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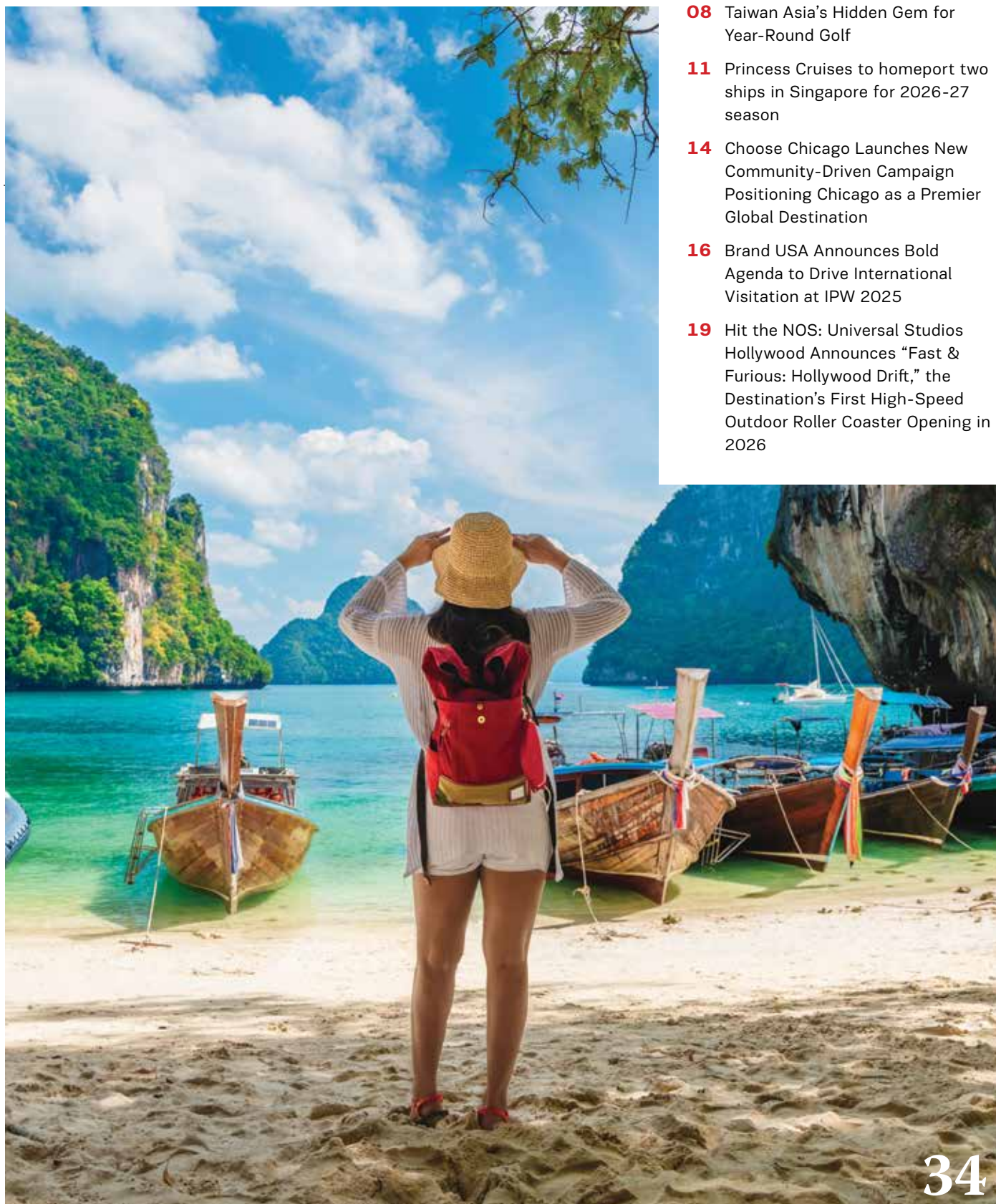
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EDITOR'S LETTER

VFS Global acquires majority stake in CiX Citizen Experience

FS Global, the global leader in trusted technology services, empowering secure global mobility for governments and citizens, has completed the acquisition of a majority stake in CiX Citizen Experience, a leading provider of digital and physical citizen services based in Brazil. This strategic acquisition marks a pivotal step in VFS Global's expansion journey—particularly across Latin America (LATAM)—as it continues to broaden its capabilities and deepen its impact in the public service delivery space.

With nearly two decades of pioneering innovation in citizen services, CiX has established a strong presence in Brazil.

This success will be further scaled across LATAM and other global markets, leveraging VFS Global's international reach and operational excellence.

This acquisition is centred on driving transformation through advanced digital technologies, including AI and data-driven platforms. By uniting CiX's cutting-edge digital capabilities with VFS Global's extensive global infrastructure and expertise in managing complex service ecosystems, we are positioned to deliver next-generation, integrated solutions to public and private sector clients around the world.

For both companies' client governments and partners, this will

lead to enhanced, tailored solutions that improve citizen engagement, access, and satisfaction.

Sergio Rodrigues, CEO of CiX Citizen Services, said, "Partnering with VFS Global will supercharge our growth. With access to their capital, technology, talent, and global reach, we can rapidly expand across Latin America, and beyond. This collaboration is about scaling CiX Citizen Experience, delivering even more intuitive, efficient, and accessible government services. Our goal is to simplify citizens' lives with a combination of physical and digital solutions that also bring agility, and savings for governments worldwide."

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*Sergio Rodrigues, Chief Executive Officer, CiX Citizen Services and
Zubin Karkaria, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, VFS Global in Sao Paulo, Brazil*

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

added, «We are very pleased to have concluded this strategically important acquisition which will be value accretive for both companies – for CiX Citizen Experience and for VFS Global. VFS Global operates in 158 countries, serves 69 client governments and has a workforce of nearly 13,000 people from 153 nationalities. Access to all of this, and our technological capabilities, will provide the launchpad for CiX Citizen Experience in its next phase of growth to become a global powerhouse. Our collaboration will transform citizen services world-wide, driving efficiency and inclusivity. It highlights VFS Global's commitment to innovative solutions that enhance citizens' quality of life and build renewed trust in governments.»

Since its founding in 2008, CiX Citizen Experience has established itself as a pioneer in public services, managing over 250 service centres across Brazil. The company offers more than 200 types of services to states and municipalities, significantly enhancing the efficiency and accessibility of government services. Over the years, CiX Citizen Experience has served over 150 million citizens, issuing more than 30 million identity cards and 20 million driver's licenses. With operations in key regions such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and Ceará, CiX Citizen Experience continues to lead the way in digital and physical public service solutions, driving innovation and improving the quality of life for millions of citizens.

VFS Global, the global leader

in trusted technology services, empowering secure global mobility for governments and citizens, has significantly expanded its global footprint. With over 3,500 Application Centres in 158 countries, VFS Global has processed more than 309 million applications since its inception in 2001. In 2023, the company secured seven major global contracts, including a landmark agreement with the UK government as the exclusive overseas provider to manage visa and citizenship services across 142 countries. Additionally, VFS Global won contracts with the governments of Australia, Norway, Sweden, Latvia, Iceland, and Austria, further solidifying its position as a trusted partner in delivering secure, efficient, and innovative solutions for visa and consular services worldwide.

VFS Global Leverages SAP Software to Power Digital Cross-Border Mobility



SAP SE has announced that VFS Global, the world-leading provider of visa, consular and technology services to governments and diplomatic missions, will leverage SAP software to help it develop leading-edge AI-powered digital solutions for cross-border mobility and citizen services.

Cross-border mobility and citizen services are becoming increasingly digital, and governments are looking into the use of innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence to drive efficiency and sovereign security. To

accelerate its innovation road map and help governments meet the increasingly complex needs of travelers and citizens, VFS Global is adopting SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition and other SAP solutions.

“We take great pride in partnering with SAP as a leading and trusted technology and AI company,” said **Zubin Karkaria, founder and CEO of VFS Global**. “By combining our deep expertise in visa, consular and citizen services with SAP’s world-class solutions, we empower governments to enhance efficiency, strengthen security

and enable seamless mobility for millions of travelers around the world.”

“With SAP solutions at its core, VFS will be able to leverage the latest innovations to become an even stronger partner for governments, travelers and citizens worldwide,” said **Christian Klein, CEO of SAP SE**.

In line with its vision to embrace technological innovation to support governments and diplomatic missions worldwide, VFS Global has also chosen SAP Business Technology Platform and the SAP Business Data Cloud solution to deliver leading-edge and AI-powered solutions to its customers and to drive operational excellence across its global operations.

“By combining the strengths of VFS Global and SAP, we are elevating cross-border mobility and citizen services to the next level,” said Michael Nilles, member of the VFS executive board and chief digital and technology officer. “Strategically, this positions us as a leading force in shaping the future of GovTech and TravelTech, powered by technology and AI innovations that benefit governments, travelers and citizens worldwide,” he added.



DEVENDER GROVER

We are on



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Taiwan

Asia's Hidden Gem for Year-Round Golf

Where world-class fairways, natural beauty, and cultural elegance meet in one extraordinary destination.

For the seasoned globetrotter who measures destinations by the quality of their greens and the view from the 18th tee, Taiwan is a revelation. This mountainous island, often better known for its tech prowess and culinary scenes, is fast emerging as one of Asia's most captivating year-round golf destinations. With more than 100 courses designed by top architects, many nestled within spectacular natural landscapes,

Taiwan offers a golfing experience that rivals the region's finest—yet remains refreshingly undiscovered.

From dramatic cliffside fairways overlooking the Pacific Ocean to serene inland courses tucked into forested valleys, Taiwan pairs unforgettable terrain with the quiet luxury and hospitality sought by the world's most discerning travelers. For those balancing business with leisure, or simply seeking a refined golfing

escape, the island's accessibility, amenities, and scenic diversity deliver an experience as rewarding as it is unexpected.

Taiwan stands out as an elite golfing destination, distinguished by its collection of world-class courses set amidst some of the most striking natural landscapes in Asia. The island's diverse terrain offers an exceptional variety of golfing experiences, ranging from coastal and oceanfront fairways to challenging mountain courses and verdant parklands. This rich tapestry of settings is complemented by Taiwan's subtropical climate, which facilitates year-round play. Many courses have been crafted by internationally acclaimed architects, ensuring a design balance that is both strategically demanding and accessible to players of all skill levels. Meticulously maintained grounds, cutting-edge facilities, and the renowned warmth of Taiwanese hospitality further elevate the golfing experience, making Taiwan an essential destination for discerning golf travelers worldwide.

Northern Taiwan: Urban Energy Meets Mountain Tranquility

Taipei & New Taipei: Championship Golf with a City View

Taiwan's capital region offers a unique combination of urban sophistication and lush natural surroundings. Taipei, a thriving international metropolis set within a basin of mountains, is home to a number of scenic golf courses that blend harmoniously with the terrain. Courses near **Yangmingshan National Park** offer sweeping views, rich volcanic soil, and verdant foliage—making each round as visually compelling as it is technically satisfying.

Nearby, the **Beitou Hot Springs**, once a haven for Japanese nobility, provide the perfect wellness-focused finish to a day on the greens. On the coast, the Tamsui area dazzles with river views, coastal breezes, and the renowned **Golden Coast Golf Course**, perched on dramatic seaside cliffs with the sun setting over the estuary.

Linkou Plateau: The Golfing Epicenter for Business Travelers

Strategically positioned just 30 minutes from central Taipei and minutes from **Taoyuan International Airport**, the Linkou Plateau is home to the highest concentration of golf courses in Taiwan. The gently rolling landscape provides ideal conditions for fairway design, and its proximity to the capital makes it a favorite among local executives and visiting dignitaries.

Several exclusive private clubs here serve as both sporting grounds and informal boardrooms, offering a discreet environment for networking and recreation alike. With cool breezes from the nearby coast and carefully contoured layouts, Linkou's courses are perfect for quick, high-quality rounds between meetings or flights.

Taoyuan: Championship-Caliber Play in a Cultural Crossroads

Home to several internationally ranked venues, Taoyuan boasts some of the island's most technically demanding and aesthetically stunning courses. The **Ta Shee Golf & Country Club**, once

host to the **Johnny Walker Classic**, and the **Sunrise Golf & Country Club**, a former site of the **Taiwan Open**, are must-plays for golfers in search of tournament-level challenges.

Surrounded by modern infrastructure and cultural landmarks, Taoyuan offers seamless integration of luxury, sport, and tradition.

Hsinchu: High-Tech Hubs and Highland Greens

Known as the Silicon Valley of Taiwan, Hsinchu is also where technology meets tranquility. Beyond its business districts lie forested hills and misty valleys that form the backdrop for some of the region's most scenic golf courses. In **Guanxi Township**, golfers find themselves surrounded by pristine nature and peaceful seclusion—qualities that have earned the area a reputation for wellness and longevity.

After your round, indulge in local culinary staples like Hsinchu pork meatballs and traditional rice vermicelli—flavors that reflect the city's rich heritage.



Central Taiwan: Elevation, Heritage, and Panoramic Play

Miaoli: A Mountain City Rich in Culture and Challenge

With over 80% of its area composed of mountains and hills, Miaoli provides a natural canvas for elevated and strategically complex golf courses. The **Royal Golf Club** and **National Garden Country Club** are two standout examples, known for their aggressive terrain and fast, undulating greens.

Visiting during **May's Tung Blossom Festival** adds an extra layer of visual delight, as hillsides across the region bloom with delicate white flowers—a perfect seasonal complement to a day on the links.

Taichung: A Central Hub for Golf and Leisure

As Taiwan's second-largest city, Taichung offers a vibrant urban core surrounded by a constellation of golf courses. The majority are located in the foothills, offering not just world-class play but panoramic views of the city below. With mild weather and convenient access to nearby attractions, Taichung is ideal for both extended golf holidays and quick weekend escapes.

Nantou: Inland Elegance and Iconic Landscapes

Nestled in the heart of the island, Nantou is a serene counterpoint to Taiwan's bustling cities. Courses like **Nan Fong Golf Club** provide a tranquil setting and fast greens within reach of iconic landmarks such as **Sun Moon Lake** and **Xitou Nature Reserve**.

Golf here is about more than sport—it's a meditative encounter with Taiwan's unspoiled interior.

Changhua: Agricultural Roots and Elevated Design

Known for its flat, fertile landscape and abundant harvests, Changhua surprises with its sophisticated course offerings. The **Chang Hwa**

Golf Club and **Taifong Golf Course** are both ranked among Taiwan's finest, delivering a balanced blend of challenge and playability. Schedule your visit during January's **Flower Festival** to witness colorful displays that brighten the landscape and elevate the entire experience.

Southern Taiwan: Coastal Luxury and Cultural Immersion

Jianan Plain & Tainan: Resort Relaxation with Historic Depth

The fertile Jianan Plain, Taiwan's agricultural heartland, also hosts a collection of resort-style courses that marry sport with serenity. These gently challenging layouts are perfect for relaxed play amid views of the **Central Mountain Range**.

Tainan, just to the south, offers a different kind of richness—historical sites, centuries-old temples, and one of Taiwan's most celebrated food scenes. Golf here is not just a game—it's an entry point into a deeply storied culture.

Kaohsiung & Pingtung: Technical Fairways in a Maritime Metropolis

Taiwan's second-largest city, **Kaohsiung**, is a bustling port with a high-energy atmosphere and a growing reputation as a golf destination. Courses here, such as the **Kaohsiung Golf & Country Club** and **Sun Wood Lake Golf Club**, feature dynamic layouts shaped by the surrounding mountain terrain.

After your round, indulge in Kaohsiung's dynamic nightlife or visit cultural landmarks like **Chengcing Lake**. For executives, Kaohsiung offers the perfect combination of challenge, charm, and convenience.

Eastern Taiwan: Sublime Vistas and Coastal Calm

Yilan: A Golfer's Wellness Retreat

Yilan, located on the northeastern coast, is one of Taiwan's most scenic and therapeutic regions. The **Chiau Sih Golf Club** commands views of

the Pacific Ocean, while its varied topography offers an exhilarating test for players.

Known for its hot springs, seafood, and seasonal festivals, Yilan combines luxury, leisure, and local charm in equal measure.

Hualien: Where Golf Meets Grandeur

Renowned for the natural splendor of **Taroko Gorge**, Hualien invites golfers to slow down and reconnect. The **Hualien Golf Club**, set within what feels like a forested retreat, delivers a round that's as restorative as it is scenic. Whale watching, coastal cycling, and boutique accommodations round out the experience for travelers seeking tranquility and authenticity.

Taiwan: A World-Class Golf Destination, Reimagined

In an increasingly crowded world of international golf tourism, Taiwan offers something rare: authenticity, variety, and year-round accessibility. Whether you're playing for business, pleasure, or a blend of both, Taiwan provides world-class fairways in unforgettable settings—all within close proximity to top-tier dining, accommodations, and cultural landmarks.

For the well-traveled golfer, Taiwan is no longer just an intriguing alternative—it is the next essential destination.

Executive Travel Essentials

- **Best Time to Visit:** Spring (March–May) and autumn (October–November) offer optimal conditions.
- **Getting There:** International airports in Taipei and Kaohsiung; high-speed rail connects major golf regions.
- **Services:** Top clubs offer caddies, rentals, English-speaking staff, and exclusive amenities.
- **Logistics:** Many courses are within an hour's drive from business districts or major hotels.

Discover Taiwan: where the fairways are pristine, the experiences are rich, and the welcome is always warm.



Princess Cruises to homeport two ships in Singapore for 2026-27 season

Princess Cruises will homeport Sapphire and Diamond Princess in Singapore for 2026-27, offering expanded Southeast Asia itineraries and festive sailings.

Princess Cruises will be homeporting two ships in Singapore for the second time when **Sapphire Princess** joins **Diamond Princess** for the 2026-27

season. This will mean that both ships will be able to offer a wider range of itineraries and more sailing dates for guests to choose from for the Singapore 2026-27 season including several festive sailings.

The first time that these two sister ships were based in Singapore, was in 2018-2019. Sapphire Princess was the first Princess ship to homeport in Singapore, and for six seasons from 2014 to 2020. Both ships can accommodate up to 2,670 guests each.

Diamond Princess will return to Singapore for the upcoming season from December 2025 to February 2026, being her third season in the region.

Key highlights of Sapphire Princess' Singapore season 2026-27

Sapphire Princess will offer 18 itineraries from Singapore, including round-trip Southeast Asia and Far East sailings, and special holiday cruises. Many itineraries include late-night stays in destinations like Ha Long Bay, Bangkok and Hong Kong.

Specific Itineraries include:

- 33-night Los Angeles to Singapore: On 15 October 2025, Sapphire Princess will embark on a repositioning voyage from Los Angeles before crossing the Pacific to visit several destinations in Hawaii, Asia (Taiwan, Hong Kong & Vietnam) and Yokohama, before sailing for Singapore.

- Christmas and New Year: A 14-

day Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam itinerary visiting eight destinations, including stops in Kuala Lumpur, Penang & Langkawi; Ho Chi Minh City; Sihanoukville in Cambodia; Phuket & Koh Samui including an overnight stop in Bangkok.

- Chinese New Year/Valentine's Day (6 Feb 2027): Guests can celebrate the welcoming of the Year of the Goat onboard as the ship embarks on the first day of Chinese New Year for a 14-day cruise, visiting 10 ports in Southeast Asia.

- Round-trip Southeast Asia: 10- to 16-day round-trip sailings from Singapore, visiting Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Key highlights of Diamond Princess' Singapore season 2026-27

Diamond Princess' extended season in Japan offers 35 unique itineraries featuring 7- to 28-day voyages sailing from February to November 2026. Thereafter, she sails to Singapore, where she will offer cruises to 28 destinations across eight countries on 11 sailings, from November 2026 to March 2027.

Other highlights include:

- The season begins and concludes sailing between Singapore and Japan, offering a variety of options from 14- to 31-days via Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam.

- Christmas & New Year: A 14-day holiday cruise with visits to Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, and Bangkok.

- Chinese New Year/Valentine's Day: 16-night cruise to Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam with Halong Bay scenic cruising.

- 10- to 16-day roundtrip sailings from Singapore visiting Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand.

Built in Japan, Diamond Princess offers a unique experience tailored to the region. Guests can enjoy authentic cuisine at Kai Sushi, sip Japanese-inspired cocktails, soak in the traditional Izumi bath at the largest Japanese bath complex at sea and enjoy regional entertainment and holiday celebrations.

Airport Digitalization Market Size to Grow by USD 14.79 Billion 2031 | 8.5% CAGR



According to a new comprehensive report from The Insight Partners, the global airport digitalization market is observing healthy growth owing to rising air traffic and passenger expectations, and security and regulatory compliance requirements.

The report runs an in-depth analysis of market trends, key players, and future opportunities. During the course of the research study, various leading industry experts, global sales managers, key opinion leaders, and industry veterans shared their valuable and critical insights about global and regional trends related to the airport digitalization market.

To explore the valuable insights in the Airport Digitalization Market

report, you can easily download a sample PDF of the report - <https://www.theinsightpartners.com/sample/TIPRE00024491/>

Overview of Report Findings

1. Market Growth: The airport digitalization market is expected to reach US\$ 7.38 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach US\$ 14.79 billion by 2031; it is estimated to record a CAGR of 8.5% from 2025 to 2031. The rapid adoption of e-commerce platforms, constant need to transport temperature-sensitive products; sustainable aviation and green logistics solutions; infrastructure development and airport expansion; express and time-definite delivery services; perishable goods and fresh food

transportation, and pharmaceutical & healthcare product transportation are some of the major factors pushing the growth of airport digitalization market across different regions.

2. Rising Air Traffic and Passenger Expectations: The global surge in air travel demand is one of the primary drivers of airport digitalization. According to International Air Transport Association (IATA), in April 2024, total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPK), was up 8.0% compared to April 2023. Total capacity, measured in available seat kilometers (ASK), was up 6.5% year-on-year. Such rise will be requiring significant infrastructural and operational enhancements. Traditional airport systems, often plagued by manual inefficiencies and capacity bottlenecks, are no longer adequate to handle such volumes. Digitalization provides the tools to scale airport operations efficiently. Technologies such as biometric identification, e-gates, and automated check-in systems streamline passenger processing, reducing long queues and improving the overall customer experience. Moreover, increased air traffic places pressure on airport authorities to manage operational efficiency. AI-driven predictive analytics can help airports forecast passenger flow, optimize staffing, and allocate resources dynamically. As demand rises, so does the need for scalability and flexibility, which digital systems inherently provide. This demand for enhanced efficiency, passenger satisfaction, and scalability underpins the aggressive digital transformation initiatives seen at major global airports such as Heathrow, Changi, and Schiphol.

3. Security and Regulatory Compliance Requirements: Airports operate in a high-security environment, subject to complex national and international regulations. Security protocols have intensified significantly, and digital technologies are now seen as indispensable in maintaining compliance and enhancing threat detection. Advanced digital tools,

including biometric identification, facial recognition, and behavior monitoring systems, help airports meet stringent security regulations while minimizing passenger inconvenience. For example, U.S. airports under the TSA PreCheck program use digital identity verification to expedite security processes while maintaining safety. Cybersecurity has also become a top priority. As airports integrate more digital touchpoints, from smart kiosks to IoT-based baggage handling, they become more vulnerable to cyber threats. Digitalization must therefore include robust cybersecurity frameworks compliant with standards like ISO/IEC 27001 and the EU's NIS2 directive.

4. Geographical Insights: In 2024, North America led the market with a substantial revenue share, followed by Europe and APAC, respectively. Asia Pacific is expected to register the highest CAGR during the forecast period.

Market Segmentation

- Based on product type, the airport digitalization market is segmented into hardware, software, and services. The hardware segment held the largest market share in 2024.

- By application, the market is segmented into asset management and maintenance, cargo and freight management, passenger experience management, operations and workflow management, security and surveillance, and others. The passenger experience management segment held a significant share of the market in 2024.

- Based on deployment mode, the airport digitalization market is segmented into on-premise, cloud, and hybrid. The on-premise segment held the largest market share in 2024.

- Based on end use, the airport digitalization market is segmented into commercial airports and military airports. The commercial airports segment held the largest market share in 2024.

Competitive Strategy and Development

- Key Players: A few of the major

companies operating in the airport digitalization market are Microsoft Corporation, IBM Corp, Cisco Systems Inc., Siemens AG, SAP SE, T-Systems International GmbH, Wipro Limited, Daifuku Co., Ltd., SITA, Indra Sistemas S.A among others.

- Trending Topics: Global airport digitalization market, air freight market size, airport digitalization market forecast 2025, air digitalization industry analysis, smart airport Market, airport digitalization market valuation, biometric authentication, digital transformation air freight, supply chain optimization, aviation cybersecurity, Internet of Things (IoT) in aviation, passenger experience management, air cargo digitalization etc.

Global Headlines on Airport digitalization market

- Kochi airport embarks on major digital shift
- Norway's airports to undergo major digital transformation
- GMR Airports introduces an AI-powered digital twin at Hyderabad Airport
- IATA released data for April 2025 global passenger demand for air travel

During the course of the research study, various leading industry experts, global sales managers, key opinion leaders, and industry veterans shared their valuable and critical insights about global and regional trends related to the airport digitalization market.

Conclusion

The global airport digitalization market is segmented into five major regions: North America, Europe, Asia Pacific (APAC), the Middle East & Africa (MEA), and South America (SAM). North America accounts for the largest market share in 2024. The APAC region is expected to grow with the highest CAGR. The Asia Pacific airport digitalization market is undergoing substantial transformation, driven by increasing air passenger traffic, rising demand for operational efficiency, and significant investments in advanced technologies. Countries across the region are prioritizing digital infrastructure development within the aviation sector to meet evolving passenger expectations and to enhance the competitiveness of their airport operations.

A noteworthy development occurred in December 2024, when India's aviation sector marked a major milestone with the launch of the nation's first AI-powered airport digital twin at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad. Developed by GMR Airports, this advanced digital twin platform is complemented by the implementation of a next-generation Airport Predictive Operation Centre (APOC). This integrated system enables real-time monitoring, predictive analytics, and dynamic resource management, setting new benchmarks for operational efficiency, safety, and passenger service excellence in the region.

Across Asia Pacific, airports are increasingly adopting emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), biometrics, and cloud-based solutions to streamline processes including check-in, security screening, baggage handling, and airside operations. These initiatives are further supported by public-private partnerships and national aviation modernization strategies. Consequently, the region is poised to be a key contributor to the global airport digitalization market's growth trajectory in the coming years.

Choose Chicago Launches New Community-Driven Campaign Positioning Chicago as a Premier Global Destination

Launching ahead of IPW 2025, the “Never Done. Never Outdone.” campaign is an invitation to experience a Chicago that is endlessly creative, relentlessly driven, and always ready to surprise you.



Choose Chicago today announced the launch of a new marketing campaign to position Chicago as a premier global destination for leisure travel, meetings, and events. The new “Never Done. Never Outdone.” campaign was informed and influenced by a year-plus long brand strategy effort consisting of over 300 community and industry listening sessions, focus groups, sentiment surveys, social listening research, and brand showcases.

“Never Done. Never Outdone.” honors the spirit of our city—always evolving, always pushing forward, and never satisfied with the status quo. The campaign launches during peak season

and as Chicago hosts the U.S. Travel Association’s IPW 2025, the largest inbound international travel trade show in the country. With \$5.5 billion of future travel booked across this four-day show, this is Chicago’s moment to tell our story to the global tourism community.

“I could not be more proud to launch Choose Chicago’s new marketing campaign: ‘Never Done. Never Outdone.’” said Kristen Reynolds, President and CEO of Choose Chicago. “This message is steeped in community and stakeholder feedback and speaks to the continued evolution of our city and our new era of visitor, business and economic domination. I’m grateful

for the time and dedication that my team took to listen to our residents, local businesses, and clients and I’m confident that the result will be a campaign that resonates with visitors and locals alike to drive economic vitality through every Chicago neighborhood.”

“From world-class dining, to beautiful lakefront views, to vibrant neighborhoods ready to explore, Chicago is an ideal destination for visitors from all across the world,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Choose Chicago’s new ‘Never Done. Never Outdone.’ campaign is a true testament to all our city has to offer. This new effort will support our already thriving

tourism economy, all while supporting countless jobs in cultural, culinary, and hospitality industries across the State of Illinois.”

“I am proud of the work our colleagues at Choose Chicago have done in developing this new campaign,” said Mayor Brandon Johnson.

“Work like this can only be born out of meaningful collaboration and engagement, and they’ve taken great care to include the perspectives of a diverse cross-section of community voices in the research that went into the campaign. I’m confident it will ultimately share an authentic depiction of our city and convey the open-minded, welcoming spirit of Chicagoans.”

“Never Done. Never Outdone.” is a campaign unlike any other Choose Chicago has launched in the past. Unlike previous campaigns, which focused primarily on attracting leisure travelers, this campaign is designed to speak to and inspire all audiences, including potential leisure visitors as well as meeting and event planners, the creative community, international sports fans, the economic development community, and most importantly, Chicago residents.

“‘Never Done. Never Done.’ reflects a mindset that’s deeply original, bold, open-minded, and grounded in community — values that are central to who we are and how we show up,” said Lisa Nucci, Chief Marketing Officer at Choose Chicago. “As a life-long Chicagoan, it has been an honor to work on this project and inspiring to see the way our partners in the tourism and hospitality industry and the civic sector have been so involved and invested from day one. Through hundreds of hours of listening sessions, preview events, and informal conversations, one thing was consistently apparent to me: Chicagoans truly love their city. That love and civic pride is really at the heart of ‘Never Done. Never Outdone.’”

Launching locally today, the “Never Done. Never Outdone.” campaign will make its international debut next week at IPW. Today’s launch includes the

CHICAGO

CHOOSE CHICAGO

release of a *campaign video* featuring Grammy- Award winning poet and artist and local Chicagoan J. Ivy. The campaign will run in key local, regional, national, and international markets, targeting both leisure travelers and meeting and event planners. Advertising will begin locally to build campaign engagement and civic pride, then expand to other markets to help drive future leisure and business travel to Chicago.

“I can’t imagine a better note to end my tenure on than the launch of a new marketing campaign for Chicago,” said Glenn Eden, Choose Chicago’s outgoing Board Chair. “‘Never Done. Never Outdone.’ is so much more than an ad campaign; it is a testament to Chicagoans’ love for their city—to the people and communities that give our food its flavor and make our neighborhoods come to life. I couldn’t be prouder of the work the team has put into this important initiative, and I know it will help introduce our city to millions of future visitors from around the world.”

Chicago residents can expect to see “Never Done. Never Outdone.” advertisements on city information panels and highlighted in social media activations in the coming weeks. Nationally, Choose Chicago prioritizes ad placements based on historical

seasonal demand from top inbound leisure markets, including Atlanta, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City. Internationally, ad placements and spend will also be primarily allocated to key leisure markets based on demand, including Brazil, Canada, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. Choose Chicago will continue to engage members and community partners in the campaign efforts to infuse reasons why Chicago is “Never Done. Never Outdone.” into content and events.

Choose Chicago collaborated with a creative collection of agencies for the brand and campaign work including MMGY Global, Envisionit (digital and creative partner), Agents of Slang (creative partner), October Productions (production partner), Word and Soul (creative partner), and Chu Batsaihan (creative partner).

Choose Chicago is the official destination marketing organization responsible for promoting Chicago as a global tourism and meetings destination—the city that’s Never Done and Never Outdone. Choose Chicago leverages the city’s unmatched assets to enrich the community by attracting meetings, events, and leisure visitors, helping to attract over 55 million visitors annually and generating \$20 billion in economic impact.

Brand USA Announces Bold Agenda to Drive International Visitation at IPW 2025



Brand USA Introduces New Global Tourism Campaign ‘America the Beautiful’ and Launches Dedicated Digital Hub, AmericaTheBeautiful.com.

Organization Promotes Decade of Big Events, including America250, 2026 World Cup, Route 66 Centennial, Upcoming 2028 Summer Olympics and Paralympics and 2034 Winter Olympic Games, and Promotes What’s New in the USA

Brand USA, the United States’ destination marketing organization and premier sponsor of U.S. Travel Association’s IPW, held its annual press conference today at McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois, outlining a bold vision for the future of international travel to the United States. The organization introduced a new global tourism campaign, *America the Beautiful*,

designed to showcase the best of the United States and drive international inbound travel in 2025 and beyond.

“As we set our sights on 2026 and beyond, we’re proud to announce *America the Beautiful* — a bold and unprecedented global tourism campaign,” said Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA. “There’s never been a better time to explore the beauty

and energy of the USA, which continues to be the world’s most aspirational long-haul travel destination. With this campaign, we’re sending a clear message: the USA is open for business and ready to welcome legitimate international travelers. We’re confident this effort will spark renewed interest and deepen connections with audiences around the world.”



Fred Dixon

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Launching in August, *America the Beautiful* is a flexible, emotionally motivating platform designed to reignite passion for U.S. travel and remind global visitors of the richness, warmth, and diversity of U.S. destinations and people.

“Visitors come to do more than see America. They come to feel it, to connect with our people, explore our landscapes, and experience our stories. *America the Beautiful* gives us a new way to tell those stories and invite the world to be part of them,” said Dixon.

The campaign will be supported by a dedicated digital hub, *AmericaTheBeautiful.com*, launching today, which leverages artificial intelligence in partnership with *Mindtrip* to personalize and enhance the traveler journey. This is a step toward a more intuitive, data-informed approach, allowing Brand USA to better understand what inspires global audiences to deliver tailored experiences that move them to action.

“This campaign is a storytelling platform that will give the world a fresh lens through which to see the United States,” said Leah Chandler, chief marketing officer for Brand USA. “We’re tapping into nostalgia and curiosity, the same feelings that have always drawn travelers to the United States. And it’s built to be scalable — allowing our partners to integrate, collaborate, and amplify our shared message worldwide.”

In addition, Brand USA has partnered with the U.S. Department of Transportation to promote *The Great American Road Trip* to international travelers, featuring 250 points of interest across the country.

In Fiscal Year 2024, *Brand USA’s marketing efforts* generated 1.6 million incremental international visitors, nearly \$6 billion in additional visitor spending, and supported close to 80,000 American jobs. These efforts produced \$1.7 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue, contributing to nearly \$13 billion in total economic impact across the country.

According to Brand USA’s most

recent Omnibus Study, the USA remains the #1 overall destination travelers are most likely to visit globally in the next year among the markets surveyed. International travel intent has increased month-over-month in several key markets, including Japan, France, South Korea, and Canada. Notably, Mexico reached its highest intent level since January, while Canada improved for the second month in a row, reversing a sustained period of decline.

In 2025, international air connectivity to the United States continues to expand, with more than 853,000 nonstop flights across 1,683 routes connecting 249 cities in 262 airports around the world to 84 U.S. airports in 74 cities. Some notable new routes include Air France’s Orlando–Paris, Aer Lingus’ Nashville–Dublin, and United’s San Francisco–Adelaide. This year alone, 44 new nonstop routes from 26 countries are launching, contributing over 1.6 million additional seats into U.S. gateways.

AMERICA THE BRAND NEW

Looking ahead, Brand USA spotlighted a defining decade for travel to the United States, one marked by global events, national anniversaries and milestones, and extraordinary new visitor experiences.

The momentum begins to build this month with the Club World Cup, followed by the Ryder Cup in New York, Super Bowl LX in California, and the World Cup in summer 2026. To support planning, Brand USA published a number of *customized itineraries* for the travel trade linking FIFA host cities and base camps to surrounding regions and destinations across the country.

In 2028 and 2034, the U.S. will welcome the world to Los Angeles for the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games and Salt Lake City for the Winter Olympics, respectively. For the first time, the Men’s and Women’s Rugby World Cups will also be held in the U.S., with cities across the USA hosting the events in 2031 and 2033.

Major milestones will also take center stage in 2026 with the *Route 66 Centennial*, the world’s most iconic

highway. Spanning eight states from Illinois to California, this historic road will come alive with commemorative experiences that celebrate the spirit of the Great American Road Trip and the communities that line its path. Also in 2026, the United States will celebrate *America 250*, marking America’s semiquincentennial, with a yearlong series of exhibitions, events, and programs across all 50 states. Brand USA has officially finalized a partnership with the *America250 Commission* to help bring this anniversary celebration to life.

As the world’s attention turns to the U.S., travelers will find a wealth of new experiences waiting for them. The following represents a sampling of the exciting developments across the USA; to discover more of what’s new and noteworthy, [click here](#).

In 2025 and 2026, the country is unveiling reimaged landmarks, new attractions, and unique experiences. *Universal Epic Universe* in Orlando, Florida has ushered in a new era of themed entertainment, and 2026 will see that energy continue with the arrival of *Mattel Adventure Park’s* second location in Kansas. The *MegaZip* in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, offers adrenaline-filled adventure high above the Great Smoky Mountains on America’s longest zipline. In Kansas City, the brand-new *Museum of BBQ* highlights how this quintessential American cuisine is made and the regional styles that make BBQ distinct across the USA. *Dataland*, opening in Los Angeles, is the world’s first museum dedicated to AI art. And in Bentonville, Arkansas, *The Compton* – a new boutique hotel nestled in the town’s historic square—offers a fresh take on small-town luxury with walkable access to parks, food trucks, and galleries.

Nature lovers can trek the newly completed 34-mile *Adirondack Rail Trail* in upstate New York. Meanwhile, San Antonio Zoo’s new *Spekboom Lodge* will immerse guests in wildlife experiences. Across the country, experiences big and small – urban and rural – are redefining travel to the USA.

Hit the NOS: Universal Studios Hollywood Announces “Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift,” the Destination’s First High-Speed Outdoor Roller Coaster Opening in 2026



Universal Studios Hollywood announces its “Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift,” first-ever, high-speed outdoor roller coaster launching in 2026 will debut as the fastest roller coaster in the Universal Destinations & Experiences portfolio at a staggering 72 MPH. The theme park also reveals a first look rendering and animatic video showcasing the breadth of this exciting new thrill ride.

Construction continues on this ambitious roller coaster and its state-of-the-art ride system, which is being uniquely designed to immerse guests within Universal Pictures’ exhilarating *Fast & Furious* universe.

This innovative roller coaster will take guests on an adventure, unlike anything ever encountered before. Featuring groundbreaking 360-degree rotation of the individual ride vehicles, the coaster will rocket guests up to 72 MPH along 4,100 feet of elaborate track, meticulously constructed with sound reduction technology for a breathtaking experience.

The fully rotational ride vehicles will create a seamless sensation of drifting cars as guests spin in motion at furiously fast speeds while being catapulted along an aerial track that winds its way over sections of the theme park, including the multi-level escalator that connects the Upper and Lower Lots.

“Watching the progress of this incredible roller coaster come to life is truly spectacular,” said Scott Strobl, Executive Vice President & General Manager, Universal Studios Hollywood. “2026 is just around the corner and we are equally as excited as our guests to introduce such an inspiring new ride to our theme park portfolio. ‘Fast & Furious: Hollywood

Drift’ will be a powerful game changer for Universal Studios Hollywood that will not only transform the topography of our destination but will infuse an entirely new level of adrenaline to our already dynamic theme park. We look forward to riding it ourselves and to welcoming guests to experience it in the very near future.”

“Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift” will be located on the Upper Lot of Universal Studios Hollywood. Guests will queue up within an expansive garage-like structure before settling into one of four ride vehicles, designed to look like the iconic cars from the films. The ride vehicle modeled after Dominic Toretto’s 1970 Dodge Charger is currently on display at Universal Studios Hollywood.

The “Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift” roller coaster will benefit from Universal Destinations & Experiences’ decades-long expertise in revolutionizing the development of the contemporary roller coaster across its global theme parks.

The ride will join Universal Studios Hollywood’s slate of unprecedented groundbreaking attractions, including the interactive land, *SUPER NINTENDO WORLD™*, featuring the critically-acclaimed “Mario Kart™: Bowser’s Challenge” ride; “*The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™*” highly immersive land that features Hogsmeade™ village, “Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey™” and “Flight of the Hippogriff™” rides; “*Jurassic World—The Ride*”; Illumination’s award-winning “*The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash*” and “*Despicable Me Minion Mayhem*”; Springfield, U.S.A. and “*The Simpsons Ride™*”; “*TRANSFORMERS™: The Ride-3D*” and “*Revenge of the Mummy—The Ride*,” as well as the theme park’s signature, behind-the-scenes *Studio Tour* attraction.

About *Fast & Furious* Saga: Over the course of eleven films that have stoked passion in an ever-expanding audience and have earned more than \$7 billion at the worldwide box office, Universal Pictures’ record-smashing, homegrown *Fast & Furious* Saga has become the studio’s most-profitable and longest-running franchise. Across social media platforms, the fan following for the movies and cast has grown into the biggest of any active franchise. Following 2017’s *The Fate of the Furious*, which debuted in theaters as the biggest global opening of all time, the blockbuster franchise expanded to a multitude of offerings – from toys and video games to an animated series and the hit spin-off title, *Hobbs & Shaw*. The tenth and most recent chapter in the *Fast & Furious* Saga, *Fast X*, raced into theaters May 2023.



360 CHICAGO

Announces Expansion of Observation Deck and New Dedicated Event Space Atop Iconic 875 N. Michigan Avenue

360 CHICAGO, the observation deck located on the 94th floor of 875 N. Michigan Avenue (the former John Hancock Center), has announced that the observation deck will expand to the 95th floor, becoming Chicago's first multi-story observation deck, and the 96th floor will become a premier event space for weddings, celebrations and corporate gatherings.

360 CHICAGO's parent company, **Magnicity**, purchased the two floors in June 2024, and after a multimillion-dollar renovation, the new spaces are expected to open to the public in 2027. New features planned include a grand staircase connecting floors 94, 95 and 96 – ascending through a dramatic triple-height space

with striking views of Lake Michigan.

"This expansion across three floors represents a significant commitment to Chicago's Magnificent Mile, as well as a strategic investment in the visitor experience and the long-term value of 875 N. Michigan Avenue," said Nichole Benolken, Managing Director of 360 CHICAGO. "The renovation – and reimagining – of these two floors will take guests on an immersive and vibrant journey to the top of the city, and those wishing to celebrate with us will be able to do so amid unparalleled surroundings."

Designed for elevated experiences, the 96th floor will become a premier venue for unforgettable weddings, standout brand activations, and exceptional corporate events. With sweeping views of Chicago's skyline and lakefront, this space will offer the flexibility to host both intimate and large-scale gatherings.

360 CHICAGO has joined forces with architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), and WB, a global leader in experiential brand development, to reimagine the guest journey through an integrated approach that fuses architecture and immersive design. The concept will align with Magnicity and 360 CHICAGO's mission to champion the city of Chicago through an elevated guest experience that celebrates Chicago's rich culture, history and diverse communities.

The new vision for the space amplifies the tower's signature

X-bracing structure—originally designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)—using it as a focal point in the interior redesign. In partnership with WB, a global leader in experiential brand development and immersive multimedia experiences, the reimagined space will celebrate the building's innovative architecture while incorporating experiential storytelling, creating a unified environment where form, function, and narrative are seamlessly interwoven.

"Over the last decade we've invested nearly \$20 million in our experience and grown our annual visitation numbers by over 60%. This acquisition and expansion will allow us to welcome even more visitors in future years," added Benolken. In 2014 360 CHICAGO introduced TILT, Chicago's highest thrill ride, and in 2022 opened the city's highest cocktail lounge, CloudBar. Most recently, 360 CHICAGO unveiled a complete renovation of the concourse-level entry, which transformed the space into a digitally enhanced tribute to Chicago's neighborhoods and culture.

SOM

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) is a global practice of architects, designers, engineers, and planners, responsible for some of the world's most technically and environmentally advanced buildings and significant public spaces. From a strategic regional plan to a single piece of furniture, SOM's designs anticipate change and have brought

lasting value to communities around the world. The firm's approach is highly collaborative, and its interdisciplinary team is engaged in a wide range of international projects, with creative studios based across the globe. SOM is also a carbon neutral business.

WB is a creative studio that partners with brands, event agencies, and cultural institutions worldwide to design and produce immersive multimedia experiences. With expertise spanning luxury events, fashion shows, product launches, and cultural exhibitions, WB combines cutting-edge technology with compelling storytelling to craft impactful, multisensory environments. Their portfolio includes collaborations with renowned clients such as Nike, Cartier, Fendi, and Louis Vuitton, delivering experiences that resonate across diverse audiences.

360 CHICAGO

Observation Deck offers the best views of Chicago from 1,030 feet above the famed Magnificent Mile, atop 875 N. Michigan (the former John Hancock Center). The 17,000-square foot observation deck on the 94th floor of the building is also the home of *TILT* – Chicago's highest thrill ride, and CloudBar, the city's highest cocktail lounge where guests can grab a specialty cocktail and relax while enjoying the view. 360 CHICAGO is operated by Magnicity, a global leader in elevated urban leisure. Follow along on

social @360CHICAGO and @CLOUDBARCHICAGO. Tickets and more information can be found at 360CHICAGO.com.

Magnicity is the world leader in elevated urban leisure and one of the only companies in the world specializing in managing panoramic observatories. It operates the Paris Montparnasse Observatory (Montparnasse Tower) in Paris, France, the Berliner Fernsehturm (TV Tower) in Berlin, Germany, the 360 CHICAGO Observation Deck at the former John Hancock Center in Chicago, Illinois, the Euromast and Zalmhaven I in Rotterdam, and will open a new site in August at the top of the Varso Tower in Warsaw, Poland, the tallest skyscraper in the European Union. The Spiral Tower project, a custom-built, freestanding observation tower that can be deployed in any city, is part of Magnicity's CSR strategy focusing on responsible urban tourism, environmental sustainability and collaboration with local communities.

More than a spectacular view of the city, Magnicity is a journey of immersive experiences where local and international visitors discover the city in all its dimensions (its history, its culture, its art of living). Magnicity venues combine educational activities, new technologies, thrill rides, exhibitions, and one-off events to create unforgettable experiences. By 2025, after the opening of the new Warsaw site, Magnicity will have 450 employees and more than 3 million visitors each year.

Universal Epic Universe, Universal Orlando Resort's Highly Anticipated New Theme Park, Is Now Officially Open

Unlocking Portals to Five Astounding Worlds Filled with Extraordinary Adventures

With the Opening of Epic Universe, Universal Orlando Resort Transforms Into a Four-Theme Park Destination Filled with a Week's Worth of Unforgettable Experiences



Let the Epic adventures begin! Universal Orlando Resort's newest theme park, **Universal Epic Universe**, is now open – marking the debut of one of the most innovative and immersive theme parks ever created and the first major theme park to open in Orlando in 25 years. The groundbreaking new theme park transports guests to five imaginative worlds filled with extraordinary adventures that go beyond guests' wildest imaginations: **Celestial Park, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Ministry of Magic, SUPER NINTENDO WORLD, How to Train**

Your Dragon – Isle of Berk and Dark Universe.

"We are thrilled to officially unveil Universal Epic Universe to the world," says Karen Irwin, President and Chief Operating Officer of Universal Orlando Resort. "Epic Universe is the culmination of what we've been working on for nearly a decade. Our teams have poured so much passion, vision and dedication into this new park and there is truly nothing like it in our universe."

More than a decade in the making, Universal Epic Universe is the most ambitious theme park Universal

Destinations and Experiences has ever created and presents a level of theme park immersion and innovation that is unmatched. Through a set of majestic portals, guests are transported to five expansive worlds featuring a combined total of more than 50 experiences – ranging from jaw-dropping attractions and exhilarating entertainment to delectable dining, themed shopping and more – all of which come together to create an unforgettable adventure that is nothing short of epic.

The five imaginative worlds of Epic Universe include:

Celestial Park

The heart of Epic Universe, **Celestial Park** is the first world guests encounter at the new theme park.

With acres of rolling gardens, chasing waterways and strolling pathways, Celestial Park puts the “park” back in “theme park,” with discovery, thrills and excitement at every turn. Here, guests can find dozens of dining and shopping venues and three exciting attractions:

- **Stardust Racers** – a dual-racing launch coaster that sends guests rocketing through the skies at speeds up to 62 mph;
- **Constellation Carousel** – a first-of-its-kind carousel that glides forward, backward – and even makes 360-degree rotations – in a choreographed dance of music and starlight;
- **Astronomica** – an interactive wet play area that doubles as a giant compass rose to the many wonders of Epic Universe.

The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Ministry of Magic

The destination’s third installment of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter is set in 1920s wizarding Paris from Warner Bros. Pictures’ *Fantastic Beasts* films and the British Ministry of Magic from the *Harry Potter* film series. Guests visiting this spectacular new world can:

- cast dazzling spells throughout the magical streets of wizarding Paris using interactive wands;
- encounter fantastic beasts at a traveling circus in the full-scale theatre experience, **Le Cirque Arcanus**;
- enjoy delectable cuisine, including the Butterbeer crepe at **Café L’Air De La Sirène**;
- embark on a thrilling adventure set inside the iconic British Ministry of Magic in Universal’s most technologically advanced attraction yet – **Harry Potter and the Battle at the Ministry**;
- and so much more.

SUPER NINTENDO WORLD

Guests can jump into the action of their favorite video game worlds in SUPER NINTENDO WORLD – featuring Super Mario Land and – for the first

time in the U.S. – Donkey Kong Country. In this colorful and kinetic world, guests can:

- join Team Mario to battle Team Bowser for the Golden Cup in **Mario Kart: Bowser’s Challenge**;
- travel through Mushroom Kingdom landscapes in search of glowing eggs on **Yoshi’s Adventure**, which also makes its U.S. debut at Epic Universe;
- careen through the jungle aboard mine carts on a thrilling adventure inspired by the world of Donkey Kong Country video games in **Mine-Cart Madness**;
- enjoy culinary creations crafted by Chef Toad in **Toadstool Cafe**;
- meet and greet Mario, Luigi, Toad and Princess Peach in Super Mario Land, and Donkey Kong in Donkey Kong Country;
- and so much more.

Guests can also level up their fun and enhance their play in SUPER NINTENDO WORLD with a Power-Up Band, which allows them to collect digital coins by punching ? Blocks and play interactive activities; collect digital stamps on attractions; earn digital keys to unlock an exclusive showdown against Bowser Jr.; and discover other hidden surprises.

How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk

This larger-than-life world captures the heart, humor and scale of the beloved *How to Train Your Dragon* films and is an authentic re-creation of the rugged, rocky world where raucous Vikings and rambunctious dragons live together in hilarious harmony. Guests will see what it’s like to live amongst dragons as they enjoy Viking-sized adventures like:

- launching into the sky for a dragon’s eye view of Berk on the family-friendly thrill coaster, **Hiccup’s Wing Gliders**;
- practicing aerobatic maneuvers and high-speed barrel rolls on Viking-made dragon-riding trainers that reach heights up to 67 feet in the air on **Dragon Racer’s Rally**;
- embarking on an unforgettable journey with beloved characters Hiccup, Toothless, Gobber and Astrid

in the dragon-filled live show, **The Untrainable Dragon**;

- savoring the wildly popular Mac & Cheese cones at **Hooligan’s Grog & Gruel**;
- and so much more.

Guests can also meet heroic Dragon Rider, Hiccup, and pose for a photo with his friendly Night Fury, Toothless; and encounter other familiar Vikings while exploring Berk.

Dark Universe

Iconic stories of unearthly legends like Dracula, The Wolf Man, Frankenstein’s Monster, the Bride of Frankenstein and more come to life alongside a new generation of monsters and characters in this ominous world. As guests venture through the ravaged village of Darkmoor, they’ll encounter monstrous adventures that include:

- journeying deep into the catacombs of Frankenstein Manor while trying to evade the grasps of Dracula, The Wolf Man, The Mummy and others in Universal Orlando’s most terrifying attraction yet, **Monsters Unchained: The Frankenstein Experiment**;
- racing to escape the werewolves before they become one themselves on the spinning family coaster, **Curse of the Werewolf**;
- becoming fashionably monstrous with elaborate face paint and temporary tattoos in **Darkmoor Monster Makeup Experience**;
- enjoying a delicious meal while surrounded by vampire artwork and artifacts in **Das Stakehaus**;
- meeting monsters like the Bride of Frankenstein, The Invisible Man, Ygor and even Dr. Victoria Frankenstein’s Monster;
- and so much more.

And at the edge of Epic Universe is Universal Helios Grand Hotel, a Loews Hotel, a 500-room Mediterranean-inspired escape that features a variety of dining options, a resort-style pool with cabanas, a rooftop bar overlooking Epic Universe, and a dedicated entrance to the theme park from the lobby for hotel guests (valid theme park admission required).



Orlando Unveils

What's New for 2025 at

IPW

Visit Orlando, The Official Tourism Association® for Orlando, announced exciting new updates from The Theme Park Capital of the World at IPW in Chicago. From 2024 visitation numbers to the first new theme park to open in 25 years and other major attractions, hotel and shopping options, Orlando continues to lead the way as one of the most dynamic travel destinations in the world.

Orlando Announces 75.3 million Visitors in 2024

Orlando welcomed more than 75.3 million visitors in 2024, a 5.9% increase over the previous year, maintaining its position as America's most visited destination. International

visitation reached 6.5 million, reflecting growth in key markets with Canada remaining the top international market, followed by UK, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia. The destination's growth is a testament to the uniqueness of Orlando; the city's increasing global connectivity, with new and expanded airlift in nearly all of Orlando's top international markets; and the efforts of travel trade partners, including Visit Orlando's network of international representation in 12 markets, with recent additions in Spain, France, Chile, Peru, Argentina and India.

2024 International Results – Top 5 Origin Markets:

- Canada: 1,290,300 (up 2.7%)
- K.: 907,900 (up 3.5%)
- Brazil: 697,200 (up 0.2%)
- Mexico: 438,000 (up 1.5%)
- Colombia: 343,000 (up 13.6%)

What's New in Orlando for 2025

Orlando continues to raise the bar with major expansions and guest experiences for every type of traveler.

At **Universal Orlando Resort**, the highly anticipated **Universal Epic Universe** opened on May 22, the first theme park to open in Orlando in 25 years. The all-new park features five fully immersive worlds including Celestial Park, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Ministry of Magic, SUPER NINTENDO WORLD, How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk and Dark Universe.

SeaWorld Orlando debuted Expedition Odyssey, a groundbreaking flying theater ride that transports guests across the Arctic using real-world footage. *Summer Spectacular* returns through Sept. 1, with new entertainment including a high-energy drone show and nightly fireworks.

At **Walt Disney World Resort**, two new shows debut at **Disney's Hollywood Studios**, including "The Little Mermaid – A Musical Adventure" and "Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After." On July 20, **Magic Kingdom Park** unveils "Disney Starlight, Dream the Night Away," Disney World's first new nighttime parade in nearly 10 years, featuring characters from Walt Disney

Animation Studios films "Peter Pan," "Encanto," "Frozen" and more.

Shopping remains a top draw for international visitors, and Orlando continues to lead the way with a growing lineup of first-to-market luxury brands at its premier retail destinations. Notable additions include Moncler, Dolce & Gabbana, and Valentino at Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets; Hollister and Greg Norman at Orlando International Premium Outlets; and Balenciaga, Tecovas and Alo Yoga debuting at The Mall at Millenia in 2025.

Orlando was ranked by WalletHub as one of the best U.S. cities for soccer fans and «Best Sports Business City for Attracting Events» by Sports Business Journal, solidifying the destination's status as a top tourism destination as a premier sports hot spot. Orlando will host several high-profile FIFA Club

and a dedicated entrance into Universal Epic Universe. Designed for families and large groups, the new **Villatell Orlando Resort** on International Drive features spacious villas that sleep up to 26 guests and include immersive themed rooms that extend the magic beyond the parks. **Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin** unveiled a sleek, modern redesign of all 756 rooms and suites in the Swan hotel as part of a \$275 million renovation, while **Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Orlando Resort & Suites** completed a top-to-bottom refresh with a nearly \$7 million investment.

MICHELIN Dining, Including Orlando's First-Ever MICHELIN 2-Star Restaurant

Orlando's evolving dining scene has been recognized with one of the world's highest culinary honors. In the 2025

Orlando welcomed more than 75.3 million visitors in 2024, a 5.9% increase over the previous year, maintaining its position as America's most visited destination. International visitation reached 6.5 million, reflecting growth in key markets with Canada remaining the top international market, followed by UK, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia.

World Cup games including LAFC vs CR Flamengo on June 24 and Juventus FC vs. Manchester City on June 26. The Orlando Magic bring world-class basketball action to downtown Orlando, giving international fans a chance to experience the excitement of the NBA live.

Orlando's Booming Hotel Growth

Orlando, home to nearly 500 hotels and more than 132,000 rooms, continues to expand its impressive portfolio of accommodations. Within the past year, Orlando added 2,600 new hotel rooms. Universal Orlando Resort introduced several new properties, including **Universal Stella Nova Resort** and **Universal Terra Luna Resort**. Additionally, **Universal Helios Grand Hotel** opened with 500 rooms

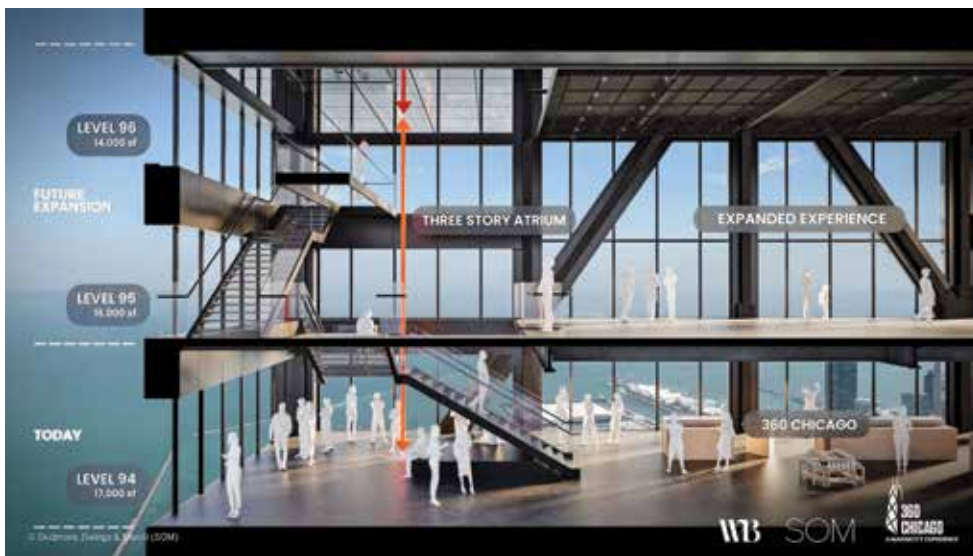
MICHELIN Guide Florida, inspectors added 11 new Orlando restaurants to the lineup, starting with the destination's first-ever Two-MICHELIN-Star honoree, Sorekara, which also received a MICHELIN Service Award for General Manager Austin Joseph, and the One-MICHELIN-Star Ômo by Jônt. Orlando now boasts 59 restaurants recognized by Michelin, including 9 MICHELIN Starred venues, 15 Bib Gourmands and 35 Recommended eateries.

Orlando Travel Academy and Trade Tools

The Orlando Travel Academy continues to grow as a leading resource for travel advisors, offering perks, up-to-date modules and tools to help agents sell the destination.

Magnicity, Paris-Based Operator of 360 CHICAGO, Accelerates Global Expansion with New Observation Deck Projects Across the U.S., Asia, and Europe

“Spiral Tower” Concept Considered for Potential U.S. Debut



MAGNICITY

in Warsaw, Poland this summer, the acquisition of the 95th and 96th floors of the former John Hancock Center in Chicago last year, in addition to the opening of a new restaurant, *Sphere* by Tim Raue, in their Berlin TV Tower property in June and an additional restaurant, *Celest*, that opened in their De Zalmhaven property in Rotterdam at the start of the year. Sphere brings the culinary expertise of renowned Chef Tim Raue to Berlin TV Tower, showcasing the finest cuisine Berlin and Brandenburg have to offer. Celest is a concept restaurant inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall" that invites travelers, food enthusiasts and explorers to embark on a one-of-a-kind culinary and sensory journey.

The 95th and 96th floors of the Hancock are currently being developed into a two-story extension of 360 CHICAGO, as well as a dedicated event space, maintaining public access to the top two floors of this iconic building.

360 CHICAGO

360 CHICAGO Observation Deck offers the best views of Chicago from 1,030 feet above the famed Magnificent Mile, atop 875 N. Michigan (the former John Hancock Center). The 17,000-square foot observation deck on the 94th floor of the building is also the home of TILT – Chicago's highest

CHICAGO – Magnicity, parent company of 360 CHICAGO, the iconic observation deck located on the 94th floor of 875 N. Michigan Avenue (the former John Hancock Center), today announced pending deals to expand their portfolio of observation deck properties in the U.S., Asia and Europe. An official announcement of the exact city and towers will be circulated by the end of 2025. Magnicity currently owns and operates observation decks in Chicago, Paris, Berlin and Rotterdam, with a new deck opening in Varso Tower in Warsaw, Poland this summer.

Additionally, Magnicity has confirmed that its innovative “Spiral Tower” concept – a sustainable observation deck made of spiraling pods designed for modular deployment in urban environments – is currently under active consideration in the

U.S. for what could become its global launch.

“Magnicity is currently expanding its global portfolio with the addition of new observation decks, including the first official launch of our exclusive and innovative Spiral Tower project. The most advanced and promising discussions to date are currently taking place in the United States.” said Alexia Vettier, CEO of Magnicity. “These developments represent an important step for our fast-growing global brand and a continuation of our commitment to bring elevated urban leisure experiences to new audiences while continuing to highlight the unique perspectives and stories that define each city.”

This announcement comes as Magnicity expands its offerings with a new property opening in Varso Tower (the tallest building in the EU)

thrill ride, and CloudBar, the city's highest cocktail lounge where guests can grab a specialty cocktail and relax while enjoying the view. 360 CHICAGO is operated by Magnicity, a global leader in elevated urban leisure. Follow along on social @360CHICAGO and @CLOUDBARCHICAGO.

Magnicity

Magnicity is the world leader in elevated urban leisure and one of the only companies in the world specializing in managing panoramic observatories. It operates the Paris Montparnasse Observatory

(Montparnasse Tower) in Paris, France, the Berliner Fernsehturm (TV Tower) in Berlin, Germany, the 360 CHICAGO Observation Deck at the former John Hancock Center in Chicago, Illinois, the Euromast and Zalmhaven I in Rotterdam, and will open a new site in August at the top of the Varso Tower in Warsaw, Poland, the tallest skyscraper in the European Union. The Spiral Tower project, a custom-built, freestanding observation tower that can be deployed in any city, is part of Magnicity's CSR strategy focusing on responsible urban tourism,

environmental sustainability and collaboration with local communities.

More than a spectacular view of the city, Magnicity is a journey of immersive experiences where local and international visitors discover the city in all its dimensions (its history, its culture, its art of living). Magnicity venues combine educational activities, new technologies, thrill rides, exhibitions, and one-off events to create unforgettable experiences. By 2025, after the opening of the new Warsaw site, Magnicity will have 450 employees and more than 3 million visitors each year.

Singapore Tourism Board appoints Serene Woon as Area Director, India, Middle East and South Asia (Mumbai)

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) announced the appointment of Serene Woon as Area Director-Designate, India, Middle East, and South Asia (Mumbai), on 1st May, 2025 and will assume the full director role on 1st July, 2025.

Based in Mumbai, Woon will oversee West and South India markets, as well as the Middle East and South Asia regions, while leading STB's pan-India destination marketing efforts.

Woon brings over a decade of experience at STB since 2010, having served as Area Director in South Korea and Malaysia where she drove significant market growth. She successfully led STB's branded entertainment initiatives in South Korea and expanded the Board's presence in Greater Busan and East Malaysia. Most recently, as Deputy Director at Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), she played a crucial role in the Cross Border Travel Office, helping shape policies for Singapore's border reopening



following the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to assuming her role as Area Director (Mumbai), she served as the Deputy Director of Strategic Planning at the STB, where she worked on the Tourism 2040 (T2040) strategy which charts

out the next bound of tourism growth for Singapore.

Commenting on the new appointment, **Markus Tan, Regional Director for India, Middle East, South Asia & Africa (IMESA), STB**, said: "India represents immense potential as one of our key markets. Serene's deep experience and keen understanding of modern traveller preferences will bring valuable new perspectives to strengthen Singapore's connections with Indian travellers. We look forward to her leadership in this crucial market."

Serene Woon, commenting on her new role, said: "I am honoured to take on this position at such an exciting time for India's outbound travel market. India's culture, diversity, and growing global influence make it a key focus and growth market for us at STB. Together with my team and our partners, I look forward to building on the strong foundation we have established and bringing Singapore closer to Indian travellers."



Prague

Ranks in Top Five Most Popular Meeting Destinations in World

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 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 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 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.**



Discover Virginia After Dark: Explore the Commonwealth's Nocturnal Tourism Experiences



As more travelers look for immersive, nature-focused experiences, Virginia's unspoiled night skies are becoming a standout attraction. The Commonwealth features several internationally designated dark sky parks, each offering unique events such as Shenandoah National Park's popular stargazing programs. Visitors can also explore public observatories and enjoy a range of nighttime activities throughout the state, making Virginia a premier destination for stargazers and astronomy enthusiasts.

Virginia's Dark Sky Places – Just a Short Trip from the Nation's Capital

Virginia proudly features five designated International Dark Sky Places (IDSP) recognized by *DarkSky International* for their exceptional nighttime visibility and conservation efforts:

- *Sky Meadows State Park* (Delaplane)
- *Natural Bridge State Park* (Rockbridge County)
- *James River State Park* (Gladstone)
- *Staunton River State Park* (Scottsburg)
- *Rappahannock County Park* (Washington)

These parks, located just a few hours from Washington D.C., offer easy access to the cosmos for urban visitors looking to escape the glow of city lights. In fact, Sky Meadows is less than 90 minutes from the capital offering a rare opportunity to experience true darkness so close to a major metropolitan area.

Many parks host stargazing events, astronomy nights, and seasonal festivals celebrating the stars while educating visitors on the importance of preserving our night skies.

Night Skies at Shenandoah National Park

One of Virginia's crown jewels, *Shenandoah National Park* offers an exclusive front-row seat to the wonders of the universe through its *Stargazing programs*. Held regularly from spring through fall, these ranger-led events include:

- Telescope viewings of planets, stars, and nebulae
- Constellation tours with cultural storytelling
- Night hikes with dark sky photography opportunities
- Educational talks on astronomy and light pollution

Set against the majestic backdrop of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah's Stargazing programs invite visitors to slow down and look up. Visiting a Dark Sky Place adds a serene, starlit dimension to any Virginia getaway.

Virginia State Parks After Dark: Wildlife, Wonder & Wilderness

Beyond stargazing, *Virginia State Parks* invite visitors to discover the mysteries of nature that come alive after sunset. These immersive nighttime programs are designed to engage all ages through guided exploration and hands-on learning:

• Nights in Nature Series -

Explore the parks' trails after dark with a ranger-led adventure focused on native nocturnal animals. From bats and owls to fireflies and frogs, learn how Virginia's wildlife adapts to life after the sun sets.

• Moonlit Bike Rides and Night Hikes - Several Virginia State Parks including New River Trail, Pocahontas, and High Bridge offer guided and self-guided evening hikes and bike rides. With headlamps and lanterns lighting the way, these activities offer a unique way to experience nature's calm under the stars.

• Owl Prowls - Join a park ranger for an educational evening walk to spot and hear some of Virginia's most mysterious nighttime hunters. These popular programs offer insight into owl behavior and adaptations,

often including call-and-response demonstrations.

• Firefly Hikes - One of Virginia's most magical seasonal sights, firefly hikes are offered in parks during peak summer months. These twilight tours showcase the dazzling bioluminescence of synchronous fireflies in full display.

Public Observatories Across Virginia

Stargazers can explore the skies year-round at several public observatories:

- *Abbott Observatory* - Virginia Living Museum (Newport News):

These parks, located just a few hours from Washington D.C., offer easy access to the cosmos for urban visitors looking to escape the glow of city lights. In fact, Sky Meadows is less than 90 minutes from the capital offering a rare opportunity to experience true darkness so close to a major metropolitan area.

Offers daytime solar viewings and monthly evening Stargazing and Laser Light Shows featuring telescope observations of planets, galaxies, and nebulae.

- *Keeble Observatory* - Randolph-Macon College (Ashland): Located

in "The Center of the Universe," this public observatory features a powerful Ritchey-Chretien telescope and offers free weekly observation nights during the school year.

Unexpected After-Dark Adventures Across Virginia

Virginia's nocturnal tourism extends far beyond traditional stargazing. Explore these unique experiences for a truly unforgettable night:

• Dark Skies Nelson (Nelson County): Just southwest of Charlottesville, Nelson County offers pristine stargazing with minimal light pollution and curated astro-tourism experiences. Visitors can book specialty Dark Sky lodging packages—like stargazing stays at Indigo House or Love Ridge Mountain Lodging—and attend seasonal astronomy events hosted at local venues like Wood Ridge Farm Brewery. The county's growing "Dark Skies Nelson" initiative makes it a rising destination for celestial exploration in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

• Primland Resort (Meadows of Dan): The resort's high altitude, remote location, on-site Observatory Dome, and special programs featuring a Celestron CGE Pro 1400 telescope make it an ideal place to add a little stargazing to your getaway. Perfect for couples or luxury travelers seeking a cosmic experience with five-star amenities.

• Full Moon Paddle Tours (Chesapeake Bay): Paddle by kayak or paddle board through the tranquil waters of Virginia's Chesapeake Bay under the moonlight with Chesapeake Paddle Sports.

• "Zzz's Under the Sea" at the Virginia Aquarium (Virginia Beach): This adult-only overnight event invites guests to sleep among marine life in the glow of aquarium exhibits as an ethereal night "under the sea stars."

• Flashlight Corn Mazes (Seasonal): Navigate farm fields after dark with nothing but a flashlight at venues like *Holly Fork Farm* (New Kent) *Liberty Mills Farm* (Orange County) and *Great Country Farms* (Loudoun County).



Marriott International Expands Its Footprint in South Asia with the Debut of Autograph Collection Hotels in Nepal

The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection weaves the story of its destination into every detail, offering guests inspiring and eclectic experiences that celebrate the culture and heritage of Nepal.

Autograph Collection Hotels, part of Marriott Bonvoy's global portfolio of over 30 extraordinary brands, makes its debut in South Asia with the opening of **The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection in Nepal**. This will be Marriott Bonvoy's 19th brand in the South Asia region (*India, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka*). Located in the heart of the city, The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection, boasts 285 rooms including suites, each narrating a unique story - a hallmark of Autograph Collection

hotels. The hotel exemplifies the brand's ethos, beautifully showcasing Kathmandu's rich history through a refined and sophisticated perspective. Guests will be treated to an authentic sense of place with panoramic views of the majestic Himalayan range, the sacred Swoyambhunath Stupa, and the hotel's serene, lush gardens.

Autograph Collection Hotels are inspired by a clear vision and story that makes each property individual, special, and exactly like nothing else. The brand includes over 300 independent hotels across the world - each hand selected

for their inherent craft, distinct perspective on design and immersive experiences that will leave a lasting impression for guests. The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection features "The Storyteller," a curated installation woven into the hotel's public spaces - a layered experience that shares the hotel's legacy through personal stories, historic fragments and guest contributions, thus being kept alive, guest by guest.

"The debut of Autograph Collection Hotels in South Asia with The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection

is a proud milestone for Marriott International, marking the arrival of our 19th brand in this vibrant region,” **commented Ranju Alex, Regional Vice President, Marriott International – South Asia.** “South Asia continues to be a dynamic growth engine for Marriott International, and the debut of Autograph Collection Hotels in Kathmandu reflects our commitment to expanding into culturally rich leisure destinations. With its deep-rooted legacy, and unique character, The Soaltee Kathmandu perfectly aligns with our vision of delivering immersive, one-of-a-kind stays across the region.”

Kathmandu, the vibrant capital of Nepal, is a gateway to the Himalayas and a cultural treasure trove renowned for its ancient temples, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and rich spiritual heritage. Blending centuries-old traditions with a lively urban atmosphere, the city offers travelers an immersive experience steeped in history, art, and natural beauty. Nestled within the city, The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection with its history dating back to 1966, stands as a cornerstone in Nepal's hospitality history. The hotel's architecture harmoniously blends contemporary design with traditional Nepalese motifs, reflecting the country's rich cultural tapestry. Situated on 12 acres of lush, landscaped grounds in Kathmandu's Tahachal area, the property has long been a preferred destination for dignitaries, celebrities, and travelers seeking luxury and authenticity. The interiors of The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection, are infused with local artistry—featuring wooden *jaalis*, exposed bricks, and traditional *Thangka* paintings—creating an ambiance that honors Nepalese heritage while embracing modern comfort. Each guest room and suite are meticulously designed, blending traditional Nepali elements with luxurious amenities, high-end furnishings, and contemporary technology, making the hotel a landmark of elegance and a testament to Nepal's evolving hospitality landscape.

Guests at The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection, can indulge in a rich culinary journey from **Garden Terrace**, an all-day dining restaurant serving signature Nepali thali, **Kakori** offering Awadhi-Indian specialties and chefs' signatures, such as Murgh Chapli Kabab, Rogan Nalli and the famous Dal Kakori, to **Bao Xuan** specializing in authentic Chinese cuisine. **Patio** offers open-air dining with live music and garden views, while **Rodi Bar and the Sports Lounge** provide vibrant spaces to relax with drinks and entertainment.

The hotel is also equipped with an indulgent spa offering a thoughtful selection of therapeutic and relaxing treatments blending time-honored traditions with modern techniques such as Hot Stone Therapy, Shirodhara, and the Traditional Newari Massage. Complementing the wellness journey, guests can also unwind at the outdoor swimming pool, enjoy a game of tennis on the hotel's clay court, or workout at the fully equipped, 24-hour fitness center, featuring state of the art facilities.

For large-scale gatherings, weddings, and grand celebrations, The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection, offers an impressive 25,000 sq. ft. of versatile indoor and outdoor

banqueting space. Nestled in a prime location, the hotel is set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Himalayan ranges, providing a stunning and unforgettable setting for any occasion. The hotel remains deeply committed to sustainability initiatives, incorporating eco-friendly practices in its operations. From energy-efficient lighting and heating systems, an in-house water bottling plant that minimizes the use of plastic, an herb garden and water conservation practices to waste reduction initiatives and the increasing use of locally sourced materials.

“We are incredibly proud to announce The Soaltee Kathmandu, Autograph Collection as the first Autograph Collection hotel in South Asia,” said **Avinash Deshmukh, General Manager.** “With a legacy spanning over 58 years, this iconic hotel seamlessly blends Nepal's rich cultural heritage with contemporary luxury. Whether guests are exploring the vibrant city, soaking in the Himalayan beauty, or hosting unforgettable events, the experience is truly distinctive. Guided by Autograph Collection's brand promise of authenticity and compelling storytelling; we are excited to usher in a new chapter for this landmark property and the brand in the region.”



Thailand Crosses Over One Million Indian Visitors in First Half of 2025 Fueling Strong Bilateral Travel Momentum



Thailand has reached a significant milestone in 2025, surpassing one million Indian visitors by mid-year. This achievement highlights the growing momentum in bilateral travel between the two nations and reaffirms Thailand's status as a top destination for Indian tourists year-round. With its diverse offerings, seamless travel experience, and targeted initiatives like visa exemptions and the Thailand Digital Arrival Card, the country continues to attract more

Indian travelers seeking everything from luxury escapes to cultural adventures.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has proudly revealed that more than one million Indian tourists have already visited Thailand in the first half of 2025. This impressive milestone, reached before the year's midpoint, underscores the enduring popularity of Thailand among Indian travelers and signals a new chapter in the thriving bilateral tourism relationship between the two countries.

A Robust Start to 2025

By mid-June 2025, Indian tourist arrivals to Thailand had surpassed the one million mark—a clear indication of India's growing outbound travel momentum. The achievement comes on the heels of a record-breaking 2024, during which Thailand welcomed over 35 million international tourists. Of these, more than 2.1 million were Indian travelers, making India one of Thailand's most vital tourism source markets.

Thailand's impressive performance in early 2025 firmly establishes it as a top travel choice for Indian tourists, not only for vacations but as a preferred year-round destination. Whether traveling for leisure, weddings, honeymoons, wellness retreats, or adventure, Indian travelers continue to find compelling reasons to visit the Land of Smiles.

Why India Loves Thailand

Indian travelers are drawn to Thailand for its exceptional blend of variety and ease of access. From the buzzing energy of Bangkok and the cultural charm of Chiang Mai to the serene beaches of Phuket and Krabi, Thailand offers something for everyone. Indian visitors are drawn to this variety—not just in terms of landscape, but also in terms of activities and experiences.

Thailand has long catered to budget-conscious travelers as well as premium holidaymakers, offering flexible travel options at every price point. Its rich tapestry of experiences includes spiritual getaways, luxury spa resorts, high-end shopping, vibrant nightlife, and an unparalleled food scene—from sizzling street food to Michelin-starred fine dining. This variety makes Thailand especially attractive to Indian families, solo adventurers, young couples, and increasingly, luxury-seeking clientele.

Seamless Travel Experience Boosting Tourism

A major driver behind the surge in Indian tourist arrivals is the increased travel convenience. By offering visa-free entry for up to 60 days, Thailand has made itself far more appealing to Indian visitors. This initiative not only facilitates hassle-free travel but also inspires more spontaneous getaways and extended, experience-rich stays.

In addition, the introduction of the Thailand Digital Arrival Card (TDAC) has simplified immigration procedures, enabling quicker entry and minimizing delays at airports. For Indian travelers, who often prioritize smooth entry and hassle-free experiences, these innovations make Thailand an even

more attractive destination.

Air connectivity has also played a crucial role. With dozens of direct flights operating daily between major Indian cities and key Thai destinations, travel has never been easier. Airlines such as Thai Airways, Air India, IndiGo, and Vistara have been instrumental in maintaining robust connectivity, while newer routes continue to open up opportunities from smaller Indian cities.

Growth in Tier-II and Tier-III Indian Cities

Another key trend TAT has observed in 2025 is the increasing interest in Thailand from emerging Indian cities. Beyond traditional metros like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, cities such as **Surat, Rajkot, Nagpur, and Nashik** are showing impressive growth in outbound travel.

These rising urban centers are fueling a new wave of Indian tourism to Thailand—particularly in the luxury and wellness segments. Travelers from these regions are now seeking more personalized and premium experiences, such as private island stays, Ayurvedic retreats, exclusive shopping tours, and gourmet culinary journeys.

TAT has identified these cities as vital growth markets and is expanding its outreach accordingly. Efforts include localized marketing, partnerships with regional travel agencies, and participation in regional travel expos to deepen engagement.

Strategic Campaigns and Long-Term Vision

TAT's current efforts are part of a larger vision to promote **high-value, sustainable tourism**. Thailand is not just seeking to attract more tourists but to offer meaningful, quality experiences that contribute positively to both the visitor and the local community.

In India, TAT continues to launch **tailored campaigns**, working closely with tour operators, travel influencers, and digital platforms to promote curated travel experiences that appeal to Indian tastes and preferences. Roadshows, destination showcases,

and joint promotions are being conducted throughout the year to maintain visibility and engagement with Indian travelers.

This strategy aligns with TAT's global mission to move beyond mass tourism and focus on delivering value—both for travelers and for the Thai tourism ecosystem. By emphasizing experiences over numbers, Thailand hopes to foster deeper connections with visitors and build loyalty that transcends one-time vacations.

Looking Ahead

As Thailand celebrates this early milestone in 2025, optimism is high for the months ahead. With the peak travel season yet to come and a calendar full of festivals, wellness events, and cross-cultural exchanges, the number of Indian visitors is expected to continue rising.

India remains one of Thailand's most promising markets, not only in terms of volume but also in terms of engagement and long-term potential. As both countries continue to deepen their people-to-people ties, tourism will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of this dynamic relationship.

Thailand has exceeded one million Indian visitors in the first half of 2025, showcasing strong bilateral travel growth and reinforcing its appeal as a year-round destination for Indian tourists.

Conclusion

The impressive surge of Indian arrivals in Thailand by mid-2025 highlights the powerful synergy between two of Asia's most vibrant nations. With a well-rounded mix of seamless travel policies, rich cultural offerings, and a traveler-first mindset, Thailand continues to reinforce its image as the ultimate getaway for Indian tourists.

By embracing a strategy of sustainable growth, innovation, and personalized experiences, Thailand is not only setting benchmarks in international tourism but also nurturing bonds that will last well beyond the holiday season.



Visit Lauderdale Made Waves at IPW 2025 with “Picture Perfect Paradise” Experience

Devender Grover - TSNN-Chicago IL - Visit Lauderdale, the official destination marketing organization for Greater Fort Lauderdale, captivated industry leaders and attendees at the U.S. Travel Association's IPW 2025, the leading international inbound travel trade show, which took place from June 14-18 at McCormick Place Convention Center in Chicago, Illinois. As a future



host, the DMO also shared a snapshot of what guests can expect from the destination in 2026.

*"Bringing Greater Fort Lauderdale's story to a global audience at IPW was a significant moment for our destination," said **Stacy Ritter, President and CEO of Visit Lauderdale.** "As we look ahead to hosting in 2026, we're excited to showcase the vibrant blend of cultures, communities, and experiences that*

define who we are, a place that proudly welcomes everyone under the sun."

Attendees visiting Visit Lauderdale's activation area at IPW were greeted by brand ambassadors dressed as lifeguards, followed by captivating performances from local Salsa dancers, Caribbean carnival dancers and stilt walkers, highlighting the lively and diverse cultural influences experienced throughout the destination. In celebration of its theme for this year, "Picture Perfect Paradise," the DMO invited attendees to take Polaroid snapshots within the activation area and post them on a picture board, creating a communal display. Visitors also had the opportunity to taste the vibrant flavors of Greater Fort Lauderdale, with margaritas, mocktails, empanadas, Caribbean risotto cakes, shrimp ceviche shooters and more throughout each day.

During its future host city press conference, Stacy Ritter highlighted what sets Greater Fort Lauderdale apart, including its dynamic culinary scene marked by recent 2025 MICHELIN Guide Florida honors, its strong commitment to diversity, accessibility, and inclusivity, and its thriving water culture that connects the entire destination.

As Visit Lauderdale gears up to host IPW 2026 from May 17-21, 2026, the destination will welcome attendees at the **Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center.** IPW 2026 is expected to bring unprecedented visibility to Greater Fort Lauderdale and deliver a powerful economic boost to the local tourism industry. The event is projected to generate more than 20,000 hotel room nights and over \$14 million in food and beverage spending. Over the next three years, the event is expected to generate \$1.5 billion in federal tax revenue and \$1.8 billion in state and local tax revenue. This sustained visitor spending will support more than 63,000 jobs annually across Greater Fort Lauderdale's travel and tourism sector, fueling long-term economic growth for the region.

Greater Fort Lauderdale - With 24 miles of golden sand beaches and 300+ miles of navigable waterways, Greater Fort Lauderdale is known as the Venice of America and Yachting Capital of the World. The area boasts an average year-round temperature of 77°F, has 3,000+ hours of annual sunshine, and is home to 31 unique municipalities, including eight distinct beach communities, each offering something for "everyone under the sun." Residents hailing from 170 countries, speaking 147 languages, call this diverse destination home. And there's good reasons, including the area's unwavering commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Upon arrival at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL), a five-minute drive will get you to the beach, Port Everglades, the newly expanded Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center, and a bustling downtown. Experience 4,000+ eateries, a thriving arts and culture scene, craft breweries, stunning rooftop bars, fishing, diving, and the unmatched beauty of the Florida Everglades. From world-class shopping, to boating, yachts and superyachts all moored at the area's many marinas, it's no wonder Greater Fort Lauderdale is one of the most desirable places to stay, work and play. The destination has more than 38,000 unique lodging accommodations at a variety of hotels, luxury spa resorts, and beautifully appointed, boutique properties, all reflecting the area's cosmopolitan vibe.

Visit Lauderdale is the official destination marketing organization for Greater Fort Lauderdale and serves as the tourism department for Broward County, Florida. Visit Lauderdale promotes the area's 31 municipalities to a global audience of leisure and business travelers as the ideal place for Everyone Under the Sun in recognition of the area's diverse and welcoming vibe, and books conventions into the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center and area hotels and resorts.

Castaway Island, Fiji, launches sculptural Coral Gene Bank with Counting Coral in landmark reef restoration effort

The large-scale installation debuted in June to commemorate World Ocean Month, uniting science, art, and regenerative tourism under OUTRIGGER's ocean conservation initiative





In a bold step toward marine conservation and sustainable tourism, OUTRIGGER Resorts & Hotels has partnered with non-profit organization Counting Coral to launch a transformative coral restoration initiative at Castaway Island, Fiji. At its heart is the installation of a visually striking Sculptural Coral Gene Bank - the third of its kind in Fiji and a first for OUTRIGGER.

The large-scale marine-grade sculpture, which began installation in May in the waters off Castaway Island, Fiji and will continue through June,

is designed to support the long-term regeneration of coral reefs and educate guests about the importance of reef conservation. The initiative is the continuation of OUTRIGGER's long-term commitment to restoring and protecting the fragile reef ecosystems surrounding its Fijian resorts.

The coral gene bank, designed over six months in California and built using marine-grade stainless steel, will house more than 500 parent corals, carefully selected for their genetic resilience. These corals will act as a living seed bank, enabling scientists to monitor,

protect and propagate diverse coral species vital to reef recovery.

Installation includes two key phases:

- Phase One (May-June): Structural anchoring of the sculpture, coral selection, surveying and transplantation of resilient coral species
- Phase Two (2026): Introduction of smaller nursery structures, where coral fragments from the original parent stock will be cultivated and transplanted onto the reef - creating a sustainable cycle of reef restoration

The coral restoration process is designed to be highly visible and

accessible, offering resort guests the unique opportunity to witness conservation in action. From snorkelling excursions to educational materials, guests will be able to engage with the initiative firsthand, strengthening the connection between tourism and environmental stewardship.

“This partnership with Counting Coral marks a major milestone in our OUTRIGGER Zone conservation initiative and our mission to protect the environment through responsible tourism,” said Ben Johnson, Area Director of Sales and Marketing, Fiji Islands at OUTRIGGER Resorts and Hotels. “The Sculptural Coral Gene Bank is more than an installation - it’s a living symbol of our commitment to reef protection through innovation, education and guest engagement.”

“Coral reefs are not only the lifeblood of Fiji’s marine ecosystems but also central to the local economy,” said Brooke True, Executive Director of Counting Coral. “By joining forces



with OUTRIGGER and Castaway Island, Fiji we’re creating a one-of-a-kind restoration site that blends science and sculpture to inspire guests and protect coral ecosystems for the long term.”

This initiative reinforces OUTRIGGER

Resorts & Hotels’ leadership in regenerative tourism and reflects Castaway Island’s commitment to preserving the natural wonders that make it one of Fiji’s most beloved private island resorts.



Pure Michigan Debuts Summer Fragrance, FRESH, Inspired by the Destination's Freshwater Coastline, Wineries, Lavender Fields, and Laughter

New fragrance collection, designed with The Aroma Labs, captures vacation in a bottle

Devender Grover - TSNN - Chicago IL - Beloved travel brand, Pure Michigan today debuted the **summer-themed fragrance FRESH**, evoking beachy vacation days in the Great Lakes State. Developed with custom perfumery, The Aroma Labs, the new fragrance is one of four seasonal scents from Pure Michigan being made available to consumers this year as part of a slow travel initiative.

*"Our sense of smell has a unique ability to transport us in time and space," said **Vice President of Pure Michigan, Kelly Wolgamott**. "These fragrances were designed to enable people to revisit a favorite vacation memory, anticipate an upcoming season, or experience a moment of the relaxation they feel in Michigan"*

*"At the Aroma Labs, we see daily the power of scent to connect to memories, evoke specific emotions, or even unlock a sense of identity," said **Tanya Thompson, owner and founder of The Aroma Labs**. "As a Michigan small business owner, working with an iconic brand like Pure Michigan to capture the essence of each season and cherished vacation experiences has been incredibly rewarding."*

First created in a limited distribution, FRESH is now available to the public as a spray for linen, room, and body via The Aroma Labs, with additional formats and fragrances to come. Readers of Food & Wine, Magnolia Journal, Midwest Living, Travel & Leisure, and Real Simple magazines received a "scratch and sniff" preview of FRESH in a first-of-its-kind scent card distribution this May/June.

"Most adults have familiarity with perfume or cologne fragrance inserts in magazines; our intent with creating a destination fragrance insert was to more fully express the Pure Michigan destinations featured on the pages and make it multisensory," added Wolgamott. "Readers will soon have the chance to experience our next seasonal fragrance, HARVEST for fall, in a similar fashion."

Future fragrance releases will include:

- **HARVEST**: An autumn mix that can transport you to a crisp fall day set off by radiant reds and yellows, while sun reflects warmly on faces and fallen leaves crunch underfoot.
- **FIRST SNOW**: A wintry blend that conveys the warmth of winter, fresh snowfall, fireside gatherings and the quiet joy

of a glistening Michigan wonderland.

- **AWAKENING**: A springtime fusion that will brighten senses like local blooms of tulips, lilacs, and fruit blossoms wafting across springtime fields.

FRESH can be purchased at thearomalabs.com/pure-michigan or at store locations in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Chicago in a 4 oz. spray format.





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 GNTB 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.

Chicago Shines at IPW 2025





Devender Grover - TSNN
- CHICAGO IL – Choose Chicago, the city's official destination marketing organization, wrapped up a **spectacular IPW 2025**, driving hundreds of millions of dollars of future travel to Chicago. Hosted by Choose Chicago, U.S. Travel Association's IPW 2025 drew more than 5,000 delegates from 64 countries, including thousands of key global travel buyers and media, for a jam-packed week of Chicago style events, meetings with tour operators, and media engagements that will impact the next three years of travel to the United States. With one-of-a-kind events at iconic attractions, a stunning booth on the trade show floor, and welcoming hospitality throughout the week, IPW visitors were wowed by Chicago at every turn, which will have a profound impact on driving international travel beyond the next three years.

"I'm immensely proud of Chicago's



tourism community for making IPW 2025 a truly show-stopping event—and the best IPW ever," said Choose Chicago **President and CEO Kristen Reynolds**. *"From celebrating opening*

night at our incredible Field Museum to closing night at the iconic Navy Pier to the Press Brunch at Wrigley Field and everything in between, we showcased what a city that is never done and



never outdone looks like. Alongside the U.S. Travel Association, our partners across Chicago's museums, hospitality, attractions, and culinary industries rose to the occasion to ensure all IPW attendees had outstanding and truly memorable experiences. I am confident that our collective efforts will pay off for years to come."

Last hosted by Chicago in 2014,

the U.S. Travel Association's IPW is the largest international inbound travel trade show in the country, bringing thousands of travel buyers and media to Chicago to connect with domestic travel exhibitors, generating global media coverage and leading to future business. According to new data released by the U.S. Travel and Rockport Analytics, IPW 2025 is

projected to drive 10.9 million new visitors to the U.S. over the next three years, generating \$26.1 billion in visitor spending, supporting over 63,000 American jobs annually, and producing \$3.3 billion in combined federal, state, and local tax revenue.

"IPW is more than a travel trade show, it's a statement about America's readiness to welcome the world," said



U.S. Travel Association President and CEO Geoff Freeman. *“Choose Chicago was an incredible partner this year. Their work brought Chicago’s strengths—its culture, creativity and spirit—into the global spotlight.”*

As host city, Chicago had a unique opportunity to position itself as a welcoming, bucket-list global destination, ensuring that we will

receive an outsized portion of the future travel generated by IPW. Choose Chicago worked for well over a year to plan for IPW 2025 and take advantage of this opportunity. Over the course of three official business days at McCormick Place, Choose Chicago held over 500 appointments with international travel buyers and conducted over 200 meetings and interviews with international travel media.

In addition to the official business conducted at McCormick Place, Choose Chicago hosted numerous events, tours, and activations at iconic attractions and neighborhoods across the city, designed to showcase the best of the city and ensure that travel buyers and media had a memorable experience in Chicago.

- Hosted more than 30 tours for media and travel buyers to showcase the city before IPW kicked off, including a culinary tour to showcase “The Bear,” a Blues Chicago tour led by Wayne Baker Brooks, and a walking tour of Chicago’s LGBTQ+ history.

- Wowed over 500 members of the international media at Chicago’s Press Brunch at Wrigley Field on Sunday on the warning track and in the bleachers, featuring a welcome from Pete Crow-Armstrong and Seiya Suzuki and a rendition of ‘Take Me Out to the Ballgame’ led by Choose Chicago President and CEO Kristen Reynolds, Cubs Executive Chairman Tom Ricketts, Mayor Brandon Johnson, U.S. Travel President and CEO Geoff Freeman, and Brand USA President and CEO Fred Dixon.

- Kicked off IPW with an unforgettable House Party 2.0 Opening Night at the Field Museum on Sunday night complete with food and drink across the museum, a karaoke lounge, a silent disco, and more.

- Governor Pritzker, Kristen Reynolds and Mayor Brandon Johnson welcomed IPW attendees to Chicago at the opening lunch and introduced Choose Chicago’s new campaign ‘**Never Done. Never Outdone**’ to a global audience.

- Hosted a VIP reception for the

Japanese delegation aboard a First Lady architectural river cruise on Monday.

- Welcomed attendees to the **Magnificent Mile Monday event**, which encouraged attendees to enjoy special deals at various restaurants and shops along the Avenue – and concluding with an exclusive party at the Shops at North Bridge featuring a performance by Maggie Speaks.

- Kept the party going Monday night with late-night **Pie in the Sky** for IPW media at Skydeck Chicago with special guest Wayne Baker Brooks.

- Hosted a **neighborhood open night** featuring Pilsen, West Town, and Hyde Park with guided tours, music, and activations on Tuesday.

- Supported the IGLTA Foundation 2025 Pride Reception as Premier Sponsor and Official Entertainment Sponsor at Sidetrack Lounge on Tuesday.

- Officially closed IPW in epic fashion with a **Playcation-themed Closing Night at Navy Pier**, featuring rides on the Centennial Wheel, a Route 66 inspired mini golf course sponsored by Enjoy Illinois, pop-up art exhibitions, and culminating in a fireworks display.

- Hosted hundreds of media and travel buyers for site visits before and after IPW, including a familiarization tour before IPW for more than 20 key travel trade clients from Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom.

“We were thrilled to welcome thousands of tourism professionals from around the world to the Field Museum for the IPW Opening Night party,” said **Dr. Julian Siggers, President and CEO of the Field Museum.**

“The entire week was a spectacular celebration of culture, connection, and Chicago—and Opening Night was the perfect way to kick off the festivities. Thank you to the Choose Chicago team for their vision and execution in showcasing the best of what this city has to offer.”

Choose Chicago welcomed visitors to McCormick Place in true Chicago Style with a spectacular booth on the trade show floor, including a



stunning 50-foot Chicago Flag display hanging overhead. The booth was created in partnership with FGIPG and featured original artwork created by Oscar Joyo. We also hosted a Chicago Press Lounge inside the IPW Press Center at McCormick Place, where we connected with global media, conducted interviews, and gave members of the media the opportunity to win Chicago prizes supplied by partners in a Chicago Style Claw Machine.

We partnered with October TV to film the many IPW events, including helping create this **sizzle reel**, and collaborated with All Star Press to create custom artwork and giveaways featuring local artists including Ariel Sinha, Blake Jones, Sentrock, and Oscar Joyo. Choose Chicago was joined on the trade floor with more than 25 partners made up of some of the leading cultural institutions, attractions, and professional sports

teams in Chicago.

- 360 CHICAGO
- The American Writers Museum
- The Art Institute of Chicago
- Barack Obama Presidential Center
- Broadway in Chicago
- The Chicago Architecture Center
- Chicago Cubs
- Chicago Fire
- Chicago White Sox
- Chicago's First Lady Cruises
- City Cruises by Hornblower
- CityPASS
- Color Factory Chicago
- The Field Museum of Natural History
- Flyover Chicago
- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry
- Hiltons of Chicago
- Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center
- John G. Shedd Aquarium
- K&G Coach Line
- The Magnificent Mile Association

- Museum of Ice Cream
- Navy Pier
- RIU Plaza Hotel
- Shoreline Sightseeing
- SKYDECK CHICAGO
- Wendella Tours & Cruises

Along with Choose Chicago, IPW 2025 was hosted by the Illinois Office of Tourism and O'Hare and Midway International Airports. Premier sponsors included 360 CHICAGO, Big Bus Tours Chicago, the Chicago Cubs, the Chicago Federation of Labor, the Field Museum of Natural History, First Lady, Levy Restaurants, Navy Pier, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and Wrigley Field Events, as well as local unions including IBEW Local 134, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 399, Labor-Management Union Carpenters Cooperation Promotion Fund, Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council, Teamsters Local 727, UNITE HERE Local 1, and USW Local 17U Decorators.

North Dakota Emerges as Premier Destination for Authentic Western Immersion Amidst Rising Cultural Travel



Devender Grover - TSNN - Chicago IL - As travelers increasingly seek genuine cultural connections and unique experiences, North Dakota is stepping into the spotlight as the quintessential gateway to the Great American West. The state proudly offers an unfiltered journey into a rich tapestry of Native American traditions and iconic cowboy heritage, promising visitors an authentic alternative to conventional tourism.

North Dakota's vibrant cultural landscape is shaped by the enduring legacy of its Native American tribes. Visitors are invited to partake in transformative experiences, from the powerful rhythms of traditional powwows and ceremonies that

celebrate Indigenous identity, to the respectful exploration of sacred sites and ancestral lands. This deep-rooted heritage offers a rare and meaningful insight into the true spirit of the land.

Complementing this, North Dakota's cowboy culture embodies the rugged independence and spirited history of the frontier. Historic towns like Medora, with its preserved Main Street and indelible ties to Theodore Roosevelt's legacy, offer more than just a glimpse into the Old West – they provide an immersive step back in time. The state's robust rodeo circuit, featuring exhilarating bull riding, precision barrel racing, and daring bronc riding, delivers an electrifying showcase of modern-day cowboy skills, underscored by vibrant

parades, live music, and family-friendly festivities.

North Dakota's dedication to preserving its Western history is evident in world-class institutions like the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck and Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site near Williston. These destinations serve as living classrooms, weaving together the compelling narratives of pioneers, homesteaders, and Indigenous peoples who collectively forged North Dakota's unique identity.

Discover an adventure beyond the ordinary in North Dakota – a place where authenticity is not just a buzzword, but a way of life, and every visit promises a profound cultural encounter.

INTERNATIONAL

Beach Break, Summer Smiles at The Residence Maldives

*Sun, Sand & Fun at The Residence Maldives'
Dhigurah and Falhumaafushi islands*





Make this summer unforgettable with a family escape to paradise! Or escape to a romantic island getaway made for two. A Maldives escape—where turquoise waters, soft sands, and golden sunsets set the scene.

For families and holidaymakers still planning their summer escapes, The Residence Maldives brings its Summer Break Offer. Available to book over the next couple of months,

this limited time promotion is part of the Cenizaro Privilege Rate campaign aimed to encourage sign-ups with compelling benefits. Guests can enjoy up to 40% off the stay at The Residence Maldives' tropical island resorts—perfect for your much-needed summer break.

From fun beach days to underwater adventures, guests can explore vibrant coral reefs and rich marine life just steps from your villa. Go snorkelling,

diving, kayaking or catamaran sailing, all right at the resorts' doorsteps. After the adventure, unwind with your choice of Bed & Breakfast, Half Board, or All-Inclusive meal plan. Savor some exquisite culinary experiences at the resorts' 9 restaurants and bars offering a world of flavors.

There's something for everyone— island excursions, kids' activities, cooking classes and plenty of time to relax under the sun.

Pack your smiles and let the beach break begin!

For Stays 31 days ahead:

- 40% off the Best Available Rate
- 10% additional discount when booking Cenizaro Privilege Rate
- Complimentary scenic domestic flight transfers for 2 persons in one-bedroom villa and 4 persons in two-bedroom villa*

For Stays within 30 days:

- 30% off the Best Available Rate
- 10% additional discount when booking Cenizaro Privilege Rate
- Complimentary scenic domestic flight transfers for 2 persons in one-

bedroom villa and 4 persons in two-bedroom villa*

Terms & Conditions:

- *Minimum 4-night stay is required and must book the Cenizaro Privilege Rate.
- Prices are subject to 10% service charge, 16% GST (17% GST from 1 July onward) and a Green Tax of USD 12 nett per person per night.
- For additional 3rd person in one-bedroom or 5th person in two-bedroom travelling with the group, additional rollaway bed & transfers are chargeable.
- For bookings over 24th and 31st December night, additional Festive

Supplement is excluded and will be chargeable by the property (payable on site).

- Chargeable transfers are excluded and will be chargeable by the hotel at USD 450 net per adult (12 years & above), USD 370 net per child (2 – 11.99 years) and USD 103 net per infant (0 – 1.99 years), (payable on site).

Cenizaro Hotels & Resorts

The hospitality arm of Bonvests Holdings Limited, Cenizaro Hotels & Resorts is a leading international property and hospitality company with a portfolio of independent luxury hotel properties in some of the world's most desirable locations.



From exotic beach destinations for The Residence by Cenizaro properties in Mauritius, the Maldives, Tunisia, Zanzibar and Indonesia, to enchanting cultural havens with Morocco's first boutique riad hotel, La Maison Arabe, Marrakech and the charmingly intimate Riad Elegancia, Marrakech, to city properties with the Sheraton Towers Singapore and Four Points by Sheraton Perth; each hotel reflects a distinct individual personality and sense of place. Dedicated to providing enriching experiences, Cenizaro's commitment to excellence is evident across every element of its business, from exceptional hospitality products to intuitive and personalised services.



The Residence by Cenizaro

The Residence by Cenizaro properties are located in some of the world's most beautiful destinations, each with a stunning beach setting. The portfolio is inspired by its mission to enrich every guest experience and create a relaxing environment that reflects the destination. Each resort strives to create long-lasting memories, from the food to the wellness offering, to the commitment to the local communities in each destination. Launching the first property in 1996, The Residence Tunis, the established hospitality brand followed with The Residence Mauritius, The Residence Zanzibar, The Residence Maldives at Falhumaafushi, The Residence Bintan, The Residence Maldives at Dhigurah and most recently The Residence Douz, the first desert property to open in 2023. Further expansion is planned with two hotels in Tunisia; The Medina of Tunis and Djerba Island, alongside Ubud, Bali and Mapur, Riau Islands in Indonesia.

A collection of distinctive hotels; The Residence by Cenizaro is part of the exclusive Ultratravel Collection within the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) with its global multi-brand loyalty programme, GHA DISCOVERY.

The Residence Maldives At Falhumaafushi

Nestled on the unspoilt island of Falhumaafushi in Gaafu Alifu atoll, one of the largest and deepest atolls in the world, this 94 beach-front and over-water villa resort is an intimate retreat in the heart of a marine oasis. The beauty of the island's house reef and its resident sharks and turtles is accessible right from the over water villa deck. Designed to complement its tropical surroundings and provide a sense of place, the villas have been created using natural materials and are decorated with local artefacts. The Spa by Clarins on both Falhumaafushi and sister resort on adjacent Dhigurah island is exclusive to The Residence in the Maldives and offers a range of treatments created exclusively for the resort – an ideal place to escape as it

sits directly on the lagoon. The resort boasts three restaurants and four bars, water sports, a fitness centre, kids club and excursions to nearby islands. The romantic Falhuma restaurant is located at the end of a 230m jetty, right on the reef facing the Indian Ocean. The diving surrounding the hotel is exceptional and the hotel's PADI 5* Dive Centre offers all levels of snorkellers and scuba-divers the opportunity to discover the un-spoilt coral reefs and rich marine life.

The Residence Maldives At Dhigurah

Located on the island of Dhigurah in an idyllic setting of Gaafu Alifu Atoll, one of the largest and deepest atolls in the world; renowned for unrivalled diving, the 2km long island is home to lush vegetation of over 2500 coconut palms, soft, white-sand beaches and a beautiful 1km bridge – the longest private bridge in the Maldives which connects it to its sister property on the island of Falhumaafushi. An all-inclusive resort, guests also have access to all nine restaurants and six bars across both islands, including Cantonese dining at Li Bai and Mediterranean tapas at Café del Sol at The Beach Club. The 173 Beach, Lagoon and Water Villas overlook the dappled turquoise waters, with both sunrise and sunset views, each with their own pool. The Spa by Clarins offers 10 over-water pavilions, each suited for singles and couples, offering an array of Ayurvedic and holistic treatments, a fitness centre, yoga pavilion, beauty salon and nail spa. Pick your own harvests at the resort's Earth Basket, our vegetable garden on a discovery of local edible plants and fruits with our chef and learn how to whip up a delicious and nutritious meal and enjoy the fruits of your labour at the Earth Table. Guests can also enjoy floating fitness classes at the Beach Club pool. The Kids Club is one of the largest in the southern atolls with plenty to keep children entertained from nature walks and beach games to arts and crafts. Experience the Maldivian sunset on a cruise on board a traditional dhoni and encounter pods of playful dolphins.

(Re) Discover Virginia!

In addition to its established world-class attractions, unique lodging options and creatively delicious dining, the Commonwealth introduces an array of new and exciting tourism offerings in 2025





A

ANNIVERSARY AND EVENT NEWS

100th Annual Chincoteague

Pony Swim will be held July 30-31, 2025. A longstanding tradition of Chincoteague, the wild ponies swim across the Assateague Channel led by the Saltwater Cowboys. The week-long festivities include a multitude of pony-related activities as well as a carnival and auction, providing visitors ample opportunity to discover this quaint small island community on the Chesapeake Bay and its citizens' love for their wild ponies.

Kings Dominion and Busch Gardens Williamsburg Theme Parks Celebrate 50 Years

- To celebrate 50 years of fun at **Kings Dominion**, the much-loved theme park near Richmond, VA will welcome *Rapterra*, the world's tallest and fastest launched wing coaster.

- **Busch Gardens** celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2025 with the opening of a new coaster *Big Bad Wolf: The Wolf's Revenge*. Riders will experience over 2,500 feet of track traveling up to 40 miles per hour while bolting through the streets of an abandoned Bavarian village on this all-new, family-friendly inverted roller coaster.

Virginia's Blue Ridge is set to host the **2025 and 2026 USA Cycling Endurance Mountain Bike National Championships**, with seven days of racing events and over 1,500 athletes in July 2025 and 2026. The races will be held along the trails of Explore Park, Elmwood Park in Downtown Roanoke, and Carvins Cove, with plenty

of opportunities to watch the riders in action.

New for 2025, **VIRginia International Raceway** hosts the inaugural **Veterans Race of Remembrance** with Operation Motorsport, an international organization supporting injured and disabled veterans, over Veterans Day weekend (November 6-9, 2025). This event will be the first of its kind in North America motorsport and will feature a variety of activities to honor military veterans.

The newly designated **Artery District** provides new offerings for Virginia Beach visitors. Home to more than a dozen restaurants and retail shops and anchored by the towering King Neptune statue on the Boardwalk, the district will host a series of specialty public events including **a new spring strawberry festival, summer farmer's market, and street parties in 2025.**

2025 marks the 20th Anniversary of **'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network.** Supporting local artisans and small businesses, the Artisan Network celebrates Southwest Virginia's rich culture of music and art and offers in-person and online shopping opportunities.

Virginia - the Birthplace of America - is the place to be for the nationwide 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, the Revolutionary War, and America's independence. **Virginia American Revolution 250** - a major statewide commemoration with hundreds of hosted events is already in full swing, leading up to the official anniversary in 2026. To note just a few of the many *signature activities*:

- Titled **Give Me Liberty**, the first-of-its-kind signature 5,000-square-foot exhibition will open at the **Virginia Museum of History and Culture** this March focusing on events throughout the revolutionary period and providing the full history of America's fight for freedom.

- Festivities continue throughout Virginia in early 2025 commemorating *Lafayette's multi-year farewell tour*

through America's historic cities 50 years after the Revolutionary War.

- **Sail 250**, a signature event in June 2026, will welcome more than 60 historic tall ships, military, and character ships from around the world, making for a once-in-a-lifetime visual in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay.

NEW TO STAY:

Caesars Virginia opened in December 2024 in Danville. The \$750 million destination resort and casino features a 320-room hotel and a world-class casino gaming floor with 90,000 square feet of gaming space. The resort also features a full-service spa, pool, fitness center, and 12 restaurants and bars, including a **first in Virginia, Ramsay's Kitchen, by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay.**

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol opened in November 2024 featuring a 300-room hotel, five restaurants, four bars and lounges, top-notch retailers, and a concert venue featuring major stars. As if the official Birthplace of Country Music wasn't already exciting enough, this internationally renowned gaming company has upped the ante in Bristol, providing even more reason to visit Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, The Crooked Road, featuring the Bristol Birthplace of Country Music Museum, and discover the very roots of American music.

The recently opened **JW Marriott at Reston Station** is Virginia's first JW Marriott and only the second in the Washington, D.C. region. The 28-story glass and concrete high-rise adjacent to the Wiehle-Reston East station on Metro's Silver Line features a JW Club, fitness facility, fine-dining restaurant, a signature bar, and a café.

A dual property **AC Marriott & Residence Inn Reston** opened in Reston in January 2025. This is the first dual concept of this type from Marriott. The Residence Inn offers 120 guest rooms featuring fully equipped kitchens while the AC Hotel offers 147 guest rooms with a distinctive modern design. Featuring the SEVEN Restaurant & Bar, a full-service, all-day

dining outlet, and the SYN Rooftop Bar & Lounge atop the property, exceptional dining options for any traveler are offered at the dual-concept property.

The **Virginia Guesthouse**, coming to Charlottesville on University of Virginia grounds in fall 2025 will feature 217 guest rooms, a full-service restaurant, a café, outside terraces, and a rooftop bar.

Virginia is all about adapting historic spots into new spaces, allowing guests to immerse themselves in the old world of Virginia while still embracing new-world comforts:

- The Birdwood Mansion, located on the grounds of the **Boar's Head Resort** in Charlottesville, is undergoing a renovation and expects to open its doors by fall 2025. The historic property features four accommodations in the mansion, three adjacent cottages, and a culinary program that brings in some of the most experienced creative chefs from around the world to create seasonal, international tasting menus for the Birdwood Mansion's dining room.

- **Shenandoah Mansions** in Richmond's Fan District is a redbrick 73-key hotel inhabiting a six-story historic apartment building dating back to the 20th century. Shenandoah Mansions exudes old-world charm through cinematic interiors with Richmond influence and references to local myths and legends. The property sits just off Monument Avenue, offering sweeping views of treetops and steeples as one of the tallest buildings in the neighborhood.

- **Hotel Burg**, the first hotel to open in downtown Leesburg's historic district in 60 years, is now open. The 39-room, seven-suite boutique hotel will offer upscale amenities, including a 70-seat restaurant called Huntōn, as well as a private speakeasy and a rooftop lounge and bar with stunning views of downtown.

- The recently opened **Hotel Heron** in Alexandria, Aparium Hotel Group's flagship adaptive-reuse development, was originally occupied from 1926 to 1971 by the George Mason Hotel. the

new space includes 134 guest rooms and a host of hotel amenities, including a seasonal rooftop bar.

- Just opened in Fredericksburg, **The Publisher** a 98-room full-service Marriott Tribute Portfolio property, stands on the same site as the once daily Fredericksburg newspaper, The Free Lance Star, and features a full bar and restaurant, and many other amenities. The hotel's location makes it the perfect gateway to the downtown historic district.

- **Hotel Petersburg**, a Tapestry Collection by Hilton property, opened in December 2024 in the heart of Old Towne Petersburg, is a newly restored 64-room upscale boutique hotel masterfully blending historical preservation with modern amenities, featuring several culinary offerings including 20 West, a rooftop lounge with curated cocktails and sweeping city views, and The Boiler Room, a spirits bar with speakeasy vibes.

- **The Rochambeau Roadside Inn** is a newly renovated, 22-room boutique hotel in Williamsburg that opened in December 2024. The property maintains all the nostalgic charm and character of the original 1954 classic roadside motel, but designer details and modern amenities perfectly blend the past and present.

- After a \$4.5 million renovation, the **Inn at Vacluse Spring** will reopen in late 2025 under new ownership. Located in Stephens City in the picturesque Shenandoah Valley, this reimagined luxury boutique inn offers a unique blend of European elegance and local charm. The highlight of this transformation is the culinary program led by Chef Proprietor Jan Van Haute, renowned for his innovative farm-to-table cuisine.

- **Three Hills Estate** is a 64-room boutique inn coming to Warm Springs in the former residence of Mary Johnston, the first woman to top the *New York Times* bestseller list, and a regional treasure built in 1913. Plans call for an opening in summer 2025 with a spa to come in fall 2025.

- **Hotel Fauna** will offer visitors to Bedford more than just a place to stay

- it's a re-imagined piece of history. The former Bedford Middle School is being transformed into a 30-room hotel with plans to open in fall 2025.

NEW TO EAT & DRINK:

Numerous restaurants, wineries, breweries, distilleries, and the like will open across Virginia in 2025, here's just a small sampling to whet your tastebuds:

Ebbitt House, the first-ever expansion of Washington, DC's world-famous Old Ebbitt Grill, is coming to Reston Station in late 2025. Ebbitt House will feature a 300-seat indoor dining experience with two bars, along with 125 outdoor seats and a patio bar. The menu will include curated offerings of the American classics for which Old

Company.

The **Virginia Wine Collective** tasting room located just south of Charlottesville, is now open. It includes seven winemaker studios off the main production area, as well as a winemaker incubator for seed stage projects. The Virginia Wine Collective has been designed to help reduce the costs associated with independent winemaking and support further innovation and talent in the Monticello AVA. Visitors may sample wines in the tasting room from all participating winemakers and daily production tours are also offered.

Ripple Ray's, a Grateful Dead-themed Southern cuisine restaurant, is now open to Richmond's Carytown neighborhood. Featuring live music

2025 marks the 20th Anniversary of 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network. Supporting local artisans and small businesses, the Artisan Network celebrates Southwest Virginia's rich culture of music and art and offers in-person and online shopping opportunities.

Ebbitt Grill is known.

Electric Bull Steakhouse is a boutique South American steakhouse by famed Chef Victor Albisu opening in Vienna in summer 2025.

Set to open in April 2025 in Hillsboro, **Loco Lion** is the latest brewery on Loudoun County's booming **LoCo Ale Trail**. It's named for two African lions, once part of a privately owned game park on a neighboring farm, buried on the property.

In winter 2025, one of Alexandria's last remaining historic waterfront warehouses will be transformed into **Cooper Mill**, a new upscale market and relaxed tavern space in Robinson Landing. The name is a nod to the former mill on the site which fabricated barrels for the Alexandria Flour

after dinner, the Southern bar and restaurant combines food and good eats under the direction of veteran bartender Katie Jarvis.

The recently-opened **2D Cafe & Eatery** in Virginia Beach isn't your typical coffee shop; in addition to great food and coffee, the cafe is designed to look two-dimensional, with white and black furniture and walls. The unique concept and stark contrast make the colors of the food pop even more, making for an Instagrammable moment.

Chef's Market, a 17,000-sq.-ft. food hall featuring a grilled cheese bar, brewery, taco bar, distillery, and more opened in October 2024 in Newport News. With shops offering fresh meats, seafood, wine, and baked goods—plus

duckpin bowling and arcade games—it's the ultimate spot for flavor and fun.

The newly launched **Harrisonburg Coffee Trail** features 11 independent coffee shops in the Harrisonburg area. Coffee lovers can download a "passport" and visit at least six coffee shops to redeem a free coffee mug.

Chilly Hollow Brewing Company opened in mid-December 2024 in Berryville, VA. The brewery is also a working farm, featuring grass-fed, locally processed beef and expansive mountain views on 100 acres. Cuts are available for purchase at the taproom. Look for expanded offerings in 2025.

The **Winery at Kindred Pointe** in Mount Jackson, VA will be premiering **KP Spirits Distillery** in 2025. «Inspired by his Prohibition-era relative Sylvanus, a moonshiner on the run from revenuers seeking to arrest him», owner Bruce Helsley set out to learn the science and art of distillation. He is now proud to introduce his line of spirits handcrafted in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in the Shenandoah Valley.

NEW TO DO:

The highly-anticipated **Atlantic Park**, brainchild of Pharrell Williams, is coming to the birthplace of East Coast surfing, allowing visitors to surf year-round in Virginia Beach. The venue is opening in stages through the spring and early summer of 2025.

A new entertainment venue **The Dome** overlooks the surf lagoon. With its flexible design and option to open to the outdoors, The Dome promises to be a popular venue for a variety of year-round shows, from music to comedy.

The **National Museum of the United States Army** at Fort Belvoir unveils a new exhibit in June 2025 curated specifically for the U.S. Army's 250th Birthday and America's 250th Anniversary commemoration. The exhibit, called *CALL TO Arms: The Soldier and the Revolutionary War*, features more than 280 artifacts in a 5,000 square-foot space.

Take an exclusive food tour with **Virginialicious**, a local woman-owned tour company that guides visitors

through *Annandale's Korean food scene*, exploring the food, the culture, and the community that helps establish Annandale as some of the best Korean food in the United States.

Level99 opens at Tysons Corner Center in 2025 as a first-of-its-kind destination for adults. Featuring real-world, interactive, social gaming with over 50 physical and mental challenges set in immersive, artistic environments, the space will include installations from local artists, opportunities for groups and player-vs-player, and a food and beverage area.

The **Allianz Amphitheater at Riverfront** in Downtown Richmond alongside the historic James River will make its debut in summer 2025 with a variety of live performances including Dwight Yoakam and Weird Al Yankovic.

Towers of Tomorrow with LEGO® Bricks at the **Science Museum of Virginia** runs from February 1 – August 25, 2025. Featuring 20 of the world's most innovative skyscrapers built using half a million bricks by one of only twelve LEGO®-certified professionals worldwide, this exhibition showcases the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) involved in architecture and design. Get inspired and show off your master builder skills in the interactive construction area stocked with 200,000 loose LEGO® bricks.

A special exhibition celebrating hometown hero Arthur Ashe's victory at Wimbledon in 1975 opened in April at the **Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia** and will include programming.

After the first-ever *Cosmic Baseball* games went viral in 2024, the *Chili Peppers* are back for more glow-in-the-dark action in 2025. Their season opened on May 22, 2025.

The **Science Museum of Virginia's** exhibit, *Ultimate Dinosaurs*, will feature 20 full specimens from locations in the Southern Hemisphere. This interactive exhibition brings dinosaurs to life with augmented reality. Don't miss this DINO-mite paleontology experience that will be on show from May 31 to September 1, 2025.

In 2025, **Massanutten Resort** welcomes the **Mountain Mayhem Coaster**, a thrilling downhill coaster experience at the Family Adventure Park. The coaster will cover 2,156 feet of terrain with two 360-degree spirals along the track.

At **Norfolk Botanical Garden**, grand ambition meets a beautiful, immersive experience in the **Garden of Tomorrow**, coming this fall. The highlight will be the stunning Perry Conservatory, a two-story 26,000-square-foot structure that will house threatened plants from around the world and become a centerpiece of the garden's conservation efforts.

Art and culture lovers will find much to love at the Norfolk **Chrysler Museum's** newly expanded **Perry Glass Studio**, which opened March 2025. Tripling in size and offering more educational programs, the museum will further cement the studio's reputation as a world-class glass institution.

After a temporary closure, **Red Wing Park** in Virginia Beach reopened in early 2025. The park is favored for its annual Cherry Blossom Festival in March, featuring more than 150 Yoshino cherry trees and a festive schedule of Japanese music and art activities.

Norfolk's **Naulityticus** has undergone a major renovation. The \$21.5 million *Reimagine Nauticus* project features new interactive exhibits, a planetarium, a maritime simulator, and a public plaza with stunning views of the Elizabeth River. These new exhibits focus on interactive play, teaching visitors about Norfolk's history as a port city, and how we all impact our environment.

Starting early 2025, **Carnival Cruise Line** offered year-round cruises from Norfolk to ports in the Eastern Caribbean and the Bahamas on the Carnival Sunshine, bringing even more reason to visit the 'Mermaid City'.

Opening in 2025, the **Moonshine Capital Heritage Museum** will highlight the history of Rocky Mount and surrounding *Franklin County as the Moonshine Capital of the World*.

Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2025

sets sustainability benchmark with carbon neutral event declaration

Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2025 achieved Carbon Neutral Event Self Declaration status, reinforcing Thailand's leadership in sustainable tourism through emissions offsetting, waste diversion, and community-focused initiatives.



Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2025 has officially achieved **Carbon Neutral Event Self Declaration** status, setting a new standard for sustainability in tourism trade events across Asia. Organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the event was held from 4 to 6 June 2025 at the Royal Park Rajapruek in Chiang Mai. This achievement underscores Thailand's commitment to reducing environmental impact while promoting responsible tourism practices that benefit local communities and ecosystems.

According to TAT Governor, Ms **Thapanee Kiatphaibool**, sustainability remains the core of TAT's tourism development strategy. "TTM+ is not only a vital international

tourism business platform but also a direct reflection of TAT's mission to drive responsible tourism that benefits both people and the planet," she stated. "The Carbon Neutral Event Self Declaration at TTM+ 2025 is a clear demonstration of that vision in action."

To fulfil the requirements for the carbon neutrality declaration, Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2025 collaborated with the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) to monitor carbon emissions throughout the event. Emissions generated at the venue were carefully measured and fully offset via the Carbon Knox Declaration platform. The initiative resulted in a total reduction of 669.84 kgCO₂eq—equivalent to the carbon absorption of 47 trees.

The event also implemented a

robust waste management strategy, diverting 1,080.63 kilograms of waste from landfill. Waste was classified into general waste (555 kg), food scraps (425 kg), and recyclables (100.63 kg). TAT partnered with Central Tham and Recycle Day to ensure waste was processed responsibly. Organic waste was converted into biogas at Chiang Mai University, while PET plastics and other recyclables were sent to authorised recycling centres.

In line with its zero food waste commitment, Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2025 redirected surplus meals to local communities. A total of 300 food and water packages were distributed to the Wat Don Chan Orphanage and the Northern School for the Blind in Chiang Mai, turning excess into opportunity and expanding the event's impact beyond sustainability metrics.

Beyond its environmental success, TTM+ 2025 exceeded its business goals, hosting over 13,000 scheduled appointments. The event welcomed 406 international buyers from 51 countries, 450 sellers, and 117 media representatives, reinforcing Thailand's competitive position as a leading destination for sustainable and responsible tourism.

With its successful execution and measurable impact, Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2025 has set a benchmark for carbon-conscious event management in the global travel industry. It serves as a blueprint for how business events can drive sustainability while maintaining commercial relevance and community engagement.

Moscow & Beyond: Discovering Russia's Storied Soul One Day Trip at a Time



MOSCOW

Where the Russian Heartbeat
Began





According to ancient chronicles, the history of Moscow dates back to 1147, when Prince Yuri Dolgoruky invited his cousin, Prince Svyatoslav Olgovich, to a small wooden fortress lost in the vast Russian forests. That quiet meeting laid the foundations of what would become Russia's most significant political, cultural, scientific, and spiritual center.

By the 12th century, Moscow had grown into a fortified settlement. A century later, it became a recognized town. By the 15th century, it was crowned the capital of the emerging Russian state. Over the centuries, Moscow flourished — not only as a seat of power but as a city of cathedrals, tsars, revolutions, and reinvention. Today, Moscow is a dynamic global metropolis, drawing visitors from every continent with its architectural masterpieces, layered history, and cultural treasures.

But for those eager to experience Russia beyond the grandeur of Red Square and the Kremlin, the region

surrounding Moscow offers a rich and revealing journey. Day trips from the capital unveil a deeper Russia — one of monasteries and manor houses, battlefields and poets' retreats, each telling its own chapter in the nation's epic tale.

Here are **10 unforgettable destinations** just outside Moscow that promise history, charm, and an authentic taste of Russian heritage.

1. Sergiyev Posad: The Soul of Russian Orthodoxy

Sergiyev Posad is one of the most revered towns surrounding Moscow and the only one in the Moscow Region included in the famous **Golden Ring** — a chain of ancient towns that played a critical role in shaping the Russian Orthodox Church.

Its spiritual centerpiece is the **Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius**, a 14th-century monastery and pilgrimage site that still pulses with spiritual power today. Visitors often spend an entire day exploring its magnificent

cathedrals, ancient frescoes, and serene courtyards. Don't forget to sample traditional honey cakes, feed the pigeons at the monastery gates, and stop by the local museums, including the State History and Art Museum-Reserve and the delightful Museum of Toys.

Getting there: Electric trains depart every 30 minutes from Yaroslavsky Station (1.5 hours). Buses also run from VDNKh metro station. Driving time is approximately 90 minutes via the Yaroslavskoye Highway.

2. Kolomna: Where History and Modernity Meet

*Situated along the scenic Oka River, Kolomna is one of Russia's oldest cities and offers a stunning blend of medieval heritage and contemporary energy. The city's impressive **red-brick Kremlin** mirrors Moscow's own, housing monasteries, ancient churches, and remnants of a once-bustling merchants' quarter.*

Perhaps the most interesting small town in the Moscow region and another popular day-trip destination for Muscovites, Kolomna is full of cute little churches and 19th-century mansions in excellent condition. The famous 18th-century architect Matvey Kazakov, an expert of pseudo-Gothic style, worked on a number of buildings in Kolomna. There's a well-preserved 16th-century kremlin with several intact towers and two monasteries within its walls.

A quirky museum, Artkommunalka is devoted to life in a Soviet-era communal apartment, supposedly frequented by the legendary writer and dissident Venedikt Yerofeyev. The museum also has an interesting collection of contemporary art. If you're not into art, local enthusiasts have revived two food specialities – *pastila* (similar to marshmallow) and *kalach* (a type of bread) – and opened two small museums devoted to each one. Theatrical performances take place here, and there are cafes where you can sample the products.

Kolomna also boasts cultural and architectural gems such as the church where Prince Dmitry Donskoy married Grand Duchess Eudoxia. In contrast, the sleek **Kolomna Speed Skating Center**, opened in 2006, brings a bold modern note to this historic landscape.

Getting there: Electric trains depart from Kazansky Station (1.5–2.5 hours). Buses are available from Vykhino metro station but travel time can vary due to traffic.

3. Shakhmatovo: A Poet's Countryside Refuge

Shakhmatovo was once the beloved summer residence of lyrical poet **Alexander Blok**, who spent his formative years here. Purchased by Blok's grandfather, the estate captivated generations with its pastoral charm and sweeping views.

The original wooden mansion, designed by the poet himself, was destroyed in 1921 and rebuilt in 2001. Today, it hosts cultural events and exhibitions dedicated to Blok's life and literary legacy. Visitors can also enjoy horseback riding, rent bicycles in summer, or ski in winter on the estate grounds.

Getting there: Best accessed by car (approximately 1.5 hours). Public transit options involve a combination of train, bus, and walking.

4. Zakharovo: Tracing Pushkin's Childhood

Nestled in the Odintsovo District, **Zakharovo** is the childhood summer retreat of **Alexander Pushkin**, Russia's greatest poet. His grandmother, Maria Gannibal, purchased the estate in 1804, and Pushkin spent several of his

earliest summers here between 1805 and 1810.

Though the original manor no longer stands, a reconstructed house now serves as a peaceful literary museum, offering insight into Pushkin's formative years. Nearby, in **Bolshiye Vyazyomy**, visitors can find the burial place of Pushkin's younger brother.

Getting there: Take the train from Belorussky Station to Zvenigorod, then exit at Zakharovo. Travel time is approximately 90 minutes.

5. Borodino: Battlefield of Nations

The name **Borodino** echoes through Russian history as the site of the largest and bloodiest battle of the **Patriotic War of 1812** against Napoleon. Today, the Borodino battlefield is preserved as a national museum complex that includes military artifacts, 19th-century architecture, and monuments commemorating those who fought and died here.

The museum also features an exhibit dedicated to **Leo Tolstoy**, who visited Borodino and brought the battle vividly to life in *War and Peace*. Annual reenactments draw history buffs and tourists alike, but the site also offers quiet reflection year-round.

Getting there: Take the train from Belorussky Station to Mozhaysk, followed by a local bus. Total travel time is approximately 2 hours.





6. Melikhovo: In the Footsteps of Chekhov

The estate of **Melikhovo** is a treasure for admirers of **Anton Chekhov**, who lived here with his family from 1892 to 1899. It was in this country retreat that Chekhov wrote some of his most acclaimed plays, including *Uncle Vanya* and *The Seagull*.

Transformed into a museum in 1941, Melikhovo now offers guided tours through Chekhov's home, exhibitions about his work as a doctor and humanitarian, and paintings by artist friends such as Isaac Levitan and Vasily Polenov.

Getting there: Buses depart from Yuzhnaya metro station or take the suburban train from Kursky Station. Travel time is about 90 minutes.

7. Abramtsevo: Russia's Artistic Utopia

Located near Sergiyev Posad, **Abramtsevo** was more than a noble estate — it was a crucible of Russian artistic and intellectual life in the 19th century. Initially owned by writer **Sergey Aksakov** and later by industrialist **Savva Mamontov**, it attracted a generation of creatives: **Gogol**, **Turgenev**, **Levitan**, **Polenov**, **Vrubel**, and **Shalyapin** all visited or worked here.

Today, the estate is a museum that preserves the legacy of its owners and illustrious guests. Its architectural highlights include a wooden manor house, fairy-tale pavilions, and intricately carved bathhouses.

Getting there: Take the electric train from Yaroslavsky Station toward Sergiyev Posad or Aleksandrov. Approximate travel time is 90 minutes.

8. Tula Yasnaya Polyana: Tolstoy's Enduring Legacy

The home to one of the best-preserved medieval fortresses in Russia, Tula makes a perfect destination for a day trip. The city itself was founded in the latter half of the 14th century, but its famous landmark — a red-brick fortress or 'kremlin' — was built in the early 16th century to defend Russia against the Tatars. You can take a tour of the kremlin walls or visit one of its small museums devoted to local specialties like *pryanik* (gingerbread) or the samovar. Right outside the kremlin walls is the new Kazanskaya embankment, designed by the Wowhaus architecture firm. **Yasnaya Polyana**, located in the Tula Region, was the lifelong home of **Leo Tolstoy**. He was born, lived, wrote, and was ultimately buried here. The estate has

been meticulously preserved, offering a rare, intimate look at Tolstoy's personal and creative life.

Visitors can explore the main house, which remains unchanged since 1910, along with the **Volkonsky House**, family outbuildings, stables, and the birch-lined path leading to the author's modest forest grave.

Getting there: Travel to Tula by train from Kursky Station or by bus from various metro stations, then transfer to local bus or trolley. Total journey is approximately 4 hours.

9. Polotnyany Zavod: A Linen Legacy and Literary Romance

Once an imperial textile hub, **Polotnyany Zavod** gained historical prominence through its association with the **Goncharov family**, ancestors of Pushkin's wife, Natalia. Founded in 1718, the town has hosted monarchs, generals, and writers, including **Catherine the Great** and **Nikolai Gogol**.

Today, Polotnyany Zavod is a museum complex dedicated to 18th- and 19th-century Russian nobility and its ties to Pushkin. Visitors enjoy dramatized tours and panoramic views of the Kaluga countryside.

Getting there: Bus from Tyoply Stan metro to Kondorovo (just over 3 hours).

10. Tarusa and Polenovo : A Timeless Russian River Town

Situated on the left bank of the Oka River in the Kaluga Region, Tarusa offers a serene escape with preserved 19th-century charm. The town's decision to reject railway development helped it retain its unique character — quiet streets, wooden houses, and poetic views. Nicknamed 'the Russian Barbizon', Tarusa has always attracted the creative intelligentsia. Founded in the 13th century as a defence fort on the Oka River, in the early 20th century the town became a popular *dacha* (summer cottage) destination for Muscovites. Tarusa is centred around the Cathedral Square; don't miss its art gallery, famous for a collection of paintings by avant-garde artist Edward Steinberg. Another must-see is the Tsvetaev family house, where prominent 20th-century poet Marina Tsvetaeva used to spend a lot of time. Wander around the centre full of splendid 19th-century buildings, imagining yourself a character in one of Chekhov's plays, and climb the hill to see the 17th-century Resurrection Church, Tarusa's oldest building; just below is a chapel with a sacred spring.

Tarusa became a creative haven in the early 20th century and remains associated with **Marina Tsvetaeva**, whose museum is a must-see.

The estate-museum of Polenovo is located on the opposite bank of the Oka River. Prominent artist Vasily Polenov spent a long time looking for a place to build his home and finally chose this spot to settle down with his family at the end of the 19th century. All the buildings on the estate were designed by Polenov himself, as well as the Holy Trinity Church in the nearby village of Bekhovo. The museum here has always been run by the artist's descendants; there's a great collection of paintings by Polenov himself, his friends and family members.

11. Rostov-Veliky

It's not clear when exactly Rostov-Veliky — often referred to as 'the pearl in the Golden Ring' — was founded, but it was probably as early as the

9th century. This city on the banks of Lake Nero played a significant role in Russian history, but today it's a small town called Veliky (Great) — if only not to confuse it with its much larger namesake in the south, Rostov-on-Don.

The main attraction of Rostov is its magnificent kremlin, so called because it resembles a fortress even though its walls serve a purely decorative purpose. Built in the second half of the 17th century by a local metropolitan, today the kremlin

is a museum with a large collection of icons and religious artefacts, as well as enamel miniatures (a local artistic speciality). Don't miss the Church of Odigitria, built in the style of Moscow baroque, and the Assumption Cathedral, located right under the kremlin walls. There are 15 bells in its belfry, including Sysoy, one of the largest in Europe. Outside the kremlin walls, you'll find several excellent restaurants and cafes serving traditional Russian cuisine.



Spices in the Snow: 7 Must-Try Indian Restaurants in Moscow

A Taste of India in Russia's Capital

Moscow may be thousands of kilometers from Delhi or Mumbai, but its cosmopolitan culinary landscape ensures that lovers of Indian cuisine won't feel far from home. Whether you're a dedicated vegetarian, an adventurous foodie, or simply craving the comforting flavors of butter chicken or masala dosa, Moscow's Indian dining scene is rich, varied, and increasingly authentic.

From traditional eateries to trendy market stalls, here are **seven of the best places in Moscow to savor Indian food** — each offering its own spice-laden journey through the subcontinent.

1. Darbars

Locations: Mira Prospect 12, Bldg. 1 & Smolenskaya Street 8

A staple in Moscow's Indian culinary scene since 1996, **Darbars** is one of the city's oldest and most respected Indian restaurant chains. Rooted in traditional Indian hospitality and design, Darbars offers a refined atmosphere with a touch of royal charm.

Its menu, prepared by Indian chefs, blends well-loved classics with lesser-known South Indian specialties rarely found elsewhere in the city. Darbars calls its approach "the harmony of luxury," and it shows — both in the attentive service and the authenticity of the food.

2. Devi Café

Address: Miklukho-Maklaya Street 21A

Hidden on the campus of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN), **Devi Café** is a favorite among Indian students and locals alike. Though modest in decor, it more than makes up for it with flavor, variety, and affordability.

With a cheerful, welcoming vibe, Devi Café serves an impressive range of tandoori dishes, vibrant vegetarian curries, and more than 20 types of tea. Its collection of Indian desserts makes

it especially popular with students craving a sweet reminder of home.

3. Jagannath

Flagship: Kuznetskiy Most 11; Also at Zemlyanoy Val 24/30 + 8 locations citywide

With multiple outlets across Moscow, **Jagannath** has become a household name for vegetarian dining. More than just a restaurant, it's a cultural concept — part eatery, part spiritual oasis — rooted in the principles of healthy, conscious living.

The menu features an array of vegetarian dishes that are creative, satisfying, and often indistinguishable from their meat-based counterparts. From tofu nuggets to vegetarian dumplings, there's plenty to please even the most skeptical omnivore. Many locations also include a vegetarian grocery shop, perfect for those wanting to cook at home.

4. Moscow-Delhi

Address: Yermolayevskiy Lane 7

Moscow-Delhi isn't your typical restaurant — in fact, it's proudly not a restaurant at all. Styled after a traditional Indian **dhaba**, this family-style vegetarian eatery offers a rare experience: guests remove their shoes at the door, watch meals being cooked in an open kitchen, and are served with the warm informality of a home visit.

There's no fixed menu — instead, a set lunch or dinner is served based on what's fresh and available. Organic ingredients and spices are flown in from India, adding to the authenticity of this truly immersive dining experience.

5. Jai Hind

Address: Olimpiyskiy Prospect 18/1 (Inside AZIMUT Hotel Olympic Moscow)

Originally launched in St. Petersburg, **Jai Hind** has expanded to Moscow with a sleek, modern outpost inside a luxury hotel. It's one of the few Indian restaurants in the city offering **traditional Indian breakfast**, making it a standout for early risers and business travelers.

The menu spans both North and South Indian cuisine, from dosa and idli

to lamb rogan josh and chicken tikka. The bread selection is particularly impressive, and the atmosphere — polished and serene — makes it ideal for business meetings or a quiet meal after a long day.

6. Ostorozhno, Slon ("Beware of the Elephant")

Address: Tsvetnoy Boulevard 15, Bldg. 1 (Bricket Market)

Located inside **Bricket Market**, one of Moscow's trendiest food halls, **Ostorozhno, Slon** brings Indian street food to the city center. The menu is compact but bold, with an emphasis on flavorful, fast, and fun dishes adapted slightly for the European palate.

This is a great introduction to Indian cuisine for newcomers. Both vegetarians and meat-lovers will find something to savor, from samosas to kebabs customized with your choice of fillings. Always evolving, the eatery regularly pops up at Moscow's popular food festivals and street markets.

7. Khajuraho

Address: Shmitovskiy Proyezd 14

Named after the UNESCO-listed Indian temple town known for its exquisite art and architecture, **Khajuraho** brings a more holistic approach to Indian dining. Meals are crafted with **Ayurvedic principles**, using organic ingredients and healing herbs to nourish both body and soul.

The result? Flavor-packed yet balanced dishes that locals — especially Moscow's Indian residents — swear by. Health-conscious and mindful, Khajuraho offers a soothing space to reflect, reconnect, and savor the deep, timeless flavors of India.

In Closing: A Culinary Passage to India in Moscow

From the deeply spiritual to the joyfully street-savvy, Indian cuisine in Moscow is more than just curry and naan — it's a mosaic of India's regional tastes, philosophies, and hospitality. Whether you're a homesick traveler, an Indian food enthusiast, or a curious local, these seven establishments will transport you straight to the subcontinent — no passport required.

Escape to Greater Fort Lauderdale This Summer: A Paradise for Foodies



Devender Grover - TSNN
- GREATER FORT
LAUDERDALE, Fla. – Known
as a vibrant melting pot with residents
from more than 170 countries, Greater
Fort Lauderdale's richly diverse
community has long shaped its
inclusive dining scene. This summer,
that global influence takes center
stage as **Visit Lauderdale**, the official
destination marketing organization for
Greater Fort Lauderdale, kicks off a
season of culinary celebration marked
by the return of Dine Out Lauderdale
restaurant months, first-time MICHELIN
guide recognitions, and notable new
restaurant openings.

"Dining in Greater Fort Lauderdale
is like taking a global journey, no
passport required," said **Stacy
Ritter, President and CEO of Visit
Lauderdale**. "Our destination's rich
cultural roots and spirit of innovation

*have shaped a culinary scene where
diversity, creativity, and unforgettable
flavors are always on the table."*

Dine Out Lauderdale Returns August and September

Visit Lauderdale's annual dining
promotion, **Dine Out Lauderdale**,
returns this August and September,
offering two months of specially priced,
prix-fixe menus at top restaurants
across Greater Fort Lauderdale's 31
neighborhoods. This popular initiative
invites visitors and locals alike to
sample the dynamic flavors of the
destination at accessible price points.
More than 170 local restaurants
participated in last year's program,
showcasing a diverse mix of cuisines.

MICHELIN Guide Florida Recognizes Local Talent

This summer, travelers can

experience Greater Fort Lauderdale's
newest MICHELIN-recognized dining
gems, following the destination's
recent debut in the 2025 MICHELIN
Guide Florida. Chef's Counter at
MAASS earned its first MICHELIN Star
with its innovative tasting menus, while
Heritage received a Bib Gourmand for
its elevated Italian cuisine. Additionally,
Daniel's, A Florida Steakhouse,
offering classic Florida steakhouse fare;
Evelyn's, featuring Mediterranean-
inspired cuisine; and **Larb Thai-Isan**,
serving authentic Thai dishes, all
earned Recommended status. These
diverse dining spots are must-visits for
foodies exploring the destination this
season.

Greater Fort Lauderdale Welcomes New Restaurant Openings

Visitors returning to the destination
have even more to look forward to this
summer with several new restaurants.
Sixty Vines on Las Olas Boulevard
offers an open-air dining experience
inspired by wine country, featuring
vineyard-inspired dishes and 60 wines
on tap. In the heart of downtown
Fort Lauderdale, **TIMBR** features a
fusion of elevated modern American
favorites and European classics. For
waterfront dining along the Riverwalk,
Mykonos Fort Lauderdale boasts a
sleek Greek-inspired ambiance and a
menu focused on bold Mediterranean
flavors.

With more than 4,000 restaurants,
Greater Fort Lauderdale's culinary
scene offers something for everyone
under the sun. Whether docking at
popular waterfront venues like the new
Marina Village food hall or exploring
multiple dining destinations via the
recently expanded **Water Taxi** routes
along the area's iconic waterways,
travelers can enjoy a unique blend
of culinary adventure and coastal
charm in Greater Fort Lauderdale this
summer.

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TAIWAN
WAVES OF WONDER

Beyond the Skyline
lies a land of
Timeless Charm

Taiwan: A wave of discovery with every journey.



交通部觀光署
Tourism Administration, MOTC

For more information, please contact:

TAIWAN TOURISM INFORMATION CENTER IN MUMBAI

Add: Suite No. GRA 102, Raheja Platinum, WeWork, Marol, Andheri East, Mumbai, Maharashtra - 400059

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