seen a quieter atmosphere across

Portugal, the result is a rare window for travelers to experience the city's soul with an intimacy usually reserved for locals. For Indian travelers, who often value the togetherness of multi-generational travel, the building's layout offers a thoughtful departure from the confinement of standard hotel rooms. The space functions as a collection of 37 private city residences, where expansive apartments feature fully equipped kitchens and laundry facilities. This setup allows families

to maintain their own pace, whether it's preparing a familiar meal for a child or enjoying a slow morning in a spacious living area, all while being supported by five-star hotel services.

The "Family-First" Philosophy

What truly distinguishes this heritage stay is its specialized care for younger guests. Recognizing that traveling with infants requires meticulous planning, the property's signature Baby Concierge allows parents to pre-book essentials like bottle sterilizers, safety gates, and strollers, ensuring they arrive at a fully-equipped home. This care extends to the dining experience at Bar 1855, which features dedicated baby menus and fresh purées for younger palates. While parents take a moment to explore the nearby boutiques, the supervised Raposinhos Kids' Club and the evening Pyjama Club provide a creative, safe environment for children, making the city break a true holiday for every generation.

Navigating with Ease

Navigating Lisbon's hilly terrain is often a primary concern for families. To address this, the current Martinhal Chiado offers a 48h Lisboa Card for stays of five nights or more. This pass acts as a key to the capital, offering free public transport and access to over 35 top attractions, from the Tower of Belém to the world-class Oceanário. Combined with the hotel's central location near the iconic yellow Tram 28, the logistical hurdles of international family travel are quietly removed.

As the Indian traveler continues to prioritize depth of experience over a simple checklist of sights, Lisbon's current spring lull presents a rare opportunity to see one of Europe's most soulful capitals at its most authentic.



Portugal, the result is a rare window for travelers to experience the city's soul with an intimacy usually reserved for locals.

A City Painted in Spring Light

Spring in Lisbon is defined by unique luminosity. As the sun reflects off the wide Tagus River, it hits the city's white-domed cathedrals and pastel-colored hills, creating a glow that has long inspired poets and explorers. For families, this season offers the perfect climate, warm enough for light linen but cool enough to navigate the city's famous seven hills without the summer heat. It is a time when the purple jacarandas begin to bloom in the plazas and the scent of fresh pastéis de nata (custard tarts) drifts through the air from open bakery doors.



A Heritage Stay Tailored for the Modern Family

The journey into the soul of the city often begins in the Chiado district, particularly within the walls of its historic architecture. One such landmark is a meticulously restored 1855 building that serves as a bridge between Lisbon's 19th-century grandeur and modern elegance. Martinhal Chiado, defined by its traditional large wooden windows and narrow balconies, offers families a front-row seat to the daily rhythms of the district below.



Jyotsna Suri appointed Chair; Vikram Madhok appointed Vice Chair; Ragini Chopra appointed Vice Chair – Advocacy; Deep Kalra completes term as Chair.

Travel Mail Desk

The World Travel & Tourism Council, India Initiative (WTTCl)—the apex private-Sector Voice for India's Travel & Tourism sector — announced the appointment of its Office Bearers for the 2026–2028 term, confirmed by Members at the WTTCl Annual General Meeting in New Delhi.

- Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson & Managing Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, appointed Chair, WTTCl (2026–2028)
- Vikram Madhok, Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent, India, appointed Vice Chair, WTTCl (2026–2028)
- Ragini Chopra, Executive Vice President – Corporate Affairs, InterGlobe Enterprises, appointed Vice Chair – Advocacy, WTTCl (2026–2028)
- Deep Kalra, Founder & Chairman, MakeMyTrip India Pvt. Ltd., completes his term as Outgoing Chair, WTTCl

Deep Kalra: “WTTCl is committed to working alongside the Government, at the Centre and in States, to support India's long-term tourism growth and help the sector scale responsibly as a global destination. We will work with decision makers to translate reform intent into measurable outcomes. We are delighted to welcome Airbnb and Hilton as WTTCl



Dr. Jyotsna Suri

Dr. Jyotsna Suri: “With the Union Budget 2026 setting a clear direction, delivery now rests on State-level execution—where investment and visitor experience are shaped. WTTCl will work with States/UTs to improve project timelines, destination management and quality standards. Our ongoing engagement through the Goa Tourism Board and the recent MoU with the Government of Tamil Nadu reflect this commitment to on-ground implementation.”

Members, further strengthening a broader platform across the travel ecosystem and deepening WTTCl's capability, voice and impact.”

Vikram Madhok: “To grow inbound tourism, India must strengthen the full journey—seamless access, stronger connectivity, sharper international marketing and better-run destinations—so we can attract high-value visitors, build year-round demand and spread benefits across regions. A key step in that direction is the new visa application platform that the Government of India is expected to commission later this year. The goal is simple: a brand promise that matches India's visitor experience.”

Ragini Chopra: “India needs a focused, priority-market international marketing campaign—and it must be matched by reliable on-ground delivery in States, where policy meets execution. WTTCl's advocacy will be evidence-led and solutions-first, leveraging our diverse membership—airlines, hospitality, travel services, OTAs, PSUs and consulting expertise—to help governments adopt practical reforms and deliver measurable performance improvements for India's travel and tourism sector.”

Skål International India announces dates for Skål India National Congress 2026 in Coimbatore

Travel Mail Desk

Skål International India has officially announced the dates for its National Congress 2026, which will be held from August 12 to 14, 2026, at Le Méridien Coimbatore. #SINC2026, the 3N4D Congress (Check-in August 12 – Check-out August 15, 2026) will be hosted by Skål International Coimbatore and is expected to bring together Skål members and senior leaders from across India's travel and tourism industry.

Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål International India said, “We congratulate Skål International Coimbatore and look forward to working closely with them. Together, we are confident of delivering a memorable Skål India National Congress in 2026.”

The National Congress will serve as a key platform for networking, collaboration, and exchange of ideas, reflecting Skål



International's guiding philosophy of Connecting Tourism Globally. Coimbatore, known for its entrepreneurial spirit and cultural depth, will provide a fitting backdrop for this important national gathering.

Ramesh Chandrakumar, President, Skål International Coimbatore stated, “We sincerely thank Skål International India

for entrusting us with this prestigious responsibility. We will leave no stone unturned to host an outstanding Congress that reflects the true spirit of Skål.”

Alongside the date announcement, Skål International India has also outlined multiple sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities for organisations seeking visibility and engagement with a pan-India audience of decision-makers, trade partners, and industry influencers. These initiatives are designed to enhance participation while strengthening collaboration across the tourism ecosystem.

With dates now confirmed, the Skål International India National Congress 2026 (#SINC2026) promises to be a landmark event—bringing together leadership, partnerships, and purposeful dialogue in Coimbatore this August.



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Sri Lanka Targets 1 Million Indian Arrivals in 2026, Eyes Growth in MICE, Weddings and Wellness

Travel Mail Desk

In an exclusive conversation with Travel Mail, **Mr. Darshana Cabraal, Board Director of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau**, shares Sri Lanka's ambitious plans for the Indian market in 2026. Also serving on the Executive Committee of the Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators, Joint Managing Director, Tour Blue Holdings (Pvt.) Limited, and as a member of the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism, Mr. Cabraal highlights why India remains Sri Lanka's most crucial source market.

What are your plans for Sri Lanka Tourism this year, especially in terms of presenting the destination at SATTE? How does the year ahead look?

We see the Indian market as one of our key source markets. In 2026, we are looking at welcoming over 550,000 tourists from India, which is already a substantial contribution to our total arrivals. However, our broader target is ambitious – we are aiming at a minimum of one million Indian tourists to Sri Lanka this year. That would make a great contribution to our economy.

India is truly a neighbour in every sense. More than business, we share a very close, brotherly connection. India has supported Sri Lanka during both good and challenging times, and this relationship goes beyond tourism numbers.

One major advantage Indian travellers have is the visa-free scheme. At the moment, Indians do not require a visa to visit Sri Lanka. They can simply travel with their passport without going through the e-visa process. This ease of travel is a strong driver for growth.

In terms of promotions, we are planning extensive activities across India this year. While major trade exhibitions such as SATTE and OTM remain key platforms for us, we are also focusing on Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. We want our message to reach all parts of India, not just the metros. There will be roadshows, promotional events, and targeted campaigns pan-India.



We are also seeing Indian travellers exploring new segments beyond traditional leisure tourism. Weddings, film tourism, MICE, and wellness are emerging strongly. The Indian market is now seeking diverse experiences, and Sri Lanka is well-positioned to cater to these evolving demands.

How significant are the MICE and wedding segments currently, and what are your expectations for this year?

Last year, when we analysed the statistics, we found that MICE, family travel, and individual leisure segments contributed almost equally. Each segment accounted for roughly one-third of Indian arrivals to Sri Lanka.

However, we would like to see stronger growth in the MICE segment this year. Ideally, we are targeting around 40% contribution from corporate and MICE travel, as this segment brings higher volumes and stronger revenue generation. At the same time, we do not want to depend on a single segment.

We believe in maintaining a healthy balance. Unlike some destinations where leisure dominates at 60% or more, the



Mr. Darshana Cabraal,
Board Director of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau

Indian market to Sri Lanka has shown an equal distribution across leisure, MICE, and family segments. This balanced structure is positive for us, and we want to sustain that equilibrium while encouraging higher MICE participation.

Family travel remains equally important. We want more families to visit Sri Lanka and experience what we offer. A diversified portfolio ensures stability and long-term sustainability for our tourism industry.

Europe Visas Simplified: Practical Insights for Travel Professionals & Corporates

SANKALP KUMAR | CEO | RSK VISA SERVICES



*As Europe continues to be a key destination for both leisure and business travel, visa processes remain a critical component for travel agents and corporate travel planners. To address real-world challenges faced by industry stakeholders, we present a refined Q&A with insights from **Sankalp Kumar**, a seasoned visa specialist at **RSK VISA SERVICES***

Q1: What are the key challenges travel agents face while handling Europe visa cases today?

A: The most common challenges include rapidly changing embassy requirements, tight client timelines, and managing documentation accuracy across different traveler profiles. Even minor errors can lead to delays or refusals, making structured handling essential.

Q2: From a corporate travel perspective, what makes business visa processing for Europe more complex?

A: Business visas require precise alignment between the traveler's role, the purpose of visit, and supporting documents such as invitation letters and company credentials. Any mismatch can raise concerns during assessment, especially for frequent or multi-country travel.

Q3: How can travel agencies reduce visa rejection risks for their clients?

A: The key lies in early assessment and documentation consistency. Agencies should ensure that travel intent, financials, and supporting documents are aligned. Partnering with experienced visa professionals can help identify potential gaps before submission.

Q4: What differentiates a well-prepared visa application from a weak one?

A: A strong application presents a clear narrative - why the traveler is visiting, how the trip is planned, and why they will return. Weak applications often have inconsistencies, incomplete documentation, or

generic submissions that do not reflect the applicant's actual profile.

Q5: How important is timeline planning for travel agents and corporates?

A: Extremely important. Starting the process at least 8-10 weeks in advance allows time for documentation, appointment scheduling, and corrections if needed. Delayed planning often leads to rushed submissions and higher rejection risks.

Q6: In an era of online information, what value does professional visa support bring?

A: While information is accessible, interpretation is key. Visa rules change frequently, and each case is unique. Professional support ensures applications are aligned with current regulations and presented correctly, which is crucial for consistent outcomes.

Q7: How can travel agencies strengthen their visa service offerings?

A: By adopting a structured approach—standardized documentation checklists, realistic timelines, and expert backend support. This not only improves approval rates but also enhances client trust and long-term business credibility.

Q8: What advice would you give to corporates managing frequent international travel?

A: Maintain organized documentation, plan travel in advance, and ensure consistency across applications. A well-documented travel history and clear purpose significantly improve efficiency in future visa processes.

Conclusion: For travel agents and corporates, Europe visa processing is not just an operational task—it is a critical touchpoint that impacts client satisfaction and business reputation. With the right approach, preparation, and expert guidance, it can be managed with greater clarity, consistency, and confidence.

Thailand Targets 2.55 Million Indian Arrivals, Unveils 'Healing is the New Luxury' Campaign



India remains one of our most important source markets, and we are confident of steady growth.

Are there any new strategies to attract Indian travellers?

Under the larger umbrella of "Healing is the New Luxury," we are focusing on specific target segments. Weddings are already a strong segment for Thailand, but we would like to expand further into incentives, sports tourism, millennials, and Gen Z travellers.

Additionally, we are encouraging Indian travellers not only to visit major cities, but also to explore secondary cities across the country. From the northern regions to the southern islands, Thailand offers diverse experiences that go far beyond the traditional tourist circuits.

Travel Mail Desk

In an exclusive interaction with Travel Mail, **Ms. Pattaraanong Na Chiangmai, Deputy Governor for International Marketing – Asia and South Pacific at the Tourism Authority of Thailand**, shares insights into Thailand's latest global campaign, "Healing is the New Luxury," and outlines the country's growth strategy for the Indian market.

Welcome to India. Could you tell us about the new campaign, "Healing is the New Luxury"?

"Healing is the New Luxury" is our latest marketing campaign for Thailand. Today, people around the world are stressed – from economic pressures, work responsibilities, and daily life challenges. We believe travellers are now looking for healing, not only for their bodies, but also for their minds and souls.

Thailand offers a wide range of products and services under this concept for international tourists, especially from India. Last year, 2.4 million Indians travelled to Thailand, and most of them were millennials who work very hard and lead busy lives.

We would love to invite them to Thailand to experience our slow lifestyle – whether it is meditation, comfort stays, forest bathing,



Ms. Pattaraanong Na Chiangmai, Deputy Governor for International Marketing – Asia and South Pacific at the Tourism Authority of Thailand

or simply activities that allow them to be themselves. Under this concept, Thailand becomes a destination where travellers can truly unwind and reconnect.

What growth numbers are you expecting from the Indian market?

From India, we recorded a growth of 16% compared to 2024. For this year, our target is 2.55 million Indian visitors, which represents an additional growth of about 4–5%.

A small message for Indian travellers?

Welcome to Thailand. Thailand has so much to offer to Indian travellers that you cannot experience everything in just one trip. You need to visit again and again to explore more – from the northern mountains to the southern beaches.

We warmly welcome Indian travellers to discover Thailand time and time again.

Norwegian Cruise Line Eyes Strong India Growth, Expands Short Europe Itineraries for 2026-27

Travel Mail Desk

In an exclusive interaction with Travel Mail, **Mr. Damian Borg, Senior Director of Sales, Strategy and Operations – APAC at Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd.**, shares insights into the brand's 10-year journey in India, the rising popularity of fly-cruise holidays, and expansion plans for 2026 and 2027.

How long have you been participating in the Indian market, and how has the response been so far?

We established our office in India 10 years ago, when we opened our regional headquarters in Australia. Manoj and the team here have been representing us for a decade, which is fantastic.

For us, the opportunity in India is primarily around fly-cruise. We understand that the local market wants more short sailings departing directly from India, and every successful cruise market needs a strong domestic homeport product. However, that's not our speciality. We focus on fly-cruise experiences – where guests fly to destinations like Europe, Alaska, Asia, Australia, or the Caribbean and then board our ships.

It's a different proposition, but once travellers experience our product, the response is incredible.

How is the Indian market performing in terms of numbers and segments?

The Indian market continues to grow year after year, and we're very excited about that trajectory. Growth will only accelerate as air connectivity from India to our key destinations increases.

We are seeing strong demand from multi-generational families – grandparents travelling with children and grandchildren – because our onboard offerings cater very well to all age groups. At the same time, MICE and incentive groups are performing strongly, with large corporates choosing cruise experiences for rewards and conferences.

Europe remains our top destination for Indian travellers, particularly the Mediterranean and the Baltic. Alaska follows closely, and then Asia.



Mr. Damian Borg,
Senior Director of Sales, Strategy and Operations – APAC at Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd.,

How big are weddings and MICE onboard your ships?

In my time, I'm aware of at least one wedding onboard – and it's truly a spectacular celebration. We have a well-established MICE team that handles incentives and large group bookings seamlessly.

Our ships feature dedicated meeting spaces and multiple dining venues that can accommodate both intimate groups and larger gatherings. Plus, our itineraries dock at ports almost daily, allowing guests to explore destinations before returning to a beautiful ship each evening.

What are your plans for 2026 and 2027, particularly for the Indian market?

For India, we plan to double down on education – both for trade partners and consumers – particularly around new European itineraries. We've introduced several seven-day, one-way sailings in Europe for 2026 and 2027. These shorter durations are very appealing to Indian travellers who may have limited vacation time.

We also want to encourage earlier bookings. Cruising has grown significantly since the pandemic. While we continue to introduce new ships – including Norwegian Aqua and Norwegian Luna launching from Miami – demand is rising rapidly. Booking early ensures better availability and value. Guests can cancel without penalty up to 90 days prior, so there's flexibility and security in planning.

We're also looking at Australia as an exciting opportunity. In January next year, we're launching two new four-day itineraries aboard the Norwegian Spirit, marking the first time we've offered short sailings in Australia. We hope to encourage Indian travellers to combine a Sydney stay with a cruise experience.

Are there plans to sail from Indian ports like Goa or Chennai?

As a group, along with our sister brands Regent and Oceania, we have 17 ships on order over the next 10 years. As new ships enter service, existing vessels naturally redeploy to other parts of the world.

India represents a growing demographic for us, with tremendous long-term potential. While I can't make any promises, I certainly hope we will bring more ships – including larger vessels – closer to this region in the future.

EgyptAir Strengthens India-Egypt Connectivity, Eyes 15-20% Growth in 2026



Mr. Amr Aly, Country Manager, EgyptAir

Travel Mail Desk

In an exclusive interaction with Travel Mail, **Mr. Amr Aly, Country Manager, EgyptAir**, shares insights into shifting traffic trends, enhanced connectivity, visa facilitation measures, and the airline's growth strategy for the Indian market in 2026 and beyond.

How has the Indian market performed so far?

We have observed a significant shift in traffic patterns. In 2024, most passengers from India used Cairo as a transit hub to Europe, North Africa, or North America.

However, we are now seeing a clear increase in O&D (Origin & Destination) traffic – meaning more Indian travellers are flying directly to Egypt as their final destination.

This growth is supported by several initiatives from the Egyptian government. One major attraction is the Grand Egyptian Museum, located just 2 km from the Pyramids area. Since its inauguration last November, it has generated strong interest globally, especially from India.

Additionally, visa facilitation has played a key role. Indian citizens holding valid and previously used Schengen, US, Australian,

or Japanese visas can obtain a visa on arrival in Egypt. Group travellers are also eligible for visa-on-arrival facilities. For EgyptAir passengers, visas can be processed through the embassy within 48 hours.

All these measures have contributed to noticeable growth in tourist movement between India and Egypt. We are also encouraging Egyptian travellers to visit India.

What are your key strategies for 2026 and 2027 for the Indian Market?

One of our key plans is to increase frequency from Delhi to five weekly flights instead of four, likely by the end of this year.

We are also offering a complimentary dinner cruise on the River Nile for long layover passengers in Cairo with a transit time of eight hours or more. Travellers heading to Europe or North America can explore Cairo and enjoy this experience at no additional cost, including visa facilitation.

This initiative is currently valid until the end of April, with ticketing starting in February.

In addition, we are running strong promotional campaigns – offering up to 45% discount on Economy Class and 25% on Business Class fares. With these combined efforts, we expect growth of at least 15–20% this year.

With Egypt emerging as a destination for Indian weddings and MICE, what incentives are being offered?

Yes, we are working closely with the Egyptian Tourism Authority to promote Egypt as a wedding and MICE destination. In collaboration with leading hotels such as Rixos Hotels Egypt, we are offering special group rates for wedding events.

For wedding and corporate groups, we provide competitive group fares and flexible options. Combined with the simplified visa regime and Egypt's iconic venues, we believe Egypt is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for Indian weddings and corporate events.

OPO Hotels Expands Across Spiritual Destinations, Targets 50 Alliances by Year-End

Travel Mail Desk

As India witnesses a surge in spiritual tourism and destination weddings, hospitality brands are strategically expanding into pilgrimage hubs and culturally significant locations. In this interaction with Travel Mail, **Mr. Sandeep Basu, CEO of OPO Hotels and Resorts**, shares insights into the company's asset-light model, rapid expansion plans, and its growing footprint across key destinations including Ayodhya, Jaipur, and emerging pilgrimage circuits.

Can you introduce yourself and tell us about OPO Hotels and Resorts? Why should one stay at OPO Hotel?

OPO operates on an asset-light model and began its journey nearly a decade ago with OPO Rooms. Over the years, we have evolved into a hospitality management company and currently operate around 16 hotels.

Our presence initially was concentrated in the Delhi-NCR region, but we have now expanded into destinations such as Jaipur and Khatu. We are also entering markets like Greater Patna, Kolkata, and Ayodhya, where we have recently signed a 150-key property. Additionally, we are establishing a footprint in the Northeast, including Itanagar, Guwahati, and Ziro Valley.

At present, we have 25 alliances, out of which 15 hotels are operational, while the rest are in pre-opening stages. We are operating 457 keys, with an additional 1,000 keys in the pipeline. Our target is to reach 50 alliances by the end of the year.

You mentioned expansion into Khatu. Are you focusing on spiritual destinations?

Yes, absolutely. Our current focus is on spiritual and pilgrimage destinations. After Khatu, we are planning to expand into Pushkar, Ajmer, Ayodhya, and Varanasi, with ongoing discussions



Mr. Sandeep Basu
CEO of OPO Hotels and Resorts

for Shirdi as well. This segment is a key differentiator for us and forms our core USP.

How has the market been so far, and what trends are you observing this year?

The market is performing very well. With our expansion into Jaipur, we are also targeting the MICE and weddings segment. Destination weddings are

gaining popularity, not just in Jaipur but also in Ayodhya, which is emerging as a new hotspot.

Our upcoming property in Ayodhya will feature large wedding lawns and a swimming pool, catering to this growing demand. We are also expanding into Ranthambore and Udaipur, both of which are strong destinations for weddings and leisure travel. Overall, it is a very promising market with strong growth potential.

Jyoti Mayal on Women Leadership, Skills and the Future of India's Tourism Industry



Jyoti Mayal

Travel Mail Desk

As the global travel landscape evolves towards experience-driven, sustainable, and wellness-focused journeys, the role of women in shaping the tourism sector is becoming increasingly significant. In this exclusive interaction with Travel Mail, **Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson of the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC)**, shares her insights on emerging travel trends, the importance of collaboration between industry and government, and the growing influence of women entrepreneurs in tourism. She also highlights the crucial role of media in amplifying women's voices and outlines her vision for a more inclusive, skill-driven, and globally competitive Indian travel industry.

As travel continues to evolve globally, what emerging trends excite you the most, and how can women entrepreneurs leverage these opportunities?

What excites me most is the strong shift towards experience-led, sustainable, and wellness-driven travel, along with the growing preference for authentic, community-based tourism. Today's travellers are seeking deeper connections with destinations – whether through local culture, food, nature, or purpose-led travel – rather than just traditional sightseeing. This evolution is creating new spaces for innovation across homestays, wellness

and yoga retreats, eco-tourism, culinary tourism, and heritage and craft-based experiences.

These trends are particularly well-aligned with women-led entrepreneurship. Women are uniquely positioned to curate personalised, trust-led, and community-rooted experiences that modern travellers value. Technology further amplifies this opportunity, allowing women entrepreneurs to reach global audiences through digital platforms, social media, and online travel marketplaces. With focused skilling, access to finance, and structured mentorship, women can scale these models efficiently and build sustainable tourism enterprises that combine commercial success with social and environmental impact.

How important is collaboration between industry bodies, government, and women leaders in driving inclusive growth in the travel sector?

Collaboration between industry bodies, government, and women leaders is not just important; it is essential for building an inclusive and future-ready travel and tourism ecosystem. Each stakeholder plays a distinct and complementary role.

When all these forces come together, they enable targeted skilling initiatives, access to finance, and structured pathways for women to enter, sustain, and scale within the tourism value chain. At THSC, we see public-private partnerships as a powerful enabler for bridging skill gaps and creating meaningful employment, particularly in Tier 2, Tier 3, and rural destinations.

Such collaboration also ensures that tourism growth is geographically balanced and socially inclusive. It helps integrate women not only as workforce participants but as entrepreneurs, decision-makers, and leaders, ensuring that tourism becomes a true driver of equitable economic development.

What role does media, especially travel publications like Travel Mail, play in amplifying women's voices and achievements in tourism?

Media plays a critical role in shaping industry narratives and creating visibility for women's leadership and contributions within travel and tourism. Publications like

Travel Mail act as important platforms to spotlight women entrepreneurs, professionals, and changemakers whose journeys can inspire greater participation and ambition across the sector.

By telling these stories, the media helps normalise women's leadership in tourism and challenges traditional perceptions around roles and capabilities. This visibility is particularly impactful for young women entering the workforce, who benefit from seeing relatable role models and real examples of career and entrepreneurial success.

Beyond recognition, media also bring attention to key themes such as skill development, workplace inclusion, sustainability, and responsible tourism. Consistent coverage of women's achievements helps build a more balanced and progressive industry narrative – one that positions women not just as contributors, but as strategic drivers of growth, innovation, and transformation in Indian tourism.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for the Indian travel industry, and how do you see women shaping its global narrative?

My vision for the Indian travel and tourism industry is to see India emerge as a global leader in experiential, sustainable, and skill-driven tourism. As infrastructure, connectivity, and digital adoption continue to improve, India has the opportunity to position itself as a destination that offers not only scale but quality, authenticity, and responsible travel experiences.

Women will be central to shaping this global narrative. From leading hospitality enterprises and destination management companies to driving community-based tourism, wellness travel, and cultural experiences, women bring a strong focus on guest experience, trust, and long-term value creation. Their leadership will be instrumental in ensuring that India's tourism growth is inclusive, ethical, and community-centric.

At THSC, our focus is on strengthening women's participation through skilling, leadership development, and entrepreneurship pathways. As more women step into leadership roles, they will help project India as a progressive, people-first, and globally competitive tourism destination.

Shaping the Future of Corporate Travel

A Strategic Shift in India and Asia

Travel Mail Desk

How has corporate travel in India and the broader Asian region evolved in recent years, particularly in response to changing business priorities and traveller expectations?

The landscape has transitioned from a cost-centre mindset to a value-centre reality. In India's maturing market, the "ticket-centric" past is being replaced by a "strategy-first" future. However, it is important to recognise that while the intent for automation is high, the region's data infrastructure remains fragmented. We are currently in a stage of "Augmented AI," where technology suggests the best choices, but human interaction remains essential to validate decisions across markets with varying levels of digital maturity.

As travel becomes a strategic function, how are organisations leveraging it to drive business growth, relationships, and overall performance?

Companies now treat travel as an investment in "Human Capital" and a tool for talent retention. A key component of this is addressing the "Bleisure" surge, with over 70% of travellers now blending work with leisure. To prevent "loyalty leakage," we help clients re-engineer policies to include soft perks like lounge access or "green points." If responsible usage is aligned with business goals, a proactive bleisure policy becomes a powerful tool for recruitment and Return on Objective (ROO).

The industry is moving from transactional bookings to end-to-end program management. What impact is this having on travel managers and service providers?

This shift has elevated the Travel Manager to a strategic consultant role. To support this, ATPI is moving away from legacy infrastructure toward unified, cloud-native platforms like Avenir (powered by Spotnana). This allows for the aggregation of multi-source content and standardised traveller profiles, creating a consistent data layer that works reliably even in structurally fragmented markets.

Mr. Jeet Sawhney Managing Director, ATPI India

In what ways are data analytics and real-time reporting influencing smarter, faster decision-making in corporate travel?

Immediate visibility allows managers to spot "leakage" the moment it happens. Furthermore, there is a critical shift from simple cost-cutting to "Cost Resilience." While cost-cutting is a static, often unreachable goal during demand spikes, cost resilience uses AI for yield management. This allows companies to search for the best value within the top 10–20% of available inventory, managing volatility rather than just chasing a fixed price.

India remains a highly cost-conscious market—how can organisations balance cost control with compliance and a high-quality traveller experience?

India remains a highly cost-conscious market, so the balance lies in combining global technology infrastructure with locally delivered service – using intuitive platforms to drive compliance through ease of use rather than rigid mandates. At ATPI, cost control is delivered through a combination of negotiated supplier rates, pre-trip auditing, and technology-driven policy compliance. Key strategies involve using proprietary advanced data analytics to identify trends and savings to reduce airfare by up to 34%, and ensuring compliance with company policies to eliminate wasteful spending.

In more unpredictable corridors, however, a purely cost-first approach can be risky. We advise a pragmatic view—investing in routes with fewer geopolitical choke points, even at a premium, as the cost of disruption far outweighs marginal savings. Ultimately, the goal is not just to reduce cost, but to optimise it, delivering a travel program that is compliant, efficient, and resilient, without compromising the traveller experience.



Which technological innovations are currently making the biggest difference in improving visibility, control, and efficiency?

In India, the biggest gains in visibility, control, and efficiency are coming from integrated T&E systems and AI-driven "zero-touch" booking—removing a lot of the manual back-and-forth that traditionally slows teams down. What's making the real difference, though, is how this technology shows up in everyday moments. Travel managers have instant visibility over spend and compliance, while travellers get fast, mobile-first tools that let them book within policy without friction.

Advanced analytics ties it all together—turning travel data into clear, actionable insights so companies can make smarter decisions in real time, not after the fact. Add in automated approvals and centralised reporting, and you get tighter control without adding complexity.

In a market like India, the focus isn't just on adding more tech—it's about using it in a way that makes travel simpler, faster, and more predictable for everyone involved.

Deepika Arora on Building Rosastays and the Rise of Boutique Hospitality in India

– Deepika Arora, Managing Director of United Hospitality Management (UHM) India

Travel Mail Desk

Your journey from architecture to hospitality entrepreneurship is unique. How has your training as a designer influenced the way you curate experiences at Rosastays?

My journey into hospitality began through design and real estate, and that foundation continues to shape how I approach hospitality experiences today. Architecture trained me to think in systems. It helped me understand how structure, environment, functionality and human behaviour intersect within a space. More importantly, it instilled a deep respect for context – the idea that every property must respond to its surroundings rather than exist independently of them.

During my time at SPA Delhi and later while working in hospitality real estate at JLL, I learned to view hospitality projects as part of a larger ecosystem. Site potential, accessibility, infrastructure, community dynamics and long-term sustainability all influence how a property will ultimately function and be experienced. That perspective continues to guide how I evaluate destinations and properties.

When we curate experiences at United Hospitality Management (UHM) India, that design thinking becomes very relevant. Rather than approaching hospitality as a standardised service model, we focus on how a space can reflect its environment and encourage a more personal connection with the destination. Flow, scale, natural surroundings and local culture all influence how the guest experience is shaped.

Architecture also taught me patience. Buildings – and experiences – must be built with intent if they are to endure. At United Hospitality Management (UHM) India, that translates into creating stays that feel contextual, intimate and thoughtfully designed rather than formulaic. In many ways, I often say I entered hospitality through the blueprint rather than the lobby. That perspective continues to influence how I approach the business – by focusing on structure, authenticity and long-term relevance before anything else.



Rosastays is redefining India's independent hotels and villas. What gaps in the boutique hospitality space did you identify that led to the creation of this brand?

The idea behind Rosastays emerged from observing two parallel shifts in the Indian hospitality landscape. On one hand, traveller preferences were evolving. Guests were increasingly looking for stays that felt more intimate, design-led and connected to the character of the destination.

There was a growing appetite for experiences that felt personal and contextual rather than standardised hotel environments.

At the same time, many independent hotel and villa owners across India possessed beautiful properties in compelling destinations but lacked access to structured hospitality systems. They understood their markets deeply, yet they often needed support in areas such as professional management, distribution, brand positioning and guest experience design.

That gap between distinctive properties and organised hospitality platforms became very evident. Rosastays was

created to bridge that space. The intention was to build a platform that allowed independent hotels and villas to retain their individuality while benefiting from professional frameworks that could elevate performance and visibility.

Rather than applying a uniform template, we focused on celebrating the identity of each property, its architecture, surroundings and local culture. Design thinking, storytelling and a strong sense of place became central to how experiences were curated. The subsequent integration of Rosastays into United Hospitality Management (UHM) further strengthened that vision. It demonstrated that boutique hospitality can scale within a global ecosystem while still preserving its character and authenticity.

Travellers today are prioritising authenticity, emotion, and connection over traditional luxury. How is Rosastays responding to this evolving traveller mindset?

Traveller expectations have evolved significantly over the past few years. Luxury today is no longer defined only by scale or opulence. Increasingly, guests are seeking experiences that feel personal, rooted and emotionally engaging. At United Hospitality Management (UHM) India, we

respond to this shift by focusing on the character of each destination rather than applying a uniform hospitality template. Many of our properties are located in leisure and nature-driven locations such as Goa, the Himalayan region and Rajasthan, where the surroundings themselves shape the experience. Design, local culture and the natural environment play an important role in how the stay is curated.

The emphasis is on creating environments that encourage connection either with the destination or local culture and often with oneself. Smaller, design-led properties naturally lend themselves to this kind of intimacy. Guests increasingly appreciate spaces that feel warm, contextual and reflective of the place they are visiting.

At the same time, authenticity must be supported by operational discipline. Travellers want meaningful experiences, but they also expect reliability in service, cleanliness and consistency. Our approach has therefore been to combine boutique individuality with professional hospitality systems so that guests experience both emotional connection and operational comfort.

Supported by the broader United Hospitality Management (UHM) ecosystem, we are able to strengthen that balance further while ensuring that each property continues to retain its individuality and sense of place. In many ways, the future of hospitality lies in this balance, experiences that feel authentic and personal, supported by systems that ensure quality and consistency.

As a woman entrepreneur leading a growing hospitality platform, how do you balance empathy-driven leadership with the demands of scale, growth, and commercial performance?

For me, empathy and performance are not opposing ideas. In hospitality, they are closely connected. Empathy-driven leadership begins with understanding the people who make the organisation function, namely teams, partners and owners. When people feel respected, heard and trusted, they tend to take greater ownership of outcomes. That sense of shared responsibility becomes particularly important as a platform grows.

My own entrepreneurial journey reinforced this perspective. Building and scaling a platform requires discipline, but it also requires an environment where people feel confident contributing ideas, taking responsibility and navigating challenges together.

At the same time, hospitality remains a commercially intensive industry. Growth must be supported by discipline in areas such as operational standards, financial performance and long-term asset value. Empathy, therefore, does not replace accountability; it strengthens it by creating an environment where teams understand both expectations and purpose.

As organisations expand, leadership naturally evolves from directing decisions to enabling capable teams. Trust, consistency and clear frameworks allow people to operate with confidence while maintaining high standards.

In my experience, the balance lies in maintaining perspective. Empathy keeps leadership grounded in people, while commercial discipline ensures that the business continues to grow sustainably.

When those elements work together, scale becomes more resilient, and teams remain deeply invested in the journey.

The independent hospitality sector in India is at an inflexion point. What opportunities and challenges do you foresee for boutique and experiential stays over the next 3–5 years?

India's branded hotel segment continues to grow at a healthy pace, particularly in the mid-scale categories, supported by strong domestic demand, loyalty ecosystems and structured distribution. This segment will remain an important pillar of the country's hospitality growth.

At the same time, a large proportion of India's accommodation supply still lies within the independent and largely unorganised segment. Many of these properties are well-located and rich in character but lack professional management, brand visibility and access to wider distribution networks. This creates a significant opportunity for boutique and experiential platforms that can organise and elevate this supply while preserving its individuality.

The growing interest in destination-led travel is also strengthening this segment. Travellers are increasingly exploring smaller leisure markets, nature-driven destinations and culturally rooted experiences, where boutique properties naturally perform well. This shift is likely to continue over the next few years as domestic travel expands and travellers seek more personalised environments.

However, the sector will also need to address certain structural challenges. Operational consistency, service training

and technology adoption remain uneven across many independent properties. Maintaining authenticity while introducing professional systems will be essential if the segment is to scale sustainably.

The integration of Rosastays into United Hospitality Management (UHM) reflects this broader industry transition. Boutique hospitality is no longer viewed as a niche offering but as an important complement to traditional branded hotels. Over the next three to five years, the most successful platforms will likely be those that combine experiential depth with strong operational frameworks, allowing independent properties to participate in a more organised and globally connected hospitality ecosystem.

Looking ahead, what is your long-term vision for Rosastays, and how do you hope to contribute to building more purpose-led, sustainable hospitality brands in India?

My long-term vision is to help build a hospitality platform that strengthens India's independent travel ecosystem in a more organised and sustainable way. A large portion of India's hospitality supply still sits within the independent segment. Many of these properties have strong location advantages and distinctive character, but they often lack the operational structure, technology platforms and distribution networks required to reach their full potential. One of the opportunities ahead lies in organising this space without diluting what makes these properties distinctive.

With Rosastays now integrated into the United Hospitality Management (UHM) platform, we have the ability to combine on-ground understanding with a global operating framework. This allows us to support property owners with stronger systems, commercial discipline and technology-driven management while still preserving the individuality of each asset.

At the same time, building hospitality brands today requires looking beyond the property itself. Sustainable platforms must create long-term value for owners, generate meaningful employment and contribute positively to the destinations in which they operate. If we can help professionalise the independent hospitality sector while building brands that respect both people and place, we will have contributed meaningfully to the next phase of India's hospitality evolution.

OPO Expands NCR Footprint with the Signing of OPO Horizon Lyro in Gurugram's DLF Cyber City

Travel Mail Desk

OPO continues to strengthen its hospitality footprint in the National Capital Region with the signing of OPO Horizon Lyro, a strategically located property in Gurugram's prominent DLF Cyber City business district. The management agreement for the property was finalized, marking another significant milestone in the brand's expansion strategy within key corporate and commercial hubs.

The property features 50 well-appointed keys along with a 40-cover all-day dining restaurant, designed to cater to the evolving needs of business and transit travelers seeking comfort, convenience, and a contemporary hospitality experience.

Commenting on the development, Sandeep Basu, CEO, OPO, said "The addition of OPO Horizon Lyro marks an



important step in our expansion strategy within key corporate and business hubs across India. DLF Cyber City continues to be one of the most dynamic commercial ecosystems in the NCR, attracting a steady flow of global business travellers and corporate activity. With this property, we are further strengthening our presence in Gurugram while reinforcing our commitment to building a scalable and high-quality hospitality portfolio. OPO Horizon Lyro aligns perfectly with our vision of delivering well-located, contemporary hospitality experiences for today's business and lifestyle travellers."

With the addition of OPO Horizon Lyro, OPO continues to advance its vision of building a robust and scalable hospitality platform across key business and leisure destinations in India, further solidifying its ambition to emerge as a strong player in the managed midscale and lifestyle hospitality segment.

City of Dreams Sri Lanka & Cinnamon Hotels initiate direct Ahmedabad-Colombo flights in partnership with FitsAir



Travel Mail Desk

City of Dreams Sri Lanka, in collaboration with Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and Walkers Tours, has partnered with FitsAir on their direct scheduled passenger flights connecting Ahmedabad and Colombo, enhancing connectivity for Indian travellers to South Asia's first fully integrated resort. FitsAir, Sri Lanka's first private international airline, will operate the service, providing travellers with convenient connectivity and a comfortable travel experience between Ahmedabad and Colombo.

The new Ahmedabad Colombo service, operated by FitsAir, will run three times a week, catering to travellers from Gujarat, one of Sri Lanka's key and fast-growing

source markets from India. With strong cultural ties and rising outbound travel from the region, Gujarat continues to show growing interest in Sri Lanka as a preferred leisure destination. The state's well-established travel trade network and strong appetite for international leisure experiences make it an important market for tourism to Sri Lanka. The enhanced connectivity further strengthens travel between the two regions while positioning Colombo as an attractive luxury getaway for Indian travellers.

Kamal Munasinghe, Senior Vice President, Colombo Hotels, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and General Manager, Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams, said, "India continues to be one of our most important markets, and Gujarat in

particular has shown strong interest in Colombo as a leisure destination. These dedicated flights provide a seamless gateway for travellers to experience the vibrant energy, entertainment, and hospitality that define City of Dreams Sri Lanka, while exploring curated Cinnamon holiday experiences across the island."

"Ahmedabad is one of India's most vibrant commercial centres, and a city we've long wanted to bring into our network. Our overnight departure from Colombo arrives early in the morning, giving travellers a full day ahead. It also opens up smooth onward connections through Colombo across our ever-growing international network," said Ammar Kassim, Director, FitsAir.

Summit Hotels & Resorts

Signs Two New Boutique Properties in Siliguri and Darjeeling Hills

Travel Mail Desk

Homegrown hospitality chain, Summit Hotels & Resorts has announced the signing of two new boutique properties in North Bengal, further strengthening its presence across the Darjeeling and Siliguri region, one of the fastest growing tourism corridors in Eastern India. The hospitality group has signed Summit Gulma River Resort in Siliguri and Summit Falling Water near Darjeeling, both 30-room boutique properties positioned around nature-led experiences and intimate hospitality formats. The Siliguri property is expected to open on 15 August, while the Darjeeling project is scheduled to open in early January 2027.

Located in the Gulma area of Siliguri, overlooking the scenic Gulma Tea Estate and a flowing river, Summit Gulma River Resort is being developed as a boutique hospitality address combining leisure stays with event-led demand. The 30-room hotel will feature a mix of standard and studio-style rooms with kitchenettes suited for extended stays. The property will also include an in-house restaurant, bar, spa, gym and a banquet hall with



capacity for approximately 150 guests, positioning it as a venue for boutique weddings, celebrations and corporate gatherings in the tea garden belt of Siliguri.

The second property, Summit Falling Water, will be located at Rangbull, around 3 kilometres before Darjeeling town, along the main highway connecting the hill station. Designed as an off-beat destination stay, the hotel draws architectural inspiration from the iconic

Fallingwater residence designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, integrating the structure with the natural landscape. Built over a natural water stream that flows through the property, the hotel will offer 30 rooms with private balconies overlooking the stream and surrounding hills. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (Toy Train) track passes directly in front of the property, allowing guests views of the heritage train from the hotel.

“North Bengal continues to be one of the most compelling tourism regions in Eastern India, with demand driven by leisure travellers, weddings and the growing popularity of experiential hill destinations. With Summit Gulma River Resort in Siliguri and Summit Falling Water near Darjeeling, we are focusing on boutique properties that are deeply connected to their surroundings. Whether it is tea garden landscapes in the plains or a stream flowing through a hill property with views of the toy train, our aim is to create stays where the destination itself becomes the central experience for travellers,” **Sumit Mitruka, Founder of Summit Hotels & Resorts** commented.

Hyatt Announces Signing of Agreement for Hyatt Place Ahmedabad Nikol, Expanding Its Essentials Portfolio in India

Travel Mail Desk

Hyatt Hotels Corporation (NYSE: H) announced the signing of an agreement for Hyatt Place Ahmedabad Nikol, marking a significant milestone in Hyatt’s continued expansion in India. In development by Golden Buildcon, this 140-key hotel will offer a unique blend of comfort, style, and modern amenities, further strengthening Hyatt’s brand presence in Ahmedabad, Gujarat’s administrative and commercial hub.

The hotel will feature a range of dining options offering a variety of culinary experiences, including a main restaurant

and grab-and-go market. The hotel will also include a 3,455-square-foot (321-square-meter) ballroom, along with several conference rooms and a boardroom, providing ample space for meetings and events. Guests will also enjoy a fitness center and swimming pool, making it an ideal choice for both business and leisure travellers.

“Ahmedabad continues to demonstrate strong economic growth, driven by infrastructure development, manufacturing, financial services, and entrepreneurship,” said **Dhruva Rathore, Vice President, Real Estate & Development for India & Southwest Asia at Hyatt.** *“This*

signing reflects our confidence in the city’s expanding hospitality landscape and reinforces our commitment to strengthening Hyatt’s portfolio in high-growth markets across India. We look forward to delivering thoughtfully designed hospitality experiences that cater to the evolving needs of business and leisure travelers in Ahmedabad.”

Hyatt Place hotels combine style, innovation, and 24/7 conveniences to create an easy and comfortable stay experience. Designed for multitasking travelers, the brand offers modern guestrooms, flexible meeting spaces, and thoughtfully curated amenities.



The signing of this deal for Hyatt Place Ahmedabad Nikol is a testament to Hyatt’s commitment to continued growth in India, where Hyatt remains focused on expanding its brand portfolio across key gateway cities and emerging markets.

The term “Hyatt” is used in this release for convenience to refer to Hyatt Hotels Corporation and/or one or more of its affiliates.

IHCL'S GATEWAY BRAND REACHES MILESTONE 50-HOTEL PORTFOLIO WITH THE SIGNING OF A HOTEL IN HYDERABAD

Travel Mail Desk

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), India's largest hospitality company, announced the signing of a Gateway hotel in Somajiguda, Hyderabad, strengthening its brand portfolio to 50 hotels. The upcoming hotel is a conversion project.

Ms. Leah Tata, Vice President & Brand Leader, Gateway Hotels & Resorts, IHCL, said, "The re-imagined Gateway's ethos is centred on the idea of creating a 'Gateway to a Destination', with hotels that are closely connected to the cultural fabric of the location. This strength of the brand has enabled it to rapidly scale to a 50-hotel portfolio, capturing the growth in business and leisure markets across metros cities, state capitals and commercial centres. With the addition of Gateway Hyderabad, the brand debuts in the city and we are delighted to partner with Mr. D. Siva Rama Raju and Mr. DVS. Soma Raju for this project."

Located in the heart of the city, the 225-key Gateway Somajiguda, Hyderabad features an all-day dining restaurant, a specialty restaurant, a bar and a lounge. Recreational offerings



include a state-of-the-art gym, health club, swimming pool and treatment rooms. The hotel offers extensive event and conference facilities with 11 banquet halls, including the largest spanning approx. 10,000 sq. ft., supported by multiple meeting rooms.

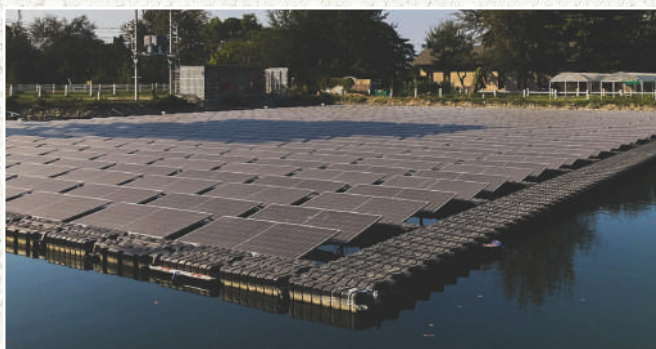
Mr. D. Siva Rama Raju and Mr. DVS. Soma Raju, said, "We are delighted to collaborate with IHCL for this project.

We look forward to bringing a refreshed hospitality experience to Somajiguda."

Somajiguda is a prominent commercial and residential precinct in Hyderabad, known for its corporate offices, retail presence and healthcare institutions.

With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have 8 hotels in Telangana, including 3 under development.

DUSIT HOTELS AND RESORTS JOINS GSTC IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY WORLDWIDE



including Dusit Thani Maldives, Dusit Beach Resort Guam, Dusit Thani Kyoto, ASAI Kyoto Shijo, and Dusit Thani Lubi Plantation Resort.

"Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important consideration across the travel ecosystem, and it is important that we continue to learn, evolve, and engage with respected organisations helping to shape the future of responsible tourism," said **Mr Chanin Donavanik, Group CEO and Chairman of the Sustainability Committee, Dusit International.** *"Joining GSTC marks an important step in our journey as we expand internationally. Through Tree of Life, we aim to create meaningful, long-term value for the destinations and communities we serve."*

Travel Mail Desk

Dusit Hotels and Resorts, the hotel management arm of Dusit International, has joined the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, marking a significant step in the company's ongoing efforts to embed responsible practices throughout its global operations.

GSTC is a global non-profit organisation that brings together public and private sector stakeholders to advance

sustainable tourism practices worldwide. By joining as a member, Dusit becomes part of a global network committed to knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and the promotion of responsible tourism principles across the industry.

As part of its commitment, Dusit has introduced property-level energy management systems to improve efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Renewable energy solutions, including solar photovoltaic installations, are already in place at several properties,

Mr. Randy Durband, CEO, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, said, "GSTC warmly welcomes Dusit Hotels and Resorts as a GSTC member organisation. We value their commitment in supporting our mission and look forward to advancing together in the direction of this shared and significant goal."

IHG signs Crowne Plaza Resort in Sohna, Gurgaon NCR

Crowne Plaza Resort Gurgaon Sohna will cater to growing Weddings and MICE demand

Travel Mail Desk

IHG® Hotels & Resorts has announced the signing of a management agreement with Harisons Hotels & Resorts Pvt. Ltd. to introduce Crowne Plaza Resort Gurgaon Sohna near Palwal in the National Capital Region. Scheduled to open in first quarter of 2029, the signing marks another significant milestone in IHG's growth journey across India.

The upcoming premium resort will be located within a 70-minute drive from Delhi International Airport. The hotel will be positioned to cater to a strong wedding and social celebrations demand in NCR originating from neighbouring states, alongside weekend leisure travel and corporate offsites.

Commenting on the signing, **Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts**, said "Sohna represents a compelling growth opportunity, situated within a high-potential corridor defined by sustained wedding and social celebrations demand, alongside expanding corporate activity, making it



an ideal fit for our Crowne Plaza brand. We are confident this resort will deliver exceptional experiences for guests while generating long-term value for our partners, M/s. Harisons Hotels & Resorts Pvt. Ltd."

In a joint statement, **Mr. Rajesh Gupta and Mr. Raman Gupta, Directors, Harisons Hotels & Resorts Pvt. Ltd.** added

"Our partnership with IHG Hotels & Resorts reflects a shared ambition to create a unique hospitality destination in Palwal. Backed by IHG's global systems, brand recognition and operational expertise, we are confident the resort will attract both domestic and international travellers while delivering long-term value to the region's hospitality landscape."

Club Mahindra Adds 110 Keys in Maharashtra with Strategic Beachside Resort Signing in Dapoli near Murud Beach

Travel Mail Desk

Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Limited (MHRIL), India's leading leisure hospitality company, has signed a new resort in Dapoli, near the scenic Murud Beach, further strengthening its presence along Maharashtra's coastline.

Dapoli strengthens MHRIL's presence in high-growth coastal markets with strong drive-to demand and marks the first of several planned developments along India's western coast.



ClubMahindra

Manoj Bhat, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd, said, "Dapoli strengthens our western coast circuit and reflects our focus on adding high-quality inventory in high-demand destinations

for India's growing base of holidaying families. We want to deepen our footprint thoughtfully, expand our resort network with discipline, and continue building the most trusted leisure hospitality brand in the country."

'ALL FOR LOVE'

BY ALL ACCOR CELEBRATION TO A JOURNEY OF INFINITY

Travel Mail Desk

ALL Accor, the booking platform and loyalty programme of Accor, a global leader in hospitality and the preferred destination to celebrate life's most meaningful moments, has launched All For Love, a signature campaign designed to transform every celebration into a timeless journey. The campaign was unveiled at an exclusive evening titled 'Languages of Love' at Raffles Udaipur.

At its heart, 'All For Love' is about celebrating love in all its expressions. The campaign brings this philosophy to life through Gautami Kapoor, who showcases how Accor's passionate Heartists curate every detail with precision and care for her second wedding, seamlessly blending heartfelt storytelling, personalised planning, and thoughtful execution. The campaign also highlights Accor's commitment to inclusivity, welcoming and celebrating love in all its forms.

'All For Love' is more than a campaign, it is a heartfelt promise. A promise to turn every 'I do' into an everlasting memory, every celebration into a joyful milestone, and every gathering into a story worth cherishing. Whether it's a grand multi-day wedding, an intimate ceremony, or any



Vineet Mishra, Nidhi Verma, Gurnoor Bindra, Pratima Badhwar, Gautami Kapoor, Ranju Alex, Amitabh Rai

other celebration, Accor ensures every moment reflects the unique story of those being celebrated.

The 'All For Love' logo itself tells a story of celebration and commitment. Designed as a fluid, handcrafted signature in rose gold, it symbolises romance, warmth, and grace. Its flowing curves subtly form the infinity sign, representing eternal love, limitless possibilities, and memories designed to last forever. More than a visual identity, it reflects Accor's belief that every celebration is crafted with infinity at heart and love at the centre.

"At Accor, we believe every celebration, from weddings and wedding functions to anniversaries and life's milestones, is more than a moment; it marks the beginning of a shared journey. With 'All For Love', we promise to craft unforgettable celebrations through bespoke experiences, legendary hospitality, and extraordinary venues across our diverse portfolio. Accor is the destination to celebrate all of life's occasions, each created with heart, elegance, and care," said **Ranju Alex, CEO Accor South Asia** at the launch of the campaign.

ELIVAAS Strengthens Its Rajasthan Footprint with its 1st Pushkar Address, Taking State Portfolio to 60+ Properties



Travel Mail Desk

ELIVAAS continues its steady expansion across Rajasthan's culturally rich leisure landscape with the launch of its first property in Pushkar, ELIVAAS Tusun Vila. With this addition, the brand's portfolio in the state now stands at 60+ properties across Udaipur, Jaipur, Ranthambore, Pushkar, Alwar and Neemrana, under ELIVAAS, ELIVAAS Privé and Alaya Stays.

This new Pushkar address underscores ELIVAAS's calibrated growth strategy in experience-led destinations. Rather than rapid scale, the brand has focused on measured expansion into markets with sustained demand for private villas, curated group stays, and destination celebrations. Over the past few years, ELIVAAS has steadily strengthened its presence

in Rajasthan, building right density in key micro-markets while maintaining operational discipline.

"Rajasthan today represents one of our most strategically important regions, with 60+ operational properties across key leisure destinations. Our entry into Pushkar is backed by destination-level demand data rather than sentiment. The town has seen a steady rise in premium leisure travel over the past few years, particularly from Delhi NCR and Jaipur, with a clear shift towards private, high-quality villa stays. As we expand, our standardised operating playbook ensures service consistency across locations, while each villa continues to offer a curated and personalised experience. Beyond accommodation, we deliver end-to-end holiday experiences, from curated activities and local immersion to personalised service, ensuring every stay is seamless and memorable. Our focus remains on building depth within high-intent leisure markets rather than expanding indiscriminately across geographies," said **Ritwik Khare, Founder and CEO of ELIVAAS Living**.

ITCHL SIGNS STORII MUKUNDGARH FORT HOTEL ENHANCING ITS RAJASTHAN FOOTPRINT

Travel Mail Desk

ITC Hotels Limited continues to build on the strong momentum of its experiential brand Storii with the signing of Storii by ITC Hotels, Mukundgarh Fort in Rajasthan. Located in the culturally rich Shekhawati region, this addition reinforces the brand's commitment to offering immersive, place-inspired hospitality in destinations known for their heritage and artistic legacy.

A prominent and well-preserved mid-18th century fort, Mukundgarh stands as a testament to Rajasthan's architectural grandeur and artistic traditions. Known as part of India's 'open-air art gallery,' the region is celebrated for its intricate frescoes, ornate havelis, and vibrant cultural narratives. The fort retains its original majesty through painted interiors, jharokhas, courtyards, overhanging balconies, arched corridors, and heritage columns—offering guests an authentic glimpse into its illustrious past.

STORII

BY ITC HOTELS

Strategically positioned along the heritage corridor connecting Jaipur, Mandawa, and Nawalgarh, Mukundgarh attracts cultural travellers and international visitors seeking deeper engagement with Rajasthan's history and art.

Commenting on the signing, Anil Chadha, Managing Director, ITC Hotels Limited, said "Brand Storii celebrates stories of place, identity, and meaningful encounters. Mukundgarh embodies this ethos beautifully. The town's rich traditions and cultural vibrancy lend the perfect backdrop for a Storii property. With Storii Mukundgarh Fort, we are delighted to bring an authentic experience to our guests—one that reflects the legacy of this eminent region."

Durga Prasad Agarwal, Director, Midas Hospitality Services Private Limited, added, "There is life and a heartbeat in Mukundgarh—its frescoes, its traditions, its timeless rhythm. Through our association with Storii by ITC Hotels, we hope to honour that essence and share it with a wider world. Together, we aim to welcome guests into a space where heritage is preserved and experienced through its art and architecture."

With this signing, ITC Hotels continues to strengthen Storii as a curated collection of distinctive properties that celebrate local character, narrative richness, and meaningful travel.

Sarovar Hotels Launches 'What a Deal' digital Campaign to Drive Summer Stays Across India

Travel Mail Desk

Sarovar Hotels has launched a digital campaign, 'What a Deal', aimed at stimulating summer travel demand and encouraging longer leisure stays across its portfolio of destinations in India.

The limited-period promotion allows guests to book a two-night stay and receive the third night complimentary, while also offering additional value-led benefits designed to attract families and leisure travellers during the upcoming holiday season.

As part of the campaign, guests can avail 15% savings on food and beverage during their stay, while children up to 10 years of age can stay and dine complimentary when sharing the same room, making the offer particularly appealing for family vacations.

The initiative will be available across select Sarovar Hotels properties located in key leisure destinations spanning beach, hill, wildlife and city markets across India. By combining value-driven pricing with experiential destinations, the hotel chain aims to encourage travellers to extend their stays and explore more within a single trip.



Commenting on the campaign, Nitika Khanna, Director Marketing and Communications, said "Summer remains one of the strongest travel seasons in India, particularly for family-led leisure demand. With the 'What a Deal' campaign, our objective is to create a compelling value proposition that encourages guests to stay longer and explore more destinations within our portfolio."

The campaign reflects Sarovar Hotels continued focus on strengthening direct consumer engagement while

driving incremental room nights during peak leisure travel periods. Bookings for the 'What a Deal' campaign are open until 15 April, with guests able to explore participating hotels and make reservations through the brand website.

Sarovar Hotels currently operates over 150 hotels across 87 destinations in India and overseas, across multiple brands including Sarovar Premiere, Sarovar Portico, Hometel, and international brands operated in partnership with Louvre Hotels Group, such as Tulip Inn, Golden Tulip and Royal Tulip.

Global Destinations Concludes Successful 6th Annual Roadshow Across Key Indian Markets

Travel Mail Desk

Strengthening its on-ground connection with the travel trade, Global Destinations concluded its 6th Annual Roadshow, bringing together 8 tourism brand partners and engaging with over 200 travel agents across Surat, Ahmedabad, and Kolkata. The multi-city initiative provided a focused platform for knowledge exchange, product updates, and the strengthening of meaningful relationships with the travel fraternity.



Sharing his perspective, **Pranav Kapadia, Founder & Director, Global Destinations**, said “Our roadshow is not just about reach, but about relevance. Its timing, just ahead of the peak travel season, allows trade partners direct access to destination insights when client enquiries are strongest. Engaging closely with partners across both emerging and established markets enables us to align offerings with evolving traveller expectations and grow business collaboratively.”

The cities were strategically selected for their growing outbound relevance. While Tier II markets such as Surat continue to demonstrate strong momentum, metro hubs like Kolkata and Ahmedabad remain key source markets for high-value, well-travelled clients seeking new destinations, innovative itineraries, and immersive travel experiences. The inclusion of at least one Tier II city is a conscious element of Global Destinations’ annual roadshow strategy, aimed at engaging trade partners who cater to discerning,

high-spending clientele and offer strong growth potential.

Participating partners included AlliedTPro (USA), Australia & Worldwide Travel (Australia), Desert Adventures (UAE, Jordan & Oman), Escapes & Co. Travel (Morocco), Private Safaris (East Africa), Sopa Lodges (East Africa), Tangerine Tours (Sri Lanka), Threeland Travel (Indo China), and World of Travel Factory (Greece & Cyprus), each offering destination insights and product updates to support trade partners during a critical planning phase.

Global Destinations’ participation at OTM 2026 preceded the roadshow, enabling engagement with a wide network of travel professionals and reinforcing visibility for partner destinations during one of the industry’s key business events.

With strong participation and high-quality interactions across all three cities, the initiative reaffirmed Global Destinations’ commitment to empowering the trade and strengthening outbound travel growth across India.

ICC Aviation & Tourism Summit 2026 Brings Industry Leaders Together in Delhi

Travel Mail Desk

The second edition of the Aviation and Tourism Summit, organised by Dr Subhash Goyal, Chairman of STIC Travel Group, was successfully held under the aegis of the Indian Chamber of Commerce Expert Committee on Aviation and Tourism. The summit brought together key stakeholders from across the aviation, travel, and hospitality sectors.

The event was graced by the Honourable Ashish Sood, Minister for Home, Power, Urban Development and Education, Government of Delhi, as the Chief Guest. Faiz Ahmed Kidwai, Director General of Civil Aviation, Government of India, attended as the Guest of Honour, highlighting the importance of policy and regulatory support in strengthening India’s aviation ecosystem.



A key highlight of the summit was the presentation of the Hall of Fame awards to distinguished leaders for their exceptional contributions. Among the honourees were Amitabh Kant, India’s G20 Sherpa to the Prime Minister and former CEO of NITI Aayog; Dr Sudhir Mishra, former Chairman of DRDO and Director General of the

BrahMos Missile Project; and H.E. Sanjay Verma, former Ambassador of Japan and Canada.

The summit witnessed participation from around 200 delegates, including VIPs, ambassadors, diplomats, travel agents, tour operators, and leaders from the tourism and hospitality industry. Representatives from television channels and print media were also present, reflecting the growing importance of aviation and tourism in India’s economic landscape.

The event served as a dynamic platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange, focusing on strengthening synergies between aviation and tourism while addressing emerging opportunities and challenges in the sector.

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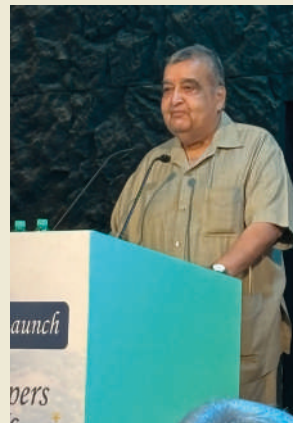


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“Whispers of the Heart” by Kanwarjit Singh Sawhney Unveiled at a Grand Ceremony in New Delhi

Travel Mail Desk

“Whispers of the Heart,” a compelling new literary work by author **Kanwarjit Singh Sawhney**, was officially launched today at Zora – The Convention Centre, located at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi. The event brought together prominent people from India’s tourism, hospitality, and travel sectors, marking a significant cultural gathering in the capital.



The book was formally launched by **Suman Billa, IAS, Additional Secretary & Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India**. In his address, he highlighted the importance of storytelling in shaping perspectives and preserving human experiences, applauding the author’s effort in bringing heartfelt narratives to life.

The launch event witnessed the presence of several distinguished guests, including **Mr. Subhash Goyal, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, Mr. Vikram Madok, Mr. Rajiv Mehra, Mr. Nakul Anand, Mr. Sandeep Marwah, Mrs. Anu Sood and Mr. Shiv Khera**, along with other eminent personalities from the tourism and hotel industries.



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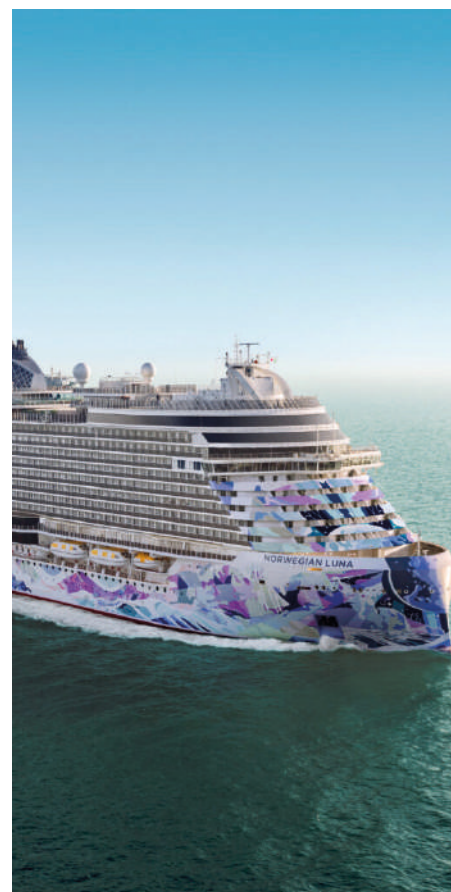
Travel Mail Desk

Norwegian Cruise Line® (NCL), the global leader in innovative cruise travel, took delivery of Norwegian Luna™, the 21st ship in its award-winning fleet, from Fincantieri, a global leader in high-complexity shipbuilding, at its shipyard in Marghera, Italy.

"We are thrilled to welcome Norwegian Luna to our fleet and to welcome our first guests aboard next week," said Marc Kazlauskas, president of Norwegian Cruise Line. "As our newest ship, Norwegian Luna is a powerful reflection of NCL's 'It's Different Out Here' brand ethos. She delivers freedom, flexibility and thoughtfully curated experiences, allowing guests to enjoy their vacation exactly how they want, with ease. This ship represents the continued evolution of our vision and the incredible work behind an award-winning class of ships. We are deeply appreciative of the world-

class architects and designers, as well as our talented partners at Fincantieri, who brought Norwegian Luna to life. We're proud to continue this strong partnership as we look ahead to building more exceptional NCL vessels together over the next decade."

Luigi Matarazzo, General Manager of Fincantieri's Merchant Ships Division, stated, "We are proud to deliver Norwegian Luna, a ship that truly reflects our ability to interpret and anticipate the evolution of the global cruise industry. This milestone further strengthens the long-standing collaboration between Fincantieri and NCL, built on a shared commitment to innovation. The Prima Plus Class sets a new benchmark for the industry, thanks to cutting-edge design solutions and a level of construction excellence showcased by our Marghera shipyard. Every vessel we build is the result of collective expertise, passion and advanced technology — elements that enable us to shape the future of cruising".



StarDream Cruises Brings Bhajan Jamming to the SEA with First-of-its-Kind Onboard Experience

Travel Mail Desk

Bhajan Jamming has been gaining attention across India as a more participatory and community-led form of devotional music. Unlike traditional performances, these gatherings are collective, immersive, and open, where familiar bhajans are sung together, and the experience feels as much social as it is spiritual. StarDream Cruises is introducing this format on Dream Cruises – Genting Dream, in an unexpected setting, the open SEA.

Dream Cruises brings a themed sailing aboard the Genting Dream, which will host what is being described as the first Bhajan Jamming session at sea, bringing the devotional gathering into the setting of a cruise journey. The themed departures are scheduled for 26 May and 9 June 2026, which will be 3-nighter sailings from Singapore to Phuket and back.



Onboard, the session will follow the same participatory and spontaneous format that defines Bhajan Jamming. Guests can sing along, clap to the rhythm, and join the music as it unfolds, turning the gathering into a shared devotional moment rather than a staged performance.

Commenting on the concept, **Naresh Rawal, Senior Vice President – Sales & Marketing,** said "What makes Bhajan Jamming special is that it's participatory and collective. It is not about watching a performance, it is about being part of the music. Bringing that same format to sea creates quite a different setting for it. When travelers step away from their everyday routines, moments like these naturally allow them to slow down, reconnect, and share the experience together."

Placed within the setting of a voyage, the gathering takes on a different rhythm. Surrounded by the sea and away from the pace of everyday life, music becomes something shared rather than performed. In that moment, Bhajan Jamming becomes part of the journey itself, a space where people pause, sing together, and reconnect through the experience.

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NAVI MUMBAI AIRPORT TO CONNECT 46 DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS UNDER SUMMER SCHEDULE

Travel Mail Desk

One of India's largest greenfield airports, Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), has announced its first summer schedule, effective from March 29 to October 24, 2026, expanding its domestic network to 46 destinations.

The schedule adds 30 new domestic routes, linking the airport to a mix of commercial, tourism and religious centres across India. Among Indian cities Delhi (9), Goa (7), Bengaluru (6) and Cochin (5) will have largest share

of daily departures followed closely by Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, Varanasi and Indore.

Three Indian carriers, IndiGo, Akasa Air and Air India Express will operate additional flights from the airport during this period, increasing capacity and network coverage.

Flight operations are expected to scale up to 1,092 weekly air traffic movements, with an average of 156 movements

per day. Average daily departures are projected to rise from 22 at launch to 78 by April 2026. NMIA, which began commercial operations on December 25, 2025, is ramping up capacity under its first summer schedule.

The expansion is expected to improve connectivity across Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities and support rising passenger demand in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), one of India's largest urban and economic hubs.



SINGAPORE AIRLINES TO LAUNCH SERVICES TO HANGZHOU IN JUNE 2026

Travel Mail Desk

Singapore Airlines (SIA) will launch daily flights between Singapore and Hangzhou, China on 1 June 2026, subject to regulatory approvals. The Airline will operate the medium-haul variant of its Airbus A350-900 aircraft, which is configured with 303 seats in two cabin classes: 40 in Business Class and 263 in Economy Class.

SIA's daily services will complement the daily flights to the city by Scoot, the Airline's low-cost subsidiary. This will be SIA's ninth destination in China, after Beijing Daxing. Together, the SIA Group serves 22 destinations in mainland China, highlighting its commitment to this important market.

Mr. Dai Haoyu, Senior Vice President Marketing Planning, Singapore Airlines, said "The launch of services to Hangzhou caters to demand from both leisure and business travellers to China. This new daily service deepens our presence in a key market for the SIA Group, and offers customers greater flexibility, connectivity, and choice when travelling between Singapore and China, and the wider region."



TAP AIR PORTUGAL APPOINTS AEROPRIME GROUP AS EXCLUSIVE CARGO GSSA PAN-INDIA

Travel Mail Desk

TAP Air Portugal has appointed Aeroprime Group as its Exclusive Cargo General Sales & Service Agent (GSSA) Pan-India, marking a significant step in strengthening the airline's cargo footprint across the Indian market.

The appointment reflects TAP Air Portugal's strategic focus on expanding cargo capacity utilisation and deepening engagement with India's fast-growing trade and logistics ecosystem. Under this mandate, Aeroprime Group will manage TAP's cargo sales, marketing, customer engagement, and operational coordination across India, leveraging its

strong regional presence, technology-driven processes, and established relationships with freight forwarders and logistics partners.

Commenting on the appointment, **Bruno Aires, Global Cargo Senior Director, TAP Air Portugal, said,** "India represents a high-potential market for our cargo business. Partnering with Aeroprime Group as our Exclusive Cargo GSSA Pan-India strengthens our local presence and enables us to better serve the evolving needs of the Indian cargo community while expanding our reach across key global markets."



AIRCAIRO EXPANDS PARTNERSHIP WITH AEROPRIME GROUP FOR CARGO GSSA IN INDIA & UAE

Travel Mail Desk

AirCairo, Egypt's leading hybrid national airline carrier, is pleased to announce the appointment of Aeroprime Group as its Exclusive Cargo General Sales and Service Agent (GSSA) for India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This strategic appointment further strengthens the existing partnership between the two international identities, wherein Aeroprime Group already serves as the Passenger General Sales Agent (GSA) for AirCairo in India.

The expanded mandate reflects AirCairo's focused business approach in addition to upgrading its passengers' services, to enhancing its cargo

capabilities and deepening its footprint across key international markets. Under this appointment, Aeroprime Group will manage AirCairo's cargo sales, operations, and customer engagement across the UAE and Indian markets, leveraging its strong regional presence, technology-driven processes, and established trade relationships.



Commenting on the appointment, **Hussein Sherif, Chairman and CEO of AirCairo stated,** "Aeroprime Group has been a trusted partner for our passenger business, demonstrating strong market understanding and consistent performance. Extending our collaboration to include cargo representation in India and the UAE is a natural progression as we look to strengthen our cargo offering and capitalise on growing demand for trade flows to and from Egypt."

Vietnam Airlines & Aeroprime Group Host India Sales Kick Off 2026 to Strengthen Trade Partnerships and Boost Bilateral Tourism



Travel Mail Desk

Vietnam Airlines, the flag carrier of Vietnam, in partnership with its All India GSA, Aeroprime Group, hosted the Vietnam Airlines India Sales Kick Off 2026, a landmark industry event bringing together key trade partners, travel associations, media, and airline

representatives to celebrate and accelerate the growing air bridge between India and Vietnam. The event, held on 27th March 2026 in New Delhi, served as a platform to strengthen partnerships, showcase Vietnam Airlines' expanding India network, promote Vietnam as a destination, and chart the course for deeper collaboration with the Indian travel trade community.

The occasion was graced by distinguished guests including His Excellency Mr. Trần Thanh Tùng, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Mr. Bui Trung Thuong, Trade Counsellor and Head of Trade Office at the Embassy of Vietnam whose presence underscored the diplomatic significance

of the strengthening relationship between India and Vietnam, and the vital role that air connectivity plays in furthering bilateral trade and tourism between the two nations.

Mr. Nguyen Trung Hieu, Country Manager India at Vietnam Airlines, stated, "India is one of our most important and fastest-growing markets, and today's event is a reflection of that commitment. The energy and enthusiasm from our trade partners here gives us great confidence as we look to deepen our presence and build on the strong momentum between India and Vietnam. We are grateful for the trust the Indian travel trade has placed in us, and we look forward to growing this partnership further in the months ahead."

Turkish Airlines Adds London Stansted as Its Third Gateway in London

Travel Mail Desk

Turkish Airlines, the airline that flies to more countries than any other in the world, has added London Stansted Airport to its flight network as its third destination in the UK capital, following London Heathrow and London Gatwick.

With the launch of Stansted flights, which will be operated with 15 weekly frequencies, the flag carrier's network in the United Kingdom has expanded to six destinations, following London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Birmingham, Manchester, and Edinburgh. When combined with Dublin, the flag carrier's total weekly frequencies across the United Kingdom and Ireland will reach 168 during the summer schedule.

On the launch of the new route, **Fuat Firat, Turkish Airlines Vice President Sales (Middle and Northern Europe),** stated "The United Kingdom continues to be one of the key strategic markets for Turkish Airlines. With the addition of

London Stansted flights, we are pleased to expand our presence in London to a third airport, further strengthening London Stansted's connectivity and offering our guests greater flexibility to access our unparalleled global network. We believe this new route will not only meet regional demand but also contribute to both commercial and tourism activity across the region."

Gareth Powell, London Stansted Airport Managing Director, said "We're delighted to welcome Turkish Airlines to London Stansted. This is a major milestone for the airport and a strong vote of confidence in both our operation and the vibrant, fast-growing region we serve. Istanbul is a fantastic destination in its own right, but this new service also opens the door to Turkish Airlines' extensive global network, connecting London Stansted to over 350 destinations, offering passengers and businesses across our region greater choice and easier access to destinations

across Asia, Africa, Australia and beyond. We look forward to building a strong partnership with Turkish Airlines and seeing this exciting new route grow."

With the addition of London Stansted flights, Turkish Airlines continues to further strengthen its presence in the United Kingdom while offering its guests seamless access to its extensive global network that covers 357 destinations in 133 countries across 6 continents.



Centrum Air increases frequency of Tashkent – Delhi flights

Travel Mail Desk

Centrum Air announces an increase in flight frequency on the Tashkent – Delhi route. Starting from March 29, flights will operate three times per week: on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays. Services will be operated using modern and comfortable Airbus A320 family aircraft.

The additional frequency will provide passengers with greater flexibility for both business and leisure travel. Fares start from USD 256 round-trip (excluding baggage). The schedule is designed to offer convenient connections via Tashkent, enabling passengers from Delhi to continue their journeys across the airline's international network to Tbilisi, Batumi, Guangzhou, Istanbul, Tel Aviv, and other destinations.

The expansion of services to India aligns with the strategy of Centrum Holding to strengthen Tashkent's role as an international aviation hub connecting

Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Uzbekistan's strategic location, historically at the heart of the Great Silk Road, creates natural advantages for developing modern transit routes and enhancing business and tourism connectivity.

Abhishek Goyal, Executive Director & CEO, AeroPrime Group, commented "The increase in frequency on the Tashkent–Delhi route reflects Centrum Air's growing commitment to the Indian market. As their Exclusive General Sales Agent in India, our focus remains on strengthening brand visibility, deepening trade engagement, and driving sustainable passenger growth. With the enhanced schedule, we see strong potential to stimulate both point-to-point and transit traffic via Tashkent, further positioning Uzbekistan as a strategic gateway connecting India with Central Asia, the CIS region, and key international destinations."



LOT Polish Airlines unveils first Dreamliner with Wi-Fi on board

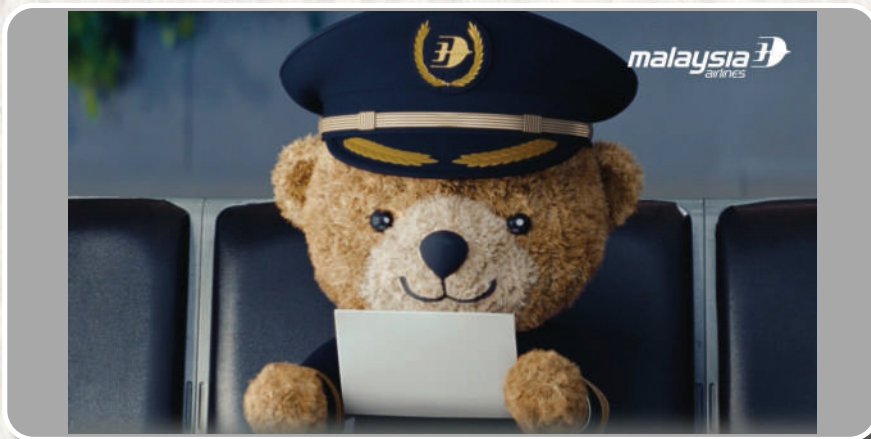
Travel Mail Desk

LOT Polish Airlines, a member of Star Alliance, presents the first Boeing 787 Dreamliner with fast Wi-Fi internet on board. This allows passengers to write and receive messages, surf the internet, stream content and much more during their long-haul flight. The Polish airline is working with American satellite communications provider Viasat to offer high-performance gate-to-gate connectivity. LOT Polish Airlines will equip two more Dreamliners with fast wireless internet by the end of April 2026.

LOT Business Class passengers can use the new service free of charge, as well as Miles & More frequent flyers with Senator or HON Circle status. All other passengers can choose between two internet packages: "Chat" for messaging only (7 USD) and "Streaming" for all other applications (29 USD). Currently, the packages can only be purchased on the aircraft by credit card or with selected mobile payment services.



Malaysia Airlines Premieres Character-Led Campaign



Travel Mail Desk

Malaysia Airlines unveiled its latest character-led campaign, 'Pilot Parker: A Story of Malaysian Hospitality', an 80-second video inspired by a true passenger story that captures the personal touches and attentive service at the heart of the airline's signature Malaysian Hospitality.

The campaign forms part of Malaysia Airlines' broader efforts under Malaysia Aviation Group's (MAG) long-term growth ambitions to strengthen the

airline's global brand positioning, deepen emotional connection with travellers, and showcase the distinctive warmth that sets the airline apart in an increasingly competitive aviation landscape.

Told through the eyes of Pilot Parker, the airline's beloved mascot, the film highlights the small yet meaningful gestures that define the Malaysia Airlines travel experience. Through moments of quiet attentiveness, the story reflects how Malaysian Hospitality transforms ordinary flights into experiences that leave a lasting impression.

The film's inspiration came from a heartfelt moment shared by a young passenger who had flown with Malaysia Airlines. After her trip, she sent the airline a hand-drawn illustration of Pilot Parker along with a letter expressing how the mascot brought her comfort throughout the journey.

Stories like these reflect the airline's approach to service, where care and attention shape every stage of the journey. From the warmth of the cabin crew to the curated experiences designed for young travellers – including the Kids Activity Pack, special meals and small surprises that make flying more enjoyable – Malaysia Airlines continues to create a welcoming travel experience for families. Whether it is a child discovering the wonder of flying for the first time or families sharing moments in the skies, these experiences showcase Malaysia Airlines as both a family-friendly airline and a premium carrier connecting travellers to Asia and beyond.

Through this campaign, Malaysia Airlines continues to celebrate the values of sincerity and attentiveness that define Malaysian Hospitality, highlighting how small, thoughtful moments can create lasting impressions for travellers worldwide.

Air India expands Asia footprint with new routes to Vietnam and Japan

Travel Mail Desk

Air India announced the launch of two new international routes as part of its continued expansion across Asia. Beginning 01 May 2026, Air India will operate non-stop flights between Delhi and Hanoi, thus making Hanoi the airline's second gateway in Vietnam after Ho Chi Minh City. Air India will also operate non-stop flights between Mumbai and Tokyo (Haneda) from 15 June 2026, in addition to its Delhi-Tokyo (Haneda) services.

The new services to Hanoi will operate five times a week, complementing daily flights to Ho Chi Minh City. This provides greater flexibility to travellers who intend to visit Vietnam with open jaw itineraries, i.e. entering from Hanoi and exiting Ho Chi Minh City or vice versa. Air India will deploy its A320neo aircraft on the Delhi-Hanoi route, featuring world-class cabin interiors across Business Class, Premium Economy and Economy Class. The opening of this new route adds 7,028 seats to and from Vietnam each month.

The new services between Mumbai and Tokyo (Haneda) will operate four times a week with Air India's Boeing 787-8 aircraft. Recently, Air India increased frequency between Delhi and Tokyo (Haneda), going from 4x weekly to 7x weekly. Effective 14 February 2026, the airline has also

upgraded its product offering on the route with its B787-9 aircraft, featuring world-class cabin interiors and introducing Premium Economy on the route for the first time.

Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India, said "Since Air India's privatisation, we have significantly grown our network across Southeast Asia and the Far East, having added several new routes, optimised flight schedules to enable convenient cross-continent connections, forged new partnerships with other carriers, and deploying upgraded cabin products progressively. Japan and Vietnam have both emerged as fast-growing destinations for Indian travellers, while India's economic and commercial ties with both nations continue to deepen and present more opportunities for business and trade on both sides. The launch of these new routes supports this growth and strengthens our presence in the region."



SriLankan Airlines Enhances Australia Connectivity with 14 Weekly Flights

Travel Mail Desk

SriLankan Airlines is set to increase its weekly service between Colombo and Melbourne to 10 flights, effective from 2 August 2026, with the addition of three more scheduled flights in response to growing demand and evolving market dynamics.

The expansion reinforces the airline's commitment to strengthening its footprint in Australia, recently identified as one of the fastest-growing inbound tourism markets to Sri Lanka, driven by leisure travel and a rising volume of visits by family and friends.

The newly added flights will operate every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, departing Colombo as UL608 at 14:10 hrs and arriving in Melbourne at 04:30 hrs the following day.

The return service, UL609, will depart Melbourne every Wednesday, Friday and Monday at 06:00 hrs, arriving in Colombo at 12:15 hrs the same day, offering convenient onward connections across the airline's



network. The schedule is designed to maximise time spent in Sri Lanka for leisure travellers while enhancing connectivity for passengers travelling onwards to India via Colombo.

In addition to the new frequencies, the airline will continue operating its daily

service, UL604, departing Colombo at 00:20 hrs and arriving in Melbourne at 14:40 hrs, with the return service UL605 departing Melbourne at 16:10 hrs and arriving in Colombo at 22:25 hrs. These services provide seamless connectivity to key destinations across India and beyond.

Aerodrome License Granted to Noida International Airport



Travel Mail Desk

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has granted the Aerodrome License to Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL) for the Noida International Airport (NIA) at Jewar in Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.

The airport has been developed by YIAPL, a wholly owned subsidiary of Zurich Airport International AG, under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model with the Government of Uttar Pradesh and the Government of India. The concession period commenced on 1 October 2021 for a period of 40 years.

The airport has been licensed under the Public Use category for all-weather operations. It features a runway with orientation 10/28 and dimensions of 3,900 m x 45 m, supported by an Instrument Landing System (ILS) and Aeronautical Ground Lighting (AGL) system, enabling 24x7 operations. The aerodrome has parking stands for 24 Code C and 02 Code D/F aircraft and is equipped with ARFF Category 9 facilities capable of handling wide-body aircraft such as the Boeing 777-300ER.

Noida International Airport is being developed in four phases along with a multi-modal cargo hub. In the first phase, with one runway and one terminal, the airport will have the capacity to handle around 12 million passengers annually. Upon completion of all phases, the airport will be capable of handling up to 70 million passengers per year, emerging as a major aviation hub for the National Capital Region and Western Uttar Pradesh.

The development of Noida International Airport is part of the Ministry of Civil Aviation's broader vision of building a robust aviation ecosystem. Over the past decade, India's civil aviation sector has expanded significantly, with the number

of operational airports increasing from 74 in 2014 to 164 today, alongside India becoming the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world.

India is rapidly expanding its aviation network through a balanced approach of developing new greenfield airports while upgrading existing brownfield airports and regional airstrips, supported by initiatives such as the UDAN scheme. Looking ahead, the country's long-term roadmap aims to develop over 400 airports by 2047, further strengthening connectivity, economic growth and national integration.

The Minister of Civil Aviation, Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu, congratulated the Government of Uttar Pradesh, stating that the development of Noida International Airport is a major step toward strengthening aviation connectivity for the National Capital Region and Western Uttar Pradesh. He highlighted that the world-class airport will boost regional economic growth, tourism, and investment while offering a seamless passenger experience by combining Swiss efficiency with Indian hospitality and will also help ease congestion at existing airports in the region.

India's Aviation Market Expected to Grow Beyond \$26 Billion by 2030

Travel Mail Desk

Media Fusion has announced Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited (NMIAL) as the Premium Airport Partner for Airport 360 Expo 2026, reinforcing collaboration across India's rapidly evolving aviation ecosystem. The agreement was signed by Capt. BVJK Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited, and Mr. Taher Patrawala, Managing Director, Media Fusion.

The expo will be held on 23-24 April 2026 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre, Mumbai, bringing together airport operators, planners, technology providers and policymakers. The event will focus on emerging solutions across terminal development, airside operations, ground handling, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), passenger experience and sustainability.

Organised by Media Fusion, Airport 360 Expo builds on the success of the Inter Passenger Terminal Show 2025, which attracted more than 2,200 aviation professionals, 62 international exhibitors and over 50 industry speakers.



The upcoming edition aims to deepen industry engagement and encourage practical dialogue on the future of airport development and operations.

Mr. Taher Patrawala, Managing Director, Media Fusion, said, "With India's aviation market expected to grow beyond \$26 billion by 2030 and passenger volumes projected to reach 600 million annually, the need for integrated solutions across airports, connectivity and operations has never been greater. NMIAL's participation strengthens Airport 360's ability to address industry priorities while advancing our mission to create

a platform that drives innovation, investment and collaboration across the aviation ecosystem."

As Premium Airport Partner, NMIAL, one of India's largest greenfield airport developments, will share insights from its development journey, helping strengthen engagement among policymakers, operators and technology providers as India expands its aviation infrastructure.

The partnership reflects a shared commitment to supporting innovation and strengthening India's airport ecosystem amid rising passenger demand and continued infrastructure expansion.

RailOne App Becoming Popular Among Passengers

with a total of 2.57 crore Downloads and 7.64 lakh Average Daily Ticket Bookings

Travel Mail Desk

With a view to facilitating passengers in booking both reserved and unreserved tickets, Indian Railways has introduced various technological solutions, such as the RailOne App, which is in addition to the conventional modes of booking through counters of Indian Railways. Through this app, passengers can book reserved as well as unreserved tickets on their mobile phone. This, in effect, brings the Passenger Reservation System (PRS) facility as well as the Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) to passengers' palms. The RailOne App has advanced security and privacy measures.

The total number of downloads of the RailOne App and the number of daily average tickets booked (both reserved and unreserved) through it (till 15-03-2026) are tabulated below:

Total number of downloads

2.57 Cr.

Average daily number of tickets booked

7.64 Lakh

The App combines all the public-facing services of Indian Railways like reserved ticketing, unreserved ticketing and platform ticketing, train enquiry, PNR enquiry, Railmadad, etc. into a single platform. The users can avail all these services in an integrated manner through a single login. The RailOne App can be downloaded from the Android Play Store and Apple App Store, and registration is user-friendly. In addition, passengers also have the facility to book reserved tickets through the app/website of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation. At present, approximately 88% of reserved tickets are being booked online.



RailOne

Further, Indian Railways also engages various types of agents, which are as follows:

Unreserved tickets

Halt agents
Jan Sadharan Ticket Booking Sevak (JTBS)
Station Ticket Booking Agents (STBA)
M-UTS Sahayaks

Reserved as well as unreserved tickets

Yatri Tickets Suvidha Kendra Licensee (YTSKL)

In addition, Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) engages E-ticketing agents for issuing reserved e-tickets.

There is no condition for having experience in issuing railway tickets for getting engaged as Halt agent, JTBS, STBA and M-UTS Sahayak. As such, these

schemes are open to eligible individuals, including educated unemployed youth and hence promote self-employment and improve access to railway ticketing facilities, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Since, in addition to unreserved tickets, YTSKLs also issue reserved tickets, which require a basic understanding of Railway Ticketing, for YTSKLs, a minimum of 02 years' experience in Railway Ticketing is required.

Agents are appointed for a fixed tenure in accordance with the scheme's terms and conditions and may be terminated for any breach of those terms. Renewal of appointments and the invitation of fresh applications upon expiry of tenure is a continuous and ongoing process.

This information was provided by the Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology, Shri Ashwini Vaishnav, in a reply to questions in Lok Sabha.



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KHAJORNKIT KHWANMONGKOL TAKES CHARGE AS DIRECTOR, TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND (TAT), NEW DELHI OFFICE, STRENGTHENING THAILAND-INDIA TOURISM TIES

Khajornrit Khwanmongkol is a distinguished senior executive with over 22 years of dedicated leadership at the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). Currently serving as the Director of the TAT New Delhi Office, he is a strategic expert in international tourism marketing, destination management, and sustainable development.

VISIT SEATTLE APPOINTS SARTHA GLOBAL MARKETING AS INDIA REPRESENTATIVE

Visit Seattle, the official destination marketing organization for the city of Seattle in Washington State, USA, has appointed Sartha Global Marketing as its representative in the Indian market. This strategic partnership marks Visit Seattle's formal entry into India and underscores the destination's growing focus on the rapidly expanding Indian outbound travel market.



WELCOME WONDER TRAVEL SERVICE CO., LTD. (TAIWAN) APPOINTS GLOBAL DESTINATIONS AS INDIA REPRESENTATIVE

Under the leadership of Sonia Chang, Chairperson, and Jie Lee, Inbound Director, Welcome Wonder Travel Service Co., Ltd. has established a strong operational framework for delivering customised leisure programs, group travel, and MICE solutions across Taiwan. The company is recognised for its destination expertise, supplier network, and execution capabilities aligned with international market expectations.

INT2CRUISES APPOINTED AS THE PREFERRED SALES AGENT FOR SAUDI ARABIA'S AROYA CRUISES IN INDIA

Int2Cruises, Asia's cruise-first online travel platform, has been appointed as Aroya Cruises' preferred Indian sales agent. The partnership strengthens Int2Cruises portfolio of global cruise offerings and introduces Indian travellers to a new cruise region spanning the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf and select Mediterranean routes.



ACCOR APPOINTS AMITABH RAI AS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER – LUXURY, ACCOR, SOUTH ASIA

Accor, a world-leading hospitality group, today announced the appointment of Amitabh Rai as Chief Operating Officer – Luxury, Accor South Asia, effective 15 January 2026. In this strategic leadership role, Amitabh will spearhead the operational and strategic direction of Accor's luxury and lifestyle portfolio across South Asia, with a clear focus on delivering distinctive luxury experiences, thoughtful brand curation, and sustained performance excellence for Raffles, Fairmont and Sofitel brands.

AJAY GUPTA APPOINTED AS DIRECTOR, NORTH INDIA, PRCI

The Public Relations Council of India (PRCI) is pleased to announce the appointment of Ajay Gupta as Director North India. In this role, Mr. Gupta will oversee PRCI's activities and initiatives in the northern region, driving growth and excellence in public relations.



CAPELLA HOTEL GROUP APPOINTS ROLAND FASEL AS PRESIDENT, LUXURY HOSPITALITY LEADER TO OVERSEE GLOBAL PORTFOLIO EXPANSION FOR CAPELLA AND PATINA

Capella Hotel Group has appointed Roland Fasel as President, effective 6 April 2026. This appointment brings a seasoned luxury hospitality executive with more than 30 years of international experience to chart the company's ambitious growth across key global markets.



TISHTAR PARAKH AS THE COUNTRY MANAGER OF TOURISM NEW ZEALAND FOR INDIA

Tourism New Zealand has appointed Ms Tishtar Parakh as its new Country Manager for India, signalling a strong renewed focus on B2B engagement in its fifth-largest source market. Based in Mumbai, Ms. Parakh brings extensive experience across both tourism boards and outbound operations. She steps into this leadership role following a successful six-and-a-half-year tenure at VisitBritain, where she drove trade strategy as Manager for Industry Relations and Partnerships.

DEEPTI SHETH ELEVATED AS PRESIDENT & GROUP HEAD – HUMAN RESOURCES AT THOMAS COOK INDIA GROUP

Thomas Cook (India) Limited, India’s leading omnichannel travel services company, has announced the elevation of Deepti Sheth as President & Group Head – Human Resources, reinforcing its focus on strengthening leadership and people strategy across the Group.

In her new role, Deepti will lead the Group HR function, shaping the organisation’s people strategy with a focus on talent, leadership development and employee experience, while also advancing its diversity, inclusion and digital transformation agenda.



SUMMIT HOTELS & RESORTS APPOINTS SHOVA LAMA AS PRO – SIKKIM

Strengthening its engagement with local markets and government institutions in the Northeast, Summit Hotels & Resorts has appointed Shova Lama as Public Relations Officer for Sikkim. In her new role, Shova Lama will be responsible for strengthening the brand’s relationship with various government departments and public institutions across the state. Her responsibilities include facilitating room bookings for official travel, coordinating hospitality arrangements for government events and conferences, and expanding institutional business opportunities for the group.

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