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VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2025

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Editor's letter

December always arrives with a pause — a gentle exhale after a year that asked us to run, chase, attend, explore, and then run some more. This one, however, arrived while I was in Cannes, walking into ILTM France, the biggest and most beautiful luxury travel show in the world. A place where the best of the best don't just exchange business cards — they exchange ideas, philosophies, and an unspoken promise that travel will always find new ways to surprise us.

What stayed with me wasn't just the glamour of the Riviera or the conversations over coffee overlooking the sea, but the realisation that while I was in France, Travel Turtle was everywhere.

One colleague was soaking in the snowy calm of Switzerland, another was navigating stories from Kenya, someone else was on ground in Kutch, and yet another was discovering the wild, vast beauty of Western Australia, experiencing it first-hand for this very issue. Different time zones, different landscapes, one shared purpose — to bring the world closer to you, one story at a time.

November was a blur of events, conversations, launches, panels, and packed calendars. Airports became familiar, suitcases barely unpacked, notebooks filled faster than memory cards. But this December issue feels like a reward — not just for us, but for you. Think of it as our Christmas gift, wrapped in winter vibes, long-haul inspiration, warm storytelling, and destinations that invite you to slow down, dream, and plan ahead.

As the year winds down, this issue celebrates movement, moments, and the magic of being present — whether that's under fairy lights, in the Australian outback, or simply curled up with a magazine and a cup of something warm.

Here's to journeys taken, stories lived, and many more waiting just beyond the horizon.

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

   : travelturtlemag



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

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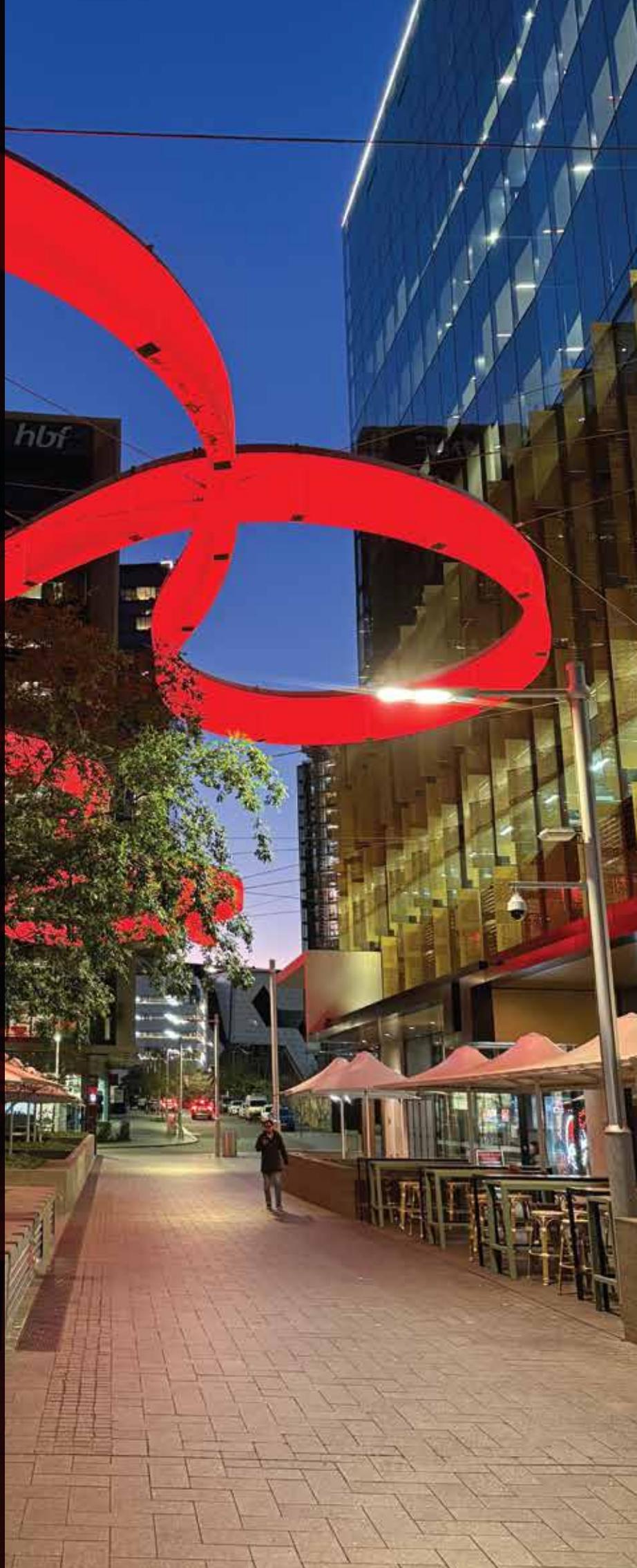
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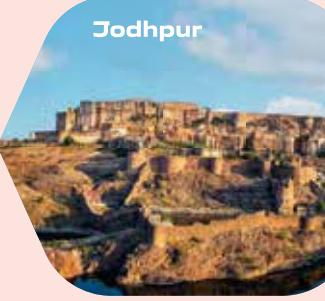
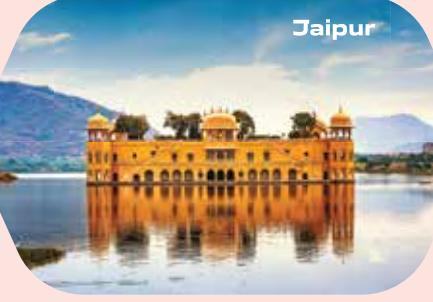


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COMMUNIQUÉ

IATO delegation meets Hon'ble Governor of Manipur to discuss key issues affecting tourism

A high-level delegation from the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) met the Hon'ble Governor of Manipur, H.E. Shri Ajay Kumar Bhalla, at Raj Bhavan to deliberate on critical issues impacting the state's tourism industry and to explore collaborative initiatives to enhance Manipur's visibility in global markets.



Villa Resorts and Villa Air launch panoramic seaplane transfers to Villa Park

Villa Resorts introduces a new Villa Air seaplane connection to Villa Park Maldives, creating an arrival experience that begins in the sky with sweeping views of the Maldivian archipelago.

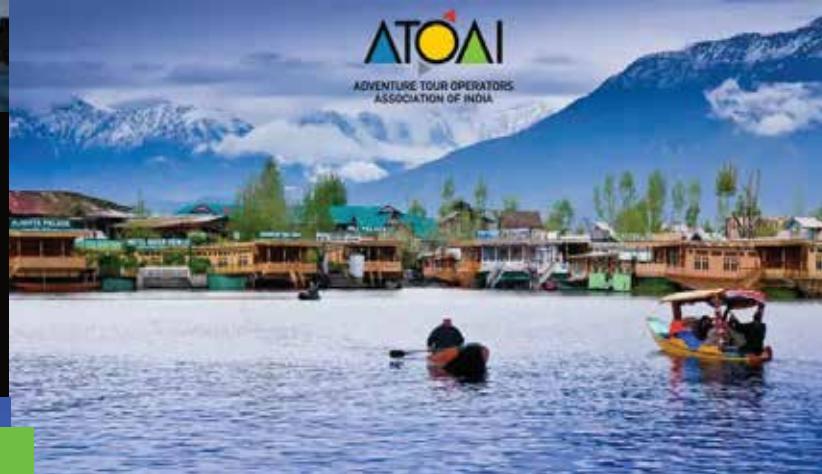


The Leela expands in Rajasthan with The Leela Jaisalmer

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, announces the signing of a management agreement with The Godwin Group for The Leela Jaisalmer, marking its foray into Rajasthan's fabled desert capital, the Golden City. Spread across 30 acres of desert landscape, this 80-room luxury Desert Resort and Spa is slated to open in 2026, further expanding The Leela's footprint across India's most captivating leisure and cultural destinations.

ATOAI announces its 17th Annual Adventure Convention in Srinagar

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) announces that its 17th Annual Adventure Convention will be hosted in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, from December 17-20, 2025. This landmark event celebrates the revival, resilience, and renaissance of India's adventure tourism in one of the world's most breathtaking destinations.



Centara Mirage Lagoon Maldives has won 'Best Family Hotel in the Maldives'

Centara Hotels & Resorts, announces that Centara Mirage Lagoon Maldives has been named the 'Best Family Hotel in the Maldives' at the Little Steps Family Travel Awards 2025/2026. Opened less than a year ago, the resort has already earned its first accolade under a family-focused category—an achievement that celebrates its dedication to delivering extraordinary experiences for guests of all ages.



RezLive.com strengthens Oman partnerships with Muscat roadshow

RezLive.com, successfully hosted an engaging roadshow at Crowne Plaza Muscat, bringing together over 180 travel agents and leading hospitality brands from across Oman. The event underscored RezLive.com's commitment to empowering travel agents through technology-driven solutions, curated global content, and strategic industry partnerships.



Sabah Tourism expands presence in India ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026

As Malaysia gears up to welcome the world for Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VMY2026), the Sabah Tourism Board (STB) unveils a comprehensive and strategic series of initiatives to bolster its presence in the Indian market, one of the fastest-growing source markets for Malaysian tourism.

Tourism and hospitality leaders meet finance minister on visa and GST reforms

Ahead of Union Budget 2026–27, leading figures from India's tourism and hospitality industry convened with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to present key recommendations aimed at boosting the sector's growth and competitiveness.



Government prepares for major 'Incredible India' 2026 push

The Ministry of Tourism is gearing up to revive one of its most iconic promotional initiatives which is the 'Incredible India' campaign. The campaign will have a fresh digital overhaul. According to reports, the government will soon introduce a brand-new digital revival campaign, marking a significant shift toward modern, technology-driven tourism marketing.

Air India Express launches Nagpur-Bengaluru and India-UAE flights

Air India Express continues its expansion spree by adding Nagpur to its domestic network and launching new international flights to Abu Dhabi from Delhi and Pune. The airline will operate twice-daily flights between Nagpur and Bengaluru, enhancing connectivity between central and southern India.



Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives unveils 'Through the Decades' 2025–2026 festive celebration

This festive season, Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives invites guests to embark on a journey 'Through the Decades' its spectacular 2025–2026 Festive Program that celebrates timeless joy, connection, and rejuvenation. From December 23, 2025, to January 7, 2026, the island will be transformed into a vivid tableau of shimmering gold, sparkling silver, and neon hues — a tribute to the resort's ethos of 'time and space redefined.'



Madhya Pradesh starts PM Shri Tourism Helicopter Service, first in India

In a historic step toward enhancing tourism and connectivity, Madhya Pradesh launches the PM Shri Tourism Helicopter Service, making it the first state in India to establish intra-state air connectivity. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav officially inaugurated the service at Raja Bhoj International Airport, Bhopal, flagging off four helicopters.



Yas Island Abu Dhabi and Pickyourtrail unveil the world's first AI-human travel experience

Yas Island Abu Dhabi, in collaboration with Pickyourtrail, unveils the world's first AI-Human holiday — a groundbreaking journey where technology and humanity travel side by side. For the first time ever, AI influencer Naina joins Bollywood actress Sahher Bambba on a real-world adventure, exploring Yas Island's world-class attractions through a fusion of human emotion and artificial intelligence curiosity.

TBO Tek posts 26 per cent revenue growth and 18.32 per cent EBITDA margin in Q2 FY26

TBO Tek Limited, announces its unaudited financial results for the quarter ended September 30, 2025 (Q2 FY26). The company delivered strong performance across key financial and operational parameters, marking a solid rebound from Q1's macroeconomic challenges.

tbo.com
TRAVEL SIMPLIFIED

Andhra Pradesh accelerates tourism growth through Public-Private Partnerships

Andhra Pradesh is witnessing rapid progress in tourism infrastructure and experience enhancement, driven by strong public-private partnerships (PPP), said Kandula Durgesh, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Cinematography, Government of Andhra Pradesh. Speaking at a stakeholder interaction organised by the Andhra Pradesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry Federation (AP Chambers), Durgesh highlighted several reform-oriented initiatives introduced during the state government's 16-month tenure.



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TOURISM, but make it AFTER HOURS

They say nothing good happens after midnight. Clearly, they haven't been travelling lately. From moonlit monuments to midnight markets and starlit safaris, the future of tourism is unfolding when the sun clocks out. Welcome to the age of night tourism, where darkness is not a drawback but the main attraction.

- **Bharti Sharma**

**Daytime is crowded.
Nighttime is curated**

For decades, travel was built around daylight hours. Morning sightseeing, afternoon excursions, early dinners and lights out. But somewhere between rising temperatures, overtourism and travellers running out of patience for crowds, the industry began to ask a dangerous question. What if the best experiences happen after dark? Night tourism is no longer about nightlife. It is about reclaiming space, slowing down travel and reimagining destinations through a calmer, more immersive lens. When the crowds leave and the temperatures drop, places breathe differently. And so do travellers. According to the World Tourism Organization, nearly 60 percent of visitor congestion at global landmarks occurs between 10 am and 4 pm. The answer was never to build more attractions. It was to stretch time itself.

**The night economy is no longer an accident.
It's policy.**

What started as late museum openings and moonlight tours has quietly become a global strategy. Cities are now actively planning their night-time tourism economies. London's night economy contributes over £26 billion annually. Paris has extended night access to cultural landmarks, while Amsterdam regulates daytime crowds by shifting experiences post-sunset. Museums across New York, Abu Dhabi and Tokyo now treat late-night openings as premium experiences rather than bonus hours.

Even wildlife tourism has flipped the script. Night safaris, stargazing reserves and nocturnal nature walks are among the fastest-growing experiential segments globally. Research suggests night-based tourism experiences can increase visitor spend by 15 to 20 percent while reducing pressure on daytime infrastructure.

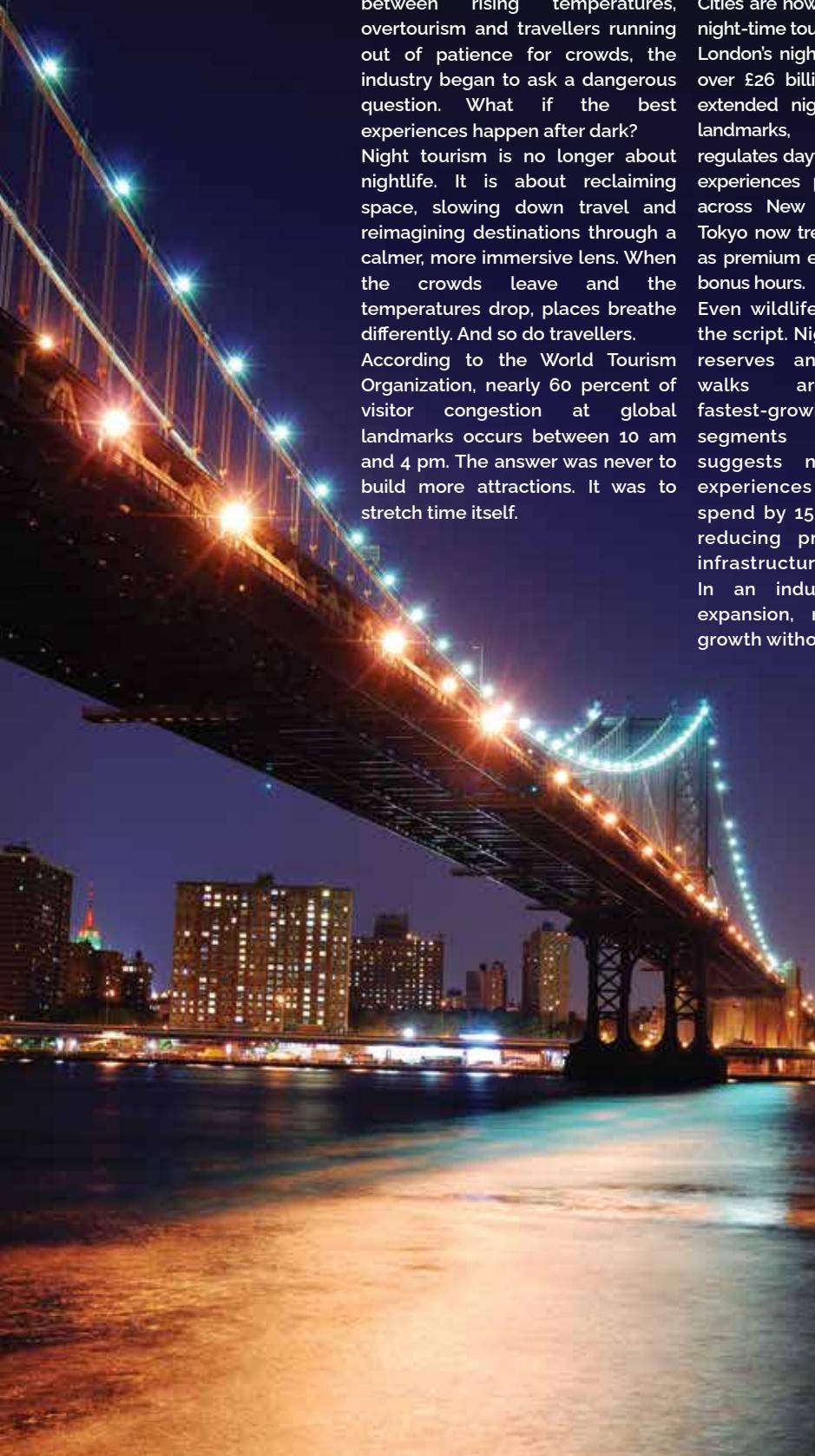
In an industry obsessed with expansion, night tourism offers growth without excess.

**Luxury doesn't sparkle louder.
It whispers later.**

Luxury travel understood the power of night long before mass tourism caught on. Private after-hours museum tours, candlelit ruins, midnight desert dinners and silent yacht cruises under the stars are now the gold standard of exclusivity. Why? Because night removes the noise.

There is no queue for silence. No crowd for solitude. No competition for stillness.

High - net - worth travellers increasingly prioritise privacy, exclusivity and emotional connection over checklist sightseeing. According to Virtuoso insights, over 40 percent of luxury travellers now seek experiences that happen outside conventional hours. The night delivers all three without trying too hard.



India after dark isn't new. It's just under-sold.

India does not need to invent night tourism. It has been practising it for centuries. From midnight temple rituals and evening aartis to night bazaars, Sufi music gatherings and desert stargazing, the country's most evocative moments have always lived after sunset. What is new is the intention to package and promote them.

Cities like Delhi and Jaipur now offer curated night heritage walks. Mumbai's food trails thrive post-midnight. National parks are cautiously introducing controlled night safaris. Even spiritual tourism peaks after dusk, when rituals replace rush.

With international travellers increasingly avoiding daytime heat and crowds, India's layered night culture is a competitive advantage waiting to be sharpened.

Climate change pushed us here. Experience will keep us here.

Let's be honest. Climate change accelerated this shift. In regions where daytime temperatures regularly cross 40 degrees, night tourism is no longer optional. It is practical. Evening temperatures can be 6 to 10 degrees cooler, making travel safer and more comfortable.

Destinations across the Middle East, Southern Europe and South Asia are actively redesigning itineraries to start later and end deeper into the night. What began as climate adaptation has now evolved into a more refined, experiential form of travel.

The irony is beautiful. In trying to escape the heat, travellers discovered depth.

Who travels at night? Almost everyone.

Night tourism is not for party-hoppers alone. Its strongest audience is surprisingly diverse. Older travellers enjoy cooler hours and fewer crowds. Luxury travellers value privacy. Cultural travellers appreciate intimacy. Photographers chase light and shadow. Even wellness-focused

travellers find night experiences gentler on the senses.

In a post-pandemic world where travel is expected to heal rather than exhaust, night tourism fits naturally into the narrative.

The smartest growth happens when no one's rushing.

From a business perspective, night tourism is efficient brilliance. It extends operating hours, increases yield per visitor and reduces pressure on existing infrastructure. Hotels, guides, transport providers and attractions all benefit from better utilisation rather than expansion.

Industry data shows destinations with structured night tourism strategies see up to an 18 percent increase in per-visitor spending without increasing overall footfall. That is sustainable tourism in practice, not theory.

NIGHT TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS

- 60 percent of congestion at major attractions occurs during peak daylight hours
- Night-based experiences can increase visitor spend by 15 to 20 percent
- Luxury travellers show a 40 percent preference for after-hours experiences
- Evening temperatures can be up to 10 degrees cooler in hot-weather destinations
- Cities with strong night economies report higher visitor satisfaction scores

The future of travel doesn't rise early.

For too long, tourism chased daylight out of habit. Night tourism demands confidence. Confidence to slow down, to redesign itineraries and to trust that travellers want meaning, not movement. The destinations that understand this will thrive quietly. The rest will keep shouting into the sun.

After all, some stories are meant to be told after dark.



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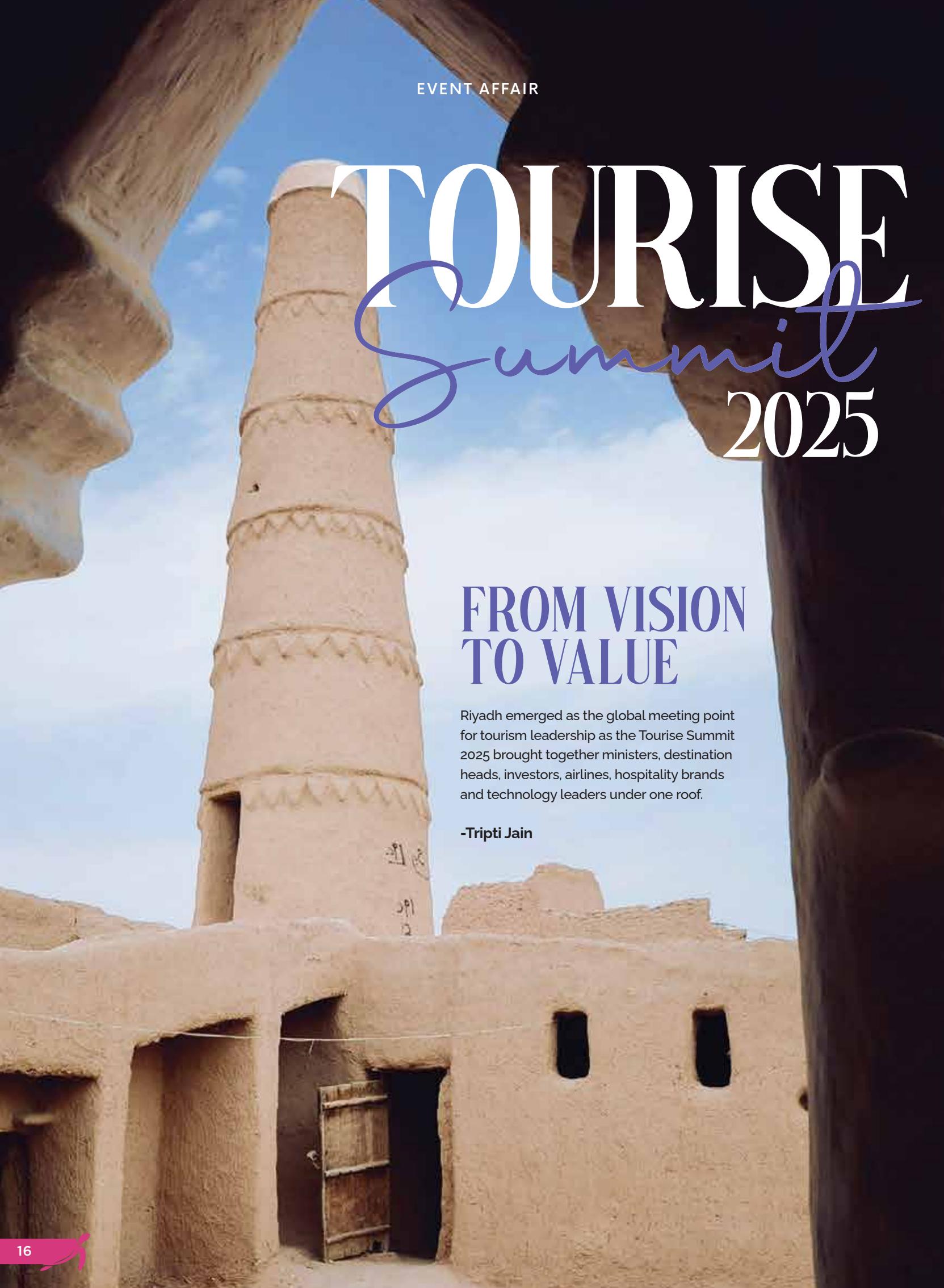
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EVENT AFFAIR

TOURISE

Summit

2025

FROM VISION TO VALUE

Riyadh emerged as the global meeting point for tourism leadership as the Tourise Summit 2025 brought together ministers, destination heads, investors, airlines, hospitality brands and technology leaders under one roof.

-Tripti Jain



Hosted in the dynamic capital of Saudi Arabia, the summit reflected the region's growing role as a connector between continents, cultures and commerce. For India's travel trade, the conversations unfolding in Riyadh carried strong relevance, opening new corridors for partnerships, outbound growth and cross-border investment.

The summit focused on tourism as an economic engine, a cultural bridge and a catalyst for sustainable development.

Delegates experienced a carefully curated agenda blending policy dialogue with deal-making, reflecting Saudi Arabia's ambition to shape the future of global tourism.

RIYADH TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Riyadh's hosting of the summit highlighted Saudi Arabia's transformation into a tourism powerhouse guided by Vision 2030. Opening the summit, Ahmed Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism, spoke about tourism as a force that connects ambition with opportunity. He shares, "Tourism today stands at the intersection of investment, innovation and inclusion. Our focus remains on building partnerships that deliver long-term value for destinations, communities and travellers."

The city itself served as a living case

study, showcasing new infrastructure, cultural districts and hospitality developments that signal Saudi Arabia's readiness to welcome the world.

POLICY, PURPOSE AND PARTNERSHIPS

High-level ministerial sessions shaped the early momentum of the summit, with participation from tourism leaders across Asia, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Representatives from UN Tourism reinforced the importance of resilient tourism models aligned with global sustainability goals. Tourism thrives when collaboration

leads the way. For Indian stakeholders, these conversations resonated strongly, particularly around ease of travel, destination marketing and skill development, areas where India and Saudi Arabia continue to find common ground.

DEALS THAT DEFINED THE DIALOGUE

Beyond discussions, the summit delivered tangible outcomes. Multiple Memorandums of Understanding were signed, signalling confidence in tourism-led growth. Key agreements included strategic collaborations between Saudi tourism authorities and





EVENT AFFAIR



international destination boards to promote multi-country itineraries, positioning the Kingdom as a hub within broader travel circuits appealing to long-haul markets such as India.

A landmark agreement between Saudi tourism entities and leading global hotel groups focused on capacity expansion and talent exchange programmes. Another significant MoU brought together airline partners and digital travel platforms to enhance connectivity, dynamic pricing and seamless booking experiences.

INDIA IN FOCUS

India's presence at the summit reflected its rising influence as both a source market and a strategic partner. Indian tour operators, MICE specialists and hospitality investors engaged in B2B meetings that explored opportunities across

leisure, religious tourism, luxury travel and corporate events. Several Saudi stakeholders highlighted India as a priority market, citing its young population, growing appetite for international travel and strong air connectivity. Discussions also touched upon simplified visa processes, language support and tailored product development, reinforcing mutual commitment to growth.

INNOVATION MEETS EXPERIENCE

Technology and innovation featured prominently, with sessions dedicated to AI-driven tourism planning, smart destinations and immersive storytelling. Saudi Arabia's investment in digital infrastructure emerged as a key enabler for personalised travel experiences. Hospitality leaders showcased projects blending

heritage with modern luxury, reinforcing tourism's role in preserving culture while driving economic value. Riyadh symbolises the future of hospitality where innovation respects tradition. These insights offered valuable inspiration for Indian travel companies navigating evolving consumer expectations.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A SHARED VISION

Sustainability remained woven through every conversation. From regenerative tourism models to community engagement, speakers emphasised responsibility alongside growth. Several agreements focused on sustainable hotel operations, carbon-conscious aviation practices and local workforce development. Sustainable tourism builds destinations that last beyond

numbers. Partnerships formed carry that responsibility forward.

A SUMMIT WITH LASTING IMPACT

The Tourise Summit 2025 concluded with a sense of optimism and momentum. Riyadh demonstrated its readiness to convene global tourism leadership while delivering outcomes that extend beyond dialogue. For India's travel trade, the summit opened doors to fresh collaborations, new routes and shared innovation.

As delegates departed, one message resonated clearly: tourism's future belongs to destinations and businesses willing to collaborate, invest and evolve together. Riyadh's role as a catalyst for that future now stands firmly established, making the summit a defining moment on the global tourism calendar.



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INDIAN ESCAPADE

CHHATTISGARH

A vision takes the stage

Delhi witnessed a showcase of ambition, opportunity, and purpose as the Chhattisgarh Investor Meet 2025 brought together policymakers, investors, and industry leaders around a shared vision of progress.

- *Tripti Jain*





Shri Vishnu Deo Sai

The outreach marked a defining chapter in the state's economic narrative, securing investment proposals worth ₹6,826 crore and placing tourism at the centre of a broader development story. Conversations flowed around landscapes shaped by forests and waterfalls, cultures preserved through centuries, and policies designed to accelerate growth with clarity and confidence. The meet reflected a state stepping forward with conviction, ready to welcome partnerships that value sustainability, speed, and shared prosperity.

Leadership with purpose

Shri Vishnu Deo Sai, Honourable Chief Minister, Government of Chhattisgarh, addressed the gathering to set the tone for the day. He shared a development philosophy rooted in inclusion and momentum, placing tourism among the state's most powerful

growth engines.

He shares, "Our vision for a 'Viksit Chhattisgarh' is rooted in the philosophy of Antyodaya, ensuring that the fruits of development reach the very last person. We have moved beyond the 'Ease of Doing Business' and entered the era of 'Speed of Doing Business,' where tourism is now recognised as a core industry with significant policy incentives." The Chief Minister spoke of Bastar's transformation with pride, presenting a future defined by peace, prosperity, and pride of place. He adds, "From the pristine waterfalls of Bastar to our ancient tribal traditions, Chhattisgarh is transitioning from a land of raw materials to a global destination of value." His reference to the Anjor Vision 2047 roadmap underlined a commitment to preserve cultural identity while building an investor-friendly ecosystem that positions the state at the heart of India's growth story.

Policy, speed, and partnerships

The operational strength behind the vision came into focus through the insights of Dr Rohit Yadav, IAS, Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of Chhattisgarh. His presentation outlined a structured, transparent pathway for investors seeking scale and certainty. He explains, "Chhattisgarh has become India's most significant

high-value tourism frontier, now fully primed for institutional and private partnership. Our strategy is built upon a robust administrative framework that transitions state-developed assets into vibrant, private-led enterprises through the Public-Private Partnership model."



Dr Rohit Yadav

Dr Yadav detailed the successful leasing of the first phase of tourism properties and the planned opening of 17 additional resorts and eco-lodges. The Industrial Development Policy 2024-30 emerged as a cornerstone, offering speed, clarity, and confidence. From luxury lakeside retreats near major dams to ethnic circuits deep within forested regions, the state's land bank is being unlocked with purpose, aiming to set global benchmarks in sustainable tourism development.





Shri Neelu Sharma

Tourism steps into the spotlight

Tourism emerged as a central pillar of discussion, framed as both an economic catalyst and a cultural custodian. Shri Neelu Sharma, Honourable Chairman, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, highlighted the sector's evolving role with clarity and optimism.

He shares, "Chhattisgarh is transitioning from a hidden gem to a primary pillar of India's tourism landscape. Our vision is to build a sustainable and inclusive tourism ecosystem that celebrates our state's two greatest assets: its untouched natural beauty and its vibrant tribal heritage."

He emphasised the impact of granting industry status to tourism and introducing investor-friendly policies designed to attract world-class hospitality and adventure projects. He adds, "We

aren't just inviting investment; we are inviting partners to help us showcase the 'Niagara of India' which is the Chitrakoot Falls and our ancient traditions to the global stage."

Opening new frontiers

Ground realities and renewed confidence were brought alive through the perspective of Shri Vivek Acharya, IFS, Managing Director, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board. His address reflected the transformation witnessed across regions once considered remote. He explains, "Chhattisgarh has undergone a significant transformation, successfully overcoming past security challenges to open up its most pristine and beautiful landscapes for the world to see. These areas are now safe, accessible, and ready for development."

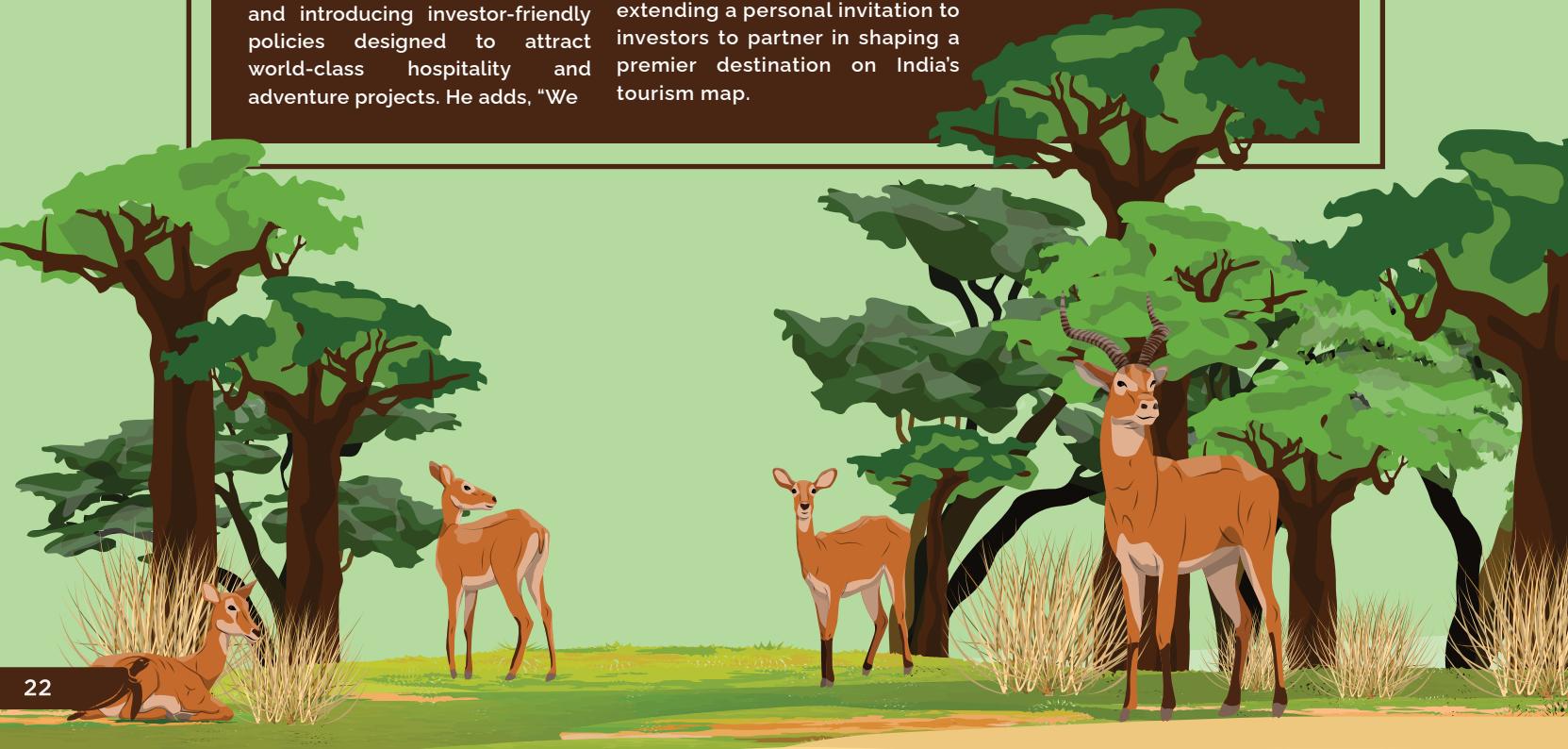
Hosting the first major investor connect in two years carried symbolic weight. Acharya highlighted the state's central location, dramatic waterfalls, and rich biodiversity as advantages waiting to be harnessed. "With our unmatched natural beauty, Chhattisgarh is the next big frontier for tourism," he said, extending a personal invitation to investors to partner in shaping a premier destination on India's tourism map.



Shri Vivek Acharya

A future shaped together

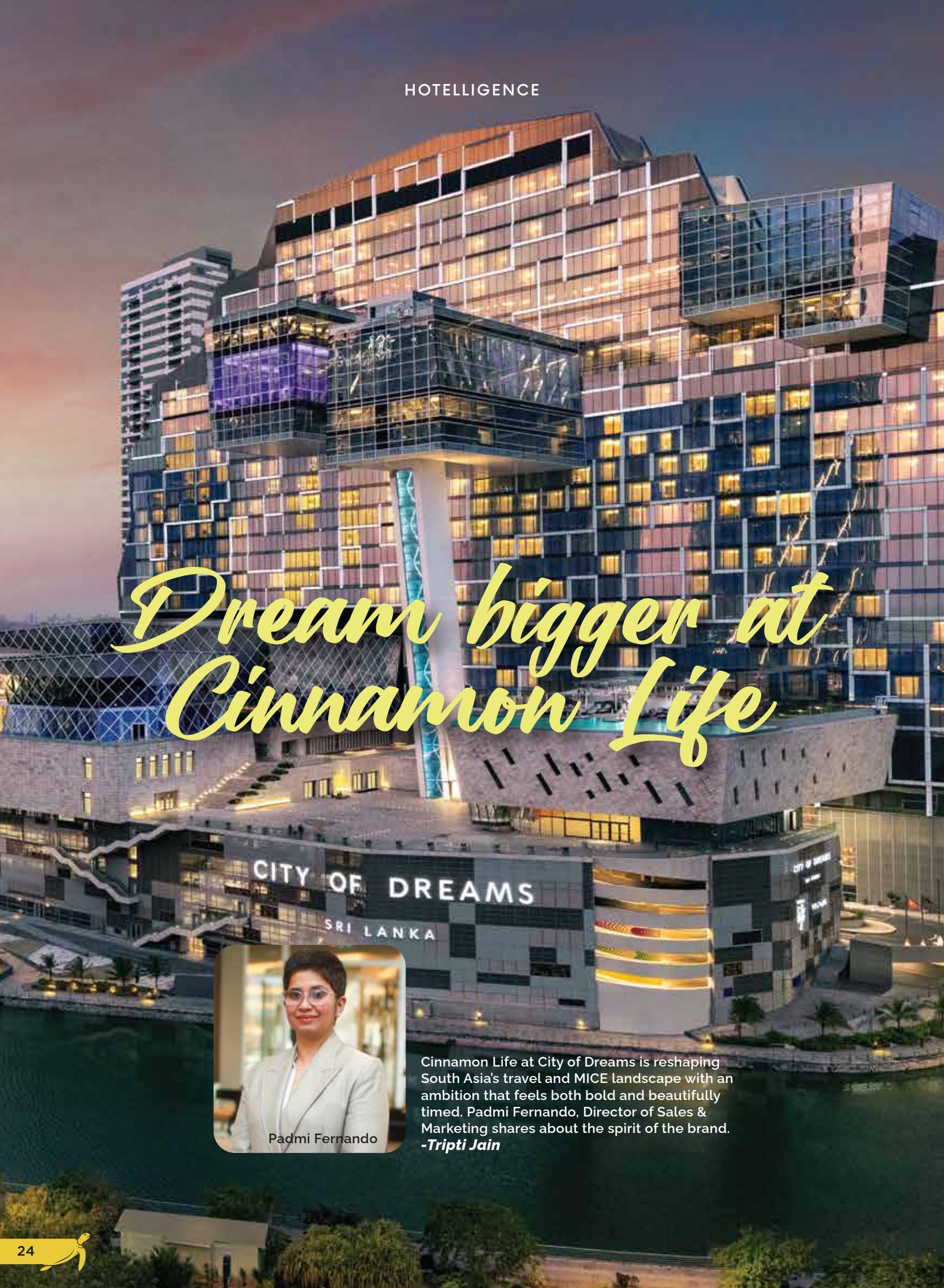
The Chhattisgarh Investor Meet 2025 concluded with a sense of momentum and mutual trust. Investment proposals reflected confidence in policy, leadership, and long-term vision. Tourism stood tall as a sector capable of generating livelihoods, preserving heritage, and inviting the world into experiences shaped by authenticity. Chhattisgarh's story today speaks of speed with sensitivity, growth with grace, and ambition anchored in cultural pride. As partnerships take shape and projects move from paper to ground, the state advances towards a future where nature and culture fuel prosperity, and where investors find both value and purpose.



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Dream bigger at Cinnamon Life



Padmi Fernando

Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams is reshaping South Asia's travel and MICE landscape with an ambition that feels both bold and beautifully timed. Padmi Fernando, Director of Sales & Marketing shares about the spirit of the brand.

-Tripti Jain



Colombo's skyline now carries the silhouette of a destination unlike anything the region has seen before. It is a world where luxury hospitality, retail, entertainment, gaming, and grand-scale events live together in harmony, creating a landmark made for celebrations, business, and extraordinary experiences.

Padmi captures this spirit with clarity and shares, "Cinnamon Life is positioned as Sri Lanka's flagship integrated resort, a lifestyle and events destination designed to become South Asia's most compelling hub for business events and premium travel. The vision is unfolding with purpose, grounded in a belief that travel should feel inspiring, seamless, and unforgettable."

Where experiences meet excellence

Cinnamon Life enters the global events stage with immense capability and the confidence of a destination prepared to deliver impact. The resort brings together accommodation, entertainment, retail, dining, and world-class infrastructure in one integrated environment. Every element works in harmony to support events of scale, creativity, and prestige.

Padmi reflects on the strategy as she shares, "Cinnamon Life is redefining MICE by offering an integrated venue ecosystem. Our goal is to set a new benchmark for high-impact events in South Asia. The destination features more than 160,000 sq. ft. of dedicated event space including expansive ballrooms, multiple indoor and outdoor venues, and six boardrooms designed for meaningful decision-making."

Furthermore she adds, "There is scale, accessibility, and experience woven together in a way that is especially compelling for Indian corporates and planners. City of Dreams brings world-class infrastructure along with entertainment, retail, and diverse dining in one location, making event logistics incredibly convenient."

India at heart

India continues to be one of the fastest - growing outbound MICE markets, creating immense potential for collaboration.



Cinnamon Life is strengthening its engagement with the Indian B2B travel community by investing in relationships built on trust, flexibility, and shared growth. Padmi highlights more about the approach of the brand and explains, "We are focusing on enhanced partnerships with leading Indian MICE planners, corporates, and agencies, establishing a strong presence at key Indian B2B trade shows and targeting India - specific programmes with customised offerings."

Cuisine forms an emotional bridge, led by an Indian Executive Chef who curates comfort, familiarity, and celebration through flavours that resonate deeply with Indian guests. "We are preparing to launch 'Utsav by Cinnamon Life' as a destination for celebrations of every scale, including weddings, corporate gatherings, and personal milestones," Padmi shares.

Built for collaboration

The travel trade remains the backbone of Cinnamon Life's India strategy, and the brand is investing

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Built for collaboration

The travel trade remains the backbone of Cinnamon Life's India strategy, and the brand is investing

deeply in supporting its partners. Strong incentive structures, competitive contracting, flexible group offerings, and a collaborative marketing approach are strengthening visibility across key Indian cities.

"We are enhancing incentive structures, investing in co-marketing initiatives, and hosting exclusive familiarisation trips so partners experience Cinnamon Life firsthand," explains Padmi. The property also places strong emphasis on curated experiences designed to spark business confidence and emotional connection.

The entertainment portfolio is a powerful differentiator, positioning Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams as South Asia's first true entertainment resort. The destination features a world-class gaming space spanning approximately 180,000 sq. ft., elevating its draw for luxury travellers, experiential audiences, and corporate incentives. "Our





SHARAF TRAVEL GROUP

Cruising ahead with confidence

Sharaf Travel Group's India game plan is shaping the next chapter of cruise travel for the Indian market. Leena Brahme, Business Head, India, Sharaf Travel Group shares insights into her journey.

-Naina Nath

PUBLIC EYE

Cruising is capturing the imagination of Indian travellers like never before, opening new horizons and new ways to explore the world. Sharaf Travel Group stands at the heart of this wave, shaping a bold and confident future for cruise tourism from India. With fresh partnerships, expanding portfolios, and a clear course set for 2026, the group is inspiring travellers to dream bigger and sail further.

Year of growth, trust and strong foundations

Stepping into her second year in the role, Leena describes the past year as fast-paced and rewarding, with relationship management at the heart of her work. She shares, "A year has gone by and how. The learning curve has been huge, connecting with a new set of partners while continuing strong engagement with existing ones has been a delight. The last year has strengthened our cruise portfolio in India by bringing in new cruise lines such as Costa Cruises, which has been great for the company. At the same time, the continued confidence of the Royal Caribbean Group in us is encouraging."

She also adds regarding the operational add-ons that have elevated the offering. Partnering with Avis Premium for cruise transfers and introducing the Cruise Protection Plan to secure traveller bookings has been meaningful milestones.

Road to 2026

Sharaf Travel is now working with a longer horizon, with 2026 taking shape as a key milestone year. Leena expects a more active cruise market as interest among Indian travellers builds. She says, "2026 will hopefully be an uptick after 2025, which we expect to soften post June. We have identified key focus destinations across various cruise brands and plans to clearly channel this information to the trade. We've prioritised key destinations across our cruise partners. This gives us direction, and the team will drive this into the B2B network."

A significant highlight is MSC's entry into Alaska. She adds, "We are excited about MSC sailing into Alaska in May 2026. This will be a fresh learning curve for us and the trade. On the other hand, Costa Cruises will see renewed communication and positioning. We want to highlight Costa's strengths, especially its sea destinations and the value of all-inclusive experiences. Royal Caribbean

Group, including Celebrity and Silversea, will continue to be strong focus areas, from premium to expedition styles, this category interests us."

Layering Value

Sharaf Travel is also working on strengthening the cruise journey beyond just selling cabins. The Cruise Protection Plan sits at the centre of this. Talking more about this Leena explains, "The Cruise Protection Plan is now a must-have in our view. It's an important part of securing cruise vacations. The flexibility to purchase it even when travellers already hold standard travel insurance has been well received."

Furthermore, she adds, "The company has also streamlined transfers. One important step has been ensuring guests can now book their airport and cruise terminal transfers through us. These enhancements are part of a long game. We'll continue identifying gaps and stitching the right product mix around the experience."

India's cruise moment arrives

India's cruise sector is gaining momentum, driven by infrastructure development, industry alignment, and government support. Leena points to India Maritime Week as a strong signal. She shares, "Mumbai hosting Global India Maritime Week says what it needs to. Ports, authorities, cruise lines, government bodies and industry players coming together under one roof signals intent."

Sharaf Travel's experience in Dubai contributes added operational depth. She says, "In Dubai, we are actively involved in port operations for several cruise lines calling at DXB. In India, our association with MSC adds strategic strength, and we plan to expand this partnership as MSC may eventually consider a homeport ship in India."

A call to the trade

With clear priorities, strengthened partnerships, and a roadmap shaped around 2026, Sharaf Travel is positioning cruise tourism as a core leisure vertical for the Indian traveller. Leena concludes and shares, "Cruising needs to become mainstream. We look forward to working with our B2B partners to make cruising a major holiday choice for Indian travellers. We haven't lived till we've sailed. Let's cruise!"





ESCAPE TO THE NATURE EMIRATE.

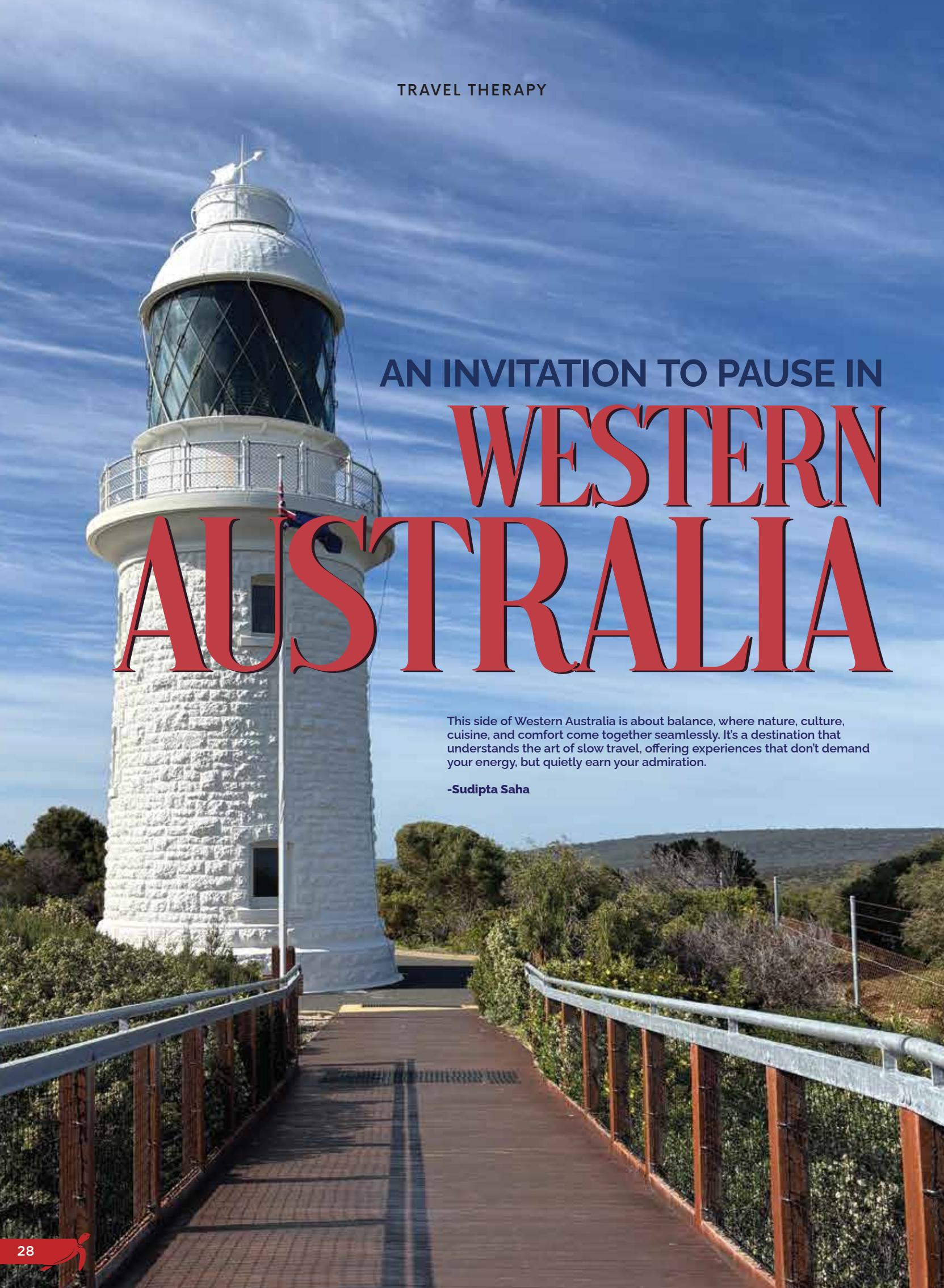
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TRAVEL THERAPY

AN INVITATION TO PAUSE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This side of Western Australia is about balance, where nature, culture, cuisine, and comfort come together seamlessly. It's a destination that understands the art of slow travel, offering experiences that don't demand your energy, but quietly earn your admiration.

-Sudipta Saha



After days filled with adrenaline and high-energy experiences, Western Australia gently shifted gears where the destination revealed a side that is equally captivating, yet wonderfully unhurried. From relaxed coastal towns and island life to fine food, world-class wines, and thoughtfully curated stays, Western Australia proved that leisure here is an experience in itself.

Away from adventure trails and sky-high views, I discovered places that invited me to linger a little longer while strolling through charming streets, enjoying scenic drives, indulging in local flavours, and embracing the easygoing rhythm that defines this part of the world. Whether it was soaking in the coastal charm of Fremantle, enjoying long lunches in the Margaret River wine region, or simply watching the waves roll in against pristine beaches, every moment felt effortlessly rewarding.

Between ocean breezes and timeless streets

This quieter chapter of Western Australia revealed itself slowly, almost deliberately, inviting me to step out of the rush of movement and into a space where time felt generous. Driven by adrenaline and discovery, this part of the journey asked for something different which was to pause, to look closer, and to truly feel the destination rather than simply pass through it.

In Perth, just after landing, the journey began with Peddle Perth, seated comfortably as the city unfolded around me, I watched streets with unfolding a story, walls which speaks arts, the long standing buildings, the heritage façades, locals greeting one another, sunlight filtering through trees. It felt personal, almost cinematic, as if the city was revealing its quieter moments just for me. The stories shared along the way added texture, turning ordinary corners into meaningful memories.

Next morning, the road then led south, where the landscape opened up and the air grew softer. At the Busselton Jetty and Underwater Observatory, the world seemed to stretch endlessly ahead. Walking along the long timber jetty, with turquoise waters shimmering on either side, I felt a gentle calm settle in. Beneath the surface, inside the underwater observatory, time stood still where fishes were moving gracefully past the windows, coral glowing subtly in the filtered light.

The Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse, the mood shifted to quiet awe. Standing atop the cliffs, with the vast Indian Ocean spreading out in every direction, I felt both small and deeply connected. The wind carried the scent of salt and wild earth, the waves crashed far below, and for a moment there was nothing to do but stand still and breathe it all in. At Republic of Fremantle, evenings unfolded effortlessly with soft lighting, polished wood, clinking glasses, and flavours that told their own story of place. Sitting there, sipping thoughtfully crafted spirits and enjoying unhurried conversations, I felt the joy of simply being present. It was indulgent without being extravagant, refined yet wonderfully relaxed.

The journey drew to a close at Fremantle Prison, where time seemed to slow in an entirely different way. Walking through its heavy stone walls and narrow corridors, I felt the weight of history linger in the air. The silence was powerful, reflective, and grounding which is a stark contrast to the freedom and openness I had experienced throughout Western Australia. It offered perspective, reminding me that every destination holds layers of stories, emotions, and lives that came before.

The Perth Mint offered an experience steeped in quiet grandeur, where Western Australia's legacy of gold unfolded with understated elegance. Watching molten gold being poured and shaped with meticulous precision was captivating, a moment where raw earth transformed into enduring value. More than a showcase of riches, The Perth Mint felt like a bridge between past and present, grounding my journey in the deep-rooted history that continues to define Western Australia's identity. This side of Western Australia was about moments where the play of light on water, the sound of wind against cliffs, the warmth of a shared meal, and the quiet power of reflection was worth witnessing.

From vineyards to distilleries

Western Australia's leisure story is incomplete without its flavours which are refined, expressive, and deeply rooted in place. From rolling vineyards in the Margaret River region to the creative spirit of Fremantle.

At Leeuwin Estate, the Margaret River region revealed one of its most elegant expressions. Set amid

manicured vineyards and wide-open skies, the estate felt serene yet purposeful. It was a place where craftsmanship was surrounded by vines and sitting down for a well-planned unhurried lunch, felt indulgent in the most meaningful way. Time seemed to slow here, measured not by hours but by courses, conversations, and the play of sunlight across the vineyard. It was the kind of experience that invites you to linger, to savour, and to appreciate the beauty of restraint. If Leeuwin Estate represented elegance rooted in nature, Republic of Fremantle embodied creativity shaped by urban energy. As evening settled in, the soft glow of lights, the hum of conversation, and the ritual of cocktail-making created an atmosphere that felt effortlessly social. Each spirit reflected a sense of place, crafted with intention and a strong connection to Western Australia's produce and culture. Sitting there, glass in hand, it felt less like a tasting and more like a moment of connection to the city, to the people, and to the relaxed confidence that defines Fremantle. Together, these two experiences showcased Western Australia's ability to balance sophistication with soul, where luxury is never loud, and the most memorable moments are often the ones that unfold slowly.

Food that defined the journey

Evenings at Six Senses at The Quay, felt quietly elegant. With gentle reflections dancing across the river and a calm rhythm in the air, the focus remained on balanced flavours and beautifully composed dishes. It was the kind of setting that encouraged stillness, where conversation softened, senses sharpened, and time felt generous. That relaxed energy continued at The Goose, where coastal charm took centre stage. Open views, sea breezes, and an easygoing buzz created a space where food and atmosphere blended seamlessly. Fresh, comforting dishes arrived alongside laughter and long conversations, turning a simple meal into an afternoon that drifted by without notice.

In Busselton, the mood became even more laid-back at Shelter Brewing Co. With the ocean stretching endlessly ahead and a lively yet unpretentious ambience, the experience felt grounding and honest. Hearty food, locally crafted drinks, and the sound of waves





created a moment that felt effortlessly right which was a reminder that the most memorable meals are often the simplest ones, enjoyed in the right setting. The journey's evenings found their most poetic expression at Sunsets Bar & Dining. As the sky shifted from gold to deep blue and the horizon softened into silhouette, dining became almost cinematic. The food and drinks complemented the moment rather than competing with it, allowing the beauty of the setting to take centre stage. Together, these dining moments became more than meals.

Hospitality that elevates the journey

Travel is as much about the places you stay as the experiences you gather, and in Western Australia, each property offered its own interpretation of hospitality, a seamless blend of comfort, style, and a sense of belonging. These were not just stops along the journey; they were spaces to pause, reflect, and recharge, enhancing every moment of exploration.

In Perth, Duxton Hotel offered a refined welcome into the city. Walking through its grand yet understated lobby, I immediately felt a sense of calm sophistication. The rooms were elegant and meticulously appointed, offering a quiet sanctuary above the city streets. From the soft lighting to the plush bedding, every detail invited me to slow down, unwind, and take in the city from a vantage point of comfort and ease. Further south in Busselton, Hilton Garden Inn provided a different rhythm — warm, inviting, and

effortlessly practical. Nestled close to the coast, the stay felt intimate yet spacious. Waking up to gentle sunlight streaming into the room and the soft sounds of the surrounding town created a sense of peace that perfectly complemented the region's relaxed pace. It was a homey, welcoming retreat, where each morning felt like a fresh beginning to explore the region at leisure.

Returning to Perth, Crown Metropol brought a vibrant contrast — modern, luxurious, and full of energy. The interiors were bold yet comfortable, offering both spectacle and solace. Sitting in the lounge with a view of the city lights, I felt the pulse of Perth alongside the quiet luxury of my surroundings. The experience balanced indulgence with relaxation, providing a space to recharge while remaining connected to the city's dynamic rhythm.

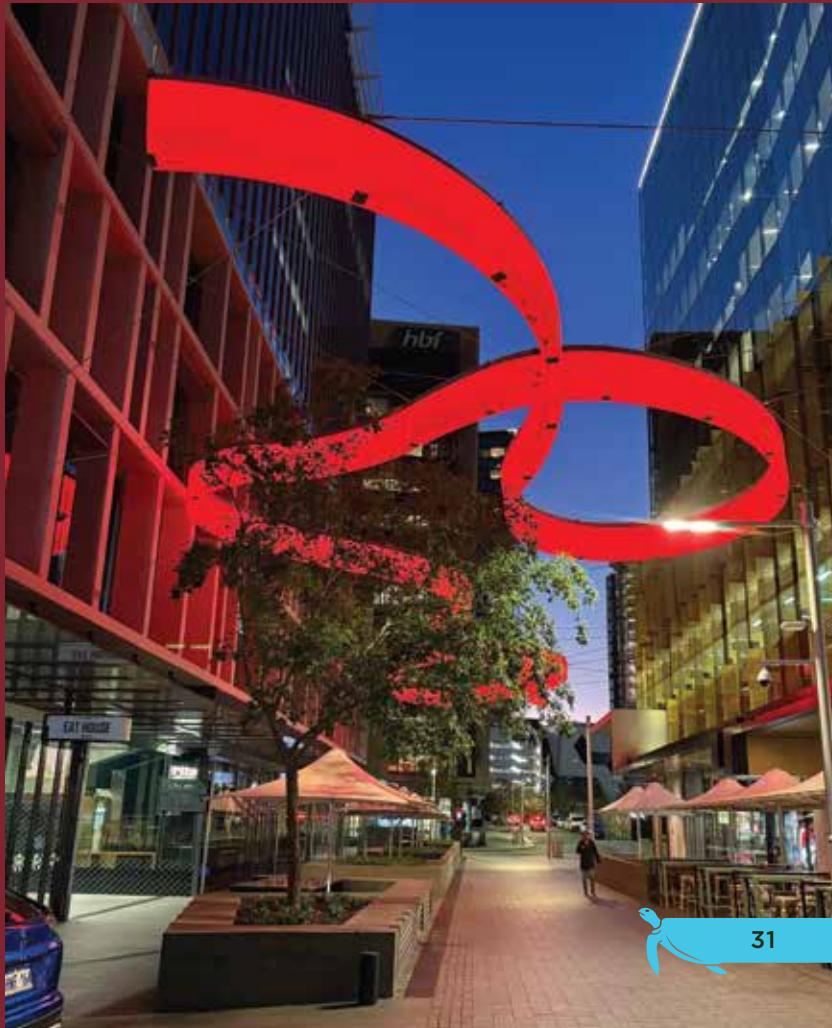
Finally, QT Perth captured a playful, creative spirit. The design was unexpected and fun, with thoughtful touches that sparked curiosity at every turn. The rooms felt stylish without pretension, and each corner of the property offered little delights that made the stay feel unique.

It was a space that encouraged enjoyment in small ways — from quirky décor to clever details — making it impossible not to feel a sense of delight and discovery while unwinding. Together, these stays reflected the spectrum of hospitality across Western Australia — from refined elegance and warm comfort to bold luxury and creative flair. Each offered more than a room to sleep; they were immersive spaces that enhanced the journey, leaving me refreshed, inspired, and fully present for every experience that lay ahead.

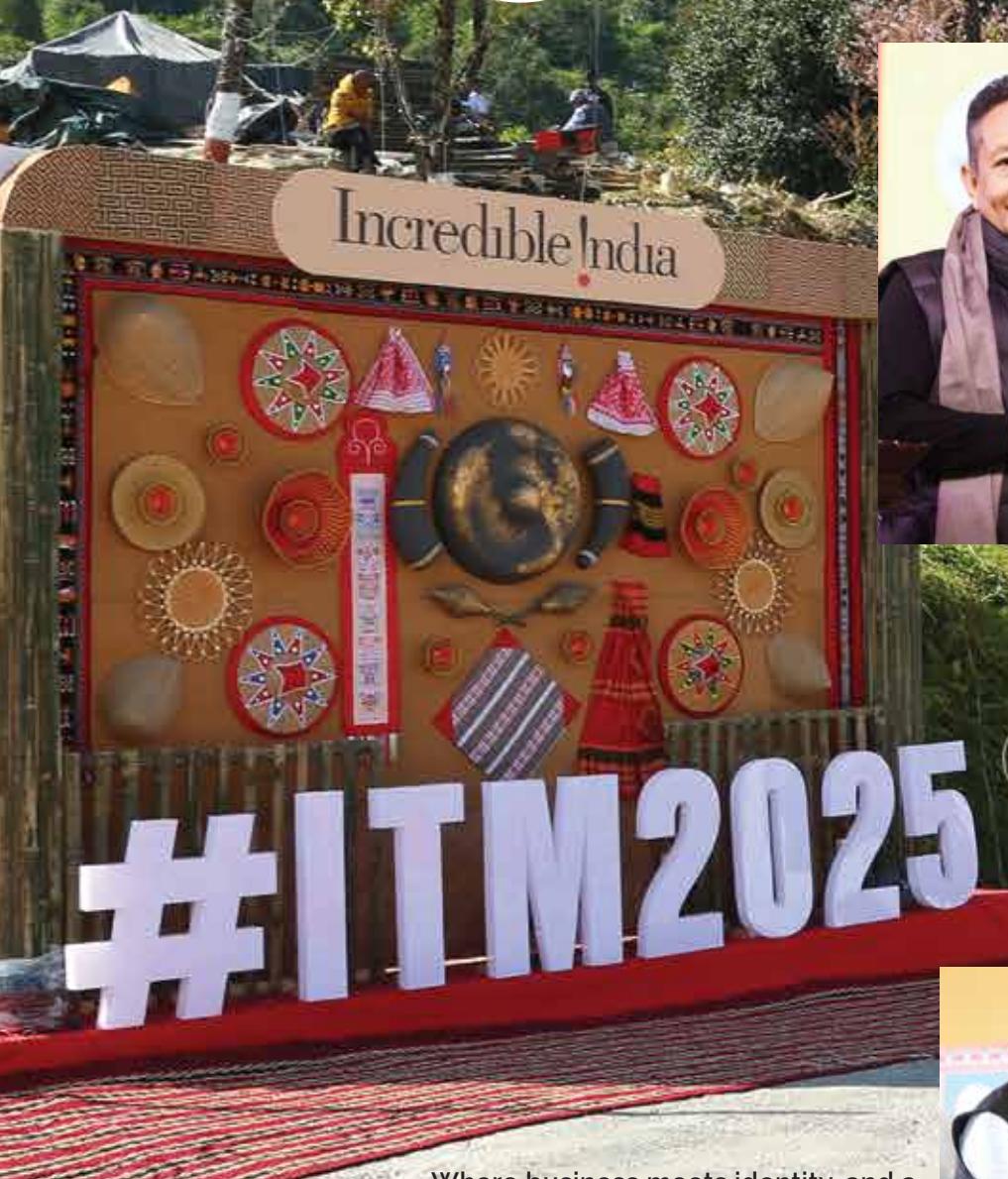
Carrying the calm, the flavours, and the stories with me

By the end of the journey, Western Australia felt less like a destination and more like a living, breathing story, one that moved at its own rhythm and invited me to move with it. From the thrill of soaring cliffs and heart-pounding adventures to the gentle calm of sunlit vineyards, serene lighthouses, and historic streets, every experience carried its own pace, its own mood, and its own memory. Meals lingered like

conversations, hotels became sanctuaries of reflection, and every coastline, city lane, and vineyard row whispered quiet stories of place, craft, and care. What lingered most were the small, intimate moments, the shimmer of sunlight on water, the aroma of wine carried on a breeze, the warmth of a room at dusk, the satisfaction of a perfectly balanced meal. Western Australia had shown me how to slow down, to savour fully, and to carry the feeling of being present, alive, curious, and utterly connected to the land, its people, and its spirit.



Northeast rising *ITM 2025 powers a vision*



Where business meets identity, and a region steps confidently onto the global tourism stage. International Tourism Mart 2025 concludes with strong showcases, bigger footfall, and a clear vision for northeast tourism.

-Naina Nath

EVENT AFFAIR

ITM 2025 concluded with the kind of energy that signals a sector preparing for scale. The 13th edition of the Mart, organised by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, along with the State Government of Sikkim, brought together states, international tourism boards, hospitality brands, travel associations, and buyers for three days of meetings, presentations, and experiences. The inauguration was graced by the august presence of the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Tourism Minister of the State and senior officials from the eight Northeast States. There was a clear sense of purpose throughout the show. India is shaping a stronger tourism identity, and the Northeast, often referred to as the country's 'Ashta Lakshmi', emerged as a major focus for national and international attention.

Marketplace with structure

At the heart of the mart was its B2B marketplace. Meetings ran at full pace from morning to evening, with exhibitors showcasing new circuits, adventure offerings, wellness travel, homestays, and sustainable tourism models. This edition featured participation from 39 international travel stakeholders representing 19 countries, as well as approximately 90 domestic tour operators from 22 states and union territories. They interacted directly with 91

tour operators and service providers from the Northeast, supported by international and domestic influencers as well as travel media. For many attending buyers, this edition of ITM felt more structured and outcome-driven. Several commented that it provided a clearer view of the tourism potential in the Northeastern region, particularly for destinations and experiences that are not often showcased at mainstream national events.

Bazaar with regional identity

The ITM Bazaar became one of the most engaging and talked-about spaces within the event. Rather than being positioned as a supporting element, it was integrated into the main visitor flow, and this made it feel connected to the larger narrative of Northeastern tourism. Stalls showcased handloom clusters, weaving traditions, craft collectives, spices, teas, and regional food products that tied directly to communities and local tourism circuits. For international delegates, especially, the bazaar provided a cultural context to the conversations taking place in the meeting halls. It allowed them to experience the region's identity in a tactile way and underscored the idea that tourism in the Northeast is deeply linked to people, heritage, and craftsmanship.

Cultural showcases

Performances were placed at the centre of the programme to reflect the depth and diversity of Northeastern arts. Delegates experienced an evening of short-format cultural pieces that included folk traditions, classical influences, and contemporary expressions. The approach received appreciation for its pacing and simplicity. It created an immersive atmosphere without overwhelming guests and offered a warm introduction to regional culture. Several participants were also taken on technical visits to key sites, including Rumtek Monastery, Do Drul Chorten, and the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, extending the cultural experience beyond the venue.

Regions positioning their vision

States used ITM 2025 to outline priorities for the coming years. Presentations and discussions covered cinematic tourism, new circuits, rural tourism, and capacity development. Many speakers discussed strengthening community-led tourism, responsible travel guidelines, and enhancing last-mile connectivity. Government initiatives aligned strongly with these themes. The Ministry highlighted ongoing investments, including the sanctioning of 65 tourism projects worth over 3,000 crore rupees across the Northeastern states, as well as

connectivity upgrades such as airport expansions, highway improvements, and future rail links. Skill development initiatives through CIHMs, SIHMs, and FCIs were also discussed, along with efforts to leverage digital marketing and outreach platforms.

Strengthening momentum

While ITM has traditionally been driven by domestic representation, the international participation this year signalled growing confidence in the region. Conversations focused on cross-border itineraries, river cruises, wildlife-based travel, festivals, culinary tourism, and adventure products for high-interest markets. Delegates will also travel across Northeastern destinations on post-event familiarisation tours.

Clear direction forward

What made ITM 2025 meaningful was the purpose behind it. The conversations reflected a tourism sector that understands changing traveller expectations, values authenticity, and recognises the importance of regional voices. With strong foot traffic, active business engagement, and visible collaboration between states and stakeholders, ITM 2025 ended on a note of optimism. Growth from here will be intentional, community-focused, and built on better planning and stronger partnerships.



STAR DREAM CRUISES

Living a dream between sea and sky

Many people think that cruising is an expensive affair, but it is not. It is just as affordable as any other holiday and offers so much more to experience.

- **Harish Chandra**



CRUISE ODYSSEY

Cruising is fast becoming the vacation of choice for Indian travellers. With flexible itineraries, family-friendly onboard experiences, and the appeal of all-inclusive offerings—whether for FITs, MICE groups, or even destination weddings—demand for sailings within Asia is growing exponentially.

According to the recent report by Int2Cruises, over 70 per cent of Indian travellers now opt for Asian cruise vacations, with Singapore emerging as the top embarkation point across all age groups. Younger travellers, millennials and Gen Z, are particularly drawn to onboard entertainment such as spas, casinos, and theme nights, along with immersive offshore excursions.

Against this backdrop, I recently joined a media FAM trip aboard

Star Dream Cruises' Genting Dream for a 3-night/4-day sailing from Singapore to Phuket and back. What awaited was a journey that blended luxury, relaxation, and moments of self-reflection something only the sea can inspire.

A floating giant at Marina Bay

Immediately we took the bus towards MBCC in Singapore. The moment I saw the Genting Dream, the first words that escaped my mouth were, "Oh My God, this is a giant ship!"

This was my second cruise experience, and the first one was almost 12 years ago. The difference was amazing. Check-in and baggage handling were swift and quite smooth. My cabin felt like a five-star hotel room in itself, well-appointed, spacious, and inclusive of a private balcony with

a view of the Andaman Sea and the breathtakingly beautiful Singapore skyline.

The sports and deck activities set the tone on the first day onboard. Just imagine cricket and pickleball at sea! That evening, cultural and musical performances were held in the grand auditorium, followed by a four-course dinner.

Beaches, food & island vibes

On the second day, the ship was berthed at the Phuket Deep Sea Port for several hours to give passengers time to see Thailand's most loved island. From beaches and nightlife to shopping and live shows, Phuket never disappoints. We headed to Patong Beach for a laid-back beach holiday and later dined at Kan Eang Seafood Restaurant on delectable authentic Thai cuisine, which is

nicely situated by the water. At night, the Genting Dream cruise liner sailed back to Singapore.

That last night out on the water was electric: an exhilarating aerobatic-musical extravaganza by world-class artists in the 1,000-seat Zodiac Theatre. Their power-packed performances left the entire auditorium spellbound.

Sailing teaches you to pause

Having travelled far and wide across the globe, I felt during this voyage that cruising is a lot more than a holiday. The continuous horizon, the soft cadence of the sea, and the distance from the din of daily life offer moments for rare introspection. On the water, life seems simpler. You reconnect with yourself, revisit your thoughts, and find ideas that the everyday routine rarely provides space for.



A ship for all

Throughout the journey, I found there were travellers of all ages and different nationalities; families; senior citizens-some on wheelchairs; couples; kids; honeymooners. The ship is designed to be accessible, safe, and inclusive. Children especially seemed to be having the time of their lives with endless onboard activities. Special mention should go to the crew: warm, smiling, and ever helpful. On the last day, Mr. Michael Goh, President of StarDream Cruises, invited us for lunch at Blue Lagoon, the multi-cuisine restaurant on the ship, where he provided valuable insights on the brand's vision and sailing plans for the future. We finally alighted at the MBCC and then proceeded to Changi Airport, carrying new friendships, lovely memories, and a desire to go back again soon.



Special features of the Genting Dream

- 1,674 cabins with capacity for 3,500+ guests
- 18 decks, with 70 per cent staterooms offering private balconies
- The Palace - an exclusive 'ship-within-a-ship' luxury enclave
- Global dining, has many options like Lido buffet with Indian vegetarian & Jain options, Dream Dining Room, specialty restaurants like Silk Road Chinese, Oasis, Umi Uma, Bistro and 24 hour Blue Lagoon restaurant
- Zodiac Theatre with 999 seat capacity for live shows
- Zouk Beach Club & Glow Bowling for nightlife and entertainment
- Waterslide park with six slides, zipline & rope course
- Sports facilities: basketball, pickleball, rock climbing, swimming pools, Jacuzzis
- Spa & Wellness programs
- Casino
- High-speed Wi-Fi Internet access for the duration of the cruise

Industry Insights

"StarDream Cruises offers a range of itineraries, including 2-5 night voyages from Singapore to Phuket and Penang, as well as round-trip cruises from China to the Philippines and Vietnam. We are also working on new routes across Southeast Asia."

- Michael Goh, President, StarDream Cruises

"The key focus for the Indian market is to grow our presence through market penetration, corporate partnerships, charter opportunities, and developing new travel agent networks."

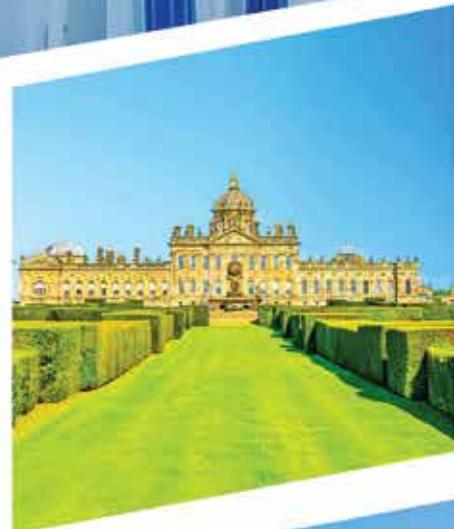
- Naresh Rawal, Sr. Vice President, Sales & Marketing, StarDream Cruises



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Tourism's global pulse

Journey
through
2025



International tourism in 2025 tells a story of confidence, continuity and renewed connection. Travel demand has remained consistent across seasons, supported by improved connectivity, destination-led initiatives and travellers seeking meaningful, well-paced experiences.

- Team Travel Turtle



REPORT

Fresh insights from the latest World Tourism Barometer by UN Tourism reveal that more than 1.1 billion travellers crossed international borders between January and September this year. The figure stands around 50 million higher than the same period in 2024, reflecting a year shaped by steady momentum and an enduring desire to explore the world. The third quarter emerged as a highlight, recording 4 per cent growth year-on-year, powered by a strong Northern Hemisphere summer that reinforced optimism across the global tourism ecosystem.

Momentum that travels far

Tourism's progress in 2025 extends beyond numbers to reflect economic vitality and traveller confidence. According to UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, international tourism continues to show strength in both arrivals and receipts, underlining its importance as a driver of livelihoods and development across regions. Destinations across continents have benefited from travellers prioritising culture, nature, gastronomy and immersive experiences. Travel today reflects balance, combining aspiration with accessibility, and destinations that invest in storytelling, infrastructure and service quality continue to attract global attention.

Africa steps into the spotlight

Africa has emerged as the strongest-performing region during the first nine months of 2025, recording a 10 per cent increase in international arrivals. Growth has remained broad-based, with North Africa rising by 11 per cent and Sub-Saharan Africa growing by 10 per cent. The results highlight expanding air access, strengthened destination marketing and growing traveller curiosity towards diverse African experiences, from heritage-rich cities to wildlife-led journeys.

Europe's summer of strength

Europe, the world's largest destination region, welcomed 625 million international tourists between January and September, marking a 4 per cent increase over 2024. A vibrant summer season supported strong performance across most sub-regions. Western Europe grew by 5 per cent, Southern Mediterranean Europe by 3 per cent, and Central and Eastern Europe by 8 per cent, reflecting sustained recovery and renewed interest in both classic and emerging destinations. Northern Europe recorded a steadier performance, contributing to the region's overall balance.

The Americans find their rhythm

The Americans recorded 2 per cent growth during the first nine months of the year. South America stood out with 9 per cent growth, supported by strong destination appeal and improved regional connectivity. Central America expanded by 3 per cent, and the Caribbean achieved 1 per cent growth, reinforcing its enduring leisure appeal. North America recorded stable volumes that reflected evolving travel patterns across the region.

Middle East and Asia-Pacific accelerate

The Middle East recorded 2 per cent growth compared to 2024 and continues to shine with arrivals standing 33 per cent above 2019 levels, the strongest performance globally when measured against the pre-pandemic benchmark. Strategic aviation hubs, large-scale events and destination diversification continue to shape the region's success.

Asia and the Pacific grew by 8 per cent, reaching 90 per cent of pre-pandemic volumes. North-East Asia led the regional recovery with 17 per cent growth, supported by restored air capacity and strong outbound and inbound demand.

The region's steady climb reflects long-term confidence in travel across Asia's diverse markets.

Destinations that captured attention Several destinations recorded remarkable growth during the period. Brazil led with 45 per cent growth, followed by Vietnam and Egypt at 21 per cent, Japan and Ethiopia at 18 per cent, South Africa at 17 per cent, Sri Lanka and Mongolia at 16 per cent, and Morocco at 14 per cent. Each of these destinations has already surpassed 2019 arrival levels, showcasing the power of focused tourism strategies and evolving traveller preferences.

Spending signals strength

Tourism receipts have mirrored arrival growth, reinforcing travel's economic contribution. Japan recorded 21 per cent growth in visitor spending, followed by Nicaragua at 19 per cent, Egypt at 18 per cent, Mongolia and Morocco at 15 per cent, Brazil at 12 per cent, and France at 9 per cent. Outbound markets also reflected confidence, led by Spain with 15 per cent growth, alongside strong performances from the United States, Republic of Korea, France, Germany and Italy. Air travel continued its upward trajectory, with international traffic rising by 7 per cent and capacity growing by 6 per cent, according to IATA. Global hotel occupancy reached 68 per cent in September, matching last year's levels and signalling operational stability across accommodation sectors.

Future looks bright

UN Tourism's projected 3-5 per cent growth for 2025 remains well within reach. Performance through September reflects a sector that continues to adapt, innovate and inspire. Tourism's global pulse in 2025 beats with confidence, shaped by destinations that understand evolving traveller expectations and travellers who continue to see the world as a place of connection, discovery and opportunity.



Israel

From dream to departure



Amruta Bangera

The Indian traveller is embracing Israel with new confidence and purpose. Not long ago, Israel lived in the realm of 'one day'. Today, it sits confidently in the 'next trip' shortlist for thousands of Indian travellers. Momentum is building across segments, from families and millennials to culture seekers and adventure lovers. Amruta Bangera, Director of Marketing, Israel Ministry of Tourism, India, shares an inside view of Israel's rising influence.

- Naina Nath





Israel's appeal to Indian travellers has shifted from curiosity to genuine intent. The country has a clear pattern: traveller confidence is back, interest is stronger than ever, and Israel is finally moving from the 'someday list' to the 'next trip' category.

Changing mindset

The rise in demand for Israel is now backed by strong, measurable momentum. Visitor numbers have surged significantly, demonstrating a clear shift in perception and intent. Speaking on the same Amruta shares, "For years, Israel lived on the 'someday' list, but that sentiment has changed dramatically. Israel welcomed 1,067,700 tourists between January and October, compared to 824,300 in the same period last year—a growth of over 29 per cent. Indian arrivals reflect this shift too: from 9,600 travellers in 2024 to 10,700 already recorded by October 2025. India now stands as the 11th largest source market globally and the leading one from Asia." She attributes this remarkable surge to the destination's diversity, vibrant nightlife in Tel Aviv, nature escapes perfect for families, rich historical and spiritual cities, pristine beaches, and a culinary culture that feels both comforting and adventurous.

Boost in access and convenience

Accessibility is set to receive a major boost with strengthened connectivity and simplified travel processes, marking another milestone in Israel's growth from the Indian market. Commenting about the connectivity Amruta says, "This month brought great news with Air India restarting direct Delhi-Tel Aviv flights from January 1, 2026. Direct flights instantly make Israel feel closer and easier."

While one-stop connections

through Turkish Airlines, Etihad, Ethiopian Airlines, El Al and others continue to support strong access, the return of direct service is expected to significantly increase both first-time and repeat travellers. A seamless planning experience is further supported by the pilot e-visa programme. She adds, "The e-visa has been a major milestone. India was the first market selected for the pilot, and the process is quick, digital, and ideal for last-minute planners. The individual applications are already benefiting from the system while group visas continue through existing channels."

Experiences beyond sightseeing

This year, Israel is steering its focus towards immersive and emotionally resonant experiences that offer travellers something far beyond traditional sightseeing. Amruta shares, "We are focusing on experiences that go well beyond traditional sightseeing. Travellers can take walking tours in old neighbourhoods, explore the City of David, or simply soak in Jaffa Port at sunset." She highlights that local markets form an integral part of this cultural storytelling—Levinsky and Carmel in Tel Aviv, Mahane Yehuda and Jaffa Street in Jerusalem, and the German Colony in Haifa each infuse history, flavour, and community.

Adventure-led experiences are rising too, from desert hikes in the Negev to diving and snorkelling in Eilat and a range of water sports for families. Israel's cultural calendar further enriches the journey with festivals such as Eat Tel Aviv, Whisky Live Israel, the Israel Festival Jerusalem, TLVFest and the Eilat International Chamber Music Festival, offering depth and discovery for travellers seeking something meaningful and memorable.

A culinary identity

Food continues to be a powerful magnet for Indian travellers discovering Israel's rich cultural tapestry. "Food is the heartbeat of Israel. Indian travellers connect easily with the ingredients, flavours and diversity. Tel Aviv's status as one of the world's most vegan-friendly cities strengthens this appeal, alongside farm-to-table dining, boutique winery tours in Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and a growing presence of Indian restaurants such as Tandoori, Jeera and Ichkidana," explains Amruta.

Strategic vision for growth

Israel's long-term tourism roadmap is focused on meaningful, sustainable, and scalable growth across key traveller segments. Amruta shares, "Our strategy is to keep Israel aspirational yet reachable, under our 2030 vision, we are investing 160 million ILS to upgrade tourism infrastructure and aim to welcome 10 million visitors by 2030."

The plan includes expanding hotel inventory, simplifying planning regulations, enhancing visitor facilities, and engaging millennials,

multi-generational families, and culture-seeking couples. Emerging trends such as wellness, slow travel, and outdoor exploration continue to gain momentum.

Partnerships that shape perception

The travel trade continues to play a pivotal role in driving Israel's growth from India. Speaking on the same lines Amruta shares, "The trade understands the Indian traveller and helps build itineraries that feel personal. Participation at various trade shows and familiarisation trips to IMTM, and workshops across key cities have been fruitful in building a strong recall value about the country."

For first-time travellers

Travellers to Israel often return with more than just photographs; they carry back stories, flavours, and moments that stay with them long after the trip ends. Israel's story in India is firmly taking shape, driven by rising confidence and deeper curiosity. For many Indians, the journey now feels closer than ever, marking a powerful shift in perception and intent.



Fairmont & Raffles

Icons of timeless Jaipur

Fairmont and Raffles Jaipur invite travellers into parallel worlds where grandeur and grace find their own expressions and shape experiences. Rajat Sethi, Cluster General Manager, Fairmont and Raffles Jaipur, shares how every guest connects with the city in their personal way.

- Tripti Jain

Rajat Sethi



Jaipur unfolds woven with echoes of royalty, colour, and timeless rituals of welcome, and within this storied landscape rise two distinctive addresses that reinterpret heritage through modern luxury. Palatial silhouettes, thoughtful craftsmanship, and an instinctive sense of hospitality come together to create journeys that move beyond a stay and into lasting memory. Jaipur inspires us to create moments that feel emotionally rich and culturally meaningful.

A royal overture

Jaipur has inspired travellers through its palaces, colours, and rituals of hospitality, and the arrival of two distinct luxury expressions has added a refined new chapter to this narrative. Fairmont Jaipur and Raffles Jaipur stand as contemporary interpretations of royal living, each shaped by a unique soul yet united by a shared respect for heritage. Together, they create an immersive journey where celebration and contemplation coexist in harmony. Speaking more on the same lines Rajat shares, "Jaipur offers a canvas rich in culture and emotion, and our vision has been to honour that spirit through two hotels that speak different languages of luxury."

Fairmont Jaipur: The palace of celebrations

Fairmont Jaipur rises with grandeur, echoing the magnificence of Rajputana architecture and the warmth of Indian hospitality. The hotel thrives on moments that bring people together, from destination weddings filled with colour and

ceremony to festive stays that turn every gathering into a memory. Spaces feel expansive and welcoming, designed for shared joy and meaningful connections. Capturing the heart of the brand's philosophy Rajat explains, "Fairmont Jaipur lives by the promise of 'Make Special Happen', where every celebration carries emotion, generosity, and a sense of occasion that guests feel deeply."

Festive magic reimagined

Festivities at Fairmont Jaipur unfold with a theatrical charm that delights families, couples, and celebratory travellers alike. Christmas and New Year experiences are curated as immersive journeys, complete with signature brunches, seasonal cocktails, and thoughtfully designed stay packages. Each detail aims to evoke nostalgia and wonder, wrapped in contemporary luxury. Highlighting the spirit behind the celebrations he shares, "Festive moments hold powerful memories, and our teams craft these experiences with warmth and imagination so guests carry that joy long after they depart."

Weddings and MICE with a mindful touch

Fairmont Jaipur continues to redefine weddings and MICE through a lens of conscious indulgence. Culinary innovation plays a central role, with kitchens embracing a refined oil-free approach using desi ghee, mustard oil, olive oil, and cold-pressed canola oil. This philosophy aligns wellness with flavour, offering

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RezLive.com

Designing tomorrow's travel

Travel, at its most powerful, connects people before it connects places. Jaal Shah, Founder, RezLive.com & Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group shares his entrepreneurial journey.

From the early days of building scalable travel solutions to shaping global distribution networks through RezLive.com, the approach has always centred on people, partnerships, and progress. Travel succeeds when trust, technology, and human understanding move forward together.

TECHNOLOGY WITH A HUMAN PULSE

Innovation in travel gains true meaning when it simplifies lives and empowers businesses. RezLive.com has grown into a platform that balances advanced technology with intuitive usability, offering agents speed, confidence, and choice. Every solution reflects an awareness of daily challenges faced by the trade. Sharing his perspective, Jaal Shah says, "Technology works best when it feels effortless for the user and meaningful for the business. This focus on practical innovation has helped partners adapt swiftly to changing traveller expectations."

PARTNERSHIPS THAT GROW TOGETHER

Strong relationships remain the cornerstone of sustainable growth. Jaal Shah has consistently championed collaboration over competition. Each partnership is nurtured with transparency and long-term intent, allowing stakeholders to evolve together. Reflecting on this belief, he shares, "Partnerships thrive when everyone at the table feels heard, valued, and

invested in a shared future. This mindset has strengthened bonds across continents and cultures."

ADAPTING WITH CONFIDENCE AND CLARITY

The global travel industry continues to transform, shaped by digital acceleration and renewed traveller curiosity. Leadership during such times calls for clarity, optimism, and adaptability. Jaal Shah's strategic thinking embraces change as an opportunity to refine systems and reimagine possibilities. His outlook remains rooted in confidence, as he explains, "Change invites us to sharpen our vision and create solutions that stay relevant for years to come. Such clarity enables teams and partners to move forward with assurance."

LEADERSHIP THAT INSPIRES

At the heart of this journey lies leadership shaped by empathy, consistency, and belief in people. Creating impact in travel extends beyond platforms and products; it lives in the ability to inspire teams and partners to think ahead with purpose. By encouraging learning, agility, and shared ownership, Jaal Shah has cultivated a culture where innovation

feels collaborative and growth feels collective. Reflecting on this approach, he shares, "Leadership in travel is about creating an environment where ideas flow freely, people feel empowered, and progress feels shared. When teams grow with confidence, the industry moves forward together."

A FUTURE DESIGNED WITH INTENT

The journey feels guided by purpose rather than pace. The focus

remains on building ecosystems that support agents, delight travellers, and respect the evolving dynamics of global tourism. Through passion, perspective, and people-first leadership, Jaal Shah's story mirrors the very essence of travel itself: meaningful, evolving, and deeply human. He envisions growth that feels inclusive and thoughtful, anchored in learning and collaboration. Summing up his philosophy, he reflects, "The future of travel belongs to those who design with intention, empathy, and an open mind."

Jaal Shah



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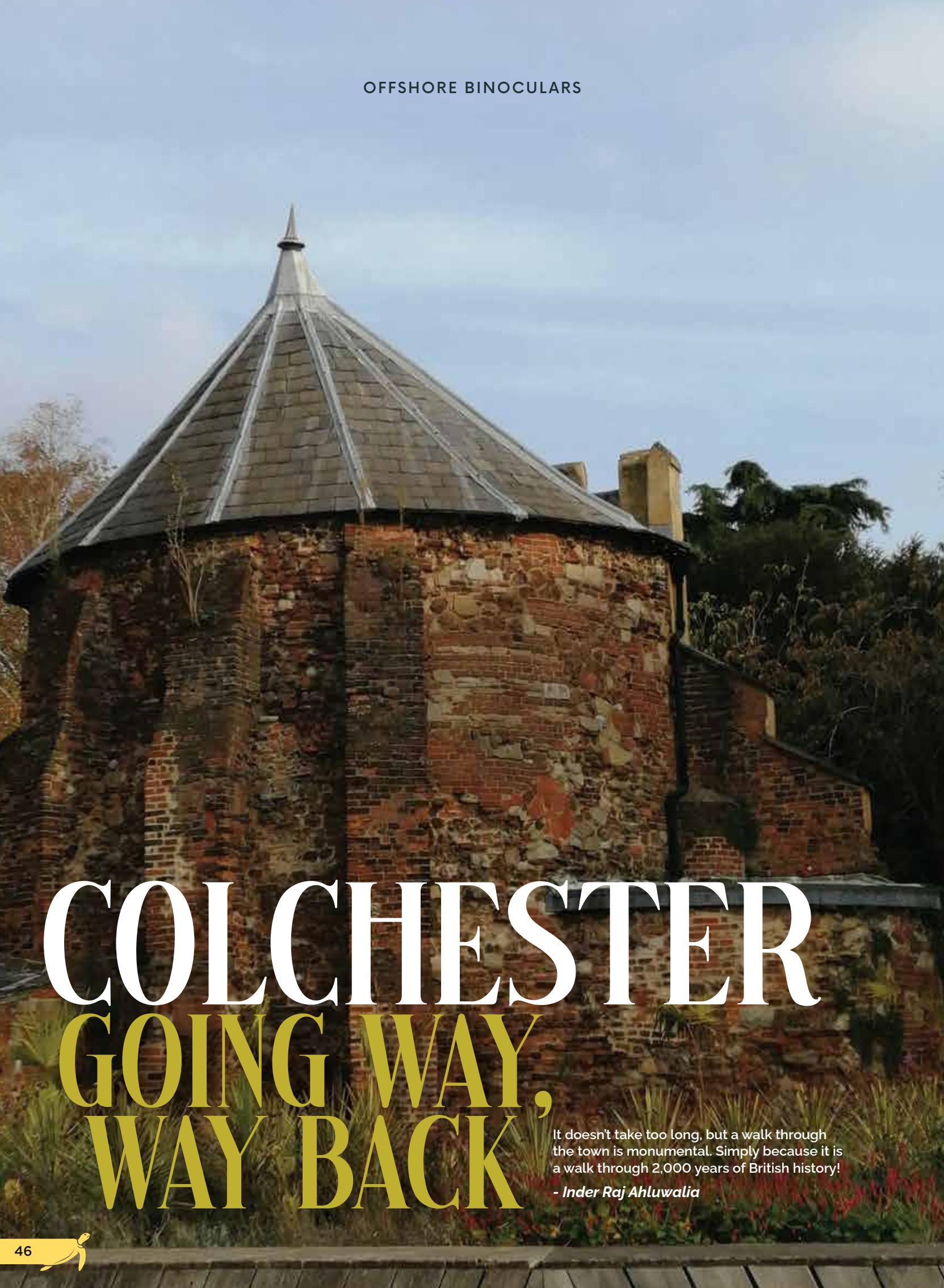
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COLCHESTER GOING WAY, WAY BACK

It doesn't take too long, but a walk through the town is monumental. Simply because it is a walk through 2,000 years of British history!

- *Inder Raj Ahluwalia*



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

The story here is all about what happened back in those early times, and there's quite a history to it. The Romans overcame the resistance of the ancient British kings in AD 43, and made the town the first capital of Roman Britain, much before London's development and prominence. Following the town's destruction by Queen Boudica in AD 60, the Romans encircled it with a protective wall, two and a half kilometers of which - the oldest in Britain-still stands, together with Britain's largest surviving Roman gateway.

Here, in Britain's oldest recorded town, you walk in the footsteps of the Britons, the Romans, the Saxons, the Normans, 16th Century Dutch weavers, Royalists and Parliamentarians, and the Victorians. Their legacies survive in the town and its four museums, and you can discover them either by taking a walk with a Blue Badge Guide, or just on your own.

But while history and heritage are the supreme backdrop, Colchester goes beyond all this. It is a thriving, modern town offering myriad places to visit and things to see. Its charm radiates from a package of attractions that ranges from lanes of stone, narrow streets, little houses of the past alongside occasional brick structures, and a unique atmosphere and ambience.

Several theatres, galleries, and a rich musical tradition rightfully make Colchester a regional centre for the arts. Enjoy a sultry evening in a club atmosphere listening to Blues or Jazz at Colchester Arts Centre; see large show bands and symphony orchestras at Charter Hall; or just tap your feet in time to exciting folk artists.

'Colchester Natural History Museum' read the sign, and it was reason enough for us to enter, partly, I must confess, because of an annoying drizzle. But it was worth it. 'From the depths of the North Sea through settlements and woodland, to your own backyard' is the scope

of the displays of the small but highly informative museum.

The unending drizzle again a motivator, our very next stop was also (conveniently) a museum. Recounting life in town over the past 300 years, the Hollytrees Museum, besides offering you a chance to discover the building itself, enables you to meet characters from Hollytree's past and hear stories from the locals.

Next in line was the 15th Century timber - framed Tymperleys Clock Museum that houses a comprehensive collection of local clocks, as featured on the BBC's Antiques Road show. Featuring over a century of railway history is the East Anglican Railway Museum at Chappel. And Firstsite is an excellent contemporary visual art gallery with a café and walled garden situated in a beautiful Georgian town house known as Minories.



History and garden buffs would do well to take a detailed walking tour with a Blue Badge Guide. Fresh air fiends will love the surrounding countryside and coast, enjoying several long-distance paths that can be tailored to circular walks. And history buffs will just enjoy the overall atmosphere.

It was all peace and bliss as we walked through landscaped gardens and terraces, around a pond, boating lake and sensory garden of the prettiest jewel in Colchester's crown—the classical Victorian Castle Park. The peace and bliss continued as we strolled through a royal hunting forest located close to the town centre. Originally gifted to Colchester by Henry VIII, the former royal preserve is now High Woods Country Park with its woodland, lake and visitor centre. In summer, people enjoy ice creams here, but this was anything but summertime, and the hot coffee we had in paper cups wasn't just handy, but an absolute delight.

At the town's heart is William the Conqueror's 11th Century castle, the largest surviving Norman keep ever built. For centuries, the castle kept secret the fact that it was built over the remains of a Roman temple

THE FACTS

- Colchester is an hour's drive from London and takes about the same time by train. Once you've arrived, park and then go exploring the town on foot.
- The local tourist office is located just opposite the castle and provides relevant information and literature.
- Guest-houses and hotels welcome you with assorted tariffs. There are several eateries, and the choice includes English, Continental and Indian food.
- Winters are cold and windy. Don't forget those woolens and good walking shoes, that enhance the local visit.

dedicated to the Emperor Claudius, the conqueror of Britain. Into the award-winning Castle Museum we went, descending into the eerie depths of the temple's original foundations. We tried on a toga and centurian's helmet and body armour, saw the mysterious 4,000 years old-Dagenham Idol, and looked out over the Roman Middleborough Mosaic. How's that for serious sightseeing.

Incredibly old it may be, but Colchester is in sync with contemporary goings on and is mindful of the present and future. One of Europe's finest roller-skating rink, Rollerworld, where everyone can have a 'go' on Britain's largest maple-floored rink, is a case in point. Pedestrian-only modern shopping centres feature big name outlets, while small specialist shops line narrow streets and lanes. They've also got their own award-winning independent department store, Williams & Griffen, a town feature. From street entertainers to quaint

street traders, the monthly farmer's by a plate of those famous market, among Britain's oldest open-air markets, throws up myriad surprises. Renowned local outlets come in the form of Cants of Colchester-specialist rose growers with their colourful nurseries; and the world-famous Beth Chatto gardens at nearby Elmstead Market. When you've done playing tourist in Britain's oldest recorded town, need do is arrive and sort of 'melt in', savour the real thing. Get tempted



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.

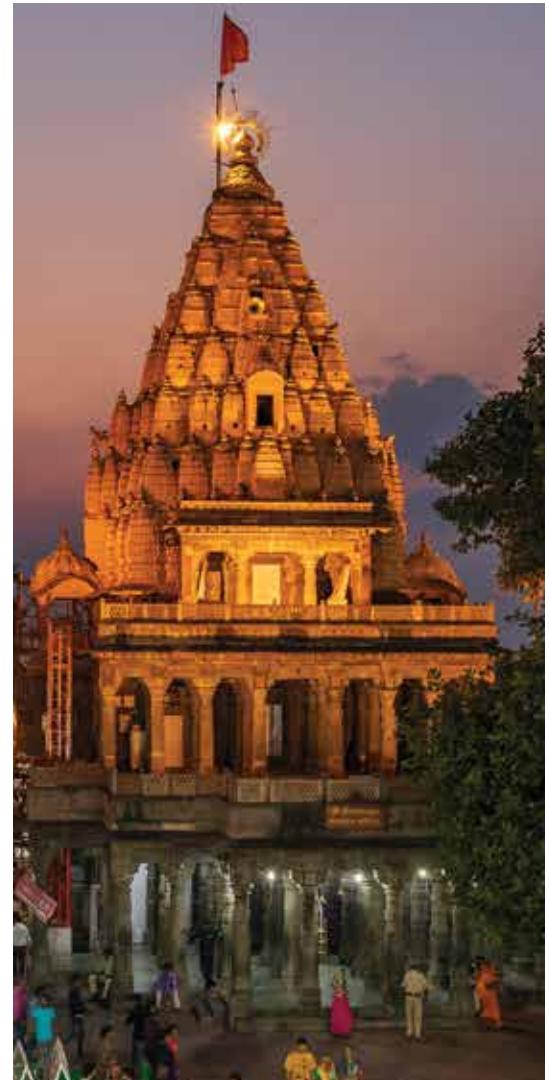




MADHYA PRADESH

THE HEART OF SPIRITUAL INDIA

At the heart of India lies a land where faith has flowed for millennia, a realm where temples, rivers, forests, and hills stand as repositories of devotion. Madhya Pradesh is a tranquil space where spirituality nurtures art, architecture, and human connection. It is here that seekers find serenity and the soul finds renewal.



PRAY AT SUBLIME SHIVA SHRINES

Begin your journey at the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain, where the pre-dawn Bhasma Aarti evokes an unmatched sense of divine energy. As priests chant mantras to the sound of drums and conches, devotees experience the eternal presence of Lord Shiva. Complete the circuit of 84 Mahadev Temples here — a pilgrimage into the essence of the self. In Omkareshwar, where the island forms the sacred “ॐ”, Shiva is worshipped as both Omkareshwar and Amareswar, embodying the cosmic and eternal. A ritual dip in the Narmada followed by the circumambulation of the island symbolizes spiritual purification. Many also undertake the sacred 2,600-kilometre Narmada Parikrama, walking along both banks of the holy river. At Maheshwar, join the Narmada Aarti — a soulful ritual initiated by the legendary Ahilyabai Holkar.



SEEKING RAM RAJA'S BLESSING

In Chitrakoot, where Lord Rama spent years in exile, offer prayers at Bharat Milap Ramghat, Janaki Kund, and Hanuman Dhara — each resonating with stories of virtue and faith. Continue to Orchha, where Lord Rama is revered not as a deity but as a King — a rare and living tradition of devotion.



EXPERIENCE THE DIVINE ENERGY

Seek the blessings of Goddess Baglamukhi at the tantric Peetambara Peeth in Datia, one of the ten Mahavidyas. The complex also houses shrines dedicated to Dhumavati, Parashuram, Hanuman, and Kaal Bhairav. Follow this with a visit to the ancient circular Chaunsath Yogini Temple at Bhedaghat, an architectural marvel tied to the legacy of Queen Durgawati.



Embark on a Shakti Trail — climb the thousand steps to Maa Sharda Shaktipeeth in Maihar, visit the Shondesh Narmada Shaktipeeth in Amarkantak, and complete your circle at Ujjain's Harsiddhi and Gadkalika temples, where the goddess is worshipped in her fierce and benevolent forms.

DIVERSE STRANDS OF FAITH

The spiritual spirit of Madhya Pradesh extends beyond temples. Meditate at Sanchi's Buddhist stupas, join prayers at Bhopal's Taj-ul-Masjid, or bow before the Jain icons at Bawangaja and Sonagir. Visit Dargah-e-Hakimi in Burhanpur, a sacred Bohra shrine known for its healing grace. Follow the sacred Narmada westward from Amarkantak to Gurudwara Shri Gwari Ghat Sahib, where Guru Nanak Dev Ji once crossed the holy river — a symbol of harmony and compassion.

In Madhya Pradesh, devotion is not a destination but a journey, “one that begins in prayer and culminates in the quiet awakening of the soul.”

HEADS IN BEDS

URBAN DAYDREAM

At 25hours Hotel One Central, Dubai, colour, culture and comfort collide to create a stay that feels as soulful as it is playful.

- *Misbaah Mansuri*



HEADS IN BEDS

There are hotels that mirror their cities and then there are those that speak to their soul. 25hours Hotel One Central belongs to the latter. Set beside the Museum of the Future, the hotel feels like a creative heartbeat threading through Dubai's skyline. It is a place shaped by stories rather than grandeur, by curiosity rather than perfection, by warmth rather than formality.

As I walked into the bustling lobby with its vinyl records, desert-toned textures and books spilling from every corner, there was a moment when Dubai's fast pace softened. The hotel blends Bedouin roots with contemporary edge, creating a space that feels lived in, not staged. There is a joyful imperfection in the details, a sense that you are stepping not into a hotel but into someone's world.

This is where Dubai comes to play, create, rest and reconnect. A hotel with an analogue heart in a digital city.

Checking In

Check-in at 25hours feels more like arriving at a friend's home. The staff is relaxed, warm and refreshing in their ease. A scent of oud drifts through the lobby, followed by the soft hum of music and the chatter of creative souls tapping away on laptops. The hotel's motto, *Come As You Are*, rises gently from the atmosphere itself. Nothing here tries too hard. Everything simply belongs.

Our Large Farmstay Suite opened like a desert lullaby. Inspired by Arabian agricultural heritage, the suite blends earthy tones, raw textiles, clay-inspired ceramics and warm timber that glows in late afternoon sunlight. The aesthetic is both rustic and refined, filled with handcrafted touches that whisper of simpler rhythms.

The window commanded a sweeping view of the Museum of the Future. At night, its calligraphy shimmered like a floating scroll of light, suspended between past and possibility. By day, it stood as a reminder of Dubai's bold hunger for reinvention.

The suite was large enough to feel like its own apartment. A woven hammock hung in the corner. Analogue books and journals were



stacked beside the bed. A freestanding tub invited long, slow baths. In a city that often leans toward steel and glass, this room felt rooted in something far gentler. The complimentary elements of the stay blended naturally into the experience, offered with the kind of warmth that feels instinctive rather than transactional.

Later, as we wandered the hotel, it became clear that 25hours was designed as a cultural playground. There were bicycles to borrow, pottery corners, a vinyl room filled with music waiting to be rediscovered and co-working spaces where strangers sat side by side, unhurried and unguarded. This was not luxury defined by distance, but luxury defined by connection.

Dining

Dinner at 25hours was a return to nostalgia. A celebration of fire, spice and the kind of food that warms the bones as much as the spirit. Tandoor Tina, known for its British Indian comfort food, offered a meal that felt both familiar and surprising.

We began with samosas that arrived crisp and golden, the shells delicate enough to crackle under the slightest pressure. Steam rose the moment they opened, carrying the scent of potatoes, cumin and coriander. Mint chutney sharpened the flavours while tamarind softened them. It was the kind of beginning that settles you into your seat a little deeper.

Next came the tandoori appetisers, blistered at the edges, smoky and tender from their time in the clay oven. The spice was balanced, the char subtle, and the yoghurt marinade left a tang that lingered pleasantly on the palate. Every bite carried a whisper of the tandoor, that old storyteller of Indian kitchens.

The butter chicken followed, and it was the kind of dish that needs no introduction. The sauce was silky, slow cooked to a soft sweetness, its tomato and cream base folding into itself until perfectly balanced. Garlic naan arrived warm and blistered, brushed with just enough butter to glow under the lights. The meal did not rely on extravagance. It relied on honesty. There was generosity in the portions and warmth in the service. Our

HEADS IN BEDS

server moved quietly, offering refills and suggestions as though reading a language written on our faces. More than anything, dinner felt like a reminder of how comforting simple, well cooked food can be.

Lunch at Nomad the next day unfolded with a very different tempo. Nomad is the hotel's casual heart, a place where digital nomads, families, creatives and travellers pass through without ever feeling like guests. Sun poured through wide windows, casting a soft golden glaze on the terracotta tiles and warm timber. It was light and refreshing, a departure from the previous night's richness. A creamy pasta with basil and garlic was comforting without being heavy.

Buttery, crisp and dusted with just enough sugar to catch the light, the almond croissant broke open to reveal a creamy almond centre that melted without resistance. Nomad's charm lies in its unfussy approach. The food is flavourful, the atmosphere welcoming and the service easygoing. It is a space to linger rather than rush.

Experiences

The spa at 25hours is a sanctuary tucked away from the hotel's energetic pulse. Designed with warm wood, muted lighting and a gentle hush that feels almost sacred, it invites you to shed the city's pace at the door.

Our couple's treatment began with a brief consultation before we were guided into a dimly lit room where soft music drifted like a slow heartbeat. The massage was unhurried, instinctive and grounded in long, sweeping strokes that loosened knots without force. Warm oil eased into the skin, coaxing out tension accumulated over busy months.

There was a moment during the treatment where everything became very still. Breath slowed, shoulders softened and the mind quieted in a way that rarely happens in everyday life.

After the massage, we were taken to a jacuzzi suite where warm water bubbled around us. The lights were low. Steam curled gently into the air. It felt like the world had stepped aside for a while, creating space for nothing but ease.

25hours calls itself a hotel for the

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ADVERT



NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi

Island rhythms



A sense of calm rises with the sun at NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi, where the turquoise horizon shapes daily rhythm and every experience feels in perfect harmony with nature. Mohamed Mauroof, General Manager, NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi shares about the essence of the property.

A gentle breeze sweeps across the lagoon as the first light of day paints the sky in soft shades of gold. Life at NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi unfolds with a quiet elegance, where the rhythm of the ocean sets the pace and every moment feels thoughtfully balanced.

Balance of lifestyle, leisure, and luxury

Guests arrive seeking rest and return inspired by the island's gentle pace, thoughtful design, and genuine warmth. Mauroof reflects deeply on what defines the essence of this destination and shares, "Our philosophy of 'Never Odd Or Even' guides everything we create. Balance is felt in every moment, from the serenity of sunrise to the joy of connection with loved ones. We promise a refreshing perspective on Maldivian luxury, celebrating meaningful simplicity and soulful hospitality."

Surrounded by the crystal-clear waters of Vaavu Atoll, NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi invites travellers to rediscover the beauty of slowing down, reconnecting with nature, and embracing the art of mindful living. He adds, "Guests reconnect with themselves, with the ocean, and with the rhythm of island life. This commitment to ease and authenticity shapes every touchpoint and welcomes travellers into a seamless experience of comfort and wonder."

Inspired spaces

Palm-lined shores, white powdered sand, and villas that blend modern elegance with natural textures form the foundation of this island sanctuary. Every detail embraces openness and balance, designed for harmony between privacy and togetherness. Mauroof explains, "Our 72 villas, from beachfront sanctuaries to overwater escapes, are created for couples, families, and friends seeking stylish comfort and deep connection. Each space reflects thoughtful planning, intuitive design, and an atmosphere that feels both elevated and effortlessly relaxed."

The resort's appeal to discerning Indian travellers is especially strong. Flexibility, culinary diversity, and family-friendly options make it a compelling choice for celebrations and long stays. Speaking on the same lines Mauroof shares, "Indian guests appreciate our personal approach, from choice-filled dining and customised experiences to our All-Inclusive options, floating breakfasts, and family-first philosophy."

Flavours of the ocean

Dining at NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi is an experience of sensory discovery. Every venue celebrates culinary artistry, culture, and storytelling through food. Mauroof takes delights in describing this journey and says, "Dining here is



a celebration of global flavours and Maldivian heritage, crafted to delight every palate and reflect the diversity of our guests. The signature restaurant Ir showcases international favourites and local creations, wāshōku reveals authentic Japanese craftsmanship, and flämē brings the excitement of open-grill cooking under the stars." Evenings unfold beautifully by the lagoon at Vēli Pool Bar, where sunset cocktails and soft island music create moments that linger long after the glass is empty. He adds, "Our goal is to create memories that stay with guests through taste, atmosphere, and connection. It is a setting that invites celebration and quiet reflection in equal measure."

Wellness and adventure

The ocean surrounding NOOE Maldives Kunaavashi is a world of discovery waiting beneath the surface. From snorkelling with gentle rays to exploring the iconic Fotteyo dive point, every adventure reveals nature's brilliance. Mauroof shares, "The Vaavu Atoll is known as the 'Wow' Atoll for a reason. Every dive is unforgettable. Every snorkelling experience feels alive. Complimentary snorkelling gear and non-motorised activities allow visitors to explore at leisure, creating endless opportunities for curiosity and play."

At the heart of wellness sits Thāri Spa by Mandara, an oasis of deep tranquillity. Inspired by nature, its treatments restore balance and radiate calm. Mauroof describes its

essence and explains, "Thāri Spa is a sanctuary where the mind slows, the body releases tension, and the spirit breathes freely. The Handhu Gym overlooking the lagoon and the Kulhun Kids Club complete the wellness journey for adults and young explorers alike."

Cultural heartbeat

The soul of NOOE pulses through local culture, tradition, and meaningful community engagement. Guests experience the authentic spirit of Maldivian life every Friday evening during the Cultural Village celebration. Mauroof explains, "Our cultural night brings the island's heritage to life through storytelling, crafts, and music. It honours the community we belong to and gives guests deeper understanding. The evening concludes with Boduberu drumming, laughter, and joyful dancing beneath the stars."

Stronger together

India remains one of the resort's most cherished markets, supported through strong partnerships and seamless access. Mauroof expresses sincere appreciation and shares, "Our travel trade partners in India are like family. Together, we create journeys filled with warmth and meaning."

Travellers from around the world step onto the island as visitors and return home as storytellers, carrying with them the soulful rhythm of the Maldivian sea and the warmth of a place that feels perfectly balanced, never odd or even."



POLAR LATITUDES EXPEDITIONS

The call of the ice!

India's rising interest, responsible travel and the evolving culture of expedition cruising is giving way to exciting polar expeditions. Craig Upshall, Director of Retail Sales, UK, India, the Middle East and Australasia, Polar Latitudes Expeditions shares about the company's success.

-Naina Nath



Craig



Polar travel has captured the world's imagination, and few operators have contributed to that momentum as consistently as Polar Latitude Expeditions.

The company's success stems from more than access to remote destinations, rather it comes from a belief that polar expeditions should be personal, thoughtful, and emotionally moving. Craig's experience across various markets provides him with a unique perspective on how guests interact with these journeys and what makes Polar Latitudes stand out.

Built on purpose and curiosity

Polar Latitudes evolved through intention, research, and a deep respect for fragile ecosystems. At the core of its philosophy is a desire to move past sightseeing towards understanding. Highlighting more on the topic Craig shares, "We have always focused on meaningful exploration rather than volume-based tourism. From the very beginning, our vision was to create expeditions that encourage emotional connection with the polar environment."

He shares about a milestone moment and adds, "A defining milestone was launching our Citizen Science Programme over 15 years ago, allowing guests to contribute real-time climate and wildlife data alongside scientists."

Small ships, expert teams, and a considered approach to guest experience reinforce that purpose-led vision."

India's growing curiosity

India is emerging as a strong audience for expedition cruising.

and this momentum is continuing at a rapid pace. Craig says, "India is one of our fastest-growing markets, much of it is driven by word of mouth. When someone returns from Antarctica or the Arctic and shares their story, the inspiration spreads quickly."

Alongside India, key markets include the UK, the US, Australia, and Western Europe, all of which share a common motivation: a quest for rare and authentic travel experiences. Several elements set Polar Latitudes apart, and many are built on experience rather than trend. He adds, "Our Citizen Science Programme, small ship focus, expert teams and unique bow viewing platforms help us deliver something personal and transformative. Dining flexibility is also key, especially for guests from India."

Strengthening trade partnerships

Polar Latitudes has a structured strategy for supporting the travel trade in India, with relationships and understanding at its core. "India is a relationship-led market, and our approach aligns strongly with that. We focus on training, personalised support, pre-travel guidance and group planning, including the option of bringing on board Indian chefs. The intention is to make the journey feel comfortable, supported, and familiar despite the destination's remoteness," explains Craig.

Arctic or Antarctic

For first-time expedition travellers, choosing between the two poles may feel overwhelming. According to him, the difference is strikingly clear.

Furthermore, he explains, "Antarctica feels like stepping onto

another world, with dramatic ice formations, penguins, whales and a stillness that stays with you. The Arctic offers both wilderness and culture, with wildlife like polar bears and walrus along with remote communities and, depending on the season, the Northern Lights."

Committed to responsible travel

Protecting the environment sits at the centre of the company's operations.

Craig emphasises on the importance of responsible tourism and shares, "We

are committed to maintaining the lightest footprint possible. Every traveller is briefed on respecting the environment, which creates shared responsibility.

Strict protocols, reduced-impact operations, and scientific partnerships reinforce this commitment."

Ships are purpose-built for polar exploration with comfort and ease in mind. He adds more about the onboard experience and says, "Our onboard experience is warm, relaxed and inclusive. Guests feel part of a shared journey, from ocean view cabins to mudrooms, libraries, and lounges, the environment is welcoming without feeling excessive."

A message for Indian travellers

For travellers ready to take that leap into the polar world, Polar Latitudes offers flexibility without compromising depth. It does not matter whether someone has a narrow travel window or the freedom to plan far in advance.

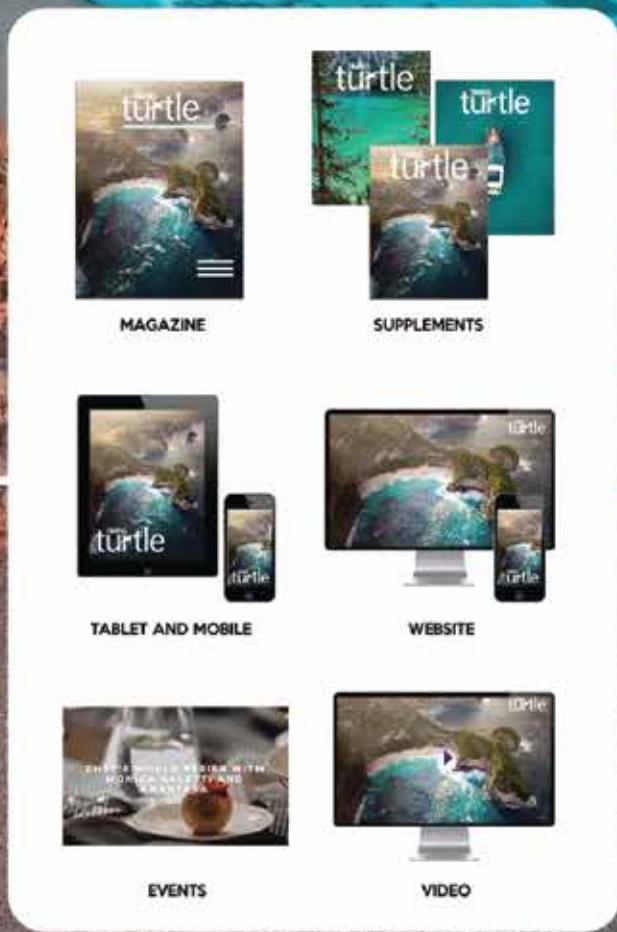
The company has itineraries across

both poles that cater to different timelines, interests, and levels of curiosity.

Each voyage promises dramatic scenery, remarkable wildlife, and a strong sense of connection to history and science. Travel may take you to the edges of the world, but in the case of polar exploration, its impact continues long after the journey ends. "If Antarctica or the Arctic has ever sparked your imagination, follow that instinct, it becomes a personal memory you will always carry," shares Craig.



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Chhattisgarh Tourism Investor Connect 2025 attracts investments for the State

The event brought together officials, industry leaders, and investors, securing ₹6,826 crore in commitments across tourism, hospitality, energy, and industrial projects. Tourism initiatives included hotels, wellness resorts, adventure circuits, and heritage experiences, supported by investor-friendly policies. The investments are expected to generate over 3,000 jobs and boost infrastructure and tourism growth in the state.



Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia hosts business matching



The Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia hosts an engaging business matching session. The event brought together 23 tourism stakeholders from Indonesia (including hotels, tour operators, and DMCs) to connect with the Indian travel trade. Ambassador Ina Hagniningtyas Krisnamurthi attended, emphasising Indonesia's commitment to strengthening tourism partnerships and expanding its market footprint in India.

TAAI Northern and South-Tamil Nadu chapters meet to strengthen travel trade ties

The Northern and South-Tamil Nadu chapters of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) recently held a joint meeting, bringing members together to strengthen cooperation across regions. The event included a presentation on 'Travel Business Protect' by Aseg and featured discussions on improving industry standards, fostering collaboration, and exploring new opportunities in heritage and venue-based travel.



France Excellence Luxury B2B showcase held by France Tourism Development Agency

The France Tourism Development Agency successfully organises the inaugural edition of France Excellence, its dedicated luxury B2B showcase. A delegation of 13 key stakeholders engaged with 50 members of the Indian travel trade fraternity through two days of pre-scheduled meetings, representing the diversity of France's luxury travel offerings.



BrandUSA's annual thanksgiving soirée celebrates a year of collaboration



BrandUSA's annual thanksgiving soirée celebrates a year of connection, collaboration, and creativity. The evening was filled with laughter, good vibes, and a special thank you to Sartha Global for making the event memorable.



Aviareps hosts meet & greet with Small Luxury Hotels

Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH) hosts an intimate media dinner in Delhi, featuring Mark Wong and Josephine Tee, who shared insights on the brand's vision and trends in independent luxury hotels. The event gathered prominent voices to discuss personalised luxury and emerging global travel trends.



Sun Siyam Resorts launches refreshed brand identity, spotlights India as key market

Sun Siyam Resorts introduces its new brand identity, (R)evolution, marking a significant transformation for the renowned Maldives-based hospitality group. Described as a major step forward, the refreshed branding aims to strengthen the company's connection with guests, partners, industry collaborators, and the broader Sun Siyam community.



Saudi Arabia showcases culture and hospitality at Spectacular Saudi event



Saudi Arabia highlighted its rich culture and world-class hospitality at the 'Spectacular Saudi' event, part of a multi-city tour across India. Bollywood stars Kareena Kapoor Khan, Ananya Pandey, and Kartik Aryan experienced qahwa tasting, bakhoor aromas, and the epicurean-culinary corner.

Six Flags Qiddiya City announces official opening

Six Flags Qiddiya City, Saudi Arabia's largest theme park and the first Six Flags park outside North America, announced its official opening at a press conference in India. Officials highlighted that safety trials are underway to ensure a secure and thrilling experience for visitors. Aqua Arabia, the kingdom's largest water theme park, is also under development and expected to open soon.



MTF Events launches MTF Premier League season 4

MTF Events opened MTF Premier League Season 4 with a lively players auction that finalised eight teams of 16 players each, including female participants. The event showcased strong camaraderie, friendly rivalry and rising talent within the travel fraternity. With teams now confirmed, preparations begin for an action-packed season filled with fresh energy and signature MTF excitement.



Uga Resorts and Heavens Portfolio hosts elegant evenings for the travel trade industry



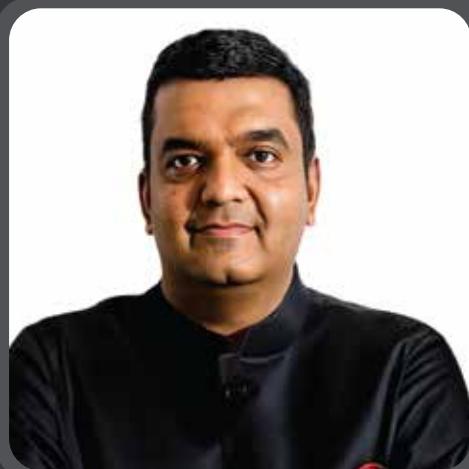
Uga Resorts and Heavens Portfolio hosts elegant media evenings in both Mumbai and Delhi, bringing together industry guests for crafted cocktails, relaxed conversations and effortless camaraderie. The gatherings offered a warm, intimate setting for meaningful connections and showcased the hosts' signature hospitality.

Otoai hosts successful members meet 2025 with industry leaders

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) hosts a vibrant Members Meet Evening in collaboration with Qantas Airways and myPartner by MakeMyTrip. The event brought together leading industry professionals to foster networking, collaboration, and stronger connections within the outbound travel community.



APPOINTMENTS



Ministry of Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, announces the appointment of Shri Srivatsa Krishna, IAS as the new Tourism Secretary. A distinguished civil servant and one of India's most accomplished administrative leaders, Shri Krishna brings over three decades of experience across governance, technology, global finance, infrastructure, and strategic policy.

The LaLiT Laxmi Vilas Palace Udaipur

The LaLiT Laxmi Vilas Palace Udaipur announces the appointment of Mr Arjun Belliappa as its new General Manager. Bringing over 20 years of diverse hospitality experience, Mr. Belliappa has established a distinguished reputation for elevating guest satisfaction, enhancing operational efficiency, and driving business growth.



voco Amritsar by IHG

voco Amritsar by IHG announces the appointment of Manish as its General Manager. With more than seventeen years of diversified experience across luxury, upscale, and mid-scale hospitality brands, Manish will spearhead the hotel's pre-opening phase while overseeing operations, commercial strategy, and service excellence.

Radisson Hotel

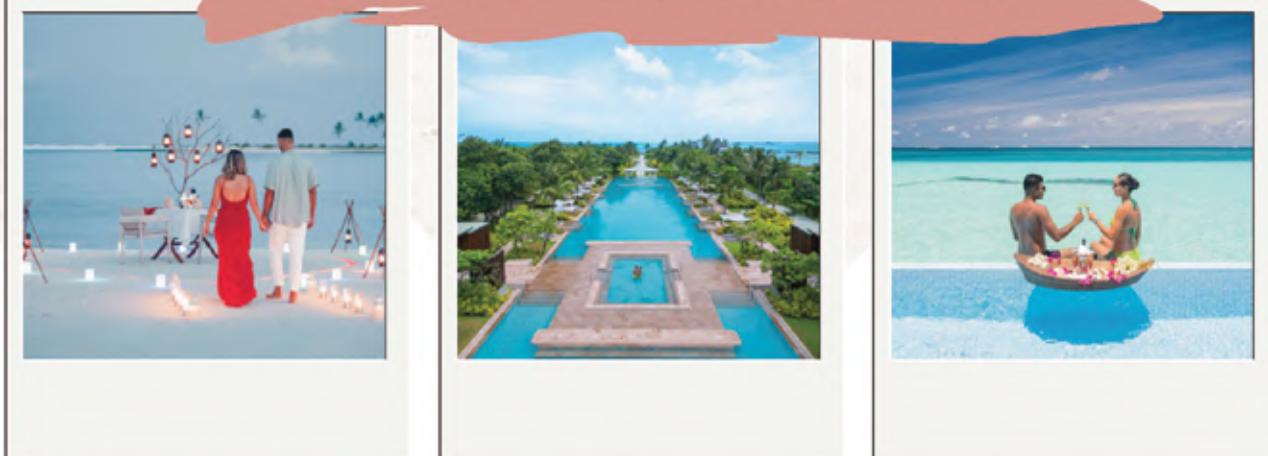
Vikram Berry and Faisal Nafees have been appointed to senior leadership roles, bringing extensive expertise in luxury hospitality, brand management, and hotel operations. Vikram Berry, with over 25 years of experience across global hotel chains and luxury properties, has previously served as Area Director of Marketing and Communication, South Asia, at Radisson Hotel Group, while Faisal Nafees adds significant operational and strategic insight to the team.



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- ◆ Dolphin or sunset cruise
- ◆ 30-minute photoshoot with one edited image
- ◆ Snorkeling equipment
- ◆ Welcome amenities on arrival
- ◆ Butler service
- ◆ Stand-up paddleboard and kayak access
- ◆ 24-hour gym access
- ◆ Kids' Happy Hour by the poolside (16:00–18:00 hrs)
- ◆ Beverage package / All-Inclusive (minibar replenished every other day)



3 Nights Stay
at the resort



Half Board
Meal Plan



Return Transfer by
Luxury Speedboat



Change is in the air

The change you can already feel



100+ upgraded cabins
across domestic and
on select SHI routes



3-Cabin
Configuration



1,200+ hrs of
entertainment



Hot Gourmet
Meals



5,000+ newly
trained cabin crew



5 million+ passengers
experiencing the
change every week

The change taking flight

- 600 of the 1100 weekly international flights now offer elevated cabin experience
- Full retrofit underway for existing Boeing 787 Dreamliners
- More new wide-body aircraft with world-class cabins joining by early 2026