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The background of the page is a collage of various travel-related items, including immigration stamps from New Delhi, Barcelona Airport, Brazil, and Myanmar, as well as departure tickets and airline logos like Air India and IndiGo. The stamps feature dates ranging from 2006 to 2019.

Editors note

Dear Reader,

As August unfolds, it brings a vibrant sense of celebration across the country. With Independence Day upon us, we extend our warmest wishes to you on this proud occasion—a moment to reflect not only on our shared journey as a nation, but on the spirit of freedom and curiosity that inspires us to explore the world around us.

August is also a month of rich traditions and festive energy, which are increasingly shaping how and where Indians choose to travel. In our lead feature, The Re-Engineered Map, we explore how this shift toward cultural depth is redefining modern leisure. Rather than routine monsoon escapes, travellers are seeking places with distinct regional heritage, authentic local flavors, and living culture—from the rain-washed plateaus of Meghalaya to the mist-covered ridges of the North-East.

At the same time, the world is opening its doors wider. Global capitals from Riyadh to Johannesburg and Bangkok are simplifying entry, recognizing the curiosity and economic vitality that Indian travellers bring to the global stage.

Back home, the journey itself continues to evolve. On our highways, high-tier intercity sleeper corridors are transforming overland travel with comfort and safety, where independent female travellers now make up forty percent of long-distance ridership. Meanwhile, domestic momentum builds through the Ministry of Tourism's strategic partnerships with Air India and IndiGo, alongside the expanded UDAN initiative opening regional routes across India.

Within these pages, you will also discover insightful conversations with the pioneers shaping these moments. We mark a century of global flight with Lufthansa at 100, reflecting on aviation's future with Kevin Markette, while hospitality leaders across Marriott Executive Apartments, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram, and The LaLiT share how luxury is being redefined through genuine personalization, authentic wellness, and lasting connection.

As you celebrate this festive season and plan your next journey, we hope these stories bring warmth, insight, and a renewed sense of wonder to your travels.

**Welcome to our August 2026 Issue.
Happy reading and safe travels!**

Warm Regards,

**Ajay Gupta
Managing Editor – Travel Mail**

travel mail

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Korea Tourism Organization Appoints New Director for New Delhi (India) Office



How the Indian traveller broke the script of predictable leisure, dismantled border friction, and forced the global travel industry to rewrite its rules.

By Travel Mail

For decades, August in India moved to a predictable cadence.

When the monsoons arrived, people packed for the same handful of coastal escapes or boarded short-haul flights toward familiar, well-trodden beach resorts across Southeast Asia. Travel was largely an exercise in repetition: resort swimming pools, pre-packaged itineraries, and the quiet, resigned acceptance of endless administrative visa paperwork.

That script is finished.

Look closely at how people are moving right now, and you will see a quiet structural shift taking place. The Indian traveller is no longer adapting to how the global tourism industry operates. The global tourism industry is frantically redesigning its mechanics to keep up with the Indian traveller.

The Shift in Impulse
The first indicator of this shift is where people choose to go—and why. The traditional preference for sanitized resort comfort is giving way to something far more inquisitive.

Across the country, interest and bookings for the steep, mist-heavy ridges of Nagaland and the rain-washed plateaus of Meghalaya are surging past traditional domestic beach strongholds.

This is not a temporary seasonal quirk. It is a shift in human value. Travellers are trading artificial leisure for locations with character, distinct regional history, and genuine local identity. They want towns where the food tastes of the soil it came from and where daily life isn't staged for an audience.

When cultural context and local identity drive the majority of holiday choices, the old luxury destination brochure becomes useless.



The Dissolving Border Simultaneously, foreign capitals are doing something that once felt unthinkable: they are getting out of the way.

From Riyadh to Johannesburg to Bangkok, immigration desks are dismantling the administrative walls that historically defined overseas travel for Indian passport holders. Streamlined digital entry, 48-hour electronic processing, and extended visa exemptions are not gestures of casual hospitality—they are hard economic math.

The global market has realized that Indian outbound travel spend has matured into one of the most powerful financial engines in global leisure and business travel. In an era of shifting global trade, lowering border friction for Indian travellers is no longer a diplomatic courtesy. It is a commercial imperative.

The Highway Cadence The most telling transformation, however, is happening on the asphalt.

The traditional divide between budget overland transport and premium air travel has collapsed. Backed by expanded highway networks, a new fleet of high-tier intercity sleeper buses and express rail corridors is capturing a demographic that previously only flew. These are quiet, tech-enabled, highly efficient vehicles engineered for long-haul comfort.

Crucially, four out of ten passengers on these premium long-distance road routes are women traveling



independently. That single statistic reveals more about the changing nature of modern travel than any hotel expansion announcement. Mobility is no longer just about raw transit speed; it is about autonomy, personal safety, and the quiet dignity of seamless travel.

The Road Ahead What does this mean for hoteliers, airlines, regional tourism boards, and booking platforms?

It means the old assumptions are dead. The modern traveller demands zero friction at immigration, deep cultural authenticity at the destination, and uncompromised connectivity en route. They do not want to be sold an escape fantasy; they want to engage with the world on their own terms.

The map has not merely been updated. It has been redrawn from the ground up.



Ministry of Tourism Signs MoU with IndiGo to Promote India as a Global Tourism Destination

Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in New Delhi, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) to promote India as a preferred global tourism destination through a strategic, non-exclusive and non-financial collaboration.

The MoU was exchanged in the presence of **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture**. The event was attended by Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism; Shri Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General (Tourism); Shri Harikishore S, Joint Secretary and other senior officials of the Ministry of Tourism; and Shri Neetan Chopra, Chief Digital and Information Officer, and Shri V. Sunil, Creative Director, IndiGo, along with senior representatives of IndiGo.

Speaking on the occasion, **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** said that the partnership will strengthen India's tourism promotion by combining the Ministry's flagship Incredible India brand with IndiGo's extensive domestic and



international network. He noted that collaborative initiatives such as this will help take India's tourism message to wider audiences and reinforce the country's position as one of the world's most compelling travel destinations.

Under the MoU, the Ministry of Tourism and IndiGo will jointly undertake a global communication initiative titled "IncredibleIndia by IndiGo." The campaign will showcase India's rich and diverse tourism offerings, including cultural heritage, natural landscapes, spiritual

destinations, wellness, adventure, wildlife and other experiential tourism products.

The campaign will be promoted through digital and print media, airport branding, in-flight platforms, social media, international travel exhibitions and other promotional channels. The Ministry of Tourism will provide access to Incredible India brand assets and promotional content, while facilitating coordination with relevant stakeholders, wherever feasible, to support campaign activities.

Ministry of Tourism Signs MoU with Air India to Promote India as a Preferred Global Tourism Destination

Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Tourism in New Delhi signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Air India Limited to establish a strategic framework to promote India as a preferred global tourism destination under the Incredible India brand.

The event was held in the presence of **Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**. It was also attended by Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism; Shri Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General (Tourism); Shri Harikishore S, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism; Shri Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India; and Shri P. Balaji, Group Head – Governance, Risk, Compliance and Corporate Affairs, Air India, along with other senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Air India.

The collaboration aims to leverage the Ministry of Tourism's destination-promotion initiatives and Air India's



extensive domestic and international network to enhance India's tourism visibility, strengthen inbound tourism and position the country as a global transit and travel hub. The partnership is non-commercial, non-binding and non-exclusive, with no financial commitment on either party.

The MoU establishes a framework for collaboration between the Ministry of Tourism and Air India in areas including tourism promotion, destination branding, content development, international marketing and stakeholder engagement. They will leverage their digital platforms, global networks and outreach capabilities to promote India as a world-class tourism destination and contribute to increasing international tourist arrivals.

As part of the collaboration, the Ministry of Tourism and Air India will undertake joint global promotional campaigns under the Incredible India brand and explore co-branded marketing and destination storytelling across digital and offline platforms. Tourism-related content will also be developed and disseminated through Air India's customer touchpoints, including its in-flight entertainment platforms.

Ministry of Civil Aviation inaugurates Hub & Spoke International Flight Operations from Amritsar

Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Civil Aviation inaugurated Hub & Spoke International Flight Operations from Amritsar, making it the second airport in the country to be integrated into India's pioneering Hub & Spoke framework for international passenger movement. The inauguration marks the next phase of the Government's strategy to transform India into a global aviation hub by providing seamless international connectivity to passengers from across the country through Indian hub airports.

Over the past one month, the system has operated smoothly, demonstrating the operational viability of the model and receiving an encouraging response from passengers. During this period, passengers originating from Varanasi have been seamlessly connected through Delhi to eighteen international destinations, validating the effectiveness of the initiative in simplifying international travel.

Through a video message congratulating all the stakeholders present at the Amritsar airport, Union Minister of Civil Aviation Ram Mohan Naidu said, "Hub & Spoke is not merely



an aviation model; it is an opportunity model. Delhi will serve as the hub, while Amritsar will emerge as a major international gateway for Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. With its strong diaspora connections and vast regional catchment, Amritsar is among the Indian cities that stand to benefit the most from this transformation in global connectivity."

Emphasizing the larger national vision, the Minister added, "Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, India is working towards building its own

globally competitive aviation hubs. This is not only about improving passenger convenience; it is about strengthening India's aviation sovereignty and ensuring that Indian hubs connect India to the world."

Highlighting the transformational impact of the Hub & Spoke model on international connectivity from Amritsar, the Minister said "Until now, passengers travelling from Amritsar had direct international connectivity to only seven destinations. With the introduction of the Hub & Spoke model, the global connectivity of Delhi Airport will effectively become available to passengers right from Amritsar itself. Travelers will be able to access more than 20 international destinations with a single check-in and a single baggage tag, making the entire journey far more seamless. At present, nearly 1.5 lakh passengers travel from Amritsar to Delhi every year to board international flights, while another 1.5 lakh passengers arrive from overseas via Delhi to reach Amritsar. As travel becomes significantly easier under this integrated system, we expect passenger traffic to grow rapidly."

Prime Minister launches the Next Phase of UDAN – Viksit UDAN

Travel Mail Desk

In a major boost to India's civil aviation sector, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the next phase of UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) and inaugurated the New Terminal Building (NTB) at Jodhpur Airport, reaffirming the Government's commitment to expanding regional air connectivity and developing world-class aviation infrastructure.

The Modified UDAN Scheme focuses on expanding regional aviation infrastructure through the development of 100 aerodromes from existing unserved airstrips with an investment of ₹12,159 crore. It also provides ₹2,577 crore towards Operations and Maintenance support for regional airports, development of 200 modern helipads with an investment of ₹3,661 crore, and continued Viability Gap Funding of ₹10,043 crore to sustain regional airline operations.

Union Minister of Civil Aviation Shri Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu, speaking on the occasion, said, "The launch of the Modified UDAN Scheme with a historic outlay of nearly ₹29,000 crore under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji marks the beginning of a new chapter in India's aviation journey. Since 2016, UDAN has transformed the Prime Minister's vision of 'Hawai Chappal se Hawai Jahaz' into a national movement by making air travel affordable, accessible and



aspirational for every Indian. Today, UDAN is not merely a connectivity scheme—it is a celebration of India's aspirations, empowering farmers, students, entrepreneurs, artisans and businesses with new opportunities for growth. From Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities to the remotest regions, aviation has become a powerful engine of economic development, tourism, employment and social inclusion. As we move towards Viksit Bharat 2047, the next phase of UDAN will further strengthen last-mile connectivity and ensure that the vision of 'Sabki Udaan, Sabka Vikas' becomes a reality across every corner of the country."

Adding about the inauguration of the New Terminal Building, Union Minister of Civil Aviation Shri Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu

said, "I congratulate the people of Jodhpur and the entire western Rajasthan region on this magnificent new terminal, which beautifully reflects the rich cultural and architectural heritage of Marwar. From its royal Rajasthani facade to interiors inspired by the region's vibrant traditions, the terminal will offer every passenger, especially visitors from across the world, their very first experience of Rajasthan's warmth and the spirit of 'Padharo Mhare Desh'. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, we are building airports that seamlessly combine world-class infrastructure with India's cultural identity. Every new terminal, every new route brings us one step closer to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047."

Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Shri Murlidhar Mohol remarked, "I congratulate the people of Rajasthan on the inauguration of the magnificent new terminal at Jodhpur Airport. The terminal beautifully showcases the rich cultural heritage of Marwar and will offer visitors a memorable first glimpse of Rajasthan's heritage. Also, the landmark extension of UDAN for another decade by the PM also took place from Jodhpur. The Modified UDAN scheme will further democratize aviation in the country by integrating every region into India's growth story."

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi Dedicates to the Nation 75 Amrit Bharat Stations Across India

Travel Mail Desk

As part of the mega infrastructure package, **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** inaugurated 75 Redeveloped Railway Stations to the nation under the flagship Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

This is the second major nationwide dedication of redeveloped stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme by the Prime Minister. Earlier, the Prime Minister dedicated 103 redeveloped Amrit Bharat Stations across 18 States and Union Territories to the nation.

The redeveloped stations have been transformed into modern, passenger-centric transit hubs with enhanced amenities, improved accessibility, and architecture reflecting local and regional heritage, while incorporating future-ready infrastructure. Nationwide, the newly inaugurated 75 stations across 20 States are redeveloped at a combined cost of approximately Rs. 1,570 crore.



Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw Flags Off Ramnagar–Dehradun Express

Travel Mail Desk

Union Minister for Railways Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw virtually flagged off the inaugural service of the Ramnagar–Dehradun Express, marking the commencement of the first-ever direct Express train connecting Ramnagar with Dehradun. **Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami** was also present on the occasion via video conferencing. The new train fulfills a long-pending demand of the people of the region and will significantly strengthen rail connectivity between the Kumaon and Garhwal regions of Uttarakhand.

The new service will benefit residents of Nainital, Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar and Dehradun districts in Uttarakhand, as well as Moradabad and Bijnor districts in Uttar Pradesh, including students, farmers, traders and people from all walks of life. It will provide convenient same-day connectivity to Dehradun and Haridwar, enabling passengers to complete official, educational, business and personal work before returning home.

The train is also expected to promote tourism and pilgrimage in the region. It will improve connectivity to Jim Corbett National Park, the Girija Devi Temple



situated on a large rock amid the Kosi River near Ramnagar, and the ancient religious sites of Sitamadhi/Sitavani. In addition, passengers will find it more convenient to access the Char Dham pilgrimage circuit, including Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri, through onward connectivity from Haridwar and Dehradun.

Addressing the people, **Shri Vaishnaw** said the Ramnagar–Dehradun Express would strengthen rail connectivity between the Kumaon and Garhwal regions of Uttarakhand. This is the first direct Express train between the two cities and is expected to provide faster, more

convenient and reliable rail connectivity for the people of Uttarakhand.

He also mentioned that Rishikesh railway station will be developed as a feeder station to ease pressure on Haridwar. For this, a master plan is being prepared to create additional capacity and improve connectivity for passengers travelling to and from Haridwar and Rishikesh.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister, Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the launch of the Ramnagar–Dehradun Express marks another major step in strengthening rail connectivity in Uttarakhand. He congratulated the people of the state on the introduction of the new train service and expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Railway Minister Sh. Ashwini Vaishnaw for the initiative.

He also highlighted that the rail connectivity in Uttarakhand has improved significantly in recent years, with several new train services being introduced across the state. **Shri Dhami** said work on the Rishikesh–Karnaprayag rail line is progressing rapidly and would become a lifeline for the social, economic, religious and tourism development of Uttarakhand.



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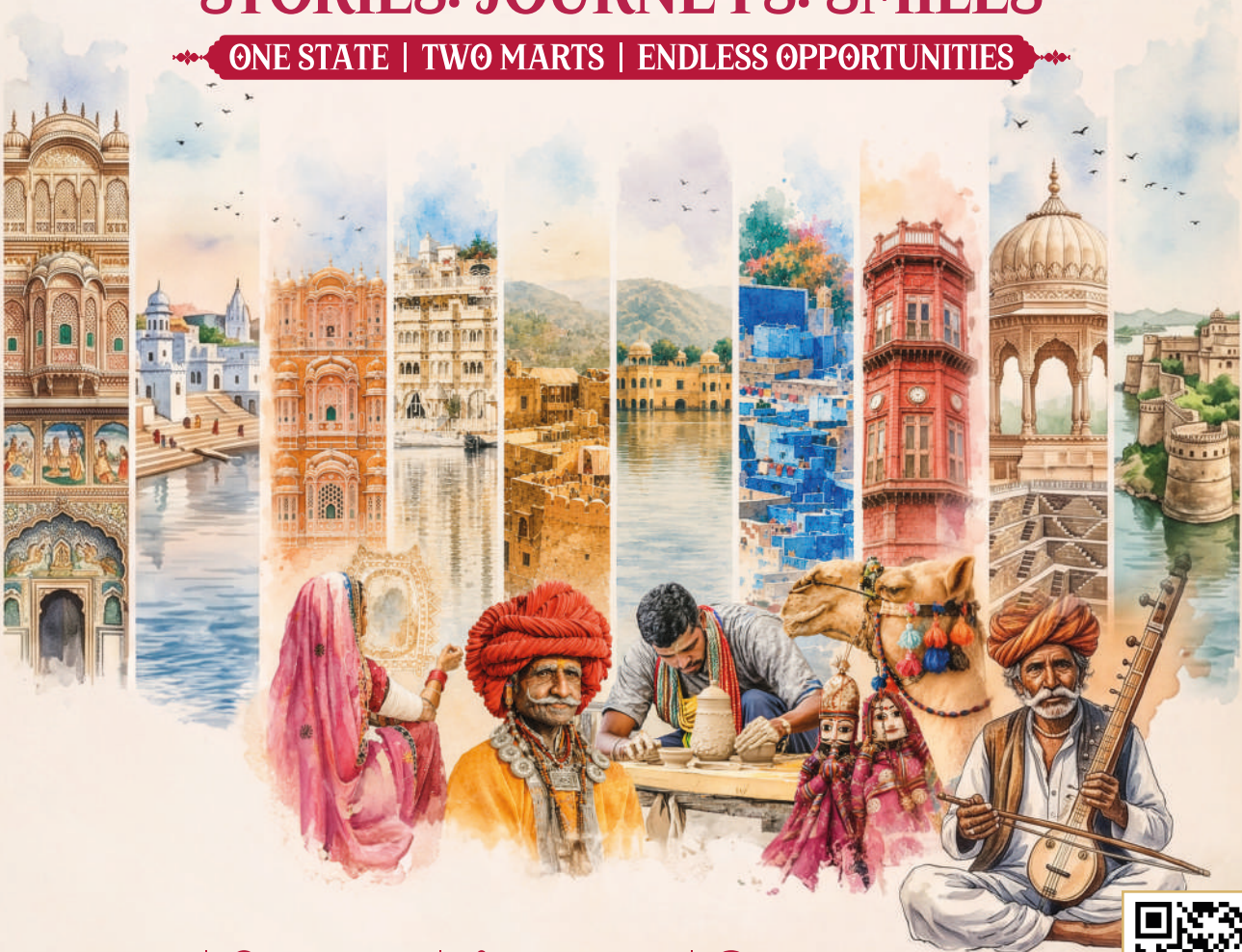


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Rajasthan Draws Nearly 62 Million Tourist Visits in First Quarter of 2026

Travel Mail Desk

Rajasthan recorded nearly 62 million tourist visits during the January to March quarter of 2026, reinforcing its position as one of India's leading tourism destinations, according to the Department of Tourism.

The State registered 61.99 million tourist visits during the first quarter, including 61.29 million domestic visitors and 698,458 international visitors.

Joint Director, Department of Tourism, Rajasthan, Mr. Daleep Singh Rathore, said tourism data for the first quarter reflects two distinct travel trends. Domestic travellers continued to prefer religious and pilgrimage destinations, while international visitors were primarily attracted by Rajasthan's forts, palaces, UNESCO World Heritage monuments, cultural heritage and wildlife.

Religious tourism remained the largest contributor to domestic travel. Khatu Shyam Ji Temple in Sikar emerged as the most visited destination with nearly 6.8 million pilgrims during the three months. It was followed by Kaila Devi Temple in Karauli with 4.74 million visitors and Sanwaliya Ji Temple in Chittorgarh with 2.87 million



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visitors. Pushkar ranked fourth among the most visited domestic destinations.

Jaisalmer accounted for five of the State's top ten domestic tourist destinations, including Jaisalmer Fort, Ramdevra, Sam Sand Dunes, Patwon Ki Haveli and Tanot Mata Temple, reflecting the district's appeal across pilgrimage, heritage and desert tourism. Ajmer Sharif Dargah also featured among the top ten destinations, highlighting Rajasthan's diverse spiritual landscape.

Among international visitors, Amer Palace in Jaipur topped the list with 91,422 tourist visits. It was followed by Jantar Mantar in Jaipur, Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur, City Palace in Udaipur and Saheliyon Ki Bari in Udaipur. Ranthambore National Park continued to remain one of the State's



leading wildlife attractions for overseas travellers.

Other popular destinations among foreign tourists included Jagdish Temple in Udaipur, Chand Baori in Abhaneri, Jaswant Thada in Jodhpur and the Ranakpur Jain Temple, reflecting sustained international interest in Rajasthan's heritage, architecture, culture and biodiversity.

Mr. Rathore said the latest figures demonstrate that Rajasthan has developed into a diversified tourism destination offering religious tourism, heritage experiences, wildlife, desert landscapes and cultural attractions. This broad tourism portfolio continues to support the State's economy and strengthen Rajasthan's position in the global tourism market.

'One State, One Destination' Initiative to Give New Momentum to Tourism in Sindhudurg

Travel Mail Desk

Under the chairpersonship of Ms Trupti Dhodmise (IAS), District Collector of Sindhudurg, Government of Maharashtra, a preliminary planning meeting was held recently at the District Collector's Office to prepare a roadmap for the integrated development of tourism across Sindhudurg district. The exercise is being carried out under the state government's flagship 'One State, One Destination' initiative.

Much of the discussion centred on how the district's tourism potential could be better realised through stronger destination planning, upgraded infrastructure, improved amenities for visitors, wider digital promotion, and greater involvement of local communities. The meeting also addressed developing new tourism circuits, giving local attractions a distinct brand identity, promoting regional art and cuisine, and making the overall visitor experience more rewarding.

Speaking at the meeting, **Ms. Trupti Dhodmise (IAS), District Collector of Sindhudurg, Government of**



Maharashtra, said that Sindhudurg brings together a rare mix of pristine beaches, historic forts, rich biodiversity, rural tourism, and vibrant local culture. Realising this potential, she said, will require close coordination among all concerned departments, along with active participation from local communities, a joint effort essential to positioning Sindhudurg as a globally recognised destination under the 'One State, One Destination' initiative.

Shri Mangesh Joshi (IAS), Director, Directorate of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, said, "The One State, One Destination initiative seeks to unlock the unique tourism potential of every

region through an integrated and sustainable approach to development. Sindhudurg is blessed with exceptional natural, cultural and heritage assets that give it the potential to emerge as a world-class destination. Through coordinated planning, infrastructure development, destination branding and active community participation, we remain committed to creating quality tourism experiences that also generate greater employment and livelihood opportunities for local communities. Once the preliminary round of consultations concludes, all concerned departments will be asked to submit detailed proposals, which will then feed into a comprehensive action plan for the district."

The meeting was attended by Resident Deputy Collector, Shri Machhindra Sukte, Deputy Collectors, Ms Pratibha Varale and Ms Aarti Desai, Deputy Director, Konkan Region, Directorate of Tourism, Dr Pradnya Manohar, Executive Engineer, Directorate of Tourism, Shri Akash Chakor, District Planning Officer, Shri Yashwant Budhawale and officials from various departments.

Castaway Island, Fiji Turns 60: Six Decades of Barefoot Luxury in the Heart of the Mamanucas

Travel Mail Desk

Castaway Island, Fiji is gearing up to mark its 60th anniversary, with the beloved resort having first opened in 1966. Between now and the end of 2026, Castaway Island, Fiji will be winding back the clock, opening the doors to its archives and encouraging guests past, present and future to experience the charm of its beachfront location.

One of the longest continually operating beachfront resorts in Fiji, Castaway Island, Fiji has spent six decades welcoming travellers to its white sand beaches, thatched-roof bures, and turquoise waters, all with warm Fijian hospitality.

In 1992, the resort was transformed by the arrival of new owner Geoffrey Shaw, an icon in Fiji's tourism industry. Under Shaw's stewardship, Castaway Island, Fiji became synonymous with authentic, barefoot island hospitality, a blueprint that drew guests back year after year



and established the resort as one of the defining properties in Pacific tourism. That legacy endures in the resort's hosts, some of whom have worked on the island for more than 30 years, and in the guests who have made Castaway Island, Fiji a family tradition across generations.

Today, under OUTRIGGER Resorts & Hotels and thanks to its OUTRIGGER Zone programming, Castaway Island, Fiji's approach to hospitality has deepened to embrace the island's ecosystem as inseparable from the guest experience. This longstanding stewardship of the reefs began as a founding member of the Mamanuca Environment Society.

Steven Andrews, General Manager of Castaway Island, Fiji, said "Castaway Island represents something rare in hospitality – more than a destination, it has allowed travellers to connect and for generations of families to bond across six decades. The loyalty of our guests and the dedication of our hosts are a testament to what happens when a destination is built on authenticity. It's the reason why our returnees and multi-generational families continue to call Castaway Island 'home'. We're proud to steward this legacy and are excited for everything the next decade holds as we invite more travellers to discover our island home for the first time."

Visit Dubai unveils cross-cultural collaboration featuring Anirudh Ravichander and Arqam Al Abri

Travel Mail Desk

Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Visit Dubai), part of the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), has brought together acclaimed Indian composer and performer Anirudh Ravichander and Emirati singer-musician Arqam Al Abri for a cross-cultural music collaboration filmed across Dubai's heritage districts and contemporary cultural spaces. The partnership builds on Visit Dubai's sustained engagement with Indian audiences and reflects the deep cultural and historical ties that have established India as one of Dubai's leading international tourism source markets.

As one of India's most influential contemporary musicians, Anirudh Ravichander brings his distinctive sound and widespread popularity to the collaboration. Joining him is Arqam Al Abri, an Emirati singer and musician celebrated for his soulful vocals and contemporary sounds.

On his experience of creating music in Dubai, **Anirudh Ravichander** said, "What makes this project truly special is the opportunity to bring together two



unique musical worlds and discover the common ground between them. Collaborating with Arqam was an inspiring experience, and Dubai provided the perfect backdrop for that creative exchange. The city's multicultural foundation, rich heritage, and openness to new ideas naturally shaped the journey and made this creative pursuit feel authentic from start to finish".

Speaking about the cross-cultural musical journey, **Arqam Al Abri** said, "Music has a unique ability to create connections that go beyond language and geography. As an artist, I found it incredibly inspiring to collaborate with Anirudh, whose music has resonated with millions across India and around the

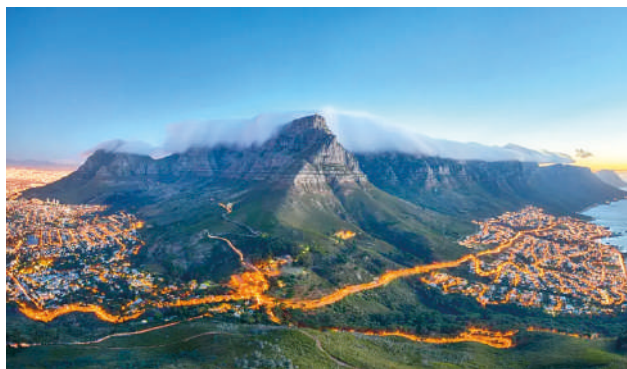
world. Through this project, we discovered how our different musical traditions could complement one another while creating something entirely new. Dubai made that exchange possible. It is a city where cultures naturally meet and learn from each other, and that spirit is reflected throughout this journey."

Bader Ali Habib, Regional Director of Proximity Markets at Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, said "Music has always had the power to bring people together, and this collaboration reflects the spirit of creative exchange that Dubai stands for. Anirudh Ravichander and Arqam Al Abri bring together two distinct musical voices that reflect the city's multicultural energy and evolving creative landscape. As a global hub for culture and creativity, Dubai continues to create opportunities for artists and audiences from around the world to connect through shared experiences and artistic expression. India holds a uniquely important place in Dubai's story, and this creative alliance reflects the spirit of our city and our commitment to deepening our engagement with India's diverse and growing community of travel enthusiasts."

South Africa Makes Travel Easier with 48-Hour ETA Visa for Eligible Indian Travellers

Travel Mail Desk

From wildlife safaris and the Cape Winelands to scenic drives along the Garden Route and the vibrant city of Cape Town, South Africa continues to attract Indian travellers looking for a diverse range of experiences. Now, travelling there has become easier with the introduction of South Africa's Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA).



The ETA enables eligible Indian passport holders to apply for travel authorization entirely online, with applications intended to be processed within 24 to 48 hours. Introduced for short leisure and work visits (up to 90 days), the digital system streamlines the application process, replacing lengthy paperwork to make the journey from holiday planning to departure faster and more seamless. The ETA is digitally linked to a traveller's passport, allowing eligible visitors to travel to South Africa for tourism and work purposes without the need for a traditional visa sticker, while also supporting multiple entries during its validity period.

Applying is simple. Travellers need to create an account on the official South African Department of Home Affairs ETA portal, take a photo of the passport you will use to travel to South Africa, complete the online application, upload the required documents, verify their identity using smartphone-based biometrics, pay the relevant application fee and submit the application electronically. Once submitted, applicants can track the status of their application online in real time.

The ETA is currently available for travellers arriving through O.R. Tambo International Airport (Johannesburg), Cape Town

International Airport and Lanseria International Airport, with rollout to additional ports of entry to follow in the future. It is available to travellers holding valid ordinary passports who are eligible for the programme and is intended for visitor stays of up to 90 days. The ETA serves as pre-authorization to travel, with final admission completed by South African border authorities upon arrival.

Commenting on the introduction of the ETA, **Ms. Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head MEISEA, South African**

Tourism, said, "Indian travellers are increasingly looking for destinations that combine extraordinary experiences with greater convenience. South Africa's new Electronic Travel Authorisation is an important step towards making travel planning simpler and faster for eligible visitors, allowing them to spend less time navigating paperwork and more time looking forward to everything our country has to offer. From iconic wildlife experiences and breathtaking landscapes to vibrant cities and rich cultural heritage, South Africa is ready to welcome Indian travellers with greater ease than ever before."

Thailand eases entry for Indian travellers with 30-day visa exemption

Travel Mail Desk

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) confirms that Thailand's Cabinet has approved updated visa measures, granting Indian citizens a 30-day visa exemption, pending publication in the Royal Gazette. This follows the Cabinet's earlier approval in May to replace the 60-day visa exemption measure introduced in July 2024. For India, the latest update ensures smoother entry, better screening, and simplified categories.

Thailand's new principle of "one country, one entry category" places India firmly in the 30-day visa exemption group, reflecting economic ties, security assessments, and reciprocity. Each country or territory will be assigned to one category: 30-day visa exemption, 15-day visa exemption, or Visa on Arrival.

In total, 65 countries and territories, including India, will be covered under the updated measures. Of these, 59 countries and territories will be eligible for a 30-day



reflecting its importance in terms of its economy, trade, investment, and international relations, as well as the longer average length of stay by Indian visitors, at around 7.17 days per trip. While Mauritius and Seychelles receive 15-day exemptions, and Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Serbia remain on Visa on Arrival, India now enjoys the more favourable 30-day exemption.

Indian travellers must continue using Visa on Arrival until the new measures take effect. Those entering before implementation can stay for the duration of their permitted visa.

visa exemption, including India, Croatia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta, and the Maldives. This aligns visa exemption treatment across all 27 European Union member states, supporting international relations, discussions on Schengen visa exemption for Thai nationals, and related economic agreements.

India's eligibility will also shift from Visa on Arrival to 30-day visa exemption,

Separate bilateral and related entry arrangements will continue to apply where relevant, providing visa exemption periods of 90, 30, or 14 days, depending on the applicable agreement or arrangement. Travellers should check the entry conditions that apply to their nationality before travelling.



SAUDI INTRODUCES “PACKAGE VISA”, INTEGRATING TRAVEL BOOKING WITH EASIER VISA APPLICATION

Travel Mail Desk

Saudi has announced the launch of Package Visa, a new digital initiative designed to simplify travel to Saudi by integrating tourist visa application directly into curated travel bookings. The launch is currently underway through qualified travel and tourism service providers across selected international markets ahead of a broader rollout.

The initiative builds on Saudi's wider efforts to simplify visiting the country. Since launching the tourist e-Visa, Saudi has introduced several new ways to visit, including visa on arrival and the Stopover Transit Visa. Together, these initiatives have supported the country's rapid tourism growth, with Saudi welcoming more than 29 million inbound visitors in 2025.

Commenting on the initiative, **His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Saudi Minister of Tourism**, said “As Saudi's tourism sector continues to grow at pace, Package Visa reflects our commitment to making travel to Saudi more seamless for visitors. By integrating visa issuance with travel bookings, we are simplifying the visitor journey and creating a more connected travel experience. This initiative also strengthens collaboration across the tourism ecosystem and supports Saudi's position as an increasingly accessible global destination.”

For visitors, Package Visa means fewer steps between planning a trip and experiencing Saudi. Instead of arranging flights, accommodation, and a visa

separately, eligible travellers can book everything through one integrated travel process, with the option to add events, activities and tourism experiences. The result is a simpler, more connected journey from booking to arrival.

For qualified travel and tourism service providers, the initiative creates an opportunity to offer more attractive travel packages, streamline the traveller journey, and encourage longer stays and richer travel experiences.

To ensure a smooth and reliable travel experience, Package Visa is available only through qualified travel and tourism service providers that meet clear service standards and offer 24/7 customer support.

Bintan Sees Continued Growth in Indian Visitor Interest Amid Evolving Travel Preferences

Travel Mail Desk

Bintan, Indonesia's tropical island destination located just a short ferry ride from Singapore, continues to witness growing interest from Indian travellers as demand for accessible and experience-led international holidays gains momentum.

The destination's increasing popularity reflects evolving travel preferences among Indian consumers who are seeking destinations that offer convenience, shorter travel times and a diverse range of experiences within a single trip.

Factors such as seamless connectivity via Singapore, growing interest in beach and wellness getaways, demand for family-friendly holidays and the appeal of nature and outdoor experiences have contributed to Bintan's growing visibility among Indian travellers.

Offering a blend of pristine beaches, wellness retreats, championship golf courses, water sports and nature-based experiences, Bintan presents travellers with an opportunity to explore a different side of Indonesia while enjoying easy accessibility and world-class hospitality.



The destination is also seeing rising interest from the MICE and corporate travel segments, supported by its range of resorts, event venues and group-friendly experiences that cater to incentives, meetings and corporate retreats.

Commenting on the growing interest from India, **Mr. Abdul Wahab, Chief Operating Officer, Bintan Resorts**, said “India remains one of our key focus markets, and we are encouraged by the growing awareness and consideration for Bintan among Indian travellers. Today's travellers are looking for destinations that offer a balance of relaxation, recreation and meaningful experiences, and Bintan continues to

resonate strongly with these evolving preferences. We look forward to strengthening our engagement with the market and welcoming more visitors to discover the island's unique offerings.”

As part of its ongoing commitment to India, Bintan Resorts continues to strengthen its presence through a combination of B2B and B2C initiatives. These include partnerships with travel trade stakeholders, engagement with MICE planners and participation in key industry platforms, alongside consumer-focused marketing campaigns, digital outreach and awareness-building efforts designed to inspire more Indian travellers to experience Bintan.

General Travel New Zealand Showcases the Best of New Zealand Through Six-City India Roadshow

Travel Mail Desk

Relationships continue to be at the heart of the travel business, and General Travel New Zealand's latest India roadshow reflected exactly that. Bringing together an extensive delegation of tourism partners from New Zealand, the six-city initiative created opportunities for meaningful conversations, product updates, and stronger trade partnerships across India's key outbound markets. Travelling across Mumbai, Delhi, Chandigarh, Indore, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad, the delegation interacted with more than 350+ travel planners and tour operators, creating a platform focused on business development, product education, and long-term partnerships.

The roadshow reflected the growing participation of New Zealand's tourism suppliers in engaging directly with the Indian travel trade. Bringing together diverse tourism experiences under one platform, the delegation showcased the depth and variety of experiences available across New Zealand while strengthening long-standing relationships with travel professionals across India.

Joining the delegation were Air New Zealand, the country's national carrier, alongside leading tourism partners including Entrada



Travel Group, Hobbiton™ Movie Set, Polynesian Spa, Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism, RealNZ, RotoruaNZ, Skyline Enterprises, Sudima Hotels, Te Puia, Development West Coast, Distinction Hotels Group, Ngāi Tahu Tourism, Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Terra and Tide and General Travel's own product Kiwiway Vacations.

The roadshow featured destination presentations, product showcases, scheduled business meetings and networking sessions, allowing Indian travel professionals to engage directly with suppliers and gain deeper insights into New Zealand's diverse tourism offerings, ranging from luxury and self-drive holidays

to Māori cultural experiences, wellness, adventure, premium accommodation and bespoke itineraries.

Anna Black, Executive Director, General Travel New Zealand, said *"India continues to be one of our most valued international markets, and this roadshow reaffirmed the importance of engaging directly with the travel trade. Bringing together such a diverse group of tourism partners allowed us to showcase the breadth of experiences New Zealand has to offer while strengthening relationships with travel professionals across the country. The enthusiasm and quality of conversations across all six cities were extremely encouraging, and we're excited to build on the momentum generated through this initiative."*

The six-city roadshow underscored the growing collaboration between New Zealand's tourism businesses and the Indian travel trade, providing a valuable platform to exchange market insights, strengthen commercial partnerships and inspire new travel opportunities. As Indian travellers continue to seek authentic and immersive experiences, initiatives such as these play an important role in equipping travel advisors with the knowledge and confidence to curate memorable New Zealand holidays.

Germany Records Growth in Indian Traveller Overnight Stays, Unveils Four Key Tourism Themes for 2026

Travel Mail Desk

Germany continues to demonstrate its enduring appeal as a travel destination, even as the global travel landscape navigates ongoing geopolitical headwinds. According to the German National Tourist Board, Germany recorded 174.9 million overnight stays between January and May 2026, up 1.3% from the same period last year, while international arrivals held firm at 28.7 million overnight stays. Domestic travel within Germany has now edged past pre-pandemic 2019 levels, underlining the country's stability and consistent pull as a destination of choice.

India remains a key growth market for German tourism. Overnight stays by Indian travellers rose to 350,488 between January and May 2026, up 0.1% year-on-year, with May 2026 alone recording 86,870 overnight stays, a clear signal of the deepening appetite among Indian travellers for German experiences, from culture and cuisine to cities and countryside.

Building on this momentum, the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) India has identified four themes that will anchor its 2026 strategy for the Indian market: a landmark cultural anniversary, dynamic city life, Germany's rich culinary identity, and experiences rooted in family, friendship and nature.

Commenting on Germany's tourism focus for India, **Romit Theophilus, Director – Marketing**



& Sales Office, India, GNTO, said, *"Despite ongoing geopolitical uncertainty across the world, Germany continues to hold its own as a stable and dependable travel destination, and India remains one of the markets driving that momentum. What we're witnessing is a clear shift in how Indian travellers engage with Germany; they're spending more time, going deeper into a region, and choosing experiences that connect them to a place rather than simply passing through it. For 2026, our India strategy is built around this shift, moving beyond conventional sightseeing to spotlight what makes the country worth exploring in depth. Through these efforts, we want to show Indian travellers a Germany*

defined not just by landmarks, but by stories, flavours and shared moments worth travelling for."

As Indian outbound travel continues to grow, GNTO India will deepen its engagement through strategic trade partnerships, influencer collaborations and thematic campaigns focused on culture, city experiences, culinary discovery and regional diversity. Backed by resilient overnight stay figures, a rich destination offering and globally active tourism campaigns, Germany is well positioned to inspire a new generation of Indian travellers to explore the country in greater depth.

Festivals are increasingly shaping travel decisions among Indians

Travel Mail Desk

Festivals are increasingly shaping travel decisions among Indians, with regional celebrations emerging as key holiday travel drivers. Thomas Cook (India) Limited, India's leading omnichannel travel services company, and its Group Company SOTC Travel are witnessing travellers increasingly aligning their holidays with Onam in Kerala, Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra, Navratri in Gujarat, Durga Puja in Eastern India, Mysore Dasara in Karnataka, Dussehra across North India and Diwali celebrated pan-India. As festivals create opportunities for extended breaks, travellers are combining celebrations with spiritual journeys, cultural immersions, family holidays and international getaways, transforming traditional festive occasions into memorable travel experiences.

The trend is evident across India's key source markets. Travellers from Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram are making the most of the Onam holidays, while Chennai and Coimbatore are leveraging the Pongal break to plan vacations. Mumbai and Pune continue to see festive travel around Ganesh Chaturthi, while Ahmedabad and Vadodara are aligning holidays with Navratri celebrations. Kolkata and Bhubaneswar are emerging as key travel hubs during Durga Puja, while Bengaluru and Mysuru are witnessing travellers extending the Mysore Dasara holidays into memorable getaways. Delhi NCR and Jaipur are among the key markets planning holidays around Dussehra, while Diwali continues to inspire travel across metros including Delhi NCR, Mumbai and Hyderabad, as families and friends make the most of the festive break to explore destinations together.

Spiritual and Cultural Experiences Continue to Hold Strong Appeal

For many travellers, festivals remain deeply connected to faith and tradition. Destinations such as Vrindavan and Mathura witness heightened interest during Janmashtami, offering visitors the opportunity to experience celebrations through temple rituals, devotional music and cultural performances. Kolkata continues to attract travellers during Durga Puja, when the city transforms into a vibrant showcase of art, culture and community spirit. From elaborate pandals and street food to cultural



performances and heritage walks, the festival has evolved into one of India's biggest tourism attractions. Varanasi also sees increased interest during Diwali and Dev Deepawali, while Mysuru draws visitors from across the country for its iconic Dasara celebrations. Increasingly, travellers are choosing to experience festivals at their cultural heart, making domestic travel an integral part of festive celebrations.

International Holidays Gain Momentum During Festive Breaks

While domestic destinations remain popular, festive holidays are increasingly serving as a launchpad for international travel. As an extension of celebrations, many travellers are using festival breaks to undertake short- and mid-haul overseas holidays.

While Europe continues to be a preferred choice among aspirational travellers seeking culture, history and scenic landscapes, particularly during the autumn season, Southeast Asia is witnessing strong demand from families and first-time international travellers. Destinations such as Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia continue to perform strongly for their blend of leisure, culture, family-friendly attractions and easy accessibility.

Travellers seeking immersive long-haul experiences are also showing growing interest in Japan, China, Egypt, South Africa and the UAE, drawn by unique cultural experiences, natural landscapes and curated itineraries that offer deeper connections with each destination.

Multi-Generational Travel on the Rise

Another notable trend is the rise of multi-generational travel during festive periods. Parents, children and grandparents are increasingly travelling together, making festivals an ideal occasion for family reunions beyond the home. Destinations such as Singapore and Malaysia, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Bali, Japan and Europe continue to perform strongly among family groups due to their combination of accessibility, comfort and experiences suitable for different age groups. This trend is also contributing to longer trip durations, as families seek to maximize holiday periods and spend meaningful time together.

Mr. Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head – Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India) Limited, said, "Festivals have become one of the strongest drivers of holiday planning for Indian travellers, with regional celebrations increasingly influencing when and where people choose to travel. We are witnessing strong demand across key source markets from Onam in Kerala and Pongal in Tamil Nadu to Durga Puja in Eastern India, Dussehra across Karnataka and North India, and Diwali celebrated across the country. Travellers are leveraging these festive windows to explore destinations that offer meaningful experiences, whether through spiritual journeys within India, family holidays in Southeast Asia, autumn escapes to Europe or immersive long-haul vacations. The growing popularity of multi-generational travel further highlights how holidays are becoming an integral part of modern festive celebrations."

Mr. SD Nandakumar, President & Country Head – Holidays & Corporate Tours, SOTC Travel, said, "Festivals are no longer just occasions to return home; they are increasingly becoming opportunities to celebrate in new places and create new traditions with loved ones. Today's travellers are looking beyond conventional holidays, choosing experiences that are immersive, enriching and memorable, whether it's discovering local cultures and cuisines, embarking on spiritual journeys, enjoying scenic rail holidays, witnessing wildlife on an African safari or cruising through spectacular landscapes. Festive travel today is less about where people go and more about the memories they create together, making every celebration a journey in itself."



Anjali Tolani
Vice President – Celebrations at
Tamarind Global

Travel Mail Desk

Destination weddings are no longer just beautiful ceremonies at exotic locations. In 2026, couples are looking to transform their weddings into immersive travel experiences that guests will remember as an actual trip rather than just a ceremony. As shared by **Anjali Tolani, Vice President – Celebrations at Tamarind Global**, today's guests are investing both time and money to travel for weddings and expect experiences they can truly enjoy and remember. Whether it's exploring the destination, connecting with fellow guests, or participating in thoughtfully curated activities, the focus has shifted towards creating meaningful memories that extend far beyond the wedding day.

Think Beyond the Wedding Day:

The ceremony may be the main part, but the most important part of the entire experience is the arrival of the guests. It is better to stretch out several events over the course of several days than to compress them into one. Royal dinners, cocktail sunsets, culinary tours, family brunches and the meals after the wedding will let the participants get to know each other. Nowadays, more couples make their own itinerary of events, paying attention to the desires of the guests.

Choose a Destination with Experiences, Not Just a Venue:

While the venue of a wedding is important, it is also necessary for it to offer guests memorable experiences after the wedding. For example, Udaipur offers heritage walks and boat rides on Lake Pichola, as Coorg has coffee plantation visits to offer. Kerala has backwater cruises available, while Tuscany offer vineyard tours. Internationally, Bali provides temple visits and many more cultural attractions.

How to Make Your Destination Wedding Feel Like a Curated Holiday

Curated Themes For Destinations:

A wedding in Goa could mean a sunset celebration at the beach with music and local cuisine. Royal weddings in Rajasthan might involve gorgeous decorations and folk artists. Kerala weddings could offer brunches inspired by the backwaters and a shimmering evening in white and gold by the lake. At a wedding event, an Italian vineyard can host lunch, and in Bali, a jungle-themed introduction dinner can be arranged. Themed festivities give the guests a feeling of participation in the event.

Curate Local Experiences:

The greatest wedding trend of 2026 is to promote local culture instead of replicating the same wedding format anywhere. Join together an incredible range of activities that will allow the guests to discover local culture. Arrange cooking classes, artisan workshops, folklore music performances, cultural walks, or visits to local markets instead of boring entertainment. For instance, guests would be able to learn block printing when in Jaipur. If in Goa, the guests could experience Goan cuisine or participate in a spice plantation tour. While in Kerala, attending a Kathakali performance or taking a boat ride may also serve as an unforgettable experience for the guests. This way, the guests will immerse themselves in the culture of the local community.

Offer Wellness & Leisure Activities:

Contemporary weddings take guests' desire to unwind into account. This means that couples are incorporating wellness activities that help them relax in between all the excitement and celebration. Morning yoga, meditation at the beach, spa treatments, nature walks, cycling, or a leisurely breakfast help guests unwind between events. Adventure lovers can choose from kayaking, hiking, scuba diving and nature safaris, depending on the location. It is vital to create a mix of activities for leisure and excitement so that guests of all ages will be able to enjoy the wedding, including families, friends and older guests.

Align The Dress Code With The Destination:

Planning what everyone is going to wear is crucial for destination weddings, and many couples are now establishing dress codes that are in keeping with the locale and the general feel of the occasion. Instead of being formal all the time, the guests are encouraged to wear clothes that make them comfortable and suit the style of the location. Examples include lightweight fabrics and tropical designs



in the attire of the guests for a seaside occasion, pretty patterns for vineyard weddings, earthy tones for mountain weddings, and bright ethnic fabrics for a celebration in Rajasthan. In many cases, the couples provide their guests with some style guidance in the form of a colour palette or mood board before the wedding that helps everyone pack properly for the trip.

Celebrate the Destination Through Gifting:

Wedding favours or gifts associated with a wedding need to have local significance. Instead of unoriginal, standard gifts, welcome hampers should contain local products. A Rajasthan wedding can feature blue pottery products, local spices, or handmade sweets. Guests at the ceremony in Kerala may get banana chips, handmade soap, local spices, or traditional snacks, while in Goa, cashew nuts, bebinca, or local coffee can be presented. Room gifts can also reflect local craftsmanship through creating handmade candles, woven baskets, and personalised guides.

End with a Memorable Farewell Experience:

The last impression is often the most memorable. Instead of just waving goodbye, end the festivities with something that will leave everyone happy. Beach picnics, brunches in the vineyards, cruises, afternoon tea or barbecues are great ways to spend the last moments together. Couples may also send personal thank-you notes and local souvenirs for guests to keep.

Great destination weddings are now more than just decoration and celebration. They are judged on how they make people feel. Couples are now seeing their wedding celebrations as a holiday. A well-planned wedding experience gives a couple the chance to create a memorable experience that goes beyond just the wedding. By combining local experiences with wellness activities and gifts, every little aspect of the wedding ensures an event that guests remember long after they leave the destination.

5 International Destinations Perfect for a Monsoon Escape from India

Travel Mail Desk

The arrival of the monsoon in India is heralded by cooler temperatures, plush evenings and a strong desire to travel. Although the rain has its own charm, it is also associated with dreams about blue skies, beaches, picturesque towns and exhilarating experiences around the world. It is to be noted that many international destinations across the globe would be at their best during this period, giving good weather and wonderful experiences. Here are 5 International destinations suggested by **Louis D'Souza, Managing Partner, Tamarind Global**, that are perfect for a monsoon escape from India.

1. Bali, Indonesia – Culture Meets Tropical Bliss: Bali presents the best sunny escape during the Monsoon in India, consisting of a clear blue sky and lush green rice fields, along with the relaxed attitude that comes from being on an island. It is the dry season in Bali during July, making it a great opportunity to explore the culture in Ubud, view the sunset at Tanah Lot temple, as well as the one in Uluwatu temple, along with taking part in exciting water sports at Tanjung Benoa beach. The temperatures in Bali remain comfortable between 22 degrees and 28 degrees, hence making sightseeing even more enjoyable.



2. Switzerland – Alpine Summers at Their Finest: The month of July is a great time to see Switzerland at its best. The alpine meadows come alive with colours and flowers, lakes glisten under the bright blue sky, and mild weather makes outdoor activities comfortable. Enjoy scenic train rides, visit the majestic Rhine Falls, or go to Mt. Titlis for snow activities in summer. Switzerland offers picturesque views from adorable towns to exciting outdoor festivals and lakes.



Louis D'Souza
Managing Partner, Tamarind Global

3. Mauritius – An Island Escape Beyond the Beaches: If you consider the ideal monsoon vacation as one where you unwind and soak in nature, Mauritius will be an exceptional choice. In addition to its picturesque white sand beaches, Mauritius has so much more to offer. You can wander around the beautiful Île aux Cerfs, participate in exciting water sports, visit stunning botanical gardens, or simply rest in a beach resort. Either way, June and July are comfortable months with fine weather that makes it easy to tour and engage in outdoor activities.



4. Georgia – Europe's Hidden Summer Gem: When monsoons are raging in India, Georgia becomes a remarkable summertime destination with amazing weather conditions, beautiful landscapes and flourishing culture. Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, is a perfect place for casual walking through its colourful streets, hidden yards and vibrant districts with its pleasant cafes and boutiques. If the beauty of Tbilisi is not enough, you can visit the mountainous areas of Kazbegi and Gudauri and breathe in fresh mountain air surrounded by beautiful views.



5. South Africa – Wildlife, Wine and Winter Adventures: When you swap the rains of India for some winter sunshine, choose South Africa! The seasons here are reversed, so the weather is cool and dry between June and August. This makes it ideal for safaris, as animals gather around water holes during this time. Your trip to Cape Town can include the beautiful vineyards and the mountains in the vicinity, apart from the whale-watching in Hermanus. There are many luxury travel packages available from India.

Your travelling plans should not be interrupted by the monsoon season. Instead of dampening your spirit to travel, consider utilizing this time for travelling to places which get good weather during monsoon. Places where there will be fewer crowds and your travel will remain memorable. You may encounter places possessed of wild adventures, nature and culture during this time.

SHARJAH'S MANGROVES

A Serene Escape into Nature and Biodiversity

Travel Mail Desk

As one of Sharjah's most captivating east coast destinations, Kalba offers a refreshing blend of nature, adventure, and eco-tourism. Renowned for its lush mangrove forests and rich biodiversity, this scenic coastal retreat invites travellers to immerse themselves in tranquil surroundings while discovering some of the UAE's most remarkable natural landscapes.

At the heart of this natural wonder lies the Khor Kalba Mangrove Centre, located within one of the oldest mangrove forests in the UAE. The region serves as a sanctuary for rare wildlife, marine species, and migratory birds, showcasing its rich ecological diversity. Visitors can witness the endangered Arabian Collared Kingfisher, green turtles, crabs, fish species, and thriving mangrove ecosystems that play a crucial role in environmental conservation.

Kalba has emerged as one of the UAE's leading eco-tourism destinations, offering activities such as kayaking through winding waterways, paddleboarding, birdwatching, trekking, and wildlife exploration. Visitors can experience the serene beauty of the protected reserve while learning about the environmental significance of mangroves through interactive exhibits and guided outdoor experiences.

Adding to the destination's appeal is the Al Qurm Protected Area, home to over 500 hectares of protected land and recognised as one of the northernmost mangrove forests in the world. The reserve supports diverse avian and aquatic life and offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to connect with nature amidst pristine landscapes.

For travellers seeking a luxurious yet sustainable retreat, the eco-conscious Kingfisher Retreat provides an exceptional stay experience within the protected reserve. Surrounded by

beaches and rare wildlife habitats, the property reflects Sharjah's strong commitment to sustainable tourism and environmental preservation.

Blending adventure, conservation, and natural beauty, Sharjah's mangroves offer a refreshing escape into one of the UAE's most biodiverse landscapes, making Kalba a must-visit destination for eco-travellers and nature enthusiasts alike.

As one of Sharjah's most captivating eco-tourism destinations, the mangroves of Kalba offer visitors a unique opportunity to explore the emirate's rich natural heritage amid serene waterways and diverse wildlife. Complementing this immersive nature experience are nearby attractions such as the picturesque Hanging Gardens in Kalba and the Al Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre, where visitors can discover native wildlife, breathtaking mountain scenery, and the diverse natural beauty of Sharjah's east coast.



Beyond the Usual Europe

Four Summer Escapes to Discover in Northern Europe

Travel Mail Desk

As travellers increasingly look beyond Europe's classic summer hotspots, destinations across Northern Europe are stepping into the spotlight. From Finland's idyllic lake region and a tranquil Estonian island to a medieval Swedish town and a historic Polish port city, these lesser-explored escapes offer a refreshing alternative to crowded itineraries. With Finnair's direct flights from Delhi to Helsinki and seamless onward connections, discovering these destinations has never been easier.

Stretching across central and eastern Finland, Järvi-Suomi is a region where thousands of lakes, forests and islands create some of the country's most iconic summer landscapes. Beyond its natural beauty, the region has emerged as a destination for local food and wellness experiences, with lakeside resorts, historic manor houses and restaurants showcasing seasonal ingredients sourced from nearby forests, farms and waters. Whether it's enjoying a traditional sauna by the lake, staying at a waterfront retreat or sampling fresh fish, wild berries and regional delicacies, Finnish Lakeland offers a slower, more immersive way to experience Finland's summer culture. Finnair's domestic network connects Helsinki to gateways including Kuopio, Joensuu and Jyväskylä, making the region easily accessible for travellers.

Estonia's largest island, Saaremaa, is a haven of medieval charm, wellness and nature. Centred around the seaside town of Kuressaare, visitors can explore one of the Baltics' best-preserved medieval castles, unwind at renowned spa resorts and discover dramatic coastlines dotted with lighthouses and forests. Summer also brings cultural highlights such as the Saaremaa Opera Festival and Maritime Festival. Operated between 8 June and 7 August 2026, Finnair's seasonal Helsinki-Kuressaare service, with up to four weekly flights, made this Baltic escape more accessible than ever.

Located on the island of Gotland, Visby is one of Scandinavia's most enchanting summer destinations. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the town is known for its medieval city walls, cobbled streets, historic ruins and rose-filled gardens. Visitors can spend their days exploring centuries-old landmarks, relaxing at nearby beaches or soaking up the lively atmosphere that takes over the town during the summer months. With Finnair's direct connection to Gotland, Visby makes for an easy addition to a Nordic summer journey.

Combining rich history with Baltic coastal charm, Gdańsk offers travellers a refreshing city break away from Europe's busiest destinations. Its colourful Old Town, waterfront promenades and maritime heritage create a distinctive

backdrop for exploration, while attractions such as the European Solidarity Centre and Museum of the Second World War provide deeper insight into the city's past. Just beyond the city lies Sopot, a popular seaside resort known for its sandy beaches and relaxed summer atmosphere. Convenient Finnair connections via Helsinki make Gdańsk an easy addition to a Northern European summer itinerary.

Whether it's unwinding among Finland's lakes, exploring Estonia's island landscapes, wandering through medieval Sweden or discovering Poland's Baltic coast, these destinations offer a different side of the European summer. With convenient connections via Helsinki, Finnair makes it easy to venture beyond the usual and uncover some of Northern Europe's most rewarding escapes.



DISCOVER AQABA

Jordan's Ultimate Coastal Adventure Escape

Travel Mail Desk

Nestled along Jordan's southern coastline, Aqaba is a vibrant seaside destination where adventure, leisure, and natural beauty come together. Blessed with year-round sunshine and warm waters, Aqaba is Jordan's only coastal city and serves as the country's gateway to an extraordinary world of marine experiences, outdoor adventures, and waterfront attractions. Whether you're seeking thrilling activities or a relaxing beach escape, Aqaba offers something for every traveller.

At the heart of Aqaba's appeal lies its spectacular underwater world, home to some of the region's most celebrated diving and snorkelling sites. Explore the legendary Cedar Pride Dive Site, a purposely sunken ship that has transformed into a thriving artificial reef, discover the colourful coral gardens of the Japanese Garden Dive Site, or venture beneath the waves to the fascinating C-130 Dive Site. These iconic

locations offer unforgettable encounters with vibrant coral reefs, diverse marine life, and crystal-clear waters that make Aqaba a paradise for underwater enthusiasts.

Adding to its unique appeal is the Aqaba Underwater Military Museum, the world's first underwater military museum, where tanks, military vehicles, and equipment have been carefully submerged to create an extraordinary attraction for divers and snorkelers alike. Visitors can also gain a deeper appreciation of the region's marine ecosystem at the Aqaba Aquarium, which showcases the rich biodiversity and conservation efforts that help preserve Aqaba's underwater treasures.

Beyond the sea, Aqaba offers a wealth of experiences for adventure seekers and leisure travellers. Perfect your swing at the Ayla Golf Course and Academy, an award-winning golfing destination set amidst

spectacular desert and waterfront scenery. For adrenaline-filled fun, head to Ayla Wake Park for exciting wakeboarding experiences or soar above the coastline with Aerosports, taking in breathtaking aerial views of Aqaba's stunning landscapes from above.

From world-class diving and snorkelling to golf, watersports, and unique marine attractions, Aqaba delivers unforgettable experiences at every turn. Whether exploring beneath the surface or embracing adventure on land and in the sky, visitors will discover a destination that perfectly blends excitement, relaxation, and natural beauty.



Culture-Led Travel Takes Centre Stage as 67% of Indians Plan Holidays Around Heritage, Festivals and Food, Reveals Skyscanner

Travel Mail Desk

Culture is increasingly shaping how and where Indians choose to explore. As travellers move beyond traditional sightseeing, they are seeking deeper, more authentic experiences that connect them with the local heritage, traditions, cuisine, festivals and communities. Leading global travel app, Skyscanner has launched The India Culture Travel Index, a report that reveals that India's appetite for culture-led travel continues to grow.

Through The India Culture Travel Index, Skyscanner analysed the evolving behaviours driving culture-led travel in India. The findings uncover five defining trends that together form the R.O.O.T.S. of India's growing culture-led travel movement:

R – Rediscovering heritage: Heritage continues to be the strongest driver of culture-led travel. It is the top motivator for Indian travellers, with 47% saying they would plan a trip around heritage and historical sites. Kerala, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand rank among the country's leading cultural destinations, reflecting travellers' growing interest in exploring India's architectural landmarks, historic communities and living traditions.

O – Open discovery: As Indian travellers become more open to discovering destinations through culture, they are embracing more immersive experiences beyond traditional sightseeing. Social media and YouTube (42%), along with the growing popularity of food, craft and heritage trails (41%), are the biggest drivers behind growing interest in culture-led travel. Beyond domestic travel, 46% of Indian travellers have already travelled internationally for a cultural event, festival or heritage trail, while a further 43% aspire to do so, highlighting a growing curiosity to explore culture both within India and around the world. This openness extends closer to home too, with one in four Indian travellers (25%) heading to Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns for cultural experiences, beyond the usual metro circuit.



O – Once-in-a-year experiences:

Festival tourism is emerging as a powerful travel driver, with 72% of Indian travellers saying they would consider planning a trip specifically to attend a major cultural or religious festival. India's iconic festivals are powerful travel motivators, with Durga Puja (58%) emerging as the top festival travellers would consider travelling to attend, followed by Ganesh Chaturthi (52%) and Navratri Garba (47%). The findings suggest that travellers are increasingly treating major festivals as limited-time experiences worth planning an entire holiday around, rather than simply activities to enjoy after arriving at a destination.

T – Traditions & Taste: Food, crafts, and local traditions continue to play an increasingly important role in shaping culture-led travel. Regional food experiences rank among the top reasons for travel, with 43% of Indian travellers saying they would plan a trip around them. The growing popularity highlights an appetite for experiences that connect travellers with a destination's local traditions, flavours and way of life.

S – Smarter planning: As cultural experiences become a bigger travel priority, travellers are becoming more intentional in how they plan their journeys. Most Indian travellers begin planning their culture-led trips well in advance, with 40% starting three to six months ahead and 36% beginning one to three months before departure. Festival

timing has become the biggest booking consideration, with 36% of travellers saying availability during key festival or event dates matters most, followed by affordable prices for transport and accommodation (32%).

With many cultural experiences taking place at specific times of the year, Skyscanner's Price Alerts allow travellers to monitor fare changes without having to repeatedly search, while Whole Month search lets them

compare prices across different travel dates to identify the best value around festivals, heritage trails and other cultural experiences.

Looking ahead, India's appetite for culture-led travel shows no signs of slowing. With 41% of Indian travellers planning to take two culture-focused trips within India over the next year, 32% expect to take three to four. While enthusiasm remains high, safety concerns (49%) and high travel costs (37%) continue to be the biggest barriers to taking more culture-led journeys.

Neel Ghose, Travel Trends and Destinations Expert, Skyscanner India, said *"For a long time, people chose a destination first and discovered its culture once they arrived. We're increasingly seeing that journey now happens in reverse. Travellers are starting with the experience they want, whether that's witnessing Durga Puja, exploring a heritage trail or discovering a region through its food, and then building the trip around it. That shift is changing not just where people travel, but how they plan. When festival dates are fixed and demand is high, comparing different travel dates, airlines, airports and routes can help travellers find better value. For instance, try mixing and matching airlines or airports when you are searching for flights, and use helpful tools like Skyscanner's Price Alerts to find better value when planning travel."*

Indians are choosing Nagaland over Goa this monsoon. Cleartrip's PeekABoo Trends Tracker shows why that's not a surprise anymore.

Travel Mail Desk

Once considered a lean season for holidays, the rainy months are now emerging as a preferred travel window, with travellers seeking immersive, nature-led and offbeat experiences. Cleartrip's Peekaboo Trends Tracker shows that monsoon travel is experiencing significant YoY growth across categories, with hotel bookings up over 54% and bus bookings surging by 140%.

"We are now in an Age of Experience, where travel is driven by intent rather than itineraries, and our data this monsoon makes that unmistakably clear. The Indian traveller is not waiting for the perfect season or the obvious destination. They are finding their own", said **Pallavi Saxena, Chief Marketing and Revenue Officer, Cleartrip.**

1. Northeast Leads Booking Growth: Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh recorded the highest growth among all destinations tracked this season, with flight bookings up 62% and hotel bookings increased over 90% year-on-year.



Hotel bookings increased by over 65% in Shillong and over 60% in Guwahati. Flight bookings increased by over 70% for Itanagar and over 50% for Jorhat and Imphal.

2. Hill Destinations See Strong Hotel Demand: Hill destinations experienced significant growth in hotel bookings this year. Wayanad saw an increase of over 160%. Alleppey grew by more than 145%. Kodaikanal and Ooty reported sharp increases in hotel bookings, each exceeding 70%.

3. Other Destinations Recording Healthy Growth: Beyond the Northeast and hill circuits, the following destinations recorded healthy increases in hotel bookings: Hotel bookings in Goa, Pondicherry, Visakhapatnam and Udaipur top the list, growing by over 110%, 104%, 85% and 50% respectively.

4. Gen Z Lean Towards Unconventional Destinations & Trains as Top Mode of Travel Tajikistan, which recorded the highest growth of over 245% year-on-year. Followed by Lakshadweep, over 80% Muscat and the Philippines (70%), Hubli and Leh over 65% and Tashkent over 54%. Train travel data shows Gen Z as the largest age group among train travellers, at 45% of bookings, followed by Millennials at 28%.

5. Booking Behaviour: Solo Travel and Advance Planning Dominate – Flight bookings up by 65% and group bookings by over 25% compared to last year's monsoon.

6. Hotels: Mid-Range Category Gains Share, Short Stays Dominate (Hotel bookings grew by 53.90% year-on-year)

74% of India's young and working-age travellers are powering the shift to Shared Mobility; 76% expect usage to rise over the next three years: IntrCity SmartBus Intercity Mobility Survey 2026

Travel Mail Desk

India's intercity travel preferences are undergoing a structural transformation, with young and working professionals increasingly choosing shared mobility over personal vehicles for long-distance journeys. According to a nationwide survey by IntrCity SmartBus titled "IntrCity SmartBus Intercity Mobility Survey 2026," covering 13,320 respondents, nearly three-fourths (74.3%) of respondents are aged between 18 and 43 years, while 65.9% are salaried professionals – indicating that the country's most active travellers are driving the next phase of shared mobility adoption.

The survey highlights that shared mobility has moved beyond being an economical alternative to becoming the preferred mode of intercity travel. Nearly half of respondents (49.2%) said all five of their most recent intercity journeys were made using shared mobility services such as buses, trains or shared transport. Looking ahead, more than three-fourths



(76.3%) expect to increase their use of shared mobility over the next three years, reflecting growing confidence in organised, technology-led travel options.

The findings also reveal that today's travellers are placing greater emphasis on experience than ownership. While over half of respondents have access to a personal vehicle, 30.4% said they own a car but prefer not to drive for intercity

journeys. When asked to choose a mode of transport for a 400–600 km journey if costs were identical, nearly seven in ten respondents (69.6%) preferred a premium shared bus over a personal car, train or flight, highlighting changing consumer expectations around convenience, comfort and stress-free travel.

Manish Rathi, Co-founder & CEO of IntrCity SmartBus, shared, "The Indian intercity traveller has evolved significantly over the last few years. Today's passengers are looking beyond affordability and are placing equal importance on reliability, comfort, safety and digital convenience. The survey reflects a larger behavioural shift where shared mobility is becoming the preferred choice for frequent travellers because it delivers a better overall travel experience. As organised mobility continues to evolve, we believe technology, consistent service quality and customer trust will define the future of intercity transportation."

Booking.com strengthens Business in India with new localised features.

Travel Mail Desk

Booking.com, one of the world's leading online travel companies, today announced new enhancements to Booking.com for Business, a corporate travel platform in India designed to help startups and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) manage business travel more efficiently. Building on the ease, choice and flexibility of Booking.com, the platform streamlines the process of capturing GST details and seamless transmission to partners. With enhanced budget management tools, it simplifies business travel while giving employees the freedom to book confidently within company guidelines.

As businesses scale, managing travel across teams, locations, and budgets can become increasingly complex. Today, many organizations continue to rely on multiple booking platforms and manual processes, resulting in limited visibility over spend, itineraries and policy compliance. Booking.com for Business offers companies an all-in-one platform that integrates stays and flights into a single, seamless experience, while addressing business needs to gain greater oversight and control, and providing employees access to extensive travel options available on Booking.com.

Completely free to use, with no subscription or booking fees, Booking.com for Business offers companies the best of Booking.com, including its global reach and personalised booking experiences. Businesses can access

Booking.com business



its extensive inventory of over 31 million property listings, ranging from city apartments and boutique stays to world-class hotels and resorts, as well as more than 500 airlines serving over 4,500 destinations. Already trusted by more than 1.5 million companies globally, the platform reflects a growing shift towards flexible, tech-forward business travel solutions.

Santosh Kumar, Regional Head, South Asia, Booking.com, said "India's business travel landscape is at an inflexion point. As companies grow, they are increasingly looking for solutions that offer greater flexibility and visibility while meeting the evolving expectations of today's workforce. Booking.com for Business brings the familiarity, breadth of choice and intuitive booking experience that travellers know from Booking.com to business travel. As part of Booking.com's Connected Trip vision, we are making it easier for businesses and employees to navigate their corporate travel through a seamless, efficient and connected travel experience. Business travel continues to evolve, and striking the right balance between organisational needs and traveller expectations becomes increasingly important. Through Booking.com for Business, we aim to make that balance easier to achieve."

Yatra Online and Kanoo Travel enter strategic partnership to transform enterprise travel across the Middle East

Travel Mail Desk

Yatra Online Limited India's leading corporate travel and expense management company, today announced a strategic partnership with Kanoo Travel, a division of the Yusuf Bin Ahmed Kanoo Group and one of the Middle East's most respected travel management companies, to transform enterprise travel across the region. The partnership combines Kanoo Travel's regional leadership with Yatra's enterprise travel and expense management platform, marking Yatra's first significant international expansion and establishing a scalable platform for long-term growth in one of the world's fastest-growing business travel markets.

The partnership represents a significant milestone in Yatra's long-term international growth strategy, bringing its enterprise travel and expense management platform to one of the world's fastest-growing business travel markets. Built and refined over more than a decade, the platform today supports the travel and expense management needs of over 1,300 large and mid-sized enterprises across India. Through its strategic partnership with Kanoo Travel, Yatra is extending these proven capabilities to the Middle East, demonstrating the platform's ability to support enterprise customers across geographies and establishing a foundation for further international expansion.



Under the partnership, Kanoo Travel will deploy Yatra's integrated enterprise travel and expense management platform, enabling a seamless experience across travel booking, policy management, expense management, automation, and analytics.

Complementing the technology platform, Yatra will establish a Kanoo Travel Global Operations Centre to provide 24x7 multilingual operational support, working alongside Kanoo Travel's customer-facing teams across the Middle East. Together, the integrated platform and dedicated operations hub will deliver a scalable, technology-enabled service model designed to enhance customer experience, operational efficiency, and future growth.

"Our partnership with Kanoo Travel marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in Yatra's growth journey. Over the past decade, we have built one of India's leading enterprise travel and expense management platforms by solving the complex needs of large organizations at scale. Together with Kanoo Travel's exceptional regional presence and customer relationships, we have an opportunity to redefine how enterprise travel is delivered across the Middle East. More importantly, this partnership demonstrates that world-class enterprise technology built in India can successfully serve customers on a global stage, and we see this as the beginning of a much larger international growth opportunity for Yatra," said **Siddhartha Gupta, Chief Executive Officer, Yatra Online Limited**.

"Our customers are increasingly looking for technology that simplifies travel, improves policy compliance, and delivers greater visibility into travel spend, without compromising the high-touch service they expect from Kanoo Travel. Yatra's enterprise platform, combined with its deep operational expertise, enables us to offer an integrated solution that strengthens our value proposition to corporate customers across the Middle East. We believe this partnership positions us well to meet the evolving needs of enterprises while supporting our long-term growth ambitions," said **Mohamed Al Kooheji, Group Chief Executive Officer, Yusuf Bin Ahmed Kanoo Group**.

Agoda Data Reveals Indian Travellers Are Expanding Their International Beach Bucket List

Travel Mail Desk

Digital travel platform Agoda has released new insights highlighting the international beach destinations gaining interest from Indian travellers this July and August. While perennial favourites continue to feature prominently, accommodation search trends highlight growing interest in a wider mix of coastal and island destinations across South and Southeast Asia as well as Europe. Travellers are looking to explore destinations that offer immersive cultural experiences and different types of coastal landscapes, reflecting an appetite to discover more of what each region has to offer.

Southeast Asia Remains a Core Draw, but the Map Is Widening

Southeast Asia remains a fixture in Indian travellers' search activity with its blend of tropical islands, vibrant coastal cities and relaxed beach towns. Among the destinations seeing notable search interest, Bali continues to captivate travellers with its blend of scenic beaches, centuries-old temples and wellness retreats. Meanwhile, Phuket retains its spot as a crowd favourite owing to its lively coastline, bustling night markets and easy access to nearby islands, offering everything from family holidays to adventure-filled getaways.

Beyond these well-known favourites, Agoda searches point to growing interest in a wider



range of destinations, each with its own unique offerings. In Indonesia, Lombok is attracting attention for its uncrowded beaches, surf culture and proximity to the Gili Islands. Vietnam is also emerging as a coastal hotspot with Phu Quoc Island offering white-sand beaches alongside protected national parks, Da Nang combining a scenic coastline with a vibrant culinary scene, and Hoi An continuing to captivate travellers with its limestone islands and overnight cruises.

From Island Retreats in the Indian Ocean to Mediterranean Shores

Along Sri Lanka's coastline, Trincomalee, known for its calm bays and marine life, has

emerged in Agoda's search data alongside Arugam Bay, a destination that has built a reputation as one of South Asia's leading surf destinations. Together with Mirissa, known for its whale-watching experiences, as well as destinations like Galle and Bentota, Sri Lanka is increasingly appealing to travellers looking beyond traditional island holidays.

Mediterranean locales are also finding a place on Indian travellers' wish lists. Santorini continues to attract visitors with its iconic cliffside villages overlooking the Aegean Sea, Nice pairs Riviera beaches with a vibrant cultural scene, while Ibiza remains a popular choice for travellers looking to combine beach holidays with its renowned nightlife.

Gaurav Malik, Country Director, Indian Subcontinent & Indian Ocean Islands, Agoda, said "Indian travellers are increasingly broadening their horizons beyond the traditional beach favourites. While well-established coastal destinations continue to see strong interest, we are also seeing growing demand for a wider mix of beach escapes across regions. From vibrant seaside hotspots and island getaways to quieter coastal towns, travellers today are seeking more variety and choice in how they plan their beach holidays. At Agoda, we remain focused on making it easy for travellers to discover, compare and book the right stay, flight and activities for every kind of beach escape."

40% of zingbus Maxx Riders Are Women as Luxury Bus Travel Gains Momentum

Travel Mail Desk

zingbus, India's leading intercity travel platform, is seeing women travellers emerge as a key driver of growth in the luxury intercity bus segment. According to the Redbus Pink Report, Female ridership has grown by over 130% between 2019 and 2025. This broader industry trend is also reflected on zingbus, where nearly 1 in 3 travellers is a woman. The data points to changing expectations among female travellers, who are increasingly prioritising not only safety but also comfort, convenience and premium travel experiences when travelling.

The shift is particularly evident on zingbus Maxx, the company's luxury intercity travel offering, where women account for 40 per cent of total ridership, significantly higher than the industry average. Women also contribute a larger share of booking value than their seat share, indicating a strong preference for premium travel experiences.

Solo travel among women reinforces this pattern. Solo bookings by women on the platform have more than doubled over the past year, with the strongest growth seen on overnight routes connecting metro cities to hometowns and leisure destinations. Women aged 22 to 35 represent a growing share of the platform's female traveller base.



Commenting on the report, **Mr. Prashant Kumar, Founder & CEO, zingbus,** said, "Women are shaping the next phase of intercity travel in India. The growth we are seeing is not just in the number of women travelling, but in their preference for services that combine safety, comfort, predictability, and quality. The rising adoption of Maxx among women travellers shows that safety is no longer just a baseline expectation; it is central to how premium travel experiences are built."

zingbus has embedded technology-led safety measures across its network, including AI-enabled safety monitoring, emergency exit visualisation during seat selection, turn-by-turn navigation to boarding points, live GPS tracking that can be shared with emergency contacts, and trained onboard marshals whose performance is monitored through customer feedback and operational metrics.

VELVET Clarks Exotica

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FAITH CONCLAVE 2026: INCREDIBLE INDIA: INVALUABLE ECONOMICS CHARTER TO UNLOCK INDIA'S TOURISM ECONOMY

Travel Mail Desk

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), the apex body representing the country's tourism, travel and hospitality sector, advocated the "Tourism Growth Charter" at the FAITH Conclave 2026 and called for a time-bound action agenda to unlock India's travel and tourism opportunity. Under the theme "Incredible India: Invaluable Economics," the Conclave focused on strategies to accelerate tourism-led economic growth, employment generation and regional development, while realising the sector's immense economic potential and strengthening India's position as a leading global tourism destination.

The Charter lays out immediate, measurable key priorities, including:

1. Granting tourism Infrastructure status by the Centre and Industry status across all states. This will improve access to capital and reduce financing costs, enhancing the sector's investment attractiveness.
2. Fast-track the development of 50 tourism destinations on Mission Mode, supported by clear implementation timelines.



3. Dedicated global tourism promotion campaign under the strong 'Incredible India' brand with sustained funding to increase foreign tourist arrivals and strengthen India's positioning in international markets.
4. Investment in tourism infrastructure, ranging from last-mile connectivity and convention centres to wayside amenities, cruise terminals, and digital infrastructure, will further elevate the visitor experience.
5. Rationalizing taxation to align with global benchmarks and creating a single-window clearance will encourage greater private sector participation.

Mr. Puneet Chhatwal, Chairman, FAITH, said, "The challenge before us is no longer proving tourism's potential; it is harnessing it at scale. Tourism is a growth engine that has a multiplier effect on both economic and social development. By acting now on industry status, 50 destinations, Brand Bharat and ease of travel, we can position India as a global tourism powerhouse this decade. This is the essence of Incredible India: Invaluable Economics, building tourism as the pathway to national growth and global influence."

Annual General Meeting 2026 of the Northern India Chapter of the Travel Agents Federation of India held at The Park, New Delhi

Travel Mail Desk

During the AGM 2026, TAFI celebrated its Ruby Anniversary Celebrations. During the meeting, Chapter Chairman Mr. Dinesh Kumar presented his Yearly Report; Minutes of the last AGM & Treasurer's report and accounts for FY 2025-2026 were approved; new members were given membership certificates along with a green plant.

As a part of Ruby Anniversary Celebrations, Industry Veteran, Sh. Subhash Goyal; TAFI National MC Member, Sh. Khushvinder Sarna; Past Chairman, Sh. Ashwani Sharma; Past Secretary, Sh. Mukul Aggarwal; Mr. Yadukul Guglani, who has completed 60 years in the trade; Mr. Anirban from Akasa Airlines; Mr. Rohan Chopra and Gagneet from SATTE Team have addressed the august gathering, and TAFI-NI have given a green plant to the esteemed guests as a

symbol of prosperity and growth. A cake-cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the Ruby Anniversary.

Every guest enjoyed the delicious lunch hosted by TAFI-NI. The meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks by the Secretary, TAFI-NI.



GAEHP Successfully Organizes 8th LEAPtrip in Varanasi; 40 Tourism Professionals Experience the City's Finest Hospitality

Travel Mail Desk

The Global Association of Events & Hospitality Professionals (GAEHP) successfully organized its 8th LEAPtrip (Learn • Engage • Assess • Promote), an exclusive Familiarization (FAM) Trip for 40 travel, tourism, and hospitality professionals from across India in Varanasi.

Hosted at Gangotri – A Divine River Retreat, Varanasi's prestigious luxury floating hotel featuring 24 elegantly appointed rooms, the LEAPtrip provided members with a unique opportunity to experience one of India's most distinctive hospitality products while exploring the cultural and spiritual essence of the holy city.

Designed around GAEHP's LEAPtrip philosophy of enabling members to personally experience tourism products



before recommending them to clients, the program featured a carefully curated itinerary that included the mesmerising Ganga Aarti, an invigorating morning yoga session, and a breathtaking sunrise over the River Ganges from the deck of Gangotri. These immersive experiences offered participants a deeper understanding of Varanasi as a destination for leisure, spiritual, and experiential tourism.

The members were graciously hosted by the **Malviya family** – **Mr. Vikas Malviya, Mr. Vivek Malviya, and Mr. Jayant Malviya** – along with the dedicated team at Gangotri. Their exceptional hospitality, meticulous planning, and personalized attention ensured a memorable stay for every participant and showcased the highest standards of Indian hospitality.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Rajesh Arya, President, GAEHP**, said "Our LEAPtrip initiative continues to create meaningful value for both our members and hospitality partners. By personally experiencing destinations and hospitality products, our members become stronger ambassadors for tourism. We sincerely thank Gangotri and Shree Shivay Thali Dining for extending exceptional hospitality and making the 8th edition of GAEHP LEAPtrip a remarkable success."

IATO RAJASTHAN CHAPTER ORGANISES AI WORKSHOP



Travel Mail Desk

The Rajasthan Chapter of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) organised a one-day workshop on Artificial Intelligence (AI) at ITC Rajputana, Jaipur.

The workshop was conducted by **Mentor and AI Transformation Coach**,

Mr. Rocky Jagtiani. He shared insights on the effective use of AI in the tourism industry, digital marketing strategies, and modern AI tools to enhance business efficiency.

Approximately 50 members of the IATO Rajasthan Chapter participated

in the program. The workshop was organised under the leadership of the **Co-Chairman, IATO Rajasthan Chapter, Mr. Mahendra Singh**. Participants appreciated the initiative, describing it as both timely and highly beneficial for the tourism industry.

THSC Connect 2026 to Bring Together Government, Industry and Academia to Strengthen India's Tourism & Hospitality Workforce

Travel Mail Desk

The Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) will host its flagship annual event, THSC Connect 2026 – "The Power of Partnerships," on 20 August 2026 at the Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The event will bring together senior policymakers, industry leaders, CSR partners, academia, training providers, and key stakeholders from the skilling ecosystem to discuss the future of workforce development in India's rapidly expanding Tourism & Hospitality sector.

THSC Connect 2026 will serve as a premier platform to foster stronger collaborations between Government, industry, academia and ecosystem partners, with a shared objective of creating an industry-ready workforce and expanding employment opportunities for the nation's youth.

The day-long programme will feature keynote addresses by distinguished dignitaries, insightful panel discussions, presentations on THSC's flagship initiatives, CSR-led skilling models, government programmes, Centres of Excellence, rehabilitation initiatives, and best practices in industry engagement. The event will also witness the presentation of the THSC Skill Champions Awards, recognising organisations and individuals for their exceptional contribution to skill development and workforce transformation.



Rajan Bahadur
CEO, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council

Participants will also have the opportunity to engage with senior leaders from across the tourism and hospitality ecosystem, exchange ideas, explore partnerships and discuss innovative approaches to address emerging workforce requirements.

Rajan Bahadur, CEO, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council

"India's Tourism & Hospitality sector is witnessing unprecedented growth, creating

significant opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. However, meeting the sector's evolving workforce requirements demands strong and sustained collaboration between Government, industry, academia and training institutions. THSC Connect 2026 reflects this spirit of partnership. By bringing together the entire skilling ecosystem on one platform, we aim to strengthen industry-led skilling, promote innovation, and create meaningful employment opportunities for millions of young Indians. Together, we can build a future-ready workforce that supports India's vision of becoming a global tourism powerhouse."

THSC Connect 2026 is expected to witness participation from senior officials from the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Ministry of Tourism, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), State Skill Missions, along with CXOs and senior leaders from leading hospitality brands, CSR organisations, industry associations, training partners, and educational institutions.

The event reaffirms THSC's commitment to building a collaborative, industry-driven skilling ecosystem that addresses current and future workforce needs while supporting the sustainable growth of India's Tourism & Hospitality sector.

Skål International Jaipur Installs New Governing Board for 2026–2028, Reinforcing Commitment to Sustainable Tourism and Industry Growth

Travel Mail Desk

Skål International Jaipur marked the beginning of a dynamic new chapter with the grand installation of its newly elected Governing Board during a prestigious ceremony held at The Lalit Jaipur. The event brought together members of the travel, tourism, and hospitality fraternity, senior hoteliers, and industry leaders to celebrate the transition of leadership and reaffirm the club's commitment to strengthening tourism in Rajasthan and beyond.

The ceremony witnessed outgoing President Rina Chaturvedi formally handing over the leadership to the newly elected President Gunjan Singhal, who will lead the club for the upcoming tenure.

The newly elected Governing Board of Skål International Jaipur (Club 744) comprises:

- President: **Gunjan Singhal**
- Vice President 1: **Soumyajit Ghosh**
- Vice President 2: **Rajender Singh Jodha**
- Secretary: **Vikrant Jain**
- Treasurer: **Sanjay Kaushik**
- Director – Events: **Geetanjali Agarwala**



Addressing the gathering after assuming office, **Gunjan Singhal** expressed heartfelt gratitude to the members for their trust and confidence. Sharing his vision for the next two years, he emphasized the importance of innovation, stronger industry collaborations, enhanced member engagement, and promoting sustainable tourism initiatives. He reaffirmed his commitment to taking Club 744 to greater heights while fostering

meaningful partnerships that contribute to the overall growth of the tourism and hospitality sector.

The installation ceremony was graced by several distinguished veterans and prominent personalities from the industry, including C. P. Rathore, Swayantank Maheshwari, Neeraj Shrivastava, Bhupendra Singh, Sanjay Sharma, Amit Bomb, Aditya Agrawal, along with numerous members of the tourism and hospitality fraternity, who extended their best wishes and support to the newly elected board.

The evening concluded with the traditional Skål Toast, symbolizing friendship, goodwill, long life, and new beginnings—values that have long been the cornerstone of the global Skål movement.

With a renewed leadership team and a progressive vision, Skål International Jaipur looks forward to further strengthening Jaipur's position as a leading tourism destination while creating new opportunities for collaboration, networking, and sustainable development within the travel and hospitality industry.

LUFTHANSA AT 100

Kevin Markette on a Century of Excellence and the Future of Global Aviation



Travel Mail Desk

Lufthansa is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. What have been the defining milestones behind this remarkable journey, and what lessons will shape the airline's future?

Celebrating 100 years is an opportunity to reflect on a century of innovation. From helping shape modern commercial aviation to becoming one of the world's leading airline groups, Lufthansa has continually evolved to meet the changing needs of travellers. Perhaps the biggest lesson from the past century is that success comes from never standing still. That's why today we're investing around €3 billion in the customer experience—from new aircraft and our new Allegris premium cabin concept to digital innovations that will help define the next chapter of our journey.

India is one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets. How does Lufthansa view India's strategic importance, and what opportunities do you see for expanding connectivity?

India is one of the most important growth markets in our global network. Strong economic growth, deepening business ties with Europe, rising outbound tourism and an expanding premium travel segment all make India strategically significant. Today, Lufthansa Group connects five Indian gateways with four European hubs, offering around 11 daily departures, and we continue to invest in both capacity and the customer experience. The launch of SWISS services to Bengaluru later this year, together with the introduction of our second A380 to India on the Mumbai–Munich route, further demonstrates our long-term commitment to the Indian market.

AI and digital innovation are transforming aviation. How is Lufthansa using technology to enhance both



Kevin Markette
Senior Director, South Asia,
Lufthansa Group

operational efficiency and the passenger experience?

Technology is becoming increasingly central to everything we do. We are using artificial intelligence to enhance operational planning, predict maintenance needs and improve the overall customer experience. For our passengers, digital innovation means more intuitive booking and check-in journeys, better real-time travel information, faster baggage services and increasingly personalised experiences. On board, we are also investing in next-generation connectivity, including the rollout of Starlink internet across all of our aircraft, to ensure customers can stay connected throughout their journey.

Sustainability is reshaping the future of aviation. What are Lufthansa's key priorities in achieving its environmental goals while continuing to grow?

Sustainability is one of the defining challenges for aviation, and there is no single solution. Our approach is built on a combination of measures, starting with one of the world's youngest and most fuel-efficient long-haul fleets, which significantly reduces fuel consumption

and emissions. At the same time, we are accelerating the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel, expanding Green Fares, improving operational efficiency and supporting the development of future technologies. Our objective is clear: to continue connecting the world while steadily reducing our environmental footprint and moving towards a more sustainable future for aviation.

With evolving regulations and global challenges, how is Lufthansa strengthening its resilience while maintaining innovation and service excellence?

The aviation industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience over the past few years. At Lufthansa Group, that resilience comes from the strength of our diversified business model. As a multi-brand airline group with strong global partnerships, an extensive network and continued investment in our people, technology and products, we are well positioned to adapt to changing market conditions. At the same time, we remain focused on what matters most to our customers: operational reliability, service excellence and delivering a consistently premium travel experience.

As Lufthansa begins its next century, what is your vision for the airline, and what message would you like to share with travellers in India?

Our ambition is to remain Europe's leading premium airline group by combining innovation, sustainability and an exceptional customer experience. For our customers in India, our message is clear: India is a strategic market for Lufthansa Group, and we will continue to invest in new aircraft, premium products, expanded connectivity and stronger partnerships. We look forward to connecting even more travellers, businesses and cultures between India, Europe and the world in the decades ahead.

Redefining Long-Stay Luxury

How Marriott Executive Apartments Bengaluru UB City is Shaping the Future of Extended-Stay Hospitality

Travel Mail Desk

Bengaluru has established itself as India's technology and innovation hub. How has this transformation influenced the demand for luxury extended-stay hospitality, and what key trends are you witnessing among today's business travellers?

Bengaluru's position as India's technology and innovation capital has significantly increased demand for quality extended-stay accommodation. With multinational corporations, start-ups, and project-driven assignments attracting talent from across the globe, business travellers increasingly seek residences that combine the comfort of home with the services of a luxury hotel. We are also seeing greater demand for flexibility, personalized experiences, and wellness-focused amenities.

Business travel is evolving rapidly with hybrid work, bleisure travel, and longer project-based assignments. How do you see these trends shaping the future of extended-stay hospitality?

The lines between business and leisure travel continue to blur. Guests today often extend work trips to explore destinations or accommodate hybrid working arrangements. As a result, extended-stay hospitality is evolving to offer larger living spaces, work-friendly environments, and lifestyle experiences that support both productivity and relaxation during longer stays.

The luxury extended-stay segment is gaining significant momentum in India. What factors are driving this growth, and how do you see the market evolving over the next five years?

The segment's growth is being driven by increasing corporate mobility, global talent movement, infrastructure development, and the rising preference



Mr. Wajeed Bagwan
General Manager, Marriott Executive
Apartments Bengaluru UB City

for residential-style accommodation during long assignments. Over the next five years, we expect continued expansion as more travellers prioritize flexibility, privacy, and a sense of belonging during extended stays.

Corporate relocations today place greater emphasis on employee well-being and lifestyle. How can hospitality providers contribute to a more seamless relocation experience while supporting organizations' mobility strategies?

Successful relocations today go beyond providing accommodation. Hospitality providers can play a critical role by offering seamless arrivals, convenient locations, wellness facilities, personalized services, and community-building experiences. These elements help employees settle faster, remain productive, and enjoy a better overall relocation experience.

With Bengaluru attracting a growing global workforce alongside professionals relocating from across India, what are the key

expectations of long-stay guests, and how are these influencing the design and services offered by premium serviced residences?

Long-stay guests increasingly expect spacious accommodations, fully equipped kitchens, reliable connectivity, fitness and wellness facilities, and personalized service. These expectations are influencing the design of premium serviced residences, which are becoming more residential in feel while retaining the standards and conveniences associated with luxury hospitality.

Luxury today is increasingly defined by flexibility, technology, wellness, and personalized experiences. How are these changing expectations reshaping the extended-stay hospitality segment?

Luxury today is defined less by extravagance and more by relevance, convenience, and personalization. Guests value intuitive technology, wellness-centric offerings, sustainability, flexibility, and tailored experiences. Extended-stay brands that successfully combine these elements with genuine hospitality are best positioned to meet evolving guest expectations.

Having led luxury hospitality brands across India and the Middle East, what do you see as the biggest opportunities and challenges for India's extended-stay hospitality sector, and what will define success in the years ahead?

India presents tremendous opportunities due to economic growth, expanding business hubs, and increasing international mobility. The key challenge will be maintaining consistent service excellence while scaling to meet demand. Success will be defined by the ability to deliver personalized, high-quality experiences that balance the comforts of home with the standards of luxury hospitality.

Redefining Coastal Luxury

Mr. Anand Nair on Transforming InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort into a World-Class Destination

Travel Mail Desk

InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort has undergone a remarkable transformation under your leadership. What was your vision behind the resort's multi-million-dollar renovation, and how has it redefined the guest experience?

When we embarked on this transformation, my vision was simple—to elevate every aspect of the guest experience while staying true to the soul of the resort. We didn't want to merely renovate spaces; we wanted to create an environment where every stay feels more intuitive, comfortable and memorable.

The redesign focused on blending contemporary luxury with the timeless beauty of our coastal setting and the architectural influences of Mahabalipuram. From our redesigned guestrooms and suites to refreshed dining destinations, enhanced wellness facilities and upgraded event spaces, every detail has been thoughtfully considered.

For me, luxury is about how a guest feels rather than what they see. Today's travellers appreciate authenticity, personalization and seamless service, and this transformation enables us to deliver exactly that while continuing to uphold the globally recognised standards of the InterContinental brand.

With more than three decades in luxury hospitality, how have guest expectations evolved over the years, and what strategies do you believe are essential for luxury resorts to remain relevant in today's competitive market?

Guest expectations have evolved significantly over the years. Luxury today is no longer defined by extravagance alone—it is about personalization, authenticity and creating experiences that resonate on a deeper level.

Modern travellers are incredibly well-informed and value meaningful interactions, flexibility and genuine hospitality. They seek destinations that offer a sense of place rather than just accommodation.

To remain relevant, luxury resorts must continue to innovate without losing their



Mr. Anand Nair

General Manager, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort

essence. Technology should simplify the guest journey, sustainability should become an integral part of operations, and service should remain genuinely human. I believe listening to our guests, empowering our teams, and constantly evolving are the keys to staying ahead in an increasingly competitive landscape.

The resort draws inspiration from the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mahabalipuram. How do you integrate the destination's rich cultural heritage into the overall guest journey while maintaining the global standards of the InterContinental brand?

Mahabalipuram is one of India's most remarkable cultural destinations, and we consider it a privilege to be located so close to this UNESCO World Heritage site.

We aim to ensure guests experience not just the destination, but its stories. The resort's design reflects elements inspired by Pallava architecture, while our culinary experiences celebrate regional flavours using local ingredients. We also encourage guests to explore nearby heritage sites and discover the region's rich history and craftsmanship.

At the same time, every experience is delivered with the consistency, sophistication and service excellence that guests expect from InterContinental. It is this balance between local authenticity and international luxury that makes the guest journey truly distinctive.

Luxury travellers today are increasingly seeking wellness, authentic experiences

and meaningful connections with destinations. How is InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort catering to these evolving preferences?

We have seen a clear shift towards more purposeful travel. Guests want to relax, reconnect and return home with meaningful memories rather than simply ticking destinations off a list.

Our wellness offerings extend beyond traditional spa experiences to include spaces that encourage mindfulness, fitness and relaxation. At the same time, we curate experiences that immerse guests in the local culture, whether through regional cuisine, cultural discoveries or personalised itineraries around Mahabalipuram.

Being located along the Bay of Bengal also allows guests to embrace nature and enjoy a slower pace of travel. We strive to create experiences that are enriching, restorative and deeply connected to the destination.

Looking ahead, what are your key priorities for InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort, and how do you envision the property contributing to the continued growth of luxury tourism in Tamil Nadu and India?

Our immediate priority is to further strengthen our position as one of South India's leading luxury resort destinations. We will continue investing in exceptional guest experiences, innovative dining concepts, wellness offerings and personalised service that reflects the evolving expectations of luxury travellers.

Beyond the resort, I believe we have an important role in showcasing the cultural richness and natural beauty of Mahabalipuram to both domestic and international visitors. By creating meaningful collaborations with local communities, promoting responsible tourism and delivering true hospitality, we can contribute to the continued growth of Tamil Nadu as a premier luxury travel destination.

The future of luxury hospitality lies in creating experiences that are authentic, sustainable and memorable. That is the direction we will continue to pursue at InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort.

Redefining Value-Driven Hospitality

How ibis & ibis Styles Are Shaping the Future of Travel in India

Travel Mail Desk

As India's travel and hospitality sector enters a new phase of growth, evolving traveller expectations, rapid digital transformation, and the emergence of new destinations are reshaping the industry like never before. Today's guests seek far more than affordable accommodation—they expect seamless technology, personalised experiences, flexible travel options, and consistent quality, whether travelling for business, leisure, or a blend of both.

In this exclusive interaction with **Mr. Animesh Kumar, Commercial Head, ibis & ibis Styles India**, he shares how ibis and ibis Styles are adapting to these changing consumer behaviours through data-driven strategies, digital innovation, and a strong focus on value-led hospitality. From the rise of bleisure travel and the growing importance of Tier-II and Tier-III cities to the role of AI in commercial decision-making, he offers valuable insights into the trends that will define the future of India's hospitality landscape and how the ibis brands are positioning themselves for sustained growth.

India's travel landscape has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. What are some of the most notable shifts in traveller behaviour and booking patterns that ibis and ibis Styles have observed, and how are these influencing your commercial strategy in India?

One of the biggest changes we've observed is that travellers today are far more intentional in how they plan and book their stays. On one hand, many guests are booking much closer to their travel dates, while on the other, we're also seeing early planners locking in stays well in advance, especially around holidays and major events. The booking journey has also become increasingly mobile-first, with digital platforms and OTAs playing a much larger role in how travellers discover, compare, and book hotels.



Mr. Animesh Kumar

Commercial Head, ibis & ibis Styles India

Another noticeable shift is the growing preference for shorter, more frequent getaways rather than a single long annual vacation. For us, this means being much more agile commercially. We rely on real-time demand insights, flexible pricing, and stronger digital engagement to stay relevant.

Our focus is on being present where travellers make decisions, while ensuring the experience consistently delivers the value, convenience, and reliability they expect from the ibis brands.

With travellers becoming increasingly value-conscious while still expecting quality experiences, how is ibis redefining value-driven hospitality to meet the evolving expectations of today's guests?

Value today is no longer defined by price alone. Guests want an experience that feels reliable, seamless, and worth

what they're paying for. They expect comfortable rooms, quality sleep, good food, easy digital interactions, and a location that helps them make the most of their trip, whether they're travelling for work or leisure. At ibis, our focus is on delivering that balance consistently. We invest in the essentials that matter most to our guests while removing unnecessary complexity. At the same time, we're constantly refining the guest experience through digital convenience, personalised offers, and service that feels intuitive rather than transactional.

Tier-II and Tier-III cities are rapidly emerging as important business and leisure destinations. How do you see these markets shaping the future of hospitality in India, and what role will ibis and ibis Styles play in this growth story?

There's no doubt that India's travel story is expanding beyond the metro cities. While destinations like Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi will always remain important, we're seeing travellers increasingly explore emerging cities for both business and leisure. Better connectivity, infrastructure development, and growing commercial activity are making these markets far more attractive than they were a few years ago.

I believe this shift will play a defining role in the next phase of hospitality growth in India. Take Jaipur, for instance, which has evolved into one of the country's strongest leisure and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) destinations. Kochi is steadily growing as a business and tourism hub, while Nashik is witnessing increasing demand driven by its industrial base as well as religious tourism. For ibis and ibis Styles, the opportunity lies in being present where this demand is growing. As more travellers look for trusted, internationally recognised brands in these emerging destinations, our focus is on delivering a consistent, value-driven experience that meets the needs of both business and leisure guests.

Beyond traditional business and leisure travel, newer segments such as bleisure travellers, Gen Z, weekend explorers, and experience-driven guests are on the rise. Which traveller segments are driving the strongest growth for ibis, and how are your brands adapting to their evolving preferences?

I think one of the biggest shifts we've seen is that travellers no longer fit into just one category. Someone might be travelling for work but extend their stay for the weekend, while another guest could be planning a quick getaway around a concert, festival, or family celebration. Alongside business and leisure travellers, we're seeing growing demand from bleisure guests, Gen Z, weekend explorers, and even remote professionals. In fact, at ibis, we're noticing that bleisure travellers already make up around 10% of our guest base, and this segment is only growing because people today don't want to separate work and leisure as strictly as before; they want flexibility, seamless connectivity, and experiences that let them make the most of both.

What's really interesting is that this is not just a trend; it's a behavioural shift. Guests now expect convenience, digital-first journeys, and social, vibrant spaces where they can unwind or even work comfortably. To match these newer expectations, we are actively evolving

the ibis experience, whether it's through smarter digital check-ins, more flexible spaces that work for both work and relaxation, or creating lively common areas that encourage interaction and local immersion.

Technology is reshaping every aspect of the guest journey. How are AI, data analytics, and digital platforms influencing revenue management, guest engagement, and the overall commercial strategy for ibis and ibis Styles in India?

If there's one thing technology has changed, it's the speed at which we can make commercial decisions. Earlier, revenue management was largely based on historical trends. Today, with AI and data analytics, we're able to respond to demand in real time, whether it's adjusting pricing around a citywide event, identifying changing booking patterns, or understanding which channels are performing best.

The same applies to guest engagement. Digital platforms help us understand what different traveller segments are looking for, so our communication and offers can be far more relevant instead of being generic. From a commercial perspective, our strategy is increasingly driven by data rather than assumptions, allowing us to improve both guest satisfaction and business performance at the same time.

The midscale and economy hospitality segments have become increasingly competitive, with both international and domestic brands expanding aggressively. What differentiates ibis and ibis Styles in this dynamic market, and where do you see the biggest opportunities for future growth?

The competition has certainly intensified, but I see that as a positive sign for the industry. It shows that demand is growing and travellers today have more choices than ever. In a market like this, differentiation doesn't come from simply offering a room. It comes from delivering a consistently reliable experience every time a guest stays with you.

That's where ibis and ibis Styles stand apart. ibis is built around quality, consistency, and value, while ibis Styles offers an upscale and contemporary living experience with a distinct local character. Together, they allow us to cater to different traveller needs without compromising on service standards. Looking ahead, I see the biggest opportunities in India's expanding domestic travel market, the rise of bleisure travel, and the growing demand from emerging business and leisure destinations. As travel becomes more frequent and diverse, trusted brands that can deliver dependable experiences at the right value will continue to have a strong advantage.

Looking ahead, what is your outlook for India's hospitality sector over the next three to five years, and what trends do you believe will define the next phase of growth for value-driven hotel brands?

I'm very optimistic about where the industry is headed. Over the next three to five years, I think we'll see hospitality becoming far more demand-driven, with domestic travel continuing to lead the way. At the same time, travel will become more frequent but shorter, with guests expecting greater flexibility, seamless digital experiences, and consistent quality regardless of where they stay.

Another trend I'm watching closely is the rise of emerging business and leisure destinations beyond the metros, which is creating new opportunities for organised hospitality. For value-driven brands, success will come from delivering the right balance of quality, convenience, and affordability while using technology and guest insights to stay relevant in an increasingly competitive market.



Luxury Today Is Defined by Personalisation and Human Connection

– Vishal Sharma, General Manager, The LaLiT New Delhi

Travel Mail Desk

Returning to The LaLiT New Delhi as General Manager marks a significant homecoming for Vishal Sharma, who brings extensive experience across some of India's leading hospitality brands. In this exclusive interview, Mr. Sharma discusses his vision for the iconic luxury hotel, the evolving definition of luxury hospitality, the importance of balancing technology with the human touch, and how sustainability, inclusivity, and operational excellence will shape the hotel's future. He also shares his leadership philosophy and outlines the initiatives that will drive The LaLiT New Delhi's next phase of growth.

Returning to The LaLiT New Delhi after your earlier tenure with the Group marks a significant homecoming. What excites you most about leading one of India's most iconic luxury hotels at this stage of your career, and what are your immediate priorities for its next phase of growth?

Returning to The LaLiT New Delhi feels like coming back home. Having been associated with the Group earlier in my career, I have always admired the legacy, culture, and warmth that define this iconic property.

What excites me most is the opportunity to build upon this strong foundation and take the hotel into its next phase of growth. The LaLiT New Delhi has always represented more than just luxury accommodation. It represents art, culture, culinary experiences, and the spirit of Delhi.

My immediate priorities are focused on strengthening guest experiences, enhancing our F&B offerings, driving operational excellence, and ensuring sustainable business growth. A key focus will be maximising profitability by improving efficiencies, optimising resources, and managing costs smartly, while ensuring that we never compromise on our service standards.

Luxury hospitality in India is undergoing a remarkable



Vishal Sharma
General Manager, The LaLiT New Delhi

transformation... What will define true luxury over the next decade?

Luxury today is no longer only defined by physical infrastructure or premium offerings. It is defined by personalisation, authenticity, and the emotional connection a guest builds with a brand.

The future of luxury will belong to hotels that understand their guests deeply and create experiences that feel thoughtful and personal. Technology will continue to play an important role, but the human element will remain at the heart of hospitality.

At The LaLiT New Delhi, our approach has always been to combine world-class standards with warmth and genuine care. We aim to deliver luxury that is exceptional as well as meaningful, as we sincerely believe in Hospitality With A Heart.

Delhi remains one of India's most dynamic hospitality markets... How is The LaLiT New Delhi evolving its offerings?

Delhi is unique because it brings together a diverse range of travellers like corporate guests, diplomats, leisure travellers, families, and international visitors.

The strength of The LaLiT New Delhi lies in our ability to cater to all these segments while maintaining a consistent experience. Our central location, extensive MICE infrastructure, multiple dining destinations, wellness offerings, and personalised services allow us to serve varied guest expectations.

Recently, we had the privilege of hosting teams associated with the 22nd Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship 2026, including the pre-event activities and mascot unveiling of 'Mayur'. Experiences like these demonstrate our ability to host

large-scale international events while delivering personalised hospitality.

Our approach is simple. Understand every guest segment, remain agile, and provide hospitality that combines efficiency with warmth.

Having worked with some of India's most respected hospitality brands, what leadership lessons have shaped your management philosophy?

Every organisation I have worked with has shaped my understanding of hospitality. The biggest lesson I have learned is that hospitality is a people-driven business. A happy and empowered team creates happy guests.

My leadership philosophy is based on trust, collaboration, ownership, and leading by example. I believe in creating a culture where colleagues feel valued and understand that every role contributes to the overall guest experience.

At the same time, leadership today requires balancing passion with commercial responsibility. Our objective is to deliver exceptional experiences while continuously improving efficiencies, optimising resources, and creating sustainable profitability.

Today's luxury travellers seek personalised, authentic, and technology-enabled experiences. How do you balance digital innovation with the human touch?

Technology has transformed the way guests discover, interact with, and experience hospitality. It enables us to understand preferences better, improve efficiency, and create more seamless journeys.

However, at the heart of hospitality is always the human connection. Technology can enhance an experience, but it cannot replace the warmth of a genuine conversation, a thoughtful gesture, or the ability to anticipate a guest's needs.

At The Lalit New Delhi, we believe in "hospitality with a heart," where every interaction is driven by care, empathy, and a genuine desire to make guests feel valued. Our approach is to use technology as an enabler while ensuring that our teams continue to create meaningful emotional connections.

Whether it is recognising a returning guest, personalising a dining experience, or simply making someone feel

welcomed after a long journey, these human moments are what define true luxury.

The future of hospitality lies in finding the right balance, combining the power of technology with the warmth of human service.

Sustainability and inclusivity are becoming central to hospitality... How is The Lalit New Delhi embedding these values?

Sustainability and inclusivity are not just initiatives for us; they are an integral part of responsible hospitality. At The Lalit New Delhi, we believe that true luxury must create a positive impact, for our guests, our colleagues, our communities, and the environment.

We continue to focus on responsible operational practices including efficient resource utilisation, energy conservation, waste management, and conscious consumption while maintaining the high standards expected from a luxury hotel.

Inclusivity is equally central to our culture. We strongly believe in creating equal opportunities and an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds can contribute, grow, and succeed. Through our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), we continue to empower our teams and support initiatives that promote dignity, respect, and equal opportunities for all.

Our approach extends beyond the hotel through community-focused initiatives

and skill development, reinforcing our belief that hospitality is not only about serving guests but also about creating meaningful opportunities for people.

For us, sustainable luxury is about balancing excellence with responsibility, delivering exceptional experiences while making a positive difference.

Looking ahead, what initiatives and experiences do you plan to introduce over the next 12–24 months?

The next phase for The Lalit New Delhi will focus on strengthening our position as a luxury lifestyle destination.

We will continue to enhance our culinary experiences through innovative concepts, chef collaborations, and curated dining journeys. We also see strong opportunities in MICE, wellness, personalised guest experiences, and creating meaningful connections with travellers.

From a business perspective, our focus will remain on sustainable growth, improving operational efficiencies, maximising revenue opportunities, and optimising costs without affecting the quality of our guest experience.

Most importantly, we will continue to strengthen our philosophy of hospitality with a heart. The Lalit New Delhi has a remarkable legacy, and our responsibility is to honour that legacy while creating experiences that are contemporary, relevant, and memorable for the future.



Redefining Luxury Through Wellness and Authentic Experiences

Dushyant Singh's Vision for Mulberry Shades Bengaluru Nandi Hills

Travel Mail Desk

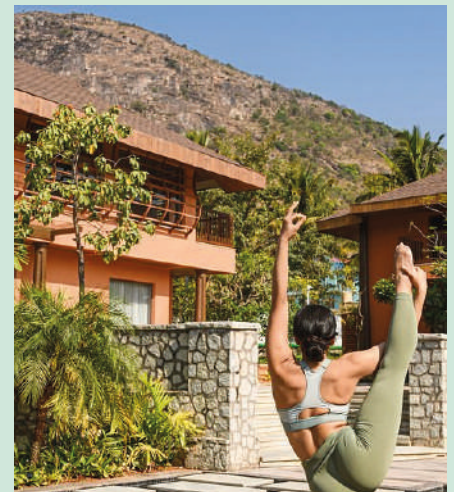
As luxury travel evolves beyond indulgence toward meaningful experiences, wellness, sustainability, and authentic connections have become the defining pillars of modern hospitality. Nestled amidst the serene landscapes of Nandi Hills, Mulberry Shades Bengaluru Nandi Hills, A Tribute Portfolio Resort, has emerged as a distinctive boutique retreat that seamlessly blends nature, mindful living, and refined luxury. Under the leadership of Dushyant Singh, the resort is creating immersive experiences that encourage guests to slow down, reconnect with themselves, and discover the essence of the destination. In this exclusive interview with Mr. Dushyant Singh, Hotel Manager, Mulberry Shades Bengaluru Nandi Hills, A Tribute Portfolio Resort shares his vision for experiential hospitality, the growing influence of wellness tourism, sustainable luxury, and how Mulberry Shades is setting new benchmarks for destination-led travel in South India.



Mr. Dushyant Singh
Hotel Manager, Mulberry Shades
Bengaluru Nandi Hills

experiencing the tranquillity of our setting, every aspect is designed to encourage mindful living.

Today's travellers are looking for meaningful escapes rather than just stays. At Mulberry Shades, we offer a sanctuary where luxury is defined not only by comfort and service, but also by authenticity, personalization, and emotional connection. That is what makes the experience memorable and encourages guests to return.



Luxury travellers today are seeking authentic experiences over conventional indulgence. How is Mulberry Shades curating immersive experiences that connect guests with the culture, wellness traditions, and natural beauty of the Nandi Hills region?

Modern luxury is increasingly about discovery and meaningful engagement. At Mulberry Shades, we curate experiences that allow guests to connect with the destination beyond the confines of the resort.

Our wellness offerings draw inspiration from holistic wellbeing philosophies, incorporating mindfulness, yoga, fitness, and restorative experiences that help guests achieve balance during their stay. At the same time, we encourage exploration of the Nandi Hills region through flora walks at the resort, outdoor activities, and experiences that celebrate the unique landscape and biodiversity of the area.



Mulberry Shades has positioned itself as a boutique wellness retreat that blends nature, luxury, and mindful living. In an increasingly competitive hospitality landscape, what do you believe truly differentiates the resort and makes it a memorable destination for today's discerning traveller?

What truly differentiates Mulberry Shades is the way we seamlessly blend luxury with a genuine sense of place.

While many resorts offer beautiful accommodations and premium amenities, our focus is on creating an environment where guests can slow down, reconnect with themselves, and immerse themselves in the natural beauty of Nandi Hills.

The resort's design is inspired by the landscape around us, allowing nature to become an integral part of the guest experience. Whether it's waking up to panoramic views, enjoying thoughtfully curated wellness activities, or simply

Culinary experiences also play an important role. We strive to highlight local flavours (zero miles thali) and regional influences while presenting them through contemporary interpretations that appeal to global travellers. By combining wellness, nature, culture, and gastronomy, we create a journey that feels both enriching and deeply personal.

As wellness tourism continues to evolve into one of the fastest-growing travel segments, what emerging trends are you witnessing, and how is Mulberry Shades adapting its offerings to meet the changing expectations of modern travellers?

We are seeing wellness evolve from a niche offering into a holistic lifestyle choice. Travellers today are looking beyond traditional spa experiences and

Having spent over two decades with Marriott International and played a key role in multiple hotel openings, what leadership philosophies have remained constant throughout your journey, and how do they influence the culture and guest experience at Mulberry Shades?

Over the years, one principle has remained constant: people are at the heart of hospitality. Exceptional guest experiences are created by engaged, empowered, and passionate associates. My leadership philosophy has always centred on fostering trust, encouraging collaboration, and creating opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Having been involved in multiple hotel openings, I have learned the importance of building a strong culture from day one. Processes and infrastructure

I believe sustainability and luxury are no longer competing priorities; they are increasingly complementary. Today's luxury travellers are conscious of their environmental impact and appreciate responsible practices when they are thoughtfully implemented.

Our approach is to integrate sustainability into operations without compromising guest comfort or experience. This includes responsible resource management, reducing waste, supporting local sourcing wherever possible, and encouraging environmentally conscious practices throughout the property.

What is particularly important is ensuring that sustainability feels authentic rather than performative. At Mulberry Shades, our commitment is reflected in the way we respect the natural environment around us, engage with the local ecosystem, and make operational decisions that support long-term environmental stewardship. The goal is to create meaningful luxury experiences that are both memorable and responsible.

Looking ahead, what is your long-term vision for Mulberry Shades Bengaluru Nandi Hills, and how do you see the property contributing to the growth of experiential, wellness, and destination-led tourism in South India?

My vision is for Mulberry Shades to be recognised as one of India's leading wellness and experiential luxury destinations. We want to be known not only for our exceptional hospitality but also for our ability to inspire transformative guest experiences that foster wellbeing, connection, and discovery.

As travellers increasingly seek destinations that offer authenticity and purpose, Nandi Hills has tremendous potential to emerge as a premier leisure and wellness destination. Mulberry Shades is uniquely positioned to contribute to that growth by showcasing the region's natural beauty, promoting sustainable tourism, and creating experiences that encourage guests to engage more deeply with the destination.

Moving forward, we will continue to innovate, strengthen our wellness offerings, and enhance the personalised experiences we provide. We aspire to set new benchmarks for destination-led hospitality in South India while contributing positively to the local community, the tourism ecosystem, and the broader wellness travel landscape.



are seeking comprehensive wellbeing programs that encompass physical health, mental wellness, emotional balance, nutrition, and meaningful human connections.

Another notable trend is the growing demand for personalised wellness experiences. Guests want flexibility and programmes tailored to their individual goals, whether that involves fitness, mindfulness, digital detox, stress management, or simply reconnecting with nature.

At Mulberry Shades, we continuously adapt by creating wellness-led experiences that are immersive yet accessible. We focus on offering spaces and programmes that encourage relaxation, rejuvenation, and self-discovery. Our approach is not about prescribing wellness but enabling guests to pursue wellbeing in a way that feels natural and relevant to them.

are important, but culture ultimately determines long-term success. A team that shares a common purpose and takes pride in creating memorable experiences can consistently exceed guest expectations.

At Mulberry Shades, we strive to cultivate an environment where associates feel valued and motivated to bring their authentic selves to work. This translates directly into warm, intuitive service and genuine guest connections, which are key pillars of our brand experience.

Sustainability has become a defining pillar of contemporary hospitality. How do you balance environmentally responsible practices with the expectations of luxury guests, and what initiatives at Mulberry Shades best reflect this commitment?

Private Pools, Desert Sanctuaries and Beachfront Villas – The Most Luxurious Stays You Can Book in Ras Al Khaimah

Travel Mail Desk

Sometimes the most extraordinary experiences are closer than you think. Just a short flight from India, Ras Al Khaimah offers a world apart, where pristine beaches, rolling desert landscapes and tranquil retreats create the perfect setting for a luxury getaway without the need for long-haul travel.

Ras Al Khaimah continues to redefine luxury, combining spectacular settings with world-class hospitality. Whether it's waking up to uninterrupted sea views from a private beachfront villa, retreating to a secluded desert sanctuary beneath star-filled skies, or enjoying quality time with loved ones in an exclusive poolside haven, the Emirate offers a collection of unforgettable stays designed for those seeking privacy, comfort and elevated experiences. These exceptional properties showcase why Ras Al Khaimah remains one of the UAE's most sought-after destinations for luxury getaways.

Anantara Mina Al Arab: Bringing a touch of island paradise to the UAE, Anantara Mina Al Arab offers a unique retreat where overwater villas stretch above the Arabian Gulf, creating a setting reminiscent of the world's most celebrated tropical destinations.

The Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Wadi Desert: For travellers seeking serenity and exclusivity, The Ritz-Carlton Al Wadi Desert offers an immersive experience surrounded by



protected desert landscapes, where private pool villas blend seamlessly into the natural environment.

The Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, Al Hamra Beach: Combining barefoot luxury with

unrivalled privacy, this intimate beachfront retreat features a collection of exclusive villas designed for complete relaxation and uninterrupted coastal living.

Sofitel Al Hamra Beach Resort: Blending contemporary luxury with timeless sophistication, Sofitel Al Hamra Beach Resort offers a collection of spacious suites, many featuring private pools and serene views of the Arabian Gulf.

InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa: Situated on the shores of Hayat Island, InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa offers an elevated beachfront retreat where spacious private pool villas open directly onto white sands and sweeping sea views.

Indeva Hotels & Resorts Showcases Integrated Hospitality Excellence During Exclusive Media FAM Staycation Unveils Global Bhakti Fest 2026

Travel Mail Desk

Indeva Hotels & Resorts, the hospitality division of India Exposition Mart Limited (IELM), successfully hosted an exclusive Media Familiarisation (FAM) Staycation, welcoming leading travel, hospitality, and lifestyle media for an immersive experience across its hospitality portfolio and destination offerings.

The thoughtfully curated two-day programme provided media representatives with a comprehensive insight into Indeva Hotels & Resorts' vision of delivering exceptional guest experiences through its diverse portfolio of brands. Guests experienced the luxurious hospitality of Expolnn Suites & Convention, explored the contemporary elegance of PLUME Hotels, and discovered the chic corporate hospitality offered by The Mor Stays. The immersive experience also provided a deeper understanding of the group's expanding hospitality footprint, innovative offerings, and ambitious growth plans.

The FAM Staycation featured guided hotel tours, curated culinary experiences, interactive sessions with the leadership team, and exclusive showcases of the group's convention and event capabilities. Media delegates



also witnessed the seamless integration of hospitality, business events, and experiential travel that defines the Indeva ecosystem. A major highlight of the event was the Curtain Raiser of Global Bhakti Fest 2026, a first-of-its-kind international festival dedicated to spirituality, Sanatan Dharma, wellness, culture, conscious living, and cultural tourism.

Speaking on the occasion, **Barun Gupta, COO, Indeva Hotels & Resorts**, said "Hospitality today is about creating meaningful experiences that leave a lasting impression. Our Media FAM Staycation was designed to showcase not only our hotels but also the integrated ecosystem we have built around business, leisure, conventions, and destination experiences. The unveiling of Global Bhakti Fest 2026 marks another significant milestone in our journey to create platforms that celebrate India's rich spiritual and cultural heritage while contributing to the growth of experiential tourism."

Commenting on the initiative, **Kanchan Verma, Cluster Director – Marketing & Airline Partnerships, Indeva Hotels & Resorts**, added "The Media FAM Staycation was an opportunity to offer our media partners an authentic experience of our hospitality philosophy and the scale of opportunities that Greater Noida offers as a destination. We are grateful for their overwhelming response and look forward to welcoming the world to Global Bhakti Fest 2026, an event that will bring together spirituality, culture, wellness, and community on one global platform."

Charting Vision 2038

GRT Hotels & Resorts Concludes Strategic Leadership Conclave 2026-27

Travel Mail Desk

GRT Hotels & Resorts successfully concluded its highly anticipated Leadership Conclave 2026-27, bringing together the organization's core leadership team for two days of intensive reflection, capability building, and future-forward dialogue. Hosted with a shared commitment to shaping the brand's next major growth chapter, the event served as a pivotal alignment platform for the years ahead.

Through a series of immersive panel discussions, leadership conversations, and industry masterclasses, the teams explored the evolving future of hospitality by intersecting traditional values with modern capabilities. The core agenda focused heavily on driving commercial growth through digital transformation and AI integration, maximizing operational efficiency, and elevating guest experiences to ensure that the brand's signature "Soulful Hospitality" seamlessly adapts to changing global trends.

A major highlight of the conclave was the celebration of excellence, which recognized outstanding achievements across the GRT family. Hotels and individual team members were honoured for exceeding key performance benchmarks—including service excellence, audit scores, and RevPAR—while special



recognition was given to the organization's "unsung heroes" whose everyday dedication embodies the resilient spirit of the brand. As GRT Hotels & Resorts marches toward Vision 2038, the organization emerges with renewed clarity, stronger collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to building a future-ready brand.

"The Leadership Conclave 2026-27 marks a defining milestone in our journey toward Vision

2038. As the hospitality landscape evolves, we are actively embracing digital transformation and artificial intelligence to drive commercial growth and maximize operational intelligence. However, our greatest anchor will always be our people. This conclave has renewed our shared commitment to building a future-ready organization that grows with clear purpose, performs with absolute excellence, and continues to lead with Soulful Hospitality," said Mr. Vikram Cotah, CEO of GRT Hotels & Resorts.

The Mor Stays by Indeva Hotels & Resorts Expands Its Footprint in Mathura

with the Signing of Hotel Sheetal Regency Near Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Mathura

Travel Mail Desk

Indeva Hotels & Resorts is pleased to announce the signing of Hotel Sheetal Regency, one of Mathura's most established hospitality landmarks, under its rapidly expanding midscale brand, The Mor Stays. The property will now be rebranded as Hotel Sheetal Regency - The Mor Stays - Krishna Janmabhoomi, Mathura, marking another significant milestone in the company's strategic expansion across India's leading spiritual and leisure destinations.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Barun Gupta, Chief Operating Officer of Indeva Hotels & Resorts**, said "Hotel Sheetal Regency is already a renowned hospitality landmark in Mathura and one of the city's first classified hotels, with a legacy of serving premium guests for over 25 years. The signing of this property marks another important milestone in strengthening our presence across India's high-potential spiritual tourism destinations. Mathura welcomes millions of devotees and travellers every year, and we are excited to introduce The Mor Stays experience to this iconic city. Our vision is to offer guests comfortable, value-driven stays backed by exceptional service, operational excellence, and authentic local experiences. India's spiritual tourism sector continues to

witness unprecedented growth, driven by increasing domestic travel, infrastructure development, and rising demand for professionally managed hospitality offerings. With this addition, The Mor Stays is well positioned to cater to the growing influx of visitors to Mathura while contributing to the



city's tourism ecosystem and local economic development."

Commenting on the partnership, **Mr. Amit Jain, Chairman, Hotel Sheetal Regency**, said "We

are delighted to partner with The Mor Stays, the hospitality brand of Indeva Hotels & Resorts. This collaboration marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Hotel Sheetal Regency. By combining our legacy of warm hospitality with Indeva's proven operational expertise and strong brand standards, we are confident of delivering an elevated guest experience while further strengthening our position as one of the preferred hospitality destinations near Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi. We look forward to welcoming guests with enhanced services, modern amenities, and the same heartfelt hospitality that has always been our hallmark."

Sharing his views, **Mr. Vineet Gopal, Head - Corporate Relations & Asset Management, Indeva Hotels & Resorts**, said "The addition of Hotel Sheetal Regency to The Mor Stays portfolio reflects our continued commitment to expanding through strategic management partnerships and asset collaborations. We remain focused on building a portfolio of quality hotels that deliver consistent service standards, operational excellence, and memorable guest experiences across business, leisure, and religious tourism markets. This signing further strengthens our presence in one of India's most important pilgrimage destinations and reinforces our long-term growth strategy."

Pavilion at Raja Bagh at Taj Palace, New Delhi returns to redefine the capital's event landscape

Travel Mail Desk

Following the exceptional success of its inaugural season last year, Taj Palace, New Delhi is pleased to announce the return of its venue, Pavilion at Raja Bagh. Conceived as a seasonal extension of the hotel's award-winning Convention Centre, the acclaimed venue once again offers a sophisticated and luxurious climate-controlled setting for large-format conventions and celebrations during Delhi's monsoons and warmer months.

Since 1983, Taj Palace, New Delhi has stood at the forefront of the Capital's convention and events landscape. With over 20 versatile indoor and outdoor venues, its iconic Convention Centre has hosted heads of state, global dignitaries, industry and world leaders and generations of families, earning an enduring reputation for landmark gatherings delivered with scale, precision and timeless elegance. Pavilion at Raja Bagh continues this legacy, reaffirming Taj Palace, New Delhi's position as the Capital's preferred destination for conventions, celebrations and events of distinction.

Designed to complement the hotel's distinguished portfolio of venues, Pavilion at Raja Bagh combines architectural elegance with remarkable versatility. Framed by the tranquil expanse of Delhi's protected Ridge

forest, it offers a sophisticated, climate-controlled setting for conventions, corporate gatherings, product launches, luxury weddings, cultural showcases and milestone celebrations. Since returning this season, Pavilion at Raja Bagh has already played host to a distinguished calendar of events, including the mega Episode 4 of Taj Palace, New Delhi's signature Live Concert Series with legendary singer Padma Shri Hariharan, alongside prominent corporate gatherings and social celebrations. Its ability to seamlessly transform across formats continues to reinforce its position as one of the Capital's most distinctive seasonal venues.

Speaking on the return of the pioneering venue, **Praydhumna Singh Rathore, General Manager, Taj Palace, New Delhi**, said "Pavilion at Raja Bagh was envisioned as a distinctive seasonal venue that would complement the strengths of our Convention Centre while offering clients a fresh and versatile event experience during this season. The response to its debut last year reaffirmed that vision, making its return this season a natural progression. We are delighted to once again welcome guests to the Pavilion at Raja Bagh and look forward to hosting another season of memorable conventions, celebrations and signature experiences that continue to build on Taj Palace, New Delhi's legacy since 1983."



MAYFAIR Elixir Deepens Eastern India Legacy with the Signing of a Premium Property in UNESCO-listed Santiniketan

Travel Mail Desk

MAYFAIR Elixir, the growth and expansion arm of MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts, has announced the signing of a new retreat in Santiniketan, West Bengal, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in September 2023 for its legacy of art, education and cultural exchange, rooted in the vision of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. More than the addition of a new destination, the signing reaffirms the Group's commitment to creating world-class hospitality experiences in destinations of exceptional cultural and experiential significance.

Set amidst the serene landscapes of Santiniketan, the upcoming property will seamlessly blend contemporary luxury with the destination's distinctive cultural character. Designed as an immersive retreat, it will cater to discerning travellers, cultural enthusiasts and intimate celebrations seeking authentic experiences, personalised service and the signature warmth synonymous with the MAYFAIR brand.

Speaking on the occasion, **Rajendra Chatterjee, CEO & Managing Director of WESTROAD Group that owns the property**,



said, "Santiniketan is more than a destination. It is an emotion that celebrates creativity, learning and Rabindranath Tagore's legacy. We wanted a hospitality partner that understands the importance of preserving this essence while delivering exceptional guest experiences. MAYFAIR Group's expertise, its deep understanding of regional culture and unwavering commitment to excellence made it the natural choice. We look forward to creating a landmark experience in Santiniketan with MAYFAIR Elixir."

Commenting on the signing, **Randhir Gupta, Vice President – Commercial & Business Development, MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts**, said, "Santiniketan has long been one of India's most celebrated cultural destinations.

Yet, the market has remained underserved in the premium hospitality segment. This signing is a strategic addition to our growing portfolio, allowing us to introduce the MAYFAIR experience to a destination of global significance. Santiniketan perfectly aligns with our vision of expanding into culturally rich destinations with long-term tourism potential."

Sharing the Group's vision, **Bjorn DeNiese, Managing Director**,

MAYFAIR Elixir, said, "This marks an exciting chapter in the growth journey of MAYFAIR Elixir. As we expand our footprint across India, our vision is not simply to add destinations, but to create hospitality experiences that celebrate the unique character and cultural identity of every place we enter. Santiniketan, with its extraordinary legacy of art, literature and learning, embodies the values we believe modern travellers increasingly seek." He adds, "We also see this as the beginning of a dynamic new phase for MAYFAIR Elixir, with new destinations, hospitality concepts and strategic partnerships in the pipeline that will further strengthen our portfolio while carrying forward the trusted legacy of the MAYFAIR Group."

Polo Hotels & Resorts Expands Northeast Footprint with Signing of New Property in Aizawl, Mizoram

Travel Mail Desk

Polo Hotels & Resorts, the Northeast's largest homegrown hospitality company, has announced the signing of Polo Hotel Aizawl, its first property in Mizoram, reinforcing the Group's commitment to expanding premium hospitality across Northeast India.

The signing follows the execution of a Concession Agreement with the Government of Mizoram for the redevelopment of the Chaltlang Tourist Lodge into a premium hotel under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. The project represents a significant milestone for both the state and the hospitality group, bringing world-class hospitality infrastructure to a destination poised for rapid tourism growth.



Slated to be Mizoram's first 5-star hotel, the property will feature an all-day diner, a speciality restaurant, a lounge, and an upbeat pool area. The hotel will also offer the largest versatile event spaces in the city, including banqueting halls and multiple meeting rooms, along with a state-of-the-art fitness centre and swimming pool.

Commenting on the signing, **Mr. Deval Tibrewalla, CEO and Director, Polo Hotels Group**, said "The signing of Polo Hotel Aizawl marks another important milestone in our journey of building world-class hospitality experiences across Northeast India. We are honoured to partner with the Government of Mizoram on this landmark project and

sincerely thank them for their trust and support. Aizawl is a destination with immense potential, and we look forward to creating a hotel that not only sets new benchmarks in hospitality but also contributes meaningfully to tourism, employment generation and the state's economic growth."

The project further strengthens Polo Hotels Group's leadership in the Northeast hospitality sector. With this signing, the Group's portfolio expands to 16 hotels, including seven properties under development, with a growing presence across Meghalaya, Tripura, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

EkoStay Expands Premium Villa Portfolio Across Maharashtra and Karnataka Ahead of Monsoon Travel Season

Travel Mail Desk

As India's monsoon travel season approaches, EkoStay, one of the country's rapidly growing professionally managed vacation home brands with over 160+ villas across India, has announced a significant expansion of its premium private villa portfolio across Maharashtra and Karnataka.

The newly launched and recently added properties include Vana Mora in Nashik, Wada Crest in Wada, Casa Elara in Igatpuri, Casa Bella in Lonavala and Forest Cube Villa in Chikmagalur. The launches form part of EkoStay's broader strategy of building immersive, design-forward private stay experiences tailored for modern travellers seeking privacy, comfort and experiential escapes close to nature.

Speaking about the expansion, **Varun Arora, CEO & Co-Founder, EkoStay**, said, "Over the last few years, we have seen a very visible shift in the way people travel, especially during monsoon and short leisure breaks. Travellers today are looking for experiences that feel more private, immersive and emotionally connected to the destination itself rather than simply transactional stays. Maharashtra and Karnataka continue to emerge as very



strong leisure markets because they offer accessibility, natural beauty and year-round travel demand, especially from urban audiences looking for quick but meaningful escapes. With properties like Casa Bella, Casa Elara, Wada Crest and Forest Cube, our focus has been on creating hospitality experiences that combine comfort, design, privacy and a strong sense of place. Every property has its own personality, whether it is a forest-facing retreat, a luxury celebration villa or a peaceful countryside escape. As a brand, we are consciously building a portfolio that feels experiential rather than standardised."

Husain Khatumdi, Managing Director & Co-Founder, added, "The demand for professionally managed private villas has evolved tremendously in recent years. Guests today are not only seeking luxury, but also reliability, operational consistency and curated hospitality experiences. Our expansion strategy is focused on identifying destinations that have strong long-term leisure potential and building a high-quality villa ecosystem around them. We believe the future of hospitality lies in highly personalised stay experiences that still maintain strong operational standards."

Speaking on operational scalability and market growth, **Sohail Mirchandani, COO & Co-Founder**, said, "As we continue expanding across multiple destinations, a strong operational backbone becomes extremely important. We have been heavily investing in standardisation, SOP-led execution, guest servicing systems and internal operational processes to ensure that the experience remains consistent across every EkoStay property. Scaling boutique hospitality successfully requires both emotional hospitality and strong backend systems working together."

Dusit Thani Maldives unveils thoughtfully refurbished villas for an elevated island escape

Travel Mail Desk

Dusit Thani Maldives, a luxury resort on Mudhdhoo Island within the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Baa Atoll, has unveiled thoughtfully refreshed villas that build on the resort's signature blend of Thai-inspired gracious hospitality, generous sense of space, and natural island character, offering guests an even more comfortable and contemporary island retreat.

Drawing inspiration from the resort's lush tropical setting and spectacular 360-degree house reef, the refurbishment spans several signature accommodation categories, including Beach Residences, Overwater Pool Villas, and Overwater Pavilions.

Throughout, the refreshed interiors introduce a lighter, more contemporary aesthetic while preserving the spacious layouts and relaxed atmosphere guests have long appreciated. Updated furnishings, renewed timber ceiling finishes, and contemporary lighting combine to create a brighter, more inviting atmosphere that reinforces the resort's connection to its tropical surroundings while reflecting a modern expression of Dusit's Thai heritage.

Selected villas have seen layout adjustments, while others retain their familiar sense of space, ensuring returning guests can enjoy a renewed experience without losing the comfort and character they know.

"Many of our guests return to Dusit Thani Maldives year after year because they



value the resort's natural beauty, generous sense of space, and warm Thai-inspired gracious hospitality," said **Jean-Louis Ripoche, Area General Manager, Maldives, Dusit International.** *"These enhancements allow us to preserve everything guests already love while introducing a fresher, more contemporary expression of the resort. Whether discovering the resort for the first time or returning for another stay, guests can now enjoy an even more refined and relaxing island experience."*

The villa refurbishment marks an important milestone in Dusit Thani Maldives' wider enhancement programme, which is designed to continually elevate the guest experience while preserving the resort's distinctive character. Further guest-focused

enhancements, including updates to selected dining spaces, are planned from Q3 2026 onwards, with the wider programme scheduled for completion in Q3 2027.

Alongside the physical enhancements across the resort, Dusit Thani Maldives has also introduced a refreshed website, making it easier for guests to explore accommodation options, discover experiences, and plan personalised stays before they arrive.

"Exceptional hospitality extends well beyond a guest's stay," said **Mr. Ripoche.** *"From the moment they begin planning their visit to the lasting memories they take home, we want every interaction with Dusit Thani Maldives to reflect the warmth, care, and gracious hospitality that define the Dusit experience."*

GRT Hotels & Resorts Connects with Destination Management Companies at Exclusive 2026 Delhi Meet

Travel Mail Desk

GRT Hotels & Resorts successfully hosted this year's highly anticipated edition of its exclusive travel trade meet in the capital. The vibrant evening brought together key players, top destination management companies (DMCs), and respected industry leaders from across the fraternity for an elite night of networking, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnership building.

The 2026 gathering showcased GRT Hotels' rapidly expanding portfolio across South India, placing special emphasis on its multi-brand segmentation, award-winning nature resorts, and upscale urban escapes. Attendees were given exclusive previews of the brand's latest signature offerings—including its deep focus on delivering curated local experiences and properties featuring distinct, destination-inspired characters.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Vikram Cotah, CEO of GRT Hotels & Resorts,** said *"Our travel trade partners have always been integral to our growth journey, and they remain vital as we navigate our roadmap toward the future. Events like the Delhi Meet allow us*



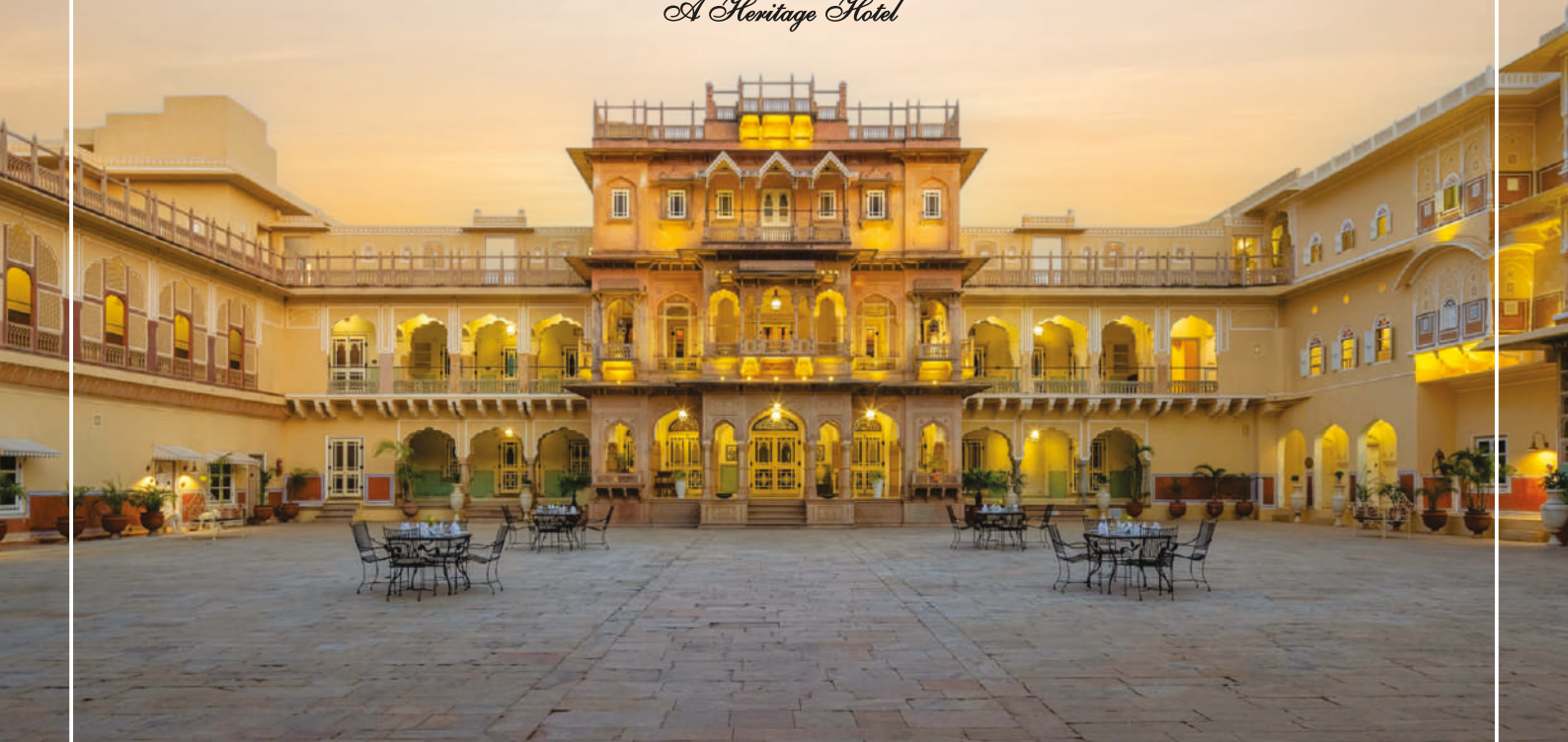
to reconnect, exchange real-time market insights, and explore fresh possibilities together. At GRT Hotels & Resorts, we believe in creating not just stays, but deeply rooted local stories – and our partners are the ones who help us take those stories far and wide."

The event concluded with an interactive session detailing the brand's upcoming expansion plans and vision for the standard of hospitality in the year ahead, reinforcing GRT Hotel's unwavering commitment to strengthening its nationwide trade relationships.



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Hospitality Should Serve the Guest — Not Hand Them a Form

By Bharath Keshava, Founder & CEO, TravDigi

Travel Mail Desk

Walk into almost any hotel in the world after a long journey, and the first thing you are asked to do is work. Fill this form. Hand over your passport. Wait while it is photocopied. Sign here. For an industry whose entire purpose is to serve the traveller, we have built a front desk that does the opposite — it puts the guest to work the moment they arrive. I have spent a long time thinking about that contradiction, and it is the reason TravDigi exists.

Here is the uncomfortable truth most hotels have never questioned: the hotel does not actually need your identity documents. The authority does. Guest registration is a legal requirement owed to the government, not to the property. Yet the hotel ends up in the middle of it — collecting your ID, copying it, storing it in a drawer, and quietly carrying all the risk if that data is ever lost or misused. The guest does the labour, the hotel takes on the liability, and nobody is better served for it.

When I looked at the technology being built to fix hotel check-in, I noticed something telling. Almost every solution was designed to make the hotel's job easier — digital

registers, KYC tools, compliance dashboards. All of it hotel-facing. And in nearly every one of them, the traveller was still filling in a form. We had simply moved the paperwork onto a screen. The person hospitality is supposed to serve was still doing the work, just with a



stylus instead of a pen. That is backwards. If hospitality means anything, it means the guest should be served — not handed a task at the door.

TravDigi is built on a simple idea: verify once, and never fill a form again. A traveller sets up their identity a single time in our app. From then on, at any partner hotel, they simply present a secure QR code. The front desk scans it, and check-in is complete

in seconds — no forms, no photocopies, nothing re-typed. The next hotel, and the one after that, is the same single scan. The guest's details are never entered twice.

Crucially, this does not come at the hotel's expense. The property gets a secure, searchable digital guest register that replaces the paper book. Sensitive documents never sit on the hotel's own systems, which sharply reduces its data-protection exposure. Records are timestamped and ready whenever authorities require them. For the first time, both sides win at once — the guest gets an effortless arrival, and the hotel gets a safer, faster, fully digital front desk. That is what a genuine hospitality solution should do.

There is a larger opportunity here, too. Every country runs its own national identity system, and none of them works across a border. TravDigi is built on the passport — the one document accepted everywhere — so a traveller of any nationality can use it in any market. It is not a form for one hotel; it is a reusable identity that travels with the guest. The hospitality industry has spent a century perfecting the guest experience everywhere except the very first moment of it. It is time the welcome felt like a welcome — and not like homework.

Encalm Hospitality Enhances Comfort with the Launch of Its New International Lounge in Hyderabad

Travel Mail Desk

Encalm Hospitality, a leader in transforming the airport travel experience, has announced the launch of a new International Lounge at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad, expanding its lounge portfolio. The launch marks another milestone in Encalm's commitment to building a comprehensive integrated experiential ecosystem that caters to evolving guest needs through thoughtfully designed experiences across multiple touchpoints.

Designed for the modern discerning traveller, the lounge brings together comfort, wellness, and dining within an immersive environment designed to elevate every moment of the journey. Curated to meet evolving traveller expectations, it transforms pre-flight time into a seamless experience of relaxation, refreshment, and convenience.

The lounge transitions into a sanctuary of holistic well-being where travellers looking to rejuvenate before a long flight can retreat to state-of-the-art sleeping pods or indulge



in therapeutic spa treatments. For families and guests seeking privacy, the space offers an exclusive private dining room and a well-stocked bar, ensuring every journey begins on a refreshing note.

Speaking on the launch, **Vikas Sharma, Group Chief Executive Officer, Encalm**, said, "As traveller expectations continue to evolve, Encalm remains focused on creating future-ready experiences shaped by innovation and operational excellence. The launch of

our new International Lounge in Hyderabad reflects this foresight, bringing together thoughtful design, seamless service, and contemporary hospitality to elevate the experience. Our ambition is to continue setting new benchmarks by delivering experiences that are differentiated, intuitive, and aligned with the evolving needs of global travellers."

Pooja Bhondekar, Business Head – Airport Hospitality, Encalm, added, "This expansion has been a testament to bringing our mission of creating delightful experiences every time in everything we do. We wanted the lounge to feel responsive to the guest, ensuring our design philosophy translates into intuitive service and a truly elevated experience. From wellness and relaxation to thoughtfully curated dining, every element has been designed with care. Our culinary offering has been built to be a highlight in itself, with curated menus and live gourmet interactions, complemented by a refined selection of beverages, both crafted to suit diverse guest preferences while maintaining a consistent sense of warmth, comfort, and hospitality."

4th Meghalaya Pineapple Festival Concludes with Record 30 MT Sales, Cementing Meghalaya's Premium Pineapple Brand

Travel Mail Desk

- **HCM Shri Conrad K. Sangma:** Our objective is to ensure that every partnership we build and every market we open ultimately translates into higher incomes, stronger livelihoods and better opportunities for the people of Meghalaya.
- **Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Hon'ble Union Minister:** Today, the sweetness, rich aroma, low acidity and high Brix content of Meghalaya's pineapples have earned them recognition far beyond the State and the country, reaching premium markets across the world
- The biggest blessing for us is that the festival provides a platform to interact directly with buyers and consumers alike: **Prin Ronghang, a farmer from Meghalaya**
- Today is our biggest performance in New Delhi, and words are not enough to describe how the MGMP has helped us. We are so grateful for this opportunity to share our music and our culture with the nation: **PERU, a CM-MGMP Band from Meghalaya**



will be happy to know that there are more than 7,000 artists in this programme. We have conducted over 38,000 shows. Today, when you go to Meghalaya, in different tourist spots and destinations, these young musicians will be right there performing for you. And we, the Government of Meghalaya, finance them to ensure that it not only helps their passion and talent grow, but also provides them a livelihood out of music; and gives the visitors a glimpse of Meghalaya."

Organised by the Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Government of Meghalaya, the Festival has evolved into the State's flagship platform for connecting farmers directly with organised retailers, food processors, exporters, hospitality businesses and consumers. Under the leadership of Shri Conrad K. Sangma, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Meghalaya, the Festival reflects the State's broader vision of making agriculture a driver of inclusive economic growth through integrated value-chain development, ensuring that greater value reaches farmers through improved market access, processing and branding.

The showcase was a resounding success, resulting in a sell-out of items and successfully promoting "Meghalaya's Finest" on a much larger scale. Local cuisines served as a major draw for the crowds, generating demand for indigenous products such as Lakadong turmeric, ginger, jackfruit chips, and honey. Notably, these products achieved outstanding sales through the collaborative efforts of brands like Meghalaya Collectives, State support groups, and a dedicated network of local farmers and entrepreneurs.

The remarkable response witnessed over the three days built upon a strong inaugural foundation laid by Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Hon'ble Union Minister for Development of the North Eastern Region and Communications, and Shri Conrad K. Sangma, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Meghalaya. The festival also witnessed the signing of strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with Flipkart and NCDEX e Markets Limited (NeML), creating a market for Meghalaya's pineapples and establishing a market for other niche

Meghalaya products that are critical to the State's agricultural transformation. It is intended to serve as a broader platform to showcase the premium agricultural produce of the State of Meghalaya.

Visitors enthusiastically participated in fresh pineapple tastings, explored premium value-added products, interacted directly with growers through the 'Meet the Growers' sessions and experienced innovative culinary creations prepared using Meghalaya's premium pineapples.

Beyond commerce, the festival celebrated the people and culture of Meghalaya. Live performances under the Chief Minister's Meghalaya Grassroots Music Program (CM-MGMP) captivated audiences throughout the three days, while local entrepreneurs, self-help groups and artisans brought alive the creativity, hospitality and entrepreneurial spirit that define the State. The seamless integration of agriculture, culture, entrepreneurship and tourism offered visitors a truly immersive Meghalaya experience.

As the Festival concluded, farmers returned home with more than just successful sales. Most of them have visited Delhi for the first time, and as a result, they leave with new business relationships, stronger market confidence and expanded opportunities for year-round engagement with organised retail and institutional buyers. The festival once again demonstrated that Meghalaya's agricultural transformation is being driven not merely by increased production, but by creating sustainable value chains that place farmers at the centre of growth.

The 4th Meghalaya Pineapple Festival leaves behind a legacy of stronger market linkages, growing consumer trust, expanding commercial partnerships and renewed confidence in Meghalaya's vision of building globally competitive, farmer-led agricultural enterprises. More importantly, it reinforces the State's commitment to ensuring that every new market, every new partnership and every value-added opportunity ultimately translates into higher incomes and better livelihoods for its farming communities.

Record sales, new retail partnerships and an overwhelming public response marked the successful conclusion of the 4th Meghalaya Pineapple Festival today at Dilli Haat, New Delhi, reinforcing Meghalaya's emergence as one of India's leading examples of farmer-led integrated value-chain transformation. More than a fruit festival, the three-day event demonstrated how strategic investments in farmer collectivisation, value addition, branding and market access are transforming Meghalaya's premium pineapples into a nationally recognised agricultural brand.

The biggest highlight of this year's Festival was the sale of 30 metric tonnes of fresh Meghalaya pineapples, nearly doubling the 15.4 metric tonnes sold during the previous edition in 2025 and 7.7 MT in the first edition in 2023. The achievement reflects the growing consumer demand for Meghalaya's premium pineapples, renowned for their exceptional sweetness, rich aroma and low acidity, while also demonstrating the success of the State's sustained efforts to build stronger market linkages for its farmers.

Speaking on the closing day, Shri Conrad K. Sangma, Hon'ble Chief Minister, thanked the people of Delhi for their overwhelming response to the festival and joined young artists of the Chief Minister's Meghalaya Grassroots Music Programme (CM-MGMP) for an impromptu musical performance, playing the guitar and singing alongside them.

Shri Conrad K. Sangma said, "On behalf of all the farmers, entrepreneurs and musicians of Meghalaya, I really want to thank all of you for making this festival a great success."

While singing alongside the artists of the CM-MGMP, **Shri Sangma** added, "We have a programme called the Meghalaya Grassroots Music Programme, and you

Rann Utsav

The Tent City Returns from 1 November, Opening a Four-Month Celebration of Kutch

Travel Mail Desk

Rann Utsav—The Tent City will return to Dhordo from 1 November 2026 to 7 March 2027, bringing back one of Gujarat's most anticipated seasonal tourism experiences.

Operated by Evoke Experiences in collaboration with Gujarat Tourism, the Tent City is located at Dhordo, approximately three hours from Bhuj. Over the years, Rann Utsav has emerged as one of India's most recognisable destination festivals, drawing travellers to the White Rann for an immersive experience of Kutch's landscape, hospitality, cuisine, crafts and living traditions.

The 2026–27 season will feature tented accommodation, regional dining, adventure and wellness activities, curated excursions and stargazing beneath Kutch's clear, low-light desert skies. Cultural programming will include performances by the Siddi community, Gujarat's unique Afro-Indian community, alongside folk music and dance accompanied by traditional instruments including the Jodiya Pava, Santar, Manjira, Harmonium, Ghado-Gamelo, Dholak and Morchhang.



The on-site Haat will bring together artisans and makers from across the region, offering Ajrakh textiles, intricate embroidery, Bandhani sarees, traditional jewellery, mirror work and Lippan art. Together, the performances and marketplace position the Tent City as a showcase of Kutch's diverse cultural and artistic legacy.

Travellers can also extend their Kutch itinerary beyond Dhordo to Dholavira. The

journey includes the celebrated Road to Heaven, a dramatic 30-km stretch of ruler-straight highway cutting through the Great Rann of Kutch, with the expansive salt landscape unfolding on either side.

The route leads to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Dholavira and the year-round Evoke Dholavira property. For the upcoming season, Evoke Experiences will add 35 seasonal tents on land adjacent to the property, offering another tented-stay option for travellers exploring the Harappan site and Khadir Bet.

Dhordo will remain the centre of Rann Utsav's celebrations, while Dholavira will serve as a separate archaeological and landscape-led extension. Together, they create a compelling Kutch itinerary—from the colour and energy of Rann Utsav to the Road to Heaven and the ancient city of Dholavira.

Bookings for the upcoming season will open with the Rann Sale from 31 July to 2 August 2026, offering a flat 25 per cent discount, subject to applicable terms and conditions.

Youth Skills Are the Foundation of India's Future

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal Advocates Skill-Led Growth

Travel Mail Desk

India's tourism and hospitality sector is entering a new phase of growth, driven by rising domestic travel, expanding hospitality infrastructure and the emergence of high-potential segments such as wellness, cruise, adventure and MICE tourism. While this momentum is opening up new employment opportunities, it is also reshaping the skills that the industry expects from its workforce.

According to the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council's (THSC) Demand & Skill Gap Study 2024, the sector is expected to require nearly 3 million additional skilled professionals by 2028, with workforce demand projected to grow from 11.8 million in 2024 to 14.8 million by 2028. The industry's requirements today extend well beyond conventional hospitality roles to include digital customer engagement, sustainable tourism practices, culinary innovation, travel operations and destination management.

Marking World Youth Skills Day 2026, **Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC)**, said "Tourism and hospitality have always been one of India's largest employment-generating sectors, particularly for young people. However, as traveller expectations evolve, so do the



Jyoti Mayal
Chairperson Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC)

skills required to succeed. Today's workforce must combine technical expertise with communication skills, digital proficiency, adaptability and a strong service mindset. Equipping young professionals with these capabilities will not only improve employability but also strengthen India's competitiveness as a global tourism destination."

She further added "The sector today offers diverse career pathways across hotels, restaurants, travel services, aviation support, heritage, wellness, cruise, events and experiential tourism. To fully realise this potential, stronger collaboration between industry, academia and skill development institutions is essential to ensure training remains aligned with evolving market needs and creates meaningful employment opportunities for India's youth."

This year's global theme, "Skills for a Shared Future," underscores that skilling is not just about jobs—it is about building inclusive, sustainable societies. It highlights the need for balanced competencies that combine technical, digital, AI, green, social-emotional and civic skills with the human qualities that technology cannot replace.

On the occasion of World Youth Skills Day, Mayal emphasised that investing in industry-relevant skilling is integral to sustaining the growth of India's tourism and hospitality sector. As the visitor economy continues to expand, building a future-ready workforce will be key to delivering world-class guest experiences and supporting the sector's long-term development.



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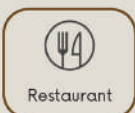
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Curtain-raiser held for the 6th Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart and the 1st Marwar Travel Mart, Jodhpur

Travel Mail Desk

Tourists today seek experiences rather than simply visiting destinations, and Rajasthan should focus on creating immersive, high-quality tourism offerings through stronger collaboration with private stakeholders. Backed by improved infrastructure, enhanced

(FHTR) in association with the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan.

Speaking at the event, the **Tourism Commissioner, Government of Rajasthan, Ms. Rukmani Riar, as Guest of Honour**, stated that due to the prevailing geopolitical situation, there may be a slight decline in the number of



connectivity and targeted marketing campaigns promoting wildlife, wellness and adventure tourism, the State is working to position tourism as a key driver of economic growth while encouraging visitors to explore both iconic attractions as well as lesser-known destinations. This was stated by Secretary Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Ms. Shuchi Tyagi, while addressing the curtain-raiser for the 6th edition of the Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) as well as the Marwar Travel Mart, Jodhpur, at ITC Rajputana, Jaipur.

On this occasion, an MoU signing ceremony between the Rajasthan Tourism Department and the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) was also held for the travel marts. This was followed by the formal launch of the RDTM and MTM posters. The event is being organised by the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan

international tourists. In such a scenario, these travel marts will play a crucial role in promoting domestic tourism. She further informed that after Jodhpur, the next travel mart will be organised in Udaipur. She added that the Tourism Department and the Government of Rajasthan are working on a financial incentive policy to promote Shekhawati's fresco art and homestays through travel marts. The Tourism Commissioner also highlighted that over 20,000 B2B meetings were conducted at RDTM last year, while more than 25,000 meetings are expected this year.

Sharing details about the programme, President, Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR), Mr. Surendra Singh Shahpura, stressed the need to move beyond conventional sightseeing by integrating Rajasthan's vibrant local fairs and festivals into travel itineraries of travel agents, enabling



tourists to experience the State's rich cultural traditions firsthand. He also called for greater promotion of Rajasthan's polo heritage, noting that the State's polo season now extends for nearly five months. He also urged greater focus on promoting Rajasthan's Tier-2 and Tier-3 destinations, moving beyond the traditional Golden Triangle circuit. Highlighting the State's railway heritage, he also said that a proposal has been given to make Bandikui a Railway Heritage City, pointing out its historic significance as one of Rajasthan's oldest and most important Railway Junctions.

Secretary General, Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR), Mr. Tarun Kumar Bansal delivered the welcome address and outlined the vision of both events. He stated that the 6th edition of the Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) will be held in Jaipur from 17 to 19 September 2026, with participation from over 300 stakeholders from the tourism and hospitality sectors across the country. He further informed that the first Marwar Travel Mart will be organised in Jodhpur from 20 to 22 September 2026, and is expected to witness enthusiastic participation from around 125 stakeholders from across India's tourism and hospitality industry. The theme for this year is 'Stories, Journey, Smiles'.

On this occasion, **President of JHARA and Chairman of the Marwar Travel Mart, Mr. M. Boob** highlighted the upcoming Marwar Travel Mart and stated, "Through this mart, efforts will be made to promote various tourism destinations across the Marwar region. Marwar is renowned for its wildlife, handicrafts, rich culture, folk music and other distinctive attractions. Our objective is to showcase the unique identity of Marwar to a wider audience of tourists and to give fresh momentum to tourism in the region."

HINDUSTHAN 2.0 to Spotlight Uttarakhand's Vision of Becoming a Global Tourism and Destination Wedding Hub



Travel Mail Desk

Uttarakhand took another significant step towards strengthening its position as a global tourism and destination wedding destination with *HINDUSTHAN 2.0 – National Chintan Shivir & Expo* at PunarNava Wellness Resort, Dehradun. The two-day national conclave was inaugurated by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.

Organised under the theme **Wed in Uttarakhand,** the event served as a strategic platform to explore new opportunities for tourism-led economic growth while positioning the Himalayan state as one of India's most sought-after destinations for weddings, wellness, and experiential travel.

The conclave brought together policymakers, tourism professionals, destination wedding planners, hospitality leaders, event specialists, hotel and resort operators, spiritual leaders, and travel industry stakeholders from across

the country to discuss strategies for enhancing Uttarakhand's tourism potential.

Discussions focused on strengthening key tourism segments, including religious and spiritual tourism, wellness retreats, rural tourism, nature-based experiences, and adventure travel, alongside promoting destination weddings as a major growth driver. Industry experts deliberated on policy initiatives, infrastructure development, sustainable tourism practices, and collaborative efforts required to attract both domestic and international travellers.

A key feature of the event was the 'Doon Declaration', which included the "Chalo Gaon Ki Ore" initiative aimed at promoting tourism-driven rural development. The initiative sought to integrate homestays, organic farming, local handicrafts, folk art, and traditional cuisine into the tourism ecosystem, creating new livelihood opportunities while supporting the revival of migration-affected villages.

On July 15, a dedicated session titled "Wed in Uttarakhand" focused on developing a comprehensive roadmap to position the state as a leading destination wedding hub at both national and international levels. The discussions explored opportunities for investment, destination branding, improved infrastructure, and stronger partnerships across the wedding and hospitality sectors.

The conclave concluded with the *BITA Awards 2026*, honouring individuals and organisations for their outstanding contributions to the tourism, hospitality, and wedding industries.

According to the organisers, *HINDUSTHAN 2.0* went beyond industry dialogue by creating actionable strategies aimed at accelerating tourism-led development, attracting investment, generating employment, and strengthening Uttarakhand's rural economy, further reinforcing the state's vision of becoming a globally competitive tourism destination.

NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE LAUNCHES FIRST-EVER SEMI-ANNUAL SALE WITH 50% OFF ALL CRUISES, PLUS FREE PRE-PAID GRATUITIES ON SELECT SAILINGS

Travel Mail Desk

Norwegian Cruise Line® (NCL), the innovator in global cruise travel, announced its first-ever Semi-Annual Sale offering travellers more value as they plan their next vacation at sea with 50% off all cruises and free pre-paid gratuities on select sailings.

"Our first-ever Semi-Annual Sale is the best deal of the season, giving our guests even more reason to book their next vacation with us," said Marc Kazlauskas, President, Norwegian Cruise Line. "Combining incredible destinations, award-winning onboard offerings and the freedom and flexibility for our guests to design their dream vacation is what NCL stands for – and there is no better time to book and experience all that we have to offer."

Whether guests are looking for a last-minute summer getaway, planning an unforgettable holiday vacation, or getting a head start on 2027 adventures, the limited-time promotion makes now an ideal time to book. From sunny Caribbean beaches and all-new experiences at Great Stirrup Cay, NCL's private island in the Bahamas, to glacier-filled Alaska voyages, Mediterranean escapes and cultural discoveries along the Mexican Riviera, the cruise line offers hundreds of itineraries for every travel style and season.

CARIBBEAN & BAHAMAS: ESCAPES TO SUN-SOAKED PARADISE

NCL's Caribbean and Bahamas voyages make it easy for travellers to swap everyday routines for crystal-clear waters, white-sand beaches and unforgettable experiences at sea. With itineraries ranging from quick escapes to immersive weeklong adventures, guests can visit some of the region's most sought-after destinations from convenient homeports including Miami and Port Canaveral (Orlando), Fla.; Galveston, Texas; New York City; New Orleans; and Philadelphia.

With the Semi-Annual Sale, guests can book a week-long voyage to the Caribbean aboard Norwegian Aura, the company's next cutting-edge ship setting sail from Miami in June 2027. Additionally, some of NCL's newest, award-winning ships – Norwegian Aqua®, Norwegian Luna™ and Norwegian



Viva® – will also sail the region, pairing Caribbean scenery with industry-exclusive attractions, world-class dining and show-stopping entertainment. Highlights include the world's only Aqua Slidecoaster – part roller coaster, part waterslide – available only aboard Norwegian Aqua and Norwegian Luna, and racetracks at sea – an NCL exclusive experience – aboard Norwegian Viva.

For shorter escapes, Norwegian Getaway® and Norwegian Joy® offer convenient four- and five-day roundtrip Bahamas voyages from Miami, visiting Nassau and Great Stirrup Cay, the company's private island.

GREAT STIRRUP CAY: NCL'S PRIVATE ISLAND EXPERIENCE REIMAGINED

With the grand opening of Great Tides Waterpark slated for Sept. 4, 2026, Great Stirrup Cay is destined to be the hottest destination this year. Spanning nearly six acres, the new waterpark will feature 19 exhilarating waterslides, industry-first cliff jumps, Splash Cay—a sprawling 9,000-square-foot splash zone for kids—and the Wandering River, a nearly 800-foot dynamic twist on a traditional lazy river that features a high-energy current.

Guests can already enjoy the new Great Life Lagoon with an expansive pool and two swim-up bars, as well as the nearby Splash Harbour, a complimentary splash area designed just for kids. Those seeking

a more tranquil experience can retreat to the all-new, adults-only Vibe Shore Club. Whether relaxing in a beachfront cabana or seeking adventure with activities like paddleboarding and ziplining, Great Stirrup Cay delivers a customizable island getaway for every type of traveller.

SCENIC ADVENTURES IN ALASKA AND EUROPE

For guests interested in more immersive adventures, NCL's Alaska cruises offer unforgettable journeys through one of the world's most awe-inspiring regions. Roundtrip seven-day sailings from Seattle aboard some of NCL's most iconic ships—Norwegian Bliss®, Norwegian Encore and Norwegian Joy—take guests to stunning destinations including Juneau, Ketchikan and Skagway, Alaska while taking in glaciers, wildlife and scenic landscapes.

With 12 ships in the region seasonally through 2027, Norwegian's voyages in Europe offer travellers an effortless way to experience some of the most sought-out destinations, from the sun-soaked Mediterranean and Greek Isles to the historic cities in Northern Europe. With a wide range of port-intensive itineraries starting from convenient embarkation ports including Barcelona, Spain; Rome (Civitavecchia), and Venice (Ravenna), Italy; Athens (Piraeus), Greece; Lisbon, Portugal; and London (Southampton), England, guests can explore multiple countries and cultures in one vacation while unpacking only once.





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AVIAREPS India appointed as GSA for German Airline Condor

Travel Mail Desk

AVIAREPS India has been appointed as the General Sales Agent (GSA) for Condor in India. The partnership will support Condor's commercial objectives in India while enhancing awareness of the airline's extensive global network among the travel trade and consumers.

As Condor's offline GSA in India, AVIAREPS India will provide comprehensive sales, reservations, ticketing, and market development support nationwide. Leveraging its extensive travel trade network and local market expertise, AVIAREPS India will work closely with travel agencies, tour operators, corporate partners, and industry stakeholders to drive demand.

The appointment comes as Condor continues to expand worldwide connectivity through its Frankfurt hub, offering travellers' seamless access to more than 70 destinations across Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia. With a modern fleet and growing network, the airline is well positioned to cater to the increasing demand for international travel all over the world.

Marcelo Kaiser, Chief Operating Officer, Aviation at AVIAREPS, said "Our partnership with Condor continues to grow, and we are proud to further expand our collaboration into India, one of the world's most dynamic and promising aviation markets. This development reflects our shared vision to unlock new opportunities and build strong, long-term relationships with local trade partners. With India's rapidly increasing demand for international travel, we see tremendous potential to position Condor's network even more prominently. Our teams on the ground are fully committed to driving brand awareness, strengthening market presence, and supporting Condor's continued growth in this exciting region."

Florian Stahl, Manager, New Markets Condor, added "India represents a market of significant long-term potential. AVIAREPS India brings deep market knowledge, strong travel trade relationships, and proven expertise in airline representation, making them an ideal partner in the region."

Founded in 1956, Condor flies approximately 10 million passengers annually to more than 70 destinations worldwide. The airline

operates one of Europe's youngest and most modern fleets, including its state-of-the-art Airbus A330neo aircraft, while continuing to invest in customer experience, efficiency, and network expansion.



Global Ballooning Returns to Mansfield with Rare Winter Afternoon Flights



Travel Mail Desk

One of Victoria's most scenic sky-high experiences is making a spectacular return, with Global Ballooning Australia launching rare winter afternoon hot air balloon flights over Mansfield and Victoria's High Country.

Operating from May to September, the new season will offer both sunrise and golden-hour afternoon flights – a rare dual-flight experience almost unheard of in Australian ballooning due to weather conditions.

Set against snow-dusted alpine landscapes, rolling farmland and crisp winter skies, the return of ballooning to Mansfield marks a major tourism moment for the region, giving visitors a new way to experience one of Victoria's premier winter destinations.

Global Ballooning founder, Kiff Saunders, first flew over Mansfield in 1992, helping establish the region as one of the state's most iconic ballooning destinations. More than three

decades later, the family-operated business is returning to where it all began.

"Flying over Mansfield in winter is unlike anywhere else in Australia," said **Eddie Saunders of Global Ballooning Australia.** "The light is softer, the valleys fill with mist, and on clear days you can see all the way to the alpine peaks. Adding afternoon flights means visitors can now experience the High Country in two completely different and equally spectacular ways."

The introduction of afternoon flights is expected to boost visitation across the cooler months, encouraging travellers to extend their stay and experience the region's wineries, breweries, farm gates, luxury accommodation and nearby alpine villages.

"Winter in Mansfield already offers so much – from snow trips and fireside dining to cycling, wineries and mountain adventures," said **Saunders.** "Ballooning adds another unforgettable layer to the High-Country experience. There's something incredibly peaceful about floating above the valleys as the sun drops behind the mountains."

The 2026 season also reflects the next generation of the Saunders family, with Eddie, Paterson and Scarlett Saunders all now involved in operations, alongside Mansfield local pilot-in-training Bevan Fistr.

Flights are now available to book via Global Ballooning Australia.

Abra Group and Etihad Airways establish strategic partnership to strengthen connectivity between Latin America, the Middle East and key global markets

Travel Mail Desk

Etihad Airways and Abra Group have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening connectivity between Latin America, the Middle East and Asia through the combined networks of Etihad and Abra's airlines: Avianca, GOL and Wamos Air.

The partnership contemplates expanded cooperation between Etihad, Avianca, and GOL through reciprocal loyalty benefits, commercial collaboration, and codeshare agreements, with plans to launch these initiatives in 2026.

A key objective of the partnership is to create a new bridge, opening new horizons for Abra's travellers through Etihad's network across the Middle East, Asia, the Indian Subcontinent and Australia, while providing Etihad customers with increased access to destinations throughout Latin America.

Adrian Neuhauser, Chief Executive Officer of Abra Group, said "This partnership reflects Abra's strategy of leveraging the complementary strengths of Avianca, GOL and Wamos Air to expand connectivity and unlock new commercial opportunities. Together with Etihad, we are building a new bridge between Latin America and the Middle East and exploring ways to bring our brands and operations together across network development, loyalty, and fleet

cooperation. We are honoured to work with Etihad—from South America to the United Arab Emirates, this joint effort reflects our shared commitment to outstanding service, offering our customers the best of both worlds. This is an important step in advancing Abra's vision of a more connected and competitive airline."

Antonoaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways, said "Latin America is an increasingly important market for Etihad, and this partnership creates a powerful platform to connect more travellers with Abu Dhabi and destinations across our expanding global network. This partnership brings together two complementary airline groups to create stronger connections between our regions. Together, we are creating stronger links between Latin America, Abu Dhabi and destinations across our global network, expanding opportunities for our guests while supporting Abu Dhabi's continued growth as a destination and hub."



Air India's WiFi on board enables over 1 million passengers to power up their inflight digital experience

Travel Mail Desk

Wi-Fi connectivity at 35,000 feet has now become a staple of the modern flying experience. Marking a milestone in enhanced passenger experience and digital engagement, more than 1 million users aboard Air India flights connected to the inflight WiFi service, according to the latest usage tracking from June 2025 through June 2026.

Operating across a schedule of over 55 daily flights, Air India travellers enjoy seamless internet access during their flight, enabling them to catch up on emails or browse social media. Usage has grown steadily over the year, with onboard Wi-Fi consumption surging from 30% in June 2025 to 55% in June 2026. This clear upward trajectory underscores an increasing demand for inflight internet connectivity.

Connectivity at 35,000 feet

Nearly 89% of connected passengers choose to stream content on social media while in transit. The remaining 11% opted for web browsing, emails and messaging apps. The consistent demand for the service resulted in nearly 500 TB worth of data consumption over the year. By category, streaming services accounted for 86% of total usage while web browsing comprised the remaining 14%.

These numbers mark the beginning of the transforming onboard experience for Air India's passengers. These numbers are currently driven by an initial fleet of 28 Wi-Fi-enabled aircraft that operate flights across the globe to cities including London, New York, Newark, Frankfurt, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bali, Manila and Mauritius, with more aircraft and cities to be added progressively. As the connected fleet grows, so will the opportunities for passengers to carry their digital lives with them, wherever they fly.



TransNusa Strengthens Regional Connectivity with New Jakarta-Bangkok Route

Travel Mail Desk

TransNusa marks the second half of 2026 with a significant milestone by introducing a new route from Jakarta to Bangkok, Thailand, strengthening connectivity between two of Southeast Asia's premier business and tourism travel hubs while simultaneously making yet another historical achievement with the expansion of its domestic network from Bali to the island destination of Wakatobi.

TransNusa became the first airline in Indonesia and the world to plan, create, develop and introduce a new direct route from Bali to Wakatobi, an island that is globally celebrated for hosting the world's second-largest barrier reef. This is the second direct route that has been created and developed by TransNusa. In 2024, the airline created, developed and became the first to launch a direct route from Bali to the diving haven of Manado.

On the regional and domestic network expansion, TransNusa Group Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Bernard Francis, said that

the much-awaited new route introduction from Jakarta to Bangkok as well as from Bali to Wakatobi and Waingapu will further strengthen TransNusa's international and domestic connectivity network. The new regional flight route launch is part of TransNusa's broader strategy to expand connectivity and respond to the growing

demand for travel between Indonesia and Thailand, which are two markets that enjoy strong tourism ties. Thailand is one of the region's vital tourism hubs.

Hence, TransNusa's scheduled flights will provide travellers with greater flexibility while supporting trade and tourism between the two countries. The Jakarta-Bangkok route is one of the busiest and strongest international routes in the region, serving millions of travellers each year. By operating daily scheduled flights for this route, we aim to provide more seamless connections for our passengers travelling across Southeast Asia and beyond. Our goal is to continue improving accessibility across Southeast Asia by continuously introducing new routes and expanding TransNusa's international as well as its domestic network.



Turkish Airlines Signs Multi-Year Agreement with CAE

Travel Mail Desk

Turkish Airlines, the airline that flies to more countries than any other airline, has signed a contract with CAE, a global leader in aviation training technologies, at the Farnborough Airshow for the delivery of five full-flight simulators (FFS) and two flight training devices (FTD), with an option for two additional FFSs.

The agreement further supports Turkish Airlines' strategy to expand pilot training capacity and strengthen its training infrastructure with the latest technologies, in line with the airline's fleet growth under its 10-year flight training investment plan. It will also contribute to the airline's new, state-of-the-art Flight Training Centre, which broke ground this past January. The new facility's simulator hangars are scheduled to become operational in 2027, with the full centre set to be completed and fully operational in 2028.

Commenting on the agreement, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee Prof. Murat Şeker said "As we continue to expand our fleet and global network, further strengthening our pilot training infrastructure is essential to supporting our long-term growth strategy.



Building on our long-standing collaboration with CAE, the addition of these advanced training devices will enhance our ability to prepare pilots across multiple fleet types with the highest levels of safety, consistency, and operational excellence. This agreement will help ensure we continue meeting the growing training demands of our expanding operations while maintaining the world-class standards our passengers expect from Turkish Airlines."

Matthew Bromberg, President and Chief Executive Officer at CAE added "This agreement is a testament to our

longstanding relationship with Turkish Airlines and to the trust it continues to place in CAE as a strategic partner in advancing its pilot training capabilities. For more than 20 years, we have worked together to support the airline's growth and evolving training needs. Through this comprehensive fleet of Airbus and Boeing training devices, we will continue to deliver advanced, high-fidelity simulation solutions that help Turkish Airlines build pilot capacity, maintain the highest safety standards, and support its long-term ambitions."

Under the contract, CAE will deliver the following devices to Turkish Airlines across Airbus and Boeing aircraft types:

- Two A321neo Full Flight Simulators (FFS)
- Two B787 Full Flight Simulators (FFS)
- One A350 Full Flight Simulator (FFS)
- Two A350 Level-1 Flight Training Devices (FTD)
- One A350 Full Flight Simulator (FFS) – optional
- One B787 Full Flight Simulator (FFS) – optional

These next-generation simulators and training devices will expand Turkish Airlines' pilot training capacity across both narrowbody and widebody aircraft types, offering a long-term solution to the airline's growing operational needs on a global scale. With this new agreement, Turkish Airlines reinforces its long-standing collaboration with CAE, continuing to embrace a technology-driven, sustainable, and scalable approach to pilot training.

EgyptAir to launch smart digital platform to transform passenger experience

Travel Mail Desk

EgyptAir is preparing to launch an advanced digital platform as part of its ongoing efforts to modernize its services and enhance the passenger experience in line with global trends in the aviation industry.

The national carrier is upgrading its digital infrastructure, including its website, online services, and mobile applications, while introducing a new customer experience management platform.

As part of the initiative, EgyptAir signed a cooperation agreement with Salesforce, a leading provider of customer relationship management (CRM) solutions.

The platform will manage customer interactions across multiple touchpoints and marks the first phase of a comprehensive digital transformation of EgyptAir's customer service operations.



It will unify customer touchpoints, provide deeper insights into passengers' needs and preferences, and enable more personalized services and faster responses. The platform will also leverage advanced data analytics to enhance the customer experience, strengthen marketing campaigns and loyalty programs, and integrate booking,

sales, and customer service into a unified digital ecosystem.

In addition, the new system will enable EgyptAir to proactively communicate with passengers during flight delays, schedule changes, or cancellations, providing faster and more accurate updates.

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Travel Mail Desk

The US West Coast is an economic powerhouse with many global companies being headquartered in California, not to forget the major technology campuses of Silicon Valley. For passengers aboard our flights from Delhi, this provides many opportunities and reasons to travel to Los Angeles and San Francisco to meet with business partners or to reconnect with family and friends who made California their new home. For reliable, fast and comfortable journeys, Star Alliance member LOT Polish Airlines provides seamless connectivity from Delhi via Warsaw to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"We are delighted to welcome more passengers from India who chose LOT Polish Airlines as their preferred airline for long-haul travel, particularly to the US West Coast. Subsequently, the number of Indian frequent flyers is growing steadily," emphasises Amit Ray, Director for India, DACH Markets, Italy and Malta, and Head of Global Corporate and Strategic Sales at LOT Polish Airlines. "Through customer surveys and market feedback from our B2B agency partners, we understand the value of customer experience, easy and smooth transfers at transit airports, reliable schedule, modern fleet, as well as Polish hospitality aboard."

From Delhi via Warsaw to California in just one day

With LOT Polish Airlines, you can travel from Delhi to Los Angeles or San Francisco within a single day. This includes a pleasant stopover at Warsaw Chopin Airport's single terminal,



where you can stretch your legs and enjoy some bargain shopping. LOT Business Class passengers and Star Alliance frequent flyers with gold tier status may relax at the LOT Mazurek Business Lounge near the departure gates. Customers originating in Delhi enjoy seamless connectivity on flights to Los Angeles every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, as well as every Wednesday and Saturday to San Francisco:

Delhi – Warsaw – San Francisco

Departure in Delhi at 8:00h, arrival in San Francisco at 20:40h local time

Delhi – Warsaw – Los Angeles

Departure in Delhi at 8:00h, arrival in Los Angeles at 20:05h local time

Additional North American cities served by LOT Polish Airlines include Newark, JFK, Miami, Chicago and Toronto.

LOT Polish Airlines operates modern Boeing 787 Dreamliners on these flights, offering passengers a choice between LOT Business Class, LOT Premium Economy Class and LOT Economy Class.

Omio Group to acquire Rail Europe to consolidate the ground transportation landscape



Travel Mail Desk

Omio Group, the world's leading multimodal travel company, has today announced it has agreed to acquire Rail Europe, the globally renowned rail distribution platform.

Upon completion, Rail Europe will become part of Omio Group, joining Omio's B2C booking platform, its B2B distribution business, and its travel discovery brand, Rome2Rio. With the addition of Rail Europe, Omio Group (OG) would sell 22 million train tickets per year, work with over 28,000 transport operators and travel sellers, and offer the world's most comprehensive ground transportation proposition.

Rail Europe would continue operating under its established brand, serving both B2B partners and travellers, while benefiting from all areas of Omio Group's technology stack, platform capabilities, and multimodal inventory. The proposed acquisition gives Omio access to Rail Europe's global network of travel agents and operators across more than 70 countries, along with more than 90 years of rail expertise, its trusted international consumer brand, significantly expanding Omio's partner reach and further strengthening its international customer base.

The proposed acquisition would create a new industry leader in rail distribution at a pivotal moment for rail travel. The global rail market is projected to exceed \$300 billion by 2032, as governments across Europe commit hundreds of billions of euros to rail infrastructure projects to increase capacity and shift more journeys away from road and air travel.

Jean-Francois Bessiron, Chief B2B Officer at Omio Group, said "This deal marks a transformative moment for the future of global ground transport. Omio and Rail Europe would give the industry a player with the technology and scale to make connected, accessible, and affordable train travel a reality for all. The sector has been constrained by outdated systems and controlled by dominant players for far too long."

Omio and Rail Europe are a natural fit. Omio brings significant scale and transformative technology. Rail Europe adds considerable rail experience, a trusted international consumer brand, and the strongest B2B distribution network. Together, we would offer more to our travellers, partners and the rail industry than either company could achieve on its own."



Björn Bender, CEO and Executive Chairman of Rail Europe, said "The past few years have been transformational for Rail Europe. With our teams and partners, we built an independent business and a unique position in the global rail industry. For the next chapter,

The proposed acquisition is subject to a consultation process with the CSE (Comité Social et Économique), which will issue an advisory opinion on the transaction. The transaction will not be completed until this process has concluded.

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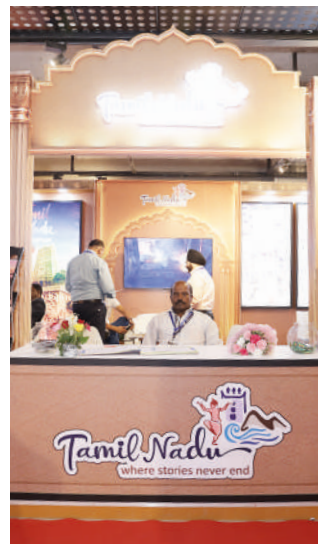


BUSINESS
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ITM JAIPUR 2026





Appointments



KOREA TOURISM ORGANIZATION APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR FOR NEW DELHI (INDIA) OFFICE

The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) has appointed Ms. Cho Yoonmi as the new Director of its New Delhi (India) Office, effective 30th June 2026. Ms Cho brings over 25 years of experience with the Korea Tourism Organization, carrying deep institutional knowledge and an in-depth understanding of Korea as a destination to her new role in India.

RAHUL HIMALIAN APPOINTED AS CMD OF IRCTC; ASSUMES ADDITIONAL CHARGE FROM JULY 20

The Ministry of Railways has entrusted Rahul Himalian with the additional charge of Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) following the resignation of Sanjay Kumar Jain from the post. Currently serving as Director (Tourism & Marketing) at IRCTC, Himalian will assume the additional charge of CMD from July 20, 2026, and will continue to oversee his existing responsibilities while leading the organisation's overall operations and strategic direction.



BLACK ROCK HOTELS & RESORTS ELEVATES GAURAV MUDGAL TO MANAGING DIRECTOR

Black Rock Hotels & Resorts has appointed Gaurav Mudgal as its Managing Director, marking a significant leadership milestone as the company enters its next phase of growth. The appointment comes as Black Rock accelerates its expansion into larger luxury resorts, destination hotels and owner-focused management solutions, while strengthening its presence across Rajasthan and other high-potential leisure destinations.

VIPUL KAMBOJ TO LEAD ONE ATMOSPHERE SUITES AT CORNER WALK, GURUGRAM

ONE Atmosphere has announced the appointment of Vipul Kamboj as General Manager of ONE Atmosphere Suites Corner Walk Gurugram. With this strategic move, the company strengthens its focus on delivering premium serviced apartments through operational excellence, elevated guest experiences, and strong commercial performance.



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.

NOVOTEL GOA RESORT & SPA AND NOVOTEL GOA CANDOLIM WELCOME RESHA NAIK AS MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Novotel Goa Resort & Spa and Novotel Goa Candolim is pleased to announce the appointment of Resha Naik as Marketing & Communications Manager. Returning to the twin properties, Resha brings with her a wealth of hospitality marketing expertise and a deep understanding of the brands, having previously played a pivotal role in strengthening their market presence and executing impactful marketing initiatives.



HYATT REGENCY TRIVANDRUM APPOINTS SAJIT SEBASTIAN AS DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING

Hyatt Regency Trivandrum is pleased to announce the appointment of Sajit Sebastian as Director of Sales & Marketing. The appointment further strengthens the hotel's commercial leadership as it continues to expand its presence across business, leisure and MICE segments.



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