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Editor's letter

The monsoon came down in sheets this year, the heaviest we've seen in a long time. Yet, just as rivers swell and fields revive, the travel trade too surged forward. Roadshows lit up cities, conversations flowed despite the clouds, and the grand gathering of travel agents and tour operators at IATO became a celebration of resilience. The season closed with the sparkle of TTM Maldives, reminding us that no storm can dampen the spirit of travel.

September arrives like a clearing sky. The rains may have washed over us, but what they leave behind is far greater: fresh beginnings, new journeys, and the fragrance of hope. For us, this issue mirrors that very renewal. We are grateful to be awarded Best Travel Magazine Digital, a recognition that feels like sunlight breaking through after a storm. We also unveiled our coffee table book Top 20 Maldives, which was embraced with overwhelming love and appreciation.



Within these pages, you will travel with us. From the buzzing streets of Sydney to Australia's ambitious plan for India revealed in Jaipur. From the shimmering world of Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab to countless stories that remind us why we move, why we explore, and why travel continues to unite us all.

Much like the rains, this issue is abundant and full of promise. May it remind you that every ending carries a beginning, and every downpour leaves behind a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you for reading, for believing, and for being part of this ever-flowing journey

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

   : [travelturtlemag](#)





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Government reduces GST on hotel rooms, boosting budget and mid-market hospitality

Guests staying at budget and mid-market hotels are set to benefit from the government's decision to reduce GST on rooms priced up to ₹7,500. Effective September 22, the GST rate will be lowered from 12 per cent (with input tax credit) to 5 per cent (without input tax credit). The earlier threshold of 12 per cent GST on rooms priced at ₹7,500 was introduced eight years ago. The revised rate is expected to deliver a significant boost to the hospitality industry, with revenues projected to rise by 7-10 per cent across the budget and mid-scale segments.



Cristiano Ronaldo launches unreal calendar and invites you to 'stay for more' in Saudi tourism's latest campaign

'Saudi, Welcome to Arabia the consumer facing brand of the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA), launches its latest campaign starring Cristiano Ronaldo (CR7). Launching across key markets in Europe as well as India and China, "I Came for Football, I Stayed for More" brings to life a Saudi that offers visitors far more than the expected.



Maldives Destination partners earn top honours for excellence in tourism promotion at Travel Trade Maldives

Island Life, One Above, Bingo, Island Hopper, and Tatabye have been honoured with prestigious awards for their outstanding efforts in passionately promoting the destination. Their dedication, creativity, and commitment have played a vital role in showcasing the destination's unique experiences to a wider audience, earning them well-deserved recognition in the travel and tourism industry.



TravelBullz marks 15 years with grand three-city roadshow

TravelBullz celebrates its 15th anniversary with a three-city roadshow across India, commencing in Kolkata on August 18, moving to Ludhiana on August 20, and concluding in Delhi on August 22. The roadshow brings together more than 30 leading hotel and activity partners from Thailand, underscoring TravelBullz's extensive network and trusted industry collaborations.



Indonesia's Tourism Ministry partners with VFS Global to promote tourism under Wonderful Indonesia campaign

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark 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 will serve as the Guest of Honour at the official celebrations on July 26.



Sri Lanka Tourism's multi-city luxury wedding shows in India

Sri Lanka Tourism embarks on an ambitious campaign to position the island as one of the most desirable wedding destinations for Indian couples. Through a series of luxury wedding shows in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and New Delhi this September, the initiative aims to showcase Sri Lanka's natural beauty, versatile venues, and easy accessibility. The events will connect Indian wedding planners, travel agents, and media with Sri Lankan hospitality providers, including luxury resorts, heritage properties, and specialised wedding service experts.



Thailand to offer free domestic flights to tourists from September

Thailand introduces a new travel scheme that will make exploring the country even more exciting for international visitors. The initiative, called 'Buy International, Free Thailand Domestic Flights', is aimed at encouraging travellers to go beyond the usual hotspots like Bangkok and Phuket, and instead discover lesser-explored destinations across the country.



Naveen Kundu launches Tourism Futures.AI

Naveen Kundu, announces the launch of Tourism Futures.AI, a pioneering platform that marks a paradigm shift in how businesses within the travel ecosystem acquire customers. Positioned as an AI marketer exclusively for the tourism sector, Tourism Futures.AI is designed to empower tour operators, DMCs, hotels, airlines, restaurants, transporters, and ground handlers with state-of-the-art AI tools for customer acquisition. Unlike traditional marketing agencies, the platform does not operate or execute travel services but focuses solely on creating business growth through AI-driven intelligence.



Travel South USA appoints Sartha Global Marketing as its official representative office in India

5-Travel South USA (TSUSA), the official regional destination marketing organization for the southern United States, announced the appointment of Sartha Global Marketing as its representative office in India. Sartha Global Marketing will implement an ongoing travel trade and public relations strategy in India, as part of TSUSA's Global Partnership Program (GPP).



IATO announces 41st Annual Convention in Vishakhapatnam

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has announced its 41st Annual Convention will take place in the vibrant coastal city of Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The announcement was made by Shri Ajay Jain, Special Chief Secretary, Tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh, marking a significant moment for the state's tourism sector.



TAAI announces 68th Convention & Exhibition in Abu Dhabi

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) announces its 68th Annual Convention & Exhibition, to be held in the spectacular city of Abu Dhabi, UAE, from September 17–19, 2025. The convention will embrace the inspiring theme 'Business with Goodness.' Marking the 74th year of TAAI's journey, this milestone convention promises an enriching and luxurious experience for members, with the stunning Grand Hyatt Abu Dhabi Emirates Pearl serving as the HQ hotel.



TBO to acquire Classic Vacations from Najafi Companies, expanding into North America

TBO announces its agreement to acquire US based Classic Vacations from Phoenix-based investment firm, The Najafi Companies, for an estimated total purchase of up to 125 million dollars. The acquisition brings together the power of TBO's first-class technology platform and worldwide inventory with Classic Vacation's vast network of luxury travel advisors and suppliers. Classic Vacations delivered revenue of 111 million dollars and an operating EBITDA of 11.2 million dollars in the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024.



KTO signs MoU with Yatra, Shinhan Bank India & Korean Air

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) enters into a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Shinhan Bank India, Korean Air, and Yatra to jointly promotes tourism to Korea from India under the initiative "Gateway to Korea." The collaboration aims to create a comprehensive and attractive travel experience for Indian tourists by integrating curated tour packages, financial benefits, and travel privileges.



Amitabh Kant urges ₹20,000 crore Incredible India push at FAITH Conclave 2025

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) inaugurated its two-day National Tourism Conclave 2025 in New Delhi under the theme 'Indian Tourism: Invincible Spirit.' The event brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and government officials to advance Tourism Vision 2047, a 3 trillion dollars roadmap aimed at achieving 100 million inbound tourists, 20 billion domestic visits, and 200 million tourism-related jobs by India's centenary year.



Sun Siyam Resorts unveils brand (R)evolution in a new era of Maldivian hospitality

Sun Siyam Resorts officially unveils its brand (R)evolution, marking a significant milestone in the company's journey and setting the stage for a new era of Maldivian hospitality. More than a refreshed identity, the unveiling symbolises a renewed commitment to sharing the rich culture, spirit, and warmth of the Maldives with the world.

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Come with the ice

THE RISE OF CLIMATE TOURISM

They say the world is shrinking, but sometimes it's not geopolitics, it's glaciers. From reefs that fade to mountains that melt, travellers are queuing up for the sights that may not last forever. But in their footsteps lies a new possibility: tourism that doesn't just take memories, but leaves behind hope.

- *Bharti Sharma*



Better, See It to Save It

Travel has always carried a sense of wonder, but today, it also carries a sense of timing. Climate tourism, often called 'last-chance tourism,' is on the rise- not as a morbid farewell tour, but as a conscious encounter with fragile landscapes. The Arctic's ice sheets, the Australian reefs, the Himalayan glaciers-places that once seemed eternal are now being visited with urgency. Yet, the deeper story is not about endings; it's about awakening.

When Paradise Teaches More Than Pleasure

Take Greenland, where travellers trek across vast ice fields under a sky so blue it almost mocks the melt beneath. Or the Maldives, where coral nurseries now allow visitors to snorkel among baby reefs, watching restoration unfold like a live experiment in resilience. Even in India's Himalayas, glaciers are retreating, but treks are being redesigned to include conversations with local guides and scientists- turning every step on snow into a step towards awareness. Paradise, here, is not just a postcard. It is a classroom.

Beauty Beyond the Bleached

Coral reefs tell the same tale in colour. The Great Barrier Reef, often described as the world's largest living organism, has suffered waves of bleaching. But alongside divers and snorkellers chasing 'last looks,' there are now citizen divers planting corals, recording marine health, and funding conservation simply by being there. Beauty isn't disappearing—it's evolving into a call to action.

Ticking Clocks Can Inspire Action

The paradox of climate tourism is undeniable: flying to fragile destinations adds carbon, yet the very act of seeing creates storytellers who return as ambassadors. A glacier that cracks before your eyes, a mangrove forest holding back a swollen sea—these are memories that statistics cannot provide. And they linger. The boarding pass, in this sense, is no longer just a ticket; it is a permission slip to responsibility.

Not All Who Wander Are Lost, Some Are Looking for Answers

The future of climate tourism lies in shifting from "see it before it's gone" to "see it, save it." From Svalbard to the Sundarbans, more operators are pairing adventure with contribution: treks that include tree planting, diving trips that include reef restoration, safaris that double as wildlife documentation. It's not about voyeurism; it's about volunteering. Tourists are not just bystanders anymore, they're being invited to join the story.

A World Worth Saving is Also Worth Seeing

Perhaps that is the real promise of climate tourism. It doesn't simply ask us to look; it asks us to look differently. To see fragility not as tragedy, but as testimony. To understand that paradise may be shifting shape, but it's still worth fighting for. The glaciers, the reefs, the forests—they are not just destinations on a bucket list. They are chapters in a story we are still writing.



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Stronger ties at Australia Marketplace India



With record arrivals and growing interest, Australia doubles down on the Indian market through trade, access, and fresh storytelling.

- Naina Nath



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Australia put the spotlight on India at the 19th edition of Australia Marketplace India (AMI) 2025 in Jaipur, where senior leaders from Tourism Australia met with more than 100 Indian travel agents and 100 Australian sellers. The event highlighted the strong momentum in travel between the two countries and showcased how Australia is positioning itself to capture a bigger share of India's fast-growing outbound market. Australia is fast emerging as a favourite among Indian travellers, and the tourism board is working closely with trade partners to build on this trend. From strategic campaigns and improved air connectivity to one of the world's most streamlined visa processes, Tourism Australia is focusing on making the journey to Australia more appealing and accessible for Indians. As part of this year's Marketplace, we spoke with Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager, India & Gulf, Tourism Australia, Jane Phillips, General Manager, Distribution Development & Partnerships, and Jennifer Doig, Regional General Manager, South and Southeast Asia. They share their perspectives on India's rising significance, the strategies driving deeper engagement, and the future of Australia's relationship with Indian travellers.

Let the numbers talk!

The numbers speak for themselves. Australia welcomed over 450,000 Indian visitors in the year to May 2025, up 10 per cent year-on-year. Spending has climbed even faster, reaching AUD 2.7 billion, a 14 per cent jump. Indians are not only travelling in greater numbers but also staying longer, close to 29 million nights collectively in 2025, a 21 per cent increase over the previous year.

According to Nishant, this reflects a changing travel style. He shares, "Indians are no longer restricting themselves to Sydney, Melbourne, or Brisbane. They are exploring regional destinations, seeking cultural connections, and staying longer. This is exactly the kind of travel Australia is well positioned to deliver."

A platform for all

This year's AMI, brought together 100 Australian tourism operators and more than 100 Indian agents. For the first time, all eight Australian states and territories were represented.

Jennifer Doig says, "This marketplace is about building real connections. India is one of our fastest growing markets, and these face-to-face meetings are crucial for showcasing premium Australian products and experiences."

The trade floor featured everything from luxury lodges and winery tours to aboriginal experiences and adventure offerings, giving Indian agents a wider portfolio to work with.



Better access fuels growth

Improved connectivity has been another game-changer. Direct flights from Qantas and Air India, supported by codeshares with Indigo and Virgin Australia, have made travel far easier. This has been complemented by one of the world's most streamlined visa systems, applications are entirely online, with no interviews or biometrics, and multi-year visas are available. Nishant adds, "This ease of access has made a big difference, especially for repeat visitors and business events."

Associating with the Indian traveller

Australia's strategy goes beyond access. Jane Phillips pointed to the importance of equipping Indian agents with the right tools. Today, more than 3,000 Aussie Specialists across India are trained to sell Australian holidays, supported by tailored programs and on-ground experiences.

Tourism Australia has also leaned on India's passions, especially cricket. Campaigns like 'Howzat for a Holiday?' featuring Pat Cummins, and collaborations with cricketer David Warner, have resonated strongly. Sporting ties have even driven visitation; over 15,000 Indians travelled to watch the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia, with many more arriving for test matches and concerts.

A New Chapter: Come and Say G'day

Adding to this momentum is the launch of the next phase of the 'Come and Say G'day' campaign in India on 20 August. This edition features animated mascot Ruby the Kangaroo alongside Sara Tendulkar, entrepreneur and philanthropist.

Sara shares, "There's something about Australia that keeps calling me back. From bustling cities and beaches to wildlife and food, the memories I carry are my real souvenirs."

Tourism Australia's Chief Marketing Officer, Susan Coghill, explains why Sara was the right fit: "Her connection to Australia is genuine, and that authenticity is what really inspires travellers to take the leap."

The campaign will run across television, outdoor, digital, and

social platforms, strengthening Australia's visibility in India just ahead of the upcoming holiday season.

The next leg!

India is now Australia's fifth-largest inbound market, and industry leaders are confident the growth story has only just begun. Rising disposable incomes, a younger travelling population, and improved access are expected to fuel demand further.

Nishant concludes, "No market offers as much potential as India right now. With the right partnerships, campaigns, and continued focus, Australia can cement itself as one of the top choices for Indian travellers."



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Preserving the Past for a Sustainable Future

Imagine standing before the majestic Taj Mahal, its white marble shimmering under the Indian sun, or wandering through the ancient ruins of Hampi, where every stone whispers tales of a bygone era.

-Vipul Singh

(Professor of Environmental History and Conservation, University of Delhi, Delhi)



INDIAN SAGA

Heritage, both tangible, such as monuments and sites, and intangible, like cultural and religious traditions and languages, connects us to our ancestors and to each other across borders and generations. Heritage in that sense is the legacy we inherit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of *Virasat bhi Vikas bhi* - heritage and development, encapsulates this ethos. He emphasises that preserving our past is integral to building a sustainable future.

Monuments such as the Iron Pillar and Qutb Minar in Delhi's Qutb Complex, the Mauryan Pillar Inscriptions, the Sanchi Stupa, the Ajanta Caves, the Taj Mahal, and the Hampi complex are among the many heritage sites regularly visited by tourists from across India and around the world. These timeless structures not only shape our collective identity but also serve as powerful symbols of unity, reminding us of the rich and shared cultural legacy we inherit.

World Heritage Day, officially the International Day for Monuments and Sites, was established in 1982 by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) during a conference in Tunisia. UNESCO formalised it in 1983, designating April 18 as a global call to safeguard this heritage. Each year, ICOMOS selects a theme—such as 'Heritage and Climate' or 'Sustainable Heritage' to focus conservation efforts worldwide. This day is not just a celebration; it is a movement, encouraging communities to engage in preservation, educating youth about their roots, and promoting sustainable tourism. In India, heritage walks illuminate sites such as Delhi's Qutub Minar, while in Peru, festivals celebrate Machu Picchu's Incan legacy.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), founded in 1945, are a cornerstone of global heritage preservation. Headquartered in Paris, UNESCO's mission spans education, science, culture, and communication, aiming to foster peace through international cooperation. Its flagship initiative, the World Heritage Convention of 1972, identifies and protects sites of "outstanding universal value." Today,

the World Heritage List boasts 1,199 sites across 168 countries - 42 in India (Taj Mahal, Ajanta Caves), 59 in Italy (Colosseum, Pompeii), 25 in Japan (Hiroshima Peace Memorial), and beyond. UNESCO provides funding via the World Heritage Fund, expertise through partnerships, and advocacy for threatened sites. In 2025, with climate change a pressing concern, UNESCO's focus on resilient heritage aligns with global priorities, supporting nations from Egypt to Indonesia in safeguarding their cultural treasures.

India, with its 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 34 cultural, seven natural, and one mixed, is a treasure trove of history. Delhi exemplifies this richness with the Qutub Minar, a

12th-century minaret, the Red Fort, built in 1639, Humayun's Tomb that previews the Taj Mahal's elegance. The Jantar Mantar reflects scientific ingenuity that India had in medieval times. Beyond Delhi, the Taj Mahal in Agra draws over 7 million visitors annually, while the Ajanta and Ellora Caves, Hampi, and Sundarbans National Park narrate India's diverse saga.

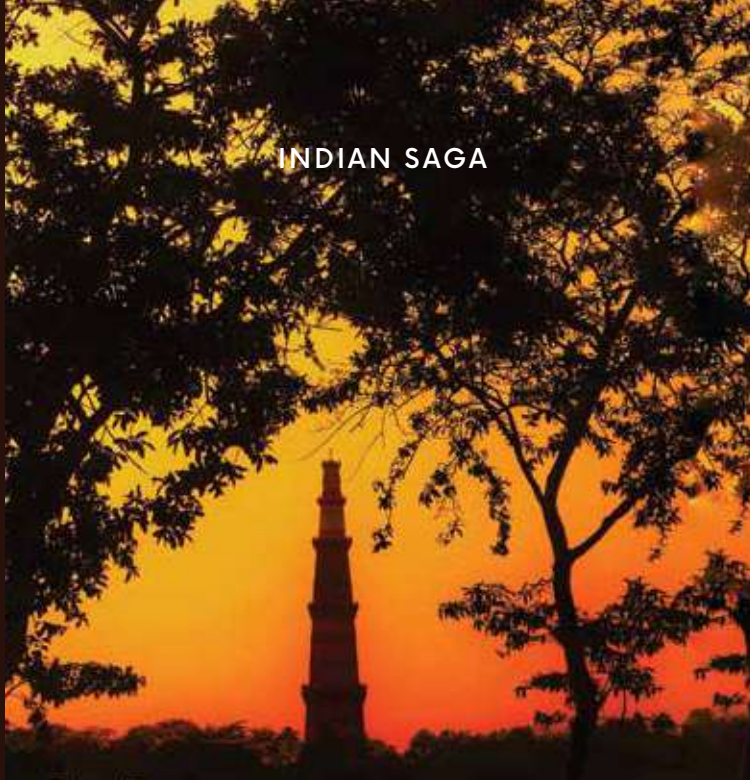
The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), founded in 1861, manages over 3,600 monuments. It also takes care of the excavation of ancient sites such as Dholavira. It has well trained archaeologist who are able to restore structures with traditional methods. Despite challenges like funding shortages, ASI's efforts ensure India's heritage endures.

Heritage Tourism Worldwide

Heritage tourism is an economic powerhouse globally. In India, tourism contributed 9.1 per cent to GDP in 2024 (USD 11.10 trillion), with heritage tourism generating USD 100–125 billion through ticket sales, local commerce, and foreign exchange (INR 2.31 lakh crore in 2023). Greece's ancient sites, like the Acropolis, drive tourism to over 20 per cent of GDP, supporting 900,000 jobs. Egypt's pyramids and temples, attracting 14.9 million visitors in 2023, contribute 12 per cent to GDP, bolstering local economies. Italy's heritage tourism, cantered on Rome and Florence, accounts for 13 per cent of GDP, with the Colosseum alone generating millions in revenue. China's Great Wall and Terracotta Army draw 70 million visitors yearly, fuelling a tourism sector worth 11 per cent of GDP. These figures highlight heritage tourism's role in sustainable development, channelling funds into conservation and community livelihoods.

India's heritage comes alive aboard special trains. The Palace on Wheels explores Rajasthan's forts, the Maharajas' Express links iconic cities, and the Golden Chariot tours South India's temples. Globally, similar innovations abound: Japan's Shinkansen, a bullet train doubling as an art gallery, connects cultural hubs, while Peru's Hiram Bingham train offers luxury travel to Machu Picchu.

Italy's 59 UNESCO sites set a gold standard. Rome's Colosseum (9 million visitors yearly) uses timed entries and VR tours, while Florence's Duomo thrives on cultural branding. Japan employs advanced monitoring for Kyoto's temples, preserving wooden structures with precision. Egypt balances tourism with conservation at Giza, using 3D mapping to monitor wear. China's Great Wall combines government oversight with international aid, protecting 21,196 kilometers of history.



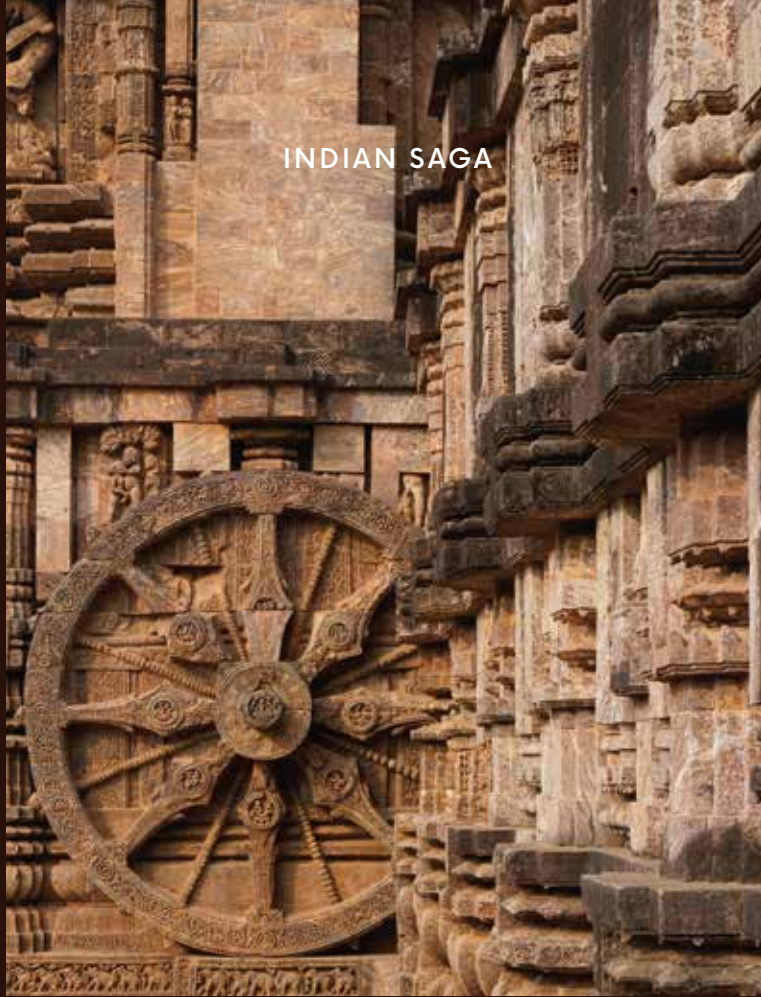
Cultural and Religious Tourism

India's recent thrust on cultural tourism is evident in its focused development of spiritual circuits that celebrate the country's rich religious and civilizational heritage. Central to this initiative is the Varanasi – Prayagraj–Ayodhya circuit, which interlinks three of Hinduism's most sacred cities. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi is a flagship project, transforming the pilgrim experience by seamlessly connecting the historic Kashi Vishwanath Temple to the Ganga ghats through modern pathways, infrastructure, and digital services, while preserving its spiritual essence. In Prayagraj, the Mahakumbh remains a magnet for cultural tourism, with massive footfall managed through a blend of traditional practices and smart technologies like surveillance drones, e-ticketing, and real-time crowd monitoring. Meanwhile, Ayodhya is emerging as a major spiritual tourism hub with the construction of the grand Ram Mandir, symbolising the cultural resurgence of India's ancient narratives.

Climate Change a Global Threat?

Climate change imperils heritage sites universally. In India, the Taj Mahal battles floods and acid rain, Hampi faces erosion, and the Konark Sun Temple weathers cyclones. Globally, Venice, Italy, saw floods in 2019 that submerged St. Mark's Basilica; Petra, Jordan, erodes under flash floods; Machu Picchu, Peru, risks landslides; and Australia's Great Barrier Reef fades from coral bleaching, with 50 per cent of its coral lost since the 1980s. Easter Island's Moai statues face coastal erosion, while Timbuktu, Mali, battles desertification. Solutions like flood barriers, reforestation, and digital archiving are critical, with UNESCO and the World Monuments Fund leading resilience efforts. Despite the growing challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, heritage tourism continues to

thrive—and India stands at a unique crossroads where tradition meets technology. With its rich heritage of monuments, temples, forts, and archaeological wonders, India has immense potential to become a global leader in heritage tourism, especially if the sector actively embraces emerging technologies. Technological innovations such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can revolutionise the way tourists experience India's cultural treasures. Imagine immersive VR tours of the Ajanta and Ellora caves, or a digital walk through the ruins of Hampi, available to both domestic and international audiences, allowing access even during monsoons or site restorations. Heritage is our bridge to the past and a beacon for the future. World Heritage Day unites us in its protection, with UNESCO, ASI, and global partners leading the way. Heritage tourism fuels economies around the globe, from India's Taj Mahal to Greece's Acropolis. At the same time it also fosters cultural exchange. Climate change demands urgent action such as resilient conservation, sustainable practices, and collective responsibility. As we look to the future, PM Modi's Virasat bhi Vikas bhi serves as a guiding principle, reminding us that preserving our heritage is not just about honouring the past but also about building a sustainable and prosperous future. Together, we can ensure our heritage endures a timeless gift for generations to come.



**STEP OUTSIDE OF THE EVERYDAY AND INTO A DREAM
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68th TAAI Convention: Business with Goodness

The exhibition will explore how trust, empathy, and responsibility can shape the future of travel.

- *Naina Nath*

Sunil Kumar





The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) is set to host its 68th Convention & Exhibition in Abu Dhabi from September 17–19, 2025, bringing together leaders and stakeholders from across the global tourism ecosystem. Coinciding with TAAI's 74th year, this edition is built around the theme 'Business with Goodness', an ethos that goes beyond conventional networking and commerce, urging the industry to reflect on values that sustain long-term growth.

Why this edition matters

The convention comes at a time when the global travel and tourism industry is navigating shifting consumer trends, economic uncertainties, and geopolitical disruptions. Against this backdrop, TAAI's focus on "goodness" highlights the need for trust,

empathy, and responsibility in business relationships. For an industry built on connections between people and cultures, the philosophy resonates deeply. As Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI, explains: "This convention is not just about strategies for business growth. It is also about ensuring that growth is rooted in trust, empathy, and responsibility. Tourism has the power to connect cultures, and that is where its true strength lies."

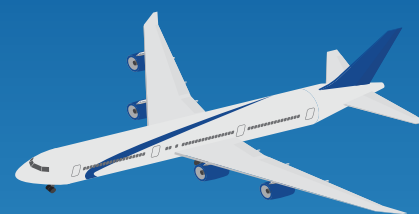
With conflicts and disruptions testing global connectivity, the Abu Dhabi edition will provide a platform to explore how tourism can continue to serve as a unifying force while also driving sustainable economic growth.

Why Abu Dhabi?

Choosing Abu Dhabi as the host city reflects TAAI's commitment

to strengthening ties with international destinations while showcasing India's importance as a source market. The UAE remains one of India's closest partners, with strong two-way tourism flows. Hosting the convention here not only acknowledges this partnership but also positions TAAI as a bridge-builder between Indian agents and global stakeholders. For delegates, Abu Dhabi offers an inspiring backdrop. From world-class infrastructure and cultural landmarks to visionary tourism strategies, the city exemplifies how destinations can successfully balance tradition and innovation. The convention will give members a chance to experience Abu Dhabi first-hand, while also exploring opportunities for collaboration with the region.





Key themes and conversations

The 68th TAAI Convention promises a robust programme designed to balance business, learning, and cultural experiences.

- September 17: An opening ceremony at Emirates Palace Mandarin Oriental, complete with entertainment, networking, and a welcome dinner.

- September 18–19: Knowledge Sessions 1 & 2, featuring plenaries led by industry leaders on current trends and future opportunities. Workshops and B2B sessions under TAAI's India Travel & Tourism Expo (ITTE 2025) will allow delegates to connect with international stakeholders, explore new destinations, and build partnerships.

- September 19: A farewell gala at SeaWorld Yas Island, combining celebration with a chance to experience one of Abu Dhabi's signature attractions.

The ITTE component is particularly significant. It is designed to create direct, meaningful engagement between Indian travel agents and global stakeholders, with TAAI once again introducing the

Delegate ITTE Passport to encourage maximum interaction.

TAAI's Priorities

The convention is also an opportunity for TAAI to outline its vision for the future. Central among them is supporting the evolving needs of Indian travel agents. With consumers increasingly seeking transparency, customised experiences, and digital-first interactions, TAAI is focused on helping its members adapt and thrive.

Equally important is TAAI's role in strengthening India's position in global tourism dialogues. India's outbound travel continues to rise sharply, while its diverse inbound potential remains underutilised in several regions. By engaging with international partners in forums such as the Abu Dhabi convention, TAAI is making sure Indian voices are central to global tourism conversations.

"India is at the centre of global tourism's growth story. Through TAAI, we want to ensure our members remain trusted advisors to travellers and valued partners to the world. The Abu Dhabi

convention is a step forward in that journey," adds Sunil Kumar.

A convention with purpose

What makes the 68th edition stand out is its underlying philosophy. "Business with Goodness" is not just a theme but a reminder that growth in tourism must be anchored in trust and responsibility. At a time when the industry is often measured in numbers alone, the emphasis on values feels both timely and necessary.

Delegates can expect more than just another industry gathering. They will return not only with new contacts and business opportunities but also with fresh perspectives on how tourism can shape a more harmonious and inclusive world.

As anticipation builds, delegates can expect more than just another industry event. The 68th TAAI Convention & Exhibition in Abu Dhabi promises to be a milestone, where business opportunities meet shared values, and where the future of tourism is discussed not only in terms of profit, but also purpose.



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A new dawn by THE sea



IATO convention 2025

The holy town of Puri is no stranger to grand gatherings, yet the 40th Annual Convention of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), held from 22 to 25 August 2025, gave the seaside city a new rhythm.

- Tripti Jain



EVENT AFFAIR

With its waves whispering stories of heritage and the towering Jagannath Temple standing as silent witness, Odisha welcomed nearly a thousand delegates from across India and beyond. The theme, 'Rejuvenate Inbound @2030', captured the collective mood.

At the inaugural ceremony, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, set the tone with a candid reminder, he shares, "India's identity as an inbound destination is growing stronger than ever before. What we must focus on now is execution and converting vision into reality."

Odisha's Deputy Chief Minister, Pravatī Parida, invites travellers and shares, "We invite the entire travel fraternity to partner with us, so that Odisha is seen as a land of art, wildlife, adventure and seaside leisure."

And in his opening remarks, IATO President Ravi Gosain urged collective ownership and shares, "Our task is not merely to bring back numbers. It is to reimagine India as a destination that delights, inspires, and endures. By 2030, inbound tourism must stand as a cornerstone of our economy and a bridge between cultures."

SETTING THE STAGE

The first day was a careful weaving together of ritual, networking, and narrative. The travel mart and exhibition floor was soon buzzing, with state tourism boards setting up colourful stalls. Chhattisgarh presented its roadmap of eco-tourism and tribal culture, while Uttar Pradesh highlighted



spiritual circuits like Ayodhya and Varanasi alongside lesser-known treasures such as Kannauj's perfumery. Odisha, as host, revealed its own ambitious plans from promoting glamping to strengthening homestay networks and upgrading airport connectivity. Evening cultural programmes, with mesmerising Odissi dance and folk music, anchored the day with a reminder of why culture remains India's strongest tourism currency.

Ideas in motion

The second day belonged to the business sessions which were intense, packed, and sometimes fiery. Moderated by Ashish, the session Rejuvenate Inbound @2030 featured voices such as Suman Billa, Praveen Chander (IHCL), Ajay Jain (Andhra Pradesh), and Ravi Gosain himself. Discussions ranged from digital-native tourism to the power of storytelling through cinema.

Suman Billa emphasises that India's marketing must move beyond campaigns and shares, "The opportunity before us is to harness the voices that already exist—travellers, influencers, the diaspora and create a collaborative narrative."

Participants spoke of the need for a 'House of Brands' approach where each state highlights its core strengths without duplicating efforts. Sustainability, too, emerged as a theme: cleanliness, responsible behaviour, and awareness among local communities were seen as equally important as government action.



REVITALISE BRAND INDIA

The next session, moderated by Naveen Kundu, shifted focus to India's global image. Here, Rajeev Kohli and JK Mohanty spoke for the role of influencers, smart collaborations, and easing of visa processes.

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Homa Mistry led a session that brought airlines, hoteliers, transporters and guides onto the same stage. Arif Patel (ITC), Subhash Goyal, and others stressed that trust is the cornerstone of tourism. "A guide is a cultural ambassador of India," one speaker notes, drawing applause. Transporters too were recognised as the unsung faces of the industry, often shaping a traveller's first and last impressions. Airlines like IndiGo highlighted their code-share arrangements with 11 global carriers, underlining how aviation partnerships can extend India's reach.

REDISCOVERING INDIA RESPONSIBLY

Debjit Dutta moderated a session on sustainability, where experts like Rampratap Singh and George Scaria drove home hard truths. "Tourism contributes nearly 10 per cent of our carbon footprint. If you cannot measure sustainability, you cannot follow it," says one panellist. From data gaps to air conditioning's outsized energy use in hotels, the discussions were refreshingly specific. IATO itself took a green step this year by replacing plastic bottles with glass ones. By the evening, the tone had shifted from policy to play, with karaoke, laughter, and dance closing out a day that proved both heavy and hopeful.

THE NEXT STEPS

The morning opened with a business session that celebrated India's diversity of experiences. From adventure treks to culinary



trails, the message was clear: today's travellers want journeys, not itineraries.

TECHNOLOGY IN TOURISM

A knowledge session on artificial intelligence and automation, with inputs from leaders like Rocky Jagtiani and Devendra Parulekar, pushed delegates to imagine tourism in a digital-first world. From AI-powered customer support to predictive travel planning, the consensus was that technology is central to future growth.

The convention concluded with a sense of closure, yet also of beginnings. Door prizes may have delighted delegates, but it was the ideas and connections that felt like the real takeaways.

BEYOND PURI

The IATO Convention 2025 was a mirror, showing where India's inbound tourism stands and where it could head. Infrastructure bottlenecks, visa facilitation, branding, sustainability, all were laid bare. Yet, the solutions, digital campaigns, collaborative storytelling, simplified regulations, and community-first strategies, were equally clear.

As Ravi Gosain reminded the gathering, "The power lies in us. We have the ability to change what we have. Tourism growth must match the pace of our GDP growth and with a solid plan, it will."

A CALL FROM THE COAST

Odisha had hosted with grace, offering its art, dance and warmth, but it had also shown how a state can reimagine itself. The 40th IATO Convention will be remembered for its scenic setting and the seriousness with which it addressed India's inbound challenges. If the mood at Puri is any indication, the fraternity is ready to collaborate, innovate, and tell India's story.



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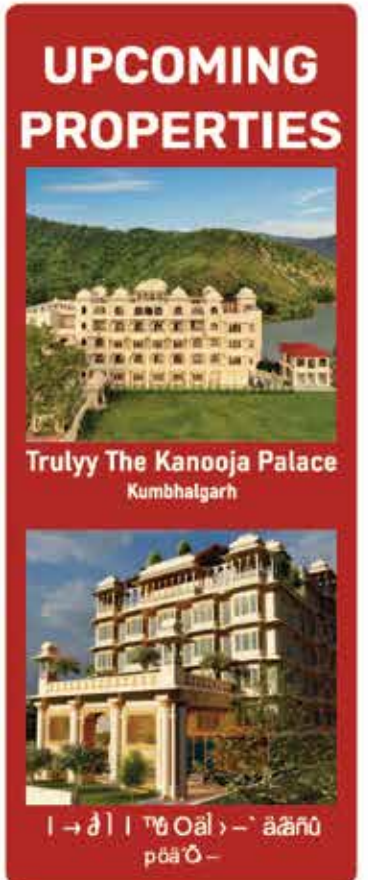
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MUMBAI TO *Phuket*

IT'S TIME TO
GO DIRECT!

A new direct route brings
Mumbai travellers closer to
Phuket's beaches, culture,
and island escapes.

-Naina Nath





There's something exciting about boarding a flight that takes you straight to a holiday hotspot without the hassle of layovers. That's exactly what Thai Vietjet has made possible with its brand- new direct service between Mumbai and Phuket. After launching flights from Mumbai to Bangkok last December, the airline has now added Phuket to the mix, giving Indian travellers another easy option for a quick getaway to Thailand.

The inaugural flight, VZ762, took off on August 14, 2025, from Phuket and landed in Mumbai in the early hours of August 15. From then on, the service runs four times a week, departing Phuket on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, with return flights from Mumbai on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays.

The Vietjet Experience

Flying with Thai Vietjet feels refreshingly easy. Check-in at Mumbai Airport was quick and efficient, and within minutes I was at the gate. Onboard, the Airbus A320 with its 180 seats felt comfortable for the short international hop.

What really stood out for me, though, was the crew. Both at the

counter and in the cabin, they were polite, approachable, and genuinely attentive, qualities that make a world of difference when you're flying. It's not about over-the-top service, but small touches of warmth that make the journey enjoyable.

Food and drinks are another highlight. Instead of a limited menu, Vietjet offers over 50 options, from hot meals and light bites to café-style drinks and desserts. The airline has even teamed up with Thai favourites like After You and Fuku Matcha, so you can indulge in treats you'd normally seek out on the ground. What's even better is that you can pre-book meals easily online or via their app, so there's no need to worry about availability onboard.

Overall, the flight felt smooth, comfortable, and well thought out. For a low-cost carrier, Thai Vietjet does a great job of striking the right balance between affordability and service.

Why This Flight Matters

For years, getting to Phuket from Mumbai usually meant a stopover in Bangkok or another city. Now, with this direct connection, you can be at the beach in just over four hours. That convenience changes



TRAVEL THERAPY

the game; not just for leisure travellers but also for weddings, MICE groups, and families looking for a quick holiday.

Phuket has long been a favourite among Indian travellers, and with easier access, we're bound to see more weekend getaways, short family trips, and destination weddings heading that way.

Phuket Through my Eyes

To give us a taste of both the airline and the destination, Thai Vietjet organised a media FAM trip that turned out to be a whirlwind of culture, adventure, and relaxation. Day one began with a warm welcome at Phuket Airport, followed by an authentic Thai meal at Michelin-starred Raya in Old Town, just the refresh we needed after the flight. The Old Town offered a mix of shopping, temples, food, and culture before we set off to explore some of the island's

highlights. From the towering Big Buddha and the colourful streets of Old Town to Monkey Hill with its cheeky residents, the day was packed with experiences. We checked into The Citrus Patong Hotel and capped the evening with the glitz and glamour of Simon Cabaret Phuket. Clearly, Phuket knows how to keep its Indian visitors entertained.

Day two was dedicated to the legendary Phi Phi Islands. A full day on turquoise waters, scenic boat rides, a laid-back Thai lunch by the waves, and endless photo-worthy views made this the highlight of the trip. By evening, we were back in Patong, ready for another lively night of shopping, dining, and nightlife along the buzzing Bangla Walking Street.

The final day moved at a gentler pace but was just as memorable. More shopping in Old Town, a stop



at the Phuket Pearl Shop, and a blissful Thai body massage made for the perfect wrap-up. As the sun dipped over the horizon, it felt like the island was giving us a fond farewell.

And so...

The new Mumbai–Phuket route isn't just about saving time, it's about making travel simpler, more enjoyable, and well within reach. Thai Vietjet has struck a balance between competitive fares and a genuinely pleasant onboard experience, something travellers often hope for but don't always get.

For me, the flight set the tone for the entire trip: smooth, welcoming, and hassle-free. Phuket, with its mix of culture, adventure, comfort, and endless entertainment, did the rest.

With this new direct connection, Phuket feels closer than ever. Whether it's a quick beach escape, a bachelorette party, or a family holiday, Thai Vietjet has made it easier for Indian travellers to slip straight into island life—no stopovers, no fuss.



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Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) 2025, the largest and most prestigious platform dedicated to enhancing domestic tourism in the state, is being organized by the Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) in partnership with the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan.

The event will bring together under one roof a wide spectrum of stakeholders including inbound tour operators, domestic travel agents, members of IATO/PATA, M.I.C.E. organizers, wedding planners, event managers, leading OTAs such as Agoda and MakeMyTrip, travel influencers, tour operators from across the country, as well as hospitality brands and heritage hotel owners, offering an unparalleled opportunity for networking, collaboration, and growth in Rajasthan's vibrant tourism and hospitality sector.

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MOSCOW DIARIES

A JOURNEY TO REMEMBER

There are some journeys that feel less like travel and more like stepping into a storybook. My recent trip to Moscow, curated by OTOAI, was exactly that, a seamless blend of culture, grandeur, and unforgettable experiences.

-Bharti Sharma

TRAVEL THERAPY

From its architectural marvels to the warmth of hospitality, the Russian capital unfolded in layers, each moment richer than the last. I arrived with curiosity but returned with stories, impressions, and gratitude that will stay with me forever.

Where time meets wonder

The first glimpse of Moscow's VDNKh—often described as 'the heart of Moscow where history meets the future'—was like stepping into an open-air museum. Stately pavilions, grand fountains, and leafy boulevards told tales of Russia's Soviet-era ambitions and its modern-day vibrancy. As we strolled through, the mix of atmospheric cafés and art spaces made it easy to lose track of time. Later that afternoon, rising to 140 metres on the 'Sun of Moscow' Ferris wheel was nothing short of breathtaking. The skyline stretched endlessly, the golden domes glinting in the sunlight, and for a brief moment, the entire city felt like it was holding its breath. But the true highlight came with the exclusive horse show at the Centre of National Equestrian Traditions. It was a cultural symphony of elegance, precision, and the deep connection between humans and horses. As the evening drew in, our welcome dinner at the Orangerie was magical, soft candlelight, world-class cuisine, and a show programme that reminded me that Moscow celebrates life with passion.

Sights and sounds

The rhythm of Moscow is best experienced by soaking in its atmosphere. After a hearty breakfast, we set out for Red Square, Zaryadye Park, and the GUM department store. Each step felt like walking through the pages of a history book. The iconic square, framed by the Kremlin walls and St. Basil's Cathedral, exuded grandeur while GUM's opulent interiors whispered stories of elegance from a bygone era. To my delight, we stumbled upon the Festival of India at Manezhnaya Square. It was heartwarming to see my own culture celebrated in a foreign land, with colours, music, and food creating a familiar sense of home amidst Moscow's historic backdrop. From there, we glided onto the Moscow River Cruise. As we lunched on board, the city revealed itself in a way that only riverside perspectives can offer, iconic landmarks mirrored in the water, each turn a postcard-perfect view. The gentle breeze, the clinking of cutlery, and the laughter of fellow travellers made it an experience of serene joy. Moscow's heartbeat is the Moscow Metro which is a world in itself. No ordinary transport system, it is an underground palace where chandeliers hang from arched ceilings, mosaics tell tales of triumph, and marble pillars stand as silent witnesses to history. It was awe-inspiring to realise that something as functional as a metro system could double up as

a living museum of art and architecture.

The evening was left for us to unwind, a luxury I cherished. Dinner at the O2 Restaurant with its panoramic views and vibrant show programme was the perfect finale to a day that had stirred every sense.

Palaces and people

One of the things I loved most about this trip was how well-paced it was. Mornings were filled with immersive explorations, afternoons balanced between adventure and leisure, and evenings reserved for celebrations. This balance struck me again as we moved from the historical grandeur of Moscow's sites to intimate cultural encounters. Whether it was savouring delicate Russian cuisine under the stars, or sharing conversations with fellow travellers over glasses of wine, the experience reminded me that travel is as much about people as it is about places. What struck me most was the sheer diversity of Moscow. It is a city of contrasts with golden domes alongside glass skyscrapers, centuries-old monasteries just a stroll away from bustling modern malls, and cultural performances that are as contemporary as they are traditional.

More than just an itinerary

As I reflect on the three days, I realise it was an orchestration. Every moment had been thoughtfully designed to offer sightseeing and storytelling.

Whether standing in the hushed grandeur of Red Square, feeling the pulse of history underground in the Metro, or watching the Moscow skyline light up from the deck of a river cruise. What could have been a whirlwind tour turned instead into a carefully crafted experience that allowed time for wonder, reflection, and connection.

Etched in gratitude

Travel, at its best, is transformative. Moscow gave me sights to see and feelings to cherish, awe, joy, serenity, and inspiration. Behind this seamless journey was the OTOAI team, ensuring every detail was perfected. From smooth transfers to exclusive shows, from luxurious dinners to moments of quiet leisure, their effort made this trip memorable and extraordinary. I return home with my heart full, my camera overflowing with snapshots, and my mind already revisiting the grandeur of Moscow's palaces, squares, and stories. Thank you, OTOAI, for crafting a trip and an experience that touched the soul.

Moscow in my heart

Moscow's grandeur humbles you, its art inspires you, its culture embraces you, and its stories stay with you. These three days reminded me why we travel. As I close this chapter of my travel diary, one truth stands out: Moscow is unforgettable.



GUJARAT'S MAJESTIC TRIO UNITY, WILDERNESS AND WONDER

Gujarat is a land where contrasts come alive and modern marvels stand tall against rugged landscapes, where ancient traditions are woven with contemporary vision.



Among the state's most captivating destinations are the Statue of Unity, the ethereal stretches of Kutch, and the dense, life-filled forests of Gir. Together, they form a trifecta of experiences that celebrate heritage, nature, resilience and culture, offering travellers a glimpse into the heart and soul of western India.

Tribute to a national icon

The Statue of Unity, rising an awe-inspiring 182 metres above the banks of the Narmada River, is an architectural achievement. Inaugurated in 2018, this monumental statue honours Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel—the 'Iron Man of India', whose vision of unity shaped the nation's political landscape. Travellers visit the site through beautifully landscaped gardens

admiring the magnanimity of the statue. Its bronze surface set against rolling hills and shimmering waters, feels right out of a movie scene.

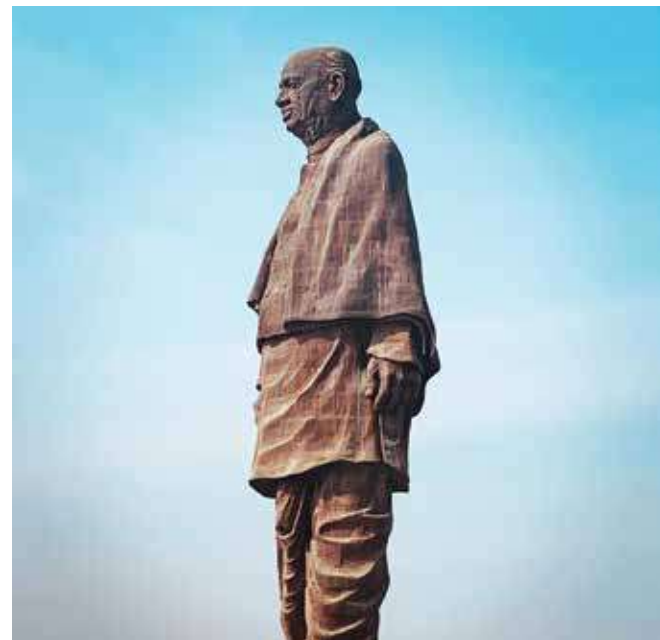
Climbing up to the viewing gallery at 153 metres, you can witness sweeping views of the river valley and surrounding forests. The complex around the statue offers sightseeing, it is a cultural hub. The Valley of Flowers bursts with colour, while the nearby Sardar Patel Zoological Park presents glimpses of the region's wildlife. In the evening, the Narmada Aarti surrounds the space with spiritual energy, reminding visitors that this is a celebration of unity, resilience and mankind.

Kutch: Where the desert dances

Further west lies Kutch, a region that feels

like another world altogether. Stretching to the edge of the Arabian Sea and bordered by the Great Rann, Kutch's vast expanse seems to dissolve into the horizon. During daylight, the landscape appears stark, salt flats stretching endlessly, dust-coloured villages and flora clinging to the earth. Yet as dusk falls, the land transforms. Under a silvery moon, the Great Rann gleams like a sheet of glass, reflecting the sky's glow and filling the senses with wonder.

The annual Rann Utsav draws thousands of travellers who come to witness this magical place. Tents decorated with local embroidery, vibrant folk performances and craft bazaars create a festive atmosphere. Here, traditions that have been preserved for generations are shared with the world in their most authentic form.



winding waterholes create a haven for species that are majestic and elusive.

Guided safaris through Gir's forests bring travellers face-to-face with more than just lions. Leopards can be spotted through the shadows, hyenas howl in the distance, and herds of deer, nilgai and wild boar move gracefully through the land. Birdwatchers delight in spotting an array of feathered inhabitants, from peacocks with shimmering tails to migratory visitors that flock to the park's watering holes.

A journey worth embarking

Travelling through Gujarat's Statue of Unity, Kutch and Gir is an experience that transcends sightseeing; it is a journey



The region's rugged charm extends beyond the Rann. Kala Dungar, or the Black Hill, offers panoramic views of the salt desert and nearby borderlands. Pilgrims and tourists climb to the temple perched at the top of the hill, seeking blessings while looking at the landscape's beauty. The Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary introduces travellers to rare wildlife roaming free in their natural habitat, while historical sites such as Lakhpat Fort and Narayan Sarovar reveal layers of Kutch's past.

Gir: The untamed heart of India

If Kutch embodies cultural richness, Gir represents nature's raw power. The Gir National Park is the last sanctuary where the Asiatic lion still roams. Spanning over 1,400 square kilometres, the park is a sanctuary beaming with life, lush grasslands, dry deciduous forests and



through resilience, creativity and nature's grandeur. From the towering homage to national leadership at Kevadia, to the moonlit salt desert of Kutch, and finally to the breathless encounter with Asiatic lions in Gir, each destination invites travellers to explore, learn and connect.

The best times to visit these sites fall between October and March, when the climate is most welcoming and festivities are in full swing. Reaching these treasures is relatively easy; Vadodara, Bhuj and Junagadh serve as gateways, with well-connected roads and transport facilities. In every sunrise over the Narmada, every shimmering moonlit salt flat, and every roar echoing through Gir's forests, the spirit of Gujarat shines through bold, enduring and full of stories waiting to be discovered.

HEADS IN BEDS

Jumeirah *Marsa Al Arab* **Where the Sea Meets the Sky**

At Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab, architecture leans forward like a prow, gastronomy unfolds in operatic chapters, and service glimmers in gestures so intimate they feel whispered.

- *Misbaah Mansuri*



HEADS IN BEDS

A Beginning in Motion

Luxury announced itself in silence. The Bentley that slid into my driveway did not purr so much as hum, interiors perfumed faintly of leather and polish. The city blurred until the road bent and the hotel rose into view: a sculptural prow cleaving sky and sea, Shaun Killa's final note in Jumeirah's nautical trilogy.

Inside, the lobby was glass and light, where the Gulf refracted itself a hundred ways. Staff moved without choreography yet with the ease of a practiced ballet.

Suite dreams

The suite was less a room than a vantage point. Floor-to-ceiling glass swallowed the horizon whole. A freestanding tub angled itself toward infinity, insisting that even bathing could be theatre. Interiors whispered of vintage Riva boats — teak, cream, brushed brass — yet carried Dubai's precision.

Evenings arrived with quiet surprises: linens monogrammed, poems slipped between pillows, objects bearing my initials as if they had always belonged. This was not service but intimacy in detail.

Lunch at Mirabelle

The brasserie began with Burgundy snails, their shells perfumed in herb butter so green it seemed to glow. Langoustine ravioli appeared as though folded by seafoam, delicate yet insistent. Then came audacity: the Wagyu Rossini burger — foie gras, brioche, and beef— collapsing decadence into a single bite.

Yet it was dessert that became memory. Orange crème brûlée laced with rose cracked like porcelain, releasing perfume before flavour. It was less eaten than inhaled, less dessert than atmosphere.



HEADS IN BEDS

Dinner at Rialto

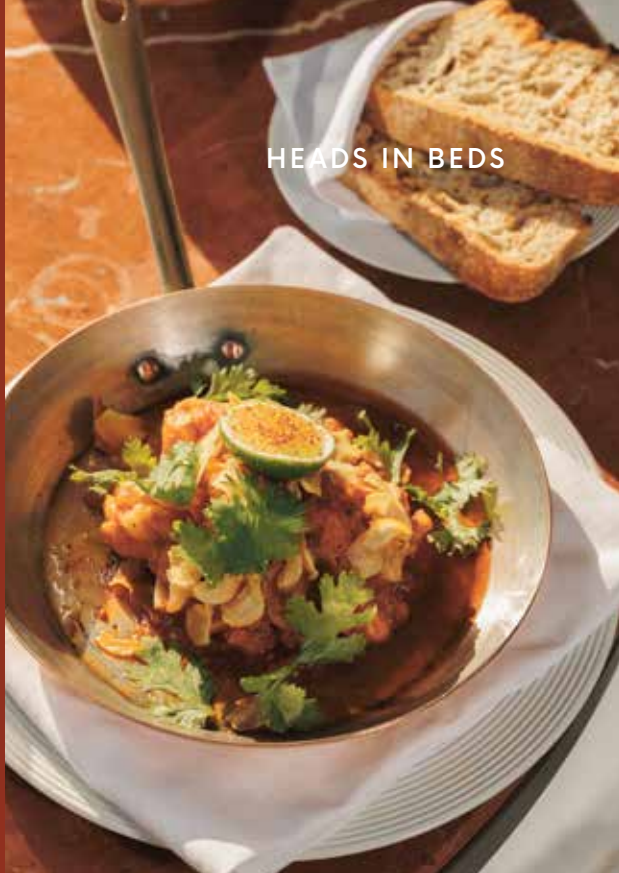
Rialto was less dinner, more opera. Octopus carpaccio spread like watercolour in basil green. Langoustines sharpened with Cremona mustard arrived both sweet and savage. Pastas carried drama: tagliolini tangled with truffle, spaghetti crowned with Osietra caviar and kissed by Amalfi lemon. Each bite demanded silence, as though the flavours required their own echo. A Fiorentina steak landed at the table with unapologetic weight. Waiters, exuberant and Italian to the bone, narrated every dish like an aria, turning service into spectacle.

An evening at Umi Kei

At Umi Kei, theatre gave way to meditation. Inspired by kintsugi, the Japanese philosophy of gilded repair, plates arrived as brushstrokes. Chutoro carpaccio shimmered under sesame and caviar. A wagyu sando whispered decadence beneath its crustless bread. Otoro dissolved before thought could catch it, Hokkaido uni carried the brine of entire coastlines. The omakase sequence became ellipses in flavour — pauses strung together until silence tasted of the sea.

Breakfast at The Fore

By morning, The Fore shifted shape. Sunlight drenched terrazzo floors, the Burj Al Arab framed like punctuation. AVROKO's design tucked secrets into corners: a peacock for India, a crane for East Asia, an oryx for Arabia. Breakfast became polyphony. Lobster Benedict, truffle scrambled eggs, Turkish menemen, a goat's cheese phyllo pie that cracked like an edible manuscript. The feuilleté station staged butter and heat into theatre — pastries filled on demand with veal, tomato, avocado. Around it: dosa stations, sushi counters, teas, fruits. Breakfast became not a beginning, but a geography lesson mapped in flavour.



HEADS IN BEDS

The Talise Spa

Talise unfolded over three floors, bathed in glass and horizon. Not retreat, but ascent. A female-only floor, a pool that mirrored the sky, treatment suites with terraces where healing stretched outward.

Guided by the pillars of Performance, Empower, Intention, rituals here felt composed, not curated. Mine began in eucalyptus steam, then drifted into massage where marma points were pressed like secret codes. Sandalwood traced skin, panchamruta poured in devotional arcs.

Elsewhere, heat sanctuaries glowed, technology hummed. Yet it was the philosophy that lingered: rest as gratification, stillness as power, harmony as destination.

I left not lighter, but steadier — as though the building itself had realigned me.

Sorbet sunsets at Iliana

Evenings dissolved at Iliana, where Greek mezze — taramasalata, octopus, dolmades — met the laughter of a burly sommelier pouring Santorini whites like blessings. Later, at The Fore Bar, cocktails blurred into stories: one perfumed with rose, another smoked into theatre, another stained hibiscus red.



Everywhere, service was flawless yet unforced. Staff from 99 countries brought exuberance and intuition; each encounter its own vignette. Luxury here did not announce itself. It arrived like a hand extended before you realised you needed it.

The aftertaste of detail

On the last morning, I lingered at the Commodore Club — figs in honey, salmon curled against porcelain, coffee laced with cardamom. The sea moved with indifference, reminding me it had been here long before the hotel, and would remain long after.

When I finally departed, the building receded in the rear-view: a yacht forever moored yet always about to depart. Leaving felt less like departure, more like being released. What endures are not grand gestures but precise ones: the crack of brûlée, the butter clinging to escargots, initials pressed into linens, the puff of pastry at dawn, the silence between sushi courses, the marma point pressed into skin.

Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab does not overwhelm. It edits, distils, arranges — until luxury becomes memory.

And memory, I realised, is the most persuasive form of hospitality.



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.

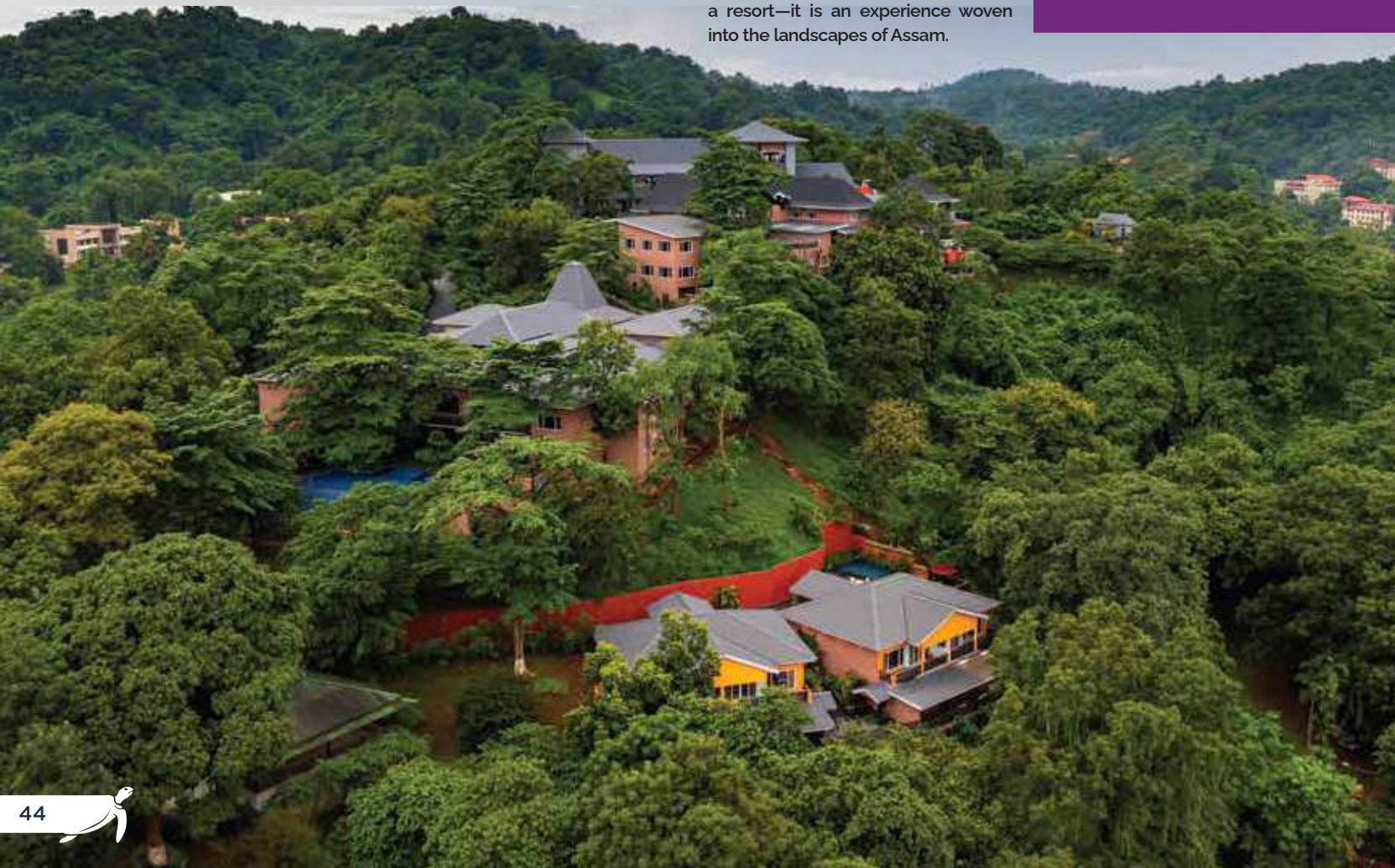
The soul of the north east

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.



MADHYA PRADESH LAYS OUT THE RED CARPET FOR THE WORLD

M Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board Invites You to the Heart of Incredible India for MP Travel Mart 2025

Imagine your guests in a jeep deep in the forest, photographing a spotted deer framed by a rugged fort, its stones echoing a thousand years of history. As dawn breaks through the canopy, the deer bolts—and a majestic tiger steps into the clearing, glowing in the sunlight. Welcome to Madhya Pradesh, one of the world's most exciting emerging destinations.

Whether expanding your hotel brand, curating itineraries for high-net-worth travellers, or scouting cinematic locations, Madhya Pradesh—the heart of India—offers it all. With progressive policies, diverse attractions, strong industry links, and forward-thinking promotion, the state's leadership has rolled out the red carpet for global partners and investors. This vision comes alive at the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Mart, October 11–13, 2025, in Bhopal.



The poster features a central image of a human hand shaking a tiger's paw. Above this, the text reads 'HANDSHAKE WITH THE TIGER STATE OF INDIA'. At the top, there are portraits of Narendra Modi and Bhupendra Patel, along with logos for the Government of India, Madhya Pradesh, and FICCI. The bottom section contains the event details: 'MADHYA PRADESH TRAVEL MART 2025' and '11-13 OCT, 2025 - BHOPAL'. A tagline states: 'Madhya Pradesh - A land where nature, heritage, culture, spirituality, wildlife and opportunity come together to shape the future of tourism'. Contact information includes the number '+91 8669026484' and the 'MADHYA PRADESH TOURISM BOARD' logo with social media icons and a QR code.

Adventure & Film Tourism

A single-window clearance system for film shoots has turned heritage and wildlife sites into key cinematic settings. For adventure seekers, the state offers rock climbing, kayaking, trekking, and island tourism in unspoiled spots like the Satpura Hills.

Diverse Destinations

Sanchi's stupas, and Khajuraho's temples—alongside fifteen more on the tentative list. Twelve national parks, twenty-two wildlife sanctuaries, and three biosphere reserves, including tiger havens like Kanha, Bandhavgarh, and Pench, make it a nature lover's dream. The state is also a global wellness hub, with sacred sites such as Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Amarkantak, and Chitrakoot offering spiritual retreats. The upcoming Simhastha Kumbh 2028 in Ujjain, one of the world's largest gatherings, is expected to draw over 100 million visitors.

Cutting-edge Communication

Established as 'The Heart of Incredible India', Madhya Pradesh promotes immersive experiences over simple sightseeing. Campaigns feature acclaimed actor Pankaj Tripathi for Indian audiences and sitar virtuoso Anoushka Shankar for global travellers. From VR monument tours to digital guided experiences, the state embraces technology to offer a 'try before you travel' preview.

Niche segments such as heritage and rural homestays, textile and craft tourism, tribal art, cuisine, and culture trails are growing rapidly. These efforts earned the state a place on The Wall Street Journal's list of 'Go-to Global Destinations for 2025'.

Partnerships & Recognition

Madhya Pradesh Tourism has forged strategic alliances—with Gujarat for an inter-state Narmada river cruise and with Uttar Pradesh for joint circuits. Improved connectivity, enhanced hospitality, and a world-class convention centre in Bhopal highlight its readiness as a MICE hub. Coffee table books and destination guides equip international tour operators with rich insights. In 2025, the state was honoured with the Best State Tourism Award at SATTE, Asia's largest travel exhibition. In 2024 alone, 134.1 million tourists visited Madhya Pradesh—a figure set to grow exponentially.

**Madhya Pradesh is ready for
the world at Madhya Pradesh
Travel Mart 2025.**



TRAVEL THERAPY

SYDNEY SCAPE

"Sydney is the city that San Francisco thinks it is..."
Now you can make whatever you like of that, but the fact
is that this is a place that likes to be taken seriously.

- *Inder Raj Ahluwalia*



TRAVEL THERAPY

Straddling its beautiful harbour, cosmopolitan Sydney is a dazzling city with sparkling beaches and national parks within easy reach.

My city initiation started in a special quarter! Here, one can delve into the past with a visit to an archaeological site, explore the cobbled lanes, and hear stories of tears and triumph, merchants and convicts.

Located on the harbour's edge and close to Circular Quay, surrounded by early Colonial architecture, with modern establishments running shoulders with old ones, The Rocks is the site of Australia's first European settlement, with a personality unmatched in Australia. A distinct style and atmosphere pervades this bustling harbour precinct of colourful streetscapes and restored gracious colonial buildings, chic boutiques, museums, wonderful restaurants and pubs with al fresco dining, and swinging entertainment venues. The place rocks.

Purely by coincidence, I spent an entire morning imbibing the 'spirit'. A quick pop in to Lord Nelson, Sydney's oldest pub, was to find out why beer drinkers have been dropping in since 1841. Then I proceeded to the atmosphere – laden Hero of Waterloo, the second oldest licensed pub, before moving to the beer garden at Phillip's Foote, and finally heading for The fortune of War Hotel, a wonderful art nouveau-style establishment whose liquor license dates back to the 1830s.

Emblazoned on thousands of postcards and t-shirts, and millions of happy snaps, the Sydney Opera House is Australia's most recognizable icon. Yet it isn't without controversy! 14 troubled years and 95 million dollars over budget later, its controversial sail-like roofs gleam and glisten against the appropriate backdrop of Sydney Harbour. Finally completed in 1973, it now features an impressive yearly programme of up to 3,000 contemporary and classical performances. It is worth taking the daily guided tour.

The views come thick and fast. And none are better than the ones from the Sydney Harbour Bridge Pylon Lookout. Testimony to the Australian worker's skill, the Sydney Harbour Bridge is still recognized as the old 'coat hanger' and has many stories to tell, including the notorious painting job of Paul Hogan, a.k.a. Crocodile Dundee. But the treat turned out to be BridgeClimb, a three-hour day, twilight and night adventure that took me to the top of the bridge some 134 metres above the sea, providing me with a walk of a lifetime under and over the bridge's famous arch. Apart from the stunning views, you also get a complimentary group photo and a Commemorative Climber Certificate.

More unforgettable views! Seated in Wildfire, among the best culinary hotspots in town,

serving Mediterranean and seafood delicacies, I had a grand view of Circular Quay, the famous Sydney Opera House-home to Australia's opera, ballet, theatre companies, and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

It never harms to discover Sydney's central business district, with shopping opportunities from stylish Castlereagh and Elizabeth streets to the Queen Victoria Building and bustling Pitt Street Mall. We drove past the beautiful Queen Victoria Building that houses a fruit market. Then past David Jones, the prime department store!

Five minutes west of the city centre, Darling Harbour is a modern waterside harbour complex with a mix of shops at Harbourside, an IMAX Theatre, and exciting waterfront restaurants at Harbourside Cockle Bay Wharf or King Street Wharf. Walk through underwater tunnels and view myriad sea life at the Sydney Aquarium dedicated to the presentation of Australian marine life. Located adjacent to the harbour in Haymarket, Sydney's Chinatown bustles with shops and restaurants.

The East...! Stroll down Macquarie Street to the Royal Botanic Gardens. Nearby is the Art Gallery of New South Wales. There's excellent shopping and dining in Potts Point, Kings Cross, Darlinghurst and Balmain. On the harbour's north side lie Paddington, Double Bay and

Mosman, leafy suburbs with stylish boutiques, galleries and antique stores. And there's Newtown that offers eclectic, alternative shops and restaurants.

Much of the city's reputation was built up thanks to its beach suburbs. Bondi is very popular and features several events. Manly is well known for its harbor, ocean beaches and the Oceanworld Aquarium. Also popular are Nielson Park, Balmoral, Camp Cove within the harbour, and the surf beaches of Bronte, Coogee, Collaroy and Curl Curl.

One sees the best of old and new in Paddington, one of the city's better residential areas, offering exciting shopping and leisurely dining. Queen Street features an extensive range of fine jewellery, antiques, art deco and designer furniture.

There's no better way of seeing the city than taking a Captain Cook cruise. With over twenty sightseeing and dining cruises daily- including Sydney Harbour cruises, lunch and dinner cruises, and Pre-theatre and Opera Afloat Dinner cruises- they ensure you get a feel of the harbourside atmosphere.

There's no shortage of things to buy, or places to flash your cash or card! The CBD is a maze of connected malls, arcades and department store thoroughfares, and home to big international designer boutiques like Chanel, Armani, and Gucci. Visit the historic Strand Arcade, The Queen Victoria Building, Pitt Street Mall, MLC Centre, Sydney Central Plaza, Chifley Plaza and Chinatown's Market City.



TRAVEL THERAPY

A different shopping experience awaits you in Oxford Street, Darlinghurst. Up the hill, Paddington is exercising its more sophisticated approach to shopping with a variety of designers, European chain stores, and fashionable home-wares lining the strip. The Inner East apart, there's good shopping with a personal and individual feel at places like The Rocks, Balmain, Rozelle and Mosman.

Sydney's largest and best traditional market, Paddy's Market has over 800 stalls with everything from clothes to cosmetics, sporting goods to CDs, and souvenirs to sheepskins, with a generous slice of Australian culture thrown in.

I took a stroll through the city's best museums and galleries. While I covered a few, the entire collection is huge and impressive. The Art Gallery of New South Wales provides a fine traditional art collection including The Yiribana gallery which offers an introduction to Aboriginal Art. Just as fascinating are MCA; The Powerhouse, Australia's largest, most interactive and fun museum; Australian Museum, the country's first, and still the best place to

discover national culture and environment; Museum of Sydney which features great incorporation of museum methodology and technology; and SH Ervin Gallery. Its well worth dropping in at the Royal Botanic Gardens, an oasis of greenery boasting views of Sydney Harbour and the city skyline. The gardens are home to the Sydney Tropical Centre with the Pyramid Glasshouse, the Herb Garden, the Fernery, the Rose Garden, a walled Cactus and Succulent Garden and the Oriental Garden.

Get up close and personal with huge gray nurse sharks, giant stingrays, sea turtles and other marine life at Oceanworld Manly; step onboard Matilda's Executive Rockets for the Rocket Harbour Express; ride the James Craig Tallship out to sea; or climb the bridge.

If food's your Achilles heel, you're in the right place! From dazzling harbor-side eateries, beach front cafes, or exotic ethnic inspired meals, dining reigns supreme. Indulge yourself at the city's up-market outlets like Bambu,

with a tantalising menu of Mediterranean, Asian, and Land and Sea dishes; Tetsuyas, featuring a unique, inspired touch; Rockpool, with a menu that will end your search for the supreme seafood meal; MG Garage, with beautiful, flawless food; Forty One, high above the rest of the city, with fine views; and WildFire, with its superb views of Sydney Harbour and fire and ice food concept.

My farewell look at the city! On the way to the Blue Mountains, we turned and looked down at the sprawling metropolis straddled around the sea. Sure, the skyscrapers dominated the skyline, and sure, the sea was a major visible factor.

Things seem to have panned out just right for Australia's largest and liveliest city!

Travel Facts

- The city has worldwide air connections. Sydney Airport (Kingsford Smith) is 10 from the city centre. Take a taxi or coach into town.
- Accommodation is wide and varied, with everything from deluxe hotels down to budget establishments and guest-houses.
- There are buses, trains, light rail monorail and ferries. The Explorer Bus stops at major attractions. Alight and rejoin as you please.
- The Sydney Pass offers unlimited bus, ferry and inner-city train travel, harbour cruises and journeys on the Explorer Bus.



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.



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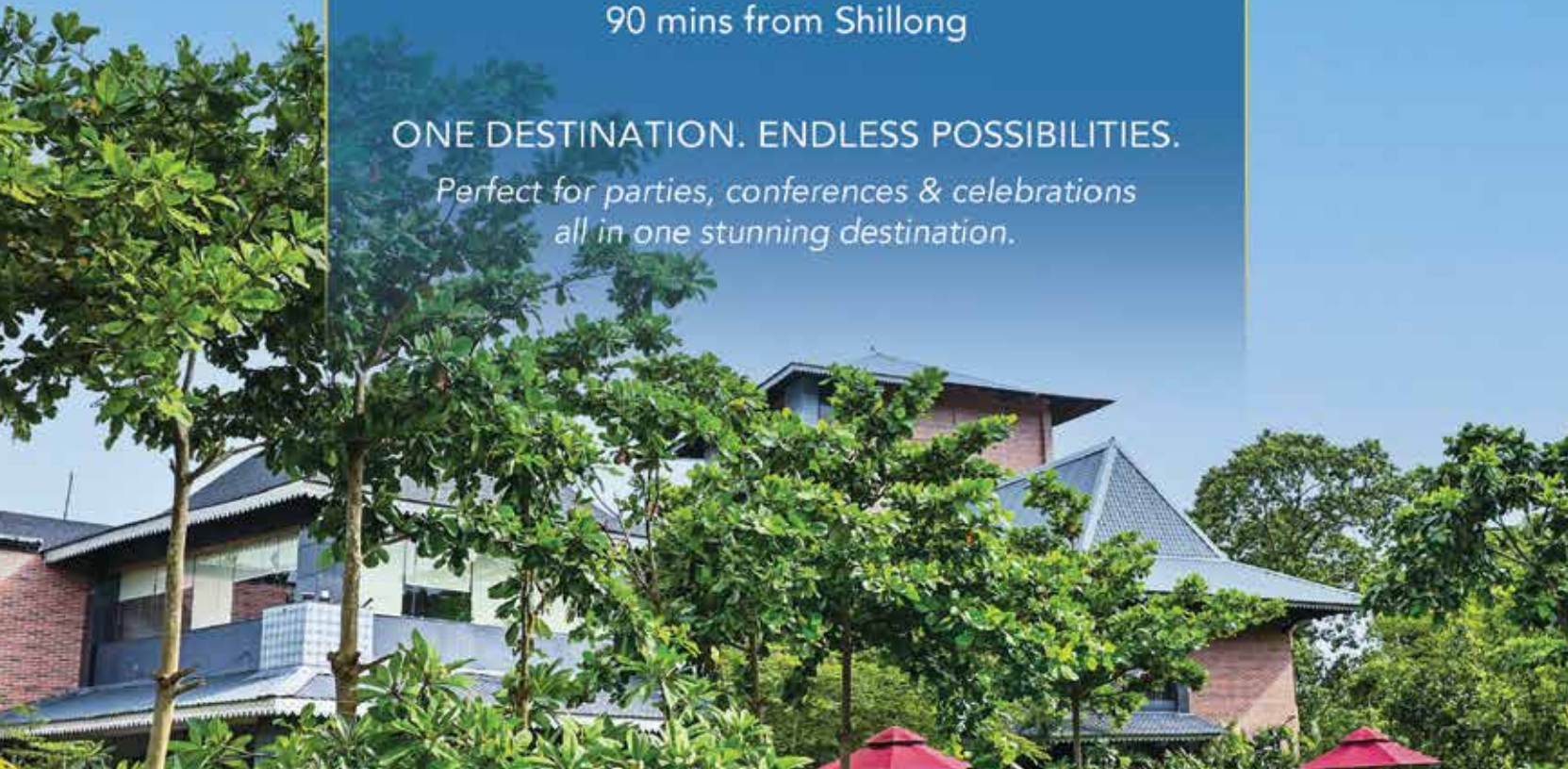
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HOTELLIGENCE

BAND, BAJA, BENGALURU

Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata
redefines the city as a dream wedding
destination

-Harish Chandra

For decades, couples and families have turned to the beaches of Goa or the palaces of Rajasthan. Bengaluru is not the first city that springs to mind when one thinks of destination weddings. Yet, Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata is determined to change this perception. With its grand spaces, thoughtful hospitality, and a flair for cultural as well as contemporary celebrations, the hotel is making North Bengaluru the stage for India's most memorable weddings.

In early August, the property hosted its much-awaited Wedding Showcase called Band Baja Bengaluru which was a three-day spectacle that married tradition with imagination. From Carnatic serenades at a rooftop luncheon to Moulin Rouge glamour at a gala dinner, every moment was crafted to inspire couples to dream bigger, brighter, and bolder.

Where hospitality meets heart

At the heart of this showcase were the people who give Hilton its human touch. General Manager Manish Garg set the tone, reminding guests that weddings are stories to be lived and remembered. His leadership team stood tall in support: Pavan Kumar, Commercial Director; Rashmi Kamboj, Director of Sales – MICE; Amit Raj A, Assistant Director of Sales and Wedding Specialist; Sudhagar Sethuraman, Director of Sales; Bavani Srinu, Cluster Director of Marketing & Communications; and the culinary maestros Gaurav Anand and Shravan Reddy, ensuring that flavours matched the flair.

It is this combination of professional precision and heartfelt warmth that makes Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata stand out. As Manish put it, "We offer the magic of a destination wedding, with the ease of being in your own city."

The canvas of celebration

For the showcase, the sprawling property transformed itself into a living gallery of possibilities. Guests were taken on guided tours of both indoor and outdoor venues, each dressed in imaginative décor concepts. The vast 60,000 sq ft event space which is the largest in North Bengaluru was proof that scale and



sophistication can exist in harmony. One moment, visitors were savouring an authentic South Indian meal served on banana leaves at Neer, the hotel's open-air rooftop restaurant. The next, they were transported to Paris, swept into a Moulin Rouge-themed gala with cabaret performances and a dramatic red-and-velvet setting. It was this ability to pivot between cultures and moods that left many convinced that Hilton Bengaluru could play host to weddings of any scale, style, or story.

Planners who paint the picture

No wedding showcase is complete without the magicians behind the scenes, who are the planners. Hilton Bengaluru invited some of the country's most respected wedding specialists to lend their eye and artistry. Among them were Wedding Partners by Lalit Sharma from Mumbai, Design by Raja from Hyderabad, Spize Events by Reema Thakkar from Chennai, Watermark Events from Cochin, Chapter 2

Events from Delhi, Neffertiti Events from Bengaluru, Baisakhi Events from Kolkata, and 7 Vachan by Minnat Lalpuria from Mumbai. Their presence gave the event both credibility and sparkle. For the planners, too, the showcase was a chance to explore a venue that offered not just grandeur, but logistical ease, close to the airport, connected to the city, and anchored in a vibrant business district.

Food, flavours and flair

Weddings are remembered as much for their menus as their moments, and here Hilton Bengaluru shone brightly. Under the leadership of Gaurav Anand, Director of Culinary, and Shravan Reddy, Director of Food & Beverage, the hotel offered a kaleidoscope of cuisines. From traditional South Indian dishes, humble yet soulful, to international spreads fit for a global palate, the culinary journey was as grand as the décor. Guests often found themselves

pausing between bites to marvel at how seamlessly the hotel shifted gears, from local authenticity to cosmopolitan indulgence. In many ways, this mirrored Bengaluru itself which is a city rooted in tradition yet effortlessly modern.

Beyond the big day

What makes Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata unique is its promise of a complete experience. For families flying in, the dual properties of Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn provide luxurious stays within the same complex. The landscaped outdoor venues offer a touch of serenity amidst urban bustle. And with the Hilton Wedding Diaries programme, every detail starting from florals to floor plans is overseen with care, allowing couples to focus on memories rather than management.

As Bavani Srinu, Cluster Director of Marketing & Communications, noted, the showcase was not about one weekend but about painting a picture of what every couple could achieve here, dreams without compromise, celebrations without boundaries.

The Bengaluru advantage

Couples today are rethinking the geography of love. Udaipur's palaces are enchanting, Goa's sunsets irresistible. Yet Bengaluru offers something different, a cosmopolitan spirit, pleasant weather all year round and unmatched connectivity. For families spread across India, it is a practical yet magical midpoint. And in Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata, the city has found a canvas vast enough to paint every dream.

A new chapter in Wedding Stories

The showcase concluded with a farewell brunch, a moment of quiet reflection after a weekend of spectacle. Planners, socialites, and influencers agreed on one thing: Bengaluru had arrived on the wedding map, and Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata was leading the way.

As couples continue to seek celebrations that are grand and personal, rooted and global, Hilton Bengaluru offers a promise, every wedding here will not only be remembered, but cherished.



KTM: Kerala's

bold leap into Niche Tourism

Kerala has long been a favourite among travellers seeking tranquility, natural beauty, and rich cultural experiences. But the state is no stranger to reinvention.

-Kashish Rawat



With the inaugural Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) 2025, featuring its first-ever Wedding and MICE Conclave - Kerala has signalled a bold shift towards niche tourism. By positioning itself as a leisure escape and a premium destination for celebrations and corporate gatherings, the state is tapping into one of the fastest-growing sectors in global tourism.

The event, held in Kochi from 14-16 August, brought together government representatives, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and service providers under one roof, all sharing a vision: to unlock the immense potential of destination weddings and business events in Kerala. More than just a trade meet, it was a statement of intent; one that blends tradition, innovation, and ambition.

Where business meets celebration

The conclave was inaugurated at the Grand Hyatt, Bolgatty, by P. A. Mohammed Riyas, Kerala's Minister for Tourism and Public Works, with subsequent trade meetings, exhibitions, and discussions at Le Meridien, Kochi. Over 675 buyers attended, 610 from across India and 65 from overseas, representing hotels, resorts, planners, caterers, designers, photographers and other service providers.

With 75 exhibition stalls on display, the event became a vibrant marketplace of ideas and services. From luxury venues overlooking the Arabian Sea to eco-resorts nestled in the Western Ghats, Kerala's offerings were on full display. It was clear that the state's tourism ecosystem is ready for diversification, armed with infrastructure and creativity.

Voice that matters

Several leaders set the tone for this ambitious expansion. Minister Riyas emphasised that Kerala's venues are more than event spaces; they are experiences shaped with finesse and flair. P. Rajeev, Minister for Industries, Coir & Law, praised the state's natural assets, its beaches, backwaters, and hill stations; and called them perfect backdrops for destination weddings and conferences. Suman Billa, Additional Secretary & DG Tourism, Government of India, delivered a keynote that resonated strongly with attendees. Calling weddings and MICE tourism 'low-hanging fruits' for Kerala, he advocated for a dedicated MICE Promotion Bureau to streamline collaboration among stakeholders. Sikha Surendran, Director of Kerala Tourism, spoke of the need for strategic global marketing and policy reforms, affirming the government's commitment to act on the conclave's recommendations. The conclave was further enriched by the presence of political leaders such as MP Hibi Eden, Mayor M. Anil Kumar, and senior officials from both state and central tourism departments, alongside past presidents of the Kerala Travel Mart Society.

Ideas that sparked enthusiasm

Beyond networking and showcases, the conclave laid out a roadmap for action. A major highlight was the suggestion to set up MICE Promotion Bureaus in key cities, beginning with

Kochi. These bodies would coordinate between government agencies and private stakeholders to ensure seamless governance and efficient service delivery.

Participants also called for a focused marketing strategy that could take Kerala's story beyond India's borders. With picturesque landscapes, heritage sites, and world-class hospitality, the state's offerings could easily stand shoulder to shoulder with global players, provided it is packaged thoughtfully and promoted consistently.

Technology was another key theme. Discussions explored how digital tools could enhance logistics, vendor coordination, customer experience, and real-time communication, all essential elements for large-scale events.

Why Kerala is ready!

Kerala's strengths are not merely aesthetic. The state boasts an impressive array of facilities: a high number of classified three, four, five-star hotels, multiple international airports, cruise hubs, rail networks, and expanding water transport systems. These infrastructural assets complement its natural beauty, cultural richness, and culinary traditions.

Moreover, Kerala's hospitality sector is already well-versed in catering to high-end travellers. With proper coordination, training, and branding, the state is perfectly positioned to transform weddings and MICE events into immersive, unforgettable experiences.

Overcoming hurdles

However, ideas and ambitions need more than goodwill to succeed. Execution will be critical. Meeting global expectations demands consistent quality, from the smallest vendor to the largest hotel chain.

Infrastructure upgrades, regulatory reforms, and capacity-building initiatives must be implemented swiftly and thoughtfully. Furthermore, the marketing narrative will need to highlight what makes Kerala unique, beyond its scenic charm.

Competing with established destinations such as Dubai, Bali, and Singapore requires a delicate balance between authenticity and scale. It is not just about glamour; it is about delivering experiences that feel deeply rooted in place and culture.

The road forward

The Wedding and MICE Conclave 2025 did more than gather industry leaders, it created momentum. By spotlighting Kerala's readiness and encouraging collaboration, it set the groundwork for a new tourism frontier.

If the recommendations are implemented with precision, and if government and private sectors work in harmony, Kerala's ambition to become a global destination for weddings and corporate events could well become reality.

This is an expansion of tourism; it is a reimagining of how celebrations are curated, how business meets culture, and how a state known for leisure can transform into a hub of experience-driven tourism. Kerala is ready. The world is watching.





AWARDS

Travel Turtle wins 'Best Travel Trade Magazine Digital' at IATO 40th Convention

Travel Turtle, secures the prestigious 'Best Travel Trade Magazine – Digital' award at the 40th Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) Convention, held in the culturally vibrant state of Odisha. This honour recognises Travel Turtle's unwavering commitment to quality journalism, insightful travel trade coverage, and a consistent digital presence in an ever-evolving media landscape. The award is a testament to the hard work, innovation, and passion exhibited by the entire Travel Turtle team.



Travel Turtle unveils 'Top 20 Maldives' coffee table book at Travel Trade Maldives

Travel Turtle unveils the 'Top 20 Maldives' coffee table book at Travel Trade Maldives, celebrating luxury, hospitality, and iconic island experiences. This soft launch highlights the Maldives as a timeless paradise for travelers worldwide.



EVENT AFFAIR



Balitrip Wisata concludes 4-city roadshow with 20+ Bali Partners

Balitrip Wisata officially launched its highly anticipated 4-city India Roadshow 2025 bringing together a strong delegation of over 20 top-tier hospitality partners from Bali. This includes leading hotels, villas, activity providers, and F&B partners, creating a powerful B2B showcase for Indian travel trade.



Thailand showcases tourism at Amazing Thailand roadshow in Delhi

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) hosts the Amazing Thailand Roadshow to India 2025 as part of its Grand Tourism and Sports Year campaign. The event highlighted Thailand's latest offerings and strengthened ties with the Indian travel trade.



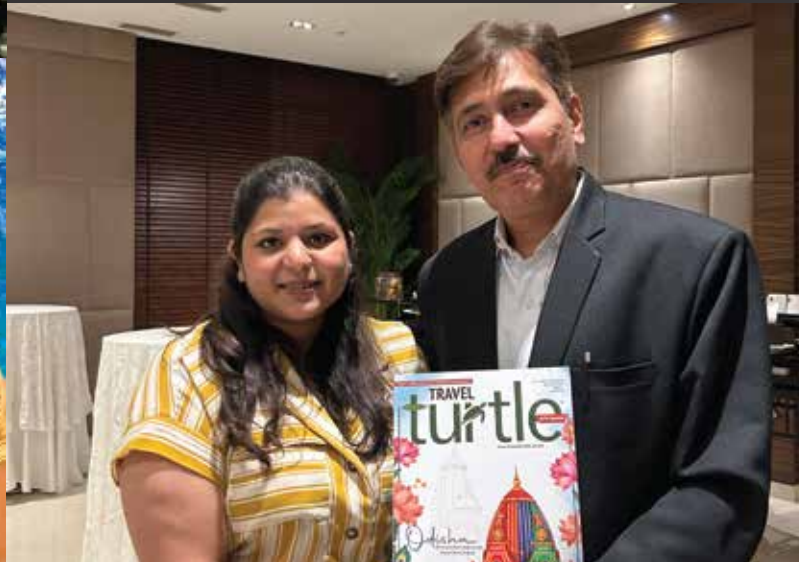
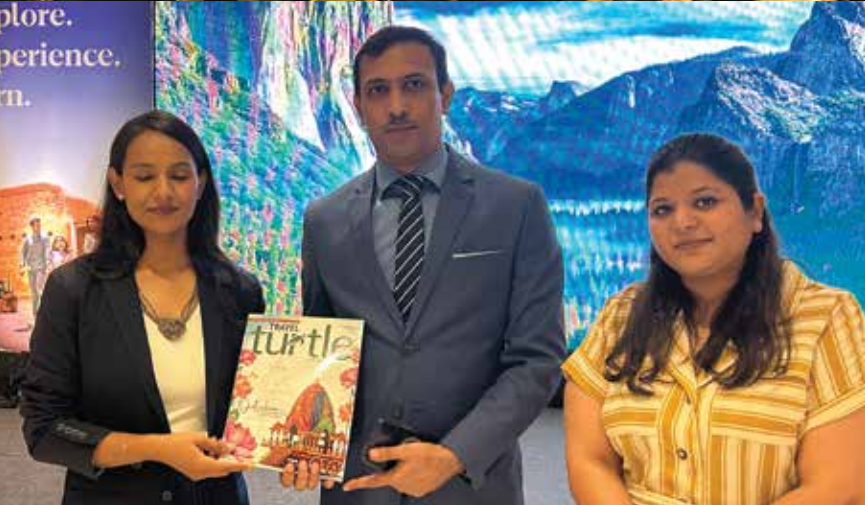
ADTOI celebrates 29 years of domestic tourism legacy

The Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) celebrates 29 years of promoting domestic tourism with a grand Founders Day event. The gathering united founding members, past presidents, industry veterans, and dignitaries in a tribute to ADTOI's legacy and future vision.



Saudi Tourism Authority and TBO Academy promote Golden Triangle

The Saudi Tourism Authority, in partnership with TBO Academy, is promoting Saudi Arabia's 'Golden Triangle' — Riyadh, Jeddah, and AlUla — to Indian travellers. With emerging destinations like Taif and Al-Baha and new Red Sea luxury offerings, the kingdom is expanding its appeal. TBO Academy supports the trade with training, curated itineraries, and exclusive rewards.



Faith hosts National Tourism Conclave 2025 in Delhi

Faith inaugurated its National Tourism Conclave 2025 themed 'Indian Tourism: Invincible Spirit!' The two-day event gathers leaders and experts to plan for India's goal of a 3 trillion dollars tourism economy by 2047, supporting the Vikshit Bharat Vision.



Regional tourism conclave spurs ₹3,500 crore investment in Madhya Pradesh



The Regional Tourism Conclave in Gwalior, led by Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, showcased investment proposals worth ₹3,500 crore to boost Madhya Pradesh's tourism and strengthen its global presence. The conclave reinforced Madhya Pradesh's push to boost its global tourism identity.



Queensland strengthens ties with India at Friends reception

The Friends of Queensland Reception, hosted by Honourable David Crisafulli MP, brought together leaders and changemakers to celebrate Queensland's vision, resilience, and cross-sector growth. The evening highlighted the strengthening diplomatic and trade ties between India and Queensland.



Jamaica celebrates 63rd Independence Day in New Delhi

The Jamaican High Commission in New Delhi celebrated Jamaica's 63rd Independence Day with a vibrant cultural evening marking 180 years of ties with India. The event saw the presence of diplomats, officials, business leaders, and cultural figures, with High Commissioner H.E. Jason Hall and Minister Shri Anupriya Patel in attendance.



APPOINTMENTS



Centara Hotels and Resorts

Centara Hotels & Resorts, announces the promotion of Hemant Jagtap to the position of Assistant Director of Sales, in recognition of his exceptional performance and strategic contributions to the brand's expansion in the Indian market.

Accor

Accor announces the appointment of Ranju Alex as its CEO for South Asia (covering India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka). Ranju is a highly accomplished hospitality professional who has until recently been the Regional Vice President for South Asia for Marriott International, running over 170 hotels across the region. Ranju began her career with The Oberoi Group in 1993 and has been in several leadership positions with Marriott International in a highly successful career which spans three decades.



The St. Regis

The St. Regis Mumbai announces the appointment of Nishanth Vishwanath as Multi-property General Manager. In his new role, he will spearhead The St. Regis Mumbai and Courtyard by Marriott Agra's vision to elevate guest experiences and drive continued success.

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts announces the appointment of Hishan Singhawansa as its new Chief Executive Officer, outlining a vision that places India at the heart of Sri Lanka's tourism growth story. With over 17 years at the John Keells Group (JKH), Singhawansa steps into leadership at a time when Sri Lanka's arrivals from India have surged by more than 30 per cent in the first half of 2025, reaffirming India as the country's largest source market.



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