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EDITORS LETTER



Someone recently told me, "The older we grow, the more we travel for feeling, not for photographs."

And I have been thinking about that ever since.

Maybe that is exactly what this issue became without us even planning it that way. Every story in these pages carries a certain mood. A certain sense of escape. Not the loud kind, but the kind that quietly stays with you.

Over the past month, between sailing from Colombo to Mumbai aboard *Crystal Serenity*, conversations around the growing cruise culture in India, discovering beautifully layered experiences like Absinthe, and curating stories from Prague, Bali, and the Fateh Collection in Udaipur, one thing became very clear to me. Travel today is becoming deeply personal. People are looking for places with soul, with character, with stories worth remembering.

I think that is what draws us back to travel again and again. Not just the destinations themselves, but the way certain places make us feel more present, more inspired, more connected to life outside routine.

This issue is a collection of exactly those moments.

Some glamorous. Some nostalgic. Some unexpected.




But all unforgettable in their own way.

As always, thank you for travelling the world with us, page after page.

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

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

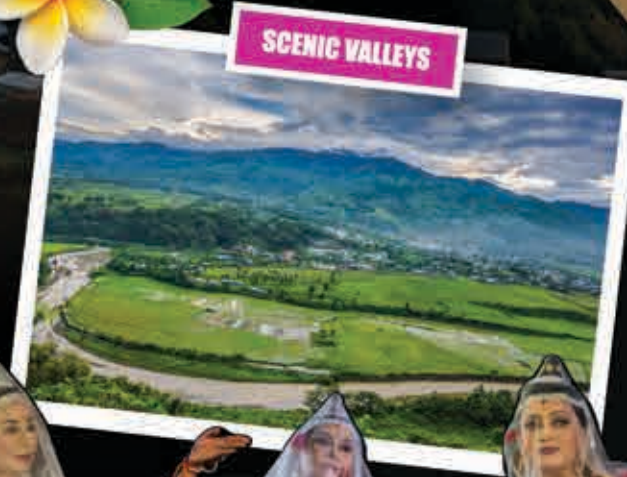
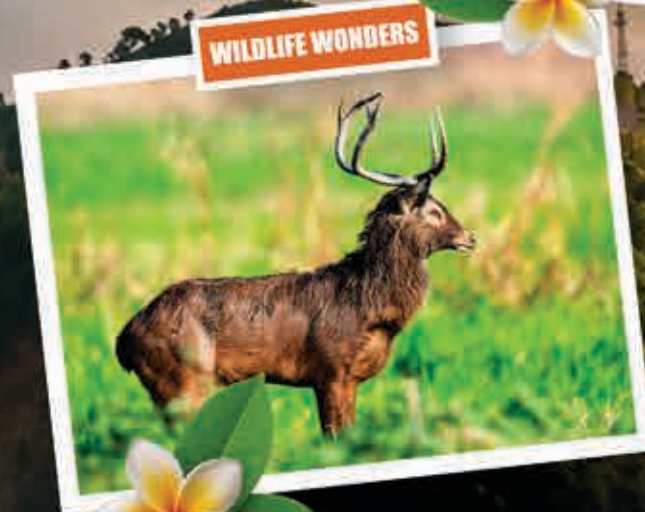
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Egypt Where Sun, Sea & Sellable Experiences Meet

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FHTR welcome Gagan Katyal as Marketing Consultant for RDTM 2026

The Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) has onboarded Gagan Katyal as Consultant for Marketing and Future Growth, strengthening its strategic vision for the upcoming Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) 2026 and associated initiatives. With extensive experience in hotel and marketing domains, he is expected to bring valuable insights and direction to enhance the event's outreach and impact. FHTR expressed confidence in his ability to contribute meaningfully and extended a warm welcome as he joins the team for this important phase of growth.



DMCBazaar & Asoko simplify Japan for Indian Agents

DMCBazaar announces a strategic partnership with Asoko (formerly Dokotrip), one of Japan's most trusted Destination Management Companies (DMCs). The collaboration aims to transform how Indian travel agents sell and operate Japan by making the destination more competitive, accessible and operationally seamless. Japan has long been one of the most aspirational destinations for Indian travellers, witnessing growing demand across FIT, luxury, family travel, cherry blossom departures and MICE segments.



Norwegian Cruise Line® marks major construction milestone with the float out of Norwegian Aura™

The float out, which took place at Fincantieri's shipyard in Monfalcone, Italy, marks the first time Norwegian Aura touched water, signifying the completion of the ship's external hull construction. Following this milestone, the ship's interior development will continue progressing to the next phase ahead of her debut in the spring of 2027. To commemorate the occasion and honour maritime tradition, two ceremonial coins were welded into Norwegian Aura's hull during a traditional coin ceremony, symbolising good fortune and safe passage for the ship, her crew and future guests.

Air India Express restores flights to key West Asia routes

Air India Express announces the reinstatement of operations to Qatar and Bahrain, along with additional flights to the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia, starting April 30. Flights have resumed from major Indian metros and regional gateways, including Amritsar, Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kochi, Kozhikode, Kannur, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Mumbai, Tiruchirappalli, Thiruvananthapuram and Varanasi. Air India Express will continue operating to Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, Jeddah, Riyadh and Muscat, with the reinstatement of established routes connecting India to the Gulf region.





Air India becomes first airline to launch flights to Halwara (Ludhiana)

Air India announces Halwara (Ludhiana) as its newest destination in India, enhancing access for travellers from the industrial heartland of Punjab to Delhi and beyond to destinations around the world. Air India will operate two flights every day between Delhi and Halwara using its A320 Family aircraft and becoming the first airline to launch flights to Halwara.



Eight Continents expands global hospitality corridor with The Royal Hotel Cookstown in Northern Ireland

Eight Continents Hotels & Resorts continues to strengthen its footprint across the UK. The Group has announced the addition of The Royal Hotel Cookstown in Northern Ireland to its international portfolio, marking a monumental step in its strategy to build a curated collection of distinctive hospitality destinations.

Centara Hotels & Resorts and OR partner to launch new budget hotel brand

Centara and OR will develop a network of budget hotels located adjacent to PTT Station service complexes, creating a convenient and accessible accommodation option for modern travellers. The collaboration combines Centara's hospitality expertise with OR's extensive nationwide network of service stations and lifestyle retail spaces.



Princess Cruises announces Voyager Class Order

Princess Cruises recently announced agreements with Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri to build three next-generation cruise ships, set for delivery in late 2035, 2038 and 2039. The new vessels will combine Princess Cruises' highest-rated experiences and venues with reimagined outer decks, staterooms and Piazza designs tailored for global travellers and diverse deployments.



Meet Boston appoints Sartha Global Marketing as its India Representative Firm

Through this partnership, Sartha Global Marketing will spearhead Meet Boston's engagement in India through public relations, travel trade, and marketing efforts. The goal is to position Boston as an attractive, year-round U.S. destination for Indian travellers by increasing destination visibility and building relationships with the travel industry and media.

Passport From Pin Code

How Tier II & Tier III India is Redefining the Future of Luxury Travel

Somewhere between a destination wedding in Phuket booked from Ludhiana, a luxury cruise inquiry coming from Surat, and a honeymoon budget in Indore crossing INR 15 lakh, the travel industry quietly realised something important.

- Bharti Sharma

For years, India's metro cities remained the primary drivers of luxury outbound travel, shaping trends, preferences and premium consumption across the industry. Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad continue to remain extremely influential markets even today.

But alongside these established markets, another equally powerful travel movement is steadily gathering momentum across emerging Indian cities.

A travel advisor in Surat selling Antarctic expeditions. A honeymoon planner in Lucknow curating private island buyouts in the Maldives. Families from Coimbatore discussing Japan over Switzerland because it feels "more experiential." A young entrepreneur from Indore choosing a wellness retreat in Bhutan over shopping in Europe.

The map has changed. Quietly. Dramatically. And the global travel industry is only beginning to catch up. Across India, a quieter but far more transformative shift is underway. The next generation of luxury travellers is emerging not from the country's biggest metros, but from cities once considered secondary markets. Lucknow, Surat, Indore, Ludhiana, Chandigarh, Kochi, Jaipur, Nagpur, Bhubaneswar, Coimbatore, Raipur and countless others are becoming serious contributors to outbound travel growth.

And they are not merely travelling more. They are travelling bigger. The Indian luxury traveller today is younger, more globally exposed, deeply aspirational and increasingly experience-driven. What is surprising the travel industry, however, is where this

demand is now coming from.

According to recent industry estimates, nearly 60 percent of India's new outbound travellers are now emerging from Tier II and Tier III cities. This is not a temporary spike fuelled by revenge travel. It is a structural shift driven by rising disposable incomes, stronger air connectivity, social media exposure and the rapid democratisation of luxury. The luxury traveller no longer belongs to one geography.

The Rise of Aspirational India

The old definition of luxury travel in India was heavily tied to legacy wealth and urban exposure. Today, luxury is increasingly aspiration-led. The modern traveller from smaller cities is willing to spend significantly on experiences that deliver emotional value, social currency and exclusivity.

A travel advisor based in Surat recently noted that honeymoon budgets that once averaged INR 3 to 5 lakh are now comfortably crossing INR 12 lakh for destinations such as the

Maldives, Switzerland and Japan. Similar patterns are visible in cities such as Indore, Kanpur and Bhubaneswar, where outbound demand has grown sharply over the past three years. This shift is being accelerated by digital exposure. Instagram, luxury influencers, destination - led storytelling and celebrity

travel culture have fundamentally changed travel aspirations across India. A traveller in Jaipur today consumes the same luxury travel content as someone in Mumbai.

The result is a new kind of traveller. One who may not come from generational wealth, but is highly ambitious, globally aware and willing to prioritise experiences over possessions.

Luxury Is No Longer About Hotels Alone

Perhaps the most important transformation within Tier II and Tier III India is the changing understanding of luxury itself. Luxury today is no longer confined to chandeliers, marble lobbies and expensive suites. It has become emotional, experiential and deeply personal. Indian travellers from emerging cities are increasingly seeking:

- Private island stays
- Wellness retreats
- Experiential cruises
- Adventure-led itineraries
- Fine dining journeys
- Spiritual travel

Slow travel experiences
Nature-driven escapes
Destinations such as Mauritius, Seychelles, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Vietnam and Hong Kong are witnessing growing interest from these markets because they offer layered experiences rather than just sightseeing.

Travel advisors confirm that travellers are now asking far more detailed questions. They want immersive food experiences, luxury train journeys, private yacht charters, vineyard stays and wellness-focused holidays. This is a consumer who has evolved rapidly.

The Wedding Economy Is Driving Travel Like Never Before

One of the strongest catalysts behind this travel boom is India's rapidly expanding wedding economy. Destination weddings are no longer limited to elite metro families. Affluent families from Tier II cities are now increasingly hosting weddings and celebrations in Thailand, Dubai, Bali, Turkey and the Maldives.

The scale of spending is extraordinary.

Industry estimates suggest India's wedding industry is now valued at over USD 130 billion, with luxury destination celebrations accounting for one of its fastest - growing segments. Travel companies are witnessing growing demand not just for weddings, but also for pre-wedding shoots, bachelor trips, family buyouts and luxury group travel.

This has created a ripple effect across airlines, luxury hotels, tourism boards and DMCs globally.

The Real Heroes Behind This Boom

While social media may influence travel dreams, travel agents remain the single most powerful force driving conversions in emerging India. In Tier II and Tier III cities, trust still plays a critical role in decision-making. Luxury travellers may discover destinations online, but bookings are largely shaped by local travel advisors who curate itineraries, simplify visa processes and offer reassurance. This is precisely why the Indian travel trade continues to remain one of the most influential ecosystems globally.

For international tourism boards and hospitality brands, understanding this distribution network is critical. The real opportunity lies not just in marketing to travellers directly, but in building strong visibility among travel advisors operating in emerging markets.

Because increasingly, the future of outbound India is being sold from cities that were once ignored.

The Numbers Changing Global Tourism

- Nearly 60% of India's new outbound travellers are now emerging from Tier II & III cities
- India's outbound travel market is expected to cross 50 million travellers by 2030
- Luxury travel demand from smaller cities has grown sharply post-pandemic
- Destination weddings abroad are no longer metro-centric
- Experiential travel is outperforming traditional sightseeing holidays
- Smaller cities are seeing a significant rise in premium passport applications
- Luxury cruise, wellness and private villa enquiries are increasing rapidly from emerging markets
- Travel advisors remain the biggest conversion drivers in non-metro Indi



The New Geography Of Global Tourism

The rise of Tier II and Tier III India is not merely an Indian travel story. It is reshaping global tourism strategy. Luxury hotel brands, tourism boards, airlines and cruise companies are now actively recalibrating their India approach. Roadshows are increasingly moving beyond metros. Regional language marketing is becoming more important. Direct connectivity to emerging cities is improving. Even luxury hospitality brands are adapting menus, experiences and services specifically for Indian travellers.

The industry understands something important. India's next luxury traveller may not live in South Mumbai or Lutyens' Delhi.

They may come from Surat.

They may come from Lucknow.

They may come from Coimbatore.

And they are arriving faster than anyone expected.

The Future Is Already Here

For decades, India's travel narrative was viewed through the lens of its metros. Today, that lens feels increasingly outdated.

The new India is ambitious, mobile and globally connected. It travels for emotion, identity, aspiration and experience. And increasingly, its luxury travellers are emerging from places the global tourism industry once overlooked. This shift will define the next decade of travel. Because the future of Indian outbound tourism is no longer being written only in metro cities. It is being written everywhere.

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CRUISE ODYSSEY

CRYSTAL

Cruises

is Betting Big on India's Luxury Boom

From redefining ultra-luxury at sea to recognising India as one of the world's most promising high-value travel markets, Crystal Cruises is entering a bold new era. In an exclusive conversation with Travel Turtle, Tony Archbold, Vice President Sales- APAC, Crystal Cruises, speaks about the brand's reinvention under Abercrombie & Kent and why India is central to Crystal's long-term vision.

-Bharti Sharma



While Indian travellers are already among the world's fastest-growing luxury consumers, ultra-luxury cruising remains a segment that is only beginning to gain visibility. For Tony Archbold, Vice President Sales at Crystal Cruises, this creates an enormous opportunity. "The Indian market has enormous potential," he says. "Not just because of the population size, but because of the growing economy, the rise of luxury consumption, and the global outlook of Indian travellers today." According to Tony, Indian luxury travellers are already deeply connected to the world. They travel extensively, understand premium hospitality, and increasingly seek experiences rather than conventional holidays. That mindset, he believes, aligns perfectly with what Crystal offers. "The Indian traveller, especially the luxury traveller, is very global," he explains. "They're curious, open to experiences, and comfortable exploring different cultures. That naturally fits into the Crystal experience."

India Isn't Just Emerging. It's Becoming Impossible to Ignore.

Crystal's India strategy is not built around immediate volume. Tony repeatedly emphasises that developing a luxury cruise market requires patience, consistency, and relationship-building.

"You can't bring a market on quickly," he says. "This is a long-term process. We see the first three years as the foundation stage, but realistically, building a mature luxury cruise market takes time."

What gives Crystal confidence is the pace at which India's affluent segment is expanding. Rising disposable incomes, increasing outbound travel, and the rapid growth of ultra-high-net-worth individuals make India impossible to ignore for global luxury brands. "If you look at the growth of UHNWIs in India, it's one of the strongest in the world," Tony explains.

"As a luxury provider, you naturally look at that and think- why wouldn't we be here?"



Tony Archbold



Yet for Crystal, this is not enough. The brand is specifically targeting travellers with a global worldview, guests who value culture, learning, and immersive experiences as much as luxury itself.

"We look for people who are positioned for luxury travel, of course," he says. "But equally important is mindset. Our guests tend to be well travelled, open-minded, culturally curious people who genuinely want to engage with the world."

Crystal's Reinvention Was Never About Starting Over. It Was About Elevating What People Already Loved.

Crystal Cruises entered a new era in 2022 after being acquired by the Abercrombie & Kent Group. While the relaunch marked a major transformation for the brand, Tony says preserving Crystal's emotional core remained essential.

"The crew is what makes this experience," he says. "A huge number of our original crew members returned, and that continuity mattered enormously to guests."

He recalls emotional moments

onboard during the relaunch sailings, where returning guests reunited with crew members they thought they might never see again.

"There were genuine tears," he says. "People realised those relationships they valued so deeply were continuing again."

Alongside emotional continuity came significant upgrades to the onboard product. One of Crystal's biggest changes was reducing ship capacity by nearly 35 percent, allowing for more space, privacy, and a calmer onboard atmosphere.

"There are no crowds on Crystal," Tony says. "The additional space changes the entire onboard experience. It creates a much more relaxed and refined environment."

At Crystal, Dining Isn't a Feature. It's Part of the Identity.

Food has always been central to the Crystal experience, and the brand has continued to strengthen its culinary positioning through globally recognised partnerships.

Crystal's longstanding collaboration with Nobu remains



CRUISE ODYSSEY

one of its strongest differentiators. According to Tony, the restaurant has almost become synonymous with the brand itself.

"Nobu has enormous global recognition," he says. "No matter where you are in the world, people instantly know the brand."

Today, Crystal's dining portfolio has expanded further with renowned concepts such as Beefbar and Osteria d'Ovidio, elevating the culinary experience onboard even further.

"For two ships, we cover an incredible variety of cuisines and experiences," he says. "The culinary offering is genuinely one of the strongest aspects of the Crystal journey."

For Indian travellers especially, Tony believes this becomes even more relevant because food often plays a central role in travel decisions.

The Abercrombie & Kent Partnership Has Changed the Scale of What Crystal Can Become.

Tony describes Crystal's integration with Abercrombie & Kent as "the best of sea and land coming together." As one of the world's most established experiential luxury travel companies, Abercrombie & Kent operates across more than 100 countries globally, creating a highly connected luxury ecosystem.

"We're now part of a business that is completely focused on travel," he says. "That allows us to think long term, invest properly, and create integrated luxury experiences."

For the travel trade, this creates additional confidence and simplicity. Advisors can now work within one trusted luxury network instead of managing multiple disconnected partnerships.

"It gives travel partners consistency," Tony explains. "One relationship can open doors across the entire luxury ecosystem."

What Truly Sets Crystal Apart Cannot Be Replicated.

When asked what truly defines Crystal Cruises, Tony immediately points to three things: people,

culinary excellence, and community.

"You can't get past the people," he says. "The warmth onboard, the relationships between crew and guests, the sense of familiarity—that's what defines Crystal."

But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Crystal experience is the strong social community onboard. Tony explains that many guests build lasting friendships during voyages and often return to sail together again.

"People genuinely connect onboard," he says. "Guests often end up booking future cruises together because they've formed friendships during the journey."

For first-time cruisers, he encourages guests to fully engage with the experience— from dining and enrichment programmes to conversations with fellow travellers.

"Only people who've never cruised say they'll get bored," he laughs. "There's always something happening onboard."

Crystal's Asia Ambition Is Bigger Than Cruises.

While India remains a key focus, Crystal also sees enormous long-term potential across Asia. Tony identifies India, Indonesia, and South Korea among the region's most promising emerging luxury cruise markets, while mature markets like Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan continue to remain important.

He also believes Asia itself is becoming one of the world's most desirable cruise destinations because of its diversity, culture, and depth of experiences.

"The rest of the world wants to experience Asia," he says. "Its colour, diversity, and energy are incredibly compelling."

Crystal's upcoming ship, Crystal Grace, expected to launch in 2028, is likely to further strengthen the brand's presence in Asia from 2029 onwards, enabling more consistent deployment within the region.

As the conversation concludes, Tony's excitement about India remains unmistakable. He

openly admits he has personally advocated for Crystal to build a stronger presence here for years. "There's an incredible energy in India," he says. "The diversity, the

ambition, the warmth— it's a market we genuinely believe in. For us, this is only the beginning."



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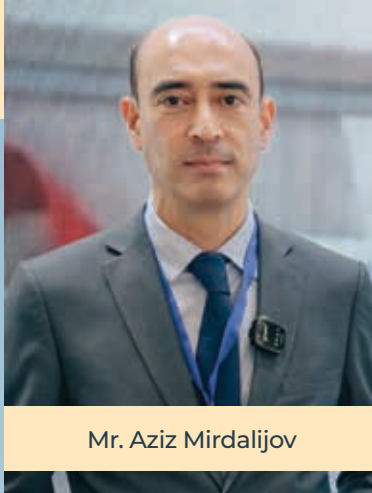


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UZBEKISTAN



Mr. Aziz Mirdalijov

bets big on India

Uzbekistan is positioning itself as one of Central Asia's fastest-growing tourism destinations. Mr. Aziz Mirdalijov, Head of Marketing, Tourism Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan to India shares how the silk route country is becoming a go to destination for Indian travellers.



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Rich cultural heritage, short-haul accessibility, growing MICE infrastructure, and aggressive tourism promotion strategies are driving the country's focused push into the Indian market. With strong government backing, enhanced air connectivity, expanding hospitality infrastructure, and deeper engagement with the Indian travel trade, Uzbekistan is steadily evolving from a niche cultural destination into a multi-segment tourism hub catering to leisure, FITs, groups, weddings, wellness travellers, and corporates alike.

For the Indian travel fraternity, the destination presents significant opportunities across curated itineraries, experiential tourism, film tourism, and MICE movements, supported by increasing destination awareness among Indian consumers.

A historic connection

Uzbekistan's tourism appeal in India is deeply rooted in centuries - old cultural and historical ties between the two nations. Shared Silk Route legacies, artistic influences, cuisine, music, and educational exchanges continue to create strong familiarity among Indian travellers.

Speaking about the relationship between both countries, Aziz Mirdalijov, says, "The ties between India and Uzbekistan go back many centuries. We traded together, exchanged knowledge, and shared cultural heritage for generations. There is a natural closeness between our people."

This emotional connect is now translating into growing tourism interest from India, particularly among travellers seeking immersive experiences within short flying distances. "In Uzbekistan, people admire Indian culture, cinema, dance, music, and cuisine. Indian travellers also find a sense of familiarity when they visit Uzbekistan," he adds.

India emerges as a key source market

India is rapidly becoming a priority outbound market for Uzbekistan's tourism strategy. The destination witnessed over



The destination witnessed over 80,000 Indian arrivals last year, with tourism authorities projecting significant growth in the coming years.

Aziz Mirdalijov shares, "India is an extremely important market for Uzbekistan because Indian outbound travel is growing rapidly. We see tremendous potential in attracting a larger share of Indian travellers. Uzbekistan is actively diversifying its tourism offerings for Indian visitors beyond traditional heritage circuits. We are promoting multiple tourism segments including cultural tourism, wellness tourism, educational tourism, senior travel, and MICE tourism."

The country's tourism board and private sector are simultaneously working to create Indian - friendly tourism ecosystems. Partnerships with Indian hotel brands, Indian restaurant chains, and hospitality training programmes are already underway. He adds, "We are working with Indian hospitality brands and also training Uzbek chefs in Indian cuisine to enhance comfort and familiarity for Indian guests."

Connectivity takes centre stage

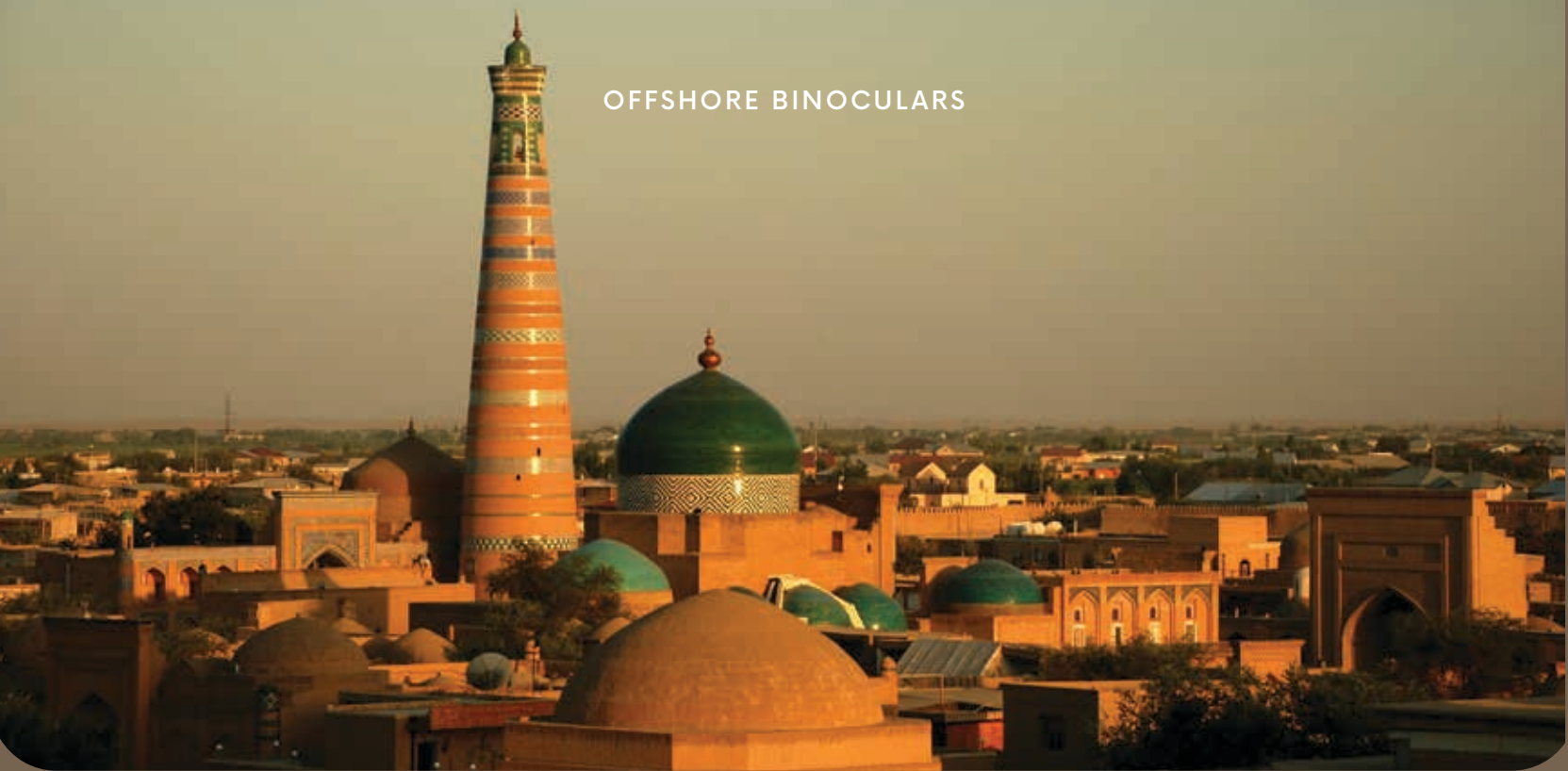
Air connectivity remains central to Uzbekistan's India strategy. Direct flights between Delhi and Tashkent currently make the

destination one of the most accessible Central Asian markets for Indian travellers.

Aziz Mirdalijov speaks on the same lines and shares, "Direct flights from Delhi to Tashkent take approximately two hours, making Uzbekistan a very convenient destination for Indian tourists. We currently have several flights operating weekly, and we are actively working towards increasing air connectivity between India and Uzbekistan."

Uzbekistan's aviation policies are also creating favourable conditions for international airline expansion. Subsidy programmes for foreign carriers and private aviation operators are expected to further strengthen regional connectivity.





MICE and luxury tourism

Uzbekistan's tourism narrative is increasingly moving beyond cultural tourism into premium experiences and business events. New convention centres, luxury hospitality developments, and integrated tourism complexes are strengthening the country's MICE proposition.

Aziz Mirdalijov explains, "We now have world-class convention infrastructure in Tashkent and Samarkand. The Samarkand Tourist Centre includes congress facilities, exhibition spaces, and luxury hotels, creating strong opportunities for international MICE events. The destination's diverse landscapes and year-round tourism possibilities are also helping position Uzbekistan for

experiential and luxury travel. We experience four distinct seasons, offering year - round tourism opportunities. Travellers can enjoy winter tourism, cultural experiences, wellness holidays, and luxury leisure travel throughout the year."

Cinema tourism is another emerging segment being promoted aggressively, especially for the Indian market. Uzbekistan's historic architecture, Silk Route cities, and dramatic landscapes are attracting increasing attention from filmmakers and content creators.

Strong trade engagement in India

Uzbekistan's tourism authorities are maintaining consistent engagement with the Indian travel trade through exhibitions, roadshows, B2B meetings,

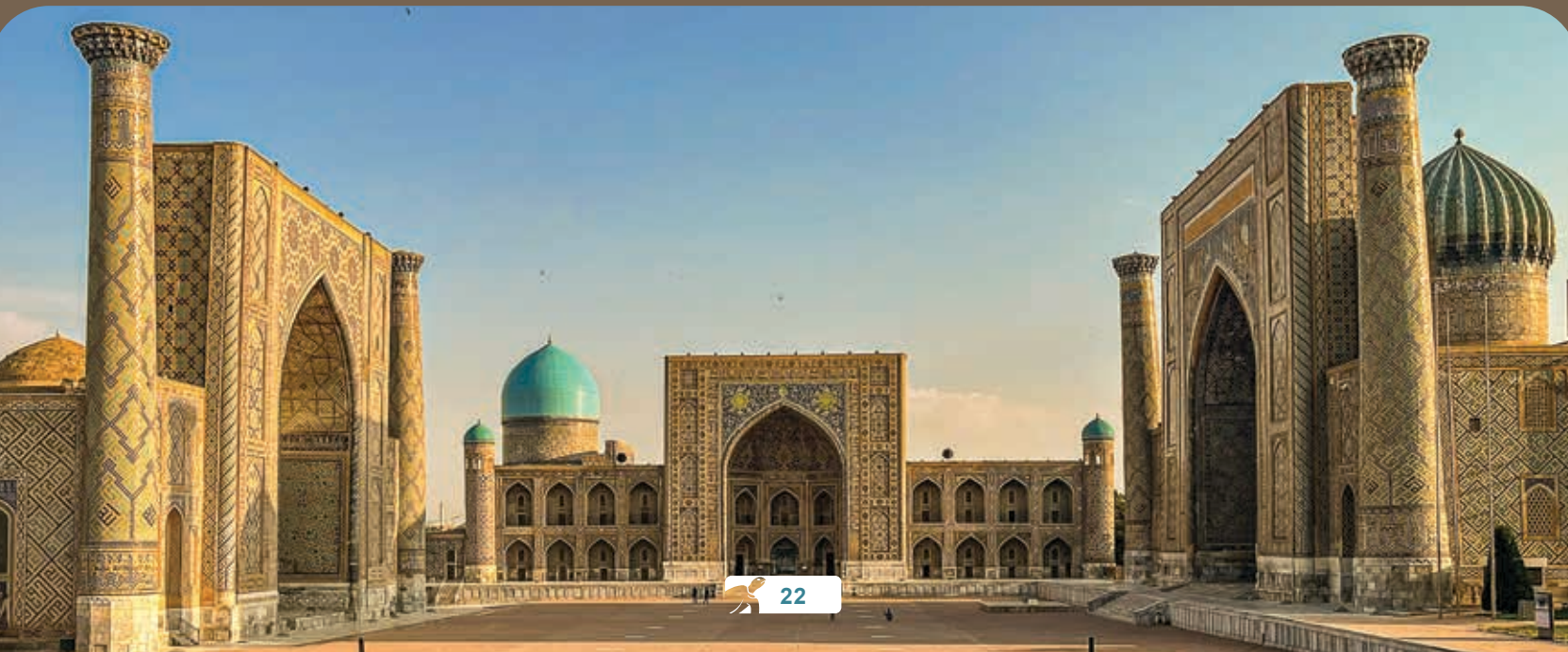
webinars, and familiarisation trips. Explaining more about the same he shares, "We participate regularly in India's major travel exhibitions. They help us connect directly with Indian tour operators, travel agencies, and tourism stakeholders. The destination is also investing heavily in trade education and market awareness initiatives. We organise webinars, roadshows, and FAM trips for Indian travel companies so they can experience Uzbekistan firsthand and better promote the destination."

A growth story

Tourism has emerged as one of Uzbekistan's key economic priorities, supported by extensive government investment in infrastructure and destination

development. Aziz Mirdalijov shares, "In 2016, Uzbekistan welcomed around three million international visitors. Last year, the country received nearly 12 million international tourists. The country now aims to welcome 20 million international visitors annually by 2030, reflecting the scale of its tourism ambitions. This growth is being supported through investments in hotels, transportation, festivals, tourism services, and modern infrastructure."

As Uzbekistan continues strengthening its tourism partnerships with India, the destination is steadily shaping itself into one of Central Asia's most promising growth markets for the Indian travel industry.



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The story of Global Destinations

18 years, countless journeys!

Eighteen years in the travel industry is never just a measure of time. It is a reflection of partnerships nurtured, markets understood, and journeys shaped with intent.

- Sudipta Saha

Global Destinations steps into this milestone with the quiet confidence of a company that has built its legacy on insight, trust, and an unwavering commitment to its people and partners. This is a story of vision meeting perseverance, of a team that transformed a simple idea into a powerful network, and of a journey that continues to evolve with purpose.

Bridge that connected worlds

Every enduring enterprise begins with a clear sense of purpose. For Global Destinations, that purpose was rooted in identifying a gap that few had fully addressed. International tourism partners often struggled to decode the complexity and diversity of the Indian travel market. The need for a bridge that could align global offerings with local expectations became increasingly evident.

That realisation sparked the inception of Global Destinations. The journey began with General Travel NZ, a partnership that continues to stand as a testament to the company's philosophy of long - term collaboration. From that first step, the foundation was set for a business built on understanding, strategy, and relationships that extend far beyond transactional exchanges.

Milestones that build a living legacy

For Global Destinations, milestones have never been isolated achievements. Each partnership has contributed to the company's identity, creating a layered and evolving narrative of growth. The journey has seen the company



take on diverse roles across the travel ecosystem. From representing leading destination management companies to serving as the General Sales Agent for Air New Zealand, each association has added depth and dimension to its portfolio. The promotion of Fiji as a luxury destination for Indian travellers marked another significant chapter, reflecting the company's ability to position destinations with clarity and appeal.

A steadily expanding portfolio of tourism boards, hospitality brands, and global travel partners has strengthened Global Destinations' footprint across markets. Every engagement reflects the trust placed in the company and reinforces its role as a strategic partner rather than a mere representative.

The leap that set the tone

Behind every successful organisation lies a defining decision. For Global Destinations, that moment came with the choice to step into entrepreneurship. Leaving behind the stability of a fixed career path and embracing the uncertainties of building a business required conviction and resilience. The early days demanded belief in an idea that was still taking shape, along with the courage to navigate an industry known for its volatility.

These experiences strengthened Global Destinations, turning unpredictability into a source of learning and growth. The ability to remain agile while staying grounded in its core values has defined the company's journey and continues to guide its future.



The human engine behind the brand

At the heart of Global Destinations lies a team that embodies its ethos. The company's growth story is deeply intertwined with the people who have contributed to it, each bringing their own perspective, expertise, and passion. Leadership within the organisation focuses on fostering an environment where collaboration and mutual respect drive outcomes. A culture that values openness and shared vision enables the team to work seamlessly towards common goals. Learning flows in every direction, creating a space where ideas are exchanged freely and innovation emerges organically. This collective spirit has been instrumental in building a brand that resonates with partners and stakeholders alike. Every success achieved by Global Destinations is a reflection of this unified effort. The team stands as the backbone of the organisation, carrying forward its legacy with dedication and pride.

Behind the scenes

Travel representation often appears effortless from the outside. The reality reveals a world that demands precision, accountability, and sustained engagement. Each partner places significant trust in Global Destinations, expecting not just visibility but measurable results. Delivering on these expectations requires a deep understanding of market dynamics, coupled with strategic execution and consistent effort. The work involves building relationships that endure, navigating complex market conditions, and ensuring that every partner's objectives are met with clarity and commitment. This

level of dedication forms the foundation of the company's credibility and long-standing success. The strength of Global Destinations lies in its ability to balance strategy with empathy, creating partnerships that are both effective and enduring.

Vision expands beyond borders

As Global Destinations looks to the future, its ambitions reflect both confidence and clarity. The next phase of growth is centred on evolving into a truly global enterprise, with plans to establish a presence across key international markets. This vision goes beyond expansion for scale. It focuses on enhancing the company's ability to serve its partners with greater depth, offering on-ground expertise and insights that strengthen its value proposition. The goal is to build a globally integrated network that remains rooted in the principles that have defined the company's journey so far. This balance of growth and consistency positions Global Destinations for a future that is both dynamic and grounded.

Celebrating a shared journey

An 18-year milestone is a moment to pause and reflect on the journey so far. For Global Destinations, it is also a celebration of the people who have been part of this story. As Global Destinations steps into its next chapter, it carries forward a legacy built on trust, strengthened by experience, and inspired by the possibilities that lie ahead. The road continues to unfold with new opportunities, deeper connections, and a spirit that remains as strong as ever.



From the Founder's desk

"Eighteen years ago, we identified a clear gap in how global tourism partners understood the Indian travel trade. What began as an effort to bridge that gap has grown into a network of meaningful partnerships built on trust and shared vision. Each association has played a role in shaping who we are today. As we look ahead, our focus remains on growing into a truly global enterprise while staying rooted in the relationships and values that define us."

— Pranav Kapadia, Founder & Director, Global Destinations



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HEADS IN BEDS

Clifftop Calm at The Ritz-Carlton Bali



At The Ritz-Carlton Bali, sweeping ocean views, deeply rooted Balinese rituals and quietly polished hospitality unfold above the cliffs of Nusa Dua.

- Misbaah Mansuri

HEADS IN BEDS



There is a particular kind of stillness that Bali does well. Not silence exactly, but softness. The sound of water moving through stone fountains. Frangipani trees shifting in the heat. Distant waves colliding with cliffs somewhere below. At The Ritz-Carlton Bali, that atmosphere begins almost immediately. Set across a dramatic stretch of cliff-top coastline in Sawangan, Nusa Dua, the resort unfolds across manicured gardens and ocean-facing terraces that seem to dissolve into the Indian Ocean. The scale is substantial, yet the experience rarely feels overwhelming. Instead, the property leans into openness. Long sightlines. Expansive skies. Constant reminders of the sea. The arrival itself sets the tone. A 70-metre glass elevator glides guests from the cliff level down toward the beachfront, revealing uninterrupted ocean views along the descent. It is cinematic without feeling forced, the sort of feature that could easily tip into spectacle but instead becomes part of the landscape. By the time I reached the lobby, Bali had already begun working its quiet magic.

Arrival

Check-in unfolded with the kind of polished ease expected from Ritz - Carlton, but there was warmth beneath the formality. Staff greeted us with genuine softness, never overly scripted, and the transition from traveller to guest felt seamless. The lobby itself

is vast and open to the elements, framed by reflecting pools, carved stone details and endless views toward the sea.

There is a generosity to the architecture here. Nothing feels enclosed.

Even while moving through the resort, the ocean remains omnipresent.

As afternoon light softened across the property, guests drifted slowly between the gardens, the beach and the open-air lounges. The atmosphere felt calm but alive, luxurious without feeling rigid.

The Sky Villa

Our Sky Villa felt less like a hotel room and more like a private cliffside residence suspended above the Indian Ocean.

At 159 square metres, the space unfolded gradually, balancing openness with intimacy. Floor - to - ceiling windows framed uninterrupted views of the ocean and tropical gardens below, flooding the villa with soft natural light throughout the day.

The design leaned contemporary but warm. Marble floors cooled the space underfoot, while soft neutral tones and natural textures kept it grounded in Bali rather than generic luxury minimalism.

The living room opened directly onto a large sundeck where our private infinity pool seemed to blur into the horizon itself. Mornings began there quietly, coffee in hand, watching the light shift slowly across the water as Bali woke around us.

The bathroom carried the same oversized elegance. A deep soaking tub, rain shower and Diptyque amenities transformed even routine moments into ritual. Everything felt spacious, deliberate and calm.

At night, with the balcony doors slightly open, the sound of the Indian Ocean carried softly into the villa. It was the kind of room that made leaving for dinner briefly feel like an interruption.

Indonesian Evenings

Dinner on the first evening took place at Bejana, the resort's Indonesian restaurant.

The setting overlooks the ocean, but unlike many destination restaurants, it does not rely solely on the view. The food carries equal weight.

Bejana approaches Indonesian cuisine with seriousness and depth, drawing from regional flavours across the archipelago while remaining grounded in Balinese warmth. The scent of grilled spices, turmeric and lemongrass drifted through the restaurant before the dishes even arrived.

But it was the sambals that truly anchored the meal.

Fiery, sharp, smoky, sometimes slightly sweet, each variation carried its own distinct personality. One cut through richness with bright chilli heat while another leaned deeper and almost earthy with shrimp paste and charred aromatics. They transformed every plate they touched.

Grilled seafood arrived delicately

charred, the flesh still sweet and soft beneath the smoke. Slow-cooked meats carried layers of spice that built gradually rather than aggressively. Even the rice felt deeply fragrant, absorbing every sauce and sambal effortlessly.

What stood out most was how rooted the meal felt. There was no dilution for international palates, no softening of flavour. The food remained entirely confident in its identity.

Dinner stretched slowly into the evening, accompanied by the sound of waves somewhere below the cliffside.

Morning Rituals

Breakfast at Senses the following morning unfolded against one of the resort's strongest assets: light.

Morning sun floods the restaurant gradually, illuminating long breakfast counters lined with tropical fruit, pastries and Indonesian specialities. The atmosphere remained calm despite the scale of the resort.

The spread itself was extensive, but the quality remained consistent.

Freshly pressed juices, delicate pastries and made-to-order dishes arrived with precision, though it was the local offerings that stood out most. Warm Indonesian dishes carried far more depth than the standard international breakfast staples often found at large luxury resorts. And then there was the coffee. Strong, rich and exactly what Bali mornings demand.



HEADS IN BEDS

Spa Calm

Later that morning we headed to The Ritz - Carlton Spa for the Hydro - Vital Pool experience followed by the Escape to Romance ritual.

The spa itself feels deeply connected to water and ritual, drawing on traditional Balinese healing philosophies designed to calm both body and mind. Our experience began with a gentle foot-washing ceremony before moving into a full-body massage using pearl extract, safflower oil and antioxidant-rich blends intended to restore glow and balance to the skin.

The treatment unfolded slowly, rhythmically, almost meditatively. Long flowing Balinese massage techniques released tension gradually while warm oils softened the body into complete stillness. At some point during the session, the distinction between body and environment began to blur slightly. Soft music, aromatic oils, distant water sounds. The outside world disappeared entirely.

Afterwards, we soaked together in a fragrant Lustre Pearl Aromatic Bath while sipping sparkling wine and nibbling on delicate Balinese chocolates.

It felt indulgent, yes, but also deeply calming. Less like a spa appointment and more like a ritual designed to slow time itself. By the end, the world felt noticeably quieter.

Beachfront Lunches

Lunch at The Beach Grill introduced a lighter rhythm to the stay. Positioned directly by the water, the restaurant leans into simple seafood cooking that allows ingredients to speak clearly. Freshly caught fish, grilled shellfish and bright salads suited the heat of the afternoon perfectly.

There is something deeply satisfying about eating beside the ocean in Bali. The salt in the air sharpens flavour somehow.

The setting did much of the work, but the restraint of the menu made it stronger. Nothing felt overworked.

Sunset Hours

As evening approached, the atmosphere around the beachfront shifted completely. A bonfire had been arranged directly on the sand, the flames flickering against the darkening ocean while the sound of waves rolled steadily onto shore. Guests gathered quietly around the fire

as the sky moved through deep orange into indigo.

There was no loud entertainment, no attempt to force atmosphere.

The setting was enough. Moments like this are where Bali excels. The island understands the emotional weight of simplicity better than almost anywhere else.

Missoni by the Sea

Dinner at the Missoni Resort Club brought a sharper energy to the evening. The collaboration between Missoni and The Ritz-Carlton Bali transforms part of the beachfront into a more fashion-forward social space, with the Italian brand's signature patterns woven subtly throughout the design. Yet despite the visual identity, the space never loses connection to its surroundings.

The ocean remains central. Dinner unfolded beneath warm lights and sea air, the atmosphere balancing glamour with ease. It felt contemporary without becoming performative, which is often a difficult line for branded collaborations to hold.

Floating Mornings

Our final morning began with a floating breakfast served directly in the villa pool. It is the sort of

experience that could easily feel overly staged elsewhere, yet here it felt playful and surprisingly relaxed. Tropical fruit, pastries and Indonesian breakfast dishes drifted gently across the water while the morning sun reflected against the pool's surface. Beyond the villa, the Indian Ocean stretched outward without interruption. For a moment, Bali felt entirely still.

Final Thoughts

The Ritz-Carlton Bali succeeds because it understands balance. The property is large, but never impersonal. Luxurious, but rarely excessive. Polished, but still rooted in the warmth that defines Balinese hospitality at its best. What lingers are not just the dramatic views or the scale of the resort, but the quieter details. The scent of frangipani drifting through open corridors. The warmth of spa oils after the massage. The layered heat of sambals at Bejana. The sound of waves beneath the beach bonfire. And perhaps most importantly, the feeling that despite its scale and stature, the resort never loses its sense of calm. In Bali, that may be the greatest luxury of all.





Antony Doucet

Kerten Hospitality is coming to India, and not quietly. The Ireland-headquartered lifestyle hospitality group has announced plans for 1,000 signed keys across the country by the end of 2026, with a dedicated on-ground team already scouting properties in Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Udaipur, Rishikesh, Shimla, Ayodhya, and Kerala.

Their entry is partnership-led, targeting both new developments and conversions of existing assets. The ambition spans across three brands under the three-star to five-star spectrum, positioned squarely in the affordable luxury middle ground that Indian hospitality has, for too long, left wide open. At the centre of this is the man tasked with delivering that promise on the ground. Antony Doucet is a rare kind of hospitality professional, someone who has spent more time listening to a place than talking about it. Part curator, part storyteller, part

part cultural anthropologist, and entirely French, he leads the experience layer across Kerten's 12 proprietary lifestyle brands operating in 11 countries. When he shared that the first employee hired for their Rome property was not the General Manager but an art curator, it was clear this would be a different kind of conversation.

A lifestyle ecosystem

Built on an owner-centric philosophy called 'bespoke-at-scale', the group manages properties on behalf of asset owners while shaping destinations around them. Co-working hubs, resident memberships, in-house culinary concepts, art residencies, and community programming are all layered into a single address. Kerten approaches each property by asking what story already exists there, and builds from that. For India, three brands are in play. The House Hotel is the flagship, upper-upscale, deeply rooted in

KERTEN HOSPITALITY

eyes India

In a world where concepts like cultural immersion, localisation, and sustainability are thrown around the travel industry like sand on a beach, it was my pleasure to find the one grain that has turned into a pearl. Antony Doucet, Chief Experience Officer, Kerten Hospitality shares more about their entry in the India market.

- Rishi Arora

place, and softly branded to honour the property's existing identity. Cloud 7 is the lifestyle-tech offering, design-forward, social, and built for the urban explorer. The Residences brand targets the long-stay guest, a segment quietly booming across India's metros.

Bringing the culture in

Ask Antony how Kerten delivers on the promise of cultural immersion, rather than simply claiming it, and the answer comes with a single word, backed by a story that justifies it which is 'Glocalisation.' In Jordan, the brief for their Aqaba property was simple but ambitious: Marrakesh meets Mykonos on the Red Sea. Half the guests are Jordanians who live the culture every day and want to feel transported. The other half are international travellers seeking exactly that cultural connection. The design had to balance both without compromising either. Oriental warmth sits alongside Mykonos blue and white, all anchored by the Red Sea. Antony shares, "It's enough exotic for Jordanians, but for foreigners, it has that oriental influence. Everyone is pleased." He adds, "We try to give people what they cannot buy. Emotions and purpose and perhaps the line that best defines our philosophy - 'True stories from real people create that emergence.' For India, that story is yet to be written. Once we have a place, I can tell you the story." Each destination is shaped by its own brief,

characters, and cultural intersections. India, with its vast range of landscapes, crafts, and traditions, may offer their richest canvas yet.

Why India?

With 55 per cent revenue growth and 69 per cent growth in gross operating profit in 2025, it would be easy to see Kerten's India entry as purely commercial. But Antony is clear that numbers alone are not enough. Speaking on the same lines he shares, "We don't come to a destination if we don't think we're going to make a difference."

What stays constant

Every Kerten property carries a name that earns its place. Their AlUla property is called Danttantura, named after the sundial that stood atop the village for centuries, guiding farmers on when to plant, harvest, and rest. An 800-year-old piece of community memory now sits above the entrance of a hotel. That level of specificity defines how Kerten approaches a place before anything else is introduced. In India, that process is just beginning. Properties are yet to be signed, stories are still forming, and artistic collaborations remain in early stages. But in a country where culture shifts every 200 kilometres, a hospitality group that chooses to listen before it speaks may well be one of the most interesting arrivals of the year.





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RezLive at the forefront of travel's new reality

As global travel patterns continue to evolve amid geopolitical uncertainties and shifting traveller preferences, Jaal Shah, Founder, RezLive.com and Group Managing Director – Travel Designer Group shares valuable insights on how the industry is adapting to disruption with agility and innovation.

- Sudipta Saha

Global conflicts reshaping travel demand

What we're seeing today is a very dynamic demand landscape. Traditionally, travel demand followed predictable seasonal curves, but in the last few months it has become corridor-sensitive and sentiment-driven. "Whenever a conflict affects a major air corridor or creates uncertainty around a region, we immediately see a softening of long-haul flows that depend on those routes. At the same time, intra-regional travel has strengthened considerably. India-Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Europe, and domestic extensions within Asia are performing well because travellers perceive them as stable, well-connected, and easier to navigate in case plans need to change," says Jaal Shah. He further mentions that another interesting shift is that partners are proactively reallocating business to 'confidence destinations' — places with predictable visa rules, strong airline capacity, and minimal geopolitical exposure. Because RezLive operates with a wide, diversified global inventory, agents can quickly pivot their demand without losing momentum. This agility has been crucial in recent months.

Adapting to disruptions

Disruptions that once caused days of uncertainty are now handled within hours because agents have the tools and visibility they need. The agility of their partner agents has been remarkable.

Here's how they typically respond using RezLive:

- Re-shopping and re-routing: Agents immediately look for alternative hotels, dates, or even substitute destinations that match the traveller's budget and expectations. RezLive's global inventory makes this process seamless.

- Real-time reassurance: Instant confirmations, transparent cancellation rules, and live availability help agents communicate confidently with travellers during uncertain moments.

"Because RezLive consolidates global supply with real-time policies, agents can protect

both the booking and the customer relationship — which is critical during disruptions," adds Jaal Shah.

The shift toward safer, smarter bookings

Travellers today are definitely more risk-aware, and that awareness is shaping their buying behaviour in very clear ways. Jaal Shah elaborates, "A strong shift toward flexible and semi-flexible rates, even when they come at a premium. Travellers want the option to change plans without heavy penalties. Also, a higher uptake of ancillary products such as travel insurance, airport transfers, and stays with well-known hotel brands that offer predictability. In response, we've already enhanced how we display policies, highlighted flexible options more prominently, and collaborated with suppliers to create products that balance value with peace of mind. The goal is to empower agents to guide travellers with clarity and confidence."

Secondary destinations

Secondary and emerging destinations are seeing a clear upswing on RezLive. Jaal Shah expresses, "Travellers are increasingly open to exploring new regions that offer safety, value, and fresh experiences."

Destinations such as Vietnam, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and parts of Eastern Europe are benefiting from:

- A perception of stability compared to some traditional hotspots
- Improved air connectivity and simplified visa processes, including e-visas and visa-on-arrival
- Strong value-for-money, especially for families and young travellers
- A desire for less crowded, more experiential travel

He further adds, "Agents are proactively recommending these destinations when primary choices are impacted by geopolitics or capacity constraints. And because RezLive has been expanding its inventory in these markets, we're able to support this shift with strong product availability."



Jaal Shah



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Skyward connection rooted in civilisations

EgyptAir

A shared legacy of ancient civilisations is shaping a vibrant new chapter in travel between India and Egypt. Amr Ali, Country Manager, EgyptAir shares more about the connection between Egypt and India.

- Tripti Jain



Mr Amr Aly,
Country Manager – India, EgyptAir

As cultural curiosity evolves into experiential travel, Egypt continues to find a firm place on the Indian traveller's map. Enhanced air connectivity, thoughtful passenger offerings, and a deep understanding of traveller preferences are building a seamless bridge between the two nations. EgyptAir, at the forefront of this movement, is steadily strengthening its presence in India, unlocking opportunities across leisure, business, and education segments.

A market of many stories

India's outbound travel landscape presents a rich mix of segments, each bringing its own aspirations and motivations. EgyptAir has embraced this diversity with a holistic approach that caters to leisure travellers, students, business professionals, and even VFR movements.

"We see a very dynamic mix of Indian travellers today, from leisure tourists exploring Egypt's history to students and MICE travellers. We aim to serve every segment, including VFR, and create a seamless experience for all," shares Amr Ali.

This approach extends beyond India, reflecting a reciprocal effort

to encourage Egyptian travellers to explore India for education and cultural exchange. Growing engagement at both official and private levels continues to strengthen bilateral tourism momentum, creating a two-way flow that enriches both markets.

Egypt through Indian eyes

Egypt's timeless appeal resonates deeply with Indian travellers who seek immersive cultural experiences. The familiarity of ancient traditions, combined with the intrigue of Egypt's iconic heritage, creates a powerful emotional connection.

"Indian travellers are naturally drawn to Egypt's ancient civilisation. There is a strong sense of familiarity between our cultures, whether in traditions or even food preferences," explains Amr Ali.

Cuisine plays a surprisingly important role in this connection. Egypt's national dish, Koshari, offers a comforting vegetarian option that aligns well with Indian tastes, adding to the destination's accessibility. The availability of diverse food choices, including vegetarian meals, ensures that Indian travellers feel at home while exploring a foreign land.

Seamless journeys

Strong connectivity remains central to EgyptAir's India strategy. With nine weekly flights currently operating from Delhi and Mumbai, the airline continues to build capacity in response to growing demand.

Amr Ali shares, "We currently operate four flights from Delhi and five from Mumbai, with plans to increase Delhi frequencies soon. Our long-term vision includes expanding to more metro cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, or Kolkata."

Aircraft deployment is strategically aligned with seasonal demand, ensuring optimal passenger

comfort. Wide-body aircraft serve winter traffic, while efficient narrow-body fleets cater to summer operations. Codeshare and interline partnerships further extend EgyptAir's reach across India, offering seamless domestic connections.

Opening doors wider

Travel convenience is a decisive factor for Indian outbound travellers, and EgyptAir is addressing this with focused initiatives. Simplified visa processes and attractive fare structures are enhancing Egypt's appeal as an accessible international destination.

Amr Ali highlights, "Visa facilitation is one of our key priorities. Indian travellers can receive visas within 24 to 48 hours in many cases, and visa-on-arrival options are also available under certain conditions."

Promotional campaigns add further value to the travel experience. Current offers include significant discounts on both economy and business class fares, making Egypt an attractive proposition for a wider audience.

"We are offering discounts of up to 45 percent on economy class and 25 percent on business class. For long layovers exceeding eight hours, passengers can enjoy a complimentary dinner cruise on the Nile along with hotel accommodation," he adds.

The emerging growth engine

India's travel story is increasingly being shaped by its Tier II and Tier III cities, where rising aspirations are fuelling outbound demand. EgyptAir's on-ground engagement in these markets is already showing promising results. Amr Ali observes, "Our visits to cities like Kolkata, Lucknow, Jaipur, and Ludhiana have created strong awareness. We have seen a

noticeable increase in passenger movement, especially from Kolkata, where interest in Egypt's history is very high. Regular participation in trade events, roadshows, and direct interactions with travel agents have strengthened our presence across India's diverse markets."

Diverse traffic streams

EgyptAir's network draws traffic from across Europe, North America, and Africa, creating a robust international ecosystem. Cairo serves as a strategic hub, connecting passengers from multiple regions for tourism, business, and even medical travel. Amr Ali shares, "We receive significant traffic from Europe and North America, along with neighbouring African countries. India plays an important role as both a destination and a transit market within our network."

A promising horizon for 2026

Egypt's tourism landscape is set for continued growth, driven by new attractions and evolving traveller preferences. The upcoming momentum around cultural landmarks is expected to further boost demand from India. Amr Ali explains, "Egypt will remain one of the most preferred destinations for Indian travellers. The opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum is set to attract even more visitors who are passionate about history and culture."

Where heritage meets hospitality

EgyptAir's journey in India reflects a thoughtful blend of connectivity, cultural understanding, and customer-centric innovation. As Indian travellers continue to seek destinations that offer depth, authenticity, and comfort, Egypt stands ready to welcome them with open arms.

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My journey to Udaipur began with a simple first which was my first time in the City of Lakes, a destination I had long romanticised through stories and pictures.

- Tripti Jain



HOTELLIGENCE

The flight from Delhi was short, yet the excitement stretched every moment into something more meaningful. A quiet thrill stayed with me as I imagined what awaited ahead, especially knowing that this trip would include a stay that promised a royal experience. Somewhere between take-off and landing, I realised this journey was already beginning to feel special, almost like stepping into a story where everything unfolds at its own unhurried pace.

The drive that set the tone

The one-hour drive from the airport gradually eased me into a different rhythm. The city began to soften into open landscapes, winding roads, and glimpses of the Aravalli hills that framed the horizon beautifully. The first glimpse of the Fateh Collection left me completely awestruck. The sheer magnanimity of the space felt unreal, as if I had arrived at a royal estate rather than a hotel. The entire collection appeared like a kingdom of its own, spread thoughtfully across the terrain, blending architecture, nature, and legacy in a way that immediately set it apart.

A welcome that felt personal

My arrival at Khas Mahal was one of the most memorable beginnings to any stay I have experienced. A group of local women welcomed me with a traditional song that echoed softly through the space, creating an atmosphere that felt deeply rooted in culture and warmth. The authenticity of that moment stayed with me long after it ended. A refreshing welcome drink crafted from the Kachnaar flower added a delicate and thoughtful touch, setting the tone for a stay that felt curated and personal from the very beginning. The check-in process flowed seamlessly, allowing me to ease into the experience without any sense of rush.

A room that became my sanctuary

The room tour at Khas Mahal felt less like an introduction and more like discovering a private sanctuary.

The suite carried a quiet elegance, where every detail reflected a balance between heritage charm and modern comfort. The space felt warm, intimate, and inviting, encouraging me to slow down and simply take it all in. The highlight, without a doubt, was the private plunge pool. It quickly became my favourite part of the stay, offering a sense of indulgence that felt both

luxurious and deeply personal. The idea of stepping into my own pool at any time of the day added a layer of relaxation that elevated the entire experience.

Mornings that felt like a dream

Each morning unfolded in the most beautiful way, beginning with a gentle dip in the plunge

pool as sunlight shimmered across the water. The soft sounds of birds and peacocks created a natural soundtrack that made the moment feel almost surreal. Time seemed to slow down, allowing me to fully immerse myself in the stillness and beauty of the surroundings. Breakfast followed at a leisurely pace, offering a wholesome and satisfying start to the day. The entire morning routine felt effortless, creating a rhythm that was both calming and deeply rejuvenating.

Exploring a collection within a collection

One of the most enriching parts of my itinerary was the heritage walkthrough across the different properties within the collection. The visit to Fateh Garh felt grand and expansive, with its architecture and elevated views creating a sense of regal magnificence. Every corner seemed to offer a perfect moment to pause and take in the surroundings, reflecting a thoughtful revival of heritage design. The experience at Fateh Vilas brought a different perspective, where open spaces and a seamless connection to nature created a calming and expansive atmosphere. Each property carried its own identity, making the entire collection feel layered, immersive, and thoughtfully curated.

A moment behind the wheel of history

The vintage car experience stood out as one of the most exciting highlights of my stay. The collection itself felt like a beautifully curated museum, showcasing automobiles that carried stories from another era. The experience became even more memorable when I had the opportunity to sit in one of the vintage cars, turning a simple activity into something truly special. That moment felt playful, nostalgic, and deeply immersive, offering a unique way to connect with the legacy of the property. The passion behind this collection was evident, reflecting a deep appreciation for history and craftsmanship.



Dining that turned into an experience

Food at Khas Mahal went far beyond taste, becoming an integral part of the overall experience. The 'Surprise Me' dinner introduced me to a personalised culinary journey where each dish felt thoughtfully crafted and beautifully presented. The traditional Rajasthani thali became an instant favourite, offering rich flavours and authentic preparations that truly captured the essence of the region. Enjoying this meal with a view overlooking Udaipur added another layer of charm, making the experience even more memorable. Evenings transformed into elegant affairs with candlelit settings and curated menus that felt reminiscent of a royal era, creating moments that lingered long after the meals were over.

Experiences that added depth

The itinerary offered a beautiful balance of relaxation and cultural immersion, allowing me to engage with the destination in meaningful ways. The craft session introduced me to traditional art forms such as miniature painting and pottery, creating an interactive and enriching experience. The village safari added another dimension, taking me through rural landscapes in a vintage car and offering glimpses into the lives of local communities. These moments felt genuine and grounding, adding depth to the overall journey and creating a stronger connection to the region.

A touch of the city's charm

A brief exploration of Udaipur brought in a vibrant contrast to the serene atmosphere of the stay. The city revealed itself through charming streets, scenic views, and bustling markets that were impossible to resist. What



Remember at a glance

- Fateh Collection includes Khas Mahal, Fateh Garh, and Fateh Vilas, each offering a distinct stay experience.
- Khas Mahal Suites features intimate suites with private plunge pools and a boutique, slow-living vibe.
- Fateh Vilas offers 76 rooms, open views, and large venues for weddings and events.
- Experiences include vintage car rides, village safaris, ziplining, crafts, and equestrian activities.
- Dining features rooftop settings, sky deck dinners, tasting menus, and traditional Mewari thalis.

began as a casual visit quickly turned into a delightful shopping experience, with beautiful souvenirs finding their way into my bag. Every purchase felt like carrying a small piece of the city back with me.

Hospitality that felt like home

What truly elevated the entire experience was the warmth and attentiveness of the people. Every interaction with the staff felt genuine, thoughtful, and intuitive, creating a sense of comfort that stayed constant throughout my stay. The hospitality reflected a deeper philosophy, rooted in the legacy of the Kelwa family, where every guest is welcomed with care and sincerity. The personal touches, the attention to detail, and the effortless service made the stay feel less like a hotel experience and more like being part of something meaningful.

Stayed with me

My stay at Khas Mahal within the Fateh Collection turned out to be everything I needed and more. The experience offered a perfect blend of relaxation, cultural immersion, and thoughtful luxury, creating moments that felt both indulgent and grounding. From slow mornings in my private plunge pool to evenings that felt like stepping into a royal setting, every part of the journey carried a sense of intention and beauty. This trip felt much needed, offering a pause from the everyday and a chance to reconnect with a slower, more meaningful way of experiencing travel.

For anyone looking to step away and immerse themselves in a space that combines heritage, comfort, and personal hospitality, this is a destination that truly delivers. The memories from this journey feel lasting, shaped by moments that continue to stay long after the trip has come to an end.



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BIZ

JourneyLabel

and the art of
intentional travel

JourneyLabel is quietly reshaping the philosophy of modern travel. Yasmin Ikrami and Sufail Husain, Founders, JourneyLabel share their view on how JourneyLabel is quietly redefining the way people experience travel itself.

- Sudipta Saha



Yasmin Ikrami

At a time when travel often swings between two extremes - overly packaged itineraries on one side and overwhelming customisation on the other, the founders of JourneyLabel saw a gap.

There was a time when travel was all about destinations. The goal was simple: see more places, visit famous landmarks, collect photographs and return with stories. But today, travel is becoming something far more personal. Travellers are no longer chasing only luxury or ticking experiences off a bucket list. They are seeking meaning. They want journeys that feel authentic, immersive and memorable experiences that stay with them long after they have returned home.

As travel preferences evolve, so do the brands shaping these experiences. Among the new generation of travel companies redefining the space is JourneyLabel — a brand built around the belief that travel should not feel assembled, but intentional. “Curation sits at the heart of how we work. For us, it goes far beyond selecting hotels or destinations. It is about shaping a journey so it feels intuitive, seamless and considered from beginning to end. We look at how someone likes to travel, what excites them, the pace they prefer and the details that matter most. From there, we

shape something that feels natural rather than assembled. Curation is as much about what you leave out as what you include. Without that restraint, a holiday can quickly lose its clarity,” shares Yasmin Ikrami - Founder & CEO.

On one side the world of highly standardised luxury travel: visually stunning, perfectly packaged, but often lacking individuality. On the other side is fully bespoke planning, exciting in theory, but often overwhelming in practice, with endless options and very little direction. Further adding to it, she mentions, “Luxury has become the baseline. Authenticity is assumed. What has changed is the intention behind travel. People are choosing destinations based on how they want to feel and what stays with them once they return. It is no longer about seeing more. It is about experiencing something that feels real, unforced and personally meaningful.”

This observation eventually became the foundation of JourneyLabel. Rather than creating travel plans, the idea was to create journeys, carefully designed experiences where every element felt connected and meaningful.

For JourneyLabel, travel is not simply about reaching a destination. It is about creating a feeling. Yasmin believes, people rarely remember every detail of a journey what they remember are emotions, moments and the

“Curation is as much about what you leave out as what you include.”

“Partnerships are fundamental to how we build and grow.”

experiences that unexpectedly stay with them.

That philosophy perhaps explains why JourneyLabel chooses to define itself not merely as a travel company, but as a curated travel brand. Rather than designing journeys around packed schedules and checklists, JourneyLabel builds around mood, pace and experiences. Because often, the most unforgettable travel moments are the ones that happen unexpectedly.

For co-founder Sufail Husain, preserving this philosophy while scaling the company has been one of the greatest challenges.

As businesses grow, systems, processes and expansion naturally take centre stage. Luxury travel can quickly become operational. “Processes, scale and volume can take over and it becomes easy to lose the thoughtfulness that makes a journey feel personal. For us, the constant effort is to ensure that does not happen. Growth matters, but not at the cost of intention,” explains Sufail Husain.

He further mentions that another challenge is knowing what not to take on. There is always more you can do, more destinations, more partnerships, more volume. But curation is defined by restraint. If you try to do everything, you stop standing for anything.



Sufail Husain

A key part of building JourneyLabel has been staying disciplined enough to say no, so that what we do say yes to still feels considered, relevant and true to how we believe travel should feel.

For any growing brand, opportunities arrive constantly, more markets, more partnerships, more possibilities. “What we design is only as strong as how it is delivered on the ground. Local experts bring depth, access and nuance that cannot be created from a distance. We see them as an extension of the JourneyLabel experience. The right partners understand not just the logistics, but the intent behind what we are creating. Growth, for us, is not just about entering new destinations. It is about ensuring that every journey is delivered with consistency, care and the same level of understanding,” expresses Sufail Husain.

For JourneyLabel, growth is about remaining aligned with what the brand originally set out to create. As JourneyLabel continues to expand its footprint and establish an early presence in the US market, the ambitions are undoubtedly global. Yasmin and Sufail aim to build a brand with recognisable perspective and to create journeys that feel thoughtful in a world moving increasingly fast.



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

THE VAST LAND OF

PUSZTA



In fading light, I had been welcomed with apricot and plum brandies at the Old Tanyacsarda premises in Lajosmizse, a remote country ranch that is home to lots of folklore, and some of Europe's most prized horses and skilled riders.

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

I had driven out of Budapest for the Puszta – the Hungarian Great Plain, considered to be not just Hungary's great heartland, but it's very heart, the historic region where the country's foundations were laid by fierce tribes, centuries ago.

A prized Hungarian relic, The Puszta and the Great Plain are lovingly cared for and preserved. And its stories and legends are those on which the foundations of an entire society rest. The land is enmeshed in local folklore, its vast expanses fostering much of Hungary's romantic literature.

Literally translated, Puszta means an 'empty, bare, grassy plain', considered to be a distant cousin of the prairies, the steppes, and the pampas. It takes a short visit to establish that it is also hauntingly beautiful.

So many memories have survived the passage of time. Of herds of wild horses racing across the barren plain; and of the famous outlaw, Sandor Rozsa, the noble-spirited brigand.

Arguably, the most endearing of the various images thrown up in this remarkable land is that of the daring 'csikos' astride five horses, racing across a lonely track of barren land, a feat known as the 'Koch five - in - hand' after the German artist who painted this as an imaginary scene.

Quite fittingly, the local legends are its major attraction. Add to all this, friendly people, cheerful inns and taverns, and a congenial atmosphere, and you understand why tourists flock here.

The flat country on both sides of the Tisza River is actually quite

diverse in landscape, with sand drifts in one area, and plum orchards in another. And though not blessed with Hungary's otherwise temperate weather, the Puszta offers some of the region's richest flora and fauna.

Vast and varied, hard and forbidding, with imagination and reality blending together, the terrain is best personified by the 'delihab' – a rare mirage-like natural phenomenon where the images of far - flung objects float upside down over the horizon. Sometimes what you see as the 'delihab' are tiny villages, sometimes it could be inns thatched with reeds, or scattered countryside farms with dazzling white walls and sweep - pole wells.

All the towns dotting the Great Plain happen to be set exactly 27



km apart. Supposedly in the Middle Ages, this was the distance merchants could cover per day on foot. At the end of the day they pitched camp at suitably sheltered places, which in time drew people who held markets, built churches, and collected tolls. And a town was born.

My second stopover was in Szeged, the Great Plain's economic and cultural capital. The local boulevards and avenues are similar to those gracing Budapest and Paris. The

main town landmarks are the neo-Romanesque Votive Church and the adjoining 13th Century Romanesque Demetrius Tower - the town's oldest monument. The statues of 100 Great Hungarians are frozen for eternity at the National Memorial Hall around the Cathedral Square. Szechenyi Square is among Hungary's biggest and liveliest parks. Flanking it are the neo-classical Zsoter House and the Zopf - Art - Nouveau style Town Hall.



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Szeged's famous cuisine includes the famed Fisherman's Soup, and among Europe's tastiest salamis, prepared with pork with flavouring spices known only to a few salami masters. Also delectable, are dishes like the Great Plain Sirloin and Puszta Porkolt, suitably washed down with fragrant, ultra-potent Kecskemet plum and apricot brandies, and light table wines. The next morning once again found me on the road, arrow-straight, stretching ahead and merging with the horizon. I was driving through country as flat as a billiards-table, mainly scrubs, shrubs, and occasional patches of agriculture. Once again I pulled into a city full of surprises. Kecskemet is a treasure house of historical buildings. The Hungarian art nouveau style Cifra Palace-now an art gallery; the world-renowned Zoltan Kodaly Teaching Institute; and the beautifully refurbished 19th Century Town Hall, are all notable landmarks. Much of the city's charm is owed to its spacious main square with its promenades and churches. Another day, another urban delight! The first thing that

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strikes you when you drive into Hungary's second city after Budapest, are its shades of imperial opulence. Debrecen is a major city, famous for its sundry tourist establishments, upscale restaurants, and the renowned thermal baths which are reputed to cure several ailments. Buildings of stature greet you at several places, with the local architectural lineage extending to the Town Hall; the nationally famous building of the Reformed College; and Nagytemplom - the Big Church, a beautiful classicist structure. Justice done to brick and mortar, I ventured to Nagyerdo - the Great Forest, a famous local attraction. The best symbol of the Puszta's rugged spirit and character is the

Fact File

- The Puszta region is a huge landmass dotted with cities and towns with vast and varied accommodation, traditional restaurants and taverns, tourist and information offices, and shopping outlets.
- A regional specialty and tourist attraction are medicinal baths in several places like Debrecen and Hajduszoboszlo, which are renowned for their curative effect, and which offer various massages, mud packs and treatments.
- The region is a year-round tourist destination, but winters are cold and woollens are recommended.

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.



Amplifying India's hospitality voice

Helping global hotels navigate India's outbound opportunity with clarity and consistency through Aumentar Hospitality Alliance. Shaista Khan, Founder, Aumentar Hospitality Alliance shares more about the brand.

- *Naina Nath*

Shaista Khan

In a market as dynamic and relationship-led as India, success in hospitality sales depends on far more than visibility alone. It requires insight, consistency, and senior commercial thinking on the ground. This is where Aumentar Hospitality Alliance steps in. Co-founded by Shaista Khan, the company brings decades of global hotel experience to create a focused, India-centric sales and market development model. For Shaista, Aumentar is a response to a clear gap she and her co-founder saw emerging in the post-pandemic hospitality landscape.

Born from experience

Aumentar was born from both experience and timing. After building long careers with leading hotel brands, the decision to launch an independent venture felt organic. As Shaista explains, “With deep roots in global hospitality, a sector we are deeply passionate about, launching Aumentar was both a natural progression and an exciting entrepreneurial step.” The past years, created a vacuum in senior commercial leadership, particularly in sales and market strategy. “Hotels struggled with consistency in sales strategy and market presence,” she notes. Aumentar was created to address this gap, offering experienced leadership without the burden of fixed infrastructure.

Beyond basic representation

At its core, Aumentar keeps things simple. The company functions as an extension of a hotel or destination's commercial team in India. “We act as a hotel's extended arm and dedicated India sales office,” Shaista says. This means not just representation, but active engagement across visibility,

enquiries, and bookings. Beyond day-to-day sales activity, the focus remains strategic. “We serve as an on-demand commercial growth partner,” she adds, emphasising senior-level thinking combined with on-ground execution. The objective is to maintain a sustained brand presence, rather than short bursts of promotion, an approach that many hotels are now actively seeking.

India means business

India's importance to global hospitality brands is no longer up for debate, and Aumentar has placed it firmly at the centre of its strategy. “India is no longer an emerging outbound market; it is a powerful, high-value source market,” Shaista states. The company represents independent luxury and upper-upscale hotels, boutique resorts, and destinations that are committed to long-term positioning. Its current portfolio includes hotels in Switzerland and Thailand, as well as domestic partners. “We collaborate with brands that recognise India's long-term potential and want a focused, experienced team to unlock it,” she explains, particularly across leisure, luxury, celebrations, and MICE.

Relationships drive results

For Aumentar, engaging the Indian market begins and ends with relationships. “India is a relationship-driven market, and our approach reflects that,” Shaista explains. The company invests heavily in consistent interaction with travel advisors, corporate planners, and MICE specialists across key cities. This happens through sales visits, curated showcases, roadshows, webinars, and FAM trips. Visibility, however, is only one side of the equation. “We serve as a strategic bridge, sharing real-time market intelligence and buyer insights,”

she adds, ensuring partner strategies remain agile and commercially relevant as market conditions evolve.

Built for growth

As the market evolves, Shaista is clear about where she sees growth coming from. Indian travellers are changing, not just in number but in mindset. “The shift is not just in volume, it is in value and aspiration,” she says. Experiences now drive decision-making, whether it is weddings, wellness travel, milestone celebrations, or multi-generational holidays. Hotels and destinations that invest early in understanding these preferences stand to gain the most. “Those who build strong trade relationships and maintain consistent market presence will benefit significantly,” Shaista notes, pointing to what she describes as a sustained growth wave.

A market evolving

Having worked closely with hotel owners and brands, Shaista sees a noticeable shift in expectations. “Today's hospitality partners are increasingly focused on measurable outcomes,” she explains. Visibility alone is no longer enough. Partners want tangible ROI, trusted trade relationships, and teams that feel like an extension of their own. Looking to 2026, Aumentar's plans reflect this thinking. “Our focus is firmly on growth and momentum,” Shaista says.

Growing the portfolio, deepening trade partnerships, and driving performance across leisure, weddings, and MICE remain key priorities for Aumentar Hospitality Alliance as India's outbound market continues to evolve.

Slow Down. Stay Longer. Discover Madhya Pradesh



There is a distinct rhythm to travel in Madhya Pradesh. Visitors begin their journey by breathing in serenity, settling into spaces that feel reassuring, comfortable and quietly welcoming. In this vast heart of India—where sacred rivers flow past ancient temples, forests stretch into the horizon and sunsets reflect across tranquil waters—Madhya Pradesh Tourism’s thoughtfully curated stays become an essential part of the experience.

Along Sacred Rivers

In Ujjain, the spiritual presence of Mahakaleshwar Temple shapes the city’s rhythm. Samrat Vikramaditya The Heritage offers a refined luxury heritage-style stay close to the temple precinct, while Shipra Residency provides a comfortable base near the ghats for pilgrims and travellers alike. Visitors immerse themselves in the city through the pre-dawn Bhasma Aarti, heritage walks and quiet evenings along the Shipra.

At Omkareshwar, Temple View overlooks the sacred island and offers easy access to the revered Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga Temple, making it ideal for pilgrims and photographers chasing sunrise views.

The journey continues to Maheshwar, where the majestic Maheshwar Fort rises above the Narmada. Narmada Resort offers a peaceful riverside retreat, perfect for sunset boat rides and evenings that echo with the heritage of Maheshwari weaving.

Embrace the Hills

In the cool heights of Pachmarhi, misty mornings and forest trails define the Satpura experience. Glen View provides sweeping valley vistas and calm surroundings, while Highlands places visitors at the centre of the hill station’s relaxed charm.

The heritage Champak Bungalow evokes colonial-era nostalgia after excursions to Bee and Duchess Falls, while Rock End Manor offers an intimate heritage stay following trekking, cycling or rock-climbing adventures. As evening approaches, travellers gather at Dhoopgarh for spectacular sunset views before



returning for dinner at Amaltas Restaurant, a unique women-run dining space celebrating local hospitality.

Into the Wild

Few journeys rival the excitement of the Kanha–Bandhavgarh–Pench–Satpura wildlife circuit. At Kanha National Park, Baghira Jungle Resort offers immersive forest stays inspired by the surrounding wilderness, while Safari Lodge Mukki provides convenient access to the Mukki gate for early safaris and nature explorations.

At Bandhavgarh National Park, White Tiger Forest Lodge blends rustic charm with warm hospitality near the historic Bandhavgarh Fort. In Pench National Park, Kipling’s Court reflects the wilderness that inspired *The Jungle Book*, offering a relaxed retreat between safaris.

Further south at Madhai, Bison Resort overlooks the Denwa River and invites guests to slow down with canoeing, nature walks, birdwatching, photography and meditation sessions.

Lakes and Leisure

In Bhopal, Palash Residency offers a comfortable stay close to the city’s cultural landmarks, while Wind n Waves provides tranquil lakeside views that capture the charm of the City of Lakes.

Just outside the city, Kerwa Resort makes for a refreshing nature escape, ideal for relaxed picnics, quiet walks and lakeside photography.

Across Madhya Pradesh, every stay becomes a gateway to culture, nature and heritage—inviting travellers to slow down, stay longer and rediscover the joy of unhurried journeys.

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Prague

Beyond Postcards

The Czech capital continues to evolve with experience-led tourism, modern gastronomy, and easy access to some of the country's most charming towns.

-Naina Nath

In 2025, the Czech Republic welcomed approximately 23.6 million visitors, generating nearly 59.1 million overnight stays. Tourism contributes around 2.44 per cent of the country's GDP and supports more than 233,000 jobs nationwide, with Prague remaining the country's biggest tourism draw. While landmarks like Prague Castle and Charles Bridge continue to define the city's appeal, Prague today offers far more than traditional sightseeing, from absinthe tastings and ghost tours to modern Czech gastronomy and riverside activities along the Vltava.

Old meets new

One of Prague's biggest strengths is the contrast between its old and new quarters. The Old Town remains the city's historic heart, filled with cobbled lanes, gothic architecture, hidden courtyards, and landmarks like the Astronomical Clock and Charles Bridge. The New Town area brings together shopping streets, nightlife, cafés, and modern architecture, including Dancing House, one of the city's most recognisable examples of post-communist modern architecture.

Castle city views

Towering above the city is Prague

Castle, still considered the largest ancient castle complex in the world. Beyond its historical significance, the area offers some of Prague's best panoramic views, particularly across the red rooftops and winding streets below.

One of the advantages for travellers is that exploring the castle grounds itself is free.

Visitors can walk through the courtyards year-round, while the gardens remain open during the summer season. Tickets are only required for the major interiors, including St. Vítus Cathedral, the Old Royal Palace, St. George's Basilica, and Golden Lane. The standard circuit ticket is priced at 450 CZK, approximately €18 per adult.

River side Prague

The Vltava River plays a major role in how the city is experienced. While evening cruises remain popular, smaller self-pedal boats have become one of Prague's more relaxed daytime activities, particularly during summer. Available for roughly €20 for two people per hour, the boats allow travellers to drift beneath Charles Bridge at their own pace, often with a small picnic onboard.

Prague after dark

Prague's evenings are increasingly becoming part of the city's tourism

appeal. Ghost walks and dungeon tours continue to attract travellers interested in the city's darker folklore, taking visitors through underground chambers, medieval passageways, and stories tied to alchemists, executions, and local legends.

The nightlife scene is equally varied, ranging from riverside bars and jazz clubs to experiences like absinthe tasting tours, which have become a popular addition to evening itineraries for travellers looking to explore a different side of Prague after sunset.

What's on our plate

Prague's dining scene has evolved rapidly in recent years, moving well beyond traditional tourist menus. Restaurants like Kantýna have become popular for their butcher-style concept centred around high-quality cuts of meat and a lively, distinctly local atmosphere. Meanwhile, 420 Restaurant offers a more refined interpretation of Czech cuisine using regional ingredients and contemporary presentation, with direct views of Prague's famous Astronomical Clock.

Beyond Prague

For travellers with extra time, Prague also works well as a gateway to other parts of the

Czech Republic. Destinations like Karlovy Vary and Český Krumlov are increasingly being added as two-day extensions to Czech itineraries. Karlovy Vary is known for its thermal springs and spa culture, while Český Krumlov offers a quieter atmosphere centred around its medieval old town and riverside castle views. Both destinations provide a slower contrast to Prague's pace while showcasing a different side of the country beyond the capital.

Getting around

Much of Prague is best explored on foot, particularly within the historic centre where many of the city's major landmarks sit within walking distance of one another. For longer routes, Prague's tram network remains one of the easiest and most scenic ways to move between districts, connecting key attractions efficiently and at relatively low cost. Electric bicycles and segways have also become increasingly popular, especially for travellers looking to cover more ground while still experiencing the city at street level. The city balances iconic landmarks with modern experiences, while also offering easy extensions into other parts of the Czech Republic, making it suitable for both first-time visitors and repeat travellers.

THE BOOKQUET EXPERIENCE



Gabriela Zmeková

Heritage walls, Michelin-led cuisine, and an increasingly strong Indian connection make Hotel Bookquet one of Prague's most interesting boutique stays. Gabriela Zmeková, Director, Business Development, JAN Hotels, describes as a 'tranquil oasis' in the middle of the city's vibrant core.

Within Prague's Old Town, Hotel Bookquet has quietly built a reputation for doing exactly that. Part of the family-owned JAN Hotels portfolio, the 82-room boutique property pairs centuries-old architecture with contemporary design.

A historic address

Located in a 15th-century building in Prague's Old Town, Hotel Bookquet stands as JAN Hotels most premium offering so far. For guests seeking something beyond a standard luxury stay, the appeal lies in the finer touches, design-led interiors, Royal Suites with private saunas or fireplaces, and views stretching toward Prague Castle. Gabriela says, "Hotel Bookquet itself represents our most premium concept. For clientele who appreciate the

blend of history and modern luxury, we wanted to create something truly special."

At the table Cuisine is a big part of the experience at Hotel Bookquet. At the centre of it is Parzival, the hotel's fine dining restaurant led by Michelin-starred chef Gal Ben Moshe and recommended by the Michelin Guide. Gabriela explains, "Our vision is built on combining exceptional accommodation with outstanding gastronomy. The group is also preparing to launch a more relaxed Bistro & Bar concept for all-day dining, catering to travellers looking for something polished yet easygoing."

India in focus

India is quickly emerging as one of JAN Hotels most closely watched markets. In 2025 alone, Hotel Bookquet recorded a remarkable 178 per cent increase in Indian visitors compared to the previous year, a number Gabriela sees as part of a larger shift. She says, "We are also seeing a growing trend in our hotels in Český Krumlov. Confirming that Indian travellers

are increasingly discovering the charm of the Czech Republic beyond Prague."

Weddings & Events

The hotel offers three intimate conference spaces suited for press events, luxury launches, private gatherings, and curated corporate experiences, supported by bespoke catering from chef Gal Ben Moshe. At Hotel Duo, gala events for up to 500 guests can be accommodated, alongside large-scale stays and outdoor functions. Weddings remain another area of growing interest. "An Indian wedding or engagement set against the backdrop of historic Prague or picturesque Český Krumlov is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience," says Gabriela.

The Prague emotion

For Gabriela, Prague is more than just a destination. "Prague is not just a city, it is an emotion," she says. And perhaps that is what Hotel Bookquet captures best, a quieter, more personal side of the city, where history, hospitality, and contemporary luxury come together with ease.





TRAVEL THERAPY



An evening with the Green Fairy

French, Swiss or Czech absinthe, Prague's most intriguing ritual is having a moment.

- Naina Nath



We have all heard of the 'green fairy', mysterious, slightly forbidden, and wrapped in stories that sound almost too dramatic to be real. But in Prague, absinthe is no longer just a legend whispered about in bars, it has evolved into a full-fledged cultural experience. And for Indian travellers looking to go beyond castles and cobblestone streets, this is quickly becoming one of the city's most unexpected must-do additions.

More than a drink

Absinthe tasting in Prague is not about ordering a glass and moving on. It unfolds as a guided, immersive experience that weaves together storytelling, history, and sensory elements. Tours led by experts like Natalia Kovach, one of the best guides Prague has to offer, bring context to every sip, turning what could have been a novelty into something far more layered and memorable. It is this guided format, structured yet relaxed, informative yet entertaining, that makes it easy to include in your Prague itinerary.

Two stops, two worlds

Our two-hour tour moved through contrasting venues. At Café Louvre, the setting felt timeless, elegant, and steeped in intellectual history, once frequented by Albert Einstein and Franz Kafka. It is easy to imagine artists and thinkers gathering here, adding a sense of continuity to the ritual. Then the mood shifted at Absintherie, often called the 'Mecca of absinthe in Prague', where the setting became darker, more experimental, and centred entirely on the art of drinking absinthe.

A timeless ritual

If there is one moment that stays with travellers, it is the preparation. A perforated spoon, a sugar cube, and a slow drip of ice cold water come together in a quietly captivating way. As the liquid clouds, the drink opens up, revealing softer, more aromatic notes.



Come uncover the secrets of the world's most mysterious drink with me in Prague. I'll guide you through its flavours and its story, and I promise, you'll leave wanting to carry absinthe back to India, to share its bold, spicy, unforgettable soul with everyone you know.

— Nataly aka Prague Green Fairy

In some settings, this ritual turns more theatrical with the Bohemian or Czech method, where an absinthe-soaked sugar cube is briefly set alight to create a caramelised finish before serving. It is unhurried, almost meditative, and undeniably visual, as engaging to watch as it is to taste.

From banned to back in vogue

Absinthe's past adds a compelling layer to the experience. Once banned across much of Europe in the early 20th century due to fears of hallucinations and erratic behaviour, it built a reputation that lingered for decades.

Today, those myths have been largely debunked. Modern absinthe is carefully regulated, and the dramatic stories have given way to a more informed appreciation. The intrigue remains, but it is now paired with understanding, which makes the tasting all the more interesting.

A quick guide to the green spirit

At its core, absinthe is distilled using botanicals like wormwood, anise, and fennel, giving it that distinctive herbal, slightly licorice-like profile. But what surprises most first-timers is the variety. Swiss absinthes are known for their subtlety, French versions for their refinement, and Czech styles for their bold, contemporary edge. Many tastings also introduce modern interpretations, ranging from intensely herbal blends to more experimental, unconventional variations, occasionally including novelty bottles that add an element of surprise (like one with a real beetle inside!)

Why it's catching on

Indian travellers today are increasingly drawn to experiences that feel immersive and a little offbeat. Absinthe tasting checks both boxes. It is rooted in history, rich in narrative, and offers a break from the standard tourist trail. Light on time yet rich in experience, slipping easily into a Prague itinerary, it stands out as one of its most unexpected highlights. What elevates it further is the context woven through the experience. Guides like Natalia Kovach add depth, and the result is not just a tasting, but something that unfolds with every pour. In a city known for its grand landmarks and cultural depth, absinthe tasting offers something more engaging. It goes beyond observation, drawing you into the experience. It lingers long after, leaving behind not just a flavour, but a memory that feels distinctly Prague.

GITB 2026 reinforces India's growing global tourism

Another successful edition of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) came to a close in Jaipur, bringing together the energy, ambition, and collaborative spirit that continue to define India's inbound tourism industry.

-Tripti Jain



Organised by FICCI in association with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, the 15th edition of GITB once again transformed Jaipur into a vibrant meeting ground for global travel professionals, tourism boards, hoteliers, tour operators, and destination specialists.

Jaipur hosts Global Travel Trade

The Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre witnessed three days of high-energy business engagements, cultural showcases, networking evenings, and destination presentations. International buyers from nearly 50 countries participated

in the event alongside Indian sellers representing destinations, heritage hotels, DMCs, wellness brands, and experiential travel companies. Structured B2B meetings remained the core strength of the bazaar, creating focused opportunities for partnerships and future business collaborations.

Spotlight on emerging tourism segments

This year's edition highlighted the growing interest in niche and experience-driven travel. Wellness tourism, destination weddings, luxury travel, adventure experiences, and MICE emerged as key focus areas across discussions and presentations. Buyers showed strong interest in curated

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itineraries that combine culture, authenticity, and immersive storytelling, reflecting the changing preferences of global travellers.

Celebrating excellence at the GITB Awards

One of the standout moments of GITB 2026 was the awards ceremony that celebrated destinations and tourism

stakeholders for their contribution to the industry. The evening added a celebratory dimension to the business - focused event, recognising excellence, innovation, and destination development across sectors.

The awards evening brought together industry leaders, tourism officials, and hospitality professionals in an atmosphere of appreciation and camaraderie,



further strengthening the sense of community that GITB continues to foster year after year.

Building momentum

GITB 2026 once again demonstrated the importance of collaborative platforms in shaping India's tourism growth story. Familiarisation tours, networking dinners, cultural performances, and business meetings

collectively created a well-rounded experience for international delegates, allowing them to engage with India beyond brochures and presentations. Each successful edition continues to strengthen India's visibility on the global tourism map, and the 2026 chapter added another milestone to this ongoing journey of growth and global outreach.



ADVERT



Department of Tourism
Government of Manipur

A journey into
India's emerald paradise

Manipur

Cradled in the enchanting hills of Northeast India, Manipur welcomes travellers with landscapes that feel painted by nature itself. Every corner of the state carries a sense of grace, beauty, and cultural richness that leaves visitors captivated from the very first moment.



Department of Tourism
Government of Manipur

A journey through Manipur unfolds like a beautifully written story. Mist-covered mountains frame the horizon, serene waters reflect endless skies, and age-old customs continue to thrive with elegance and pride. Travellers seeking meaningful experiences discover a destination filled with authenticity, charm, and unforgettable moments. Known as the 'Jewel of India,' Manipur shines through its pristine lakes, vibrant traditions, spiritual artistry, and warm hospitality.

From the floating wonders of Loktak Lake to the rhythmic beauty of Rasleela, from the spirited legacy of Manipuri polo to the breathtaking landscapes of Dzükou Valley, Manipur creates a travel experience that lingers deeply in memory.

Loktak Lake: The floating jewel

The heart of Manipur glimmers through the breathtaking beauty of Loktak Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India. Famous for its floating circular islands known as phumdis. Gentle ripples move across the shimmering waters as fishermen glide gracefully in traditional wooden boats.

Sunrise at Loktak Lake creates one of the most magical experiences in Manipur. Golden light spreads across the floating islands, migratory birds soar above the tranquil waters, and the calm atmosphere brings an overwhelming sense of peace. Lakeside villages add warmth and character to the experience, offering travellers a glimpse into the harmonious lifestyle of the local communities.

The lake also shelters the remarkable Keibul Lamjao National Park, celebrated as the world's only



Sagol Kangjei



Raas Leela



Shri Shri Govindajee Temple

floating national park. The rare Sangai deer, lovingly known as the 'dancing deer,' moves across the floating marshlands, adding a rare natural wonder to the region's appeal. Boat rides, photography excursions, local cuisine, and lakeside stays transform Loktak into an immersive experience filled with serenity and discovery.

Royal Spirit of Manipuri Polo

Manipur proudly carries the legacy of being the birthplace of modern polo. Locally known as Sagol Kangjei, the sport holds deep cultural significance and reflects the energetic spirit of the region.

Traditional polo matches in Manipur create a thrilling spectacle filled with speed, skill, and excitement. Riders dressed in traditional attire race across open grounds with remarkable agility, preserving a sporting tradition that has flourished for centuries. The atmosphere during these matches feels vibrant and celebratory, drawing travellers into the cultural heartbeat of the state.

The history of polo in Manipur adds an extraordinary dimension to the destination's tourism appeal. Sports enthusiasts and cultural travellers find themselves fascinated by the origins of a game that eventually gained global recognition.

Raas Leela: Poetry of dance and devotion

Among Manipur's most treasured cultural experiences is the classical dance form of Raas Leela. Graceful movements, soulful music, and spiritual storytelling come together to create a performance filled with elegance and emotion.

Inspired by the divine tales of Radha



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Loktak Lake



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and Krishna, Raas Leela reflects devotion through fluid choreography and expressive artistry. Dancers dressed in elaborate traditional costumes move with extraordinary precision, creating an atmosphere that feels serene and deeply captivating. The beauty of Raas Leela lies in its gentle rhythm and spiritual essence. Every gesture carries meaning, every movement flows with harmony, and every performance leaves audiences mesmerised. Cultural festivals and traditional celebrations across Manipur offer travellers the opportunity to witness this timeless art form in its purest expression.

Dzükou Valley: Nature's endless canvas

High in the hills bordering Manipur and Nagaland lies the breathtaking Dzükou Valley, often admired as one of the most picturesque valleys in Northeast India. Rolling green meadows stretch endlessly across the landscape, crystal-clear streams flow gently through the valley floor, and seasonal flowers create bursts of colour across the hillsides.

The journey to Dzükou Valley feels as rewarding as the destination itself. Scenic trekking trails pass through lush forests and mountain pathways, gradually revealing panoramic views that leave travellers spellbound.

During the monsoon and post-monsoon months, the valley transforms into a vibrant paradise filled with wildflowers and soft mist drifting through the hills. The refreshing mountain air and peaceful surroundings create the perfect escape for trekkers, photographers, and nature lovers.

Cultural heritage rooted in grace Manipur's cultural richness shines through its traditions, festivals, textiles, music, and craftsmanship. The state's diverse communities preserve their heritage with remarkable pride, creating a vibrant cultural identity that travellers can experience in every village and marketplace.

Traditional handloom weaving remains an integral part of Manipuri life. Intricately woven textiles, elegant shawls, and traditional attire reflect generations of artistry and craftsmanship. Local markets in

Imphal bustle with colour and creativity, offering visitors beautifully handcrafted products that capture the spirit of the region.

The famous women-run markets of Manipur stand as powerful symbols of community and tradition. These lively marketplaces offer everything from handwoven fabrics and bamboo crafts to local spices and authentic Manipuri delicacies. Festivals across the state bring music, dance, sports, and cultural performances together in grand celebration. The Sangai Festival, held annually in November, beautifully showcases Manipur's tourism experiences, indigenous traditions, adventure activities, and artistic heritage.

Best time to visit Manipur

The months between October and March create the ideal season to explore Manipur. Pleasant weather, clear skies, and lush landscapes make sightseeing and outdoor experiences especially enjoyable during this period.

Loktak Lake glows beautifully under crisp winter sunlight, trekking conditions in Dzükou Valley remain comfortable, and

cultural festivities bring vibrant energy to the region. November holds special significance with the celebration of the Sangai Festival, offering travellers a wonderful opportunity to experience Manipur's traditions and hospitality in full splendour. Spring and post-monsoon months also enhance the beauty of the valleys and hills with fresh greenery and blooming flowers, creating spectacular views across the state.

The soul of Northeast India

Manipur welcomes travellers into a world where nature, culture, and tradition exist in beautiful harmony. Every experience feels immersive and heartfelt, from watching fishermen drift across Loktak Lake to witnessing the elegance of Rasleela performances beneath glowing lights.

The state offers an inspiring blend of scenic beauty and cultural depth that resonates long after the journey ends. Mountains whisper ancient stories, lakes reflect timeless serenity, and traditions continue to flourish with pride and authenticity.



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Centara hosts fourth edition of 'Rewards and Recognition Night' in Delhi

Centara Hotels and Resorts concluded its fourth Rewards and Recognition Night in New Delhi. The event marked the finale of a three-city India series, celebrating key B2B and B2C partners while reinforcing strong trade relationships and continued focus on the Indian market.





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Crown & Champa Resorts hosts exclusive media evening in New Delhi

Crown & Champa Resorts, in association with Think Strawberries, hosted an exclusive media dinner in New Delhi. The evening brought together leading media professionals for engaging conversations, offering insights into the brand's vision, developments, and commitment to enhancing luxury hospitality experiences.

Atmosphere Core and OA Globe DMC hosts networking night in Mumbai

Atmosphere Core, in association with OA Globe DMC, hosted a vibrant networking evening. The event brought together key travel partners for meaningful interactions over cocktails and dinner, fostering stronger relationships and celebrating collaboration within the travel trade community.



Delhi Tourism hosts Tourism Stakeholder Conference 2026

The Tourism Stakeholder Conference 2026 concluded with insightful panel discussions and valuable recommendations from across the tourism sector. The Delhi Government's initiatives received strong appreciation, while the esteemed presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister Smt. Rekha Gupta added inspiration, reinforcing a shared vision for strengthening and advancing the capital's tourism landscape.

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WION ICONIC Summit unites leaders across Tourism Industry

Red Hat Communications curated the WION ICONIC Travel & Tourism Summit 2026, in association with Zee Network, convening leading voices from travel, aviation, hospitality, and policy. The summit facilitated impactful discussions, industry insights, and collaborative dialogue, reinforcing its position as a key platform shaping the future of tourism.

Minor Hotels strengthens India focus with Sales Mission 2026

Minor Hotels and Resorts advanced its India Sales Mission 2026 across Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai, engaging key travel trade partners. The initiative brought together a global delegation, reinforcing India's importance as a growth market while strengthening long-term relationships and aligning with evolving global travel dynamics.



Polo Hotels & Resorts curates intimate media interaction

Polo Hotels & Resorts curated an exclusive media interaction with CEO Deval Tibrewalla in New Delhi, highlighting the brand's journey and evolution. The gathering offered insights into its Northeast India roots, new architectural direction, and repositioning strategy, while fostering engaging conversations around the region's growing hospitality narrative.





New Orleans Jazz spirit comes alive in New Delhi

New Orleans brought its signature jazz culture to New Delhi with a vibrant showcase at The Piano Man. The evening featured live jazz, themed cocktails, and authentic cuisine, creating an immersive experience that celebrated music, culture, and community, offering guests a lively taste of the city's iconic spirit.

Vishwas Makhija celebrates 30 Years of India Insight Tours with book launch

Vishwas Makhija marked 30 years of India Insight Tours with the launch of Peaks, Paths & Purpose in Gurgaon. The evening brought together family and industry peers, celebrating his journey from the Himalayas to leadership, while reflecting on community, shared memories, and a forward-looking vision for the future.



Sunlife Resorts Mauritius curates networking evening

Sunlife Resorts Mauritius curated an informal networking evening in Delhi, bringing together key travel trade partners. The gathering fostered meaningful interactions and strengthened relationships, while offering insights into the brand's offerings and reinforcing its commitment to the Indian market through continued engagement and collaboration.



APPOINTMENTS



Tourism New Zealand

Tourism New Zealand has appointed Tishtar Parakh as the Country Manager for India. Prior to joining Tourism New Zealand, Parakh served as Travel Trade Lead at VisitBritain, where she co-led destination marketing initiatives across trade and consumer segments in India. She brings with her a deep understanding of the industry, having led strategic campaigns, trade partnerships and industry events designed to increase visitor numbers and spend from the Indian market.



Dusit International

Dusit International has appointed Marc Handl as Managing Director of Dusit Thani Bangkok, its reimagined luxury hotel overlooking Lumpini Park in central Bangkok, alongside Dusit Residences and Dusit Parkside, two upcoming luxury residential offerings managed by Dusit. All three form part of Dusit Central Park, one of the city's most significant mixed-use developments, which also includes a retail centre, an office tower, and one of Thailand's largest rooftop parks in the heart of the capital.



Conrad Bengaluru

Conrad Bengaluru announces the appointment of Dhruva Parate as Director of Sales, further strengthening its commercial leadership and commitment to driving strategic growth. With over a decade of diverse experience across premium consumer brands and luxury hospitality, Dhruva brings strong expertise in corporate sales, market expansion, and strategic partnerships.



OA Globe DMC

OA Globe DMC has announced the appointment of Neelma Masand as its Channel Sales Partner – Gujarat. Neelma, Founder of Constant CONNECT, brings over three decades of experience in the travel and hospitality industry. Her expertise spans airline operations, hospitality, B2B travel platforms, and destination management companies, giving her a well-rounded understanding of the evolving travel ecosystem.

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