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# Editor's Letter

Being in the travel profession means we're often immersed in a whirlpool of discussions, debates, and hot topics. Over time, I've come to realise how invaluable these exchanges are. They go beyond the 'trade gossip' that circulates, delving into the heart of our industry and revealing the passion and depth of involvement of each individual. It's eye-opening to see how vast and dynamic the travel industry is, and how much there is still to learn—even when we think we've mastered our niche.

Honestly, no matter how much we know, our industry is constantly evolving, influenced by factors as fundamental as the weather (let's not even get started on inflation!). Despite these changes, I've yet to meet someone who doesn't like travelling. To me, saying you don't like to travel is akin to saying you don't like to dream. Speaking of dreams, I recently lived one—not the California Dream, but my 'Seychelles Dream' with Club Med. This experience was truly transformative, offering insights that only solo travel can provide.

As you read about my adventures, you'll understand what I mean. My perspective on beach destinations has changed, and for the better. My time at Club Med Seychelles was the perfect respite after the hustle of ATM Dubai. Another hobby of mine is meeting new people and engaging in cultural conversations, and this trip provided ample opportunities for that.

In this issue, we've also covered the enchanting landscapes of Sri Lanka, the vibrant charm of Goa, and other exciting destinations that our team has explored. So, sit back, relax, and let these stories inspire your own travel dreams.

Do share your feedback at [bharti@travelturtle.world](mailto:bharti@travelturtle.world).

Happy Reading!



**Bharti Sharma**  
Editor

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### ***Saudi Tourism Authority hosts Two City experiential perfumery events in India***

The fragrances of roses wafted through the air at Essence of Saudi, immersive perfumery workshops held in Mumbai and Delhi hosted by the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA). The events showcased treasures of Saudi fragrances with a focus on the renowned roses from Taif, a city known for its perfumeries. It offered guests a unique opportunity to delve into the rich olfactory heritage of Saudi, the true home of Arabia. Over 60 guests, including luxury travel trade partners, top online travel agents, wholesalers, media, influencers, and travel bloggers, attended the workshops, a first-of-its-kind activation by STA across markets.



### ***Taiwan Tourism Administration concludes roadshow in Hyderabad and Bengaluru***

The Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA) has jumped into improving its appeal to the Indian market with great enthusiasm, making up for lost time. The tourist board recently wrapped up its multi-city road show, with the final leg ending in Bengaluru, India's very own Silicon Valley, on April 19, 2024. The roadshow began with OTM earlier this year and continued with B2B trade networking events in Delhi and Mumbai.



### ***IndiGo reinstates direct connectivity between Mumbai and Jabalpur***

IndiGo, India's preferred airline, has announced the recommencement of operations between Mumbai and Jabalpur, enhancing direct connectivity between these cities. This route not only strengthens tourism between the two popular destinations but also boosts vital business interactions. Starting July 01, 2024, these flights will operate daily, providing customers with an extended range of flight options to enhance accessibility and facilitate seamless travel.



### ***The Fern Hotels & Resorts strengthens its presence in Western India***

The Fern Hotels & Resorts, India's leading environmentally sensitive hotel chain announces the launch of 3 new hotels – The Fern Residency, Gandhinagar and The Fern Wisteria Resort, Dhari in Gujarat and The Fern Residency, Bhiwandi-Pimples in Maharashtra. The company has a total of 27 properties in Gujarat and 28 across Maharashtra, operational and shortly opening. The addition of these new properties marks a significant milestone in the group's expansion strategy, reinforcing the brand's leadership position in these key markets and underlining its commitment to exemplary guest experiences.





**Meliá Hotels International and Vietnam Airlines signs a significant MoU**

Meliá Hotels International, represented by Outbound Marketing in India, signs an MOU with Vietnam Airlines, marking milestone collaboration. Meliá Hotels International, the renowned Spanish hotel chain, has over 400 properties across 43 countries and four continents, including the luxurious seafront retreat, Meliá Nha Trang, in Vietnam. Launched in July 2023, Meliá Nha Trang is the first Gran Meliá property in Vietnam and features 94 private pool villas, lavish wellness amenities with gorgeous ocean views, and a culinary experience par excellence.



**VFS Global, along with MoT and TAAI hosts a B2B Incredible India evening in Dubai**

In a collaborative effort supported by The Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of India, The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and VFS Global successfully host a B2B Incredible India Evening – ‘Fostering Partnerships and Connections’ on 8th May 2024 at Taj Dubai. This exclusive event brought together key industry professionals to foster partnerships and connections within the travel and tourism sector, with a primary focus on driving tourism visitor ship to India.



**MoT showcases India as a premier global hub for MICE activities at IMEX, Frankfurt 2024**

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India participates in IMEX, Frankfurt from 14th -16th May 2024. The Ministry of Tourism showcases the strengths of India as a leading MICE destination to the global market and acts as a catalyst to bring forth greater number of Conferences and Conventions hosted in the country. IMEX is a hub for the global events industry, which offers a valuable and lucrative opportunity for professionals to enhance businesses, foster genuine connections, and gain invaluable insights.



**Saudia Group announces Hajj Season 2024 Plan**

Saudia Group announces its operational plan for Hajj Season 2024, aimed at facilitating the transportation of pilgrims from around the world, streamlining all procedures and providing top-notch services at various service locations. Over 1.2 million seats have been allocated through optimal investment in its fleet of more than 150 aircraft, distinguished by operational efficiency and quality services. This initiative is in line with the directives of Saudi leadership, supported by collaboration with various entities involved in serving Hajj pilgrims.



**Jumeirah unveils new brand identity as part of their growth journey**

Jumeirah unveils its new brand identity marking a key milestone in its growth strategy to double the size of the portfolio by 2030. The new visual identity is the first stage in a journey of brand evolution designed to inspire a new perspective of luxury for discerning travellers. Building on its origins and reputation for generous hospitality, the move will see Jumeirah reaffirm its position as an industry pioneer, with curated experiences that shape perceptions and trends.



**IRIS Reps announces Tisya Stays' expansion into hill stations**

IRIS Reps announces the latest expansion of Tisya Stays into the picturesque hill stations of Mukteshwar, marking a significant milestone for the hospitality brand. Following its successful partnership with Homes & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy, Tisya Stays continues to expand its footprint, now offering exquisite chalet accommodations in the serene hills.



**AI Based Travel & Expense Management Tool**



**QuadLabs showcases Travog 2.0 at ATM Dubai 2024**

QuadLabs, with a team of over 25+ years of travel industry experience in developing corporate travel solutions, announces the next generation of Travog 2.0, and its latest Expense Management solution. Travog 2.0 provides a new AI based personalization engine with dynamic offers and recommendations for travellers based upon their preferences, company policies and past booking history. It brings a bouquet of products together which can be booked and managed in the same tool. With extensive expense management capability, corporates can now manage budgets and approvals seamlessly on the platform.



**Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board targets international tourists at GITB**

In an effort to make the tourist graph more buoyant, the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board had broad ranging deliberations on partnering with various global stakeholders at the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) in Jaipur. GITB was organised in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) from May 5 to 7.





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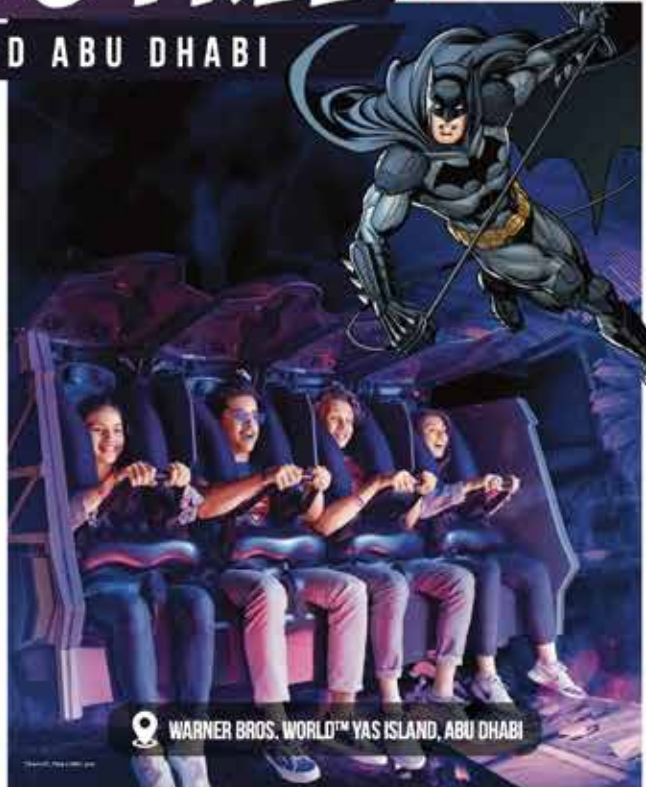


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# JOURNEY THROUGH TIME THE FASCINATING WORLD OF GEOTOURISM

Geotourism, a portmanteau of 'geography' and 'tourism', is a niche segment that emphasises visiting geological features and engaging with the Earth's natural landscapes. Unlike traditional tourism, which often focuses on cultural and recreational activities, geotourism is rooted in the appreciation and understanding of geological formations, processes, and the environments that shape our planet. This burgeoning field not only promotes environmental stewardship but also offers unique and enriching travel experiences.

- *Bharti Sharma*





## EXPLORING PLANET EARTH'S GEOLOGY

Geotourism is defined by its focus on geological features, such as mountains, volcanoes, caves, and fossil beds. These natural attractions provide insight into Earth's history and the dynamic processes that continue to shape its surface. Geotourism encourages travellers to explore and learn about these features in a way that is educational, engaging, and sustainable. One of the cornerstones of geotourism is the concept of 'sense of place'. This refers to the distinctive characteristics that make a location unique, including its geological formations, ecosystems, and cultural heritage. By fostering a deeper connection to these places, geotourism helps to cultivate a sense of responsibility and respect for natural and cultural resources.

## FROM CANYONS TO VOLCANOES: THE ALLURE OF GEOTOURISM DESTINATIONS

• **The Grand Canyon, USA:** The Grand Canyon, located in Arizona, is one of the most iconic geotourism destinations in the world. Carved by the Colorado River over millions of years, this natural wonder exposes nearly two billion years of Earth's geological history. Visitors can explore the canyon through hiking, rafting, and educational programs offered by the National Park Service.

• **Jeju Island, South Korea:** Jeju Island is renowned for its volcanic landscapes, including Hallasan Mountain and the Manjanggul Lava Tube. As a UNESCO Global Geopark, Jeju offers a range of geotourism activities, from guided tours of volcanic features to educational exhibits on the island's geological history.

### • The Dolomites, Italy:

The Dolomites, a mountain range in northeastern Italy, are celebrated for their dramatic peaks and unique rock formations. These mountains, formed from ancient coral reefs, offer a wealth of geotourism opportunities, including hiking, climbing, and visiting geological museums.

### WADI RUM, JORDAN

Wadi Rum, also known as the Valley of the Moon, is a stunning desert landscape characterized by towering sandstone and granite rock formations. This UNESCO World Heritage site offers geotourism experiences such as guided jeep tours, rock climbing, and cultural exchanges with local Bedouin communities.

## DISCOVERING NATURE'S GEOLOGICAL WONDERS

### • Iceland's Geothermal Wonders

Iceland's unique geological features, including geysers, hot springs, and volcanic landscapes, have made it a hotspot for geotourism. The Blue Lagoon, a geothermal spa, attracts over 700,000 visitors annually. This influx of tourists has significantly boosted Iceland's economy, but it has also raised concerns about environmental sustainability. To address these issues, Iceland has implemented strict regulations on visitor numbers and promotes eco-friendly practices among tour operators.

### • The Geoparks of China

China has established numerous geoparks, such as the Zhangjiajie Sandstone Peak Forest Geopark and the Danxia Landform Geological Park, to protect its unique geological heritage. These geoparks not only attract millions of tourists each year but also provide educational opportunities and support local economies. The success of these geoparks has prompted China to expand its network, with a focus on sustainable tourism practices that minimize environmental impact.





**SPECIALISED GEOTOURS AND TOUR OPERATORS**

Several specialised tour operators cater to geotourists, offering a range of experiences designed to educate and inspire. Companies like Geotours and Geoworld Travel provide guided tours to geological sites, led by experts in the field. These tours often include lectures, hands-on activities, and opportunities to explore off-the-beaten-path locations.

For example, Geoworld Travel offers a 'Volcanoes of Italy' tour, which takes participants to active and extinct volcanoes, including Mount Etna and Vesuvius. These tours provide a deep dive into the geological processes that shape our planet, offering a unique and immersive travel experience.

**THE GROWING INTEREST IN GEOTOURISM**

The appeal of geotourism lies in its ability to combine adventure, education, and environmental stewardship. Many travellers are drawn to the idea of exploring Earth's natural wonders while gaining a deeper understanding of the planet's geological history. Additionally, geotourism often involves visiting remote and pristine locations, offering a sense of escape and connection to nature that is increasingly valued in our fast-paced, technology-driven world. Furthermore, geotourism

supports local economies by creating jobs and promoting sustainable development. By emphasizing the importance of preserving geological sites, geotourism helps to ensure that these natural treasures are protected for future generations.

**SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF GEOTOURISM SITES**

To maintain geotourism sites sustainably, several best practices should be followed:

- Implementing Visitor Management Plans-** Effective visitor management plans are crucial for minimizing the environmental impact of tourism. This includes regulating visitor numbers, providing educational materials, and designing infrastructure that minimizes ecological disruption.
- Promoting Responsible Tourism Practices-** Tour operators and visitors should be encouraged to follow responsible tourism practices, such as minimizing waste, respecting wildlife, and staying on designated trails. Education

and awareness campaigns can help to instill these values in both tourists and local communities.

- Supporting conservation efforts-** Revenue generated from geotourism should be reinvested into conservation efforts, such as habitat restoration, scientific research, and community development. This ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably and contribute to the long-term preservation of geological sites.

- Engaging local communities-** Local communities play a vital role in the success of geotourism initiatives. By involving them in the planning and management of tourism activities, and ensuring they receive a fair share of the economic benefits, geotourism can foster a sense of ownership and pride in local heritage.

Geotourism offers a unique and enriching way to explore the natural world, combining adventure, education, and environmental stewardship. By promoting sustainable tourism practices and supporting local communities, geotourism can help to protect our planet's geological heritage for future generations. Whether it's marveling at the grandeur of the Grand Canyon, exploring the volcanic landscapes of Iceland, or discovering the ancient rock formations of the Dolomites, geotourism provides a window into the dynamic and ever-changing nature of our Earth.





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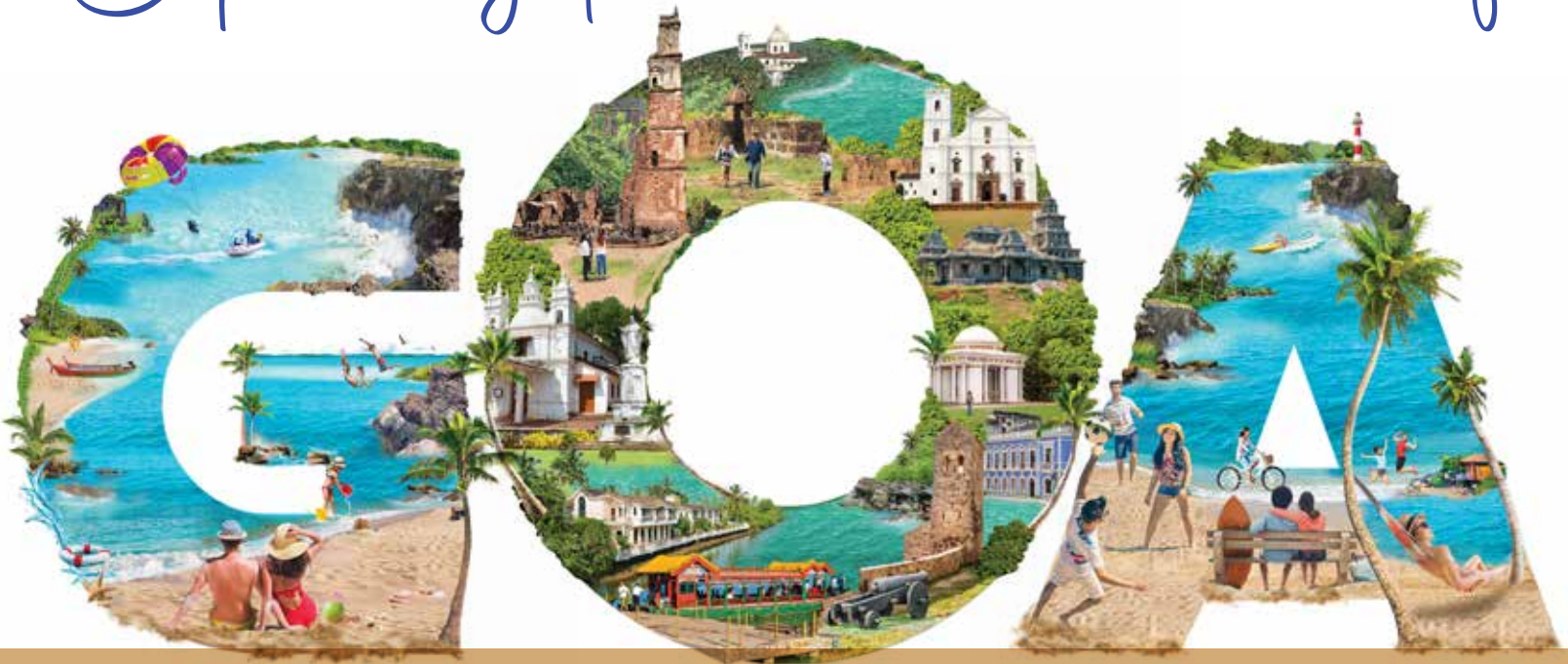
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# TOURISM



Shri Sanjeev Ahuja

Goa has long been synonymous with pristine beaches, vibrant nightlife, and a rich colonial history. However, in a bid to diversify its appeal and ensure long-term sustainability, the Department of Tourism, Government of Goa, is redefining its approach to tourism. **Shri Sanjeev Ahuja, IAS, Secretary Tourism, Goa** shares insights on the transformative journey of the state.

- *Tripti Jain*





## INDIAN SAGA

Goa, India's coastal gem, entices travellers with its sun-kissed beaches, vibrant nightlife, and rich Portuguese heritage. Immerse yourself in its lively markets, savor delectable seafood, and experience serene backwaters. From historic forts to electrifying festivals, Goa offers a perfect blend of relaxation and adventure, making it an unforgettable destination.

### *From beaches to hinterlands*

Goa's new tourism strategy focuses on the untapped potential of its hinterlands. While the beaches of Goa have always been a major draw, the state's interior regions are rich with forests, waterfalls, and picturesque landscapes. "We want to promote Goa as a hinterland tourism destination. The hinterland has lots of forests and waterfalls that offer a different kind of charm and adventure for tourists. This shift aims to provide a more holistic experience, encouraging visitors to explore the lesser-known natural beauty of Goa," says Shri Sanjeev Ahuja.

The hinterland tourism initiative also includes promoting eco-friendly activities such as trekking, bird watching, and nature walks. This approach not only helps in spreading the tourist footprint but also supports local communities through sustainable tourism practices. By highlighting these areas, Goa hopes to attract adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers, thereby reducing the pressure on its coastal regions.

### *A journey of tranquility and reverence*

In addition to its natural beauty, Goa is rich in spiritual heritage. Known for its majestic churches, the state is now also focusing on promoting its beautiful temples. Shri Sanjeev Ahuja shares, "Goa is known for its churches, which is great, but we also have beautiful temples that have been renovated and made more

accessible. This initiative aims to offer a serene and reflective experience for visitors seeking spiritual solace."

Spiritual tourism in Goa includes guided tours to ancient temples and churches, meditation retreats, and yoga workshops. These activities are designed to cater to tourists looking for peace and spiritual enrichment. By showcasing both its Christian and Hindu heritage, Goa is positioning itself as a destination that offers a harmonious blend of different religious traditions, attracting pilgrims and spiritual seekers from around the world.





## *Savouring the Flavours of Goa*

Goa's culinary scene is a vibrant tapestry of flavours influenced by its diverse cultural history. The Department of Tourism is keen on promoting the state's local cuisine to a broader audience. "We are promoting the local cuisine, which is a unique blend of flavours that reflect our rich cultural heritage. From the spicy vindaloo to the sweet bebinca, Goan cuisine offers a delightful culinary journey," shares Shri Sanjeev Ahuja.

Local food festivals and cooking classes are being organised to provide tourists with an immersive experience. These events not only highlight traditional Goan dishes but also support local chefs and food producers. By focusing on culinary tourism, Goa aims to attract food enthusiasts and gourmards, offering them an opportunity to explore and savour the unique flavours that the state has to offer.



## *Reviving traditions*

Goa is also placing a significant emphasis on reviving and promoting its cultural heritage through local festivals. These festivals are an integral part of Goan culture, showcasing its music, dance, and traditional arts. Shri Sanjeev Ahuja tells us, "We are organising Goa local festivals and promoting our traditions to regenerate our culture. These events provide tourists with a deeper understanding of Goa's rich cultural fabric."

From the vibrant Carnival to the serene Shigmo, these festivals offer a glimpse into the traditional lifestyle and artistic expressions of the Goan people. By promoting such cultural events, Goa aims to create a more engaging and enriching experience for visitors, encouraging them to connect with the local culture and traditions.





## INDIAN SAGA

### *A comprehensive tourism strategy*

Goa's comprehensive tourism strategy aims to cater to a wide range of tourist preferences. Whether its adventure tourism, cultural experiences, or spiritual retreats, the state offers a diverse bouquet of activities. Shri Sanjeev Ahuja, "We basically want to give a bouquet to the tourists that they can enjoy other things as well. This inclusive approach ensures that Goa remains a versatile and attractive destination for all types of travellers."

Efforts are also being made to extend the average stay of tourists. He adds, "We want tourists to stay longer, ideally four or five nights, and we are

offering a variety of activities to make their stay more engaging. By providing a mix of experiences, we aim to enhance tourist satisfaction and encourage repeat visits, which are crucial for the sustained growth of the tourism sector."

### *A sustainable and inclusive future*

Goa's new tourism strategy, focused on regenerative and sustainable practices, marks a significant shift in its approach to attracting visitors. By promoting its hinterlands, spiritual sites, culinary heritage, and cultural festivals, the state is diversifying its appeal and ensuring that

tourism benefits are widely shared among local communities. As Shri Sanjeev Ahuja, IAS, Secretary Tourism, aptly puts it, "We want to regenerate our culture and traditions while offering a rich and diverse experience for tourists."

This holistic approach not only aims to attract a broader spectrum of tourists but also ensures the preservation of Goa's natural and cultural heritage. By embracing sustainable tourism practices, Goa is paving the way for a future where tourism thrives in harmony with the environment and local communities. As Goa continues to evolve as a tourist destination, it remains committed to offering an enriching and sustainable experience for all who visit.





THE BENCHMARK STORY  
OF LUXURY TRAVEL

# HEAVENS PORTFOLIO

Heavens Portfolio redefines the essence of luxury travel, offering and curating transformative experiences for their clients as they go beyond mere destinations and properties. Christine Galle Luczak, Founder & CEO, Heavens Portfolio shares how the company has a rolodex of the most exquisite luxury brands under its umbrella, ensuring a representation style like no other.

- *Bharti Sharma*





The luxury travel industry is constantly evolving, driven by innovation and the changing preferences of travellers. Heavens Portfolio's unique approach in representing the luxury travel space creates a significant path for the company.

### **A UNIQUE PATH FOR HOSPITALITY REPRESENTATION**

The philosophy of representing brands that provide transformative experiences has become the cornerstone of Heavens Portfolio's success. Christine Galle Luczak's entry into the travel and hospitality sector was anything but conventional. She shares, "I started in the industry from a unique angle, focusing on wellness properties about 25 years ago." This initial focus on representing wellness industry gave her a distinct perspective on hospitality, emphasising the human aspect over mere accommodation. "This approach was very human-centric as we were selling experiences that could change people's lives, not just hotel rooms," she explains.

### **AN UNEXPECTED BEGINNING**

The establishment of Heavens Portfolio was not part of a grand plan but rather an unexpected turn of events. Christine shares the story behind the conceptualisation of Heavens Portfolio and shares, "I was preparing to leave my role at Chiva-Som to get married when an unexpected opportunity arose. The owner of Chiva-Som suggested I start my own company and offered to be my first client. That's how my company started about 20 years ago. This serendipity led to the birth of Heavens Portfolio, which has been curating luxury travel experiences since then."

### **CURATING AN ILLUSTRIOUS PORTFOLIO**

Building a portfolio of marketing luxury properties is no small feat, but Christine's approach has always been rooted in passion

and organic growth. She shares, "Our industry is small and abuzz with information, which is the reason we've built our portfolio organically through passion and commitment. We have thrived on our word-of-mouth recommendations from clients who appreciate our unique approach. This has helped us handpick niche hotels and operators. This method has allowed us to curate some of the most exquisite and exclusive properties worldwide."

**Christine Galle Luczak**

### **INDIA'S LUXURY TRAVEL TRANSFORMATION**

India has always been a significant market for Heavens Portfolio, and Christine has seen it evolve dramatically over the years. "India was one of my first markets, launched alongside China about 16 years ago. Initially, India was overshadowed by China due to its last-minute booking culture and other factors. However, in the past few years, the dynamics have shifted, making India shine bright. The industry's perception of India has transformed, recognising the market's passion for travel and willingness to explore unique experiences. This transformation has positioned India as a crucial player in the global luxury travel market," explains Christine. Christine's experience with the Indian market gives her a unique





## PUBLIC EYE

perspective on their dynamics. "India is now more accepting of higher rates, driven by well-travelled, knowledgeable, and tech savvy new generations. Over the past 15 years, the Indian market has evolved significantly, with travellers seeking unique and off-the-beaten-path experiences and willing to pay for the luxurious experience. This shift reflects a broader trend towards experiential travel, where value is placed on unique and enriching experiences," she shares.

### STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Understanding the nuances of the Indian market has been the key to Heavens Portfolio's success. Christine highlights several critical factors, including

the importance of family travel, honeymoons, and weddings and shares, "Emphasising cultural aspects, food, and engagement is crucial. Additionally, leveraging technology and maintaining an elaborate social media presence is vital." Furthermore, she adds, "We educate our clients to understand India's diversity, from dietary preferences to cultural nuances. This comprehensive approach ensures that Heavens Portfolio can effectively cater to the diverse needs of Indian travellers."

### LEGACY: PASSING THE BATON

Looking ahead, Heavens Portfolio has ambitious plans for expansion and diversification.

"We are expanding in the Middle East, having merged with the Travel Portfolio, and are hiring more talent. The company aims to grow in various segments, including representing F&B brands and will place a strong emphasis on technology and marketing. India will continue to be a key driver in their growth strategy, reflecting its importance as a diverse and extensive travel market," shares Christine.

Christine's long-term vision for the company is deeply personal and forward-looking. She hopes to pass the company on to her daughter, who has been travelling with her since she was a baby. Her vision is to maintain a strong human factor in the company and ensure that they

continue to have fun while sharing their passion for hospitality representation.

Her journey in the luxury travel industry is an example of the power of passion, innovation, and a human-centric approach. From her unique entry into the wellness property sector to building an illustrious portfolio and navigating the evolving Indian market, Christine's insights provide a valuable roadmap for success. As Heavens Portfolio continues to expand and adapt to new trends, its commitment to helping brands offering transformative experiences remains unwavering. Heavens Portfolio is well-positioned to embrace the future and continue setting new benchmarks in the luxury travel industry.





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HEADS IN BEDS

A SENSORY JOURNEY AT

# Club Med Seychelles

Club Med Seychelles is nothing short of the heart of paradise, an ideal haven for the discerning traveller seeking an unforgettable fusion of nature and hospitality. Dive into the crystal-clear waters for a snorkelling adventure with sea turtles, or indulge in plethora of activities they have to offer. This resort promises the ultimate tropical escape, where every moment is a blend of adventure and luxury.

- *Bharti Sharma*





## HEADS IN BEDS



It's not often in life that you discover a resort that genuinely feels like a home away from home, but Club Med Seychelles achieved that for me. Why do I call it a home away from home? Because the unparalleled comfort, personalised attention, and genuine warmth I received during my stay were simply extraordinary. Seychelles, a dream destination for countless travellers with its unique allure. Club Med, celebrated for its prime locations across the globe, has truly exceeded expectations with this exceptional gem.

### Unravelling surprises at every turn

Despite all the meticulous research I did online before my stay, nothing could have truly prepared me for the enchanting magic of Club Med Seychelles.

Nestled on the private Saint Anne Island within a protected national marine park, just a short and scenic boat trip from Mahé, this resort is perfectly positioned in paradise. As a lover of the jungle, beach, and mountains, I found this destination to be the ultimate fulfilment of all my vacation dreams.

Right off the bat, you'll notice something unique – no room keys. Instead, you wear a band throughout your stay that doubles as your room key. "It's like wearing a Wonder Woman band with superpowers!" I mused as I put mine on. My room had a stunning view with trees reaching up to my third-floor balcony and a vast expanse of ocean beyond. It was like living in a treehouse by the sea.

### Authentic Interactions

Arshley, our charming GO (Gentil

Organisateur), personally greeted us with cocktails, a champagne reception, and a smile that could light up the entire resort. From the moment we arrived, she and her fellow GOs went above and beyond to ensure our stay was perfect and comfortable. Most of my meals were shared with GOs, and engaging in delightful conversations with them made me feel deeply connected to the property.

At Club Med, I wasn't just a guest; I was a GM (Gentils Membres). I was immersed in an environment curated to make everything feel personalised and special. Club Med is all about fostering real connections. "It's not your typical, stereotypical hospitality brand. It's genuine and focused on creating real interactions," Arshley told me during one of our chats. This emphasis on authentic relationships set the resort apart

and made my stay truly unforgettable.

### Something for Everybody

The constant elements at the resort were their unparalleled hospitality, endless fun, and dynamic engagement. My days at Club Med Seychelles were never the same. The property buzzes with vibrant energy, with parties lighting up the beach, restaurants, and pool. The food is incredible, but don't worry about overindulging – Pilates, yoga, aqua gym, and cardio will keep you fit. Whether you're with your partner, family, or friends, there are great bonding activities, from hikes and sailing to sunset kayaking and archery. "There's always something new to try!" exclaimed a fellow guest I met at yoga. The variety of activities ensures everyone finds their perfect slice of paradise.





## HEADS IN BEDS

### Not just an island, but world of experiences

The resort is vast, and you can always use a buggy when you're all decked up for dinners and amazing beach parties, but consider taking walks because it's so lush and green. The buggies are driven by GOs, and I often found my snorkelling instructor or gym instructor driving them, making for interesting conversations. "It's like everyone here wears multiple hats," I joked with one of the GOs.

The My Club Med app made it easy for me to plan my day with

activities that piqued my interest. They have a dress code for every night, so download the app before your travel to pack accordingly. Even if you forget something, you can buy it from the resort. I got myself an amazing Club Med shirt celebrating the brand's 45th anniversary. "Best souvenir ever!" I laughed as I showed it off.

### Enchanting experience on the ground as well as Underwater

Exploring Club Med Seychelles was a journey of enchantment both on land and underwater. Active hikes

unveiled breathtaking views, offering a variety of trails to suit every adventurer. For a gentler start to the day, leisurely morning walks around the island provided moments to soak in nature's finest. Sporting enthusiasts found delight in the full-size tennis courts, prompting one guest to jest, "Who knew I'd play tennis in paradise?"

Make sure to capture moments with the resort's VVIPs – Beyoncé, Shakira, and Coco. These gentle giants add a touch of whimsy and wonder to

your Seychelles experience.

Snorkelling at Club Med Seychelles was an unparalleled highlight. Guided by experienced and accommodating staff, we delved into the vibrant marine world where fish darted among stunning coral formations. The pinnacle of this experience was encountering a curious sea turtle, its graceful glide capturing our hearts for the entire 45 minutes underwater. "This feels surreal," I whispered, completely absorbed by the mesmerising beauty beneath the waves.





## HEADS IN BEDS



### **Savouring the exquisite cuisine**

Indulging at Club Med Seychelles is a journey through culinary excellence. As an all-inclusive resort, it caters to every desire, whether lounging on the beach with cocktails, perfecting your aqua gym skills, or savouring exquisite cuisine. Beyond the main restaurant, Turtle Cove, which offers an international buffet, and The Reef Beach Lounge, each dish is a testament to freshness and local sourcing, highlighting a variety of fish, including the daily catch.

The live Italian counter is a standout, offering freshly baked pizzas and pastas with new flavours daily. The expansive menu

ensures there's something for every palate, from vibrant salads to bespoke dishes tailored to your dietary preferences. "Every meal is a culinary adventure," I enthused, marvelling at the diversity and quality of each dining experience. Reflecting on my transformative journey at Club Med Seychelles, I find myself overwhelmed by the depth of emotions stirred by this remarkable experience. The seamless blend of French sophistication and Seychellois warmth enveloped me from the moment I arrived. Each day unfolded like a cherished chapter in a storybook, filled with vibrant activities and moments of quiet awe amidst the island's natural splendour.

### **Leaving as a Club Med Loyal**

Hans Christian Andersen once wrote, 'To travel is to live', and never have these words rung truer than during my time here. The days passed in a blur of exploration and relaxation, leaving me yearning for more. The connections forged with fellow travellers and the attentive staff, epitomised by the thoughtful gestures of the GOs, made me feel not just welcomed, but truly at home.

As I bid farewell to this sanctuary, I couldn't help but feel a pang of longing. The memories of snorkelling amidst kaleidoscopic marine life, indulging in exquisite cuisine at Turtle Cove, and gazing

at breathtaking sunsets over Sainte Anne Island will forever be etched in my heart. Club Med Seychelles isn't just a resort; it's a sanctuary where adventure, tranquillity, and luxury converge seamlessly.

In short, Club Med Seychelles offers an unparalleled eco-chic retreat, perfect for families and adventurers alike. It's a haven where every moment is crafted to inspire and rejuvenate, leaving you with cherished memories and a profound sense of belonging. Leaving this paradise, I departed not only as a guest but as part of a cherished community—a testament to the enduring magic of this extraordinary destination.





# Left a piece of my heart in Sri Lanka!

Sri Lanka, a beautiful island where green hills meet blue oceans, and the friendly people, rich culture, and stunning scenery help you to create a memorable journey. The destination is a must on everybody's bucket list. Join me as I take you through this amazing land, filled with exciting adventures and unforgettable moments. Every part of Sri Lanka tells a wonderful story.

- *Tripti Jain*





## TRAVEL THERAPY

Arriving in Sri Lanka was like stepping into a lush, verdant dream. The flight journey was no less than a relaxation in itself. As we reached the Delhi airport, a pleasant surprise of our seats upgraded as business class was waiting for us. With an exclusive meal and comfortable seats, the journey went too quickly as I dozed off looking at the beautiful clouds enveloping our SriLankan Airlines airplane. As our flight touched down, I felt a sense of anticipation and excitement that would only grow as we began our six-day exploration of this beautiful island. Organised by SriLankan Airlines, SriLankan Holidays, and the ever-accommodating Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, our journey promised a blend of luxury, adventure, and cultural immersion. This was my first visit to Sri Lanka, and I was eager to experience the hospitality, breath-taking landscapes, and vibrant culture

that had long intrigued me.

### A warm welcome!

We landed in Colombo in the morning and were swept by the warm welcome and twinkling raindrops opening arms for the journey ahead. From the moment we exited the airport, the warmth and friendliness of the Sri Lankan people were evident. Representatives from Cinnamon Hotels greeted us with broad smiles and refreshing drinks, setting the tone for the days to come. Immediately after entering the Cinnamon Grand Colombo, we were excited about the relaxing spa and massage at NIJA. Our home for the first day was the elegant Cinnamon Grand Colombo. After a brief rest, we headed to NIJA for a luxury wellness treatment. This spa, renowned for its holistic therapies, was the perfect introduction to Sri Lankan relaxation. The experience was

rejuvenating, setting a serene tone for the rest of our journey.

### Exploring Colombo and evening festivities

After a much-needed session of relaxation and rejuvenation, we headed to Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo for a sumptuous lunch at Long Feng Restaurant, where the flavours of Sri Lankan and Chinese cuisine melded beautifully. Props to the chef who curated a special Indo-Chinese meal for us. Our afternoon was dedicated to shopping, where we explored local markets and high-end boutiques, discovering home-grown brands and unique souvenirs. In the evening, SriLankan Airlines hosted cocktails at the Breeze Bar, a delightful prelude to our dinner at Chutneys Indian Restaurant. The blend of traditional Sri Lankan dishes with Indian flavours was a culinary highlight, and the company of

media peers and local hosts made for engaging conversations. The evening was a fun soiree of tales and stories about one another's experience in Sri Lanka. Exhausted yet exhilarated, we retired to the comfortable and spacious rooms of Cinnamon Grand.

### Nature trails and wildlife wonders

Our second day began with an early departure to Beddagana Wetland Park. Despite the early hour, the journey was invigorating as we anticipated the beauty that awaited us. The park did not disappoint; it was a haven for birdwatchers. Guided by knowledgeable naturalists, we spotted numerous bird species while learning about the park's ecosystem. The most exciting part of the journey was the company and little fishes guiding our way as we explored the nature reserve.





**Natural wonders amidst rain!**

After a hearty breakfast at Plates Restaurant and checking out, we embarked on a four-hour journey to Cinnamon Habarana Lodge. The drive was a feast for the eyes, with rolling landscapes, verdant forests, and occasional glimpses of wildlife. To our surprise we spotted elephants on the road plucking leaves from the trees and giving us poses as we tried to capture them on our phones.

Upon arriving at Cinnamon Lodge Habarana, we were treated to a delicious lunch at the restaurant before setting out for an afternoon safari. Elephants have been my favourite animal since childhood, so the excitement was palpating. Not to give any spoiler alerts, but this safari was one of the best I've ever been on. We visited Minneriya Wildlife Park, famed for its elephant gatherings. As soon as we entered the park it started raining cats and dogs, and being the adventurous and impulsive bunch of travellers, we decided to make the most of it and enjoy the safari with pouring rain showers. Watching these majestic creatures in their natural habitat was a humbling experience, and the rain made it all the more beautiful. We saw a cluster of elephants proudly walking in search of green leaves flaunting their trunks in the rain.

Drenched in rain we headed back to the lodge for an evening of amazement and delicious delicacies. Dinner that night was accompanied by a cultural show, showcasing traditional Sri Lankan dance and music. The vibrant performances added a touch of magic to the evening, leaving us enthralled.

**Historical treks and coastal beauty**

On day three we wore our trekking shoes and climbed to visit the Dambulla Cave Temple. The temple, a UNESCO World

Heritage site, was a marvel of Buddhist art and architecture. Our guide shared fascinating stories about its history and significance, enhancing our appreciation of the site. The journey up and down the hill was serene and heart-warming with drizzling rain.

Post-exploration, we travelled to Trincomalee, a scenic drive that took approximately two hours. We arrived at Trinco Blu by Cinnamon just in time for lunch at Captain's Deck Restaurant. The coastal town of Trincomalee is known for its stunning beaches and historical sites, and we were eager to explore.

Our afternoon included visits to Fort Fredrick and Koneswaram Temple. The fort, with its colonial history and panoramic views, was captivating. Koneswaram Temple, perched atop a cliff, offered breath-taking views of the Indian Ocean and a deep sense of spirituality. Overlooking the ocean, the temple was a vision to behold.

After the exhausting yet spiritual day we were back for dinner at the Habarana Village by Cinnamon, with a menu that delighted the senses and conversations that lingered late into the night.

**Gardens and forts of the South**

Our fourth day began with breakfast at the lodge before departing for Bentota. The four-hour drive was scenic, and as we neared the coast, the landscape shifted to reveal palm-fringed beaches and turquoise waters. Not to forget our constant companion in Sri Lanka, the rains.

We checked into Cinnamon Bentota Beach and enjoyed a leisurely lunch at Ottimo Restaurant. We visited Galle Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The fort's colonial architecture, cobblestone streets, and eclectic boutiques made for a charming exploration. The streets of Galle

reminded me of some little town where fairy tales were written. The fort had a majestic history enveloped by stories of war, defeat, and wins along the way. Returning to Cinnamon Bentota Beach, we were treated to cocktails and a splendid dinner.

The relaxed atmosphere, combined with the gentle sound of the ocean waves, made for a perfect evening. The hospitality of Cinnamon Hotels was exemplary, with attentive service and delicious food enhancing our experience.







## Art Tour and Mangrove Boat Ride

Our penultimate day started with breakfast at Ottimo Restaurant, followed by an art tour of the property. Guided by the in-house art curator, we delved into the architectural influence of Geoffrey Bawa, whose designs are iconic in Sri Lanka. The tour highlighted the seamless blend of modernist architecture with traditional Sri Lankan elements.

Next, we embarked on a mangrove boat ride. The tranquil waters and lush mangroves provided a serene escape, and our guide shared insights into the local ecosystem. For those inclined towards adventure, water sports were an option, and being an adventure enthusiast, I hopped on the disco ride and bumped along the lake laughing my heart out.

Lunch was served at Cinnamon Bey Beruwala, where the food and

hospitality won our hearts. The rest of the afternoon was designated for leisure back at Cinnamon Bentota Beach. Some of us took this opportunity to relax by the pool, while others were catching up on their work and relaxing with the waves of the beach.

## Farewell to Sri Lanka

Our final dinner at Ottimo Restaurant was a fitting end to the day. We shared stories and laughter, reflecting on the experiences that had made this trip so special.

Then came our last morning in Sri Lanka which began with breakfast at Ottimo Restaurant. As we packed our bags and prepared for departure, there was a palpable sense of reluctance to leave. Reflecting on the trip, it was clear that Sri Lanka had exceeded all expectations. The natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and warm

hospitality had made a lasting impression. Special thanks are due to SriLankan Airlines, SriLankan Holidays, and Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts for their exceptional organisation and service. Their meticulous planning and gracious hospitality ensured that our first experience in Sri Lanka was nothing short of magical.

## A Journey to Remember

From the moment we arrived until our final departure, Sri Lanka captivated us with its charm and beauty. The lush landscapes, historical sites, and vibrant culture provided endless fascination, while the people's warmth and friendliness made us feel at home. This trip, marked by luxury and adventure, left an indelible mark on all who experienced it.

As we boarded our flight back home, I carried with me not just memories of breath-taking vistas and

exhilarating adventures, but also a deep appreciation for the spirit of Sri Lanka and the wonderful friends I made through the journey. It is a land where the past and present coexist harmoniously, where nature's beauty is celebrated, and where hospitality is a way of life. This journey had been more than a mere travel experience; it was a profound exploration of a country that beckons to be revisited.

Sri Lanka is a destination that offers something for every traveller. Whether it's the thrill of wildlife safaris, the serenity of wellness treatments, the allure of historical sites, or the simple joy of a beautiful beach, this island nation delivers in spades. This trip was an example of the power of travel, not only to show us the world but also to connect us more deeply to it. I look forward to the day I can return to Sri Lanka, a country that has truly touched my heart.







# Mr. Chang Wook Jung

Executive Director, Korea MICE Bureau at  
Korea Tourism Organization



# The wave of increasing MICE travel from Korea

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) recently conducted a MICE-focused roadshow in India, aiming to fortify ties and showcase Korea's burgeoning potential as a premier destination for MICE. Chang Wook Jung, Executive Director, Korea MICE Bureau, KTO shares his experience with India's vibrant travel trade sector.

- Naina Nath





## OFFSHORE BINOCULAR

Whether it is Korean dramas, skincare or tourism, Indians love exploring the Korean ways of living. Korea is an important travel market for Indians. The growing MICE market in Korea from India is a testament to that. With a strategic focus on India, the key emerging market, the roadshow held significant promise for fostering mutually beneficial partnerships.

### Setting the Stage

India's significance in the global tourism landscape is unmistakable. Chang shares, "In 2023, Korea welcomed 122,771 arrivals from India, reflecting a resilient trend despite external challenges. However, the figures for 2019, with 143,367 arrivals, underscored the potential for growth and the need for strategic initiatives. Against this backdrop, KTO set an ambitious target for 2024, aiming for 200,000 overall arrivals with a specific focus on MICE, targeting 20,000 delegates."

### Mumbai: A Nexus for MICE business

The roadshow commenced in Bengaluru and culminated in Mumbai, strategically chosen for its economic significance and corporate landscape. Mumbai, being the financial capital, offered a prime platform for engaging with key stakeholders, including travel agents, tour operators, and corporate entities. Chang shares, "The event was carefully structured to facilitate networking opportunities and showcase Korea's charm as a MICE destination."

### Redefining Korea's appeal

Central to KTO's narrative was Korea's evolving cultural landscape, propelled by the global popularity of Korean pop culture and entertainment. "With K-pop and K-drama capturing the imagination of audiences worldwide, Korea is an intriguing destination that offers a blend of modernity and tradition. Leveraging this cultural resonance, we aim to position Korea as an emerging MICE destination, catering to the discerning preferences of Indian travellers," shares Chang.

### Strategic engagement

Beyond the roadshow, KTO's engagement extends to strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts. Meetings with prominent Indian corporations, including insurance companies and travel agencies, was part of the India itinerary for the KTO delegation. He adds, "With a concerted effort to forge meaningful alliances through tailored presentations and immersive experiences, KTO sought to showcase Korea's diverse MICE offerings, ranging from state-of-the-art convention centres to leisure attractions accompanied by cultural performances."

### Infrastructure and Innovations

Key to Korea's MICE appeal is its cutting-edge infrastructure and on-going innovations. "The 'Inspire' resort, housing a sprawling casino and a massive arena capable of hosting over 20,000 attendees, exemplifies our commitment to facilitating world-class events," adds Chang. Additionally, upcoming convention centres in strategic locations promise to further enhance Korea's capacity to host diverse MICE events.

### Leisure pursuits

"While MICE remain a primary focus for us, our leisure offerings add a layer of allure for our travellers. From theme parks such as Everland to adrenaline - pumping activities such as car racing, Korea offers a wide range of options for post-event

relaxation and leisure activities. Shopping and food enthusiasts find ample opportunities to indulge in Korea's vibrant culinary and retail landscape," shares Chang.

### Looking Ahead

As the Korea MICE Roadshow concluded, KTO extended an invitation to the Indian travel trade to explore the multiple opportunities that Korea offers for MICE travel. He adds, "Emphasising the importance of collaboration, we envision a future marked by strong partnerships and unforgettable experiences. With a shared commitment to excellence, the journey toward unlocking Korea's MICE potential promises to be both enriching and rewarding."





# Israel

## A journey through time and tradition amidst chaos

Embark on a mesmerising odyssey through the enchanting landscapes and cultural kaleidoscope of Israel. Unravel the mysteries of its ancient past, dance through the bustling markets, and immerse yourself in the warmth of its people. Join me on this exhilarating adventure where every step is a story waiting to be told.

- *Tripti Jain*





Israel, a land where ancient history intersects with modern innovation, offers travellers an unparalleled experience of cultural richness, historical depth, and scenic beauty. As our group of professional media representatives embarked on this carefully curated journey, we were not just observers of the country's famous sites but witnesses to the resilience and spirit of its people amid challenging times. Despite the backdrop of conflict, the warmth, hospitality, and vibrancy of Israel shone through, leaving an indelible impression on each of us.

### International Mediterranean Tourism Market

Our adventure began as we touched down at Ben Gurion International Airport. The excitement was palpable as we drove through the bustling streets of Tel Aviv, a city that seamlessly blends the old with the new. The drive from the airport offered glimpses of the Mediterranean coastline, modern skyscrapers, and historic neighbourhoods.

Our first stop was the opening event of the International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM). Held in the heart of Tel Aviv, IMTM is a global networking event that brings together professionals from all levels of the tourism and travel industry. The atmosphere was electric, with representatives from various countries showcasing their tourism potential, engaging in discussions, and forging new partnerships. Despite the on-going conflict, the event was a testament to the industry's resilience and the collective hope for peace and prosperity.

After a morning immersed in the world of travel and tourism, the journey continues with a drive to Jerusalem. As the landscape transitions from the modernity of Tel Aviv to the historical and spiritual heart of Israel, there's a palpable sense of anticipation. The road to Jerusalem is lined with stories waiting to be discovered, each mile a step closer to the cradle of three major religions.



### Walk and taste through the Mahane Yehuda Market

The evening is spent at Mahane Yehuda Market, a bustling hub of flavours and aromas. The market is a sensory explosion – vendors shouting their wares, the smell of fresh bread and spices filling the air, and the vibrant colours of fresh produce and handmade goods. It's a place where the old meets new, where traditional stalls sit alongside trendy cafes and restaurants. Here, the heart of Jerusalem beats loudly, a testament to its enduring vibrancy amidst adversity.

Dinner that evening was a feast of traditional Middle Eastern dishes, with plates of hummus, falafel, and fresh salads. The conversations as we walked the streets of the market were as rich as the food, reflecting on the day's experiences and the sense of history that resounds in Jerusalem.





## Immersed and exploring Jerusalem's Old City

Ramparts Walk, Western Wall, Via Dolorosa, Christian Quarter, Shuk, Tower of David, and National Library

The day dawns with a golden hue over Jerusalem's Old City, a place where every stone tells a story. The Ramparts Walk offers a unique start, providing panoramic views of the city. Walking atop the ancient walls, one can see the juxtaposition of sacred sites and modern buildings, a visual representation of Jerusalem's complex history.

Next is the Western Wall, or Kotel, a site of profound spiritual significance. Standing before the ancient stones, touched by millions over centuries, one can't help but feel a deep connection to the history and faith that this place holds. It's a moment of reflection, of understanding the enduring nature of belief in the face of adversity.

The Via Dolorosa, the path believed to be walked by Jesus on his way to crucifixion, is another profound experience. The narrow, winding streets of the Old City echo with the footsteps of pilgrims from around the world, each step a journey through time. The Stations of the Cross are marked by chapels and shrines, each telling a part of the story that has shaped Christianity. The Christian Quarter, with its beautiful churches and bustling streets, is a mosaic of cultures and traditions. Here, the Old City Market (Shuk) offers a glimpse into daily life. The market, with its labyrinthine alleys filled with shops and stalls, is a place where one can find everything from religious artefacts to everyday items, a mirror of Jerusalem's diverse population.

The Tower of David Jerusalem Museum provides a deeper understanding of the city's history. Housed in an ancient citadel, the museum's exhibits span thousands of years, offering insights into Jerusalem's past and



its significance to various cultures and religions.

A visit to the National Library rounds out the day, offering a modern perspective on Israel's cultural heritage. The library is a treasure trove of knowledge, its vast collections encompassing everything from ancient manuscripts to contemporary literature.

## Natural Wonders and Historical Marvels

As we left Jerusalem, the next stop on the agenda was the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth. En route, we saw Masada which reveals one of Israel's most dramatic historical sites. The ancient fortress, perched atop a cliff, is a symbol of Jewish resistance. The story of Masada, where Jewish rebels made their last stand against the Romans, is both inspiring and tragic. Continuing to the Dead Sea, the landscape changes to one of surreal beauty. The turquoise waters, surrounded by barren desert, create a scene of otherworldly serenity. Floating in the mineral-rich waters is a unique experience, a moment of peace and reflection in a region often defined by conflict.

As the day ends, the drive back to Tel Aviv offers time to absorb the experiences of the day. The contrast between the ancient landscapes and the modern city ahead is striking, a reminder of Israel's unique blend of old and new.





## Coastal Charm of Jaffa and Tel Aviv

The ancient port city of Jaffa, with its winding alleys and historic buildings, is the perfect start to the day. Jaffa's charm lies in its blend of old and new – ancient churches and mosques sit alongside contemporary art galleries and cafes. The port, once a bustling hub of trade, now offers a serene view of the Mediterranean, its waters a deep blue against the golden stone of the old city. Exploring Jaffa's flea market is a delightful experience. The market, with its eclectic mix of antiques, art, and handmade goods, is a treasure trove for the curious traveller. Every corner holds a surprise, every shop a story. The tour continues into Tel Aviv, a city known for its vibrant energy and modernity. The contrast with Jaffa is immediate – Tel Aviv is a city that never sleeps, its streets filled with cafes, restaurants, and shops. The city's architecture, from Bauhaus buildings to sleek skyscrapers, tells the story of its rapid growth and development.

## A Day in Tel Aviv

The promenade, stretching along the Mediterranean coast, is a haven for cyclists, joggers, and walkers. The fresh sea breeze and the sound of waves provide a perfect backdrop for exploring the city's coastline. The route passes through parks, beaches, and vibrant neighbourhoods, offering glimpses of daily life in Tel Aviv. A visit through the streets of Tel Aviv with graffiti on the walls is a delight for the eyes. Every street and wall has a story to tell with vibrant colours and incidences to tell. Considering the current situation, the graffiti represents the plight of the war-stricken areas and families that have lost their dear ones. The blend of modern architecture and personalised touch of the artists make the sight something to behold and remember. Every street tale is different and every stroke of brush creates a lasting effect. The day concludes with a discussion at Tel Aviv Global, an



initiative aimed at positioning Tel Aviv as a leading global city. The discussion provides insights into the city's strategies for growth and development, its challenges and opportunities. It's a fitting end to the journey, highlighting the dynamic and forward-thinking nature of Israel's largest city.

## Amidst Conflict, Resilience

Traveling through Israel in times of conflict is a profound experience. The country's rich history, cultural diversity, and natural beauty are ever-present, offering moments of peace and reflection amidst the chaos. The resilience of its people, their ability to find joy and meaning even in difficult times, is inspiring. From the sacred sites of Jerusalem to the modern energy of Tel Aviv, from the ancient fortress of Masada to the healing waters of the Dead Sea, this journey through Israel is a testament to the enduring spirit of a land that has seen millennia of history. Despite the current challenges, Israel's beauty, history, and culture continue to shine, offering an unforgettable travel experience.





HEADS IN BEDS

# Arabian Splendour

Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi redefines luxury with every touch.

- Misbah Mansuri







## HEADS IN BEDS

Stepping into the Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi, I am immediately captivated by the lobby's majestic chandelier that bathes the space in a warm, inviting glow. The deep colors, rich woods, and plush furnishings evoke a regal ambiance that sets the tone for the rest of the hotel. Intricately patterned lighting sconces cast ornate shadows on the walls, reminiscent of Moroccan decadence, while the carpeting mimics the rippling dunes of the desert. Authentic vintage telephones on each floor, more than mere decoration, add a charming touch of nostalgia. This luxurious setting, with its grand staircases and vibrant camel bags doubling as wall décor, seamlessly blends traditional Arabian elegance with modern comfort, making a stunning first impression while offering

front-row seat views to the iconic Sheikh Zayed Mosque.

### The property

The Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi offers an exclusive slice of paradise with sweeping views of the ravishing backdrop. As I stepped onto this pristine property, I was enveloped by a palpable sense of tranquility, a hallmark of the renowned hospitality that Shangri-La is celebrated for.

Nestled between a pristine stretch of white sand and lush gardens, Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri exudes classic Arabesque style and serenity right in the heart of the dynamic Emirati capital. The complex also includes six spectacular villas, each consisting of private pools and four bedrooms.

Stepping into my suite, I was

immediately struck by the versatile design options, ideal for family stays or hosting events. The revered four-bedroom villa boasts a private swimming pool, a spacious dining room. Some villas even come with their own cinema, offering a luxurious touch for private screenings. The interiors are a blend of modern luxury and traditional Arabian charm. Neutral tones filled the space, complemented by local design touches such as grand Arabic-style wooden doors on the closet and arched entryways. The spacious marble bathroom feature a walk-in rain shower and a separate tub, providing a serene space to unwind. Every room had a comfortable balcony, perfect for enjoying the region's lovely winter climate.

Each of the 214 rooms at the hotel, which felt like private Arabic oases, had its own balcony or terrace. The use of gold mosaic tiles and marble in the bathroom added a stately feel, while the L'occitane bathroom products were a delightful touch. The Chinese silk toiletry bag provided at turn-down was an impressive in-room addition, enhancing the overall luxury experience.

An upgrade to a Horizon Club room comes with a plethora of extra perks. The private check-in in my room was seamless, and the option for a late checkout until 4 p.m. offered added convenience. The Horizon Club lounge served food and drinks all day long, and the complimentary suit pressing was a thoughtful amenity that added to the comfort of my stay.







### Cocktails and sorbet sunsets

One evening, I indulged in sunset cocktails at the Amalfi Beach Lounge. This Mediterranean - inspired beach lounge offered a perfect blend of laid-back elegance, crafted beverages, Mediterranean flavors, and magnificent views of the sunsets over the creek. The atmosphere was serene, with the sun casting a golden hue over the water, creating a picturesque backdrop. I started with a tropical sangria, a delightful concoction infused with white wine, Bombay Sapphire, Mancino Bianco Vermouth, and a homemade tropical fruit cordial. The sangria was a refreshing blend, each sip a symphony of flavors. The crisp white wine provided a light, refreshing base, while the botanical notes of the gin added depth. The Mancino Bianco Vermouth brought a hint of sweetness, perfectly balanced by the homemade tropical fruit cordial's vibrant, fruity flavors. It was a drink that captured the essence of a beachside retreat,

making me feel truly immersed in the tranquil setting.

As I sipped my cocktail, the lounge's ambiance enhanced the experience. The elegant yet relaxed decor, combined with the soft sounds of the waves and the gentle murmur of other guests, created a perfect environment for unwinding. The staff's attentive service ensured that my glass was never empty and that each cocktail was crafted to perfection. Overall, the Amalfi Beach Lounge at Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri provided an unforgettable evening, blending stunning views, exquisite drinks, and a serene atmosphere into a truly enchanting experience.

### Dining

Brunch at Shang Palace became the highlight of my culinary escapades. The crispy prawns were a culinary epiphany, their tender meat ensconced with the sauce's sweet zestiness. The golden garlic prawns come alive with just the right tinge of spice, igniting the palate without

overwhelming it. The fried soft shell crab was another standout dish, its crisp exterior giving way to the succulent sweetness of the crab within. The gentle heat of the spice brought a depth of flavour that elevated the dish to gold standards, creating an interesting interplay of texture and taste.

The next morning began with a serene breakfast on an abra, a traditional wooden boat that gently glided along the tranquil waterways of the hotel. As the soft morning light danced on the water, I savored a selection of freshly baked pastries, ripe fruits bursting with flavor, and a cup of aromatic coffee that awakened my senses. The gentle sway of the boat and the melodic chirping of birds created a peaceful ambiance, perfectly complementing the stunning views of the Arabian Gulf. The serene setting, combined with the delicious breakfast, set a perfect tone for the day ahead, making it an unforgettable experience.

The Gardens of Babylon Brunch

at Sofra bld was another feast for the senses. This souq-style restaurant masterfully blends Arabian and Asian influences, offering a diverse array of cuisines from various ancestral homes. The vibrant atmosphere, with its colorful décor and bustling live cooking stations, set the stage for an unforgettable culinary journey.

I began my meal with a delicate egg pudding topped with green pea, baby cress, sesame seed, and soya pearl. Each bite was a harmonious blend of textures and subtle flavors, a delightful introduction to the brunch. Following this was the perfectly roasted wagyu beef with teriyaki sauce, nestled in toasted bread with pickled onion and lettuce. The beef was tender and flavorful, the teriyaki sauce adding a sweet-savory glaze that complemented the fresh, crisp vegetables. This dish was a perfect example of how Sofra bld combines traditional ingredients with innovative culinary techniques to create a memorable dining experience.





## HEADS IN BEDS



### Spa

In the afternoon, I indulged in an Asian Blend Massage at Chi, The Spa. The couple's treatment was a masterful display of technique and tradition, combining rhythmic strokes with aromatic oils that seeped deep into the muscles. Each movement of the massage expertly released tension, fostering a profound sense of relaxation. The ambiance of the spa played a crucial role in enhancing the experience; the soft, soothing music and the gentle flow of water created an atmosphere that felt completely detached from time and space. The tranquil setting, with its dim lighting and subtle fragrance, enveloped us in a cocoon of serenity, making the massage not just a treatment but a journey into blissful calm.

### Final thoughts

As the day wound down, I enjoyed sunset cocktails at the Pool Bar. The setting is expansive, sprawling out across a terrace that leads into a shimmering pool and extends down to the white sand

beach. The gentle sound of the waves and the warm hues of the setting sun created a picturesque backdrop. The atmosphere was perfect for unwinding, blending a laid-back vibe with a touch of chic elegance. With comfortable lounge chairs and attentive service, it was the quintessential spot for relaxation, allowing me to savor each moment as the day gracefully transitioned into evening. The refreshing cocktails, expertly crafted, complemented the serene surroundings, making it an idyllic end to a perfect day. The evening continued with a sumptuous dinner at Bord Eau by Nicolas Isnard. This fine dining restaurant offers an exquisite culinary adventure, blending classic French flavours with innovative twists. The standout dishes of the evening, each bursting with unique flavours and artful presentation, captured the essence of Chef Isnard's daring culinary style. The restaurant's ambiance is one of sophistication, with luxurious interiors that create an elegant

backdrop for the culinary experience. Among the standout dishes of the evening was the Modern Onion Soup 2.0, a fresh spin on the traditional French onion soup. The rich flavors and the delicate emulsion provided a delightful start to the meal.

Another highlight was the Gillardeau oyster with burned eggplant and Sturia caviar. The combination of the fresh, briny oysters with the smoky eggplant and the rich, luxurious caviar was an explosion of flavors and textures, perfectly capturing Chef Isnard's inventive style. For the main course, the red mullet served with confit eggplant and saffron sauce transported my taste buds to Morocco. The fish was perfectly cooked, and the saffron sauce added a fragrant, aromatic touch that elevated the dish. The evening culminated with a unique dessert—a pina colada with a Bord Eau twist. Heavier on the coconut, this dessert was a refreshing and indulgent end to a culinary journey that traversed various regions and flavors.

The attentive service, knowledgeable sommeliers, and the chef's creative vision made dining at Bord Eau by Nicolas Isnard a sterling one. The crowning jewel of my stay at the Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri was undoubtedly the overall experience of luxury, tranquillity, and exceptional service. The staff, always gracious and attentive, enhanced every experience with their warmth and professionalism, ensuring that each guest feels uniquely valued. At Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi, luxury is palpable in every little detail, from staff who are genuinely gracious and go the extra mile to make your day, to restaurants that are true masterclasses in gastronomy. Staff members like Rahim ensured my abra ride was a postcard-perfect experience, clicking pictures and going above and beyond to make the moment memorable. With its old-world charm doused in unmistakable luxury, here is a property that glows from within, even among the ever-expanding empire of Abu Dhabi hotels.





# A Japanese Dream

Sounds a bit clichéd, but it was a sight for sore eyes! The truth is that I didn't have a clue regarding what to expect, so it hit me with a punch. Anything even remotely 'beautiful' tends to have that effect on me, as my past has shown. We had sort of crept up to a plethora of nature's marvels, shining in the sunshine, visible in all their glory.

*- Inder Raj Ahluwalia*







Located near the summit of Mt. Haruna, arguably among Gunma Prefecture's and indeed Japan's, most famous mountains, Lake Haruna is a delightful odyssey of nature at its kindest.

Lakes come thick and fast in Japan, but by any yardstick, this one's special. Surrounded by mountains at an elevation of 1,100 metres, the waters of Lake Haruna reflect the colours of each changing season, providing a surreal touch to the landscape. Being the dead of winter, however, the lake was frozen solid, and lay silent.

We were here, enjoying the spoils of nature, courtesy a 90-minute scenic mountain drive from Takasaki. The weather was cold and the mood one of palpable excitement, engendered by a sublime combination of snow, scenery, hill atmosphere, and tranquillity.

Trees dot the outer rim of the crater that surrounds the lake, and from late April through late September is when various flowers bloom. Activity wanes in the winter, but one can see fantastic light shows held by the lake.

Mountain lodgings have a unique charm, and Harunako Onsen Yuusuge, the spa hotel we bedded down in, was everything a resort hotel is meant to be. Yuusuge incidentally, is a yellow lily. The hotel sports copious light, timber furniture, cheery music, and old-world Japanese hospitality.

Dinner time saw our motley group excitedly seated on the floor at the in-house restaurant, enjoying a karaoke-type ambience. The meal was a sumptuous Japanese dinner, replete with mildly-flavoured dishes, embellished with unobtrusive service. Everyone was in fine fettle and good humour, and with the hotel's owner joining in, we were one big, happy family.

Came morning, and it was time for action. Sunlight gave the frozen lake and the surrounding mountains a different colour from what we'd seen the precious evening. All the essential ingredients for active living were there, and we set off in pursuit of adventure. Taking the Mt. Haruna Cable Car up to the summit of the mountain, catapulted us immediately into a world of snow, and incredible views, just mildly hindered by a light mist.

It was a view of pure class. Just below lay the frozen Lake Haruna, just beyond green hills encircled us, and further away in the distance, snowy peaks formed a majestic, formidable backdrop. Takasaki sprawled below to our left. The icing on the cake was Mt. Fuji that lay quietly brooding in the distance. The sky was clear, the wind crisp, and the temperature a balmy Minus 6. Trudging up the steps to the shrine that nestles right at the very top, brought immediate rewards in the form of even more exceptional views!





### 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.

This done, we piled into our van and headed out for a site which possess great spiritual value and is endeared to the locals. Standing amidst a majestic formation of strangely shaped rocks that rise straight from the earth, Haruna Shrine has attracted the faithful throughout the ages. With a 1,400 - year history behind it, the shrine permeates an atmosphere of deep spirituality. The historic buildings and giant old trees, notably a magnificent 600 year-old specimen, provide numerous highlights, including pavilions that have been integrated with the rocks. Statues of seven deities including Saraswati, guard various sections of the establishment. Tourists and pilgrims mill about in the vast shrine complex. Your spiritual tour done, and blessings duly garnered, you can indulge yourself with contemporary titbits, and also enjoy a bowl of Monen Soba (Buckwheat Noodles), the local town's specialty. As is often the case while visiting

charming destinations, before one really wanted it, the time had come to bid adieu to this refreshing, beautiful hill-resort. Headed back for our base, Takasaki, we took a break for lunch at Roshi, a small, family - run homestead Japanese vegetarian restaurant that has clung to nature and uses self-cultivated vegetables. It was simple, fresh food served without fuss or ceremony, strong on taste and flavour.

On the move once again, a short drive deposited us at the Christmas Rose Garden that is famous in the region for its variety of flowers. This is where men from the surrounding regions buy red roses to send to prospective wives and girlfriends. Well...

Making a quiet promise of providing an interlude of tranquillity, within hailing distance of urban, mainstream Japanese life, Lake Haruna is exactly the kind of place to visit to fight that stress you've been struggling with.





# ACING THE GAME OF HOSPITALITY

## Holiday Inn Bangkok Silom

Strategic location, exceptional service, and versatile facilities, are the pillars of Holiday Inn Bangkok Silom. Rakesh Sharma, Director Sales - Southwest Asia, shares insight.

- Tripti Jain

Located in the vibrant heart of Bangkok, the Holiday Inn Bangkok Silom offers a unique blend of modern comfort and cultural charm. It is the top choice for both business and leisure travellers. The hotel's commitment to high-quality service and guest satisfaction makes it a choice for anyone visiting Bangkok.

### A blend of comfort and convenience

Holiday Inn Bangkok Silom boasts an array of 684 rooms categorised between Deluxe, Premier, and Suite, ensuring a comfortable stay for every type of traveller. The hotel's accommodation is designed with the guest's comfort in mind, featuring spacious layouts and modern amenities. "Our rooms

are tailored to meet the needs of today's travellers, offering a perfect blend of luxury and practicality. Each room category provides a unique experience, whether you are here for a quick business trip or an extended family vacation," says Rakesh.

### Space for leisure plus gatherings

One of the standout features of the property is its comprehensive meeting and banqueting facilities. The hotel has two Grand Ballrooms and nine individual function rooms that can host a variety of events, from small executive meetings to large cultural gatherings. Rakesh takes pride in the property's facilities and shares, "We can accommodate a wide range of events with our versatile spaces. The rooms can be configured in multiple styles, including boardroom, buffet, banquet, classroom, and theatre setups, ensuring that every event is tailored to perfection. An LCD display outside each room adds an extra touch for branding and event announcements."



Rakesh Sharma

### Location speaks!

The hotel's prime location is another significant attraction for guests. Situated just a short walk from the Surasak BTS Skytrain Station and the riverside, guests have easy access to Bangkok's major attractions. The nearby Jewellery Trade Centre, one of Asia's largest, offers a unique shopping experience, while the famous Sri Maha Mariamman Temple on Silom Road provides a glimpse into the local culture. Rakesh highlights, "Our location is one of our biggest assets. It allows our guests to explore the best of Bangkok has to offer. The hotel's proximity to major expressways also ensures that guests can reach both Suvarnabhumi International Airport and Don Mueang International Airport within 35-45 minutes."

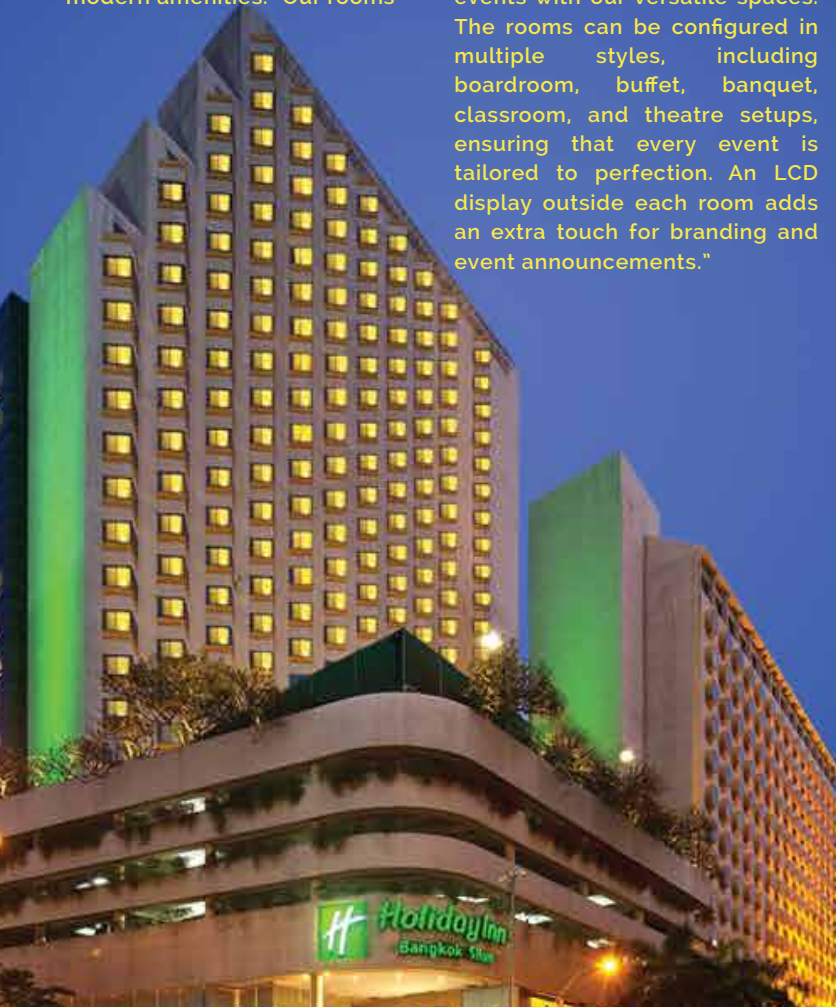
### In design lies the essence

The property is known for its distinctive features, including the iconic round window in the Deluxe Rooms that overlooks a large 20-meter swimming pool. This unique design element not only adds to the aesthetic appeal of the rooms but also provides a perfect spot for photography enthusiasts. "The round window in our Deluxe Rooms is a favourite among our guests. It offers a

unique view and adds a touch of elegance to the room," says Rakesh. Furthermore, he shares, "In addition to the well-designed rooms, the hotel offers ample parking space for 250 vehicles, an executive lounge, and a variety of dining options that cater to different tastes."

### Service made exceptional!

The hallmark of the property is its exceptional service. The staff's warm and attentive approach consistently receives high praise from guests. Speaking on the same lines Rakesh shares, "We believe that every interaction with our guests is an opportunity to create a memorable experience. Our team is dedicated to providing personalised service to each guest. Housekeeping is meticulous, ensuring that the rooms are always clean and comfortable. The hotel's amenities, including the breakfast spread and the executive lounge, are well-received, though some guests have noted that certain features could use an update." At Holiday Inn Bangkok Silom, they strive to exceed their guests' expectations by providing a unique and memorable experience. Whether you're here for business or pleasure, they ensure that every aspect of your stay is exceptional.





# THE LUXURIOUS NIRVANA PIMALAI RESORT & SPA

Nestled on the serene island of Koh Lanta in Krabi province, Pimalai Resort & Spa stands as a beacon of tranquillity and luxury. Charintip Tiyaphorn, the second-generation owner of Pimalai Resort & Spa shares a peep into the luxurious abode!

- Tripti Jain



Charintip Tiyaphorn





Just a two-hour journey from Krabi airport, this five-star resort offers an unparalleled escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. Founded 23 years ago, Pimalai has grown into a sanctuary where guests can immerse themselves in nature while enjoying world-class amenities. With only 144 keys spread across 100 acres of lush forest and nearly 1.1 kilometres of pristine beachfront, Pimalai promises a private and rejuvenating experience for every traveller.

### To begin with!

Pimalai Resort & Spa boasts a variety of accommodation options to cater to all types of travellers. From deluxe rooms and beachfront suites to one, two, and three-bedroom villas located on both the mountain and the beach, there is something for everyone. "We have designed our resort to accommodate diverse

segments, whether it's families, extended families, honeymooners, or groups of friends. Our goal is to provide a luxurious yet intimate experience, where guests feel connected to nature," explain Charintip.

The spacious villas offer stunning views and complete privacy, making them ideal for those seeking a peaceful retreat. The beachfront suites, on the other hand, provide direct access to the shore, allowing guests to wake up to the sound of waves and enjoy the beauty of the beach at their doorstep.

### Embracing local and traditional ways

One of the key attractions of Pimalai is its emphasis on cultural and local experiences. "We believe that a holiday should be more than just relaxation; it should be an

opportunity to immerse oneself in the local culture and environment. The resort offers a variety of activities, including Thai cooking classes where guests can learn to prepare traditional dishes using fresh ingredients from the resort's herbal garden. Our cooking classes are a hands-on experience. Guests pick the herbs themselves and cook their chosen recipes, making it a fun and educational activity," says Charintip.

Additionally, Pimalai's proximity to a small village offers guests a chance to explore local restaurants and bars. A leisurely 10-minute walk along the beach leads to this charming village, providing a taste of authentic Thai cuisine and hospitality.

### Saving the plant, one step at a time!

Sustainability is at the heart of Pimalai's operations. From the

outset, the resort has implemented various eco-friendly practices to minimise its environmental impact. "Our goal is to reduce waste and preserve the natural beauty of Koh Lanta. We started with rainwater collection and recycling, ensuring that we use natural resources responsibly," shares Charintip.

The resort has a comprehensive waste management system, including food waste composting and a significant reduction in single-use plastics. Pimalai also participates in coral propagation and turtle release projects, contributing to the conservation of local marine life. These initiatives are not just about the environment; they're about educating the guests and the local community on the importance of sustainability.





## Acing the game of technology

While Pimalai embraces its natural surroundings, it also incorporates modern technology to enhance the guest experience. "We've integrated mobile applications to streamline our services, making it easier for guests to navigate the resort and access amenities. The app allows guests to call for transport within the resort, order room service, and view menus with detailed pictures, ensuring a seamless and convenient stay," shares Charintip.

The resort also offers state-of-the-art facilities, including a jungle spa where treatments are provided in small huts along a waterfall. This unique setup allows guests to enjoy the soothing

sounds of nature while receiving rejuvenating spa treatments. "Our jungle spa is like a sanctuary within a sanctuary. It's designed to offer a deeply relaxing and immersive experience," describes Charintip.

## Family first!

Pimalai is not just a resort; it's a community that values family connections and local engagement. "We cater to families with our kids' corner and daily activities, ensuring that children have a fun and safe environment while parents can relax and enjoy their time. The resort also offers babysitting services, giving parents the freedom to explore the island or indulge in a spa day," explains Charintip.

The resort's community

involvement extends to local schools and authorities, particularly through its environmental initiatives. "When we conduct turtle releases, we invite students and local residents to participate. It's important for us to involve the community in our conservation efforts and raise awareness about protecting our environment," she shares.

## Looking to the Future

As they continue to grow, they aim to attract a broader range of international tourists, including those from India. "India is a significant market with a strong economy and growing interest in travel. While many Indian tourists currently visit Phuket and Bangkok, we want to offer Koh Lanta as a unique and

luxurious alternative," shares Charintip.

Pimalai's focus on personalised service, cultural experiences, and sustainable practices sets it apart from other destinations. "Our independent brand allows us to be flexible and cater to our guests' needs in a more intimate way. We strive to create an experience that feels both luxurious and homely, where every guest feels valued and cared for," she explains.

Pimalai Resort & Spa on Koh Lanta is more than just a destination; it's an experience that combines luxury, nature, and cultural immersion. With its diverse accommodations, commitment to sustainability, and focus on personalised service, Pimalai offers a unique and unforgettable retreat.





# One Above

## Leading the Way in Global Travel

One Above Destination Management Services is revolutionising travel and tourism with its extensive offerings across Africa, Asia, the Far East, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, the USA, Europe, Russia, and the UK. The company excels in integrating tour operations, event management, and MICE services. With a commitment to trust and success, Rahim Aslam, CEO, One Above shares how they are setting new benchmarks in the industry.

- *Naina Nath*

### Performance of growing markets

"The trend of travel from India is experiencing a robust surge, with significant growth observed from destinations such as Dubai, Singapore, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Vietnam, Georgia, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Bali. Taiwan is another emerging popular destination, attracting travellers from all segments, with its blend of nature and vibrant night markets. Although the Maldives has seen a slight slowdown due to market sentiments, the current aggressive pricing by resorts presents a prime opportunity for travellers. Also, the MICE segment is on an upward swing, with a burgeoning interest observed in corporate travel and business events," shares Rahim.

### Strategic marketing initiatives

As Rahim says, "Success is not a word, it's an action... Trust is not an action; it's a word - Your TRUST, our SUCCESS." - This ethos is reflected in every aspect of their operations, from the meticulous planning of travel packages to the seamless execution of corporate events. They pride themselves on their local expertise, vast bed bank, owned vehicles, professional in-house guides, and fully trained staff, ensuring that each business transaction is executed efficiently and professionally.

One Above is ready to capitalise on these positive trends with a focused marketing strategy to enhance conversions through meaningful connections. The upcoming year will see the company engaging in various roadshows, trade fairs, and event collaborations to strengthen its market presence. Speaking on the same lines Rahim shares, "Complementing these efforts, celebrity campaigns will continue to be a cornerstone of our strategy, while showcasing diverse destinations and reinforcing our brand's appeal."

### Creating a Niche

Headquartered in Mumbai, the financial capital of India, One Above has rapidly carved out a niche for itself in the global market. Its strong presence is bolstered by a dedicated team and an extensive network of global DMCs, facilitating lasting connections with Indian B2B travel partners. The company's ultimate goal is to increase profit margins while providing a stress-free working environment for its partners. Rahim shares, "In a world of discovery, you're the compass guiding us to new horizons. Keep exploring, keep inspiring. Here's to endless adventures and meaningful connections."

Rahim Aslam





# Inspiring Vacations

Providing the **O**HQ way of travelling!

Offering high-quality, value-driven travel packages to thousands of satisfied customers each year, Inspiring Vacations are evolving as one of the top players in the travel trade market. Ujjwal Kant, Director, Inspiring Vacations India shares their journey through the years.

-Sudipta Saha



UJJWAL KANT





Since its inception in 2017, the company has established itself as a leader in the market, inspiring individuals to explore the world's most magnificent sights. With a commitment to diverse tour styles and exceptional customer service, Inspiring Vacations continues to connect with a growing number of travellers across India, eager to embark on unforgettable journeys.

### **Expanding horizons**

As we look toward 2024, Inspiring Vacations remains dedicated to its founding principle: inspiring everyone to explore the world. This vision drives the company's efforts to reach an ever-expanding audience. Ujjwal shares, "Our goal is to make travel accessible and exciting for people from all walks of life. We believe in the transformative power of travel and strive to provide experiences that broaden horizons and enrich lives." The company's extensive range of travel packages caters to various preferences and budgets, ensuring that every traveller finds their perfect adventure. By maintaining high standards of quality and value, Inspiring Vacations continues to inspire confidence and curiosity in its customers.

### **A journey of excellence**

Since its founding, the company has set the standard for exceptional travel experiences. The company offers a diverse array of travel packages, combining coach, rail, and cruise journeys with guided sightseeing and meals. This comprehensive approach ensures that every aspect of the trip is meticulously planned and executed. "Our success lies in our attention to detail and our commitment to customer satisfaction. We work tirelessly to create travel experiences that exceed expectations and provide lasting memories. This dedication has earned our company a reputation as a trusted name in the travel industry, sending thousands of customers to destinations across the globe each year, shares Ujjwal.

### **Tailored to every Traveller**

Inspiring Vacations is known for its wide range of tour styles, designed to suit every traveller's needs. From luxury tours that offer

the utmost in comfort and exclusivity to premium small-group tours that provide personalised attention, the company's offerings are both diverse and comprehensive. Private and tailor-made tours allow for fully customised experiences, while large group tours offer a social and engaging way to explore new destinations. "We understand that every traveller is unique, and we strive to offer something for everyone," says Ujjwal. "Whether you're looking for a luxury getaway or a budget-friendly adventure, we have the perfect package for you. This commitment to inclusivity and variety ensures that we can accommodate a wide range of preferences and budgets," he adds.

### **The appeal of small group tours**

Among the company's most popular offerings are its small group tours to destinations such as Japan, South America, Norway, and Antarctica. These tours provide once-in-a-lifetime experiences, allowing travellers to explore some of the world's most fascinating locations in an intimate and immersive setting. Ujjwal shares, "Our small group tours have been incredibly well-received. They offer a unique opportunity to connect with the destination on a deeper level and create meaningful memories. The positive feedback from customers and the high number of repeat and referred clients highlight the success of these unique travel experiences."

### **Meeting market demands**

In today's travel market, safety and value are paramount concerns for customers. The company addresses these priorities by partnering with trusted local providers and maintaining a dedicated support team in India. This ensures that all tours are well-organised, secure, and offer excellent value for money. "Customer confidence is the key! We work with reliable partners and have a local team to support our customers, ensuring their safety and satisfaction throughout their journey. By

focusing on these essential aspects, we aim meet and exceed the expectations of modern travellers," shares Ujjwal.

### **The potential of Tier II & III markets**

Recognising the potential of tier II and III markets, the brand aims to broaden its reach through referrals, repeat business, and social media engagement. The company has observed a growing trend of customers returning for tailored packages, often traveling with extended family or friends.

"We see tremendous potential in these markets. Our customers appreciate the personalised attention and the ability to create travel experiences that suit their unique needs. This focus on customisation and community travel is a key component of the company's growth strategy," he adds.

### **Commitment to excellence**

The company's commitment to customer service is evident in its 24/7 support team. Whether assisting with bookings or providing support during travel, the team ensures that customers' expectations are consistently met. Ujjwal shares, "Our customers' satisfaction is our top priority. We are always available to provide assistance and ensure that their travel experiences are smooth and enjoyable. This unwavering dedication to quality and service sets us apart in the travel industry."

### **Inspiring the World to Explore**

As Inspiring Vacations continues to grow and evolve, its vision of inspiring everyone to explore the world remains at the heart of its mission. By offering diverse, high-quality travel experiences and maintaining a steadfast commitment to customer satisfaction, the company is poised for continued success in 2024 and beyond.

"Our goal is to make every journey unforgettable," Ujjwal concludes. "We look forward to inspiring more people to discover the beauty and wonder of the world." With its focus on excellence, variety, and customer care, Inspiring Vacations is leading the way in creating exceptional travel experiences for all.







Bhil Tribe

# COME & EXPLORE MADHYA PRADESH

A land where indigenous culture is a living masterpiece!

The Heart of Incredible India will take you on an enthralling journey to unveil the soul of India's indigenous heritage. Home to the largest concentration of indigenous communities in the country, Madhya Pradesh has 24 distinct tribes, each with their own vibrant language, traditional customs and local social structures.

The skilled artisans breathe life into age-old crafts, their nimble fingers weaving tales into textiles, shaping wood into exquisite sculptures, and adorning themselves with fine jewellery. Each piece they create is a testament to their rich history, passed down through generations.



Baiga Tribe

Madhya Pradesh resonates with ancient traditions, where tribes like the Bhil, Gond, Baiga and Bhariya have thrived for centuries. Pack your bags for a indigenous trail to converse with the Bhil, India's largest tribe, known for their colourful Pithora paintings that narrates stories on walls. Navigate the indigenous belt while crisscrossing through Mandla, Chhindwara, Balaghat, Shahdol, Dindori, Hoshangabad, Jabalpur, Betul, Damoh, Sagar, and parts of northern Madhya Pradesh where the Gond tribe dwells. These mountain dwellers are known for creating decorative fabrics with intricate geometric patterns and animal motifs with natural dyes and weaving techniques passed down through generations. Explore the Baiga tribe that resides primarily in the southern

region of the state particularly at Dindori, Mandla, Jabalpur, Shahdol, revered for their knowledge of the forest and their deep respect for nature's bounty. Unravel the secrets of the Sahariya tribe in Madhya Pradesh that resides primarily in the north-western districts of Shivpuri, Guna, Gwalior, Morena, Bhind and Sheopur. Learn the herbal remedies from the Sahariya tribes and drown yourself in "Khambaswang", a dance drama of the Korku tribe from Chhindwara, Narmadapuram and Harda districts. Inhale the ancestral art of Agaria tribe – transforming black sand and clay into iron using ancient bellows. This tribe particularly resides in Dindori, Balaghat, Mandla, and Sidhi. Nestled in the mountains of Madhya Pradesh, Jhabua echoes with stories through their ancestral dolls. Crafted by the Bhil and Bhilala tribes, these dolls, known as "Adivasi Gudiya Hastashilp," are more than just playthings. Each stitch and bead carries

the weight of tradition, empowering the artisans and keeping their heritage alive. Adorned with intricate cultural hues, these dolls have reflections of a land embellished with artistic flavours. Unveil the synergy of the Korku tribes with nature as they design pieces with brass, beads, and shells. Walk around to acclimatize with their lives, homes, cultures, religion and marriage traditions. Savour the rhythmic beats of drums and intricate patterns of indigenous art. Madhya Pradesh awaits – come discover a land that resonates with myriad hues of culture and traditions.



Korku Tribe





# Kavya Himalayas Resort and Spa

## Elevating Wellness Tourism in Nepal

Kavya Himalayas, a leading wellness destination in Nagarkot, Nepal, has swiftly become a distinguished name in luxury and wellness tourism. Integrating traditional Nepalese elements with modern amenities, Kavya offers a serene retreat amidst the peaceful hills of the Himalayas. Hitesh Golcha, Managing Director, The Leaf Hospitality shares the idea behind the beautiful oasis.

- Naina Nath



### Holistic wellness approach

Kavya Himalayas provides a comprehensive wellness experience, offering activities designed to cater to diverse preferences. From meditation and yoga to Ayurvedic treatments and outdoor adventures such as mountain biking and hiking, Kavya ensures every guest finds relaxation and rejuvenation. Hitesh shares, "Our wellness programs are tailored to individual needs, with packages available from three to fifteen days."

### Luxurious accommodations and privacy

The resort features a range of accommodations, including spacious suites, one- and two-bedroom villas, designed for privacy and comfort. Each unit blends luxury with the natural landscape, offering breath-taking Himalayan views. "We emphasise space and discreteness ensuring a peaceful and exclusive stay for all our guests," shares Hitesh.

### Sustainability at its core

Kavya upholds its commitment to

sustainability, using natural terraces and indigenous materials such as mud, wood, and copper to minimise environmental impact. Eco-friendly practices include in-house mineral water production to eliminate plastic use, organic farming for fresh produce, and electric vehicles for guest transportation. Hitesh adds, "These initiatives underscore our dedication to preserving our surroundings' natural beauty and ecological balance."

### Expanding horizons and market focus

Since its inception in July 2022, Kavya has rapidly expanded its capacity, currently offering 18 operational villas with an additional six nearing completion, totalling 24 villas with 39 keys. Despite its growth, Kavya maintains high standards of service and exclusivity. Hitesh shares, "The resort has received offers to expand but remains focused on nurturing its flagship property first."

India has emerged as a key market due to its proximity and

affordability. "We have also attracted interest from regions including Dubai, Europe, Japan, and the United States. Kavya's appeal lies in its unique, bespoke experiences catering to various guests, from entrepreneurs seeking solitude to corporate groups seeking productive retreats," he adds.

### Unique experiences and activities

Kavya's offerings extend beyond traditional wellness activities, curating exceptional experiences such as helicopter tours to the Himalayas for a champagne breakfast with views of Mount Everest and cultural excursions to UNESCO World Heritage sites in the Kathmandu Valley. He shares, "These experiences provide guests with a deeper connection to Nepal's rich cultural and natural heritage."

### Culinary Delights

The resort's culinary offerings feature diverse mountain cuisines crafted from organic produce grown on-site. Guests enjoy farm-to-fork dining

experiences, ensuring fresh, flavourful meals aligning with Kavya's wellness philosophy. Hitesh shares, "We accommodate various dietary preferences, providing both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, along with a discreet bar service for those who wish to indulge."

### Future prospects

Looking ahead, Kavya Himalayas aims to solidify its position as a leading wellness destination while exploring opportunities for selective expansion. The resort's focus on sustainability, luxury, and personalised wellness experiences sets it apart in the competitive wellness tourism landscape.

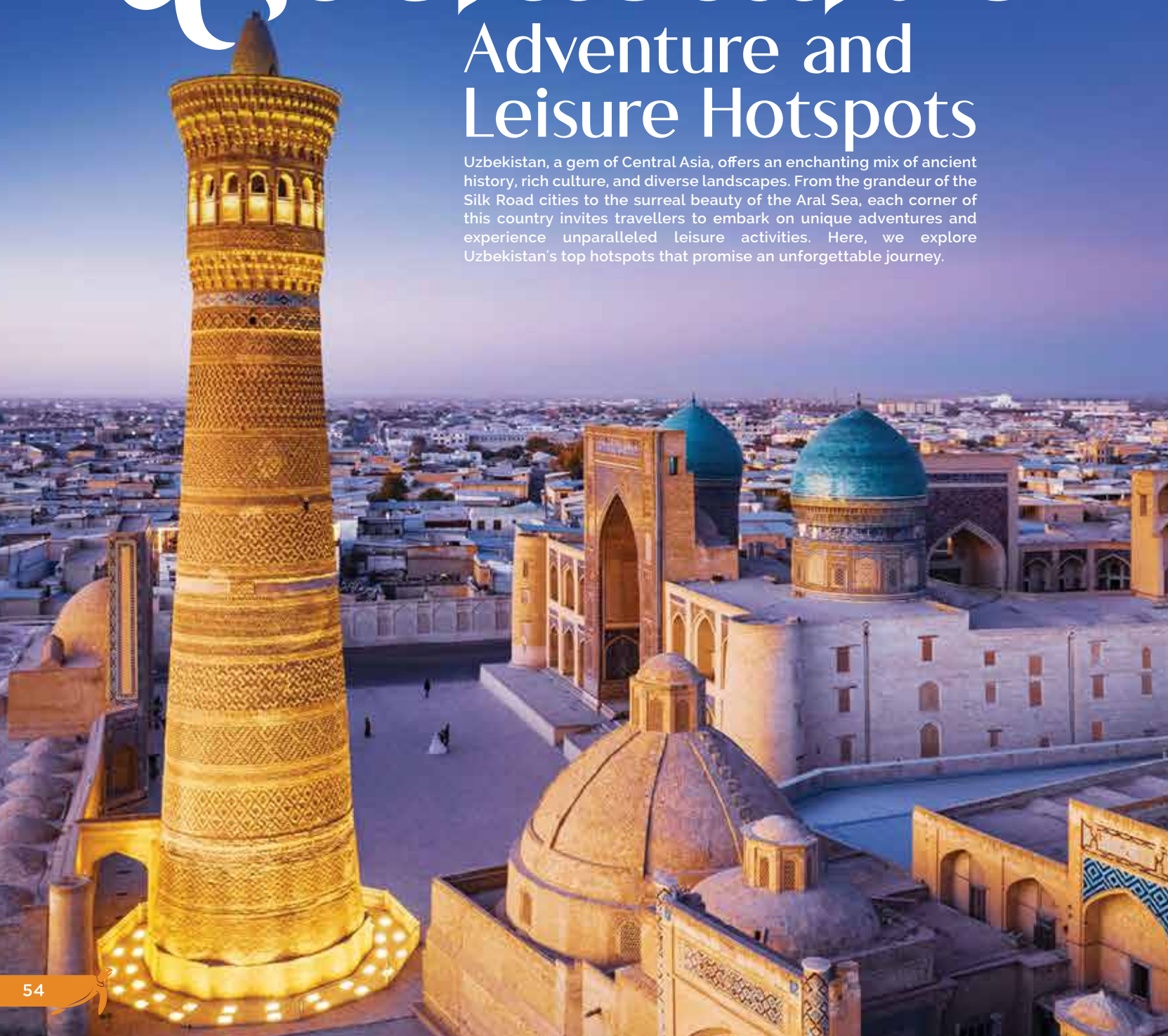
Kavya Himalayas Resort and Spa offers a unique blend of luxury, tradition, and holistic wellness, making it a standout destination for travellers seeking an immersive and transformative experience in the heart of the Himalayas. Hitesh shares, "At Kavya, we expect people to become their best selves, and we're here to help them achieve that."





# Discover Uzbekistan's Adventure and Leisure Hotspots

Uzbekistan, a gem of Central Asia, offers an enchanting mix of ancient history, rich culture, and diverse landscapes. From the grandeur of the Silk Road cities to the surreal beauty of the Aral Sea, each corner of this country invites travellers to embark on unique adventures and experience unparalleled leisure activities. Here, we explore Uzbekistan's top hotspots that promise an unforgettable journey.





Relive history on the Silk Road  
Uzbekistan's Silk Road cities are a treasure trove of history and architecture, transporting visitors back to medieval times. Samarkand, one of the most famous cities on the Silk Road, is home to the magnificent Registan Square, flanked by three stunning madrassahs adorned with intricate tile work. Nearby, the Shah-i-Zinda necropolis offers a stunning collection of mausoleums, while the Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum stands as the final resting place of the great conqueror Timur.

Bukhara is another city steeped in history, boasting 140 protected monuments. Highlights include the Ark Fortress, a royal town-within-a-town, and the Poi Kalon Ensemble with its towering minaret and grand mosque. The Samanid Mausoleum, one of the oldest monuments in Central Asia, showcases the region's early Islamic architecture.

In Khiva, the walled inner city of Ichan Kala is a UNESCO World Heritage site, renowned for its well-preserved buildings such as the Juma Mosque, Tosh-Hovli Palace, and the striking Kalta Minor Minaret. Walking through Khiva feels like stepping into a living museum, where the grandeur and tranquillity of medieval Central Asia are palpable.

**Savour authentic Uzbek Plov**  
No visit to Uzbekistan is complete without indulging in its national dish, plov. This flavourful rice dish, cooked with meat, carrots, and raisins, varies by region, offering a delicious culinary journey across the country. In Tashkent, the bustling capital, Besh Qozon is a popular spot to sample this beloved dish.

Samarkand and Bukhara each boast their own unique versions of plov, rich in tradition and taste. In Kokand and Rishtan, teahouses serve local variations that highlight the diverse ingredients and techniques used across Uzbekistan. Whether enjoyed in a high-end restaurant or a traditional teahouse, plov is a must-try for any visitor.

### Ski amidst majestic Peaks

For those seeking adventure, Uzbekistan's mountainous regions offer excellent skiing and snowboarding opportunities. Amirsoy Resort stands out for its modern infrastructure and natural beauty, making it a prime destination for winter sports enthusiasts. With well-maintained slopes and facilities, it caters to both beginners and seasoned skiers. The Chatkal, Beldersoy, and Chimgan Mountains provide more options for outdoor activities. These areas are known for their breath-taking landscapes and offer



a variety of trails for skiing, snowboarding, and even hiking during the warmer months. The thrill of descending these majestic peaks, surrounded by stunning vistas, is an experience not to be missed.

### Marvel at the Aral Sea's surreal beauty

The Aral Sea, once one of the world's largest lakes, has dramatically shrunk over the past few decades, creating a unique and surreal landscape. Visiting the dry seabed and exploring the ship graveyards offers a poignant insight into this environmental catastrophe. The journey to the Aral Sea provides a profound understanding of the region's changing environment and the human impact on nature.

Travellers can visit the city of Muynak, which was once a bustling port on the sea. Today, it's a stark reminder of the sea's retreat, with rusting ships stranded in the desert. This area, though somber, is a fascinating destination for those interested in environmental history and the resilience of local communities.

### Taste Uzbek wine at Uzumfermer Winery

Uzbekistan's wine-making tradition dates back centuries, and today, the country is witnessing a revival of this ancient craft. Uzumfermer Winery is a leading name in this renaissance, offering award-winning wines that reflect the region's rich terroir. Visitors to the winery can enjoy picturesque vineyard tours, learn about the wine-making process, and indulge in tastings of various wine varieties.

The winery's location amidst beautiful

landscapes makes it an ideal spot for a leisurely day out. Savouring Uzbek wines while overlooking the lush vineyards and understanding the heritage of wine-making in Uzbekistan is a delightful experience for any wine lover.

### Dive into Uzbek art and craftsmanship

Uzbekistan is renowned for its vibrant arts and crafts, with each region offering unique artistic traditions. Tashkent, Bukhara, and the Fergana Valley are key centres for experiencing these crafts first-hand. In Rishtan, the Ceramic Museum showcases exquisite ceramics known for their intricate designs and vibrant colours.

The Yodgorlik Silk Factory in Margilan offers insights into the traditional process of silk production, from mulberry cultivation to weaving. Visitors can also explore the Meros Paper Mill in Samarkand, where ancient techniques are used to produce high-quality paper. The Bukhara School of Miniature Painting is another highlight, where one can see the meticulous work of artists continuing this delicate art form.

### Shop unique Uzbek souvenirs

Uzbekistan's bazaars and art studios are treasure troves for unique souvenirs. The Chorsu Bazaar in Tashkent is a bustling market where visitors can find a wide array of handmade crafts, including ceramics, suzani (embroidered textiles), wood carvings, and carpets.

Navruz Ethnopark in Tashkent is home to modern showrooms featuring local brands such as Azukar Moreno, Mursak, and Two Eagles, which incorporate traditional fabrics into contemporary fashion.

These markets and studios offer not only shopping opportunities but also a chance to engage with local artisans and learn about their crafts. Bringing home a piece of Uzbek artistry is a wonderful way to remember the vibrant culture of this fascinating country.

### Reconnect with Nature in Zaamin National Park

Just a few hours' drive from Tashkent, Zaamin National Park is a haven for nature lovers. The park's diverse landscapes, from lush forests to rocky cliffs, provide a stunning backdrop for outdoor activities. Hiking along its scenic trails offers a chance to experience the serenity of Uzbekistan's natural beauty.

For those seeking more adventure, the Chimgan Mountains provide excellent hiking trails, while the Maidanak Observatory is perfect for stargazing. Aydarkul Lake offers opportunities for camping and fishing, and the dunes near Muynak in Karakalpakstan are ideal for exploring the unique desert landscapes. These outdoor adventures promise both excitement and rejuvenation.

### Experience nomadic life in Yurts

To truly connect with Uzbekistan's heritage, spend a night in a traditional yurt. These portable, round tents have been used by nomadic people in Central Asia for centuries. Staying in a yurt offers a unique glimpse into the nomadic lifestyle, complete with camel rides, folklore performances, and the serene beauty of the desert.

Yurt camps are set up in various locations, allowing visitors to experience the vast landscapes and star-filled skies of Uzbekistan's deserts. The hospitality of the local hosts, combined with the comfort of the yurts, makes for an unforgettable cultural experience. Uzbekistan, with its rich history, vibrant culture, and diverse natural landscapes, offers a myriad of adventures and leisure activities. Whether exploring ancient Silk Road cities, savouring the flavours of traditional plov, skiing down majestic peaks, or reconnecting with nature in national parks, this Central Asian gem promises unforgettable experiences. Embrace the journey and discover the many facets of Uzbekistan, a land where history and adventure seamlessly blend.





## A TASTE OF FRANCE WITH FERRANDI PARIS AT

## Galeries Lafayette

French culture is renowned for its sophisticated art, fashion, and, most importantly, gastronomy. When I had the opportunity to dive into this culinary tradition by taking the Mushroom Risotto Cooking class, I embraced it. This class was hosted at Galeries Lafayette Paris Haussmann in collaboration with Ferrandi Paris, which truly left a lasting impression.

- Naina Nath

Upon arrival, we were warmly greeted by our chef, who introduced us to the kitchen and our cooking agenda. The setting was both professional and inviting, designed to make us feel like true chefs. The class size was small, and limited to six participants, ensuring personalised attention and an intimate learning environment. This allowed us to closely follow the chef's instructions and ask questions freely.

The chef began by explaining the origins and significance of the dish we were about to prepare—Forest Mushroom Risotto. This traditional French dish, known for its rich flavours and creamy texture, perfectly showcases the artistry of French cuisine. Our chef, a Ferrandi Paris graduate, shared

valuable insights into ingredient selection, the importance of technique, and the nuances that distinguish an ordinary dish from an extraordinary one.

We started with the basics: selecting and preparing the mushrooms. The chef emphasised on the importance of using fresh, high-quality ingredients, a cornerstone of French cooking. We learned how to clean and slice the mushrooms properly, ensuring they retained their flavour and texture during cooking. The aroma of fresh mushrooms filled the kitchen, setting the stage for a delightful culinary experience.

Next, we moved on to preparing the risotto. The chef guided us through each step, from sautéing the shallots to

toasting the rice, and finally, the slow, careful process of adding broth. We learned that patience is the key to achieving the perfect risotto. The chef demonstrated how to stir the risotto consistently, allowing the rice to release its starch and create the creamy texture that defines this dish.

Throughout the class, our chef shared numerous tips and tricks. For instance, we learned how to deglaze the pan with white wine to enhance the flavour and how to judge the perfect consistency of the risotto. These insights were invaluable and would undoubtedly elevate our home cooking.

As we cooked, the atmosphere was lively and collaborative. Working together in a small group helped us feel like a team, as we shared our progress and tasted each other's dishes. The chef was always on hand to offer guidance and encouragement, ensuring we stayed on track.

Finally, it was time to taste our creations. We gathered around a beautifully set table, with our risotto dishes presented elegantly in the French style. The moment of truth came, and the first bite was simply amazing. The risotto was creamy, flavourful, and rich with the earthy taste of mushrooms—a testament to the chef's expert guidance and our

collective efforts.

Concluding the class, we enjoyed our meal with a glass of wine, savouring the fruits of our labour. The experience was more than just a cooking class; it was a deep dive into French cooking, made special by our chef's knowledge and passion.

And so, the Forest Mushroom Risotto Cooking class at Galeries Lafayette Paris Haussmann, led by a Ferrandi Paris chef, was an unforgettable journey into the heart of French gastronomy. It was an experience that left me with new skills, lasting memories, and a deeper appreciation for the art of French cooking. Whether you are a novice cook or a seasoned gourmet, this class offers something valuable for everyone. A special thanks to Atout France India for organising this memorable experience.





## Resorts World Cruises celebrates its entry in the Arabian Gulf Market with Resort World One



Resorts World Cruises is pleased to announce that it will be expanding its footprint to the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman with Resorts World One for a 6-month homeport deployment in Dubai, UAE. Starting from 18th October 2024, the Resorts World One will homeport and depart from Dubai, which will provide travellers from India the option to embark from Dubai on a cruise adventure to popular destinations within the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. The itineraries include the two Night Sir Bani Yas Weekend Cruise with departures on Fridays; a three Night Oman Cruise to Khasab and Muscat departing on Sundays; and a two Night Doha Cruise departing on Wednesdays. Indian guests will have the flexible option to combine two or all three of the itineraries to increase the cruise length to a four, five or seven Night Cruise.





*An oasis of culture and comfort*  
**Teardrop Hotels**  
**Sri Lanka**



In the ever-evolving landscape of Sri Lanka's hospitality industry, Teardrop Hotels stands as a symbol of refined luxury, blending contemporary comfort with the island's rich cultural heritage. **Manoj Devaraj, Group Head, Sales and Marketing, Teardrop Hotels** uncovers the factors shaping its growth.

- *Naina Nath*







Teardrop Hotels offers seven unique properties in Sri Lanka, each reflecting the country's heritage and natural beauty. These include Wallawwa (18 bedrooms), Lunuganga (10 bedrooms), Fort Bazaar (18 bedrooms), Kumu Beach (10 bedrooms), and three tea bungalows: Goatfell (4 bedrooms), Nine Skies (5 bedrooms), and Camellia Hills (5 bedrooms); catering to families, honeymooners, and wellness enthusiasts,

While prioritising sustainability through the Teardrop CARE Foundation, they support education, women empowerment, and environmental conservation. They offer curated experiences such as the Pico Trail, showcasing Sri Lanka's landscapes and cultural heritage. As a locally rooted brand, they emphasise personalised service, locally sourced experiences, and affordability, ideal for travellers seeking an authentic Sri Lankan experience.

### **Navigating the changing tides of tourism**

With an influx of travellers from diverse markets, including India, Teardrop Hotels has witnessed a notable increase in its clientele numbers. What was once perceived as a niche sector has now become a flourishing market segment, with boutique hotels capturing a significant share of the tourism pie. Manoj shares, "Twice a year, we witness the influx into Sri Lanka, transforming the landscape of travel. It's not just a destination; it's an experience waiting to be embraced."

### **Redefining Sri Lanka's appeal**

The allure of Sri Lanka extends beyond its pristine beaches and lush landscapes. Teardrop Hotels recognises the evolving preferences of travellers and the need to differentiate Sri Lanka as a distinct destination. Manoj shares, "Through our curated experiences and a nuanced approach to hospitality, we showcase the multifaceted charm of Sri Lanka, enticing travellers to explore its cultural tapestry, culinary delights, and natural wonders. As Sri Lanka embraces a new era of travel, we remain committed to crafting unforgettable journeys that transcend mere vacations."

### **Catering to the discerning Indian traveller**

India is a pivotal market for Teardrop Hotels, with an increasing number of Indian travellers seeking immersive experiences beyond traditional tourist hotspots. The company has adapted its offerings to cater to the preferences of Indian travellers, including wellness retreats, culinary experiences, and personalised service. "By aligning with the evolving trends in Indian tourism, the brand has positioned itself as a preferred choice for luxury seekers and experiential travellers alike. India's influence on Teardrop Hotels goes beyond borders, inspiring us to curate experiences that resonate with the discerning Indian traveller seeking luxury with a soul," shares Manoj.

### **Beyond the Metropolis**

While major cities such as Mumbai and Delhi remain key hubs, they recognise the untapped potential in Tier II and Tier III cities of India. Through strategic partnerships and targeted marketing initiatives, the brand aims to penetrate emerging markets, offering unique experiences tailored to diverse consumer segments. Manoj shares, "By understanding the distinct preferences and requirements of travellers across different regions, Teardrop Hotels seeks to create lasting connections and expand its footprint in the Indian market. Our commitment to authentic experiences extends beyond our properties, featuring initiatives that empower local communities while showcasing our rich heritage"

### **Sustainability: A Core Commitment**

Amongst the changing dynamics of the hospitality industry, Teardrop Hotels remains unwavering in its commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism practices. From community engagement initiatives to environmental conservation efforts, Teardrop Hotels strives to create a positive impact on local communities and preserve Sri Lanka's natural heritage for future generations. "Through its Teardrop CARE Foundation, Teardrop Hotels spearheads initiatives aimed at empowering marginalised communities and promoting eco-friendly practices across its properties. With sustainability at

our core, Teardrop Hotels isn't just about luxury; it's about leaving a positive impact on the communities we call home," shares Manoj.

### **The Future of Hospitality**

As Teardrop Hotels charts a course toward the future, innovation emerges as a cornerstone of their strategy. From leveraging technology to enhance guest experiences to embracing new trends in wellness tourism, Teardrop Hotels remains at the leading edge of innovation in the hospitality sector. By staying attuned to evolving consumer preferences and market dynamics, the company aims to redefine the paradigm of luxury hospitality in Sri Lanka and beyond. He adds, "In a world driven by personal connections, we prioritise face-to-face interactions, understanding the unique needs of each market, and curating bespoke experiences that resonate with travellers."

The journey of Teardrop Hotels showcases the impactful power of hospitality to shape perceptions, foster cultural exchange, and create memorable experiences. As Sri Lanka continues to be a preferred travel destination, Teardrop Hotels is ready to welcome Indian guests, elevate the standards of luxury hospitality, and invite travellers to discover and indulge in the heart of paradise. Discover the heart of Sri Lanka with Teardrop Hotels, where every stay is a testament to their passion for authenticity, sustainability, and exceptional hospitality.





# The Flourishing Tourism and Hospitality Sector in India



India's tourism and hospitality sector has experienced remarkable growth and transformation in recent years. The latest insights, as outlined in the 'Tourism and Hospitality Infographic - March 2024,' reveal significant trends, key statistics, and government initiatives that have shaped this vibrant industry. Let's explore the critical aspects of the sector, exploring foreign tourist arrivals, foreign exchange earnings, market size projections, GDP contributions, and the role of government policies in fostering growth. Additionally, we examine the diverse attractions that make India a preferred destination for various types of travellers.





### Rising Foreign Tourist Arrivals

The number of foreign tourists arriving in India has shown a consistent upward trend, reflecting the country's growing appeal as a global travel destination. In 2023, India welcomed 10.93 million foreign tourists, up from 10.56 million in 2022. This increase is indicative of India's enhanced tourism infrastructure, effective marketing campaigns, and the unique experiences it offers to visitors.

### Purpose-wise Foreign Tourist Arrivals

The composition of foreign tourist arrivals in 2023 was diverse, catering to various interests and purposes:

- **Leisure, Holiday, and Recreation:** This category accounted for 45.73 per cent of foreign tourists, highlighting India's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities.
- **Business and Professional:** Representing 10.28 per cent of arrivals, this segment underscores India's growing importance as a business hub.
- **Indian Diaspora:** Comprising 26.52 per cent of arrivals, the Indian diaspora plays a significant role in tourism, visiting family and participating in cultural and religious events.
- **Medical:** Attracting 6.87 per cent of foreign tourists, India's medical tourism sector is thriving due to world-class healthcare facilities and traditional healing practices.
- **Others:** This segment made up 10.60 per cent of arrivals, including various other travel purposes.

### Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism

Tourism is a vital source of foreign exchange for India. In 2023, foreign exchange earnings from tourism reached US\$ 9.24 billion, up from US\$ 6.44 billion in 2022. This substantial increase reflects the sector's robust performance and its critical role in the national economy. The influx of foreign

tourists contributes significantly to various economic activities, including hospitality, transportation, retail, and entertainment.

### Market Size and Projections

The travel market in India is poised for significant expansion. In FY20, the market size was estimated at US\$ 75 billion, and it is projected to reach US\$ 125 billion by FY27. This growth trajectory is driven by increasing disposable incomes, a burgeoning middle class, and the rising popularity of domestic and international travel among Indians. The robust demand for travel and tourism services is further fuelled by India's diverse attractions and the government's proactive measures to boost the sector.

### Contribution to GDP

Tourism and hospitality make substantial contributions to India's GDP. In 2022, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was US\$ 199.6 billion. This figure underscores the sector's importance in generating economic activity, creating jobs, and promoting regional development. The direct contribution

of tourism and hospitality to GDP also remains significant, highlighting the industry's role in driving economic growth.

### Government Initiatives and Policy Support

The Indian government has been instrumental in fostering the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector through various initiatives and policy measures. The 2024 interim budget allocated Rs. 2,449.62 crore (US\$ 294.8 million) to the tourism sector, marking a 44.7 per cent increase from the previous fiscal year. This substantial allocation underscores the government's commitment to enhancing tourism infrastructure, promoting new destinations, and supporting tourism-related businesses.

### Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD Schemes

Under the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 52 tourism sector projects valued at over Rs. 1,400 crore (US\$ 168.5 million) in 2024. These schemes aim to develop theme-based tourist circuits and

promote pilgrimage tourism, respectively. By improving infrastructure and creating world-class tourist facilities, these initiatives are expected to attract more domestic and international tourists, thereby boosting the sector's growth.

### Diverse Attractions: A Magnet for Tourists

India's tourism offerings are incredibly diverse, encompassing geographical diversity, cultural heritage, and niche tourism products. This diversity makes India a compelling destination for various types of travellers.

### Geographical Diversity

India's vast geographical diversity ranges from the snow-capped Himalayas in the north to the tropical beaches in the south. The country's varied landscapes offer numerous opportunities for adventure tourism, trekking, wildlife safaris, and beach holidays. Popular destinations like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Goa attract millions of tourists each year, each region offering a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural experiences.





**Cultural Heritage and World Heritage Sites**

India is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, and the Red Fort. These historical monuments reflect the country's rich cultural heritage and architectural marvels. Cultural tourism is a significant draw, with tourists flocking to explore India's ancient temples, forts, palaces, and heritage sites. Festivals such as Diwali, Holi, and Durga Puja also attract international visitors eager to experience India's vibrant traditions and celebrations.

**Niche Tourism Products**

India's niche tourism products cater to specific interests and preferences, further enhancing its appeal:

- **Medical Tourism:** Drawing upon world-class healthcare amenities and traditional healing practices, medical tourism entices 21 per cent of international travellers. India offers affordable and high-quality medical treatments, including complex surgeries, wellness retreats, and alternative therapies like Ayurveda and yoga.
- **Adventure Tourism:** Adventure seekers can indulge in activities like river rafting, paragliding, skiing, and trekking. Destinations like Rishikesh, Manali, and Ladakh are renowned for their adventure tourism offerings.
- **Eco-tourism:** Eco-tourism is gaining popularity, with tourists visiting wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, and rural areas to experience India's biodiversity and engage in sustainable travel practices.
- **Cruises:** India is emerging as a cruise tourism destination, with major ports like Mumbai, Goa, and Kochi offering luxurious cruise experiences along the Indian coastline and beyond.

**The Role of Pilgrimage Travel**

Pilgrimage travel is a significant segment of India's tourism industry, attracting millions of domestic and international visitors. Sacred sites such as Varanasi, Rishikesh, Amritsar, and the temples of Tamil Nadu are

frequented by devotees seeking spiritual experiences. The Indian diaspora also contributes to pilgrimage tourism, with many expatriates returning to their homeland to participate in religious and cultural rituals. This segment's popularity is expected to grow, driven by the government's efforts to improve infrastructure and promote lesser-known pilgrimage destinations.

**Economic Impact and Employment Generation**

The tourism and hospitality sector is a major employment generator in India, providing jobs to millions of people across various segments, including hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and tour operators. The sector's growth has a multiplier effect on the economy, stimulating demand for goods and services and supporting allied industries such as handicrafts, textiles, and transportation.

**Future Outlook and Opportunities**

The future of India's tourism and hospitality sector looks promising, with several factors contributing to its sustained growth:

1. **Increased Disposable Incomes:** Rising incomes and a growing middle class are expected to drive domestic tourism, with more Indians opting for leisure and recreational travel.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** On-going infrastructure projects, including the development of airports, highways, and tourist facilities, will enhance connectivity and improve the overall travel experience.
3. **Digital Transformation:** The adoption of digital technologies and online platforms for booking, planning, and experiencing travel will facilitate seamless and personalised travel experiences for tourists.
4. **Sustainable Tourism Practices:** Emphasising sustainable and responsible tourism practices will help preserve India's natural and

cultural heritage while promoting eco-friendly travel options.

5. **Policy Reforms:** Continued government support through favourable policies, incentives, and investments will further boost the sector's growth and competitiveness on the global stage.

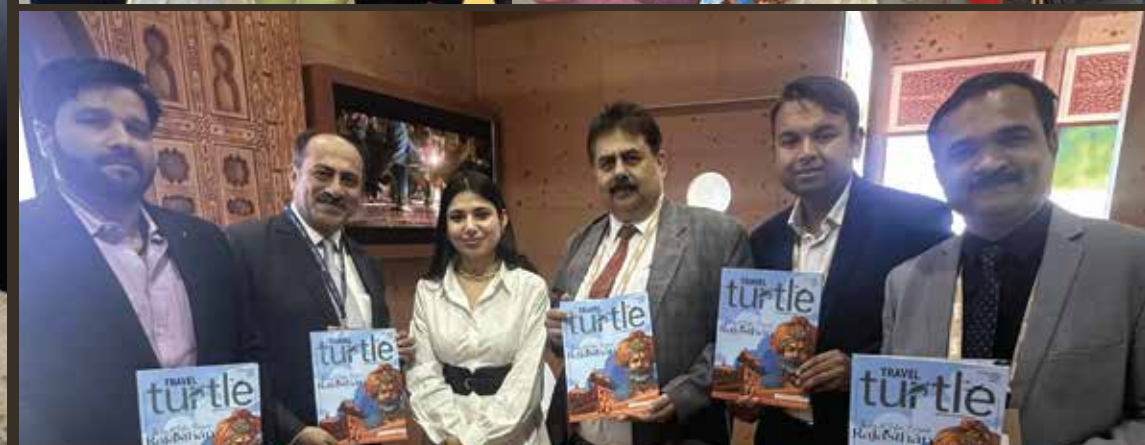
India's tourism and hospitality sector is on a robust growth trajectory, driven by increasing foreign tourist arrivals, rising foreign exchange earnings, and significant contributions to GDP. The government's proactive initiatives and policy support, coupled with India's diverse attractions and unique tourism offerings, position the country as a leading global travel destination. As the sector continues to evolve and adapt to changing traveller preferences, it holds immense potential for economic development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. With a strategic focus on sustainability, infrastructure development, and digital transformation, India is well poised to achieve its vision of becoming a top tourism destination in the coming years.





# Arabian Travel Market 2024 sees 15 per cent year-on-year growth

More than 46,000 industry professionals from over 160 countries – including 33,500 visitors – attended the 31st edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM), in Dubai, UAE. This represents a 15 per cent year-on-year increase in attendees compared to ATM's landmark 30th edition, setting a new record for the show and demonstrating the strength, resilience and momentum of the global travel and tourism sector. In line with ATM 2024's theme, 'Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship', over 2,600 exhibitors gathered at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) to explore the drivers behind industry growth and identify future opportunities within the global tourism sector. Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said: "My colleagues and I are delighted that so many industry professionals from around the world were able to join us in Dubai to explore how innovation and entrepreneurship are shaping a more efficient, profitable and sustainable tourism sector for future generations. We are thrilled to have set a new show record, underscoring our position as the travel and tourism exhibition of choice as we continue to drive global growth within the industry."





# The Great Indian Travel Bazaar 2024 in Rajasthan draws global attention



Rajasthan hosted India's premier tourism event, The Great Indian Travel Bazaar attracting a significant global audience. Nine state tourism boards, including Odisha (theme state), Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, and Punjab, showcased their attractions. The event drew around 250 Foreign Tour Operators (FTOs) from 52 countries and 16 international wedding planners, all keen on exploring various wedding destinations. With over 300 booths, the exhibition facilitated engagement between numerous domestic tour operators and 60 wedding planners with their foreign counterparts, resulting in over 11,000 B2B meetings. The Ministry of Tourism's new initiative, 'Coolcation,' which promotes unique and cool travel experiences, struck a chord with both buyers and sellers, further enhancing the event's success. This convergence of international interest and local offerings underscores India's growing appeal as a premier tourism and wedding destination.







**Cambodia Angkor Air launches Phnom Penh-New Delhi direct flight from 16th June**

Cambodia Angkor Air Co. Ltd, the National Flag Carrier of Cambodia (IATA Code: K6), announces the commencement of direct flights between Cambodia's vibrant capital, Phnom Penh, and the bustling metropolis of New Delhi, India. Set to take flight four times a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday) under the flight code K6760/K6761, this ground-breaking service marks the first-ever direct connection between these two nations, heralding a new era of seamless air travel. Cambodia Angkor Air's historic launch of direct flights, during the "Cambodia-India Cultural Tourism Year" of 2024, signifies a profound step towards enhancing economic, cultural and tourist exchange between the two countries.



**Vietnam Airlines enters a new era with their Airbus A350 from Vietnam to New Delhi**

Vietnam Airlines, the flag carrier of Vietnam proudly announces the commencement of commercial operations of the state-of-the-art Airbus A350 aircraft, connecting the vibrant capital city of India, New Delhi, to the buzzing cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, effective 15th May. This milestone marks a significant moment in Vietnam Airlines' commitment to providing exceptional service, unparalleled comfort, and seamless connectivity to passengers travelling between India and Vietnam and beyond. The Airbus A350, renowned for its advanced technology and superior comfort has been designed to elevate the travel experience for passengers, offering a harmonious blend of modern amenities and Vietnamese hospitality.





## APPOINTMENTS

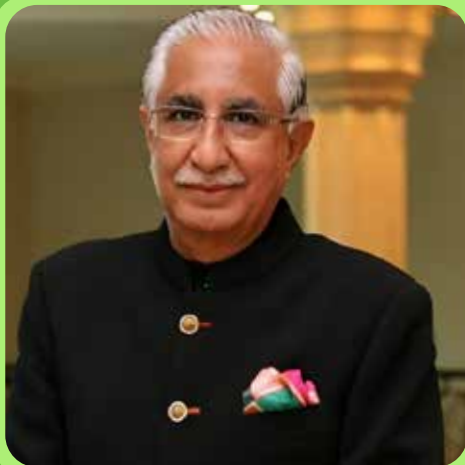


### ***Centara Hotels & Resorts***

Centara Hotels & Resorts, a prominent hotel chain in Asia, announces the promotion of Moumita Mukherjee Paul to the position of Director of Sales & Marketing – South Asia and GCC. Previously serving as the Director of Sales & Marketing – India, Moumita has demonstrated exceptional leadership and strategic vision throughout her tenure. Moumita joined Centara Hotels & Resorts 10 years back, bringing with her a wealth of experience and an innovative approach to sales and marketing.

### ***New Zealand Tourism***

With over a decade of diverse experience spanning E-commerce, Debt Syndication, Trade & Investment, and Tourism, Ghosh brings in a wealth of expertise in customer-facing roles with Sales, Marketing, and Strategy at the core of his career. Ghosh's professional journey includes notable contributions to fostering international relationships and promoting tourism initiatives. During his tenure with the Government of Western Australia, he played a pivotal role in maintaining Sister-State relationships with Andhra Pradesh. His outstanding achievements led to his appointment as the first in-market representative of Tourism Western Australia (TWA) in India, where he served for four years.



### ***FAITH***

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) announces the appointment of Mr Nakul Anand as 'Patron-in-Chief' of FAITH for life with immediate effect. The decision was made during the recent Board Meeting held under the Chairmanship of Mr Puneet Chhatwal, Chairman – FAITH.

### ***Oetker Collection***

Oetker Collection announces that Emanuela Setterberg Di Vivo has been appointed Managing Director of its first North American Masterpiece Hotel, The Vineta, which will open its doors in Q4 2024. With a career in the luxury hospitality industry spanning almost three decades, Setterberg Di Vivo brings with her immense experience in the international luxury hotel space. Covering various leadership positions, She has worked for renowned international luxury hotel brands, including Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton, Bulgari Hotels, Ferragamo, Rosewood, Dorchester Collection and One&Only.





# LIFE

## FRESH EXPERIENCES & FLEXIBLE STAYS AT SAMUI'S NEWEST ADDRESS



With a focus on elevating the essentials and uplifting everyday travel with daily delights, Centara Life Lamai Resort Samui delivers efficiency, flexibility, and exceptional value for all just steps from the soft sands of Lamai Beach.

Contemporary earth-tone rooms offer a fresh retreat, and each is complete with a daybed to comfortably accommodate 3-4 persons. A glistening outdoor pool, 24-hour fitness centre, and casual all-day dining restaurant serving breakfast until 4pm ensure a fresh and flexible experience for your clients, allowing them to enjoy their stay on their own terms.

From pristine beaches and majestic temples to lush jungles and underwater wonders, Koh Samui offers an array of vibrant experiences for every traveller. Whether seeking adventure or relaxation, Centara welcomes your clients to embrace the warm hospitality of this tropical oasis.

**CENTARA LIFE**  
LAMAI RESORT  
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