

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

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Introduces Ottobots in
Terminal Operations

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Ritz-Carlton Yacht
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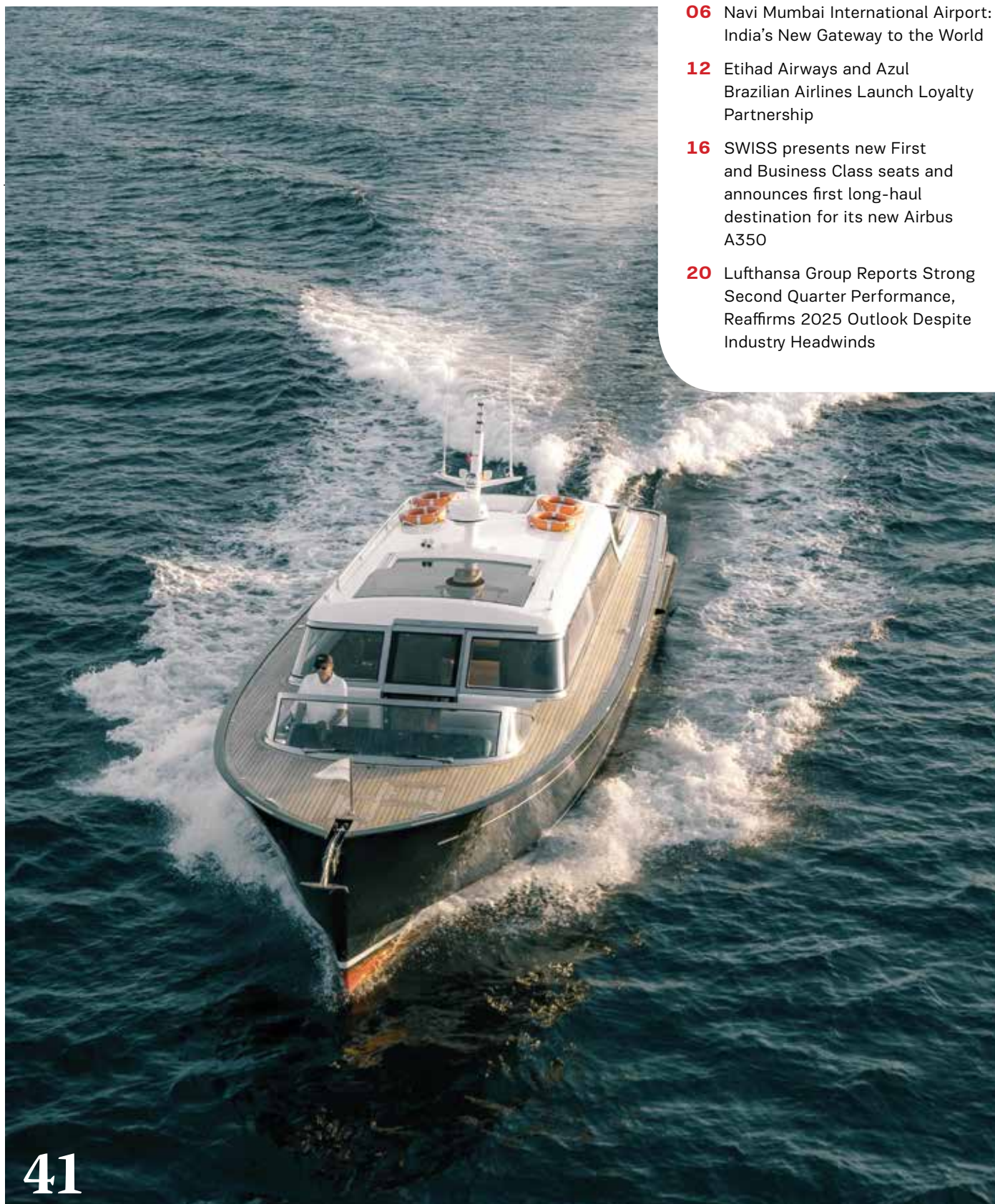
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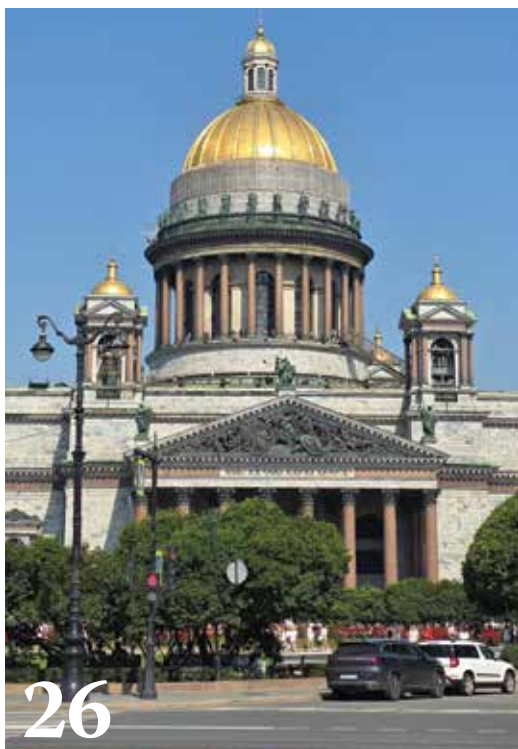
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Navi Mumbai International Airport: India's New Gateway to the World

By September end, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region will welcome a landmark in India's aviation history—the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA). Rising from the marshlands of Ulwe near Panvel, this 16,000-crore greenfield airport is more than just another terminal; it is a statement of ambition. For decades, Mumbai has been served by a single airport—Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA)—which, despite expansions, has been operating beyond capacity. Now, with NMIA, the city is poised to join the ranks of global hubs like London, New York, and Dubai, all of which thrive on the efficiency of multiple international airports.

A Vision Takes Shape

Spread across a vast 2,865 acres, NMIA has been years in the making, overcoming challenges of land acquisition, rehabilitation, and complex engineering. Designed to eventually handle 90 million passengers annually across four ultra-modern terminals, it is set to become one of the busiest aviation hubs in Asia.

The first phase—Terminal 1 with a 20-million-passenger capacity—is complete and ready for operations. Built with passenger convenience and speed in mind, it features expansive waiting lounges, biometric-enabled check-in kiosks, advanced security lanes, and what developers claim

will be the world's fastest baggage claim system. The emphasis is clear: reduce bottlenecks, minimize waiting times, and deliver a seamless travel experience.

Reimagining the Passenger Journey

What makes NMIA stand out is its focus on next-generation passenger amenities. The check-in process will be powered by automated kiosks and biometric validation, ensuring quick, paperless boarding. Security lanes have been designed for single-lane clearance with advanced scanners, allowing smoother passenger flow.

Lounges and waiting areas have

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been planned with comfort and capacity in mind, reflecting the needs of India's growing middle-class travelers as well as international flyers seeking global-standard services. The much-anticipated baggage claim system—a point of frustration for many fliers in India—has been designed to set a new global benchmark in speed and reliability.

Connected Like Never Before

An airport is only as strong as its connectivity, and NMIA has been strategically planned to integrate with Mumbai's wider transport grid. Located close to the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, the Goa highway, and JNPT port, the airport's accessibility is a major highlight.

The 22-kilometre Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (Atal Setu), India's longest sea bridge, will slash travel time from South Mumbai to Ulwe to just 20 minutes. Complementing this will be a 9-km elevated corridor being built by CIDCO for direct airport access.

In addition, the Maharashtra State



Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) plans express bus services from Thane, Dadar, Vashi, and Panvel, with fleets including electric buses for sustainable operations. Metro line extensions and the redevelopment of Panvel as a multimodal transport hub will ensure NMIA is not just an airport, but a

catalyst for integrated urban mobility in the region.

Mumbai's Twin-Airport Future

With NMIA operational, Mumbai will become one of the few global cities operating under a twin-airport model. By 2032, NMIA and CSMIA together are projected to handle 150–160 million passengers annually, putting Mumbai in the same league as Dubai, London, and New York—cities known for their aviation dominance.

This shift is not just about easing congestion at CSMIA; it is about positioning Mumbai as a competitive global hub, attracting more international carriers, improving turnaround times, and offering travelers greater choice.

Airlines on Board

Domestic carriers are already lining up. IndiGo, India's largest airline, has confirmed its operations from NMIA, while Akasa Air—India's youngest carrier—is also set to begin services. International airlines are expected to follow soon, particularly as the airport gains traction in global aviation circles.

Beyond Passenger Travel: Business and Cargo Potential

NMIA is not only focused on commercial passenger operations. It will feature India's largest general

FAST FACTS	
NMIA at a Glance Project Cost: ₹16,000 crore Location: Ulwe, Navi Mumbai (near Panvel) Total Area: 2,865 acres Operational Model: Twin-Airport system with CSMIA Passenger Capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phase 1 (2025): 20 million passengers annually• Full Capacity (2032): 90 million passengers annually Terminals: 4 (Terminal 1 ready in Phase 1) Unique Features: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• World's fastest baggage claim system (planned)• Biometric-enabled check-in kiosks• Single-lane advanced security scanning• Expansive lounges Connectivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 22 km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (Atal Setu) – 20 mins from South Mumbai	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9 km Elevated Corridor (CIDCO) for direct access• Express buses by MSRTC from Thane, Dadar, Vashi, Panvel (electric fleet)• Metro extensions and Panvel redevelopment as transport hub Airlines (Initial Commitments): IndiGo, Akasa Air (international carriers expected to join) General Aviation: India's largest GA terminal with 75 business jet stands & heliport Cargo & Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicated cargo terminals (800,000 tonnes annually in Phase 1)• Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) facility• Advanced Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower By 2032: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSMIA + NMIA to handle 150–160 million passengers annually, on par with Dubai, London, New York



A Symbol of India's Aviation Ambition

The opening of NMIA represents more than just relief for overburdened infrastructure—it marks a new era for Indian aviation. As the world's fastest-growing aviation market, India has long needed a second international hub in its financial capital. With NMIA, the country sends a strong signal that it is ready to meet the challenges of global connectivity head-on.

For travelers, this means shorter queues, faster connections, and a world-class experience. For the city, it means enhanced global competitiveness and economic growth. And for India, it is yet another milestone in the journey of transforming its aviation landscape to match global standards.

The Take-Off Ahead

As the first flights prepare for take-off from NMIA, anticipation runs high. This is not just an airport—it is a gateway to the future, built to serve millions, support trade and industry, and redefine Mumbai's place on the world map.

With its blend of cutting-edge technology, sustainable design, and world-class infrastructure, Navi Mumbai International Airport stands as a beacon of India's progress—a bold reminder that the country's ambitions are taking flight.

aviation terminal, offering 75 stands for private business jets along with a dedicated heliport. This makes it particularly attractive for Mumbai's business community, corporates, and high-net-worth individuals who rely heavily on private aviation.

On the cargo side, NMIA will open with a dedicated terminal capable of handling 800,000 tonnes annually, with

room for expansion. Given Mumbai's role as a financial and trading hub, this facility will provide a significant boost to India's logistics and supply chain infrastructure. The airport will also house a Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility, critical for supporting airline fleets, and an advanced Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower for smoother airspace management.

What NMIA Means for You

Faster Access

- Reach Ulwe in just 20 minutes from South Mumbai via Atal Setu.
- Express buses and metro extensions ensure smooth last-mile connectivity.

Seamless Check-In

- Biometric validation and automated kiosks mean shorter queues.
- Smart single-lane security scanning for quicker clearances.

Baggage Without the Wait

- Experience the world's fastest baggage claim system, reducing post-flight delays.

Lounge in Style

- Expansive, world-class waiting lounges designed for comfort and capacity.

More Flight Options

- New routes from domestic carriers like IndiGo and Akasa Air.
- International airlines expected to open additional global connections.

For Business Travelers

- India's largest general aviation terminal with 75 business jet stands.
- Dedicated heliport for swift corporate transfers.

Cargo & Trade Advantage

- Boosts logistics with 800,000 tonnes cargo capacity annually, strengthening Mumbai's role as a trade hub.



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South Korea eyes tourism growth and potential reopening of individual tours to North Korea

South Korea's tourism rebounds with 8.83 million visitors as the government considers resuming individual North Korea tours to ease inter-Korean tensions.



South Korea recorded a significant rebound in inbound tourism in the first half of 2025, welcoming **8.83 million international visitors** — a 14.6% increase year-on-year and surpassing 2019 pre-pandemic levels by 4.6%, according to data released by the **Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)**.

China remained the top source

market with 2.53 million arrivals, followed by Japan (1.62 million), Taiwan (860,000), and the United States (730,000). The month of June alone saw 1.62 million foreign entries, reflecting a 14.2% rise from the same month last year. Outbound travel by South Koreans also showed a strong recovery, reaching 14.56 million during January–June 2025, which represents

97% of the 2019 benchmark for the same period.

This rebound aligns with broader efforts by the South Korean government to leverage tourism as a driver for economic recovery and regional stability. In a parallel development with potentially profound tourism implications, the Ministry of Unification confirmed that Seoul is considering the reintroduction of **individual tours to North Korea**, a proposal being reviewed as part of efforts to ease tensions and improve inter-Korean relations.

The initiative follows President Lee Jae-myung's broader policy agenda focused on de-escalation and renewed dialogue with Pyongyang. As part of this approach, the administration recently suspended anti-North broadcasts along the DMZ and discouraged provocative leaflet campaigns.

Although group tours to North Korea remain suspended due to sanctions and security concerns, individual tours could provide a symbolic and practical pathway for reengagement. The Ministry clarified that such visits, if implemented under strict controls, would not constitute a breach of current UN sanctions.

Tourism to North Korea, while highly restricted, has historically served as a controlled source of foreign currency for Pyongyang and a rare form of inter-Korean people-to-people exchange. The proposed resumption of individual travel — discussed during a National Security Council meeting on July 10 — could emerge as a diplomatic tool amid stalled denuclearization talks and prolonged geopolitical friction.

For the wider travel and hospitality industry, these developments signal both recovery momentum in South Korea's inbound tourism sector and a possible shift in the regional travel landscape, should North Korea partially reopen under a monitored framework. Stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific travel are advised to closely monitor policy signals from Seoul as the situation evolves.

Etihad Airways accelerates growth with record aircraft deliveries



- July 2025 becomes Etihad’s busiest month for aircraft deliveries in company history
- Five aircraft delivered throughout July including two B787s, an A350, an A321LR and an A320ceo
- Fleet expansion supports ambitious network growth and passenger targets

Etihad Airways achieved a significant milestone in its fleet expansion programme with July 2025 becoming the busiest month for aircraft deliveries in the airline’s 22-year history. Throughout July, Etihad took delivery of five aircraft, including its inaugural A321LR, two Boeing 787 Dreamliners, one Airbus A350-1000, and one Airbus A320ceo.

This record-breaking month demonstrates the airline’s commitment to rapid growth as it works towards its target to carry 38 million passengers annually by 2030. The five aircraft will significantly enhance Etihad’s capacity across its expanding global network.

Antonoaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways, said: “July has been a remarkable month for Etihad Airways. Taking delivery of five aircraft is our most intensive delivery programme to date and showcases our ambitious growth trajectory. These aircraft will enable us to serve more destinations,

offer increased frequencies, and deliver the exceptional experiences our guests expect across our network.”

The delivery programme reflects Etihad’s strategic approach to fleet modernisation, with each aircraft type serving specific network requirements. The Boeing 787 Dreamliner will support long-haul operations to destinations across Asia, Australia, and North America, while the Airbus A350-1000 will enhance capacity on high-demand routes.

A particular highlight of July’s deliveries was Etihad’s first Airbus A321LR, which represents a significant milestone as the airline’s inaugural aircraft of this type. Etihad defines luxury again with a revolutionary cabin configuration to Etihad’s narrowbody operations, featuring dedicated First Suites alongside lie-flat Business seats, a first for narrowbody aircraft in the region, and enhanced Economy seating with seatback entertainment - bringing premium in-flight experiences to medium and short-haul routes. The

deliveries bring Etihad’s total fleet to 106 aircraft. The airline operates one of the world’s youngest fleets, with an average aircraft age of 8.7 years, supporting operational efficiency and enhanced passenger experience.

The aircraft deliveries support Etihad’s recently announced network expansion, which includes 27 new destinations and increased frequencies across existing routes. The airline has experienced remarkable growth, carrying more than 20 million passengers in the last 12 months for the first time in its history, doubling passenger numbers from 2022 levels.

Etihad’s fleet expansion programme continues beyond July, with 20 additional aircraft per annum expected for delivery throughout 2025 and 2026.

By expanding its fleet and network, Etihad Airways is strengthening Abu Dhabi’s position as a global aviation hub and offering unparalleled travel experiences to millions of passengers worldwide.

LOT Polish Airlines receives first Recaro seats for new Boeing 737 MAX 8

- Total order of around 14,000 aircraft seats for the Boeing 737 MAX 8 and the Airbus A220
- 13 new Boeing 737 MAX 8s will join the fleet by the end of 2026

Star Alliance member LOT Polish Airlines has received its first shipment of RECARO Aircraft Seating products, which will be installed on both its Boeing 737 MAX 8 and Airbus A220 aircraft. The initial set was manufactured at RECARO's facility in Świebodzin and will be fitted into one of the thirteen Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft that are set to join the Polish carrier's fleet by the end of 2026. In total, LOT will take delivery of about 14,000 modern, ergonomic seats – with passenger comfort as a top priority.

The new RECARO R2 seats combine lightweight construction with advanced ergonomics and high functionality. Each seat features a dedicated 60W power outlet for fast charging of electronic devices, as well as a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) holder for easy use of a tablet or smartphone. For extra comfort, the seats are equipped with six-way adjustable headrests, extended armrests, contoured backrests with comfort-enhancing foam, and lightweight sliding tray tables.

RECARO R2 seats stand out for their light weight – each seat weighs less than 10 kg – helping to reduce fuel consumption and lower CO₂ emissions. Their

modular design facilitates easier maintenance and supports sustainable practices. These new seats will be installed on all new Boeing 737 MAX 8 and Airbus A220 aircraft as they join the LOT Polish Airlines fleet.

The new seats are part of LOT Polish Airlines' broader initiative to modernise its aircraft cabins. The interiors of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 fleet will be completely redesigned, drawing inspiration from LOT Polish Airlines' Polonez business lounges in Warsaw and Chicago. The goal is to create a unified look across the entire fleet, aligning the new design with the cabin style of the Boeing 787 Dreamliners, which are also set for a comprehensive interior upgrade. This retrofit will take passenger comfort to an even higher level across all classes of service.

LOT Polish Airlines is a modern carrier connecting Central and Eastern Europe with the rest of the world. LOT's offer includes, inter alia, direct long-haul flights to airports in the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and India. The Polish carrier has been consistently increasing the number of its flights to those destinations, thus strengthening its position in Central and Eastern Europe. It operates its long-



haul flights with Boeing 787 Dreamliner, one of the most advanced wide-body aircraft in the world. Present in the sky since

1929, the Polish carrier is the 12th oldest airline worldwide, being one of the most internationally recognisable Polish brands.

Etihad Airways and Azul Brazilian Airlines Launch Loyalty Partnership

- Members can now earn and redeem miles across both networks.
- Partnership opens 137 Brazilian destinations, including São Paulo, Salvador, and Recife.
- Azul Fidelidade members gain access to Etihad's expanding network.



Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, and Azul Brazilian Airlines have launched a frequent flyer partnership agreement. The agreement enables members of both Etihad Guest and the Azul Fidelidade programme to earn and redeem their respective loyalty currency on either carrier.

Etihad Guest members can redeem their miles on flights, worldwide hotel stays, and holidays, or shop from a variety of products from the Etihad Guest Reward Shop. Azul Fidelidade member miles can be spent on hotel stays, car rentals, products, and services at Azul Fidelidade Shopping.

Mark Potter, Managing Director of Etihad Guest, said: *"Signing this frequent flyer agreement with Azul Brazilian Airlines is both exciting and significant for Etihad Guest. The partnership opens up Azul's impressive network for our members to be rewarded for their travel adventures, offering more ways to earn and redeem their miles when exploring destinations across the Americas. We also look forward to welcoming Azul Fidelidade members onboard Etihad Airways, showcasing our signature Emirati hospitality and offering them the ability to earn or redeem their miles when they choose to travel across our rapidly expanding global network,*

also bringing more people to our home in Abu Dhabi."

The partnership transforms how members explore South America. Etihad Guest members can now use their miles to discover Brazil's cultural capitals – from the bustling streets of São Paulo to the colonial charm of Salvador and the beaches of Recife. The agreement also unlocks Azul's routes to popular destinations like Fort Lauderdale, Orlando and Curaçao, creating new possibilities for onward travel throughout the Americas.

For Azul Fidelidade members, the partnership opens doors to Etihad's rapidly expanding network. Members can earn miles exploring Asia's emerging destinations, including Krabi's pristine beaches, Phnom Penh's vibrant night markets, or the bustling energy of Taipei.

Cristina Yoshida, Director of Azul Fidelidade, Azul Brazilian Airlines, also commented, *"We are very excited to open the door for our customers to explore the extraordinary destinations offered by Etihad Airways in the Middle East and Asia, while also welcoming new members eager to discover Brazil. This partnership reinforces Azul's commitment to offering more global benefits in collaboration with companies recognized for excellence in service and customer experience."*

The partnership launches as both airlines continue to grow their networks. Etihad recently announced 27 new destinations for 2025, expanding the network to more than 100 spectacular destinations around the world, while Azul maintains Brazil's largest domestic network with over 137 destinations.

70 Years of Flight Service on the Warsaw-Vienna Route: LOT Polish Airlines and Vienna Airport Celebrate Their Anniversary

Poland's national airline and Vienna Airport are commemorating a long-standing and dynamic partnership. On July 29, 1955, LOT Polish Airlines resumed flight operations to Vienna, inaugurating a period of uninterrupted service on the Warsaw-Vienna route that endures to this day. Yet the roots of LOT's presence in the Austrian capital reach even deeper—its inaugural aircraft touched down in Vienna as early as 1929, operating both non-stop and direct services from Katowice. Over the decades, this route has played a pivotal role in the airline's development, serving as the launchpad for major fleet milestones, including the first Embraer 170 and Boeing 787 Dreamliner landings at Vienna Airport. About three million passengers have taken advantage of this flight connection over the last 30 years alone, namely since 1994. Today the 70th anniversary of flight service linking Warsaw and Vienna was commemorated within the context of a photo session featuring Amit Ray (Director DACH Markets, Italy, Malta, India & Head of Global Corporate & Strategic Sales), Olaf Krauss (Sales Manager Austria & Corporate Sales Italy), both for LOT Polish Airlines and Julian Jäger (joint CEO and COO of Vienna Airport).

"The Vienna-Warsaw connection has been a success story for 70 years. LOT Polish Airlines was one of the first



international carriers at Vienna Airport and served as a gateway to Central and Eastern Europe. Today, this route is a key pillar of our network – strategically vital. Over the past three decades, three million passengers have flown this route, underscoring its unique blend of continuity and future potential", states Julian Jäger, joint CEO and COO of Vienna Airport.

"Our connection with Vienna dates back to 1929, when LOT's first aircraft landed in the Austrian capital. Since the resumption of regular operations in 1955, we have developed this route not only through consistent air service but also through a shared history, mutual trust, and a strong sense of European identity. It was on this very route that LOT introduced the newest additions to its fleet – the Embraer 170 and the Boeing 787 Dreamliner – underscoring its strategic importance within our network. Today, Warsaw and Vienna are more than just two Central European capitals; they are essential transit hubs at the heart of Europe ", adds Robert Ludera,

Proxy and Director of Network Department at LOT Polish Airlines.

A flight connection with many premieres: 70 years of flights on the Warsaw-Vienna route

The Warsaw-Vienna flight connection is a well-established route in the airline's network, but one of particular importance. In 2004, LOT Polish Airlines reached a global milestone by becoming the first airline in the world to operate the Embraer 170 on a commercial flight. The next premiere took place eight years later, i.e., in the year 2012. LOT Polish Airlines was the first European airline to deploy the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Once again, it did so on the Warsaw-Vienna route. These pioneering achievements underline the airline's innovative strength and its close ties to Vienna Airport. The connection goes back even further, as LOT Polish Airlines already landed in 1929 at the former Aspern airfield in Vienna, well before today's Vienna Airport was officially opened in 1954.

Singapore and IndiGo Enter Landmark Partnership to Enhance Indian Travel Experience and Drive Bilateral Tourism Growth



Strengthening a Vital Tourism Corridor

India has consistently ranked among Singapore's top three source markets for inbound tourism. In the first six months of 2025 alone, Singapore welcomed over half a million Indian visitors, underscoring the resilience and growing appetite for travel between the two countries. This upward trajectory is supported by exceptional air connectivity: Singapore's Changi Airport—widely regarded as Southeast Asia's premier aviation hub—currently offers more than 270 weekly flights to and from 15 Indian cities.

IndiGo, which operates a significant share of these routes, plays a critical role in facilitating this flow. With Singapore ranking among its top three international destinations, the airline is now expanding its operations in response to surging demand. A key highlight of this growth is the introduction of *IndiGoStretch*, the airline's enhanced business-class service, launching August 9, 2025, on routes between Singapore and both Delhi and Mumbai. The service, introduced to coincide with Singapore's National Day celebrations, represents IndiGo's first foray into

In a significant development for Asia's travel and aviation sectors, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has entered into a strategic year-long partnership with IndiGo, India's largest and fastest-growing airline, to deepen tourism cooperation and enhance the travel experience for Indian visitors.

This collaboration, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), is the first of its kind for both organizations—marking a milestone in cross-border tourism development between Singapore and India.

The partnership is designed to amplify Singapore's appeal as

a preferred destination for Indian travelers while supporting IndiGo's ambitions to expand its international footprint. Central to the initiative are enhanced air connectivity, targeted marketing campaigns, and curated travel offerings that cater to the evolving preferences of modern Indian tourists.

premium-class offerings on Southeast Asian routes.

"This collaboration reinforces IndiGo's commitment to international expansion and premium service innovation," said Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales at IndiGo. "We are proud to partner with STB to deliver a world-class travel experience to our Indian customers, many of whom see Singapore as their gateway to Southeast Asia."

A Strategic Move in a Milestone Year

The timing of this partnership is especially significant, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Singapore. The alignment of aviation, tourism, and diplomacy sends a powerful message about the long-standing and multifaceted ties between the two nations.

By offering improved connectivity, enhanced onboard products, and personalized travel experiences, the initiative seeks to not only cater to existing demand but also to stimulate new interest from first-time visitors, repeat travelers, and corporate segments.

"India continues to be one of Singapore's most important tourism markets, both in terms of volume and economic contribution," said Rachel Loh, Senior Vice President, International Group (India, Middle East, South Asia) at STB. "This partnership with IndiGo is a strategic investment in our shared future. It reflects our commitment to providing meaningful, memorable, and

accessible travel experiences for Indian visitors."

Elevating the Indian Travel Experience

As part of the agreement, STB and IndiGo will collaborate on a comprehensive, year-long marketing campaign aimed at inspiring travel to Singapore. The initiative builds on the earlier success of the "Untold Singapore" campaign, shifting the narrative from traditional tourism to experiential, culturally immersive journeys.

The new campaign will include:

- **Co-branded digital content** targeting Indian travelers across age groups and travel profiles
- **Exclusive promotional packages** and airfare deals for flights to Singapore
- **Social media and influencer partnerships** to drive visibility and engagement
- **Thematic travel itineraries** spotlighting Singapore's hidden gems, beyond its iconic landmarks

The campaign will focus on catering to a new generation of Indian travelers—tech-savvy, experience-driven, and culturally curious. It aims to showcase Singapore not just as a destination but as an evolving, living experience: from culinary adventures and urban heritage trails to sustainable eco-attractions and art precincts.

Investing in Trade Engagement and Industry Capacity

Beyond consumer engagement, the

partnership prioritizes trade outreach to further reinforce tourism supply chains and distribution networks. A series of multi-city trade roadshows will be conducted across India, targeting travel agents, tour operators, and corporate travel planners.

These events will offer in-depth destination training, market intelligence, and product updates from both Singapore and IndiGo. Special emphasis will be placed on the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) sector—a high-growth segment where Singapore already enjoys global leadership.

Additionally, curated familiarization trips will be organized to allow key industry stakeholders to experience Singapore firsthand. Trade partners will gain insight into the city-state's evolving offerings and be better equipped to design and promote high-value travel packages tailored to Indian clientele.

Data-Driven, Customer-Centric Strategy

At the heart of the collaboration lies a shared commitment to data-driven marketing. Both STB and IndiGo will leverage traveler behavior insights and consumer segmentation to optimize outreach. The goal is to deliver timely, personalized, and contextually relevant content to Indian travelers at every stage of the travel lifecycle—from inspiration and planning to booking and post-arrival engagement.

This approach reflects an understanding that the Indian outbound market is not monolithic. The partnership will cater to diverse needs, including:

- Families seeking multi-generational travel experiences
- Young professionals exploring short getaways
- Affluent travelers demanding luxury and exclusivity
- SME business travelers combining work with leisure (bleisure)

By using behavioral data to tailor offerings, the campaign is expected to achieve higher engagement rates and greater conversion efficiency.

Conclusion: A New Model for Regional Tourism Collaboration

The STB-IndiGo partnership stands as a forward-thinking model for how national tourism boards and airlines can jointly navigate the post-pandemic travel landscape. It exemplifies a holistic approach—where infrastructure, service innovation, marketing, and trade development converge to create a robust tourism ecosystem.

As the Indo-Singapore corridor continues to expand, this alliance is poised to deliver sustained value to travelers, businesses, and tourism stakeholders alike. It not only reinforces Singapore's reputation as a dynamic and welcoming destination but also reflects the growing sophistication of Indian outbound travelers who seek more than just a destination—they seek experiences.



SWISS presents new First and Business Class seats and announces first long-haul destination for its new Airbus A350

Luxury Takes Flight: SWISS Unveils New First and Business Class Cabins on Boston–Zurich Route, Debuting 2026

In a move that redefines the future of luxury air travel, Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) has announced the launch of its brand-new First and Business Class cabins, set to debut in 2026 on the prestigious transatlantic route between Boston and Zurich. The newly designed cabins will be featured on the airline's next-generation Airbus A350 aircraft, signaling SWISS's continued investment in comfort, innovation, and refined design.

This premium offering is not merely a seat upgrade—it's a complete reimagination of the long-haul flying

experience, blending Swiss precision with cutting-edge technology and timeless aesthetics.

A Flagship Route for a Flagship Experience

The Boston–Zurich route was carefully chosen as the inaugural service to showcase SWISS's revamped First and Business Class cabins. A gateway between two major international hubs, this route caters to a mix of discerning business travelers and high-end leisure passengers—ideal candidates for the enhanced level

of comfort and service that SWISS intends to offer.

The new cabins will be exclusively rolled out aboard the state-of-the-art Airbus A350-900, known for its advanced engineering, ultra-quiet interiors, and superior fuel efficiency. With increased cabin pressurization and humidity control, the A350 creates a more restful and relaxing onboard environment—particularly noticeable on long-haul flights such as the 7-hour journey between New England and Switzerland.

First Class Redefined: Private Suites With Personal Climate Control

SWISS's new First Class offering features fully enclosed private suites





designed to elevate the concept of personal space in the sky. Each suite comes equipped with floor-to-ceiling French doors, rich wood finishes, ambient lighting, and expansive surfaces for a warm, residential feel. Passengers can expect:

- **Individual temperature controls**—including seat heating and cooling systems
- **Ultra-wide high-definition screens** for an immersive cinematic experience
- **Wireless device charging** and multiple connectivity ports
- **Luxurious bedding and amenity kits**, reflecting SWISS's premium service ethos

For couples traveling together, select First Class suites are designed to merge into a shared cabin—an innovative design that offers both intimacy and exclusivity, ideal for partners or families seeking to travel in refined privacy.

Elevated Business Class: Privacy Meets Precision

The redesigned Business Class also receives a dramatic transformation. Each seat converts into a fully lie-flat bed and includes:

- **Direct aisle access** for every passenger
- **Sliding privacy doors** in the center section for a cocooned travel experience

- **Customizable ambient lighting** to match personal comfort preferences

- **Personal climate controls**, a rare feature in business cabins globally

SWISS's new Business Class is crafted to meet the evolving expectations of business travelers who demand both productivity and relaxation. The layout is intentionally staggered to offer maximum privacy, whether you're working on a presentation or winding down with in-flight entertainment.

Sensory Enhancements: A Multi-Layered Inflight Experience

Beyond aesthetics and seat design, SWISS is introducing a curated sensory environment onboard. The airline has developed a bespoke **signature cabin fragrance**, designed to subtly evoke calm and serenity throughout the journey. In addition, **circadian lighting systems** will be installed to mimic natural light patterns, helping passengers adjust to time zone changes and reduce jet lag.

This emphasis on holistic comfort reflects a broader trend in premium aviation: shifting from functional travel to **experience-driven luxury**. For SWISS, this means every detail, from the scent of the cabin to the softness of the linens, has been carefully considered to delight the senses and enhance well-being.

Upgraded Economy Experience

While much of the spotlight is on the airline's First and Business Class overhaul, SWISS has not overlooked its Economy Class travelers. The Airbus A350s will feature reimagined Economy cabins with:

- **Increased seat pitch** for greater legroom and comfort
- **13-inch high-definition entertainment touchscreens**
- **Ergonomic seat design** to reduce fatigue on long-haul routes

These updates ensure that even those traveling on a budget can enjoy a significantly improved onboard experience.

A Strategic Rollout and Future Route Expansion

The Boston–Zurich route marks just the beginning. SWISS has confirmed plans to expand the new cabin configurations to additional long-haul routes across Europe, North America, and Asia. As the airline continues to modernize its fleet, more A350 aircraft will be introduced with the new premium cabins, bringing a consistent luxury experience to more passengers worldwide.

The investment aligns with Zurich's ongoing appeal as a premier leisure and business destination. Whether travelers are exploring the charming cobbled streets of the Altstadt, visiting world-renowned museums, or soaking in the panoramic views over Lake Zurich, SWISS aims to ensure that the journey is as extraordinary as the destination.

Final Thoughts: Swiss Precision in the Skies

With the introduction of its new premium cabins aboard the Airbus A350, SWISS is reaffirming its reputation as one of the world's leading luxury carriers. Merging thoughtful design, modern technology, and a sensory approach to hospitality, the airline is setting new standards for high-end air travel.

From the moment passengers step on board to the time they land, every aspect of the experience has been designed to deliver not just a journey—but a statement in refined Swiss luxury.

flyadeal passenger numbers increased by 25% to five million+ in 2025 vis-à-vis 2024

- Flyadeal announces impressive 2025 half-year performance topped by global No.1 ranking for operational punctuality
- flyadeal, Saudi Arabia's fast-growing low-cost carrier (LCC), has announced half-year performance figures that exceeded growth expectations, with milestones and achievements topped by becoming the world's most punctual airline in June.

Compared with the first half of 2024, the six months to June 2025 saw flyadeal passenger numbers increase 25% to just over five million, which outstripped the 21% seat capacity growth.

With 33,400 flights operated – 200 daily for the first time since flyadeal's inception in 2017 – thanks largely to a near 60 per cent increase in the number of routes flown during the six months, the airline surpassed the industry average for best On-Time Performance of any low-cost Middle

East airline for six consecutive months.

In June, flyadeal was acclaimed for being the world's most punctual airline, achieving 91.77% operational performance based on flights within 15 minutes of scheduled arrival.

Operational highlights for January – June 2025 over the same period in 2024

- The number of passengers carried rose 25 per cent to 5.05 million
- Seat capacity increased by 21 per cent

- Total flights operated were up 20 per cent to 33,400
- The number of routes flown went up 57 per cent to 127 from three bases in KSA
- Fleet grew by five aircraft to 39
- Most punctual airline in the world with On-Time Performance peaking at 91.77%
- Six consecutive months as the best Mid East low-cost airline for punctuality
- Launched scheduled flights to Pakistan, signaling the first move into South Asia

Key milestones and achievements in H1 2025

- Joined sister airline Saudia's AlFursan loyalty scheme for members to earn and redeem miles on flyadeal flights
- Historic order for 10 Airbus A330 widebody aircraft for long-haul flying
- Graduation of the first 10 of 150 cadet pilots under the new Saudi government scholarship programme
- flyadeal announced Saudi cabin crew to be trained as certified tour guides in ground-breaking regional initiative
- flyadeal joined the industry body International Air Transport Association
- Headcount rose 21% to 1,600 employees.



Lufthansa Group Reports Strong Second Quarter Performance, Reaffirms 2025 Outlook Despite Industry Headwinds

Q2 Adjusted EBIT up 27% to €871 million; Net profit more than doubles to €1 billion; Cargo and Technik divisions deliver standout results



The Lufthansa Group has reported a robust financial performance in the second quarter of 2025, increasing its Adjusted EBIT by 27% year-on-year to €871 million, while net profit more than doubled to over €1 billion. The Group has reaffirmed its full-year guidance, citing continued strong demand and operational stability despite persistent geopolitical tensions and macroeconomic uncertainties.

Group CEO Carsten Spohr noted that 2025 remains a “year of transformation” due to industry-wide challenges, including delayed aircraft deliveries, regulatory pressures, and high inflation. Nonetheless, he emphasized the Group’s operational resilience and reaffirmed its outlook: “Our ability to deliver a strong second-quarter performance underlines the strength of our multi-brand strategy and the commitment of our teams across all divisions.”

Key Financial Highlights

- **Q2 Revenue:** €10.3 billion (+3% YoY)
- **Adjusted EBIT:** €871 million (Q2

2024: €686 million)

- **Net Profit:** €1.01 billion (Q2 2024: €469 million)

- **Adjusted Free Cashflow (H1):** €1.04 billion

- **Net Debt:** Reduced to €5.5 billion (from €5.7 billion at end-2024)

The improved earnings were supported by a 4% increase in passenger capacity, a €91 million contribution from the Group’s investment in ITA Airways, and a twofold increase in the logistics division’s profit. A combination of lower fuel prices and favorable currency effects also positively impacted the bottom line.

Operational Performance: Passenger and Cargo Divisions

In the second quarter, Lufthansa Group airlines carried approximately 37 million passengers, up from 35.9 million a year ago. While European yields came under pressure due to increased competition, intercontinental revenues remained stable. The passenger airline division recorded €8.2 billion in revenue and an Adjusted EBIT

of €690 million.

Across the first half of 2025, Group airlines flew over 61 million passengers. Lufthansa Airlines’ ongoing *Turnaround* program—focused on improving operational reliability and profitability—yielded notable progress, with the best punctuality rates since 2016 and a more than 25% increase in ancillary revenue.

In parallel, **Lufthansa Cargo** posted a standout performance, with Q2 Adjusted EBIT surging to €73 million (Q2 2024: €36 million), driven by strong Asian e-commerce demand and sea freight constraints. The division also began marketing the cargo belly capacity of ITA Airways’ South American network—a move expected to boost future route profitability.

Lufthansa Technik Delivers Record Results

Lufthansa Technik continued its upward trajectory, achieving record earnings in the first half. Revenue for Q2 rose 8% to €2 billion, and first-half Adjusted EBIT reached €310 million, reflecting heightened global demand for aircraft maintenance amid sustained air travel recovery.

Strategic Developments and ITA Airways Integration

Lufthansa’s strategic investment in ITA Airways continues to show early returns. Customer benefits have expanded, including harmonized frequent flyer perks, integrated booking options across short-, medium-, and long-haul routes, and enhanced digital services via Lufthansa’s Travel ID platform.

Outlook: Maintaining Confidence Amidst Uncertainty

Despite a volatile macroeconomic landscape, high inflation, and ongoing global uncertainties, Lufthansa Group maintains its full-year forecast. The Group expects to exceed the 2024 Adjusted EBIT of €1.6 billion, supported by approximately 4% capacity growth. Adjusted Free Cashflow is expected to remain at 2024 levels (€840 million), despite planned investments of €2.7 to €3.3 billion, largely earmarked for fleet renewal.

Notably, Lufthansa plans to add up to ten Boeing 787-9 'Dreamliner' aircraft with its next-generation Allegris seating configuration by the end of 2025. By summer 2026, it expects to operate 15 Dreamliners from its Frankfurt hub.

Till Streichert, CFO of Deutsche Lufthansa AG, added, "In a persistently uncertain environment, our strong Q2 performance and progress on key transformation measures validate our strategy. We remain agile and prepared to adapt should the

economic environment shift."

Summary

The Lufthansa Group's Q2 performance reinforces its strategic resilience and operational momentum as it navigates an evolving global aviation landscape. With gains in profitability across core and ancillary divisions, and strong cash generation, the Group is positioned to deliver on its 2025 targets while investing in long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

Air New Zealand appoints **Nikhil Ravishankar** as next Chief Executive Officer

Air New Zealand has today announced the appointment of Nikhil Ravishankar as its next Chief Executive Officer, succeeding Greg Foran, who steps down in October after almost six years leading the airline through one of the most challenging periods in aviation history.

Currently, the airline's Chief Digital Officer, Nikhil, will officially take over as CEO on 20 October 2025. In the nearly five years that Nikhil has been at Air New Zealand, he has gained a deep understanding of the aviation sector and the airline. He has also led major advances in the airline's technology backbone, loyalty program, and customer proposition.

Air New Zealand Board Chair, Dame Therese Walsh, says the appointment marks the beginning of the next chapter for the airline, reflecting the strong momentum underway and a new generation of leadership for the future.

"Across Air New Zealand, we are very clear on what matters most - connecting our communities and country to each other and the world, delivering value and excellence, and running a world-class airline that all Kiwis are proud of.

"We have always been bold and not afraid to adapt and lead. Nikhil

brings the mindset and contemporary leadership we need to build on our strong foundations and focus on the future. The Board undertook an extensive international search and was delighted to see Nikhil come through the process so strongly. His ambition for the airline's future and his people leadership skills, coupled with his pursuit of excellence, digital literacy, global outlook, and relationships, and his deep care for the airline and New Zealand, shone through.

"Airlines will continue to face immense challenges, whether that's climate change, customer expectations, technology, cost pressures or geopolitics. Nikhil brings a fresh perspective that is grounded in New Zealand values and a deep knowledge of the airline and critical infrastructure across different sectors. He's not afraid to challenge how things are done and ask questions," says Dame Therese Walsh.

Prior to Air New Zealand, Nikhil was Chief Digital Officer at Vector and Managing Director of Accenture.

"I'm both thrilled and humbled to be given this opportunity to lead Air New Zealand," says Nikhil. "This airline is an institution with a deep legacy but also a fantastic future. It's a privilege



to step into the CEO role and take on that responsibility for our people, our customers, and our country.

"Airlines are complex, and safety underpins every decision we make. I truly believe that New Zealand is one of the most innovative nations in the world and one of the greatest destinations to visit. Our airline is amongst the very best, and I get to work with some of the most dedicated people in the country, from our cabin crew, engineers, and pilots to our ground teams, corporate, and digital teams behind the scenes. At the end of the day, we are a people business - purposeful, ambitious, and deeply rooted in Aotearoa New Zealand, and I'm excited to help shape what this next stage of Air New Zealand looks like," says Nikhil Ravishankar.



Ten Compelling Reasons to Visit Munich Airport — Even If You're Not Flying

Munich Airport is far more than just a transportation hub—it's a vibrant destination in its own right. Whether you're jetting off, picking someone up, or simply looking for a

With 150 stores and 60 restaurants, it's not just the waiting time at Munich Airport that flies by. The airport is also worth a trip for those staying at home with its numerous leisure activities.





unique day out, the airport offers a host of attractions that blend convenience, culture, and recreation. With over 150 stores, 60 dining outlets, immersive tours, wellness experiences, and even beer brewed on-site, Munich Airport promises far more than your average layover.

Here are ten standout reasons why a visit to Munich Airport is worth your time—whether or not you're boarding a plane.

1. Recharge at the Mountain Hub Spa

Escape the everyday rush and rejuvenate at the **Mountain Hub Spa** in the Hilton Munich Airport hotel. Featuring a heated 17-meter indoor pool, Finnish saunas, steam baths, and a fully equipped fitness center, the spa is open to hotel guests and day visitors alike. Whether you opt for a two-hour break or a full-day experience, the tranquil ambiance provides the perfect pre-flight or leisure-time recharge.

2. Indulge in Retail Therapy

With over **150 shops and service outlets**, Munich Airport is a shopper's paradise. From luxury brands and travel essentials to local specialties and unique gift items, the offerings are extensive. And there's an added incentive: spend €30 or more, and you'll receive an hour of free parking at the P20 garage. Many shops even offer home delivery—ideal for those avoiding extra baggage.

3. Dine Around the World—And at a Michelin-Starred Table

From quick bites to gourmet feasts, the airport's **60 dining venues** reflect culinary excellence. Sample Bavarian fare and locally brewed beer at **Airbräu**, Europe's only airport-based brewery, or savor international cuisine at various cafés and bistros. The **Mountain Hub Gourmet** restaurant, awarded a Michelin star, elevates airport dining with refined dishes in an elegant setting—all without needing a boarding pass.

4. Go Behind the Scenes with an Airport Tour

Take a guided tour and explore the high-tech logistics that power Munich Airport's operations. These engaging experiences offer rare insights into ground handling, runway systems, and the inner workings of a world-class airport. Ideal for aviation enthusiasts and families alike, tours depart from the Visitors Park and can be booked online.

5. Cycle the Eco-Trail and Learn About Sustainability

The airport's **18-kilometer Environmental Cycling Path** offers a scenic and educational ride around the entire campus. Starting from the Visitors Park, this family-friendly route includes **17 interactive stations** detailing Munich Airport's nature conservation efforts. QR codes along the trail offer deeper insights—though currently only in German.

6. Immerse Yourself in Aviation at the Visitors Park

A hands-on exhibition at the **Visitors Park** invites guests to explore the fascinating world of air travel through interactive displays. Open daily and free to enter, the exhibit is a must-see for those curious about aviation, airport logistics, and the history of flight.

7. Let the Kids Burn Off Energy

For families, Munich Airport doubles as a playground. The

Visitors Park features an expansive adventure playground and a mini-golf course, while various play zones inside the terminals keep children entertained before departure. It's a welcome break for both kids and parents.

8. Lounge in Style

Whether flying economy or first class, all travelers can access **Common User Lounges** for a more serene pre-flight experience. Located in Terminal 1, **Airport Lounge Europe** and **Airport Lounge World** offer comfortable seating, refreshments, and business services. Premium passengers can also enjoy bespoke luxury in the **VIP Wing**, complete with a private shuttle to the aircraft.

9. Watch Planes from Spectacular Vantage Points

For aviation enthusiasts, Munich Airport offers multiple observation points. The **Visitors Hill** in the park area gives panoramic views of runways and taxiways, while the **Terminal 2 Observation Deck** provides a bird's-eye view of the apron and satellite terminal. Open daily and free to the public, these spots offer unforgettable views of aircraft in motion.

10. Sip a Cold, Locally Brewed Beer

No visit is complete without a stop at **Airbräu**, the airport's brewery. Enjoy freshly brewed varieties like Fliegerquell, Kumulus, or the bold Doppelbock alongside hearty Bavarian dishes in Europe's largest covered beer garden. With seasonal brews and traditional fare, Airbräu is a perfect toast to your journey—or your day out.

Beyond Takeoff: A Destination in Itself

With an unmatched blend of leisure, luxury, and local charm, **Munich Airport is redefining what it means to travel**. Whether you're flying or not, the airport invites visitors to shop, relax, dine, and discover—all under one roof. It's not just a point of departure, but a place to explore.



Munich Airport introduces Ottobots in Terminal 2

*Munich Airport Pioneers Digital Innovation to Enhance Passenger Experience
From service robots to smart gates, the airport is transforming travel through cutting-edge technology*

In a bold move to redefine the airport experience, **Munich Airport** is accelerating its digital transformation with a suite of innovative technologies that streamline passenger services, enhance operational efficiency, and add a dose of futuristic charm to the terminal atmosphere.

Already recognized as one of Europe's most advanced airports,

Munich continues to set benchmarks in digital innovation—positioning itself not just as a transit hub, but as a forward-thinking **premium travel ecosystem**.

Robotics Take Flight: Service Bots Join the Ground Crew

In Terminal 2, travelers may now encounter **two autonomous service robots** developed by U.S.-based robotics startup **Ottonomy**. These smart machines—currently deployed in the Customer Service Center, gate areas, and baggage claim zones—perform a mix of logistical and informational tasks.

Equipped with mobile display screens and integrated containers, the robots assist passengers by offering **real-time flight updates, rebooking services, tax refund guidance, and lost-and-found support**. Users simply scan a QR code on the robot to access Lufthansa's digital chat assistant via their smartphones.

In addition to offering passenger assistance, the robots also deliver **complimentary bottled water**, pausing periodically at designated locations for travelers to hydrate on the go.

Snackbot: Merging Convenience with Entertainment

A more whimsical but equally functional addition to Terminal 2 is **Snackbot**, a cheerful service robot that roams the gate area with a selection of snacks and beverages available for purchase. Originally designed for hospitals and hotels, the **Robotise-developed** bot is making its **aviation industry debut** at Munich Airport.

Operating autonomously like a robotic floor cleaner, Snackbot navigates Levels 4 and 5, offering goods via a touchscreen interface. Customers can pay using contactless methods such as Apple Pay, Google Pay, or major credit cards. A built-in weight sensor adds a layer of security by preventing unauthorized removal of items.

"This is more than just a vending

robot," said **Laura Pichler**, project manager at Terminal 2. "Snackbot is designed to enhance the overall travel experience with a playful, interactive service that passengers won't forget. We're closely monitoring passenger interaction as part of our ongoing pilot phase."

The one-year trial, operated by **Allresto** and spearheaded by the Terminal 2 company, is part of Munich Airport's broader commitment to **testing service robotics in real-world airport environments**.

SmartGates: Real-Time Passenger Flow Optimization

Efficiency at security checkpoints has also been upgraded with the installation of **SmartGates** at Terminal



through the central security screening area. The result: a more fluid, responsive security experience for travelers.

Fast Track: Accelerated Screening for Time-Critical Departures

Munich Airport has also broadened access to its **Fast Track lane** at the central security checkpoint in Terminal 2. Initially launched in late 2023, the service now includes all passengers flying with **Lufthansa (LH), Austrian Airlines (OS), Lufthansa City Airlines (VL), Discover Airlines (4Y), Air Dolomiti (EN), and SWISS (LX)**—regardless of status or travel class.

Passengers departing on eligible flights displayed on the terminal monitors can proceed through dedicated eGates. As of **July 31**, those checking compliant carry-on luggage at **counters 459 or 460** will have their boarding passes authorized for Fast Track by staff using handheld scanners—adding speed and simplicity to the security process.

A Model for the Future of Travel

Through the integration of service robotics, sensor-driven infrastructure, and smart self-service systems, Munich Airport is making **digital convenience and traveler-centric innovation** the cornerstone of its identity.

As airports worldwide race to enhance operational efficiency and passenger satisfaction, Munich continues to lead by example—offering a glimpse into the **next era of seamless, tech-enabled air travel**.

Already recognized as one of Europe's most advanced airports, Munich continues to set benchmarks in digital innovation—positioning itself not just as a transit hub, but as a forward-thinking premium travel ecosystem.

2's central lining. These automated door systems, guided by overhead **XOVIS sensors**, respond dynamically to passenger traffic by adjusting entry routes in real time.

Originally implemented to measure queue lengths, the sensors now enable **automated gate adjustments**, helping to reduce bottlenecks and better distribute passenger flow

OTOAI Convention 2025: Moscow Welcomes India's Travel Pioneers

Moscow Becomes the New Gateway for Indian Outbound Travel

By Gaura G. Bahl

Moscow played host to the 6th convention of the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), in what is already being hailed as a landmark event for the outbound tourism industry. With a strong delegation of Indian travel professionals, tourism stakeholders, and media, the convention underscored the growing Indo-Russian tourism corridor and positioned Russia as a dynamic new destination for Indian travellers.

Strengthening Indo-Russian Tourism Ties

Over four days, the convention showcased Russia's evolving appeal for Indian tourists, particularly in Moscow and St. Petersburg. For OTOAI, which has long served as a bridge between Indian operators and global destinations, the Moscow edition marked a decisive step in diversifying outbound travel beyond traditional favourites such as Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

The Russian capital became the epicentre of Indo-Russian tourism dialogue this summer, as the **Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI)** hosted its **6th Annual Convention** in Moscow. With the theme "**Fast Forward Future – The Intelligent Travel**", the event blended business, culture, and strategy into an unforgettable four-day experience that has set new benchmarks for India's outbound tourism sector.

A Grand Opening in Moscow

The convention kicked off in style at **The Carlton, Moscow**, one of the city's most prestigious venues. Delegates were welcomed by the Moscow City Tourism Committee, underscoring the city's commitment to growing Indian arrivals.

The opening ceremony set the tone with cultural performances, keynote addresses, and a sense of excitement about Moscow's positioning as the "new frontier" for Indian outbound travellers.

The gathering provided a powerful platform for **Business-to-Business (B2B)** and **Government-to-Business (G2B)** meetings, enabling Indian operators to build direct partnerships with Russian counterparts. Delegates also attended engaging sessions with tourism leaders and industry experts, who shared insights into emerging travel trends and opportunities in a fast-evolving market.

Among the prominent speakers were:

- **Mr. Dev Karvat**, Founder & CEO, Asego
- **Mr. Ankush Nijhawan**, Co-Founder, TBO and Joint MD, TBO Tek
- **Mr. Sharad Govani**, Regional Head (South Asia), VFS India
- **Mr. Irshad Dadan**, Managing Director, One Above
- **Ms. Anastasia Popova**, Moscow City Tourism Committee

Their discussions highlighted the rising demand among Indian travellers for premium yet offbeat destinations,

the critical role of connectivity, and the growing importance of building long-term cross-border alliances.

OTOAI President **Himanshu Patil** spoke passionately about the future of tourism:

"Travel today is not just about destinations—it is about intelligent choices, seamless experiences, and cultural connections. Moscow offers all of this and more."

Strengthening Long-Term Collaborations

OTOAI President emphasized that the convention would serve as an excellent platform for building long-term collaborations with global partners. The travel industry is rapidly evolving, and as Indian travelers increasingly seek out new, premium destinations, events like this convention will help travel operators discover untapped markets and strengthen their business alliances.

Business with a Purpose

The heart of the convention was its **business sessions and B2B meetings**. Over **1,750 meetings** were conducted between Indian outbound operators and Russian tourism stakeholders, ranging from hotels and DMCs to airlines and regional tourism boards.

Key sessions included:

- **Intelligent Travel & AI** – exploring how technology is reshaping the way travellers search, book, and experience trips.





- **Sustainability in Outbound Tourism** – discussions on responsible travel practices for long-haul destinations.

- **Visa & Accessibility Challenges** – addressed through the signing of an **MoU with VFS Global**, aimed at simplifying Russian visa procedures for Indians.

This blend of knowledge-sharing and actionable business ensured delegates left not just with ideas, but with concrete opportunities.

Culture, Colors & Connections

Moscow provided a spectacular backdrop to the convention. Delegates were treated to curated city experiences:

- **A night tour of Red Square**, with St. Basil's Cathedral illuminated in dazzling colors.

- **A visit to the Moscow Metro** is often described as an underground art museum.

- **Cultural showcases**, including the *Festival of India* at Manezhnaya Square, where Indian and Russian performers celebrated the spirit of exchange.

- **A post-convention tour to St. Petersburg**, offering glimpses of the Hermitage, Peterhof Palace, and the city's canals.

These immersive activities weren't just sightseeing—they were designed to help Indian operators understand what Russian destinations could offer their clients.

The Core Committee: Visionaries Behind the Success

At the helm of this ambitious convention was OTOAI's **Core Committee**, whose leadership ensured seamless execution:

- **Himanshu Patil (President)** – The visionary leader who positioned Moscow as the next big outbound hub for Indians.

- **Shravan Bhalla (Convention Chairman & Vice President)** – Mastermind of the convention's structure, balancing business depth with cultural immersion.

- **Monia Kapoor (Co-Chairman)** – Crafted the engaging session formats

and spearheaded delegate experience design.

- **Sidharth Khanna (General Secretary)** – Managed coordination, logistics, and the behind-the-scenes details.

- **Vineet Gopal & Adl Abdul Karim (Executive Committee Members)** – Curated offerings and helped members connect with Russian stakeholders.

- **Riaz Munshi (Immediate Past President)** – Brought his invaluable industry expertise and networks to strengthen Indo-Russian ties.

Their teamwork proved the power of a strong vision coupled with flawless execution.

Key Highlights and Takeaways

- **1,750+ B2B Meetings**: Opened doors for fresh collaborations and seasonal packages.

- **MoU with VFS Global**: Paved the way for smoother travel formalities.

- **Destination Showcase**: Moscow and St. Petersburg repositioned as high-potential destinations for Indian travellers.

- **Technology & Trends**: AI, personalization, and sustainability became buzzwords for future travel planning.

- **Cultural Diplomacy**: The Festival of India and Russian hospitality strengthened people-to-people ties.

Looking Ahead

As the convention concluded, optimism was high. With Moscow firmly on the map, OTOAI's members are expected to roll out new itineraries for winter 2025-26 and beyond. The Core Committee is already working on streamlining collaborations, pushing for friendlier visa regimes, and championing "intelligent travel" as a standard practice.

The Moscow convention wasn't just another industry event—it was a **bridge between two nations** and a reminder that travel, at its core, is about building connections.

"For our members, the OTOAI convention is more than a gathering—it's a springboard for the future of

outbound tourism," said **Shravan Bhalla**, Convention Chairman.

For Indian travellers, this convention signals easier access, better packages, and richer experiences in Russia. For the travel trade, it's proof that with vision, collaboration, and innovation, outbound tourism can thrive even in new and uncharted territories.

The story of OTOAI 2025 in Moscow is one of ambition, collaboration, and the promise of a brighter, more connected future of travel.

INFO FACTS:

Why Russia for Indian Travellers?

1. **Direct Air Connectivity** – Regular flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Moscow and St. Petersburg.
2. **Visa Simplification** – MoU with VFS Global to streamline visas, plus expanding e-visa options.
3. **Affordable Luxury** – High-quality hotels and mid-market stays at better value than Western Europe.
4. **Cultural Richness** – Red Square, Kremlin, Hermitage, and the Moscow Metro's "palaces underground."
5. **Seasonal Appeal** – Summer's White Nights in St. Petersburg, winter snowscapes, and festive markets.
6. **Growing Indo-Russian Ties** – Tourism strengthened by cultural diplomacy and festivals.

Top 5 Experiences in Moscow & St. Petersburg

1. **Red Square by Night (Moscow)**: Iconic landmarks illuminated against the evening sky.
2. **The Moscow Metro Tour**: Palatial stations that double as an underground museum.
3. **The Bolshoi Theatre**: A cultural pilgrimage for ballet and opera lovers.
4. **The Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg)**: A treasure trove of art in the Winter Palace.
5. **White Nights & Canal Cruises (St. Petersburg)**: Midnight sun, festivals, and music on the water.

Together, Moscow and St. Petersburg offer Indian travellers a rare blend of history, art, and vibrancy—perfect for curated itineraries.

Luminara Sets Sail: The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection Unveils Its Third Superyacht in a Grand Mediterranean Launch



Designed for elegance and discovery, Luminara joins Evrima and Ilma in offering immersive journeys across the globe. Explore the world by sea — intimately, exquisitely — with curated itineraries spanning the Mediterranean, Asia, Alaska, and beyond.

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection has officially unveiled its third superyacht, *Luminara*, in a glittering ceremony in Monte Carlo, marking a significant new chapter in the brand's expansion into the ultra-luxury maritime space. Measuring 794 feet (242 meters) and accommodating up to 452 guests, *Luminara* builds upon the legacy of her sister ships, *Evrima* and *Ilma*, with a bold commitment to craftsmanship, experiential travel, and refined living at sea.

The superyacht's highly anticipated inaugural season began on July 3, 2025, with a seven-night itinerary from Monte Carlo to Rome, featuring stops in iconic Mediterranean destinations such as Cannes, Livorno, and Portofino.

"Welcoming Luminara to our fleet is the culmination of years of thoughtful design, partnership, and brand vision," said **Ernesto Fara, President of The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection**. *"This launch reinforces our position at the forefront of ultra-luxury yachting and*

sets a new benchmark in service, design, and experience."

A Star-Studded Christening

The ceremonial christening of *Luminara* brought together senior leadership, including **Jim Murren, Executive Chairman and CEO of The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection; Tina Edmundson, President of Luxury at Marriott International; Captain Tom Roth, who will lead the ship's Mediterranean season; and General Manager Muna Azab.**

The highlight of the evening was British actress and global fashion icon Simone Ashley, who formally christened *Luminara* as its godmother—a traditional maritime honor bestowed upon a female figure to bring good fortune and safe passage to the vessel. With the classic breaking of a Champagne bottle against the bow, Ashley cemented the start of *Luminara's* journey into the world's most prestigious waters.

"Luminara represents the spirit of modern travel—the emotional resonance of place, culture, and connection, all brought to life through impeccable hospitality," remarked **Tina Edmundson**. *"This vessel is a bold expression of the Ritz-Carlton brand's future on the sea."*

A Floating Masterpiece: Design That Illuminates

Named after the Latin word for "light," *Luminara* is conceived as a vessel of illumination—both in concept and in physical form. A seamless blend of organic design and contemporary luxury, the superyacht reflects flowing lines, natural textures, and meticulously curated materials throughout its interiors and exterior spaces.

Public areas were envisioned by Chapi Design Luxury Division, suites by AD Associates, lighting by dpa lighting consultants, and exterior design by Aivan. The result is an environment of serene elegance, with open-plan

lounges, sweeping sea views, and a palette of dark oak, Emporada marble, smoked glass, and warm neutral tones.

Each of the 226 ocean-facing suites features a private terrace and floor-to-ceiling windows, offering guests uninterrupted views and a private connection to the sea. Upper-category suites, including the newly introduced Residential Suite, elevate the offering further with bespoke furnishings from design houses such as Molteni, Minotti, Poltrona Frau, Giorgetti, and Talenti.

Customizable ambient lighting and advanced scene-setting technology allow guests to shape their personal onboard experience with precision and elegance.

A Gallery at Sea: Art that Inspires

Luminara also functions as an extraordinary art vessel, home to 731 carefully selected artworks—two-thirds of which were commissioned exclusively for the yacht. The collection celebrates the symbolism of light and Malta's rich cultural heritage, with abstract tributes to maritime lore, knights' armor, and the ethereal Maltese hawk moth.

Guests will find original works from celebrated modern and contemporary masters, including Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, David Hockney, Alexander Calder, Gerhard Richter, and Andy Warhol—seamlessly integrated into lounges, corridors, and suites to evoke a profound sense of exploration and elegance.

Culinary Excellence: Five Signature Dining Concepts

Dining aboard *Luminara* is a centerpiece of the guest experience, underscored by exclusive collaborations with acclaimed chefs Fabio Trabocchi and Michael Mina.

- **Seta su Luminara** offers a refined tasting journey influenced by the spice routes of Venice, curated by Chef Trabocchi.

- **Beach House**, led by Chef Mina, features a Mediterranean-Middle Eastern fusion inspired by his Egyptian heritage.

- **Azur on Luminara** delivers seasonal, regionally influenced cuisine.

- **Haesu Bit** draws culinary inspiration from Japanese, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and other Asian traditions aligned with *Luminara's* future ports of call.

- **Mistral** showcases Mediterranean coastal fare, from freshly grilled seafood to artisanal meats.

Seven elegant bars and lounges, including the new *Art Bar*, complement the culinary experience, inviting guests to enjoy panoramic sea views, destination-inspired cocktails, and curated art installations in a sophisticated atmosphere.

Wellness, Recreation, and Retail in Elevated Form

Luminara's Deck 10 hosts a panoramic pool with twin whirlpools, while *The Ritz-Carlton Spa®* offers a tranquil escape with treatments by ESPA, 111SKIN, and Pisterzi.

The Marina Terrace and Marina Beach provide direct access to the sea, with opportunities for ocean swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, Seabob, and electric foiling. At select anchorages, the yacht transforms into a floating resort with a dynamic lounge platform and central sea pool.

Onboard shopping has been curated to match the yacht's elevated profile. New retail concepts include flagship spaces for Cartier, IWC Schaffhausen, and Piaget—making their debuts with The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection—alongside a boutique showcasing exclusive co-branded Lululemon apparel, resort wear, vintage couture, and fine home décor from brands such as Hermès, Chanel, La DoubleJ, and Olympia Le-Tan.

Global Horizons: Asia-Pacific and Beyond

Following its Mediterranean debut, *Luminara* will embark on an Asia-Pacific season beginning December 2025, with itineraries that include Hạ Long Bay, Osaka, and Bangkok. In May 2026, the yacht will voyage to Alaska and the Canadian coastline, offering immersive

journeys into remote wilderness, glacier fjords, and rich cultural landscapes.

Continuing a Legacy of Innovation at Sea

Launched in 2022, *Evrima* introduced the Ritz-Carlton experience to the sea. *Ilma* followed in 2024, and now *Luminara* continues that legacy with greater scale, artistic ambition, and global vision. The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection distinguishes itself through intimate guest capacity, high crew-to-guest ratios, personalized service, and an unmatched standard of luxury in yachting.

"Each voyage aboard *Luminara* is designed to be a transformative journey—where luxury, discovery, and personalized service converge," said Fara.

Reservations for *Luminara* - ritzcarltonyachtcollection.com.

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection represents a bold reimagination of luxury cruising. Blending the iconic hospitality of The Ritz-Carlton® with the elegance of yachting, the collection offers bespoke voyages across the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Northern Europe, Asia-Pacific, and North America. Each yacht reflects modern craftsmanship, world-class design, and personalized service that mirrors the legendary experience of Ritz-Carlton hotels.

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, LLC

With over 120 hotels in more than 35 countries, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C. continues to set the standard in luxury travel. The brand's commitment to transformative experiences and authentic discovery is expressed through its signature properties, as well as through brand extensions such as Ritz-Carlton Reserve and The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection. The company is a wholly owned subsidiary of Marriott International, Inc. and participates in the Marriott Bonvoy® global travel program.

For reservations - ritzcarlton.com.

Norwegian Cruise Line® Unveils Nearly 500 Voyages Worldwide During Peak 2027 Travel Season

*NCL to deploy eight ships in Europe including Norwegian Prima and Norwegian Viva, with 10 embarkation ports, multiple overnight stays & late night departures
With an Expanded Focus on Seven-Day Voyages and Weekend Departures, NCL Delivers Guests MORE Opportunities and Easy Access to Explore the World*



Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), the innovator in global cruise travel with a 58-year history of breaking boundaries, has revealed its Northern Hemisphere spring/summer 2027 deployment – allowing travellers to get ahead on planning their ideal holiday. The season features nearly 500 individual voyages across 20

ships, departing from nearly 30 of the world's top homeports, including Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy; Southampton, England; Helsinki, Finland; Istanbul, Turkey; Copenhagen, Denmark and Reykjavik, Iceland.

From April through October 2027, NCL's spectacular fleet of ships will call to over 150 unique ports across

59 countries delivering immersive itineraries with MORE time in port, including over 170 overnight stays in the most sought-after destinations such as Istanbul, Turkey; Reykjavik, Iceland; and Copenhagen, Denmark. Whether planning a quick escape or longer adventure, the newly opened deployment delivers MORE

opportunities for guests to make the most out of the prime travel season.

“With our most expansive deployment yet, we’re giving Indian guests even more ways to explore the world—with itineraries now open from 2025 through 2027,” said Ben Angell, Vice President and Managing Director of NCL APAC. “From more ways to enjoy an exhilarating Alaska holiday to more seven-day Mediterranean and Northern Europe sailings we’re delivering more of what matters to our guests: longer port stays, more overnight calls, more value and greater flexibility to create the perfect cruise holiday.”

“We’re proud to be the cruise line of choice for travelers who want MORE out of their vacation – MORE freedom, MORE destinations and MORE unforgettable experiences,” said David J. Herrera, president of Norwegian Cruise Line. “Our spring and summer 2027 deployment clearly brings our promise to life, offering something for everyone. Whether guests are hopping between European cities nearly every day, taking in Alaska’s natural beauty from ships custom-built to bring the outdoors in, or kicking back on the beach with family and friends at one of our two resort-style destinations, there’s no shortage of ways to relax, explore, and create unforgettable memories.”

Itinerary highlights from NCL’s Northern Hemisphere spring/summer 2027 deployment include:

EXPLORE EUROPE WITH MORE SEVEN-DAY VOYAGES, OVERNIGHTS & LATE DEPARTURES

NCL will deploy eight ships, including some of the brand’s newest and recently renovated vessels, across Europe. Offering mostly seven-day itineraries that begin and end on weekends, guests have the option to sail from 10 popular embarkation ports, including Barcelona, Spain; Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy; Athens (Piraeus), Greece; and Reykjavik, Iceland. These port-intensive voyages spend over 90% of their time in port with an average stay of nearly 11 hours and feature multiple overnight stays in cities

like Istanbul, Turkey; Copenhagen, Denmark; and Hamburg, Germany, as well as late-night departures from favourites like Santorini, Greece; Dubrovnik, Croatia; and Ibiza, Spain, giving guests MORE time to explore Europe’s most captivating destinations.

In spring/summer 2027, Norwegian Prima® and Norwegian Viva® will return to European waters offering a variety of nine-to-11-day voyages across the continent. Norwegian Viva will sail the *Western Mediterranean and Greek Isles itineraries* from June through October from four different homeports: Istanbul, Turkey; Barcelona, Spain; Rome (Civitavecchia) and Ravenna (Venice), Italy. Meanwhile, Norwegian Prima will offer Mediterranean voyages, featuring maiden calls to Dubrovnik and Split, Croatia and Kotor, Montenegro. For the majority of the summer, she will make her return to Northern Europe to operate *guest-favorite open-jaw voyages* to Iceland and Norway, departing from Southampton, England, and Reykjavik, Iceland. In September and October 2027, Norwegian Prima will close out her Europe season with three Baltic open-jaw sailings, which will also mark her inaugural turnaround in Helsinki, Finland and her maiden call in Riga, Latvia.

In addition to its newer and larger ships, NCL strategically deploys its mid-size ships to the region to deliver more intimate, destination-focused voyages allowing guests to explore must-see and lesser-known ports with ease. Aboard Norwegian Sun®, travellers can sail *seven-day, port-intensive Mediterranean itineraries* with no sea days between May and August 2027 departing for the first time from Rome (Civitavecchia) and Venice (Ravenna), Italy. These open-jaw sailings include maiden calls to historic bucket list ports including Corfu, Greece. Moreover, Norwegian Jewel® will return to Europe for a full season for the first time in over a decade, offering *seven- and nine-day Baltic voyages* between Copenhagen, Denmark and Helsinki featuring first-time visits to Klaipeda, Lithuania; Riga, Latvia; and Gdynia, Poland – ideal for

guests seeking to dive into cities that boast Medieval architecture and history as well as modern art, design and culture in Northern Europe.

Rounding out the season, Norwegian Epic® will offer NCL’s ever-popular seven-day Western Mediterranean voyages from Barcelona, Spain and Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy from May through October 2027, providing travellers the opportunity to explore each destination pre- or post-cruise for an extended vacation. Norwegian Dawn® will also offer *scenic open-jaw sailings* from May through October 2027 between Barcelona, Spain and Lisbon, Portugal, providing even more ways to experience the best of Southern Europe by sea.

MORE WAYS TO ENJOY ALASKA ABOARD SHIPS CUSTOM-BUILT FOR THE GREAT OUTDOORS

With the global rise of “coolcations,” holidays to cooler climates, Alaska is the prime destination to experience an exhilarating holiday. Commencing in late April, NCL’s Alaska season sets sail from Seattle; Whittier, Alaska and Vancouver, British Columbia aboard Norwegian Encore®, Norwegian Bliss® and Norwegian Joy®, each of which were custom-built for the destination with expansive outdoor and indoor spaces to marvel at the natural beauty, rugged landscapes, and the area’s rich wildlife as well as Norwegian Jade, Norwegian Encore, Norwegian Bliss and Norwegian Joy will sail *seven-day voyages departing each Friday, Saturday and Sunday* from Seattle’s Pier 66. Furthermore, Norwegian Joy will offer longer and more immersive nine- and 10-day voyages from mid-May to mid-June as well as end of August to end of September.

Beginning 10 May 2027 through 20 Sept. 2027, Norwegian Jade® will cruise a series of *seven-day open-jaw sailings* between Vancouver, British Columbia and Whittier, Alaska and feature iconic scenic cruising along Hubbard Glacier or Glacier Bay on each voyage. Guests aiming to immerse themselves even more in the “Last Frontier” can add an *NCL Cruisetour*

to their reservation and explore the majestic Denali National Park, take a scenic ride on the historic tracks of the Alaska Railroad or fish halibut and salmon in the cold waters of Kachemak Bay.

GUEST FAVOURITE NORWEGIAN SPIRIT TO OFFER EXTENDED SOUTH PACIFIC SEASON

Following her 2026/2027 summer season in Australia and New Zealand, Norwegian Spirit® will remain in the Pacific through December 2027, offering a diverse range of open-jaw voyages across Australia, New Zealand, South Pacific, Hawaii and Alaska. The ship will homeport in Sydney, Australia; Lautoka, Fiji; Papeete, French Polynesia and Honolulu, and sailing a total of 11 immersive itineraries across the region.

Norwegian Spirit will offer an expansive South Pacific season with a choice of 11- to 13-day voyages, calling to exotic destinations such as New Caledonia, Fiji, the Samoan Islands, French Polynesia, and the Cook Islands.

MORE SHORT ESCAPES AND ISLAND-FILLED ADVENTURES WITH THREE- TO 11-DAY CRUISES TO THE CARIBBEAN, BAHAMAS & BERMUDA

A standout feature of NCL's Caribbean and Bahamas itineraries is a visit to the company's private island destinations *Great Stirrup Cay*, the cruise line's top-rated port in the Bahamas, and *Harvest Caye* in Belize. Both islands are featured on nearly every voyage during the spring/summer 2027 season. These destinations deliver a picture-perfect beach experience, complete with pristine shores and turquoise waters, while offering guests even MORE ways to create lasting memories through unique shore excursions and curated island offerings. Beginning in late 2025, Great Stirrup Cay will debut a *series of enhancements* designed to elevate the guest experience, including a new multi-ship pier that ensures guaranteed access to the island; a convenient tram service for ease; an oversized heated pool perfect for relaxing under the sun;



as well as the extension of popular onboard experiences ashore, such as an adult-only retreat with private cabanas, and Horizon Park, a family-friendly recreation area with lawn games and gathering spaces.

These updates to NCL's private island come as it's expanding its Caribbean and Bahamas deployment for the spring/summer 2027 season. Guests will have eight ships to choose from including some of the Company's newest, Norwegian Aqua™ and Norwegian Viva®, as well as easy access with embarkation ports across Florida.

Another popular island destination best enjoyed during the spring and summer is Bermuda, with voyages departing from Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. In 2027, three NCL ships will sail to Bermuda as part of the cruise line's seven-month season, including Norwegian Breakaway®, Norwegian Pearl® and to-soon-be the Company's newest ship – Norwegian Luna®. Running from April through October, guests will have MORE opportunities than ever to experience the island's pink sand beaches, historical sites and lush green golf courses through overnights at the Royal

Naval Dockyard on each sailing.

Moreover, both Norwegian Breakaway and Norwegian Pearl will sail *Canada & New England itineraries* from 29 Aug 2027 to 17 Oct. 2027 calling to the most picturesque ports, including Charlottetown, Canada and Quebec City. Onboard these voyages, guests can savor the picturesque scenery of the Northeast tinted with the changing fall foliage, feast on fresh, local seafood delicacies and enjoy wine tastings at regional wineries and estates.

In addition to the newly opened 2027 deployment, *NCL cruises to nearly 350 destinations worldwide* giving guests the chance to plan and book their upcoming cruise vacation well in advance.

For guests looking to elevate their cruise experience, NCL's *More At Sea™* is a must. Available across the whole fleet, this all-in-one offering delivers incredible value and includes unlimited premium beverages with brands such as Casamigos Tequila, Woodford Reserve, and Grey Goose Vodka; specialty dining package; high-speed Wi-Fi minutes; and US\$50 shore excursion credits at every port.

SG60 celebrations take flight at Changi Airport with heartwarming charity walk and dazzling Airport Boulevard light-up

Changai Airport kicked off its lineup of celebrations for Singapore's 60th birthday today with the SG60 Changi Airport Charity Walk and Airport Boulevard light-up. Held along the Changi Airport Connector, the event drew over 1,200 participants and was graced by Acting Minister for Transport and Senior Minister of State for Finance Mr Jeffrey Siow, alongside representatives of the Changi Airport community and members of the public.

The Charity Walk garnered over \$57,000 through registration fees and public donations. With dollar-for-dollar matching by both the Changi Foundation and SG Gives, a total of over \$220,000 was raised. This fundraising initiative will support a range of causes, including Community Chest-funded programmes that empower youth-at-risk and children with special needs.

Mr Jayson Goh, Executive Vice President of Airport Management at Changi Airport Group, said, "The strong show of support from the public and members of the ONE Changi community in this SG60 Changi Airport Charity Walk has been truly inspiring. Their generosity has made a meaningful difference to the causes supported by Community Chest. As Singapore prepares to mark its 60th birthday in just a few weeks, Changi Airport warmly welcomes all visitors to join in the rest of the festivities that we have lined up."

Prior to the start of the Charity Walk, Acting Minister for Transport launched the SG60 light-up at the Changi Airport Connector. Commemorating '60 Years of Homecoming', the dazzling display features an array of Singapore icons



Acting Minister for Transport launching the '60 Years of Homecoming' light-up alongside Mr Yam Kum Weng, CEO of Changi Airport Group (first from left), and Mr Jayson Goh, Executive Vice President of Airport Management (first from right).

lined up along a segment of Airport Boulevard, culminating in a majestic arch adorned in the red and white of the Singapore flag. Over 100 kilometres of LED lights were used to create the stunning display, which includes iconic sights like Gardens by the Bay, the Merlion, the Toa Payoh Dragon Playground, and the Changi Control Tower.

The SG60 light-up will continue to illuminate Airport Boulevard until the end of the year, both welcoming and bidding farewell to travellers and Changi's visitors as they continue their journeys.

Strolling amid celebratory lights and local treats for a good cause

From the flag-off at Terminal 2's Race Village, participants in the Charity Walk embarked on a scenic

two-kilometre walk that took them down memory lane. Along the route, participants received glow sticks, enjoyed interactive trivia, and posed with charming local delight-themed installations like kueh lapis, durians, and curry puffs – perfect for capturing memorable photo moments.

Old-school snacks like colourful iced gem biscuits and ice cream sandwiches brought a taste of nostalgia to the walk, while finishers at Terminal 4 were rewarded with a commemorative medallion and an SG60 plush keychain featuring Buddy Bear or Mr Merlion.

For a bonus challenge, participants could choose to extend their walk to the Jurassic Mile, where life-sized dino-themed light installations and a hidden checkpoint awaited, offering a whimsical, photo-worthy finale to the evening.

Jordan

Sees 14% Surge in Tourism, Welcoming 2.7 Million Overnight Visitors in H1 2025

Strong growth led by regional markets as Europe, North America, and Asia, contributes significantly.

Jordan's tourism sector is experiencing a resounding upswing, with the first half of 2025 marking a period of exceptional performance. According to newly released data from the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), the Kingdom welcomed 2.7 million overnight visitors between January and June—representing a robust 14% year-on-year increase. The surge signals a return to form for Jordan, positioning it as one of the most desirable cultural and leisure destinations in the Middle East.

At the heart of this growth lies a strategic alignment with the Gulf



Cooperation Council (GCC) markets, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These neighboring countries continue to drive momentum, drawn by Jordan's shared heritage, linguistic and cultural familiarity, and expanding network of air links.

GCC Markets Fuel Momentum

The Kingdom recorded 633,000 overnight arrivals from GCC countries during the first six months of 2025—up 6% from the same period last year. Saudi Arabia remained the leading source market, with 564,000 visitors, reflecting an 8% increase. The UAE, while smaller in absolute terms, posted a notable 15% rise, reaching 10,000 visitors. In contrast, Kuwait saw an 11% decline, dropping to 32,000 arrivals.

Dr. Abdulrazzaq Arabiyat, Managing Director of the Jordan Tourism Board, attributed the growth to Jordan's enduring appeal and targeted engagement with Gulf travelers.

"These results reflect the growing confidence of international, and particularly Gulf, travelers in Jordan's tourism offering," Dr. Arabiyat said. "Despite geopolitical headwinds, Jordan continues to be perceived as a safe,

familiar, and enriching destination—offering a unique blend of heritage, hospitality, and natural beauty."

Heritage Destinations See Renewed Footfall

The rise in arrivals is mirrored by increased visitation to Jordan's most iconic sites. Petra, the ancient Nabataean capital and UNESCO World Heritage Site, welcomed 200,000 foreign tourists in the first half of the year—up 17% year-on-year. Mount Nebo, a revered pilgrimage site overlooking the Jordan Valley, recorded a 12% rise to 105,000 visitors. Jerash, known for its remarkably preserved Roman ruins, attracted nearly 69,000 international travelers.

This resurgence signals a renewed global interest in Jordan's historical and cultural assets—particularly among Gulf travelers who seek destinations that offer both relaxation and meaningful experiences.

Strategic Resilience Amid Regional Challenges

Jordan's tourism sector has demonstrated impressive resilience in the face of regional instability, including the ongoing conflict in Gaza and sporadic disruptions to air connectivity. By focusing on markets within geographic and cultural proximity—namely the GCC—Jordan has managed to mitigate declines from some traditional long-haul source markets in Europe and North America.

Notably, GCC and Arab travelers increasingly favor independent, experience-led itineraries, with Amman, the Dead Sea, and northern Jordan emerging as preferred hubs for self-guided exploration, wellness retreats, and family travel.

Infrastructure Investment and Market Expansion

To sustain this momentum, Jordan is actively enhancing both its aviation links and hospitality infrastructure. Royal Jordanian Airlines is expanding its network across South Asia, including new services from Delhi and Mumbai. Simultaneously, negotiations

are underway to restore low-cost connectivity via Ryanair and Wizz Air by October. Collaborative efforts with Qatar aim to bolster long-haul access through strategic aviation partnerships.

On the ground, Jordan is investing in mid-tier hospitality developments across Petra, Wadi Rum, and the Dead Sea—catering to a growing segment of quality-conscious travelers seeking comfort, authenticity, and value.

A Sustainable Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, Jordan has set an ambitious goal of reaching 10 million overnight visitors annually by 2033. However, tourism authorities emphasize a focus on sustainable, high-value travel over mass-market volumes. The emphasis is on curating premium experiences that celebrate Jordan's natural, spiritual, and cultural assets—while ensuring long-term preservation.

"Jordan's future as a tourism leader lies in our ability to offer experiences that are both meaningful and responsible," said Dr. Arabiyat. "We are building a tourism ecosystem that delivers value to visitors, while preserving the heritage and environment that make Jordan unique."

Why Jordan Continues to Resonate with Gulf Travelers

- **Effortless access:** Direct flights from major Gulf cities to Amman and Aqaba
- **Visa-on-arrival:** Seamless entry for most GCC nationals
- **Cultural affinity:** Arabic-speaking hospitality, shared traditions, and regional cuisine
- **Diverse offerings:** From UNESCO sites and desert adventures to wellness retreats and religious tourism
- **All-season appeal:** Cool summers in the north, warm desert escapes in the south

With demand continuing to rise and new strategic initiatives underway, Jordan is poised to reaffirm its position not only as a cornerstone of Middle Eastern tourism but as a global destination for discerning, experience-driven travelers.





*Dev Karvat, Founder
and CEO - ASEGO*

Is Travel Business Protection the Safety Net Agencies Can't Afford to Ignore?

Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO - ASEGO

In the evolving travel industry, travel trade partners are navigating a landscape that is not only competitive but increasingly fraught with risk. Minor mistakes and errors by them often carry heavy financial and legal repercussions. According to industry data, claims related to travel service errors and cyber incidents have risen by nearly 40% in the past three years, reflecting the heightened scrutiny and accountability faced by travel operators.

The consequences can be stark. A single error in a passenger's name on an air ticket resulted in a loss of ₹85,000 for one travel trade partner. Another company faced the entire burden of rebooking costs when a missed flight caused a trip cancellation for an elderly couple. More alarmingly, a recent Supreme Court ruling upheld a compensation order of ₹13.5 lakh plus costs against a leading OTA when a customer was left unattended during a medical emergency on a European tour. The risks extend beyond service lapses: in 2022, a forex operator disappeared with client funds in Delhi, and in 2023, a Goa-based travel firm suffered a cyberattack that leaked sensitive customer data. Even partner arrangements can expose businesses to liability, as seen when a solo traveller in Leh sued a company for negligence after an unsafe homestay experience.

These incidents highlight the reality that travel businesses today are accountable not just for their own actions, but also for those of their partners, vendors, and staff. They manage sensitive customer data, financial transactions, and life-critical situations — and any lapse can damage both their reputation and balance sheets.

Recognising these challenges,

ASEGO has introduced Travel Business Protect, a first-of-its-kind product designed exclusively for travel agencies and tour operators in India. Unlike standard offerings, this solution is tailored to travel trade partners, providing broad coverage across operational and legal risks. It offers legal defence and compensation support, covering lawyer fees, court expenses, and payouts if a client wins a case. It also protects against unintentional service errors and omissions by staff, and safeguards important client documents such as passports. The cover extends to third-party bodily injury and property damage involving third parties, as well as claims arising from negligence or unsatisfactory services. Accidents such as slips, falls, and transport-related incidents are included, and medical costs like first aid and emergency expenses during tours are covered. Addressing modern challenges, it includes protection against cybercrime, phishing, identity theft, and employee fraud, as well as coverage for losses from supplier defaults or delayed payments.

Additionally, Travel Business Protect also includes emergency travel assistance, including tele-assistance.

This comprehensive suite ensures travel trade partners are protected on every front — from day-to-day operations to unforeseen crises. By combining industry-specific covers with robust assistance, ASEGO helps them build resilience in an increasingly demanding environment.

Commenting on the launch, **Mr. Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO of ASEGO**, said: *"Travel trade partners today are at the frontlines of customer trust. They are no longer just booking operators; they are service providers, financial custodians, and crisis managers. We created Travel Business Protect because we saw a gap — travel businesses needed a solution that understood their world and protected them at every level. This offering is about ensuring their hard work and reputation are secured, no matter what challenges come their way."*

For travel trade partners, the message is clear: the cost of inaction is rising. A single oversight can spiral into legal disputes, customer claims, or reputational harm. Travel Business Protect is more than an insurance product — it's a business sustainability strategy. With a safety net covering them, travel trade partners can focus on what they do best: creating memorable journeys for their clients, with the confidence that their own future is secure.

Asego Global Assistance Limited ("Asego") provides travel assistance and facilitates business protection solutions, including liability cover, office protection, and cyber insurance. Insurance products are underwritten by IRDAI-authorized insurers and are subject to solicitation. This material is for general information only and does not create any binding obligation unless confirmed by an authorized representative of Asego. All insurance policies are distributed under the Corporate Agency of Asego Insurance LLP (IRDAI Reg. No. CA0776) and are governed solely by the terms, conditions, and exclusions of the respective insurers. Asego shall not be liable for denial of claims, delays, or deficiencies in services provided by third parties.

Leisure Hotels Group Makes Royal Entrance into Rajasthan with Iconic Jaipur Haveli



Leisure Hotels Group (LHG), a leading name in experiential hospitality, has announced the debut of its second property in Rajasthan with the addition of the storied **Royal Heritage Haveli in Jaipur** to its expanding portfolio. Rooted in the spiritual and cultural heartland of Uttarakhand, LHG continues its foray into heritage tourism by restoring this 18th-century architectural marvel into a refined boutique retreat.

A Regal Legacy Reimagined

Originally built in the 1700s by His Highness Madho Singhji as a royal hunting lodge, the Royal Heritage Haveli has undergone a meticulous transformation, emerging as a symbol of understated luxury and cultural authenticity. Nestled in the heart of the Pink City, the haveli seamlessly fuses its regal lineage with contemporary sophistication, offering guests a deeply immersive experience into Rajasthan's royal traditions, art, and architecture.

Strategic Expansion of Experience-Led Stays

"Our entry into Rajasthan marks a significant chapter in our journey," said **Vibhas Prasad, Director, Leisure Hotels Group**. "Jaipur's vibrant cultural tapestry aligns beautifully with

our ethos of curating experience-led stays. With our first heritage venture in Ranthambhore, this addition in Jaipur further reinforces our commitment to crafting soulful getaways rooted in local legacy and personalized hospitality."

Having already made its mark with heritage offerings in Nainital and Haridwar, LHG views the acquisition of this nearly 300-year-old haveli as a continuation of its vision to preserve and celebrate India's architectural treasures while delivering elevated, emotionally resonant guest experiences.

A Home Steeped in History

"The Royal Heritage Haveli has been part of our family for generations," said **Shambhavi Singh, Director, Royal Heritage Haveli**. "It has always been a home that welcomed guests with warmth, grace, and authenticity. Our ancestors hosted dignitaries and travelers during an era when Queen Mary's visit in 1911 left its mark on the very road that leads here. Partnering with Leisure Hotels Group allows us to preserve that tradition while elevating the experience for today's discerning travellers."

Boutique Elegance Meets Royal Comfort

The haveli features 25 bespoke suites, each thoughtfully restored with

original frescoes, intricate jharokhas, and heritage design elements that reflect Jaipur's royal charm. The interiors marry old-world grandeur with modern sensibilities to create a serene and luxurious ambiance.

Culinary offerings include the charming **Kigelia Court**, an open-air all-day fine dining space serving gourmet local and global cuisine, and the **Mehrab Bar**, a moody and elegant watering hole offering rare spirits and heritage-inspired dishes, including "lost recipes" handed down through generations of royal kitchens.

Wellness and Celebrations in a Heritage Setting

Guests can indulge in traditional Indian healing therapies at the **Frangipani Spa**, or unwind by the serene outdoor pool surrounded by manicured gardens. The property also offers versatile indoor and outdoor venues, perfect for intimate weddings, private gatherings, and bespoke corporate events—all within the lush, tranquil setting of a centuries-old haveli.

With its prime location, rich legacy, and curated luxury, the Royal Heritage Haveli marks a meaningful addition to Leisure Hotels Group's Rajasthan portfolio, reinforcing the brand's stature as a leading custodian of India's hospitality heritage.

The Peninsula Istanbul Sets Sail with Launch of Bespoke Luxury Yacht 'PEN 1' for Guest Transfers and Private Bosphorus Cruises



Guests can now experience Istanbul's iconic waterway in refined style aboard the hotel's custom-crafted private yacht

The Peninsula Istanbul, one of the city's most prestigious waterfront addresses, has introduced an exclusive new offering that seamlessly blends luxury hospitality with Istanbul's maritime heritage: a private 16-metre luxury motor yacht, PEN 1, now available for bespoke guest transfers and private cruises along the Bosphorus.

Launched for the summer season, PEN 1 is a striking, handcrafted

mahogany vessel designed by celebrated Turkish naval architect Tanju Kalaycıoğlu and constructed by renowned yacht builder SuMarine. Merging timeless maritime elegance with contemporary design, the yacht features exquisite details such as teak decking, polished stainless-steel fittings, and a gleaming hull painted in The Peninsula's signature green. With capacity for up to 16 guests, PEN 1 offers a distinctive and sophisticated

way to arrive at – or depart from – The Peninsula Istanbul.

Catering to guests seeking both convenience and exclusivity, the yacht offers smooth waterborne transfers from the hotel's private dock at Galataport to key waterfront destinations including Üsküdar and the Haliç (Golden Horn). Each voyage is helmed by a professional captain and crew, ensuring a seamless and elegant journey across the storied strait that separates Europe and Asia.

"Istanbul is a city that lives and breathes through its waterways," said Jonathan Crook, Managing Director of The Peninsula Istanbul. "With PEN 1, we offer our guests a truly unique perspective of the city, combining the tranquillity and grandeur of the Bosphorus with the refined luxury and service that defines The Peninsula experience."

The yacht experience begins even before guests set foot aboard. Upon arrival at Istanbul Airport or Sabiha Gökçen Airport, guests are chauffeured to their embarkation point—Haliç or Üsküdar respectively—while their luggage is delivered directly to the hotel. Once aboard PEN 1, guests are welcomed by a dedicated Guest Experience Executive and offered a glass of chilled Champagne, creating an immediate sense of arrival and indulgence.

Beyond transfers, PEN 1 is also available for curated private charters, including sunset cruises, intimate celebrations, and milestone events. Each journey is tailored to guest preferences and showcases panoramic views of Istanbul's skyline, iconic landmarks, and historic architecture from the unique vantage of the Bosphorus.

Whether as a romantic escape, a celebratory voyage, or a stylish transfer, cruises aboard PEN 1 reflect The Peninsula's legacy of timeless sophistication and exceptional service. The new offering reinforces The Peninsula Istanbul's commitment to providing immersive and unforgettable experiences that capture the spirit of the city from its most enchanting angle — the water.



Centara Karon Resort Phuket

Reopens with a Vibrant New Look, Redefining Hospitality in One of Thailand's Most Beloved Beach Destinations

The newly transformed **Centara Karon Resort Phuket** is once again welcoming guests to paradise, unveiling a sweeping renovation that elevates its longstanding appeal and positions it as one of the most exciting reimagined destinations on the island. Seamlessly blending contemporary aesthetics with its lush tropical surroundings, the revitalised resort offers an enhanced experience tailored for families, couples, and group travellers alike.





Situated just a short stroll from the golden sands of **Karon Beach** and within easy reach of local attractions including night markets and cultural landmarks, the resort reopens with renewed energy and a bold design philosophy, promising a stay that balances serenity with modern vibrancy.

A Resort Reimagined for Every Traveller

Centara Karon Resort Phuket now features **three distinct zones**—**The Terrace, The Lagoon, and The Tropicale**—with a **fourth zone, The Villas**, slated to debut by the end of 2025. Each zone offers tailored experiences, from romantic retreats to family escapes.

- **The Terrace** offers spacious rooms with sweeping sea or garden views, ideal for couples or solo travellers.
- **The Lagoon** presents a collection of superior and deluxe rooms, perfect for friends or families looking for comfort with flexibility.
- **The Tropicale**, nestled in lush greenery, caters specifically to families with larger rooms and easy access to leisure facilities.

• **The Villas** (coming late 2025) will introduce one-, two-, and three-bedroom private pool villas, complete with dedicated check-in, private pools, and an exclusive day lounge.

Guest rooms and suites across

all wings are designed to maximise natural light and the tropical ambiance of Phuket, with modern comforts including satellite TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, mini bar, tea and coffee facilities, in-room safes, and interconnecting room options for families and groups.

A Tropical Playground with Wellness at Its Core

A major highlight of the upgraded resort is its **3,000-square-metre pool complex**, featuring **three separate swimming areas** for adults and children, including **water slides and fountains**. Active travellers can enjoy a fully equipped fitness centre, while younger guests will find hours of entertainment at the **Chang Dee Kids' Club** and **E-Zone**, complete with games and table tennis.

For those seeking rest and rejuvenation, the **SPA Cenvaree** offers a tranquil sanctuary with a curated menu of traditional Thai treatments, couple's therapy rooms, and a steam and sauna suite. Using only premium local ingredients and aromatic oils, the spa delivers authentic healing designed to calm the mind and energise the body.

Exploration Made Easy

Thanks to its central location, the resort serves as an excellent base for exploring the wider island. The culturally rich **Phuket Old Town**, with its iconic Sino-Portuguese architecture

and lively street markets, is just a short drive away. The world-famous **Patong Beach** is also easily accessible, while nearby golf courses cater to guests seeking a leisurely challenge on the green.

Culinary Diversity in Spectacular Settings

Dining at Centara Karon Resort Phuket is a vibrant part of the experience, with **a selection of restaurants and bars** offering international, Thai, and Italian cuisine in both relaxed and refined settings:

- **Bistro Grill & Bar** – An all-day dining venue serving global and local favourites in a warm, interactive atmosphere.
- **Escape Pool Club** – A lively poolside venue specialising in modern Italian fare, grilled delights, and themed events like luaus and glow-in-the-dark parties.
- **Pink Social** – A stylish lounge serving coffee and pastries by day, and creative cocktails and tapas by night.
- **Tropix, Koh Kool & Splash** – Three breezy pool bars offering smoothies, cocktails, light snacks, and refreshments served in or beside the water.

Meetings and Celebrations in Paradise

Whether planning a corporate retreat, social gathering, or intimate wedding, the resort offers **four versatile meeting spaces** accommodating up to 100 guests in a cocktail-style setup, with flexible configurations for banquets and conferences.

A New Era for a Phuket Favourite

With its comprehensive renovation, Centara Karon Resort Phuket not only reaffirms its position as a cornerstone of Phuket's hospitality scene but emerges as a **stylishly reimagined destination** that balances laid-back charm with modern elegance. From upgraded accommodations to elevated dining and wellness experiences, it's clear: **Centara Karon Resort is once again the place to be in Phuket.**



Ciel by The First Group Hospitality: A Monument to Elevated Luxury and Emirati Excellence

Rising boldly above Dubai's iconic skyline, *Ciel*—the world's tallest hotel—ushers in a new chapter in global hospitality, where ambition meets innovation, and heritage blends seamlessly with the horizon. Curated by **The First Group Hospitality**, Ciel is more than a destination; it is an experience inspired by the boundless energy and dynamism of the city it calls home.

A Vision Reaching the Skies

With 82 stories soaring into the clouds and offering 1,004 elegantly appointed rooms and 147 exquisite suites, Ciel is a remarkable testament to design, luxury, and vision. Each space is thoughtfully crafted to deliver both serenity and grandeur, setting a new benchmark for hospitality in the heart of the UAE.

From the moment guests enter, they are transported to a realm where traditional Emirati warmth is elevated by world-class standards of service and architectural excellence. Designed to harmonize with the elements, Ciel invites travelers to immerse themselves in an environment that

celebrates both sustainability and sophisticated comfort.

Design with Purpose, Comfort with a View

Every room and suite at Ciel is an experience in itself. Floor-to-ceiling glass windows frame panoramic views of the Arabian Gulf and Dubai's architectural marvels, creating a sense of awe and expansiveness. Infused with natural light and fitted with contemporary amenities, each space is a sanctuary designed for the discerning global traveler.

Culinary Horizons: A New Era of Dining

Ciel is set to redefine the culinary landscape with more than **10 distinct food and beverage concepts**, each offering a sensorial journey through innovation, culture, and artistry. Guests can expect immersive dining environments where each plate tells a story and every meal becomes a memory. The aim: to create repeatable, unforgettable moments that resonate long after check-out.

Elevated Experiences at Every Level

Among the hotel's many highlights is the **Observation Deck on the 81st floor**, offering unparalleled views of Dubai's ever-evolving skyline. Ciel's wellness offering includes a state-of-the-art gymnasium, a world-class spa, and a tranquil guest lounge designed for both relaxation and rejuvenation. Families are welcomed with thoughtfully designed spaces including a dedicated children's pool.

The crown jewel, however, is the **world's highest infinity pool** located on the 76th floor—a serene aquamarine escape suspended above the clouds, offering unmatched vistas and an experience unlike any other.

A Hospitality Vanguard

At the heart of Ciel is the forward-thinking vision of **The First Group Hospitality**, a trailblazer in reimagining the future of the hospitality sector. With a focus on creating transformative guest experiences, the group's portfolio is a testament to its commitment to excellence, innovation, and strategic partnerships.

"We are not just building hotels—we are shaping experiences that leave a lasting imprint," said a spokesperson from The First Group Hospitality. "Ciel represents the convergence of our aspirations with Dubai's spirit of ambition, a place where each guest encounter is elevated to the extraordinary."

Reaching New Heights

As Dubai continues to capture the imagination of the world, Ciel stands as a beacon of what the future of luxury hospitality looks like—immersive, inspired, and intentional. From breathtaking views and design-forward accommodations to next-generation amenities and culinary innovation, Ciel is a destination designed not only to be seen but to be felt.

Ciel by The First Group Hospitality—where you don't just check in, you ascend.

The Oberoi, New Delhi, and Tarun Tahiliani Celebrated a Legacy of Timeless Elegance with ‘Quintessence’



In a momentous confluence of legacy and artistry, The Oberoi, New Delhi – celebrating 60 years of timeless hospitality—and couturier Tarun Tahiliani—commemorating 30 years of design excellence—came together to unveil *Quintessence – The Spirit of Tarun Tahiliani Couture & Bridal 2025*.

Rooted in the essence of refinement, *Quintessence* reflected Tahiliani’s design philosophy at its most distilled—elevating timeless craft, emotion, and precision. This was couture, not meant to dazzle with volume, but to resonate quietly with the soul. Each silhouette whispered rather than shouted, with pearl-

studded embroideries, fluid drapes, and structured tailoring that celebrated lightness and restraint.

At the heart of this poetic unveiling stood The Oberoi, New Delhi—a sanctuary of calm and architectural grace. With its serene interiors and enduring heritage, the hotel served not merely as a venue, but as muse and collaborator. Its legacy provided the perfect canvas for Tahiliani’s modern interpretation of India’s rich design language. The creative partnership marked a celebration of shared values—heritage, excellence, and a commitment to artistry that transcends time.



“In its quiet, you meet yourself.” This refrain from the designer encapsulated the philosophy behind *Quintessence*—a collection envisioned for brides and grooms who seek meaning in every thread, who wish to be adorned, not overwhelmed. It was about being present, feeling beautiful in one’s skin, and celebrating love in its most intimate, luminous form.

Further enriching the narrative was a landmark collaboration with *de Gournay*, masters of hand-painted

wallcoverings. For this season, they created a bespoke suite titled *Early Views of India*, hand-painted on Ivory Indian Tea Paper. These immersive artworks transformed the venue into a living tableau of India’s visual and artisanal heritage. A custom-painted silk panel was even reinterpreted by Tahiliani into a one-of-a-kind couture jacket, blending the worlds of decorative art and fashion.

This collaboration between two icons—one of hospitality and the

other of design—stood not just as a tribute to their respective legacies, but as a shared vision of what the future of Indian luxury could be: soulful, enduring, and exquisitely quiet.

As The Oberoi, New Delhi marked six decades and Tarun Tahiliani commemorated three, *Quintessence* emerged as more than a showcase. It stood as a statement—a reminder that what truly endures is never loud. It lingers—like memory, like heritage, like home.



Ras Al Khaimah's Tourism Soars with Record- Breaking Half-Year Performance

654,000 visitor arrivals, 9% revenue growth, and expanded global reach cement Emirate's rise as a tourism powerhouse

Ras Al Khaimah's tourism sector continues its impressive growth trajectory with a **record-breaking first half of 2025**, as the emirate welcomed **over 654,000 visitors**—the highest ever for six months—marking a **6% year-on-year increase in arrivals** and a **9% jump in tourism revenues**. The figures, released by the **Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA)**, underscore the emirate's evolution into one of the **Middle East's fastest-growing tourism destinations**.

"These half-year achievements are a clear testament to the strength of Ras Al Khaimah's tourism offering and the impact of its focused strategy," said **Raki Phillips, CEO of RAKTDA**. "Our goal of welcoming over 3.5 million visitors annually by 2030 is well within reach as we continue to build long-term, sustainable value for our economy, our communities, and our guests."

Tourism by the Numbers: Growth Across the Board

The first half of 2025 saw dynamic performance across all tourism indicators:

- **654,000+ visitor arrivals**, up 6% year-on-year
- **9% growth in tourism revenues**
- **36% surge in MICE and Weddings revenues**
- Significant growth across key source markets, including the **CIS, UK,**

India, China, and Central & Eastern Europe

The emirate recorded particularly high growth from countries with **new and expanded air connectivity**, including **Romania (+65%), Poland (+56%), Uzbekistan (+47%), and Belarus (+30%)**.

MICE & Weddings: A Strategic Growth Segment

Business and celebratory travel played a key role in the emirate's strong results. Revenues from the **MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions)** and **Weddings** segments jumped by 36%, driven by a surge in high-value destination weddings and large-scale corporate events. Ras Al Khaimah's growing reputation as a premier events destination is being bolstered by tailored experiences, world-class venues, and strategic marketing.

Connectivity and Infrastructure Expansion

Ras Al Khaimah International Airport is emerging as a critical enabler of tourism growth, with **direct routes** from key cities including **Katowice, Warsaw, Bucharest, Moscow, Tashkent, and Prague**. These routes are supported by ongoing airport upgrades designed to accommodate **larger aircraft** and streamline the **arrival experience**.

Meanwhile, major hotel announcements and openings are







further strengthening the emirate’s accommodation offering. Among the notable projects announced in the first half of the year:

- **Fairmont Al Marjan Island** (250 keys)
- **Taj Wellington Mews Al Marjan Island** (336 hotel apartments)
- **Four Seasons Resort and Residences at Mina Al Arab** (150 keys)
- **NH Collection Ras Al Khaimah Al Marjan Island Hotel & Apartments** (156 keys)
- **Rove Al Marjan Island** – a

lifestyle beachfront property marking the brand’s debut in the emirate

These developments support Ras Al Khaimah’s ambition to **more than double its hotel inventory by 2030**, one of the most aggressive expansion strategies in the region.

Strategic Partnerships Drive Diversified Growth

RAKTDA strengthened its international footprint through a series of high-impact partnerships:

- A **cross-Emirate agreement with Fujairah Adventures**, creating a joint adventure tourism itinerary
- Strategic **MoUs with leading**

Chinese OTAs, including **Trip.com** and **Tongcheng**, tapping into growing demand from China

- Collaborations with **top Saudi OTAs—Fursan Travel, Smart Holidays, Almatar, and Wego**—to attract regional travelers
- A tech-forward MoU with **Huawei** to enhance **smart tourism infrastructure**
- A partnership with **Open World** exploring **Web3-based visitor rewards**, reinforcing the emirate’s innovation credentials

Signature Events Strengthen Destination Appeal

Ras Al Khaimah continues to invest in **high-impact events** to enhance livability and visitor engagement. The first half of 2025 saw a packed calendar of international sporting experiences:

- The **18th Ras Al Khaimah Half Marathon**, with a record turnout of over 10,000
- The return of the **UAE Tour**, featuring the dramatic **Jebel Jais mountain stage**
- The **4th edition of the Ras Al Khaimah Championship** on the DP World Golf Tour

• The **HIGHLANDER hiking adventure**, drawing global outdoor enthusiasts

- The debut of **Jais Ride**, a challenging **25km cycling ascent** of the UAE’s highest peak

These events not only attract international participants and spectators but also position Ras Al Khaimah as a **regional hub for outdoor, endurance, and lifestyle tourism**.

Looking Ahead: A Destination with Momentum

With solid half-year results and an ambitious 2030 vision, Ras Al Khaimah is carving a distinct niche in the competitive Middle East tourism landscape. Strategic investments, global partnerships, and a diversified offering across leisure, business, and adventure segments are driving sustained momentum.

As Raki Phillips puts it, “Every milestone—from hotel openings to route expansions and tech partnerships—brings us closer to establishing Ras Al Khaimah as one of the most vibrant, resilient, and forward-thinking destinations in the world.”



Thailand Launches “The New Thailand” Vision to Redefine Tourism in 2026

TAT sets bold new direction with quality-first strategy, emotional storytelling, and global event power to position Thailand as a top-10 tourism economy to drive sustainable tourism growth

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, has unveiled its 2026 strategy under the theme “Value is the New Volume”—ushering in *The New Thailand* and signalling a bold shift to redefine Thai tourism through quality, balance, and sustainability.

The announcement took place at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok, attended by Minister of Culture, Ms. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Minister of Tourism and Sports, Mr. Sorawong Thienthong, along with Deputy Minister of Interior,

Ms. Teerarat Samretvanich, tourism ministry executives including TAT, tourism operators and stakeholders from across the country.

Mr. Sorawong Thienthong, Minister of Tourism and Sports, said that despite global tourism has faced several challenges in 2024, Thailand remains a leading destination, having welcomed more than 18.08 million international visitors and generated 1.4 trillion Baht in revenue so far this year. In response to the shifting tourism landscape, the government has approved a 4.5-billion-

Baht budget to drive 22 strategic initiatives.

These are built around a forward-looking framework of five new paradigms: New Customer, New Product, New Partnerships, New Marketing Strategy, and New Key Performance Indicators. The objective is to build trust, elevate safety and accessibility, unlock new opportunities through sport tourism, and promote hidden destinations aligned with UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network. Additionally, a strong emphasis will be placed on soft power and Thailand’s



cultural identity to strengthen its international appeal.

“Tourism is no longer just about numbers—it’s about trust, value, and inclusivity. Thailand is not simply bouncing back, but building forward—with safety, innovation, and sustainable growth as the foundation for a new era of Thai tourism,” **Mr. Sorawong** added.

Building on the government’s vision, TAT’s 2026 strategy marks the start of a paradigm shift—transforming Thai tourism into *The New Thailand*. With a sharp focus on quality over quantity, the agency is moving beyond image restoration to build a more balanced, resilient, and experience-led tourism economy. At its heart: integrity, safety, authentic connection, and long-term value—laying the foundation for sustainable growth across every sector.

The strategy stands on four pillars: prioritising *Value over Volume* through precision marketing and a deeper understanding of traveller segments—amplified by soft power and data-driven storytelling; *Balancing Tourism* across regions and seasons by spotlighting local identity and decentralising flow; *Advancing Creative and Thematic Tourism* with curated, niche experiences that engage diverse audiences; and embedding *Sustainability* as a measurable, sector-wide standard.

Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor, stated: “2026 marks the beginning of a fundamental shift

towards *The New Thailand*—where tourism success is defined by value, not volume. Through our ‘*Stay Focus*’ approach, we will emphasise quality, balance, and long-term growth rooted in genuine experiences for visitors and tangible benefits for Thai communities. Tourism will not only bring joy, but lasting prosperity.”

On the international front, TAT will sharpen its focus through two lenses: high-potential traveller segments and tiered market priorities. Key segments include Millennials craving meaningful, diverse experiences; Gen Z travellers driven by digital trends and identity; luxury tourists seeking exclusivity and personalisation; and health-conscious visitors drawn to Thailand’s holistic wellness strengths. These groups reflect the country’s evolving tourism identity—one that is immersive, emotionally rich, and value-led.

To support this, **TAT has mapped out three strategic market tiers.** **Priority markets** include mature destinations like China and Hong Kong, where efforts will focus on rebuilding safety perceptions and expanding into secondary cities. In short-haul markets such as Malaysia, South Korea, and Singapore, TAT will continue to grow new segments while nurturing existing audiences. Growth markets in the short-haul category, including India and Japan, will be further cultivated, while long-haul destinations such as

the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia will be developed under the “New Million Market” strategy to attract high-value travellers. **Mid-sized and emerging markets**—including Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines—will be expanded through new target segments and geographic areas. Meanwhile, markets such as Australia, Scandinavia, Italy, and Spain will be positioned under Thailand’s “Green Destination” and “Long Stay Paradise” concepts. **High-value markets** in the Middle East will receive tailored offerings in premium wellness and leisure, alongside continued momentum in markets like Israel.

Communications will shift from transactional promotion to purpose-led storytelling under the theme “**Unforgettable Experience.**” Thailand will be presented not just as a scenic getaway, but as a sanctuary for healing and emotional depth—brought to life through the global concept “**Healing is the New Luxury.**” This refreshed narrative invites the world to experience Thailand’s true essence: peace, connection, and cultural resonance.

As Thailand repositions itself globally around purpose and value, the **domestic strategy will be just as pivotal**—placing Thai travellers at the heart of the country’s tourism renewal. TAT will reinforce the “**Grand Moment**” concept to inspire travel that uplifts communities and creates deeper personal meaning. Rather than simply promoting more trips, **campaigns will encourage journeys that foster connection**—whether through time with loved ones, peaceful escapes in nature, or authentic local encounters that turn everyday travel into unforgettable memories.

This strategy will be rooted in **area-based marketing** and **experience-led design**, tailored to the evolving lifestyles of three high-potential groups: Millennials, high-end travellers, and multi-generational families. **Exclusive offerings—such as wellness retreats, sport tourism, and cultural immersion**—will be

deployed to stimulate year-round and repeat travel across both flagship and emerging destinations. **Regional campaigns** will spotlight each area's distinct strengths: music festivals and luxury escapes in Central Thailand; soft adventure and gastronomy in the East; seasonal storytelling and community culture in the North; rich traditions in the Northeast; and nature-based wellness in the South. Meanwhile, signature routes in Thailand's **UNESCO Creative Cities**—Sukhothai, Phetchaburi, and Suphan Buri—will help craft a deeper, more compelling domestic travel narrative.

To support this multi-directional strategy, **TAT is elevating Thailand's tourism products through innovation, identity, and inclusivity.** The focus is on crafting distinctive, locally grounded offerings that resonate with diverse traveller motivations and showcase Thailand's cultural depth. Key product clusters will span nature-based escapes, wellness and meditation retreats, spiritual and belief-based tourism (*Mu-Telu*), LGBTQ+ travel, solo journeys, cinematic trails, arts and craft fashion, sports and adventure, vibrant nightlife, and the iconic "5 Must-Do" Thai soft power experiences. All will be developed through deep collaboration with government, private sector, communities, and media—ensuring every offering is rooted in authenticity and geared toward long-term value.

TAT will also strengthen **connectivity and standards** to support these enhanced experiences. New travel routes—by land, sea, air, and rail—will link major cities and emerging destinations both within Thailand and across the region. New travel options—like **Mekong cruises**, themed trains (**Kiha**, **Royal Blossom**, **Blue Jasmine**, **STR Prestige**), and **private air travel**—will make journeys more seamless, immersive, and connected. On the quality front, flagship certifications such as the **Thailand Tourism Awards**, **TAT Certified (STGs STAR and STAR Plus)**, and **CF Hotels** will raise the bar across the industry. **Krabi**, continuing



as a prototype of sustainable tourism under the "Blue Zones" concept, will lead with ten certified routes showcased internationally. This will be reinforced by the **Trusted Thailand (Safe Travel Stamp)** launching in August—ensuring safety, accessibility, and service excellence are not just promised, but proven.

Complementing these efforts, **TAT will harness the power of world-class events and festivals** as emotional touchpoints and key demand drivers under the **International Festival Focus** strategy. Thailand's cultural calendar will be filled with **standout moments**—from heritage-rooted celebrations like **Maha Loy Krathong in Sukhothai**, which fuses tradition with creative innovation, to large-scale spectacles like the **Amazing Thailand Countdown**, the 45-day **Vijitr Chao Phraya** light show, and the globally iconic **Maha Songkran World Water Festival**. On the sports front, marquee events such as the **Amazing Thailand Marathon 2025**, the **33rd SEA Games**, and **Honda LPGA Thailand** will reinforce Thailand's status as a premier sport tourism hub—amplified by global ambassadors like **Eliud Kipchoge**.

Lifestyle and entertainment will also take centre stage, with crowd-pulling festivals like **Wonderfruit**,

Big Mountain, H2O, Thailand Illumination, and the **International Balloon Fiesta** drawing diverse audiences. TAT will further elevate beloved cultural moments, including the **World Wai Kru Muay Thai** ceremony, **Chinese New Year**, and **Grand Diwali 2025**. A milestone moment will arrive with **Tomorrowland Thailand 2026**, marking the first full-scale edition of the legendary Belgian music festival in Asia. In parallel, TAT will champion three homegrown traditions on the global stage: the **Nakhon Phanom Fire Boat Festival**, **Ubun Ratchathani Candle Procession**, and the **Christmas Star Parade in Sakon Nakhon**—all part of Thailand's strategy to amplify cultural soft power through celebrations that resonate worldwide.

"In 2026, success will be defined not solely by arrival numbers, but by the quality of experiences delivered, the satisfaction of all stakeholders, and Thailand's ascent into the world's top 15 tourism economies. This is our moment to shift from popularity to purpose—rebalancing the industry and advancing toward true quality. With sustainability, collaboration, and local identity at the core, Thailand is ready to become not just a destination to visit, but a destination of enduring value," **Ms. Thapanee concluded.**

Kolkata Emerges as a Gateway to Southeast Asia with New Direct Flights to Bangkok and Singapore Tourism Partnership

Thai Vietjet and the IndiGo-Singapore Tourism Board collaboration reshapes the travel landscape for Indian leisure and business travelers



A new chapter in regional air connectivity and tourism collaboration is unfolding as Kolkata strengthens its role as a strategic gateway to Southeast Asia. With the launch of direct flights between Kolkata and Bangkok by Thai Vietjet Air and a year-long partnership between the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and IndiGo, Indian travelers now have expanded access to two of Southeast Asia's most sought-after destinations.

Together, these developments are expected to stimulate cross-border tourism, enhance business travel, and provide seamless connectivity for both leisure and corporate travelers seeking convenient and cost-effective options to explore Bangkok and Singapore.

Thai Vietjet Air to Launch Direct Kolkata-Bangkok Flights This November

Low-cost carrier Thai Vietjet Air is set to begin direct services between Kolkata and Bangkok starting **November 16, 2025**. Initially operating **four times weekly**, the frequency may increase in response to market demand.

The route offers a competitively priced alternative for travelers from Kolkata and neighboring regions eager to visit Thailand's capital, long a favorite for Indian tourists drawn to its vibrant street life, shopping, cultural landmarks, and hospitality.

"We see strong demand in this sector and are committed to expanding our presence in the Indian market," said **Bhubet Kittiyanyanya, Deputy Head of Commercial, Thai Vietjet Air**. *"With flexible scheduling and attractive fares, we aim to make Bangkok more accessible to Indian travelers, particularly those seeking a convenient getaway from eastern India."*

The airline plans to scale to daily operations depending on load factors, positioning itself as a serious contender in a highly competitive sector dominated by legacy carriers and regional LCCs.

Singapore Tourism Board and IndiGo Forge Strategic Year-long Collaboration

Meanwhile, the **Singapore Tourism Board (STB)** and **IndiGo**, India's largest airline by market share, have entered into a year-long strategic partnership to promote Singapore as a top-tier destination for Indian travelers.

The collaboration aims to **boost inbound travel from India** by

leveraging IndiGo's extensive domestic network, funneling travelers from secondary Indian cities into Singapore via its key hubs—including daily services from Kolkata.

"India remains a top-priority market for Singapore. This renewed collaboration with IndiGo will help us reach a wider Indian audience with targeted marketing campaigns and curated travel experiences," said a senior representative from STB.

The partnership will include joint marketing initiatives, travel trade engagement, and digital outreach to promote Singapore's wide-ranging appeal—from family-friendly attractions and shopping precincts to MICE infrastructure and luxury experiences.

Upgraded Travel Experience for Business Travelers

In a move to cater to the growing demand for premium air travel, IndiGo will roll out its enhanced product, **IndiGoStretch (business class seating)**, on select flights between Singapore and key Indian metros, including **Delhi and Mumbai**, beginning **August 2025**.

This upgrade aims to attract the MICE segment and discerning business travelers who value greater comfort, convenience, and time efficiency—especially in a post-pandemic era where hybrid travel and productivity-focused itineraries are on the rise.

Singapore and Thailand Among Top Southeast Asian Destinations for Indian Tourists

India continues to be one of the largest source markets for both Singapore and Thailand. According to STB, more than **500,000 Indian visitors** traveled to Singapore in the first half of 2025 alone—a testament to the city-state's enduring popularity among Indian travelers.

Similarly, Thailand remains a perennial favorite, with growing demand for destinations such as Bangkok, Phuket, and Krabi. The new

direct link from Kolkata is expected to support this demand and unlock potential for increased outbound travel from eastern India.

Stronger Regional Integration and Economic Potential

These new aviation and tourism partnerships not only cater to growing tourist demand but also hold **strategic economic value** by promoting bilateral business exchanges, cultural engagement, and long-term regional integration.

The combination of **affordable fares, enhanced connectivity**, and **premium travel options** is set to benefit both casual holidaymakers and business professionals. Moreover, with Southeast Asia emerging as a major hub for global business, tech, and lifestyle experiences, improved air access from India will help foster deeper economic ties.

"These partnerships reflect the broader regional trend toward smarter, more connected, and accessible travel," said a senior aviation analyst. *"Kolkata is now better positioned as a springboard for travel to Southeast Asia."*

Looking Ahead

As travel rebounds and Indian travelers seek new and repeat international experiences, the dual announcements from Thai Vietjet and STB-IndiGo come at a pivotal time. They reinforce the long-term vision of strengthening travel infrastructure and tourism flows between India and Southeast Asia.

Whether for weekend escapes, cultural immersion, or business conferences, the enhanced air links from Kolkata will offer Indian travelers **more flexibility, better value, and broader choice**.

With continued collaboration between airlines, tourism boards, and stakeholders, the future of outbound travel from eastern India looks increasingly bright—and deeply interconnected with Southeast Asia's growth story.

CAPA Airline Leader Summit 2025: Global Aviation Convenes in Australia to Shape the Future of Air Travel



In a landmark event for the global aviation industry, the **CAPA Airline Leader Summit 2025** has officially commenced, with Cairns, Australia, serving as host for this prestigious gathering on **July 31 and August 1**. Recognized as one of the most influential forums in

international aviation, the summit has drawn key stakeholders from across continents, including high-level delegations from **Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia**, and major global aviation hubs.

The summit, which will return again in **2026 and 2028**, is poised

to deliver strategic insights into the evolving landscape of air travel. With a clear focus on **collaboration, policy-making, sustainability, and innovation**, this year's edition is shaping up to be a pivotal moment in reshaping the future of the aviation sector.

Asia-Pacific in the Spotlight

The 2025 summit places a strong emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, with representation from emerging and established aviation markets such as **Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines**. Rapid growth in passenger numbers, fleet expansion, and infrastructure development across Southeast Asia makes this region central to global aviation conversations.

Australia and New Zealand, with their strategic geographic locations and advanced aviation frameworks, are also playing a crucial role—offering insights into both long-haul travel recovery and domestic network resilience. Their engagement with ASEAN partners underscores the region's interconnected future.

Beyond Asia-Pacific, the summit has attracted participants from aviation powerhouses such as the **United States, United Kingdom, Japan, and the Middle East**, further reinforcing the global scale and strategic importance of this gathering.

A Forum for Critical Industry Dialogue

With the air travel industry navigating ongoing economic, environmental, and geopolitical uncertainties, this year's summit addresses several high-stakes challenges:

- **Global Market Volatility:**

From fluctuating fuel prices to post-pandemic demand recovery, the summit provides a platform for CEOs and airline executives to share adaptive strategies.

- **Regulatory Frameworks:**

Government officials are participating in discussions on harmonizing international aviation policies and improving cross-border travel coordination.

- **Technological Transformation:**

Airline leaders are exploring AI-driven customer service, touchless travel solutions, and real-time data integration to enhance passenger experience and operational efficiency.

A core highlight is the forum's **deep dive into sustainability**, examining

how the industry can align with global climate goals. Expect robust dialogue on **SAF (Sustainable Aviation Fuel)** adoption, **carbon offsetting**, next-generation aircraft, and airport electrification.

Impact on Industry Collaboration and Policy

More than just a talking shop, the CAPA Airline Leader Summit acts as a policy-shaping engine. Government representatives, regulators, and CEOs are laying the groundwork for **future aviation frameworks** that emphasize innovation, financial resilience, and environmental responsibility.

The summit also facilitates **bilateral and multilateral agreements** that could lead to new air service partnerships, codeshare expansions, and streamlined visa policies—developments that will directly benefit travelers across the globe.

Why Hosting Matters: Australia's Aviation Ascent

Cairns hosting the 2025 summit—and **Adelaide preparing to host future editions**—signals a growing recognition of **Australia's influence in global aviation policy** and its readiness to lead on issues ranging from regional air connectivity to tourism recovery.

The event is expected to provide a **significant economic boost** to the local economy. Hotels, restaurants, and tourism operators in Cairns are experiencing an influx of international

delegates, media, and support staff. Long-term infrastructure upgrades—particularly at Cairns Airport—reflect the city's ambitions to become a hub for major international events.

Additionally, **Australia's tourism sector** stands to gain from increased global visibility, with visiting executives and their entourages engaging in pre- and post-summit travel across the country.

Benefits for the Global Traveler

While the CAPA Airline Leader Summit is an industry-focused event, its outcomes hold meaningful implications for travelers worldwide:

- **Expanded Connectivity:**

New intercontinental and regional routes are likely to emerge from the partnerships and policy alignments sparked during the summit.

- **Enhanced Travel**

Experience: Collaborations between airlines and airports promise improvements in on-ground and in-flight services—from check-in to baggage handling and in-flight connectivity.

- **Sustainable Options:**

Passengers can expect more eco-friendly travel options, such as carbon-neutral flights, electric airport shuttles, and loyalty programs that support green initiatives.

Looking Ahead: A More Connected, Sustainable, and Resilient Future

As air travel demand rebounds and the aviation industry transforms, the **CAPA Airline Leader Summit 2025** stands at the intersection of opportunity and responsibility. It is a vital step toward a **more sustainable, inclusive, and tech-driven future** for the skies.

For global travelers, it means better connections, smoother journeys, and a stronger alignment between the airline industry and the values of the 21st-century passenger. For cities like Cairns and Adelaide, it reaffirms their rising stature in the global travel ecosystem—ushering in a new era of aviation diplomacy, business tourism, and strategic vision.

The 2025 summit places a strong emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region, with representation from emerging and established aviation markets such as Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.



Cristiano Ronaldo

Fronts Saudi Tourism's New 'Unreal Calendar' Campaign, Urges Travelers to 'Stay for More'

“Saudi, Welcome to Arabia,” the consumer-facing brand of the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA), launched its latest campaign starring Cristiano Ronaldo (CR7). Launching across key markets in Europe as well as India and China, **“I Came for Football, I Stayed for More”** brings to life a Saudi that offers visitors far more than the expected. Heralding the start of its extended season of high-stakes sports, rousing entertainment, and breathtaking film, fashion, and cultural events, the campaign harnesses TV, Social, Digital, and OTA to give audiences a taste of one of the world's most exciting destination calendars.

Featuring football superstar and Saudi's most famous foreign resident, CR7, the film takes viewers on a journey through Saudi's cornerstone events. An awed CR7 sits in the stands – comparing the different sports to his own. Hushed monochromes give way to vibrant colour as we see more of what enticed CR7 to stay in Saudi. From the adrenaline coursing through the crowd, we hear its roar – feeling the highs and lows of a shared experience. The emotion is palpable and brings audiences into the thick of the action. This is Saudi – engaged, excited, and eager to take its place on the world stage.

The campaign highlights Saudi's diverse, year-round sports and entertainment events held across Riyadh, Jeddah, and AlUla, with curated packages making it ever easier to visit. As hosts of the FIFA World Cup 2034, AFC Asian Cup 2027, Esports Olympics Games 2027, Asian Winter Games 2029, among others, Saudi is bringing sport home. Its regular calendar includes large-scale international events such as the Esports World Cup, Formula 1, LIV Golf Riyadh, Tennis, and Saudi Pro League (RSL) – cementing its position as a hub for large-scale events.

From sports to culture and entertainment, Saudi offers something for all interests. Its annual calendar continues to grow, with Riyadh Fashion Week, the Red Sea International Film Festival, Arts Biennales, and the eponymous Seasons – held in Riyadh and Jeddah – forming the cornerstone of activities. From music to comedy, international and regional acts are taking the stage in Saudi, furthering reach and accessibility for ever more audiences.

His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism for Saudi, stated: *“Saudi is cementing its place as a global destination that combines cultural authenticity, warm hospitality, and the thrill of world-class events. In the tourism sector, we remain steadfast in our commitment to developing a seamless landscape that inspires the world and provides visitors with unforgettable experiences.”*

Fahd Hamidaddin, CEO of the Saudi Tourism Authority, added: *“This campaign with CR7 is a showcase of Saudi today, and our ambitions. Tourism is a core component of our vision, and we are continuously expanding our offerings. Since 2018, we've hosted over 100 major international events, and as our calendar continues to expand, we're on track to reach our goal of 150 million visitors by 2030. From world-class events to iconic sites and breathtaking landscapes, Saudi is a land of discovery. We are committed to welcoming the world to join us in the Heart of Arabia, to stay a while and witness the future unfold in real time.”*

Cristiano Ronaldo said: *“Being part of Saudi's journey as a global sports hub has been truly special and somehow unexpected for me a few years ago. Today, the truth is that from the energy of the fans to the scale of ambition, this is where the future of sport is being written. What I admire most about Saudi is how it honors its roots while building for the future. From camels to horses, racing to esports, from the desert to the stadium — this is a place where every young athlete can dream big.”*

Saudi is investing to become a global hub for events, as part of its Vision 2030 goal of diversifying the economy and expanding the tourism sector. It has committed \$800 billion to the sector, which is projected to reach \$22.4 billion in market value by 2030 and contribute \$16.5bn to GDP by 2030. Events play a pivotal role in this, boosting tourism numbers, driving infrastructure growth, creating jobs, and inspiring youth participation. Investments in stadiums, arenas, and grassroots programs are helping shape Saudi's legacy as a leader not only in global sports tourism, but wider entertainment.

Visa-on-Arrival Key to Goa's Tourism Growth, Says Minister Rohan A. Khaunte



During the ongoing Monsoon Session of the Goa Legislative Assembly, Tourism Minister Shri Rohan A. Khaunte reiterated the state's request to the Centre for the extension of the visa-on-arrival facility to Goa, citing the state's growing stature as a preferred global destination and the need to ease international travel formalities.

The Minister noted that while the e-visa program has already been incorporated for over 170 countries, the visa-on-arrival facility is currently restricted to a select group of just 4 countries, including Japan, South Korea, UAE, and Russia, and is operational only at six designated metro airports such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru etc.

"We have raised this matter with the Hon'ble Union Civil Aviation Minister and are planning to take it up with the Hon'ble Home Minister as well," said Minister Khaunte. "We've also corresponded with the Ministry of External Affairs, and we are actively pursuing the matter to ensure that Goa is included as a visa-on-arrival airport. "Goa is now better connected to various parts of the world, and we are seeing the results of our focused outreach efforts," the Minister affirmed.

The Minister emphasized that while the visa-on-arrival facility comes with both advantages and limitations, it is important to work out a comprehensive and balanced solution. He informed the House that once the Assembly session concludes, the matter will be taken up in detail with the Hon'ble Chief Minister and all relevant stakeholders. He expressed confidence that through collective dialogue and coordinated efforts, a viable way forward can be achieved.

In a further boost to the state's international tourism efforts, Shri Khaunte shared that Goa has successfully tapped into emerging markets such as Poland, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, which previously had limited or no direct tourism linkage with the state. This growth is attributed to targeted international roadshows and sustained global destination promotion, which have expanded Goa's reach and visibility across new geographies.

Shri Khaunte highlighted that the data on tourist arrivals and hotel occupancy is systematically captured through the Tourism Information Management Enterprise (TIME) software. This centralized digital platform has been developed to streamline the process of data collection and analysis across the state's tourism accommodation sector. All registered hotels, guesthouses, and homestays are mandated to use TIME to log guest check-ins and report occupancy statistics on a real-time basis. This initiative not only ensures accurate and transparent reporting but also helps the Department monitor tourism trends, improve planning, and make data-driven policy decisions.

The Department of Tourism remains committed to enhancing Goa's global accessibility, fostering new market connections, and ensuring a seamless, world-class experience for all international travellers.

Centrum Air to Launch Direct Delhi–Tashkent Flights from October; Aeroprime Appointed GSA in India



Strengthening air connectivity between India and Central Asia, Uzbekistan's largest private airline, **Centrum Air**, has announced the launch of **direct scheduled flights between Delhi and Tashkent** starting **October 3, 2025**.

The new service will operate **twice weekly**, every **Tuesday and Friday**, offering Indian travellers more seamless access to Uzbekistan at competitive fares. Flights will be operated using Centrum Air's modern fleet, which includes the **Airbus A320neo, A321neo, and widebody A330-300** aircraft, ensuring a comfortable travel experience.

Flight Schedule (Local Time):

- **Delhi–Tashkent:** 12:10 – 14:50

(Tuesdays & Fridays)

- **Tashkent–Delhi:** 06:55 – 10:55 (Tuesdays & Fridays)

Beyond the direct connection, the route will also provide **onward connectivity via Tashkent** to international destinations such as **Almaty, Istanbul, Dubai, Tel Aviv, and Copenhagen**, further positioning Tashkent as an **emerging aviation hub in Central Asia**.

To support its expansion into the Indian market, Centrum Air has appointed **Aeroprime Group** as its exclusive **General Sales Agent (GSA)** in India. Under this partnership, Aeroprime will oversee both passenger and cargo sales for Centrum Air and its freighter division, **My Freighter**, while also

spearheading marketing initiatives and ensuring customer support for Indian travellers and shippers.

"We are proud to open a direct link between Delhi and Tashkent," said **Abdulaziz Abdurakhmanov, Founder and CEO of Centrum Air**. *"This route will not only provide greater convenience for Indian travellers but also strengthen Uzbekistan's role as a regional hub, connecting India with Central Asia, Europe, and the Middle East."*

Abhishek Goyal, Executive Director & CEO of Aeroprime Group, added: *"We are delighted to be appointed as the Exclusive GSA in India for Centrum Air. These direct flights will provide Indian travellers with affordable and convenient access to Uzbekistan and beyond, opening up immense opportunities for tourism, trade, and business travel."*

With this launch, Centrum Air aims to capitalise on growing demand for **tourism and business exchanges between India and Uzbekistan**, while offering competitive connections to a wider international network.

Fact Box: Why Uzbekistan Should Be on Your Travel Radar

- **Silk Road Legacy:** Explore the ancient cities of **Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva**, UNESCO-listed gems that showcase breathtaking Islamic architecture and centuries of trade history.

- **Vibrant Tashkent:** A fascinating blend of modern boulevards, bustling bazaars, Soviet-era monuments, and lively café culture.

- **Adventure & Nature:** From trekking in the Tian Shan Mountains to exploring the vast Kyzylkum Desert, Uzbekistan offers rich outdoor experiences.

- **Cultural Immersion:** Warm Uzbek hospitality, vibrant festivals, and hearty cuisine—don't miss *plov* (pilaf), the national dish.

- **Gateway to Central Asia:** With growing air connectivity, Tashkent serves as a strategic hub for travellers heading to **Europe, the Middle East, and beyond**.

TBO Expands Global Footprint with Acquisition of Classic Vacations

Indian travel distribution leader enters North America's luxury market with \$125 million deal



Indian travel distribution giant **TBO** (NSE: TBO TEK) has announced an agreement to acquire **Classic Vacations**, the U.S.-based luxury travel wholesaler, from Phoenix-headquartered investment firm **The Najafi Companies** in a deal valued at up to **\$125 million**.

The acquisition marks TBO's formal entry into the North American luxury travel segment and brings together two complementary strengths:

TBO's technology-driven global marketplace and inventory with **Classic Vacations' deep-rooted network of luxury travel advisors and suppliers**.

Classic Vacations generated **\$111 million in revenue and \$11.2 million in operating EBITDA** in fiscal year 2024. With nearly **five decades of brand heritage**, Classic has become one of the most trusted B2B luxury brands in the United States, serving more than **10,000 travel advisors nationwide**.

Strategic Fit for Premium Outbound Travel

TBO's move into the high-end outbound travel market is a natural extension of its strategy to serve a broader spectrum of global travelers. The Gurugram-based platform is already a leader in technology-

driven travel distribution, connecting thousands of buyers and suppliers worldwide.

"We're thrilled to bring Classic Vacations into the TBO family," said **Gaurav Bhatnagar, Co-founder and Joint Managing Director of TBO**. *"Their longstanding commitment to outstanding service has earned the trust of travel advisors across the U.S. Classic will continue to operate as an independent brand while leveraging TBO's technology and distribution capabilities to scale further."*

Ankush Nijhawan, Co-founder and Joint Managing Director of TBO, added: *"This acquisition is part of our ongoing strategy to pursue both organic and inorganic growth. As we integrate Classic into TBO, we will also remain open to further strategic partnerships that strengthen our position in global travel markets."*

A New Chapter for Classic Vacations

For Classic Vacations, the acquisition provides access to next-generation travel technology and global resources.

Melissa Krueger, CEO of Classic Vacations, commented: *"TBO's tech-driven solutions are tailor-made for our advisor community. This partnership equips us with powerful new tools, resources, and connections to deliver*

even greater value to our advisors and their clients. Together, we are reinforcing Classic's position as the premier luxury partner in the U.S. while extending our reach to the global stage."

The Najafi Companies, which acquired Classic Vacations from **Expedia Group in 2021**, expressed confidence in the transition.

Jahm Najafi, Founder and CEO of The Najafi Companies, said: *"This partnership is the natural next step for Classic Vacations. We are proud to have worked with them over the past four years to maximize their strengths in the luxury space. With TBO, they are uniquely positioned to build on their legacy and lead the industry forward."*

Looking Ahead: A Stronger Global Luxury Platform

The transaction underscores a clear ambition: to create one of the world's strongest platforms for **luxury travel distribution**, meeting the rising demand for premium experiences worldwide. Global luxury travel demand is projected to grow steadily over the next decade, driven by affluent travelers seeking exclusivity, personalization, and curated experiences.

By combining TBO's scale and technology with Classic Vacations' advisor-first approach, the partnership promises not only continuity for customers and suppliers but also accelerated growth across markets.

The transaction remains subject to customary regulatory approvals and closing conditions, with completion expected by the end of Q3 2025.

Advisors to the Deal: Moelis & Company LLC acted as exclusive financial adviser and Ballard Spahr LLP as legal adviser to Classic Vacations. Cooley LLP served as legal adviser to TBO, while PwC acted as financial and tax adviser.



ITB India 2025: Global Travel Leaders Converge in Mumbai to Shape the Future of Tourism

The international travel and tourism community has gathered at the **Jio World Convention Centre** in Mumbai for the much-anticipated **ITB India 2025**, a three-day B2B trade show and conference that opened yesterday. Co-located with **MICE Show India** and **Travel Tech India**, this third in-person edition positions itself at the crossroads of innovation, experiential travel, and business networking.

Under the theme “*The Business of Experience: Curated Travel for Targeted*

Growth”, the event showcases how global tourism leaders are harnessing technology, wellness, cinematic storytelling, and adventure to meet the evolving expectations of today’s traveller.

Scale and Significance

ITB India 2025 has drawn **over 400 exhibitors, 600 high-level buyers, and more than 8,000 trade visitors** spanning leisure, MICE, corporate, and travel technology sectors. From **National Tourism Organisations**

(**NTOs**) to **OTAs, hospitality brands, MICE specialists, and travel tech innovators**, the show floor reflects the vibrancy and scale of India’s fast-expanding role in global tourism.

Key international exhibitors include **Wonderful Indonesia, Visit Northern Finland, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism Oman, Sarawak Tourism Board, Ha Noi Tourism, Destination 2 Italia, Prince Hotels & Resorts, and VEGA Hotel & Convention Center.**

“*ITB India demonstrates the vitality of the Indian and South Asian travel markets,*” said **Darren Seah**, Executive Director of Messe Berlin Asia Pacific. “*This year’s edition puts experience-led travel at the centre while enabling innovation, dialogue, and collaboration across MICE, leisure, and travel technology. The strong participation of India’s partner states showcases the country’s cultural depth and reinforces ITB India as a gateway to the future of travel.*”

India at the Centre: Partner States Shine

This year, **Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh** have been welcomed as the **Official Partner States**, highlighting India's rich cultural diversity and positioning these destinations as leaders in authentic, offbeat, and immersive travel experiences. Their presence underscores ITB India's mission to blend India's domestic tourism strengths with its growing international influence.

Thought Leadership at ITB India Conference

Running parallel to the exhibition, the **ITB India Conference 2025** features more than **40 sessions** across four curated tracks — *Knowledge Theatre, MICE & Corporate, Travel Tech, and Experiential Travel*.

Highlights include:

- **Knowledge Theatre:**

- **Scott Wegener** (Tripadvisor) delivered the opening keynote on South Asia's pivotal role in global tourism growth.

- A spotlight on India as a top outbound travel market, with panels featuring Austria, France, Ras Al

Khaimah, and Switzerland.

- Insights from **Thomas Cook India** and **SOTC Travel** on evolving Indian traveller behaviour across family, luxury, and corporate segments.

- **Nikhil Sharma** (Radisson Hotel Group) on weddings and MICE as hospitality growth drivers in emerging cities.

- **MICE & Corporate Track:**

- **Parveen Chander** (IHCL) on redefining hospitality for business events.

- A panel with **Asian Paints, CRISIL, and Nayara Energy**, moderated by SKIL Travel, on seamless design for corporate travel.

- A fireside chat with **Tripjack** executives on personalised Duty of Care in a transforming corporate landscape.

- **Travel Tech Track:**

- A panel with **Amadeus, RezLive.com, Skyscanner, and TBO.com** exploring the future of travel tech.

- **Anurag Jain** (RateGain) on harnessing AI to streamline hotel operations and drive sustainability.

- Insights from **Musafir.com, Riya Tours & Travels, Volaron Tech, and Zetexa Global** on AI, airline distribution, and customer engagement.

- **Experiential Travel Track:**

- Cruise industry discussions featuring **Cordelia Cruises, StarDream Cruises India, and MakeMyTrip**.

- Panels on small-ship and luxury expeditions with **Cruise Professionals, Polarverse, STIC Travel Group, and Thomas Cook India**.

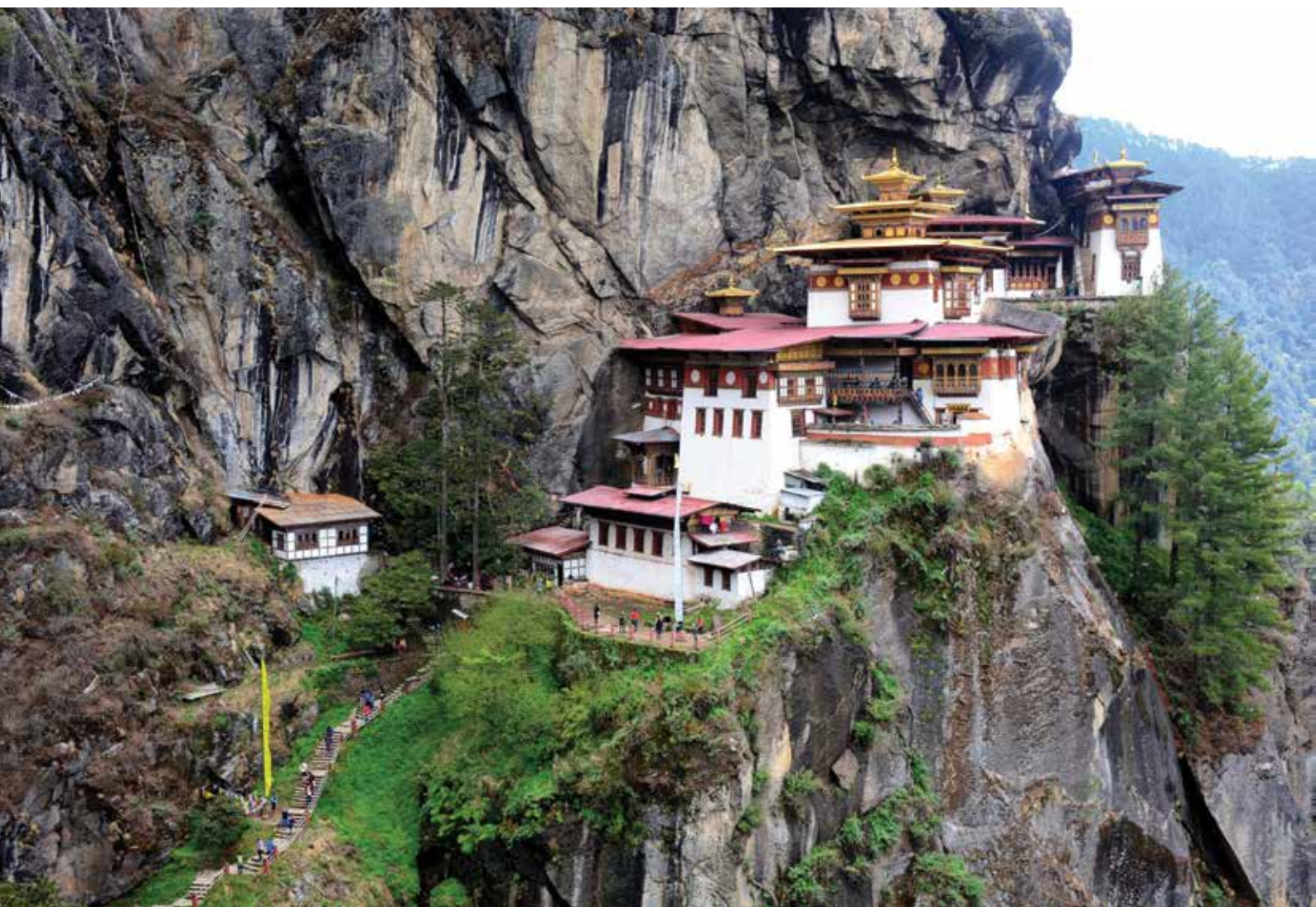
- A C-suite talk with **Vandana Vijay (Offbeat Tracks)** on crafting purpose-driven travel experiences that empower local communities.

A Marketplace for Collaboration

With its **global reach and regional focus**, ITB India 2025 is more than an exhibition; it is a marketplace for knowledge-sharing, partnership-building, and future-shaping conversations. From spotlighting emerging destinations to exploring how technology is redefining customer engagement, the show has become a strategic platform for connecting India's dynamic tourism landscape with the world.

As the event unfolds, ITB India 2025 continues to underline one message: **the future of travel is experiential, collaborative, and powered by innovation.**





Bhutan

Where Happiness
Shapes the

Journey

Tucked between India and China, the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has long intrigued travellers seeking something beyond the ordinary. With fewer than 800,000 residents and a development model rooted in **Gross National Happiness (GNH)** rather than GDP, the country stands as a rare example of measured progress in an age of hyperglobalisation.

For visitors, Bhutan is not merely a destination—it is a philosophy brought to life.

Arrival Among the Clouds

Flying into Bhutan is an experience in itself. National carriers Drukair and Bhutan Airlines connect Paro International Airport with major

hubs such as Bangkok, Delhi, and Kathmandu. On clear days, passengers are treated to sweeping views of the Himalayas, including Everest and Kangchenjunga. The dramatic landing at Paro—considered one of the world's most challenging—sets the tone for a journey defined by awe, reflection, and discovery.

A Nation Guided by Gross National Happiness

Introduced by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan's GNH framework rests on four pillars: sustainable development, environmental protection, cultural preservation, and good governance. This philosophy informs every sphere of life, from national planning to the way tourism is managed.

In the capital, **Thimphu**, the balance between tradition and modernity is palpable. There are no traffic lights—only white-gloved policemen guiding vehicles. Monks in crimson robes mingle with office-goers in national dress, while fortress-monasteries

(dzongs) anchor the skyline. The city's rhythm is calm yet purposeful, offering visitors a refreshing contrast to the rush of urban Asia.

Tourism with Intent

Bhutan welcomed just over **103,000 international visitors in 2024**, a modest figure compared with neighbouring Himalayan destinations. India remains the largest source market, followed by the US, China, the UK, and Germany.

But unlike many nations, Bhutan has no ambitions for mass tourism. Its **"High Value, Low Volume"** policy limits visitor numbers through the **Sustainable Development Fee (SDF)**—recently adjusted to **US\$100 per person per night until 2027**. This ensures that revenue supports conservation, heritage, and community well-being while protecting the nation from the pitfalls of overtourism.

This deliberate approach has allowed Bhutan to position tourism as a tool for preservation rather than exploitation.

Landscapes of Timeless Beauty

Bhutan's landscapes embody the spirit of permanence. Prayer flags flutter across high ridges, dzongs dominate valleys, and cliffside monasteries defy gravity. None is more iconic than **Taktsang, or Tiger's Nest Monastery**, perched dramatically 900 metres above the Paro Valley. The hike to its gates is both physically demanding and spiritually rewarding.

In **Phobjikha Valley**, black-necked cranes migrate each winter, celebrated with festivals that unite conservation and culture. **Bumthang**, often called Bhutan's spiritual heart, offers ancient temples, apple orchards, and pastoral calm. Across the kingdom, fortress-monasteries such as **Punakha** and **Trongsa** continue to serve as both civic and spiritual centres.

Culture, Cuisine, and Daily Life

Bhutanese culture is deeply rooted and proudly displayed. Traditional dress is worn daily, not just ceremonially, reflecting resilience in the face of global homogenisation.





The cuisine is equally distinctive. **Ema datshi**—chillies simmered in cheese—remains a staple, typically paired with red rice and butter tea. More than a meal, it is a reflection of the Bhutanese spirit: simple, hearty, and unpretentious.

Archery, the national sport, is both an athletic competition and a cultural celebration, often accompanied by song, dance, and community gathering.

Authentic Stays

Among Bhutan's accommodations, **Zhiwa Ling Heritage in Paro** stands as a benchmark for authenticity. Handcrafted over five years, it fuses Bhutanese artistry with quiet luxury, offering carved woodwork, temple-style courtyards, and an atmosphere of serene retreat. Its sister property, **Zhiwa Ling Ascent in Thimphu**, combines eco-conscious design with sweeping city views, appealing to modern travellers while maintaining a strong cultural connection.

A Broader Ethos of Care

Bhutan's people-first philosophy extends beyond tourism. Healthcare is free for citizens, supported by a nationwide network of hospitals and clinics, including the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital in Thimphu. In a region where

healthcare access is often unequal, Bhutan's model underscores its commitment to equity, compassion, and human dignity.

Why Bhutan Matters Now

Bhutan is not untouched by modernity—Wi-Fi is available, students pursue higher education abroad, and international hotel brands are expanding. Yet the pace of change is deliberate, designed to safeguard what makes the country exceptional.

The message is clear: **development can coexist with preservation.**

Tourism can enrich without overwhelming. Happiness can be a national aspiration.

For travellers, Bhutan offers more than landscapes and monuments. It offers perspective—a chance to slow down, live mindfully, and reflect on what it means to pursue balance in a restless world.

If You Go: Essentials

- **Airlines:** Drukair and Bhutan Airlines connect Paro with Bangkok, Delhi, Kathmandu, and Singapore.
- **Visa & SDF:** All international visitors (except Indians) must book through licensed tour operators and pay the **US\$100 Sustainable Development Fee (per night until 2027).**

- **Best Time to Visit:** March–May for rhododendron blooms; September–November for clear skies and festivals. Winter offers solitude and crisp air, while summer's monsoons bring lush greenery.

- **Where to Stay:** Zhiwa Ling Heritage (Paro) for heritage luxury; Zhiwa Ling Ascent (Thimphu) for eco-modern comfort.

- **Travel Tip:** Distances are deceptive—mountain roads are winding. Embrace the slower pace; it is central to the Bhutanese experience.

In Brief

Top 5 Bhutan Festivals

- 1. Paro Tsechu (March/April):** Monastic mask dances, vibrant pageantry.
- 2. Thimphu Tsechu (September):** The capital's grandest festival.
- 3. Punakha Drubchen (February/March):** Re-enactments of Bhutanese victories.
- 4. Jambay Lhakhang Drup (October/November):** Fire and mask dances in Bumthang.
- 5. Black-Necked Crane Festival (November):** Conservation meets culture in Phobjikha.

Must-Try Bhutanese Dishes

- **Ema Datshi** – Chillies and cheese.
- **Phaksha Paa** – Pork with radish and red chillies.
- **Momos** – Dumplings with meat or cheese.
- **Hoentay** – Buckwheat dumplings from Haa Valley.
- **Suja & Zaw** – Butter tea with puffed rice.

If You Go: Essentials

- **Airlines:** Drukair, Bhutan Airlines.
- **Visa & SDF:** US\$100/night (except Indian nationals).
- **Best Time:**
 - Spring (Mar–May): Rhododendrons.
 - Autumn (Sep–Nov): Clear skies, festivals.
 - Winter: Quiet, crisp air.
- **Travel Tip:** Mountain roads are winding—travel time is slow, but part of the experience.

Umrah 2025: Over 1.2 Million Pilgrims from 109 Countries Flock to Saudi Arabia in Record-Breaking Season



Saudi Arabia's Umrah season is off to a historic start, welcoming more than 1.2 million pilgrims from 109 countries since its commencement on June 11. The remarkable surge—up 30% from the same period last year—signals renewed global enthusiasm for religious travel and reflects the Kingdom's robust preparations and evolving infrastructure.

Unprecedented Growth in Pilgrim Arrivals

According to the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, this year's increase in arrivals is accompanied by a 27% rise in the number of issued Umrah visas. This upswing is largely credited to streamlined digital services, a more efficient visa issuance system, and strengthened safety protocols designed to support the rising number of international visitors.

Seamless Pilgrimage Through Digital Innovation

Central to the success of this year's season is the *Nusuk* platform—Saudi Arabia's unified digital portal for pilgrims. Available in multiple languages, *Nusuk* enables travelers to book services, obtain e-visas, and access real-time assistance, dramatically improving the overall pilgrimage experience. Its wide adoption has helped the Kingdom handle the increased influx while maintaining organizational efficiency.

Safety, Comfort, and Spiritual Focus

More than 89 new initiatives have been launched by the Saudi government to enhance the safety and spiritual experience of pilgrims. From upgraded accommodation booking systems to advanced crowd management strategies at the Grand Mosque, authorities have taken a holistic approach to facilitating a peaceful and organized pilgrimage.

One such innovation—the **Makkah Route Initiative**—continues to be a cornerstone of efficiency. Launched in

2019, the initiative enables pilgrims to complete immigration formalities at their departure airports in participating countries, allowing for a streamlined arrival experience in the Kingdom.

Boost to Tourism and the Saudi Economy

The surge in pilgrim numbers is making a substantial impact on Saudi Arabia's travel and tourism economy. Hospitality, transportation, and retail sectors—especially in Makkah and Madinah—are experiencing significant boosts. Hotels report soaring occupancy rates, while airlines and local transport services have ramped up operations to meet increased demand.

This upward trend supports the broader goals of **Saudi Vision 2030**, which positions religious tourism as a core pillar in diversifying the nation's oil-dependent economy. Investments continue to pour into infrastructure surrounding the holy cities, including new hotels, commercial centers, and public amenities tailored to meet the needs of a growing number of international visitors.

Cultural and Economic Significance

Beyond economic gains, the diversity of the pilgrim population—spanning over 100 countries—underscores Saudi Arabia's global standing as the heart of the Muslim world. The influx has not only generated revenue but also reinforced the Kingdom's cultural diplomacy and its commitment to facilitating spiritually enriching journeys for Muslims worldwide.

Vision 2030: A Path Forward

With the goal of attracting 15 million Umrah pilgrims annually by 2025 and 30 million by 2030, Saudi Arabia is accelerating investments in technology, transport, and hospitality. This year's strong start is a promising sign that these targets are within reach.

A New Chapter for Religious Tourism

As the Umrah season progresses, the successful integration of digital platforms, operational planning, and international collaboration signals a new chapter in religious tourism. Saudi Arabia's dedication to improving the pilgrim experience—while sustaining economic and cultural growth—positions it as a model for faith-based tourism in the 21st century.

With its sights firmly set on the future, the Kingdom is not just welcoming pilgrims—it is redefining the pilgrimage experience for generations to come.



Bintan Resorts Targets Indian MICE Market with New Convention Centre and Incentive Offerings



Bintan Resorts, located just an hour from Singapore by ferry, is intensifying its focus on the Indian MICE (Meetings, Incentives,

Conferences and Exhibitions) market by positioning itself as a versatile, resort-based destination for corporate gatherings in Southeast Asia.

The island already hosts a portfolio of luxury beachfront properties equipped with dedicated meeting facilities and flexible venues. Beyond the boardroom, Bintan offers a suite of incentive activities — from championship golf courses and holistic wellness programmes to outdoor adventure and team-building experiences. This blend of infrastructure and lifestyle has started to resonate with Indian corporates seeking alternatives to conventional city hotels and urban conference centres.

A major development is set to further elevate the island's business events profile. A five-hectare convention centre at Lagoi Bay, slated to open in 2027, will have the capacity to host more than 10,000 delegates. Once complete, it will rank among the largest convention venues in the region, designed to attract international-scale conferences, leadership summits, and global product launches.

"Indian corporates today are looking for destinations that combine accessibility and robust infrastructure with experiences that extend beyond the meeting room," said Abdul Wahab, Chief Operating Officer of Bintan Resorts. "With its resort-based venues, signature incentive offerings, and a world-class convention centre on the horizon, Bintan is well placed to deliver on these expectations."

Bintan's proximity to Singapore — a primary aviation gateway for India — strengthens its appeal, allowing event planners to combine seamless connectivity with a resort-style environment. The destination's mix of scale, accessibility, and experiential offerings positions it as a compelling choice for India's expanding MICE sector.

As the region's business events industry evolves, Bintan Resorts is carving out a distinct niche: a destination where productivity meets leisure, and where conferences can be as memorable as the landscapes that host them.

Uttar Pradesh

Showcases Buddhist Tourism Leadership at PATA Travel Mart 2025

Uttar Pradesh Tourism made a commanding impression at the 47th PATA Travel Mart 2025, held in Bangkok from August 26–28, spotlighting its Bodhi Yatra theme and reinforcing its ambition to become the global hub of Buddhist tourism.

Under the banner “Embark on Your Bodhi Yatra in Uttar Pradesh”, the state’s pavilion highlighted six of its most revered Buddhist sites — Sarnath, Kapilvastu, Sankisa, Kaushambi, Shravasti, and Kushinagar. Through immersive displays, cultural storytelling, and modern design elements infused with Buddhist aesthetics, the pavilion drew wide attention from international delegates, media, and industry leaders. Twenty co-exhibitors from Uttar Pradesh engaged in high-level B2B meetings, generating new opportunities for investment, collaboration, and inbound travel itineraries.

The pavilion was inaugurated by Nagesh Singh, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Thailand, marking the beginning of three days of intensive networking and dialogue. Delegates praised the stall for blending spiritual heritage with world-class presentation, an approach that showcased both authenticity and accessibility.

Tourism & Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh underscored the state’s vision, noting: “At PATA Travel Mart, Uttar Pradesh has successfully positioned itself as the world’s foremost destination for Buddhist tourism. The Bodhi Yatra in our state is not just a spiritual trail — it is a global journey of culture, wellness, and community, supported by modern connectivity and infrastructure.”



Principal Secretary for Tourism & Culture, Mukesh Kumar Meshram, added: “The enthusiastic response at PATA has reaffirmed our vision to establish Uttar Pradesh as the global hub of Buddhist tourism. The partnerships forged by our co-exhibitors will enrich itineraries, extend visitor stays, and open new opportunities for local communities and service providers.”

Building on this momentum, the Embassy of India in Bangkok hosted a high-profile roadshow immediately after the mart. The Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, presented its Buddhist Circuit and wider tourism portfolio to

an international audience. The event also recognised Promila Gupta, Group General Manager, Tourism, IRCTC, and Jagpreet Kaur, Head of Commerce Wing at the Indian Embassy, for their contributions in advancing India–Thailand tourism cooperation.

From its pavilion design to its B2B engagements, Uttar Pradesh’s participation at PATA Travel Mart 2025 was marked by strong industry engagement and cultural diplomacy. The state not only strengthened its global partnerships but also reaffirmed its long-term vision: to establish itself as the spiritual and cultural capital of world tourism by 2030.

The St. Regis Mumbai Names Nishanth Vishwanath as Multi-Property General Manager



Seasoned Marriott leader to oversee The St. Regis Mumbai and Courtyard by Marriott Agra

The St. Regis Mumbai has announced the appointment of **Nishanth Vishwanath** as **Multi-property General Manager**, a role that entrusts him with the leadership of both **The St. Regis Mumbai** and **Courtyard by Marriott Agra**. Vishwanath will be responsible for steering the properties' strategic vision, strengthening guest experiences, and driving operational and commercial excellence.

A Distinguished Hospitality Journey

With more than **two decades of experience within Marriott International's portfolio**, Vishwanath is recognized as a dynamic hotelier with a proven ability to combine operational discipline with innovative guest-focused strategies.

He began his career in 2001 at the **Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel** in the Food & Beverage division. Over the years, his leadership has been instrumental in enhancing F&B reputations, transforming properties into sought-after venues for luxury events and weddings, and consistently driving revenue growth alongside guest satisfaction.

Proven Track Record of Success

Vishwanath has held key roles across Marriott's flagship brands, shaping the success of hotels in multiple cities. At **JW Marriott Pune** and **Renaissance Mumbai**, he

elevated both properties as premier wedding and conference destinations. Later, as **Director of Operations at JW Marriott Bengaluru**, he positioned the property as a market leader, earning recognition for innovation and service excellence.

His first tenure as **General Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Chennai** further cemented his reputation for performance-driven leadership. He subsequently took on the role of **Area Director – Operations for South & East India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka**, where he strengthened Marriott's market presence across the region, overseeing diverse teams and complex markets.

People-First Leadership

Colleagues and peers often highlight Vishwanath's **people-first leadership style**, marked by his commitment to mentoring associates, supporting pre-opening teams, and nurturing a culture of excellence. His leadership philosophy balances creativity and empathy, ensuring that both employees and guests remain central to each initiative.

Beyond his professional life, Vishwanath holds a **degree in hotel management from Mangalore University**. A passionate traveler with an affinity for culture and history, he also enjoys fitness and reading, pursuits that reflect his well-rounded outlook.



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