

India's Leading, Multi-Award-Winning Travel Magazine

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TRAVEL turtle

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Andhra Pradesh

Unfolding many journeys

IATO Special





A New Bihar

A New Tourism Story

From the spiritual aura of Sitamarhi to the historic hills of Rajgir, from the untouched landscapes of Kaimur to the wilderness of Valmikinagar, Bihar possesses an extraordinary tourism portfolio waiting to be explored.



Rajgir
Adventure

East Champaran
Largest Stupa in World

Rajgir
Peace Pagoda

Kaimur
A lot to Explore

Sitamarhi
Spiritual Aura

Nalanda
Global Tourism Destination

With helicopter joy ride at ₹2,100, affordable helicopter tour packages, improved tourism infrastructure, community-led homestays, pilgrimage initiatives and landmark destination-development projects, Bihar is building a tourism ecosystem that is accessible, aspirational and globally competitive.



Helicopter Joy
Ride @ 2,100



Affordable Helicopter
Tour Package



Improved Tourism
Infrastructure



Community-led
Homestays



Pilgrimage Initiatives

The vision is clear to transform Bihar from a destination travelers pass through into a destination travelers choose.

Because the Bihar of tomorrow is not just about looking back at history. It is about creating new reasons for the world to look towards Bihar.

**YOUR NEXT
UNFORGETTABLE
JOURNEY BEGINS HERE.**



EDITORS LETTER



In travel, we are always talking about what is next. The next destination, the next big opening, the next market, the next trend, the next journey. Perhaps that is why I have come to value what stays.

This August, while in the Maldives for TTM, I found myself reflecting on something rather personal. It was my 10th year at TTM. Ten years of returning to the same industry gathering, meeting familiar faces, watching new ones enter the room and witnessing how much the travel fraternity has changed along the way.

And now, almost in parallel, comes another milestone. This year marks my 10th year at the IATO Annual Convention. There is something deeply meaningful about that kind of consistency. Not because attending an event for ten years is an achievement in itself, but because of everything that happens in those ten years. Relationships turn into friendships. Professional acquaintances become people you look forward to seeing. Conversations from years ago become collaborations you never imagined. And somewhere along the way, these annual gatherings become chapters in your own story.

Which is perhaps why this September issue feels especially personal. Our IATO Special is built around an organisation and a convention that I have watched grow for a decade. The 41st IATO Annual Convention in Vizag is a reflection of an industry that has grown in scale, confidence and ambition, and it is wonderful to witness its magnitude today.

But as always, our pages go beyond one event. We bring you conversations with Meghalaya and Bihar, explore the stories and people shaping these destinations, and look back at the many events and developments that kept August moving. From RDTM Jaipur to the first edition of Marwar Travel Mart in Jodhpur, the industry continues to create new spaces for conversations, connections and possibilities. And then there is Rhodes, where the TAFI Convention awaits.

Perhaps that is what these pages really represent: not just a collection of events, but a collection of moments from an industry we have had the privilege of growing with.

Ten years at TTM. Ten years at IATO. A decade of showing up, listening, learning, connecting and watching this incredible industry evolve.

And if there is one thing I have learnt, it is that sometimes the most meaningful journeys are not the ones that take us somewhere new, but the ones we keep returning to.

We hope you love this issue as much as we loved putting it together.

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

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

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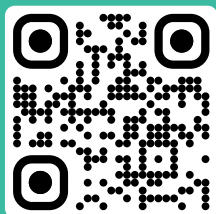
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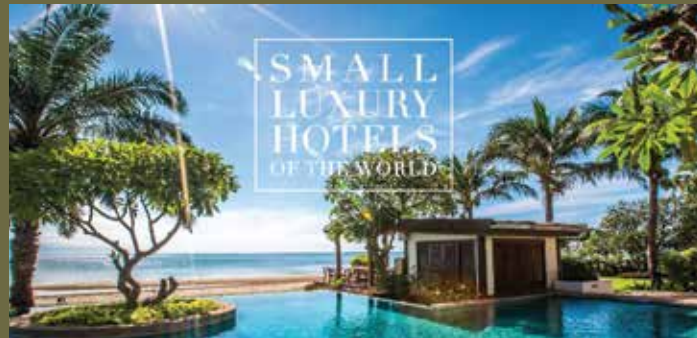


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Wild Horizons appoints Ace Connect to strengthen its presence in the Indian market

Wild Horizons appoints Ace Connect, led by Alpa Jani, as its official sales and marketing representative for India. The partnership strengthens Wild Horizons' presence in India's fast-growing outbound travel market and deepens long-term ties with the Indian travel trade.



Small Luxury Hotels of the World expands its wellbeing collection

Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH) welcomes seven new members, bringing the carefully curated portfolio to 21 independently spirited hotels across the globe. Spanning the mountains of India and Italy, the forests of Finland and Transylvania, and the tropical landscapes of Bali and Panama, the latest additions broaden a collection created for travellers seeking deeper, more meaningful ways to rest and reconnect.

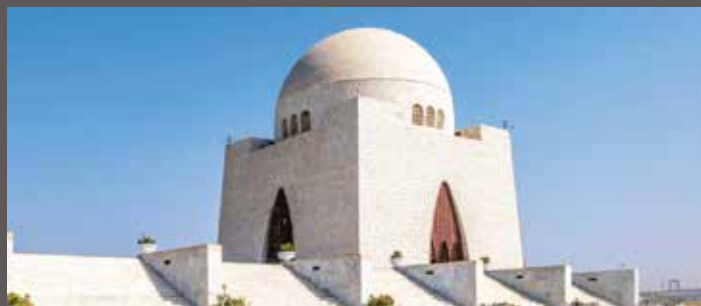
Synergi Hospitality partners with Tiara, Calicut

Synergi Hospitality has partnered with Tiara by MPS, Calicut, to strengthen the hotel's offline marketing efforts and expand its market presence across key travel and hospitality segments. Located in one of Kerala's emerging hospitality markets, Tiara by MPS is a contemporary 105-key hotel offering modern-classic accommodation across Suites, Studio, Premium and Deluxe rooms, complemented by an open-air city-facing pool, specialty and all-day dining, spa, gym, and banquet and conference facilities. The property is well positioned to cater to both business and leisure travellers visiting Calicut.



The Utah Office of Tourism appoints Sartha Global Marketing as India Representative

The Utah Office of Tourism appoints Sartha Global Marketing LLP as its India representative, reinforcing the state's focus on India's fast-growing outbound travel market. Sartha will lead travel trade and media engagement through PR and marketing initiatives, positioning Utah as a compelling, year-round US destination for Indian travellers.



Centrum Air to launch's Hyderabad operations from 28 September

Centrum Air, the Tashkent-based carrier, announces the launch of scheduled services from Hyderabad effective 28 September 2026, marking its second Indian gateway after Delhi. The new Hyderabad-Tashkent service will operate twice weekly on the Airbus A320neo, offering direct connectivity to Tashkent and convenient onward connections across Central Asia, the CIS, the Middle East and Europe through Centrum Air's hub.



Building Tourism from the Roots

MUKHYAMANTRI HOMESTAY PROTSAHAN YOJANA 2026

Tourism is not only about monuments and destinations; it is also about people, culture, hospitality and local livelihoods.

Recognizing this, Department of Tourism, Government of Bihar, has launched the **Mukhyamantri Homestay Protsahan Yojana 2026**, a significant initiative aimed at strengthening the state's tourism economy through community participation.



₹25 Crore

Sanctioned by the Government to promote Homestay



16 Districts

Covered Under the scheme



34

Important tourist destinations.



The initiative will encourage visitors to experience Bihar beyond conventional hotels—by staying with local communities and discovering the state through its authentic lifestyle, traditions, cuisine, stories and hospitality.

Tourism becomes truly sustainable when local communities become its strongest partners.



From historical and spiritual tourism to eco-tourism and rural tourism, the scheme seeks to create a more diverse and immersive tourism ecosystem while generating new opportunities for local residents.



A Journey of Faith

Sindhu Darshan Yatra Subsidy

Bihar's commitment to tourism extends beyond destinations within the state. The Government has also introduced a special initiative encouraging residents of Bihar to undertake the spiritually significant Sindhu Darshan Yatra.

Subsidy Up To

₹20,000

on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The initiative reflects a broader vision of promoting spiritual journeys while enabling more citizens to explore India's rich cultural and civilizational heritage.



Maa Punaauradham, Sitamarhi

A Sacred Destination Taking Shape

A new chapter in Bihar's spiritual tourism landscape is also unfolding at Maa Punaauradham in Sitamarhi, revered as the birthplace of Mata Sita.

The development of the Maa Punaauradham Temple is progressing as an important landmark project aimed at strengthening Sitamarhi's identity as a major spiritual and religious tourism destination.

With its deep connection to the Ramayana and the sacred legacy of Mata Sita, Punaauradham holds immense cultural and spiritual significance.

The ongoing development is envisioned to provide devotees and visitors with an enhanced pilgrimage experience while creating a destination of national and international appeal.



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, GOVERNMENT OF BIHAR

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TAWI LUSH appoints Sales and PR arm for Konzept Africa in India

TAWI LUSH appoints as the Sales and PR arm for Konzept Africa in the Indian market, strengthening the luxury travel specialist's presence among India's high-net-worth and discerning experiential travellers. The partnership will focus on building greater awareness of bespoke African travel experiences while expanding Konzept Africa's engagement with India's luxury travel trade, advisors and consumers.



Villa Resorts wins double honours at TTM Awards & Gala 2026

Villa Resorts wins two honours at the TTM Awards & Gala 2026, with Royal Island named Best Dive Resort 2026 for its pristine house reef, vibrant marine life and immersive diving experiences. The award recognises the resort's commitment to delivering exceptional underwater experiences in the Maldives' rich marine environment.

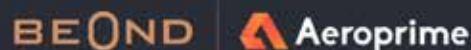
Wyndham introducing Vienna House to India, signs first hotel in Vrindavan

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts announces plans to introduce its European lifestyle brand, Vienna House, to India with the signing of the 100-key Vienna House Easy Vrindavan, further expanding its presence in one of the world's fastest-growing hospitality markets. The all-new hotel, slated to open in 2029, is being developed by entrepreneur Sachin Kumar, owner and operator of Kumar Beverages Industries, one of North India's leading packaged drinking water businesses in partnership with Nardev Chaudhary.



ITB India 2026 opens its doors in Mumbai for three days

The fourth in-person edition brings the international travel industry together for three days of business, networking and knowledge exchange, with the ITB India Conference 2026 providing industry insights and the inaugural Leadership Roundtable with Simon-Kucher bringing senior leaders together to explore India's evolving role in global tourism.



beOND signs MoU with Aeroprime Group to advance cargo strategy in India

beOND announces the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Aeroprime Group to explore the appointment of beOND's Cargo General Sales and Service Agent (Cargo GSSA) in India. The MOU marks a milestone in beOND's ecosystem development strategy as the airline expands its presence in one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets.



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Who owns the traveller?

The battle for the modern traveller is no longer between destinations.
It is between ecosystems.

- Bharti Sharma



I have spent enough years around the travel industry to remember when the battle seemed wonderfully simple. A destination wanted us to come. An airline wanted to fly us there. A hotel wanted us to stay. A travel advisor wanted to make the booking.

Today, nothing is quite that simple. The traveller now moves through a maze of influence long before a passport is presented at an airport. A photograph can plant the idea. A search engine can validate it. An influencer can romanticise it. An airline can make it possible. A hotel can make it desirable. A loyalty programme can make it familiar. An OTA can make it bookable. A credit card can make it rewarding. An AI tool can now suggest an entirely different trip before the traveller has even made up their mind.

And somewhere in this increasingly crowded ecosystem sits the travel advisor, trying to make sense of it all.

Which brings us to a question that sounds simple, but isn't: **Who owns the traveller?**

THE CUSTOMER EVERYONE WANTS

The global appetite for travel is hardly in doubt. International tourism returned to almost pre-pandemic levels in 2024, with an estimated 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide,

according to UN Tourism. Air travel continued its extraordinary momentum in 2025, with international passenger demand growing 7.1 per cent and international load factor reaching a record 83.5 per cent, according to IATA.

But these numbers tell only the visible part of the story.

The more interesting battle is happening before the journey begins. Every traveller passes through a series of decisions: where to go, when to go, how to get there, where to stay, what to do, who to trust and, increasingly, what not to worry about. Each decision represents an opportunity for a different player to enter the relationship. That is why the traveller has become more valuable than the booking.

A booking happens once.

A traveller can book for decades.

The new prize in travel is not the transaction. It is the relationship.

DESTINATIONS ARE NO LONGER SELLING PLACES

Tourism boards still sell the

romance of place: landscapes, culture, cuisine, history and experiences. But none of it matters if a destination never makes the traveller's shortlist. Today, a country is competing not just with neighbouring destinations, but with every place, trend, airline route and experience fighting for the same limited attention and discretionary spend. A beautiful destination with poor connectivity can remain aspirational, while a lesser-known one with the right flights, hotels, infrastructure and visibility can suddenly become the place everyone wants to visit. The destination creates the desire. The ecosystem turns that desire into travel.

THE AIRLINE IS DRAWING THE MAP

We often speak about airline connectivity as though it were simply a matter of convenience. It is much more powerful than that. Airlines can alter the perceived geography of the world. A direct flight can make a distant destination feel close. Greater frequency can turn an occasional possibility into a practical choice. Premium capacity can influence which travellers arrive. Alliances and partnerships can determine how easily several destinations can be combined into one journey. The numbers underline the strength of demand. International air passenger demand grew 7.1 per cent in 2025, while global passenger demand rose 5.3 per cent, with

the overall load factor reaching a record 83.6 per cent.

But perhaps the more important statistic is the route that doesn't exist.

Because a destination without connectivity is not merely inconvenient.

It is invisible to a traveller who needs convenience.

That is why airlines are no longer just transport providers. They are participants in destination strategy, tourism development and consumer behaviour.

They do not simply follow the map. **They help redraw it.**

THE HOTEL DOESN'T WANT ONE NIGHT. IT WANTS THE NEXT TEN.

The hotel industry's ambition has changed too.

A room night is no longer the end goal. It is the beginning of a relationship.

The growth of loyalty ecosystems has made the traveller's future behaviour almost as important as today's booking. Points, status, recognition, benefits and personalisation create familiarity, and familiarity has a remarkable influence on choice.

Once a traveller becomes deeply embedded in an ecosystem, the decision becomes subtly different.

It is no longer only, "Where should I stay?"

It becomes, "What does my trusted ecosystem offer me here?"

That shift is enormously valuable. Because the hotel group is no longer competing for one stay.

It is competing for a share of the traveller's lifetime.

THE TRAVELLER'S NEW JOURNEY

INSPIRE - Social media, creators, culture, word of mouth

DISCOVER - Search, AI, destination platforms, editorial

VALIDATE - Reviews, communities, travel advisors, trusted brands

CONVERT - Airlines, OTAs, hotels, direct channels

EXPERIENCE - Destination, hospitality, attractions, local ecosystem

RETURN - Loyalty, personalisation, recognition, relationships

REPEAT - Whoever earned the traveller's trust



THE GREAT FRAGMENTATION

No single player owns the traveller anymore. Social platforms shape inspiration, search engines drive discovery, AI increasingly influences recommendation, airlines build loyalty, hotels own the stay, OTAs capture the transaction, credit cards influence the payment, destinations create the memory, and travel advisors hold something harder to buy: trust. The traveller moves fluidly between all of them, rarely aware of where one ecosystem ends and another begins. The future of travel, then, may not belong to the biggest player, but to those who can remain relevant across the greatest number of moments in the journey.

AND THEN THERE IS TRUST

This is where I think the travel industry has a particularly interesting story to tell.

We have spent years assuming

that technology would gradually eliminate the need for intermediaries. Yet the more complex travel becomes, the more valuable judgement can become.

Expedia Group's 2026 research found that 68 per cent of travellers still prefer to book with a trusted travel brand rather than an AI platform. Sixty-six percent said they would not trust an AI assistant to buy or book something on their behalf.

That tells us something important. Travellers are happy to be helped by machines. They are not necessarily ready to be handed over to them. And that distinction matters enormously for travel advisors.

The advisor of tomorrow cannot simply be a person who knows how to make a reservation. That role is increasingly replaceable. The valuable advisor will be the person who understands the traveller well enough to know

FIVE ECOSYSTEMS. ONE TRAVELLER

The Destination wants preference.

The Airline wants connectivity and loyalty.

The Hotel wants lifetime value.

The Platform wants the transaction and data.

The Advisor wants trust.

And increasingly, AI wants to be there before any of them.

that the most obvious itinerary is not necessarily the right one. Information can be automated. Judgement is harder to replicate.

THE TRAVELLER DOESN'T BELONG TO ANYONE

Perhaps we have been asking the wrong question all along.

Who owns the traveller?

Nobody, really.

The traveller can leave the loyalty programme. Ignore the advertisement.

Change airlines. Book another hotel. Ask another AI. Call another advisor. Discover somewhere completely unexpected.

What the industry can own is data. It can own a transaction.

It can own a loyalty relationship. It can own a moment of attention.

But it cannot own the human being making the decision.

And that may be the most important lesson of all.

The traveller is not an asset to be captured. The traveller is a relationship to be earned.

THE NEXT BATTLE

The travel industry has spent decades making the world easier to access. Now it is entering a new phase, one where every player wants a place inside the traveller's journey. Destinations want preference, airlines want loyalty, hotels want lifetime value, platforms want the transaction, AI wants influence, and travel advisors want trust. Yet perhaps the winners will not be those trying hardest to own the traveller, but those who understand that travel is ultimately an act of choice. Because however sophisticated the ecosystem becomes, the final decision remains deeply human: "This is where I want to go." And perhaps that is where the next great battle will be fought, not over who owns the traveller, but over who earns the right to influence their next journey.

But over who earns the right to influence their next journey.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE BATTLE

1.4 billion - International tourist arrivals recorded globally in 2024, virtually restoring global tourism to pre-pandemic levels.

7.1 per cent - Growth in international air passenger demand in 2025.

83.5 per cent - International airline passenger load factor in 2025, a record high.

89 per cent - Consumers who said they want to use AI in future travel planning in Booking.com's 2025 research.

68 per cent - Travellers who still prefer booking with a trusted travel brand over an AI platform, according to Expedia Group's 2026 research.

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INDIAN ESCAPADE

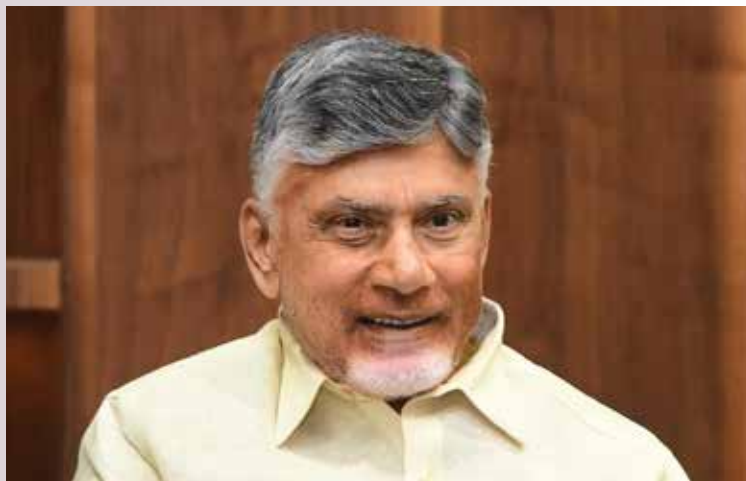
Andhra Pradesh

Unfolding many journeys

From sun-kissed beaches and ancient Buddhist trails to the Eastern Ghats, dramatic gorges and river landscapes, Andhra Pradesh is connecting its diverse tourism experiences into longer, richer journeys, with policy-led development and travel-trade partnerships giving the state fresh momentum.

-Srishti Mukherjee

INDIAN ESCAPADE



Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu

Andhra Pradesh is widely known to the travellers for its pilgrimage centre, Tirupati, that draws visitors from all across the country and the world. With its golden beaches along the Bay of Bengal in Vishakhapatnam (Vizag) and Suryalanka, the coffee plantations in the Eastern Ghats and tribal landscapes of Araku Valley, the Buddhist remains of Amaravati and Vizag, the almost cinematic Pennar gorge at Gandikota, the caves of Borra and Belum, the forested landscapes around Papikondalu and the Godavari and the coastal stretches around Nellore and Kakinada, the state is a perfect blend of heritage, spirituality, adventure cuisine and an unmatched coastal charm that offers travellers an opportunity to experience the region in different ways.

Honourable Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu shares at a tourism meet, "Tourism had long been synonymous with pilgrims and temple visits but it is now

becoming a global driver of transformation. Today, the only sustainable sector is tourism. While Indians are travelling abroad, no other country in the country has as many tourism opportunities as we have in Andhra Pradesh."

Along the coast

With a coastal line that stretches for about 1000 kilometres, Andhra Pradesh offers a pleasant seaside holiday with Vizag as a natural starting point that brings together beaches, panoramic viewpoints and Buddhist archeological sites. The city, set between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal, combines an urban vibe with the beaches, hills and heritage. The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-29 proposes five beach tourism circuits to enhance the coastal areas covering Vishakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Kakinada, Nellore and Machilipatnam. The vision focuses on more than just traditional sightseeing, it aims to transform the state into a leading global

tourism hub with plans around water sports, nature walks, yoga, beach events, local cuisine, cafes and improved visitor facilities that translate into an experience-led travel model.

The Honourable Chief Minister also shares, "Andhra Pradesh should become a destination for tourists. The goal is to make them feel that 'AP is a happy State'. Creating an enjoyable and welcoming environment is necessary. They should believe that Andhra Pradesh offers the best food. All other 'isms' may fade, but tourism is the only 'ism' that will survive. Tourism is not just a cultural and economic catalyst but also a sustainable engine for future growth and inclusive development."

A trail of temples

Whilst expanding into different circuits, spirituality remains the bedrock of Andhra Pradesh's tourism that draws millions of tourists every year. Tirupati and the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple are

the helm of the pilgrimage economy that has long brought visitors not only from India but across the world with their aura of devotion.

However, with Srisailem, Amaravati, Vijayawada and numerous temple towns that form a wider network of religious and cultural destinations, the state's spiritual landscape extends well beyond Tirupati and resides in the hearts of the devotees.

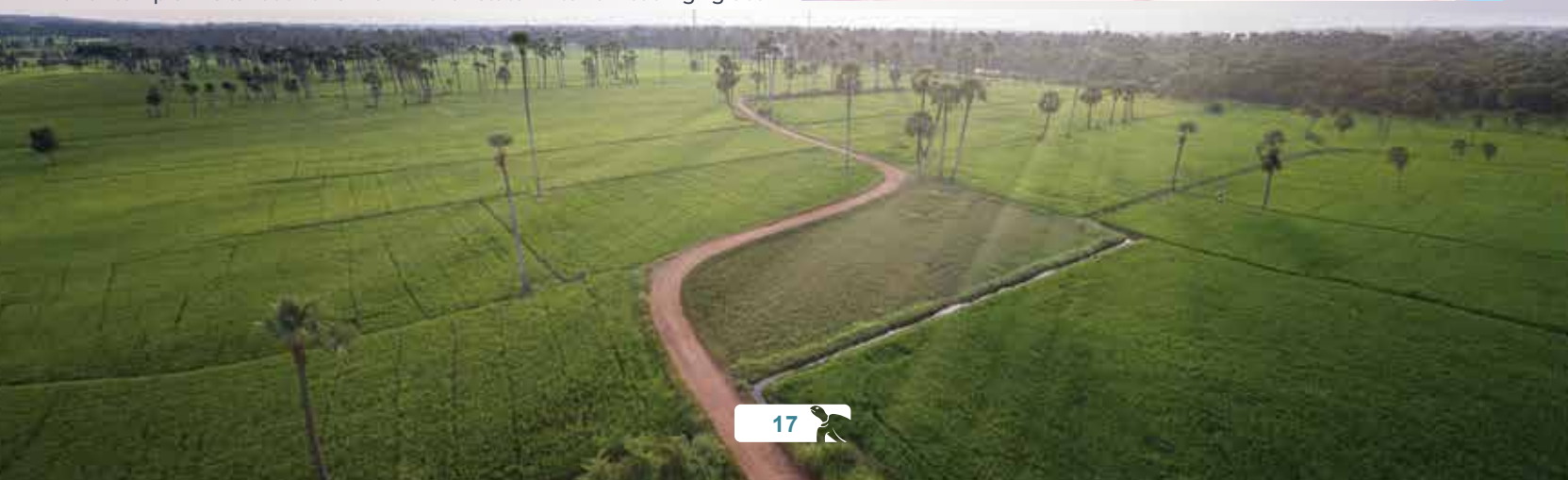
And the Andhra Pradesh tourism policy 2024-29 acknowledges the state's reliance on religious tourism and formally structures and modernises spiritual tourism to shift pilgrims from 'single-day visits' to 'extended wellness stays'.

Andhra Pradesh's Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh shares, "Andhra Pradesh has got all sorts of tourism activities. The thing is that the Government of Andhra Pradesh is concentrating much on making the tourists stay for more and more days because of its holy places."

By formally recognising the spiritual landmarks as primary



Shri Kandula Durgesh



INDIAN ESCAPADE

anchors of the state's tourism, the policy identifies seven anchor hubs — Vizag, Tirupati, Araku Valley (including Lambasingi), Rajamahendravaram(Rajahmundry), Amaravati, Srisailem and Gandikota — and ten dedicated temple circuits — Tirupati & Kanipakam Circuit, Srisailem & Ahobilam Circuit, Simhachalam & Annavaram Circuit, Vijayawada & Dwaraka Tirumala Circuit, and Lepakshi & Shakti Peeta Circuits. These circuits and hubs encourage travellers to plan for multi-stay vacations rather than visiting only one major attraction.

Following the Buddhist trail

Andhra Pradesh's beauty lies beyond its sandy beaches and temple architecture. The state has a remarkable Buddhist legacy that dates back to the 3rd century BCE and houses over 140 listed historic Buddhist sites. The tourism policy proposes two Buddhist circuits centred on Amaravati & Nagarjunakonda circuit and Vishakhapatnam coastal circuit. The line-up of these circuits include Amaravati stupa, Nagarjuna, Undavalli Caves, Thotlakonda, Bojjanakonda and Shaligundam. These and several of the other 140 Buddhist monuments that have been identified across the state offer an opportunity for the state to attract travellers not just from across India but also Buddhist-majority countries across East and Southeast Asia.

If one is travelling around Vishakhapatnam, pairing the Buddhist trail with its coastline makes for a good travel itinerary. Thotlakonda and Bavikonda twin monasteries bring the travellers closer to the region's ancient Buddhist history with its ancient prayer halls, stone stupas and water reservoirs. While the beaches nearby bring a tropical energy to the destination.

Beyond architecture and into nature

Andhra Pradesh's nature tells tales about the allure of the state. And at the heart of these stories sits Araku Valley making way for an

experience rooted in nature and adventure. Araku, set amid the Eastern Ghats, is known for its forested hills, coffee plantations, waterfalls and tribal culture. One of the seven anchor hubs of the state, the valley can be paired with other tourist destinations in the vicinity to add another layer to the experience.

Borra Caves nearby, with their dramatic limestone formations, are one such tourist spot. These caves offer the travellers an underground adventure alongside Araku's hill and plantations and together, they make for Andhra Pradesh's most appealing itinerary. The state's tourism policy proposed eco-tourism circuits bring together destinations such as Araku Valley, Belum Caves, Nallamala, Kondapalli Forest, Gandikota, Erramatti Dibbalu and Papikondalu which open up a wide scope for experiential travel for the tourists and encourages them to build a multi-stay vacation in the state.

IATO and Andhra Pradesh Tourism

The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Policy 2024-29 sits at the heart of the state's tourism strategy that focuses on creating thematic circuits and connecting destinations that can encourage travellers to spend more time in the state, exploring its beauty and heritage. One of its key targets is to increase the average stay from one or two days to five days. And As the state prepares to host the 41st IATO Annual convention in Visakhapatnam September 2026, the strategy now gets a direct travel-trade platform as it brings together travel professionals and tourism stakeholders and offers a deeper understanding of Andhra Pradesh's coastline, heritage, spirituality, cuisine and experiential offerings.

Andhra Pradesh's appeal goes beyond the usual stops and for travellers looking to experience the beauty of the state in the most unconventional manner, the state offers ample opportunities. What makes it even more interesting is how effortlessly the different landscapes can come together to turn a quick getaway into a more layered escape.

Now with the measures to strengthen its circuits and travel-trade partnerships, Andhra Pradesh is creating more ways that enable travellers to explore and experience the state at their own pace and discover the stories that hide in plain sight in its ancient sites, archeological ruins and its nature.



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INDIAN ESCAPADE

MEGHALAYA'S TOURISM renaissance



Shri Timothy D. Shira

Shri Timothy D. Shira, Tourism Minister, Meghalaya shares about the untapped tourism potential, infrastructure push, safety and sustainability, and what's next for one of India's most spectacular travel destinations.

INDIAN ESCAPADE

Meghalaya doesn't need convincing anyone of its beauty. Living root bridges older than most nations, waterfalls spanning every few kilometres, and a matrilineal culture that has quietly built one of the safest travel environments in the country, the state has always had everything it takes to become one of India's defining travel destinations. In a wide-ranging conversation, the Minister of Tourism, Government of Meghalaya, spoke about the state's post-2018 tourism boom, its ambitious homestay economy, a soon-to-launch cultural village, and why Meghalaya's terrain remains remarkably stable and comfortable; a distinct advantage over other trekking-heavy hill states that face higher landslide risk.

• What is Meghalaya's biggest tourism opportunity over the next five years?

Shri Timothy D. Shira: Every single tourist spot in this state, we intend to explore and expand. That means connecting them through proper road infrastructure, and building local capability

alongside it. We're already training unemployed youth in hotel management to prepare for what's coming.

Meghalaya, in many ways, has far richer nature and destinations than what have been realised and materialised. Most simply aren't aware of what's here. Ask anyone outside the state to name a spot here, and they'll say Cherrapunji, and probably stop there. The truth is, in every 10 kilometres of this state, there is natural beauty waiting to be discovered. We need to promote it far more aggressively. Here, in the Khasi and Garo Hills, people are only now beginning to understand what tourism can bring them.

• What are the key focus areas of Meghalaya's tourism policies, and how will they shape future growth?

Shri Timothy D. Shira: We recently inaugurated a new eco-friendly hotel 'Pine Home' in Mawlynnong, conceived and built by bringing together Slovakian ecological architecture and Meghalaya's indigenous craftsmanship and traditional building knowledge using entirely local materials such as

mud, limestone and straw for the walls. It runs on a beautifully simple heating system: a single wood-fired oven connected by iron piping that carries warmth up through every floor of the building. It's inexpensive, easy for local people to replicate, and it's a genuine model of sustainable design paired with scenic beauty.

We've already built 900 homestays, and 3,000 more will come up within the next year. As for support, we actively promote and incentivise homestays. Some entrepreneurs who have the means also invest and build on their own, and we encourage that too. It's a mixed model with government-backed and private investment, working side by side.

• What new destinations or experiences are you looking to promote beyond Shillong and Cherrapunji?

Shri Timothy D. Shira: We actively participate in tourism festivals and promotional events in Delhi, Mumbai and other major cities, where we also showcase our agricultural produce. For example, in Delhi, we organise these pineapple

festivals. On the ground here, we're seeing growing interest from private players who want to build parks, lakes, and adventure trekking infrastructure, and the government is stepping in to assist wherever we can. One destination we're particularly focused on is Siju Cave in the Garo Hills, one of the largest limestone cave systems in the region. Right now, visitors can reach it, but there's nowhere nearby to stay. We're building a tourist resort there to change that.

• How is the state strengthening connectivity to make travel to Meghalaya easier?

Shri Timothy D. Shira: Most major roads connecting our key tourist destinations are being taken up for upgrades. We recently laid the foundation for a 40-kilometre stretch connecting Willow, Mukherjot and further to Tongkor. It's a ₹140-crore project that will convert a single-lane road into an intermediate lane. This is the pattern we're following across the state, so likewise, every important route linking a tourist spot is being systematically improved.





• **What is your vision for positioning Meghalaya in India's B2B travel market?**

Shri Timothy D. Shira: With Meghalaya hosting the National Games in 2027, we're constructing 300 new homestays specifically for that event. Beyond that, several five-star hotels are coming up. Many projects are already approved and under construction in Tura, and we're extending that development to Baghmara, the headquarters of South Garo Hills, and to Resubelpara in my own district, North Garo Hills.

We're promoting big hotels and homestays equally, side by side, because they serve different travellers. Some people want a five-star experience; others want something quiet, close to nature. Homestays also create direct employment for local families, which matters just as much to us as the big-ticket investments.

There's one more project close to my heart: developing the naturally formed Shivalinga found nowhere else. I see real

potential here similar to Amarnath. Amarnath sometimes poses a few problems: winter shutdowns, overcrowding, and security concerns. The journey over here, in many ways, is even smoother. A railhead is just 5 kilometres away, the road is already built, and travel time from Guwahati is currently under two hours, soon to drop to 1.5 hours once the ongoing national highway and flyover works are complete.

• **What kind of tourism segments are you planning to tap in the coming future? Is promoting MICE and Weddings in the pipeline, as it's a high - revenue - generating segment of tourism?**

Shri Timothy D. Shira: It'll be a mixture, developed according to suitability and availability in each region. We're not neglecting any segment: homestays, adventure tourism, all of it matters. South Garo Hills, in particular, has enormous untapped potential for adventure tourism.

• **The Hundred Drums Wangala Festival is celebrating its Golden Jubilee, marking five decades of the festival in its modern form. What does this milestone mean for the preservation of Garo heritage, and how do you see it strengthening Meghalaya's cultural tourism proposition?**

Shri Timothy D. Shira: We've purchased land to develop a dedicated space to host this festival going forward, alongside a cultural village representing every community in the state, where visitors can experience different traditions and live performances in one place.

Here's the gap we've noticed: tourists arrive, spend the day enjoying our scenic beauty — the living root bridges, the waterfalls, and then have nothing to do once they're back at their hotel in the evening. So we're building a cultural centre for regular performances, music festivals and shows, so that whether someone is staying in Shillong or Cherrapunji, their evenings are just as memorable as their days.

We've also noticed that younger

travellers increasingly decide where families go on holiday. They want adventure like trekking and hiking by day, and energy by night. So we're building towards capturing that spirit with live music, open-air dining, and shows timed to sunset, something in the spirit of Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, or the waterfronts of LA. More broadly, youth development is central to our tourism strategy. We see young people as the backbone of our community, and we're channelling that energy into sport, tourism, and music alike, including direct support for young musicians to develop their talent.

And it doesn't happen overnight. We do face financial constraints as a state. We're also working to ease congestion in Shillong itself. Government offices, including the police headquarters and the IT Park, are being relocated to New Shillong, just 2-3 kilometres away, which should meaningfully reduce city traffic. And a new Shillong bypass is under construction, so travellers heading to Cherrapunji won't need to pass through the city centre at all.



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BIHAR

Rewriting a new tourism story!

Bihar carries its history the way a river carries silt, quietly, continuously, enriching everything downstream. Shri Lokesh Kumar Singh (IAS) Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Bihar shares how the state is upping its tourism game.

-Sudipta Saha





Shri Lokesh Kumar Singh (IAS)

Bihar is the land where the Buddha found enlightenment under a tree in Bodh Gaya, where the ancient university of Nalanda once drew scholars from across Asia, and where the Ganga, the Son and the Gandak have shaped both soil and story for centuries. Yet Bihar today is far more than an open-air museum of the past. Its forests shelter tigers and leopards, its hills invite trekkers, its rivers carry the possibility of water sports, and its villages hold traditions that have never needed a stage to be extraordinary.

The vision on the table is considerably wider than pilgrimage alone, weaving together spirituality, wildlife, adventure, wellness and rural life into a single, unfolding experience. Homestays are opening doors in tribal hamlets, temple corridors are rising on the scale of India's grandest pilgrimage sites, and heli-tourism is preparing to stitch remote corners of the state into the mainstream travel map.

Vision beyond pilgrimage

Bihar's tourism identity has always been anchored in its spiritual and historical significance, yet the department is now looking to widen that lens considerably. Speaking on the same lines Shri Lokesh Kumar Singh shares, "Bihar's tourism story extends

far beyond its globally renowned pilgrimage and heritage destinations. Our vision is to position Bihar as a diverse, experiential and year-round tourism destination, where spirituality, heritage, nature, wildlife, adventure, wellness and rural experiences together define the visitor journey. The ambition is measured less by footfall numbers and more by the depth of the journey visitors take across the state."

Experiences that go beyond monuments

Travellers today want to feel a place under their feet, not just photograph it from a distance, and Bihar's tourism department has taken this shift to heart. Rajgir stands out as a living example, where a visitor can walk the same hills the Buddha once walked and then, within the same afternoon, cross a glass bridge suspended over the forest or spot deer on a jungle safari. Highlighting more about the destination Shri Lokesh Kumar Singh says, "Rajgir best represents this shift by combining its extraordinary Buddhist and historical heritage with Nature Safari, Zoo Safari, Glass Bridge and adventure activities in one destination. Valmiki Tiger Reserve and the trekking landscapes of Rohtas and Kaimur are opening entirely new chapters for adventure and nature tourism in the state."

Communities at the heart of growth

Perhaps the most heart warming part of Bihar's tourism blueprint is its commitment to the people who live closest to these destinations, the families who will end up cooking the meals, telling the folklore and lighting the lamps for every visitor who arrives. Local households are being empowered to become hosts through a growing homestay network. Elaborating about the new initiative Shri Lokesh

Kumar Singh explains, "A key initiative is Bihar's Homestay Programme, through which local households convert residential properties into tourist accommodation. The programme is now operating around 28 identified tourist locations in order to strengthen accommodation capacity while creating an additional income source for local families. Tribal tourism around Valmiki Tiger Reserve, where visitors can experience Tharu food, traditions and folklore, adds another layer of authenticity to this community-first model."

Building bridges with industry

The Bihar Tourism Policy 2023 has been crafted with exactly this partnership in mind, opening doors for hotel groups, tour operators, travel agencies and digital platforms. Government vision needs private wings to truly fly, and Shri Lokesh Kumar Singh speaks about the role investors and industry partners must play. He says, "Private-sector participation is absolutely critical to the next phase of Bihar's tourism growth. The government's role is to create an enabling ecosystem through policy, infrastructure, connectivity, destination development and facilitation, while the private sector brings investment, expertise, innovation and market access."

Circuits, corridors and new horizons

Bihar's next big leap lies in weaving its scattered treasures into cohesive journeys. A comprehensive gap assessment is in process to identify circuits that blend spirituality, heritage, wildlife and rural culture into multi-day itineraries. Shri Lokesh Kumar Singh shares, "Based on this assessment, Bihar will develop new thematic and multi-day itineraries that combine spirituality, heritage, nature, wildlife, adventure, rural

culture and wellness. Landmark projects such as Punaura Dham in Sitamarhi, envisioned on the scale of Ayodhya's Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, and the Baba Hariharnath Temple Corridor in Sonpur, modelled along the lines of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, signal the scale of transformation underway. Heli-tourism and air-tourism services are also being introduced to connect remote corners of the state with mainstream travel routes."

An open invitation to investors

With destination development plans worth crores taking shape in Gaya-Bodh Gaya and Nalanda-Rajgir, and five-star hospitality projects rising in Patna, Vaishali and Rajgir, the investment climate in Bihar is turning increasingly favourable. Shri Lokesh Kumar Singh explains, "The policy offers Capital subsidy, Interest subvention, Ease of Doing Business and Single Window facilitation. Adding eligible categories now extend to adventure tourism, eco-tourism, wellness tourism and MICE infrastructure. Our task is to transform these strengths into high-quality, sustainable and globally competitive tourism experiences of Bihar."

What future holds

Bihar today stands at a rare crossroads where ancient heritage and modern ambition walk hand in hand. From glass bridges over forest canopies to homestays nestled in tribal villages, from grand temple corridors to heli-tourism connecting its remotest corners, the state is scripting a tourism narrative that honours its past while confidently building its future. For the travel trade, Bihar is no longer a destination to be discovered once. It is fast becoming a landscape to be explored, again and again, one experience at a time.



IATO *brings India's* *tourism story to* *Visakhapatnam*

The Indian Association of Tour Operators is gearing up for its 41st Annual Convention, and this edition promises to be a defining chapter for inbound tourism. Ahead of the Convention, **Ravi Gosain**, President, IATO shares his vision for what delegates can expect, what the state stands to gain, and how IATO plans to turn dialogue into tangible business outcomes.

-Tripti Jain

Set against the coastal charm of Visakhapatnam, the Convention carries a theme that captures the mood of the industry today: 'India: The World's Next Tourism Opportunity.' Ravi Gosain speaks with quiet conviction about why this is the moment for India to dream bigger, and why Andhra Pradesh is the perfect stage for that conversation to unfold.

The opportunity knocking

Every great opportunity arrives with a sense of timing, and he believes India's moment has arrived. Culture, heritage, wellness, spirituality, wildlife, cuisine and adventure already exist in abundance across the country, yet global arrival numbers have not caught up with that promise. Explaining the thinking behind this year's theme, Ravi Gosain says, "We chose 'India: The World's Next Tourism Opportunity' because I strongly believe the time has come for India to think much bigger about inbound tourism... Yet our share of global international tourist arrivals is still not commensurate with our potential."

The Convention, in his vision, becomes a launchpad for asking sharper questions about international promotion, easier access, stronger connectivity and closer coordination between government and industry, so that India's natural advantages finally translate into visible, measurable growth.

Beyond the beaten trail

Taking the Convention outside the usual metro circuit has always been part of IATO's larger design, and Visakhapatnam fits that purpose beautifully. Coastal beauty, Buddhist heritage, tribal culture and regional cuisine sit

waiting to be woven into international itineraries, often overlooked simply because they have not yet found their place in mainstream programmes. Ravi Gosain frames this as a discovery mission for the very people who build India's global image. "Visakhapatnam and Andhra Pradesh have much more to offer than what is currently visible in mainstream inbound programmes. We want our delegates to experience the coastline, Buddhist heritage, tribal culture, cuisine, nature and the wider tourism possibilities around Visakhapatnam," he shares.

For him, the true measure of success lies in delegates returning home with genuinely new products rather than only pleasant memories, ready to place Andhra Pradesh on the international map.

From talk to trade

A convention earns its worth long after the closing ceremony, once ideas begin translating into itineraries and bookings. He is emphatic that Visakhapatnam should mark the beginning of a new business chapter for Andhra Pradesh rather than a one-time showcase. Structured B2B meetings between delegates and local travel agents have been built into the agenda specifically to make that happen. "We are bringing together tour operators, tourism stakeholders, hotels, transporters, state tourism representatives and other industry partners. This creates an excellent platform for Andhra Pradesh to engage directly with the people who sell India overseas," he explains, adding that familiarisation remains equally central to the plan. Once operators witness connectivity,

infrastructure and ground logistics firsthand, confidence naturally follows, paving the way for new circuits built around beaches, heritage, nature and Buddhist trails.

Business, front and centre

For delegates travelling to Visakhapatnam, the promise extends well beyond networking dinners and photo opportunities. Ravi Gosain wants this Convention to address the everyday challenges that inbound operators actually grapple with, from regaining India's competitive edge on the world stage to embracing technology and artificial intelligence as tools for growth. "This year we want the discussions to address the real business issues confronting inbound tour operators - how India can regain competitiveness, how technology and AI are changing our businesses, how we unlock India's tourism potential, and how we develop new tourism products and experiences," he says. Alongside these conversations, first-hand exposure to Andhra Pradesh's offerings gives operators fresh material to bring back to their international clients, turning the trip itself into a working showcase.

New voices, new vision

Every edition of the Convention carries its own signature, and this year's edition leans firmly toward outcomes over optics. Sessions have been redesigned to be sharper, more interactive and closely tied to real business impact, with dedicated B2B interactions featuring local stakeholders introduced as a new feature altogether. Ravi Gosain highlights subjects

that will shape the coming decade of Indian tourism, from digital transformation and international marketing to sustainable practices and evolving traveller behaviour. Equally close to his heart is the inclusion of younger professionals in shaping the industry's direction. "We also want to create stronger opportunities for younger members and the next generation of tourism professionals to participate in the conversation, because they will play an important role in shaping the future of IATO and the industry," he notes.

His ambition reaches beyond the Convention hall itself, with plans to carry forward the recommendations generated in Visakhapatnam directly to government and industry stakeholders throughout the year.

The tide ahead

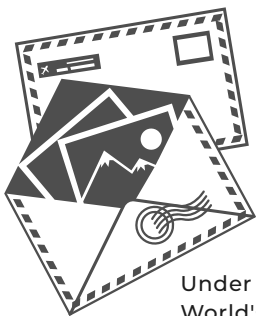
Visakhapatnam is set to host far more than a gathering of tourism professionals this season. It stands poised to become the setting where India's next tourism story begins to take shape, one built on genuine collaboration, fresh destinations and a shared belief in the country's untapped potential. Ravi Gosain's vision threads together every element of the Convention, from the choice of theme to the structure of sessions, toward a single ambition: transforming India's vast tourism promise into visible growth on the global stage. As delegates prepare to converge on this coastal city, the 41st IATO Convention carries the energy of an industry ready to think bolder, act faster and sell India's story to the world with renewed confidence.

Visakhapatnam gears up for IATO's annual soirée!

The countdown has begun for the 41st IATO Annual Convention, and this time the coastal city of Visakhapatnam is more than just a host destination. It is being positioned as the launchpad for a much larger story, one that ties together government priorities, industry ambition and a state eager to showcase what it has to offer.

-Tripti Jain





PUBLIC EYE

Under the theme 'India: The World's Next Tourism Opportunity,' the convention is shaping up to be equal parts business summit, knowledge exchange and celebration of Andhra Pradesh's untapped travel potential. For an association as large and influential as the Indian Association of Tour Operators, pulling off an event of this scale takes months of planning across multiple fronts, from delegate logistics to destination storytelling.



Rajnish Kaistha

A campaign for the masses

IATO's office bearers shares their vision for the convention, and their responses paint a picture of an organisation determined to make this edition count well beyond its three days on the calendar.

Rajnish Kaistha, Senior Vice President of IATO, believes the convention needs to be treated as a sustained marketing exercise rather than a one-time gathering. Speaking about the approach IATO is taking this year, he explains, "The association is building a 360-degree communication campaign around the event, one that runs before, during and after the three days in Visakhapatnam, using IATO's digital platforms, social media, a dedicated convention app and a steady stream of destination stories to keep the momentum going. The Indian Tourism Fair on 11th and 12th September will

be a genuine business marketplace where states, hotels, DMCs and airlines can announce partnerships and generate real B2B leads, and a 'post convention bank' of content so that the convention markets Indian tourism for the next twelve months rather than for just four days."



Sanjay Razdan

Delegate experience takes centre stage

Behind every successful convention lies a mountain of logistical planning, and Sanjay Razdan, Vice President of IATO, has been closely involved in ensuring that this machinery runs without a hitch. He describes, "The effort is a collective one, with coordination, attention to detail and contingency planning forming the backbone of the organising process, starting from choosing the right speakers to curating value-added business and knowledge sessions, these remain some of the most important pieces of the puzzle. My goal for delegates is simple: they should be free to focus on networking, learning and exploring Visakhapatnam, while the Secretariat handles everything from registrations and transfers to cultural programmes behind the scenes."

He also shares a preview of the entertainment line-up, which promises to be a highlight in its own right. Delegates can look forward to Sufi band Dastaan setting the tone at the

inaugural evening on 10th September, followed by the ever-popular 'IATO Got Talent' karaoke competition on 11th September, where fifteen IATO members will take the stage before a DJ and percussionist take over. The 12th September brings a lighter touch with a mentalist and stand-up comedian in the afternoon, followed by an evening with retro Bollywood band Crooners Collective, rounding off a convention designed to blend business with genuine celebration.



Sunil Mishra

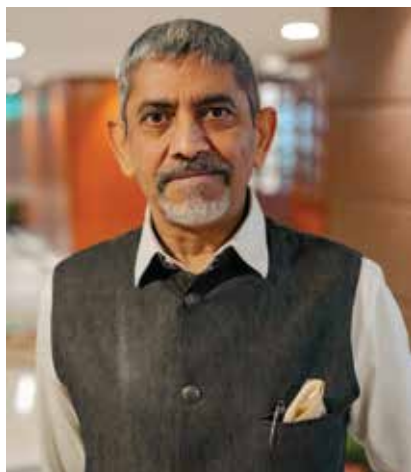
Turning discussion into direction

Sunil Mishra, Honorary Secretary of IATO, framed the convention's purpose in terms of measurable outcomes for inbound tourism. He shares, "We want the government and industry leaders to walk away with clear priorities around international promotion, easier access, better connectivity, competitive taxation and stronger product innovation, alongside a sharper understanding of what today's international traveller expects. New itineraries built around Andhra Pradesh and other lesser-known regions are high on our wish list, and the success should ultimately look like: stronger collaboration, new partnerships and tourism business that can be tracked long after the delegates have flown home."





PUBLIC EYE



Deepak Bhatnagar

Smooth skies and strong numbers

Registrations are often the first real indicator of how a convention will land, and Deepak Bhatnagar, Honorary Treasurer of IATO, has reason to feel optimistic. He shares, "The very first day of registrations brought in over 100 sign-ups, a strong start that has the association hopeful of surpassing last year's numbers. On the logistics front, IATO has negotiated favourable air fares with IndiGo and secured a reasonably good offer from Air India, moves aimed squarely at making travel to Visakhapatnam as convenient as possible for members. With the city's new airport now operational, adequate transportation has been arranged to move delegates smoothly from the airport to their hotels, removing one more layer of friction from the overall experience."

Building itineraries that outlast the event

Viney Tyagi, Honorary Joint Secretary of IATO, brings a historical perspective to the conversation, drawing on how past conventions have reshaped the destinations that hosted them. He recalls, "I remember the Bhubaneswar convention of 2017 and the earlier Visakhapatnam edition in 2018 led IATO members to jointly develop new and innovative itineraries across Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, creating lasting partnerships between pan - India tour operators and local

stakeholders. Building on that legacy, and following the momentum of the 2025 Puri convention, this year's edition in Visakhapatnam will open up even better opportunities for members, supported by post-convention familiarisation tours designed to give tour operators firsthand knowledge of the state's emerging tourism products."



Viney Tyagi

He also spoke about the tangible value the business and educational sessions bring, particularly for newer tourism entrepreneurs looking to understand emerging markets and the vast potential of Southern India. Fresh contacts, sharper product knowledge and renewed confidence to sell India internationally are, in his view, the real currency delegates should take home.

Building a bridge to the world

Rajiv Mehra, Immediate Past President of IATO, describes the 41st Convention as far more than an industry gathering, calling it an opportunity to showcase Andhra Pradesh as one of India's most promising tourism destinations. He shares, "We are working closely with the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the State Tourism Department and a wide network of local stakeholders, hotels, tour operators and transport providers to ensure delegates experience the state's hospitality first-hand, taking the convention beyond the conference venue to create a



Rajiv Mehra

comprehensive destination experience. Visakhapatnam's beaches, hills, heritage attractions, Buddhist sites, tribal culture, cuisine and modern hospitality infrastructure are an ideal combination for both leisure and business tourism, B2B networking, destination presentations and exposure visits will create direct business linkages between local stakeholders and tour operators from across the country. Andhra cuisine's distinctive blend of spice, freshness and regional ingredients, from rice-based specialties and chutneys to the coastal seafood traditions drawn from the Bay of Bengal, would leave with more than photographs, carrying instead a genuine taste of the state's culture and cuisine along with the confidence to package Andhra Pradesh for their own clients."

Convention built to travel beyond its dates

The vision laid out by IATO's leadership signals an association thinking well beyond the confines of a three - day event. From a content strategy designed to keep the destination visible all year round, to airfare negotiations that ease the path for delegates, to an entertainment calendar built for genuine bonding, every piece has been assembled with intent. Andhra Pradesh, with its coastline, tribal experiences and heritage sites waiting to be explored through familiarisation tours to Araku Valley, Kakinada, Rajahmundry and Vijayawada, stands to gain a spotlight that could shape its tourism trajectory for years to come.



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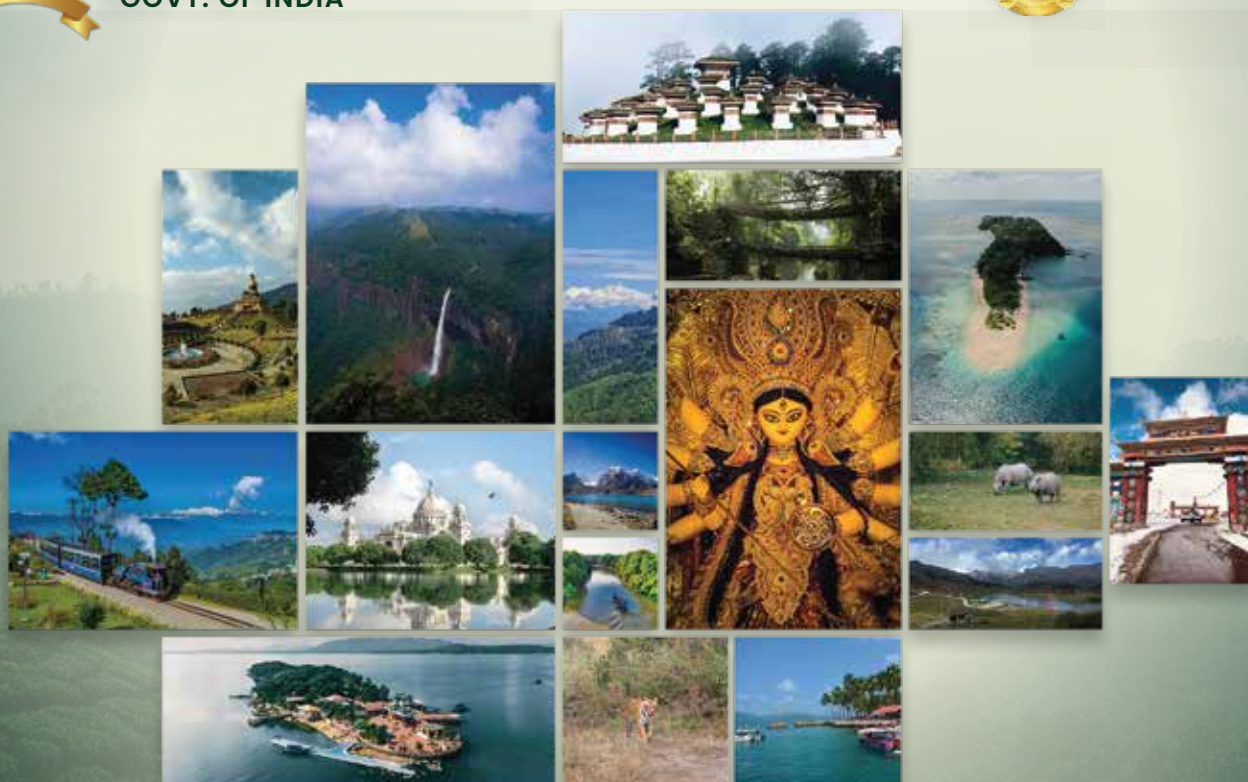
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TAFI turns 40 in Rhodes, Greece

With a theme 'Connecting Legacies, Crafting Futures', TAFI is all set to celebrate its 40th anniversary in Greece with business meetings like stepping stones to a brighter future of India's vtravel trade.

Abbas Moiz, President, TAFI, shares more about the 40th year of TAFI

-Srishti Mukherjee



With a four decades long journey that mirrors the evolution of India's travel trade, TAFI has grown and reinvented itself alongside the changing tourism landscape. It has continued to represent the interests of India's travel - agent community and their concerns and ambitions. As TAFI celebrates its milestone 40th Ruby Anniversary throughout 2026, the President of TAFI, Abbas Moiz, shares what the upcoming anniversary convention means for the association.

Set to be hosted in Rhodes, Greece, from October 4, 2026 to October 7, 2026, TAFI's 40th anniversary convention with the theme 'Connecting Legacies, Crafting Futures' is set to host close to 440 delegates.

Connecting Legacies, Crafting Futures

Talking about the theme of the convention and what it means for the future of India's travel trade, Abbas shares, "The word legacy represents the four decades of experience, relationships, trust and professional knowledge that have contributed to building India's travel trade, and must be used as the foundation for the future."

He believes that crafting futures is about recognising that the travel business is changing rapidly. "Technology, artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and changing traveller expectations are transforming how people discover, plan and purchase travel. It is no longer about competing with technology. Transition through the correct use of technology, based on the foundation of years of knowledge, sound judgement

and ethical problem-solving solutions, will eventually be the way agency operations will be conducted," he adds.

Rhodes as a representation

Picking Rhodes, Greece to host the anniversary convention, Abbas says, was a strategic choice. He shares, "Rhodes was chosen because it represents much more than a beautiful Greek island. It is a destination where history, cultures and commerce have intersected for centuries - which makes it particularly appropriate for TAFI's 40th anniversary and the theme, 'Connecting Legacies, Crafting Futures'."

He explains that a decisive factor for Greece was the direct connectivity between India and Greece. Rhodes was also chosen because it is a relatively unexplored destination. Furthermore he adds, "There is already a growing focus in Rhodes and the wider South Aegean region on developing stronger relationships with the Indian market. In fact, discussions around the TAFI Convention include a proposed framework for cooperation aimed at promoting the region in India, developing thematic tourism, and strengthening business relationships."

He also highlights that the island also offers the infrastructure and diversity required for a convention of this scale - quality accommodation, conference facilities, cuisine, heritage, leisure, and experiences that can be incorporated into a business programme. Greece itself is positioning Rhodes as one of its

key MICE destinations.

"Most importantly, Rhodes gives us an opportunity to connect two travel communities. We bring several hundred Indian travel professionals to a destination that is keen to deepen its engagement with India. That creates opportunities for B2B relationships, destination knowledge, new product development and, hopefully, greater travel between India and the Greek islands," he says.

What to expect?

With the preparations for TAFI's 40th anniversary in full swing, Abbas reveals that the business sessions at the upcoming convention are designed to be thought - provoking, practical, and relevant to the realities facing travel advisors today. According to him, the objective is not simply to discuss where the industry is going, but to give the members perspectives and ideas that they can take back and apply to their businesses. He shares, "A key focus will be the changing role of the travel advisor, with considerable emphasis on emerging technologies. An open dialogue on issues that have a direct impact on the day - to - day business of our members - airline distribution and inventory, NDC, commissions and commercial relationships, visa facilitation, taxation, regulatory compliance, and the overall ease of doing business. These are particularly relevant as the Government and industry are currently looking at reforms to simplify tourism regulations, approvals, and compliance.

New opportunities for Indian travel agents

Now, as TAFI enters its fifth decade Abbas believes the opportunities for Indian travel agents are greater than ever - but the nature of the opportunity is changing. He shares, "Travellers are increasingly looking for something beyond a standard itinerary - they want experiences that are relevant to their interests and lifestyles. As connectivity improves and travellers become more adventurous, travel advisors can introduce their clients to destinations beyond the traditional favourites. This requires product knowledge, strong destination relationships, and the ability to create differentiated itineraries."

A successful outcome for TAFI

Beyond the four-day convention, Abbas highlights that a successful convention, according to him, would be one where the impact continues long after the delegates leave Rhodes. The four days should be the beginning of conversations and relationships, not the end of them.

He says, "For TAFI as an organisation, I would like the convention to strengthen collaboration within the travel fraternity - between members, chapters, and our industry partners. It should also help us identify the issues where TAFI needs to take a stronger collective position and where we can work more constructively with government, airlines, technology companies, destinations, and other stakeholders."



TravStack's smart stay revolution

India's hospitality sector is entering a season of quiet transformation, one where guest data, sales funnels and loyalty programmes are no longer scattered across disconnected screens. Mounika Pothineni and Sai Santhosh Kalangi, Co-Founders, Travstack share how technology can smooth the bumps in the travel industry.

-Tripti Jain

TravStack is a platform built to bring CRM, marketing, automation and AI together under one roof for hotels and resorts. Every great guest experience begins long before check-in, and TravStack's recent innovations are designed around exactly that moment of first contact.

Building the backbone

Mounika explains, "The platform has spent the past year strengthening its Social CRM and direct-sales capabilities, pulling enquiries from websites, WhatsApp, social channels and paid campaigns into a single, visible funnel." Santhosh adds, "Expanding integrations with PMS, channel managers and payment gateways has allowed hotels to weave AI directly into daily workflows through lead scoring, automation and conversational reporting, turning scattered data into decisions hotels can act on immediately."

Intelligence with instinct

Artificial intelligence has moved from buzzword to backbone in hotel operations, and both founders describe it as a genuine shift in how properties think about guests. Santhosh says, "AI an intelligence layer that runs



Sai Santhosh Kalangi and Mounika Pothineni

across the entire sales and guest journey, capable of spotting high-potential leads and surfacing patterns in guest behaviour that a human team might otherwise miss." Mounika highlights "Conversational, LLM-enabled tools now let hotel management simply ask which locations are driving demand or which guest segments deserve attention, moving the industry from reporting what already happened to recommending what should happen next."

One platform, many possibilities

Fragmentation has long been

hospitality's quiet tax, with separate systems for bookings, WhatsApp, loyalty and reporting pulling teams in different directions. Mounika describes, "TravStack is a connected sales and guest-engagement layer that wraps around a hotel's existing ecosystem rather than replacing it, giving teams a single view from first enquiry to booking and beyond." Santhosh adds, "This connectivity lets hotels retain guest intelligence and personalise every conversation, building the kind of direct and repeat business that ultimately strengthens a property's bottom line."

Numbers that tell a story

Measurable results are where the platform's promise turns into proof, and the founders are candid about what they are seeing across implementations. Santhosh shares, "Centralised lead management and automation help teams save close to a quarter to nearly half of the time once spent on repetitive follow-ups and coordination." Mounika points to the bigger win being visibility itself, since spotting delayed follow-ups and funnel bottlenecks early opens fresh opportunities for upselling, retention and stronger direct conversions.

Guests who return, revenue that grows

The conversation with Mounika and Santhosh circles back to a simple idea: the guest journey does not end at checkout, it begins there. Their shared belief is that hotels sitting on rich booking and preference data hold the raw material for lasting relationships, and platforms like TravStack exist to turn that raw material into revenue. As Indian hospitality leans further into technology, TravStack's founders are betting that the properties who connect their data today will be the ones guests keep choosing tomorrow.



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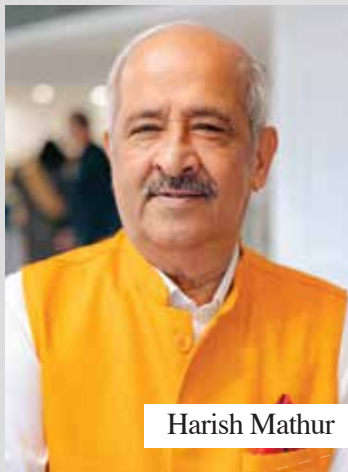


A convention built for business

Every IATO Convention carries its own personality, shaped by the destination that hosts it and the people who build it from the ground up.

-Tripti Jain

As Visakhapatnam prepares to welcome India's inbound tourism fraternity for the 2026 edition, the Executive Committee members steering the event share what delegates can expect this time around. This year's convention is meant to open doors, spark itineraries, and leave Andhra Pradesh firmly on the international travel map. From the energy of the Travel Mart to the discipline behind VIP logistics, from post-convention tours along the Buddhist and coastal circuits to a 13-year-old wellness tradition that has become an IATO signature, the conversations below capture the spirit driving this year's gathering.



Harish Mathur

Platform built for new beginnings

Harish Mathur shares it as a genuine turning point for how the trade sees Andhra Pradesh. "An IATO Convention is ultimately about creating meaningful business opportunities for our members, and Vizag offers the right platform to achieve that," he says, pointing to the state's growing tourism potential, strong connectivity, and diverse mix of coastal, Buddhist, cultural, and experiential products as reasons the destination is ready for its moment in front of the inbound trade.

He views the convention as a chance for members to discover new products, connect with local stakeholders, and identify circuits worth taking to international markets. For him, the real test of success will play out well beyond the closing ceremony, measured in the partnerships, itineraries, and business opportunities that continue to surface long after delegates have returned home.



Tony Marwah

A destination on the rise

Convention host cities rarely stay the same after IATO comes to town, and Tony Marwah is quick to point to the pattern. He shares, "Historically, every destination that hosts IATO Convention sees an increase of about 20 per cent if not more post it. B2B networking is excellent since there is a mix of tour operators, travel agents, airlines, hotels etc. New circuits in the venue state are shared and partnerships forged. The convention's panel discussions are built to be knowledge-driven, giving delegates real product understanding and a clearer view of where the business is heading. Newcomers walk away with product knowledge, seasoned operators walk away with fresh circuits to sell, and

everyone leaves with a sharper read on where the industry is trending."



Manoj Kumar Matta

Marketplace of ideas

If there is one space at the convention where opportunity is most visible, it is the Travel Mart, and Manoj Kumar Matta describes it as the beating heart of the event. He explains, "The Travel Mart shall emerge as one of the most vibrant and opportunity-rich spaces of the convention, offering delegates a comprehensive view of India's tourism landscape in a single, curated environment. Dedicated booths from State Tourism Departments and industry stakeholders will give members direct access to new products, emerging circuits, and experiential offerings taking shape across the country, creating a marketplace where collaboration meets innovation." He also points to the digital groundwork laid well before the convention doors open. Coordinated social media campaigns, real-time registration updates, and a livestream of the full event have kept the wider IATO community engaged from the moment dates were announced. Daily

updates, behind-the-scenes content, and full Facebook coverage during the event itself will extend the convention's reach well beyond the venue walls.



Sejo Jose

More than business cards

For Sejo Jose, the real measure of a good convention lies in what members carry back to their desks. "I think members should come away from the convention with much more than just a collection of business cards. The biggest tangible outcome should be new ideas, new knowledge and new opportunities that can be converted into business. Conversations with local operators, hoteliers, and tourism officials often plant the seed for a new itinerary or a fresh way to present a destination to international travellers, and it is these small sparks, that eventually grow into genuine partnerships and sellable products."





Rishi Kapoor

Moving delegates, seamlessly

Behind every successful convention sits a logistics operation that delegates rarely see but always feel, and the team IATO has built a robust one for Vizag. Rishi Kapoor shares, "This year we have a dedicated team of total of 9 experienced EC members and members of IATO who will be overseeing the smooth functioning of TPT services in Visakhapatnam for all attendees. With a purpose-built software solution developed to help the secretariat collate delegate information for smoother transport coordination, with Arnav Travels appointed as the local partner managing vehicles and on-ground teams across key locations."

He is equally excited about what happens after the main convention wraps up. Six post-convention tours and two spouse tours have been curated to spotlight Andhra Pradesh's coastal circuit, Buddhist heritage, nature and eco-tourism, and experiential offerings, giving delegates a firsthand feel for products they can later pitch to partners in both domestic and international markets.



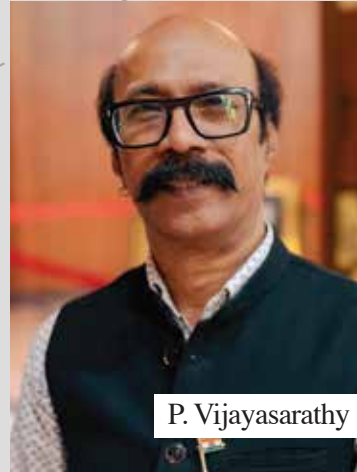
Ashok Dhoot

A warm welcome, by design

First impressions matter enormously at an event of this scale, and Ashok Dhoot has made VIP hospitality his personal mission as Head of the IATO VIP and Reception Committee. "I have personally coordinated and completed all necessary arrangements for the smooth arrival, reception, check-in, registration, and departure of all VIPs and invited guests. Arrival and departure details for every VIP have been mapped in advance, with Senior EC Members assigned to receive guests at the airport, and local Chapter Chairmen stepping in to welcome representatives from State Tourism Boards. Coordination with the host hotel ensures that check-in and registration flow smoothly the moment guests step through the door, delivering the seamless hospitality experience IATO has become known for," he says.

Vizag as a live business laboratory

P. Vijayasathy sees enormous potential in treating the convention as an active testing ground for new products rather



P. Vijayasathy

than a purely ceremonial gathering. "The convention can become a live business laboratory for Vizag and Andhra Pradesh. The destination workshops and familiarisation visits can help members work directly with local hotels, attractions, DMCs, and tourism authorities to build market-ready itineraries. A suggested six-night route covering Vizag's Buddhist heritage, coastal beauty, and wellness offerings could be refined during the convention itself and packaged for markets including Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, and Southeast Asia."

Running for a cause

Somewhere between the boardrooms and the Travel Mart booths, one tradition has quietly become part of IATO's identity, and Wasim Shaikh has nurtured it since day one. "The IATO Run was born with a very simple idea back in 2012 at the IATO Convention, Mumbai, to bring the focus back to health. Now heading into its 13th edition in Vizag, the Run has evolved over the last four years into a Green initiative, with every participant taking a pledge toward

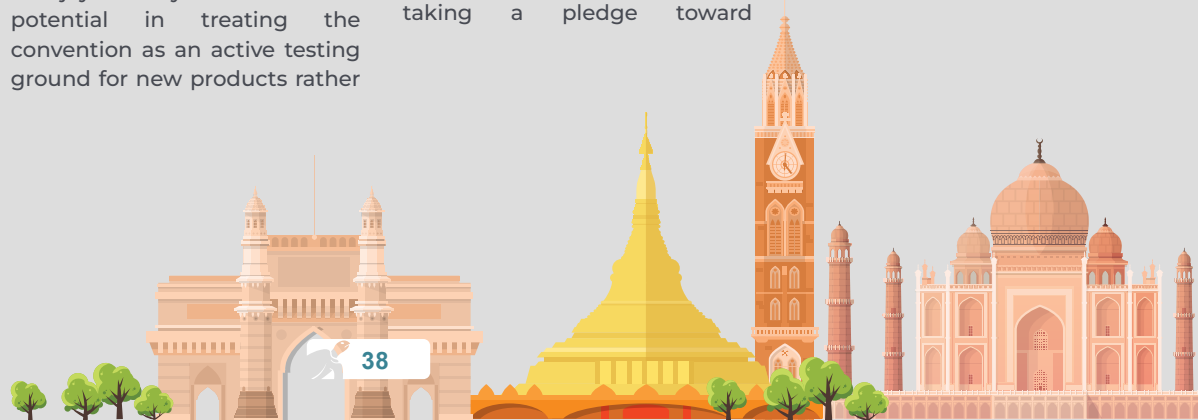


Wasim Shaikh

environmental responsibility and women's empowerment." His message to delegates ahead of the Vizag edition is simple: show up and participate. Carrying the spirit forward through sustainable choices during the convention, avoiding single-use plastic, and embracing the pledge on Run day all send a powerful signal about the values of the fraternity, making the 13th edition an opportunity to set a new benchmark for participation.

Setting the stage for Vizag

These conversations reveal a convention built with intent at every layer. The Travel Mart is designed to spark real products, the panel discussions to sharpen industry knowledge, the logistics to run without friction, and the reception to make every guest feel genuinely welcomed. Andhra Pradesh stands ready to be more than a backdrop, positioned instead as a destination whose circuits, culture, and coastline are about to be discovered afresh by delegates from across the country and beyond.



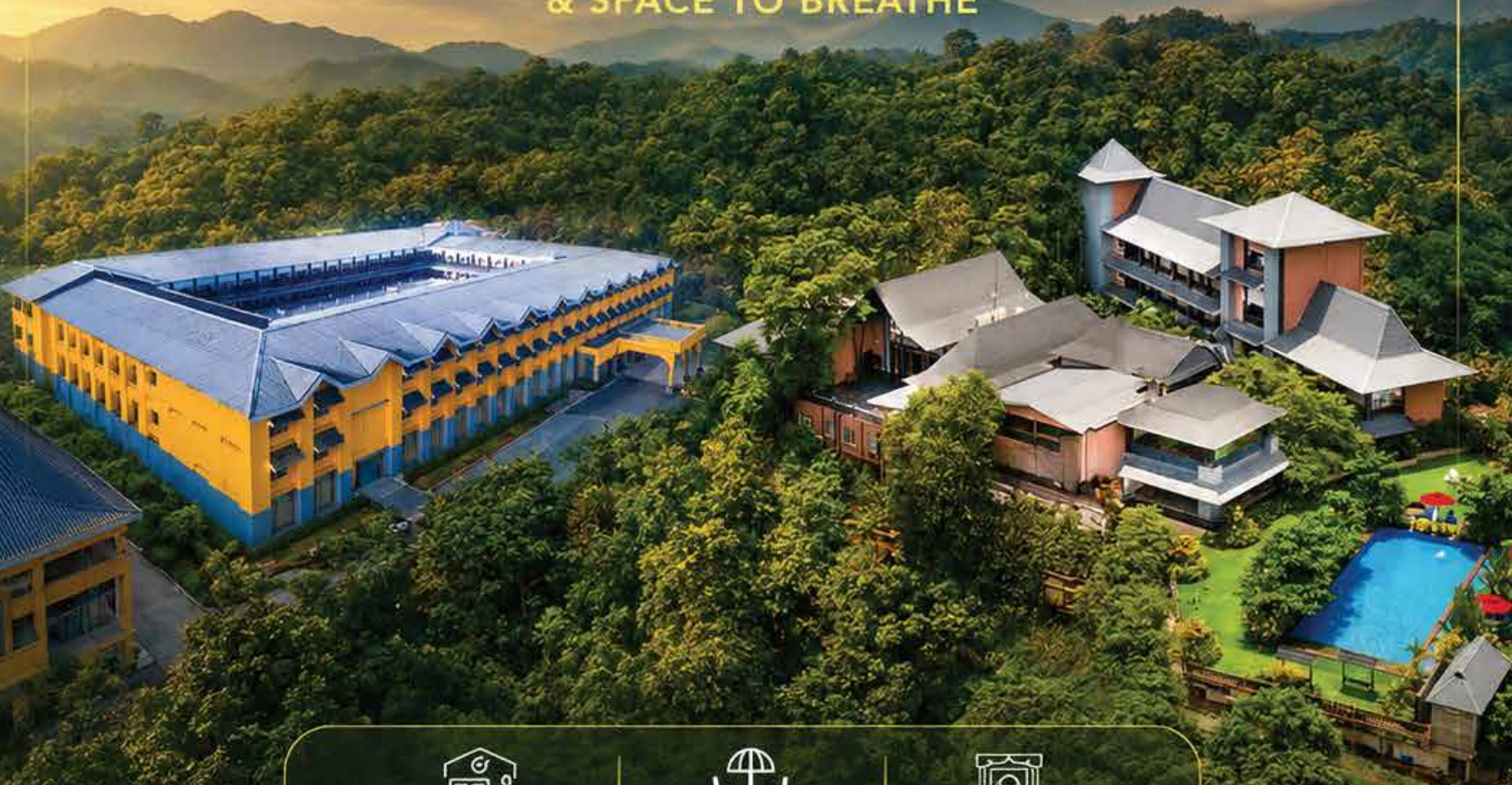


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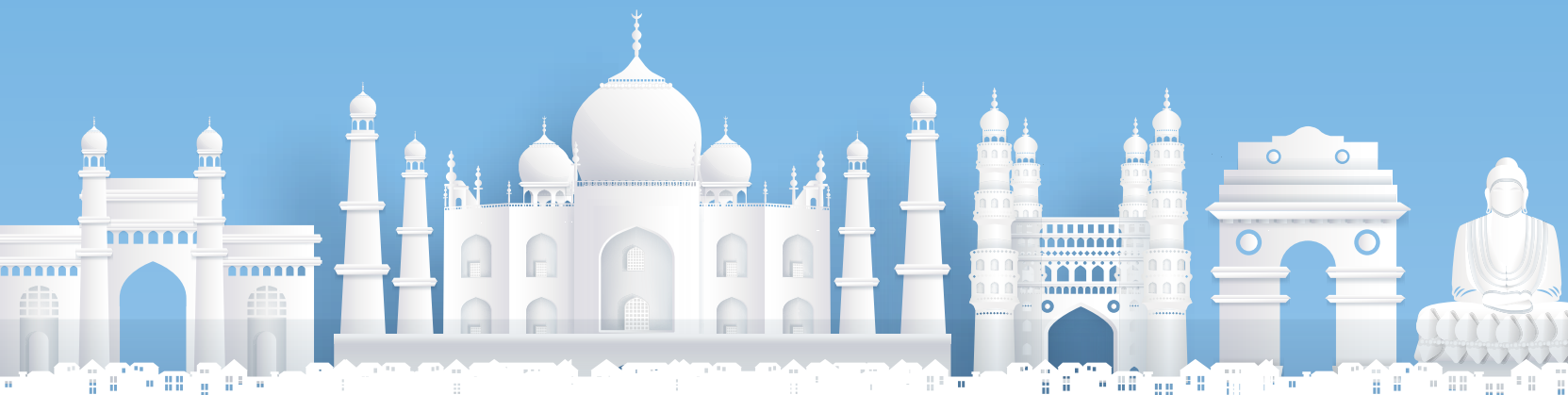
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From strengthening ties with state tourism boards to creating new opportunities for inbound operators, IATO Chapter Chairmen are working across regions to promote destinations, address industry needs and drive India's inbound tourism growth.

-Srishti Mukherjee

When we talk about promoting India as a global tourism product, marketing and positioning continue to remain key challenges for inbound tourism, which calls for strong collaborative efforts between the tourism industry and the respective state governments, tourism boards and industry stakeholders. And when it comes to inbound tourism, the role of tour operators and industry associations becomes increasingly crucial.

The recent years have witnessed several such collaborations with an increased focus on connecting destinations with the inbound trade where several tourism conventions across the country bring key stakeholders together and put India and its destinations in the spotlight. Meanwhile, IATO aims to focus on the inbound trade and tour operators who are directly responsible for taking India's tourism products to the international markets. With its annual conventions bringing together tour operators, state tourism representatives, government officials and other industry stakeholders under one roof, the association encourages discussions that extend beyond destination promotion.

Here's a glimpse into what the IATO Chapter Chairmen have to say about the initiatives they are undertaking with the state government to boost tourism for the state.

IATO SOUTHERN REGION



K. Ranga Reddy Chairman- IATO Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Chapter

"We closely align private trade expertise with government policy - jointly developing niche

itineraries, promoting lesser - known regional destinations, and participating in global trade meets to position our state as a premier year-round hub. To empower our members, we prioritize ease of doing business. Key initiatives include streamlining single - window regulatory clearances, advocating for digitized visa operations, and conducting digital upskilling workshops. We actively mediate between operators and statutory bodies to resolve operational bottlenecks, secure trade incentives, and ensure local infrastructure supports seamless, high-quality visitor experiences."



R. Nandakumar Chairman – IATO Tamil Nadu Chapter

"To strengthen our collaboration, we maintain regular interaction with the State Tourism Board team to enhance joint international roadshows, B2B meetings, travel marts, and coordinated digital marketing campaigns. We are also focusing on promoting lesser-known destinations within the state rather than concentrating only on established tourist centers. We have proposed several key initiatives to support operators and improve the visitor experience. We suggested introducing a scheme in major temples allowing faster access for a prescribed fee alongside online booking facilities to help operators plan visits efficiently along with regular training and refresher programs for licensed guides.



K. Vijay Mohan, CEO Co-Chairman IATO Andhra Pradesh

"We have curated the Tribal Circuit – 'Echoes of the earth,' with 15 unique experiences in the PVTG villages of Vantamiri and Korai Kotavalasa. We are also working on creating the Buddhist Circuit - Foot Steps of Buddha and creating the stories around the Buddhist sites and planning joint campaigns to showcase Andhra Pradesh beyond the usual spots. We are working with the government on improving last-mile connectivity, homestay policies, and skill development for hospitality staff to ensure tourists get a world-class experience. We also have a dedicated B2B between Andhra Pradesh Agents and IATO members and are curating product presentations with new circuits, and niche products so members have new things to sell immediately."

IATO WESTERN REGION



Mahendra Pratap Singh Chairman- IATO Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter

"It is my duty to maintain regular contact with state tourism officials

and to share the industry's viewpoint on the development and promotion of destinations.

Madhya Pradesh is no longer being shown only through its established strengths of heritage, wildlife, tribal and rural tourism. Experiential and eco-tourism are becoming increasingly popular, which provides the industry with new narratives and products to promote internationally. One such attempt was the London experiential tour in 2025, which aimed to showcase the state through experiences rather than just its popular attractions. The Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart, which was held in the same year, welcomed foreign tour operators from 27 countries, as well as domestic operators and members of the Indian travel trade.

The Swachh Paryatan Abhiyaan at Sanchi is another good example of how the tourism board and IATO can work together beyond promotion. As a chapter, we were able to take IATO's national cleanliness initiative to a World UNESCO Heritage site, with the support of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board and local stakeholders.

IATO provides a platform for inbound operators to raise industry matters with government bodies and tourism authorities. At the chapter level, we stay connected with our members and bring their inputs into these discussions.

We also work towards creating more business opportunities for our members. FAM programmes, B2B meetings and platforms such as MPTM allow Indian operators to meet overseas counterparts, understand their requirements and explore new markets. At MPTM 2025, the participation of FTOs from 27 countries provided a strong platform for such interactions."





Dr Sanket Shah, Chairman- IATO Gujarat & Diu Chapter

"I regularly visit the Tourism Board and stay in close touch with TCGL to represent the interests of IATO members. We discuss issues related to homestays, upcoming fairs and festivals, and challenges faced by inbound operators. I am also constantly encouraging Gujarat Tourism to participate more actively in international exhibitions.

This year, we have organised B2B roadshows and meetings to create more business opportunities. At the same time, we are taking up practical issues such as Gir safari availability, advance festival dates, brochures and maps, so that our members can plan and promote Gujarat well in advance."



Pravin Kooverji Shah Chairman - IATO Maharashtra and Dadra, Nagar Haveli & Daman Chapter

"Our focus is on encouraging international visitors to explore the states' rich heritage, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, forts, caves, wildlife, beaches, spirituality,

cuisine, festivals and experiential tourism offerings.

We also encourage participation in B2B activities, trade fairs, destination promotions and familiarisation programmes to showcase the state's tourism products to overseas markets. Supporting IATO members and creating a more business-friendly environment for inbound tour operators remains one of our key priorities as a chapter. We regularly engage with government departments and other stakeholders to take up issues faced by our members, particularly those relating to tourism infrastructure, connectivity, destination facilities, permits, local regulations and other operational challenges."



Jaspreet Singh Bhatia, Co-Chairman, IATO Chhattisgarh Chapter

"We are focusing on creating the backward linkages with the stakeholders working on ground level in the state in the field of tourism and hospitality and trying to bring them in the main flow of the industry.

For our members, the first focus is to create awareness about the association's objectives and to increase the number of members. Parallely with the support of CTB we are planning to organise workshops both online and offline to educate the members about the various tourist circuits and especially how intra state circuits can be used to include Chhattisgarh as a part of it which can increase the footfalls of tourists in our state."

IATO EASTERN REGION



J.K. Mohanty Chairman - IATO Eastern Region

"I am focusing on improving the tourism ecosystem, strengthening connectivity, developing tourism infrastructure and creating better experiences for tourists visiting the region. One of the key priorities is to increase international tourist arrivals to Odisha. Swosti Group has also been contributing to the growth and promotion of Odisha tourism for over four decades through its hotels, resorts, travel services and new tourism projects. Our focus is to make inbound tourism more efficient and business-friendly for our members. We are regularly taking up industry concerns with the Government and relevant authorities, particularly on air connectivity, visa facilitation, tourism infrastructure, destination development and promotion."



Debjit Dutta Chairman IATO West Bengal Chapter

"IATO has consistently advocated for policy reforms, improved connectivity, destination infrastructure, product

diversification and a stronger global positioning for Bengal. We are also working towards positioning West Bengal as the Gateway to the East, connecting Bengal with the wider Eastern and Northeastern region and our neighbouring countries.

At the chapter level, my focus is on making our members more future-ready. We encourage them to develop and market new experiential journeys across Bengal and Northeast India, while providing knowledge and practical support on certifications, accreditations, government schemes, international marketing, and responsible tourism. We are also mentoring emerging tourism entrepreneurs and community-led accommodation providers so that promising local ideas can evolve into credible, market-ready experiences."



Manas Mukherjee Chairman - Jharkhand Chapter

"The government's role should primarily be to develop infrastructure, ensure security, frame and implement effective policies, and create a favourable environment for private investment.

As a team, we are identifying important tourism locations and trying to involve local communities so that they can directly participate in tourism and benefit through sustainable livelihood opportunities—for example, by serving authentic local cuisine, working as local guides, sharing stories about their culture and traditions, and offering authentic local experiences to visitors."



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Gagan Sarangi Chairman IATO Odisha Chapter

"IATO (Odisha) Chapter has also been actively engaging with the Tourism Department to encourage greater participation by Odisha's tourism stakeholders in major national travel trade fairs. Odisha Tourism has been participating actively in major tourism fairs and events, with strong representation from tour operators in the Odisha Pavilion. To ensure that members' concerns are regularly addressed, IATO (Odisha) Chapter has been organising bi-monthly chapter meetings. At the same time, IATO (Odisha) Chapter is working with overseas tourism boards and their representatives to facilitate the participation of our members, particularly those involved in outbound tourism, in tourism roadshows and trade events being organised in Odisha."



Dr. Peter Lobo Chairman - IATO Sikkim and North Bengal Chapter

"We are working towards promoting Sikkim and North

Bengal as premier birdwatching destinations, both in India and in international markets and developing and promoting birding circuits and wildlife-based tourism products that can attract international visitors and encourage longer stays.

We focus on working with the tourism authorities to identify and promote lesser-known destinations. Besides that, we encourage greater participation in international travel fairs, B2B meetings, and overseas tourism promotions to position the region as a serious international tourism destination.

For the members of IATO and the tourism industry, we focus on supporting the development of trained local bird guides, nature guides, and tourism professionals, which will improve the quality of visitor experiences and generate local employment. I also focus on raising industry concerns that directly affect international visitors and inbound tour operators."



H Radhakrishna Sharma, State in Charge- IATO, Manipur chapter

"Our focus is on developing market-ready itineraries and promoting Manipur's key attractions — Sangai Festival, Loktak Lake, wildlife, culture, heritage, polo and indigenous experiences—while providing industry feedback on connectivity, infrastructure, visitor facilitation and destination readiness. We aim to strengthen public-private partnerships, attract more international tour operators and ultimately increase foreign

tourist arrivals.

Our priority is to make inbound tourism more practical and rewarding for members by creating a stronger interface between IATO, the State Tourism Department and other concerned agencies. We are working to facilitate destination information, government coordination, B2B networking, familiarisation visits, market development, product packaging and promotion of Manipur with national and international tourism boards."



Bengia Mrinal State Incharge, IATO-Arunachal Pradesh Chapter

"Last month, we successfully organised the IATO-Arunachal Meeting - cum - Workshop, with the support of Arunachal Tourism. As tourism in our State continues to grow, IATO - Arunachal is making sincere efforts to empower local tour operators and tourism stakeholders through capacity building, education, product development, promotion and marketing.

Arunachal Tourism has also introduced the Chief Minister Paryatan Vipan Sahayata Yojana (CMPVSY), an important initiative that provides marketing assistance to tour operators and other allied tourism stakeholders for promoting Arunachal Pradesh at domestic and international travel trade fairs and festivals. Under the scheme, eligible stakeholders are provided opportunities to participate in up to four domestic and two



E. Banlumlang Blah, State In-charge- IATO, Meghalaya chapter

"One of our key initiatives has been organising Familiarisation (FAM) Tours for IATO members from across India during the month of June 2026. We also work together on roadshows, tourism conclaves, and buyer-seller meets to enhance industry engagement and generate business opportunities. We actively encourage responsible tourism by promoting community-based experiences, supporting local entrepreneurs, and showcasing Meghalaya's rich cultural heritage, adventure tourism, and natural attractions.

Supporting our members remains one of our highest priorities. We are focused on creating a stronger ecosystem where inbound tour operators can operate more efficiently while delivering exceptional experiences to international visitors.

We facilitate networking opportunities between members, hotels, transport providers, local tourism stakeholders, and government agencies. We regularly share industry updates, policy developments, and market intelligence to help members stay informed and competitive. We also advocate for improved tourism infrastructure, better connectivity, simplified operational processes, and policies that encourage international arrivals."

IATO NORTHERN REGION



Sunil Gupta, Chairman, IATO Northern Region

"We maintain active policy dialogues to streamline operations, enhance infrastructure, and resolve ground - level bottlenecks for inbound operators. Key joint initiatives include targeted FAM trips, co - promotions and roadshows and skill & capacity Building.

IATO focuses on removing operational friction and creating robust business networks for inbound operators through policy advocacy, market Access & B2B platforms and crisis assistance & capacity building"



Sunil Singh Rana Chairman - IATO Uttarakhand Chapter

"We are working towards closer collaboration in areas such as destination promotion, improved connectivity, development of new tourism products, infrastructure, skill development and responsible tourism. One of our key priorities is to promote destinations beyond

the traditional circuits and encourage tourism that benefits local communities and creates sustainable employment.

Our focus is to make it easier for IATO members to do business in Uttarakhand and to create a more supportive ecosystem for inbound tourism. We are working to strengthen coordination between our members and the State Government, particularly on issues and operational challenges faced by inbound tour operators.

We are also focusing on capacity building and knowledge sharing through training programmes, webinars and industry interactions. Another important area is B2B networking and destination promotion and at the same time, we are advocating for simplification of processes and better coordination among different government agencies, because ease of doing business is critical for the growth of inbound tourism."



Nasir Shah Chairman - IATO Jammu & Kashmir Chapter

Stake Holders on their own have been vigorously promoting J&K as a premier, peaceful & pristine destination. Their regular marketing has positioned J&K in general and Kashmir in particular as a fast growing destination. The Combination of Kashmir & Ladakh is doing very well. Much to the desire of State Tourism Deptt to participate in all forums & hold parley with various Inbound Tour Operators, primarily with Members of IATO, besides organising Road Shows in Far East & Middle East Market, the

Government's financial difficulties have put the promotions behind presently. The onus presently lies on IATO Members PAN India to promote & market Kashmir as an important destination where infrastructure is robust & facilities of various Adventure activities across all destinations.

The J&K Chapter Members of IATO have urged the Hon'ble Chief Minister, who is also the Tourism Minister time & again to collaborate with IATO for extensive presence of J&K Branding at various markets. The State Tourism Board must extend financial support to all the Indian Exhibitors to display J&K and distribute Digital Publicity material to all those who visit India Pavilions."

Mayfair Spring Valley Guwahati

Oasis in the hills



Pardeep Siwach

Once viewed largely as a convenient entry point, the city is developing into a destination in its own right, supported by better connectivity, rising tourism visibility and growing interest in Assam and its neighbouring states. At the heart of this evolution is Mayfair Spring Valley Guwahati, which is positioning itself around the changing needs of leisure travellers, MICE groups, wedding celebrations and social gatherings. Pardeep shares, "Guwahati is increasingly becoming more than just a transit point for travellers visiting the Northeast. People are spending more time in the region and looking for a more complete experience rather than treating Guwahati simply as an entry and exit point."

Gateway with a story

The growing appeal of Guwahati is closely linked to the wider rise of Northeast tourism. Travellers are increasingly using the city as a base from which to explore Assam and neighbouring states, creating opportunities for hotels to become part of the journey rather than simply a place to stay.

Pardeep points to connectivity and the region's growing visibility as key drivers. "As connectivity improves and the Northeast gets greater visibility as a tourism region, we expect Guwahati to play an increasingly important role in the overall hospitality and tourism

Guwahati is steadily changing the way travellers experience the Northeast. Pardeep Siwach, Dy. General Manager – Accommodation, Mayfair Spring Valley Guwahati shares about the beautiful oasis they have created in the Northeastern hills.

-Tripti Jain

story of the region. The city's expanding tourism ecosystem is consequently bringing together leisure, corporate travel, MICE and social events under one growing tourism umbrella," he says.

Events find their stage

MICE is emerging as an important tourism opportunity for Guwahati, with Mayfair Spring Valley offering five event venues and substantial outdoor spaces that lend themselves to meetings, conferences, celebrations and destination events.

The property is already witnessing demand across corporate meetings, conferences, offsites, social celebrations and weddings. A recent BRICS - related meeting further demonstrated the city's ability to accommodate high - level business and institutional gatherings. Pradeep explains adding that improving connectivity could encourage organisers to look beyond traditional metropolitan destinations, "Going forward, there is an opportunity to attract larger national and international conferences to Guwahati."

Weddings with a sense of place

For destination weddings, Guwahati brings something increasingly valuable to the table: a strong sense of place. Assam's culture, traditions and cuisine can become part of the celebration, giving couples the opportunity to create an experience rooted in the destination.

Pradeep elaborates, "What makes Guwahati interesting as a wedding destination is the sense of place it brings to a celebration. Assam's rich culture, traditions, cuisine and the character of the Northeast offer couples an opportunity to create weddings that feel distinctive."



A broader tourism mix

The property's performance reflects this expanding tourism story. Over the last three years, Mayfair Spring Valley has consistently exceeded its budgeted occupancy targets, recording average year-on-year occupancy growth of around 15 per cent. For FY2026, the hotel is looking at occupancy in the 55 – 60 per cent range, supported by destination weddings and larger MICE events.

Pradeep also highlights the growing contribution of restaurants, local social events and the spa. "Our restaurants and local social events continue to be a consistent strength, helping us

drive business beyond room revenues. Weekend day outings are another emerging trend across the Northeast, contributing increasingly to the overall tourism and hospitality mix."

The next leg for Mayfair Spring Valley

The story of Mayfair Spring Valley is closely tied to the larger tourism story unfolding in Guwahati. As travellers spend longer in the Northeast, weddings become more experiential, conferences explore new destinations and air connectivity continues to strengthen, the city is gaining a larger role on India's tourism map.



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- ❖ Bagh Serai, Ranthambore
- ❖ Winds Desert Camp, Jaisalmer
- ❖ Godwad Safari Camp, Jawai
- ❖ Lilypool the Heritage Jalmahal, Jaipur
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GUJARAT

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The Wyndham diaries

Big dreams, bigger India

Cards prepared, questions unrehearsed, and a genuine curiosity in the air about what India means to one of the world's largest hotel companies. Grab a cup of chai, because this one's worth the read.

-Tripti Jain



There's a certain magic that happens when two hospitality veterans stop reciting talking points and just start talking. That's exactly what unfolded in a room full of travel trade insiders, where Dimitris Manikis, President, Europe, Middle East, Eurasia and Africa (EMEA), Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and Rahool Macarius, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, sat down for what was supposed to be a Q&A and turned into something far more entertaining.

Premium feels, without the premium bill

Wyndham has built its India playbook on a simple idea: you should not have to pay extra to feel like you matter. Rahool put it plainly when talking about the brand's upmarket push through Wyndham Grand. "Our strategy is always being the right price," he says, describing how properties like the one near the airport have 'created a lot of noise' purely on the strength of design and service rather than sticker price. Dimitris picked up the thread with a story about his brother trading in his German car for a BYD. "He gets a premium experience and he doesn't pay a premium price," Dimitris shares, drawing the parallel straight back to hospitality. "We can provide premium experience without necessarily having people pay premium price, and that is very important."

Franchise today, who knows tomorrow

Ask Wyndham if it plans to manage hotels in India rather than simply franchise them, and you get honesty instead of a rehearsed dodge. Owners running two or three properties are already nudging the brand in that direction, and Rahool did not shy away from admitting it. "The owners who have three, four hotels are asking us, why don't you manage those hotels for us," he shares, adding with a grin that a formal proposal might land "before the end of the year." Dimitris backed the sentiment g



Dimitris Manikis



Rahool Macarius

with characteristic warmth, calling India a market where franchise partners "have given us more than what they actually expect," a rare compliment in an industry built on hard numbers.

Home is where the growth is

Domestic travel is doing the heavy lifting for Wyndham in India, and both leaders wanted that fact front and centre. Rahool points out that "85 per cent of the business in India is domestic," a statistic that shapes everything from brand strategy to sales structure. "We built national sales in this part of the world, and we are getting

owners value in terms of business and national reach," he explains. Dimitris widens the lens to loyalty, mentioning that Wyndham Rewards counts "126 million people" globally and that outbound travel from India is climbing at nearly 10 per cent a year, fast enough to place the country among the world's top five outbound markets within the next four years.

A promise, finally kept

Every good story needs a callback, and this one belongs to Vienna House. Rahool recalled chasing Dimitris for years about bringing the European design-led brand to India, joking

about how kids never forget a broken promise. "You promised me you're going to do a Vienna House, and I think you found somebody, or he paid somebody, to do it," Dimitris Dimitris laughed. Rahool delivered with pride, describing the brand as "a beautiful design-led" concept picked up three and a half years ago that now marks Wyndham's twenty-fifth brand globally. Dimitris called it a milestone moment, saying he was "more proud of him keeping his promise than the actual announcement."

Hungry, ambitious, unstoppable

The most personal moment of the evening came when Dimitris shares a story about his daughter's classmate in London, an Indian student who raised his hand first, reached the library first, and submitted every essay ahead of everyone else. "That guy is hungry, that guy is ambitious, he wants to be successful," Dimitris says, calling that hunger "the epicentre of what India is today." He urged the room never to lose that edge, reminding everyone that Indian professionals already lead boldly on the world stage, with a striking share of global CEOs tracing their roots back to the country.

To India, with warmth

As the evening wound down, the tone stayed refreshingly personal. Dimitris thanked India for "being such a great place for us," acknowledging the welcome, the talent, and the growth the market has given Wyndham over the years. Rahool echoed that gratitude while looking ahead, painting a future where Wyndham's twelve-plus India brands keep multiplying alongside a young, aspirational population ready to travel more, stay longer, and explore further. Somewhere between the BYD story and the Vienna House confession, one thing became obvious: Wyndham is building a relationship that both men clearly enjoy showing off.





Thailand

Creating alliances for future

With strong and longstanding ties between India and Thailand, both nations continue to deepen their partnership, strengthen collaboration and explore new avenues of cooperation. Vathanachai Chatrirath, Vice President, Association of Thai Travel Agents (ATTA) shares more about the ties between India and Thailand.

-Rishi Arora

With Indian travellers becoming increasingly important to Thailand's tourism landscape, the focus is now on understanding what they want and building stronger connections with the trade. "Thailand will be offering visa - free entry for Indians for stays of up to 30 days. For a short - haul destination like Thailand, 60 days is more than necessary. Most Indian tourists stay for around 10 to 15 days before returning home, and many come back again for another trip," says Vathanachai Chatrirath.

Untangling the visa knot

Thailand's visa policy for Indian passport holders has been the subject of considerable discussion in recent months. Following the earlier 60 - day visa exemption, the latest policy framework places India in the 30 - day visa - exemption category. The new measures are set to take effect 15 days after their publication in the Royal Gazette. According to Vathanachai Chatrirath, the revised duration is more aligned with the typical travel patterns of Indian visitors. "Indian tourists mostly come for not more than 15 to 20 days. 60 days is far too long," he explains.

Alliances in action

To support the growing influx of Indian tourists, ATTA relies heavily



Vathanachai Chatrirath

on strong business - to - business networks. When asked about its synergy with Indian travel trade partners, Vathanachai Chatrirath emphasises that the relationship is robust and deeply integrated. "99 per cent of travel agents in Thailand do B2B business with Indian agents," he says. Out of ATTA's 1,100 to 1,200 members, approximately 200 are dedicated entirely to the Indian market, reflecting the scale and importance of Indian tourism to Thailand.

Land of smiles, endless returns

India consistently ranks among

Thailand's top source markets. Vathanachai Chatrirath also highlights a noticeable shift in traveller demographics and spending habits, particularly among younger Indian travellers. "The Indian young generation is changing their thoughts. They want to spend on themselves, focusing on luxury tourism and wellness," he observes. The shift towards higher - value travel is an increasingly important opportunity for Thailand, with luxury, wellness and experiential travel emerging as key areas of interest among Indian travellers. For 2026, Thailand's Tourism Authority is targeting more than

2.55 million Indian visitors, underlining the market's continued importance.

Hitting the road

To sustain this momentum and tap into the growing demand for premium experiences, ATTA is actively engaging with the Indian travel trade through targeted roadshows. Its current India tour focuses on major markets, including Mumbai and Bengaluru. The primary objective of these roadshows is to cultivate long - term relationships rather than focus solely on immediate business. "We want to update our partners on new properties and evolving culture, but mainly we want to build our relations, cultivate stronger partnerships, and interact with new agents," Vathanachai Chatrirath explains. By prioritising these face - to - face interactions, ATTA aims to strengthen the trade relationship between Thailand and India, while keeping Indian travel partners informed about the destination's evolving tourism offering.

From luxury and wellness to new properties and experiences, Thailand is keen to keep evolving its offering. With regular engagement between the two markets, the relationship looks set to grow even stronger in the years ahead.



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RDTM

Expanding the tourism canvas!

As Rajasthan expands beyond its iconic forts and palaces with RDTM and the inaugural Marwar Travel Mart, FHTR executive members put emphasis on spotlighting the lesser-known destinations, MICE, experiential tourism, local artisans and the distinctive cultural flavours of the state's districts.

-Srishti Mukherjee

For decades, Rajasthan's tourism story has been centred around its forts, palaces and royal heritage but as the tourism landscape witnesses a continuous shift, the state is increasingly aiming to build a much broader tourism proposition. And this proposition extends from MICE and weddings to rural, eco, adventure and experiential travel, while putting emphasis on destinations and experiences beyond its familiar circuits. This shift is now becoming more regional, with tourism promotion moving beyond the traditional Jaipur - Jodhpur - Udaipur narrative to bring individual districts and their tourist spots into sharper focus. And the sixth edition of Rajasthan Domestic Travel Mart (RDTM) in Jaipur reflects this evolution. The event that is set to be hosted from September 17-19 will be followed by the inaugural Marwar Travel Mart in Jodhpur from September 20-22.

Organised by the Federation of Hospitality & Tourism of Rajasthan with the support of the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, the two marts are poised step further into this regionalisation.

RDTM, MTM and state tourism

While RDTM is known to bring the state's tourism and hospitality ecosystem together, the new Marwar Travel Mart is largely focused on unlocking the tourism potential of the Marwar-Thar region across heritage, destination weddings, cultural and experiential travel, desert adventures, luxury hospitality and rural tourism. Its

focus on the lesser-known destinations and experience - led itineraries hint at a Rajasthan that is looking to make the travellers stay longer and experience the state beyond its postcard destinations.



Surendra Singh Shahpura

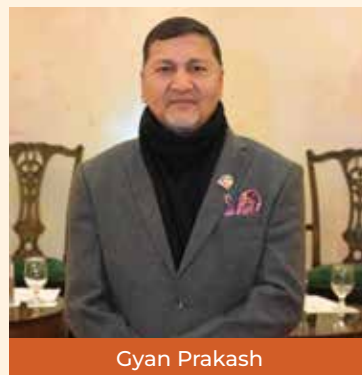
Surendra Singh Shahpura, President, FHTR shares the intent behind RDTM and MTM and suggests, "RDTM and MTM extends beyond the B2B exchange between prominent tour operators, hoteliers, destination wedding planners and other members of the associations. With cultural evenings planned around local dances, flavours, tradition and the region's living heritage and greater attention to local artisans and home-grown experiences, RDTM and MTM aim to position the state as a destination that houses a collection of distinct regional stories that travellers can experience at their own pace." Furthermore, he believes that this year's RDTM and Jodhpur Travel Mart would present a particularly exciting opportunity. "For the first time, the Rajasthan travel trade is taking the Mart beyond Jaipur and introducing Jodhpur as an additional host city," he shares.



Rajendra Singh Pachar

New business opportunities

Rajendra Singh Pachar, Senior Vice President, FHTR, says, "Traditionally, RDTM has always been organised in Jaipur, naturally placing the focus on Jaipur as the gateway and the city is showcased to visiting buyers. This year, however, the addition of three more days in Jodhpur as an extension of the Mart creates an opportunity to introduce buyers to another major tourism city of Rajasthan and, more importantly, to the wider Marwar and Thar Desert region and the breadth of products and experiences it offers."



Gyan Prakash

Gyan Prakash, Vice President, FHTR, adds, "This will give buyers an opportunity to discover Jodhpur's hotels, heritage properties, MICE facilities,

culinary offerings, cultural experiences, local crafts and newer tourism products, while also experiencing the distinctive offerings of the Thar Desert region like its desert landscapes, villages, crafts, culture, wildlife, experiential stays and unique ways of life. We hope this exposure will generate fresh interest, new enquiries and eventually more business for the hotels, DMCs, experience providers and the wider travel ecosystem across Jodhpur, Marwar and the Thar region. More broadly, we hope RDTM and Jodhpur Travel Mart create meaningful B2B connections and long-term partnerships between Rajasthan's travel trade and buyers from India and overseas."



Mahendra Singh Rathore

Mahendra Singh Rathore, Vice President, FHTR, "Most importantly, we see this two-city format as a beginning. If we can take the Mart to different cities and regions of Rajasthan in the future, we can progressively introduce buyers to the many different tourism propositions of the state, creating business opportunities not just for the established destinations but also for emerging and lesser-known ones."



Tarun Bansal

Deeper dive into Rajasthan

Tarun Bansal, Secretary General, FHTR, highlights that FHTR would like travellers to venture beyond the well-known monuments and established tourist circuits and discover the Rajasthan that lives behind them. "Our rural landscapes, living craft traditions, local communities, folk music, traditional cuisines, heritage villages, stepwells, havelis, pilgrimage centres and conservation initiatives offer enormous potential," he shares. Furthermore he adds, "Rajasthan lives far beyond its palaces and royal culture. From the Orans and desert ecology of western Rajasthan to the living crafts of Marwar, the tribal and rural landscapes of southern Rajasthan, the pilgrimage traditions of Pushkar and Ajmer, and the lesser - known heritage of Hadoti, there is a vast expanse of the state that is still waiting to be explored."



Hemant Mittal

Beyond destination tourism

Talking about the one key change that the members of FHTR would like to see in Rajasthan in the future, Hemant Mittal, Joint Secretary, FHTR shares, "We would like to see a shift from 'destination tourism' to 'immersive, experiential and responsible tourism.' Rajasthan should not be experienced only through its famous forts, palaces and monuments. We need travellers to stay longer, travel deeper and discover the people, stories, traditions, landscapes and living culture that make each place unique. At the same time, we would like to see a much stronger culture of responsible tourism with more aware travellers and stakeholders who use less plastic, do not litter, respect the environment and local communities, and consciously support and promote local arts, crafts, artisans and products. Tourism should create value for the destinations and the people who call them home, rather than simply bring footfall."



Rajendra Singh Jodha

Meanwhile, Rajendra Singh Jodha, Treasurer, FHTR, reveals, "A lot of tour operators continue to sell Rajasthan based on what they remember from the past 10-15 years. Rajasthan has never been stagnant and has constantly added new attractions, destinations, and experiences. Bringing these tour operators to RDTM and letting them meet and see the new offerings is sure to update their perception and knowledge about our products, thereby encouraging them to sell the destination more confidently. We really are losing out on a lot of MICE movements because of a lack of suitable facilities in cities other than Jaipur. Repeat business is almost impossible from the same client if they have already been to Jaipur. We must create venues that can hold events for 5000 people at the same time in Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Udaipur. This one step will help bring large movements to the state."



Kuldeep Singh Chandela

Role of FHTR

While concluding, Kuldeep Singh Chandela, Imm. Past President, FHTR, adds that FHTR can play a crucial role by bringing the industry together to identify, develop and promote new experiences, particularly in lesser - known destinations, while also encouraging responsible tourism practices across the sector. He highlights, "It can facilitate collaboration between the government and private sector, create awareness among tourism stakeholders, encourage sustainable practices and promote local communities and their traditional arts and crafts as an integral part of Rajasthan's tourism offering." Ultimately, the state's greatest tourism asset is its people, their culture and the living traditions of the state. If the people, stories, authentic experiences and responsible practices are put together at the heart of tourism, Rajasthan can move from being a destination that travellers simply visit to one that they truly connect with, respect and remember.

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DIVERSE HOTELS

A LOCAL LENS ON LUXURY

Digvijay Diwakar

Resorts are learning a new language today, one written in walks through coffee estates, boat rides across quiet backwaters, and breakfasts served whenever a guest wakes up ready for them. Digvijay Diwakar, Director, Diverse Hotels Pvt. Ltd., spoke about the brand's growing focus on experience-based resorts.

-Tripti Jain

Diverse Hotels Pvt. Ltd. has been listening closely to this language, and it shows in the way the group is shaping its road ahead. Today's traveller arrives with homework already done, and that changes everything about how a resort must show up for them.

The traveller who already knows

Digvijay shares, "Today's travellers are well informed about the resort and the destination. They know exactly what they are looking for from this holiday, and they keep taking their short breaks to unwind themselves," he shares. Understanding this mindset, he adds, "This is what allows the group to deliver experiences that genuinely meet expectations rather than simply meet a checklist. This, in turn, builds the kind of loyalty that benefits travel trade partners and the resorts. Small, thoughtful touches carry this philosophy forward across the portfolio, from farm to fork experiences at Aamaghati Wildlife Resort to an intertidal walk at Barefoot Andaman, a night safari within the resort premises, a coffee plantation walk at The Serai Chikmagalur, a boat ride at The Serai Kabini, and an anytime breakfast offering at The Earth Maison Ocean Resort, Goa."

Homegrown holidays take the lead

Domestic leisure travel has found fresh momentum, and Digvijay credits much of this energy to a renewed pride in exploring India. He shares, "Domestic leisure is showing the strongest growth, along with MICE and social business. People are discovering corners of their own country with genuine curiosity, and this

appetite has opened doors for boutique and experience-led properties to flourish well beyond the usual metro circuits. Rural and semi-urban locations, once considered off the beaten path, are now emerging as thriving business destinations."

Trade ties that travel far

Travel agents and tour operators remain central to how Diverse Hotels builds its business, and Digvijay is clear about the value this channel brings. "Travel trade is a key segment, and it is very important to us, as these are the strongest channel partners in business. Our approach rests on building a relationship where both sides gain equally. Extending consistent support to trade partners which creates a foundation where growth becomes shared rather than one sided, strengthening trust that lasts well beyond a single booking cycle," he says.

Room for every dreamer

Looking at the wider hospitality landscape, Diwakar sees abundant room for hotels willing to bring the right energy to the table. "There are enough opportunities for everyone with the right attitude in the market, and it is only growing day by day," he affirms. Emerging markets, in his view, reward those who approach guests with genuine intent and a willingness to craft something memorable, regardless of scale or location.

A journey still unfolding

Diverse Hotels appears to be reading the traveller of today with real attention, translating that understanding into resorts that feel personal, moments that feel earned, and partnerships that feel lasting. As Digvijay's outlook suggests, this is a story with plenty of chapters still to be written, each one shaped by curiosity, hospitality, and a shared sense of possibility.

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ONE CONNECT LOCAL ROOTS, GLOBAL WINGS

India's outbound travel story keeps writing new chapters every season, and the latest one belongs to One Connect. Sharad Tiwari, Managing Director, Destination Launcher & One Connect walks us through the thought, the strategy and the road map behind this new chapter.

-Tripti Jain

Launched under the well-established umbrella of Destination Launcher, this venture is stepping onto the trade circuit with a promise that feels both familiar and exciting: bringing travellers closer to the world through genuine, on-ground expertise.

Born from a simple idea

Every great travel brand begins with a philosophy, and One Connect's is refreshingly clear: Local Expertise, Global Presence. Sharad shares, "We wanted to build something that goes beyond selling holiday packages. The idea was to create a platform that connects travellers directly with authentic local knowledge, wherever they choose to go." For him, One Connect is less a new business and more an extension of trust, a way for Destination Launcher to plant a stronger flag in the destinations it represents, connecting people, places and experiences under one dependable network.

The local advantage

Ask Sharad what makes One Connect stand apart in a crowded field of destination management companies, and his answer circles back to presence. He shares, "Our strength lies in combining strong local roots with a wider global outlook. It is not about representing a destination from a distance. It is about understanding it from the ground up. That on-ground understanding, paired with the industry muscle of Destination



Sharad Tiwari

Launcher, gives the brand a distinctive edge, letting it read every destination's culture and character with far greater authenticity than a standard travel solution ever could."

A portfolio built for Indian agents

One Connect's current footprint spans the CIS, the Balkans, the Philippines and the UAE, a mix that reads like a well-planned itinerary in itself. Sharad shares, "Each of these regions brings something different to the table for Indian agents. The CIS and Balkans offer scenic beauty and culture, the Philippines brings island charm, and the UAE adds luxury and entertainment. Beyond the destinations themselves, I am proud of the

trusted local support, competitive solutions and the flexibility to design everything from FIT journeys to MICE movements and tailor-made group travel."

Where the spotlight shines brightest

Every portfolio has its rising stars, and for One Connect, those are currently the CIS region and the Philippines. He shares, "CIS is winning hearts because of direct connectivity from India and a European feel that comes at excellent value. The Philippines, meanwhile, is capturing travellers who want pristine beaches, marine life and a laid-back island rhythm." Together, he believes, the two destinations complement each

other beautifully, one offering culture and landscapes, the other delivering tropical escape, giving Indian travellers a compelling reason to explore both.

Mapping the next chapter

Ambition clearly runs deep at One Connect, and Sharad is candid about what lies ahead. "Our immediate focus is the GCC and the wider Middle East, where we want to build strong trade partnerships. From there, our roadmap moves toward European and Asian markets." Closer home to its current strongholds, plans are already underway to open a local office in the Philippines and deepen experiential offerings across every market the brand touches. He adds, "We are not chasing numbers. Every new destination must bring a genuine local connection and real value for our agents."

The journey continues

One Connect's story is only just beginning, yet its direction feels remarkably assured. Guided by Sharad's vision of blending authentic local knowledge with global ambition, the brand is quietly building what could become one of the most trusted names for Indian travel agents seeking dependable, experience-rich destinations. As the CIS, Balkans, Philippines and UAE continue writing their own travel narratives, One Connect stands ready to be the thread that ties them all together, one connection, one destination and one memorable journey at a time.



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HEADS IN BEDS

Monumental Bali Apurva Kempinski

At The Apurva Kempinski Bali, Indonesian craft, theatrical architecture and immersive dining unfold high above the Indian Ocean.

-Misbaah Mansuri



HEADS IN BEDS

Some hotels disappear into Bali. The Apurva Kempinski Bali does precisely the opposite. Arriving at the resort in Nusa Dua, there is little attempt at understatement. The property rises dramatically from the cliffside before cascading towards the Indian Ocean in a succession of terraces, pools and gardens. From the soaring open-air lobby, the view falls towards an immense staircase and, eventually, a horizon so blue it seems almost painted into place. Yet the scale is not simply there for effect. The resort was conceived as a celebration of Indonesia, its architecture drawing from the country's temples, traditional villages and terraced landscapes. Designed by architect Budiman Hendropurnomo of Denton Corker Marshall, the property uses stone, timber, water and monumental proportions to create something that feels less like a conventional beach resort and more like a contemporary Indonesian palace. The lobby is perhaps the clearest expression of this. Vast columns rise towards an intricately patterned ceiling while enormous openings frame the ocean beyond. Indonesian craftsmanship appears throughout, from carved stone and timber to woven textiles and sculptural details. Even in a resort of this size, the hand of the artisan never feels far away.

Checking in

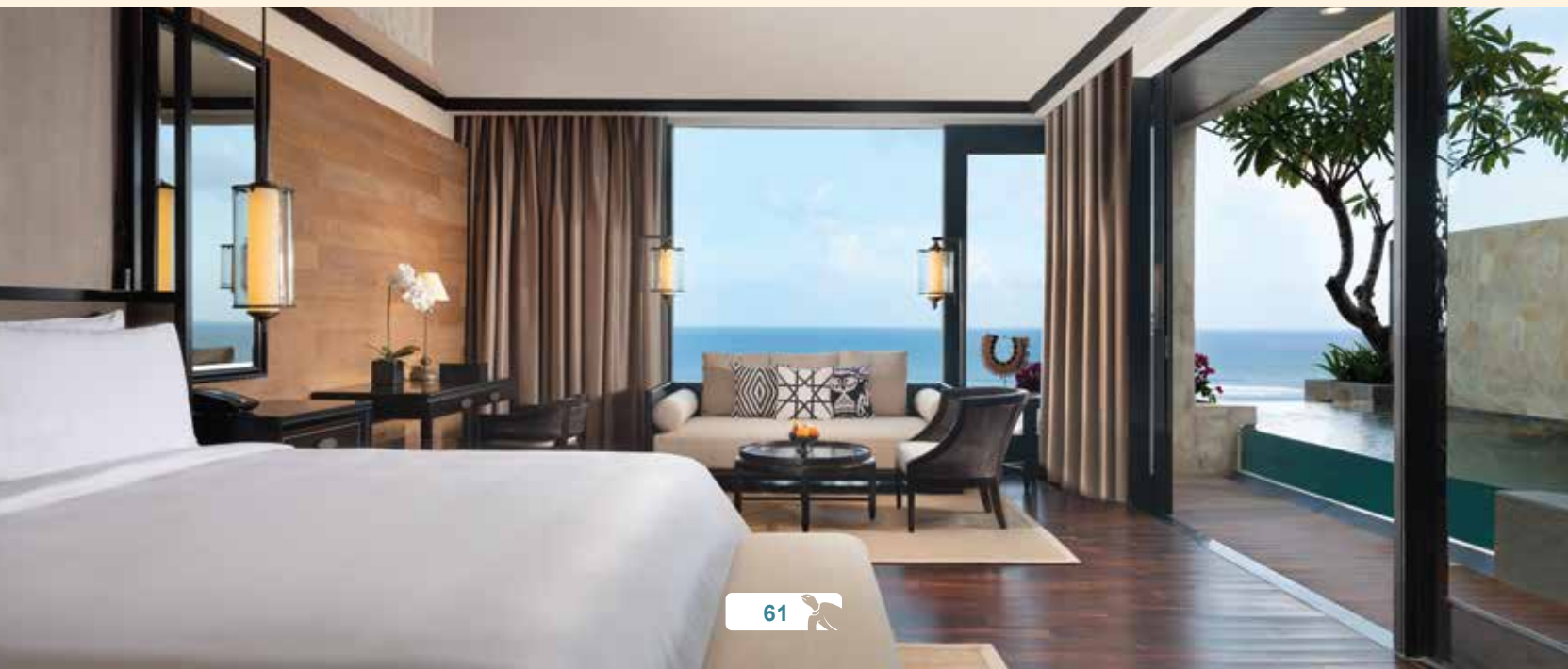
At 100 square metres, the suite felt generous without becoming cavernous. Warm woods, intricate Indonesian detailing and tactile fabrics softened the contemporary interiors, while floor-to-ceiling windows ensured the Indian Ocean remained the real focal point. The bedroom flowed naturally into the living space, but it was the private terrace that changed the character of the room completely. Outside, our plunge pool sat suspended above the resort, offering the luxury of slipping into the water without leaving the privacy of the suite. Mornings were particularly beautiful. Curtains opened to blue sky and ocean, while sunlight moved gradually across the terrace and pool. It became tempting to postpone plans simply to stay there a little longer. Guests staying in the Cliff accommodation also receive access to the Cliff Lounge, which gives this enormous resort an unexpectedly intimate dimension. The lounge has its own infinity pool and hydro jet pool, but it was breakfast that made us return each morning. Served until noon, it immediately removes one of the least appealing rituals of resort life: waking up early simply because breakfast is about to end. Instead, mornings unfolded slowly over fresh fruit, pastries,

coffee and beautifully prepared hot dishes, with the ocean stretching beyond the windows. There were all-day refreshments, afternoon tea and evening cocktails too, allowing the lounge to function almost as a quieter hotel within the hotel. For a property built on such impressive scale, having somewhere that feels calm and residential makes all the difference.

Beneath the surface

If there is one experience that captures The Apurva's appetite for spectacle, it is Koral Restaurant. Bali's first aquarium restaurant could very easily have relied on novelty alone. Instead, it manages to turn an extraordinary setting into one of the resort's most memorable experiences. The light changes first. Everything takes on an aquatic blue as enormous windows reveal fish gliding silently through the water beside you. At its most dramatic tables, the aquarium extends overhead, placing diners beneath a tunnel of marine life. Shadows ripple across the room as fish move above your head, and for a few moments it is difficult to concentrate on anything else. Then the food arrives. That matters because a dining room this spectacular creates a difficult challenge for any chef. When your

backdrop is a living aquarium, the cooking needs enough personality to prevent dinner becoming merely an elaborate photo opportunity. Under Michelin-starred Executive Chef Jean-Baptiste Natali, Koral succeeds. The cooking is precise and contemporary, built around premium and locally sourced ingredients rather than unnecessary complication. Seafood feels naturally at home in the setting, treated with enough restraint that texture and freshness remain at the centre of each plate. Sauces bring intensity without drowning delicate flavours, while plating has the refinement expected of fine dining without trying to compete visually with the room. What surprised me most was how quickly the spectacle became peaceful. Once the initial excitement faded, watching marine life drift slowly past the table became strangely hypnotic. Conversation softened. Courses arrived at an unhurried pace. Every so often a particularly striking fish would glide past and momentarily steal everyone's attention. There are countless restaurants designed to be photographed. Far fewer create a genuine sense of place once the camera is put away. Koral does. By the end of lunch, the aquarium no longer felt like a backdrop. It had become part of the rhythm of the meal.





Above the ocean

The resort's relationship with the horizon continues at Pala Rooftop Bar. In the late afternoon, the rooftop is one of the best places to appreciate the sheer scale of The Apurva. From here, you can look back towards its vast architecture and out towards the Indian Ocean, with the changing light gradually softening the stone façade.

Cocktails arrive as the heat begins to lift from the day. There is something almost cinematic about sitting here as Nusa Dua changes colour around you. The brilliant blues of afternoon become warmer, the ocean darkens and lights begin appearing across the resort's terraces.

It is a completely different energy from Koral below. There is no need for elaborate entertainment. A good drink, an ocean view and the slow disappearance of daylight are enough. And perhaps that is when the architecture makes the most sense. The resort is

dramatic during the day, but around sunset its scale softens, becoming less monumental and considerably more romantic.

The spa

The following morning brought another change of pace at Apurva Spa, perched high within the resort overlooking the ocean. Its philosophy is rooted in the ancient Sanskrit principle *rupasampat wahyabiantara*, which centres on the idea that true beauty is achieved when the inner and outer self exist in harmony. Our 60-minute Gending Apurva treatment translated that philosophy into something much more tangible. After days of travelling, my body was carrying the familiar residue of movement: tight shoulders, tired legs and the peculiar restlessness that comes from never quite unpacking before moving again.

The treatment worked slowly through that tension. Rather than relying on elaborate



wellness technology or unnecessary theatre, the experience centred on touch. Rhythmic movements and intuitive pressure gradually loosened tired muscles, while the quiet treatment room allowed everything beyond it to recede. There was a point midway through when I noticed my breathing had slowed completely.

That, to me, is always the measure of a good massage. Not how complicated the ritual sounds on paper, but whether somewhere during it you stop thinking about everything waiting outside the room. Here, I did. By the time the treatment ended, the monumental resort beyond the spa seemed strangely distant.

In a nutshell

The Apurva Kempinski Bali is not interested in being anonymous. Its architecture is bold, its scale extraordinary and its celebration of Indonesia deliberately visible. Yet reducing it to spectacle would miss what makes the property interesting. The most memorable moments happen when that grandeur

becomes personal.

It is waking in a Cliff Private Pool Ocean Junior Suite and stepping outside to see the Indian Ocean before doing anything else. It is letting breakfast stretch towards noon at the Cliff Lounge because there is nowhere you urgently need to be. It is watching a school of fish glide silently overhead between courses at Koral. It is feeling the tension of travel gradually disappear beneath the hands of an excellent therapist at Apurva Spa. Even Pala Rooftop reveals another version of the same hotel, transforming monumental architecture into a backdrop for something as simple as watching the sun go down.

Bali has no shortage of beautiful resorts, and many choose to whisper. The Apurva Kempinski Bali chooses a different language. It celebrates scale, craftsmanship and Indonesian identity with confidence, then creates intimate spaces within that grandeur where you can retreat from it all. You arrive looking at the architecture. You leave remembering how surprisingly personal life inside it can feel.

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Synergi Hospitality

Beyond the beaten path

In a market crowded with hotel representation firms chasing volume, Synergi Hospitality has built its name on curation. Shruti Pandey, Founder, Synergi Hospitality shares about the idea behind expanding the brand to different parts of India.

-Tripti Jain



Shruti Pandey

The company represents a handpicked collection of luxury experiential properties across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Maharashtra and Kerala, from heritage havelis and desert camps to safari lodges tucked beside sanctuaries.

Growing with intent

Synergi's growth story is a carefully drawn map. The company has moved deliberately into the corporate and domestic travel segments, building relationships that go beyond transactional bookings. Shruti shares, "Synergi has been working with a selective group of luxury experiential hotels, and we aim to continue expanding the same with further partnerships in the future. Every addition to the portfolio is treated as a long-term partnership rather than a quick listing, which keeps the brand's identity sharp even as its footprint widens."

South India in the spotlight

The next chapter for Synergi points firmly southward. South India's temples, backwaters, coffee estates and coastal retreats offer a texture that complements the desert and heritage stories the brand already tells so well. Shruti explains, "The

expansion of partner hotels in South India will provide for a wider reach in the market. This move signals more than geographic growth. It reflects a desire to give travel partners a fuller palette of Indian experiences under one trusted umbrella, from the golden dunes of Jaisalmer to the misty hills further south."

Reading the new Indian traveller

India's travel landscape has shifted from ticking off landmarks to seeking out feeling. Travellers today lean towards camps under open skies, safari lodges beside wildlife corridors

and boutique heritage stays that carry a sense of place. Synergi's portfolio, stacked with desert camps in Jaisalmer and Jawai, safari lodges in Sasan Gir and Velavadar, and mobile luxury camping around festivals such as the Pushkar Camel Fair and Nagaur Cattle Festival, mirrors this appetite precisely. Properties are chosen because they offer nature, heritage, culture and comfort together, giving agents a story to sell rather than just a room to book.

Trade partners that matter

Ask any seasoned travel agent what keeps a hotel partnership working, and the answer rarely

changes: dependability. Consistent service standards, stable rates and steady collaboration matter more to trade partners than flashy one-off offers. Shruti shares, "The travel partners are looking for consistency in services, rates and continued collaboration. We at Synergi have been sensitive towards these requirements and have been coordinating with our partner hotels to ensure we deliver the best possible experience."

What's the next step?

Synergi's vision stays rooted in the same philosophy that built it: fewer, finer partnerships over sprawling numbers. The brand intends to deepen its presence in South India, strengthen its corporate and domestic bookings, and continue positioning experiential stays as the heart of Indian travel rather than an add-on to it.

Synergi Hospitality's tagline, 'Stay Somewhere Extraordinary,' captures the company's approach well. Nature, heritage, culture and comfort are not marketing words for this brand, they are the criteria every partner hotel must meet. As Indian travel continues its shift towards meaningful, story-rich journeys, Synergi appears well placed to keep guiding trade partners toward stays worth remembering.

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Purvi Discovery

Putting Northeast on the experiential map



Manoj Jalan

There are only a few properties that let their guests be one with nature and environment in its true sense and Purvi Discovery is one such. Pioneering heritage stays in Assam, since its inception in 2000 in Dibrugarh, Purvi Discovery began tea tourism in Upper Assam before expanding its footprint across Northeast. And for more than two decades, the brand has been taking travellers beyond the conventional tourist map of Northeast India, building their journeys around the region's landscapes, living cultures and distinctive heritage.

With their heritage bungalows such as Mancotta Heritage Chang Bungalow, Chowkidinghee Heritage Chang Bungalow and Wathai Heritage Bungalow, situated right in the heart of Assam's tea gardens, the brand's portfolio spans tailor-made experiences, wildlife and birding experiences, cultural and festival tours.

Northeast: A unique experience

Purvi discovery has developed a distinctive profile that focuses on turning the Northeast region of India from a destination to be sightseeing into a region that the travellers should experience its customised holidays and journeys. Manoj shares the core philosophy that drives the way the brand

From tea gardens and heritage bungalows to wildlife, culture and communities, Purvi Discovery is opening up a more immersive side of Northeast India. Manoj Jalan, Director of Property, shares insights into the company's approach and the region's growing appeal.

-Srishti Mukherjee



designs and curates these experiences. He says, "Purvi Discovery is largely built on attention to detail and experience - focused tourism. The Stays in our heritage bungalows are carefully designed to be quietly luxurious, and the similar philosophy is followed for the tours across Assam and the Northeast of India that are led by experienced and thoughtful tour leaders to provide lifelong experiences for guests."

Heritage bungalows and tea estates

Manoj shares that their heritage bungalows amongst others are the most popular travel experiences that are driving the business for the brand. He shares, "Our unique heritage bungalows that are thoughtfully set within the working tea estates, the curated tours across the stunning landscape of Upper Assam and Eastern Arunachal Pradesh, with a particular focus on indigenous community life, wildlife and bird watching have been a driving factor for us. Travellers who visit

this region are usually very discerning and informed as this is a special interest destination."

Talking about the importance of their heritage tea stays to the brand's portfolio, he reveals, "The Bungalows continue to be some of the only genuinely sought-after heritage properties in the region, with a legacy that blends authentic tea heritage experience with modern comfort, naturally blending with the lush environment. The tea stays are designed for guests who appreciate heritage, elegance and calmness."

Piquing Tourist attention

Manoj shares that as a destination specialist Purvi Discovery works rather smoothly and efficiently with the travel agents, tour operators and international partners to promote Assam and Northeast. He says, "With much improved connectivity, there is a noticeable growth in the interest in the Northeast region amongst the travellers, particularly in the inbound segment. And much of this interest can be

attributed to festival tours such as the Hornbill festival, the Bihu Festival and the Jonbeel Mela since they are very popular across regions and countries."

Furthermore, Manoj shares the biggest challenges that he sees in operating and scaling an experiential business in the Northeast, he shares, "I believe, Northeast is an emerging destination that is consistently evolving and piques people's interest which is why it becomes increasingly important to protect it from the risks and adverse impact of mass tourism. Hence, promoting boutique and special interest travel seems to be the best way forward."

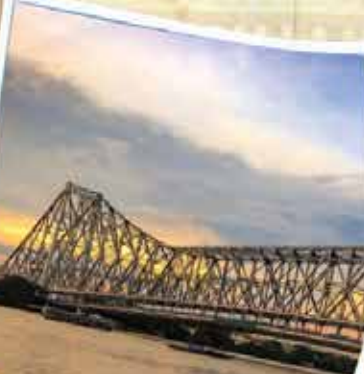
Future plans for Purvi Discovery

Manoj reveals the brand's growth plans for the property. He says, "The focus has to be on market creation for niche and special interest tours. We are also looking to develop integrated circuits with neighboring countries."

The brand, with its charming retreats and a location that can be fit into various Upper Assam itineraries, champions responsible tourism with unmatched experiences with guests that offer opportunities for them to connect with local communities. The brand's approach is rooted in slow, experiential travel as it offers its guests unique experiences that go beyond just accommodation and basic amenities to experience meaning engagement with the places that the travellers visit, whether that is through their heritage stays amid Assam's tea country or through carefully curated journeys through the lesser - explored landscapes.

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Divine Resorts & Spa

A riverside state of mind

At the intersection of wellness, spirituality and contemporary hospitality, Divine Resort & Spa brings a riverside stay experience to the evolving tourism landscape of Rishikesh. Vijay Singh Bisht, Director, Divine Resorts & Spa and Anil Gusain, DOSM, Divine Resorts & Spa reveal the vision behind the property.

-Srishti Mukherjee

Nestled in the heart of Tapovan, Divine Resorts & Spa sits overlooking the Ganga and the Himalayan foothills and offers a perfect harmony of luxury and calm with its panoramic views of the rivers, valleys and the peaks along with its proximity to Rishikesh's spiritual and adventure attractions. The property is known for its spa and wellness experience, yoga, meditation and facilities for celebrations and corporate gatherings alongside the basic amenities. With Laxman Jhula and the riverfront within walking distance from the resort, Divine positions itself as a stay that enriches the guest experience with its warm hospitality, and an unmissable location where soft romance meets the spiritual vibe.

Vision behind Divine

Vijay shares, "When we started Divine Resort & Spa, the idea was simple, Rishikesh already has everything a traveller needs spiritually and naturally, so a hotel here shouldn't compete with that, it should get out of the way and let people experience it. We built the property facing the Ganga for that reason, so that the river stays part of the stay and not just the view from a window." He believes that Rishikesh itself has changed a lot since Divine Resorts & Spa began. It used to draw a fairly specific crowd, which were yoga practitioners, backpackers, spiritual seekers on



Vijay Singh Bisht

longer trips. Today, there is a noticeable shift towards weekend travellers from Delhi - NCR, young professionals, families, even corporate groups looking for offsites with a wellness angle.

Anil adds, "While the core vision hasn't moved, which is calm, comfort, and a genuine connection to the Ganga, we've had to widen what 'comfort' means. Comfort to us means better rooms, stronger dining, event spaces for weddings and retreats, and a lot more thought put into service standards than a purely spiritual - tourism property might have needed a decade ago."

Location is key

Vijay believes that the location of the property largely sets the brand apart from the others in the market but there is more than just the location. He shares, "A lot of new properties are coming up further from the river or higher up the hillside, however, we are actually on the river, in Tapovan, walking distance from Laxman Jhula and the ghats. But



Anil Gusain

beyond the location, it's the balance we try to strike. Rishikesh hotels tend to lean one of two ways which are, either very ashram-style and stripped down, or resort-style and close to nature."

Anil explains more on the same lines, "We've tried to sit in between: proper luxury, the rooms, the rooftop dining, the spa — without losing the reason someone picks Rishikesh over other secluded destinations. Our team also spends a lot of time helping guests actually plan their time here which includes, which ghat to go for the aarti, which yoga session suits a beginner, when to go for rafting etc."

Beyond Divine Resorts & Spa

Talking about their plans to expand, Vijay mentions that the brand is already operating three properties— Divine Resort & Spa, Divine Lake Cruise, and Divine Oak Stay — each built around a different way of experiencing this region, whether that's the riverside resort experience, life on the water, or a quieter stay away

from the main crowd.

"That itself has been a deliberate expansion, not three versions of the same hotel. We are actively looking at growing further. Nothing we're ready to announce in detail yet, but the direction is clear that we want to keep building around Rishikesh and the wider Uttarakhand region," he explains.

Biggest source markets

While concluding, Vijay highlights that domestically, Delhi NCR remains their single biggest feeder market by a distance, simply because of the drive distance and the weekend-getaway appeal — followed by Punjab, UP, and other North Indian states. "We also see a steady flow from Mumbai and Bangalore, usually travellers coming specifically for yoga, wellness, or a longer spiritual break rather than a quick weekend trip," he says.

Anil also adds, "On the international side, we get a consistent mix of European and North American guests, many of whom are here specifically for yoga teacher training courses or extended retreats."

With every detail selected to perfection and thoughtful hospitality and services, Divine Resorts & Spa is dedicated towards guests' comfort and creating memories that would stay with the guests long after the stay is over.



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Marche, Maybe!

Nature's been benevolent. The climate's good. And the place is safe. Marche was on-song, revealing its incredibly rich and varied artistic treasures.

-Inder Raj Ahluwalia



Leonardo Catucci laughed in that special tone that became the hallmark of all our meetings thereafter. It was five days of delightful discovery in a region enriched with varying countryside, medieval towns, villages, palaces, and religious buildings, all of important artistic and architectural value. Though we missed out on Ancona - the regional capital and an important Adriatic port, no one complained. We did full justice to several other places of immense interest, exploring one of Europe's most historical and religious belts. My Italian sojourn had started on a quit note. I landed in Milan en-route to Marche, and connected with a group. Now Milan is Italy's fashion capital and seems stuck in a multi groove. It's not very Italian in the true sense, at least not architecturally. Unlike other Italian cities, her few cathedrals and domes dot the skyline, fashion is a city highlight and has etched it firmly on the Italian map. Thanks to its fashion fame, the city gets year-round visitors from the industry, and Fiera Milano Grounds are where the action is. It just so happened that the Asian Fashion Week was on, and I walked straight into a well-presented Sabyasachi Mukherjee show that paid tribute to India's rich textile legacy. Talk

about being made to feel at home! Late afternoon saw us on the highway, bound for the Marche region. Five hours at a hundred and twenty kilometres per hour, driving through flatland with fields and factories with low rolling hills in the distance, two 'technical' halts, and we arrived at the delightful La Foresteria. This became our serene base and hideout for the next five days. The place has a cloister-like charm. Adjoined to a former abbey and convent (they even have their own wine cellars) the hotel blends into the region's easy character. Typically Italian in temperament, Mariella Staffolani was my local guide, helped along by Leonardo Catucci, our 'host escort' who translated Mariella's words into English (with a little adaptation, I suspect). Our foray started off at Piazza Della Liberta in Tolentino! It was a Sunday and it was raining, which should have made it deserted, but for the Fire Fighter's Day celebrations, and they gamely went on with the men in blue making appropriate speeches and a band belting out its stuff. Things are nice and easy. The area round the piazza is all squares and old, light brown brick buildings. We did a walkabout, saw the local college,

backtracked and walked through a charming narrow street called Vie Del Popolo. Lunch time found us at the popular Hotel 77, with the lunch being a grand affair with lots of fresh vegetables and fried lamb.

A little later we ended up at Macelleria, at the little awful - smelling shop of Giuseppe Dell Orso, the 'funny butcher' with his glib talk and bowtie that resembled a salami. In true showman style, Giuseppe showed us the fine art of sampling wines with meat, thoughtfully also helping himself to both. Meanwhile, back at the hallowed confines of La Foresteria, it was business as usual.

I woke up early the next morning to be greeted by a clear blue sky. We drove passed Cacamo Lake and through low forested hills and reached 670 metre - high Camerino, that presented a stunning views and a slice of Italian history.

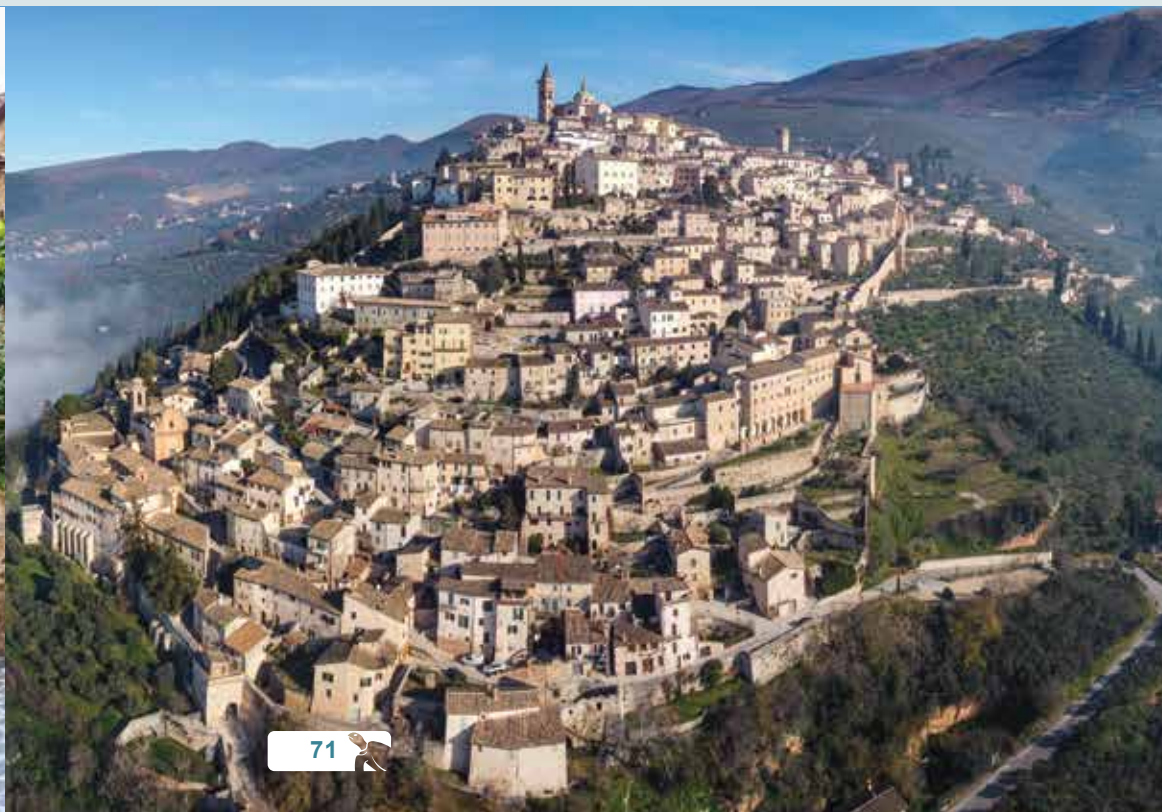
Camerino was the home of the powerful Verano Family. We entered the fort built by The Pope Rocca Borgesia, greeted at the entrance by busts of eminent local personalities like the musician Filippo Marchetti. Driving through hilly woods, we arrived at Visso, a charming little village sporting old buildings and

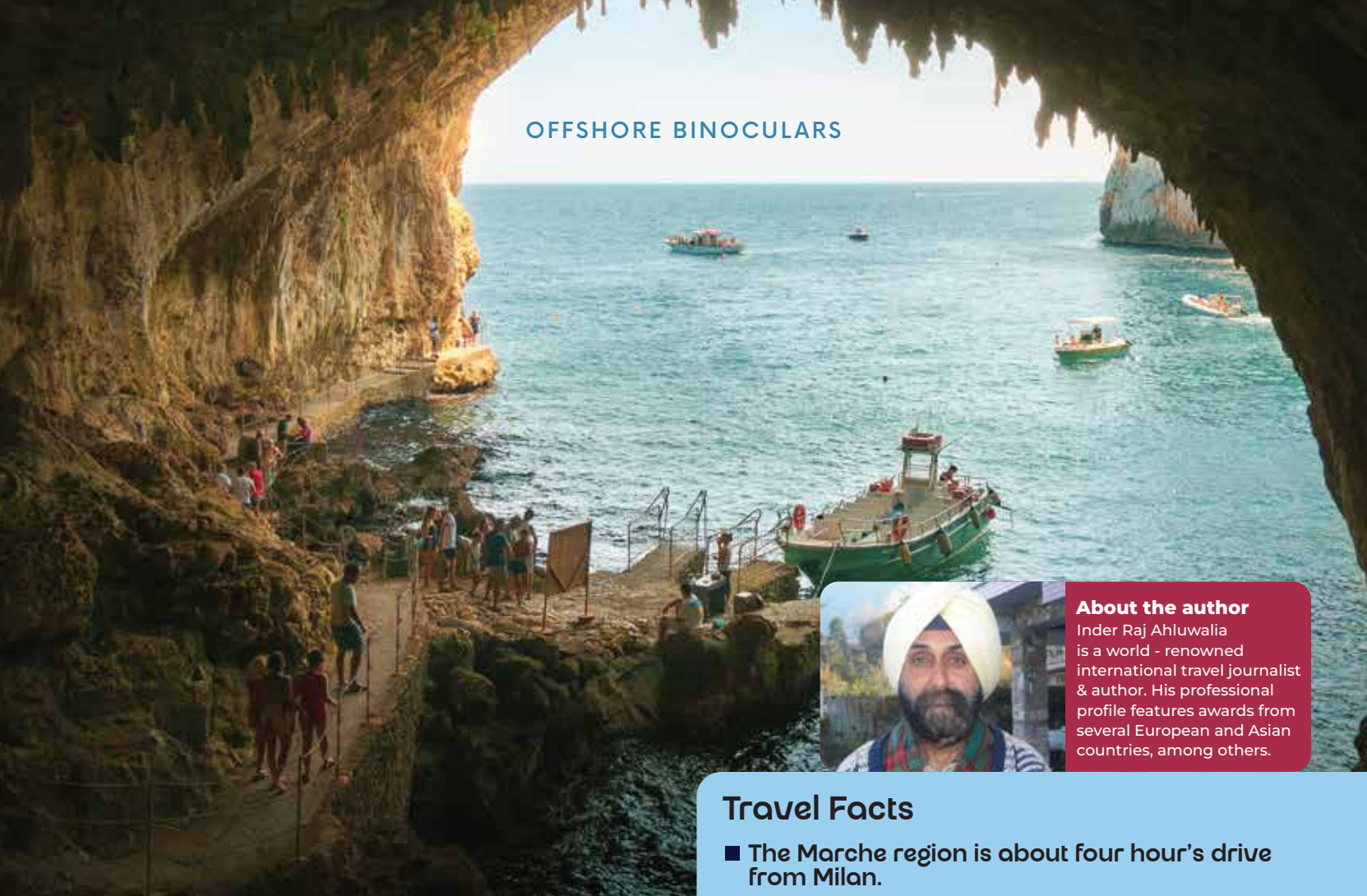
gabled streets. Our port of call here was the Church of St. Augustino, now converted into a little museum. The young lady attendant who resembled the singer Madonna, explained the Church's history while walking us through the premises with its wall frescoes and wooden sculptures.

The sun was setting when we pulled in at Urbs Salvia, a famous little town renowned for its heritage and health centres. Our dinner at Le Logge involved good food served with style. 'Pepper with Garlic in Olive Oil', 'Rabbit with diced mushroom', 'Parma Ham', 'Crushed Chicken Liver,' ...

The next morning we were back, and the sunshine was a blessing as we rummaged through ancient sites just outside Urbs Salvia, including the ruins of the amphitheatre that was built in the First Century AD by the patron, Lucio Flavius Silva Nonius Bassusa. The site also featured gladiators' boat fights and fights with wild boar and bears.

Being a Tuesday meant the weekly flea-market in Mogliano, a little town on a hill, featuring old buildings and panoramic views. Teatro Apollo is a charming little hideout with ornate side galleries, and a beautiful ceiling with a large circular fresco. I noticed thst things were rather quiet when we visited.





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.



Travel Facts

- The Marche region is about four hour's drive from Milan.
- All towns have hotels and guest-houses. A diverse cuisine range is available.
- It's a year-round tourist destination. If visiting in winter, take adequate woollens along.
- A one-week stay is ideal to explore the region.

Another day, another drive, this time through rolling hills, gentle valleys, and brown meadows, all bathed in bright sunshine. The little town of Fermo has plenty to interest visitors, but our group typically prioritised a stop at Astoria for lunch. Below and ahead, lay the town and its environs, a maze of pale red tile roofs glinting in the sun.

Suitable amends were made for the risotto and 'Birra Moretti' lunch by a visit to the church. A grand building with magnificent views, history shrouds the much-visited church.

Back on the highway, a short drive along the coast brought us to Ascoli Piceno with its superb blend of medieval and renaissance architecture. In the centre of town lies the Square, meeting-place of locals and tourists, and venue for noteworthy events. Leading off from here, narrow streets hive off in different directions, onto other, smaller squares. S. Francesco, Loggia dei Mercanti, and Piazza del Popolo, are major local historical sites.

Another drive deposited us at San Benedetto, a popular seaside resort. But things looked rather

quiet that evening, so we didn't stay long. Our last day in the Marche region started off quietly enough, with the drive to Urbino being a ninety-minute affair that took us past fields, the seaside, and then green hills. Finally, busy and tourist - friendly Urbino loomed up above us.

From the middle of town, where narrow streets flanked by brick buildings funnel off in different directions. The Ducal Palace is a stupefying testimony of Renaissance grandeur, and the undoubted highlight. We spent an hour exploring this grand, self - contained complex, admiring historical frescoes, statues and paintings.

It involved a two hours drive past the sea to reach Loreto, the hill-perched fortress of religion. We entered the compound and were greeted by an open-air choir singing session.

With its high ceiling, ornate roof - there's a rotunda above the altar - massive pillars, and roomy interior, the Basilica is simply magnificent. In a marble enclosure is housed the stature of the Black Madonna, encased above an altar. No photos please, and no sound here, in

this holy place. We paid our silent respects and left.

Now came our last stop. Macerata turned out to be another historical relic. Our local escort took us straightaway to the Arena, which used to be the centre of all things important. Accommodating an audience of 2,500, the Arena has a stage measuring 90 into 16 metres. We moved on to Lauro Rossi Theatre, very traditional with a large stage, cute balcony boxes and ornate ceiling.

The region offers fine dining, a la Italian style. Risotto and pasta may rule, but there's plenty more from the spit and oven. Macerata boasts of its own distinct cuisine tradition that includes rich dishes such as 'vincisgrassi'. For starters, try 'Crostone con fegatini' (fried bread with chicken liver), or 'Pizza with pork sgrisci'. A good soup to try out is 'Pancotto' (tomatoes, garlic, salt, pepper and pecorino

cheese). Prominent main course dishes are 'Rabbit in porchetta cooked on the spit'; 'Fricassee' (lamb, onion, bay leaf, dry white wine, egg yolk, lemon, flour, broth); 'Baccala' (dried, salted cod with potatoes); 'Broad beans ngreccia' (anchovies, capers, parsley, garlic and vinegar); and 'Frecando' potatoes, celery, onion, aubergines, tomatoes, courgettes and white wine). For deserts, go for 'Peconi' (typical Macerata cakes) and 'Biscuits with mosto' (the grape residue left at the end of wine production).

While there are as many wines around as Sundays in a year, 'Falerio dei Colli Ascolani' (white), and 'Lacrima di Morro d'Alba' (red wine with an intense, fruity bouquet) are good picks. And if you're fond of your beer, there's always 'Birra Moretti' with the label of the 'man with the hat and moustache'...



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Sumi Yashshree

Scaling the Eastern Himalayan Story

With a family - rooted hospitality philosophy, an expanding portfolio and a sharp focus on B2B partnerships, Sumi Yashshree Hotels & Resorts is strengthening its presence across the Eastern Himalayas while exploring new opportunities across Northeast India.

-Srishti Mukherjee



Sadip Lama

There are only so many properties in the hospitality industry that reflect a family tradition quite like Sumi Yashshree Hotels and Resort. What began with a name rooted in family, Sumi Yashshree has now built its presence around the Eastern Himalayas and has grown into a hospitality brand that spans across some of India's most prominent leisure destinations with a commitment to comfort, quality, and authentic service.

While the brand initially set foot in Darjeeling during its inception, it has now expanded into markets beyond its original stronghold with more than 27 properties across its brand and in location such as Gangtok, Pelling, Siliguri, Kalimpong, North Sikkim, Tinsukia, Digha. However, Sumi Yashshree has not just made its mark across the Eastern Himalayas but also moved a little south of India with their properties expanding into Visakhapatnam and Araku Valley.

And at the heart of the business, sits the name, Sumi Yashshree, attaching a personal essence to the brand. Parth Banerjee shares that the group's philosophy is tied to his family. "Sumi Yashshree" is a

family - inspired name. 'Sumi' comes from my wife's name, while 'Yashshree' is derived from my children's names — Yashkar (Yash) and Shreya (Shree)," he shares.

Sadip Lama, Chairman and Managing Director, Sumi Yashshree Hotels & Resorts shares that as the portfolio has grown, this philosophy has been translated into two distinct brands — Yashshree and Sumitel — with each property offering a consistent yet destination-specific guest experience, such as Yashshree Mall Road and Yashshree Sanderling in Darjeeling, Yashshree properties in Lachung, Pelling and Yangyang and Sumitel Queensyard and other properties across Darjeeling, Gangtok, Pelling and Siliguri.

The strategy of establishing properties in a certain location, according to Sadip, is that the group focuses on three key factors — location, guest and tourist flow and the overall condition and potential of the property. "As we grow, we focus on retaining the local character of each destination while delivering personalised and consistent hospitality," he shares. It is not just about adding destinations to the brand's portfolio but also about analysing whether a property and its location can support the kind of experience the group aims to deliver to its guests.

Beyond Darjeeling

While, Darjeeling, alongside its immediate Eastern Himalayan Circuit, has, without a doubt, been an important market for the group and remains central to the brand's

identity, with its current directory listing multiple properties in the town, Sadip reveals that the company is also set to add another property to that market. He shares, "Yes, we currently have a new project in the pipeline in Darjeeling, which is expected to be operational by 2027."

But that is not all that the group is looking to focus on. Sadip also reveals that the group has already expanded beyond the Eastern Himalayas and into North-East India and are actively exploring further opportunities across the region, indicating the group's expanding footprint with its listing incorporating locations like Assam alongside its established presence in West Bengal, Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh.

A challenging 2025

However, despite the consistent expansion in the brand's portfolio, the group faced a mixed operating environment in 2025. Sadip describes the year as a challenging one for the company, although their key leisure destinations continued to show healthy demand and contributed positively to the overall business performance. "2025 was a challenging year for us, with occupancy remaining relatively steady across our properties. Compared with previous years, we experienced softer demand in some markets," he reveals. Nonetheless, the group entered 2026 with expansion as a central priority with an ambition to deepen its presence across the

Eastern Himalayas. Sadip reveals, "Our key focus for 2026 is strategic portfolio expansion, with plans to increase our presence across the Eastern Himalayas by adding more hotels while continuing to improve occupancy and overall business performance."

B2B remains a key business engine

He highlights that travel trade has been increasingly crucial to the group's business. While the wider portfolio of the brand focuses on individual leisure travellers, B2B partnerships currently make for its strongest source markets. Sadip shares, "It continues to contribute significantly to our overall business. We are also closely monitoring shifts in the domestic and international guest mix to identify new opportunities for growth."

This B2B focus fits naturally with a portfolio spread across multiple leisure destinations. For tour operators, a wider network of properties can offer opportunities to package destinations and build multi-stop itineraries, particularly across the Eastern Himalayas. At the consumer-end, meanwhile, the group's individual properties can offer unique experiences blending the views of the Himalayan range with the town's attractions and facilities aimed at both leisure and family travellers and that balance between consistency and destination identity may ultimately prove to be the most important facet of Sumi Yashshree's expansion.

Tents, Trails, Traditions: A New Address for *Luxury* in Madhya Pradesh

Imagine a luxury getaway that does not begin in the lobby of a hotel, but beside a vast lake, within sight of a medieval fort, or at the edge of a forest where cheetahs roam. Experience the spectacular landscape of Madhya Pradesh, where the Tent Cities at Gandhi Sagar, Hanuwantiya, Chanderi, and Kuno combine the comfort of premium hospitality with the thrill of waking up in *The Heart of Incredible India*.



01 GANDHI SAGAR:

Thrills, History & Wilderness

Kick off September beside the magnificent Gandhi Sagar reservoir, where a year-round Tent City seamlessly blends serene tranquility with high-energy adrenaline within a lush wildlife sanctuary. Start your morning with lakeside walk, a scenic cycling expedition, or birdwatching, before pumping up the adrenaline with jet skiing and speed boating. Beyond the water, journey deep into the forest to explore the historic Hinglajgarh Fort and 30,000-year-old prehistoric rock art of Chaturbhujnath Nala. Finally, wrap up your day with breathtaking sunsets, authentic local flavors, and enchanting folk performances beneath an open sky.



02 HANUWANTIYA:

Water Sports & Sacred Trails

In October, Hanuwantiya Jal Mahotsav set against the vast Indira Sagar reservoir. Running through March, this vibrant 100-plus luxury Tent City offers thrilling water sports alongside aerial adventures like paramotoring and hot-air ballooning. On land, enjoy scenic nature walks and trekking, before unwinding with stunning sunset views or taking a spiritual day trip to the sacred Jyotirlinga island of Omkareshwar.

03 CHANDERI:

Medieval Heritage & Master Weaves

Explore the medieval charm of Chanderi on foot, stepping out from the Tent City to wander past historic gateways, bustling bazaars, ancient stepwells, and iconic monuments like the hilltop Chanderi Fort, Badal Mahal, and Koshak Mahal. Experience the town's living heritage by visiting local weaving communities, watching master artisans craft legendary Chanderi fabrics on their looms, and taking home an authentic, hand-woven piece directly from its source.



04 KUNO:

Cheetah Safaris & Stargazing

From October to March, the Kuno Forest Retreat places you at the center of a landmark global conservation story: the return of the cheetahs. Beyond thrilling wildlife safaris, connect with the indigenous Sahariya tribal communities to experience their rich crafts and traditions, then wrap up your evening stargazing beneath brilliant, unpolluted night skies.

Perhaps it is time to rethink what a luxury getaway can be.
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UDAAN HOTELS AND RESORTS

The Northeast expansion story



Ajay Kumar Wadhawan

Since its inception in 2017, the brand has built its niche and identity around boutique stays in the Eastern Himalayas, that offer the perfect blend of unique destinations and views, warm hospitality, personalised services and vegetarian cuisine perfected to suit the tastebuds. At the Udaan Hotels and Resorts, hospitality begins with more than a comfortable room. Today, its portfolio spans across destinations that include Darjeeling, Gangtok, Lachung, Pelling, Kalimpong and Siliguri, with the brand positioning itself as a pure-vegetarian hotel chain that is deeply rooted in the Himalayan experience. Ajay shares, "Our hospitality wing, Udaan Hotels and Resorts, operates multiple boutique properties in Darjeeling, Siliguri in North Bengal, and Gangtok, Pelling, and Lachung in Sikkim."

Philosophy behind the brand

At its core, the Udaan has a very straightforward approach to hospitality and believes in providing the best of services and experiences. The brand's main focus lies in their philosophy of #goodstay #goodfood and #goodpeople which reflects its commitment towards making the experience as much about the comfort and warmth of the stay as it is about the destination.

Built around personalised service, scenic locations and vegetarian cuisine, the Udaan Hotels & Resorts is leveraging its wider travel ecosystem and network of tour operators to fuel its next phase of growth. Ajay Kumar Wadhawan, Executive Director, AIR IQ and Udaan Hotels and Resorts, shares about their northeastern expansion.

-Srishti Mukherjee

A leap into Northeastern India

Now, the brand is looking to expand beyond its established Himalayan circuit and turn their attention towards the wider Northeast India. Having consolidated its presence across the Eastern destinations, including Siliguri, the north Bengal Hills and Sikkim, Udaan is now preparing to expand its hospitality network to at least five more destinations across the region. Ajay reveals, "We are expected to have approximately 50 properties by 2030. All the Hotels and Resorts are set up and run with a simple philosophy of providing the best of quality, location, comfort, and luxury and wonderful veg cuisine. Hundreds of the domestic and inbound tour operators currently choose our properties as their preferred option."

With the brand outlining its ambition to grow its reach and portfolio, they plan to enter the five additional Northeastern locations by 2030. However, as the names and timelines of the upcoming properties still remain a secret, their existing properties across Eastern Himalayas hint at the hospitality model that the brand plans to introduce into the new markets.

Udaan across Eastern Himalayas

A quiet mountain retreat situated close to Mall Road, Udaan Nirvana Resort, Darjeeling offers a peaceful setting amidst scenic surroundings and an easy access to Darjeeling's main attractions whilst maintaining its calm and uncrowded vibe. Meanwhile Himalayan Suites & Spa brings its guests closer to

the heart of the town with rooms that face the Kanchenjunga peak. The property offers easy access to the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. Beside these two, Udaan's portfolio also includes Udaan Dekeling Resort, a heritage property that is housed in a 172 - year - old British - era structure perfectly blending colonial character with contemporary facilities.

Gangtok is also another important pillar of the Udaan network with properties such as Udaan Pride Sikkim Hotel & Spa, Udaan Alpine Resort, Udaan Keepsa Hotel & Spa, Udaan Woodberry Hotel & Spa and Udaan Yalley Resort & Spa catering to different segments. From centrally located city stays to the quieter retreats, Udaan offers panoramic mountain and valley views for the guests paired with Sikkimese influences and modern comforts across its properties. Going north, the brand has marked its presence in the Lachung region with properties like Udaan Tashi Gakhil Resort and Udaan Metho Pelri Resort. While Tashi Gakhil combines traditional Sikkimese architectural influences with modern facilities, Metho Pelri opts for a more premium approach as it incorporates contemporary interiors with traditional Sikkimese aesthetics and scenic mountain views.

Pelling witnesses properties such as Udaan Khang-Chen View Resort & Spa and Udaan Hotel Pine Crest that place the brand within West Sikkim's mountain tourism circuit. While Udaan Khang-Chen View Resort & Spa is known for its

panoramic views of Kanchenjunga, Pine Crest offers a quiet setting amid pine forests. Siliguri, meanwhile, has grown to become an important gateway to the region with Udaan Hotel Clover & Banquet set close to Bagdogra Airport, making it easier to access major rail and transport links.

AIR IQ 365

This hospitality footprint of the brand is closely associated with the group's wider travel ecosystem, at the centre of which sits AIR IQ 365, its air - distribution platform for fixed departures across domestic Indian and short-haul international routes.

He also shares, "The platform's key strength is its network of more than 19,000 tour operators and over 77,000 agents who partner with us for air travel, primarily for tourism and leisure. These operators combine their own land arrangements with our air tickets and big tour operators also use our portal to source additional seats when their existing inventory is insufficient. It helps Airlines too, to not to service so many Tour Operators, who have less potential but those eventually constitute high volume through us."

Udaan Hotels & Resorts' expansion across the Northeast is all about building a stronger hospitality connectivity in a region that houses growing tourism potentials. With its focus on quality, comfort and cuisine, the brand, combined with AIR IQ, is positioning itself to welcome travellers to the Northeastern part of the country and make the region easier for the trade to experience.

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02

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03

FRANCE

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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

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08

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15th Conventions India Conclave powers the future of MICE

New Delhi's Bharat Mandapam turned into the beating heart of India's business events industry from August 19 to 21, 2026, as the India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) hosted the 15th edition of the Conventions India Conclave.

EVENT AFFAIR

Held under the banner 'Powering the Future of Innovation,' the three-day gathering brought together policymakers, hoteliers, venue owners, destination marketers and global MICE leaders, reaffirming Delhi's stature as the country's convention capital. Organised with the backing of the Ministry of Tourism, Delhi Tourism, the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) and the Incredible India and Meet in India campaigns, the Conclave stood out as a confluence of policy, capital and creativity for the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions sector.

An inauguration worthy of the occasion

The opening evening set an ambitious tone. Following an ICPB Board Meeting and a press conference at the Leader's Lounge, the Inaugural Function began with a theme panel titled 'Powering the Future of Innovation,' moderated by Ms Anju Gomes, Regional Director, ICCA, with Dr Neeraj Kharwal, IAS, Managing Director, ITPO; Mr Suneel Anchipaka, IAS, Managing Director, Delhi Tourism; and Mr Arun Srivastava, Joint Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, on the panel.

A string of addresses gave the evening its gravity. Mr Chander Mansharamani, Convention Chairman, ICPB, CIC 2026, welcomed delegates before Dr Senthil Gopinath, CEO, ICCA, spoke on how global business events drive innovation. The evening peaked with addresses by the Guest of Honour, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of India.

The exhibition floor comes alive

Day two opened with the formal unveiling of the exhibition at the Multipurpose Hall by the Executive Director of ITPO, the Managing Director of Delhi Tourism and the Joint Secretary of



Tourism. A packed calendar of B2B Prefix Appointments ran from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, resumed from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, and continued into the third morning with Reverse Marketing sessions from 10:00 am to noon. Across the three days, delegates had close to six hours of structured, pre-fixed one-on-one meeting time, a format built to convert conversations into confirmed business.

Women leading the MICE narrative

The afternoon's first panel, "Women in Leadership: Shaping the Future of MICE in Viksit Bharat," moderated by Ms Vibha Bhatia, President, MMACTIV Sci Tech Communications Pvt. Ltd., placed women's leadership at the centre of the industry's growth story. Panellists included Capt. Yashika Tyagi, Mindset Strategist; Ms Nisha Dhingra, Company Secretary and Chief Legal, ONGC Videsh Ltd; Ms Sonia Parashar, Chairperson of the Board and Managing Director, NürnbergMesse India; Ms Stella Ariadne Styliani, CEO and Owner, Impressive World Leads SRL; and Ms Rajani Nair Deb, General Manager, DoubleTree by Hilton Agra, sharing a confident view of the leadership pipeline steering the sector towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

Redefining destination marketing

Energy built further through "Redefining Tourism, MICE and Destination Marketing," moderated by Ms Deepika Chowdhry, Founder and CEO, Candid India, with Mr Arun Srivastava, Joint Director General, Ministry of Tourism; Mr Eyal Halevy, CEO, Paragon Global; Mr Navneet Kaushal, Founder and CEO, PageTraffic; Mr Anil Parashar, President and CEO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ); and Mr Vipul Awasthi, Account Director, Google, exploring how technology and branding are placing Indian cities on the global convention map. A Gala Cocktail Dinner at The Oberoi, New Delhi, closed the day.

EVENT AFFAIR

Building the infrastructure of tomorrow

The final day opened with a Power Breakfast at the Leader's Lounge, followed by two hours of Reverse Marketing and B2B meetings. The session "Building a National Strategy for MICE Infrastructure," moderated by Mr MQ Syed, Chairman and Managing Director, Exhicon, turned to the industry's physical backbone, with Mr Sachin Sinha, Chief Financial Officer, India Exposition Mart Ltd; Mr Amit Aggarwal, Head, Exhibition Venue Sales and Marketing, Yashobhoomi (IICC); Mr Mohammad Ali, Director of Global Sales, India and South Asia; Mr Udit Kumar, Director, Exhicon Events Media Solutions Ltd; and Mr Thomas Joseph, CICE, EMD, Vice President, Business Development, Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai, mapping what world-class venues mean for India's competitiveness.

Taking India's MICE story to the world

The closing content session, "ICPB – Promoting MICE India to the World," moderated by Mr Raghav Khosla, Group Editor, Exhibition Showcase, brought the discussion full circle to global positioning, with Mr Vikas Sood, General Manager, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts; Mr Ashish Jagota, Executive Director, Concept Conferences Pvt Ltd; Mr Dharmendra Kumar, Founder Director and CEO, Geanis World and MICE; Mr Ajay Vinayak, CEO, Palomino Hospitality Pvt Ltd; and Mr Tushar Kesharwani, Director, Vacation Experts Pvt Ltd, sharing views on positioning Indian destinations on the international circuit. A CEO Meet at the Summit Hall gathered leaders by invitation the same day on MICE policy reform.



A valedictory finale

The Conclave concluded with a structured Valedictory Session opening with a keynote address, followed by remarks from the Convention Chairman, an awards distribution recognising excellence across the MICE ecosystem, and a vote of thanks by the Honorary Treasurer. A closing lunch sent delegates off, carrying fresh partnerships and a clearer roadmap for India's convention economy.

A confident step forward

The 15th Conventions India Conclave delivered exactly what its theme promised: a platform powering the future of innovation in India's meetings and events industry. Bharat Mandapam, itself a symbol of India's convention infrastructure ambitions, proved an apt setting for conversations spanning policy reform, destination branding, women's leadership and global positioning. With ministries, venues, hoteliers and destination marketers speaking in one voice, the Conclave reinforced why the MICE platform remains one the world cannot afford to miss, and why India's business events sector is entering its most promising chapter yet.

Conclave highlights

Three days of programming at Bharat Mandapam, August 19 to 21, 2026

Four flagship panels on leadership, destination marketing, infrastructure and global promotion

Nearly six hours of structured B2B and reverse marketing appointments

A dedicated CEO Meet on MICE policy reform, by invitation



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HYATT PLACE VITHALAPUR

New address for business travel

As Vithalapur finds its place on India's automotive map, Hyatt Place creates a hospitality hub for business travellers, international professionals and the local community. Bhuwan Chandra, General Manager, Hyatt Place Vithalapur shares how the property maintains quality hospitality.

-Naina Nath

Vithalapur is changing. Once known primarily as an industrial belt, it is now emerging as an important automotive and manufacturing hub, attracting Japanese companies, suppliers and international professionals. This growth also points to a clear need for quality hospitality closer to the heart of business. Bhuwan Chandra takes us through the thinking behind the hotel and what it means to be part of this next chapter.

Hotel for a growing hub

The idea behind the hotel was straightforward: bring quality accommodation closer to the businesses driving Vithalapur's growth. Until now, international business travellers and expatriates often had to head to Ahmedabad for internationally branded accommodation and dining. "Our vision is not only to provide a comfortable place to stay, but to create a hospitality destination that supports the region's growing business ecosystem," says Bhuwan.

Beyond a business trip

The changing nature of Vithalapur has also changed what travellers expect from a hotel. Longer stays, international guests and corporate travel mean that a comfortable room alone is no



Bhuwan Chandra

longer enough. "Travellers today expect more than just a room," Bhuwan explains. They want consistency in service, comfortable long - stay accommodation, good dining, connectivity and spaces where they can work or conduct meetings efficiently. That thinking is reflected across the property, from work - friendly guestrooms and meeting spaces to its outdoor pool and fitness centre.

A taste of something familiar

For a destination with a growing

international business community, dining plays an important role. At Zing, the hotel's restaurant, guests can choose from buffet and à la carte options including Asian, Italian and Indian cuisines. Pan - Asian food has a particular relevance given Vithalapur's growing Japanese business community. At the same time, the idea is not to make international guests feel disconnected from their surroundings. "There is an opportunity to give international travellers a comfortable and seamless stay

while also allowing them to experience India," says Bhuwan, particularly through the food and hospitality experience at the hotel. The approach is not about recreating home, but offering familiar flavours alongside opportunities to discover something new.

Vithalapur's next chapter

Bhuwan sees the region becoming an increasingly important part of India's automotive and manufacturing story. As the ecosystem expands, he expects more corporate travellers, international professionals, longer stays, meetings and business events. For Hyatt Place, the opportunity goes beyond accommodating them. "The opportunity is not just to provide rooms, but to create a complete destination where business travellers can work, meet, dine, relax and recharge," he says. And perhaps that is the bigger story here. As India's business growth moves beyond the traditional metros, places like Vithalapur are creating their own identities. Hyatt Place hopes to grow alongside that evolution, serving the businesses that bring people here, while giving the local community a reason to walk through its doors too.

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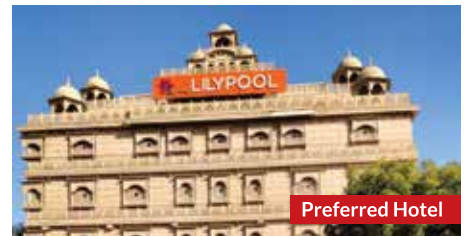
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Swosti

Shaping Odisha's hospitality story

As Odisha emerges as one of India's most promising tourism destinations, its hospitality sector is evolving alongside it. At the heart of this transformation is Swosti Group, which has spent more than four decades building a strong hospitality ecosystem across the state.

Established in 1984, the Group has grown from a pioneering hotel company into a diversified hospitality and tourism organisation, with hotels, resorts, travel services, convention facilities and tourism projects across Odisha.

City luxury

At the centre of the portfolio is Swosti Premium, Bhubaneswar, the Group's flagship five-star deluxe property. With 147 rooms, diverse dining options and extensive convention facilities, the hotel caters to business and leisure travellers while also serving as a significant MICE and wedding destination. Its Chanakya Convention Hall, supported by modern technology and elegant design, strengthens its position as a venue for large-scale conferences, exhibitions and celebrations. The recently introduced Ekayaa Spa adds a wellness dimension to the property.

Complementing it is Swosti Grand, Bhubaneswar, a four-star business hotel with 57 rooms and suites. Its central location,

conference and banquet facilities, dining options and refreshed contemporary identity make it a convenient choice for corporate and leisure travellers.

Coastal escapes

Swosti's portfolio extends beyond the capital into some of Odisha's most scenic destinations. Swosti Palm Resort, Gopalpur - on - Sea, combines beachfront tranquillity with comfortable accommodation, leisure experiences and event facilities. Its Pelican seafood restaurant adds a distinct coastal culinary experience, while its conference and banquet infrastructure makes it suitable for retreats and social events.

At Chilika, Swosti Chilika Resort brings together luxury and nature. With 78 villas, a Presidential Suite, spa facilities, a yoga centre, herbal gardens, sports bar, amphitheatre and water-based activities, the resort has developed into a sought-after destination for weddings, honeymoons and MICE events.

Further along the coast, Swosti Premium Beach Resorts, Puri, offers 125 luxury rooms and suites overlooking the Golden Sea Beach. With multiple wedding venues, banquet facilities, landscaped lawns, a spa, fitness centre and recreational spaces, it brings together leisure, wellness and celebrations under one roof.

Beyond hotels

Swosti's contribution to Odisha's tourism story extends beyond accommodation. Through Swosti Travels, the Group offers destination management, inbound programmes, MICE operations, pilgrimage tours, cultural experiences and customised travel services. Its work has helped connect travellers with Odisha's heritage, wildlife, spirituality, beaches and natural attractions.

The Group is also investing in the future through the Swosti Institute of Management and Social Studies, nurturing trained hospitality professionals, while upcoming projects in Gopalpur and other

destinations are expected to further expand its footprint.

A vision for tomorrow

Swosti's journey reflects the evolution of Odisha itself: from a destination known primarily for heritage and spirituality to one increasingly positioned for luxury, MICE, leisure and experiential tourism. With its expanding portfolio and continued investment, the Group is poised to remain an important force in taking Odisha's hospitality story to a wider audience.



"Our vision has always been to create hospitality experiences that showcase the best of Odisha while contributing meaningfully to the state's tourism and economic growth. As Odisha enters a new era of tourism development, Swosti remains committed to building destinations, creating opportunities and taking the essence of Odisha to the world."

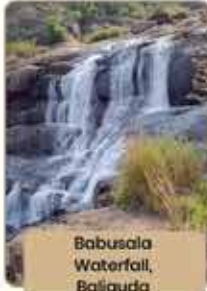
– Dr J K Mohanty,
Founder, Swosti Group



Tribal Tour to Odisha



Rayagada



Babusala
Waterfall,
Baliguda



Jeypore



Tribal Museum,
Bhubaneswar



Golden Triangle of Odisha with Chilika



Dhauli,
Bhubaneswar



Kalijai Temple,
Chilika



Konark Temple,
Konark



Jagannath Temple,
Puri

Golden Triangle of Odisha with Bhitarkanika



Khandagiri,
Bhubaneswar



Puri Beach,
Puri



Konark Temple,
Konark



Boat Safari,
Bhitarkanika



Shaktipeethas Tour of Odisha

- Maa Biraja Temple (Jajpur)
- Vimala Temple (Puri)
- Tara Tarini Temple (Ganjam)
- Bhagabati Temple (Banapur)
- Mangala Temple (Kakatpur)
- Charchika Temple (Banki)
- Katakachandi Temple (Cuttack)
- Kalijai Temple (Chilika Lake)

Transport Assistance



EVENT AFFAIR



TTM 2026 concludes in Maldives, strengthening global travel trade connect

TTM 2026 concludes in the Maldives, bringing together international travel buyers, hoteliers, tourism stakeholders and industry professionals for business meetings, networking and destination engagement. The event provided a platform to showcase the Maldives' diverse tourism offerings while facilitating new business opportunities and partnerships across key source markets. Through its B2B interactions and industry-focused sessions, TTM 2026 reinforced the destination's position as a leading global leisure and luxury tourism market.



Tejbir Singh Anand elected as the new President of ATOAI for the tenure 2026-2028

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) has elected Tejbir Singh Anand, Managing Director of Holiday Moods Adventures Pvt. Ltd., as its President for the 2026-2028 tenure. Held on September 1, 2026, the elections saw all five office-bearer positions filled unopposed. The new leadership team includes Vaibhav Kala as Senior Vice President, Ronny Singh Gulati as Vice President, Paras Loomba as Honorary Secretary and Yog Chinmay Dutt as Honorary Treasurer. The incoming Executive Committee will also include newly elected members Shekhar Babu, Amit Periwal and past President Ajeet Bajaj, alongside other committee members.



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EVENT AFFAIR



TravelBullz's Great India Roadshow 2026 wraps up in Delhi with 250+ trade attendees

TravelBullz's Great India Roadshow 2026 concludes in New Delhi, marking the final stop of its three-city series following successful editions in Lucknow and Chandigarh. The Delhi leg drew more than 250 travel trade professionals within the first two hours. Organised in partnership with the Tourism Authority of Thailand as the destination partner, the roadshow brought together industry stakeholders for meaningful interactions, destination engagement and discussions aimed at strengthening travel trade partnerships across India.



MTF Events hosts Pre-Melange media meet in Mumbai

MTF Events hosts a vibrant Pre-Melange Media Meet in Mumbai, bringing together travel industry professionals and members of the media for an evening of meaningful conversations, networking and new connections. The gathering offered an informal platform for industry stakeholders to interact, exchange ideas and strengthen relationships ahead of M lange. The evening concluded on a relaxed note with cocktails and conversations, creating a warm and engaging atmosphere for the travel fraternity.





An Initiative to Compete with

Global Tourism Destinations

From ancient civilizations and sacred traditions to breathtaking landscapes and unforgettable experiences, Bihar is redefining its tourism story. With a renewed focus on connectivity, hospitality, innovation and experiential travel, Department of Tourism, Government of Bihar, is transforming the state into a destination that is ready to welcome travelers from all over India and across the world.

Bihar is no longer merely a destination to be visited—it is becoming a destination to be experienced.



EXPERIENCE BIHAR FROM THE SKY

Adding a new dimension to Bihar's tourism experience, the state has introduced Helicopter Joy Ride starting at just ₹2,100. The initiative offers travelers an opportunity to witness Bihar from a completely new perspective, combining adventure, luxury and accessibility at an exceptionally attractive price on which Government is bearing the subsidy of Rupees 15,422. For visitors seeking something beyond conventional sightseeing, a helicopter ride promises an exhilarating experience and a memorable glimpse of Bihar's evolving tourism landscape.

Helicopter Joy Ride At Just

₹ 2,100

Government
Subsidy
₹ 15,422

Discover Bihar's Iconic Destinations
with Affordable Helicopter Tour Packages.

Taking experiential tourism a step further, Bihar is preparing to introduce helicopter-based tour packages from October, connecting travelers with some of the state's most spectacular destinations at remarkably affordable prices. Designed with comfortable stays, seamless travel and memorable experiences, these packages aim to make exploring Bihar easier, faster and truly unforgettable.

Rajgir

WHERE HISTORY MEETS ADVENTURE

Nestled amid scenic hills and steeped in the legacy of ancient India, Rajgir offers a fascinating blend of spirituality, history, nature and modern attractions. From its association with Lord Buddha and ancient Magadha to the majestic Rajgir hills, Glass Bridge and world-class tourism infrastructure, Rajgir presents an extraordinary experience for every traveler.

Kaimur

BIHAR'S HIDDEN TREASURE OF NATURE

With its undulating landscapes, forests, waterfalls, rivers and rich cultural heritage, Kaimur represents the unexplored natural beauty of Bihar. It is an emerging destination for travelers looking for tranquility, adventure, eco-tourism and an intimate connection with nature.



Package Price
₹ 26,911

A thoughtfully designed helicopter tour package offering travelers the opportunity to discover Rajgir with comfortable accommodation and a journey crafted for convenience and memorable exploration.

Package Price
₹ 28,644

An attractive helicopter tour package designed to bring this lesser-explored destination closer to travelers, combining aerial connectivity with comfortable stay and immersive experiences.



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Sara Consulting Services concludes three-city Finland - India Tourism Workshop 2026

The 2026 edition featured the largest-ever Finnish delegation for a tourism workshop in India, representing destination marketing, luxury hotels and resorts, DMCs, experience providers and tourism businesses. Over three days, Finnish partners engaged with leading Indian luxury travel advisors, tour operators, MICE specialists and media, creating new opportunities for business and collaboration. The workshop was also attended by travel agents from key Tier II and Tier III markets, including Pune, Kolkata, Indore, Raipur, Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Agra further strengthening Finland's outreach beyond the major metropolitan cities.



Ajman eyes stronger connect with Indian travel trade

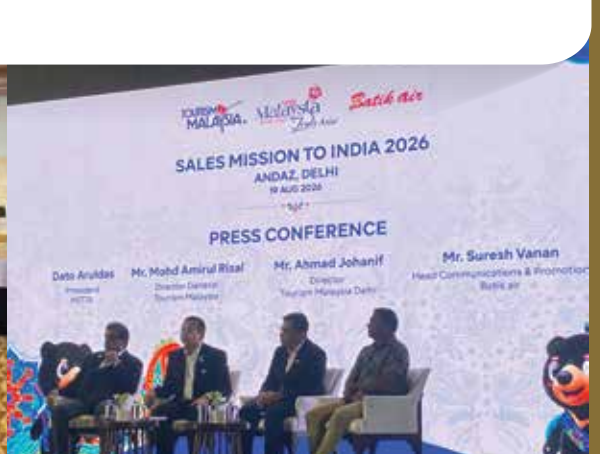
Ajman is stepping up its engagement with the Indian travel market, positioning the emirate as a destination that offers far more than a stopover in the UAE. The Ajman Department of Tourism, Culture and Media hosts an exclusive press interaction with H.E. Mahmood Khaleel Alhashmi, Director General, highlighting the emirate's growing tourism potential and its plans to deepen ties with India.





Tourism Malaysia strengthens India market engagement ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign

The sales mission brought together 47 Malaysian tourism stakeholders, comprising tour operators, hoteliers and airline partners, to strengthen trade partnerships, expand business opportunities and reinforce Malaysia's position as a preferred destination for Indian travellers. The programme also served as a platform for business-to-business (B2B) engagements, networking and the development of new travel opportunities between Malaysian and Indian tourism stakeholders.



Andhra Pradesh invites travel trade to unlock its next tourism growth story at 41st IATO Convention

Shri Kandula Durgesh, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Culture & Cinematography, Government of Andhra Pradesh, extends the invitation while addressing IATO members and the media in New Delhi in connection with the 41st IATO Annual Convention, to be held at Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach from 10th to 12th September 2026.



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APPOINTMENTS



Villa Resorts

Villa Resorts has appointed Pankaj Pandey as Cluster Senior Sales Manager – India, strengthening its sales leadership and market presence across India. Pankaj brings valuable experience to the role, having previously served as Cluster Sales Manager, and will now take on enhanced responsibilities to drive sales growth, strengthen trade relationships and expand Villa Resorts' engagement with the Indian travel market.



TIRUN Travel Marketing

TIRUN Travel Marketing appoints Dhriti Kapur as its Chief Business Officer (CBO). The appointment comes at a significant stage in the company's growth as it strengthens its leadership team to accelerate business expansion, deepen industry partnerships and unlock new opportunities across the travel ecosystem.



Raffles Udaipur

Raffles Udaipur announces the appointment of Henna Punjabi as Director of Marketing and Communications. In her new role, Henna will lead the hotel's marketing strategy, brand positioning, communications, digital initiatives, and strategic partnerships, further strengthening Raffles Udaipur's presence in the luxury hospitality landscape.



Hyatt Place Vithalapur

Hyatt Place Vithalapur, Gujarat, appoints Bhuwan Chandra as General Manager, reinforcing the hotel's continued commitment to operational excellence, guest satisfaction and sustainable business growth. In his new role as General Manager, Bhuwan will lead Hyatt Place Vithalapur into its next phase of growth, with a focus on enhancing guest satisfaction, strengthening operational efficiencies, driving commercial performance and further positioning the hotel as a preferred destination for business and leisure travellers from Gujarat and across India.

A new address at Villa Park, Maldives

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