

India's Leading, Multi-Award-Winning Travel Magazine

VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 08

AUGUST 2025

₹200/-

PAGES 72

TRAVEL

turtle

TM

IATO Special

www.travelturtle.world

Odisha

Timeless heritage meets
tomorrow's travel



NEW LAUNCH LUXURY HONEYMOON GETAWAY

BALI & LOMBOK WITH DAY TRIP TO GILI & UBUD

6 Nights | 7 Days

Ubud – Lombok with Gili – South Bali



BALI (South)
2 Nights – Royal Tulip



UBUD | 2 Nights
Sthala, Tribute Portfolio



LOMBOK | 2 Nights
Royal Avila Boutique

USD 629

Per Person

(valid till 18th Dec 2025)

CURATED FOR HONEYMOONERS

- Handpicked stays with soul
- Time to pause. Space to explore.
- No crowds, no chaos — just your story.

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- 6 Nights Stay (3 Hotels)
- Daily Breakfast
- Candlelight Dinner in Bali
- Private Car & Speedboat to Gili Trawangan
- Guided Island Experience + Bike Ride
- Set Dinner by the Ocean in Lombok
- All Inter-island Transfers



LIMITED TIME
OFFER

Start & end in Bali | Includes Lombok transfers

- Valid for bookings till 18th Dec 2025
- Fall in love with each other... and with Indonesia.

Contact : 8448377902 | dmsales@balitrip.in

Editor's letter

I have always turned to nature for lessons. A river never stops flowing, it finds a way around the rocks. A tree survives storms not by resisting, but by bending. A flower blooms only after enduring long days of waiting. Nature, in its quiet wisdom, teaches us resilience, patience, and the courage to grow no matter what stands in the way.

The travel industry is no different. Like a restless river, it never pauses. For those of us in media, the flow is constant- one event, one story, one deadline leading into another. No sooner had we soaked in the energy of the OTOAI Convention in Moscow; a truly productive gathering where ideas sparkled like sunlight on water, than we found ourselves preparing for the IATO Special Issue. From outbound to inbound, it feels like witnessing both banks of the same river: one carrying us out to the world, the other reminding us of the treasures within.

This issue is especially close to my heart because at IATO, we turn our gaze to the forgotten child of India- our inbound tourism. Like a neglected tree that deserves nurturing, inbound holds the roots of our identity yet waits for the care and attention it deserves. Through stories directly from the industry's core, we attempt to water those roots with fresh conversations and perspectives.

Our cover story takes you onto the tracks of train tourism, echoing the journey of rivers that connect places, people, and stories across vast lands. We also take you into the serene embrace of Taj Bekal, a reminder that true hospitality, like nature, restores the spirit. And just as migratory birds remind us that the world is deeply interconnected, this edition will also travel with us to the TTM Maldives, where we engage with the finest hoteliers shaping tomorrow's horizons.

Every page you hold is curated with the same love and persistence nature shows us- resilient, flowing, and deeply human. I hope, as you read, you feel not just the pulse of the industry but also the quiet lessons of growth, revival, and connection that travel continues to teach us all.

Happy reading, always.

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

   : [travelturtlemag](#)





Travel Turtle Team

Publisher: **Harish Chandra Uniyal**

Editor: **Bharti Sharma**

Executive Director: **Sudipta Saha**

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

Assistant Editor: **Tripti Jain**

Sub-Editor: **Kashish Rawat**

Contributing Editors:

Inder Raj Ahluwalia

Misbaah Mansuri

Marketing Executive: **Rishi Arora**

Marketing: **Tejas Sharma**

Art Director: **Pankti Anjaria**

Rajas More

Legal Consultant: **Aditya Singh**

Photographer: **Khurshed Ahmad**

Circulation: **Pradeep Kumar**

Accounts: **Dinesh Kumar**



All information in Travel Turtle is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. Opinions/views expressed by third parties in abstract or in interviews are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced in whole or in part(s) without prior permission. The publisher assumes no responsibility for material lost or damaged in transit.

Printed and Published by: Harish Chandra on behalf of Trouvaille Media & Communications Private Limited; Printed at Shree Ram Print O Pac, D 10/5 (Basement) Okhla Industrial Area Phase II, New Delhi 110020 ; Published at Plot No.1, 311, Vardhman Sunrise Plaza, Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi 110096. Editor: Bharti Sharma



THERE'S ONLY **ONE** WASHINGTON, DC

EXPLORE THE
CAPITAL OF FREE EXPERIENCES!



 National Air & Space Museum

WASHINGTON
DC
WASHINGTON.ORG

USA
GoUSA.in

tboacademy 
Marketing | Conversion | Education

Start planning today with TBO.com

info@tbodmc.com | +91 7400198849

12-14
INDIA TO
THE ORIENT
**TRAIN
TOURISM
STEAMS INTO
A NEW ERA**

24-26
MALDIVES
ISLAND DESTINATION
THAT INDIANS LOVE

30-32
**THE IATO
EDGE!**

34-36
BACKWATERS &
BELONGING
TAJ BEKAL

44-45
**SINGAPORE
2025**
REVITALISING
STORIES!



Discover India with Expert

Domestic Travel Protection



**20+ high-risk
adventure sports**
activities covered



**Emergency medical
expenses & personal
accident cover**



Trip cancellation
cover for medical &
non-medical reasons



**Trip interruption,
trip delay & missed
connection benefits**



**Real-time
baggage tracking**
with TrackMate



Includes Asego
Pilgrim Protect
& much more



**24/7 Emergency
Medical Assistance**



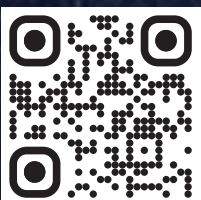
**Domestic Roadside
Assistance**



**Pan India
Presence**



**Customisable
Travel Insurance**



For partnership or more details, scan the QR code

Note: Assistance services are provided by Asego Global Assistance Private Limited. Please note that insurance is underwritten by an IRDAI authorised underwriter and is a subject matter of solicitation. The content expressed in this poster is for information purpose only and it does not accept any liability of any sort unless confirmed by an authorized representative of Asego. All Insurance policies are sold under the Corporate Agency of Asego Insurance LLP bearing IRDAI registration no. CA0776.

24x7 helpline: +91 8448582205 | customersupport@asego.in | claims@asego.in

*T&C Apply

New leadership elected at TAFI Northern India Chapter AGM 2025

The Annual General Meeting of the Northern India Chapter of the Travel Agents Federation of India was held under Chapter Chairman Mr Khushvinder Sarna. Elections for the 2025-2027 term were conducted, with all candidates elected unopposed: Mr Dinesh Kumar (Chairman, Inter Airways Pvt. Ltd.), Mr Rajiv Aggarwal (Secretary, Hindustan Air Travels), Mr Naveen Kumar Gupta (Treasurer, Travelco India), and Committee Members Ms Charu Arora (YTS Travel Services Pvt. Ltd.) and Ms. Niti Batra (Joy Travels Pvt. Ltd.).



Indo-Rwandan cultural night celebrates 'Art for Peace' in New Delhi

As part of the Rwanda National Day celebrations, the High Commission of Rwanda, in collaboration with Chavara Cultural Centre and with the support of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, hosted the Indo-Rwandan Cultural Night: 'Art for Peace' at the Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts, in New Delhi.



IRIS Reps adds Barceló Hotels & Resorts to portfolio

IRIS Reps, announces its newest partnership with Barceló Hotels & Resorts, adding yet another prestigious name to its growing global portfolio. This exciting collaboration will place special focus on promoting Barceló's stunning resorts in the Maldives and Thailand to the Indian travel trade.



Maldives unveils bold new logo and identity

In a bold move to bolster its presence on the global stage, the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/Visit Maldives) unveils an updated logo and refreshed brand identity. This transformation marks a significant yet subtle shift aimed at giving the iconic Maldives brand a more unified and visually consistent presence across all platforms.



Yorker Holidays expands internationally with new office in Bali

Yorker Holidays announces a significant milestone in its journey, the grand opening of its new international office in Bali, Indonesia. This exciting development marks a major step forward in the company's global growth strategy and its commitment to serving clients with excellence, wherever their travel dreams may lead.



IATO organises a 'Brainstorming Session' to prepare a unified white paper for the government

A Power-packed and exclusive first-ever full-day 'Brainstorming Session' of Active Members was organised by IATO in a Hybrid Mode. Mr. Ravi Gosain, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators apprised that it was truly heartening and encouraging for the IATO EC to see such an overwhelming response, with around 140 active members joining the session from across the country in Hybrid Mode. The strong pan India presence and depth of engagement made this one of the most meaningful sessions in recent times.



TripJack partners with BOXX insurance to launch CyberSafe

TripJack announces its strategic partnership with BOXX Insurance, a global cyber protection and Insurance company to launch CyberSafe, a cutting-edge digital security companion designed to keep modern travelers protected from evolving cyber threats.



PM Modi's state visit highlights strengthening India-Maldives ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarks on a State Visit to the Maldives from July 25 to 26, 2025, at the invitation of President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu. Marking the 60th anniversary of Maldivian independence, PM Modi serves as the Guest of Honour at the official celebrations on July 26.

Neemrana Hotels partners with UP and MP governments on two heritage restoration PPP projects

For nearly four decades, Neemrana Hotels has pioneered the art of reviving India's forgotten architectural treasures, turning historical ruins into revenue-generating heritage 'non-hotels'. These have breathed new life into 5000 years of India's past frozen in forgotten ruins.



Taiwan promotes 'Waves of Wonder' golf tourism with a Kolkata roadshow

Taiwan plans Golf promotion, its newest 'Waves of wonder', in India Expands its destination marketing to East India with a road show in Kolkata. Following a highly successful post-pandemic destination launch in India last year, Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA) is actively broadening its marketing efforts in India in order to solidify on gains and momentum that's been built so far.



Norwegian Cruise Line® reveals nearly 500 voyages worldwide for peak 2027 travel season

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), reveals its Northern Hemisphere spring/summer 2027 deployment – allowing travellers to get ahead on planning their ideal holiday. The season features nearly 500 individual voyages across 20 ships, departing from nearly 30 of the world's top homeports, including Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy; Southampton, England; Helsinki, Finland; Istanbul, Turkey; Copenhagen, Denmark and Reykjavik, Iceland.



Global Destinations appointed as the India Rep for Akoya Hotel & Spa

This partnership represents a major milestone in Akoya's global expansion strategy, with a strong emphasis on the rapidly growing Indian outbound travel market. Leveraging their extensive industry expertise and well-established network within the Indian travel trade, Global Destinations will lead efforts to position Akoya Hotel & Spa as a top choice for Indian luxury travellers, honeymooners, families, and bespoke MICE groups.

Singapore Tourism Board and IndiGo ink year-long strategic partnership to boost travel to Singapore

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and IndiGo, signs a year-long Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote Singapore as a leading leisure and business destination for Indian travellers and boost bookings through IndiGo's extensive network. This collaboration marks STB's first MOU with an Indian airline, and IndiGo's first with a national tourism board.



TAFI expands national footprint with launch of Punjab Chapter

The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) launches its 13th regional chapter in Punjab, marking a significant step forward in its mission to unify and empower travel professionals across the country. The inauguration, effective July 25, underscores TAFI's strategic focus on regional engagement and growth.

Kanoo Travel partners with QuadLabs to launch 'eo' corporate travel solution powered by Travog

Kanoo Travel has partnered with QuadLabs, to launch their own Corporate Travel Solution – 'eo'. This strategic collaboration aims to enhance corporate travel management by leveraging advanced technology to offer seamless, efficient, and cost-effective solutions for businesses across the region.



experience abu dhabi

📍 teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi

05 Days from
US\$ 449*
per person

Abu Dhabi Family Special

Inclusions:

- ✓ 04 Nights Stay in Abu Dhabi City Hotel
- ✓ Daily Breakfast
- ✓ Return Abu Dhabi International Airport Transfers on Private
- ✓ Abu Dhabi City Tour with a stop at BAPS Hindu Temple on Private
- ✓ TeamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi Ticket Only
- ✓ 1 Day Any 2 Parks as Yas Island Ticket only (Select from SeaWorld® or Ferrari World™ or Warner Bros. World™ or Yas Water World)

Remarks: Rates are based on DBL/TWN sharing basis & are Commissionable to Travel Agents. Rates and Offers are subject to change without prior notice & are subject to availability. Valid till 30Sep 2025 *T&C Apply.

Ottila International Pvt. Ltd.

Mumbai (Registered Office & Corporate Headquarters) : 022 6720 5000

Ahmedabad: +91 93761 20982

Bengaluru: +91 96 0648 4185

Chennai: +91 44 4555 8582

Coimbatore: + 91 99527 17750

Hyderabad: +91 88 8501 5970

Indore: +91 731 4911 374

Kochi: +91 75938 63903

Kolkata: +91 98301 19561

New Delhi: +91 11 4141 4242

Pune: + 91 89 7636 5200

Nashik: +91 253 231 0044

For Enquiries & Bookings, please contact any of our offices | **B2B Portal:** www.ottila.net





India to the Orient Train Tourism Steams Into a New Era

There was a time when the journey was the holiday. Trains were more than transport, they were moving worlds of polished wood, fine dining, and slow, unfolding scenery. That magic faded with the rise of cheap flights and express highways, but it is back on track. Across continents, luxury rail journeys are selling out, themed trains are turning travel into theatre, and in India, royal carriages are once again carrying travellers through history, comfort, and unforgettable landscapes.

- Bharti Sharma



From Steam to Streamlined Dreams

Once upon a platform, train travel was the very definition of romance and adventure. Handwritten tickets, steam curling into the morning air, and the steady rhythm of wheels on track made the journey as memorable as the destination. Then came budget airlines and express highways, and the golden age of trains began to fade. Today, the world is witnessing a revival. Train tourism made a grand comeback, not as a necessity, but as an experience worth travelling for. This is not about reaching a destination quickly. It is about creating a journey that is the destination itself.

The World Rolls Out the Red Carpet

Across Europe, luxury rail journeys are selling out months in advance. The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express glides through the Alps with

wood-panelled suites, white-gloved service, and champagne breakfasts. In South Africa, the Rovos Rail offers old-world elegance with panoramic views of savannahs and wildlife. Even global hospitality brands are stepping aboard. Accor has launched its own Orient Express-branded train, merging five-star hotel service with the charm of rail travel. Here, your train is a moving hotel, a lounge, and a theatre, while the world unfolds outside your window.

India's Iron Royalty

India has taken luxury train tourism to regal heights. The Palace on Wheels, Maharajas' Express, and Deccan Odyssey are icons of slow, immersive travel. These trains cover extensive itineraries, often lasting over a week, without the hassle of constant packing and unpacking. One day you might sip tea as Rajasthan's deserts pass by, and the

next you could be stepping into Khajuraho's temple complex. In the evening, you dine in carriages inspired by royal banquets. It is not just international travellers who are drawn to these experiences. More Indians are now booking these journeys to rediscover their own country in style and comfort.

Themed Journeys Beyond Geography

The new era of train tourism is not limited to covering long distances. It is about creating themed experiences. Scotland offers whisky-tasting train trips. Japan has gourmet trains that rival fine dining restaurants. In the United States, jazz-themed carriages bring live performances to the tracks. There are even art trains where every compartment is curated like a gallery. In each case, the train becomes an attraction in itself.

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Why Travellers Are All On Board

In a fast-paced world, train tourism offers the rare luxury of time. Time to watch the scenery change, to enjoy conversations, to read, to write, or simply to sit back. It is more sustainable than air travel, more scenic than highways, and deeply personal in its pace. The modern renaissance of train tourism has brought us back to an old truth. The joy is not only in arriving, but in the journey itself.

Must-Experience Luxury Rail Journeys International

1. Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, Europe – A legendary route linking London, Paris, and Venice with art deco carriages and silver-service dining.
2. Rovos Rail, South Africa – Known as the 'Pride of Africa', it travels between Cape Town, Pretoria, and Victoria Falls with vintage charm and wildlife views.
3. Seven Stars in Kyushu, Japan – A luxurious cruise train offering scenic coastal views, regional cuisine, and impeccable Japanese hospitality.

India

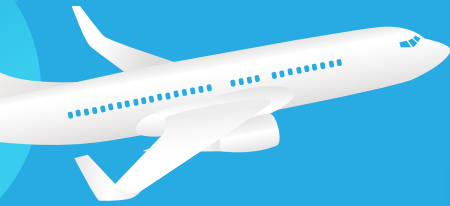
4. Maharajas' Express – Often called the most luxurious train in the world, it offers multiple itineraries covering Rajasthan, Agra, Varanasi, and Mumbai.
5. Palace on Wheels – A royal journey through Rajasthan's forts, palaces, and wildlife reserves, steeped in heritage and comfort.



Saudi

Where cool mountain air carries
centuries of stillness.





IATO @ 40



HONOURING THE PAST, DRIVING THE FUTURE

In 1982, a group of industry leaders came together with a bold vision: to create a platform that would give India's inbound tourism its own identity, its own voice, and its rightful place on the world stage.

-Tripti Jain

While foreign visitors were already arriving in small numbers, the industry lacked direction, unity, and representation. India needed a voice dedicated solely to inbound tourism, a body that could advocate, inspire, and drive growth. That spark gave birth to the Indian

Association of Tour Operators (IATO). Over four decades, IATO has championed the cause of inbound operators and also reshaped policies, pushed for reforms, created opportunities, and given India's tourism industry the

credibility it enjoys today. From visa facilitation to global branding, from protecting members in times of crisis to building roadmaps for the future, IATO has been at the centre of it all. As the 40th Annual Convention takes place in Puri, Odisha, under

the theme 'Rejuvenate Inbound @2030', IATO is celebrating its past and its promise for the future. Its office bearers reflect on this remarkable journey offering perspectives that blend history, pride, and an unshakeable belief in what lies ahead.





Rajinsh kaistha

The genesis of a movement

Rajinsh Kaistha, Sr. Vice President, captures the story of IATO's founding with both pride and urgency:

"When IATO was founded in 1982 by the late Mr Ram Kohli, India's tourism industry was at a crossroads. TAAI, the oldest association, was primarily focused on IATA concerns of the 1970s and '80s. There was no dedicated platform for inbound tour operators, despite inbound tourism having quietly existed since the 1960s. The absence of representation meant that operators had no unified voice. IATO was formed with the clear and single-minded mission of protecting their interests and putting India on the global tourism map. That remains at the heart of everything we do even today.

Over the years, IATO's advocacy has given the industry a seat at the table with the Ministry of Tourism and other departments. This engagement led to transformative

initiatives with participation in overseas roadshows, global travel marts, and closer cooperation with various ministries. We pushed for simplifying business processes and supported schemes like the Market Development Assistance programme. We also fought for policies that gave operators much-needed relief, such as bringing hotel tariffs back from being pegged in US dollars to Indian Rupees in the 1990s. These victories mattered to members and shaped the future of inbound tourism in India.

A landmark moment came in 2017 when the e-Visa on arrival was launched from the IATO platform by the then Home Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh. That was a proof that IATO's voice had reached the corridors of power. Today, as we mark 40 years, I feel that our greatest legacy has achieved milestones and we have



Sanjay Razdan

instilled a belief in the industry that when we speak together, change is possible."

Resilience in the face of crisis

For Sanjay Razdan, Vice President, resilience is the defining thread that

binds IATO's history.

"Over the last four decades, IATO has stood as a shield for its members in times of crisis. Whether it was global recessions, natural disasters, or the recent pandemic, we have always risen to the occasion. When borders shut during COVID, we fought to keep India's inbound industry alive in the eyes of global travellers. When natural disasters struck or advisories discouraged travel, IATO worked tirelessly to assure the world that India was safe and open. Resilience is not just a word for us; it is our way of survival.

Beyond crises, we have been instrumental in laying the foundations for long-term growth. Simplifying visa processes, advocating for e-Visa facilitation, and showcasing India with a unified presence at global fairs that these are not small achievements. They have been pivotal in turning India into a more accessible, attractive, and competitive destination.

As we celebrate our 40th convention, I see it as both a celebration and a strategy session. The theme, Rejuvenate Inbound @2030, was chosen deliberately. It is about embracing future-readiness, technology adoption, sustainable practices, destination promotion, and building global competitiveness. We have invited visionary speakers, policymakers, and thought leaders not just to talk, but to create actionable roadmaps. The message is clear: we are here to honour the past, address the present, and prepare for a resilient, innovative future."

Brand India on the global stage

Sunil Mishra, Hony. Secretary, credits IATO for strengthening Brand India and ensuring the



Sunil Mishra

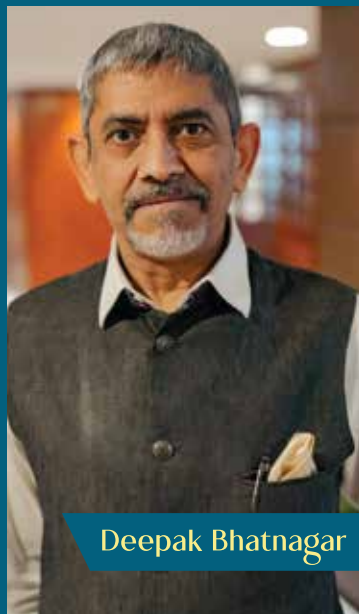
country is seen as a diverse, year-round tourism destination.

"The launch of the Incredible India campaign in 2002 was a watershed moment, and IATO played a crucial role in its success. But our contributions didn't stop there. We have continuously advocated for schemes like the MDA and the Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS), both of which provided critical support to tour operators. We fought hard for visa facilitation measures, which eventually led to e-Visa which made India accessible to millions of travellers who otherwise might not have considered us.

But what truly defines IATO's journey is how we've balanced big-picture branding with grassroots advocacy. We've promoted lesser-known destinations alongside the big-ticket ones. We've fostered public-private partnerships and ensured that the concerns of even the smallest operator were heard at the highest levels of policy-making. That is why inbound tourism has not just grown in numbers, but in diversity.



Yet, we must also be realistic. Challenges such as the shortage of quality hotel rooms, limited airline seats to key destinations, and the urgent need for infrastructure upgrades are very real. The 40th convention in Puri is not shying away from these issues. On the contrary, we are addressing them head-on, while also bringing fresh ideas to the table such as harnessing Artificial Intelligence for destination marketing, visitor engagement, and operational efficiency. If India is to remain competitive, we need to innovate as much as we advocate."



Deepak Bhatnagar

The bridge between industry and policy

For Deepak Kumarr Bhatnagar, Hony. Treasurer, two milestones define IATO's journey—the Incredible India campaign and the e-Visa introduction.

"These were game changers, and they happened because the government and industry came

together with IATO as the bridge. That is what we do best, we create dialogue, we create results, and we make sure that the industry's concerns are turned into action.

This 40th convention is proof of that philosophy. We've worked closely with the Odisha government to create not just a celebratory event but a business-driven one. We have curated business sessions, invited speakers who can genuinely influence outcomes, and ensured that the host state is given the exposure it deserves. The eight post-tours, all sold out to capacity, are a great example of that. They will allow our members to experience Odisha first-hand and take its story to



Viney Tyagi

international markets. For me, that is what IATO is about: turning opportunities into outcomes."

A growing family, A growing voice

Viney Tyagi, Hony. Joint Secretary,

believes that IATO's credibility is best measured by its expanding membership.

"Membership is about trust. Every month, new operators join us, and others aspire to qualify. That tells me that IATO has built a platform that delivers. We are seen as credible, influential, and effective, and that is why more people want to be part of this journey.

The 40th convention in Puri is a perfect example of what makes IATO unique. It is a celebration with cultural evenings and networking and a serious platform for strategy. We are creating a forward-looking roadmap, and at the same time, unlocking the tourism potential of Odisha. This dual approach of celebrating the legacy while shaping the future is what keeps IATO relevant."

Advocacy in action

For Rajiv Mehra, Immediate Past President, IATO's influence lies in turning advocacy into tangible results. "Over the past four decades, we've been able to drive policies that matter, from e-Tourist Visa to GST relief and infrastructure development. Even recently, we secured cancellation fee waivers with IndiGo, persuaded embassies to update their travel advisories, and worked with CAQM on extending timelines for greener vehicles. This directly impacts our members' businesses.

Our annual conventions are where collaboration really happens. They bring together state governments, central ministries, private stakeholders, and international partners to align on a shared vision. The 40th convention in Puri is no different. Themed sessions will look at sustainability, innovation, technology, partnerships, and

rediscovering India responsibly. The idea is to not just chase growth but to do it in a way that is sustainable, inclusive, and future-ready.

For me, the greatest strength of IATO has been its consistency. Through 9/11, the 2008 financial crisis, COVID, and countless other challenges, we've never wavered. We've always been there for our members and for India's inbound tourism. That is why we've lasted 40 years, and that is why we will lead for the next 40."



Rajiv Mehra

Celebrating the journey

Forty years on, IATO is a movement, a bridge, and a family. Its legacy is written in policies changed, crises weathered, members empowered, and destinations transformed. But its story is not about the past. It is about what comes next.

As the convention in Puri unfolds, one message rings clear: India's inbound tourism has untapped potential and IATO is determined to unlock it. With vision, resilience, and unity, the journey that began in 1982 is far from over; it is only gathering momentum.

Perfume Capital of India Kannauj

📍 Uttar Pradesh



INDIAN ESCAPADE

Odisha

**Timeless heritage meets
tomorrow's travel**

Odisha, India's best-kept cultural
secret, is finally finding its moment
in the global tourism spotlight.

-Tripti Jain





With its tapestry of golden beaches, temple architecture, tribal traditions, and untamed landscapes, the state offers a rare blend of spirituality, adventure, and authenticity. It is against this inspiring backdrop that the 40th IATO Annual Convention takes place in Puri which is a fitting choice that echoes Odisha's growing stature as a must-visit destination for both domestic and international travellers. The convention marks a milestone for India's travel industry and also celebrates Odisha as a destination poised to redefine experiential tourism.

Puri: The spiritual soul

Puri, the spiritual heart of Odisha, is renowned for the Jagannath Temple, one of the four sacred Char Dham pilgrimage sites in India. Millions gather here annually for the iconic Rath Yatra, when the deities embark on their grand chariot procession. Beyond its spiritual aura, Puri is also a coastal paradise with sun-drenched beaches, cultural vibrancy, and artisanal crafts that reflect centuries of tradition.

Konark: A masterpiece in stone

No journey through Odisha is complete without marvelling at the Sun Temple at Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built in the 13th century, this architectural wonder represents the chariot of the Sun God, with intricately carved stone wheels and sculptures that depict mythology, everyday life, and artistic mastery. Konark is a historical landmark and a symbol of Odisha's place in the world's cultural narrative. The Konark Dance Festival, held annually, brings alive this heritage with classical performances under the starlit sky which is a scene that fuses past and present seamlessly and leaves visitors with a sense of awe.

Bhubaneswar: Temple city of India

Known as the Temple City, Bhubaneswar is a living museum of over 700 temples that narrate the story of Kalinga architecture. From the grandeur of Lingaraj Temple to the serenity of Mukteshwar, the city is steeped in

devotion and artistry. Yet Bhubaneswar is not bound to its past alone. As the state capital, it is rapidly evolving as a smart city with modern infrastructure, cultural hubs, and international connectivity. For travellers, it serves as the gateway to Odisha's many wonders, balancing its timeless traditions with an eye toward the future.

Untamed nature

While temples and traditions define Odisha's cultural fabric, its wild landscapes complete the picture. The state is home to Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, Chilika Lake, where flocks of migratory birds and playful Irrawaddy dolphins enchant visitors. Simlipal National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, offers dense forests, cascading waterfalls, and elusive tigers that thrill adventurers. Bhitarkanika, often called India's 'mini-Amazon,' is home to thriving mangroves and giant saltwater crocodiles. These natural wonders showcase Odisha's commitment to

eco-tourism and sustainable travel, creating experiences that connect visitors with nature at its rawest. They also remind travellers that Odisha is as much a land of wilderness as it is of temples.

Living traditions

Odisha's identity thrives in its arts and crafts, and every village is a canvas of creativity. From the delicate filigree silverwork of Cuttack to the vibrant appliqué art of Pipli, the state's artisans have kept centuries-old traditions alive. The handloom heritage, especially the world-renowned Sambalpuri ikat which has carried Odisha's artistry to global platforms. Festivals play an equally important role in preserving culture. Durga Puja in Cuttack, the Rath Yatra in Puri, and tribal celebrations in Koraput make Odisha a cultural kaleidoscope, where every season offers a new rhythm of life. Travellers stepping into this world are not mere spectators; they become part of the living traditions that define the state.



INDIAN ESCAPEDE

A rising star in Indian tourism

The decision to host the 40th IATO Annual Convention in Odisha underlines the state's growing importance on India's tourism map. The government's proactive policies, enhanced connectivity, and focus on infrastructure have given the state the platform it deserves.

"Odisha is a jewel waiting to be discovered. For years, it has remained on the fringes of mainstream tourism, but today it stands ready to embrace the world. With its unmatched combination of heritage, nature, and culture, Odisha is destined to



become one of India's leading destinations," says J.K. Mohanty, Chairman – IATO Eastern Region.

Building a tourism future

Beyond heritage and culture, Odisha is actively investing in tourism development. Improved air connectivity from major Indian metros, better road networks, and luxury hospitality projects are opening new gateways. The state has also emphasized community - based tourism, ensuring local participation and sustainable growth. Adventure activities such as trekking in the Eastern Ghats, water sports on Chilika Lake, and eco-retreats along the coast are positioning Odisha as a dynamic destination for the modern traveller.

"This convention is more than an event; it is an opportunity to showcase Odisha to India's travel fraternity. We want visitors to see Odisha not just as a destination but as an experience — where every temple, every beach, every village has a story to tell,"



Culinary trails

Food in Odisha is an experience of its own. The traditional Odia thali, with rice, dalma (lentils with vegetables), and pakhalā (fermented rice), embodies the state's earthy flavours. Seafood lovers can relish prawn malai curry, crab masala, and the much-loved dried fish delicacies along the coast. And no mention of Odisha's cuisine is complete without chhena poda, the burnt cheesecake that originated here and has since

become a beloved delicacy across India. For international travellers, the cuisine offers a gentle yet authentic introduction to India's diverse food culture, striking a balance between subtlety and spice while celebrating the bounty of the land and sea.

Odisha awaits!

Odisha is an awakening to India's lesser-known wonders, to a heritage that whispers through stone carvings, to rhythms that echo in tribal dances, and to landscapes that silence the noise of the world. The 40th IATO Annual Convention is more than an industry gathering; it is a celebration of a state that has patiently nurtured its identity and is now ready to embrace global recognition. As the delegates will depart from Puri, they will carry strategies, insights and also a piece of Odisha in their hearts. Odisha awaits, timeless yet ever new.



NATURE MEETS MODERN LUXURY

#goodstay #goodfood #goodpeople

Travellers'
Choice



Tripadvisor



DARJEELING • GANGTOK • LACHUNG • PELLING • KALIMPONG • SILIGURI

AIRiQ
www.airiqonline.in

AirIQonline.in the most user friendly
National FIT Travel outline platform.

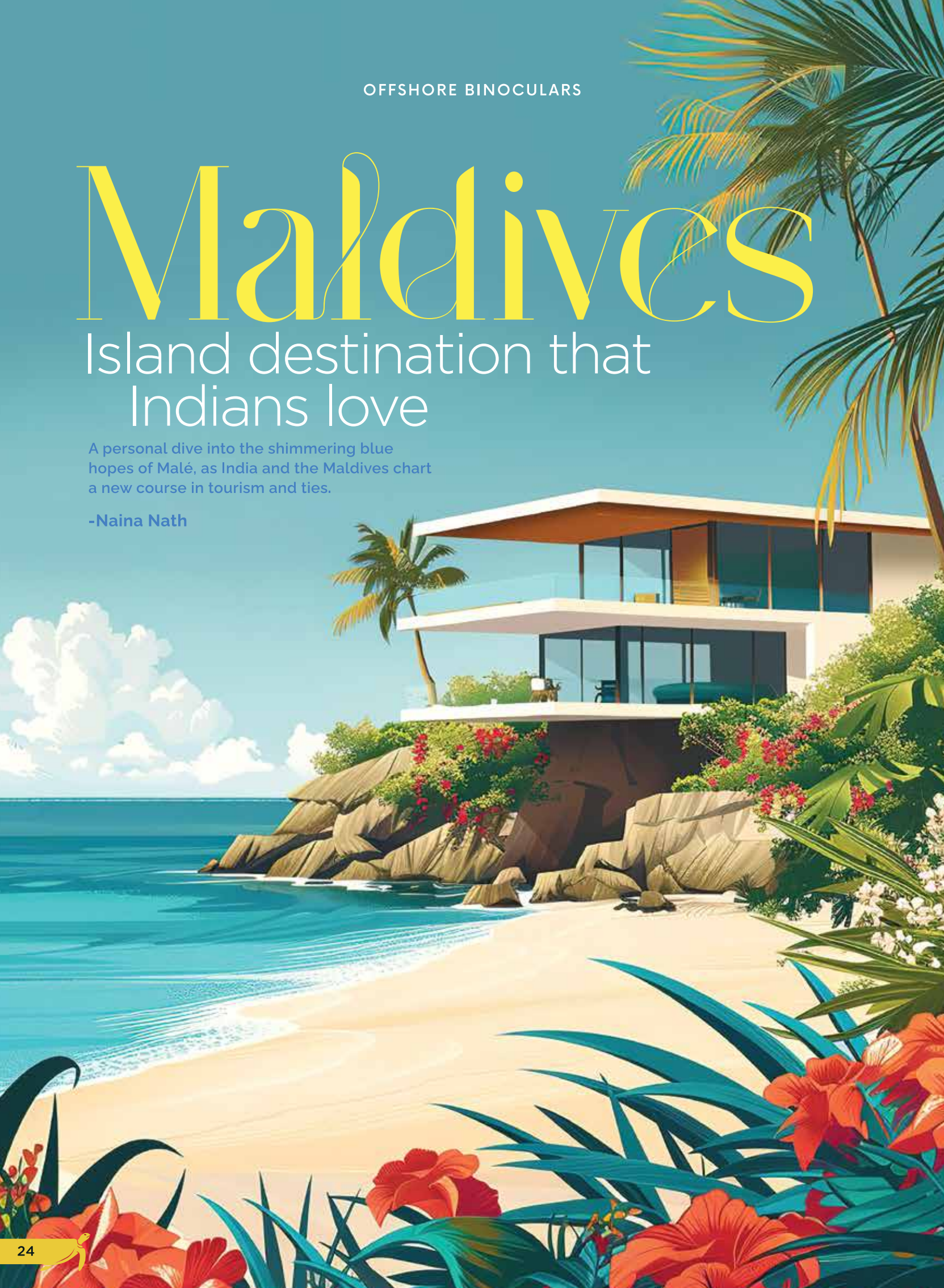
AirIQ.in our online **Fixed Departure**
platform offering more than 275 routes

Maldives

Island destination that Indians love

A personal dive into the shimmering blue
hopes of Malé, as India and the Maldives chart
a new course in tourism and ties.

-Naina Nath



I've always felt that certain places call to you, not just echo in your mind, but truly beckon your heart. For me, the Maldives is one such place. Think clear waters floating like jewels in the Indian Ocean, coral reefs so full of life they look surreal, and turquoise waters whispering secrets of serenity. As an Indian traveller, the Maldives has held a magnetic draw, accessible, exotic, and yet, intimately familiar.

Over the years, the country has become a go-to choice for everything from honeymoons to quick weekend getaways. Lazy breakfasts by the sea, snorkel glimpses of playful reef fish, evenings winding down under skies awash with stars; it's easy to see why few places can compare. But recently, beyond those dreamy experiences, I've watched the arc of Maldives tourism reflect something much larger; our evolving relationship, both as travellers and as neighbours.

Let's talk trends

Indian tourists were once the biggest wave of arrivals to the Maldives, steady and growing post-pandemic. Then came a dip, in early 2024, following some ill-advised remarks by Maldivian ministers, Indian arrivals nosedived (by about 33-42 per cent), pushing India from its top tourism spot to somewhere around fifth or sixth in source markets. Seeing President Muizzu extend a heartfelt invitation — calling India “one of our largest tourism source markets” and hoping “to welcome more Indian tourists to the Maldives”—felt like the first breath of fresh air after a contained fizz. Over and above tourism sentiment, this thaw gained substance when PM Modi attended the Maldives' 60th Independence Day as the Guest of Honour in July 2025, amidst chants of 'Vande Mataram' and a grand welcome that was both emotional and symbolic. That visit also sealed the restart of strategic and economic

cooperation: a \$565 million line of credit, MoUs spanning tourism, health, fisheries, and digital development, and launched talks on a free trade agreement. In his remarks, Muizzu called India a “crucial partner,” highlighting shared history and future.

Maldives is all up for game!

On the tourism front, the Maldives isn't shying away. It's aiming to welcome 300,000 Indian tourists in 2025, and pushing campaigns across India, bolstered by influencer outreach, cricket clinics, even film shoots, and forging new flight links from cities like Kolkata, Pune, and Chennai. All that makes me hopeful, not just for travel's sake but for what it signals: a mutual commitment to repair, revive, and recalibrate.

To better understand the renewed energy around Maldives tourism from an industry perspective, we reached out to key voices from leading hospitality brands operating in the region. Here's what some of them had to say about the evolving relationship with Indian travellers.



Rakesh Gupta, Account Director of Sales & Marketing, Sun Siyam Resorts

“The Indian outbound market has been central to the Maldives' tourism recovery. Even during uncertain times, Indian travellers showed remarkable resilience, as seen across our five Sun Siyam properties. From honeymoons and family holidays to weddings, India continues to deliver both

volume and value.

Maldives appeals through direct connectivity, visa-free access, and the privacy-luxury of the one-island-one-resort concept. Today's Indian traveller seeks curated, meaningful experiences, and our tailored offerings across segments have received strong responses. We're seeing longer stays, larger groups, and more multi-generational family trips, along with rising demand for scuba diving, water sports, spa rituals, and private dining — experiences beyond the room. Looking ahead, collaboration is key. Indian tour operators bring deep consumer insight, and paired with the unique Maldivian product, the potential is immense. From weddings and premium leisure to MICE, joint innovation will drive value and sustainable growth for both markets.”



Moumita Paul, Director of Sales & Marketing - South Asia & GCC, Centara Hotels & Resorts

“Centara's journey in the Maldives has been remarkable. Until 2024, we operated Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa and Machchafushi Island Resort & Spa, but our vision went further. In November 2024, we introduced Centara Mirage Lagoon Maldives, the country's first underwater-themed family resort, followed by Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives in April 2025. Together, they form Atollia — a unique two - island ecosystem offering seamless access to diverse dining, adventure, and relaxation.

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Indian travellers remain our largest market and a cornerstone of our operations, with strong appeal across couples, honeymooners, and families. From all-inclusive overwater villas to underwater-themed experiences, interconnecting rooms, extensive vegetarian dining, and Hindi-speaking staff, we design with their preferences in mind. Enhanced connectivity, visa-free travel, and cultural affinity have strengthened this bond. Atollia's concept enables parents and children to enjoy distinct yet connected experiences, redefining the Indian guest experience in the Maldives."



Rahul Gupta, Senior Sales Manager, Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa

"The travel bond between India and the Maldives remains strong, shaped by proximity and shared appeal. With flights of 1.5–3.5 hours from Mumbai, Delhi, Kochi, and Bangalore, the Maldives is a natural choice for short-haul luxury getaways. Romance, serenity, visa-free entry, and direct flights have made it a favourite, keeping India at the top of arrivals for five consecutive years and among the leading markets in 2024. At Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa, we value our relationship with Indian travel planners, staying collaborative, consistent, and culturally aware. Through roadshows, events, tailored packages, culinary customisation, and destination training, we ensure partners feel supported. Firsthand visits help agents

guide clients authentically. Looking ahead, more direct flights from second-tier Indian cities, growth in the MICE segment, and digital storytelling via influencers and Bollywood tie-ups can further strengthen Maldives' appeal for Indian travellers—and we are fully committed to driving that growth."



Pankaj Kumar Pandey, Cluster Sales Manager, Villa Resorts

"The Maldives–India tourism connection is rooted in proximity, familiarity, and genuine warmth. At Villa Resorts, our strong partnerships with Indian travel agents have been central to our growth, helping us welcome a significant number of Indian guests.

Support from both governments, through improved connectivity, simpler travel processes, and mutual understanding, has further strengthened this bond.

Indian travellers typically seek world-class resorts with exceptional service, the exclusivity of the one-island-one-resort concept, pristine natural beauty, and fine dining paired with memorable activities. Meeting these expectations is not just important; it defines their stay. Since the pandemic, the Indian share of our guests has grown to a healthy double-digit figure. Strategic collaborations, a refreshed brand identity, and an unwavering focus on safety and luxury continue to drive this momentum. Our aim is simple: make every Indian guest feel the Maldives was made for them."



Dhawal Vyas, Founder, Tathya Hospitality Services

"With the Hon'ble Prime Minister's recent visit, Maldives–India relations have taken a positive turn, likely boosting tourism and positioning India back in the top three source markets soon. Now is the time for the Maldives Marketing & PR Corporation (MMPRC) to act proactively. A multi-city roadshow across key Indian cities can reconnect with the trade, strengthen partnerships, and restore traveller confidence. Alongside trade initiatives, shaping public perception is essential—a focused marketing and PR campaign highlighting recent diplomatic progress can help reset sentiment in a value-conscious, relationship-driven market like India.

At Tathya Hospitality Services, we've strengthened on-ground presence for our partner resorts, positioning Pullman Maldives as a premium, family-friendly all-inclusive escape and Mercure Maldives as a boutique, adults-only retreat—both seeing growing interest from India. As travel sentiment rebounds, clear messaging, consistent engagement, and targeted positioning can firmly re-establish the Maldives as a trusted, aspirational choice for Indian travellers."

As International destinations compete for the Indian outbound traveller, the Maldives serves as a reminder that relevance often matters more than reinvention. There's no single way to sell the Maldives, but for the Indian market, success lies in knowing exactly who you're selling it to.



MOMENTS MADE FOR YOU



📍 Doha Corniche

visit
QATAR

Explore Qatar

03 DAYS FROM

US\$ 283*_{PP}

Inclusions:

- ☑ 02 Nights Accommodation with Breakfast
- ☑ Return Airport Transfers on Private
- ☑ Half Day City Tour on Private

Remarks: Rates are based on DBL/TWN sharing basis. Rates & Offers are subject to change without prior notice and subject to availability. Valid till 30th Sep 2025. *T&C Apply.

Ottila International Pvt. Ltd.

Network: Mumbai (Registered Office & Corporate Headquarters): 022 6720 5000

Ahmedabad: +91 93 7612 0982

Hyderabad: +91 88 8501 5970

New Delhi: +91 11 4141 4242

Bengaluru: +91 96 0648 4185

Indore: +91 73 1491 1374

Pune: +91 89 7636 5200

Chennai: +91 44 4555 8582

Kochi: +91 75 9386 3903

Nashik: +91 25 3231 0044

Coimbatore: + 91 99 5271 7750

Kolkata: +91 98 3011 9561

For Enquiries & Bookings, please contact any of our offices. | Book with Ottila





Reimagining Indian Inbound with

IATO

As the Indian travel and tourism industry grows every year, one event that emerges with clarity and conviction is the 40th edition of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) Annual Convention. Held in the heritage-rich state of Odisha, this year's theme is 'Rejuvenate Inbound @2030,' which is a blueprint for long-term transformation.

- *Sudipta Saha*



At the helm of this ambitious vision is Ravi Gosain, President, IATO, a seasoned voice in Indian tourism. Known for his strategic foresight, negotiation skills, and unwavering advocacy for inbound travel, he brings both gravitas and agility to an industry in flux.

Why this theme, why now?

The theme serves as a pointed response to the shrinking presence of India in the global tourism conversation. The challenges are many—reduced financial allocation for overseas promotions, withdrawal of the Service Export from India Scheme (SEIS), absence from international travel fairs, and the discontinuation of the Market Development Assistance (MDA) by the Ministry of Tourism.

These concerns, once dismissed as temporary disruptions, have now snowballed into systemic gaps that require strategic intervention.

As President, I've been in continuous dialogue with the ministries to address issues such as visa facilitation, safety protocol training for stakeholders, and reimagining the Incredible India campaign with stronger international visibility," shares Ravi Gosain.

How this convention stands apart

While each IATO convention carries its own signature, the 40th edition arrives with renewed focus and evolved content. From dynamic business sessions and powerful keynote addresses to curated state presentations and the much-anticipated IATO Travel Mart

B2B meetings, this edition promises depth, diversity, and dialogue.

"The entire platform has been rethought. The business sessions are designed to address real pain points, while networking events—be it over luncheons, dinners, or one-on-one booth interactions—are engineered for meaningful conversations," says Ravi Gosain.

The valedictory and inaugural ceremonies are expected to offer more than ceremonial flair — they will articulate policy directions and reinforce IATO's long-standing demand for tangible government support.

Response from the Industry

Despite an industry that remains cautiously optimistic, the convention has already drawn substantial attention. With 432 registered participants and growing, and representation from 16 states, the Ministry of Tourism (GOI), speakers, and key stakeholders, the response has been nothing short of electric.

"Rooms are getting booked like there's no tomorrow. The industry is eager. They're eager for engagement, answers, and above all, direction," states Ravi Gosain. He further states that this is not merely an event; it's a mirror to the industry's mood and momentum.

Every challenge: Blessing in disguise

The central challenge remains the same: limited global marketing. Without visibility, India risks fading from the global traveller's

imagination — something Ravi Gosain is adamant to prevent.

"Our task is to ensure India remains competitive, visible, and welcoming. Through collaboration with states, ministries, and international allies, we aim to restore India's rightful place on the global tourism map," he affirms. The convention will serve as a forum to address these challenges through policy roundtables, strategic presentations, and informal discussions across the exhibition floor.

Why Odisha?

Odisha, this year's host state, stands as a shining example of policy-driven tourism development. With its improved air connectivity to Bhubaneswar, enhanced access to Puri, and the rapid growth of star-category accommodations, Odisha has quietly but firmly become an ideal destination for inbound tourists.

"Odisha has done everything right—from infrastructure to branding. They've emerged as a leader in creating a tourist-ready ecosystem, and their selection as host reflects our recognition of that vision," Gosain acknowledges. As IATO marks its 40th milestone, this isn't just a celebration of endurance—it's a reset, a roadmap, and a rallying cry. And with Ravi Gosain at the helm, the message is clear: the time to rejuvenate Indian inbound is not tomorrow—it's now.

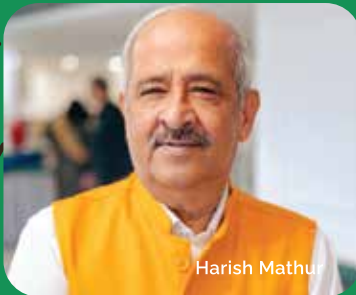
The IATO Edge!

In the crowded space of trade associations, one name has consistently stood tall in shaping the destiny of India's inbound tourism – the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO).

-Tripti Jain



For decades, IATO has been the voice of inbound tourism and also the bridge between stakeholders, government bodies, and international markets. What makes it different from other associations is its deep-rooted focus on collaboration, inclusivity, and advocacy that goes beyond transactional boundaries. For its members, IATO is a family with a shared purpose.



Harish Mathur

The voice of inbound India

IATO has become a second name for inbound tourism, tirelessly working to strengthen India's position in the global tourism map. Unlike other associations that spread their attention across multiple verticals, IATO's laser-sharp focus on inbound has allowed it to build unmatched expertise and authority.

Harish Mathur, IATO Executive Committee Member shares, "What sets IATO apart is its unwavering commitment to inbound tourism. While many associations represent diverse segments, IATO has created a strong and dedicated platform for inbound operators. This ensures that our concerns, opportunities, and challenges are addressed with clarity and precision, giving India a unique voice in global tourism discussions."

Collaboration as strength

While advocacy is at its core, IATO thrives on collaboration by bringing together government agencies, foreign offices, state boards, and



Tony Marwah

allied partners to create an ecosystem that benefits everyone. This spirit of inclusivity has been instrumental in sustaining the industry through challenging times. Tony Marwah, IATO EC Member explains, "IATO has always been different because it doesn't operate in silos. Our ability to engage with the Ministry of Tourism, aviation partners, and even international markets gives us an edge. We are not merely an industry body but a collective force that aligns stakeholders towards common goals, whether it's policy advocacy or showcasing India at global marts."



Manoj Matta

A platform for every member

IATO's strength lies in its ability to create space for both large tour operators and smaller players. By fostering inclusivity, the association ensures that opportunities reach every corner of the membership spectrum. Manoj Matta, IATO EC Member adds, "IATO is a true representation of the entire inbound fraternity. Whether you are a big operator in metropolitan cities or a smaller company from a tier-II town, you get a voice here. That democratic structure and equal opportunity approach set IATO apart from other

associations, making every member feel valued and heard."

Innovation and adaptability

Over the years, IATO has proven its ability to evolve with changing times. From embracing digital platforms for its conventions and training programmes to addressing new-age concerns such as sustainability and experiential tourism, the association has kept pace with global trends.

Sejoe Jose, IATO EC Member, highlights, "The difference with IATO is that we don't resist change; we embrace it. Be it technology, sustainability, or the changing profile of the traveller, IATO is always at the forefront of adapting. That adaptability ensures that our members remain competitive in a fast-evolving marketplace."



Sejoe Jose

Strong policy advocate

One of the most distinctive aspects of IATO is its constant engagement with policymakers. The association is often the first to table industry issues and the last to leave the negotiation table until solutions are reached.

Rishi Kapoor, IATO EC Member explains, "We have successfully pushed for reforms in visa policies, taxation, and infrastructure, all of which directly benefit inbound tourism. That persistence and proactive approach to policy advocacy distinguish IATO from other associations that often remain reactive."

PUBLIC EYE



Rishi Kapoor

The allied advantage

Beyond its core operator members, IATO has extended its umbrella to allied members who represent hotels, transporters, technology providers, and other service partners. This holistic approach ensures a 360-degree ecosystem where every segment of the inbound chain is represented.

Ashok Dhoot, IATO EC Allied Member elaborates, What makes IATO unique is its inclusivity towards allied members. Our contributions are not seen as secondary; instead, we are considered integral partners in the journey of inbound tourism. That balance between operators and allied partners strengthens the entire value chain."



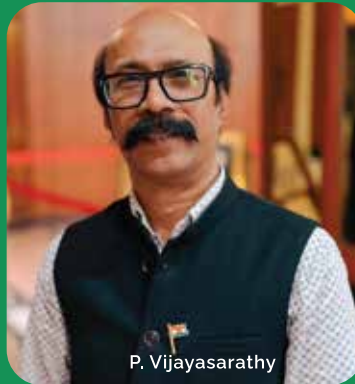
Ashok Dhoot

Bridging tradition and modernity

IATO has managed to stay relevant by blending its deep-rooted traditions with a forward-looking mindset. Its conventions are both a celebration of India's cultural

wealth and a stage for discussing futuristic industry solutions.

P. Vijayasathy, IATO EC Allied Member, reflects on this synergy and shares, "IATO stands apart because it bridges the gap between tradition and modernity. On one hand, it proudly showcases India's heritage, while on the other, it equips members with the tools to embrace innovation, digitalisation, and global best practices. This dual approach ensures long-term sustainability."



P. Vijayasathy

A culture of community

At the heart of IATO lies a sense of belonging that makes it more than just an association. Members often describe it as a family, bound by common challenges and collective aspirations. This culture of community is what inspires loyalty and active participation. Wasim Shaikh, IATO EC Allied Member concludes, "IATO is different because it doesn't treat membership as a transaction. It's a community where members look out for each other, share resources, and grow together. That human element makes IATO not just an association but a family you can depend on."

What truly sets IATO apart from other associations is its ability to combine focus with inclusivity, advocacy with adaptability, and

tradition with innovation. It is an association that listens, leads, and nurtures and ensures that every stakeholder feels part of something larger than themselves. In doing so, IATO has redefined what an industry body can achieve, becoming not just a voice of inbound tourism, but its beating heart.



Wasim Shaikh

TRAVEL TO EUROPE

Explore your dream destination in Europe with us.
We make travel easy and effortless.



OUR DESTINATION

- Greece
- Italy
- France
- Balkans
- Switzerland
- Czech Republic
- The Netherlands
- Poland

For Queries

operations@saffronworld.travel
www.saffronworld.travel

Address

Stationsplein 45, 4th floor, 3013
AK Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Contact No.

Utkarsh: +91 9999807969
Prince: +91 9555 842672

HEADS IN BEDS

BACKWATERS & BELONGING

At Taj Bekal, wellness floats on still waters and family bonds deepen in the Kerala breeze

-Misbaah Mansuri





HEADS IN BEDS

There are few places where time folds itself neatly around your family's rhythms—where toddlers' laughter doesn't clash with luxury, and grandparents are not merely accommodated but cherished. Taj Bekal is one such place. Wrapped in the lush curve of Kerala's backwaters, it doesn't just host you. It holds you.

We arrived, all six of us, just after noon. My parents, my sister and her two little ones, and I — each with our own expectations and weariness — were welcomed not just with jasmine garlands, but with a kind of knowing warmth. Staff members greeted the babies by name by day two. My mother's dietary preferences were remembered without reminders. And my father—once skeptical of hotel yoga—was won over by a single session under swaying palms.

Check-in to stillness

The arrival at Taj Bekal is less a formality and more an exhale. Coconut groves flank the entry path, and the Kappil River shimmers just beyond the lawns. Each villa seems carved into the landscape, private yet porous to nature.

After a short welcome and a coconut water in hand, we were shown to our rooms: elegantly understated spaces with laterite stone, dark teak, and open courtyards. The private plunge pool tempted even the toddlers, and the outdoor rain showers made every rinse feel like a ritual. The property manages the rare feat of being both expansive and intimate—it stretches luxuriously along 26 acres, but nothing ever feels far.

We unpacked quickly—because who can linger indoors when lunch awaits at Backwater Café?

Flavours that feel like home—only better

Lunch that first day was our introduction to what would become a culinary love affair. At Backwater Café, the food is local without being heavy, nuanced without being intimidating. There was meen pollichathu — pearls of fish wrapped in banana leaf and slow-cooked with spice — and malabar parotta, buttery and flakey like it had been made for someone you love.

As we ate, we watched houseboats drift across the backwaters. My nephew fed rice to a curious myna that landed beside her table. This, we realised, was the tone of Taj Bekal — beauty unforced, comfort unspoken.

A day that swayed and sparkled

The afternoon unfolded in soft, sun-dappled chapters. We walked through the property, exploring little bridges, temple-like structures, and hammocks stretched between coconut trees. The kids darted ahead while the rest of us fell behind, paused by the sound of flute music rising from the activity lawn.

Then came an hour of terra bouncing, kayaking, zip-lining, and archery—an outdoor burst of joy designed as much for grown-ups as for the little ones. By 4:30, we were ready for something gentler, and we found it at Chaya Kada, the resort's charming tea set-up by the backwaters.

There, we were served saffron chai in clay cups, paired with banana fritters and jaggery-dusted jackfruit crisps. As the sun melted into gold, we moved to the beach for the sundowner. Wine in hand, toes in the sand, the children



building sand castles, we watched the sky break open in blush and coral. That night, under a waxing moon, we climbed aboard for moonlight rafting—a soft drift through the backwaters, lit only by lanterns and laughter. We ended the day with dinner at By the Bay, the seafood grill by the ocean. The prawns were sweet, the grill smoky, and the air thick with salt and serenity.

Wellness, woven deep

The next morning began with yoga at J Wellness Circle, and here's where Taj Bekal surprised me again. This wasn't yoga-as-tourism. It was real, rooted, and reverent. Our instructor led us through a gentle flow as birds chattered overhead and the river glistened in early light. And then came my Abhisheka experience.



This is no ordinary spa ritual. It is spiritual in design and devotional in rhythm. Inspired by ancient Vedic cleansing practices, it began with a steam bath that coaxed out more than just physical toxins. Then came a pouring of warm seawater and panchamruta—a nectar blend infused with five sacred ingredients—gently cascading from a traditional urn. The therapist's hands moved like prayer, pressing sandalwood paste into my skin, massaging tired limbs, and tracing marma points with precision. At one point, a soft chant played in the background—invoking goddesses and calm. By the end, I felt not just pampered but purified.

HEADS IN BEDS



A second day of slow delights

The rest of the day unfolded with equal intention. A floating breakfast in our private pool — idiyappam, papaya jam, coconut chutney, and fresh pineapple juice — was served with a side of giggles from the kids who insisted on “swimming for pancakes.” Later came pickleball, which had my father unexpectedly competitive, and another decadent lunch at Backwater Café, this time featuring a full Kerala Sadhya, laid out on banana leaves. Each bite told a story: bitter melon, ash gourd, mango pickle, parippu curry, coconut-avial the sweet-sour-spicy rhythm of a coastal feast.

That evening, we boarded a sunset cruise through the Valiyaparamba backwaters. Coconut trees leaned in from the banks, and egrets glided low. We sat in silence, everyone lost in their own thought or simply in the light. Dinner was again al fresco—this time with grilled lamb, smoky paneer tikka, and wood-fired naan. Under fairy lights and banyan trees, the children fell asleep on their mother's lap while we finished dessert and coffee.

Nature, nurture, nostalgia

Our third day began with a

bird-watching walk—kingfishers, drongos, and bee-eaters flitting across our path. The babies were surprisingly still, watching as our guide pointed out nests and whispered local legends. Later, we ventured into Thonikadavu, a protected forested area where nature feels raw and untouched. We saw butterflies the size of palms and mango trees older than our guide's grandfather. For lunch, we returned hungry and happy.

By late afternoon, we visited Bekal Fort—a red stone sentinel overlooking the sea—and a humble Goushala, where the children fed cows and asked curious questions. That evening was all fun: table tennis, PS5 games, and a family board game battle over ladders and snakes. Dinner that night was a private gazebo set-up near the backwaters. Lanterns flickered. A live flute played in the distance. The kids danced barefoot. And for the first time in a long time, all of us lingered—not because we had to, but because we wanted to.

Blessings in the breeze

Our final morning began, once again, with yoga. Then breakfast, rich and familiar: appams, stew, and cardamom-laced coffee. We

visited the Malik Deenar Masjid, Madhur Temple, and Anandapuram Temple—a trio of sacred spaces, diverse and deeply rooted in the region's soul. The day ended with shuttle badminton on the court, laughter echoing between serves. And then, finally, check-out. Only, it didn't feel like we were checking out. It felt like we were gently being released—sent back into the world a little more whole.

The joy of being remembered

More than the postcard setting, more than the activities or even the unforgettable food, what Taj Bekal gave us was the comfort of being seen. Whether it was the server who remembered my sister's almond milk request, the lifeguard who high-fived my nephew each morning, or the yoga teacher who told my mother, “Come again, ma—it was peaceful with you here”—it was a resort that made space for all of us. We arrived as individuals with suitcases. We left as a family with a shared memory.

That, perhaps, is the highest form of hospitality. And Taj Bekal has mastered it.



Immerse Yourself in Royal Heritage, Untamed Nature & Soulful Stays



ABHEYGARH by Alsisar Hotels
Weddings by Trulyy India



Trulyy The Shakti Vilas
Udaipur



Trulyy The Maharana Bagh
Udaipur



Trulyy Rudransh Inn
Jodhpur



Trulyy The Amar Mahal
Udaipur



Trulyy Gir Lion Safari Camp
Sasan Gir



Trulyy The Kumbha Residency
Kumbhalgarh



Trulyy The Jawai Leopard Kingdom
Jawai



Trulyy The Blackbuck Trails
Velavadar



Trulyy Kumbhalgarh Safari Camp
Kumbhalgarh

UPCOMING PROPERTIES



Trulyy The Kanooja Palace
Kumbhalgarh



Trulyy The Kanooja Palace
Kumbhalgarh

Call Now: +91 93280 16885/86/87 | 079 2397 7600

Our Destinations:

Udaipur | Kumbhalgarh | Jodhpur | Jawai | Sasan Gir
Velavadar | Jaipur | Munnar



www.trulyy.in

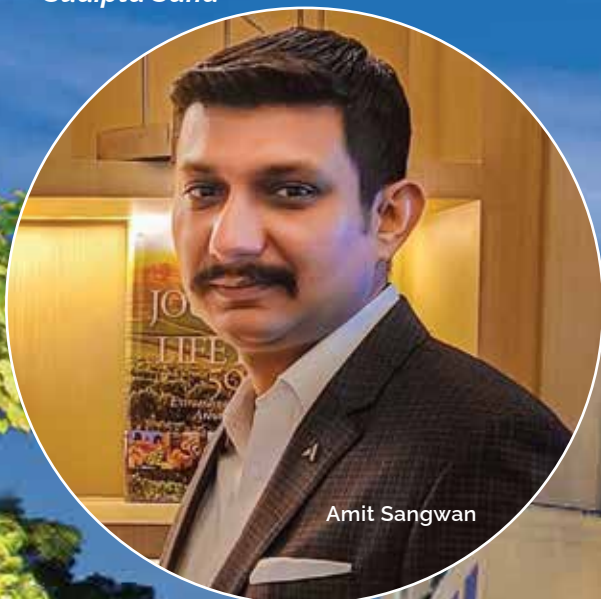
HOTELLIGENCE

Novotel Ahmedabad

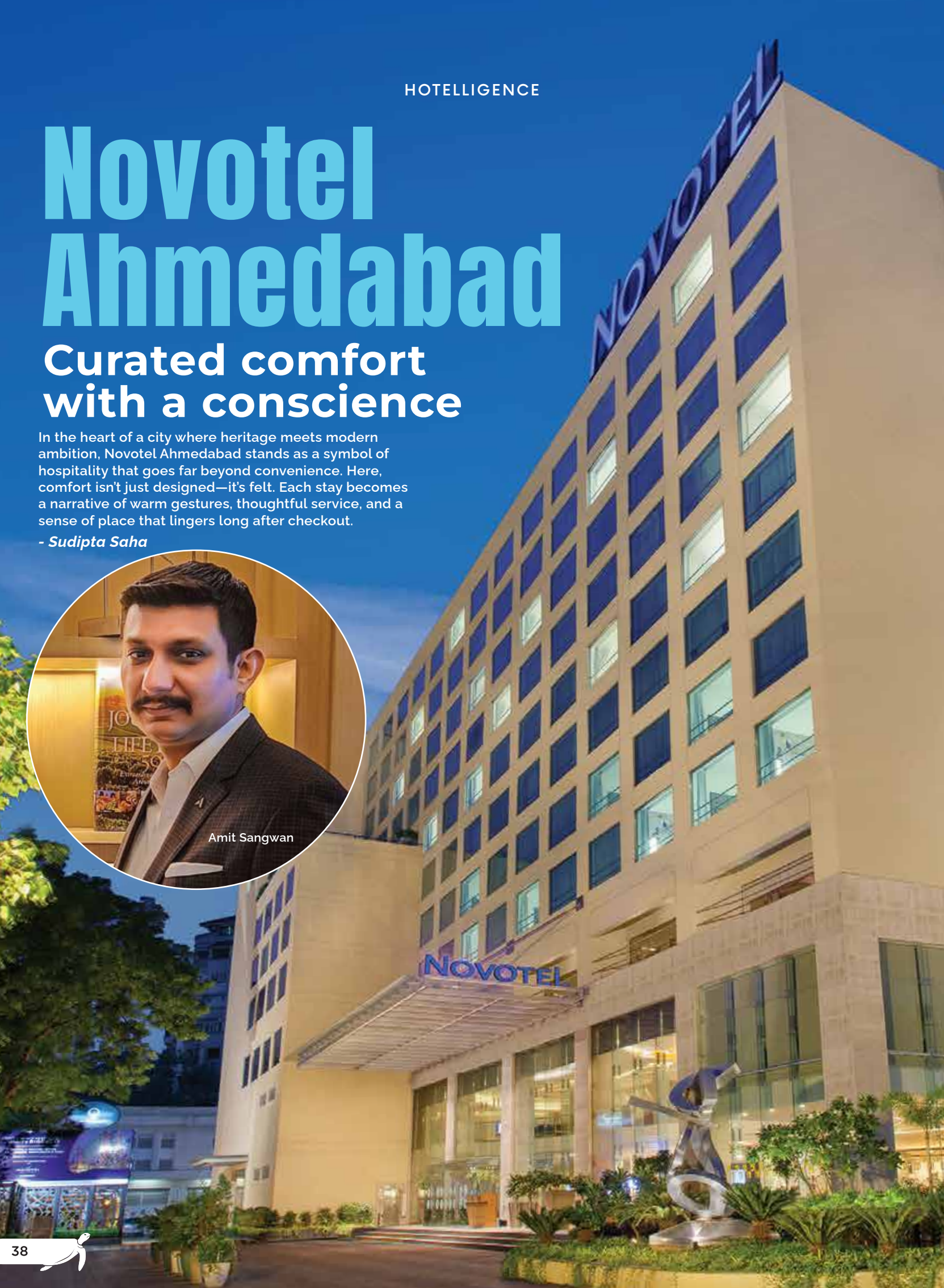
Curated comfort with a conscience

In the heart of a city where heritage meets modern ambition, Novotel Ahmedabad stands as a symbol of hospitality that goes far beyond convenience. Here, comfort isn't just designed—it's felt. Each stay becomes a narrative of warm gestures, thoughtful service, and a sense of place that lingers long after checkout.

- Sudipta Saha



Amit Sangwan



Rooted in the 'Rhythm of the City'

From the moment guests walk through the doors, they're welcomed not just into a hotel, but into a living reflection of Ahmedabad itself. The design, the experiences, and the service philosophy are all in sync with the city's vibrant yet grounded spirit. "What sets Novotel Ahmedabad apart is our unique blend of location, hospitality, and personalised experiences," says Amit Sangwan, General Manager. He further states, "Every corner of the hotel reflects the soul of the city. We don't just provide a place to stay—we offer a way to live Ahmedabad, in a way that feels authentic to each guest." Whether its business or leisure, the hotel adapts effortlessly to each guest's pace. Business travellers enjoy state-of-the-art meeting rooms and seamless digital conveniences, while leisure guests can explore the city at their own rhythm using the hotel's MyByk service—one of many thoughtful touches that set the tone.

A culinary language of care

Novotel Ahmedabad understands that food is never just food—its comfort, culture, and memory rolled into one. At The Square, the all-day dining restaurant, breakfast turns into a leisurely ritual, while lunch and dinner buffets present a celebration of global and local flavours. Quick bites are elevated through Grab & Go, and coffee finds its finest expression at Café Deli-Tel, a favourite among guests looking for quiet moments between meetings or after long days of exploration. "We believe dining is a key part of the guest experience. That's why we've designed options that are not just varied, but also emotionally resonant—whether it's a comforting coffee or an indulgent dinner," shares Sangwan.

Infini: Dining under the stars

The hotel's latest culinary offering, Infini, is a space that captures imagination as much as appetite. Open from 7 PM to 2 AM, this women - driven, fully sustainable restaurant offers a European - inspired menu served in a setting

that feels nothing short of magical. "Infini is not just about food—it's an experience. It reflects our values of sustainability, inclusion, and conscious luxury. It's a space where you dine under the stars, and every dish has a story to tell," Sangwan explains.

The ambiance invites connection. Whether its couples celebrating special moments, families bonding over dinner, or solo travellers seeking a soulful escape, Infini's allure lies in its ability to transform meals into memories.

Consistency that feels personal

In a fast-moving hospitality landscape, Novotel Ahmedabad has found the delicate balance between innovation and consistency. Behind its polished service lies a philosophy of care that touches every part of the guest experience.

"We focus on anticipating needs, listening to feedback, and empowering our team. Consistency, for us, is about being deeply personal in everything we do — from a

smooth check-in to a genuine conversation," says Sangwan. Staff training, real-time guest feedback loops, and smart technology ensure every visitor is not only heard but remembered.

Comforts that go beyond the usual

What truly make Novotel Ahmedabad unforgettable are the little details that quietly say, 'you matter'. The hotel is proudly pet-friendly, allowing guests to bring their furry companions along for the journey. Children can enjoy thoughtfully designed play areas, and long-stay guests benefit from in-room kitchenettes that bring a sense of home to their travels. Sustainability isn't a trend here — it's a foundation. Energy-efficient systems and eco-conscious practices are seamlessly woven into the guest journey, allowing one to relax without compromising the planet.

In every gesture, there's care. In every experience, there's intention. Novotel Ahmedabad doesn't just host—it connects. Because here, hospitality isn't a service — it's a feeling. And every guest is part of the story.





IATO Chapter Chairmen

Paving the road for tourism!

India, with its captivating beauty and rich cultural heritage, offers travellers endless moments of wonder. From diverse landscapes to unique experiences, the country leaves a lasting impression on every visitor. The India Association of Tour Operators (IATO) is showcasing this vibrancy, with Chapter Chairmen driving innovative initiatives to boost inbound tourism.

- Sudipta Saha



India's allure is woven from threads of vibrant culture, breathtaking landscapes, and the unmistakable warmth of its people. From ancient cities steeped in history to pristine natural wonders, the country offers a journey rich with discovery at every turn. Each destination tells its own story, each encounter leaves a lasting impression, and every moment reflects the nation's timeless beauty.

According to the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024 report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India is ranked 39th among 119 countries. In the previous index published in 2021, India was ranked 38th. As per a report, India recorded 18.89 Million International Tourist Arrivals in 2023 and Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) through tourism during 2023 surged to Rs. 231927 Crore. Several incredible projects were launched by the Ministry of Tourism to offer an incredible experience to the global travel and tourism industry. Here's a glimpse into what IATO Chapter Chairmen have to say about inbound tourism and efforts to change the scenario of tourism.



Mr Mahendra Pratap Singh
Chairman IATO Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter

Inbound Momentum: The tourist flow in the state of Madhya Pradesh has incredibly gone up as compared to previous year. Today, tourists are exploring the vivid colours of this magnificent state. From UNESCO World Heritage sites such as Khajuraho and Sanchi to the lush forests of Kanha and Bandhavgarh, it offers travellers a perfect blend of

history, nature, and culture. As per a report in 2024, MP welcomed a record 13.41 crore visitors, representing a 19.6 per cent increase over 2023, a 50.6 per cent rise compared to 2019, and an astonishing 526 per cent surge relative to 2020. It also stated that among these, foreign tourist arrivals totalled roughly 1.67 lakh in 2024.

Game-changing steps: The India Association of Tour Operators (IATO), in close collaboration with the state tourism department, is driving a series of strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing tourist inflow into Madhya Pradesh. As Chapter Chairman, my mission is to showcase the state's unparalleled charm on every possible platform. I often say, "Dekho Apna Desh, Sabse Pehle Madhya Pradesh," the phrase perfectly captures our vision to position MP at the forefront of domestic and inbound tourism.

In recent months, the department has been organising Regional Tourism Conclaves in multiple cities across the state, leading up to the grand Madhya Pradesh Tourism Mart. These conclaves serve a dual purpose: they educate and empower local tourism stakeholders, while also fostering collaboration within the industry. The upcoming Tourism Mart will act as a showcase of the state's vast offerings, from its UNESCO World Heritage sites and wildlife reserves to its vibrant cultural heritage.



Mr Manas Mukherjee
Chairman - Jharkhand Chapter

Inbound Momentum: Created in 2000, Jharkhand is a land of natural wealth, rich forests,

mineral reserves, and vibrant tribal traditions. Once hindered by Maoist unrest, the state has now entered a phase of renewed growth, with the Tourism Department actively driving visitor interest through targeted projects. New attractions such as a Glass Bridge and Ropeway are in development, while the Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation has partnered with Coalfields CCL to launch India's first Mining Tourism experience. The hospitality industry is responding, with brands such as Taj, Radisson, ITC, Ramada, Lemon Tree, and Sarovar investing in the state. A dedicated land pool for tourism projects is also underway.

Key improvements, including professional tour guides, well-maintained transport, and a tourist helpline, are being addressed to enhance visitor experience. The state's tourism themes range from pilgrimage and tribal heritage to eco-tourism, wildlife photography, and community-based homestays. Hidden gems like the Gaur Sanctuary at Mahuadanr, the only one of its kind in India, add to the state's allure. With its cultural richness, scenic beauty, and expanding infrastructure, Jharkhand is positioning itself as an emerging tourism hotspot, offering travellers a blend of authenticity, adventure, and innovation.

Game-changing steps: When it comes to IATO membership, building numbers in my state remains a challenging task. Although membership is slowly increasing, much of this growth comes through personal influence rather than widespread interest. I believe it is essential for us to re-examine our approach and explore new ways to showcase the value of IATO, so that more stakeholders see it as a platform worth joining and engaging with.

Mr Sunil Singh Rana
Chairman - IATO Uttarakhand Chapter

Inbound Momentum: Uttarakhand's tourism sector has seen exceptional growth over the past year, reinforcing its position as

one of India's premier destinations for pilgrimage, adventure, and nature-based travel. The state recorded 5.96 crore visitors in 2023-24, a remarkable rise compared to previous years. Of these, 56 lakh pilgrims embarked on the revered Char Dham Yatra, underscoring the state's spiritual pull. By the first half of 2025, more than 35 lakh pilgrims had already visited the sacred shrines.



The surge goes beyond religious tourism. Adventure hotspots, wildlife sanctuaries, and heritage landmarks across Uttarakhand have experienced robust footfall, helping the state build a more diverse and resilient tourism portfolio.

Game-changing steps: As Chairman of the IATO Uttarakhand Chapter, I have focused on empowering tour operators and fostering strong collaboration with the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB). Together, we introduced guide training programmes to enhance service quality and prepare for growing tourist inflows. Recognising that connectivity is vital, I have consistently advocated for better air links to key destinations.

In partnership with UTDB, we developed innovative products such as the Manaskhand Express, a 10-night spiritual rail journey through Kumaon, and niche initiatives like the Nakshatra Sabha astro-tourism campaign. To boost community participation, we launched a homestay booking portal and offered subsidies under the Deendayal Upadhyay Homestay Scheme.

Marketing incentives for



international tour operators, particularly during events like the International Yoga Festival, have strengthened Uttarakhand's global presence. These combined efforts are reviving inbound tourism and positioning the state as a destination where tradition, nature, and innovation meet.



Mr K. Ranga Reddy
Chairman IATO Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Chapter

Inbound Momentum: The last year has been a fantastic time for tourism in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. We've seen a noticeable buzz and a real increase in visitors, which is a great sign. People are discovering the unique blend of ancient history in Warangal and the bustling, modern vibe of Hyderabad. Down in Andhra Pradesh, the serene coastlines and Buddhist sites like Amaravati are really catching on. This positive trend isn't happening by accident; it's the result of close collaboration among everyone from the state tourism departments to the local tour guides. It's been incredibly rewarding to see our region get the recognition it deserves as a must-visit destination, offering travellers truly authentic and unforgettable experiences.

Game-changing steps: As the IATO Chapter Chairman, I've focused on a three-pronged approach to really get things moving. First, we've actively promoted the region through dynamic roadshows and participation in major travel expos, making sure our unique

destinations stand out. Second, we've built stronger partnerships with government bodies and local businesses to create a more welcoming and seamless experience for tourists. This includes everything from better signage to improved visitor facilities. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we've empowered our local operators and Guides. We've held practical workshops on digital marketing and promoted sustainable practices, giving them the tools they need to succeed in today's travel landscape. These efforts are all about building a sustainable and thriving tourism industry that benefits our communities and delights our visitors.



Mr Himanshu Agashiwala
Chairman - IATO Western Region

Inbound Momentum: Maharashtra's tourism sector has shown growth; however, much of this is driven by NRI travellers and tourists transiting to southern states who make brief stops in Mumbai and other cities of Maharashtra. At present, the state's Ministry of Tourism is quite active. Statistics show that in 2023, 3.39 million foreign travellers arrived in Maharashtra, compared to 5.50 million in 2024. While the figures indicate growth, these numbers largely consist of NRIs and transiting passengers.

Game-changing steps: I have only recently taken over as IATO Chairman – Western Region, while Mr. Pravin Shah continues to serve as IATO Chairman, Maharashtra Chapter. Over the past two months, Maharashtra has undertaken

several initiatives, including organising familiarisation (FAM) trips for select inbound agents from North India to Pandharpur and Kolhapur districts. The aim was to showcase the rich culture and heritage of Maharashtra.



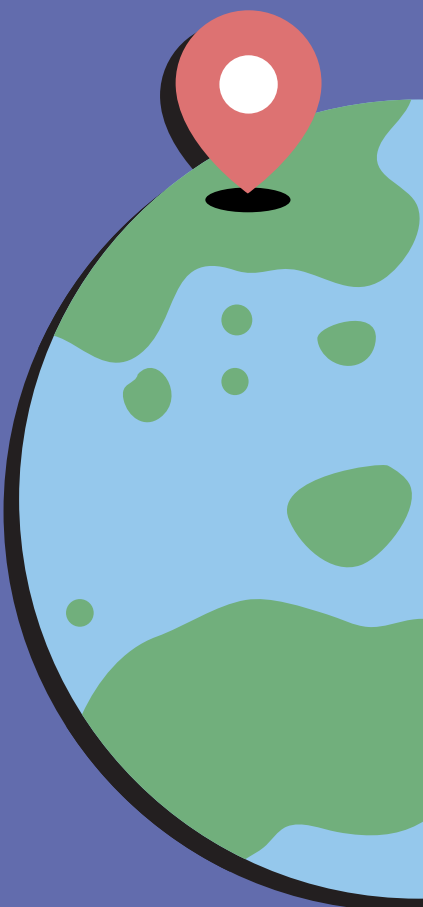
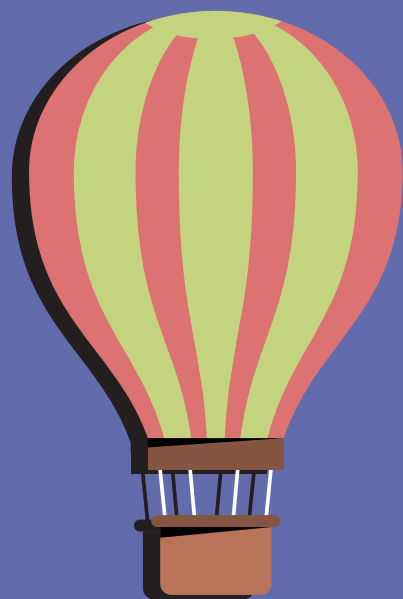
Mr Debjit Dutta
Chairman – IATO West Bengal Chapter

Inbound Momentum: The temporary restrictions on tourist and medical visas from Bangladesh certainly created a sharp void in our inbound traffic, given the historic and cultural closeness we share. But what's been remarkable is how this challenge has opened new doors. Travellers from Europe and ASEAN countries are not just visiting Bengal as a stop on their itinerary; they're coming with the intent to experience much more. They're walking with artisans through lanes lit by the spirit of Durga Puja, sharing a plate of panta bhaat in a village courtyard, and experiencing the mangroves of the Sundarbans. This isn't simply tourism; it's a slow, emotional journey where visitors are connecting heart-to-heart with our people and culture. That, in my view, is the kind of inbound momentum that is far more sustainable and rewarding for the state.

Game-changing steps: For West Bengal and Eastern India to truly thrive as tourism destinations, we need good infrastructure and vision-driven collaboration. Strengthening cross-border circuits, opening up lesser-known destinations, and building skills at the

grassroots level are not just policies; they are game-changing steps that can transform how the world experiences our region.

More initiatives are currently in the pipeline, along with plans to recruit 1,000 tour guides who will be officially approved and trained by the Maharashtra Tourism Department.





SIMPLY DELIGHTFUL

Discover a world of comfort, elegance, and thoughtful hospitality at Radisson, where every stay is designed to be unforgettable. Choose from 260 beautifully appointed rooms, including Superior, Premium, and Business Class rooms, as well as luxury suites—each thoughtfully equipped with modern amenities such as a mini bar, in-room personal safe, hair dryer, tea/coffee maker, and iron with ironing board.



For those seeking a more extended or residential-style stay, Radisson Residences offer 30 fully serviced apartments, including Studio, 1 BHK, 2 BHK, and 3 BHK options. Each apartment features a fully equipped kitchen with induction stove, oven, microwave, refrigerator, and all essential kitchenware. Added conveniences include a washing machine, LED lighting, magnifying and defogging mirrors, and designated dining areas—perfect for long-term stays with all the comforts of home.



Radisson
HOTEL & RESIDENCES
KATHMANDU

Lazimpat, P.O. Box 2269, Kathmandu, Nepal
T +977 1-4511818 | radisson@radkat.com.np
www.radissonhotels.com/kathmandu



Singapore 2025:

Revitalising stories!

As Singapore rises to global tourism dominance, STB's newest initiatives and immersive offerings aim to redefine how Indian travellers engage with the Lion City. Markus Tan, Regional Director (India, Middle East, South Asia and Africa), Singapore Tourism Board and Michael Ma, Assistant Chief Executive, Sentosa Development Corporation share their insights on the new offerings.

-Tripti Jain

A journey rooted in friendship

In a world teeming with destinations eager for attention, Singapore stands apart for its efficiency, attractions, and rare ability to evolve with its audience. Ranked in top five globally in international tourism, the city-state is relevant for Indian market. This year, marking 60 years of India-Singapore diplomatic ties, is a celebration of shared history, and the start of a deeper, more emotive journey between the two nations.

Markus shares, "2025 is symbolic; it's about commemorating a relationship that goes beyond policy and numbers. We're weaving a narrative that reflects how Singapore lives in the hearts and memories of Indian travellers."

Singapore's evolving soul

Today's Indian traveller is more diverse than ever. From large families and multi-generational groups to solo adventurers and digital influencers, expectations have transformed. Singapore has taken the lead to reach the hearts of everyone. Speaking on the same Markus shares, "Whether it's a mother-daughter getaway, a bachelor's trip, or a solo woman traveller on a self-discovery path, Singapore offers a deeply personal experience. What sets us apart is how

we adapt those experiences to fit the emotional needs of our guests."

This adaptability extends from world-class safety and ease of travel to the way experiences are curated across lifestyle, culture, and entertainment. And no destination within Singapore reflects this emotional dynamism better than Sentosa. Highlighting more about Sentosa Michael shares, "Sentosa isn't just a resort island—it's an ecosystem of meaningful leisure. For Indian travellers, it's that one place where everyone starting from thrill-seekers to peace-lovers can find their own rhythm."

Game changers and storytellers

Two of STB's flagship programmes launched this year is aimed at creating emotional resonance - the Game Changers Studio and 60 Insiders. Game Changers Studio invites India's most influential minds, across travel, business, media, and culture to explore Singapore through tailored lenses. These are immersive journeys that spark stories and partnerships. Explaining more about the initiatives Markus shares, "We're inviting those who influence travel decisions and culture. When a thought leader sees Singapore



Markus Tan



through a unique frame, be it sustainability, design, or innovation. They go back with a mission to share their story and experience with the world."

Then comes the deeply creative and crowd-powered 60 Insiders initiative. From different regions and industries across India, these insiders are curated as cultural ambassadors. Through their own perspectives, be it via reels, blogs, or documentaries they become storytellers of modern Singapore. Furthermore Markus adds, "The idea is to offer 60 different perspectives on the same city. Their stories are raw, personal, and refreshingly real. They're shaping how Singapore is seen, felt, and imagined in Indian minds."

The online diaries of Singapore

In a world dominated by digital narratives, STB's content strategy is designed to spark emotional curiosity before travellers even pack their bags. Each story shared by an Insider or Game Changer is part of a growing digital tapestry that's reaching deep into India's Tier II and Tier III cities. Markus shares his thoughts and explains, "We're no longer relying solely on traditional media. We're investing in short-form videos, live walkthroughs, bite-sized narratives, formats that mirror how Indians consume travel inspiration today."

This means potential travellers don't just read about Singapore, they feel it through shared moments: a chai-inspired cocktail at a rooftop bar, a midnight walk along East Coast Park, or a Bollywood dance class inside an art gallery. These digital touchpoints are often the first spark in a traveller's decision journey.

Nightlife, culture and comfort

While Singapore's family-friendly appeal remains timeless, there's a new energy coursing through its veins, particularly in its nightlife and after-dark culture. Indian millennials and Gen Z travellers are now seeking nightlife that's not only safe but also eclectic and layered with local character. Sharing more about this Michael says, "You'll find Indian travellers soaking in a jazz set in a Chinatown speakeasy, or dancing at a beach club in Sentosa after a food walk and the beauty is, they can do all this while feeling completely safe and culturally comfortable."

Singapore's continued focus on urban wellness, nature integration, and inclusive public spaces ensures solo and first-time Indian travellers feel welcomed, oriented,



Michael Ma

and protected, making it a go-to for independent explorers.

MICE, memories, and more

Singapore's transformation also extends into the business domain. Indian corporate travel is bouncing back fast, and STB's push in the MICE sector is equally emotional as it is strategic. Markus shares, "Today's corporate incentive travellers want meaningful encounters. We're creating corporate experiences that also allow for bonding, learning, and rejuvenation."

Sentosa has evolved into a playground for corporate imagination, hosting everything from leadership offsites to wellness-centric MICE events. Explaining more about the experiences Michael shares, "We see top executives ziplining before panel discussions, or meditating on the beach before a strategy session. That kind of integration makes Singapore unforgettable and deeply effective for business travellers."

A timeless friendship

At the heart of all this innovation and evolution lies something more intangible: friendship. Singapore's efforts in 2025 are celebrations of a 60-year-long partnership with India that continues to blossom in newer, more vibrant ways. Markus shares, "Our bond with India is emotional, historical, and forward-looking. The travellers coming in today are part of a shared cultural story we've been telling for decades."

This shared story is about discovery, identity, and voice. It's about Indians feeling at home in a city that mirrors their ambition and imagination. He adds, "Singapore has always been about contrasts and harmony. In 2025, we're proud to say it's also about kinship; with Indian travellers at the very heart of our story."

A city that listens

As borders blur and cultures intermingle, Singapore is leading the charge in co-creating meaningful travel with purpose-led experiences. For the Indian market, it means access to a destination that listens, adapts, and always, always inspires. Markus concludes, "At the end of the day, it's about Indian travellers feeling that Singapore has been built a part for them. Singapore 2025 is a movement. One where stories are shared, bonds are strengthened, and a new generation of Indian travellers find their second home in the Lion City."



OTOAI Convention

Where the future of travel met the soul of a city

When I first stepped out into Moscow's summer sun, I realised this convention was going to be more than just another industry gathering.

-Bharti Sharma

Domes, dreams, and discussions

The air was alive part history, part ambition as the city's iconic onion domes and broad boulevards framed the stage for an event that was as forward-looking as it was unforgettable. The 6th OTOAI (Outbound Tour Operators Association of India) Convention, held on July 11, 2025, at The Carlton, was a living conversation about where travel is heading, fuelled by sharp minds, shared ideas, and the backdrop of one of the most magnificent capitals in the world.

Moscow was the perfect host

Moscow is a city that doesn't whisper its story, it sings it. From the fairytale silhouette of St. Basil's Cathedral to the formidable

elegance of The Kremlin, every view felt like stepping into a postcard. Even the Metro stations looked like underground palaces, reminding us that beauty here is not confined to the surface.

During the welcome notes, Shravan Bhalla, the coonvention chairman said, "Moscow is a symbol of intelligent, modern hospitality." And standing there, surrounded by a city that blends imperial history with cutting-edge efficiency, I couldn't agree more. The choice of Moscow was not just about location, it was about making a statement: that the future of tourism belongs to cities that honour their past while embracing innovation.

Sessions that shaped the day

The energy inside the convention hall was electric. Each session was crafted to not just inform but to challenge. The 'Connected Travel' panel opened the floor, diving deep into the urgent need for speed, safety, and scale in travel services. Deven Parulekar of SaffronStays took us on a journey



Welcome to 6th

EVENT AFFAIR



were right, Moscow leaves a mark. Not just on itineraries, but on the way we think about tourism.

The 6th OTOAI Convention was not simply a success. It was a blueprint for how our industry can marry heritage and innovation, ambition and authenticity. And for me, it was a reminder of why I love being part of this world, because in travel, as in life, the journey is always richer when you share it.



into the future, showing how technology and personalisation will shape the traveller's tomorrow. And then came the AI keynote by Dr. Prashant Pansare, easily one of the most talked-about moments of the day. His insights made AI feel less like a distant concept and more like an immediate tool, capable of unlocking new ways to understand travellers, predict trends, and create experiences that feel tailor-made.

A chorus of industry leaders

It wasn't just the content; it was the people who made this convention extraordinary. The speaker line-up read like a who's who of travel and tourism. Dev Karvat from Asego, Sharad Gowani from VFS Global, Irshad Dadan from One Above, and Ankush Nijhawan from TBO Tek brought not only expertise but an authenticity that connected instantly with the audience. These were not abstract speeches. They were roadmaps, grounded in reality, yet ambitious in scope.

More than a slogan

'Fast Forward Future - The Intelligent Travel' was the official theme, but by the end of the day, it felt like a collective mindset. Speed was about instant bookings and real-time updates. Safety

meant compliance and trust. Scale was about building systems that can handle tomorrow's volumes without losing today's quality. And intelligence? That was the heart of it all - personalised, tech-led journeys for travellers who know exactly what they want and when they want it. One speaker put it perfectly: "The future of travel isn't ten years away - it's already knocking on the door." Sitting there in that hall, I believed it.

Perfectly planned, beautifully executed

From the first handshake over morning coffee to the signing of the MOU between VFS Global and OTOAI, the day flowed with precision. The B2B sessions were purposeful, the Q&As were lively, and there was a sense of genuine connection in the air. Even in the busiest moments, it felt like the event had space, for ideas, for conversations, for the kind of networking that will spark collaborations months down the line.

A city, A convention, A lasting impression

As the final remarks echoed through the hall, I stepped outside to find Moscow bathed in golden evening light. The city seemed to mirror the mood of the convention: proud of its heritage, bold about its future. Chairman Shravan Bhalla and Mr. Evgeniy Kuzlov of the Moscow City Tourism Committee



EVENT AFFAIR

“

The OTOAI Convention held in Moscow served as an excellent platform for meaningful dialogue, networking, and collaboration within the travel and tourism fraternity. The sessions were thoughtfully planned, addressing both opportunities and challenges faced by the Indian Travel Fraternity today. I particularly valued the exchange of innovative ideas and the chance to connect with industry stalwarts, who are equally passionate about driving positive change in our sector. Asego has always believed in the power of collective growth, and events like these play a pivotal role in bringing the industry together.

Dev Karvat,
Founder & CEO, Asego

“

It was a great convention. The participants were young and energetic, and the host committee, along with the EC, truly behaved like gracious host... every small need was taken care of. Each dinner and event felt unique and different from the last, creating a constant flow of excitement and anticipation.

Komal Seth,
Director, Linkin Reps

“

Moscow and St. Petersburg were nothing short of magical—where timeless elegance meets unexpected charm. From the grandeur of Red Square to regal palaces, scenic canals, and a nightlife that sparkles till dawn, Russia had us enchanted at every turn. Grateful to the OTOAI team for their flawless planning and heartfelt dedication. This convention was more than just an event—it was a perfect blend of unforgettable experiences and meaningful business connections, paving the way for many more travellers to discover the wonders of Russia.

Alpa Jani,
Founder, Ace Connect

“

Russia was an unforgettable destination and this convention was so well organised and curated. We had the best 6 days spent in this beautiful country and looking forward to selling the destination to our clients soon and this couldn't have happened without we being a part of OTOAI convention.

Abhineesh Anand,
Director, Kamal Tours and Travels



Representing
Luxury | Boutique | Wildlife



Madhya Pradesh

Jamtara Wilderness Camp, Pench
Kanha Jungle Lodge
Bandhavgarh Jungle Lodge

Kerala

Vythiri Resort, Wayanad
Vayal Veedu, Muthanga (Wayanad)
Reen Resort Aanavilasam, Thekkady
Somatheeram Ayurveda Group
Mountain Club, Munnar

Karnataka

Kaav Safari Lodge, Kabini

Maharashtra

AsmiVilla, Tadoba

Rajasthan

Fort Rajwada, Jaisalmer

Ladakh

Ladakh Sarai, Leh
Tara Mountain Sarai
Zang'ser Sarai, Zaskar

Assam

Kathoni, Kaziranga



Call Us:
+91-9810950312



Email ID:
medhavi@kalaava.com

Kuda Villingili

Redefining time and space

In a world where travel has become more than ticking off destinations, a new kind of luxury is taking centre stage, one that offers deep connection, mindful experiences, and meaningful time. Ali Solih, Director, Sales & Marketing, Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives shares his vision.

- Tripti Jain



Ali Solih



Nestled in the North Malé Atoll, Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives embodies this shift with an ethos that's as poetic as it is purposeful. At Kuda Villingili, they create a state of being which allows their guests to slow down and rediscover what truly matters.

Luxury with soul

Forget marble bathtubs and butler bells, at Kuda Villingili, luxury begins with intention. Set amidst turquoise lagoons and fringed with powder-white sands, the resort offers 75 villas, including 36 overwater sanctuaries that float like dreams above the Indian Ocean. famous for its service the property is charming and extravagant. Speaking more about this Ali shares, "We combine the timeless charm of Maldivian hospitality with a modern spirit of mindfulness. Every detail here is thoughtfully designed to nurture connection—whether it's with nature, loved ones, or oneself."

A market with heart

The Indian market has become one of the strongest pillars in Kuda Villingili's growth story, and it's about the nuances. "From honeymooners and big-fat family vacations to solo retreats and wellness-focused escapes, the diversity is incredible. The resort has been quick to adapt, offering vegetarian and Jain dining options, culturally aware service, private celebration packages, and even curated itineraries for Indian guests celebrating anniversaries, weddings, or milestone birthdays," shares Ali.

Waves, wellness, and wow moments

Beyond the scenic perfection lies a world of experiences curated with purpose. Kuda Villingili is a place to lounge and a destination to live. Explaining more Ali adds, "We've gone beyond the beach. Surfing at Chickens Break, wellness rituals in our oceanfront spa, or culinary journeys through

global cuisines, every moment is curated to inspire.

The resort is home to the Maldives' largest pool at 150 metres, winding through tropical palms and chic cabanas. Guests can dine on Nikkei flavours at Mar-Umi, relax in a cigar lounge paired with rare wines, or rejuvenate in eight overwater spa villas that seem to float on serenity.

Standing out, staying ahead

In a region as competitive as the Maldives, uniqueness is currency. For Kuda Villingili, standing out comes from within, through values, not vanity. Ali says, "Anyone can build a beautiful resort. What sets us apart is how we make people feel. That emotional connection is what keeps guests coming back and telling their friends. Instead of relying solely on architecture or luxury taglines, the resort invests in community - driven programming, wellness workshops, kids' activities, and immersive cultural moments that allow guests to experience authentic Maldivian life."

The agent advantage

While technology has changed the travel booking landscape, Kuda Villingili continues to place strong emphasis on one of its most trusted allies: travel agents. Talking more about the agents Ali shares, "Indian travel agents are storytellers and trusted advisors. Their word carries weight, especially in a relationship-driven market like India. The resort conducts regular FAM trips, webinars, and roadshows to educate, engage, and empower agents to confidently pitch Kuda Villingili as a bespoke luxury experience. They help us personalise our product better. Their feedback is invaluable, and we make sure to listen."

Marketing that feels personal

Kuda Villingili's marketing strategy for India is rooted in storytelling, segmentation, and soul. Instead of

blanket messaging, the resort adopts a tailored approach. Ali shares, "We focus on segments such as honeymooners, wellness travellers, families, and corporates to create narratives that speak their language. From collaborations with Indian influencers to custom content for platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, the resort ensures its brand isn't just seen—it's felt. Travel shows, luxury wedding platforms, and destination branding are also part of the mix. It's about relevance. We want to show Indian travellers how Kuda Villingili fits beautifully into their stories."

Not just a stay

Perhaps what makes Kuda Villingili so special is its philosophy, a mindful pause in a rushed world. Here, every moment is an invitation to reconnect with loved ones, with the ocean, and with oneself. Ali explains, "When we say 'redefining time and space,' we mean it. Our guests leave feeling recharged, refocused, and reconnected. The resort has become popular not just for leisure travel, but for micro weddings, incentive groups, surf retreats, and wellness immersions—all tied together by the resort's signature mix of warmth and wonder.

A journey to the heart

As the luxury hospitality landscape continues to evolve, Kuda Villingili stands as a testament to what today's travellers truly seek: meaning, mindfulness, and magic. "The future of travel is emotional. It's about how places make us feel. And at Kuda Villingili, we want every guest to feel deeply cared for, understood, and inspired. For Indian travel professionals and guests alike, Kuda Villingili is a resonant journey into luxury with soul," Ali concludes.



Shushant Tiwari, Sales Manager, Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives

The Maldives has become a preferred short-haul destination for Indian travellers, with easy flight connectivity, visa-on-arrival access, and the allure of private island luxury. At Kuda Villingili, we are seeing strong demand from India, especially during festivals and school holidays, with families, couples, and wedding groups choosing our resort for its exclusivity and personalised experiences. What stands out is the shift in trends, Indians are increasingly opting for destination weddings, multi-generational stays, and wellness-driven getaways, making this market one of the most dynamic and valuable for us.



TRAVEL THERAPY

Languorously

Linz

Nestling on the banks of the Danube, smack in the heart of Europe, the pulsating Upper Austrian provincial capital, Linz, offers an experience that's an amalgam of cultural, modern, traditional lifestyles.

-Inder Raj Ahluwalia

The wind had come all the way from the 'far north'. A wall of pain that just wouldn't go away! And yet there we were, braving the elements with nothing on but a jacket and a spirit for adventure. Not surprisingly, the baroque Main Square didn't wear its usual busy look that morning. Among Europe's largest medieval squares, this is where they gather for special occasions, like the Christmas Market, for instance. But right now, we had the place pretty much to ourselves. The chill had driven all but the most daring and desperate away.

But the elements and solitude apart, the square- its large courtyard flanked by stately old buildings- was supremely impressive. And the cup of scalding tomato soup someone had placed in my hand, helped.

If the Main Square was less lively than usual, the shopping streets around sported their usual hustle and bustle. Assorted temptations stared out of shop windows as we ambled along. No less lively were the bars and pubs. In fact they

were exuberant, typifying local affluence. Our walk took us past historical buildings and idyllic alleys, sporting a distinct charm. And as for the Altstadt -the old city- it's a world by itself, contrasting sharply with the town's newer section.

Culture runs deep in Austria, and Linz backs this up to the hilt. That the town's cultural roots run deep is seen from the packed calendar of events. June through September features elaborate theatre performances, concerts, and open-air events enlivening the squares of the inner city, the Danube Park, or the historical arcade courtyards. The stage above the town's roofs, the cultural programme of the Rostengarten (rose garden) at the Linz Postlingberg comprises concerts and comedies as well as theatre performances. There are also Easter concerts in churches, and classical concerts at the Brucknerhaus.

At the top of the pyramid is Urfahrner Markt, Austria's largest and oldest fair, which features the work of painters as well as artists

of glass, pottery and jewellery. And there's Pflasterspsktakel - the 'streets artist festival' in July, which uses the whole inner city as a stage, transforming it into a 'hot pavement' for some 200,000 revellers. Six hundred artists from thirty countries ensure rich entertainment. Pantomimes from Argentina and comedy-ballet from England, are featured alongside jugglers and clowns from Germany.

If you like your wine, head for the old quarter of the inner city, where end-August features scores of winegrowers offering the best of produce of Austrian vineyards. September features the Ars Electronica Festival with events and symposiums that show the latest trends and developments in the field of digital media art. This is when the computer world looks at Linz. September also sees the 'clouds of sounds' move over the Danube Park, featuring multimedia compositions of visual and acoustic effects. Activity and bonhomie take over later in the year, at the Christmas market held in the Main Square.

From the Main Square, Linz unfolds its attractions. Driven by the urge to see and savour as much as I could in the city, I decided to see as many of the city's architectural charms as I possibly could. The regal looking, hill-perched Pilgrimage Church is a rare treat, as is Neuer Dom- the New Cathedral, Austria's biggest church. But my favourite is Alter Dom- the Old Cathedral, where Anton Bruckner worked as an organist. By a stroke of good fortune, I deviated from the fixed programme and took time out for the Botanical Gardens which turned out to be a treat, what with its orchids, rosarium, one of Europe's biggest cacti collections, and loads of fresh air.



The city is museum-rich and it's worth short-listing Landesmuseum Biologiezentrum - museum of natural sciences; Landesmuseum - castle museum; Nordico - municipal museum; and Linz Genesis - museum of local history. There are also Landesgalerie - provincial museum Francisco Carolinum; Adalbert-Stifter-Institut - gallery and museum; the O.K. Centre of Contemporary Art, and the Ars Electronica Centre.

Take it easy. Amble along the Donauradweg, the popular cycle track along the river. If feeling energetic, try the wakeboard next to the Brucknerhaus. If feeling lucky, venture into Casino Linz, which has it all for gamers daily from 3 p.m. You lose nothing by trying your luck.

If the Ars Electronica Centre proclaims its modern and futuristic attractions, the Altstadt unfolds its history with quiet grace, and the Design Centre welcomes convention delegates. But perhaps the most pleasant of all local attractions is the world-renowned

Linzner Torte, the town's sweetest ambassador. Have it any way you like, but don't forget that strong, aromatic coffee they serve at a host of riverside cafes.

If walking around the town had been rewarding, there was a further bonus in the form of the Dabube river cruise that provided the best view of the town. It was cold and windy but, being the good sport that I am, I didn't mind it one bit I sailed past grand buildings that collectively form a huge and impressive façade of symmetry and grace.

Other ways to get a lasting city impression are by taking a ride on the bright yellow Linz City Express, or riding the carriages of the Postlingbergbahn, Europe's steepest adhesion railway (established in 1898) onto the Postlingberg.

The Austrian penchant for organization makes it all fairly easy to do. It's pleasant and smooth, and is part of the languorous Linz experience.

Fact File

- Linz is a couple of hours by train from Vienna.
- The downtown area is a mere five minutes by car from the rail station. The Old City is best explored on foot.
- Local accommodation comprises a wide range that includes deluxe, standard and budget hotels.
- From traditional 'Upper Austrian' to international preparations, there's cuisine for all tastes.
- The high season is from April through October, but the winters, though cold, are also very enjoyable in the region. Just don't forget your jacket, gloves and comfortable walking shoes.



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.



CLOUDS, CULTURE AND CELEBRATION IN THE HEART OF INDIA!



The heart of
Incredible India

MADHYA PRADESH IN AUGUST IS A CELEBRATION OF MONSOON MAGIC AND CULTURAL VIBRANCE. VERDANT HILLS, SWELLING RIVERS, AND JOYFUL FESTIVALS LIKE RAKSHA BANDHAN AND JANMASHTAMI TRANSFORM THE HEARTLAND INTO A SOULFUL CANVAS OF UNITY AND FESTIVITY. FROM THE BALLADS OF BUNDELKHAND TO THE RIVERSIDE AARTIS OF NIMAR, EVERY REGION—CHAMBAL, BUNDELKHAND, BAGHELKHAND, MAHAKAUSHAL, NIMAR AND MALWA—ADDS A UNIQUE STROKE TO THIS LIVING PAINTING.



Boisterous Bundelkhand

In this land of legends, monsoon ballads of Alha-Udal echo through the rain. The Raai dance swirls in the villages, while the Betwa gushes through Orchha. Indulge in Poori-Halwa with Ghewar, Bafauri and Ras Kheer. Celebrate Kajari Teej in Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur, where married women dress in finery, praying to Shiva-Parvati. Visit Ramghat in Chitrakoot, or capture the solitude of Khajuraho's sculptures amidst the mist.

Charismatic Chambal

Fog-kissed temples at Mitaoli and Padawali, vibrant Jhulan Yatras in Datia, and the colourful Sandhi Fair in Bhind invite you into Chambal's layered heritage. In Gwalior, begin your day with Bedai Pooris and Paneer Jalebi lively lanes of Mayur Nagar and Daulat Ganj, and let the dramatic ravines stir your imagination.



Natural Nimar

Flowing with the grace of the Narmada, Nimar is where tribal rhythm meets spiritual depth. Omkareshwar's Narmada Aarti stirs devotion in Shravan. At the Hariyali Amavasya Mela, explore Jiroti paintings and feast on Malpua, Kheer and Mawa-Bati. Listen to the Bhil's Fag songs as Satpura's cool air invites you to taste Jowar Roti with Amadi ki Bhaji. Don't leave Burhanpur without sipping Sharbat-e-Mohabbat.

Mysterious Mahakaushal

Worship of forest spirits, Gedi dances on stilts, Baiga tattoos, and Gond paintings showcase the region's deep-rooted tribal spirituality. At Hareli, children swing from neem trees while farmers offer prayers to their tools. Relish Bamboo Shoot Curry or Rugra mushrooms in Seoni. At Amarkantak, witness Raksha Bandhan celebrations at the sacred Narmada Temple and relive the tale of Rani Durgawati atop Jabalpur's Madan Mahal Fort.



Blissful Baghelkhand

Dense forests, royal legacies and sacred monsoon rituals make this region unforgettable. Seek solitude at Rewa Fort, Chachai Falls and the serene Sharda Devi Temple. Bandhavgarh's buffer zones bloom with wildflowers and tiger tales. In villages, tribal communities plant sacred trees and dance through the night to celebrate Karma. Discover the soulful art and calm of Art Ichol just 8 KMs from Maihar



Marvellous Malwa

Swings, Teej songs and trays of Ghewar in Neemuch and Mandsaur fill the air with joy. Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar Temple enchants during Bhasma Aarti. Mandu's rain-kissed ruins and Sanchi's peaceful stupas beckon. Taste Bhutte ki Khees, Gosht Korma, and explore Indore's Sarafa Bazar. Maheshwar's looms sing with raindrops, and Chanderi's hilltop fort whispers textile tales.



Follow us on: [f](#) [x](#) [in](#) [ig](#)

For more information please visit: www.mptourism.com | www.tourism.mp.gov.in | info@mp.gov.in

Marriott's magic for Indian travellers

For Indian travellers, that magic of Maldives is being reimagined by Marriott's rich portfolio of resorts across the archipelago.

Peter Foreman, Senior Director, Sales & Distribution, Singapore and the Maldives share his vision about the market.

-Tripti Jain

From sound healing at The Ritz-Carlton to garden-fresh pizzas at JW Marriott, Marriott offers luxury and is famous for crafting soulful, personal experiences. Peter shares, "India is a key source market for us in the Maldives. All our brands present in the Maldives are also known in India, which creates a natural connection. That trust means Indian travellers often choose Marriott properties instinctively, already confident in what awaits them."

With most stays lasting just three or four nights, proximity matters. Resorts such as Sheraton, Ritz-Carlton, and the new JW Marriott Kaafu, each accessible by speedboat or yacht are especially popular. India consistently ranks among Marriott Maldives' top markets, with demand continuing to climb.

JW, W & what's next

The JW Marriott Kaafu Atoll, opened in January, is quickly becoming a favourite. Just 15 minutes from the airport, it blends convenience with the comfort of a trusted brand. Meanwhile, the W Maldives has returned after an 11-month transformation. "Everything's been redone from tiles, pools, cables, you name it. Guests will feel the same energy, but now with an elevated touch. The buzz is also building around Bulgari Maldives, scheduled for 2026. With 54 villas, it will mark Marriott's next ultra-luxury jewel in the region," Peter says.

Beyond honeymoons

Once known as a honeymooner's paradise, the Maldives is now drawing multigenerational Indian travellers. Peter shares, "We're seeing families, parents, kids, grandparents, preferring two-,



three-, even four-bedroom villas. It's about keeping everyone together, in one big 'home.' Birthdays, anniversaries, and reunions are replacing the old honeymoon-only image, making resorts like JW, St. Regis, and La Méridien especially popular."

A taste of home

Food often defines the Indian holiday experience, and Marriott understands this better than most. "About 25-30 per cent of our chefs across properties are from India. So when we host an Indian night or a buffet, it's authentic," Peter says. Guests often bond with chefs over family

recipes, making dining both comforting and personal. Sustainability plays a role too. La Méridien boasts one of the largest greenhouses in the country, harvesting over 50 kilos of fresh produce daily. At JW Marriott, children pick basil and tomatoes before rolling their own pizzas, an experience that blends fun with flavour.

Wellness & wonder

Experiences at Marriott's resorts go beyond indulgence, they touch the soul. Peter shares, "At The Ritz-Carlton, I recently did a 15-minute sound healing session before dinner.

It completely shifted my energy. Guests leave with a crystal and a personalised playlist, carrying the experience home. For Indian travellers, sunrise yoga, sound baths, and spiritual therapies are increasingly sought after; proof that wellness is becoming as essential as luxury pools or spas."

Tier II takeoff

Behind Marriott's success is its strong network of Indian travel agents. "In the Maldives, where choices can be confusing — speedboat or seaplane? beach villa or overwater? Agents are vital," says Peter. Marriott also engages actively in Indian roadshows and exhibitions, tailoring packages to local needs. And demand is no longer limited to metros. "With more flights from cities like Kochi and Bangalore, plus visa-free access, tier-two markets are becoming power players. With 42 direct flights a week, the Maldives is now as accessible as a weekend escape, he adds.

A home away from home

For Foreman, Marriott's role is clear: to make Indian travellers feel at home in paradise. "Indian travellers already know and love our brands. Now, they're experiencing them in one of the world's most beautiful destinations." Whether it's a multigenerational sunset, a garden pizza, or a sound bath under Maldivian skies, Marriott is making the Maldives more than a destination, it's becoming a second home for Indian hearts. "It's not just about where you stay, but how you feel. And with our roots in India, we're here to make every Maldivian memory unforgettable," concludes Peter.



TRAVEL turtle



MAGAZINE



SUPPLEMENTS



TABLET AND MOBILE



WEBSITE



EVENTS



VIDEO



- [travelturtlemag](#)

 TROUVAILLE

For advertising contact:

+91 98189 65684

info@travelturtleworld.com

918, 9th Floor, Tower-A, NEXTRA - The Address,
Plot no. 4-B, District Centre,
Mayapuri Vihar Ph-1 Extension,
Delhi-110091 (India)

SUBSCRIBE NOW

THE ISLAND LIFE TRAVEL STORY

In the world of destination management, Island Life Travel has carved out a niche as a Maldives specialist with unmatched on-ground insight. Puneet Gera and Sanket Mishra, Associate Directors and Heads of Sales share why staying loyal to one destination has been their biggest strength.

-Naina Nath



Sanket Mishra



Puneet Gera

Founded in 2019, the company recently celebrated its sixth anniversary in August 2025. In a candid conversation with, we explored the brand's journey, its vision, market trends, and what's next for one of the most prominent names in the Maldives travel space.

"When we started, we were just three people with a single office. Today, we're over 25 people spread across five global offices. It hasn't been easy, but our focus on both volume and the destination has kept us grounded. People often advise us to expand into new destinations, and while we might do that soon, the Maldives will always be our priority," shares Puneet.

What sets them apart

Island Life Travel is not just another DMC; it's the only destination-specific wholesaler for the Maldives across India. Sanket explains, "Every team member has visited the Maldives at least once, which gives us the extra edge when advising clients. We don't

just sell packages; we train our partners on what to sell and how to position our preferred products. Our strong relationships with hotels also play a huge role in ensuring competitive deals and unique experiences."

Indian travel trends for the Maldives

The last year brought its challenges. "2024 was the lowest year we've seen because of the political situation. But 2025 is already showing a strong recovery. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the Maldives has brought both nations closer, and we expect the numbers to be close to 2023 levels," shares Puneet.

Maldives is for everyone

While the Maldives is often perceived as a luxury market, Island Life Travel's numbers tell a different story. "About 65 per cent of the market share comes from the mass segment, brands like Centara, Sun Siyam, Adaaran, Atmosphere, and Villa Resorts. We make sure clients have a wide

range of options and keep introducing new properties. At the same time, luxury is growing, whether it's FITs or full island buyouts, we've seen increased movement in the high-end space," explains Sanket.

Operations across borders

With operations spanning across India, the Maldives, Malaysia, and Dubai, efficiency is key. Puneet says, "We've kept our operations centralised at our Delhi office. Of course, there are challenges, especially when it comes to educating new markets. But we've seen strong growth from Southeast Asia by investing in personal visits, training our teams, and supporting travel agents. With the knowledge-driven team we have now, operational hurdles are minimal."

What's next?

Island Life Travel is gearing up for some big announcements. Sanket shares, "We're working on adding new island destinations to our

portfolio. But we won't go live until we're fully confident in the product. We also have some very big events lined up for this season, and we'll be sharing details with the trade very soon."

Advice for travel partners

Both Puneet and Sanket agree that Indian travel agents can do more to broaden the Maldives market. They add, "Explore, go beyond the typical honeymoon pitch, look at new products, new properties, and even city islands. The Maldives has huge potential for experience-driven markets, not just couples. Some B2C companies are already focusing on specific niches such as budget, luxury, or couple travel. Focused selling always helps you target the right audience."

From a niche specialist to a global player, Island Life Travel has proved that staying loyal to one destination can be a winning formula. And as the company prepares to expand its portfolio while keeping the Maldives at its heart, its journey has just begun.

STAY WITH US. STAY WITH NATURE

East India's Iconic Venue for Events
That Impress



260 LUXE ROOMS & VILLAS



72,000 SQ. FT. INDOOR SPACE



2.25 LAKH SQ. FT. OF OPEN-AIR LAWNS

5 Restaurants & Bars | Wellness & Fitness Centre | Kids' Activities

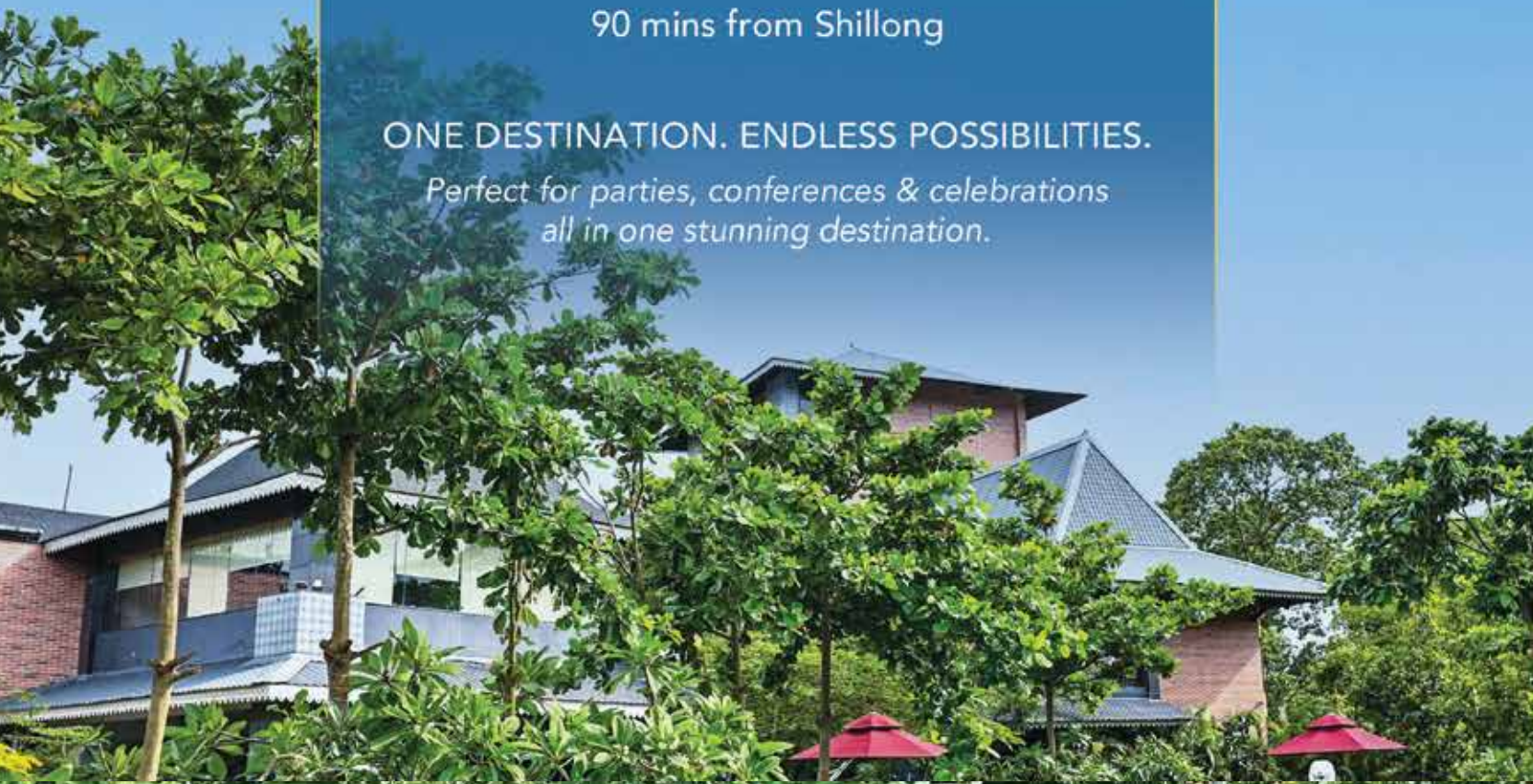
60 mins from Airport &
Kamakhya Mandir

30 mins from
Pobitora Sanctuary

90 mins from Shillong

ONE DESTINATION. ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.

*Perfect for parties, conferences & celebrations
all in one stunning destination.*



+91 7099037100 / 125

📍 Tapesia Garden Rd, Sonapur, Guwahati, Assam 782401



MAYFAIR SPRING VALLEY

Leisure paradise

Set amidst the rolling hills and emerald tea gardens of Guwahati, MAYFAIR Spring Valley stands as a serene escape in the heart of North East India.

A retreat in the hills

With 260 luxurious rooms, suites, cottages and villas, the resort is designed to offer a stay that is both indulgent and soulful. Here, nature and comfort blend seamlessly, giving travellers a chance to slow down, breathe easy, and discover the quiet magic of Assam.

Luxury in every detail

Life at MAYFAIR Spring Valley is about embracing leisure in its finest form. Guests can take their pick from multiple swimming pools, each inviting in its own way—whether for a refreshing morning swim or a lazy afternoon float under the sun. The award-winning spa, known for its expert therapies and calming

ambience, offers a restorative sanctuary where modern wellness meets traditional practices. Families are equally cared for with a vibrant hi-tech kids' zone that ensures children are entertained and engaged while parents unwind.

Flavours to savour

Dining at the resort is an experience in itself, with Bay Leaf, the signature restaurant, bringing together a rich tapestry of flavours. From authentic Assamese delicacies to global favourites, each dish is prepared with flair and finesse. Whether it's a hearty breakfast with sweeping views of the hills or a romantic dinner under starlit skies, Bay Leaf ensures every meal becomes a memorable occasion.

A gateway to adventure

While the resort is a destination in itself, its location also makes it the perfect starting point to explore Assam's treasures. A short drive leads to Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, famed for its population of one-horned rhinoceroses. The sacred Kamakhya Temple, one of India's most revered Shakti Peeths, lies just an hour away. A scenic journey of ninety minutes takes travellers to Shillong, the enchanting 'Scotland of the East,' while Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site celebrated for its wildlife, can be reached in three hours.

The soul of the north east

MAYFAIR Spring Valley is more than

a resort—it is an experience woven into the landscapes of Assam. Mornings begin with the songs of birds, afternoons are filled with the aroma of fresh tea, and evenings close with skies painted in stars. Every corner of the property is designed to draw guests closer to nature while surrounding them with comfort.

A story to take home

In every sense, MAYFAIR Spring Valley is a destination where leisure takes on a deeper meaning. Whether you come seeking peace, wellness, family fun, or the thrill of exploration, the resort offers it all with grace and warmth. It is not merely a stay, but a story waiting to be lived — and remembered long after.



Luxury Journeys Through Incredible India

Alleppey

Marvel Cruise
Spice Routes – Luxury Cruises

Athirapally

Rainforest Resort

Hassan

Hoysala Village Resort

Idukki

Silver Oak, Nedumkandam

Kumarakom

Lakesong, Kumarakom

Munnar

Eastend, Munnar

Poovar

Poovar Island Resort

Thekkady

Carmelia Haven Resort

Dausa, Rajasthan

The Clement Village
Retreats, Dausa

Jaipur

Indana Palace
Rajrasa Restaurant-Rajasthan
Culinary Experience

Jamba, Rajasthan

The Clement Dune Retreats, Jamba

Ranthambore

The Kipling Lodge –
By Nature Kalp

Udaipur

Yaan Wellness Retreat

Mumbai

Fariyas Hotel

Lonavala

Fariyas Resort

Mussoorie

Soul Stories Luxe Villas
& Wellness Resort

Varanasi

Om Vilas Benares, Varanasi

North East DMC

Purvi Discovery

Dibrugarh, Assam

Mancotta Heritage Chang Bungalow
Chowkidinghee Heritage
Chang Bungalow
Wathai Heritage Bungalow

South India DMC

Marvel Tours



GEETA MAHESHWARI

Director | Hospitality and Marketing Services

66, A-2 Shiv Arcade, Acharya Niketan, Mayur Vihar, Phase I, New Delhi - 110091

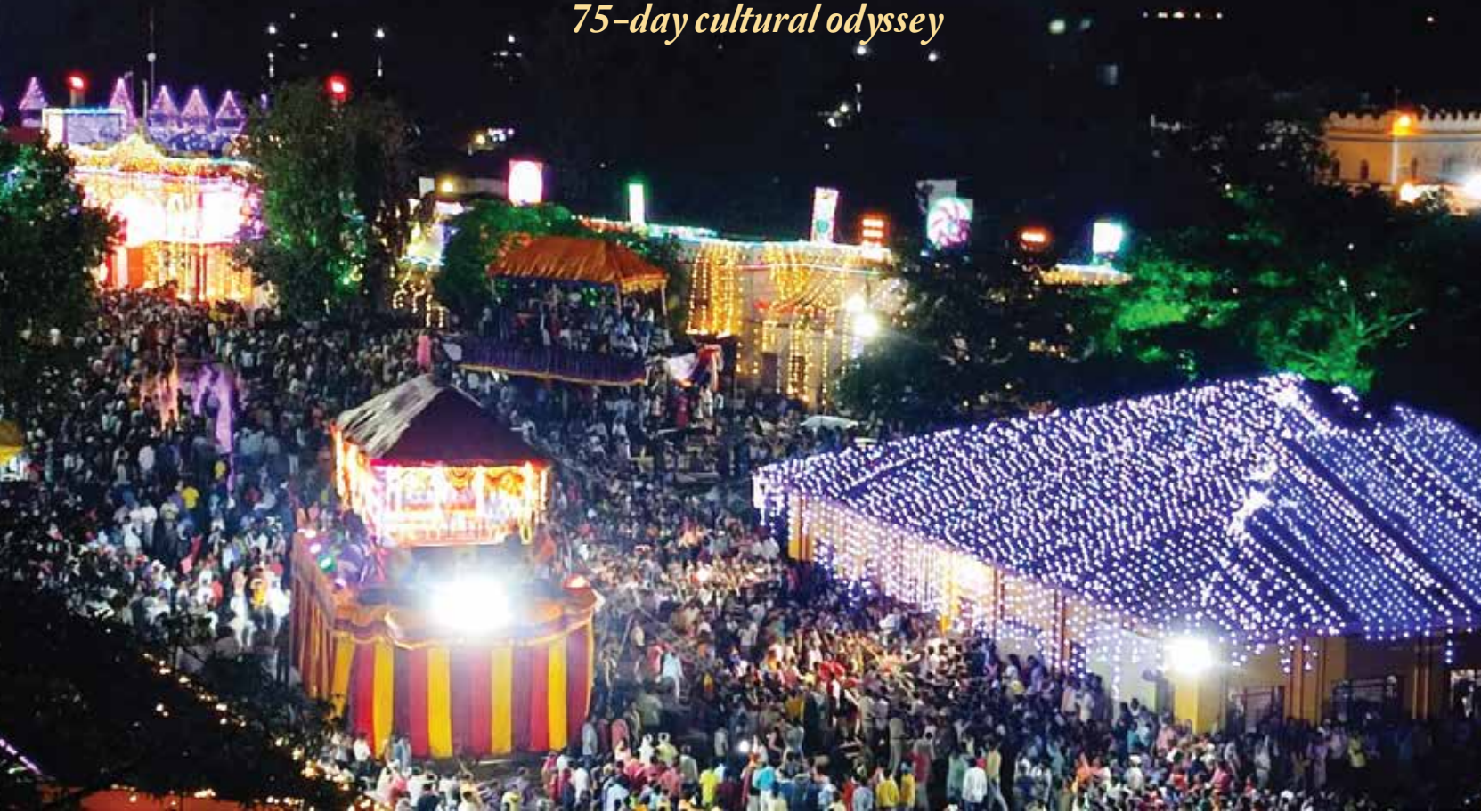
Email us : geeta@hnmsservices.in, crs@hnmsservices.in

Tel No: +91 1143570335 / 43570369

Mob No : +91 9868129188 | Website : www.hnmsservices.in

Bastar Dussehra

75-day cultural odyssey



When most of India celebrates Dussehra as a victory of good over evil in ten days, Bastar in Chhattisgarh transforms it into an extraordinary 75-day celebration.

This year, the city is experiencing the celebration from 24th July to 7th October 2025. The region comes alive with centuries-old traditions, tribal rituals, grand processions, and community celebrations, making it one of the longest and most unique festivals in the world. Different from the Dussehra celebrated across India, Bastar's celebration is dedicated to Goddess Danteshwari, the presiding deity of Bastar, and symbolises the cultural unity of its tribes.

The spirit begins

The festivities started on 24th July with Paat Jatra Puja, a ceremonial worship marking the preparation for the grand season. By 5th September, the Derri Gadai ritual will add a rustic charm, performed at Sirhasar Bhavan. Travellers visiting during this early phase can explore Jagdalpur's bustling markets, taste local delicacies such as chapura (red ant chutney) and mahua-based sweets, and witness local artisans

beginning to prepare traditional ornaments and attire for the grand season.

A festival in full bloom

The pace picks up from 21st September with Kaachangnadi Puja at Mangraam Chowk, where locals gather in vibrant attire. The following days see Kachan Sthaapna, Jogi Bithai, and the start of Navratri Puja Vidhaan on 24th September. One of the biggest highlights is the Rath Parikrama Puja, a majestic chariot procession through Sirhasar Bhavan to Gol Bazar. With music, chants, tribal drumming, and people dancing their hearts out, it is a delight for the travellers. Photography enthusiasts will find this period visually rich, with tribal jewellery, vivid textiles, and decorated chariots making for postcard-perfect frames.

The peak festivities

By 29th September, Bail Puja (worship of the bull) in rural areas connects visitors

to Bastar's agrarian roots. On 30th September, Mahaarti at the Danteshwari Temple is followed by Nisha Jatra which is a night-time ritual in the heart of Jagdalpur. The spiritual pulse can be felt during the Kunwari Puja on 1st October, celebrating the divine feminine energy. The same day, the symbolic Jogi Uthhai ceremony and Mavli Parghav ritual bring tribal elders together in colourful attire, holding traditional weapons and insignia. Travellers during this period should take a trip Chitrakote Falls which is just a short drive from Jagdalpur. The monsoon season and the festive lights together make the experience worth witnessing.

The royal procession

The early days of October see Bheetar Reni and Bahar Reni Pujas, with the Bahar Reni Pujas taking place in the royal premises. Travellers can see the Maharaja of Bastar's ceremonial participation, a living link between history and the present. The streets light up with folk dances such as Gaur,



ADVERT

Dandami Maria, and Muria, performed by tribes who travel from far-off villages. Each performance is a storytelling tradition passed down for generations.

The grand farewell

The final days are deeply symbolic. On 5th October, the Kachin Jatra (Gangamunda Jatra) sees deities from different villages brought together with people in high spirits. The festival concludes on 7th October with the Mavli Maati Vidhaan which is a ritual where the soil from the deity's feet is ceremonially returned to its origin, signifying the end of the celebration cycle and the promise of its return next year. This is an important moment to witness as



the joy of festivities merging with the grace of farewells leaves you wondering about a number of things around you.

Bastar and its charm

To witness Bastar Dussehra is to step into a world where time slows down, traditions breathe, and communities unite under the gaze of Goddess Danteshwari. From the ring of temple bells at dawn to the rhythmic drumbeats under a starlit sky, every moment is a story waiting to be told. For travellers seeking a chance to feel the light of a land and its people, Bastar Dussehra 2025 is a journey into the soul of Chhattisgarh.

Traveller's guide to experience Bastar Dussehra

- Base Location: Stay in Jagdalpur, the cultural hub, well connected by road from Raipur and Visakhapatnam.
- Best Time to Visit: For peak action, plan your trip between 24th September and 5th October.
- Local Cuisine to Try: Mahua laddoos, rice beer, bastar chicken, bamboo shoot curry.
- Shopping: Pick up bastar bell metal craft, tribal jewellery, and handwoven kosa silk.
- Cultural Tip: Be respectful of rituals. Photography is usually allowed, but always ask permission.



ADVERT

Tathastu Resorts

A symphony of nature

Nestled in the heart of the Jungles of Central India, Tathastu Resorts is a Chain of Experiential Wildlife Resorts.



Anil Agarwala

The resorts are a sanctuary of peace and luxury offering an unparalleled experience away from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Surrounded by lush forests and break taking landscapes, we provide our guests with perfect blend of comfort and adventure.

Guided by their ethos of 'SEWAA' – Service, Experience, Wildlife, Art, and Adventure – the team of Tathastu Resorts ensure an unforgettable stay at India's most Iconic Tiger Reserves at Pench, Tadoba, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, and Satpura. At Tathastu, their eco-conscious luxury design ensures both comfort and sustainability, bringing you close to the wonders of the jungle.

Ensuring 'Something for Everyone', there will never be a dull moment at Tathastu. Luxurious Accommodations like Cave Rooms, Tree Houses, Mongolian Yurts, Tents, Villas, Machans & Cottages, you have plethora to choose from

at various locations. Thrilling Jungle Safaris with experienced in-house Naturalists, Guided Nature Walks, Exciting Activities, Rejuvenating Spa Treatments, and Curated Dining Experiences.

Tathastu Pench at Pench Tiger Reserve, is a 61-room resort and at just a 90-minute drive from Nagpur ensures smooth connectivity to all major cities of India. An in-house Spa & Wellness Centre, a temperature-controlled Indoor Swimming Pool, an Art Centre and a range of indoor and outdoor activities, await. It is ideal for you next Reunion, Corporate MICE Event, or even an intimate wedding, in addition to the jungle enthusiasts looking for a vacation.

Tathastu Kanha at the famous Kanha National Park, near the Mukki Gate is a 20-room property offering serenity & wilderness with dense plantation within the resort.

It is accessible through Nagpur, Jabalpur & Raipur via Air.

Tathastu Tadoba popular for its frequent Tiger Sighting is just 500 meters from the Moharli Gate of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. This beautiful resort has 31 Rooms and with a multi cuisine restaurant, bar, indoor heated swimming pool, activity centre, multi-purpose hall and lawns for recreation and events. With Multiple Jungle Safari gates in the Vicinity, Tadoba is almost synonymous with Tigers.

Tathastu Bandhavgarh at the historic Bandhavgarh National Park is in itself picturesque with all the 20 Cottages surrounded by Water Lagoons which is a love-at-first-sight for every guest. Each room equipped with an exclusive sit out with a swing overlooking the lagoon, and two bathrooms out of which one is open to sky. You may also choose to visit the unexplored Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve (90 km) where Tathastu has created a

home stay on their 32 Acre land parcel, on which a resort is planned in the future.

Tathastu Satpura– at the South side of the Satpura Tiger Reserve has direct access to the Bori-Churna range. This side of Satpura is absolutely unexplored with currently just 3 resorts operational. 39 Luxurious Villa Rooms with some having a private plunge pool, offer exclusivity. Three hours from Nagpur and two hours from Bhopal, Satpura is undoubtedly the most rustic and promising upcoming park in Central India. There is still a genuine rawness intact in the safari experience here. In addition to the Tiger and Leopard, Indian Sloth Bear is a common sighting.

Tathastu has become a leading brand in Wildlife Luxury Hospitality by serving millions of delighted guests from India and around the world. You will leave Tathastu... but only to come back!





Wonderful Odisha

— India's best kept secret —



Heritage

A



Wildlife



Nature



Odisha, a state on the eastern coast of India, invites you to discover its unique charm. Immerse yourself in a journey through ancient history, vibrant culture, and breathtaking landscapes.

Holiday Mechanic is your one stop solution partner.

Top destinations to explore

With Holiday Mechanic you get to explore the wonderful culture and the top spots in Odisha.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Puri | Konark |
| Bhubaneswar | Chilika Lake |
| Bhitarkanika | Gopalpur |
| Ancient Wonders | Nature & Wildlife |
| Art & Culture | Festivals |

BOOK YOUR ADVENTURE NOW!



WhatsApp at:
+91 9810798923

Follow us on:



Plot No A1/3A, Indra Housing Colony, Post Sisupalgarh
PS Dhauli Bhubaneswar Odisha - 751002



Scan to join
WhatsApp Community



+91 9810798923 | +919958540334



www.holidaymechanic.com

operation@holidaymechanic.com | booking@holidaymechanic.com

Kempinski reaffirms India focus with elegant two-city Soirée

Kempinski Hotels hosts a two-city roadshow in Mumbai and Delhi, celebrating a year of strong growth and deeper engagement with the Indian travel market. The Kempinski Soirée brought together top travel partners and industry leaders, alongside senior representatives from 15 of the brand's iconic properties across destinations like Berlin, Budapest, Muscat, Bali, and Bangkok. The event showcased Kempinski's signature hospitality and highlighted its commitment to India as a key outbound market, fostering connections and collaboration for the year ahead.



An evening to discover Hokkaido with Club Med & JNTO



Club Med, in collaboration with the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), hosts an engaging evening, inviting travel industry professionals to explore the wonders of Hokkaido, Japan's northern gem. The event offered a perfect blend of networking, Japanese delicacies, and destination discovery, spotlighting Club Med's four premium resorts—Tomamu, Sahoro, Kiroro Peak, and Kiroro Grand. Attendees had the opportunity to connect with destination experts, learn about Hokkaido's year-round appeal from snow adventures to summer escapes, and experience how Club Med blends French luxury with Japanese hospitality for Indian travellers seeking unforgettable holidays.



Relais & Châteaux hosts delegation meet in New Delhi

Relais & Châteaux hosts its annual Delegation Meeting for the Indian Subcontinent & Southeast Asia. The gathering brought together esteemed members of the association, prominent media figures, and key voices from the hospitality industry to celebrate shared values of excellence, culture, and well-being. A highlight of the evening was an engaging conversation between Laurent Gardinier, President of Relais & Châteaux, and renowned media personality Vir Sanghvi, offering insightful reflections on the future of luxury hospitality. The evening concluded with a warm aperitif reception, embodying the spirit of Relais & Châteaux's commitment to authentic experiences and meaningful connections.



Mumbai celebrates Bastille Day with culture and camaraderie



The Consulate General of France hosts a vibrant Bastille Day event, bringing together friends of France for an elegant evening of culture, connection, and celebration. With heartfelt remarks from Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet and a special appearance by artist Kalki Koechlin, the event beautifully showcased the enduring bond between France and India through art, cuisine, and the spirit of liberté, égalité, fraternité.

Marriott International organises Roadshow in India with its Maldives properties

The roadshow brought together travel trade partners and top tier publications, seasoned journalists and contributors, creating a valuable platform for dialogue, collaboration, and future planning. Each city stop included a combination of sales missions to engage with key travel agents and tour operators, and media get-togethers aimed at storytelling and awareness-building around the Maldives and Marriott Portfolio of Resorts in the Maldives.



One Above hosts Maldives Roadshow in Ahmedabad

One Above hosted the final leg of its four-city Maldives Roadshow in Ahmedabad. The event brought together top Maldivian resorts and local travel partners for interactive one-on-one sessions over Hi-Tea. The showcase focused on luxury experiences tailored for Indian travellers, allowing agents to explore new offerings and build direct connections with resort representatives. The Ahmedabad edition saw strong participation and marked a successful conclusion to the roadshow.



Perfume Capital of India Kannauj

UTTAR PRADESH



APPOINTMENTS



ClubMed

The Board of Directors of Club Med Holding announces the appointment of Stéphane Maquaire as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Club Med Holding, effective immediately. Based on the recommendation of Henri Giscard d'Estaing, Club Med's rigorous succession and evaluation process identified Stéphane Maquaire, a French national, as uniquely qualified among the candidates considered to lead the company into a new phase of profitable growth.

Amilla Maldives

Amilla Maldives announces the appointment of Gaurav Makhijani as the new Director of Sales, marking a strategic addition to the resort's leadership team as it continues to elevate its global sales efforts. Bringing over 14 years of experience in luxury hospitality sales, Gaurav is known for his dynamic approach to relationship-building and revenue growth.



Air New Zealand

Air New Zealand announces the appointment of Nikhil Ravishankar as its next Chief Executive Officer, succeeding Greg Foran who steps down in October after almost six years leading the airline through one of the most challenging periods in aviation history.

Raffles Udaipur

Raffles Udaipur announces the appointment of Guneeta Duggal as its new Director of Sales and Marketing. With over two decades of strategic leadership and a proven track record in the luxury hospitality industry, Guneeta will spearhead the hotel's sales and marketing initiatives, driving growth, strengthening brand presence, and elevating the guest experience.



THE PLACE TO BE

DISCOVER FOUR DAZZLING RESORTS, FOUR DISTINCT EXPERIENCES IN THE MALDIVES

Discover the magic of the Maldives with Centara, offering four distinct experiences to suit every traveller. The jewel in Centara's crown, Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives, is a newly launched sanctuary of indulgence and serenity, while underwater world-themed Centara Mirage Lagoon Maldives offers a vibrant family paradise. From the intimate, adults-only Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa to the pristine beaches and award-winning house reef of Machchafushi Island Resort & Spa Maldives, The Centara Collection, each destination promises a uniquely unforgettable journey. Breathtaking villas, world-class dining, and immersive experiences await—whether your clients seek tranquillity, romance, adventure, or family fun.



GET TO KNOW CENTARA
WITH UNBEATABLE TRAVEL INDUSTRY RATES

Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives



CENTARA RESERVE

THE
CENTARA
COLLECTION

CENTARA
GRAND

CENTARA

CENTARA
LIFE

ICOM

Visit our dedicated trade website centarahotelsresorts.com/b2b

CENTARA
HOTELS & RESORTS

MORE included. MORE value. MORE to enjoy.

When it comes to a holiday, your clients deserve it all.



— INCLUDES —
KIDS SAIL FREE*
FREE EXCURSION CREDITS
FREE WI-FI PACKAGE
PLUS UNLIMITED OPEN BAR
PLUS SPECIALTY DINING



Norwegian Aqua™, Miami, Florida

experience
MORE
at sea™

21 Ships • 400+ Destinations Worldwide • Overnights & Late Stays in Port†

7-Day Alaska
Round-trip Seattle:
Glacier Bay, Juneau
& Ketchikan

Norwegian Bliss®
Sep - Oct 2025 & 2026

7-Day Caribbean
Round-trip Miami:
Bahamas &
Dominican Republic

Norwegian Aqua™
Oct 2025 - Apr 2026

9-Day Greek Isles & Italy
Round-trip Rome
(Civitavecchia):
Santorini, Athens & Florence

Norwegian Epic®
22 Sep 2025

14-Day Iceland
Round-trip London
(Southampton):
Reykjavik, Belfast & Paris

Norwegian Prima®
14 Sep 2025



View more
sailings

For more information or to book
call +91 22 7127 9333

