

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

# travel

## SPAN

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Where Luxury Meets  
Conscious Living and  
Artistic Immersion

### Fiji for Kids

A Destination Made  
for Family Fun!

### Capella Bangkok

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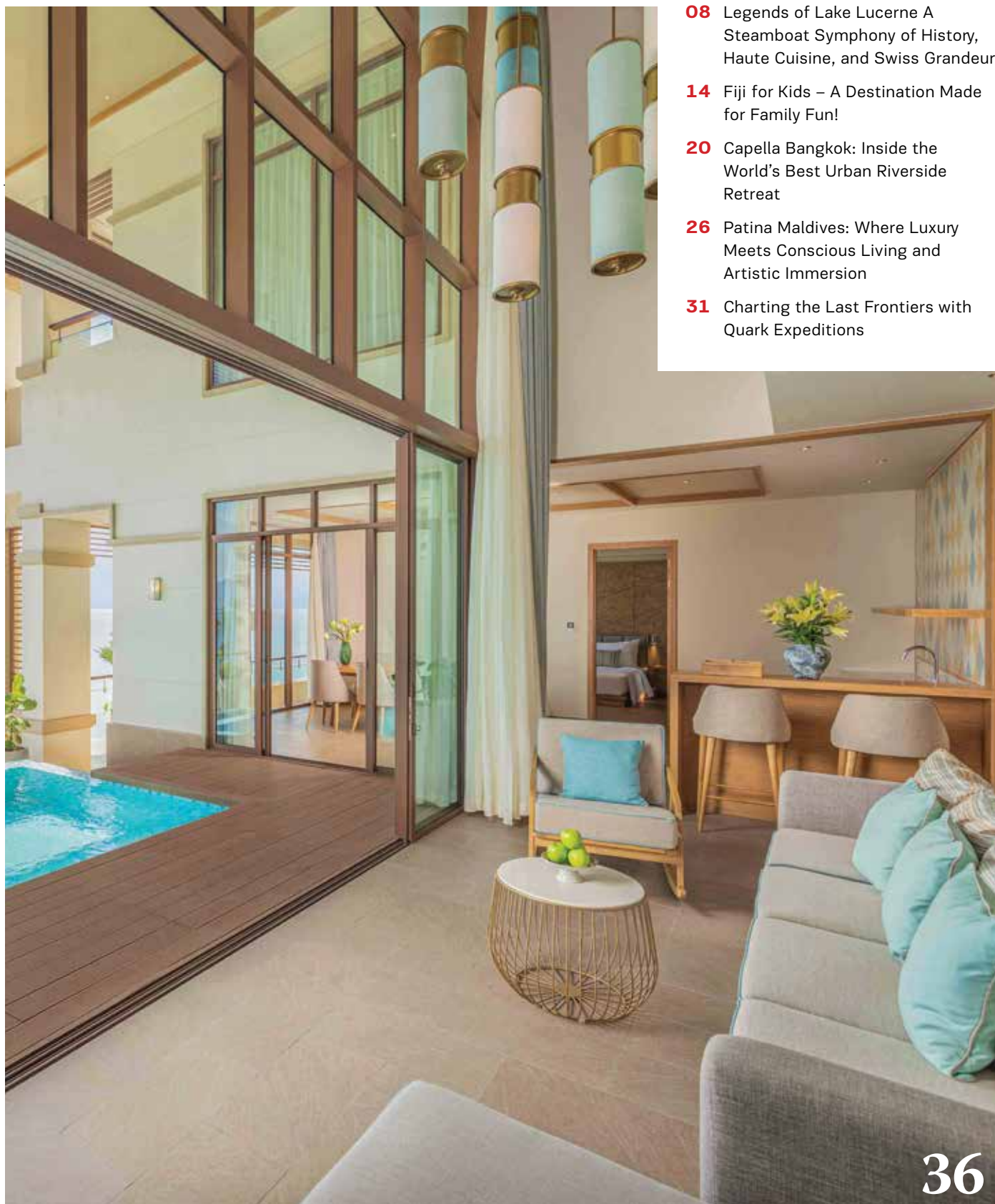
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## EDITOR'S LETTER

# The Next Frontier: Travel & Tourism's Unstoppable Rise

**A**s we turn the page on the global recovery story, a new chapter of travel is being written—one defined by record-breaking momentum, bold vision, and unmistakable shifts in influence. The World Travel & Tourism Council's latest forecasts show 2025 shaping up to be a landmark year, with the sector poised to contribute a staggering **\$11.7 trillion to global GDP**, accounting for **10.3% of the world's economy**. International visitor spending alone is set to **surpass all previous records**, reaching **\$2.1 trillion**.

But this is not just a story of revival—it's one of transformation. And at its heart is Saudi Arabia.

Once seen as an emerging player, the Kingdom has rapidly become one of the most dynamic forces in global tourism. This year, Saudi Arabia's Travel & Tourism sector is expected to deliver a **record SAR 447 billion economic impact**, with **inbound visitor spending approaching SAR 200 billion**. Backed by visionary leadership and driven by the aspirations of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is now positioning itself as a **luxury destination of the future**—where

heritage, hospitality, and high design intersect.

What makes this evolution so compelling for our readers is not just the numbers, but the ambition. While mature markets like the U.S. and China show signs of plateauing, Saudi Arabia is accelerating—investing in ultra-luxury resorts, cutting-edge infrastructure, and curated experiences for discerning travelers.

This year, more than **2.7 million jobs** in the Kingdom will be supported by the sector, making it a living engine of growth—not just for the Middle East, but for

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the world. Indeed, across the wider region, Travel & Tourism will inject **\$367.3 billion** into the economy, with international visitor spending surging **24% beyond pre-pandemic levels**.

For leaders and luxury travelers alike, the message is clear: The new epicenters of influence are shifting. Whether you're scouting the next investment landscape or your next unforgettable journey, all eyes are turning east.

Welcome to the next frontier of global travel.



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SPAN







# Legends of Lake Lucerne

A Steamboat Symphony of  
History, Haute Cuisine, and  
Swiss Grandeur





*An Exclusive Cruise  
Experience for the  
Experiential Traveller - For  
the Global Connoisseur of  
Luxury Travel*

**By Devender Grover,**  
*Editor in Chief, Travel Span,  
Luxury and Lifestyle Travel Brand*

**W**elcome to Lake Lucerne, often heralded as the most beautiful lake in Switzerland. Now, this glittering Alpine jewel is the setting for a rare and refined voyage that marries timeless elegance with modern innovation. *Legends of Lake Lucerne – The Supreme Steamboat Experience* launches this season as a quintessential journey for discerning travellers seeking immersion, storytelling, and unparalleled sensory pleasure.

This is not your average lake cruise. Aboard the *Gallia*—an impeccably restored, century-old steamboat—you are not simply a passenger, but a participant in a living tale. With capacity limited to just 65 guests, the voyage offers an atmosphere of serenity and sophistication that is increasingly rare in the age of mass tourism.



### A Floating Salon of Taste and Time

As the *Gallia* unfurls its journey across Lake Lucerne, the experience begins not with a blast of the horn, but with a sip of vintage champagne and the aroma of freshly prepared amuse-bouches. The setting is majestic: think Rigi's stately silhouette, the rugged outline of Mount Pilatus, and the glassy waters of the Urnersee, framed like a moving painting through the steamboat's gleaming brass railings.

Culinary artistry is central to the voyage. A refined five-course menu, composed with seasonal Swiss ingredients, speaks to both tradition and innovation. Thanks to the Flying Service concept, three courses are served wherever you choose—perhaps on the deck with a flute of champagne, the lake's reflections dancing in your glass, or nestled inside the boat's elegant dining saloon. The wine pairings, hand-selected by Swiss sommeliers, are included, as are a







premium selection of drinks from craft beers to hot digestifs.

### **History in Motion: Meet the Legend Himself**

The *Gallia* does more than glide through landscapes—it traverses centuries. Guests are welcomed on board by none other than Casimir Friedrich Knörr, the charismatic 19th-century founder of steamboat navigation on Lake Lucerne—brought vividly to life by a gifted storyteller and performer.

Knörr escorts guests through a voyage of vision, myths, and milestones. From the legend of William Tell to the storied Rütli Oath, history is not merely recounted but relived. The experience is as intellectually enriching as it is visually and gastronomically indulgent.

### **Exclusivity at Every Turn**

In an era where privacy and space are the new luxuries, *Legends of Lake*



Lucerne offers both in abundance. With a maximum of 65 guests, every traveller enjoys a bespoke level of attention. The atmosphere is that of an intimate salon at sea—elegant, elevated, and delightfully unscripted.

The boat itself is a marvel: more than 100 years old yet equipped for the future. From 2025, *Gallia* will be the first steamboat on Lake Lucerne to operate partly on solar fuel, quietly blending heritage with sustainability.

### Tailored Experiences for Private Groups and Celebrations

Whether you're orchestrating a corporate soiree, a milestone birthday, or a private anniversary celebration, the *Gallia* offers bespoke charter options. The package for up to 40 guests is priced at CHF 22,000, including the full five-course menu, aperitifs, and the legendary program.

Each additional guest is CHF 550, and every detail—from floral arrangements to live music—can

be customised. The result? An unforgettable event wrapped in the elegance of a bygone era, with all the comforts of the present.

### A Gift of Grandeur

Looking for an extraordinary gift? The *Legends of Lake Lucerne* voyage is a memorable gesture for weddings, anniversaries, or simply to mark life's exceptional moments. More than just a cruise, it's an experience that lingers—on the palate, in the mind, and in the heart.

### A New Chapter in Swiss Elegance

As Casimir Friedrich Knörr once dreamed, this voyage is about more than travel—it's about connection, imagination, and celebration. *Legends of Lake Lucerne* is a unique blend of nostalgia and novelty, luxury and legacy. Step aboard and write your own chapter in the grand story of Switzerland's most enchanting lake.

*Because some journeys aren't just taken—they're felt.*



### Fact Sheet: Legends of Lake Lucerne

#### Switzerland's First Premium Cruise Experience

A pioneering concept by SGV, *Legends of Lake Lucerne* redefines Swiss lake tourism. Running daily from **15 May to 15 September 2025**, the five-hour experience aboard the historic steamboat *Gallia* combines gourmet dining, theatrical storytelling, and jaw-dropping natural beauty.





### HIGHLIGHTS

- Aboard the *Gallia* – over 100 years of history
- **Five-hour voyage** steeped in legend and luxury
- **Welcome apéritif on deck**
- **Refined five-course menu** celebrating Swiss regional cuisine
- **Flying Service** for flexible dining locations
- **Live storytelling** by Casimir

Friedrich Knörr

- **Scenic highlights:** Rigi, Pilatus, Tellsplatte, Rütli Meadow
- **Climate-forward vision:** Solar-fuel hybrid system (in development)

### MESSAGE & POSITIONING

- The **first offering of its kind** on any Swiss lake
- Designed for a **quality-focused, international audience**

- A seamless blend of **gastronomy, culture, and natural splendour**

### DAILY SCHEDULE

- **Meeting Point:** Lucerne, Pier 5
- **Boarding:** 09:00 h
- **Welcome & Introduction:** 09:30 h
- **Departure:** 09:45 h
- **Return to Lucerne:** 13:45 h
- **End of Experience:** Approx. 14:00 h



# Fiji for Kids

A Destination Made  
for Family Fun!

*By Devender Grover,  
Editor in Chief, Travel Span*



**F**iji is not just a tropical paradise—it's a vibrant playground for families looking to create unforgettable memories.

This island nation offers a safe, welcoming, and exciting environment for children of all ages. From peaceful beaches to cultural adventures, Fiji effortlessly blends relaxation with excitement, ensuring both kids and parents have the vacation of a lifetime.





### Why Fiji is Perfect for Kids?

#### Safe & Calm Beaches

Fiji's idyllic coastline is made for family holidays. Its beaches are known for their gentle, shallow waters and soft, powdery sands, making it a haven for young swimmers. Parents can rest easy as their children splash and play in the warm, clear waters without worrying about strong currents or rough surf. The calm seas provide an ideal environment for safe, enjoyable family beach days.

#### Marine Adventures

Underwater exploration is one of Fiji's signature experiences, and it's made even more exciting for little ones. Kids can snorkel among a rainbow of fish, explore vibrant coral reefs or you can do scuba diving with the baby sharks for a more immersive experience. Certain resort provide immersive experiences like conservations of the Turtles, the corals and more, where children can learn about the importance of conservation while getting a close look at these gentle creatures.

#### Cultural Fun

Fiji is rich in culture, and there's no better way for kids to connect with the island's heritage than through hands-on experiences. Many resorts offer kid-friendly versions of traditional Fijian activities, such as learning local dances and listening to captivating stories passed down through generations. Kids are encouraged to become part of Fijian traditions, making it an educational and fun cultural experience.

#### Island Hopping & Cruises

Fiji is made up of more than 300 islands, and exploring these is one of the best ways to experience the country's diverse landscapes. Family-friendly boat trips allow for leisurely island-hopping, with plenty of stops for swimming, picnics, and fun. Whether on a day trip or a longer cruise, island-hopping in Fiji is a perfect adventure for the entire family to enjoy together.

#### Outdoor Thrills

Fiji's natural environment offers an array of activities designed for young adventurers. From zip-lining

through lush rainforests to kayaking in tranquil lagoons, active children will have endless opportunities to explore. Nature walks and eco-tours allow families to engage with the island's flora and fauna, while older kids may enjoy the thrill of jet boating or river tubing.

#### Fijian Cooking

What better way to immerse your family in local culture than by preparing a traditional Fijian meal together? A "Lovo" feast, where food is cooked underground, is a unique and delicious experience for kids. They can get involved in the preparation, from marinating meats to helping with the cooking process. The sense of teamwork and learning about traditional cooking methods is a highlight for many families.

#### Weaving & Crafts

Fijian craft traditions, such as weaving mats, baskets, and jewelry from natural materials, are a great way for children to develop their creativity. Many resorts offer workshops where







kids can make their own souvenirs, giving them a hands-on understanding of Fiji's rich cultural heritage. This tactile experience is not only fun but also educational, as they learn the importance of sustainability and craftsmanship.

### Storytelling by the Fire

Evenings in Fiji are a time for families to come together and enjoy the magical atmosphere. Gather around a fire to hear traditional Fijian myths and legends, told by local storytellers. These captivating tales of ocean creatures, warriors, and gods bring the island's rich history to life in a way that's both entertaining and enlightening.

### Family-Friendly Resorts & Activities

Fiji's hospitality is world-renowned, and many resorts are designed with families in mind. From kids' clubs and

babysitting services to kid-friendly pools and supervised activities, these resorts provide everything parents need for a stress-free getaway. Whether you're staying at an all-inclusive resort with a wide range of activities or a secluded beachside retreat, there's no shortage of options. While the little ones enjoy a day of arts and crafts or treasure hunts, parents can unwind, knowing their children are in safe hands.

Here are eight compelling factors why this island paradise is the ultimate family vacation destination.

#### 1. The Fijian People

The warmth of the Fijian people is one of the highlights of any trip to Fiji. Known for their friendliness and welcoming nature, locals will make you feel like family from the moment you arrive. Whether it's a warm 'Bula!' greeting or a heartfelt 'Isa Lei' farewell, the connection with Fijians makes the

entire experience feel personal and special.

#### 2. Kid-Friendly Resorts

Fiji's resorts are designed to cater to families, with a range of accommodations to suit every budget and preference. From luxurious beachfront resorts with kids' clubs to private villas perfect for family bonding, there's something for everyone. Kids will love the variety of activities available, including supervised games, nature walks, and even arts and crafts workshops.

#### 3. Adventure in the Great Outdoors

Fiji's rugged landscapes and beautiful beaches make it an adventure lover's dream. Whether it's hiking through lush rainforests, discovering hidden lagoons, or zipping across the canopy, there's always something for kids to explore. The natural beauty of Fiji is the perfect backdrop for outdoor fun and exploration.





## 4. Fascinating Culture

Fiji's rich cultural heritage is another major attraction. From traditional fire-walking ceremonies to lessons in local crafts, there's always an opportunity for families to learn something new. The fusion of indigenous Fijian, Indian, and European influences gives the country a unique and fascinating cultural identity.

## 5. Island Hopping

With over 300 islands to explore, Fiji offers unparalleled opportunities for island-hopping. Whether you're taking a leisurely boat ride or embarking on a private yacht charter, the Mamanuca and Yasawa Islands are easily accessible and perfect for a family day trip.

## 6. Fiji Time

Perhaps the greatest gift Fiji offers families is the chance to slow down and enjoy each other's company without the distractions of everyday life. "Fiji Time" is a reminder to savor the moment, whether you're watching the sunset from a beach or sharing a meal with loved ones. It's the perfect opportunity to recharge and create lasting memories.

## Child-Friendly Day Trips

Fiji is packed with family-friendly day trip options that provide unique experiences for children. Here are a few highlights:

- **Malamala Beach Club:** Spend the day at the world's first island beach club, where kids can snorkel, paddleboard, or jump off the jetty into the crystal-clear water.
- **Sigatoka River Safari:** A thrilling

jet boat adventure combined with an authentic cultural experience in a Fijian village.

- **Kula Wild Adventure Park:**

A wildlife conservation park where children can interact with native species and enjoy water slides.

- **Big Bula Waterpark:** A water park in Denarau with inflatable slides, perfect for families seeking an adrenaline rush.

- **Ecotrax Fiji:** A rail-biking adventure where families can explore Fiji's scenic coastline and enjoy a refreshing swim at a secluded beach.

Whether you're looking for thrills or relaxation, Fiji offers something for every family. A vacation here will not only entertain your kids but also immerse them in the island's unique culture, stunning nature, and warm-hearted people.

## Experience Loloma Hour, Fiji's "Happy Hour" for the Environment

In Fiji, true happiness isn't just about receiving; it's about giving back. Rooted in the spirit of sharing and connection, Fiji offers more than just stunning natural beauty and rich cultural traditions—it fosters genuine happiness through meaningful experiences that create a deep sense of belonging and contribution.

Enter *Loloma Hour*, Fiji's first-of-its-kind initiative designed to invite





visitors to spend an hour making a positive environmental, cultural, or community impact during their stay. Dubbed a “happy hour for the environment,” *Loloma Hour* draws on the Fijian word *Loloma*, which embodies generosity and love. It offers a simple but powerful way for visitors to engage with the land, ocean, and people, while contributing to preserving Fiji’s unparalleled beauty. Whether it’s planting mangrove trees, taking part in sea turtle conservation efforts, or learning traditional weaving, there are a host of activities available for those seeking a deeper connection to the islands.

*Loloma hour* is a great initiative for kids and family members to understand the importance of conservation in Fiji.

### A New Approach to Conscientious Travel

In a world where travelers are becoming increasingly aware of their environmental and social impacts, *Loloma Hour* presents an accessible way to align with Fiji’s broader sustainability goals. While tourism—whether by plane or cruise—inevitably contributes to emissions, *Loloma Hour* provides a meaningful counterbalance. It’s designed to amplify sustainability efforts across Fiji’s tourism industry, uniting resorts, hotels, and tour operators in the shared mission of



preserving the environment and cultural heritage for future generations.

“Fijians believe that true happiness comes not just from what you take, but also what you give,” says Srishti Narayan, Chief Marketing Officer at Tourism Fiji. “*Loloma Hour* gives visitors a chance to help preserve what makes Fiji so special—its people, environment, and traditions.”

Getting involved in *Loloma Hour* is easy. Children and Visitors can

participate through a range of partner resorts, hotels, and tour operators across Fiji, with activities organized into four key pillars: wildlife conservation, cultural engagement, reef protection, and coastline preservation. Families can join conservation walks, participate in marine research, or help protect endangered species. For those looking to connect with Fijian culture, there are opportunities to take part in traditional storytelling, weaving, and village programs. And for those with a love for the ocean, activities like coral planting, reef restoration, and beach clean-ups allow travelers to give back to Fiji’s pristine coastal environments.

Leading resorts such as InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, Six Senses Fiji, and Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort have already embraced *Loloma Hour*, offering guests a chance to make sustainability part of their experience. By integrating these activities into the guest experience, Fiji’s tourism industry continues to strengthen its commitment to sustainability, positioning the country as a global leader in responsible travel.

In Fiji, happiness comes naturally—for kids and parents alike!



Capella Bangkok

# Inside the **World's** Best Urban **Riverside** Retreat





*A Strategic Conversation with Josephine PNG, Executive Assistant Manager – Sales & Marketing, Capella Bangkok*

*In conversation with Devender Grover, Editor-in-Chief, Travel Span – Luxury & Lifestyle Travel*



In an era where modern travelers seek experiences layered in meaning, not just marble, Capella Bangkok has emerged as the **#1** The World's Best Hotels & The Best Hotel in Asia by The World 50 Best Hotels. Poised along the tranquil banks of the Chao Phraya River in the heart of Bangkok's cultural district, this urban sanctuary offers a fresh blueprint for hospitality—one that's rich in **emotional connection, cultural immersion, and sustainable luxury**.

**Capella Bangkok** has swiftly become the gold standard for ultra-luxury urban hospitality. This contemporary retreat blends exquisite design, heartfelt service, and immersive local experiences into a seamless expression of modern luxury.

With just **101 river-facing suites and villas**, including **seven private sanctuaries** (outdoor Jacuzzi plunge pool) Capella Bangkok offers the intimacy of a boutique property combined with the world-class amenities of a grand resort. Yet it's not simply the architecture or accolades that set Capella apart—it's the brand's unwavering commitment to emotional connection, cultural authenticity, and personalized service.

From Michelin-starred dining and bespoke wellness rituals to curated encounters with local artisans and communities, Capella Bangkok is more than a place to stay—it is a place to belong. For hospitality leaders seeking a case study in experience-driven excellence, Capella is not just a benchmark; it is an inspiration.

We sit down with **Josephine PNG**, the commercial engine behind Capella Bangkok, to uncover what makes this low-rise icon not just an award-winner—but a case study in the future of luxury hospitality.

**Q Josephine, Capella Bangkok has been crowned the world's best hotel. From a commercial leadership standpoint, what does such global acclaim translate to in terms of brand equity and business performance?**

**A:** It's a rare and transformative honor. For a property that's only been operating a few years, to be ranked #1 globally and in Asia speaks volumes—not just for our product, but for our philosophy. It immediately elevated our brand equity, drove significant organic PR, and boosted demand across key markets. More importantly, it validated our emotional luxury positioning, allowing us to justify a premium rate strategy, higher REVPAR, and long-stay trends. It's no longer about "filling rooms"—it's about delivering lifelong memory capital.

**Q Capella is often described as emotionally luxurious. What does that mean commercially?**

**A:** Emotional luxury is the new gold standard. It's about resonating with the heart, not just the wallet. For us, that means creating a highly personalized, soulful experience where guests feel deeply seen and valued. Commercially, this translates into industry-leading guest satisfaction scores, high repeat rates, and strong direct bookings. Our Net Promoter Score is one of the highest in the region.

**Q Your staff culture has been described as "family-style." How does this impact service quality and staff retention?**

**A:** Dramatically. We have over 350 team members for just 101 rooms, allowing for a deeply personalized guest journey. But beyond numbers, it's about culture. We invest in people as much as we do in infrastructure—nutritious meals, celebration days, ongoing training, and wellness support. Happy associates create exceptional guest touchpoints, and our retention

rate reflects that. It's a virtuous cycle of care.

**Q From a product standpoint, what makes Capella Bangkok architecturally and experientially distinct in a competitive luxury market like Thailand?**

**A:** Every room—101 in total—faces the river. We have 7 ultra-private riverside villas with outdoor private Jacuzzi plunge pools, private gardens, and dedicated entrances. The entire design philosophy is low-rise, residential, and tranquil. It doesn't just accommodate—it restores. Our rooms are flooded with natural light and connected to nature. This isn't "just another" city luxury hotel; it's a sanctuary of serenity crafted with intimacy in mind.

**Q How are you redefining the wellness experience for high-end urban travelers?**







Josephine PNG,  
Executive Assistant  
Manager – Sales &  
Marketing,  
Capella Bangkok





**A:** Wellness is no longer just a spa treatment—it's a state of being. At Capella, our **Auriga Wellness** is designed around tailored restoration. We offer hydrotherapy circuits, mindfulness

sessions, art therapy, mixology classes, and cultural workshops. It's all complimentary and seamlessly integrated into the guest stay. We've moved beyond passive pampering to active reconnection.

**Q** Let's talk about F&B. Capella Bangkok has made waves with its dining concepts. How strategic is F&B in driving both guest experience and profitability?

**A:** It's a core pillar. CÔTE by Mauro Colagreco is a two-Michelin-starred destination that drives both global visibility and high-ticket dining revenue. On the other hand, **Phra Nakhon** is about soulful Thai cuisine that draws in local residents and expats. Dining here is storytelling in action—each dish is narrative-driven. We see F&B not just as a service, but as a strategic vertical that enhances brand cachet, attracts destination diners, and converts into room revenue.

**Q** How is Capella engaging with local communities while remaining globally aspirational?

**A:** By becoming part of the neighborhood, not just a presence in it. We conduct guided food tours, work with local artisans, and host Thai



ceremonies and monk blessings. We see ourselves as cultural curators, not just hoteliers. This deep local integration appeals to global travelers seeking authenticity—not just aesthetics.

**Q How important is the Indian market in your overall segmentation strategy?**

**A:** Incredibly important. India offers volume, frequency, and high-spend potential. It's also a market that deeply values personalized service and meaningful experiences—two of our strongest suits. With strong air connectivity and a growing affluent segment seeking short-haul getaways, India represents both strategic volume and emotional affinity. We've curated exclusive cultural programs and stay offers to further appeal to this audience.

**Q Post-pandemic, sustainability is a top priority for luxury travelers. What is Capella Bangkok's approach?**

**A:** We call it “**Conscious Luxury.**”

From eliminating single-use plastics and sourcing locally, to optimizing design for natural airflow and light, every aspect is sustainability-focused. Guests are also invited to engage with local communities in meaningful, low-impact ways. It's about living beautifully—without compromise to people or planet.

**Q With only 101 keys and such a high staff ratio, how do you scale personalization without compromising efficiency?**

**A:** It's all about systemized intimacy. We use CRM intelligence, pre-arrival questionnaires, and real-time team communication to anticipate and exceed guest expectations. Whether it's monogrammed amenities, surprise celebrations, or curated itineraries, nothing is cookie-cutter. We've made small-scale our strategic superpower.

**Q Final Word: For fellow leaders in luxury hospitality, what's the key takeaway from Capella Bangkok's rise to the top?**

**A:** Know your soul—and never dilute it. Luxury today is not about price—it's about purpose. It's about how deeply you can connect with a guest, how gracefully you can tread on the planet, and how meaningfully you can tell a story. Capella Bangkok isn't successful because it's big or flashy. It's successful because it's **true.**

**Capella Bangkok – Fast Facts**

**101 rooms**, all river-facing

- **7 private villas** (Private Outdoor Jacuzzi plunge pool)
- **2 restaurants:** CÔTE by Mauro Colagreco (2 Michelin stars), Phra Nakhon (Thai homestyle)
- **Auriga Wellness** with hydrotherapy, vitality pool, bespoke therapies
- **Capella Culturists** curating guest experiences tied to Bangkok's heritage
- **Sustainability-first operations** and low-rise architectural footprint
- **#1** The World's Best Hotels & The Best Hotel in Asia by The World 50 Best





# Patina Maldives

## Where Luxury Meets Conscious Living and Artistic Immersion

*Redefining Island Indulgence -  
Luxury Reimagined in the Maldives:  
Travel Span's Devender Grover Talks  
with Christeena Thiruvinkal, Director  
of Marketing & Communications*

**W**ithin the spellbinding beauty of the Maldives' North Malé Atoll lies Patina Maldives, Fari Islands, the first – and flagship – luxury resort under Patina Hotels and Resorts, a transformative luxury brand from the award-winning Capella Hotel Group. Just a 45-min speedboat ride from Malé, sophisticated villas and contemporary studios crafted from nature's materials and pure creativity blend harmoniously with breathtaking outdoor spaces, interspersed with a stunning range of 13 culinary concepts that showcase diverse cuisines from Nordic-Japanese fusion to plant-based





creations. A private sanctuary that inspires immersive experiences, Patina Maldives is a transcendent journey into a destination of deep cultural character, connecting conscious travelers through originality, discovery and togetherness.

*"Luxury is no longer about chandeliers and crystal stemware. It's about transformation, purpose, and personal resonance. Patina Maldives is a living, breathing example of what the future of high-end hospitality looks like."*

– **Christeena Thiruvinkal**

**Q** Christeena, thank you for joining us. With so many luxury resorts in the Maldives, why should the well-travelled, experience-driven guest choose Patina? What's the essence of the brand?

**Christeena Thiruvinkal:** Thank you, Devender. Patina Maldives isn't

just a resort—it's a philosophy. Our core is built around the **"Perpetual Journey"**, a concept drawn from our logo, which reflects the four Ps / pillars: *Place, Pace, Perspective*, and the *Patina Spirit*. These are not just abstract ideas—they're lived experiences. At Patina, our guests don't just check in, they *transform*. They explore, reflect, and reconnect—with nature, with culture, and often, with themselves.

We're curators of experience. Yes, we have turquoise lagoons and iconic villas, but our purpose is to inspire. Whether it's through our **13 dining venues** (11 of which are Patina's, two shared with our neighbours at The Ritz-

Carlton), immersive art installations, or sustainability-led initiatives, we offer something no one else does—a luxurious space to evolve.

**Q** You mentioned transformative experiences. Let's talk about luxury—not in the traditional sense, but how you define it at Patina.

**Christeena Thiruvinkal:**

Absolutely. At Patina, we don't believe luxury is about perfection or polish—it's about authenticity and freedom. Our version of luxury allows you to *be yourself*, without the need to perform. You can wake up barefoot, sip espresso under James Turrell's awe-inspiring



Christeena Thiruvinkal, Director of Marketing & Communications

**“Amarta” installation**, or dine plant-based under the stars at *Roots* with a **net-zero footprint dinner**. This is high design with heart—an artful, soulful interpretation of luxury where every day is a new beginning.

**Q** You mentioned culinary earlier. For our readers—many of whom are global connoisseurs—what makes the gastronomic offering at Patina so distinct?

**Christeena Thiruvinkal:** We view food as both nourishment and narrative. Our **Roots restaurant** is a flagship of sustainable luxury. Every dish is consciously crafted, often from ingredients grown in our own gardens. Think: a seven-course tasting menu paired with organic wines—all prepared with *zero carbon emissions*. We also have a **burger truck, gelato**

**cart**, and high-touch chef-led venues like *Brasa* and *Helios*. It’s playful, thoughtful, and globally inspired. Dining at Patina is like attending a traveling dinner party—always fresh, never repetitive.

**Q** Sustainability is clearly not just a trend for Patina. Can you expand on your most innovative environmental initiatives?

**Christeena Thiruvinkal:** Sustainability is central to everything we do. We’ve eliminated single-use plastic, implemented refillable amenities, and are currently scaling up to source **60% of energy from solar power** for the entire **Fari Islands** by year-end. Our **coral restoration program** invites guests to participate in ceramic reef-building workshops. It’s hands-on conservation—restoring

beauty, reef by reef, with every guest leaving a literal mark beneath the surface.

**Q** What role does technology—especially AI—play in enhancing the guest experience?

**Christeena Thiruvinkal:** Technology should feel invisible yet empowering. We use AI to personalize guest stays, manage preferences, and reduce waste. Digital menus, in-villa service controls, and experience bookings are seamlessly handled through our mobile platform—cutting down paper use and enhancing convenience. For travel agents and partners, our booking interface is smart, intuitive, and backed by a team that believes in human touch with digital precision.











**Q** With art, architecture, sustainability, and personalization at the forefront, it feels like Patina offers more than a holiday—it offers a reawakening. Who is your ideal guest?

**Christeena Thiruvinkal:** Our ideal guest is *curious*. Someone who values depth over dazzle, who travels to expand rather than escape. Be it a creative, a CEO, a honeymooner, or a multigenerational family—we

see them not as visitors, but as co-creators of their journey. Patina is where you rediscover your rhythm—through nature, design, cuisine, and consciousness.

**Q** Final question—why should our most discerning readers consider Patina for their next travel chapter?

**Christeena Thiruvinkal:** Because Patina is not a place you simply stay at—it's a place that stays with you. It's where barefoot luxury meets intentional living. Where your values align with your indulgences. It's time the world experiences the Maldives not just as paradise, but as a **platform for personal evolution**. That's the Patina promise.

*“Patina Maldives offers a bold new blueprint for future-focused luxury—where art, sustainability, and soul converge beneath the Maldivian sun.”*

– **Christeena Thiruvinkal**



# Charting the Last Frontiers with Quark Expeditions

*Exclusive Interview Feature with Tenille Hunt Regional Sales Director APAC Quark Expedition - Antarctica & Beyond Quark Expeditions ”*

*Travel Span, Luxury and Lifestyle Travel Brand, By Devender Grover - Editor-in-Chief*

In a world where luxury often means predictability, Quark Expeditions offers something far rarer—authentic adventure at the ends of the Earth. For over three decades, this pioneering polar operator has led the charge into the frozen wildernesses of the Arctic

and Antarctic, guiding curious minds and courageous spirits through pristine, untamed landscapes. With purpose-built vessels like the *Ultramarine*, expert-led itineraries, and an unrelenting commitment to sustainability, Quark Expeditions redefines what it means to

travel with meaning. From observing penguins in the Antarctic Peninsula to flying over ice shelves in a helicopter, their journeys are not just about witnessing nature—but understanding it.

In this exclusive conversation, Devender Grover, Editor-in-Chief of





*Travel Span*, speaks with Tenille Hunt, Regional Sales Director (APAC), to uncover how Quark is capturing the imagination of a new generation of affluent travellers—including India's rapidly growing luxury adventure market.

**"Beyond the Ice—A Conversation with Tenille Hunt of Quark Expeditions"**

**Q** Tenille, welcome. Let's begin at the origin. What sets Quark Expeditions apart in the world of polar travel?

**A:** Thank you, Devender. Quark is polar only—polar is all we do. We've been operating exclusively in the Arctic and Antarctic for nearly 35 years. We were the first to take commercial travellers to the North Pole and the first to circumnavigate Antarctica by passenger vessel. Our expertise is deep, and our team's pioneering spirit continues to drive innovation in every voyage.

**Q** With so many expedition operators today, how does Quark offer a truly distinct experience?

**A:** We prioritize off-ship exploration. Our itineraries are dynamic designed around nature. We offer twice-daily excursions, which may include flight seeing, guided hikes, zodiac cruising, or adventure options such as kayaking or heli-landings. Our 1:6 guide-to-guest ratio ensures personalized exploration. This isn't passive cruising—it's full immersion.

**Q** Operating in extreme conditions must demand rigorous safety protocols. How do you ensure guest safety?

**A:** Absolutely. Safety is our top priority. Every journey starts with in-depth briefings. Our guides are polar veterans—some with over 16 years of field experience. We also run the Polar Travel Academy—the only formal polar training institute globally. It ensures our team stays ahead of both risks and guest expectations.

**Q** You've recently intensified your focus on the Indian market. Why now?

**A:** India's outbound travel market is surging. Indian travellers value

experience-rich, culturally authentic journeys, and polar travel fits perfectly. There's growing demand for "soft adventure"—exciting yet inclusive. We're also seeing more multigenerational travel, and Indians tend to book closer to departure. We're ready to meet that need.

**Q** What kind of onboard innovations can travellers expect from Quark Expeditions?

**A:** Our flagship, *Ultramarine*, is a game-changer. It has two twin-engine helicopters for aerial excursions—something few operators offer. We've also implemented the MAG system (Micro Auto Gasification), which reduces onboard waste by 95%. Across the fleet, we're constantly upgrading for both comfort and sustainability.

**Q** Speaking of sustainability, how does Quark balance exploration with ecological responsibility?

**A:** It's integral to our mission. We're founding members of IAATO and AECO—ensuring compliance with



the highest environmental standards. We partner with Arctic communities to support economic and cultural resilience and keep landings intimate, less than in the Antarctic, to minimize our footprint.

**Q Comfort matters—especially for high-net-worth travellers. What's the onboard experience like?**

**A:** Our vessels offer five-star luxury. Think penthouse suites, personalized service, and fine dining. But what's truly unique is the enrichment. Guests enjoy expert talks from scientists, historians, and even penguinologists! It's comfort and curiosity coexisting beautifully.

**Q How can Indian travellers and travel advisors best connect with Quark Expeditions?**

**A:** We operate globally, but for India, our Australia and UK teams provide direct support. We also partner with trusted Indian travel advisors to offer a seamless booking experience—whether for individuals or multigenerational groups. Our B2B systems are user-friendly and designed for quick turnaround.

**Q Looking ahead, what's your vision for the future of polar travel?**

**A:** Polar regions are more than destinations—they're global indicators. As awareness of climate and conservation grows, we expect more demand for educational, sustainable travel. Quark will continue to innovate, scale responsibly, and champion the preservation of these fragile ecosystems—ensuring

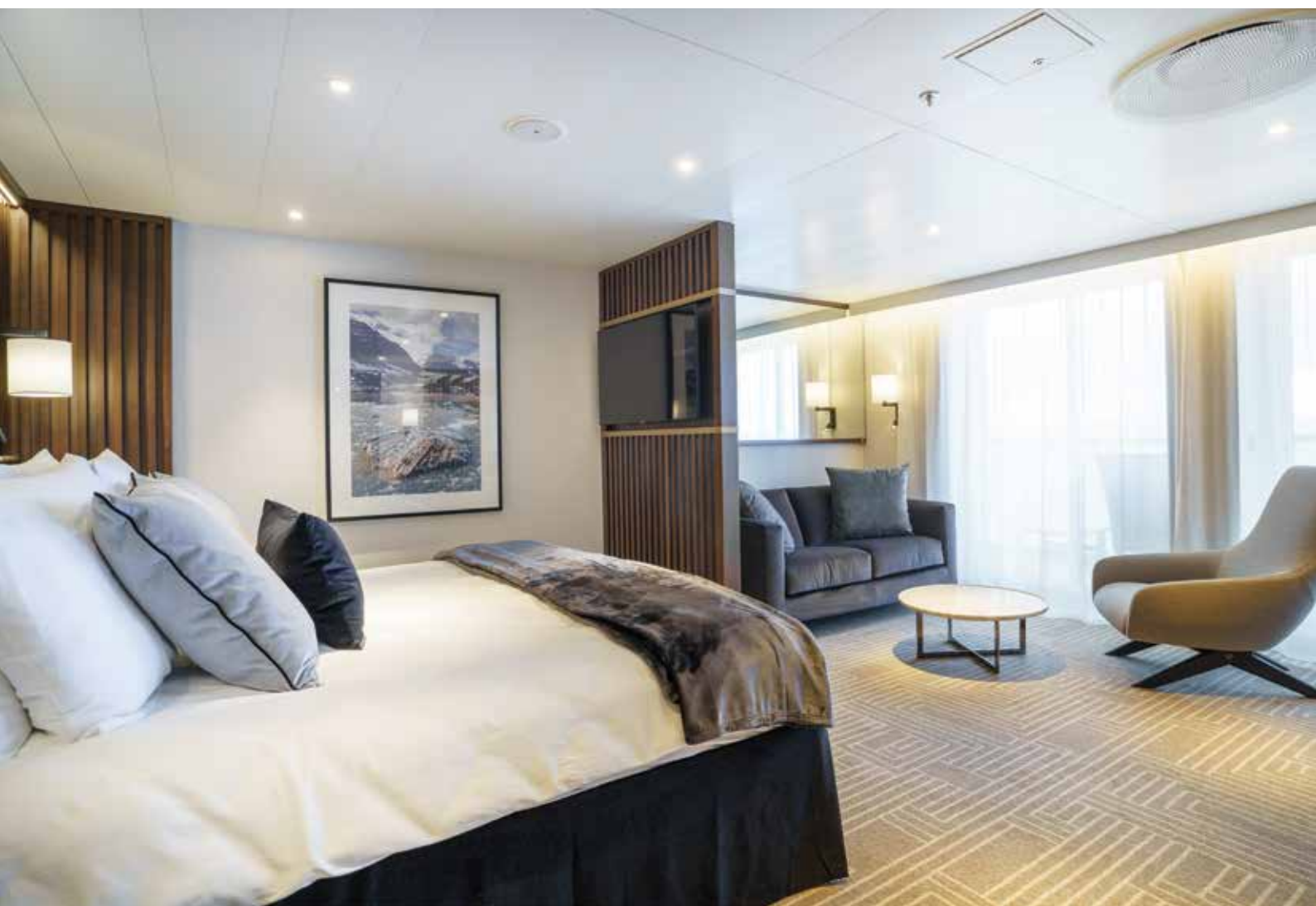
they remain accessible but not compromised.

**Q Why Quark Expeditions?**

**A.** Polar is all we do. We have a deep passion and love for these regions. And with 30 years specializing in polar-only travel, we have built the best team in the business, with the deepest knowledge and know-how.

**B.** Pioneering spirit, we were the first to do it. And, even today, our team continuously strives to push the boundaries of polar travel, with industry-first innovations, the most innovative itineraries and beyond.

**C.** More exploring, on-ship and off-ship. Whether on one of our expedition ships, in a helicopter, on a zodiac, kayak or bike, camping, hiking or immersing in a local cuisine or culture, our guides will get you closer, get you off-ship.





more and make your polar adventure unforgettable.

**D.** We flex for the best experience. We want you to leave the polar regions with stories to last a lifetime. The experience of our team and our unrivaled guide-to-guest ratio means we're able to remain agile, so each day you have more unforgettable moments.

#### Closing Insight

*For the discerning global executive or high-net-worth traveller seeking an authentic, transformative journey—Quark Expeditions is more than a travel company. It is a gateway to Earth's most awe-inspiring frontiers, curated with precision, delivered with passion, and led by purpose.*

*With over 20 years in the travel industry — and more than a decade focused on the planet's most remote frontiers — Tenille Hunt shares her*

*passion for polar exploration and the unique magic of traveling to the ends of the Earth.*

**Q Can you tell us a bit about your background and how you got involved in polar travel?**

**Tenille Hunt:** I'm originally from Melbourne, Australia, and I've been working in the travel industry for 20 years now. The last 12 of those years, I've specialised in polar expeditions. I first caught what we call the "Polar Bug" 12 years ago — and I've been hooked ever since. I've had the chance to join SIX expeditions so far, and each one has been a transformative experience. There's just something truly special about disconnecting from the modern world to reconnect with nature in such a raw and untouched environment.

**Q What is it about the polar regions that continues to draw you back?**

**Hunt:** The polar regions offer a kind of beauty and serenity you can't find anywhere else. The landscapes are vast and dramatic, the wildlife is extraordinary, and every expedition feels like a once-in-a-lifetime experience — even if you've done it before. It's also deeply humbling. You come back changed. It's a privilege to help others discover that for themselves.

**Q What do you enjoy doing when you're not working or on an expedition?**

**Hunt:** When I'm not working, I'm usually off somewhere exploring with friends on weekend getaways. I love sailing on Port Phillip Bay, browsing through local markets, enjoying live theatre, or visiting one of Victoria's



beautiful vineyards. I've always had a strong connection to travel, adventure, and discovery — whether I'm in Antarctica or just a few hours from home.

### **“5 Reasons the Arctic Should Be Your Next Adventure Destination”**

*A special conversation with Tenille Hunt, Regional Sales Director (APAC), Quark Expeditions*

**Q** Tenille, Arctic travel seems to be gaining momentum among luxury and niche travellers. Why should today's individuals consider the Arctic their next adventure destination?

**A:** The Arctic offers what few destinations can today: true remoteness, unspoiled natural beauty, and meaningful engagement with nature and culture. For travellers who have seen it all—from Mediterranean villas to African safaris—the Arctic delivers a rare, humbling perspective. It's a place where luxury isn't excess, but access. From private heli-landings on ice caps to Zodiac cruises through ice-choked fjords, the Arctic offers exclusivity in its purest form.

**Q** Let's start with its most dramatic draw—the landscape. How would you describe the Arctic's natural beauty?

**A:** Ethereal. Stark. Otherworldly. The Arctic landscape is a visual revelation. Imagine towering glaciers glowing blue, jagged icebergs adrift under golden midnight sun, and vast tundras echoing with silence. And then there's the Northern Lights—truly nature's grandest light show. For photographers, creatives, or anyone seeking clarity of mind, the Arctic's beauty is transformative.

**Q** Beyond the scenery, the Arctic is rich in wildlife. What can travellers expect on that front?

**A:** The Arctic is alive with unique, resilient wildlife. Polar bears, walruses, Arctic foxes, reindeer, and countless

bird species call this region home. And these aren't distant sightings through binoculars—our small expedition ships and expert guides bring guests up close, safely and respectfully. It's a rare privilege to witness a polar bear hunt or walruses lounging on ice flows in their natural habitat. These are moments that redefine one's connection to the planet.

**Q** For high-powered individuals used to structured lives, is there an adventurous side to Arctic travel?

**A:** Absolutely. The Arctic is tailor-made for active exploration, but with finesse. Picture kayaking through glacier-strewn bays, hiking ancient ridges, or even ice climbing. Our small expedition ships access secluded inlets where larger vessels can't go. For those who want adrenaline wrapped in elegance, the Arctic is an adventure playground—executed with Quark's meticulous standards of safety and style.

**Q** Culture and people may not be the first things that come to mind with Arctic travel. Can you share more on that?

**A:** That's a misconception we love to change. The Arctic is home to deeply rooted indigenous cultures that have thrived for centuries in harmony with

their harsh environment. Whether sharing a traditional “Kaffemik” (a Greenlandic coffee gathering) or visiting local museums and community projects in Greenland or Nunavut, travellers gain profound insights into resilience, sustainability, and cultural identity. It's enriching on a level that lingers far beyond the trip.

**Q** And finally, what makes Arctic travel such a unique luxury experience in today's saturated travel market?

**A:** True luxury is rarity—and few have experienced the Arctic. Unlike typical resort destinations, Arctic travel is deeply personal, intentionally slow, and utterly unpredictable in the best way. One day you may watch a calving glacier from the deck of a ship; the next, land on a remote ice field by helicopter. Each journey is unrepeatable. For elite travellers who value authenticity, privacy, and purpose, the Arctic offers a travel experience that is both grounding and exceptional.

As the world's most sophisticated travellers seek depth over dazzle, Quark Expeditions' Arctic journeys rise to meet that demand—with precision, integrity, and reverence for nature. For those ready to move beyond the ordinary, the Arctic is not just a destination—it's a revelation.



## FUSION HOTEL GROUP







Wellness, Originality, and  
Hospitality Reimagined

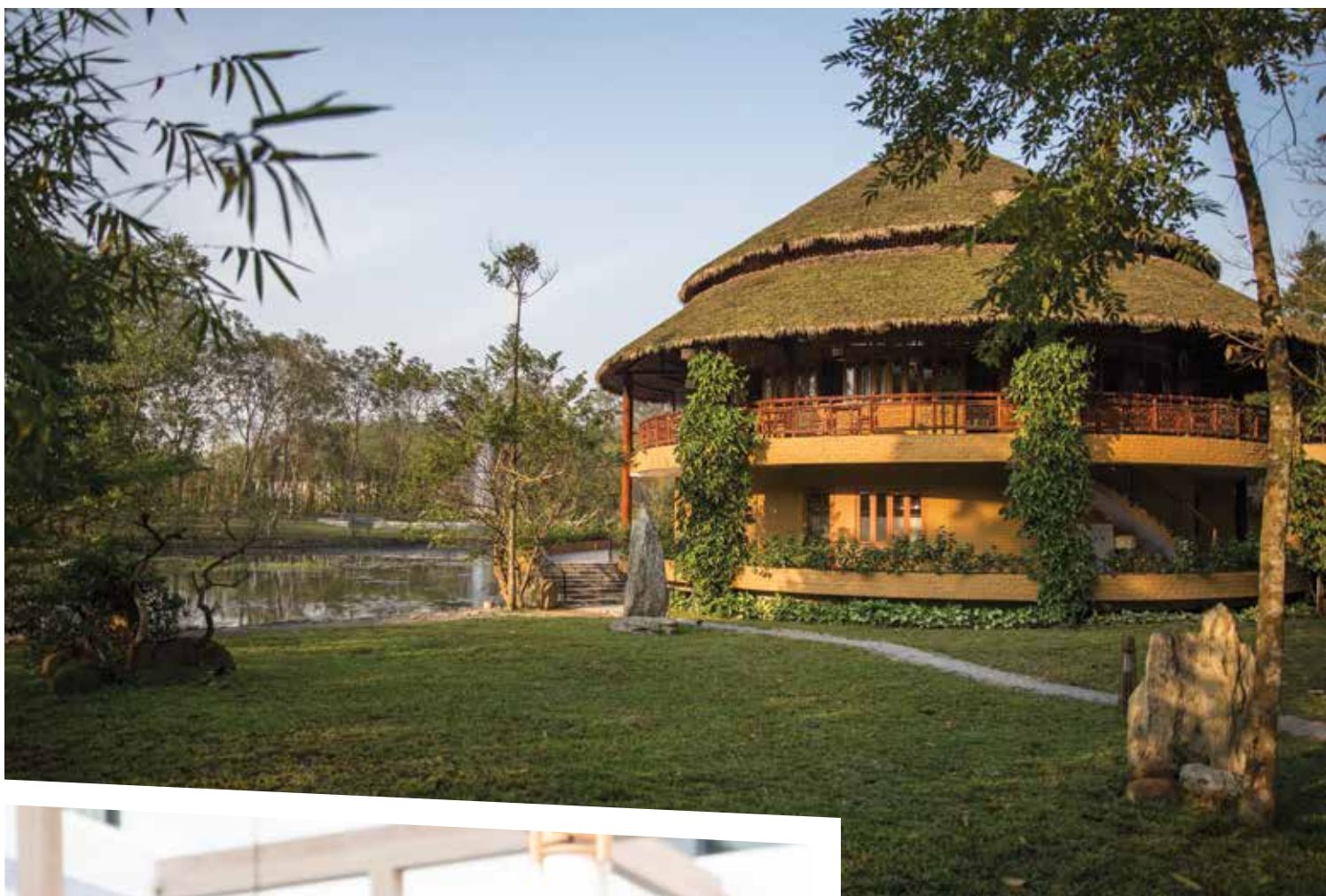
# Fusion Hotel Group

## Leads Vietnam's Luxury Evolution

In an era where the global hospitality landscape is rapidly transforming to meet the desires of the conscious traveler, **Fusion Hotel Group** has emerged as Southeast Asia's most compelling story in wellness-driven, experience-first hospitality. Founded in Vietnam in 2008, Fusion has distinguished itself with a disruptive model rooted in holistic well-being, design innovation, and authenticity. Today, it is the **only fully vertically integrated hospitality company** in Southeast Asia—crafting, operating, and managing its properties with a singular vision and precision that few in the industry can claim.

Pioneering the **'all-spa inclusive'** model and the now-iconic **'breakfast anywhere, anytime'** service, Fusion has steadily grown its footprint across Vietnam and Thailand, managing 22 hotels and resorts—including city escapes, beachside sanctuaries,





wellness retreats, and business hotels. With eight distinct brands under its umbrella—**Fusion Resort, Fusion Originals, Fusion Retreats, Fusion Suites, Fusion Residences, Fusion Collection, GLOW Hotels & Resorts**, and the newly launched **HIIVE**—Fusion offers a comprehensive ecosystem of hospitality that is tailored to diverse traveler personas. From the experiential millennial to the global CEO on a rejuvenation getaway, Fusion’s multi-segment strategy delivers design-forward environments and genuine hospitality that transcends typical brand homogeny.

At the heart of Fusion’s expansion is its commitment to **wellness as a lifestyle**, not merely a luxury add-on. Its properties provide guests daily spa treatments, healthy cuisine, nature-connected environments, and immersive local experiences,



seamlessly integrated into the guest journey. Now, with a keen eye on cross-border growth, Fusion is eyeing new markets across Asia—including Malaysia, Laos, Philippines, Cambodia, and the Maldives.

To steer this next chapter, **David Roberts**, an accomplished hospitality veteran with over 20 years of experience across Southeast Asia, has joined Fusion as its **new Chief Operating Officer (COO)**. Formerly with Onyx Hospitality Group and Dusit International, Roberts brings both granular operational know-how and macro-strategic foresight to the Fusion leadership team. Under his guidance, Fusion is primed not just for regional expansion, but for redefining wellness hospitality in the Asian context.

In an exclusive conversation with **Devender Grover**, Editor-in-Chief of *Travel Span*, David Roberts speaks candidly about Fusion's evolving

philosophy, its innovation playbook, cultural integration, and the vast potential of India's outbound luxury traveler.

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH  
DAVID ROBERTS - Chief Operating  
Officer, Fusion Hotel Group -  
Interviewed by Devender Grover,  
Editor-in-Chief, Travel Span**

**Q** David, Fusion Hotel Group is known for its luxurious yet modern design. Could you take us through the origin and evolution of this vision?

**David Roberts:** Absolutely. Fusion started as a luxury wellness concept, with our first flagship resort in Da Nang, Vietnam. The idea was to blend hospitality with holistic well-being, offering spa-inclusive stays. From there, we expanded across Vietnam, keeping wellness at our core. Our expertise in interior and experiential

design enabled us to evolve from pure wellness resorts to diversified properties, including mid-scale lifestyle hotels and upper-upscale boutique resorts—all grounded in our DNA of design, wellness, and originality.

**Q** What is the current brand philosophy that drives Fusion's operations and future direction?

**David Roberts:** Fusion is built on three core pillars:

- **Originality** – Not just in aesthetics but also in operations and service delivery.
- **Wellness** – It's our origin and still the core of many properties.
- **Nature** – We emphasize sustainability, from construction to operations, ensuring environmental responsibility and a strong bond with the local ecosystem.





**Q How does Fusion incorporate local culture into its guest experience and operations?**

**David Roberts:** Localization is central to our approach. We tailor design elements, sourcing, staffing, and even excursion curation to reflect each property's environment. Whether it's coastal or highland Vietnam or city centre in Thailand, we engage local artisans, businesses, and staff to ensure authenticity. This offers our guests a deeply immersive and place-specific experience, rather than a generic luxury stay.

**You pride yourselves on innovation.**

**Q How is Fusion leveraging technology to enhance guest experience?**

**David Roberts:** We're actively investing in digital infrastructure. We're developing a Fusion app with AI integration for seamless bookings, loyalty program, and in-destination concierge services. Technology changes rapidly, so we adopt a modular and evolving approach, ensuring relevance and ease of use.

**Q The Indian market is massive and influential. How do you view its potential for Fusion Hotel Group?**

**David Roberts:** I've spent two decades in Thailand and witnessed the tremendous growth of Indian outbound tourism there. Vietnam has just as much—if not more—potential in terms of destinations. Our wellness-centric and boutique outdoor wedding-friendly properties make us a natural fit for Indian travelers. The key barrier today is direct flight connectivity. Once that's addressed, we see India becoming one of our top feeder markets.

**Q Are you targeting Indian weddings and honeymoons in particular?**

**David Roberts:** Definitely. We already offer boutique outdoor wedding venues that align with the trend of smaller, experiential weddings. We're actively engaging with Indian agents and planners, especially in Mumbai and Delhi, to tailor offerings. As for

honeymoons, our romantic, immersive resorts are a perfect match.

**Q Personalized service is the future of luxury hospitality. How does Fusion define and deliver personalization?**

**David Roberts:** Understanding the guest is key. Each of our properties serves unique demographics. In Cam Ranh, we host many Korean travelers, so we organized Korean themes culinary events for special occasions. That's the level of personalization we aim for—culturally relevant, emotionally resonant experiences. As guest profiles diversify, so do our services.

**Q What is Fusion's current portfolio size, and what are the growth projections?**

**David Roberts:** We currently manage 22 hotels—18 in operation and 4 under development. By 2028, we aim to double our portfolio to 50 hotels. Presently, we manage about 4,000 rooms and project to reach 8,000—





10,000 rooms, depending on individual property sizes.

**Q What geographic markets are you targeting for expansion?**

**David Roberts:** We're focused on Southeast Asia—continuing in Thailand, and entering the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and possibly the Maldives and Sri Lanka. India remains a strong consideration, provided we find the right partner and property. Our goal is to become a regional hospitality leader.

**Q Your properties are known for unique guest experiences. What stands out the most?**

**David Roberts:** One standout is our spa-inclusive model—guests receive daily spa treatments as part of their stay. This wellness-centric offering creates memorable experiences, encouraging deeper relaxation and return visits. Moreover, we design each hotel to connect guests to local culture, food, and nature.

**Q Summing up, what is the key USP of Fusion Hotel Group—especially from an Indian traveler's perspective**

**David Roberts:** Our key USP is our ability to provide a diverse, yet cohesive hospitality experience across multiple destinations. With Fusion, an Indian traveler can experience an urban lifestyle hotel in Saigon, a wellness resort in the jungle, and a beachfront retreat, all under one trusted brand. No other operator offers such a breadth of experience across a single country like Vietnam.

**Q Is Indian cuisine part of your culinary offerings at this point?**

**David Roberts:** Currently, not significantly, because the Indian traveler volume is still growing for us. But as soon as that market reaches scale, we'll absolutely adapt. We've done it with Korean travelers and we'll do it for Indian guests. Our chefs are adaptable and we're ready to tailor menus to meet guest expectations.

**Q Finally, who is David Roberts—the man behind the brand?**

**David Roberts:** I've spent 25 years in hospitality, 20 of those in Thailand, which I believe offers the gold standard of service culture in Southeast Asia. I've worn multiple hats—GM, operations executive, and development leader. This mix of ground-level and strategic experience allows me to guide Fusion through both growth and guest experience excellence. It's also my first time stepping out of Thailand in two decades, and I'm excited by the new challenges and opportunities Vietnam presents.

**CLOSING REMARKS:**

As Fusion continues to expand its wellness-first, culturally embedded hospitality footprint across Asia, the arrival of David Roberts marks a new era of calculated, ambitious growth. For Indian luxury travelers seeking curated, wellness-rich, and story-driven escapes, Vietnam may just have found its perfect hospitality match.



## Homebound Puts Madhya Pradesh on the Global Cinematic Map

*Only Indian Film in Cannes' "Un Certain Regard" Highlights State's Growing Clout as a World-Class Filming Destination*

"Madhya Pradesh is not just a film location—it's a canvas for global storytellers."

—**Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla,**  
Principal Secretary, Tourism &  
Culture, Madhya Pradesh

In a moment of cinematic triumph for India, *Homebound*—a poignant feature film directed by Neeraj Ghaywan and **shot entirely in Madhya Pradesh**—received a **nine-minute standing ovation** at

the prestigious **78th Cannes Film Festival**. As the **only Indian entry in the festival's renowned "Un Certain Regard" section**, the film not only dazzled global critics but also turned the spotlight on Madhya Pradesh as a rising epicentre for international filmmaking.

Produced by **Dharma Productions** and backed by producer **Karan Johar**, *Homebound* marks the studio's **fifth major project filmed in the state**. With a cast that includes rising stars **Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa, and Janhvi Kapoor**, the film's premiere was

further elevated by the presence and endorsement of Oscar-winning filmmaker **Martin Scorsese**, adding international gravitas to its narrative and setting.

#HomeboundAtCannes  
#MadhyaPradeshOnScreen  
#IndianCinemaGlobalStage

### Why Global Filmmakers Are Turning to Madhya Pradesh

From Bhopal's lakes and Mughal-era palaces to the rustic charm of surrounding villages and dense forests, **Madhya Pradesh offers a uniquely versatile visual palette**—something filmmakers are increasingly seeking. But it's not just the scenery that draws directors. The state's **proactive film-friendly policies** are fast becoming the gold standard for cinematic collaboration in India.





According to **Shri Sheo Shekhar Shukla**, Principal Secretary, Tourism, and Managing Director of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, “*Madhya Pradesh has positioned itself as an ease-of-filming destination. Our streamlined permissions, financial incentives, and collaborative local communities create the perfect environment for visual storytelling.*”

The state’s **Film Tourism Policy**, launched to simplify and incentivize productions, is bearing significant fruit. Over **350 film and web productions** have been shot in the state since its inception, and more than **INR 24 crore** has already been disbursed in financial support to national and regional projects.

#FilmFriendlyIndia #ShootInMP  
#CreativeCapital

### Cannes Recognition, Local Impact

*Homebound*’s international reception is not merely a victory for its cast and crew—it signals a larger shift in how global cinema views **emerging creative destinations** like Madhya Pradesh. The film’s production team credited the state’s supportive

infrastructure, vibrant local talent, and logistical ease for making their creative vision possible.

Minister of State for Culture and Tourism, **Shri Dharmendra Singh Lodhi**, hailed the film as a milestone for the state. “*We are proud that an internationally recognised film has showcased the natural and cultural wealth of Madhya Pradesh. It reaffirms our commitment to nurturing a world-class filming environment.*”

#Cannes2025 #CinematicIndia  
#FilmTourismMP

### A Rising Star in Film and Cultural Tourism

For luxury travellers, cinephiles, and culture connoisseurs, Madhya Pradesh now offers more than historical monuments and wildlife sanctuaries—it is fast becoming an **experiential destination** where **travel and storytelling intersect**. With its **rich heritage, adaptive modern infrastructure**, and a **government actively fostering creative industries**, the state is ideal for both exploration and enterprise.

As the global travel and tourism

sector embraces experiential and content-driven itineraries, Madhya Pradesh’s growing cinematic presence offers a **new narrative-driven tourism opportunity**. From film location trails to curated cultural immersions inspired by cinema, the possibilities are as rich as the stories filmed here.

#ExperienceMP #FilmInspiredTravel  
#DestinationOfStories

### The Road Ahead: A Hub for Visionaries

With *Homebound* making waves at Cannes and Madhya Pradesh repeatedly proving itself as a production powerhouse, the trajectory is clear: the state is set to become a **permanent fixture on the global cinematic map**.

Whether you’re a **film investor, producer, luxury traveller, or cultural strategist**, Madhya Pradesh invites you to discover its **landscapes not just as locations, but as canvases for creativity**.

#CinemaMeetsCulture  
#MadhyaPradeshCalling  
#IndiaForFilmmakers

# Prague

## Ranks in Top Five Most Popular Meeting Destinations in World Again

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*The Czech capital has reaffirmed its position among the top 10 most sought-after meeting destinations in the world, despite the growing competition of Asian cities. This year's ranking is dominated by Vienna, followed by Lisbon, Singapore and Barcelona with Prague in fifth place.*





An analysis by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), which publishes the annual rankings, placed Prague on the 5th position based on the number of international association meetings held. Among European destinations, Prague is 4th and has improved by one position compared to last year. In total, more than 5,100 events took place in the Czech capital in 2024, which is 5% more in year-on-year comparison.

*“Prague achieved its position in the top five despite the growing competition from Asian cities, whose reappearance to the ranks of the most popular meeting destinations was slower than, for example, European cities,” says Roman Muška, Director of the Prague Convention Bureau, the organization that officially represents the Prague meetings industry, adding: “The improvement in Prague’s ranking for association congresses and conferences is a clear sign of the city’s dynamic recovery and growing appeal on the international stage. While the overall number of events globally has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels – as confirmed by ICCA data – Prague continues to outperform expectations and strengthen its position as one of Europe’s top meeting destinations.”*

*“2024 was a record-breaking year for Prague as well as for the Prague Congress Centre – not only in terms of economic performance, but also in the calibre of international events we hosted. From the world’s largest heart and lung transplantation congress (ISHLT) to global tech and business summits, we continue to be a place where ideas, industries and people connect and moments matter.” reviews Lenka Žlebková, CEO of the Prague Congress Centre. “Prague’s position among the world’s top five meeting destinations reflects what international organisers value most: professional infrastructure, innovation, and a clear focus on sustainability. Our continued investments in immersive technologies – such as a full-stage LED wall and advanced AV systems – have paid off as they enable us to deliver*

*world-class experiences that meet the highest expectations of the global event industry.”*

According to aggregated data from the Prague Convention Bureau and from the Czech Statistical Office, a total of 5,139 events of various types took place in the Czech capital in 2024, which is 5.1% more in year-on-year comparison. However, compared with the record year of 2019, this is 86.5% of all events held. *«Last year, the Prague events attracted more than 804,000 delegates, who, according to*

*and meeting facilities around the world. Other source markets include the United Kingdom, Germany and France,” concludes Roman Muška.*

According to the latest ICCA rankings, Czechia as a whole ranks among the world’s leading congress destinations – placing 21st globally. In addition to Prague, other cities are increasingly attracting the attention of organizers of professional and incentive events. For example, Brno improved its position by more than 30 places year-on-year, moving up to 112th

*While the overall number of events globally has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels – as confirmed by ICCA data – Prague continues to outperform expectations and strengthen its position as one of Europe’s top meeting destinations.*

*the statistics of the Prague Convention Bureau, spent an average of 2.27 days here and most frequently discussed topics from the fields of medical sciences, economics and finance, or IT and telecommunications,» says Roman Muška. The fact that the Czech capital excels in these topics is also confirmed by data from the International Congress and Congress Association. In the number of medical congresses held, Prague ranked fifth globally and in the number of technologically measured congresses, it ranked fourth. Prague is thus succeeding in fulfilling the direction set by the city as part of the Regional Innovation Strategy RIS3. «Our data also show that there was a year-on-year increase in local events, which accounted for 58.5% of international events. On the global scale, Prague is most often requested by organizers from the USA. This corresponds to Prague’s 9th place in the ranking of the American server event, which helps event organizers, especially from the USA, to find the most suitable destinations*

place. This development confirms the growing interest in destinations outside the capital and supports the trend of a more balanced distribution of tourism across regions.

*“Prague rightly maintains its position as a top congress destination in Europe and globally. What’s especially encouraging is the growing interest in other cities and regions throughout Czechia. From the perspective of sustainable tourism, this is a key trend. Through MICE events, we can motivate visitors to explore lesser-known locations and help spread tourism more evenly. Congresses also bring economic benefits, enhance the prestige of the host destination, and contribute valuable know-how that can benefit both the public and private sectors. Ultimately, this strengthens the stability of tourism and reinforces the perception of Czechia as an attractive, professional, and innovative congress destination,” says Director of the Czech Tourist Authority – CzechTourism František Reismüller.*

# Saudia Ushers in a “New Era” for Hajj with Revolutionary Services and Innovations



*Cutting-edge Products, Smart Travel Solutions & the World’s Coolest Ihram Redefine Pilgrimage for Millions*

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**S**audia, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, has entered into a “new era” in Hajj travel. With a bold and visionary approach, the airline is transforming the pilgrimage experience for 2025 and beyond — not only as a carrier but as a complete service partner for pilgrims worldwide.

This year, Saudia takes a historic leap forward. For the first time, it expands beyond air operations to play a central role in delivering a comprehensive Hajj experience. From dedicated flight operations to ground services and hospitality, Saudia is bringing innovation, care, and scale to one of the world’s most important journeys.

In preparation for the 2025 Hajj season, Saudia is allocating over one million seats utilizing a modern fleet of 158 aircraft. With a projected market share of up to 35%, the airline will serve pilgrims from over 100 global destinations.



The end-to-end travel experience is designed to maximize comfort and efficiency, from ticket issuance to streamlined arrival and departure processes. Saudia is also coordinating extensively with public and private sector partners to ensure smooth operations across all airport touchpoints, with more than 11,000 frontline staff and aircraft maintenance technicians mobilized to serve pilgrims across a 74-day operational window.

Hajj is expected to take place from June 4 to 9, 2025, depending on lunar observations. In accordance with official guidelines, pilgrims must be at least 12 years of age to participate.

**H.E. Engr. Ibrahim Al-Omar, Director General of Saudia, said:** *"Hajj remains one of our top national priorities. This year, we're proud to not only manage air operations at full capacity but to also extend our role to become a direct service provider to pilgrims. Through this expansion, we aim to deliver a holistic experience that meets the highest standards of care and hospitality." He continued, "We're investing over SAR 100 million in Makkah, Madinah, and the holy sites to provide pilgrims with thoughtfully curated service packages, to redefine the concept of Hajj service delivery, setting a new standard for excellence."*

This includes special accommodation, dedicated rest areas, restaurants, and coffee and snack lounges inspired by AlFursan lounges at the holy sites — all supported by multilingual

staff for seamless communication.

Among Saudia's most notable innovations this year is the launch of "The Coolest Ihram" — the world's first high-tech Ihram garment, introduced on World Creativity and Innovation Day. Designed in collaboration with Landor and brrr®, the garment features patented cooling minerals, active wicking, and rapid-drying technology that can reduce skin temperature by up to 2°C. It offers UPF 50+ protection while remaining fully compliant with Islamic requirements for both men and women, creating a safer and more comfortable environment for pilgrims under extreme conditions. It will be available to Saudia guests from June 2025.

Onboard, pilgrims can enjoy a range of thoughtful services during their journey, including diverse meal options, timely prayer and Miqat announcements, and specially curated instructional programs developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah. For those with special needs, Saudia provides accessible transportation, oxygen supply during the flight, and medical stretcher services—ensuring inclusive and dignified access to the pilgrimage.

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and Umrah. For those with special needs, Saudia provides accessible transportation, oxygen supply during the flight, and medical stretcher services—ensuring inclusive and dignified access to the pilgrimage.

To provide real-time updates and centralized services, Saudia Group has also launched the official Saudia Hajj and Umrah platform — a dedicated digital channel showcasing new products, pilgrim-

focused services, and innovations shaping the future of spiritual travel.

By combining scale, service, and smart innovation, Saudia is leading this new era of Hajj with purpose and precision. Backed by the resources and strategic vision of Saudia Group, the airline is not only supporting Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals — it is reimagining how millions experience this sacred journey.

## Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights Launches ZAIQA: A Taste of India



**M**ercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights is proud to announce the grand opening of Zaiqa, an authentic Indian cuisine restaurant that celebrates the rich and diverse culinary heritage of India. Set to open on April 7, 2025, Zaiqa promises an unparalleled dining experience in the heart of Kathmandu, with a launch graced by the esteemed presence of **Actress Ms. Manisha Koirala as the Chief Guest.**

Zaiqa brings together the artistry of Executive Chef Mukesh Singh and the mastery of Sous Chef Mohammad Ahmad, offering a carefully curated menu that pays homage to India's time-honored traditions while embracing a touch of modern elegance.

*Speaking on the launch of Zaiqa, Vijay Nanmaran*

**S., General Manager of Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights, expressed his enthusiasm,** "Zaiqa is more than just a restaurant — it is a gateway to India's culinary heritage, reimagined in an elegant and contemporary setting. We are thrilled to introduce this exceptional dining experience to Kathmandu and offer Indian travelers a taste of India while exploring Nepal's vibrant culinary capital. Our talented chefs have curated a menu that promises to take guests on an unforgettable journey through India".

Zaiqa's menu showcases the depth and variety of Indian cuisine, blending bold spices with refined cooking techniques. Signature dishes such as Murgh Shahjhani, Nalli Nihari, and Kasundi Jhinga are crafted with passion and precision, ensuring an extraordinary gastronomic journey. Beyond its exquisite culinary offerings, Zaiqa delivers an immersive dining experience with elegant interiors, private dining rooms, and personalized service, including private butlers and an interactive chef's table — making it the perfect venue for intimate gatherings and memorable celebrations.

Perched on the 10th floor, Zaiqa offers stunning views of Kathmandu's skyline, enhancing each meal with a sense of grandeur and tranquility. Whether you're a passionate foodie, a lover of Indian cuisine, or an explorer seeking a unique dining atmosphere, Zaiqa promises to be a landmark destination in Kathmandu's vibrant dining scene.

With the opening of Zaiqa, Mercure Kathmandu Sukedhara Heights reaffirms its commitment to providing guests with diverse and refined culinary experiences.

## Zaal Choksi Appointed Business Development Manager for Titlis Cableways in India

*New Role Focused on Expanding Market Reach for Iconic Swiss Destination*

**T**itlis Cableways has announced the appointment of Zaal Choksi as Business Development Manager for its India operations. In his new role, Choksi will be responsible for expanding the company's business model and exploring new sales channels to promote Mt. Titlis, one of Switzerland's most

renowned mountain excursions.

Choksi holds a Master's degree in Business Communication with a specialization in Tourism from the University of Lugano in Switzerland. His academic background and international exposure are expected to support Titlis Cableways' strategic push to strengthen its footprint in the Indian travel market.

Mt. Titlis, famed for its glacier experiences and panoramic views, continues to be a top attraction for Indian tourists visiting Switzerland. Choksi's



appointment is seen as a key move in capitalizing on this growing interest.





# Meliá Hotels International Launches 'Atithi Program' to Elevate Indian Group Travel Across Europe

In a strategic move to deepen its cultural engagement and expand its footprint among Indian travelers, **Meliá Hotels International** has officially launched the **Atithi Program** — a bespoke initiative designed to deliver authentic, culturally attuned hospitality for Indian groups journeying through Europe.

Unveiled with a focus on weddings, corporate retreats, and celebratory group travel, the Atithi Program blends Meliá's decades of excellence in international hospitality with thoughtful, personalized service tailored specifically to Indian tastes and traditions.

## A Portfolio of Properties with Cultural Finesse

The program is backed by a curated selection of Meliá properties across top European cities — each well-versed in hosting Indian events and experienced in group logistics. Participating hotels include:

- **Austria:** Meliá Vienna
  - **Germany:** Meliá Berlin, Meliá Frankfurt
  - **France:** Meliá Paris La Défense
  - **Italy:** Meliá Milan
  - **Spain:** Meliá Barcelona Sarrià, Meliá Barcelona Sky, INNSIDE Barcelona Apollo, Meliá Madrid Castilla, Meliá Madrid Serrano, Meliá Madrid Princesa, Meliá Sevilla, Meliá Lebreros, Gran Meliá Palacio de Isora in Tenerife, and Meliá Valencia
  - **United Kingdom:** Meliá White House, London
- Each location boasts central access, modern event infrastructure, and multilingual staff trained in delivering seamless experiences for Indian guests — from ceremonial needs to business conference standards.

## Atithi Cuisine: A Culinary Homecoming

A standout feature of the program is **Atithi Cuisine**, a signature menu curated to bring familiar flavors

from India to the European table. Guests can expect beloved dishes such as Butter Chicken, Rogan Josh, Paneer Kadai, Chole, and Rajma — all crafted with authenticity and finesse by culinary teams trained in Indian gastronomy.

This offering ensures that Indian travelers — whether attending a multi-day wedding or an executive strategy retreat — can feel at home in both palate and service.

## "A Tribute to Indian Hospitality"

Speaking about the initiative, a spokesperson for Meliá Hotels International remarked:

*"The Atithi Program is more than a service — it's a tribute to India's rich tradition of hospitality. It reflects our commitment to cultural understanding and our dedication to making every Indian guest feel genuinely welcomed."*

As Indian outbound tourism continues to grow, particularly among affluent groups seeking bespoke international experiences, the Atithi Program positions Meliá as a preferred hospitality partner for Indian travelers navigating Europe.

For Indian families planning destination weddings, corporates hosting global offsites, or groups celebrating milestone occasions, Meliá's Atithi Program offers not just a stay — but a culturally immersive experience rooted in warmth, care, and elevated service.

# From Riyadh Winters to Red Sea Summers: Inside Saudi Arabia's Travel Revolution

*Saudi Arabia's Groundbreaking Year-Round Tourism Strategy*



In an era when many destinations grapple with seasonality—quiet winters or scorching summers—Saudi Arabia is charting an entirely different course. Once known to international travelers mostly for its spiritual and business appeal, the Kingdom has emerged as a compelling 365-day tourism destination. This isn't just a marketing push—it's a carefully orchestrated reinvention. And it's working.

Welcome to the new Saudi Arabia: a land of unexpected climates,

immersive festivals, tailored itineraries, and a tourism calendar without gaps. Whether you're a mountain chaser, cultural connoisseur, or desert wanderer, there is now *always* a reason to go.

## Turning Seasons into Strategy

What makes Saudi Arabia's tourism transformation so distinct is its unapologetically strategic use of geography and culture. Most countries offer a peak season. Saudi Arabia offers multiple.

In the sun-baked heart of summer, when traditional Middle Eastern destinations slow down, Saudi Arabia's southwestern highlands—particularly Asir and Abha—spring to life. Misty mornings, lush valleys, and a refreshing alpine-like climate create a natural draw for those escaping the heat. Local summer festivals spotlight regional crafts, music, and folklore in settings that surprise even seasoned travelers.

When winter arrives, Riyadh and Jeddah shift into the spotlight. These cosmopolitan hubs become



playgrounds for international events—Riyadh Season dazzles with concerts, e-sports tournaments, and immersive art, while Jeddah welcomes film lovers from around the globe to its Red Sea Film Festival. AlUla, with its desert glamour and ancient Nabataean ruins, hosts polo matches, fashion galas, and archaeological exhibitions under star-strewn skies.

Saudi Arabia doesn't hibernate. It rotates.

### **Climate Diversity: The Kingdom's Natural Ace**

Stretching from the temperate Red Sea coastlines to mist-laced mountain ranges and vast, shifting deserts, Saudi Arabia holds within its borders an incredible spectrum of climates. This geographical range forms the backbone of the Kingdom's all-season appeal.

Unlike destinations locked into a single weather pattern, Saudi Arabia's diversity allows tourism to pivot with precision. Think tropical diving in Umluj while snow flirts with the mountaintops of Tabuk. Or camel racing in winter dunes as spring wildflowers bloom near Al Baha.

This isn't luck—it's leverage.

### **A New Breed of Tour Operator: Saudi Trips**

One of the engines behind this year-round boom is **Saudi Trips**, a trailblazing brand under the Almatar Group that is redefining seasonal travel planning. Drawing on data, local knowledge, and real-time climate insights, Saudi Trips crafts itineraries that evolve month to month.

In July? Explore forested mountain trails or head offshore to Red Sea coral reefs. In January? Take in desert concerts or culinary pop-ups during Riyadh Season. This fluidity eliminates the notion of a "best time to visit"—because *every* time becomes the best time.

The result? Elevated traveler satisfaction and a tourism model built for resilience.

### **Event Culture with Global Pull**

A key driver of Saudi Arabia's

momentum is its investment in large-scale events that span seasons and demographics.

The winter calendar teems with activity: from global sports like Formula E and international football matches to art biennales and culinary festivals. Meanwhile, summer is no longer the Kingdom's downtime. Instead, it's a season of local discovery—wellness retreats in Abha, night markets in Taif, and heritage tours through the cool plateaus of Najran.

Events are no longer seasonal spikes. They're a permanent feature of Saudi Arabia's tourism DNA.

### **Aviation & Infrastructure: Matching the Momentum**

Tourism cannot flourish without access—and the Kingdom is keeping pace. Flag carriers like **Riyadh Air** and **Saudia** have rapidly expanded seasonal and year-round routes, linking emerging hotspots like AlUla and Abha to Europe, Asia, and North America.

Simultaneously, major airports are evolving. King Khalid International in Riyadh and King Abdulaziz International in Jeddah now offer smart immigration, multilingual traveler services, and expedited visa processing. This infrastructure ensures that a year-round invitation is matched by a seamless arrival.

### **Hospitality That Moves With the Seasons**

Saudi Arabia's hospitality sector is adapting to seasonal demand with nimble precision. Eco-resorts are popping up along the Red Sea, where mangroves meet luxury. In the highlands, boutique lodges reflect the region's stone-and-cedar architecture, while Riyadh's five-star skyline continues to expand for business travelers and winter tourists alike.

Notably, projects like **The Red Sea Global** and **Diriyah Gate** fuse sustainability with world-class design—making them as responsible as they are aspirational.

### **Accessible, Inclusive, Spontaneous**

Part of Saudi Arabia's appeal lies

in its dramatically overhauled travel policy. Travelers from over 60 countries can now apply for an eVisa online, with no restrictions on entry times or peak/off-peak access.

This flexibility supports spontaneous travel, solo explorers, and family trips alike. Enhanced airport services, growing public transport links, and inclusive tour offerings mean Saudi Arabia is no longer perceived as exclusive or hard to navigate. It's easy, diverse, and increasingly cosmopolitan.

### **The Emotional X-Factor**

Beyond logistics, what keeps travelers returning is emotional resonance. Each visit to Saudi Arabia offers a different mood, a different moment.

In spring, wadis bloom. In summer, mountain clouds roll in. In fall, old towns glow with festivity. In winter, city streets crackle with creativity. The destination transforms, and so do the experiences.

For today's niche travelers—those who seek meaning over mass, transformation over routine—Saudi Arabia offers what few destinations can: *a place that feels new, every single time.*

### **Final Thoughts: Not Just a Destination—A Calendar**

Saudi Arabia's tourism revolution isn't a fleeting campaign—it's a structural shift. The Kingdom has taken what many considered limitations (arid summers, vast distances, underexplored regions) and turned them into unmatched strengths.

For travel professionals, it means reliable demand and a wider window of opportunity. For travelers, it means more chances to connect with culture, climate, and community—on their own terms.

In the world of global travel, where off-seasons often mean off-limits, Saudi Arabia is quietly rewriting the rules. And the message is clear:

**This is no longer just a place to visit. This is a place to return to, season after season.**

# TBO Tek Ltd Reports Record FY25 Results as Hotel Segment and Global Expansion Drive Performance



**TBO Tek Limited** (BSE: 544174 | NSE: TBOTEK), a leading global travel distribution platform, has announced a stellar set of financial results for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025. Riding on the momentum of international growth

and a surging Hotels & Ancillaries segment, the company continues to fortify its position as a tech-driven force in global travel commerce.

The company posted an impressive **25% year-on-year growth in revenue** from operations, reaching

**INR 1,737 crore**, while **Adjusted EBITDA** climbed **22% to INR 329 crore**. Total **Gross Transaction Value (GTV)** for the year crossed a significant milestone at **INR 30,832 crore**, reflecting **16% growth** over FY24 and signaling strong volume

growth across regions and services.

## Strategic Growth Anchored by Hotel Segment Surge

A highlight of TBO's FY25 performance was the rapid scaling of its **Hotels & Ancillaries vertical**, which



has become an increasingly important revenue driver. In India, hotel-related bookings grew in double digits during the second half, and globally, the segment has contributed significantly to the overall GTV mix.

Key developments in the Hotels segment include:

- **H-Next**, TBO's next-generation hotel booking platform, has been fully deployed in the Indian market and is now live in select global geographies. Early customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with notable improvements in booking conversions.
- The company continues to invest in **AI-driven automation**, particularly in backend functions, to streamline supplier communication and improve operational efficiency.
- A major expansion of on-ground sales infrastructure took place, with **73 new hires across 32 countries**, reflecting a commitment to scaling local presence alongside global ambitions.

#### Global Expansion Continues at Breakneck Speed

TBO's international strategy has delivered strong returns. **International GTV grew by 43% year-on-year**, underpinned by explosive growth in key regions:

- **Europe:** +70% YoY growth
- **Asia-Pacific (APAC):** +66% YoY
- Middle East and the Americas also posted double-digit growth, underlining the platform's diversified demand base.

The company has added **15 new countries** to its operational footprint in FY25, and now serves buyers and suppliers across more than **150 countries**, reinforcing its role as a truly global distribution ecosystem.

#### Quarterly Highlights: Q4 FY25 Snapshot

Even as macroeconomic headwinds persist in certain regions, TBO Tek posted solid results in the final quarter of the year:

- **Q4 GTV:** INR 7,788 crore, a 4% YoY increase
- **Q4 Revenue:** INR 446 crore, up 21% YoY
- **Q4 Adjusted EBITDA:** INR 79 crore, up 15% YoY
- **Q4 PAT:** INR 59 crore, up 27% YoY

This consistent quarterly performance reflects a robust and agile business model that can adapt to fluctuating travel trends and seasonal demand cycles.

#### Financial Strength Supports Aggressive Expansion Plans

TBO Tek continues to maintain a **strong balance sheet**, with over **INR 1,450 crore in cash and cash**

**equivalents** (including fixed deposits and liquid funds). This liquidity provides a solid foundation for both **organic expansion** and **inorganic growth opportunities**, including potential acquisitions and new technology deployments.

The company also appointed a new **Sales Leader for North America**, a key move that aligns with its goal to deepen penetration in one of the most lucrative travel markets globally.

*"Our Hotels & Ancillaries vertical isn't just growing—it's reshaping how global travel is booked, sold, and experienced."*

—Ankush Nijhawan,

Co-founder & Joint Managing Director, TBO Tek Ltd

*"We are not just expanding geographies—we are deepening value, efficiency, and personalization through AI-driven innovation."*

—Gaurav Bhatnagar,

Co-founder & Joint Managing Director, TBO Tek Ltd

In India, TBO conducted extensive **stakeholder engagement initiatives**, felicitating its top-performing agents across more than **40 cities**. This continued focus on partner recognition and loyalty strengthens its vast distribution network.

#### Leadership Vision: Targeting Market Leadership

Commenting on the performance, **Mr. Ankush Nijhawan**, Co-founder and Joint Managing Director of TBO Tek Ltd, said:

"Our Hotels & Ancillaries segment continues to gain momentum, supported by a

clear consumer shift towards high-value, experiential travel. With cross-sell initiatives and growing outbound demand, we are strategically placed to sustain profitable growth in the Indian market and beyond."

**Mr. Gaurav Bhatnagar**, Co-founder and Joint Managing Director, added:

"FY25 laid the groundwork for rapid global expansion. Our growth in Europe and APAC demonstrates that our platform and strategy are working. Our ongoing investment in AI and technology is already enhancing customer experience and operational efficiency—key to achieving our long-term goal of global market leadership."

#### About TBO Tek Ltd

Founded as a platform to simplify travel commerce, **TBO Tek Limited** connects a vast network of over **189,000 travel buyers** with **more than one million suppliers** in over **150 countries**. The platform facilitates seamless transactions across air travel, hotels, transfers, car rentals, cruises, insurance, and more—catering to both B2B and enterprise clients.

Through a two-sided technology model, TBO empowers suppliers to set prices and manage inventory, while offering buyers a powerful, integrated, multi-currency, and multilingual interface to book travel globally. This includes segments such as leisure, corporate, and religious travel.

For more details, visit **www.tbo.com**

# Korea Tourism Organization Wraps First Leg of 2025 India Roadshow, Showcasing Cultural Charm and Trade Collaboration



*Kolkata, Kochi, Chennai, and Bengaluru Events Strengthen Korea's Presence in the Indian Outbound Market*

**T**he Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) India has successfully concluded the first leg of its ambitious **four-city Korea Tourism Roadshow 2025**, held across April and May in key Indian metros. Designed to strengthen Korea's presence in India's outbound tourism market, the series made impactful stops in **Chennai (April 23), Bengaluru (April 25), Kolkata (May 21), and Kochi (May 23)**.

Each city hosted a robust lineup of **over 10 Destination Management Companies (DMCs) from Korea**, who engaged directly with India's top-tier travel professionals through **dedicated B2B Travel Marts** and the signature **K-Gala Nights**, a cultural and culinary celebration of

Korea's vibrant identity.

## **Building Cultural Bridges Through Trade**

The roadshows marked a strategic outreach by KTO India into **southern and eastern Indian markets**, aiming to forge new partnerships and reinforce Korea's positioning as a diverse, experience-rich travel destination. Travel agents across **leisure, luxury, FIT, and GIT segments** took part in immersive destination presentations and face-to-face networking sessions that laid the groundwork for future collaborations.

In **Kolkata and Kochi**, participants were treated to a dynamic performance by **The Painters**, a globally acclaimed Korean art performance troupe

known for blending visual storytelling with live art and theatre. Their show served as a cultural highlight of the roadshows, drawing widespread applause and underlining Korea's creative appeal beyond traditional tourism.

## **A Personal Touch to Korean Hospitality**

Speaking on the success of the roadshow series, **Mr. Myong Kil Yun**, Regional Director for India & SAARC Countries at KTO, stated:

*"Our goal through these roadshows has been to create meaningful, long-term relationships with the Indian travel trade and to showcase Korea's evolving offerings in a fresh and culturally immersive way. We are grateful for the overwhelming response in all four cities*

*and remain committed to supporting our trade partners in expanding Korea's footprint in India's outbound travel landscape."*

Each event featured a **Korea-themed promotional booth**, inspired by the country's traditional markets, where guests experienced the richness of Korean street food and local snacks — a nod to the culinary authenticity that increasingly draws Indian travellers to Korea.

## **Strategic Collaborations and Future Focus**

The success of the 2025 roadshows affirms KTO India's continued focus on **deepening bilateral tourism ties** and building a solid framework for future growth. As in-person travel trade engagements make a strong return post-pandemic, the human connection and cultural storytelling emphasized in these events are key to shaping destination preference in competitive outbound markets like India.

With future engagements already in the pipeline, KTO India remains committed to expanding Korea's visibility through targeted activations, trade support, and cultural diplomacy — ensuring Korea is not just a destination, but a compelling story waiting to be explored.



# FLY91 Launches Direct Flights Between Goa and Solapur, Expanding Access to Maharashtra's Spiritual and Industrial Heartland



*Maharashtra.”*

Located in south-western Maharashtra, Solapur is a prominent textile and manufacturing centre, while also serving as a gateway to five of the state's most revered pilgrimage destinations: Pandharpur, Tuljapur, Akkalkot, Gangapur, and the Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga. The new air link offers pilgrims, domestic tourists, and business travellers a time-efficient, reliable alternative to long road journeys.

The Goa–Solapur route exemplifies FLY91's broader mission to connect tier II and tier III destinations with major urban centres, a vision closely aligned with India's UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) regional connectivity scheme.

Based at **Manohar International Airport in Goa**, FLY91 currently connects key cities like Hyderabad and Pune to regional destinations including Jalgaon, Sindhudurg, and now Solapur. The airline operates with a focus on punctual, efficient service tailored to the needs of regional India.

FLY91 has extended its gratitude to the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**, the **Government of Maharashtra**, the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation**, the **Airports Authority of India**, **Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited**, and other stakeholders whose support has enabled the airline's continued growth into new markets.

As FLY91 continues to expand, niche travelers—be they spiritual seekers, regional entrepreneurs, or off-the-map explorers—can look forward to discovering India's lesser-known destinations with greater ease than ever before.

*India's emerging regional airline deepens its network with new route enhancing last-mile connectivity*

FLY91, India's dedicated regional carrier, has announced the launch of direct flights between Goa and Solapur, further cementing its role as a key enabler of last-mile air connectivity across India's underserved regions. The new route, now open for bookings, marks another milestone in FLY91's expanding network, which now spans eight destinations across the country—including four in Maharashtra alone.

With Solapur joining Pune, Jalgaon, and Sindhudurg on FLY91's Maharashtra roster, the airline is

steadily strengthening regional air access in a state with both growing economic potential and rich cultural heritage. The Goa–Solapur connection is poised to serve a diverse mix of passengers—from pilgrims and industrial travelers to tourists exploring inland Maharashtra.

*“Solapur is more than just an industrial hub—it's a vital stop on Maharashtra's pilgrimage map,”* said **Manoj Chacko, MD and CEO of FLY91**. *“By launching direct flights from Goa, we're creating a seamless link between the vibrant tourism of the Konkan coast and the spiritual and commercial pulse of southern*

# Thailand Launches 'Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival' to Celebrate Pride Month and Pioneer Inclusive Tourism in Asia



As Pride Month 2025 approaches, Thailand is making headlines with one of its most ambitious tourism campaigns to date: the **Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival**. Backed by the Royal Thai Government and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), this month-long, nationwide celebration marks a historic moment for LGBTQIAN+ rights and cements Thailand's reputation as one of Asia's most welcoming and inclusive travel destinations.

## A Groundbreaking Year for Equality and Tourism

The festival arrives on the heels of Thailand's landmark legalization of same-sex marriage, which came into effect earlier this year.

The new law, amending Section 1448 of the Civil and Commercial Code, legally recognizes marriages between same-sex couples — a first for Southeast Asia. This historic legislation has not only elevated Thailand's human rights standing but also invigorated its tourism strategy to actively embrace diversity, equality, and inclusion.

"The Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival is more than a celebration—it's a testament to the country's ongoing commitment to human rights and equality," said **Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, Governor of TAT**. "We are inviting travelers of all gender identities and orientations to experience a Thailand where love is truly without labels."

## Voices from the Community

Local LGBTQIAN+ advocate **Niran Charoensuk**, director of *Rainbow Rights Thailand*, highlighted the significance of the festival:

"This is a pivotal moment for our community. The legal recognition of same-sex marriage combined with nationwide Pride celebrations sends a powerful message of acceptance and belonging—not only to Thai citizens but to visitors worldwide. It's a clear signal that Thailand is a safe, joyful, and inspiring place to be yourself."

## A Festival Spanning the Entire Nation

From bustling Bangkok to the serene islands of the south, the Love Wins Festival spreads across the



country, offering a vibrant array of Pride parades, performances, cultural showcases, and community events.

- **Bangkok** kicks off with the *Bangkok Pride Festival* (May 30 – June 1), themed “Born This Way: From Marriage Equality to Identity Recognition,” alongside the glamorous finale of *Thailand’s Drag Star 2025*.

- In the **north**, Chiang Mai hosts a month-long Pride parade and events, while Tak and Nan provinces celebrate local inclusivity with dedicated activities.

- The **east** sees Pattaya and Chanthaburi lighting up with Pride festivities throughout June.

- Along the **southern** coast, island destinations such as Phuket, Samui, Krabi, and Songkhla hold their own colorful celebrations.

- The **northeast region**, including Khon Kaen, Ubon, and Mukdahan, joins the movement with vibrant Pride festivals promoting unity and acceptance.

#### Government Leadership and Vision

The campaign enjoys strong backing from Thailand’s top officials. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Mr. Phumtham Wechayachai, emphasized Thailand’s dedication to human rights and freedom. Meanwhile, Minister of Tourism and Sports, Mr. Sorawong Thienthong, highlighted the festival’s dual role in fostering inclusivity while boosting the nation’s tourism economy.

This unified government support ensures the festival is deeply integrated into Thailand’s national tourism strategy, making inclusivity a pillar of the country’s global travel brand.

#### Industry Experts Weigh In

Travel industry veteran **Ananda Sukwicha**, CEO of *Sawasdee Travel*, remarked:

*“The Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival is a game-changer. Inclusive tourism isn’t just ethical—it’s smart business. We’ve already seen growing demand from international LGBTQIAN+ travelers seeking authentic experiences in welcoming environments. This festival*

*amplifies Thailand’s position as Asia’s leading Pride destination, and we expect significant growth in bookings and visitor satisfaction.”*

#### Tourism Strategy with Heart and Impact

Beyond festivities, the Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival is a strategic effort to:

- Increase international arrivals during Pride Month
- Support inclusive local businesses and entrepreneurs

legal same-sex marriages in a tropical paradise

- Access to diverse Pride events spanning urban hubs and island retreats
- Curated travel packages, exclusive Pride-themed tours, and special hotel promotions
- World-class hospitality infused with open-hearted cultural warmth

#### A Movement Beyond Tourism

The Love Wins Festival also serves as a national platform to

*The festival arrives on the heels of Thailand’s landmark legalization of same-sex marriage, which came into effect earlier this year. The new law, amending Section 1448 of the Civil and Commercial Code, legally recognizes marriages between same-sex couples — a first for Southeast Asia.*

- Stimulate economic growth in diverse provinces
- Promote social harmony and greater understanding of gender diversity
- Position Thailand as Asia’s premier Pride travel destination

By blending cultural celebration with sustainable tourism development, Thailand aims to offer visitors authentic experiences that extend beyond the usual sun-and-sand narrative.

#### Why Thailand is the Ultimate Pride Destination in 2025

For LGBTQIAN+ travelers seeking a welcoming and vibrant destination, Thailand offers:

- Historic opportunities to celebrate

elevate visibility, representation, and empowerment of LGBTQIAN+ communities across Thailand. It fosters public dialogue on gender identity, celebrates local artists and changemakers, and inspires future generations with stories of love, resilience, and acceptance.

#### Conclusion

With the launch of the **Amazing Thailand Love Wins Festival**, Thailand is rewriting the narrative on what it means to be an inclusive travel destination. This Pride Month is not just a celebration—it is a bold statement of equality, culture, and unity that invites travelers worldwide to experience a Thailand where love truly wins.

# Bahrain's Ascendancy: From Gulf Gem to Global Tourism and Entertainment Powerhouse



Once merely a strategic stopover, Bahrain is rapidly redefining itself as a premier destination where heritage and modernity converge. This small island kingdom is making waves on the global tourism stage by seamlessly blending centuries-old culture with cutting-edge entertainment, world-class sports, and groundbreaking innovation. With an alluring mix of historic sites, vibrant arts festivals, and adrenaline-pumping events, Bahrain invites niche travellers seeking experiences beyond the ordinary.

## A Star-Studded Moment: Hollywood Meets Bahrain

In May 2025, Bahrain's rising global stature was celebrated in style at Cipriani Bahrain, Manama's luxe hotspot, where Hollywood luminaries

including Anthony Mackie, Simu Liu, and Letitia Wright gathered alongside cultural icons and business leaders. This landmark event underscored Bahrain's ambitious vision to become a creative media and entertainment nexus, attracting top-tier talent and international investment.

## Sporting Spectacles Fuel Bahrain's Global Appeal

At the heart of Bahrain's tourism boom lies the Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, the Middle East's iconic Formula One race that draws motorsport aficionados worldwide each year. This thrilling event elevates Bahrain's status as a top-tier sports destination, complemented by international football fixtures and prestigious equestrian tournaments that further diversify its athletic portfolio.

## A Cultural Mosaic: Festivals, Heritage, and Arts

Bahrain's cultural calendar is a vibrant tapestry of world-class events. The Bahrain Jazz Festival invites renowned international musicians, while the Spring of Culture festival celebrates a rich array of artistic performances—from traditional to contemporary. Meanwhile, UNESCO World Heritage sites like Qal'at al-Bahrain (Bahrain Fort) offer visitors a rare window into the island's ancient Dilmun civilization and archaeological treasures, anchoring Bahrain's cultural tourism appeal.

## Innovation at the Crossroads of Tradition and Tomorrow

Bahrain's forward-thinking approach is evident in its strategic investments in creative industries and smart tourism. State-of-the-art performance venues and film production facilities are nurturing a burgeoning creative economy, while technology-driven experiences—such as AR-enhanced heritage tours—are revolutionizing how visitors engage with the island's legacy. Championing youth empowerment and cultural preservation, leaders like His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa ensure the nation's cultural vitality is sustained for generations to come.

## Beyond the Cityscape: Natural Beauty and Adventure

For travellers craving outdoor pursuits, Bahrain offers desert safaris, kayaking through serene mangroves, and hiking scenic natural reserves—all accessible within a short distance from urban luxury. This diverse landscape adds a refreshing layer to Bahrain's appeal, catering to adventure seekers and nature lovers alike.



### Culinary Journeys: A Taste of Bahrain

Bahrain's gastronomic scene is as dynamic as its cultural landscape, skillfully blending traditional Bahraini flavors with global influences. From refined fine dining experiences to authentic street food, the island's culinary offerings promise a journey for the senses.

### In the Global Spotlight

Bahrain's captivating charm recently featured in the Amazon Prime documentary *Beyond Borders with Bear Grylls: Bahrain*, introducing international audiences to its rugged landscapes and adventurous spirit. This media exposure aligns perfectly with Bahrain's goal to diversify tourism, expanding

beyond cultural and sports tourism to encompass nature and adventure travel.

### Looking Ahead: A Vision of Sustainable Growth

Bahrain's tourism strategy is anchored in sustainability and innovation, ensuring the preservation of its cultural sites and natural environment. Infrastructure upgrades and global partnerships aim to enhance visitor experiences while safeguarding the island's heritage. As Bahrain continues to carve out its place as a global tourism and entertainment powerhouse, it stands ready to welcome travellers eager for authentic, world-class experiences.

### Why Bahrain Should Be on Your 2025 Travel Radar

- Formula One thrills at the Bahrain International Circuit
- Cultural immersion through festivals and UNESCO heritage sites
- Hollywood-caliber creative industry growth
- Cutting-edge tech-enhanced tourism experiences
- Scenic natural escapes and outdoor adventures
- A rich culinary landscape bridging tradition and innovation

For travellers who crave a destination where tradition fuels innovation and where culture meets high-octane excitement, Bahrain in 2025 offers a compelling, multifaceted journey like no other.

## Asia's first Cruise-focused OTA, Int2Cruises, sets sail in India

*Int2Cruises Launches in India: Asia's First Dedicated Cruise OTA Set to Transform Cruise Travel for Indian Tourists*

Int2Cruises, Asia's pioneering online travel agency (OTA) dedicated exclusively to cruise vacations, has officially launched in India, heralding a new era in how Indian travellers plan and book cruise holidays. As cruise tourism gains momentum in the Indian market, Int2Cruises aims to revolutionise the booking experience by combining cutting-edge technology with expert travel support.

Designed as a fully digital platform, Int2Cruises provides real-time access to inventories from the world's leading cruise lines, offering travellers a diverse array of itineraries—from the sun-drenched Mediterranean to the icy landscapes of Alaska, and the tropical allure of Southeast Asia. Leveraging AI-powered recommendations, the platform delivers personalised cruise options tailored to individual preferences,

making the search and selection process intuitive and effortless.

What truly distinguishes Int2Cruises is its seamless integration of innovative technology with a dedicated concierge-style support team. This dual approach caters to both seasoned cruise enthusiasts and first-time voyagers, removing the complexities often associated with cruise bookings and ensuring a smooth journey from initial planning to embarkation.

With India emerging as a rapidly growing market for cruise travel, Int2Cruises is strategically positioned to meet the evolving needs of Indian holidaymakers. The platform's launch marks a significant milestone in making cruising a mainstream and accessible vacation choice in the region.

**Akansa Agarwal, CMO at Int2Cruises** said, "Indian travellers



today are confident, digitally savvy, and looking for memorable experiences. But cruise booking remains fragmented and often overwhelming. With Int2Cruises, we have built a seamless, end-to-end platform that removes the stress and adds joy to the planning process. It's a cruise booking, the way it should be, simple, transparent, and expert-backed."

For Indian travellers eager to explore the world's waterways with confidence and convenience, Int2Cruises promises a fresh, sophisticated approach to discovering the magic of cruising.

# A Nation in Motion: How the UAE Is Reimagining Tourism for the Future



In the shimmering desert light of the United Arab Emirates, a quiet transformation is underway—one that is less about spectacle and more about purpose. Once known primarily for its futuristic skylines and luxury shopping, the UAE is fast emerging as one of the world's most forward-thinking travel destinations, guided by sustainability, innovation, and a deep reverence for place.

New research from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) confirms what many observers have sensed: the UAE's tourism sector is not just recovering—it's thriving. In 2025, international visitors are expected to spend a record AED 228.5 billion, eclipsing pre-pandemic levels by 37%. The sector is forecast to contribute AED 267.5 billion to the national economy, nearly 13% of GDP, and support more than 925,000 jobs.

## The Rise of Responsible Travel

Beneath the big numbers lies a more meaningful story. The UAE's success is rooted in a long-view strategy that places sustainability and cultural integrity at the heart of its tourism evolution. National projects like the *Tourism Strategy 2031* and the *National Tourism Charter* are helping the country move beyond the conventional tourism playbook.

**Julia Simpson, President & CEO of the WTTC**, praised the nation's leadership, noting, "*The UAE continues to lead the way in global Travel & Tourism. From cutting-edge smart cities to exceptional hospitality and seamless visa systems, the country is a model of how strategic vision drives economic growth.*"

## Local Journeys, Global Impact

While Dubai's towering hotels and

Abu Dhabi's cultural icons still draw millions, more travelers—residents and visitors alike—are now seeking experiences off the beaten path. And the country is ready. Domestic tourism is projected to reach AED 60 billion in 2025, a 47% rise from 2019. Nature reserves, heritage villages, and conservation areas are increasingly being woven into itineraries that emphasize slower, more meaningful travel.

## What 2024 Tells Us

The past year laid the foundation for this momentum. In 2024, tourism contributed AED 257.3 billion to the economy and sustained nearly 899,000 jobs. International spending reached AED 217.3 billion, while domestic travel added AED 57.6 billion—clear signs of a sector in robust health.

## Looking to 2035: A Sustainable Horizon

WTTC projections for 2035 paint a promising picture. The UAE's tourism industry is expected to generate AED 287.8 billion—over 10% of GDP—and create more than one million jobs. These aren't just statistics; they represent livelihoods, cultural preservation, and a continued commitment to a more inclusive and resilient economy.

## A Regional Renaissance

The UAE is part of a larger Middle Eastern resurgence in tourism. The region contributed \$341.9 billion to GDP in 2024 and supported 7.3 million jobs. By 2025, those numbers are expected to rise to \$367.3 billion and 7.7 million jobs. Together, these nations are reshaping how the world sees—and experiences—the Middle East.

Whether it's stargazing in the Liwa desert, exploring the mangroves of Kalba, or learning Emirati weaving techniques in a coastal souk, travel in the UAE today is as much about connection as it is about discovery. This is a country writing a new narrative—one that invites travelers not just to visit, but to understand.



# Spain's Tourism Renaissance: Sector on Track to Surpass €260 Billion by 2025

Spain's travel and tourism sector is poised to soar to unprecedented heights, with the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) forecasting a remarkable €260.5 billion contribution to the national GDP by the end of 2025. This would represent nearly 16% of Spain's total economic output, reaffirming the country's status as a global tourism titan.

The latest **Economic Impact Research**, conducted in partnership with Oxford Economics, signals a continued resurgence for the sector, anticipating year-on-year growth of 4.7%. These gains will not only fuel economic momentum but also support approximately **3.2 million jobs**—accounting for 14.4% of the national workforce.

## International and Domestic Spending on the Rise

Luxury travellers and international guests are expected to contribute significantly to this growth. International tourism spending is projected to reach **€113.2 billion** in 2025—a 5.7% increase year-on-year. Meanwhile, domestic travel remains robust, forecast to grow by 2.4% to **€84.9 billion**.

"Spain remains a true global tourism powerhouse," said **Julia Simpson**, WTTC President & CEO. "This dynamic, resilient sector not only drives prosperity but also champions innovation, sustainability, and high-quality employment. The outlook for 2025 is exceptionally strong."

## A Record-Breaking 2024

Spain's tourism industry has already shown impressive momentum. In 2024, the sector delivered its strongest performance since 2019, contributing **€248.7 billion** to GDP—an 8% year-on-year increase—and supporting **3 million jobs**.



International visitor spending surged by 10.9% to **€107.1 billion**, while domestic travellers contributed **€82.9 billion**, a 2.2% rise from the previous year. Leisure travel continues to dominate, comprising **88.3%** of total tourism spend.

Spain's allure continues to attract travellers from key markets, with the **United Kingdom (20%), France (14%), and Germany (13%)** leading arrivals. Meanwhile, outbound Spanish travellers favoured **France (25%), Italy (14%), the UK (8%), and Portugal (8%)**.

## A Vision for the Future

Looking ahead to 2035, the WTTC envisions Spain's tourism sector reaching **€315.7 billion**, representing over **17% of GDP** and supporting **4 million jobs**—a gain of 700,000

positions over current levels.

## A European Context

Spain's growth mirrors a broader trend across the European Union. In 2024, the EU's travel and tourism sector generated **€1.8 trillion**, contributing more than **10% of the region's GDP** and employing **24.6 million people**. These figures are set to climb further in 2025, with international spending projected to exceed **€573 billion**, an increase of over 11%, and domestic expenditure reaching **€1.1 trillion**.

**For today's discerning global traveller, Spain offers more than sunshine and sangria—it represents a thriving, world-class tourism ecosystem where luxury, culture, and opportunity converge.**

# Indian Tourism to Japan Surges in 2024: Longer Stays, Higher Spending, and Deeper Cultural Engagement



- *India Emerges as a High-Value Market for Japan's Inbound Tourism*
- *India Falls in Love with Japan: Travel Soars, Spending Surges, and Cherry Blossoms Bloom*

**T**he Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) Delhi Office has unveiled compelling new insights into the rising influence of Indian travellers on Japan's tourism landscape. According to recent figures released by the Japan Tourism Agency, Indian tourists in 2024 demonstrated not only a remarkable increase in visitation but also a significant surge

in travel spending—firmly establishing India as a high-value market for Japanese inbound tourism.

Indian visitors spent an average of **¥241,590** per person (approximately **INR 1.45 lakh**), marking a substantial **53.6% increase** compared to 2019. This figure encompasses both in-destination expenses and pre-arranged travel packages, underlining the

growing sophistication and economic impact of Indian outbound travel.

Even more telling is the **average duration of stay**: a notable **16.3 nights**. Indian travellers are showing a clear preference for deep cultural immersion, opting to explore Japan beyond the surface and indulge in its traditions, modernity, and landscapes at a leisurely pace.



In total, **approximately 233,000 Indian tourists** visited Japan between January and December 2024, contributing a record-breaking **¥56.1 billion** (around **INR 3,366 crore**) to Japan's economy.

### The Evolving Indian Traveller: First-Timers, Repeat Visitors & Beyond the Golden Route

The data highlights a healthy blend of **new and returning visitors**. While **64.9%** of Indian travellers were first-time visitors, **26.2%** had previously visited Japan two to five times—indicating growing familiarity and satisfaction with the destination.

For many first-timers, the iconic **Golden Route**—featuring Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Hiroshima—continues to be the go-to itinerary. This route delivers a harmonious blend of Japan's historical heritage, modern marvels, and scenic vistas.

However, the JNTO Delhi Office is actively championing travel **beyond the Golden Route**, inviting Indian tourists to uncover the **regional richness of Japan**. From the rural charm of Tohoku to the cultural treasures of Shikoku and the serene landscapes of Kyushu, these lesser-known destinations promise authentic experiences and a welcome escape from tourist crowds.

### Purpose of Travel: Leisure Leads, But Business and MICE Are Rising

Leisure remains the dominant motive for Indian travellers, with **41.8%** visiting Japan for holiday and recreation. **Corporate and business travellers** comprised **14.7%**, while **8.4%** came to visit friends and relatives (VFR). A growing trend is the emergence of **MICE tourism**—Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions—especially to regional cities, reflecting Japan's rising stature as a corporate travel hub.

### Independent Yet Curated: Evolving Travel Preferences

Indian tourists are becoming increasingly confident and savvy in how they explore Japan. A robust **86.9%** of

**leisure travellers** prefer to plan their trips independently. However, many still opt for **customized packages** that combine structure with flexibility—covering essentials like flights, hotels, and sightseeing, while allowing room for personal exploration.

This trend speaks to the growing ease of travel in Japan, bolstered by a user-friendly transportation system, multilingual support, and seamless connectivity between major and regional destinations.

### 2025 Momentum: Record-Breaking Numbers in Q1 and Cherry Blossom Boom

The momentum has continued into 2025. In the first quarter (January–March), Japan welcomed **62,100 Indian visitors**, a **24.8% increase** from the same period in 2024. Even traditionally quiet travel months like February saw an **impressive 29.0% year-on-year increase**, fueled by Indian interest in **winter experiences**—especially in Hokkaido, renowned for its world-class “powder snow”.

April 2025 set a new benchmark with **37,300 Indian arrivals**—not only the highest-ever for April but the **highest monthly figure on record** for Indian travel to Japan. Unsurprisingly, this surge coincided with Japan's beloved **cherry blossom season**, a perennial draw for Indian travellers captivated by its ethereal beauty.

### Spending Habits: Quality, Comfort, and Authentic Experiences

Indian tourists in Japan in 2024 demonstrated thoughtful spending patterns, prioritizing **comfort, cultural immersion, and authentic experiences**.

- **Accommodation** topped the list at **43.2%** of total expenditure, indicating a preference for premium stays that enhance the overall travel journey.

- **Shopping** accounted for **19.5%**, driven by the popularity of Japanese snacks, fashion, electronics, and cosmetics.

- **Food and beverages** followed closely at **19.4%**, as more Indian travellers embraced Japanese culinary experiences—from Michelin-star sushi bars to quirky themed cafés.

- **Transportation**, at **14.3%**, underscored the widespread use of Japan's efficient rail system, including the famed **Shinkansen** bullet trains.

- **Amusements and attractions**, comprising **3.6%**, reflected sustained interest in theme parks, live performances, and cultural showcases.

### India Pavilion at Expo 2025, Osaka: A Cultural Showcase on the Global Stage

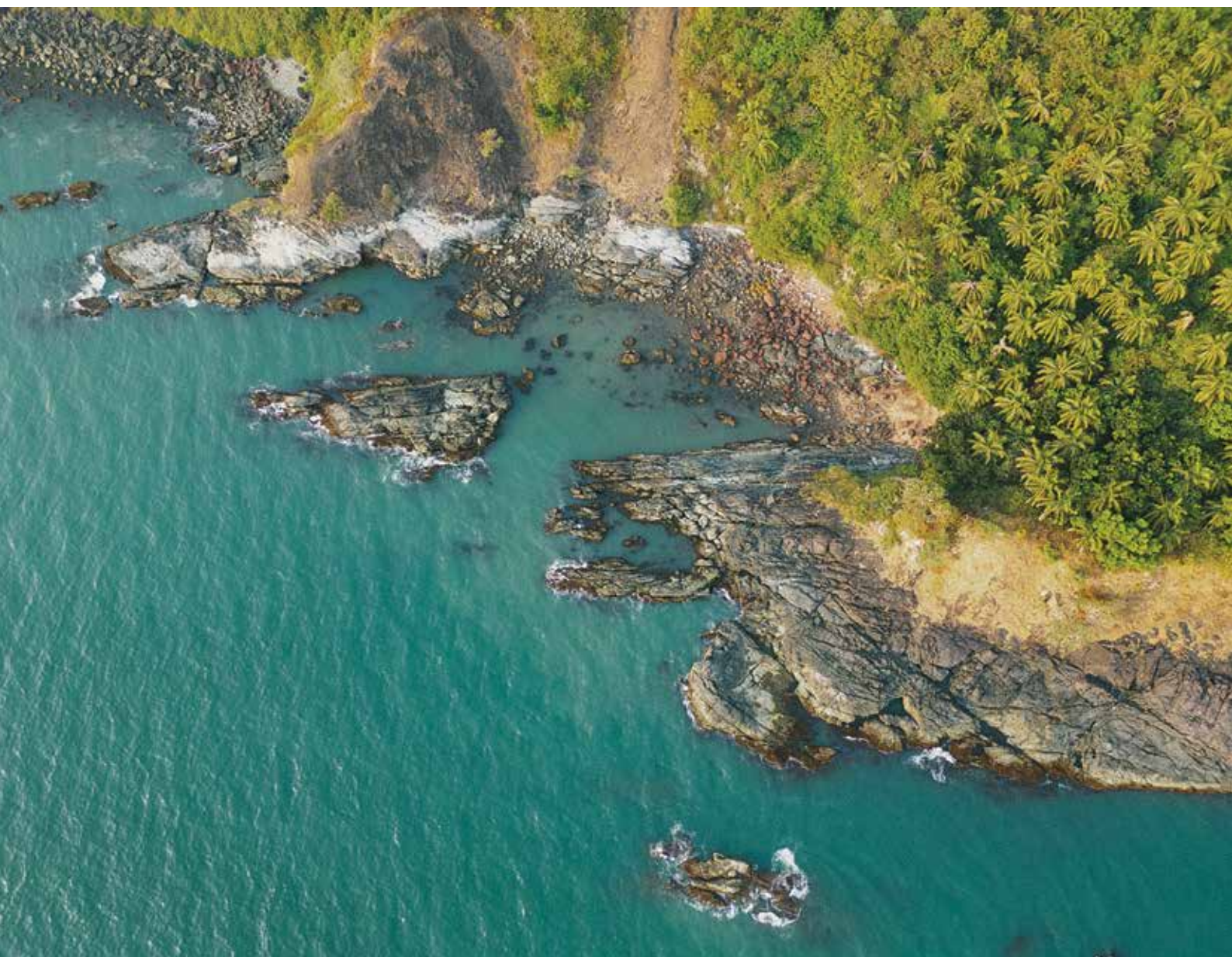
As Indian engagement with Japan intensifies, the **India Pavilion—Bharat at Expo 2025 in Osaka** offers a dazzling representation of India's heritage and innovation. Visitors can stroll through the **Lotus Courtyard**, where spiritual icons like **Padmapani** and the **Bodhi Tree** evoke timeless wisdom and compassion.

The **Oneness Lounge**, inspired by a sacred mandapa, radiates India's warmth and hospitality. Highlights include a **scale model of Chandrayaan-3**, celebrating India's strides in space exploration, and a futuristic **Geo-light Mesh Rooftop** with over **72,000 LED lights**, offering a glowing beacon of Indian creativity—visible across the Expo grounds.

### Looking Ahead: A Golden Era of India-Japan Tourism

From record-breaking visitation and longer stays to deepening cultural ties and corporate engagement, 2024 and 2025 mark a golden era in India-Japan tourism relations. With continued efforts by JNTO and growing traveller interest in discovering new corners of Japan, the future promises a flourishing exchange of ideas, traditions, and unforgettable journeys.

Whether it's the cherry blossoms in Kyoto, the snowy slopes of Hokkaido, or the serenity of a ryokan in the countryside, **Japan is no longer just a bucket-list destination for Indian travellers—it's becoming a beloved second home.**



## Airbnb and Goa launch 'Goa Unseen' showcasing Goa's hidden heritage

*Airbnb and Goa Tourism unveil Goa Unseen, a digital guide spotlighting the state's lesser-known cultural sites and experiences.*

**G**oa's glistening coastline and vibrant nightlife have made it one of **India's** most sought-after travel destinations. However, beyond the bustling beaches lies a world waiting to be explored, rich in heritage, artistry, and local traditions — where colonial-era mansions, serene spice plantations, and vibrant markets tell the story of Goa's deep-rooted cultural legacy. To bring this lesser-known side of Goa into the spotlight, **Airbnb**, in collaboration with the **Goa Tourism Department**, launched '**Goa Unseen**'—a digital guidebook that takes travelers beyond the obvious,



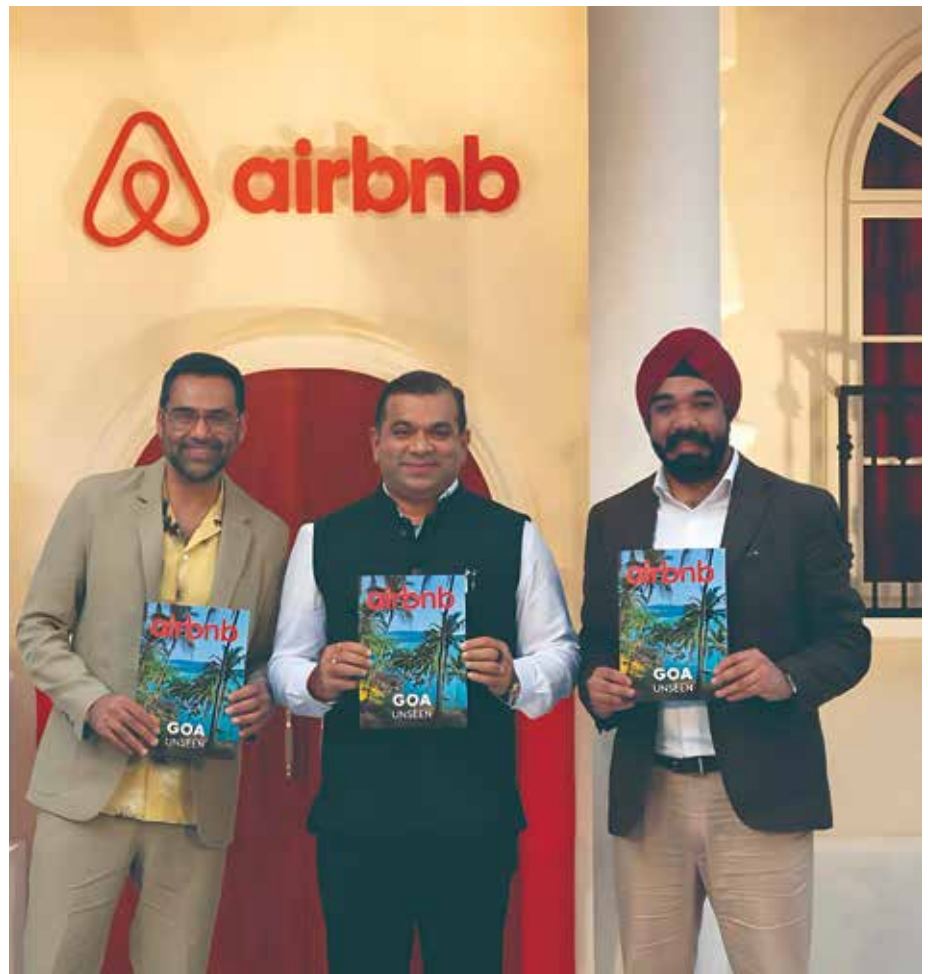
uncovering the very soul of the state through its hidden cultural treasures and heritage gems.

The 'Goa Unseen' guidebook has been thoughtfully curated with insights from local experts who offer a fresh, authentic perspective of the state. Contributors include culinary maestro **Avinash Martins**, food writer **Nolan Mascarenhas**, artist, and content creator **Siddharth Kerkar**, **GoaGetterr** founder **Garv Vohra**, travel writer Insia Lacewalla, and TV host and content creator **Scarlett Rose**. Each of them has shared their personal favourite recommendations for Goa – from off-the-beaten-path cultural landmarks, to secret culinary delights, and immersive local experiences—that will help travelers uncover Goa's true essence.

Goa continues to be one of the most popular destinations for Airbnb in India, and the platform has witnessed an over 20% increase in bookings for Goa in 2024 compared to 2023. This surge highlights the increasing interest in the state as a prime vacation spot for tourists from around the world. Particularly, South Goa has seen a significant uptick in bookings, with an over 25% rise in bookings in 2024 versus the previous year. This growth is a testament to travelers seeking new experiences beyond Goa's well-known hotspots, with many now exploring the state's serene hinterlands and vibrant local culture.

**Amanpreet Singh Bajaj**, **Airbnb's Country Head for India and Southeast Asia**, said: "Goa has always been a key destination for Airbnb in India, and through initiatives like 'Rediscover Goa' and the launch of 'Goa Unseen', in partnership with the Goa Tourism Department, we are striving to showcase the state's rich cultural heritage, dynamic communities, and unique accommodations. With a growing community of hospitality entrepreneurs, Airbnb remains committed to fostering responsible tourism and helping travelers experience the authentic, lesser-known side of Goa."

Commenting on the Rediscover Goa 2.0 campaign & Goa Unseen



guidebook, **Shri Rohan Khaunte**, **Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Government of Goa**, commented, "Tourism is the backbone of Goa's economy, and our focus on regenerative tourism ensures that its benefits reach local businesses, communities, and a new generation of entrepreneurs. By encouraging homestays, particularly in rural Goa, and empowering women and youth, we are aligning with our Honorable Prime Minister's vision of Nari Shakti and Yuva Shakti. Furthering our MoU with Airbnb on initiatives like the 'Goa Unseen' guidebook, we offer travelers an authentic Goan experience—one that extends beyond the popular hotspots and into the heart of our Goa Beyond Beaches. We are excited to partner with Airbnb once again and look forward to welcoming travelers from around the world to discover the true essence of Goa."

**Indian actor Abhay Deol** added: "Goa has always been a place of discovery for me, a sanctuary where creativity, nature, and community thrive. Over the years, I've been exploring its hidden gems – from lush forests, lesser-known beaches to unique local experiences – all of which have inspired my journey. Through 'Goa Unseen,' I'm excited to share this side of Goa and invite travelers to experience its true essence. With Airbnb, I hope you'll find your own connection to Goa's vibrant soul."

With Goa Unseen, Airbnb invites travelers to look beyond the familiar and embark on a journey through the state's unseen wonders. Whether it's exploring tranquil hinterlands, discovering artistic enclaves, or indulging in local culinary treasures, this guidebook is the ultimate companion to experiencing Goa in a whole new way.

# Germany Travel Mart™ 2026 Heads to Oberhausen, Spotlighting Sustainability and Innovation in German Tourism



Germany's premier B2B travel event, the **Germany Travel Mart™ (GTM)**, is set to make a dynamic return in 2026, with the Ruhr valley city of **Oberhausen** confirmed as host. Organized by the **German National Tourist Board (GNTB)**, GTM continues to evolve as a high-impact platform connecting international travel buyers with Germany's most forward-thinking tourism players.

Following the success of this year's **GTM 360°**, which introduced a hybrid model designed for year-round industry engagement, the 2026 edition promises to merge tradition with

innovation in one of Germany's most culturally revitalized cities.

## **GTM 360°: A Milestone for Global Tourism Partnerships**

GTM 2025, under the enhanced **GTM 360° format**, underscored the GNTB's commitment to fostering continuous global engagement. Around **150 accredited buyers**—including key delegates from India—conducted over **3,200 one-on-one business meetings** with **129 German tourism providers** through the GNTB's bespoke online platform.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

- **87%** of attendees rated their experience as satisfactory or highly satisfactory
- **98%** reported successful new business contacts
- **85%** indicated strong interest in returning for future editions

Premium sponsors included **Dorint Hotels Betriebs GmbH** and **Deutsche Lufthansa AG**, with **Sixt SE** supporting as a mobility partner—highlighting the event's blend of hospitality, logistics, and strategic networking.

## **Oberhausen: A Bold Choice for GTM 2026**

Set to take place from **April 19 to 21, 2026**, the **52nd Germany Travel Mart™** will shine a spotlight on **Oberhausen**, a city emblematic of the Ruhr region's transformation from industrial powerhouse to cultural and green innovation hub.

**Petra Hedorfer, CEO of the GNTB**, expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming host:

*"Oberhausen is a powerful symbol of the Ruhr's dynamic renewal. Its choice as the next GTM venue reflects*

*our desire to showcase destinations that balance industrial heritage with sustainable, future-facing tourism development."*

One standout venue will be the **former zinc factory**, a striking example of adaptive reuse that blends historical grit with modern sophistication—perfectly aligning with the GTM's experiential ethos.

## **India's Growing Influence**

**Romit Theophilus, Director of Marketing & Sales at GNTO India**, highlighted India's growing engagement:

*"We are incredibly excited to bring our Indian partners to Oberhausen in 2026. GTM is a hub for meaningful interaction, from high-caliber meetings to immersive convention tours showcasing Germany's hidden treasures."*

## **Looking Ahead: Green Tourism and IGA Ruhr 2027**

Oberhausen's presentation will also highlight the **International Garden Exhibition (IGA) Ruhr 2027**, positioning the GTM as a springboard for sustainable tourism initiatives across the region. The event is expected to generate not only fresh business ties but also long-term interest in Germany's evolving eco-tourism landscape.

For travel industry leaders, from boutique agency founders to global CEOs, the 2026 GTM in Oberhausen offers a compelling blend of strategy, discovery, and inspiration—proving once again that Germany is not just a destination, but a dynamic tourism innovator.

Explore more at: [Germany Travel Mart™](#)





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