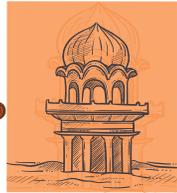


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March finds us at a familiar crossroads. As this ITB Special issue takes shape, the world continues to move through uncertainty, shaped by conflict, resilience, and quiet reflection. In moments like these, travel feels less about distance and more about understanding. It becomes a way to listen, observe, and stay connected to a world that is constantly changing.

This issue comes together at a moment when the global travel community gathers, reflects, and resets. As conversations unfold at ITB we too pause to consider what travel represents today. Connection over consumption. Understanding over urgency.

Our cover story on Relic & Ruins Tourism sets the tone for this issue, exploring why travellers are increasingly drawn to places shaped by time, memory, and survival. We then turn our focus to SATTE, reflecting on a dynamic start to the year and a season of continuous engagement for the industry.

Luxury and leadership also take center stage through our conversations with Capella Kyoto, and The Lux Collective, where we explore evolving hospitality visions and future-forward strategies. Alongside these, the issue brings together a curated selection of stories designed to inspire, inform, and offer perspective.

As the year unfolds with back-to-back shows and global conversations, we continue to shift gears each month to bring the best of the world to our readers. Because travel, much like life, moves forward quietly, resiliently, and with purpose.

Stay curious. Stay connected. And as always, keep growing with Travel Turtle.

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

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THE RED SEA



DESERT ROCK RESORT,
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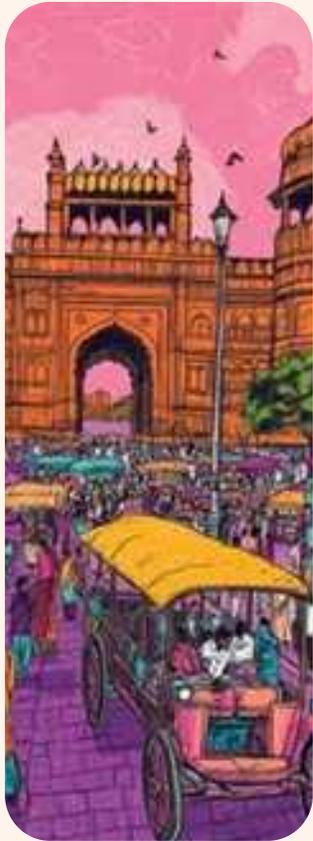
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Tourism Western Australia unveils second iteration of 'Walking On A Dream' global campaign

The renewed campaign captures Western Australia as a place where vast deserts glow beneath endless skies, coral reefs shimmer in turquoise seas, and ancient landscapes tell stories stretching back millennia.



Nirmala Sitharaman presents Union Budget 2026 in Parliament

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2026–27 in Parliament, marking her ninth consecutive Budget. Setting the tone for the year ahead, the Finance Minister stated that the “reform express is on its way”, signalling the government’s continued focus on structural reforms, inclusive development and long-term economic resilience.



Asego reinforces pilgrim protection

As the Char Dham Yatra commences this April, with registrations surging into lakhs each season, ensuring traveller safety across the Himalayan corridor, Asego has strengthened its support for pilgrims through Pilgrim Protect, a travel assistance and insurance product designed specifically for high-risk pilgrimage routes.

IATO announces 'Namaste India' showcase in Europe following ITB Berlin

The Indian Association of Tour Operators announces a Three city roadshow titled 'Namaste India', scheduled after ITB Berlin. The roadshow will be hosted across three key European cities: Frankfurt, Paris, and Amsterdam. The initiative aims to further strengthen inbound tourism to India by engaging directly with European tour operators and travel partners.



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One Rep Global appointed official sales and PR representative for Airelles Collection in India

This strategic partnership reinforces One Rep Global's position as a trusted partner for ultra-luxury brands seeking structured commercial growth and long-term market development in India. Under this mandate, One Rep Global will drive focused sales representation, trade engagement, and targeted marketing and PR initiatives to accelerate Airelles' footprint within India's high-value luxury travel segment.



IRIS Repts announces strategic tie-up with Hong Kong DMC – UR Travel Limited

IRIS Repts announces its strategic partnership with Hong Kong-based DMC, UR Travel Limited, marking a significant expansion of its outbound portfolio for the Indian travel trade. Having represented Hong Kong in the Indian market for over a decade through leading hospitality brands, IRIS Repts will now offer end-to-end destination packages, strengthening its ability to service trade partners with complete land arrangements, experiences, and itineraries.



Air India signs MoU with Lufthansa Group to strengthen India–Europe connectivity

Air India signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Lufthansa Group to enhance air connectivity between India and Europe through expanded cooperation and coordinated network planning. The agreement extends beyond Air India to include its subsidiary Air India Express, as well as Lufthansa Group carriers including Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, ITA Airways and Swiss International Air Lines.

Cosmic Group acquires 20% stake in One Above to accelerate global expansion

Cosmic Group has acquired a strategic minority stake in One Above, marking a significant milestone in One Above's journey to build a globally integrated travel platform. Under the transaction, Cosmic Group will hold a 20% equity stake in the company. This investment brings together Cosmic Group's expertise across real estate, hospitality, and travel with One Above's fast-growing destination management and B2B travel infrastructure capabilities.



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TBO Tek Ltd posts strong Q3 FY26 results with 86% revenue growth

TBO Tek Ltd posts a solid Q3 FY26 performance driven by broad-based growth and integration of Classic Vacations – Revenue up 86% YoY and Adj. EBITDA (before M&A Costs) at 115 Crores, up 53% YoY. The quarter saw a broad based growth across Europe, APAC, MEA and India.



Rixos Murjana officially opens as Saudi Arabia's largest ultra all-inclusive destination

Rixos Murjana officially opened in King Abdullah Economic City, enabled by the Tourism Development Fund (TDF) -the national enabler of Saudi Arabia's tourism sector- the project's financier and investor, in partnership with Emaar Economic City -the master developer of King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC)- as an investor in the project, and FTG company the project's developer.

Air India opens first Maharaja Lounge at Indira Gandhi International Airport Terminal 3

Air India opens the doors of its first flagship Maharaja Lounge at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport Terminal 3, warmly welcoming guests to experience a blend of authentic Indian hospitality and contemporary luxury. N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons and Air India, inaugurated the lounge ahead of its opening, marking a defining moment in the airline's ongoing transformation journey.



Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts introduces UPI payments in Sri Lanka

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts introduces UPI payments across its portfolio in Sri Lanka and Maldives, allowing Indian travellers to pay using their existing UPI apps while travelling in these destination. The move is aimed at reducing friction for Indian guests by eliminating the need for currency exchange, cash handling or international card usage, and aligns with the chain's broader focus on guest centric travel design.



Rail Europe expands global distribution of European rail through a new integration with Juniper

Rail Europe has strengthened its international distribution strategy with the integration of its European rail offering into Juniper Travel Technology's platform, enabling travel agencies and online travel agencies (OTAs) to sell rail products seamlessly within their existing booking flows.

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LIVE WIRE

Relic & Ruins tourism

Travelling through what time could not save

Broken cities. Silent temples. Fallen empires. Why millions are choosing collapse over comfort. And what ruins reveal about the future we are building.

- Bharti Sharma

The Allure of What Refuses to Disappear

There is a silence that only ruins possess. It is not emptiness, but memory. Memory pressed into stone, cracked walls, and weathered steps where entire lives once unfolded.

Across the world, travelers are turning away from polished skylines and predictable itineraries. Instead, they stand inside abandoned cities, walk through half-buried temples, and trace the outlines of civilizations that once believed themselves eternal. Relic and ruins

tourism is no longer niche. It is a quiet movement driven by reflection, curiosity, and the need for perspective.

In an age obsessed with what is next, ruins offer something radical. They ask us to pause.

Not Just Old Stones and Stories

Relic and ruins tourism refers to travel centered around ancient remains, archaeological sites, abandoned settlements, and historical structures that exist in partial decay. These are places shaped by time, conflict, natural disaster, or neglect, where absence is as meaningful as presence.

Unlike conventional heritage tourism, which often celebrates preservation and restoration, ruins tourism embraces incompleteness. The erosion is part of the narrative. The missing pieces matter as much as what survives.

This form of travel spans continents and centuries, from prehistoric settlements to early industrial remains, drawing visitors who seek understanding rather than entertainment.

Why We Stare at the Past Like It Knows Something

Ruins hold a mirror to modern life. They remind us that power fades, resources run out, and progress is fragile.

Psychologists often describe ruins as emotionally grounding. Standing before them strips away the illusion of permanence. For many travelers, especially younger generations, ruins offer something rare in modern tourism. Perspective without performance.

Social media has amplified their visibility, but it has not created the fascination. Humans have always been drawn to remnants of earlier worlds. Today, the images travel faster, but the

emotional pull remains timeless.

Postcards from a Fallen World

Some ruins have become global symbols, defining how we understand ancient civilization.

High in the Andes, Machu Picchu reveals the engineering brilliance and environmental sensitivity of the Inca civilization.

In Italy, Pompeii offers an intimate snapshot of daily Roman life, preserved by catastrophe rather than care.

Angkor Wat stands as a spiritual and architectural marvel, slowly reclaimed by jungle and climate.

Carved directly into rose-colored rock, Petra reflects trade, resilience, and adaptation in one of the harshest environments on Earth.

In Mexico, Chichén Itzá reveals advanced astronomical knowledge and ritual complexity centuries ahead of its time.

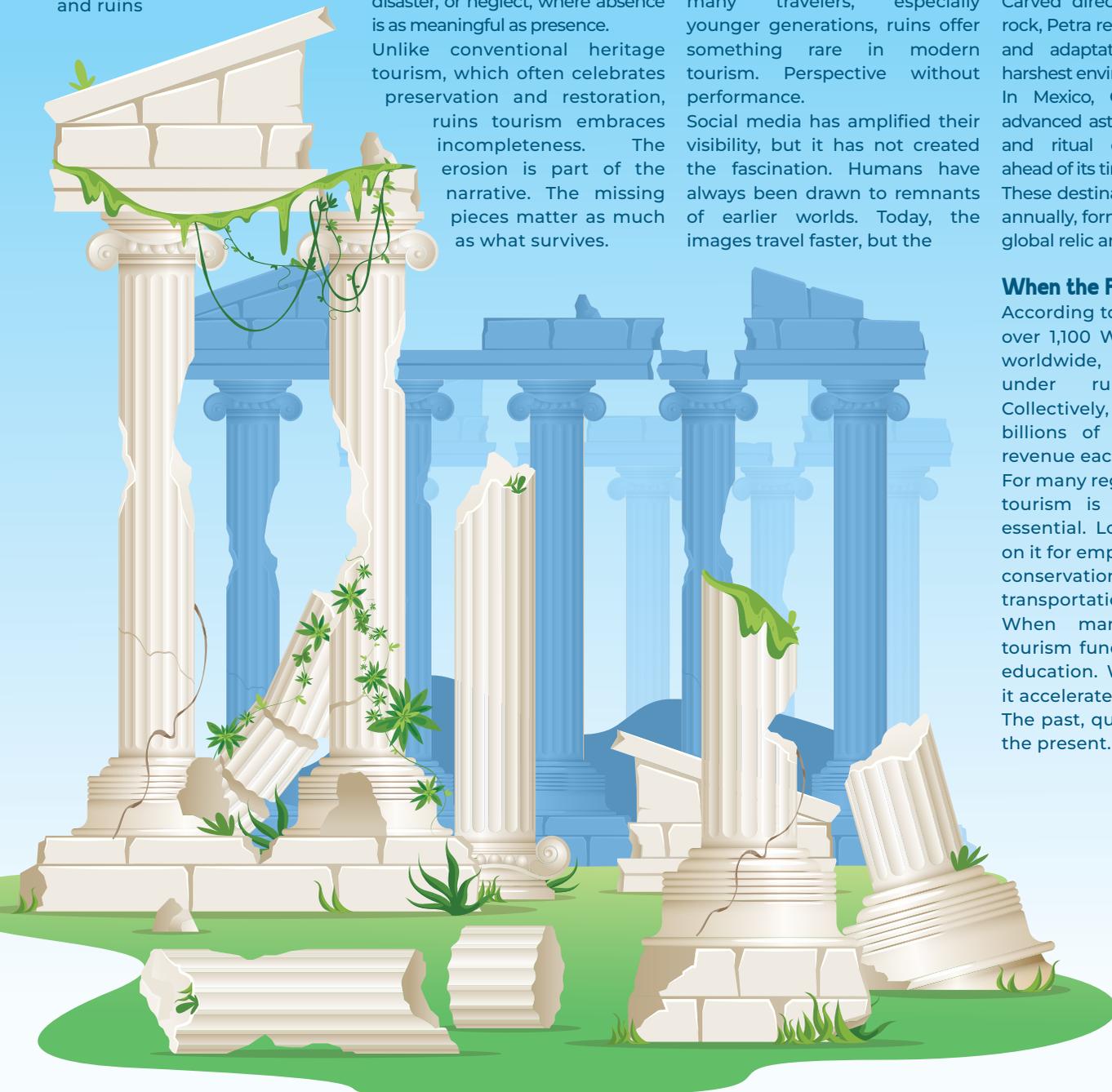
These destinations attract millions annually, forming the backbone of global relic and ruins tourism.

When the Past Pays the Bills

According to UNESCO, there are over 1,100 World Heritage Sites worldwide, many of which fall under ruins and relics. Collectively, these sites generate billions of dollars in tourism revenue each year.

For many regions, relic and ruins tourism is not optional. It is essential. Local economies rely on it for employment in guiding, conservation, hospitality, transportation, and research. When managed responsibly, tourism funds preservation and education. When mismanaged, it accelerates destruction.

The past, quite literally, sustains the present.





Loving Ruins to Death

Popularity comes at a cost. Foot traffic erodes ancient stone. Breath alters microclimates inside tombs. Flash photography fades centuries-old pigments. Climate change intensifies erosion, flooding, and desertification, threatening sites that have survived for millennia.

As visitor numbers grow, conservationists face difficult questions. Should access be limited? Should ruins be restored or left untouched? How much intervention destroys authenticity? Many sites now use timed entry systems, capped daily visitors, and restricted zones. These measures are not about exclusivity. They are about survival.

How to Sell Silence, Stone, and Centuries

Modern relic and ruins tourism is no longer limited to wandering with a guidebook.

Today's experiences include:

- Archaeologist-led site walks

- Conservation and excavation workshops

- Night tours with controlled lighting

- Augmented reality reconstruction

- Educational travel packages

- linked to museums and universities

Luxury travel has also entered the space, offering slow travel itineraries focused on depth, context, and learning rather than speed.

Ruins are no longer passive destinations. They are curated experiences.

Can the Future Save the Past?

Technology is reshaping how ruins are explored and protected. Virtual reality allows visitors to experience fragile or inaccessible sites without physical impact. Three-dimensional mapping preserves structures digitally before they are lost. Artificial intelligence is reconstructing

missing sections of cities without altering the original remains.

Sustainability will define the future of this sector. Success will no longer be measured by visitor numbers, but by longevity.

As climate instability grows, ruins will also serve as historical climate records, offering lessons in adaptation and collapse that modern societies cannot afford to ignore.

Stone Cold Facts

RUINS BY THE NUMBERS

- Over half of known ancient sites remain undiscovered or unexcavated
- Tourism funds conservation for nearly 70 percent of major archaeological sites globally
- Some ancient structures have survived longer than modern concrete buildings are projected to last
- Climate change is now considered the single greatest threat to ruins worldwide

What the Ruins Leave Us With

Ruins do not offer comfort. They offer clarity.

They remind us that progress is fragile, that power fades, and that beauty often survives in fragments. In standing among ruins, we do not mourn the past. We listen to it.

Relic and ruins tourism endures because it answers a question modern life keeps asking. What remains when everything else falls away?

For travelers seeking meaning rather than movement, the answer lies not ahead, but beneath our feet.



Spiritual Triangle of Uttar Pradesh

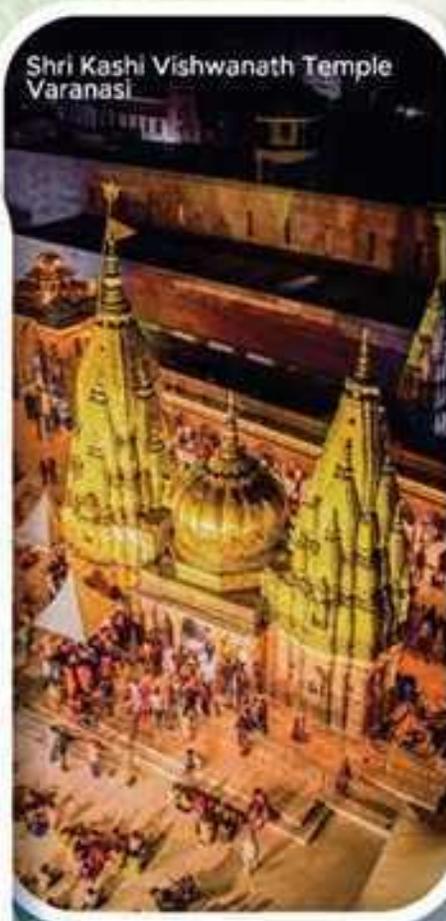
Where Faith Flows with Devotion

Ayodhya~Kashi~Prayagraj

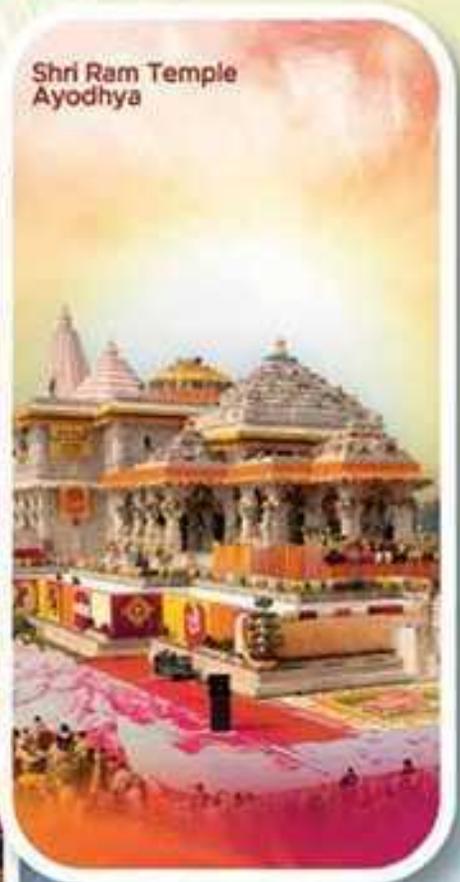
Triveni Sangam
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Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple
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Ayodhya



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Uttar Pradesh brings together Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Ram, the hero of the epic Ramayana; Varanasi, one of the world's oldest living cities; and Prayagraj, home to the revered Triveni Sangam, the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati.

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Sacred footprints & wild frontiers



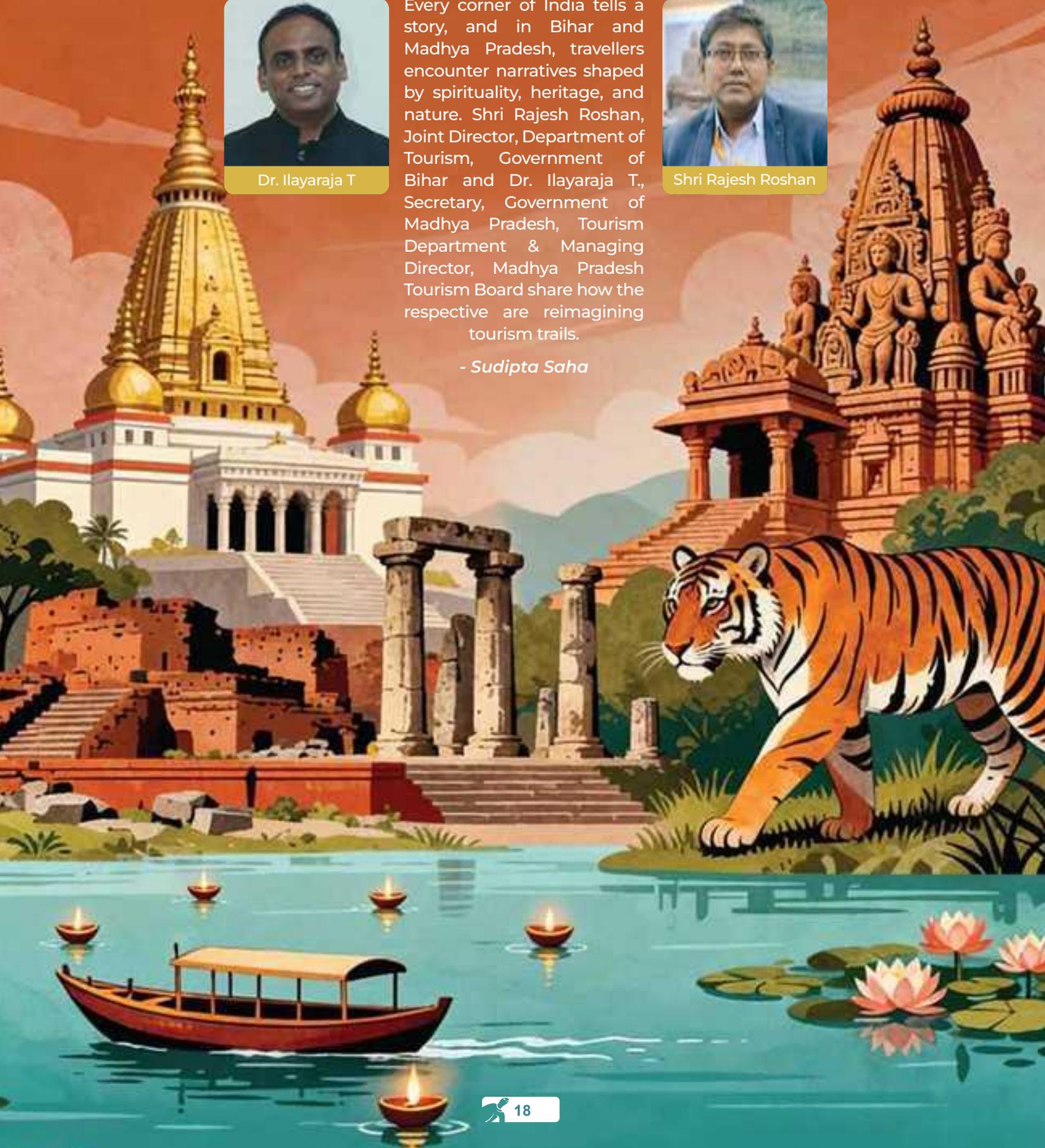
Dr. Ilayaraja T

Every corner of India tells a story, and in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, travellers encounter narratives shaped by spirituality, heritage, and nature. Shri Rajesh Roshan, Joint Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Bihar and Dr. Ilayaraja T., Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Tourism Department & Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board share how the respective are reimagining tourism trails.



Shri Rajesh Roshan

- Sudipta Saha



India's travel landscape continues to expand through destinations that blend heritage, spirituality, nature, and immersive cultural experiences. Among the states shaping this evolving narrative, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh stand as remarkable examples of diversity and depth. Each destination carries a distinctive story rooted in history, faith, and natural splendour. Pilgrims, culture enthusiasts, wildlife explorers, and curious travellers discover experiences that resonate with India's timeless identity. Tourism initiatives across these two states highlight a commitment to preserving heritage while enhancing visitor experiences through improved infrastructure, curated circuits, and storytelling-led travel. Sacred landscapes in Bihar connect travellers with centuries of spiritual legacy. Vast forests, wildlife reserves, and heritage towns across Madhya Pradesh reveal the vibrant soul of central India.

Bihar: Where spiritual journeys begin

Sacred geography defines the tourism narrative of Bihar. The state carries immense significance for global spiritual travellers who seek meaningful journeys rooted in history and faith. Destinations such as Mahabodhi Temple, Nalanda Mahavihara, and Rajgir create an extraordinary spiritual circuit that draws visitors from across continents.

Shri Rajesh Roshan emphasises the depth of Bihar's spiritual identity and the experiences awaiting travellers. Speaking on the same lines he shares, "Bihar represents one of the most profound spiritual landscapes in

the world. The land carries the legacy of Lord Buddha's enlightenment at Mahabodhi Temple and the remarkable learning traditions of Nalanda Mahavihara. Visitors who arrive here experience a sense of history, philosophy, and cultural continuity that remains deeply inspiring. The state tourism department is committed to presenting these experiences through improved infrastructure, better connectivity, and curated tourism circuits that allow travellers to explore Bihar in a more meaningful way."

Cultural heritage, spiritual pilgrimages, and historical narratives create an atmosphere where travellers feel connected to the origins of ancient civilisations. Historic sites across the state bring to life the intellectual traditions that once attracted scholars from across Asia. Shri Rajesh Roshan further shares how the state is evolving its tourism approach to welcome modern travellers. He adds, "Our vision focuses on creating a seamless and enriching experience for visitors. Infrastructure development, improved accessibility, and enhanced visitor facilities play an important role in shaping tourism growth in Bihar. Travellers today seek deeper engagement with culture and spirituality. Bihar offers exactly that through its monasteries, heritage towns, festivals, and traditional communities. Each journey here becomes a discovery of India's philosophical and cultural foundations."

Madhya Pradesh: The heartbeat of wilderness

Wildlife, heritage architecture, and natural landscapes define the

travel experiences of Madhya Pradesh. Vast forests stretch across the state, creating extraordinary wildlife habitats that attract nature enthusiasts from across the world. Parks such as Bandhavgarh National Park, Kanha National Park, and Satpura National Park offer immersive safari experiences where travellers witness the rich biodiversity of central India.

Dr. Ilyaraja T. describes the state's tourism vision as one centred on experiences that celebrate nature and culture. He shares, "Madhya Pradesh truly reflects the spirit of India's natural and cultural diversity. Our wildlife parks such as Kanha National Park and Bandhavgarh National Park continue to attract travellers seeking extraordinary encounters with nature. The state offers an immersive experience where visitors explore dense forests, encounter incredible wildlife, and engage with vibrant local communities. Our tourism initiatives focus on enhancing infrastructure, promoting sustainable travel, and creating new experiences that allow visitors to connect with the destination in a meaningful way."

Nature tourism across Madhya Pradesh continues to evolve through guided wildlife experiences, eco-tourism initiatives, and heritage explorations. Historic towns and cultural landmarks enrich the journey beyond the forests, offering travellers an engaging mix of adventure and discovery.

Dr. Ilyaraja T. further highlights the importance of developing holistic tourism experiences and says, "Our approach focuses on showcasing the diverse experiences available across the

state. Wildlife tourism remains a major highlight, and destinations such as Satpura National Park provide exceptional opportunities for safaris, nature trails, and conservation-focused travel. Travellers also discover remarkable heritage sites including Khajuraho Group of Monuments and vibrant cultural towns that reflect India's artistic traditions. Tourism in Madhya Pradesh continues to grow through innovation, sustainability, and thoughtful destination development."

Journeys that tell India's story

Together, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh represent two powerful dimensions of India's tourism landscape. Bihar offers a profound spiritual journey rooted in philosophy, enlightenment, and ancient knowledge. Madhya Pradesh invites travellers into a world of wilderness, heritage architecture, and immersive cultural exploration.

Travellers who explore these states discover more than destinations. They encounter living traditions, timeless landscapes, and stories that continue to shape India's identity. Tourism initiatives led by dedicated leaders and departments ensure that these experiences remain accessible, meaningful, and memorable for visitors from around the world.

Each journey through Bihar and Madhya Pradesh reveals a deeper understanding of India's cultural soul and natural splendour. Together they create a compelling invitation for travellers seeking authentic experiences that celebrate the essence of the country.



Sarawak



Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah

Where the rainforest still roars

Sarawak is a melting pot of culture. Thirty diverse ethnicities, cultures, ethnic backgrounds and religions, they're able to live peacefully, very peacefully. Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, Minister of Tourism, Creative Industry & Performing Arts, Sarawak shares how they want to share destination with the world.

- Rishi Arora

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

While Indian travellers scramble for European honeymoons and Southeast Asian beach resorts, Borneo sits quietly in the corner — unspoiled, underhyped, and unfairly overlooked. Sarawak, the Malaysian state occupying the northwestern portion of this ancient island, isn't trying to compete with Bali's Instagram feeds or Thailand's party beaches. It's playing an entirely different game: preservation over promotion, substance over spectacle.

Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah shares, "Sarawak is a beautiful state in the island of Borneo, very much unspoiled, and the government, as well as the people, are very passionate about making sure that our forests, our rivers, our heritage is being preserved. This isn't marketing spin—it's policy. Half of Sarawak's land remains protected, with six million hectares committed as permanent forest."

The wildlife spectacle Indians are missing

Forget the African safari and skip the Amazon. Sarawak offers something most destinations can only dream about:

130-million-year-old rainforests teeming with species you won't find anywhere else.

Start with the orangutans. At Semenggoh Wildlife Centre, just 30 minutes from Kuching, semi-wild orangutans swing through the canopy during feeding times. Locals don't see orangutans as animals but as highly intelligent beings. 'Orangutan' means 'orange people,' and they're revered as people of the forest with enormous respect and love. The complexities of their way of life will really leave you in awe. Seeing one up close is not something you can ever forget.

Then there's the *Rafflesia arnoldii* — the world's largest flower, blooming exclusively in Borneo and Sumatra. It smells like a dead corpse, which is why it's also known as the corpse flower. When you look at it, a flower is the last thing that comes to mind. But if you're lucky enough to see one blooming — massive, reaching up to a meter in diameter — you'll never forget it.

The rhinoceros hornbill, Sarawak's state bird, cuts through the forest with its distinctive call. Spot them in

Bako National Park or during jungle treks in Mulu. And if you're genuinely adventurous, Sarawak's rainforests harbour over 60 species of frogs, vipers, civets, and proboscis monkeys found nowhere else.

UNESCO recognition: Nature done right

Sarawak doesn't just talk conservation—it earns global recognition for it. Gunung Mulu National Park became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000, protecting primary rainforest and spectacular cave systems. Niah National Park earned UNESCO World Heritage status in 2024.

The Sarawak Delta Geopark is pursuing UNESCO Global Geopark designation for 2026, while Bako and Bukit Lambir National Parks have been nominated as ASEAN Heritage Parks.

Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah emphasises: "Innovation and sustainability will be the driving forces in positioning Sarawak as a top-tier destination not only in this region but also on an international level. The government isn't chasing tourist numbers at the expense of nature—it's building a model where both can coexist sustainably."



Culture as currency

Beyond wildlife, Sarawak offers authentic cultural diversity that hasn't been sanitized for tourists. Thirty different ethnic groups live peacefully across the state, each maintaining distinct traditions, languages, and lifestyles.

Kuching earned UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy status in 2019 for genuine culinary traditions born from multiracial, multicultural heritage. The food reflects centuries of cultural exchange: Malay, Chinese, Indian, indigenous Dayak, and more.

As Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah shares, "Modern travellers don't go becoming tourists to do shopping. They will bring back souvenirs, but what they want to see are cultures, what they want to see, our lifestyle, how people lead their life."

India: The market that matters

Sarawak is doubling down on India. Indian arrivals jumped from 26,000 pre-pandemic to 38,000 in 2025—a 46 per cent increase. With Malaysia offering visa-free access and direct connectivity improving, Sarawak sees India as a strategic priority for Visit Malaysia Year 2026.

The state welcomed 4.8 million visitors in 2024, surpassing its 4 million target. For 2026, the target is 5 million, with India as a key growth



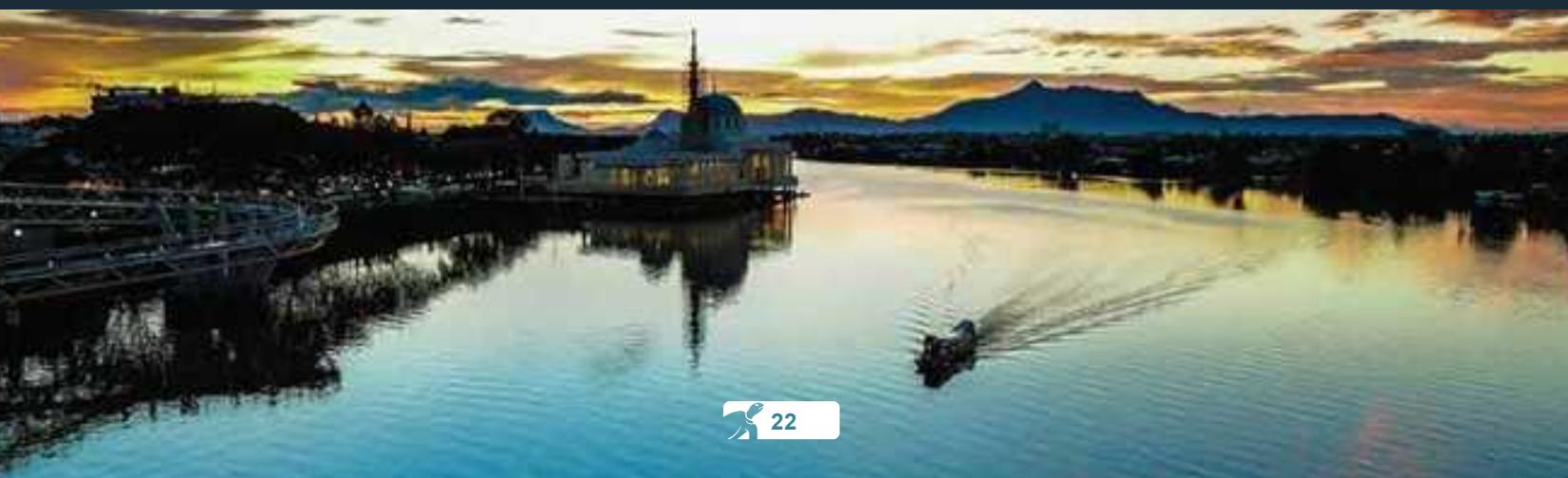
driver. Sarawak's promotional strategy focuses on CANFF — Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festivals.

Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah shares, "The collaboration between the government and industry stakeholders is crucial to ensure sustainable and impactful tourism development."

Go before everyone else does

Here's the uncomfortable truth: Sarawak won't stay undiscovered forever. China's arrivals doubled in 2024 thanks to visa-free access. Infrastructure is improving. Hotels are being built. The window for experiencing Sarawak while it's still offbeat is closing.

For Indian travellers seeking destinations that combine wildlife, culture, and conservation without the crowds, Sarawak offers a rare opportunity. The rainforests have stood for 130 million years. The orangutans still swing freely through the canopy. The Rafflesia still blooms unpredictably in hidden corners of the jungle. And for now, you can experience it all without fighting through Instagram influencers and tour group bottlenecks. Go before the secret's out. Because sooner or later, everyone else will figure out what Sarawak has been quietly protecting all along.



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SOPA 2015 LODGES

SAFARI, SOUL
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HOSPITALITY



Rosemary Muthoni

East Africa has long stirred the imagination of Indian travellers seeking landscapes that feel cinematic and experiences that feel personal. Rosemary Muthoni, Director of Sales, Sopa Lodges shares how they have created a niche travel segment from India for itself.

- Tripti Jain

Rolling savannahs, vast skies, and wildlife encounters that unfold in their purest form create journeys that linger in memory. Within this extraordinary setting, Sopa Lodges has carved a reputation for delivering immersive safari experiences anchored in comfort, cultural warmth, and operational excellence.

With a portfolio spanning Kenya and Tanzania, the brand presents a seamless blend of wilderness and refinement. From multi-generational leisure travel to MICE movements and destination weddings, Sopa Lodges offers Indian outbound travellers a canvas where adventure meets ease and authenticity meets thoughtful hospitality.

Where safari meets seamless comfort

Sopa Lodges' presence across iconic safari circuits allows Indian travellers to explore East Africa in a manner that feels both expansive and well-paced. Properties are strategically located within or along major national parks and reserves, enabling guests to maximise wildlife viewing without enduring long transfers between destinations.

Rosemary shares "Indian travellers appreciate journeys that are immersive yet comfortable, and our portfolio across Kenya and Tanzania has been thoughtfully aligned with this preference. Our lodges sit within prime safari circuits, allowing guests to experience diverse

landscapes, wildlife corridors, and cultural interactions in a way that feels fluid and enriching."

The design philosophy across the portfolio ensures that each lodge reflects its natural surroundings while maintaining consistent service standards. Expansive grounds, panoramic views, and generous public spaces encourage guests to engage with nature at an unhurried pace.

Culinary familiarity in the heart of the wild

For Indian travellers, cuisine plays a defining role in travel satisfaction. Sopa Lodges recognises this deeply and has invested in culinary offerings that resonate with diverse dietary preferences.

Rosemary says, "We understand how important food is for Indian guests. Our experienced Indian chefs ensure authentic cuisine is available across our lodges, including vegetarian and Jain requirements. Guests can savour local African flavours alongside familiar Indian dishes, creating a dining experience that feels both adventurous and reassuring."

This culinary adaptability strengthens Sopa Lodges' appeal for leisure groups, wedding celebrations, and corporate movements where varied preferences must be addressed with care and precision.

Iconic landscapes, distinctive experiences

Across Kenya and Tanzania, Sopa



Lodges anchors itself in destinations that define the safari narrative. The portfolio includes properties in the Maasai Mara National Reserve, Amboseli National Park, Samburu National Reserve, Lake Naivasha, Lake Nakuru National Park and Tarangire National Park.

Each destination offers a unique narrative. In the Maasai Mara, guests witness extraordinary wildlife spectacles including the Great Wildebeest Migration, a phenomenon recognised globally for its scale and drama.

"The Maasai Mara delivers one of nature's most powerful spectacles. Guests at our lodge enjoy exceptional access to wildlife viewing and an authentic Kenyan safari rhythm that resonates strongly with Indian travellers seeking once-in-a-lifetime moments," shares Rosemary.

In Amboseli, vast elephant herds move against the dramatic backdrop of Mount Kilimanjaro. She adds, "At Amboseli Sopa Lodge,

guests enjoy uninterrupted views of Kilimanjaro and remarkable elephant sightings. The Rocky Hill Restaurant inside the park elevates the experience by allowing guests to enjoy freshly prepared hot meals after game drives, adding comfort to adventure."

Samburu introduces an unexpected dimension with astro-tourism, featuring pristine dark skies and Kenya's only safari planetarium. "At Samburu Sopa Lodge, guests can transition from game drives to stargazing sessions under unpolluted skies. This blend of wildlife and astronomy creates a distinctive experience that feels both educational and magical."

Lake Naivasha offers a softer rhythm, with wildlife roaming freely across the resort grounds and experiences ranging from boat rides to aqua gastronomy. Lake Nakuru delights birdwatchers and conservation enthusiasts with frequent rhino sightings. In Tanzania, Tarangire captivates with its vast elephant populations and ancient baobab trees that lend the landscape a timeless presence.

"Tarangire feels like stepping into a living wilderness museum. Guests often wake up to majestic elephant herds visible right from their rooms, surrounded by baobab trees that have stood for thousands of years," she shares.



Designed for celebrations

Sopa Lodges extends far beyond leisure safaris. With expansive lawns, banquet facilities, and flexible indoor-outdoor venues, the brand caters confidently to MICE groups, incentive travel, and destination weddings.

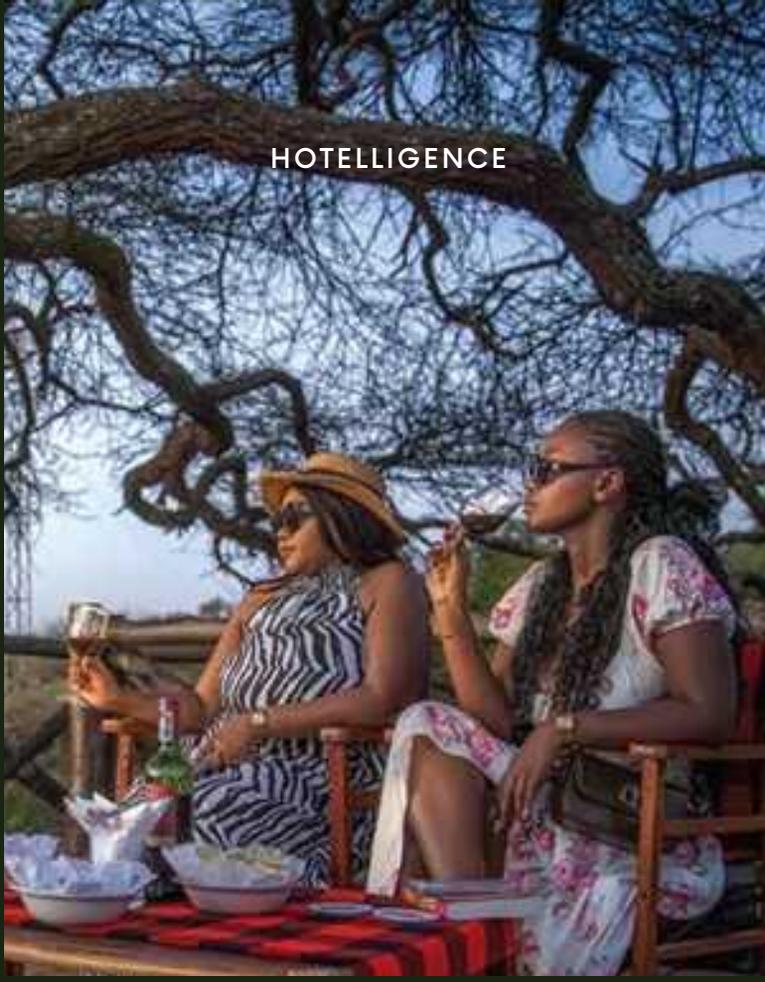
Rosemary explains, "Our infrastructure allows us to manage large movements with ease. From corporate offsites to gala dinners and social celebrations, our teams are experienced in orchestrating events that unfold smoothly against extraordinary natural backdrops." Open landscapes and panoramic settings create dramatic stages for Indian weddings seeking something distinctive. Multi-generational families find comfort in the generous inventory and well-planned public areas that allow for shared experiences alongside private moments.

A culture of consistency

Operational reliability forms the backbone of Sopa Lodges' reputation. Strong systems, continuous training, and a service culture nurtured over decades ensure uniform standards across destinations. "Consistency is rooted in our people. Many of our team members grow within the organisation, which strengthens continuity in service values and guest engagement. Guests experience the same warmth and professionalism whether they are in Kenya or Tanzania," shares Rosemary.

Seamless multi-property itineraries

Sopa Lodges has structured its portfolio to support multi-property itineraries that are commercially compelling and operationally efficient. "Our lodges are positioned along well-connected safari circuits, making it easy for tour operators to combine two or more properties within a single journey. This approach allows guests to experience varied landscapes while maintaining consistency in comfort and service," explains Rosemary.



Multi-property bookings also unlock preferential pricing and value advantages, encouraging longer stays and deeper exploration. "Operators benefit from enhanced itinerary depth and improved margins, and guests receive a cohesive East African narrative that feels curated and immersive," she adds.

Deepening ties with the Indian Travel Trade

India remains a priority growth market for Sopa Lodges, supported by structured engagement with the B2B trade. Rosemary emphasises, "India represents immense potential for wildlife-led and experiential travel. We are working closely with our sales and marketing representatives to strengthen product understanding, conduct educational initiatives, and build long-term relationships with tour operators." Participation in key trade platforms and outreach into Tier II cities form part of a strategy designed to expand awareness beyond metro markets. She says, "Our focus is on building confidence in selling East Africa. Through familiarisation trips, trade interactions, and consistent engagement, we aim to position Sopa Lodges as a trusted partner delivering value and authentic safari experiences."

A safari story that endures

Sopa Lodges stands as a reflection of East Africa's grandeur shaped by thoughtful hospitality and operational depth. The portfolio invites Indian travellers to embrace landscapes that feel cinematic, wildlife encounters that feel intimate, and celebrations that feel unforgettable. In the evolving landscape of outbound travel, Sopa Lodges continues to craft safari stories that resonate deeply, inviting Indian travellers to discover Africa through a lens of trust, elegance, and enduring hospitality.

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Namibia Meets India

A land where endless ochre deserts meet dramatic Atlantic coastlines, Namibia invites travellers into a world of raw wilderness, ancient cultures, and soul-stirring silence. Sebulon Chicalu, Chief Executive Officer, Namibia Tourism Board shares thoughts on luxury demand, long stays, and why Indian travellers are ready for Africa's most diverse destination.

- *Naina Nath*



Sebulon Chicalu

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Making his first visit to India, Sebulon Chicalu arrives in Mumbai marking Namibia's formal push into one of the world's fastest-growing outbound travel markets. The visit signals the start of a structured and sustained engagement with India. He shares, "This is our first activation in India, and we want to be strong and consistent in this market. City - to - city roadshows are also under consideration to deepen awareness and trade engagement."

Early market signals

Although India currently contributes fewer than 1,000 arrivals annually, interest from the market exceeds expectations. According to Sebulon, enquiries are coming primarily from luxury travellers and those seeking destinations that feel new, exclusive, and experience - driven. He says, "India has surprised us, in a good way. The interest we are seeing is from travellers who want high - quality experiences and are looking beyond the usual destinations." Namibia's traditional source markets remain Germany, South Africa, the UK, Belgium, and Italy, while arrivals from China continue

to grow steadily. India, however, is now positioned as a long-term growth market rather than a short-term volume play.

A new market awakens

With focused marketing now underway, the Namibia Tourism Board aims to increase Indian arrivals to around 5,000 a year over the next few years. While Sebulon acknowledges this is ambitious for a new market, he believes steady education and sustained trade engagement will deliver results. He explains, "We are not overstretching ourselves. Even if

the growth is gradual, anything above current numbers is progress. In two years, we expect India to show strong potential."

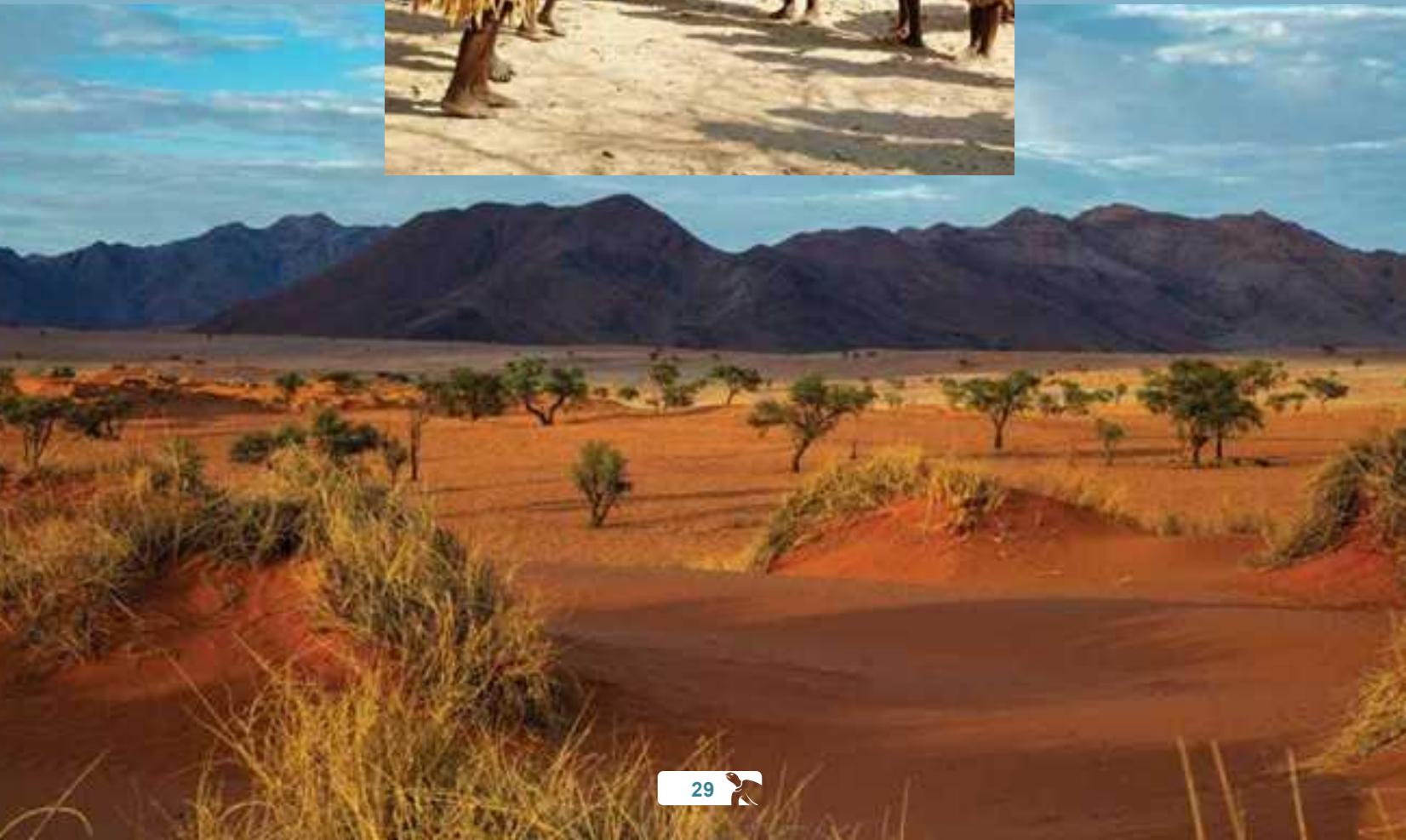
Central to this approach is trade education. Destination training through webinars has already begun, even ahead of Namibia's physical presence at exhibitions, and will continue throughout the year. "We need to capacitate travel agents with the right information," Sebulon says, adding that once agents understand the destination well, selling Namibia becomes significantly easier. These efforts are being supported by closer

collaboration with local representatives and PR partners to build long-term visibility in the Indian market.

Landscapes like nowhere else

For Indian travellers unfamiliar with Namibia, Sebulon describes it as a destination shaped by dramatic landscapes and diversity. Namibia's appeal stretches from the Namib and Kalahari deserts to coastal towns like Swakopmund, each offering a distinct travel experience. Key highlights include towering sand dunes that form part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, rich wildlife across savannahs and wetlands, living museums that showcase indigenous cultures, and strong appeal for photography and adventure tourism.

The destination also offers activities such as hot air ballooning, skydiving, desert safaris, and boat cruises. Namibia is also home to the Fish River Canyon, the second - largest canyon in the world, ancient rock engravings at Twyfelfontein, and the Hoba Meteorite, one of the largest known meteorites on Earth.





Shift in travel seasons

Post-pandemic travel patterns are working in Namibia's favour, with the traditional high season extending from July through November and the shoulder months of May and June gaining importance. These months align well with Indian travel preferences, helping the destination balance demand while extending its season. Sebulon shares "This helps us manage flows better and spread demand more evenly. Indian travel patterns fit very well into our calendar."

Namibia's scale also encourages longer stays, making travel during these periods more rewarding. The destination caters to a wide range of budgets, from guesthouses and pension hotels to high-end luxury lodges, and is best experienced over time. He adds, "The average length of stay is around 14 days. Shorter trips are possible, but Namibia rewards travellers who spend more time exploring." Luxury itineraries typically span 10 days and are often fully inclusive, with pricing starting at approximately USD 15,000 depending on the chosen accommodation and experiences.

Getting there

Connectivity is another advantage. Ethiopian Airlines operates daily flights from Mumbai and Delhi via



Addis Ababa to Windhoek, with plans to increase frequency. Namibia is also easily accessible via South Africa, with regular regional connections. Visa access is equally straightforward. Indian travellers can apply for an e-visa or opt for a visa on arrival, with flexible durations that typically range from 14 to 21 days for tourism. Sebulon shares, "Our focus is on making the journey seamless. We work closely with immigration authorities to ensure a smooth experience for visitors."

Why Choose Namibia?

Closing with a message to the Indian travel trade, Sebulon positions Namibia as a destination for discerning travellers who value privacy, safety, and quality. He says, "Namibia offers freedom, space, and variety. It is safe, well-developed, and not affected by over-tourism. For travellers who want to experience Africa in a refined and meaningful way, Namibia belongs on that bucket list."

He confirms that Namibia offers the Big Five and is safe for solo women, factors that are increasingly important for Indian travellers. As India looks beyond familiar destinations, Namibia appears ready to meet that curiosity with confidence, clarity, and a long-term vision.

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INTERCONTINENTAL MALDIVES MAAMUNAGAU RESORT

Where time softens

At InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort, sunsets are sabred, manta rays glide beneath you, and time loosens its grip.

- Misbah Mansuri



HEADS IN BEDS



There are places in the Maldives that overwhelm you with spectacle. And then there are places like InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort, where the spectacle exists, but it unfolds gently. Where the lagoon glows almost impossibly blue, the sand feels powdered, and yet nothing feels staged. The island does not shout. It exhales.

A thirty-five minute seaplane ride from Velana International Airport, the approach itself is cinematic. From above, Raa Atoll looks like an artist dropped shards of turquoise glass into deep cobalt waters. As we descended, I caught sight of Maamunagau's private lagoon, impossibly clear, curving around the island like a protective embrace. We were greeted not with theatrics, but with warmth. A soft welcome. A cool towel. And then Sherif.

Our Island Curator, Sherif, was the quiet anchor of our stay. Efficient without rigidity, present without intrusion. The kind of hospitality professional who reads the rhythm of a guest intuitively. By the second hour, it felt less like service and more like someone guiding us through his island home.

An Island of Intent

InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort is IHG's first and only all-Club InterContinental property. That

detail matters. Because it changes the pace of everything. Club privileges are not an add-on here. They are the foundation. Breakfast from sunrise until late morning. Afternoon tea beside the pool. Aperitif hours that blur seamlessly into sunset. There is a generosity to the structure of the day that removes friction entirely. No calculating inclusions. No mental tallying. Just flow.

The island itself feels intimate, almost secretive. Eighty-one villas in total, scattered between beach, lagoon, and overwater sanctuaries. We were staying in an overwater villa, hovering above glassy shallows where reef fish darted in flashes of silver and electric blue.

Each morning, I would wake before Aadil and step onto the deck. The ocean was always first. No sound but water brushing gently against the stilts below. No movement but sunlight sliding slowly across the horizon. Time does not stop here, but it stretches.

Welcome, Thoughtfully Done

In our villa, a welcome display awaited us. A chilled bottle of champagne resting in an ice bucket. Two tall flutes catching the light. Beside it, two elegant wooden boxes of delicately crafted petits fours and chocolates, arranged with almost architectural precision. Bright citrus fruits in a carved wooden

bowl added a pop of colour against the muted interiors.

It was understated but intentional. No overindulgence. Just enough to signal: you are meant to be here. We poured the champagne slowly, the first sip tasting of salt air and anticipation.

Days Designed Around the Sea

Friday unfolded as a gentle introduction. Lunch at Café Umi was light and sun-soaked. Fresh salads, clean flavours, and coconut water that tasted as though it had been opened moments earlier. The setting, framed by the lagoon, made even a simple lunch feel restorative.

Afternoon tea at The Retreat followed. Served poolside, it was indulgent without heaviness. Delicate pastries, savoury bites, teas poured with ceremony. The Retreat itself is an adults-only enclave, and there is a noticeable shift in atmosphere there. Quieter. More contemplative. But sunset is where the island transforms.

At Sunset Bar, hosted that evening by Fathmath Sheena from the marketing team, the sky began its slow theatre. Hues of apricot and rose folding into deep violet. The ritual of champagne sabering began just as the sun hovered low. The blade met glass with a sharp, decisive crack. A clean break. Applause from guests. And then flutes refilled beneath a sky dissolving into fire. It felt

celebratory, yes. But also symbolic. A pause to honour the day's end.

The Lighthouse

Dinner that evening at The Lighthouse was panoramic in every sense. Perched high above the island, the 360 degree view of the Indian Ocean is almost dizzying in its vastness. You feel suspended between sea and sky.

The cuisine here leans Mediterranean, but grounded in the freshness of Maldivian seafood. Each plate was vibrant, layered, confident. Nothing fussy. Just well-executed flavours allowed to speak clearly.

Manta Magic

Saturday morning brought breakfast at Café Umi. Generous without chaos. Tropical fruits cut with care. Asian selections that felt authentic rather than token. Eggs cooked exactly as requested. Coffee strong enough to cut through the softness of island air. Then, the Manta excursion.

There are moments in travel that recalibrate you. Sliding into open water and suddenly finding yourself suspended beside manta rays is one of them. Their scale is humbling. Their movement impossibly graceful. One swam close enough that I could see the delicate rhythm of its fins slicing through water. You may see one, the team had said. Or hundreds. We saw several. And it felt like a private audience.



HEADS IN BEDS

Teppanyaki, Elevated

That evening, something entirely different awaited us. A curated teppanyaki experience crafted by Filipino Chef Joelle. The menu read like a study in precision: Tajima Wagyu Beef Gyoza with truffle teriyaki sauce. Sri Lankan freshwater scampi dressed with furikake and ponzu. Galician octopus balanced by Kaeshi soya and grated radish. Local Maldivian lobster paired with sweet potato and yuzu truffle dressing. Japanese A5 Kagoshima beef served with asparagus, crispy garlic, and cognac teriyaki.

But menus only tell part of the story. Chef Joelle approached the grill with quiet confidence. No unnecessary theatrics. Just clean, deliberate movements. The Wagyu gyoza arrived first, crisp at the edges, yielding to a deeply savoury interior lifted by the sweetness of truffle. The lobster was sweet and tender, elevated by citrus brightness. The Kagoshima beef was the crescendo. Perfectly seared, marbled fat melting almost instantly on contact with warmth. Teppanyaki can sometimes lean into performance. Here, it felt curated. Intimate. A conversation between fire and finesse. Paired with sake, the meal unfolded slowly. Measured. Intentional.

Dolphins at Dusk

Later, aboard a boat drifting into open waters, dolphins appeared as if summoned by the fading light. They leapt alongside us, spinning effortlessly against a peach-streaked sky. For a moment, everyone on board fell silent. The Maldives has a way of layering experiences so that each day feels improbably full, yet never rushed.



Wellness, Redefined

Sunday began with sunrise yoga at the pavilion. A soft wind. The ocean exhaling beneath us. Movements slow and grounding. At AVI Spa, our sixty-minute treatments felt immersive. Oils warm against sun-kissed skin. Hands skilled and intuitive. The treatment room overlooked greenery that filtered sunlight into soft, moving shadows. With Club InterContinental benefits offering twenty percent off spa experiences, there is encouragement to lean into wellness rather than treat it as indulgence. And we did.

Fish Market

Dinner at The Fish Market that evening celebrated sea-to-table philosophy. Fresh Maldivian seafood paired with aromatic Southeast Asian flavours. The open kitchen allowed glimpses of flame, steam, and swift hands plating with care. It felt interactive but not intrusive. A reminder that the island's greatest asset is the water that surrounds it.

The Luxury of Flow

Perhaps what distinguishes InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau most is the absence of friction. Everything flows. The all-Club concept removes decision fatigue. The staff anticipate quietly. Sherif would check in with a message just as we were thinking of asking a question. The island never feels crowded. It feels curated.

By Monday morning, breakfast at Café Umi felt like a ritual we had known for weeks rather than days. The thought of departure hovered quietly in the background. As the seaplane lifted us away, the lagoon shimmered below. The island shrinking slowly into turquoise. There is something life-affirming about this place. Not because it dazzles, though it does. But because it restores. Where time softens. And beautiful stories unfold.





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Tourism in Motion

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has championed Indian tourism for over thirty years, shaping it into a coordinated, future-ready sector that aligns policy, private enterprise, and global ambition.

The National Tourism Committee operates through ten focused verticals covering Hotels, Travel & Technology, Ayurveda & Wellness, Domestic Tourism, Inbound Tourism, Outbound Tourism, MICE & Business Travel, Sustainable Tourism, Wedding Tourism, and Sports Tourism. This structure ensures every tourism segment receives strategic attention and expert guidance. The approach creates a 360-degree framework where policy advocacy, industry dialogue, and market expansion move in sync.

Marketplace at scale

The Great Indian Travel Bazaar has emerged as India's most powerful inbound tourism platform. Hosted annually in Jaipur since 2008, the event pioneered the structured B2B travel mart concept in the country. Fourteen editions have welcomed nearly 3,000 foreign tour operators from 99 countries, establishing it as a globally recognised marketplace.

Each edition facilitates more than 11,000 pre-scheduled B2B meetings within two focused business days. Around 280 international buyers connect with approximately 290 Indian sellers, generating measurable commercial outcomes. Curated familiarisation trips after the event offer buyers firsthand experiences of India's destinations, strengthening conversion potential.

The 15th edition, scheduled for April 26–28, 2026 in Jaipur, is set to further amplify inbound opportunities.

Strategic alignment with initiatives such as G20 Tourism Expo 2023, Wed in India 2024, and Meet in India 2025 has elevated the platform into a global convergence point for policymakers, international buyers, and tourism leaders.

States in spotlight

Regional tourism growth receives structured support through FICCI's state partnerships. Memorandums of Understanding with Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh have created collaborative frameworks focused on promotion, policy development, and investment facilitation.

The Odisha Travel Bazaar, organised jointly with the Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha, has completed six editions. Each edition hosts 50–60 foreign tour operators from 8–10 countries for exclusive B2B meetings with the state's tourism stakeholders. A four-night familiarisation tour across key destinations deepens product understanding and builds long-term business relationships. The platform strengthens Odisha's positioning in both domestic and international markets.

Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart 2025 in Bhopal demonstrated the scale of state-led engagement. The event welcomed over 650 delegates, including more than 80 foreign tour operators from 27 countries and 140 domestic operators. Approximately 350 tourism stakeholders from Madhya Pradesh showcased their offerings during exhibitions and B2B sessions. The mart recorded 8,998 structured business meetings across two days, reflecting strong buyer interest in the state's heritage circuits, wildlife experiences, and cultural landscapes.

High-level sessions focused on transforming Madhya Pradesh from a hidden gem into a global tourism icon. Dedicated roundtables with State Tourism Boards and MICE and wedding planners reinforced collaboration and positioned the state as a premier

destination for conferences, events, and celebrations.

Outbound ambition

India's growing outbound travel market finds a strategic platform in the FICCI Outbound Tourism Summit held in New Delhi. The summit positions India as one of the world's leading source markets and promotes bilateral tourism exchange.

The third edition in July 2024 brought together diplomats, tourism boards, airlines, and tour operators. Representatives from Kenya, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, Georgia, Malaysia, and Singapore engaged in focused discussions on strengthening tourism partnerships with India. The release of the knowledge paper "Navigating Horizons: The Rise and Future of Indian Outbound Tourism" offered industry insights into growth trends, traveler preferences, and emerging global opportunities.

Panel discussions highlighted innovation, digital adoption, and collaborative marketing strategies as key drivers shaping the outbound ecosystem. The summit continues to reinforce India's role as a dynamic contributor to global tourism flows.

Global connect

FICCI's tourism outreach extends across major international markets through roadshows and diaspora engagement programs. Initiatives in the USA, Dubai, London, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Tokyo create direct trade linkages and strengthen India's visibility abroad.

Participation in Expo 2020 Dubai further amplified India's tourism narrative on a global stage. These international

platforms support investment dialogues, enhance destination branding, and open channels for sustained collaboration.

Skill and sustainability

Capacity building remains central to FICCI's tourism vision. Agreements with the Ministry of Tourism have facilitated structured hospitality skilling programs that connect leading hospitality groups with premier training institutes. Industry-aligned curricula and standards-based training create a workforce ready to meet global service benchmarks.

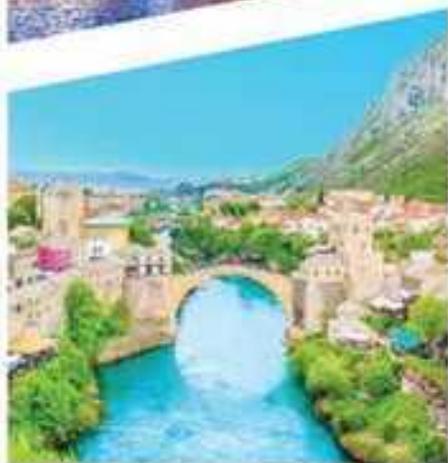
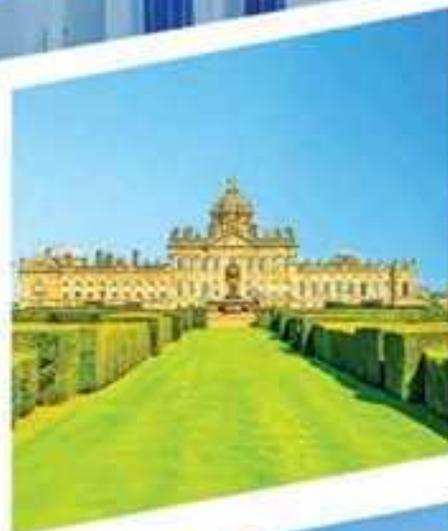
Sustainability and niche tourism segments receive focused attention through dedicated sub-committees covering Ayurveda, wellness, weddings, golf, MICE, and domestic travel. This diversified approach ensures tourism growth aligns with responsible practices and emerging market demand.

Driving the next chapter

FICCI's tourism journey reflects scale, structure, and strategic clarity. High-impact travel marts, international roadshows, policy advocacy, and skill development initiatives collectively shape a resilient tourism ecosystem. The organisation continues to act as a bridge between government vision and industry execution, strengthening India's position as a premier global tourism destination. The momentum built over three decades signals a future defined by collaboration, innovation, and sustained growth. Indian tourism stands on a foundation of structured engagement and global outreach, powered by a platform that consistently converts vision into measurable opportunity.

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Columbia Pictures Aquaverse

You know that defiant expression, 'Don't take water from anybody...! Well, it doesn't apply here. Simply because there's water everywhere, and it's a major contributor to the thrills.

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Get ready to experience Thailand's cinematic water park revolution...! Tucked away in the heart of Thailand's eastern seaboard, along Sattahip's main Sukhumvit Road, just a short coastal drive from vibrant Pattaya, a new kind of entertainment destination is announcing its presence, making its mark, and redefining what a theme park can and should be.

The world's first fully Columbia Pictures-branded water and theme park is an ambitious fusion of Hollywood storytelling, state-of-the-art attractions, Southeast Asia's vibrant tropical spirit, and Hollywood storytelling. That's Columbia Pictures Aquaverse Movie Theme Park Thailand for you.

The sun was shining brightly when I arrived on the scene. Things started off rather nicely, with the first item on my agenda being a very pleasant meeting with Liakat Dhanji, the company's affable Chairman & CEO, who welcomed me with a warmth that, if I may say, befitted the occasion. He is a man with boundless energy and a clear business vision that seeks new horizons. Our pleasant meeting over, I was entrusted to the care of the equally affable Ashif Dhanji, Chief Operations Officer. He too is a man with high energy levels and a sound business vision.

With this pleasant curtain-raiser behind me, I was entrusted to the company of half



a dozen young staffers who produced a video on me. If I may say, this too befitted the occasion. Personally escorted by Ashif, who explained things along the way, I did the rounds of the park that brings to life some of the most beloved film franchises of our era - Jumanji, Hotel Transylvania, Bad Boys, Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs, Surf's Up, Zombieland, and Ghostbusters. Quite a collection! It becomes abundantly clear that considerable thought and planning has gone into this project. Clearly demarcated, each zone sports its own identity and character. They transport visitors directly into their own cinematic universes, transforming iconic moments from screen to splash. While all the zones are up to scratch, pride of place goes to the Ghostbusters Zone. Here, Asia's first Ghostbusters-themed water slide drops riders headlong into a gigantic Stay Puft Marshmallow Man water dome.

Guests who visit the Jumanji Zone are in for a rare experience, taking on jungle dangers at Jaguar Mountain, and hurtling through hungry hippos, mandrills and serpents. If you're young and in possession of sufficient energy, find your adventure in the expansive Hotel Transylvania Aqua Playground, Southeast Asia's largest branded water play structure, offering more than a hundred interactive features with Drac's lovable monster crew.





If you're the action type, you'll get your share of thrills in the Zombieland Zone-home to some of Asia's tallest and steepest slides. Families will like to stop by at the the Emoji Movie Mini Golf. Explorers will prefer to drift along the 335-meter Swallow Falls River, meeting animatronic 'Foodimals' along the way. While water is the park's mainstay, it goes beyond this and offers more than just water attractions. It's cinematic expansion continues with the Grans Turismo Race Club, featuring Miami-style go-kart racing, and the FlowRider Double Surf Machine inspired by Surf's Up. We were now at the heart of the park, and excuse enough to take a pause in our walkabout. The Aquaverse Mega Wave Pool, a man-made lagoon that doubles as an outdoor mega-stage equipped with giant LED screens and Dolby DTS surround sound, is a major attraction for people of all ages. Without showing off, Ashif put things in perspective and explained just how and why the park was a high-value visitor site. From movie screenings to



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.

concerts, from fun and frolic to hearty eating, from cabanas tucked in tropical gardens to international dining pavilions and character meet-and-greets at Aquaverse Square, the park blends premium comfort with cinematic adventure. It is an immersive open-air entertainment venue unlike anything else in the region. For travellers seeking a new era of immersive entertainment - where film, fantasy, and water-park thrills collide-Columbia Pictures Aquaverse is Thailand's brightest new star. The world is noticing its excellence. Columbia Pictures Aquaverse was named Best ASEAN Themed Water Park by MATFA and recognized by CNN Travel as one of the world's best new theme parks of 2023, establishing its status as an international attraction of class. My tour of the park had more than convinced me about its unique composition and management style. They don't force you to figure too much out. They just expose you to it in a direct way. The thing to do is to just shed your inhibitions and 'drop by'. And the time to do it is now!



RAJASTHAN
The Incredible State of India !

15th Edition



THE GREAT INDIAN

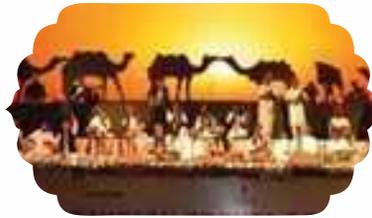
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EMPIRIA GROUP

Building joy, one island at a time!

A space to open up with the nature, space to connect, space for emotions to open up, space for relationships to flow is how Kalia Konstantinidou, Co-Founder & Group Executive Officer, Empiria Group describes Empiria Group.

-Rishi Arora



Kalia Konstantinidou

As Indian outbound travel matures into one of the most dynamic segments globally, Empiria Group is thoughtfully positioning itself to deepen its engagement with this audience - through culture, connection and curated experiences rather than conventional luxury templates.

A natural cultural synergy

Empiria's journey began in 1999 with Vedema Resort on Santorini—at a time when the island was far from the global icon it is today. Today, the group manages eight properties across Santorini, Paros and the Mani

Peninsula, each with a distinct narrative and identity.

Kalia believes this diversity aligns beautifully with the Indian traveller's evolving expectations. She shares, "We have seen Indian travellers evolve tremendously over the past two decades. Earlier, the focus was largely on big weddings, large MICE spaces and iconic backdrops. Today, we see a shift towards immersive, experiential journeys. Indian guests now want to connect deeply with the destination, the people, and the culture—and this is exactly what we offer at Empiria."

Luxury reimaged for the Indian mindset

Empiria's portfolio includes properties such as Mystique, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Istoría, a Design Hotels member, Parílio and Cosme, each designed to reflect the character of its island rather than replicate a standardised luxury formula.

For Kalia, this individuality is precisely what resonates with the new-age Indian luxury traveller. She adds, "Luxury today is not about opulence alone. It is about authenticity. It is about belonging. When Indian travellers come to our islands, we want them to feel

that they are stepping into a living, breathing culture—not just into a beautiful hotel."

She emphasises that Indian guests are increasingly seeking longer stays, curated culinary experiences and meaningful cultural immersion. Empiria's architecture mirrors local villages, interiors echo Cycladic homes, and experiences are led by passionate locals who share stories of sourcing, tradition and craftsmanship.

Growing with purpose

India is no longer viewed as an occasional market for Empiria—it is a strategic growth focus. Kalia shares that the group is strengthening partnerships with Indian travel designers and luxury operators to curate bespoke journeys across multiple islands. Rather than positioning a single property, Empiria is presenting its portfolio as a narrative journey through Greece.

"We don't want to sell rooms. We want to design journeys. For Indian travellers, especially families and multi-generational groups, we can create seamless experiences across Santorini and Paros, allowing them to discover different moods of Greece within one thoughtfully crafted itinerary," shares Kalia.

Sustainability that speaks

As Indian travellers become more conscious about sustainability and responsible tourism, Empiria's long-standing environmental ethos becomes an added advantage. Operating across fragile island ecosystems, the group has implemented initiatives such as on-site water bottling systems in Santorini and Paros to eliminate plastic usage, alongside micro sustainability projects tailored to each destination.

Kalia shares, "Sustainability for us did not begin as a trend. It began as instinct. We live on these islands, we raise our families here. Protecting them is not a business strategy—it is a responsibility."

A shared future

As Empiria Group continues to expand its footprint across Greece, its growth strategy remains measured and intentional. New projects are approached with the same philosophy—rooted in place, culture and narrative integrity.

In a world where luxury is increasingly defined by authenticity and connection, Empiria Group's approach feels both timely and timeless. And as Indian travellers look beyond spectacle toward substance, the Greek islands—through Kalia Konstantinidou's vision—may well become their next emotional home away from home.



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THE LUX COLLECTIVE

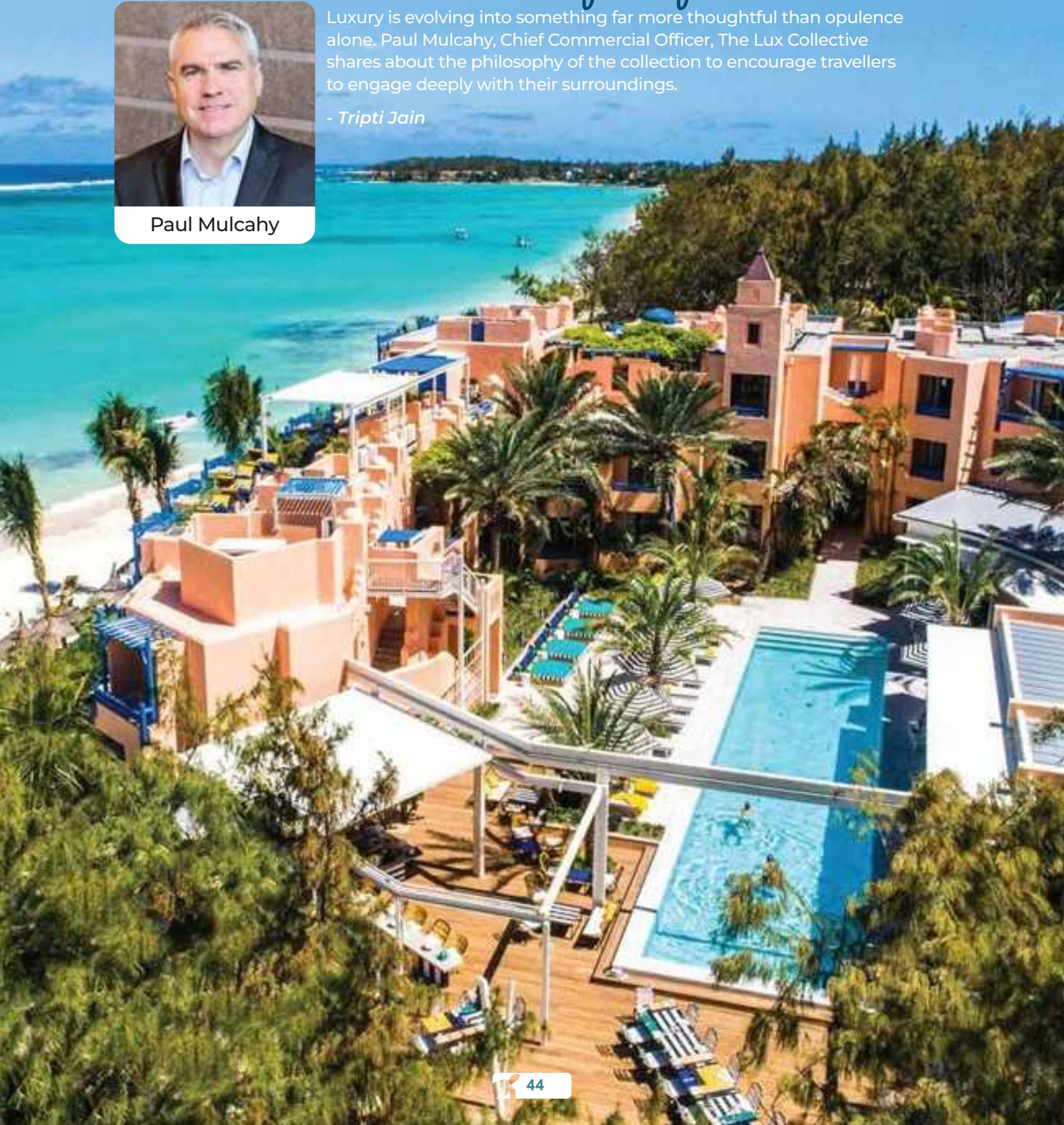
places with purpose



Paul Mulcahy

Luxury is evolving into something far more thoughtful than opulence alone. Paul Mulcahy, Chief Commercial Officer, The Lux Collective shares about the philosophy of the collection to encourage travellers to engage deeply with their surroundings.

- Tripti Jain



Discerning travellers are seeking stories, cultural immersion and a deeper sense of belonging. The Lux Collective has positioned itself at the intersection of design, sustainability and human connection, building a portfolio that reflects individuality across destinations. From boutique eco-retreats to vibrant urban hubs, the group's brands are united by intention and crafted to deliver experiences that resonate long after check-out.

Rooted in culture, designed for connection

At the heart of the portfolio lies SALT of Palmar, a boutique, adults-only retreat that embodies conscious luxury. With just 56 rooms set along the Mauritian coastline, the property champions local sourcing, community engagement and immersive travel.

Paul shares, "SALT was conceived as a brand that allows guests to experience a destination from the inside out. We collaborate with local farmers, artisans and fishermen so that every detail feels authentic. Guests are invited to discover Mauritian culture, cuisine and traditions in a way that feels natural and enriching. Luxury here is defined by connection, by sustainability and by a sense of place."

Dining at SALT becomes storytelling. The intimate restaurant concept, TechTech, draws its name from the Mauritian Creole word for shellfish. The chef shares family recipes and cultural anecdotes as he cooks in front of guests, creating a shared table that feels personal and joyful.

Paul reflects on the spirit behind the experience and adds, "We want guests to feel part of something genuine. The culinary journey is relaxed, interactive and rooted in heritage. When people connect over local food and shared stories, the atmosphere transforms. That sense of belonging is powerful and memorable."

Iconic escapes, distinct personalities

The flagship LUX* brand brings a broader canvas to life across beach resorts and urban retreats. Each property carries a distinct design narrative inspired by its location,



ensuring that no two hotels mirror one another.

In Vietnam, LUX Phu Quoc* introduces a striking overwater aesthetic rarely seen in Southeast Asia. Set amid lush landscapes near a UNESCO - protected biosphere, the resort blends Maldivian - style villas with Vietnamese vibrancy.

Paul explains the design philosophy and shares, "Every LUX* property is shaped by its environment. We celebrate local architecture, materials and traditions so that guests feel they are truly in that destination. Our aim is to deliver iconic experiences that are rooted in context, whether that is a beachfront villa in Vietnam or an urban sanctuary in Shanghai."

The upcoming Shanghai property, scheduled for Q1 2027, exemplifies this vision. Housed within a repurposed building overlooking the river and skyline, the hotel will feature a private marina, yacht access and rooftop dining. The concept positions the hotel as an urban oasis within a dynamic cityscape.

"Shanghai represents our belief that even in the world's most energetic cities, travellers seek moments of calm and inspiration. The property will offer immersive service and architectural elegance, creating a retreat-like environment in the heart of the metropolis," Paul adds.



Heritage woven into hospitality

Along the historic Tea Horse Road in China, LUX Tea Horse Road* reflects a deep respect for culture and storytelling. This collection of intimate retreats draws inspiration from the ancient trade route that once connected Tibet and Yunnan.

Paul describes the emotional resonance of the project and explains, "The Tea Horse Road properties honour the legacy of the traders who travelled these routes centuries ago. We incorporate local rituals, from wish trees inspired by Himalayan traditions to architectural elements that echo the surrounding mountains. Guests experience history in a way that feels alive and relevant."

A new social energy

The collective's SOCIO brand responds to evolving traveller expectations, particularly among millennials and Gen Z. Designed as a vibrant, flexible environment, SOCIO properties blend residential comfort with social energy.

In Oman, the first SOCIO property offers adaptable communal spaces that encourage creativity and interaction. A forthcoming residential project in Dubai near the Burj Khalifa district is set for 2028, extending the concept into lifestyle living.

Paul shares the brand's intent and shares, "SOCIO is about freedom and fluidity. Guests can choose how they engage with the space. The environment feels intuitive and welcoming, allowing people to move between work, relaxation and social connection effortlessly. The brand speaks to a generation that values experience and community."

Wellness and the future of travel

In Khorfakkan, Sharjah, the group is developing a wellness-focused retreat centred on the idea of enhancing health span. The concept emphasises vitality, longevity and holistic wellbeing within a dramatic coastal landscape.

"Our wellness philosophy focuses on enriching lives through thoughtful design and curated programmes. Guests are invited to recharge physically and mentally in a setting that feels organic and inspiring. The architecture integrates with the natural terrain, creating harmony between environment and experience," Paul explains.

Future ambitions extend into Africa, with projects under consideration in destinations such as Rwanda and Botswana. Each potential development reflects the group's deliberate, selective growth strategy. He adds, "We are highly intentional about where we expand. Our priority is alignment with our values and the opportunity to create something distinctive. We choose destinations that allow us to tell meaningful stories and contribute positively to local communities."

Crafting luxury with integrity

The Lux Collective's trajectory illustrates a commitment to individuality and substance. Each brand within the portfolio carries its own voice, shaped by cultural authenticity and sustainable practices. Growth unfolds with precision, ensuring that every property enhances the collective narrative. The result is a portfolio that invites travellers to explore the world with curiosity, comfort and a sense of belonging.



Silk Routes & Snow Trails

Capella's JAPAN SYMPHONY



John Blanco

Japan's luxury hospitality landscape is entering a new chapter with the arrival of Capella Hotels and Resorts in some of the country's most evocative destinations. John Blanco, Cluster General Manager, Capella Kyoto and Patina Osaka views Japan as an artistic canvas and a stage for immersive luxury.

- Tripti Jain

HOTELLIGENCE

With Capella Kyoto opening its doors and Patina Osaka bringing a fresh perspective to urban sophistication, the brand is weaving its philosophy of personalised storytelling into Japan's cultural fabric. For the Indian traveller, whose appetite for refined, meaningful experiences continues to grow, Capella's Japan portfolio offers a rare opportunity to experience the country through a deeply curated lens.

Living inside a cultural masterpiece

Kyoto has long stood as Japan's cultural heartbeat. Its temples, tea houses and centuries-old traditions already draw global connoisseurs of heritage. Capella Kyoto elevates that narrative by embedding guests directly into the city's living artistry. John shares his vision with clarity and conviction and says, "Kyoto is already one of the world's most culturally rich destinations. Our responsibility is to go deeper into that richness and create access that feels personal and intimate. At Capella Kyoto, guests do not simply observe tradition. They experience it in motion. Our connection to the historic Kaborenjo, the geisha training school and theatre, allows guests to see geiko and maiko glide through the hotel as part of their daily practice. It creates a sense of authenticity that becomes part of everyday life here."

The property's design reflects the elegance of traditional machiya townhouses, infused with contemporary refinement. Natural textures, warm wood tones and subtle artistry create an environment that feels grounded in place.

John explains how Capella's signature programming adds another dimension and shares, "Every Capella has what we call Capella Moments and Capella Rituals. In Kyoto, these experiences are deeply inspired by local culture. Guests may participate in tea ceremonies, sake tastings, craft workshops or seasonal celebrations. These are complimentary and thoughtfully curated, allowing our guests to immerse themselves in Japanese traditions even if they choose to spend the day within the sanctuary of the hotel."

A distinctive feature of Capella Kyoto is its private onsen. Onsen bathing holds profound cultural meaning in Japan, and Capella presents it in a way that feels welcoming and luxurious. Guests can reserve the natural hot spring bath exclusively, enjoying it as couples or families, complemented by champagne or curated refreshments. This flexibility ensures that first-time visitors feel comfortable embracing an iconic Japanese ritual.

Osaka's new pulse

In vibrant Osaka, Patina Osaka introduces a fresh interpretation of urban hospitality. Positioned as a refined yet progressive brand under the Capella umbrella, Patina blends mindful living with contemporary energy.

John views Osaka as an exciting counterpoint to Kyoto's classical charm. He shares, "Osaka has a dynamic spirit. It is expressive, creative and forward-thinking. Patina Osaka reflects that character. We focus on wellness, sustainability and meaningful design, creating spaces that feel alive and inspiring. Guests can expect an environment

that balances high design with a sense of ease, allowing them to connect with the city in a very natural way."

The hotel's culinary concepts celebrate Japan's vibrant gastronomy, inviting guests to explore both local flavours and innovative techniques. Wellness spaces are crafted as sanctuaries within the urban landscape, encouraging balance amid the city's lively rhythm.

John highlights the synergy between the two properties and explains, "With Capella Kyoto and Patina Osaka, travellers can experience two distinct dimensions of Japan within a short journey. One offers heritage and ritual. The other expresses creativity and modernity. Together, they form a narrative that feels complete and compelling."

A growing bond with India

India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing luxury outbound markets for Japan. Discerning Indian travellers seek depth, exclusivity and meaningful engagement, qualities that align seamlessly with Capella's ethos.

John acknowledges this synergy with optimism and shares, "Indian guests bring a remarkable level of curiosity and appreciation for culture. They value personalised service and experiences that feel crafted specifically for them. Our approach resonates strongly with that mindset. We take the time to understand the motivation behind each journey, whether it is family bonding, celebration or exploration, and then tailor the experience around that purpose."

Targeted engagement within key Indian cities such as Mumbai and Delhi ensures that Capella's story

reaches the right audience. Through curated events, close collaboration with luxury travel advisors and immersive familiarisation experiences, the brand is building long-term relationships within the Indian market.

John sees Japan's diversity as a powerful draw and emphasises, "Japan offers extraordinary variety within one country. From the cultural treasures of Kyoto to the vibrant pulse of Osaka and future expansions in destinations such as Tokyo and Niseko, guests can discover multiple facets of Japan in one journey. Our role is to serve as the gateway that makes those discoveries seamless and memorable."

Crafting the future of experiential luxury

The philosophy established by founder Horst H. Schulze continues to shape every Capella property worldwide. Service is intuitive, experiences are meaningful and every detail is designed to create lasting impressions.

For Indian travellers seeking a refined introduction to Japan or a fresh way to rediscover it, Capella Kyoto and Patina Osaka present a compelling proposition. Heritage and modernity coexist gracefully, offering journeys that feel both immersive and elevated. As Capella plants its flag firmly in Japan, the brand signals a confident new chapter in Asian luxury. Through thoughtful programming, architectural sensitivity and personalised engagement, it creates spaces where tradition and innovation meet in harmony. The result is a Japan experience that feels intimate, inspired and distinctly Capella.



GlobalTix

Simplifying the Business of Selling Experiences

Why travel agents are turning to one platform to sell attractions smarter, faster, and with confidence. Chanel Leong, Chief Commercial Officer, GlobalTix, shares how they are making experience selling simpler, efficient, rewarding for travel partners, particularly in the Indian market.

- Naina Nath

Chanel Leong

As travellers place greater importance on experiences, attractions have moved from being an add-on to a central part of trip planning. Supporting this shift behind the scenes is GlobalTix, a B2B platform that simplifies how travel agents access and sell attractions worldwide.

What GlobalTix Does

“GlobalTix is a B2B travel distribution platform focused on experiences, attractions, tours, and activities worldwide,” says Chanel. At its heart, the platform is designed to remove complexity. “Our core role is to connect travel partners with global suppliers through a single platform that provides real-time inventory, dynamic pricing, instant confirmation, and seamless fulfillment.” For agents, this means fewer follow-ups, faster confirmations, and far less guesswork when selling attractions to clients.

Building for Scale

In her role as Chief Commercial Officer, Chanel's attention is firmly on partnerships that last. “I'm focused on building partnerships that scale,” she explains, emphasizing that growth needs more than just technology. For her, success comes from aligning systems, support, and commercial terms so agents can perform better every day. “It's about helping agents sell better, convert faster, and grow for the long term,” she says, framing GlobalTix as a business partner rather than just another booking tool.

Solving Agent Pain Points

Selling global attractions is rarely simple. Agents often juggle multiple suppliers, inconsistent

availability, and last-minute client requests. Chanel sees this first-hand. “Agents often deal with too many fragmented suppliers and systems, unclear availability, and tight timelines,” she notes. GlobalTix was built to cut through this clutter. “We offer one platform, one contract, and quick confirmations,” she says. The result is confidence. Agents can respond faster to clients and close sales without operational headaches.

AI with a Purpose

AI is everywhere in travel conversations, but GlobalTix keeps its application practical. “Yes, we use AI,” Chanel confirms, but she is quick to explain how it helps on a daily basis. The technology supports agents by helping them “find the right products faster, improve search results, and onboard product contents more easily.” These small efficiencies add up. “This saves time and helps agents sell more confidently,” she says, especially when handling complex itineraries or tight deadlines.

Why India Matters

India has become a key focus market, and not by accident. “India is growing fast in outbound travel,” Chanel says, pointing out that traveller expectations have evolved. “Travellers are looking for better experiences, not just sightseeing.” She also highlights the strengths of Indian travel sellers themselves. “Indian agents are strong at customized trips, value pricing, and customer service,” she observes. GlobalTix tailors its support and approach to fit the way Indian agents work and sell.

What Indians are Booking

Data from the platform paints a clear picture of preferences. According to Chanel, Indian travellers consistently gravitate towards “popular attractions and landmarks,” along with “family-friendly experiences.” Value also matters. “Good-value and skip-the-line tickets” are in high demand, as are “unique and memorable activities” that go beyond standard sightseeing. In terms of destinations, Europe, Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Middle East continue to dominate outbound interest.

What's New at GlobalTix

Beyond attractions, GlobalTix is steadily expanding its offering. “We continue to add high-demand attractions such as sports events, concerts, FI, and more,” Chanel shares, alongside continuous platform improvements to make bookings faster and smoother. The vision goes further. With hotels now being added and cruises already onboard, including Disney Cruises, she explains that GlobalTix is “moving toward a single platform that supports the full travel planning and selling journey.”

A Message for India

Chanel's message to Indian travel agents is grounded and forward-looking. “We aim to be a long-term growth partner for Indian travel agents,” she says. The focus is not just on today's bookings, but on building stronger businesses. “GlobalTix aims to help agents sell attractions seamlessly today, while building stronger margins and sustainable growth for the future.” For agents navigating an increasingly experience-led travel market, that promise is proving hard to ignore.





The Micato

way of
safari travel



Sean Walwyn

From Kenya to the world, a safari legacy that stays intentionally personal. Sean Walwyn, Chief Executive Officer share how a family-run safari company has grown with restraint while preserving what sets it apart.

- *Naina Nath*

Luxury safaris have evolved beyond exceptional wildlife and beautiful lodges. Today's discerning travellers seek reassurance, continuity, and the comfort of knowing every detail has been quietly taken care of. This philosophy has long guided Micato Safaris.

Built like family

Micato Safaris, founded in Kenya over 60 years ago by Jane and Felix Pinto, began as a destination management company before evolving into a respected luxury safari operator with strong roots in North America. "No matter where you travel with us, you will always know and feel that we're in a family business," says Sean Walwyn. While New York now functions as the operational hub, Nairobi remains central to the company's identity. Jane Pinto, now 90, remains an active presence. "She's the foundation of the company," Sean says, recalling how guests often meet her and are visibly moved by the experience.

Growth with care

Micato Safaris operates across East Africa, Southern Africa, and India, supported by offices in New York,

Nairobi, Delhi, and Cape Town. Expansion has never been hurried. "We can't stretch that family feel too far," says Sean Walwyn. The India business emerged from a close family relationship, while Southern Africa evolved through long-established cruise line partnerships. That philosophy still guides decisions today. "Dennis is a visionary, but he's also a perfectionist. He won't enter a market just for the sake of it," Sean notes, referring to Managing Director Dennis Pinto.

India's luxury potential

Within Micato Safaris, India plays a distinct role. The India office handles inbound travel, largely for U.S. guests looking to experience highlights such as the Taj Mahal and tiger safaris, alongside more niche interests, including Ladakh and Kerala. Outbound travel from India is still being explored. "East Africa has historically been sold here in a very price-driven way. That's not our market," says Sean Walwyn. Michelle Alma Shah adds that while Micato can curate journeys across India, the immediate opportunity lies elsewhere. "From a luxury perspective, Africa is a destination

Indians will really love, and Micato can make a strong impact there."

Safaris, your way

Micato offers both small set departures of up to 16 guests and fully private, tailor-made safaris, with consistency at the core of its operations. "If only two people book a departure, we will still run it. We don't cancel," Sean explains. Demand for private versions of existing itineraries has grown sharply. "Before COVID, we did three or four a year. Last year, we did 40." Every itinerary is carefully shaped with travel advisors and, where appropriate, with guests themselves.

Seasons and shifts

The company's peak season typically begins in mid-May and runs through September, extending into October in recent years. December sees a short lull before a strong festive surge, while November is often supported by incentive travel. Sean points to a noticeable change in guest behaviour. "People are staying longer and travelling more slowly," he says. Repeat travellers may spend weeks across multiple

regions, balancing game drives with downtime. "They're not coming just to tick off wildlife. They want to enjoy where they are," he explains.

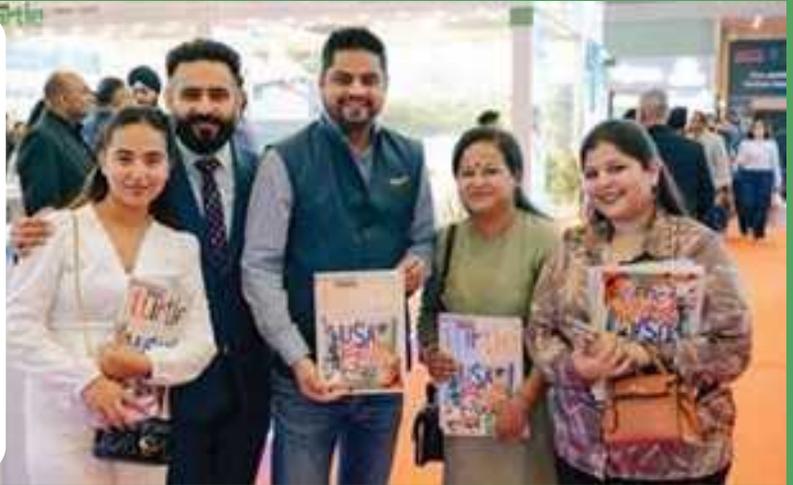
Celebrations in the wild

Micato caters to a broad range of travellers, from families with children above seven to senior guests, often travelling together across generations. "Those dynamics influence how trips are planned and experienced," Sean explains. Alongside this, the company designs milestone journeys, including honeymoons, landmark birthdays, and bespoke pre-wedding experiences. "If you're on a private safari, the world is your oyster," he says. Dietary preferences are handled with ease. "Vegetarian food is never an issue. Indian cuisine is widely understood across East Africa," Sean adds. At its core, Micato Safaris remains guided by restraint, continuity, and care. As Sean puts it simply, "We're very careful not to dilute who we are." At a time when luxury is frequently defined by scale, Micato continues to prove that intimacy, when protected, is luxury in its purest form.



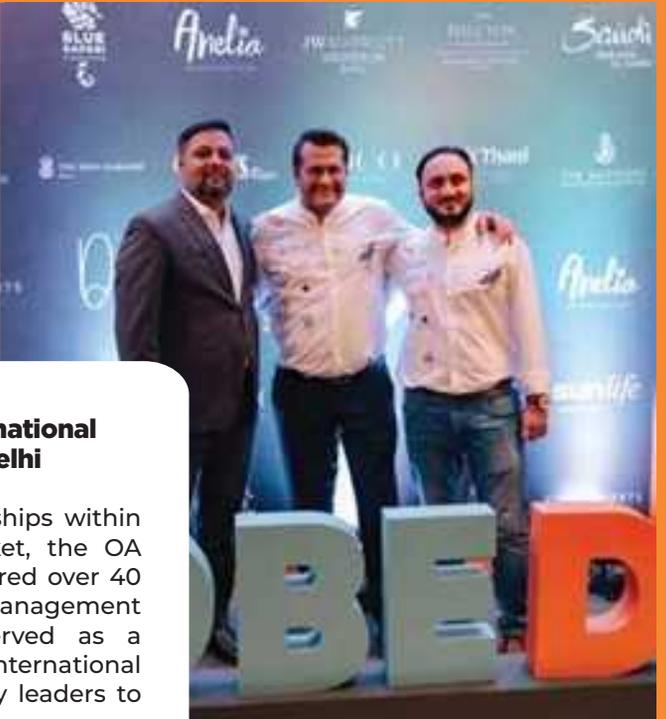
SATTE 2026 witnesses strong global participation

SATTE 2026 brought together tourism boards, travel brands, and industry stakeholders from across the world for three days of networking and business exchange. The exhibition showcased new destinations, experiences, and travel products while highlighting emerging trends shaping the industry. With vibrant participation and engaging interactions, the event once again reinforced its position as one of South Asia's most significant travel trade platforms.



EVENT AFFAIR





OA Globe DMC hosts international networking roadshow in Delhi

Designed to foster partnerships within the Delhi-NCR travel market, the OA Globe DMC roadshow featured over 40 partners and global travel management companies. The event served as a dedicated space for international experts and local hospitality leaders to strengthen industry ties.



Ten Heritage Wonders

From the heart of India you've never heard of!



Over centuries, Madhya Pradesh has witnessed rulers, merchants, ideas and ambitions. Their legacy is enshrined in the form of stunning architectural and living heritage. It also lives on in the rustle of peepal leaves over obscure shrines, the scent of wet earth in a historic fort and a river's song echoing beneath ancient carvings. Every trip here challenges history buffs to go beyond famed sites into hidden destinations that remind us that heritage is not a relic, but a living rhythm.

बलेश्वर मंदिर

In rural Morena's badlands, a region once known for banditry, lies a group of temples at **Bateswar**. More than a thousand years old, reduced to rubble by earthquakes, and lost for centuries, they were rediscovered in the 19th century and restored in the early 21st. Today, nearly 200 temples stand out for their antiquity and design, leaving visitors stunned.

वराह मंदिर

Even older are two 5th – 6th century CE period icons depicting God **Vishnu** in his **Varaha** incarnation, in which the god takes the form of a wild boar supporting Mother Earth. At Eran is a gigantic zoomorphic Varaha with gods, sages, demons and other beings carved on it. Home to an ancient **Vishnu temple** complex, inscriptions and coins are still found here. No surprise that locals do dawn circumambulation of the Varaha on auspicious days. The other Varaha is

a magnificent andromorphic one carved into the wall of a hill at Udayagiri. Religious icons are found all over the hill and metallurgical studies have stated the non-rusting Iron Pillar at Delhi's Qutab Minar complex probably came from here.

गुजरापुर व अजोधर

Not far away is **Gyaraspur**, a veritable open-air museum of ancient religious iconography. Around a single hill are the Maladevi Temple, Hindola Toranas, and the **Athkhamba** and **Bajramath shrines**. They represent an acme in temple architecture. Even more elaborately carved iconography is seen on the gateway of mighty Ajaigarh Fort, built a thousand years ago by the Chandelas and witness to many a battle. Speaking of battles, a Chaunsath Yogini Temple shrine visited by the medieval warrior queen Durgawati lies at Bhedaghat, on the banks of the Narmada outside Jabalpur. Its circular design makes it unique.

भेदघाट व बुरहानपुर

At **Burhanpur** is a mighty fort along the Tapti River, containing Mughal-era paintings within. The town is dotted with mosques and tombs, and just outside lies the first tomb of **Mumtaz Mahal**, a temporary abode for her remains while the Taj Mahal was being built. Older than all of these and forgotten in the western edge of Madhya Pradesh is the **Chaturbhujnath Nala** – a 5 kilometre stretch of stunning prehistoric rock art. In the same district is the majestic



धर्मराजेश्वर मंदिर जल शून्य

Dharmarajeshwar Temple, an 8th century subterranean shrine cut out of rock. Climax the journey at another monolithic shrine, lying in the shadow of Gwalior's mighty fort. The 9th century **Chaturbhuj Temple** bears an inscription containing the world's second oldest mention of the number 'zero'. A great round figure to end a trip down history lane!

नए धरोहर सीमाएं

At the edge of Madhya Pradesh's heritage journey lie four new serial nominations: the **Ashokan Edict Sites, Chaunsath Yogini Temples, Gupta Period Temples, and Bundela Palace-Fortresses**. These wonders, both hidden and newly recognised, remind us that Madhya Pradesh is not just a land of history, but a living journey through time.



EVENT AFFAIR



Le Magnifique Group hosts Valentine Bash for Expat community in New Delhi

The Le Magnifique Group organises its Annual Valentine Bash, bringing together the diplomatic community and expat CXOs in New Delhi. CEO Neeraj Kumar highlights the event as a vital networking platform for high-net-worth expats and global brands to connect within the Delhi NCR region.





The Ashok Hotel Marks 70 Years; ITDC Celebrates Diamond Jubilee in Delhi

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, launches a series of initiatives to celebrate 60 years of the India Tourism Development Corporation and 70 years of The Ashok Hotel. The event emphasised on a digital 're-imagining' strategy aligned with the Viksit Bharat vision.



IATO hosts first luncheon of the year to strengthen travel trade

The Indian Association of Tour Operators held its first session of the year, focusing on an upcoming three-city showcase in Europe being organised by IATO. The event featured a Q&A on tourism promotion and the launch of two new industry books by Naveen Kundu and Radhika Mehta.



EVENT AFFAIR



Heavens Portfolio hosts exclusive luxury media evening at The Taj Mahal Hotel

Heavens Portfolio brought together leading names in luxury hospitality for an evening dedicated to the future of experience-driven travel. The discussion focused on how global brands are curating offerings to meet the evolving needs of India's discerning luxury travellers.



South African Tourism concludes annual India roadshow in Delhi

South African Tourism recently wrapped up its multi-city India roadshow with a final stop in Delhi. Led by Mitalee Karmarkar, the event featured over 40 exhibitors and focused on data-driven marketing strategies to strengthen India's position as a critical source market for the 2026 growth strategy.





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EVENT AFFAIR



Atout France India discusses the future of Indo-French Tourism

Adam Oubuih, CEO of Atout France, shares insights into France's strategy to become the world's most sustainable destination by 2030. The session focused on the evolving India-France partnership and upcoming high-impact travel experiences for the 2026 Year of Innovation.



Team Avenir presents African and Greek luxury portfolios in Mumbai

Team Avenir, in collaboration with Atua Enkop Africa and DMC Travelr, showcases a portfolio of luxury safari camps and Greek travel experiences to Mumbai's travel industry. The session highlighted destination storytelling and curated itineraries across Africa and Greece.



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APPOINTMENTS



Accor

Accor announces the appointment of Amitabh Rai as Chief Operating Officer – Luxury, Accor South Asia. In this strategic leadership role, Amitabh will lead the operational and strategic direction of Accor's luxury and lifestyle portfolio across South Asia, with a strong focus on delivering distinctive luxury experiences, thoughtful brand curation, and sustained performance excellence across the Raffles, Fairmont and Sofitel brands.



Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) appoints Khajornrit Khwanmongkol as the new Director of the TAT New Delhi Office, Khajornrit is expected to further strengthen Thailand's tourism engagement in India and deepen partnerships across the travel trade.



Cinnamon Life

Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams announces the appointment of Kamal Munasinghe as General Manager. In his new capacity, Munasinghe will lead the strategic direction and day-to-day operations of Cinnamon Life, South Asia's first fully integrated resort, as it enters its next phase of growth and solidifies Colombo's position as a premier destination for luxury hospitality, entertainment, and business.



ibis

ibis announces the appointment of Sachin Maheshwary as Cluster General Manager for ibis Mumbai. This appointment further strengthens the brand's leadership team in one of its most important and high-impact markets in India.

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