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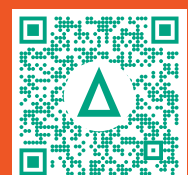


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## SPAN



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# EDITOR'S LETTER

## **SATTE 2025 Set to Break Records** as South Asia's Premier Travel and Tourism Expo

*With over 2,000 exhibitors, 50+ countries, and 40,000+ visitors expected, this year's edition is poised to drive global tourism innovation and business growth.*

**T**he 32nd edition of **SATTE (South Asia's Travel and Tourism Exchange)** is gearing up to be its most expansive yet, promising an **unparalleled platform for industry networking, business expansion, and innovation.**

Organized by **Informa Markets**, SATTE 2025 will take place from **February 19-21** at **Yashobhoomi, New Delhi**, marking a significant milestone in India's tourism sector.

With an impressive lineup of **over 2,000 exhibitors, participation from more than 50 countries, 28 state tourism boards, and an anticipated 40,000+ visitors**, the event is set to be a catalyst



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for **strategic alliances and transformative discussions** in global travel.

### **A Defining Year for the Travel & Tourism Industry**

As travel trends shift toward **experience-driven journeys, sustainable tourism, and technology-enhanced personalization**, **SATTE 2025** arrives at a pivotal moment for the industry.

*“With evolving traveler preferences, new destinations emerging, and a strong infrastructure push, 2025 will be a defining year for Indian tourism,”* said **Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, Informa Markets in India**. He emphasized that **government-led initiatives, including streamlined e-visa policies, improved connectivity, and enhanced destination promotions**, are expected to make travel more seamless for both domestic and international tourists.

*“SATTE 2025 will be the epicenter for industry collaboration, innovation, and business growth. This year’s edition, held for the first time at Yashobhoomi, will extend its reach to 402 cities, including Tier I and Tier II markets. With its ability to foster global partnerships and showcase cutting-edge developments, SATTE remains the definitive platform for shaping the future of travel and tourism.”*

### **International Participation & Strategic Alliances**

The **2025 edition** will see a strong international presence, featuring key tourism boards, travel operators, and hospitality giants from across the world.

- **Saudia Tourism** leads as the **Premium Partner Country**, with strong representation from **Malaysia, Thailand, Dubai, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and other global tourism powerhouses**.

- **Notable participating countries** include **Hong Kong, Egypt, Cambodia, Greece, Bhutan, Jamaica, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, Qatar, Mauritius, Fiji, St.**

**Petersburg, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, and more.**

- **Uttar Pradesh** takes center stage as the **Host State**, with **Jharkhand as the Focus State** and participation from **Gujarat, Rajasthan, Odisha, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Punjab, Ladakh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Chhattisgarh**.

Key sectors such as **homestays, adventure tourism, domestic travel, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions)** will feature prominently, reflecting India’s growing tourism diversity.

### **Spotlight on Cruise Tourism & the “Atithi” Initiative**

For the first time, **India’s Port Authority** will highlight the **Cruise Bharat Mission**, showcasing the country’s vast coastline and its potential as a premier cruise destination.

Additionally, **Atithi—an exclusive buyer-seller meet** in collaboration with the **Service Export Promotion Council (SEPC)**, will welcome **250 international buyers**, offering them an immersive introduction to India’s tourism potential.

*“Tourism is a vital driver of Brand India globally, and with the sector expected to reach \$150 billion by 2025, platforms like SATTE play a crucial role in fostering long-term global partnerships,”* said **Dr. Abhay Sinha, Director General, SEPC**.

### **Industry Insights, Networking, and Recognition**

Beyond exhibition booths, **SATTE 2025** is set to deliver **unmatched industry insights** through its **Leadership Summit, thought-leadership sessions, and networking forums**.

#### **Key highlights include:**

- **SATTE Leadership Summit** – Experts discuss **India’s MICE market growth, tourism vision for 2047, and sustainable travel strategies**.
- **Industry Awards** – The **SATTE**

**Awards, SHAKTI Awards, and Colours of SATTE** will recognize excellence in tourism and hospitality.

- **Exclusive Pre-Event Networking** – A **Golf Morning for industry leaders** sets the stage for meaningful discussions.

- **High-Impact Panels** – Discussions on **AI in tourism, viral travel trends, and the rise of India’s outbound travel market**.

To ensure continuous industry engagement beyond the event, SATTE will run year-round initiatives, including **SATTE 365 Clicks, SATTE Podcasts, SATTE Road Shows, and industry association programs**.

### **Shaping the Future of Travel & Tourism**

With its expansive global participation, focus on **innovation, sustainability, and digital transformation**, **SATTE 2025** is set to shape the future of travel and tourism—not just in India, but across South Asia and beyond.

As the industry moves into an era defined by **experiential travel, digital-first strategies, and global collaborations**, **SATTE remains at the forefront—connecting leaders, driving change, and unlocking new business opportunities**.



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# IndiGo Airlines Targets Global Growth with Boeing 787-9 Wet-Lease and Accelerated Airbus A350-900 Rollout

IndiGo Airlines is making bold moves to expand its global footprint, with plans to wet-lease six **Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners** from **Norse Atlantic Airways** and fast-track the delivery of its **Airbus A350-900** aircraft. These strategic steps are part of the airline's efforts to strengthen its presence in the long-haul market and accelerate its international operations.

## Wet-Lease of Boeing 787-9s Set to Launch Long-Haul Routes

In a significant expansion of its international operations, IndiGo plans to take delivery of **six Boeing 787-9s** from Norse Atlantic Airways in 2025. According to **The Economic Times**, the first two aircraft are expected to enter service by **February 2025**, with the remaining four to join by **September 2025**. These widebody aircraft will enable IndiGo to begin operating its first-ever long-haul routes.

The airline has set its sights on **Europe**, with **London** and **Paris** emerging as potential initial destinations for the new services. Currently, IndiGo does not operate any widebody aircraft in its own fleet, relying instead on wet-leasing for its international expansion. The airline currently uses **two Boeing 777-300ERs** leased from **Turkish Airlines**, which are dedicated to flights between **Mumbai** and **Delhi** and **Istanbul Airport**.

While both IndiGo and Norse Atlantic have refrained from officially commenting on the deal, Norse Atlantic recently announced plans to lease out six of its Boeing 787-9s to an undisclosed "reputable international airline." This arrangement highlights the Norwegian carrier's efforts to boost its **ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance, and Insurance)** contract revenues, as it looks to capitalize on the growing demand for international travel. Norse Atlantic's fleet includes 12 Boeing 787-9s, split between its operations in **Norway** and the **UK**.

## Changing Aviation Landscape in India Supports Expansion

This new wet-lease agreement is possible due to recent changes in **India's aviation regulations**. Historically, India had restrictive policies around **ACMI contracts**, but these have been relaxed in recent years to encourage the growth of domestic carriers, particularly amid the ongoing global **aircraft shortage**.

The ability to quickly scale up long-haul operations by leasing Boeing 787-9s aligns with IndiGo's broader strategy of competing on international routes, including entering markets that have historically been dominated by other large carriers.



## Airbus A350-900 Delivery Accelerated

In addition to the wet-lease arrangement, IndiGo is also negotiating with **Airbus** to expedite the delivery of its order for **30 Airbus A350-900s**. Initially slated to begin entering service in **2027**, IndiGo is working with Airbus to bring forward the timeline in order to meet its ambitious growth plans. The A350-900s are expected to be a core component of the airline's future long-haul fleet, complementing the Boeing 787-9s.

The accelerated delivery of the A350-900s is a key part of IndiGo's strategy to establish itself as a serious player on long-haul routes, especially as the airline looks to diversify its offerings and tap into the high-demand international market.

## Aiming for Global Reach

With these moves, IndiGo is setting the stage for a significant leap in its long-haul capabilities. The wet-lease agreement with Norse Atlantic Airways and the expedited Airbus A350-900 delivery underscore the airline's determination to break into new global markets and compete on the international stage.

As India's largest airline by fleet size and market share, IndiGo's entry into long-haul travel marks a major milestone in the country's aviation landscape. By fast-tracking the expansion of its international services, IndiGo aims to capitalize on the growing demand for air travel post-pandemic and build a sustainable global presence.

With new aircraft joining its fleet and a rapidly expanding international network, IndiGo is well-positioned for the next phase of its growth trajectory, aiming for a prominent spot in the global aviation industry.



# Singapore Airlines Showcases KrisWorld and Premium Service in Latest Ad Campaigns

Singapore Airlines' recent advertising campaigns have effectively spotlighted its **premium in-flight entertainment and luxury service offerings**, reinforcing its reputation as a leading global airline.

According to data and analytics firm **GlobalData**, the airline's **November 2024 to January 2025 campaigns** successfully emphasized **its state-of-the-art KrisWorld entertainment platform, exclusive brand partnerships, and commitment to exceptional service**. By seamlessly integrating **luxury travel elements with digital innovation**, Singapore Airlines continues to set the benchmark for top-tier passenger experiences.

## A Strategic Balance of Entertainment and Luxury

GlobalData analyst **Satya Prasad Nayak** highlights the airline's well-

**balanced marketing strategy**, stating:

*"Singapore Airlines has masterfully positioned its KrisWorld entertainment platform alongside luxury service offerings, such as its exclusive partnership with Charles Heidsieck champagne. This approach not only enhances its premium brand identity but also reinforces its commitment to delivering an unparalleled travel experience."*

## Key Themes in Singapore Airlines' Latest Campaigns

The airline's recent advertising push has focused on **three core pillars**, showcasing a blend of cutting-edge technology, luxury partnerships, and world-class service.

### 1. A Seamless Digital Entertainment Experience

Singapore Airlines has positioned KrisWorld as a **"theatre in the**

**sky,"** offering passengers a diverse selection of **new movie releases, documentaries, TV shows, and live sports**. The campaign highlights the platform's pre-flight accessibility, allowing travelers to **browse and personalize their in-flight entertainment** via the KrisWorld app. Integrated **QR codes and mobile apps** further enhance this **digitally immersive experience**, bridging convenience with innovation.

### 2. Luxury Partnerships Elevate the Travel Experience

The airline's collaboration with **prestigious brands**, including **Charles Heidsieck champagne**, underscores its premium status. First-class passengers are treated to **exclusive offerings**, reinforcing the brand's commitment to **delivering high-end experiences**. Singapore Airlines has also expanded its entertainment partnerships, featuring **Apple TV+ trials for passengers**, ensuring a curated and elevated content selection.

### 3. Service Excellence and Personalized Hospitality

Singapore Airlines' campaigns continue to highlight the **warmth and attentiveness** of its **award-winning cabin crew**. Recent advertisements have placed a strong emphasis on **family travel**, showcasing the airline's ability to cater to **passengers of all ages**—from children to elderly travelers. By focusing on **personalized service and attention to detail**, Singapore Airlines reinforces its dedication to creating **memorable journeys**.

### Redefining Premium Air Travel

Through a **strategic mix of entertainment, luxury, and hospitality**, Singapore Airlines' latest campaigns **solidify its position as a top-tier airline**. By integrating **cutting-edge technology, exclusive brand partnerships, and a deeply personalized service approach**, the airline continues to redefine what it means to **travel in ultimate comfort and style**.





## Inflight Theft on the Rise: Why Travelers and Agents Must Stay Alert

A growing number of inflight theft incidents, particularly across Asia, is raising alarm among airlines and travel agencies. Reports of **criminal syndicates targeting high-value routes** have prompted renewed calls for vigilance from both travelers and industry professionals.

### Organized Crime at 30,000 Feet

One of the latest incidents occurred on **February 5**, when Singapore's **Airport Police Division arrested a 30-year-old man** for stealing **US\$885 in cash** from a fellow passenger during a flight to Singapore. The theft was uncovered when the victim **noticed the suspect tampering with her bag** in the overhead compartment. Upon discovering that several hundred dollars were missing, she quickly alerted the cabin crew, who **coordinated with ground staff for the suspect's arrest upon landing**.

This is not an isolated case. According to **Subhas Menon, director-general of the Association of Asia-Pacific Airlines (AAPA)**, these incidents are part of a **rising trend of inflight thefts**, often carried out by **organized crime groups targeting wealthy travelers on specific routes**.

*"They know which flights are most likely to have high-value passengers and deliberately board these flights to steal,"* Menon explains.

### Targeting Wealthy Passengers on High-Value Routes

According to aviation expert **Sam Chui**, inflight theft is particularly **common on flights to and from Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Bangkok**—as well as on premium routes to **luxury destinations like Dubai**.

Chui warns that these crimes are **not random acts of petty theft** but **carefully planned operations** involving multiple individuals.

*"Thieves position themselves strategically across different sections of the aircraft—some in Business Class, others in Economy—so they can easily pass stolen items between them. They also have ground accomplices who help retrieve hidden loot once the flight lands,"* he explains.

In some cases, stolen goods are **concealed inside aircraft lavatories**, hidden in compartments such as **trash bins, behind sinks, or behind mirrors**. Once the thieves disembark, **airport cleaners or accomplices** retrieve the stolen items to avoid detection.

### How Passengers Can Protect Their Valuables

With inflight theft on the rise, travelers are being urged to take **extra precautions** when flying. **International luggage brand PacSafe** recommends the following security measures:

**Keep valuables on your person** – Store money, jewelry, and electronics in your **carry-on under your seat** rather than in the overhead bin.

**Secure your bags to a fixed object** – If your bag has a locking system, **attach it to your seat** to prevent opportunistic theft.

**Place valuables deep inside your bag** – Hide **wallets, passports, and electronics** beneath layers of clothing or personal items to make them harder to access.

**Lock your zippers** – Use luggage with **built-in locks or interlocking zippers** to deter unauthorized access.

**Position bags strategically in the overhead compartment** – **Turn them upside down** or place zippers facing the wall to **make tampering more difficult**.

**Stay vigilant** – Theft is more likely to occur on **long-haul flights** when cabin lights are dimmed. While comfort is key, **remaining alert**—especially in premium cabins—could help prevent theft.

### A Growing Concern for Airlines and Travelers

As **inflight thefts become increasingly sophisticated**, both passengers and travel professionals must remain cautious. Airlines are urged to **heighten security measures**, while passengers should adopt **preventative strategies** to safeguard their belongings.

In the world of modern air travel, vigilance isn't just about safety—it's about **protecting what matters most, even at 30,000 feet**.

# 23.6 million passengers at Brussels Airport in 2024, up 6,4% on 2023

*Brussels Airport achieved 23.6 million passengers in 2024 (+6.4%), added 10 destinations, welcomed nine airlines, and saw 5% cargo growth.*





In 2024, **Brussels Airport** welcomed a total of 23.6 million passengers, up 6,4% on 2023. Moreover, the airport saw its network expanded with 10 new passenger destinations and five new airlines. Brussels Airport also recorded continued growth in the leisure segment, in both holiday travel and visits to family and friends. Overall cargo volumes increased by 5%, totalling 733,000 tonnes, and the cargo division welcomed four new airlines.

*“Together with the entire airport community, we successfully brought 23.6 million passengers to their destinations smoothly and comfortably last year. We further strengthened our network, particularly our intercontinental network, by adding five significant new long-haul destinations. This provides*

*numerous additional opportunities for holidaymakers, people visiting family and friends, and business travellers to access large parts of the world directly from Brussels Airport. In total, we welcomed nine new airlines for passengers and cargo. Our cargo community achieved solid growth, supporting the import and export businesses and the broader economy of our country.”*, said **Arnaud Feist**, CEO of **Brussels Airport**.

#### **Passenger traffic: up 6,4% on 2023**

In 2024, 23,610,856 passengers passed through Brussels Airport. This is an increase of 6,4% on 2023 (22.2 million passengers). Holiday travel, particularly trips to visit family and friends, saw the highest increase.

Last year, Brussels Airport expanded its passenger network with 10 new destinations and five new airlines. Primarily intercontinental destinations were added, significantly expanding the options for passengers, both for direct travel and onward connections.

In the long-haul segment, Brussels Airlines launched a new connection to Nairobi, while Singapore Airlines (Singapore) and Thai Airways (Bangkok) resumed services at the airport. TUI fly added Curaçao to its network, and Hainan Airlines and Juneyao Air launched direct daily flights to Shanghai, China. New short-haul routes include Krakow (Brussels Airlines), Bergen (Wideroe), Gazipaşa (Corendon Airlines), Bari (Transavia) and Tromsø (Norwegian).

Transfer passengers accounted for 14% of all departing passengers, particularly between Europe, Africa, and North America. In this regard, Brussels Airport remains a key hub for the Star Alliance network.

The 10 countries with the most passengers in 2024 were Spain, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Morocco, United Kingdom, United States, Portugal, France and Switzerland respectively.

In **December**, Brussels Airport welcomed 1,773,930 passengers, representing an 11% growth in passenger numbers compared to December 2023. The busy start of the

Christmas holidays positively impacted passenger numbers, with a notable increase in departing travellers. The top 10 countries in December were Spain, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, United States, Morocco, Switzerland, France, Turkey and Portugal, respectively.

#### **Flights**

The total number of flight movements increased by 3% in 2024 compared to 2023, to 198,617 flight movements. The number of passenger flights increased by 4% compared to 2023. The number of passengers per flight is up from 141 in 2023 to a new record of 144, due to the use of larger aircraft and an ever-increasing load factor. The number of cargo flights increased slightly by 1% compared to 2023.

In 2024, the independent slot coordinator (BSC) allocated 15,866 night slots, which complies with the legal limit of maximum 16,000 night slots.

There were 16,175 commercial flight movements during the night (between 11pm and 6am) in 2024, which is lower than in 2023 (16,284 commercial night flight movements). In addition, there were 105 helicopter flights and 100 exempted flights (military flights, government flights, etc.).

There are often operational reasons for night flights without night slots, such as delays or operational problems. Whether these flights were conducted with a valid reason is subject to verification by the Belgian Civil Aviation Authority (DGLV/DGTA) which is competent in this matter.

The number of night flights without night slots has dropped significantly by -28% over the past 2 years from 1,458 in 2022 to 1,055 in 2024, thanks to Brussels Airport's proposals and the proactive approach of DGLV, BSC and the airlines.

In December there were 15,609 flight movements at Brussels Airport, an 8% increase compared to December 2023. The number of passenger flights equally grew by 8%, with an average of 139 passengers per flight. The number of cargo flights increased by 14% in December compared to 2023.



# Carnival Cruise Line joins Times Square NYE revels for fourth consecutive year



*Military heroes joined the 2024 Ball Drop in New York City*

**F**rom left to right: Jeffrey Straus, president of Countdown Entertainment; Sherri White, executive, Jamestown and One Times Square; Tom Harris, president of the Times Square Alliance; Sarah Beth Reno, senior vice president of guest operations at Carnival Cruise Line; Medal of Honor Recipient Earl Plumlee; Chris Cassidy, National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation president and CEO.

Carnival Cruise Line returns to New York's Times Square for a fourth consecutive New Year's Eve celebration with military hero guests to help light the iconic New Year's Eve Ball. Highlighting Carnival's support for active service members, veterans and their families, Medal of Honor Recipients Jack Jacobs and Earl Plumlee as well as Chris Cassidy, president and CEO of the National Medal of Honor Museum, are joining

Carnival's Senior Vice President of Guest Operations Sarah Beth Reno for the festivities. Plumlee accompanied Reno and Cassidy on Tuesday morning for the lighting test of the Ball, and Jacobs will join to help flip the switch for the official lighting ahead of the countdown to midnight.

In addition to serving as the official cruise line sponsor for Times Square New Year's Eve once again, Carnival will also serve as the on-site Times Square countdown clock sponsor and as a musical sponsor for "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest 2025" on ABC, airs live beginning at 8 p.m. EST on Dec. 31 and streams the next day on Hulu.

Jacobs and Cassidy were invited by Carnival to join the New Year's Eve Ball lighting in honor of their military service and dedication to supporting veterans and military families, a commitment championed by the cruise line. Carnival carries the most military members and hosts a military appreciation day and tribute on all of its sailings and supports multiple veterans and military-related causes. Carnival will serve as a founding partner of the National Medal of Honor Museum, which is set to open in Arlington, Tex. in March.

"As America's cruise line, we're extremely grateful to take part in this great American tradition, welcoming in 2025 in Times Square, with true American heroes. We show our appreciation for service members on every Carnival cruise, and supporting the National Medal of Honor Museum is an opportunity for us to further our commitment to honoring those whose service ensures our freedom," said Christine Duffy, president of Carnival Cruise Line. "2025 is going to be a pivotal year as well for us at Carnival, with the opening of Celebration Key on Grand Bahama. This new exclusive destination will offer our guests their own slice of paradise no matter how they define it."

Carnival is highlighting Celebration Key's opening, which is set for July, with the debut of a new television commercial and full paid media campaign, including Times Square billboards that showcase the destination. Celebration Key sits on over a mile of white sand beach and is set among the largest freshwater lagoons in the Caribbean and will provide guests an array of relaxation and recreation options.



# Cordelia Cruises Set for Major Expansion with Plans to Add Two New Ships

**C**ordelia Cruises, India's leading cruise operator, has announced plans to expand its fleet with the addition of **two new ships**, as demand for cruise tourism surges. The company, currently operating with a single vessel—the **Cordelia Empress**—is running near full capacity and sees this expansion as a strategic move to capitalize on the growing market.

To fund its ambitious growth plans, Cordelia's parent company, **Waterways Leisure Tourism**, has approved a proposal to raise approximately **800 crore through an Initial Public**

**Offering (IPO)**. The decision, made during a board meeting in **Mumbai**, is subject to regulatory approvals. The funds will be used to acquire new ships and attract institutional and retail investors.

## India's Cruise Tourism on the Rise

The Indian government has prioritized **cruise tourism** as a key sector for economic growth, aiming to boost both **domestic and international travel**. Cordelia's expansion aligns with this vision, positioning the company to offer enhanced cruise experiences and cater to the rising demand in the region.

## Discussions Underway, But No Deal Finalized

Cordelia Cruises is actively in talks with **major cruise operators from the US and Europe** who are looking to divest their **smaller ships** with passenger capacities of **2,000 to 2,500 guests**. These operators are transitioning to larger vessels that can accommodate between **5,000 and 7,000 passengers**.

**Jurgen Bailom, President & CEO of Cordelia Cruises**, confirmed the ongoing discussions but clarified that no deals have been finalized yet. "We have

*received multiple offers from existing cruise lines that are upgrading their fleets. Given the current market conditions, this is an opportune moment for us to expand,"* he said.

Once acquired, the two **yet-to-be-named ships** will **increase Cordelia's total passenger capacity by 4,000**, significantly expanding its reach. The new additions will feature between **1,800 and 2,200 staterooms and suites**, complementing the existing **800 cabins aboard the Cordelia Empress**.

## Strategic Board Expansion

Alongside its fleet expansion, **Waterways Leisure Tourism** has strengthened its leadership team with the appointment of **Vice Admiral Anil Chopra** to the board. He joins **Jurgen Bailom, Aditya Gupta, and Coralie Ansari**. The company is expected to bring in additional experts from the **tourism and entertainment industries** to further bolster its strategic vision.

With its planned IPO and fleet expansion, **Cordelia Cruises is poised to reshape India's luxury cruise landscape**, offering **world-class maritime experiences** and reinforcing the country's status as an emerging cruise hub.





# Finnish Travel Trends

Show Increased Interest in Cultural, Wellness, and Sustainable Tourism





**F**innish travel habits are experiencing a notable shift, with a rising number of Finns traveling abroad and a strong interest in cultural, wellness, and sustainable tourism, particularly in Southern Europe. In 2024, Finnish international travel returned to pre-pandemic levels, while domestic travel saw a significant increase, up by 10 percentage points.

Despite economic concerns, Finns' travel plans remain robust, with 70% intending to travel abroad, up from 56% in 2023. Domestic travel plans are consistent with the previous year.

An international survey conducted for the first time reveals a growing interest in Finland as a tourist destination. However, it also highlights a knowledge gap, with many potential visitors unaware of the full scope of Finland's tourism offerings. The survey shows that 91% of Finns traveled at least once during the year, whether within Finland or abroad, and over 20% made six or more trips.

SMAL Managing Director Heli Mäki-Fränti attributes a shift in consumer behavior to a decline in economic confidence, particularly in family travel. However, she notes that business travel has recovered, which could positively influence leisure travel in the coming months. "As in recent years, we are still seeing a shortage of travel during the tourism restrictions," she adds.

#### AI Drives Travel Planning

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an integral tool in the travel planning process, with 26% of Finnish travelers now using AI services like ChatGPT for travel-related information. A significant trend is the growing desire to travel abroad, particularly to Southern Europe. Destinations such as Spain, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, and Portugal are experiencing increased interest, while nearby Norway and long-haul destinations like Thailand, Malaysia, the Maldives, and Vietnam are also gaining traction.

Among the most popular types of trips, cultural, concert, nature, wellness, and health holidays stand out. Interest in retreats, food, and wine tourism is also growing. Over half of Finns spent their holidays at a holiday cottage in 2024.

#### Sustainability and Responsible Travel Take Center Stage

Sustainability continues to play a key role in travel decisions. More than half of Finns (51%) consider it important for tour operators to

offer responsible travel options, with cultural preservation being the primary sustainability concern. Interest in regenerative tourism is moderate, with 34% of respondents viewing it as significant. Additionally, 12% of Finns have expressed interest in purchasing a second home abroad, influenced by factors such as remote working opportunities and retirement.

Families and couples tend to spend the most on travel, with households budgeting an average of €1,800 for international trips. A notable 34% of respondents estimated their expenditure on international vacations exceeded €2,000.

#### European Interest in Finland: A Focus on Nature and Culture

Europeans are increasingly drawn to Finland for its natural beauty, cultural experiences, and wellness offerings. Nature remains the top attraction, with 70% of cultural tourists also expressing interest in Finland's landscapes, and 53% of nature tourists curious about the country's cultural attractions. In comparison to other Nordic destinations, Finland stands out for its cultural, activity, and wellness offerings, leading the region in these areas.

Italians and French are the most eager to visit Finland, drawn by its pristine nature, including forests, lakes, and Lapland, as well as the allure of snowy winters and the welcoming Finnish people. Urban culture in cities like Helsinki also holds appeal for 27% of potential visitors, while the mild summer climate attracts 19%.

Despite the interest, 31% of international respondents feel they lack sufficient information about Finland as a tourist destination.

The findings of these trends were captured through multiple surveys conducted by Taloustutkimus, including the Matka Travel Fair's Travel Survey, Holiday Travel Forecast, and International Travel Survey. Data for the international survey was gathered in November 2024 from 1,313 respondents across key European markets: Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, France, and Italy.

# Thailand's TCEB Unveils "MEET WELL" Campaign to Elevate MICE Industry

**N**ew initiative promotes wellness, connectivity, sustainability, and Thai hospitality at AIME 2025

Thailand is strengthening its position as a premier destination for business events with the launch of "MEET WELL", a new campaign introduced by the **Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)** at **AIME 2025** in Melbourne. This initiative is designed to align with the growing industry demand for **wellness, meaningful experiences, and sustainable event solutions**, reinforcing Thailand's appeal as a top-tier MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) destination.

TCEB led a delegation of **12 Thai exhibitors from Bangkok and Phuket** to meet with global buyers at **AIME 2025**, held from **February 10-12**. As part of its media presentation, the bureau officially launched **MEET WELL**, emphasizing how Thailand's unique strengths can create **mindful, immersive, and high-value MICE experiences**.

### A New Standard for Business Events

According to **TCEB President, Mr. Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya**, the campaign is a response to an evolving events industry that prioritizes **value, impact, and well-being**.

*"MEET WELL is built on Thailand's rich resources, professional expertise, and industry collaboration. It reassures global event planners that hosting MICE events in Thailand offers not just logistical efficiency but also meaningful and memorable experiences,"* he explained.

The campaign is structured around **four core pillars**, each designed to enhance the overall experience for business travelers:

### 1. Wellness – Elevating Mind and Body

Thailand's reputation as a **global wellness hub** plays a key role in the **MEET WELL** initiative. The campaign integrates **luxury wellness services**,







**holistic therapies, and medical treatments** into MICE experiences. Delegates can enjoy **pre- and post-event wellness programs**, from scientific health treatments to **meditation and mindfulness workshops**, ensuring a rejuvenating experience while conducting business.

## 2. Well-Connected – Seamless Travel and City Pairing

TCEB is enhancing connectivity by **pairing key MICE destinations** with their surrounding regions, offering **expanded travel opportunities** for event attendees. For instance, a **Bangkok-Ayutthaya itinerary**, supported by **efficient rail links**, allows delegates to **combine urban meetings with cultural and heritage experiences**. This strategy maximizes Thailand's diverse attractions while ensuring ease of movement between venues.

## 3. Well-Balanced – Sustainability and Purposeful Travel

With an increasing emphasis on **sustainable travel**, **MEET WELL** promotes **low-carbon MICE routes and community-driven experiences**. Developed in collaboration with the **Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association**, these routes allow MICE groups to actively contribute to **carbon footprint reduction** while engaging in meaningful, environmentally responsible activities.

## 4. Heartfelt Welcome – The Essence of Thai Hospitality

Thailand's legendary hospitality is a cornerstone of the **MEET WELL** experience. Beyond **government-backed event support**, such as **fast-track immigration, logistical assistance, and cultural showcases**, the campaign also highlights **exclusive**

**industry partnerships**. Special **tailored workshops, unique cultural activities, and personalized event enhancements** ensure a warm and memorable stay for MICE visitors.

## Thailand's Competitive Edge in the Global MICE Industry

By integrating **wellness, connectivity, sustainability, and world-class hospitality**, **MEET WELL** aims to position Thailand as a **high-value MICE destination**. TCEB's commitment to **innovation and meaningful business experiences** ensures that Thailand remains a preferred choice for global event organizers.

As international business travel continues to evolve, **MEET WELL** reinforces Thailand's ability to offer not just a meeting space—but a **holistic, enriching, and impactful event journey**.

# “FLY91: Pioneering Regional Air Connectivity in India – Vision, Challenges, and the Road Ahead”

Q and A with Mr. Manoj Chacko, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, FLY91



## “**B**ridging Bharat with FLY91: A Deep Dive into the Journey, Innovation, and Future of Regional Aviation”

India’s aviation sector is soaring to new heights, with regional connectivity playing a crucial role in shaping the future of air travel. As the demand for seamless travel between Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities grows, a new player has emerged, committed to bridging the connectivity gap—FLY91.

In this exclusive interview with *Travel Span*, we sit down with **Mr. Manoj Chacko, Managing Director & CEO of FLY91**, to delve into his journey in the aviation industry, the inspiration behind launching a regional airline, and his vision for transforming air travel in underserved regions. With over three decades of experience spanning engineering, global airline operations, and corporate travel, Mr. Chacko brings unparalleled expertise to the table.

From his early days at Larsen & Toubro to pivotal leadership roles at Emirates, Kingfisher Airlines, and WNS Global Services, his career has been defined by strategic thinking and a deep understanding of aviation dynamics. Now, at the helm of FLY91, he is on a mission to revolutionize regional air connectivity, supporting the government’s **UDAN** initiative and making air travel more accessible for millions.

In this insightful Q&A, Mr. Chacko shares the **vision, challenges, and strategies** driving FLY91’s ambitious growth plans. We discuss the airline’s **fleet expansion, technological innovations, sustainability efforts, and the future of regional aviation in India**. As FLY91 takes off with a focus on efficiency, reliability, and customer experience, this conversation offers a glimpse into what lies ahead



for India's next big regional carrier.

Let us explore the journey, challenges, and aspirations of FLY91 in redefining regional air travel in India.

**Q Can you share your journey in the aviation industry leading up to the founding of FLY91?**

It's been quite an interesting journey spanning over three decades, across various facets of travel and aviation. I began my career as an engineer with Larsen and Toubro, one of India's leading engineering companies. However, the majority of my professional life - around 25 years was dedicated to travel and aviation.

My early exposure to the airline industry was during my time at Spencer and Company, the general sales agent for KLM Northwest. That's where I really learned the nuances of both the airline and travel agency sides of the business. Subsequently, I joined Emirates where I was part of the startup team in Hyderabad. I later spearheaded the establishment of operations in Bengaluru and Cochin and managed Emirates in North and Western India. A particularly transformative phase of my career was at Kingfisher Airlines. In the first phase, I helped set up the airline from the ground up. However, post Kingfisher's merger with Deccan, I moved to explore other opportunities. During this period, I led the Travel Business at American Express. I returned to Kingfisher Airlines to help fix the operational challenges of the airline. Here I gained an understanding of what it takes to build a great airline and learned critical lessons from navigating turbulent times in the business.

After Kingfisher Airlines, I had a great stint at Kuoni SOTC, where I served as CEO of the corporate travel business. My last role was at WNS Global Services, where I spent over five years leading global operations.

The idea for FLY91 was seeded nearly a decade ago, around the time Kingfisher Airlines stopped operating. It has been an aspiration to create a regional airline that prioritizes connectivity to Tier II and Tier III cities

and I am thrilled to see the vision come to life with FLY91.

**Q What inspired you to start a regional airline focused on tier 2 and tier 3 cities in India?**

The idea for FLY91 took root nearly a decade ago, around the time Kingfisher Airlines shut down. At Kingfisher Airlines, we had successfully built a robust regional network, flying to tier II and tier III cities. These were profitable routes with good aircraft utilisation and efficient, low-cost operations. That experience inspired us to focus FLY91 on these tier 2 and tier 3 regions, which are full of potential but often lack sufficient air connectivity. With FLY91 we wish to unlock the potential of these underserved regions.

**Q What is the core mission of FLY91, and how do you envision its impact on regional air connectivity in India?**

FLY91 is dedicated to improving last-mile air connectivity aiming to connect over 50 cities across India within the next five years. Our vision aligns with the Central Government's UDAN scheme, which seeks to develop smaller regional airports, making aviation services more accessible to the public. This vision is supported by our choice of the ATR 72-600 aircraft, known globally for its safety, efficiency and sustainability in regional operations. In line with UDAN's goal of enhancing regional connectivity, we've already commenced operations from several regional airports in our first phase, connecting destinations like Goa, Sindhudurg, Jalgaon, Pune, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Agatti.

**Q How do you see FLY91 contributing to the overall growth of the Indian aviation sector?**

India's aviation sector is expanding at an unprecedented rate and FLY91 is proud to be part of this growth story. We are firmly committed to the country's

development by facilitating last-mile air connectivity, serving unserved and under-served routes. India's tier II and tier III towns and cities are increasingly aspirational. What they lack is air inter-connectivity and last mile connectivity to main centres. Our focus is to provide safe, reliable and comfortable flights to our customers in such regions. Just as the country code '+91' unifies India, FLY91 aims to unite Indians through accessible air travel and enhancing last-mile connectivity.

**Q What challenges do you foresee in enhancing air connectivity in less accessible regions?**

Aviation is a high precision business. Success hinges on cost leadership, sound financial structuring and maintaining your most valuable asset—the aircraft—while keeping engineering costs in check. We studied both failed and successful airlines. A common mistake among the failures was viewing aviation solely through the lens of hospitality and service. That's a fundamental issue. The core of aviation is not about what you serve on board; it's about your network and your assets. Airlines should focus 80% of their efforts on operations—the heart of the business. The remaining 20% can be shaped by the airline's category. At FLY91, we're focused on doing what successful airlines have done: selecting one aircraft type, establishing a solid financial structure, acquiring assets at the right price and ensuring strong maintenance.

**Q How does FLY91 plan to differentiate itself from other regional airlines operating in India?**

We aim to co-exist, not compete, with all forms of transportation, including airlines. Our goal is not to compete with anyone, but to provide access to cities where air service is lacking, focusing on last-mile connectivity. While competition is inevitable, we have various strategies in place. In niche sectors, we are often the

only player, or one of two. Our sweet spot is any route under 90 minutes for an ATR. We consider ourselves an air transportation company, dedicated to safely and efficiently connecting tier 2 and tier 3 cities, creating a robust air transport ecosystem, which focuses on improving last mile connectivity. For instance, most of the destinations, FLY91 flies to include tier 2 and tier 3 regions like Goa, Sindhudurg, Jalgaon, Agatti and Pune. We also provide connectivity from such locations to Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

**Q What criteria did you use to select the cities FLY91 will serve initially?**

We participated in the government's UDAN "Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik" scheme and won 20 sectors, along with Viability Gap Funding (VGF). However, our business plan isn't solely dependent on UDAN it is an added advantage, not the foundation. Our focus remains on connecting tier 2 and tier 3 cities and providing Indian travellers with better connectivity. Under UDAN 5.0, FLY91 connects cities like Sindhudurg,

Jalgaon and Agatti in Lakshadweep, as well as key business and leisure destinations such as Goa, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Pune.

**Q Why did you choose the ATR 72-600 aircraft for your fleet, and what advantages do they offer for regional operations?**

The ATR 72-600 is one of the safest aircraft in the world with an excellent safety record. It is also the most fuel-efficient in the 70-plus-seater category.





To give you some context, it burns around 600 kilos of fuel per flight hour. Now, regarding costs: The cockpit cost for an ATR is the same as that for an A320 or a 737, but while those planes can spread costs across 186 passengers, we can only do so across 70. However, when it comes to maintenance and leasing, we pay about one-third or one-fourth of the cost of larger jets. So, while we have fewer seats to generate revenue, on days with low passenger loads, we lose far less money compared to operating a 320 or 737.



**Q Can you elaborate on your plans for fleet expansion and the operational hubs across India?**

As part of FLY91's growth strategy, the first six aircraft will be based at Goa's Manohar International Airport, the airline's home base, from where they will connect eight to 10 cities. FLY91 plans to open a new base annually over the next five years, with each base operating six to seven aircraft. By the end of five years, the airline aims to have a fleet of 30 aircraft, each covering 8 to 10 cities, ultimately serving 50 cities across the country. The average flight duration for FLY91 is expected to be around 60 to 90 minutes.

**Q What measures are you implementing to ensure a high level of customer satisfaction on FLY91 flights?**

Making air travel accessible and seamless for passengers from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities is our top priority. We aim to provide a hassle-free in-flight experience that celebrates our regional connection to Goa. For a flat fee of Rs 200, passengers can enjoy a variety of snacks, hot meals and beverages inspired by regional fruits from Goa and the Konkan region. Options include Aam Panha Surprise, Classic Kokum Magic, Exotic Jamun Surprise, Tangy Bimbli Delight, Divine Mango Fantasy and more. Additionally, passengers can relive nostalgia with Amar Chitra Katha onboard, a unique feature of FLY91. Our stylish interiors and comfortable leather seats enhance the flying experience.

**Q How important is it for FLY91 to cater to the unique needs of travelers in tier 2 and tier 3 cities?**

We believe all Indian travellers deserve quality travel experiences, which is why FLY91 is designed to offer comfort and efficient service, especially in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Currently, we operate two ATR 72-600 aircraft, with two more aircrafts joining the fleet in the first quarter of

2025. This will help us build a strong pan-India presence across five zones. To emphasise regional customs, our cabin crew is trained to converse in local language, and they have the option to wear their name tag in their own regional language. The inflight snacks, hot meals and beverages reflect regional flavours and ingredients, providing a more personalised and culturally connected experience for our passengers.

**Q In what ways is FLY91 committed to sustainable aviation practices?**

One of the biggest contributions to lower carbon emissions is the choice of our fleet, which is not only strategic but also greener for the environment. The ATR is the most fuel-efficient aircraft that exists today. For example, if you're doing a Bengaluru-Goa leg, the total fuel that our aircraft would burn on a sector like that would be below 800 kilos. When you fly the same sector on an Airbus 321, just taxiing that aircraft from the gate to the take-off point burns about 700 kg of fuel.

**Q How do you plan to incorporate technology and innovation into your operations to enhance efficiency?**

Technology is a key enabler for us and agile solutions are central to FLY91's operations. We've introduced some remarkable innovations that even large airlines haven't yet adopted. For instance, we're the only airline globally where, the moment you purchase a ticket, you are automatically checked in, and receive your boarding pass via WhatsApp or email. Our boarding pass is only 19 KB in size, whereas the average boarding pass in India is around 380 to 400 KB. Our entire office is digital—no paper, no drawers. We've leveraged simple yet effective technologies, avoiding the traditional call centre route entirely by using bots. In fact, my revenue management team consists of just two people and five bots. This approach is underpinned by no-code technology, Robotic Process Automation and structured use of bots.

Notably, we implemented a robust Passenger Service System (PSS) remotely and tested nearly 1,000 use cases before rolling it out. The FLY91 website itself is designed to be user-friendly and efficient; you can navigate the entire site in just two minutes. We're immensely proud to be a digitally native airline, structured to bring simplicity and efficiency to the travel experience.

**Q Where do you see FLY91 in the next five years?**

As part of our growth plan, our first six aircraft will be based at Goa's Manohar International Airport, which is our first home base, and we will cover 8-10 cities from here. We have brought in the first two aircraft and over the next few months, four more aircraft will be joining our fleet. We will be opening a new base annually over the next 5 years, and in every base, we are going to place 6-7 aircraft. FLY91 started commercial operations out of our home base, which is the Manohar International Airport, Mopa, Goa. Currently, we are operating to Goa, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Jalgaon, Agatti, Pune and Sindhudurg.

**Q What are your long-term goals for the airline, and how do you plan to achieve them?**

The five-year plan is to induct a fleet of 30 aircraft and establish five bases across the country, with each base covering 8 to 10 cities. By the end of this period, FLY91 will connect 50 cities through these bases, providing air connectivity to airports within a 60 to 90-minute flight. The airline's long-term strategy includes servicing six zones, including the Northeast region. Currently, our focus is on meeting the air travel needs of the seven cities we serve.

**Q How do you perceive the current landscape of regional aviation in India?**

Everyone is aware of India's booming aviation industry, the increasing number of airports, improvements in the quality of life and consequently, the increase in

*From his early days at Larsen & Toubro to pivotal leadership roles at Emirates, Kingfisher Airlines, and WNS Global Services, his career has been defined by strategic thinking and a deep understanding of aviation dynamics.*

people's spending ability. People from smaller towns are aspirational, those in big cities now want to visit regions off the mainstream map as there is so much to see. The Central Government's UDAN scheme is also geared towards connecting these destinations. FLY91 wants to connect the real Bharat – our tagline says 'Bharat Unbound'. We want our airline to allow people to get into those cities where air service is lacking, so the focus is on getting into underserved cities and providing last-mile connectivity. We are here to co-exist and not in competition with all forms of transportation including airlines.

**Q What trends do you believe will shape the future of regional air travel in the coming years?**

With a population of 1.4 billion, India's spending power is increasing exponentially, reflecting remarkable wealth creation. India stands out globally as a highly digital country; we now have over 900 million internet users and our internet costs are among the lowest, at around 15 cents per GB compared to five dollars in other parts of the world. Our digital infrastructure—through Aadhaar's biometric system and UPI—puts us at a unique advantage in digitalisation and growth. This digital growth aligns with a similarly rapid expansion in transportation, particularly aviation.

Globally, as countries grow, transportation demand rises exponentially, and India is no exception. The rise in transportation demand would not just be limited to major cities or popular tourism and trade hubs, but in regional centres too, which are in a position to ride the India growth story.

In fact, we are the second fastest-growing aviation market globally, on the brink of becoming the fastest. Consider this: India has over 1,500 new aircraft on order—primarily narrow-body and wide-body jets, not regional aircraft. No other country matches that scale, putting India on an entirely different growth trajectory. I'm highly optimistic about India's future, especially the aviation sector, as these fundamentals drive us forward.

**Q What has been the most rewarding part of your journey as an entrepreneur in the aviation sector?**

It's been an interesting and enriching journey. I carry lessons from my time at Kingfisher Airlines, where I experienced both the excitement of launching an airline and the challenges of keeping it afloat. Those experiences shaped my vision for FLY91, focusing on last-mile connectivity to tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Working with an incredible team at FLY91 that shares this passion has been fulfilling as we strive to make Bharat more accessible and bring communities closer together through air travel.

**Q Your vision for the future of regional air travel in India?**

My vision for the future of regional air travel in India focuses on bridging the connectivity gap in underserved regions and making air travel accessible to everyone. In the coming years, regional air travel should no longer be seen as a luxury, but as an essential mode of transportation. True last-mile connectivity will empower local economies, promote off-the-beaten-path tourism, and unify communities across the length and breadth of Bharat.





## The Ritz-Carlton, Amman: Elevating Jordan to Global Luxury Status



**T**he Ritz-Carlton, Amman has solidified its position as a leader in luxury hospitality, earning the top spot in the Intent to Recommend

(ITRec) survey for the Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) regions. This prestigious ranking highlights Jordan's rising profile as a premier global

destination for luxury travel, placing the hotel at the forefront of hospitality excellence.

For over 28 consecutive months, The Ritz-Carlton, Amman has led the rankings among 27 Ritz-Carlton properties across EMEA, further cementing its role in showcasing Jordan's distinctive hospitality on the world stage. Additionally, the hotel ranks fifth globally out of 108 Ritz-Carlton properties across 30 countries, underscoring its exceptional service and commitment to offering unparalleled guest experiences.

Tareq Derbas, General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Amman, expressed his pride in the recognition: "This honor is not just a celebration of our hotel—it's a celebration of Jordan's rich culture and the warmth of its people. Through The Ritz-Carlton, Amman, we are proud to bring Jordan to the forefront of the global luxury hospitality scene, offering guests a truly authentic experience."

Derbas also credited the hotel's dedicated staff for its success: "Our team's passion and commitment to excellence are the heart of this achievement. Their unwavering dedication allows us to consistently exceed expectations, further positioning Jordan as a must-visit destination for luxury travelers."

The ITRec survey, a key metric within the Marriott Group, measures guest satisfaction across multiple factors. The Ritz-Carlton, Amman's top rankings reflect the tireless efforts of its team, who take pride in offering guests the best of Jordanian hospitality. By blending the Kingdom's rich heritage with world-class luxury, the hotel has become a beacon for travelers seeking both authenticity and opulence, ensuring that every stay leaves a lasting impression.

As Jordan continues to rise as a sought-after destination for global travelers, The Ritz-Carlton, Amman remains at the helm, offering a luxurious gateway to the Kingdom's unique charm and hospitality.

# What Sets **Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights** Apart?

## Sustainability, Culture, and Local Flavors

*Travel Span exclusive with Mr. Desh Bandhu Basnet, Chairman of Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights*

In the ever-evolving landscape of global hospitality, certain properties stand out not just for their service and amenities but for the stories they tell and the experiences they create. *Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights* is one such gem—an embodiment of the perfect blend of contemporary comfort and deep-rooted Nepali heritage. As the latest addition to Mercure’s prestigious portfolio, the hotel invites guests to immerse themselves in the essence of Nepal through authentic cultural experiences, sustainable initiatives, and a distinct local charm.

In this exclusive interview to *Travel Span*, Mr. Desh Bandhu Basnet, Chairman of *Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights*, delves into the inspiration behind the hotel, its commitment to sustainability, and how it offers guests a unique window into the heart of Nepal. From showcasing traditional Mithila art and supporting local artisans to crafting culinary experiences that highlight Nepal’s rich gastronomic heritage, the hotel exemplifies Mercure’s “Discover Local” philosophy.

Beyond its cultural offerings, the hotel is also making strides in environmental responsibility—eliminating single-use plastics, conserving energy and water, and sourcing ingredients locally to reduce its carbon footprint. These efforts, combined with its prime location near some of Kathmandu’s most iconic landmarks, make it a compelling choice for both leisure and business travelers.

As Nepal’s hospitality industry undergoes a transformation to align with new travel trends—be it wellness

tourism, digital nomad-friendly spaces, or eco-conscious stays—*Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights* is at the forefront of this evolution. Through this candid conversation with Mr. Basnet, we explore how international hotel brands like *Mercure* are shaping the future of Nepalese tourism, elevating hospitality standards, and redefining the guest experience in a sustainable and culturally enriching way.

**Q** **Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights is a recent addition to the Mercure portfolio. How does the hotel reflect the brand’s global philosophy of “Discover Local”? What local experiences and cultural elements can guests expect during their stay?**

*Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights* embraces the brand’s “Discover Local” philosophy by deeply connecting with Kathmandu’s vibrant culture. The hotel supports the local community through sustainable practices, such as sourcing local produce, partnering with artisans, and reducing waste. Guests are welcomed with warmth and personalized service, ensuring a seamless stay.

The hotel offers a perfect blend of comfort and cultural immersion, where relaxation meets the best of Kathmandu’s traditions, all while providing modern amenities and thoughtful touches for a truly memorable experience. Upon check-in, guests are greeted with the traditional “Namaste” gesture, a warm and symbolic welcome in Nepalese

culture. The literal meaning to *Namaste* is “**Namah**” (नमः) means “**bow**” or “salutation. *Namaste* (नमस्ते) translates to “**I bow to you**”

The hotel features three unique art pieces reflecting religious sites and heritage buildings. The lobby chandelier is handcrafted from *Kastakala* (traditional wooden craftsmanship), and each room entrance is adorned with intricate sculptures. Additionally, the courtyard showcases *Mithila* art, which represents the cultural heritage of Janakpur in the Terai region.

Culinary offerings include a dedicated section for Nepalese cuisine at breakfast, featuring *Bara*—a famous Newari dish—along with other local specialties such as *Momo*, *Sekuwa*, *Pahadi Khasi ko Masu*, and traditional beverages like *Aila*.

Guests at *Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights* can explore some of Nepal’s most iconic heritage sites just a short distance from the hotel. *Pashupatinath Temple* and *Boudhanath Stupa*, both renowned for their spiritual and architectural significance, are just 3 kms away. The city’s vibrant architecture, featuring ancient palaces and temples, offers a fascinating glimpse into Nepal’s rich history.

For an immersive cultural experience, visitors can savor authentic Nepalese cuisine at local eateries, shop for exquisite handicrafts, or admire *Thangka* art, a traditional form of Buddhist painting. The lively streets of *Thamel*, located 4 km from the hotel, are perfect for discovering local markets filled with textiles, souvenirs, and unique Nepalese goods.







**Q What distinguishes Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights from other hotels in the region, especially when it comes to guest experiences, sustainability initiatives, and cultural integration?**

Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights offers a seamless blend of modern comfort and authentic Nepali heritage, creating an immersive experience that highlights Kathmandu's vibrant traditions. The hotel features a rooftop infinity pool with panoramic views of the skyline and the Himalayas, accompanied by a large LED screen for relaxation and entertainment. Dining options DYNE which is our all-day dining restaurant where we serve multi cuisine, Zaiqa, serving Indian specialties, Sopra Italiano for authentic Italian cuisine, and The Kove lobby bar offering a mix of local and international flavours.

Located just 4 km from Tribhuvan International Airport, the hotel provides easy access to popular attractions like Boudhanath Stupa, Thamel, and Durbarmarg. Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights is committed to sustainability, with initiatives like eliminating single-use plastics, energy and water conservation, sourcing local ingredients, and supporting the local community. These practices, combined with its strategic location

and personalized service, make it a preferred choice for both business and leisure travellers.

**Q Looking ahead, what is your vision for the future of the hospitality industry in Nepal? How do you believe international hotel chains like Mercure can play a role in the country's tourism growth and success?**

Looking ahead, the future of Nepal's hospitality industry holds immense promise, and Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights is poised to play a pivotal role in this growth. By elevating hospitality standards, attracting international tourists, and generating local employment, the hotel will significantly contribute to Nepal's tourism sector. Through its design and immersive cultural experiences, Mercure showcases Nepali heritage, enhancing the country's cultural tourism appeal and reinforcing Nepal's position as a desirable destination for travellers.

International hotel chains like Mercure can contribute to this success by introducing globally recognized brands, which not only raise the standard of service but also attract a broader range of travellers. Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights marks the beginning of a broader strategy to introduce a variety of Accor brands to

Nepal. This will cater to diverse traveller needs, whether luxury, premium, midscale, or economy, and support the growth of the hospitality sector while enriching Nepal's tourism landscape.

**Q With new travel preferences such as wellness tourism, remote work-friendly accommodations, and eco-conscious travel on the rise, how do you foresee the hospitality industry adapting to meet the evolving needs of the next generation of travellers?**

The hospitality industry is adapting to the evolving needs of the next generation of travellers by embracing a more personalized, immersive, and responsible approach. Hotels are integrating wellness offerings such as mindfulness retreats and spa therapies to cater to health-conscious travellers. With remote work becoming mainstream, properties are designing co-working spaces, high-speed connectivity, and long-stay packages that seamlessly blend work and leisure.

Sustainability is a key focus, with eco-friendly architecture, carbon-neutral initiatives, and locally sourced dining shaping the future of hospitality. Additionally, cultural authenticity is being prioritized, with hotels incorporating regional design, cuisine, and curated local experiences to offer



travellers a deeper connection to their destination. By combining innovation, sustainability, and cultural storytelling, the industry is ensuring that hospitality remains relevant and enriching for the next generation.

**Q Over the past decade, the hospitality industry has undergone significant changes, driven by digital tools, experiential travel, and the sharing economy. What do you believe are the most important trends shaping the future of global tourism and hospitality?**

Technology is transforming the hospitality industry by making travel more seamless and personalized. AI-powered concierge services, smart-room automation, and mobile check-ins are enhancing guest convenience and experience. Digital tools, like virtual reality previews and data-driven personalization, are allowing travellers to explore and customize their stays before they even arrive. Experiential travel continues to grow, with travellers seeking unique and immersive experiences, from adventure tourism to wellness retreats, which go beyond traditional offerings. Additionally, the sharing economy has pushed hotels to offer more flexible, community-oriented accommodations, integrating innovation and convenience to meet evolving traveller expectations.

**Q Mercure has built a reputation as a global brand with a strong local connection. How has Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights adapted to meet the changing expectations of today's travellers, particularly in terms of sustainability and immersive, local experiences?**

The hotel incorporates local design elements, offering guests an immersive experience that celebrates Kathmandu's vibrant heritage. In terms of sustainability, the hotel prioritizes eco-conscious practices, we are currently using reusable glass bottles instead of plastic bottles, reducing

single-use plastics, conserving energy and water, and sourcing local ingredients. These initiatives, along with the focus on local culture, ensure that Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights delivers a responsible, meaningful, and culturally enriching experience for today's environmentally aware travellers.

**Q As technology continues to evolve, what role do you see innovations like artificial intelligence, automation, and sustainability-focused technologies playing in the future of hospitality? How is Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights integrating these advancements into its operations?**

At Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights, we embrace the evolving role of technology in hospitality by integrating artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and sustainability-focused innovations into our operations. AI-driven analytics allow us to understand guest preferences, enabling personalized services and seamless communication through virtual tour is under the planning stage. Automation enhances the guest experience with digital check-in and check-out, ensuring efficiency and convenience. Our commitment to sustainability is reflected in energy-efficient lighting, climate control systems, and eco-friendly waste management practices, reducing our environmental footprint while supporting local artisans with traditional handcrafted décor. By blending modern technology with Nepal's rich cultural heritage, we offer a smarter, more sustainable, and immersive experience for our guests.

**Q Given Mercure's global presence and the expanding hospitality market in India, what can India's hospitality industry learn from international hotel brands to enhance service delivery and improve guest experiences?**

The commitment to offering a seamless blend of international

standards and local authenticity, delivering memorable experiences through attentive service, culturally enriched design, and diverse amenities. By focusing on these aspects, Nepal's hospitality industry can elevate service standards, meet the evolving needs of modern travellers, and strengthen the overall guest experience.

Consistency in service standards, achieved through rigorous training and quality control, ensures seamless guest experiences, enhancing convenience and personalization. Additionally, sustainability-focused initiatives, like energy efficiency and waste management, are essential for eco-conscious hospitality. Most importantly, embracing cultural authenticity—integrating local traditions, cuisine, and décor—can create truly memorable stays. By blending innovation with heritage, Nepal can set new benchmarks for world-class hospitality.

**Q As the Chairman of Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights, how does the hotel incorporate sustainability into its day-to-day operations, and what efforts are being made to align with global environmental goals while providing high-quality services?**

At Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights we focus on reducing our environmental impact by adopting practices such as energy and water conservation, waste reduction, and eliminating single-use plastics. Our commitment extends to supporting the local community by sourcing fresh produce from local farmers, partnering with regional suppliers and artisans, and promoting eco-friendly initiatives throughout the property. We also encourage responsible travel among our guests by providing information on sustainable tourism practices and offering experiences that highlight the local culture and environment. By aligning our operations with global environmental goals, we ensure that we not only provide high-quality services but also contribute positively to the community and the planet.

# Thailand Launches ASEAN + India Shopping Campaign 2025 to Elevate Retail Tourism



The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has unveiled the **ASEAN + India Shoppers in Thailand 2025** campaign, a high-impact initiative designed to position Thailand as a premier shopping and cultural tourism destination. With exclusive promotions, immersive cultural experiences, and high-end retail perks, the campaign aims to attract travelers from ASEAN nations and India while driving economic growth.

## Strategic Expansion of Thailand's Retail Tourism

Building on the success of previous editions, this year's campaign aligns with Thailand's broader tourism strategy, incorporating the government's **"5 Must-Do Experiences in Thailand"** initiative.







The program highlights Thai strengths across **cuisine, locally crafted goods, and unique artisanal products**, reinforcing the nation's status as a vibrant shopping hub.

*"We are thrilled to bring back the ASEAN + India Shoppers in Thailand campaign,"* said **Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor**. *"This initiative not only enhances Thailand's appeal as a world-class shopping destination but also supports local communities and small enterprises by promoting Thai food, handcrafted souvenirs, aromatherapy products, and fashion by local artisans."*

#### **A Three-Month Celebration of Shopping and Culture**

Running from **March 1 to May 31, 2025**, the campaign showcases Thailand's retail and hospitality excellence through partnerships with leading brands such as **King Power International, Central Group, The Mall Group, One Bangkok, Erb, Gaysorn Village, Big C Supercenter, and Thai AirAsia**. These collaborations ensure visitors experience a dynamic mix of **luxury shopping, local markets, and specialty retail stores** across

Bangkok and other key tourist destinations.

#### **Exclusive Perks for ASEAN and Indian Tourists**

For three months, travelers from **ASEAN and India** can unlock **shopping and dining privileges worth 500 to 3,000 Baht**. Accessing these benefits is seamless—tourists simply scan a QR code upon arrival to receive digital vouchers, discounts, and promotional deals valid at major shopping centers, lifestyle boutiques, and traditional markets.

Shoppers can indulge in **authentic Thai fashion, artisanal lifestyle brands, handcrafted souvenirs, and gourmet Thai cuisine**, experiencing the full spectrum of Thailand's diverse retail culture—from high-end designer stores to traditional floating markets.

#### **Enhanced Connectivity and Market Potential**

Thailand's accessibility remains a key advantage, with **short-haul flights of just two to four hours** making it a preferred shopping destination for ASEAN and Indian travelers. The campaign capitalizes on **ASEAN tourists' high return**

**rate of 72.26%** and the growing number of Indian visitors, supported by Thailand's **visa-free travel policy and expanded air connectivity**.

#### **Economic Impact and Global Recognition**

TAT estimates that **ASEAN + India Shoppers in Thailand 2025** will generate **over 180 million Baht** in economic impact while reinforcing Thailand's retail and hospitality sectors. Beyond immediate revenue, the initiative aims to boost global recognition of the **"Amazing Thailand"** brand, reaching an estimated **1 million global impressions** during the campaign.

#### **Tourism as a Catalyst for Economic Growth**

In 2025, Thailand expects **11 million tourists from ASEAN countries and 2.3 million from India**, making these markets critical to its economic recovery. Through sustainable tourism, cultural experiences, and retail incentives, the **ASEAN + India Shoppers in Thailand 2025** campaign is set to be a game-changer, solidifying Thailand's reputation as a leading global shopping and tourism destination.



# Taiwan

● Experience the Charm of

in 2025 : A Journey Through  
Culture, Nature, Food,  
and Warm Hospitality



Taiwan, an island brimming with natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and a food scene that can captivate the most discerning of palates, is undoubtedly one of Asia's most unique destinations. While it has long been a favorite for travelers seeking adventure and cultural immersion, Taiwan's blend of modernity and tradition makes it an ideal place to visit in 2025. Whether you are exploring the buzzing capital of Taipei, delving into Taiwan's indigenous culture, or savoring the island's culinary delights, the allure of Taiwan lies in its seamless balance of vibrant city life and serene nature, all underscored by its famously warm and welcoming people.



### Taipei: The Heartbeat of Taiwan

A trip to Taiwan in 2025 begins in its dynamic capital, Taipei. The city is a bustling hub that effortlessly blends tradition with modernity. One cannot visit Taipei without standing in awe of the iconic **Taipei 101**, a towering skyscraper that has long been one of the most recognizable landmarks in the city. Once the tallest building in the world, Taipei 101 offers visitors breathtaking panoramic views of the city and the surrounding mountains from its **observatory**. The building itself is a feat of engineering and design, symbolizing Taiwan's innovation and forward-thinking mindset.

While Taipei 101 represents modernity, it is important to take time to explore some of Taiwan's most significant historical and cultural sites, which can help visitors understand the island's complex identity. The **National Museum of Taiwan** is a treasure trove of Taiwanese history, art, and culture, with exhibitions covering everything from ancient Chinese artifacts to contemporary Taiwanese art. Situated nearby is the **Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall**, a grand monument dedicated to Taiwan's former leader, Chiang Kai-Shek. The memorial hall is surrounded by tranquil gardens, offering a stark contrast to the fast-paced city. Visitors can also witness the changing of the guards, a solemn and fascinating



ritual that takes place every hour.

After soaking in the city's rich cultural heritage, make sure to visit **Longshan Temple**, one of the oldest and most famous temples in Taiwan. Located in Taipei's Wanhua District, Longshan Temple is a hub of both religious activity and local culture. This bustling temple is a testament to Taiwan's deep roots in traditional Chinese beliefs, and its colorful architecture and intricate carvings provide a stunning snapshot of Taiwan's spiritual landscape.

Taipei's food culture is another experience you cannot miss. Taiwan's food scene is a rich reflection of its history, shaped by various cultural influences, from indigenous groups to waves of Chinese immigration and even a half century of Japanese rule. Amidst the hum of night markets and the charm of local tea shops, the country offers up a selection of dishes that tell the island nation's story in the most flavorful way possible. **Shilin Night Market** is one of the city's most famous markets, offering an abundance of street food stalls that sell everything from **bubble tea** to **tofu** and **xiao long bao** (soup dumplings). These markets are lively spaces where locals and tourists mingle, enjoying both the food and the energetic atmosphere. Every dish tells a story of Taiwan's diverse cultural influences and culinary ingenuity don't forget to relish Indian food at

### **The Wonders of Nature: Taiwan's Scenic Beauty**

Once you've experienced the vibrant city life of Taipei, venture out to explore Taiwan's natural beauty. The island's rugged terrain, lush forests, and stunning coastline offer ample opportunities for outdoor adventures. One of the most famous natural attractions is **Sun Moon Lake**, located in central Taiwan. Surrounded by mountains and verdant forests, this picturesque lake is the largest in Taiwan and is considered one of the island's most serene spots. A boat ride across the lake offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape, while cycling around the lake provides











an opportunity to take in the fresh air and natural beauty at a more leisurely pace.

Another highlight of Taiwan's natural wonders is the **Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village** near Sun Moon Lake, where you can experience the island's indigenous heritage firsthand. The village showcases the rich traditions, art, and lifestyles of Taiwan's indigenous peoples, who have lived on the island for thousands of years. Visitors can explore traditional aboriginal homes, observe cultural performances, and learn about the indigenous communities that have shaped Taiwan's identity. This cultural village offers a fascinating insight into the island's deep-rooted connection to its past and its diverse indigenous populations.

For those seeking more adventurous activities, Taiwan offers a wide array of hiking and nature trails. Taiwan's rugged mountains, which cover more than 70% of the island, are a paradise for hikers and nature lovers. **Alishan** and **Taroko Gorge** are just two







examples of Taiwan's stunning natural landscapes, offering awe-inspiring views and hiking opportunities for all levels.

### Tea Culture: Taiwan's Storied Tea Traditions

Taiwan's tea culture is world-renowned, and no visit to the island is complete without experiencing its centuries-old tea traditions. The city of **Taichung**, situated in central Taiwan, is home to some of the country's finest tea estates. Taiwan's oolong teas, in particular, are prized for their exceptional quality and distinct flavors. A visit to **Taichung's tea estates** offers the opportunity to witness the tea-making process up close, from the cultivation of the tea leaves to the delicate brewing methods that produce the perfect cup of tea.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Taiwan's tea culture is the traditional **tea ceremonies**, where visitors can learn about the art of tea preparation. Taichung's tea houses provide a





peaceful, meditative setting in which guests can sip tea, contemplate, and learn about the centuries-old customs that make Taiwan's tea culture so special. Don't forget to get pampered with TEA SPA.

### Discovering Taichung: A City of Culture and Creativity

While Taipei is Taiwan's bustling capital, **Taichung** is a city that offers a more relaxed, yet equally engaging, experience. Known for its thriving arts scene, creative spaces, and rich history, Taichung provides a perfect balance of culture and modernity. A must-visit destination in Taichung is **Rainbow Village**, a colorful neighborhood where local artist Huang Yung-Fu turned his former military village into a vibrant, street art-filled wonderland. The walls and streets are adorned with murals, creating a lively and imaginative atmosphere that attracts both locals and tourists alike.

In addition to its artistic allure,

Taichung is a gateway to the beautiful **Tea estates** of the central region. Here, visitors can not only experience the tea culture of Taiwan but also explore the surrounding countryside and its lush, rolling hills. The **Taichung Railway Station** is another charming feature of the city, offering a glimpse into Taiwan's history while also serving as a hub for the island's fastest and most efficient train network.

### Fastest Trains and Efficient Travel: The Future of Taiwan's Transport

Taiwan's modern infrastructure is another reason why the island is such an appealing destination. The **Taiwan High-Speed Rail (THSR)** is one of the fastest and most efficient train systems in the world. Traveling between cities like Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung has never been easier, thanks to this sleek and fast network that connects the major urban centers in under two hours. This high-speed

train network allows visitors to explore Taiwan's diverse regions with ease and efficiency, making it possible to experience the island's beauty and culture without the hassle of long-distance travel.

### The Hospitable People: Taiwan's Warm Welcome

One of the defining features of any visit to Taiwan is the hospitality of its people. Taiwanese culture places a high value on warmth and kindness, and visitors will immediately feel at home among the island's residents. From the bustling streets of Taipei to the tranquil tea estates of Taichung, the people of Taiwan are eager to share their culture, traditions, and stories with visitors. Whether you are enjoying a cup of tea at a local tea house or receiving directions on the street, you'll encounter a level of kindness that makes Taiwan feel like more than just a travel destination—it feels like home.

### Conclusion: A Timeless Destination

In 2025, Taiwan remains one of the most enchanting and diverse destinations in Asia. Whether you're marveling at the skyline from the **Taipei 101 observatory**, savoring a cup of Taiwan's famous tea / coffee, exploring the indigenous traditions of the **Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village**, or soaking in the natural beauty of **Sun Moon Lake**, Taiwan offers something for every type of traveler. The island's unique blend of cultural heritage, modern innovation, stunning natural landscapes, and its famously welcoming people make it a destination unlike any other.

Taiwan in 2025 promises to be a year of exciting travel experiences, and whether you're a seasoned traveler or visiting the island for the first time, Taiwan's charm is sure to captivate and leave a lasting impression. From the energy of Taipei to the serene beauty of Taichung's tea estates, Taiwan beckons travelers to explore its vibrant culture, indulge in its exquisite cuisine, and discover the warmth of its people. This is a destination that will stay with you long after you've left its shores—Taiwan is waiting to be discovered, again and again.





# Love Wins in Trang: Thailand's Iconic Underwater Wedding Celebrates Equality and Inclusion



Against the stunning backdrop of Hat Chao Mai National Park, couples from across the globe gathered for the **Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival @ Underwater Wedding Ceremony**, an event that blended romance, culture, and inclusivity beneath the crystal-clear waters of the Andaman Sea.

Organized by the **Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)** in collaboration with Trang Province, this year's celebration held special significance—it marked the first underwater wedding ceremony since Thailand's landmark **marriage equality legislation was enacted on January 23, 2025**.

"The *Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival* reaffirms our nation's commitment to diversity and inclusivity," said **Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor**. "This milestone reflects Thailand's progress in recognizing love in all its forms, and we are honored to

*share this moment with couples from around the world. Trang, with its rich culture and breathtaking landscapes, is the perfect setting for this extraordinary celebration.*"

## A Wedding Like No Other: Underwater Vows and Beachfront Romance

The festival's main event, **Wedding Moment on the Beach: Under the Sea**, saw couples participate in the **world-famous underwater marriage registration** and the **Rod Sai Sang sand pouring ceremony** at **Underwater Wedding Beach**. With **Ko Kradan and Sunset Beach** as the picturesque backdrop, newlyweds sealed their vows in an unparalleled setting beneath the waves.

Adding to the magic, the festival's **Dinner Love Wins Party** transformed the beachfront into a romantic escape, where couples enjoyed live music,

cultural performances, and a night of celebration under the stars.

## A Carnival of Love and Diversity

The **Amazing Thailand Love Wins Carnival** infused the streets of Trang with color and energy, featuring artists, LGBTQIAN+ representatives, influencers, and notable figures from the government and private sectors. Among the celebrated guests were **celebrity couples Saipan-Khunawut and Porch-Arm**, along with dazzling drag performers and local school participants.

A **vibrant parade** marched from **Dugong Circle to Trang Clock Tower**, presenting six themed processions that honored **love, tradition, sustainability, and cultural heritage**:

- **World-Class Procession of Khan Mak** – Showcased Thailand's traditional wedding customs.
- **The Miracle Love of Under the Sea** – A tribute to Trang's marine beauty.
- **Save the World with Love** – Highlighted sustainability and eco-conscious tourism.
- **Treasures of Trang** – Celebrated local culture and heritage.
- **Love Wins** – A powerful statement on love's triumph over barriers.
- **Love is Giving** – Represented generosity and kindness.

## Trang: A Global Destination for Love and Commitment

Since its inception in **1996**, Trang's **Underwater Wedding Ceremony** has gained worldwide recognition, earning a **Guinness World Record** for the largest underwater wedding. This year's event not only honored that legacy but also reinforced Thailand's role as a global leader in **inclusive tourism and marriage equality**.

With its mix of **breathtaking landscapes, rich traditions, and warm hospitality**, Trang is fast becoming a **premier wedding and honeymoon destination** for couples seeking a unique and meaningful way to say, "I do."



## Sleep Tourism: The Future of Luxury Travel in India, Thailand, and the United States

A new era of travel is emerging—one where rest, relaxation, and deep sleep take center stage. **Sleep tourism**, a niche once overlooked, is now **one of the fastest-growing trends in wellness and luxury travel**, with the global market expected to soar from **\$70.13 billion in 2024 to \$118.64 billion by 2031**.

### Why Is Sleep Tourism Booming?

As travelers move beyond traditional sightseeing and adventure tourism, many are prioritizing **well-being, stress relief, and holistic rejuvenation**. Sleep tourism taps into this demand, offering **scientifically designed sleep-enhancing retreats**





aimed at combating **burnout, digital fatigue, and sleep deprivation.**

Hotels and wellness resorts worldwide are incorporating:

**Specialized sleep-focused therapies** – Including guided meditation, aromatherapy, and personalized relaxation rituals.

**Scientifically optimized sleep environments** – Featuring **AI-powered sleep trackers, smart lighting, and soundproofed rooms.**

**Medical and therapeutic sleep programs** – Merging wellness tourism with healthcare to offer **deep, restorative sleep experiences.**

#### **Top Sleep Tourism Destinations**

Some of the world's leading

**wellness retreats and luxury resorts** have embraced sleep tourism, making **India, Thailand, and the U.S.** key hotspots for this billion-dollar industry.

**India** – Home to some of the most sought-after **Ayurvedic sleep retreats**, including **Ananda in the Himalayas, Vana Retreat, and Somatheeram Ayurvedic Health Resort.** These destinations offer **holistic healing, herbal therapies, and guided sleep meditation.**

**Thailand** – With its world-renowned **Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas**, Thailand has positioned itself as a premier sleep and wellness escape. Visitors can indulge in **floating therapy,**

**breathwork practices, and personalized sleep consultations.**

**United States** – Luxury wellness resorts and **high-tech sleep clinics in California, Arizona, and Mexico** are leading the charge in North America. Boutique wellness hotels like **The Hotel Figueroa and Wellbeing Escapes** offer sleep-optimized rooms, mindfulness programs, and **customized melatonin-boosting spa treatments.**

#### **How Are Hotels Transforming the Sleep Experience?**

With demand for **restorative travel** rising, the **hospitality industry is redefining luxury** by integrating advanced **sleep-enhancing**





technology and wellness-driven experiences:

**AI-Optimized Sleep Rooms**

– Featuring **smart beds, adaptive temperature control, and white noise systems.**

**Personalized Holistic Programs**

– Offering **Ayurvedic sleep therapies, melatonin-enhancing spa treatments, and custom relaxation rituals.**

**Exclusive Sleep Experiences**

– Including **private sleep pods, guided lucid dreaming sessions, and floatation therapy for deep relaxation.**

**Is Sleep Tourism the Future of Luxury Travel?**

As sleep tourism **shifts from niche to mainstream**, luxury resorts and wellness retreats are investing heavily in **scientifically backed sleep programs**. With the market on track to **exceed \$118 billion by 2031**, it's clear that **rest and rejuvenation** are no longer just wellness trends—they're shaping the **future of high-end travel**.

Will sleep tourism **redefine the hospitality industry**? If the numbers are any indication, the answer is a resounding **yes**.

**Sleep Retreats: The Ultimate Escape for Rest and Rejuvenation**

In an era where stress, screen time, and hectic lifestyles are wreaking havoc on sleep quality, **sleep retreats** are emerging as a sought-after solution. These specialized getaways—ranging from luxury spa resorts to scientifically backed wellness clinics—are designed to help guests reset their sleep cycles, combat insomnia, and achieve deep, restorative rest.

**What Is a Sleep Retreat?**

A sleep retreat is a **curated travel experience** that places sleep and







relaxation at its core. Some retreats offer simple sleep-enhancing amenities like **pillow menus, herbal teas, and aromatherapy baths**, while others take a clinical approach with **multi-day programs guided by sleep specialists and medical professionals**. Whether through **guided meditation, low-intensity movement, or advanced sleep diagnostics**, the overarching goal remains the same—to **improve sleep quality and overall well-being**.

#### How Do Sleep Retreats Work?

Unlike a traditional vacation, where sightseeing and activities take precedence, **sleep retreats prioritize deep rest**. Many luxury hotels and wellness resorts now offer **dedicated sleep programs** designed to help guests escape the stressors of everyday life and recalibrate their natural sleep rhythms.

For those struggling with **chronic sleep issues**, some retreats include a **diagnostic component**. Experts analyze sleep patterns using tools such as **overnight monitoring devices, hormone tests, and sleep trackers** to uncover underlying issues like insomnia, snoring, or

stress-induced restlessness. Based on the findings, tailored treatments—ranging from **relaxation therapies and mindfulness practices to specialized diet plans**—are recommended.

Popular sleep retreat offerings include:

**Mindfulness & Meditation** – Guided breathing techniques, Yoga Nidra, and sound baths to induce relaxation.

**Personalized Sleep Environments** – AI-powered sleep trackers, soundproofed rooms, and aromatherapy-infused bedding.

**Holistic Wellness Therapies** – Reflexology, massage, acupuncture, and Ayurveda-based treatments.

**Nutrition & Lifestyle Adjustments** – Customized meal plans designed to promote sleep-friendly nutrition.

#### Creating a Sleep Retreat at Home

For those who can't travel to a luxury sleep retreat, replicating the experience at home is possible by adopting key **sleep hygiene practices**.

**Optimize Your Sleep Environment** – Use **weighted blankets, memory foam pillows,**

**and lavender-infused sprays** to promote relaxation.

**Establish a Pre-Sleep Routine** – Avoid blue light from screens, sip on **chamomile or valerian root tea**, and take a warm bath infused with **Epsom salts or essential oils**.

**Follow a Consistent Sleep Schedule** – Maintain a **fixed bedtime and wake-up time** to regulate your circadian rhythm.

**Prioritize Natural Light Exposure** – Get morning sunlight exposure to **enhance melatonin production and balance your sleep-wake cycle**.

#### Top Sleep Retreats Around the World

For those looking to indulge in a **fully immersive sleep retreat experience**, here are some of the best destinations:

##### Chiva-Som Hua Hin, Thailand

Set amidst lush greenery, Chiva-Som's **Sleep Enhancement Specialization program** offers sleep tracking, hormone testing, and naturopathic consultations. Guests also benefit from **meditation, diet modifications, and in-room sleep**

**support** to reset their circadian rhythms.

**Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, Switzerland**

With a team of **27 medical professionals**, this Swiss retreat specializes in **sleep diagnostics**. Guests undergo **lung function testing, video polysomnography (overnight brain activity monitoring), and personalized therapy sessions**.

**SHA Wellness Clinic, Spain**

SHA's **Sleep Medicine Program** integrates **clinical sleep assessments, polygraphic diagnoses, and cognitive therapy**. Their high-end suites feature **HOGO mattresses**, scientifically designed to **reduce oxidative stress and enhance cell regeneration**.

**The Cadogan, A Belmond Hotel, UK**

The **Sleep Concierge service**, in collaboration with hypnotherapist Malminder Gill, includes **guided sleep meditation, a pillow menu, weighted blankets, and custom herbal teas**. Guests can also book **personalized sleep therapy sessions**.

**Hästens Sleep Spa, Portugal**

This Swedish luxury mattress brand's boutique sleep hotel offers **exquisite handcrafted mattresses** (the same ones favored by celebrities like Drake) to create a **highly customized and indulgent sleep experience**.

**StarStruck Glamping, Texas, USA**

For a more nature-driven sleep retreat, StarStruck Glamping provides **geodesic dome tents** in **one of the world's darkest sky reserves**, where guests can **fall asleep under a canopy of stars** with zero light pollution.

**Carillon Miami Wellness Resort, USA**

A pioneer in **sleep therapy treatments**, Carillon Miami offers

**electromagnetic frequency release, infrared therapy, floating Epsom salt baths, and AI-powered sleep tracking beds**.

**Four Seasons Resort Bali at Sayan, Indonesia**

The **"Sacred Nap" experience** invites guests to rest **suspended in aerial silk hammocks** while listening to soothing sounds of nature and guided meditation.

**Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa, France**

This wellness retreat combines **luxury sleep treatments with wine country relaxation**, offering **calming essential oils, melatonin-based skincare, and personalized meditation kits**.

**Six Senses Ibiza, Spain**

Guests at Six Senses Ibiza can book a **three- to seven-night program**

featuring **consultations with sleep doctors, wellness screenings, Yoga Nidra, and customized fitness routines** to improve long-term sleep habits.

**The Future of Sleep Tourism**

With the global sleep tourism industry projected to surpass **\$118 billion by 2031**, luxury hotels, wellness retreats, and travel companies are **investing heavily in sleep-centric experiences**. No longer just a wellness trend, **sleep tourism is redefining the hospitality industry**, proving that deep rest and rejuvenation are just as essential to travel as adventure and exploration.

So, whether it's a **clinical sleep study in Switzerland, a jungle meditation in Bali, or an AI-powered sleep suite in Miami**, the world's best sleep retreats are ensuring that travelers **wake up more refreshed than ever before**.





# Leah Chandler Appointed Chief Marketing Officer of Brand USA



**B**rand USA has named Leah Chandler, CDME, as its new Chief Marketing Officer, effective March 17. With over two decades of experience in branding, advertising, and destination marketing, Chandler will lead the organization's global marketing initiatives, reinforcing the United States' position as a top-tier travel destination.

## A Strategic Appointment at a Pivotal Time

Fred Dixon, President and CEO of Brand USA, expressed enthusiasm about Chandler's addition to the leadership team. "Her extensive expertise in destination marketing and leadership will significantly strengthen our long-term strategies, broaden global brand awareness, and solidify the USA's status as the world's most aspirational travel destination," said Dixon.

Chandler's appointment is the latest in a series of strategic leadership moves following Dixon's own appointment as CEO in July 2024. As the international inbound travel market transitions from recovery to expansion, her leadership is expected to play a key role in driving new records for visitation and tourism spending.

"Since July, we have intensified our focus on global communications, trade and product development, strategic partnerships, AI innovation, and the meetings and events sector," Dixon added. "Leah's arrival completes our leadership team, ensuring we are well-positioned to advance our consumer marketing, content strategies, partner programs, and analytics. With a decade of major events ahead, Brand USA is in a strong position to capitalize on these opportunities and drive inbound tourism growth."

## Proven Leadership in Destination Marketing

Before joining Brand USA, Chandler served as Chief Marketing Officer at Discover Puerto Rico, where she led a brand repositioning that resulted in four years of record-breaking tourism growth. Under her leadership, the organization launched its most successful campaign, *Live Boricua*, celebrating Puerto Rico's rich culture and significantly boosting perception, awareness, and visitor interest.

Previously, Chandler was the Chief Marketing Officer for Explore Branson, where she played a crucial role in sustaining five consecutive years of tourism industry growth. Her expertise in branding and strategic storytelling has made her a transformative figure in the travel and tourism sector.

## Recognition and Industry Influence

Chandler's contributions to the industry have been widely recognized. In 2024, Skift named her one of the "Top Women Shaping Travel's Future" in its inaugural *Generation Next* list, while the American Marketing Association honored her as «Nonprofit Marketer of the Year» for her exceptional impact in marketing.

She also holds a Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) credential, awarded by Destinations International, signifying the highest level of professional education in the tourism industry.

## Vision for Brand USA

As Chief Marketing Officer, Chandler will oversee Brand USA's branding, advertising, digital marketing, content, and research efforts. Excited for the journey ahead, she stated, "I am honored to join Brand USA at such a transformational time for the industry. The opportunity to lead global marketing for one of the world's most diverse and dynamic travel destinations is thrilling. I look forward to working alongside Fred and the team to inspire travelers worldwide and drive significant economic impact."

With Chandler at the marketing helm, Brand USA is poised for an era of strategic growth and innovation, reinforcing its mission to showcase the United States as a premier travel destination to the world.

DESTINATION

Emerging Travel  
Destinations for 2025:

# Uncover Malta's Hidden Treasures and Investment Opportunities







As we look ahead to 2025, more travelers are venturing off the beaten path to discover destinations that promise authenticity, tranquility, and untapped beauty. These emerging hotspots offer a chance to experience culture, nature, and heritage in a way that feels deeply personal and unique. One such destination gaining significant attention is Malta, a Mediterranean gem offering not just scenic charm and rich history, but also

lucrative investment opportunities. This article explores why Malta is quickly becoming a must-visit destination for globetrotters and savvy investors alike.

### **1. The Rise of Emerging Destinations in 2025**

Travel trends are shifting in 2025, as an increasing number of visitors seek destinations beyond traditional tourist hubs. Research shows that countries like Bulgaria and Albania are attracting

travelers for their affordability and cultural depth, a trend that highlights the growing demand for less conventional travel experiences. The pandemic also accelerated this shift, with many travelers now prioritizing authenticity over mass tourism. In this context, Malta emerges as a perfect fit—a destination offering rich history, Mediterranean charm, and an air of exclusivity, making it an ideal getaway for those craving a more peaceful and enriching travel experience.



## DESTINATION

### 2. Malta: A Mediterranean Jewel Awaits

Located at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, Malta offers an ideal year-round climate and a history dating back millennia. The island's rich cultural heritage is evident in UNESCO-listed Valletta and the Megalithic Temples, some of the oldest freestanding structures in the world. Whether you're a history enthusiast or simply seeking a beautiful place to relax, Malta presents an exceptional blend of ancient wonders and modern comforts.

### 3. Unique Attractions: Malta's Hidden Gems

Malta's small size belies its wealth of attractions. History buffs will find

plenty to explore in the medieval streets of Mdina and the ancient Tarxien Temples. For nature lovers, Malta's coastline offers pristine beaches, including the famous Blue Lagoon on the island of Comino, and stunning vistas from the Blue Grotto. The island's festivals—such as the Malta International Fireworks Festival—add vibrant color to its cultural calendar, making it an exciting destination for all types of travelers.

### 4. The Mediterranean Lifestyle: Warmth and Charm

With over 300 days of sunshine annually, Malta offers a lifestyle that many dream of—sun-kissed days by the sea, crystal-clear waters, and

a friendly, welcoming community. The island's cuisine, influenced by Mediterranean flavors, showcases fresh seafood, local produce, and traditional dishes like rabbit stew, all complemented by the exceptional quality of local wines. For those seeking a laid-back yet sophisticated lifestyle, Malta offers a rare blend of natural beauty and vibrant local culture.

### 5. Malta as an Investment Hub

Beyond tourism, Malta is gaining attention as an attractive investment destination. As a European Union member, the country offers access to a stable economy and a strategic location that bridges three continents. Malta's thriving





sectors—tourism, real estate, and technology—make it a prime location for foreign investment, while its robust legal framework and business-friendly environment offer security and growth potential for entrepreneurs and corporations.

### 6. Citizenship by Investment: A Gateway to Global Mobility

Malta's Citizenship by Investment program has drawn global interest, offering individuals visa-free access to over 180 countries, including the EU Schengen zone, the UK, and the USA. This program is especially appealing to investors seeking both European market access and a high standard of living. For those who frequently travel or have international

business ties, Malta's citizenship program streamlines global mobility and offers unparalleled opportunities for growth.

### 7. Sustainable Tourism: Protecting Malta's Heritage

Sustainability plays a crucial role in Malta's tourism strategy. The island's government and local organizations are committed to preserving its cultural and natural heritage, with initiatives aimed at reducing waste and promoting eco-friendly accommodations. Malta's efforts to protect its pristine landscapes are reflected in activities like diving and hiking, which not only showcase its beauty but also encourage responsible tourism practices. As Malta continues to develop as a tourism hub,

sustainability remains at the forefront of its efforts.

### 8. Ideal Travel Experiences for 2025 Visitors

Malta offers a range of experiences for every type of traveler:

- **For history enthusiasts:** Wander through the ancient streets of Mdina or explore the Tarxien Temples.
- **For adventure seekers:** Dive into Malta's crystal-clear waters to explore shipwrecks and coral reefs.
- **For relaxation:** Unwind on the beaches of Mellieħa or indulge in a luxurious spa retreat overlooking the Mediterranean.

These diverse experiences showcase Malta's versatility as a destination, catering to a wide range of interests.

### 9. Living the Maltese Dream: Benefits for New Citizens

Malta offers an enviable lifestyle, with top-tier healthcare and education systems that rank among the best in Europe. The island's healthcare system ensures access to quality medical services, while international schools cater to expatriates. For entrepreneurs, Malta's secure environment, strategic location, and business-friendly regulations create a strong foundation for success. Combining leisure with long-term residency, Malta offers an exceptional living experience that blends modern conveniences with Mediterranean charm.

### 10. Why Malta is the Perfect Hidden Gem for 2025

Malta's blend of history, culture, investment opportunities, and quality of life makes it an ideal destination for 2025. Whether you're a traveler searching for new experiences or an investor exploring global opportunities, Malta offers unmatched rewards. With its strategic location, vibrant lifestyle, and welcoming community, Malta is a hidden gem ready to be discovered.

Plan your visit to Malta or explore its Citizenship by Investment program to unlock the island's full potential. Embrace the chance to experience a destination that promises not just a trip, but a brighter future.



# UAE and Uzbekistan explore ways to enhance economic relations in tourism



**UAE and Uzbekistan discuss strengthening economic ties, focusing on tourism, renewable energy, logistics, agriculture, and private sector collaboration through strategic partnerships.**

H.E. **Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri**, Minister of Economy, held a meeting with H.E. **Laziz Kudratov**, Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan, to explore the means to

strengthen collaboration across a wide range of economic and developmental sectors. These include the new economy, tourism, entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), FinTech, innovation, transportation, renewable energy, logistics services, and agriculture.

H.E. Bin Touq stated that the UAE and Uzbekistan relations serve as a thriving model for economic partnerships based on shared interests and future perspectives, underlining the solid strategic relations and fruitful cooperation shared by the two countries in various fields of shared interest.

H.E. Bin Touq said: *“We see Uzbekistan as a promising economic partner in Central Asia. The latest meeting with the Uzbek delegation demonstrates our shared commitment to enhancing partnerships in advanced and sustainable economic sectors. It also offers an avenue for fostering stronger coordination and*

*mutual understanding, which plays a vital role in the growth and prosperity of both economies.”*

H.E. highlighted that thanks to its attractive economic environment and flexible economic legislation, the UAE serves as a strategic platform for Uzbek businesses to access global markets and leverage the country’s expansive network of international partnerships.

H.E. Bin Touq emphasised the advantages of the UAE economy and the benefits offered by the UAE to investors and business owners across different sectors including tourism, family enterprises, e-commerce, manufacturing, sustainable transportation, and technology.

H.E. also stressed the advanced infrastructure, prominent initiatives, and national strategies that bolster the country’s new economic model. The significance of fostering stronger connections between the two private sectors to develop top-notch initiatives that contribute towards the achievement of shared economic goals was also highlighted.

The meeting placed particular emphasis on fostering partnerships in renewable energy, technology, transportation, logistics services, agriculture, and food security. The discussions also noted the significance of supporting the private sector in both countries and exchanging knowledge in this crucial field. Additionally, it shed light on the joint efforts exerted via the UAE-Uzbekistan Joint Economic Committee (JEC), a key platform for advancing bilateral relations.

At the end of the meeting, H.E. Bin Touq invited the Uzbek delegation to attend the fourth edition of *Investopia*, scheduled to be held next month. The event will serve as a key platform to explore the promising opportunities that the UAE offers to global investors, while also expanding collaboration across diverse economic sectors.





# Cygnett Hotels & Resorts Announces Launch of Anamore Select Resort & Wellness in Mopa, Goa



Cygnett Hotels & Resorts has unveiled its latest luxury offering, the Anamore Select Resort & Wellness, located in the serene surroundings of Mopa, Goa. This high-end resort, featuring 150 exquisitely designed villa rooms, promises to set a new benchmark in luxury travel by blending opulence, sustainability, and cultural immersion.

Targeting the upscale market, Anamore is a bold extension of Cygnett Hotels & Resorts' strategy to diversify its portfolio beyond the mid-segment market. Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & Managing Director of Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, shared his vision for the brand: "With Anamore, we aim to redefine the future of luxury travel in India. Our track record of successfully launching 10-12 mid-segment hotels annually across the country gives us confidence that we can replicate this success in the upscale market. We have five more Anamore properties planned in destinations like Karjat, Murud, Khalapur (Maharashtra),

Srinagar (Uttarakhand), and Pushkar (Rajasthan)."

The resort marks the first project under the Anamore brand, a collaboration with Yugen Infra, a leading real estate firm formed by Timespro Consulting and V K Developers. Yugen Infra is behind several prestigious developments, including Goa's first-ever Golf Course township.

Strategically located just 15 minutes from Mopa Airport and easily accessible via the Goa-Mumbai Highway, Anamore Select Resort & Wellness promises seamless connectivity. Set within Goa's largest golf course township and nestled against the backdrop of the Western Ghats, the resort offers an immersive luxury experience, combining tranquility and natural beauty.

In addition to its luxurious villas, the resort boasts a range of amenities designed for both relaxation and business. These include an all-day dining restaurant, a bar, a sprawling 10,000 square feet lawn, a 6,000 square feet banquet hall, and meeting

rooms ideal for corporate events and grand celebrations. Other features include a swimming pool, a health club, a kids' play area, and a clubhouse.

With wellness increasingly becoming a key component of modern travel, the resort includes a dedicated wellness wing, Bluum Mudra by Ayurvyaas, which offers holistic well-being services for rejuvenation and relaxation.

"Today's discerning travelers seek more than just luxury – they want a comprehensive wellness experience," Sarkar explained. "Anamore Select Resort & Wellness has been carefully designed to provide that perfect blend of wellness, luxury, and comfort."

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts is confident that Anamore Select Resort & Wellness will redefine upscale hospitality in Goa. With its prime location, world-class amenities, and a strong focus on sustainability and wellness, the resort is poised to become the go-to destination for travelers seeking an immersive and luxurious experience in one of India's most sought-after regions.







# Cappadocia Marriott Hotel

## Opens as Region's Largest Luxury Destination

**M**arriott Hotels has unveiled its first property in the heart of Cappadocia, Turkey, marking the debut of the renowned brand in this iconic region. The Cappadocia Marriott Hotel, the largest hotel in the area, offers a blend of luxury accommodations, cultural experiences, and versatile event spaces, serving as a new gateway to the mesmerizing landscapes and rich history of this UNESCO-listed destination.

“We are thrilled to introduce the first Marriott Hotel in Cappadocia, a sought-after destination known for its unique beauty and cultural significance,” said Sandra Schulze-Potgieter, Vice President of Premium & Select Brands for Europe, the Middle East & Africa at Marriott International. “This property not only marks our debut in Cappadocia but also highlights Marriott International’s continued commitment to the Turkish market. Our goal is to





create unforgettable stays, where guests can immerse themselves in the region’s history, awe-inspiring scenery, and diverse experiences.”

**A Design Rooted in Local Culture**

The design and architecture of the Cappadocia Marriott Hotel are deeply inspired by the region’s distinctive natural beauty. Constructed with locally sourced stone, the hotel’s color scheme reflects the earthy tones of the surrounding landscape—terracotta, soft beige, and muted green—that evoke tranquility and warmth. Handmade artwork from local artisans, including a curated collection from Venessa Ceramics, further connects the property to Cappadocia’s rich cultural heritage.

**Luxurious Amenities and Dining Experiences**

The hotel offers 298 guest rooms, each blending modern comfort with contemporary design. With amenities such as complimentary Wi-Fi, flat-screen TVs, and air conditioning, the hotel provides a seamless stay for all guests. The Greatroom, Marriott’s signature communal space, offers

a stylish setting for relaxation and socializing.

For those seeking to maintain their fitness routine, the hotel features a 24-hour fitness center, as well as both indoor and outdoor swimming pools. After a day of exploration, the Health Club & Spa invites guests to unwind with Turkish baths, massages, and other rejuvenating treatments.

Culinary options at the Cappadocia Marriott Hotel are diverse and distinctive. The Fairy Flame Restaurant, inspired by the region’s famous fairy chimneys, serves traditional Turkish dishes like Testi Kebab and Çömlek Beans. For guests craving Italian cuisine, Sapore Restaurant offers a taste of Italy in the heart of Cappadocia. The Pool Bar provides a relaxed atmosphere with bar-style favorites for poolside enjoyment.

Exclusive to M Club room and suite guests, the M Club lounge offers a private retreat to relax, recharge, and refocus throughout the day.

**Event and Meeting Spaces for Every Occasion**

The hotel also caters to business and social events with over 3,300

square meters of flexible event space. With seven multifunctional meeting rooms and 11 configuration options, the hotel can host a wide variety of gatherings, from corporate conferences to lavish weddings. The centerpiece is a 1,200-square-meter, column-free ballroom equipped with state-of-the-art technology, ideal for large-scale events.

**Prime Location for Exploring Cappadocia**

Located near the town of Göreme, the Cappadocia Marriott Hotel is perfectly situated for guests to explore the region’s top attractions. These include the UNESCO-listed Göreme National Park, the Open-Air Museum, and the famous underground cities. Additionally, the hotel’s proximity to hot air balloon launch sites offers guests an unforgettable opportunity to experience Cappadocia’s dramatic landscapes from above.

With its luxurious accommodations, cultural offerings, and convenient location, the Cappadocia Marriott Hotel promises to be a standout destination for travelers seeking to experience the unique charm of this historic region.



# Taj Mahal Palace Unveils Loya: A New Benchmark in Luxury Indian Dining



The Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has introduced **Loya**, its celebrated Indian dining concept, to the **iconic Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai**. Following its success at **Taj Palace, New Delhi**, and **Taj West End, Bengaluru**, this latest expansion further cements the brand's commitment to offering **authentic, elevated North Indian cuisine** in a setting of unmatched luxury.

**Mr. Ritesh Sharma, General Manager of Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai**, expressed his enthusiasm for Loya's arrival: *"The Taj Mahal Palace, with its century-old legacy, has always been at the forefront of pioneering fine-dining experiences. Loya is a tribute to the rich culinary heritage of North India, offering guests an immersive journey through its vibrant flavors and traditions. As regional Indian cuisine gains global recognition, Loya will provide an*

*unparalleled opportunity to savor the finest of the North in an atmosphere of timeless elegance."*

## A Culinary Voyage Through North India

Loya embarks on a **gastronomic journey** through the **plains of Punjab, the foothills of the Himalayas, and the pristine landscapes of Kashmir**. Inspired by the **five natural elements** and infused with **age-old cooking techniques**, the menu pays homage to **regional flavors** while incorporating **contemporary flair**.

Signature dishes include **Gosht Ki Lazeez Pasliyan** (succulent lamb ribs), **Dal Jakhiya** (a spiced lentil delicacy), and **Loya Chaat**, a sophisticated interpretation of Mumbai's famed street food culture. The kitchen employs traditional North Indian techniques such as **dhungaar (smoke**

**infusion) and dum (slow cooking)**, ensuring an authentic and layered depth of flavor.

The **bar program, named "Panjj" (five)**, is equally innovative, crafting cocktails that reflect the **spices and spirits of India**, designed to complement the menu's bold and nuanced dishes.

## An Ambiance Steeped in Heritage

Loya's interiors transport diners to a **North Indian caravanserai**, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern elegance. The **sandstone structures, intricately carved arches, and geometric motifs** evoke the grandeur of India's historical trade routes, creating a space that is both opulent and inviting.

Adding to the immersive experience is a **curated soundscape** by **Shreyas Patkar**, which complements the dining atmosphere with authentic folk melodies. Guests can also enjoy **Loya Qissa**, an interactive storytelling experience, and the **Loya Bazaar**, a brunch concept inspired by ancient Indian markets, showcasing artisanal ingredients and regional flavors.

## Loya at the Taj Mahal Palace: A New Culinary Landmark

Nestled within the legendary **Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai**, Loya offers a **sensory journey through India's epicurean traditions**, masterfully reinterpreted for the modern connoisseur. By seamlessly merging heritage with innovation, Loya is set to redefine the landscape of **luxury Indian dining in Mumbai**.

For those seeking an extraordinary **culinary and cultural experience**, Loya at the **Taj Mahal Palace** promises an unforgettable **celebration of North India's rich gastronomic legacy**.

# Singapore Unveils Luxurious Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree



Singapore is set to welcome its newest luxury retreat, the Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree, offering guests an unparalleled experience in the heart of nature. Situated just a short drive from the city centre, the resort is nestled within the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, providing seamless access to Singapore’s famed zoological attractions—Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, River Wonders, Bird Paradise, and the highly anticipated Rainforest Wild Asia.

## A Nature-Inspired Retreat

The Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree boasts 338 guest accommodations, including 24 uniquely designed treehouses.

Guests can choose from standard rooms, suites, and family-friendly accommodations with bunk beds, all offering breathtaking views of the lush rainforest, serene gardens, and the picturesque Upper Seletar Reservoir. The treehouses, each with a private patio, provide a secluded sanctuary perfect for couples seeking a tranquil escape.

The resort opens for staycations from April 2, 2025, marking Banyan Group’s debut in Singapore’s hospitality landscape.

## Exclusive Experiences & Amenities

Beyond its stunning accommodations, the resort promises a curated selection of premium

experiences:

- **Scenic Rooftop Pool:** Guests can unwind while taking in unobstructed views of the Upper Seletar Reservoir.
- **Gastronomic Delights:**
  - ◆ *Forage:* A specialty restaurant featuring a ‘Trust the Chef’ menu with fresh, daily-sourced ingredients, including produce from the resort’s rooftop edible garden.
  - ◆ *Planter’s Shed:* An all-day dining venue offering an extensive selection of local and international cuisine, with buffet options, live cooking stations, and interactive tableside service.
- **Award-Winning Banyan Tree Spa:** A sanctuary for relaxation, the spa offers invigorating treatments such as detoxifying body wraps infused with



natural ingredients like turmeric and ginger, as well as signature massages designed to enhance circulation and alleviate muscle fatigue.

- **Banyan Tree Gallery:** Guests can take home meaningful souvenirs, with locally inspired merchandise available for purchase.

### A Commitment to Nature and Sustainability

Set within the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, the resort aligns seamlessly with Singapore's broader conservation efforts. Designed with a biophilic approach, its architecture and interiors draw inspiration from the natural layers of the rainforest, from the forest floor to the canopy. This integration fosters an immersive experience that celebrates biodiversity while ensuring a

lighter environmental footprint.

Guests are invited to participate in thoughtful sustainability initiatives, reinforcing the resort's commitment to responsible tourism.

### The Banyan Tree Spa Experience

Banyan Tree Spa, renowned for its holistic wellness philosophy, incorporates centuries-old Asian traditions into its treatments. Offering a sanctuary of serenity, the spa features private pavilions that blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings, ensuring a tranquil retreat.

Signature massages, crafted with aromatic oils, herbs, and ancient healing techniques, aim to restore balance and well-being. Guests can indulge in a 30-minute *Calm Time*—a complimentary relaxation period that

enhances the overall rejuvenation experience.

### Embracing Tranquillity in the Heart of the Rainforest

Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree is more than just a luxurious getaway; it is an invitation to awaken the senses, reconnect with nature, and experience the harmonious blend of sustainability and indulgence. Whether exploring the wonders of Mandai Wildlife Reserve or unwinding in a private treehouse, guests are sure to leave with a renewed sense of tranquillity and connection to nature.

As Singapore's premier integrated wildlife and nature resort, Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree is poised to redefine eco-luxury travel in the region.



# Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights: Where Sustainability Meets Culture & Local Flavor



Since 1973, Mercure has been a name synonymous with celebrating local experiences, and now, the brand makes its much-anticipated debut in Nepal with the opening of **Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights**. Located in the heart of the capital, this new hotel embodies Mercure's commitment to unveiling the rich cultural tapestry of every destination, offering a warm and immersive experience for travelers.

## A Haven in the Heart of Kathmandu

Nestled amidst the vibrant energy of Kathmandu, **Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights** offers a seamless blend of contemporary elegance and traditional Nepali charm. Guests can choose from a variety of thoughtfully designed accommodations, each bathed in natural light and offering sweeping views of the bustling city, the surrounding mountains, or the majestic Himalayas. The interiors harmoniously

integrate modern aesthetics with Nepali accents, ensuring a stay that is both comfortable and culturally enriching.

## A Gastronomic Journey Across Continents

Culinary enthusiasts are in for a treat with the hotel's diverse dining offerings. **DYNE**, the all-day dining restaurant, presents an eclectic menu that traverses international



classics and authentic Nepali flavors. **Sopra Italian** brings a slice of Italy to Kathmandu, while **Zaiqa** offers a tantalizing journey through India's spice-laden cuisine. For those seeking a more relaxed atmosphere, **Sukra Bar** provides an exquisite rooftop lounge experience, where guests can sip on expertly crafted cocktails while soaking in panoramic cityscapes.

### A Sanctuary of Wellness and Leisure

Designed for both relaxation and rejuvenation, the hotel's **rooftop infinity pool** presents a stunning vantage point overlooking the Kathmandu Valley. Fitness enthusiasts can stay active at the **state-of-the-art fitness center**, complete with steam and sauna facilities. These amenities ensure a holistic and luxurious retreat for travelers.

### Elevating Events and Celebrations

With sophisticated venues tailored for weddings, corporate meetings,

and social gatherings, **Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights** sets a new benchmark in event hosting. A dedicated events team curates seamless and memorable experiences, ensuring each occasion is flawlessly executed.

### A Milestone in Accor's Expansion

The launch of **Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights** marks a significant chapter in Accor's expansion across Asia. Garth Simmons, Chief Operating Officer of Accor's Premium, Midscale & Economy Division, Asia, expressed the brand's vision: *"This hotel exemplifies our commitment to offering travelers distinctive and immersive experiences while honoring the rich heritage of each destination."*

Desh Bandhu Basnet (Ajit), Chairman of The Metropolitan Hotel Private Limited, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the partnership's goal of *"delivering exceptional hospitality that seamlessly integrates international standards with Nepal's vibrant cultural legacy."*

### The Spirit of Mercure

Inspired by Mercury, the Roman god of travelers, **Mercure hotels** transcend the conventional stay experience, serving as a gateway to local culture. With over 1,000 hotels across more than 60 countries and a growing portfolio of 220 additional properties in development, Mercure continues its mission of curating authentic experiences for travelers worldwide.

### A Rewarding Stay

Guests can enhance their experience with **Accor's award-winning lifestyle loyalty program, ALL**, earning points that can be redeemed for exclusive rewards and experiences globally. Membership is free and available at [www.all.com](http://www.all.com).

With its distinctive charm, world-class amenities, and deep-rooted cultural connection, **Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights** stands as a testament to Nepal's evolving hospitality landscape, inviting travelers to embark on an unforgettable journey in the heart of the Himalayas.





# Raffles Hotels & Resorts



Elevates Jaipur  
Polo Season  
2025 with  
Prestigious  
Raffles  
Sirmour Cup  
Sponsorship



The grandeur of heritage, sportsmanship, and luxury will converge at the Rajasthan Polo Club as Raffles Hotels & Resorts proudly sponsors the prestigious Raffles Sirmour Cup (12-goal) during the Jaipur Polo Season 2025. As one of the marquee events of the season, the tournament will be held from February 10 to 16, 2025, amid the thrilling spectacle that spans from January 13 to March 30, 2025. This illustrious sporting event will welcome some of the world's finest polo players and enthusiasts, ensuring an unparalleled celebration of the 'Sport of Kings.'

### A Legacy of Heritage and Sport

Steeped in tradition, the Raffles Sirmour Cup stands as a symbol of Rajasthan's rich cultural and sporting legacy. By associating with this prestigious tournament, Raffles Hotels & Resorts reinforces its dedication to preserving Rajasthan's regal traditions while curating refined experiences for global travelers.

"The Raffles Sirmour Cup epitomizes the enduring relationship between heritage, elegance, and sportsmanship, all values that align seamlessly with the philosophy of the Raffles brand. Through this partnership, we aim to further enrich the cultural and luxurious experiences that define Rajasthan and its timeless

appeal," said Binny Sebastian, General Manager of Raffles Jaipur.

### A Commitment to Elegance and Excellence

This esteemed partnership highlights the shared ethos of Raffles Jaipur and the Rajasthan Polo Club—celebrating sophistication, tradition, and sporting excellence. Attendees at the Raffles Sirmour Cup will be treated to an exclusive array of experiences, including VIP lounges, curated events, and signature high teas presented by Raffles Jaipur and Raffles Udaipur, offering guests an unforgettable fusion of indulgence and refinement.

*"The Raffles Sirmour Cup epitomizes the enduring relationship between heritage, elegance, and sportsmanship, all values that align seamlessly with the philosophy of the Raffles brand. Through this partnership, we aim to further enrich the cultural and luxurious experiences that define Rajasthan and its timeless appeal,"* said **Binny Sebastian, General Manager of Raffles Jaipur.**

### An Exquisite High-Tea Experience

As part of this grand affair, Raffles Jaipur will host an exclusive high-tea experience on February 15 and 16, 2025, set against the majestic backdrop of the polo grounds. This

meticulously curated event will showcase a selection of signature teas, artisanal pastries, gourmet delicacies, and handcrafted cocktails, all served in an ambiance inspired by Raffles' signature elegance and charm. Designed to complement the exhilarating sport, this high-tea experience promises to be a highlight of the season, seamlessly blending heritage, indulgence, and luxury.

### Raffles Jaipur: Redefining Luxury in Polo

The Jaipur Polo Season has long been an iconic event for polo aficionados, luxury travelers, and sports enthusiasts. With its association, Raffles Jaipur continues to set new benchmarks in curated lifestyle experiences, offering guests a distinguished gateway into the world of high society and sporting grandeur. By supporting the Raffles Sirmour Cup, Raffles Hotels & Resorts strengthens its role in shaping Rajasthan's vibrant polo culture while reaffirming its status as a beacon of timeless elegance and exclusivity.

As the Jaipur Polo Season 2025 unfolds, the Raffles Sirmour Cup promises to be an unforgettable celebration of heritage and excellence, where tradition meets contemporary luxury in an event befitting royalty.



# Inside Raffles

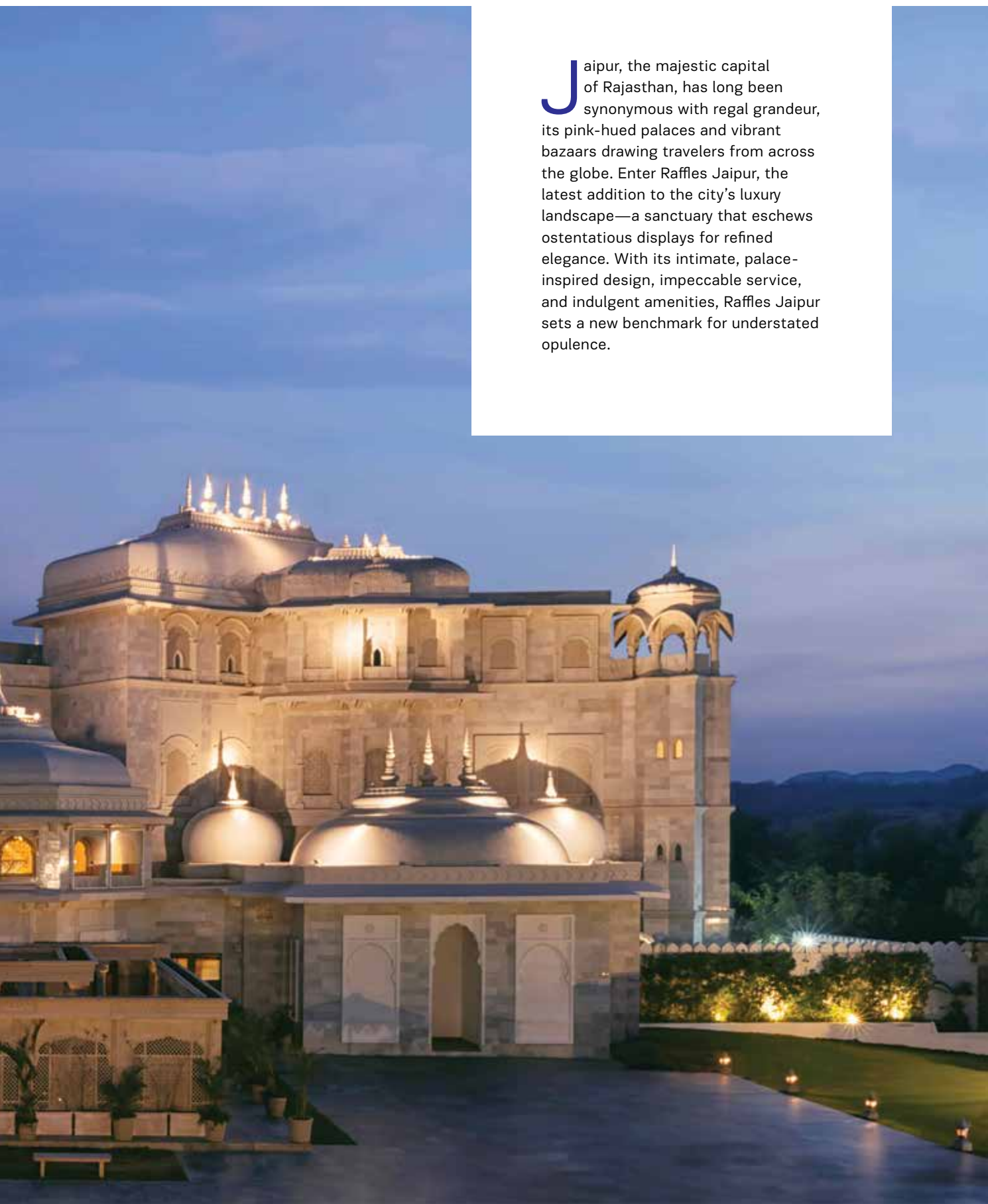
## U Jaipur India's Latest Ultra-Luxury Haven

*By Devender Grover*





Jaipur, the majestic capital of Rajasthan, has long been synonymous with regal grandeur, its pink-hued palaces and vibrant bazaars drawing travelers from across the globe. Enter Raffles Jaipur, the latest addition to the city's luxury landscape—a sanctuary that eschews ostentatious displays for refined elegance. With its intimate, palace-inspired design, impeccable service, and indulgent amenities, Raffles Jaipur sets a new benchmark for understated opulence.



**An Oasis of Discretion and Grandeur**

As the second Raffles property in India—following the palatial Raffles Udaipur—Raffles Jaipur offers an alternative to its more flamboyant sibling. Situated 12 miles from the city center, it finds a balance between seclusion and accessibility. Unlike

Udaipur’s sprawling lakeside estate, this 50-room retreat nestles quietly among Jaipur’s luxury hotels, yet once inside, it transports guests to an exclusive world of comfort, lifestyle and sophistication.

Architecturally, Raffles Jaipur pays homage to Rajasthan’s royal heritage with a contemporary twist. The

entrance, a discreet tent-like structure, opens into an intimate haven shielded by intricate jali screens. High-ceilinged rooms are adorned in soft sherbet hues, featuring lantern-lit bathrooms infused with the fragrance of Madhumalti blooms. With private plunge pools and alfresco stone tubs on the terraces, the hotel’s accommodations redefine





urban luxury. Impressively, the property boasts 17 temperature-controlled pools, including a rooftop oasis that offers breathtaking views.

True to the Raffles legacy, each room comes with a dedicated butler service. Dressed in powder-pink sherwanis, these consummate hosts anticipate guests' desires with remarkable

intuition—whether drawing a milk, honey, and neem-infused bath or curating personalized experiences steeped in local tradition.

### Culinary Excellence with a Royal Touch

Dining at Raffles Jaipur is a theatrical affair, where every detail—

from the golden glow of the atrium to the delicate scent of saffron—exudes decadence. Safir, the heart of the hotel, serves all-day indulgences, with the highlight being meticulously curated teas from London Tea Exchange. Among them, the Rajmata Jewel, crafted from the rare Persian pomegranate blossom, is an experience unto itself.

At Arkaa, North Indian culinary traditions take center stage. Signature dishes include pasliya, lamb ribs slow-cooked to perfection in the age-old Jaipur style, and shahi tukra, a Mughal-era dessert infused with the heady aroma of Pushkar roses. Meanwhile, the rooftop Sehara offers Mediterranean delights, from Neapolitan-style pizzas to a refined selection of antipasti.

No visit to Raffles Jaipur is complete without a stop at the Writers Bar, a robin-egg-blue, hand-painted masterpiece where mixology meets storytelling. Its star attraction? The Jaipur Sling—a local twist on the iconic Singapore Sling, blending Tanqueray No. 10, orange liqueur, pineapple, and the herbal elixir Chandr Haas.

*(The Raffles signature is the gin sling with every property around the world adding local flavors to the tropical tippie. Here, the Sling is a smooth number that looks as pretty as it tastes. Apart from the gin and the fruit juices, this version includes a hibiscus infusion and a generous dash of Chandrahas, a local brew with a regal lineage that combines over 80 herbs. The result: a terracotta pink cocktail that matches the walls of its home city.)*

### A Sanctuary for Rejuvenation

The lower-ground spa at Raffles Jaipur is an enclave of tranquility, adorned with Rajasthani block-print drapes and candlelit serenity. It features Ayurvedic-based treatments using Subtle Energies products, with private steam and shower rooms enhancing the indulgence. A Turkish hammam, clad in black-and-white marble, offers an authentic thermal experience, while a secluded thermal pool is reserved exclusively for spa guests.





For fitness enthusiasts, the 24-hour gym—elegantly accented with books—provides a chic workout space. Complimentary morning yoga, HIIT, and Pilates classes add a wellness dimension to the stay, while personalized evening sessions cater to guests seeking deeper engagement with their fitness regime.

**Exploring Jaipur’s Regal Charms**

Jaipur’s regal splendor extends beyond Raffles’ luxurious embrace. A visit to the historic Amber Fort, where 1135 AD Restaurant offers a princely dining experience, is a must. The City Palace, an architectural marvel, and the breathtaking Hawa Mahal, with its honeycomb façade, remain Jaipur’s most celebrated landmarks.

For those inclined towards contemporary indulgences, The Palace Atelier presents a curated shopping experience blending heritage craftsmanship with modern

aesthetics. Meanwhile, a stop at the Rajasthan Polo Club, recently refurbished in sumptuous gold and green hues, provides a taste of aristocratic sport.

Jaipur has many must-visit spots, but if you do not want to travel too far then Amer Fort lies close and the hotel can organise your trip. One can also visit the Anokhi Museum to get a glimpse of the art of block printing.

In a city known as a shopper’s paradise, the colourful alleys of Bapu Bazaar are lined with shops selling traditional clothes, while Johri Bazaar is the place to pick up ethnic jewellery. Raffles also plans to organise special excursions like a trek to the surrounding Aravalli hills with breakfast.

**Final Thoughts: A Regal Escape Like No Other**

Raffles Jaipur is not merely a hotel; it is an experience—a meticulously woven tapestry of luxury, history, and

contemporary elegance. Whether basking in the warmth of Raffles’ legendary hospitality, savoring exquisite flavors, or soaking in the cultural vibrancy of Jaipur, every moment here is an invitation to revel in the extraordinary.

In a city famed for its dazzling grandeur, Raffles Jaipur stands apart by embracing a quieter, more refined luxury. It does not seek to outshine—it simply mesmerizes.

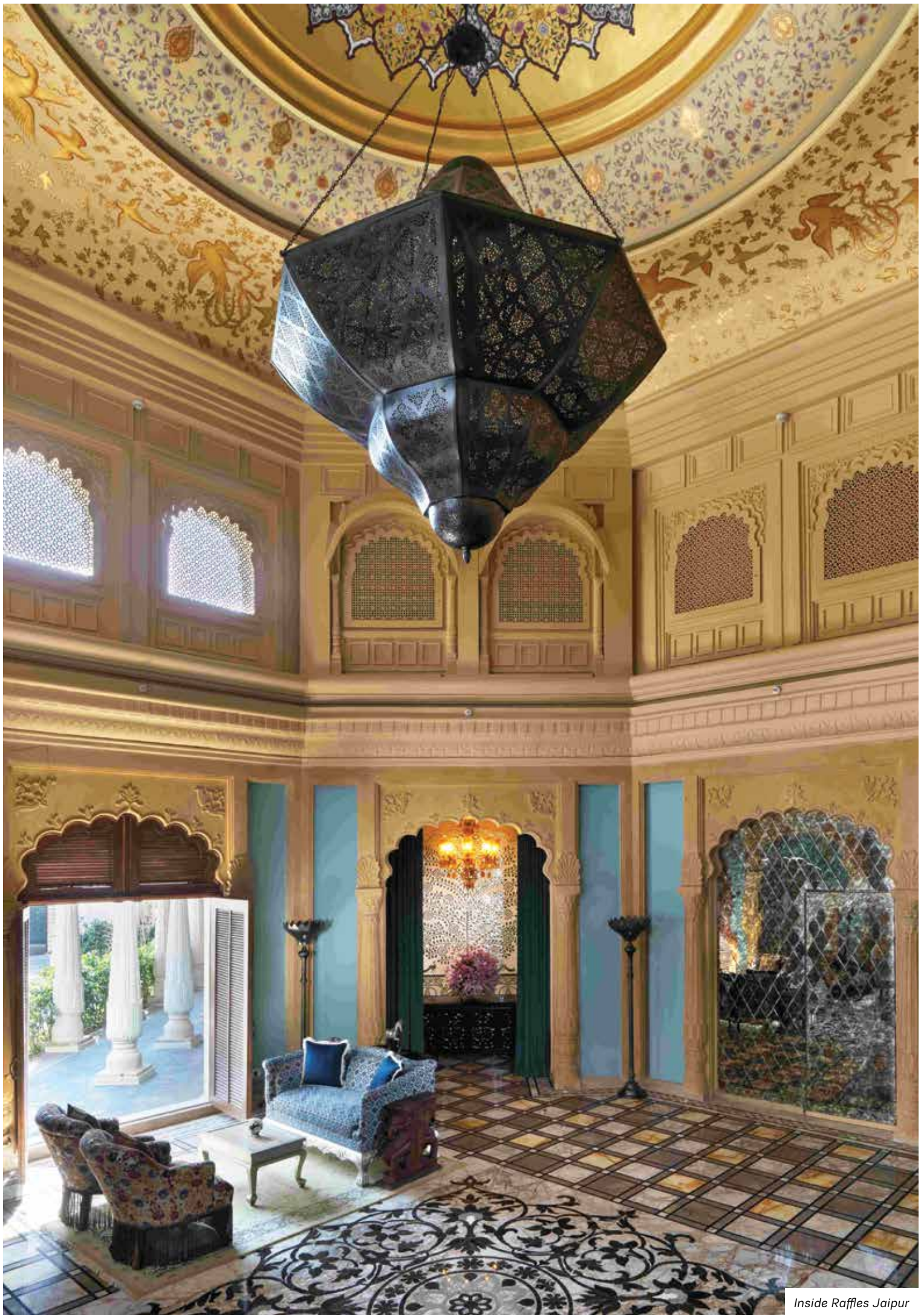
**Why book?**

Raffles Jaipur provides its guests a taste of royal life in the Pink City without stepping out.

**Getting There**

Raffles Jaipur is an hour from the main Jaipur city, the property is located close to Amber Fort. Accessible by airways and roadways, international and domestic guests can fly into the airport and request transfers.





Inside Raffles Jaipur



# EXPERIENCE

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