

# TRAVEL turtle

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an imprint!



# MALDIVES - DIWALI CARNIVAL

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# Editor's Letter

As many of us know, there are certain things in life we simply can't get enough of- learning, growing, and the quiet joy of small victories. Recently, I ventured into something new: Golf. With eager curiosity, I asked my coach, "How long until I perfect this?" His response struck me deeply: "There is no limit to perfection." In that moment, I realized how elusive perfection truly is. We chase it tirelessly, yet it wears a different face for each of us.

This pursuit of perfection runs through everything we do, from our personal endeavours to the work my incredible team pours into every page of our publication. And while we may not know what perfection looks like, we know what dedication feels like. Winning the award for Best Travel Publication at the Annual IATO Convention for the fourth consecutive time is a testament to that. It reminds us that striving, whether we reach 'perfection' or not, is what pushes us forward.

Another moment of reflection came when I moderated a session on Artificial Intelligence at the IATO convention. As the conversation unfolded, I couldn't help but marvel at how swiftly the world is changing. Our travel industry is evolving with it, moving at a pace that requires us to be adaptable, creative, and forward-thinking. AI isn't just a tool, it's reshaping how we explore, experience, and connect with the world.

This month has been a whirlwind of excitement, from the IATO convention to some of the most spectacular events in India. Our magazine covers them all, including stories from breathtaking destinations like Vietnam. Each piece is a reminder of how vast and beautiful the world is, and how fortunate we are to share these stories with you.

We've poured our hearts into this edition, and I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we loved crafting it. After all, as someone once said, "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase it, we can catch excellence."

Do share your feedback at [bharti@travelturtle.world](mailto:bharti@travelturtle.world).

Happy Reading!

*Bharti Sharma*

**Bharti Sharma**  
Editor

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## ***TravelBullz celebrates 14 years of excellence and success***

TravelBullz celebrates its 14th year of operation. In honour of this landmark event, the company held an inspirational offsite gathering for its India-based team, emphasising the importance of team unity and the acknowledgement of outstanding employees.



## ***Ebix emerges from Chapter 11 as a Debt-Free globally***

Ebix Inc., a leading international provider of on-demand software and e-commerce services to the insurance, financial, healthcare, and e-learning industries, announces its successful emergence from Chapter 11 bankruptcy, now operating as a debt-free company worldwide. The restructuring, completed in a record time of less than nine months, positions Ebix for robust future growth and operational excellence.

## ***Sunil Kumar elected as President of Travel Agents Association of India***

Sunil Kumar has been elected as the new President of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), succeeding the outgoing president. With over two decades of experience in the travel and tourism industry, Kumar brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership skills to this esteemed position. His vision for TAAI includes fostering collaboration among travel agents, enhancing industry standards, and advocating for the interests of the travel community in a rapidly evolving landscape.



## ***TripJack rewards top travel agents in New Delhi***

TripJack, hosts an exclusive Hotel Bonanza Event on 2nd September 2024 at The Lalit to recognise the outstanding achievements of travel agents from New Delhi who excelled in driving hotel bookings and meeting their campaign targets. The evening was marked by an awards ceremony, where exceptional agents were celebrated and rewarded with prizes that included gold coins, televisions, iPhones, and more.





## ***SriLankan Airlines and flydubai announce new interline agreement***

SriLankan Airlines and flydubai, the Dubai-based carrier, have announced an interline agreement commencing from 09 September 2024, introducing more travel opportunities between Sri Lanka, the UAE and beyond on select routes on the carriers' networks. This interline agreement will enable passengers travelling with SriLankan Airlines to seamlessly connect via Dubai's aviation hub to more than 30 destinations that flydubai operates to in Africa, Central Asia, Central and Southeast Europe as well as the Middle East.



## ***ATOAI holds Annual General Meeting 2023-24 and announces 2024-26 Leadership***

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India concluded its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the 2023-24 financial year and held its elections for the 2024-26 term on September 16, 2024, at The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa, New Delhi. The event concluded with an exclusive Fellowship Dinner aiming to promote unity and camaraderie among its members who had gathered from various parts of the country.



## ***TIA and Amity University to Organise Tourism & Travel Expo in February 2025***

Tourism India Alliance (TIA) signs an MoU with Amity University Uttar Pradesh as its Exclusive Trade Partner to organise Tourism & Travel Expo as an integral part of the International Conference on 'Bridging the Gaps in Tourism Knowledge and Practice: Sustainable Development, Regenerative Tourism, Digital Eco-Systems and Green Investments' scheduled from 07th to 09th February 2025 at Amity University Uttar Pradesh (AUUP).



## ***Heavens Portfolio group launches its 17th office in Europe***

The Travel Representation Company's European Outpost to Cover Switzerland, Monaco, Belgium, Greece, France, and Luxembourg. Heavens Portfolio, a leader in luxury travel representation, is proud to announce its expansion into Europe with the opening of its 17th office in Switzerland. This strategic move will strengthen the company's presence in key European markets, including Switzerland, Monaco, Belgium, Greece, France, and Luxembourg.



### ***Royal Thai renews VFS Global contract to handle visa applications in India***

Applications are accepted at VFS Global visa application centres in Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chandigarh, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Goa, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jalandhar, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai and Pune. Maintaining its trusted partnership with the Thai government, VFS Global, the leading outsourcing and technology services provider for governments and diplomatic missions globally, has once again secured the contract to handle visa applications for Thailand from India.



### ***Tatabye Tours wins the Leading Travel Agency – Inbound to the Maldives award at the SATA***

An Indian-based Destination Management Company (DMC) operating in the Maldives has won the prestigious 'Leading Travel Agency – Inbound to the Maldives' award at the South Asian Travel Awards (SATA). This recognition highlights their outstanding contributions to promoting tourism and providing top-notch travel services to the Maldives, positioning them as a key player in the region's travel industry.



**Saudia appoints QuadLabs to power the B2B Business Travel Solution**



### ***Saudia appoints QuadLabs to power the B2B business travel solution***

Saudia, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, signed a strategic partnership with QuadLabs, a leading travel technology solutions provider, to launch an advanced B2B solution tailored for corporates. The solution aims to revolutionise the business travel experience for companies across the region. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in corporate travel management. It combines QuadLabs' innovative technology with Saudia's renowned service and extensive network.



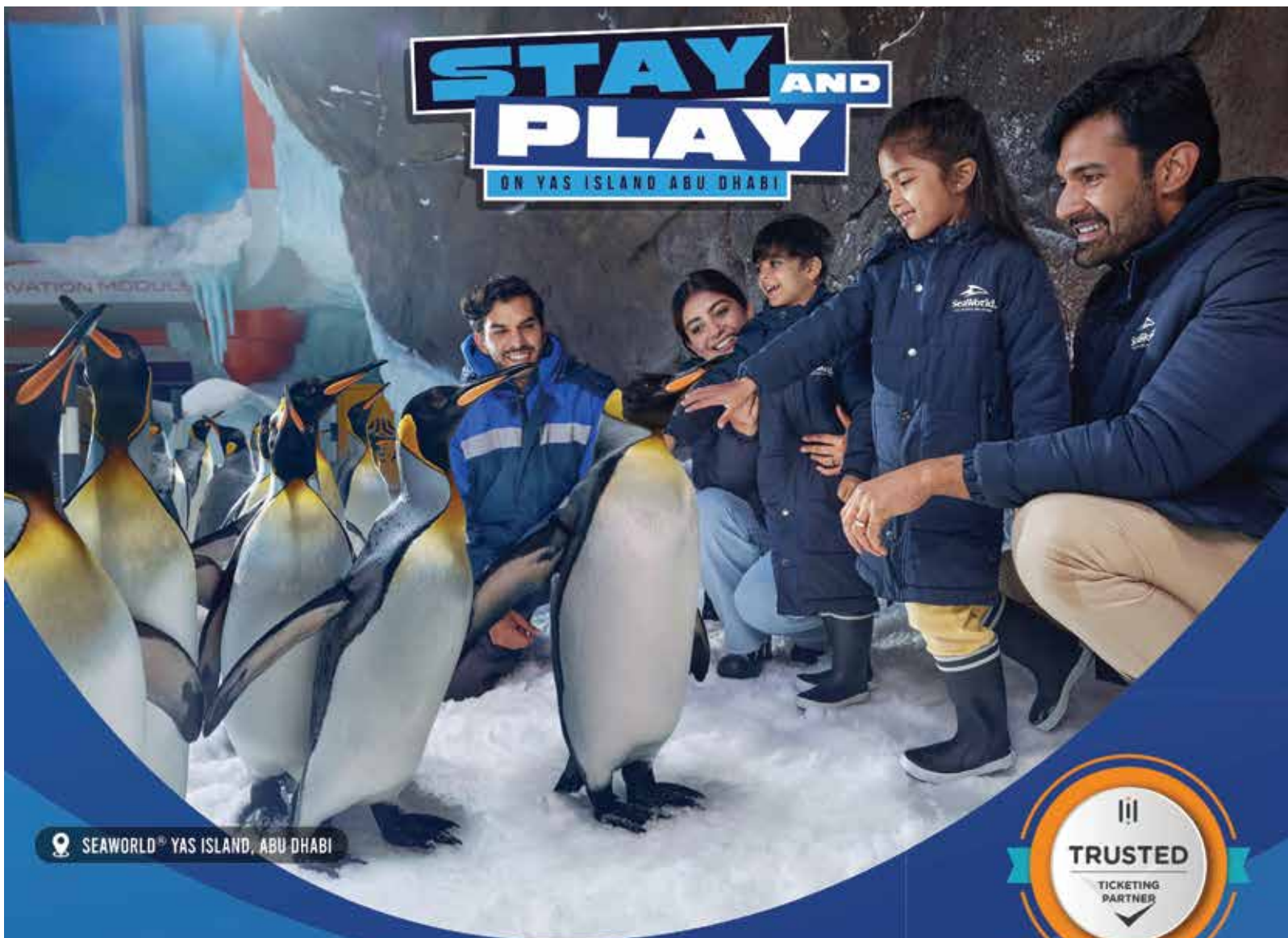
### ***IATO seeks Government support as Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTA's) yet to revive***

India's apex Inbound Tour Operators body IATO, seeks immediate government assistance as Tour operators continue to suffer in the wake of sluggish FTA's which still remain below 2019 levels. The major reason for little revival in this sector can be attributed to lack of budgetary support for publicity abroad and withdrawal of incentives to tour operators which could be utilised for promotion in the key source market like UK, Canada, USA, Germany, Australia, France and Russia.



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# CONCERT

*tourism*

taking over the  
global stage in travel

In the realm of tourism, there exists a fascinating niche where love for melodies transcends borders and passports: concert tourism. With each soaring chorus and electrifying guitar riff, fans of global music icons pack their bags, board planes, and crisscross continents to witness their favourite bands and singers live. It's not just about the music, it's about belonging to something larger than life, an emotion that unites thousands in arenas and stadiums around the world. Concert tourism has rapidly grown into a powerful force, reshaping how people plan their travels and how destinations prepare for these musical pilgrimages.

- Bharti Sharma





### A Ticket to Ride

Whether it's the earth-shattering spectacle of Coldplay's colour-drenched stadium shows or Taylor Swift's deeply personal storytelling wrapped in spectacular performances, modern concerts are much more than a few hours of music. They are cultural phenomena, where the artist's persona, brand, and charisma drive waves of fans to follow them wherever they perform. From Mexico City to Paris, from Tokyo to Berlin, concert-goers are charting global itineraries for the love of live performances.

And this love is no fleeting fad. According to a report by Ticketmaster, concert tourism contributes significantly to global tourism, with 40 per cent of concert attendees traveling from outside the event's host city.

Another report by Eventbrite found that over 25 per cent of attendees at major festivals and concerts are international travellers. For many, it's the culmination of a dream, a way to stand in the presence of an idol they've listened to for years, live and in colour.

### Worth Every Beat

Travelling for a concert is not a casual expenditure. Flights, hotels, food, and transportation all contribute to hefty bills, sometimes far exceeding the price of the concert ticket itself. Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour has seen fans flying across oceans and continents to secure a seat, often spending thousands of dollars. In 2023, a Forbes article highlighted that her North American tour brought an estimated \$4.6 billion to the U.S.

economy, with fans splurging on everything from luxury accommodations to memorabilia. However, for devoted fans, the love for their favourite performers knows no boundaries. The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see their musical hero live makes every expense justifiable. Concert-goers view it as more than just a performance; it's an experience filled with emotional highs, a communal celebration of shared love for the artist and their work.

### High Notes and High Prices

With the massive influx of concert-goers, host cities prepare for a surge akin to national events. Hotels raise their prices, sometimes tripling the rates in the days leading up to and following major performances. Airlines too, are

not far behind, adjusting fares to match demand as throngs of fans fly into cities. It's no coincidence that hotel bookings in Buenos Aires saw a spike of nearly 70 per cent during Coldplay's 2022 world tour stop. Airlines, hoteliers, and local businesses benefit immensely from these musical migrations. According to research by Oxford Economics, in the UK alone, music tourism generated £5.2 billion for the economy in 2022, a figure up 16 per cent from 2019. Cities that host these mega-concerts effectively experience a mini tourism boom, with restaurants, transport services, and local attractions all reaping the rewards. It's a symbiotic relationship where music is the driving force, and cities become playgrounds for a global audience of music lovers.





### Harmony Between Tourism Boards and Music

Recognising the untapped potential of concert tourism, tourism boards around the globe have begun to strategically work toward attracting big-name performers to their cities. These collaborations are much more than just about securing a performance date; they are comprehensive marketing strategies that aim to elevate the city's global profile.

For example, when U2 announced their 2019 Joshua Tree Tour stop in Seoul, the Korea Tourism Organization actively promoted the event to fans across Asia, enticing them with tailored travel

packages. Similarly, the Tourism Authority of Thailand capitalized on K-pop's global appeal, working with event organizers to secure BTS concerts that drew fans from across the world.

By facilitating the logistical aspects of bringing performers to their countries and promoting the concerts to international travellers, tourism boards can enhance their cities' cultural relevance. Some have gone as far as to create dedicated campaigns around major music events, ensuring they are prominently featured in tourism marketing materials. The fusion of tourism and music creates an unforgettable experience for travellers, turning a concert into a full-fledged vacation package.

### A Symphony of Change

Looking back over the last two decades, concert tourism has evolved significantly. In the early 2000s, fans primarily travelled within their own countries to see their favourite bands. Now, thanks to global connectivity, artists like Beyoncé, The Rolling Stones, and Ed Sheeran tour extensively across continents, transforming their concerts into must-attend global events. Fans are no longer constrained by geography; rather, they are driven by the singular desire to be part of a global fan community.

This shift has caused tourism boards to rethink their strategies, with many looking to attract international tourists specifically through large-scale music events. Research by the World Travel & Tourism Council suggests that by 2025, music

tourism will contribute nearly \$12 billion annually to the global economy, driven by increasing interest in mega-concerts and music festivals.

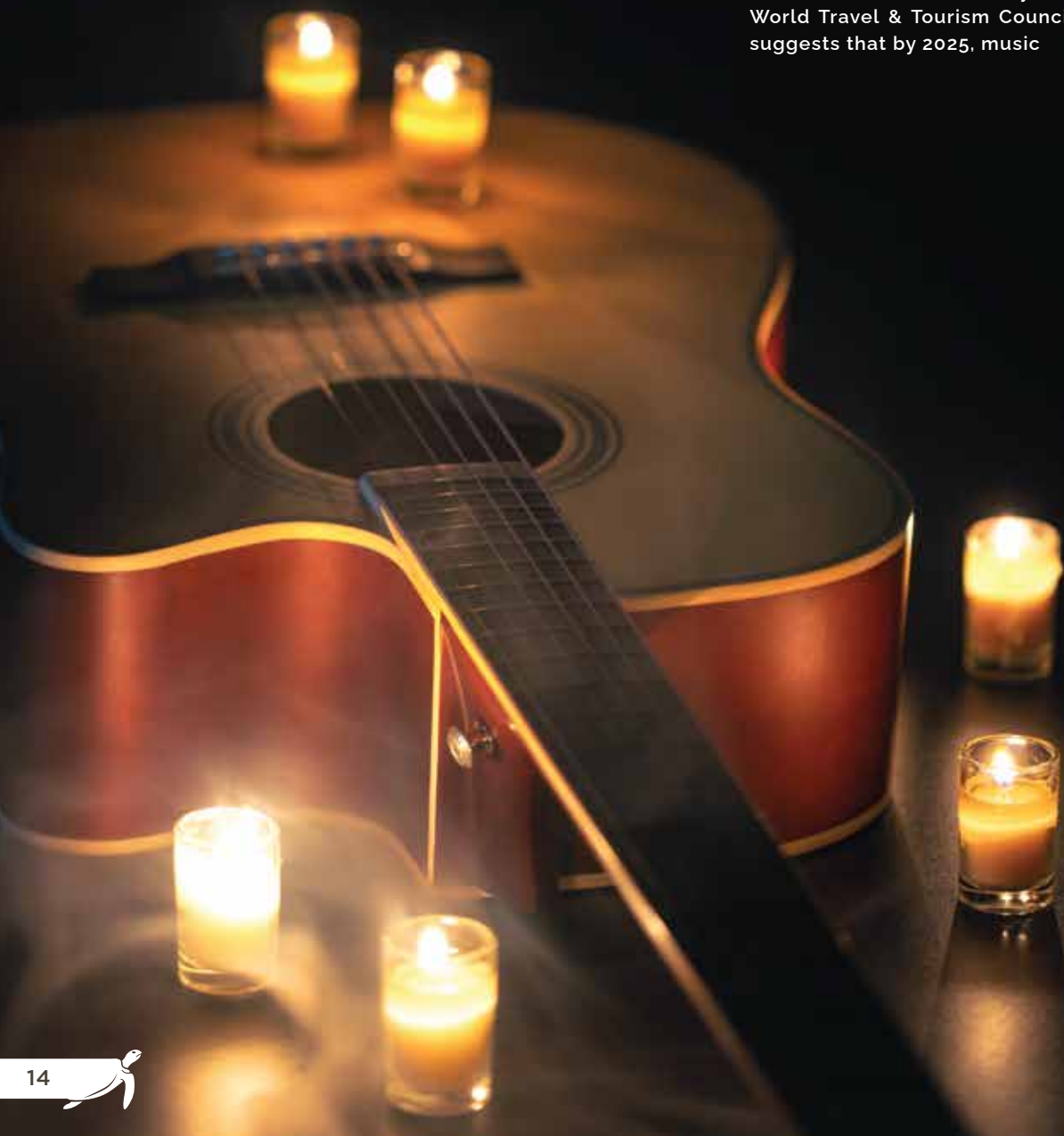
### Striking the Right Chord

The key to fully capitalising on concert tourism lies in creating an ecosystem that entices both the performer and the traveller. To do this, tourism boards need to focus on partnerships with airlines, hoteliers, and event organizers to craft seamless travel experiences. Special travel packages, such as 'music fan passes' or early access to event tickets, can be marketed to fans long before the concert dates. Building strong relationships with the artists' management teams and tour organizers is crucial to secure more stops in a particular city or country.

Cities with existing infrastructure to host large-scale events should also highlight their ability to handle the influx of international visitors. When properly executed, these partnerships elevate the city from just a concert stop to a full-fledged travel destination.

### The Encore

As more people find themselves drawn into the magic of live performances, concert tourism will only continue to grow. The allure of seeing a beloved artist perform in iconic venues, surrounded by thousands of like-minded fans, is irresistible. The world becomes smaller when music is the guiding force, and geography becomes just another variable in a travel plan for the ultimate fan experience. For artists, concert tourism is a testament to the global reach of their music; for cities and tourism boards, it's a goldmine waiting to be tapped. As concert tourism hits its crescendo, it's clear that the love for live music is creating new pathways in travel, merging melodies with miles and turning fan loyalty into a global phenomenon.



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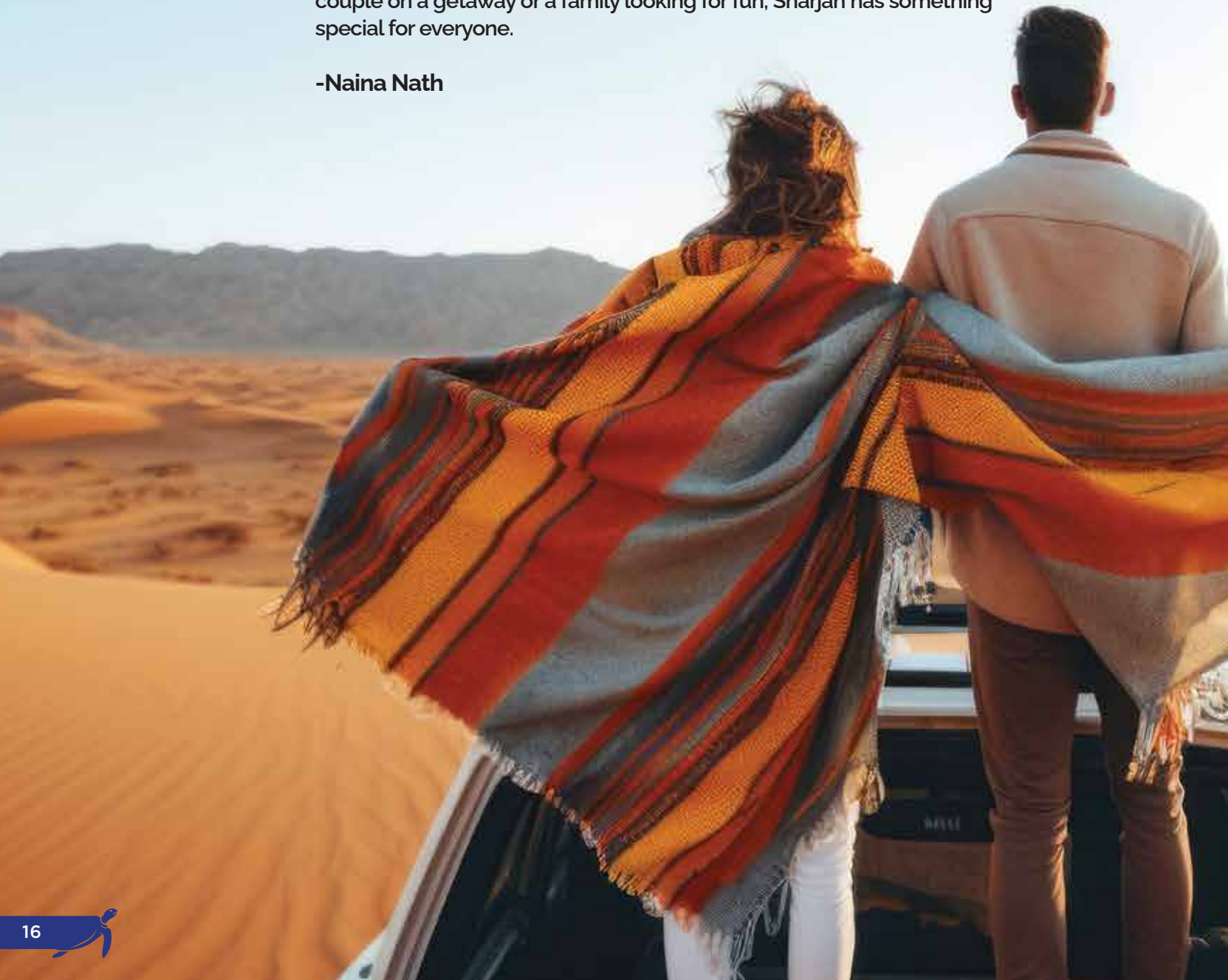


# Sharjah

## *A dream destination!*

Having explored the vibrant city of Sharjah, I can confidently say it's one of the UAE's cultural gems. Whether you're a foodie, an adventure seeker, a couple on a getaway or a family looking for fun, Sharjah has something special for everyone.

**-Naina Nath**





Sharjah truly has something for everyone. Whether you're seeking adventure, culture, or just a fantastic meal, this city's blend of history and modern charm is sure to leave a lasting impression. Whether you're planning a quick getaway or a longer break, I'm sure Sharjah will offer experiences that you won't forget!

### A Taste of Sharjah

One of my favourite dining spots is India Palace Restaurant. The moment you step inside, you're enveloped in the rich aromas of traditional Indian dishes including biryanis and rich curries. I particularly love their kebabs—each bite is a delightful experience! Then there's Beit Setti located in Al Qasba along the Qasba Canal. If you're craving authentic Syrian cuisine, this is the place to be. Beit Setti brings the flavours of Damascus to Sharjah. I still remember enjoying their hommos and salads, while admiring the traditional and nostalgic décor. The manakeesh and shawarmas are must-tries! Another gem is Fen Café & Restaurant, where I discovered an inventive twist on local flavours. Fen Café & Restaurant combines local ingredients with international flavours presenting delectable dishes such as shawarma tacos and saffron risotto in a contemporary setting.

### Where retail meets charm

For shopping, you can't miss the Central Souq, also known as the Blue Souq. This iconic shopping destination is famous for its traditional crafts and jewellery. I spent hours wandering through its vibrant lanes, exploring unique souvenirs, textile and handcrafted items. Mega Mall Sharjah is another favourite shopping destination, especially when I'm looking for a comprehensive shopping experience. With its mix of international brands and diverse dining options, it's the perfect spot for a leisurely day out. If you're in the mood for something upscale, Sahara Centre offers a luxurious shopping experience along with family-friendly amenities. I always enjoy the mix of high-end brands, delightful dining options, and entertainment for all ages, making it a fantastic spot for a complete shopping experience.

### Activities for All Ages

If you have kids, Sharjah Discovery Centre is an absolute must! The little ones have a blast with the interactive science and technology exhibits. It's a fun, educational environment where kids can learn through play. For a full day of excitement, Al Montazah Parks is ideal. With both water rides and traditional amusement park attractions, families can have the best time splashing around and enjoying the picnic areas. For nature lovers and families, the Kalba Birds of Prey and Khor Kalba Conservation Reserve offer a unique experience. We got up close with nature, spotted incredible wildlife, and enjoyed guided tours through the stunning natural habitat.

### For the adrenaline seekers

For an unforgettable adventure, combine dune bashing with a visit to the Mleiha Archaeological Centre.

Experience the thrill of navigating towering dunes, and then explore the centre's guided tours, which offer fossil hunting and quad biking. It's a perfect way to create lasting memories filled with adventure and discovery. If you're looking for something more tranquil, try kayaking at Al Qurm Nature Reserve. Paddling through the serene mangroves and spotting wildlife can feel like a peaceful escape from the city. And for diving enthusiasts, Khorfakkan Bay's clear blue waters feature over seven stunning diving sites. This is a beautiful way to explore the vibrant coral reefs, spot marine life like blacktip reef sharks and turtles, and discover historical sites such as the Inchcape wreck.

### Dive into Sharjah's Heritage

Art lovers will adore the Sharjah Art Foundation, a leading contemporary art hub that features global

exhibitions, workshops, and festivals. I was captivated by the iconic Rain Room installation by random International, where I could walk through rain without getting wet! Previously displayed at MoMA and London's Barbican, it's now permanently housed in Sharjah, making this foundation an incredible destination for art enthusiasts.

The Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization was another highlight of my visit, showcasing an extensive collection of Islamic art and artifacts, including manuscripts, ceramics, and calligraphy. This remarkable collection allowed me to dive deep into the region's rich cultural heritage. Visiting the Heart of Sharjah was a memorable experience, a destination dedicated to preserving the city's historical heritage. Featuring restored traditional buildings, galleries, and markets, it offers insights into Sharjah's past.

### Sharjah Must-Dos

- One of the most magical experiences in Sharjah is the Overnight Desert Safari. Enjoy dune bashing, camel rides, and a traditional Emirati meal under the stars—a unique way to immerse yourself in the desert's beauty.
- I would also recommend the Mleiha Stargazing Experience, where guided tours offer insights into the night sky, creating a peaceful and memorable evening. Pairing it with a desert camp experience, complete with a dune buggy ride and a barbecue meal, can turn any night into a special one.





# Sharjah

## *A rising star for Indian Tourists*

One of the most culturally rich emirates of the UAE is rapidly becoming a top destination for Indian travellers. **Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA), shares insights into how Sharjah is evolving and the role of Indian tourists in its growth.

**-Tripti Jain**





With a growing emphasis on adventure and eco-tourism, the emirate is transforming itself into a hub of natural beauty, adventure activities, and modern infrastructure. The unique blend of cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and rapidly growing tourism infrastructure, the emirate is capturing the attention of the global travel market.

### Sharjah's new frontier

Khalid Jasim Al Midfa began by discussing how Sharjah is positioning itself in the tourism sector, particularly in terms of eco-friendly and adventure-oriented attractions. He shares, "We are making significant advances, particularly in adventure tourism and eco-tourism, which is increasingly popular globally. Sharjah's diverse landscapes, from rugged mountains to serene coastlines, provide ample opportunity for tourists to engage with nature in a sustainable way. The emirate is keen on tapping into this global trend, offering visitors an experience that blends environmental responsibility with adventure."

### A nature lover's paradise

One of the most exciting recent additions to Sharjah's tourism offerings is the Hanging Garden, a nature-centric attraction located on the emirate's East Coast. Boasting vast green areas, flower-laden terraces, and flowing waterfalls, the Hanging Garden is designed to bring visitors closer to nature.

Khalid Jasim Al Midfa shares, "This garden has quickly become a favourite among tourists and tends to be busy except during the summer months. However, visitors can still enjoy indoor amenities such as restaurants and cafes during this time. The garden's outdoor areas are open from September to May, allowing visitors, including many from India, to soak in the natural beauty. For Indian tourists looking for a peaceful, scenic getaway, the Hanging Garden offers a perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of city life."

### Sharjah's growth plan

Sharjah's efforts to attract more visitors don't stop at creating beautiful attractions. Infrastructure development has been a critical part of its strategy. The chairman reveals that Sharjah's focus on

improving accessibility and hospitality has been a major driving force behind its tourism boom and shares, "In the first phase, we connected the area to the city of Sharjah and the rest of the UAE with a world-class road. In the second phase, we established the attractions. Currently, we are focused on building additional hotels. Today, Sharjah offers 11,000 hotel rooms, and more are being added as demand continues to rise. This multi-phase development ensures that tourists can enjoy the attractions with ease while also staying in comfortable accommodations."

### A key market for Sharjah

As Sharjah's tourism grows, India has emerged as a key market. Indian tourists, in particular, have shown great interest in exploring the emirate's unique blend of adventure, culture, and eco-tourism. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa shares, "Our goal this year is to attract around 185,000 Indian tourists. Last year, 165,000 Indian visitors stayed in Sharjah's hotels, and this year's figures are already promising, with 94,000 Indians having visited in the first half of 2024. The SCTDA is committed to strengthening its ties with India and

increasing the number of Indian visitors. We see India as one of our top source markets, and it's very encouraging to see the strong interest in Sharjah from Indian tourists."

### Sharjah's bright future

With on-going projects aimed at enhancing its tourism appeal, including the expansion of Sharjah International Airport to accommodate 25 million passengers by 2026, the emirate is well-prepared to welcome more visitors. The focus on eco-tourism, adventure activities, and luxury experiences is drawing global attention, but Indian tourists, in particular, are playing a significant role in shaping Sharjah's tourism landscape.

Khalid Jasim Al Midfa explains, "Sharjah offers something truly special, and we are excited to welcome more Indian travellers to experience it for themselves. As Sharjah continues to expand its tourism offerings and infrastructure, its appeal to the Indian market is only set to grow, making it a top destination for those seeking a unique and culturally rich experience in the UAE."





*The new dawn of  
luxury travel in Asia*

# SLH



Luxury travel has undergone a significant transformation, particularly in Asia, where travellers are no longer simply looking for opulence but for meaningful, authentic experiences. **Mark Wong, Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific, SLH**, shares about the shifting dynamics of luxury travel and how SLH is uniquely positioned to lead this change.

**- Tripti Jain**







As the middle class continues to grow in countries like India, China, and Southeast Asia, there's been a shift from lavish displays of wealth to more thoughtful and personalised approaches to travel. The rise of boutique hotels, unique cultural experiences, and sustainable practices are now shaping the future of the luxury travel industry.

At the forefront of this evolution is Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH), a carefully curated collection of over 570 independently owned luxury hotels in more than 90 countries. SLH stands out not only for its intimate properties but also for its ability to meet the changing needs of modern luxury travellers.

### The three phases of luxury travel

Mark introduces a fascinating framework to understand how luxury travel has evolved over the last decade. He describes the industry's growth in three phases: pre-luxury, luxury, and post-luxury. He explains, "In the

pre-luxury phase, luxury was aspirational. It was about once-in-a-lifetime experiences, such as honeymoons or milestone celebrations. People would save up to indulge in a grand getaway and showcase it on social media."

This phase was marked by an intense focus on grandiosity, where travellers were eager to stay in five-star hotels, dine at Michelin-starred restaurants, and capture perfect Instagrammable moments. Mark shares, "As the luxury travel sector matured, we entered the second phase, where luxury became a lifestyle. People were no longer traveling for special occasions only; they were integrating luxury into their everyday lives. Regular getaways, quality experiences, and comfort became part of their routine."

However, the most exciting phase, according to Mark is the post-luxury phase, where travellers prioritise privacy, exclusivity, and understated elegance. He shares, "We're seeing a move toward 'quiet luxury'—a more

refined form of luxury that's not about being loud or flashy. Travellers today want craftsmanship, attention to detail, and experiences that are immersive and personal, without the need for showy displays of wealth."

This trend, which Mark refers to as quiet luxury, is characterised by discreet indulgence. It's about celebrating authenticity, quality, and connection. SLH's portfolio of small, characterful properties embodies this ethos, offering guests deeply personalised stays that emphasise privacy and intimate experiences over extravagance.

### Redefining opulence for today's traveller

The concept of quiet luxury resonates deeply with the discerning travellers of today, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. There is an increasing desire for intimate, meaningful experiences over the over-commercialised and crowded luxury resorts of the

past. Mark believes that SLH is perfectly positioned to meet these evolving preferences.

"Luxury travellers, especially in Asia, are now looking for privacy, exclusivity, and craftsmanship. They want to escape the masses and find places that offer authentic connections to the destination," he shares.

SLH's properties, such as Keemala in Thailand or Suryagarh in India, embody the concept of quiet luxury. These boutique hotels offer seclusion, exceptional service, and a deep sense of place. "It's about creating a space where guests can unwind and truly immerse themselves in their surroundings, without the distractions of branding or unnecessary fanfare."

Mark also points out that this shift is not just about choosing a hotel based on its brand but selecting it based on its story and its connection to the destination. He shares, "Travellers today want an experience that reflects the local culture and heritage. They want something that feels personal and unique, not mass-produced."





### The considerate collection

Another key trend shaping the future of luxury travel is the growing focus on sustainability. Today's travellers are more conscious of their environmental footprint and are seeking out brands and hotels that share their values. SLH has responded to this demand by launching the Considerate Collection in 2021, a selection of hotels committed to eco-friendly and community-focused practices. Mark explains, "The Considerate Collection is something we're incredibly proud of. It was born out of the idea that luxury and sustainability can coexist. Travellers shouldn't have to choose between an incredible luxury experience and being kind to the planet."

The Considerate Collection now includes 61 hotels globally, with several properties in the Asia-Pacific region, such as The Pavilions Himalayas in Nepal and Wa Ale Island Resort in Myanmar. These hotels go beyond simple eco-friendly measures, with many focusing on protecting cultural heritage and supporting local communities.

"At SLH, we look at sustainability through three lenses: environmentally conscious

practices, cultural preservation, and community involvement. We want our hotels to not only reduce their environmental impact but also contribute positively to their surroundings," he adds.

SLH has also taken steps to improve sustainability throughout its entire portfolio, providing resources, webinars, and guidance to its member hotels. Mark shares, "Many of our member hotels are small, independent properties that may not have the resources of large chains. We support them in their sustainability journey, whether that's through advice on energy efficiency or helping them source local products."

### Tailoring experiences to different markets

One of SLH's greatest strengths is its ability to cater to travellers from diverse cultural backgrounds, each with its own preferences and expectations. The Asia-Pacific market is particularly dynamic, with travellers from countries like India, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia all seeking different experiences.

Mark shares, "We work very closely with our member hotels to ensure they understand the needs of travellers from different countries. For example, Indian travellers often

travel in multigenerational groups and look for hotels that can accommodate their family's needs, while Japanese travellers may prioritise privacy and wellness."

SLH places a strong emphasis on personalised service. Each year, a rigorous quality assessment process known as mystery inspections is conducted at every SLH property to ensure that the highest standards are maintained. This level of quality control is a key differentiator for SLH, setting it apart from other luxury hotel collections.

Mark explains, "We're not just about luxury for the sake of luxury. We listen to our guests and tailor our offerings to meet their needs. This is why we've introduced new products like the Private Collection, which offers exclusive group and family experiences, and the Considerate Collection, which responds to the growing demand for sustainability."

### What the future holds!

As we look ahead, the future of luxury travel in Asia is bright, with several key trends expected to shape the industry. Mark predicts

that slow travel, a movement focused on taking time to truly experience a destination rather than rushing from place to place, will become more prevalent.

"Slow travel is something we're seeing more. Travellers want to take their time, savour each moment, and really connect with a place. This is something that's very much in line with our ethos at SLH," says Mark.

He also believes that sustainability will continue to be a major driver of change in the industry. "We're committed to raising the bar when it comes to sustainability. Our goal is to ensure that every SLH property meets a certain level of sustainable practices."

Lastly, Mark highlights the importance of innovation. "The world of luxury travel is constantly evolving. Our role at SLH is to stay ahead of the curve and continue offering experiences that resonate with today's luxury traveller. Whether that's through new partnerships, unique hotel additions, or a stronger focus on wellness and privacy, we're always looking for ways to innovate."







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# Welcoming ZIMBABWE To India



Tongai M Mhangagwa

Imagine standing before the majestic Victoria Falls, the thundering roar of cascading water filling the air, or gazing at the ancient ruins of Great Zimbabwe. A land of striking contrasts and unspoiled beauty, offers a journey that touches the soul. Tongai M Mhangagwa, Honorable Deputy Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Zimbabwe shares his perspective on expanding tourism.

- Naina Nath





From witnessing the Big Five on a thrilling safari to feeling the adrenaline rush of bungee jumping, this southern African gem invites travellers to experience adventure like never before. With a growing interest in the Indian market, Zimbabwe opens its arms to Indian travellers, offering not just a vacation, but an unforgettable, personal adventure into Africa's heart.

This visit marks his first time in India, with a focus on strengthening tourism connections between the two nations. While this trip was centered solely in Mumbai, the Minister plans to expand to other cities, such as New Delhi, in future promotions. Zimbabwe tourism representatives were here because they believe that the market is here. India has a growing significance in Zimbabwe's tourism efforts.

### Zimbabwe's Tourism is on the Rise

The Deputy Minister shared positive insights about the current performance of Zimbabwe's tourism sector, now the third-largest contributor to its economy. With a target of reaching a \$5 billion tourism economy, the country is witnessing rapid growth—Indian visitors alone increased by 13 per cent. He credited this success to substantial government investments in infrastructure and improved connectivity and shares, "It's now easier to visit, and we've got stunning airports to welcome you."

### Expanding hospitality offerings

Zimbabwe's hospitality sector is thriving, with international hotel giants such as Hyatt Hotels and Holiday Inn (IHG) making their mark, alongside well-established local brands. He shares emphasising on the country's dedication to delivering top of the line experiences to all travellers, "We offer something for everyone, whether you're on a budget or seeking luxury."

### Creative marketing efforts

To capture India's attention, Zimbabwe has rolled out a range of innovative marketing campaigns, such as inviting Indian travel



professionals for familiarization tours and amplifying Zimbabwe's attractions through media exposure. Plans for billboard advertisements across Indian cities and partnerships with local travel agents will further boost visibility. "Collaboration is the key to success," he adds, recognising the power of strong alliances.

### Smoother travel, enhanced connectivity

Exciting news for Indian travellers—Zimbabwe has simplified its visa process, offering visas on arrival. With affordable single-entry and double-entry options, this move is expected to significantly ease travel. The Minister also mentions, "The increased airline connectivity, with Emirates, Qatar, and Ethiopian Airlines providing convenient access. Our airport infrastructure meets global standards."

### New attractions on the horizon

Zimbabwe is focusing on new ventures in sports and wellness tourism, including plans to co-host the 2028 Cricket World Cup and the construction of a multi-purpose international cricket stadium. The Minister reveals, "Victoria Falls will soon welcome a medical tourism hotel, blending wellness with breath-taking scenery. It'll be a major multi-purpose facility."

### Unforgettable adventures

When asked about top Zimbabwean experiences, the Deputy Minister was quick to recommend must-see

spots. Visitors should not miss the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls, the ancient Great Zimbabwe ruins, and the chance to witness the Big Five in their natural habitat. He shares spots for adrenaline junkies, "I would suggest bungee jumping and zip-lining, promising a Zimbabwean adventure you won't forget. We invite Indian travellers to come and experience it all."

### Safe, Accessible, and Welcoming

Addressing concerns about safety, particularly for solo women travellers, the Minister assures and says, "Zimbabwe is one of the safest destinations in the world. With public transport options such as in-drive, similar to Uber, he emphasised the importance of safety and convenience for all visitors. Zimbabwean

infrastructure is also wheelchair-friendly, catering to diverse traveller demographics, including families, solo women travellers and older individuals."

### Sustainability and Innovation

"We're a progressive and responsible destination. Zimbabwe is committed to sustainability, working closely with the Environmental Management Agency to ensure eco-friendly tourism practices. The country is also integrating technology, including AI to enhance the travel experience," says the Minister. The Deputy Minister extends a heartfelt invitation to the Indian travel industry. "Come to Zimbabwe. We're ready to host you and share our culture, our heritage, and unforgettable experiences," he shares.







# Vietnam Airlines

## The complete package of comfort!

In a world where travel has become more accessible and global connections continue to strengthen, Vietnam Airlines is soaring high, embracing the Indian market with a renewed sense of purpose. Nguyen Trung Hieu, Country Manager India, Vietnam Airlines, shares insights into the airline's journey.

- Tripti Jain



Nguyen Trung Hieu







The national carrier of Vietnam has made substantial strides in the Indian travel space, recognising the immense potential India holds as a rapidly growing outbound market. With the recent introduction of the Airbus A350 on key routes between India and Vietnam, the airline is positioning itself to cater to the burgeoning demand.

### A growing affinity between India and Vietnam

The bond between India and Vietnam is one that goes beyond trade. There's a cultural resonance, a shared appreciation for history, and a mutual curiosity about each other's landscapes and traditions. This deepening relationship is reflected in the rising number of Indian travellers choosing Vietnam as their destination. Hieu explains, "India is one of our most important markets. We see a growing interest in Vietnam not just for its stunning landscapes but also for business opportunities. The Indian traveller is curious and adventurous, and Vietnam offers a diverse palette – from the serene beaches of Phu Quoc to the bustling streets of Hanoi. This market holds incredible potential, and we're committed to building on the strong connection that already exists between our two nations." Vietnam was reported as the 'Most Searched Destination for Indians in 2023' according to Google Trends, a clear indication of how the country has captured the imagination of Indian travellers. The ease of connectivity and the growth of Vietnam Airlines'

network have only made the destination more accessible.

### Expanding horizons with the Airbus A350

One of the key milestones in Vietnam Airlines' India strategy has been the introduction of the Airbus A350 aircraft on routes connecting Delhi and Mumbai with Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The A350, known for its spacious cabins and advanced features, marks a significant step towards enhancing the travel experience for passengers. Hieu believes that this move will unlock even greater growth in passenger volumes from India. He shares, "The Airbus A350 represents not just a technological upgrade but also our commitment to offering the best to our passengers. With increased capacity and state-of-the-art amenities, we expect to see a substantial increase in Indian travellers. We're looking at XX per cent growth in passenger numbers from India in the next few years, thanks to the increased demand for direct flights and the premium experience that this aircraft offers."

This strategic expansion, with 14 weekly flights from Delhi and Mumbai, positions Vietnam Airlines as a strong player in connecting the two countries. The airline is also exploring potential connections with other major Indian cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai in the future.

### Creating memorable experiences in the skies

For Vietnam Airlines, it's not just about getting passengers from one destination to another; it's about

making the journey itself a memorable experience. Known for its impeccable in-flight service and award-winning hospitality, the airline ensures that every touch point reflects Vietnamese warmth and tradition. "At Vietnam Airlines, we take pride in offering a uniquely Vietnamese experience from the moment a passenger boards our flights. Our carefully curated menu, featuring both Vietnamese and international cuisine, reflects our dedication to culinary excellence. The A350's spacious and luxurious interiors, coupled with our world-class service, make the journey as special as the destination," shares Hieu.

This focus on comfort and luxury is further emphasised by the airline's recognition as a Skytrax 4-Star airline and its membership in the prestigious SkyTeam global airline alliance. Vietnam Airlines is also ranked among the top 20 airlines in the world for service quality, a testament to its commitment to enhancing the passenger experience.

### A strategic approach to growth in India

Vietnam Airlines' marketing strategy in India is multifaceted, leveraging digital platforms, influencer partnerships, and collaborations with hospitality brands. The airline also maintains a strong presence at key travel expos, reinforcing its brand visibility among Indian consumers. Hieu elaborates on the airline's approach and shares, "Our strategy in India is cantered around building long-term relationships

with our travellers. We're actively engaging in joint promotions with hotels and travel agencies, as well as collaborating with influencers to showcase the beauty of Vietnam. Additionally, our participation in travel expos allows us to directly connect with potential customers and showcase what makes Vietnam Airlines special."

Special promotional fares and tailor-made travel packages further entice Indian travellers, who are increasingly seeking unique, immersive experiences. By offering a seamless travel experience from booking to boarding, Vietnam Airlines is effectively meeting the needs of the modern Indian traveller.

### A bright future

As Vietnam Airlines continues to expand its footprint in India, the future looks promising. With plans to introduce more routes, increase flight frequencies, and invest in the latest aircraft, the airline is on track to becoming the preferred carrier for Indian travellers bound for Vietnam.

"We are excited about what the future holds. India's potential as a market is immense, and we are here for the long run. Our aim is not just to transport passengers but to create unforgettable experiences that reflect the spirit of Vietnam," concludes Hieu.

As the skies between India and Vietnam become even busier, Vietnam Airlines stands at the forefront, bridging cultures, enhancing connectivity, and offering Indian travellers an unparalleled experience.



# Bintan

## Singapore's Hidden Gem

The other day I was sitting in our boardroom, surrounded by my team, and someone casually mentioned a Bintan Fam tour. I've heard about Bintan Resort's sprawling island spread across 18,000 hectares with 19 lavish resorts, my brain immediately whispered, "Get up, it's time to pack that luggage again!"

- Harish Chandra







With visions of glistening beaches, untouched mangroves, and peaceful hideaways, this tranquil haven, just a ferry ride away from Singapore, promised to be a perfect escape from my rather hectic work schedule.

### Changi Airport: The crown jewel

The journey kicked off in style with a business class flight on Air India—because if you're going to explore paradise, might as well do it comfortably, right? We landed in Singapore, and as I wandered through Changi Airport, I stumbled upon the aptly named Jewel. I'm not kidding; it's like stepping into a futuristic, nature-themed mall. This 135,700-square-meter wonderland is a glorious mix of shopping, tech, food (and more food), and stunning sights. Plus, it has early check-in facilities, a lifesaver for travellers like me who can't wait to drop off bags and get exploring.

Jewel is packed with attractions for every age: Canopy Park for the adventurous, bouncing nets for the child in you, and hedge mazes if you're into getting lost in style. And don't get me started on the food! Indian food lovers rejoice—Sankranti is your go-to spot for a curry fix. I had grabbed a thali before hopping onto the ferry. Hey! Have you ever been on a

ferry? If not, then picture this: a big boat with comfy seats, an ocean breeze, and a little adventure vibe to spice things up. It's just an hour-long ride, but it feels like you're sailing into another world! After a seamless transfer from Changi to the Keberangkatan Ferry Terminal (currently getting a facelift, by the way), we boarded the ferry to Bintan.

### The Luxury tent life!

Natra Bintan, a Marriott Bonvoy property was our first stop. Though I'm no stranger to the outdoors, this place takes camping to a whole new level. Air-conditioned tents? Check. Surrounded by nature? Double check; add to that Southeast Asia's largest man-made seawater lagoon (you heard that right), and you've got yourself the ultimate mix of luxury and adventure. Water sports abound, and while others splashed around, I lounged in pure bliss. Two nights of this and I felt like a brand-new person.

Next, we moved to Grand Lagoi—another property that was charming beyond words. For dinner, our hosts took us to Nirwana Resort, nestled by the South China Sea. This place is a seafood lover's paradise. 'Delicious' would be a small word for The Red and Black Carab Curry. Trust me, you'll dream about it long after you've left.





## Landmark moments for Bintan Tourism

The next day, I was a part of something that promises big things for Bintan tourism—the signing of a Destination Marketing Partnership Agreement between Bintan Resorts and VFS Global. "We are excited to partner with VFS Global to introduce the beauty and charm of Bintan Island to the Indian market," said Abdul Wahab, Chief Operating Officer, Bintan Resorts. This MOU is set to bring even more Indian travellers to this island, and let's just say I felt like I was at the forefront of something huge. The signing ceremony at Grand Lagoi was attended by key stakeholders, such as, Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister for Marketing, Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia; Guntur Sakti, Head of Tourism Office of the Riau Islands Province; Robby Kurniawan, Head of Bintan Regency; Arief Sumarsono, Head of Tourism Office Bintan Regency, Bintan Resorts Council, along with other key figures from the travel and tourism industry.

## Scouring through Bintan Island

During our stay, we visited a few iconic properties. Mövenpick's in its final stages of opening, and with 500-plus rooms and villas, it's going to be a game-changer. Then there's Banyan Tree, Four Points by Sheraton, and Cassia—all stunning properties offering unique experiences. Cassia, in particular, won my heart with its Indian cuisine, thanks to the culinary wizardry of Chef Mohan Singh.

Being a golf enthusiast, I couldn't resist a visit to the Ria Bintan Golf Club, one of Asia's top golf destinations. As I stood there, admiring the lush greens, I mentally added it to my list of best golf courses in the world. Early morning runs on Bintan's peaceful roads and parks were another highlight—this island has something for every kind of traveller.

No trip to Bintan would be complete without a nature tour, so we hopped on a boat and cruised through the award-winning Bintan Mangrove. Spotting mangrove snakes and monitor lizards was thrilling, and the calm, crystal-clear waters made it feel like a world away from the hustle of everyday life.







### Bintan beyond its natural beauty

Bintan may be peaceful, but don't be fooled—it knows how to party too. We joined the crowd at Tidal Bar in Lagoi Bay for a night of dancing and fun. The DJ was on fire and the crowd? A perfect mix of partygoers from around the world. If you're lucky enough to visit on the last Saturday of the month, you'll get to witness a fireworks display that will leave you in awe.

Beyond the resorts and beaches, Bintan's cultural side is just as captivating. We visited Buddhist temples like Vihara Avalokitesvara Graha and Vihara Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, which are worth a trip for their stunning sculptures and spiritual aura. If you're a history buff, don't miss a visit to Tanjungpinang, Bintan's old city, where Indonesian cuisine reigns supreme.

Before heading back to Singapore, we made a stop at Doulos Phos, a century-old ship turned into a Ship hotel. Titanic may get all the fame, but this ship was built just two years later. With its charming cabins and sea views, Doulos Phos offers a taste of maritime history with modern comfort.

As we boarded the ferry back to Singapore, I couldn't help but feel a pang of nostalgia. Bintan had offered me four days of pure relaxation, adventure, and a touch of history. While some of my team members headed straight to the airport, I stayed behind for a bit more time in Singapore. But Bintan? It's a place I'll be dreaming about for a long time.





## Bathing Dates

- |                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Paush Purnima                    | - 13 <sup>th</sup> January, 2025  |
| 2. Makar Sankranti (1st Shahi Snan) | - 14 <sup>th</sup> January, 2025  |
| 3. Mauni Amavasya (2nd Shahi Snan)  | - 29 <sup>th</sup> January, 2025  |
| 4. Basant Panchami (3rd Shahi Snan) | - 03 <sup>rd</sup> February, 2025 |
| 5. Achala Saptami                   | - 04 <sup>th</sup> February, 2025 |
| 6. Magh Purnima                     | - 12 <sup>th</sup> February, 2025 |
| 7. Shri Mahashivratri               | - 26 <sup>th</sup> February, 2025 |

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TRAVEL THERAPY

# Wellington well done!

Nestled amphitheatre-style between a harbour and forested hills, Wellington is located at the country's epicentre, and proclaims itself to be New Zealand's ultimate urban destination.

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia





## TRAVEL THERAPY



From my wind-swept perch on Mount Victoria, I felt the world itself was at my feet. It was a view to fight for. Below me the terrain appeared as part of a grid map. At one go I'd got a visual feel for the city and taken in its geographical details! I felt kind of, at home.

To my left downtown area with its crowded streets and high-rise skyline dominated. To my right, the bay stretched in a lazy curve, and behind me it was more of the same. Just below the lookout point, a solitary canon stood staring defiantly out to sea. Things would have been near perfect but for the scalpel-type wind.

The national capital, it is also replete with national treasures, museums, galleries, excellent shopping and gastronomic experiences, and national icons such as the Parliament Buildings and Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand.

An exciting downtown shopping experience is only minutes away from a peaceful walk through native bush or along a golden sand beach. In fact, wild life and

nature's attractions lurk right on its doorstep. Compact, and easy to walk around in, the city, nevertheless, has the stimulation and sophistication of a big, cosmopolitan-flavoured metro.

Literally having set foot in the city, my escort Peter Reilly deposited me at Te Papa, an experience as educative as it was enjoyable. First on the agenda was the Matariki Starlab session at the museum's PlaNet Pasifika Discovery Centre, where the host walked us through the galaxy, explaining the wonder that's Matariki. I then literally 'went to town' and explored the whole museum. New Zealand's largest cultural attraction, Te Papa is a showcase of national treasures, revealing the nation's stories through a provocative and entertaining exhibition of the past, present and future. Talk about 'instant' orientation!

While on the subject of museums, invest some time and stop by at The Museum of Wellington City and Sea on Queen's Wharf. You'll feel it was time well spent.

My hosts hadn't quite finished with me yet. Determined to acquaint me with Matariki's myriad features, Peter drove me to the Carter Observatory for another, more detailed view of the stars. In half a day, I'd become an instant authority on the galaxy. But the observatory apart, the views from up there are staggering.

An affable sort, Peter was a perfect escort. He knew the city like the back of his hand, was easy and accommodating, and significantly, liked food. My city stay was punctuated by being driven around, lounging at theme cafes, and occasionally stretching our legs. It was the kind of drill one gets to like.

The next day, early morning saw me out on the streets before my hosts 'got' me and I enjoyed my freedom by doing a little 'walkabout'. A shot of rich, black espresso from a sidewalk coffee cart set things rolling for what turned out to be another enjoyable day, the rain notwithstanding.





## TRAVEL THERAPY

To feel the local buzz, the place to be at is the harbour side. The morning sunshine was still mellow when we landed up. Queen's Wharf is the core and action hub of the waterfront area, with animated cafes, bars, restaurants and shops, and scores of prime berthing spots. If you're inclined, kayaking and boating are available. We walked the sea-face and felt the spray in our faces. Facing Te Papa is 'The C&A Odlin Timber & Hardware Co Ltd' building, a historic, restored structure. It was a wonderful walk, educative, bracing, and thoroughly enjoyable.

There's this food legacy they like to talk about here, thanks in part to the fact that Wellington is home to over 300 cafes and restaurants – more per head than New York. From silver service to cheap eats, you're well served in this melting-pot of flavours that reflect the city's cultural diversity. Cohabiting deliciously, are Japanese, Chinese, Turkish, Indian, Greek and Malaysian cuisines. With cafes competing to impress the connoisseur, the city's also renowned for good coffee.

Having heard about it, there was no way I was going to miss stopping by at Chocolate Fish Café, a local jewel and hotspot, which became the favourite hangout of the Hollywood

stars and movie crew of 'The Lord of the Rings' fame. We drove there, leaving the harbour area, traversing a hilly road that looked down on the city, turning several bends, before descending to sea level again. The quirky café sports an easy, elegant ambience, has its private beach, and commands a fine view of Scorching Bay and the sea.

Scorching Bay itself is beautiful and quite the perfect place to take brunch by the sea and watch the inter-island ferries depart and the dolphins arrive. I would have loved to have lingered on here, but time was short and we had things to do.

Lest I forgot I was in the national capital, Peter then took me to visit the Parliament Buildings. Located in the historic suburb of Thorndon, the large complex comprises three architecturally distinctive buildings of note – the Edwardian neo-classical Parliament House; the unique 1970's-style Beehive Building; and the Victorian Gothic Parliamentary Library.

Wellington has an instinct for arts, culture and heritage. From classical to Cuban, Elgar and high drama to downtown funk, music suffuses the atmosphere. You can rock your socks off at dance clubs in Courtenay Quarter, the entertainment district. There are



world-class auditoriums like the Michael Fowler Centre, and excellent professional theatres like the Westpac St James Theatre and the Opera House.

Compact and bursting, there are shopping options galore. From high-fashion to bohemian, there's a shop for everyone, and most thrive in a few square kilometres, making an exciting and convenient retail experience. Kirkcaldie and Stains, the city's premium department store, is the flagship around which the best names in international high-street retailing have gathered. From the Old Bank building to the top of Willis Street, it's a fresh boutique experience. Boutiques also fill the gaps on Woodward Street, Victoria Street and Little Cuba Mall.

An intrepid 4WD journey courtesy 'Seal Coast Safari', through Wellington's rugged back blocks

and out to its wild South Coast, gave me an experience of nature at our doorstep. My guide, John and I wound our way through hilly farmland populated by wild horses, ostrich, deer, wild goats, and hobbit hangouts, past a giant wind turbine, ending up at South Coast that sports beautiful views of Cook Strait, and is home to a New Zealand Fur Seal colony.

Out at sea, the inter-island ferry happened to be passing by, a sleek vessel gliding along through seas that seemed to be getting choppy by the minute.

Braving a typhoon-type wind, we had tea and cookies at the seal colony, and stared out at the leaning lighthouse that looked like being blown over any moment. 'It's a local symbol' John explained, tossing me a muffin.

It had been a perfect day in a city blessed with everything a city could desire! Oh well...!



### 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.

### Facts to remember

- Wellington's connected with several destinations by air.
- Being located at the southern tip of New Zealand's North Island makes it the ideal 'hopping-off' point for visits to South Island.
- You can commute by taxi or bus, but most tourist sites are walking distance from one another.
- The accommodation range comprises everything from deluxe hotels to standard ones, motels and home stays.
- Eating out is easy and exciting, with a vast international cuisine choice
- The city's vibrant nightlife is best experienced in its bars and cafes.
- Wellington is a year-round destination.





# Destination Wedding

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# A journey towards a better future!

Uttar Pradesh, a state rich in culture, history, and natural beauty, welcomes millions of tourists each year. From the spiritual embrace of Varanasi to the architectural wonders of Agra, the state offers a diverse range of experiences.

As this influx of visitors continues, so does the need for responsible tourism—one that ensures the preservation of Uttar Pradesh's treasures while benefiting local communities. Responsible tourism isn't just about limiting harm; it's about fostering a deeper connection between travellers and the places they visit, promoting sustainability, and making travel more meaningful.

## Preserving cultural and natural heritage

Uttar Pradesh is home to some of India's most cherished cultural landmarks. The Taj Mahal, a symbol of eternal love, attracts visitors from all corners of the globe. However, the sheer volume of tourists poses challenges, from environmental degradation to overcrowding. Responsible tourism efforts in the region focus on protecting these invaluable sites by encouraging visitors to be mindful of their impact.

The state's national parks and wildlife reserves, such as Dudhwa and Chambal, are also important ecosystems that need protection.

Eco-tourism initiatives are gaining momentum, offering travellers a chance to experience these natural wonders in a way that leaves minimal ecological footprints. Guided wildlife tours are designed to educate visitors about the importance of biodiversity while ensuring that the habitats of the state's rich flora and fauna remain undisturbed.

## Empowering local communities

One of the most beautiful aspects of responsible tourism in Uttar Pradesh is its role in uplifting local communities. Travel is no longer just about sightseeing; it's about engaging with the people who make these places come alive. Rural tourism programs are gaining popularity, offering visitors a glimpse into the daily lives of local villagers. Whether it's staying in traditional homestays or

learning about indigenous crafts, tourists contribute directly to the livelihoods of rural families. In cities such as Varanasi and Lucknow, artisans often invite visitors to witness the intricate processes behind Banarasi silk weaving or chikankari embroidery. By purchasing local goods, tourists help preserve these centuries-old crafts while supporting the artisans who rely on this income. The interaction becomes more than just a transaction—it's a cultural exchange that leaves both sides enriched.

## Sustainable travel practices

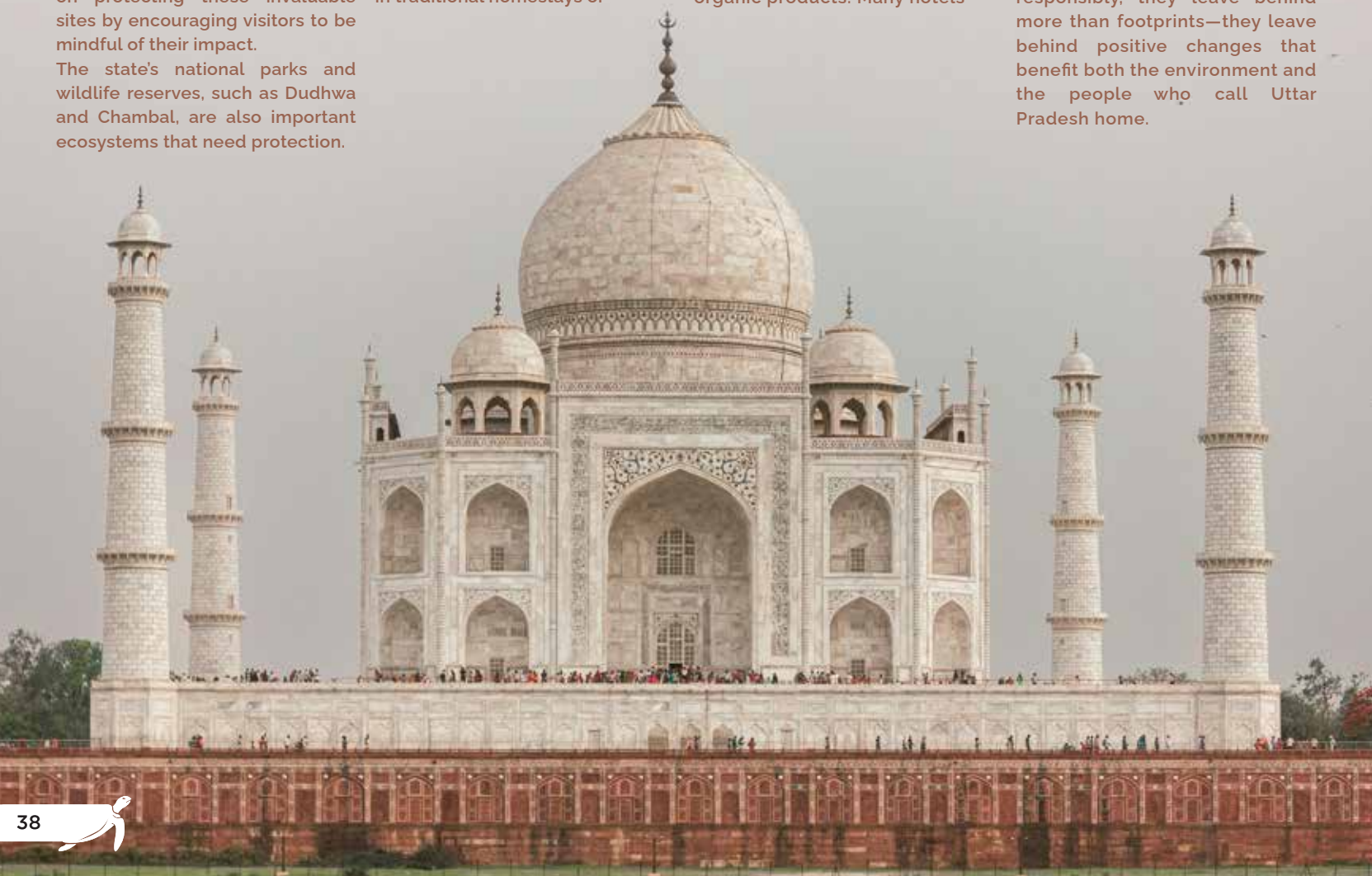
Sustainability is the backbone of responsible tourism, and Uttar Pradesh is working to make this a reality. The state is encouraging eco-friendly practices, such as reducing single-use plastics and promoting the use of local, organic products. Many hotels

and resorts now offer eco-conscious accommodations, using solar power and rainwater harvesting to reduce their environmental impact.

The Clean Ganga project, aimed at reducing pollution in the sacred river, is another key initiative. Tourists are encouraged to contribute by keeping the river clean, avoiding harmful practices, and participating in clean-up efforts. These actions help preserve not just the water but the deep spiritual connection that millions of people have with the Ganga.

## A collective responsibility

Responsible tourism in Uttar Pradesh is about more than protecting monuments and ecosystems; it's about preserving the spirit of the state itself. When travellers choose to act responsibly, they leave behind more than footprints—they leave behind positive changes that benefit both the environment and the people who call Uttar Pradesh home.





# Mahakumbh 2025

## A global gathering of faith

As the dawn of 2025 approaches, anticipation for the Mahakumbh Mela—the grandest of all religious gatherings—builds to a crescendo.

Held once every twelve years at Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad), this spiritual event draws millions of pilgrims, saints, and tourists from across the world. It's not just a congregation; it's a soul-stirring journey for devotees seeking salvation. Behind the scenes, the Uttar Pradesh government is pulling all stops to ensure that Mahakumbh 2025 is not only smooth and safe but also an experience to remember.

### Spirituality meets faith

Mahakumbh Mela is one of India's most significant cultural and spiritual spectacles. It traces its roots to Hindu mythology, where the gods and demons fought over a pot (kumbh) of amrita (nectar of immortality). According to legend, during this battle, drops of the nectar fell at four different locations in India—Haridwar, Ujjain, Nashik, and Prayagraj—making these sites holy. Mahakumbh at Prayagraj is the most sacred and grandiose of the Kumbh Melas, drawing millions of people for the holy dip in the confluence of the

Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati rivers.

The beauty of Mahakumbh lies not only in the spiritual cleansing but also in the vibrancy of cultural exchanges. For many, it's an opportunity to witness centuries-old traditions, interact with sages and ascetics, and experience the deeper essence of India.

### Paving the path to divinity

The Uttar Pradesh government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, is leaving no stone unturned in its preparations for Mahakumbh 2025. The state has embarked on an ambitious project, investing heavily in infrastructure, safety, and amenities to cater to the massive influx of pilgrims and tourists.

### Expanding infrastructure

One of the key focus areas for the government is improving connectivity. The Prayagraj airport is being upgraded, with enhanced

flight services to cater to international visitors. Additionally, road networks leading to the city are being expanded, and railway services are set to increase with special trains, ensuring smooth transportation for all.

Within the city, a smart city project is in progress. The creation of temporary tent cities, well-equipped with modern facilities, will accommodate lakhs of devotees, ensuring they have access to clean water, electricity, sanitation, and medical services.

### Focus on safety and security

Given the massive scale of the event, safety and security are paramount. The Uttar Pradesh government is implementing a multi-layered security strategy. Surveillance cameras, facial recognition technology, and artificial intelligence will monitor crowd movements, ensuring the safety of all attendees. Emergency response teams will be stationed

across the city, with medical facilities equipped to handle any health concerns or outbreaks.

### Enhancing the pilgrims' experience

The government is equally focused on making the spiritual experience more seamless for pilgrims. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department is developing mobile apps to provide real-time information on crowd density, routes, bathing schedules, and emergency services. Volunteers will assist elderly pilgrims, and specialised help desks will be set up for international tourists.

### A spiritual legacy in the making

Mahakumbh 2025 is not just an event; it's an example to faith, tradition, and the unyielding spirit of millions who gather to celebrate life's deeper meanings. With the Uttar Pradesh government's robust planning and initiatives, this edition promises to be a landmark in the history of the Kumbh Mela.





# A Grand Celebration of Heritage

## 11th IHHA Annual Convention

Set against the serene backdrop of INDeco Hotels Swamimalai, Tamil Nadu, the 11th Convention of the Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) was a remarkable gathering. The two-day event, held from 19th to 20th September 2024, celebrated the rich tapestry of India's heritage hotels and brought together visionaries and leaders under one roof. From the graceful inauguration by HH Maharaja Gaj Singh Ji II to the stirring speech by Shri K. Lakshminarayanan, the convention was alive with passion and pride for India's cultural legacy. Vibrant cultural performances, gourmet dining under the stars, and stimulating discussions on the future of heritage tourism created an atmosphere of camaraderie and inspiration. The event was not just a meeting—it was a celebration of the past, present, and future of India's timeless heritage.





# TOFTigers Wildlife Travel AWARDS 2024



© Rohit Varma

**CELEBRATING HARMONY:  
FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE TOURISM  
THROUGH INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION**

## NOMINATE NOW FOR 13 AWARDS



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Nominations closing midnight 15th October 2024.



### Celebrating 20th Anniversary

TOFTigers, in partnership with The Sanctuary Nature Foundation and Outlook Traveller, announces the 7th Wildlife Tourism Awards. Under the theme *"Celebrating Harmony: Fostering Sustainable Wildlife Tourism through Innovation and Collaboration,"* the Awards recognize eco-lodges, wildlife guides, tourism operators, community initiatives, photography & documentary experts and Climate guardians in India and Nepal for their leadership in sustainable tourism and conservation. *With over 200 global members,* TOFTigers continues to drive a vision where tourism actively supports the preservation of wildlife and natural heritage.

Supported by

**Sanctuary**  
NATURE FOUNDATION

In association with

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**TRAVELLER**



### THE AWARDS CATEGORIES 2024

1. The John Wakefield Memorial Award for Most Inspirational Lodge (Four Awards will be awarded in this category - Outstanding, Quality, Footprint & Rising Star).
2. The Billy Arjan Singh Memorial Award for Wildlife Guide (Awards will be given in four regional categories - North, West, East, South)
3. Wildlife Promotion Company Award
4. Wildlife Tourism Community Initiative Award
5. Wildlife and Tourism Initiative Award
6. International Wildlife Tour Operator Award
7. Lodge Naturalist Award
8. Wildlife Conservation Photography Award
9. Wildlife Conservation Documentary Award
10. Wildlife Harmony Homestay Award
11. Kailash Sankhala Visitor Friendly Wildlife National Park Award
12. Sanctuary Asia Award for "Best State for Sustainable Wildlife Tourism."
13. Climate Guardian Award

For Further information visit:

[www.toftigers.org/WildlifeTourismAwards](http://www.toftigers.org/WildlifeTourismAwards)

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TOFTigers is formed in 2004, galvanising those most active in the Indian nature travel industry to promote best operating practices. TOFTigers engages with global travel and tourism operators, Indian destination management companies and local wildlife lodges and resorts helping them all adopt practices that promote sustainable business, community support and tiger conservation. By doing so TOFTigers not only helps support the tigers, the parks and local communities, but also helps these companies provide their clients with a more inspired, fulfilling and enjoyable experience. A true 'win-win' scenario.

The Sanctuary TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Awards are a celebration of what has been achieved so far, and perhaps more importantly, are an inspiration for what can be done in the future.



HEADS IN BEDS

# Tropical Tranquility at Andaz Pattaya Jomtien Beach

With serene accommodations, a focus on sustainability, and unforgettable dining experiences, Andaz Pattaya Jomtien Beach offers a luxurious retreat deeply connected to nature.

- Misbaah Mansuri





## HEADS IN BEDS

Sun-dappled paths lead to the heart of Andaz Pattaya Jomtien Beach, where lush greenery and the gentle sound of waves create a sense of calm that envelops the senses. From the moment I stepped onto the property, I felt transported to a haven of peace and sophistication, a place where luxury and nature coexist in perfect harmony.

### The Property

Andaz Pattaya Jomtien Beach is a testament to thoughtful design and sustainable luxury. Nestled along the pristine coastline of Jomtien Beach, this sprawling resort spans 10 acres and offers 204 meticulously designed guestrooms and suites. Each room, adorned with natural materials like wood, stone, and local

textiles, reflects the serene beauty of its surroundings. My suite, with its private terrace overlooking the tranquil lagoon, was a sanctuary of comfort and style. The spacious bathroom, featuring a deep soaking tub and a rain shower, offered a personal retreat where the soothing sounds of nature blended with the indulgence of modern amenities.

### Culinary Delights

Dining at Andaz Pattaya is a culinary journey that showcases the rich flavors of Thailand and beyond. Each restaurant offers a unique experience, from casual beachfront dining to sophisticated gourmet offerings. One of the highlights of my stay was the dinner at Fish Club, where I savored the

Thai Beef Burger - a dish that perfectly embodies the resort's commitment to elevating local flavors. The burger, made with succulent, locally sourced beef, was an explosion of taste and texture. It was topped with a tangy green papaya slaw that added a refreshing crunch, and a rich chili mayonnaise that provided the perfect balance of heat and creaminess. The homemade sesame bun was toasted to perfection, holding all the ingredients together in a symphony of flavors. Paired with crispy, golden fries and a side of zesty tamarind dipping sauce, this dish was a true celebration of Thai cuisine, reimagined in a modern and indulgent way.



### Afternoon Tea at Ruen Thai

The traditional afternoon tea at Ruen Thai was another highlight of my culinary experience. Set in a beautifully restored wooden pavilion surrounded by lush gardens, this tea service was a delightful blend of East and West. The savory bites included delicate crab salad sandwiches with a hint of sriracha aioli, while the sweet offerings featured a variety of traditional Thai desserts like Khanom Chan, a layered pandan jelly cake, and Mango Sticky Rice in miniature form. The Thai herbal tea, with its subtle notes of lemongrass and pandan, was the perfect accompaniment to this exquisite experience, providing a moment of calm and reflection amidst the vibrant surroundings.

### Wellness and Relaxation

No visit to Andaz Pattaya is complete without experiencing the Panpuri Wellness Harbor. This tranquil spa, set amidst lush greenery, offers a range of treatments designed to rejuvenate both body and mind. My 90-minute signature massage was a transformative experience. The skilled therapist used a blend of traditional Thai techniques and aromatherapy to relieve every knot and tension in my body. The serene setting, with its calming music and the soft glow of candles, enhanced the sense of peace and relaxation, making it a truly unforgettable experience.

### A Taste of Thai Cuisine

Lunch at Wok Wok was a feast for the senses, featuring a variety of traditional Thai dishes that were as beautiful to look at as they were delicious to eat. The Thai Omelette, a simple yet flavorful dish, was a highlight. Filled with fragrant jasmine rice and tender shrimp, it was perfectly seasoned with fish sauce and a touch of chili, offering a harmonious balance of flavors that lingered on the palate. The Fried Crab with Yellow Curry, a rich and aromatic dish, featured sweet, succulent crab meat bathed in a velvety curry sauce, with just the right amount of heat. The Wok-Fried Basil, a classic Thai dish, was elevated to new heights with the addition of crispy pork belly, and its rich, umami flavors perfectly complemented by the spicy, aromatic basil.





## HEADS IN BEDS

### Evening Cocktails and Sunset Views

As the sun began its descent, painting the sky with hues of pink and gold, I made my way to Fish Club for sunset cocktails. The Wan Sabai, a refreshing blend of Chalong Bay rum, lime, and sweet Thai basil, was the perfect companion to the breathtaking view of the sun setting over the Gulf of Thailand. The relaxed, beachfront setting, with its comfortable seating and attentive service, made for a perfect end to the day.

### Sustainability at Andaz Pattaya

Andaz Pattaya Jomtien Beach is deeply committed to sustainability, integrating eco-friendly practices into every

aspect of the guest experience. From the use of locally sourced materials in the construction of the resort to the farm-to-table dining philosophy, every detail reflects a dedication to preserving the natural beauty of the region. The resort's efforts to reduce its environmental footprint, such as the use of solar panels and water-saving fixtures, are commendable, making it a leader in sustainable luxury.

### Exploring the Grounds

The resort's expansive grounds are a paradise of lush greenery, winding pathways, and tranquil water features. Winding paths lead through gardens filled with tropical flowers and centuries-old trees, creating a sense of seclusion and tranquility. The

Lagoon Pool, with its serene waters and jacuzzi pods, offers a refreshing respite from the Thai sun, while the Raintree Court, a peaceful courtyard shaded by an ancient raintree, is a perfect spot for quiet contemplation.

### Final Thoughts

Andaz Pattaya Jomtien Beach is more than just a resort; it is a sanctuary of tranquility, where the beauty of nature meets the luxury of modern comforts. Every aspect of my stay, from the exquisite dining experiences to the serene spa treatments, was crafted with care and intention. It's rare to find a place where one can feel so connected to nature, while still indulging in the finest comforts. It was a journey that nourished my body, mind, and soul.





# OPEN TO NEW SHADES OF GREEN

Showcasing  
Thailand's top golf  
courses and expanding  
global partnerships in  
golf tourism.

- *Naina Nath*





The Thailand Golf Travel Mart (TGTM) 2024, hosted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), spotlighted the country's outstanding golf tourism offerings. Held from September 17-19, the event brought together over 90 golf holiday specialists and international media representatives in Bangkok to experience Thailand's top-rated golf courses, exceptional hospitality, and diverse business opportunities. TGTM 2024 showcased why Thailand continues to be a top destination for golf enthusiasts from around the world.

#### A Global Platform for Golf Tourism

This year, TGTM welcomed 63 international golf travel specialists, providing them the chance to engage with 59 Thai exhibitors, including golf courses, country clubs, and hotels. The event also saw the participation of 31 foreign media representatives, further boosting Thailand's exposure as a global hub for golf tourism. Delegates not only discussed potential partnerships but also participated in networking golf tournaments, ensuring a hands-on experience of the world-class courses Thailand offers. Aditya Malpani, Founder & CEO, Ace Golfing shares, "TGTM 2024 was a well-organised event, bringing together top professionals from Thailand. It provided a superb opportunity to foster new partnerships and business, thanks to the great initiative by the Tourism Authority of Thailand."

#### Opening with a Competition

The first day of TGTM 2024 kicked off with a Networking Golf Inspection and Tournament at the Siam Country Club Bangkok. Delegates then gathered at Top golf Megacity for a Welcome Dinner, allowing for casual networking in a relaxed setting. The second day saw the official opening ceremony at the Hyatt Regency Bangkok Sukhumvit Hotel, where delegates participated in a Thailand golf briefing, B2B meetings, and various networking functions. The event concluded with another networking tournament at Riverdale Golf Club, reinforcing relationships through friendly competition. Jogeswari Peddi, Director, Golftripz shares, "The Thailand Golf Travel Mart is essential to our company, reflecting our long-standing ties with Thailand as a premier golf destination. This year, the event showcased the evolving golf tourism industry and offered valuable networking opportunities, reinforcing Thailand's role as a key player in our travel portfolio."

#### Thailand's Growing Reputation in Golf Tourism

TAT Deputy Governor for Marketing Communications, Mr Nithee Seepree, highlights the critical role of golf in Thailand's tourism strategy. He says, "Golf is not just a sport in Thailand; it's a year-round experience that complements our renowned

hospitality. Our courses host major tournaments, offering golfers an opportunity to play in state-of-the-art settings while enjoying local experiences and wellness treatments." Thailand's extensive range of courses—over 250—caters to golfers of all levels. With both internationally recognised venues and hidden gems like Gassan Legacy Golf Club in Lamphun or Royal Creek Golf Club in Udon Thani, the kingdom offers a truly diverse golfing experience.

#### A Strong Focus on International Partnerships

At the event's opening, Mr Siripakorn Cheawsamoot, TAT Deputy Governor for International Marketing, discussed the on-going global appeal of Thai golf. He shares, "Thailand continues to attract golfers with its beautiful landscapes, quality facilities, and year-round playability. Our courses, combined with exceptional hospitality, create memorable experiences for players worldwide."

To further encourage local participation, TAT's 'Amazing Golf in Southern Thailand' initiative, in partnership with Golfdigg, offers special promotions for domestic golfers and expats. This project, which includes discounted green fees and deals at top restaurants and hotels, aims to bolster local tourism in Phuket, Krabi, and surrounding areas. Shyam

Vador, Director, My Gold Tours shares, "Thailand Golf Travel Mart in Bangkok was an excellent platform to connect with golf tourism suppliers and explore new offerings. The networking tournament strengthened relationships, and we look forward to sending more golfers from India to Thailand's golf destinations."

#### Recognising Excellence in Golf

Thailand's status as a leading golf destination is backed by several prestigious awards. Bangkok was recently recognised as the 'Golf Destination of the Year 2024 (Southeast Asia)' by the IAGTO, while Nikanti Golf Club in Nakhon Pathom was awarded 'Golf Course of the Year (Thailand)'. Additional wins include Pineapple Valley Golf Club Hua Hin as 'Thailand's Best Golf Hotel 2023' and Siam Country Club Pattaya-Old Course being named 'Thailand's Best Golf Course 2023' by the World Golf Awards.

Thailand Golf Travel Mart 2024 continues the conversation on Thailand's world-class golf offerings, providing unique experiences for players while fostering international partnerships. Through its exceptional venues, renowned hospitality, and diverse attractions, Thailand remains a top choice for golfers from around the world, and TGTM plays an important role in driving this narrative forward.



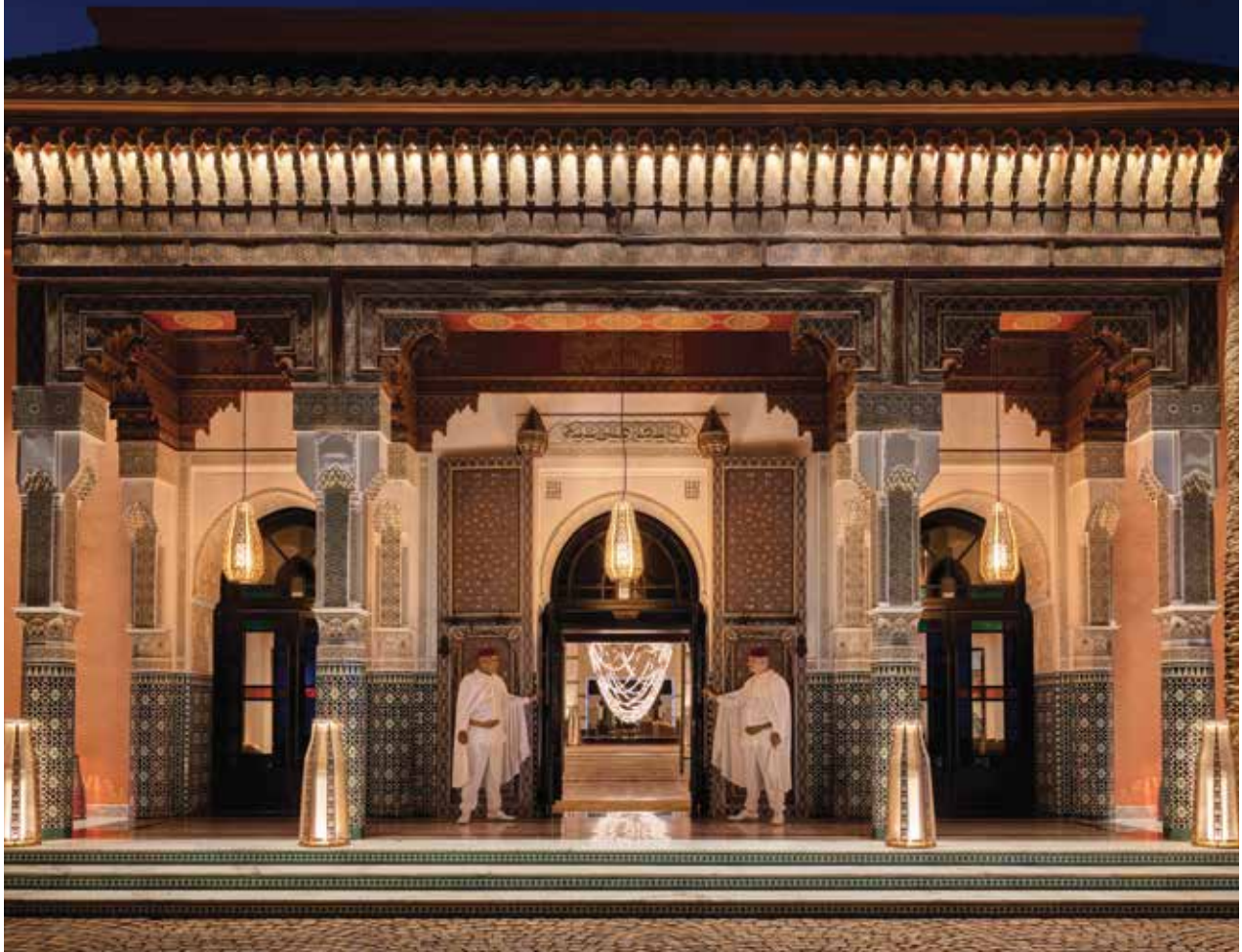


# La Mamounia

## A luxurious oasis in Marrakech

Nestled in the heart of Marrakech, La Mamounia is more than just a hotel; it's a timeless sanctuary that marries the rich heritage of Morocco with modern luxury. Pierre Jochem, General Manager and Denys Courtier, Regional Director of Sales and Marketing, La Mamounia shares their experience with guests from around the world.

-Tripti Jain





## HOTELLIGENCE

The lush gardens, stunning architecture, and warm hospitality create an atmosphere that is both enchanting and inviting. As Pierre Jochem shares, "We aim to provide our guests with a unique experience that combines the essence of Moroccan culture with the comforts of modern hospitality. This remarkable establishment, with its storied history and world-class service, offers a breath of fresh air to anyone seeking an escape from the ordinary."

### A historic legacy

La Mamounia has a legacy that dates back to the 1920s, serving as a haven for royalty and celebrities alike. The hotel's name pays homage to the historic olive groves that surround it, a symbol of peace and tranquility. Pierre Jochem shares, "Our history is deeply intertwined with the charm of Marrakech. Every corner of the hotel tells a story, from the intricate mosaics to the elegantly designed rooms."

The hotel's architecture is a stunning blend of traditional Moroccan and contemporary design, featuring grand arches, intricate tile work, and lush courtyards. Visitors are immediately struck by the beauty of the place, making it a perfect backdrop for both relaxation and celebration. Denys Courtier emphasises this connection and shares, "We've preserved the heritage while embracing modernity, ensuring that each guest feels the rich culture of Morocco as soon as they arrive."

### Unparalleled luxury

Stepping into La Mamounia is like entering a world of elegance. The rooms and suites are beautifully appointed, with rich fabrics and luxurious furnishings that reflect Moroccan artistry. Pierre Jochem shares, "We focus on creating an environment where our guests can unwind and indulge in comfort. Each room offers breath-taking views of the gardens or the Atlas Mountains, ensuring that every moment spent here is memorable."

The hotel features several exquisite dining options, including Le Marocain, where guests can savour traditional Moroccan cuisine, and L'Italien, which offers a taste of Italy amid stunning decor. Denys Courtier explains about the dining experience and shares, "Dining at La Mamounia is an experience in itself. Our chefs use the freshest local ingredients to create dishes that are both authentic and innovative. The attention to detail in each culinary offering is just one way the hotel elevates the guest experience."







## HOTELLIGENCE



### A serene escape

One of La Mamounia's standout features is its expansive gardens, which provide a serene escape from the hustle and bustle of Marrakech. With over eight acres of manicured greenery, these gardens are a tranquil oasis where guests can stroll, meditate, or simply enjoy the beauty of nature. Pierre Jochem describes the gardens as 'a reflection of Marrakech's vibrant spirit,' adding that they play a crucial role in the overall experience of the hotel.

The hotel's spa is another highlight, offering a range of treatments inspired by Moroccan traditions. From hammams to massages, the spa is designed to rejuvenate the mind and body. Denys Courtier emphasises, "Wellness is at the forefront of what we offer. We want our guests to leave feeling not just relaxed but revitalised. This commitment to wellness extends beyond the spa, with various fitness and yoga programs available, allowing guests to

maintain their wellness routines during their stay."

### Cultural immersion

At La Mamounia, guests are encouraged to immerse themselves in the rich culture of Marrakech. The hotel offers curated experiences, such as guided tours of local markets, cooking classes, and traditional Moroccan tea ceremonies. Pierre Jochem believes that these activities are essential for creating lasting memories. He shares, "We want our guests to connect with the local culture. It's about experiencing Marrakech in a way that goes beyond just sightseeing." Furthermore, Denys Courtier adds, "Our team is dedicated to crafting unique experiences that resonate with our guests. Whether it's exploring the vibrant souks or attending a local festival, we aim to showcase the true essence of Marrakech. This focus on cultural immersion ensures that every guest leaves with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the city."

### Sustainability and community engagement

La Mamounia is committed to sustainability and giving back to the local community. The hotel employs local artisans for renovations and decor, ensuring that traditional craftsmanship is preserved. Pierre Jochem shares, "We believe in supporting the community that surrounds us. It's our way of giving back and ensuring that the rich culture of Morocco thrives." Moreover, the hotel has initiated several eco-friendly practices, from reducing waste to using renewable energy sources. Denys Courtier highlights this commitment and shares, "Sustainability is not just a trend; it's a responsibility. We strive to lead by example and encourage our guests to engage in eco-conscious practices during their stay."

### A timeless retreat

In a world where travel can often feel rushed and impersonal, La

Mamounia stands out as a timeless retreat that offers both luxury and authenticity. The combination of exquisite design, rich cultural experiences, and unparalleled hospitality creates a sanctuary that rejuvenates the spirit. Pierre Jochem shares, "At La Mamounia, we don't just provide a place to stay; we create a home away from home."

As guests indulge in the lush surroundings, savour the delectable cuisine, and connect with the vibrant culture of Marrakech, they discover that La Mamounia is more than just a destination; it's an experience that lingers long after the journey ends. Denys Courtier resonates with this sentiment beautifully and shares, "When guests leave La Mamounia, we want them to carry a piece of Morocco in their hearts."

This remarkable hotel, with its rich history and commitment to excellence, truly embodies the magic of Marrakech, inviting travellers to immerse themselves in a world of beauty, culture, and unforgettable memories.







The heart of  
Incredible India

# GREEN, CLEAN & SAFE

# MADHYA PRADESH

## A TRAVELLER'S PARADISE

Are you looking for a destination that blends natural beauty, rich heritage, and security? Madhya Pradesh, the green, clean, and safe Heart of India, has it all. From wildlife safaris and spiritual pilgrimages to cultural exploration and adventure, this state offers a wealth of experiences.

Madhya Pradesh is a haven for nature lovers, with lush greenery, vast national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. With a large forest cover of 94,689 square kilometers, the state's commitment to conservation is evident in its efforts to preserve natural resources and promote sustainable tourism. As the 'Tiger State of India,' it is home to 785 tigers, alongside significant populations of leopards, vultures, and gharials. Also known as the 'Cheetah State,' Madhya Pradesh has 11 national parks, 7 tiger reserves, and 24 wildlife sanctuaries. Additionally, it is recognized as the 'Gharial State,' with a thriving population of 2,400 gharials. The state's commitment to conservation is evident in its expansive forest cover and sustainable tourism efforts.

Madhya Pradesh is often referred to as the 'Paternal Home of Rivers,' given the many rivers that flow through it. The state's landscapes are shaped by rivers like the Narmada, Betwa, Tapti and Chambal. The hill station of Pachmarhi, nestled in the Satpura Range, offers a mix of stunning landscapes, verdant forests, and a refreshing climate.

Madhya Pradesh has also earned a reputation as one of India's cleanest states, with cities like Indore and Bhopal consistently ranking among the top in the country. In 2023, the state was named the cleanest in India for the second consecutive year, according to the Swachh Survekshan Awards. Indore and Bhopal have garnered national and international recognition for their outstanding cleanliness and hygiene efforts, consistently ranking among the cleanest cities in India.

Safety is a top priority, especially for women travelers. The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board's initiatives ensure women feel secure, with thousands receiving training in tourism and self-defense. Women are empowered and actively contribute to the state's vibrant tourism sector.

The Safe Tourist Destination for Women initiative by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is a significant step toward ensuring that women feel secure at tourist destinations. Under this program, 10,000 women are being trained and connected to the tourism service sector, while 40,000 women and girls are receiving self-defense training. The state has taken significant measures to create a secure environment by empowering local women to take on leadership roles within the tourism industry. From driving safaris to guiding treks, women are at the forefront of delivering exceptional experiences.

Madhya Pradesh invites you to discover its green, clean, and safe environment. Whether you seek adventure, relaxation, or cultural immersion, this eco-friendly destination has a lot to offer for everyone.





Together We Rise

# IATO Convention 2024

Tourism isn't just about destinations—it's about people, experiences, and the stories we share. This was the heartbeat of the 39th Annual IATO Convention 2024 held in the vibrant city of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

- Tripti Jain





With over 1,200 delegates gathering under the theme 'Resurgent India Inbound,' the convention wasn't just an industry meeting. It was a powerful call to action for all stakeholders to come together, rebuild, and rediscover the beauty and potential of India as a leading global destination.

Set against the backdrop of Taj Lakefront, the energy at the convention was palpable—full of ideas, excitement, and an overwhelming belief that Indian tourism is ready to rise again. It was more than a business event; it was a moment of collaboration, reflection, and forward-thinking action, one that would set the tone for the future of inbound tourism in India.

#### A new dawn for Indian Tourism

The IATO Convention 2024 felt like a fresh start, brimming with opportunities to reinvent and reinvigorate the Indian tourism landscape. The conversations were vibrant, and the vision clear: to position India as a must-visit destination for travellers worldwide. Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), captured the spirit of the convention in his passionate opening remarks: "India's tourism potential is immense, and now more than ever, we have an opportunity to showcase our country's incredible diversity to the world. The theme 'Resurgent India Inbound' is not just a slogan but a vision for the future. Together, with the support of the government and private stakeholders, we can create an inbound tourism landscape that thrives on collaboration and innovation."

His words weren't just meant for those in attendance. They resonated with anyone invested in the future of Indian tourism, from tour operators to government officials, hospitality leaders, and even the travellers themselves. It was time to take action, and the convention became the platform for doing just that.

#### Madhya Pradesh shines bright

One of the standout features of this year's convention was its location. Madhya Pradesh, known as the 'Heart of India,' is rich in cultural heritage, natural beauty, and wildlife. It was the perfect setting for

discussions on tourism's future, and the state played a pivotal role in showcasing the potential of lesser-known destinations.

Shri Mohan Yadav, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh, welcomed the delegates with open arms and shares, "Madhya Pradesh is committed to becoming a leader in India's tourism growth story. Our state offers a diverse range of experiences, from heritage tourism to wildlife sanctuaries and spiritual journeys. We are working diligently to improve connectivity, enhance visitor experiences, and ensure that tourism benefits all sections of society."

Madhya Pradesh's focus on sustainable tourism and community involvement was widely applauded. The state has set a benchmark for other regions in India, particularly through its efforts to promote wildlife tourism and conservation. Ten post-convention tours were organised to showcase the beauty and hidden gems of Madhya Pradesh, giving delegates the chance to see first-hand how these initiatives were transforming the local tourism landscape.





### Sustainability takes center stage

A major theme at the IATO Convention 2024 was sustainable tourism. With growing concerns about environmental impact, the tourism industry was encouraged to embrace responsible practices that prioritise conservation and community welfare. Ravi Gosain, Vice President, IATO stressed the importance of sustainability in his speech and shares, "As we work towards reviving inbound tourism, we must not lose sight of our responsibility to preserve the environments and communities that make India such a unique destination. Sustainable practices must be at the core of every tourism initiative, ensuring that we leave a positive impact for future generations."

This message was echoed in various sessions throughout the convention, where experts emphasised the need for eco-friendly policies, green infrastructure, and responsible travel practices. Madhya Pradesh, with its national parks, heritage sites, and vibrant festivals, was presented as a model for sustainable tourism. The state's efforts to promote wildlife tourism, particularly in reserves such as Kanha and Bandhavgarh, were a shining example of how tourism can coexist with conservation.

Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary (Tourism), Madhya Pradesh explains, "Our focus has been on ensuring that tourism develops in harmony with local communities and the environment. By engaging local communities in the tourism process, we ensure that they directly benefit from the influx of visitors, making the entire experience more sustainable. This holistic approach was a key takeaway for many delegates, highlighting the growing importance of sustainability in shaping the future of tourism."

### Connectivity, Visa Issues, and Global Promotion

While the convention was full of optimism, it also addressed some of the key challenges facing India's inbound tourism. Visa restrictions, limited flight connectivity, and the need for enhanced global marketing were hot topics throughout the event. Rajiv Mehra pointed out the obstacles and shares "There is a growing demand for experiential travel, and

India is uniquely positioned to offer that. However, we need better connectivity and streamlined visa processes to capitalise on this demand."

Several speakers called for improved infrastructure, particularly in terms of air travel and road networks, to ensure tourists could easily access India's many hidden gems. Last-mile connectivity—the final step in getting travellers from airports to remote destinations—was a key focus. Shri Shukla emphasised the state's efforts in this regard, and says, "Improved roads and air links to major tourist spots have helped us boost tourism in previously hard-to-reach areas." Additionally, the convention highlighted the need for India to step up its global marketing efforts. Participation in international travel fairs, enhanced digital marketing campaigns, and strategic partnerships with global tour operators was seen as essential tools to increase India's visibility on the world stage.







### The role of technology in shaping the future of tourism

As the world becomes more digitally connected, the role of technology in tourism has never been more critical. The convention featured several sessions on the impact of digital transformation, exploring how tech innovations can help attract more travellers to India.

Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, emphasises the importance of leveraging technology to meet the evolving needs of modern travellers. He shares, "Technology has become a game-changer in the world of travel. From contactless services to AI - powered personalisation, technology enables us to offer seamless experiences that meet the expectations of international tourists."

With travellers increasingly seeking immersive and personalised experiences, the use of AI, virtual reality (VR), and data-driven marketing were identified as key strategies for the future. The convention encouraged

tour operators and hoteliers to adopt these technologies to create tailored experiences that resonate with global travellers.

### Celebrating leadership and honouring Contributions

One of the highlights of the IATO Convention 2024 was the Hall of Fame awards ceremony. This year, the honours were bestowed upon Late Shri M.L. Razdan, Founder, Razdan Holidays, and Puneet Chhatwal, CEO, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, for their extraordinary contributions to the Indian tourism industry.

Accepting the award on behalf of his late father-in-law, the Razdan family expressed their gratitude for the recognition. Shri M.L. Razdan was a true pioneer, especially in promoting Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh as must-visit destinations. His vision, tireless work, and unwavering commitment to the

development of tourism have left a lasting impact.

Puneet Chhatwal, in his acceptance speech, reflected on the Taj brand's journey and shares, "This recognition stands as a testament not only to my personal journey but also to the collective efforts of my colleagues, partners, and everyone in the hospitality and tourism industry. I am proud of the strides we've made in positioning India on the global tourism map."

These moments of recognition were a reminder of the hard work and passion that drive the tourism industry forward.

### A future full of promise

The 39th IATO Annual Convention ended on a high note, with delegates leaving Bhopal filled with a sense of optimism and purpose. The message was clear—India's inbound tourism sector is poised for a revival, but it will take collective

effort, innovative strategies, and a focus on sustainability to make it happen.

As Rajiv Mehra concludes in his closing remarks, "Tourism is the lifeblood of many communities across India. Together, we will not only recover but also grow stronger and more resilient than ever. With strong governmental support, proactive strategies, and a focus on sustainable practices, India's tourism industry is well-positioned to emerge stronger in the years to come."

Every year the IATO Convention showcases the power of collaboration. It reminds everyone involved that tourism isn't just about places—it's about people coming together to share experiences, support communities, and create lasting memories. Now, the journey continues as India sets its sights on becoming a top global destination.





# The Crowning Moment!




Success thrives on passion, commitment, and consistency, but when combined with teamwork, the results are extraordinary. We are beyond excited to announce another proud moment for Travel Turtle at the 39th IATO Annual Convention in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. While the saying goes, "Third time's lucky," we're celebrating an even greater milestone with our fourth consecutive award for 'Best Travel Media Publication' at this prestigious event. We've been driven by our passion to keep the industry updated on the latest trends, and this award is a true

reflection of our hard work. Our readers fuel our motivation, and our clients spark our creativity. Their support pushes us forward, and we are incredibly grateful for it. An added highlight was our success in the 'IATO Run for Responsible Tourism.' It's been a rewarding journey, and we're excited to keep moving forward, delivering fresh insights and inspiration with every step. With our eyes set on higher goals, we thank everyone who has been part of our story. We're excited to continue growing, working harder, and sharing the best of the tourism world with you!







EVENT AFFAIR

## A Celebration of Heritage, Hospitality, and Future Tourism

# RDTM 2024

The Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) 2024 unfolded as a vibrant gathering of the tourism industry. It was a grand event celebrating Rajasthan's rich cultural legacy while opening doors to future tourism opportunities.

-Khurshed Ahmad



Attended by government officials, travel agents, hoteliers, and domestic buyers, the event was a mix of dynamic business discussions, cultural festivities, and networking opportunities—all aimed at promoting the splendour of Rajasthan.

### ***Where tradition met elegance***

The Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur became a hub of activity as the RDTM 2024 kicked off. The excitement was palpable as delegates and dignitaries arrived, setting the tone for what was to be a grand celebration of Rajasthan's legacy and future tourism prospects.

The inaugural night began with the symbolic lighting of the lamp, a timeless Indian tradition that embodies the start of something new and promising. The guests, including notable dignitaries such as Shri Kuldeep Singh Chandela, President, Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR), and Shri Ravi Jain, Secretary Tourism, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan were welcomed with a green reception, emphasising Rajasthan's commitment to sustainability. Then came the keynote speech from Honourable Smt. Diya Kumari, Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan. Her words were filled with a sense of pride, as she eloquently spoke about the importance of domestic tourism in revitalising the state's economy post-pandemic. She also touched upon how Rajasthan's breath-taking landscapes, luxurious heritage properties, and emerging tourism experiences continue to attract visitors in record numbers.

### ***Mesmerising cultural performance***

What followed was a cultural extravaganza that showcased the true spirit of Rajasthan. The audience was treated to a mesmerising performance of folk dances and music that painted a vivid picture of the state's rich cultural heritage. The beats of traditional Rajasthani music echoed through the venue, transporting everyone to a world where history, art, and culture coexist harmoniously. The cultural performances were a reminder of why Rajasthan is considered the jewel of Indian tourism—its ability to enchant visitors through a seamless blend of royal history, folk traditions, and an undying spirit of hospitality.

### ***Business meets culture***

The next morning, on September 14, the BM Birla Convention Centre opened its doors to the main exhibition and B2B meetings. The venue was a hive of activity as industry professionals—sellers and buyers alike—engaged in discussions and negotiations aimed at fostering collaboration. From heritage hotels and resorts to eco-tourism operators and adventure tourism agencies, Rajasthan's wide array of tourism products were on full display. The ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the formal opening of the exhibition, and soon the halls were buzzing with conversations between travel professionals. The prescheduled B2B meetings provided a structured format for buyers and sellers to explore mutual interests and form potential business partnerships. This year's focus was on promoting Rajasthan's evolving tourism landscape, especially in niche segments like wellness tourism, destination weddings, and rural experiences.

### ***Buiding new relationships***

The B2B meetings were structured yet flexible, allowing ample time for discussions that went beyond surface-level exchanges. As the meetings progressed, it became clear that Rajasthan's tourism industry is not just about historical monuments and luxury hotels; it's also about community-based tourism, sustainable travel, and experiential adventures. Rajasthan's reputation as a destination for destination weddings was another hot topic. Many buyers expressed interest in the state's luxurious palaces and heritage properties, which have become sought-after venues for lavish Indian and international weddings.

### ***Planning for the Future***

The final day of RDTM 2024 continued the momentum, with more B2B meetings and discussions filling the schedule. The prescheduled meetings allowed for structured negotiations, while the exhibition remained open for the general public to explore Rajasthan's travel offerings. The event had successfully achieved its goal of bringing together the brightest minds in the tourism industry and fostering meaningful connections. Beyond the business meetings and exhibition stands, RDTM 2024 showcased the heart of Rajasthan—its people, its traditions, and its unwavering commitment to hospitality.





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TRAVEL THERAPY

# Vietnam



## A journey that left an imprint!

Known as the 'Land of Ascending Dragon' Vietnam creates magic in every region. Now, having experienced its warm people, vibrant cities, and stunning landscapes, I know one thing for sure: Vietnam is a place I must return to again and again.

-Tripti Jain







The hum of the engines was barely noticeable as I settled into my seat on Vietnam Airlines' business class, a cocoon of comfort that made the long flight feel like a breeze. The spacious seats felt more like personal suites, and I was immediately welcomed with a glass of champagne and a warm smile from the cabin crew. The exquisite food menu catered to all my tastes, offering both international and local Vietnamese delicacies that gave me a glimpse of the flavours waiting for me. As I reclined and relaxed in my seat, I couldn't help but marvel at how smoothly my journey was beginning. Vietnam Airlines, with its impeccable service and attention to detail, had set the tone for what would be an unforgettable adventure.

It wasn't just the comfort of the flight that made me excited, but the destination itself. Vietnam had long been on my bucket list—a land of history, culture, and natural beauty. But what I didn't know was just how

deeply this country would imprint itself on my heart.

### A majestic escape

The early morning sun greeted me as the plane touched down at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi. The crisp air carried a sense of anticipation. Immediately, I embarked on a journey to Ha Long Bay, one of Vietnam's most iconic natural wonders. The drive from Hanoi to Ha Long was scenic, with emerald rice paddies stretching out on either side of the road. As we approached the bay, the sight of towering limestone karsts rising from the water took my breath away. I boarded the luxurious Ambassador Cruise, which would be my home for the next two days. Cruising through the jade-green waters of Ha Long Bay felt surreal, like sailing through a postcard. The limestone islands, shrouded in mist, created a mystical atmosphere that was both calming and awe-inspiring.

During the cruise, I had the chance

to explore Sung Sot Cave, the largest cave in the bay. As I stepped inside, I was greeted by a mesmerising display of stalactites and stalagmites, each one more intricate than the last. The cave seemed like a natural cathedral, carved out over thousands of years. Afterward, I visited Titov Island, where the time went by clicking pictures and appreciating the top of the hill.

That evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon I sipped a Vietnamese coffee overlooking the islets through the Ha Long Bay. The night ended with a live band playing soft tunes under the star and we made our way back to the city.

### The soul of Vietnam

Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, is where old-world charm meets modern vitality. My first impression was one of contrasts—the ancient temples and French colonial buildings juxtaposed with the bustling traffic and skyscrapers.





After a ride back from the Ha Long Bay, I arrived at my hotel, a lovely boutique property nestled in the heart of the Old Quarter. Stepping out into the lively streets, I was immediately enveloped by the energy of the city. The narrow lanes were lined with vendors selling everything from fragrant street food to delicate silk scarves, and the sound of motorbikes filled the air like a chorus. After soaking up all the beautiful energy of the city I climbed back in my bed and had a peaceful sleep.

I spent my morning exploring the Old Quarter, and it felt like stepping into a living museum. Each street seemed dedicated to a different craft or trade—one for silk, another for shoes, another for spices. As I wandered, I found myself drawn into the tiny shops, haggling good-naturedly with the vendors. If you're a shopaholic like me, be prepared to spend—Vietnam's markets are irresistible, and my wallet quickly felt lighter with all the unique finds.

As the day went on, I made my way to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, where the father of modern Vietnam lies in state. It was a somber and respectful experience, witnessing the deep reverence the Vietnamese people hold for their leader. Later, I visited the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The citadel, with its ancient ruins and lush gardens, offered a peaceful contrast to the city's busy streets.

By evening, I found myself sitting in a local café, sipping on Vietnam's famous egg coffee. The creamy,





## TRAVEL THERAPY

frothy mixture of coffee and whipped egg yolk was surprisingly delicious and gave me the perfect jolt of energy. Hanoi, with its blend of tradition and modernity, had already captured a piece of my heart.

### The city of eternal spring

Leaving the coast behind, my next destination was Da Lat, a charming hill station known for its cool climate and romantic landscapes. The moment I stepped off the plane, I was struck by how different Da Lat felt from the rest of Vietnam. The air was crisp and cool, a welcome relief from the humidity of the lowlands. The town itself felt like a quaint European village, with its French colonial architecture and sprawling flower gardens.

One of my favourite experiences in Da Lat was visiting the Clay Tunnel, an open-air museum featuring intricate sculptures made entirely of clay. The artwork depicted the history and culture of Da Lat, from its early days as a French resort town to its modern-day attractions.

In the evenings, I explored Da Lat's famous night market, where the streets came alive with vendors selling everything from warm woolen scarves to steaming bowls of pho. I indulged in all the local treats—grilled corn on the cob, sticky rice, and sweet potato cakes—while soaking in the festive atmosphere.

### A bustling metropolis

My final stop was Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's largest and most vibrant metropolis. From the moment I arrived, I could feel the city's frenetic energy. The streets were a blur of motorbikes, and the air was thick with the smell of street food being cooked on every corner.

For a change of pace, I spent an afternoon exploring the city's vibrant markets. Ben Thanh Market was a sensory overload—bright fabrics, exotic fruits, and the sound of vendors calling out to customers. I couldn't resist buying a few souvenirs and gifts for friends back home. If you love shopping, this is the place to be, but fair warning—it's easy to get carried away!

### Vietnam's heart and soul

As much as I fell in love with Vietnam's landscapes, it was the people who truly left an imprint on my heart. Everywhere I went, I was met with kindness and hospitality. From our drivers and guides who went out of their way to recommend the best local spots to the shopkeepers who greeted me with smiles, the warmth of the Vietnamese people was unforgettable.

One moment that stands out was during my visit to a small café in Hanoi. I had been walking around all day and stopped in for a quick coffee. The owner, an elderly man, struck up a conversation with me, asking where I was from and how I liked Vietnam so far. Before I knew it, we were chatting like old

friends, and he even brought out a plate of freshly made bánh cuốn (steamed rice rolls) for me to try. It's moments like these that make travel so special—the connections we make with people from different walks of life.

### A must-visit destination

As my time in Vietnam came to an end, I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude for the experiences I had. From the bustling streets of Hanoi to the tranquil waters of Ha Long Bay, from the romantic charm of Da Lat to the vibrant energy of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam is a country that offers something for everyone.

But more than the sights and sounds, it's the spirit of Vietnam that stays with you—the resilience, the warmth, and the undeniable beauty of both the land and its people. This journey, made even more special by the impeccable service of Vietnam Airlines, is one I will cherish forever.

Vietnam is a place that lingers in your heart long after you've left, and for me, it's a destination I know I will visit again. If you're seeking a travel experience that is rich in culture, history, and natural beauty, look no further than Vietnam. Just be sure to pack an extra suitcase—you'll need it for all the treasures you're bound to bring home!





# Discovering the Magic of Türkiye

Türkiye, a country where East meets West, has long been a favourite for travellers seeking a blend of ancient history, stunning landscapes, and vibrant culture.

-Bharti Sharma



Its timeless charm continues to attract visitors from around the world, including India. However, as Türkiye evolves, so do the destinations it offers. While Istanbul and Cappadocia have always been popular, newer destinations are now capturing the imagination of Indian travellers, promising experiences that are both fresh and captivating.

## The rising appeal of Türkiye

For Indian tourists, Türkiye is a treasure trove of experiences that align with their love for history, culture, shopping, and adventure. The ease of travel, direct flights from major Indian cities, and Türkiye's welcoming nature further add to its appeal. Whether it's a family holiday, a honeymoon, or a solo trip, Türkiye has something to offer every type of traveller. And in recent years, the country has opened up newer destinations that promise to add even more magic to the Turkish experience.

## Exploring the lesser-known gems

### 1. Bodrum – A Mediterranean delight

For those seeking sun, sea, and serenity, Bodrum is the place to be. Located on the Aegean coast, this coastal town is becoming increasingly popular among Indian travellers. Known for its beautiful beaches, luxury resorts, and historic charm, Bodrum is the perfect spot for a relaxing holiday with a dash of culture. The 15th century Bodrum Castle, the Museum of Underwater Archaeology, and the nearby ruins of the ancient city of Halicarnassus offer a glimpse into the region's rich history.

But Bodrum isn't just for history lovers. The town's vibrant nightlife, chic beach clubs, and yacht-filled marina make it a hotspot for the elite traveller. For Indians looking for a luxurious escape, Bodrum's resorts offer world-class amenities, including private beaches, wellness retreats, and Michelin-starred restaurants. The best part? The turquoise waters and Mediterranean breeze make for an unforgettable stay.

### 2. Antalya – The gateway to the Turkish Riviera

Antalya, often dubbed the gateway to the Turkish Riviera, is fast becoming a favourite among Indian honeymooners and families. This stunning coastal city offers a unique mix of historical attractions and modern luxury. The old town of Kaleiçi, with its narrow streets, charming cafes, and ancient ruins, is perfect for a leisurely stroll. Antalya's beaches, such as Konyaalti and Lara, are among the most picturesque in Türkiye, offering golden sands and crystal-clear waters.

For those seeking adventure, the nearby Taurus Mountains provide opportunities for hiking, paragliding, and even skiing during the winter months. The Düden Waterfalls and Köprülü Canyon offer natural beauty that is perfect for day trips. Antalya's growing reputation as a destination for destination weddings has also put it on the radar of Indian couples seeking a fairytale wedding in a dreamy setting.

### 3. Izmir – A blend of modernity and tradition

Izmir is a city that seamlessly blends the old with the new. As one of Türkiye's largest cities, it offers the perfect mix of modern amenities and ancient sites. Indian travellers looking to explore something



beyond the usual tourist destinations will find Izmir's rich history and vibrant lifestyle appealing. The ancient ruins of Ephesus, a short drive from Izmir, are a must-visit for history enthusiasts. This UNESCO World Heritage site takes visitors back to the Roman Empire, with its grand amphitheatre, library, and temples. Back in the city, the Kemeraltı Bazaar offers a true taste of Turkish culture. This bustling market is filled with stalls selling spices, textiles, ceramics, and traditional Turkish delights, making it a shopper's paradise. Izmir's waterfront, with its trendy cafes and restaurants, offers stunning views of the Aegean Sea, making it an ideal spot to unwind after a day of sightseeing.

### 4. Konya – The city of whirling dervishes

For those seeking a deeper spiritual and cultural experience, Konya is an emerging destination that's captivating the Indian traveller. Known for being the home of the famous Sufi mystic Rumi, Konya offers a serene and reflective atmosphere. The city is best known for its Whirling Dervish ceremonies,

a mesmerising spiritual practice that has drawn visitors for centuries. The Mevlana Museum, dedicated to Rumi, is a must-visit for anyone looking to delve into the spiritual side of Türkiye.

Konya's slow pace and timeless charm make it a unique destination for those seeking something different from the hustle and bustle of tourist-heavy spots. It's a place to relax, reflect, and immerse oneself in a spiritual journey, making it a perfect stop for culturally curious travellers from India.

## A new Türkiye awaits!

As Indian travellers continue to explore the world, Türkiye is rapidly emerging as a destination that offers both classic beauty and fresh experiences. Whether it's the luxurious beaches of Bodrum, the historical wonders of Izmir, or the spiritual serenity of Konya, there's a Türkiye for every traveller. With direct flights, a friendly visa process, and an increasing number of Indian-friendly amenities, Türkiye is poised to remain a top destination for Indian tourists in the years to come.





# Mélange 2024: A milestone event in the trade industry

We were thrilled to be part of Mélange 2024. The event was nothing short of spectacular, bringing together an impressive lineup of exhibitors, industry leaders, and eager visitors under one roof. The energy on the floor was high, with cutting-edge innovations, insightful discussions, and countless networking opportunities throughout the two days. From the state-of-the-art setups to the high-caliber attendees, Mélange 2024 exceeded expectations and set a new benchmark for trade shows.





## Saudi Tourism Authority hosts immersive culinary soiree and qahwa experience

The Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) recently hosted a series of exclusive events including 'Epicurean Saudi' in Mumbai, and 'Brewtopia - A Qahwa Experience' in Bengaluru and Delhi, offering unparalleled dining and coffee appreciation pop-ups. Specially curated for select travel trade partners and media influencers, the goal was to give attendees an immersive sneak peek into Saudi's diverse gastronomic traditions and offerings, further positioning the country as a premier destination for discerning travellers.



## Taiwan Tourism reignites the Indian capital



Taiwan Tourism made a grand return to the Indian capital, hosting its first post-pandemic roadshow in New Delhi. The event saw a buzzing turnout of 110+ travel agents and 12+ renowned travel trade media, all excited to rediscover what makes Taiwan the next big destination for Indian travellers. With Air India and EVA Air as airline partners, the spotlight was firmly on promoting seamless travel routes connecting India and Taiwan. The roadshow aimed to reignite interest in Taiwan as a premier leisure and MICE destination and saw enthusiastic participation from the travel industry.





## Bingo Holidays and Sunlife Mauritius Showcase Luxury Hospitality

Bingo Holidays, in collaboration with Sunlife Mauritius, recently hosts an exclusive product presentation for their preferred agents in New Delhi. Kevin Hopive, Head of Sales at Sunlife Mauritius, delivered an insightful presentation, showcasing the brand's four luxurious resorts—Sugar Beach, Long Beach, La Pirogue, and Ambre along with the award-winning Ile aux Cerfs Golf Club. With over 45 years of expertise since the opening of La Pirogue in 1976, Sunlife Mauritius continues to set the standard in luxury hospitality.



## Indonesia's strategic roadshow in India and Nepal



The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy/Tourism and Creative Economy Agency (MoTCE) of the Republic of Indonesia in collaboration with Badung Regency Government of Bali and Indonesia tourism industry holds a Tourism Sales Mission in the South Asia region on 9-18 September 2024. The tourism roadshow held in 4 cities in India, Bangalore, Chennai, New Delhi and Jaipur, and completed in the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu.

## OTOAI hosts members' meet evening in Collaboration with Tourism Western Australia and ASEGO Travel Insurance

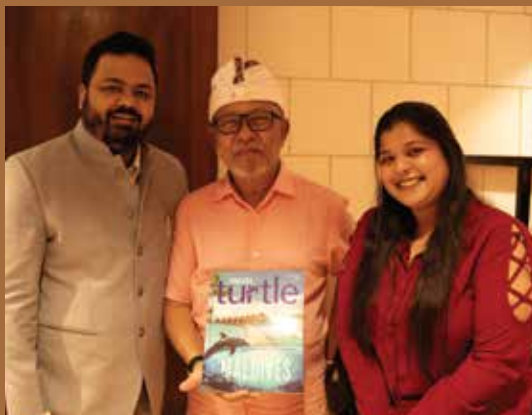
This soirée garnered tremendous support from Tourism Western Australia and ASEGO, highlighting the immense potential to attract tourists. Mr. Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI, emphasised the association's unwavering commitment to enhancing members' knowledge and expertise. He expressed satisfaction with the exposure provided to emerging outbound destinations from India, noting the success of the event as a testament to the fruitful collaboration with Tourism Western Australia and ASEGO Travel Insurance.





## Balitrip Wisata embarks on a Four City Roadshow

The Roadshow showcased Balitrip's hospitality partners who have been serving the Indian market over the years and have seen it grow considerably through this particular segment. The roadshow led by Dheeraj Ranjan Kumarr, Founder and Managing Director, Balitrip Wisata & Bapak Herdy D Sayogha, Managing Partner, Balitrip Wisata together with 16 industry partners (sellers) which comprise of hotels, resorts, theme parks, cruise companies and restaurants from Bali was a massive hit.



## Miral Destinations hosts Yas Evening in Mumbai



To celebrate Yas Island Abu Dhabi's ongoing success and accomplishments, Miral Destinations organises the 'Yas Evening' in Mumbai. In order to demonstrate the solid partnerships that have aided Yas Island's expansion in the Indian market, the event gathered together top-performing partners, professionals from the travel industry, travel media, and social media influencers. Miral Destinations hailed the accomplishments at the event and unveiled exciting new promotions and future plans aimed at boosting the number of Indian tourists.





## APPOINTMENTS



### ***TripJack***

TripJack announces the appointment of Mr Subhodeep Bhattacharya as its Chief Human Resources Officer, effective May 2024. Subhodeep will lead a major HR transformation initiative at TripJack, driving growth and innovation across the company. With a rich background in HR leadership, Subhodeep joins from DreamSetGo by Dream Sports, where he played a key role in building the organisation and leading strategic HR initiatives.

### ***Cinnamon Maldives Resorts***

Cinnamon Maldives Resorts announces the appointment of Mohammed Shihab as its new Commercial Director. With over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, Shihab brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his role, having worked in diverse leadership positions across major luxury brands. His proven track record in driving sales and fostering strategic partnerships aligns perfectly with Cinnamon's mission to enhance guest experiences while ensuring business growth and sustainability.



### ***Island Life***

Island Life, a distinguished Destination Management Company (DMC) for the Maldives, announces the appointment of Nidhi Garg as the new Head of Product & Operations, with a specific focus on the luxury travel segment. With extensive experience in high-end travel and operational excellence, Nidhi will drive innovation in Island Life's luxury offerings and streamline operations to deliver unparalleled experiences to discerning travellers.

### ***Hyatt Place Aurangabad Airport***

Hyatt Place Aurangabad Airport has appointed Amit Jain as the new General Manager. Amit brings more than 18 years of hospitality experience to his new role that will see him overseeing all hotel operations and driving revenue growth, while offering top-class service to guests of the Hyatt Place Aurangabad Airport.







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