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EDITORS LETTER

There is an old saying that the grass is always greener on the other side. In travel, however, the grass is usually greener at the next destination, the next hotel opening, the next flight, the next familiar airport lounge. And if I am being completely honest, our industry has become rather good at romanticising the hustle. The early morning flights. The red-eye journeys. The back-to-back meetings. The "landed two hours ago, flying out again tomorrow" conversations that have somehow become badges of honour. I may have been guilty of it myself.

Yet the older I get, the more I realise that while travel may be about movement, life certainly isn't. The trick lies somewhere in between. What makes this moment particularly fascinating is that the industry itself seems to be experiencing a similar contradiction. India's domestic travel story continues to move from strength to strength growing at a pace few would have imagined a decade ago. Meanwhile, outbound travel finds itself navigating a different reality. Airline frequencies are being adjusted, certain routes are disappearing altogether, and travellers are working with a slightly smaller map than they were a year ago. But as the saying goes, when one door closes, another opens.

New destinations are stepping into the spotlight. Emerging tourism boards are seeing opportunity where others see challenge. And travellers, perhaps unknowingly, are expanding their horizons in ways they never expected. As for me, May delivered a rare surprise. I didn't travel. For someone whose life is often measured in boarding passes rather than calendar dates, that felt unusually strange. I am still not entirely sure I have processed it. But perhaps staying still every once in a while isn't such a bad thing. While I remained grounded, my mind certainly wasn't. The month offered a chance to focus on new ideas, upcoming projects and some exciting initiatives that will unfold over the remainder of the year.

Of course, Travel Turtle was never standing still. My team was everywhere. From Indaba in South Africa to luxury hospitality showcases and destinations across the globe, they returned with stories, conversations and insights that have shaped this issue.

Inside these pages, you'll find some exceptional properties including Chiva-Som, Mandarin Oriental Bangkok and AAHAASA Collection in Sri Lanka. We also explore how Indian travellers are increasingly influencing the global luxury landscape, not merely as visitors, but as tastemakers whose preferences are shaping experiences around the world.

They say good things come to those who wait.
Thankfully, you won't have to wait much longer.
As always, we hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.
Happy Reading.

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

   : [travelturtlemag](#)





Travel Turtle Team

Publisher: **Harish Chandra Uniyal**

Editor: **Bharti Sharma**

Executive Director: **Sudipta Saha**

Bureau Chief (West): **Naina Nath**

Assistant Editor: **Tripti Jain**

Sub-Editor: **Itika Nindrajog**

Contributing Editors:

Inder Raj Ahluwalia

Misbaah Mansuri

Marketing Executive: **Rishi Arora**

Marketing: **Tejas Sharma**

Art Director: **Pankti Anjaria**

Rajas More

Legal Consultant: **Aditya Singh**

Photographer: **Khurshed Ahmad**

Circulation: **Pradeep Kumar**

Accounts: **Dinesh Kumar**



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Editor: Bharti Sharma

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Asego launches visa rejection cover amid rising visa uncertainty

As India's travel landscape continues to evolve, travellers across destinations are facing challenges related to visa appointment bookings, longer processing timelines and stricter scrutiny; and geopolitical tensions and evolving immigration policies are further contributing to the uncertainty. Asego's Visa Rejection Protection is designed to protect travellers against financial losses caused by unexpected visa rejections. The product offers coverage of USD 500 for losses incurred on non-refundable flight expenses, hotel bookings, and prepaid activities, minimising the financial impact caused.

Norwegian Cruise Line® reveals grand opening date for Great Tides Waterpark

Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) has announced the opening of Great Tides Waterpark at Great Stirrup Cay in the Bahamas on September 4, 2026. Spanning nearly six acres, the family-friendly attraction will feature the 170-foot Tidal Tower, industry-first Breakwater Blasters water coasters, multiple body, mat and tube slides, and immersive experiences for guests of all ages. Highlights include the Whitewater Dash body slides, Rapid Mat Racers, and the Tropic Storm and Tropic Spiral tube slides, designed to deliver high-energy thrills and adventure.



Via East DMC expands presence with new Sales & Marketing office in Canada & USA

Via East DMC has opened a new Sales & Marketing Office for Canada and the USA, strengthening its North American presence and supporting the promotion of its specialist destination brands across Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.



Dusit Hotels and Resorts expands Well-Fest2026

Dusit Hotels and Resorts, Dusit International's global portfolio of luxury retreats, wellness resorts and lifestyle hotels, is celebrating the 5th edition of Well-Fest 2026 throughout June. Inspired by Global Wellness Day and themed 'Reset | Reconnect | Reignite,' the month-long initiative offers restorative wellness experiences focused on emotional well-being, better sleep, mindfulness, meaningful connections and healthier lifestyles.

Top 6



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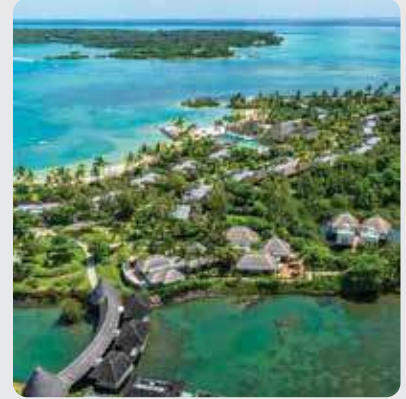
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For bookings & offers, please do contact our team as per the below mentioned details.



Saroj Jena
COO
M: +91 98111 90446
E: saroj@oa-dmc.com



Jaleel Aubeeluck
Director
M: +230 5784 5717
E: jaleel.mru@oa-dmc.com

Sneha : M: +91 98928 62205 | E: ops.mru@oa-dmc.com
Sheetal : M: +91 98204 78247 | E: ops.mru1@oa-dmc.com
Umar : M: +91 97730 35519 | E: ops.mru3@oa-dmc.com



Air India Express launches direct Bengaluru-Phuket flights

Air India Express is strengthening its international network with the launch of new direct flights connecting Bengaluru and Phuket, further expanding connectivity between India and Thailand while supporting growing leisure travel demand across the region. The service is scheduled to commence from June 1, 2026. The new route is expected to enhance travel options for Indian tourists seeking direct access to one of Thailand's most popular leisure destinations, while also supporting tourism, business travel, and regional connectivity between the two countries.



IATO launches 'Swachh Paryatan Abhiyaan' to promote Cleanliness, Responsible Tourism, and Heritage Conservation

The initiative brought together IATO members, tourism professionals, students, local stakeholders, and tourism enthusiasts with a shared objective of creating awareness about maintaining cleanliness at monuments and tourist destinations, promoting civic responsibility, encouraging respectful behaviour towards tourists, and preserving India's rich heritage and cultural values.

Egyptair celebrates 94 years in India with a grand industry evening

Egypt's national flag carrier, Egyptair, hosted a celebration evening in New Delhi to commemorate the airline's 94th anniversary, bringing together 200+ distinguished guests including members of the travel trade fraternity, aviation leaders, corporate partners, diplomats, and distinguished guests. The evening was hosted by Mr Amr Aly, Country Manager, Egyptair, marking a significant milestone in the airline's growing engagement with the Indian market, while also celebrating the deepening cultural, tourism, cinema, and aviation relationship between India and Egypt.



StarDream Cruises appoints TravClan as preferred sales agent in India

TravClan, appointed as the Preferred Sales Agent (PSA) for StarDream Cruises in India. The partnership aims to strengthen and modernise cruise distribution across the Indian travel trade ecosystem by making cruise products more accessible, scalable, and easier to sell for travel agents across the country.



Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles' strengthens presence in the Indian MICE & wedding market

Avani+ Barbarons Seychelles welcomed a distinguished delegation of leading Indian travel, event, luxury wedding and aviation professionals for a dedicated MICE event, showcasing the resort's exceptional potential for destination weddings, luxury celebrations, group travel and high-end experiential journeys in Seychelles.

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LIVE WIRE

The Longevity Revolution

How to add life to your years

The world's most coveted journeys are no longer measured in miles travelled, but in years gained. Welcome to the era of longevity tourism, where luxury, science and travel converge in pursuit of life's ultimate upgrade.

- *Bharti Sharma*



LIVE WIRE

First-Class To Forever

Not long ago, luxury travel was defined by excess.

The bigger suite. The rarer vintage. The private island. The yacht anchored in impossibly blue waters. Today, a new kind of luxury is taking shape. One that has little to do with thread counts or champagne labels and everything to do with time.

Time with energy. Time with vitality. Time without disease.

Across the world's most exclusive resorts and wellness sanctuaries, affluent travellers are investing in something once considered impossible to buy: a healthier, longer life.

Longevity tourism, once a niche corner of the wellness industry, is rapidly becoming one of travel's most compelling movements. From Swiss medical retreats and Japanese Blue Zones to Mediterranean islands where centenarians thrive, travellers are seeking experiences that promise more than memories. They are seeking transformation. And perhaps for the first time in travel history, the ultimate souvenir isn't something you take home within yourself.



Champagne Is Out. Biomarkers Are In.

The modern luxury traveller has evolved.

Five - star hotels are still desirable, but increasingly they are expected to deliver more than indulgence. Today's travellers want outcomes. Better sleep.

Reduced stress.

Improved fitness.

Sharper mental performance.

A biological age younger than the one printed on their passport.

At Switzerland's legendary **Clinique La Prairie**, guests undergo sophisticated health assessments and personalised longevity programmes designed to optimise wellbeing from the inside out. The property has become synonymous with the longevity movement, attracting everyone from royalty to business leaders seeking a proactive approach to ageing.

In Spain, **SHA Wellness Clinic** has built a devoted international following through its blend of cutting-edge medical science, nutrition and holistic wellness. Meanwhile, Thailand's iconic **Chiva - Som** continues to attract discerning travellers seeking life - enhancing experiences rather than conventional holidays.

The shift is unmistakable.

Luxury is no longer about escaping reality.

It's about extending the best parts of it.



Where Centenarians Call Home

While longevity clinics are attracting headlines, some of the most valuable lessons can be found far from laboratory testing and advanced diagnostics. They exist in small villages, coastal communities and remote islands where people routinely celebrate their 90th and 100th birthdays. The Blue Zones have become modern pilgrimage sites for longevity travellers. In Okinawa, Japan, elders remain active and socially connected well into old age. In Sardinia, Italy, daily movement and strong family ties remain central to life. In Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula, purpose, simplicity and community continue to shape everyday routines. These destinations offer a powerful reminder that longevity isn't solely about technology. It is often about culture. Travellers leave not only inspired by the scenery but transformed by the rhythms of life they encounter. The leisurely shared meals. The afternoon walks.

The emphasis on connection over consumption. Perhaps the greatest luxury of all is learning how to slow down.

The New Longevity Grand Tour

- Okinawa, Japan**
For purpose-driven living and one of the world's highest concentrations of centenarians.
- Sardinia, Italy**
For Mediterranean cuisine, mountain villages and active ageing.
- Nicoya, Costa Rica**
For nature, simplicity and community.
- Icaria, Greece**
For slow living and island life at its most authentic.
- Swiss Alps**
For the latest advances in preventive health and longevity science.

The Billion-Dollar Pursuit of More Time

Longevity has become one of the most lucrative opportunities in global travel. Industry analysts estimate the broader wellness economy to be worth trillions of dollars, with

longevity emerging as one of its fastest - growing segments. Hotels are partnering with medical experts. Luxury resorts are introducing genetic testing and preventive health programmes. Cruise lines are launching wellness - focused itineraries. The demand is coming from a surprising audience. Not retirees. Not pensioners. But high - performing professionals in their thirties, forties and fifties who view health as their greatest asset. They are investing in longevity today because they understand that healthy ageing begins long before old age arrives.

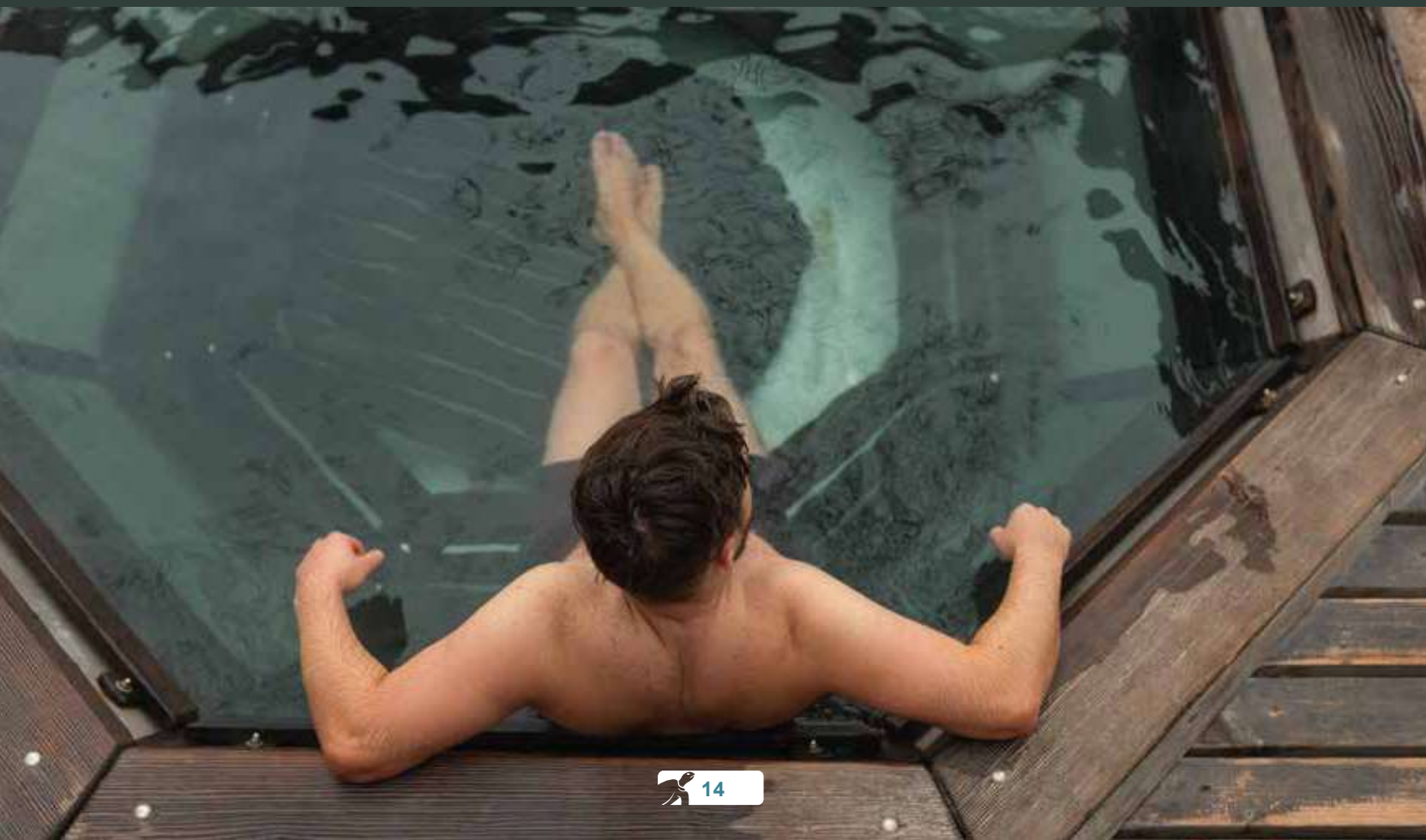
The New Status Symbol

For decades, luxury was displayed through possessions. Today, it is increasingly expressed through wellbeing. The entrepreneur who prioritises sleep. The executive who books a longevity retreat instead of a shopping holiday. The traveller who returns home healthier than when they left. Healthspan, the number of years spent in good health, is becoming

the ultimate measure of success. In a world obsessed with productivity and performance, feeling younger may prove more valuable than looking younger.

Checking Into The Future

The future of travel may look remarkably different from the past. Tomorrow's hotels could offer personalised wellness programmes based on genetic data, sleep patterns and biological age. AI-powered health assessments may become as common as concierge services. Entire destinations may position themselves as longevity ecosystems rather than holiday hotspots. Yet amid all the technological advances, the essence of longevity remains beautifully simple. Move often. Eat well. Stay curious. Cultivate meaningful relationships. Travel widely. Because if longevity tourism has taught us anything, it is that living longer isn't the real aspiration. Living better is. And increasingly, the journey begins with a boarding pass.



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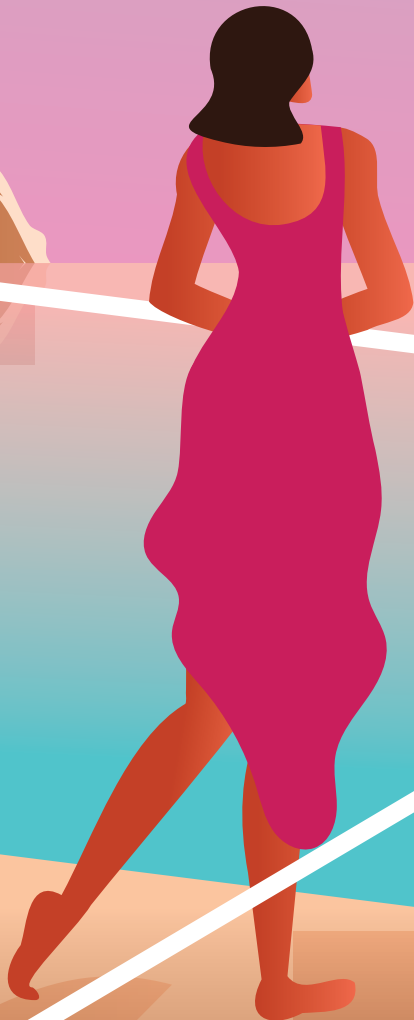
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The Indian Influence *on* Luxury Hospitality



From wellness retreats and family-centric villas to destination weddings and personalised experiences, Indian travellers are shaping the future of global luxury hospitality like never before.

-Tripti Jain

Every generation redefines what exclusivity, comfort, and aspiration mean to them. Today, one market is driving that evolution with remarkable speed and influence: India. Across continents, hospitality brands are paying closer attention to Indian travellers than ever before. Their preferences are influencing product design, culinary offerings, wellness programmes, accommodation formats, and even long-term business strategies. The shift reflects more than rising spending power. It represents the arrival of a traveller who is globally aware, culturally confident, digitally connected, and increasingly drawn to experiences that deliver emotional value.

The modern Indian luxury traveller is moving beyond traditional markers of indulgence. Private journeys, authentic cultural encounters, wellness-focused escapes, immersive dining experiences, and meaningful family moments have become the new language of luxury. As affluent Indians continue to explore the world with greater frequency and purpose, international hospitality brands are responding with experiences that feel more personalised, intuitive, and culturally relevant.

Luxury's new powerhouse

Few markets have captured the attention of global hospitality leaders quite like India. Strong economic growth, rising disposable incomes, expanding entrepreneurial wealth, and increasing international exposure have created a luxury travel audience that is both influential and aspirational. Christine Galle-Luczak, Founder & CEO, Heavens Portfolio, believes India is rapidly becoming one of the world's most significant luxury travel source markets.



Christine Galle-Luczak

"India is already emerging as one of the most exciting and influential luxury travel markets globally, and this momentum will only accelerate over the next decade. What is particularly remarkable is the evolution of the Indian traveller. They are increasingly well-travelled, discerning, and emotionally invested in meaningful experiences rather than simply material luxury. We have witnessed a significant shift from traditional luxury consumption towards experiential and transformative travel."

Her observations reflect a broader industry reality. Luxury travellers from India are increasingly venturing beyond familiar destinations and seeking experiences rooted in authenticity, privacy, and personal enrichment. Wellness retreats in remote locations, expedition-style journeys, cultural immersion programmes, and highly curated itineraries are becoming increasingly popular.

Christine also believes the industry's understanding of India has matured significantly over the years. She says, "One of the biggest misconceptions is that Indian travellers remain purely price-sensitive or predominantly last-minute bookers. Today's luxury Indian traveller is incredibly informed, global in outlook, and willing to pay for exceptional

experiences that offer value and personal relevance. Understanding nuances around food preferences, family dynamics, celebrations, wellness, and service expectations is essential."

The experience economy

Luxury travel today is less about possessions and more about stories, emotions, and memories. That transformation is particularly visible among Indian travellers. According to Saloni Mahajan Narang, Owner & Founder, Paras Corporation, a younger generation of affluent consumers is driving this shift towards experience-led luxury.



Saloni Mahajan Narang

"India's luxury travel segment is expanding rapidly, driven by rising disposable incomes, global exposure, and a younger demographic that prioritises experiences over possessions. Indian travellers today are travelling more frequently, celebrating milestones through travel, and seeking bespoke, culturally immersive journeys."

The appeal of luxury now lies in discovering a hidden vineyard, participating in a local cultural ritual, enjoying a wellness retreat tailored to personal goals, or spending uninterrupted time with family in a spectacular destination. Saloni believes the future of Indian luxury travel will be defined by deeper engagement with



destinations. She shares, “The future of Indian luxury travel is deeply experiential and destination-driven. Travellers are moving beyond sightseeing towards immersive journeys centred around wellness, food, culture, design, and local storytelling. There’s growing demand for boutique stays, slow travel, curated retreats, and experiences that feel emotionally resonant rather than overtly extravagant.”

She also points to the rise of short luxury escapes, particularly among younger travellers. “We’re seeing a sharp rise in micro-cations, especially among Gen Z travellers. They no longer wait for long holidays or milestone celebrations. Weekends themselves have become opportunities for luxury staycations and quick getaways.”

Personalisation takes centre stage

As Indian travellers become more diverse in their preferences, personalisation has emerged as the defining principle of luxury hospitality. For Yash Chandhok, Manager, Global Sales – Middle East, Africa & India, Rosewood Hotel Group, true luxury cannot be delivered through standardised experiences.



Yash Chandhok

“At Rosewood, our foundation is built on relationship hospitality and our restless need for discovery. When guests arrive at any of our properties around the world, the focus is on making them feel immediately at ease through a highly personalised approach. That personalisation can take many forms, from curated culinary experiences and family-oriented room configurations to tailored amenities and lifestyle programming that reflect individual preferences and travel styles.”

This approach aligns closely with the expectations of Indian travellers, who increasingly seek experiences tailored to their unique interests rather than broad market assumptions. Yash believes India’s importance within global hospitality has reached a pivotal moment.

He shares, “India is firmly in the global spotlight within hospitality today. The country’s strong economic growth and expanding appetite for luxury have positioned India as a major source market rather than simply an emerging one. Hotels are no longer viewed simply as places to stay, but as destinations offering curated wellness journeys, cultural immersion, exceptional dining, and meaningful experiences.”

The rise of the Indian tastemaker

India’s influence extends far beyond traveller numbers. Increasingly, Indian luxury consumers are shaping global trends and expectations. Aakriti Batra, Chief Executive & Co- Founder, 1524 Delhi, believes the conversation around India’s luxury travel potential has already changed.



Aakriti Batra

“India is growing at an exponential pace. The conversation has already shifted from ‘will it’ to ‘it already is’. For many international luxury brands, India won’t just be an important source market. It will be among their most important ones.” She sees tremendous diversity within India’s affluent traveller community, a factor that international brands must recognise. “The biggest misconception is treating Indian travellers as a single profile. The reality is far more varied: established family offices, first-generation entrepreneurs, and a growing wave of younger wealth creators from tech and startups, each travelling very differently.” One of the strongest emerging trends, according to Aakriti, is the demand for exclusivity and privacy. She adds, “Private villas, island buyouts, and entire estate rentals are seeing growing demand. Indian families often travel in groups of 10 to 30 across generations, and the demand for properties offering genuine privacy and dedicated service for such groups has grown significantly. Milestone celebrations,



destination weddings, and multi-generational holidays have made exclusive-use experiences increasingly mainstream.”

A growing number of Indian travellers are also exploring lesser-known destinations and seeking experiences that feel truly unique. Aakriti explains, “Travellers who’ve covered the established destinations are now asking for less-explored regions. They want experiences that feel singular, not broadly marketed. This traveller is no longer looking for the best hotel. They’re looking for something that can’t simply be replicated.”

Balancing global standards

Luxury hospitality brands are increasingly recognising that cultural relevance enhances, rather than compromises, international brand identity. Rohit Chopra, Area Commercial Director, India, Minor Hotels, sees localisation as a crucial part of delivering meaningful luxury experiences.



Rohit Chopra

“We are redesigning experiences for the Indian market by combining international luxury standards with locally rooted, experience-led offerings. Our strategy focuses on culturally immersive stays, wellness-driven travel, personalised guest experiences, and expansion into emerging destinations.”

The integration of regional culture, wellness, sustainability, and local storytelling is becoming central to the guest experience. Rohit shares, “Key adaptations include integrating Indian heritage, regional design, and local culinary experiences into hotel concepts,

expanding wellness offerings, catering to experience-focused travellers, and embedding sustainability and community-driven tourism into luxury experiences.”

India’s growing significance within the company’s global strategy reflects a wider industry trend. He adds, “India has emerged as a strategic growth market for Minor Hotels, driven by strong demand for luxury, wellness, and experience-led travel. With rising domestic tourism and an evolving affluent traveller base, India is becoming an increasingly important contributor to our long-term expansion strategy.”

The family, wellness and wedding effect Three themes consistently emerge when discussing Indian luxury travellers: family, wellness, and celebration. Multi-generational travel continues to influence how luxury resorts design accommodation, services, and experiences. Spacious villas, interconnected suites, private residences, and exclusive-use properties are increasingly being developed to cater to larger family groups.

Wellness has evolved from a supplementary offering to a central pillar of luxury travel.

Personalised wellness programmes, holistic therapies,

mindfulness retreats, and longevity-focused experiences are attracting growing interest from Indian travellers seeking purposeful journeys.

Destination weddings remain one of India’s most influential contributions to global hospitality. Luxury resorts across the world have invested heavily in infrastructure, event planning capabilities, culinary expertise, and culturally intuitive service models to accommodate the scale and sophistication of Indian celebrations.

Vegetarian and wellness-oriented dining has also become an essential component of luxury hospitality. Fine dining establishments are expanding plant-based offerings and creating culinary experiences that align with evolving dietary preferences.

Together, these trends illustrate how Indian travellers are influencing luxury hospitality at every level, from design and operations to service philosophy and long-term planning. The world’s leading luxury brands increasingly recognise that India’s importance goes far beyond visitor numbers. It represents a market capable of shaping global travel trends and defining the future of luxury itself.



INDIAN ESCAPE



EXPLORE

MAHARASHTRA THROUGH ADVENTURE

From soaring over the Sahyadris to diving beneath the Arabian Sea, Maharashtra is redefining adventure tourism through a framework that blends safety, sustainability, and opportunity.

- Tripti Jain



INDIAN ESCAPEDE

Maharashtra is known for its vibrant cities, historic forts, cultural landmarks, and diverse landscapes. Today, a new narrative is unfolding across the state, one that invites travellers to look beyond traditional sightseeing and embrace experiences that awaken the spirit of exploration.

Maharashtra's tourism story

Stretching from the spectacular Konkan coastline to the rugged Sahyadri mountain ranges, and from dense forests to winding rivers, Maharashtra possesses a natural canvas perfectly suited for adventure tourism. Trekking routes weave through ancient forts, coastal waters offer thrilling marine experiences, and open skies provide opportunities for aerial adventures. This rich geographical diversity has positioned the state as one of India's most promising destinations for adventure seekers. Recognising this immense potential, the Government of Maharashtra introduced the Adventure Tourism Policy on August 24, 2021, creating a structured and future-focused framework designed to encourage growth, attract investment, and establish high

standards of safety and professionalism across the sector.



Shri. Sanjay Khandare

Driving economic opportunity

Adventure tourism activities create opportunities for local guides, instructors, transport providers, hospitality businesses, equipment suppliers, and community - based enterprises. Rural and semi-rural destinations are particularly benefiting from increased visitor footfall and tourism-linked economic activity. By encouraging responsible tourism development across multiple regions, Maharashtra is creating pathways for inclusive growth that support local livelihoods while showcasing

lesser-known destinations.

Shri. Sanjay Khandare, Principal Secretary (Tourism), Government of Maharashtra, highlights the broader significance of the initiative: "The Adventure Tourism Policy has a major role to play in the holistic development of the tourism sector in the state along with economic growth. The policy has a strong focus on ensuring the safety of tourists while promoting adventure tourism activities. There has been a steady growth in the interest for adventure tourism activities, which in turn has created job opportunities. This well - structured policy is further boosting the development of adventure tourism."

Balancing adventure with sustainability

Modern travellers increasingly value destinations that protect their natural and cultural heritage. Maharashtra's approach recognises that sustainable tourism development is essential for long-term success. The policy encourages responsible practices that support environmental conservation and preserve the state's natural assets. Adventure tourism activities are designed to promote appreciation of

landscapes, ecosystems, and local communities while ensuring their protection for future generations.



Dr. B. N. Patil

Dr. B. N. Patil (IAS), Director, Directorate of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, emphasises this broader vision: "Adventure tourism is not just about recreation for visitors; it is also about its contribution to the economic development of the state's tourism sector. Special attention is being given to infrastructure development and tourism safety in adventure tourism sites. Under this policy, importance is given to preserving natural heritage in promoting tourism as well. Adventure tourism centres have been developed in many places in the state, creating more employment opportunities for the people in those areas."





INDIAN ESCAPADE



Creating a framework for growth

Adventure tourism is increasingly emerging as one of the most dynamic segments of the global travel industry. Maharashtra's policy arrives at a time when travellers are actively seeking immersive, experience-led journeys that combine excitement with meaningful engagement with nature. The policy applies to a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including adventure tourism operators, service providers, camps and resorts, aggregators, clubs, non-profit organisations, training institutes, and registered companies. Through this inclusive approach, Maharashtra has created an ecosystem that encourages participation from both established businesses and emerging entrepreneurs. The response has been

remarkable. Since the launch of the policy, the state has received 809 applications related to adventure tourism activities. Of these, 692 operators have been granted official certification, reflecting strong industry confidence and growing interest in organised adventure experiences. This certification process serves as a significant milestone in professionalising the sector. It offers assurance to travellers, strengthens operator credibility, and creates a reliable framework that supports long-term industry growth.

Safety at the core of every adventure

As adventure tourism continues to gain popularity, Maharashtra has placed visitor safety at the heart of its development strategy. The policy establishes comprehensive guidelines that ensure every adventure activity is conducted with the highest standards of preparedness and responsibility. Operators are required to maintain equipment and infrastructure, engage qualified guides, and implement safety protocols appropriate to each activity. First-aid facilities, emergency response mechanisms, communication systems, directional signage, and risk-awareness measures form an integral part of the operational framework.

Special provisions have been introduced for activities conducted in sensitive locations, particularly within urban environments such as Mumbai, where organisers must coordinate with relevant authorities to ensure smooth management of safety

and logistics. The policy also encourages transparent communication with participants. Tourists receive clear information regarding activity requirements, safety precautions, and operational procedures, helping them make informed decisions and enjoy their experiences with confidence.

State's diverse adventure potential

The Sahyadri ranges provide ideal conditions for trekking, rock climbing, rappelling, and mountain expeditions. Historic forts such as Rajgad, Torna, Harishchandragad, and Lohagad have become iconic landmarks for adventure enthusiasts seeking both physical challenge and historical discovery. The Konkan coastline presents opportunities for parasailing, scuba diving, snorkelling, kayaking, and other water-based pursuits. Coastal destinations are increasingly attracting travellers eager to explore marine ecosystems while enjoying immersive outdoor experiences. Rivers and reservoirs across the state support rafting, boating, and other recreational activities, creating opportunities for tourism development in both established and emerging destinations. Adventure tourism is also expanding into aerial experiences, with activities such as paragliding and parasailing offering visitors a unique perspective of Maharashtra's breathtaking landscapes.

As travellers continue to seek journeys that combine thrill, discovery, and authenticity, Maharashtra offers an invitation that is increasingly difficult to resist. From mountain peaks and forest trails to coastal waters and open skies, the state is opening the door to a new era of exploration where adventure meets opportunity, and every landscape becomes a gateway to unforgettable experiences.





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THE HORIZON TOURS

Mandarin Oriental Bangkok

Luxury's most enduring address

As luxury travel enters a new era shaped by authenticity, wellness, and meaningful connections, Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok continues to evolve with remarkable elegance.

Anthony Tyler, General Manager, Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok shares about the legacy hospitality.

-Tripti Jain



Anthony Tyler



For 150 years, Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok has stood gracefully along the banks of the Chao Phraya River, welcoming royalty, literary legends, global leaders, and discerning travellers from every corner of the world. Its journey reflects a careful balance between honouring an extraordinary legacy and embracing the expectations of a new generation of travellers who seek experiences rich in emotion, culture, and personal significance.

Heritage in motion

Many heritage properties preserve the past. Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok brings it to life.

Recent enhancements across the hotel have been guided by a philosophy of thoughtful evolution, ensuring that modern luxury seamlessly complements the character that has defined the property for generations.

“As Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok celebrates its 150th anniversary, we remain deeply committed to preserving the heritage, grace, and legendary service that have defined the hotel for generations, while continuing to evolve thoughtfully for the modern traveller.

Today’s guests seek experiences that feel personal, authentic, and meaningful.

Our recent restoration, together with the continued evolution of our culinary and wellness offerings, reflects this naturally. Experiences such as Anne-Sophie Pic at Le Normandie, The China House by Chef Fei, and Baan Phraya honour both our legacy and Bangkok’s contemporary cultural energy, ensuring the hotel remains timeless while continuing to feel relevant to each new generation of guests,” says Anthony.

This approach has enabled the property to remain one of the most respected names in global hospitality. Guests experience the grandeur of a legendary institution while enjoying contemporary comforts designed around their individual preferences.

The art of feeling known

Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok has elevated this principle into an art

form. Every interaction, recommendation, and thoughtful gesture is designed to create a sense of familiarity and belonging. Guests are welcomed not merely as visitors, but as individuals whose preferences and aspirations matter. Anthony explains, “What continues to distinguish Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok is the connection we create with our guests through intuitive, gracious, and personalised service refined over 150 years. Beyond our iconic riverside setting, guests are drawn to experiences that feel memorable, whether through wellness journeys at The Oriental Spa or dining experiences at Anne-Sophie Pic at Le Normandie, The China House by Chef Fei, and Baan Phraya. It is this combination of service, cultural connection, and a strong sense of place that continues to make the hotel so enduringly special.”

A favourite among Indian travellers The relationship between India and Thailand has grown stronger over the years. For Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok, the Indian market continues to play a significant role in its international strategy. Travellers from India are increasingly seeking experiences that blend luxury with authenticity, creating opportunities for deeper engagement and tailored offerings. Elaborating more on this Anthony shares, “The Indian outbound market is incredibly important to Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok, particularly as we continue to see strong demand for family travel, milestone celebrations, wellness retreats, and culinary-led experiences. Indian travellers value authenticity, warmth, and personalised hospitality, which aligns naturally with the spirit of our hotel. From bespoke itineraries and multi-generational stays to curated dining experiences and wellness programmes, we continue to tailor our offerings thoughtfully for this sophisticated and evolving market.”

From destination weddings and family gatherings to wellness escapes and culinary discoveries, the hotel has successfully





positioned itself as a preferred choice for affluent Indian travellers seeking exceptional experiences in Southeast Asia.

The new luxury language

Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok has embraced this evolution by curating experiences deeply connected to the destination. Wellness programmes, cultural encounters, and distinctive dining experiences allow guests to engage with Bangkok in a way that feels authentic and transformative.

Anthony says, "Today's travellers are increasingly seeking experiences that feel more meaningful and connected to the destination. Wellness, privacy, cultural authenticity, and emotional connection have become central to modern luxury travel. At Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok, we continue to evolve by curating experiences rooted in the character of Bangkok, from wellness journeys to dining and cultural experiences. Throughout this evolution, we remain grounded in the service philosophy that has defined the hotel for a century and a half."

Partnerships beyond transactions

Travel advisors and trade partners continue to play a vital role in shaping luxury travel decisions around the world. The brand views these relationships as long-term partnerships built on trust, collaboration, and shared success. The hotel actively invests in nurturing these connections through engagement initiatives, educational programmes, and immersive experiences that allow partners to understand the



property's unique story firsthand. Anthony emphasises, "Our travel trade partners play an important role in sharing the story of Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok with travellers around the world, and we value these relationships greatly. We work closely with our partners through regular communication,

educational experiences, and opportunities to experience the hotel firsthand. As we celebrate our 150th anniversary, these collaborations continue to be an important part of how we share the heritage and ongoing evolution of Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok internationally," Tyler shares.

Crafting the next chapter

As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, the future belongs to brands that can create genuine connections while remaining true to their essence. The brand enters its next chapter with a clear vision centred on craftsmanship, wellness, cultural authenticity, and personalised service. The hotel's future is being shaped by the same values that established its reputation more than a century ago, enhanced by a contemporary understanding of what luxury means today.

Anthony concludes, "My vision is for Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok, long considered the Grande Dame of hospitality in Thailand, to continue shaping hospitality through personalised service, cultural authenticity, and a strong sense of heritage. As luxury continues to evolve, we believe distinction will increasingly be shaped by connection, craftsmanship, wellness, and meaningful experiences rather than excess alone. While continuing to innovate thoughtfully, we remain deeply committed to preserving the soul, heritage, and spirit that have defined Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok for 150 years."

A legacy that flows

Great hotels leave an impression. Iconic hotels become part of a traveller's personal story.

Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok continues to occupy a rare position in global hospitality, where heritage feels alive, luxury feels meaningful, and service feels deeply personal. Its 150-year journey stands as a testament to the enduring power of authenticity, thoughtful evolution, and genuine human connection.

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CRUISE ODYSSEY

The Rhythm of the Sea, the Grace of

Crystal Serenity



Somewhere between Roberto's morning coffee, Nobu dinners, strawberries and cream after "Wimbledon", and evenings spent watching White Lotus from my balcony, I forgot what day of the week it was. And that, perhaps, is the greatest luxury Crystal Serenity offers.

-Bharti Sharma



CRUISE ODYSSEY

touches throughout the suite made longer stretches at sea feel effortless.

What surprised me most, however, was the sense of space.

Cruise cabins are not typically known for their generous proportions, but this felt different. The bathroom alone was larger than those found in many city hotels, with ample storage, a spacious shower and enough room to move around comfortably.

Yet it wasn't the wardrobe, the minibar or even the bathroom that I remember most.

It was the veranda.

Every morning began the same way. I'd step outside with a cup of coffee and watch the ocean unfold before me.

No emails. No meetings. No notifications competing for attention. Just the sea.

As the days passed, the balcony became less of an amenity and more of a ritual. Whether it was a quiet sunrise, a pause between activities or a few moments of solitude before

dinner, I found myself returning to it again and again.

Out there, with nothing but water on the horizon, time seemed to move differently.

Crystal's Biggest Problem: There Is Too Much To Do

Before boarding, I diligently studied the Crystal Before You Sail Guide. It helped me navigate everything from dining reservations to onboard activities. It also convinced me that I would somehow maintain an active fitness routine during the voyage. As a result, I packed four gym outfits. I used one.

In my defence, Crystal Serenity makes it remarkably difficult to stick to any self-imposed schedule. Every day seemed to present another temptation: a fascinating lecture, live music drifting through the lounges, a production show, a leisurely lunch that stretched into the afternoon, or a film at the cinema that felt impossible to resist. What impressed me most was how effortlessly the entertainment

I knew I was in trouble the moment I started missing my suite while I was still on the ship.

My five-night voyage from Colombo to Mumbai aboard Crystal Serenity turned out to be one of those rare travel experiences where everything simply worked. There were no grand gestures or over-the-top attempts to impress. Instead, there was thoughtful service, exceptional food, beautifully designed spaces and an atmosphere that made slowing down feel effortless.

By the time Mumbai appeared on the horizon, I wasn't ready to leave.

The Art of Making Guests Feel at Home

Embarkation was seamless. Before I knew it, I was onboard and being introduced to Roberto, my Italian butler, who quickly became a familiar presence throughout the voyage.

Luxury hospitality often talks about personalised service, but Roberto embodied it effortlessly. Within a day, he seemed to know my routine better than I did. My morning coffee appeared exactly when I wanted it, the suite was always immaculate, and every small request was handled before it became a request.

What I appreciated most was that nothing ever felt scripted. The warmth felt genuine. In many ways, Roberto set the tone for what I would experience across the ship.

Crystal Serenity is undeniably luxurious, but not in the flashy sense. There are no unnecessary displays of extravagance. The ship feels elegant, sophisticated and quietly confident. The luxury here is in the details. Crew members remember your name. Service appears before you need it. Public spaces never feel crowded. It is the kind of luxury that doesn't need to announce itself.

Warm smiles seemed to follow me everywhere.

Where the Sea Became Part of the Room

My Sapphire Veranda Suite became my home for the voyage, though "suite" hardly feels like the right word. Like much of Crystal Serenity, it struck a balance between comfort and understated elegance.

There was plenty of room to settle in. A comfortable sitting area became my morning workspace, the walk-in wardrobe easily accommodated my chronic overpacking, and thoughtful



CRUISE ODYSSEY

blended into the rhythm of life onboard. There was always something happening, yet nothing felt forced or over-programmed. Guests could fill every hour of the day with activities or simply find a quiet corner and watch the ocean roll by.

Both approaches seemed equally acceptable.

That flexibility is one of Crystal Serenity's greatest strengths. The ship offers plenty to do without ever making you feel obliged to do any of it. As for the gym, it never really stood a chance.

Between the conversations, the entertainment, the dining and the simple pleasure of being at sea, I found far better ways to spend my time. I have no regrets.

Dining That Deserves Its Own Voyage

Food can make or break a cruise. On Crystal Serenity, it became one of the main reasons I looked forward to each day.

I genuinely cannot remember a single craving that wasn't satisfied.

One evening I found myself enjoying beautifully executed Asian cuisine at Umi Uma by Nobu Matsuhisa, the only Nobu restaurant at sea. The dishes carried the chef's signature blend of Japanese precision and Peruvian influences and easily rivalled many land-based restaurants.

At Osteria d'Ovidio, handmade pastas, perfectly grilled meats and comforting Italian flavours made

every meal feel like an occasion.

Even breakfast became something to look forward to.

The spread was extensive without feeling excessive. Fresh fruits, healthy options, artisanal breads, made-to-order egg dishes and enough pastries to derail anyone's nutritional intentions were all thoughtfully presented.

Crystal understands something important about travellers.

We want to indulge.

But we also want to feel slightly less guilty about it.

The breakfast offerings somehow managed to accommodate both.

High Tea, "Wimbledon" and Life at Sea

One of my favourite things about Crystal Serenity was how easily one could move from activity to activity without ever feeling rushed.

One afternoon, I discovered that Crystal Serenity has its own version of Wimbledon on Deck 12.

Technically, it is a paddle tennis court. In my mind, however, it was Wimbledon.

Conveniently, strawberries and cream appeared later at high tea, which only strengthened the illusion. For a brief moment somewhere in the Arabian Sea, I felt oddly connected to Centre Court.

The high teas themselves became a highlight of the journey. Beautiful pastries, delicate sandwiches, excellent tea and ocean views make for a difficult combination to resist.

In fact, I suspect I may have missed

a few spectacular sunsets because I was too busy attending high tea.

A trade-off I am prepared to defend.

The Art of an Evening Well Spent

The evenings onboard had a rhythm all their own.

Guests emerged impeccably dressed, cocktail glasses appeared, music drifted through the lounges and the ship seemed to take on a different energy altogether. Everywhere I looked, people were settling into their own version of the perfect evening.

Some nights, I joined them.

There were performances to watch, live music to enjoy and plenty of lively corners of the ship where conversations stretched well into the night. I even found myself spending more time than expected in the gaming area, where a quick visit had a habit of turning into a much longer one.

Other evenings were considerably quieter.

I'd retreat to my balcony, settle into a chair and watch the Arabian Sea disappear into darkness. Sometimes I would read. Sometimes I would simply stare at the horizon. And occasionally, I happily binge-watched a few

episodes of White Lotus on the tablet provided in the suite.

What I loved most was that Crystal Serenity never seemed to dictate how a guest should spend their time. Whether you wanted a lively evening filled with entertainment or a quiet night alone with the sea, both felt equally rewarding.

That, perhaps, is one of the greatest luxuries of all.

Why Crystal Serenity Stays With You

Luxury is often associated with having more—more space, more choice, more indulgence.

What struck me most about Crystal Serenity was something else entirely.

It was the rare opportunity to slow down. For five days, the usual rush of daily life gave way to leisurely breakfasts, unhurried afternoons and evenings that unfolded exactly as I wanted them to. Somewhere between Colombo and Mumbai, the sea quietly reset my sense of time.

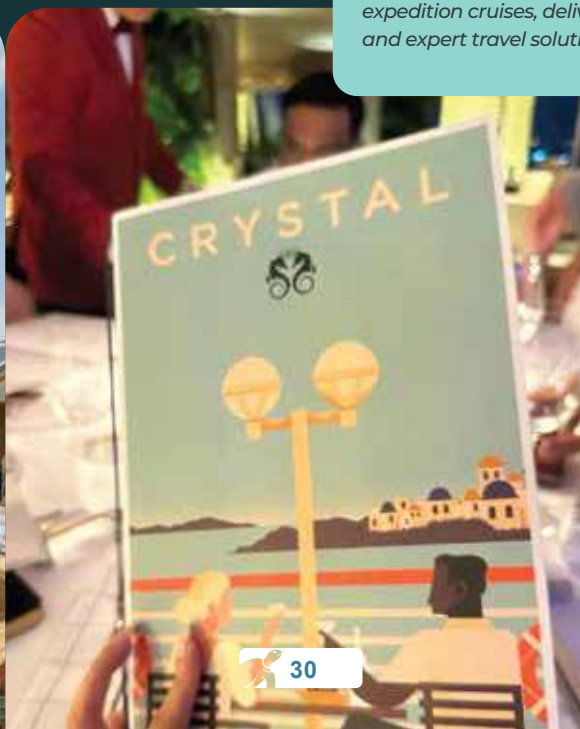
And perhaps that's why the voyage has stayed with me long after disembarkation.

Not because of any single meal, suite or show, but because it reminded me how good it feels to occasionally do less.

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FAIRMONT UDAIPUR PALACE

Of Panthers, Pichwais and Quiet Luxury

Somewhere between rose-petal welcomes, leisurely breakfasts, restorative spa treatments and endless views of the Aravallis, I remembered what it feels like to slow down.

- *Bharti Sharma*

After months spent chasing flights, deadlines and destinations, I arrived at Fairmont Udaipur Palace craving something that had become surprisingly elusive: stillness. Perched amidst the Aravalli Hills, the 18 - acre palace is impossible to ignore. Yet beyond the architecture and scale, what struck me most was how naturally it encouraged guests to slow down. To linger over breakfast. To admire the artwork. To take the longer route back to their room simply because the view was worth it. By the time I stepped through its grand gates, greeted with rose petals and warm smiles, I realised I had found exactly the pause I was looking for.

A Royal Arrival

Some hotels begin at the reception desk. Fairmont Udaipur Palace begins long before that. The arrival feels carefully choreographed. Guests are escorted by jeep through the expansive estate, and with every turn another layer of the property reveals itself. Long driveways, elegant courtyards and striking architectural details create a growing sense of anticipation before you've even stepped out of the vehicle. Then comes the welcome. A shower of rose petals, warm smiles and traditional greetings set the tone for what would become a stay deeply rooted in Rajasthan's culture and hospitality. In Indian tradition, rose petals symbolise honour, celebration and good fortune, and while I have experienced countless luxury hotel arrivals over the years, few have felt quite as memorable. Before I had even reached the lobby, I had already begun to understand what makes this property so special.

The Lobby That Stops You in Your Tracks

Most hotel lobbies are designed to facilitate movement. This one encourages pause. Perched on the seventh floor, Fairmont Udaipur Palace's lobby is less an arrival space and more a statement of intent, a thoughtful



celebration of Rajasthan's artistic heritage interpreted through a contemporary lens.

I must have spent the first ten minutes looking up instead of ahead. Welcome drink in hand, an inventive blend infused with Kachnar flower, local herbs and an optional splash of gin, served in beautifully crafted metal goblets- I found myself repeatedly distracted by the surroundings. Every time I thought I had taken in the space, another detail demanded my attention. What impressed me most was that the art never felt decorative. It felt intentional.

The magnificent Pichwai paintings, including works by local artist Shahid Parvez, lend the space the atmosphere of a living gallery. Equally striking are the panthers that appear throughout the property- in sculptures, motifs and subtle design details. As the

hotel's emblem, they pay homage to the wildlife of the Aravalli region while quietly tying the palace's design narrative together.

The entire property feels less like a hotel and more like a carefully curated celebration of Rajasthan's art, culture and craftsmanship.

A Palace Designed to Be Explored

With 327 rooms and suites spread across 18 acres, Fairmont Udaipur Palace is one of Rajasthan's largest luxury resorts.

Yet despite its scale, the experience never feels overwhelming. My room quickly became a sanctuary. Thoughtfully designed with subtle nods to Rajasthan's royal heritage, it balanced comfort and elegance effortlessly. Large windows framed uninterrupted views of the Aravalli Hills, while handcrafted details sat comfortably alongside contemporary luxury.

Every morning began the same way. I would pull back the curtains and pause.

The view demanded it. What elevated the experience even further was the service. My butler seemed to anticipate requests before they were voiced, ensuring everything ran seamlessly while making the stay feel genuinely personal rather than merely efficient.

Not that I spent much time inside. By the second day, I had abandoned any attempt to navigate the property confidently. Every stroll revealed another courtyard, hidden walkway, water feature or view I had somehow missed before. The golf carts quickly became less of a luxury and more of a necessity.

Breakfasts Worth Celebrating

At Fairmont Udaipur Palace, breakfast is not merely the first meal of the day.

It is an event. Whether enjoyed in the comfort of your room, by the pool or amidst nature at Bamboo Forest, each setting brings its own charm. The spread is equally impressive, featuring everything from Indian favourites and local Rajasthani specialities to continental classics, fresh juices, baked goods and made-to-order dishes.

I enjoyed breakfast in several corners of the property, but Bamboo Forest was undoubtedly the standout.

Reached via a short trek through the estate, it feels part breakfast venue, part picnic and part escape. The journey itself became part of the experience, thanks to Prashant, who accompanied us along the trail and seemed to know every scenic vantage point along the way. Whether it was a sweeping view of the valley or the perfect angle for a photograph, he always knew exactly where to stop.

Sitting there with hot chai, fresh juice and a perfectly made sandwich while overlooking the valley, I found myself lingering far longer than intended.

The silence alone was worth the walk.



A Spa That Knew What I Needed Before I Did

If there was one place that perfectly captured why I needed this stay, it was the spa.

By the time I arrived, weeks of flights, hotel rooms and events had left me carrying the kind of fatigue that no amount of coffee could fix.

Fortunately, Charu Lal, Director of Spa & Wellness, recognised this immediately.

Rather than simply recommending a treatment, she took the time to understand what I actually needed. Within minutes, our conversation had shifted from spa preferences to stress levels, travel schedules and the reality that sometimes the body needs a reset before the mind can catch up.

What followed was less a treatment and more a reset.

I walked in carrying months of accumulated tension.

I floated out.

Cocktails, Conversations and Culinary Highlights

While the food at Fairmont Udaipur Palace was consistently excellent, it was the bar that first won me over.

Dahaad is the kind of place that immediately transports you to another era. Rich textures, moody lighting, vintage - inspired interiors and impeccable detailing create an atmosphere that feels both intimate and theatrical.

The cocktails were equally memorable.

Rather than simply taking our order, the bartender guided us through some of the bar's signature creations and the stories behind them. Each cocktail felt thoughtfully crafted, balancing local influences with contemporary mixology, while the inventive names added a playful touch to the experience.

One culinary highlight was a traditional Rajasthani thali curated by the chef. More than just a meal, it was a celebration of the region's rich culinary heritage served one dish at a time.

Needless to say, moderation was not part of the experience.



Beyond the Room Key

One afternoon, I found myself enjoying high tea against a backdrop of rolling hills while traditional Rajasthani

performances unfolded nearby. Between the music, the setting and the golden afternoon light, it felt less like a hotel activity and more like a scene from a film.

Elsewhere, I discovered a striking stepwell that looked as though it belonged in a historical epic rather than a contemporary resort. The pool offered equally compelling distractions, with panoramic views that made swimming feel entirely optional.

The palace seemed full of these moments.

Friendly horses wandering into view. Children disappearing happily into dedicated play areas. Guests perfecting their pickleball game. Wedding planners walking through courtyards with the unmistakable excitement of people who had found the perfect venue.

And honestly, I understood their enthusiasm.

With its dramatic architecture, sweeping vistas and seemingly endless collection of terraces, lawns and courtyards, the property feels almost purpose - built for celebration.

The remarkable part is that I am certain I missed half of what was on offer.

The Verdict

Fairmont Udaipur Palace has the architecture, the views, the restaurants and the amenities expected of a luxury resort.

Yet what stayed with me long after checkout was something less tangible.

Somewhere between the rose-petal welcome, breakfasts at Bamboo Forest, evenings at Dahaad and countless moments spent wandering through the palace, I found a rhythm that had been missing for months.

And in a world that constantly demands more of our time and attention, that may be the greatest luxury of all.

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AAHAASA

Sri Lanka's soulful escape



Nath Rankothge

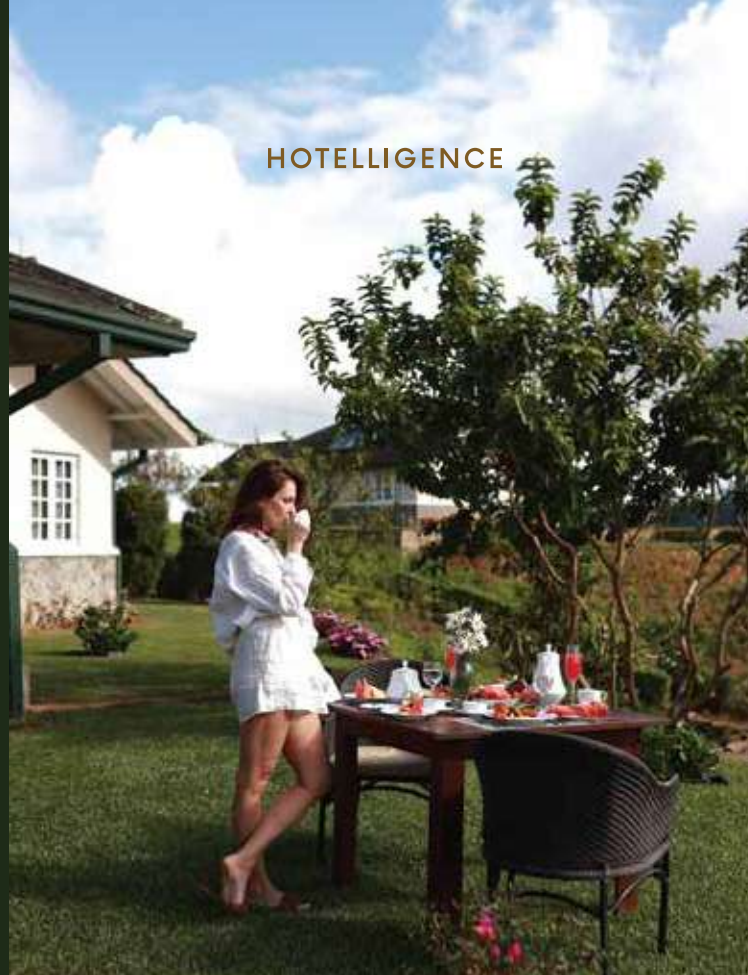
Luxury today is finding a quiet moment above the clouds, waking up to the rhythm of the ocean, or sitting amidst endless tea hills where time feels beautiful. Nath Rankothge, Founder, AAHAASA Collection shares the idea behind creating a luxury escape for travellers amidst the chaos.

- Tripti Jain

Across Sri Lanka's mountains, coastlines, and lush landscapes, AAHAASA Collection is crafting experiences that invite travellers to slow down, breathe deeply, and reconnect with themselves through nature, wellness, and soulful hospitality. Founded by architect and visionary entrepreneur Nath Rankothge, the boutique luxury collection brings together immersive sanctuaries that celebrate Sri Lanka's emotional warmth, cultural richness, and transformative beauty through deeply personal journeys shaped by place, people, and purpose. AAHAASA Collection brings together a trilogy of distinctive sanctuaries across the country. Aarunya Nature Resort offers restorative mountain serenity, Aavya Cove Villas captures the stillness of the ocean, and Aadya Tea Bungalows immerses guests within the timeless rhythm of Sri Lanka's tea country. Each property delivers its own emotional experience while remaining connected through a shared philosophy rooted in wellness, nature, architecture, and soulful hospitality.

Born between mountains, tea & sea

The story of the brand began with Aarunya Nature Resort, a project rooted in family, architecture, and a desire to reconnect with Sri Lanka's landscapes and spirit. "AAHAASA emerged organically through the journey of creating Aarunya Nature Resort, which began as a personal architectural and family vision rooted in Sri Lanka's landscapes, culture, and sense of peace," says Nath. Having worked internationally across London, New York, Shanghai, Sydney, and Colombo, Nath was exposed to luxury hospitality developments around the world. Those experiences inspired him to create a Sri Lankan brand capable of delivering global luxury standards while remaining emotionally authentic and deeply connected to its surroundings. Speaking more about the core purpose behind the brand he shares, "Aarunya was an



opportunity for my father Lal Rankothge, an environmentalist, and I to give back to Sri Lanka after spending over three decades overseas."

The evolution of the collection unfolded naturally. During the completion of the Sol Sanctuary at Aarunya, Nath discovered the property that would later become Aavya Cove Villas. He reminisces and shares, "Through a single photograph I immediately recognised how perfectly it complemented

Aarunya, sea and mountains, reflection and awakening. Soon after came Aadya Tea Bungalows, completing the collection's tea, spice, and sea trilogy."

Luxury with a soulful pulse

At the collection, design and aesthetics form only the beginning of the guest experience. The deeper philosophy revolves around transformation, stillness, and emotional elevation. Nath explains about the origin and says, "The name 'AAHAASA,' meaning

'to the sky' in Sinhala, reflects our belief that travel done right has the ability to elevate the mind, body, and spirit. This philosophy is woven into every aspect of the collection through what we call it as the 'Aa...' philosophy. Aarambha focuses on rituals of arrival, Aarogya centres around holistic wellbeing, Aahaara celebrates culinary storytelling, and Aaloka creates spaces of gathering and warmth. Each property interprets these ideas differently according to its own landscape and atmosphere."

Furthermore he elaborates, "Aarunya became a place of awakening where architecture, wellness, cuisine, and nature converge to create moments of stillness, clarity, and reconnection. I recall a guest who regularly stayed at Aman properties around the world telling me, after staying at Aarunya, that the experience felt more personal and emotionally authentic."

Where travellers find stillness

India continues to emerge as one of the most significant markets, particularly among travellers seeking immersive and restorative experiences close to home. During a recent visit to India, Nath observed the extraordinary pace and energy shaping cities such as Mumbai and Delhi. Alongside that dynamics, he also recognised the growing importance of calm, privacy, and emotional respite for modern Indian travellers.

Nath points a key point and explains, "In increasingly fast-paced urban environments, peace and seclusion have become rare luxuries. This evolving traveller mindset aligns naturally with our philosophy. Every sanctuary is designed to slow time down and create meaningful moments of reconnection."

He adds, "Whether it is wellness journeys overlooking the ocean at Aavya, tea - country reflection at Aadya, or restorative mountain serenity at Aarunya, every experience is designed around privacy, authenticity, emotional warmth, and meaningful immersion in nature."



Curating journeys

AAHAASA is steadily strengthening its engagement with the Indian travel trade through deeper collaboration with luxury travel specialists and boutique experiential travel planners.

Nath says, "India has always been an important market for Aarunya, with many returning guests across couples, families, and celebratory travel. Recent meetings with leading travel professionals have opened opportunities across wellness retreats, honeymoons, intergenerational family holidays, private group experiences, and destination celebrations. Our latest properties, Aavya and Aadya, significantly expand the breadth of experiences we can offer Indian travellers."

One of the newest initiatives is the AAHAASA Island Concierge, a curated collection of itineraries connecting the collection's tea, spice, and sea sanctuaries into one seamless Sri Lankan journey.

"These itineraries allow guests to experience Sri Lanka through a coherent philosophy of wellness, nature, culture, and emotional discovery. Our focus remains on creating journeys that naturally foster long-term relationships with both travellers and trade partners," Nath says.

Every sanctuary tells its own story

For many boutique hospitality brands, growth often comes at the cost of individuality. They approach expansion differently by ensuring each property retains its own emotional identity and architectural character.

Speaking more about the same Nath shares, "Individuality is fundamental to our philosophy. Aavya delivers a serene ocean-inspired wellness experience, Aadya reflects the contemplative calm of tea country, and Aarunya offers mountain spirituality and restorative stillness. What unites the collection is a shared emotional philosophy centred around transformation, authenticity, wellbeing, and quiet refinement."

Future properties will continue embracing this approach,

introducing new wellness and cultural experiences while remaining deeply rooted within local identity and landscape. There goal is to create soulful sanctuaries connected through philosophy and emotion rather than formula.

The rise of transformative travel

As luxury travel continues evolving toward more intentional and emotionally enriching experiences, AAHAASA Collection is creating a new benchmark for boutique hospitality in Sri Lanka. Through architecture, wellness, nature, and deeply personalised experiences, the collection offers travellers something increasingly rare in today's world: stillness, connection, and emotional clarity. Nath concludes, "At its heart, our collection is for travellers seeking calm, restoration, and perspective. The greatest luxury today is the ability to truly disconnect from the world and reconnect with oneself. In an era where travellers are searching for meaning as much as movement, AAHAASA stands as a sanctuary where luxury feels intimate, transformative, and deeply alive."



THE SPIRIT OF DIPPEMESS

For three weeks each year, Frankfurt swaps business suits for rollercoasters, food stalls, and family fun.

- Naina Nath

On my visit to Frankfurt, Germany, I discovered a side of the city that rarely appears in brochures and business itineraries. Known globally as Germany's financial capital, Frankfurt is more often associated with skyscrapers, trade fairs, and commerce than carnival rides and fairground games. Yet every spring, the city reveals a very different personality through Dippemess, Frankfurt's oldest and largest folk festival.

A long tradition

Dating back to the 14th century, Dippemess began as a pottery market before evolving into the large-scale festival it is today. Held at Frankfurt's Ratsweg fairgrounds, the spring edition typically runs for around three weeks and remains one of the city's most anticipated annual events. The atmosphere hits you immediately. Bright lights flash across the skyline, music fills the air, and the scent of sizzling bratwurst, garlic mushrooms, sweet pastries, and candy drifts

between the stalls. Everywhere you look, people are laughing, eating, and making their way between rides and attractions.

Adrenaline included

The rides are undoubtedly one of the festival's biggest attractions. Giant Ferris wheels rise above the grounds, while rollercoasters, drop towers, swing rides, bumper cars, and spinning attractions keep adrenaline levels high throughout the day. As evening approaches, the ground transforms into a sea of colour, with hundreds of lights illuminating the skyline. Even for those who prefer to keep their feet firmly on the ground, the energy alone is worth experiencing.

Fun for all ages

What makes Dippemess particularly enjoyable is the mix of people it attracts. Teenagers gather around the biggest thrill

rides, families spend entire afternoons exploring the attractions together, and older visitors return for the nostalgia of a tradition many have grown up with. Despite its size, Dippemess never feels like a tourist attraction. It remains a local event at heart, supporting local businesses and creating a warmth that many larger festivals often lack.

Beyond the rollercoasters

There is far more to Dippemess than its thrill rides. While the rides grab most of the attention, they are only part of the experience. Some visitors spend hours testing their skills at carnival games, while others simply enjoy wandering between the stalls, snacks in hand, soaking up the atmosphere.

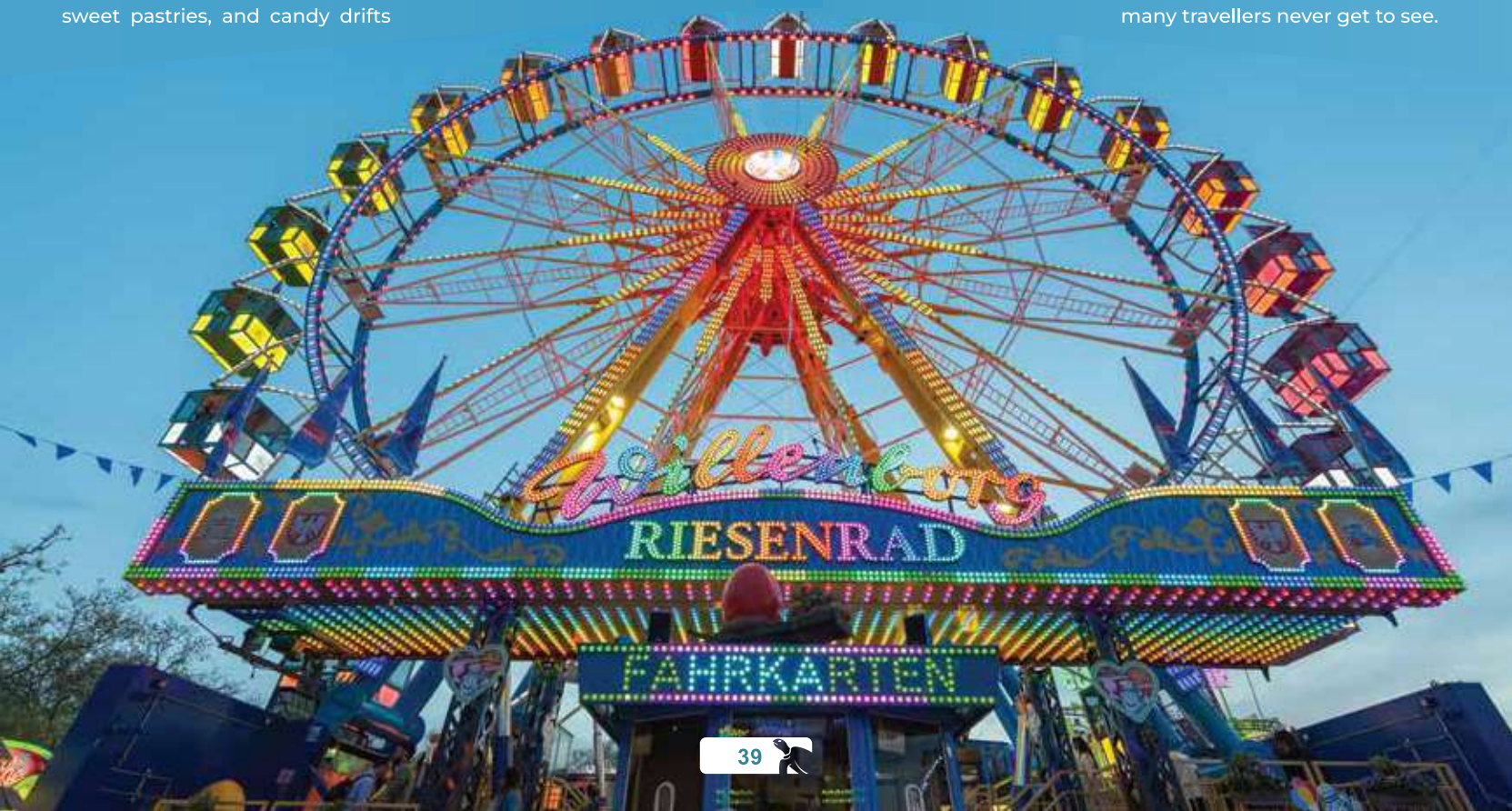
A bite of Dippemess

Traditional German sausages,

giant pretzels, langos, local apple wine, and freshly poured beer can be found throughout the festival. Between the rides and attractions, it was often the food stalls that caught my attention most. With hundreds of options to choose from, almost every walk between attractions somehow turned into a snack stop.

Another side of Frankfurt

What stayed with me most was seeing Frankfurt let its hair down. For a few weeks each year, the city trades its business-minded image for something far more playful, colourful, and community-driven. Families laugh together, friends gather around food stalls, and bright lights fill the night sky. If you happen to find yourself in Frankfurt during Dippemess, make time for it. More than just a festival, it offers a glimpse into a colourful side of the city that many travellers never get to see.



SUN SIYAM

Islands of emotion and warmth



Deepak Booneady

The Maldives has inspired travellers with its turquoise lagoons, white sands, and overwater luxury. Deepak Booneady, Group CEO, Sun Siyam shares how they are redefining the Maldives through storytelling.

- Tripti Jain



Sun Siyam is shaping a new chapter for the destination by bringing together authentic Maldivian warmth, immersive experiences, and a portfolio that speaks to every kind of traveller. From intimate island escapes to expansive lifestyle resorts, the group has evolved into one of the region's most dynamic hospitality brands.

Rooted in a legacy that began with a modest travel agency, Sun Siyam today stands as a reflection of entrepreneurial ambition blended with cultural authenticity. Every property within the portfolio carries a distinct personality, allowing travellers to discover the Maldives through different lenses. Families, honeymooners, wellness seekers, luxury enthusiasts, and MICE travellers each find experiences designed with precision and emotion. The transformation of the brand continues to elevate the way guests engage with island hospitality, creating journeys that feel personal, memorable, and deeply connected to the spirit of the Maldives.

Living the Maldivian story

The essence of Sun Siyam lies far beyond visual luxury. The brand's strength comes from its heritage and the emotional connection it creates with guests. Speaking on the same lines Deepak shares, "If Sun Siyam were a guest, I would describe it as someone who grew up on a remote island with very little, but who had an enormous amount of love, pride, and a fierce sense of purpose. They are warm, unpretentious, deeply rooted, and ambitious at the same time." That philosophy flows across the group's properties, where luxury is paired with genuine hospitality and thoughtful storytelling. Sun Siyam's transformation reflects a natural evolution of the brand, moving from trusted hospitality foundations into a more refined and elevated space.

Deepak explains this journey through a striking analogy. "I sometimes use the analogy of moving from Toyota to Lexus. Toyota represents reliability, consistency, and a strong service

foundation. Lexus is the next evolution: refined, sophisticated, and more detailed in every experience, yet built on that same engineering foundation of trust. This balance between authenticity and sophistication has become the defining character of our growing global identity."

Rise of experiential Maldives

One of the group's most defining milestones arrived with the launch of Siyam World, a resort that transformed perceptions of what the Maldives could offer. For years, the destination was largely associated with honeymooners and secluded island retreats. Siyam World introduced a new dimension by creating a vibrant, activity-led island experience designed for families, groups, and corporate travellers.

Highlighting more about the same Deepak shares, "Siyam World introduced an entirely new concept to the Maldives. A tropical playground packed with experiences that include horse riding, a water park, jet cars, go-karting, and entertainment operating on a 24-hour all-inclusive model."

The resort quickly became a powerful conversation starter within the travel trade. Large-scale MICE movements, multi-generational family holidays, and

experiential travel packages suddenly found a perfect fit in the Maldives. Its seamless accessibility and operational scale created fresh opportunities for travel planners across India and international markets. The property's achievement of a Guinness World Record for the most people snorkelling simultaneously at a single venue further strengthened its global appeal.

For every kind of traveller

The strength of Sun Siyam lies in the diversity of its collections. Each resort has been carefully positioned to serve a distinct traveller mindset while maintaining the group's signature Maldivian warmth. Properties such as Sun Siyam Olhuveli and Siyam World appeal strongly to families and lifestyle travellers seeking entertainment, dining variety, and activity-driven holidays. Boutique resorts within the Privé Collection deliver intimate and personalised escapes ideal for couples and honeymooners.

Deepak shares more about the collection and explains, "Our Luxury Collection, including Sun Siyam Iru Fushi, delivers a more refined and elevated experience, combining spacious villas, wellness, and premium service for discerning travellers. The Indian

market continues to respond enthusiastically to experiences that combine luxury with flexibility and strong culinary offerings. Multi-generational travel has emerged as one of the most significant shifts shaping the region's outbound tourism landscape."

Travel trade at the heart of the journey

Sun Siyam's relationship with the travel trade carries a unique depth because the company itself began as a travel agency. That understanding has helped shape a collaborative and partnership-driven approach over the decades.

"Agents today are looking for a story they can sell, not a rate sheet. They want training, digital content, and a brand they can be proud to represent. We continue to invest heavily in strengthening these partnerships through immersive brand experiences, roadshows, dedicated India representation, familiarisation trips, and co-branded initiatives," shares Deepak.

This growing collaboration with the trade also supports the company's long-term expansion plans. Four new properties are already in the pipeline, promising even more opportunities for agents and repeat travellers.

The future glows bright

As Sun Siyam moves into its next phase of growth, the brand continues to build experiences that go beyond accommodation and become lifelong memories. New signature experiences, upgraded villas, immersive cultural programmes, and enhanced wellness offerings are shaping a future rooted in innovation and emotional connection.

Deepak concludes, "For us, keeping the trade engaged means constantly evolving the guest experience while staying ahead of changing travel trends. Our vision remains deeply connected to the Maldives itself. Every new concept, every resort enhancement, and every guest interaction is crafted to celebrate the spirit of the islands in a modern and globally relevant way."



HOTELLIGENCE

CHIVA SOM LEGACY



Vaipanya Kongkwanyuen

30 years of wellness

As wellness travel evolves, Chiva-Som remains focused on personalised, preventive, and holistic wellbeing. Vaipanya Kongkwanyuen, General Manager of Chiva-Som International Health Resort, shares how the property continues to evolve.

-Naina Nath

Set along the peaceful coastline of Hua Hin, Thailand's 'original' beach resort destination, Chiva-Som has spent more than three decades establishing itself as one of the world's leading wellness retreats.

Wellness evolved

According to Vaipanya, the biggest shift in recent years has been the growing global focus on health and longevity. While wellness travel was once considered a niche segment, it has become an increasingly important part of how people choose to travel. He explains, "People are more concerned about their health and wellness individually."

Beyond medical

While many new wellness brands focus heavily on medical diagnostics and treatments, Chiva-Som continues to position itself differently. Vaipanya shares, "If people are unwell, they would see a specialist or a doctor. Instead our focus is on prevention, rehabilitation, education, and creating lasting lifestyle changes that guests can continue long after returning home."

Personal journeys

One of the resort's defining features is its personalised approach. Every guest begins their stay with a consultation and is assigned a dedicated wellness advisor. "Drawing from six wellness modalities, including fitness, physiotherapy, spa, holistic therapies, nutrition, and aesthetic beauty, advisors create tailored programmes designed around individual goals, preferences, and abilities. Programmes are reviewed regularly throughout the stay and adjusted when needed," says Vaipanya.

Time to reset

While guests can stay for as little as three nights, the average stay is

seven nights. Vaipanya believes this allows guests sufficient time to disconnect from daily routines and fully engage with the experience. He says, "Wellness is not a destination. It's a gift of time. The philosophy reflects our emphasis on sustainable habits rather than quick fixes."

Nature matters

Sustainability remains deeply embedded in the resort's identity. One of its most significant initiatives is the restoration of a mangrove ecosystem in Hua Hin. Vaipanya shares, "What began with fewer than a thousand mangrove trees has grown into a thriving habitat of approximately 15,000 trees. We also supports community access through a boardwalk and regularly introduces guests to both the mangrove project and its organic gardens."

India in focus

India continues to be one of Chiva-Som's most important source markets and ranks among its top five globally. Vaipanya elaborates, "Many Indian guests return repeatedly, often bringing friends and family with them. The property has also expanded its wellness offering for younger travellers, recently lowering its minimum guest age from 16 to 14 and introducing programmes designed to help teenagers better understand fitness and wellbeing."

Lasting impact

As wellness travel continues to grow, Chiva-Som remains committed to education, transformation, and helping guests build healthier lifestyles. Vaipanya concludes, "Invest in yourself before your body asks for it. After all, wellness is not about reaching a destination. It is about creating habits that support a healthier life for years to come."



ELIVAAS

Elevating the art of stay



Ritwik Khare

As travellers increasingly seek privacy, exclusivity, and personalised experiences, luxury villa stays are fast emerging as a preferred alternative to traditional hotels. Ritwik Khare, Founder & CEO of Elivaas shares how they blend the comfort of private homes with the service standards of a five-star hotel.

- Sudipta Saha

Elivaas was founded with a vision to offer travellers the warmth and privacy of a luxury villa without compromising on service, convenience, or hospitality. In this candid conversation, Ritwik shares the journey behind the brand, the role of technology, the future of luxury travel, and the philosophy that continues to drive Elivaas forward.

The inspiration behind Elivaas

Reflecting on the origins of Elivaas, Ritwik explains how a personal experience as a homeowner ultimately sparked the idea for a hospitality brand that bridges the gap between luxury hotels and private villas. Ritwik mentions, "The idea for Elivaas was born from a personal experience. In 2021, I purchased a home in Goa and, having previously served as COO at MakeMyTrip, I already had a strong understanding of the alternate accommodation and second - home market. However, owning a property in a different city gave me first - hand insight into the challenges homeowners face - from maintenance and monitoring to overall peace of mind. The need for a reliable solution became increasingly evident."

He further adds, "At the same time, I began closely studying evolving traveller preferences. Post - pandemic, the demand for private villas and holiday homes grew significantly. Through conversations with travel agents and consumers, one recurring theme stood out: travellers loved the space, privacy, and flexibility of a home but were unwilling to compromise on the service standards of a five-star hotel. Bridging this gap and bringing together the best of both worlds became the inspiration behind Elivaas. Our vision is simple yet

ambitious - to deliver the service excellence of a five-star hotel within the comfort and exclusivity of a private home. By combining exceptional homes, premium real estate, and world-class hospitality, Elivaas aims to redefine the luxury stay experience for modern travellers."

Technology at the 'Heart of Hospitality'

Technology is often cited as one of Elivaas' biggest differentiators. Ritwik believes it is the foundation that enables the brand to deliver consistent hospitality standards across a rapidly expanding portfolio of luxury villas. "At Elivaas, we are essentially in the business of creating happiness and memories. When guests choose to spend a few days with us, our objective is simple - to ensure they return with experiences and memories they cherish long after the trip has ended. Technology plays a critical role in making that possible. Delivering five-star hospitality within a private four - bedroom villa is a complex challenge, particularly when you are operating across hundreds of locations. As we scale to thousands of villas across diverse destinations, technology becomes the backbone of operational excellence," states Ritwik. On the same line, he says, "Our approach is centred around three key pillars - supply, operations, and demand. For homeowners, we have developed a proprietary app that offers complete visibility into their property, including maintenance updates, guest reviews, occupancy status, and operational activities. It gives homeowners peace of mind, regardless of

where they are located."

On the operations side, the caretaker is the most important stakeholder for them. Much like delivery partners define the customer experience in the food delivery industry, caretakers shape the guest experience in the villa segment. To support them, they have built a dedicated housekeeper app that streamlines training, attendance, task management, audits, and performance monitoring.

"For the demand side, we introduced India's first AI-powered travel agent platform for alternate accommodation. The system enables travel partners to instantly identify the most suitable properties based on specific guest requirements, making the booking process far more efficient. Beyond this, we leverage AI-powered chatbots, automated verification systems, guest-support tools, and backend automation to enhance every stage of the customer journey. Technology today powers virtually every aspect of our ecosystem - from homeowners and housekeepers to travel partners and guests - and remains a key enabler of our growth strategy," expresses Ritwik.

From one villa to over 700 properties

Despite being a relatively young brand, Elivaas has witnessed remarkable growth, expanding its footprint across some of India's most sought-after leisure destinations. Ritwik highlights, "We are still a very young company, just two and a half years old, but our vision is ambitious. Our next milestone is to expand to 5,000 villas over the

coming years. The foundation of our growth has been people, execution, and technology. Together, these create trust, which is critical in our business. Homeowners trust us with their properties because of our structured and technology - driven approach. Today, we work with over 1,600 travel agents, while more than 300 actively generate bookings every month. Equally important has been our focus on customer experience. With over 41,000 online reviews and 94 per cent five - star ratings, word-of-mouth continues to be one of our strongest growth drivers."

Why the 'Travel Trade' matters

While many brands focus primarily on direct consumer engagement, Elivaas has consciously invested in building strong relationships with the travel trade, recognising the important role advisors play in shaping traveller decisions. Adding to it, Ritwik says, "This industry is built on expertise and trust. When travellers choose a villa over a five-star hotel, they often have questions around safety, hygiene, comfort, location, and service standards. Travel advisors play a crucial role in building that confidence. We recognised early on that partnering with travel agents would be instrumental in growing the category. Today, we have a dedicated 20 - member B2B team covering the country and continue to invest significantly in travel trade relationships, education, and support. We believe trusted advisors will remain an integral part of the travel ecosystem for years to come."



Where royalty breathes through every corridor



Nitin Sud

In the heart of Jodhpur, where sandstone facades glow under the desert sun and stories linger in every courtyard, Ajit Bhawan continues to stand as a living chapter of Rajasthan's regal past. Nitin Sud, Cluster General Manager, Ajit Bhawan & Rawla Narlai shares a glimpse into the royal luxury hospitality.

-Tripti Jain



Tucked away in the blue city of Jodhpur, the heritage hotel carries the charm of an old royal residence that has gracefully opened itself to travellers from around the world. The property began its journey in 1971 with just five rooms inside the palace premises. Over the years, it evolved into one of Rajasthan's most recognised heritage stays, growing steadily without losing the warmth and soul that made it special in the first place.

Together with Rawla Narlai, the group today presents two very different sides of Rajasthan.

One celebrates the grandeur and colour of royal Jodhpur, while the other slows life down amidst village landscapes, temple bells, and the calm of the Aravalli hills.

The legacy lives on

Long before heritage hospitality became a luxury trend in India, Ajit Bhawan had already opened its doors to travellers looking for a more personal and cultural experience. Speaking on the same lines Nitin shares, "The idea behind Ajit Bhawan was always deeply personal.

The family wanted guests to experience the warmth and grace of royal hospitality in a way that felt natural and intimate. What started with five rooms slowly became a much larger hospitality brand, though the essence of the place has remained untouched. Guests still walk into an atmosphere that feels warm, welcoming, and emotionally connected to the family's history and legacy."

The hotel's architecture beautifully preserves its original character. Spacious suites filled with vintage accents, lush gardens, old stone pathways, and charming courtyards create an atmosphere that feels elegant without trying too hard.

Luxury that feels personal

Luxury travellers today are looking beyond polished rooms and extravagant interiors. They seek experiences that feel authentic and emotionally meaningful.

"Guests want to connect with destinations on a deeper level. They are looking for stories, culture, emotions, and moments that stay with them long after the trip ends. Ajit Bhawan naturally fits into this new way of

travelling because the property has always focused on human connections and personalised hospitality rather than simply offering luxury in the conventional sense," says Nitin.

International travellers continue to form a strong part of the guest mix, especially from Europe and the United States. Domestic luxury travel has also grown significantly over the last few years, particularly in the wedding and celebrations segment.

He adds, "Destination weddings have become an important part of our business over the years. We host around 14 to 17 weddings annually, primarily between October and March. Guests usually prefer complete buyouts because they want privacy and exclusivity during such intimate celebrations. The beauty of the property lies in how naturally it transforms into a royal wedding setting with candlelit courtyards, heritage architecture, local music, and traditional Rajasthani experiences."

The quiet magic of Rawla Narlai

If Ajit Bhawan captures the spirit of royal Rajasthan, Rawla Narlai introduces travellers to its quieter and more soulful side. Set amidst the Aravalli hills, the property was once a hunting lodge and today stands as one of Rajasthan's most immersive experiential stays.

Life moves slowly here. Mornings begin with temple bells. Afternoons unfold under ancient banyan trees. Evenings glow softly beside stepwells lit with hundreds of candles.

Highlighting more about the property Nitin shares, "Rawla Narlai is a completely different experience altogether. The property allows travellers to disconnect from routine life and reconnect with nature, culture, and simplicity. Guests wake up to the sound of temple bells, spend time exploring villages and temples, dine beside lakes or stepwells, and experience Rajasthan in a very peaceful and authentic way."

The surrounding region is home to more than 300 temples, adding a spiritual energy to the destination. Experiences such as village walks, leopard safaris, stepwell dinners, local interactions, and traditional

cooking sessions allow guests to discover Rajasthan in a deeply personal way.

Furthermore, he shares about the most popular experience at the property and says, "We illuminate sections of the property with thousands of candles, and the atmosphere becomes incredibly magical in the evenings. Guests often tell us that the experience feels timeless because there is a certain stillness and beauty around the property once the candles are lit."

Keeping heritage alive

Across Rajasthan, many heritage families are finding meaningful ways to preserve their ancestral homes through hospitality. Ajit Bhawan and Rawla Narlai remain deeply committed to that philosophy. The group actively supports local communities through employment and social initiatives. A large part of the staff comes from nearby villages and towns, creating a hospitality environment that feels naturally warm and rooted in local culture.

Nitin elaborates, "Nearly 80 to 85 percent of our workforce comes from local communities, and that has always been a very conscious decision by the family. Local people bring authenticity into the guest experience because this culture is naturally a part of who they are.

Guests connect very differently when they interact with people who

genuinely belong to the region and understand its traditions, stories, and way of life."

The family's community initiatives through the Maharaj Swaroop Singh Ji Charitable Trust continue to support healthcare, sanitation, village development, schools, and other local welfare activities. Sustainability also reflects through smaller everyday practices across the properties. Kitchen gardens, local sourcing, reduced dependency on processed procurement, and community engagement quietly shape the operational philosophy.

Taking Rajasthan to the world

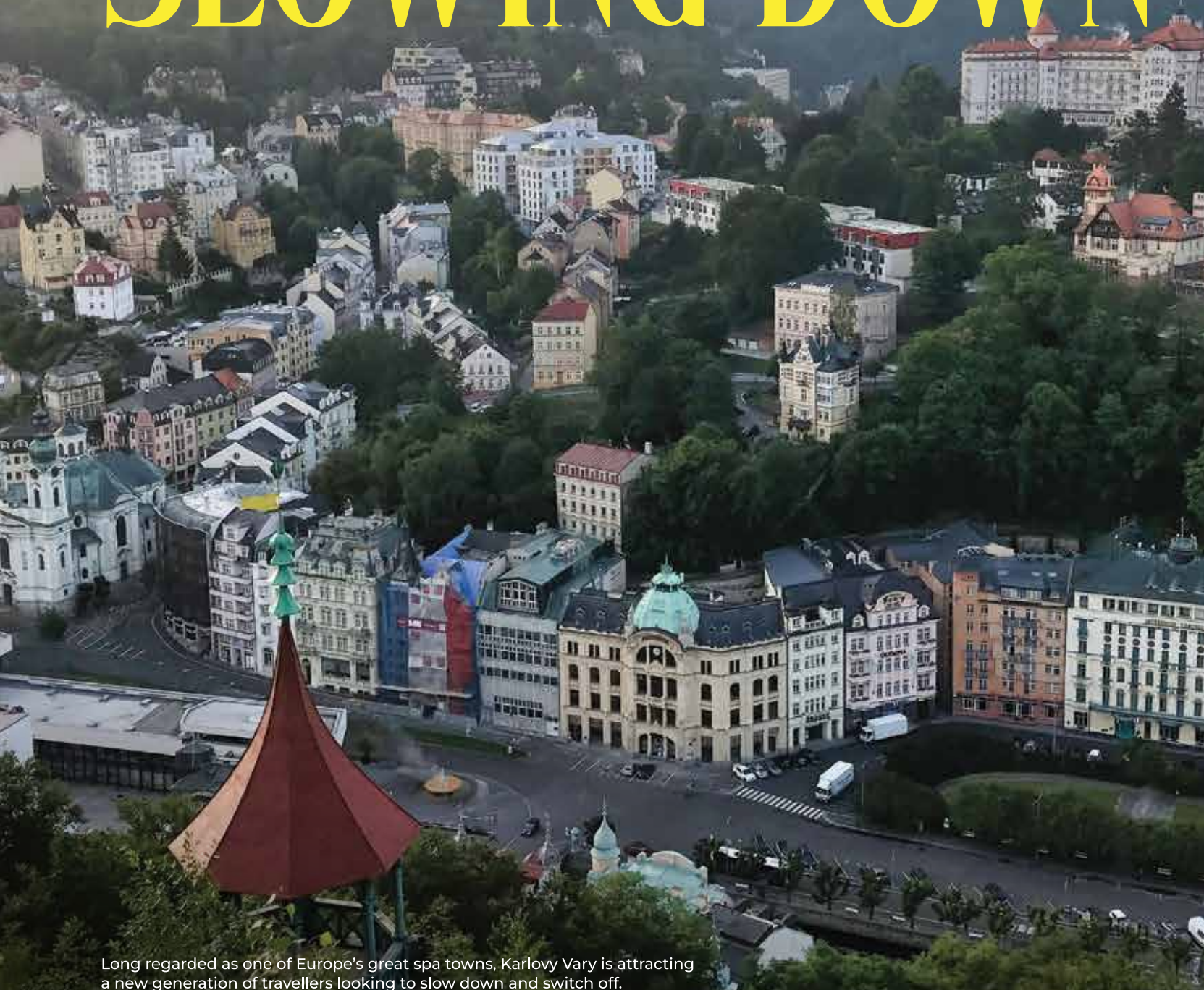
Ajit Bhawan is now entering a new phase of global visibility with a stronger focus on international collaborations and luxury travel partnerships.

Nitin shares about the future plans of the group and explains, "Our vision is to strengthen our presence in the international luxury travel space while continuing to preserve the individuality of the properties. We are participating in carefully selected global trade platforms and exploring partnerships that align with our philosophy of experiential and heritage-led luxury. The idea is to introduce Ajit Bhawan and Rawla Narlai to travellers who truly value authenticity and meaningful hospitality experiences."



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

THE ART OF SLOWING DOWN



Long regarded as one of Europe's great spa towns, Karlovy Vary is attracting a new generation of travellers looking to slow down and switch off.

-Naina Nath



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS



For centuries, travellers have come to Karlovy Vary to do something increasingly difficult in modern life: slow down. Known for its thermal springs, elegant colonnades, and UNESCO-listed spa culture, the town has traditionally attracted wellness seekers, honeymooners, and those looking to recharge. Today, a younger generation is beginning to discover the appeal that has drawn visitors here for centuries: a refreshingly slower pace of life.

Drink the city

You cannot visit Karlovy Vary without encountering its famous mineral springs. The town is home to 13 main drinking springs and dozens of additional thermal sources, each with a different mineral composition and temperature. Visitors wander along the historic spa promenades carrying distinctive porcelain spa cups, sipping mineral water as generations of travellers have done before them. Long associated with digestive health and wellbeing, the springs remain central to the

town's spa traditions. It may feel unusual at first, but before long, the ritual becomes part of the experience.

Life slows down

Karlovy Vary is not a destination packed with late-night distractions. In fact, that is exactly the point. Shops begin closing early, restaurants wind down, and by 11pm much of the town is asleep. Miss your dinner reservation and you may find yourself learning very quickly just how seriously the town takes its beauty sleep.

Beyond the springs

While wellness remains the main attraction, there is plenty to explore beyond the spa culture. Visitors can take the funicular to the Diana Observation Tower for panoramic views, wander through the town's colourful streets, explore boutique shops, or sample the locally produced Becherovka herbal liqueur. The surrounding forests also offer walking trails that provide a different perspective on

the region's natural beauty.

Crystal craftsmanship

One of the town's most famous attractions is Moser Glassworks. Founded in 1857, the factory continues to produce luxury crystal entirely by hand. Visitors can watch glassblowers at work, tour the museum, and browse the showroom, where everything from small keepsakes to statement pieces is available for purchase. Souvenirs start from just a few euros, while collectors can easily spend hundreds or even thousands on Moser's intricate crystal creations.

Cinema in the summer

Every July, Karlovy Vary transforms as it hosts the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, the most prestigious film festival in Central and Eastern Europe. For a few days, filmmakers, international stars, industry professionals, and cinema enthusiasts descend on the town, creating an atmosphere that feels remarkably glamorous

and quite different from the quiet spa destination visitors encounter throughout the rest of the year.

An easy escape

Karlovy Vary works particularly well as a two or three-night extension from Prague. The drive takes approximately two hours from Prague, making it easily accessible for travellers wanting to combine the energy of the capital with something more restorative.

It is also compact enough to explore largely on foot, allowing visitors to move between hotels, springs, restaurants, and attractions with ease. An unmissable destination with a world of offerings!

Karlovy Vary is not the place for packed itineraries and late nights. It is a place to sip mineral water from a porcelain cup, take an evening stroll beneath the colonnades, and embrace a slower rhythm. Sometimes, that is exactly the kind of holiday travellers do not realise they need. After all, few destinations make doing less feel quite so rewarding.

59TH KARLOVY VARY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL JULY 4-12 2025



THE THERMAL EXPERIENCE

From healing springs and panoramic pools to film festival glamour, Spa Hotel Thermal remains one of the Czech Republic's most iconic stays. Markeeta Straědalovaě, Director of Sales & Marketing, Spa Hotel Thermal shares more about the brand.

- Naina Nath

Located in the UNESCO-listed spa town of Karlovy Vary, Spa Hotel Thermal has spent nearly five decades establishing itself as one of the Czech Republic's most recognisable hospitality landmarks. Rising above the Teplá River with its unmistakable Brutalist silhouette, the hotel combines wellness, architecture, gastronomy, and culture under one roof.

An architectural icon

Opened in 1977 and designed by celebrated architects Věra and Vladimír Machonin, Thermal remains one of the country's most important examples of Brutalist architecture.

Recent renovations have modernised the property while preserving its distinctive character. Markeeta says, "The hotel has a very strong identity. Guests appreciate that they are staying somewhere truly unique. Today, the hotel offers 273 rooms and suites while continuing to serve as a landmark for visitors arriving in Karlovy Vary."

The best outlook

Few hotel rooms in Karlovy Vary offer views quite like these. From the upper floors, guests can look across the spa town's colourful rooftops and surrounding hills.

Recently renovated rooms and suites pair contemporary comfort with elements of the hotel's original design. "Our guests are looking for comfort, but they also want to experience the destination. The views from the rooms help create that connection," says Markeeta.

Wellness at heart While Thermal may be known for its architecture, wellness remains at the core of the experience. The hotel operates its own balneotherapy centre, offering more than 80 treatments rooted in Karlovy Vary's centuries-old spa traditions. Guests can enjoy hydrotherapy, massages, thermal baths, rehabilitation programmes, and wellness treatments, alongside heated outdoor pools, a sauna world, indoor wellness facilities, and a mineral pool filled with 100 per cent mineral water. Markeeta explains, "We offer both traditional spa treatment and modern wellness stays. Some guests come for medical reasons, while others simply want to relax and recharge."

Everything under one roof

Beyond its wellness facilities, the hotel offers beauty treatments, fitness services, bike rentals, and extensive meeting spaces. It is also



Markeeta Straědalovaě

one of the Czech Republic's leading MICE venues, with facilities ranging from intimate salons to the Grand Hall, which accommodates more than 1,000 guests.

Lights, camera, thermal!

Thermal's connection to the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival is impossible to ignore. Since opening in 1977, the hotel has served as the festival's central venue, hosting screenings, press conferences, and headline events. Over the years, stars including Leonardo DiCaprio, Helen Mirren, Richard Gere, and Scarlett Johansson have walked the red carpet outside its doors.

A destination in itself

Thermal's greatest strength is not any one facility, but the way everything comes together.

A morning exploring Karlovy Vary can be followed by a thermal pool, a wellness treatment, and an evening meal without ever feeling rushed. It is an experience perfectly suited to a destination built around rest and rejuvenation. You may come for the spa, but leave understanding why travellers have been returning to Karlovy Vary for generations.



When the Rains *Awaken* the Heart of India:

MONSOON JOURNEYS THROUGH MADHYA PRADEH

As the first monsoon clouds drift over central India, Madhya Pradesh undergoes a transformation that is nothing short of poetic. The plains turn emerald, Sal forests breathe again, rivers swell with purpose, and waterfalls—silent for months—return in full voice. The countryside reveals its most romantic self, inviting travelers not to rush, but to linger, listen, and feel the space, solitude and a sense of quiet discovery.

Roads Washed in Romance

Enjoy the serenity of the landscape with compelling road journeys. The Mandu–Maheshwar stretch is particularly evocative in the monsoon. Rain-softened medieval palaces, cloud-wrapped ramparts, and the fuller, calmer flow of the Narmada create moments of reflection and beauty. Heritage walks in light rain transform stone corridors into contemplative spaces.

Into the Satpuras: Where Mist Meets Memory

From Bhopal, pass by the Narmada’s gentle rhythm before climbing into the Satpura forests. In Narmadapuram, misty ghats and slow mornings by the river set the tone. Pachmarhi, revived by rain, reveals flowing waterfalls and cloud-kissed viewpoints at Dhoopgarh. While staying at MP Tourism’s Amaltas, a resort run entirely by women, enjoy forest trails that celebrate silence as much as scenery.

Hidden Valleys and Quiet Escapes

Further south, Tamia’s winding roads, drifting clouds, and dramatic valley viewpoints reward those seeking stillness. Patakot, a secluded horseshoe-shaped valley, comes alive with trickling waterfalls, lush medicinal flora, and guided cultural encounters.

Wildlife in the Rain: A Rare Perspective

For those willing to travel just off the calendar’s edge, the monsoon ushers in a rare opportunity for wildlife photography in the buffer zones of Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, and Satpura – with forest paths unmarked by crowds, quieter viewpoints and diffused light. Immerse yourself in guided nature walks that reveal fresh pugmarks on soft earth, deer grazing in meadows washed clean by showers and butterfly populations that explore in colour.

Slow Travel. Deep Connection

Cycling trails around forest fringes and villages allow travelers to move at nature’s pace, accompanied by the scent of wet leaves and wildflowers. Importantly, these experiences are designed by Madhya Pradesh Tourism with safety and conservation in mind—expert naturalists, defined trails, and regulated access ensure that both visitor and habitat are respected.



Jahaz Mahal, Mandu



Ahilya Fort, Maheshwar



Sabarwani Homestay, Pachmari



Tamia Hill Station

Flavours of the Monsoon

Monsoon journeys in Madhya Pradesh are more about intimacy than mere spectacle - about clouds drifting through forests, peacocks calling at dusk, and landscapes rediscovered in their most honest form. Soak it in with a dash of local cuisine - steaming chai, bhutte ka kees, poha, dal bafla and Bhopali gosht korma — best when savoured against a rain-cooled backdrop.

To travel through the heart of India when it rains is to witness renewal in real time. It is to drive through mist and emerge into sunlight, to hear forests hum with life, to watch ancient stones glisten under rain. And to bring back memories that last a lifetime.

WITH THANDA, FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 brought us to Durban, but the journey through the wildlife-rich plains of Zululand and the dramatic peaks of Drakensberg was a memorable one. And boy, do I have a story for you.

- *Naina Nath*

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Nearly a decade ago, I visited South Africa for the first time and left a piece of my heart behind. Returning years later to some of the same landscapes brought back memories I hadn't thought about in years. From safari mornings and mountain views to moments I'll never forget, this journey reminded me exactly why I fell in love with the country in the first place. From tracking the Big Five to soaring above the mountains, KwaZulu - Natal delivered one unforgettable moment after another.

To begin with

Before heading into the wilderness, there was Durban. Staying at the Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani overlooking North Beach meant waking up to views of surfers riding waves along the Golden Mile. Between meetings and networking sessions at Indaba, there was time to sample Durban's famous bunny chow, browse the colourful stalls of Victoria Street Market, and enjoy excellent meals, including dinner at Durban Country Club's Grimaldi's. Home to one of the largest populations of people of Indian origin outside India.

The Thanda experience

A few hours north of Durban, the landscape began to change. Roads narrowed, cities disappeared, and before long, we arrived at Thanda Safari. Spread across thousands of hectares of protected wilderness, the luxury private game reserve offers elegant suites, exclusive-use villas, exceptional dining, a tranquil spa, and service that somehow manages to be both polished and deeply personal. Between game drives, there was time to relax by the private plunge pool, enjoy a massage, sip on a glass of Amarula, and simply listen to the sounds of the bush. The occasional monkey wandering through the lodge grounds seemed to be the only interruption to an otherwise peaceful setting.

Into the wild

Of course, the real stars of Thanda are the animals. Early morning wake-up calls quickly became worthwhile the moment we rolled out into the reserve. Accompanied by expert guides and spotters, we were fortunate enough to see the entire Big Five. Along the way came giraffes, zebras, cheetahs, antelope, warthogs, and countless bird species. Every drive felt different. Some delivered dramatic sightings, others offered quieter moments, but each one reminded me why safaris remain one of the most extraordinary travel experiences on the planet.

A change of scenery

Leaving Zululand behind, we traded wildlife for mountains. The drive to Drakensberg revealed a completely different side of South Africa. Rolling grasslands gradually gave way to dramatic peaks that seemed to rise endlessly into the sky. Often referred to as the country's mountain kingdom, the region is home to hiking trails, waterfalls, scenic viewpoints, and a wide range of accommodation options, from family-friendly resorts to luxury mountain retreats. After days spent scanning the horizon for wildlife, it was refreshing to simply admire the landscape itself.

Mountain retreat

For the next leg of the journey, we checked into Cathedral Peak Hotel, one of Drakensberg's most iconic properties. Surrounded by towering peaks, open green spaces, and some truly spectacular scenery, it felt like the perfect contrast to the safari experience we had just left behind. Mornings began with mountain views stretching in every direction, while evenings offered a chance to slow down, breathe in the crisp air, and appreciate the incredible setting. If Thanda was all about the wildlife, Cathedral Peak was all about the landscape.

Above the peaks

Seeing Drakensberg from the ground is impressive. Seeing it from the air is something else entirely. A motorised glider flight from the Berg Air Lifestyle Centre provided a bird's-eye view of endless mountain ridges, deep valleys, and scenery that seemed to stretch forever. Smooth, quiet, and surprisingly relaxing, it was easily one of the highlights of the trip. Back on solid ground, Scootours brought the adrenaline back, with a fast-paced descent through mountain trails and some of the most spectacular views in the region.

South Africa still has the same magic it did all those years ago. The landscapes remain breathtaking, the wildlife remains unforgettable, and the people remain among the warmest you'll meet anywhere in the world. In a span of a few days, we moved from a vibrant coastal city to the heart of the bush and then high into the mountains, a reminder of just how diverse this country truly is.

And somewhere between the lion sightings, the mountain views, and the long drives through KwaZulu-Natal, I realised I had finally found that missing piece again. It had been waiting for me all along, right here in the wild heart of South Africa.



SOUTH AFRICA'S NEXT CHAPTER



Patricia de Lille

With India firmly established as a priority market, Patricia de Lille, South Africa's Minister of Tourism, is focused on strengthening the country's appeal among Indian travellers.

India first

South Africa has set ambitious goals for the Indian market in the years ahead. Having welcomed 69,680 Indian visitors in 2025 and already recording 12,912 arrivals between January and March 2026, the destination believes there is significant room for growth. "We have set ourselves a target for India for 2026 to increase our numbers to at least 100,000 because it is possible," says Minister Patricia de Lille. Achieving that target will require stronger engagement and improved accessibility.

Visa breakthrough (ETA)

One of the most significant developments is the introduction of South Africa's new Electronic Travel Authorisation system. Patricia de Lille explains, "One of the stumbling blocks that prevented Indian travellers from coming used to be the visa. The new digital system is designed to simplify travel, but awareness remains a challenge. We have to communicate the benefits of the new visa system effectively enough in India."

Smarter marketing

The Minister believes South Africa must rethink how it promotes itself in India. Traditional roadshows alone are no longer enough. She says, "Digital is the way to go big time in India. Targeted campaigns aimed at different traveller segments, from luxury and families to millennials and Gen Z audiences. There is a strong potential in working more closely with digital platforms, influencers, and celebrities to improve visibility."

Beyond safaris

While wildlife remains one of South Africa's strongest attractions, Patricia de Lille, believes the destination has much more to offer. "We cannot rely on safaris and leisure alone to tell South Africa's story. Beyond wildlife, South Africa offers more than 200 heritage sites, including UNESCO-recognised attractions, cultural experiences, and lesser-known 'hidden gems' such as, Dinosaur Interpretation Centre,

home to the world's oldest known dinosaur embryo. Since opening, the attraction has welcomed more than 95,000 visitors in just six months," she says.

The cricket opportunity

With South Africa set to co-host the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in October and November 2027, the Minister sees a major opportunity to attract Indian travellers. She shares, "Indians love cricket, and we want to create travel packages that encourage visitors to extend their stay and experience more of South Africa. Infrastructure upgrades are also underway in host cities."

Building connections

Connectivity remains one of the industry's biggest challenges. While discussions continue with airlines regarding direct services, aircraft shortages have slowed progress. She says, "Both Air India and IndiGo are ready, but what is impacting us is the global shortage of aircraft. We need to promote India in South Africa so that we can fill up those seats when they go back to India."

ATI 2026

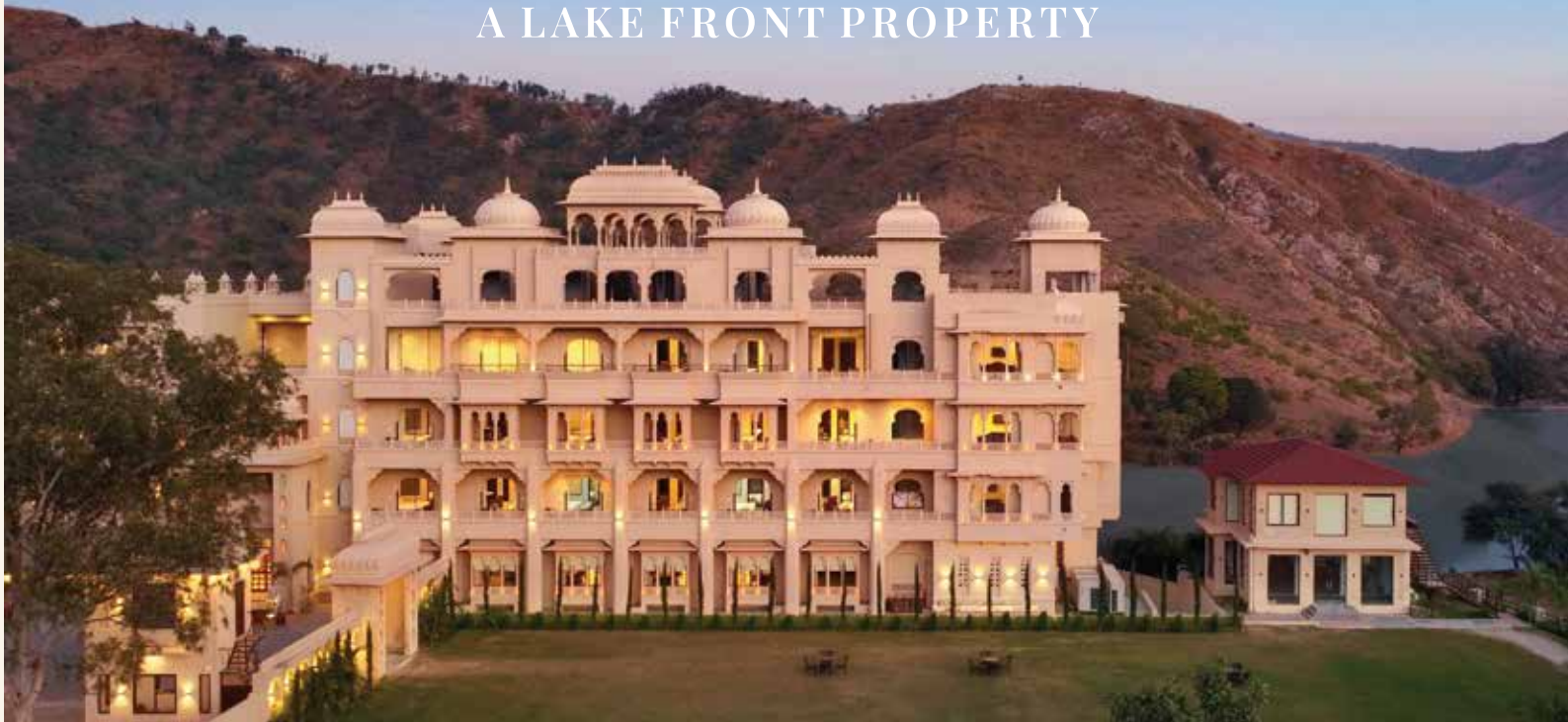
Africa's Travel Indaba remains one of the continent's leading tourism trade shows. Looking ahead, Minister Patricia de Lille, is keen to build on that success. She says, "There's going to be a complete revamp if you come back next year. The aim is to keep the event evolving through new ideas, stronger partnerships, and industry collaboration."

Travellers notes

- Pack warm layers, nights can get surprisingly cold in both the game reserves and the Drakensberg.
- Carry some South African Rand from India to avoid higher exchange rates at airports and hotels.
- Get a local Vodacom SIM card for reliable connectivity, even in remote areas.
- South Africa is easy to navigate, but standard travel precautions are recommended.
- Tipping is customary and appreciated across the tourism industry.
- There are no direct flights to Durban; Emirates via Dubai is among the most convenient options.

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Biarritz

BALANCED
HEADINESS

*Laid back and elegant, Biarritz begins
where the Atlantic Ocean ends, amidst the
rolling waves once braved by bold whalers.*

- Inder Raj Ahluwalia

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Picture a silver necklace of sand along the blue of the ocean...! Picture paradise...! There's a history here. It was the whales and not the elegant ladies from the 19th Century, who were the first sea-bathers in Biarritz. In the Middle Ages, this was merely a tiny fishing port. But then came a great change that made sea-bathing a craze. The Empress Eugenie thrust the town into the limelight, making it Europe's most fashionable resort. The crowned heads of the entire continent converged here to throw themselves into the waves and into an endless round of glittering balls, sophisticated soirees and romantic promenades. In their wake followed the stars of the arts and high society who played hard on the green grass of the golf courses and the green baize of the gaming tables. It was these fine people with their fine taste for a celebrated and whirlwind existence that made Biarritz what it is today - a unique, highly animated resort.

Victor Hugo was among the first personalities to be enchanted by the fishing harbour in the Basque country in 1843, and voiced his concern that Biarritz would become 'fashionable' and that 'this day will come soon'. Well, it came soon enough, and the results were starkly visible.

Napoleon III built a summer residence - the 'Villa Eugene' - for his wife the Countess of Montijo, and the couple came every year to enjoy the climate and the sea's invigorating effects. Following their example, many Royals

discovered the town. The list included the Kings of Wurtemberg, Belgium and Portugal, and also Russian, Polish and Rumanian Princes, English Lords and Spanish aristocracy.

The 'Second Empire' give way to the Belle Epoque, and the Royals of the 1st Republic spent lazy days in Biarritz. Stylish and flamboyant houses were built. Sadi Carnot, Poincare, Clemenceau, Alexandre Dumas, Zola and Jules Ferry met around the beaches. It was the English who gave the town its first horse shows and first golf course, the 'Golf du Phare'.

So much for the past! Today, Biarritz seduces with its beaches, big waves, and year-round mild weather, and is all about special sights, images and feelings. Breath-taking like the Rocher de la Vierge and picturesque like the Port des Pecheurs. Daydreaming about the opulence of the Roaring Twenties, a Basque song carried on the breeze from a church balcony, the wonderful flavours of a seafood platter, the performance of a surfer, dancer, a txistu player or a pelotari, are some prominent images.

Stop by at boutiques displaying Basque cloths, berets and colourful espadrilles. In the Basque villages, there are feasts of hams, ewe's cheese and black cherry jam. Have some tapas in a bar or bodega. Try some squid.

A source of food in the early days, a source of pleasure today, the Atlantic has always contributed. The beaches aren't long, but they're very good. And the rocks in the sea lend a rare beauty that ensnares visitors.



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

The town is renowned for its seawater therapy that includes sea bathing in warm waters, mud and seaweed baths, tonifying showers, seawater steam baths and water physiotherapy. Thalassotherapy is the order of the day, with several centres offering treatments and care programmes. The Thermes Marins offer a la carte programmes, with a swimming pool, sauna, UV treatments and a beauty salon.

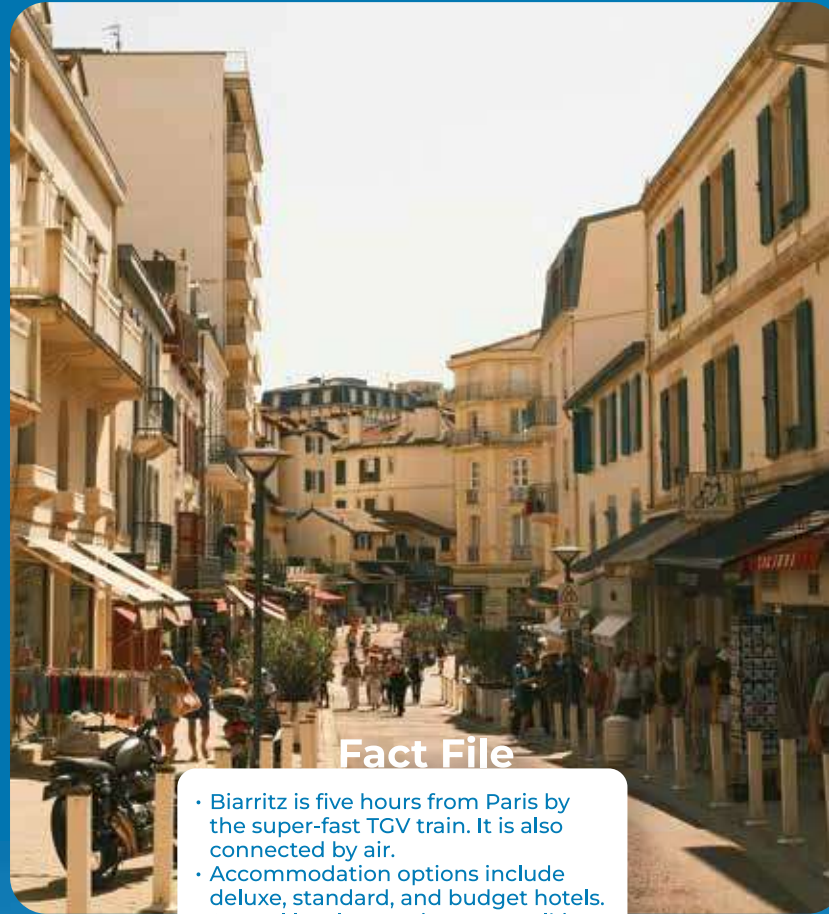
Dotting the town are neo - Renaissance chateaux, Andalusian haciendas, Swiss chalets, English villas, and Basque houses. Elegant buildings open onto the Atlantic. A remarkable architectural heritage has been preserved in the Casino Municipal, the Espace Bellevue and the Gare du Midi. Some offer a gala dinner by the waterside.

I walked. Tamarisks and hydrangeas line the streets that take one past a variety of buildings that form joyous, unexpected juxtapositions. The Russian Church stands just behind the Hotel du Palace which stands just by the sea. My walk took me past an Orthodox Church, a Byzantine - inspired chapel, and a medieval villa (the Roche Ronde). Thanks to ideal weather conditions and exceptional courses, golf is another great local attraction. Heritage of the English legacy, the town has one of Europe's oldest and largest courses, the 'Golf du Phare' created in 1888. Exactly a hundred years later saw the opening of the Libarritz - Bidart International Training Centre, the only complex of its kind in Europe. Within a fifteen-mile radius of town are ten other greens, which have firmly inserted it in golfing legend.

Scriptwriter Peter Viertel came to town from America in 1957 with his wife Deborah Kerr to shoot his film 'The Sun also rises'. He brought surf boards with him to practice surfing, and started a craze here. The Large Beach became one of Europe's best surfing spots and now attracts international surfers. Today, the Biarritz Surf Festival is held in end-July on the 'Basques Beach'. And then there is Basque Pelota, especially Cesta Punta, a stronger version of pelota.

Watching over things is the lighthouse - the beginning of the Basque coast. At its foot, one gets a stunning view of the town on the left, and on the right, of the sea (and Spain in the distance). There can't possibly be a lovelier spot in which to take photos and have coffee.

Basque country...! Indeed...! Red, white and green! Red like the dancers' berets or pimentos from Espelette! Green like the valley where the black-headed sheep graze. White like the houses clinging to the hillsides. Over the blue of the ocean in Biarritz, the Basque Country flies its colours. They tell of a land whose origins are lost in the mists of time, and of the Basques themselves whose very language is such a mystery. Throughout the year there are parades and festivals. The 'Fetes Musicales' see a good line-up. And there is the 'Franco-Iberian and Latin American Theatre Festival'. 'Le Temps d'Aimer' is devoted to dance. And there are notable congress centres, such as the Municipal Casino, the Bellevue Centre, the Palais des Festivals - Gare du Midi. Rejoice...!



Fact File

- Biarritz is five hours from Paris by the super-fast TGV train. It is also connected by air.
- Accommodation options include deluxe, standard, and budget hotels.
- Several local attractions are walking distance from one another. But a vehicle helps see the town's environs and surrounding country.
- Eating out is a delight, with a vast cuisine choice, including dozens of local specialties.
- This is a year-round destination.



About the author

Inder Raj Ahluwalia is a world - renowned international travel journalist & author. His professional profile features awards from several European and Asian countries, among others.



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Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority concludes multi-city roadshow in India

MTPA hosts a multi-city trade roadshow across three dynamic outbound markets, Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Indore, on 2, 3, and 5 June 2026 respectively. The roadshow comprised a delegation of 26 representatives from across the Mauritius Tourism ecosystem, including DMCs, luxury hotels and resorts, experience and activity providers, and airlines, offering direct access to a broad cross-section of the island's tourism offering in a single forum. The event's success was underlined by the presence of over 300 total attendees, inclusive of travel agents, tour operators, and travel trade media.



Virginia Tourism Corporation hosts India Sales Mission 2026

Virginia tourism partners and representatives from the Virginia Tourism Corporation conducts a five-day tourism marketing mission in India from June 1 to June 5, 2026. Managing Director of Global Markets for Virginia Tourism Corporation, Heidi Johannesen accompanied by representatives from Visit Fairfax, Luray Caverns, Visit Williamsburg and the Virginia Tourism Corporation lead the mission. The delegation, led by Sartha Global Marketing LLP, visited Mumbai and New Delhi.





Yorker Holidays launches Cruise Booking Portal for travel agents

Yorker Holidays Services Pvt. Ltd. announces the launch of the Yorker Cruise Portal, a digital platform designed to simplify and streamline cruise bookings for travel agents. The portal was inaugurated by Mr. Naresh Rawal, Senior Vice President – Sales & Marketing, StarDream Cruises, at an event attended by industry partners. This long-awaited initiative is a result of digital transformation in the travel industry, addressing a crucial need in the market. As a platform, it allows agents to navigate bookings effortlessly, offering real-time updates and simplified processes for leading cruise brands.



Uzbekistan Showcases new opportunities for Indian travel trade

The Uzbekistan Tourism Committee, in collaboration with the Embassy of Uzbekistan in India, successfully hosts an exclusive roadshow, bringing together leading destination management companies, tourism stakeholders, and members of the Indian travel trade. The evening highlighted Uzbekistan's rich cultural heritage, diverse tourism offerings, and growing connectivity through airline partners Uzbekistan Airways and Centrum Air. The event provided a valuable networking platform, fostering stronger tourism ties between India and Uzbekistan while opening new avenues for collaboration and business growth in the outbound travel segment.



APPOINTMENTS



Seychelles Tourism Board

The Office of the President announces the appointment of Vesna Rakić as Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Tourism Board (STB), effective 15 May 2026. Ms. Rakić brings more than 30 years of experience in the tourism industry, with a distinguished career spanning destination marketing, tourism product development, industry partnerships, entrepreneurship, and tourism systems strengthening in Seychelles.



Aamaghati Wildlife Resort Ranthambore

Black Rock Hotels & Resorts has appointed Pranav Bharadwaj as General Manager of Aamagha Wildlife Resort Ranthambore. With nearly three decades of hospitality experience, he has held leadership roles with IHG Hotels & Resorts, Leela Kempinski Hotels, Marriott International and Starwood Hotels & Resorts, with expertise spanning hotel operations, commercial strategy, revenue optimisation and guest experience management.



Indeva Hotels and Resorts

INDEVA Hotels & Resorts announces the appointment of renowned tourism and hospitality professional Vineet Gopal as Head – Corporate Relations & Asset Management at its Greater Noida headquarters. With over 26 years of extensive experience across tourism, hospitality, luxury travel, MICE, destination marketing, government liaisoning, and international business development, Vineet Gopal brings deep industry expertise and strategic global relationships to the organisation.



IATO Andhra Pradesh Chapter

The IATO Executive Committee appoints Mr K. Vijay Mohan as Co-Chairman for the IATO Andhra Pradesh Chapter with effect from 8th May 2026. Mr Vijay Mohan has been associated with the tourism industry since 1998. With his vast experience of 28 years, IATO expects his valuable contribution towards strengthening the association and expanding its membership base in Andhra Pradesh.

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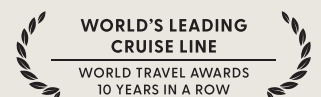
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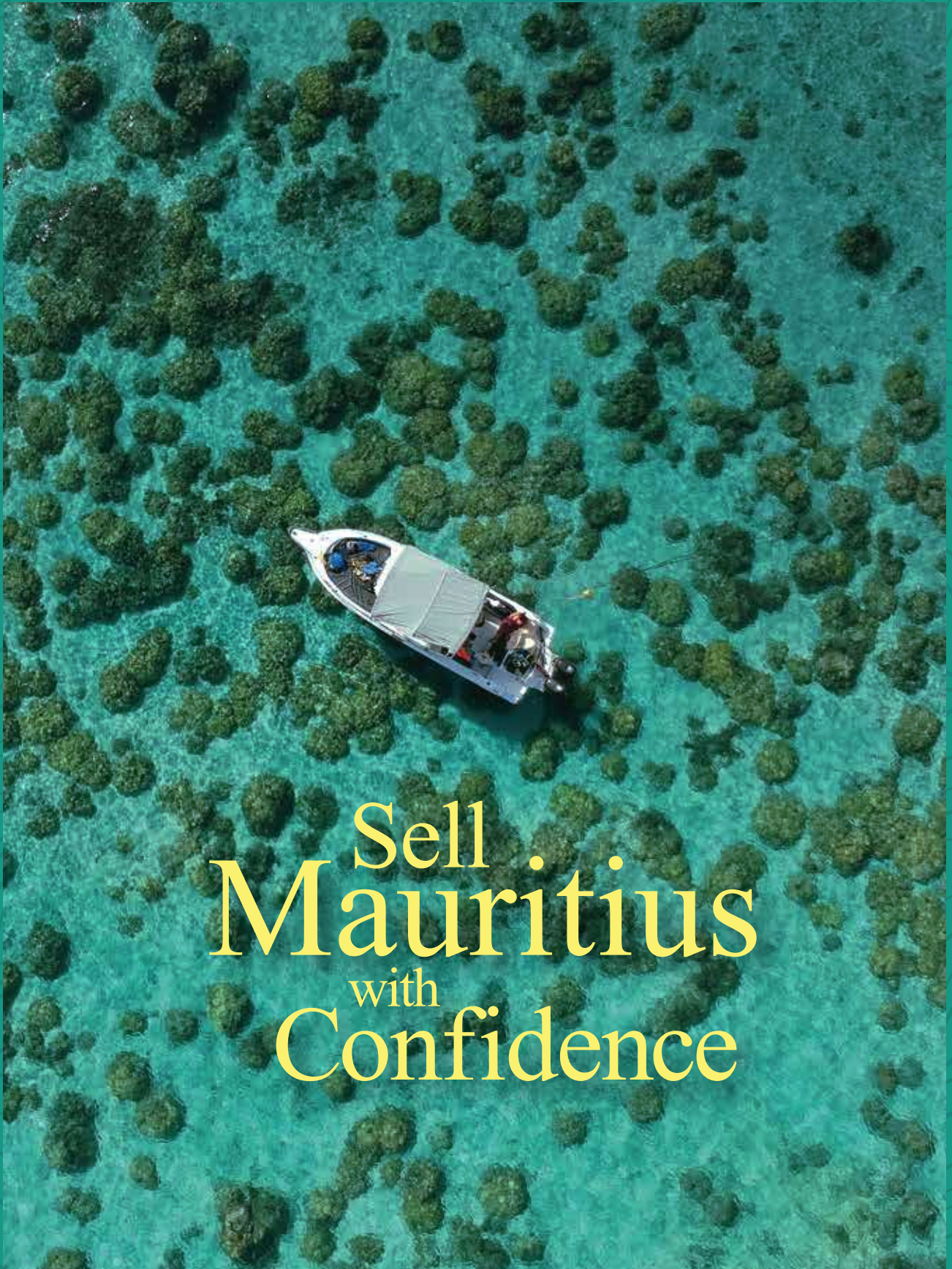


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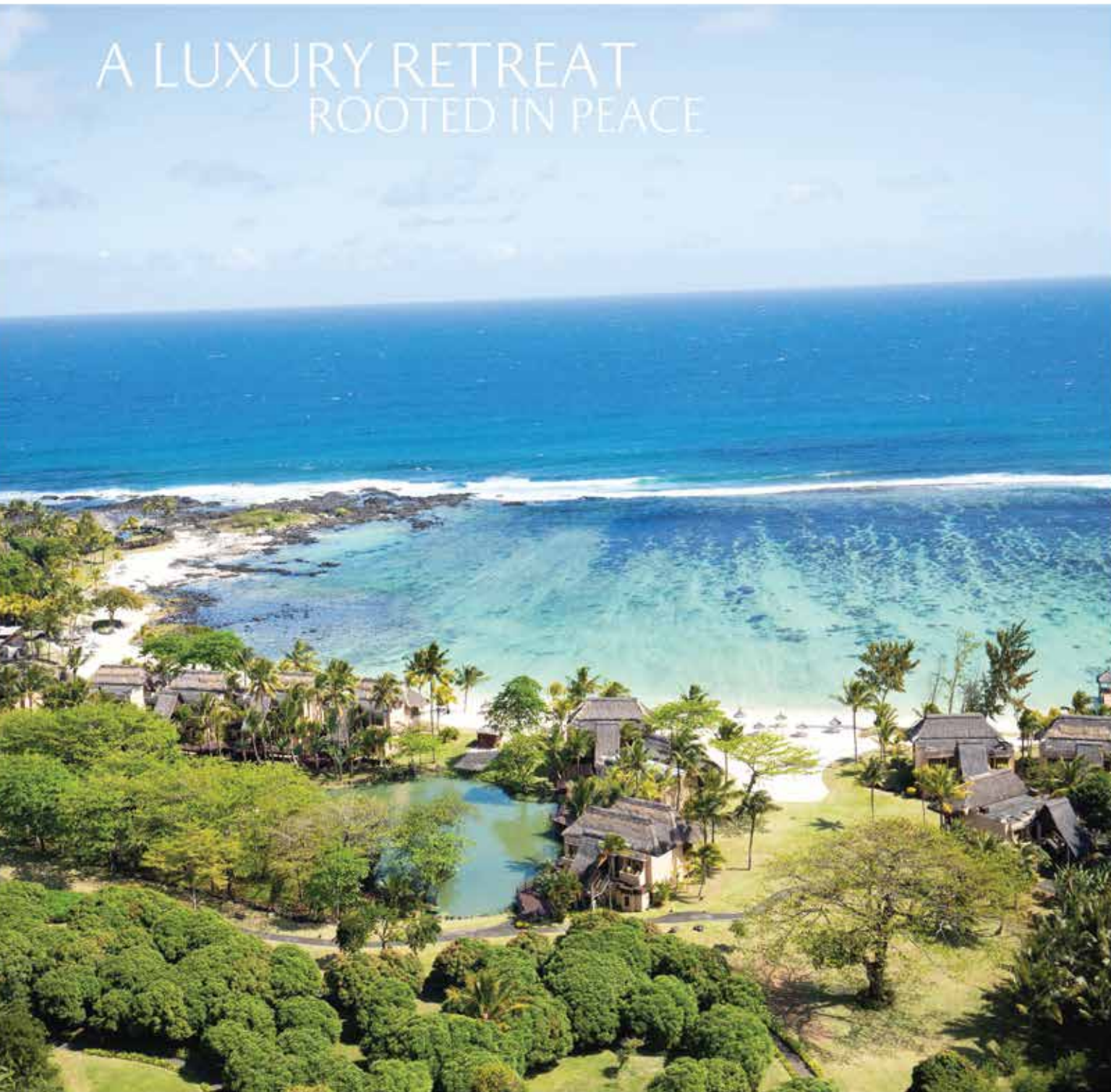
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A Note from the Director

There are some relationships that transcend diplomacy, commerce, and tourism. The relationship between Mauritius and India is one such bond, woven through history, heritage, language, values, and a shared sense of belonging. Today, as we witness a remarkable 19.1 per cent growth in visitor arrivals from India during the first months of 2026, we see more than encouraging statistics; we see the reaffirmation of a relationship built on familiarity, trust, and genuine affection.

What is particularly inspiring is the transformation in the way Mauritius is being experienced by Indian travellers. The island has become a destination of many dimensions, a place where celebrations are elevated, businesses form meaningful connections, wellness finds its natural rhythm, and luxury is defined by authenticity. This evolution reflects a broader shift in traveller aspirations, and Mauritius is proud to be responding with experiences that are richer, more diverse, and more meaningful than ever before. As custodians of one of the Indian Ocean's most cherished destinations, our vision extends far beyond visitor numbers. We aspire to deepen engagement, strengthen partnerships, and foster a tourism ecosystem that creates lasting value for travellers and stakeholders. The travel trade remains at the heart of this ambition. Travel advisors, tour operators, airline partners, hospitality leaders, and media platforms shape perceptions, inspire confidence, and influence the choices that define travel trends. Their role in Mauritius' success story is significant and deeply appreciated. The road ahead is one we approach with optimism and purpose. India will continue to be a strategic and valued partner in Mauritius' tourism journey. Together, we have an opportunity to grow arrivals, elevate the quality of engagement, broaden the narrative of what Mauritius represents, and create experiences. The foundations of this partnership are strong, its potential is extraordinary, and I remain confident that the most compelling chapter of the Mauritius–India story is yet to be written.

Benoît Harter
Director
Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA)



Content

6. Distinct Offerings

9. Year-Round Destination

12. Language, Food & Comfort

17. Beaches to Remember

PEARLE HOTELS

MAURITIUS



PEARLE BEACH RESORT & SPA (**** stars)

Ideally located on the beautiful Wolmar Beach in Flic en Flac, on the west coast of Mauritius, **Pearle Beach Resort & Spa** offers a relaxing and enjoyable stay. This 4-star hotel is the perfect destination for a peaceful tropical getaway.

Overlooking the crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean and surrounded by lush tropical gardens, the hotel provides an idyllic setting where relaxation and comfort come together.

Here, guests can fully experience the Mauritian way of life and discover the richness of the local culture in a calm and welcoming atmosphere.

The hotel features 76 comfortable and well-appointed rooms, each measuring approximately 35 m² and equipped with a private bathroom—ideal for unwinding after a day by the sea.

Designed with comfort and well-being in mind, the rooms include air conditioning, a double bed or twin beds, and a range of amenities to ensure a pleasant stay in a refined tropical setting.

A variety of sports activities are also available throughout the day, along with indoor games for added enjoyment.

GOLD BEACH RESORT & SPA (*** stars)

Located on the stunning Wolmar Beach in Flic en Flac, on Mauritius' west coast, **Gold Beach Resort** welcomes you to a truly beautiful natural setting.

Enjoy year-round sunshine, spectacular sunsets, and breathtaking views of Morne Brabant and the turquoise lagoon.

With soft sandy beaches, dramatic landscapes, and a peaceful tropical atmosphere, Gold Beach Resort offers an authentic Mauritian experience focused on relaxation and escape.



Familiar at Heart. Extraordinary in Experience.

Nestled in the serene waters of the Indian Ocean, Mauritius is a captivating island nation that transcends the typical tropical getaway. Renowned globally for its spectacular white-sand beaches, crystal-clear lagoons, and vibrant coral reefs, it stands as a premier destination for luxury seekers, honeymooners, water sports enthusiasts, multigenerational families, corporate incentives, weddings, and MICE groups alike.

Venture into the island's lush, mountainous interior, and you will discover a landscape teeming with natural wonders. From the breathtaking Chamarel Waterfalls and the mesmerising geological phenomenon of the Seven Colored Earths to the dense, wildlife-rich rainforests of Black River Gorges National Park, Mauritius offers endless adventures for hikers and ecotourists.

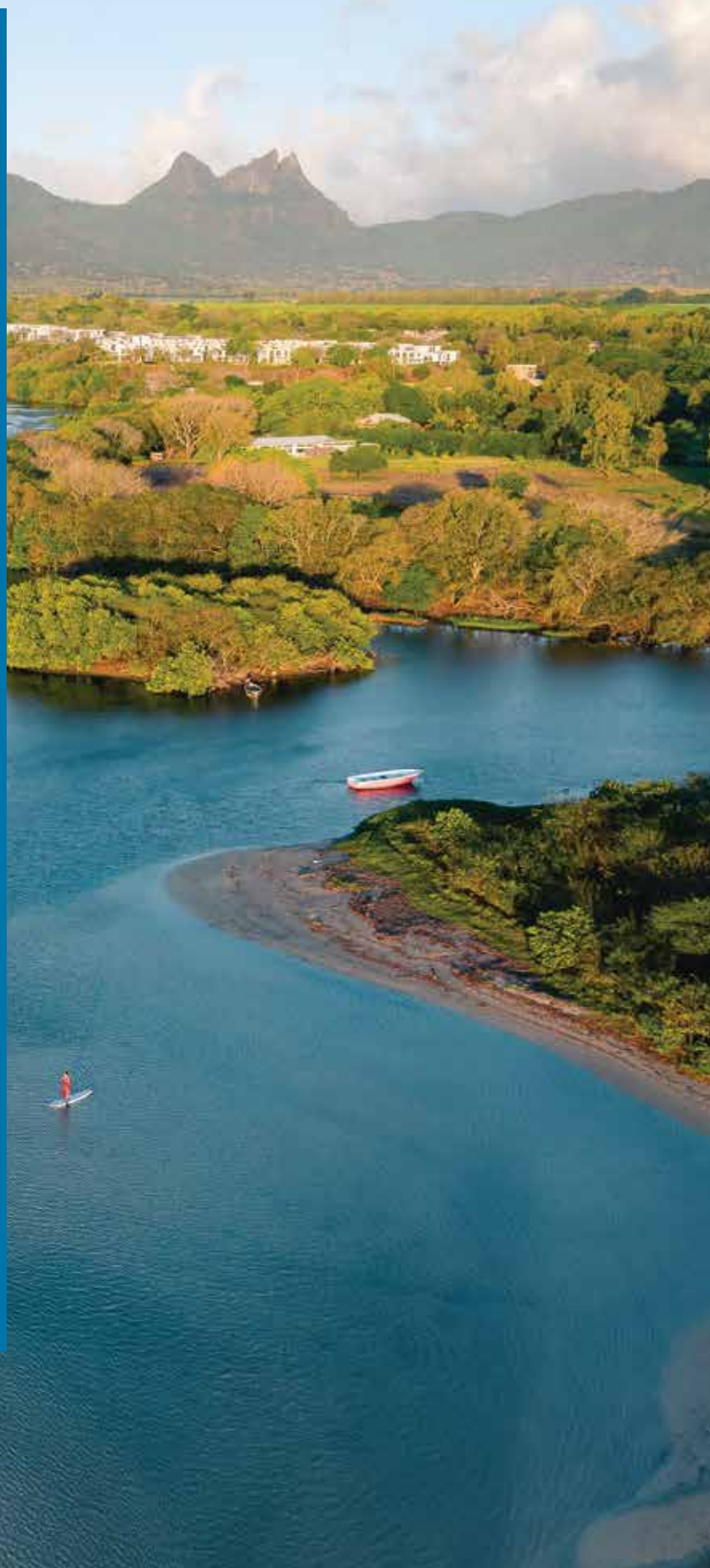
However, the true magic of Mauritius lies in its incredible diversity, extending far beyond its picture-perfect shores. As a historical melting pot of Indian, African, French, and Chinese influences, Mauritius boasts a remarkably warm and welcoming local heritage.

For Indian travellers, Mauritius is more than just another tropical destination. It feels comforting from the moment they land.

There's a strong Indian soul woven into the island. Hindi songs play in local markets, temples stand beside sugarcane fields, and festivals like Diwali and Maha Shivaratri are celebrated with enthusiasm. Add to that familiar food, warm hospitality, and easy visa access, and Mauritius becomes one of the easiest international holidays to recommend.

It offers an intriguing balance of luxury without being intimidating. Exotic without feeling unfamiliar. Relaxing, yet packed with memorable experiences. One holiday can include catamaran cruises, tea estates, rum tastings, lush hiking trails, wellness retreats, championship golf, and some of the most romantic beaches in the world.

Whether your client is planning a honeymoon, a family holiday, a destination wedding, or a corporate incentive, Mauritius delivers high satisfaction and excellent conversion potential.





The comfort of home, wrapped in luxury

Mauritius is a vibrant multicultural nation shaped by Indian, African, Chinese, and European communities, creating a rich blend of languages, traditions, cuisines, and festivals. With a relatively large population of Indian origin, the island already has a deep-rooted connection with India. A shared heritage creates a sense of belonging, and one instantly feels at ease and comfortable, like at home. The travel anxiety thus gives way to a more adventurous spirit willing to dive into new experiences. While many destinations across the world offer beach destinations, Mauritius makes it more exclusive, making one feel away from the crowds.

Think

- Quiet beaches
- Private villas
- Boutique resorts
- Personalised service
- Intimate experiences



Hidden Gem

If one is looking for a beautiful, untouched beach away from the big crowds and resorts, Pointe d'Esny is widely considered the best hidden gem in Mauritius.

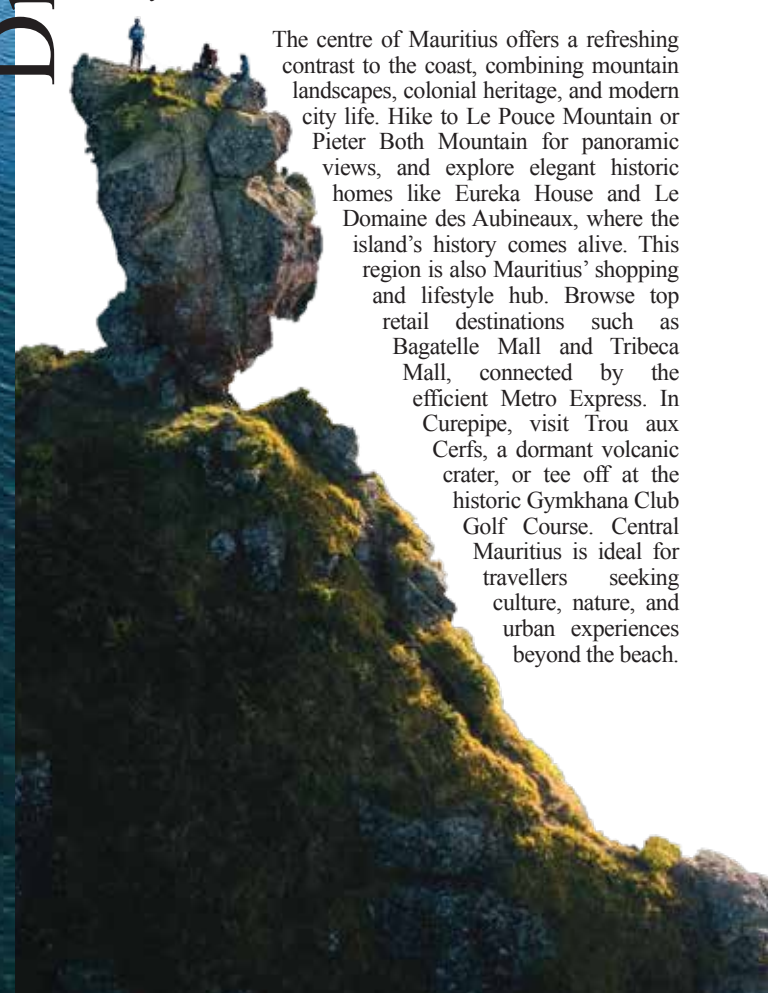
Located on the southeast coast near Blue Bay, it remains mostly a secret because there are no big signs or parking lots pointing to it. You have to access it through a small, unmarked sandy path nestled between private residential walls. It boasts some of the finest, whitest sand on the island and unbelievably clear, calm turquoise water. The water is protected by a coral reef, making it safe and perfect for a quiet swim or casual snorkelling.




One Island Distinct Offerings

What makes Mauritius so compelling is that each region has a completely different personality. In the north, the island is lively and energetic. Anchored by Grand Baie, this part of Mauritius is known for its vibrant nightlife, stylish restaurants, shopping, and easy access to northern islands like Îlot Gabriel and Coin de Mire. It is ideal for travellers who want a holiday with equal parts beach time, dining, and entertainment. The east, by contrast, is serene and naturally beautiful, with long stretches of powder-soft sand such as Belle Mare Beach and the crystal-clear lagoon around Île aux Cerfs. This coast is perfect for travellers seeking laid-back luxury, golf, sunrise views, and postcard-worthy beaches.

The south reveals Mauritius at its most raw and authentic. Rugged cliffs, crashing waves, sacred sites, and hidden beaches define this region. Highlights include Ganga Talao, the island's most important Hindu pilgrimage site, the historic Bois Chéri Tea Factory, and marine-rich Blue Bay Marine Park. It is the ideal choice for nature lovers and culturally curious travellers. On the west coast, Mauritius slows down to a relaxed rhythm. Known for spectacular sunsets, kitesurfing at Le Morne Beach, and the dramatic silhouette of Le Morne Brabant, the southwest region combines adventure, beach life, and some of the island's most iconic landscapes. Together, these four regions offer a destination that can be tailored to every kind of traveller.



The centre of Mauritius offers a refreshing contrast to the coast, combining mountain landscapes, colonial heritage, and modern city life. Hike to Le Pouce Mountain or Pieter Both Mountain for panoramic views, and explore elegant historic homes like Eureka House and Le Domaine des Aubineaux, where the island's history comes alive. This region is also Mauritius' shopping and lifestyle hub. Browse top retail destinations such as Bagatelle Mall and Tribeca Mall, connected by the efficient Metro Express. In Curepipe, visit Trou aux Cerfs, a dormant volcanic crater, or tee off at the historic Gymkhana Club Golf Course. Central Mauritius is ideal for travellers seeking culture, nature, and urban experiences beyond the beach.



Adding to that, Mauritian hospitality is heartfelt and genuine. Guests are welcomed with sincerity and looked after with meticulous attention. From the moment guests arrive at their resort, they are welcomed with sincere smiles, thoughtful gestures, and a level of personal attention that feels both effortless and heartfelt.

This warmth is evident across the island, whether it is a concierge remembering a guest's preferences, a chef preparing customised vegetarian or Jain meals, or local guides sharing stories about the island's history and traditions. Many Indian travellers find Mauritius especially comforting because of its strong cultural ties with India and the familiarity reflected in its cuisine, festivals, and everyday interactions.

Luxury resorts in Mauritius are known for highly personalised experiences - from private beach dinners and tailored spa rituals to curated excursions and family - friendly services. Combined with the island's relaxed pace and multicultural spirit, this attentive hospitality creates a sense of ease that transforms a good holiday into a deeply memorable one, leaving guests feeling cared for long after they return home.

SERVING WITH A HEART

CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

Direct connectivity makes Mauritius highly accessible from India.

Airlines operating direct flights include:

- Air Mauritius
- Air India
- IndiGo

Indian travellers can fly non-stop from:

- Delhi
- Mumbai
- Bengaluru
- Chennai

Flight time: approximately 5.5 to 6 hours.

Arrival is through Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, with most resorts located 45 minutes to 1.5 hours away. That means travellers can relax by the beach shortly after landing.



Year-Round Destination

Mauritius is one of the few island destinations that can be confidently sold throughout the year. With a pleasant tropical climate and two mild seasons, there is never a bad time to visit. Summer, from November to April, is ideal for beach holidays, water sports, and romantic getaways, while the cooler winter months from May to October offer comfortable temperatures of 22 – 28°C, perfect for hiking, golf, and sightseeing. Shoulder months provide excellent value, making Mauritius an attractive option for both luxury travellers and budget - conscious clients seeking sunshine, relaxation, and memorable experiences any time of year.



With pleasant tropical weather throughout the year, Mauritius works in every season.

- Summer: ideal for beach holidays
- Winter: perfect for outdoor exploration
- Shoulder months: excellent for value-driven packages

Ideal Holiday Duration

Mauritius deserves a well-paced itinerary. Recommended Stay: 6 Nights / 7 Days

North

Best for:

- Beaches • Shopping
- Nightlife • Cruises

Highlights:

- Grand Baie
- Trou aux Biches
- Cap Malheureux
- Îlot Gabriel
- Château de Labourdonnais

South

Best for:

- Nature • Golf
- Wellness • Culture

Highlights:

- Bel Ombre
- Ganga Talao
- Le Morne
- Blue Bay Marine Park
- Bois Chéri Tea Estate

Centre

Best for:

- Heritage • Shopping
- Golf • Hiking

Highlights:

- Pieter Both Mountain
- Le Pouce Mountain
- Eureka House
- Bagatelle Mall
- Gymkhana Club Golf Course

East

Best for:

- Beaches • Nature
- Island Excursions
- Adventure

Highlights:

- Île aux Cerfs
- Belle Mare Beach
- Bras d'Eau National Park
- Eau Bleue Waterfall
- La Vallée de Ferney

West

Best for:

- Sunsets • Adventure
- Water Sports • Nature

Highlights:

- Chamarel Waterfall
- Underwater Waterfall
- Tamarin Bay
- Le Morne Brabant
- Kitesurfing at Le Morne

This split gives travellers a complete taste of the island.





LANGUAGE, *Food & Comfort*



Food in Mauritius tells the story of the island itself. Influenced by Indian, Chinese, African, and European communities, Mauritian cuisine is a vibrant blend of cultures, traditions, and flavours. For Indian travellers, this means the best of both worlds: the comfort of familiar dishes and the excitement of discovering something new.

Indian visitors will find no shortage of North Indian and South Indian cuisine, along with vegetarian, vegan, and Jain-friendly meals at most resorts and restaurants. But the real soul of Mauritius is found in its street food. Walking through local markets and coastal villages offers a delicious introduction to the island's culture.



Try the iconic dhol puri, a soft flatbread filled with yellow split peas and served with curry and chutneys. Snack on gateaux piments, crispy chilli fritters, or enjoy a steaming bowl of boulettes, delicate dumplings served in a light broth. Mauritian biryani carries its own distinctive island character, while sweets such as gato patate and cassava pudding reflect the tropical bounty of the land. From spicy street snacks to elegant gourmet dining, Mauritius offers a culinary experience that is warm, diverse, and deeply satisfying - much like the island itself.

This combination of comfort and discovery is a strong selling point.



Where to Stay

Mauritius is known for exceptional beachfront resorts featuring:



Luxury Resorts

- Spacious suites and villas
- Award-winning spas
- Golf courses
- Fine dining
- Private pools



Private Villas

- Ideal for families, wedding groups, and extended stays.



Boutique Hotels

- Perfect for couples and travellers looking for intimate experiences.

MICE & Weddings

Mauritius is a compelling choice for MICE and Weddings, combining world-class business infrastructure with the allure of a tropical island escape. Many luxury resorts offer sophisticated meeting rooms, state-of-the-art conference facilities, beachfront gala venues, and customised team-building experiences. Direct flights from India, easy visa access, and excellent hospitality make planning seamless for corporate groups and weddings.

Beach ceremonies, sunset pheras, and private celebrations create a magical experience. What sets Mauritius apart is the opportunity to pair business with memorable leisure experiences.

Delegates/Guests can enjoy romantic beaches, sunset cruises, rejuvenating spa treatments, private pool villas, underwater adventures, and candlelit dinners by the sea - creating an inspiring setting that rewards performance and leaves a lasting impression.



Image Credits: In Tune Travel



Incentive travel offerings can

- ▶ Leadership retreats
- ▶ Reward trips
- ▶ Team-building getaways
- ▶ Conferences
- ▶ Gala dinners
- ▶ Catamaran cruises
- ▶ Golf tournaments
- ▶ Adventure activities
- ▶ Wellness sessions



Mauritius is far more than a beautiful beach destination. It is an island where every day can unfold differently, offering a rich mix of relaxation, adventure, culture, and discovery. Travellers can spend the morning sailing across turquoise lagoons, the afternoon hiking through lush forests and waterfalls, and the evening enjoying local street food or a sunset spa ritual by the sea.

What makes Mauritius especially appealing is the diversity packed into one compact destination.

Beyond its iconic beaches, the island reveals sacred temples, colourful markets, tea plantations, rum distilleries, hidden coves, and charming villages where local traditions are very much alive.

Whether clients are seeking romance, family bonding, wellness, or immersive cultural experiences, Mauritius delivers with ease.

This versatility makes the destination highly attractive to a wide range of travellers - from honeymooners and families to MICE groups and repeat visitors. It offers the perfect balance of familiar comforts and unique experiences, ensuring every itinerary feels both effortless and memorable. In Mauritius, there is always more to explore beyond the shoreline.



Experiences That Sell *Mauritius*

Water Experiences

Mauritius is all about turquoise lagoons and endless ocean adventures. The island's protected lagoons make these experiences accessible even for beginners.

- ◆ Snorkelling
- ◆ Scuba diving
- ◆ Parasailing
- ◆ Island hopping
- ◆ Jet skiing
- ◆ Kayaking
- ◆ Sunset cruises
- ◆ Underwater walks



Beaches to Remember

Among the island's most loved beaches, each offers powder-soft sand and postcard-perfect views.

Belle Mare Beach

Le Morne Beach

Flic en Flac Beach

Trou aux Biches Beach

Beyond its beaches, Mauritius is lush and dramatic. Must-visit natural attractions include:

Black River Gorges National Park

Chamarel Seven Colored Earth Geopark

Le Morne Brabant

Visitors can hike through forests, discover waterfalls, and enjoy spectacular viewpoints.

Culture and Heritage

Mauritius' multicultural character is one of its greatest strengths.

Experiences include:

- Temple visits
- Cultural festivals
- Local markets
- Music and dance performances
- Street food trails

A highlight for many Indian travellers is Grand Bassin (Ganga Talao), a sacred crater lake and important Hindu pilgrimage site.

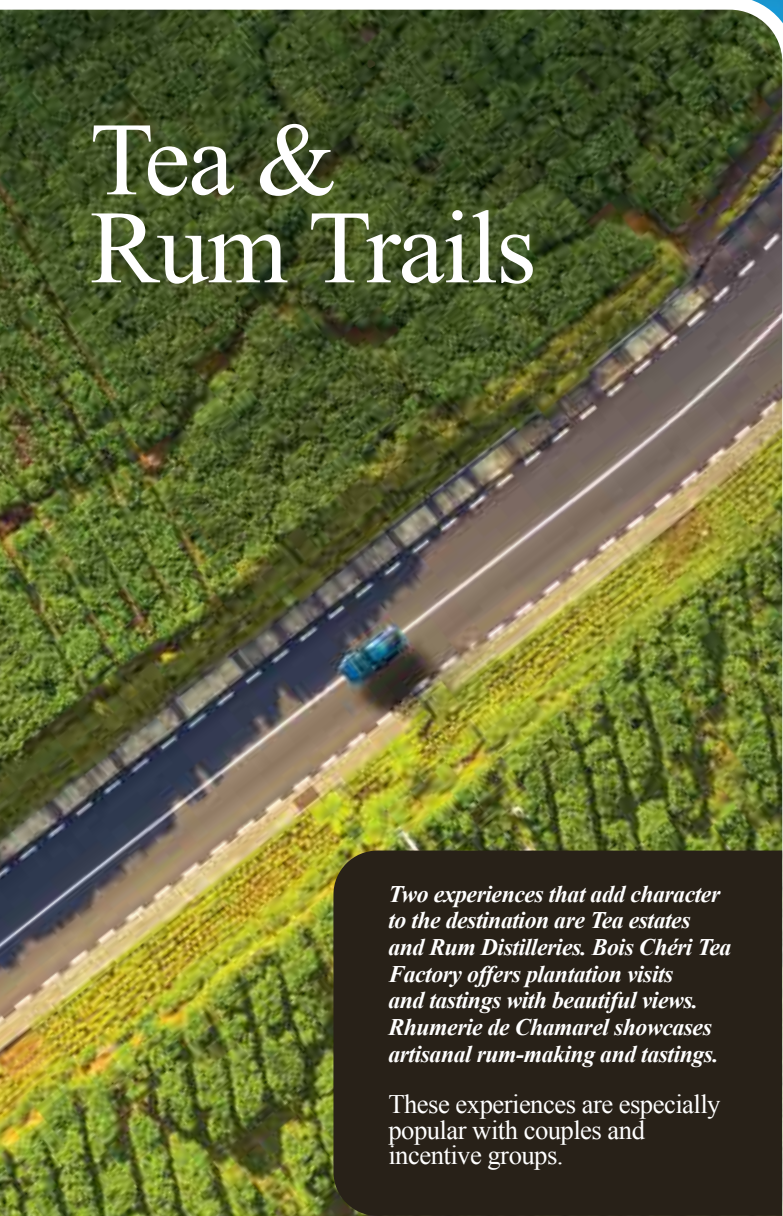


Exploration & Offbeat Discovery

For repeat travellers, Mauritius has many hidden gems. Such experiences add depth to the traditional beach holiday.

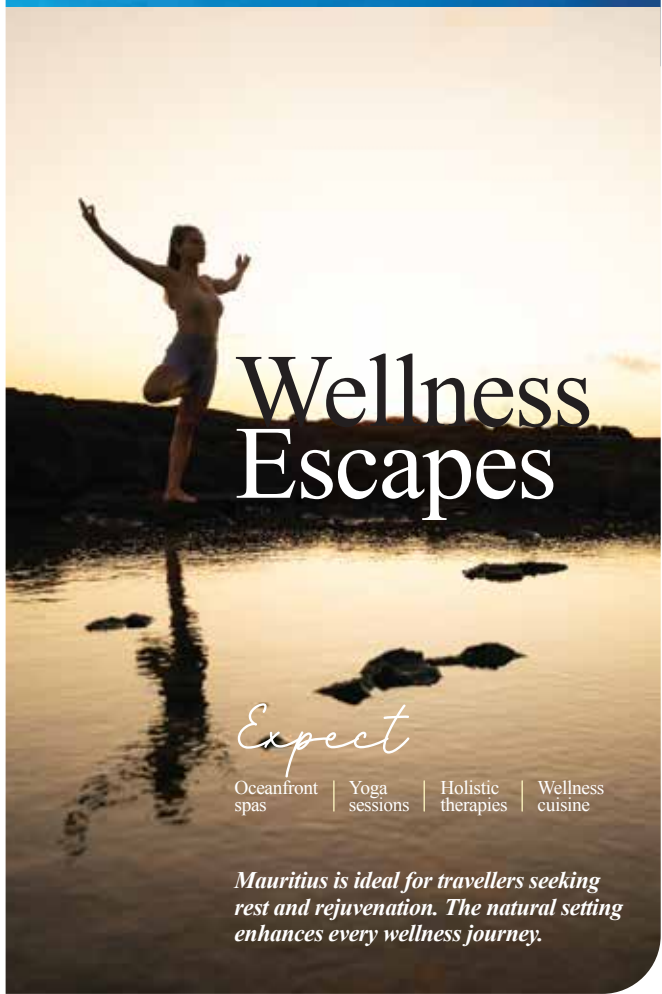
- Secret coves
- Scenic drives
- Plantation visits
- Village experiences
- Eco-adventures

Tea & Rum Trails



Two experiences that add character to the destination are Tea estates and Rum Distilleries. Bois Chéri Tea Factory offers plantation visits and tastings with beautiful views. Rhumerie de Chamarel showcases artisanal rum-making and tastings.

These experiences are especially popular with couples and incentive groups.



Wellness Escapes

Expect

- Oceanfront spas
- Yoga sessions
- Holistic therapies
- Wellness cuisine

Mauritius is ideal for travellers seeking rest and rejuvenation. The natural setting enhances every wellness journey.

How to Sell Mauritius

Positioning Statements

“Luxury without overcrowding”

“An international island holiday with Indian comfort”

“Perfect blend of relaxation and experiences”

Ideal Customer Profiles

- ▶ Honeymoon couples
- ▶ MICE groups
- ▶ Luxury family travellers
- ▶ Destination weddings
- ▶ Repeat international travellers seeking exclusivity

Quick Pitch Lines

“Perfect for couples and multigenerational families.”

“Short-haul luxury island escape from India.”

“Easy visa, direct flights, premium experiences.”

“A year-round destination with strong emotional appeal.”

Marketing & Engagement Ideas

Use WhatsApp campaigns with short itineraries & resort visuals

Promote honeymoon and family packages through reels and social media storytelling. Share quick travel facts: visa ease, flight duration, food comfort, and luxury appeal. Conduct destination webinars and online training modules for clients

Lead Conversion Flow

Inquiry → Visual Inspiration → Itinerary Suggestion → Resort Matching → Quick Follow-Up → Booking Conversion

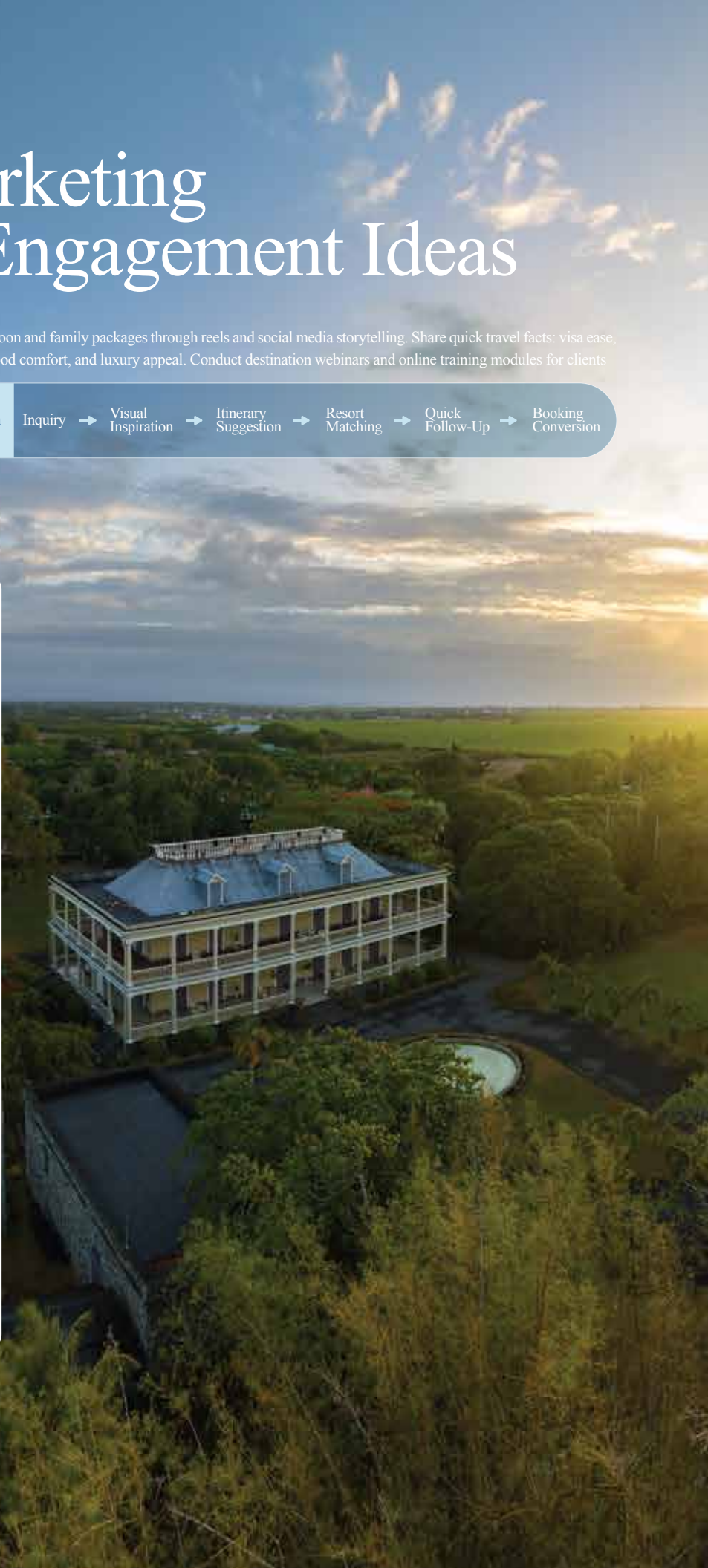
Become a Certified Mauritius Specialist

The 'Discover Mauritius: Destination Specialist E-Learning Program' by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority is a valuable training tool designed to help travel professionals sell Mauritius with greater confidence. This self-paced online program offers a comprehensive understanding of the island's geography, culture, regional highlights, and diverse tourism offerings.

Through four engaging modules, participants explore everything from Mauritius' history and natural beauty to adventure experiences, hidden gems, and specialised segments such as honeymoons, family holidays, wellness retreats, golf, and MICE travel. The course equips agents with practical knowledge to match the right experiences and regions to different client profiles, making itinerary planning more effective and personalised.

On successful completion, participants earn recognition as certified Mauritius Specialists, enhancing their credibility and destination expertise. As an added incentive, agents who complete the program also stand a chance to win an exclusive familiarisation trip to Mauritius, subject to terms and conditions.

For travel advisors looking to deepen their product knowledge and boost conversions, this e-learning program is an excellent opportunity to become a true Mauritius expert.





MICE VAT

Exemption Scheme

Mauritius continues to position itself as a highly attractive destination for MICE, weddings, and international events through its newly introduced MICE VAT Exemption Scheme. Replacing the earlier VAT refund model, the new initiative allows eligible event organisers—both local and international—to apply for VAT exemption on accommodation costs incurred during qualifying events held in Mauritius.

The scheme applies to conferences, exhibitions, business meetings, destination weddings, international sports events, and television or cinema award events attended by 50 or more international visitors staying a minimum of three nights in Mauritius. Eligible visitors must hold a foreign passport along with a valid air or sea ticket from an international destination. The exemption covers hotel accommodation charges on half-board or full-board stays, while personal stay extensions beyond the official event period are not included.

Event organisers must register their event under the EDB MICE VAT Exemption Scheme at least three weeks prior to the event date, providing key details such as organiser information, event dates, venue, and expected number of international visitors. Once registered, the organiser is required to submit the VAT exemption application to the Economic Development Board of Mauritius within one week through the prescribed application format.

Combined with direct air connectivity from India, luxury resorts, world-class venues, and seamless hospitality infrastructure, Mauritius offers strong commercial potential for corporate groups and large celebrations. The simplified process through the Economic Development Board of Mauritius further enhances ease of planning for travel agents and event organisers.



Frequently Asked Questions



Do Indians Need a Visa?

Indian passport holders can obtain a Visa on Arrival in Mauritius for short leisure stays. Travellers should ensure they carry a valid passport, confirmed return tickets, and proof of accommodation.

What Currency Is Used?

The local currency is the Mauritian Rupee (MUR). Currency exchange is easily available at the airport, banks, and hotels across the island.

Are Cards Accepted?

Yes, international credit and debit cards are widely accepted at resorts, restaurants, shopping malls, and most tourist attractions. Carrying a small amount of cash is useful for local markets and street purchases.

Is Mauritius Safe?

Mauritius is considered one of the safest destinations in the Indian Ocean. It is clean, well-organised, and highly welcoming for couples, families, and solo travellers.

What Languages Are Spoken?

English and French are widely spoken, making communication easy for Indian travellers. Hindi and Bhojpuri are also understood in many areas because of the island's strong Indian heritage.

Is Vegetarian Food Easily Available?

Absolutely. Most resorts and restaurants offer excellent vegetarian, vegan, and Jain-friendly options, along with familiar Indian dishes.

Is Mauritius Good for Honeymooners?

Mauritius is one of the world's most romantic island destinations. Private villas, sunset cruises, beach dinners, and luxurious spa experiences make it ideal for couples.



Mauritius isn't just a holiday. It is a destination that makes travellers feel special, relaxed, and deeply connected. For Indian travellers, it delivers all the ingredients of a dream vacation:

- ▶ Stunning beaches
- ▶ Rich culture
- ▶ World-class hospitality
- ▶ Delicious food
- ▶ Easy access
- ▶ Memorable experiences



And for travel professionals, it offers something even better:

A destination that is easy to package, easy to sell, and consistently rewarding.

Sell Mauritius with Confidence.



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For more info, contact
sheetal.kalisaran@hotels-attitude.com



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