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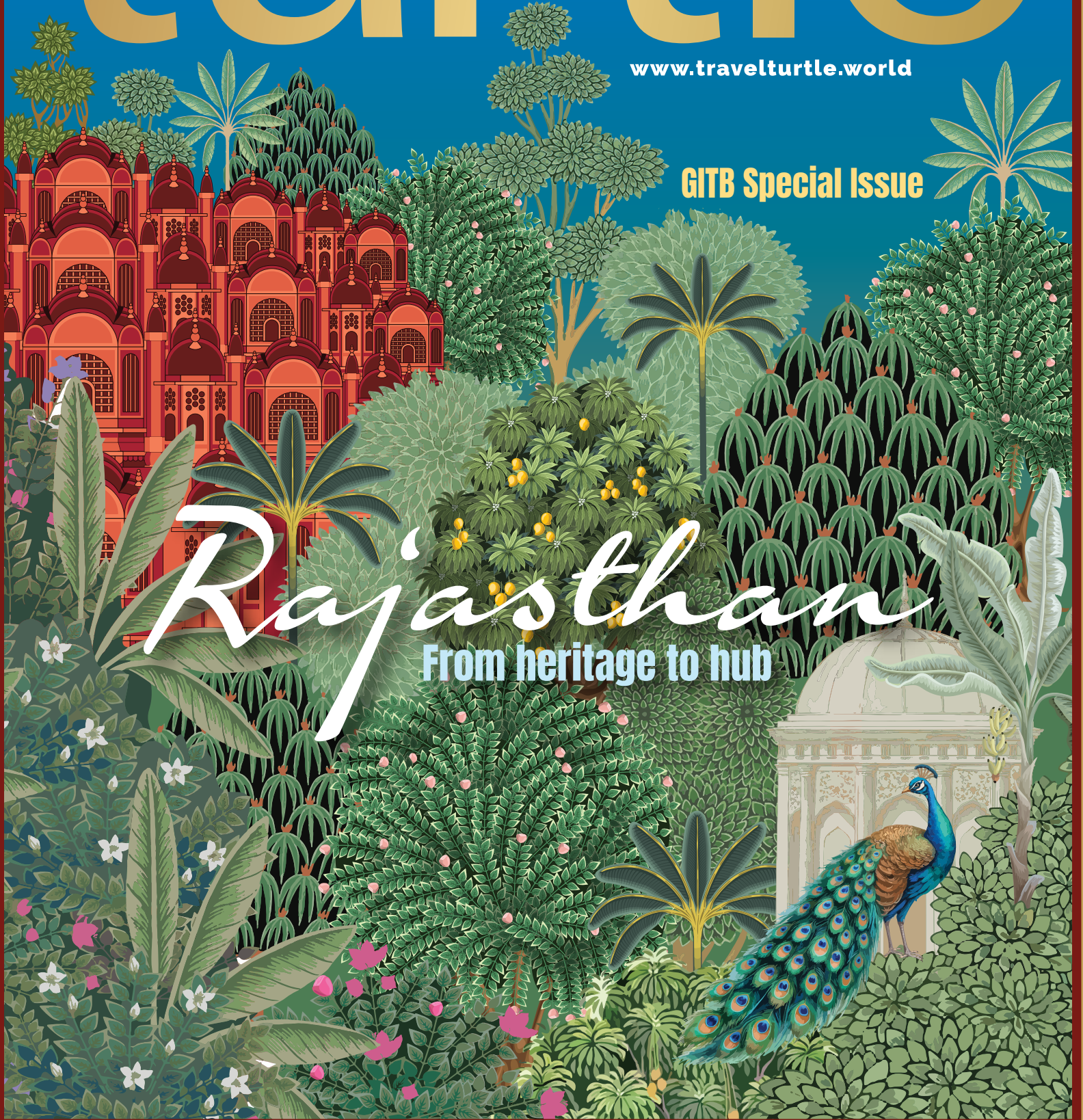
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GITB Special Issue

Rajasthan From heritage to hub



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Some months arrive with urgency. Others unfold like a story. March, for me, was the latter—layered, immersive, and quietly defining.

It began in Berlin at ITB, where the world gathers, but not everything that matters is spoken aloud. Between conversations and corridors, there was a shift you could feel more than articulate. India was not louder, not larger, but surer. There was a certain stillness in that presence, the kind that comes from knowing your story has found its moment.

That sentiment travelled with us into the Namaste India Showcase with Indian Association of Tour Operators across Frankfurt, Paris and Amsterdam. Each city felt like a continuation of the same conversation—one that was warm, receptive, and deeply engaged. With the support of Ministry of Tourism, the narrative did not just travel, it resonated. There is something powerful about watching a country not just being seen, but being understood in its many layers.

This issue, our GITB special, carries that same sense of depth. Rajasthan reveals itself not as a destination, but as a mood that lingers. A journey through Japanese cuisine becomes an exercise in quiet discovery. On the seas, Disney Cruise Line opens up a world that feels almost cinematic, while our conversations around NCL echo a shift I have long believed in. The cruise space is no longer finding its way—it is arriving, beautifully and unapologetically.

Travel, at its core, is not about movement. It is about recognition—of places, of people, of moments that change the way we see the world, and sometimes, ourselves. As I write this, on the cusp of another journey, there is a familiar sense of anticipation.




Perhaps that is what we are always chasing, not just the next destination, but the feeling of discovering something, again.

Until then, I hope this issue travels with you, in its own quiet way.

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

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

   : [travelturtlemag](#)





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Explorer

Taipei | Sun Moon Lake | Alishan | Tainan | Jiufen

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Highlight

- * Visit the iconic Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall
- * Explore colourful Rainbow Village
- * Scenic views at Sun Moon Lake
- * Nature experience in Alishan National Scenic Area
- * Discover historic Anping Fort
- * Lantern experience at Shifen Old Street
- * Coastal rock formations at Yehliu Geopark
- * Visit the famous Jiufen Old Street
- * Photo stop at Taipei 101



Rail Europe expands B2B portfolio with BritRail Pass integration

The BritRail Pass, available exclusively to travellers residing outside the United Kingdom, enables seamless travel across the extensive National Rail network, spanning England, Wales and Scotland. The pass also provides access to key airport rail services, including the Heathrow Express, Gatwick Express and Stansted Express, as well as overnight journeys such as the Caledonian Sleeper and Night Riviera.



Via East DMC strengthens East Asia presence with dedicated destination verticals

Via East DMC, a venture of RN Tours and Travels, has announced its expansion into the East Asian markets of South Korea and Taiwan, marking a significant step in its regional growth strategy. The company, which has built a strong niche in East Asia through its Japan-focused brand ILoveJapan DMC, continues to broaden its offerings for the Indian outbound travel segment.



ATM 2026 rescheduled to August at the Dubai World Trade Centre

Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2026, originally scheduled to take place from 4–7 May 2026 at Dubai World Trade Centre, will now take place from 17-20 August 2026, with the venue remaining unchanged. The decision to reschedule the event has been made to prioritise the safety and well-being of customers, partners and colleagues, and to give the global travel and tourism community greater confidence and flexibility to attend.

StarDream Cruises brings Bhajan Jamming to the SEA with first-of-its-kind onboard experience

Bhajan Jamming has been gaining attention across India as a more participatory and community-led form of devotional music. Unlike traditional performances, these gatherings are collective, immersive, and open, where familiar bhajans are sung together, and the experience feels as much social as it is spiritual. StarDream Cruises is introducing this format on Dream Cruises – Genting Dream, in an unexpected setting, the open SEA.





Air India and Air India Express schedules ad-hoc flights to West Asia on 9 March 2026

Air India and Air India Express continues operating their scheduled services to and from Jeddah and Muscat on 9 March 2026, as airspaces over Saudi Arabia and Oman remain open. The two airlines operates a total of 10 flights to and from Jeddah, while Air India Express operates 14 flights to and from Muscat. On 9 March 2026, Air India operates one round-trip each from Delhi and Mumbai to Jeddah, and Air India Express will operate one round-trip each from Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Kozhikode.



Welcome Wonder Travel Service (Taiwan) appoints Global Destinations as its official India

Under the leadership of Sonia Chang and Jie Lee, the company has built a strong operational framework for delivering customised leisure programmes, group travel, and MICE solutions across Taiwan. The company is recognised for its destination expertise, extensive supplier network, and strong execution capabilities aligned with international market expectations.

Norwegian Cruise Line takes delivery of Norwegian Luna ahead of Miami debut

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) has officially taken delivery of its newest cruise ship, Norwegian Luna, during a ceremony held at the Fincantieri shipyard in Marghera. The vessel is the second ship in the Prima Plus Class and brings NCL's total fleet to 21 ships. Norwegian Luna can accommodate 3,565 passengers across 1,809 cabins, offering a wide range of onboard experiences designed to elevate the modern cruising experience.



JourneyLabel partners with Los Angeles Tourism to launch 'We Love LA' campaign for India's luxury travellers

The partnership marks a strategic step in continuing to connect one of the world's most iconic cities with India's evolving community of luxury travellers. Known for curating hyper personalised holidays for its global HNI clientele, JourneyLabel will showcase Los Angeles through a distinctive lens that celebrates the city's culture, creativity, entertainment legacy, and contemporary luxury lifestyle.



Club Med launches its highly anticipated property in Malaysia, Club Med Borneo

Club Med unveils reservations for Club Med Borneo, its highly anticipated new resort in Malaysia, opening for bookings from 23 March 2026 ahead of its official debut in November 2026. Located in the unspoiled coastal enclave of Kuala Penyu, near Kota Kinabalu, the resort marks the brand's second property in Malaysia and its first large-scale BREEAM-certified sustainable beach resort in Asia Pacific, reinforcing Club Med's continued expansion across Southeast Asia.



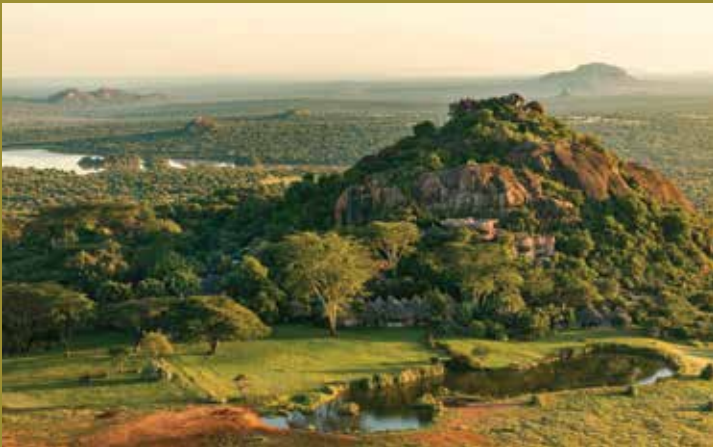
IndiGo progressively rebuilds Middle East and Europe network amid volatile conditions

IndiGo has been working with the relevant authorities in India and respective destinations to progressively rebuild its scheduled network in the Middle East and Europe. IndiGo restarted its scheduled flights, in a staggered manner, to and from select destinations in the Middle East from 03 March 2026 and has operated more than 165 such flights ever since, flying over 22,000 customers between India and the region.



Disney Adventure debuts in Asia with maiden voyage from Singapore

On board the Disney Adventure, the magic unfolds across seven uniquely themed areas—Disney Imagination Garden, Toy Story Place, San Fransokyo Street, Town Square, Wayfinder Bay, Disney Discovery Reef, and Marvel Landing. Each area offers immersive entertainment, thrilling attractions, diverse dining options, exclusive retail experiences, and family-friendly activities designed for guests of all ages.



Heavens Portfolio appointed to represent Ol Jogi Private Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya

As demand grows among Singapore's high-net-worth travellers for meaningful, private and transformational journeys, Ol Jogi offers a compelling alternative to traditional luxury safaris. With rising interest in exclusive-use villas, private jet travel and milestone-driven experiences, Ol Jogi's sole-use-only model for customised safari stays aligns with the expectations of discerning families, C-suite travellers and next-generation wealth seeking rare access and purpose-led travel.

Journey Routers ties up with Sentosa Island to launch curated packages

Journey Routers announces a strategic collaboration with Sentosa Island, Singapore's premier entertainment and resort destination. This partnership is designed for modern travellers and marks a significant step towards enhancing outbound tourism, offering thoughtfully curated itineraries that combine convenience, comfort, and access to the island's newest and most exciting attractions.



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- Premium positioning with strong revenue potential
- A trusted global brand with over 70 years of expertise



Our Key Offering

Beach Resorts

- Maldives, Phuket, Seychelles, Bali, Bintan
- Ideal for families and leisure travelers

Mountain Resorts (Ski)

- Japan and Europe
- All-inclusive ski packages (lift pass, lessons included)

Exclusive Collection (Luxury)

- Private villas and premium suites
- Perfect for high-end clients and honeymooners

Who Should You Target?

- Families (Kids Clubs for ages 4–17)
- Couples and honeymooners
- Corporate groups and incentives (MICE)
- Luxury FIT travelers

What Makes Club Med Different?

- Hassle-free holidays — no hidden costs
- 15–25 sports and activities included
- International cuisine and premium beverages
- Multilingual staff and seamless service

MICE & Group Opportunities

- Tailored group packages and buyouts
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- Attractive commission opportunities



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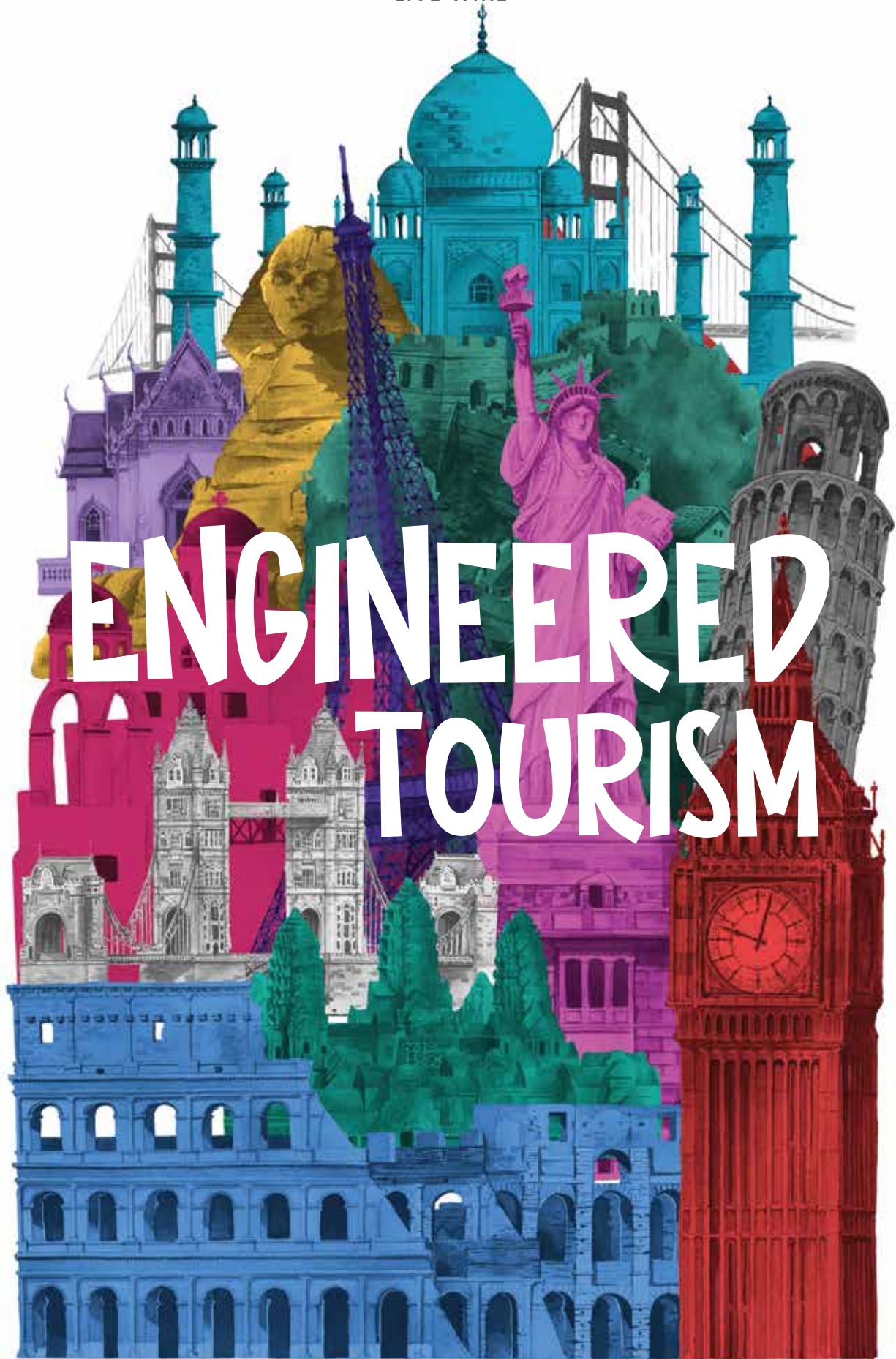


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ENGINEERED TOURISM

How access, policy and connectivity are shaping where Indians go next.

- *Bharti Sharma*

The Indian traveller today is more ambitious, better informed, and ready to spend. Yet, every travel decision is increasingly influenced by access, approvals, and global dynamics. From visa policies to airline networks, the forces shaping outbound travel are more strategic than ever before.

THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE

The modern Indian traveller is confident, well-researched, and globally aware. Yet, behind every travel decision lies a framework that quietly influences the final outcome. A summer planned in the Schengen Area often shifts to Southeast Asia. A honeymoon imagined in Italy finds its way to Japan. A long-awaited European holiday is postponed, not out of lack of interest, but due to process fatigue.

What appears to be a change in preference is often a response to access. Travel today is shaped as much by systems as it is by desire. The global map, especially for Indian outbound, is being redefined through a combination of policy, infrastructure, and ease.

VISA FRICTION AND THE SHIFT IN DEMAND

Visa processes have moved from being a formality to becoming a decisive factor. Appointment delays, extensive documentation,

and uncertain timelines continue to impact regions such as the Schengen Area. For many travellers, the unpredictability is enough to reconsider plans.

Travel advisors across the country are seeing a clear pattern. Travellers who begin with high intent are increasingly choosing destinations that offer faster and more reliable access. Countries with efficient e-visa systems or visa-on-arrival policies are seeing stronger conversion, not just because they are attractive, but because they are accessible. The result is a steady shift in demand. Ease of entry is no longer an added advantage. It is often the deciding factor.

VISA REALITY CHECK (INDIA OUTBOUND)

- Europe: High aspiration, high friction
- Southeast Asia: Low friction, high conversion
- East Asia: Rising interest, improving access
- Middle East: Mixed sentiment, perception-driven

THE MIDDLE EAST PARADOX

The Middle East remains one of the most connected and familiar regions for Indian travellers. At the same time, it presents a layered narrative. Destinations such as Dubai continue to attract strong demand due to ease of travel, strong infrastructure, and consistent marketing.

However, regional tensions often influence traveller sentiment beyond specific borders. Even when destinations remain operational and welcoming, perception plays a significant role. Travellers tend to shorten booking windows, seek reassurance, or consider alternatives that feel more predictable.

This creates a contrast where accessibility and sentiment do not always align. Being geographically close is no longer enough. Confidence in the overall travel environment matters just as much.

AIRLINE STRATEGY AND THE POWER OF CONNECTIVITY

Airlines play a central role in shaping travel patterns. While demand drives routes, connectivity also creates demand. The expansion of IndiGo into Central Asia and Southeast Asia is

introducing Indian travellers to newer destinations. At the same time, the transformation of Air India is expected to improve direct access to long-haul markets.

For travellers, convenience is key. Direct flights, shorter travel times, and competitive fares influence decisions at an early stage. Destinations that require multiple connections or long transit times are often reconsidered, even if they remain desirable.

In many ways, connectivity defines possibility. Where airlines go, travellers follow.

WHAT SHAPES YOUR DESTINATION (WITHOUT YOU KNOWING)

1. Visa ease and approval probability
2. Direct flight availability
3. Airfare competitiveness
4. Geopolitical sentiment
5. Destination marketing spend



TOURISM AS A STRATEGIC LEVER

Tourism today is closely linked with economic and diplomatic priorities. Countries are actively positioning themselves to attract Indian travellers, recognising their growing global influence. Nations such as Saudi Arabia are investing in tourism infrastructure and visibility as part of long-term economic plans. Meanwhile, Japan continues to refine its appeal with curated experiences and improved access for Indian visitors. These efforts are supported by partnerships, marketing collaborations, and policy alignment. The approach is structured and targeted. Attracting Indian travellers is no longer just about promotion. It is about creating a seamless and appealing ecosystem.

ASPIRATION AND ACCESS

A clear distinction is emerging between aspiration and access. Europe and the United States continue to hold strong appeal, but practical challenges such as visa timelines and cost considerations influence final decisions. At the same time, destinations that offer clarity, efficiency, and ease are seeing consistent growth. Travellers are increasingly choosing options that provide certainty. The idea of a “smart destination” is gaining ground, where the overall experience begins well before departure. This does not reduce aspiration. It reshapes how it is fulfilled.

THE EVOLVING INDIAN TRAVELLER

The Indian traveller today approaches travel with a strategic mindset. Planning often begins with understanding visa timelines, entry requirements, and flight options. Flexibility has become an important trait, with travellers willing to adjust destinations

based on practicality. Luxury is also being redefined. It is no longer limited to where one travels, but how seamless the journey feels. A smooth process, from documentation to arrival, is valued as much as the destination itself.

THE NEW INDIAN TRAVELLER 3.0

- Time-sensitive, not just budget-conscious
- Experience-driven, but access-aware
- Flexible with destination, clear on convenience
- Influenced by logistics as much as aspiration

A MAP IN TRANSITION

The global travel map is evolving in response to policy, connectivity, and perception. Destinations that simplify access, strengthen airline links, and maintain stability are better positioned to attract Indian travellers.

Others may continue to inspire interest but face challenges in converting that interest into actual travel. The shift is gradual, but visible.

FINAL WORD

Travel continues to represent freedom, discovery, and aspiration. At the same time, it operates within a framework shaped by access and global dynamics. The Indian traveller is navigating this landscape with awareness and adaptability. Choices are being made with both ambition and practicality in mind. The question is no longer just about where to go next. It is also about how easily that journey can begin.





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RAJASTHAN'S

grandeur through GITB

Rajasthan unfolds like a living tapestry where history breathes through sandstone walls, traditions colour everyday life, and hospitality carries the warmth of generations. Industry leaders and veteran voices from Rajasthan's leading tourism and hospitality associations come together to share their perspectives on GITB's growing influence and the evolving global appeal of the state.

-Tripti Jain



INDIAN ESCAPEDE



The state has long held a commanding presence on India's tourism map, and today, it is stepping into a renewed global spotlight with a sharper, more experiential narrative. The Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) plays a pivotal role in this transformation, offering a powerful platform that connects Rajasthan to the world in a meaningful and structured way. Where legacy meets global curiosity, a fresh wave of international travel demand is shaping how destinations present themselves, with travellers seeking depth, authenticity, and connection. Rajasthan's tourism ecosystem is responding with intent, evolving beyond sightseeing into curated journeys that reflect the state's cultural richness. Hotels, heritage properties, and tourism stakeholders are embracing this shift, creating offerings that feel immersive and personal. This collective momentum is redefining Rajasthan as a destination that delivers not just travel, but a story worth experiencing.

The bazaar that builds bridges

GITB continues to strengthen Rajasthan's position as a global

tourism powerhouse by facilitating high-quality interactions between international buyers and local stakeholders. The platform brings together a curated mix of tour operators, hospitality players, and influencers, all focused on unlocking the state's tourism potential.



Shri Surendra Singh Shahpura, Co Chairman, FICCI Rajasthan and President, FHTR shares, "GITB has evolved into a powerful bridge between Rajasthan and the global travel trade.

What makes it impactful is the quality of engagement it facilitates. International buyers arrive with intent to explore, collaborate, and invest in Rajasthan as a destination. It reinforces our identity as a culturally rich, diverse, and globally competitive tourism hub. The curated B2B meetings and exposure to niche segments like luxury, experiential, and MICE tourism position Rajasthan as an experience that stands apart on the world map."

He adds, "GITB provides unmatched opportunities for local stakeholders to engage directly with global buyers and expand their market reach. It opens doors for new collaborations, product diversification, and access to emerging markets. The growing emphasis on rural tourism, eco-tourism, and experiential travel creates avenues for smaller players to step into the spotlight while strengthening the overall tourism ecosystem."

A growing canvas of opportunity

The evolving landscape of Rajasthan tourism is creating new opportunities for regions and experiences that were once underexplored. Interest in lesser-known destinations is steadily rising, bringing fresh attention to boutique properties, rural circuits, and community-driven tourism initiatives.



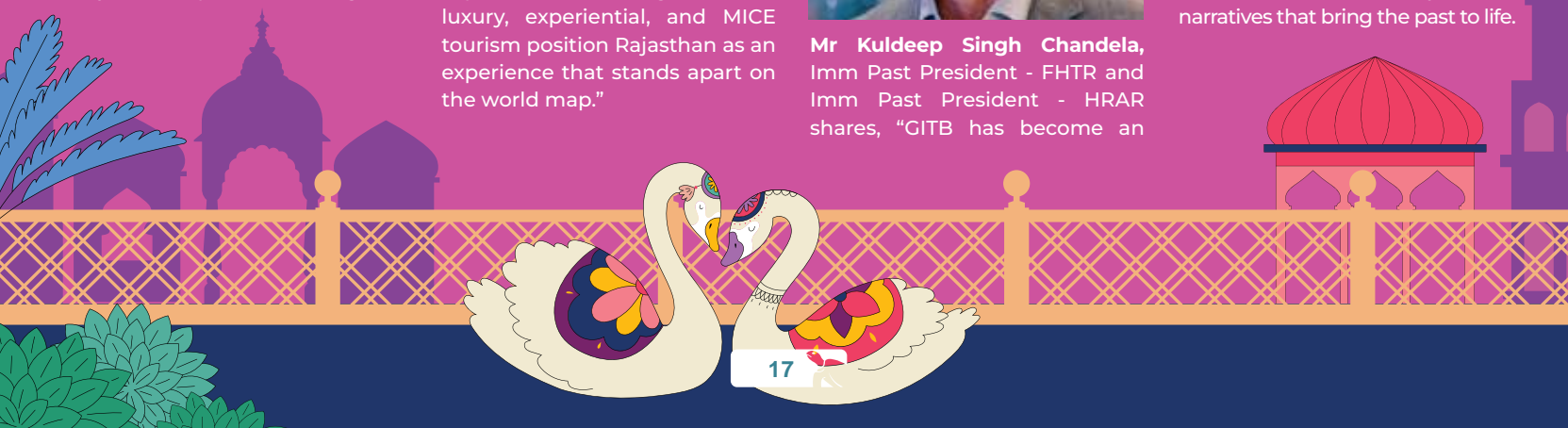
Mr Kuldeep Singh Chandela, Imm Past President - FHTR and Imm Past President - HRAR shares, "GITB has become an

important platform for building long-term opportunities for Rajasthan's tourism stakeholders. The increasing interest in lesser-known destinations is particularly encouraging. Boutique properties, rural tourism initiatives, and smaller players are gaining the attention they deserve on a global stage."

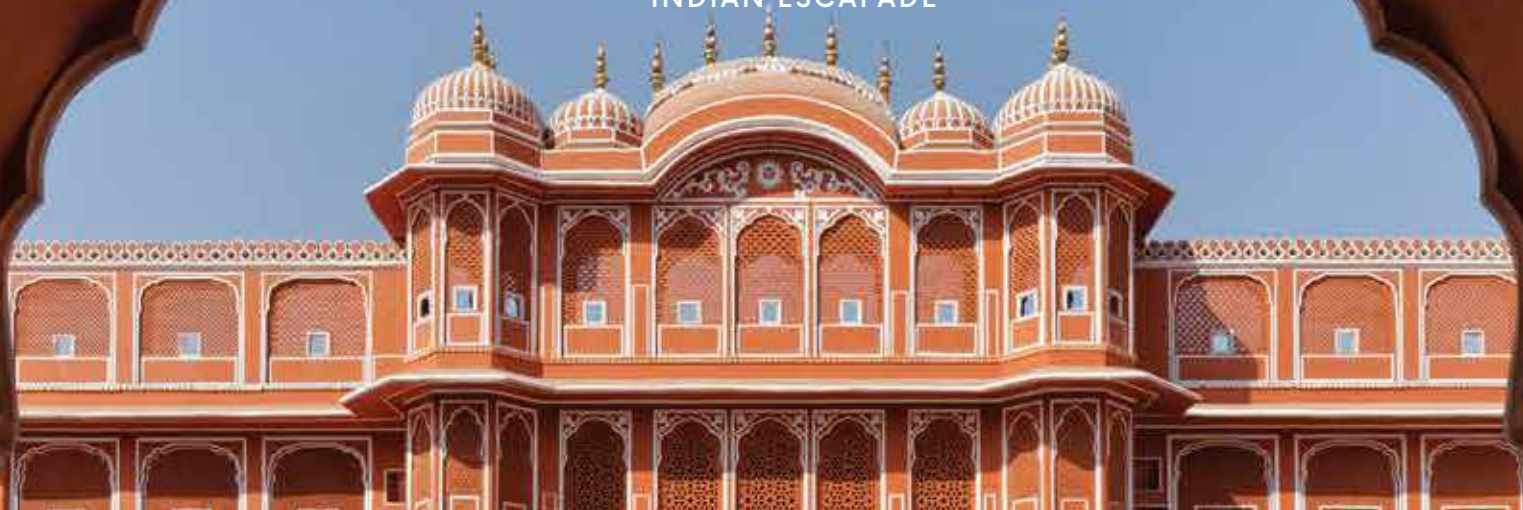
He continues, "The platform fosters relationships that go beyond immediate business. It builds confidence among stakeholders and integrates them into a larger, evolving tourism ecosystem. This sense of inclusion and recognition plays a significant role in shaping Rajasthan's future as a leading inbound tourism destination. This shift is gradually expanding Rajasthan's tourism map, ensuring that benefits reach beyond established circuits and contribute to a more balanced and inclusive growth story."

Living stories that travel the world

Heritage properties remain at the heart of Rajasthan's global appeal, offering travellers an opportunity to step into history while enjoying modern comforts. These spaces are more than accommodations; they are narratives that bring the past to life.



INDIAN ESCAPADE



Thakur Gaj Singh, President, IHHA shares, "The Great Indian Travel Bazaar offers a powerful platform for heritage hotels to present themselves as immersive cultural experiences rather than just places to stay. It brings international buyers who are actively seeking unique, story-driven products. Through curated interactions, these properties can showcase their identity, from restored palaces and forts to havelis that seamlessly blend history with modern comfort."

He adds, "Heritage hotels form the backbone of Rajasthan's tourism appeal. They allow travellers to live its history through architecture, culture, and traditions. Their role extends into supporting sustainable tourism by preserving legacy structures and benefiting local communities. Rural heritage tourism is also gaining momentum, offering travellers access to authentic lifestyles and lesser-explored regions, which adds depth and diversity to Rajasthan's overall tourism narrative."

From stay to story

Rajasthan's hospitality sector is undergoing a thoughtful transformation, with a clear focus on creating experiences that resonate with global travellers. The shift from standardised stays to personalised journeys is visible across segments, from luxury resorts to boutique properties.



Mr Tarun Bansal, President, HRAR shares, "India's positioning as a stable and culturally rich destination creates strong opportunities for Rajasthan on the global tourism map. GITB serves as a premier platform to present this potential to international buyers. Hotels are becoming more proactive, focusing on personalisation, infrastructure upgrades, and experience-driven offerings that align with evolving traveller expectations."

Experiences take centre stage

The definition of travel is evolving, and Rajasthan is embracing this change by placing experiences at the centre of its offerings. Travellers today seek connections with culture, cuisine, and communities, and the state is well-equipped to deliver on these expectations.

He explains, "Responsible stays, experience-rich offerings, and a strong focus on gastronomical journeys are shaping the future. Travellers prefer hotels that offer a personal touch and meaningful engagement. Heritage properties, smaller destinations, and ecologically rich stays are gaining strong interest, allowing both large hotels and boutique properties to grow together. This approach is encouraging diversity within the hospitality sector, ensuring that every traveller finds an experience that aligns with their interests and preferences."

Rajasthan for the world

Rajasthan's tourism journey is entering an exciting new phase, where its timeless heritage aligns seamlessly with contemporary global

expectations. The state continues to evolve with confidence, embracing innovation while preserving its cultural essence.

GITB stands as a catalyst in this transformation, fostering meaningful connections and long-term partnerships that strengthen Rajasthan's position on the global stage. The collective efforts of stakeholders across the spectrum are shaping a tourism ecosystem that feels inclusive, dynamic, and future-ready.

The road ahead carries a sense of optimism and purpose, positioning Rajasthan as a destination that offers more than travel. It offers stories, experiences, and memories that stay with travellers long after the journey ends.





Sariska Safari Lodge



Sariska Safari Lodge is a boutique, eco-friendly luxury lodge located closest to Gate No. 1 (Sariska Gate) of the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan. Surrounded by the Aravalli ranges, the region is rich in wildlife, Mauryan-Buddhist heritage, serene lakes, and captivating night skies. Set across 6.5 acres, the lodge offers a tranquil escape where sustainable living meets refined comfort, creating a truly immersive wilderness experience.

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AIR INDIA'S

NEW ERA TAKES FLIGHT



Air India's transformation story is unfolding with a renewed sense of purpose, scale, and ambition. Manish Puri, Head of Global Sales, Air India shares the present and future goals of the Airline.

-Tripti Jain



Manish Puri

AEROPHILE

Over the past few years, the airline has quietly rebuilt its foundation, investing in fleet, product, people, and systems. Today, that effort is becoming increasingly visible across cabins, campaigns, and customer experiences. The shift is no longer confined to internal restructuring; it is now being experienced at 35,000 feet and beyond.

The takeoff moment

Air India's transformation has entered a phase where storytelling meets substance. Campaigns like 'Change is in the

confidently telling our story because the product is ready to be experienced. This transition signals a strategic shift from internal alignment to external engagement, backed by tangible improvements across the board."

Scale meets sophistication

A defining pillar of Air India's transformation lies in its ambitious fleet expansion. With an order book of approximately 600 aircraft, the airline is positioning itself for long-term global relevance. Manish

three-class configuration across most aircraft. This standardisation ensures that passengers experience the same level of comfort and service regardless of route or aircraft type.

"The earlier inconsistency in product was a challenge for customers. Today, with a harmonised narrowbody fleet, we are delivering a predictable and elevated experience across domestic and short-haul international routes," he adds.

Redefining long-haul travel

aircraft will feel like they are stepping into a completely new product. The distinction between a legacy aircraft and a new delivery will disappear."

The introduction of new-generation aircraft, including the Boeing 787-9 and Airbus A350 variants, further strengthens this narrative. By the end of the year, a significant portion of the widebody fleet will reflect this upgraded identity.

"This is a journey where every new aircraft and every retrofit adds to the momentum. The goal is to ensure that a majority of our flights offer a modern, world-class



Air' and the ongoing premium economy narrative are reflective of a brand ready to showcase its evolution. Manish captures this moment with clarity and shares, "Over the last three years, the focus was on building the foundation.

What you are seeing now is the outcome of that effort becoming visible to customers, partners, and the larger ecosystem. This is the phase where we are

elaborates on the magnitude of this commitment and explains, "We have placed one of the largest aircraft orders in aviation history because scale is essential for a network carrier. This is about building a future-ready airline that can serve both India and the world with consistency and quality."

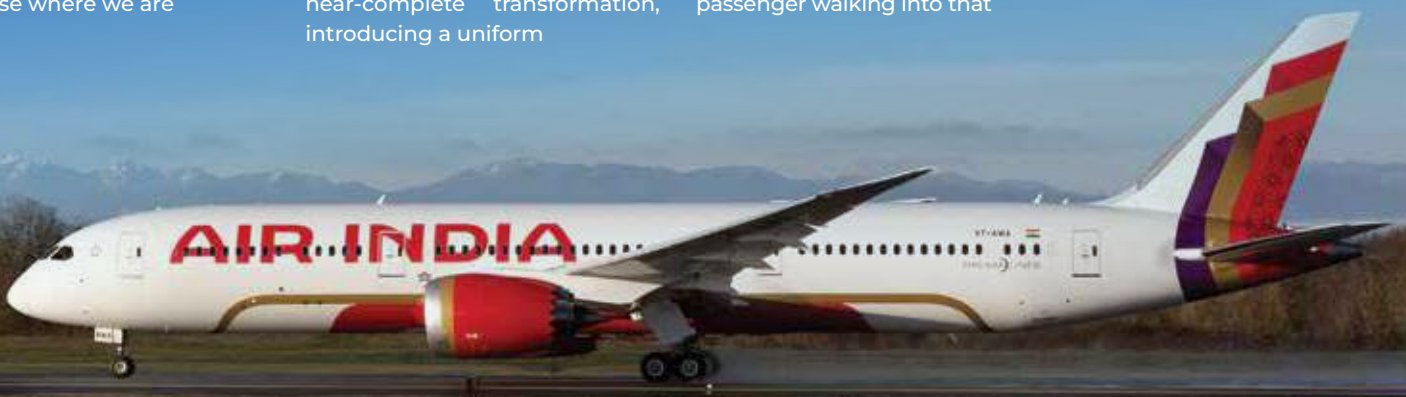
The narrowbody fleet has already undergone a near-complete transformation, introducing a uniform

The spotlight in 2026 firmly rests on widebody transformation. Air India's legacy Boeing 787 Dreamliners are being completely retrofitted, with interiors stripped down to the shell and rebuilt to match global standards. Manish paints a vivid picture of this evolution and highlights, "When a widebody goes in for retrofit, everything inside is brand new. The passenger walking into that

experience," he shares.

Experience beyond the seat

Air India's transformation extends far beyond seats and cabins. The airline is reimagining the entire onboard experience, from dining to entertainment. Manish highlights the attention to detail in these enhancements and shares, "The experience on board is being curated





thoughtfully. From upgraded menus to regional wine programs, every element is designed to resonate with the route and the customer. When you fly to Japan, you experience a Japanese touch. When you fly to Europe, the offering reflects that region."

Digital innovation plays a key role as well. The introduction of onboard streaming through personal devices brings a fresh dimension to in-flight entertainment. He adds, "We have introduced a bring-your-own-device platform with over 1,300 hours of content. This is available across our narrowbody fleet and offers a seamless entertainment experience even on shorter routes."

The sweet spot of modern travel

Among the most significant strategic bets is the expansion of premium economy. Positioned as an accessible upgrade, this cabin class is redefining value for Indian travellers. Manish explains its growing relevance and explains, "Premium economy is where aspiration meets practicality. It allows travellers to enjoy enhanced comfort, priority services, and a better overall experience without stepping into business class pricing. The response from customers has been extremely encouraging. This segment is increasingly attracting both leisure and corporate travellers, reflecting a broader shift towards premiumisation in the Indian aviation market."

Grounded in excellence

The transformation journey begins well before takeoff. Air

India's new Maharaja Lounge at Delhi's Terminal 3 sets the tone for a refined ground experience. Manish describes the philosophy behind this space and emphasises, "The lounge is designed to reflect the essence of Air India's new identity. It combines modern aesthetics with elements of Indian heritage, creating an environment that feels both premium and rooted." Expansion plans across domestic and international airports indicate a commitment to consistency at every touchpoint. "For a network carrier, the transit experience is just as important as the flight. We are building spaces that enhance that journey," he adds.

Building the backbone

Behind the scenes, Air India is investing heavily in infrastructure to support its ambitious growth. Training academies, simulator facilities, and maintenance hubs are being developed at scale. Manish shares, "A 600-aircraft airline requires a robust ecosystem. From pilot training to maintenance, every aspect needs to be built with scale and efficiency in mind.

These investments are critical for sustaining long-term growth. Such initiatives ensure that the transformation is deeply rooted in operational excellence, rather than surface-level change."

Connecting India to the world

Air India's strategy is anchored in establishing India as a global aviation hub. With its geographical advantage, the airline is well-positioned to connect East and West seamlessly.

Manish shares his perspective on this opportunity and says, "India has the potential to become a major transit hub. Our network strategy is designed to bring traffic through India, connecting Europe, Southeast Asia, and beyond. This is a significant opportunity for us as a global carrier. The focus on key international markets, coupled with improved product offerings, is already driving a shift in passenger profiles, particularly in premium cabins."

A brand reborn in the skies

Air India's revival is a story of scale, ambition, and meticulous execution. The airline is steadily moving towards its goal of capturing a larger share of both domestic and international markets. Manish concludes with a forward-looking vision and shares, "Our journey is ongoing. The transformation is visible, and the momentum is strong. Every step we take is aimed at delivering a world-class experience that reflects the aspirations of modern India."

Air India's transformation represents more than an airline upgrade; it reflects the resurgence of a national icon. With a renewed focus on product, service, and global connectivity, the airline is carving a new identity that resonates with both Indian and international travellers.



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INDIAN ESCAPADE

Gujarat

2.0 Towards holistic travel



Dr. Kuldeep Arya (IAS)

Stepping into his new role as Secretary of Tourism, Gujarat, Dr. Kuldeep Arya (IAS) carries with him a clear and evolving vision which is to reposition the state beyond its established strengths and introduce it as a multifaceted, future-ready destination.

- *Sudipta Saha*

INDIAN ESCAPE

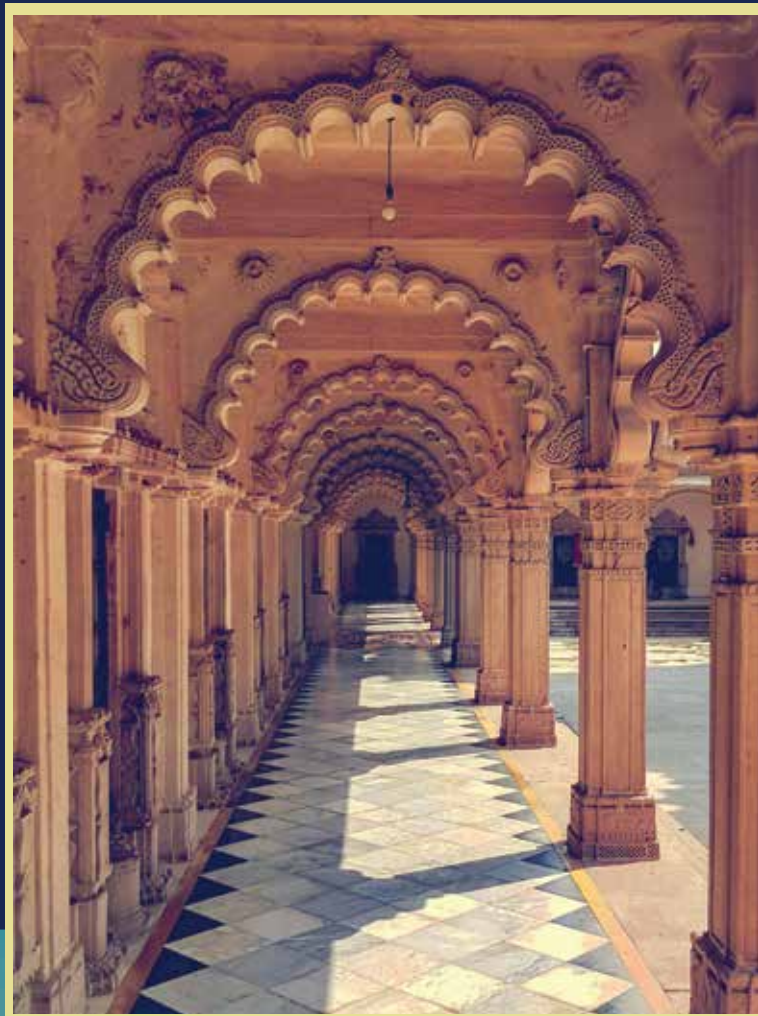
While Gujarat has long been celebrated for its rich cultural heritage, wildlife, and iconic landmarks like Somnath Temple and Dwarkadhish Temple, the focus now is to expand its tourism narrative. The roadmap is firmly aligned with emerging global travel trends, with special emphasis on wellness, destination weddings, and adventure tourism. With 2026 declared as the 'Tourism Year,' Gujarat is entering a dynamic new phase, expanding beyond its iconic spiritual landmarks to embrace a more diverse and future-ready tourism identity. The focus is steadily shifting towards wellness, destination weddings, and adventure, positioning the state as a holistic destination that blends tradition with evolving global travel trends.

2026 declared as tourism year

The timing is strategic. "We want to promote Gujarat, in addition to its existing attractions and therefore the state government has declared 2026 as the 'Tourism Year,' signalling a renewed push to amplify Gujarat's visibility and appeal. The vision is clear to develop Gujarat as a holistic tourism hub where wellness and hospitality experiences flourish, adventure tourism regains momentum, and the state becomes a preferred destination for weddings," mentions Dr. Kuldeep Arya.

Inbound Tourism: A strong yet growing segment

Contrary to common perception, Gujarat already attracts a significant number of international visitors, particularly



for its spiritual circuits. Pilgrims and global travellers frequent key temples, and many extend their journey to explore wildlife at Gir National Park. While the base is strong, there remains scope to further enhance global appeal.

While iconic attractions like Somnath Temple and Dwarkadhish Temple continue to draw visitors, the state aims to build on these strengths. The strategy is to complement spiritual and cultural tourism with wellness retreats, adventure experiences, and curated wedding destinations. Addressing perceptions around inbound tourism, Dr. Kuldeep Arya offers a data-backed perspective. Gujarat, he asserts, already commands a strong presence among international travellers, particularly those drawn to its spiritual circuits. Pilgrimage sites continue to be major anchors, attracting visitors seeking profound cultural and spiritual experiences. These journeys often extend beyond temples, with travellers exploring the wilderness of Gir National Park, creating a well-rounded itinerary.

However, he acknowledges that there is always room to grow. Enhancing Gujarat's appeal and visibility remains a priority, especially on the global stage. While the state has been consistently active across domestic travel exhibitions, efforts are now being intensified internationally. Participation in leading global travel marts like ITB Berlin and World Travel Market London is being scaled up, alongside exploring newer platforms and markets to widen outreach.



Festivals as a key tourism driver

Festivals, too, play a central role in Gujarat's tourism identity. Navratri, one of the state's most vibrant celebrations, continues to be promoted extensively. Already supported and organised at a large scale by the state, there are ongoing efforts to enhance its appeal further—through pre- and post-event experiences that can attract both domestic and international travellers seeking immersive cultural engagement. "And Gujarat Tourism is celebrating and promoting Navratri for many

years, and have been sponsoring full pre-event and post-events," says Dr. Kuldeep Arya.

Tourism as an economic engine

Policy reforms are also on the horizon. Dr. Kuldeep Arya adds, "A new, integrated tourism policy is in the works—one that aims to bring together all aspects of the sector under a single, cohesive framework. From hotels and adventure tourism to homestays, caravans, and even film tourism, the policy will be comprehensive and investor-friendly. Benchmarking against leading tourism destinations in India and neighbouring countries, the goal is to create a robust ecosystem that encourages investment and infrastructure development. We

assure to come up with a policy that would not only be attractive but would also be investor friendly for those who intend to invest in the infrastructural development in Gujarat."

At its core, the larger vision ties tourism directly to economic growth. "With tourism already recognised as an industry in Gujarat, the focus is now on attracting greater private participation, boosting conventions and events, and generating employment opportunities across the state," adds Dr. Kuldeep Arya.

In essence, Gujarat's tourism story is entering a new chapter, one that builds on its strong cultural and spiritual foundation while embracing new-age travel experiences to capture the imagination of a global audience.

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Sailing into what's next



With a robust pipeline of new ships, refreshed brand positioning, and a sharpened focus on trade partnerships, Damian Borg, Senior Director of Sales Strategy & Operations, Asia Pacific, NCL shares how they are shaping a future that blends scale with sophistication.

-Tripti Jain



Damian Borg

CRUISE ODYSSEY



The global cruise industry is navigating a powerful position, and Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) is riding that wave with confidence, clarity, and a renewed focus on innovation. Across regions, including Asia Pacific and India, the brand is witnessing strong traction driven by evolving traveller preferences, growing awareness, and a deepening appreciation for experiential travel. The brand is clearly ambitious to deliver more immersive, flexible, and differentiated cruise experiences that resonate across markets.

The Aqua effect

The launch of Norwegian Aqua has emerged as a defining highlight for the brand, reinforcing the enduring appeal of new hardware in the cruise space. Speaking on the same lines Damian shares, “2025 has been a really strong year for us including Asia Pacific, with India performing exceptionally well. The response to Aqua has been fantastic. New ships naturally generate excitement, and Aqua

has delivered on that expectation in every way. We positioned her in the Caribbean, which continues to be a high-performing market, especially out of North America where demand for new ships is incredibly strong.”

He adds how the ship’s design evolution has played a crucial role in its success and shares, “What’s remarkable is that Aqua is only about 27 metres longer than Prima and Viva, yet that additional space has completely transformed the onboard experience. You can see it in the open deck layouts, the expanded dining venues, and the more spacious cabins. Guests immediately notice the difference. The ship has been rated very highly, and from a bookings perspective, she has outperformed both Prima and Viva in their launch years.”

A fleet that feels familiar

Excitement around new ships often captures headlines, yet NCL’s broader fleet continues to

deliver consistent value and experience. Damian explains, “There’s always a lot of attention on our newest ships, and rightly so, they are incredible. At the same time, our entire fleet has undergone significant refurbishment over the past few years. What we offer is consistency. Guests stepping onto any of our ships will recognise the design language, the restaurants, the service ethos. That familiarity builds trust and comfort, which is incredibly important.”

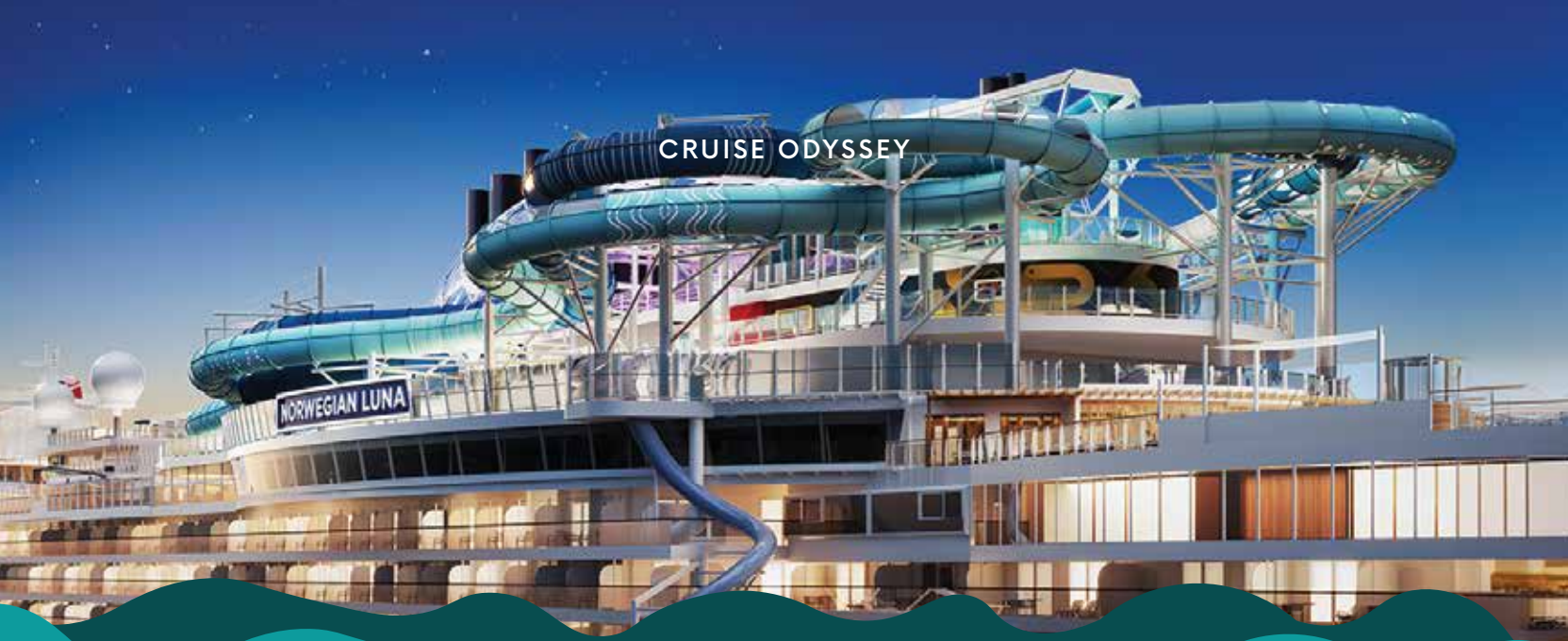
The emphasis lies in ensuring that every ship, regardless of age, reflects the brand’s core promise of quality and experience. “Guests may be drawn in by features like go-kart tracks or water slides on newer ships, and those are great additions. The essence of a great cruise lies in the service, the itinerary, and the overall atmosphere on board. Our older ships deliver that just as effectively, and often with a sense of nostalgia that many guests truly appreciate,” he says.

Charting the future

NCL’s pipeline signals a bold expansion strategy, with innovation and scale at its core. Damian shares highlights about the incoming routes and says, “We’re incredibly excited about what’s coming next. Norwegian Luna is set to launch soon, followed by Norwegian Aura, which is already open for sale. Aura will be our largest ship ever, accommodating around 3,800 guests. The focus is on creating more space, more experiences, and more opportunities for guests to engage with the ship in their own way.”

He shares about the broader vision which extends well beyond individual launches. “Across the group, including our sister brands, we currently have 17 ships on order. That level of investment speaks volumes about our confidence in the future of cruising. It also gives us the flexibility to expand into new regions and bring our best hardware to more markets over time,” he adds.





From the Caribbean to the world

The Caribbean continues to serve as the launchpad for NCL's newest ships, offering scale, demand, and immediate commercial viability. Damian explains, "The Caribbean is a natural starting point for our new ships. The market there is large, established, and very receptive to new experiences. It allows us to build momentum quickly and ensure strong early performance."

Growth ambitions extend far beyond this core market. He adds, "As we continue to expand the fleet, we will naturally see greater distribution of ships across different regions. Asia Pacific is an area of immense opportunity, and we are optimistic about bringing more and better deployment into this part of the world over time."

India Rising

India stands out as one of the most promising markets in NCL's global strategy, driven by its scale, diversity, and evolving

travel mindset. "This is an incredibly exciting market for us. The opportunity here is immense. You have a large population with increasing disposable income and a growing appetite for international travel. Our focus is on building awareness and confidence, particularly through our trade partners," Damian shares with conviction.

Travel patterns from India reveal a strong preference for specific regions. "Europe continues to be the number one destination, especially the Mediterranean and Northern Europe.

Alaska is also performing very well. We are seeing growing interest in the Caribbean as well, particularly as shorter itineraries become more visible and accessible," he says.

The Fly-Cruise shift

The concept of fly-cruise remains central to NCL's approach in India, supported by a strong emphasis on education and engagement.

"Our strategy is very clear. We want to position cruise as a natural extension of an

international holiday. When a customer is planning a trip to Europe or Alaska, cruise should be part of that conversation. That's where our focus on training and education comes in," Damian shares.

A broader industry evolution is also contributing to this shift. "As more cruise brands enter markets closer to home, they are introducing new travellers to cruising as a category. That's a positive development for everyone. Once guests discover different brands and destinations. That's where we come in with our global offerings," he adds.

A new narrative

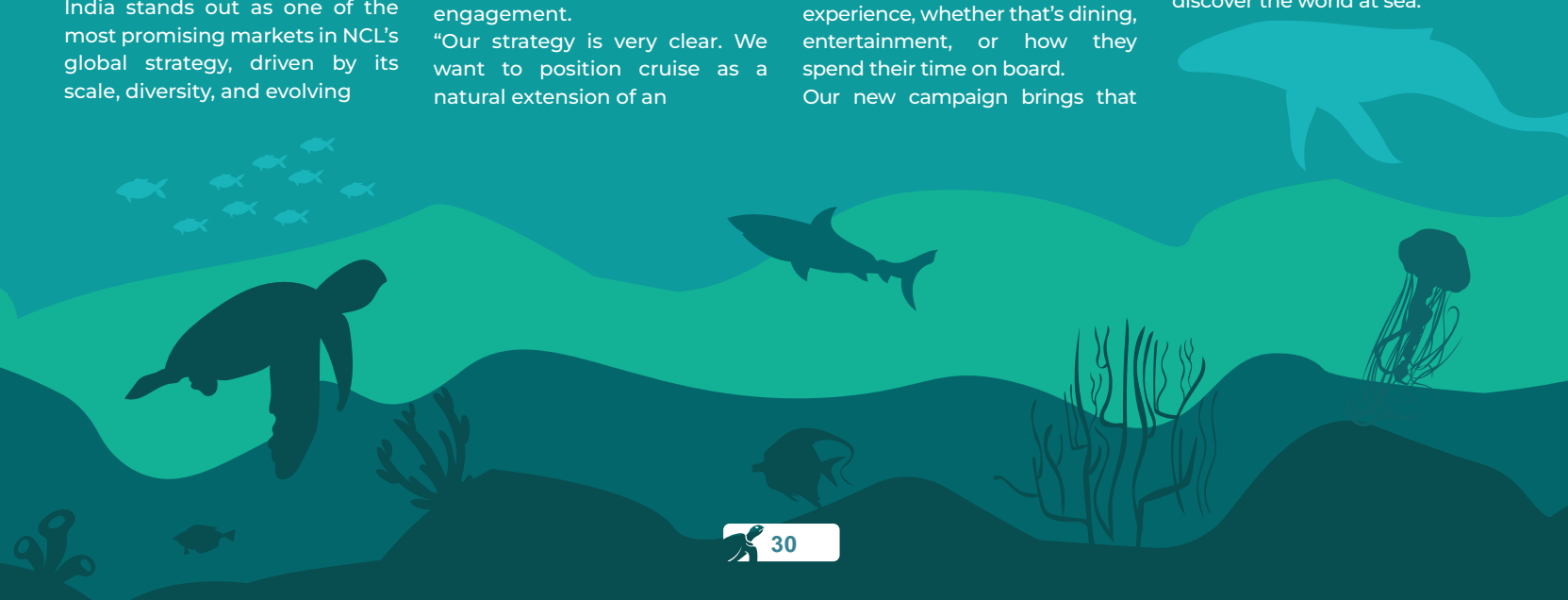
NCL's brand evolution is rooted in its original philosophy of flexibility and choice, now reintroduced with a fresh perspective. Damian explains, "Freestyle cruising has always been at the heart of who we are. It's about giving guests the freedom to design their own experience, whether that's dining, entertainment, or how they spend their time on board.

Our new campaign brings that

idea back into focus in a more contemporary and engaging way," The goal is to simplify the message and strengthen differentiation. "We want guests and agents to clearly understand what makes us different. It's about flexibility, variety, and the ability to create a holiday that truly reflects individual preferences. That clarity will drive stronger engagement and, ultimately, better conversion," he says.

Building a future anchored in experience

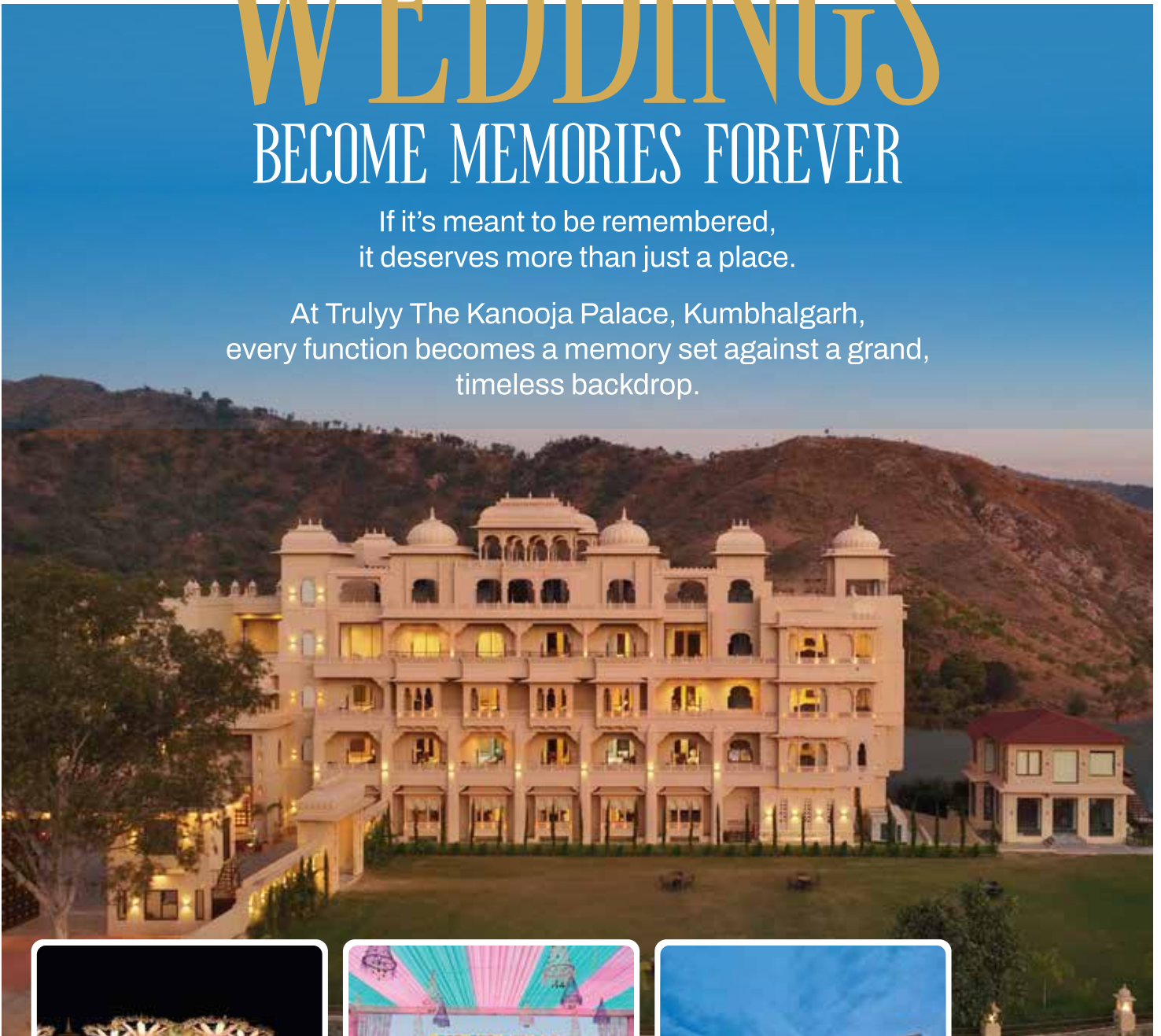
India, with its scale and evolving traveller base, remains a key pillar in this growth story. As awareness deepens and aspirations rise, NCL's focus on delivering flexible, experience-led cruising is set to resonate strongly. The horizon ahead looks expansive, and for NCL, the course is clear which is to create more space, more choice, and more reasons for travellers to discover the world at sea.



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Rajasthan

From heritage to hub

A new phase of tourism growth is taking shape in Rajasthan, built on stronger global engagement and clearer market positioning. GITB sits at the centre of this evolution, enabling real business outcomes. Industry leaders speak their mind about the upcoming Travel Bazaar.

- Tripti Jain

Rajasthan's tourism journey is entering a decisive phase, shaped by a clear intent to evolve into a year-round, high-value global destination. The Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), hosted annually in Jaipur, has emerged as a central force driving this transformation. The platform brings together international buyers, Indian tourism stakeholders, and policymakers, creating a focused environment where ideas convert into partnerships and visibility translates into business.



Smt. Rukmani Riar, IAS

Setting the stage

GITB reflects a strategic shift in how destinations are positioned. The emphasis lies on building sustained engagement with global travel trade rather than relying solely on promotional campaigns. Rajasthan's diverse offerings, spanning heritage, wildlife, luxury, and experiential travel, find structured representation through this marketplace, ensuring that the state remains relevant across evolving traveller preferences. Rajasthan in focus

Smt. Rukmani Riar, IAS, Commissioner of Tourism and Managing Director, RTDC, highlights the state's long-term vision anchored by GITB. Speaking on the same she shares, "Rajasthan's tourism strategy is guided by a clear objective to evolve from being admired primarily as a heritage destination to being consistently chosen as a year-round, high-value, experience-led global tourism hub. Hosting GITB in Jaipur positions the state at the centre of India's inbound tourism engagement, where curated B2B meetings, destination familiarisation visits, and focused presentations convert visibility into tangible commercial outcomes. International buyers engage directly with our stakeholders, assess our offerings, and integrate them into their travel portfolios, ensuring that Rajasthan becomes part of sustained global travel planning." This approach allows Rajasthan to present itself as a comprehensive tourism portfolio. Experiences range from palace stays and desert safaris to rural immersion and destination weddings, creating strong appeal across diverse international markets. GITB strengthens this positioning by enabling direct interactions that accelerate decision-making and deepen market access.

India's inbound momentum

GITB plays a significant role in strengthening India's global tourism narrative. Dr Jyotsna Suri, CMD, The Lalit and Past President, FICCI, elaborates its importance in building credibility and expanding reach. She shares, "This year's Great Indian Travel Bazaar plays a pivotal role in reinforcing India's credibility as a serious global inbound tourism destination. It builds confidence by showcasing readiness for high-value travel and large-scale MICE opportunities, while also encouraging diversification into newer, high-potential source markets. The emphasis on experience-led storytelling, across luxury, culture, wellness, and immersive travel, is helping transform India from a campaign-driven perception into a consistently deliverable global tourism product."

The focus on niche segments such as wellness, culture, and experiential travel aligns with global demand trends. GITB provides a platform where these offerings are presented in a structured manner, allowing international buyers to understand and integrate them into their travel programs.



Dr Jyotsna Suri

Driving business outcomes

For Rajesh Magow, Co-Founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip and Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee, the strength of GITB lies in its ability to align key stakeholders. He explains, "GITB has created a credible platform that places India's inbound opportunity in front of the right global audience. Its real strength lies in aligning policymakers, tourism boards, and international buyers in a shared space where open dialogue can address perceptions, unlock opportunities, and showcase the depth of experiences India offers. This alignment drives meaningful business outcomes and has the potential to significantly strengthen India's global tourism positioning." Such alignment ensures that discussions move beyond visibility and translate into actionable outcomes. Partnerships formed during GITB contribute to long-term growth by strengthening inbound travel pipelines and enhancing destination readiness.



Rajesh Magow



Mr Ravi Gosain

Empowering stakeholders

The benefits of GITB extend directly to local tourism stakeholders across Rajasthan. Hotels, tour operators, transport providers, artisans, and experience curators gain access to a global audience within a structured environment. Mr Ravi Gosain, Managing Director, Erco Travels and Chairperson, FICCI Inbound Tourism Committee, emphasises the importance of this connection. Elaborating further he says, "GITB serves as a powerful bridge between global demand and local capability. It enables Indian stakeholders to engage directly with international buyers, understand evolving expectations, and position their offerings with greater precision. The platform fosters collaboration across the tourism value chain and drives a

more structured approach to inbound growth, ensuring that benefits are widely distributed and aligned with global standards." This engagement encourages stakeholders to upgrade service standards, refine their offerings, and explore new market segments. The exposure to international expectations drives continuous improvement and innovation across the ecosystem. Expanding experiences Rajasthan's tourism strategy focuses on diversification and year-round appeal. GITB provides an effective platform to communicate this shift, highlighting experiences beyond traditional heritage tourism. Wildlife safaris, rural tourism, MICE events, and destination weddings are gaining prominence as high-value segments. These offerings encourage longer stays and higher spending, contributing to sustainable growth. The ability to present such diverse experiences under a unified narrative strengthens Rajasthan's position as a versatile destination.

The journey continues

GITB continues to shape the future of tourism in Rajasthan and India by fostering

collaboration, enhancing market access, and driving innovation. The platform supports a transition towards premium, experience-led travel, aligned with global trends and traveller expectations. Rajasthan's consistent focus on quality, diversity, and global engagement positions it strongly for sustained growth. GITB stands as a key enabler in this journey, ensuring that the state remains at the forefront of international tourism conversations while delivering tangible value to stakeholders. Rajasthan's transformation from a heritage-led destination to a year-round global tourism hub is being actively realised through platforms like GITB. The event brings together vision, strategy, and execution in a single space, creating opportunities that extend far beyond its duration. With strong leadership, collaborative efforts, and a clear focus on high-value tourism, Rajasthan is strengthening its global footprint. GITB ensures that this growth remains structured, inclusive, and aligned with the evolving demands of international travellers, securing the state's position as a leading force in India's tourism landscape.





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LUXURY, YOUR WAY IN Seychelles

Seychelles feels less like a destination and more like a mood Indian travellers are increasingly chasing, it is intimate, indulgent, and deeply personal. Lijo John, Cluster Director of Sales and Marketing, Anantara Maïa Seychelles Villas & Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles Resort shares how that mood unfolds in two distinct rhythms, each shaping a different kind of island story.

-Tripti Jain



Lijo John



Seychelles has steadily transformed into a dreamscape that aligns seamlessly with the aspirations of Indian travellers seeking beauty, exclusivity, and immersive experiences. With its turquoise waters, powdery beaches, and lush tropical landscapes, the destination offers a sense of escape that feels both indulgent and deeply personal. Within this idyllic setting, Anantara Maia Seychelles Villas and Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles Resort present two distinctive interpretations of island luxury, each thoughtfully crafted to resonate with different traveller mindsets from India.

Two resorts, one destination

Anantara Maia Seychelles Villas captures the essence of ultra-luxury through its intimate, all-villa concept, where privacy becomes the ultimate indulgence. Designed for those who value discretion and bespoke service, the resort curates every detail around the guest, creating an experience that feels deeply personal and effortlessly refined.

“Indian travellers today are incredibly discerning and value experiences that feel exclusive and tailored to their preferences. At Anantara Maia Seychelles Villas, every stay is a reflection of individuality. From personalised menus to curated wellness journeys and private dining under the stars, the entire experience is designed to celebrate privacy, luxury, and meaningful moments,” shares Lijo.

Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles Resort brings a vibrant and contemporary energy to the island, offering a more social and dynamic beachfront escape. The resort appeals to a new generation of Indian travellers who seek stylish spaces, engaging experiences, and a relaxed yet elevated holiday atmosphere.

“At Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles Resort, the focus is on creating a lively and immersive environment that resonates with modern travellers. The resort offers a blend of comfort, design, and curated experiences that are ideal for couples, families, and groups of friends looking to enjoy Seychelles in a more interactive and social way,” he adds.

The rise of experience-led travel

A clear shift in travel preferences has shaped the way Indian guests approach international holidays. Experiences now take centre stage, with travellers seeking journeys that go beyond sightseeing and connect with emotions, culture, and personal milestones.

“Experiential travel has become a defining trend among Indian travellers. Guests are increasingly looking for moments that feel unique and shareable, whether it is a private beach dinner, a wellness retreat, or an immersive nature experience. Seychelles naturally lends itself to these aspirations, offering a setting that is both visually stunning and deeply experiential,” explains Lijo.

Celebrations continue to play a significant role in travel decisions, with honeymoons, anniversaries, and intimate gatherings driving demand. The appeal of Seychelles as a

romantic haven remains strong, enhanced by the ability to create highly customised experiences. “Honeymoons and milestone celebrations remain at the heart of the Indian market. There is a growing interest in creating intimate, meaningful celebrations that reflect personal stories.

Our resorts are designed to facilitate these moments through bespoke experiences, thoughtful service, and settings that feel truly magical,” he explains.

Culinary comfort meets island discovery

Dining preferences have emerged as a key consideration for Indian travellers, who seek a balance between familiar flavours and local culinary exploration. The ability to cater to diverse tastes enhances the overall travel experience,





HOTELLIGENCE

creating comfort alongside discovery.

“Indian guests appreciate the availability of familiar cuisine alongside the opportunity to explore local flavours. At both resorts, we place a strong emphasis on flexibility in dining, ensuring that guests can enjoy Indian dishes tailored to their preferences while also discovering the unique culinary heritage of Seychelles,” says Lijo. This approach allows travellers to feel at home even in a faraway destination, enriching their journey through a seamless blend of comfort and curiosity.

Building connections through storytelling

Strategic collaborations and authentic storytelling form the backbone of the resorts’ approach to the Indian market. By engaging with travel partners, media, and digital platforms, both properties continue to strengthen their visibility and appeal.

“Our strategy for India revolves around meaningful partnerships and compelling storytelling. We are working closely with luxury tour operators, travel advisors, and media platforms to showcase the distinct experiences offered by both resorts. Influencer collaborations and PR initiatives play a key role in bringing these stories to life in a way that resonates with Indian

audiences,” he shares.

Digital engagement remains a powerful tool in reaching today’s travellers, with curated content designed to inspire and inform. “Digital campaigns tailored specifically for Indian travellers allow us to highlight the romance, wellness, and lifestyle aspects of our resorts. Social media and targeted marketing efforts help us connect with our audience in a more personalised and impactful way,” he adds.

Crafting experiences that speak to India

Both resorts offer experiences that align naturally with the expectations of Indian travellers, combining luxury, flexibility, and thoughtful attention to detail. From personalised stays at Anantara Maia to the vibrant offerings at Avani+, every aspect is designed to create lasting memories.

“At Anantara Maia Seychelles Villas, the experience is entirely customised to the guest.

Every detail, from dining to wellness, is curated to reflect individual preferences. This level of personalisation resonates strongly with Indian guests who value exclusivity and attention to detail,” Lijo explains.

“At Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles Resort, guests can enjoy a wide range of curated experiences, including water sports, cultural

immersions, and relaxed dining concepts. The resort offers a sense of freedom and exploration that appeals to families and groups, creating a well-rounded island getaway,” he adds.

which presents exciting opportunities for the destination,” says Lijo.

Vision for the future

Anantara Maia Seychelles Villas and Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles Resort together represent a holistic approach to hospitality, catering to the evolving needs of Indian travellers across different segments. Their combined offering ensures that every traveller finds an experience that aligns with their aspirations.

“Both properties complement each other beautifully, allowing us to cater to a wide spectrum of Indian travellers. From ultra-luxury and complete privacy at Anantara Maia to the vibrant and contemporary experience at Avani+, we are able to offer something unique for every kind of guest. This dual positioning strengthens our presence in the Indian market and allows us to create more meaningful connections with our audience,” concludes Lijo.

A destination on the rise

Seychelles continues to strengthen its position as a preferred destination for Indian travellers, driven by accessibility, natural beauty, and its strong association with romance and luxury. The destination’s appeal extends beyond traditional segments, opening new opportunities for diverse travel experiences.

“Seychelles is gaining remarkable momentum in the Indian market. The visa-free access, combined with its stunning landscapes and premium offerings, makes it an attractive choice for travellers seeking both convenience and exclusivity. There is also a growing interest in family travel, destination celebrations, and wellness-focused holidays,

The Consortium Hotels Wild by Design

As experiential travel takes centre stage in India, The Consortium Hotels is carving a distinctive niche through curated wildlife, heritage, and boutique luxury stays. Jitender Sharma, Founder & CEO, The Consortium Hotels shares more about the brand.

- Tripti Jain



Jitender Sharma

India's tourism narrative is transforming, one that moves beyond destinations and into the realm of meaningful experiences. Discerning travellers today seek intimacy with nature, authenticity in heritage, and depth in storytelling. This shift has created fertile ground for hospitality brands that understand the art of curation. The Consortium Hotels stands at this intersection, shaping a portfolio that celebrates boutique luxury, wildlife immersion, and culturally rooted stays. With a focused approach toward experiential travel, the brand is aligning itself with the aspirations of a new-age traveller who values both exclusivity and emotional connection.

Market in motion

"The tourism market in 2026 is evolving towards experience-led, premium, and domestic travel, which strongly aligns with our core philosophy. Travellers are increasingly seeking wildlife, heritage, and immersive stays that offer more than just accommodation they want stories, connections, and memories," shares Jitender. He elaborates on how this shift positions the company advantageously. "Our strength lies in curating such distinctive

experiences. Clear positioning, thoughtfully designed offerings, and a strong digital presence will define success in this phase. The outlook remains highly positive, and we are well placed to capitalise on this momentum through focused execution and meaningful differentiation."

Where wilderness meets luxury

A significant highlight in the brand's growth journey is its recent strategic collaboration. Jitender shares, "This year, we have entered into a strategic commercial and operational partnership with Jungle Vilas Resort in Ranthambhore. This addition strengthens our footprint in one of India's most sought-after wildlife destinations and enhances our ability to deliver curated jungle experiences."

Each addition to the portfolio reflects a deliberate approach, choosing properties that resonate with the brand's ethos of authenticity and experiential depth. The focus remains on creating immersive environments where guests can engage with the destination in a meaningful way.

2025: A year of strengthening foundations

Reflecting on the past year, Jitendra highlights a phase of consolidation and strategic growth. "In 2025, we strengthened our positioning as curators of boutique, wildlife, and heritage experiences. We expanded our industry partnerships and enhanced our experiential

portfolio to better serve evolving traveller expectations."

He continues, "Our efforts were directed towards supporting partner properties through improved sales, marketing, and distribution frameworks. At the same time, we remained committed to promoting responsible tourism practices, ensuring that growth aligns with sustainability and community engagement."

Scaling with purpose

The roadmap is defined by thoughtful expansion and sharper brand identity. Jitendra explains, "Our vision for 2026 is to scale strategically by onboarding unique and high-potential properties. We are also focused on strengthening our digital presence and positioning The Consortium Hotels as a leading experiential hospitality brand."

He adds, "Curated guest experiences will remain at the heart of our offering. The growing domestic luxury segment presents immense opportunity, and we aim to create strong differentiation through storytelling and personalised services. This approach will drive sustained growth and deeper brand recognition."

On the horizon

The future pipeline reflects a clear focus on high-potential wildlife destinations. "A boutique wildlife resort in Panna is currently under development as a greenfield project and is expected to be operational by mid-2027. This

project represents our commitment to expanding into emerging wildlife circuits and offering unique, nature-led experiences," shares Jitendra.

Marketing with meaning

The Consortium Hotels adopts a comprehensive approach to marketing and collaborations. "We actively engage in both B2B and B2C initiatives to drive visibility and revenue. Our involvement extends beyond marketing into the day-to-day operations of partner properties, ensuring a consistently high guest satisfaction index," shares Jitendra.

He highlights the importance of this integrated model: "This approach enables us to generate business while delivering quality experiences, which in turn strengthens brand credibility and fosters long-term relationships with our partners."

Designing the future

The journey of The Consortium Hotels reflects a clear understanding of where the travel industry is headed. With a strong foundation in experiential hospitality, a carefully curated portfolio, and a vision anchored in authenticity, the brand is crafting a distinctive narrative in India's evolving tourism landscape. As travellers continue to seek deeper, more meaningful journeys, the company's commitment to storytelling, personalisation, and immersive experiences positions it as a compelling force in the years ahead.



CRUISE ODYSSEY

Sailing into a storybook with Disney Adventure

Some journeys begin long before you pack your bags. Mine started years ago, sitting in front of a television, watching stories unfold where friendships felt pure and magic always found its way in.

-Tripti Jain





Avengers Assemble _Disney Adventure

Disney had quietly shaped so many of those early memories, becoming more than just entertainment. It became a feeling. So when I received an invitation to be part of the exclusive pre-sailing of the Disney Adventure from 5th to 9th March, just ahead of its maiden voyage on 10th March, the decision felt instinctive. This was something I had unknowingly been waiting for.

The call of a childhood dream

The morning of the christening arrived with a sense of anticipation that was hard to ignore. The drive to the port felt longer than usual, every passing minute building excitement. And then, suddenly, there it was. The Disney Adventure stood in front of me, massive, elegant, and almost unreal. I remember pausing for a moment, just taking it all in. This was the ship that would soon become my world for the next few days. Walking up the ramp felt symbolic, like stepping out of routine life and into something far more magical.

Walking into my childhood

The moment I stepped inside, I felt an instant shift. This was storytelling brought to life in the most immersive way possible. The Disney Adventure is divided into seven themed zones, and each one felt like a chapter from a story I already knew.

Disney Imagination Garden immediately stood out as the heart of the ship, open and vibrant, filled with a sense of warmth and nostalgia. San Fransokyo Street brought in a completely different energy, lively and dynamic, buzzing with activity and colour. Marvel Landing felt bold and exciting, designed for moments that feel larger than life, while Wayfinder Bay offered a calm, almost meditative escape with views that stretched endlessly into the sea. Every space felt intentional, every detail thoughtfully placed, making the entire ship feel like a living, breathing story.

And then came that moment

The christening ceremony unfolded in a grand theatre, where the energy in the room was already electric. An orchestra

played, building anticipation with every note, creating a sense that something extraordinary was about to happen.

And then it did.

Robert Downey Jr. walked onto the stage.

For a second, it felt surreal. And then the room erupted into cheers. Iron Man himself, standing right there, christening the ship, turned the moment into something unforgettable. I remember looking around and seeing the same disbelief and excitement reflected on every face in the room.

The evening continued with dinner at Enchanted Garden, where a beautifully curated five-course meal brought together flavour, presentation, and a sense of occasion. It felt like the perfect end to a day that was already hard to top.

Embarkation: The real beginning

The next morning marked the beginning of the actual sailing. There was a different kind of

excitement in the air, one that came with the realisation that the experience was truly about to begin. I packed my bags, handed them over, and made my way to the ship. By the time I reached my stateroom, my luggage was already waiting for me. It was a small detail, yet it spoke volumes about the seamlessness of the experience.

The room itself felt instantly comforting. Spacious, thoughtfully designed, and filled with subtle Disney touches, it became a space I looked forward to returning to after every long day.

When the ship's whistle finally echoed and we began to move, I stood still for a moment, watching the water shift around us. That quiet realisation that we were sailing made everything feel real.

Days that felt like a dream

The next four days passed in what felt like a beautifully paced dream. Each day brought something new, something unexpected, something memorable.



Disney Adventure Christening



Disney Discovery Reef _Disney Adventure



CRUISE ODYSSEY



Mornings were often spent exploring different parts of the ship, discovering spaces I had missed the day before. Toy Story Place brought out a sense of childlike joy with its playful energy, while Disney Discovery Reef offered a calmer, more serene atmosphere. Afternoons often found me by the pool, soaking in the energy around me. One moment that remains etched in my memory is watching the Moana show unfold with the vast ocean stretching endlessly in front of me. It felt surreal, almost cinematic. Evenings were reserved for the shows, and they were nothing short of spectacular. Remember Me stood out as one of the most emotional experiences onboard. The storytelling, music, and

performances came together in a way that left me unexpectedly teary-eyed.

Food, comfort and indulgence

Dining onboard quickly became one of my favourite parts of the experience. The rotational dining concept ensured that every evening felt different, with new themes, new settings, and new flavours waiting to be explored. Each meal felt thoughtfully curated, blending global cuisines with familiar comfort. I found myself returning to Pizza Planet more often than planned, drawn in by the simple joy of a good slice of pizza paired with soft-serve ice cream. Meals never felt rushed. They felt like moments to pause, to reflect, and to simply enjoy being there.

The little moments that stayed

Some of the most memorable parts of the journey came from the smallest moments. Meeting Mickey and Minnie felt surprisingly emotional, like reconnecting with old friends. Goofy, my personal favourite, brought an instant smile and a sense of lightness to every interaction. The Infinity Bar became my quiet escape. Sitting there with a drink in hand, looking out at the endless blue, felt grounding in a way I hadn't expected. Time seemed to slow down in those moments. Exploring the retail spaces was another adventure in itself. Every item felt like a piece of the experience I wanted to hold onto. Walking through those stores, I constantly found myself thinking about how much I wished I could take back with me.

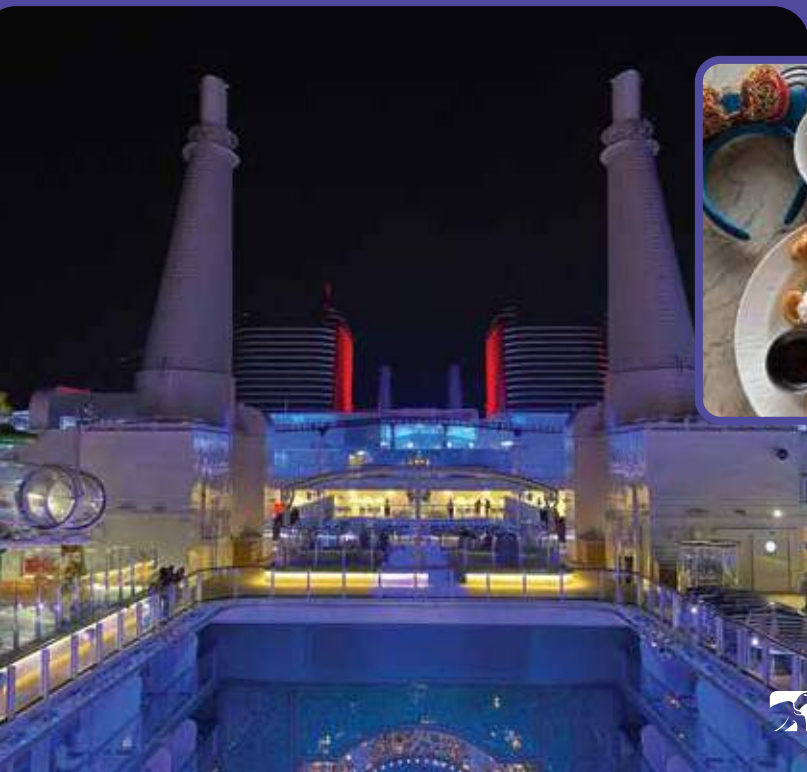
A ship that understands you

What stood out most was how intuitively the Disney Adventure

is designed. It manages to cater to every kind of traveller without ever feeling overwhelming. There is always something happening for those who seek excitement, and always a quiet corner for those who prefer stillness. The balance feels natural, making it easy to find your own rhythm onboard.

Four days later

Four days passed faster than I expected. Disembarkation came with a mix of gratitude and reluctance. There was a part of me that wasn't ready to leave just yet. I found myself looking back at the ship more than once, almost as if trying to hold onto the experience for a little longer. The Disney Adventure is an experience that stays with you long after it ends. It brings together childhood memories and present-day indulgence in a way that feels seamless and deeply personal. I boarded with excitement, expecting something special. I left with memories that feel impossible to forget.





Silk route reimagined

CENTRUM AIR

India's outbound travel story continues to evolve with newer destinations entering the consideration set, and Uzbekistan is steadily capturing attention with its blend of heritage, accessibility, and immersive experiences. Adil Mirza, Head of Agents Division, Commercial Department, Centrum Air shares about Centrum Air growth in the market.

- Tripti Jain



Adil Mirza

Centrum Air is tapping into this growing interest with a focused India strategy, building strong connectivity and a product that aligns with the expectations of today's Indian traveller. With a clear emphasis on expansion and engagement, the airline is positioning itself as a key bridge between India and Central Asia.

Aspiration and affinity

India's scale and growing appetite for international travel make it a market of immense relevance for Centrum Air, especially as travellers look beyond conventional destinations.

Adil shares, "India is a very important and promising market for us, primarily because of its vast population and the increasing capacity for outbound travel across segments. There is also a strong cultural and historical connection between India and Uzbekistan, which creates a natural sense of

familiarity for travellers. Indian travellers today are curious, well-informed, and open to exploring destinations that offer a mix of heritage, experiences, and value, and Uzbekistan fits perfectly into that aspiration."

Building bridges through connectivity

Centrum Air's growth in India is anchored in a phased and strategic expansion of its network, ensuring that connectivity evolves in line with demand.

He explains, "At present, we are operating flights to Delhi twice a week, and we are increasing this to three weekly frequencies, which is a very positive step forward for us. Our approach is to grow steadily and sustainably, ensuring that every addition to our network is backed by strong demand and operational readiness."

Strengthening its presence in the Indian market, Centrum Air has appointed Aeroprime Group as its General Sales Agent (GSA) in India, enabling deeper engagement with the travel trade and wider market reach.

Adil adds, "Our partnership with Aeroprime Group is a key pillar in our India strategy, as it allows us to build stronger relationships with travel partners and create better awareness about our services. With our fleet expanding from 15 aircraft to an expected 25 in the near future, we are also actively evaluating new destinations such

as Hyderabad and Bangalore, which will further strengthen our footprint in India."

Designed for every traveller

Centrum Air's product philosophy revolves around inclusivity and flexibility, catering to a diverse mix of travellers across segments.

Adil says, "We are targeting a wide spectrum of travellers, including FITs, leisure groups, and corporate travellers, all of whom are showing growing interest in this region. At this point, the economy segment forms the largest share of our traffic from India, which reflects the value-driven nature of the market, and at the same time, we are also seeing encouraging traction in corporate travel as business ties between regions continue to grow."

Uzbekistan: Where stories come alive

Uzbekistan's appeal lies in its ability to offer a rich and layered travel experience, combining iconic history with modern convenience. Adil elaborates, "Destinations like Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara offer an incredible journey through time, where travellers can experience centuries of history along with contemporary infrastructure and hospitality. The country is extremely safe, very welcoming, and offers great value for money, which is very important for Indian travellers. Food, accommodation,

and local experiences are all accessible and comfortable, making it an easy destination to explore."

A new frontier

Centrum Air is also tapping into emerging travel segments such as weddings, honeymoons, and experiential itineraries, which are gaining momentum among Indian travellers.

"We see tremendous potential in segments like destination weddings and honeymoon travel, as Indian travellers are increasingly looking for unique and memorable settings for their celebrations. Uzbekistan offers beautiful backdrops, cultural richness, and the infrastructure required to host such occasions seamlessly, which makes it an exciting new option for the Indian market," shares Adil.

A journey poised for growth

Centrum Air's India journey reflects a strong commitment to building a meaningful and long-term presence in one of the world's most dynamic travel markets. With increasing frequencies, strategic partnerships, and a product that resonates with evolving traveller preferences, the airline is well-positioned to drive growth. As awareness grows and connectivity expands, Centrum Air is set to bring the timeless allure of Central Asia closer to Indian travellers, opening doors to journeys filled with discovery and inspiration.



HEADS IN BEDS

Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives

LAGOON REVERIE

At Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives, paradise unfolds in sunlit rhythms of snorkelling reefs, oceanfront feasts and quietly attentive service that makes each day feel effortless.

- Misbah Mansuri

HEADS IN BEDS



The Maldives has a way of slowing time, but some islands manage to do it with a particularly graceful ease. I felt that shift almost immediately upon arriving at Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives, where the journey itself becomes part of the ritual.

After landing at Velana International Airport, we boarded a speedboat that skimmed across the Indian Ocean, the water shifting between sapphire and turquoise as the capital receded behind us. Forty minutes later the island emerged on the horizon, low and luminous, framed by powdery white sand and an impossibly calm lagoon. There is something about that first approach to a Maldivian island that never quite loses its magic. Villas hover above the water, the sea stretches endlessly outward, and the pace of life recalibrates the moment you step onto the jetty.

The welcome here was warm and celebratory. Traditional Maldivian drummers marked our arrival as we were guided toward check-in, a gesture that made the transition from traveller to guest feel ceremonial rather than transactional. Within minutes, the outside world had faded into the background.

ARRIVAL

The rhythm of the island reveals itself gently. Lunch at The Gallery was our first introduction to the resort's dining philosophy. The restaurant overlooks the lagoon, with open views that make it difficult to rush through a meal. International grill dishes arrive with subtle Asian accents, fresh seafood, vibrant salads and perfectly grilled meats that feel indulgent yet light in the midday heat. But what stood out most



during those first hours was the attentiveness of the team.

Throughout our stay, Zu from the hospitality team became a constant, reassuring presence. She seemed to appear at exactly the right moments each day, greeting us with an ease that felt genuine rather than rehearsed. Whether checking in after an excursion or ensuring dining reservations flowed smoothly, she carried a quiet professionalism that elevated the entire experience. In many luxury resorts service can feel polished but distant. Here it felt warm, human and instinctive.

THE ROOM

The overwater villa felt like a quiet sanctuary suspended above the lagoon. Instead of the stark minimalism many Maldivian resorts favour, the interiors felt softer and more textured. Sculptural wooden panels framed the headboard wall, their organic

shapes giving the room a sense of craftsmanship rather than standardised luxury.

Waiting on the bed was a delicate welcome arrangement made entirely from leaves and greenery spelling out 'Welcome to Centara Grand.' It was a small gesture, but one that immediately set the tone. Hospitality here felt thoughtful rather than performative.

The bathroom opened dramatically toward the ocean, with floor-to-ceiling glass framing endless shades of turquoise. A freestanding bathtub sat inside, while outside on the deck a circular jacuzzi faced directly toward the lagoon. Sinking into warm water while looking out across the Indian Ocean is the sort of simple pleasure that reminds you why the Maldives exists as a destination at all. The villa managed to feel both expansive and intimate, a balance many resorts attempt but few achieve.



BREAKFAST RITUALS

Breakfast each morning took place at The Club, where the atmosphere felt calm and almost residential rather than busy or theatrical. What stood out immediately was the quality of the food. The highlight for me was the Thai omelette, a deceptively simple dish that arrived crisp at the edges and soft within. Lightly seasoned and slightly fluffy, it had the comforting depth that only well-executed cooking can deliver. It quickly became the sort of dish you order once and then quietly return to every morning. Around it, the breakfast spread offered a thoughtful mix of tropical fruits, pastries, Asian dishes and Western classics. Nothing felt excessive. Instead, everything felt carefully curated and well executed.

Breakfast unfolded slowly against the backdrop of the lagoon, sunlight glinting off the water as the island gradually woke around us. It was one of those rare hotel breakfasts where you linger long after finishing your plate.

OCEAN ADVENTURES

The Maldives invites exploration, and the following morning we began with a snorkelling excursion from the resort's dive centre. A short boat ride carried us out to nearby reef sites where the water felt almost impossibly clear. Beneath the surface, coral formations revealed themselves in bursts of colour. Schools of fish moved like living mosaics through the reef, darting between structures that felt both delicate and ancient. There is something uniquely calming about snorkelling in these waters. The sounds of the world disappear, movement slows, and the experience becomes almost meditative.



HEADS IN BEDS

SPA CALM

Later that afternoon we headed to Spa Cenvaree, the resort's wellness sanctuary. Tucked quietly within the island's greenery, the spa is intentionally understated, encouraging calm from the moment you arrive. Our Balinese massage began with aromatic oils and slow, rhythmic techniques designed to release tension accumulated from travel. The treatment unfolded gradually, with long strokes and gentle pressure points dissolving stress layer by layer. Somewhere during the session I noticed my breathing slow and my thoughts soften. When it ended, the world felt quieter somehow.

SUNSET RITUAL

Maldivian evenings unfold slowly, and Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives leans beautifully into this natural rhythm. As the sun begins its descent, guests drift toward Sunset Social, the resort's overwater champagne bar. The space floats above the lagoon, with netted seating that allows you to watch the ocean beneath your feet while the horizon transforms. That evening the sky shifted through layers of amber, rose and deep indigo while the sea mirrored every colour change. Glasses clinked softly and conversations drifted through the warm air. From here, dinner at Bluefin continues the evening's rhythm. Positioned above the water, the restaurant

specialises in Mediterranean seafood served with relaxed elegance. Fresh fish arrives simply prepared, allowing the quality of the ingredients to shine. It is the sort of meal that stretches comfortably into the night.

EVENINGS UNDER THE STARS

One of the most memorable evenings of our stay was the beachfront barbecue experience. As the sun disappeared below the horizon, the beach came alive with music and flickering firelight. Chefs worked behind open grills preparing lobster, premium meats and freshly caught seafood while the scent of charcoal drifted through the warm night air. A DJ provided the soundtrack while traditional Boduberu performers added bursts of Maldivian rhythm beneath the stars. For a moment, the island felt entirely alive.

THAI FLAVOURS

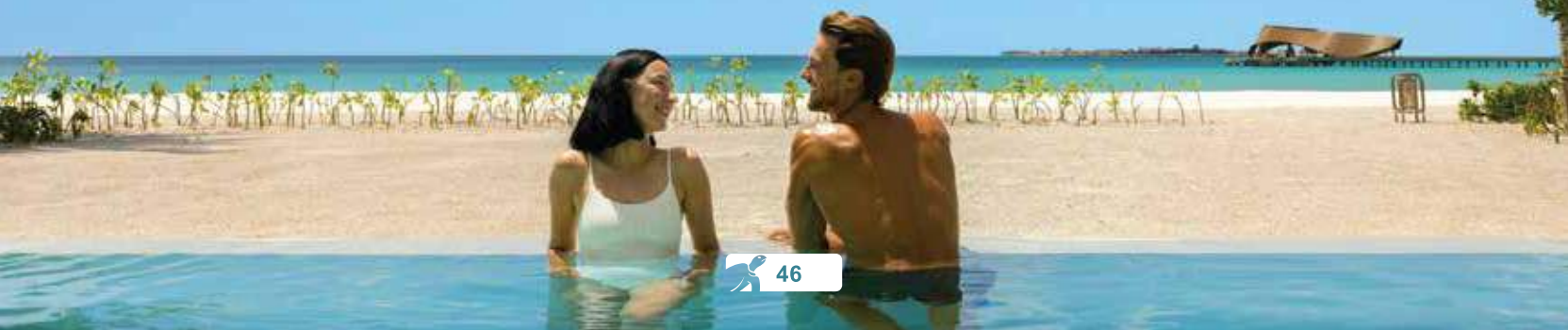
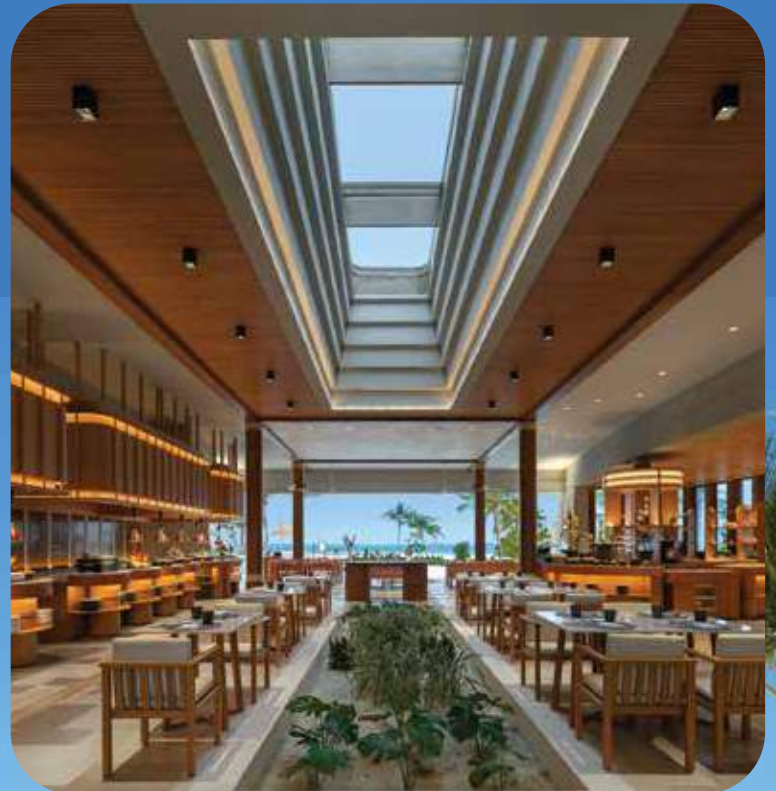
Another evening brought us to Suan Bua, the resort's Thai restaurant. Here the energy shifts slightly. Aromas of lemongrass, chilli and basil drift through the air as dishes arrive layered with flavour, fragrant and deeply comforting. Curries are rich and aromatic, stir-fries vibrant with fresh herbs. The menu reflects Thailand's culinary heritage, balancing sweetness, acidity and heat with precision. It is the kind of cooking that feels both celebratory and grounding.

QUIETLY EXCEPTIONAL

The Maldives has no shortage of ultra-luxury resorts. Names like Soneva, Cheval Blanc and Joali often dominate conversations about the region's most extravagant stays. What surprised me about Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives was how comfortably it holds its own within that

landscape. The experience here may be less theatrical than some of the Maldives' most extravagant properties, but that is precisely its strength. The luxury feels grounded rather than overwhelming. Rooms are beautifully designed, dining is

consistently strong, and the island feels generous yet intimate. It is easy to build beautiful villas in the Maldives. What is far more difficult is creating an environment where guests feel genuinely cared for. Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives manages to do both.



BEAT THE HEAT WITH COOL GETAWAYS OF MADHYA PRADESH



Every summer, as the temperature of the plains climbs relentlessly, regular hill stations are rapidly packed with teeming millions, traffic snarls and rushed itineraries. For those seeking sanctuary from a sweltering summer, Madhya Pradesh offers a clutch of restorative choices - a collection of cool, forested highlands and elevated plateaus where the air is gentler, the landscapes expansive, and the experience deeply soothing. From forest towns to hidden valleys, the heart of India has destinations ideas for families, wellness seekers, and travellers craving calm over crowds.

1 Pachmarhi, Narmadapuram

Pachmarhi, nestled in the Satpura range, remains the state's most loved hill retreat. At a higher elevation, surrounded by dense forests and open meadows, it stays pleasantly cool even through peak summer. Forest walks punctuated by viewpoints like Dhoopgarh, gentle climbs, picnics near the Bee and Apsara Vihar Waterfalls, heritage-era stays, eco-resorts, and welcoming homestays make visitors wish for longer stays.

2 Satpura Tiger Reserve

Make the most of the off-season with a jeep-safari in the Satpura Tiger Reserve, with chances of tiger spotting much higher in the dry season. The adventurous can try their hand at canoe rides on the Denwa River, rock climbing, ATV bike rides and paragliding.

3 Tamia, Chhindwara

If Pachmarhi is the queen, Tamia is the secret sanctuary. Perched quietly on a ridge, Tamia offers uninterrupted

views, pine-scented air, and near-total escape from crowds. Life slows to nature's rhythm—birdsong at dawn, forest walks by day, tribal culture in the afternoon and glowing sunsets at Sunset Point. Tamia is ideal for wellness travel, with yoga-friendly surroundings and eco-resorts focused on simplicity and silence.

4 Patalkot, Chhindwara

Nearby, Patalkot valley offers a naturally cool environment shaped by dense forests and geography. Take a trek to Raja Khoh. Nearby, the forested highlands around Seoni and the Pench region provide shaded landscapes, riverside breezes, and eco-resorts suited to relaxed summer breaks.

5 Amarkantak, Anuppur

Eastward, in the Maikal Hills lies Amarkantak, where spirituality and nature coexist effortlessly. Known as the origin of the Narmada, Son, and Johila rivers, its elevation and forest cover keep

summers mild. Morning walks, forest trails, and great viewpoints make it ideal for reflective, family-friendly, and wellness-driven holidays supported by eco-conscious stays and ashram-style lodges. A defining advantage of Madhya Pradesh's summer destinations is convenience, with easy access from Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and even Nagpur or Prayagraj —making them ideal for short, efficient vacations.

As May marks vacation season, advance planning is essential. The best eco-resorts, luxury accommodation, homestays, and forest lodges fill quickly. Plan ahead using great itineraries curated by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board and ensure better choices, better views, and a calmer, more rewarding escape. For travelers who seek to skip the crowds, and seek a summer that is truly memorable, the hills of central India are all set to act as a balm for the soul.

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The next chapter of France in India

As one of the world's most visited destinations, France has built a formidable tourism legacy anchored in culture, heritage, and global appeal. Adam Oubuih, CEO, Atout France outlines a new strategy focused on sustainability, experiences, and a deeper engagement with India.

- Naina Nath

Adam Oubuih

From the timeless charm of Paris to the sun-drenched vineyards of Bordeaux and the lavender fields of Provence, France has long captured the imagination of travellers across the world. When Adam Oubuih, Chief Executive Officer of Atout France, visited India recently, it marked his first official trip to the country since taking charge of France's national tourism development agency. During his visit, Adam discussed France's evolving tourism strategy, the increasing importance of India as a source market, and how the country plans to balance visitor growth with sustainability and meaningful travel experiences.

Beyond visitor numbers

France continues to lead globally in international visitor arrivals, welcoming more than 100 million travellers each year. Yet the country's next tourism chapter is not just about attracting more visitors. It is also about improving the value of tourism. "Our objective is to remain the world leader in visitor numbers. But at the same time, we want international visitor spending to increase by around 50 per cent in the coming years." He added that this shift reflects a broader change in how destinations measure success.

India in focus

As global travel patterns evolve, France is turning its attention to dynamic long-haul markets, and India plays a crucial role in this strategy. Adam shares, "Outside Europe, India is clearly one of our top priorities." He pointed out that India's steady economic growth and expanding affluent traveller base make it an increasingly important market for destinations worldwide. He adds, "Indian travellers are exploring the world more than ever, and they are curious and demanding in the best possible

way. People don't want to see France as just another stop within Europe. We want them to experience France for what it truly is, its culture, its landscapes and its lifestyle."

Experiences as luxury

According to Adam, the definition of luxury travel is transforming. Material indulgence still plays a role, but increasingly, travellers are looking for something deeper. He explains, "Experience itself is becoming luxury. Having the time to enjoy a place, to discover local culture, to travel at your own rhythm, that is what many travellers are now seeking."

France believes it is particularly well-positioned in this space. He adds that such variety allows travellers to return multiple times and discover different sides of France, "Our strength lies in diversity. You can explore vineyards, mountains, historic towns, islands or coastal regions, all within the same country."

Looking beyond Paris

While Paris remains the country's most recognised gateway, France is actively encouraging travellers to explore beyond the capital. For Indian travellers especially, this means discovering destinations that are less frequently included in traditional itineraries. Adam shares, "We want visitors to understand that France is much more than one city. There are the Alps, the Atlantic coast, the Mediterranean, the vineyards, the islands and even volcanic landscapes in the centre of the country." He believes that encouraging travellers to explore different regions also helps distribute tourism more evenly. "When people travel across the country, they experience a richer version of France," he adds.

Technology and tourism

Digital innovation is another area where France sees potential for

collaboration with India. The growing role of technology in tourism, from payments to artificial intelligence, is reshaping how travellers interact with destinations. Adam shares, "We see strong opportunities to work with India on digital solutions. India has developed impressive systems, especially in areas such as digital payments and data integration." He notes that simplified transactions are becoming increasingly important for international travellers. "When travel becomes easier and more seamless, it improves the overall visitor experience."

Commitment to Responsible Tourism

Sustainability is at the centre of France's long-term tourism vision. The country aims to become the world's most sustainable tourism destination by the end of the decade, a goal that extends beyond environmental concerns. Adam explains, "Sustainability is not only about carbon emissions. It is also about social balance and economic viability." He emphasises that tourism must benefit both travellers and local communities. "A destination must remain enjoyable for residents as well as visitors." For France, preserving regional identity is also part of that equation. He adds, "Protecting culture and heritage is essential. Every region has its own story, and tourism should help keep those traditions alive."

France has long drawn travellers with its culture, cuisine and sense of art de vivre. As Adam suggests, the country's future in tourism lies in offering experiences that feel authentic and meaningful. "Tourism is about people. It's about building bridges between cultures." For travellers from India and beyond, France hopes those bridges will only continue to grow stronger.



THE BANYAN GROUP STORY

A vision rooted in restoration has shaped one of the world's most distinctive hospitality brands. Benjawan Meksakul, AVP, Regional Sales & Marketing, Banyan Group shares the story and future of the brand.

- Tripti Jain



Benjawan Meksakul

HOTELLIGENCE



What began on a former tin mining site in Phuket has evolved into a global portfolio of resorts, residences, and immersive experiences that celebrate nature, culture, and well-being. The founding philosophy was simple yet profound, to transform damaged landscapes into thriving ecosystems while creating meaningful travel experiences. This purpose continues to guide the group's journey as it marks over three decades of redefining luxury through authenticity and sustainability.

Where purpose meets place

Every Banyan Group destination carries a strong sense of place, reflecting its surroundings rather than replicating a global template. This commitment to local immersion has resonated deeply with travellers seeking more than just a stay. Benjawan Meksakul highlights this ethos and shares, "Travel today is about connection. It is about discovering the soul of a destination through its culture, its people, and its environment. At Banyan Group, we create experiences that allow travellers to truly feel where they are, rather than simply visit."

This philosophy translates into resorts that integrate seamlessly with their natural environment, offering guests a chance to engage with local traditions, cuisines, and landscapes in an authentic way.

A natural alignment

India has emerged as a key growth market for Banyan Group, driven by a shift in traveller mindset. Indian guests are increasingly embracing experience-led travel, exploring multiple destinations through the year, and seeking journeys that combine relaxation with enrichment. Benjawan Meksakul shares her perspective and says, "The Indian traveller has evolved beautifully over the years. There is a strong inclination towards well-being, family bonding, and curated experiences. Even in familiar destinations like Thailand, travellers are looking for something new, something

deeper, something more personal. This evolution aligns seamlessly with our offerings, where each property delivers a distinct narrative shaped by its location."

Thailand & Maldives: Timeless favourites

Thailand continues to be a cornerstone for Indian travellers, offering accessibility, familiarity, and diversity of experiences. Banyan Group's presence across Bangkok, Phuket, Krabi, and Koh Samui ensures that guests can explore multiple facets of the destination.

Meksakul elaborates, "Thailand feels like a second home for many Indian travellers. The ease of travel, combined with the richness of experiences, makes it incredibly appealing. Our properties in Laguna Phuket, Bangkok, and Koh Samui offer everything from vibrant cityscapes to serene beachfront escapes."

The Maldives stands as another strong favourite, where Banyan Group has pioneered sustainable luxury. Resorts located in the North Malé Atoll offer easy accessibility along with pristine marine environments.

She adds, "Our resorts in the Maldives reflect our commitment to sustainability. From marine conservation initiatives to

thoughtful design that respects the ecosystem, every element is created with care. Guests appreciate this balance between luxury and responsibility."

Beyond the familiar

As travellers seek fresh destinations, Banyan Group is introducing them to emerging gems like Vietnam and unique concepts in Bali. Benjawan Meksakul shares, "Vietnam is a wonderful blend of beach and heritage. Locations like Lang Co offer stunning landscapes along with proximity to cultural treasures like Hoi An. It is a destination that surprises and delights."

In Bali, the group has taken experiential travel to another level with its nature-immersive offerings. She adds, "Our resorts in Bali invite guests to reconnect with nature in a very intimate way. Imagine waking up to the sounds of the forest, surrounded by greenery, with spaces designed to bring you closer to the environment. These are experiences that stay with you long after the journey ends."

Well-being as a Way of Life

Well-being forms the cornerstone of Banyan Group's philosophy, extending beyond traditional wellness to

encompass emotional and mental harmony. Benjawan Meksakul elaborates, "We believe in well-being as a holistic concept. It is about feeling good, thinking clearly, and living mindfully. Our spas, our spaces, and our experiences are all designed to nurture this balance. This approach has positioned our brand as a pioneer in the spa and wellness space, offering guests transformative experiences that go beyond relaxation."

Culinary journeys

Food plays an integral role in the travel experience, especially for Indian guests who value both familiarity and exploration. Benjawan Meksakul explains, "Our culinary offerings are designed to celebrate local flavours while accommodating global preferences. Indian travellers appreciate having access to familiar cuisine, and we ensure that their needs are thoughtfully catered to, especially for groups and special occasions."

Changing face of travel segments The rise of independent travel has reshaped the way Indian guests explore the world. Digital platforms have made booking more accessible, empowering travellers to design their own journeys. Benjawan Meksakul shares, "At one point, group travel and incentives dominated the market. Today, we see a strong shift towards independent travellers and smaller, more personalised experiences. Guests are confident, informed, and open to exploring at their own pace."

Redefining luxury through meaning

Luxury today is defined by authenticity, connection, and purpose. Banyan Group embodies this shift, offering travellers experiences that resonate on a deeper level. As Indian travellers continue to seek journeys that inspire and transform, Banyan Group stands ready to welcome them into a world where every stay tells a story, every destination has a soul, and every journey leaves a lasting impact.



Island connect with **Sri Lankan Airlines**



Dimuthu Tennakoon

SriLankan Airlines is scripting a compelling new chapter in regional aviation, with India firmly at the centre of its growth story. Dimuthu Tennakoon, Head of Commercial, SriLankan Airlines sheds light on the ongoing expansion of the airlines.

- *Tripti Jain*



A robust network, expanding fleet plans, and a clear focus on connectivity are shaping an airline that is deeply aligned with the aspirations of Indian travellers. Rising demand across leisure, business, and cultural travel is further accelerating this momentum, positioning the airline as a vital bridge between India and the world.

India has evolved into the airline's most significant market, contributing close to 30% of total passenger traffic and a substantial share of visitor arrivals into Sri Lanka. This strong foundation is driving a new phase of expansion, built on connectivity, convenience, and a product that resonates with Indian sensibilities.

Expanding horizons

SriLankan Airlines' presence across India reflects a thoughtful and inclusive network strategy. Key metropolitan hubs are complemented by emerging cities, ensuring broad accessibility for travellers across regions. The upcoming addition of Ahmedabad as the airline's tenth Indian destination marks a strategic step in unlocking new demand corridors.

"India continues to be our largest and most important market, contributing significantly to both inbound tourism and transit traffic. Our expansion into Ahmedabad reflects our commitment to tapping into high-growth regions and offering seamless connectivity to global destinations," shares Dimuthu.

Plans to increase frequencies across existing routes are also in motion, with a clear intent to enhance capacity and bring operations closer to peak service levels. Each addition strengthens the airline's ability to offer flexibility and convenience to travellers across India.

The transit advantage

Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport plays a pivotal role in SriLankan Airlines' network strategy. Its geographic positioning, combined with efficient scheduling, enables smooth connections between

India and key global destinations. Dimuthu explains, "Nearly 30 per cent of our passengers from India use Colombo as a transit hub. The convenience of a short hop into Sri Lanka followed by seamless onward connections makes us a preferred choice, especially for long-haul travellers."

This advantage is especially visible in routes to Australia, Southeast Asia, and parts of Europe, where well-timed connections create a seamless journey. Short travel durations from Indian cities to Colombo further enhance the appeal, offering travellers a practical and time-efficient alternative.

Fleet, frequency, and forward momentum

A steady expansion of fleet capacity is central to SriLankan Airlines' growth roadmap. The airline is currently operating a fleet in the mid-20s, with plans to scale up progressively in response to demand.

Dimuthu shares, "The demand is strong, and our focus is on aligning fleet expansion with market needs. Aircraft availability remains a global challenge, yet we are confident of gradually scaling up to meet our growth targets. The long-term vision includes building towards a fleet of around 35 aircraft, enabling increased frequencies, enhanced connectivity, and improved operational resilience."

Product that feels like home

SriLankan Airlines has crafted an onboard experience that

resonates strongly with Indian travellers. Familiar flavours, curated entertainment, and warm hospitality create a sense of comfort that enhances the overall journey.

Dimuthu elaborates, "Our philosophy is simple. When passengers step onboard, it should feel like coming home. Indian cuisine, regional entertainment, and culturally aligned service elements are integral to our offering."

Tapping into emotional journeys

Indian travel to Sri Lanka is driven by a rich mix of motivations that extend beyond traditional tourism. Destination weddings, visiting friends and relatives, and cultural exploration are emerging as powerful demand drivers.

"India is a vibrant market with diverse travel motivations. Destination weddings, in particular, have seen remarkable growth, and we actively support these through charter operations and customised travel solutions," shares Dimuthu.

Collaborations with tourism stakeholders further amplify Sri Lanka's appeal, showcasing its versatility as a destination that blends beaches, heritage, spirituality, and wellness. These efforts are strengthening the emotional connect between the two countries.

A balanced sales strategy

SriLankan Airlines continues to maintain a balanced approach to distribution. Direct channels

contribute around 40 per cent of bookings, supported by a strong network of trade partners and online travel agencies that account for the remaining share.

Dimuthu explains, "Our trade partners remain a cornerstone of our distribution strategy. At the same time, we are enhancing our digital capabilities to provide a seamless booking experience for our customers."

Building for the future

Sustainability is gradually becoming an integral part of the airline's operational philosophy. Initiatives focused on reducing onboard waste, minimising single-use plastics, and supporting environmental programmes are shaping a more responsible approach to aviation.

Dimuthu adds, "Our focus is on delivering a holistic experience that combines comfort, efficiency, and sustainability. Every step we take is aimed at creating long-term value for our passengers and the environment."

Charting the next chapter

SriLankan Airlines' trajectory in India reflects a blend of strategic clarity and market understanding. A strong network foundation, combined with a clear expansion roadmap, is enabling the airline to navigate an increasingly dynamic aviation landscape.

Dimuthu concludes, "India's growth story is closely intertwined with ours. Our goal is to continue strengthening this partnership by offering unmatched connectivity, a superior product, and a travel experience that truly resonates with our passengers."

More than just connectivity

SriLankan Airlines is building a narrative that goes far beyond routes and frequencies. A strong emphasis on connectivity, cultural alignment, and customer experience is shaping an airline that understands its audience deeply. Each initiative reinforces its position as a trusted bridge between India and global destinations.



A new way to reach Antarctica



Juan Cristobal Del Pedregal Bravo

The Antarctica21 approach is to explore the White Continent through a Fly & Cruise model shaped by access, comfort, and care. Juan Cristobal Del Pedregal Bravo, Senior Commercial Director, Antarctica21 shares more about this approach.

- *Naina Nath*



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Reaching Antarctica has long been viewed as the ultimate travel aspiration, but also one of the most challenging. Antarctica21 has quietly transformed that narrative by updating how travellers arrive and explore the world's most remote continent. Leading this shift is Juan Cristobal Del Pedregal Bravo, Senior Commercial Director, who brings a clear focus on efficiency, comfort, and sustainability. For Antarctica21, the goal has never been to simplify Antarctica, but to make the journey more thoughtful, accessible, and respectful without losing its sense of wonder.

A smarter beginning

Antarctica21 was established more than two decades ago with a clear idea of what needed to change. Juan explains, "Traditionally, reaching Antarctica meant crossing the Drake Passage by ship, which can be long and unpredictable. The company pioneered the Fly & Cruise model, allowing travellers to fly directly to Antarctica before continuing by expedition vessel. He adds while still preserving the essence of a true expedition, "This innovation significantly reduces travel time and physical strain. The vision was simple but ambitious: to open Antarctica to a broader range of travellers while maintaining safety, comfort, and environmental responsibility at every stage."

Boutique at sea

A significant addition to Antarctica21's fleet is Magellan Discoverer, the first hybrid electric expedition cruise ship built in the Americas, scheduled to sail from the 2026-27 Antarctic season. With panoramic observation decks, spacious cabins, and thoughtfully designed social areas, the ship balances guest comfort with environmentally conscious exploration in Antarctica's fragile landscapes. Designed in Chile for the company's air cruise expeditions, the 76 guest vessel brings together hybrid



propulsion technology and boutique scale. "The hybrid electric technology supports our environmental commitments, while the boutique size ensures the flexibility and personalised experience our guests expect," says Juan.

From Punta Arenas

The Antarctic experience with Antarctica21 begins well before guests set foot on the ice. A key part of this journey is Explorers House in Punta Arenas. "This exclusive space allows guests to transition unhurriedly into expedition mode," Juan explains. Here, travellers receive personalised briefings, equipment fittings, and expert guidance in a relaxed setting. Once in Antarctica, the days are immersive and varied. "Daily Zodiac landings, guided walks through untouched landscapes, and close encounters with wildlife define the experience," he says, with optional activities

like kayaking adding further depth to each voyage.

Designed for ease

For many first time Antarctic travellers, confidence and comfort are just as important as adventure. Juan explains, "Antarctica21 is designed for travellers who value comfort, efficiency, and discretion." With only 76 guests onboard and no Drake Passage crossing, the experience feels both personal and unpressured. "First time travellers appreciate the sense of ease," he adds, pointing to expert support at every step and a pace that allows genuine engagement with the environment. Luxury here is quiet and considered, shaped by access, privacy, and thoughtful execution rather than spectacle.

India in focus

Antarctica21 has recently turned its attention towards India, and Juan is clear about the reasons.



"Indian travellers today are globally experienced and increasingly drawn to meaningful, transformational journeys," he says. Antarctica appeals to those seeking rarity paired with responsibility. "We are seeing strong interest from Indian guests who want experiences that are both exclusive and values driven," Juan explains. The alignment feels natural, particularly as Indian travellers increasingly look for journeys where comfort, sustainability, and depth of experience sit side by side rather than in opposition.

Prepared and protected

Despite its remoteness, Antarctica21's expeditions are designed to be accessible. "Antarctic travel with Antarctica21 is possible for travellers in good general health," Juan says, noting that extreme fitness is not required. Guests should be comfortable with uneven terrain and Zodiac boarding, and the minimum age is typically eight. Clear medical screenings help ensure safety for all. Sustainability remains central. "The company is CarbonNeutral certified and a member of IAATO," he explains, with strict protocols guiding wildlife interaction and waste management. "Every journey is guided by the principle of leaving no trace."

A first encounter

When asked what he would say to Indian travellers considering Antarctica for the first time, Juan's response is rather reflective. "Antarctica is the ultimate expression of quiet luxury," he says. More than a destination, it offers perspective. "With Antarctica21, you experience the continent in a way that is respectful, intimate, and deeply enriching," he adds. It is an approach that values access and responsibility equally, allowing travellers to encounter one of the world's last great wildernesses with care, confidence, and a lasting impact.





JOURNEY ROUTERS

Elevating travel



Akash Kumar

In an increasingly competitive and experience-driven travel landscape, the focus is steadily shifting from transactional bookings to meaningful, well-curated journeys. Journey Routers stands at the forefront of this evolution, building its approach around depth, personalisation, and seamless execution rather than sheer volume. Akash Kumar, Founder, Journey Routers, shares on how Journey Routers remains committed to its core philosophy—delivering high-touch, thoughtfully designed travel experiences where consistency, trust, and relevance define true luxury.

- Sudipta Saha

1. How do you balance volume-driven business with high-value experiential travel?

We have never believed that we can trade off volume for experience. For us, scale comes from building strong systems, reliable partnerships, and operational clarity, not from standardising the product. Our core audience, especially couples, expects travel to feel personal and considered. They are two people who decide to spend their savings on their dream trip, and so, they deserve to feel every moment as special and intentional. So as volumes have grown, our primary focus has remained on strengthening the backend so the front-end experience remains client-centric and seamless. What scales for us isn't the number of bookings. It's the depth of our knowledge about a particular destination and the trust couples place in us. As we expand into B2B, the intention is to carry forward the same philosophy, i.e., we want partners who value quality outcomes over transaction counts. Because at scale, consistency becomes your luxury.

2. What does "curated travel" mean to you in practical terms?

Curated travel, for us, is really about relevance over excess. Basically, we start with the traveller before starting with the destination. Whether it's celebration, reconnection, or simply slowing down, the intent behind the trip plays a big role, and that is precisely what we keep in mind

while designing a journey. It's less about adding up and more about creating the right pace, the right mix of experiences, and leaving room for moments to unfold naturally. Curation involves knowing what to leave out.

3. Are travelers today prioritising price, personalisation, or seamless execution?

There's been a clear shift towards seamless execution and personalisation. Travelers today are far more informed, and they value their time much more than before.

These days, when travellers plan their trips, they focus more on the 'worth' than the 'price'. And if the experience feels effortless and well thought out, they're willing to invest more.

Although price still matters, it has become more of a baseline factor. Confidence in delivery is really what drives decisions now. I'll say, 'Confidence in delivery is the new currency in travel.'

4. Are you focusing on expanding into new destinations or deepening existing ones?

Right now, our focus is largely on deepening our presence in destinations we already operate in. It's easy to keep adding new places, but true differentiation comes from how well you understand and deliver within a destination. Depth allows you to create journeys that feel distinct rather than interchangeable, which plays a big role when it comes to experiential travel, especially for couples. We are expanding, but very selectively,

and only where we can maintain the same level of control and quality. Because I believe that coverage builds a portfolio but depth builds a brand.

5. Which emerging markets or destinations excite you the most right now?

We're seeing growing interest in destinations that feel less commercial and more immersive. Places across Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and even lesser-explored parts of Southeast Asia are becoming more relevant. The traveller's mindset has evolved over time. People are now more curious and open to going beyond the usual circuits, as long as the experience feels seamless and well-supported.

I feel that the idea of a "dream destination" is definitely expanding.

6. What is your long-term vision for Journey Routers in the global travel landscape?

We're building Journey Routers to be a globally trusted experiential travel partner, one that people can rely on not just for bookings but also for curating journeys that feel distinct, meaningful and effortless. While our foundation has been in FIT travel for couples, we're now expanding into B2B and MICE, bringing the same design thinking into larger and more complex travel formats.

The long-term vision is to build scalable yet high-touch travel frameworks while staying rooted in experience-first thinking along with creating a strong global ecosystem of partners.

We don't just want to grow bigger, we want to grow more meaningful too.

7. How are you adapting your FIT-focused expertise to B2B and MICE travel?

For us, moving into B2B and MICE comes as a natural extension rather than a shift. Our understanding of people and designing experiences around them is our core strength. Today, the expectations are changing even in group travel. Travellers want journeys that feel engaging, well-paced, and thoughtfully put together along with smooth logistics. We follow principles like attention to detail, personalised frameworks, and strong on-ground execution for FIT travel, and we are applying the same to larger groups. MICE is gradually moving from coordination to curation.

8. In an increasingly competitive travel market, what has been your biggest differentiator so far?

I believe that our biggest differentiator has been clarity of focus. We've always been clear about who we're designing for, and that's what helps us build depth rather than spreading ourselves too thin.

Beyond that, it also really comes down to execution. Ideas play a big role in travel, so it is effortless to design a wonderful itinerary on paper, but what truly sets you apart is how well you can deliver that experience on the ground consistently. In a market full of options, reliability becomes your edge.



The boutique pulse of H&M Services

India's hospitality landscape is witnessing a refined shift towards individuality, storytelling, and immersive travel. Geeta Maheshwari, Founder, H&M Services shares how her brand is levelling up in the ecosystem of travel.

- Tripti Jain

Boutique properties, experiential stays, and culturally rooted destinations are shaping a new narrative, where travellers seek connections that go beyond the ordinary. At the forefront of this evolution stands Hospitality & Marketing Services, a company that has steadily built its identity around personalised representation and thoughtful curation. With a deep understanding of both product and people, the brand continues to bridge the gap between independent hotels and the ever-evolving expectations of modern travellers.

A portfolio with personality

The strength of Hospitality & Marketing Services lies in its carefully curated portfolio that celebrates diversity and distinctiveness. From boutique resorts to experiential stays across emerging destinations, each property reflects a unique identity and story.

"We have consciously built a portfolio that speaks to the evolving traveller. Every property we represent carries a strong sense of place and individuality, which makes it easier to create meaningful connections with the right audience," shares Geeta.

The addition of dynamic DMC partnerships across regions such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, South India, and the North East further enhances the company's reach. Each collaboration adds depth, allowing the brand to offer a seamless blend of destination expertise and product strength.

"Our partnerships are built on trust and shared vision. We align with stakeholders who believe in



Geeta Maheshwari

long-term growth and are willing to invest in building their brand narrative," she explains.

Marketing beyond visibility

A defining aspect of the company's approach lies in its ability to go beyond conventional marketing. The focus remains on storytelling that resonates, creating visibility that translates into engagement and business.

"Marketing today is about creating relevance. Digital storytelling, targeted outreach, and curated showcases allow us to position our hotels in a way that feels authentic and engaging," says Geeta.

Participation in trade shows, roadshows, and B2B networking platforms continues to play a significant role in strengthening industry relationships. Alongside these, collaborations with content

creators and niche travel communities bring a fresh perspective to brand positioning.

Evolving with the traveller

The modern traveller is informed, selective, and driven by experiences. This shift has encouraged Hospitality & Marketing Services to continuously refine its strategies and offerings.

"Travellers today are seeking authenticity and personalisation. There is a growing interest in wellness, culture, and lesser-explored destinations. Our role is to help our partners align with these expectations in a meaningful way. Agility has become essential. A deeper understanding of traveller behaviour allows us to create campaigns that are timely,

relevant, and effective," she shares. Collaborations that create impact Strategic collaborations form a key pillar of the company's growth journey. Through its Aapt Alliances vertical, the brand is building structured partnerships with wedding planners, experiential curators, and international buyers. Geeta explains, "Our goal is to create platforms where our partner hotels are actively showcased to the right audience. Collaborations open doors to new opportunities and bring in a more focused approach to business development."

Engagement with travel trade bodies and participation in destination-led initiatives further amplifies visibility, ensuring a well-rounded presence in both domestic and international markets.

Growth rooted in purpose

Hospitality & Marketing Services continues to move forward with a vision that blends growth with purpose. The journey reflects a commitment to relationships, innovation, and a deep respect for the evolving travel ecosystem. "Growth for us has always been about building lasting relationships and contributing meaningfully to the industry. There is a strong sense of responsibility in how we represent our partners and create opportunities for them," concludes Geeta.

With a keen eye on emerging trends and a foundation built on trust and authenticity, the company stands poised to shape the next chapter of boutique hospitality in India.



Naresh Rawal

The rising romance of Kanooja Palace, Kumbhalgarh

Set against the rugged poetry of the Aravalli Hills, Kanooja Palace in Kumbhalgarh unfolds as a destination that feels deeply personal and evocative. Naresh Rawal, Founder & Managing Director, Truly India shares about the everlasting bonds created at the property.

Set against the rugged poetry of the Aravalli Hills, Kanooja Palace in Kumbhalgarh unfolds as a destination that feels deeply personal and evocative. Overlooking the tranquil Lake Kanooja and located close to the historic Kumbhalgarh Fort, the palace invites couples to celebrate amidst heritage, serenity, and timeless charm.

A canvas of celebrations

Every wedding at Kanooja Palace feels thoughtfully curated, thanks to the diversity of venues within the property. Each space carries a distinct personality, allowing celebrations to flow seamlessly from one mood to another. A mehendi ceremony by the lake captures the golden glow of the setting sun, bringing an intimate and relaxed vibe to the festivities. The sangeet transforms into a lively affair under the open sky, where music and movement come alive against a starlit backdrop. The wedding ceremony itself finds a regal rhythm in courtyards inspired by traditional Mewari design, where architecture enhances the sacredness of the moment.

The presence of open lawns, lake-facing venues, and elegant indoor spaces ensures that every function feels unique. Couples find the freedom to design multi-day weddings where each event stands apart, creating a layered and memorable celebration. This thoughtful spatial planning resonates strongly with modern wedding sensibilities that seek variety, intimacy, and storytelling within a single venue.

Stay together, celebrate closer

Kanooja Palace currently offers 60 well-appointed rooms, designed to host close-knit wedding groups with comfort and ease. Each room reflects understated elegance, blending spacious layouts with calming views of the surrounding landscape. Guests experience a sense of retreat within the celebration, where moments of quiet relaxation complement the vibrancy of wedding festivities. An exciting expansion is already underway, with 10 additional rooms set to elevate the inventory to 70 keys. This enhancement strengthens the property's appeal

for destination weddings, allowing larger groups to stay together within one cohesive space. Families benefit from simplified logistics and a stronger sense of connection, where every guest remains part of the shared celebration journey.

Design that invites

Inspired by the architectural legacy of Mewar, Kanooja Palace carries a design language that feels elegant and welcoming. The aesthetic focuses on harmony rather than grandeur, allowing the natural beauty of the surroundings to take centre stage. Soft tones, traditional elements, and open spaces create an environment that feels both luxurious and grounded.

A living experience

Kanooja Palace extends its charm beyond the wedding functions, offering guests an opportunity to explore and unwind. The proximity to heritage landmarks enriches the experience, encouraging visitors to discover the cultural depth of the region. Leisure moments by the lake, scenic walks,

and quiet pauses within the property create a holistic stay that blends celebration with relaxation. "Weddings today are evolving into deeply personal, experience-led celebrations where every element needs to feel intentional and distinctive. Kanooja Palace offers a rare combination of natural beauty, architectural character, and spatial versatility, allowing families to craft multi-day weddings that feel seamless and emotionally engaging. The setting encourages togetherness, and that sense of shared experience is what truly defines memorable destination weddings," shares Naresh Rawal.

New-age destination weddings

Kanooja Palace is steadily carving a niche as one of the most promising upcoming wedding destinations in Kumbhalgarh. The combination of scenic beauty, versatile venues, and expanding capacity positions it as an ideal choice for couples seeking something distinctive. Each celebration here feels intimate, picturesque, and thoughtfully designed.





A Feast of
JAPANESE

One may well ask. What is Japanese food all about, and what and how does one eat and drink in Japan?

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia

Japanese cuisine has always received a 'mixed review' beyond its own shores, with most foreigners considering it highly exotic, either visually too artistic to be of relevance to the stomach, or composed of ingredients too alien. The mere mention of 'raw fish', 'eel', or 'bean curd' conjures up visions of something 'foreign', best left untried.

In actual fact, Japanese cuisine is an elegant intersection of the culinary world, as eclectic in its tastes as the culture from which it springs. It offers palate-tickling sensations that range from the subtle joys of 'sashimi' to the hearty basics of noodles. Tokyo, in particular is host to a lip-smacking cornucopia of food flavours and textures.

To scratch the surface of Japan's vast selection of culinary variety, take a walk in the vicinity of any subway or train station. For non-Japanese speakers, some restaurants display plastic and wax replicas of their dishes in front windows, or provide a menu with colour photos.

Ocean-fresh seafood, tasty cuts of young pork loin, succulent fillet of beefsteak, tender chicken, and farm-fresh vegetables and herbs are but a few ingredients used.

The essential idea is to enhance the food's natural taste, not camouflage it with rich sauces.

Rice is the staple, boiled until sticky, and indeed, the word for meal in Japanese (gohan) means rice. Soba and Udon are two kinds of noodle. Meats are chopped into bite-sized pieces or thin slices easily picked up by chopsticks. These are mostly dipped into a tiny dish of sauce, usually with a soy sauce base and fresh ingredients like ginger, onions, or grated radish. Vegetables range

from familiar types like carrots and cucumbers to wild mountain plants, and may be served fresh, boiled, pickled, or deep-fried.

All meals are normally accompanied with a bowl of hot soup, either made from soybean paste (miso) or a clear fish stock, pickled cucumbers, cabbage, radishes etc. The pickles are usually eaten with the rice at the end of the meal. The taste apart, it's intriguing to see the way food is served. Crockery is selected to suit the food's colour and texture. The most exquisite culinary refinement and ultimate Japanese eating experience is 'Kaisek Ryori,' which originated in Japan's Zen temples, where meat was shunned. Each course is served in gorgeous lacquer ware or China. Though expensive, Kaisek is a unique experience.



There's something for everyone. The list of traditional, mainstay food items can include.

- **Yakitori:** Bite-sized bits of chicken skewered on bamboo, dipped in a sweetly robust sauce and barbecued to tender perfection over open coals, to be eaten by the fingers, accompanied by hearty beer or a flask of warm sake.

- **Sukiyaki:** Prepared right at the table, with thin slices of beef dipped in a boiling broth together with mushrooms, green onions and fresh vegetables.

- **Tempura:** Sweet prawns, delicate white fish, mushrooms and vegetables; all deep-fried in a light batter, and served with a mild sauce along with hot rice.

- **Teppan - yaki:** Steak cuts grilled to order at your table and served in bite - sized pieces with fresh vegetables cooked alongside the meat.

- **Tonkatsu:** Whole cutlets of fresh pork loin or fillet, dipped in a flour and egg batter and deep fried.

- **Kushi - age:** Bits of everything. Beef, chicken or pork; stuffed eggplant or rolled crabmeat; salmon with tartare sauce or cheese croquettes; all skewered and deep-fried and served in steady succession – each stick different – until you say you've had enough.

- **Kamameshi:** Individual casseroles of rice blended with mushrooms, chicken, salmon, fresh vegetables, steamed together in the pot from which one eats it.

- **Okonomi:** Literally, 'as you like it!' Hearty omelettes grilled right at your table, with your choice of baby shrimps, bacon, beef, cheese or vegetables, served topped with a sweet brown sauce.

- As for raw fish, well, it's worth a try. As 'sushi' - bite - size fresh fish pieces on rice. Or as 'sashimi'-slices dipped in soy sauce.

Breakfast is sometimes a dilemma for visitors to Japan. Japanese breakfasts usually consist of rice, bean-paste soup, fish etc. But many hotels offer Western-style breakfasts, and some have buffet breakfasts. Many coffee shops in the larger business districts open early



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.

and serve a 'morning set' that is Continental or semi-Western, including toast, a boiled egg, coffee, a piece of fruit etc.

For the budget-minded...! Several 'fast food' chains operate in several areas and sell hamburgers, pizzas, fried chicken and bakery products. There are also 'deli' sections in Central Tokyo and other large city supermarkets that sell imported and domestic cheeses, sausage and other meats, pates, crackers and breads, and also gourmet items. Wines are available, though they're not always the norm. Most Japanese restaurants serve as accompaniment, either one of their excellent brands of beer, served ice cold, or sake, the clear liquor brewed from a malted rice base. Sake is an excellent accompaniment to Japanese dishes such as tempura, yakitori and sukiyaki, and is normally served hot, in small flasks called 'tokkuri', with tiny cups. Made from various grains and vegetables, 'Shochu' is the rawest tasting of all authentic Japanese spirits. It is cheap and mixes well with fruit juices for exotic cocktails. Suntory and Nikka whiskey need no introduction, and are usually drunk with water over ice – the ubiquitous 'mizuwari'.

What type of Japanese bar does one go to? There are two broad categories: the 'Nomiya' (literally 'drinking shop') and 'Sunakku' (from the English word 'snack'). Nomiya are more festive and noisy, while Sunakku tend to be smaller and offer more intimacy.

A few customs common to Tokyo restaurants! Tips aren't the norm. Some restaurants will automatically add a ten per cent service charge to your bill. Don't be afraid to experiment with chopsticks. Most establishments will provide a fork if asked. Beef is the most expensive meat, while chicken and pork are of superb quality and normally good value for money. There's good feasting in Japan. So don't feel guilty about a bit of over-indulgence.

IATO Namaste India Showcase strengthens Europe-India tourism connect

Marking a significant milestone, IATO Namaste India Showcase was the first-ever international roadshow undertaken by IATO from 6-11 March 2026, to directly engage with global travel markets. A multi-city European roadshow organised by the Indian Association of Tour Operators, successfully concluded its engagements across Frankfurt, Paris, and Amsterdam, strengthening tourism ties and fostering meaningful dialogue between Indian tourism stakeholders and the European travel and tourism trade.



EVENT AFFAIR



Adaaran & Heritance Aarah hosts Awards and Recognition night for travel trade in Delhi

Adaaran Resorts and Heritance Aarah Maldives hosted an appreciation evening bringing together key trade partners and media to recognise their continued support. Despite heavy rains, the event witnessed strong participation with over 150 attendees. Around 40 tour operators were honoured for their performance, reflecting robust engagement with the Indian travel trade.



Vietnam Airlines & Aeroprime Group hosts India Sales Kick Off 2026 to strengthen trade partnerships

Vietnam Airlines with its All India GSA, Aeroprime Group, hosted the Vietnam Airlines India Sales Kick Off 2026, a landmark industry event bringing together key trade partners, travel associations, media, and airline representatives to celebrate and accelerate the growing air bridge between India and Vietnam. The event, held on 27th March 2026 in New Delhi, served as a platform to strengthen partnerships, showcase Vietnam Airlines' expanding India network, promote Vietnam as a destination, and chart the course for deeper collaboration with the Indian travel trade community.





ICC Summit maps India’s Aviation leap towards Viksit Bharat 2047

The 2nd ICC Aviation & Tourism Summit 2026, held at Le Méridien New Delhi, spotlighted India’s rapid aviation growth under the theme “Viksit Bharat 2047.” With daily passenger traffic rising from 2.39 lakh to 5.46 lakh over the past decade, the summit brought together key stakeholders to discuss infrastructure expansion, enhanced connectivity, and regulatory reforms needed to position India as a globally competitive tourism hub.



Korea Tourism Organisation hosts Delhi and Mumbai Roadshows

KTO introduced the latest trade-focused initiatives for 2026, including the Korea Premium Travel Consultant (KPTC) program and the K-Incentive Scheme 4.0, both designed to support travel partners in developing high-quality Korea travel experiences. Korea recorded close to 200,000 visitors from India in 2025, reflecting an increase of 13 per cent compared to the previous year, underscoring the continued growth of the Indian outbound market.



APPOINTMENTS



IndiGo

IndiGo announces the appointment of William Walsh as its new Chief Executive Officer, marking a significant leadership transition for the carrier. Walsh, who previously served as CEO of British Airways and currently heads the International Air Transport Association, is expected to take charge by early August 2026 following the completion of his tenure at IATA.



Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

Bhuvnesh Kumar, IAS (UP:95), has been appointed as the new Secretary, Ministry of Tourism. With a distinguished career in public administration, he brings with him extensive experience in governance, policy formulation, and implementation across key sectors. In his new role, Kumar is expected to play a pivotal part in strengthening India's tourism ecosystem, accelerating strategic initiatives, and enhancing the country's global positioning as a preferred travel destination.



IRIS Repts

IRIS Repts has announced the promotion of Priyanka Mehta to the position of Associate Director, effective April 1, 2026. With over 11 years of dedicated service at IRIS Repts, Priyanka has been a key force in strengthening the company's presence in the Indian travel and hospitality industry. Her long-standing association with the organisation reflects both her commitment and her deep understanding of the evolving market landscape.



Novotel Ahmedabad

Novotel Ahmedabad announces the appointment of Nikhil Chandra as its new General Manager. With over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, Chandra brings extensive operational expertise, commercial insight, and strategic leadership to the role.

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