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Madhya Pradesh

THE HEART OF
Incredible India

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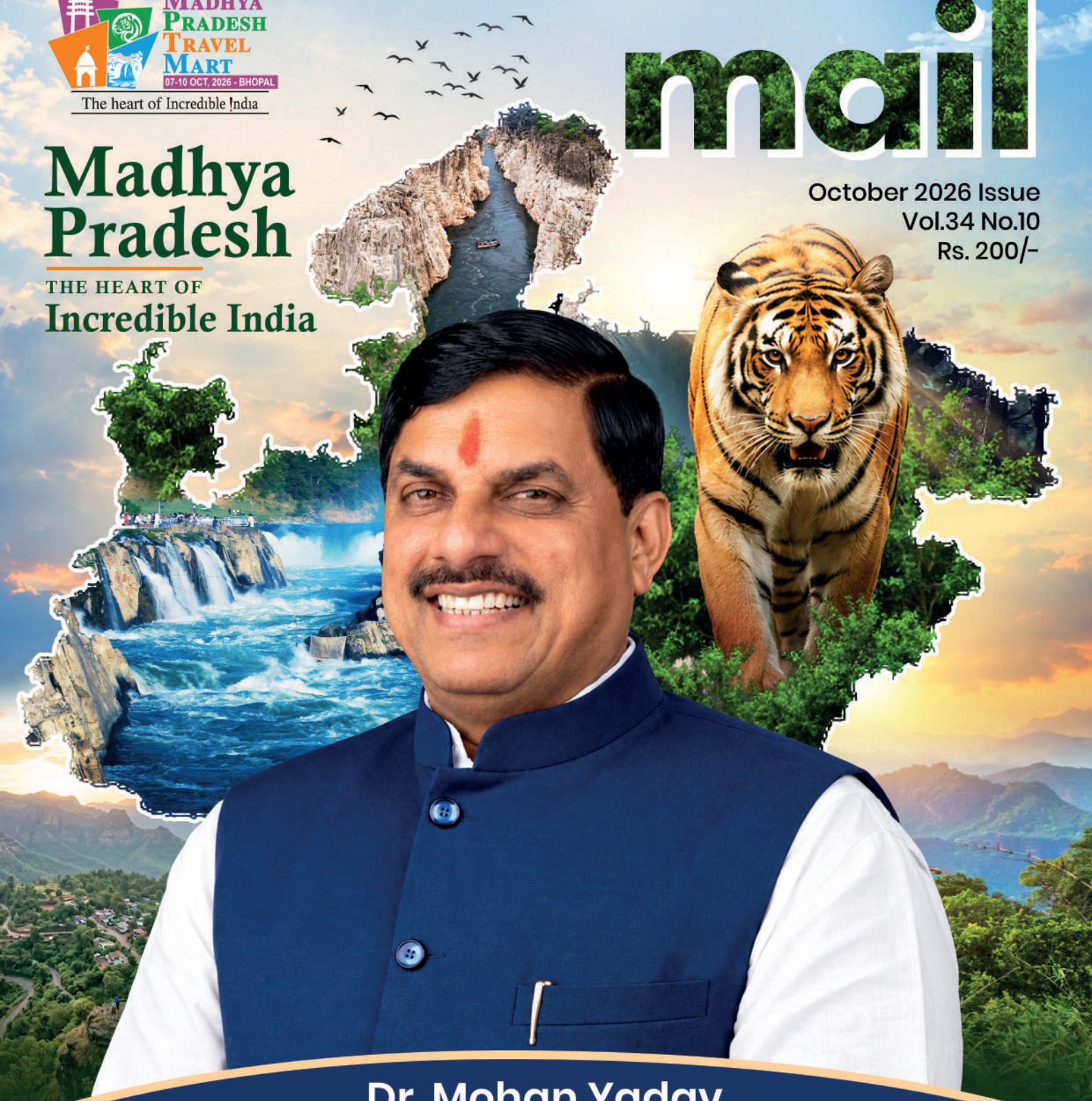

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Madhya Pradesh: Where Every Journey Tells a Story

Travel is no longer simply about reaching a destination. It is about discovering stories, experiencing cultures, connecting with communities and finding new reasons to return. In this evolving travel landscape, destinations that can offer depth, diversity and authentic experiences are increasingly finding their place in the spotlight.

This October, Travel Mail turns its focus to one such destination — Madhya Pradesh, the heart of India.

Rich in history, heritage, wildlife, spirituality, culture and natural beauty, Madhya Pradesh has steadily emerged as a destination that offers something for every kind of traveller. From magnificent monuments and ancient cities to forests, rivers, tribal traditions and immersive experiences, the state presents a remarkable diversity that deserves to be explored beyond the familiar.

Our cover story and special feature on Madhya Pradesh take a closer look at the destination's tourism potential and its growing appeal to travellers and the travel trade. At the centre of this focus is the Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart, an important platform bringing together tourism stakeholders, travel professionals and industry partners to showcase the state's destinations, experiences and opportunities. It reflects the growing importance of meaningful B2B engagement in shaping the next chapter of India's tourism story.

This issue also comes at an important moment for the global and Indian tourism industry. World Tourism Day 2026 provides an opportunity to reflect on how traveller expectations are changing — from experience-led holidays and technology-enabled journeys to more conscious, community-oriented and personalised travel. We bring together voices from across the travel, tourism and hospitality industry to understand these shifts and what they mean for the future. Our World Tourism Day section captures perspectives from industry leaders and organisations, offering insights into the changing Indian traveller.

Beyond destinations, this issue explores the people and businesses shaping the industry. Our interviews feature perspectives from hospitality leaders, tourism professionals and travel trade representatives, covering subjects ranging from heritage hospitality and experiential stays to the growth of India's cruise market and the future of global cruising.

We also bring you developments from airlines, aviation, railways, hotels and resorts, along with updates from leading travel associations and industry bodies. From new air connectivity and hotel openings to changing leadership across the sector, these developments underline the pace at which India's travel ecosystem continues to evolve. Our trade-event coverage takes you across the country, including the 6th Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart and the 1st Marwar Travel Mart in Jodhpur, where regional tourism potential, heritage and experiential travel took centre stage. We also bring you glimpses from the events that continue to connect destinations with the travel trade and create new opportunities for collaboration.

As the industry moves forward, one thing is increasingly clear: the future of tourism will be shaped not only by how many people travel, but by how they travel, what they experience and the value their journeys create for destinations and communities.

At Travel Mail, we remain committed to documenting this changing landscape — bringing our readers closer to destinations, people, ideas and developments that matter to the travel and tourism industry.

We invite you to turn the pages of our October issue and discover Madhya Pradesh through a new lens, while exploring the many stories that continue to shape the world of travel.

Happy Reading!

Warm Regards,

Ajay Gupta
Managing Editor – Travel Mail

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INDIA AND ITALY AGREE TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL COOPERATION IN TOURISM

2nd India–Italy Joint Working Group on Tourism discusses cine-tourism, destination twinning, skilling and B2B engagement

Both sides agree to establish focused technical groups and points of contact to advance tourism cooperation

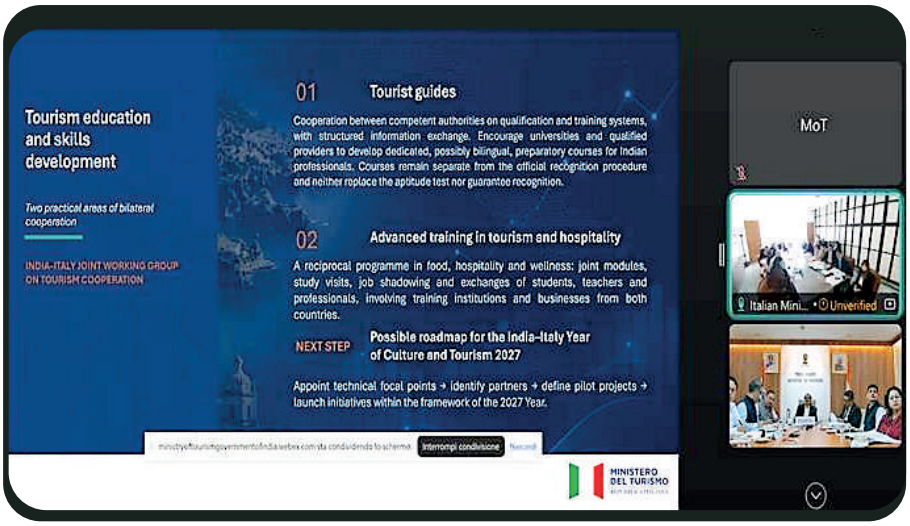
Travel Mail Desk

The 2nd India–Italy Joint Working Group (JWG) on Tourism was held on 29 September 2026, co-chaired by Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Ms. Emanuela Tripi, Secretary-General, Ministry of Tourism, Italy.

The meeting brought together representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of External Affairs, Embassy of India in Rome and Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) from the Indian side. The Italian delegation included senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Embassy of Italy in New Delhi and ENIT (Italian National Tourism Board).

The discussions covered a broad range of areas for strengthening tourism cooperation between the two countries, including exchange of tourism data, promotion of lesser-known destinations, cine-tourism, destination twinning, skilling and capacity building, and enhanced Business-to-Business (B2B) engagement.

As a key outcome of the meeting, both sides agreed to establish focused technical groups and designate points of contact to take forward the identified areas of cooperation and facilitate sustained engagement between relevant stakeholders.



The two sides also discussed opportunities for tourism cooperation in the context of the proposed India–Italy Year of Culture and Tourism 2027, with a view to further strengthening cultural and tourism exchanges between the two countries.

The 2nd Joint Working Group meeting reaffirmed the commitment of India and Italy to deepen bilateral cooperation in tourism and create stronger institutional and industry linkages between the two countries.

Indian Railways Approves New Tri-Weekly Train Between Machilipatnam and Kurnool City via Vijayawada of South Coast Railway

Travel Mail Desk

In a major relief to the commuters of Andhra Pradesh, the Indian Railways has approved a new tri-weekly train service between Machilipatnam and Kurnool City via Vijayawada of South Coast Railway, providing an additional rail connectivity option between coastal and central parts of Andhra Pradesh.

The approved Machilipatnam-Kurnool City Express will cover a distance of 499 km. It will depart from Machilipatnam at 16:55 and reach Kurnool City at 05:45 the next day. In the return direction, the Kurnool City-Machilipatnam Express will depart from Kurnool City at 09:30 and reach Machilipatnam at 21:35 the same day.

The Machilipatnam-Kurnool City Express will operate on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, while the Kurnool City-Machilipatnam Express will operate on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.

The new service will provide an additional travel option for the passengers of Andhra Pradesh and strengthen connectivity between Machilipatnam, Vijayawada and Kurnool City, while also improving access to several towns and cities along the route.

Major Stations to be Connected

- Gudivada
- Vijayawada
- Narasaraopet
- Vinukonda
- Donakonda
- Markapur Road
- Cumbum
- Giddalur
- Diguvametta
- Nandyal
- Betamcherla
- Dhone

Ashwini Vaishnaw Gives Directions for Improvement of Railway Safety, Technical and Maintenance-related Deficiencies

Travel Mail Desk

Union Minister for Railways Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw held a detailed safety review meeting at Rail Bhawan. The meeting was attended by the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Railway Board; Members of the Railway Board, General Managers of Zonal Railways, Director Generals (DGs) and Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs).

During the meeting, the Railway Minister gave directions to address technical deficiencies related to signalling in mission mode. With regard to Overhead Equipment (OHE), he asked to ensure necessary action for their maintenance and replacement at locations where the components have completed their prescribed service life.

The Railway Minister gave directions to improve the level of maintenance in workshops by paying special attention to the maintenance of coaches, particularly the electrical circuits and wiring related to fire safety. He also asked to pay attention to the maintenance of couplers and wheels of wagons and coaches.

Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw
Union Cabinet Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting, and Electronics & Information Technology in the Government of India.

With regard to track maintenance, emphasis was laid on ensuring proper maintenance of point machines, turnouts and fasteners. Wherever fasteners are missing, arrangements were asked to be ensured for their installation.

The meeting directed strict action in cases of poor-quality supplies. In case of any deficiency in the quality of materials related to Signalling & Telecommunication (S&T), OHE, track, coaches or wagons, it was asked to ensure stringent action against the concerned supplier. In cases of deliberate negligence, directions were also given to permanently blacklist the concerned supplier.

The Railway Minister asked all officers to establish coordination with the district and state administrations and make advance preparations at locations where there is a possibility of a sudden increase in passenger crowds due to festivals or fairs, so that necessary facilities can be made available there in time.

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu curtain-raises Routes Asia

24th Routes Asia to be held from 16-18 March 2027 in New Delhi

Travel Mail Desk

Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu unveiled the Curtain Raiser for Routes Asia 2027 in New Delhi, marking a significant milestone in India's preparations to host the prestigious international aviation event. The Curtain Raiser witnessed participation from representatives of 28 embassies, along with leading aviation stakeholders, underscoring the growing international engagement and collaborative opportunities surrounding Routes Asia 2027.

The 24th edition of Routes Asia will be held from 16–18 March 2027 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, bringing together more than 115 leading airlines, representatives from 55+ countries, airports, tourism authorities and aviation stakeholders from across Asia and beyond.

Minister of Civil Aviation, Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, while unveiling the curtain raiser plaque, presented India's vision for Routes Asia 2027 under the theme *"Bharat Aviation Rising: Inclusive Growth – Connecting Asia & Beyond."* He highlighted that guided by the vision of **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi,** the event comes at an opportune moment as India advances towards becoming the world's

third-largest aviation market. **He said,** ***"Routes Asia 2027 is coming to the right place, at the right time, with the right opportunity! There is room for more capacity, more airlines and more routes".***

With over 166 airports and plans to develop 100 additional airports over the next decade, India's aviation sector is witnessing rapid expansion. The Minister emphasised the growing importance of the hub-and-spoke model, which can connect more cities and people with emerging markets, creating opportunities for airlines, tourism and economic growth. He also highlighted India's active bilateral aviation engagements, particularly with Southeast Asian countries, and the continued growth in international air travel, with passenger traffic recording a compound annual growth rate of 4.6%.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Samir Kumar Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, highlighted the transformative role of aviation in connecting people, facilitating trade and creating economic opportunities. Emphasising that international travel should become increasingly accessible and seamless for tourism and business, he underscored the importance of partnerships and route development in strengthening India's aviation ecosystem.

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu launches Challenge Mode for Aerodrome Development

Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Civil Aviation took a major step towards strengthening regional air connectivity across the country with the signing of 21 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with States and Union Territories under the next phase of the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme. The MoUs mark a significant milestone in Centre–State/UT cooperation for the development of aviation infrastructure and expansion of air connectivity to underserved and unserved regions.

The ceremony, held at The Ashok, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, was inaugurated by Shri Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, Minister of Civil Aviation, in the presence of Shri Murlidhar Mohol, Minister of State for Civil Aviation; Shri Samir Kumar Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; Shri Vipin Kumar, Chairman, Airports Authority of India (AAI), and senior officials of the Ministry.

"With these MoUs, Team Bharat is joining hands to take India's regional aviation to greater heights. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Viksit Rajya is the foundation of Viksit Bharat, with every State as an equal partner in this journey. Modified UDAN rests on four pillars; affordability for

passengers, sustainability of operations, transparent Challenge Mode framework for projects and the promotion of indigenous manufacturing. Together, we are building an ecosystem towards the larger ambition of Made in India Civil aircraft. That is the direction in which this next phase of UDAN is taking us". said **Shri Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu.**

With this launch, the next phase of UDAN moves from policy and stakeholder consultations towards on-ground implementation, with a three-pronged focus on strengthening Centre–State/UT partnerships, creating aviation infrastructure and expanding regional air connectivity.

Speaking at the event, **Minister of State for Civil Aviation Shri Murlidhar Mohol** said, *"Under the able leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, UDAN has come a long way since 2016 expanding regional and remote connectivity across the country. Now, with Modified UDAN, we are looking at 120 new destinations and 4 crore more passengers over the next ten years. With more than 20 States coming together, we are taking this journey forward and opening a new chapter in India's civil aviation sector."*

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THE NEW HEART OF INDIA
MADHYA PRADESH

- Siddharth Gupta

Beyond tigers and temples, Madhya Pradesh is building a broader, experience-led tourism proposition and MPTM 2026 is bringing that story to the global travel trade.

Madhya Pradesh has never suffered from a shortage of tourism assets. Its forests are home to some of India's most celebrated tiger reserves; Khajuraho and Sanchi connect the state to a remarkable civilisational past; Ujjain and Omkareshwar bring spiritual journeys into the picture; while cities such as Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Maheshwar add layers of culture, cuisine and heritage.

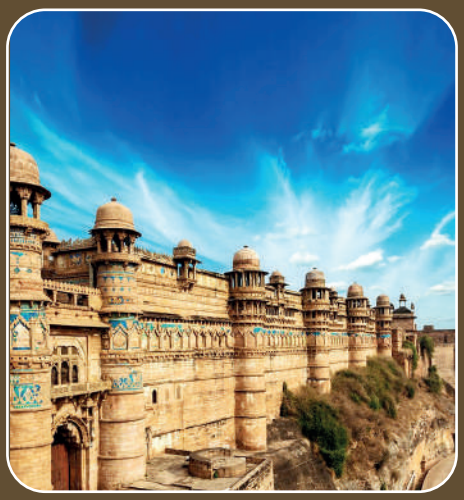
What is changing is the way these experiences are being brought together and presented to the traveller.

The state is increasingly looking beyond individual attractions towards **circuits, experiences, regional tourism and stronger connections with the travel trade.** The seventh edition of the **Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart (MPTM)** in Bhopal from **7–10 October 2026** brings an important platform for that next phase. The Mart is designed around B2B meetings, exhibitions, industry discussions, investment interactions, cultural showcases and curated familiarisation experiences.

FROM DESTINATIONS TO JOURNEYS

The breadth of Madhya Pradesh's tourism is perhaps its greatest opportunity.

MPTM's own positioning brings together **heritage, wildlife, rural culture, handicrafts, cuisine and film tourism** with categories that can individually attract travellers, but become more powerful when connected into longer journeys.



The Mart's curated Pre and Post FAM Trip itineraries reflect this approach, combining destinations such as Bhopal, Ujjain, Maheshwar and Mandu; Bhopal, Orchha and Khajuraho; and Bhopal, Bhimbetka, Madhai and Pachmarhi.

The thinking is significant. Rather than asking travellers to visit one famous attraction and move on, Madhya Pradesh has the potential to encourage them to **stay longer, travel deeper and experience different sides of the state within one journey.**

This regional approach is also visible through the state's **Regional Tourism Conclave (RTC)** initiative, which brings together tourism

stakeholders, investors, hospitality leaders, tour operators, travel professionals and policymakers around the distinctive tourism potential of different regions.

WHERE BUSINESS MEETS DESTINATION

For Madhya Pradesh, MPTM is ultimately about converting destination interest into business.

The current MPTM platform highlights **250+ international buyers, 700+ domestic buyers, 250+ exhibitors and participation from 40+ countries.** The Mart's programme includes scheduled buyer-seller meetings, interaction with foreign tour operators and engagement with local tourism and hospitality stakeholders.

That commercial objective is reflected in the words of **Dr. Mohan Yadav, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Madhya Pradesh:**

"The business meetings and connections created here will connect our entrepreneurs with global markets, open new opportunities, and give new strength to the state's tourism economy."

The ambition extends beyond tourism promotion. **Shri Dharmendra Singh Lodhi, Hon'ble Tourism Minister, Government of Madhya Pradesh,** points to tourism's wider economic role, highlighting MPTM's focus on **tourism, hospitality, film, weddings and MICE,** and its potential to support tourist arrivals, local employment, investment and partnerships.

For a destination as geographically and experientially diverse as Madhya Pradesh, this business dimension is increasingly important. The challenge is not simply to make people aware of the state, but to ensure that international and domestic travel businesses understand **how to sell it, connect it and build products around it.**

A BROADER EXPERIENCE OF THE HEARTLAND

The next chapter is also about changing how travellers experience Madhya Pradesh.

One recent example is the state's new partnership with Royal Enfield, aimed at developing motorcycle-led and responsible tourism experiences. The inaugural expedition covers approximately 1,520 km, travelling through Bhopal, Pachmarhi, Pench, Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Panna, combining motorcycle touring with wildlife, culture and heritage. The two-year partnership runs from 2026 to 2028.

It is an example of the destination moving beyond conventional sightseeing towards experience-led travel, where the journey itself becomes part of the product.

For **Dr. Ilayaraja T, Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board,** this wider proposition is central to MPTM:

"MPTM brings Madhya Pradesh's diverse tourism offerings together under one roof by showcasing its heritage, wildlife, rural culture, handicrafts, cuisine and film tourism."

That diversity also creates opportunities across different traveller segments, from wildlife and luxury travellers to spiritual seekers, cultural explorers, adventure enthusiasts, destination weddings, MICE groups and film productions.

THE REGIONAL ADVANTAGE

Madhya Pradesh's geography is another part of the opportunity.

A traveller can move from the architectural history of Khajuraho and Orchha to the forests of central India, from spiritual centres to rural communities, or from historic cities to the hills of Pachmarhi.

The state's Regional Tourism Conclave model adds another layer to this strategy by giving individual regions a platform to develop their own tourism identities through destination showcases, B2B interactions, investor engagements, knowledge sessions and curated experiences.

The result could be a tourism map that looks less like a collection of isolated attractions and more like an interconnected network of journeys.

MPTM 2026: THE NEXT CONVERSATION

The significance of MPTM 2026, therefore, lies not merely in the size of the exhibition. It is a meeting point between **Madhya Pradesh's tourism supply and the markets that can take it further.**

International buyers, domestic tour operators, hotels, tourism businesses and other stakeholders will come together in Bhopal, while familiarisation tours will allow trade participants to experience the destination beyond the exhibition floor.

For Madhya Pradesh, the opportunity is to ensure that the conversation continues long after the Mart closes through new itineraries, partnerships, investment, repeat visitation and stronger international visibility.

The state already has the ingredients. The next task is to connect them.

Wildlife with heritage. Spirituality with culture. Adventure with community. Cuisine with craft. Business with destination experiences.

That may ultimately be the new Madhya Pradesh: **not a destination defined by one story, but a state with enough stories to create many different journeys.**

MPTM 2026 | AT A GLANCE

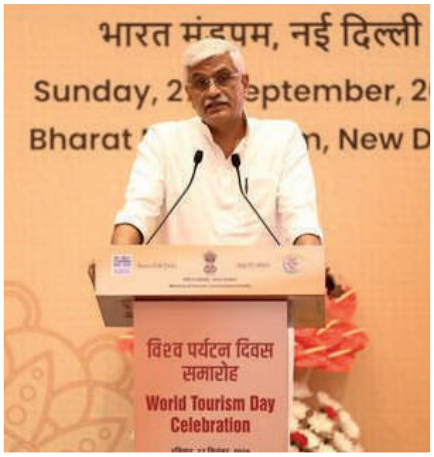
- ☑ **7–10 October 2026**
- ☑ **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh**

» **250+ International Buyers**
» **700+ Domestic Buyers**
» **250+ Exhibitors**
» **40+ Countries**

Focus:
B2B Meetings • Tourism • Investment • MICE • Weddings • Film Tourism • Wildlife • Heritage • Culture • Rural & Experiential Tourism

Tourism growth must reach beyond popular destinations and create opportunities for local communities

Union Minister of Tourism & Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat



Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Tourism celebrated World Tourism Day 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, in the presence of Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, senior officials of the Ministry and the tourism industry representatives.

On this occasion, the Union Minister launched **the National Digital Tourism Stack** and **the National Mission for Alternative Destinations — Dekho Apna Desh Campaign 2.0.** The Ministry also exchanged five Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with industry partners for joint tourism promotion and marketing.

Addressing the gathering, **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** said, *"Tourism is no longer just about visiting places; today's travellers seek authentic experiences—local cuisine, local art, local traditions and meaningful connections that create memories, not merely photographs." He further stated, "The next phase of India's tourism journey must ensure that growth reaches beyond popular destinations, creating opportunities for local communities, entrepreneurs, women and youth while making tourism more balanced, inclusive and sustainable."*

Delivering the welcome address, **Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, stated,** *"Artificial Intelligence, digital platforms and data-driven destination management can make tourism more accessible, responsive and personalised.*

India has considerable experience in Digital Public Infrastructure, and we are now looking at how these capabilities can be brought together for tourism."

As part of the programme, **Dr. Vivek Raghavan, Co-Founder, Sarvam AI**, delivered the keynote address on this year's World Tourism Day theme, **"Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism."** He stated that *"AI has the potential to transform every stage of the tourism journey — from discovering destinations and planning a trip to booking, experiencing and sharing it. The opportunity before us is to use technology to make travel more seamless, personalised and accessible, while creating a customized experience for every traveller."*

Presentations on the National Digital Tourism Stack and the National Mission for Alternative Destinations, a mission for the redistribution of tourism demand & promotion of lesser-known destinations — Dekho Apna Desh Campaign 2.0 were made by Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar and Shri Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, respectively, followed by interactions with industry representatives.

The National Digital Tourism Stack, being developed in collaboration with ONDC and the support of International Centre for DPI Innovation and Advancement (ICDIA), aims to make India's tourism offerings more discoverable, accessible and trustworthy. This shared digital infrastructure will enable tourism providers to make their offerings available across participating platforms, supported by capabilities such as verified identities and supplier credentials, search and discovery, payments, ratings and grievance redressal. Envisaged as a collaborative effort involving the Ministry, States, Union Territories and industry, the programme will be implemented in phases with a pilot planned for January 2027.

The National Mission for Alternative Destinations – a mission for redistribution of tourism demand & promotion of lesser-known destinations — Dekho Apna Desh Campaign 2.0 seeks to distribute tourism demand more widely by promoting tourism-ready, lesser-known destinations as alternatives or complements to destinations experiencing heavy tourist footfall. In collaboration with States and Union Territories, the initiative will identify destinations with a distinct appeal, adequate

infrastructure and accommodation, and the capacity to receive additional visitors sustainably. The initial focus will be on hill and mountain destinations, coastal and waterfront destinations, heritage and cultural towns, and regional pilgrimage destinations.

The initiative will bring together States, Union Territories and tourism industry partners to develop bookable itineraries and packages covering accommodation, transport, meals and local experiences, while creating opportunities for artisans, self-help groups, guides and other local stakeholders. Joint promotion will adopt a social media-first approach, supported by digital campaigns and industry participation. Visitor data and feedback will inform destination management and help monitor tourist footfall against assessed carrying capacity.

On the occasion, the Ministry of Tourism also exchanged five Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Airbnb India Private Limited, FlixBus India Private Limited, Glance Digital Experience Private Limited (InMobi Group), Eicher Group Foundation and MakeMyTrip (India) Limited to strengthen destination promotion, community participation and responsible tourism. The partnerships cover homestay development and host skilling with Airbnb; destination promotion and responsible travel through intercity mobility with FlixBus; digital tourism content and responsible visitor messaging with Glance; community-led, heritage-based sustainable tourism in the Himalayan region with Eicher Group Foundation; and promotion of unexplored villages, authentic local shopping and Ministry-identified travel initiatives with MakeMyTrip. The collaborations under all these five MoUs are non-commercial, non-financial, non-binding and non-exclusive.

The occasion also marked the launch of a social awareness TV Campaign 2026 on Swachhta, featuring the Hon'ble Prime Minister's call to citizens to keep pilgrimage sites, temples and heritage sites clean and promote collective participation in cleanliness efforts. India Tourism Statistics 2026 was also released during the event. The launches were accompanied by the screening of the campaign TVC and a video on the publication.

World Tourism Day

From Experience-First Holidays to Tap-and-Pay Travel, Behaviours Shaping the New Indian Traveller

Travel Mail Desk

The Indian traveller is changing how they discover, plan and experience holidays, with experiences, events, digital content and convenience increasingly influencing travel choices. This shift comes as digitalization and Artificial Intelligence reshape tourism, enabling more personalized discovery, planning, booking and payments. As the world marks World Tourism Day 2026 under the theme "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism," these behaviours reflect how technology is becoming an integral part of the modern travel journey.

Thomas Cook (India) Limited, India's leading omnichannel travel services company, and its Group Company, SOTC Travel, share insights into key traveller behaviours shaping the Indian travel landscape today. These include a stronger focus on experiences, greater use of digital platforms and payments, more frequent short breaks, and growing international travel from beyond the metros.

Choosing the experience, not just the destination

Holiday searches increasingly start with what travellers want to experience, rather than simply where they want to go. Wildlife safaris in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa, culinary trails in Italy and Japan, cultural immersion in Rajasthan and Vietnam, adventure in New Zealand and Switzerland, and stargazing in Ladakh and Norway are becoming reasons to choose a destination. For premium travellers, this is extending to experiences such as expedition cruises, premium rail journeys, Grand Slam tennis, premium golf and Formula 1, where access and curation are becoming an important part of the experience.

This is also visible in spiritual travel, where destinations such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Ujjain and Rishikesh are being explored beyond the pilgrimage itself, with travellers adding heritage, cuisine, architecture, wellness and local experiences to their itineraries. Similarly, destinations such as Bhutan, Japan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are being explored for their distinctive mix of culture, nature, wellness and food. Digital platforms and personalised recommendations are further helping travellers discover destinations and experiences aligned with their individual interests.

Planning holidays around moments and short breaks

Travel is increasingly being planned around moments rather than only around calendars. Festivals, concerts, sporting events and major cultural occasions are becoming reasons to travel, with travellers building holidays around experiences they do not want to miss. At the same time, the traditional long annual holiday is being complemented by more frequent, shorter breaks. Long weekends, festive holidays and gaps between work commitments are being converted into domestic getaways, road trips and short-haul international holidays, creating a more distributed pattern of travel through the year.

Discovering travel through social media, OTT and AI-powered digital journeys

The journey is increasingly beginning before a traveller actively starts planning a holiday. A destination seen in an OTT series, movie, social media reel or creator recommendation can spark interest and quickly translate into a travel plan. AI is adding another layer to this discovery journey, helping travellers move from broad inspiration to more relevant destinations, experiences and itineraries based on their individual interests. The result is a travel journey that is becoming increasingly personalized from the point of discovery itself.

Going digital with forex and payments

Digitization is now extending across the entire travel journey, including how travellers manage and spend their money overseas. Thomas Cook India's 2026 Forex Report found that 25% of customers transact through digital purchase channels, while 57% of forex-card spend is through contactless and online transactions.

The shift reflects a clear preference for greater convenience, flexibility and control, with travellers increasingly comfortable managing forex digitally and using contactless and online payments rather than relying on cash. Payments are therefore becoming an integral part of the seamless travel experience, rather than a separate pre-trip consideration.

Taking international travel beyond the metros

International travel is no longer a metro-led story. Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities are emerging as important growth engines for outbound travel, supported by rising disposable incomes, better connectivity and growing global aspirations. Markets such as Lucknow, Indore, Surat, Kochi, Bhubaneswar and Vijayawada are increasingly contributing to the outbound travel landscape. Importantly, travellers from these markets are moving beyond simply taking their first international holiday. They are increasingly seeking distinctive experiences from Northern Lights and Arctic cruises to wildlife safaris and multigenerational holidays while valuing the reassurance of trusted guidance and end-to-end planning. Digital access is further helping bring international travel within easier reach, while stronger air connectivity is reducing the dependence on metros as gateways.

Choosing the journey as part of the experience

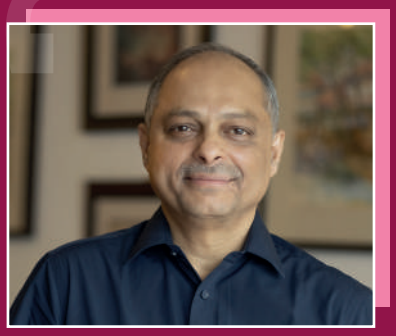
The holiday is increasingly being judged by the quality of the journey as much as the destination itself. Cruises, premium rail journeys, distinctive stays, glamping and wildlife experiences are attracting travellers who want the mode of travel and the stay to be part of the holiday story, rather than simply a means to get somewhere. At the same time, practical factors such as connectivity, visa convenience and ease of access are becoming more influential in destination selection. For the new Indian traveller, the expectation is increasingly for a holiday that is distinctive at the destination and seamless across the journey.

Mr. Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head – Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India) Limited, said, *"Indian travellers are becoming more intentional about what they want from a holiday. The focus is moving beyond simply visiting a destination towards experiences that offer discovery, immersion and personal relevance — whether that is exploring a spiritual destination through its heritage and culture, experiencing wildlife and adventure, or choosing a premium cruise or rail journey. At the same time, technology is making it easier to discover and personalize these experiences. The opportunity for the travel industry is to bring together the right experiences with greater simplicity and relevance for each traveller."*

Mr. S.D. Nandakumar, President & Country Head – Holidays & Corporate Tours, SOTC Travel, said, *"Technology is becoming an increasingly integral part of how Indians discover and experience travel. From social media and OTT-led inspiration to digital payments and AI-enabled recommendations, the travel journey is becoming more connected and personalized. The next phase is about using technology meaningfully — to simplify planning, provide more relevant choices and create a smoother experience across the journey. As travel participation expands across geographies and occasions, digital innovation can play an important role in making travel more accessible, intuitive and personal."*

World Tourism Day 2026

Voices from the Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Industry



– Jose Ramapuram
Executive Director, Marketing, Evolve Back Resorts

"Technology is making travel more seamless, more personalised and more accessible, but as travel becomes increasingly connected digitally, there is a growing desire for technology to simply do its job quietly in the background. What comes to the fore is the human side of travel. They seek meals laced with local flavours, a conversation with someone who knows the place, a walk through a landscape they had only seen in photographs, or a story that gives them a different understanding of where they are. This is also changing the role of hospitality in today's digital world. Travellers are becoming more interested in spending meaningful time with a destination and engaging with what makes it distinctive. That calls for experiences that are rooted in the character of a place rather than ones that could be recreated anywhere. Food, architecture, nature, local traditions and most importantly, the people who know a destination intimately can all become part of that connection.

At Evolve Back, we have been working closely with our teams to create stays that leave travellers with a stronger sense of where they have been. The value of a memorable journey is not necessarily in how much you manage to see, but in how much of a place you can help your guests take away with them. Technology can help us discover, plan and experience a destination more seamlessly, but it need not be the experience itself. When it remains in the background, there is more room for the destination, the people and the experiences around us to take centre stage. That sense of place is what ultimately gives travel its meaning."

– Sohail Mirchandani
Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder, EkoStay

"World Tourism Day this year is about how digital tools and AI can redesign travel, and for us that is not a theme; it is how we run the business every single day. But the bigger story in India right now is a simple one. Indians are travelling within the country at a scale we have never seen, and the supply of good places to stay has not kept pace. As per NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Tourism's June 2026 report on unlocking growth in tourism and hospitality, India recorded 2.9 billion domestic tourist visits in 2024, well past the pre-pandemic peak of 2.3 billion, while a typical hotel project still takes 36 to 48 months to go from approval to opening.

The same report puts branded hotel inventory at under 8 percent of the country's total lodging rooms. That gap is where professionally managed homestays and villas come in. A well-run private home can be brought to market in months, not years, and it gives a family or a group the space, privacy and flexibility that a hotel room simply cannot. For us, technology is what makes that scale possible without losing the personal touch. Every check-in, every meal, every maintenance call runs on a backend built so the guest never has to think about it. As India travels more, the brands that win will be the ones that treat reliability as the real luxury, and the homestay sector, with the policy support it is finally starting to get, is ready to carry a much bigger share of that demand."

– Vijay Prabhu
Founder, Little Earth Group

"Tourism today stands at an important inflection point. It is no longer defined simply by the number of people travelling, but by the value that travel creates for destinations, communities, businesses and the traveller. India has tremendous potential in this space, with its diversity of culture, heritage, cuisine, landscapes and increasingly sophisticated hospitality ecosystem. The traveller is also evolving. There is a growing preference for experiences that feel authentic, locally rooted and meaningful, rather than simply checking destinations off a list. This presents a significant opportunity for the Indian tourism and hospitality industry to build destinations and experiences that encourage longer stays, deeper engagement and greater local participation.

The next phase of tourism growth must therefore be about creating stronger tourism ecosystems, where hospitality, local enterprises, culture, food, entertainment and communities come together to create a distinctive sense of place. Responsible development will be equally important, ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are shared while the character and resources of destinations are protected. At Little Earth Group, we see this as an opportunity to rethink how destinations are experienced and how hospitality can contribute to the larger tourism economy. India has the scale and diversity to become one of the world's most compelling tourism markets; the focus now should be on building experiences and infrastructure that can sustain that growth over the long term.

World Tourism Day is ultimately a reminder that tourism is not just an industry of movement. It is an industry of connection, opportunity and destination building."

– Abhinav Pathak
Co-founder & CEO, Escape Plan

"Travel has moved from being an event to being a habit. People are no longer saving up for one big annual trip. They are taking three or four shorter ones, adding a weekend to a work trip and travelling outside peak season. International travel is growing faster than domestic. That has changed what luggage means. It used to be a once-in-a-decade purchase, often inherited, bought on durability alone. Today it is a considered purchase with a much shorter replacement cycle. Households own multiple pieces in different sizes instead of one large suitcase, with design, weight and colour now sitting alongside price. Cabin-first is the biggest trend. Shorter trips and hand-baggage-only fares have made the cabin bag the primary bag rather than the companion piece. The trip is also no longer single-purpose.

– Mr. Gaurav Shiva
General Manager, The Orchid Hotel Mumbai

"India's travel and tourism landscape is evolving rapidly, with travellers moving beyond conventional stays to seek experiences that are personalized, authentic and purposeful. For hospitality leaders, this means looking at the entire guest journey—from discovery and planning to accommodation, dining and experiences. Artificial Intelligence will increasingly help hotels anticipate preferences, personalize recommendations and make the travel journey more seamless. However, technology must remain an enabler; the warmth, intuition and human connection that define hospitality cannot be automated. Food and beverage will also play a larger role in shaping destination experiences.

Travellers are increasingly curious about regional flavours, local ingredients and culinary traditions, creating opportunities for hotels to showcase the identity of a destination while supporting local producers and communities. At the same time, sustainability must move beyond isolated initiatives and become embedded in everyday operations—from energy and water efficiency to responsible sourcing and food-waste reduction. The future of tourism will ultimately depend on how well we balance innovation with authenticity, efficiency with responsibility, and technology with genuine human connection. For hospitality leaders, the opportunity is to anticipate evolving expectations and create experiences that guests remember long after their journey ends."

– Gaurav Gupta
Co-founder, Saltstayz

"World Tourism Day is a good moment to ask a simple question: how many of India's actual destinations does most of our hospitality infrastructure really serve? For years, quality stays have clustered around a handful of metros, while some of the country's richest travel experiences — spiritual, heritage, adventure and nature — have remained underserved. We believe the next phase of Indian hospitality has to go beyond the traditional hotel markets and move closer to the destinations and experiences travellers are actually seeking. Whether it's Rishikesh for the traveller chasing the Ganga and the rush of a river rapid, Ujjain and Indore for the spiritual and heritage circuit of Madhya Pradesh, or Gurgaon as a gateway to the lesser-known experiences spread across the Aravalis, we want our network to put a dependable stay closer to where the journey actually leads. Our hotels in Gurgaon, for instance, are not only designed for corporate and social travellers, but also for people looking to discover the trails, heritage sites, lakes, villages and other hidden gems that sit within and around the Aravalis, often just a short drive away.

We also think about the same traveller differently through the week. A corporate guest in Delhi or Indore on a Tuesday can just as easily be a weekend leisure traveller in Rishikesh or Ujjain by Saturday, and our properties are built to serve both occasions without compromise. As this year's global theme reminds us, technology has a real role to play here too — from how a traveller discovers a destination to how seamlessly they can book and experience their stay. For us, that isn't a separate innovation story. It is the infrastructure that can support India's next wave of tourism — connecting business and leisure, metros and lesser-known destinations, convenience and discovery, through one dependable network."

– Mr Abhishek Bhattacharya
Sales, WelcomHeritage Hotels

"On World Tourism Day, we are reminded that every property in our portfolio carries a living story—from historic forts and havelis that anchored communities, to boutique retreats, nature lodges, and wildlife sanctuaries dedicated to preserving fragile ecosystems. At WelcomHeritage, our role across our collection of heritage, nature, and wildlife retreats goes beyond hospitality; it is one of active stewardship.

In a country as culturally and naturally rich as India, responsible tourism is the catalyst that breathes new life into historic structures, creates sustainable livelihoods, and protects vital natural habitats. Across all our properties, we remain committed to ensuring these spaces remain vibrant and cared for—delivering authentic experiences for today's travellers while safeguarding India's heritage and environment for generations to come."

– Amit Damani,
Co-Founder, StayVista

"World Tourism Day is a good moment to recognise how much the Indian traveller has changed. Travel today is less about ticking off destinations and more about time spent together, whether it is three generations under one roof or a group of friends reconnecting over a long weekend. Private homes have become the heart of that experience. At StayVista, we see guests choosing a villa in the hills of Igatpuri or a plantation estate in Coorg not as a place to sleep, but as the reason for the trip itself. That, to us, is the future of Indian hospitality."

– Anirudh Lakhotia
Director, Ivory Destinations (The Golden Tusk and The Chamomile Estate)

"This World Tourism Day, we're reminded that Corbett doesn't just draw travellers for a safari drive; it asks something more of us: to protect the wilderness we're inviting people into. At The Golden Tusk, every experience we design, from our villas to the conversations we have with guests, carries that responsibility. We've seen firsthand how a well-informed traveller becomes a quiet advocate for the forest long after they've left, and that's the real dividend of tourism done right. Every destination needs more people who leave caring about what they saw. Tourism here isn't separate from conservation."

6th Edition of World Tourism Day Celebration Concludes with Grand Success in New Delhi,

Graced by Union Minister Dr. Raj Bhushan Choudhary

Travel Mail Desk

The Indian travel fraternity witnessed a monumental gathering this weekend as the 6th Edition of the World Tourism Day Celebration concluded successfully on September 26, 2026, at the UTSAV Hall at Udman Hotels & Resorts, New Delhi, graced by Union Minister Dr Raj Bhushan Choudhary.

Organized collaboratively by the Purvanchal Paryatan Association (PPA) and the Great Indian Travel Fest (GITF), the premier B2B event hosted a record-breaking convergence of over 800 travel delegates and industry leaders.

Built on the core philosophy of being an event "by the travel fraternity, for the travel fraternity," this year's celebration brought together diverse travel stakeholders, fostered business partnerships, strengthened industry relationships, and recognised excellence across the travel and tourism sector.

Distinguished Leadership and Inauguration

The mega convergence was graced by esteemed national and international dignitaries. Dr. Raj Bhushan Choudhary, Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti, attended the event to extend his support and highlight the vital role of tourism in driving economic empowerment and cultural integration across the nation.

The grand inaugural ceremony was jointly led by industry stalwart Mr. Subhash Goyal, Chairman of STIC Travel Group, and His Excellency Mr. Aleksander Sitnikov, Economics Counsellor of the Russian Federation, marking a distinguished opening to the day's proceedings.

Unmatched B2B Synergy and Networking

The event successfully facilitated high-value strategic networking with an exclusive lineup of more than 20 top-tier B2B exhibitors. The exhibition floor provided an expansive platform for destination showcasing, partnership building, business interactions, and exclusive B2B deal-making among key stakeholders from across the travel and tourism industry.

The strong participation of travel professionals created meaningful opportunities for exhibitors, buyers, travel agents, tour operators, DMCs, tourism professionals, associations, and other stakeholders to establish new business relationships and strengthen existing partnerships.

Celebrating the Spirit of Tourism

True to the spirit of World Tourism Day, the business convergence seamlessly blended professional networking with entertainment and celebration. The event featured a special Bollywood musical performance by Vishal Shrivastava, a Bollywood playback singer. Following the intensive B2B meetings and felicitation ceremony, delegates enjoyed a curated networking lunch alongside the electrifying musical performance, creating the perfect combination of business, networking, entertainment, and celebration.

The Organising Vision

The overwhelming response and successful execution of the 6th Edition of World Tourism Day Celebration 2026 were spearheaded by a dedicated core organizing committee:

Shridhar Jha
Pranav Bansal
Rajesh Dhankhar
Goldy Rati
Dilip Rajput

WTD 2026 Organizing Committee

The collective efforts of the organizing committee, exhibitors, sponsors, association partners, supporters, volunteers, and the entire travel fraternity contributed significantly to the success of this year's celebration. Due to the unprecedented volume of registrations and overwhelming response from the travel trade community, the organizing committee is already evaluating expanded infrastructure and capacity for the 7th Edition in 2027. The next edition is scheduled for 25th September 2027, with plans to accommodate an even larger footprint of domestic and international travel professionals.

Brightsun Travel celebrates India's diverse travel stories for World Tourism Day

Travel Mail Desk

Brightsun Travel celebrated World Tourism Day through an employee initiative that brought together India's cultural heritage, regional flavours and lesser-known destinations. Held at the company's Gurugram office in August, the celebration encouraged employees to share the stories, traditions and places that have shaped their roots, highlighting the diversity that continues to make India a compelling destination for travellers.

Employees presented hidden travel gems from their home states, drawing attention to destinations of cultural, natural and local significance that are often overlooked by mainstream itineraries. Teams also showcased signature regional dishes through food stalls, while colleagues wore traditional attire representing their home states. The initiative created an opportunity for employees to discover the richness of India through one another's experiences and celebrate the distinctive character of the country's many regions.

"India offers an extraordinary range of stories for travellers to discover, and this celebration gave our employees a meaningful opportunity to share the places, flavours and traditions that matter most to them," said **Sandeep Arora, Director, Brightsun Travel.** *"It was encouraging to see colleagues come together with such pride and curiosity, reminding us that every region has something unique to offer."*

Through the initiative, Brightsun Travel celebrated the culture and community that make travel more meaningful, while giving employees a platform to share the traditions and perspectives that shape who they are. For a company built on helping people discover new places, the day was a reminder that some of the richest travel stories come from the people already in the room.

The Future of Mountain Tourism Could Begin in Kangra

Travel Mail Desk

Over a decade ago, we chose Bir as the home of our first hostel in Himachal, at a time when it was still a quiet village known largely to a small community of paragliders and long-term backpackers. There was no blueprint for building hospitality in a region that was only beginning to find its place on India's tourism map. Instead, we were guided by a simple belief: Kangra, with its mountains, trails, open skies, and distinct way of life, deserved to be experienced thoughtfully and responsibly, not simply passed through.

That belief feels newly relevant with the appointment of Shri Sandeep Kumar as Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Himachal Pradesh. A native of Himachal himself, he brings a lived, personal understanding of the state that goes beyond his professional record. Having previously served as Deputy Commissioner of Kangra and later as Divisional Commissioner of the Kangra Division, he brings something the region has long needed: administrative leadership that understands its geography, its communities and its potential from the ground up, not from a policy document.

The Chief Minister's vision of positioning Kangra as Himachal's tourism capital is ambitious, and rightly so. Bir alone has grown into one of the world's most recognised paragliding destinations, drawing travellers not just for the adventure but for the slower, more grounded way of life that surrounds it. This is precisely the kind of asset that regenerative tourism, the model the world is increasingly moving towards, is built on. Not extraction, but exchange. Not volume, but value.

We have also seen, up close, how quickly the traveller is changing. Post-pandemic, the Indian traveller is no longer chasing checklists and Instagram-worthy vantage points alone. They are staying longer, seeking slower itineraries, and actively choosing destinations where their presence adds value rather than strain. Bir has become a quiet case study on reverse migration in this shift, drawing digital nomads, wellness seekers and repeat travellers who return not for novelty but for a sense of belonging. A tourism economy that recognises and nurtures this shift, rather than defaulting to volume-driven growth, stands to build something far more durable for Kangra's future.

If Himachal gets this right, Kangra will not just be another destination on a map. It will be a working model for what mountain tourism across India, and perhaps Asia, can look like when ambition is matched with understanding. That is the kind of future worth building towards, and one Zostel is glad to be a part of.

Department of IT, Electronics and Communications (DITEC) launches Tourism AI Chatbot for Goa

Travel Mail Desk

To accelerate digital transformation and promote safe, authentic tourism, the Department of Information Technology, Electronics & Communications (DITE&C), in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) and Goa Electronics Limited (GEL), has officially launched the Goa Tourism AI Chatbot. Released initially as a Beta version for further refinement, the AI-powered assistant is designed to provide visitors and residents with trusted, verified government information regarding Goa Tourism and GTDC services.

The launch took place during the Goa Yuva Tourism Meet 2026, at the hands of **Shri Rohan Khaunte, Hon'ble Minister for Information Technology, Electronics & Communications and Tourism.** Key dignitaries present at the launch included Shri Kabir Shirgaonkar, Director, DITE&C; Shri Kedar Naik, Director, Goa Tourism; Shri Kuldeep Arolkar, Chairman, GTDC; and Shri Jack Ajit Sukhija, President, Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG) and Smt. Revati Kumar, CEO, GEL.

Integrating AI into tourism marks a natural evolution for Goa's digital ecosystem. Speaking on how the chatbot safeguards travellers by delivering authentic government information, **Hon'ble Minister Shri Rohan Khaunte** said, *"In my previous tenure, I laid the foundation with the IT and Startup policies; the current focus is centred on deploying artificial intelligence for practical public solutions. While numerous private portals already exist, travellers often find unverified accommodations online. With this Tourism AI Chatbot, tourists can get secure, verified stay options and really enjoy Goa. If you have any query, you can converse with the bot; multilingual conversational support is available."*

The Tourism AI chatbot directly addresses traveller questions about verified stays, authentic cultural experiences, safe transit and local transport with a simple 'Chat with Us' feature. Currently live on both the official Goa Tourism website and the GTDC portal, the chatbot offers multilingual assistance in English and Hindi, with Marathi and Konkani to follow. It guides users through GTDC hotels and registered private stays, and provides transit help to reach Goa and travel within the state. It also includes built-in support for raising and tracking inquiry tickets.

This launch represents a continuous expansion of DITE&C's AI roadmap, following the introduction of the Goa Online AI Chatbot on the Goa Online portal in February and its integration onto WhatsApp in September. Extending this conversational AI framework to tourism, one of Goa's primary economic pillars, paves the way for similar AI integrations across other government departments in upcoming phases as DITE&C continues to improve public service delivery and AI adoption across the state.

From Kashi's Ganga Aarti to Ram Mandir: UPSTDC Unveils Five-Day 'Spiritual Triangle' Tour

Travel Mail Desk

With the festive season approaching, Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation has brought Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya together in a single four-night, five-day spiritual journey. Launched under the 'Visit My State' campaign, the 'Spiritual Triangle' Tour Package will remain available through the festive season, taking devotees from the ghats and temples of Kashi to the Sangam in Prayagraj and Ram Mandir in Ayodhya under one curated itinerary.

Beginning from Varanasi at 1:00 PM, the package covers major temples, sacred ghats, Buddhist sites and cultural landmarks across the three cities.

Highlighting the initiative, **Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh** said, *"The 'Spiritual Triangle' Tour Package under the 'Visit My State' campaign will connect Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya in one journey, making pilgrimage travel easier during the festive season and strengthening Uttar Pradesh's spiritual tourism circuit. With around 31.40 crore domestic and international tourist visits recorded in the state during the first three months of 2026, the upcoming festive months are expected to further boost footfall and spiritual tourism."*

The journey begins in Varanasi with visits to Sankat Mochan Temple, Durga Kund Temple and Assi Ghat, followed by a boat ride and the world-famous Ganga Aarti. The second day includes VIP darshan at Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Annapurna Temple and Kaal Bhairav Temple.

Travellers will then visit Sarnath, covering Dhamek Stupa, Chaukhandi Stupa, the Bodhi Tree, Ashoka Pillar and museum, along with Banaras Hindu University.

On the third day, the tour proceeds to Prayagraj, covering Anand Bhavan, a holy dip at the Sangam and Lete Hanuman Ji Temple. The following day, travellers will continue to Ayodhya for darshan at Hanumangarhi, Kanak Bhawan and Dashrath Mahal, followed by VIP darshan at Ram Mandir and Aarti at Saryu Ghat. The tour will conclude on the fifth day after breakfast, with departure for Ayodhya Airport or Railway Station.

The customisable package costs ₹14,400 per person in a Sedan for a minimum of four travellers and ₹13,000 per person in a Crysta for a minimum of six travellers. It includes AC transport, a boat ride, guide services, four nights of AC accommodation on a double-sharing basis and breakfast. Lunch and dinner will be payable directly by travellers.

UPSTDC Chairman and Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism, Culture and Religious Affairs, Amrit Abhijat, said, *"The 'Spiritual Triangle' package under the 'Visit My State' campaign brings Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya together in one curated journey, offering travellers a seamless way to experience Uttar Pradesh's diverse spiritual and cultural heritage while strengthening pilgrimage tourism."*

For bookings and additional details about the 'Spiritual Triangle' Tour Package, travellers can contact UPSTDC at 9149099890 or 7985816467.

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau to spotlight Destination Weddings at Three-City India Roadshow

Travel Mail Desk

The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau hosted a three-city roadshow across Hyderabad, Surat and Pune with a focused objective of strengthening Sri Lanka's positioning as a preferred destination for Indian weddings and celebrations.

The initiative will bring together leading wedding planners and tourism industry members across the three cities, creating a platform to showcase Sri Lanka's diverse wedding proposition and engage directly with the professionals who are shaping India's rapidly growing destination wedding market.

Senior representatives from the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, together with Sri Lanka missions in India, will participate in the roadshow and engage with wedding planners through dedicated networking and business interactions. The delegation will highlight Sri Lanka's wide range of wedding possibilities, from luxury beachfront celebrations and intimate destination ceremonies to culturally immersive experiences and bespoke multi-day wedding festivities.

The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau will be hosting a press conference in each city, providing an opportunity for senior

representatives to interact with the media and share insights into Sri Lanka's market strategies for India. This media outreach activity aims to further amplify Sri Lanka's wedding proposition and generate awareness around the destination's unique venues, hospitality, and experiences.

Deputy Managing Director, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Mr Chamila Jayarathne *"India is an extremely important market for Sri Lanka, and the Indian wedding segment presents a significant opportunity for us to deepen our engagement. The growing interest from Indian couples and families is a strong indication of the potential this segment holds. Through our three-city roadshow, we look forward to connecting with India's wedding fraternity and showcasing the diverse possibilities Sri Lanka offers for memorable destination weddings."*

Chairman, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Mr. Buddhika Hewawasam mentioned, *"The Indian wedding market is looking for destinations that can offer more than a beautiful backdrop; planners and families are seeking seamless hospitality, distinctive experiences and the ability to create celebrations that feel personal and memorable. Sri Lanka has a compelling story to tell in this space, with its beaches, luxury resorts, heritage, culture and experiential offerings. This roadshow across Hyderabad, Surat and Pune is designed to take that story directly to the wedding planners who are influencing destination choices, while the accompanying media press conferences will help build wider awareness and interest around Sri Lanka as a wedding destination"*.

With its easy accessibility from India, diverse venues, luxury hospitality, and ability to combine celebrations with memorable pre- and post-wedding experiences, Sri Lanka is positioning itself as far more than just a wedding backdrop. It is a destination where the wedding, the celebration, and the journey become one unforgettable experience.

Brand USA Selects 15 Global Travel Trade Ambassadors from India and Partners with Emirates as Preferred Airline Partner to Inspire Travel During America's 250th Anniversary

Travel Mail Desk

As part of America's 250th anniversary celebration, Brand USA has appointed 250 Global Travel Trade Ambassadors worldwide, including 15 from India. This has created a global network of travel advisors to inspire international visitation to the United States, strengthen destination expertise, and support travel trade engagement throughout the semiquincentennial celebration and beyond. Additionally, Brand USA India has partnered with Emirates as the preferred airline for the Global Ambassadors Program in India, enhancing this initiative by facilitating seamless connectivity to the US.

"Strong partnerships with the travel trade are fundamental to Brand USA's success," said **Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA.** *"As we continue to grow international demand for the United States, the Global Ambassador Program recognizes top professionals who influence travel decisions every day. As one of Brand USA's largest coordinated travel trade initiatives to date, the program reflects our long-term commitment to advisor education, industry collaboration, and building a stronger global network that benefits travellers, our destination partners, and communities across the United States."*

"The response to Brand USA's Global Ambassador Program reflects the incredible enthusiasm travel advisors have to connect international travellers with the United States," said **Malcolm Smith, senior vice president, global markets & chief trade and product development officer at Brand USA.** *"The volume and quality of applications exceeded our expectations, and it was inspiring to see how many U.S. specialists are committed to growing their destination knowledge while helping elevate the industry around them. These 250 ambassadors represent a network of trusted professionals who will share best practices, mentor their peers, and strengthen confidence in selling the United States during America's 250th anniversary and for many years to come."*

The Global Ambassador Program recognizes travel professionals who demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting travel to the United States and to creating opportunities for ongoing education, collaboration, and peer-to-peer engagement. The program underscores the value of empowering experienced travel advisors to share destination knowledge with their peers, creating a multiplier effect that extends well beyond individual bookings.

Sheema Vohra, Account Director-India, Brand USA, shared, *"India continues to be one of Brand USA's most dynamic and high-potential markets. The Global Ambassador Program is an exciting milestone in Brand USA's efforts to deepen travel trade engagement worldwide. With 15 ambassadors representing India, we are creating a stronger network of U.S. destination advocates who will share their expertise, inspire confidence in selling the destination, and support sustained growth in visitation to the United States. The collaboration with Emirates as the preferred airline partner further paves the way for inspiring more travel to the USA in this highly significant year, the 250th anniversary of America's Independence."*

Tourism Bhutan Appoints BlinkBrand Solutions as Official Representation Partner for India and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Travel Mail Desk

Bhutan is entering a new phase of market development in its tourism journey with a renewed focus on strengthening and growing its source markets and deepening its engagement with travellers that is in sync with the kingdom's wider tourism goals. In line with this vision, the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Industry, Commerce & Employment, Kingdom of Bhutan, has appointed BlinkBrand Solutions, a destination representation company offering specialist marketing, public relations and trade engagement services, as its official Public Relations and Sales Representative for the Indian and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) markets.

The appointment marks a significant step in Bhutan's renewed focus on developing its source markets, with India remaining the kingdom's largest and most strategically important tourism market, while also expanding reach and awareness in the fast-growing high-yield MENA region. For BlinkBrand, the mandate brings together two closely aligned strengths: Bhutan's distinctive philosophy of High-Value, Low-Volume tourism and BlinkBrand's expertise in connecting destinations with rapidly evolving travel trade and high-value traveller segments.

Commenting on the appointment, **Damcho Rinzin, Director, Department of Tourism, Bhutan,** said, *"This mandate represents more than a conventional destination marketing appointment. It is about moving beyond the conventional Bhutan itineraries and showcasing the breadth of experiences available across our Himalayan kingdom. Through this mandate, Blink will work towards strengthening Bhutan's engagement with the travel trade, media, consumers and relevant travel communities, while highlighting Bhutan as a destination for wellness and spirituality, culture, nature and adventure, family travel, luxury, MICE and Destination Weddings, and also deeply immersive experiential journeys and slow travel."*

"India holds a unique and advantageous place in Bhutan's tourism ecosystem. As Bhutan's closest neighbour and the largest source market, India consistently accounts for the largest share of annual arrivals into the Kingdom. In addition to the deep historical, cultural, spiritual and people-to-people ties, Bhutan and India have multiple direct flight routes and land border crossings that make Bhutan one of the most accessible international destinations for Indian travellers," **he further added.**

Speaking for BlinkBrand, Anisha Prakash, Head of Marketing and Strategic Alliances, said, *"BlinkBrand is delighted to partner with the Department of Tourism, Bhutan, to support the continued growth of the country's tourism sector. Our focus will be on bringing the Kingdom's evolving story and approach that is in sync with its wider national vision of growth to the right audiences across India and the MENA region, building deeper engagement with the right trade, media and high-value traveller segments, build visitation while respecting the destination's high-value, low-volume and regenerative tourism philosophy."*

The Utah Office of Tourism Appoints Sartha Global Marketing as India Representative

Travel Mail Desk

The Utah Office of Tourism, the official state agency that promotes travel, advertising, and economic growth across Utah, USA, has appointed Sartha Global Marketing LLP as its representative in India. This strategic partnership marks the destination's continued focus on expanding the rapidly growing Indian outbound travel market for the state.

Sartha Global Marketing will lead Utah's engagement in India with the travel trade and media by implementing a range of public relations and marketing initiatives, positioning the state as a compelling, year-round US destination for Indian travellers.

India's relevance as an international source market for Utah is steadily rising. India ranked ninth in visitor spending for the state in 2025, and forecasts suggest visitor spending from India could grow by 16 percent between 2024 and 2030, driven by a combination of long-haul aspiration, improved air connectivity into the US, and Indian travellers' growing interest in experiential, nature-led itineraries.

Utah offers a diverse mix of some of the finest outdoor recreation, including great skiing and snowboarding, whitewater rafting, boating, hiking, biking, and fishing, as well as some of America's best National Parks, National Monuments, and State Parks. Coupled with great urban areas and unique towns rich in history, local heritage, and vibrant arts, it makes Utah one of the most unique year-round destinations in the United States.

According to **Rachel Bremer, Global Markets Director at the Utah Office of Tourism,** *"By partnering with Sartha, we plan to expand our outreach in the Indian market and position Utah as a premier travel destination for aspiring travellers. This appointment builds on our growing travel trade and media network and destination awareness in India, generating greater interest among potential Indian travellers."*

Speaking about the appointment, **Sheema Vohra, Managing Director at Sartha Global Marketing,** added, *"We are delighted to represent Utah in the Indian market. With the state's unique topography, endless outdoor adventures, and a diverse range of experiences for all ages throughout the year, we hope to inspire more Indians to discover this beautiful destination."*

Emirates and Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Join Forces to Drive Visitor Growth Across Key Markets

Travel Mail Desk

The MOU was signed at the Arabian Travel Market by Adnan Kazim, Emirates' Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer and Her Excellency Phillipa Harrison, Chief Executive Officer of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority.

Under the MOU, RAKTDA and Emirates will work closely to explore implementing promotional activities across select markets. This will include joint marketing and advertising, trade and media familiarisation programmes, with RAKTDA supporting visits through curated ground experiences that showcase the destination and sharing marketing costs for multi-market campaign activities in Ras Al Khaimah's target markets.

Both parties will explore developing bespoke products and packages for Emirates customers, to be promoted to Emirates' customers directly through 'Dubai Experience' on the airline's website, alongside incentives for tour operators and the wider travel trade – enabling tourists to explore the full range of activities and experiences the UAE has to offer. RAKTDA and Emirates will also explore opportunities to share insights that identify what traveller segments are prioritised and leveraged across marketing campaigns.

H.E. Phillipa Harrison, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, said *"As we expand our destination offering and cement Ras Al Khaimah's positioning globally, working with Emirates will help connect the destination with audiences across key international markets. Through our collaboration with Emirates, we aim to build long-term value for our tourism partners and offer travellers more reasons to visit the UAE and explore Ras Al Khaimah."*

Adnan Kazim, Emirates' Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer, said *"We are proud to support the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority and their 2030 tourism targets. Emirates' network reach of close to 140 destinations provides the scale required to reach new travellers and encourage them to expand their itinerary with the rich experiences Ras Al Khaimah has to offer. As our home and hub, we remain committed to showcasing the UAE's breadth of attractions and depth of experiences available for visitors."*

Located just 45 minutes from Dubai International Airport, Ras Al Khaimah offers incredible natural landscapes, complemented by world-class hospitality and visitor experiences. With 68 kilometres of coastline, terracotta desert dunes, and Jebel Jais, the UAE's highest mountain, the emirate offers a distinctive setting for holidays that combine relaxation, outdoor adventure and cultural discovery.

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority is targeting more than 3.5 million annual visitors by 2030 as the destination continues to expand its offering through new hotel openings, developments by major international hospitality brands and landmark projects. Together, these investments will broaden the choice of accommodation and experiences available to visitors, supporting the emirate's long-term tourism ambitions and creating further opportunities for collaboration with Emirates and its travel trade partners.

Kenya Tourism Board Enters into Partnerships with Emirates and Qatar Airways Targeting More Visitors and a KSH 15 Billion Tourism Boost

Travel Mail Desk

Kenya is targeting a major increase in tourist arrivals from the Middle East, backed by new marketing partnerships with global aviation giants Emirates and Qatar Airways. The Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), signed at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) tourism expo taking place in Dubai, will combine international air connectivity with targeted destination marketing campaigns designed to turn traveller interest into bookings and arrivals.

The partnerships will see KTB and the two airlines jointly undertake destination awareness and publicity campaigns, conversion-focused marketing, travel trade engagement and media familiarisation programmes across key source markets.

An Emirates representative said the partnership would strengthen the link between air access and destination demand. *"Connectivity provides the pathway, but destination marketing creates the demand. Through this partnership, Emirates and the Kenya Tourism Board will jointly take Kenya's tourism proposition to consumers and the travel trade, to convert awareness into bookings and bring more travellers to Kenya."*

A Qatar Airways representative said the partnership would help take Kenya's tourism proposition to a wider international audience while supporting stronger conversion. *"Kenya has a compelling proposition for international travellers, from wildlife and conservation to the coast, culture, adventure, wellness and business events. Working with KTB allows us to combine our global reach with targeted destination marketing and create greater demand for travel to Kenya."*

KTB Chief Executive Officer June Chepkemei said the MoUs mark a shift towards more commercially focused destination marketing, with the Board increasingly measuring partnerships by their ability to generate actual travel demand. *"We are moving from visibility to conversion. The question is not simply how many people see Kenya; it is how many decide to book Kenya, fly to Kenya and spend their time and money in our destination. These partnerships give us the reach, connectivity and marketing platforms to make that conversion happen."*

Mauritius Tourism India Strengthens India Ties as Indian Arrivals Grow 14.5% in the First Half of 2026

Travel Mail Desk

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) deepened its engagement with India through a four-city initiative across Pune, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad — its third marketing operation in the country since January 2026 — reaffirming the country's importance as a key tourism market and strengthening the longstanding cultural and people-to-people ties between Mauritius and India.

From January to July 2026, Mauritius welcomed 51,005 Indian visitors, recording a 14.5% year-on-year growth. The rise reflects the destination's continued popularity among Indian travellers and growing interest across a wider range of travel segments.

The four cities were selected for their growing outbound travel potential and role as regional travel hubs. The initiative brought together 20+ tourism partners from Mauritius, including hotels, DMCs and airlines, for direct interactions with travel professionals across the markets.

The engagements highlighted Mauritius beyond its established appeal for beach holidays, honeymoons and weddings, showcasing opportunities across leisure, family travel, luxury, MICE, wellness, golf, gastronomy and adventure. Travel advisors also gained insights into evolving traveller

preferences and the destination's diverse accommodation and experience offerings, helping them develop more varied Mauritius itineraries for their clients.

Held ahead of the upcoming travel season, the initiative also allowed the trade to familiarise themselves with the latest destination offerings and plan programmes well in advance.

For Indian travellers, Mauritius combines its beaches with a rich cultural heritage, nature, adventure, gastronomy, wellness and wildlife. Experiences such as Grand Bassin, Aapravasi Ghat, Chamarel, Black River Gorges, Le Morne Brabant and Casela offer opportunities to discover the island beyond its coastline.

The destination also benefits from visa-free access, a multicultural and multilingual population, widely available Indian culinary options, established hospitality infrastructure and direct air connectivity from key Indian cities, further supporting its appeal to the Indian market.

"India is much more than an important tourism market for Mauritius; it is a market with which we share deep cultural and historical connections. The warmth and familiarity between our two countries create a natural bond that extends into travel. Our engagement across Pune, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad was an opportunity to strengthen this relationship, understand the evolving Indian traveller and showcase the different facets of Mauritius. By engaging with the market ahead of the travel season, we wanted to give our partners the time and confidence to plan and promote Mauritius more effectively." **Benoit Harter, Director – India, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority.**

MTPA will continue to build on its India strategy through trade partnerships, familiarisation trips for travel agents, media initiatives and targeted activity across major cities and emerging travel markets, with a focus on presenting Mauritius as a diverse, accessible and year-round destination for Indian travellers.

Highline Warsaw Draws 700,000 Visitors in First Year, Strengthening Warsaw's Tourism Offering

Travel Mail Desk

Highline Warsaw, the highest observation deck in the European Union, has welcomed nearly 700,000 visitors in its first year of operation, marking a strong first year for one of Warsaw's newest tourism attractions.

Located 230 metres above the Polish capital, Highline Warsaw welcomed visitors from 152 countries, with approximately 270,000 international visitors accounting for around 40% of total attendance. The Netherlands, Italy and Germany were the leading international markets, while visitors also travelled from destinations as far as New Zealand.

Since opening, Highline Warsaw has become an addition to Warsaw's tourism offering, combining panoramic views of the capital with cultural, lifestyle and special-event experiences. The attraction has also become a popular setting for personal milestones, with at least 20 marriage proposals taking place during its first year.

"Highline Warsaw has rapidly become a powerful symbol of Warsaw's growing appeal on the international tourism map. Its first-year success, with 700,000 visitors from all over the world, places the site among Europe's most compelling urban observation experiences and reflects Magnicity's ambition to create destinations that elevate the way people discover cities," said **Alexia Vettier, CEO of Magnicity.** Highline Warsaw has also generated strong digital engagement, with its Instagram content recording more than 23 million views between May 2025 and July 2026, while its profile grew to approximately 31,000 followers.

With its growing international visitor base and distinctive location above the city, Highline Warsaw continues to add a new dimension to Warsaw's visitor experience, offering travellers an opportunity to experience the Polish capital from a unique perspective.

Qatar's 2026/2027 Calendar Brings a 'World of Events' to Life

Travel Mail Desk

From Formula 1 and international football to Art Basel Qatar, food festivals and desert adventures, more than 560 events will give travellers new reasons to visit, explore and stay longer.

Qatar's 2026/2027 events calendar brings together more than 560 events, festivals and championships across sport, art and culture, entertainment, family experiences and outdoor activities.

As Eng. Abdulaziz Ali Al-Mawlawi, Chief Executive Officer of Visit Qatar, explains: "Qatar's strength as a leading tourism destination lies not only in the diversity of experiences it offers, but in its exceptional ability to bring together world-class events, strategic partnerships and seamless experiences."

Although Doha remains the main entry point for many visitors, the calendar provides additional reasons to explore the city, coastline and desert as part of one itinerary.

The programme brings together international sport, live entertainment, family activities, cultural events and outdoor experiences. Visitors may attend a championship, explore cultural institutions, join a desert excursion or enjoy a food festival during the same stay.

The Visit Qatar app surpassed 230,000 users in 2026, compared with approximately 105,000 in 2025. A new Widget, initially available to Apple users, provides direct access to upcoming events without opening the full application.

With more than 560 events scheduled for 2026/2027, A World of Events in Qatar presents a year-round programme of sport, culture, entertainment, food and outdoor experiences.

Korea Tourism Organization New Delhi Office Hosts Travel Mart and Roadshow in Chennai

Travel Mail Desk

The Korea Tourism Organization New Delhi Office (KTO) hosted a travel mart and roadshow in Chennai at the ITC Grand Chola, bringing together Korea's tourism industry with Tamil Nadu's travel trade community.

More than 500 travel trade professionals attended the roadshow, including 16 Korean destination management companies (DMCs) and 5 airline partners. Representatives from the Korea Visa Application Centre were also present, offering attendees direct insight into visa processes for travel to Korea.

The roadshow saw participation from several distinguished guests, including:

- **Ms. Hyeran Chun, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Chennai**
- **Mr. Raja Gopal Sunkara, IAS, Director of Tourism, & Managing Director of Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation**
- **Mr. Nam Soo Park, Head, Korea Visa Application Centre**

Members of leading travel trade associations, including TAAI, TAFI, OTOAI, ETAA, and SKÅL International India, also attended, reflecting strong industry interest in the growing tourism relationship between Korea and the southern region.

Ms. Cho Yoonmi, Director, Korea Tourism Organization New Delhi Office, made her first visit to Chennai. She shared *"The presence of 16 DMCs and five airline partners in one room here in Chennai shows just how seriously the industry is taking Korea as a growing destination for Indian travellers. I was genuinely encouraged by the trade's enthusiasm today. We are also working closely with our airline partners to strengthen connectivity from the southern region, making it easier than ever for travellers here to explore Korea. This is just the start. We're committed to building long-term partnerships across Tamil Nadu and the southern region."*

The evening program continued with the KTO team presenting an overview of Korea's tourism offerings to the attendees, followed by a performance by THE PAINTERS, a Korean live art performance group known for combining painting, music, dance, and visual artistry. The event concluded with a gala dinner, bringing together trade partners, government officials, and industry representatives to mark the occasion.

Oman builds MICE Momentum in India with Three-City Sales Mission

Travel Mail Desk

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman has strengthened its engagement with India's MICE industry through a three-city MICE Sales Mission across Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi, bringing together Omani tourism stakeholders with key Indian MICE and corporate travel specialists and other industry partners.

Across the three cities, the Omani delegation engaged with leading corporate and MICE decision-makers from sectors including banking, insurance, consumer goods, travel and events. The mission aimed to deepen trade relationships, build greater awareness of Oman's MICE offering, and identify new opportunities for corporate groups.

Oman's short flying time from India, coupled with its hospitality infrastructure and diverse experiences, emerged as key advantages. The mission further reinforced Oman's potential in the corporate incentive segment. Discussions with major corporations and MICE stakeholders highlighted the destination's appeal for dealer and employee incentive movements, with group sizes of 650–700 delegates, as well as larger programmes accommodating up to 1,500–2,000 delegates.

Mohammed Al Jabri, Head, Business Development & Strategic Partnerships, Ministry of Heritage & Tourism, Sultanate of Oman: *"India continues to be a strategically important market for Oman, and the MICE segment offers considerable scope for further growth. Through this Sales Mission, we have had the opportunity to engage directly with key decision-makers and understand the evolving requirements of the Indian corporate and MICE sector. The strong interest in Oman reinforces the potential for deeper partnerships and a stronger pipeline of business events from India."*

Al Muatasim Almarhoon, Tourism Events Specialist, Ministry of Heritage & Tourism, Sultanate of Oman: *"The discussions across Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi have provided valuable insights into what Indian MICE planners are looking for when selecting a destination. Oman's accessibility, hospitality infrastructure and diversity of experiences allow us to create programmes that go beyond the traditional conference format. We look forward to working closely with our Indian trade partners to develop more compelling and customised experiences for corporate groups."*

Arjun Chadha, Tourism Events Specialist, Ministry of Heritage & Tourism, Sultanate of Oman: *"India's MICE landscape is evolving rapidly, with corporates increasingly looking for destinations that offer ease of access, value, and experiences that delegates can take back with them. The response to Oman during this mission has been encouraging, with discussions ranging from mid-sized corporate groups to larger incentive movements. Our focus now is to build on these conversations, strengthen trade partnerships, and convert this interest into a sustained pipeline of MICE business for Oman."*

Bintan Island Makes a Stronger Play for India's MICE Market, Hosts Corporates Across Diverse Industries

Travel Mail Desk

Bintan Resorts, Vanilla Hospitality and Air India, the airline partner, jointly organised a corporate familiarisation trip to Bintan, Indonesia. Vanilla Hospitality and Air India facilitated the participation of senior representatives from leading companies across the pharmaceuticals, life sciences, energy, manufacturing, consumer goods, aviation, hospitality, travel services and event-management sectors.

The programme was designed to introduce the delegation to Bintan's potential for conferences, corporate gatherings, off-sites, employee-engagement programmes and leadership retreats. Participants explored the destination's resort portfolio, meeting and event spaces, dining options and group activities.

Located in Indonesia's Riau Archipelago, Bintan Resorts is accessible by ferry from Singapore, allowing corporate groups from India to combine international air connectivity with an island setting. The itinerary demonstrated how formal business sessions could be complemented by team-building activities, wellness, recreation, nature and beachfront experiences.

Commenting on the evolving corporate-events landscape, **Mr. Abdul Wahab, Chief Operating Officer, Bintan Resorts,** said, *"Corporate events are becoming increasingly experience-led, with Indian companies looking beyond conventional venues to offer employees and leadership teams something distinctive and memorable. Bintan Resorts has the capacity and flexibility to cater to this demand across different group sizes and programme formats. Its accessibility through Singapore, combined with its meeting infrastructure and diverse experiences, makes it a strong choice for Indian corporates seeking both purpose and impact from their events."*

The trip formed part of Vanilla Engage, an initiative by Vanilla Hospitality that connects corporate decision-makers with destinations and hospitality partners through first-hand engagement. It enabled participants to evaluate Bintan from a planning perspective and understand how its different elements could be incorporated into future corporate programmes.

Mr. Farhat Samuel Roberts, Head of Sales & Strategic Partnerships, Vanilla Hospitality, said, *"Destination decisions are far more informed when corporate planners can experience the product themselves. Through Vanilla Engage, our aim was to move beyond a conventional presentation and allow participants to understand how Bintan could work for their own teams and business requirements. Bringing decision-makers directly to the destination creates more meaningful conversations and helps translate interest into practical programme possibilities."*

The familiarisation trip reinforced the opportunity to position Bintan Resorts more prominently within India's outbound MICE and corporate travel market. It also highlighted the value of collaboration between the destination, hospitality and aviation sectors in introducing Indian corporate decision-makers to new possibilities for international meetings and events.

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DISCOVER THE OTHER ISRAEL

Exclusive Interview Ms. Galit Hoffman, Consul – Tourism Affairs, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India

Ms. Galit Hoffman
- Consul - Tourism Affairs, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India

- Siddharth Gupta

Ms. Galit Hoffman on Israel's evolving India strategy, new tourism experiences and the road to 100,000 Indian visitors

For Indian travellers, Israel has long been associated with pilgrimage and its revered holy sites. But the destination's tourism proposition extends well beyond spirituality, bringing together beaches, nightlife, culinary experiences, adventure, culture and business tourism.

For Galit, broadening this understanding is an important part of Israel's engagement with the Indian market.

Hoffman brings a particularly deep understanding of India. Now in her eighth year in the country, she spent six years in Delhi, including two years as spokesperson at the Israeli Embassy and four years representing Israel's Ministry of Defence, before moving into tourism. She is now based in Mumbai, bringing experience across government, media and the private sector to her current tourism role.

In an exclusive conversation with Travel Mail, Hoffman spoke about the evolving Indian traveller, Israel's opportunities in leisure and MICE, destination weddings, film tourism, lesser-known destinations and the ambition to welcome 100,000 Indian visitors.

FROM TEL AVIV TO THE DEAD SEA

For Hoffman, Israel's appeal to Indian travellers extends well beyond its identity as the Holy Land. While the country's holy sites remain an important draw, she believes Israel has a much broader proposition, combining culture, nature and adventure within a compact destination.

"You can come for the holy places, but you will definitely find much more afterwards."

Tel Aviv, she points out, brings together beautiful beaches, nightlife, history, culture, music and culinary experiences. The Dead Sea offers the distinctive experience of floating in its waters, while the northern mountains offer skiing and the Red Sea in the south provides opportunities for diving.

The variety, she believes, allows Israel

I to appeal to different traveller profiles. Families can combine history and culture with nature and adventure, while younger travellers and Gen Z can discover Tel Aviv's nightlife and contemporary experiences.

For Indians however, Hoffman sees another advantage that goes beyond the tourism product itself: the connection between the people of the two countries.

A connection beyond government

The India and Israel relationship, according to Hoffman, is not limited to government or defence ties. Having lived in India for eight years, she sees a strong cultural connection between the people of both countries.

"The most unique thing about Israel and India is the people-to-people connection."

She points to similarities in family values, dinner gatherings and the warmth and openness of both cultures. Her own experience of living and working in India has reinforced that connection, with Hoffman describing how welcomed she has felt during her years in the country.

For her, this familiarity can become an important part of the destination story, which gives Indian travellers another reason to feel comfortable discovering Israel.

Leisure meets MICE

Leisure remains one of the key segments in Israel's India strategy, but Hoffman also sees potential in MICE and business travel.

Israel offers convention infrastructure and hospitality in destinations such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Hoffman also highlights the country's established conference ecosystem across sectors including cyber security, agriculture and water technology.

The opportunity lies in combining business with leisure: travellers attending conferences or corporate events can also experience Israel beyond the meeting venue, bringing together professional commitments with the country's cultural, historical and tourism attractions.

Hoffman also believes the Indian MICE market can benefit from looking beyond the destinations that have traditionally dominated the segment and exploring new experiences and locations.

Looking further from the familiar

While Tel Aviv and Jerusalem remain important parts of an Israeli itinerary, Hoffman wants Indian travellers and the trade to look further. She highlights Haifa, in northern Israel, with its Bahá'í Temple and Gardens, as well as the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

Further south, Eilat, located alongside the Red Sea, offers diving and marine experiences. As a diver herself, Hoffman is particularly enthusiastic about the region.

"As a diver who has travelled around the world, I can say there is nothing quite like the Red Sea."

In the north, Mount Hermon offers skiing, adding yet another dimension to Israel's tourism proposition.

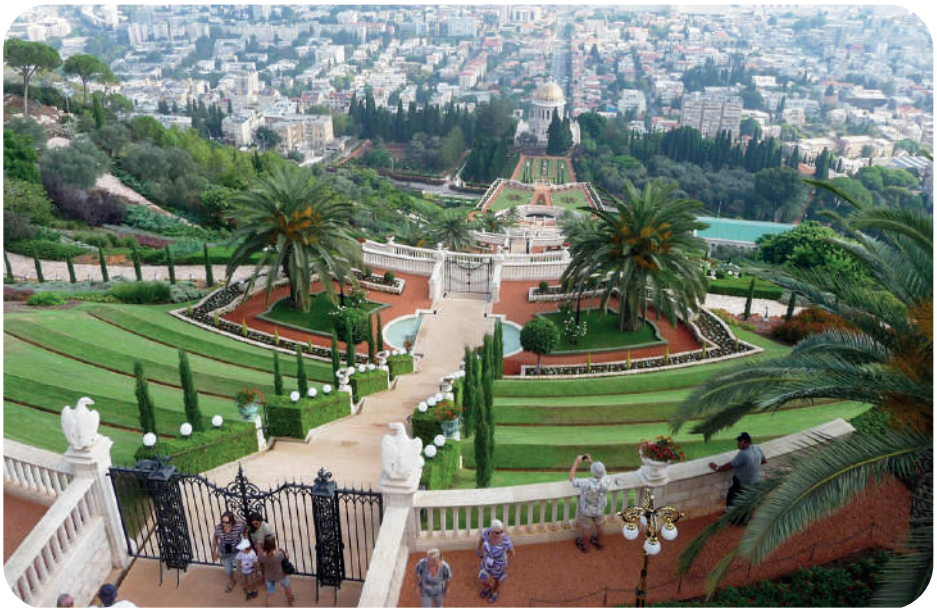
For a seven-day itinerary, Hoffman suggests combining Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, Haifa and the Sea of Galilee. It brings together urban experiences, spirituality, nature and culture.

Weddings, films and the power of pop culture

India's destination wedding and entertainment industries represent another area of potential for Israel.

For Hoffman, the destination's strength lies not in competing purely on individual attributes such as beaches or shopping, but in the unusual combination of experiences available.

Tel Aviv, for example, combines technology and innovation with beaches, restaurants, nightlife, cultural events, film festivals and culinary festivals. That blend, she believes,



creates a distinctive proposition for Indian celebrations and events.

The same idea extends to the film industry. The popularity of the series Fauda in India has already introduced Indian audiences to an aspect of Israeli culture and landscape, and Hoffman says IMOT is working with the film industry to explore greater engagement with Indian productions.

"I would love to see Bollywood come to Israel to shoot films and music videos."

Her Mumbai base is particularly relevant to this ambition, putting the tourism office closer to India's film industry. While incentives remain an area that requires further work, Hoffman sees clear potential for greater collaboration.

And there is one particularly ambitious personal goal:

"I want to bring Amitabh Bachchan to Israel."

Hoffman notes that the Bollywood icon is hugely popular in Israel.

The road to 100,000

The ambition for the outbound market is clear.

According to Hoffman, Indian arrivals to Israel reached almost 70,000 visitors annually before COVID-19. Looking ahead, the target is to reach 100,000 Indian visitors.

Getting there, however, will require more than destination promotion. Hoffman acknowledges the need to rebuild confidence following the recent period of conflict and, importantly, reconnect the Indian travel trade with the destination.

IMOT is therefore focusing heavily on trade engagement and destination education. Roadshows are planned in Bengaluru, Mumbai and Delhi, alongside a major webinar, participation at travel exhibitions and multiple FAM trips, including a luxury travel-agent programme.

The objective is to allow travel agents and tour operators to rediscover Israel and understand the breadth of experiences available to Indian travellers.

For Hoffman, the next chapter of Israel's India story is ultimately about moving beyond what's familiar and encouraging Indian travellers to see a destination where spirituality, culture, leisure, business and adventure can all form part of the same journey.

THE TRAVELLER'S ISRAEL

- **WHEN TO GO**
  Spring & Autumn
- **HOW LONG**
  7–10 Days
- **START WITH**
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- **GO BEYOND**
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- **EXPERIENCE**
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Floating in the Dead Sea | Bahá'í Gardens | Red Sea experiences | Tel Aviv's beach & city life

Jordan brings history to life with real-feel Heritage Experiences

Travel Mail Desk

Across Jordan's most storied landscape, a new generation of immersive heritage experiences is inviting visitors to step directly into moments that shaped the region. From Roman legions marching through ancient cities, to the desert campaigns of 1916 unfolding across the dunes of Wadi Rum, to the intricate mosaic artistry of Madaba brought to life before their eyes, these experiences are a blend of historical accuracy with theatrical staging, live performance, and site-specific storytelling, offering a far more participatory alternative to traditional guided tours.

Here are the four absolute must-dos that you must experience yourself:

Walk Through Roman History in Jerash

Jerash is the kind of place where history feels remarkably close. Visitors can walk along the ancient colonnaded streets, explore temples and public spaces, and enter the South Theatre that once hosted performances for the city's residents. Rather than simply looking at Roman ruins, travellers can spend time exploring the city and imagining what everyday life may have looked like here almost two thousand years ago.

The city's golden age came under Roman rule, and today Jerash is recognised as one of the best-preserved Roman provincial towns in the world. Its streets, theatres, temples, fountains and plazas reveal the scale and character of Roman urban life in the region.

The South Theatre, built between 90–92 AD, could accommodate more than 3,000 spectators and is known for its remarkable acoustics. The original Cardo, still paved with its ancient stones, also gives visitors a sense of how the city was planned and experienced centuries ago.

Take the Journey Through 1916 in Wadi Rum

Wadi Rum is famous for its vast desert landscapes, but there is another story waiting to be discovered here. The Journey Through 1916 experience takes visitors back to the period of the Great Arab Revolt through an immersive train experience.

Developed with the support of the Jordan Heritage Revival Company (JHRC), a key partner in the Kingdom's historic tourism sector, the Jordan Tourism Board is promoting this history-based experience that channels tourism revenue directly into local communities, including employment opportunities for retired military personnel and residents of underserved areas.

The experience features a collection of working steam locomotives that were formerly used as part of a pilgrimage route and are closely associated with the Great Arab Revolt. This adds a historical dimension to a destination otherwise widely known for its dramatic desert landscapes.

Travelling through the desert while discovering the history associated with the revolt creates a very different way to experience Wadi Rum. It brings together the landscape, the story and the sense of adventure in one experience. The experience allows visitors to connect with an important chapter in Jordan's modern history while experiencing the unique setting of Wadi Rum.

Discover the Stories Behind Madaba's Mosaics

In Madaba, history can be found in extraordinary detail. Known as the City of Mosaics, the destination is home to the famous 6th-century Madaba Mosaic Map, which depicts the Holy Land and surrounding areas.

Exploring the city's historic churches and mosaic traditions gives visitors an opportunity to see how craftsmanship, faith and history have been passed down through generations. The mosaic map is housed in the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George and is a remarkable record of Byzantine Jordan, Palestine and lower Egypt. Made from hundreds of thousands of naturally coloured tesserae, the surviving map continues to offer a detailed glimpse into the geography of the region.

Beyond the famous map, Madaba is home to other Byzantine and Umayyad mosaic works depicting flowers, plants, birds, animals and scenes from everyday life. The city's Archaeological Park and Museum also preserve several important examples of this long-standing artistic tradition.

Follow the Silk Route in Petra

Petra was much more than the iconic Treasury seen in photographs. The ancient Nabataean city was an important trading hub where caravans travelling between Arabia, Egypt and the Levant came together. Goods, ideas and cultures passed through the city, making it an important link in the historic trade networks that connected the region.

Walking through the Siq and exploring Petra's monuments today offers a chance to imagine the merchants, travellers and caravans that once made their way through this remarkable city.

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Petra became a major caravan centre for the incense of Arabia, the silks of China and the spices of India, positioning it at a crossroads between Arabia, Egypt and Syria-Phoenicia.

The city's prosperity was closely linked to these trade routes, while its ingenious water-management system supported settlement in an otherwise arid landscape. Today, walking through its passages and gorges offers travellers a way to experience the scale of a city shaped by trade, culture and the movement of people across the region.

So, build your itineraries around these cultural and historical offerings and learn for yourself how these experiences represent a distinctive way to differentiate the destination — one rooted not in what visitors see, but in what they get to live.

Empire State Building

What's New for Visitors, From Tickets to Experiences

Travel Mail Desk

The Empire State Building is a leading New York City attraction, offering a range of visitor experiences and ticket options. Here is how to plan a perfect visit, what to expect, and insider tips for the number one attraction in the USA in Tripadvisor's 2026 Traveller's Choice Awards: Best of the Best Things to Do.

Empire State Building Observatory Tickets

The Empire State Building offers several ticket options designed to accommodate different visitor preferences and itineraries. From Flex Tickets allowing all-day entry to All-Access Tours or Premium experiences with special amenities, purchase tickets for the Empire State Building Observatory online through the official website or onsite at the ticket office located at 12 W 34th Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues.

The 86th Floor Observatory ticket grants access to the immersive museum and iconic 86th Floor Observatory, where you can take in the unmatched view of New York City.

The 86th and 102nd Floor Observatory ticket includes access to the museum along with both the 86th and 102nd Floor Observatories.

For a more exclusive visit, the Premium Experience tickets include additional benefits like skip-the-line access, priority elevator service, and access to exclusive areas not available to regular ticket holders. It also includes a Champagne toast in the celebrity green room, an All-Access Tour of behind-the-scenes, and a sunrise visit to the 86th Floor Observatory, where guests can enjoy a cup of ESB Microblend from the building's Starbucks Reserve.

Special Ongoing Display

A rare piece of American history, an 1818 facsimile of the Declaration of Independence printed on silk, was recently unveiled on the 80th floor of the Empire State Building Observatory Experience. The piece, one of only four or five silk copies of the first facsimile to show the signatures of the engrossed Declaration, traces back to calligrapher Benjamin Owen Tyler, who created a decorative copy of the Declaration following the War of 1812. His subscription book was signed by prominent figures including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and John Quincy Adams, among others. The new display celebrates 250 years of America and gives visitors from around the world an opportunity to encounter a piece connected to the country's founding ideals from inside one of its most recognizable landmarks. The artifact is now on display on the Observation Deck Experience's 80th floor and is included with regular admission. It will remain on display through October 4.

Best Times to Visit

The Empire State Building Observatory Experience offers different viewing options throughout the day, from early-morning visits to sunset views. During the winter months, the 86th Floor Observation Deck features wraparound outdoor heaters, while the 102nd Floor Observation Deck is enclosed and temperature-controlled, providing comfortable options for families with little kids as well as ageing adults.

How Much Time to Plan for Your Visit

The length of your visit at the Empire State Building depends on how much time guests choose to spend exploring the Observatories and the museum. The average visit lasts between one and two hours, but stay longer to spot New York City's landmarks within the 360-degree views and see six states from the 102nd Floor Observatory.

Agoda Unveils 2026 Return Visitor Ranking

New Delhi Leads India, Tokyo Tops Asia

Travel Mail Desk

Digital travel platform Agoda has unveiled its latest Repeat Visitor Ranking, highlighting the top destinations in India and across Asia that continue to draw travellers back for more. Based on bookings made during the first half of the year, New Delhi leads India's repeat-visit ranking, followed by Chennai, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Kochi. Across Asia, Tokyo has claimed the top spot for the first time, overtaking Bangkok. Rounding out the top five are Bali, ranking third for the first time, followed by Seoul and Osaka. Da Nang, Kuala Lumpur, Fukuoka, Taipei, and Johor Bahru completed the top 10.

Some destinations have a way of calling travellers back for more. The chance to discover new attractions, revisit fond favourites, or simply enjoy the familiar surroundings keeps travellers booking again. Agoda's data shows that these beloved places often attract repeat visits, with some travellers returning multiple times in just the first half of the year.

New Delhi, which leads India's ranking, offers a mix of experiences spanning the Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb, bustling markets, and the city's diverse food scene. Chennai, in second place, brings together Dravidian heritage, iconic coastal locations like Marina Beach and its distinctive South Indian cuisine. In the west, Mumbai, ranking third, is defined by its Art Deco architecture, Bollywood legacy and iconic food culture. Bengaluru, in fourth, blends its tech-driven identity with its craft beer and restaurant scene, live music culture and green spaces, while Kochi, completing the top five, offers a distinctive mix of Fort Kochi's colonial heritage, Kerala cuisine, contemporary art and easy access to the state's backwaters.

Internationally, Tokyo's rise to number one reflects its unique ability to offer something new with each visit, from seasonal spectacles like cherry blossoms to hidden neighbourhoods and an unmatched culinary scene. Bangkok, ranking second, continues to captivate with its unparalleled wellness experiences, world-class dining, and cultural landmarks. Bali's climb to third place underscores the island's magnetic appeal with its irresistible beaches, spiritual retreats, and lush landscapes that enchant travellers time and again.

Gaurav Malik, Country Director, Indian Subcontinent and Indian Ocean Islands at Agoda, shared, *"Indian travellers are increasingly looking beyond one-time holidays and building deeper connections with destinations they love. Whether it's returning to a favourite city for its food and culture, a loved one's wedding, a festival, or a work trip that turns into a long weekend away, repeat travel is becoming an important part of the way Indians experience the world. At Agoda, we are committed to making these journeys more seamless, accessible and rewarding, helping Indian travellers discover more reasons to return to the places they love."*

Expanding Outbound Opportunities Across Five Key Asian Destinations with the Launch of Linkin South Asia

Travel Mail Desk

New destination venture to offer Japan, Taiwan, China, South Korea and Hong Kong, with a focus on structured products, human-led service and stronger margins for travel agents. Linkin Reps is expanding its presence in the outbound travel market with the launch of Linkin South Asia, a new brand focused on five key Asian destinations- Japan, Taiwan, China, South Korea and Hong Kong.

Headquartered in New Delhi, Linkin South Asia commenced operations in September 2026, offering directly operated destination services to Indian travel agents and tour operators.

The expansion marks a new phase in Linkin Reps' journey, extending its expertise in travel representation, sales, marketing and destination development into direct outbound operations. Through Linkin South Asia, the company is establishing a dedicated platform to develop and operate its own destination capabilities across five high-potential Asian markets.

Commenting on the expansion, **Komal Seth, Founder and Director, Linkin Reps,** said, *"We wanted to do something different in the destination management space, and in the process, we realised that the vendor supply gap was particularly large across these destinations. It took us a while to build the right foundation. Still, we have finally succeeded in developing and launching packages where we can offer competitive products while also delivering good margins to travel agents. For us, the objective has always been to create a proposition that works for both the traveller and the trade, with strong products, better servicing and a commercially viable model for our agent partners."*

Mr. Amit Rai, Director of Sales, will head Linkin South Asia and bring 24 years of experience across B2B, B2C and MICE, with leadership experience at UDMC and organisations including Cox & Kings, Cadila Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Freedom Travel and Bluemoon Travel to the new venture. He will be supported by Ms. Namrata Grover, General Manager of Operations and Sales, based in New Delhi, whose 14+ years of experience spans FIT, MICE, leisure, groups and corporate incentive travel, with expertise in operations, marketing, B2B network development and destination product training.

With the launch of Linkin South Asia, Linkin Reps is expanding its role within the outbound travel ecosystem, moving beyond its established representation and market-development capabilities to build a directly operated destination platform across five strategic Asian markets.

A NEW CHAPTER of GAEHP BEGINS IN UTTAR PRADESH

Travel Mail Desk

Global Association of Events & Hospitality Professionals proudly marks another significant milestone with the official launch of the GAEHP Uttar Pradesh Chapter in the historic city of Varanasi on 4th October 2026.

The launch marks an important step towards strengthening GAEHP's presence across Uttar Pradesh and bringing together professionals from the Travel, Tourism, Events & Hospitality industry on a stronger platform for networking, collaboration and growth. The occasion was graced by the presence of esteemed industry leaders, including **Mr. Amit Gupta from India Tourism and Mr. Dinesh Kumar, Joint Director Uttar Pradesh** Tourism, whose presence added great value and significance to this important milestone.

GAEHP leadership and team members, with the presence of **Mr. Rajesh Arya, President, GAEHP; Mr. P.P. Khanna, National Advisor and Mr. Pranav Bansal, General Secretary, GAEHP,** along with other members of the GAEHP team, who came together to mark this special milestone and extend their support to the newly launched Uttar Pradesh Chapter.

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. D.N. Singh – Travel Club as Chairman, GAEHP Uttar Pradesh Chapter, and Mr. Avaneesh Kant Pathak – Travel Prism as Secretary, GAEHP Uttar Pradesh Chapter. Their leadership, experience and commitment to the industry will play a vital role in building a vibrant and connected professional community across Uttar Pradesh.

One Association. One Vision. Stronger Together.

TAAI Convention 2026

69th Convention to Bring India's Travel Industry Together in Kolkata

Travel Mail Desk

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), India's nodal association with about 2,500 companies actively engaged in Travel, Tourism, Hospitality & MICE, are delighted to announce the Grand Celebrations of TAAI's 75 years of Excellence at its 69th TAAI Convention & Exhibition in Kolkata, West Bengal.

The 3-day convention will be held from 25th to 27th October, 2026 at ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata. The Convention holds special significance as TAAI celebrates 75 years of Excellence, Leadership and Service to Indian Travel, Tourism & Hospitality.

The 69th Convention comes to India

Guided by the call of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, TAAI's Managing Committee has decided that the 69th Convention will be held in India, a departure this year from doing it overseas. The decision reflects TAAI's commitment to Incredible India, strengthening domestic tourism and showcasing India's immense tourism potential to the global travel fraternity.

A landmark gathering of the Indian travel industry

The three-day convention is expected to bring together approximately 900 delegates and media from across India.

The event will bring together leaders from the Government, stakeholders in the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Industry; Airlines, Hotels, Destinations, Technology Companies; MICE products and services and other allied sectors, creating a platform for industry interaction, collaboration, networking and discussions on the opportunities and challenges shaping the future of Indian Travel & Tourism.

Mr Sunil Kumar, the President of TAAI: "The 69th TAAI Convention & Exhibition is a very special milestone for our Association as we celebrate 75 years of Excellence, Leadership and Service to the Indian Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Industry. We are delighted to do our Convention in India and particularly in Kolkata. This decision reflects our commitment to Incredible India and to strengthening domestic tourism. We look forward to bringing the Indian travel fraternity together in Kolkata and creating a meaningful platform for collaboration and the future growth of our industry.

TAAI Northern Region marks 75 years with special celebration in New Delhi

Travel Mail Desk

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Northern Region hosted a special evening in New Delhi to commemorate the association's 75th anniversary, bringing together members of the travel trade to celebrate its legacy and look ahead to its next chapter.

The gathering also marked the launch of the 69th TAAI Convention and Exhibition, scheduled to take place from October 25 to 27, 2026, at ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata. The convention assumes added significance as it coincides with 75 years of TAAI, which was established in 1951.

Speaking at the gathering, **Sunil Kumar R, President, TAAI,** said, *"This convention is particularly special for us because we are bringing together two important milestones—the 69th TAAI Convention and TAAI's 75th year. We are extremely delighted that this year's convention is being held in India. It is a matter of great pride for us to celebrate this important milestone at home and provide our members with an opportunity to be part of this landmark occasion. The 75-year journey of TAAI is a legacy that has been entrusted to us by generations before us. A journey of seven and a half decades does not happen by accident. It represents years of commitment, contribution and collective effort that have shaped TAAI into what it is today."*

The 69th TAAI Convention and Exhibition will bring together travel agents, tourism stakeholders and industry partners in Kolkata as the association commemorates 75 years while looking towards the future.

ATOAI Holds Annual General Meeting and Announces New Leadership for 2026–28

Travel Mail Desk

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) successfully conducted its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the Financial Year 2025–26, followed by the elections for the Office Bearers and Executive Committee for the term 2026-28, marking an important milestone in the Association's continued efforts to strengthen and advance India's adventure tourism industry.

The AGM brought together members of the adventure tourism fraternity for a day of institutional review, accountability, and collective direction. The proceedings included the presentation of the Annual Report for FY 2025–26, consideration and adoption of the Audited Financial Statements, appointment of the Statutory Auditor for FY 2026–27 and discussions on matters concerning the Association and the wider adventure tourism sector.

Following the conclusion of the AGM, elections for the 2026–28 term were conducted under the supervision of the Returning Officer, Mr. Rajeev Kohli.

The following leaders were elected to guide the Association for the next two-year term:

Office Bearers:
1. President Mr. Tejbir Singh Anand, Holiday Moods Adventures Pvt. Ltd.

2. Senior Vice President Mr. Vaibhav Kala, Aquaterra Adventures India Pvt. Ltd.
3. Vice President Mr. Ronny Singh Gulati, Youreka Campouts Services Pvt. Ltd.
4. Honorary Secretary Mr. Paras Loomba, GHE Impact Ventures Pvt. Ltd.
5. Honorary Treasurer Mr. Yog Chinmoy Dutt, Junoon Adventure and Eco Tours

Executive Committee Members:
1. Mr. Shekhar Babu, Transcend Adventures Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mr. Amit Periwal, Clubside Tours and Travels Pvt. Ltd.

The newly elected leadership assumes responsibility at a significant time for the Indian adventure tourism sector, as the country seeks to unlock the full potential of its mountains, rivers, forests, coasts and diverse adventure destinations.

Speaking on the occasion, the newly elected President, **Mr. Tejbir Singh Anand**, said, *"As we take this leadership forward, the new incoming team is deeply committed to building upon the strong legacy created over the last thirty years. Our core focus will be on delivering tangible membership benefits, fostering active mentorship, and truly listening to the evolving needs of our community. By encouraging and equipping our members to adopt the highest operational and safety standards, we will strengthen the industry from within and firmly establish India on the global map as a premier, responsible adventure destination."*

Dr. Valmiki Hari Kishan elected President of Skal International Hyderabad Chapter

Travel Mail Desk

Dr. Valmiki Hari Kishan, a veteran travel professional, was elected as **President of Skal International Hyderabad 606 Chapter of Skål International,** the worldwide professional organisation of travel and tourism professionals. He was elected for a two-year term, 2026-28

Along with him, Board members were elected. The newly elected Board comprises Pankaj Sampath, Vice President–1; Rubin Cherian, Vice President–2; Earnest Immanuel, Secretary; Ravi Agarwal, Treasurer; Ramakrishna, Director–Membership Development; Srinivas, Director–PR & Communication; and Mohan Krishna, Director–Young Skal.

Dr. Valmiki Hari Kishan was elected with the highest majority and thanked the members for reposing their confidence in his leadership. Speaking on the occasion, he said it is a great privilege and honour to lead Skal International Hyderabad. The trust placed in me by our members brings with it a greater responsibility to carry forward the remarkable legacy of this club.

Skal International Hyderabad also has the distinction of hosting the Skal International World Congress in 2017.

"Our club has created history and achieved several milestones. Therefore, the responsibility on the new Board is even greater. We will work collectively to strengthen member engagement, networking and professional relationships, while creating new milestones for Skal International Hyderabad," **Dr. Valmiki said.**

The newly elected Board will assume responsibility for the 2026–28 term, with a focus on strengthening membership, communication, professional networking, Young Skal initiatives and greater participation in international Skal programmes.

Nirav Gandhi Elected New President Of HRAWI At The 76th AGM

Travel Mail Desk

Mr. Nirav Gandhi, Director of the Express Group of Hotels & Resorts, Gujarat, has been elected the new President of The Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) – HRAWI. The appointment took place during the 76th Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Mumbai on 10th September, 2026, where new Office Bearers for the 2026-27 term were also appointed.

Prior to this appointment, Mr Gandhi served as the Senior Vice President of the Association, where he led key industry discussions and was an active proponent for regional tourism and hospitality growth across Western India. In his new role, Mr Gandhi will be spearheading HRAWI's continued engagement with policymakers and stakeholders, while strengthening collaboration among hotels, restaurants and allied businesses across the region. The Association will continue to focus on constructive policy advocacy, knowledge sharing, capacity building and initiatives that support a more resilient and competitive hospitality ecosystem.

"It is an honour and a responsibility to take on the leadership of HRAWI at a time when the hospitality industry is undergoing significant transformation. The Association has built a strong legacy of advocacy, collaboration and service to the industry, and I look forward to building on that foundation. I believe that a strong and united industry voice is essential to shaping policies that enable hospitality businesses to thrive. Together with our Office Bearers, Executive Committee and members, we will work towards making hospitality more resilient and competitive," says **Mr. Nirav Gandhi, President, HRAWI.**

The newly appointed Office Bearers include Mr. Paramjit Singh Ghai, Senior Vice President; Mr. Gurbir Singh Bedi, Vice President; Mr. Pradeep Shetty, Hon. Secretary; Mr. Sumit Suri, Jt. Hon. Secretary and Mr. Satyen Jain, Hon. Treasurer.

"In continuation of the efforts of the previous Office Bearers, our priorities will be to strengthen Government engagement on EoDB and industry matters, while advancing up-skilling, food safety and compliance. We will also expand, both in reach and frequency wherever possible, the HRAWI Conclave & Awards and Knowledge Series as platforms for recognition and industry learning. A proposed Hotel Chain Representation Board (HCRB) will provide leading hotel chains a formal platform to engage with HRAWI and contribute to policy discussions at the State and National levels. We also envision taking the HRAWI Expo to a larger scale, creating greater opportunities for industry collaboration and business," **concludes Mr Gandhi.**

Garish Oberoi Elected as New HRANI President

Travel Mail Desk

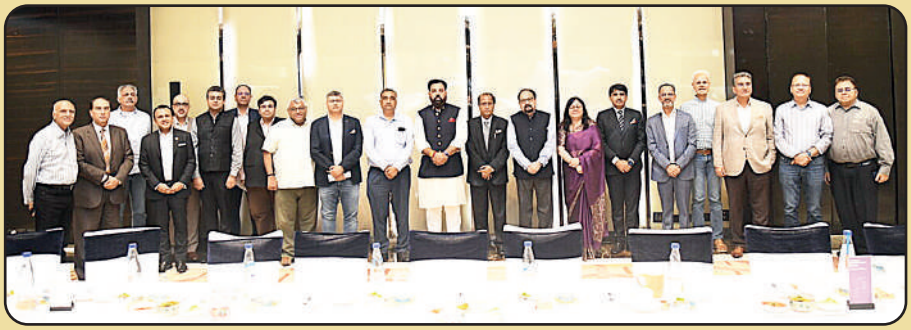
The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI) concluded its 75th Annual General Meeting at Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport, New Delhi. In addition to adopting and approving the financial results for the year 2025-2026, the AGM's agenda included elections of the Association's Managing Committee for the term 2026-28.

The AGM was followed by the meeting of the Managing Committee to elect the office bearers for the term 2026-28.

Mr. Garish Oberoi, Partner, Hotel Uberoi Anand, has been elected as the new President of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI). With an extensive background in the hospitality industry, Mr. Oberoi brings decades of valuable experience to the forefront. He has been a strong advocate for the sector, successfully lobbying for industry-wide causes and driving positive outcomes for the hospitality community.

In addition to his new role at HRANI, Mr. Oberoi also serves as Honorary Secretary – FHRAI of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI).

The newly elected office bearers for HRANI are as follows:



Vice Presidents

1. Mr. Nikhil Sharma
Managing Director & Chief Operating Officer, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

2. Mr. Rahool Macarius
Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

Honorary Secretary

1. Mr. Surendra Kumar Jaiswal
Partner, Deep Hotel, Lucknow

Treasurer

1. Mr. Rishabh Khanna
Advisor, Hotel Crowne Plaza, Rohini

Honorary Joint Secretary

1. Mr. Amarvir Singh
Partner, Hotel Natraj, Ludhiana

2. Ms. Meena Bhatia
Vice President & General Manager, Le Méridien, New Delhi.

With Mr. Oberoi at the helm, HRANI is poised to continue its legacy of advocacy and development for the hospitality sector in Northern India.

"One Rajasthan, Many Experiences"
— Surendra Singh Shahpura on Expanding Tourism Horizons

Travel Mail Desk

Are there plans to expand this initiative in the future, perhaps through similar travel marts in other parts of the Mewar region or elsewhere in Rajasthan? And how has the response been so far from hosted buyers and travel agents across India?

Absolutely. The response to the Marwar Travel Mart has been extremely encouraging. The travel agents who participated, particularly those from Bengal, South India and Pune, were genuinely amazed by the experiences Rajasthan has to offer beyond its well-known attractions.

For instance, when we took the delegates to the Sand Dunes Sundowner, many of them were surprised to discover that such unique experiences existed in this part of Rajasthan. This is precisely why travel marts are so important. They provide tour operators and travel agents with first-hand exposure to destinations and experiences that they can then incorporate into their itineraries and recommend to travellers.

Travel agents are the key link between a destination and the traveller. By showcasing lesser-known attractions and experiences, we enable them to move beyond conventional hotel stays and sightseeing and create more diverse and experiential Rajasthan itineraries.

Mr. Surendra Singh Shahpura
President, Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) and Chairman of Shahpura Hotels

We have received a tremendous response. The B2B session was very well attended, and we had a full house. We are also holding a B2B session followed by a B2C interaction for the people of Jodhpur, allowing the initiative to engage both the travel trade and the local community.

Personally, I believe such travel marts are needed in other cities across Rajasthan as well. Every region has its own character, heritage and tourism potential. For example, Bikaner is currently experiencing a slight lull in tourism and could benefit significantly from a dedicated Bikaner Travel Mart that brings together the trade, stakeholders and destination partners.

Going forward, how do you see the role of FHTR in promoting emerging and lesser-known destinations across Rajasthan?

Promoting Rajasthan is a collective responsibility. No single individual, organisation or association can achieve this on its own. We all have to work together to highlight the state's diverse tourism offerings.

As President of FHTR, my objective is to showcase not only the established destinations but also those tourist-friendly cities and regions that have immense potential but may not yet receive the attention they deserve.

With the continued support and trust of the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, we look forward to organising more initiatives and events that can bring these destinations into the spotlight. Travel marts such as Marwar Travel Mart can play an important role in connecting destinations with the travel trade and creating new opportunities for tourism growth across the state.

There is tremendous potential in Rajasthan, and by working together, we can ensure that more travellers discover the many different experiences the state has to offer.

"Where Heritage Meets Hospitality: Preserving Jodhpur's Soul Through Experiential Stays"

Travel Mail Desk

Jodhpur has been steadily emerging as an important tourism destination. How do you view the growth of the city and RAAS' association with Marwar Travel Mart?

Jodhpur has been evolving significantly as a tourism destination and has increasingly started contributing to Rajasthan's overall tourism story. Naturally, there were expectations about how the city would develop and evolve alongside established tourism destinations such as Jaipur and Delhi.

We were expecting an initiative of this scale to happen sooner or later, and we are extremely happy that Marwar Travel Mart has taken place in Jodhpur in the way we envisioned. It has been a great experience and has provided an excellent platform to showcase what Jodhpur and the wider Marwar region have to offer.

RAAS has partnered with Marwar Travel Mart as the Heritage Conservation Partner, and it gives us immense pleasure to be associated with an initiative that is focused on bringing greater attention to the region's tourism potential.

RAAS is closely associated with heritage and conservation. What is the philosophy behind the brand, particularly when it comes to guest experiences?

At RAAS, we strongly believe in preserving and restoring buildings, architecture and culture

Ayushi Shekhawat
Assistant Manager – Sales, RAAS Hotels

while ensuring that their original character remains intact.

The property we visited today is a heritage haveli that has been thoughtfully converted into a hotel. Several parts of the property have been restored and preserved in their original form. When you explore the heritage areas of the hotel, you can still experience the character and architectural details of the original property.

At the same time, the suites combine contemporary design with elements of 18th-century heritage architecture. This blend of modernity and history creates a distinctive experience and gives guests a genuine sense of what it means to stay in Jodhpur.

The location also adds significantly to the experience. The local markets and major attractions are nearby, including Mehrangarh Fort. We have also restored and continue to maintain the stepwell located within the property.

We take its upkeep very seriously. It is cleaned and maintained regularly, and we also focus on maintaining the surrounding areas. In addition, we provide employment opportunities to people living in the surrounding communities, particularly within approximately a five-kilometre radius.

In our own way, we are trying to contribute to the preservation of Jodhpur's culture and architecture while maintaining the authenticity and character of the city.

Today's traveller is increasingly looking for personalised and distinctive experiences. How is RAAS responding to this changing demand?

We are open to all kinds of travellers. Whether it is MICE, weddings, leisure travellers, corporate guests or free independent travellers, our objective is to ensure that everyone staying at RAAS receives the same level of personalised attention and service.

We strongly believe in customisation and personalisation. Every guest has different expectations, needs and requirements, and we make an effort to understand those individual preferences and tailor the experience accordingly.

That philosophy has been an integral part of our approach from the beginning and continues to guide how we design our guest experiences.

"75 Years of TAAI: Celebrating the Legacy, Preparing for the Future"

In Conversation with Mr. Sunil Kumar R., President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

Travel Mail Desk

The 69th TAAI Convention & Exhibition is particularly significant as TAAI celebrates 75 years. What makes this convention different from previous editions?

This convention is particularly special for us because we are bringing together two important milestones—the 69th TAAI Convention and TAAI's 75th year. We are extremely delighted that this year's convention is being held in India. It is a matter of great pride for us to celebrate this important milestone at home and provide our members with an opportunity to be part of this landmark occasion.

The 75-year journey of TAAI is a legacy that has been entrusted to us by generations before us. A journey of seven and a half decades does not happen by accident. It represents years of commitment, contribution and collective effort that have shaped TAAI into what it is today.

The convention, therefore, will not only celebrate our past but also look towards the future.

What can delegates expect from the three-day convention in terms of content and engagement?

The three-day convention has been designed around different themes and will offer a strong mix of knowledge, learning, networking and celebration.

The mornings will focus on sessions that are intended to enlighten, educate and encourage travel professionals to understand the changing world around them. The travel industry is evolving rapidly, and professionals need to continuously upskill, upgrade and update themselves to remain relevant.

At the same time, there will be considerable opportunities for networking. TAAI conventions have always been about bringing the entire travel ecosystem together. Whether you are a travel agent, airline professional, hotelier, technology provider, destination representative or any other stakeholder, there is a sense of excitement when the industry comes together under one roof.

This year will be no different.

With 75 years of TAAI, how important is it to reflect on the Association's journey and the transition it has witnessed over the decades?

It is extremely important. TAAI's 75-year story is a remarkable journey, and there have been many transition phases along the way.

The industry today is very different from what it was decades ago. Technology, consumer behaviour, distribution systems and the way people travel have all changed significantly. TAAI, too, has evolved with the times.

Our 75th anniversary allows us to reflect on that journey—to understand where we have come from, appreciate the contribution of those who built the Association and, importantly, consider what we need to do next.

The legacy we have inherited comes with a responsibility to continue building upon it.

"Beyond the Stay: Creating Authentic Rajasthan Experiences Through Hospitality"

In Conversation with Adhiraj Singh Shahpura, Director, Shahpura Hotels & Resorts

Travel Mail Desk

Shahpura Hotels & Resorts has a diverse portfolio across Rajasthan. Could you tell us about the properties and the experience you are creating for travellers?

Shahpura Hotels & Resorts is a mix of heritage palaces, boutique properties and wilderness resorts. At present, we operate four properties across Rajasthan.

Our flagship property is Shahpura House in Jaipur. We also have Shahpura Haveli in Shahpura, our hometown, which is a 20-suite property. In addition, we have a wilderness resort in Sariska and a heritage property in Abhaneri.

Each property has its own character and allows us to showcase a different aspect of Rajasthan—from heritage and architecture to nature and wilderness.

For us, hospitality is not simply about providing a room and a meal. We want guests to experience the destination in a meaningful way.

Experiential travel has become increasingly important. How are you incorporating Rajasthan's culture and traditions into the guest experience?

This is something we are very passionate about. Our objective is not simply to sell rooms and food. When a traveller comes to Rajasthan, we want them to take back an experience of the culture and traditions of the place.

We organise festivals and celebrations around occasions such as Diwali, Holi and Gangaur. If guests happen to be travelling during one of these festivals, we want them to experience it in the way we celebrate it ourselves.

The entire Shahpura family becomes involved in these celebrations. We interact with our guests, celebrate with them and allow them to experience our traditions in an authentic and personal way.

For an international traveller, participating in a traditional festival in Rajasthan can become a very special memory—something they remember long after they return home.

That is the kind of experience we want to create.

Personalised hospitality seems to be an important part of the Shahpura philosophy. Where does this approach come from?

It comes from our own journey. Shahpura began with my parents, who started the hospitality journey with just three rooms.

At that time, the focus was naturally on personalised service and direct interaction with guests. Guests were not just room numbers; there was a personal connection with every person who stayed with us.

As the business has grown, we have tried to retain that philosophy. While our portfolio and capabilities have expanded, we still believe that genuine interaction, personalised service and making guests feel at home are extremely important.

We want people to leave with memories and a connection to Rajasthan, rather than simply remembering the hotel in which they stayed.

From Destination to Experience The Next Phase of Tourism in Madhya Pradesh

- Mahendra Pratap Singh

Mahendra Pratap Singh

Managing Director, MP Tours India Pvt. Ltd.Chairman, Tourism Committee, Madhya Pradesh

Travel Mail Desk

Madhya Pradesh has reached an important stage in its tourism trajectory. The state has built a strong tourism spectrum across wildlife, heritage, spirituality, culture, nature, adventure and rural experiences. The next opportunity is not simply to attract more visitors, but to create greater value for destinations, local communities, businesses and travellers.

The journey towards responsible and sustainable tourism in Madhya Pradesh is already underway. The next phase should take it deeper and make it part of mainstream tourism growth.

This requires examining three key tourism areas: how much value each traveller brings, how residents are involved, and how tourism affects nature.

A key opportunity is experiential tourism. Travellers today are increasingly looking for more than a list of places to visit. They want to understand the destination, meet local people, taste local food, experience traditions and take part in activities that are connected to the character of the place.

Madhya Pradesh has the resources to develop this at scale. A traveller visiting Chanderi or Maheshwar can experience handloom traditions and meet artisans. A rural destination can offer local food, village activities and community-led experiences. Wildlife tourism can go beyond a safari by helping visitors understand forests, biodiversity and conservation. Responsible safari practices, visitor management, waste reduction and respect for ecological limits will become increasingly important as destinations grow. Tribal tourism can introduce travellers to local art, food, crafts and traditions while ensuring that communities participate meaningfully in the tourism economy.

This is where community-based and rural tourism become commercially relevant. Residents should not remain only service providers around a destination. They can become homestay operators, guides, artisans, entrepreneurs, and experience creators. When more tourism spending reaches local communities, tourism becomes a stronger source of livelihoods and gives residents a direct stake in protecting and developing their destinations.

Low-carbon tourism should also become part of this approach. Tourism will always involve travel and an environmental cost, but better choices can reduce its footprint. Longer stays, fewer unnecessary transfers, local mobility, energy-efficient accommodation, reduced waste and greater use of local experiences can all contribute. Slow travel can therefore support both a better visitor experience and more responsible tourism growth.

Sustainability also needs to be reflected in how destinations are planned and operated. Eco-tourism should mean more than staying close to nature. It should include efficient use of resources, responsible visitor behaviour, clean destinations and infrastructure suited to the ecological character of each place.
The opportunity for Madhya Pradesh is to build tourism that creates value at several levels: a better experience for the traveller, stronger opportunities for local communities, sustainable business for the industry and greater protection for the destinations themselves.

The industry must therefore move beyond selling standard packages and start designing experiences that give travellers a reason to stay longer, explore deeper, and connect with Madhya Pradesh.

The future of Madhya Pradesh tourism is not only about how many people visit. It is about what they experience, what local communities gain, what we preserve, and how responsibly we grow.

Mr. Manoj Singh on India's Growing Cruise Market, Evolving Traveller Preferences and the Future of Global Cruising

Travel Mail Desk

India's outbound travel market is undergoing a significant transformation, with cruise holidays emerging as an increasingly popular choice among affluent and experience-driven travellers. As Indian consumers become more discerning and seek seamless, premium and multi-destination holidays, cruising is evolving from a once-in-a-lifetime aspiration into a repeatable vacation format. In this conversation, Mr. Manoj Singh, Country Head – India, Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) shares his perspective on the rapid growth of India's cruise market, the changing preferences of Indian travellers, the growing popularity of fly-cruise holidays, the role of travel trade, and Norwegian Cruise Line's plans for the Indian market. From multigenerational family travel and Freestyle Cruising to new itineraries across Asia, Europe and Alaska, he discusses how the cruise experience is adapting to the evolving Indian traveller.

Mr. Manoj Singh
Country Head – India,
Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL)

India is emerging as one of the fastest-growing outbound travel markets, with cruise holidays gaining significant momentum. From Norwegian Cruise Line's perspective, what is driving this shift, and how important is the Indian market to your long-term growth strategy?

Yes. High-income urban Indians are increasingly choosing international cruise vacations, pushing up India's overall outbound travel numbers. Today, more travellers are aware of the benefits of a cruise holiday – value, convenience, meaningful experiences and the joy of unpacking just once yet waking up to a new destination each day – and are planning their international itineraries months. India is also a market where families often travel together across generations, and that is exactly where NCL's strength lies: our ships offer enough variety and freedom for every family member, from grandparents to kids, to enjoy the holiday in their own way, without anyone having to compromise on their experience. That is what makes India such an important and fast-growing market for us.

Indian travellers today are increasingly seeking premium, experience-led holidays. How have you seen traveller preferences evolve over the past few years, and what trends are shaping cruise demand from India?

NCL cruises are known for offering exclusive, meaningful yet premium travel experiences that give guests the freedom to enjoy their holiday at their own pace. Our long-standing philosophy of no fixed dining times or dress codes resonates well with different age groups, as do our diverse accommodation choices, unique on-board dining and entertainment offerings, and destination-rich itineraries that give them some of the most memorable experiences of their lives. From being considered an aspirational once-in-a-lifetime bucket-list wish, global cruises today have become preferred, repeatable holiday formats, reflecting the evolved mindset of a far more discerning, aware Indian consumer.

Despite rising international airfares and changing travel patterns, outbound cruise demand continues to grow. What factors have helped the cruise segment remain resilient?

More urban Indians are spending their disposable incomes on experiencing the world through travel than on material goods. A cruise vacation ticks off the checklist of an aspirational international holiday. Unlike land holidays that require multiple bookings for flights, hotels and experiences, a global cruise includes the convenience and value of visas, accommodation, dining, entertainment, and multiple destinations in one booking. NCL's 'Free at Sea' package adds even more value to your booking by bundling drinks, speciality dining, Wi-Fi, and shore excursions.

Fly-cruise holidays are becoming increasingly popular among Indian travellers. Which destinations and itineraries are currently seeing the strongest demand, and are there any emerging routes that you believe have strong potential?

Yes, Indian travellers have popularised the convenient fly-cruise connections from our primary gateway cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Chennai to the embarkation ports of their NCL cruise. Our fleet of 20 ships sails to nearly 450 destinations worldwide, and at present, the Mediterranean and Northern Europe, as well as Alaska, remain the most popular destinations for Indians. We're also seeing Asia emerge as a culturally rich, closer-to-home option gaining strong traction. For travellers looking for a shorter getaway, our 3– to 4-day Bahamas sailings pair well with a few extra days in the embarkation city – think theme parks in Orlando or a stay in Miami – before or after the cruise. All of these itineraries call at our private island, Great Stirrup Cay, which now features the Great Life Lagoon pool area, the adults-only Vibe Shore Club, and the soon-to-open Great Tides Waterpark, making it a destination the whole family can enjoy together.

Norwegian Cruise Line pioneered the concept of Freestyle Cruising. How does this philosophy appeal to today's Indian traveller, and what sets it apart from a traditional cruise vacation?

Delivering each guest with the freedom and flexibility to create their individual holiday experience and enjoy it at his/her own pace is the backbone of the NCL's brand promise, which is why multigenerational Indian families and large groups of friends love it! While travelling with company, each person has the freedom to enjoy the experience with no fixed dining times, dress codes, or rigid schedules. This empowers guests with the choice to decide how they want to spend their vacation – with their loved ones at any of the restaurants, multiple entertainment options, and activity zones together, or sitting by the deck with a book and their favourite drink alone!

Travel Trade continues to play a major role in growing the cruise market. How is Norwegian Cruise Line working with travel partners, particularly in Tier II and Tier III cities, to increase cruise awareness and bookings?

Our travel partners remain central to our growth strategy in India, and we remain committed to investing in several initiatives that empower them with everything they need.

The Norwegian Central provides training through NCL University, while our Book-A-BDM initiative links travel advisers with our local Business Development Managers.

We are collaborating closely with our travel partners in India and providing them with the necessary support to further increase cruise awareness through our various marketing strategies while also encouraging more Indian tourists to explore their favourite destinations across the world with an NCL cruise.

Sustainability is becoming a key consideration across the tourism industry. Could you share some of Norwegian Cruise Line's recent sustainability initiatives and how they contribute to delivering a more responsible cruise experience?

We remain committed to continuing to invest in green initiatives that help reduce the environmental impact of our fleet while elevating the visitor experience. We have deployed fuel-efficient technologies, advanced wastewater treatment systems, waste reduction programmes and reduced single-use plastics across the fleet. Our goal is to provide memorable cruise experiences to our guests in a more responsible manner, even as we continue to innovate on new sustainable initiatives. For more details on our efforts, guests and partners can also refer to our latest Sustainability Report at https://www.nclhltd.com/sustainability/reporting-and-downloads.

And lastly, looking ahead, what can the Indian travel trade and travellers expect from Norwegian Cruise Line over the next 12–24 months? Are there any new partnerships, initiatives, or developments that you can share?

Indian travellers have a great deal to look forward to. They can now plan and book their cruise to key destinations across Europe, Alaska, and Asia right through Summer 2028, so those who book early get the widest choice of itineraries, preferred staterooms, and the best value on offers and promotions.

Norwegian Jade returns to Asia for the first time since 2019 with a seven-month season from October 2026 through April 2027, sailing from homeports including Incheon, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Tokyo. Our Alaska programme continues to expand too, with multiple ships and convenient weekend departures giving guests more flexibility on when to sail.

We're also excited about the upcoming launch of Norwegian Aura, our newest and largest ship yet, which debuts with a seven-day Mediterranean sailing from Trieste to Barcelona in May 2027, before repositioning to homeport in Miami for her Caribbean season from June 2027.

Combined with our diverse itineraries across Europe, Alaska, and Asia, we continue to deliver innovative, adaptable cruise holidays through closer engagement with our travel partners here in India.

The Most Romantic Luxury Escapes Around the World

Travel Mail Desk

Some journeys stay with you long after you return, not because of how many places you visited, but because of how they made you feel. A candlelit evening in Paris, a secluded escape on a private island, the quiet drama of the Arctic or the unhurried rhythm of the Mediterranean – the right setting can turn a holiday into a shared story. These are journeys shaped by atmosphere, discovery and the simple pleasure of having time to enjoy it all together.

In an era defined by hyper-connectivity, the ultimate luxury has shifted definitively toward absolute privacy, emotional restoration, and profound isolation. Modern affluent couples are no longer satisfied with standard five-star accommodations; they seek experiences that go beyond the usual standard honeymoon suites. Across the world, these distinctive escapes offer couples something increasingly valuable: space to slow down, switch off and share an experience that feels entirely their own.

Cheval Blanc Paris: The Epitome of Parisian Romance on the Seine

Perched majestically beside the historic Pont Neuf, Cheval Blanc Paris stands as a triumph of contemporary Art Deco design orchestrated by visionary architect Peter Marino. Occupying a legendary historic building overlooking the dynamic flow of the Seine, the property offers couples an unmatched urban retreat. Guests are welcomed into sprawling, light-filled Mason featuring floor-to-ceiling glass doors opening onto private balconies with cinematic views of the Louvre, Notre-Dame, and the Eiffel Tower. Romance reaches its zenith at the subterranean Dior Spa Cheval Blanc, where bespoke couples' rituals are complemented by immersive facilities. Culinary excellence is anchored by Plénitude, holding three Michelin stars under Chef Arnaud Donckele, offering intimate tables designed for multi-course culinary celebrations.

Capella Ubud: A Tent Sanctuary Suspended in Bali's Sacred Valley

Tucked deep within the pristine emerald rainforests of the Keliki valley in Bali's cultural capital, Capella Ubud reimagines 19th-century European colonial expedition camps through a lens of unmatched modern luxury. Masterminded by Bill Bensley, the resort integrates seamlessly into the dense jungle canopy without felling a single mature tree. Comprising twenty-two hyper-luxurious canvas tents—each complete with a private saltwater plunge pool and large outdoor wooden deck—the property offers absolute immersion in nature. Couples can partake in sacred Balinese water cleansing ceremonies led by local priests at the Auriga wellness sanctuary, enjoy fireside storytelling under a canopy of stars with traditional balladeers, and dine on organic farm-to-table delicacies harvested directly from the resort's extensive permaculture gardens.

Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa: The Historic Grande Dame of the Black Forest

For over a century and a half, Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa has remained an enduring monument to classic European grace, nestled within manicured private parklands bordering Germany's legendary Lichtentaler Allee. This grand estate marries nineteenth-century architectural splendour with cutting-edge holistic medicine and wellness. The crown jewel of the estate is Villa Stéphanie, an independent spa mansion dedicated entirely to medical wellness, emotional restoration, and physical revitalization. Couples can book private spa suites equipped with saunas and plunge pools, undertake physician-supervised wellness programs, or take romantic horse-drawn carriage rides through the misty foothills of the Black Forest before enjoying refined dining at Wintergarten.

Fregate: The Ultimate Barefoot Paradise in the Indian Ocean

An untamed private granite island rising from the turquoise waters of the Seychelles, Fregate represents the ultimate expression of ecological luxury and extreme privacy. With only sixteen magnificent residences dispersed across the lush tropical slopes, the island guarantees complete isolation from the outside world. Fregate boasts seven pristine, powdery beaches, any of which can be entirely reserved for the day by couples via a simple wooden shaka sign placed at the pathway entrance. Days can be spent snorkelling among vibrant coral reefs, encountering hundreds of free-roaming giant Aldabra tortoises, and dining by candlelight directly on the sand with private chefs preparing freshly caught seafood under the equatorial starlight.

Octola Wilderness Luxury Exclusive Arctic Wonder Above the Circle

Set within the pristine snowy taiga forests of Finnish Lapland far above the Arctic Circle, Octola is a private, ultra-exclusive wilderness sanctuary designed for travellers seeking absolute serenity amidst dramatic winter landscapes. Built using sustainable local wood and expansive glass architecture, Octola offers uninterrupted panoramic views of snow-draped wilderness and the celestial magic of the Aurora Borealis. Couples can experience traditional Finnish wood-fired smoke saunas, outdoor Scandinavian hot tubs beneath sub-zero starry skies, and private reindeer-drawn sleigh excursions through silent, snow-laden pine forests guided by indigenous Sami experts.

La Reserva Rotana: A 17th-Century Manor of Timeless Mediterranean Charm

Tucked away in a secluded private valley near Manacor on the sun-drenched island of Mallorca, La Reserva Rotana is a meticulously restored 17th-century historic manor that channels aristocratic heritage, agricultural tradition, and profound romantic quietude. Surrounded by rolling hills, ancient olive groves, and private vineyards, the estate offers an authentic escape from hurried modern life. Couples can spend tranquil afternoons lounging beside the cliffside pool, playing a private round on the estate's exclusive nine-hole golf course, and partaking in private sunset wine-tasting sessions featuring indigenous grape varieties paired with organic Mediterranean gastronomy. From the streets of Paris to the forests of Lapland, the appeal of travelling together lies in discovering some place new while having the time to truly experience it. Whether the perfect escape means city culture, wilderness, privacy, or simply a few slow days, these destinations offer experiences that leave a lasting impression.

Royal Savoy Hotel & Spa Lausanne Names BRANDit as its India Representative

Travel Mail Desk

Royal Savoy Hotel & Spa Lausanne, located in the Lake Geneva Region of Switzerland and part of The Bürgenstock Collection, has partnered with BRANDit to strengthen its presence in India. The mandate will focus on trade engagement, product education and sales-led initiatives that position the hotel more prominently within Switzerland itineraries for Indian travellers.

Since 1909, the Royal Savoy has been part of Lausanne's hospitality landscape, bringing together historic character and contemporary Swiss elegance. Located in the Ouchy neighbourhood, close to Lake Geneva and the city centre, the hotel, now a historical landmark, features 196 rooms and suites with exceptional city, garden and lake views.

Lausanne, the Olympic Capital, is home to the International Olympic Committee and the iconic Olympic Museum. Its lakefront setting, museums and Michelin-recognised dining scene can be combined with the UNESCO-listed Lavaux vineyards, giving travel partners a versatile base for wider itineraries across the region.

Within the hotel, key draws include the spa, the Michelin Guide-listed Brasserie du Royal, serving seasonal French cuisine rooted in regional produce, the Sky Rooftop with its panoramic views over the lake and the Alps, and the Lobby Bar overlooking the Japanese Gardens. For meetings, weddings and celebrations, the property offers multiple flexible event spaces, including Lausanne's largest ballroom.

The hotel's responsible-luxury credentials include Green Globe certification, Level 3 of the Swisstainable programme and recognition under the Leading Hotels of the World Sustainability Leaders programme. Together with its focus on local sourcing and community, these certifications give travellers the assurance of a luxury stay with high sustainability standards.

Alain Kropf, General Manager, Royal Savoy Hotel & Spa Lausanne, said, "*We believe the Royal Savoy is particularly well suited to Indian travellers seeking refined hospitality and a stay that balances the energy of the city with lakeside ease. Its wellness offering and flexible spaces for celebrations make it equally appealing to couples, families and groups. Through BRANDit, we look forward to helping travel partners understand this proposition and position the hotel within more Swiss itineraries.*"

Ms. Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO & Co-founder, BRANDit, said, "*We are delighted to partner with the Royal Savoy in Lausanne, a landmark property with a rich history, a high standard of hospitality and an exceptional location between the city centre and Lake Geneva. Its wellness and event offerings make it relevant across traveller segments. We look forward to working with our trade partners to build product knowledge and strengthen its inclusion in Swiss itineraries.*"

Through this mandate, BRANDit will focus on sales engagement and product education across key Indian markets, helping travel partners position the Royal Savoy effectively within Switzerland itineraries.

Indo Asia Heritage Showcases Two Distinct Hospitality Experiences in Madikeri and Coorg

Travel Mail Desk

Indo Asia Heritage recently hosted an exclusive familiarisation (FAM) trip for around 25 selected travel agents from Bengaluru and Mysuru, offering them first-hand exposure to its two properties — Indo Asia Heritage Madikeri and Indo Asia Heritage Coorg.

The FAM was designed not merely as a property visit, but as an opportunity for travel partners to understand the distinct positioning of the two properties and the customer segments best suited to each.

While Indo Asia Heritage Madikeri is positioned as a business-oriented hotel, Indo Asia Heritage Coorg offers a resort-led leisure experience, surrounded by the tranquillity and greenery for which the destination is known.

A key objective of the FAM was to give participating agents an immersive understanding of both properties, covering accommodation, facilities, dining, experiences and surroundings.

The two-day itinerary was curated to ensure agents experienced more than the physical infrastructure of the properties.

The FAM highlighted how the two properties can complement each other while serving different travel requirements — Madikeri for the business-oriented traveller and Coorg for guests seeking a relaxed, resort-led escape.

For Indo Asia Heritage Coorg, the combination of its 30-year legacy, renovated cottages, enhanced facilities and tranquil natural setting presents a renewed proposition for the travel trade — a place where guests can slow down, reconnect and experience Coorg at an unhurried pace.

GINGER JORHAT OPENS, STRENGTHENS PRESENCE IN THE NORTH EAST

Travel Mail Desk

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), India's largest hospitality company, announced the opening of Ginger Jorhat, Club Road in Assam. Located in the heart of the city, the hotel offers seamless access to key commercial hubs, making it an ideal choice for business and leisure travellers.

Ms. Deepika Rao, Executive Vice President – Select Service Business, IHCL, said, *"The opening of Ginger Jorhat in Assam strengthens the brand's presence in the Northeast region. This opening is in line with our strategy of expanding across emerging markets and offering guests Ginger's signature blend of lean luxe hospitality and seamless experiences."*

Ginger Jorhat features 78 contemporary rooms designed to offer a comfortable and convenient stay. Qmin, the brand's signature all-day dining restaurant, serves a selection of Indian and international cuisines and a bar. Guests can maintain their fitness routines at the hotel's well-equipped fitness centre, while the hotel's meeting rooms and banquet facilities provide versatile venues for conferences and social gatherings.

Often referred to as the cultural capital of Assam, Jorhat is known for its tea gardens, rich heritage, and educational institutions. Guests can visit attractions including Raja Maidam, Dhekiakhowa Bor Namghar, Jorhat Science Centre & Planetarium and Bangalpukhari.

HOW FOUR SEASONS HOTEL BENGALURU IS REDESIGNING HOSPITALITY FOR THE AI AGE

Travel Mail Desk

There is a version of the future where a hotel knows you before you speak, where the room is already at your preferred temperature, dinner is quietly arranged at the table you enjoy, and nothing has to be asked for twice. This year, the world's tourism community gathers around a theme that asks the industry to imagine exactly that future: "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Redesign Tourism," the focus of World Tourism Day.

"Technology does not replace human intuition; it strengthens it by giving our people the insights they need to understand and anticipate a guest's needs. In an industry built on human connection, the conversation is not about whether technology belongs in travel, but how we can use it while preserving the warmth that makes an experience truly memorable. At Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru, this comes to life in the quiet, continuous work of understanding our guests better with every visit and using those insights to make each stay feel increasingly personal," says **Biswajit Chakraborty, General Manager, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE.**

Personalised service has always been at the heart of hospitality. What has changed is the ability to carry that knowledge forward, seamlessly, and everywhere a guest goes. A dietary preference, a request for a firmer pillow, a magnesium-rich wellness menu, or a later check-in after a long flight is no longer held in one associate's memory; it lives in a single, unified guest profile that every team, from Reservations to Culinary to Housekeeping, can draw upon together. This is made possible by a centralised recognition platform that brings together bookings, dining choices at CUR8 or Copitas, spa visits, mobile app interactions and guest feedback into what the hotel calls its "Golden Profile", a single, synchronised view that turns scattered detail into thoughtful anticipation.

Yet technology is only ever half the story. The most meaningful moments at the hotel are rarely asked for at all, a pattern noticed in what a guest gravitates towards, a preference observed once and quietly remembered the next time.

As the world's tourism community gathers this year to discuss digital agendas and artificial intelligence, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru offers a reminder worth carrying forward: redesigning tourism need not mean reinventing hospitality. Sometimes, it simply means using every tool available to do what has always mattered most, to treat every guest exactly as they would like to be treated, and to make coming back feel like coming home.

IHG Hotels & Resorts and United Hospitality Management Signs Garner Hotel Jim Corbett, Strengthening IHG's Growing Presence in India

Travel Mail Desk

IHG® Hotels & Resorts, one of the world's leading hotel companies, has announced the signing of Garner Hotel Jim Corbett, in partnership with United Hospitality Management (UHM) India, continuing the rapid expansion of its newest midscale brand in India. The signing builds on Garner's strong global trajectory as the fastest-scaling brand in IHG's history, having reached 100 open hotels worldwide since its launch in 2023. Scheduled to open in Q2 2027, the 50-key hotel will be owned by Victorian Corporation and managed by United Hospitality Management (UHM) India.

Garner Hotel Jim Corbett will feature 50 thoughtfully designed rooms along with facilities and amenities tailored to the needs of modern travellers. Staying true to the brand's ethos, Garner Hotel Jim Corbett will focus on delivering dependable quality, comfort and convenience in a setting full of character, offering guests a stay experience that is both accessible and locally relevant.

Commenting on the signing, **Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts,** said *"Garner's rapid momentum in India reflects the strong fit between the brand's proposition and the needs of both owners and travellers in the market. Globally, Garner has become the fastest-scaling brand in IHG's history and in India we are seeing that momentum translate into growing owner confidence and a strong development pipeline."*

Deepika Arora, Managing Director, United Hospitality Management-India said *"At United Hospitality Management, we are focused on building a strong and differentiated hospitality platform in India through strategic partnerships, disciplined growth and a deep understanding of the markets we operate in. Our collaboration with IHG Hotels & Resorts reflects this approach, bringing together UHM's local operating expertise and market insight with IHG's global brands, systems and distribution strength. As we continue to expand our presence across India, including high-potential leisure and emerging markets, our priority is to create consistently high-quality guest experiences while delivering sustainable, long-term value for our ownership partners. Garner Hotel Jim Corbett is an important addition to this growth journey and demonstrates our confidence in the potential of well-positioned destinations beyond the traditional metros."*

Parveen Saraswat, Director, Victorian Corporation, said *"Jim Corbett continues to grow as a year-round wildlife and leisure destination, with increasing demand for reliable, quality accommodation. As traveller expectations evolve, we saw a clear opportunity to bring a trusted international brand to the market. Garner's distinctive proposition of delivering quality stays at an accessible price point, combined with IHG's global brand strength and distribution platform, made it the right choice for this project. We are confident the hotel will be well positioned to serve the growing demand for branded hospitality in the region."*

GRT Hotels & Resorts concludes 4-City Gujarat Roadshow 'GReaT Gujarat Utsav' to Boost South India Tourism

Travel Mail Desk

GRT Hotels & Resorts has successfully concluded the inaugural edition of 'GReaT Gujarat Utsav', a maiden four-city travel trade roadshow across Gujarat. The landmark event introduced GRT Hotel's expanding South Indian portfolio to Gujarat – one of India's most important emerging source markets for outbound domestic travel.

Marking GRT Hotel's first-ever dedicated roadshow in the region, the event was exceptionally well received across Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Surat. Local travel partners, tour operators, MICE planners, and regional trade bodies expressed immense enthusiasm in discovering GRT Hotel's wide-ranging hospitality portfolio and specialized travel offerings.

Highlights & Key Offerings Briefed to Trade Partners

During the interactive sessions, GRT Hotel's leadership briefed attendees on the group & core brand pillars and specialized travel circuits tailored specifically for Gujarati travelers: Soulful Hospitality & Pet-Friendly Stays: Introducing GRT Hotel's signature ethos of Soulful Hospitality alongside progressive guest amenities, including pet-friendly accommodations across select leisure resorts.

1. Leisure & Heritage Portfolio:
Showcasing scenic resort properties across Mahabalipuram, Kodaikanal, Yercaud, Thanjavur, Madurai, Pondicherry, and Wayanad.

2. Divine Darshan Circuits:
Tailored pilgrimage itineraries covering Tamil Nadu's iconic temple hubs and spiritual corridors. MICE & Destination Weddings: Highlighting state-of-the-art convention spaces, banquet facilities, and picturesque backdrops for large-scale corporate events and luxury destination weddings.

"Gujarat is a rapidly emerging market with an exceptional appetite for domestic travel. As our very first multi-city roadshow in the state, "GReaT Gujarat Utsav", allowed us to build direct, personal connections with our travel partners here. We are thrilled by the enthusiastic reception and the keen interest shown in our leisure portfolio, pet-friendly properties, MICE venues, and Tamil Nadu's Divine Darshan circuits. We extend our heartfelt thanks to regional associations like VTAA, ATAA, TAFI Gujarat, TOSG and TAAS for their strong support."; **– Mr. Vikram Cotah, CEO, GRT Hotels & Resorts.**

MADHYA PRADESH TRAVEL MART 2026 TO HOST 100+ INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS FROM 34 COUNTRIES

Travel Mail Desk

10,000+ B2B Meetings, 11 MoUs, 14 Letters of Award and 16 FAM Tours to Drive Tourism Partnerships and Investment

The **7th Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart (MPTM) 2026** will be held from October 7–10 in Bhopal, bringing together tourism stakeholders from India and across the world to promote business partnerships, investment and Madhya Pradesh's diverse tourism offerings.

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav will inaugurate the Mart on October 7 at 6 PM at Kushabhau Thakre International Convention Centre, in the presence of **Union Tourism and Culture Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** and Tourism Minister Shri Dharmendra Singh Lodhi.

The event will feature 100+ international tour operators from 34 countries, 150 domestic tour operators, 355 sellers and 600+ participants, with 10,000+ B2B meetings and 100+ seller stalls. The Mart will focus on tourism investment, wildlife and sustainable tourism, adventure and water tourism, MICE and live events, film tourism, homestays, digital promotion and local livelihoods.

A special Wildlife Tourism session on October 8 will discuss conservation-led tourism, community participation and new wildlife circuits. Adventure tourism and MICE roundtables will also explore opportunities to strengthen Madhya Pradesh's tourism and event economy.

MPTM 2026 will facilitate 11 MoUs across investment promotion, skill development, adventure and water tourism, film tourism and digital media, along with 14 Letters of Award involving approximately ₹252 crore in proposed investment.

Dr. Ilayaraja T (IAS)

Secretary to the Chief Minister, Secretary of Tourism Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh

Ahead of the Mart, an Influencers Meet with 200+ influencers and an Art & Craft Fashion Show will be held on October 6, showcasing Madhya Pradesh's craft and handloom traditions.

The Mart will also feature VR, "Aankhon Dekhi" and live temple darshan experiences, while a dedicated student session on October 10 will highlight tourism careers, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities. 16 FAM Tours will introduce 200+ domestic and international delegates to the state's heritage, wildlife, culture and tourism products.

MPTM 2025: Building on Previous Achievements

MPTM 2025 recorded participation from 27 countries, 100+ international delegates, 150+ domestic tour operators and 700+ participants. More than 4,000 B2B meetings generated investment proposals exceeding ₹3,665 crore.

Key partnerships included ASI for heritage conservation, Balaji Telefilms for film tourism, Curly Tales for digital promotion, EaseMyTrip for tourism infrastructure and Atavi Bird Foundation for bird tourism.

Major investment proposals included ₹600 crore from Treasure Group, ₹500 crore each from The Malwa Club and Som Group, ₹300 crore from SLMG Beverages, ₹250 crore each from MRVH Resorts and Postcard Hotels, and ₹200 crore from Orbit Resorts.

Over the last two years, 85 land parcels and 12 heritage properties have been allotted, covering 511 hectares, attracting around ₹1,323 crore in investment* and generating potential for 12 lakh+ direct and indirect employment opportunities.

MPTM 2026 builds on this momentum by expanding global participation, strengthening B2B engagement and creating new opportunities for tourism investment, partnerships and employment in Madhya Pradesh.

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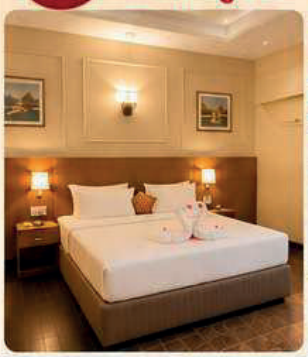
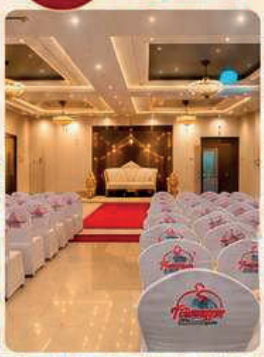
- લક્જરી રૂમમાં રહેવાની સુવિધા
- બધા ભોજનની સુવિધા
- વિશાલ પાર્ટી લોન (500 થી વધુ મહેમાનો)
- બેન્ક્યેટ હોલ (150 મહેમાનો)
- અકિરેશન ડેકોરેશન





Green Resort of the Year Award (E)-2026

by FHRAI (Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Association of India)

Diu Delwada Road,
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6th RDTM EDITION IS THEMED

'STORIES, JOURNEYS, SMILESONE STATE, TWO MARTS, ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES'

Travel Mail Desk

The sixth edition of Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) 2026 commenced grandly on its second day with the inauguration of the two-day exhibition at the B.M. Birla Convention Centre in Jaipur. **Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan, V. Srinivas,** inaugurated the exhibition as the Chief Guest by cutting the ribbon and lighting the ceremonial lamp. Following the inauguration, he went around the exhibition and visited various stalls, interacting with exhibitors and learning about tourism and hospitality products, services and new tourism experiences from different regions of Rajasthan. The exhibitors briefed him about their respective products and the unique features of various tourism destinations. Secretary Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Shuchi Tyagi and Commissioner, Rajasthan Tourism, Rukmani Riar, along with senior officials of Rajasthan Tourism, representatives of FHTR and the hospitality sector, and other key stakeholders from the tourism industry, were also present on the occasion.

On the occasion, **Chief Secretary V. Srinivas said,** *"The participation of tour operators, hotels, heritage properties and various stakeholders from the tourism sector from across the country at RDTM is encouraging. The footfall witnessed at the exhibition reflects the growing importance of domestic tourism. The exhibition showcases diverse tourism products, including hotels, technology, Palace on Wheels and caravans, along with initiatives focused on innovation and sustainable tourism. He further said that the government is working on innovations for domestic tourists visiting Rajasthan. Referring to the caravan showcased at the exhibition, he said that tourists can use caravans during long journeys, making travel more convenient and comfortable."*

Sawai Padmanabh Singh, a member of the erstwhile Royal Family of Jaipur, also visited the RDTM exhibition.

Secretary Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Shuchi Tyagi said, *"Today, tourists no longer want to limit themselves to visiting traditional tourist destinations; instead, they are increasingly seeking authentic and experience-based journeys. Rajasthan has immense potential for wedding, rural, wildlife, eco-tourism, wellness, adventure, spiritual, monsoon and MICE tourism. We endeavour to develop Rajasthan as a year-round tourism destination while promoting lesser-known destinations, new tourism circuits and local experiences. This will help increase tourists' length of stay and ensure that the benefits of tourism reach different regions of the state, local communities, artisans, entrepreneurs, homestay operators, guides and other stakeholders."*

Commissioner, Rajasthan Tourism, Rukmani Riar said, *"The sixth edition of RDTM aims to strengthen domestic tourism and create more business opportunities for Rajasthan's tourism stakeholders, particularly amid the current geopolitical situation. She highlighted the new initiative of taking RDTM to the districts to showcase lesser-known destinations and local tourism products. She added that delegates are being introduced to Rajasthan's diverse offerings through experiences showcasing its architecture at Amer Fort, sporting heritage through polo, and handicrafts through Rajeevika artisans."*

President, FHTR, Surendra Singh Shahpura said, *"RDTM has now become a celebration of the tourism sector. Just as FHTR has established RDTM as a strong platform, it has now also been entrusted with the responsibility of organising the first Marwar Travel Mart. This year, wedding planners from across the country have also been invited to the mart for the first time. New opportunities are emerging for Rajasthan's wedding and MICE industries. The tourism industry also played an important role in Rising Rajasthan. In line with Rajasthan's tourism policy, efforts are being made to connect rural areas with tourism as well, thereby creating greater opportunities for investment and employment."*

With the opening of the exhibition, pre-scheduled B2B meetings between registered buyers and sellers are being conducted over the two days. These meetings are being held at the booths of registered sellers, where buyers are learning about various tourism and hospitality products and services across Rajasthan and discussing potential business opportunities. Recognised as one of Rajasthan's leading B2B tourism and hospitality marts, RDTM has brought together key stakeholders from the travel and tourism sector on a common platform. These include hoteliers, institutions offering luxury and experiential tourism services, travel agents, tour operators, wedding planners, event managers, airlines, tourism boards, policymakers, media representatives and social media influencers.

This year, around 300 travel agents from across the country and more than 700 properties and tour companies from Rajasthan are participating across nearly 160 pavilions. The exhibition is showcasing Rajasthan's tourism destinations, hospitality services and experiential tourism products to leading buyers from across the country. For the first time, the mart has also provided a platform to the events and wedding industry, creating an opportunity to promote the art, culture, heritage and cuisine of lesser-known regions of Rajasthan on a wider scale.

It is to be noted that Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart 2026 is being organised by the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR), in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, and will continue until 19 September 2026. RDTM has received support from several tourism and hospitality associations, including the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Rajasthan (HRAR), Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO), Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA), Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), and Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), along with several other reputed national tourism organisations.

This year, CREDAI Tourism Wing has also joined the event, contributing to initiatives aimed at supporting the development of tourism. The mart aims to showcase the diversity of Rajasthan's tourism and hospitality sector to audiences across the country while creating new business opportunities for stakeholders in the industry.

1st MARWAR TRAVEL MART, JODHPUR SHOWCASED THE RICH TOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE MARWAR REGION

Travel Mail Desk

The inaugural 1st Marwar Travel Mart brought together key stakeholders from the travel, tourism and hospitality industry to showcase the rich cultural heritage, diverse tourism experiences and immense potential of the Marwar–Thar region.

The event was organised under the esteemed guidance of Chief Patron HH Maharaja Gaj Singh ji of Jodhpur–Marwar, and jointly by the Federation of Hospitality & Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR), JHARA, and the Department of Tourism, Government of India, with active participation from TAAJ, IHHA, HRAR, and RATO.

The Mart commenced with the traditional ceremonial lamp lighting by Shri Alok Ranjan, District Collector, Jodhpur, at the grand Amritam Palace, marking the formal inauguration of the first edition of the travel mart.

The event provided a dedicated platform to highlight the Marwar region's distinctive tourism offerings, including its magnificent forts and palaces, desert landscapes, vibrant arts and crafts, traditional culture, luxury hospitality, destination weddings, experiential travel, and rural tourism.

The Mart brought together tour operators, hoteliers, destination wedding planners, event curators, travel writers, bloggers, influencers and tourism stakeholders from different parts of the country. Through business interactions, networking opportunities and destination presentations, participants explored opportunities to develop and promote new tourism products centred around the Marwar–Thar region.

Speaking on the significance of the initiative, stakeholders highlighted the growing demand for short-duration holidays, self-drive journeys and experiential travel. With travellers increasingly seeking immersive four- to five-day experiences, the Marwar–Thar region has the potential to emerge as a complete destination offering a diverse combination of heritage, culture, adventure, luxury and rural experiences.

The focused approach of the Marwar Travel Mart is aimed at strengthening the region's position in the domestic and international tourism marketplace while encouraging travel trade partners to develop specialised itineraries and short-break products.

From exploring the historic forts and palaces of Jodhpur to experiencing the desert landscape, traditional communities, handicrafts, cuisine and rural life of Marwar, the region offers a compelling blend of history and contemporary hospitality.

The inaugural edition of the 1st Marwar Travel Mart thus served as an important platform for strengthening industry connections, generating business opportunities and presenting the unique tourism identity of Marwar to the wider travel fraternity.

NEW PICTURE OF WEDDINGS WILL BE FRAMED IN THE SHADOW OF THE TAJ

Travel Mail Desk

Indian Wedding Industries Conclave and Expo-2026, Tourism Minister says – Positive environment for investors in UP, Government will walk shoulder to shoulder for growth of wedding industry. The world of the wedding industry was seen at more than 50 stalls; President Manish Agrawal Rawi demands a 10-member committee for the industry from the government, Agra.

In the shadow of the Taj, deliberations on new possibilities of wedding business. The second edition of the Indian Wedding Industries Conclave and Expo-2026 was inaugurated by the State Tourism and Culture Minister Thakur Jaivir Singh by cutting the ribbon at Hotel Taj. The Minister visited more than 50 stalls set up at the Expo and interacted with entrepreneurs associated with the wedding industry to get information about their business, products and possibilities.

Present on the occasion were MLA Bhagwan Singh Kushwaha, BJP District President Prashant Pauniya, City President Rajkumar Gupta, Program Patron Sunil Agrawal, Guardian of Wedding Industries Association Rajesh Goyal, President Manish Agrawal Rawi, General Secretary Sandeep Upadhyay, Joint Commissioner Industries Anuj Kumar, Deepta Gupta and others. A group of 10 children from Maa Anand Bhavan Pathshala, who came from Assi Ghat, Varanasi, presented Aarti.

Addressing the conclave, **Tourism and Culture Minister Thakur Jaivir Singh** said, *"The Government of Uttar Pradesh stands shoulder to shoulder with entrepreneurs associated with the wedding industry. With the new tourism policy, security, facilities, better law and order, connectivity and infrastructure work, a positive environment for investment has been created. He said that tourist places in the state are being continuously developed and the government is sensitive and committed to the development of the industry, trade and tourism sector."*

He added, *"After giving industry status to the tourism sector, possibilities of investment have increased in areas like hotels, resorts, heritage hotels, wellness, eco-tourism, adventure tourism and destination weddings. 12 major tourism circuits are being developed in Uttar Pradesh for tourism."*

Mentioning the provisions of Tourism Policy-2022, **the Minister said**, *"Eligible tourism units are being given capital subsidy benefit according to the category of investment. As per the official policy, there is a provision of up to 25% capital subsidy on eligible investment from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 10 crore. There is a provision of an additional 5% subsidy for women and SC/ST entrepreneurs. The total limit of various incentives is up to a maximum of 30% as per the policy."*

Jaivir Singh said, *"There are wide possibilities for destination weddings in historical forts, palaces, old princely states and heritage sites in Uttar Pradesh. On the lines of Rajasthan, historical sites of the state can also be developed as wedding and tourism centres."*

The Minister said, *"The tourism and wedding industry are important means of employment generation. With the arrival of one tourist, about six people get employment directly or indirectly. Similarly, one wedding provides work to many people associated with wedding planners, caterers, hotels, hospitality experts, fashion designers, photographers, artists, makeup artists, jewellery designers, decorators, flower sellers, lighting and events."*

Welcoming the guests, **Wedding Industries Association President Manish Agrawal Rawi said,** *"In the two-day conclave, various aspects of the wedding industry are being discussed in six special sessions. He demanded that the Tourism and Culture Minister form a 10-member committee for the wedding industry."*

After the inauguration, in the session 'From City of Love to City of Weddings', keynote speakers Sunil Kothari, President of Bombay Metal Exchange, Rituraj Khanna, Mahavir Sharma, Arshad Hussain, Tarun Agrawal and Suraj Katoch (Delhi) expressed their views. Moderator Sandeep Upadhyay discussed the possibilities of the wedding industry in Agra through questions and answers with the speakers.

In the program, the Lifetime Achievement Award 2026 was given to Shyam Babu Garg Ji of Kunjamal Associates. Considered the centenary man of the wedding tradition continuing since 1910, Shyam Babu has kept alive the glorious tradition of 115 years in the wedding industry and has made the seed sown by his ancestors in 1910 into a banyan tree today. Even at the age of 78, he is nurturing this industry with hard work, honesty and dedication.

BEYOND THE SEA OF SAMENESS WITH PATINA

Travel Mail Desk

Patina Maldives brings a distinctive take on contemporary luxury to India's travel trade

Patina Maldives is positioning itself as a different expression of luxury hospitality, one that moves beyond traditional notions of opulence to focus on design, art, music, wellness, nutrition and meaningful experiences.

That vision came into focus during a networking evening hosted by Heaven Portfolio at D'MONDE Members Club, Delhi, where Anthony Gill, General Manager, Patina Maldives, with the team, met with members of the media during his multi-city visit to the country.

Gill travelled through Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi, reconnecting with travel partners and agents while sharing Patina's evolving brand story.

> *"There is such a sea of sameness in the luxury market and Patina is obviously so very bold and different."*
> **— Anthony Gill, General Manager, Patina Maldives**

Launched in 2021 as the first property of Patina Hotels & Resorts, Patina Maldives is located in the Fari Islands and comprises 90 beach and water villas alongside 20 Fari Studios. The resort's positioning centres on "transformative luxury", with experiences designed around creativity, wellbeing and connection.

For Gill, the brand's appeal lies particularly in its relevance to a younger generation of affluent travellers who increasingly seek individuality and cultural experiences alongside luxury.

"Patina is for the future. It's also a brand for now," **he said**, highlighting the brand's focus on guests with an appreciation for art, music, food and design.

India remains an important market for the resort. Gill noted that while the year has presented challenges for international travel, Patina's business from India has remained strong, with renewed confidence expected around the upcoming festive season and future Maldives travel.

The evening also featured a presentation by Kushal Kejriwal, Associate Director of Marketing & Communications, Patina Maldives, followed by dinner curated by D'MONDE and further networking with industry partners.

Patina's story is increasingly becoming one of building a global luxury identity, one that seeks to be recognisable not through convention, but through a distinctly different point of view.

ICONIC TOURISM SUMMIT 2026
BRINGS INDUSTRY LEADERS TOGETHER TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM

Travel Mail Desk

Marking a significant milestone in India's travel and tourism landscape, Red Hat Communications (an initiative by Jyoti Mayal) successfully hosted the 9th edition of the WION ICONIC Tourism Summit 2026, in association with Zee Network and VFS Global, at ITC Maurya, New Delhi. The summit was graced by the presence of Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture & Tourism, as Chief Guest and Shri Kapil Mishra, Cabinet Minister, Govt. of Delhi, as Guest of Honour.

The landmark 9th edition was held under the broader theme "Reinventing Tourism: Where Technology, AI and Sustainability Are Shaping the Future of Travel", reflecting the rapidly changing dynamics of the global tourism ecosystem. The summit focused on the forces shaping the next decade of travel, including digital transformation, artificial intelligence, aviation expansion, sustainable tourism, evolving traveller expectations, destination readiness, and the need for a future-ready workforce.

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture & Tourism, addressed the summit, adding, *"Tourism will play an increasingly important role in India's growth story, and our approach has always been rooted in the timeless values of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Atithi Devo Bhava. The growth of tourism goes far beyond architecture or amenities. It depends on a complete ecosystem where infrastructure, connectivity, hospitality, food and beverage, technology, local communities and travel enablers work together to create a meaningful experience for visitors. Tourism is becoming increasingly decentralised, which presents a tremendous opportunity for a diverse country like India. Technology and social media are opening up destinations that were earlier less visible, while AI, AR and VR can help travellers curate experiences and discover destinations in new ways. Yet technology can only enable the journey; it can never replace the human touch. Travel agents, tour operators and other travel enablers continue to play an important role in shaping the overall visitor experience. Indian hospitality has always been one of our greatest strengths, and we must continue to raise the bar. In the age of social media, a visitor's experience can travel faster than anything else, and a poor experience can influence the perception of an entire destination. This makes it essential for all stakeholders to work together on quality, safety, infrastructure and connectivity. India offers immense possibilities for unparalleled travel experiences because of its extraordinary diversity, and our collective responsibility is to build an ecosystem that allows these experiences to flourish."*

Shri Kapil Mishra, Minister of Labour, Delhi, shared his insights, adding, *"It is a privilege to be part of ICONIC Summit 2026 and to engage with stakeholders who share a common vision for the growth of tourism. We all have a role to play in taking tourism forward in the national capital as well as across India. Delhi and the NCR region have immense potential, and we are undertaking several measures to strengthen tourism infrastructure, architecture and visitor experiences across the capital and its surrounding areas. At the same time, making Delhi a leading tourism hub will require greater participation from the private sector, with investments and partnerships that can help strengthen infrastructure, develop new tourism experiences and create more opportunities for visitors. Technology, artificial intelligence and social media are opening up new possibilities for tourism and can significantly expand the way destinations are discovered and experienced. At the same time, the impact we create will ultimately depend on how effectively all stakeholders come together and translate these opportunities into meaningful action. Stronger public-private partnerships can play an important role in bringing together government vision, industry expertise and private investment to build a more vibrant and competitive tourism ecosystem for Delhi. Government, industry, tourism professionals and citizens must work collectively to build an ecosystem that supports sustainable growth and creates a stronger tourism experience. I invite stakeholders from across the industry and everyone working towards the larger interests of the nation to come forward, collaborate and contribute their ideas towards strengthening tourism in Delhi and across India. I also extend my appreciation to Hon'ble Union Minister of Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat ji for his continued efforts and passion towards taking Indian tourism forward. Together, we can build further on the vision of the Government and Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji and strengthen tourism as an important contributor to India's growth and prosperity."*

Addressing the summit as a keynote speaker, **Ms. Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) and CEO, Red Hat Communications,** highlighted that *"tourism today is much more than travel; it is an ecosystem that connects infrastructure, technology, hospitality, culture, entrepreneurship and communities. India has a tremendous opportunity to build tourism experiences rooted in its local identity while creating livelihoods and economic opportunities for the communities that host them. This will require stronger collaboration between government, industry, investors and local stakeholders, alongside greater focus on skilling and digital readiness. As AI and technology reshape the traveller journey, we must ensure that innovation continues to complement the human touch that lies at the heart of hospitality. The future of Indian tourism will be shaped not just by the number of visitors we attract, but by the opportunities we create for communities, entrepreneurs and the people who make these experiences possible."*

The 9th edition brought together several prominent industry leaders including Tribhuvan Darbari, Chairman, BIMSTEC Business Council Secretariat, India; Mr. K.B.Kachru, Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia at Radisson Hotel Group, Ravi Nandan Sinha, Director, Strategic Investments & Economic Partnerships, MSME Business Forum India; Saurabh Tiwari, Vice President – Middle East, Maldives & Sri Lanka, IHCL (Taj Dubai); Vikram Lalvani, MD & CEO, Sterling Holiday Resorts; Manish Puri, Head of Global Sales, Air India Limited & Air India Express; Ahmed Hamed Sharbak, Regional Manager (APAC), Visit Qatar; Kamal Munasinghe, Senior VP, Colombo Hotels, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and General Manager, Cinnamon Life; Anil Parashar, Executive Director, ITQ Technologies Pvt. Ltd.; Vinay Malhotra, Head, Strategic Global Partnerships, VFS Global; Achin Sharma, Chief Digital Officer, WAISL (GMR Cargo); and Abhilash Kalathil Ramesh, Executive Director, Kairali Ayurvedic Group and Sharad Gowani, Head of Operations – India, VFS Global, among several other eminent industry stakeholders.

Speaking on the successful completion of the 9th edition, **Ms. Jyoti Mayal, visionary behind the ICONIC platform and Chairperson, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC),** said: *"Today, marking the 9th edition of ICONIC is a deeply meaningful milestone. Over the years, the platform has grown into a space where leaders across sectors can come together, exchange perspectives and collectively shape the future of travel and tourism. The industry has undergone tremendous transformation, with technology, AI, sustainability and evolving traveller expectations reshaping the way tourism is experienced. As we look ahead, the opportunity lies in building a more connected and inclusive tourism ecosystem—one that brings together government, industry, investors, technology partners and local communities. Collaboration, innovation and skilling will be central to ensuring that tourism growth creates stronger destinations, new opportunities and meaningful livelihoods. I am grateful to all the industry leaders, policymakers, diplomats and partners who have been part of the ICONIC journey and contributed to making it a meaningful platform for the industry."*

Greater private investment, new destinations and better visitor experience critical to India's next phase of tourism growth

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism and Culture

Travel Mail Desk

Greater private-sector investment, development of new destinations and a stronger focus on destination management and visitor experience will be critical to driving the next phase of India's tourism growth, **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism and Culture, Government of India**, said at the **ASSOCHAM National Tourism Conclave 2026** held in New Delhi.

Organised under the theme **"Tourism as an Economic Engine: Technology, Policy, Investment & Global Partnerships,"** the Conclave brought together government and industry stakeholders to discuss the policy and investment priorities required to strengthen tourism as a driver of economic growth, employment and regional development. Discussions focused on connectivity and destination infrastructure, investment facilitation, ease of travel, technology adoption, skills, destination development and stronger Centre-State-industry coordination.

The Conclave also highlighted the changing nature of India's tourism demand. The ASSOCHAM-CBRE report points to growing opportunities across spiritual, MICE, wellness, cruise, rural and wildlife tourism, supported by improving connectivity through expressways, rail networks, ropeways and river-based circuits.

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism and Culture, Government of India, said, *"Tourism is emerging as an important driver of economic growth and employment, with the potential to play a much larger role in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047. As the economy grows and connectivity improves through highways, airports, railways and new transport corridors, the demand for tourism and travel experiences will also expand significantly. This will require greater investment and stronger participation from the private sector. The next phase of tourism growth will require us to look beyond increasing tourist numbers and focus on building new destinations, creating new experiences and improving destination management. The quality of the visitor experience is critical, and this requires investment in infrastructure, hospitality and human resource development across the tourism ecosystem. Technology will also be central to improving the tourism experience, from destination discovery and parking to feedback and visitor services. The government has been working with technology companies, airlines and other platforms to strengthen this ecosystem, but greater private-sector participation and partnerships will be important. With the right combination of policy support, technology and investment, tourism can create significant opportunities for businesses, communities and the wider economy."*

Shri Nirmal K. Minda, President, ASSOCHAM, said, *"India's tourism sector is at a defining juncture, evolving beyond leisure into a powerful engine of economic growth, employment, investment and regional development. As we move towards Viksit Bharat 2047, ASSOCHAM believes there is a need to build a tourism ecosystem that is globally competitive, inclusive and sustainable. The ASSOCHAM-CBRE report highlights how improved connectivity and emerging segments such as spiritual, MICE, wellness, cruise, rural and wildlife tourism are opening new avenues for growth and investment. Through its industry engagement, ASSOCHAM continues to focus on five key pillars—Make in India, Ease of Doing Business, MSME growth, the Digital Economy and Sustainability—to support the sector's next phase of growth. Through this Conclave, ASSOCHAM is bringing government and industry stakeholders together to identify opportunities, address sectoral priorities and translate them into actionable policy and investment roadmaps. This continued industry-policy dialogue will be critical to strengthening India's tourism ecosystem and advancing the ambition of a $1 trillion tourism economy."*

Dr. Subi Chaturvedi, Former Member MAG, United Nations IGF said, *"Tourism is one of the sectors where every Indian can be an ambassador for the country. India's opportunity is not simply to bring more travellers to the destinations we already know, but to help the world discover the extraordinary places, cultures, crafts, cuisines and communities it has yet to see. AI and technology can help us move from discovery to redistribution, taking attention beyond familiar tourist circuits and opening new pathways for local guides, artisans, women entrepreneurs, homestays and small businesses. But the real measure of smart tourism is not impressions or footfall alone. It is whether every new journey creates shared value, supports local livelihoods and protects the heritage and character of the places people come to experience. When technology, policy and private-sector innovation work together, tourism can become a powerful engine of inclusive growth for India."*

Dr. Arvind Kumar Sharma, Honourable Cabinet Minister for Cooperation, Jails, Elections, Heritage and Tourism, Government of Haryana, said, *"Tourism has an important role to play in driving economic growth and creating opportunities across sectors. As we work towards the vision of a developed India by 2047, it is important that the benefits of tourism reach farmers, workers, MSMEs, entrepreneurs and communities. Ease of doing business, MSME growth, the digital economy, sustainability and environmental considerations are important to creating a conducive ecosystem for tourism. Haryana, with its proximity to the National Capital Region and its heritage and cultural assets, has significant potential for tourism-led development. There is also scope to explore public-private partnerships and attract investment into tourism properties and destinations. Haryana has a strong tourism proposition, from Kurukshetra and its spiritual and historical heritage to Panipat and Surajkund, as well as emerging opportunities in rural tourism. We welcome greater industry participation and investment and will continue to support initiatives that can strengthen tourism in Haryana and contribute to the growth of tourism at the national level."*

Mr. Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO, India, South East Asia, Middle East and Africa, CBRE, said, *"India has a strong tourism proposition, with its mix of heritage, spirituality, culture, wildlife, wellness, beaches and mountains. The opportunity now is to strengthen infrastructure, destination management, cleanliness and safety while leveraging technology and AI to create a more seamless travel experience. With greater collaboration between government and the private sector, tourism can become a major engine of employment and regional prosperity."*

Mr. Ravi Gosain, President, IATO, said, *"Tourism's contribution to India's economy goes far beyond arrivals and hotel rooms. It supports transport, hospitality, local businesses, artisans, guides and communities, while creating opportunities for young and women entrepreneurs. With our rich culture, heritage, nature, spirituality, wildlife and cuisine, India has a strong tourism proposition that can be developed into experiences that are easy to discover, book and enjoy. Technology and AI can make travel planning more personalised and help businesses reach the right audiences, but the human element remains at the heart of tourism. To unlock the sector's full potential, we also need continued investment in connectivity, digital infrastructure, skills and lesser-known destinations. Stronger government-industry collaboration can help turn India's tourism potential into greater economic opportunity and better experiences for travellers."*

ASSOCHAM reiterated the need for sustained government-industry engagement to identify sectoral gaps, facilitate investment and support policy measures that can strengthen India's tourism competitiveness, expand the economic benefits of tourism and contribute to the country's broader growth ambitions.

Antara Cruises Unveils Nauka Vilas

A Private Wooden Yacht for the Most Intimate Journeys on the Ganges

Travel Mail Desk

Antara River Cruises launches Nauka Vilas– an exquisite one-suite wooden yacht that redefines river travel as a wholly private affair. Sailing from and to Kolkata, Nauka Vilas is the first of its kind: a bespoke, single-suite ship designed for couples and travellers seeking uncompromising privacy, service and craftsmanship whilst discovering the heritage and history along the sacred waters of the Hooghly.

Crafted by expert designers, Nauka Vilas carries just one Luxury Suite — a king bed, ensuite three-fixture bathroom, walk-in closet and a private sun deck that unfolds into an open-air lounge above the river. Every detail, from floor-to-ceiling windows with mesmerising river views, hand-finished teak interiors, to a dedicated in-house culinary team crafting bespoke menus onboard, has been conceived to make the vessel feel like a personal plush private residence.

The inaugural itinerary, A Romantic Bespoke Journey on the Hooghly, is an all-inclusive three-night, four-day passage tracing the river's storied past — from the confluence town of Tribeni, home to a 14th-century Islamic shrine, through the Portuguese heritage of Bandel, the French colonial charm of Chandernagore, the Danish quarters of Serampore, and into Kolkata. Guests will move through centuries of history — Mughal tombs, terracotta temples, colonial churches and candlelit shores — from the privacy of their own vessel, with excursions, meals, beverages and transfers fully curated and included.

"Nauka Vilas was conceived for travellers who no longer wish to share their journey — not the deck, not the itinerary, not the moment," **Raj Singh, Founder and Chairman of Antara Cruises,** comments. *"It is an intimate journey of immersive discovery, reimagined."*

Nauka Vilas is conceived as much for romance as for remembrance — an unforgettable way to mark an anniversary, a birthday getaway, a honeymoon or an unforgettable gift to loved ones – a precious once-in-a-lifetime journey to remember for years.

Nauka Vilas is open for bookings, with fares starting from ₹1,00,000/ night, including pick-up and drop-off from Kolkata. Itineraries are entirely bespoke and can be curated and customised as per guest requirements.

MSC Cruises Highlights Global Itineraries and New Ship Experiences for Indian Travellers

Travel Mail Desk

MSC Cruises is highlighting the breadth of its global cruise offering for Indian travellers, bringing together a wide choice of itineraries, modern ships and onboard experiences designed for guests looking to discover multiple destinations in one seamless holiday.

MSC World Asia

As demand for new international holiday experiences continues to evolve in India, cruising offers travellers a compelling way to combine destination discovery, entertainment, dining and relaxation, all while unpacking only once. With itineraries across the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, the Caribbean, and Alaska, MSC Cruises provides a broad portfolio of holidays for families, couples, groups of friends and multi-generational travellers.

Guests sailing with MSC Cruises can choose from a wide range of experiences on board, including international dining, live entertainment, dedicated kids' clubs, wellness and fitness facilities, family activities and accommodation options for different travel styles. The line's exclusive MSC Yacht Club offers a premium "ship-within-a-ship" experience with dedicated areas, 24-hour butler and concierge service, private facilities and elevated comfort.

For Indian guests, MSC Cruises offers access to a diverse portfolio of itineraries across five continents, with sailings in some of the world's most sought-after cruise regions. This global choice is supported by an extensive network of international embarkation ports and fly-cruise options, allowing travellers to select the holiday experience that best suits their plans.

Norbert Stiekema, Executive Director Global Sales, MSC Cruises, said, *"India is an important market for the future of cruising, with travellers increasingly looking for holidays that combine discovery, comfort, choice and value. MSC Cruises is well placed to meet this demand through our global portfolio of itineraries, modern fleet and onboard experiences designed for international guests. Our focus is to make cruising more relevant and accessible for Indian travellers, while continuing to introduce new ships, destinations and experiences across our global network."*

A key example of MSC Cruises' continued investment in its fleet and guest experience is MSC World Asia, the cruise line's newest World Class ship, which will sail in the Western Mediterranean from December 2026. The ship will offer seven-night itineraries with calls including Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa, Civitavecchia for Rome, Messina and Valletta during winter 2026/27, followed by summer 2027 sailings to Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa, Naples, Messina and Valletta.

MSC World Asia will feature more than 40 bars, lounges and restaurants, international entertainment, dedicated family facilities, wellness spaces and seven onboard districts, each designed with its own atmosphere and experiences. The ship will also include MSC Yacht Club accommodation, a wide range of dining concepts and new venues that reflect the creativity and innovation of MSC Cruises' World Class ships.

Sustainability remains central to MSC Cruises' long-term vision, with the company committed to reducing the environmental impact of its operations and achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

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Vietjet partners with Starlink to bring high-speed Wi-Fi across its global fleet

Travel Mail Desk

During Vietnamese General Secretary and President To Lam's working visit to the United States, Vietjet, together with its group companies Galaxy Holdings and Galaxy Telecom, signed a strategic partnership agreement with Starlink, SpaceX's satellite internet service, to provide passengers with free, high-speed Wi-Fi on Vietjet flights.

The agreement was exchanged in the presence of Vietnam's General Secretary and President To Lam, senior leaders and business representatives from both countries, marking a new milestone in aviation technology cooperation between Vietnam and the United States.

In the initial phase, Starlink will be installed on 120 Vietjet aircraft, including 100 Airbus A321/Boeing 737 aircraft and 20 Airbus A330 aircraft. The airline also plans to equip all future aircraft deliveries with high-speed internet, extending connectivity across its domestic and international network, including its extensive India–Vietnam network connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

With high-speed, low-latency connectivity and coverage over oceans, polar regions and remote areas, Starlink will enable passengers to work, stay connected, stream entertainment and access online content throughout their journey. Vietjet aims to make high-speed inflight Wi-Fi no longer a premium amenity, but an essential and widely accessible digital service for everyday air travel.

Dr. Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao, Vietjet Chairwoman, said *"With Starlink, time in the air no longer has to mean time offline. Vietjet passengers will be able to stay connected throughout their journey—whether working, staying entertained, or keeping in touch with family and friends. This reflects Vietjet's longstanding commitment to innovation and our ambition to bring leading technologies closer to more people."*

"The introduction of Starlink on Vietjet will build on the fast, reliable service already connecting homes and businesses on the ground in Vietnam," said **Tim Hughes, Senior Vice President of Global Business and Government Affairs at SpaceX.** *"We're thrilled to deliver a connectivity experience to Vietjet and its customers, making every journey better, smoother and infinitely more enjoyable."*

The agreement marks the beginning of a long-term technology relationship between Vietjet and SpaceX. Together with its modern fleet and continued investment in data, artificial intelligence and highly skilled talent, Vietjet is building a digital aviation ecosystem that keeps millions of passengers connected to the world throughout their journeys.

Air India Delhi -Tel Aviv Flights Return 5 Weekly Non-Stops

Travel Mail Desk

Air India Delhi Tel Aviv flights: five weekly services to restore direct connectivity and support India-Israel tourism from December 1

Air India will resume its direct flights between Delhi and Tel Aviv from December 1, 2026, restoring a key air link between India and Israel. Air India will be the only airline operating non-stop flights between the two countries, with five weekly flights scheduled from Sunday through Thursday aboard Boeing 777 aircraft.

Flight AI139 will depart Delhi at 5:00 AM and arrive in Tel Aviv at 8:30 AM, with a flight time of approximately seven hours. In the opposite direction, flight AI140 will depart Tel Aviv at 10:30 AM and arrive in Delhi at 7:45 PM, with a flight time of approximately five hours and 45 minutes.

The return of the direct route comes at a time when the Israel Ministry of Tourism is strengthening its engagement with the Indian market and broadening the way the destination is presented to Indian travellers. Alongside Israel's longstanding appeal for pilgrimage and spiritual travel, the Ministry is placing increasing emphasis on leisure, family travel, MICE, luxury and experiential tourism.

Welcoming the announcement, **Galit Hoffman, Consul for Tourism Affairs, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India,** said *"The return of Air India's direct flights is an important development for tourism between India and Israel. For Indian travellers, the restoration of a regular non-stop connection makes the journey more convenient and gives them greater flexibility when planning a visit to Israel. India remains an important market for us, and direct air connectivity has a significant role to play in supporting the growth of travel between our two countries.*

Ms. Galit Hoffman, Consul – Tourism Affairs, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India

"We would like more Indian travellers to discover the many different sides of Israel, beyond its longstanding appeal for pilgrimage and spiritual travel. From Jerusalem and the beaches, culinary experiences and vibrant city life of Tel Aviv, to the Dead Sea, the desert, Galilee and Eilat on the Red Sea, Israel offers an extraordinary variety of experiences within a relatively compact destination. The return of the Delhi route gives us an important opportunity to build greater awareness of this diversity and encourage more Indian travellers to experience Israel in different ways."

India was already a significant source market for Israel before the COVID-19 pandemic, with nearly 70,000 Indian visitors annually. Alongside the restoration of direct connectivity, the Israel Ministry of Tourism is strengthening its presence in India through closer engagement with the travel trade, destination training, webinars, familiarisation programmes for travel agents and media, and greater promotion of Israel's diverse tourism experiences.

The resumption of Air India's flights on December 1 is expected to provide further momentum to tourism ties between India and Israel and make the destination more accessible to new segments of Indian travellers.

Centrum Air Hyderabad Tashkent Flights Begin: Twice Weekly

Travel Mail Desk

Centrum Air has commenced a new twice-weekly direct passenger service between Hyderabad and Tashkent, marking a significant step forward in strengthening air connectivity between India and Uzbekistan.

The inaugural service took place, with a launch ceremony held at Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) in association with GMR, customs authorities, senior airport officials and key travel trade stakeholders. The new route establishes Hyderabad as Centrum Air's second gateway in India, following its Delhi–Tashkent operations.

Operating twice weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays, the new Hyderabad–Tashkent service provides passengers from Hyderabad and the wider South Indian region with direct access to Uzbekistan. The new connection is expected to create greater opportunities for tourism, business, trade and cultural exchange between India and Uzbekistan.

The service also offers passengers a comfortable onboard experience, with hot meals available in both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. With Tashkent serving as a key hub for Centrum Air, passengers can also access the airline's wider network across Central Asia and other international markets.

As Centrum Air's Exclusive GSA in India, Aeroprime Group is proud to support the airline's expanding network and growing presence in the Indian market. The launch further strengthens Aeroprime Group's commitment to supporting its airline partners in developing new markets and creating greater connectivity opportunities.

Adil Mirza, Head of Agents Division, Centrum Air, said, *"The launch of the Hyderabad–Tashkent route marks an important milestone in Centrum Air's expansion in India. Hyderabad and the wider South Indian region represent an important market, and this direct service will provide travellers with convenient access to Uzbekistan while supporting greater tourism, trade and business opportunities between the two countries. We look forward to developing this market further with our partners."*

Aeroprime Group, Centrum Air's Exclusive General Sales Agent (GSA) in India, is supporting the airline's market development and trade engagement in the country. At the launch, Aeroprime highlighted its commitment to supporting Centrum Air's India expansion through strong local market knowledge, trade relationships and on-ground sales and marketing support.

Abhishek Goyal, Executive Director & CEO, Aeroprime Group, said, *"We are delighted to support Centrum Air with the launch of its direct Hyderabad–Tashkent service. This new connection brings Uzbekistan closer to travellers across Hyderabad and South India while opening up new opportunities for tourism, trade and business. As Centrum Air's Exclusive GSA in India, Aeroprime Group remains committed to supporting the airline's growth and strengthening its presence in the Indian market. Within one year of starting two weekly flights from Delhi, Centrum Air has now expanded to 7 weekly flights connecting New Delhi and Hyderabad with Tashkent, demonstrating huge potential and growing customer demand for Uzbekistan."*

The Hyderabad–Tashkent service operates twice weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays, providing passengers with direct connectivity to the Uzbek capital and further strengthening the growing air links between India and Uzbekistan. This is in addition to 5 weekly flights operated by Centrum Air between New Delhi and Tashkent.

Cathay celebrates its 80th anniversary by giving back to the community

Travel Mail Desk

As part of its "80 Years Together" anniversary celebrations, Cathay hosted a special Community Volunteering Day, bringing together over 250 Cathay volunteers to give back to the community through six meaningful activities across the city, in partnership with HandsOn Hong Kong and several charity partners.

With its deep roots in Hong Kong for 80 years, Cathay has a longstanding commitment to giving back and being a positive force for the communities it serves. Hosted by Cathay Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Lavinia Lau, the Community Volunteering Day began with an opening ceremony at the iconic and storied Kai Tak Sports Park, attended by Director of Home Affairs of the Hong Kong SAR Government Priscilla To as Guest of Honour, Cathay volunteers and community partners.

Cathay's Lavinia Lau said: *"We are proud to mark our 80th anniversary by giving back to the community. Cathay's story has always been closely connected with Hong Kong, and supporting our communities is a meaningful way for our people to honour that shared journey. This Community Volunteering Day brings to life Cathay's values of being thoughtful, progressive and can-do. Today, over 250 Cathay volunteers are coming together around Kai Tak, our historical home, to help support diverse community needs. Through our joint efforts, not only are we contributing to Cathay's ambition to uplift 80,000 lives this year, but also supporting our community and creating positive change together."*

Cathay's Lavinia Lau highlighted Cathay's longstanding commitment to giving back and being a positive force for the communities it serves.

Throughout the afternoon, Cathay volunteers supported six activities designed to create positive and inclusive experiences for different community groups. These included promoting confidence and teamwork to children from less-advantaged families through pickleball activities; supporting individuals with disabilities through an inclusive bowling session; accompanying elderly people on grocery shopping visits; celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival with elderly people through mooncake- making; and helping maintain an urban community garden as an accessible green space.

Turkish Airlines Finalizes Order for up to 150 Boeing 737 MAX Aircraft

Travel Mail Desk

Turkish Airlines has finalized an agreement with Boeing for up to 150 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, marking another significant step in its long-term growth strategy. In the talks since 2025, the agreement will be flag carrier's largest ever Boeing single-aisle aircraft order and will support its fleet expansion strategy while strengthening its short- and medium-haul network.

The agreement for the 737 MAX order was finalized in the presence of His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye.

The order comprises 100 firm Boeing 737-8 aircraft and options for an additional 50 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. The agreement also includes substitution rights for the Boeing 737-10, the largest member of the 737 MAX family, providing Turkish Airlines with greater flexibility to align capacity with growing passenger demand across its network.

Commenting on the agreement, **Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee Prof Murat Şeker stated:** *"This agreement marks another significant step in the continued expansion of our fleet. The new Boeing 737 MAX aircraft will bring greater efficiency and flexibility to our operations, supporting the extensive network we serve from our hub in Istanbul. We are pleased to build on our longstanding cooperation with Boeing through an agreement that also supports Türkiye's aviation ecosystem."*

President and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes Stephanie Pope stated: *"This order reflects the trust and shared vision that have defined our long-standing partnership with Turkish Airlines. We're proud to continue our support of Türkiye's aviation ecosystem and Turkish Airlines as it grows its Istanbul-based network, connecting more people and destinations worldwide."*

ixigo Trains Launches Spiritual and Family Holiday Packages with ixigo Bharat Darshan

Travel Mail Desk

ixigo Trains, India's leading AI-based train ticketing platform, today announced the launch of Holiday Packages with ixigo Bharat Darshan, a new feature that enables users to discover and book IRCTC's curated spiritual and family travel packages directly within the ixigo Trains app.

The 'ixigo Bharat Darshan' feature will enable travellers to seamlessly plan their journey end-to-end, bringing together train travel, accommodation, sightseeing, meals and local transport in a single curated package. This makes it easier for travellers to plan and manage their trips without coordinating multiple bookings across platforms.

The feature will initially focus on spiritual circuits across India. Travellers can browse and book curated packages to destinations such as Vaishno Devi, Ayodhya, Char Dham, Tirupati and Shirdi, as well as family favourites such as Kashmir and the Northeast as well. Packages are available across Comfort and Superior categories, with prices starting from Rs. 6,990 and going up to Rs.2–3 lakh for premium experiences.

One of the key advantages of the feature is that it provides a guaranteed travel alternative for travellers who cannot secure confirmed train tickets. For instance, a traveller planning a trip from Delhi to Vaishno Devi can still complete the journey without being waitlisted by booking a curated Bharat Darshan package through ixigo Trains, without having to coordinate multiple bookings separately.

Speaking on the launch, **Dinesh Kumar Kotha, CEO, ixigo Trains & ConfirmTkt,** said, *"Spiritual travel has been gaining significant momentum in India over the last few years, with travellers increasingly seeking convenient and well-planned journeys to the country's cultural destinations. On ixigo, train searches to spiritual destinations have grown by 15-20% YoY for popular destinations such as Haridwar, Rishikesh, Ujjain, Shirdi and Varanasi. With ixigo Bharat Darshan, we are building on this trend by making it easier for travellers to discover and book complete pilgrimage and family travel experiences. Our aim is to take the complexity out of planning these journeys and make travel across India simpler, more seamless and accessible."*

Users can book and manage their Holiday Packages with ixigo Bharat Darshan bookings within the ixigo Trains app, with trip reminders, updates and dedicated customer support ensuring a seamless experience throughout the journey.

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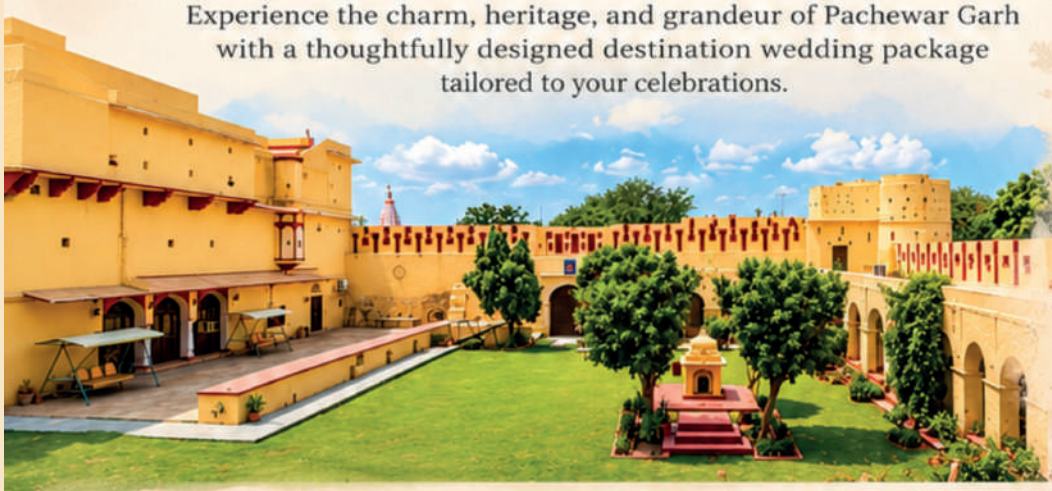

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Etihad Airways and Swissport Expand Global Ground Handling and Cargo Partnership

Travel Mail Desk

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, and Swissport, the world's largest provider of aviation services by revenue, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding at Arabian Travel Market to expand their global partnership, increasing the number of airports at which Swissport serves the airline from 30 to 40.

The expanded partnership covers airports across Africa, Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia, adding 10 new locations to the work Swissport already carries out for the airline.

Under the MoU, the two companies will work together across ground handling and cargo services, with scope to extend the relationship into airport hospitality through Swissport's Aspire brand, which operates 110 airport lounges worldwide. Both sides intend it as a long-term partnership, giving them a framework to add airports and services as Etihad's network grows.

Captain Majed Al Marzouqi, Chief Operations and Guest Officer, Etihad Airways, said *"Etihad is expanding at pace, and each new destination we add depends on the right standard of service being in place on the ground before the first flight arrives. Working with one partner across 40 airports gives our guests the same experience whether they are departing from Europe, Asia or North America, and gives our operation the consistency it needs to match that expansion. By combining Swissport's global expertise with Etihad's ambitious plans, we can enhance efficiency, service quality and the guest experience across our operations, while creating a strong platform for what comes next."*

Warwick Brady, President and Chief Executive Officer, Swissport, said *"Etihad and Swissport are a natural fit. We share the same ambition for operational excellence and an uncompromising focus on the customer experience. Etihad is embarking on an exciting phase of growth, and Swissport is proud to support that journey with our global network, our teams' operational expertise and our technology capabilities. Our track record in managing complex, large aviation hubs will enable us to support Etihad effectively wherever its growth takes it."*

Technology and innovation will be important drivers of the expanded partnership as Etihad and Swissport explore opportunities to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen service delivery and improve the guest experience. By applying automation, artificial intelligence and data-driven insights, including Swissport's work on autonomous ground vehicles, the two organisations aim to support safer, smarter and more seamless airport operations, while investing in the people and capabilities that will support it.

WestJet Appoints AVIAREPS as Cargo GSA in India

Travel Mail Desk

AVIAREPS has been appointed as General Sales Agent (GSA) for WestJet Cargo in India, taking on nationwide responsibility for supporting the carrier's cargo sales, customer engagement and market development across the country.

Under the new appointment, AVIAREPS will represent WestJet Cargo, the cargo business of Canadian airline WestJet, across India. With its pan-India presence and understanding of the local aviation and cargo landscape, AVIAREPS will support WestJet Cargo in strengthening its engagement with freight forwarders, cargo agents and other industry stakeholders across the market.

The appointment brings together AVIAREPS' local market expertise and nationwide presence with WestJet Cargo's international cargo offering, creating a dedicated platform for greater engagement with the Indian cargo community. AVIAREPS will focus on developing commercial relationships, supporting cargo sales and identifying opportunities across the Indian market.

As part of WestJet Cargo's wider GSA structure in India, Airline Services International (ASI) will coordinate with Rainbow Aviation Private Limited to focus on specific regional cargo markets, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana and Goa.

Frederick Overton, Global Head of Cargo, AVIAREPS *"We are delighted to support WestJet Cargo as its Cargo GSA in India. Our pan-India presence, local market expertise and established relationships across the aviation and cargo ecosystem position us well to support WestJet Cargo's commercial objectives in the country. We look forward to working closely with customers and industry partners across India and contributing to the continued development of WestJet Cargo's business in this market."*

For AVIAREPS, the appointment further expands its cargo representation portfolio and strengthens its role in supporting international airlines with market-specific sales and commercial representation. The mandate builds on AVIAREPS' established presence in India and its experience in representing international aviation brands across the country.

Through its nationwide representation, AVIAREPS will serve as a dedicated local point of contact for WestJet Cargo's customers and trade partners, supporting the carrier's continued engagement and commercial development in India.

SriLankan Aviation College Marks Airline's Legacy Through 'Skyline Stories'

Travel Mail Desk

SriLankan Aviation College marked the 47th anniversary of SriLankan Airlines with a special anniversary edition of its aviation talk series, The Skyline Stories, celebrating the enduring legacy of the pioneering aviators who helped shape the National Carrier and the next generation carrying that legacy forward. The sixth episode of the series paid tribute to the pioneering years of Air Lanka, established in 1979, and traced the journey of the National Carrier to its present identity as SriLankan Airlines, while exploring how the values, experiences and influence of its early aviators continue to resonate in Sri Lankan aviation today.

The session featured Captain Shavantha Pedris and Senior First Officer Nuwan Jayawickrama, whose fathers, Captain Ranjit Pedris and Captain Nihal Jayawickrama, were among the pioneering flight crew of Air Lanka during its formative years. Their participation created a unique bridge between the generation that helped establish the National Carrier and the aviation professionals carrying that legacy forward today, while also reflecting the important role the airline has played in the development of Sri Lanka's tourism and aviation industry over the past 47 years.

Captain Shavantha Pedris said, *"Growing up, everything around me seemed connected to aviation because of my father. He inspired me from a young age and always encouraged me to aim higher. The journey to where I am today has not always been easy, and there have been many challenges along the way. Each experience has shaped who I am and strengthened my passion for aviation. Now, I feel it is my turn to give back to the industry that has given me so much."*

Senior First Officer Nuwan Jayawickrama added, *"Aviation was always part of our family life, so becoming a pilot felt like a natural possibility. But having a parent who has already achieved so much in the industry also comes with expectations. Over time, I realised that the goal is not simply to follow someone else's journey, but to learn from it and build your own. Every career has its own challenges, and it is how you respond to them that shapes you as a professional."*

As the training arm of Sri Lanka's National Carrier, SriLankan Aviation College is uniquely positioned to provide its students with direct access to the people and experiences that have shaped the country's aviation industry. Through The Skyline Stories, the College seeks to prepare students not only with the technical and academic knowledge required for aviation careers, but also with a realistic understanding of the opportunities, responsibilities and challenges that await them. The Anniversary Edition celebrated the pioneering generation that helped build Air Lanka while recognising that a legacy is not simply something inherited and that each succeeding generation must find its own path and make its own contribution.

Air connectivity grows 11% across Asia-Pacific & Middle East as airports build resilience for the next phase of growth.

Travel Mail Desk

Airports Council International Asia-Pacific & Middle East (ACI APAC & MID), the trade association representing over 600 airports across Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, today released its flagship Air Connectivity Index, recording an average growth of 11% in 2025 across the two regions.

The ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East Air Connectivity Index is a passenger-centric analytical tool to measure the connectivity of airports through network scale and frequency, the economic weight of destinations, and connection quality and efficiency in terms of aircraft type, domestic/international status, number of stops, and alliance membership.

The Middle East posted 21% growth in air connectivity, driven by the expanding reach of Gulf-based carriers, while Asia-Pacific grew 10%, reflecting continued network expansion.

Stefano Baronci, Director General of ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East, said: *"The growth in air connectivity is encouraging. With post-pandemic recovery behind us, 2025 marked a shift from rebuilding capacity to preparing for sustained growth. With passenger volumes across Asia-Pacific and the Middle East projected to reach 11 billion within the next three decades, it is increasingly important that we continue to strengthen connectivity so that aviation can deliver greater choice for passengers and wider economic benefits."*

Baronci emphasised: *"Despite the macroeconomic challenges, the Asia-Pacific region proved resilient in the first half of 2026, with passenger traffic increasing by approximately 1.6% year on year, though the outlook remains challenging. Boosted by growing international demand and a strong domestic traffic base, we still forecast growth in the medium and long term. As the operating environment evolves, the focus is increasingly on how these efforts can support greater resilience and sustainable growth. This includes making better use of existing capacity, strengthening operational reliability, improving the passenger experience, and investing in new infrastructure and technology."*

"ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East recommends strengthening the policy and regulatory environment that enables connectivity growth, including the revision of existing air service agreements, continued easing of visa requirements, and reforms to enhance the slot allocation framework," **Baronci added.**

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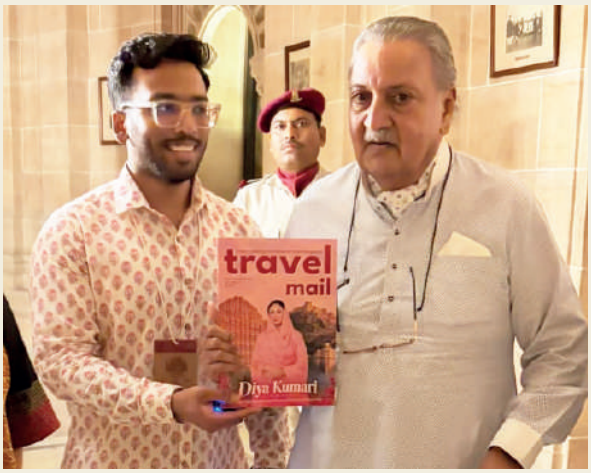
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Appointments

VIPUL MISRA APPOINTED AS ACTING CEO OF SRILANKAN AIRLINES

Vipul Misra has been appointed Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SriLankan Airlines. Bringing over two decades of aircraft engineering and aviation leadership experience, Misra's background spans across significantly large commercial carriers including Air India, Vistara, Indigo, SpiceJet, Kingfisher Airlines, and Air Deccan. His comprehensive expertise across legacy, full-service, and low-cost carriers is expected to provide strong technical and operational direction during this interim period, as the national carrier of Sri Lanka works towards enhancing its performance and long-term sustainability.

SFO ANNOUNCES EVA CHEONG AS NEW CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

The San Francisco International Airport (SFO) announced the appointment of Eva Cheong as the new Chief Operating Officer for the Airport. In this role, Cheong will lead airside and landside operations, AirTrain, safety and security, the Airport Integrated Operations Centre and 911 dispatch centre, guest care, facilities, and the SFO Museum. Cheong will be the first female Chief Operating Officer in SFO history.

"I am excited to announce Eva Cheong as SFO's new Chief Operating Officer," **said Airport Director Mike Nakornkhet.** *"Eva brings a deep operational expertise in our industry, combined with a genuine commitment to our people and our mission, and I look forward to her contributions in this role."*

PROJJWAL GHOSH APPOINTED AS AREA CHAMPION – SALES & MARKETING, SOUTHWEST ASIA, IHG HOTELS & RESORTS AND DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING, INTERCONTINENTAL CHENNAI MAHABALIPURAM RESORT

InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort has announced the appointment of Projjwal Ghosh as Area Champion – Sales & Marketing, Southwest Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts and Director of Sales & Marketing, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort. With over 16 years of experience spanning sales, marketing, revenue and events across luxury, upscale and mainstream hospitality brands, Projjwal brings extensive expertise in pre-opening, opening and revamp commercial strategies, operations, market development and revenue growth to his leadership role.

RAJAT SHARMA APPOINTED GENERAL MANAGER AT THE WESTIN PUSHKAR RESORT & SPA

Bringing over two decades of experience across luxury hospitality, sales, marketing, MICE and business strategy, Rajat Sharma will lead the resort in his new role. The Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa has announced the appointment of Rajat Sharma as its new General Manager. With over two decades of experience across leading luxury hospitality brands, Rajat brings extensive expertise spanning hotel operations, sales and marketing, business development and strategic alliances to his new role.

THE LEELA HYDERABAD ANNOUNCES THE APPOINTMENT OF MEHEK SHARMA AS HEAD OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The Leela Hyderabad has appointed Mehek Sharma as Head of Marketing & Communications, marking her first role in the hospitality sector. With experience spanning brand building, digital initiatives, campaign planning, and experiential projects, Mehek joins the hotel focused on strengthening its presence across the luxury, lifestyle, culinary, and travel landscape.

HYATT CENTRIC MG ROAD BANGALORE APPOINTS NEHA LIZ CHUNGATH AS ASSISTANT MANAGER – MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore is pleased to announce the appointment of Neha Liz Chungath as Assistant Manager – Marketing Communications (MARCOM). In her new role, Neha will be responsible for supporting and strengthening the hotel's marketing and communications initiatives, with a focus on brand storytelling, content development, digital communication, campaign execution and creating engaging experiences that resonate with the hotel's audiences.

THE WESTIN HYDERABAD MINDSPACE APPOINTS ADITYA KAUL AS DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING

The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace is pleased to announce the appointment of Aditya Kaul as Director of Sales and Marketing. With extensive experience in the hospitality industry, Aditya brings strong expertise in sales leadership, commercial strategy, business development, market positioning and hotel pre-openings across leading international hospitality brands.

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