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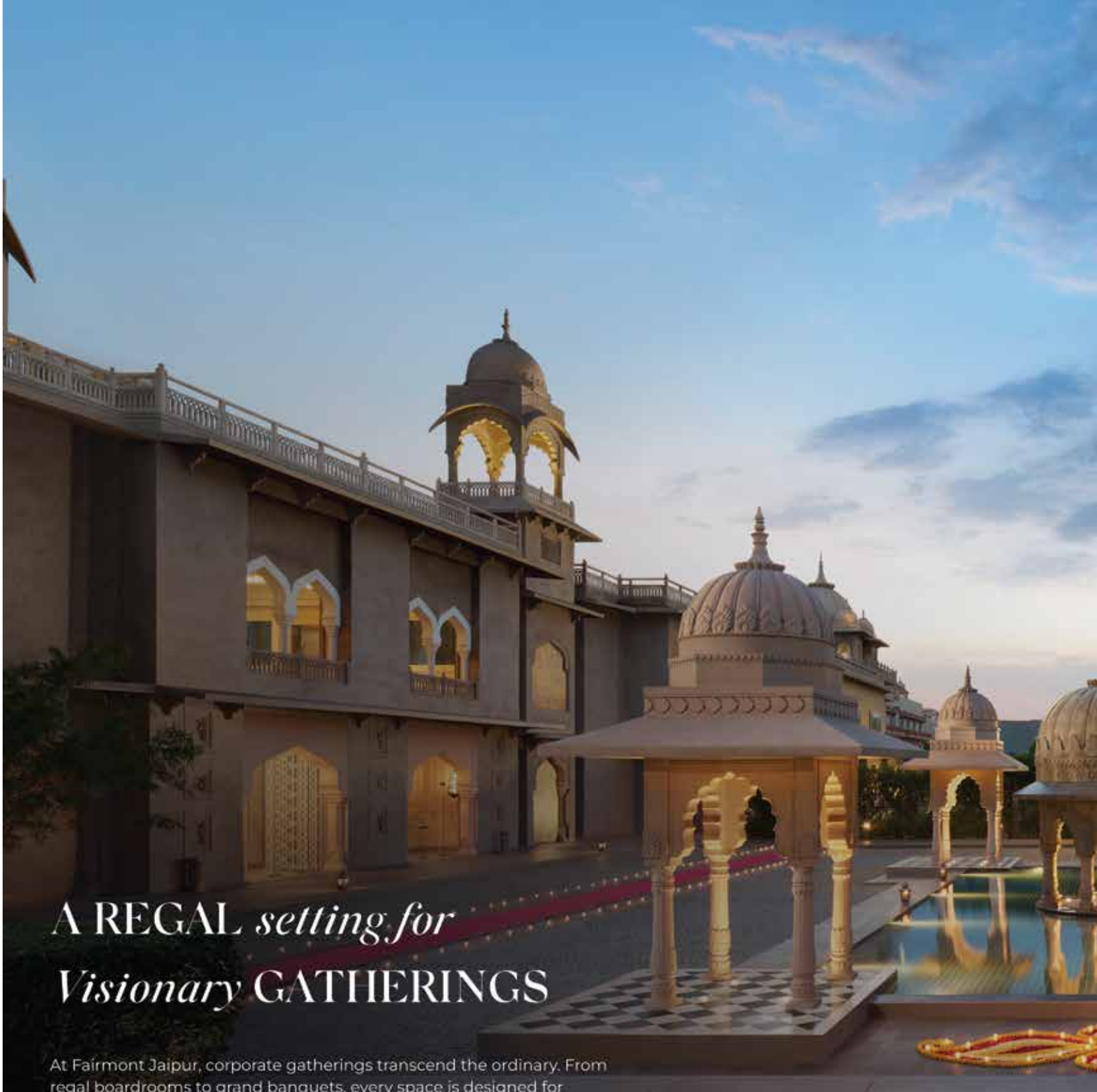


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Editor's Letter

Spring has tiptoed in, draping the world in a symphony of colours, blossoms unfurling like whispered promises, hues of hope spilling into the air. February, you slow, simmering prelude to the grand crescendo that is SATTE. It was the calm before the whirlwind, the pause before the plunge, and now, in its wake, I find myself carrying echoes of countless conversations, stories that refuse to fade, and the overwhelming passion destinations hold for India.

There's something profoundly moving about meeting almost every destination under one roof, witnessing their dedication, their hunger to be part of India's travel revolution. Trust me, there's so much to do this year. International brands are not just stepping but sprinting into the Indian market, each bringing their finest to entice and inspire. And as media, we stand poised on our toes, in our element, to amplify their voices and to craft narratives that matter.

But beyond the business, beyond the deals and data, there was something far more precious at SATTE-love. The kind that lingers in the warmth of familiar faces, in the words of clients and readers who see us only once a year yet remain connected through our pages. How they follow our stories, how they wait for the next issue- it's humbling, it's powerful.

And while the event haze still lingers, we march ahead to our next masterpiece- our ITB Special Issue. This one is stitched together with threads of heritage and adventure, featuring the spellbinding landscapes of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka. From the fairy-tale charm of Disneyland Paris Hotel to the spiritual serenity of Pemako, from the soul of Morocco to the vibrance of Taiwan, we've left no stone unturned. And of course, industry leaders bring us insights on the topics that truly shape travel today.

But the Bollywood buff in me is particularly thrilled about a feature that's close to my heart- Bollywood Tourism. Just pause for a moment and think about it: the world's largest film industry, seamlessly intertwined with travel. The dreamscapes of cinema fuelling real-world wanderlust. It's grand, it's surreal, and it's an untapped treasure trove waiting to be explored.

I hope you find as much joy flipping through these pages as we did bringing them to life. Because this is more than a magazine-it's a labour of love, a bridge between stories and seekers, a testament to the magic of travel.

Happy reading!



Bharti Sharma
Editor

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A new era begins with the grand return of StarCruises and Dream Cruises

Resorts World Cruises announces the grand return of two of Asia's most iconic and legendary cruise brands – StarCruises (a refreshed take on the previous Star Cruises brand) and Dream Cruises. The Resorts World Cruises brand was used temporarily to restart cruising in Asia post Covid, and will be reverting to its original roots, which span over the last 30 years. The brand transition period will take approximately 3 months with the renewed ambition to reinforce StarCruises and Dream Cruises as pioneers of the Asian and global cruising industry.



Sabi Sabi Collection appoints Ace Connect to strengthen presence in the Indian Market

Sabi Sabi Collection announces the appointment of Ace Connect, led by Alpa Jani, to represent us in the Indian market. This partnership reinforces Sabi Sabi's commitment to expanding its presence in one of the world's most dynamic and rapidly growing luxury travel markets.



IATO signs an MoU with Japanese tourism associations to promote tourism between two countries

To facilitate tourism between India and Japan, IATO, the national apex tourism body signed an MOU with Okinawa-India Friendship Association (OIFA) & Onna Village Tourism Association of Japan in New Delhi today. The MOU was signed on behalf of IATO by Mr Rajiv Mehra, President IATO and Mr Moritake Tomikawa, President – Okinawa India Friendship Association (OIFA) and Ms Rumiko Miyazaki, Chairperson – Onna Village Tourism Association. Present on the occasion were Mr Yoshimi Nagahama, Mayor of Onna Village and Mr Ravi Gosain – Vice President-IATO.



Thomas Cook India & SOTC signs strategic MOU with Korea Tourism Organization

Thomas Cook (India) Limited, India's leading omnichannel travel services company and its group company SOTC Travel, have signed a strategic 24-month partnership with Korea Tourism Organization – a collaboration that focuses on Special Projects towards increasing visibility for the destination in the high-potential India market. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Mr Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head, Holidays, MICE, Visa – Thomas Cook (India) Limited, Mr SD Nandakumar, President & Country Head – Holidays & Corporate Tours – SOTC Travel and Mr Myong Kil Yun, Regional Director – India & SAARC Countries, Korea Tourism Organization.



Saudia expands global network with over 10 new destinations for 2025

Saudia, announces a significant expansion of its global flight network, adding more than ten new destinations for 2025. This strategic growth, fuelled by a 16 per cent increase in international guest numbers last year, reflects the airline's commitment to connecting the world and meeting increasing global travel demand. The new destinations offer a diverse range of options, spanning Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.



Sri Lanka launches its first-ever Conference Ambassador Programme

Sri Lanka has marked a significant milestone in its journey to becoming a premier destination for international conferences with the launch of the Sri Lanka Conference Ambassador Programme (SLCAP). This first-of-its-kind initiative, presented by Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) and Sri Lankan Airlines, bringing together trusted entities to promote Sri Lanka as a global hub for business events.



Crystal Cruises appoints Cruise Professionals as their Preferred Agency in India

Cruise Professionals has been appointed by Crystal Cruises as their preferred sales agency in India. Crystal has been the watchword for exceptional cruises for three decades. In 2022, A&K Travel Group acquired the Crystal brand. They refurbished and relaunched the flagships, Crystal Serenity and Crystal Symphony. Now that Crystal has set a new standard at sea, they look forward to welcoming guests to the exceptional world of Crystal.



The Fern Hotels & Resorts unveils new wildlife retreat in Rajasthan

The Fern Hotels & Resorts announces the launch of its latest experiential resort, Jawai Zinc Journey by The Fern, located in the scenic and wildlife-rich region of Jawai, Rajasthan. This new addition to the brand's portfolio further strengthens The Fern Hotels & Resorts' position as a leader in eco-sensitive and sustainable hospitality. The company now has a total of 17 properties in Rajasthan, operational and shortly opening.



Ebix Travels and Delhi Capitals reignite partnership for the 2025 T20 Season

Ebix Travels Private Ltd. announces that it has entered into a strategic partnership with Delhi Capitals as an Associate Sponsor for the upcoming 2025 T20 cricketing season, covering both the men's and women's teams. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in the Indian T20 cricketing landscape, with Ebix joining forces with one of the most exciting teams in the league.



A new exhibition opens at Ben Gurion Airport in Israel

As direct international routes opened up and arrivals to Israel began in larger volumes, a new exhibition titled, The Eternity of Israel, opened at Ben-Gurion Airport's Terminal 3. It provides visitors an opportunity to explore the history of Israel through archaeological findings and photos from rare moments of discovery. The exhibition takes passengers on a journey through the history of the people of Israel – a story of strength, challenges, upheavals, and revival, spanning thousands of years and illustrating the power of the people's renewal.



Tourism Western Australia and Scoot organises trade event in Chennai and Visakhapatnam

Tourism Western Australia partnered with Scoot to host an exclusive trade networking event in Visakhapatnam and Chennai. The event received an encouraging response from 47 travel agent partners from each city. These key industry partners were provided with valuable insights of Western Australia's incredible tourism offerings and Scoot's seamlessly connections from India to Perth via Scoot's extensive network.



Karnataka Tourism Inaugurate's the second edition of 'Karnataka International Travel Expo'

After achieving a resounding success with its inaugural edition, it has returned with its second edition. This premier travel and tourism event took place in February end, showcasing Karnataka as a vibrant and diverse global tourism hub.

Limitless investment opportunities and vast potential in Madhya Pradesh's Tourism Sector

With the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Madhya Pradesh presents limitless opportunities and vast potential for tourism investment. If any state stands out for offering comprehensive facilities to investors while providing unique experiences for every traveller, it is Madhya Pradesh. Recognising the state's expanding tourism sector and rising investments, I firmly believe that in the future, the Global Investors Summit will be exclusively focused on tourism," says Chief Minister Dr. Yadav while addressing the Tourism Summit at GIS.



OA Globe DMC unveils new identity at SATTE 2025

One Above Global DMC has officially rebranded as OA Globe DMC, marking a new chapter in its journey as a dynamic and forward-thinking leader in the travel industry. The transformation was unveiled at SATTE 2025, setting the tone for an exciting future driven by experiential travel, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.





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The world,
a stage and



Bollywood

its spotlight

As a self-proclaimed Bollywood aficionado, I've often found myself daydreaming about the vibrant locales showcased in our favourite films. The allure of Bollywood extends beyond the silver screen, captivating audiences worldwide and transforming ordinary destinations into iconic tourist hotspots.

- *Bharti Sharma*



Cinema, the mirror of society

Bollywood, India's prolific film industry, produces over a thousand films annually, reaching audiences across the globe. Its influence permeates various aspects of culture, fashion, and notably, tourism. The depiction of picturesque landscapes and exotic locales in Bollywood films often ignites a desire among viewers to experience these settings firsthand.

Seeing is believing

The phenomenon where cinematic portrayals inspire travel is known as film-induced tourism. Bollywood has been a catalyst in this domain, with several destinations witnessing a surge in visitors post their on-screen appearances.

• Ladakh's Pangong Lake:

Featured in the climax of '3 Idiots,' Pangong Lake's pristine beauty captivated audiences, leading to a significant increase in tourism to

this remote region.

• **Spain:** The film 'Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara' showcased Spain's vibrant culture and scenic locales, resulting in a 32 per cent increase in Indian tourists to the country within six months of the film's release.

• **Rajasthan's Palaces:** Movies like 'Jodha Akbar' and 'Bajirao Mastani' highlighted Rajasthan's majestic forts and palaces, drawing tourists eager to relive the grandeur depicted on screen.

Every place has a story waiting to be told

Bollywood doesn't just spotlight popular tourist spots; it also brings lesser-known destinations into the limelight. By choosing unconventional locations, filmmakers introduce audiences to India's diverse landscapes, fostering curiosity and travel interest.

• **Manali and Rohtang Pass:** The movie 'Jab We Met' featured

these locales, showcasing their natural beauty and leading to increased tourist footfall.

• **Chanderi, Madhya Pradesh:** 'Stree,' a horror-comedy, was set in this quaint town, piquing interest among travellers seeking offbeat destinations.

Tourism is the golden goose

The surge of tourists to film locations brings substantial economic benefits. Local businesses experience increased demand for accommodations, dining, and crafts, bolstering residents' livelihoods. To accommodate the influx, infrastructure developments such as improved roads and enhanced public facilities are often undertaken. This tourism boom also generates employment opportunities in hospitality, transportation, and tour services, contributing to the region's overall economic growth.



Every rose has its thorn

However, this symbiotic relationship between Bollywood and tourism presents challenges. A sudden influx of tourists can strain natural resources and disrupt local ecosystems. Preserving the cultural integrity of destinations is crucial to prevent the erosion of local traditions and values. Additionally, rapid tourist booms can overwhelm existing infrastructure, leading to issues like overcrowding and inadequate public services.

To travel is to live

As a Bollywood enthusiast, visiting these iconic locations has been a dream come true. Standing by Pangong Lake, I could almost hear Rancho's infectious laughter from '3 Idiots.' Walking through the bustling streets of Chanderi, I felt the eerie yet exciting vibe of 'Stree.' These experiences have

deepened my appreciation for the seamless blend of cinema and reality, where storytelling transcends screens and becomes a tangible adventure.

The best is yet to come

To fully capitalize on film-induced tourism, collaborative efforts are essential. Tourism boards and film industries can form strategic partnerships to promote destinations, offering incentives for filmmakers to choose specific locales. Implementing sustainable tourism practices ensures that growth doesn't compromise the environment, as seen in Thailand's proactive measures to protect Koh Samui amid increased interest from productions like "The White Lotus" [cite turnonews6](#). Engaging local communities in tourism activities helps preserve cultural heritage while

providing authentic experiences for visitors, exemplified by the restoration of the Sad Hill cemetery in Spain, which revitalized the area and attracted enthusiasts of "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly"

The show must go on

Bollywood's influence on tourism is a testament to the power of storytelling. It transforms mundane locations into magical realms, inviting audiences to step beyond their screens and embark on journeys of discovery. As both industries continue to evolve, their intertwined destinies promise a future where every film is an invitation to explore, and every journey is a story waiting to be told.

So, fellow Bollywood buffs, pack your bags, follow the cinematic trails, and let the magic of movies guide your next adventure.





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Chhattisgarh

A journey through culture and nature

Rich in natural splendour and cultural heritage, Chhattisgarh holds immense significance in India's tourism landscape. However, much of its beauty and experiences remain untouched, offering travellers an opportunity for true exploration. Shri Vivek Acharya (IFS), Managing Director, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, shares insights into the future plans for Chhattisgarh, and initiatives to promote its rich cultural and natural heritage.

- *Sudipta Saha*





Shri Vivek Acharya

Blessed with dense forests, cascading waterfalls, and a rich tribal heritage, this state is a true paradise for explorers. Whether it's the roar of Chitrakote Falls, the serenity of Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary, or the vibrant hues of tribal art and culture, Chhattisgarh offers an experience like no other. A forward-thinking leader, Shri Vivek Acharya is dedicated to positioning Chhattisgarh as a key tourism destination while also prioritising industry education and development for long-term success.

Elevating tourism

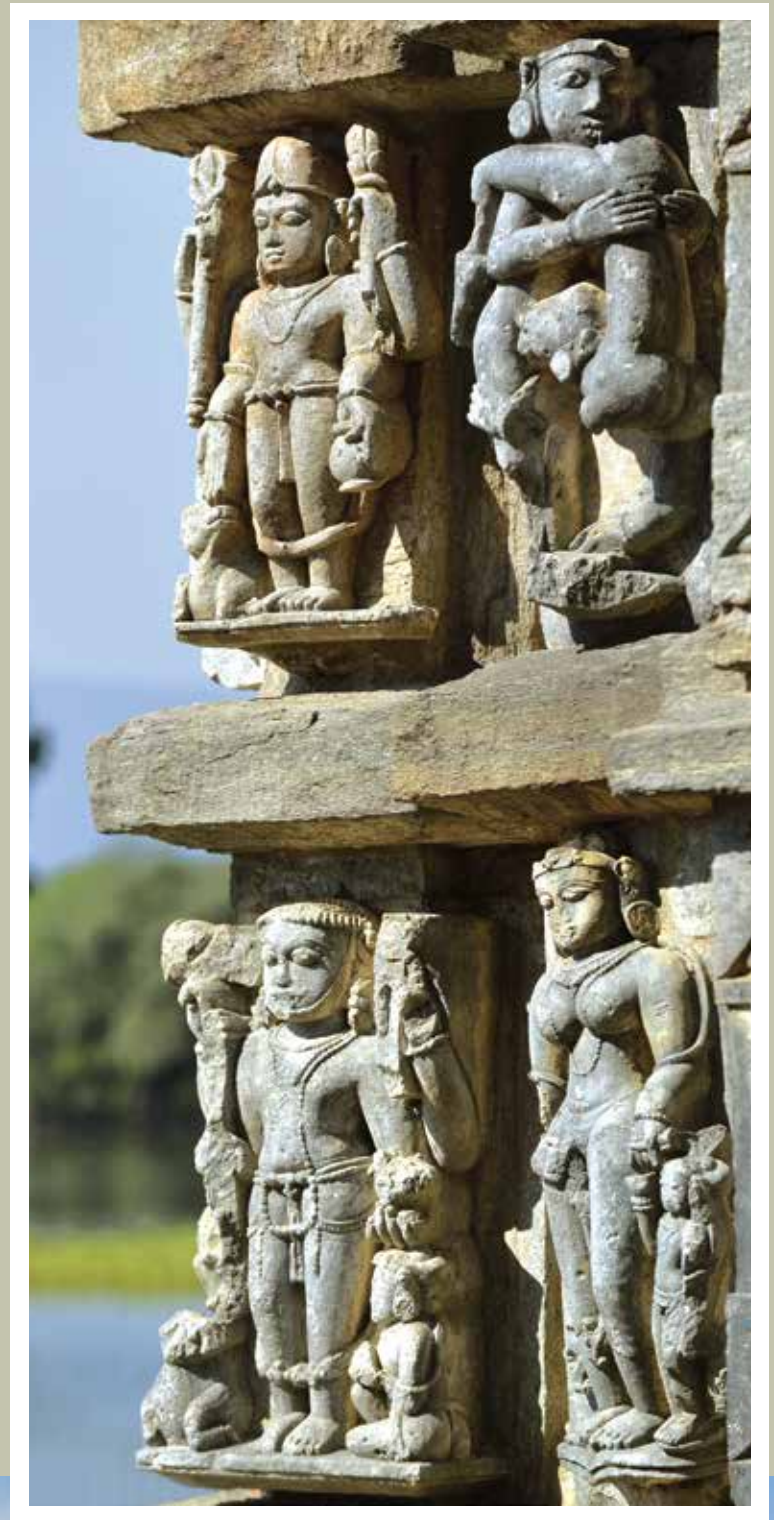
Chhattisgarh is an emerging destination with immense potential across various tourism segments, including religious, adventure, and ethnic tourism. "Chhattisgarh, as a relatively young and emerging tourism destination, holds immense potential. Our tourism sector is primarily driven by religious tourism, followed closely by adventure and ethnic tourism, with tribal tourism being a significant highlight," says Shri Vivek Acharya.

He further shares, "Recognising Chhattisgarh's rich tribal heritage, we are actively working on a homestay policy that will empower local communities. This initiative aims to provide incentives and subsidies for tribals to expand their homes, enabling them to host tourists. By fostering this unique cultural exchange, we aspire to offer travelers an authentic experience while creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for our tribal communities."

Culture, cuisine & community

Chhattisgarh is redefining rural tourism by offering travellers an opportunity to experience authentic tribal life. Through its homestay initiatives, visitors can engage with indigenous communities, savour traditional cuisine, and witness a way of life deeply connected to nature. "In these homestays, visitors can immerse themselves in the vibrant culture and traditional cuisine of the tribal communities. These tribes continue to live in harmony with nature, preserving age-old customs and sustainable ways of life. This initiative is a key part of our efforts to promote rural tourism in Chhattisgarh," adds Shri Vivek Acharya.

"Recently, our commitment to sustainable tourism received global recognition, as the village of Dhudmaras, located in the deep south of the state, was honored with a United Nations award for Best Rural Adventure Tourism Village. This achievement further strengthens our vision of positioning Chhattisgarh as a leading destination for authentic and immersive rural experiences," mentions Shri Vivek Acharya.



Expanding horizons

Chhattisgarh is strategically broadening its tourism focus, targeting both domestic and international markets. Among the key global markets, Pennsylvania, Dubai, and Spain have emerged as primary areas of interest for promoting the state's diverse tourism offerings.

"In recent years, domestic tourism has seen a significant surge, particularly post-pandemic, as travel restrictions led Indian travellers to explore homegrown destinations. This shift, often termed 'revenge tourism,' saw many states prioritising domestic travel. While domestic tourism remains the backbone of the industry, inbound tourism brings higher revenue and enhances global visibility. Recognising this, Chhattisgarh is now actively working to attract more foreign tourists, ensuring a balanced approach that leverages both local and international opportunities for sustainable tourism growth," states Shri Vivek Acharya.

Growing film, MICE, and experiential tourism

Chhattisgarh is rapidly emerging as a preferred destination for film production, large-scale events, and experiential tourism. "Over the past year, 27 movies have been filmed in the state, with one receiving a National Award. Recognising the power of cinema in influencing travel, the government has introduced various subsidies and incentives for filmmakers, including



additional benefits for productions that hire local artists. This initiative has attracted Bollywood projects, making Chhattisgarh a sought-after filming location," highlights Shri Vivek Acharya.

He further expresses, "The state has sanctioned a Film City in Raipur, which will be developed alongside a Convention Center on a PPP model in collaboration with leading hotel chains. This venue will serve as a hub for MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), hosting government and corporate events, as well as tourism expos."

In addition, Chhattisgarh recently organised the Central India Conclave, bringing together seven states on World Tourism Day. Building on this success, the state is planning a national-level tourism event in Raipur in the upcoming financial year, further cementing its place on India's tourism map.

Shri Vivek Acharya further adds, "Apart from film and MICE tourism, wedding tourism is another area of focus, aligning with India's booming destination wedding market. Moreover, experiential tourism is being actively promoted, as immersive and unique experiences play a crucial role in increasing tourist footfall."

Chhattisgarh's holistic approach—spanning film tourism, MICE tourism, wedding tourism, and experiential tourism — demonstrates its commitment to creating a dynamic and thriving tourism ecosystem.



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Tourism on a Shoestring

India's grand budgetary magic trick

In a stunning act of financial wizardry, the Government of India has unveiled its latest vanishing trick—making the overseas tourism promotion budget disappear.

- Tripti Jain



PUBLIC EYE

With just INR 3 crore allocated for marketing India to the world, the tourism industry is left wondering whether they should invest in billboards or just hand out postcards at international airports. As the global tourism race speeds ahead, India seems content watching from the sidelines, waving meekly with an empty wallet.



Rajiv Mehra

See You... If You Can Find Us!

Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators is no stranger to navigating turbulent waters in the tourism industry, but even he finds the current allocation beyond absurd. "This is a major setback for India's inbound tourism. The Ministry of Tourism, IATO, and other stakeholders rely heavily on overseas marketing and participation in global trade fairs to attract foreign travellers. With such a reduced budget, our visibility in international markets will be severely impacted," he shares.

For an industry that is still trying to recover, a marketing budget smaller

disinterest. Mr Mehra warns, "Foreign travel agents are already raising complaints, citing India's declining presence in the global tourism market. If the government is serious about making India a global tourism giant, he insists that the budget needs an immediate twentyfold increase."



Rajiv Kohli

Marketing or Mirage?

Rajiv Kohli, Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel doesn't mince words when assessing the situation. He shares, "Three crores? That's not a budget; that's a rounding error. We should be spending at least 100 million dollars a year to compete internationally. Instead, we've been given just enough to afford a handful of trade show booths and a few digital ads that no one will see."

He stresses that India needs a strategic sales pitch, not just participation in a few global events. "We need hard-hitting digital campaigns, high-quality promotional videos, and a dedicated approach to marketing India as a must-visit destination. Right now, we are just

Frame and hang it in a museum!

HS Duggal, Managing Director, Minar Group takes a more sarcastic stance on the matter. "Let's be honest—INR 3 crore for international tourism marketing is not a budget, it's a symbolic gesture," he says. "Countries with far smaller tourism economies allocate hundreds of crores to ensure visibility in key markets. Meanwhile, we're expected to make do with peanuts."

He emphasises the importance of visibility at top-tier travel trade shows such as ITB Berlin and WTM London. Without a strong presence in these global arenas, India risks fading into irrelevance while other nations seize the spotlight. "We need at least INR 300 crore for meaningful international promotions," he asserts, adding that marketing India in a globalised tourism landscape requires more than wishful thinking.



HS Duggal





Ravi Gosain

A tourism budget that is as useful as a chocolate teapot!

Ravi Gosain Founder & MD, Erco Travels Pvt. Ltd. has spent years advocating for a robust international marketing strategy for Indian tourism. Yet, every year, he finds himself fighting the same battle. "India attracts just 10-12 million foreign tourists annually, while smaller Asian countries see three to four times more. Why? Because they invest in marketing. India, on the other hand, seems to believe that tourists will just magically appear," he says.

A strong overseas marketing strategy, according to him, requires a budget of at least INR 1000 crore. "We need to invest in influencer collaborations, social media campaigns, digital ads, cultural roadshows, and partnerships with major airlines. The world won't come to us if we don't go to them first."

Tourism is diplomacy—And we're losing the battle!

Tarun Bansal, Joint Secretary, FHTR sees tourism as more than just an industry—it's a tool for global diplomacy. He says, "Tourism is not just a revenue earner, it is the best way to generate goodwill for the nation. A country like India, with its immense cultural heritage, should be using tourism as soft power. But instead, we are doing the opposite—by cutting the budget, we are reducing our global influence."

He believes the government must revive its tourism campaigns with fresh, long-term investments. "The 'Incredible India' campaign is over 15 years old. We need a new vision, a new tagline, and sustained investment for at least three years. Without a consistent marketing push, we are simply handing the advantage to our competitors."



Tarun Bansal,

A call to arms for India's travel trade

The tourism industry in India is an economic powerhouse waiting to be unleashed. But with a budget that barely covers a single global campaign, how does the government expect to compete with aggressive tourism boards from Thailand, Singapore, and the UAE?

This is not just about money; it's about intent. A country that genuinely values its tourism industry will invest in its growth, not throw it a bone and expect miracles. It's time for the private sector to step up, innovate, and create an independent marketing strategy before India becomes the forgotten destination in global travel. The world is moving fast. The question is—does India want to be a leader in tourism, or is it content being a footnote in someone else's travel diary?



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There's always something to discover, on the pristine white beaches or in the ocean with a house reef teeming with marine life. The resort features a signature restaurant called Vista, the perfect place to experience a picture-perfect panorama view complimented by exquisite Italian flavors. Whether you choose to lounge by the pool bar and bask in the sun, or go on an aquatic adventure, every day becomes a story to remember for a lifetime.



Morocco

Crown jewel of culture and heritage!



Jamal Younes Kilito

Morocco is a destination of culture, adventure, and growing opportunities. Jamal Younes Kilito, Country Manager India, MNT0, shares insights into Morocco's growing appeal in India, its participation in trade events, and the roadmap for future engagements.

- **Naina Nath**



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Strengthening trade relations

Morocco is emerging as a sought-after destination for Indians, thanks to the strategic efforts of the Moroccan National Tourist Office. This year, the Moroccan delegation included 10 co-exhibitors, including hotels and DMCs offering tailored experiences at an exhibition in India. "As the number of Indian visitors to Morocco increases, it will become feasible for us to be present at multiple trade shows in the future. Our goal is to nurture this market by providing more engagement opportunities and industry collaboration," says Jamal.

Expanding marketing efforts in India

Since opening its India office in September 2023, MNTO has prioritised B2B partnerships with tour operators, focusing on joint marketing initiatives and setting visitor targets. The initial phase has involved roadshows in Mumbai and Delhi, with plans to expand outreach to Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad in 2025. Jamal emphasises, "Our marketing efforts

are designed to ensure steady growth in Indian arrivals. We are focused on building relationships with the travel trade. This will strengthen Morocco's brand presence."

In addition to mainstream tourism, MNTO is keen on tapping into niche segments such as MICE, weddings, and filmmaking. While consumer-focused campaigns are not yet a priority, the office plans to introduce a structured training program for travel agents to improve destination awareness. Familiarization trips remain an integral part of their strategy, allowing trade partners to experience Morocco firsthand. "We believe that once travel agents see Morocco's potential, they will confidently recommend it."

Morocco's record tourism growth

With 17.5 million tourists in 2023, Morocco remains Africa's leading travel destination. France, Spain, the UK, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands remain the top source markets. The growth has been remarkable, with overall visitor

numbers up by 40 per cent compared what they were earlier. India is an emerging market for Morocco, with 41,000 Indian travellers visiting in 2023—a 43 per cent increase from 2022. While the current figures are promising, MNTO aims to accelerate this growth, targeting 100,000 Indian visitors in the coming years. Achieving this milestone would bolster the case for direct flights between the two countries. Jamal shares, "We hope to reach this goal by 2027. The demand is there, and we are working towards making travel more seamless."

A destination for every traveller

Indian travellers to Morocco mainly include honeymooners, solo explorers, and couples. The

country's diverse offerings make it an attractive alternative to European destinations. "Morocco has something for everyone," says Jamal.

For first-time visitors, he recommends the 'Imperial City' round trip, a seven-night itinerary covering Morocco's key cultural hubs. Travellers seeking a more immersive experience can opt for a 12 to 15-day itinerary. He explains, "We encourage Indian travellers to explore Morocco's diversity beyond the typical routes." Adventure seekers can explore Morocco's vast mountains, desert treks, and coastal retreats, with 3,500 kilometres of coastline. The country also houses nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites and several intangible cultural heritage traditions. Surprisingly, Morocco even has ski resorts!



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

A taste of Morocco

Morocco's rich culinary heritage is another attraction for Indian travellers, offering a balance of Mediterranean, Berber, and Arabic influences. Jamal shares, "We have 12 Indian restaurants in Morocco, with four in Marrakesh alone, serving authentic flavours that cater to Indian tastes." Shopping enthusiasts can explore bustling souks, while adventure seekers can experience desert safaris, mountain treks, and water sports. He adds, "There is so much to discover beyond tourist spots, from hidden gems to unique cultural experiences."

Hassle-free travel

Morocco has streamlined its visa application process for Indian tourists. The e-visa system, accessible via www.accessmaroc.ma, allows travellers to obtain a visa in a few

hours to a maximum of four days, at an affordable cost of approximately INR 7,000. "Only a passport is required, making the process simple," highlights Jamal. Despite the lack of direct connectivity, multiple transit options are available via hubs such as Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Jeddah, Cairo, Istanbul, Frankfurt, Paris, and London. These routes provide easy access to Morocco for Indian travellers. He adds, "While direct flights would be ideal, current transit routes provide excellent connectivity."

MICE & destination weddings in Morocco

Morocco has long been a preferred destination for international MICE events. Marrakesh alone has three convention centres capable of hosting up to 5,000 attendees. The country has successfully organised major global events,

including the 2023 Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF (14,000 attendees), COP22 in 2016 (25,000 attendees), and the 1994 GATT meeting. Jamal shares, "Morocco has proven itself as a reliable host for major gatherings."

The destination wedding segment is gaining momentum, with Indian weddings already being hosted at luxurious Moroccan venues. Many are organised by Indians residing outside India, attracting guests from the subcontinent. Several hotels specialise in Indian weddings and traditions, ensuring an authentic experience. He mentions, "We see Morocco as an exotic yet accessible destination, and we are working to build more awareness around this."

Unlocking travel potential

Jamal expresses confidence in Morocco's potential to become a

key destination for Indian travellers. He says, "Interest in Morocco is growing, and demand will follow." With initiatives underway to strengthen trade partnerships, expand marketing outreach, and simplify travel logistics, Morocco is steadily emerging as a preferred choice for Indian tourists. As Morocco strengthens its foothold in India, MNTTO remains committed to fostering long-term partnerships and awareness programs.

Jamal concludes, "Our focus is on expanding marketing efforts, deepening trade collaborations, and showcasing Morocco as a destination that caters to a wide range of traveller interests. Morocco is the new kid in town, offering the travel trade an opportunity to craft unique vacations and professional trips."



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Karnataka

Promise to an unforgettable journey!

A land of timeless heritage, breath-taking landscapes, and dynamic urban hubs, Karnataka is fast emerging as a premier destination for both travellers and business professionals. With a bold vision to expand its tourism footprint and position itself as India's leading MICE destination. Smt. Salma K Fahim, IAS, Secretary to Government, Dept of Tourism, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation shares the plans to make Karnataka a top-preferred destination.

- **Sudipta Saha**



With the goal of significantly increasing tourism in Karnataka, Smt. Salma K. Fahim has a visionary approach for the state's tourism sector. She is not only committed to strengthening Karnataka's presence on both national and international platforms but also focused on diversifying and enhancing tourism experiences. By introducing innovative initiatives and improving infrastructure, she aims to position Karnataka as one of the most sought-after destinations on India's tourism map.

Vision, growth, and global outreach

Karnataka Tourism is setting ambitious goals for 2025, with a strong focus on increasing foreign tourist arrivals while further strengthening domestic tourism. Currently ranked 11th in terms of inbound tourism, the state aims to climb to the third or fourth position this year.

Adding to this, Smt. Salma K Fahim says, "A key area of focus will be MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism. The recently established Bangalore Convention and Visitor Bureau is in its early stages but is expected to play a significant role in positioning Karnataka as a premier destination for business and conference tourism."

Marketing strategies for 2025 will emphasise targeted campaigns to attract tourists from Asian countries and Russia, recognising these as high-potential markets. "Participation in leading global travel trade events, including ATM Middle East and ITB Berlin, will be a priority to strengthen Karnataka's presence in international markets. Additionally, the state is looking to tap

into tourism opportunities in the Middle East and Central Asian republics," adds Smt. Salma K Fahim.

Expanding Karnataka's global tourism reach

Rather than focusing on individual countries, Karnataka's tourism strategy is best approached by targeting key regions with strong potential for growth. Asia, particularly Vietnam, Cambodia, and Japan, has emerged as an important market. "With a rising number of Indian travellers visiting these destinations, there is an opportunity to encourage reverse tourism and attract visitors from these countries to Karnataka. The shared colonial histories and cultural connections further strengthen the potential for collaboration, positioning Karnataka as an appealing alternative to traditional Western destinations such as Europe and America.

Additionally, the Middle East is recognising tourism as a key economic driver, making it another crucial market. Travellers from Gulf countries seek diverse experiences, and Karnataka's rich heritage, scenic landscapes, and adventure offerings make it a compelling destination. Strengthening partnerships with these regions will be essential for increasing inbound travel and fostering long-term, sustainable growth in Karnataka's tourism sector," highlights Smt Salma K Fahim.

Boosting MICE opportunities

Going forward, a key focus area for Karnataka's tourism strategy will be the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector. Bengaluru, in particular, boasts some of India's finest properties and convention centres, including Hilton, BIEC, and Marriott,



Smt. Salma K Fahim

making it a prime destination for large-scale events.

"To strengthen MICE tourism, the approach will be multi-faceted. First, infrastructure development will be prioritised, with plans for large-scale venues similar to Bharat Mandapam in Delhi. Two major convention centres are already in the pipeline—one being developed by Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) and another through a public-private partnership. These additions will enhance Karnataka's capacity to host global conferences and exhibitions," explains Smt Salma K Fahim.

Second, proactive event pitching will be driven by the Bengaluru Convention and Visitors Bureau (BCVB), which will actively seek to attract international and national MICE events. So two large spaces coming up, beside, which adds to the existing, mice, venues that we already have.

She further adds, "Third, financial and policy incentives will be introduced. A dedicated budget for BCVB is being planned to provide event-specific incentives, which could include subsidies, tax benefits, or logistical support. This model, successfully adopted by global convention destinations, will help Karnataka compete on an international scale."

Finally, expanding MICE

opportunities beyond Bengaluru is crucial. Tier-II cities such as Belagavi, Hubballi, and Dharwad, which offer strong connectivity and growth potential, will be developed as secondary MICE hubs. The goal is to secure at least 25 major events in the first year and gradually expand the scale and reach of Karnataka's MICE sector.

Experiential tourism in Karnataka

Experiential tourism is becoming a key demand among global travellers, including those from Europe, America, and even within India. Modern tourists seek more than just sightseeing—they want immersive experiences that engage all their senses. Karnataka, with its diverse offerings, is well-positioned to meet this demand.

"The state provides a wide range of unique experiences, from cultural and heritage tourism to nature-based adventures and wellness retreats. Whether it's exploring the ancient ruins of Hampi with guided storytelling, engaging in traditional crafts and cuisine workshops, trekking through the lush Western Ghats, or indulging in Ayurvedic wellness retreats, Karnataka offers rich, immersive experiences that go beyond conventional tourism," states Smt Salma K Fahim.



Fly24hrs Setting foot in one city at a time!

Fly24hrs is making waves with its aggressive expansion strategy. Sahil Raj Chaudhary, CEO and Vaseem Parvez, CCO, Fly24hrs share their plans for this year.

- Tripti Jain

The company, driven by a passionate team and visionary leadership, is on a mission to establish its presence in every major city across India. With recently inaugurated offices in Siliguri and Jaipur, the momentum is stronger than ever, and the roadmap for the future is even more ambitious.

Planting flags across India

Fly24hrs has never been just another travel company; it is a brand built on innovation, trust, and an unwavering commitment to customer service. Vaseem shares, "We are not just expanding geographically; we are strengthening our roots in the Indian travel ecosystem. The launch of our Siliguri and Jaipur offices was just the beginning. Next, we are bringing our services closer to our customers in Lucknow, Mumbai, and Bangalore." Sahil adds to this emphasising the importance of a nationwide presence. "India is a vast and diverse market. To truly cater to travellers across regions, we need to be where they are. This expansion is not just about numbers; it's about making travel seamless, accessible, and personalised for everyone."

The power behind the progress

At the heart of Fly24hrs' success lies a dedicated team that has been instrumental in turning vision into reality. The company's remarkable growth trajectory is a testament to the efforts of its people. Vaseem shares, "Our strength is in our team. The dedication and passion with which they work are unparalleled. Each milestone we achieve is a collective victory, and our expansion is as much about our employees as it is about the business."

Sahil highlights how this team has transformed the company's



Sahil Raj Chaudhary



Vaseem Parvez

ambitions into tangible success. He shares, "Every city we expand into is a new challenge, but with the right people, every challenge turns into an opportunity. We have built an ecosystem where every employee contributes to our larger mission. That's why we are where we are today."

A brand beyond borders

Fly24hrs is not just focusing on physical expansion; the brand is evolving to become synonymous with trust and innovation in the travel industry. The upcoming Visa Monster portal is a testament to their commitment to simplifying travel experiences. Vaseem shares, "Our growth isn't limited to offices; we are also strengthening our digital footprint to enhance customer convenience. This combination of physical presence and tech-driven services will make Fly24hrs an industry leader."

Sahil highlights the bigger vision behind their rapid growth. "The dream is to be a household name in travel services. We want to ensure that no traveller in India has to look too far to find a Fly24hrs office. The journey has just begun, and the best is yet to come."

The sky is just the beginning

With an unwavering commitment to expansion, innovation, and customer satisfaction, Fly24hrs is redefining the Indian travel landscape. The recent openings in Siliguri and Jaipur serve as stepping stones for a much larger journey ahead. Vaseem shares, "We are creating a brand that will be remembered for decades to come, with our team, our vision, and our strategy, nothing can stop us."

Sahil sums it up perfectly, and explains, "We are not just flying; we are soaring. The dream is big, the plan is solid, and the execution is relentless. India, get ready—Fly24hrs is coming to a city near you!"



EXPERIENCE ISLAND LIFE IN LUSH TECHNICOLOUR

Experience Island Life in Lush Technicolour

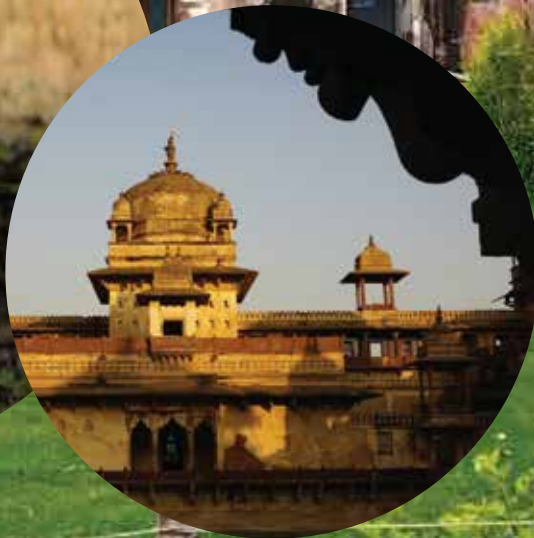
Surrounding the island is a spectacular lagoon in shades of turquoise and shimmering azure blue. If you want to get away from it all and experience affordable, laid-back rustic at a Maldives resort, you can't find anywhere better than Medhufushi Island Resort.

Madhya Pradesh

Redefining experiences, reviving heritage

Madhya Pradesh continues to captivate travellers with its rich tapestry of history, culture, and breath-taking landscapes. From ancient temples and UNESCO-listed heritage sites to thriving wildlife sanctuaries and immersive cultural experiences, the state is charting an ambitious course to elevate its tourism potential. Under the visionary leadership of Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of the Tourism and Culture Department and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, the state is poised to embrace 2025 with transformative initiatives.

- Sudipta Saha



INDIAN SAGA



Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla

With a strategic focus on enhancing connectivity, promoting MICE tourism, and preserving its invaluable heritage, Madhya Pradesh is setting new benchmarks for sustainable tourism. The state is also leveraging its vibrant traditions, such as the Malwa and Kayatha cultures, to create unique, experiential journeys for travellers. By balancing tourism growth with environmental conservation and community empowerment, Madhya Pradesh is not only welcoming the world but also ensuring that its legacy thrives for generations to come.

Initiatives to promote tourism in Madhya Pradesh in 2025

In 2024, Madhya Pradesh emerged as a leading tourist destination, welcoming over 13 crore visitors. The state will capitalise on its recent tourism surge by enhancing air connectivity with expansion of PM Shri Paryatan Vayu Seva to boost accessibility to key destinations in 2025. "We are also planning on developing a state-of-the-art convention center in Bhopal worth ₹100 crore near Minto Hall to attract MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism. Orchha's heritage is a priority and the state is committed to preserving Orchha's historical significance while promoting tourism with investment of ₹100 crore to support sustainable development in the region. Furthermore the state is actively promoting UNESCO Intangible

Cultural Heritage: Showcasing unique cultural offerings such as Bhagoria dance, Gond painting, and Narmada Parikrama to international travellers," states Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla.

Strategies to increase foreign tourist arrivals

Madhya Pradesh has plans to strategically attract global tourists in 2025. The state tourism board is working on an 'Outreach Programs' to build a connection with sources market and leverage global reach. Adding to it, Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla "We aim to actively participate in international travel trade shows and conferences to connect with key stakeholders and promote Madhya Pradesh as a destination. We participated in FITUR, International tourism trade fair at IFEMA Madrid and will be there at ITB Berlin to showcase its tourism offerings and connect with potential partners. The board organised a roadshow in Barcelona post FITUR to promote Madhya Pradesh to travel agents, tour operators, and media. The roadshow highlighted the state's unique experiences and encourage partnerships."

Leveraging Malwa and Kayatha cultures to attract tourists

Madhya Pradesh is a kaleidoscope of rich cultural heritage. "This leads us to ensure that we leverage it through cultural trails, promotion of delectable cuisines, experiential tourism. We are promoting themed trails showcasing the unique cultural heritage of

Malwa, Bundelkhand, and other regions, including the Malwa Trail, focussing on Indore's street food, Maheshwar's handloom weaving, and Ujjain's ancient temples. Thereafter, we have Bundelkhand Trail, which highlights UNESCO heritage site Orchha's palaces, Khajuraho's temples and the region's folk music and dance. The rich tribal culture is also our USP and we promote tribal art, crafts, and cultural performances in regions such as Jhabua and Alirajpur through tribal trails. Our goal is to revitalise our cultural heritage through cultural and destination promotion events showcasing local music, dance, art, and cuisine while ensuring their conservation," mentions Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla.

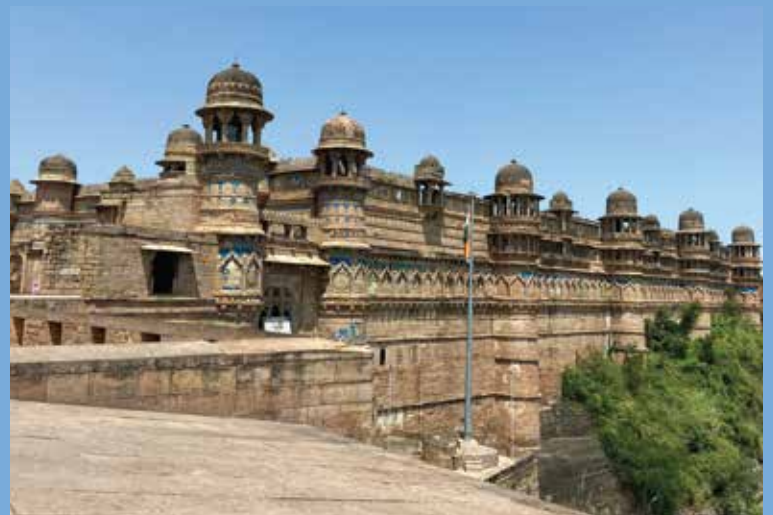
Balancing growth, conservation & communities

Madhya Pradesh is a green, clean and safe offbeat multispecialty destination of first choice. The state proudly holds the title of 'Tiger state', 'Cheetah state', 'Leopard state', 'Vulture state', 'Wolf state', 'Gharial state' and is home to 8 tiger reserves, 25 wildlife sanctuaries and 3 biosphere reserves. The heart of incredible India also boasts 14 UNESCO Heritage Sites. Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla further highlights, "The incredible sites are worth appreciation and it is important to acknowledge what we own and get back to our roots. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board participated at the 46th UNESCO

World Heritage Committee Session 2024 in New Delhi. In Madhya Pradesh, we've successfully balanced conservation with tourism development by putting communities at core and instilling a sense of ownership. Particularly in our National Parks, we have created a framework where we know that the boundaries of the national park are sacrosanct. While tourism is encouraged within limits, we prioritise conservation above all. Similarly, our goal is to revitalise our heritage cities while ensuring their conservation."

Effective marketing strategies

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board's Television Commercials are a series of Cinematic Odyssey ensuring a musical journey of the Heart of India to the Heart of Traveller. Starting with 'Hindustan ka Dil Dekho,' these cinematic masterpieces, like the recent 'Moh Liya Re' have effectively showcased the state's unique charm. With over 1.4 million views, 'Moh Liya Re' garnered significant attention in 2024. Speaking further, Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla says, "The Board continues this tradition with an upcoming TVC featuring Anoushka Shankar, aiming to enhance international appeal. Furthermore, Madhya Pradesh plans to strategically attract global tourists. The state tourism board is implementing an 'Outreach Programs' initiative to connect with key source markets and expands its global reach."

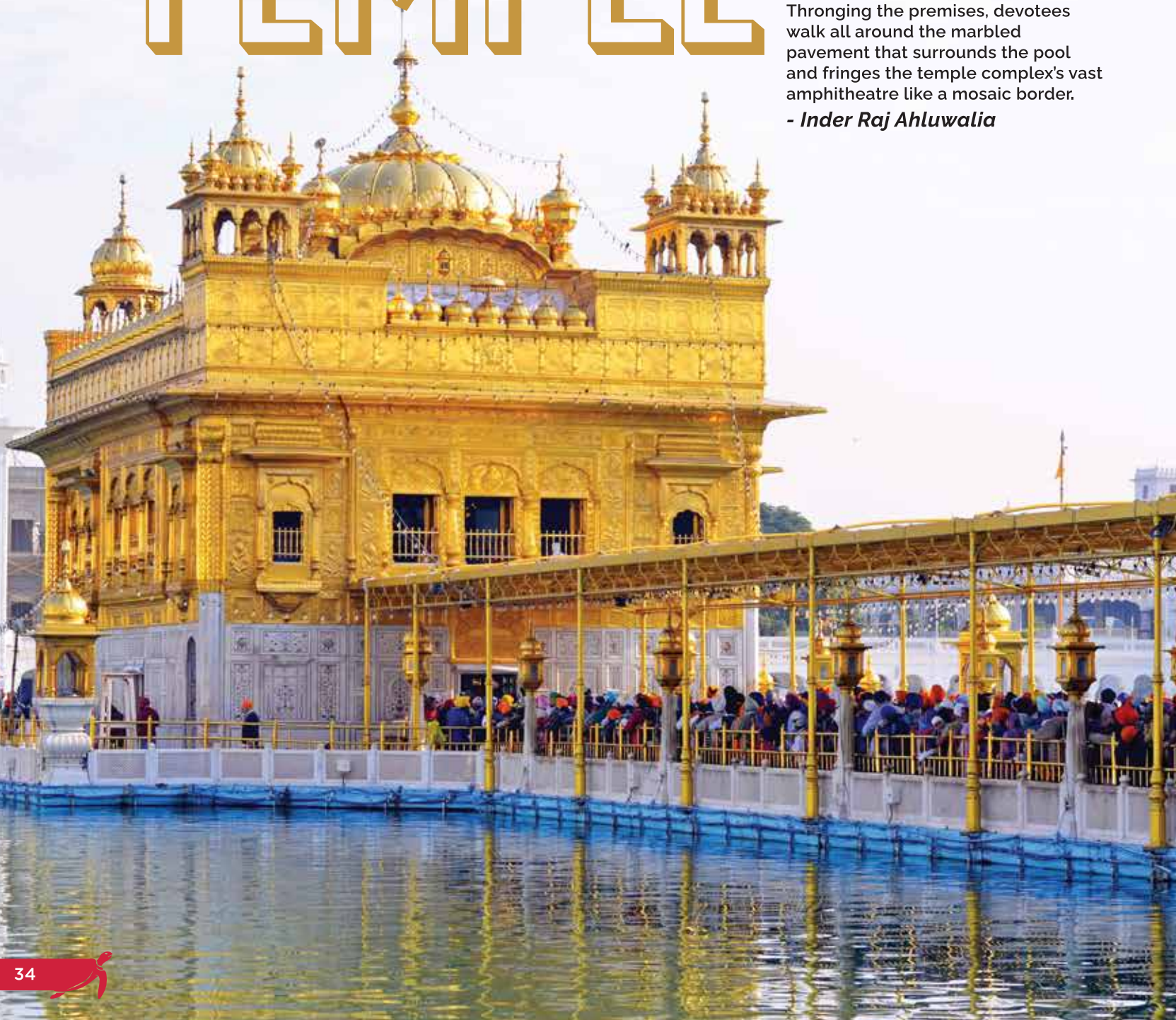


THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

Befittingly a sight
for the Gods!

Thronging the premises, devotees
walk all around the marbled
pavement that surrounds the pool
and fringes the temple complex's vast
amphitheatre like a mosaic border.

- *Inder Raj Ahluwalia*



TRAVEL THERAPY

Displaying simple majesty, the gilded splendour of its dome and panelling gleaming in the sunlight, silhouetted softly in the water of the surrounding 'pool of nectar' (holy tank), it has an immediate effect on visitors. The nonstop recitation of the 'kirtan' (religious hymns) resonates in the background. The most exalted of all Sikh Gurdwaras, the Hari Mandir or Golden Temple is the most prized spiritual and pilgrimage centre. Regarded as one of the world's most tastefully decorated shrines, its art and architecture has drawn universal praise.

For centuries, pilgrims have been drawn here, and its sanctity has cradled and nurtured the city that grew around it. Here, there is no tinsel richness, just a sense of reverence. The Sikh Gurus welcomed everyone to Amritsar. The Hari Mandir was made open on all four sides, signifying open

entry and welcome to all. The Gurus' deep feelings are palpable in the atmosphere.

The Golden Temple's noble story began some four centuries ago with the Fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das Ji sanctifying the 'Pool of Nectar' in the 16th Century. In 1574, Guru Ram Das Ji set up home by the side of the pool supposedly blessed with miraculous healing powers. His home came to be known as Guru-ka-Mahal. The Guru bought the pool and its surrounding land and excavated the tank to construct a shrine at its centre.

In 1588, the Fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, invited the Muslim Sufi divine, Hazrat Mian Mir of Lahore, to lay the temple's foundation stone. A small town called Ramdaspur quickly emerged, deriving its future name, Amritsar, from the holy tank that encircles the Hari Mandir, now known as the Golden Temple.

The town that grew around the temple during Guru Arjan Dev Ji's lifetime grew further. The first Sikh Emperor, Maharaja Ranjit Singh made Amritsar his spiritual capital, and oversaw the temple's further development. He gilded the embossed plates, renewed the 'pietra dura', and embellished the interior with a floral-designed, mirrored ceiling. Thanks to people's devotion, making it an eclectic monument, the Golden Temple has achieved the kind of romantic glory that defies conventional norms and compels humility before God. Hallowed by the meditations of holy men, and the blood of martyrs defending the Sikh faith against imperial oppression, the temple has always been a refuge for the weary, sick and downtrodden.

On arriving, I was immediately swept off my feet. The electric atmosphere, tranquil mood, and the shrine's architectural splendour and rich history awed

and humbled me.

I descended into the amphitheatre (unlike most temples, here you actually descend as the structure is built below the level of the surrounding area) and was confronted by the stunningly beautiful sanctum sanctorum glimmering in the water of the holy tank, flanked on all sides by spotlessly clean marble pavements. This first view of the Golden Temple is something that stays with you.

I walked clock-wise across the vast, square amphitheatre splayed out around the tank. Within seconds I was at Dukh Bhanjani Beri and I remember the poignant legend of Rajni's husband being miraculously cured of leprosy. Several devotees were taking a dip here and elsewhere in the tank. Beside it is Ath-Sath Tirath (68 holy places), the gilded chhatra that marks Guru Amar Das Ji's and Guru Ram Das Ji's return from a tour of Hindu holy places.



TRAVEL THERAPY

Walking on, I found myself standing before the memorial to Baba Deep Singh. Walking on, I arrived at the 'pershad' counter, and then at Darshani Deori, the imposing, embellished gateway entrance to the causeway that leads to the sanctum sanctorum. Crossing the causeway, I was at the house of the Lord.

The temple's main structure is 150 metres square, rises from the centre of the sacred pool, and is approached by the 60 metre-long causeway. It stands on a platform, its lower part marble, and upper portion embellished with gilded copper plates.

Entering the stunningly beautiful confines of the sanctum sanctorum, I was in front of the Guru Granth Sahib (holy book of the Sikhs) reverently placed under a jewel-studded canopy.

The ground level structure's interior is exquisitely ornate, with intricate ceiling and walls inlay work. The ceiling features a rich design ensemble. Hanging by a gold threaded rope is a single, large chandelier.

I moved out and stopped at Har Ki Pauri, the most sacred point of the sarovar, which Guru Arjan Dev Ji himself consecrated. I cupped the sacred water and sprinkled some on my head. I then ascended to the structure's first floor pavilion, known as Shish Mahal (mirror room), which houses a large Guru Granth Sahib. In the main section, a

corridor flanks the four walls, and from this perch one can see the Guru Granth Sahib just below, on the ground floor of the sanctum sanctorum. It's an enrapturing scene that's among the most powerful and beautiful I've ever seen. Before the Guru Granth Sahib strings of flowers have been hewn together to form a pattern. To the left of the Guru Granth Sahib sit the 'pathis' (hymn singers), singing 'shabads and kirtan' (devotional hymns).

I now ascended to the small pavilion on the second floor, which also has the Guru Granth Sahib. I payed my respects and left the sanctum sanctorum to see the complex's other notable landmarks.

On stepping off the causeway, I found myself facing the Akal Takht, a massive marble structure with a stunning façade, that's the night resting place for the Guru Granth Sahib. It also houses Guru Hargobind Ji's two swords. I've been fortunate and blessed to be able to see the morning and night processions of the Guru Granth Sahib being carried on a golden palanquin from the Akal Takht to the Harmandir Sahib.

Moving on, I stopped at the two giant 'nishan sahibs' (flagpoles) that stand as silent, magnificent sentinels just by the side of the Akal Takht, and then walk a few metres to arrive at Ber Baba Buddha Ji, an ancient Zizyphus tree, the spot from where Baba Buddha Ji, the Golden Temple's first head priest, supervised the

temple's construction.

A short walk and I was at the giant langar hall (community kitchen) to partake of the 'langar' (community meal) served at all Sikh temples. I joined the hundreds of devotees partaking of the delicious meal. I then visited the Central Sikh Museum and Library that contain priceless Sikh relics, artefacts and manuscripts.

The pristine beauty and sanctity of the Golden Temple grows on you. Mirrored, are unforgettable images. The golden dome shimmering in the water! The kirtan resonating everywhere! Thousands of devotees thronging the premises for darshan...!

The Golden Temple grows on you. Most visitors find the elusive inner peace they sought. Leaving is never easy ...

While the Golden Temple is sublime, Amritsar city is historical and interesting. Amritsar played a pivotal role in India's independence struggle and no national monument is more significant than Jalianwala Bagh, a poignant, grim reminder of one of the bloodiest chapters of India's freedom movement.

There are bustling bazaars around the temple, stocked brimful with crisps and savouries like papadums, vadis, ampapad (salted, dried mango slices), and myriad spices. Other good local buys are rugs and handicrafts.

A robust, hardworking lot, the Amritsaris like their food and are

generous with their hospitality. Prepare to gourmet. The lassi (yoghurt shake) served in town is considered the best in the world, and the Amritsari Fish (deep fried river fish) is world famous.

According to Rama Ranjit Mehra, Proprietor of 'Ranjit's SVAASA', a top-end heritage hotel and spa, Amritsar is unique because of its huge mix of attractions, and quality of food.

Also upbeat about the city is Gunbir Singh, owner of Divine Destination, and a prominent citizen, who feels Amritsar is heading to become a truly world-class pilgrim and tourist centre.

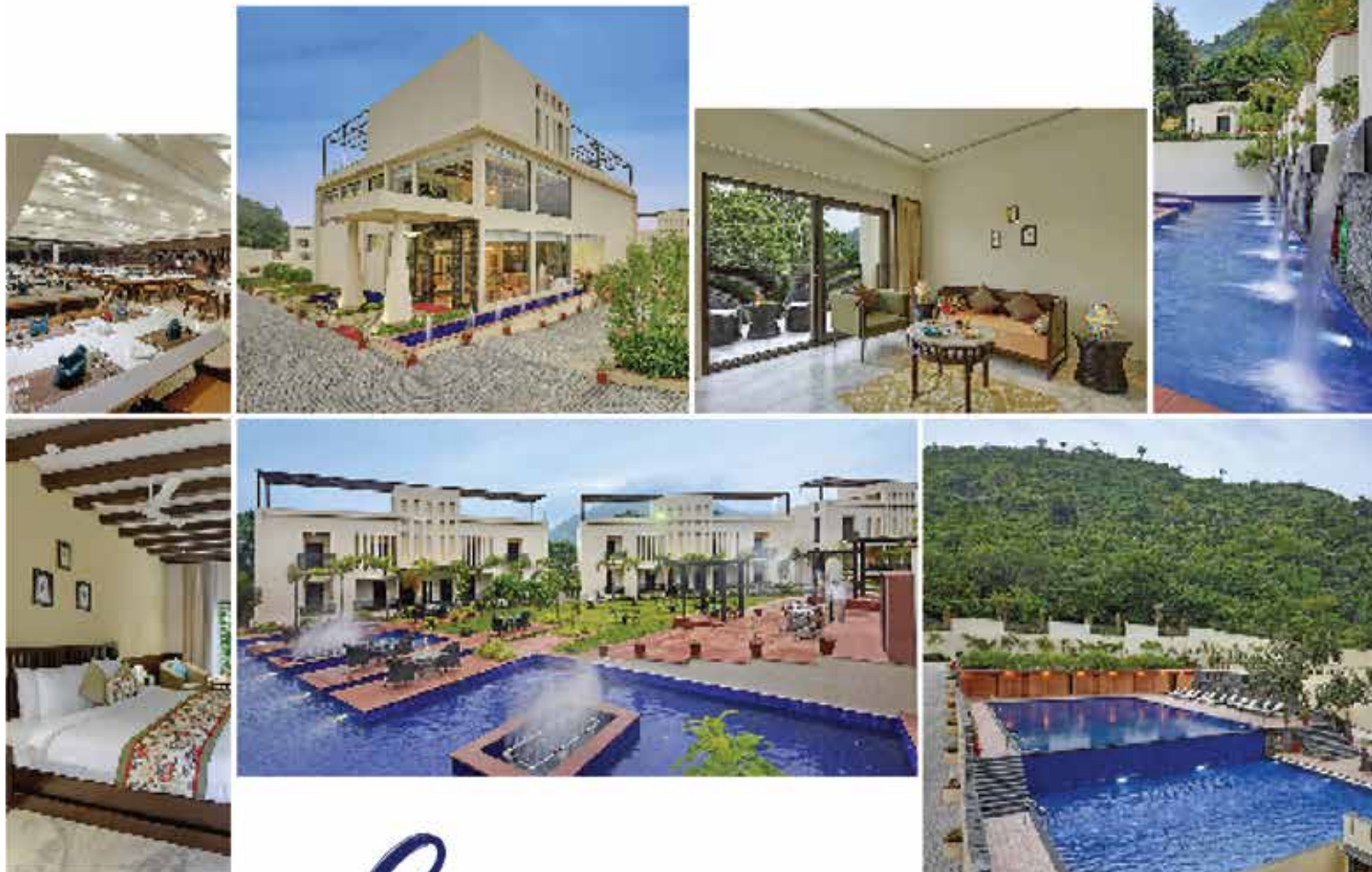
Riding on the spiritual strength and pristine beauty of the Golden Temple, Amritsar awaits the world...



About the author

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





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Grecootel's odyssey into Indian hearts



Vangelis Vassiliou

In an era where travel transcends mere sightseeing, Grecootel Hotels & Resorts is crafting experiences that resonate deeply with the soul. Vangelis Vassiliou, Senior Sales Manager, Grecootel Hotels & Resorts shares why India is a key market for Grecootel's growth.

- *Tripti Jain*



HOTELLIGENCE

Recognising the trending wanderlust among Indian travellers, the luxury Greek hotel chain is weaving the rich tapestries of Greek and Indian cultures into a seamless journey. "With the rise in demand for luxury travel and increased connectivity, India is one of the top priority markets on our list. The brand's commitment to blending luxury with cultural authenticity makes it an ideal destination for Indian travellers seeking unique and memorable experiences," shares Vangelis.

THE GRECOTEL-ELYSIAN ALLIANCE

To fortify its presence in the Indian subcontinent, Grecotel has partnered with Elysian as its PR and sales representative. This strategic alliance aims to introduce Indian travellers to Grecotel's curated collection of luxury accommodations nestled in iconic Greek locales. Vangelis excitedly shares, "We are thrilled to introduce these hotels and expand their distribution in the Indian market." He also, emphasises the group's commitment to offering unparalleled experiences to discerning Indian guests. By leveraging Elysian's deep-rooted expertise in India's travel landscape, Grecotel is positioning itself as a premium choice for outbound Indian tourists.

DECODING THE INDIAN TRAVELLER

Understanding the unique preferences of Indian tourists is

important. Vangelis recently embarked on a multi-city tour across New Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai, engaging with travel trade experts to gain insights into the evolving desires of Indian travellers. He explains, "Our interactions have been enlightening, allowing us to tailor our offerings to meet the specific needs of the Indian market. This proactive approach ensures that Grecotel's services resonate with the cultural and experiential expectations of its Indian clientele. From vegetarian and Jain meal options to kid-friendly activities and personalised concierge services, Grecotel is leaving no stone unturned in catering to Indian travellers."

THE PROMISE OF PROXIMITY

The travel landscape is set to transform with the introduction of direct flights between New Delhi and Athens in 2026. This development is poised to reduce travel time and enhance convenience, making Greece a more accessible destination for Indian tourists. Vangelis anticipates, "With direct flights launching between New Delhi and Athens from 2026, the market will surely record a surge in travel demand." Highlighting the anticipated boost in bilateral tourism he adds, "With easier connectivity, Indian travellers will no longer view Greece as a distant dream but as a viable and attractive destination for honeymoons, family vacations, and luxury retreats."

CRAFTING MEMORIES!

Grecotel's portfolio boasts a diverse range of properties, from luxurious beachfront resorts to high-end city hotels, each offering a unique blend

of Greek heritage and modern luxury. For Indian travellers, the brand is spotlighting 12 key hotels in the initial phase, meticulously selected to align with the preferences of the Indian market. Vangelis shares, "Our goal is to provide Indian guests with authentic Greek experiences, complemented by the warmth of our hospitality. This includes culinary offerings tailored to Indian palates, cultural events, and personalised services that make guests feel at home."

From stunning wedding venues overlooking the Aegean Sea to wellness retreats that blend Greek and Ayurvedic traditions, Grecotel is offering experiences beyond just accommodation. He adds, "Luxury is no longer just about opulence; it's about personalisation and storytelling. Whether it's an intimate dinner under the stars at Mykonos Blu or a heritage-inspired stay at Grecotel Cape Sounio, every experience is designed to create lasting memories."

BEYOND TOURISM

Grecotel's vision extends beyond business; it aims to create a bridge between Greek and Indian cultures. Vangelis shares, "India and Greece share a rich historical connection, and we want to celebrate that through curated experiences. By incorporating elements of Indian hospitality, festivals, and cuisine into their offerings, we seek to make Indian guests feel truly at home. With the rise of Bollywood film shoots, destination weddings, and corporate retreats in Greece, the brand sees immense potential for long-term engagement with Indian travellers."

A VISION OF CULTURAL SYNERGY

As Grecotel deepens its roots in the Indian market, the focus remains on fostering a symbiotic relationship between the two rich cultures. Vangelis shares, "We envision a future where Indian travellers see Greece not just as a destination, but as a home away from home. This vision is underpinned by continuous engagement, feedback-driven improvements, and a steadfast commitment to excellence. With initiatives such as special packages for Indian honeymooners, loyalty programs, and bespoke itineraries, we aim to become a preferred brand for Indian tourists."

A NEW CHAPTER IN GLOBAL HOSPITALITY

Grecotel Hotels & Resorts' foray into the Indian market signifies more than just business expansion; it's a celebration of cultural convergence and shared experiences. With strategic partnerships, an understanding of traveller nuances, and infrastructural advancements, Grecotel is poised to become a cherished name among Indian globetrotters. As Vangelis concludes, "This is just the beginning of a beautiful journey between Greece and India." As more Indian travellers set their sights on Greece, Grecotel stands ready to welcome them with open arms, promising an experience that is as luxurious as it is heartfelt."



HEADS IN BEDS

Disneyland Hotel Paris AN ODE TO ROYAL ENCHANTMENT

At Disneyland Hotel Paris, where
Disney royalty is reimagined through
immersive storytelling, stellar design,
and sterling service

- *Misbah Mansuri*



©Disney



HEADS IN BEDS

I still remember the moment I arrived at Disneyland Hotel on that brisk January morning—a day that promised not just luxury, but a full immersion into a world where every corner whispers magic. Pulling up to the grand entrance at Disneyland® Paris, I was immediately struck by the sense that I was about to step into something far beyond a typical hotel stay. The hotel, reborn as the world's first five-star property dedicated solely to Disney royalty, beckoned me with a blend of opulent design and the promise of enchanting experiences.

The first glimpse of the property set my heart racing. The façade, with its intricate details and regal overtones, looked like something straight out of a modern fairy tale. As I walked along the red carpet, a Royal Greeter greeted me with a warm smile and a sparkle in their eyes that made me feel instantly like a cherished guest in a secret kingdom. Their greeting was more than a formality—it was a personal invitation to embrace the magic that lay ahead.

Stepping through the revolving doors, I found myself in an immense lobby that outdid all my expectations. The space was bathed in soft hues of ivory and gold, reminiscent of a French château

fused with Disney wonder. Dominating the ceiling was a colossal chandelier, crafted from Bohemian crystal by a master Czech artisan. Its light danced across the polished marble floor in mesmerising patterns, each ripple a reminder that here, every detail was orchestrated with precision and passion.

I wandered slowly through the lobby, absorbing every nuance. Exquisitely arranged dioramas lined the walls, each one capturing iconic moments from Disney's storied past. These weren't just decorative installations; they were vibrant snapshots of history, each one telling a tale of whimsy and wonder. The echoes of classic Disney tunes seemed to mingle with the hushed murmurs of delighted guests, creating an atmosphere that was as inviting as it was awe-inspiring.

The magic of the lobby was enhanced by spontaneous performances from La Troupe Royale Disney. I found myself pausing to watch as this charming duo burst into song, their voices carrying tales of adventure and enchantment. Their impromptu performances made me smile, and I couldn't help but join in the laughter of those around me. It was an immediate reminder that at

Disneyland Hotel, the experience is as much about the unexpected moments as it is about the grandeur of its design.

Soon, I was escorted to my room—a Superior Room that epitomised the hotel's blend of modern luxury and Disney storytelling. Opening the door, I was greeted by a space awash in cool blues and shimmering silvers. The room's décor featured subtle nods to Disney classics: delicate artworks depicting scenes from Snow White, Cinderella, and The Little Mermaid were tastefully interwoven with modern, elegant furnishings. One playful detail—a golden mirror framed in a style reminiscent of Rapunzel's flowing locks—caught my eye immediately and set a whimsical tone for the rest of my stay.

The room was a perfect sanctuary. Soft, premium linens draped the king-sized bed, inviting me to sink into their comfort after the sensory overload of the lobby. A clever design feature—a mirror that concealed an Ultra HD television—ensured that technology did not disrupt the room's serene ambience. Large windows framed a view of the bustling Disney resort grounds, the interplay of natural light and meticulously landscaped gardens

a constant reminder of the harmony between magic and reality.

Later that afternoon, hunger began to beckon, and I eagerly ventured out to sample the culinary delights promised by Disneyland Hotel. My first stop was The Royal Banquet, a dining hall that felt more like a grand royal feast than a mere restaurant. The space was magnificent: walls adorned with portraits of Disney royalty and intricately woven tapestries that celebrated the legacy of beloved animated families created an atmosphere of regal elegance.

Seated at a long, elegantly set table, I perused a lavish buffet that was a testament to French culinary excellence. One dish, in particular, left an indelible mark on my palate—a succulent beef entrée that was cooked to perfection. The beef was seared with such precision that every bite was tender, juicy, and bursting with rich flavour. It was accompanied by a medley of seasonal vegetables and a reduction sauce that balanced the meat's savoury depth with a touch of sweetness and acidity. Each forkful was a revelation, the flavours harmonising in a way that was both robust and delicately refined.



HEADS IN BEDS

As I savoured the meal, I was approached by none other than Mickey Mouse himself—a delightful, interactive surprise that added an extra layer of enchantment to the dining experience. Mickey's cheerful banter and friendly high-fives transformed an already sumptuous meal into a memorable encounter that made me feel like I had stepped straight into a cherished childhood memory. It wasn't long before I found myself mingling with Disney princesses during the meal, too. I had the pleasure of chatting briefly with a princess dressed in an elegant reinterpretation of Cinderella's gown, her grace and warmth echoing the magic of her story. These interactions, seemingly small yet profoundly personal, enriched my dining experience and reminded me that here, every guest is treated like royalty.

After an incredible meal, I took some time to explore the expansive grounds of Disneyland Hotel. Staying at the property comes with its own set of exclusive benefits, including priority access to some of Disneyland® Paris's most popular attractions. With early entry passes and dedicated extra magic hours, I found myself relishing the freedom to visit rides before the park filled with the usual throngs of visitors. I hopped on a few attractions—a high-speed roller coaster, a whimsical boat ride, and even a gentle carousel—that were all imbued with the unmistakable charm of Disney. The thrill of experiencing these rides with shorter lines and more intimate access only deepened my sense of being part of a world where every

moment is steeped in magic. In the evening, I returned to the hotel for another round of culinary indulgence, this time at La Table de Lumière. This restaurant, set in an intimate space designed to evoke the romance of an enchanted ballroom, offered a table service dinner that was nothing short of a theatrical performance. The ambiance was set by elegant mirrors and sparkling crystal accents, and the tableware—adorned with delicate rose motifs—seemed to shimmer in the soft lighting. I was served a multi-course meal that featured exquisite dishes such as a tender, slow-cooked beef medallion, its rich sauce and perfectly caramelised exterior a testament to culinary artistry. Every bite transported me to a realm where time slowed, allowing me to fully appreciate the layers of flavour and the artistry behind each dish.

Throughout dinner, the presence of live Disney characters added an extra dimension of magic. A parade of Disney princesses made appearances, each one gracefully interacting with diners, sharing stories of adventure and hope. At one point, I even caught a glimpse of Mickey Mouse, making a playful cameo at one of the tables, his infectious energy drawing laughter and spontaneous applause from everyone present. The blend of gourmet cuisine and immersive character interactions created an atmosphere that was both sophisticated and whimsically delightful—a rare combination that truly epitomised the spirit of Disneyland Hotel.

Later that night, as I returned to the lobby, I couldn't help but feel the pull of the evening's grand finale: the fireworks show and art night. The anticipation was palpable as guests gathered outside, their faces illuminated by the soft glow of streetlights and the sparkling reflections of the surrounding architecture. I found a cozy spot near the edge of the property, where the sky stretched wide above me—a perfect canvas for the impending display.

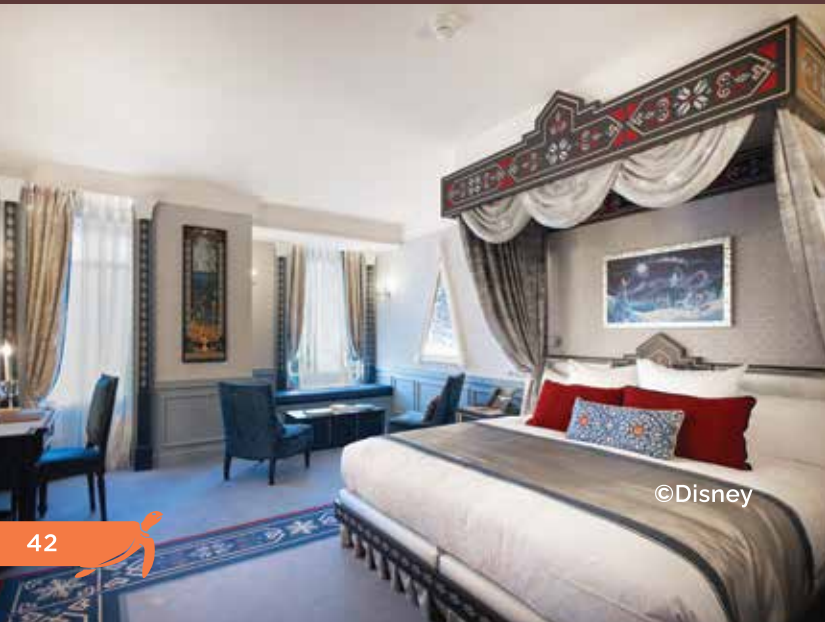
When the show began, the night sky erupted in a dazzling array of colours and patterns. The fireworks were choreographed to a stirring musical score that seemed to echo the heartbeat of Disneyland itself. Each explosion of light was perfectly timed, painting the heavens with bursts of red, blue, gold, and silver. As I watched, I felt a profound sense of connection to the magic that had defined my entire stay. It was as if every moment—from the sumptuous meals and enchanting character encounters to the exhilarating rides and intimate design details—had been building to this climactic celebration of art and wonder.

The fireworks show was a multisensory experience, in all its glory. Soft, ambient lighting illuminated the lobby's elegant features once more, and the gentle hum of delighted voices mingled with the crackle of fireworks. For a few unforgettable minutes, time

seemed to stand still as I absorbed the beauty of the night—a perfect synthesis of art, technology, and pure Disney magic. In that moment, I realized that Disneyland Hotel wasn't merely a place to stay but rather a living narrative, a grand tapestry of experiences that celebrated the joy of being truly alive.

Reflecting on my stay, I realised that Disneyland Hotel had achieved what few places can: it transformed the act of travel into an immersive, transformative experience. Every detail, every interaction, and every taste had been carefully orchestrated to create an atmosphere of genuine enchantment. Whether it was the stellar culinary experiences, the intimate conversations with Disney princesses, or the thrill of early access to world-class attractions, each element had contributed to a narrative of wonder that I will cherish for years to come.

For anyone who has ever believed in the magic of stories, or who simply seeks an escape from the ordinary, a stay at Disneyland Hotel is nothing short of a fairy tale come true. It is a place where every detail is a chapter in an unfolding epic—a celebration of art, luxury, and the enduring power of imagination. More than just a visitor, I felt like a part of a timeless story, a story that continues to inspire, delight, and remind me that magic is very much alive.



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JECC

Where Jaipur meets the World!

In a country where convention centers are rising in key metros, Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre (JECC) is rewriting the rulebook. Manuj Ralhan, General Manager, of JECC & Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre shares his deep passion to make a difference in the hospitality space.

- Tripti Jain

A convention dream like no other

Nestled in the heart of the Pink City, JECC is more than a venue—it's an experience. Manuj shares, "JECC is not just about space; it's about creating exceptional experiences. We're offering an unmatched blend of infrastructure, service, and culture."

JECC boasts two colossal exhibition halls, each spanning a lakh square feet, completely pillar-less with a soaring 40-foot ceiling. It's an architectural marvel, a rarity in India. He explains, "This kind of space, combined with world-class infrastructure, doesn't exist anywhere else in the country. The venue also features sprawling open exhibition grounds, a 50,000-square-foot lawn, 16 meeting rooms, a grand convention centre, a poolside venue, and a luxurious 226-room hotel."

A haven for MICE, Weddings, and More

With the ability to host multiple events simultaneously, JECC is a haven for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions). In its first year, it has already hosted 200 corporate groups, each a complete buyout. "We've set a new benchmark in the industry. Our first-year revenue is the highest among convention hotels in India, even after adjusting for inflation. That speaks volumes about our impact," says Manuj.

The wedding segment is another feather in JECC's cap. The centre transformed its exhibition halls into dreamy wedding destinations, hosting 25 grand weddings in its debut year. "One wedding



Manuj Ralhan

experience at JECC leads to five more referrals. That's the magic we create," he shares proudly.

The people behind the magic

While the infrastructure is top-notch, Manuj insists JECC's true USP is its team. "Our team is our biggest differentiator. Passionate, meticulous, and dedicated—we don't just host events, we craft unforgettable moments," he says. This commitment is reflected in glowing reviews from clients and guests.

JECC's culinary offerings are as diverse as its event portfolio. The venue boasts specialists for every cuisine: a Maharaj for Rajasthani delicacies, an Amritsari chef dedicated solely to Punjabi flavours, and an expert in Lucknowi and Afghani cuisines. "We even have a dedicated pizza chef whose only job is to craft the perfect pizza every day! Excellence has a cost, and we're happy to pay it," he adds.

Jaipur's global calling

India's convention industry has immense potential, but to compete globally, aggressive promotion is the key. Manuj emphasises, "India needs stronger, more active bureaus such as ICPB to drive international MICE traffic. Regional bureaus should collaborate with industry players to make India the top choice for global conventions."

As JECC continues to break records, it's clear that Jaipur is no longer just a tourist city—it's a powerhouse for business, events, and world-class hospitality. "We're not just putting JECC on the map; we're putting Jaipur on the global MICE radar," concludes Manuj.



Madhya Pradesh's journey toward Sustainable Tourism

Madhya Pradesh has long been a sanctuary for wildlife enthusiasts, history buffs and culture seekers. But in recent years, the state has also emerged as a trailblazer in sustainable tourism, seamlessly blending conservation, community involvement and eco-tourism.



INDIAN SAGA

From the dense sal forests of Kanha to the architectural grandeur of Orchha, from pristine Parsili to serene Sailani every corner of this state is now a testament to a new way of exploring—one that respects nature, supports local communities, and preserves heritage.

Luxury meets sustainability

One of the most commendable aspects of Madhya Pradesh's sustainable tourism efforts is its eco-friendly accommodations. Nestled deep within the state's tranquil forests are green lodges that redefine luxury while minimising environmental impact. The state promotes sustainable tourism in Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Satpura through eco-friendly lodges, community-driven homestays, buffer zone development and waste management ensuring responsible tourism while benefiting local communities.

Beyond the Safari

Tourism in Madhya Pradesh is not just about watching tigers or exploring ancient temples—it's about immersion. The state's innovative homestay and rural tourism initiatives invite travellers to go beyond traditional sightseeing and experience the true essence of its villages. Ladpura Khas, recognized as a Best Tourism Village by the Union Ministry of Tourism, Madla village, named one of the UNWTO's Best Tourism Villages and many other homestays allows visitors to live with local families, participate in their daily

activities and get a firsthand taste of Madhya Pradesh's rich culture and warm hospitality.

By choosing homestays over commercial hotels, travellers contribute directly to the livelihoods of rural families. Guests can learn traditional crafts from Gond and Bhil artists, join local farmers in their fields, or enjoy a home-cooked meal prepared with indigenous ingredients. This model not only supports local economies but also ensures that traditional knowledge and customs are preserved for future generations.

Where wildlife roams free

Madhya Pradesh's national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are among its biggest draws, but the state understands that conservation isn't just about protecting animals—it's about involving people. Recognising that communities living around protected areas play a crucial role in wildlife conservation, the government has taken steps to empower locals as guardians of nature.

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB) plays a crucial role in promoting community-driven eco-tourism initiatives like the Buffer Zone Eco-Development Program. Under MPTB's sustainable tourism vision, local communities—especially those living near Kanha and Panch National Parks—have been empowered as naturalists, guides, and hospitality providers. Additionally, MPTB supports women's self-help groups (SHGs) by integrating them into the tourism

value chain by involving them in guiding and hospitality services in eco-tourism zones, handicraft promotion and rural homestays and ecotourism ventures in collaboration with local communities.

MPTB's efforts align with the state's Sustainable Tourism Policy, ensuring that tourism development benefits both conservation and local livelihoods. These initiatives position Madhya Pradesh as a leading example of responsible tourism in India.

Crafts, Culture, and Conservation

Sustainability isn't just about the environment—it's about preserving cultural heritage too. Madhya Pradesh is home to a wealth of indigenous art forms, including the famed Gond paintings, Chanderi weaves and Bagh printing. The government, along with Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board (MPTB), has actively supported traditional crafts through tourism-linked initiatives, such as establishing Pranpur as India's first Craft & Handloom Tourism Village. Several other initiatives are in progress to promote indigenous art, handicrafts, and rural tourism.

Visitors can engage in hands-on workshops where artisans demonstrate age-old techniques, or they can visit craft hubs that ensure fair wages and ethical production. The synergy between tourism and cultural preservation has turned these artistic traditions into thriving economic pillars, preventing them from being lost to modernisation.

A model for the future

As the world grapples with the environmental impacts of mass tourism, Madhya Pradesh is proving that responsible travel is not just a concept but a practice. The state's sustainable tourism model is built on three pillars: eco-conscious development, community participation, and cultural preservation. These principles are evident in various initiatives, such as the "Project Clean Destinations," which collaborates with local communities to maintain environmental sustainability at tourist sites. Additionally, the MPTB has implemented eco-friendly homestay projects in rural locations, promoting vernacular architecture and local culture.

Travel with a purpose

Madhya Pradesh's commitment to sustainability is more than just policy—it's a way of life that travellers are invited to be a part of. Whether it's staying in an eco-lodge, choosing a homestay over a hotel, supporting local artisans, or simply treading lightly in the wilderness, every visitor has the power to make a difference.

So, the next time you plan a getaway, let Madhya Pradesh be your destination—not just for its stunning landscapes and rich history, but for the opportunity to travel responsibly, support communities, and preserve nature for generations to come. After all, the best journeys are the ones that leave the world a little better than we found it.



Bhutan's Home-grown Luxury
PEMAKO HOTELS



Vishal Pradhan

An authentic Bhutanese experience with a modern touch: Pemako Hotels redefines hospitality in Bhutan
- *Naina Nath*



Pemako Hotels is a home-grown hospitality brand backed by the Tashi Group of Companies, offering travellers a stay that reflects Bhutan's rich culture and traditions. Vishal Pradhan, Operations and Marketing Manager, shares how Pemako's properties provide meaningful experiences while keeping local heritage at the heart of their design.

Key destination for Indian travellers

India has always been an important market for Bhutan, with Indian travellers making up 60 per cent of visitors last year. Vishal notes a shift in how Indian travellers are approaching Bhutan, with a growing preference for immersive experiences over just sightseeing. "More travellers are looking for ways to truly connect with Bhutan—whether it's through cultural experiences, spiritual retreats, or adventure tourism," he says. To tap into this interest, Pemako is actively engaging with Indian travellers through joint marketing initiatives with BRANDit and partnerships with travel agents. "We understand the preferences of Indian travellers and are working closely with our partners to offer customised experiences that cater to them," Vishal adds.

Immersive traditions at Pemako Punakha

At Pemako Punakha, every detail reflects Bhutan's heritage. The interiors draw inspiration from the national flag's colours, featuring black highland tents traditionally crafted from yak skin. "Even the small details, such as artisanal souvenirs in the rooms, are carefully chosen to give guests a glimpse into Bhutanese culture," Vishal explains. The journey begins at the entrance, where guests cross a suspension bridge lined with prayer flags before receiving a blessing from a resident lama. Beyond its design, the property offers immersive experiences such as white water rafting on the Mo-Chu River, archery sessions, and cooking classes that introduce guests to authentic Bhutanese recipes.



Cultural connections at Pemako Thimphu

While Pemako Punakha highlights adventure and nature, Pemako Thimphu offers a mix of culture and city life. Guests have easy access to monasteries, bustling markets, and vibrant cultural performances. Vishal shares, "It's perfect for travellers who want to balance exploration with relaxation. Spiritual seekers can participate in guided meditation sessions with the resident monk or explore Bhutanese astrology through personalised readings. At its core, Pemako ensures that every guest leaves with not just memories of luxury but also a deeper connection to Bhutan's traditions."

Easy flight access from India

Bhutan is well-connected to India through direct flights operated by two airlines—Bhutan Airlines, owned by the Tashi Group, and Royal Bhutan Airlines, the national carrier. "There are four flights a week from Delhi and daily flights from Kolkata, along with seasonal flights from Mumbai and Bangalore during peak travel periods. With Visa-on-Arrival, Indian travellers can plan their trips with ease, without

the hassle of complex travel logistics," explains Vishal.

Expanding horizons

Pemako Hotels is looking to expand within Bhutan, adding new properties that showcase the country's diverse landscapes and cultural traditions. Vishal shares, "Each property will highlight different aspects of Bhutanese culture and geography, offering travellers more opportunities to explore the country beyond the usual tourist circuit." The focus remains on offering boutique, experience-driven stays rather than large-scale hotels. The upcoming properties will continue to focus on cultural immersion, ensuring that every guest enjoys an intimate and authentic connection to Bhutan.

Unique setting for weddings & events

With its scenic landscapes and intimate atmosphere, Pemako Hotels is a sought-after venue for weddings and private celebrations. "With just 21 tents, Pemako Punakha is great for full property buyouts, creating an exclusive setting for families and groups," says Vishal. The property also features a

helipad, allowing guests to arrive in style via a short 15-minute helicopter ride from Paro International Airport. "For destination weddings, this adds an extra layer of luxury and convenience," he adds. The team works closely with event planners to customise every detail, from Bhutanese inspired décor to curated local menus.

Special offers for Indian travellers

Pemako Hotels has introduced exclusive offers tailored for Indian visitors. "We currently have a 'Stay for five nights, pay for four' offer at Pemako Thimphu, which gives travellers extra time to explore Bhutan without stretching their budget," Vishal shares. These special packages are designed to make Bhutan more accessible to Indian travellers while encouraging longer stays.

Sustainability: The core of hospitality

Bhutan places a strong emphasis on sustainability, and Pemako Hotels follows the same philosophy. "We source local materials, support Bhutanese artisans, and focus on minimizing our environmental impact," Vishal explains. The spa treatments are rooted in Bhutanese traditional medicine, incorporating holistic healing techniques passed down for generations.

Building stronger ties

To further strengthen its presence in India, Pemako Hotels is actively engaging with the travel trade community. Vishal says, "Through BRANDit, the team is conducting webinars, training sessions, and direct sales calls to educate travel agents on what sets Pemako apart. We believe that building strong relationships with our trade partners is key to bringing more Indian travellers to Bhutan."

Pemako Hotels is set to expand its footprint in Bhutan, with new properties in the pipeline that will showcase different facets of the country. "Our goal is to create stays that go beyond just accommodation — we want travellers to leave with a true sense of Bhutan," Vishal concludes.



Beyond the Edge

QUARK EXPEDITIONS



For over three decades, Quark Expeditions has been at the forefront of polar exploration, offering once-in-a-lifetime journeys to Antarctica and the Arctic. Tenille Hunt, Regional Sales Director APAC, Quark Expeditions shares the way to Polar Regions for Indian travellers.

- Tripti Jain





Tenille Hunt



Chasing the ends of the Earth

Since 1991, they have been obsessed with the world's most remote and extreme destinations, being the pioneers in taking travellers to the Geographic North Pole and completing the first-ever circumnavigation of Antarctica. Their mission? To keep pushing boundaries and unlocking new frontiers. And now, their sights are set on India.

Tenille shares, "The Indian market is an emerging powerhouse. In the last three to six months, we've seen a significant uptick in inquiries from India, and that's why I'm here—to educate and inspire travellers about the incredible adventures that await them in the Polar Regions."

Flying over the Wild Drake

For Indian travellers, one itinerary stands out—the Fly the Drake program. Instead of enduring the unpredictable waters of the Drake Passage, travellers take a direct flight from Chile to the Antarctic Peninsula, making the journey seamless and comfortable.

"Indians are smart travellers. They prefer flying across the Drake Passage to avoid seasickness and still get the full experience of Antarctica in just eight days. With this innovative approach, we have made polar travel more accessible than ever to Indian adventurers, providing them with an immersive, thrilling, yet hassle-free experience," says Tenille.

The numbers tell the tale

While the numbers may seem

modest now, they are growing at an impressive rate. She shares, "In the last 12 months, we've had around 80 passengers from India, and that's just the beginning. As more Indian travellers become aware of what we offer, we expect these numbers to grow exponentially."

Globally, Quark Expeditions' biggest market remains North America, followed by the UK, and then the APAC region—where India is steadily carving out a substantial share. "India accounts for about 25 per cent of our APAC market, and we see huge potential here," explains Tenille.

The Polar Difference

Unlike many competitors, Quark Expeditions is exclusively focused on the Polar Regions. While other companies offer worldwide cruises, Quark stays true to its roots, providing an unmatched depth of expertise and specialised experiences. Tenille shares, "If you're going to Africa, you book with an African safari specialist. If you're going to Antarctica or the Arctic, you come to us because we are the polar specialists."

Beyond their expertise, they also offer unique adventures, such as ice landings via helicopter in Greenland and Antarctica, polar camping, and exclusive off-ship activities. She adds, "We offer more adventure options than any of our competitors—kayaking, paddle boarding, even camping on the Greenland ice sheet. We're not just taking you to these places; we're letting you truly experience them."



CRUISE ODYSSEY

Luxury meets adventure

One might assume that extreme destinations come with rugged conditions, but Quark Expeditions seamlessly blends adventure with comfort. Onboard their state-of-the-art vessels, guests indulge in world-class cuisine, wellness spas, and even indigenous gastronomic experiences.

Tenille shares, "Food is a big question for the Indian market. I can assure you, we have plenty of vegetarian options, and our guests love the variety. But one of the most unique experiences we offer is 'Tundra to Table,' where we bring indigenous cuisine from the Arctic to our guests."

With dishes prepared by Inuit chefs, travellers get to taste authentic Arctic flavours while sailing through some of the most pristine environments on Earth. "It's a culinary journey like no other," she adds.

Who's booking the expeditions?

Indian travellers embarking on polar expeditions are seasoned explorers, often seeking new challenges after having visited Europe, the U.S., and Australia. "They are well-travelled, and they're now looking for something truly extraordinary," explains Tenille.

Another trend she's noticed is multi-generational travel. "In India, we see a lot of families travelling together—grandparents, parents, children, even extended family members. What starts as four people quickly turns into fourteen!" she says with a smile. With family-friendly accommodations and interconnecting cabins, Quark Expeditions is well-prepared to cater to large travel groups, making the polar experience accessible to all ages.

Indian partnerships and incentives

To strengthen its presence in India, Quark Expeditions collaborates with Heaven's Portfolio, a company dedicated to luxury travel marketing. Tenille



shares, "India is a last-minute booking market. Right now, we're promoting the Arctic 2025 and Antarctic 2025-26 seasons."

For travel agents, Quark offers lucrative incentives. She explains, "We have different promotions throughout the year. Right now, for every Arctic 2025 booking, travellers receive a 250 dollar voucher. We also have amenities for specific groups, making the experience even more rewarding."

Pushing the limits

Despite rapid expansion, the company remains committed to sustainability and exclusivity. Tenille shares, "We believe in small-ship travel. All our vessels carry fewer than 200 passengers, ensuring everyone gets off the ship twice a day to explore."

For the truly brave, Quark Expeditions offers an adrenaline-fueled activity—the Polar Plunge. She explains, "At the end of the trip, passengers jump off the ship into the freezing waters of the polar regions. It's electrifying. People of all ages, from 20 to 80, take part in it."

With doctors on standby and heated saunas waiting afterward, it's a safe yet exhilarating way to cap off an expedition. "I've done it six times myself," she adds proudly.

A brighter future for Indian Polar travel

As Quark Expeditions deepens its footprint in India, its mission is clear: to educate, inspire, and invite more Indian travellers to the ends of the Earth. Tenille shares, "I was surprised at how many Indian agents already knew about Antarctica. Now, my job is to show them why Quark is the best choice." With growing interest, increased awareness, and exclusive itineraries tailored for Indian travellers, the future of polar travel in India looks brighter than ever. She concludes "If I leave India with just a few new partners for life, then I know I've done my job. For those seeking an adventure beyond imagination, we promise an experience that is nothing short of extraordinary."



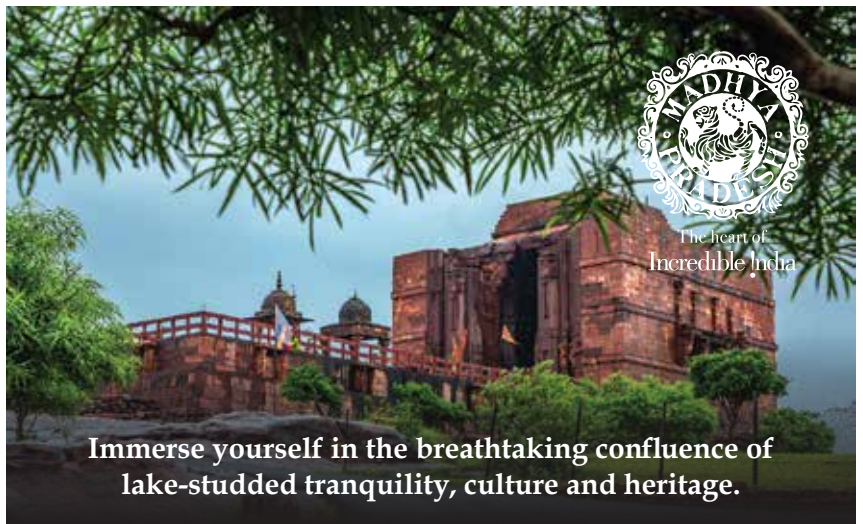
UNVEIL THE OFFBEAT DESTINATIONS AROUND BHOPAL

A Gateway to Madhya Pradesh

Steeped in history, the heart of India is unfailingly a kaleidoscope of cultural wonders. From the grandeur of age-old temples and the serenity of majestic mosques to the opulent beauty of palaces and the imposing presence of museums, the state's architectural marvels offer a captivating glimpse into its rich heritage.



Imagine a place where history whispers through ancient monuments while nature casts a spell with the gentle waves lapping. This is Bhopal, the 'City of Lakes,' the soul of Madhya Pradesh. Nestled amidst stunning lakes, this 'City of Royals' beckons to experience long, imperative history and a significant architectural and cultural legacy, truly embodying the heartland of India. Come and ascend the Gauhar Mahal for breathtaking panoramic views. Immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Madhya Pradesh at the State Museum, home to a vast collection of artifacts.



Immerse yourself in the breathtaking confluence of lake-studded tranquility, culture and heritage.

Glide through the composed Upper Lake, admiring the iconic Taj-ul-Masajid. Explore the opulent Shaukat Mahal, a testament to architectural brilliance. Wander through the vibrant markets of Chowk Bazaar and New Market and unwind by the serene Lower Lake. Don't miss Bharat Bhavan showcasing the best of Indian art and literature. Traverse through the State Museum which stands as a gateway to Madhya Pradesh's rich past, housing ancient sculptures, rare manuscripts and fossils that whisper stories of bygone eras. The Tribal Museum immerses its visitors into the lives of the region's indigenous communities with colorful displays of their art, traditions and spiritual world.

Experience the unique tapestry of human history and culture at the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (National Museum of Mankind). The Mrignayanee Emporium in Bhopal offers exquisite Chanderi and Maheshwari weaves, tribal jewellery and handcrafted artifacts boasting Madhya Pradesh's rich craftsmanship. To experience royal legacy of an age-old tradition of beauty and finesse, explore the Jari Jaradozi embroidery with its delicate gold and silver thread work. Discover the stunning Jagdishpur, experience serenity at the Moti Masjid and escape the city bustle amidst a scenic backdrop of Van Vihar National Park. Seek a tranquil escape and authentic rural experiences at Khari village.

EXPLORE BHOPAL'S ENCHANTING SURROUNDINGS

The city offers a perfect blend of urban life and natural beauty. But the real magic lies beyond its city limits. Explore and pick what intrigues you!

The Great Stupa of Sanchi:

Journey back in time and explore this UNESCO World Heritage Site just 48 km away from Bhopal. Marvel at ancient Buddhist stupas and monasteries, dating back to the 2nd century BC, offering a glimpse into the rich history of Buddhism in India.

Udaygiri Caves:

Explore a series of 20 captivating Hindu and Jain caves just 57 km from Bhopal, renowned for their historical significance and intricate architectural details.

Bhojeshwar Temple:

Witness the grandeur of this tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site, an awe-inspiring Shiva temple, showcasing the architectural prowess of ancient India just 28 km from the city.

Bhimbetka:

Delve into prehistoric times at this UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to the largest collection of rock art in India located 50 km from Bhopal.




Ratapani Tiger Reserve:

Embark on a thrilling wildlife safari just 70 km from state capital and encounter majestic tigers and a diverse array of other wildlife amidst scenic landscapes.


Pachmarhi - Satpura Tiger Reserve & Narmadapuram:

Venture into the heart of the Satpura Range and explore another tentative UNESCO heritage site Satpura Tiger Reserve, a paradise for nature lovers. Explore the scenic beauty of Pachmarhi and visit Narmadapuram, a significant pilgrimage site on the banks of the sacred Narmada River.



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Taipei

A City That Has It All And Then Some

A city of lights, flavours, and stories- Taipei is where history lingers, shopping seduces, and every sunset feels like a promise.

- Bharti Sharma



A Love Letter to Taipei's Many Wonders

Some cities dazzle, some cities inspire, and then there's Taipei- a city that effortlessly does both while making you question why you ever thought you had self-control over shopping, eating, or gawking at history. From the moment I arrived, I was swept into a whirlwind of culture, cuisine, and consumerism, leaving me simultaneously enriched and lighter (both spiritually and financially). If you ask me to name a single thing Taipei doesn't have, I'd probably just change the subject. Where Time Stands Still, But My Heart Raced: The National Palace Museum

For a history lover like me, walking into the National Palace Museum was akin to stepping into a time machine. The past wasn't just on display, it was alive. My heart raced as I encountered the masterpieces of the Ming dynasty, their delicate blue-and-white porcelain whispering stories of emperors, artisans, and a civilisation that shaped the world. But what truly left me breathless was an unexpected treasure: the Van

Cleef & Arpels collection. Rare gems, so exquisite they seemed stolen from the dreams of royalty, were dazzling under the museum lights. Taiwan, you had me at history-but now you've got me at jewellery, too.

The Echo of Footsteps: Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall

If there's one place that anchors Taipei's historical identity, it's the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall. Standing in its grand courtyard, I soaked in the solemnity of its architecture, the weight of history palpable in the air. The changing of the guards was a spectacle of precision and honour, reminding me that history isn't just about what was-it's about how we choose to remember it.

Reaching for the Sky: Taipei 101

What's better than seeing a city? Seeing it from the top of a record-breaking skyscraper, of course. Taipei 101 isn't just an engineering marvel, it's an experience. Watching the city wake up at sunrise, bask in golden hues at sunset, and then glitter like a cosmic masterpiece at night? I could do it



all day (I wish). The mall at the base was a whole other adventure-where self-restraint went to die. Let's just say Taipei's shopping scene won, and my wallet lost. But when in Taiwan, right?

Flavours That Follow You Home

Even now, long after my return, I find myself dreaming of the meals I had. The Indian food at Three Idiots Indian Vegetarian Restaurant was unexpectedly delightful, bringing flavours of home with a Taiwanese twist. And of course, Din Tai Fung- because no rational human being leaves Taipei without consuming unreasonable amounts of xiaolongbao.

Rongjin Time Life Park: A Postcard from the Heart

If Taipei 101 is the city's crown, Rongjin Time Life Park, Daan District is its heart, a charming neighbourhood with leafy streets, stylish boutiques, and a quiet kind of vibrance. I wandered through its nooks and crannies, sipping bubble tea and wondering if I could just move in. If a city can have a 'cute' district, this is it.

Shop 'Til You Drop- And Then Shop Some More

If shopping were an Olympic sport, Taipei would take gold. The city's electronic stores were a tech-lover's paradise, and the pottery? Let's just say my suitcase barely made it home intact. I shopped like it was my life's mission, and I regret nothing. Some places you visit; some places stay with you. Taipei is firmly in the latter category. It's a city that gives you history, food, culture, and skyline views that rewrite your definition of breathtaking. It's where self-control in shopping is futile, food is unforgettable, and every moment feels like a scene from an epic travelogue. Taipei, you have my heart.

Dancing with the Neon Lights: The Night Market Chronicles

No trip to Taipei is complete without surrendering to its street food scene. Raohe Street Night Market was an assault on the senses in the best way possible- aromas, neon lights, and a cacophony of excitement. Every bite was a revelation, but my heart (and stomach) belonged to the famous black pepper buns.



A Morning to Remember

Dawn's embrace in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu awakens each morning with a blanket of nature and culture. Mornings in Tamil Nadu are the most enchanting. Where the sun is ready to paint the sky in gold!

As the first golden rays kiss the ocean at Kanniyakumari and filter through the misty peaks of Ooty, a new day unravels with a mix of heritage and natural beauty. Women create intricate kolams at their doorsteps, temple bells resonate in ancient shrines, and the aroma of Kumbakonam's legendary

degree coffee fills the air. Whether you seek the tranquillity of a hill station, the energy of a bustling city, or the serenity of a coastal sunrise, Tamil Nadu's mornings are a traveller's delight.

The dawn of three oceans: Kanniyakumari

At the southernmost tip of India, Kanniyakumari

offers one of the most breath-taking sunrise views in the country. Here, the confluence of the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean creates a scene where the sky is set ablaze with hues of crimson and gold. The Vivekananda Rock Memorial and Thiruvalluvar Statue stand

as silhouettes against the rising sun. Travellers can witness this celestial show from the beach or opt for a ferry ride for an even more enchanting experience. The best time to visit is from October to March, when the skies are clear and the ocean reflects a perfect mirror of the dawn. As the night falls, the Thiruvalluvar



Statue comes alive with a mesmerising laser mapping show, painting the towering structure with vibrant lights that narrate stories of Tamil Nadu's literary legacy.

Misty mornings at Kodaikanal

Kodaikanal greets the morning with a poetic mist rolling over lush valleys. At the famous Coaker's Walk, an early morning stroll is rewarded with panoramic views of the hills draped in white clouds. The Kodai Lake, calm and serene, mirrors the changing hues of the sky, making it a perfect place for an early boat ride. Byrant Park, located nearby, is a riot of colours as the first sunlight filters through its blooming flora. For travellers, a visit between September and May ensures the best weather to enjoy this hill station's tranquil mornings.

The roar of the morning at Hogenakkal Falls

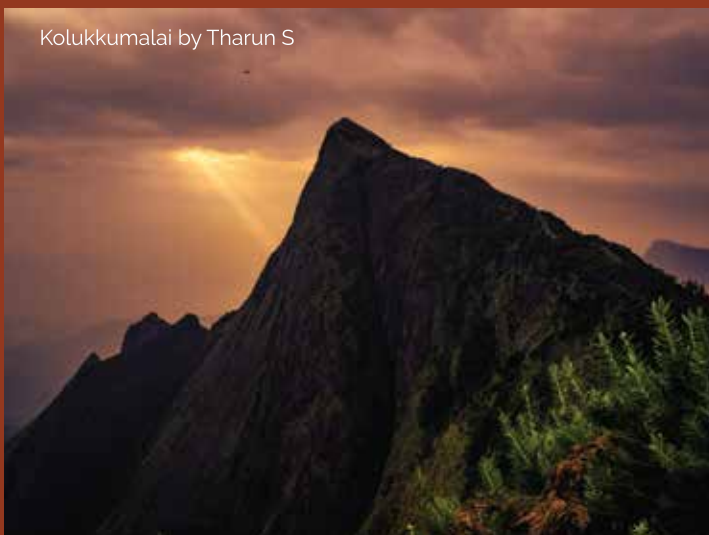
Dubbed the 'Niagara of India,' Hogenakkal Falls is a sight to behold at sunrise. As the first light hits the cascading waterfalls, a golden glow envelops the gushing waters. The cool morning air, combined with the rhythmic roar of the falls, creates an invigorating experience. Coracle rides, available from early morning, allow travellers to get up close to the stunning rock formations



Kodaikanal Hills



Madurai



Kolukkumalai by Tharun S

and swirling waters. The best time to visit is from July to December, when the falls are at their majestic best.

Marina Beach: Where the sun meets the sand

Chennai's iconic Marina Beach comes alive at sunrise, offering a perfect blend of nature and city life. The golden sands stretch endlessly, kissed by gentle waves, while morning joggers, fishermen, and yoga practitioners welcome the day. Watching the sunrise over the Bay of Bengal from the lighthouse or simply strolling along the beachside promenade is an experience that defines Chennai's spirit. For travellers, visiting before 7 AM ensures a peaceful encounter before the city rush begins.

Ooty's high-rise sunrise!

Doddabetta Peak, the highest point in the Nilgiris, is a sunrise seeker's paradise. At an altitude of 2,637 meters, the early morning unveils a panorama of rolling hills bathed in golden light. The Needle Rock Viewpoint, a short drive from Ooty, offers an equally mesmerising sight where the first rays break through the clouds, creating an ethereal glow. The best months to visit are October to March when the skies are clearest, ensuring a surreal sunrise experience.

Madurai mornings

Madurai, the cultural capital of Tamil Nadu, begins its day with the divine chants of temples. The Meenakshi Amman Temple, an architectural marvel, opens its doors early, allowing devotees and travellers to soak in its spiritual energy. The morning abhishekam (ritual bathing of the deity) is a mesmerising sight, enhanced by the aroma of incense and temple lamps flickering in the dim light. A visit to Madurai is incomplete

without indulging in a traditional South Indian breakfast at Murugan Idli Shop, where the idlis are as soft as clouds and served with a variety of chutneys.

True essence of Tamil Nadu's mornings

As the sun rises over Tamil Nadu's villages and cities, women skilfully draw kolams, a ritual symbolising prosperity. Meanwhile, another ritual brews in the kitchens of K u m b a k o n a m — t h e famous degree coffee.



Served in a traditional 'dabara set,' this rich, frothy coffee is the perfect wake-up call for travellers. A visit to Kumbakonam's iconic coffee houses offers a taste of this authentic South Indian delight.

Where every sunrise tells a story

From the spiritual glow of Madurai to the golden beaches of Chennai and the misty peaks of Ooty, Tamil Nadu's mornings

are a celebration of nature and culture. Each sunrise paints a different story, be it the roar of waterfalls, the whisper of temple bells, or the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. For travellers, exploring Tamil Nadu at dawn is an invitation to witness the state in its most magical form—an experience that lingers long after the journey ends.





EXPLORING THE SACRED **TEMPLES** OF VRINDAVAN

A JOURNEY OF **DEVOTION**

Vrindavan, a sacred town in Uttar Pradesh, holds deep spiritual significance as the childhood abode of Lord Krishna. Rooted in Hindu scriptures, it attracts millions of pilgrims seeking a deep spiritual experience. One of the most revered temples is the Banke Bihari Temple, where unique traditions prevent prolonged eye contact with the deity due to Krishna's powerful gaze. The temple resonates with ecstatic devotion and devotional music.

The ISKCON Temple, built in 1975, is a hub for Gaudiya Vaishnavism, housing idols of Krishna and Balaram. Melodious kirtans and spiritual discourses make it a centre for learning and devotion.

The Prem Mandir, built of white marble, features intricate carvings, light displays, and animated depictions of Krishna's pastimes, offering a mesmerizing experience.

The ancient Radha Raman Temple, established in 1542, houses a self-manifested Krishna idol. The Madan Mohan Temple, one of the oldest, provides a tranquil setting for meditation. Vrindavan's temples offer a transformative journey into Krishna consciousness.



Uttar Pradesh
Tourism App.

RANGOTSAV

Celebrating the Vibrant Festival of Colours in Braj Region.



Holi, a vibrant festival, is celebrated grandly in Uttar Pradesh's Braj region. Known as Rangotsav, the festivities in Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, and Nandgaon span ten days, honouring the love of Lord Krishna and Radha with colours symbolizing joy and devotion.

A highlight of the celebrations is the famous Lathmar Holi of Barsana and Nandgaon, where women playfully chase men with sticks, re-enacting Krishna's legendary visit to Radha's village. Vrindavan's Banke Bihari Temple opens with Phoolon ki Holi, showering devotees with flowers, while Mathura's Dwarkadhish Temple hosts grand processions and Rasleela performances.

A significant addition is Widow's Holi in Vrindavan, breaking societal taboos and promoting inclusion. Another unique tradition is Laddoo Holi, where devotees joyfully throw sweets.

Beyond colours, Rangotsav features folk music, Krishna-centric performances, and festive delicacies like thandai and gujiya. The Braj region becomes a vibrant canvas of love and spirituality, making it a truly divine experience.



**Uttar Pradesh
Tourism App.**

Centara Hotels & Resorts hosts a partners meet in New Delhi

Centara Hotels & Resorts hosted an exclusive partners meet bringing together leading travel partners, industry experts, and stakeholders for an evening of networking and collaboration. The event highlighted Centara's expanding footprint, especially in the Maldives, and its commitment to providing world-class hospitality experiences.



Celebrating Connections at IATO Annual Day!

A day brimming with joy, camaraderie, and cherished moments, the IATO Annual Day brought together industry leaders and travel enthusiasts for an unforgettable celebration. Laughter echoed, bonds strengthened, and new partnerships blossomed, making it a truly remarkable event. Here's to lasting memories and the promise of exciting journeys ahead!



Satte 2025 unveils the future of travel!

SATTE 2025 has set the stage for a groundbreaking year in tourism, bringing together global travel leaders, industry pioneers, and key stakeholders under one roof. From emerging destinations to sustainable travel solutions, we thank our partners for their constant support!



EVENT AFFAIR



IslandLife and Noku Maldives organise a meet and greet for their partners

An electrifying night of fun, laughter, and connections! IslandLife & Noku Maldives brought together incredible travel and trade partners for a spectacular celebration of strong partnerships and shared success. From clinking glasses to dancing the night away, the energy was unmatched!



Tourism Malaysia unveils the Visit Malaysia Year 2026 campaign



The event was inaugurated by Muzafar Shah Mustafa, High Commissioner of Malaysia to India, along with Ahmad Johanif Mohd Ali, Director, Tourism Malaysia Delhi, in the presence of guests from the travel trade, airline industry, and media. A key highlight of the evening was the official unveiling of the VM2026 logo, featuring Wira and Manja – the Malayan Sun Bears as the campaign mascots.



7 South and Minor Hotels host exclusive Seychelles-themed evening

Bringing together industry professionals for a business dinner followed by cocktails. The event was a fantastic opportunity to connect with great people, engage in insightful conversations, and learn more about the stunning Anantara Maia Seychelles and Avani Barbarons Seychelles Resort. The team shared exciting updates on these exceptional properties, making for an evening filled with meaningful discussions, great food, and wonderful company.



Korea Tourism Organization Sees 44 per cent Surge in Indian Arrivals

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), in collaboration with the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), successfully hosted the Korea Tourism Roadshow in Delhi, strengthening its engagement with key travel trade partners and industry leaders. The event comes at a time when Indian tourism to South Korea has witnessed remarkable growth, with 176,668 Indian visitors recorded in 2024—a 44 per cent increase from 2023.



NIMA celebrates 10 years and announces new executive team



The Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) celebrated a decade of excellence, marking its 10th anniversary with a grand event. In this milestone moment, NIMA also announced the reconstitution of its Executive Team, with key leadership appointments.



APPOINTMENTS



Centara Villas Phi Phi Island

Centara Hotels & Resorts announces the appointment of Prapaijit Thongma as General Manager of Centara Villas Phi Phi Island. A distinguished hospitality professional, Prapaijit brings extensive leadership experience and deep expertise in beach resort management to this exciting new property, set to open in Q1 2025.

Brand USA

Brand USA, announces the appointment of Leah Chandler, CDME as its new Chief Marketing Officer, beginning March 17, 2025. With over 20 years of experience in branding, advertising, and destination marketing within the travel and tourism industry, Chandler will lead Brand USA's global marketing strategy. She will spearhead efforts to inspire international travel to the United States through innovative campaigns and by elevating the country's presence as a premier global destination.



OA Global DMC

OA Global DMC appoints Saroj Jena as the new Chief Operating Officer (COO). With 20 years of expertise in managing operations and sales, Saroj brings a wealth of experience, a collaborative approach, and a strong focus on teamwork. His leadership will further strengthen our ability to deliver exceptional services to our clients and drive our growth in the industry.



WelcomHeritage

WelcomHeritage announces the appointment of Mr Ashutosh Chhibba as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO). With over 30 years of exemplary experience in the hospitality industry, Mr Chhibba is poised to lead WelcomHeritage into an exciting new era of growth, innovation, and operational excellence.





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