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EDITOR'S LETTER

Tie the Knot in Türkiye's Land of Fairy Tales: Cappadocia

Imagine exchanging vows surrounded by one of the world's most enchanting landscapes. Nestled in the heart of Türkiye, Cappadocia offers couples a truly unique setting for their wedding—a place where fairy chimneys, vibrant hot air balloons, and a rich cultural history converge to create an unforgettable celebration. Known for its surreal beauty and romantic atmosphere, Cappadocia is quickly becoming a sought-after destination for couples seeking a wedding experience as magical as the location itself.

A Wedding Straight Out of a Fairytale

Cappadocia's stunning landscapes, from its captivating valleys to its one-of-a-kind cave hotels, set the stage for a wedding like no other. Whether you dream of saying "I do" amidst

the ancient fairy chimneys, hosting a reception on a rooftop terrace with a panoramic sunset view, or even tying the knot in a hot air balloon, Cappadocia offers an array of venues that cater to all wedding dreams.

Couples can work with event planners who specialize in organizing destination weddings, ensuring that every detail—from the ceremony to the reception—meets the highest standards. With multilingual staff and a commitment to world-class hospitality, Cappadocia's expert organizers ensure that your wedding day will be as memorable as your love story.

For those envisioning an outdoor wedding, the region's fairy chimneys provide a striking natural backdrop that guarantees breathtaking wedding photos. Alternatively, rooftop venues offer a magical setting for an evening



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celebration under the stars. Enjoy an elegant dinner as the sun sets over the valley, and treat your guests to regional cuisine paired with the finest local wines. For a truly exceptional experience, Cappadocia's cave hotels—where the area's ancient rock formations are fused with modern luxury—provide a unique venue that offers both intimate charm and lavish amenities, such as heated pools and rooms with wine taps. These hotels promise a wedding experience unlike any other, making them perfect for those looking to blend history, luxury, and romance.

A Celebration Beyond the Wedding Day

Cappadocia isn't just a place to exchange vows—it's a destination brimming with experiences that will leave both you and your guests with unforgettable memories. Beyond the ceremony, your guests will have the opportunity to explore the region's iconic sites, from the fairy chimneys that dot the valleys to the ancient underground cities like Derinkuyu and Kaymakli. These subterranean marvels, complete with rooms, tunnels, and

even wineries, offer a fascinating glimpse into Cappadocia's rich history.

A hot air balloon ride is the best way to take in the breathtaking views of the region, including the UNESCO-listed Göreme Open Air Museum and the dramatic valleys below. For a more personal experience, guests can explore Cappadocia's landscape on horseback, guided by locals familiar with the area's hidden gems. Those with an interest in history will appreciate the ancient rock-carved churches and monasteries that line the region, where intricate frescoes tell the story of early Christian settlements. These

historical landmarks offer guests the chance to embark on a spiritual journey through the region's rich past.

Culinary Delights for Every Palate

Cappadocia is a paradise for food lovers. While your guests will certainly indulge in the region's flavors during the wedding itself, there are plenty of opportunities to continue the culinary adventure long after the ceremony. The region's fertile volcanic soil makes it an ideal location for grape growing, and the local vineyards offer tours that immerse visitors in the art of winemaking. Guests can explore the vineyards year-round and even participate in workshops that teach the winemaking process.

Food lovers can also sample Cappadocia's famous regional dishes, such as *testi kebabı* (a slow-cooked meat and vegetable dish served in a clay pot) and *Nevşehir mantısı* (ravioli-style dumplings), often paired with a glass of wine made from the local Emir grape variety. These culinary experiences are perfect for guests seeking to explore the full range of flavors that Cappadocia has to offer.

Honeymoon Bliss in a Magical Setting

After the wedding, Cappadocia continues to provide the perfect setting for newlyweds to relax and unwind. From its unique underground cities to the luxurious cave hotels, the region offers everything a couple could want for a post-wedding getaway. Start the day with a hot air balloon ride, followed by a relaxing spa treatment, and explore the area together by taking a pottery workshop in the charming town of Avanos. As the day draws to a close, enjoy a romantic candlelit dinner under the stars, savoring local wines as you gaze at the region's iconic rock formations.

Cappadocia's blend of adventure, luxury, and natural beauty makes it an ideal destination not only for a wedding but also for a honeymoon or family vacation. Whether you're looking for thrilling experiences or peaceful moments, this enchanting region promises to be a perfect place for newlyweds to create new memories as they begin their life together.

Cappadocia isn't just a place to celebrate love—it's a destination where memories are made. With its otherworldly landscape, rich history, and exceptional service, it offers couples the chance to experience their wedding day in a way that's as unique and unforgettable as the love they share.



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EaseMyTrip Partners with Sabah Tourism Board to Boost Indian Travel to Sabah



EaseMyTrip, one of India's leading online travel platforms, has entered into a Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) with the Sabah Tourism Board (STB) to enhance Sabah's visibility among Indian travelers. The official signing took place on February 3, 2025, at EaseMyTrip's office in New Delhi, with Mr. Julinus Jeffery Jimit, CEO of STB, and Ms. Nutan Gupta, COO of EaseMyTrip, formalizing the partnership.

The event was attended by key representatives from both organizations, including Mr. Sanchit Chopra (Senior Vice President – Marketing & Alliances, EaseMyTrip), Mr. Saurabh Shukla (Assistant General Manager – Marketing & Alliances, EaseMyTrip), Mr. Humphrey Ginibun (Senior Marketing Manager, STB), and Ms. Poonam Nautiyal (Marketing Manager, Tourism Malaysia New Delhi).

This strategic partnership aims to strengthen Sabah's presence in the burgeoning Indian travel market by leveraging EaseMyTrip's digital marketing expertise, extensive customer base, and industry knowledge. Both parties will collaborate on targeted initiatives to increase inbound

tourism to Sabah and enhance travel experiences for Indian visitors.

As part of the collaboration, EaseMyTrip will create a dedicated Sabah page on its Malaysia microsite, offering detailed travel itineraries, must-see attractions, and essential travel tips. The platform will also feature destination-specific blogs,

immersive video content, and social media campaigns to highlight Sabah's unique offerings, such as its vibrant cultural heritage, pristine landscapes, adventure tourism, and luxury experiences. Additionally, EaseMyTrip and STB will jointly fund digital marketing campaigns to ensure broad outreach and visibility across Indian markets.

The partnership extends beyond leisure tourism, focusing on niche segments such as MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), destination weddings, and wellness tourism. Special packages will be curated for business travelers, corporate retreats, and international conferences. EaseMyTrip will also promote Sabah as an ideal destination for weddings, offering couples the chance to tie the knot in stunning locations. Moreover, wellness tourism will be highlighted, with eco-retreats and nature therapy experiences designed to rejuvenate travelers amidst Sabah's tranquil landscapes.

Recognizing the growing outbound travel trend in India, EaseMyTrip will expand its marketing efforts to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, catering to the diverse

needs of Indian travelers. Targeted campaigns will be designed for various demographics, including senior citizens, millennials, solo travelers, corporate groups, and students, ensuring that Sabah is accessible to a broader audience.

To optimize tourism strategies for the Indian market, EaseMyTrip will provide STB with data-driven insights, including traveler preferences, booking trends, and demand forecasts. Additionally, EaseMyTrip will integrate Sabah into its loyalty rewards program, offering exclusive deals and promotions to encourage repeat visits. New special offers will also be introduced, featuring discounts on Sabah holiday packages to make the destination even more attractive to Indian travelers.

Julinus Jeffery Jimit, CEO of Sabah Tourism Board, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "India is a high-potential market for tourism growth, and this collaboration with EaseMyTrip is set to drive increased visitor arrivals and promote Sabah's unique offerings to Indian travelers."

Rikant Pittie, CEO and Co-Founder of EaseMyTrip, echoed the sentiment, saying, "Sabah is an extraordinary destination with breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and exciting adventure opportunities. We are excited to partner with STB to introduce Indian travelers to Sabah's diverse experiences. This collaboration allows us to leverage our technology and digital platforms to offer seamless travel solutions and immersive travel packages that showcase the best of Sabah."

Through this partnership, EaseMyTrip and the Sabah Tourism Board are poised to drive significant growth in Indian tourist arrivals to Sabah, offering travelers an unparalleled mix of adventure, relaxation, and cultural exploration.

IndiGo's first-ever long-haul flights to Manchester and Amsterdam will commence from July

Flights to both destinations will run thrice a week and are expected to commence from July 2025, subject to operational preparedness and regulatory approvals.



India's largest airline by market share, IndiGo made its long-haul debut on March 6, announcing non-stop flights to Manchester and Amsterdam which will commence from July, as it ramps up the global network.

"We're thrilled to announce our first-ever long-haul destinations - Manchester and Amsterdam," Pieter Elbers, Chief Executive Officer, IndiGo said, adding that these long-haul routes will help the airline in building India into a global aviation hub. The airline has ambitions to expand its

international reach as well as cargo operations and position itself as a leading global airline by 2030.

Flights to both destinations will run thrice a week and are expected to commence from July 2025, subject to operational preparedness and regulatory approvals. IndiGo said the frequency may be ramped up as additional aircraft join its fleet later this year. The airline had signed a damp lease agreement with Norse Atlantic Airways for a Boeing 787-9 aircraft, which was inducted into operations this month, and three additional such planes will be leased in

the second half of 2025.

"India has strong ties both with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands for business and tourism; and there is a large Indian diaspora who live in these countries. These new flights will benefit both our existing and potential customers who fly on these routes," said Pieter Elbers.

The aircraft will help IndiGo foray into the long-haul market and establish itself in Europe as it awaits delivery of its Airbus A321 XLR and A350-900, expected starting 2027.

The airline said it has been building a presence

in Europe through multiple codeshare partnerships over the past two years to connect several European cities to India.

Just days ago, IndiGo announced direct flights between Mumbai and Krabi, Thailand, starting March 23. The airline will initially run six flights a week with plans to increase frequency to daily services in a week after launch.

Brussels Airport authorities are already in talks with Air India as well as IndiGo to restore direct flight services between India and Belgium this year in an attempt to expand trade and tourism ties.



Air India optimizes routes, positioning India as a global transit hub



Air India enhances international connectivity, reducing transit times to 2.5 hours via Delhi and Mumbai. The 'Via' campaign promotes India as a world-class hub.

With its long-term vision of building India as a global transit hub, **Air India** has optimised its international network to offer faster connections to travellers from the UK and rest of Europe to Australia and South-East Asia via India and vice versa, reducing connection times to around 2.5 hours. The airline has launched a campaign called 'Via' to highlight these improved connection times and promote India as a world-class hub.

The optimised flight schedule makes Air India flights amongst the fastest for travel between Europe and Australia, South-East Asia, with comfortable transit times at Air India's hubs in Delhi and Mumbai.

"India's geographical advantage

and impressive airport infrastructure, combined with Air India's robust route network, offer convenient one-stop access for travellers from the West to East and vice-versa", said **Nipun Aggarwal**, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India.

Air India Enhances Transit Experience at Delhi and Mumbai Airports

The airline's operations at Terminal 3 Delhi Airport and T2 Mumbai Airport enable seamless same-terminal transfers for guests travelling to Australia and South-East Asia from the UK and rest of Europe and vice-versa. These terminals boast world-class design, architecture, and operational efficiency, enriched with Indian

heritage and cultural character.

Business Class passengers, Maharaja Club members, and eligible Star Alliance members can enjoy lounge services at these airports, ensuring maximum comfort and convenience during their stopovers.

Air India Launches 'Via' Marketing Campaign

The airline has launched a marketing campaign titled 'Via', running until March, to raise awareness among UK travellers about the destinations they can conveniently fly to via India.

Flights are available for booking on the airline's official website, mobile app, customer contact centre, city and airport offices, and through travel agents worldwide.

Air India highlights cabin upgrades and A350 innovations at SATTE 2025



Air India Unveils Upgraded A320 Business & Premium Economy Seats, Offers VR Tour of A350 at SATTE 2025

New Delhi, India – Air India is making a bold statement at the South Asia Travel & Tourism Exchange (SATTE) 2025 by showcasing its latest Business Class and Premium Economy seats from its retrofitted A320 family aircraft. Additionally, visitors at the event can experience a cutting-edge virtual reality (VR) tour of the airline’s state-of-the-art A350 aircraft. The event is taking place from February 19-21, 2025, at Yashobhoomi

(India International Convention and Expo Centre) in New Delhi.

The airline’s booth at the prestigious travel and tourism exhibition is designed around its signature gold window frame, ‘The Vista,’ seamlessly integrating aesthetics with immersive digital interactions. Attendees can explore Air India’s transformation through live demonstrations of the newly upgraded A320 Business Class and Premium Economy seats.

Expanding Premium Economy Offerings

Air India currently offers Premium Economy cabins on more than 80 aircraft across domestic and international routes. As part of its fleet enhancement, the airline is refurbishing 27 of its legacy A320 aircraft, a project set for completion by mid-2025. The refurbishment includes new cabins, seats, upholstery, and carpets, along with



Air India's flagship A350, featuring 316 seats in a three-class configuration, is designed to elevate passenger experience with its spacious cabins, larger windows, mood lighting, onboard Wi-Fi connectivity, and advanced inflight entertainment system, setting a new benchmark in Indian aviation.

Showcasing Culinary Excellence and Loyalty Program

In addition to its seating and VR showcase, Air India is offering a preview of its refreshed onboard dining experience, displaying an array of inflight meals curated to enhance passenger satisfaction.

Visitors can also enroll in the airline's newly revamped **Maharaja Club** loyalty program, which offers exclusive rewards and privileges. To further engage attendees, Air India is hosting a raffle at its booth, where participants stand a chance to win curated gift hampers and complimentary Economy Class tickets.

With a focus on innovation and passenger comfort, Air India's presence at SATTE 2025 underscores its commitment to redefining air travel and strengthening its position as a global airline.

the introduction of Premium Economy cabins, significantly increasing the number of three-class configuration aircraft.

The new Premium Economy section aims to enhance passenger comfort with spacious seating, extra legroom, upgraded meals, and priority services at airports, delivering a superior travel experience.

"As Air India continues its transformation into a world-class airline with an Indian heart, SATTE 2025 provides an ideal platform to showcase our premium offerings and engage with travel industry stakeholders worldwide. Through interactive activations and immersive product displays, we are offering visitors a glimpse of the new Air India," said Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer of Air India.

Virtual Reality Experience of the A350

A key highlight at the Air India pavilion is a Virtual Reality experience zone that brings visitors closer to the airline's advanced A350 fleet.

This setup transports users into the premium cabins of the A350, which has been strategically deployed on key international routes such as Delhi-London Heathrow, New York (JFK), and Newark.





Air India expands codeshare agreement with Lufthansa, SWISS and Austrian Airlines



Air India strengthens its partnership with Lufthansa Group, adding 60 new codeshare routes across Europe, boosting connectivity for global travelers.



Air India and Lufthansa Group have agreed to build on their longstanding codeshare partnership, which sees Air India enter into a new codeshare agreement with Austrian Airlines, as well as expand the existing codeshare agreements between Air India, Lufthansa, and Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS).

The expanded partnership significantly boosts flight options and connectivity for travellers between the Indian Subcontinent and Europe with the addition of close to 60 codeshare routes operated by the four airlines across 12 Indian and 26 European cities.

The expanded agreements increase the total number of codeshare routes between

Air India, Lufthansa and SWISS from 55 to nearly 100. Additionally, the new agreement between Air India and Austrian Airlines adds 26 codeshare routes. This provides greater choice, convenience, and seamless experiences to travellers from both regions.

Air India will now offer its customers a total of 26 destinations across Europe and 3 destinations in the Americas beyond its gateways in Europe (Frankfurt, Vienna, and Zurich), with the 'AI' designator code placed on the following services operated by airlines in the Lufthansa Group, including Austrian Airlines for the first time:

Lufthansa

Between Frankfurt and: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Bremen, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Dublin, Geneva, Hamburg, Hannover, Luxembourg, Lyon, Manchester, Marseille, Munich, Nice, Nuremberg, Oslo, Prague, Riga, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Toulouse, Valencia, – Washington D.C.

SWISS

Between Zurich and: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Bremen, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Dublin, Geneva, Hamburg, Hannover, Luxembourg, Manchester, Marseille, Munich, Nice, Oslo, Prague, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Valencia.

Austrian Airlines

Between Vienna and: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Bremen, Brussels, Copenhagen, Düsseldorf, Geneva, Hamburg, Hannover, Lyon, Manchester, Marseille, Munich, Nice, Oslo, Prague, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Valencia.

Reciprocally, customers of Lufthansa Group will now be able to connect to Air India's domestic services to or from 15 points within India, namely Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Delhi, Goa Mopa, Goa Dabolim, Hyderabad, Indore, Kochi, Kolkata,

Mumbai, Pune, and Thiruvananthapuram. Additionally, Lufthansa Group carriers will add

their respective designator codes to Air India's international services to 3 destinations from Delhi and Mumbai: Kathmandu, Melbourne, and Sydney.

Additionally, flights currently operated by Air India and Lufthansa Group carriers between India and Germany or Switzerland will be covered under the expanded codeshare partnership. For example, customers who wish to fly between Delhi and Frankfurt will now have three daily flight options each way with 'LH' flight numbers, including two flights operated by Air India and one flight operated by Lufthansa.

Both airlines plan to progressively include other destinations in their network to the codeshare arrangements.

Air India and the three Lufthansa Group carriers are members of Star Alliance. Frequent flyers will continue to earn and redeem points/miles on all four airlines, while elite status holders of Air India's Maharaja Club and Lufthansa Group's Miles & More programmes will benefit from Star Alliance Gold benefits including priority services, extra baggage allowance, and airport lounge access across the world.

"Our goal is to enable our customers to travel from any corner of the world to another via Air India and its partner airlines. The expansion of our

partnership with Lufthansa Group is a step in that direction, and we are pleased to take this long-standing relationship to the next level," said Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India.

"With this renewed partnership, our customers will have access to more destinations and greater flexibility to travel across Europe on Lufthansa Group carriers. It also gives us the opportunity to serve Lufthansa Group customers, with warmth and quintessential Indian hospitality, aboard Air India flights. We look forward to continuing working closely with our Star Alliance partners in making the world feel like a smaller place," Aggarwal added.

"We are thrilled to strengthen our partnership with Air India and elevate the travel experience for our joint customers. By further enhancing our cooperation, we will increase the travel options between Europe and India and offer our passengers improved access to additional destinations. Lufthansa Group remains committed to India, and we are excited about the possibilities and potential the country and Air India as a partner have to offer", according to Dieter Vranckx, Chief Commercial Officer, Lufthansa Group.

Subject to regulatory approvals, the codeshare flights will be progressively made available for sale through the airlines' respective booking channels.



IndiGo Partners with Norse Atlantic Airways to Boost Long-Haul Fleet with Boeing 787-9

IndiGo, India's leading airline, has made a bold move in its global expansion strategy by securing a damp lease agreement with Norse Atlantic Airways for one Boeing 787-9 aircraft. This strategic partnership supports IndiGo's goal to enhance its international network and offer passengers more long-haul travel options, with operations set to begin in March 2025.

The deal marks a significant step for IndiGo in its pursuit of becoming a major player in the global aviation market. The Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, renowned for its fuel efficiency and passenger comfort, will be a crucial addition to IndiGo's growing fleet, expanding its capabilities for long-haul routes. The aircraft, which offers advanced aerodynamics and spacious interiors, is perfectly suited to meet the increasing demand for international travel.

Details of the IndiGo-Norse Atlantic Partnership Under the terms of the agreement, the Boeing 787-9 will be leased to IndiGo for an initial six-month period, with the option to extend the lease up to 18 months, subject to regulatory approval. Both airlines have expressed interest in deepening their collaboration, with the potential to add more aircraft to IndiGo's fleet to support its long-haul services.

IndiGo's CEO, Pieter Elbers, emphasized that this partnership is a key part of the airline's broader strategy to transform into a global airline by 2030. He said, "We are pleased to confirm this damp lease of the Boeing 787-9 from Norse Atlantic Airways. Our vision is to expand our international network significantly while maintaining our strong presence in India."

Expanding IndiGo's International Reach IndiGo has been steadily growing its international footprint to cater to the surging demand for travel to and from India. This latest partnership with



Norse Atlantic Airways comes as part of IndiGo's broader strategy to enhance its fleet capabilities and offer more travel options to global destinations. In line with this expansion, IndiGo has also placed a firm order for 30 Airbus A350-900 wide-body aircraft, with deliveries slated to begin in 2027.

The addition of wide-body aircraft like the Boeing 787-9 and the upcoming Airbus A350s represents a shift for IndiGo, which has traditionally focused on narrow-body aircraft. This move enables the airline to tap into the long-haul market, offering travelers a more comfortable and efficient flying experience.

What the Lease Means for Indian Travelers For Indian passengers, the partnership with Norse Atlantic Airways brings more long-haul options, improved comfort, and access to modern, fuel-efficient aircraft. The Boeing 787-9, known for its spacious cabins and eco-friendly features, will elevate the travel experience for those flying to international destinations.

As IndiGo expands its global presence, travelers can expect more direct flights to major destinations, offering greater convenience and

enhanced connectivity between India and the rest of the world.

A Glimpse into IndiGo's Future Fleet Expansion The damp lease agreement with Norse is just the beginning of IndiGo's long-term expansion strategy. With the A350-900s set to join the fleet in the coming years, IndiGo will be well-equipped to expand its intercontinental reach and compete with other global carriers. The airline's growth is in line with the increasing demand for travel from India, as passengers seek non-stop flights to destinations across Europe, North America, and beyond.

Looking Ahead: A Bold Step Toward Global Connectivity IndiGo's partnership with Norse Atlantic Airways represents a pivotal moment in its journey toward becoming a global airline. By adding the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner to its fleet and continuing to expand with the Airbus A350, IndiGo is positioning itself as a leading force in the global aviation industry.

With a clear focus on long-term growth and global connectivity, IndiGo is committed to offering passengers more choices, improved travel experiences, and seamless connections between India and the world.

VFS Global pioneers AI & digital innovation; Launches AI-Powered Chatbot for UK visa customers in 141 countries



- Developed in the VFS Global AI Centres located in India, UAE & Germany and available to UK visa customers in 141 countries globally
- Leveraging Generative AI-powered conversational chatbot, offering human-like, conversational support
- Responds to voice and text inputs, effectively catering to a diverse audience

VFS Global has recently launched a new Generative AI-powered chatbot to enhance customer support for travellers to the UK.

The AI-Powered Chatbot not only utilises advanced Generative AI technology to offer human-like, conversational support, but does so through both voice and text commands, providing instant, accurate, and accessible information for customers travelling to the UK.

Developed by VFS Global's AI team, headquartered in Dubai, the AI-Powered Chatbot addresses the increasing demand for efficient customer support, allowing users to easily access the information needed to navigate the application process.

Jen Vidler, Deputy Director, Cross Cutting Service Operations, Visa, Status and Information Services, Customer Services Group, UK Visas and Immigration, said, "The rollout of VFS Global's AI-powered chatbot demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring our visa services are accessible, efficient and meet the needs of all customers. Providing instant access to accurate information about the visa application process will ensure we continue to offer the best service to our customers."

Zubin Karkaria, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, VFS Global,

added, "Technology and innovation have always been the cornerstones of our operations at VFS Global, and we are pleased to launch this AI-powered information solution which will significantly enhance the visa application experience for our customers travelling to the UK from across the globe. We are developing a range of AI and digital technology driven products to drive the next transformation in visa and consular services for our Client Governments and customers. We remain deeply committed to the responsible development of AI in accordance with the policies and requirements of our client governments."

The AI-Powered chatbot was developed using advanced Generative AI technologies, each trained exclusively on publicly available data from their respective VFS Global Country-to-UK websites. Built and hosted entirely on VFS Global's secure IT infrastructure, the AI models adhere to rigorous data privacy and security standards.

A dedicated team of data scientists and AI specialists collaborated on the project, leveraging in-house expertise to uphold the highest quality and security standards, with VFS Global's AI centres based in Dubai (the headquarters for AI and Digital Operations), Mumbai, and Berlin.

Ethical AI practices were a key

focus, with VFS Global partnering with the 'Responsible AI Institute' to integrate ethical considerations and bias mitigation into the development process. Additionally, the project utilised proprietary AI platforms, including our AI Foundation Model and Super Alpha Application Platform, both equipped with built-in guardrails to ensure data safety, security, and regulatory compliance.

Key Features of the GenAI-Powered chatbot

- Human-like interactions: The AI-Powered Chatbot delivers responses that closely mimic human conversation, enhancing user engagement
- Country-specific information: Focused solely on the customers' needs, the information is highly accurate and relevant
- Data masking and PII detection: This process detects and masks any Personally Identifiable Information (PII); therefore, no sensitive data is stored
- Secure AI hosting: Deploys our Large Language Model (LLM) in a safe environment to prevent data sharing with external platforms
- Ethical AI practices: Minimises biases and ensures fair and consistent responses
- 24/7 availability: Customers can access assistance anytime
- User feedback mechanism: User feedback helps refine responses over time.

After attracting record travellers, Dubai is eyeing Gen Z from India in 2025



Dubai has unveiled multiple new attractions that will cater to young Indian travellers and provide them with experiences no other destinations will provide, Bader Ali Habib, Director of Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism told *Travel Span*

Dubai attracted a record 3.14 million overnight visitors from South Asia in 2024, which is a significant contribution to the overall 18.72 million international visitors that made a trip to the city, up 9% year-on-year. Speaking to Devender Grover, Editor in Chief *Travel Span*, Bader Ali Habib, Director of Proximity Markets at the Dubai

Department of Economy and Tourism said that the city has ambitious plans to enhance tourism offerings especially for Indian travellers.

Dubai, a city known for its towering skyscrapers, luxurious lifestyle, and iconic attractions, is enhancing its appeal to young Indian travelers by unveiling new attractions that offer unique experiences. In an exclusive interview with *Travel Span*, Bader Ali Habib, the Director of Proximity Markets at the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, shared insights into the city's tourism plans, emphasizing how Dubai aims to cater

to the evolving preferences of Indian visitors. Here's a closer look at what's coming up in the vibrant city of Dubai, and why it's quickly becoming a must-visit destination for young Indians.

How is Dubai's tourism booming among Indian travelers?

Dubai has seen an impressive surge in tourism, particularly from South Asia. In 2024 alone, Dubai attracted 3.14 million overnight visitors from South Asia, which significantly contributed to the city's record-breaking 18.72 million international visitors. This growth represents a 9% increase

compared to the previous year. Among these international visitors, Indian nationals have been a key demographic, making India one of Dubai's top source markets.

"India is a special market for us, and we have been tailoring our offerings specifically for Indian consumers," said Habib. The Dubai tourism authorities are strategically working to cater to India's diverse demographic, from Gen Z to those seeking a luxury experience, which includes offering more personalized experiences to make their stay unforgettable.

What new attractions are being introduced to engage Indian travelers?

In 2025, Dubai is set to launch several groundbreaking attractions designed specifically with young Indian visitors in mind. One of the most anticipated is the world's largest Ferris wheel. This colossal structure will provide stunning panoramic views of Dubai's iconic landmarks, including the Burj Khalifa and Palm Jumeirah. The Ferris wheel promises to offer a unique vantage point of the city's ever-evolving skyline, making it a must-see for visitors looking for an iconic experience.

Additionally, Dubai has introduced "The House of Hype," a 100,000-square-foot entertainment venue that integrates technology, gaming, and art. Habib emphasized that this venue is especially catered to India's younger audience, combining interactive experiences with cutting-edge digital technology. The House of Hype aims to create an immersive environment where visitors can enjoy gaming, art installations, and entertainment all under one roof.

What role does culture play in shaping Dubai's tourism?

Culture plays a central role in Dubai's identity, and it's something the city is eager to share with visitors from India. According to Habib, "Culture is a very important part of Dubai's identity. It's what makes us who we are." Dubai has a deep historical connection with India, particularly in textiles and spices,

which continues to influence the city's tourism offerings today.

Dubai's Al Fahidi District, also known as the city's cultural quarter, is one of the top destinations where visitors can experience the richness of local culture. The district is a hub for art galleries, museums, and traditional architecture that reflect Dubai's storied past. Visitors are encouraged to explore this cultural gem and connect with the city's history, especially during Ramadan. During this time, the city transforms into a vibrant space filled with bustling markets, social festivities, and unique food traditions, providing a deeper understanding of Dubai's customs and lifestyle.

What makes Dubai stand out as a destination for young Indian travelers?

Dubai is not just about luxury shopping and extravagant hotels – it offers an array of experiences that appeal to young travelers looking for excitement, adventure, and cultural immersion. With the launch of futuristic attractions and immersive entertainment hubs, Dubai is positioning itself as a dynamic destination where young Indians can explore new technologies, creative art forms, and cutting-edge entertainment.

Habib also highlighted Dubai's role in making travel even more accessible for Indian visitors, particularly through its expanded visa-on-arrival program. Since February 13, Indian citizens holding ordinary passports and valid visas or residence permits from six countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, and South Korea, have been granted visa-on-arrival access at all UAE entry points. This development is expected to simplify travel procedures and encourage more young Indians to explore everything Dubai has to offer.

How is Dubai strengthening its relationship with the Indian travel industry?

Dubai's presence at South Asia's Travel & Tourism Exchange (SATTE) played a key role in strengthening ties



with Indian stakeholders in the travel industry, including airlines, destination management companies, and hotels. Habib believes that collaborations with the Indian travel industry are essential for building stronger relationships and further boosting Dubai's tourism.

By aligning its marketing campaigns with India's evolving travel trends and preferences, Dubai is ensuring that it stays at the forefront of the region's tourism industry. With a focus on delivering exclusive experiences and fostering deeper cultural exchanges, Dubai is all set to welcome a new wave of young Indian travelers in 2025.

What can Indian travelers expect in the coming years?

Looking ahead, Dubai's tourism department is committed to offering more personalized and dynamic experiences that will cater specifically to Indian travelers. Whether it's through new, larger-than-life attractions, immersive cultural experiences, or convenient travel arrangements, Dubai is focused on solidifying its place as a top destination for young Indians. The city's vision for 2025 includes even more exciting developments that promise to offer unforgettable moments for those seeking luxury, adventure, and cultural exploration.

A New Era Begins with the Grand Return of StarCruises and Dream Cruises



Resorts World Cruises proudly reverts to the two iconic and legendary brands that shaped the Asian cruise industry for the past 30 years.

Cruise ship Resorts World One rename Star Navigator to join Star Voyager under StarCruises, and Genting Dream under Dream Cruises.

Resorts World Cruises is proud and excited to announce the grand return of two of Asia’s most iconic and legendary cruise brands – StarCruises (a refreshed take on the previous Star Cruises brand) and Dream Cruises. The Resorts World Cruises brand was used temporarily to restart cruising in Asia post Covid, and will be reverting to its original roots, which span over the last 30 years. The brand transition period will take approximately 3 months with

the renewed ambition to reinforce StarCruises and Dream Cruises as pioneers of the Asian and global cruising industry.

Launched in June 2022, Resorts World Cruises has successfully welcomed close to 2 million passengers to date, setting the foundation for this momentous transformation. Now, as part of this historic revival, our fleet will transition under both iconic brands:-

The Resorts World One cruise ship will be renamed Star Navigator, joining Star Voyager under the StarCruises banner.

Genting Dream will continue under the Dream Cruises brand.

The transformation goes beyond a name change, as it is a declaration of excellence, innovation, and commitment to redefining cruising in

Asia with unique, refreshed cruising experiences tailored to different markets.

StarCruises

With a rich legacy of over 30 years, the original Star Cruises name will be revitalized as StarCruises, bringing a modern, vibrant, and innovative approach that will deliver a lifestyle-driven cruising experience to new generations across the region. The refreshed StarCruises brand represents:-

- Affordable yet premium lifestyle cruising.
- Vibrant onboard entertainment, world-class dining and themed experiences.
- Mid-sized ships (about 2,000-passengers) for a more intimate

and accessible voyage.

- Short port intensive itineraries for domestic and Fly-Cruise passengers.

Star Navigator will begin four 4-night sailings from Singapore on 7 March 2025 to Krabi and Penang, before being deployed to Taiwan for an exclusive 8-month operational period starting 28 March. During this eight month, she will offer diverse itineraries that connect Taiwan's scenic coastlines with various destinations in Japan and South Korea, allowing guests to experience cherry blossoms in spring, vibrant summer seascapes, and stunning autumn foliage. Star Voyager will set sail on 26 March 2025, from multiple seasonal homeports in Singapore,

Jakarta, Melaka, Bangkok, and Ho Chi Minh, with more cities to be added.

Dream Cruises

Dream Cruises will introduce a new era of luxury cruising, tailored for travellers seeking world-class service, premium amenities, and unparalleled elegance. Dream Cruises represents:

- A sophisticated and indulgent onboard experience.
- Spacious ships with over 3,000-passenger capacity.
- Vibrant onboard entertainment, world-class dining and themed experiences.
- Luxury Fly-Cruise itineraries for the modern explorer

Genting Dream, the flagship of Dream Cruises, will be homeported in Singapore all year round, offering itineraries to Malaysia and Thailand, perfect for travellers who seek a seamless combination of a Singapore city stay and an opulent cruise escape to the region.

By clearly differentiating StarCruises and Dream Cruises, the brands will cater to distinct segments while reinforcing their leadership in the Asian cruise industry. This transition marks an exciting step forward, reflecting the brands' commitments to delivering exceptional world-class cruise experiences that cater to a diverse range of travellers.



Malaysia Airlines at SATTE 2025: Strengthening Ties and Modernising for Growth in the Indian Market



Malaysia Airlines made a significant impact at SATTE 2025, South Asia's premier travel and tourism exhibition, held from February 19-21 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi. This marks the airline's continued commitment to enhancing its presence in the Indian market, fostering stronger partnerships, and showcasing its ongoing fleet modernisation.

The event kicked off with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting led by **H.E. Dato' Muzafar Shah Mustafa, the High Commissioner of Malaysia to India**, further cementing Malaysia Airlines' position as a prominent player in the region. The airline's participation highlighted its strategic focus on India, an important growth market.

One of the key attractions at the Malaysia Airlines booth was an interactive photo booth, which quickly became a hit with attendees. The booth provided visitors with a fun and memorable way to engage with the brand, reflecting the airline's efforts to

connect with its audience on a more personal level.

In addition to the interactive experience, Malaysia Airlines also focused on strengthening its relationships with trade partners. Through productive meetings, the airline underscored its commitment to enhancing the travel experience, with offerings like the Bonus Side Trip programme, which allows travellers to explore an additional Malaysian destination without extra airfare. This initiative, along with a range of other products, demonstrates the airline's dedication to offering value-added services to its customers and trade partners alike.

A key announcement during the exhibition was the delivery of Malaysia Airlines' second Airbus A330neo, further enhancing the airline's fleet. With this addition, all flights to Melbourne will now be serviced by the new, state-of-the-art A330neo, offering superior comfort, fuel

efficiency, and an overall improved passenger experience. The A330neo's advanced features are expected to elevate travel experiences on key routes, including Melbourne, Auckland, and Indonesia.

Dersenish Aresandiran, Chief Commercial Officer of Malaysia Aviation Group, commented on the airline's strategic efforts: *"Our participation at SATTE 2025 underscores our strong commitment to the Indian market and to our valued trade partners. As the gateway to Asia and beyond, Malaysia Airlines continues to offer seamless connectivity, exceptional in-flight experiences, and diverse culinary delights through our Chef-on-Call service and Best of Asia Meal. The addition of our second A330neo on key routes is just one example of how we are constantly improving our service to ensure that our passengers experience the best of Malaysian hospitality."*

As part of its ongoing expansion, Malaysia Airlines also aligns with Tourism Malaysia's Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign, which aims to attract 1.6 million Indian visitors. Through strategic trade initiatives, travel promotions, and its "Time For" marketing campaign, the airline aims to inspire more Indian travellers to explore Malaysia. Together with the efforts of Tourism Malaysia, these initiatives are expected to make a significant impact on the growing number of Indian visitors.

With a focus on fleet modernisation, expanding networks, and strengthening industry ties, Malaysia Airlines remains committed to delivering world-class travel experiences, positioning itself as the carrier of choice for Indian travellers seeking exceptional service and seamless connectivity.



Tourism Malaysia Strengthens Indian Market Focus at SATTE 2025

Tourism Malaysia marks its return to the South Asia's Travel & Tourism Exchange (SATTE) for the 21st time, reinforcing its commitment to maintaining Malaysia as a top destination for Indian travelers. Taking place from 19th to 21st February in New Delhi, this three-day event aims to strengthen Malaysia's appeal in the Indian tourism market.

Tourism Malaysia is focusing on niche tourism segments such as shopping, golfing, luxury tourism, soft tourism, theme parks, and honeymoon packages as part of the global Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign. Additionally, the agency is leveraging wedding tourism alongside Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) to expand its market reach.

Recognized as the **Best MICE Destination 2024** in the Indian market, Malaysia continues to solidify its position as a preferred choice for Indian corporate and leisure travelers. With more than 40,000 trade visitors expected at SATTE 2025, Tourism Malaysia anticipates a surge in Indian tourist arrivals, strengthened by

collaborations with travel operators and tourism stakeholders.

Leading the Malaysian delegation is **Mr. Ahmad Johanif Mohd Ali**, Director of Tourism Malaysia's New Delhi Office, alongside **60 organizations**, including tour agents, hotel and resort operators, tourism product owners, airline representatives, as well as the **Sabah Tourism Board** and **Tourism Melaka**.

"Tourism Malaysia remains committed to attracting a growing number of Indian visitors, catering to their diverse preferences. India has been a key market for Malaysia for over two decades. With the upcoming Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VM2026) campaign, we are determined to increase tourist arrivals from India significantly," said **Mr. Ahmad Johanif Mohd Ali**.

India ranks as Malaysia's **sixth-largest visitor source**, owing to strong economic ties and cultural connections between the two nations. In 2024, Malaysia welcomed **38 million visitors**, of which **1.4 million** were from India. Air connectivity remains robust, with **237 weekly**

flights offering over **43,000 seats** between India and Malaysia, operated by **Malaysia Airlines, Batik Air, AirAsia, Air India, and IndiGo**.

Furthermore, Tourism Malaysia is capitalizing on the **visa-free policy** for Indian travelers, effective until **31st December 2026**, to encourage increased travel.

In addition to SATTE 2025, Tourism Malaysia is actively promoting its tourism offerings in India through various initiatives. The **Malaysia Food and Cultural Festival** is being held at Pullman Hotel New Delhi Aerocity from **17th to 23rd February**. The agency also participated in the **Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) 2025** in Mumbai from **30th January to 1st February**, and recently concluded a promotional roadshow across **Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Kochi** from **2nd to 11th February**.

Tourism Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, also known as **Tourism Malaysia**, operates under the **Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia**, dedicated to promoting the country as a premier travel destination. Since its inception, it has played a vital role in the global tourism landscape. The upcoming **Visit Malaysia Year 2026** aims to emphasize sustainable tourism, aligning with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**. For more information, follow Tourism Malaysia on **Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok**.

TO CANADA – HERE COMES ETIHAD’S A380

- The famous A380 of the UAE’s national carrier is heading true north this summer
- The double-decker will offer even more to Canada on the popular route, debuting *The Residence* for the first time in Toronto on 24 June
- Sensational special offer fares up for grabs

Etihad Airways is excited to announce that its legendary A380 will serve the Abu Dhabi – Toronto route in time for Summer 2025.

The famous double-decker will start flying between Zayed Abu Dhabi International (AUH) and Toronto Pearson International (YYZ) on 24 June 24, 2025, perfectly timed for the busy summer travel period and key corporate market. It means the world’s only three-room suite in the sky, serving up the legendary flying experience, is on the way to the land of the maple leaf.



Arik De, Chief Revenue and Commercial Officer, said: *“We’re delighted to start flying our remarkable A380 to Canada, and we know our guests love the onboard experience. Whether they are flying in Economy, Business, First or the three-room suite in the sky, The Residence, they will relish the attentive service from our dedicated crew. The timing and comfort provided by the A380 means they can arrive in Toronto fresh and ready for anything.”*

“Deploying the A380 on the popular Toronto route is a strategic move to meet customer demand for increased capacity while expanding our network. Given Toronto’s popularity

among Etihad’s customers, enhancing our capacity in the Canadian market is a logical step. This will strengthen connections to the broader GCC and Indian subcontinent and attract more visitors to experience the vibrant city of Abu Dhabi.”

The increase in capacity on the Toronto route gives more opportunity for guests to visit Abu Dhabi, either as a stopover or a destination. Etihad’s Abu Dhabi Stopover programme further enhances connectivity, enabling travellers to extend their layovers into memorable stays with up to two complimentary nights at premium hotels in Abu Dhabi.

To celebrate the launch of the A380, Etihad is launching a sale from today until 5 March, with special themed one-way fares to Abu Dhabi in Economy starting at CAD \$ 880, in Business Class from CAD \$ 2,380, and in First Class from CAD \$ 8,380, and return fares from CAD \$ 1,380 in Economy, CAD \$ 3,380 in Business Class and CAD \$ 10,380 in First Class for travel between 24 June and 8 December 2025.

Welcome onboard

Step into a world of luxury on Etihad’s A380, where every guest is treated to a unique and elevated experience.

In Economy Class, the journey begins with a dedicated welcome area that sets the tone for an enjoyable flying experience. The cabin features 68 extra legroom seats, offering an additional 4 inches of space, along with 337 Economy Smart seats. These seats are designed for maximum comfort, boasting Etihad’s signature fixed-wing headrests and large pillows.

On the upper deck, Business Class passengers can enjoy the exclusive Business Studios, which provide 70 private spaces for a stress-free journey. The upper deck also houses The Lobby, a serviced

lounge and bar area situated between the First and Business cabins. Etihad has collaborated with Armani/Casa to bring sophistication to the Business experience, offering premium ceramics, glassware, cutlery, and fabrics. Comprehensive Wi-Fi ensures that business travellers can remain productive and in touch throughout their journey.

First Class takes luxury to new heights with the First Apartments. These nine private spaces are equipped with designer tableware, a spacious leather lounge chair, and a separate ottoman that transforms into an 80” lie-flat bed. First-class guests also have access to personal vanity units and the exclusive First-class shower room.

The Residence

At the pinnacle of luxury is The Residence, the world’s only three-room suite in the sky. Accommodating up to two guests, The Residence features a private living room, bedroom, and ensuite bathroom, complete with a shower at 40,000 feet. A dedicated team of Etihad cabin crew ensures

unparalleled service. Guests in The Residence can indulge in a culinary journey with an à la carte menu, served on designer tableware in the private living room, or even opt for breakfast in bed. From gourmet cuisine to champagne and caviar, The Residence Signature High Tea offers a range of lavish options.

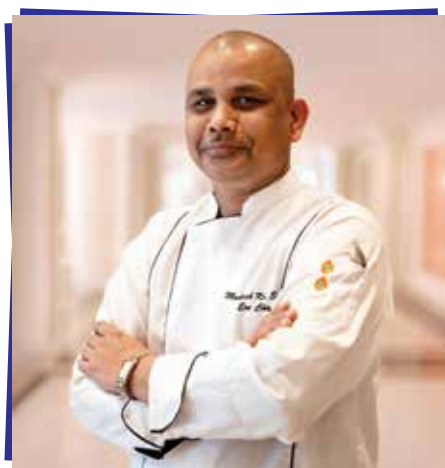
Toronto flight schedule – all times local. From 24 June 2025 - A380

Flight No	Departure airport	Departure Time	Arrival airport	Arrival Time	Frequency
EY21	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	02:40	Toronto (YYZ)	09:00	Daily
EY22	Toronto (YYZ)	13:40	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	11:00+1	Daily

Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights Appoints Chef Mukesh as Executive Chef

Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights is pleased to announce the appointment of Chef Mukesh Singh as the Executive Chef at Mercure Kathmandu. With over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, specializing in pre-opening operations and culinary excellence, Chef Mukesh brings a wealth of expertise to the property’s diverse food and beverage offerings.

His career spans leadership roles at prestigious hospitality brands, including Accor, Wyndham, Radisson Hotel Group, ITC, Clarks, and Sarovar, where he played a key role in elevating culinary standards and operational efficiencies. Throughout his journey, he has been recognized for his innovative approach to menu curation, high guest satisfaction scores, and meticulous focus on food quality. His expertise extends to catering for high-profile events, including those attended by the President and Prime Minister of India.



In his new role at Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights, Chef Mukesh will lead the culinary team, overseeing operations across four dining outlets, in-room service, and expansive banqueting facilities. His passion for creativity, guest engagement, and rigorous adherence to food safety standards will further enhance the property’s reputation

as a premier dining destination in Kathmandu.

Speaking on his appointment, Chef Mukesh stated, “I am delighted to join Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights and lead its dynamic culinary team. My vision is to create an exceptional dining experience that celebrates both global flavours and Nepal’s rich culinary heritage. By focusing on fresh, locally sourced ingredients and innovative techniques, I aim to craft menus that surprise and delight our guests. I look forward to introducing thoughtfully curated dining concepts that elevate the gastronomic journey at Mercure, ensuring each meal is a memorable experience”

With a proven track record of success and a commitment to culinary excellence, Chef Mukesh is set to redefine gastronomic experiences at Mercure Kathmandu Sokedhara Heights, ensuring memorable dining moments for guests.

SATTE 2025: Global Tourism Leaders Unite to Shape Industry's Future



The 32nd edition of the South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) commenced in New Delhi, reinforcing India's position as a key player in the global tourism landscape. The prestigious event, held at Yashobhoomi, brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders under the theme "Tourism 2025: Fostering Global Collaboration for Mutual Growth."

The inaugural ceremony witnessed the presence of dignitaries such as Mr. **Omar Abdullah**,

Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir; Mr. **Rohan Khaunte**, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, IT and Printing & Stationery, Govt of Goa; Mr. **Umid Shadiev**, Hon'ble Minister of Tourism Uzbekistan; Mr. **Kandula Durgesh**, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Culture & Cinematography, Government of Andhra Pradesh; Mr. **Jakkaphon Tangsutthitham**, Hon'ble Vice Minister, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand; Mr. **Subhash Goyal**, Chairman- STIC Group; Mr. **Peter Hall**, President, IMEA, Informa

Markets, IMEA; Mr. **Yogesh Mudras**, Managing Director, Informa Markets in India and Ms. **Pallavi Mehra**, Sr Group Director- Informa Markets in India & Publisher- Travel Trends Today. The event underscored the importance of collaboration in driving tourism growth and innovation.

India's Expanding Tourism Horizon

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister of Tourism & Culture, Government of India said, "It's truly a remarkable moment as SATTE marks 32

years of bringing the travel and tourism community together and opening doors to new opportunities. Today's energy and enthusiasm at SATTE reflect this vibrant sector's incredible potential. We are committed to fostering new collaborations in the South Asia Pacific region, and SATTE plays a key role in driving this vision forward."

He further added, "India's tourism story is evolving, we are no longer just a destination but a growing tourism market. The future holds immense promise, especially with the rise of MICE tourism, which calls for robust infrastructure across the country. In recent years, we've seen a significant increase in hotels, and the number of aircraft is expected to triple. The government is fully aligned with this growth, supporting states in developing 40 new destinations and encouraging unique tourism experiences nationwide. With domestic trade on the rise and people's incomes growing, investments in tourism infrastructure will create a ripple effect across the economy. As we look ahead, with the sector projected to grow at a CAGR of 24%, I believe India's tourism landscape is set for a transformative journey. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to everyone participating in SATTE 2025, together, let's continue working towards a brighter future for tourism in India."

SATTE 2025: A Hub for Industry Collaboration

With over 2,000 exhibitors, participation from more than 50 countries,

and representation from 28 state tourism boards, SATTE 2025 continues to serve as the region's premier platform for industry networking, policy discussions, and business collaborations. This year, 'Atithi,' an exclusive buyer-seller meet in collaboration with the Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC), is once again a key highlight. The initiative will welcome 250 international buyers, offering them an immersive experience of India's tourism potential.

Another significant development at SATTE 2025 is the participation of the Indian Ports Authority, which is spotlighting the transformative Cruise Bharat Mission and the vast opportunities for cruise tourism along India's coastline.

Exhibitors include travel agents, tour operators, online travel platforms, airlines, hoteliers, and tourism boards. Key international destinations being showcased include Malaysia, Hong Kong, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Cambodia, Greece, Bhutan, Jamaica, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, Qatar, Mauritius, Fiji, St. Petersburg, Dubai, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Nepal, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Leading Indian states such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Odisha, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab are also at the forefront. The exhibition places a strong focus on core sectors such as homestays, luxury villas, adventure tourism, domestic travel, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), offering

businesses an opportunity to promote their brands, generate leads, and share industry insights.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, Informa Markets in India, said,

"SATTE 2025 marks a defining moment for the travel and tourism industry. With this milestone edition at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, SATTE continues to be 'Plus One'—always a step ahead in driving innovation and collaboration. India's travel market is set to reach \$125 billion by FY27, with the hospitality industry projected to grow to \$52 billion, reinforcing its economic significance. Transformative government initiatives—from expanded e-visas to cruise tourism under the Cruise Bharat Mission—are strengthening India's position as a global tourism powerhouse.

As the industry embraces sustainability and digitalization, SATTE remains at the forefront—nurturing partnerships, shaping future trends, and ensuring tourism's benefits extend to every part of the country. Engaging experiences such as Colours of SATTE, the SHAKTI Awards, and the SATTE Awards make this event not just a business enabler but a true celebration of the industry's vibrancy and potential," he added.

The opening day of SATTE 2025 featured a series of high-impact business sessions. The session on "India's MICE Market: Prospects & Potential," moderated by **Mugdha Sinha**, IAS, Director General, Tourism, Government of

India, explored the rapid expansion of India's MICE industry, valued at \$3.3 billion and expected to reach \$10.5 billion by 2030. Industry experts, including **Chander Mansharamani** (Alpcord Network Travel & Conferences), **KB Kachru** (Radisson Hotel Group), **Mohammad Ali** (Accor), Yogesh Mudras (Informa Markets – India), and Hyung Phil Chung (KINEXIN Convention Management), shared insights on the opportunities and challenges in this fast-growing sector.

Another key session, "Tourism Vision: The 2047 Impact," moderated by Aashish Gupta, Founder, Strategy Pluto & Consulting CEO – FAITH, examined how India's tourism industry is being envisioned for the country's 100th year of independence. Key stakeholders, including **Mugdha Sinha** (Director General, Tourism, Govt. of India), **Rajiv Mehra** (IATO), **Dr. Abhay Sinha** (SEPC), **Aalap Bansal** (KPMG), and **Arvind Singh** (Former Tourism Secretary, Govt. of India), provided insights into the long-term strategies shaping the future of global tourism.

State tourism development was a central focus in the session "State Leaders in Focus: Perspectives on Growth, Policies, and Partnerships," moderated by **Raj Singh**, Founder & Chairman, Antara Cruises. Goa Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte, Nagaland Tourism Minister Temjen Imna Along, and senior representatives from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, and Madhya Pradesh shared their

perspectives on leveraging regional attractions to boost visitor traffic and strengthen their positioning in the global tourism landscape.

Wedding tourism was another major area of discussion during the session "Unleashing the Wedding Bonanza for Destinations," moderated by Navneet Mendiratta, Senior Travel Journalist & VP, PR & Media at Think Strawberries. Industry leaders **Arun Srivastava** (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India), **Manuj Ralhan** (JECC & Novotel Jaipur), **Chetan Vohra** (Weddingline), **Prerana Saxena** (Theme Weavers), and **Vinayak Saboo** (Paradise Group India) analyzed trends shaping India's 5 lakh crore (\$67 billion) wedding tourism sector, which is expected to grow at a CAGR of 15-20%. The discussion highlighted the increasing demand for luxury services, digitalization, and sustainability, positioning wedding tourism as a significant contributor to India's travel economy.

The discussions at SATTE 2025 brought together key stakeholders to explore emerging trends, policy frameworks, and growth opportunities in the tourism sector. With dynamic panel discussions, exclusive networking opportunities, and a strong focus on innovation and collaboration, the event continues to set new benchmarks for the global travel and tourism industry.

As SATTE 2025 unfolds, it remains a cornerstone for shaping the future of tourism in South Asia and beyond.



Thailand showcases tourism diversity and potential at SATTE 2025

Thailand Showcases Vibrant Travel Experiences at SATTE 2025 to Attract Indian Tourists





Thailand is making a strong push to captivate Indian travellers with its rich cultural heritage, renowned hospitality, and exclusive travel packages at the South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) 2025. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is leveraging the event, taking place from February 19-21 at Yashobhoomi – India International Convention and Expo Centre, to highlight its diverse tourism offerings and strengthen its position in the Indian market.

As India's largest travel and tourism trade fair, SATTE 2025 is expected to attract over 35,000 visitors and 1,400 exhibitors. Thailand's presence at the event is prominent, with a 300-square-metre pavilion divided into three distinct zones: an information area, a business networking space, and an interactive

cultural demonstration section showcasing traditional Thai art and heritage. In collaboration with 50 Thai tourism businesses, the Thailand Stand aims to facilitate business-to-business (B2B) engagements and forge new partnerships.

Promoting Thailand as a Premier Destination

Ms. Pattaraanong Na Chiangmai, TAT Deputy Governor for International Marketing – Asia and South Pacific, underscored the significance of SATTE 2025 as a crucial platform for Thai tourism operators. "This event provides an opportunity to foster business relationships, introduce new travel products, and promote exclusive packages tailored to Indian tourists," she said. "It further cements Thailand's status as a premier destination under the globally recognised

'Amazing Thailand' brand, aligning with the 'Amazing Thailand Grand Tourism and Sports Year' initiative."

India: A Fast-Growing Market for Thai Tourism

India remains one of Thailand's fastest-growing tourism markets, with 2,129,149 Indian visitors recorded in 2024—a remarkable 30.74% increase from 2023. This surge is attributed to Thailand's visa exemption policy, which permits Indian travellers to stay for up to 60 days, along with robust air connectivity offering 2.93 million seats in 2024—nearing pre-pandemic levels.

With a target of 2.3 million Indian arrivals in 2025, TAT is intensifying its marketing efforts to cater to key traveller segments, including families, luxury leisure seekers, wedding and celebration groups, and golf tourism enthusiasts.

Tailored Campaigns for Indian Travellers

TAT has rolled out two flagship campaigns to enhance Thailand's appeal among Indian tourists. The 'Living it Up in Thailand' campaign focuses on cultural, culinary, and adventure experiences tailored to Indian millennials, with collaborations involving travel platforms such as Clear Trip and Akbar Holidays. Meanwhile, the 'Celebrations with Care and Inner Shine' initiative targets India's growing wedding and anniversary travel market, engaging wedding planners and event organisers with exclusive promotions and familiarisation trips.

Thailand's Top Destinations for Indian Tourists

Thailand continues to attract Indian travellers with its blend of scenic landscapes, vibrant nightlife, and world-class wellness retreats. Bangkok, Chon Buri, Phuket, Krabi, and Surat Thani remain favourite destinations, while emerging hotspots such as Ko Samui, Ko Tao, Ko Pha-ngan, Phang-nga, Rayong, and Chiang Rai are gaining popularity. Indian visitors are particularly drawn to beach experiences, Thai cuisine, nightlife, wellness retreats, and heritage tours. On average, Indian tourists spend 34,920 Baht per trip and stay for approximately 6.58 nights.

As Thailand strengthens its tourism ties with India, the country remains committed to delivering diverse and immersive experiences that cater to the evolving preferences of Indian travellers.

SATTE 2025: DAY 2, Paving the Future of Global Tourism

The second day of SATTE 2025 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, reaffirmed its role as a key platform for shaping the future of travel and tourism. Industry professionals, exhibitors, and thought leaders gathered to discuss emerging trends, foster strategic partnerships, and explore new business opportunities in the ever-evolving global tourism landscape.

India-Japan MoU Strengthens Tourism Ties

One of the most significant developments of the day was the signing of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) and its Japanese counterparts. This agreement aims to promote bilateral tourism, cultural exchanges, and travel opportunities, with a special focus on Okinawa. The initiative seeks to encourage Indian travelers to explore Japan while attracting more Japanese tourists to India, further strengthening the diplomatic and economic relationship between the two nations.

Business & Networking at 'Atithi'

The exclusive buyer-seller meet, 'Atithi,' organized in collaboration with the Service Export Promotion Council (SEPC), continued to serve as a vital platform for forging business relationships. This initiative connected international buyers with Indian tourism stakeholders, facilitating discussions that could lead to significant industry growth.

Expert Panels Address Industry Challenges & Innovations

The conference sessions offered deep insights into pressing industry challenges, emerging trends, and future market dynamics.

• "Routes Development:



Significance & Impact – Moderated by Sunil Kumar, President of the Travel Agents Association of India, this session examined how strategic air, sea, and land routes contribute to economic growth and tourism expansion. Industry experts discussed opportunities for route development beyond 2025.

• **"Anchoring Opportunities in Cruise & Port Tourism"** – Led by Vinod Zutshi, Former Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, this panel explored India's potential as a major cruise tourism hub, highlighting infrastructural enhancements and strategies to attract foreign tourists.

• **"Overcrowded & Overlooked: Balancing the Scales"** – Moderated by Sanjay Basu, Chairman of Far Horizon Tours, this session addressed the need for sustainable tourism, focusing on lesser-known destinations that hold untapped potential.

• **"India on the Move – Cracking the Code of Outbound Growth"**

– With outbound travel from India witnessing rapid growth, this discussion, moderated by Rajeev Nangia, COO of TRAC Representations India Pvt. Ltd., analyzed traveler preferences, key international markets, and strategies to boost outbound tourism.

• **"AI Revolution & Hyper-Connected Tourism – Are We Ready?"** – As artificial intelligence continues to transform the tourism sector, this session, moderated by Chirag Agrawal, Co-founder & COO of TravClan, explored AI-driven innovations that enhance customer experience and operational efficiency.

• **Fireside Chat: "From Viral to Vital: The Impact of Social Media on Destinations"** – Leading travel influencers shared insights on the growing power of digital platforms in destination marketing and how viral content can turn hidden gems into must-visit locations.

Destination Briefings & Award Recognition

SATTE 2025 also featured destination briefings for Rajasthan, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia, among others, highlighting the expanding tourism potential of these regions.

The **SATTE Awards 2025** celebrated excellence in travel and hospitality across 22 categories, recognizing outstanding contributions from hotels, tour operators, tourism boards, international cruise operators, and travel agencies. With 231 nominations from 187 companies—including 90+ new entrants—the awards underscored the industry's evolution. The **Shakti Awards**, an initiative by Informa Markets, honored the contributions of women leaders driving innovation in the travel and tourism sector. The winners were selected by a distinguished jury chaired by Arvind Singh, Former Tourism Secretary, Government of India,

alongside industry experts. Ernst & Young served as the process advisor, with Travel Trends Today as the official media partner.

A Global Stage for Travel & Tourism

With over 2,000 exhibitors, 40,000+ visitors, and participation from more than 50 countries, SATTE 2025 solidified its position as South Asia's premier travel and tourism exhibition. The event provided a hub for industry stakeholders to explore new business avenues, engage in knowledge-sharing, and drive future growth.

Exhibitors included travel agents, tour operators, airlines, hoteliers, and tourism boards, while key visitors ranged from travel professionals and wedding planners to corporate leaders and procurement heads. This year's edition prominently featured international destinations such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, Egypt, Saudi

Arabia, Greece, Japan, Uzbekistan, Mauritius, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan. Leading Indian states, including Gujarat, Rajasthan, Odisha, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab, also showcased their tourism potential.

Core segments such as homestays, adventure tourism, domestic travel, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) were at the forefront, providing a platform for industry leaders to promote their brands, generate leads, and exchange insights.

Looking Ahead

SATTE 2025 continues to play a pivotal role in redefining the travel and tourism landscape, fostering international collaboration, and driving industry innovation. As the global tourism sector evolves, SATTE remains a cornerstone event, bringing together stakeholders to shape the future of travel and hospitality.

OTOAI & OIFA MOU Signing Ceremony 2025

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) and Okinawa-India Friendship Association Sign MOU to Strengthen Tourism Collaboration

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) and the Okinawa-India Friendship Association (OIFA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to promote tourism cooperation between India and Okinawa, Japan. The signing ceremony took place at Le Meridien, Delhi, marking a significant step toward fostering travel



exchange and strengthening bilateral tourism ties.

The MOU was signed by Mr. Shравan Bhalla, Vice President, OTOAI, and

Mr. Moritake Tomikawa, Chairman, OIFA. The event was graced by a distinguished delegation from Okinawa, including Mr. Yoshimi

Nagahama, Mayor of Onna Municipality (Okinawa Onna Village), Ms. Rumiko Miyazaki from the Onna Village Tourism Association, and Ms. Mayumi Yamashiro from Kinki Nippon Tourist Okinawa.

Representing OTOAI, Mr. Siddharth Khanna, General Secretary, Ms. Monia Kapoor, Joint Secretary, and Mr. Vineet Gopal, Executive Board Member, was also in attendance.

Mr. Sanjeev Bhandari from United Travels Service International, New Delhi was coordinating the event.

The MOU signifies a commitment to mutual growth, including the exchange of tourism information, data sharing, promotional support, and efforts to remove barriers that hinder travel between India and Okinawa.

Goa Tourism Dazzles at SATTE 2025, Showcasing Cultural Heritage, Adventure, and Sustainable Travel



Goa Tourism made a grand impression at South Asia's Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) 2025, held at Yashobhoomi (IICC), New Delhi. The Goa Pavilion was inaugurated with great fervor by Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Government of Goa, Shri Rohan A. Khaunte, who led the state delegation. Accompanying him were Secretary Tourism, Government of Goa, Shri Sanjeev Ahuja, IAS; Shri Shawn

Mendes, OSD to the Tourism Minister; Shri Deepak Narvekar, Deputy General Manager (Marketing), GTDC; Shri Jayesh Kankonkar, Assistant Director of Tourism; and Smt Chitra Vengurlekar, Assistant Tourist Officer.

A Grand Inauguration

The Goa Pavilion stood out as a vibrant showcase of the state's diverse tourism offerings, highlighting

its commitment to responsible and regenerative tourism. Speaking at the inauguration, Shri Rohan A. Khaunte stated, "Goa has always been at the forefront of India's tourism landscape. At SATTE 2025, we are reinforcing our vision of responsible and regenerative tourism, emphasizing sustainable and experiential travel that benefits both visitors and local communities."

The pavilion featured interactive

exhibits, immersive cultural displays, and informative sessions that provided visitors with insights into Goa's evolving tourism landscape. Designed to engage industry stakeholders, it highlighted the state's initiatives in cultural heritage, adventure, eco-tourism, and sustainable travel experiences.

Thought-Provoking Panel Discussion

One of the key highlights of Goa's participation at SATTE 2025 was the panel discussion featuring Shri Rohan A. Khaunte alongside global tourism leaders. The session included prominent figures such as Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Uzbekistan, Shri Umid Shadieiev; Hon'ble Vice Minister, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand, Shri Jakkaphon Tangsutthitham; and Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Government of Nagaland, Shri Temjen Imna Along.

The discussion centered around emerging trends in global tourism, with a special focus on sustainable and regenerative tourism. Shri Rohan A. Khaunte shared valuable insights on Goa's journey towards responsible tourism, emphasizing the importance of cultural preservation in enhancing visitor experiences. The session was well received by industry leaders and stakeholders, further cementing Goa's reputation as a leader in sustainable tourism practices.

Strategic Collaborations and Networking

During SATTE 2025, Shri Rohan A. Khaunte held a high-level meeting with Uzbekistan's Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Shri Umid Shadieiev, exploring collaboration opportunities between Goa and Uzbekistan. This strategic discussion aimed at strengthening tourism ties and promoting cross-cultural exchanges.

Additionally, the Goa delegation engaged in business-to-business (B2B) meetings with top industry officials and media representatives. These interactions provided a platform to discuss Goa's latest tourism initiatives,

expand international partnerships, and enhance visibility for the state's diverse travel experiences.

Emphasis on Regenerative Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Goa Tourism's presence at SATTE 2025 reaffirmed its commitment to regenerative tourism, aiming to create immersive travel experiences while preserving the state's rich cultural and natural heritage. The pavilion highlighted key initiatives such as:

- **Regenerative Tourism:** Focused on minimizing environmental impact, supporting local communities, and ensuring sustainable visitor experiences.
- **Cultural Heritage & Festivals:** Showcasing Goa's unique blend of Indian and Portuguese influences, traditional art forms, and vibrant festivals.
- **Adventure and Eco-Tourism:** Promoting adventure sports, trekking, water activities, and eco-tourism to attract experiential travelers.
- **Sustainable Travel Experiences:** Encouraging responsible tourism practices that contribute positively to local culture and heritage.

Business Opportunities and Industry Engagement

The Goa Pavilion served as a crucial networking hub at SATTE 2025, bringing together travel agents, tour operators, and international buyers. The pavilion facilitated interactive sessions and strategic partnerships, positioning Goa as a premier destination for experiential and responsible tourism.

With growing global interest in sustainable travel, Goa's emphasis

on experiential and cultural tourism resonated strongly with industry stakeholders. The state's proactive approach to tourism development has further strengthened its appeal as a top destination for conscious travelers.

Media Presence and Public Engagement

Shri Rohan A. Khaunte actively engaged with media representatives, highlighting Goa's strategic vision for the future. His discussions focused on

The Goa Pavilion stood out as a vibrant showcase of the state's diverse tourism offerings, highlighting its commitment to responsible and regenerative tourism. Speaking at the inauguration, Shri Rohan A. Khaunte stated, "Goa has always been at the forefront of India's tourism landscape."

Goa's innovative tourism strategies, commitment to sustainability, and efforts to enhance visitor experiences while supporting local communities.

The event garnered significant media attention, reinforcing Goa's image as a leader in responsible tourism. Coverage of Goa's participation at SATTE 2025 underscored its evolving tourism landscape and dedication to sustainable travel.

Goa Tourism's Vision for the Future

Recognized as one of India's most sought-after travel destinations, Goa continues to set new benchmarks in the tourism sector. The state's strong presence at SATTE 2025 reaffirmed its commitment to responsible tourism, cultural preservation, and sustainable practices.

By showcasing its rich heritage, adventure tourism prospects, and regenerative tourism initiatives, Goa is redefining its tourism narrative. With a firm focus on sustainability and experiential travel, the state is poised for continued growth, offering visitors unique and meaningful travel experiences while preserving its natural and cultural treasures.

Türkiye Makes Powerful Impact on Opening Day of SATTE 2025, Showcasing Record Tourism Growth



The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye and the Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA) attach great importance to the Indian market and marked a commanding presence on the inaugural day of SATTE 2025, South Asia's premier travel and tourism exhibition. The event is being held at the state-of-the-art Yashobhoomi (India International Convention and Expo Centre) in New Delhi.

H.E. Mr. Firat Sunel, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to India, attended the opening ceremony and welcomed visitors at the GoTürkiye Pavilion, highlighting the strong tourism ties between the two nations. Turkish Delegation led by **Ms. Basak Onsal Demir, Counsellor for Culture and Tourism Affairs at the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye**, accompanied by the **Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA)**

representatives **Ms Cagla Yontem (MICE Director-Weddings and Incentives)** and **Mr. Dogucan Lale (Exhibition Assistant Manager)** showcased the country's remarkable tourism achievements and diverse offerings through an innovative display at Booth B54, featuring around 20 companies.

The timing of Türkiye's participation at SATTE 2025 is particularly significant, following a stellar performance in 2024 that saw the country welcome 62.2 million international visitors, marking a 9.8% year-on-year growth. The Indian market emerged as a particularly strong growth driver, with visitor numbers surging by 20.7% compared to 2023, underlining the increasing appeal of Turkish destinations among Indian travellers.

Speaking on the occasion, **H.E. Mr. Firat Sunel** said, *"India represents one of our most dynamic and fastest-growing source markets. Our tourism revenue reached a historic high of 61.1 billion USD in 2024, with an impressive average visitor spend of USD 972. Through our presence at SATTE 2025, we aim to build on this momentum and showcase Türkiye's unique blend of historical heritage, modern attractions, and authentic experiences that resonate deeply with Indian travellers. The remarkable growth in Indian visitors is a testament to our strategic initiatives, including enhanced air connectivity between major Indian cities and Turkish destinations, specialised experiences catering to Indian preferences, and strong support for wedding planners and MICE organisers."*

The Turkish pavilion has attracted significant attention from travel trade professionals, featuring immersive displays highlighting popular wedding destinations including Istanbul, Antalya, and Cappadocia, along with comprehensive MICE facilities across major cities. The focus on luxury tourism and bespoke travel experiences has particularly resonated with Indian visitors, reflecting the growing sophistication of the Indian outbound travel market.

Building on the strong start, the Turkish delegation will continue to engage with travel professionals through personalised meetings and presentations until February 21st at Booth B54. These interactions are expected to further strengthen the tourism ties between Türkiye and India, contributing to the ambitious growth trajectory of Turkish tourism in 2025.

Travel professionals and media representatives are invited to visit the Turkish pavilion to explore partnership opportunities and discover the latest tourism offerings that have positioned Türkiye among the world's top five most visited destinations.

TBO Tek Limited Unveils TravelBytes: A Game-Changing News App for Travel Agents



In a strategic move to enhance industry knowledge and digital engagement, TBO Tek Limited, a global leader in travel distribution, has launched TravelBytes, an exclusive news app tailored for travel agents. Developed under TBO Academy, the platform aims to deliver real-time updates, expert insights, and in-depth industry reports, helping travel professionals stay ahead of the curve.

Vidhu Lamba, Vice President of TBO Academy, highlighted the app's significance, stating, "TravelBytes is more than just a news app; it's a knowledge hub for travel agents. With real-time and

curated news updates, we empower our partners with the latest trends and developments at their fingertips."

TBO Tek Limited, known for driving digital transformation in the travel sector, sees TravelBytes as a natural extension of its commitment to empowering travel professionals. "TBO has always been at the forefront of innovation. TravelBytes is a testament to

our dedication to equipping travel agents with relevant, timely information, enabling them to navigate the evolving industry landscape," Lamba added.

Available on Android and iOS, the app delivers curated travel content, including market insights, policy updates, and expert commentary. It also integrates short- and long-form video content, ensuring agents have access

to dynamic and engaging information on the go.

With TravelBytes now live for download, TBO Tek Limited continues its mission to support and educate travel professionals worldwide, reinforcing its position as a digital innovator in the travel industry.

The TBO platform connects around 185K Buyers across more than 150 countries with over one million Suppliers. TBO simplifies the business of travel for suppliers such as hotels, airlines, car rentals, transfers, cruises, insurance, rail and others, and retail buyers such as travel agencies and independent travel advisors; and enterprise buyers that include tour operators, travel management companies, online travel companies, super-apps and loyalty apps through their two-sided technology platform that enables Suppliers and Buyers to transact seamlessly with each other. TBO's platform allows the large and fragmented base of Suppliers to display and market inventory to, and set prices for, the large and fragmented global Buyer base. For Buyers, the platform is an integrated, multi-currency and multi-lingual one-stop solution that helps them discover and book travel for destinations worldwide, across various travel segments such as leisure, corporate and religious travel.

With TravelBytes now live for download, TBO Tek Limited continues its mission to support and educate travel professionals worldwide, reinforcing its position as a digital innovator in the travel industry.

Madhya Pradesh's Tourism Sector: A Hotspot for Investment and Growth

Madhya Pradesh: A Rising Star in Global Tourism Investment



Tourism: A Cornerstone of India's Economic Growth

Union Tourism Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat underscored tourism's crucial role in India's economic development. He noted that Prime Minister Modi has identified three major sectors—Technology, Textiles, and Tourism—as pivotal to India's future growth. By 2047, tourism is expected to contribute more than 10% to the nation's GDP. With India's middle-class spending power growing,

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Madhya Pradesh is fast becoming one of India's most promising destinations for tourism investment. The state, with its vast potential and a growing commitment to developing world-class tourism infrastructure, is setting new benchmarks in creating an investor-friendly environment while offering unique experiences for travelers.

In recent remarks during the Tourism Summit at the Global Investors Summit (GIS), Chief Minister Dr. Yadav emphasized the state's ongoing efforts to build and expand its tourism infrastructure. "The future of the Global Investors Summit will be focused on tourism," he remarked, highlighting the increasing importance of this sector in the state's growth. Dr. Yadav further stated that regular air services have been launched to improve connectivity and instill confidence among tourists. In a significant gesture of inclusivity,

the state also offers free ambulance services for Ayushman Card holders, ensuring seamless travel experiences for all.

A Hub for Wildlife and Environmental Conservation

Madhya Pradesh stands as a leader in wildlife tourism, offering a diverse array of experiences that blend natural beauty with environmental conservation. The state's unique ability to integrate wildlife and human settlements offers travelers rare opportunities to witness nature in harmony. Notably, cheetahs are often seen near villages in Sheopur, and even tigers have been spotted in the urban areas of Bhopal, demonstrating a rare balance between nature and urban life. This commitment to preserving wildlife has earned Madhya Pradesh the title of "Vulture State," and the state continues to expand its tiger reserves, further cementing its position as a prime wildlife tourism destination.

bolstered by recent tax relief measures, domestic tourism is thriving. As travel demand surges, Madhya Pradesh is strategically positioned to capture a significant share of this expanding sector.

Madhya Pradesh: A Prime Investment Destination

Madhya Pradesh's appeal as an investment hub in the tourism sector is undeniable. Shri Shekhawat, addressing global investors, assured them that the state is a gateway to vast tourism opportunities. The investor-friendly environment, coupled with policies designed to promote growth, ensures that Madhya Pradesh remains a compelling destination for tourism investments. The state's supportive infrastructure, including robust road, rail, and air connectivity, along with its Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives, further strengthens its position as an attractive investment destination.

Minister for Tourism, Culture, and Religious Trust & Endowments, Shri Dharmendra Bhav Singh Lodhi, echoed this sentiment, adding that Madhya Pradesh has also become a hotspot for film production, drawing blockbuster movies and solidifying its reputation as a cinematic destination.

Film Industry and Tourism: A Symbiotic Relationship

Actor Shri Pankaj Tripathi, a brand ambassador for Madhya Pradesh tourism, shared his deep personal connection to the state. “I played the role of a guide in a film shot here nearly 20 years ago, and I have been in love with Madhya Pradesh ever since,” he said. Encouraging domestic travelers, Tripathi emphasized that one doesn’t need to go abroad to experience some of the most stunning destinations in the world—Madhya Pradesh has it all.

The state has also become a hotspot for film production, offering filmmakers diverse, picturesque locations that have been featured in numerous films. Tripathi highlighted how the authenticity of locations, such as the ancient town of Chanderi, adds realism and depth to the films, ultimately benefiting both the film industry and the local economy. As films boost tourism, these locations become more prominent, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.

Tourism Infrastructure Expansion and Investment Opportunities

Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of Tourism, Culture, and Religious Endowments, provided insights into the state’s ambitious tourism projects and the incentives available for investors under the Tourism Policy 2025 and the Film Tourism Policy 2025.

Madhya Pradesh’s investment appeal is enhanced by several factors:

- A streamlined single-window approval system for ease of business
- Available land parcels for tourism projects
- Strong connectivity via road, rail, and air
- Robust Public-Private Partnership

(PPP) initiatives

At GIS 2025, the state secured investment proposals exceeding 4,468 crore in the tourism and hospitality sector. Key investment areas include:

- Cruise tourism
- Film production studios
- Luxury hotels and resorts
- Water parks and golf courses
- Ultra-mega tourism projects

Noteworthy Investment Proposals:

- **Ayodhya Cruise Lines** – ₹70 crore for cruise tourism projects
- **Knowledge Marine & Engineering Works Ltd.** – ₹100 crore for houseboats and water sports
- **Jehan Numa Group of Hotels** – ₹18 crore for a premium hotel in Mandu
- **Amazon Prime, Hollywood Projects, Zee5** – ₹300 crore in film production investments
- **Treasure Group** – ₹600 crore for luxury resorts and golf courses
- **Indian Hotels Company Ltd.** – ₹1,960 crore for hospitality units across national parks
- **ITC Hotels Pvt. Ltd.** – ₹250 crore for heritage hotel development
- **Imagica World Entertainment Ltd.** – ₹200 crore for a water park near Indore

Strategic MoUs Signed at GIS 2025

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board also signed several key Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to drive sustainable tourism development. These included partnerships focused on:

- Women’s safety
- Adventure tourism
- Cultural preservation
- Water tourism

Notable MoUs include:

- **MakeMyTrip** – Construction of ‘Pink Toilets’ at Orchha, providing employment to local women
- **IndiaHikes** – New trekking routes and adventure tourism campaigns
- **Alchemy Cruise Lines** – Launching a cruise service along the Narmada River
- **UN Women** – Gender equality awareness at major tourist destinations

Shaping the Future of Madhya Pradesh’s Tourism

At GIS 2025, a high-profile panel discussion explored the future of Madhya Pradesh’s tourism sector. Among the key participants were:

- Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of Tourism
- Dr. Ilayaraja T, MD of MP State Tourism Development Corporation
- Padma Shri K.K. Mohammed, Renowned Historian
- Padma Shri Ajit Bajaj, President, Adventure Tour Operators Association of India
- Actor Shri Pankaj Tripathi
- Shri Rohit Khosla, Executive VP, Indian Hotels Company Ltd.

The panel highlighted the state’s long-term vision for tourism, focusing on low-volume, high-value tourism, sustainable travel practices, and authentic rural experiences.

A Future-Ready, Sustainable Tourism Model

Madhya Pradesh’s tourism policy prioritizes sustainable practices, including the development of tranquil, rejuvenating destinations and rural homestays. The state is committed to creating a future-ready tourism model, supported by simplified investor policies like the Ease of Doing Films (EODF) initiative and single-window clearance.

With its rich cultural heritage, expanding tourism infrastructure, and unwavering government support, Madhya Pradesh is poised to become a global tourism powerhouse. Whether you are an investor, a traveler, or a filmmaker, Madhya Pradesh offers endless possibilities for exploration and growth.

As Padma Shri Historian Shri K.K. Mohammed aptly put it, “I am Surma Bhopali,” capturing the essence of Bhopal’s unique culture and history. The state’s untapped potential, from its UNESCO-listed heritage sites to its rich wildlife reserves, makes Madhya Pradesh a top destination for those seeking authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences.



Chiva-Som

Celebrates Three Decades
of Wellness
with an Array of
Activities in April

Renowned wellness brand hosts celebratory dinners, multi-sensory experiences and cultural connections throughout April at Chiva-Som Hua Hin



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Throughout April, *Chiva-Som*, the acclaimed wellness brand that has led the field in holistic wellness since opening in Thailand in 1995, is marking its 30th anniversary with a curated array of wellbeing immersions and celebrations. Blending the practices found at its flagship in Hua Hin Thailand and its latest destination, Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som in Qatar, activities will immerse guests in the warm hospitality and leading wellness offerings Chiva-Som has been renowned for over the past three decades.

As part of the year-long anniversary celebrations, April's complimentary programme for guests will see a special dinner combining the approaches of Chiva-Som Hua Hin and Zual Wellness Resort, multi-sensory classes with artist Notep, and an array of visiting consultants and cultural connections.

30th Anniversary Dinner – Saturday 19th April

A highlight of the celebrations, Chiva-Som Hua Hin will host a special 30th Anniversary Dinner on Saturday the 19th of April at its tranquil beachside restaurant, Taste of Siam. Chiva-Som Hua Hin's Executive Chef Sinchai and Executive Chef Mayssam Abdulkhalek of Zual Wellness Resort will team up to present a delectable array of dishes. The menu will combine the cuisine of both resorts, from the Thai and international gastronomy of the Hua Hin flagship to Middle Eastern cuisine rooted in Zual Wellness Resort's Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine (TAIM) ethos.

Immersing guests in local culture as well as its sustainability and community outreach initiatives, activities on the 19th of April will encompass tree planting at the resort, the Chiva-Som exhibition, and classic Khon masked



theatre performances during dinner. Students who have been supported by Chiva-Som in their learning journey will share the culture and art of classical Thai and Khon performance, while a special draw will offer guests the opportunity to win exclusive Chiva-Som Hua Hin and Zual Wellness Resort prizes.



Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som at Chiva-Som Hua Hin

Celebrations will see the family wellness and Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine (TAIM) principles of Zulal Wellness Resort, Chiva-Som’s second destination and the first resort in the world to offer dedicated family wellness retreats and programmes, brought to Hua Hin.

Guests embarking on a retreat during the month of April can further deepen their family wellness through a complimentary online consultation with Zulal Wellness Resort’s Health & Wellness Advisor. Offering tailored, in-depth insights into healthy habits and approaches for the entire family, consultations aim to encourage all ages to embrace a culture of wellbeing and healthy living.

On the 16th and 17th of April, Zulal Wellness Resort’s Executive Chef Mayssam will present a sumptuous TAIM inspired wellness cuisine menu, featuring wild mushroom soup; TAIM chickpeas garden; and pumpkin texture at Chiva-Som Hua Hin’s revered formal fine dining restaurant, The Emerald Room.

Ammar Samad, General Manager of Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som, comments, “I’m delighted Zulal Wellness Resort is joining Chiva-Som’s celebrations of its exceptional three decades of leading wellness journeys. As Chiva-Som’s first destination outside of Thailand, we’re thrilled to be bringing our resort’s TAIM philosophy and dedicated family wellness expertise to esteemed guests at the Hua Hin flagship.”

“Embracing individual wellness alongside that of the community and planet has always been at the heart of Chiva-Som and at Zulal Wellness Resort, and we’re honoured to be a part of its inspired journey to showcase how living well can transform lives.”

Breath, Sound and The Sea with Esteemed Artist Notep – 22nd to 25th April

Chiva-Som Hua Hin welcomes Notep—a multifaceted artist,

musician and environmentalist—for an immersive journey of self-discovery and rejuvenation. This transformative activity weaves together the sanctuary of the resort with the power of breath, sound, and a deep connection to the sea, inviting guests to embrace the wisdom of the ocean and flow with its rhythms.

Rooted in Chiva-Som’s and Notep’s shared philosophy of blending traditional and modern practices, this exclusive multi-sensory experience integrates sound healing, meditation, breathwork, and creative workshops — guiding guests toward a deeper connection with themselves, nature, and the world around them.

Throughout April

On the 13th of April, Chiva-Som Hua Hin will bring the charm of Songkran, Thailand’s traditional New Year celebration, to guests with a colourful parade and special BBQ dinner menu at its Taste of Siam restaurant overlooking the beach.

Throughout April, esteemed visiting consultants Jill Banwell and Masa Sugiyama will host a selection of complimentary wellness sessions, further elevating guests’ wellbeing journeys. Renowned holistic wellness expert and founder of the pioneering Masa Methode®, Masa Sugiyama will lead weekly classes on Anti-Ageing Face & Neck Sculpting Exercises and Facial Shaping with Posture Correction. Acclaimed healing specialist Jill Banwell will lead a twice-weekly Chakra Balancing Meditation and weekly class guiding guests on The Power of Positive Affirmations.

Supporting mind-muscle connection whilst improving movement quality by addressing muscular imbalances, Chiva-Som’s physiotherapy experts will lead complimentary Neuromuscular Exercise Classes, each Sunday throughout April, supporting guests to improve flexibility, muscle strength and joint stabilisation.

Helping guests deepen relaxation, reduce stress and connect with their inner selves, on 14 April the resort’s expert holistic therapist will offer a

complimentary Tibetan Bowls Sound Bath.

Elevating guests’ understanding of hormonal and gender lifecycles, alongside how wellness habits can support an individual’s wellbeing and hormonal balance, Chiva-Som’s Dr Joe M.D will lead complimentary Men’s and Women’s Health talks on the 17th of April.

A class on adopting ‘micro-habits’ with the resort’s Naturopath Doctor, Patience Sangwa, on the 26th of April is aimed at busy Gen Zillennials and will guide guests on creating small yet practical, sustainable and impactful changes to their daily lives to yield significant wellbeing benefits.

On the celebrations, Vaipanya Kongkwanyuen, General Manager, Chiva-Som Hua Hin comments, “April will be a true highlight of the year of anniversary celebrations at Chiva-Som Hua Hin. Throughout our three decades, Chiva-Som has stayed true to our core philosophy of holistic wellbeing, while being consistently committed to innovation and evolution to truly support individuals, community and planet. We’re delighted to welcome guests, both returning and new, to join us for this special celebration.”

Over the past three decades, Chiva-Som Hua Hin has continually evolved its specialised retreats, programmes and treatments to support guests in reaching optimal health, while tackling life-disrupting health issues. As the resort celebrates its 30-year anniversary, it continues to look to the future, launching new programmes and retreats, ensuring that the best in wellness is still yet to come.

Chiva-Som’s Anniversary Month Offer

This April, in celebration of our birthday month, we’re offering something truly special: Stay on a three-night retreat and pay for only 2 nights. Share the gifts of our birthday – for a retreat stay - on this unique and special occasion. Start from THB 62,000++ per person, based on two sharing an Ocean Room.

Hyatt Centric

to Expand Across Asia Pacific with New Hotels by 2028



H Hyatt Centric is set to significantly broaden its footprint across Asia Pacific, with plans to launch over 35 new hotels globally by the end of 2028. This expansion will increase the brand's portfolio by 50 percent, bringing the total number of Hyatt Centric properties worldwide to over 100 by 2029. A major focus will be on strengthening its presence in the Asia Pacific region, where the brand aims to boost its footprint by more than 75 percent in the next three years.

In 2024, Hyatt Centric experienced a surge in global growth, opening new properties in some of the world's most dynamic cities, including Cairo, Shanghai, San José, Santo Domingo, and more. These openings align with the brand's strategy of offering vibrant, culturally immersive hotels that place guests in the heart of bustling city centers and cultural hubs.

"As part of our strategic brand realignment, the Hyatt Centric brand complements our Classics Portfolio,

which features captivating brands offering timeless style and unparalleled service in some of the world's most-traveled destinations," said Emily Wright, Vice President and Global Brand Leader for Hyatt's Classics & Essentials Portfolios. "The brand's expansion reflects the growing demand, especially from Millennial and Gen Z travelers, for contemporary accommodations with unique designs, sophisticated furnishings, and social spaces."

Expanding Horizons: New Hotels and Key Openings

Each Hyatt Centric hotel is uniquely tailored to its location, reflecting the culture, art, and attractions of the area through playful and eclectic design. With several exciting openings on the horizon, the brand will continue to build on its recent growth, offering guests even more opportunities to explore new destinations.

Notable upcoming Hyatt Centric properties in Asia Pacific include:

- **Hyatt Centric Bengaluru Airport** (expected 2026): This 166-room hotel will be conveniently located near Bengaluru International Airport.
 - **Hyatt Centric Electronic City Bangalore** (expected 2026): Set in the heart of India's tech hub, this hotel will cater to the region's growing business and leisure demand.
 - **Hyatt Centric East Taipei** (expected 2026): The first Hyatt Centric in Taiwan, this hotel will sit in Taipei's cultural center, blending modern comfort with local flair.
 - **Hyatt Centric Shanghai Jinqiao** (expected 2026): Featuring 224 rooms, this property will be inspired by the nearby Pudong Football Stadium.
 - **Hyatt Centric TODTOWN Shanghai** (expected 2026): Part of a mixed-use development in Shanghai, this hotel will offer both luxury and accessibility.
 - **Hyatt Centric Tianxin Changsha** (expected 2026): With stunning views of the Xiangjiang River, this hotel will debut in Hunan province's capital.
 - **Hyatt Centric Vrindavan** (expected 2026): Set in a city renowned for its spiritual and architectural significance, this hotel will expand Hyatt Centric's presence in northern India.
 - **Hyatt Centric The Ring Chengdu** (expected 2025): Located in downtown Chengdu, this hotel will offer modern accommodations inspired by the area's industrial history.
 - **Hyatt Centric Sapporo** (expected 2026): This will be the first Hyatt Centric hotel in Hokkaido, located near Odori Park, with rooms offering panoramic views of the city.
- In the **Middle East**, Hyatt Centric is also making waves, with the debut of its brand in Saudi Arabia:
- **Hyatt Centric Madinah KEC** (expected 2028): This hotel will feature 130 rooms and suites, designed with elements that celebrate the local culture, providing travelers with a comfortable base for exploring the city.
- With these new openings, Hyatt Centric continues to solidify its position as a go-to brand for travelers seeking vibrant, culturally rich experiences in some of the world's most exciting destinations.

IHCL Launches 103-Key Gateway and 33-Key SeleQtions Hotel in Diu

Prime Minister Modi Marks the **Grand Opening of Two New IHCL Hotels in Diu**



Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), India's largest hospitality company, today forayed in Diu with a multi-brand presence launching two hotels inaugurated by **Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri. Narendra Modi** in the august presence of **Shri Praful Patel, Hon'ble Administrator, UTs of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep** during a public function at Sayli Stadium, Silvassa. The two greenfield hotel projects are located in proximity to Diu Fort and will be operated under IHCL's **SeleQtions** and **Gateway** brands.

Mr. Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, IHCL, said, "Today is a historic day, as IHCL in collaboration with Daman & Diu Administration is pioneering tourism in Diu with the launch of two hotels. The government has taken significant strides in the infrastructure development of Diu to unlock the potential of the destination. I would like to thank **Hon'ble Prime**



Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji for his vision to showcase India's hidden treasures and for recognising the role of **Travel & Tourism** in enabling economic growth and employment generation for the region."

Perched along a breathtaking coastline, the 33 key **The Fort House, Diu- IHCL SeleQtions** stands as a tribute to Diu's historic charm. Its spacious rooms and tasteful suites overlook the Arabian Sea. The dining

spaces include a multicuisine restaurant, *Pallete* and *The Hub* bar with additional outdoor seating offering views of the horizon. Overlooking Jalandhar Beach, the 103 key **Gateway Diu** is a contemporary coastal retreat blending modern comforts with the city's rich heritage. Embark on a global epicurean expedition at *The Earth Pavilion* and *Hi-Tide* bar. Unwind at the swimming pool or rejuvenate at the spa with 3 treatment rooms. The hotels will offer well-equipped and exclusive event space for celebrations and gatherings as well as a state-of-the-art gym, a serene spa and curated itineraries that take you from sun-kissed shores to centuries-old forts and unique dining experiences.

In addition to these **2** hotels, **IHCL** operates **Ginger Diu, Jalandhar Beach** and in the coming year will introduce a restaurant housed in **Panikotha Fort** showcasing vegetarian delicacies of the region.

The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) and its subsidiaries bring together a group of brands and businesses that offer a fusion of warm Indian hospitality and world-class service. These include **Taj** – the iconic brand for the most discerning travellers and ranked as **World's Strongest Hotel Brand 2024 and India's Strongest Brand 2024** as per *Brand Finance*; **SeleQtions**, a named collection of hotels; **Tree of Life**, private escapes in tranquil settings; **Vivanta**, sophisticated upscale hotels; **Gateway**, full-service hotels designed to be your gateway to exceptional destinations and **Ginger**, which is revolutionising the lean luxe segment.

Incorporated by the founder of the Tata Group, **Jamsetji Tata**, the Company opened its first hotel - *The Taj Mahal Palace*, in Bombay in 1903. IHCL has a portfolio of **368** hotels including **128** under development globally across 4 continents, 14 countries and in over 150+ locations. **The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL)** is India's largest hospitality company by market capitalization. It is listed on the BSE and NSE.

IHCL Signs New Gateway and Ginger Hotels in Ludhiana: Expanding Its Footprint in Punjab



Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), India's largest hospitality company, today announced the signing of a **Gateway** and a **Ginger** hotel in **Ludhiana**. These greenfield projects will be part of a mixed-use development.

Ms. Suma Venkatesh, Executive

Vice President, Real Estate & Development, IHCL, stated, "Ludhiana's recognition under the Smart City Mission has spurred significant infrastructure development leading to a surge in business travel and tourism. The signing of Gateway and Ginger hotels is in line with IHCL's

strategy of building its presence in emerging markets. We are delighted to partner with **Hampton Sky Realty Ltd.** and contribute to the city's growth story."

The **110-key Gateway Ludhiana**, embodying the spirit of the city will offer immersive experiences. Guests can indulge in the culinary delights at the all-day-diner and the bar. Featuring a range of premium amenities including a gym, swimming pool, the hotel will also house a 5,000 sq. ft. ballroom designed to host events and gatherings. The **100-key Ginger Ludhiana** will include the brand's signature all-day dining, **Qmin**, along with a bar, state-of-the-art gym, and a 1,000 sq. ft. banquet hall, making it ideal for social and business events.

Mr. Sanjeev Arora, Chairman & Managing Director and Mr. Kavya Arora, Whole Time Director, Hampton Sky Realty Ltd. said, "We are delighted to partner with IHCL, India's largest hospitality company, for these landmark projects in Ludhiana. These hotels will play a key role in showcasing Punjab."

Ludhiana, a major economic hub in Punjab, blends tradition with modernity. Known for its manufacturing and export industries, this vibrant city offers diverse experiences for every visitor.

With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have **5** hotels in **Punjab** including **4** under development.

About Hampton Sky Realty Limited
Hampton Sky Realty Limited (HSRL) formerly known as Ritesh Properties and Industries Ltd (RPIL) is a leading Indian company with primary business operations in the real estate sector, development of commercial, industrial, housing, retail, hospitality and medical projects.



The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa Celebrates 25 Years of Excellence



The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa, a distinguished luxury destination in the heart of New Delhi, marks a remarkable milestone this year—celebrating 25 years of service and excellence. Since opening its doors to guests in 2000, the hotel has evolved into a symbol of sophistication, style, and unparalleled hospitality.

Affectionately known as *THE MET*, this 5-star deluxe property has undergone significant transformations over the years, blending



modern design with exceptional service. Known for its minimalist, urban aesthetic, the hotel has created an inviting atmosphere where guests can indulge in both comfort and luxury. With its seamless fusion of contemporary style and thoughtful

service, *THE MET* has earned accolades from prestigious platforms including Haute Grandeur Global Awards, World Luxury Hotel Awards, International Hotel Awards, and leading travel sites like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, and Expedia.

Reflecting on the hotel's journey, **Director Vipul Gupta** expressed pride and gratitude, saying, *"This is an exciting year for THE MET as we celebrate our rich history and look forward to an even brighter future. We are kicking off our anniversary with a series of celebratory offers and packages. This achievement is a testament to the hard work of our dedicated team and the loyalty of our guests, to whom we owe our success."*

The hotel has become synonymous with the warmth and charm of hospitality since its inception, and to commemorate its 25 years of success, *THE MET* is offering exclusive promotions. From special

room packages to dining offers and rejuvenating spa treatments, guests are invited to enjoy unique experiences at exceptional prices. These celebrations promise to elevate the *THE MET* experience, making it the perfect time for both new and returning guests to indulge in the hotel's renowned services.

Looking ahead, *THE MET* plans to continue expanding its offerings. With its signature fine-dining restaurant, Sakura, the luxurious Craft House lifestyle store, and the indulgent neoVeda Spa, the hotel aims to enhance its services and introduce new experiences to a wider audience.

As *THE MET* celebrates this momentous occasion, it extends heartfelt thanks to its guests for their continued support, loyalty, and trust in making it their preferred hotel in New Delhi. The journey continues, with an unwavering commitment to excellence and exceptional guest experiences.



Sterling Rudraksh Jaisalmer Opens as a Luxurious Desert Escape

Sterling Holiday Resorts has unveiled its 59th property, Sterling Rudraksh Jaisalmer, a stunning new addition to its growing portfolio, located in the heart of Rajasthan's Thar Desert. This resort, which marks the company's entry into its 50th destination, offers a blend of traditional Rajasthani charm and modern luxury, reflecting the essence of Jaisalmer, famously known as "The Golden City."



Constructed from the region's iconic golden-yellow sandstone, the resort sits along the highway leading to the Indo-Pakistan border, providing a peaceful haven amidst the desert's vast expanse. Guests will find themselves immersed in the city's rich cultural heritage while enjoying world-class amenities.

Spread across 2.5 acres, the resort offers spectacular views of the desert and features elegantly designed rooms and suites, each with private sit-outs and a seamless fusion of Rajasthani aesthetics and contemporary luxury. Visitors can relax by the grand pool,

enjoy vibrant cultural performances like Ghoomar and Kalbeliya dances under the starlit sky, or take part in camel safaris and private dune barbecues. The resort's culinary offerings include Rajasthan's authentic flavors, with signature restaurant RockSalt serving dishes like Laal Maas and Dal Baati Churma, while Ripples, the poolside café, offers a more casual, yet equally delightful, dining experience.

Vikram Lalvani, Managing Director and CEO of Sterling Holiday Resorts, spoke about the significance of the new resort: "Sterling Rudraksh Jaisalmer is a regal addition to our expanding network and marks an important milestone as our 50th destination. This property is part of our vision to create a seamless travel circuit through Rajasthan, from the cool heights of Mount Abu to the cultural treasures of Udaipur, the wild beauty of Jawai, and now, the expansive desert landscapes of Jaisalmer."

Conveniently located near several major attractions, including Jaisalmer Fort, Patwaon Ki Haveli, Kuldhara Village, and Gadisar Lake, the resort is also close to the Tanot Mata Temple and Laungewala War Museum, providing guests with opportunities to explore both the region's rich history and its spiritual significance.

"Sterling Rudraksh Jaisalmer encapsulates the architectural beauty and craftsmanship of Rajasthan," said Surath Banerjee, Managing Director of ADB Hospitality. "With increasing interest in 'Border Tourism,' we expect Jaisalmer to become a prominent destination for global travelers seeking unique desert experiences. This resort, with its authentic cuisine and immersive cultural offerings, combined with Sterling's renowned hospitality, sets a new benchmark for luxury in the desert."

With the opening of Sterling Rudraksh Jaisalmer, Sterling Holiday Resorts continues to strengthen its commitment to providing curated travel experiences that highlight India's diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage.



Cygnett Hotels

Expands in Jaipur with Cygnett Inn Airport

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts has unveiled its third property in Jaipur with the opening of **Cygnett Inn Airport**, a full-service, midscale hotel strategically located just 200 meters from Jaipur's International Airport. With this addition, the hotel chain aims to cater to the increasing demand for high-quality yet affordable accommodations in the Pink City.

The new hotel features 45 elegantly designed rooms, offering guests comfort and convenience with close proximity to the airport terminal. In addition to its well-appointed rooms, Cygnett Inn Airport boasts a range of dining options, including the all-day dining restaurant **C Pavilion** and a stylish **Rooftop Restro Bar** that offers panoramic views of the airport's aerodrome.

"Jaipur is one of India's most sought-after tourist destinations, attracting both domestic and international visitors. The opening of Cygnett Inn Airport further strengthens our footprint in Jaipur's competitive hospitality sector," said Mr. Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & Managing Director of Cygnett



Hotels & Resorts. "Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding our presence in key destinations known for their high tourism appeal and thriving business environments."

The hotel also features a spacious **3,000 sq. ft. banquet facility**, perfect for hosting events and gatherings. Guests can unwind at the hotel's **Health Club**, enjoy a rejuvenating session at the **Spa**, or take advantage of the fully equipped **Meeting Room** for business purposes.

Cygnett Inn's focus on value for money, high-quality service, safety, sustainable practices, and excellent food positions it as a reliable choice for travelers. The opening of **Cygnett Inn Airport** marks a significant milestone in the brand's larger expansion plan, with the aim of operating over 100 hotels by 2029.

Discovering MOSCOW'S Hidden Cultural Treasures

Moscow, a city of grand historical landmarks and artistic heritage, is far more than just the Kremlin and the Bolshoi Theatre. Beyond its world-famous sites, the Russian capital offers an array of hidden gems — unconventional art spaces, architectural marvels, and cultural hubs that reveal the city's multifaceted character.

Contemporary Art: A Thriving Scene in Historic Spaces

Moscow has long been a global cultural powerhouse, home to over 440 museums and exhibition halls. While the Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum are must-visit destinations for classical art lovers, the city's contemporary art scene thrives in unique, repurposed spaces.

The GES-2 House of Culture, a former power plant, is now a dynamic venue for exhibitions, concerts, performances, workshops, and film screenings. Another essential stop is

the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA), the first state museum in Russia dedicated to 20th- and 21st-century art. MMOMA now encompasses six venues, five of which are housed in historic mansions in the heart of Moscow, all within walking distance of one another. Visitors eager to explore the entire museum network can opt for a single ticket, granting access to all locations for a period of two weeks.

From Factories to Creative Hubs: Moscow's Transformed Art Clusters

Over the last decade, Moscow's art clusters have flourished, supporting creative industries and attracting both locals and tourists. The number of these hubs has doubled in just five years, exceeding 30 venues that showcase artisan goods and trendy cafes.

For those drawn to an industrial aesthetic, the Winzavod Center for Contemporary Art — housed in a





DESTINATION

former wine factory — stands as a vibrant hub of galleries, artist studios, and creative workshops. A haven for street art enthusiasts, it was home to the legendary graffiti project “Wall” for 11 years, showcasing over 60 artists from Russia and beyond. In 2019, this initiative transformed into an open-air gallery — a striking 100-meter mural-lined pathway leading from the metro to the art center, now a living canvas for contemporary urban artists.

Another must-visit destination is the Hlebozavod (Bread Factory) art cluster, where Moscow’s industrial past converges with contemporary creativity. Built in the mid-1930s as part of the city’s effort to expand bread production for its rapidly growing population, Hlebozavod was one of the first fully automated bakeries in Moscow. For decades, it supplied the city with bread before ceasing production in 2015. Following its transformation, Hlebozavod has evolved into a dynamic urban hub, home to over 120 designer boutiques, cafés, and creative spaces, while also serving as a vibrant venue for festivals and fairs.

The Design Zavod, a former glass plant, has transformed into a lively creative space featuring co-working areas, designer boutiques, cafes and even a yoga studio. Another standout is the Red October complex, a former chocolate factory now home to galleries and stylish cafes.

Restored Cinemas and Moskino Cinema Park: A Nostalgic Film Experience

Moscow’s restored Soviet-era cinemas have been revitalized as cultural centers, preserving their historic charm while offering curated film screenings. The Moskino network, featuring theaters like Zvezda and Salut, showcases Russian and international films in retro settings.

For a truly memorable experience, visit Khudozhestvenny, Moscow’s oldest cinema, operating since 1909 and exquisitely restored in 2021. Here, visitors can enjoy modern and classic films in a historically inspired interior. Another iconic venue, Illusion Cinema,

is housed within one of Seven Sisters’s skyscrapers, retaining its Empire-style decor and offering screenings of global cinematic masterpieces.

Cinema lovers should not miss Moskino Cinema Park, which opened in 2024. This extraordinary venue combines 20 open-air film locations and four pavilions, allowing visitors to step into scenes from historical films. Guests can participate in immersive performances, witness live filming, or even star in a short movie inspired by famous Russian films.

Space Exploration: Cosmos Pavilion & Moscow Planetarium

Russia is renowned as a pioneering force in space exploration, with its immeasurable contributions to humanity’s understanding of the cosmos, and Moscow offers a wealth of captivating destinations for those intrigued by the mysteries of the universe.

Housed within the historic Cosmos Pavilion, the Cosmonautics and Aviation Center invites visitors on a journey through space exploration’s legacy. It features over 120 aircraft and spacecraft, along with more than 2,000 rare archival materials. Visitors can explore full-scale models of satellites, space stations, and rockets, try interactive exhibits, and even step into the role of a mission control specialist through engaging simulations and quests.

For those fascinated by the mysteries of the universe, the Moscow Planetarium provides an immersive experience with its giant hemispherical dome, where breathtaking projections of galaxies, constellations, and celestial bodies come to life. As one of Europe’s largest planetariums, it hosts interactive exhibits, observatories, and educational programs for all ages, making it a captivating destination for both budding astronomers and curious visitors alike.

Botanical Gardens and the Apothecary Garden: Moscow’s Green Oases

For those seeking a retreat into

nature, Moscow’s botanical gardens offer a tranquil escape. The Main Botanical Garden of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the largest in Russia and one of the most extensive in Europe, spans over 360 hectares and houses more than 16,000 plant species from around the world.

Visitors can explore themed gardens, including Japanese and English landscapes, stroll through peaceful forest trails, and admire the renowned Rose Garden, which bursts into bloom each summer. The Orangery Complex provides a tropical experience year-round, allowing guests to marvel at rare exotic plants.

For a historical botanical journey, the Apothecary Garden, founded by Peter the Great in 1706, is a must-visit. Once used to cultivate medicinal plants for the royal court, it is now a cultural space offering seasonal floral exhibitions, tropical greenhouses, and even nighttime botanical tours. Its palm conservatory and orchid exhibits provide a lush, immersive experience in the heart of Moscow.



A Journey Through Soviet Grandeur

The Seven Sisters, Moscow's iconic skyscrapers, were built in the late 1940s and early 1950s as symbols of Soviet might. Today, these towering structures serve various purposes while offering fascinating insights into the city's architectural history.

The Radisson Collection Hotel is one of the most accessible for tourists, boasting an observation deck with breathtaking views of the Moscow River and a gallery of Soviet-era art and sculptures. Another landmark, Moscow State University (MSU), the tallest of the Seven Sisters, is situated near Sparrow Hills, a popular viewpoint for panoramic cityscapes.

Festival Venues: Moscow's Year-Round Cultural Celebrations

Moscow's dynamic festival calendar ensures that no matter when you visit, there's always something happening in the city.

During winter, the Journey to Christmas Festival transforms Moscow into a dazzling wonderland, featuring festive markets, open-air ice rinks, traditional Russian delicacies, and stunning light installations. Tea lovers can explore Russia's rich tea culture at the Moscow Tea Time Festival, where samovar rituals, rare tea tastings, and historical performances take center stage.

For a glimpse into aristocratic

Russia, the Moscow Estates Festival is an enchanting experience. Hosted at the city's grand historic manors, this event brings the imperial era to life through costumed reenactments, classical concerts, guided estate tours, and even ballroom dancing.

Beyond these major events, Moscow's calendar includes a diverse array of film festivals, culinary fairs, and avant-garde art exhibitions, ensuring that visitors can always experience the city's cultural pulse. Whether you're drawn to history, art, or gastronomy, Moscow's hidden treasures promise an unforgettable journey through one of the world's most vibrant capitals.





Dubai

to Host the World's
Tallest Wellbeing Resort:
Therme Dubai

Dubai has approved Therme Dubai, a groundbreaking AED 2 billion wellness resort in Zabeel Park set to redefine luxury relaxation and sustainability by 2028.

Dubai has officially approved the Therme Dubai project, an innovative wellness resort and interactive park poised to become the first of its kind in the Middle East. Set to rise in Zabeel Park, this visionary development is a collaboration between Dubai authorities and Therme Group, a global leader in wellbeing infrastructure. With an estimated investment of AED 2 billion, the project is scheduled for completion by 2028.

A Vision Aligned with Dubai's Future

Therme Dubai seamlessly integrates into the UAE's 'Year of the Community' initiative and the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, both of which emphasize quality of life, sustainable living, and community well-being. Once operational, this 100-metre-tall, 500,000-square-foot facility will accommodate up to 1.7 million visitors annually, offering an unparalleled wellness and entertainment experience.

A New Era of Wellness and Entertainment

Therme Dubai will be a multifaceted wellness sanctuary, blending relaxation, adventure, and cultural immersion. The resort's offerings will cater to visitors of all ages with state-of-the-art facilities, including:

- **Spectacular Water Features:**

Three towering 18-metre waterfalls, complemented by expansive indoor and outdoor pools.

- **Thrilling Play Zone:** A high-energy space with 15 waterslides and immersive family-friendly attractions.

- **Serene Relaxation Zone:** Thermal pools, steam rooms, and rejuvenating mineral-infused treatments for a deeply restorative experience.

- **Innovative Restore Zone:** A haven of wellness featuring saunas, mineral baths, and global bathing rituals designed for holistic renewal.

Adding to its grandeur, the resort will feature the world's largest indoor botanical garden, housing over 200 plant species, alongside a cultural hub showcasing interactive art installations from around the globe.

Commitment to Sustainability and Economic Growth

Therme Dubai is designed with a strong environmental focus, utilizing advanced technologies to recycle 90% of the water used in thermal pools. Additionally, 80% of its air

circulation and cooling requirements will be met through sustainable energy sources, reinforcing Dubai's commitment to eco-conscious development.

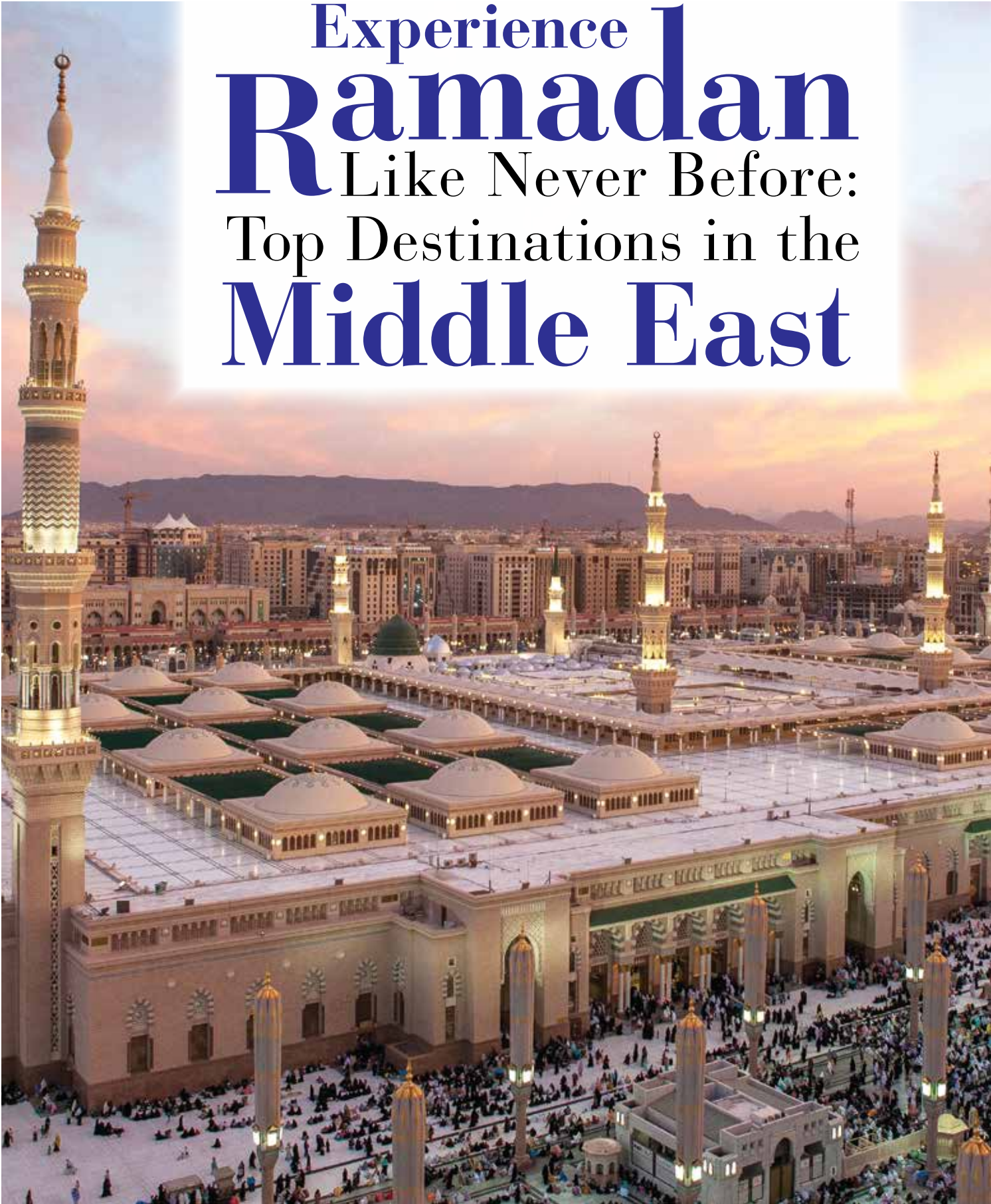
Beyond its wellness offerings, the project is expected to drive economic growth, boosting Dubai's medical tourism industry and attracting significant foreign direct investment. This aligns with the city's broader vision to establish itself as a global leader in wellness tourism.

A New Benchmark in Luxury Wellness

As construction progresses, Therme Dubai is set to generate substantial economic activity and open new avenues in the hospitality, tourism, and wellness sectors. Once operational, it promises to redefine luxury wellness, positioning Dubai at the forefront of holistic, sustainable, and transformative travel experiences.



Experience Ramadan Like Never Before: Top Destinations in the Middle East





Ramadan in the Middle East is an extraordinary celebration of spirituality, culture, and community. From the tranquil mosques of Oman to the bustling markets of Egypt, the region offers an unforgettable experience of the holy month. Here's where to go for a truly memorable Ramadan journey in 2025.





1. Egypt – A City of Lanterns and Spiritual Serenity

Cairo, Egypt's vibrant capital, is alive with energy during Ramadan. The streets glow with colorful lanterns, and the calls to prayer echo through the city's historic mosques. Al-Muizz Street, a living museum of Islamic architecture, becomes a magical backdrop for Ramadan festivities. At the renowned Khan El Khalili Bazaar, shop for souvenirs while indulging in traditional treats like qatayef and kunafa. Meanwhile, Luxor and Aswan offer a serene Ramadan experience, with peaceful Nile-side iftars surrounded by ancient temples.

2. Saudi Arabia – The Heart of Islamic Heritage

There's no place more sacred for Muslims during Ramadan than Saudi Arabia. Makkah and Madinah are home to the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, where millions gather for Taraweeh prayers. The atmosphere

is deeply spiritual, with worshippers seeking solace in these holy sites. In Jeddah, the historic district of Al-Balad is illuminated with Ramadan lights, while Riyadh's cultural performances and charity initiatives bring the city to life. The fusion of tradition and modernity makes Saudi Arabia the ultimate destination for a profound Ramadan experience.

3. UAE – Lavish Iftars and Cultural Extravaganza

Dubai and Abu Dhabi transform into hubs of luxury during Ramadan. Dubai's iconic hotels offer grand iftar buffets, while traditional Ramadan tents provide a more intimate setting for breaking fast. The Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding invites visitors to experience Ramadan traditions firsthand, and the Ramadan Night Market at the Dubai World Trade Centre is perfect for shopping and entertainment. In Abu Dhabi, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque stands as an architectural marvel,





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hosting prayers and Islamic lectures. Sharjah also offers a cultural feast, with Ramadan-themed events and heritage activities at the Heart of Sharjah.

4. Oman – Tranquil Ramadan Traditions

Oman offers a peaceful and traditional Ramadan experience. In Muscat, the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque welcomes visitors for prayers, while the Muttrah Souq offers a sensory delight with its Omani spices and handicrafts. Nizwa, a historic town, provides a glimpse of a simpler Ramadan, with families gathering for humble iftars. For a unique touch,





Salalah's lush landscapes and seafont gatherings make for a refreshing Ramadan retreat, with cultural programs that highlight Oman's rich heritage.

5. Qatar – Opulence and Culture Unite

Doha shines with its extravagant Ramadan iftar tents at luxury hotels, where guests are treated to both local and international cuisine. The Katara Cultural Village hosts festivals featuring Islamic art and performances, while the bustling Souq Waqif invites visitors to explore traditional Ramadan delights like luqaimat. The Pearl-Qatar offers a luxurious atmosphere for open-air iftars, and its sparkling Ramadan lights create a magical ambiance along the waterfront.

6. Bahrain – Heritage Meets Modernity

Bahrain offers a unique blend of traditional and contemporary Ramadan celebrations. Manama's Al Fateh Grand

Mosque is a key destination for prayers, while Bab Al Bahrain's market is a lively hub for Ramadan shopping. Muharraq, known for its cultural significance, hosts events where visitors can enjoy Bahraini music, storytelling, and traditional food. For an extraordinary experience, head to the Sakhir Desert for stargazing and Bedouin-style iftars in luxury desert camps.

Ramadan Nights – A Celebration of Faith, Unity, and Culture

Across the Middle East, Ramadan is more than just fasting. It's a celebration of faith, community, and cultural heritage. As night falls, cities are illuminated by lanterns, and the air is filled with the aroma of freshly baked bread and spices. Whether you're in the sacred mosques of Saudi Arabia, the bustling souks of Egypt, or the luxurious iftar tents of the UAE, Ramadan in the Middle East is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that brings together spirituality, culture, and unforgettable memories.

Outbound Tourism to Taiwan Set for Strong Growth in 2025, Says Paul Shih, Director Tourism



Indian outbound tourism to Taiwan saw a significant uptick in 2024, with a 10% growth in Indian arrivals. Between January and October 2024, Taiwan welcomed 31,766 Indian visitors, reflecting a 20% increase over the same period the previous year. This growth is attributed to the Taiwan Tourism Administration's (TTA) ongoing efforts to strengthen its relationship with India's expanding outbound tourism market.

Paul Shih, Director of TTA's Singapore office,

expressed confidence in sustaining this momentum in 2025. He expects a further 20% growth in Indian arrivals, contributing to the overall target of 7.5 million international visitors to Taiwan in the upcoming year. "We are extremely optimistic about the potential of India's outbound market for Taiwan," Shih remarked.

Shih was in India recently to bolster Taiwan's partnership with the Indian travel community, engaging in a series of meetings with key stakeholders. His visit

included participation in a panel discussion titled "India on the Move: Cracking the Code of Outbound Growth," underscoring Taiwan's commitment to enhancing its presence in India.

Taiwan's post-pandemic revival has been marked by strategic market-specific campaigns. Since January 2024, the country has ramped up its promotional efforts through roadshows, familiarization trips (FAMs), digital activations, and participation in travel trade shows. Shih emphasized that these initiatives have played a crucial role in Taiwan's strong rebound in the Indian market. "The increase in Indian outbound tourism, particularly Taiwan's 20% growth in 2024, is a direct result of our persistent efforts, which include targeted trade partnerships and digital outreach," he explained.

Between January and October 2024, Taiwan recorded 6.2 million international visitors, a remarkable 24.55% increase compared to 2023. To further attract Indian tourists, Taiwan has strategically invested in both trade and consumer activities, making it easier for Indian travel partners to promote and sell Taiwan as a destination. Shih noted that TTA's focus on the incentives market has

yielded strong results, with more than 1,100 individuals from a top Indian paint company traveling to Taiwan this month alone.

Looking ahead to 2025, Shih outlined TTA's plans to focus on expanding the incentives and luxury travel segments from India. The agency intends to continue working closely with the travel trade and promoting Taiwan as a preferred destination. He added, "We will maintain our position as the safest destination for Indian travelers, offering Indian cuisine, including Jain options, excellent flight connectivity, and world-class infrastructure for large events."

TTA is also focusing on forging stronger partnerships with online travel agencies (OTAs) and airlines to create customized travel packages for Indian travelers. Additionally, Taiwan aims to expand its market reach into East India and beyond major metro cities, targeting tier II cities across the country.

As part of its global tourism promotion efforts, Taiwan recently launched the 3.0 version of its tourism campaign, "Taiwan Waves of Wonder." This new initiative highlights the year-round appeal of Taiwan, offering travelers the opportunity to experience its unique charm across all four seasons.

TAT Paris and Louis Vuitton Unveil Exclusive Bangkok 2025 City Guide



The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Paris office, in partnership with luxury fashion house Louis Vuitton, has officially launched the **Louis Vuitton City Guide Bangkok 2025**.

The unveiling took place on February 18, 2025, at the prestigious Maison de Famille de Louis Vuitton in Asnières-sur-Seine, France, offering an exclusive and sophisticated glimpse into Bangkok's most luxurious and culturally rich experiences.

The Bangkok 2025 edition is the latest addition to the globally acclaimed **Louis Vuitton City Guide collection**, renowned for curating unparalleled travel experiences in the world's most dynamic destinations. This edition captures Bangkok's unique essence—merging tradition with modernity—by spotlighting its iconic landmarks, Michelin-starred dining, thriving contemporary art scene, high-end fashion hubs, and luxury accommodations



blending Thai heritage with contemporary design.

A Grand Celebration of Thai Culture

To mark the launch, TAT Paris and Louis Vuitton hosted an exclusive gathering attended by leading figures in the travel and tourism industry, including airline executives, tourism influencers, and luxury travel specialists. The event was staged at Louis Vuitton's historic family residence, a fitting backdrop that underscores the brand's dedication to heritage and craftsmanship.

Highlighting the significance of this collaboration, **Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool**,

Governor of TAT, stated: *"This partnership aligns with the Amazing Thailand Grand Tourism and Sports Year 2025 initiative, reinforcing Thailand's status as a premier destination for travelers seeking exclusive and culturally immersive experiences."*

Five Curated Experiences for Discerning Travelers

Under the theme **"5 Must-Do in Thailand,"** the **Louis Vuitton City Guide Bangkok 2025** curates five essential experiences:

- **Must-See:** Iconic landmarks and historical sites.
- **Must-Seek:** Hidden cultural treasures and off-the-beaten-path gems.
- **Must-Try:** Unique local experiences showcasing Thai heritage.
- **Must-Taste:** A culinary journey through Thai gastronomy.
- **Must-Buy:** Artisanal handicrafts and luxury souvenirs.

A Showcase of Thailand's Rich Heritage

The launch event immersed guests in Thailand's artistic and cultural legacy through live performances and interactive experiences. Traditional Thai dance and theatrical arts were on full display, with a mesmerizing **Khon performance of Hanuman and Suvannamaccha**. Attendees also witnessed

the intricate art of palm leaf fish weaving and explored a curated selection of handcrafted Thai souvenirs. The country's famed culinary arts were celebrated through the live preparation of **Khanom Dara Thong**, while cultural showcases included **Muay Thai demonstrations, Nuad Thai massage, the Nora dance, and Serng Kapo performances**. The evening concluded with a musical fusion of Eastern and Western traditions, blending **Thai instruments like the Krajappi and Saw Duang with piano and violin compositions**.

Strengthening Thailand's Global Tourism Appeal

Thailand continues to solidify its reputation as a top-tier global travel destination, welcoming **35.5 million international visitors in 2024**—an impressive 89% recovery compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019. The **French market alone saw 720,806 visitors**, achieving a 96% rebound from 2019 figures, further highlighting Thailand's enduring appeal among European travelers.

With the launch of the **Louis Vuitton City Guide Bangkok 2025**, Thailand reaffirms its commitment to providing exceptional, luxury-driven experiences for global explorers, seamlessly blending heritage, modernity, and exclusivity.



Singapore's Tourism to Outpace Regional Rivals with Record Arrivals in 2025

*Singapore Leads
Southeast Asia's Tourism
Recovery, Surpassing
Pre-Pandemic Levels*

Singapore is poised to take the lead in Southeast Asia's tourism recovery, outpacing regional competitors such as Thailand and the Philippines, and even exceeding

pre-pandemic visitor levels. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), international arrivals to Singapore are projected to reach nearly 16 million by 2025—a 9.6% increase compared to 2019.

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has revealed that Singapore is on track to smash its all-time international arrivals record this year, outpacing other major Southeast Asian destinations such as Thailand and the Philippines.

According to the latest research, international arrivals are projected to reach almost 16MN in 2025 – 9.6% above pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

India is fueling a major tourism surge, with arrivals expected to jump from just over 1.11MN in 2019 to 1.25MN in 2025 — the highest on record.

Despite a slow rebound in outbound travel from China globally, record numbers of Chinese visitors are set to head to Singapore this year, to reach



almost 2.8MN, setting the stage for further growth in 2026.

International arrivals to Thailand are also set to break all records this year with a 5% growth, whilst the Philippines will come within touching distance of its previous high of 2019.

Malaysia is expected to see international visitor numbers rise by almost 10% ahead of 2019 levels and is expected to break its previous high reached in 2016, by almost 7% this year.

WTTC President & CEO, Julia Simpson, said *“Singapore is setting the pace for global tourism growth, breaking records, and outpacing its regional rivals. With soaring visitor numbers expected from India, and a return of Chinese travellers, the city-state’s tourism engine is running at full throttle. “This is not just a comeback – it is a transformation. Singapore is leading in innovation and sustainability, and its Travel & Tourism sector is on course*

to be stronger than ever, driving jobs, growth, and economic prosperity for years to come.”

A Booming Economic Engine

In 2024, Travel & Tourism was projected to pump \$66.1BN into Singapore’s economy, accounting for 9.8% of GDP, and support a record 570,000 jobs.

By the end of the decade, the sector is expected to contribute almost \$80BN to the economy, 19% above its previous high in 2019.

Travel & Tourism is also forecast to support over 637,000 jobs, marking an increase of over 90,000 more since 2019.

Singapore’s SAF Leadership

Singapore’s greenhouse gas emissions from Travel & Tourism dropped 4.1% per year between 2019 and 2023, reducing the sector’s share from 23.5% to 18.4%.

However, despite being home to the world’s largest SAF plant, low-carbon energy currently powers just under 2.5% of the Travel & Tourism sector.

The upcoming SAF mandate will require all departing flights to incorporate 1% SAF from 2026.

In contrast, other major tourism economies, such as the United Kingdom and Japan, have set targets of 10% SAF adoption by 2030.

Boosting the Regional Economy

In 2024, the Travel & Tourism sector was expected to generate nearly \$379BN USD for Southeast Asia’s economy, representing 9.7% of the region’s GDP and supporting approximately 42.5MN jobs.

By 2030, the sector’s economic contribution is projected to reach nearly \$551BN USD — 48% above 2019. Employment in Travel & Tourism is also forecast to hit 51.5MN jobs, an increase of over 10MN since 2019.

Southeast Asia’s Environmental Footprint

Southeast Asia’s Travel & Tourism sector saw an annual decline of 7% per year between 2019 and 2023, reducing its contribution from over 10% to just under 7% of the regional total.

Currently, low-carbon energy accounts for just under 5.5% of the sector’s power supply.

WTTC is urging the government to bring forward the mandate to this year and increase the minimal usage target.



Thailand Unveils '7 Months 7 Wonders' Festival to Boost Tourism and Cultural Engagement in 2025



Thailand's Ministry of Tourism unveils the '7 Months 7 Wonders' festival, featuring 70+ events from March to September 2025 to boost tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports has launched the **Thailand Summer Festivals**, a seven-month celebration under the theme **'7 Months 7 Wonders'**, running from March to September 2025. Featuring over 70 events across seven categories—Songkran, Pride, Cultural Festivals, Music, Sports, Food, and Arts & Creativity—the festival is part of the Amazing Thailand Grand Tourism and Sports Year 2025, aiming to position Thailand as a premier global travel destination.

Prime Minister H.E. Ms. **Paetongtarn Shinawatra** stated: "Tourism is a key driver of Thailand's economy, contributing over 14% of GDP.

Our goal is to establish Thailand as a year-round travel destination, reducing the low-season impact with vibrant festivals and cultural experiences. The Thailand Summer Festivals will showcase diverse events across all regions, boosting local economies while attracting global visitors. With this initiative, we aim to achieve a record breaking of 3.5 trillion Baht in tourism revenue."

Ms. Paetongtarn presided over the Thailand Summer Festivals press launch held today at Government House, joined by Tourism and Sports Minister Mr. **Sorawong Thienthong**, Culture Minister Ms. **Sudawan Wangsuphakijkosol**, and other

Cabinet members. Also present was **Dr. Surapong Suebwonglee**, Deputy Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Soft Power Development Committee of Thailand.

Tourism and Sports Minister Mr. Sorawong Thienthong said: "With 2025 designated as the Amazing Thailand Grand Tourism and Sports Year, we are proud to invite travellers to experience Thailand's rich cultural heritage. The Thailand Summer Festivals will be a Grand Festivity, bringing together traditional Thai celebrations and world-class events to create a vibrant and engaging atmosphere. This initiative aims to elevate Thai traditions on a global stage and strengthen



Thailand's appeal as a year-round travel destination for visitors from around the world."

A key highlight of the Thailand Summer Festivals is the Maha Songkran World Water Festival 2025, set to take place at Sanam Luang from 11–15 April, celebrating Songkran in the country, a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. This grand event not only honours Thailand's rich traditions but also strengthens its position as one of the world's top 10 festival destinations. Additionally, the nationwide 'Grand Songkran Festival' will showcase Thailand's vibrant cultural traditions across 17 provinces and four key locations in Bangkok. To engage international audiences, an official Songkran Thai New Year theme song has been introduced in 20 languages, including Thai, English, French, Chinese, German, and Japanese.

Culture Minister Ms. Sudawan Wangsuphakijkosol added: *"With Songkran now recognised as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, we are taking this celebration to new heights. The 'Grand Songkran Festival' blends heritage with innovation, establishing Thailand as a world-class festival hub while boosting cultural pride, tourism, and economic growth."*

Highlights of Thailand Summer Festivals Month by Month

- **March** – Kicking off the celebrations with MotoGP – PT Grand Prix of Thailand 2025 in Buri Ram,

Thailand's first-ever season-opening race. Other major events include the World Wai Kru Muay Thai Ceremony, International Kite Festival 2025, and music festivals like Pattaya Music Festival and PELUPU International Music Festival 2025 in Chon Buri.

- **April** – Thailand's iconic Songkran festival will be elevated to new heights with the Maha Songkran World Water Festival 2025 at Sanam Luang, featuring eight spectacular carnival parades and delivering a vibrant and immersive experience for attendees. Additionally, the nationwide "Grand Songkran Festival" will see both public and private sectors collaborating to host celebrations across all five regions.

- **May** – A month dedicated to food, music, sports, and cultural festivals, featuring the Bun Bang Fai Rocket Festival in Yasothon and the Nora Rong Kru Ceremony in Phatthalung. Food lovers can indulge in the Amazing Thailand Grand Taste Festival in Chon Buri and the Fruit & Delicacies Festival in Rayong. Music enthusiasts can look forward to the Music & Mutelu Festival in Nakhon Phanom, while sports fans can enjoy major events such as the Bangsaen 10 Run in Chon Buri, the Amazean Jungle Thailand by UTMB 2025 in Yala, the Samui Regatta in Surat Thani, and the Thailand Super Series 2025 in Buri Ram.

- **June** – Pride Month takes over Thailand, led by River Pride of Bangkok 2025 and Pride events across Bangkok, Surat Thani, Chiang Mai, Chon Buri, and

Phuket. Another major highlight is the Splash International Soft Power Forum 2025, Thailand's premier creative soft power forum, showcasing the country's cultural influence on a global stage.

- **July** – A month of spiritual traditions, featuring the Candle Festival processions in Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Buriram to mark Khao Phansa, or Buddhist Lent period, while Ayutthaya will host the unique Aquatic Phansa Festival. Another key event is the Phaya Si Sattanakarat Worship Ceremony in Nakhon Phanom, honouring the sacred serpent deity and drawing visitors to experience Thailand's spiritual traditions.

- **August** – A celebration of creativity and cultural diversity, with events such as the Pla Ra & Molam Festival in Chon Buri, Isan World Art and Culture Festival in Maha Sarakham, and Thailand Festival Experience in the Eastern Region. The Southern Bliss Festival in Chumphon will showcase the charm of Thailand's southern provinces, while music lovers can enjoy the Summer Sonic Bangkok 2025 at IMPACT Muang Thong Thani. Sports enthusiasts won't want to miss the FIVB Women's Volleyball World Championship, with Thailand hosting matches in Phuket, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Bangkok.

- **September** – The festival journey concludes with a Grand Moment, featuring the sunrise alignment with the 15 doorways of Phanom Rung Historical Park in Buri Ram. Other traditional events include the Long Boat Races in Phichit, Um Phra Dam Nam Ceremony in Phetchabun, Tan Kuay Salak Merit-Making Festival in the North, and the Sart Duan Sib Festival in the South. Adventurers can take part in the "Once in a Lifetime: Conquer Doi Suthep" Chiang Mai 22K 2025.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports is confident that the Thailand Summer Festivals will enhance the grandeur of Amazing Thailand Grand Tourism and Sports Year 2025, positioning Thailand as a leading festival destination while boosting economic impact, global recognition, and cultural preservation.

Vietnam Tourism

Reaches New Heights With Surge in Indian Travelers

Vietnam's tourism sector is experiencing explosive growth in early 2025, fueled by a dramatic surge in Indian visitors. The first week of January saw Indian arrivals jump by 50-70% compared to December, according to the Vietnam Tourism Advisory Board (VTAB). This surge solidifies India's position as the fastest-growing inbound market for Vietnam, contributing significantly to the country's booming tourism industry.

Vietnam's Appeal to Indian Travelers

India's growing presence in



Vietnam's hospitality scene is undeniable. Indian tourists now account for 30% of the guest list at Hanoi's Flower Garden Hotel, as reported by Vu Thu Hien, Sales Director at TMG.

This rising influx of Indian visitors is largely attributed to expanding direct flight routes and improved connectivity between the two nations, making Vietnam a convenient and attractive



travel destination for Indians.

In 2024, Vietnam welcomed over 500,000 Indian visitors, marking a staggering 297% growth compared to pre-pandemic levels. This surge

outpaced arrivals from other countries, including Cambodia, which saw a 208% increase, further cementing India's place among Vietnam's top 10 source markets.

How Indian Travelers Can Reach Vietnam

By Air: Flights remain the fastest and most convenient way to reach Vietnam, with direct and



one-stop routes available from major Indian cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata to Vietnam's three major international airports: Noi Bai (Hanoi), Tan Son Nhat (Ho Chi Minh City), and Da Nang International Airport.

- **Average flight duration:** 4 hours
- **Flight costs:** Starting at INR 20,000 (US\$230), with early bookings dropping the price to INR 7,000-9,000 (US\$80-100).

By Sea: For those looking for a scenic journey, ferries and cruises from Cambodia along the Mekong Delta offer an alternative route, while cruises from Singapore to Ho Chi Minh City provide a luxurious travel experience. Prices for these cruises range from US\$45 to US\$100, depending on the vessel and amenities.

By Road: Adventurous travelers can also opt for a road trip through Thailand or Laos. With six border crossings from Laos and three from Cambodia, overland travel to Vietnam is an exciting option for those seeking cross-country experiences.

Navigating Vietnam's Visa Process for Indian Travelers

Indian nationals must obtain a visa before entering Vietnam, regardless of their travel method. Fortunately, the visa application process has been

streamlined to enhance convenience for travelers.

Visa Application Methods:

- **E-Visa:** Available via Vietnam's official government portal, valid for up to 90 days with single or multiple entries.
- **Embassy or Consulate:** Applications can be processed through Vietnam's diplomatic missions in India.

Required Documents for a Vietnam Visa:

- A passport valid for at least six months beyond the planned entry date.
- A completed visa application form.
- A passport-sized photo (4x6 cm, white background).
- A confirmed return flight ticket.
- Hotel booking confirmation.
- A recent bank statement (last three months).

Processing Time:

- **Embassy Applications:** 10-12 working days (slightly longer in some locations).
- **E-Visa Applications:** 3-5 business days.

Visa Extension and Renewal Options:

For those wishing to extend their stay in Vietnam, there are two options available:

1. Visa Extension: Allows visitors to extend their stay without leaving the country. The extension period is tied to the original visa duration (e.g., a one-month visa can be extended by one month).

2. Visa Renewal: A completely new visa is issued, ideal for travelers wishing to upgrade from a single-entry visa to a multiple-entry visa or extend their stay beyond the original visa limits.

Vietnam's Growing Popularity Among Indian Tourists

With enhanced connectivity, convenient visa processes, and a wealth of attractions, Vietnam is quickly becoming one of Asia's most popular destinations for Indian travelers. The country's stunning natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and affordability continue to draw visitors from India, offering a perfect blend of adventure, relaxation, and exploration.

As Vietnam cements its position as a top travel destination, it's clear that the future of tourism between Vietnam and India is brighter than ever. With record-breaking growth, seamless travel options, and an increasing number of flights, Vietnam is well on its way to becoming the go-to destination for Indian tourists seeking a unique and unforgettable experience.

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