

India's Leading International Travel Magazine

# travel mail



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TRAVEL MAIL

## Editors Desk

Dear Readers,

**October greets us with the vibrant spirit of Navratri, and we extend our heartfelt wishes for Ma Durga's blessings to accompany your journeys, wherever they may lead.**

**Sustainability is at the core of our mission. As travelers, we bear the responsibility to protect and preserve the places we eagerly explore. The footprints we leave today should be imprints of responsible choices, echoing through generations to come.**

**Switzerland, with its pristine lakes and majestic Alpine landscapes, serves as a beacon of sustainability. This nation's unwavering dedication ensures that these wonders endure, offering inspiration to all travelers. With winter approaching, consider destinations like Kashmir or Switzerland for your next adventure. But remember, being a conscious traveler is not merely a choice; it's a moral imperative. Leave behind nothing but cherished memories and a cleaner, more beautiful world for others to savor.**

**As you plan your journeys, think beyond convenience and comfort. Embrace sustainable choices that align with the global shift toward responsible travel. Let your wanderlust become a positive force, making a meaningful impact on the places you visit and the people you encounter.**

**Safe Travels and Read Wisely.**

**Regards,  
Ajay Gupta**

**RNI. NO. 65222/96**

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**OCTOBER 2023**



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TRAVEL

**Sustainable Experiential  
Travel:  
Discover it the Swiss Way**

## INDIA TRAVEL MART (ITM)

INDIA'S LEADING  
TRAVEL, TOURISM  
EXHIBITION AND CONCLAVE



Domestic

## INDIA TRAVEL MART (ITM) Calendar of Events 2023

Outbound

**VARANASI**  
19 - 20 - 21  
October 2023

**JAMMU**  
23 - 24 - 25  
November 2023

**LUCKNOW**  
08 - 09 - 10  
December 2023

**CHANDIGARH**  
23 - 24 - 25  
December 2023

### SUPPORTING ASSOCIATION





# Enhancing Convenience: Korea Visa Application Centres Now Open in Chennai and Bengaluru

## TRAVEL MAIL:

In a significant move, the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Chennai, India, has inaugurated its modern and spacious visa application centres in Chennai and Bengaluru, effective from September 1st, 2023. This strategic development aims to provide seamless visa application services for travellers in the region.

### Streamlined Korea Visa Processing in Southern India:

Travellers from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Pondicherry, and Tamil Nadu will now experience streamlined visa application processes for all categories, including express visas, at these cutting-edge South Korea visa application centres, commonly referred to as KVACs. These centres operate from Monday to Friday, offering services from 9 AM to 1 PM for individuals, 9 AM to 12 PM for travel agents, and 10 AM to 3 PM for passport collection.



Operated in collaboration with VFS Global, a renowned global outsourcing and technology service specialist for governmental and diplomatic entities, these KVACs also provide optional services tailored to the preferences of discerning applicants. It's worth noting that the Embassy has successfully operated KVACs in New Delhi and Kolkata since 2011, further strengthening the bond between South Korea and India.

### Boosting Tourism: A Celebratory Effort:

South Korea is actively promoting tourism from India, especially as both nations commemorate the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. The Korean Tourism Department (KTD), based in Seoul, organized an extensive roadshow in New Delhi in late August, with plans to extend these roadshows to other major Indian cities.

While tourism from India to South Korea witnessed remarkable growth until 2019, it faced setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic and various other

factors. To revitalize the tourism sector in 2023, the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) India office has introduced a special K-incentive Scheme, aimed at boosting sales of Korean travel packages among Indian travel agents. This initiative not only spotlights Seoul but also highlights regional tourist destinations such as Busan, Gangwon, and Jellanam-do provinces, catering to the preferences of Indian travellers.

### Economic Ties and Collaborative Visits:

Chennai boasts over 300 Korean companies that have established a strong presence in the market, with a particular focus on the automobile and electronics sectors. On the other hand, Bengaluru continues to witness the steady expansion of Korean IT-based companies. As economic activities flourish between South Korea and India, the operation of KVACs in these regions will play a pivotal role in enhancing collaborative visits and reinforcing the enduring partnership between the two nations.

# Jamaica Product Expo (JAPEX) 2023: Jamaica's Bright Prospects in the Indian Travel Market

## TRAVEL MAIL:

The Jamaica Product Expo (JAPEX), an annual industry trade event organized by the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) in partnership with the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), has recently concluded its proceedings in the enchanting locale of Montego Bay. The occasion has provided us with a distinct indication – a surge in global visitors is looming on the horizon. As the world's gaze turns towards Jamaica, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) exhibits particular enthusiasm regarding the potential of the Indian market and actively explores opportunities to amplify Indian engagement with the island.

### Jamaica's Record-Setting Year in Tourism

The Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, initiated the festivities with exhilarating tidings at Jamaica Product Expo JAPEX. He announced that Jamaica is teetering on the brink of an exceptional year in terms of visitor arrivals, with a projected tourism revenue of USD 4.1 billion for 2023. The entire tourism sector resonated with his enthusiasm during the grand inauguration at Chukka Outpost along the Sandy Bay coastline. Bartlett confidently declared, "At this juncture, we stand on the cusp of witnessing the most outstanding year in the annals of Jamaican tourism, especially for stopover arrivals in 2023."



### Jamaica's Resilience and Post-Pandemic Expansion:

Although, in 2019, Jamaica unveiled ambitious blueprints for the expansion of its hotel industry with an augmentation of 10,000 novel chambers over the ensuing few years, the global tourism arena faced a temporary impediment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, even during the economic downturn, Jamaica retained its allure as an investment haven. In the post pandemic milieu, the tourism industry is in the throes of reconstruction, and Jamaica is firmly back on course, now aspiring to introduce 15,000 fresh hotel rooms over the next 3-5 years.

### The Pivotal Role of the Indian Market in Jamaica's Future:

During Jamaica Product Expo JAPEX 2023, Donovan White, the Director of Tourism for Jamaica, underscored the seminal role of the Indian market in shaping Jamaica's destiny. Indian travel trade and media enthusiastically

participated in this year's event for the first time. White introduced TRAC Representations as the Jamaica Tourist Board's designated liaison in the Indian market, commending their exemplary service. He elucidated, "We are also keen on exploring the Indian diaspora residing in Canada the United States, and the UK. Consequently, our foray into India extends beyond the subcontinent to encompass the broader Indian diaspora."

### JAPEX 2023: An Emblem of Resilience and Rejuvenation:

JAPEX 2023 transcends the conventional realm of a mere trade exposition; it stands as an emblematic testament to Jamaica's resilience and rejuvenation. **Minister Bartlett expounded, "It symbolizes our resurgence. This year's event holds added significance, emerging in the wake of an unparalleled period of trials and tribulations for the global travel and tourism industry. The pandemic served as a crucible testing our collective mettle, yet it also accentuated our indomitable spirit."**

Furthermore, Jamaican cricket luminary Chris Gayle, who commands an extensive following in India, is poised to join hands with Jamaica to allure a greater influx of Indian travellers to this captivating island haven.



# World Tourism Day: UNWTO Chief Initiates Groundbreaking 'Tourism Unleashes Minds' Campaign



## TRAVEL MAIL:

In an epoch-making commemoration of **World Tourism Day (WTD)**, the UNWTO, under the visionary stewardship of **Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, its Secretary-General**, has revealed its revolutionary global drive, 'Tourism Unleashes Minds.' This venture signifies an epochal landmark as it reshapes the manner in which individuals traverse the globe, imploring travellers to broaden their horizons and embrace hitherto uncharted destinations.

### Embracing Novel Expeditions:

A recent YouGov survey, freshly published, sheds light on contemporary travel inclinations. While 66% of globetrotters tend to adhere to familiar locales, an astounding 83% attest that embarking on uncharted terrains has enriched their perspectives and engendered profound insights into multifarious cultures.

### A Worldwide Call to Mobilize:

**Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili**, in a resonant proclamation during the WTD symposium in Riyadh, has pronounced, *"For the assurance of bona fide global prosperity, we must collectively collaborate to unleash the latent capabilities of the flourishing tourism sector. This industry serves as an integrative dynamo,*

*propounding cultural appreciation, nurturing societal bonds, and fervently advocating environmental preservation."*

### Saudi Arabia's Pledge to Tourism:

His Excellency Ahmed Al-Khateeb, Minister of Tourism for Saudi Arabia, echoes this ethos, underscoring their unwavering commitment to augmenting the sector's impact, transcending geopolitical confines. Their endeavours encompass seminal alliances such as the inauguration of the UNWTO Middle East bureau in Riyadh, the establishment of the Riyadh School for Travel and Hospitality, and the hosting of record-breaking iterations of the WTTC Global Forum and UNWTO World Tourism Day.

# Revamping Passport, Visa, and Consular Services: India's Ministry of External Affairs Takes a Bold Step

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**Ministry of External Affairs Strengthens the First Point of Contact:**  
In a bid to combat predatory pricing practices, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has recently implemented sweeping changes in the process of selecting partner visa and consular service providers, aiming to better serve both the Indian diaspora and foreign visitors.

The MEA's mission is clear: to enhance the robustness, seamlessness, and reliability of its services, all while bolstering India's global image and reputation. The MEA's Indian Missions serve as the initial touchpoints for international travellers arriving in India. Whether it's Indian citizens, Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), or foreign visitors, these missions play a pivotal role in providing essential services.

### Ms Jyoti Mayal ~ Transformational Journey:

**Ms. Jyoti Mayal, President of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)**, expressed her thoughts on the MEA's ambitious transformation program. She emphasized *the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the tendering and evaluation process to ensure the selection of the most suitable outsourced service providers. While cost efficiency remains a priority (referred to as L1 pricing), the MEA places strong emphasis on four key pillars: Quality Services, Sustainable and Viable Pricing, Data Protection and Security, and Ethical Practices and Integrity.*



### Crafting a Pristine First Impression:

Ms. Mayal stressed the significance of creating impeccable first impressions for individuals travelling to India or engaging with any Indian Mission worldwide. The government's commitment to delivering the promise of New India necessitates that MEA and its missions act as exemplary representatives, offering superior, efficient, and cost-effective services as the initial step towards this goal.

### India's Ascent on the Global Stage:

India is steadily positioning itself as a global leader across various sectors, including trade, cross-border services, and citizen services. As the country accelerates towards a high-growth phase, it becomes paramount to address factors that could hinder progress and pose risks to India's reputation and image on the world stage.

### Prioritizing Quality, Reliability, and

### Credibility:

This imperative has compelled the Indian government to prioritize the quality, reliability, and credibility of its service providers. Effective and efficient service delivery, in line with established standards, is crucial. Any lapse in service quality can erode confidence and trust in the government's capabilities, leading to public dissatisfaction. Emphasizing quality also signifies prudent use of public resources and ensures that citizens receive maximum value for their money.





# \$3 Trillion Tourism GDP for Transforming India's Tourism Sector: A Sustainable Vision

## TRAVEL MAIL:

In a world grappling with the complexities of climate change, India emerges as a beacon of hope in the tourism industry's pursuit of sustainability. Nakul Anand, Chairman of the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), envisions a \$3 trillion tourism GDP for India by 2047, backed by 100 million foreign tourist arrivals, 20 billion domestic tourism visits, and over 200 million direct and indirect tourism-related jobs.

### A Global Stage for Sustainable vision:

On the auspicious occasion of World Tourism Day, 'Travel for Life' was unveiled—a pioneering initiative by the Ministry of Tourism. The event drew luminaries such as Mr. Ajay Bhatt, Minister of State for Tourism, and Mr. Atul Bagai, Country Head of UNEP. With Ms. Leena Nandan, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and other esteemed guests in attendance, it was a momentous launch. 'Travel for Life' is a dedicated effort to promote sustainability within the tourism sector, aligned with 'Mission Life,' a larger initiative championing sustainable tourism practices. The global launch saw participation from G20 nations, international organizations, and states, setting the stage for transformative change.

### India's Remarkable Strides in Sustainable Tourism:

India stands out as one of the few countries that have made significant strides in reshaping their tourism industry based on eco-friendliness, youth appeal, and sustainability. The introduction of the G20 Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals dashboard serves as a potent tool to keep the industry accountable in its journey to achieve sectoral goals by 2030. The nation's commitment to responsible tourism and eco-conscious practices is evident in its ambitious goals.

### The Challenge of Balancing Progress and Preservation:

Nakul Anand recognizes the tourism sector's potential as a torchbearer of responsible and sustainable development in the face of climate change. However, the industry faces a critical challenge: striking a balance between economic development and ecological preservation. To fulfil commitments made under the Paris Agreement, where nations aim to limit global temperature increases to below 2°C (preferably 1.5°C), the tourism industry must address its sustainability concerns.

### Tackling Tourism's Carbon Footprint:

The current travel and tourism model, as it stands, is unsustainable, contributing an estimated 5.2 gigatons



of carbon emissions annually—equivalent to 9% to 12% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. To align with the Paris Agreement's goals, emissions must be reduced significantly, aiming to lower them from 5.2 to 3.1 gigatons, preventing the projected 6.2 gigaton rise. Acknowledging this challenge, Nakul Anand expresses gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Ministry of Tourism for pioneering 'Travel for Life' under the Mission Life directive—a strategy to harness tourism for sustainable development.

### Exemplary Initiatives: ITC Hotels Leading the Way:

In the hospitality sector, ITC Hotels stands out as a shining example of responsible luxury and sustainability. Globally, ITC Hotels boasts 23 LEED Platinum Certified properties, with 12 hotels achieving LEED Zero-Carbon Certification and two hotels securing LEED Zero-Water Certification. Remarkably, ITC Hotels has consistently exceeded UN 2030 sectoral targets, recycling and reusing over 99% of solid waste and meeting more than half of its electricity consumption through renewable sources. Innovations like Atmospheric Water Generators at select properties demonstrate that sustainable practices not only coexist with the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) business model but also enhance planet-positive experiences.

# Travel Associations Urge Finance Ministry: Postpone TCS Rollout

## TRAVEL MAIL:

In a fiscal declaration that caused reverberations within the travel sector, the Central Government disclosed intentions to implement fresh Tax Collection at Source (TCS) rates commencing on July 1, 2023, as part of the Union Budget 2023. Among the most conspicuous alterations was the elevation in TCS for foreign transfers under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) from 5% to a remarkable 20%. Although this was designed to influence a multitude of dealings, encompassing global excursions and overseas transfers, it would not apply to educational outlays abroad or health-related motives. Nevertheless, anxieties about readiness and the burden of adherence led to a postponement of the impending TCS rate modifications.

### TAAI Express Apprehensions:

With the imminent execution of the novel TCS guideline, travel associations such as TAFI (Travel Agents Federation of India) and TAAI (Travel Agent Association of India) have adopted a proactive position. They have corresponded with the Ministry of Finance, Government of India articulating the predicaments confronted by the travel sector due to the envisaged TCS execution.

### An Entreaty to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman:

Ajay Prakash, at the helm of TAFI as its President, representing the interests of his association, has beseeched Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to postpone the implementation of the proposed TCS framework delineated in the Finance Bill 2023. He has accentuated the injurious consequences of the 20% TCS rate, particularly for Indian excursion firms, which are poised to encounter a disparity when contrasted with international entities exempt from such levies. The elevated initial expenses associated with reservations made through Indian excursion operators imperil the diversion of commerce towards foreign counterparts, potentially culminating in employment losses within the sector.

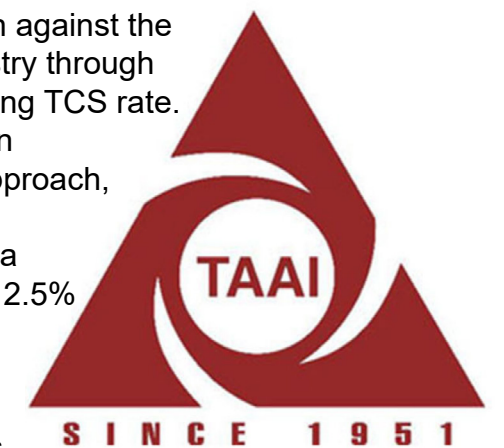
### TAFI Plea for Equity and a Balanced Arena:

Ajay interrogates the reasoning underpinning the

discrimination against the tourism industry through such a towering TCS rate. He proffers an alternative approach, entailing the imposition of a standardized 2.5% TCS on all overseas expenditures by individuals holding valid PAN Cards, with augmented rates for those lacking them. According to him, this approach would harmonize the competitive landscape, dispel the bias in favour of foreign excursion operators, and enable the Indian travel industry to engage in equitable competition on a worldwide scale.

### Response from the Authorities:

TAFI has received confirmation that their appeal has been dispatched to the pertinent department. Simultaneously, TAAI has been actively liaising with the Ministry and CBDT (Central Board of Direct Taxes) on the matter of rescinding TCS for Overseas Tour Packages. The leaders of the association have transmitted an exhaustive letter to the Finance Minister, imploring the deferment of the scheduled TCS hike on October 1, 2023, and soliciting a consultation with the ministry to delve further into the matter.





# Why You Should Get An International Travel Insurance for Your Next Trip

## TRAVEL MAIL:

Venturing into foreign territories and the vast expanse of international waters holds an allure that beckons even the most discerning adventurers. The allure of diverse cultures, awe-inspiring vistas, and novel escapades promise to etch indelible memories in the hearts of travellers, memories destined to be cherished for a lifetime.

However, amid the fervour of orchestrating the perfect international sojourn, many travellers inadvertently overlook the linchpin of their plans – Travel Insurance. Contrary to its perception as a mere optional addendum, this discourse endeavours to illuminate the profound significance of travel insurance, an impenetrable fortress that guarantees unalloyed security and serenity throughout one's global odyssey.

### Confronting Your Apprehensions: Embracing the Imperative of Travel Insurance:

In an increasingly globalized world where the globe seemingly shrinks with every passing moment, a growing contingent of intrepid voyagers from India are donning their metaphorical travel shoes, poised to traverse uncharted realms. Whether one is an intrepid adrenaline junkie embarking on an overseas adventure or a diligent corporate professional traversing foreign lands for business, the embrace of an international travel insurance policy stands as an invaluable shield against the

unforeseen tribulations that often beset those abroad.

It unfailingly extends its protective wing during medical emergencies, the misplacement of checked-in luggage, flight faux pas, and other exigent predicaments. Expanding its purview even further, select travel insurance plans proffer supplemental options such as accidental insurance, home insurance, and coverage for pecuniary losses, thereby crafting a bulwark of comprehensive safeguarding.

Therefore, when scrutinizing the contours of the right international travel insurance policy, it is



imperative to ascertain that the chosen policy encompasses the following salient add-ons, offering an all encompassing bulwark against a panoply of potential adversities during one's expedition:

### Reimbursement for Lost, Stolen, or Delayed Luggage:

Picture this: You arrive at your long-anticipated dream destination only to discover that your baggage is yet to make its serendipitous appearance. The disconcerting loss, theft, or tardiness of your baggage can swiftly disrupt meticulously devised travel plans, imperilling not just the itinerary but also the allocated budget, potentially earmarked for procuring essentials.

Yet, here, the invaluable travel insurance policy strides gallantly to the rescue. This aegis promises reimbursement for funds expended on indispensable items necessitated by the non-arrival or tardiness of baggage, thus mitigating the ensuing disarray.

### Safeguarding Against Medical Emergencies:

Plying on foreign soil, especially one juxtaposed with a disparate healthcare framework, magnifies the spectre of accidents or capricious maladies. Abroad, medical expenses can often balloon to exorbitant proportions. In the absence of a robust travel insurance policy, one teeters on the precipice of a twin precipice, confronting both fiscal ruin and health exigencies. However, with the aegis of travel insurance, medical costs, hospitalization outlays, and even exigent medical evacuations dissolve into a more manageable financial tableau, facilitating the receipt of vital healthcare sans perforating one's wallet.

### Fortification Against Missed Flights, Monetary Mishaps, or Passport Peril:

The capricious realm of international travel is replete with unanticipated flight delays and boarding misses, events that can precipitate a cataclysmic cascade of financial impediments, necessitating reservations' rejigging and commitments' reshuffling. Furthermore, the disappearance of money or valuable possessions augments the potential fiscal maelstrom. Yet, travel insurance unfurls its mantle of protection, underwriting



coverage or reimbursement for such expenses, serving as an impregnable bulwark against potential monetary setbacks.

**Emergency Exfiltration and Repatriation:** In the direst of scenarios, marked by cataclysmic natural upheavals, political tumult, or unforeseen medical exigencies, the spectre of evacuation looms large over travellers. Travel insurance, in its expansive repertoire, enshrines the capacity to underwrite the costs of emergency extrication, ensuring the safety and well-being of the embattled traveller. Moreover, in sombre circumstances where a traveller breathes their last on foreign soil, travel insurance lends its benevolent hand to oversee the repatriation of mortal remains to their native abode.

**Imperative Mandate in Some Lands:** *Beyond its instrumental role in cushioning against the inherent uncertainties of international journeys, the import of travel insurance attains a heightened zenith when contemplated in the context of its obligatory nature in several countries. Diverse destinations, such as the Schengen Countries, a consortium of 26 European nations, the United Arab Emirates, and Australia, stand as exemplars, exacting a mandatory covenant from incoming travellers, one that includes the solemn embrace of travel insurance.*

– Brijesh Unnithan, SVP – Embedded Insurance, ACKO



# Neeraj Chopra's Zurich Adventure: A Day to Remember

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**N**eeraj Chopra, the reigning champion of the 2023 World Athletics Championship and Switzerland's esteemed 'Friendship Ambassador,' recently embarked on an unforgettable journey through Zurich. His itinerary was nothing short of thrilling, encompassing mountain biking across the Uetliberg, city exploration, and a sumptuous dining experience at Zunfthaus zur Zimmerleuten.

### Zurich: The City of Splendor:

Zurich, often referred to as the "city by the water," offers a harmonious blend of natural beauty and urban sophistication. This Swiss gem has long been a favourite among travellers, and for good reason. Whether you're a culture enthusiast, a shopaholic, or an adventure seeker, Zurich has something for everyone. The city boasts world-class museums, a vibrant art scene, a shopper's paradise, diverse culinary delights, vibrant nightlife, and a plethora of water sports. Plus, within an hour's drive, you can find yourself amidst the breathtaking Swiss mountains.

**Neeraj Chopra** shared his thoughts on Zurich, saying, *"Zurich has always been one of my go-to cities, whether I'm competing or simply taking a break. I've had such a memorable time indulging in water sports and also trying mountain biking up to the Uetliberg, Zurich's home mountain. Zurich was the perfect choice for me because, in very little time, I could do a lot, as everything is so close by and easily accessible. You can shop, have a great meal, do some city sightseeing, and also experience adventure. I could never imagine that there is so much nature right in the city itself. You can also make the most of the outdoors, be it on*



*the water or up in the mountains. I am not a city person as I prefer being out in nature, but Zurich has the best of both."*

### Highlights of Neeraj Chopra's Zurich Adventure:

- 1) Mountain Biking at Uetliberg:** Uetliberg, Zurich's local mountain, is a haven for mountain biking enthusiasts. What sets it apart is its proximity to the city, allowing bikers to dive right into thrilling trails without the need for extensive travel. Uetliberg also treats riders to spectacular views of Zurich city and the majestic Glarner Alps. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced rider, Uetliberg offers two distinct mountain bike trails catering to all skill levels.
- 2) Exploring Zurich:** Your Way: Zurich offers various options for city sightseeing, ensuring there's something for everyone. Travelers can opt for walking tours, e-biking adventures, or tantalizing food tours that take them through the city's most enticing corners.
- 3) Culinary Delights:** When it comes to culinary

diversity, Zurich shines as Switzerland's food hub. From traditional Swiss and Italian fare to Mediterranean delights, Indian feasts, Chinese delicacies, Thai flavours, and even Ethiopian cuisine, Zurich caters to every palate. Neeraj Chopra savoured Swiss hospitality and indulged in traditional Swiss specialties at Zunfthaus zur Zimmerleuten, a historic establishment nestled within one of Zurich's iconic buildings.

**4) Water Adventures:** To truly appreciate Zurich, consider exploring it from the water. Lake Zurich and the two rivers, Limmat and Sihl, offer a unique perspective of the city. Water excursions are popular here, with regular boat services operating year-round on Lake Zurich. However, the real gems are the historic paddle steamers, where you can embark on cruises lasting from one hour onwards, including the highly sought after lunch cruises. For the more adventurous, paddle boating, kayaking, and stand-up paddleboarding are excellent choices. Or, like Neeraj, take a refreshing dip or swim in the pristine waters of Lake Zurich to cool off on a hot day.



# Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Records Skyrocketing Half-Year Arrival Numbers



## TRAVEL MAIL:

**R**as Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) has achieved a remarkable milestone, recording its highest-ever half-year arrival figures. Between January and June 2023, this scenic Emirate welcomed a staggering 600,000 visitors, marking a substantial 14.8% surge compared to H1 2022.

Notably, this period also witnessed the highest tourism-related revenue ever generated during a half-year period. This extraordinary performance underscores Ras Al Khaimah's growing prominence as a premier travel destination.

### Ras Al Khaimah Tourism's International Tourism Soars:

One of the standout achievements of this exceptional half-year is the resurgence of international tourism, accounting for more than 52% of all visitor arrivals. Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority has taken significant strides toward becoming a regional leader in sustainable tourism by 2025. It proudly secured Silver Certification, making it the Middle East's first EarthCheck-certified tourism board.

### Expanding Aviation Connectivity:

Ras Al Khaimah's aviation strategy has received a substantial boost through its partnership with Qatar Airways, providing direct access to the Emirate via Qatar Airways' extensive global network spanning 150+ countries.

### Strengthening European Ties:

The Emirate has also made significant inroads in European markets. An agreement with FTI GROUP, a leading European outbound tour

operator, has been linked to boost inbound traffic from Germany, one of the top five visitor source markets.

### Unveiling Mega Tourism Investments:

Ras Al Khaimah unveiled its vision for the USD 3.9 billion Wynn Al Marjan Island, marking the largest foreign direct tourism investment project in the region. The grand opening is scheduled for early 2027.

### Surging Demand for Accommodations:

The demand for accommodations has surged, with a year-on-year growth rate of +33.6%, attributed to the addition of new hotel brands in the Emirate in 2022. Notable additions to the growing hotel portfolio include Earth Hotels, Le Meridien, and Nobu Hotels, with plans to double the number of guest rooms in the coming years.

### Luxury Cruise Visits:

Ras Al Khaimah has attracted luxury cruise liners, with six calls by four luxury cruise liners in the first half of the year, welcoming over 2,500 passengers and crew.

### Boosting MICE Tourism:

The Emirate has also been actively focusing on

the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) market, with a 26% increase in MICE room nights compared to H1 2022. It has hosted several significant events, including the Ras Al Khaimah Half Marathon, Arab Aviation Summit, DP World Tour, and Exotic Wedding Planners Conference (EWPC).

### Enhancing the Wedding Destination Experience:

Ras Al Khaimah has elevated its status as a wedding destination with the introduction of civil law marriage licenses and new wedding incentives and certification programs. These initiatives are set to bolster the Emirate's position as a preferred wedding destination.

### Recognitions and Digital Initiatives:

Raki Phillips, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, has earned accolades, being named one of Forbes Middle East's Top 100 Travel & Tourism Leaders and Businessperson of the Year by Arabian Business. The Emirate has also launched 'Get More,' a cutting-edge digital-first summer campaign, garnering over half a billion impressions and more than 2.5 million clicks, surpassing industry benchmarks.





## Redefining Experiential Travel: Mastercard and Invest India Unveil Enriched Priceless.com for Cultural Experiences

### TRAVEL MAIL:

In a groundbreaking move, Mastercard and Invest India have come together to revolutionize the world of experiential travel. The duo has introduced an upgraded version of priceless.com in India, promising travellers immersive cultural experiences that are truly priceless.

### Unlocking Exclusive Experiences Across India:

Mastercard cardholders are in for a treat as this program grants them exclusive access to carefully curated, culture-rich, gastronomical, and wellness focused experiences in various Indian cities. From the bustling streets of Delhi to the historic marvels of Agra, the serene landscapes of Jodhpur, the tranquil escapes of Dehradun, and the vibrant culture of Pune, this initiative spans the length and breadth of India.



### A Landmark Announcement in New Delhi:

On the 12th of September 2023, the heart of India, New Delhi, witnessed a historic announcement. Mastercard and Invest India, with invaluable support and guidance from the Ministry of Tourism, unveiled the enhanced priceless.comTM. This initiative marks a significant milestone in redefining experiential travel for both international and domestic tourists. The ultimate goal is to position tourism as a pivotal driver of India's flourishing economy.

The launch event in New Delhi saw the presence of distinguished individuals such as Smt. Manisha Saxena, Director General, Ministry of Tourism; Raja Rajamannar, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer and President, Healthcare at Mastercard; Gautam Aggarwal, Division President, South Asia at Mastercard; and Nivruti Rai, CEO, Invest India.

### Going Global with Priceless Experiences:

The introduction of priceless.comTM in India is an extension of Mastercard's globally acclaimed priceless platform. This platform offers a diverse array of over 2,000 curated experiences across various passion points for Mastercard cardholders spanning 40+ countries.

### Riding the Wave of Travel Industry Trends:

The Mastercard Economics Institute's Travel Industry Trends 2023 report has unveiled a

remarkable surge in consumer spending on travel experiences. In comparison to March 2019, there has been a staggering 65% increase, driven by pent-up demand for travel. Mastercard's program, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, not only aligns with India's 'Dekho Apna Desh' initiative but also provides a golden opportunity for both local and international travel enthusiasts to immerse themselves in the country's rich heritage.

### Delving into the Passion Points:

Priceless.com is set to deliver compelling experiences across ten dynamic passion points, ensuring there's something for everyone:

- 1) Culinary Delights: Indulge in a sumptuous dinner with breathtaking views of the iconic Qutub Minar.
- 2) Historical Exploration: Embark on curated walks through the enchanting lanes and by-lanes of Old Agra.
- 3) Wellness Escapes: Experience a rejuvenating day of wellness with celebrity nutritionist Pooja Makhija.
- 4) Yoga Bliss: Participate in a private yoga class led by the renowned yoga expert, Anshuka Parwani.
- 5) Royal Retreats: Enjoy lavish stays at opulent palaces owned by royal families.
- 6) Bollywood Fitness: Join exclusive fitness sessions with the famous Yasmin Karachiwala.
- 7) Epicurean Adventures: Savour exclusive food experiences that tantalize the taste buds.

## Unveiling Vibrant Czechia Street Art



### TRAVEL MAIL:

In the lively urban hubs and charming villages of Czechia, a unique and ever-evolving form of artistic expression unfurls right before our eyes. Street art, a dynamic interplay between creativity and public spaces, has discovered a vibrant sanctuary within the country's urban landscapes. Let's delve into the world of Czechia street art, where streets metamorphose into canvases, and passersby become an integral part of this artistic journey.

### Czechia's Open-Air Gallery:

Czechia's streets, akin to an expansive open-air gallery, beckon both locals and tourists to immerse themselves in art within an unconventional setting. From the cobblestone alleys of Prague's Old Town to the industrial byways of Brno, street art punctuates the urban scenery with vivid splashes of color and profound messages. The roots of Czechia's street art are intertwined with a history of resistance and self-expression, often weaving themes of freedom, democracy, and unity into the artwork as a poignant reminder of the nation's path.

### Prague's Vibrant Street Art Scene:

In contemporary Prague, the street art scene flourishes, infusing the city's narrow alleys and pathways with creative optimism. Keep an eye out for sculptures, installations, and murals that breathe life into the cityscape. Among these treasures lies one of Prague's few legal graffiti walls, Tesnov. A mere 15-minute stroll from the city center, Tesnov provides a fitting conclusion to your exploration of street art, offering you the opportunity to craft cherished memories along the way.

### Pasta Oner's Divine Touch:

Drawing inspiration from Michelangelo's iconic Sistine Chapel fresco, Pasta Oner has etched his interpretation of the "divine touch" on Vítězné náměstí. This pop-art mural portrays the "hand of God," directing attention to the powerful message: "Choose to Be Happy." This uplifting artwork emerged through Prague's Stuck in the City initiative, showcasing how street art can inspire positivity.

### The Timeless John Lennon Wall:

And let us not forget the iconic John Lennon Wall. Despite frequent cleanings, Lennon-inspired graffiti has adorned this wall since the 1980s, never disappearing for more than a few hours. Nestled in the heart of Old Town, this vibrant wall is adorned with uplifting quotes, Beatles' lyrics, and personal expressions through notes, musings, and artwork.

### A Tapestry of Styles and Techniques:

Czechia's street art scene encompasses a diverse range of styles and techniques. Stencils, graffiti, murals, and installations intermingle to create a visually captivating and multi-dimensional tapestry of creativity.



# Sustainable Experiential Travel: Discover it the Swiss Way

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**I**n the heart of India, where youth's dynamism shapes the demographic landscape, a transformative shift in travel is underway. The new generation of Indian travellers is embracing their responsibility to our planet, revolutionizing the way they explore the world. Their itineraries now prioritize sustainability, eco-friendly experiences, and conscious travel choices. And if there's a destination that can school these travellers in responsible, earth preserving journeys while ensuring maximum enjoyment, it's none other than Switzerland!

Switzerland Tourism unveiled its groundbreaking Swisstainable Strategy in 2021, with a vision to make the nation the epitome of sustainable travel. Let's delve into some innovative initiatives that are drawing young adventurers from all corners of the globe:

### Swiss Travel System: The Green Way to Explore:

Are you eager to reduce carbon emissions and make a positive impact on our planet? Look no further than Switzerland's highly efficient and punctual public transport system. The Swiss Travel System stands as a beacon of sustainable travel, seamlessly integrating air, train, and bus travel. Powered primarily by clean hydropower, this system significantly minimizes the carbon footprint, ensuring minimal harm to the pristine Alpine region.

With just one Swiss Travel Pass, you gain access to an extensive network of rail, bus, and boat routes spanning an impressive 26,000 km across Switzerland. A train journey in Switzerland generates a mere 5% of the CO2 emissions produced by a car journey covering a comparable route. Thanks to the eco-friendly transport solutions of Switzerland's largest transport company, SBB (Swiss Federal Railways), the country saves an astounding five million tonnes of CO2 emissions annually that's equivalent to a remarkable 10% of Switzerland's overall emissions!

### Abundant Water and Sustenance:

Switzerland, often referred to as the "water castle of Europe," boasts an impressive 6% share of the continent's freshwater reserves. This natural abundance is complemented by the availability of potable drinking water from taps and fountains maintained by municipalities in every town and city. Unlike other European countries, Switzerland's sizeable water reserves, including numerous lakes, glaciers, and natural ground water, ensure a steady supply. Only a mere 2% of annual rainfall finds its way into drinking water reserves, emphasizing the nation's commitment to water conservation.

When it comes to food, Switzerland leads by example. Swiss consumers boast the highest per capita consumption of organic products globally. Swiss retailers consistently top international sustainability rankings, reflecting their dedication to environmentally conscious practices. The country's restaurants are at the forefront of change, focusing on seasonal organic

vegetables, employing technology to minimize food waste, and engaging in various social integration projects aimed at nature conservation. Over 5,000 restaurants have embraced the 'Too Good To Go' movement, actively combatting food wastage. Switzerland even celebrates World Vegetarian Day with fervour, encouraging restaurants to craft an array of authentic and innovative vegetarian dishes using locally sourced, fresh, seasonal produce.

**Ritu Sharma, Deputy Director and Marketing Head – India at Switzerland Tourism** encapsulates the spirit of Switzerland's sustainable ethos, stating, *"Switzerland is a nation blessed by Mother Nature with her treasure trove of natural beauty and resources. The Swiss people understand that a healthy, green way of life can only be sustained by safeguarding our environment. As more young Indians journey to Switzerland, we witness a growing respect for and alignment with the locals' profound environmental consciousness. Consequently, we observe a profound shift in travellers' attitudes, as they increasingly gravitate toward natural, experiential, and sustainable travel experiences. It's heartening to note that Indian travellers are the foremost users of the Swiss Travel System! We eagerly anticipate the youth scripting a new chapter in sustainable travel following their Swiss sojourns. As part of our ongoing Swisstainable campaign, we urge Indian travellers to extend their stays, immerse themselves in local culture and experiences, and savour seasonal produce sourced locally."*



Switzerland beckons, not just as a destination but as a guiding light for responsible, sustainable, and unforgettable travel experiences. Join the movement and discover the Swiss way to explore our planet while safeguarding it for future generations.





# MOT to Host PATA Travel Mart 2023 in Delhi from Oct 4th

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**P**repare yourselves for the astonishing spectacle that is the **46th edition of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Travel Mart 2023**, orchestrated by the **Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India**. This extraordinary three-day extravaganza happened from October 4 to 6, 2023, within the sprawling expanse of the International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC), colloquially known as Bharat Mandapam, nestled within the vibrant tapestry of Pragati Maidan in Delhi.

This forthcoming event in India's spotlight beckons as a harbinger of transformation, destined to unveil a kaleidoscope of destinations and products, galvanizing international alliances and championing the sanctity of sustainable tourism practices.

### PATA Into History:

Having taken its nascent steps in 1951 and rooted in the effervescent heart of Bangkok, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has unfailingly championed the cause of responsible travel and the development of the tourism industry throughout the vast expanse of the Asia Pacific. The illustrious PATA Travel Mart, a celebrated international trade exhibition, assumes the grandiose mantle of a maestro, orchestrating an intricate symphony of trade interactions amongst the global pantheon of industry stakeholders, with an unabating focus on the boundless realm of the Asia Pacific. This year's spotlight on India as the custodian of this illustrious gathering signifies the nation's unswerving dedication to the promotion of responsible and all-encompassing tourism practices.

### PATA With A New Meaning?

Inscribing its chapter in the annals of global tourism, the PATA Travel Mart 2023 emerges as an unprecedented crucible of industry metamorphosis. It emerges as an effervescent crucible, sparking the catalysis of collaborations, igniting the torch of sustainability, and fostering the seamless exchange of cultural currency amongst the global throng of tourism aficionados and professionals. With a vivid tapestry of activities woven into its fabric, embracing the prestigious PATA Gold Award, the revelatory PATA Youth Symposium, the contemplative PATA Forum on Sustainability, and the core cornerstone of the business sphere, the B2B Mart, participants stand to bask in an overflowing

cornucopia of opportunities, transcending the mundane and embracing the extraordinary.

### India's Cinematic Showcase:

India's grandiloquent presence on the stage of the PATA Travel Mart transcends the realm of the ordinary, soaring into the stratosphere of the spectacular. Within this bustling carnival, an exclusive pavilion stands poised to tantalize, unveiling the panoramic spectrum of destinations nestled within the bosom of this extraordinary nation.

States such as the majestic Rajasthan, the resplendent Gujarat, the bustling Delhi, the enchanting Karnataka, the resurgent Telangana, the tranquil Uttarakhand, the enigmatic Madhya Pradesh, and the revered Handlooms Development Commissioner will each fashion their unique tapestries, unfurling the tapestry of their distinctive offerings.

From the tranquil sanctuaries of wellness retreats to the exhilarating escapades that traverse the gamut of adventure, from the sacred corridors of heritage immersion to the epicurean odyssey of culinary delights, from the canvas of artistry to the finesse of craftsmanship, India's pavilion unfolds as a veritable treasure trove of multifaceted experiences.

## Beyond Business: A Journey through India's Mosaic:

Although the central tenet of this event revolves around the crucible of business-to-business (B2B) interactions, it unfurls a secondary persona, that of a cherished realm where global audiences are initiated into the thematic repertoires offered by the varied Indian states. Here, visitors find themselves submerged in the ocean of wellness, embarking on audacious sojourns into the world of adventure, delving into the intricate tapestry of heritage, relishing the gastronomic symphonies that resonate with culinary delights, and embarking on an odyssey into the diverse world of artistry and craftsmanship. All of this unfolds within the pulsating heart of this dynamic event, a metamorphosis that elevates the quotidian to the sublime.

## Delhi's Ascendancy as the Quintessential Host:

The International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC), ensconced within the heart of Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, has played host to illustrious gatherings, most notably the grandeur of the G20 Leaders' Summit, thereby casting the limelight on India's prowess in orchestrating colossal international events and symposiums. This represents yet another glorious feather in India's cap, a testament reaffirming its standing as a coveted destination for global congregations of monumental proportions.

## India's Ascent in the Tourism Pantheon:

India's burgeoning prominence in the domain of tourism finds its semblance in its resolute commitment to sustainable and all-inclusive tourism initiatives. The nation emerges as an irresistible magnet, beckoning the world's gaze, and elevating its stature as the favored choice for organizing Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) events.

## Promoting the Sanctity of Travel: Enter Travel for Life:

In a recent and momentous development, the Ministry of Tourism unveiled the Travel for LiFE sustainable program on the momentous occasion of World Tourism Day, celebrated on September 27, 2023, under the aegis of the Mission LiFE initiative. This groundbreaking program stands as a clarion call, beckoning responsible behaviour amongst the global wanderlust community during their journeys. The Ministry further envisions an enduring legacy, committed to the perpetuation of cleanliness initiatives and the provisioning of indispensable amenities across 108 meticulously designated sites, including those embraced by the "Travel for Life" program, along with other hallowed grounds of tourist fascination.

The PATA Travel Mart 2023 in Delhi is not merely an event; it represents a testament to India's unswerving allegiance to the global tourism fraternity. It unveils itself as an opportunity, an invitation to connect, collaborate, and exult in the splendid mosaic of travel experiences that India unfurls before the world.





# Singapore Grand Prix 2023: A Spectacular Celebration of Speed and Entertainment

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**S**ingapore is revving up for the 14th edition of the Singapore Grand Prix Season, Singapore (GPSS), set to take place from September 8th to September 17th, 2023. This highly anticipated event promises a thrilling combination of electrifying precinct parties spread across four unique locations and a captivating array of race-themed lifestyle experiences throughout the city.

GPSS is designed to cater to diverse tastes and interests, offering an array of experiences that will inspire both locals and travellers to explore Singapore's vibrant offerings. Alongside the F1

Singapore race, GPSS brings a wealth of themed parties and celebrations, ensuring that attendees fully immerse themselves in this unique event.

**Singapore Grand Prix Season Experience:** **GB Srithar, Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia & Africa, Singapore Tourism Board (STB)**, enthusiastically states, *"Singapore is all set and ready to flag off the latest edition of Grand Prix Season Singapore (GPSS). The night race continues to enthrall fans from the world over. The fusion of high-speed Formula 1 racing with electrifying*

*entertainment brings both a thrilling sporting spectacle and a vibrant buzz across the city, making it a truly iconic way to experience how Singapore – as one of the most dynamic lifestyle capitals of the region – celebrates such events. GPSS is an unmissable experience for those seeking our unique blend of speed, spectacle, and entertainment."*

**Ms. Ong Ling Lee, Executive Director, of Sports and Wellness, Singapore Tourism Board**, adds, *"The GPSS is back for its 14th edition, revving up more excitement and*



*festivities across Singapore for an action packed 10-day period. The curated lineup of offerings across multiple facets such as dining, entertainment, and retail showcase the best of Singapore's lifestyle experiences, which both locals and visitors can enjoy."*

## A Circuit of Festivity: Precinct Parties:



This year's GPSS theme, 'Circuit of Festivity,' promises unique race-themed offerings at four different yet interconnected locations: Orchard Road, Clarke Quay, Kampong Gelam, and Sentosa. Each location boasts its own distinctive and extensive programming, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the unique offerings of each precinct.

## Orchard Road: The Epitome of Excitement

Orchard Road, Singapore's famous shopping belt, will be transformed into a multifaceted epicentre of excitement during GPSS. At the heart of this transformation lies "Revolutions: The GPSS Immersive Experience," a high-tech light and sound show curated by local artist Brandon Tay. This spectacular show serves as a captivating tribute to the people, achievements, and aspirations of the vibrant city while narrating the enthralling story of GPSS. Visitors to Orchard Road can also explore the Orchard Pit Shops: GPSS Lifestyle Bazaar, featuring over 24 stalls offering an array of local artisanal products, delectable food and beverages, live music, and captivating art installations. Furthermore, shoppers will be delighted to discover a retail haven at Design Orchard, where limited-edition merchandise, exclusively curated for GPSS, awaits.

**Clarke Quay: Entertainment Extravaganza** Clarke Quay seamlessly transitions from day to

night during GPSS, offering a wide range of entertainment options that bring a buzz to the area. From the bustling CQ Street Market to the GPSS Fitness Fest featuring Les Mills, fitness enthusiasts can enjoy dynamic workouts with music and captivating lights. Motorsports fans can compete in the Teleios Race Sims Grand Slam for the GPSS Sims Championship. At OutDrive GP, meet Formula 1 and Formula 2 drivers like Nico Hülkenberg and witness live racing against local stimulated racing talent. Music lovers can immerse themselves in Asia's premier independent music festival, Music Matters Live, featuring a diverse lineup including Kiwi singer-songwriter Paige, Indonesian sensation Teddy Adhitya, Korean electro-pop acts like Love x Stereo, and more, alongside local talents.

## Kampong Gelam: Celebrating Culture:

Visitors can immerse themselves in Singapore's rich culture and heritage at the Kampong Gelam precinct party known as "Culturally Singapore." This event features multicultural performances in celebration of the race season and the festivities. Satisfying culinary experiences await visitors at the GPSS Food Park, where one can enjoy a delectable mix of local and international cuisines, including smoky flavours at Hot-Pit Stop: Grills & BBQ. Wilfred Cheah's exhibition, "Singapore Stories: Miniatures of the Past," offers an exhilarating journey through time, an opportunity to dive headfirst into the intricate and meticulously crafted miniatures that bring Singapore's rich history to life.

## Sentosa: Adventure Awaits:

Sentosa, known for its pristine beaches and world-class attractions, is back with island exclusive experiences aimed at adventure seekers. Following its successful debut at the GPSS precinct parties last year, Sentosa now offers a range of exciting activities. Stretching across Siloso Beach, the Siloso Beachwalk Bazaar promises a dining and shopping extravaganza, complete with roving acts and other entertaining pitstops. For those looking to savour Singapore's iconic culinary delights, including the internationally renowned Chilli Crab the GPSS Beach Feastable will be a major draw, featuring approximately 20 gourmet booths and al-fresco beachside seating.



# Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival: Hong Kong's Culinary Delights and Nightlife Extravaganza

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**I**n the heart of Asia's culinary capital, Hong Kong, a sensational month-long culinary journey awaits you. This gastronomic extravaganza is spearheaded by the grand return of the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, a colossal outdoor culinary spectacle set against the stunning backdrop of Victoria Harbour. After a five-year hiatus, this event is back to tantalize taste buds and ignite the city's vibrant nightlife scene.

This autumn, the Hong Kong Tourism Board extends a warm invitation to all food and wine enthusiasts from across the globe. The Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival is set to be a highlight of this season, offering a four-day culinary spectacle that kickstarts a month-long celebration of the city's nightlife.

Speaking about the highly anticipated return of the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, **Mr Puneet Kumar, Director – South Asia and Middle East Hong Kong Tourism Board**, stated, *"As young and discerning Indian travellers seek immersive holiday experiences, Hong Kong is poised to captivate their senses with a world-class culinary journey against the iconic cityscape."*

*The revival of the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival marks a significant event in our culinary calendar. It's more than just an event; it's a celebration of our rich gastronomic heritage and global flavours. It's an invitation to immerse oneself in the vibrant spirit of the city's gastronomy and nightlife. We are thrilled*



*to welcome international visitors to savour the world's finest flavours, create unforgettable memories, and Discover Hong Kong as never before."*

## The Return of the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival:

Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Victoria Harbour's Central Harbourfront Event Space, the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival 2023 promises four days of gourmet indulgence. This marks the first physical edition of the festival after a five-year hiatus. With nearly 300 booths showcasing global culinary delights and wines, along with a range of interactive workshops suitable for all ages, this event guarantees an unforgettable experience. Eligible overseas visitors will also receive a complimentary cocktail upon arrival.

Wine enthusiasts will find a haven at the festival, with Major Country Pavilions featuring wine producers from 36 countries worldwide. This year, the spotlight is on classic vintages from France and Italy, as well as emerging wine regions from Thailand, Moldova, and Finland. Adding to the excitement, the festival



introduces a dedicated display for Chinese Wine Discovery, featuring esteemed wine merchants such as Xige Estate and Chateau Miho from Ningxia (Northwest China), Yunnan Red Wine & Spirits, and Shandong based Mystic Island Winery.

## A Global Feast:

Visitors to the four-day event will embark on a global culinary journey, with a diverse array of flavours waiting to be explored. From bold and flavorful street food to cherished local favourites and exquisite hotel delicacies, including offerings from The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong, there's something to delight every palate.

A new addition to the festival this year is the Tasting Theatre, where hands-on workshops will inspire visitors of all ages to roll up their sleeves and step into the world of culinary arts.

Engaging sessions such as 'Plant to Plate,' 'Origin of the Coffee Bean,' 'The Story of Rice,' and more await. Renowned celebrity chef He

Jiansheng from Shunde, Guangdong, and award-winning Taiwanese baker Wu Pao-chun will also make their debut appearances at the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, leading cooking demonstrations and workshops.

## Taste Around Town: A Culinary Extravaganza Continues:

The Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival 2023 serves as the launchpad for a month of culinary celebrations across the city. Throughout November Taste Around Town will shine a spotlight on over 300 of Hong Kong's dining and drinking establishments. This month-long program will feature exclusive discounts, limited-time menus, and more, reaffirming Hong Kong's position as one of the world's premier dining destinations.

Don't miss this opportunity to embark on a culinary adventure like no other. Join us in savouring the finest flavours, creating lasting memories, and discovering the true essence of Hong Kong.



## Norwegian Spirit Sets Off: Norwegian Cruise Line Invites Indian Travelers to Explore Its Exciting New Asia Pacific Voyages on World Tourism Day

### TRAVEL MAIL:

**N**orwegian Spirit's Eight-Month Asian Odyssey from September 2024 to April 2025: Departures from Manila, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo, and Seoul Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), the trailblazer in global cruise adventures, is thrilled to announce a captivating array of 14 immersive Asia Pacific itineraries on the freshly renovated Norwegian Spirit.

### Discovering Asia's Marvels Aboard Norwegian Spirit:

During its extensive eight-month sojourn across Asia, spanning from September 2024 to April 2025, Norwegian Spirit promises an extraordinary selection of voyages, ranging from four to fourteen days. The departures commence in September 2024 and continue through April 2025, setting sail from five bustling ports: Manila, Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo, and Seoul.

### NCL's Commitment to the Asia Pacific Region:

NCL's commitment to the Asia Pacific region is underscored by the expansion of its fleet and the broadening of its itinerary choices. This commitment extends to both serving as a source market and a dream destination. The allure of cruising lies in the seamless exploration of enchanting destinations and engaging shore excursions without the hassle of incessant packing and unpacking. As Ben Angell, VP, and managing director of NCL APAC put it, "We know Asia is a popular choice for local travellers – Japan is one of my personal favourites – and we are excited to expand our options in this market to excite our Indian guests."

### Norwegian Spirit: A Jewel of the Sea:

Norwegian Spirit, a more intimate vessel accommodating just over 2,000 guests, boasts an impressive array of features. These include the serene adults only Spice H20 pool retreat, captivating entertainment options, and the expanded Mandara Spa™, which now features a



Thermal Suite complete with a steam room, sauna, rejuvenating shower experience, and heated-tile loungers. With a staggering choice of 14 dining venues, from savouring French delicacies at Le Bistro to relishing contemporary Italian fare at Onda by Scarpetta, guests can relish their holidays at their own pace, free from the constraints of set dining schedules, assigned tables, or dress codes.

### An Abundance of Onboard Delights:

The ship also offers an extensive range of amenities and activities, making it an ideal choice for multi-generational families seeking diverse onboard and onshore experiences while still creating cherished collective memories. For families of all sizes, Norwegian Spirit provides a variety of stateroom options, including interconnecting and family staterooms that can be combined to create more spacious accommodations.

## 9 Vande Bharat Express Trains Flagged Off by Prime Minister Modi

### TRAVEL MAIL:

**I**n an extraordinary display of progress and innovation, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi unveiled 9 Vande Bharat Express trains via a groundbreaking video conference ceremony. These Vande Bharat trains, designed to redefine the nation's connectivity landscape and enhance the travel experience for passengers, are a testament to the Prime Minister's unwavering commitment to modernizing India's railway infrastructure.

Prime Minister Modi proudly noted that these Vande Bharat Trains represent the embodiment of a new India, characterized by modernity and comfort. He expressed his delight at the growing popularity of these trains, with more than 1 Crore 11 Lakh passengers having already experienced the Vande Bharat journey. Currently, 25 Vande Bharat trains are serving passengers in various states and union territories, and today's addition of 9 more marks a significant step towards connecting every corner of the country. The Prime Minister also highlighted the utility of Vande Bharat for travellers seeking efficient same day journeys, leading to a boost in tourism and economic activities in the regions these trains serve. He also lauded the Narishakti Vandan Act as a pivotal moment for women-led development and commended the increasing number of railway station run by women functionaries.



### Celebrating Establishment Day of Railway Stations:

The Prime Minister expressed his joy at the Railways' initiative to celebrate the establishment day of railway stations. He cited the celebrations at Coimbatore, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, and Mumbai as examples. Coimbatore Railway station, in particular, marked a significant milestone by completing 150 years. This tradition of celebrating railway stations will continue to expand and engage more people.

### Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat:

Prime Minister Modi reiterated the vision of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat as a means to achieve a developed India by 2047. He emphasized the necessity of equitable development across all states, acknowledging that concentrating railway development in one state, as had been done previously, had hindered the nation's progress. The Prime Minister called for unity and progress for all, encapsulated in the mantra of "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas."

### New Experience:

Addressing the dedicated Railway employees, the Prime Minister urged them to create memorable journeys for passengers, emphasizing the importance of providing a seamless and pleasant travel experience.

### Transforming Indian Railways:

Recognizing the paramount importance of railways in the lives of everyday citizens, the Prime Minister lamented the historical neglect of this vital sector. He provided insight into the government's efforts to transform Indian Railways, with the current year's railway budget being eight times that of 2014. The Prime Minister detailed ongoing work in doubling, electrification and establishing new routes.

### Modernizing Railway Stations:

Prime Minister Modi emphasized the need to modernize railway stations, marking a significant shift in India's approach. A campaign for the development and modernization of railway stations has been initiated for the first time, resulting in the construction of a record number of foot-over bridges, lifts, and escalators across the country. Stations built during this period will be known as Amrit Bharat Stations, symbolizing the new India's identity.



# Vistara's Mumbai to Frankfurt Direct Flights Soar High

## TRAVEL MAIL:

In an exciting development for globetrotters and business travellers, Vistara is set to elevate your travel experience with its new direct flight route between Mumbai and Frankfurt. Commencing operations on November 15, 2023, this addition to Vistara's expansive network is bound to revolutionize your journey. Let's delve into the details of this exhilarating travel update.

### Expanding Horizons: Vistara's Mumbai to Frankfurt Connection:

Vistara, known for its commitment to excellence, is unveiling 6x weekly direct flights connecting the bustling metropolis of Mumbai to the heart of Europe, Frankfurt. This move comes as a natural progression, building on the success of Vistara's 6x weekly service between Delhi and Frankfurt, which took flight in February 2021. With these direct flights, Vistara is fostering stronger bonds between Europe and India while bolstering its global presence. Travelers can look forward to the remarkable comfort of Vistara's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, offering a three-class cabin configuration that includes Business, Premium Economy, and Economy cabins.

### Mumbai's Skyrocketing Significance in Vistara's Journey:

Mumbai, often dubbed the "City of Dreams," has become a pivotal hub for Vistara's international endeavours. The city now serves as a gateway to 12 international destinations, creating a seamless bridge between India and the world. These destinations include Abu Dhabi, Bangkok, Colombo, Dammam, Dhaka, Dubai, Jeddah, London Heathrow, Male, Muscat, Mauritius, and Singapore. In the past year alone, Vistara has significantly expanded its domestic and international offerings from Mumbai, resulting in a staggering 42% increase in departures and nearly doubling its workforce at the Mumbai station.

**Words from the Wise: Vinod Kannan, CEO of Vistara:**  
**Vinod Kannan, the Chief Executive Officer of Vistara,** expressed his enthusiasm for this

milestone, saying, *"We are thrilled to expand our international network with the launch of this new Mumbai to Frankfurt service. Our long haul routes connecting Delhi with London Heathrow, Paris, and Frankfurt have received tremendous acclaim from our valued customers. This positive response emboldened us to extend similar offerings from Mumbai. This marks our second long-haul route from Mumbai, complementing our existing 5x weekly flights to London Heathrow. We believe that travellers will appreciate the opportunity to fly with India's premier airline on this route."*

He further added, *"Over the past couple of years, we have introduced several new international routes from Mumbai, particularly to the Middle East. This aligns seamlessly with our strategy to position Mumbai as a pivotal hub for international travel."*

Mark your calendars for November 15, 2023, and get ready to embark on a journey like never before with Vistara. Your adventure begins here!



# Red Sea Global's Inaugural Flight: First Flight at Red Sea International Airport

## TRAVEL MAIL:

Red Sea Global (RSG), the visionary developer spearheading the creation of two transformative tourism destinations, The Red Sea and Amaala is rejoiced as the wheels of progress touch the tarmac of the Red Sea International Airport (RSI) runway on September 21, 2023. This momentous occasion marks the inaugural flight to RSI, a game-changing development for the region.

### Embarking on a New Journey:

Every Thursday and Saturday, travellers can now board SAUDIA flights departing from King Khalid International Airport (RUH) in Riyadh for a to RSI. With a flight duration of just under two hours, this new service ushers in a fresh era for The Red Sea, setting the stage for the arrival of global visitors eager to experience its unique offerings.

### The Vision Takes Flight:

**John Pagano, Group CEO of Red Sea Global,** expressed his excitement, saying, *"We promised to make The Red Sea a place where people from all around the world would come to experience the best of Saudi culture, hospitality, and nature. Now, with the first flight touching down at Red Sea International Airport, and our first resorts receiving bookings, Saudi Arabia's position on the global tourism map is all but secured."* Starting September 21, 2023, flights depart RUH each Thursday at 10:50 AM, with return flights from RSI at 1:35 PM. Additionally, a second service departs RUH every Saturday at 12:50 PM, with the return flight to RUH departing at 3:35 PM.

### Gateway to Adventure:

Positioned within an eight-hour flight from 85% of the world's population, RSI is poised to become an international aviation hub as it welcomes flights from around the globe in the coming year, coinciding with the opening of phase one resorts.

### Unveiling the RSI Brand:

On the same day as the first flight's arrival, RSG revealed the brand identity for RSI, encapsulating the essence of this sun-soaked destination. The brand's influence extends to the airport terminal, staff uniforms, and electric mobility vehicles, ensuring a consistent and memorable experience for travellers. **John Pagano** further emphasized the significance of the brand, stating, *"RSI is the*

*gateway to The Red Sea destination. It is the first impression visitors have, and their parting memory when they leave. The brand echoes the qualities of the five-star hospitality guests will enjoy across the destination."* The brand's icon is a representation of Red Sea International Airport's unique architectural design, inspired by an aerial view of the airport's exterior. It has been meticulously crafted to convey the brand's creativity, innovation, and sophistication in a contemporary and distinctive manner.

### The Red Sea Experience:

The Red Sea is poised to deliver extraordinary guest experiences, firmly establishing Saudi Arabia as a premier luxury destination offering a vibrant culture, robust economy, and a year-round calendar of events for all to enjoy. The first phase of The Red Sea's development includes the unveiling of three remarkable hotels: Six Senses Southern Dunes, The Red Sea, followed closely by St. Regis Red Sea Resort, and Nujuma Ritz-Carlton Reserve on the Ummahat Islands. Upon its full completion in 2030, this visionary destination will encompass 50 resorts, boasting up to 8,000 hotel rooms and over 1,000 residential properties spread across 22 islands and six inland sites. The destination will also feature luxury marinas, golf courses, entertainment venues, dining establishments, and leisure facilities, offering an unparalleled experience to all who visit.





# Vietjet: Asia's Premier Airline for Unparalleled Customer Experience

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**V**ietjet, at the forefront of Vietnam's modern aviation landscape, has achieved remarkable acclaim within the industry, earning prestigious international accolades. The airline's unwavering commitment to delivering an exceptional customer experience has garnered it the coveted title of "Asia's Leading Airline for Customer Experience 2023" at the 30th Annual World Travel Awards (WTA).

### The World Travel Awards (WTA):

Established in 1993, the World Travel Awards (WTA) has become a global beacon for acknowledging, rewarding, and celebrating excellence across all vital segments of the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries.

**Graham Cooke, the Founder of the World Travel Awards**, lauded Vietjet, saying, *"As a rapidly growing airline, Vietjet has carved out a distinct position for itself in a competitive aviation market."*

### Vietjet Setting the Standard for Passenger Travel:

Vietjet's success can be attributed to its unwavering focus on convenience, compelling marketing campaigns that benefit its customers, and a steadfast commitment to innovation and creativity. These qualities have earned Vietjet a reputation for enhancing the overall passenger travel experience.

**Graham Cooke** attested to this excellence, stating, *"Having flown on many Vietjet flights, I can personally attest to the excellent service and delicious in-flight catering – a well deserved win."*

### Elevating the Passenger Experience:

Vietjet has gained favour with passengers by offering complimentary SkyCare travel insurance packages to all domestic and international travellers, providing comprehensive coverage benefits. The airline has also introduced a premium Business class service on its wide-body aircraft, featuring comfortable flat-bed seats and exceptional culinary experiences throughout the flight.

### Affordable Fares and Extraordinary Services:

Vietjet continues to be a preferred choice for



travellers due to its range of affordable fare options and additional services, including the "Fly Now – Pay Later" program, travel credit cards, and enticing promotions for various destinations in Vietnam and beyond.

### A Commitment to Excellence:

**Vietjet's Chief Operating Officer, Michael Hickey**, expressed his gratitude, saying, *"Winning this recognition is another milestone for Vietjet as the airline expands its international operations. We sincerely thank our beloved customers for their trust, companionship, and support throughout this journey." As an innovative carrier, Vietjet is committed to making continuous efforts to offer a more enjoyable travel experience, catering to various demands with exceptional amenities.*

### Bridging the Gap and Fostering Relations:

Vietjet, the largest airline connecting India and Vietnam in terms of the number of flights, aims to bridge the gap further by providing enhanced travel opportunities between the two countries leading economic and cultural centres. This initiative also promotes the development of economic relations and cultural exchanges between India and Vietnam.

# New Frontier for IndiGo: Flags Off Delhi to Tashkent Flights



## TRAVEL MAIL:

**I**ndiGo, one of the leading names in the aviation industry, has embarked on an exciting journey by commencing operations between Delhi and Tashkent. This move marks a significant milestone for the airline, as Tashkent becomes the 31st international destination and the 110th overall destination in the expansive 6E network.

### Connecting Delhi to Tashkent: The Gateway to Central Asia:

IndiGo's decision to initiate four weekly non-stop flights between Delhi and Tashkent showcases the airline's proactive approach to expanding its global network. Beyond the convenience of travel, this strategic move promises to enhance trade relations and provide customers with seamless connectivity to a plethora of destinations.

### A Word from Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales, IndiGo:

**Vinay Malhotra, the Head of Global Sales at IndiGo**, expressed his enthusiasm about this new venture, stating, *"We are thrilled to introduce direct flights between Delhi and Tashkent, the dynamic metropolitan capital of Uzbekistan. This new air link brings India closer to Central Asia, unlocking a gateway for travellers to explore the rich cultural landmarks*

*and historical connections along the historic Silk Route."*

### Bridging Cultures and Commerce:

IndiGo's commitment to expanding its international network is not solely about facilitating travel. It's also about fostering cultural exchanges and strengthening commercial ties across new horizons. Malhotra emphasized, *"We remain dedicated to providing our customers with affordable, punctual, courteous, and hassle-free travel experiences across our unparalleled network."*

In conclusion, IndiGo's foray into the Delhi to Tashkent route is more than just a flight; it's a bridge that connects two diverse cultures and opens up new opportunities for travellers and businesses alike. As IndiGo continues to expand its global footprint, passengers can look forward to more convenient and exciting travel options that bring the world closer together.



# Air India and AIX Connect Partner for Seamless Travel

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**A**ir India and AIX Connect have entered into a codeshare agreement, allowing passengers to seamlessly connect between the two airlines' networks. This means that Air India passengers will be able to book flights on AIX Connect routes, and vice versa. The agreement also includes baggage transfer and complimentary meals for Air India passengers connecting to AIX Connect flights.

### What is a codeshare agreement?

A codeshare agreement is an arrangement between two airlines to market and sell seats on each other's flights under their airline code. This allows airlines to offer their passengers more destinations and flight options, without having to operate all of the flights themselves.

The codeshare agreement between Air India and AIX Connect will cover over 100 flights a day on 21 routes. Air India passengers will be able to connect to over 80 destinations in Air India's domestic and international network through AIX Connect's route network.

### Benefits of the codeshare agreement for Air India passengers:

Air India passengers will benefit from the codeshare agreement in several ways, including:

- 1) Access to a wider network of destinations and flight options
- 2) Seamless baggage transfer
- 3) Complimentary meals on AIX Connect flights

The codeshare agreement will also benefit AIX Connect by allowing it to leverage Air India's global distribution network. This will help AIX

Connect to reach a wider audience and attract more passengers.

### Benefits of the codeshare agreement for AIX Connect:

AIX Connect will benefit from the codeshare agreement in several ways, including:

- 1) Access to Air India's global distribution network
- 2) Increased brand awareness
- 3) More passengers

In a strategic move, Air India has forged a formidable codeshare partnership with AIX Connect, formerly recognized as Air Asia India. This collaboration is set to redefine air travel connectivity and convenience.

The codeshare agreement between Air India and AIX Connect is a positive development for both airlines and their passengers. It will allow Air India passengers to connect to more destinations and enjoy seamless baggage transfer and complimentary meals on AIX Connect flights. It will also help AIX Connect reach a wider audience and attract more passengers.



# Singapore Tourism: Lim Kean Bon Takes the Helm in India, South Asia, and Africa

## TRAVEL MAIL:

**I**n a significant move to enhance Singapore's tourism prospects, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has appointed Lim Kean Bon as the Area Director for India, South Asia, and Africa. This strategic appointment marks a pivotal moment for STB's initiatives in these regions.

### Driving Singapore's Appeal in India and Beyond:

Kean Bon will be succeeding Raymond Lim as the India market lead, based in New Delhi. His primary mission is to lead STB's promotion and engage with the travel trade industry in Northern and Eastern India. His goal is clear: to sustain and foster a deep affinity for Singapore among leisure travellers in these regions. Beyond that, Kean Bon's responsibilities extend to business development efforts, aimed at bolstering visitorship from India to Singapore, particularly in the Cruise and Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) segments. Additionally, he will be instrumental in engaging consumers in other regional markets such as Bangladesh and South Africa.

### A Warm Welcome from STB: GB Srithar, Regional Director of India, Middle East, South Asia, and Africa (IMESA)

expressed his warm welcome to Kean Bon, acknowledging his leadership skills and expertise. *Srithar stated, "We extend a hearty welcome to Kean Bon as he joins our dynamic team. I believe Kean Bon's leadership in driving experience development for a leisure precinct and his past tenure in the Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau (SECB) places him in good stead to take on this role in STB New Delhi, particularly in this pivotal moment of anchoring Singapore as the premier lifestyle and business destination for Indian travellers."*

### Lim Kean Bon Marked by Excellence:

Kean Bon's journey within Singapore's public service sector began as an urban planner, contributing to the city's planning authority. In 2015, he made a significant transition to STB's



infrastructure planning and management division focusing on MICE infrastructure planning. His dedication and expertise eventually led him to the SECB team in 2017, where he managed destination bids and account servicing for large scale business meetings and conventions organized by global associations.

Before assuming his leadership role at STB New Delhi, Kean Bon steered STB's Lifestyle Precinct Development team from 2020 to 2023. During this time, he played a crucial role in directing various projects aimed at sustaining the allure of Orchard Road, Singapore's premier lifestyle precinct.

### A Bright Future for Singapore Tourism:

Expressing his enthusiasm for this new role, **Kean Bon** remarked, *"I am excited to join the STB IMESA team and look forward to building on the good work and strong partnerships forged by my predecessor Raymond. Together with my team in New Delhi, we will continue our efforts to promote Singapore and inspire the Indian audience with the sheer breadth of vibrant experiences the city has to offer for leisure and business travellers."*



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