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VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 08

AUGUST 2026

₹200/-

PAGES 68

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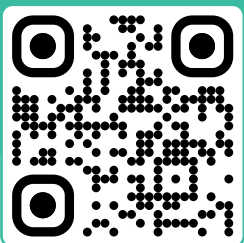


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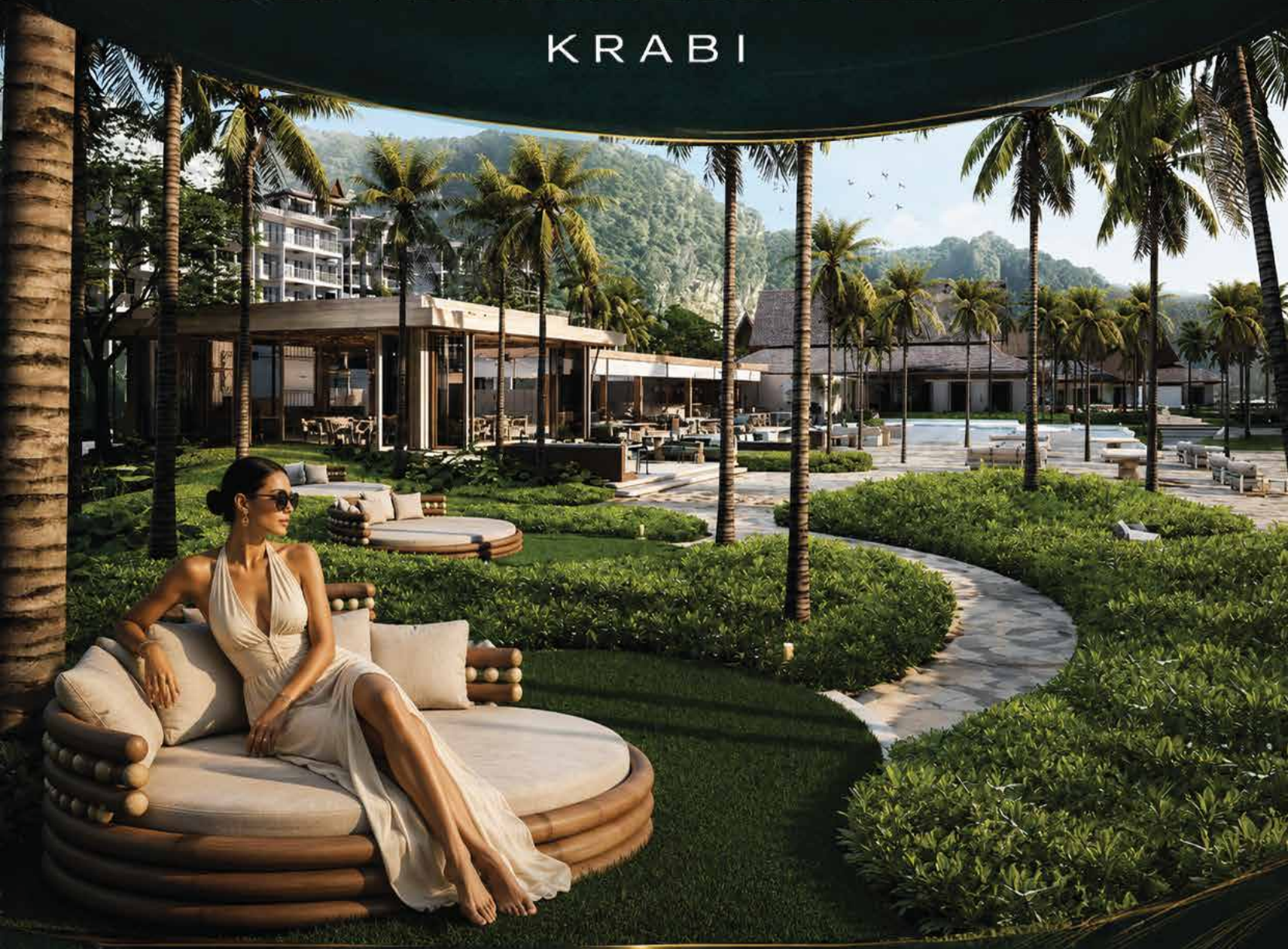
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EDITORS LETTER

There is a curious shift that happens when you spend enough years in travel journalism. You begin by asking the questions, and somewhere along the way, people begin asking you. At industry gatherings, over coffee, across conference tables and increasingly in informal conversations, I am often asked the same things: Where is travel heading? What are people buying? What has changed? And what comes next?

It is an interesting responsibility. Everyone in this industry has numbers—booking data, market intelligence, traveller feedback and increasingly sophisticated technology. Yet there remains a certain trust in an independent view of the larger picture. Perhaps because the larger picture has become harder to read.

For years, inflation was the familiar adversary. We understood its language: rising costs, cautious consumers and compressed margins. Then came disruptions that changed the vocabulary altogether—geopolitical tensions, wars, shifting alliances, fragile confidence and, of course, the global health crisis we still refer to, somewhat cautiously, as the P word.

Travel, once remarkably predictable in its rhythms, has had to learn to live with uncertainty. And yet, it keeps moving. That may be the industry's greatest strength: its ability to adapt, recalibrate and learn. We learn from destinations, from travellers, from technology, from crises and, perhaps most importantly, from one another. This issue reflects that constant evolution.

We bring you a closer look at the changing luxury hospitality landscape through our conversation with Small Luxury Hotels of the World, as it charts its expansion and strengthens its position in a world where travellers increasingly seek character, individuality and meaningful experiences.

We also explore some of the most fascinating stories shaping the industry today—developments that are not just changing how travel is sold, but how it is imagined. And then there is Four Seasons Chiang Mai, a reminder that great hospitality cannot always be measured in numbers. In a world obsessed with speed and scale, some experiences are powerful precisely because they invite us to slow down. Perhaps that is the great contradiction of travel today. The world is moving faster than ever, yet travellers are searching for reasons to pause.

We want to see more, but experience more deeply. We embrace technology, yet still crave the unexpected moments no algorithm can create. So, as always, I invite you to read, question, agree, disagree and discover. Because in travel, the most interesting journey has never been about knowing exactly where we are going. It is about remaining curious enough to ask what comes next.

Happy reading.

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

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

Editor: Bharti Sharma

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Finding Kashi
from the heart
of the Ganga





Rajasthan plans two travel marts to strengthen Tourism Promotion

Rajasthan Tourism plans to expand its domestic and international outreach by organising two dedicated travel marts to strengthen travel trade engagement, destination promotion and buyer-seller interactions, while positioning Rajasthan as a year-round tourism destination.



Air India enters codeshare partnership with Azerbaijan Airline

Air India and Azerbaijan Airlines, part of AZCON Holding, have entered into a new codeshare partnership. The cooperation offers greater flexibility, enhanced connectivity, and more convenient travel options between Azerbaijan and India, as well as onward destinations through both airlines' networks, while strengthening business, tourism, and cultural ties between the two countries.

TBO Tek reports strong Q1 FY27 growth with revenue up 81 per cent YoY and EBITDA rising 77 per cent

TBO Tek Limited has announced a strong financial performance for Q1 FY27, delivering robust growth across key metrics despite continued geopolitical challenges. The company reported Gross Transaction Value (GTV) of ₹11,154 crore, up 37 per cent year-on-year, while revenue from operations surged 81 per cent to ₹926 crore. Adjusted EBITDA stood at ₹150 crore, up 77 per cent YoY, and Profit After Tax reached ₹83 crore, marking a 32 per cent rise. Monthly Transacting Buyers (MTBs) increased by 14 per cent to 33,736, supported by broad-based growth across India, APAC, Europe, North America, and Latin America.

tbo.com
TRAVEL SIMPLIFIED



SKAL International establishes presence in Madhya Pradesh

With the objective of strengthening Madhya Pradesh's presence in global tourism, the inauguration and office bearers' installation ceremony of SKAL International Bhopal was held in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Dr. Rajendra Shukla as Chief Guest. The programme was presided over by Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Culture, Religious Trusts & Endowments, and General Administration Department.



TAFI & MTDC sign landmark MoU to strengthen tourism in Maharashtra

A significant milestone for the travel and tourism industry was achieved as the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) and the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaboratively promote and strengthen tourism across Maharashtra.

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Air India Express adds Bhopal to its growing Domestic Network

Air India Express has commenced commercial operations from Raja Bhoj Airport, Bhopal, marking another milestone in its domestic network expansion with the launch of two daily flights to Delhi and one daily flight to Mumbai. The new services are expected to significantly enhance air connectivity for Madhya Pradesh's capital while offering greater travel convenience for business and leisure travellers.



beOND marks entry into Asia with appointment of Minar Group as GSA in India

beOND has appointed Minar Group as its General Sales Agent (GSA) in India, marking the airline's first commercial presence in Asia as it prepares to enter one of the world's fastest-growing travel markets. The partnership marks another milestone in beOND's international expansion strategy, establishing a strong commercial foundation in India while reinforcing its commitment to long-term relationships with the country's travel trade.

Centara accelerates Luxury Growth with the launch of its Second Centara Reserve

Centara Hotels & Resorts, announces the launch of Centara Reserve Krabi, the second property under its award-winning luxury Reserve brand, scheduled to open in December 2026 following a multi-billion-baht development. The opening represents the next chapter of the company's long-term premium growth strategy, strengthening its position in the luxury hospitality sector while supporting Krabi's emergence as one of Asia's most desirable quiet luxury destinations.



Special Excess Baggage allowance for IATO Members on Air India and Air India Express

Air India and Air India Express have introduced a Special Excess Baggage Allowance for foreign tourists travelling on group bookings made through IATO Members on IATO's request. This facility has been extended exclusively for IATO Members for their group bookings to enable foreign nationals to avail excess baggage allowance, while ensuring the necessary authorisation, validation, and accounting controls.



Sarnath gets UNESCO World Heritage tag

Twenty-eight years after entering UNESCO's Tentative List, Sarnath, where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon and the Buddhist Sangha took shape, has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, becoming India's 45th World Heritage Site and Uttar Pradesh's fourth. The recognition announced during the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee puts one of Buddhism's holiest places on the world's highest heritage platform and gives a major boost to UP's Buddhist Circuit.

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The 1%

Beyond The Known

We live in a world where almost nothing is truly hidden anymore. We can see a place before we arrive, know its best table before we sit down and follow a trail long before we take it. Yet somewhere beyond the familiar lies a rarer kind of travel, where discovery still belongs to those willing to look a little further. For the traveller who has seen the obvious, luxury is beginning to mean something different. Not more, but rarer. Not grander, but deeper. Not simply a place to visit, but a moment that cannot quite be repeated.

Because perhaps, in a world that has made everything accessible, the greatest luxury left is the feeling of finding something for yourself.

- Bharti Sharma

Have We Already Seen Too Much?

I sometimes wonder whether we have made travel a little too easy. Before we arrive anywhere, we have already seen it. The hotel room has been photographed from twelve angles. The restaurant menu is online. Someone has filmed the sunset from the exact spot where we are supposed to stand. We know which table to ask for, which road to take, which beach is "hidden" and which café is worth the queue. Even getting lost now comes with a blue dot showing us precisely where we are.

And yet, for all this information, I still believe travel has a few surprises left.

Perhaps that is because the things that move us most deeply were never really the things we could search for. They were the unexpected conversation, the road we took because we missed a turn, the landscape that appeared when we were not looking for it, the meal that became memorable because of the person sitting across the table. Travel, at its best, has always been about a certain surrender. You leave knowing where you are going, but never quite knowing what you will find. That feeling has become rare. And rarity, as we know, has a way of becoming precious.

Welcome To The 1%

The phrase sounds deliberately provocative. It is not about wealth, although wealth can certainly buy access to some of these experiences. It is about something more elusive.

The 1% of travel is that small territory occupied by journeys that cannot easily be replicated. Places where access is limited, seasons are short, nature has the final word, or the experience depends upon a relationship rather than a reservation.

It could be an expedition into the polar wilderness, a private encounter with an artist or conservationist, a journey through a landscape accessible for only a few weeks each year, or a meal inside a home that has never needed a sign outside its door.

What connects these experiences is not their price. It is their unrepeatability.

And perhaps that is where luxury travel is heading next.

When the Door Matters More Than the Room

For years, luxury was about what was inside the room. The size of the suite, the view from the balcony, the thread count, the butler, the bottle waiting on arrival. Today, I find myself increasingly fascinated by what happens outside the room.

Who can introduce you to a place differently? Who knows the story behind it? Who can take you somewhere a conventional itinerary cannot? Who can turn a destination you thought you knew into something entirely new?

This is where access becomes more valuable than extravagance. A private room can be booked. A relationship cannot.

A beautiful meal can be purchased. An invitation into someone's world has to be earned. Perhaps the most sophisticated

luxury travel is therefore becoming less about possession and more about proximity.

Not owning the extraordinary.

Being allowed close enough to experience it.

Antarctica Does Not Care About Your Itinerary

There is something wonderfully humbling about Antarctica.

You can book the finest suite, board the most sophisticated expedition vessel and plan every detail months in advance. But once you enter that vast white wilderness, nature takes over.

The ice decides where you go. Weather determines whether you land. Wildlife appears when it chooses. The landscape changes without consulting your schedule.

And somehow, that lack of control is part of the luxury.

We have spent years making travel increasingly seamless. Faster flights, smoother transfers, digital check-ins, private aviation, personalised service. We have become very good at removing uncertainty.

Yet some of the most sought-after journeys today are those that put uncertainty back.

A storm can change the itinerary.

A whale can change the day.

A sunrise can change the way you remember an entire trip.

Perhaps we travel not only to control where we go, but occasionally to remember that we cannot control everything.

The World Has Become Searchable. Discovery Has Become Scarce.

There was once something almost magical about discovering a place before everybody else knew about it. Today, that window can close almost overnight.

A quiet village becomes a social-media sensation. A little-known restaurant becomes impossible to book. A remote beach becomes a backdrop. The word "undiscovered" itself has become a marketing strategy.

So perhaps the future of discovery is not necessarily finding places nobody knows.

Perhaps it is finding a different way into places everyone thinks they know.

A historian opening a private archive. A conservationist taking you into a protected landscape. A chef explaining not just what is on the plate, but why it exists. A family sharing recipes that have never appeared on a menu. An artist allowing you into the studio where the work actually happens. The destination may be familiar. The story is not.

And isn't that what we are really searching for when we travel?

Not another photograph, but another perspective.



The Passport Is No Longer Enough

A passport can take you across borders. It cannot necessarily take you deeper.

For the luxury traveller, relationships are becoming a new kind of currency. The right guide, expedition leader, curator, conservationist, hotelier or local family can reveal a version of a destination that no search engine can produce.

This is also why I believe the role of the travel advisor is becoming more important, not less.

Information is everywhere.

Judgement is not.

When a traveller can find a thousand hotels in seconds, the value lies in knowing which one matters. When they can discover a hundred experiences online, the real expertise lies in knowing which one will still be remembered ten years from now.

First Is the New Famous

There is another kind of luxury I find particularly fascinating: being early.

The first guests aboard a new expedition ship. The first travellers on an emerging route. The first to stay at a remote lodge before its photographs begin appearing everywhere. The first to understand that a destination is about to become the next big thing.

In a world where popularity can arrive almost instantly, the space before popularity has become incredibly valuable.

Perhaps the most interesting traveller is no longer the one who says, "I've been there."

It is the one who says, "You should go before everyone else does."

For the travel trade, that requires a different kind of instinct. Not simply knowing what is selling today, but sensing what will matter tomorrow.

THE 1% TEST**Can everyone book it?**

If yes, it may be luxury, but it is not necessarily rare.

Can the experience be repeated exactly?

If not, its value rises.

Does nature have a say?

Weather, wildlife and seasonality often create the most memorable experiences.

Does it require a relationship?

The right introduction can be more valuable than the right reservation.

Will you remember the feeling, not just the photograph?

That may be the most important test of all.

The strange luxury of having time

Perhaps the most philosophical shift in luxury travel is also the simplest.

We have spent decades trying to save time.

Now we are paying to spend it.

We take longer trains. We board ships instead of planes. We travel to remote places that require days to reach. We sit on verandahs watching landscapes change rather than rushing towards the next attraction.

Why?

Because time has become the one luxury that money cannot manufacture.

A private jet can save six hours.

It cannot give those six hours back to you in a meaningful way.

Perhaps that is why slow travel feels increasingly seductive. It asks us to stop measuring a journey by how quickly we arrive and start measuring it by what happens while we are getting there.

The Traveller Who Has Done It All

I have always found this traveller fascinating.

The one who has stayed in the great hotels, sailed the famous

seas, crossed continents, taken the safaris, visited the islands and accumulated enough destinations to make a bucket list feel almost unnecessary.

What do you offer someone who has already seen so much?

Perhaps not another destination. Perhaps a story.

A night beneath an extraordinary sky. A conversation with someone whose life has nothing in common with yours. A landscape that makes you stop speaking. A journey where the plan changes because nature intervenes. A meal that stays with you because of the person who served it, not just because of what was on the plate.

At some point, travel stops being about collecting places.

It becomes about collecting moments of recognition.

Those strange instances when you encounter something outside yourself and, somehow, return home slightly different.

Some Places Should Remain Difficult

There is, however, a responsibility attached to this pursuit of rarity.

Not everything extraordinary should become accessible to everyone.

Fragile ecosystems cannot withstand unlimited visitors. Ancient communities cannot endlessly become attractions. Wildlife cannot be treated as entertainment. Some landscapes need protection more than they need another photograph.

This may be the great paradox of the 1%.

The more valuable an experience becomes, the more carefully it may need to be protected.

Sometimes luxury must learn to say no.

No, there is no additional room.

No, the group cannot be larger.

No, the site cannot be visited today.

No, the season cannot be extended.

Because if we make every extraordinary place easy to access, we may eventually make the extraordinary disappear.

The Map May Be Complete. The World Isn't.

We have mapped the earth. We have photographed it from space. We have placed almost every corner inside a search bar. Artificial intelligence can now construct an itinerary before we have even finished our morning coffee.

And yet, I remain convinced that travel will always retain one beautiful advantage over technology.

It can surprise us.

A place can still be more beautiful than its photograph. A stranger can still say something that changes the way we see a destination. A storm can still turn a perfectly planned journey into a story. A landscape can still make us feel very small, very grateful and completely present.

Perhaps that is what the 1% of travel really means.

It is not about being among the few who can afford something.

It is about being among the few who are willing to look beyond what is obvious.

Because perhaps the greatest luxury in travel is no longer arriving somewhere nobody has been.

It is arriving somewhere everyone thinks they know and discovering that you had never really seen it before.

And perhaps that is why we keep travelling.

Not because the world is still unknown.

But because, every once in a while, it makes us feel that it is.



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FAM Trips Passports or Passé?

-- Part One | The Brands Speak --

There was a time when a FAM trip was almost a rite of passage in the travel trade. Put a group of travel agents on a flight, check them into a beautiful hotel, fill the itinerary with site inspections, experiences and good food, and somewhere between the sunset cocktail and the hundredth property photograph, the destination was expected to sell itself.

- Tripti Jain



Naresh Rawal

The travel industry has moved on. Today, agents can explore hotel rooms, cruise ships, destinations and experiences from their screens before they have even packed a suitcase. So, the question that deserves a little more attention is - Are FAM trips losing their charm, or are brands simply asking more from them?

For a cruise line, two DMCs and a hotelier, the answer is clear. FAMs still matter, yet the definition of success is changing. The complimentary flight, hotel stay and packed itinerary are only the beginning. The real test comes after the agent returns home. Does the experience translate into confidence? Does confidence translate into recommendations? And, eventually, do those recommendations translate into revenue?

Beyond the brochure

For experience - led products such as cruises, firsthand knowledge carries particular weight. Naresh Rawal, Senior Vice President, Sales, India & Middle East, StarDream Cruises, believes a FAM can turn an advisor from a product seller into an experience storyteller. He shares, "FAM trips remain one of the most effective tools for selling a destination or a cruise product because travel is an experience - driven industry. No brochure, website, or video can fully replicate the confidence a travel advisor gains by personally experiencing the product. A FAM trip transforms an advisor from someone selling a product into someone sharing a personal experience, which significantly strengthens customer trust and conversion."

For Naresh, the commercial value extends beyond an immediate booking. He adds, "When planned strategically, FAM trips continue to deliver excellent long - term ROI. Rather than viewing them as a marketing expense, they should be seen as an investment in building knowledgeable and confident sales partners. The key is selecting the right participants, partners with proven sales potential and a genuine commitment to growing the category."

The ROI question

That last point gets to the heart of the matter. A FAM is rarely a small investment.

Flights, accommodation, meals, transfers, experiences, site inspections and manpower all add up. For brands, the pressure to demonstrate value is understandable. A beautifully organised trip that generates plenty of photographs but little business can quickly become an expensive memory.

The more meaningful return can emerge over months rather than days. An agent who has personally experienced a destination can speak with greater authority, answer client questions more confidently and recommend products based on actual experience. In luxury travel especially, that personal conviction can influence the final decision.

The challenge for brands is to connect the experience with a measurable commercial objective. Who is travelling? What are they likely to sell? Which products need visibility? What happens once everyone returns?



Rahim

Experience still wins

Rahim, Founder, OA GlobeDMC, sees firsthand experience as the foundation of destination selling. He shares, "You can showcase a destination digitally, but you can only truly sell what you have experienced. At OA Globe, we see a FAM as more than just a familiarisation trip. It is an investment in product knowledge, relationships and business development. The ROI of a FAM is not measured only in bookings, it is measured in the confidence and advocacy it creates within the trade."

His perspective reflects an important reality for DMCs. Agents need to understand the destination beyond the standard itinerary, from local experiences and logistics to hotels, attractions and the finer details that help create a seamless holiday. Rahim believes the format is evolving rather than disappearing. He adds, "The FAM model is not disappearing; it is becoming smarter."





Shushant Tiwari

Luxury needs a feeling

For hotels and resorts, particularly in premium destinations, the physical experience remains difficult to replace. Shushant Tiwari, Sales Manager, Kuda Villingili Resort Maldives, believes the value of a FAM lies in allowing agents to understand the destination and the complete guest experience firsthand. He shares, "Absolutely. FAM trips continue to play a vital role, especially for premium destinations like the Maldives. While travel agents can access extensive information online, nothing compares to experiencing a destination firsthand. The real return on investment comes when participating agents actively promote the destination after the trip and convert their experience into confirmed bookings. Building long-term relationships with trade partners is another significant benefit."

He also sees digital and experiential marketing working hand in hand, with 'The strongest results' coming from 'combining digital marketing with well-planned FAM trips.' For a resort, that firsthand understanding can be invaluable. An agent who has experienced the room categories, dining, service, activities, transfers and atmosphere is better equipped to match the property with the right client.

The new FAM equation

The four perspectives point towards the same conclusion: FAM trips are evolving from hospitality-led experiences into more focused trade engagement platforms. The modern FAM needs a purpose. It needs the right participants, relevant products, meaningful experiences and a follow-up plan. Most importantly, it needs patience when measuring ROI. Travel sales do not always happen the moment an agent returns home. A client may enquire weeks later. A honeymoon booking may come months later. A family holiday may emerge during the next planning cycle. That makes the FAM a longer game.

Perhaps, then, FAM trips are not losing their charm. The industry is simply asking them to grow up a little. A memorable dinner is lovely. A stunning sunset is even better. A social media post can certainly help. The real applause, though, comes when the agent returns to the desk, picks up the phone and sells the experience.

The FAM is alive. The free holiday is simply no longer enough. And that sets up the second part of the story: what do the travel agents themselves think? Do they find FAMs genuinely useful? Do they return with products they can actually sell? And, perhaps most importantly, what makes them say yes to the next invitation?



Pranay Nath

Less, but better

The days of simply filling seats on a FAM may be numbered. Pranay Nath, Founder, Via East DMC, believes the strength of a FAM lies in its relevance. He shares, "The role of a FAM trip has evolved. Today, agents have access to an extraordinary amount of information digitally, so a FAM should not simply be about showing them what they can already find online. Its real value lies in giving them an understanding that cannot be replicated on a screen. The quality of the FAM matters far more than the number of people on it."

Pranay also puts the spotlight on what happens after the trip, a phase that can sometimes receive less attention than the itinerary itself. He adds, "Ultimately, the

success of a FAM should not be judged by how many Instagram posts it generates or how enjoyable the trip was. The real measure is what happens six or twelve months later, whether the agent is more confident selling the destination and whether that confidence translates into business. That is a useful reality check for an industry where social media has become an unofficial scoreboard. A hundred photographs from paradise can create visibility. A hundred bookings over time create a business case."



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Mark Wong

Somewhere between the highway and the horizon lies the kind of hotel that never makes it to a billboard, tucked into a valley, floating on a bay, or hidden behind a garden wall that only the curious traveller thinks to open. Mark Wong, Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific, Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH), shares the essence of the properties.

-Tripti Jain



From the misty crossroads of India's northeast to the quiet beaches south of Tokyo, luxury never stops to amaze the travellers. This is the world that SLH has spent over three decades building. Mark speaks of destinations the way a storyteller speaks of old friends, each with a character, a mood, and a reason to be remembered. He unpacks how SLH is choosing depth over distance, and character over crowds, one remarkable address at a time.

Growth with grace

Every year, hospitality brands race to announce bigger numbers, more signings, more flags planted on the map. SLH has chosen a quieter, more deliberate path. Mark shares describing how the brand added 100 hotels last year, "We are still going after quality type of hotels. SLH is on track to surpass that milestone this year, even as global supply of independent hotels continues to swell in the travel boom."

Rather than chasing volume, the brand is reading the map with a sharper eye, choosing destinations where its presence adds meaning instead of noise. He adds, "We are not there just to have everyone come in. It's just to give enough choices for our customers to experience the place that they want to visit. We follow a philosophy that separates SLH from the crowded field of collection brands expanding purely for headlines."

India's rising trail

India has become one of the most compelling chapters in this growth story. From just seven properties a couple of years ago, the portfolio has climbed to twelve, with fresh additions in Pune's countryside and a converted hill station retreat reshaping what a getaway from the city can look like. Mark shares, "In India, we have added four hotels this year. The region is now one of the largest clusters in Asia for SLH, amongst long-established



markets including China, Japan, and Thailand."

His own explorations across the country read like a traveller's diary rather than a corporate itinerary. Speaking about Dolkhar and its neighbouring valleys, he describes it with genuine wonder: "It's still a very mysterious place, like Bhutan. You don't know whether you're still in India or in Bhutan. Ladakh left a similar impression, with dramatic altitude and equally dramatic scenery along the drive into Nubra Valley, proving that India's next luxury frontier lies far beyond its metro gateways."

recently marked the first anniversary of its Wellbeing Collection with the arrival of a retreat nestled in Shillim, its first well-being property in the country. "They are kind of in the league of the Himalayas," Mark says, describing ambitions to place the property among the top wellness destinations in the region. Globally, the wellness collection remains intentionally small, with 21 hotels in total. "The collection is not going to be very big because it has to be the DNA of the hotel," he explains, making it clear that a spa alone does not earn a place on this list. The hotel itself has to breathe wellness.

Wellness in the hills

Wellness travel has emerged as one of SLH's most personal growth stories in India. The brand

Hubs, then horizons

Ask Wong how a boutique brand convinces travellers to venture



beyond famous gateway cities, and his answer is refreshingly strategic. SLH has built what he calls a hub and spoke network, anchoring properties in major international airports before extending outward into quieter, lesser explored towns. Japan captures this beautifully, with a new seaside retreat in Atami and a wellness property in Awaji City drawing travellers gently away from the well-trodden trail through Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. "After a very busy itinerary, you go there for some relaxation," he says of these regional escapes, describing a model that is also taking shape in China, France, and Australia through high-speed rail routes and scenic self-drive trails.

Homes on water, nests in the wild. Luxury today asks for stories, not just stays, and SLH is answering with accommodation that barely resembles a traditional hotel. The portfolio now includes super yachts and catamarans gliding along the waters of Ecuador and Vietnam's Halong Bay, tree houses rising above the forests of Bali and Phuket, and tented camps set against the wilderness of Rwanda and Tanzania. "Another spin of transportation," is how Mark describes the floating properties, a playful nod to how far the definition of a luxury address has stretched.



Together, under one roof

Among the most telling trends Wong has tracked is the rise of multi-generational travel from India, where families no longer travel in twos but in tribes. "We do have products that are catered to that as well," he says, pointing to SLH's Private Collection of villa-style properties offering multiple bedrooms and shared living spaces built for grandparents, parents, and children to holiday together under one roof. With around 240 such villas in the portfolio, the

brand has found a genuine niche in celebrating togetherness rather than treating it as an afterthought.

Next stop, more discovery

For a brand with 35 years of global heritage, the Indian market still feels like an exciting first act. "We are still in the infancy of coming, reentering the market," Mark shares plans to deepen ties with travel agents, expand awareness campaigns, and eventually extend the brand's footprint into tier two and tier three cities.

Recognition remains a work in progress, since many guests discover only after their stay that the boutique property they loved belongs to the SLH family. Bridging that gap of awareness, one roadshow and one story at a time, is where the next phase of growth will be won.

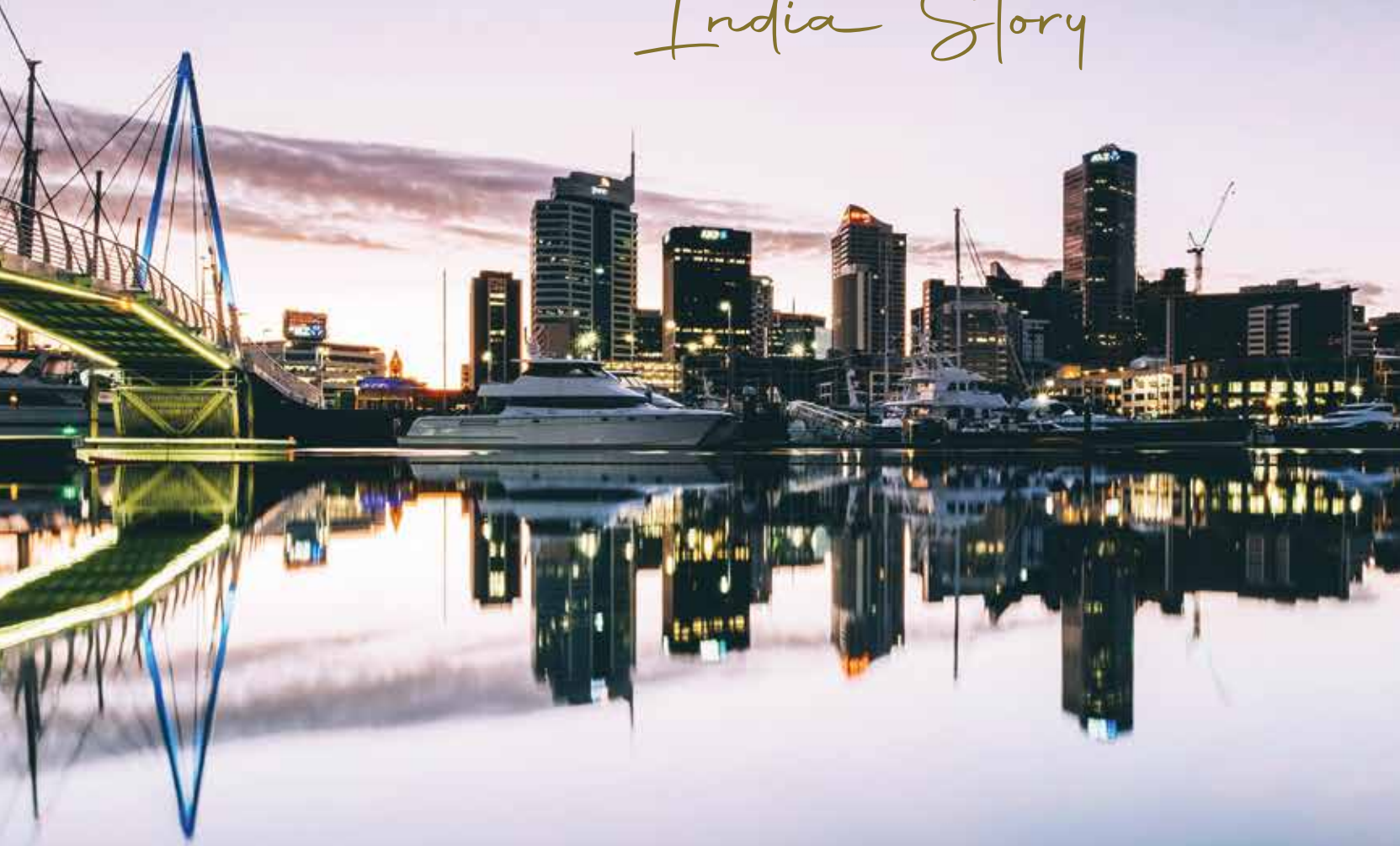
As destinations grow busier and travellers grow more discerning, Small Luxury Hotels of the World is betting on something timeless: the idea that a journey remembered is one that feels personal, unexpected, and entirely one's own. Under Mark Wong's leadership, that belief is steadily reshaping how the world experiences luxury travel, one hidden gem at a time.



Building

NEW ZEALAND'S

India Story



Anna Black

From Auckland's vibrant city life and Rotorua's geothermal wonders to the majestic Southern Alps, pristine lakes and scenic routes of the South Island, the country offers remarkable variety within a single holiday. Anna Black, Managing Director, General Travel reflects on three decades of building trade relationship and showcasing New Zealand's diversity.

-Rishi Arora



For Indian travellers, New Zealand has steadily evolved from a faraway dream destination into a diverse holiday choice that appeals to families, honeymooners, adventure seekers, MICE groups and independent travellers. Behind this growing interest is a travel trade network that has spent years understanding the destination, building product knowledge and creating strong connections between New Zealand suppliers and Indian travel advisors.

General Travel has been part of this journey for three decades. The company established its presence in India at a time when New Zealand was still relatively unfamiliar to the Indian market, working closely with travel agents through roadshows, training sessions and destination-focused engagements. Today, that long-standing relationship continues to play an important role in introducing the many facets of Aotearoa to Indian travellers.

Kiwi connections

General Travel's annual roadshows have become an important platform for connecting the Indian travel trade with New Zealand's tourism suppliers. Hotel groups, transport operators, Regional Tourism Organisations and activity providers come together to present their latest offerings, giving agents a direct understanding of what travellers can experience across the country. For a destination as geographically diverse as New Zealand, this product knowledge becomes particularly valuable when creating itineraries.

Anna shares, "Our goal is to bring the real heartbeat of New Zealand to the Indian market through the partners who know the destination best. The roadshows also provide an opportunity for suppliers to understand the changing requirements of the Indian market and develop stronger relationships with agents who are selling New Zealand."

A destination for all

The destination also lends itself well to different styles of travel. Couples can build romantic itineraries around scenic drives and nature experiences, families can combine attractions and outdoor activities, while adventure seekers can explore everything from hiking and jet boating to bungee jumping and other adrenaline-led experiences.

For Anna, this diversity remains one of New Zealand's strongest advantages. She says, "Whether someone is looking for adventure, nature, culture or simply time to unwind, New Zealand has a story for every traveller."

Knowing the market

The Indian visitor profile for New Zealand has continued to evolve, creating opportunities across multiple segments. Group tours continue to have relevance among older travellers, while the MICE segment is steadily gaining momentum as companies look for destinations that can offer memorable incentive experiences. Self-drive holidays are particularly attractive to travellers looking for flexibility, allowing them to experience the country's landscapes

and towns at their own pace.

Understanding these different requirements is central to developing relevant itineraries. Anna shares, "Understanding what each segment wants allows us to create experiences that truly resonate with Indian travellers."

The golden route

For first-time visitors planning their first New Zealand holiday, Anna recommends allowing around 13 to 14 days to experience both the North and South Islands. The classic journey begins in Auckland before taking travellers through some of the country's most recognisable destinations.

The itinerary can include Waitomo and its famous glowworm experiences, Hobbiton, the geothermal landscapes of Rotorua and the cultural experiences associated with the North Island. Travellers can then continue south towards Christchurch, Mount Cook and Queenstown, before exploring the spectacular West Coast and returning to Christchurch.

Anna explains, "The route brings together cities, countryside, mountains, lakes, adventure and culture, creating a well-rounded introduction to the destination. This journey gives travellers the opportunity to experience New Zealand's incredible variety in a single trip."

Easy connections

Connectivity remains an important consideration when selling any long-haul destination to Indian travellers. While the industry continues to look forward to direct

flight options between India and New Zealand, Singapore remains a preferred gateway for many travellers heading to the country. The Singapore connection also brings an additional dimension to the journey. Many travellers choose to extend their layover at Changi Airport, using the opportunity to explore its shopping, dining and attractions before continuing to New Zealand.

"The Singapore connection works remarkably well, and many travellers see Changi as an experience in itself. This flexibility can also allow travel advisors to create multi-destination itineraries for clients looking to combine New Zealand with another stopover experience," says Anna.

Family values

Founded in 1973 by Anna's father, General Travel has remained a family-run business for more than five decades. The company's long history has shaped its approach to the travel trade, with relationships and personal connections remaining central to the way it operates.

That philosophy has been particularly significant in India, where General Travel has spent 30 years working with travel partners. The relationships developed through roadshows, training programmes and regular trade interactions have helped create a deeper understanding of New Zealand within the market. Anna says, "As long as our partnership with India's travel trade remains this strong, we're confident New Zealand will continue inspiring more Indian travellers for years to come."

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02

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Historic cities, iconic landmarks,
exquisite cuisine, stunning coastlines.



03

FRANCE

Elegant cities, iconic monuments,
fine cuisine, timeless culture.



04

BALKANS

Diverse cultures, scenic mountains,
historic towns, hidden gems.



05

SWITZERLAND

Majestic Alps, crystal lakes,
charming villages, scenic railways.



06

CZECH REPUBLIC

Fairy-tale castles, medieval charm,
rich history, vibrant culture.



07

THE NETHERLANDS

Windmills, canals, tulip fields,
vibrant cities, rich heritage.



08

POLAND

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LUXURY TRAVELS IDENTITY CRISIS!

As luxury travel becomes more accessible than ever, the definition of exclusivity is shifting. Today's affluent travellers are no longer chasing five star labels alone, they're searching for experiences that still feel personal, rare, and worth talking about.

- Naina Nath

Remember when a five - star holiday used to feel like a big deal? You'd save for it, plan for it, talk about it for months before and after. Today, it's Tuesday content. Someone in your feed is checking into an overwater villa, someone else is sipping champagne in a private jet lounge, and somewhere in between, a twenty - three - year - old is unboxing a hotel amenity kit for 40,000 followers. Luxury travel hasn't disappeared, if anything, it's everywhere. And that's exactly the problem people are starting to talk about.

For decades, luxury travel meant rarity. It meant a small, quiet circle of travellers who could afford the best suites, the best service, the best seat on the plane and importantly, very few people who could see them do it. Today, that circle has become a crowd. Instagram, budget business class, loyalty points, "revenge travel," and a genuinely wealthier, more well - travelled global middle class have all conspired to put once-rarefied experiences within reach of far more people. A stay that used to be the stuff of postcards from royalty is now a reasonably common milestone birthday gift. So has luxury travel become too mainstream? The honest answer, and the one most people in the industry will quietly admit, is yes, mostly. Exclusivity, the very currency luxury used to trade in, has become genuinely hard to find. Five-star hotels are no longer rare; they're a category with hundreds of competitors in every major city. Private islands have waitlists. "Hidden gems" get geotagged within a week of opening. The moment something becomes desirable, it becomes visible, and the moment it becomes visible, it becomes

accessible; at least to a larger slice of the world than ever before.

Part of this is simply economics. More people, across more countries, have more disposable income and more appetite to spend it on experiences rather than things. Budget airlines built the on-ramp; social media built the aspiration; travel credit cards and points systems built the affordability. What used to require generational wealth now sometimes just requires a well-timed sale, a points transfer, or a good travel agent. That's not a bad thing for the world, more people getting to see more of it rarely is. But it has undeniably changed what 'luxury' is supposed to signal.

And that's really the heart of the shift. Luxury used to be about the unattainable, the villa nobody else could book, the service nobody else could access. Now, thanks to sheer volume and visibility, luxury has quietly repositioned itself as something closer to a lifestyle expectation than an indulgence. A nice hotel room, a lounge pass, an upgrade; these used to feel like treats. Today, for a growing number of travellers, they feel more like the baseline. The bar hasn't dropped; it's just moved. What was once 'extra' is now often just 'normal,' and what counts as genuinely rare has had to climb even higher to stay rare at all. Think private aviation, ultra-remote expeditions, or fully bespoke, unlisted experiences that no algorithm can surface.

This doesn't mean luxury travel is dead, or even diminished, it simply means it has evolved, split into layers, and gotten a lot more competitive. Brands that used to coast on the word 'luxury' alone are now being forced to prove it,

over and over, to travellers who have seen it all, compared it all, and reviewed it all. The mainstreaming of luxury hasn't killed exclusivity. It's just made it a lot more expensive, a lot more private, and a lot harder to fake. We asked voices from across the travel industry to weigh in on whether luxury travel has lost its edge. Here's what they had to say -



Jose Dominic

1. Luxury takes a new definition. It has ceased to be the built ostentation but the experience. To be lasting and meaningful and must have purpose. Serve the local community without harming the environment. Inclusive of people protective of the ecology. Memorable by teaching you new ways of thinking. Ageless and beyond trending for the time being. Happy to come back for more and more of the same. Authentic and original. Price does not put a measure on luxury. The ultimate luxury is pristine nature and its enjoyment without in any way causing any diminution to it.

- Jose Dominic — MD & CEO at CGH Earth



Joerg Drechsel

2. Yes, luxury travel has become more mainstream. Expanding global chains have created a commercialised 5 star experience, mostly standardised, driven by social media and aspirational upgrade offers. It is often a repeating experience. Contrasting genuine high end travel has evolved, offering personalised immersive experiences. This is where Relais & Chateaux comes in, an association with more than 500 members globally. What unites them is crafting genuine culture rooted experiences, local authenticity and culinary excellence. The values we represent and practice have become the true luxury.

- Joerg Drechsel, Delegate for ISC, SEA and Greater China for Relais & Chateaux, Owner of Malabar House





Radhika Khanijo

3. Luxury travel hasn't become too mainstream — the old definition of it has. Display-driven luxury, the right hotel, the right photo, was always accessible with enough money. But true luxury was never about scarcity; it's about how an experience makes you feel, and that can't be mass-produced.

What's emerging instead is rarity of experience over mere access: Ayurveda integrated with modern medicine at places like Tulah, longevity clinics like La Prairie and Lanserhof, private conservancies like Ol Jogi over hotel suites, private yachts and polar expeditions over cruises, bespoke suites at FI or Art Basel over a ticket in. So true luxury isn't about getting more, it's curating rare, experiential stories. The shift from ornament to experience is less about being seen in the right place, more about finding something impossible to replicate. Luxury, true luxury, is no longer one-size-fits-all. It begins with a relationship, not an itinerary.

- Radhika Khanijo — Founder & Luxury Travel Designer at Welgrow Travels.



Abbhinish Annand

4. Luxury travel has certainly become more mainstream, but interestingly, we are seeing a shift in what travellers consider luxury. Many of our clients today prefer to stay within the same hotel group or brand, even when travelling to different destinations. Loyalty programmes and points accumulation play a significant role in this decision, as clients value recognition, upgrades, benefits and the sense of familiarity that comes with being loyal to a brand. At the same time, they still expect highly personalised and distinctive experiences. So, while luxury has become more accessible, the expectations of the luxury traveller have become much higher. For us, true luxury is no longer simply about the hotel or the price tag. It is about the combination of exclusivity, personalisation, recognition and experiences that genuinely add value to the journey.

- Abbhinish Annand — Director at Kamal Tours & Travels Pvt Ltd

And so, the rarest luxury today isn't necessarily the most expensive one. It's time. It's privacy. It's authenticity. It's finding moments that don't feel mass produced.

So yes, luxury travel has become more mainstream. But perhaps that's exactly why the industry's definition of luxury is evolving faster than ever. The future won't belong to the hotels with the biggest suites or the destinations with the most Instagram worthy views. It will belong to those that can still surprise even the most well travelled guest.



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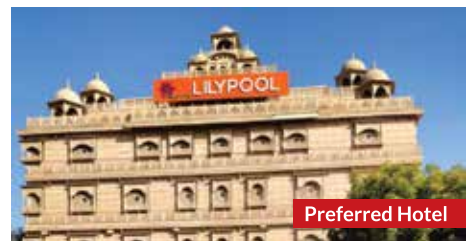
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WASHINGTON DC

Capital full
of surprises



Letizia Sirtori

Washington, DC has long worn the crown of America's political heart, but beneath the marble monuments and famous skyline lies a city bursting with rivers, rooftops, global cuisine, and neighborhoods that locals adore. Letizia Sirtori, Vice President, Tourism and Global Development at Destination DC paints a picture for us while sharing her love for the destination.

- *Tripti Jain*

For travellers from India seeking a destination that blends history with adventure, culture with comfort, and grandeur with genuine warmth, the American capital is quietly rewriting its own story. Destination DC is committed to strengthening its presence in India and is collaborating closely with the travel trade to inspire more Indian travellers to experience the many facets of the U.S. capital.

Beyond the monuments

DC's iconic landmarks remain unforgettable, yet the city offers a far richer tapestry than postcards suggest. Letizia explains that the destination is working to move travellers past a familiar image. She shares, "We're really trying to get past that very federal perception, because we have that depth that the Indian market is really looking for. From world-class museums to lively local markets, the city invites visitors to peel back its layers and discover experiences that rarely make it onto a typical itinerary."

A city built on water

One of DC's best-kept secrets is its relationship with water. Two rivers wind through the capital, opening the door to kayaking, paddleboarding, sunset cruises, and waterfront dining that most travellers never expect to find here. Letizia describes this side of the

city with pride and says, "It's really something that people don't think of when they think of Washington, DC, but it's a waterfront destination. Neighborhoods such as The Wharf and Georgetown showcase this connection beautifully, offering canal-side cafes, scenic tours, and a relaxed rhythm that pairs perfectly with the city's cultural offerings."

Museums that come alive

DC's museum scene is celebrated worldwide, and much of it comes without a price tag. Letizia points out that this accessibility sets the capital apart from many global cities. She shares, "Culture should be free for everybody. The Smithsonian institutions, the National Gallery, and the National Zoo welcome visitors at no cost, supported through federal funding. Alongside these free treasures, immersive paid experiences such as the newly renovated National Air and Space Museum and its space capsule exhibits, planetarium shows, and 3D theaters add an extra layer of wonder for curious minds of every age."

Flavours from every corner of the world

With over sixty cuisines represented and twenty-six Michelin-starred restaurants, DC has quietly become a destination for food lovers. The city's Indian dining scene, in

particular, reflects its deep and growing connection to the subcontinent. Letizia speaks fondly of this culinary bridge and shares, "We have some contemporary Indian fusion, some traditional options, and even fast Indian food restaurants that introduce visitors to home-style cooking. Local entrepreneurs have built menus inspired by family recipes passed down through generations."

Where green spaces meet city life

Unlike many major capitals, Washington offers travellers a sense of calm rarely associated with big-city travel. Rooftop lounges with sweeping views, tree-lined parks larger than Central Park, and a skyline capped at thirteen stories create an atmosphere that feels open and unhurried. Letizia captures this feeling perfectly and says, "You can relax, just walking around the city, no one's rushing you. It's very nice. The city's famous park score and its abundance of green corridors as part of what makes the destination so appealing to families and young travellers alike."

An experience designed for everyone

Accessibility runs deep in DC's identity, shaping everything from sidewalks to hotels to restaurants. Letizia shares a story that stayed

with her, about a mother traveling alone with three young children who found the city remarkably easy to navigate. She shares, "It was so easy, and truly, that is what we want every visitor to feel. This commitment extends to travellers with disabilities as well, with venues, transportation, and public spaces designed thoughtfully to welcome every kind of visitor with ease and dignity."

The future story

As India continues to rank among the top spending markets for the destination, Destination DC is focused on deepening those ties through curated experiences, seasonal celebrations like the Cherry Blossom Festival, and new culinary and cultural discoveries. Letizia remains confident about what awaits travellers once they arrive. "Our job is really getting people there, because once they're there, they're going to have a great time"

Washington, DC invites travellers to look past the familiar skyline and discover a city shaped by rivers, rhythm, flavour, and genuine hospitality. It is a capital that rewards curiosity, welcoming visitors to explore its museums by day, its rooftops by evening, and its riverbanks whenever the mood calls for something a little more adventurous.

The Horizon Tours Story

Every great travel company begins with a story worth telling, and the tale of The Horizon Tours is one that trade partners across India will find genuinely relatable. Himanshu Aggarwal and Rajdeep Mandal, Founders, Horizon Tours share about the journey behind Horizon Tours.

- Tripti Jain



Every successful journey begins long before a traveller boards a flight. It starts with an idea, shaped by conversations, local knowledge and an understanding of what truly matters to the person travelling. This is a story of two professionals who spent years learning the travel business from the inside out, before deciding to build something of their own that the industry had been quietly waiting for.

Where it all began

Himanshu Aggarwal and Rajdeep Mandal did not stumble into the destination management business by chance. Between them, they carried more than three decades of experience across hotels, OTAs, destination management and large-scale MICE movements. Sitting down one day to reflect on everything they had seen in the industry, a simple thought took shape and refused to leave them. Himanshu shares light on the beginning of the company, "The Horizon Tours started with a very simple idea. After spending more than fifteen years in the travel industry, both Rajdeep and I felt there was room for a destination management company that genuinely understood different markets instead of offering the same product to everyone. Rajdeep has a strong MICE background and speaks German, while I speak Japanese and have worked across hotels, OTAs and destination management. Those different experiences shaped the way we built the company."

That idea, born from years of watching the industry up close, became the foundation of a company built on empathy and understanding rather than templates and shortcuts.

Speaking the language of every traveller

What makes The Horizon Tours stand apart today is the sheer diversity of travellers it now serves. The company has grown well beyond its original Indian outbound focus to welcome travellers from the Middle East, Europe, the USA and several other



Himanshu Aggarwal

international markets exploring Japan and Europe. Himanshu believes this growth has only reinforced the philosophy the company was built on. He says, "Today we don't only work with the Indian market. We handle travellers from the Middle East, Europe, the USA and other international markets visiting Japan and Europe. Every market has different expectations, so we don't believe in a one - size - fits - all approach. Our job is to understand the traveller first and then build the right experience around them."

Partnerships that go beyond bookings

Seasoned travel agents will tell you that the value of a good DMC partner rarely begins with price. Rajdeep understood this early, and it shows in the way The Horizon Tours has built its trade relationships. He shares, "For us, partnerships are built long before a booking is confirmed. Travel agents need someone they can rely on for honest advice, quick solutions and strong local support. That's what we focus on every day." Behind every confirmed booking sits a team that Rajdeep trusts completely, and he speaks about them with visible pride. "We also invest a lot in our team because our operations team represents



Rajdeep Mandal

our company on the ground. We encourage everyone to understand destinations, think independently and take ownership instead of simply following a checklist. When our team is confident, our partners automatically feel more confident working with us."

Rise of meaningful travel

Ask the founders where the energy in their business currently lies, and Japan comes up almost instantly. Himanshu discusses about the destination closest to his expertise, "Japan continues to be one of our strongest destinations. We are seeing increasing demand for FIT travellers, luxury holidays, anime-themed experiences, premium family holidays and corporate groups. Across Europe, Italy, Switzerland, France, Spain and Scandinavia continue to perform well. At the same time, travellers are becoming more interested in destinations that offer authentic local experiences rather than just famous landmarks."

A message for the trade

For Indian travel agents navigating a rapidly changing market, Rajdeep offers a perspective rooted in optimism. He shares, "Indian travellers have become much more informed over the last

few years. They travel more often, ask better questions and expect experiences that are personalised. That creates a great opportunity for travel agents. Instead of competing only on price, they can create value through knowledge, planning and destination expertise. Clients remember the experience they had, not just the amount they paid."

The road still being written

Himanshu remains focused on the personal touch that started it all when he looks toward the future of the business. He says, "I believe personalised travel will continue to grow. People are looking for experiences that reflect their interests, whether that's luxury, culture, food, motorsports, anime, wellness or adventure. They're also willing to spend more if they know the experience will be worth it. Another trend is that travellers increasingly want recommendations from people who actually know the destination rather than simply finding information online."

Rajdeep has a clear vision for the company's next chapter. He adds, "Our focus remains very clear, deliver consistently and grow responsibly. We've never believed that business is won only through the lowest price. It is won through communication, product knowledge and smooth execution. Over the next year, we'll continue investing in our on-ground operations across Japan and Europe, strengthen our MICE business and expand our luxury and tailor-made travel portfolio."

The Horizon Tours carries the energy of a young company with the maturity of a well-seasoned one, and its founders find their greatest reassurance in something far more meaningful than numbers on a balance sheet. Most of their business today comes through repeat clients and referrals, a quiet but powerful signal that their belief has found its place in the market. Great travel, as Himanshu and Rajdeep continue to prove, is created by understanding people first and destinations second, one journey and one partnership at a time.



Holiday Mechanic

Odisha through meaningful journeys

Odisha is emerging as one of India's most compelling destinations, bringing together ancient temples, spiritual traditions, rich tribal heritage, wildlife, coastlines and vibrant local culture. Poonam Dhankhar, Founder, Holiday Mechanic shares more about the brand.

- Tripti Jain

Holiday Mechanic, the Odisha - focused Destination Management Company (DMC) is building journeys around local expertise, personalised experiences and dependable destination support. Holiday Mechanic was founded with a simple vision, to make travel planning seamless and dependable for both travel agents and travellers.

The company was created to address a clear need within destination management. Travel partners required reliable ground support, transparent pricing and prompt service to confidently plan holidays for their clients. Holiday Mechanic set out to bridge this gap by combining strong local knowledge with personalised travel solutions and efficient operations.

Discovering Odisha differently

Poonam explains, "Odisha remains our strongest market, with high demand for Puri, Bhubaneswar, Konark, Chilika and tribal tourism experiences. Each destination brings a distinct dimension to Odisha's tourism story. Puri combines spirituality with coastal appeal, Bhubaneswar offers an introduction to the state's remarkable temple architecture, and Konark showcases the grandeur of India's ancient heritage. Chilika adds nature and wildlife to the experience, while tribal tourism introduces travellers to Odisha's indigenous traditions and communities." Holiday Mechanic is also seeing

growing demand for customised family holidays, spiritual tourism, leisure groups, corporate travel and FIT packages. This diverse demand reflects travellers' growing preference for journeys designed around individual interests and travel styles.

Experiences made personal

"Today's travellers seek unique experiences rather than standard packages, so we create tailor-made itineraries while ensuring quality accommodations, smooth logistics and 24/7 support," says Poonam. Personalisation is central to Holiday Mechanic's approach.

Rather than relying solely on conventional packages, the company develops itineraries around the traveller's interests, pace and purpose. Technology - driven operations support faster responses and smoother coordination, creating a more efficient planning process for travel partners.

The approach is particularly relevant for Odisha, where heritage, spirituality, nature and culture can be woven together into highly individual journeys. A family holiday can combine temples and leisure, a spiritual itinerary can explore sacred sites, while an FIT traveller can discover lesser - known cultural and natural experiences.

Partnerships that matter

Poonam shares, "Our philosophy is to grow together with our



Poonam Dhankhar

partners. Strong relationships with travel agents remain fundamental to the company's growth. Transparency, competitive pricing, quick turnaround times, consistent communication and dependable on-ground support form the foundation of these partnerships."

For travel agents, having a trusted destination partner provides greater confidence when recommending Odisha to their clients. Holiday Mechanic's focus on delivering its commitments and resolving requirements promptly has helped build long-standing relationships within the travel trade.

Looking beyond Odisha

"Our vision is to establish Holiday Mechanic as one of India's most trusted and preferred Destination Management

Companies. Over the next three to five years, the company aims to strengthen its presence across India, expand its travel trade network and embrace technology to enhance the customer experience. Promoting Odisha as a world-class tourism destination will remain an important part of this journey," says Poonam.

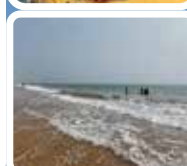
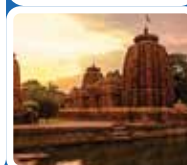
Holiday Mechanic's story is closely connected to Odisha's own tourism evolution. By combining destination knowledge with personalised planning and reliable execution, the company is helping travellers experience the state through journeys that are richer, more immersive and distinctly their own. Its next chapter promises to take this experience - led approach to a wider Indian tourism landscape.

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HEADS IN BEDS

Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai Life Between the Rice Fields

Set amid the emerald rice terraces of Chiang Mai's Mae Rim Valley, Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai celebrates the rhythms of rural Thailand through authentic Lanna culture, exceptional dining and quietly luxurious hospitality.

- Misbaah Mansuri



HEADS IN BEDS

Thailand has always known how to seduce travellers. Bangkok dazzles with its restless energy, Phuket tempts with beach clubs and island sunsets, while Koh Samui and Krabi have perfected tropical escapism. But Chiang Mai tells a different story. It asks you to slow down.

Nestled within the emerald folds of the Mae Rim Valley, around an hour from Chiang Mai International Airport, Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai feels worlds away from the bustle of modern Thailand. There are no soaring towers or dramatic entrances here. Instead, water buffalo graze beside working rice paddies, lotus ponds mirror the changing skies, and birdsong replaces the soundtrack of traffic. Designed by celebrated landscape architect Bill Bensley, the resort unfolds like a living northern Thai village. Traditional teak pavilions emerge from lush tropical gardens, lily-covered ponds reflect century-old rain trees, and terraced rice fields stretch gently across the valley, changing colour with the seasons. Nothing feels imposed

upon the landscape; the architecture seems to have grown from it.

That sense of place defines everything here.

Unlike many luxury resorts that recreate local culture through carefully staged performances, Four Seasons embraces the traditions of Northern Thailand with remarkable sincerity. Farmers still tend the rice fields each morning. Guests are invited to plant rice alongside them, meet the resident water buffaloes or learn centuries-old handicrafts at Chaa Baan, the resort's cultural centre. Luxury isn't separated from local life; it exists because of it.

From the moment our car rolled beneath the resort's wooden entrance pavilion, that philosophy became immediately apparent.

There was no hurried check-in desk waiting inside.

Instead, we were welcomed with chilled towels delicately scented with lemongrass, refreshing herbal tea and genuine smiles that never felt rehearsed. Formalities were completed while we relaxed in the open-air lobby, where polished teak floors

overlooked gardens alive with birds, butterflies and towering palms.

It felt wonderfully unhurried.

In an industry increasingly obsessed with efficiency, Four Seasons reminds guests that slowing down can be the greatest luxury of all.

Checking in

Our Pavilion room continued that quiet conversation between luxury and nature.

Rather than overwhelming with opulence, it immediately put the landscape centre stage. Floor-to-ceiling windows framed uninterrupted views across tropical gardens, while warm teak flooring, handcrafted furnishings and subtle Lanna-inspired details created a sense of understated elegance. Soft creams, natural wood and woven textures echoed the colours outside, allowing the surrounding greenery to become part of the room itself.

Waiting on the bed was a thoughtful floral welcome spelling out "Welcome to Chiang Mai", while fresh tropical fruit, locally brewed Chiang Mai iced tea and

delicate Thai sweets sat waiting on the coffee table.

It was a simple gesture, but one that immediately made the room feel personal.

The spacious bathroom continued the resort's connection to nature, complete with a deep soaking tub positioned beside oversized windows that welcomed soft morning light. Every detail, from the handcrafted ceramics to the locally inspired amenities, reflected a quiet confidence rather than unnecessary extravagance.

Outside, the private balcony overlooked mature trees, lotus ponds and rice fields where farmers quietly tended the crops each morning. Rather than reaching for my phone, I found myself simply watching the changing light across the valley. Luxury here wasn't designed to distract.

It was designed to reconnect.

The same philosophy carried effortlessly into every meal that followed, where local ingredients, traditional recipes and breathtaking settings transformed dining into one of the highlights of the stay.



HEADS IN BEDS

Dining

If the landscape nourishes the soul, the dining at Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai celebrates the land itself.

Every meal here feels intrinsically connected to Northern Thailand, whether through ingredients harvested from nearby farms, recipes rooted in centuries of Lanna tradition or settings that blur the line between restaurant and nature.

Our most memorable evening unfolded at the resort's Private Rice Barn Dining experience, one of the property's signature culinary moments.

Hidden beside a tranquil lake and surrounded by emerald rice paddies, the setting felt almost cinematic. Our table was dressed with tropical flowers and softly flickering candles, while gentle music drifted across the water as dusk settled over the Mae Rim Valley. Beyond the lantern light, lotus leaves floated quietly across the pond, their reflections shimmering beneath an impossibly clear night sky.

There were no distractions, no neighbouring tables, only the sounds of nature and the quiet anticipation of a beautifully paced meal.

Dinner began with a fragrant tom yum soup, its broth striking that elusive balance between brightness and warmth. Notes of lemongrass, kaffir lime and galangal unfolded gradually, while just enough chilli lingered to awaken the palate without overwhelming it. Comforting yet elegant, it was a reminder that Thailand's most iconic dishes rarely need reinvention when executed this well.

The Thai beef salad quickly became another highlight.

Tender slices of perfectly cooked beef were dressed with fresh herbs, roasted rice, lime and fish sauce, creating layers of freshness, smokiness and gentle spice that danced effortlessly across the palate. Every bite felt vibrant and alive.

The meal continued through beautifully prepared Thai classics designed for sharing, each allowing the quality of locally sourced ingredients to shine. Rich curries, fragrant stir-fries and delicate vegetables reflected the culinary heritage of Northern Thailand with confidence rather than complication.

Yet it was the setting that lingered longest.

As candlelight danced across the lake and the rice fields disappeared into the evening mist, dinner became less about the food and more about the feeling. It captured everything Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai does so well: understated luxury, an extraordinary sense of place and an ability to make even the simplest moments feel quietly unforgettable.

The following morning, breakfast at KHAO by Four Seasons carried that same philosophy into daylight.

Overlooking the rice terraces, mornings unfolded slowly through tropical fruit, buttery pastries, freshly brewed coffee and authentic Thai favourites. The atmosphere encouraged lingering, watching farmers begin their day's work while mist slowly lifted from the surrounding fields.

Later, lunch returned us to KHAO, where the chefs celebrated Thailand's remarkable regional diversity through beautifully presented classics prepared with

produce sourced from the fertile Northern Thai countryside.

Our final evening took us to NORTH by Four Seasons, where the resort's open-fire concept offers an altogether different expression of local cuisine. Ingredients from nearby farms are transformed over glowing embers, allowing smoke, flame and exceptional produce to take centre stage. Rustic in inspiration yet refined in execution, it was a fitting conclusion to a stay where every meal felt deeply connected to the landscape around us.

Experiences

While the food nourishes, it is the experiences that reveal the soul of the resort.

At Chaan Baan, Four Seasons invites guests to step into rural Northern Thailand through a series of hands-on cultural traditions. We wandered through herb gardens, learnt the centuries-old art of natural tie-dye using plant pigments, and spent time with the resort's resident water buffaloes, gentle symbols of Thailand's agricultural heritage that continue to work the surrounding rice fields.

Rather than feeling curated for tourists, the experience felt authentic, celebrating traditions that remain very much alive today.

The afternoon naturally flowed into the Wara Cheewa Spa, where our Rose of the North treatment drew inspiration from ancient Lanna healing rituals. Long, rhythmic massage techniques using aromatic oils dissolved the fatigue of travel, before a private floral bath surrounded by fresh blossoms offered a deeply restorative finale.

As the name suggests, Wara

Cheewa, meaning "the gift of life", is less about pampering and more about restoring balance.

Later, as the sun dipped behind the Doi Suthep mountains, we made our way to Ratree Bar.

Named after a delicate variety of jasmine, the open-air lounge overlooks the resort's infinity pool and rice paddies beyond. Signature cocktails arrived as the valley slowly shifted through shades of amber and violet, creating one of those rare moments where conversation naturally gives way to simply watching the landscape change around you.

In a nutshell

Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai doesn't rely on spectacle.

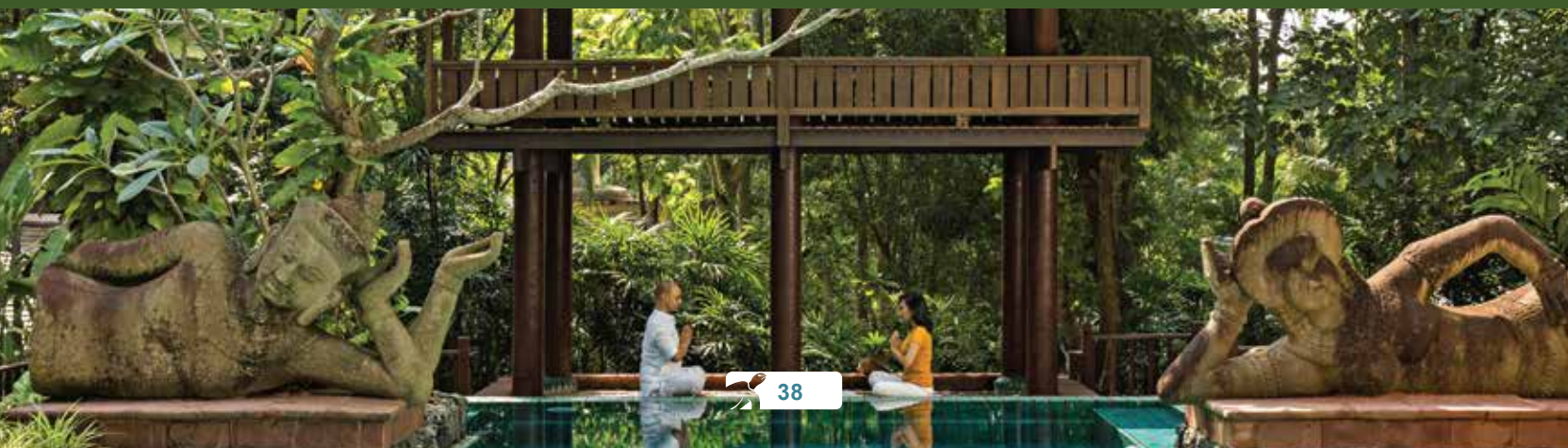
Instead, it offers something increasingly rare: authenticity.

Here, luxury isn't measured by excess, but by the quiet confidence of a place deeply connected to its surroundings. From Bill Bensley's extraordinary landscape design and heartfelt Lanna hospitality to candlelit dinners beside lotus ponds, restorative spa rituals and mornings overlooking emerald rice fields, every experience feels intentionally rooted in Northern Thailand.

It is a resort that encourages you to slow down, breathe a little deeper and rediscover the simple pleasure of being present.

Long after leaving Chiang Mai, it wasn't the infinity pools or beautifully designed pavilions that stayed with me most.

It was the rhythm of the rice fields, the warmth of the people and the profound stillness that somehow made the world beyond the valley feel wonderfully far away.



World Travel Collective

Curated for Connection

Six industry veterans came together to build a curated, outcome-driven platform for India's travel trade, with the inaugural edition of WTC held in Gujarat's capital.

-Naina Nath



India's travel trade has a new address for business. World Travel Collective (WTC), a fresh B2B networking platform, held its inaugural edition in Ahmedabad on 3rd to 4th August 2026 at the Gujarat University Convention and Exhibition Centre, backed by six well-known names from the travel industry, the founder of the event Hiral Somani, Holiday Exotica, and the co-founders of the event, Aalok Soni, Assured Hospitality Services, Munjal Fitter, rezmytrip.com, Niral Patel, Exotic Places, Dheeraj Saundh, Chutney Hotels & Holidays, and Digvijay Sinh Jhala, Shaurya Hospitality.

Built to close a gap

WTC grew out of a shared challenge within the industry: trade shows are good for networking, but they rarely give exhibitors and buyers the structure they need to actually get down to business. By the end of the first edition, the founders felt the format had worked the way they'd hoped. Hiral Somani, Holiday Exotica, and Founder of WTC has been part of the travel trade for more than 26 years and has attended trade shows in India and abroad through much of that time. She shares, "In over 26 years in this industry, I've been to countless trade shows in India and overseas. These events are great for networking, but we felt the trade needed something more focused, a platform driven by outcomes, where the quality of interactions matters more than the volume. WTC was built to be a business-enabling ecosystem, one where long-term partnerships take root and results can actually be measured."

Hiral also pointed to a gap she had long noticed in who gets to access global travel platforms. She explains, "I always felt that only a certain set of agents ever get the chance to attend these kinds of events internationally, while the rest of the fraternity misses out entirely. I wanted my fraternity to have access to a platform like this too. For Hiral, the business side of the two days was inseparable from something more personal. "Even though it's business, there's always a personal connection that forms when you meet people face to face. I've always valued that personal connect," she adds.

Why Ahmedabad?

The decision to base WTC in Ahmedabad was not incidental. Gujarat has grown into one of India's most active outbound travel markets, yet it had never really had an international-standard B2B networking platform built specifically for its travel community, until now. By hosting WTC in Ahmedabad, the founders gave tourism boards, destinations, hotels, DMCS and suppliers direct access to one of the country's most entrepreneurial travel markets, while giving Gujarat's own travel professionals the chance to connect with global partners without having to travel to Delhi or Mumbai for it.

Dheeraj Saundh, Chutney Hotels & Holidays and Co-Founder of WTC put it down to what Gujarat had been missing all along. He shares, "There's a real gap in the luxury segment here in Gujarat. A number of exhibitions are happening in the metro cities, but there's nothing built for this segment in our own state."



Digvijay Sinh Jhala, Shaurya Hospitality and Co-founder of WTC adds that the larger idea behind bringing the event to Ahmedabad was rooted in Gujarat's growing weight as an outbound tourism market. He says, "The whole idea of bringing the world to Ahmedabad comes from the fact that Gujarat has become such a predominant outbound market. We want the world to see and experience Gujarat, and to experience the business that comes out of it."

A curated, appointment-led format

According to the founders, what really set WTC apart was how the meetings themselves were run. Every buyer who attended had been screened beforehand, and meetings were pre-scheduled around genuine, mutual business interest instead of being left to chance on the show floor. "Our structured meeting model makes sure exhibitors get in front of the right buyers, and buyers get connected with the partners most relevant to them. That translates into better conversations, stronger relationships, a higher return on investment, and real business opportunities for everyone involved," explains Aalok Soni, Assured Hospitality Services, Co-founder of WTC.

To make this happen on the ground, WTC ran on an app-based meeting system through the event. "We've built the entire event around an app-based meeting system. Buyers download the app, book appointments with exhibitors through it, and meet them accordingly," explains Niral Patel, Exotic Places and Co-Founder of WTC, describing a

process that gave the two days a clear, trackable structure instead of relying on walk-ins.

Munjal Fitter, rezmytrip.com, another co-founder, points out that WTC was never built around any single individual's vision. He shares, "WTC isn't built on one person's vision, it stands on six strong pillars. Each of the founders and co-founders brings expertise from their own region. A spread of expertise that gave the platform its national outlook despite being rooted in Ahmedabad."

A reflection of evolving travel habits

The event also reflected a broader shift in what Indian travellers want. People are moving away from conventional sightseeing toward more authentic, personalised experiences; wellness retreats, cultural immersion, adventure travel, gastronomy tours and bespoke itineraries are increasingly what luxury means to the modern Indian traveller. Destinations and tourism partners at WTC used the platform to showcase offerings built around this shift, and travel professionals came away with a clearer sense of what's actually in demand right now.

What's next?

For the founders, the real measure of this first edition isn't how many people showed up, but how many of those business relationships hold up over time. With the inaugural edition done, they're now looking ahead - the plan is to grow WTC into one of India's most respected B2B travel platforms, known for its curated approach and the quality of the people in the room rather than sheer numbers.






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FAITH Conclave 2026:



India's tourism moment

India's tourism story is entering an exciting phase, with destinations, connectivity, hospitality and experiences coming together as powerful drivers of economic growth. This larger vision shaped the FAITH Tourism Conclave 2026, held on 16 and 17 July under the theme 'Incredible India: Invaluable Economics.'

-Tripti Jain

EVENT AFFAIR

Organised by the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), the conclave brought together policymakers, tourism leaders, hospitality professionals, airlines, travel associations and global industry voices to discuss the opportunities shaping India's tourism future. FAITH positioned the conclave as a platform to define time-bound milestones for Indian tourism towards 2030 and contribute to the larger vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The two-day programme covered inbound and domestic tourism, aviation, hospitality, MICE, entrepreneurship, frontier tourism and destination development, giving the travel trade a broad view of the opportunities ahead.

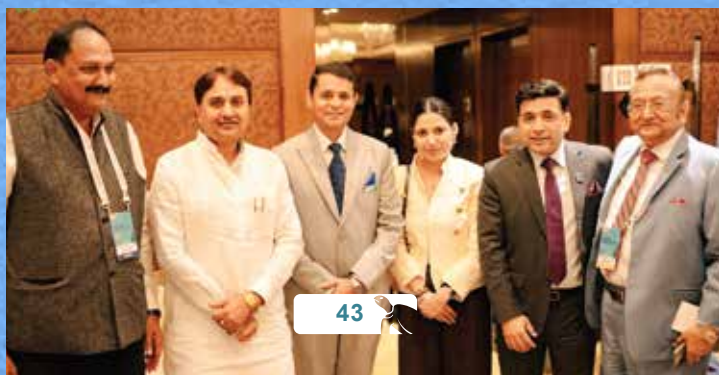
Unlocking potential

The theme of the conclave - 'Unlocking India's Tourism Economy', set the tone for the conclave. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Tourism delivered a special addresses, and keynote speaker Gloria Guevara, CEO, WTTC, shared her views on travel and tourism as a global powerhouse for growth, prosperity and employment. For the B2B sector, this destination-led approach presents opportunities to create fresh circuits, package emerging experiences and take travellers beyond established tourism routes.

The business of travel

Day two shifted the spotlight towards the business dimensions of tourism. Boman Irani opened the programme with 'Perseverance, Patience & Passion: Building India's Tourism Future', followed by a session on entrepreneurship featuring Rajesh Magow, Co-founder & CEO, MakeMyTrip, in conversation with Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH.

The conversations reflected the growing importance of entrepreneurship, innovation and private enterprise in expanding India's tourism market. For travel companies, the opportunity lies in translating changing traveller preferences



into sharper products, stronger destination knowledge and more personalised experiences.

Hospitality moves ahead

Hospitality remained central to the tourism economy conversation. 'The Next Frontier for Indian Hospitality' featured Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson & Managing Director, Lalit Group, and K.B. Kachru, President, HAI, moderated by Mandeep Lamba, President, HVS South Asia.

India's expanding destination portfolio calls for a strong and varied accommodation ecosystem. Hotels increasingly form an integral part of the destination experience, with service, product quality and location influencing the way travellers discover and experience India. The opportunity for the travel trade is equally significant, as new accommodation options can support the development of fresh itineraries across emerging destinations.

Connecting India

MICE and aviation emerged as key pillars of tourism growth. Dr Neeraj Kharwal IAS, MD, ITPO, and Hari Kishore IAS, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Chairman, ICPB, participated in the session 'Creating a Global MICE Leadership Position for India', with Chander Mansharamani, Vice Chairman, ICPB, joining the fireside chat.

Aviation took centre stage through 'Wings of Growth: Aviation Fueling India's Tourism Economy', featuring Nipun Agarwal, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India, Aloke Singh, Chief Strategy Officer, IndiGo, and Kevin Markette, Senior Director, Regional Sales, Asia, Lufthansa Group, moderated by Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travels. Better connectivity can open new tourism corridors, improve destination accessibility and give tour operators greater flexibility in designing domestic and international itineraries.

The domestic pulse

The importance of domestic travel received dedicated attention through 'Importance of Domestic Tourism in India', featuring Neelu Sharma, Chairman, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, and Vivek Acharya,

EVENT AFFAIR

IFS, Managing Director, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, followed by a fireside chat with Ved Khanna, President, ADTOI.

India's domestic market provides a strong foundation for destination development, particularly for regions seeking to introduce lesser-known attractions to a wider audience. Nature, culture, food, festivals and experiential travel can help create compelling reasons for travellers to explore new parts of the country.

Inbound, reimagined

India's international tourism ambitions came into focus through 'Reimagining India's Inbound Tourism Strategy: Global Learnings', featuring H.E. Dr Philipp Ackermann, Ambassador of Germany to India, and Ravi Gosain, President, IATO.

India's depth of heritage, spirituality, wellness, wildlife, culture and experiential travel gives it a distinctive proposition for international markets. Building stronger destination narratives and improving every stage of the visitor journey can further enhance India's competitiveness. Visa facilitation formed another important part of the discussion, with Yummi Talwar, COO, South Asia, VFS Global, highlighting the

role of efficient processes in building smoother international travel experiences.

One seamless ecosystem

The session 'Building a Seamless Tourism Ecosystem for India' brought together Dr Vikram Lalwani, President, AIRDA; Shatrunjai Singh, EC Member, IHHA; Satish Sehrawat, President, ITTA; and Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI.

The discussion highlighted the importance of collaboration across government, associations and businesses. Infrastructure, transport, accommodation, attractions and travel services work best when they form one connected visitor experience. Such integration can also make destination products easier for the B2B community to develop, package and sell.

Beyond borders

Tourism's wider role was explored through 'Peace Through Tourism', addressed by Ajay Prakash, Global

President, International Institute of Peace Through Tourism, followed by a fireside chat with Abbas Moiz, President, TAFI.

The conclave then turned towards 'Frontier Tourism: Unlocking the Strategic Potential of India's Border Destinations', featuring General Anil Chauhan PVSM UYSM AVSM SM VSM, Former Chief of Defence Staff, in conversation with Ajeet Bajaj, Padma Shri, Vice Chairman, FAITH and President, ATOAI.

Frontier destinations offer the travel trade an opportunity to introduce travellers to distinctive landscapes, communities and experiences, supported by responsible destination development.

Made for the World

The closing conversation, 'Made in India. Admired by the World', featured Anupam Kher in conversation with Puneet Chhatwal, Chairman, FAITH, focusing on lessons for building world-class tourism enterprises.

The concluding session reinforced the larger message of the conclave: India possesses the scale, diversity and tourism assets to build globally competitive experiences. Rajiv Mehra, General Secretary, FAITH, delivered the vote of thanks before the gala networking dinner and closing celebrations.

The next step

FAITH Tourism Conclave 2026 offered the travel industry a strong view of India's next tourism chapter. From aviation and hospitality to inbound travel, domestic tourism, MICE and frontier destinations, the conversations reflected an industry moving towards greater collaboration and sharper destination development.

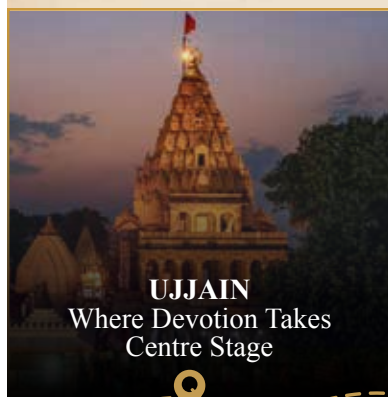
The theme 'Incredible India: Invaluable Economics' captured the opportunity succinctly. Tourism is increasingly becoming a force that connects destinations with markets, businesses with travellers and experiences with economic opportunity. For India's B2B travel fraternity, the next phase will be about turning this immense potential into products, partnerships and experiences that place India firmly on the global tourism map.



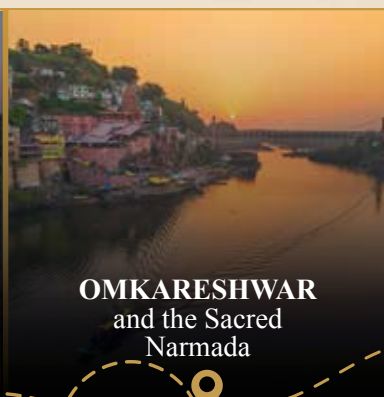
Experience the Sacred Month of *Shravan* In Madhya Pradesh

This Monsoon

As the sacred month of Shravan unfolds, centuries-old chants of Har Har Mahadev once again echo across the temple towns, river ghats and ancient pilgrimage routes of Madhya Pradesh. With the arrival of the monsoon, rivers swell, landscapes turn lush and temple bells resonate across historic cities. It is a time when devotion deepens and travel transforms into a spiritual experience.



UJJAIN
Where Devotion Takes
Centre Stage



OMKARESHWAR
and the Sacred
Narmada



MAHESHWAR
Heritage and
Tradition



MANDU
Rain Saked Forts and
Timeless Charm

The Auspicious Month of Shravan

Shravan is one of the most sacred months in the Hindu calendar, dedicated to Lord Shiva. Across Madhya Pradesh, villages and temple towns come alive with rituals, bhajans, community processions and traditions lovingly preserved for generations. Mist-covered hills, flowing rivers and rain-washed heritage sites create a stunning backdrop for this season of devotion.

Ujjain: Where Devotion Takes Centre Stage

At the centre of this spiritual landscape is the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain, one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. Devotees gather for the famed pre-dawn Bhasma Aarti, while on select

Mondays, the Mahakal Sawari transforms the city into a grand celebration of faith with music, decorated processions and chants accompanying the deity through the streets. A few hours away, the Omkareshwar Temple stands on an island shaped like the sacred symbol Om. During Shravan, pilgrims carry holy water from the Narmada to offer at Shiva temples, while evening aartis along the ghats create moments of quiet reflection. The nearby Statue of Oneness, dedicated to Adi Shankaracharya, adds a deeper philosophical dimension to the pilgrimage.

Where Rivers and Faith Meet

The Narmada remains central to Madhya Pradesh's spiritual identity, flowing from Amarkantak through Maheshwar and Jabalpur. Beyond the celebrated Jyotirlingas, revered shrines such as Bhojeshwar Mahadev

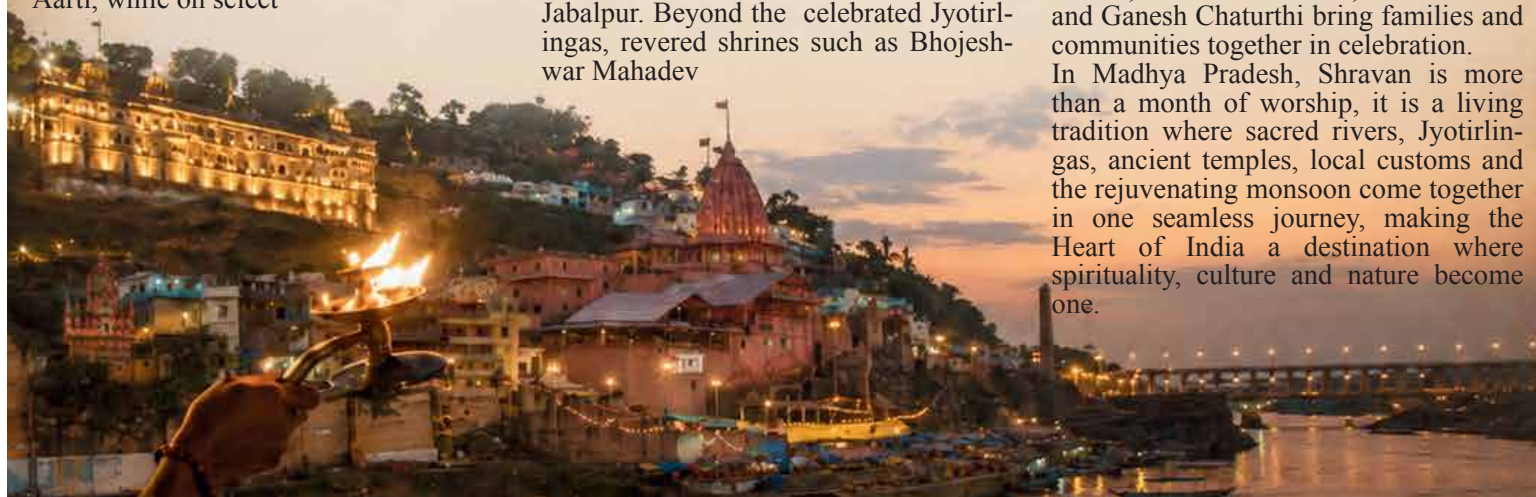
in Bhojpur, Jatashankar Temple in Pachmarhi, Chitrakoot and Orchha enrich this interconnected sacred landscape.

A Monsoon Pilgrimage

This spiritual journey aligns beautifully with Madhya Pradesh's monsoon circuit—Indore, Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar and Mandu. Along the way, travellers can witness evening aartis, explore the Ahilya Bai Fort, discover Maheshwari textiles, savour regional cuisine and conclude amid the mist-covered forts and rain-soaked beauty of Mandu.

From Shravan to Festive Celebrations

As Shravan gives way to the festive season, Raksha Bandhan, Janmashtami and Ganesh Chaturthi bring families and communities together in celebration. In Madhya Pradesh, Shravan is more than a month of worship, it is a living tradition where sacred rivers, Jyotirlingas, ancient temples, local customs and the rejuvenating monsoon come together in one seamless journey, making the Heart of India a destination where spirituality, culture and nature become one.



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

BRITISH LITERARY DANCE



Poets, writers, royalty, and the river! Sounds very prosaic,
but then this is all about English literature's icons.

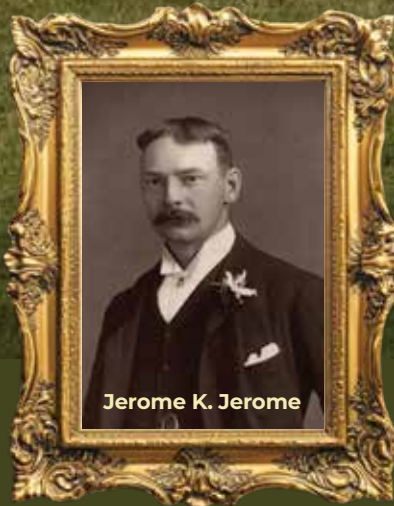
-Inder Raj Ahluwalia

OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

A glance back presents staggering facts. John Milton found his 'Paradise Lost' here. The site inspired Mary Shelley to write 'Frankenstein'. Thomas Gray composed his still resonant 'Elegy' in the same churchyard where his bones now lie. Kenneth Graham, also inspired by the river and 'the wind in the willows' gave birth to Toad, Ratty and Mole. Jerome K. Jerome lived besides the river and thought up the classic comic novel 'Three men in a boat'. And if all this wasn't enough, the place also had strong connections with the likes of Enid Blyton, Edgar Wallace, and T.S. Elliot.

All that the place needed now was for me to stop by, which I did, one cold wintry day.

"Makes you feel sort of intellectually dwarfed, doesn't it" Paul, our portly guide asked nonchalantly, looking pointedly at me. "I mean, all these writer types haunting these parts. It's a bit of a story".



Jerome K. Jerome

I agreed with him, and why shouldn't I have. It was a truly magnificent day out, providing Britain's very best literally at London's back door.

A stone's throw to the west of London, the countryside offers natural delights such as the Chiltern Hills and the Thames Valley. To the casual visitor they come across as scenic, serene and pleasant countryside spots. And so they are, but they possess an added asset that has asserted itself, to the delight of visitors and tourists.

It's serene. Amidst the low hills and meadows, thatched cottage villages, old coaching towns, and along the banks of the rolling river Thames, stand mansions and houses lived-in by some of England's greatest writers, and the graveyards where they now lie buried. You might say it is a region with a scholarly shroud.

In addition to these sites, homes and memorials associated with these literary giants, there are also other sites like the original 'Mayflower Barn' and Quaker resting place of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. And, then of course, there is Windsor, best associated with H.G. Wells, and the royal family's impressive castle.

We had left London early enough in the morning for the traffic to be still short of being nightmarish. We drove along on Highway A 40 and then crossed M 25 to be out in the country. "That's Northold Airfield of the 'Battle of Britain' fame", Paul informed us with a serious-enough expression.

A short drive deposited us at Denham! John Mills lived here, a good enough reason for us to stop for a look around. It's basically a one-horse village with just a few houses, a church, and three pubs – The Swan; Green Man; and The Falcon, huddled faithfully together. The fact that our good guise refrained from saying

anything suggested we'd just move on.

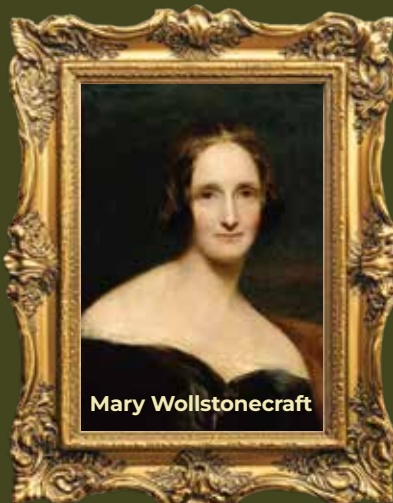
Back on the road again, we crept up the Chiltern Hills. Low, gradually sloping, and wooded, with the leaves turning golden, the hills roll gently as far as the eye can see!

Before you could say 'King Arthur', we were in Chalfont St. Giles Village, Milton's home. We stopped by at his cottage, a grim looking brick affair on the main road. The cottage was closed for entry, and so we made-do with walking around its front, trying to picture the past scenarios.

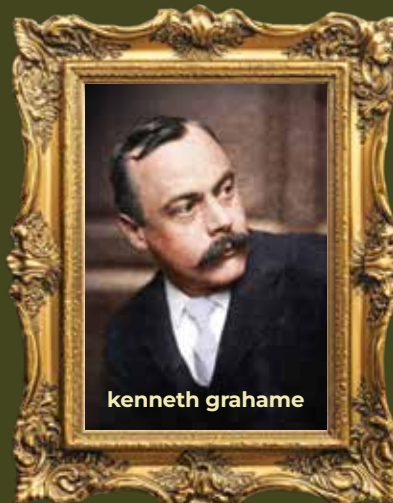
Another short drive brought us to another gem in the form of a major Quaker Centre. The beautifully preserved Mayflower Barn, reputed to be constructed from the timbers of the 'Mayflower'- that carried the Pilgrim Fathers to the New World in 1620-has an enormous religious and historical background.

A few short steps from the barn brought us to the 17th Century Jordan Meeting-House that retains most of its original brick, glass, paneling and benches. In the adjoining burial ground lie the remains of William Penn, his first and second wife, their children, and other friends prominent in establishing the region as a major centre for British Quakerism.

Our next stop was a delight! The immensely charming village of Stoke Pogdes is praiseworthy. St. Giles Church is tranquility itself and its silence and hauntingly beautiful



Mary Wollstonecraft



kenneth grahame



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS



Enid-Blyton

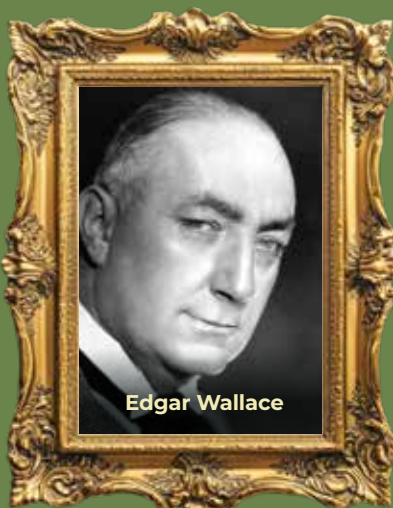
cemetery that contains the grave of Thomas Gray, seems like the perfect setting for a ghost film.

"Makes you feel sort of spooked, doesn't it" Paul intoned, once again looking pointedly at me. Or so I thought, anyway.

Gracefully plodding on, it was afternoon when we found ourselves in the confines of Marlow, which is big enough to pose parking problems. So we parked by the river, crossed the magnificent Court Garden House and took a pleasant walk along the river bank, under the famous 19th Century suspension bridge designed by Tierney Clarke-who also built the similar bridge over the

River Danube in Budapest-and entered All Saints Church. Just a stone's throw downstream is Marlow Lock and Weir where you get a good view of the church and the bridge and also of the world famous Compleat Angler Hotel.

Five minutes ambling along the High Street with its elegant town houses, including Cromwell House, brought us to the cheery though somewhat lonely confines of 'The Crown', the venerated inn that was the local lodging place of Jerome K Jerome. Enjoying 'homemade chicken and leek



Edgar Wallace

pie', 'mushroom & spinach pasta in a creamy sauce', and a local draft beer, we learnt the background of the literary houses alongside on West Street. T.S. Eliot and Thomas Love Peacock lived here and so did Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife Mary (who wrote

Frankenstein whilst living in Marlow). It was a bit of a historical overload, but very interesting.

We wound up our heritage jaunt at Windsor, the world's oldest and largest inhabited castle. We couldn't get into the castle, so made the most of the little town, walked about, saw a gaggle of tourists milling about, and further out, a gaggle of those much - photographed, famous swans on the river.

The little township has a picture - book look to it, and it was enhanced by a giant Christmas tree at the intersection adjoining the castle. A girl in traditional Victorian costume, basket in hand, stood posing for photographs and almost our entire group obliged.

Quietly and pleasantly, the day had slipped by. A 200-odd kilometre drive had exposed us to a wide swathe of British literary history. Back in London, we rediscovered the meaning of the world 'traffic'.

Our little escapade was an ode to the past. "Makes you feel sort of 'intellectually dwarfed', doesn't it" I asked Paul, looking him in the eye.

"It does, but don't take it personally" Paul told me reassuringly. "Who knows, one day you might become a writer yourself and people might come to visit your grave."



T.S. Eliot

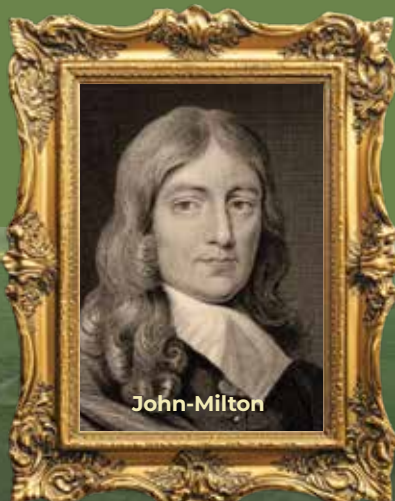
Fact File

- The Chiltern Hills and Thames Valley are very close to London. There are conducted tours, but you can also drive there and discover the region.
- A day trip is recommended. A self-drive tour is an excellent option.
- There are plenty of pubs and restaurants at all villages and towns, and tourist information centers at several places. Guides are at hand.



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.



John-Milton



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Nominations closing midnight 7th August 2026.

TRAVEL THERAPY

Gangotri

Finding Kashi
from the heart of
the Ganga



There are some travel experiences that stay with you because of the destination, and then there are those that become memorable because of the way you experience it.

-Tripti Jain

TRAVEL THERAPY



My recent trip aboard Gangotri - A Divine River Retreat by Alaknanda Cruiseline, Varanasi's first floating hotel, was one such journey. Cruising along the Ganga, watching the ancient ghats unfold from the deck, waking up to the rising sun and experiencing the timeless soul of Kashi from the river made this more than a stay. It became a journey that changed the way I looked at the city, and in many ways, at life itself.

A home on water

From the moment I stepped aboard Gangotri, there was an immediate feeling of comfort. With 24 rooms, the floating hotel felt like a home that had simply chosen the Ganga as its address. The rooms were comfortable, the hospitality warm and the food a delightful part of the experience. Every meal on board was fresh, flavourful and thoughtfully prepared, adding to the feeling that this was much more than a river cruise.

There was also something

wonderfully unhurried about being on the water. Instead of rushing from one sightseeing point to another, the destination came to us. The ghats, temples, boats and bustling life of Banaras became part of the view from the deck. Gangotri allowed us to experience Kashi at its own pace, with the Ganga always flowing alongside us.

The ghats unfolded

The evening cruise was undoubtedly the highlight of the journey. As Gangotri began moving along the Ganga, the ghats of Banaras appeared one after another. Seeing them from the river offered a completely different perspective. The city seemed to rise gently from the water, revealing layers of history, faith and everyday life.

The cruise became even more magical as evening approached. With high tea on board, the changing colours of the sky and the ghats beginning to glow, the experience felt almost surreal.

Then came the Ganga Aarti. Watching the lamps being raised

against the evening sky, with their reflections shimmering on the Ganga, was a moment that words can hardly capture. The chants, bells, flames and the river came together in a spectacle that felt deeply spiritual. From the deck, I could simply sit back and absorb it all.

A night with Banaras

The city stroll at midnight was another experience altogether. Banaras during the day is a world of movement. The lanes are filled with people, pilgrims, conversations, colour and constant activity. At night, the city reveals another side.

Walking through the streets after midnight felt like an adventure. The crowds had thinned, the noise had softened and the ancient lanes seemed to carry a

different energy. Kashi, which speaks loudly throughout the day, seemed to whisper at night. The silence was almost overwhelming. It felt as though the city had finally found a moment to pause, yet its soul remained awake. There was a strange sense that the walls, the ghats and the lanes were quietly sharing stories and life lessons with anyone willing to listen.

The fire at Manikarnika

My visit to Manikarnika Ghat brought the most profound moment of the journey. Known as one of Varanasi's most sacred cremation grounds, Manikarnika is said to have a fire that burns continuously, day and night. Standing there was an experience that is genuinely difficult to explain. The Ganga flowed beside



TRAVEL THERAPY



the ghat while the fire continued to burn, bringing into focus the eternal cycle of life and death. It was an enlightening moment. Kashi has a unique way of putting life into perspective without saying a word. At Manikarnika, the usual concerns of everyday life seemed to become smaller. The experience made me think about how much of our lives is spent chasing things that are temporary, while the city around us has been quietly witnessing the same cycle for centuries. There was no grand lesson, only a feeling. A feeling of acceptance, perspective and gratitude.

Sunrise from the deck

Stepping onto the deck early in the morning and seeing the first rays of sunlight spread across the Ganga was a moment of pure tranquillity. The river looked golden, the ghats slowly came alive and boats began making their way across the water. The morning yoga session followed by a peaceful cruise and breakfast added to the rejuvenating feeling. There was something incredibly calming about starting the day surrounded by the river, with Kashi slowly waking up around you. For a few moments, there was no itinerary, no schedule and no rush. There was simply the Ganga and the morning light.

Life at the cruise

What made GANGOTRI special

was the way it brought together the comfort of a hotel and the intimacy of a river journey. The floating hotel became our base, our viewing platform and our window into Kashi. The experience also made me realise that luxury in travel can take many forms. Sometimes it is a beautiful room or exceptional food. Sometimes it is warm hospitality. And sometimes, it is simply having the privilege of sitting quietly on a deck while one of the world's oldest living cities unfolds before you. Gangotri offered that rare luxury of slowing down.

The river within

By the time the journey came to an end, I realised that the FAM trip had given me much more than memories of a beautiful stay. It had given me a different way to experience Kashi. A story about a city that has witnessed centuries of human life and a river that continues to flow through it, quietly and endlessly. I arrived in Kashi as a traveller. I left feeling a little more reflective, a little more grateful and strangely rejuvenated. Perhaps that is the magic of a river cruise in Varanasi. Gangotri allows you to experience the city from the heart of the Ganga. And somewhere between the flowing river and the timeless ghats, I found myself slowing down, looking inward and understanding that some journeys are meant to change you.





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Exploring beyond the stay!

Some journeys begin with an itinerary and end with memories that stay long after the trip is over. My first familiarisation trip was one such experience.

- Itika Nindrajog



Organised by Indeva Hotels & ExpoInn, it was more than a carefully planned showcase of hospitality brands. It became a journey that revealed the people, stories and thoughtful details that shape meaningful travel experiences.

This journey gave me the opportunity to experience hospitality from the other side. Every interaction offered a deeper understanding of what goes into creating experiences that travellers remember long after they return home.

From the moment we arrived, every part of the itinerary unfolded seamlessly. Conversations flowed effortlessly, every experience had a purpose, and every destination offered something unique. The journey quickly became less about visiting hotels and more about discovering the philosophy behind hospitality.

A warm beginning

Our first stop was ExpoInn Suites & Convention, the flagship property that welcomed us with warmth and genuine hospitality. Every smile reflected a culture where guests are treated as valued visitors rather than just arrivals on a reservation list.

The day began with a media briefing led by the leadership team, offering valuable insights into the vision of Indeva Hotels and its growing hospitality portfolio. Listening to the journey of the brand made the experience feel far more meaningful than a routine property inspection. The conversations highlighted how every property has been developed with a distinct identity while remaining connected through a shared commitment to guest satisfaction.

Adding another dimension to the morning was the curtain raiser of the upcoming Global Bhakti Fest. The discussions beautifully illustrated how cultural tourism continues to evolve by bringing together spirituality, heritage and community experiences. It served as a reminder that travel today is increasingly about meaningful connections rather than simply reaching a destination.

The heart of the experience

Exploring ExpoInn Suites & Convention offered a glimpse into a property designed to welcome every kind of traveller. The spacious accommodation, contemporary interiors and expansive convention spaces make it equally suited for corporate events, destination celebrations and leisure holidays. Every corner reflected functionality without compromising on comfort.

What truly distinguished the experience was the people. Every interaction felt genuine, every request was met with warmth and every detail reflected careful planning. Hospitality here extended far beyond beautifully designed spaces. It lived in the thoughtful gestures that made every guest feel completely at home.

Three brands, three stories

One of the most interesting aspects of the journey was discovering how Indeva Hotels has created distinct hospitality experiences through its three brands. Our visit to Plume Hotels introduced us to a vibrant world filled with colour, creativity and youthful energy. The bold interiors, contemporary design

and lively ambience make the property an appealing choice for modern travellers who seek stays with personality and character. Every space felt expressive, inviting guests to experience hospitality through a fresh and energetic lens.

The journey then took us to The Mor Stays, where the atmosphere changed beautifully. Calm interiors, minimalist aesthetics and cosy spaces created a sense of relaxation that instantly slowed the pace of the day. The property celebrates simplicity and comfort, making it ideal for travellers looking to unwind in a peaceful setting.

Experiencing these three brands together demonstrated how hospitality continues to evolve alongside changing traveller preferences. Every property speaks to a different audience, yet each one carries the same commitment to thoughtful service and memorable guest experiences.

Beyond the table

Every memorable journey is accompanied by memorable meals, and this itinerary celebrated that beautifully. A lavish lunch at ExpoInn brought everyone together before the property visits began. High tea during the inspections created another opportunity to pause, reflect and exchange stories. Every meal felt thoughtfully curated, allowing conversations to unfold naturally.

Somewhere between shared tables and endless laughter, the formalities disappeared. Industry discussions blended with personal stories, photographs captured spontaneous moments and professional acquaintances

gradually became friends. Those conversations became just as memorable as the destinations themselves.

An unexpected highlight

Every itinerary carries a surprise, and ours arrived in the form of an exciting boxing event hosted during the evening. The energy inside the arena was infectious. Every bout was met with enthusiastic cheers, creating an atmosphere that felt vibrant and celebratory. Experiencing a sporting event within the itinerary added an unexpected layer to the journey and demonstrated how thoughtfully curated experiences can enrich a traveller's overall stay.

The perfect finale

The day concluded with an elegant gala dinner back at ExpoInn Suites & Convention. Beautifully presented cuisine, warm hospitality and relaxed conversations created the perfect setting to reflect on the experiences of the day. The evening felt less like the conclusion of a scheduled programme and more like a celebration of shared experiences, new friendships and meaningful connections.

Looking back, my first FAM trip offered far more than an introduction to three hospitality brands. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Vineet Gopal, Barun Gupta and the entire Indeva Hotels and ExpoInn team for curating an experience that reflected warmth at every step. Their hospitality was effortless, thoughtful and deeply personal, transforming a professional visit into a memorable journey.



Trulvy India

Stays with a sense of place

Trulvy India is building its hospitality portfolio around this shift, creating properties that go beyond accommodation to become an integral part of the travel experience. Naresh Arora, CEO & Founder, Trulvy India shares about the next steps in the journey.

- Tripti Jain

From heritage and wildlife to nature, wellness and spirituality, the brand is steadily expanding its presence across some of India's most distinctive destinations. The journey has been about creating a hospitality brand rooted in authentic Indian experiences. Naresh Arora shares, "The biggest achievement is not just the number of hotels we have added, but the trust we have built with our guests, travel partners and business associates. That trust continues to shape the brand's expansion as it explores new destinations and new segments of Indian tourism."

A portfolio with purpose

Trulvy India's portfolio has evolved from conventional leisure hotels into a collection of experience-led properties, each designed around the destination it represents. Heritage stays, wildlife and safari locations, resorts and nature-driven retreats now form an important part of the brand's offering.

Naresh Arora explains the philosophy behind this approach: "Each property in our portfolio has its own personality and is designed to complement the destination rather than simply replicate a standard hotel experience."

The brand's development strategy revolves around a simple question: what can a traveller experience here that cannot be experienced elsewhere? This destination-first thinking allows each property to offer a distinct sense of place, giving travellers another reason to explore India beyond its familiar tourist circuits.

Rise of experiential travel

Travellers today are increasingly seeking journeys that allow them



Naresh Arora

to connect with a destination. Wildlife safaris, heritage experiences, nature escapes, wellness, culinary journeys and intimate celebrations are gaining momentum, creating opportunities for hospitality brands to become part of the destination story.

"The younger traveller is no longer travelling simply to see a destination; they are travelling to experience it and to create a story around it. This shift is particularly visible among Gen Z and millennial travellers, who value authenticity, culture, design, food, nature and personalised experiences. Hotels are increasingly becoming part of the holiday itself, rather than simply serving as a base between sightseeing excursions, he says.

A divine new chapter

Trulvy India is also entering the spiritual tourism space with Trulvy Divine, beginning with Trulvy Divine – The Suraj Krishna in Ujjain. The move reflects the growing importance of spiritual and pilgrimage tourism within India's domestic travel landscape.

He adds, "Ujjain represents a different kind of travel experience. It is a destination driven by spirituality, culture, faith and pilgrimage. The destination offers a rich combination of spirituality, heritage and culture, creating opportunities for travellers to experience much more than a pilgrimage. Trulvy Divine is positioned to cater to this

evolving traveller, bringing hospitality into a destination where faith and tourism intersect."

Beyond the usual getaway

Celebration travel is another growing opportunity for Trulvy India. Weddings, pre-weddings, milestone occasions and family getaways are increasingly being shaped as complete destination experiences, opening avenues for properties that offer distinctive settings and personalised hospitality.

He shares, "Wildlife and safari experiences, heritage stays, nature escapes, wellness, culinary experiences and intimate celebrations are all gaining momentum. India's geographic and cultural diversity gives the brand a wide canvas for expansion, from palaces and forts to forests, mountains, beaches and spiritual centres."

What next?

Trulvy India's expansion strategy remains focused on destinations with strong tourism potential and a clear experiential identity. Rajasthan and other heritage destinations remain important areas of interest, alongside wildlife, nature and emerging leisure markets.

Naresh Arora shares, "Himachal Pradesh and Goa are also on the brand's expansion radar. Himachal gives us the opportunity to create nature and mountain-led experiences, while Goa allows us to strengthen our leisure and experiential resort offering. The long-term ambition is clear: build Trulvy India into a recognisable experiential hospitality brand that allows travellers to discover different sides of India through warm, personalised Indian hospitality."

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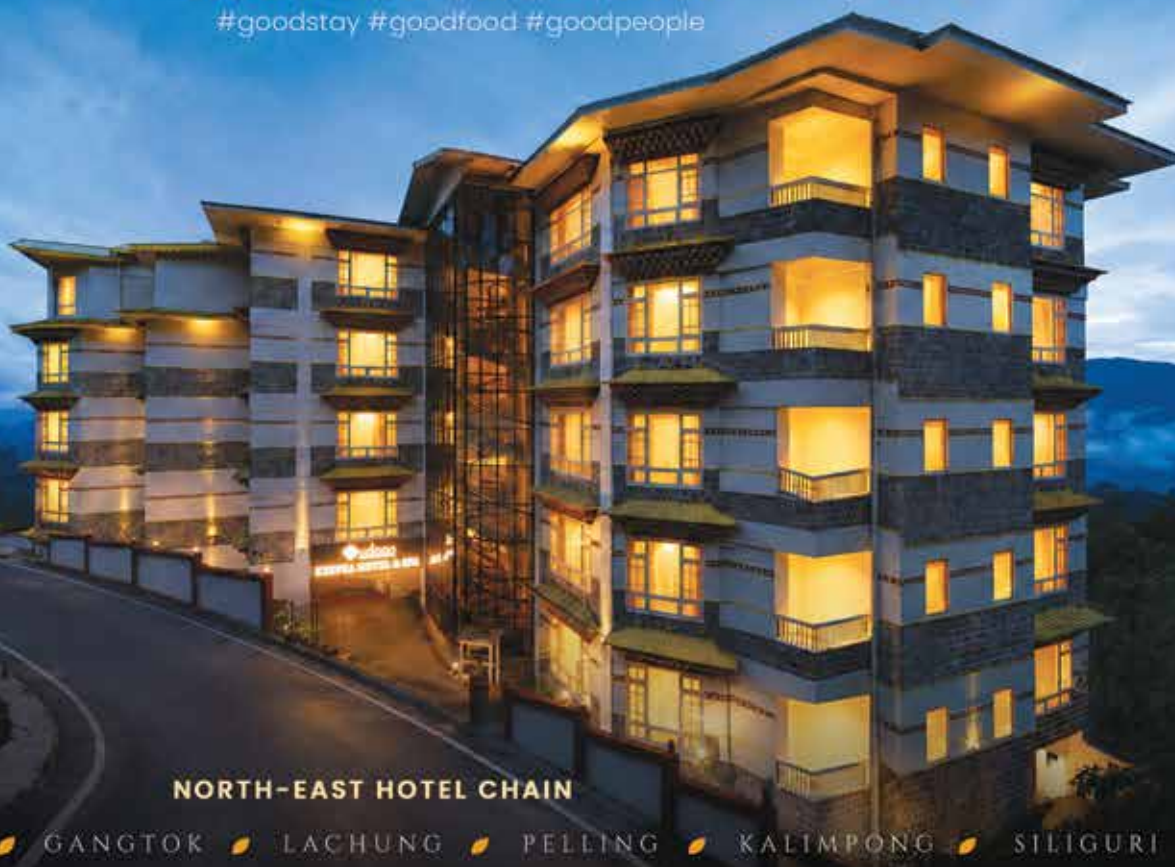


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*Where Goa meets
the world*



Goa has always known how to welcome the world. Its beaches, its festivals, and its easy coastal charm have drawn travellers for generations. Now, a new chapter is opening in the state's tourism story, one written in glass, stone, and grand halls rather than sand and surf.

-Tripti Jain

The unveiling of the Urja Bharat Convention Centre (UBCC), celebrated over two vibrant days at URJATVA, introduces Goa's newest landmark for meetings, conferences, and large-scale gatherings, a venue built to turn business travel into an experience worth remembering.

Setting the stage

The celebrations opened with warmth and pride, setting the stage for everything that followed. Saket Gupta, Editor-in-Chief, Institute ATI, ONGC, welcomed guests with a vision that reached far beyond the walls of the new centre. He shares describing the venue as a space built to host conversations that shape industries and inspire ideas, "Urja Bharat is ONGC's commitment to building infrastructure that reflects where India's energy story is headed, both literally and symbolically."

Manish Patil, Director (HR), ONGC, spoke next, bringing the focus to the people who will bring this vision to life. He adds, inviting delegates to see Urja Bharat as the beginning of a lasting collaboration rather than a single grand event, "A world-class venue truly comes alive through a world-class ecosystem to support it, built on

people, partnerships, and a long-term commitment to excellence."

A campus comes alive

Day one carried the fitting theme of Experience the Campus, and delegates did exactly that. Arrivals and warm check-ins gave way to a colourful showcase titled Essence of Goa at the Vayu Exhibition Hall, offering a taste of the state's culture, craft, and coastal spirit. The Vasudha Grand Plenary Hall hosted the heart of the day's proceedings, including the much-anticipated brand logo unveiling ceremony, a moment that drew applause from a room full of industry voices witnessing the birth of a new landmark.

A guided tour then took guests across the sprawling campus, revealing the scale and thoughtfulness behind the design. Evening brought tea, networking, and a gala dinner filled with entertainment, a fitting close to a day that combined celebration with genuine discovery.

Ideas take the floor

Day two shifted the spotlight to dialogue, with a session on the MICE ecosystem drawing some of the sharpest minds in the events and travel industry. The discussion painted a picture of what makes a destination truly unforgettable for

organisers and travellers. Conversation around the growing appeal of green venues, where sustainability and local supply chains come together to create conferences that feel as good as they look was a highlight. The enduring power of the human touch, describing technology as a wonderful catalyst when paired thoughtfully with genuine hospitality, pointing to seamless audio experiences as an example of technology enhancing rather than overshadowing an event.

A special mention about the service providers who bring every gathering to life behind the scenes, praising their central role in creating smooth, memorable experiences for every guest. An inspiring, big - picture view, encouraging organisers to embrace a complete, 360-degree approach to hosting large gatherings and to see MICE travel as part of Goa's growing bleisure appeal, where business trips naturally extend into leisure getaways was discussed. The untapped opportunities in maritime and coastal events, a category perfectly suited to Goa's natural beauty and waterfront charm was brought to light.

The conversation also turned to the importance of nurturing local talent through university

partnerships, strengthening Goa's readiness to welcome international delegations with warmth and expertise. Hospitals, hotels, wellness retreats, and even the region's agricultural bounty found their place in the discussion, painted as the many threads that weave together to create a destination experience travellers remember long after they leave.

Where the story continues

Urja Bharat Convention Centre now stands as a symbol of Goa's expanding identity, a destination that offers sun-soaked beaches alongside world-class spaces for global gatherings. Its grand halls, exhibition spaces, and thoughtfully designed campus invite travellers and organisers to imagine conferences that feel like celebrations and business trips that linger with the charm of a holiday.

URJATVA captured this spirit beautifully, blending ceremony with substance and vision with genuine warmth. As delegates departed after two memorable days, the sentiment was clear: Goa has gained a landmark that will welcome the world in style, and Urja Bharat is ready to write the next chapter of the state's celebrated hospitality story.



TRAVEL THERAPY

Agra

Stays, Stories & Experiences

At times, the most unforgettable moments aren't the ones planned they're the ones that happen unexpectedly.

-Itika Nindrajog

TRAVEL THERAPY

Every FAM trip starts the same way: an early morning, a bus full of people who may or may not know each other, backpacks filled with chargers that rarely get used, and the quiet hope that the schedule allows enough time to truly enjoy the place. As we left Delhi behind and headed to Agra, there was a sense of excitement in the air. The two days ahead promised hospitality, culture, and an opportunity to explore Agra in a new way. Looking back, it wasn't just the destination that stayed with me it was everything that happened along the way.

Start with a great spread

Our first stop wasn't the hotel it was lunch. And no one minded that the itinerary started with food. We arrived at Berco's, where we were hosted with a beautifully arranged Pan-Asian lunch.

What made the experience unique was the presence of Mr Varun Mittal, the franchise owner, who joined us throughout the meal. Instead of just welcoming us, he shared stories about the brand, interacted with everyone at the table, and made the lunch feel like a casual afternoon with friends rather than a scheduled stop on a FAM trip. The restaurant itself deserves a mention.

With dragon designs, warm lighting, and Asian-inspired decor, Berco's created an atmosphere that perfectly complemented its menu. Every corner of the place reflected the restaurant's personality, making it hard not to take a photo before sitting down. The food was nothing short of excellent, and by the time lunch ended, everyone was feeling cheerful. It reminded me that sometimes the journey is just as memorable as the destination.

Welcome at HHW Hotels

After lunch, we finally arrived at HHW Hotels, where we would be staying for the next two days. The welcome was friendly, the check-in process was smooth, and the staff went out of their way to make us feel at home. Before heading to our rooms, the team gave us a quick tour of the property, introducing us to the spaces and explaining their vision for the hotel. One thing I appreciated was their honesty. The management openly shared that parts of the property were still being renovated. In an industry where perfection is often

the goal, it was refreshing to hear that they were still growing. It felt more like a heartfelt conversation than a sales pitch.

The rooms were comfortable, spacious, and well-equipped, but they also showed signs of ongoing improvements. I found myself thinking the hotel was a bit like a first draft full of promise and potential, and waiting for the final touches that would bring it to life. Sometimes, authenticity leaves a stronger impression than polished perfection.

Coffee, treats and a relaxing afternoon

By the time we had explored the hotel, it was time for afternoon tea. After a busy morning, it was the perfect moment. The spread had a great mix of savoury and sweet items, and the endless cups of tea encouraged everyone to slow

down for a while. Conversations flowed easily as fellow travel professionals shared stories, experiences, and even future travel plans. It's funny how a simple cup of coffee can make a new place feel more familiar. The rest of the afternoon was ours to relax before heading out again, giving us just enough time to unwind and prepare for the evening ahead.

A different side of Agra

As the evening approached, we headed to Qairo Agra, where the city showed a completely different side. With Agra Fort beautifully lit in the distance, the setting was perfect for winding down the day. Good music, refreshing drinks, and easy conversations made the evening feel relaxed and unhurried. After a full day of travel, it was exactly the kind of change of pace

everyone needed. It also reminded me that Agra is so much more than the Taj Mahal. The city has its own unique rhythm after dark one that is quieter, warmer, and best enjoyed with good company.

Wake-up call no one complained

The next morning started earlier than most of us would have liked. By 6:30 a.m., everyone had gathered in the lobby, some with cameras, others with coffee, and a few still convincing themselves they were fully awake. By 7 a.m., we were on our way to the Taj Mahal. I've always thought the phrase "pictures don't do it justice" was slightly overused. Then I stood in front of the Taj Mahal. Turns out, everyone who had ever said it was right. Bathed in the soft morning light, the monument looked almost unreal.

There was a calmness to it that photographs can't capture. It wasn't just about its beauty it was about the feeling of standing before something that has inspired people for centuries. Our professional guide played a big role in making the experience unforgettable.

Instead of overwhelming us with dates and facts, he brought the monument to life through stories, humour, and interesting details. From explaining the use of Makrana marble and the intricate pietra dura inlay work to sharing lesser-known stories about its construction, he kept us engaged throughout the visit.

His sense of humour was a pleasant surprise. Making an entire group laugh before breakfast is no small feat, but he did it effortlessly. Somewhere between learning about Mughal architecture and stopping every few minutes for "just one more picture," the morning passed by too quickly.

A thoughtful farewell

Returning to HHW Hotels, we enjoyed breakfast before packing up to check out. Before we left, the hotel team gave each of us a thoughtful souvenir as a token of appreciation. It was a simple gesture, but one that reflected the warmth and care they had shown during our stay. Soon, our luggage was back on the bus, room keys were returned, and it was time to make our way back to Delhi.





Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH)TM concludes India sales roadshow in Delhi and Mumbai

Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH) successfully concludes its India Roadshow, reaffirming its commitment to one of its fastest-growing source markets through a series of sales engagements and media events across Delhi and Mumbai. The roadshow was led by Mark Wong, Senior Vice President – Asia Pacific, SLH, alongside a delegation of member hotel representatives: Danat Thanosilp, Director of Sales & Marketing, The Sukhothai Bangkok, Thailand; Charintip Tiyaiphorn, Owner, Pimalai Resort and Spa, Thailand; Andrés Páez, Business Developer, Hermes Galapagos Catamaran, Ecuador; and Gloria Robuschi, Sales Manager, Grand Hotel Bristol Spa Resort, Italy.



Germany records growth in Indian traveller overnight stays

Germany continues to demonstrate its enduring appeal as a travel destination, even as the global travel landscape navigates ongoing geopolitical headwinds. According to the German National Tourist Board, Germany recorded 174.9 million overnight stays between January and May 2026, up 1.3 per cent from the same period last year, while international arrivals held firm at 28.7 million overnight stays. Domestic travel within Germany has now edged past pre-pandemic 2019 levels, underlining the country's stability and consistent pull as a destination of choice.



EVENT AFFAIR



OA Globe DMC successfully hosts the Discover Saudi B2B Networking Event

The event highlighted Saudi Arabia's diverse tourism experiences, with a special focus on the Red Sea, a destination renowned for its pristine coastline, vibrant marine life, and world-class hospitality offerings. Participants gained deeper insights into the Kingdom's growing tourism landscape and explored opportunities for future collaboration. The gathering served as an excellent platform for fostering stronger industry relationships and exchanging ideas that will contribute to promoting Saudi Arabia to the Indian travel market.



Enchanting Experiences hosts an interactive meet

Enchanting Experiences hosts its 8th Interactive Meet in New Delhi, bringing together inbound destination management companies (DMCs) and leading hotel partners for a day of networking and business exchange. As Enchanting Experiences prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary in October 2026, the event reflected the company's continued commitment to fostering meaningful partnerships across the hospitality and travel ecosystem.





Delhi Tourism organises a Stakeholders' Meet

The initiative was led by Shri Suneel Anchipaka, Managing Director and CEO of Delhi Tourism, who emphasised the importance of collaborative planning and industry participation in shaping a stronger, more vibrant tourism ecosystem for Delhi. The interactive session brought together stakeholders from across the travel, hospitality, and tourism sectors to deliberate on innovative strategies, destination branding, infrastructure enhancement, visitor experiences, and sustainable tourism development.



Saudi Tourism Authority showcases new tourism experiences, Summer Offers and Package Visa at Delhi event

Reinforcing its commitment to the Indian travel trade, the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) recently hosts an exclusive curated event in New Delhi, bringing together leading outbound tour operators and members of the media to provide updates on Saudi's rapidly evolving tourism landscape and the exciting opportunities it offers Indian travellers. The immersive event highlighted Saudi's continued tourism transformation while reiterating India's importance as one of its key tourism source markets.



EVENT AFFAIR



GRT Hotels & Resorts connects with Destination Management Companies at Delhi Meet

GRT Hotels & Resorts hosts an exclusive travel trade meet in Delhi. The vibrant evening brought together key players, top destination management companies (DMCs), and respected industry leaders from across the fraternity for an elite night of networking, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnership building.



French Consulate marks Bastille Day with Gala in Mumbai

The Consulate General of France in Mumbai celebrated French National Day on 14 July, bringing together members of the diplomatic corps, business leaders and the Indo-French community for an evening honouring France's national day. The event highlighted the enduring ties between France and India, reflecting the growing business, cultural and people-to-people connections between the two nations, and offered attendees from across sectors an opportunity to connect and celebrate the continuing strength of the Indo-French partnership in Mumbai.



APPOINTMENTS



Air India

The Board of Directors of Air India announces the appointment of Tewolde Gebremariam as the airline's Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director. This executive transition marks a pivotal juncture in Air India's transformation journey to become a world-class, leading global airline.



Maharashtra Tourism Board

The Government of Maharashtra announces the appointment of Mr Vikas Pansare, an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, as the new Director of the Directorate of Tourism. Mr Vikas Pansare (IAS) has assumed charge of his position at the Directorate of Tourism, Mumbai, on Thursday, July 30, 2026.



JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa

JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa announces the appointment of Shagun Sethi as Director of Sales & Marketing. Bringing more than two decades of experience in luxury hospitality, commercial strategy, and business development across India and international markets, Shagun joins the resort's executive leadership team to further strengthen its position as one of Phuket's leading luxury destinations.



Seychelles Tourism Board

The Office of the President announces the appointment of Mrs Maria Azemia as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Tourism Board. Mrs Azemia holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in International Business Administration from Amity University, India, and a Bachelor's Degree in Tourism Management and Marketing from Edith Cowan University, Australia.

गौरवशाली आदिवासी संस्कृति,
प्रकृति, जीवन दर्शन की झलकियां



बिरसा मुंडा

सिदो-कान्हू चांद-भैरव
दिशोम गुरु शिबू सोरेन
नीलाम्बर-पितांबर राना भगत

पोटो हो फूलो-झानो
जगन्नाथ सिंह पातर
वीर नारायण सिंह

तिलका माँझी लक्ष्मण नायक
रामजी गोंड रावत जोधसिंह चौहान
तलक्कल चंदू गोबिन्द गुरु

अल्लूरी सीताराम राजू
रानी गाइदिनल्यू
टंट्या भील मोजी रिबा

प्रियमपिल्लई कुरवानार
राघोजी भांगरे
शूरवीर पसालथा खुआंगचेरा

कुशल कोंवार रुपिणी देबबर्मा
तिरोत सिंग सिएम

झारखण्ड

**आदिवासी
महोत्सव**

9-10 अगस्त
मोरहाबादी मैदान, रांची

2026

**जहाँ बोलना ही संगीत
और चलना है नृत्य**

आप सभी सादर आमंत्रित हैं

श्री हेमन्त सोरेन
माननीय मुख्यमंत्री, झारखण्ड

सूचना एवं जनसंपर्क विभाग, झारखण्ड



Purposeful stays inspired by nature

At Villa Park, every day is an adventure waiting to unfold. Inspired by nature, this vibrant island is a playground for families, where exploration and excitement go hand in hand. From thrilling marine encounters to endless activities for all ages, every stay is purposeful, filled with moments to cherish and stories to share.

