

India's Leading International Travel Magazine

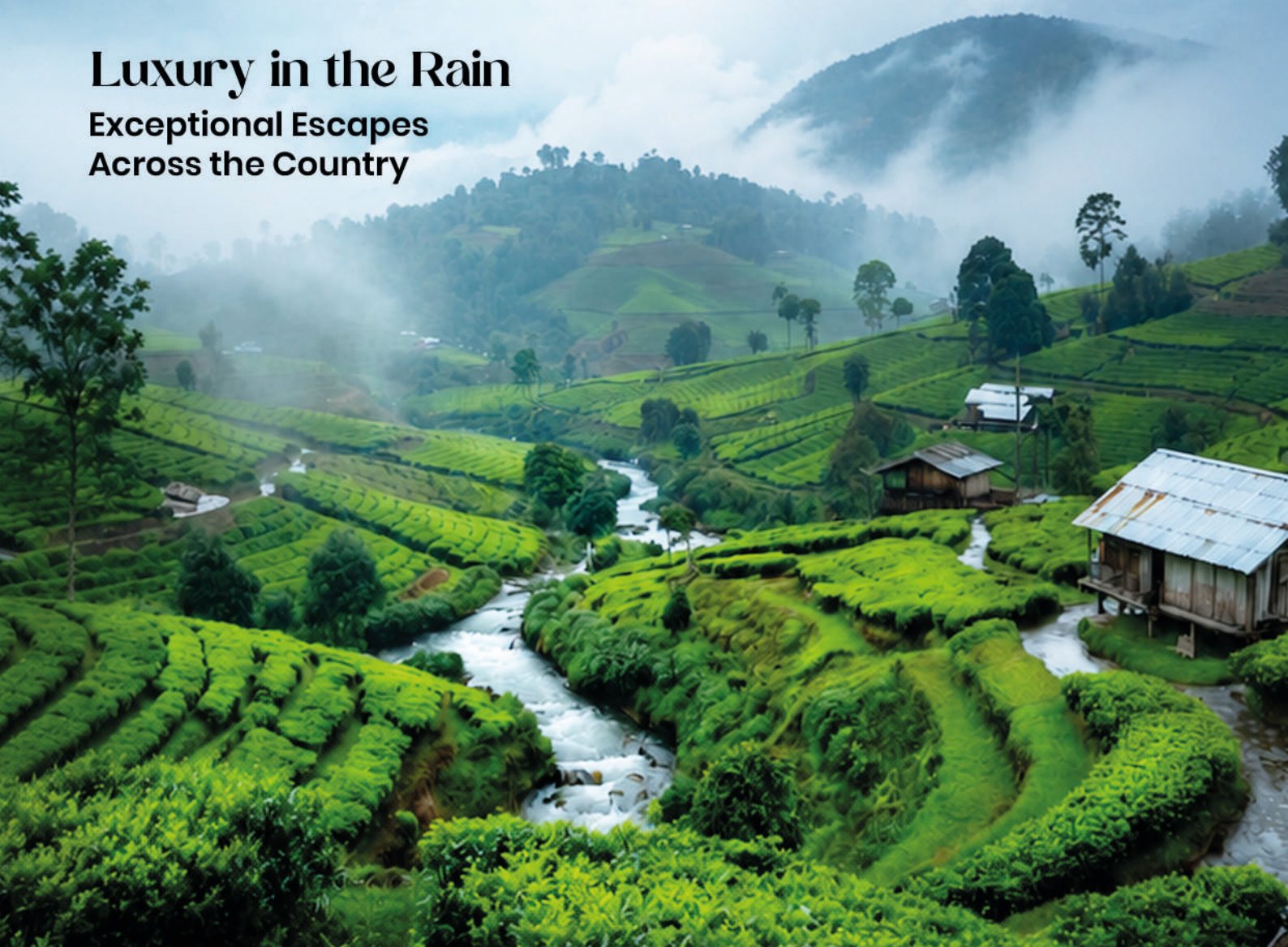
travel mail

When India
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July 2026 Issue
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Luxury in the Rain

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Across the Country**





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Editors note

Dear Reader,

For decades, the monsoon was considered the quiet season for travel. Holiday calendars slowed, destinations waited for clearer skies, and the industry prepared for the next surge of visitors.

That perception is changing.

Today, the rains are no longer seen as an interruption to travel but as an invitation to experience destinations differently. Mist-covered mountains, overflowing waterfalls, lush forests, and quieter escapes are redefining what a memorable journey looks like. Across India, travellers are increasingly embracing the monsoon as a season of discovery rather than hesitation.

This transformation reflects a broader shift taking place across the tourism industry. Destinations are moving beyond seasonal campaigns to create year-round experiences. Community-led initiatives in Meghalaya, the emergence of adventure destinations such as Tons Valley, and the growing popularity of wellness, spiritual, and experiential travel all point towards a tourism landscape that is becoming more diverse and resilient.

The industry itself continues to evolve at an equally impressive pace. From the Ministry of Tourism's strategic initiatives and digital collaborations to innovations in travel technology, aviation, hospitality, and mobility, the focus is no longer simply on attracting more travellers—it is about creating smarter, more meaningful, and more sustainable journeys.

As India's travel ecosystem continues to mature, collaboration, innovation, and authentic experiences are becoming the driving forces behind its growth. Whether it is a remote village welcoming visitors, a new airline route connecting cultures, or technology simplifying every stage of the journey, each development contributes to a stronger and more connected tourism future.

At **Travel Mail**, we remain committed to bringing you these stories—stories that celebrate not only destinations but also the people, ideas, and innovations shaping the future of travel.

Welcome to our Monsoon Special – **July 2026 Issue.**

Happy Reading !

Warm Regards,

Ajay Gupta
Managing Editor – Travel Mail

travel mail

India's Leading Travel Magazine

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

 @etravelmaildelhi

 @travelmail.in

 @travelmail



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Address: 199, CM-1, Office Complex, Jhandewalan, New Delhi - 110055

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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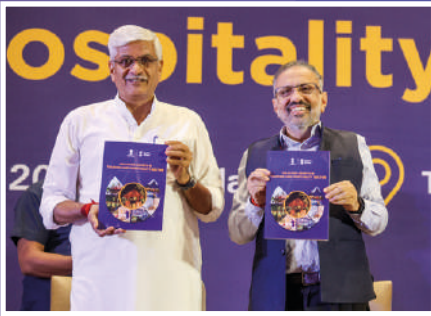
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Ministry of Tourism and NITI Aayog Launch a Report on 'Unlocking Growth in Tourism and Hospitality Sector'



Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with NITI Aayog, today launched the report titled Unlocking Growth in Tourism and Hospitality Sector at a National Workshop in New Delhi. The report presents a comprehensive roadmap to simplify regulations, improve ease of doing business, attract investments and accelerate sustainable growth in India's tourism and hospitality sector.

The report was launched by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture; Shri Rajiv Gauba, Member, NITI Aayog; Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism; and Shri Suman Billa, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries highlighted tourism's role as a key driver of economic growth, employment generation and regional development. They underscored the need for coordinated action between the Central Government, State Governments and industry stakeholders to improve the ease of doing business, strengthen tourism infrastructure, encourage private investment and create an enabling ecosystem for tourism enterprises. They also emphasized the importance of promoting entrepreneurship, supporting local livelihoods, strengthening community participation and advancing sustainable tourism practices across destinations.

Based on a detailed assessment of regulations governing accommodation providers, hospitality establishments, homestays, food and beverage services, tour operators and tourism infrastructure projects, the report identifies key regulatory bottlenecks



affecting investment, project implementation, accommodation capacity and institutional coordination. It recommends measures to simplify regulatory and approval processes, reduce compliance burden, strengthen inter-departmental coordination, expand accommodation capacity, promote tourism entrepreneurship and create an enabling environment for faster tourism infrastructure development and private investment.

Aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the report seeks to strengthen tourism's contribution to economic growth, employment generation and regional development while promoting sustainable, inclusive and globally competitive tourism destinations across the country. The recommendations provide a practical roadmap for enhancing the ease of doing business, accelerating tourism investments and supporting tourism-led growth in the years ahead.

The National Workshop brought together representatives of State Governments, industry associations, hospitality stakeholders, online travel platforms, academic institutions, knowledge partners and Central Ministries. Discussions focused on tourism investment, regulatory



reforms, accommodation capacity, environmental sustainability and the roadmap for tourism-led growth under Viksit Bharat 2047.

The workshop concluded with a shared commitment among stakeholders to work collaboratively towards creating a simpler, more investment-friendly and globally competitive tourism ecosystem that supports India's long-term vision of tourism-led economic growth.



Ministry of Tourism Signs MoU with Google India to Strengthen Digital Promotion of Indian Tourism

Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Tourism signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Google India Pvt. Ltd. to strengthen the digital promotion of India's tourism destinations through the use of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, data-driven insights and capacity building. The MoU was exchanged in the presence of Union Minister for Tourism and Culture, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in New Delhi.

The MoU establishes a framework for collaboration between the Ministry of Tourism and Google India in key areas including digital tourism promotion, knowledge sharing, capacity building and the use of emerging technologies for enhancing visitor engagement. The partnership will leverage Google's expertise across its digital ecosystem to strengthen the visibility of India's tourism destinations, experiences and cultural heritage among domestic and international travellers. The collaboration is non-commercial, non-binding and non-exclusive, with no financial implications for either side.

The event was attended by Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism; Shri Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General (Tourism); senior officials of the Ministry; and Ms. Preeti Lobana, Country Manager and Vice President, Google India, along with representatives from Google India.

Speaking on the occasion, **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** said, *"Digital technologies have the potential to create immersive experiences that can showcase the glory and grandeur of India's cultural sites to audiences across the world. By harnessing cutting-edge digital technologies, we can transform the way travellers discover, experience and engage with India's rich cultural and natural heritage."*

The Minister said that the collaboration reflects the Ministry's commitment to adopting innovative, technology-driven approaches to tourism promotion under the Incredible India initiative. He expressed confidence that the partnership would help strengthen

India's global tourism presence, improve digital outreach, and position the country as a modern, accessible and globally competitive tourism destination.

As part of the collaboration, Google's insights will be leveraged for global travel trends, traveller behaviour and digital engagement patterns to support evidence-based tourism promotion strategies. The partnership also envisages training and capacity-building programmes for Ministry officials on digital marketing tools, campaign optimisation, content creation and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, to enable more targeted, effective and measurable outreach.

The Ministry of Tourism and Google India reaffirmed their shared commitment to leveraging technology and innovation to enhance India's tourism ecosystem and promote the country as a preferred global travel destination.

Government Committed to Reforms to Make India a Globally Competitive Tourism Destination

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

Travel Mail Desk

An Interactive Session on Ease of Doing Business was organized by the Ministry of Tourism in New Delhi with the representatives of tourism and hospitality industry under the chairmanship of **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture**. The meeting brought together leading industry associations, including FAITH, ASSOCHAM, PHDCCI, WTTCL, TGFI, ABTO, CII, IAAPI and FICCI, to deliberate on reforms required to unlock the full growth potential of India's tourism ecosystem.

The Ministry of Tourism made a presentation on its reform agenda and highlighted several initiatives already undertaken, including the delinking of licenses from the Ministry's classification of hospitality units. The consultation provided a platform for industry stakeholders to present key concerns and recommendations aimed at creating a more enabling, competitive and investment-friendly environment for tourism and hospitality businesses across the country.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat emphasised the Government's commitment to reforms and to making India a globally competitive tourism destination. He underlined the importance of continuous engagement with industry stakeholders to identify regulatory bottlenecks and facilitate sustainable sectoral growth through greater ease of doing business.

Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, highlighted the need for simplification of the hotel classification system by shifting from inspection-based assessment to a self-declaration-based assessment, reducing checklist items and mandatory certification requirements in a time-bound manner to reduce regulatory burdens. These proposals were appreciated by industry representatives.

Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining a globally competitive business environment for tourism enterprises. Discussions covered opportunities for rationalisation of visa processes and taxation frameworks, facilitation of investments



through simplified clearances, defining timelines for licenses, onboarding line Ministries and States/UTs for speedy implementation of reforms, and development of tourism infrastructure to support sustained sectoral growth. Industry stakeholders also highlighted the importance of enhanced destination marketing and promotion to further elevate India's visibility in key international markets.

The meeting witnessed extensive deliberations on improving the ease of setting up and operating tourism businesses. Suggestions focused on streamlining approvals and clearances, reducing compliance burdens, promoting digital governance solutions and encouraging greater convergence among regulatory frameworks. Stakeholders appreciated the Government's ongoing efforts towards simplification and recommended further measures to strengthen investor confidence and improve operational efficiency.

Recognising the transformative role of technology in governance, participants discussed innovative digital solutions, including the concept of an Entity Locker for the tourism and hospitality sector, which could facilitate seamless sharing and verification of documents, reduce paperwork and enhance ease of compliance.

The consultation also highlighted the growing importance of data-driven decision-making in tourism planning and investment. Stakeholders underscored the value of reliable and predictable tourism data and suggested

that the Ministry of Tourism maintain a database of hotels, homestays, tour operators, guides and other tourism stakeholders to strengthen the tourism data ecosystem and support evidence-based policy formulation.

Participants also shared perspectives on enhancing the overall visitor experience through continued improvements in visa facilitation, digital platforms, tourism services and travel convenience. Discussions focused on strengthening India's tourism competitiveness through improved connectivity, visitor facilitation measures and the adoption of global best practices.

Special attention was given to emerging growth segments such as live events, experiential tourism, amusement parks and legitimising homestays as a sub-sector. Industry representatives highlighted the significant potential of these segments to generate employment, stimulate local economies and diversify India's tourism offerings. The need for supportive policy frameworks, balanced regulation and quality standards was emphasised to enable sustainable growth in these sectors.

The consultation also explored opportunities for developing tourism hubs, facilitating access to land for tourism projects, promoting innovation in tourism services and strengthening the overall investment ecosystem. Stakeholders reiterated their commitment to partnering with the Government in advancing the vision of a vibrant, resilient and globally competitive tourism sector.

The Ministry of Tourism welcomed the wide-ranging suggestions received during the deliberations and reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with industry associations, State Governments and other stakeholders to advance reforms that enhance the ease of doing business and support the long-term growth of the tourism and hospitality sector.

The consultation reflects the Government's continued focus on fostering a conducive business environment, promoting investment and innovation, and positioning India as a leading global tourism destination through continuous reforms.

Green Initiative to Transport Fly Ash by Railways

Travel Mail Desk

In a review meeting chaired by Union Minister for Railways Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, an important initiative was discussed to enable large-scale transportation of fly ash through the railway network. The objective is simple yet transformative: move fly ash efficiently from power plants to industries where it can be used to build roads, manufacture bricks, produce cement and support infrastructure development across the country. Union Ministers of State for Railways Shri V. Somanna and Shri Ravneet Singh Bittu were also present during the meeting.

Nearly 340 million tonnes of fly ash is generated every year from thermal power plants. For decades, this grey burden sat heavy around the smokestacks. Now, Indian Railways is changing that through a green initiative, creating a dedicated logistics network of specialised containers and rail corridors. This network will transport the waste material from where it is generated to where it is needed.



The beauty of this initiative lies in its simplicity: what the power plant discards, the cement plant treasures. Fly ash, rightly moved and rightly used, is a raw material for cement, concrete,

blocks and boards. More affordable fly ash means cheaper bricks, lower cement prices, and ultimately more accessible housing across urban and rural India alike.

Indian Railways Takes a Major Step to Enhance Passenger Safety with Nationwide Fire Safety Audits at Stations

Travel Mail Desk

Indian Railways will conduct fire safety audits at railway stations across the country to further strengthen safety and security. The initiative will assess existing fire safety systems and identify areas requiring improvement to enhance the safety of passengers and protect railway assets.

The audit will cover all critical safety infrastructure, including station buildings, electrical installations, air-conditioning and ventilation systems, emergency exits, firefighting equipment, water availability, pumping arrangements, and sprinkler systems. The objective is to ensure that railway stations are fully prepared to respond effectively to emergencies, including fire incidents.

The audit will also assess compliance with prescribed fire safety and security standards. Any deficiencies identified during the inspection process will be addressed through prompt corrective measures.



Joint inspection teams comprising officials from various departments will conduct the audits. Assistance from specialized agencies and State Fire Departments will also be sought wherever required. Improvements identified during the audits will be taken up on priority to further strengthen safety preparedness.

Indian Railways remains committed to continuously enhancing safety and security across its network. This fire safety audit initiative marks another important step towards strengthening safety standards and improving emergency preparedness at railway stations.

First Phase of 2026 Char Dham Helicopter Operations concludes successfully

Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Civil Aviation proudly takes note of the safe and successful conduct of helicopter operations during the first phase of the Char Dham Yatra 2026, reaffirming the Government's unwavering commitment to ensuring safe, seamless and reliable air connectivity for the pilgrims.

The first phase of helicopter operations commenced with the opening of the Char Dham Yatra in April 2026 and concluded on 26 June 2026. During this period, approximately 400 helicopter movements were conducted daily. A total of 12,032 shuttle departures facilitated the travel of 67,064 pilgrims, while an additional 2,065 charter operations catered to 11,715 pilgrims, providing safe, reliable and efficient connectivity across the Char Dham sector.

Sharing his views on the successful conduct of this year's operations, **Minister for Civil Aviation Shri Ram Mohan Naidu** said, "Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, our government has accorded special priority to ensuring that every devotee undertaking the Char Dham Yatra is able to travel with greater ease, convenience and safety. Our foremost responsibility is to ensure that every pilgrim completes this sacred journey safely and with complete confidence. Continuous reviews were ensured at multiple levels well before the commencement of this year's Yatra in close coordination with all stakeholders like DGCA, Helicopter Operators and UCADA. And I especially appreciate and thank

the active support extended by Chief Minister Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami for ensuring comprehensive preparations."

Minister for Civil Aviation Shri Ram Mohan Naidu personally chaired multiple high-level review meetings to comprehensively assess operational readiness and safety preparedness. These meetings brought together senior officials from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Airports Authority of India (AAI), Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority (UCADA), India Meteorological Department (IMD), helicopter operators and the Government of Uttarakhand to ensure complete alignment on operational procedures, safety protocols, weather preparedness and emergency response mechanisms.

A high-level meeting under the joint chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation Shri Samir Kumar Sinha and the Chief Secretary, Government of Uttarakhand Shri Anand Bardhan further finalized the comprehensive safety framework for the Yatra. To ensure continuous oversight throughout the pilgrimage season, a mechanism of weekly review meetings was institutionalized under their leadership, enabling timely resolution of operational issues.

Shri Ram Mohan Naidu, further added, "Following the unfortunate incidents reported in previous seasons, we undertook a comprehensive review of every aspect of helicopter operations.

We identified root causes, strengthened regulatory oversight, enhanced air traffic coordination, upgraded operational infrastructure and aligned every stakeholder around one common objective—aviation safety."

The Ministry adopted a multi-layered safety strategy encompassing enhanced air traffic management, surveillance, communication, weather monitoring, pilot competency, infrastructure augmentation and operational oversight.

As part of the enhanced safety framework, Airports Authority of India expedited the publication of dedicated K-Routes for systematic helicopter movement across the valley. The AAI operationalized Air Traffic Control (ATC) services at Sahasradhara and Sersi by strategically deploying Air Traffic Control and Communication, Navigation & Surveillance (CNS) personnel. Land has also been identified for the development of permanent ATC infrastructure at Badrinath and Kedarnath, while interim operational facilities have been established to ensure safe conduct of helicopter operations.

Minister for Civil Aviation Shri Ram Mohan Naidu further added, "Safety in aviation is our utmost priority and there can never be any compromise on it. We have adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards safety violations. Moreover, when it concerns lakhs of devotees undertaking the sacred Char Dham Yatra, safety becomes completely non-negotiable."



Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu launches first 'Easy Connect' flight from Varanasi

Travel Mail Desk

In a significant milestone towards realising the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Minister of Civil Aviation Shri Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu on June 25, 2026 launched India's first 'Easy Connect' flight under the Hub-and-Spoke model from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport at Varanasi. It signifies Government's efforts to transform India into a global aviation hub and provide seamless international connectivity to passengers from Tier-II and Tier-III cities.

The Hub-and-Spoke strategy aims at making India the aviation hub of choice for Indian passengers by 2030 and for the world by 2047. The benefits extend beyond aviation. Improved international connectivity is expected to facilitate trade, tourism, investment and regional economic development. Studies undertaken by the Ministry indicate that aviation hub development could generate approximately 0.4 million direct and indirect jobs and contribute an additional USD 30 billion to India's GDP by 2030. By 2047, the cumulative impact could support approximately 16 million direct and indirect jobs and contribute nearly USD 1.4 trillion to the economy.

Speaking on the occasion, **Civil Aviation Minister Shri Ram Mohan Naidu** said "Today we take a major step forward towards realising our vision of making air travel more accessible and building a

future-ready, self-reliant Indian aviation industry that is efficient, inclusive, and globally competitive."

The Minister informed the gathering by saying, "Our new hub-and-spoke model paves the way for a monumental shift in how our citizens travel—regardless of the city one lives in India, one can begin their international journey from their home city and travel across the globe with ease and confidence, on India's own wings."

Marking the commencement of operations, the Minister presented a commemorative boarding pass to the first few passengers to check in for the inaugural 'Easy Connect' flight.

The event was attended by **Shri Samir Kumar Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; Shri Puneet Kansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; Shri Vipin Kumar, Chairman, Airports Authority of India; Shri Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Air India and other senior officials of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Airports Authority of India, Directorate General of Civil Aviation and the airline operator.**

Under the Hub-and-Spoke model, international passengers complete check-in, immigration and customs formalities at the spoke airport itself, making it the first point of departure for their international journey. For instance, passengers commencing their journey from Varanasi complete all departure formalities at Varanasi before boarding



Civil Aviation Minister
Shri Ram Mohan Naidu

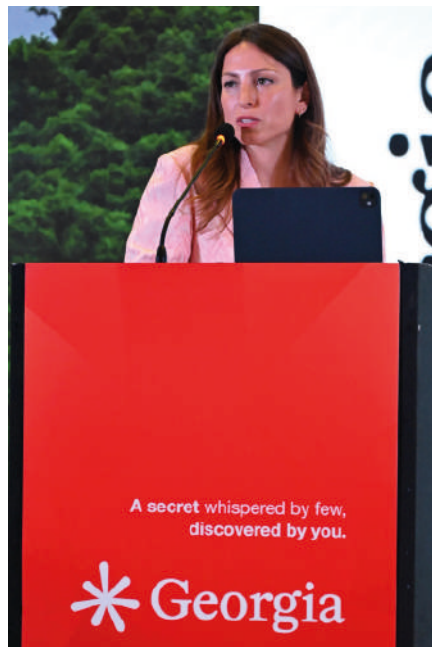
a flight to a designated Indian hub airport such as Delhi.

To ensure the highest standards of security and operational integrity, several safeguards have been incorporated into the model. Both legs of Domestic-International operations are designated as international operations. Separate physical boarding cards bearing appropriate identifiers for domestic (D) and international (I) passengers are issued to prevent passenger intermixing. International passengers travelling under the Hub-and-Spoke framework do not have access to customs declaration facilities at hub airports.

The launch of Hub-and-Spoke international operations from Varanasi marks a major advancement in India's aviation ecosystem and reinforces the Government's commitment to providing inclusive, efficient and globally competitive air connectivity for citizens across the country.



Georgia Deepens Ties with Indian Travel Trade Through Roadshows in India



Travel Mail Desk

The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) successfully concluded its two-city roadshow series in Chennai and Bengaluru, reaffirming India's growing importance as a key source market and spotlighting Georgia as one of the most exciting emerging destinations for Indian travellers.

Centred around the destination's campaign message, "Yeh Dil Phir Jeene Laga," the roadshows showcased Georgia's unique blend of culture, nature, gastronomy, adventure, and warm hospitality.

Often referred to as Europe's Best Kept Secret, Georgia continues to capture the imagination of Indian travellers seeking authentic and enriching travel experiences beyond traditional European destinations.

The events brought together leading travel trade professionals for destination presentations, networking sessions, and one-on-one business meetings. The roadshows also served as a valuable platform for GNTA to engage directly with the travel trade, exchange market insights, and explore new opportunities to further drive tourism growth from India.

The events were graced by H.E. Vakhtang Jaoshvili, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to India, and Counsellor Ketevan Lagvilava, both of whom highlighted the strategic importance of the Indian market and the growing tourism ties between the two countries.

A strong delegation of Georgian tourism partners, including Travel Vibes Georgia, Georgian Travel Group, Travel Door, Arrival DMC, Vector Travel, Kazin DMC, Georgian BUS, Georgia by Car, Nomads of Georgia, Turalux Holiday Travel Company, participated in the roadshows. Through dedicated business meetings, attendees gained deeper insights into Georgia's diverse tourism offerings and tailored travel experiences.

Speaking on the occasion, **Rozalia Jomidava, Chief Specialist, Brand Development Department, Ministry of**

Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Georgian National Tourism Administration, said, "India remains one of Georgia's most promising tourism markets. With a remarkable 40% growth in Indian visitor arrivals last year, we are witnessing increasing interest in Georgia among Indian travellers. We are encouraged by the response received in Chennai and Bengaluru and remain committed to strengthening our engagement with the travel trade while showcasing the experiences that make Georgia a year-round destination."

Munnmunn Marwah, COO, MMGY Think Strawberries, added, "The enthusiasm witnessed across both cities reflects the growing demand for unique international destinations among Indian travellers. Through a strategic combination of trade engagement, marketing initiatives, training programmes, and partnerships, we have been actively building awareness and preference for Georgia in the market. With strong momentum already in place, we are confident that Georgia will continue its growth trajectory and welcome even more Indian travellers in the coming year."

The successful roadshows mark another milestone in GNTA's ongoing efforts to deepen its presence in India. As awareness continues to grow, Georgia is well-positioned to inspire a new generation of Indian travellers seeking unforgettable journeys, meaningful cultural connections, and experiences that truly make them feel that "Yeh Dil Phir Jeene Laga."



DISCOVER
Georgia
*Europe's **best** kept secret*



A secret whispered by few,
discovered by you.

 **Georgia**

HOME GROUND

How Meghalaya Is Turning Local Families Into the Future of Tourism

Travel Mail Desk

When travellers visit a new place, they don't always look for scenic spots. They look for genuine human connections. For years, Meghalaya has offered that warmth, rooted in its rich culture and deep hospitality. Today, that warmth is driving economic growth.

The numbers tell this story clearly. Shillong recently topped Skyscanner's 2025 Report as the most-searched travel destination in India. It is drawing more visitors than ever under its new tourism identity, Symphony in the Mist. Tourist arrivals have surged from roughly 12 lakhs in 2018 to over 16 lakhs today, and the State has set an ambitious target of 21 lakhs by 2028. In April 2026, NITI Aayog's Divya Bharat: A Window to the Soul of India report added further weight to this momentum. It identified Meghalaya as one of India's few year-round travel destinations with no clear off-season. It highlighted the State's living root bridges, extensive cave systems, and indigenous cultural traditions. The message was clear: Meghalaya is no longer a seasonal stop. It is a destination for all seasons.

But recognition alone does not fill a room. As visitor numbers climbed, a serious challenge emerged. Demand was outpacing supply. Many high-potential destinations lacked adequate lodging, and tourist spending went unrealised. The government saw that building massive hotels was not the only answer. Instead, it chose to empower the families who call these hills home. This thinking made the homestay model the cornerstone of Meghalaya's tourism strategy.

The government took the first step in September 2023 by launching the Meghalaya Tourism Homestay Scheme in convergence with the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP). The scheme gives financial assistance of up to 70% for projects

costing up to ₹10 lakhs. This includes a 35% subsidy under PMEGP and an equal 35% from the State's Tourism Department, making it accessible to first-time entrepreneurs and rural households. The response was swift. The scheme sanctioned 900 applications. On the ground, more than 490 homestays became operational, creating 1,000 rooms and around 1,500 livelihood opportunities.

With this proof of success, the government moved to scale. It launched the Chief Minister's Meghalaya Homestay Mission in September 2025, building on the earlier scheme with greater ambition. The Mission targets 3,000 new homestays and 15,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2028. The support structure improved as well. New homestays can receive a subsidy of up to 70%, capped at ₹7 lakhs. Existing homestays can claim an upgradation incentive of up to ₹2 lakhs to improve quality and visitor experience. Early momentum has been strong, with 80 applications already approved across 10 districts, showing participation from every part of the State.

These are not just statistics. For people like Daminot Kharshandi from Ri Bhoi district, a first-generation entrepreneur and scheme beneficiary, this support changed everything. *"The Homestay Scheme gave me the financial confidence to launch my business, which I have successfully expanded," he added. "The State's Meghalaya Tourism branding policy has also brought more footfalls and revenue."* His story is becoming a familiar one across the region. It shows that the right support, reaching the right people, multiplies.

One such story belongs to Donny Esmond Rapsang. His Friendship Homestay at Umden Umsaitprah, Umroi is a story of resilience and community

empowerment. Rapsang once moved between multiple small jobs and businesses to support his family. The Government of Meghalaya's Homestay Scheme opened a new door. With financial assistance of over ₹9 lakh, he began construction in 2023, completed the homestay in 2024, and opened it to the public in 2025. Today, the homestay supports his household and has created opportunities for local youth involved in its construction and operations. His journey, like Daminot's, shows how tourism-based initiatives can strengthen livelihoods, promote self-employment, and empower rural communities.

This wide participation reflects what Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Conrad K. Sangma has consistently emphasised. These initiatives are not isolated interventions. They build an ecosystem where homestay owners, local transport providers, food vendors, and tourist guides all grow together. The State treats smaller homestays as just as vital as large infrastructure, spreading the economic benefits of tourism to the grassroots rather than concentrating them at the top.

Nowhere is this philosophy more visible than in the State's plans for the upcoming 39th National Games, 2027. Meghalaya intends to house visitors in homestays rather than traditional Games Villages, placing local families at the centre of a national stage.

As that moment approaches, the homestay revolution tells a bigger story about how Meghalaya is choosing to grow. By giving ordinary people the tools to succeed, the Government of Meghalaya is doing more than expanding accommodation. It is building something more enduring, a tourism economy where benefits flow directly to the families who have always been its greatest hosts.

Uttarakhand Tourism unveils Tons Valley as India's next Great Adventure Destination



Travel Mail Desk

A hidden Himalayan wilderness of world-class whitewater, ancient forests, mountain trails and authentic cultural experiences is set to welcome adventure travellers from across the globe.

Uttarakhand Tourism has unveiled the Tons Valley as one of India's most promising adventure tourism destinations, opening the doors to a region that combines world-class whitewater rafting, pristine Himalayan wilderness, high-altitude trekking, rich biodiversity and authentic local culture.

Nestled in the western Himalayas, the Tons Valley remains one of India's least explored natural treasures. Home to the mighty Tons River, dense deodar forests, remote mountain villages, alpine meadows and spectacular Himalayan landscapes, the region offers travellers an opportunity to experience a side of Uttarakhand that remains untouched, authentic and deeply immersive.

As global travellers increasingly seek meaningful outdoor experiences beyond traditional tourist circuits, the Tons Valley represents a new frontier for adventure tourism in India.

"The Tons Valley showcases everything that makes Uttarakhand special – breathtaking landscapes, thrilling adventure, vibrant local communities and an unparalleled connection with nature. Through this initiative, we aim to introduce travellers from India and around the world to a destination that delivers authentic Himalayan experiences while promoting sustainable and responsible tourism."

The announcement follows the successful completion of the inaugural Total Tons Expedition, during which international adventurers from the United Kingdom and the United States explored the valley through a combination of rafting, trekking and wilderness camping. Their journey highlighted the region's immense potential as a world-class adventure destination.



WHY TONS VALLEY?

Unlike many established adventure destinations, the Tons Valley offers a rare combination of experiences within a single landscape:

- World-class whitewater rafting on the Tons River, widely regarded as one of India's finest rafting rivers
- Scenic trekking routes through alpine meadows, forests and remote Himalayan terrain
- Wilderness camping under pristine night skies
- Encounters with rich biodiversity including native Himalayan flora and fauna
- Cultural interactions with local communities and traditional Himalayan settlements
- Access to some of the most untouched natural landscapes in northern India

The valley forms part of a larger ecosystem that stretches across forests, rivers, mountain ridges and protected wilderness areas, making it ideal for travellers seeking immersive outdoor experiences.

5 Important Learnings for the Tourism Industry From Recent Travel Restrictions

Travel Mail Desk

Few industries understand the value of movement better than tourism. Every booking—every flight or every hotel stay, and every destination experience depends on confidence. The recent travel restrictions across several parts of the world served as another reminder of how closely tourism is linked to global events. For travellers, a change in airspace availability or an unexpected advisory may alter a holiday plan. For the industry, the ripple effect is much larger. Airlines adjust routes. Tour operators redesign itineraries. Hotels revisit forecasts. Businesses rethink investments. Yet, every disruption brings valuable lessons. The tourism industry has always shown remarkable resilience. The latest developments offer an opportunity to pause and understand what truly matters for long-term growth.

Domestic Tourism Remains India's Strongest Safety Net

Whenever international travel faces turbulence, domestic tourism steps forward. India has witnessed this repeatedly over the last few years. Families rediscovered destinations within driving distance. Pilgrimage circuits witnessed renewed interest. Wellness retreats, wildlife destinations, cultural towns, and rural experiences attracted travellers looking for meaningful journeys closer to home. This is where India's greatest tourism advantage lies. The country offers extraordinary diversity within its own borders. Strengthening regional connectivity, improving destination infrastructure, and promoting lesser-known locations will continue to create stability during uncertain global periods. A healthy domestic tourism ecosystem supports businesses, creates employment, and keeps local economies active regardless of external developments.

Traveller Confidence Has Become the Industry's Most Valuable Currency

Price remains important. Trust has become even more important. Travellers today make decisions differently. They seek clarity before they seek discounts. They value transparency alongside flexibility. They appreciate businesses that communicate honestly during periods of uncertainty. Right from a hotel, an airline, or a travel



Jyoti Mayal
Chairperson, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council

company, confidence is built through communication. Clear information, responsive customer service, and flexible booking policies create reassurance during uncertain times. The businesses that retain customer trust during difficult periods are often the ones that emerge stronger when conditions improve.

Adaptability Is a Requirement & Not A Mere Competitive Advantage

The tourism industry once planned months with relative certainty. Today's environment demands a different approach. Market conditions can change quickly. Travel patterns can shift within days. Consumer sentiment can evolve even faster. This reality requires organisations to become more agile. Businesses that can adjust products, redesign itineraries, manage disruptions efficiently, and respond quickly to changing conditions are better positioned for long-term success. Adaptability in 2026 extends beyond operations. It also includes leadership mindset, business planning, and organisational culture.

Technology Matters But People Matter Even More

Technology has transformed every aspect of tourism. From digital bookings and contactless services to AI-enabled customer support and predictive analytics, innovation is helping businesses operate more efficiently. Yet, tourism remains a people-driven industry. Technology can simplify

processes. It can analyse trends. It can support decision-making. Human beings continue to deliver empathy, judgement, cultural understanding, and personalised service. This is why skilling has become one of the most important priorities for the future.

Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council, suggests that professionals entering the sector must be equipped with digital capabilities alongside communication skills coupled with problem-solving abilities and customer engagement expertise. At the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council, we see this transition every day. The future workforce must be comfortable with technology while remaining deeply human in its approach.

Collaboration Is the Industry's Greatest Strength

Tourism operates through a vast network of interconnected stakeholders. Governments, airlines, hotels, tourism boards, skilling institutions, transport providers, and local communities all play a role in shaping the traveller experience. Recent challenges demonstrated the value of coordinated action. When stakeholders communicate effectively and work toward common objectives, the sector responds more efficiently to disruption. Future growth will depend increasingly on collaboration. Strong partnerships create stronger destinations. Shared planning creates better outcomes for travellers and businesses alike.

End Note

Tourism has always been an industry built on optimism. People will continue to travel. They will continue to explore new destinations, seek new experiences, and connect with different cultures. The question for the industry is how prepared it will be for the next unexpected challenge. The recent travel restrictions have reinforced a few enduring truths. Domestic tourism creates resilience. Trust drives decision-making. Skilled people remain central to service excellence. Technology works best when paired with human understanding. Collaboration strengthens the entire ecosystem. India possesses every ingredient needed to become one of the world's leading tourism destinations. The focus now must be on building a sector that is agile, skilled, collaborative, and ready for whatever comes next.

Visit Dubai Launches India-Specific WhatsApp Channel to Bring the Best of Dubai Closer to Indian Travellers

Travel Mail Desk

Reinforcing its commitment to engaging Indian travellers through digital-first initiatives, The Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Visit Dubai), part of the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), has launched the Visit Dubai India WhatsApp Channel – a market-specific WhatsApp Channel created by Visit Dubai for an international audience.

Created exclusively for the Indian market, the channel serves as a dedicated hub for real-time updates, travel inspiration, destination news, exclusive offers, major events, hidden gems, and new experiences across the city.

India remains one of Dubai's largest source markets, playing a significant role in the city's tourism growth. The launch of the channel reflects Visit Dubai's ongoing efforts to connect directly with Indian audiences through platforms that are accessible, engaging, and part of their everyday digital lives.

Followers will receive a curated stream of content showcasing the breadth



of experiences Dubai has to offer, from iconic attractions and cultural happenings to dining, entertainment, shopping, seasonal events, and new openings.

Travel trade partners, media, and consumers can follow the Visit Dubai India WhatsApp Channel to discover the latest developments, events, and experiences across Dubai.

Jamaica launches 10x10x10 Tourism Vision to drive Massive Growth and Workforce Empowerment

Travel Mail Desk

Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett, has launched a bold new strategic blueprint for the nation's visitor economy: the '10x10x10' Vision, targeting 10 million annual visitors and US\$10 billion in total tourism earnings within the next decade.

Jamaica is also rolling out Tourism 3.0, a groundbreaking framework designed to transform the island's tourism landscape. Having achieved its previous ambitious "5 x 5 x 5" plan by reaching 4.5 million visitors and \$4.3 billion in earnings in just four years, the island is now channelling its momentum inward.

"Now it is time for reimagining," said **Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett**. Tourism 3.0 represents a new direction for Jamaica—one that places as much attention on the people behind the tourism experience as the visitors who come to enjoy it.

This pivotal shift moves the focus from solely tracking visitor arrivals to prioritising workforce empowerment, local community enrichment, and long-term economic sustainability. For global travellers, this evolution means elevated



service standards, vastly expanded authentic culinary offerings, and deeper, community-driven cultural experiences.

A robust US\$5 billion development pipeline is slated to deliver 15,000 to 20,000 new rooms over the next five to ten years. To meet sustained global demand, major airline partners are significantly scaling up service from key international transit hubs: Porter Airlines will debut new nonstop routes to Montego Bay from Toronto Pearson, Ottawa, and Hamilton airports, adding

nearly 5,000 seats for the upcoming winter season. Strategic frequency increases via Wingo from Latin America and expanded flight schedules from the United Kingdom via Virgin Atlantic will further boost visitor arrivals.

"We can never underestimate the power of our travel specialists who champion Jamaica every day to global consumers," added **Director of Tourism Donovan White**. "To achieve this new target, we will be leaning on them even more to attract these numbers to the destination."

Why Krabi Offers More Than a Traditional Destination Wedding

Travel Mail Desk

For couples seeking a wedding that feels deeply personal and a honeymoon that unfolds seamlessly after the vows, Krabi offers a rare balance of privacy, natural beauty, ease of access, and understated luxury.

Here are the top reasons why this coastal corner of Thailand continues to resonate with couples planning intimate celebrations.

Because Nature Creates the Perfect Backdrop: Forget over-styled ballrooms and predictable banquet settings. Barefoot ceremonies unfold on untouched beaches, vows are exchanged against dramatic limestone cliffs rising from the Andaman Sea, and candlelit dinners drift effortlessly into slow tropical nights. Towering karsts, turquoise water, and sunsets that linger over the coastline give every celebration a cinematic quality without feeling staged.

Because Discretion is Non-Negotiable: One of the defining shifts in modern weddings is the move toward intimate celebrations. Couples are increasingly prioritising privacy and meaningful



experiences over scale — and Krabi naturally lends itself to that philosophy. Hidden coves, private villas, and low-density beachfront resorts create an atmosphere that feels intimate rather than over-programmed. At Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, that sense of exclusivity is elevated through deeply personalised service. Couples work closely with dedicated wedding planners who oversee every detail — from venue selection and ceremony styling to

bespoke menus and cultural traditions — ensuring the celebration feels seamless, private, and entirely their own.

Because Indian weddings are unique: Indian weddings are multi-day affairs, rich in tradition, emotion, and togetherness. In Krabi, that scale of celebration feels immersive rather than overwhelming, especially with all-inclusive buyout options that allow families to celebrate privately and seamlessly over several days. At Phulay Bay, the venues are designed to feel connected to the landscape. Beach ceremonies unfold against uninterrupted views of the Andaman Sea, while Sala Srichan — a pitched-roof pavilion illuminated by candlelight — creates an unforgettable setting for sunset vows and evening festivities. For Indian weddings in particular, the resort offers tailored wedding experiences thoughtfully designed around multi-day celebrations, accommodating everything from traditional ceremonies and customised menus to family gatherings and post-wedding experiences.

That balance is what gives Krabi its staying power. The destination delivers privacy and refined hospitality without losing the character of the place itself, something increasingly rare in luxury travel today.

The Royal Tank Museum A symbol of Jordan's Military Legacy



Travel Mail Desk

Standing proudly in the heart of Amman, the Royal Tank Museum has emerged as one of the region's most remarkable cultural and educational landmarks, offering visitors an immersive journey through military history, technological evolution, and Jordan's enduring legacy of courage and patriotism.

Recognised as the first specialised tank museum in the region, the museum spans over 20,000 square metres and houses an extraordinary collection of more than 158 tanks and armoured vehicles. Designed to international museum standards, the

destination combines history with cutting-edge interactive storytelling tools, creating an engaging and educational experience for both local and international visitors.

Currently ranked among the top attractions in Amman, with an excellent visitor rating of 4.9 out of 5 and ranked number five among 129 destinations in the city, the Royal Tank Museum continues to strengthen its position as a leading cultural destination in Jordan.

Driven by a mission to collect, restore, preserve, and exhibit military tanks and armoured vehicles, the museum aims

to educate visitors on the significant role played by the Jordan Armed Forces in shaping modern Jordan amid global conflicts and historical transformations. Through its carefully curated exhibitions, visitors gain a deeper understanding of military history while exploring the evolution of warfare technologies and battlefield strategies.

More than a museum, The Royal Tank Museum stands as a living tribute to Jordan's military heritage, technological advancement, and national identity, preserving stories of courage and sacrifice for generations to come.

Tourism Australia Strengthens Business Events Presence in India with New Appointment and Boosted Bid Fund

Travel Mail Desk

Tourism Australia's dedicated business events division, Business Events Australia, has strengthened its presence in India with the appointment of **Sharmishtha Patange as Business Events Manager – India**. Sharmishtha will support the implementation of Business Events Australia's distribution strategies and partnerships across India's MICE industry while working closely with key customers and stakeholders to drive business events and incentive travel to Australia.

The appointment comes as Business Events Australia expands its focus on the Indian market and introduces new support for events from India through its Business Events Bid Fund Program (BFP). The program is designed to help event planners and corporate clients choose Australia for large-scale business events and incentive travel by providing financial assistance towards event delivery costs. For the Indian market, new subvention funding has been introduced for short-term incentive groups of at least 400 delegates travelling to Australia before 31 May 2027. The funding can be used



Sharmishtha Patange
as Business Events Manager – India

to offset on-ground expenses such as accommodation, venue hire and transport, making it easier and more attractive for organisations to host incentive events in Australia.

India continues to be a strong growth market for Australia's business events sector. According to Tourism Research Australia's latest International Visitor Survey data, business events visitation from India increased by 9 per cent year-on-year in 2025, with 44,417 business delegates travelling to

Australia. Total expenditure grew by 12 per cent year-on-year, reaching nearly AUD 279 million.

Speaking about the growing potential of the India business events market and Tourism Australia's continued investment in the sector, **Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager – India, Tourism Australia**, said "India is a critical growth market for Tourism Australia, driven by improved bilateral relationships and the future scale of the market. We're thrilled to support short-term event bids from India via our Bid Fund Program and nurture key customer relationships through the support of a new dedicated Business Events resource. By doubling down on our Bid Fund Program and placing a dedicated expert on the ground, we are ensuring that Australia's incentive offering remains top-of-mind for planners and corporate clients in India."

For more information on the Business Events Bid Fund Program and incentive opportunities in Australia, planners and corporate clients can visit the Business Events Australia website or contact Sharmishtha Patange at spatange@tourism.australia.com.

Baden-Württemberg Launches Dedicated Tourism Initiatives in India, Inviting Travellers to Discover the Diversity of Southwest Germany

Travel Mail Desk

Baden-Württemberg, Germany's dynamic state in the southwest, has launched dedicated tourism initiatives in India as part of its efforts to engage one of the world's fastest-growing outbound travel markets. Through a series of targeted trade and public relations activities in partnership with AVIAREPS India, the destination aims to build awareness among Indian travellers and the travel trade, while showcasing its rich diversity of experiences spanning culture, nature, wellness, gastronomy, shopping, innovation and luxury.

Positioning itself as a premium destination for culturally curious and high-net-worth travellers, Baden-Württemberg offers a unique blend of world-renowned attractions, picturesque landscapes and authentic experiences. From fairytale castles and historic cities to automotive excellence, Michelin-starred dining and wellness escapes, the destination invites Indian travellers to discover a more vibrant side of Germany.



Commenting on Baden-Württemberg's growing focus on India, **Christine Schönhuber, Managing Director, Tourism Marketing GmbH Baden-Württemberg**, said "With its growing middle class and strong desire to travel, India is a market with enormous potential for Baden-Württemberg, and one in which we will be stepping up our efforts in the future. I've already had the opportunity this year to learn

firsthand about the interests of Indian travellers and was impressed by their enthusiasm for our destinations and offerings. Baden-Württemberg stands out for vacation travel with its world-famous natural landscapes and cultural heritage, but it is also a major MICE destination."

Adding to this, **Ellona Pereira, General Manager, AVIAREPS India**, said "Indian travellers today are looking beyond traditional European itineraries and are increasingly seeking destinations that offer authenticity, immersive experiences and a strong sense of place. Baden-Württemberg answers this demand through its unique blend of offerings. From iconic attractions and scenic landscapes to world-class shopping and enriching local experiences, the destination offers something for every kind of traveller. This partnership with Baden-Württemberg marks an exciting new chapter for AVIAREPS as we work to place this diverse and experience-rich region of Germany firmly on the Indian traveller's map."

Korea Tourism Organization Hosts Successful MICE Roadshow 2026 in Mumbai

Travel Mail Desk

The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) India successfully hosted the Korea MICE Roadshow 2026 in Mumbai, bringing together key stakeholders from India's travel trade and corporate sector to explore Korea's expanding opportunities in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry.

As Korea continues to strengthen its position as a leading MICE destination in Asia, the roadshow highlighted the country's world-class convention infrastructure, innovative event experiences, seamless accessibility, and comprehensive support programs. Backed by state-of-the-art venues, smart city initiatives, rich cultural experiences, and strong government support, Korea is increasingly attracting



international meetings, conventions, and incentive groups from around the world.

During the event, KTO presented its extensive support framework for Indian MICE groups, including the highly popular Korea MICE Group Visa Program, which offers visa fee waivers, expedited processing, and simplified documentation procedures for eligible groups. Attendees were also introduced to KTO's customized MICE Support Program 2026, which provides a wide range of benefits tailored to group size and requirements.

These support measures include destination experience fees, souvenirs, official dinner support, cultural performances, charter bus arrangements, K-pop experience booths, K-food trucks, welcome receptions, team-building activities, and professionally produced trip highlight videos. The program is designed to help organizers create memorable and impactful experiences while maximizing value for participants.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Myong Kil Yun, Regional Director, India & SAARC Countries, Korea Tourism Organization**, said "Korea is not just a destination for business events; it is a place where business, culture, innovation, and unforgettable experiences come together. We are proud to welcome the recent group from India and showcase the many possibilities Korea offers for the MICE industry. The strong response from our Indian partners reflects the growing confidence and potential of this market. We believe this is only the beginning, and we look forward to welcoming even larger groups, more impactful events, and deeper collaborations in the years ahead. Together, we will continue to create exceptional MICE experiences that strengthen the friendship and partnership between India and Korea."

A special highlight of the roadshow was the felicitation of Indian actress and Korea Tourism Honorary Ambassador Ms. Priyanka Mohan, who was officially appointed by KTO on June 1, 2026, during a ceremony held at the KTO Seoul Centre, HiKR Ground.

As part of her ambassadorial engagement, Ms. Priyanka recently participated in a specially curated familiarization (FAM) trip to Seoul and Gyeongju, where she experienced Korea's diverse tourism offerings firsthand. Her itinerary included immersive encounters with K-beauty, Korean cuisine, traditional markets, cultural heritage sites, and contemporary lifestyle attractions, offering a comprehensive glimpse into Korea's unique blend of tradition and innovation.

Addressing the audience, **Ms. Priyanka Mohan** shared "Korea holds a special place in my heart. My time there, both during my shoot and on this recent visit, has given me memories I will always cherish. The people, the culture, the food, and the warmth I experienced have stayed with me long after I left. I've also been fortunate to make some wonderful friends there, which has made my connection to Korea even more special. It's a place that continues to inspire me, and I look forward to returning again and again. I am truly honoured to have been appointed as the Honorary Ambassador for Korea Tourism in India. It is a privilege and responsibility that I deeply value, and I look forward to doing my best to promote Korea's rich culture, beautiful destinations, and unique experiences to Indian travellers. Thank you to the KTO team for hosting me this year and making this experience so memorable."

Through the Korea MICE Roadshow 2026, KTO reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening India-Korea tourism and business event exchanges.

Consulate General of Israel in Mumbai Celebrated Israel's 78th Independence Day and Announced Historic Shivaji Maharaj Statue Initiative in Israel

Travel Mail Desk

In a landmark gesture highlighting the deep friendship between India and Israel, Israel's Consul General, Yaniv Revach, announced an initiative to establish a **statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Israel**, a project being advanced in close cooperation with the Government of Maharashtra. He also expressed his sincere appreciation to **Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Devendra Fadnavis** for his enthusiastic support and commitment to helping bring this historic initiative to life, reflecting the mutual respect and admiration between the peoples of India and Israel.

The announcement was made during the Consulate General of Israel's celebration of Israel's 78th Independence Day, held at The St. Regis Mumbai, where the Hon'ble Minister of Culture, Shri Ashish Shelar, attended as Guest of Honour alongside senior government officials, diplomats, business leaders, media representatives, cultural figures, and friends of Israel from across Western India. The Israel Ministry



A special culinary collaboration featured renowned Israeli chef Avi Razon, who worked together with the culinary team of The St. Regis Mumbai to create an exclusive menu combining Israeli flavours with premium Indian ingredients, offering guests a unique fusion of both culinary traditions.

reflects our deep respect for India's heritage and the close ties between our peoples."

The Consul General also highlighted Israel's resilience and continued success despite the challenges of recent years, emphasizing the strength of Israeli society, its innovation-driven economy, and the growing cooperation between Israel and India across different fields.



of Tourism team in Mumbai, led by Galit Hoffman, Consul for Tourism Affairs, also participated in the event.

This year's celebration highlighted the growing friendship between Israel and India through a unique combination of cuisine, music and shared creativity.

The evening also featured a unique performance by JAMAN, an Israeli ensemble that combines music, rhythm, lights and movement. Guests received specially designed drumsticks and became active participants in a dynamic show that blended Israeli and Indian symbols, culture and traditions in a shared celebration of creativity and friendship.

Commenting on the occasion, **Consul General Yaniv Revach** said "As we celebrate Israel's 78th Independence Day, we also celebrate the strong and growing friendship between Israel and India. The initiative to establish a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Israel

Hon'ble Minister of Cultural Affairs, Government of Maharashtra, Shri Ashish Shelar, said "On Israel's 78th Independence Day, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the people of Israel. India and Israel share a strong partnership founded on trust, innovation, and mutual respect. Maharashtra takes special pride in its historic ties with the Bene Israel community, which symbolizes the deep cultural bond between our peoples. May the friendship between India, Maharashtra, and Israel continue to flourish and create new avenues for cooperation and shared progress."

This year's celebration demonstrated how food, music and shared experiences can bring people closer together and reflected the deep and growing friendship between the peoples of Israel and India.

India Emerges as Virginia's Largest Overseas Tourism Market as Virginia Tourism Corporation Launches 2026 Trade Mission



for outdoor adventure and superior luxury stays, while our tantalising culinary offerings and immersive cultural and historical experiences ensure there is always something new and exciting to discover. We are thrilled to be here and show more Indians the exciting potential of a Virginia holiday, especially on the eve of America's 250th anniversary."

In addition to travel trade business meetings, Johannesen will conduct interviews with trade media representatives to illustrate the Commonwealth's extensive tourism assets to prospective travellers. Virginia Tourism Corporation | 901 E. Cary St. – 9th Floor | Richmond, VA | virginia.org



"Trade and media missions boost the profile of Virginia and enhance its position in the global tourism market," said Johannesen. "Through face-to-face meetings we can really showcase our extraordinary tourism experiences and help build strong, lasting relationships with tour operators, travel agents and media representatives from around the world."

In 2024, India was Virginia's largest overseas market for inbound tourism with more than 69,000 visitors who spent \$124 million in The Commonwealth. Estimates for 2025 visitation numbers point to a decrease in Indian visitors to Virginia with total inbound visitation at 65,295.

Additionally, preliminary spending data shows Indian visitors spent approximately \$112 million in Virginia in 2025. While visitation by Indian travellers to Virginia in 2025 is down, as is Indian visitation to the U.S. as a whole, visitor volume and spending from Indian travellers have grown significantly in recent years.

In 2019, India ranked fifth in visitor volume for Virginia, behind Canada, the UK, China, and Germany. By 2025, India has moved up to first place, trailing only Canada. This rapid growth and increasing interest in Virginia make India an attractive market for the state's tourism efforts. Virginia Tourism Corporation has maintained Sartha Global Marketing LLP as in-country representatives since 2018.

Travel Mail Desk

Virginia tourism partners and representatives from the Virginia Tourism Corporation will conduct a five-day tourism marketing mission in India from June 1 to June 5, 2026. Managing Director of Global Markets for Virginia Tourism Corporation, Heidi Johannesen, will be accompanied by representatives from Visit Fairfax, Luray Caverns, Visit Williamsburg and the Virginia Tourism Corporation. The delegation, led by Sartha Global Marketing LLP, will visit Mumbai and New Delhi.

Between one-on-one business meetings and hosted networking events, the delegation will meet with more than 100 representatives of the Indian travel trade and media over the course of the mission, seeking to further tourism and travel connections between India and Virginia. Virginia, known for its iconic

'Virginia is for Lovers' brand, which speaks to a visitor's love of travel with those they love, is looking to attract more holidaymakers from India to Virginia.

The state on the U.S. East Coast is an attractive travel destination for tourists from around the world, and India ranks as a top overseas inbound market for Virginia. From the famous Shenandoah National Park and the Blue Ridge Mountains in the west, to the long sandy beaches along the Atlantic coast and the Chesapeake Bay in the east, there is a wide range of attractions, culinary hotspots and sites of significant American history across the entire state. *"Virginia truly is for lovers – lovers of life, and memorable times with friends and family,"* said Heidi Johannesen.

"Our scenic beauty and diverse landscape make for the ideal backdrop

Trek-First Travel Planning Gains Momentum as Indian Travellers Seek Cooler Escapes this Summer, Reports Agoda

Travel Mail Desk

As temperatures rise this summer, Indian travellers are increasingly considering destinations that offer easy access to trekking routes and outdoor experiences. According to digital travel platform Agoda, accommodation searches for mountain destinations such as Leh, Kasol and McLeod Ganj have risen significantly compared to last year, driven largely by travellers from metro cities.

Leh, set in the Trans-Himalayan region of Ladakh, witnessed a 143% increase in searches. Home to high-altitude trekking routes, including the Markha Valley and Lasermo La, among others, Leh appeals to adventure seekers seeking challenging terrain and unique landscapes. Searches from New Delhi and Mumbai-based travellers grew by 140% and 158%, respectively, compared to last year, while searches from Hyderabad increased by 106%.

Kasol follows closely, seeing a 126% increase in searches from India compared to the previous year. The picturesque hotspot is known for its access to trails like Kheerganga and Tosh Valley, as well as its scenic Parvati Valley location. Key cities with an



increase in travel interest include New Delhi, with accommodation searches increasing by 129% year-on-year, as well as Chandigarh, which saw a 178% increase in searches.

Additionally, travellers are also showing increasing interest in McLeod Ganj and the surrounding areas, which offer trekking-focused experiences along scenic routes in the Dhauladhar range like Triund, Kareri Lake, and Indrahhar Pass.

This shift reflects a broader evolution in how travellers are approaching trip planning, with outdoor accessibility becoming a primary consideration rather than an afterthought. The rise of destinations with accessibility to popular

trekking trails indicates that travellers are moving beyond traditional itineraries and seeking destinations that offer immediate access to nature-based activities.

Gaurav Malik, Country Director, Indian Subcontinent & Indian Ocean Islands, Agoda said, *"The decisions of Indian travellers today are increasingly shaped by experiences and not just the destination itself. Destinations like Leh, Kasol and McLeod Ganj are emerging as strong choices because they offer both cooler climates and immersive outdoor experiences. At Agoda, we are making it easier for travellers to discover and plan these getaways with a wide range of accommodation options, great value deals and a seamless booking experience."*

Through its platform, Agoda enables travellers to plan their journeys seamlessly with access to over 6 million holiday properties worldwide, more than 130,000 flight routes, and over 300,000 activities, all available in one place. Travellers looking to explore mountain escapes and nature-focused destinations can discover and book their trips easily through Agoda's website and mobile app.

redBus Data Shows GenZ Leads India's Spiritual Travel Segment with 53% Share

Travel Mail Desk

India's spiritual travel segment continues to see strong participation across generations, with younger travellers becoming increasingly visible across key routes and destinations to religious and pilgrimage destinations. Data from redBus, the world's largest online bus ticketing platform, indicates that Gen Z and young travellers now account for more than 53% of travellers to spiritual destinations in FY26. This marks a notable rise over the corresponding period in FY25, making them a significant cohort in this category.

Gen Z and young travellers now account for nearly 53% of travel to spiritual destinations in India, making them the largest cohort in this category. Men account for nearly 69% of these travellers, while women contribute around 31%. This reflects a stronger youth presence in a segment that has long



held deep cultural, familial and personal significance in India.

Spiritual travel continues to remain closely linked to family traditions, cultural continuity and personal belief among younger travellers. Industry reports from 2024 estimate that spiritual tourism contributes nearly 60% of domestic tourism in India, underlining the scale and relevance of the segment.

Gen Z's growing participation does not change the essence of travel to spiritual destinations. It reinforces its continued place in India's cultural and community life. As younger travellers become more active on these routes, the segment is gaining wider visibility across age groups, supported by easier access, digital planning and intergenerational relevance. For young India, these journeys remain anchored in tradition, family, culture and a deeper personal connection to spiritual destinations.

Yatri Partners with Google Maps & Where Is My Train to Integrate Real-Time Mumbai Local Train Updates

Travel Mail Desk

Yatri, the official partner for Mumbai Local Trains under Indian Railways, are partnering to integrate real-time Mumbai local train updates on Google Maps and Where Is My Train. This integration allows millions of daily local train commuters to access real-time train data, helping them eliminate travel uncertainty and better plan their daily commutes.

To ensure commuters receive trustworthy information, Yatri combines proprietary GPS systems with direct railway control room integrations. This delivers precise, source-verified updates on live train locations and ETAs, train delays, cancellations, or real-time schedule adjustments, and platform changes to prevent last-minute rushes. The rollout spans Mumbai's entire suburban rail network, backed by a robust, deeply integrated real-time data infrastructure built by Yatri to handle the scale and



complexity of one of the world's busiest transit systems. This experience is now available on Google Maps and will soon be launched on the Where is My Train app.

"In a city where more than 8 million people rely on the local train network every day, even a minor delay can

disrupt entire schedules. We have focused on building infrastructure that reflects the real-time state of the network with high accuracy. By bringing this intelligence to platforms like Google Maps and Where Is My Train, we are significantly scaling up real-time coverage so commuters can make faster, more confident decisions every day," said **Reeva Sakaria, Co-Founder of Yatri.**

"Our goal has always been to make Google Maps the most helpful and reliable companion for everyday journeys in India by building tailored, India-first experiences and collaborating deeply with the local ecosystem. We're thrilled to collaborate with Yatri to provide Mumbai's commuter community with an enhanced real-time tracking experience that brings greater predictability to their daily travel," said **Lalitha Ramani, GM - Google Maps, India.**

Digi Yatra Crosses 100 Million Usages, Strengthening India's Privacy-First Digital Identity Ecosystem

Travel Mail Desk

Digi Yatra, India's decentralised digital identity platform, has crossed a landmark 100 million passenger journeys, underscoring the rapid adoption of seamless, contactless, and consent-based travel across the country's aviation ecosystem. With over 24 million app downloads, the platform continues to see strong momentum as passengers increasingly embrace secure, privacy-first digital travel experiences.

Built on a privacy-by-design architecture, Digi Yatra empowers passengers with greater control over their personal information. The platform leverages Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI) principles, ensuring that user credentials remain encrypted, consent-driven, and decentralised, without the need for centralised storage of personal data.

Suresh Khadakhbavi, CEO, Digi Yatra Foundation, said, *"100+ million passenger journeys reflect the growing trust passengers have placed in Digi Yatra's privacy-first approach to*



digital identity. As we expand to more airports, introduce additional regional languages, advance international interoperability, and explore new applications beyond aviation, our focus remains on building infrastructure that is secure, inclusive, and user-controlled. The opportunity ahead is to create trusted digital identity frameworks that can support multiple sectors while upholding the principles of privacy, consent, and interoperability."

As part of its expansion roadmap to further strengthen inclusivity and

accessibility, Digi Yatra (which already supports 11 regional languages) prepares to introduce support for all 22 Indian languages by 2027. The Foundation is also advancing India's vision for contactless international travel. Following the successful completion of an IATA-aligned international travel proof of concept, Digi Yatra is preparing to commence live international trials in collaboration with ecosystem stakeholders. The initiative aims to enable seamless and secure international journeys through verifiable credentials and consent-based identity sharing while maintaining user privacy.

Beyond aviation, Digi Yatra continues to explore opportunities to extend its privacy-first digital identity framework to other sectors. During the second half of 2026 and early 2027, the Foundation plans to evaluate and pilot select non-aviation use cases, leveraging secure digital identity, biometric authentication, and consent-based credential sharing to simplify user experiences while maintaining the highest standards of privacy and trust.

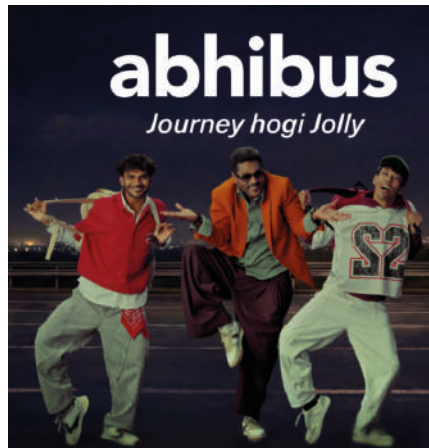
AbhiBus Launches Industry-First Roadside Assistance for Bus Breakdowns on Highways

Travel Mail Desk

AbhiBus (ixigo's bus business), one of India's leading online bus ticketing platforms, today announced the launch of an industry-first Roadside Assistance program designed to support travellers in the event of a bus breakdown during their journey.

Under this initiative, if a bus booked through AbhiBus experiences a breakdown en route, the platform will arrange a cab within 45 minutes, ensuring passengers can continue their journey with minimal disruption and greater peace of mind. The service will be provided at no additional cost to travellers, with AbhiBus bearing the entire cost of the alternate transport.

Bus travel has witnessed significant growth across India, particularly in Tier II and Tier III markets. While bus operators continue to maintain high service standards, unforeseen mechanical or service-related issues can occasionally occur. With the launch of Roadside Assistance, AbhiBus is extending its responsibility beyond ticket confirmation and stepping in when travellers need support the most.



By introducing guaranteed cab support within 45 minutes during breakdowns, AbhiBus aims to address one of the biggest anxieties associated with bus travel being stranded on the highway. The initiative reflects the company's continued focus on building greater reliability, accountability and trust in intercity bus travel across India.

Commenting on the launch, **Rohit Sharma, COO, AbhiBus**, said, "Consumer empathy is at the heart of everything we do. We go to great lengths to partner with trusted

operators and help travellers make informed choices through quality and safety-focused features. At the same time, we recognise that unexpected disruptions like bus breakdowns can be stressful, especially during long or late-night journeys. With Roadside Assistance, we're ensuring that our customers are never left stranded. For us, the travel experience doesn't end at booking- it continues throughout the journey, and we're committed to being there when our customers need us the most."

The company has also launched a new campaign featuring iconic dancer and actor Prabhu Deva to promote its Roadside Assistance service.

The Roadside Assistance program strengthens AbhiBus' commitment to delivering a seamless and dependable travel experience and complements its broader suite of customer-first offerings. These include Abhi Assured, which provides up to 150% refunds; the Filter New Bus feature, which enables users to choose between newer and older buses before booking; and 360-degree bus photos that allow travellers to view the actual bus interior and exterior before confirming their seats.

CLEARTRIP LAUNCHES 'CREATORS CLUB' TO TURN TRAVEL INSPIRATION INTO A COMMERCE FLYWHEEL

Travel Mail Desk

Cleartrip, a Flipkart company and one of India's fastest-growing online travel platforms, has announced the launch of Cleartrip Creators Club, a structured affiliate programme that integrates creator content directly into the booking journey, turning influence into a measurable, monetisable commerce channel.

The Cleartrip Creators Club moves away from the traditional pay-per-content model, embedding creators directly into the booking journey through a performance-based commission structure, making them revenue partners, not just amplifiers of it. With no minimum follower threshold and eligibility determined by engagement rather than audience size, the programme is open to creators across all tiers and categories. By design, the wider the creator base, the stronger the programme gets..

Pallavi Saxena, Chief Marketing & Revenue Officer, Cleartrip, said, "Gen Z has fundamentally changed



how travel decisions are made. The intent and inspiration for a trip now begin on a social feed, and creators are at the centre of that shift. India's next wave of travel growth will come from markets and audiences where creators hold more influence than any traditional channel. The launch of Cleartrip Creators Club gives them the infrastructure to turn every post into an

income stream and every booking into more inspiration. That flywheel is what we're building."

A key friction-removal feature is Comment-to-DM automation: when a viewer comments "TRIP" on a creator's post, they automatically receive a pre-filled booking link and an exclusive Cleartrip coupon code in their DMs. The programme is live pan-India on Instagram and YouTube.

The programme's early results have been encouraging. Regional creators have accounted for 50% of total content pieces generated, reflecting strong localised reach across geographies. Cross-category traction has also exceeded expectations, with Beauty and Lifestyle, Food, and Deal Hack content consistently delivering engagement rates of 5% to 6%, well above industry benchmarks. The programme has also seen strong creator participation from southern states, with Telugu-language content in particular emerging as one of the more active and fast-growing segments.

Why Monsoon Travel is No Longer Considered an Off-Season Experience

Travel Mail Desk

For those who don't necessarily believe monsoon travel is just for those "off-peak" periods anymore, it's now a very exciting travel experience. Many travellers now decide to take their holidays during the months of June through September, when many destinations come alive with beautiful greenery, misty, cloud-filled skies, and refreshing weather, instead of only going to beautiful locations during the traditional peak summer months. According to Ms. Leena Jhugroo, Managing Director of Travel Lounge & Leisure Tours Ltd., today's trend for travellers is to consider the monsoon season as a season of adventure, relaxation, and reconnecting with nature.

Travelers Today Prioritize Experiences and Flexibility over Seasonal Calendars: Once considered a compromise of travelling during low travel periods, there is now a shift toward viewing travelling during rainy periods as a conscious choice. The desire to have a meaningful and flexible (albeit shorter) travel experience rather than conforming to a rigidly scheduled holiday has grown among today's travellers. As a result, the "mini-cation" has allowed for multiple trips throughout the year to stunningly beautiful locations. In addition, wellness retreats, immersion in nature and plantation stays are now providing relaxing getaways from busy lifestyles. Furthermore, hotel stays are often less expensive, and there are usually fewer people visiting many popular tourist spots, creating a greater overall sense of satisfaction and accomplishment while travelling.

Value-Led Luxury is Driving Demand Beyond Peak Travel Periods: Travelling during the monsoon has gone from being something that travellers resorted to in order to save money during the off-season to being viewed by modern travellers as a smart choice based on luxury, value and exclusivity. Premium resorts, boutique villas and wellness retreats offer attractive seasonal rates during monsoons, enabling travellers to enjoy high-end experiences that may have been out of reach to them during peak travel. But in addition to the monetary savings associated with travelling during the monsoon, the monsoon also provides travellers with a unique opportunity to experience serenity that many will not find during the more congested holiday periods. Monsoon travel creates an opportunity for travellers to enjoy rain-washed landscapes, highly personalized service and consistent access to their chosen destinations, providing an intimate



and engaging travel experience that redefines luxury based on comfort, space and meaningful connections.

Diversified Tourism Offerings Are Reducing Dependence on Peak Seasons: As more and more destinations begin implementing tourism strategies that go beyond their typical peak periods, the perception that monsoon travel is only an "off-season travel" experience is starting to disappear rapidly. This will put monsoon travel on the same level as other forms of travel, as the number of people travelling during monsoon will increase because there will be opportunities to travel throughout the year instead of just during peak season. Digital nomads and retirees will also be able to participate more frequently at times other than peak season, which will allow them to expect more equity in their experience while they travel. In conjunction with targeted pricing and promotions, these strategies will create exciting and desirable new experiences for those travelling during the foliage season.

Remote Work and Flexible Travel Are Reshaping Traditional Travel Patterns: The emergence of remote working options and flexible hours has dramatically altered the travel patterns of individuals, which adds to the appeal of going away in the monsoon season. Travellers can combine business and pleasure by staying longer at beautiful places during periods of month-long rainfall instead of solely relying on scheduled holiday periods as in previous times. With high-speed internet access and the ability to work from anywhere, many are taking advantage of travelling in the monsoon to experience slow-paced, relaxed travel instead of waiting for peak seasons to go on vacation.

DMCs Are Helping Travellers Navigate Season-Neutral Tourism: Travel is being redefined by DMC's (Destination



Ms. Leena Jhugroo

Management Companies) as they create a new season each year for travellers to discover new destinations throughout the year with their well-crafted itineraries and deep understanding of each location. DMCs create opportunities for travellers to explore new, lesser-visited destinations while reducing the overcrowding that occurs at peak tourist destinations. By providing authentic, sustainable, and individualised experiences, DMC's are turning the traditional Monsoon travel into a destination rather than an off-peak alternative.

Social Media and Digital Content Are Redefining Monsoon Travel Perceptions: Through the emergence of social media in relation to travel during the monsoon, this once seasonally based form of travel has become a popular travel experience. Digital media has allowed the sharing of beautiful images of magnificent misty mountains, verdant green beauty, and wet rainy getaways by both creator and traveller alike, which has helped pave the way for a new form of travel.

The Future of Island Tourism Lies Beyond Traditional Seasons: Future trends in island tourism show that the majority of today's tourists are looking to experience the island rather than rely on the weather to visit. As a result of the demand for wellness retreats, cultural festivals, culinary travels, and nature-oriented adventures, many of today's island destinations are open year-round for international visitors. For example, Mauritius has gone from a primarily honeymoon destination to an area that many tourists select year-round due to the diverse experiences provided outside of the traditional peak travel season. Overall, this shift in trend for island tourism will create new opportunities for island destinations to develop off-season tourism in a non-seasonal manner as compared to years prior.

Tune In to Magical Monsoon Holidays

10 Destinations That Shine During the Rains

Travel Mail Desk

As the first showers arrive, India and its neighbouring destinations transform into a world of lush landscapes, shimmering lakes, vibrant festivals and unforgettable experiences. While hill stations remain popular, monsoon travellers are increasingly seeking destinations that offer easy access, rich culture and unique seasonal experiences. **Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel** present a curated list of magical monsoon escapes that combine scenic beauty, immersive experiences and seasonal celebrations.

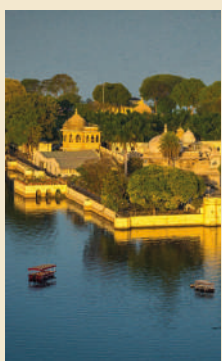
Mandu, Madhya Pradesh – The Ship Palace of the Monsoon:



Few places transform as dramatically as Mandu during the rains. Surrounded by water-filled reservoirs, the iconic Jahaz Mahal appears to float like a grand ship

amidst the monsoon landscape.

Udaipur, Rajasthan – Lakes, Palaces and Monsoon Romance:



Known as the City of Lakes, Udaipur becomes even more enchanting during the monsoon. Rain-fed lakes brim with water, the Aravalli hills turn green, and palace reflections shimmer across Lake Pichola.

Alleppey, Kerala – Backwaters and Boat Racing Traditions:



The monsoon breathes new life into Kerala's famed backwaters. Cruising through rain-kissed canals aboard a

traditional houseboat offers a uniquely tranquil experience. Visitors timing their journey around August can witness the spectacular Nehru Trophy Snake Boat Race—one of the world's largest team sporting events.

Chikmagalur, Karnataka – Coffee in the Clouds:



for travellers seeking nature, relaxation and fresh mountain air.

The birthplace of Indian coffee is at its most fragrant during the monsoon. Rolling coffee estates, mist-covered hills, waterfalls and scenic plantation trails make Chikmagalur an ideal retreat

Ladakh – India's Monsoon Escape:



festivals make it one of the most distinctive monsoon getaways.

While much of the country experiences rainfall, Ladakh remains largely dry thanks to its high-altitude desert landscape. Dramatic mountains, pristine lakes, Buddhist monasteries and vibrant cultural

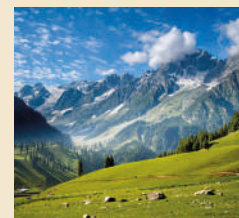
Sri Lanka's East Coast – Sunshine During the Southwest Monsoon:



it a compelling monsoon alternative.

While India's west coast experiences heavy rainfall, Sri Lanka's eastern coastline enjoys pleasant weather during this period. Pristine beaches, whale-watching opportunities and rich cultural experiences make

Kashmir – Fifty Shades of Green:



As summer progresses into monsoon, Kashmir's valleys become greener than ever. Rivers run full, meadows flourish, and

gardens bloom against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks.

Western Ghats & Mysore Circuit – Waterfalls, Wildlife and Heritage:



The Bangalore-Coorg-Mysore circuit comes alive during the monsoon with lush forests, cascading waterfalls, coffee plantations and royal heritage attractions.

Nepal – Himalayan Vistas and Cultural Discovery:



While trekking trails may become wetter, Nepal's valleys flourish during the monsoon. Kathmandu and Pokhara offer dramatic Himalayan

views between rain showers, vibrant cultural experiences and a quieter travel season.

Luxury Train Journeys – India Through a Different Window:



For travellers seeking comfort and exclusivity, luxury train journeys offer a unique way to experience India's landscapes during the monsoon.

Traversing royal cities, historic forts and cultural landmarks, these journeys combine elegance with immersive exploration.

From Waterfalls to Misty Hills India's Best Monsoon Destinations

Travel Mail Desk

Monsoon travel in India works best when rain is not seen as a disruption, but as part of what shapes the experience of a place. It changes how destinations feel in a very real way. Hills disappear into mist, waterfalls come alive again, forests deepen in colour, and everything slows down just enough for travellers to actually take it in.

Some of the most striking monsoon experiences are in the Western Ghats. Coorg and Chikkamagaluru in Karnataka are classic examples. Coorg turns completely lush from June to September, with coffee estates wrapped in fog, rain-soaked roads, and the occasional burst of activity like rafting on the Barapole River. Chikkamagaluru has a quieter charm, with mist-covered slopes, long plantation drives, and viewpoints that often sit above drifting clouds.

In Kerala, Wayanad feels almost designed for this season. The rain amplifies everything here, from dense forest trails to waterfalls like Meenmutty and Kanthanpara that are at their most powerful during the monsoon months. Meghalaya sits in a different category altogether. When the rains arrive, the entire landscape seems to switch character, with waterfalls in full flow and living root bridges framed by dense cloud cover, living up to its identity as the "Abode of Clouds."

What stands out across all these destinations is not just how they look, but how they feel. The pace naturally drops. Drives take longer, but they are more scenic. Walks become less about distance and more about atmosphere. Even simple moments, like stopping for tea after getting caught in a sudden shower, tend to stay with travellers longer than planned itineraries.

That is where monsoon travel finds its strength. It suits people who are not trying to rush through a checklist, but are open to letting a destination unfold on its own terms. The season rewards patience in a way few others do.

Weekend Escapes: Best Places to Visit During the Rainy Season

For short monsoon breaks, accessibility becomes important, but so does contrast. The best weekend destinations are usually the ones that are close enough to reach easily, yet feel completely different once you are there.

Lonavala continues to be a reliable monsoon escape. The region transforms quickly with the rains, turning into a green stretch of waterfalls, lakes, and Sahyadri viewpoints that feel far removed from nearby city life. Goa is another interesting one during this season. It slows down significantly compared to its peak months, and that shift is exactly what makes it appealing. The landscapes turn greener, the crowds thin out, and experiences like spice plantation visits and long drives through rain-washed villages come into focus.

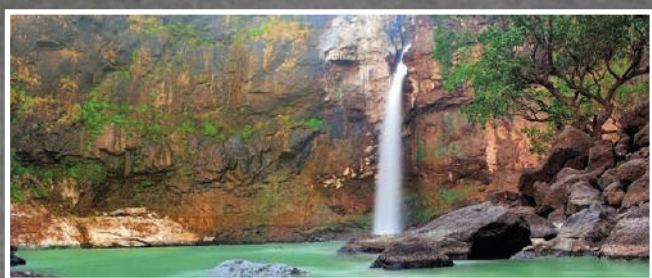
Further south, Coorg and Chikkamagaluru also work well for shorter breaks. They offer a mix of plantation stays, misty viewpoints, and weather that naturally encourages a slower routine. Nothing feels rushed, which is usually what people are looking for in a two- or three-day escape.

Most monsoon weekends work best when kept simple. A drive out of the city, one good waterfall stop, long meals without hurry, and enough time to sit back and watch the rain move through the landscape. It is not about covering more places. It is about experiencing fewer things properly.

That simplicity is often why these trips end up being memorable. The monsoon does most of the work. Travellers just need to show up and let the weather take over the rest.



Pranav Dangi
Founder & CEO of
Hosteller



The Only Boston Summer Bucket List You Need!



Travel Mail Desk

Boston summers are a testament to the city's vibrant summer culture and seasonal energy, blending iconic summer experiences, outdoor adventures, waterfront activities, sports culture, culinary finds, music festivals, neighbourhood charm, and more into an unforgettable getaway. Moreover, the city's walkability makes exploring Boston during the summer both convenient and enjoyable.

Start your vibrant Boston summer with one of the most unique experiences in the city: access to beautiful water views, activities, and boat tours. Take a sunset cruise in the harbour, gather friends and have some fun with city views, sightsee, or paddle down the Charles River, glide through the Boston Common on a swan boat, or explore the city by land or by sea with an iconic Boston Duck Tour.

Along with being a bustling city, Boston is filled with fun ways to enjoy the great outdoors, and summer is a prime time to savour that energy to the fullest. Once named America's Walking City, Boston offers several walking tours spanning interests such as the Revolutionary War, Black History, science and innovation, and even pizza! For a serene escape, take a walk along the Charles River Esplanade or visit one of the sites along the Emerald Necklace, a 1,100-acre chain of parks linked by parkways and waterways in Boston and Brookline. You may also head to South Boston and walk around Castle Island or sunbathe at one of the Boston area's best beaches, such as Constitution Beach or Carson Beach.



Take your explorations outside the land limits and visit the Boston Harbour Islands National and State Parks, just minutes from the city. Grab a ticket on a park ferry and head to Islands, such as Spectacle Island or Georges Island for some outdoor fun and relaxation.

What is summer without music and festivals, and Boston's music scene is brimming with some of the hottest tunes of the season. With several outdoor music venues and concerts, there is something for the ears of every music lover. Head to the Seaport and grab tickets to a show at

the Leader Bank Pavilion or check out the Fenway Concert Series for the summer.

Summer calls for city explorations like no other season, and with Boston's wealth of historic moments and sites, especially as the nation marks the USA's 250th anniversary, there is no better time to discover the city's rich past. Take a walk along the Freedom Trail, stop in for a tour of the Museum of African American History, head to Charlestown and visit the USS Constitution Museum, or choose from many other famous landmarks in the city, including the beautiful halls of the Boston Public Library, Quincy Market or Faneuil Hall. And if you are visiting the city during the Fourth of July, check out Boston's Harborfest, a weekend-long itinerary of events, concerts, and more to celebrate Independence Day.

The city is filled not only with activities to fill your summer itinerary but also with a wide array of culinary options to fill your plate. From dim sum and dumplings in Boston's Chinatown neighbourhood to Italian dishes in the North End, there is something for everyone. And if there is one thing Boston is known for, it is the seafood. Try a lobster roll at city favourites such as Yankee Lobster or Neptune Oyster, grab a cup of chowder at the Union Oyster House or The Banks Fish House, or split a couple of dozen oysters at Row 34, The Hourly Oyster House, or Reelhouse Oyster. For fried seafood options, head to the Seaport to visit the Barking Crab or Newbury Street to grab a bite at Little Whale Oyster Bar.

During the summer months, there is nothing more refreshing than a delicious drink or bite to eat in the sun. Here in Boston, visitors can even enjoy these moments with one-of-a-kind views. Head to the Lookout Rooftop at the Envoy Hotel for one of the best views of the Boston skyline or enjoy a poolside drink at Lifted Restaurant at the Omni Boston Hotel at the Seaport. Moreover, with the city known as a craft beer haven and the sunny summer weather in full swing, visiting one of Boston's beer, wine, or cocktail gardens is a must-do during your visit. Check out one of the many pop-ups in some of the coolest locations in the city, such as Harpoon Beer Garden in Seaport or Anchor Navy Yard, Boston's only multi-story public gathering space in Boston's iconic and historic Charlestown neighbourhood or make your way to one of Boston's widely known breweries along the Boston Craft Beer Trail, such as Samuel Adams or Dorchester Brewing Company.

Southern California Showcases World-Class Family Attractions Across Theme Parks, Aquariums and Wildlife Parks

Travel Mail Desk

Southern California is an epicentre for family-friendly attractions with theme parks, aquariums, wildlife parks, and endless adventures, creating an abundance of memories for the whole family. From the thrilling rides at Disneyland Resort and beachside theme park experiences in Santa Monica to Universal Studios Hollywood's family-friendly offerings and the magical world of LEGOLAND, or a day with wildlife at San Diego Zoo Safari Park, these experiences fulfil all the essentials of a memorable family-friendly trip.



Santa Monica Pier

About 1-1.5 hours from Anaheim lies one of the top family-friendly attractions in California by the water, featuring amusement park rides and an aquarium. Pacific Park, the amusement park perched right on Santa Monica's pier, is home to roller coasters and classic carnie rides that will appeal to little ones. From incomparable views from atop the pier's Pacific Wheel to the thrilling West Coaster ride, the boardwalk's Funhouse experience, which draws inspiration from the original Toonerville Funhouse, to enjoying a creamy thick shake, the pier is a vibrant playground for children and adults alike.

Just steps away from the carnival rides, games, and snack bars of the Santa Monica Pier and right below Pacific Park's carousel, sits this unassuming attraction of the Heal the Bay Aquarium (the former Santa Monica Pier Aquarium), housing 100 local aquatic species from sea hares to moray eels, inviting children and guests to get hands-on through exhibits, touch tanks, and daily educational programs.

Hollywood Highlights, Universal Studios Hollywood and Hollywood Walk of Fame

About an hour drive from Anaheim, located on a sprawling complex in the Hollywood Hills of Los Angeles, the unique theme park of Universal Studios Hollywood blends a behind-the-scenes world-famous Studio Tour with film sets, original film props, and special effects. The theme park's rides and attractions are inspired by popular movies, television series, and games, including The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash, Despicable Me



Minion Mayhem, DreamWorks Theatre Featuring Kung Fu Panda, The Simpsons Ride, Revenge of the Mummy—The Ride, Transformers: The Ride—3D, and Jurassic World—The Ride. The immersive world of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter or the iconic pipe to enter SUPER NINTENDO WORLD, which takes you into the Mushroom Kingdom and the world of Mario, are worth checking out. Moreover, regular and seasonal events such as performances by the Frog Choir in Hogsmeade and Halloween Horror Nights are designed to engage a child's curiosity.

Just nearby, kids can find their favourite celebrity's star along the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the famous sidewalk located on Hollywood Boulevard, while enjoying a bevy of other entertainment from street performers to costumed movie characters.

LEGOLAND California Resort, Carlsbad

Conveniently located about 1-1.5 hours by car from Anaheim, LEGOLAND offers multiple ways to bring out anyone's

inner child and also features a water park, an aquarium, and two onsite hotels. The park has roller coasters, shows, and attractions, many based on LEGO incarnations from The LEGO Movie, LEGO Friends, Ninjago, LEGO City, and LEGO Duplo. Walk through Miniland USA for a visual and structural jaw-dropper: expansive miniaturised LEGO recreations of Washington D.C., New York City, and San Francisco, among other cities, as well as Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium. Fans of the LEGO movie series will love The LEGO MOVIE WORLD, featuring characters, attractions, and rides inspired by the films, like the Build Wat'evra You Wa'Na Build play zone or Emmet's Flying Adventure Ride. Thrill awaits at the LEGO Ferrari Build & Race attraction, where kids can sit inside a life-size Ferrari F40 made with 350,000 of the tiny plastic bricks.

For older kids, the Dragon roller coaster, the Deep-Sea Adventure submarine ride, the Fun Town area's Driving School, or Ninjago The Ride are popular attractions. Aside from the classic rides and LEGO-building opportunities, LEGOLAND Resort features the SEA LIFE Aquarium, offering interactive exhibits and giant marine displays, all inhabited by diverse sea creatures from colourful fish to majestic sharks. Experience bioluminescence and make actual contact with starfish and sea urchins while also learning about marine conservation.

San Diego Zoo Safari Park

Drive 2-2.5 hours to reach the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, an ideal base for a day trip from Anaheim for a spectacular experience among the wildlife. Unique experiences at the park include the Flightline Safari, a zipline ride above the rhinos, giraffes, and other animals below or the exhilarating Balloon Safaris and a Jungle Ropes Safari for kids 7 and up to test their balance and jungle skills on rope bridges, tightropes, and more.

The Denny Sanford Elephant Valley habitat is an immersive new home for the Safari Park's African elephant herd, where guests can walk alongside or above the herd and observe elephants in more natural behaviours while learning about their ecological roles and social structures. For those who want to extend the trip, the Roar & Snore Safari offers a sleepover adventure in one of 46 comfy, safari-style tents that border an expansive grazing area for giraffes, rhinos, gazelles, antelopes, and other exotic animals within the park.



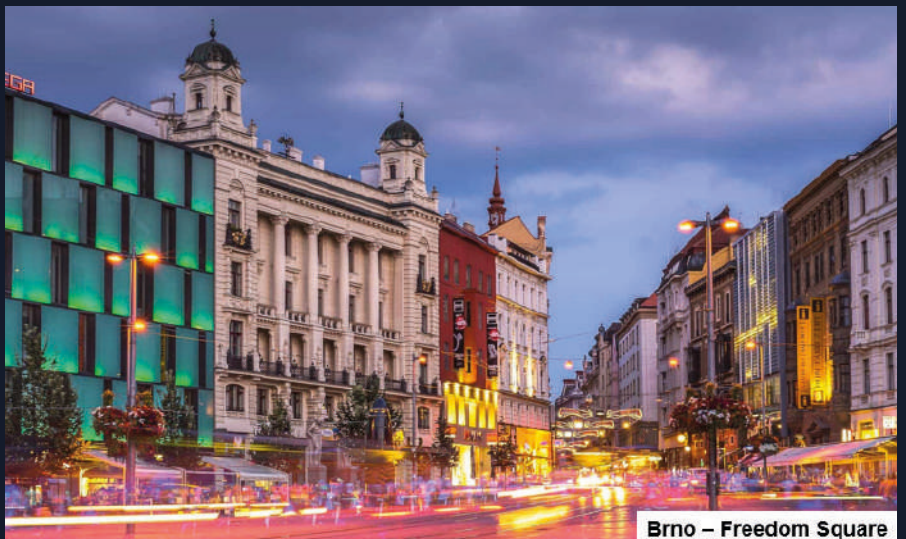
The Czech City Set to Become India's New Favourite

Travel Mail Desk

Imagine wandering through cavernous underground chambers that resemble a cathedral, discovering centuries-old crypts hidden beneath city streets, collecting a glass marble from a quirky astronomical clock and ending the day with a glass of local wine before heading out to vineyard-covered landscapes and charming wine towns. Add to that a thriving café culture, creative energy and a refreshingly local atmosphere free from the crowds that define many European destinations. It sounds like the kind of place travellers spend years searching for.

That place is Brno. Czechia's second-largest city is quickly emerging as one of the country's most exciting hidden gems. Brno is not the kind of city that demands attention. It does not compete with Prague's postcard-perfect charm or ask to be checked off a list. Instead, it rewards travellers who enjoy discovering places with character. The city is youthful, creative and refreshingly local. Its streets are lined with cafés, wine bars and hidden corners that feel genuinely discovered. For Indian travellers looking to experience Czechia beyond the usual highlights, Brno offers a different perspective.

One of the city's most surprising attractions lies underground. Beneath Brno are vast historic water reservoirs built between the late 19th and early 20th centuries to supply drinking water to the growing city. Today, these restored chambers have become one of Brno's most atmospheric spaces. With vaulted



Brno – Freedom Square

ceilings, dramatic corridors and a cathedral-like scale, they feel equally suited to an art installation, a film set or an unforgettable underground techno event.

Another of Brno's standout attractions is Villa Tugendhat, a UNESCO-listed masterpiece that has become a pilgrimage site for architecture and design enthusiasts from around the world. Its pioneering use of space, materials and technology was decades ahead of its time, making it one of the most important examples of modern architecture in Europe.

Brno's fascination with the unusual continues above ground. The Capuchin Crypt offers a glimpse into the city's past

through naturally mummified monks preserved beneath the monastery, while Brno's famous astronomical clock releases a glass marble every day at 11 am – a quirky local tradition that visitors love.

The city is also the perfect gateway to South Moravia, Czechia's renowned wine region. From vineyard-covered landscapes to underground wine cellars and charming towns like Mikulov, the region offers a slower and more sensory side of the country. Curious without being crowded, stylish without being obvious and local without being inaccessible, Brno is the city to add next for travellers seeking a more unexpected side of Czechia!

Family Goals: The Ultimate Multigenerational Itinerary in New Orleans

Travel Mail Desk

Multigenerational destinations and itineraries are sometimes difficult to plan due to the lack of activities that appeal to all. Luckily, New Orleans is a city that warmly welcomes visitors of all ages with a diverse blend of attractions, activities, and experiences that will keep the whole family engaged and immersed all day!

Day 1: French Quarter – French Quarter is one of New Orleans' most historic neighbourhoods and a vibrant hotspot of culture and endless multigenerational experiences.

Take a stroll and visit the iconic landmark. The Paddlewheeler Creole Queen Historic Cruise is a fun experience for all ages, with cruises sailing downriver from the French Quarter to Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and the historic Chalmette Battlefield for a guided tour.

A great post-cruise activity for the whole family is Vue Orleans. Located at the foot of Canal Street in the Four Seasons Hotel, take the elevator to the 33rd floor and experience the only 360° panoramic riverfront view of New Orleans. The experience also includes an outdoor observatory deck and an interactive cultural exhibit indoors.



Day 2: Museums – New Orleans is bursting with museums offering a wide variety of experiences that appeal to all ages.

Backstreet Cultural Museum is a wonderful small museum dedicated to sharing the traditions of Mardi Gras Indians. With colourful, hand-beaded suits on display, visitors both young and old will marvel at the exhibit. Learn about New Orleans' culture from culture bearers themselves at Backstreet.

As the only museum of its kind in the country, The National WWII Museum's immersive exhibits, including "The Arsenal of Democracy," "Bayou to Battlefield," and others that highlight everyday men and women who found the strength and courage to accomplish the extraordinary, are worth exploring for curious minds across ages. Watch a 4D film in the Solomon Victory Theatre, have a meal at The American Sector, or attend



the outdoor attraction, 'Expressions of America.' Foodies will appreciate the Southern Food & Beverage Museum, which includes exhibits on the food, drink, and culture of the American South. There is a Popeye's exhibit, a bar, and cooking classes designed for both adults and children.

New Orleans also has several options for both demonstration and hands-on cooking classes. The Mardi Gras School of Cooking stands out because children can sign up for class alongside adults. See what they have on the schedule and encourage the whole family to cook together and create unforgettable memories.

Families can enjoy learning about New Orleans' most famous cocktail, the Sazerac, at Sazerac House. Known locally as New Orleans' greatest free attraction, guests can sign up online for visitor slots and tour three floors of cocktail history. Samples are only open to adults 21+, but children are welcome as guests of the museum.

Day 3: City Park– New Orleans City Park is a destination in itself where multigenerational travellers find something of interest in the serenity of nature.

Little ones will love the Louisiana Children's Museum, while those with a more refined palate may prefer the New Orleans Museum of Art or the Besthoff Sculpture Garden.

Day 4: Uptown– From one of the best multigenerational spots in New Orleans, Audubon Zoo, to a

plethora of vibrant activities like eating or shopping on Magazine Street, to an adult-only night, everything is possible in this lively neighbourhood.

World-renowned Audubon Zoo is a New Orleans gem located in the Uptown neighbourhood that takes everyone on a fascinating journey through the world of flora and fauna. This family-favourite destination is home to award-winning natural habitat exhibits and a wide variety of more than 1,700 striking, rare and endangered animals representing more than 350 species from across the world.

During the summer months, visit Cool Zoo, a seasonal water attraction inside Audubon Zoo, featuring a lazy river, splash zones, and water slides.

Day 5: Outside City Limits – Just outside New Orleans lies an entire network of nearby destinations, perfect for day outings, that blend adventure and exploration for everyone in the family.

30 minutes outside of the city lies Zip NOLA, one of the area's best attractions, where children and older adults can all participate. Strike a pose upside down while flying high above the gators. Another nearby activity perfect for a thrilling multigenerational group is swamp tours. Airboat and pedal-barge tours are available just outside the city. Pick your adventure and don't be scared to pet the baby gator.

So, start planning your next group getaway to New Orleans for an experience of a lifetime.

Indo-Korean Cultural Festival 2026 to Light Up Mumbai's Gateway of India



Travel Mail Desk

The Maharashtra Government's Tourism Department convened a high-level review meeting to chart the course for the much-anticipated 'Indo-Korean Cultural Festival 2026', slated to be held at the iconic Gateway of India, Mumbai. The meeting was chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism), Government of Maharashtra, Shri Sanjay Khandare (IAS), followed by a formal proposal submitted by the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea. Discussions during the meeting were constructive and forward-looking.

The review meeting brought together key officials, including the Directorate of Tourism's, Director, Shri. Mangesh Joshi (IAS), Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation's Managing Director, Shri. Neelesh Gatne (IAS), and the Department of Tourism's Deputy Secretary, Shri. Santosh Rokade and

senior representatives from the Cultural Department.

The momentum behind this year's festival draws significantly from the overwhelming public response to 'K-Harmony Festa 2025', held in Mumbai last year. Building on that success, the Tourism Department is now focused on staging a larger, more ambitious edition, one that can meaningfully elevate Maharashtra's profile on the international tourism map.

At the meeting, Shri. Kyeongbeom Kim of the Korean Consulate General delivered a detailed presentation outlining the festival's concept and vision. The core objective, as articulated during the session, is to deepen cultural ties between India and the Republic of Korea while giving a tangible boost to the state's tourism sector and the local economy.

Through this international festival, the aim is to create a vibrant platform that celebrates Korean culture in its full spectrum, traditional and contemporary music, dance, cinema, culinary arts, and the creative industries of both nations. Officials also held in-depth discussions on the logistical and administrative requirements of hosting such a large-scale event at a heritage landmark like the Gateway of India, covering areas such as necessary permits, law and order management, traffic regulation, and coordination with local civic authorities. Officers were directed to initiate immediate action on all fronts.

The Tourism Department expressed confidence that this festival, organised jointly with the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, will serve as a significant catalyst for tourism growth in Maharashtra.

Little Hearts, Lasting Memories

How Novotel Mumbai International Airport is Redefining Family Hospitality

Travel Mail Desk

As family travel continues to evolve, hotels are increasingly focusing on creating meaningful experiences that cater to guests of all ages. Recognising the growing demand for personalised and family-centric stays, Novotel Mumbai International Airport has introduced "Little Hearts by Novotel", a thoughtful initiative designed to make young travellers feel genuinely welcomed and valued. Through personalised interactions, sustainable gifts, and child-friendly experiences, the hotel is creating memorable moments that strengthen family bonds while embracing responsible hospitality. In this email interaction with Rachita Sood, General Manager, Novotel Mumbai International Airport, we explore the inspiration behind the initiative, changing trends in family travel, and how the brand is shaping the future of hospitality for modern families.

"Little Hearts by Novotel" reflects a thoughtful and evolving approach towards family travel. What inspired the launch of this initiative, and what kind of experience were you aiming to create for young guests and their families?

At Novotel Mumbai International Airport, we believe that hospitality should create meaningful connections and memorable experiences for every guest, regardless of age. The inspiration behind "Little Hearts by Novotel" is to make children feel genuinely welcomed and valued from the moment they arrive. While adults often enjoy personalized hospitality experiences, we wanted to extend that same sense of importance to our youngest guests.

The initiative was designed to create joyful first impressions, encourage family bonding, and ensure that children feel like active participants in their travel experience. Through thoughtful touches such as personalized registration cards and sustainable teddy bears, we aim to make every family stay warmer, more engaging, and truly memorable.

Family travel preferences are changing rapidly, with guests increasingly seeking personalised and meaningful experiences. How is Novotel Mumbai International



Rachita Sood
General Manager, Novotel Mumbai International Airport

Airport adapting its hospitality offerings to meet the expectations of modern family travellers?

Today's family travellers are looking beyond traditional accommodation; they seek experiences that are personalized, authentic, and enriching. At Novotel Mumbai International Airport, we continuously evolve our offerings to reflect these changing expectations.

We focus on creating guest journeys that cater to all generations, ensuring comfort, convenience, and engagement for families travelling together. Whether through family-friendly amenities, personalized welcome experiences, thoughtfully curated dining options, or activities that encourage interaction and exploration, our goal is to create a seamless and memorable stay. "Little Hearts by Novotel" is a natural extension of this philosophy, allowing us to connect with families in a more meaningful and heartfelt way.

Could you share some of the personalised or child-friendly experiences introduced under the "Little Hearts by Novotel" initiative that have particularly resonated with guests?

One of the most appreciated aspects of the initiative has been the personalized registration card that every child receives upon arrival. The card includes a series of fun questions designed to help us understand each young guest better: their favourite foods, toys, hobbies, interests, and the kinds of experiences they enjoy. This allows our team to add thoughtful, personalized touches throughout their stay, whether it's a preferred snack, a small surprise, or recommending activities within the hotel that align with their interests.

Another highlight is the sustainable teddy bear gifted to each child. More than just a keepsake, it reflects our commitment to combining warmth and sustainability in a meaningful way. Together, these personalized elements transform the guest experience, making children feel genuinely welcomed, valued, and celebrated from the moment they arrive.

The response from families has been incredibly positive. Parents appreciate the attention to detail, while children are delighted to see their preferences acknowledged, creating memorable moments that often become the highlight of their stay.

Sustainability is becoming an essential aspect of hospitality today. How has the initiative incorporated environmentally conscious practices while still creating a warm, engaging, and enjoyable experience for children and families?

Sustainability is deeply embedded in our approach to hospitality, and we wanted "Little Hearts by Novotel" to reflect that commitment in an engaging and meaningful way. The sustainable teddy bears are crafted using eco-friendly materials, allowing us to create a memorable guest experience while minimizing environmental impact.

We believe that sustainability and guest delight can go hand in hand. Through this initiative, we are not only creating moments of joy but also introducing children and families to the importance of making responsible choices. By incorporating sustainability into experiences that are fun and memorable, we hope to inspire greater awareness among our young guests while maintaining the warmth and care that define our hospitality.

With family and multi-generational travel on the rise, how important is it for hotels to design experiences specifically tailored for younger guests and families? It is incredibly important. Family travel today often includes multiple generations traveling together, and each guest has unique needs and expectations. Children play a significant role in shaping family travel experiences, and creating thoughtful moments for them can greatly enhance overall guest satisfaction.

When hotels invest in family-centric experiences, they create stronger emotional connections with guests and foster lasting loyalty. Tailored experiences for younger travellers not only make children feel included but also provide parents with that security, knowing that every member of the family is being cared for. Hospitality is ultimately about creating memories, and family-focused initiatives play a vital role in achieving that.

Have you noticed any significant shifts in the expectations and preferences of family travellers in recent years, particularly within the upscale and luxury hospitality segment? Absolutely. Family travellers today are seeking more than luxury in the traditional sense; they value personalization, meaningful engagement, wellness, sustainability, and experiences that create lasting memories.

Parents increasingly appreciate hotels that acknowledge and cater to children's needs in thoughtful ways. There is also a growing preference for brands that demonstrate environmental responsibility and social consciousness. Families want experiences that feel authentic, purposeful, and tailored to their interests. This shift has encouraged hotels to move beyond standardized offerings and focus on creating deeper, more memorable guest experiences.

What kind of response and feedback have you received from guests since introducing the



initiative, and have any memorable experiences or stories stand out?

The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Families have shared how much they appreciate the attention given to their children and the effort to make them feel special from the very beginning of their stay.

One particularly memorable aspect has been seeing the excitement on children's faces when they receive their personalized registration cards, snacks, games, experiences and teddy bears. Many parents have told us that these simple yet thoughtful gestures became some of the most talked-about moments of their stay. It is incredibly rewarding to witness these genuine reactions and know that we are helping create cherished family memories.

How does the "Little Hearts by Novotel" initiative reflect Novotel's broader philosophy towards family-centric hospitality and guest engagement?

Novotel has always been recognized as a family-friendly brand that understands the importance of bringing people together through meaningful experiences. "Little Hearts by Novotel" perfectly embodies this philosophy by placing families and children at the heart of the guest journey.

The initiative reflects our commitment to inclusivity, personalization, and sustainability while reinforcing our belief that every guest deserves to feel welcomed and valued. It is about creating emotional connections, fostering memorable moments, and ensuring that hospitality extends beyond service to genuine care and engagement.

Looking ahead, are there plans to further expand or enhance the initiative through new experiences, collaborations, or activities for families and young travellers?

We see "Little Hearts by Novotel" as an evolving initiative with significant potential for future growth. As we continue to gather guest feedback and insights, we are exploring opportunities to introduce new interactive experiences, educational activities, and meaningful collaborations that further enrich family stays.

Our focus will remain on combining creativity, personalization, and sustainability in ways that delight young travellers while supporting family engagement. We are excited about the possibilities ahead and look forward to continuing to innovate in ways that strengthen our position as a preferred destination for modern family travel.

Elevating Central Vietnam's Luxury Landscape

A Conversation on Wellness, Sustainability, and Destination Experiences at Banyan Tree & Angsana Lăng Cô

Travel Mail Desk

Nestled between the pristine shores of the East Sea and the lush Truong Son Mountains, Banyan Tree Lăng Cô and Angsana Lăng Cô have emerged as two of Central Vietnam's most distinctive luxury resorts. As part of the integrated Laguna Lăng Cô destination, the properties combine world-class hospitality, immersive wellness experiences, sustainable practices, and exceptional event facilities, making them increasingly attractive to global travellers, including the rapidly growing Indian market. In this exclusive conversation with **Franck Rodriguez, General Manager**, we explore the resorts' long-term vision, commitment to responsible luxury, evolving wellness offerings, and the unique experiences that continue to position Lăng Cô as one of Southeast Asia's most compelling luxury destinations.

Banyan Tree Lăng Cô and Angsana Lăng Cô have established themselves as standout luxury resorts in Central Vietnam. How do you define the core identity and long-term vision of these properties within the wider Banyan Group portfolio?

Banyan Tree and Angsana Lăng Cô represent Banyan Group's dual-brand strategy, offering both ultra-luxury villa experiences and contemporary lifestyle hospitality within one integrated destination. Located within Laguna Lăng Cô, the resorts occupy a unique position in Central Vietnam, combining beachfront, mountain and lagoon landscapes with extensive leisure infrastructure. As part of Banyan Group's long-term vision, we aim to further strengthen Lăng Cô's position as a leading luxury resort destination in Southeast Asia while maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability, community engagement and authentic Vietnamese experiences.

Sustainability and responsible luxury are central to Banyan Group's philosophy. How are these principles embedded into daily



Franck Rodriguez
General Manager

operations and the overall guest experience at Lăng Cô?

Sustainability is embedded across both resorts. We prioritise local employment, support regional suppliers and actively engage in environmental and

community initiatives. The design of both resorts was developed to complement the surrounding natural environment, while guest experiences encourage meaningful connections with local culture, nature and heritage. These initiatives allow us to deliver responsible luxury without compromising guest comfort.

Wellness travel is becoming a defining pillar of global luxury tourism. What distinctive wellness offerings or signature experiences set Banyan Tree Lăng Cô and Angsana Lăng Cô apart in the regional market?

Wellness is a key pillar of the Banyan Tree experience. Guests can enjoy award-winning Banyan Tree Spa treatments, private wellness journeys, sleep-focused retreats and immersive wellbeing experiences set against the backdrop of the Truong Son Mountains and East Sea. Angsana complements this with a more active lifestyle offering, including water sports, outdoor recreation and family-oriented activities. Together, the two resorts cater to a broad spectrum of wellness travellers seeking both rejuvenation and adventure.





Vietnam is witnessing growing interest from Indian luxury travellers. What bespoke experiences or services have you developed to cater specifically to this segment?

India is one of our priority growth markets, particularly across luxury leisure, multi-generational family travel, weddings and MICE. To cater to Indian guests, we offer extensive vegetarian dining options, customised group dining experiences and flexible event solutions for celebrations and family gatherings. Our spacious villas and rooms are particularly well suited to larger family groups. We have also increased engagement with the Indian travel trade through dedicated sales initiatives and strategic partnerships to enhance awareness of Lăng Cô as an alternative to more established Southeast Asian destinations.

India is also a key source market for MICE and destination weddings. How well are the resorts positioned for such large-scale events, and what makes Lăng Cô a compelling destination for celebrations and corporate gatherings?

Banyan Tree and Angsana Lăng Cô are exceptionally well positioned for destination weddings, incentive groups and corporate retreats. As part of Laguna Lăng Cô, we offer a diverse range of indoor and outdoor venues, beachfront event spaces, luxury accommodation, championship golf, wellness facilities and curated team-building experiences within a single integrated destination. The ability to host intimate celebrations as well as large-scale multi-day events provides planners with significant flexibility. Combined with convenient



access via Da Nang International Airport and the natural beauty of Central Vietnam, Lăng Cô presents a compelling alternative for Indian weddings and MICE programmes seeking exclusivity and privacy.

How do you envision the evolution of luxury hospitality in Central Vietnam over the next 3–5 years, and what role will your resorts play in shaping that growth trajectory?

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access via Da Nang International Airport and the natural beauty of Central Vietnam, Lăng Cô presents a compelling alternative for Indian weddings and MICE programmes seeking exclusivity and privacy.

Finally, could you share a signature experience or hidden gem within the resort that you believe every guest—especially first-time visitors—should not miss?

For me, it is early morning in Lăng Cô. Before breakfast, when everything is still quiet, and the sun begins to rise over the mountains, the bay is incredibly beautiful. It is a very simple experience, but many guests remember that feeling long after they leave. The way the mountains, lagoon and sea come together at sunrise perfectly captures the tranquillity and natural beauty of the destination. It is one of those moments that allows guests to truly disconnect, appreciate their surroundings and experience what makes Lăng Cô so special. Often, it becomes one of the most memorable highlights of their stay.

HRAWI Organises FSSAI's FoSTaC Programme In Mumbai

Travel Mail Desk

The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) – HRAWI organised FSSAI's latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) at the Hotel Marine Plaza in Mumbai. Held on 27th May, 2026, the training program was conducted by Dr V. Pasupathy – Trainer, Parikshan FSS Pvt Ltd. and covered essential topics including food handling, hygiene, sanitation and waste management. The 30 hospitality professionals attending the session received practical insights on strengthening food safety measures, reinforcing industry best practices.

The training session was inaugurated by Dr V. Pasupathy; Mr Osdan Henriques – Executive Assistant Manager and Ms Vaishali Savale – Human Resources Manager of Hotel Marine Plaza and



Mr Adhir Vinod Dabholkar – F&B Manager of Silent Hills Resort Pvt Ltd.

HRAWI has successfully trained and certified 3,870 hospitality professionals through its FoSTaC and FSSAI's

Management Training Program. The programme is designed to promote a culture of food safety and equip industry professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to uphold the highest standards in daily operations.

INDIAN TOURIST TRANSPORTERS ASSOCIATION (ITTA) ELECTS NEW MANAGING COMMITTEE

Travel Mail Desk

The Indian Tourist Transporters Association (ITTA), the apex body representing tourist transport operators across India, has announced the election of its new Managing Committee. The new committee was duly elected during the Association's election process held on 30 May 2026.

The newly elected Office Bearers are:

- **President:** Mr. Satish Sehrawat, Ten Travels Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi
- **Vice President:** Mr. Sharat Chandra, State Express, New Delhi
- **Honorary Secretary:** Mr. Krishan Dutt Yadav, Alwar Tourist Transport Service, New Delhi
- **Joint Secretary:** Mr. Mahesh Kumar Shukla, Aruna Tourist Taxi Service, New Delhi
- **Treasurer:** Mr. Sanjay Nagar, New Friends Travels, New Delhi



The newly elected Executive Committee Members are:

- Mr. Balvinder Singh Bakshi, BTC, New Delhi
- Mr. Rajesh Kumar Tokas, Tokas Tourist Taxi Service, New Delhi
- Mr. Madhukesh Malhotra, Malhotra World Travels, New Delhi
- Mr. Maninder Singh, Grand Tourist Bus Service, New Delhi

- Mr. Manmohan Goyal, Geetee Travels Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai
- Mr. Rajendra Singh Jodha, Rajasthan Routes Trails Pvt. Ltd., Jaipur

The newly elected Managing Committee brings together a distinguished group of tourism transport professionals from across the country, reflecting ITTA's commitment to strengthening the sector and advancing the interests of tourist transport operators nationwide.

15th Conventions India Conclave 2026 to Showcase India's Vision for the Future of MICE and Innovation



MEET in INDIA

ITPO

ICPB
(Established in 1988)
India Convention Promotion Bureau
(Sponsored by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India)

Delhi Tourism

Incredible India

15th CONVENTIONS INDIA CONCLAVE

August 19 - 21, 2026 | Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

Powering the Future of Innovation...

In collaboration with Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.
Jointly organised by ITPO & Delhi Tourism

The MICE platform the world cannot miss

Travel Mail Desk

India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB), a body sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is pleased to announce our flagship event, the "15th Conventions India Conclave," in New Delhi from August 19-21, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam. This event is in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and jointly organised by ITPO and Delhi Tourism.

As the Theme of the Event is "Powering the Future of Innovation," the focus area during the Conclave will be on all segments of the MICE industry— incentives, exhibitions, association conferences, and corporate meetings— creating an opportunity for our members to look for new avenues of business development.

The Conclave is not only significant, being the 15th CIC 2026, but it will also be an opportunity for us to project ICPB as a parent body for marketing India as a preferred Convention Destination, especially in the context that we in ICPB are also working on restructuring and strengthening of ICPB.

This is not a traditional Association Event, but it is regarded to be South Asia's premium networking event for buyers and sellers in the India Convention



Industry, organised on the pattern of IBTM, ITCMA and IMEX. It is a premium B2B Event in this part of the World.

The Exhibition and B2B meetings with prescheduled appointments will be an important component of the Conclave. We expect 350-400 delegates, including domestic and international buyers, for our two-day event, in addition to 75-100 Exhibitors.

The two-day Event is also packed with Sessions and Panel discussions on various topics, such as "Technology Innovation in the Meeting Industry,"

"Incentives- Meeting Expectations of Corporates," a panel discussion on synergy between the Exhibition & Conference Industry and renowned international keynote speakers sharing their experiences during the Convention.

The 15th Convention India Conclave is being organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and jointly organised by ITPO & Delhi Tourism.

The Conclave will provide the perfect forum for opinions, views and standpoints on India's meetings and Convention Industry.

Skål India National Congress 2026 gears up as Skål International Coimbatore hosts curtain-raiser event

Skål International Coimbatore officially unveiled the countdown to the much-anticipated Skål India National Congress (SINC) 2026, scheduled to take place from August 12-14, 2026 at Le Méridien Coimbatore. The curtain-raising ceremony was hosted on May 30, 2026, at The Residency Towers, Coimbatore, bringing together distinguished leaders from the travel, tourism and hospitality fraternity.

For the first time, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu's dynamic industrial and cultural hub, will host the prestigious national congress of Skål International India. The congress is expected to welcome tourism leaders, hoteliers, travel professionals, media and stakeholders from across the country and around the world for meaningful dialogue centred around doing business among friends, sustainability, heritage and the future of tourism.

The evening reflected the warmth and traditions of Tamil Nadu with a graceful local touch in hospitality and presentation, while guests embraced elegant ethnic and regional attire in celebration of the destination's rich cultural identity. The curtain raiser was organised under the leadership



of Ramesh Chandrakumar, President, Skål International Coimbatore and P.K. Ganesh, SINC 2026 Chairman, along with the entire Skål International Coimbatore team.

The event was attended by dignitaries including D. Srinivasan, Managing Director of Annapoorna Hotels; Sathish

K.S. (IFS), Regional Passport Officer, Coimbatore; T. Jegatheswari, District Tourist Officer, Coimbatore; Sundar Singaram, Director – Operations, SIHRA (South India Hotels and Restaurants Association); NSN Mohan, Vice President, Skål International; and Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål International India.



IEIA Celebrates Global Exhibitions Day 2026 Through a Historic Multi-City National Relay Across Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata

Travel Mail Desk

The Indian Exhibition Industry Association (IEIA) marked the Global Exhibitions Day (GED) 2026 through a first-of-its-kind nationwide celebration spanning Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata. Linked through live broadcasts and a symbolic Mashaal Relay, the celebrations showcased the power of exhibitions to connect industries, regions and opportunities, while highlighting their vital role as catalysts for economic growth, innovation, entrepreneurship, trade and national development.

Celebrated worldwide, Global Exhibitions Day is an initiative of the global exhibition community that highlights the transformative role exhibitions and business events play in driving trade, investment, innovation, knowledge exchange and economic development. This year's theme, "Exhibitions Drive Opportunities," underscores how exhibitions continue to create value for businesses, industries and communities across the globe.

At a time when economies are navigating rapid technological change, shifting geopolitical dynamics and growing sustainability expectations, exhibitions remain among the most effective platforms for connecting people, ideas, products and markets. They serve as engines of commerce, innovation and collaboration while generating significant benefits for travel, hospitality, logistics, technology and numerous supporting industries.

As part of the nationwide celebrations, and with the support of industry stakeholders across the country, industry leaders, venue operators, organizers, service providers, exhibitors and associations gathered to reflect on the sector's achievements and discuss the future of exhibitions in an increasingly complex global environment. Discussions focused on emerging opportunities, geopolitical developments, technological transformation, sustainability, business resilience and preparedness for future challenges.

A key highlight of the celebrations was the ceremonial Mashaal Relay, symbolizing the exhibition industry's



role as a harbinger of economic growth, innovation, connectivity and opportunity. As the Mashaal is passed from one region to another, it reflects the collective strength of an industry that facilitates trade, drives investments, enables knowledge exchange, supports entrepreneurship and fuels business growth across sectors.

The celebrations also underscored the industry's contribution to tourism, hospitality, infrastructure development, manufacturing growth, startup promotion, exports, foreign investment attraction and employment generation.

Speaking about the celebrations, **IEIA President Mr. Sooraj Dhawan** said, "Global Exhibitions Day is a reminder of the extraordinary impact our industry creates every day. Exhibitions are not merely events; they are powerful platforms that stimulate economic activity, encourage innovation, facilitate trade, support MSMEs, create employment and drive regional development. Through this unique multi-city celebration, we aimed to demonstrate how exhibitions connect India's growth corridors and contribute meaningfully to the nation's vision of becoming a leading global business destination."

Mr. Jagdish Patankar, Honorary Secretary, IEIA, added, "The exhibition industry serves as a vital bridge between businesses, markets, policymakers, investors and consumers. The symbolic Mashaal Relay reflects the spirit of collaboration that defines our sector. As India advances toward becoming a global economic powerhouse, the exhibition industry will continue to play a pivotal role in fostering innovation, facilitating knowledge exchange and creating opportunities for sustainable growth."

As the exhibition industry marked the 11th edition of Global Exhibitions Day, stakeholders across the country reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening India's exhibition ecosystem, enhancing global competitiveness and positioning India among the world's leading destinations for exhibitions, conferences and business events.

Global Exhibitions Day 2026 serves not only as a celebration of the industry's achievements but also as a powerful reminder of the critical role exhibitions continue to play in shaping the future of trade, innovation, sustainability and economic development in India and around the world.

36th Annual General Meeting of the Hotel & Restaurant Association of Rajasthan Held at Hilton Jaipur

Travel Mail Desk

The 36th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Hotel & Restaurant Association of Rajasthan (HRAR) was successfully held at Hilton Jaipur, in the presence of Founder Members, Past Presidents, senior hoteliers, restaurateurs, tourism stakeholders and members from across the State.

During the AGM, the members unanimously constituted the new Executive Committee for the forthcoming term.

Addressing the members, outgoing **President Shri Tarun Bansal** expressed his gratitude to the entire HRAR fraternity for their unwavering support during his tenure. He congratulated the newly constituted Executive Committee and expressed confidence that the Association would continue to grow stronger under its new leadership.

Presenting the Secretary's Annual Report, **General Secretary Shri Adhiraj Singh Shahpura** briefly highlighted the Association's key achievements during the past year. These included a significant increase in membership, effective representation before the Central and State Governments on various policy matters concerning the hospitality industry, skill development initiatives for tourism stakeholders, participation in leading national travel exhibitions, responsible tourism and heritage conservation initiatives, as well as several programmes focused on member engagement and industry development. He acknowledged the collective efforts of the Executive Committee, members and partner organisations, stating that these achievements were the result of teamwork and shared commitment.

Thereafter, **Treasurer Shri Aseem Parakh** presented the Audited Financial Statements and Annual Accounts for the financial year 2025-26. He provided

members with an overview of the Association's financial performance and activities during the year. The audited accounts were unanimously approved by the House, and members appreciated his efforts in maintaining financial discipline, transparency and sound governance. In recognition of

and enhancing HRAR's visibility and representation across the hospitality and tourism sector.

The AGM was graced by the presence of HRAR's Founder Members, Shri Bhim Singh Rathore (Rajasthan Tours) and Shri Ajay Agarwal (LMB). Also present were the Association's Past Presidents Shri Apurve

Kumar, Chairman, Clarks Group of Hotels, Shri Rishipal Singh, and Shri Kuldeep Singh Chandela, Director, Spice Court. The members expressed their gratitude for their continued guidance, invaluable contribution and unwavering support towards the growth and development of the Association.

A special vote of thanks was extended to Hilton Jaipur, particularly General Manager Shri Rahul Bhagat, Director of Sales Shri Shivendra, and their entire team for their outstanding hospitality, meticulous

arrangements and wholehearted support in successfully hosting the 36th Annual General Meeting.

The meeting concluded on a note of unity, optimism and renewed commitment towards the continued growth of Rajasthan's hospitality and tourism industry. Members extended their best wishes to the newly constituted Executive Committee, reaffirming their collective resolve to further strengthen HRAR and serve the interests of the hospitality fraternity.

New Executive Committee (2026-28)

- President: **Shri Hemant Mittal**
- General Secretary: **Shri Adhiraj Singh Shahpura (Re-elected)**
- Treasurer: **Shri Aseem Parakh (Re-elected)**
- Joint Secretary: **Shri Luv Shekhawat**
- Immediate Past President: **Shri Tarun Bansal**



his valuable contribution, Shri Aseem Parakh was unanimously re-elected as Treasurer.

Accepting the responsibility as the **newly elected President, Shri Hemant Mittal** thanked the members for their confidence and assured them that the new Executive Committee would work with dedication to strengthen HRAR as a progressive, member-centric organisation. He reiterated the Association's commitment to working closely with the Government, industry stakeholders and tourism bodies to promote sustainable growth and further enhance Rajasthan's position as one of India's leading hospitality and tourism destinations.

The members also placed on record their appreciation for the exemplary leadership of Shri Tarun Bansal, acknowledging his contribution towards strengthening unity within the Association, maintaining financial discipline, encouraging transparency

FAITH Conclave 2026 to Spotlight Tourism as a Catalyst for India's Economic Growth



Travel Mail Desk

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), the apex policy federation representing India's Tourism, Travel and Hospitality industry, has announced the second edition of the FAITH Conclave 2026, scheduled to take place on 16–17 July 2026 at Taj Palace, New Delhi. The conclave will be held under the theme “Incredible India: Invaluable Economics,” underscoring tourism's growing role as a strategic contributor to India's economic development and global positioning.

Working in close collaboration with the Government of India and State Governments, FAITH has consistently championed policy advocacy and industry-led initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth across the tourism ecosystem. The 2026 conclave is expected to serve as a premier platform for constructive dialogue between government and industry, while exploring strategies to unlock tourism's full economic potential.

The two-day gathering will bring together an influential cross-section of stakeholders, including senior Union Cabinet Ministers, Hon'ble Chief Ministers, policymakers, industry leaders, global tourism experts and senior executives from across the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality sectors. Discussions will focus on positioning tourism as a key pillar of India's economic agenda through policy reforms, investment opportunities, employment generation, infrastructure development, cultural preservation and enhanced global competitiveness.

The forthcoming edition builds on the success of the inaugural FAITH Conclave held in August 2025, which attracted more than 350 delegates from across the country. The inaugural event witnessed the participation of several distinguished dignitaries, including Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar, Hon'ble Minister of Culture & Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Shri Omar

Abdullah, Shri Amitabh Kant, Former G20 Sherpa, Lt. General Rakesh Kapoor, AVSM, VSM, Deputy Chief of Army Staff, alongside senior government officials and leading CEOs representing India's tourism and hospitality landscape.

With the Indian tourism sector witnessing unprecedented momentum, FAITH Conclave 2026 aims to further strengthen collaboration between policymakers and industry stakeholders while shaping a future-ready roadmap for sustainable growth. The conclave will examine how tourism can serve as a powerful force multiplier for economic expansion, job creation, regional development and India's soft power on the global stage.

By convening government leaders, industry experts and key decision-makers under one roof, FAITH Conclave 2026 seeks to reinforce tourism's position as a vital engine of national growth and a cornerstone of India's long-term development vision.

Marriott International and CG Hospitality Global Sign Multi-Unit Agreement to Open Three Properties across India and Nepal

Travel Mail Desk

Marriott International, Inc. signed a landmark agreement with CG Hospitality Global to open three new hotels in South Asia, introducing Marriott's industry-leading luxury and premium hotel brands to key urban, economic and leisure destinations across Nepal and India. Anticipated to open in 2031 and adding nearly 450 keys to the company's portfolio, The Ritz-Carlton Kathmandu, The Westin Kathmandu, and JW Marriott Hotel Siliguri are poised to become coveted addresses for discerning travellers and residents.

This multi-property agreement was officially signed in the presence of **David Marriott, Marriott International's Chairman of the Board**; **Dr Binod K Chaudhary, Chairman, CG Corp Global & CG Hospitality**; and **Mr. Rahul Chaudhary, Managing Director & CEO, CG Corp Global & CG Hospitality**.

"We are pleased to deepen our association with CG Hospitality Global through a shared vision to bring world-class hospitality experiences to these high-potential markets", said **Rajeev Menon, President, Asia Pacific** excluding



China, Marriott International. "These landmark developments reflect the exceptional standards and brand excellence that define Marriott's luxury and premium portfolio, while contributing meaningfully to tourism growth, local employment, and regional economic development. Backed by CG Hospitality Global's strong market expertise and long-term commitment to Nepal, we are confident these hotels will emerge as defining hospitality destinations in the region".

On the occasion, **Rahul Chaudhary, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director of CG Hospitality Global**, said,

"Growing our relationship with Marriott International marks an exciting new chapter in our journey to elevate South Asia's hospitality landscape. These signings signify the importance that both parties put in this collaboration, and we sincerely thank Marriott for their trust, collaboration, and shared vision as we embark on these landmark projects together. Together, we will create iconic destinations that celebrate local culture, unlock meaningful employment, and deliver exceptional experiences for travellers and communities."

The three-property signing is the latest in a series of milestones reflecting the growing association between Marriott and CG Hospitality Global, including the recent celebration of 75 total signings and 50 open properties for Series by Marriott in under two years. Outside of India, CG Hospitality Global and Marriott also opened The Farm at San Benito, Autograph Collection in the Philippines, marking the debut of the Autograph Collection brand in the country. At the same time, CG Developers announced JW Marriott Residences at Dubai Islands, Central, Dubai's first JW Marriott branded residences.

Evoke Rambagh Ayodhya Opens, Expanding Premium Hospitality Offerings Near Ram Mandir

Travel Mail Desk

Eyak Ventures has announced the launch of Evoke Rambagh, a 25-acre hospitality development near the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, which will be operated under the Evoke Experiences brand.

In such an environment, the opening of Evoke Rambagh could not have come at a better time, as Ayodhya continues to receive more visitors following the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple and improved infrastructural development in the region. The hotel offers its services to these visitors by providing a well-rounded accommodation facility that caters specifically to family travellers and pilgrims.

Spread across 25 acres, Evoke Rambagh is among Ayodhya's largest resort properties and features multiple water bodies integrated across the development, creating a tranquil and expansive stay environment. The property has a total of 156 cottages that offer the perfect blend of comfort and



convenience. Located on Parikrama Marg, it is easily accessible via Ayodhya Junction railway station and the Maharishi Valmiki International Airport.

The property provides an extensive array of facilities to ensure that guests have a comfortable stay experience. The property offers an extensive choice of dining venues, with the provision of an all-vegetarian restaurant that serves satvik food based on Indian, Oriental, and Continental cuisine, along with a lobby restaurant and room service.

Events and functions can be organised at the property as it has a large banquet hall, spacious landscape gardens, a separate clubhouse and area for activities. With Ayodhya gradually emerging as a destination for weddings and social celebrations alongside religious tourism, the property is also positioned to cater to destination weddings, family gatherings, and large-format events. Other facilities offered by the property include a business centre, guest lounge, and other social and corporate facilities.

JW MARRIOTT APPOINTS AISHWARYA RAI BACHCHAN AS GLOBAL BRAND AMBASSADOR, ADVANCING THE BRAND'S WELL-BEING PHILOSOPHY THROUGH INDIA'S CULTURAL LENS

Travel Mail Desk

JW Marriott, part of Marriott Bonvoy's global portfolio of more than 30 brands, today announces its collaboration with Aishwarya Rai Bachchan as a Global Brand Ambassador. Through this, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan will elevate and bring renewed expression to the brand's global "Stay in the Moment" platform, bringing a thoughtful, globally resonant perspective that deepens its relevance across key international markets.

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's appointment as a Global Brand Ambassador reflects this shared alignment. For over two decades, she has represented India on the global stage with distinction across cinema, fashion, philanthropy and international cultural platforms. Her career is defined not only by enduring visibility but by credibility, discernment, and a rare sense of gravitas that reflects a life grounded in balance, built on integrity, resilience, unwavering authenticity, and a strong sense of purpose.

"Aishwarya's global stature, warmth, and authenticity make her a natural embodiment of JW Marriott and an ideal partner for the brand," said **Bruce Rohr**,



Vice President and Global Brand Leader, JW Marriott. "She brings a thoughtful, grounded presence that reflects the way our guests seek to travel – with intention and a sense of connection. As we continue to expand in India and across markets shaped by Indian travellers, this collaboration reinforces our

commitment to celebrating presence as the ultimate in luxury experiences."

As a Global Brand Ambassador, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan will be featured across international brand campaigns and storytelling spanning film, print, and digital platforms, while also engaging in thoughtfully curated brand experiences in India and select global markets. The creative expression centres on moments of reflection, connection, and quiet sophistication within JW Marriott spaces – bringing to life environments intentionally designed to foster clarity, presence, and a sense of calm.

For Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, the association reflects a shared sensibility with the brand's approach to holistic well-being and meaningful connections. "Travel has always been an important part of my life, both personally and professionally," she said. "The most meaningful experiences are often the quietest ones, when you are fully aware of where you are and who you are with. JW Marriott's philosophy of being present and in the moment speaks to that awareness. I am honoured to represent a brand that values presence and purpose in equal measure."

IHG Hotels & Resorts signs Holiday Inn Mathura, tapping demand in a key spiritual tourism market

Travel Mail Desk

IHG® Hotels & Resorts, one of the world's leading hospitality companies, has signed a management agreement with Embrassio Hotels & Resorts Private Limited, the hospitality arm of Vrindara Group, to develop Holiday Inn Mathura. Scheduled to open in early 2030, the signing reinforces IHG's commitment to expanding its presence across high-potential travel markets in India and driving growth in demand-led destinations across the country.

Holiday Inn, one of the world's most recognised hotel brands, continues to respond to evolving travel needs and strong owner demand. In India, the brand is building momentum across key destinations, supported by a pipeline of more than 40 Holiday Inn-branded hotels and IHG's broader growth ambitions in the country.

One of India's oldest and most significant religious centres, Mathura continues to attract visitors from across the country, supported by growing spiritual tourism and increasing demand for quality branded accommodation. Well



positioned to serve this demand, Holiday Inn Mathura will offer 115 rooms and suites, three dining venues including an all-day dining restaurant, bar and lobby lounge, as well as meeting and event facilities across five venues, including a ballroom. The hotel will also feature a fitness centre and swimming pool.

Commenting on the signing, **Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts**, said "We are delighted to partner with Embrassio Hotels & Resorts Private Limited to introduce Holiday Inn Mathura. The city's

significance as a spiritual destination, combined with rising demand for quality branded accommodation, makes it a compelling market for growth. The signing of Holiday Inn Mathura aligns with our strategy of expanding in high-potential destinations and bringing globally recognised brands to locations where travellers are seeking trusted hospitality experiences."

Mr. Krishna Kumar Sharma, Managing Director, Vrindara Group, added "We are pleased to partner with IHG Hotels & Resorts to bring Holiday Inn to Mathura. As one of the most recognised and trusted hotel brands in the world, Holiday Inn is well suited to meet the needs of the city's growing visitor base. We look forward to developing a hotel that combines international standards with the warmth and character of Mathura."

The signing of Holiday Inn Mathura marks another milestone in IHG's expansion journey in India, underscoring its strategy of bringing globally trusted brands to high-potential destinations and broadening its presence across key travel markets in the country.

Aravali Marriott Resort & Spa Presents Everything You Love Included, Redefining the All-Inclusive Resort Experience

Travel Mail Desk

Aravali Marriott Resort & Spa, Delhi NCR, heralds a defining moment in India's hospitality landscape with the launch of Everything You Love Included – a first-of-its-kind offering that reimagines the modern getaway through thoughtful inclusions, intuitive hospitality, and seamless experiences.

The Everything You Love Included experience thoughtfully includes:

- Premium accommodation, complemented by personalised welcome amenities and elevated hospitality touchpoints.
- Extended buffet breakfast, lunch, and dinner experiences at The Aravali Kitchen, along with an indulgent dining experience at Huang featuring a specially curated contingency set menu.
- Unlimited select premium alcoholic beverages, soft beverages, tea, and coffee are served across Glaze Bar from 12 PM to 11 PM and Olive Grove from 12 PM to 8 PM. A handcrafted welcome cocktail or mocktail on arrival, alongside signature Chaupal



hi-tea experiences and a specially curated tapas and light bites menu served at Glaze Bar and Olive Grove from 4 PM to 7 PM.

- 25% savings on spa therapies, complemented by wellness-led experiences and fitness access.
- Access to the vibrant clubhouse featuring board games, foosball, air hockey, and table tennis, creating immersive leisure experiences for families and groups alike.
- 2,000 Marriott Bonvoy points, curated departure gifts, flexible late check-out privileges, and a thoughtfully designed pet-friendly stay experience for guests travelling with their furry companions. Available starting at INR 30,000 on weekdays and INR 32,000 on weekends, Everything You Love Included presents a hospitality format rarely experienced within the Indian staycation landscape.

Beyond the forecast: Discovering the beauty of monsoon travel at The Serai Resorts

Travel Mail Desk

As travellers increasingly seek meaningful escapes over packed itineraries, a new travel mindset is emerging. According to recent travel trend reports, Gen Z and millennial travellers are embracing “quietcations” and “hushpality”, experiences centred around slowing down, disconnecting from digital noise, and reconnecting with nature at a gentler pace. In a world that constantly demands attention, the luxury of stillness has become one of the most sought-after indulgences. It is precisely during the monsoon season that this philosophy comes alive across The Serai Resorts, where the showers come in not merely as a weather change but as an invitation to experience destinations in their most authentic, immersive form.

The Serai Resorts, Chikmagalur: In the land of rains: Chikmagalur sits within Karnataka's famed Malnad region, literally translating to “the land of rains”, where monsoons have shaped the landscape, culture, and rhythm of life for centuries. At The Serai Resorts Chikmagalur, nestled amidst sprawling coffee plantations at the foothills rather than high-altitude terrain, the season transforms the estate into a canvas of emerald greens, mist-covered valleys, and rain-kissed coffee bushes. Far from being a challenge, the monsoon is widely considered one of the most beautiful times to experience Chikmagalur. Guests can embrace slow mornings overlooking



the plantations, embark on guided estate walks through fragrant coffee trails, enjoy leisurely cycling routes framed by lush scenery, and savour the simple pleasure of watching clouds drift across the hills. It is a destination that encourages travellers to slow down, breathe deeply, and reconnect with nature's rhythm.

The Serai Resorts, Kabini: Life along the backwaters: There is perhaps no season more magical in Kabini than the monsoon. As rains replenish the backwaters and breathe new life into the forests, the landscape becomes richer, quieter, and teeming with natural beauty. At The Serai Kabini, perched along the

tranquil backwaters, the experience is centred around immersion rather than observation. Families and travellers can explore nature walks through thriving ecosystems, glide across the waters on coracle rides and kayaking adventures, enjoy speedboat excursions, try their hand at archery, or let younger guests discover creativity through the Junior Chef experience. The rains create an atmosphere of calm and renewal, making Kabini ideal for those looking to disconnect from routine and embrace the restorative power of nature without compromising on comfort or safety.

The Serai Resorts, Bandipur: The wilderness in its most beautiful season: Monsoon breathes fresh energy into Bandipur's forests, painting the landscape in vivid shades of green and transforming the wilderness into one of the most scenic periods of the year. Located on the edge of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and framed by the Nilgiri hills, The Serai Bandipur offers travellers a chance to experience nature at its most serene. The season invites slower exploration—unhurried nature walks, quiet wildlife sightings, leisurely afternoons surrounded by the sounds of the forest, and meaningful time spent with family away from urban distractions. Complementing by spacious accommodation, thoughtful hospitality, and immersive outdoor experiences, Bandipur becomes an ideal setting for travellers seeking a deeper connection with the natural world.

Ravi Surya Group Launches Ananta Spa & Resort Jaipur, Among Rajasthan's Largest Luxury Destination Resorts, Managed by BlackRock Hotels

Travel Mail Desk

In a major boost to Rajasthan's luxury hospitality and destination wedding sector, Ravi Surya Group has announced the launch of Ananta Spa & Resort Jaipur. Managed by Black Rock Hotels & Resorts, the property is among the state's largest luxury resort developments, featuring 351 rooms spread across 40 acres of the Aravali landscape. Positioned as India's first large-scale Japanese-inspired luxury resort ecosystem, the property marks a significant shift in Jaipur's hospitality landscape, moving beyond conventional palace and heritage formats toward globally inspired experiential travel destinations.

The launch comes amid rapidly growing demand for immersive domestic tourism, large-format destination weddings, wellness-led hospitality, and self-contained luxury travel ecosystems in India. Strategically located off the Delhi-Jaipur Highway, Ananta Spa & Resort Jaipur has been developed as an integrated experiential destination combining Japanese-inspired aesthetics with Rajasthan's warmth, scale and celebration culture.



Speaking on the launch, **Ravindra Pratap Singh, Chairman, Ravi Surya Group and owner of Ananta Spa & Resort Jaipur**, said, "Ananta Jaipur has been envisioned as more than a luxury resort. We wanted to create a destination that allows guests to slow down, reconnect with nature and experience celebrations, leisure and hospitality in a deeply immersive way. Rajasthan already has

a powerful tourism identity, but we saw an opportunity to create something globally inspired and emotionally distinct from the conventional palace hospitality experience. The response we are witnessing reflects the growing appetite for experiential luxury destinations within India."

Gaurav Mudgal, Managing Director, Black Rock Hotels & Resorts, said, "We want to create a destination that serves as the perfect meet, greet and celebrate space, catering to every segment, from leisure and MICE to weddings. By offering every experience in one place, Ananta Spa & Resort Jaipur is poised to become one of Rajasthan's most sought-after resorts for every occasion."

Nearby attractions include Amer Fort, Jaigarh Fort, Nahargarh Fort, Elephant Village and Motocross Adventure Park. With experiential hospitality becoming one of the fastest-growing segments in India's tourism sector, the launch of Ananta Spa & Resort Jaipur signals Rajasthan's growing evolution into a global-scale luxury travel and destination celebration hub.

Capella Hotel Group Brings Wellness-Integrated Branded Residences to Southeast Asia's First Wellness Complex

Travel Mail Desk

Capella Hotel Group announced the launch of Capella Residences Bangkok, a 262-unit residential centrepiece of the WellEra development located at the intersection of Sarasin and Langsuan Roads and overlooking Lumpini Park in Bangkok's prestigious Lumpini district.

Marking the brand's first entry into wellness-integrated branded residences, Capella Residences Bangkok forms an interconnected whole alongside BDMS Wellness Clinic, an urban wellness retreat, and a curated lifestyle retail offering within WellEra. It is realised in partnership with BDMS Wellness Clinic, the preventive healthcare arm of Bangkok Dusit Medical Services Public Company Limited (BDMS) — Thailand's leading private healthcare network and one of Asia-Pacific's most respected names in scientific wellness.

Roland Fasel, President of Capella Hotel Group, said "Excellence in hospitality is the foundation of everything we do. The personalisation, the attention to craft, the bespoke experiences that make



each stay entirely one's own. We share BDMS's vision to take that spirit of service further into something more enduring, into the quality and vitality of how people live every day. There is no better city than

Bangkok and no better partner than BDMS to shape the future of luxury living. We are already anchored by Capella Bangkok, the world's best hotel in 2024, and our roots in this city will only deepen from here."

Dr. Poramaporn Prasarttong-Osoth, Chairperson of the Executive Committee and President of Bangkok Dusit Medical Services Public Company Limited (BDMS), added "WellEra represents an investment of more than 29 billion baht in a new model of integrated wellness living — where health, medicine, science, technology and lifestyle come together under one vision: that good health is not an aspiration, but a way of life. It is the first development of its kind in Southeast Asia to integrate scientific wellness and preventive medicine into every dimension of daily life. We believe the future of health will not be shaped within healthcare systems alone, but within every aspect of how people live. Together with Capella Hotel Group, we are pioneering a new standard of wellness-integrated ecosystem in the region."

5 Resort Wedding Ideas That Are Redefining Indian Celebrations

Travel Mail Desk

While Indian weddings have traditionally been celebrated on a grand scale, couples today are moving away from conventional ballroom-style celebrations and embracing experiential events that offer a more personal, immersive, and meaningful experience. According to Anjali Tolani, Vice President – Celebrations at Tamarind Global, since 2020, weddings have evolved into more curated celebrations, with a greater focus on elements such as wellness, sustainability, guest experience, and creating memorable moments rather than focusing on scale alone. Luxury resorts in India and abroad are responding to this shift by introducing creative wedding concepts that combine travel, hospitality, and celebration into one seamless experience.

Here are five resort wedding trends redefining modern Indian weddings.

Wedding + Wellness Retreat:

With the growing focus on self-care, many couples are choosing wellness-focused wedding experiences. The wedding journey has evolved beyond celebrations alone, allowing couples, families, and friends to arrive at lifestyle wellness destinations where they can enjoy activities such as yoga, guided meditation, spa treatments, sound therapy, and nature walks. Popular destinations for wedding wellness experiences include Rishikesh, Udaipur, Coorg, and luxury wellness resorts across Kerala. Many celebrations now feature organic menus, cold-pressed juices, and locally sourced ingredients from regional farmers. As a result, guests leave feeling rejuvenated, refreshed, and more connected with each other.

Adventure Destination Weddings:

Couples who believe their wedding should be an exciting and unforgettable experience are increasingly turning towards adventure weddings. Many resorts located in areas surrounded by natural beauty, such as mountains, forests, deserts, and coastlines, offer unique itineraries that combine wedding celebrations with adventure activities. Imagine trekking in the Himalayas before your wedding, dune bashing in Jaisalmer, enjoying a hot-air balloon ride in Jaipur, or scuba diving in the Andaman Islands. In Kerala, girls' side and boys' side snake boat races are also being introduced



Anjali Tolani, Vice President
Celebrations at Tamarind Global

as part of wedding celebrations. By creating opportunities for guests to participate in shared experiences, adventure weddings create lasting memories beyond the ceremony itself. Younger couples looking for celebrations that break away from traditional norms are especially drawn to this trend.

Farm-to-Table Wedding Experiences:

Sustainability has emerged as one of the most prominent wedding themes over the past decade, with food becoming a key part of this movement. In farm-to-table weddings, chefs create fresh, seasonal menus using locally sourced ingredients from regional farmers and producers. High-end wedding venues located among vineyards, tea plantations, and countryside landscapes are now incorporating farm-to-table concepts into their dining experiences. This allows guests to enjoy locally grown produce, artisanal cheeses, organic fruits, vegetables, and regional delicacies. Destinations such as Nashik, Coorg, Alibaug, and vineyards across Maharashtra offer the perfect settings for elegant yet eco-conscious celebrations. These weddings not only promote sustainability but also allow couples and guests to connect with the destination through its culinary heritage.

Digital Detox Weddings:

With technology becoming an integral part of everyday life, many couples are choosing to focus on creating meaningful experiences rather than constantly documenting moments. Digital Detox Weddings encourage guests to disconnect from their devices and fully immerse themselves in the celebration. Beaches, forests, and mountain destinations away from the hustle of everyday life provide the perfect setting for these experiences. While photographers capture important moments, guests can focus on being present, spending quality time together, and strengthening emotional connections. Unplugged weddings create an intimate atmosphere that allows couples and guests to truly experience every moment.

Wedding Weekend Festivals:

One of the biggest trends in destination weddings is the rise of festival-inspired wedding weekends. Similar to global music festivals or luxury retreats, these multi-day celebrations transform weddings into immersive experiences filled with entertainment, relaxation, and memorable activities. Guests can enjoy beachside sundowners in Goa, pool parties in Phuket, carnival-themed welcome nights in Jaipur, local food markets, live music performances, wellness mornings, and themed after parties. Couples are now creating customised itineraries that offer a balance of celebration, relaxation, and entertainment throughout the weekend. Many resorts are designing entire wedding experiences around themes that reflect the couple's story, moving beyond traditional wedding formats to create unique and personalised celebrations.

No matter the type of resort wedding couples choose, there are endless opportunities to create memorable experiences for both the couple and their guests. Resort weddings today are no longer just about the venue; they are about creating meaningful journeys filled with connection, celebration, and unforgettable moments. As wedding trends continue to evolve, the future of Indian celebrations will focus on experiences that are personal, immersive, and designed to create lifelong memories.

Sculpting India Across Continents

The Extraordinary Journey of Naresh Kumar Kumawat



Creating National Icons

One of the most celebrated contributions of Kumawat is the 75-foot Samudra Manthan mural at the new Parliament Building in New Delhi. It is an artwork inspired by one of the most significant episodes in Indian mythology. The mural serves as a powerful representation of cooperation, perseverance and the pursuit of the collective good. These values can be an inspiration for democratic governance. Kumawat was also the heart and soul behind the lifelike medallion at Parliament Complex featuring Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

He was also associated with the towering 369-foot Statue of Belief of Lord Shiva in Nathdwara, Rajasthan. This sculpture is highly responsible for establishing his reputation for handling projects of extraordinary scale and complexity. He has also contributed to the proposed grand Lord Ram Statue

Travel Mail Desk

Travellers have different motives behind taking the extra mile and exploring new places. Some do it purely for the adrenaline. On the other hand, some have the urge to capture beautiful landscapes. However, there are those rare individuals who leave behind landmarks that leave a mark on a nation's identity. Renowned sculptor Naresh Kumar Kumawat is a living example of the rare talent that creates history. His journey can be described as a beautiful story of transforming stone, metal and imagination. He has added hard work and soul to timeless symbols of heritage, faith and national pride. These monuments have made this remarkable artist shine across countries and cultures.

The years Kumawat has devoted to his art have rewarded him with recognition as one of the most influential sculptors in our country. The monumental artworks created by him have become cultural landmarks in India and abroad. It is the life-like sculpting in all his work that has made him a renowned personality, right from the spiritual heartlands of Rajasthan and Ayodhya to the landmark streets of North America, Africa and other nations. Travel has played a defining role in every project by becoming a source of inspiration, learning and cultural exchange.

From Rajasthan to the World

Being born in a family of Rajasthan-based generational sculptors had a huge impact on shaping the early years

of Naresh Kumar Kumawat. His ancestors had devoted their lives to this art form, and that was also a reason for sparking his fascination with sculpture and craftsmanship. His birthplace, Rajasthan, is known for its artistic tradition and architectural excellence. It has been a driving force for his growing admiration for the artistic world. They have formed a foundation for a career that was destined to shine beyond borders.



He began his artistic journey with a commitment to preserving India's sculptural traditions and converting them into masterpieces that grab the spotlight in modern public spaces. His uncanny ability to transform narratives into monumental-scale projects earned him recognition from various governments, institutions and communities from different parts of the world.

Today, his creations can be found across continents. Each of his creations carries a distinctly Indian ethos. They also resonate with universal themes of spirituality, leadership, and cultural identity.



Project in Ayodhya. This will be another landmark initiative that seeks to celebrate India's spiritual heritage.

His sculptures are adorned across the country as memorials, educational institutions, temples, public parks and civic spaces. They have a significant role in shaping the visual identity of communities and cities alike.

What began as Kumawat's journey as a sculptor in Rajasthan has now evolved into his mission of global storytelling through culture. Today, much like the namesake of Kumawat's artwork and the great leaders he has sculpted, his sculptures stand as a lasting tribute to India's heritage. They serve as monuments that unite communities all over the world, celebrate shared beliefs and inspire generations to come.

Karnataka Tourism Society Concludes Successful Gujarat Series B2B Roadshows with Over 600 Buyers



Travel Mail Desk

The Karnataka Tourism Society (KTS), in association with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC), and Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd. (JLR), has successfully concluded the Gujarat Series B2B Tourism Roadshows, held from 24th to 27th June 2026 across Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Surat.

The series witnessed the participation of over 600 buyers across four cities, engaging with 40 tourism stakeholders from Karnataka. The roadshows provided a dynamic platform for networking, collaboration, and showcasing Karnataka's diverse tourism offerings – from heritage and culture to eco tourism, adventure, and luxury hospitality.

Stakeholders from Karnataka included leading names such as Air Travel Shoppe Pvt. Ltd., Arcor Hotels Mysuru, Areca County, Bigtravels, BlueEarth Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., CGH Earth, Cintacor Island Resort, Coorg Cliffs Resorts India Pvt. Ltd., Evolve Back Resorts, Heritage Resort Hampi, Indo Asia Hotels & Resorts, Intersight Tours & Travels Pvt. Ltd., Java Rain Resorts, Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd., Kaav Safari Lodge Kabini, Kadkani River Resorts Pvt. Ltd., Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation Ltd., Machaan Lodges & Resorts, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts, Maitri Heritage, Narayani Holidays and Conferences Pvt. Ltd., Paradise Resorts Udupi, Quality Holidays and Cars Pvt. Ltd., Scylla Luxury



Resort & Spa, SGR Travels, Skyway International Travels Pvt. Ltd., Tamara Leisure Experiences, TGI Hotels & Resorts, The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary, The Serai Resorts, The Silver Sky Hotels & Resorts, The Windflower Resorts & Spa, The Yellow Bamboo Resort & Spa, Travel India Company, Tripbanao, Trivik Hotels & Resorts Pvt. Ltd., WelcomHeritage Shivavilas Palace Hampi, and Woodstock Resorts.

Adding vibrancy to the roadshows, engaging activities such as a Quiz on Karnataka's tourist destinations and a raffle draw were conducted at each location. Winners were awarded with complimentary stay vouchers and gift hampers, creating excitement and further strengthening the connection between Karnataka's tourism stakeholders and the buyer community.

Speaking on the occasion, **K. Syama Raju, President – Karnataka Tourism Society (KTS)**, said *"The Gujarat Series Roadshows have been a landmark initiative in connecting Karnataka's tourism stakeholders with the vibrant travel trade community of Gujarat. With over 600 buyers participating across four cities, the response has been truly encouraging. Gujarat is one of the most important feeder markets for us in terms of domestic tourism, and strengthening this relationship is vital to sustaining growth. Building on the momentum of the recently concluded Discover Chikkamagaluru showcase, which highlighted Karnataka's coffee heritage and cultural richness, these roadshows further reinforce our commitment to promoting Karnataka as a preferred destination for both domestic and international travellers."*

12 Spots on This Cruise Ship That Will Fill Your Camera Roll Before You Even Reach the First Port

Travel Mail Desk

There are selfies. There are great selfies. And then there are cruise selfies – where the backdrop changes every few hours, the light behaves differently than it does on land, and the setting is so good your friends assume you hired a photographer.

Norwegian Luna, one of Norwegian Cruise Line's newest ships at sea, is proof that some vacations are built differently. The backdrop is constantly shifting. Sunrise over open water looks nothing like noon, noon nothing like golden hour, and golden hour nothing like a night on a glowing deck. You'll never capture the same moment twice.

Here are 12 spots on board worth every frame in your camera roll.

The Hull – Before You Even Step Aboard:

Some ships are forgettable on the outside. This one isn't. Norwegian Luna's hull carries 'La Luna' – a sweeping mural by New York-based street artist ELLE, a bold, colourful exploration of humanity's connection to the moon and celestial forces. Spanning nearly a thousand feet, it's a statement in itself. Get the shot from the dock before you board. It sets the tone for everything that follows.

Oceanwalk Glass Bridge – For the "I'm Walking on Water" Selfie: Not a morning person? You might just want to become one for this. Oceanwalk is a glass-bottomed, glass-walled bridge that extends over the open ocean – sea below your feet, sky above, nothing else in the frame. This is the best place on the ship for that one slow, no-crowd selfie, in the early hours when the light is soft, and the deck is quiet. The drama is entirely built in. No filter required.

The Penrose Atrium – The Indoor Shot That Isn't Indoor:

Step inside and look up. The three-story glass-walled atrium is anchored by a three-tonne crystal chandelier inspired by constellations – the kind of centrepiece that makes every photo look intentional. Natural light shifts throughout the day. Morning here feels different from evening, but both are worth the shot. There's also a professional photography studio set up in the evenings if you want to give away the camera entirely.

Infinity Beach – Golden Hour No Compromise:

Two infinity pools sit on either side of the ship, designed to



visually merge with the horizon. You know the shot – water appearing to spill into the ocean beyond. It's a perspective you cannot imitate on land. Both sunrise and sunset lovers win here. Pick your hour, find your angle, and let the setting do the work.

Ocean Boulevard – The Promenade That Goes Everywhere:

Ocean Boulevard wraps 360 degrees around the ship, so the view is always evolving. Morning light on one side, the wake of the ship from the other, noon feels completely different from dusk. Along the way is The Concourse – an outdoor sculpture garden with installations designed specifically for photo moments, with metal artworks by Alexander Krivosheiv and David Harber. It's a selfie spot that doesn't announce itself as one, which makes it even better.

Vibe Beach Club – When Even Your Candid Look Composed:

The adults-only Vibe Beach Club is the kind of space that captures the way a good vacation feels. Think plush loungers, infinity hot tubs and uninterrupted ocean views. It's the sort of setting where you're not trying to chase the perfect shot – it happens naturally.

The Aqua Slidecoaster – Chaos, But Make It Content:

Hear us out. The Aqua Slidecoaster is a hybrid waterslide and roller coaster that wraps around the ship's funnel in two brightly coloured tubes, launching riders through uphill sections, drops, and twists across three decks. The visual – neon tracks

against the open sky and the expression on someone's face mid-launch is genuinely great content. Get the POV in a waterproof case or stand on the deck and capture the moment. Either way, it makes the camera roll.

The Drop – Ten Stories of Pure Expression:

If the Slidecoaster is chaos, The Drop is commitment. A ten-story free-fall dry slide – one of the only ones at sea, where the only way is straight down. The photo opportunity here is all about the expression.

Glow Court – The Night Shift Selfie:

By day, it is a high-tech LED sports floor. By night, it transforms into something that looks like it belongs in a music video – colour underfoot, the deck lit up, the ocean dark beyond the rails. It's the spot for the photo that says "the night was good" without needing a caption. This is what low-light phone photography was made for.

Indulge Food Hall – Where the Food Is the Story:

Open-air, set on Ocean Boulevard, and running ten global cuisine stations, Indulge Food Hall is made for food content. Whether it is a bowl of noodles with the ocean behind it or a dessert plated against the sky, the backdrop changes with every meal. –Breakfast, lunch or al fresco dinner – if you're a food content creator, this is your part of the ship.

The Haven – No Crowds, No Compromises:

For the selfie that requires nothing additional, The Haven is the answer. This private enclave within the ship has its own sun decks, dedicated elevators, and a slower pace. No crowds, unobstructed views and understated elegance. It feels less "I'm on a cruise", more "I live here now".

At Every Port – The "Let's Take a Selfie" Shore Excursion:

The camera roll doesn't stop when the ship docks. Across many of Norwegian Cruise Line's destinations – from the colourful plazas of Cozumel to the blue-domed churches of Santorini to the iconic landmarks of Rome, a dedicated Let's Take a Selfie shore excursion takes guests to the most photogenic spots in each port, with a selfie tutor to help with angles, lighting and composition. It's sightseeing along with a masterclass in photography. And when you return to the ship, you have captured an entire destination, not just visited it.

AIR FRANCE STRENGTHENS CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN INDIA, FRANCE AND THE WORLD



Travel Mail Desk

Reinforcing its long-standing commitment to the Indian market, Air France continues to strengthen connectivity between India, France, and destinations worldwide through its extensive global network via Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport.

With daily direct summer operations from Bengaluru, Delhi and Mumbai, Air France connects Indian travellers to Paris and beyond, offering access to over 190 destinations worldwide through its hub at Paris-Charles de Gaulle.

To simplify transit for Indian nationals, the French authorities have recently removed the Airport Transit Visa (ATV) requirement for Indian nationals transiting through French airports between India and non-Schengen destinations. Eligible passengers can now benefit from smoother, more streamlined transit procedures at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport, subject to valid travel documents and destination entry requirements.

Commenting on the recent developments, **Laure Daynie, Country Manager Air France-KLM India**, said "India is a key strategic market for Air France and continues to demonstrate

resilience and strong growth potential in the current environment. We operate daily flights from three gateways, offering customers greater choice and flexibility in their travel options. The recent removal of the Airport Transit Visa (ATV) requirement for Indian nationals by the French authorities is a very welcome development, making transit through Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport simpler and more seamless. Along with Air France's signature services and refined French hospitality, these developments further strengthen our commitment to elevating the customer journey and delivering a smoother, more consistent, and premium travel experience for our customers from India at every step."

The Air France lounges in Terminal 2E at gates K, L and M at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport offer a premium and seamless experience for passengers transiting through Paris onwards to a long-haul destination or before departure. The lounges reflect the airline's signature blend of French elegance, comfort and hospitality.

Vietjet expands international network with new routes and strategic aviation infrastructure developments



Travel Mail Desk

Vietjet continues to strengthen its international presence through new routes across Asia and Europe, alongside strategic investments in aviation infrastructure. As the airline connects five major Indian cities to Vietnam, these latest developments reinforce Vietnam's position as an increasingly accessible destination for Indian travellers and support the long-term growth of the aviation ecosystem across Asia.

As part of its expansion plans, the airline has announced a new service connecting Ho Chi Minh City and Cebu in the Philippines, linking two important economic and tourism hubs in Southeast

Asia. The airline has also announced a direct route between Nha Trang, one of Vietnam's most popular beach destinations, and Singapore, offering travellers more convenient travel options between the two countries. Both new routes are scheduled to commence operations from December 11, 2026, supporting tourism, trade and people-to-people exchanges across ASEAN markets.

Expanding beyond Southeast Asia, Vietjet will also launch a new Hanoi-Prague service via Almaty, Kazakhstan, strengthening connectivity between Vietnam, Central Asia and Europe. The route marks another important milestone in Vietjet's international growth

strategy and opens new opportunities for travellers exploring Europe through Vietnam.

In addition to expanding its flight network, Vietjet continues to invest in aviation infrastructure and operational capabilities. The airline has signed an agreement with Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor Office (EECO) to develop an aircraft Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) centre at U-Tapao International Airport, supporting the long-term growth of the regional aviation industry.

To celebrate its network expansion, Vietjet has launched one of its largest promotional campaigns in 2026, offering 12 million discounted tickets across its network, including direct flights linking Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru to key Vietnamese hubs of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Indian travellers can book Eco-class fares from INR 11, plus taxes and fees, until 9:30 PM on June 7, 2026 (IST). Special promotional fares are also available across Deluxe, SkyBoss and Business classes. Tickets can be booked through Vietjet's website (www.vietjetair.com), the "Vietjet Air" mobile app, and official sales channels worldwide.

Etihaad and TAROM Open New Links Across Eastern Europe



Travel Mail Desk

Etihaad Airways and TAROM, the national airline of Romania, have signed a codeshare agreement that connects Etihaad's global guests with Romania and Eastern Europe, and links travellers from Romania to Abu Dhabi, Etihaad's home and gateway to its worldwide network. The agreement was signed at the IATA Annual General Meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

Under the partnership, Etihaad guests can book a single ticket on TAROM flights from Bucharest to six cities across Romania:

Baia Mare, Cluj-Napoca, Iasi, Oradea, Suceava, and Timisoara. The codeshare also extends to four Eastern European capitals: Belgrade, Budapest, Chisinau, and Sofia. Guests from Romania, in turn, can reach Abu Dhabi from Bucharest on Etihaad's new service.

The codeshare supports the launch of Etihaad's new Abu Dhabi-Bucharest service on 17 December 2026. Once the new service begins, guests can travel on a single ticket between Bucharest and destinations across Etihaad's network, with bags checked through to the final stop.

Romania is one of Eastern Europe's fastest-growing economies and a rising travel destination, drawing visitors to the medieval towns of Transylvania, the Carpathian Mountains, and the Danube Delta. The codeshare gives Etihaad's guests a single connection to Bucharest and the wider region.

For travellers from Romania, the codeshare opens a new connection to Abu Dhabi, home to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, the museums of the Saadiyat Cultural

District and the beaches and resorts of the Arabian Gulf. From the UAE capital, guests can travel onward with Etihaad to destinations across the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Australia.

Arik De, Etihaad Airways Chief Revenue & Commercial Officer, said "TAROM gives Etihaad real depth in Eastern Europe: a flag carrier shaped by more than seven decades of European aviation, and an established network reaching across the country and the wider region. Launching this codeshare ahead of our own Bucharest service means we enter a fast-growing market with genuine scale from day one."

Mircea Nicolae Cotoros, TAROM Chief Commercial Officer, said "This codeshare with Etihaad Airways extends TAROM's international reach and gives passengers a new connection between Bucharest and Abu Dhabi. It strengthens the link between Romania and the Middle East, supports the continued growth of our network and fosters cultural and economic exchanges."

With the addition of TAROM, Etihaad's partner network now spans 47 codeshare and over 130 interline partners, the largest of any non-alliance airline, giving guests single-ticket and through-fare access to over 350 destinations worldwide.

Centrum Air Adds More Capacity on India Route, Now Operating Five Flights Weekly

Travel Mail Desk

Centrum Air, Uzbekistan's fast-growing private airline, has announced an increase in its flight frequencies between India and Uzbekistan, further strengthening connectivity between the two countries. The airline will now operate five weekly flights, offering greater flexibility, convenience, and travel options for passengers.

The enhanced schedule reflects the growing demand for travel between India and Uzbekistan, driven by increasing tourism, business exchanges, medical travel, and cultural ties. The additional frequencies are expected to support both leisure and corporate travellers while contributing to the continued growth of bilateral tourism and trade.

Speaking on the development, **Abdulaziz Abdurakhmanov, Founder and CEO of Centrum Holding**, said "India remains one of the most important international markets for Centrum Air. The increase in frequencies is a direct response to growing passenger demand and reflects our confidence in the market's potential. We are committed to offering reliable, comfortable, and affordable travel options while strengthening connectivity between India and Uzbekistan."



The enhanced services will provide travellers with greater scheduling flexibility and improved connectivity across Centrum Air's growing network. Passengers will also benefit from convenient onward access to key destinations within Uzbekistan and the wider Central Asian region.

Abhishek Goyal, CEO & Executive Director, Aeroprime Group, the airline's GSA partner in India, added "The response to Centrum Air's services from Indian travellers and the trade community has been extremely encouraging. Increasing operations to five weekly flights is a

significant milestone that reflects the strength of the India-Uzbekistan travel corridor. We look forward to supporting Centrum Air's continued expansion and making Uzbekistan more accessible than ever for Indian travellers."

The expanded schedule is expected to further boost tourism flows between the two countries. Uzbekistan continues to attract Indian travellers with its rich Silk Road heritage, visa-friendly policies, authentic cultural experiences, and growing appeal as a leisure and MICE destination.

Air India and Booking.com Partner to Offer Integrated Booking Experiences and Exclusive Rewards to Travellers

Travel Mail Desk

Air India, India's leading global airline, and Booking.com, one of the world's leading digital travel platforms, announced a strategic partnership to deliver a more seamless and rewarding travel booking experience. Customers can now access a vast array of global accommodations via a dedicated co-branded platform on the Air India website and mobile app, powered by Booking.com, along with exclusive benefits and loyalty rewards for Maharaja Club members.

The co-branded platform offers Air India customers access to Booking.com's extensive global inventory of over 31 million reported listings in 45 languages, including 8.6 million listings in homes, villas and other unique places to stay, backed by its 24/7 customer support.

Air India's Maharaja Club members can earn 5 Maharaja Points for every INR 100 spent on stays booked through the dedicated platform. These points can be redeemed for award flights and cabin upgrades. Customers will also benefit from exclusive discounts of up to 15% on participating properties for a limited period, from June 22 to July 21, 2026.



"Our partnership with Booking.com is another step in our efforts to build a comprehensive travel ecosystem for our customers. By combining Air India's growing global network with Booking.com's vast portfolio, we are offering our guests greater convenience, choice and added value across journeys," said **Abhijit Menon, Divisional Vice President & Head of Revenue Management, Air India.**

Laura Houldsworth, Managing Director and Vice President, Asia Pacific at Booking.com, said, *"As travellers increasingly seek integrated, digital-first travel experiences, we are excited to partner with Air India. This collaboration reflects our Connected Trip vision of making travel planning simpler and*

more seamless. By combining our diverse global accommodation inventory with Air India's growing international network, we are helping to make it easier for travellers to book their flights and stay in one place. This partnership also reinforces our commitment to India, delivering greater value, rewarding loyalty and creating a more seamless, end-to-end travel experience."

Industry data indicates that travellers increasingly prefer planning multiple parts of their journey through a single platform. Research shows that leisure travellers opt for bundled travel offerings combining flights, accommodation or other services. The partnership reflects Air India's and Booking.com's continued focus on supporting this shift towards more seamless, end-to-end travel planning by offering integrated accommodation options.

As a member of Star Alliance, Air India offers Maharaja Club members global recognition and benefits across the alliance's extensive network. Over the last two years, more than 100 brands across categories have entered partnerships with Air India for Maharaja Club, thus significantly enhancing the benefits for travellers.

Ready, Set, Summer! Etihad launches limited-edition Summer Essentials Kit onboard

Travel Mail Desk

Etihad Airways, the national carrier of the United Arab Emirates, brings the heat this summer with a full schedule of seasonal routes to trending destinations across Europe and Africa. To have travellers beach-ready from the second they touchdown, Etihad will gift guests a limited-edition Summer Essentials Kit, thoughtfully curated and inspired by the airline's summer network.

To kick-start the summer season, Etihad will launch new flights to Krakow (from 11 June), Palma de Mallorca (from 12 June) and Zanzibar (from 14 June) this week as part of the airline's ambitious and ongoing network expansion.

Additionally, Etihad will resume five seasonal routes to trending hotspots on everyone's summer bucket-list, giving direct access for holiday-makers to some of Europe's most popular destinations: Malaga (from 15 June), Mykonos (from 15 June), Santorini (from 16 June) and Nice (19 June); complemented by the resumption of its Al Alamein



route (from 16 July) which launched last summer, Egypt's hidden gem on the Mediterranean coast.

Onboard the first flights of all eight seasonal routes, guests will be gifted a limited-edition, Etihad-branded

Summer Essentials Kit which comes in a waterproof backpack celebrating the return of seasonal favourites and the launch of exciting new routes. Inside, guests will find a waterproof phone pouch to allow travellers to capture every extraordinary moment, hydration must-haves for the summer heat like one-shot electrolytes, Al Ain flavoured sparkling water and a ginger brew drink, and a handy pack of water wipes.

The kits aim to elevate the guest journey through a thoughtfully curated package that enhances comfort, inspires exploration, and creates memorable touchpoints; guests will step off the plane beach-ready and well-equipped to sink straight into the sand from the moment they touch down. The branded Etihad items focus on guest wellbeing, while maintaining the essence of vibrancy, thoughtful care and fun, inspired by vibrant summer cities and coastal destinations. The kit blends wellbeing essentials and practical items into an indispensable companion for every city stroll or beach escape.

Make more of your summer with Emirates

Travel Mail Desk

Emirates is kickstarting the summer holidays with exclusive offers for passengers travelling to or through Dubai. From complimentary stays at the iconic JW Marriott Marquis to hundreds of discounts through the popular My Emirates Pass, travellers can enjoy even more value while exploring the city, whether visiting for a longer getaway or a short stopover.

Built for all seasons, Dubai offers an unrivalled variety of experiences in one destination, making it easy to tailor a summer escape to any travel style or length of stay. Travellers can explore both in- and outdoor activities that entertain, inspire or educate; visit world-famous attractions like the Burj Khalifa; enjoy immersive, thrilling experiences at theme parks; or beat the heat entirely by spending a day at Dubai's museums and interactive art galleries. As one of the world's most visited cities, Dubai is ready to welcome travellers with the warmth, hospitality and safety the destination is renowned for.

Adnan Kazim, Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates,



said, "Whether visitors are seeking relaxation, adventure, entertainment or a combination of all three, Dubai is the ideal start to any summer vacation. We're inviting passengers to enjoy even more of the city with a complimentary hotel stay to take advantage of the exceptional range of shopping, entertainment, dining and family-friendly experiences that

define the Dubai summer experience, when stopping over as part of your journey or visiting Dubai as your final destination."

Now in its 28th year, Dubai Summer Surprises returns for 2026 with one of its biggest programmes of activities and offers yet. From 2 July to 30 August, residents and visitors can expect an extraordinary live Beat the Heat DXB concert series, cultural events and an array of wellness and fitness activities, as well as big savings and exclusive, limited-time experiences in the city's malls and lifestyle destinations.

Emirates is currently operating to over 138 global destinations and offering customers peace of mind with flexible rebooking policies. All bookings made after 2 April 2026 include one complimentary date change, across all cabin classes, while Hold My Fare will lock in great ticket prices while customers finalise the rest of their summer holiday bookings. Finally, Emirates recently launched an industry-leading Comprehensive Travel Cover insurance, available in select markets, to offer customers added confidence and protection while travelling this summer.

Cathay Pacific announces plans to launch direct flights to Almaty

Travel Mail Desk

Joining a high-level delegation led by Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) John Lee Ka-chiu to Central Asia, Cathay Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Lavinia Lau has attended the visit to Kazakhstan, supporting efforts to explore new business opportunities for Hong Kong with emerging markets in the region.

Affirming Cathay's ongoing commitment to growing Hong Kong's connectivity with Belt and Road countries, Cathay Pacific is pleased to announce plans to launch direct flights to Almaty, Kazakhstan's commercial and cultural capital, in the first quarter of 2027. The airline plans to operate three flights per week using an Airbus A330-300 widebody aircraft, which will be the only direct service linking Hong Kong and Kazakhstan.

Attending a ceremony alongside **President of Almaty International Airport Goker Kose and Deputy Head of the Tourism Department of Almaty Akmaral Yeshanova**, Lau said "Central Asia is a strategically important Belt and Road region that offers ample business opportunities. As Hong Kong's home hub

carrier, Cathay has aligned interests with the HKSAR Government in strengthening our connectivity with this emerging market.

Last year, we launched direct flights to Urumqi in Northwestern China, a city whose proximity to Central Asia extended our reach not only in the Chinese Mainland, but also to other key destinations along the Belt and Road. As we celebrate '80 Years Together' with our home city, we are excited to build on that momentum by announcing plans to operate direct flights between Hong Kong and Almaty, our first-ever destination in Central Asia, fostering new opportunities for people, cargo and capital flow with this dynamic region."

Kazakhstan is Central Asia's most developed economy with key industries including manufacturing, mining and industrial production. It is Hong Kong's largest trading partner and leading export market in the region. Meanwhile, demand between the Chinese Mainland and Central Asia has grown steadily in recent years, underpinned by trade, investment



and Belt and Road activity. The country also has a growing tourism sector offering summer and winter outdoor activities and is set to host the Asian Winter Games in 2029.

Growing connectivity at the Hong Kong hub

Cathay is committed to strengthening connectivity between Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland and the world, enhancing Hong Kong's status as a world-class international aviation hub supported by the National 15th Five-Year Plan.

Together, Cathay Pacific and HK Express operate close to 600 return flights per week to 33 Belt and Road destinations. The Group also operates more than 330 return flights per week between Hong Kong and 24 destinations in the Chinese Mainland.

Riyadh Expands Global Connectivity with Six New Air Links Across Europe and the Middle East

Travel Mail Desk

Riyadh is strengthening its connectivity with key markets across Europe and the Middle East, with six new routes set to come online in seven weeks, providing travellers with greater access to the Saudi capital amid growing demand for business and leisure travel.

The expansion comes as Riyadh Air continues to develop its route network alongside established carriers, adding services to London, Madrid, Manchester, Dubai, Cairo and Jeddah. The new links build on an aviation ecosystem that is increasingly connecting Riyadh to major cities around the world.

In a sign of strong demand and operational readiness, Riyadh Air has brought forward the launch of its London service from July 1 to June 10. Services to Jeddah will commence on June 14, followed by Dubai on June 18 and Cairo on June 25. Flights to Madrid and Manchester are scheduled to begin on July 17 and July 23, respectively, with tickets already available.



The expansion comes amid a broader period of growth across Riyadh and Saudi. Major developments including Diriyah, Qiddiya and King Abdullah Financial District (KAJD), alongside a

growing calendar of international events, exhibitions and sporting competitions, are attracting visitors from around the world and driving demand for stronger connectivity and easier access to the capital.

Regional routes to Dubai and Cairo reinforce two of the Middle East's busiest travel corridors, while new services to Madrid and Manchester further deepen Riyadh's links with Europe. Together, the additions reflect the increasingly important role connectivity plays in supporting tourism, business and cultural exchange.

Saudi has also continued to simplify travel through a range of visa initiatives. The eVisa programme now includes 66 countries and special administrative regions, while the GCC Residents Visa and complimentary 96-hour Stopover Visa offer additional options for visitors. Holders of valid UK, US or Schengen visas, as well as residents of the UK, US and European Union countries, are also eligible for an instant eVisa.

Malaysia Airlines and Singapore Airlines launch strategic joint business partnership with new joint fare products

Travel Mail Desk

Malaysia Airlines (MAB) and Singapore Airlines (SIA) have launched their strategic joint business partnership, formalised in January 2026 following the regulatory approvals, with the introduction of joint fare products for travel between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The new joint fare offerings build on the airlines' existing codeshare partnership, enabling MAB and SIA to provide customers with a greater variety of fare options between the two capital cities, as well as enhanced connectivity across the combined network of both carriers.

MAB and SIA are also working towards the progressive introduction of additional customer benefits, including reciprocal lounge access, coordinated flight schedules, and joint corporate travel arrangements. These initiatives reflect the airlines' deepening commercial collaboration and shared commitment to improving connectivity between Malaysia, Singapore, and the wider region.



Mr. Bryan Foong, Chief Executive Officer of Airline Business from Malaysia Aviation Group, said "This joint business partnership with Singapore Airlines marks a significant milestone in the expansion of our commercial collaboration. By introducing joint fare products, we are giving our customers greater choice, improved flexibility, and a more seamless travel experience. This collaboration also lays the foundation for deeper integration across our networks, ultimately benefiting both leisure and business travellers."

Mr. Lee Lik Hsin, Chief Commercial Officer, Singapore Airlines, said "The

introduction of joint fare products with Malaysia Airlines expands the range of fare options available to customers travelling between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, offering more flexibility and convenience when planning their journeys. As we deepen our collaboration, we will continue to combine our strengths to enhance both airlines' offerings and deliver greater value to customers, while strengthening the long-standing people-to-people connections and trade links between Singapore and Malaysia."

Since signing their commercial cooperation framework agreement in October 2019, MAB and SIA have progressively expanded their collaboration, offering customers greater connectivity and more travel options. The airlines currently codeshare on services across Malaysia, Singapore, Europe, and South Africa. In addition, both carriers introduced reciprocal accrual and redemption between the Enrich and KrisFlyer frequent flyer programmes in February 2024, allowing members to earn and redeem miles or points on selected flights operated by both carriers.

Royal Jordanian Reinforces Jordan's Position as a Reliable Middle East Gateway for Indian Travellers

Travel Mail Desk

At a time when several airlines across the region temporarily suspended operations due to ongoing geopolitical developments, Royal Jordanian continued operating consistently over the past six weeks, ensuring uninterrupted connectivity for travellers across the Middle East and beyond.

As global travel steadily regains momentum and traveller confidence begins to return, Royal Jordanian is strategically positioning Jordan as a preferred Middle East gateway for Indian travellers seeking safe, seamless, and culturally rich experiences.

"During a period when uncertainty impacted travel sentiment across the region, Royal Jordanian remained



operational and committed to serving passengers. Our continued operations reflect the resilience of both the airline and Jordan as a destination," said a **spokesperson from Royal Jordanian.**

Royal Jordanian is also strengthening Amman's position as a convenient and efficient hub, enabling Indian travellers

to seamlessly connect onwards to the Levant and the wider Middle East through its extensive regional network. This reinforces Jordan's role not only as a destination in itself but also as a strategic gateway to the region.

Royal Jordanian continues to support tourism to Jordan through reliable operations, onboard comfort, and seamless connectivity via Amman. As travel demand gradually rebounds, the airline is also introducing competitive fares and flexible travel options, making it an ideal time for Indian travellers to rediscover the region.

Backed by operational continuity, stability, and renewed traveller confidence, Royal Jordanian remains committed to strengthening Jordan's position as a key gateway to the Middle East while deepening its presence in the Indian market.

SriLankan Airlines Expands Passenger Connectivity Across Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka

Travel Mail Desk

SriLankan Airlines is pleased to announce strategic partnerships with Saudia (SV) and Flynas (XY), further strengthening air travel links between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka. This collaboration significantly expands SriLankan Airlines' network reach, enabling travellers to access a wider range of destinations through convenient domestic and international connections.

Under this arrangement, Saudia provides access to seven international and thirteen domestic destinations, while Flynas contributes an additional eight international and six domestic destinations, offering passengers greater travel flexibility and improved accessibility across the Kingdom.

Through Saudia's network, passengers can connect from destinations including Amman, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Cairo, Dubai, Kuwait City and Los Angeles, together with key domestic points such as Jeddah, Abha, Madinah and Tabuk, among others across Saudi Arabia.

Flynas further extends the network with international services from Addis Ababa, Karachi, Giza, Tashkent and Soqat, alongside domestic connectivity from cities including Jizan, Najran, Dammam and Jeddah. Passengers travelling from



across Saudi Arabia can now connect seamlessly via Riyadh and Dammam onto SriLankan Airlines' daily services to Colombo, with onward access to destinations throughout the airline's international network. SriLankan Airlines currently operates daily flights from both Riyadh and Dammam to Colombo, catering to growing demand for business, leisure and visiting-friends-and-relatives (VFR) travel between the two countries.

Dimuthu Tennakoon, Head of Commercial, said *"This partnership represents an important step in expanding SriLankan Airlines'*

presence across Saudi Arabia while strengthening links to key destinations in the Middle East, Africa and North America. Working together with Saudia and Flynas enables us to offer customers smoother connections from multiple regional and international destinations into Sri Lanka and beyond."

Commenting on the partnership, **Thusitha Wickramasinghe, Manager Saudi Arabia,** stated *"We are delighted to partner with Saudia and Flynas to further strengthen air travel links between Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka. This collaboration offers passengers greater convenience, expanded travel options and seamless journeys across our combined networks, while enhancing the overall travel experience through improved network integration."*

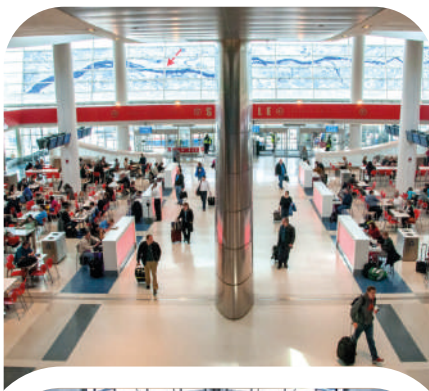
SriLankan Airlines connects passengers to 131 destinations across 63 countries through its own services and codeshare partnerships, while operating direct services to 34 destinations worldwide. Its network spans Europe, Australia, the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia and the Far East. The airline operates an all-Airbus fleet comprising state-of-the-art A330-200/300 and A320/321 aircraft.

Good Things Start with Improved Airport Spaces

Travel Mail Desk

Good things are happening at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) and Northeast Philadelphia Airport (PNE). As an extension of its brand refresh launched last year, the City of Philadelphia Department of Aviation has kicked off a new "Transform PHL" and "Transform PNE" campaign to let everyone know the status of its capital development improvement projects.

"We're inviting travellers to be part of our transformation journey. Guests and employees can learn more and see results like new restrooms, furnishings and exit lanes," said Department of Aviation Chief Development Officer Api Appulingam. "We're also showcasing the work that is taking place on the airfield and in non-public areas that increase operations and promote energy efficiency —projects passengers won't be able to see or feel—but are necessary for improving PHL and PNE for everyone."



These include projects taking place to welcome our guests not only for the activities of 2026, but for years to come."

The new PHL.org/transform website highlights how every project is helping create a more enjoyable experience for passengers and employees and redefining what it means to travel through Philadelphia.

The website groups projects across the terminals, airfield and information technology by distinct colours and icons to create clear information. The public can use the website to learn about a project's scope, estimated timeline and how the completed project will enhance the airport experience.

PHL.org/transform web page will also feature videos with members of the project teams, airport staff and guests discussing the importance of the projects from their unique perspectives.

Hong Kong Air Cargo Appoints Aeroprime Group as Cargo General Sales & Services (GSSA) Agent for Delhi, India

Travel Mail Desk

Hong Kong Air Cargo has appointed Aeroprime Group as its Cargo General Sales and Services Agent (GSSA) for Delhi, reinforcing the airline's commitment to expanding its cargo presence in the Indian market and strengthening trade connectivity between India, Hong Kong, and key international destinations.

Under the agreement, Aeroprime will be responsible for cargo sales, marketing, customer engagement, and business development activities for Hong Kong Air Cargo's operations in Delhi. The partnership aims to capitalise on the growing demand for air cargo services between India and East Asia, while providing customers with enhanced access to Hong Kong Air Cargo's extensive network and cargo capacity.

As one of Asia's leading aviation and logistics hubs, Hong Kong continues to play a pivotal role in facilitating global trade flows. The strategic appointment of Aeroprime Group is expected to further support Indian exporters and

freight forwarders by offering efficient and reliable cargo solutions through Hong Kong, one of the world's busiest international cargo gateways.

Commenting on the appointment, **Mr. Raymond Chen, Vice President, Commercial**, said *"India remains a strategically important market for Hong Kong Air Cargo. Delhi, in particular, serves as a major gateway for high-value and time-sensitive shipments. We are pleased to partner with Aeroprime, whose deep market understanding, strong industry relationships, and proven cargo expertise will help us strengthen our presence and better serve customers in the region."*

Speaking on the partnership, **Mr. Abhishek Goyal, Executive Director & CEO, Aeroprime Group**, said *"We are delighted to represent Hong Kong Air Cargo in Delhi. Hong Kong remains one of the most important air cargo hubs globally, offering seamless access to*

major manufacturing, trading, and consumption markets. This partnership reflects our continued commitment to delivering value-driven cargo solutions to the logistics community while supporting Hong Kong Air Cargo's growth ambitions in India."

The collaboration comes at a time when trade between India and East Asia continues to witness robust growth, particularly across sectors such as electronics, telecommunications equipment, pharmaceuticals, automotive components, fashion, perishables, and e-commerce shipments.

By combining Hong Kong Air Cargo's international connectivity with Aeroprime's extensive market reach and cargo management capabilities, the partnership aims to provide freight forwarders and logistics stakeholders with enhanced service reliability, market responsiveness, and commercial support.



3 Things Smart Travellers Always Do Before Booking Flights

Travel Mail Desk

In an era of volatile airfares and endless booking options, seasoned travellers are relying on a few consistent habits to secure better deals, reduce stress, and avoid costly mistakes.

With global air travel demand steadily rebounding, pricing has become more dynamic than ever. Industry data suggests that airfares can fluctuate by as much as 20–30% within days, while nearly 45% of travellers admit to overpaying simply due to last-minute decisions or lack of comparison. Against this backdrop, experienced travellers aren't relying on luck; they follow a disciplined approach before hitting "book now."

The first thing smart travellers do is compare across multiple platforms rather than relying on a single website or airline. Flight aggregators, airline portals, and even regional booking platforms can display significantly different fares for the same route, often due to inventory allocations and pricing algorithms. A 2024 travel behaviour study found that users who checked at least three platforms saved an average of 12–18% on international bookings. This step, while simple, often makes the single biggest difference in cost.

Equally important is timing the booking strategically. Contrary to popular belief, there is no universal "best day" to book flights, but data consistently shows that booking too early or too late can both be expensive. For domestic travel in India, fares tend to be most competitive when booked 3–6 weeks in advance, while international flights are often best secured 6–10 weeks ahead.

Additionally, mid-week searches, particularly on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, often reveal lower fares, as airlines adjust prices based on demand patterns and competitor activity.

Finally, smart travellers always evaluate the total cost, not just the ticket price. Low base fares can be misleading

when additional charges for baggage, seat selection, meals, and rescheduling are factored in. According to recent consumer reports, ancillary fees can increase the final cost of a ticket by up to 25–40%. Experienced travellers factor in these hidden costs upfront, ensuring they are comparing like-for-like options rather than being drawn in by seemingly cheaper fares.

Beyond these core practices, experienced travellers also leverage tools and alerts to stay ahead of price movements. Setting fare alerts, tracking historical pricing trends, and using incognito browsing to minimise dynamic price targeting have become increasingly common behaviours among frequent flyers. Data indicates that travellers who enable price alerts are up to 20% more likely to book at lower fare points compared to those who search sporadically. This proactive approach transforms booking from a reactive decision into a planned strategy.

Another subtle but critical habit is flexibility. Travellers who remain open to adjusting departure times, nearby airports, or even travel dates by a day or two often unlock significantly better fares. Even a shift of 24–48 hours can result in savings of 10–15%, particularly on high-demand routes. Smart travellers recognise that small compromises in timing can lead to disproportionately better value.

As travel becomes increasingly digital and data-driven, the gap between casual and informed booking behaviour continues to widen.

Those who take a few extra minutes to research, time, and evaluate their bookings are not just saving money; they are also gaining greater control over their travel experience.

Written by
Sandeep Arora
Director of Brightsun
Travel India



North India Tourism Expo & Conclave (NITC) 2026



North India Tourism Expo & Conclave (NITC) 2026



Appointments



VISIT CALIFORNIA NAMES JULIE COKER PRESIDENT & CEO

Visit California announced Julie Coker has been named the organization's next – and only second ever – president & CEO, succeeding longtime leader Caroline Beteta, who announced her retirement earlier this year. In this role, Coker will lead Visit California, the private industry-led nonprofit organization marketing California as a premier travel destination, and will simultaneously serve as a strategic advisor for the Governor's Office of Business & Economic Development (GO-Biz).

CAPTAIN NASARUDDIN A. BAKAR APPOINTED TO IATA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Captain Nasaruddin A. Bakar, President and Group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG), has been appointed to the Board of Governors (BoG) of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) during its 82nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He will serve a three-year term until 2029, joining global industry leaders in providing strategic oversight and policy direction for IATA. In this capacity, he will contribute to guiding the association's industry committees and subsidiary bodies on critical issues shaping the future of global aviation.



ANTARA CRUISES STRENGTHENS LEADERSHIP TEAM WITH APPOINTMENT OF VIKRAM MISHRA AS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Antara Cruises has appointed hospitality industry veteran Mr Vikram Mishra as its Business Development Manager, a strategic move to accelerate the company's growth in India's evolving cruise tourism sector. With over 15 years of robust experience spanning hospitality sales, regional business development, MICE, weddings, inbound agencies, corporate accounts, and travel trade relations, Mr. Mishra brings a valuable mix of market knowledge, leadership expertise, and strategic business acumen to his new role.

SUMMIT HOTELS & RESORTS APPOINTS ARUN DAGA AS GENERAL MANAGER OF SUMMIT GREEN VILLAGE RESORT & SPA, KAZIRANGA

Summit Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of Arun Daga as General Manager of Summit Green Village Resort & Spa, Kaziranga, further strengthening its leadership team in one of Northeast India's key wildlife tourism destinations.



RADISSON BLU BENGALURU OUTER RING ROAD ANNOUNCES THE APPOINTMENT OF RAVI RAI AS GENERAL MANAGER

Radisson Blu Bengaluru Outer Ring Road announces the appointment of Ravi Rai as General Manager. In his new role, Ravi will oversee all aspects of hotel operations, with a focus on strengthening service standards, enhancing guest experiences, driving operational excellence, and supporting talent development across the property.

IBIS APPOINTS MAHI TEJA AS GENERAL MANAGER OF IBIS COIMBATORE CITY CENTRE

ibis, one of Accor's most trusted and fastest-growing economy hospitality brands, has announced the appointment of Mahi Teja as General Manager of ibis Coimbatore City Centre. Bringing close to 14 years of hospitality experience, Mahi joins the property after building a diverse career across sales, rooms, and hotel operations with leading hospitality brands, including Accor and Hyatt Hotels.



OTHERLAND GALLE APPOINTS JAZIB HUSAIN AS GENERAL MANAGER AHEAD OF OPENING

Otherland Hotels, South Asia's first independent lifestyle collective, has appointed Jazib Husain as General Manager of Otherland Galle, the brand's debut international property set to open on Sri Lanka's southern coast soon. With 20 years of experience across internationally renowned hospitality brands, Jazib brings a broad range of expertise, leadership capability, and operational efficiency to Otherland Galle, Sri Lanka.



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