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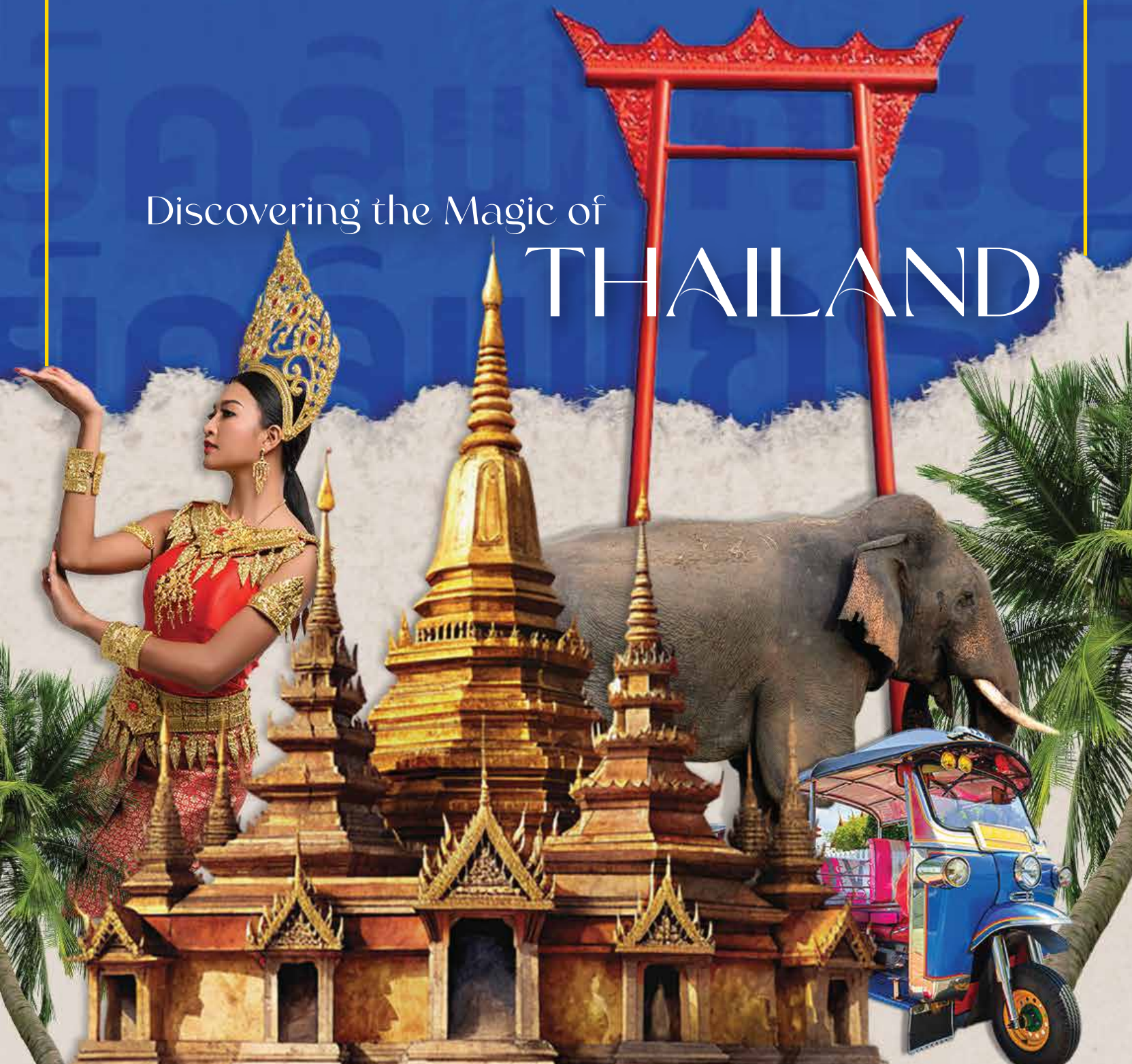
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# TRAVEL turtle

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# Editor's Letter

As we step into the second half of the year, I reflect on a whirlwind of hopes fulfilled, businesses thriving, and an abundance of travel that has defined our journey so far.

Reflecting on these past months, I can't help but feel immense gratitude and excitement. As I pen down these editor notes, often from the bustling halls of airports, the rhythmic clatter of train tracks, or the open road, I am reminded of the words of J.R.R. Tolkien: "Not all those who wander are lost." This journey is not just mine but ours, a collective odyssey of exploration, connection, and growth.

Our recent roadshow, The Travel Marketplace West, held in Pune and Surat, was a testament to the strength and unity of our travel community. The warmth and support from the travel fraternity in these regions were overwhelming. Our partners experienced not just good business but the kind of camaraderie that fuels our industry's heart. As Helen Keller once said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." With this spirit, we are committed to reaching new heights and expanding our horizons to even more potential cities.

The mid-year period, although devoid of major exhibitions, is perhaps the busiest time for the travel industry. It's what we fondly call 'season time,' a period bursting with roadshows, events, and networking nights. Our dedicated team has been tirelessly on the move, ensuring that we capture every moment and bring it to you live on our social media platforms and within the pages of our magazine.

From the serene islands of Thailand and Halong Bay to the magical adventures at Disneyland Paris, we've covered it all. We've delved into exciting plans from Qatar Airways and SriLankan Airlines, among many other interactions, ensuring you remain at the forefront of the trade.

As we embrace the second half of the year, let's carry forward the momentum, the dreams, and the shared purpose that have defined our journey so far. Here's to more travels, more connections, and more stories waiting to be told.



**Bharti Sharma**  
Editor

   : [travelturtlemag](https://www.instagram.com/travelturtlemag)







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Publisher: **Harish Chandra Uniyal**

Editor: **Bharti Sharma**

Executive Director: **Sudipta Saha**

Bureau Chief (West): **Naina Nath**

Sub-Editor: **Tripti Jain**

Contributing Editors:

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Photographer: **Abhishek**

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Accounts: **Dinesh Kumar**



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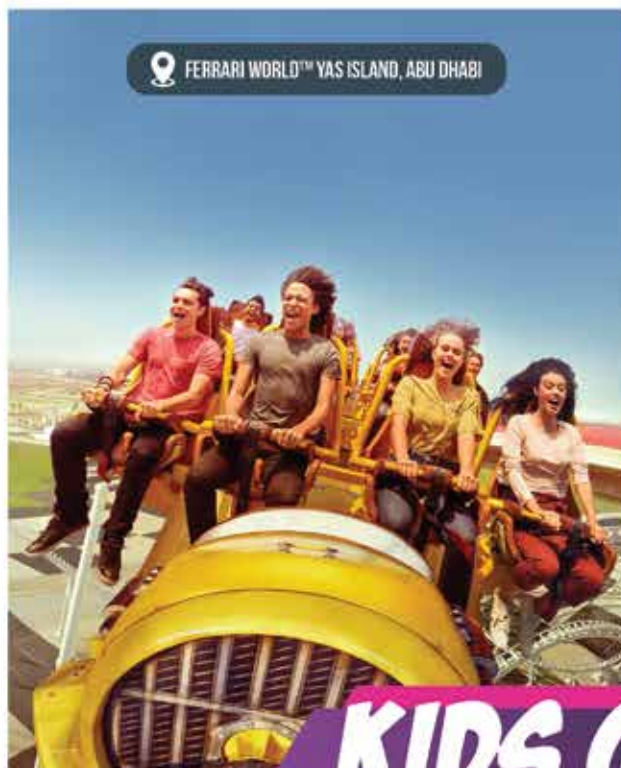
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THE LUXURIOUS  
WORLD OF  
**THE OZEN  
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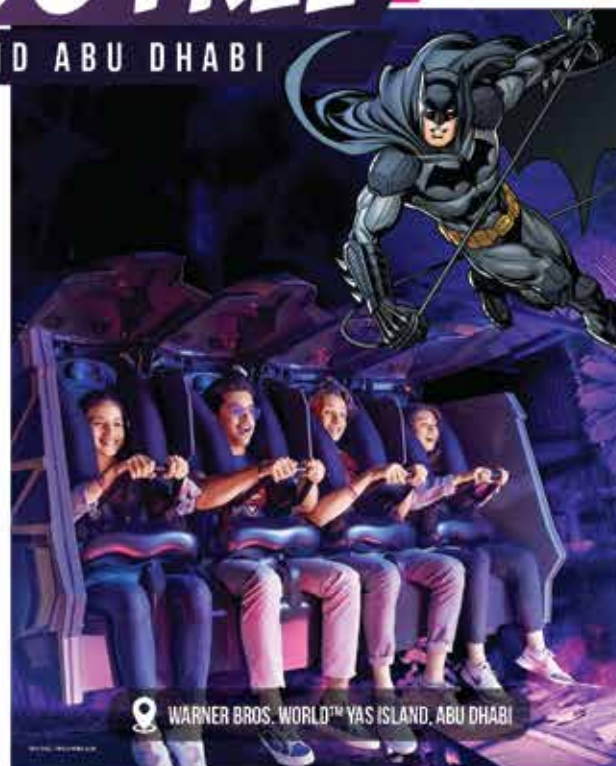
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## ***Aeroprime Group appointed as the exclusive Cargo GSSA for Cambodia Angkor Air***

Aeroprime Group, India's leading new-age GSA, is proud to announce its appointment as the exclusive Cargo General Sales and Service Agent (GSSA) for Cambodia Angkor Air, the flag carrier of Cambodia, effective June 1, 2024. Currently, the airline boasts a fleet comprising A320, A321, and ATR aircrafts, serving over 11 destinations across Cambodia, China, Laos, Singapore, and Vietnam. Starting 16th June 2024, Cambodia Angkor Airlines will operate four (4x) weekly flights from Delhi (DEL) to Phnom Penh (PNH) utilising A320 aircraft, offering the only direct connectivity between India and Cambodia which will help increase the trade between the countries and open up more business opportunities for cargo.

## **AEROPRIME GROUP APPOINTED AS THE EXCLUSIVE INDIA CARGO GSSA FOR CAMBODIA ANGKOR AIR**



## ***MATATO, NHGAM and MMPRC announces Maldives Tourism Roadshow in India***

The Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO) and National Hotels & Guest House Association of Maldives (NHGAM) together with Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) have announced a joint roadshow across India to promote Maldives as a leading tourist destination. The roadshow will take place in three major cities, Bangalore, New Delhi and Mumbai.

## ***IATO Delegation meet the new Cabinet Tourism Minister of India***

An IATO delegation of three senior Office Bearers i.e. Mr. Rajiv Mehra, President, Mr. Ravi Gosain – Vice President and Mr. Sanjay Razdan – Hon'y. Secretary, called on Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the new Cabinet Minister of Tourism, Govt. of India and met him in his office yesterday for a courtesy call and to congratulate him on taking over the charge in the Cabinet as Tourism Minister of India.



## ***Singapore Tourism Board holds multi-city B2B roadshow in India with 50 exhibitors***

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is set to organise a multi-city B2B roadshow in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad this July. Titled 'Singapore Tourism Board Roadshow 2024. Holidays Made in Singapore', the event features 50 exhibitors representing hotels, attractions, airline, cruise lines and destination management companies. Notably, seven of these exhibitors are participating for the first time, including the city's famed family-friendly attraction Museum of Ice Cream, and Disney Cruise Line, which has made Singapore its exclusive Southeast Asian homeport for five years starting next year.





## ***Moroccan National Tourism Office successfully hosts a Familiarization Trip for Indian tour operators***

From the bustling streets of Casablanca to the enchanting allure of Marrakech, participants embarked on a journey filled with immersive experiences and valuable connections. They explored vibrant cityscapes, savoured the best of Moroccan and Indian cuisine, and marvelled at the majestic Hassan II Mosque and Rabat's historic Chellah site. The adventure continued with a magical night at the Agafay Camp, complete with music and dance in the serene desert. And not to forget the vibrant Jemaa el Fna square where participants shopped to their heart's content, the famous Jardin Majorelle Garden, the Yves Saint Laurent Museum, and the Bahia Palace, a breath-taking testament to Moroccan architecture and design from the late 19th century.



## ***Island Life DMC announces its newest destination: Bali***

Island Life DMC is thrilled to announce the addition of Bali to their portfolio of premier travel destinations. Known for its breath-taking landscapes, vibrant culture, and pristine beaches, Bali offers an unparalleled experience for travellers seeking both tranquillity and adventure.



## ***Taiwan Tourism Administration invites Indian Businesses to Taiwan to expand the MICE market***

Following the establishment of the "Taiwan Tourism Information Center in Mumbai", India's largest economic city, on February 7, 2024, the Administration invited ten travel agencies specialising in incentive travel to Taiwan from June 20 to 25. First Group Focuses on Yilan, Followed by Taichung and Kaohsiung Inspections in the Second Half of the Year.







### ***Saudi Arabia opens up multiple visa services for Indian travellers***

Indian tourists will now be able to access electronic visas (eVisa) and visa-on-arrival services if they meet certain conditions. For instance, those with a valid tourist or business visa from the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) or any Schengen country, along with proof of entry stamps, are eligible for an eVisa. Travellers who meet the aforementioned conditions can also apply for a visa on arrival. Permanent residents of the USA, UK or Schengen countries, or individuals possessing a valid residence visa from a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country with a minimum validity of three months beyond the entry date into Saudi Arabia, are also eligible for an eVisa.



### ***Disney Cruise Line creating Disney Adventure, sailing from Singapore in 2025***

Sailing from Singapore in 2025, the one-of-a-kind Disney Adventure will offer families throughout the region the ultimate holiday at sea. The first Disney Cruise Line ship to homeport in Asia will be a destination itself, sailing on three- and four-night voyages designed with magical days at sea and filled with immersive storytelling and captivating entertainment like only Disney can do.



### ***Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority concludes Three-city Roadshow in India***

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) proudly announces the successful conclusion of its three-city roadshow in India. Led by MTPA's Director, Mr Arvind Bundhun, and featuring a delegation of 21 esteemed partners from Mauritius, this roadshow exemplified the robust bond between India and Mauritius and the promising potential for collaborative growth within the tourism sector.







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# LEISURE TRAVEL

## The heartbeat of Global Exploration

Leisure travel, the most captivating facet of the travel industry, is thriving spectacularly, enchanting millions across the globe. As individuals seek respite from their daily routines, seek mental rejuvenation, and dive into the wonders of the world, leisure travel has become an essential part of their lives. Dive with us into this dominant sector of travel, where we will explore its vast scope, analyze its market influence, uncover emerging trends, and envision the future of this ever-evolving domain.

- *Bharti Sharma*





### THE DOMINATING SEGMENT OF TRAVEL

As it stands at the pinnacle of the travel industry, the segment eclipses business travel in both scale and spending. Driven by an enduring desire for adventure, relaxation, and fresh experiences, this segment offers everything from sun-drenched beach getaways and rich cultural immersions to thrilling adventure excursions and serene wellness retreats. The advent of advanced digital tools has transformed the planning and booking processes, making them more streamlined and accessible, and significantly contributing to the sector's explosive growth.

### THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTION

Leisure travel forms a monumental segment of the global travel market. Recent

data shows that nearly 75 per cent of all annual trips are for leisure, generating billions in revenue. This vibrant market is set to experience steady growth over the coming decade. Major industry players—ranging from airlines to hotels and travel agencies—are investing heavily to meet the soaring demand for leisure experiences. Their efforts highlight the crucial role leisure travel plays in the industry, promising even more remarkable adventures and unmatched relaxation for travellers worldwide.

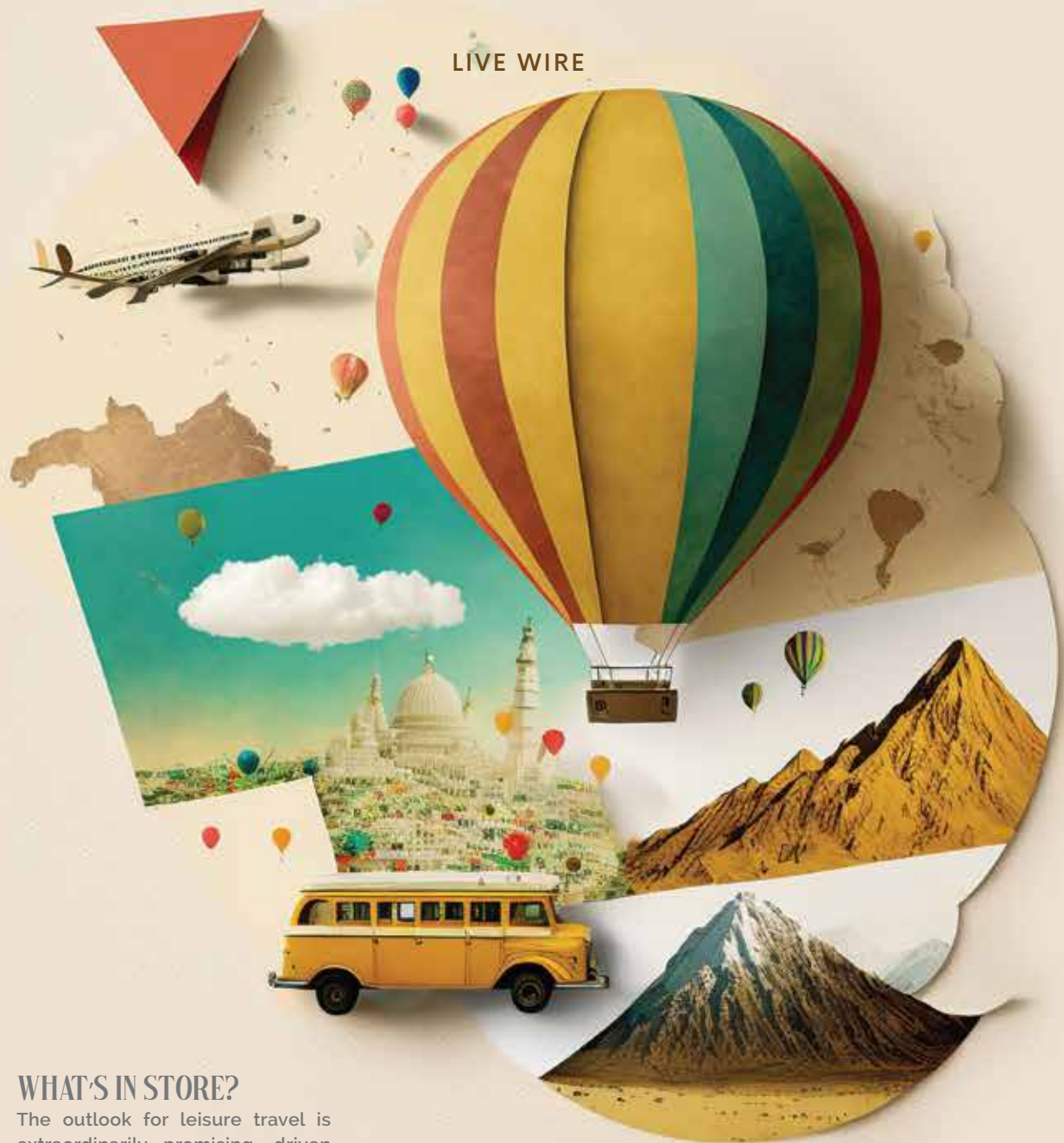
### EVER-GROWING TRENDS IN LEISURE TRAVEL

The landscape of leisure travel is in continuous transformation, shaped by emerging trends.

Sustainability is now a focal point, with travelers increasingly opting for eco-friendly accommodations and participating in conservation initiatives, making eco-conscious travel a mainstream practice. Wellness tourism is on the rise, with travelers seeking retreats that offer physical and mental rejuvenation, such as yoga retreats and spa holidays. Experiential travel is also gaining traction, with a growing demand for unique experiences like cultural immersions, culinary tours, and adventure sports. Concurrently, technological advancements are revolutionizing the travel experience through AI-driven recommendations, virtual reality previews, mobile applications, and seamless, contactless services.







LIVE WIRE

## WHAT'S IN STORE?

The outlook for leisure travel is extraordinarily promising, driven by several dynamic factors. Increasing middle-class incomes and a global shift towards valuing experiential over material possessions will continue to stimulate demand. Advancements in transportation and infrastructure will enhance accessibility to even the most remote and breathtaking destinations. Emerging markets, particularly in Asia and Africa, are poised to become influential players in the leisure travel sector. As these regions develop their tourism infrastructure and promote their unique attractions, they will attract a growing number of international explorers. Additionally, a strong emphasis on sustainability and responsible travel will shape the industry's future, with travelers prioritizing destinations and companies

committed to environmental stewardship and community support. This shift towards mindful travel will ensure that leisure travel not only flourishes but also contributes positively to global wellbeing, offering enriching and responsible experiences.

## THE BRIGHT HORIZON OF LEISURE TRAVEL

Leisure travel is a dynamic and ever-evolving sector, driven by our fundamental desire for discovery, relaxation, and new experiences. As trends in sustainability, wellness, and experiential travel gain momentum, the industry is set for extraordinary growth. Technological innovations and the emergence of new markets further enhance the future of leisure travel. Whether it's a tranquil

beach escape, an adventurous exploration, or a deep cultural experience, leisure travel offers something for everyone, becoming an indispensable aspect of modern life. This extraordinary sector not only enriches our personal journeys but also deepens our appreciation of the world's diversity. Looking forward, the potential for innovation and growth in leisure travel is limitless, promising unforgettable experiences and inspiring adventures for travellers around the globe. The future of leisure travel is not merely bright; it is radiant, brimming with endless possibilities that will continue to captivate and inspire globetrotters for generations to come.





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# Buddhist Circuit in UTTAR PRADESH

## A Journey of Spiritual Heritage

Uttar Pradesh, known for its rich cultural and spiritual heritage, has taken significant strides to promote its Buddhist circuit, a collection of sites associated with the life of Lord Buddha.

-Tripti Jain







Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, with the support of various stakeholders, has been working tirelessly to enhance the infrastructure and facilities at the Buddhist sites of Uttar Pradesh to attract pilgrims and tourists from around the world. Uttar Pradesh government is making significant efforts to promote the Buddhist circuit, and taking steps and initiatives to foster tourism and local communities.

### Global outreach

The global promotion of the Buddhist circuit is a strategic objective for the Uttar Pradesh government. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister, Tourism and Culture, emphasises the spiritual significance of Uttar Pradesh. He shares, "India is not the land of war but the land of Buddha. This holy land gave the message of truth, non-violence, kindness, and compassion to the entire world, and Uttar Pradesh is a prominent part of this legacy. I want to congratulate the Uttar Pradesh government for their efforts in bringing the Prime Minister's vision of creating various tourist circuits to reality, with the Buddha Circuit being a prime example."

The state has been actively participating in international tourism fairs and exhibitions to promote the Buddhist circuit. By collaborating with international travel agencies and tour operators, Uttar Pradesh aims to attract a larger number of foreign tourists. Additionally, the state is working on easing visa processes and providing better travel information to make it easier for international visitors to plan their trips.

### Significance of the Buddhist Circuit

The Buddhist circuit in Uttar Pradesh includes several key sites that are deeply intertwined with the life of Lord Buddha. These sites include:

**Sarnath:** Where Buddha delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment.

**Kushinagar:** The place where Buddha attained Mahaparinirvana (final nirvana).

**Shravasti:** Known for Buddha's miracles and teachings.

**Kapilvastu:** Buddha's childhood home.

**Kaushambi:** A site Buddha visited during his travels.

**Sankisa:** Known for Buddha's descent from Tushita heaven.

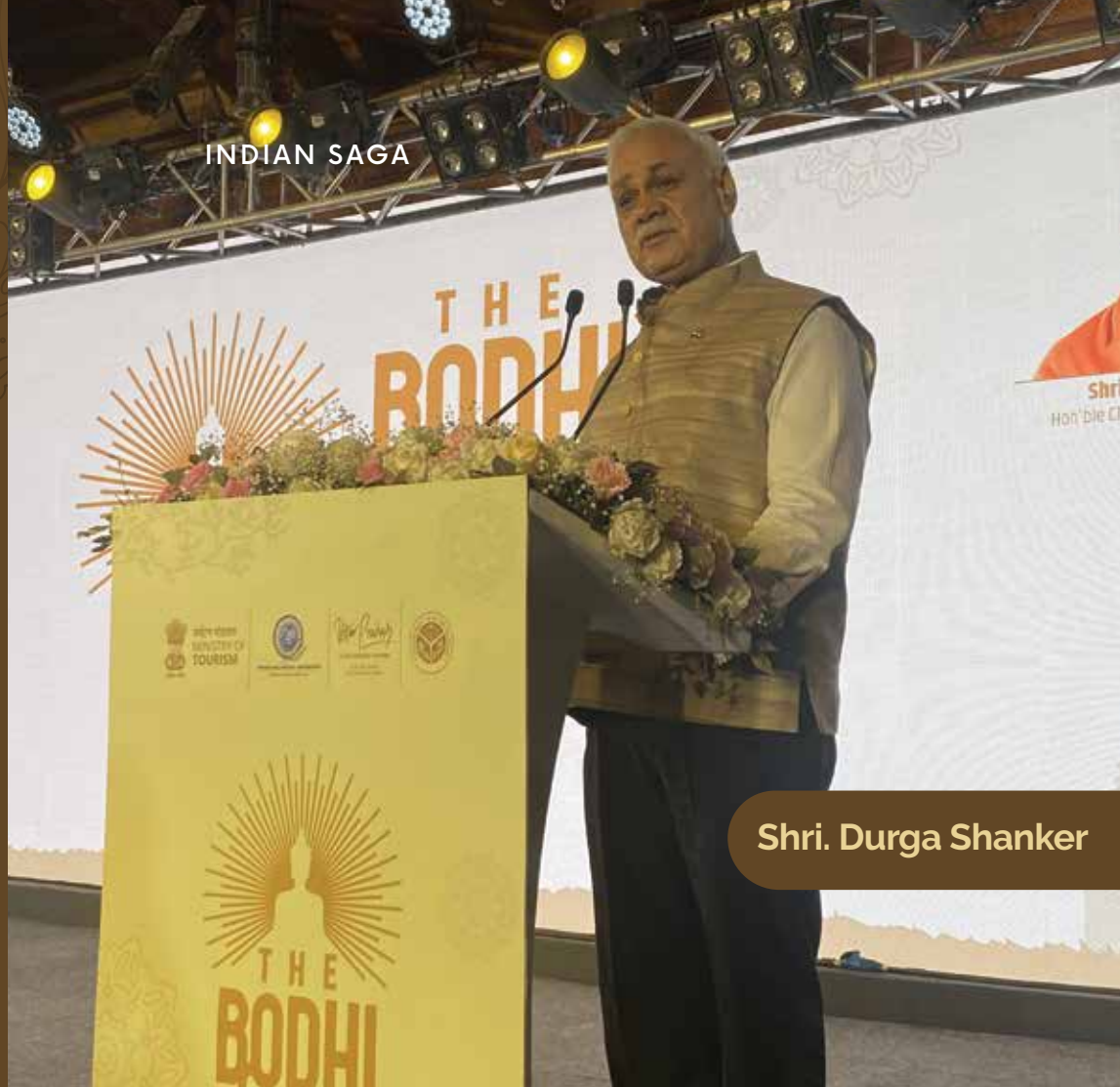


## INDIAN SAGA

These sites hold immense spiritual significance for Buddhists worldwide and are crucial for understanding the historical and cultural context of Buddhism.

### Development all the way

To cater to the growing number of pilgrims and tourists, the Uttar Pradesh government has undertaken extensive infrastructure development at these sites. Durga Shankar Mishra, Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, emphasised the state's commitment to creating world-class facilities. "Uttar Pradesh is the cradle of Buddhism, and this Bodhi Yatra is an initiative to make you experience the serenity and divinity of Lord Buddha. Significant events of Buddhism took place in UP, we aim to promote these Buddhist sites on the global map. We have developed infrastructure and world-class tourist facilities at these sites, emerging as top tourist destinations in the country," he said. The government has focused on improving connectivity, building comfortable accommodations, and enhancing the overall visitor experience. This includes constructing better roads, improving



Shri. Durga Shanker



Mr. Jaiveer Singh

signage, and developing visitor centres that provide historical and cultural information about each site.

### Cultural and spiritual promotion

Promoting the cultural and spiritual aspects of the Buddhist circuit is a key objective for the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department. Jaiveer Singh, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Uttar Pradesh, highlights the state's efforts to develop the Buddhist circuit. "Uttar Pradesh is the fourth largest state in terms of area and the largest in terms of population. All the places from the birth of Lord Buddha to his education, attainment of knowledge, preaching, and Mahaparinirvana (death) are located here. We are developing the Buddhist circuit to propagate the strong historical, cultural, and spiritual ties of Buddhism with Uttar Pradesh on the world map," he explains.

Various cultural events, such as the 'Bodhi Yatra' conclave, have been organised to celebrate the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. These events not only attract tourists but also serve as a platform for cultural exchange and diplomacy. The inclusion of international ambassadors and representatives from Buddhist countries further strengthens the global appeal of these sites.





## INDIAN SAGA



**Mr. Mukesh Kumar Meshram**

### Opportunities of expansion

Mukesh Kumar Meshram, Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, emphasises the importance of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) to boost the tourism sector. "We wanted to reveal the spiritual and cultural connection with different countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia and improve cultural diplomacy with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs," he says. He announced that land had already been allotted to the Bhutan government for constructing temples and guest houses in Varanasi and invited other countries to invest in the hospitality and tourism sector of the Buddhist sites in Uttar Pradesh.

The government has created investor-friendly tourism policies to encourage both domestic and international investments. These policies aim to develop high-quality infrastructure and services that cater to the needs of tourists and pilgrims, ensuring a comfortable and enriching experience.

### Local communities take centre stage

The promotion of the Buddhist circuit also aims to benefit the local communities residing around these sites. V. Vidyavathi, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, emphasises the collaborative

efforts of the Government of India and the Government of Uttar Pradesh in this regard. She shares, "Buddha resides in the heart and soul of Uttar Pradesh. We aim to create a memorable experience for Buddhist pilgrims and ensure the development and better employment opportunities for local communities. We are also keen to enhance the infrastructure and amenities of Buddhist Museums in the state as they are a living source of history."

By developing these sites, the government hopes to create employment opportunities and improve the standard of living for the local population. Tourism not only brings economic benefits but also fosters a sense of pride and ownership among the residents, encouraging them to actively participate in preserving their cultural heritage.

The Buddhist circuit in Uttar Pradesh is not just a collection of historical sites; it is a journey through the spiritual and cultural heritage of Buddhism. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, with the support of various stakeholders, has made significant strides in promoting these sites, enhancing infrastructure, and creating a memorable experience for pilgrims and tourists. Through cultural diplomacy, investment opportunities, and a focus on

benefiting local communities, the state is poised to become a global destination for Buddhist tourism. As Uttar Pradesh continues to emerge as a prominent tourist destination, the efforts to promote the Buddhist circuit stand as a testament to the state's commitment to preserving and celebrating its spiritual legacy. With continued collaboration and investment, the Buddhist circuit will not only attract visitors from around the world but also contribute to the socio-economic development of the region, creating a lasting impact on both the local and global communities.



**Ms. V. Vidyavathi**







# Indulgence in the skies!

Recognising Indian travellers' needs, Qatar Airways prides itself in providing delectable Indian cuisine onboard, and family-friendly amenities

- *Inder Raj Ahluwalia*



Karthik Vishwanathan





The aircraft: B787-8. The flight: Business Class. The cabin: Simply 'spaced out'. The service: Ceaseless.

Make no mistake. I wasn't here to be impressed. I just wanted to decipher for myself if the airline's in-flight service matched the global advertising hype.

The fact is, it did! What can one say, really! Possessing something of an adventurous nature, I found myself caught up in the world of swirling charm on offer. And in indulging in the myriad services at hand, that elevate the quality of the journey.

Actually the charm started at the PRIVE lounge at Delhi airport itself. The largest in India, the spacious, elegant lounge caters to all manner of pre-flight requirements. This set the tone for things to come.

The Qatar Airways flight from Delhi to Doha was a pleasant sojourn and a seamless affair. The ambience of the Business Class section is predominantly created by the seats, which stretch out and recline, transforming into beds. With each seat sectioned-off, one gets to enjoy the flight with relative privacy. Thirty minutes after take-off, the service started without fuss or ceremony, and persisted almost throughout the flight. Talk about indulgence!

Appetisers came in the form of a trio of Tandoori Prawns and Grilled Cherry Tomatoes. The main course comprised Grilled Chicken Breast with Thyme Jus. Dessert was a Classic Tiramisu. Bring out the wine...! A

combination of wines from emerging nations, while paying homage to the classics, ensures a rather copious and diverse selection. From the iconic Chateaux of Bordeaux, to the 'caves' of Vila Nova de Gaia, across the North Atlantic to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, down the Pacific Ocean to the Andes of Chile and Argentina – the wine world itself is on offer, high up in the skies.

Something of a wine connoisseur, my pick is - Champagne: Duval-Leroy. Wines: Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Port: Niepoort. Spirits: The Glenlivet. Cognac & Liqueurs: Frapin XO VIP. Cocktails: Aperol Royal and Cuba Libre.

Landing at Doha Airport provided comfort in the form of exclusive immigration formalities in the soothing ambience of an exclusive lounge.

As the only airline in the world to have won the Skytrax World's Best Airline seven times, Qatar Airways' global network includes a robust Indian presence, offering seamless connectivity to over 13 key Indian cities. The airline's comprehensive network spans metros such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad, among others.

The airline's commitment to excellence is evident in its state-of-the-art fleet, featuring advanced aircraft such as the Airbus A350 and Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

The airline's absolute 'cherry on the cake' is its Qsuite Business Class which has been voted as

the World's Best Business Class, a staggering 10 times by Skytrax, setting an enviable industry benchmark for premium travel. Not surprisingly, this enhanced service level ensures the airline's position as a preferred choice for Indian travellers.

Karthik Vishwanathan, VP Sales, Qatar Airways, proclaims their deep commitment to providing Indian travellers unparalleled connectivity and exceptional service. With their extensive network covering almost the length and breadth of India, India, they strive to offer passengers seamless access to destinations worldwide, ensuring their journey is comfortable, convenient, and enjoyable. Their focus on innovation and customer-centricity underscores their dedication to meeting the evolving needs of Indian travellers, further solidifying their position as a leading airline in the region. Promising a pleasant future, they look forward to continuing their journey of excellence, fulfilling the role of a trusted partner for travellers across India.



# The game of change in Tourism for India

Recent changes in the cabinet ministry and the launch of new tourism policy will definitely have an influential impact on the tourism industry and various leaders of the industry have a decisive opinion on the impact. The scenario shows that the decisive purpose of the government to take the tourism industry forward, but, it's too early to come to any conclusion.

- Sudipta Saha



Tourism has always influenced the economy and its growing impact on the society is witnessed by everyone. And with the new policies coming in and the new cabinet taking charge, the industry expects an influential development along with the introduction of several new initiatives which will have positive impact on the industry leading to its augmentation.

### Embracing sustainable tourism

Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), highlights the significant impact of India's new tourism policies, particularly in promoting sustainable and responsible tourism. "The emphasis on eco-friendly practices is essential for preserving our natural and cultural heritage. The policies aim to minimise the environmental footprint of tourism activities, attracting travellers who prioritise sustainability. By adopting sustainable tourism practices, we

are not only protecting our resources but also enhancing India's appeal to eco-conscious visitors." This approach includes measures such as waste management, energy conservation, and promoting local crafts, which together create a more sustainable and authentic tourism experience.

These efforts reflect India's commitment to preserving its rich biodiversity and cultural sites while offering unique experiences to modern travellers. Rajiv Mehra emphasises that the focus on sustainability is about more than just conservation. He shares, "It's about providing enriching experiences that resonate with today's tourists and ensuring that tourism benefits local communities. By integrating sustainability into the tourism framework, India is poised to become a leader in responsible tourism."

### Infrastructure and technological advancements

The new policies also prioritise infrastructure development and digital transformation, key areas for enhancing the tourist experience. Rajiv Mehra explains, "Investment in transportation and accommodation infrastructure is crucial for improving accessibility and comfort for tourists. The government is working to make remote and lesser-known destinations more accessible, with a particular focus on developing MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions)



Rajiv Mehra

infrastructure. These improvements will help position India as a top destination for international events and high-value tourism."

Additionally, the policies emphasise the role of technology in modernising the tourism sector. "Digital transformation, including e-visa facilities and contactless payments, streamlines services and enhances convenience. This technological upgrade, combined with targeted digital marketing strategies, aims to showcase India's diverse offerings to a global audience. By promoting niche tourism segments, we can distribute the benefits of tourism more evenly across the country," Rajiv Mehra adds, highlighting the potential for these policies to transform India's tourism landscape.

### Optimism in new policies and leadership

Riaz Munshi, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), expresses optimism regarding the impact of the new policies and leadership in India. He believes these changes could positively influence the economy, tourism sector, and trade relations. Riaz Munshi shares, "I think as the new cabinet is taking charge in India, we anticipate that their policies will significantly influence our economy, tourism sector, and trade relations." He further elaborates on the potential benefits for the tourism industry, including increased investments in infrastructure and enhanced digitalisation, which could help in better marketing India as a global destination. He believes this will position India more favourably on the world stage, attracting tourists and boosting the sector's growth.







Riaz Munshi

### Tax reforms and economic benefits

Riaz Munshi also highlights specific expectations from the new policies, particularly in terms of tax reforms. He emphasises the need for a reduction in GST rates on outbound tour packages, which he believes would make international travel more affordable for Indian travellers. "One key expectation is the reduction of GST rates on outbound tour packages, making international travel more affordable," he shares. Additionally, he calls for improvements in Tax Collected at Source (TCS) policies, pointing out that the current rates are burdensome for both travellers and travel agencies. He argues that the heavy TCS rates lead to financial and administrative problems and result in revenue loss for the government, as many outbound travel businesses are managed by foreign companies that don't contribute to the Indian economy. Riaz Munshi suggests that adjusting policies to provide tax incentives to outbound travel companies can help them grow, offering better deals to both Indian travellers and international tourists. He shares, "Overall, smart changes in GST and TCS can greatly benefit the outbound tourism sector. These changes could lower travel costs, reduce the tax burden on travel companies, and ultimately boost the economy."

### Strengthening tourism infrastructure and trade relations

"As the new cabinet assumes office, there are several

implications for India's economy, tourism sector, and trade relations. India's travel and tourism sector continues to contribute 5.8 per cent to the GDP and aims for a target of USD 1 trillion by 2047," says Jyoti Mayal, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI). She emphasises the growth of domestic markets but points out the limited number of inbound tourists, and shares, "We need to work for both inbound and outbound as one cannot flourish without the other." She advocates for prioritising policies that enhance tourism infrastructure, promote sustainable practices, and boost both domestic and international travel. She believes that investments in connectivity, heritage sites, and eco-tourism can drive growth. Additionally, she highlights the importance of strengthening trade ties with key partners and diversifying export markets, suggesting that the ministry explore bilateral agreements, ease of doing business, and market access for Indian goods and services.

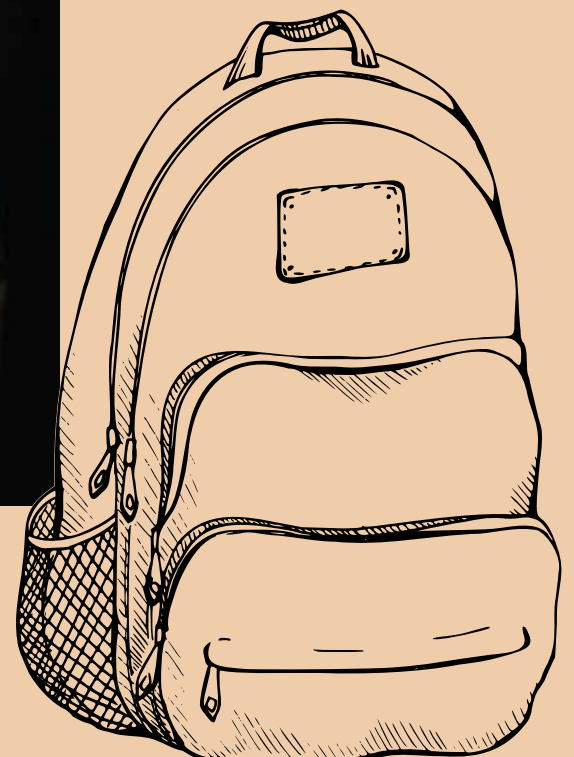
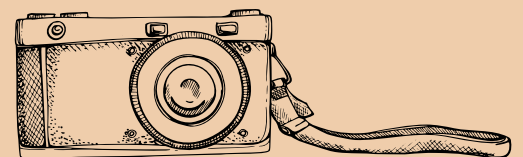
literacy and enhance contactless services. There is a growing need for modernisation in the tourism sector." She also highlights the importance of skill development programs for tourism professionals, guides, and local communities, with a focus on sustainable practices, safety, and cultural sensitivity. "The ministry can champion niche segments such as adventure and sports tourism, wellness retreats, cruises, and religious circuits. These unique offerings can attract diverse travellers and contribute significantly to local economies. Simplifying licensing requirements, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and creating a business-friendly environment to encourage investment should be looked upon," she adds. She also calls for industry status recognition for travel operators and rationalised GST rates for hotels, restaurants, and tour operators, along with streamlined input tax credit provisions and the removal of TCS to enhance competitiveness.



Jyoti Mayal

### Embracing digital and niche tourism

Jyoti Mayal also stresses the necessity of embracing digital technologies, aligning with global trends and post-pandemic travel preferences. She shares, "The ministry should encourage digital





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# The 2030 vision for Thailand



Siriges-a-nong-Trirattanasongpol

Thapanee Kiatphaibool

Thailand, the 'Land of Smiles,' is renowned for its stunning landscapes, rich culture, and warm hospitality. Siriges-a-nong Trirattanasongpol, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi Office, sheds light on how the nation plans to achieve this monumental goal.

-Harish Chandra

The tourism sector has long been a cornerstone of Thailand's economy, contributing nearly 20 per cent to the GDP in 2019. With an ambitious target to elevate this contribution to 30 per cent by 2030, Thailand is gearing up to diversify its offerings and attract a broader spectrum of visitors and travellers.

## Embracing repeat travellers

One of the critical strategies Thailand is employing to boost tourism is catering to repeat visitors. According to Siriges, "A significant number of travellers to Thailand are repeat visitors. They come to Thailand multiple times, sometimes even several times a year. These visitors often seek new experiences each time they visit."

To keep these loyal visitors engaged; Thailand is constantly innovating its tourism offerings. From new adventure activities to unexplored cultural sites, the aim is to provide fresh experiences that entice travellers to return. This strategy ensures that even seasoned visitors have something new to look forward

to on each trip.

## Hidden charms

While Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai are well-established tourist hubs, Thailand is now turning its focus to lesser-known destinations. Siriges highlights this shift and shares, "For Indian travellers, cities such as Chiang Mai are still relatively new. We want to highlight such destinations."

Chiang Mai, in particular, is being positioned as a prime spot for adventure tourism. With activities such as hot air balloon rides, Para motoring, and skydiving, it offers thrilling experiences that are bound to attract younger travellers seeking excitement. This diversification not only spreads tourist traffic more evenly across the country but also introduces visitors to the rich cultural tapestry of different regions.

## Enticing adventure tourism

Adventure tourism is rapidly gaining popularity among younger travellers, and Thailand is well-poised to tap into this trend. "In





the past, Thailand was often viewed as a place for relaxation and family activities. Now, we're introducing more adventurous options," says Siriges.

In addition to adventure sports in Chiang Mai, Thailand offers unique experiences such as whale watching near Bangkok. Siriges elaborates, "Even close to Bangkok, within an hour's reach, there are activities such as whale watching in the Gulf of Thailand. It might be surprising, but we have proven that this is possible in the Gulf of Siam." Such offerings enhance Thailand's appeal to thrill-seekers and nature enthusiasts alike.

### Religious and cultural ties

Cultural and religious tourism is another pillar of Thailand's strategy to boost its tourism sector. The north-eastern region of Thailand, with its significant ties to Hinduism, is a focal point for attracting Indian travellers. Siriges explains, "We believe the cultural ties, especially through Hinduism in our north-eastern

region, can strengthen our connection with Indian travellers." By highlighting these cultural and religious connections, Thailand aims to create a more profound and meaningful relationship with Indian visitors. This approach not only attracts tourists but also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of Thailand's rich heritage.

### Diversifying tourism offerings

To meet its ambitious target, Thailand is also diversifying its tourism offerings beyond traditional sightseeing and beach holidays. Wellness tourism, eco-tourism, and culinary tourism are emerging as key areas of growth. By promoting holistic wellness retreats, sustainable travel practices, and Thailand's world-famous cuisine, the country is appealing to a wider range of interests and preferences.

Siriges shares, "We are focusing on new areas of Thailand. Traditionally, travellers visit the central and southern parts, which

is Bangkok and Phuket. Now, we want to highlight the northern part, including Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, which is rich in culture."

### Thriving future

Achieving the goal of 30 per cent GDP contribution from tourism by 2030 is no small feat, but Thailand is well on its way with a multifaceted approach. By embracing repeat visitors, promoting lesser-known destinations, tapping into adventure and cultural tourism, and diversifying its offerings, Thailand is setting the stage for sustainable growth in its tourism sector.

Siriges concludes, "We are confident that India will play a significant role in achieving our goal of 30 per cent GDP contribution by 2030. With a clear vision and strategic initiatives, Thailand is poised to become an even more compelling destination for travellers worldwide."

Quote from Ms Thapanee Kiatphaibool, Governor, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

We are thrilled to present Thailand's strategic vision for the future of tourism. Our focus is on promoting sustainable and immersive travel experiences that highlight our cultural richness and natural wonders. Phang Nga serves as the perfect backdrop for this initiative, showcasing its stunning landscapes and welcoming communities.

Our next move involves enhancing tourism infrastructure with advanced technology and eco-friendly practices to preserve our destinations for future generations. We are committed to spotlighting lesser-known regions, fostering economic growth, and alleviating pressure on popular tourist spots.

Additionally, we are forging stronger global partnerships to offer unique travel experiences, from wellness retreats to cultural festivals. By prioritising sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation, we aim to position Thailand as a leading destination that offers transformative journeys and lasting memories.



# ACROSS THE OCEAN WITH SRI LANKAN *Airlines*



Looking out the window of SriLankan Airlines at the beautiful coast line of the Indian Ocean, one can only be in awe of the Sri Lankan beauty and hospitality. Step into a world of enchantment with SriLankan Airlines as I take you along my journey with them.

**-Sudipta Saha**



Richard Nuttall





Exploring Sri Lanka has never been more seamless and delightful, thanks to the impeccable services of SriLankan Airlines. With an ever-growing focus on the Indian market, SriLankan Airlines continues to strengthen its connections, offering unmatched experiences both in the air and on the ground. Recently, I had the pleasure of experiencing their services firsthand during a familiarization trip to Sri Lanka organised by the airline. It was a journey filled with comfort, elegance, and a touch of magic. Richard Nuttall, CEO, SriLankan Airlines shares insights about the airline including the relations with Indian market and expansion plans.

### CONNECTING WITH THE INDIAN LAND

SriLankan Airlines has made significant strides in the Indian market over the past year. Richard shares, "More than 200,000 passengers of Indian origin have flown with us since the start of this year. India contributes about 11 per cent of our revenue, making it one

of our top-performing markets with an overall average load factor of about 74 per cent."

My flight from New Delhi to Colombo was a testament to these impressive numbers. The aircraft was nearly full, yet the crew managed to maintain a high level of service with genuine warmth. As I settled into my seat, I was struck by the thoughtfulness of the cabin design and the array of in-flight entertainment options available.

### THE TWO E'S – EXPLORING AND EXPANDING

To cater to the growing demand for air travel between Sri Lanka and India, SriLankan Airlines is actively looking to expand its reach. "We are exploring the possibility of adding new Indian destinations to our route network as part of our long-term plan once we acquire new aircraft. In the short term, our focus is on increasing frequencies on existing routes," explains Richard.

The prospect of more flights and new destinations is exciting, especially for frequent travellers such as myself. The anticipation of smoother, more frequent

connections adds to the appeal of planning future trips. My experience in the SriLankan Airlines lounge in Colombo was exceptional, reinforcing the airline's commitment to quality. The lounge offered a serene environment, complete with comfortable seating, a wide selection of refreshments, and attentive staff that ensured a relaxing pre-flight experience.

### PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES FOR THE WIN

Enhancing connectivity and services for passengers is a key focus for SriLankan Airlines. "Air India is currently a codeshare partner. We are also in discussions with several prominent South Asian carriers, as well as online travel agencies and other digital travel service providers, to establish codeshare partnerships and offer bespoke deals and competitive fares for our customers," shares Richard.

Such partnerships are crucial for expanding the airline's reach and providing passengers with more travel options. During the fam trip, I witnessed firsthand the ease of travel facilitated by these alliances. The seamless transition between flights and the smooth handling of logistics made the journey stress-free and enjoyable.





### GRABBING THE INDIAN PULSE

Understanding and catering to the preferences of Indian travellers is a priority for SriLankan Airlines. Richard shares insights into the demographics and preferences of their Indian passengers and says, "We see a lot of millennials, young professionals, and families, as well as a growing number of pilgrims traveling since we began promoting the Ramayana trail. We offer a vegetarian meal option on every sector, a selection of movies in Hindi, Malayalam, and Tamil, and tailor-made holidays through SriLankan Holidays for Indian passengers." I found these tailored services to be highly thoughtful and reflective of the airline's commitment to

customer satisfaction. The vegetarian meal I enjoyed on my flight was not only delicious but also a nod to the fact that the airline understands the dietary preferences of its passengers.

### BRIGHT AND SUNNY FUTURE!

SriLankan Airlines has ambitious plans to capture a larger share of the Indian outbound and inbound travel segments. Richard shares, "We aim to position Colombo as a strategic gateway that facilitates seamless connections to and from India, while capturing a portion of the expanding Indian outbound travel market. This will be supported by increased frequencies to Indian metros and the expansion of our Indian network with new cities, including both

major metros and underserved secondary cities."

The vision of making Colombo a central hub for Indian travellers is both strategic and exciting. During my time in Sri Lanka, I was mesmerised by the country's beauty and cultural richness, which SriLankan Airlines is keen to showcase to the world. The familiarization trip highlighted the airline's efforts to promote Sri Lanka as a premier holiday destination, making the journey as enchanting as the destination itself.

### A JOURNEY BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

SriLankan Airlines is not just an airline; it's an experience. The dedication to excellence, the thoughtful services, and the strategic vision all contribute to

making every journey memorable. Richard shares, "SriLankan Airlines is gearing up to meet the rising demand for Sri Lanka as a holiday destination from India and around the world. We will build on our past successes while trailing new strategies to maintain our status as one of the most award-winning and dynamic airlines in the region." My trip with SriLankan Airlines was nothing short of magical. From the moment I boarded the plane to the time I stepped off in Colombo, every aspect of the journey was meticulously planned and executed. The combination of Sri Lanka's breathtaking landscapes and the airline's superior service made for an unforgettable experience, one that I eagerly look forward to repeating.





# TRAVEL turtle



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*Club  
Med*

# Leading the way in Luxury Resorts

Club Med, a pioneer in the all-inclusive vacation industry, continues to set new standards in luxury, innovation, and customer satisfaction. Bruno Courbet, Director, Club Med for Thailand, India, and New Markets, shares how the brand has expanded its footprint while adapting to the evolving preferences of modern travellers.

-Naina Nath

Bruno Courbet





### A shift towards luxury

Club Med has strategically repositioned itself as a provider of upscale experiences. According to Bruno, *"We've moved from two-trident to four-trident resorts. The two and the three don't exist anymore."* This transition has seen 95 per cent of their portfolio now classified as upscale or very upscale, emphasising a commitment to high-quality offerings.

### Diverse property portfolio

The diversity of Club Med's properties enhances its appeal to a broad range of guests. From the expansive Puta Cana resort in the Dominican Republic, with its 800 to 900 rooms, to the exclusive setting of 52 overwater villas in the Maldives, the brand caters to a variety of preferences. Bruno shares, *"In the French Alps, we have luxurious chalets designed for those seeking intimate and exclusive experiences."*

### Embracing Indian Weddings

Indian weddings are known for their grandeur and elaborate customs, and Club Med is keen to tap into this market. *"We see great potential in hosting Indian weddings,"* Bruno. This initiative reflects Club Med's adaptability and commitment to meeting diverse cultural needs. Furthermore he adds, *"We are ready to welcome these ceremonies and provide all necessary arrangements to ensure a memorable event."*

### The Focus on MICE

The MICE sector forms a significant part of Club Med's global business, accounting for 10 to 15 per cent of its revenue. Club Med aims to capitalise on the burgeoning MICE market in the region. Although still nascent in India, Bruno is optimistic about its potential: *"We are exploring the MICE segment in India and plan to start this year. This market offers substantial opportunities for growth,"* he shares.

### Exclusive Escapes

Club Med's portfolio includes properties that cater to those seeking exclusivity and privacy. Bruno explains, *"Our Maldives property, with 52 overwater villas, provides an intimate and private atmosphere, perfect for family bookings and special occasions,"* These smaller properties offer a unique experience, distinguishing Club Med from other luxury resort brands.

### Sustainability Initiatives

In addition to luxury and innovation, Club Med is also committed to sustainability. *"We integrate eco-friendly practices into our operations to minimize our environmental impact,"* says Bruno. *"Sustainability is a key aspect of our strategy, and we aim to lead by example in the hospitality industry."* This commitment to sustainability further enhances Club Med's appeal to environmentally conscious travelers.

Looking ahead, Club Med is focused on innovation and expansion to maintain its competitive edge. Bruno shares, *"We are continually exploring new markets and opportunities. Our goal is to enhance our offerings and ensure that we remain at the forefront of the luxury resort industry."* This proactive approach ensures that Club Med stays ahead in a rapidly evolving market.





# Bay with a 'View'

A small township that nestles along the sea, this is the kind of place you come to when you feel you're sort of 'overheated'. There's no noise, hardly any traffic, no commercial hoardings, and certainly no boisterous crowds.

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia





## TRAVEL THERAPY

I'm not one for early mornings, and take rather unkindly to being bundled out earlier than I would have liked.

But my good guide, dutifully awaiting me in the hotel lobby, assured me it was for a worthy cause that carried ample rewards. "You see, we're going to visit a truly beautiful destination. One you just can't afford to miss". She seemed quite convinced, and

that was good enough for me.

As it turned out, the guide was 'spot on'. A two-hour drive from Hanoi, on a relatively well-maintained highway, deposited our group at Ha Long Bay, one of Vietnam's undoubted tourist highlights. I must admit, it was a complete and delightful surprise for me, justifying all the hype and hoopla built around it. My purpose for being here was to take a day cruise to what is





arguably one of nature's marvels. Walking along the impressive Ha Long International Cruise Port not only put things in perspective, but also set the tone for the pleasant humdrum to follow. The large quays and all those magnificent boats berthed in a row engendered the kind of excitement associated with cruises.

Thoughtfully chosen for us was 'Ambassador Cruise', a local market leader and big name in the business. Awaiting us was Waseem Ahmed, the company's affable Operations Manager, who'd been given the onerous task of looking after us. Walking the extra mile, he fulfilled his task very well, resulting in a thrillingly pleasant day.

The boat being large, one didn't immediately notice the number of passengers, but in fact there were a couple of hundred aboard. We were led to our reserved table in the spacious dining hall, whose large bay windows provided wonderful, panoramic views and revealed little secrets. Everything, including the table linen, was plush, and completing the seduction was a fragrance of fresh food that wafted across the large hall. The first appetiser, I might add.

Sipping strong coffee, I settled down and leant a keen ear to Waseem's induction talk that filled me in on all sorts of relevant details.

Apparently, they welcomed guests from the world over, with Taiwanese, Koreans, and Indians being leading clients. In fact, India was among their top source markets. He also mentioned that Ha Long Bay's popularity was increasing, owing to its superb natural setting.

Keen to explore the boat, I decided to give the top-deck the 'once over'. With the proverbial bar, stage, tables, music and dancing, and some stunningly beautiful views, it turned out to be one heck of a place.

There was a 'buzz' on the boat, and with good reason. It was packed with tourists, and they all looked excited. We sailed lazily past dozens of majestic limestone islets in Ha Long Bay







and Bai Tu Long Bay. An hour out, our boat dropped anchor at what was obviously a designated spot flanked on right and left by islets protruding out of the blue sea. Little boats chugged around like floating playthings. It was serenely beautiful, almost 'fairy-tale' stuff.

There was a choice of excursions, and given my sense of preservation, I opted for the easiest one. This was a short boat ride excursion to Titov Island, dominated by a crescent moon-shaped beach edging turquoise water. One can climb up to the hill-top for breathtaking 360 degree views of the entire surrounding area, idle on the beach, or just laze around and drink some coconut juice. Back on our boat, lunch was announced. I don't know if you've ever felt what I always have – that

lunches and dinners just manage to taste infinitely better while cruising. Well, that's my conviction, and seeing the constant stream of delectable dishes come and go, justice was done to my sound belief. The mushroom soup, glazed chicken, assorted salad, and vegetable 'toss up' demanded undivided attention. And got it!

Lunch over; it was time to get back into the exploration mode. My second excursion was more 'hands on', entailing a bamboo barge ride to Luan Cave, a unique marvel of nature's creations, arguably among the world's most exotic water locations. Entering the cave, one is confronted by a self-contained, deep lake inside a closed arch-shaped mountain. While the sea was blue, the lake's water was a light green. The setting is nothing short of

stunning, and it's one of those places you just have to see to grasp its full beauty. Back on the boat, I sensed a perceptible change of mood. The initial exuberance had given way to something between satisfaction and excitement. It's as if everyone was trying to digest everything on offer that day, and struggling to quite manage it.

It had been a memorable outing, and definitely worth my losing a bit of my 'beauty sleep'. But now it was over, and the day had gone, or rather, 'flashed by'. My keen sense of self-analysis convinced me that under the circumstances, there was only one thing to do. Move on and fly Vietnam Airlines to another beautiful site, for another beautiful experience. That's Vietnam for you!



### About the author

Inder Raj Ahluwalia is a world-renowned international travel journalist & author. His professional profile features awards from several European and Asian countries, among others.



OFFSHORE BINOCULAR

# DISCOVERING THE WONDERS OF **DisneyLAND® Paris**

## WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE

In the quaint French town of Marne-la-Vallée lies a treasure trove of enchantment – Disneyland Paris. Since its debut in 1992, this beloved theme park and resort has delighted visitors with its unique blend of European charm and Disney magic.

- *Naina Nath*





## OFFSHORE BINOCULAR

My first glimpse upon entering Disneyland Paris was nothing short of astonishing. Nostalgia flooded over me, and at that moment, I knew I was exactly where I was meant to be! From the breath-taking pink Sleeping Beauty Castle to the iconic park characters waving and welcoming us with smiles, I couldn't help but feel goosebumps of excitement. As you step into Disneyland Park, you begin a journey filled with wonder and excitement. Thrilling rides such as Big Thunder Mountain and Star Wars Hyperspace Mountain await, offering an adrenaline rush that stirs the imagination. From Fantasyland to Adventure land, there is so much to explore! Don't miss the chance to walk into the enchanting Sleeping Beauty Castle, where a fire-breathing dragon lurks in the shadows, adding an extra touch of magic, an experience you will find only at Disneyland Paris. And this is only the beginning! As I explored further, more and more colours and excitement filled my day.

### Let's talk dining options!

The restaurants and food options at Disneyland Paris delighted my taste buds. From the retro vibes of Annette's Diner to the culinary wonders of Bistrot Chez Rémy inspired by Ratatouille, there was something to satisfy every palate. Casa de Coco, Hakuna Matata, and a host of other Disney-themed restaurants and food trucks spread across the park offered an immersive dining experience that complemented the excitement and energy of the park.

### Getting There

Getting to Disneyland Paris was a breeze – a 40-minute RER train ride from Gare de Lyon to Marne-la-Vallée - Chessy station transported me to this magical destination. Fun fact: Disneyland Paris is Europe's most-visited tourist destination and the largest single-site employer in France, with over 17,000 employees. By 2022, the park had welcomed an astounding 375 million visitors!

The resort offers much more than just theme parks. Alongside

Disneyland Park and Walt Disney Studios Park, there's Disney Village, an entertainment district with restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues. Val d'Europe, a shopping centre, offers a variety of outlet stores and department stores. For leisure activities, there's Golf Disneyland, featuring both 9-hole and 18-hole courses. My favourite ride at Walt Disney Studios was the 4D experience at Ratatouille: The Adventure.

Of course, we can't forget the iconic Disneyland Parade. Known as Disney Stars on Parade, this magical procession brings beloved

Disney characters to life on colourful floats accompanied by enchanting music. From Peter Pan's flying ship to Elsa's icy magic, every moment is a spectacle to behold. Join the fun every afternoon in Disneyland Park and immerse yourself in the magic of Disney like never before.

For those seeking even more excitement, Walt Disney Studios Park offers a behind-the-scenes look at the world of cinema. And of course, with the breath-taking Disney Illuminations fireworks display, every moment from start to finish was an unforgettable experience.



©Disney



## OFFSHORE BINOCULAR



Armed with the Disneyland Paris App, I stayed updated on park timings, attractions, and even queue times for my favourite rides. The park typically opens at 9:30 AM and closes around 11 PM, with the evening culminating in a mesmerising fireworks and drone display called Disney Electrical Sky Parade.

As the day ended, I eagerly awaited the highlight of my visit – the Disneyland Paris fireworks experience. Magic lights up the sky every evening in Disneyland Park! Called Disney Dreams, this spectacular show took place at Central Plaza, where Peter Pan's shadow led us through beloved Disney stories brought to life with jaw-dropping fireworks and magical effects on the Sleeping Beauty Castle. It was a breath-taking finale to an epic adventure in Disneyland, leaving my heart soaring with joy.

Disneyland Paris is more than just a theme park – it's a world of wonder waiting to be discovered. So why wait? Come experience the magic for yourself and create memories that will last a lifetime. Disneyland Paris is represented by Think Strawberries in India.



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# THE ENCHANTING ITINERARY OF MADHYA PRADESH

## OFFBEAT MULTISPECIALTY DESTINATION



### GWALIOR — SHIVPURI — ORCHHA — DATIA — MORENA

Madhya Pradesh unveils an itinerary that oscillates through forts narrating tales of valour, temples resonating with devotional flavour and natural reserves enveloped with wildlife.

#### Gwalior : Artistic Aroma

Inhale the splendour of Gwalior Fort, a sprawling citadel that guards the city. Dig out the historical and architectural narratives. Explore a maze of palaces including the intricately carved Man Singh Palace, the opulent Karan Mahal, the majestic Vikram Mahal, the ethereal Jahangir Mahal, Saas Bahu Temple, and Teli ka Mandir. Feast on the beauty of the 18th-century Padavali Fort. Ascend the 100 steps to the Chausath Yogini Temple, a circular edifice nestled amidst verdant hills. The Museum at Gwalior Fort brings alive the artistic heritage of the city through a spread of sculptures, coins, and weapons. Brace yourself for a visual treat of the Garuda statue and the Salabhanjika - the 'Mona Lisa of India', the Saas Bahu Temples and the rock-cut statue of Siddhanchal.



Cenotaph, Shivpuri

#### Shivpuri : Magical Moments

The Surwaya Fort here exhales a mystical past, weathered walls and remnants of temples. Explore the ecological terrain at the Madhav National Park and the colonial charm of George Castle. Enjoy the serenity of Badhaiya Kund and the splendour of Narwar Fort.



Jehangir Mahal, Orchha

#### Orchha : Heritage Hues

Immerse yourself in the grandeur of Raja Mahal, adorned with vibrant murals. Seek blessings at the intricately carved Laxmi Narayan Temple, known for its artwork. Inhale the beauty of ornately decorated cenotaphs or Chhatris, celebrating the Bundela kings and their families. The Jahangir Mahal - a fusion of Indo-Islamic architecture will enthrall you with its turquoise tiles, intricate carvings, and stunning balconies. The Ram Raja Temple, the only temple where Lord Rama is worshipped as a king will transport you spiritually. Wind up by listening to the mellifluous music of the birds at the Orchha Bird Sanctuary, gliding along the Betwa River and savouring the artistically knitted Chhatris.

#### Datia : Spiritual Sanctuary

Seek the blessings of Goddess Baglamukhi Devi at the Pitambara Peeth Temple, known for its imposing architectural and spiritual reverberations.

#### Morena : Wrap up

The National Chambal Sanctuary is must go place especially for wildlife enthusiasts. The critically

endangered gharial, the red-crowned roof turtle and the Ganges river dolphin sums up the ecological beauty of the place. The Bateshwar Group of Temples in the adjoints is a heritage feast.

Soak yourself in the artistic splendours of Madhya Pradesh. This itinerary is a roadmap to a journey interspersed with bliss and adventure.

#### How to Reach

Cover the circuit as per your convenience Gwalior, Shivpuri, Orchha, Datia, and Morena

##### 1. Gwalior:

Air: Raja Bhoj International Airport (GWL)

Train: Gwalior Junction Railway Station (GWR)

Road: Gwalior is well-connected by road

##### 2. Shivpuri:

Train: Shivpuri railway station

Road: Shivpuri is 110 km from Gwalior.

##### 3. Orchha:

Train: Jhansi Junction Railway Station (JHS) located 85 km from Orchha.

Road: Orchha is 170 km from Gwalior and 115 km from Shivpuri

##### 4. Datia:

Train: Datia Railway Station (DTI)

Road: Datia is 70 km from Gwalior and 47 km from Orchha.

##### 5. Morena:

Train: Morena Railway Station (MOR)

Road: Morena is 128 km from Datia and 39 km from Gwalior.





## The Travel Marketplace, western region organised by Travel Turtle was a resounding success

The recently concluded Travel Marketplace Roadshow, organised by Travel Turtle, was a tremendous success, delighting exhibitors and attendees alike. Held in Pune on June 18-19 at the Crowne Plaza Pune City Centre and in Surat on June 20-21 at the Surat Marriott Hotel, the event drew significant participation from the travel industry, showcasing the best in travel and hospitality services. The roadshow, a B2B networking platform, aimed to transform businesses and foster substantial industry connections. With 27 esteemed participants, the event allowed exhibitors to present their offerings and establish vital connections.





## EVENT AFFAIR





## EVENT AFFAIR





## EVENT AFFAIR





BIZ



## INTERACTIVE MEET 2024



Creating heritage magic

# Enchanting Experiences

The landscape of inbound tourism in India is experiencing a dynamic shift. KP Singh, Founder, Enchanting Experiences, provided valuable perspectives on the current trends and future potential of inbound tourism in India.

-Tripti Jain





### Economic Lifeline

In a recent interactive meet, hotel owners and travel companies came together to exchange insights and forge stronger ties, aiming to rejuvenate the sector. Inbound tourism plays a crucial role in the Indian economy, contributing significantly to revenue and employment. KP Singh shares, "Inbound tourism is not just about numbers; it's about the rich cultural exchange and the economic boost it brings to local communities." Highlighting the recent event and the importance of this segment, he shares, "We bring together participants from various parts of India, including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala, showcasing the diversity and potential of the country's tourism offerings."

Tourism is more than just a financial lifeline; it is a bridge that connects people, cultures, and traditions. The influx of international tourists not only boosts local economies but also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of India's rich heritage. He further elaborates, "Each international visitor carries with them stories and experiences that promote cultural diplomacy and build bridges of understanding between nations."

### Markets and trends to follow

The current market trends in inbound tourism reveal a strong presence of European tourists, particularly from Germany, France, and the UK. "Europe remains our largest market, contributing significantly to our inbound tourism numbers. Additionally, the US market is gradually building up, while Australia also contributes a fair share," shares KP Singh.

He emphasised the need to understand and adapt to the evolving preferences of these markets. "Today's travellers are looking for unique and immersive experiences. They want to go beyond the usual tourist spots and explore the real India. By offering authentic experiences and personalised itineraries, India can attract a more discerning and high-spending segment of travellers," he said.

### Speaking of experiential!

One of the standout features of India's tourism sector is the emphasis on experiential travel. "Our hotels offer more than just accommodation;

they provide unique experiences that are deeply rooted in the local culture and heritage," he explains. Many properties featured in the event are small, boutique establishments, such as havelis and forts, with room capacities ranging from 9 to 20. This focus on offering immersive experiences is a significant draw for international tourists seeking authenticity.

The trend towards experiential tourism is transforming how travellers interact with destinations. Instead of merely visiting a place, they seek to live and breathe its essence. He shares an example, "At Enchanting Experiences, we curate stays in heritage properties where guests can partake in traditional activities, such as pottery making or local cooking classes. This not only enriches their travel experience but also supports the preservation of local arts and crafts."

### Learning curve

Despite the positive trends, challenges remain in capturing the full potential of inbound tourism. KP Singh shares, "India is not yet getting its fair share of the global tourism market. Issues such as infrastructure ease of travel, and international perceptions of safety and cleanliness continue to pose hurdles." However, he remains optimistic about the future. The new cabinet, with a Minister for Tourism from Rajasthan, brings hope for increased support and development. "We are always hopeful that with the right government support, we can see significant growth in our tourism sector," he adds.

Another challenge lies in ensuring that tourism growth is sustainable and inclusive. He emphasises, "We must ensure that the benefits of tourism reach the local communities. This means investing in infrastructure, training local guides, and promoting local businesses. By adopting a community-centric approach, India can create a more resilient and equitable tourism sector."

### Global supremacy

To capitalise on opportunities, proactive strategies are essential. He emphasises the importance of promoting Indian tourism directly in overseas markets. He shares, "We need to be more aggressive in our marketing efforts abroad. Setting up promotional events and engaging with international tour operators can

help drive more business. This proactive approach, combined with the unique selling propositions of India's tourism offerings, can significantly enhance the country's appeal to international travellers." Innovative marketing campaigns that highlight India's diverse attractions and unique experiences can play a crucial role. He shares, "Digital platforms and social media have revolutionised how we can reach potential tourists. Storytelling through videos and virtual tours can captivate audiences and inspire them to visit. Furthermore, building strong partnerships with global travel agencies and influencers can amplify India's presence in the competitive international tourism market."

### Ahead of the curve

The future of inbound tourism in India looks promising, with anticipated growth in traditional markets and emerging opportunities in new regions. This optimism is grounded in the steady recovery of traditional markets such as Europe and the UK, and the growing interest from the US. "With the right strategies and support, we can position India as a top destination for international travellers," he concludes.

He also highlights the potential of emerging markets such as Southeast Asia and Latin America. "These regions have shown increasing interest in India, driven by cultural ties and growing middle-class populations. By diversifying its target markets, India can reduce its reliance on traditional sources and tap into new growth avenues," he shares.

The interactive meet highlights the resilience and potential of India's inbound tourism sector. KP Singh's insights highlight the importance of a proactive approach, leveraging unique experiential offerings, and fostering strong ties with international markets. The collaborative efforts of hotel owners, travel companies, and government support will pave the way for a thriving inbound tourism industry, enriching both the economy and cultural fabric of the nation.

India's tourism sector stands at a crossroads, with immense potential waiting to be unlocked. By embracing innovation, sustainability, and collaboration, India can emerge as a leading destination for travellers from around the world.



Masters of Hospitality in Sri Lanka

# Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts

Capturing the heart and soul of every traveller, Sri Lanka is a unique gem with its incredible hospitality and welcoming faces at every corner. This country has a special place in every traveller's Rolodex.

- Tripti Jain





As someone who has always been enchanted by tales of lush landscapes, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality, I was thrilled to embark on a familiarization trip organised by SriLankan Airlines. This journey, which took us through the exquisite Cinnamon properties, exceeded my wildest expectations. Each stay was a unique blend of great hospitality, comfortable accommodation, delectable Sri Lankan cuisine, and stunning interiors, with stories behind every room. Here's a personal glimpse into this memorable journey that left an indelible mark on my heart.

### City tunes at the Cinnamon Grand Colombo

Our adventure began at the Cinnamon Grand Colombo, a luxurious oasis in the bustling heart of Colombo. From the moment we stepped in, the warmth of Sri Lankan hospitality enveloped us. The rooms were elegantly decorated, offering a serene escape from the city's hustle and bustle. The highlight of our stay here was an Indochinese lunch at Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo. The restaurant, with its panoramic views of the lake, served an array of flavours that left our taste buds dancing. The combination of delicate spices and fresh ingredients set the tone for the culinary delights that awaited us throughout the trip.

### Serenity at Cinnamon Lodge Habarana

Next, we headed to Cinnamon Lodge Habarana, nestled amidst the tranquillity of the jungle. The journey itself was a scenic drive, taking us deeper into the lush greenery of Sri Lanka. As we arrived, we were greeted by the calm and peaceful ambiance of the lodge. The rooms here told stories of ancient Ceylon, with intricate woodwork and decor that reflected the rich cultural heritage of the island. Walking through the lodge, we encountered various species of birds and butterflies, making it a nature lover's paradise. The evenings were spent enjoying the serene surroundings and indulging in exquisite Sri Lankan cuisine, prepared with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

### Beach life at Trinco Blu by Cinnamon

On our way to the next destination, we made a delightful pit stop for lunch at Trinco Blu by Cinnamon. This beachfront property was a breath of fresh air, with its azure waters and sandy beaches. The restaurant offered a feast of seafood, cooked to perfection, and the view of the ocean made the meal even more enjoyable. It was a brief yet refreshing stop that rejuvenated us for the journey ahead.

### Majestic views at Cinnamon Beach Bentota

The most memorable stay of all was at Cinnamon Beach Bentota. This property is a true embodiment of paradise, with its pristine beaches and luxurious villas. Each room at Cinnamon Beach Bentota has a unique story, told through its decor and artifacts. The rooms were spacious and offered breath-taking views of the ocean. The hospitality here was exceptional, with the staff going above and beyond to make our stay comfortable. We spent our days lounging by the beach, enjoying water sports, and savouring the exquisite Sri Lankan cuisine. The evenings were magical, with the sound of waves creating a soothing symphony as we dined under the stars.

### A feast at Cinnamon Beruwala

As we continued our journey, we made a stop at Cinnamon Beruwala for lunch. This property is known for its culinary excellence, and it did not disappoint. The lunch spread was a feast for the senses, with an array of traditional Sri Lankan dishes that showcased the rich flavours and spices of the island. Just as we finished our meal, it started raining, adding a refreshing twist to our experience. The sound of rain,

combined with the aroma of the food, created a perfect symphony that made the meal unforgettable.

### Sri Lankan nostalgia

This familiarization trip with SriLankan Airlines showcasing Sri Lanka and Cinnamon properties was more than just a travel experience; it was a journey of discovery and appreciation for the rich culture and heritage of Sri Lanka. Each property had its unique charm, offering great hospitality, comfortable stays, amazing cuisine, and gorgeous interiors. The stories behind every room added a personal touch, making the experience even more special. From the bustling cityscape of Colombo to the serene jungles of Habarana, and the pristine beaches of Bentota, every moment was filled with joy and wonder. This trip has left an indelible mark on my heart, and I can't wait to return to explore more of this beautiful island.

Sri Lanka, with its warm and welcoming people, stunning landscapes, and rich cultural heritage, is a destination that every traveller should experience. And there's no better way to do it than with the exceptional hospitality of Cinnamon properties. This trip was a testament to the fact that Sri Lanka is not just a place to visit, but a place to feel and experience deeply.





# Discovering the Magic of

# THAILAND

Thailand is a place where ancient temples whisper stories of the past while bustling markets pulse with the rhythm of modern life. The flavours here are as vibrant as the landscapes, offering a culinary journey that dances on your taste buds.

-Harish Chandra





The journey began with an air of anticipation and excitement. My flight from India to Thailand was the start of an adventure that promised to be both enriching and exhilarating. As the plane soared above the clouds, I couldn't help but imagine the experiences that awaited me at the Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+ 2024) Media FAM Trip. The thought of exploring 'Amazing Thailand,' with its rich culture, stunning landscapes, and warm hospitality, filled me with eager anticipation.

### A taste of Thai hospitality

Upon landing in Pattaya, I was immediately enveloped by the warmth of Thai hospitality. A scenic drive led me to Khao Lak in Phang Nga province, the venue for TTM+ 2024. En route, we stopped at Fashi,' a charming local food restaurant where I savoured my first taste of authentic Thai cuisine. The flavours were a delightful mix of sweet, sour, spicy, and savoury, setting the perfect tone for the culinary adventures to come.

Our destination was the JW Marriott hotel in Khao Lak, a luxurious resort and spa nestled by the Andaman Sea. The hotel's grandeur, coupled with its serene oceanfront location, promised a relaxing and rejuvenating stay. The sight of the

two elegant ballrooms and the luxurious spa heightened my excitement for the days ahead.

### The blend of heritage and modernity

Phang Nga province is often described as a paradise on earth, known for its breath-taking flora and fauna. On my second day, I embarked on a half-day tour of the old city of Khao Lak. The city's blend of heritage and modernity was striking. The old wooden houses and bustling markets stood in harmony with modern infrastructure, reflecting the region's evolution while preserving its cultural roots.

In the evening, I attended the grand opening ceremony of TTM+ 2024. The event was a spectacular affair, attended by over 1,000 people, including dignitaries from Tourism Ministries and the travel trade. Witnessing my first Thai cultural performance, with its vibrant costumes and graceful movements, was a personal highlight. The event was a testament to Thailand's rich cultural heritage and its dynamic tourism industry.

### The TTM+ Experience

The second day of TTM+ was dedicated to business meetings. The event was meticulously organised, with well-managed proceedings and





productive one-on-one interactions. I met several buyers and exhibitors who were pleased with the turnout and the opportunities for networking and collaboration. The professionalism and efficiency of the organisers ensured that the event was both enjoyable and rewarding.

Our evenings in Khao Lak were marked by exquisite dinners at picturesque locations such as La Vela, La Vita Sana Khaolak, and The Little Shore. Each venue offered a unique ambiance and culinary experience. The celebration at The Little Shore, with its performances from different continents and dazzling fireworks, was particularly memorable.

### Embarking on a different journey

Our journey to Krabi began with a splendid breakfast at the JW Marriott. The scenic drive to Krabi was a feast for the eyes, with lush green hills and agricultural plots painting a serene landscape. We visited a beautiful Buddha temple and had lunch at Coffee & Latte Art, a quaint Chinese restaurant run by a family that migrated from China to Thailand in the mid-18th century. The Blue House, perched on the beach and facing the Andaman Sea, served the most delicious authentic Thai cuisine. Next, we visited the Kok Nong Na Model village near Krabi. Here, we enjoyed a traditional meal and visited the Nai Nang Apiculture Learning Centre for Mangrove Conservation. The visit provided a deeper understanding of rubber plantations and the 'Phung Phrohng Bee Farm,' a community enterprise dedicated to sustainable growth and the restoration of indigenous forest trees.

Our day concluded with a check-in at the luxurious Varana hotel in Krabi. This eco-friendly hotel, with stunning views of the Andaman Sea, impressed us with its commitment to sustainability. The owner's tour of the hotel highlighted its innovative use of reusable materials in the interiors. A fabulous dinner followed by a relaxing wellness experience the next day made our stay at Varana truly memorable.







### Immersing in Krabi's Charm

The next day, we visited the Sofitel Hotel in Krabi, a property renowned for its beautiful rooms and superb hospitality. Traditional dance and music welcomed us in the lobby, and the manager treated us to a signature cocktail at their fabulous bar. The evening was capped off with a dinner featuring mouth-watering delicacies. Our Krabi adventure continued with a tour of Hong Island, where we were captivated by breath-taking views, enjoyed swimming in the Blue Lagoon, and relished a delicious lunch in a serene setting. The island's natural beauty was a testament to Thailand's allure.

### Luxurious Rayavadee

Our next destination was Rayavadee, where we experienced true luxury. The property tour showcased its unique charm, and a meal at the famous Cave Restaurant, carved out of a natural cave, was an unforgettable experience. Dining in a cave, with waves gently lapping nearby, felt like a scene from a fairy tale.

### An unforgettable journey

As I look back on my journey through Thailand, I am filled with a sense of gratitude and wonder. The TTM+ 2024 Media FAM Trip was an enriching experience that offered a perfect blend of luxury, adventure, culture, and sustainability. The hospitality and warmth of the Thai people, the breath-taking natural

landscapes, the rich cultural heritage, and the commitment to sustainability made this trip truly special.

I left Thailand with a heart full of memories and a desire to return and explore more of this beautiful country. The announcement of TTM+ 2025 in Chiang Mai has already sparked excitement and anticipation. Chiang Mai, with its rich history, vibrant culture, and stunning landscapes, promises to offer another fantastic experience. I am eagerly looking forward to participating in the next event and creating more unforgettable memories in the heart of Thailand.

Traveling through Thailand during the TTM+ 2024 was more than just a journey; it was an immersive experience that touched my soul. From the luxurious accommodations and fine dining to the cultural encounters and scenic adventures, every moment was filled with wonder and discovery.

Thailand's charm lies not just in its stunning landscapes and rich cultural heritage, but also in its people's warmth and hospitality. This trip has deepened my appreciation for this incredible country and left me with memories that will last a lifetime. Here's to the magic of travel, the joy of discovery, and the beauty of Thailand. Until next time, sawasdee krub!



THE LUXURIOUS WORLD OF

# The Ozen Collection

In the picturesque setting of the Maldives, The Ozen Collection stands out as a paragon of luxury and exceptional hospitality. Falaaz Ismail, Assistant Vice President, The Ozen Collection, Maldives shares insights into the brand's journey, success, and future aspirations.

- Tripti Jain



Falaaz Ismail





Ozen Life Maadhoo and Ozen Reserve Bolifushi have captivated travellers with their unique offerings and unparalleled service. The two properties are unique in their own way with an array of travellers visiting from all over the world.

### **A vision for excellence**

Falaaz Ismail's career in hospitality began in 2011 in the Maldives. His association with Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts, the management behind The Ozen Collection, has been pivotal. He shares, "From the very beginning, we wanted to create a brand that encapsulates the true essence of Maldivian hospitality combined with luxury. This vision led to the rebranding of our properties and the birth of The Ozen Collection.

Ismail's journey reflects a dedication to excellence and innovation. "Our goal was to stand out in a crowded market by offering something truly unique. We wanted our guests to experience luxury in a way that felt personal and memorable," he adds.

### **A sanctuary of bliss**

Ozen Life Maadhoo, nestled in the serene beauty of the Indian Ocean, has become a pure example of luxury and relaxation. The resort's proximity to Malé International Airport makes it an

accessible paradise. Falaaz explains, "We designed Maadhoo to offer an all-encompassing holiday experience. From gourmet dining to underwater adventures, guests can indulge in everything without worrying about extra costs.

The resort's all-inclusive holiday plan is a significant draw. He shares, "Around 40 per cent of our guests check out without any additional charges, thanks to our comprehensive holiday plan. It's more than just all-inclusive; it's a promise of value and luxury.

### **The pinnacle of luxury**

Ozen Reserve Bolifushi represents the epitome of luxury. The resort features expansive villas with private pools, a signature underwater restaurant, and water villas equipped with slides. "Bolifushi is for those who seek extraordinary experiences. Our villas with private pools and unique dining options, such as our underwater restaurant, set us apart," shares Falaaz.

The resort's strategic location near the airport and its exclusive offerings make it a top choice for discerning travellers. He adds, "Indian travellers, in particular, have shown a great preference for Bolifushi. The combination of convenience and luxury aligns perfectly with their travel desires.



### A growing affinity

India has emerged as a crucial market for The Ozen Collection, showing remarkable growth pre- and post-pandemic. In 2019, Indian arrivals were around 1, 60,000, and post-pandemic, the numbers surged to nearly 3, 00,000. Commenting on the same lines Falaaz shares, "The Indian market is diverse and evolving. We've seen a significant increase in group travel and high-end clientele." Seasonal trends also influence travel patterns. "During winter, we see a higher influx of luxury travellers from India. In contrast, summer sees more demand for European destinations. However, our entry-level 5-star and 4-star resorts remain popular year-round," he elaborates.

### Innovating the marketing strategies

Marketing to the Indian market has evolved significantly over the years. Traditionally reliant on B2B partnerships, the brand is now exploring direct and innovative marketing approaches. "There's been a shift from traditional print media to digital and experiential marketing. We're collaborating on social media, conducting roadshows, and even exploring billboards in shopping malls," shares Falaaz.

Despite these changes, wholesale partners remain vital. "99 per cent of our business from India comes through B2B channels. However, we're adapting to include more direct marketing strategies as well," he adds.

### Expanding horizons

The brand is on the cusp of significant international growth, with new properties set to open in Kolkata and Sri Lanka. "We've been known as a Maldives-centric brand, but our vision is to become an international luxury brand. Our first international hotel in Kolkata will open this October, followed by expansions in Sri Lanka," highlights Falaaz. This expansion is about more than just increasing numbers; it's about maintaining the brand's essence. "Our goal is to

replicate the success we've had in the Maldives by offering unparalleled luxury and service wherever we go," he emphasises.

The Ozen Collection has successfully navigated the challenges of the hospitality industry by staying true to its core values of luxury and exceptional service. Falaaz shares, "The brand continues to innovate and expand, promising unforgettable experiences to travellers worldwide. As we set sights on new horizons, the future looks incredibly promising for us."





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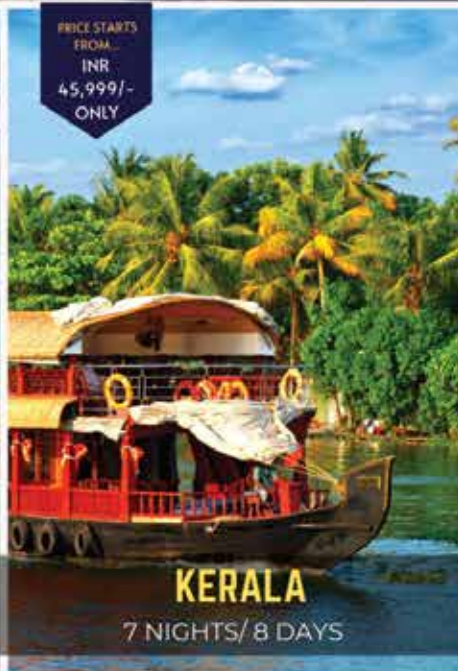
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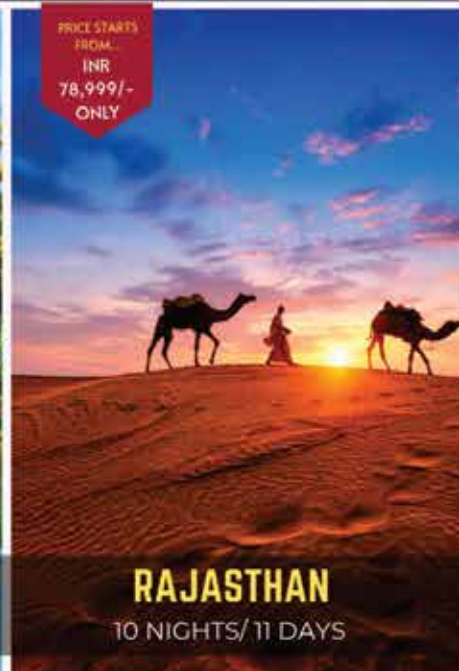
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LA LA LAND

# Oktoberfest 2024

A CELEBRATION OF BAVARIAN TRADITION

As autumn leaves begin to fall, Munich, Germany, gears up for one of the world's most famous cultural celebrations-Oktoberfest. In 2024, this iconic festival promises to be bigger and better, drawing millions of visitors from around the globe. With its rich history, vibrant atmosphere, and a delightful array of Bavarian traditions, Oktoberfest 2024 is an event not to be missed.

-Tripti Jain





### A Glimpse into History

Oktoberfest dates back to 1810, when Crown Prince Ludwig (later King Ludwig I) married Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen. The citizens of Munich were invited to join the festivities, which took place over five days on the fields in front of the city gates. These fields, now known as Theresienwiese (Theresa's Meadow), have been the venue for the festival ever since. The event was such a success that it became an annual tradition, evolving into the world-renowned celebration of Bavarian culture that we know today.

### The heart of Oktoberfest

At the core of Oktoberfest are the beer tents, each offering a unique experience! The festival features 14 large tents and 20 smaller ones, where visitors can enjoy a variety of Bavarian beers brewed specifically for the occasion. These beers are crafted by Munich's six major breweries: Augustiner, Hacker-Pschorr, Hofbräu, Löwenbräu, Paulaner, and Spaten. Each beer must adhere to the Reinheitsgebot, the Bavarian Purity Law of 1516, ensuring that only water, malt, hops, and yeast are used in the brewing process. The beer tents are bustling with activity, from traditional Bavarian music to lively conversations and dancing. Some of the most popular tents include the Schottenhamel, where the festival is officially opened by the Mayor of Munich tapping the first keg, and the Hofbräu Festzelt, known for its lively atmosphere and spacious interior.

### Beyond the Beer

While beer is the star of the show, Oktoberfest offers a wide range of activities and experiences for all ages. Traditional Bavarian cuisine is a highlight, with delicacies such as pretzels, sausages, roast chicken, and pork knuckles available at every turn. Visitors can also enjoy a variety of sweets, from strudels to gingerbread hearts. For those seeking thrills, the festival boasts an impressive array of amusement rides, including roller coasters, Ferris wheels, and more. The 'Oide Wiesn,' a section of the festival dedicated to traditional Bavarian culture, offers vintage rides and nostalgic experiences, providing a glimpse into the past.

### Lederhosen and Dirndls

Oktoberfest is also a showcase of traditional Bavarian attire. Men typically wear lederhosen, leather shorts that are often embroidered and paired with a checkered shirt and suspenders. Women don dirndls, colourful dresses with a



bodice, blouse, and apron. These outfits add to the festive atmosphere and are a nod to the region's rich cultural heritage.

### Plan your visit now!

Oktoberfest 2024 will run from September 21st to October 6th. To make the most of the experience, it's advisable to plan ahead. Accommodation in Munich can fill up quickly, so booking early is essential. Additionally, while entry to the festival grounds is free, it's recommended to reserve a table in the beer tents if you plan to visit during peak times, especially on weekends and public holidays. For those unable to make it to Munich, Oktoberfest celebrations are held in cities around the world, bringing a taste of Bavarian culture to a global audience.

### A celebration of unity and tradition

Oktoberfest is more than just a beer festival; it's a celebration of Bavarian tradition, culture, and unity. It's an opportunity for people from all walks of life to come together, enjoy good food and drink, and revel in the joyous atmosphere. As the world becomes more connected, events such as Oktoberfest serve as a reminder of the importance of cultural heritage and the joy that comes from sharing traditions with others. In 2024, as the tents fill with laughter, music, and the clinking of beer mugs, Oktoberfest will once again demonstrate why it remains one of the most beloved festivals in the world. Prost!





# A robust flight of Domestic Tourism in India

India's Travel & Tourism sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience and growth, as highlighted by the World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) 2024 Economic Impact Research (EIR). The sector's resurgence is primarily driven by a surge in domestic tourism, setting a robust foundation for future growth. This article explores the key findings from the WTTC report, the sector's current state, future projections, and the broader regional impact.



**A strong comeback**

According to the WTTC, the Travel & Tourism sector's contribution to India's GDP reached an impressive INR 19.13 trillion in 2023, surpassing 2019 levels by nearly 10 per cent. This growth underscores the sector's resilience and its vital role in the country's economic recovery post-pandemic. Employment within the sector also saw significant growth, with an increase of 10 per cent from the previous year, reaching just under 43 million jobs. This figure represents an 8 per cent increase compared to 2019, highlighting the sector's critical role in job creation.

**The role of domestic tourism**

One of the most significant drivers of this recovery has been the resurgence of domestic tourism. Domestic visitor spending in 2023 was 15 per cent higher than in 2019, amounting to INR 14.64 trillion. This surge in domestic travel has been

pivotal in revitalising the sector, compensating for the slower recovery in international tourism. The reduced reliance on international visitors has provided a buffer, allowing the sector to maintain momentum despite on-going global travel restrictions and economic uncertainties. Julia Simpson, WTTC President & CEO, emphasised the importance of domestic tourism, stating, "India's Travel & Tourism sector is bouncing back with remarkable vigour, driven by a surge in domestic tourism. While international visitor spending is still catching up, the unwavering support from local travellers showcases the resilience and potential of this dynamic sector. With continued strategic efforts, India is set to shine as a global tourism powerhouse."

**International tourism**

Despite the strong performance in domestic tourism, international visitor spending remains a challenge. The WTTC report noted that international spending was still more than 14 per cent below 2019 levels, with INR 0.4 trillion less being spent by international visitors in 2023 compared to pre-pandemic figures. This shortfall highlights the need for continued efforts to attract international tourists, which is crucial for a well-rounded recovery and growth of the sector.



### 2024 and beyond

The future of India's Travel & Tourism sector looks promising with the WTTC forecasting a significant uptick in key metrics by the end of 2024. The sector is projected to contribute almost INR 21.15 trillion to the Indian economy, a 21 per cent increase from 2019. Employment in the sector is also expected to rise, with an additional 2.45 million jobs, indicating the sector's growing significance in the national employment landscape. International visitor spending is forecasted to grow by over 17 per cent, reaching INR 2.85 trillion, while domestic visitor spending is expected to continue its upward trajectory with a 9.6 per cent increase, reaching over INR 16 trillion. These projections reflect a comprehensive recovery, with

both domestic and international segments showing positive trends.

### The vision for 2047

The Indian Government has ambitious plans for the sector's future, aiming to attract 100 million inbound tourists by the 100th anniversary of India's independence in 2047, as part of the 2047 vision. This initiative is expected to significantly boost the economy, positioning India as a top global travel destination. With the right policies and investments, the WTTC estimates that the sector could contribute INR 43.25 trillion annually to the GDP by 2034, employing nearly 63 million people.

### Regional impact

The WTTC also provided insights into the broader South Asian region, where the Travel & Tourism sector is expected to

contribute INR 25.1 trillion in 2024. The number of jobs supported by the sector in South Asia is projected to reach 54.77 million, reflecting the region's critical role in the global tourism landscape. Domestic visitor spending in South Asia is forecasted to reach INR 18.3 trillion, with international visitor spending anticipated to hit INR 3.8 trillion.

India's Travel & Tourism sector is on a path of robust recovery, underpinned by strong domestic tourism and strategic government initiatives. While challenges remain, particularly in the international tourism segment, the sector's outlook is promising. With continued support and strategic investments, India is poised to become a leading global tourism destination, driving economic growth and creating millions of jobs.





## Madhya Pradesh Tourism organises 'MP Tourism Masterclass' in New Delhi

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board's recent workshop 'MP Tourism Masterclass' was held at the Madhya Pradesh Bhawan, New Delhi. The workshop aimed at positioning MP as a preferred tourist destination. The state is undoubtedly a treasure trove of tourism experiences and an 'Offbeat Multispecialty Destination of First Choice!' With rapid transformation in the tourism industry, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is committed to organise comprehensive workshops across the country. This comprehensive workshop highlighted tourism offerings of the state to foster collaboration between key industry stakeholders.





## Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department hosts 'Bodhi Yatra' to celebrate Lord Buddha's journey



Bringing spirituality and the rich heritage of Uttar Pradesh together, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department organised the 'Bodhi Yatra' conclave in New Delhi to commemorate the extraordinary journey of Lord Buddha. The event highlighted Uttar Pradesh's significance as a Buddhist pilgrimage and the tourism potential of the state. The conclave witnessed the presence of key officials, including the Minister of Tourism, Government of India, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Uttar Pradesh, Jaiveer Singh, Secretary, Ministry Of Tourism, V. Vidyavati, Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, Durga Shankar Mishra, Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture, Mukesh Kumar Meshram, Special Secretary of Tourism, Eesha Priya, Director General of IBC, Abhijit Haldar and Former Deputy Speaker of CTA, Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok.





## Centara Hotels & Resorts celebrates 40th Anniversary with Award Nights in New Delhi and Mumbai



Centara Hotels & Resorts recently celebrated their 40th anniversary by hosting award nights in New Delhi and Mumbai. The events honoured key trade partners for their on-going support, marking the second time the hotel chain has held such ceremonies. The evenings were more than just award presentations; they celebrated friendships, unity, and growth within the industry. These gatherings highlight Centara's commitment to building strong relationships and their appreciation for the partnerships that have contributed to their success over the past four decades.





## APPOINTMENTS



### ***Ministry of Tourism***

The Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture has new leadership with Gajendra Singh Shekhawat as the Union Minister and Suresh Gopi as the Minister of State for Tourism. Shekhawat, previously the Union Cabinet Minister in the Jal Shakti Ministry, represents Jodhpur for the BJP. Gopi, the first Keralan MP from the BJP in this role, adds a significant milestone for the party in Kerala. The previous minister, G. Kishan Reddy, focused on promoting India as a global tourist destination. Shekhawat and Gopi aim to enhance India's tourism sector and cultural heritage further.

### ***Think Strawberries***

With over a decade of credibility and operations in India, Think Strawberries has announced the on-boarding of Navneet Mendiratta as the new Vice President of Public Relations and Media for India. In this leadership role, she will be responsible for handling Public Relations and Media strategy for projects, designing media campaigns, and advancing the brand's corporate reputation. Navneet comes with a rich experience of over 27 years in the field of communications, having held leadership roles with some of the top media houses in the country. As a seasoned journalist and communications professional, Navneet has mastered the art of creating success in both PR and media.



### ***Fairmont The Norfolk and Fairmont Mara Safari Club***

Fairmont The Norfolk and Fairmont Mara Safari Club proudly welcome Ileshaa Nijhawan as their new Cluster Commercial Director. With a distinguished career spanning over 15 years of luxury experience in the hospitality industry, Ileshaa, a seasoned hospitality leader joins the Accor Group from her previous role as Director of Events Groups & Conferences at Waldorf Astoria Lusail, Doha, Qatar. She is a globalista, having had multicultural experiences having lived across the globe including UAE, Qatar, India, UK, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Spain.

### ***ACE Connect***

ACE CONNECT, a B2B niche specialist in the travel and hospitality sector in India, takes pride in announcing its appointment as India representative for PURE MOROCCO. ACE Connect, known for its strong industry connect and respected reputation, will give Pure Morocco the desirable edge by offering the right connections amidst trade partners.





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