

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

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**Changi Airport
and Jewel**
redefine festive
Travel with Disney's
Magic of Adventure

Phu Quoc Island:
Vietnam's Hidden Jewel
of Accessible Luxury

Brand USA
Invites Global Travellers
to Celebrate 250 Years of
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Unveils Stunning New
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Where Imagination Takes Flight: Changi Airport and Jewel redefine festive travel with Disney's Magic of Adventure

By **Devender Grover**, Editor in Chief

There are a few places in the world where the journey begins long before take-off. Singapore's Changi Airport — consistently ranked among the best in the world — is one of them. With its lush gardens, kinetic rain displays, art installations, and the architectural wonder that is Jewel, Changi has long transcended the definition of an airport. It has become an experience in itself, where the lines between travel, leisure, and imagination beautifully blur.

This festive season, imagination soars to dazzling new heights. In a

first-of-its-kind collaboration, Changi Airport and Jewel Changi Airport (Jewel) have partnered with Disney Cruise Line to present *The Magic of Adventure* — a spellbinding celebration that brings Disney's timeless tales and maritime spirit to life. The partnership transforms the airport and its adjoining wonderland into a living, breathing gallery of light, sound, and creativity.

For travellers and locals alike, it is an invitation to rediscover joy, wonder, and childlike excitement — qualities that define both the Disney brand and

Changi's visionary approach to travel. Here, the airport isn't a place to pass through; it's a destination to explore.

A Voyage Before the Voyage

From now through 4 January 2026, visitors to Changi Airport and Jewel will find themselves on an immersive journey inspired by *Disney Adventure*, Disney Cruise Line's newest ship set to sail in 2026. Each terminal offers its own chapter of this storybook, reimagined through spectacular installations, interactive moments, and multi-sensory experiences.

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As night falls, Jewel's iconic centrepiece — the Rain Vortex, the world's tallest indoor waterfall — becomes a stage of enchantment. The all-new *Magic of Adventure* Light & Music Showcase transforms the 40-metre cascade into a screen of dreams. For three and a half minutes, light and sound sweep guests through seven themed areas aboard the Disney Adventure, each represented by radiant medallions and scenes from beloved Disney, Pixar, and Marvel stories. It's an orchestration of colour, nostalgia, and technology — where Mickey's world meets the magic of motion.

From Terminals to Tales

The celebration extends across Changi's terminals, where travellers can encounter a fleet of magical moments at every corner. At Terminal 3's Departure Hall, a stunning 6.5-metre installation of a ship's bow — modelled after the Disney Adventure — welcomes visitors. Captain Mickey and Captain Minnie stand proudly at its helm, offering travellers their first taste of the nautical magic that defines Disney Cruise Line.

Surrounding the ship, four themed photo zones bring Disney's storytelling

universe to life:

- **Disney Imagination Garden** evokes the charm of storybook castles and features a topiary sculpture of Sorcerer's Apprentice Mickey.
- **Town Square** celebrates Disney's royal worlds, from Snow White to Elsa, complete with a peek into Olaf's dining room from *Frozen*'s Enchanted Summer Restaurant.
- **Marvel Landing** showcases Iron Man in all his Stark-itecture brilliance, a nod to Disney Adventure's futuristic design.
- And in **Captain Mickey's Cabin**, visitors can step into a sailor's world filled with festive memorabilia and framed memories of Disney's most beloved friends.

The festive spirit continues with daily snowfall at the Departure Hall, transforming Terminal 3 into a wintry wonderland — a sight to behold in tropical Singapore. Families can meet beloved Disney characters in special meet-and-greet sessions, with complimentary passes available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Elsewhere across the terminals, topiary sculptures of Disney favourites add a touch of whimsy — from Baymax of *Big Hero 6* in Terminal 1's San

Fransokyo Street display to Duffy the Disney Bear and his friends ShellieMay and StellaLou at Terminal 2.

Adventures Beneath the Surface

Down at Terminal 3 Basement 2, another world awaits — inspired by Disney Adventure's *Discovery Reef*. Visitors can dive into an underwater dreamscape where the stories of *The Little Mermaid* and *Finding Nemo* come alive through immersive installations and self-service photo booths. The area glows with vibrant marine hues, offering countless photo moments and a chance to relive Disney's ocean adventures.

Nearby, the atmosphere shifts to a breezy Hawaiian beat, modelled after a beachside eatery from the Disney Adventure. Here, visitors can participate in creative Do-It-Yourself activities, decorating Disney Cruise Line-themed travel journals, tote bags, or mugs. It's a chance to bring a piece of the magic home — one handcrafted memory at a time.

Festive Fun for All Ages

For those seeking even more festive cheer, the *Unleash the Holidays Carnival* at Terminal 3's Departure Hall promises hours of play. With claw machines, game booths, and colourful installations, the carnival invites families to create shared moments of laughter and joy. Spend-and-redeem promotions through Changi Rewards and Mastercard sweeten the experience, allowing guests to earn tokens and exclusive perks for every qualifying purchase.

A whimsical *Stamp Rally* adds a playful twist to the festivities. Participants can collect seven Disney Cruise Line-themed stamps scattered across the airport, revealing a layered surprise picture that doubles as a collectable postcard. Complete the card, and earn carnival tokens for more fun — a clever blend of exploration and reward.

A Jewel of Wonder

Across the skybridge, Jewel Changi Airport amplifies the enchantment with

its own breathtaking transformation. The Forest Valley welcomes visitors with a towering 16-metre *Festive Tree of Adventure* — a luminous cascade of fairy lights, nautical touches, and Mickey-shaped ornaments. It's a centrepiece that captures the season's spirit and makes for the perfect photo op.

Nearby, four-metre-tall topiaries of Captain Mickey and Minnie capture hearts with their joyous detail, while snowfall sessions each evening at the Forest Valley and Canopy Park sprinkle the air with delight.

At Jewel's Canopy Park, visitors can wander through three extraordinary Disney Adventure-themed zones. At the *Source Pool*, Woody, Jessie, and Buzz Lightyear are reimagined as bath toys in a whimsical playtime scene inspired by *Toy Story Place*. The *Foggy Bowls* shine with stained-glass arches depicting Disney princesses — a dreamlike tableau of colour and grace. And at the *Petal Garden*, a special installation pays tribute to *Duffy and the Friend Ship*, the all-new live show debuting aboard the Disney Adventure.

Collect, Shop, and Sail Away

The spirit of giving is very much alive at Changi this season. From now until 4 January 2026, visitors who meet the minimum spend threshold can purchase or redeem exclusive Disney Cruise Line-themed collectibles. The merchandise line includes adorable Sailor Chip and Dale cushions, Captain Mickey and Minnie travel neck pillows, puffy carry-on bags, and mini luggage — each item thoughtfully designed as a keepsake of this magical collaboration.

Adding to the excitement, shoppers are automatically entered into a lucky draw with every qualifying spend. The grand prize? A 3-night Disney Cruise vacation aboard the *Disney Adventure* in a Concierge Family Stateroom with Oceanview Verandah — a voyage that promises to be as extraordinary as the festivities themselves.

At Jewel, the DisneyStore.sg Pop-Up Experience at Basement 1 Atrium brings the joy of shopping to life. Running through early January,



it showcases a curated selection of Disney, Pixar, Marvel, and *Star Wars* merchandise, including collectibles from Disney Store Japan. The pop-up is Singapore's only physical Disney Store — a rare opportunity to bring home authentic Disney magic.

Spending rewards also extend to Jewel's retail outlets, where shoppers using UOB or Mastercard credit cards can enter exclusive lucky draws or receive vouchers, adding a layer of festive generosity to the retail experience.

Where Travel Becomes Storytelling

Through every light show, snowflake, and smiling face, one message shines through: Changi Airport and Jewel continue to redefine what travel means. Their collaboration with Disney Cruise Line is not just about entertainment — it's about emotion. It's about rekindling the joy of discovery, reminding travellers that the journey itself can be as wondrous as the destination.

In a world where airports often symbolise transience, Changi transforms the waiting into wonder. It has reimagined the terminal as theatre, the corridor as canvas, and the act of travel as art. By weaving storytelling

into architecture and imagination into everyday moments, Changi and Jewel reaffirm why they remain benchmarks for airports everywhere.

This festive season, they invite every traveller — young or old, near or far — to embark on their own *Magic of Adventure*. To pause. To look around. To rediscover how travel, at its best, can move both body and spirit.

Because here, imagination truly takes flight.



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Thailand Welcomes Etihad Airways' Inaugural Abu Dhabi–Krabi Direct Flight

Thailand marked a major milestone in expanding air connectivity with the Middle East as Etihad Airways launched its inaugural direct flight from Abu Dhabi to Krabi on 9 October 2025. The new route strengthens Thailand's position as a premier destination for beach, wellness, cultural, and sustainable tourism while supporting the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) strategy to grow premium and family-friendly travel in the south.

The welcome ceremony at Krabi International Airport featured traditional Thai performances and special souvenirs for arriving passengers, exemplifying the warmth

and hospitality of the Amazing Thailand brand. Key dignitaries in attendance included Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport Mr. Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, Deputy Minister of Interior Ms. Sasithorn Kittidhrakul, TAT Governor Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, Krabi Governor Mr. Ratthasart Chidchoo, and Mr. Danai Ruengsorn, Director-General of the Department of Airports, alongside senior officials and private sector tourism partners.

Flight EY424, operated on an Airbus A321LR with 160 seats, increases monthly seat capacity between Thailand and the Middle East by approximately 7,650 seats—around a

16% rise over existing levels—boosting travel convenience and regional tourism growth.

"This new direct connection between Abu Dhabi and Krabi opens fresh opportunities for sustainable tourism development in southern Thailand," said TAT Governor Thapanee Kiatphaibool. "We are committed to empowering local destinations to offer authentic, high-quality experiences that blend cultural richness with environmental responsibility and community engagement."

Krabi Governor Ratthasart Chidchoo emphasized the province's readiness to welcome travellers from the Middle

East and beyond. “Krabi is renowned not only for its stunning islands and marine attractions but also for its vibrant cultural and community-based tourism experiences. Visitors can explore authentic local lifestyles and distinctive encounters that make Krabi truly memorable,” he said.

Sustainability remains a cornerstone of Krabi’s appeal. Earlier this year, Lanta Archipelago National Park was named among Thailand’s top ten winners in the 2025 Green Destinations Top 100 Stories, highlighting the province’s commitment to responsible tourism through initiatives like the Krabi Prototype model supported by TAT.

The new Etihad Airways service also reflects TAT’s ongoing collaboration with international carriers to enhance access to southern Thailand and attract high-value travellers. “The route complements our efforts to draw

visitors seeking health and wellness, luxury, family-friendly, and halal-conscious experiences. Thailand’s growing reputation as a global Medical and Wellness Hub allows us to offer meaningful travel experiences that capture the essence of Amazing Thailand,” Thapanee added.

The welcome ceremony at Krabi International Airport featured traditional Thai performances and special souvenirs for arriving passengers, exemplifying the warmth and hospitality of the Amazing Thailand brand.

To promote the new connection, the TAT Dubai Office is organising a familiarisation trip for key opinion leaders from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), highlighting local gastronomy, cultural heritage, and themed itineraries such as the Hidden Gem Cities and Jurassic World: Rebirth film location route—showcasing southern Thailand’s diverse experiences for Middle Eastern travellers.

Between January and September 2025, Thailand welcomed approximately 618,000 visitors from the Middle East, with arrivals projected to reach 850,000 by year-end. On average, Middle Eastern tourists spend 10 days in Thailand and around 104,000 Baht per trip, underscoring the region’s importance in Thailand’s tourism growth and positioning the kingdom as a world-class, welcoming destination.



Air India Express Expands Delhi Network with New Domestic Routes



Air India Express is set to strengthen its domestic network with the launch of multiple direct flights from Delhi, enhancing connectivity to culturally, economically, and tourism-significant cities across India. The expansion comes ahead of the winter travel season, offering passengers greater convenience and choice.

Starting **26 October 2025**, the airline will inaugurate direct services from Delhi to **Goa (Dabolim), Imphal, Lucknow, and Port Blair (Sri Vijaya Puram)**. Services to **Amritsar** will follow on **28 October 2025**, while **Jodhpur and Udaipur** routes will commence on **1 November 2025**, further connecting Delhi with key regional centers.

Expanded Schedule and Connectivity

Under the new schedule, effective **26 October 2025**, Air India Express will operate multiple daily and weekly flights:

- **Delhi–Goa (Dabolim):** Three flights daily at 05:15, 12:00, and 21:45

- **Delhi–Imphal:** Daily flight at 11:25
- **Delhi–Lucknow:** Two daily flights at 11:45 and 22:45
- **Delhi–Port Blair (Sri Vijaya Puram):** Daily flight at 04:10
- **Delhi–Amritsar:** Three weekly flights (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday) from 28 October
- **Delhi–Jodhpur and Delhi–Udaipur:** Daily services starting 1 November

From **26 October**, all domestic departures from Delhi will operate from **Terminal 1 (T1)**, while international flights will continue from **Terminal 3 (T3)**.

Strengthening India's Domestic Connectivity

The expansion aligns with Air India Express' strategy to develop a more inclusive and accessible air travel network. By linking historical cities, tourist hubs, and fast-growing regional centres to the national capital, the airline aims to support business travel, leisure tourism, and regional mobility.

This initiative follows a period of

rapid growth, particularly from Delhi and Bengaluru, Air India Express' largest operational hubs. With a fleet of **115 aircraft** and over **500 daily flights** to **43 domestic and 17 international destinations**, the airline continues to reinforce its role as a key connector across India and the wider region.

Celebrating India's Cultural Heritage

Through its '**Tales of India**' initiative, Air India Express highlights India's rich cultural identity, featuring over **50 indigenous art forms from more than 25 states** on aircraft liveries. These include traditional crafts such as **Madhubani, Bandhani, and Kalamkari**, reflecting the airline's commitment to cultural representation.

Passengers can also explore **Xpress Holidays**, the airline's curated travel platform offering complete packages with flights, accommodation, transport, and experiential activities across domestic and international destinations. Onboard, guests enjoy freshly prepared **Gourmair meals**, while the airline's digital-first approach ensures a seamless booking and travel experience.

Expansive Operations from Delhi NCR

Air India Express currently operates over **400 weekly flights** from **Delhi (IGI Airport)** to **24 domestic destinations**, including Amritsar, Ayodhya, Bengaluru, Goa, Guwahati, Jaipur, Mumbai, Patna, Srinagar, Surat, Udaipur, and more. International services include Muscat and Sharjah.

Additionally, the airline operates more than **60 weekly flights from Hindon Airport (Ghaziabad)** to nine domestic destinations, including Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Goa, Jaipur, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, and Varanasi.

With these new additions, Air India Express reinforces its reputation as one of India's most dynamic carriers, enhancing **tourism, regional accessibility, and cultural exchange** across the country.



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British Airways Unveils Stunning New Lounge in Miami, Reflecting Art Deco Glamour and Joining Dubai's Exclusive Offerings for Travelers



- *British Airways has unveiled its bold new lounge design concept, with brand new openings in Miami International Airport and Dubai International Airport*
- *The designs carefully blend the airline's British style with the locality of each destination, with inspiration taken from the Art Deco features of Miami and fretwork patterning and architecture in the United Arab Emirates*
- *Both lounges feature striking full-service bars as focal points, menus that champion local ingredients with a British twist, as well as the exclusive Concorde Dining Rooms*
- *These openings are the latest part of the airline's £7bn transformation programme, with significant recent investment in lounges, such as the refreshes in London Gatwick, Lagos, Singapore, Seattle, and Washington Dulles*

British Airways is proudly celebrating the launch of its new lounge design concept with the opening of two new lounges on its global network,

marking a significant step change in the airline's premium offering.

Working in partnership with global architecture and design firm

Gensler, these openings debut the flag carrier's new design concept that will serve as the vision for future lounge developments.

Calum Laming, British Airways' Chief Customer Officer, said: "We're thrilled to be unveiling our new design concept with new lounges in both Miami and Dubai. These unique spaces have been created with our customers in mind and are the next step in our extensive lounge transformation plan. Whether they're looking to relax, dine, work or enjoy a drink at the fully staffed bar, there's something for everyone."

"We're proud to bring our brand to life in these spaces, having blended our British originality with each destination's unique character. This approach has allowed us to make the most of brilliant talents from around the world. We're grateful to all the teams, both within British Airways and our partners, who've helped make our vision a reality. We are incredibly excited to welcome our customers to these new lounges."

Rooted in hospitality, the new design concept establishes a cohesive architectural identity that connects British Airways lounges worldwide. Drawing inspiration from the airline's heritage and the character of each destination, the spaces are designed to feel welcoming, intuitive, and restorative, creating moments of calm, connection, and delight for



customers wherever their journey takes them.

Reflecting the airline's playful side, 'look-up' moments feature across British Airways' lounges, adding a touch of surprise to the experience. Upon arrival in Miami, for example, guests are greeted by a floor mural that, when viewed through the mirrored ceiling, reveals the words 'London Calling' as a homage to the airline's home.

MIAMI

This is the first time in decades that the airline has had its own lounge available to customers in Miami. Opening today, it spans 13,000 sqft, becoming the largest lounge outside of London solely operated by British Airways.

Air India Expands UK Operations with Fourth Daily Delhi–London Flight for Winter 2025



Air India, India's flagship carrier, is strengthening its India–UK connectivity with the introduction of a fourth daily flight between Delhi and London (Heathrow) as part of its Northern Winter 2025 schedule, effective 26 October 2025. The new frequency increases weekly services on this high-demand route from 24 to 28 flights, adding 1,196 seats each way, reflecting strong passenger demand and rising international travel trends.

Cutting-Edge Fleet and Premium Travel Experience

All Delhi–London flights

will operate using Air India's modern long-haul aircraft — the **Airbus A350-900** and **Boeing 787-9**. Two daily flights will utilize the A350-900 and two the 787-9, ensuring consistent service quality across all departures. Both aircraft offer three cabin classes: **Business Class, Premium Economy, and Economy Class**, featuring the airline's latest seating designs, in-flight entertainment systems, and enhanced amenities.

Passenger satisfaction is on the rise, with Air India reporting an **average Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 47 points**, and even higher ratings between 50–60 points for Business Class

and Premium Economy on the A350-900. These scores highlight the airline's focus on premium service, comfort, and a world-class travel experience.

Optimized UK Network for the Northern Winter Season

In addition to expanding Delhi–London services, Air India has realigned and reinstated key UK routes to meet growing demand:

- **Mumbai–London (Heathrow):** Double daily, 14x weekly.
- **Bengaluru–London (Heathrow):** Restored to 7x weekly following reinstatement of curtailed flights.

- **Ahmedabad–London (Gatwick):** Returns to Gatwick, 3x weekly.

- **Amritsar–London (Gatwick):** Restored to 3x weekly.

- **Delhi–Birmingham:** Restored to 3x weekly.

- **Amritsar–Birmingham:** Continues 3x weekly.

These network adjustments reinforce Air India's position as the **preferred carrier between India and the UK**, enhancing connectivity, capacity, and travel flexibility ahead of the winter season.

Strategic Implications for Indian Travelers

With the growing appetite for international travel from India, especially to the UK, Air India's Northern Winter 2025 schedule ensures passengers have **more options, convenient timings, and premium services** across all key routes. The move aligns with global aviation trends, where carriers are increasingly optimizing capacity on high-demand routes while offering a superior travel experience.

Air India's expansion underscores its commitment to **world-class service, modern aircraft, and seamless India–UK connectivity**, catering to business travelers, leisure tourists, and the diaspora.

Saudia Launches First Direct Riyadh–Moscow Flights, Strengthening Saudi–Russian Tourism and Business Ties



Saudi Arabia's national carrier, **Saudia**, has inaugurated its **first-ever direct passenger flight from Riyadh to Moscow**, landing at **Sheremetyevo International Airport** on Friday. Operating **three times weekly**, this historic route marks a milestone in air connectivity between Saudi Arabia and Russia, two of the world's most influential oil-producing nations, while signaling deeper **diplomatic, commercial, and tourism collaboration**.

Expanding Saudi–Russia Aviation Corridors

The new Riyadh–Moscow route reflects a strategic effort to expand air links between the Kingdom and Russia. Following the launch of **Flynas' Riyadh–Moscow flights** in August and the upcoming **Jeddah–Moscow service** in December, travelers now benefit from **direct, seamless access** between key business, cultural, and religious hubs, eliminating long layovers and transit stops.

This expansion underscores the growing mutual interest in **tourism, business travel, and cultural exchanges**, strengthening both nations' global connectivity.

Tourism Growth and Economic Opportunities

The enhanced air connectivity is expected to **boost inbound and outbound tourism** substantially:

- **Saudi travelers** can now explore Moscow's **historical landmarks, world-class museums, cultural events, and urban attractions** with unprecedented convenience.
- **Russian tourists** gain direct access to Saudi Arabia's **cultural, religious, and commercial centers**, supporting **Vision 2030**, the Kingdom's initiative to diversify its economy through tourism.

The rise in passenger traffic is projected to generate **economic benefits** for hospitality, retail, and services sectors in both countries. Direct flights also create opportunities for **luxury tourism, wellness travel, and**

cultural exchange programs, elevating the profile of Saudi Arabia and Russia in the international tourism market.

Diplomatic and Strategic Significance

Beyond tourism, the Riyadh–Moscow flight reflects **deepening diplomatic and economic relations**:

- Collaboration in **OPEC+ agreements** has helped stabilize global energy markets.
- Improved air connectivity supports **bilateral investments, trade initiatives, and cultural diplomacy**.
- The new route encourages **people-to-people interaction**, fostering mutual understanding and long-term cooperation.

Enhanced Travel Experience

Passengers flying with Saudia on this new route can expect:

- **Award-winning onboard hospitality** with premium seating and dining.
- **Seamless airport experiences** with access to flagship lounges and expedited transit.
- **Frequent and reliable scheduling** tailored for both business and leisure travelers.

Travel agencies, tour operators, and investors now have opportunities to explore **cross-industry collaborations** in sectors like **education, healthcare, technology, arts, and luxury tourism**.

Future Expansion and Religious Tourism

With rising demand, further expansion of Saudi–Russia routes is anticipated, potentially linking additional cities. The upcoming **Jeddah–Moscow service** will cater to **Muslim pilgrims** traveling for Hajj or Umrah while providing **Russian travelers access to cultural exploration**, creating a new dimension in **religious and cultural tourism**.

A Landmark Step for Bilateral Relations

The **Riyadh–Moscow direct flight** is more than an aviation milestone; it's a strategic step toward:

- Strengthening **tourism and business connectivity**
- Enhancing **people-to-people cultural exchange**
- Supporting **economic growth and bilateral investments**
- Elevating both nations' presence in the **global tourism and business landscape**

Saudia's new route promises to **transform Saudi–Russian travel**, offering convenience, comfort, and new opportunities for tourists, business travelers, and investors alike.

Air India Inaugurates India's First Non-Stop Flight to The Philippines

- Non-stop flights between Delhi and Manila start today
- Ambassador of the Philippines to India, Josel F. Ignacio, inaugurates the flight at Delhi airport



Air India, India's leading global airline, today inaugurated India's first non-stop flight to the Philippines. The inaugural flight to Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, departed from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport per schedule.

H.E. Josel F. Ignacio, Ambassador of the Philippines to India, and Maria Cynthia P. Pelayo, Minister and Consul General, Embassy of the Philippines in India, joined P. Balaji, Group Head – Government, Risk, Compliance &

Corporate Affairs, Air India, and other senior officials from the Embassy and Air India at Delhi airport for the inauguration of Air India's new services to Manila.

With the launch of services to Manila, Air India further strengthens its presence in Southeast Asia, now operating to eight destinations across seven countries in the region. In addition to providing non-stop connectivity to an increasing number of travellers between India and the Philippines, the new flights also open

new connections for Filipino travellers to access Air India's robust network across Europe and North America via Delhi.

Air India's flights between Delhi and Manila are operated by the airline's Airbus A321LR aircraft, featuring a three-class cabin configuration to offer a choice of Business Class, Premium Economy, and Economy Class to travellers. Air India is one of the few airlines in Southeast Asia to offer fully flat beds in Business Class in the single-aisle A321 aircraft.

Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Air India, said: *"The launch of non-stop flights to Manila unlocks the immense potential for tourism to the Philippines, as Indian travellers, with their growing appetite for leisure travel and increasing spending power, seek new and exciting destinations. These new services will help showcase the Philippines' vibrant culture and stunning landscapes to many Indian travellers, while also fostering greater trade and cultural exchange, strengthening the bonds between the two nations."*

From the powdery sands of Boracay's White Beach to the fascinating limestone karsts and emerald lagoons of Palawan's El Nido, the Philippines' natural beauty positions it as a destination with immense tourism potential.

SCHEDULE OF AIR INDIA FLIGHTS BETWEEN DELHI AND MANILA (Effective 01 October 2025)

Flight #	Sector	Departure	Arrival	Days of Operations
AI2362	Delhi-Manila	1320 Hrs	2240 Hrs	Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday
AI2361	Manila-Delhi	2340 Hrs	0350 Hrs ^{*1}	Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday

All times are indicated in local time zones. ^{*1}indicates next day arrival.

IndiGo Becomes First Indian Carrier to connect India to Cambodia

Introduces Direct, Thrice Weekly Flights Between Kolkata and Siem Reap from 13 November 2025



IndiGo, India's preferred airline, today announced the launch of direct flights between Kolkata and Siem Reap, Cambodia, from 13 November 2025. IndiGo will operate these flights three times a week using its Airbus A320neo aircraft. This makes IndiGo the first Indian carrier to offer direct connectivity between the two countries, as the airline further enhances its network in Southeast Asia.

Pieter Elbers, Chief Executive Officer, IndiGo, said, "In line with our commitment to connecting India

to key global destinations, we are delighted to be the first Indian carrier to offer direct flights to Cambodia. This service not only enhances international connectivity from Kolkata but also provides a convenient connection from the rest of India to Cambodia via Kolkata, leveraging IndiGo's extensive domestic network. With Kolkata's strategic location and Siem Reap as our 7th international destination from the city, the route is a natural fit for our expanding network. With rising travel demand between the two countries, fuelled by convenient

Visa rules and growing trade, we are confident that these flights will not only boost tourism but also open new avenues for cultural exchange and economic cooperation."

With Cambodia already witnessing a surge in Indian visitors, and Visa on Arrival or quick e-Visa options making travel convenient, IndiGo's direct connectivity is poised to further boost tourism from India. For those travelling from Southeast Asia to India, this new service will enable seamless onward connections across IndiGo's extensive domestic network of 90+ cities.

Schedule of Flights between Kolkata and Siem Reap Effective 13 November 2025

Sector	Flight No.	Frequency	Departure	Arrival
Kolkata – Siem Reap	6E 1655	Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays	01:50	06:20
Siem Reap – Kolkata	6E 1656	Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays	07:20	08:55

**All timings are in local time zones; exact timings may differ on the respective days of operation*

***Subject to regulatory approvals*



Air India Completes First Phase of \$400 Million A320 Retrofit, Elevating Passenger Comfort Across 82 Routes



104 A320 family aircraft now feature new or upgraded cabin interiors

- The first phase of the retrofit programme included 27 legacy A320neo
- 3,024 weekly flights on 82 domestic and short-haul international routes to offer new cabin interiors

Air India has announced the successful completion of the retrofit programme for its legacy A320neo fleet, with the final of 27 aircraft returning to service with brand-new cabin interiors and in the airline's vibrant new livery. With these, combined with 14 newly delivered A320neo aircraft and those integrated following the merger of Vistara into Air India, the airline now operates 104 A320 Family aircraft, featuring new or upgraded cabin interiors.

Commenced in September 2024 as part of a broader \$400 million initiative to modernise Air India's entire legacy fleet, the retrofit programme for all 27 legacy A320neo aircraft has been completed within a record one-year time frame.

Now operating 3,024 flights per week with new or upgraded cabin interiors

With 104 A320 Family aircraft featuring new or upgraded interiors, Air India now operates 3,024 weekly flights across 82 domestic and short-haul international routes:

Domestic India routes: All flights on the busiest domestic routes such as Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Hyderabad, Delhi-Bengaluru, Delhi-Kolkata, Delhi-Chennai, Mumbai-Bengaluru, Mumbai-Hyderabad, Mumbai-Chennai and Mumbai-Kolkata, in addition to many others.

Short-haul international routes: All flights to and from Bangkok, Phuket, Ho Chi Minh City, Kuala Lumpur, Bali (Denpasar), Manila, Mauritius, Malé (Maldives), Riyadh, Jeddah, and most flights to and from Singapore.

Transformed cabin for enhanced comfort

The retrofit programme for the 27 A320neo involved equipping all aircraft with modern cabin interiors, each in a three-class cabin configuration, ensuring a consistent, world-class in-flight experience. This includes the installation of:

- 3,564 new Economy Class seats
- 648 new Premium Economy Class seats

- 216 new Business Class seats
- 450+ metres of premium leather and 15,000+ metres of fabric
- 5,000+ square metres of carpet, enhancing cabin aesthetics and comfort
- 8,000+ kg of paint, to repaint the legacy aircraft in Air India's bold new livery

All seats come with USB-A and USB-C ports, enabling travellers to keep their personal electronic devices charged. This also helps them in accessing 'Vista Stream', Air India's on-board inflight entertainment streaming service, which offers close to 900 hours of global cinematic content on personal devices.

Air India has been consistently recording a high Net Promoter Score (NPS) of close to ranging between 45 and 50 points each month for its narrowbody aircraft operations.

Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Air India, said: "We continue to make good progress on the upgradation of our fleet. With over 100 of our A320 Family aircraft now featuring modern interiors, our guests will enjoy a superior travel experience across our extensive network."

As we mark the end of the first phase of our narrowbody retrofit, we remain committed to elevating passenger experience and offering cabin products of global standards to our guests."

Retrofit of other aircraft in progress

Starting in 2026, Air India will retrofit 13 legacy A321 aircraft. These aircraft are being sequenced for refit and new livery together with the erstwhile Vistara fleet over the next year.

Air India also commenced the widebody retrofit programme for its legacy B787-8 aircraft, with the first of 26 aircraft (VT-ANT) having flown to a Boeing facility in Victorville, California (United States) in July 2025. The programme, now on a steady schedule for completion by mid-2027, will introduce brand-new interiors featuring a three-class configuration with Business Class, Premium Economy, and Economy Class seats.

Starting in early 2027, Air India will also retrofit 13 of its legacy Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, aiming for completion by October 2028, with the timeline shifting due to supply chain delays.





Fit for the Runway

The evolution of Emirates' iconic Cabin Crew uniform

Emirates Cabin Crew Uniforms Through the Years

With heritage in every hemline, the iconic uniform of Emirates cabin crew is instantly recognised as a symbol of the world's largest international airline, and the Emirates *fly better* experience. From its inception in 1985 to its current iteration in 2025, the Emirates cabin crew uniform is both evocative and emotive – capturing the glamour of flying with Emirates, and the power of a world-renowned brand.

Check out the video on Instagram

With a colour combination that never wavers – Emirates' cabin crew uniform is designed to be iconic and classic – standing the test of time, like the airline itself. With quality and durability as its most essential elements, Emirates rejects fast fashion and trends in favour of timeless style and sophistication.

Emirates cabin crew maintain their impeccable 'Emirates look' through a thoughtfully designed uniform that

utilises nano-coated fabrics for stain and crease resistance, ensuring it stays immaculate even after long-haul flights. While the uniform style has evolved with strategic tweaks, the brand look remains strong, with practicality and comfort placed above all else – allowing cabin crew to maintain high standards of safety and deliver world-class hospitality to Emirates' customers.

1985 – An iconic look is born

In the more-is-more fashion era

of 1985, Emirates unveiled its first-ever cabin crew uniform for 80 crew members, in its signature brand colours of red and gold. Female cabin crew were presented with warm sandy-beige, round-bordered jackets with red piping around the edges, and subtle shoulder pads in keeping with the style of the time. Designed in a shade of sunlight on sand, the Emirates cabin crew uniform subtly symbolises the desert dunes of its home nation – the United Arab Emirates. The skirt at the time was cut straight, hanging just below the knee with one elegant pleat in the middle. Paired with a cream blouse and a red ribbon tied in a bow around the collar, the look was complete with a red hat featuring the Emirates Arabic logo and a white scarf. The logo in elaborate Arabic calligraphy and

elegantly draped cream chiffon scarf reflect the local culture, featuring seven pleats to represent the seven Emirates of the UAE. In 1985, male and female Emirates cabin crew wore black leather shoes. Male cabin crew and pilots wore a classic grey suit with a red tie, white shirt and gold insignia.

1987 – Culture in tasteful touches

In 1987, Emirates introduced a refreshed look for female crew members. The uniform featured a double-breasted beige jacket with eye-catching gold buttons, a longer skirt with an extended pleat, a white blouse with a subtle Emirates logo pattern, and the signature red hat and veil. Gold remained an important accent to the Emirates look, featured on the very first Emirates aircraft livery and chosen

because of its association with Dubai. Male crew members continued to wear the original 1985 uniform. For both winter and summer, all 180 cabin crew wore a pochette in the pockets that symbolised the flag of the UAE.

By the end of 1987, when Emirates was serving around 11 destinations including Amman, Mumbai, Cairo, Colombo, Delhi, Dhaka, Frankfurt, Istanbul, Karachi, London Gatwick and Male – the team decided to introduce a ‘Summer Safari’ dress for female crew, designed to be lighter and more comfortable for the warmer weather. Complete with structured shoulders, stylish front pockets and a red belt at the waist, the summer safari dress is still relevant in today’s styles. Female crew in First Class also wore a traditional Arabic dress called a ‘Thoub,’





to serve Arabic coffee and dates, adding a sophisticated cultural touch.

1997 - Paco Rabanne bestows a designer eye

In 1997, Emirates collaborated with legendary Spanish designer Paco Rabanne, to redesign the uniforms and give them a modern, stylish update. The female uniform retained the classic beige and red colour scheme but featured updated cuts and fits in the clean aesthetic of the 1990s, with the addition of brown bags and brown shoes. For female cabin crew,

Rabanne designed a shapely skirt and blouse with a round neck and jacquard logo print, under a slimline jacket with a mandarin collar, while male crew members wore navy blue jackets paired with beige trousers and brown shoes. With a decade of successful growth behind it, Emirates had served 3 million customers, with 1500 cabin crew who showcased the clean lines of the uniform to more than 44 destinations.

2008 – Tailored for take-off, the Emirates’ signature style begins

The next iteration of the Emirates

uniform was introduced in July 2008, to mark the arrival of the airline’s first Airbus A380. Designed by Emirates’ in-house team in collaboration with Simon Jersey, the updated look preserved the iconic beige and red colour palette for its now sizeable 11,000 cabin crew.

The female uniform saw the introduction of a subtle pinstripe, four kick pleats in the skirt revealing more signature Emirates’ red, and red trims throughout the suiting. The hat was redesigned, with the Emirates logo positioned on the side in a wing shape. Accessories like shoes, belts and bags were a slightly darker maroon red to complement the uniform’s trims and the iconic hat.

The male uniform was reintroduced in a rich, chocolate brown pinstripe with subtle red trim, complemented by a cream shirt and a striped tie in shades of gold, brown, and red – a luxurious reflection of Emirates’ success, as it now served 99 destinations throughout the globe.

2023 and beyond – Accents of red leather and shoes you can choose

As part of the continued evolution of the uniform, in 2023, Emirates began to offer female cabin crew a range of 15 shoe styles to personally choose from, catering to individual comfort and taste. The expansive range of Spanish-manufactured, 100% leather male and female shoes offers a variety of heights, widths, shapes and styles, ensuring comfort, style and fit for every foot.

The latest edition of the female shoes were introduced with matching red leather handbags and belts, in a brighter red colour than before, perfectly complementing the pleat of the skirt and the trim of the uniform, and leaning into the iconic red shade that has now become synonymous with Emirates.

Poised for even more growth, Emirates has found a fashion formula that works. The iconic uniform now empowers 25,000 cabin crew flying to more than 140 destinations to be ‘runway ready’ in every sense.

Cruise Travel in 2025–26:

Protecting Clients and Enhancing Experiences



Cruises have transitioned from being a niche luxury option to a mainstream and rapidly growing segment in the travel industry. For travel agencies and tour operators, this shift presents both a significant opportunity and a responsibility. Ensuring clients enjoy a seamless cruise experience now requires more than just booking the right cabin; it demands comprehensive travel protection and expert guidance while sailing through international waters.

The Indian cruise market is projected to generate \$235 million in revenue by 2025, with expectations to reach \$418 million by 2030, growing at a steady 12% CAGR. This expansion is supported by initiatives such as the Cruise Bharat Mission, which aims to develop 51 new cruise circuits across 14 states and three Union Territories by 2027. The resulting growth opens new avenues for tour operators and travel agencies to curate specialised packages while positioning themselves as trusted advisors in this evolving segment.

The trends shaping modern cruise travel are clear. Passenger numbers in India have increased from around 100,000 in 2014–15 to nearly 490,000 in 2024–25, reflecting a broader demographic appeal. Cruises today attract travellers of all ages and interests, offering diverse itineraries ranging from international destinations to domestic rivers and backwaters. Themed cruises focusing

on wellness, culture, adventure, and family experiences are becoming increasingly popular. For agencies, these developments highlight the importance of designing personalised offerings that cater to the unique preferences of each client.

According to Mr. Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO of Asego, “With the rapid growth of the cruise industry, travel agencies play a crucial role in ensuring clients not only have the right itinerary but also the right protection. Cruise-specific insurance is no longer optional—it’s essential to guarantee a smooth and memorable experience. Agencies that proactively guide their clients in this area can build trust and long-term relationships.”

Standard travel insurance, while useful for traditional trips, often falls short when it comes to cruise-specific situations. Trip cancellations, medical emergencies on board, and disruptions due to cabin confinement require coverage that is tailored to the cruise environment. Travel Advisors who educate their clients about the advantages of cruise-specific insurance—covering medical emergencies, trip interruptions, and lost experiences—can build stronger trust and deliver greater value. This proactive approach not only sets them apart from competitors but also positions them as advisors who view traveller safety as paramount.

Cruise trips often come with their own set of challenges. Weather-related itinerary changes, mechanical delays, and high onboard medical costs can quickly disrupt a traveller’s experience. Additionally, lost or delayed baggage, or unexpected illness or injury, can prevent them from enjoying planned excursions. By recommending specialised travel protection, tour operators can help mitigate these risks and ensure their clients feel confident and secure throughout the journey.

Looking ahead, the cruise industry in India and globally is set to continue its rapid expansion, offering more niche, personalised, and adventurous itineraries. Travel agencies that integrate flexible, cruise-specific insurance solutions and provide informed guidance will be well-positioned to capture this growing market. In 2025–26, the key to success is not merely selling cruise trips but ensuring that every traveller’s journey is protected, seamless, and memorable. Tour operators and travel agencies that master this balance will not only enhance client satisfaction but also strengthen their reputation and long-term business growth.

Brand USA Launches “America the Beautiful” Global Tourism Campaign at Travel Week U.K. & Europe 2025 to Bolster International Tourism’s Impact on the U.S.



Brand USA, the destination marketing organisation for the United States, today launched America the Beautiful, a global tourism marketing campaign and platform that represents the organisation’s most ambitious marketing initiative to date. The campaign debuts during this week’s Brand USA Travel Week U.K. and Europe, now in its seventh year, which connects U.S. destinations with leading international buyers and media from 20 countries. Today’s announcement comes as international travel continues to drive meaningful economic impact. Year-to-date through July, travel and tourism exports totalled \$147 billion, up two per cent year-over-year. That spending is projected to generate approximately \$39.6 billion in federal tax revenue by year’s end, support millions of American jobs, and contribute to a total economic impact of \$551 billion in 2025. The campaign is strategically timed to build on that momentum and accelerate growth ahead of 2026, a milestone year marked by the FIFA World Cup, America’s 250th anniversary, and the Route 66 centennial.

“The United States remains the top international destination for long-haul leisure travel in the world, reflecting

the enduring appeal of our varied and unique destinations and experiences,” said Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA. “With America the Beautiful, we’re delivering a fresh invitation to explore the USA in new and exciting ways. As we look ahead to 2026 and the decade of mega events on the horizon, we remain laser-focused on maximising international tourism opportunities to drive economic impact and job growth while inviting the world to celebrate 250 years of America the Beautiful.”

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

America the Beautiful marks a new chapter in Brand USA’s global marketing approach. This organisation-wide platform brings every facet of the brand under a single, strategic vision to meet this moment. It is designed to cut through the noise and reconnect travellers with what they truly love about the United States. It shifts focus from product to people, reminding the world that what sets the U.S. apart is not just the places to visit, but the people to meet, and the stories, culture, and unique experiences shared along the way.

“America the Beautiful tells the story of America bigger, bolder, and more beautifully than ever before—balancing the power of place with the depth of human connection,” said **Leah Chandler, chief marketing officer of Brand USA.** *“Every element, from powerful creative storytelling to AI-powered planning tools, is designed to inspire travellers to see America in new ways and to turn that inspiration into action. We’re not asking people to simply visit America; we’re inviting them to feel it, taste it, and carry home experiences that become core memories.”*

Research across 10 global markets shows the campaign is resonating with travellers. Rigorous testing revealed strong emotional appeal and broad relevance of the America the Beautiful tagline, with 72% responding positively and 67% reporting increased desire to visit the U.S.

The campaign will roll out across connected TV, streaming, out-of-home,

digital, and social media in nine priority markets (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, India, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, United Kingdom) identified through data-driven analysis of travel intent, economic trends, and consumer sentiment. Targeted messaging will engage confident, globally curious travellers seeking nature-driven escapes, authentic family moments, luxury experiences, and immersive arts and culture. Watch the campaign come to life through four video spots highlighting the great outdoors, family travel, and luxury travel.

Complementing the creative rollout is AmericaTheBeautiful.com, a new AI-powered hub built with Mindtrip technology. Available in eight languages, the hub offers personalised recommendations, interactive maps, and itinerary-building tools, making planning easier than ever while helping travellers connect iconic gateways with regional destinations across the United States.

Together, these elements form a comprehensive effort that unifies Brand USA’s partnership marketing programs, travel trade initiatives, and earned media efforts across the organisation’s key international markets, maximising the reach and impact of America the Beautiful.

BRAND USA TRAVEL WEEK DRIVES INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Brand USA Travel Week has become a cornerstone of Brand USA’s international trade and media engagement strategy. This year’s event, presented by Atlantic Joint Business partner airlines (British Airways, American Airlines, Finnair, Aer Lingus, Iberia, Level), welcomes nearly 900 delegates across trade, media, suppliers, and destinations for four days of curated business appointments, leadership discussions, and educational sessions.

“The success of Brand USA Travel Week U.K. and Europe has set a strong foundation for global expansion. We’re excited to bring this high-impact platform to new regions and strengthen relationships with travel trade and

media partners worldwide,” said Dixon.

Brand USA Travel Week India (January 18-23, 2026) and Brand USA Travel Week South America (March 16-20, 2026) will be key events in markets with strong potential for inbound travel growth.

Colm Lacy, British Airways’ Chief Commercial Officer, said: “We’re proud to be supporting this year’s Brand USA Travel Week alongside our Atlantic Joint Business partners. With more than 27 US destinations to choose from on our route network, our transatlantic flights continue to be a firm favourite with our customers. We know how much they value the country’s variety, so our partnership with Brand USA is important to us in spreading the word about what the US has to offer – from world-class cities to spectacular natural scenery.”

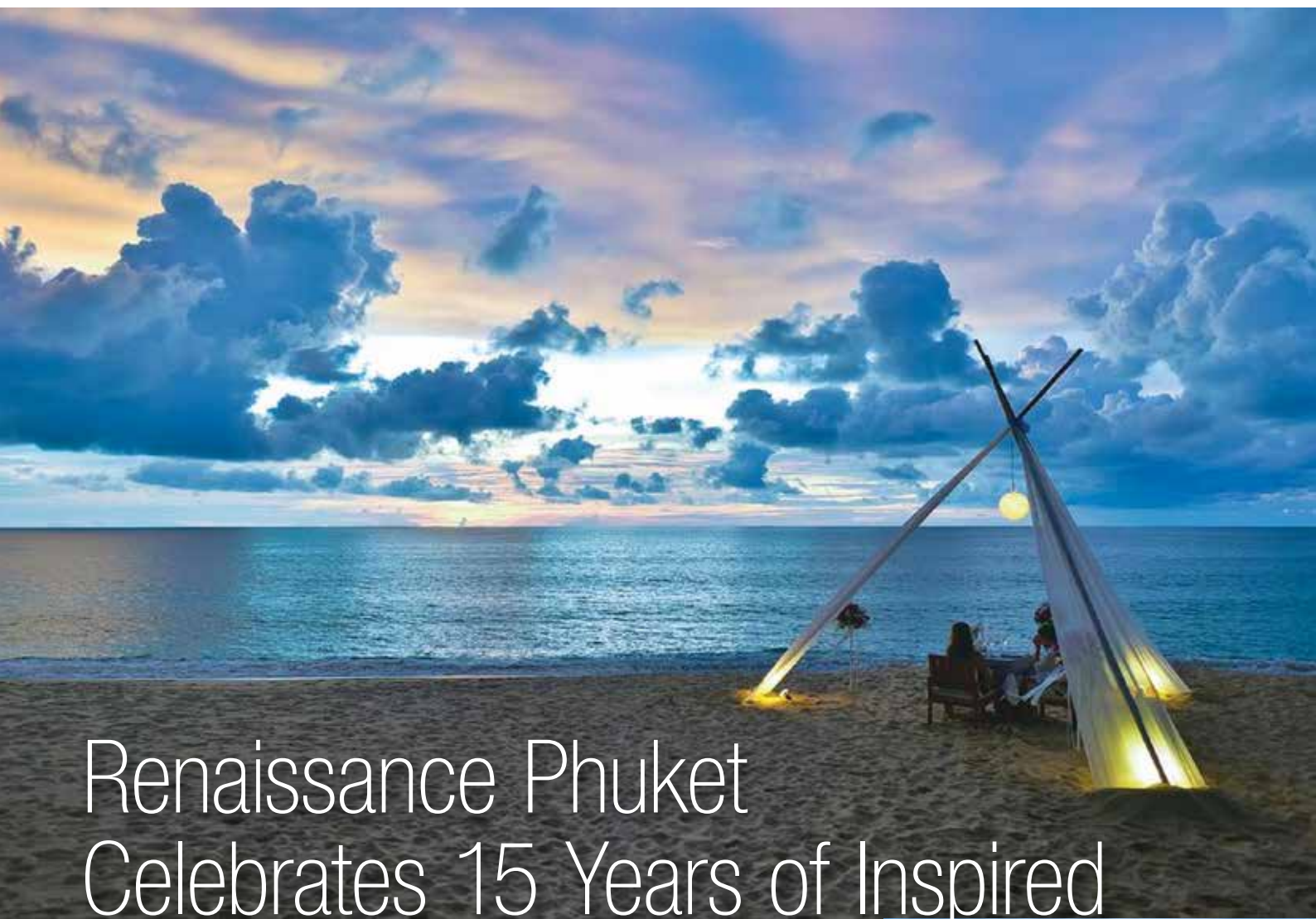
Additional Brand USA Travel Week U.K. & Europe 2025 sponsors include Adara, Expedia Group, Atlas Obscura, Miles Partnership, Warner Bros. Discovery, MMGY Global, Broadway Inbound, and Tourism Cares.

WHAT’S NEW IN AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

In addition to next year’s historic milestones, travellers will find new attractions, unique hotel openings, and destination experiences launching across the country. Coinciding with Brand USA Travel Week U.K. & Europe, the organisation is publishing its newest “What’s New in the USA” update.

Beginning in April 2026, British Airways will launch service from London to St. Louis, while Aer Lingus introduces flights from Dublin to Raleigh-Durham. In the Pacific Northwest, both Alaska Airlines and Delta Air Lines are adding new nonstop service from Rome to Seattle beginning in May. United Airlines will also expand service to Newark with new flights from Bari, Glasgow, and Santiago de Compostela, each beginning in May.

These developments offer even more reasons for international visitors to explore the United States—now, in 2026, and beyond.



Renaissance Phuket Celebrates 15 Years of Inspired Luxury on Mai Khao Beach

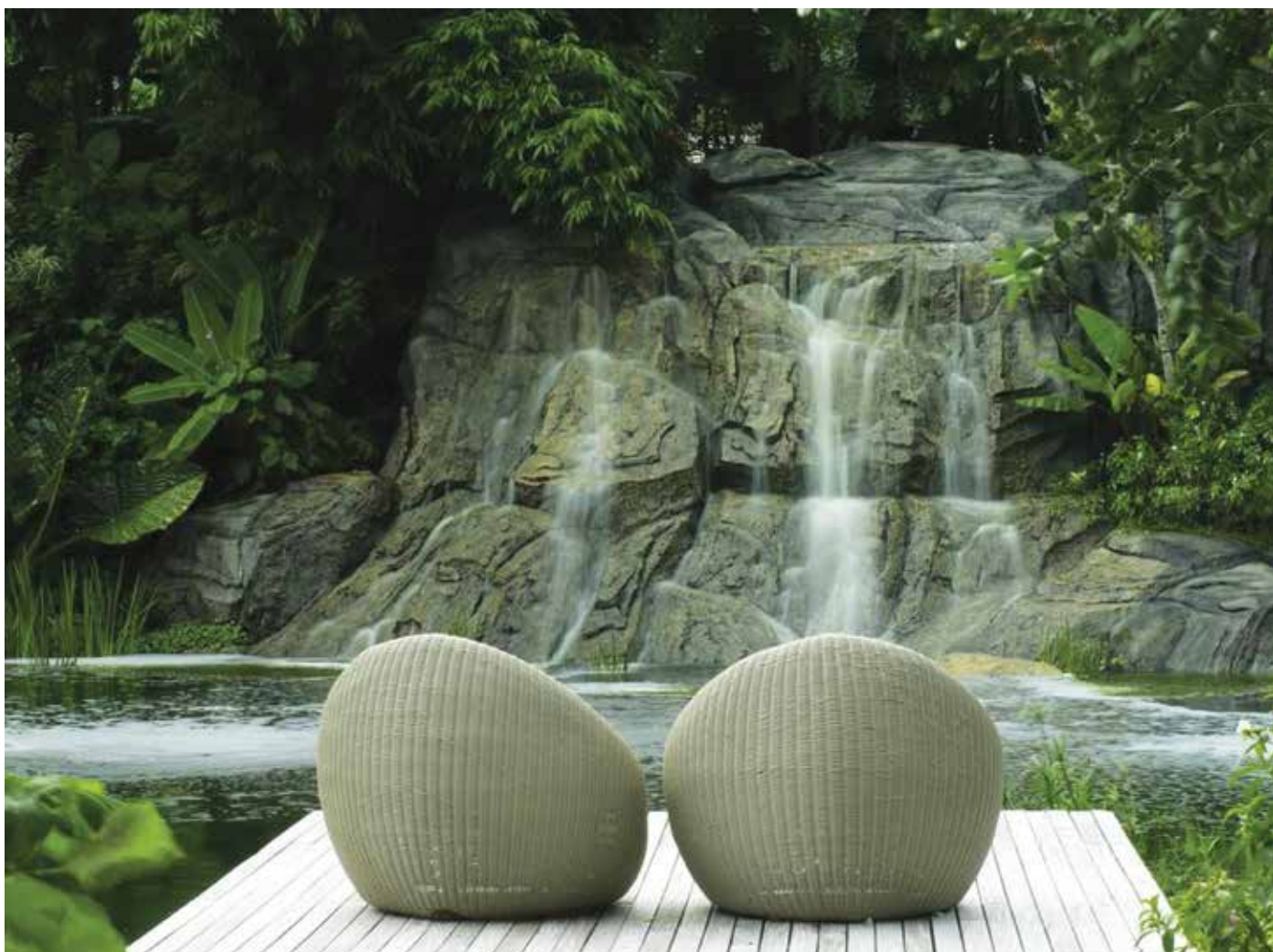
Renaissance Phuket Resort & Spa, the contemporary luxury resort on Phuket's pristine Mai Khao Beach, marks its 15th anniversary with a comprehensive transformation, unveiling redesigned rooms, villas, and enhanced dining and wellness experiences. The renovation blends modern design with the serene beauty

of Southern Thailand, reinforcing the resort's reputation as a sanctuary for travellers seeking sophistication and authenticity.

A Legacy of Inspired Hospitality

Since opening in 2010, Renaissance Phuket has been celebrated for offering more than a beach retreat.





Nestled within Sirinat National Park and overlooking Phuket's longest stretch of untouched sand, the resort has become renowned for its distinctive architecture, exceptional Thai hospitality, and attention to detail. Fifteen years on, the resort has evolved with a bold new aesthetic, combining contemporary style with world-class comfort to meet the expectations of modern luxury travellers.

The Transformation: Modern Beachfront Luxury

At the heart of the renovation are the resort's guestrooms and villas, which now set a new standard for luxury on Mai Khao Beach.

- **Luxury Living:** Spacious rooms and villas feature clean lines, soft tones, and panoramic views, creating



Czech-born son of a diplomat, leads the resort with a vision that combines precision, care, and heartfelt service. His approach has fostered a team culture where attention to detail and genuine hospitality define every guest interaction.

Culinary experiences are led by Executive Chef Piti Puliwekhin, whose creativity elevates Renaissance Phuket as a gastronomic destination. From Italian-inspired dishes at Sand Box to the authentic Southern Thai flavours at Takieng and bespoke villa dining, Chef Piti's expertise ensures every meal is memorable.

an immediate sense of comfort and tranquility.

- **Beachfront Retreats:** Signature pool villas serve as private sanctuaries, blending stone, timber, and luxurious furnishings with terraces and private pools for ultimate relaxation.

- **Design with a View:** Interiors are bright and contemporary, with statement lighting and expansive windows framing the turquoise Andaman Sea.

Experiences That Inspire

Renaissance Phuket's philosophy, "*Discover This Way*," ensures every guest experience is thoughtfully curated.

- **Walks on Golden Sands:** Strolling along Mai Khao's pristine beach offers a sense of serene indulgence and sustainable luxury.

- **Culinary Excellence:** Dining is central to the guest experience. Sand Box Beachfront Bar & Eatery offers Mediterranean-inspired lunches with

sweeping ocean views. Loca Vore serves Phuket's celebrated breakfast, while Takieng showcases Southern Thai cuisine with modern sophistication. Guests can also enjoy private villa barbecues under the stars, prepared by personal chefs.

- **Wellness and Balance:** Quan Spa remains a haven of relaxation, offering signature treatments inspired by Asian wellness traditions. Complementary activities like sunrise yoga, meditation, and sound therapy, along with a beachfront infinity pool and 24-hour fitness centre, provide holistic wellbeing.

- **Island Discoveries:** Curated excursions allow guests to explore local communities, heritage sites, and long-tail boat journeys across the Andaman, connecting travellers with the living culture of Southern Thailand.

Leadership That Shapes Hospitality

General Manager Libor Secka, a

A Future of Modern Comfort and Care

The 15th-anniversary renovation is not just a physical upgrade—it represents a renewal of Renaissance Phuket's commitment to luxury, modern comfort, and exceptional guest experiences.

Siriphan Uasrikongsuk, Director of Sales & Marketing, commented: "Our 15th anniversary is both a celebration and a fresh start. The new rooms and villas embody spacious, stylish, and deeply comfortable modern luxury. This milestone positions Renaissance Phuket to continue inspiring travellers for many years to come."

Beyond its design, the resort's appeal lies in its thoughtful touches and genuine care—from a morning walk on golden sands to the personalized service in every villa, Renaissance Phuket ensures that each stay creates lasting memories. Here, luxury transcends aesthetics, becoming a truly immersive and meaningful experience.

VFS Global Expands Bulgaria Long-Term Visa Services Across India



Six state-of-the-art centres to simplify access for Indian travellers and professionals

VFS Global has launched **Bulgaria's long-term visa**

(**D visa**) services in India, marking a major milestone in improving accessibility for travellers, students, and professionals planning extended stays in the European nation. The newly inaugurated **visa application centre at New Delhi's Hamdard Complex** serves as the flagship facility, with additional centres opening in **Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, and Mumbai** from mid-November 2025.

For the first time, applicants can apply for Bulgaria's long-term visas without visiting the Embassy of Bulgaria in New Delhi. Starting **1 November 2025**, they can conveniently book appointments online and complete their

application process closer to home.

Simplifying Travel for Indian Applicants

This expansion, jointly launched by the **Embassy of Bulgaria in New Delhi** and **VFS Global**, brings long-term visa processing to six major cities—an initiative designed to enhance accessibility and efficiency. The move eliminates the need for cross-country travel to the embassy, making Bulgaria's visa services more inclusive for applicants across India, including those in tier-2 and tier-3 regions.

"The launch of Bulgaria's long-term visa services across India marks an important step in strengthening the people-to-people and business ties between our two countries," said

H.E. Dr. Nikolay Yankov, Ambassador of Bulgaria to India. "By offering these services nationwide, we are deepening the growing partnership between our nations and supporting easier mobility for Indian citizens."

A Trusted Partnership

The announcement also highlights **VFS Global's enduring partnership with the Government of Bulgaria**, which began in 2008. Having successfully managed Bulgaria's short-term (C visa) services, VFS Global now extends its expertise to long-term visa processing.

"We are proud to expand our partnership with the Government of Bulgaria by introducing long-term visa services across India," said **Yummi Talwar**, Chief Operating Officer – South Asia, VFS Global. "This initiative will greatly improve convenience for applicants, allowing them to complete the process closer to home while enjoying a seamless experience backed by our trusted service standards."

Enhanced Visa Application Experience

Each centre is designed to provide a smooth, customer-friendly experience. Applicants can access a suite of **optional premium services**, including:

- **Visa At Your Doorstep** – allowing submission from the

applicant's preferred location.

- **Premium Lounge Access** – for a more personalised and comfortable experience.

- **Prime Time Collection** – enabling flexibility for submissions outside standard hours.

- **Courier, SMS updates, and form-filling assistance** – for added convenience and transparency.

While VFS Global manages the administrative side of visa processing—document collection, biometrics, and appointment scheduling—the **Embassy of Bulgaria** retains sole authority over all visa decisions.

Strengthening Bilateral and Travel Links

The rollout of Bulgaria's long-term visa services marks a pivotal development in strengthening **India-Bulgaria relations**, fostering deeper cultural, educational, and business exchanges. For Indian students, professionals, and families, the process is now easier than ever—opening doors to explore Bulgaria's opportunities, landscapes, and lifestyle.

With six modern visa centres strategically located across India, **VFS Global continues to bring the world closer to Indian travellers**, reinforcing its leadership in seamless visa facilitation and international mobility.



RAVA Beach Club Opens in Phuket, Boasting Thailand's Longest Beachfront

Phuket's Bang Tao Beach has a new reason to shine with the launch of **RAVA Beach Club**, an upscale coastal destination developed by Banyan Tree Phuket. Nestled within the Laguna Phuket complex, RAVA spans **150 meters of Thailand's longest uninterrupted beachfront**, introducing a contemporary, lifestyle-focused beach concept that blends leisure, gastronomy, music, and wellness.

A New Coastal Philosophy: "Live in Flow"

Guided by the mantra "*Live in Flow*," RAVA Beach Club is designed to immerse guests in sensory experiences throughout the day. Its name, derived from the word "RAVA," meaning sound or reverberation, captures the venue's emphasis on rhythm, atmosphere, and energy, reflecting a dynamic fusion of music, coastal relaxation, and social engagement.

"RAVA Beach Club represents an evolution of the Banyan Tree experience, merging our legacy of impeccable service with a dynamic, modern lifestyle concept," said **Peter Somsri, General Manager of Banyan Tree Phuket**. "By creating Thailand's



longest beachfront destination, we are not only enhancing Phuket's vibrancy but also setting a new benchmark for sophisticated island escapes, reinforcing Laguna Phuket's position as a premier global destination."

Design and Guest Experiences

Spanning **3,500 square meters**, the beach club offers a layered design to cater to a diverse range of guest experiences.

- **Young & Fun Zone:** Features three infinity pools with curated music programming, offering a lively yet relaxing daytime atmosphere ideal for socialising and coastal leisure.

- **Prestige Lounge:** Designed for privacy and exclusivity, this area is reserved for Laguna Residence Owners and Sanctuary Club members, providing a private infinity pool alongside dedicated dining and relaxation spaces.

The club's contemporary architecture blends natural materials with modern design elements, creating fluid spaces that allow guests to transition

effortlessly between sun-soaked lounge areas, poolside retreats, and evening entertainment zones.

Culinary Excellence at RAVA

RAVA Beach Club's flagship dining concept, **Pura Vida Sunday Brunch**, showcases local produce and international flavours through a menu that includes fresh seafood, charcoal-grilled specialties, and authentic Thai cuisine. Under the guidance of **Head Chef Joshua Gray**, the culinary philosophy emphasizes ingredient integrity and bold, balanced flavours.

"My vision for Pura Vida Brunch is to celebrate ingredients for what they are — pure, honest, and full of life," said Chef Gray. "By pairing fresh produce with refined techniques, we create impactful dishes that highlight Phuket's natural bounty while drawing inspiration from global culinary trends."

Innovative Guest Engagement

RAVA introduces a **Digital Detox Challenge**, encouraging guests to

temporarily disconnect from mobile devices and fully immerse themselves in offline experiences. This initiative underscores the growing trend in luxury hospitality to integrate well-being and mindfulness into the guest journey.

The beach club also hosts a vibrant calendar of entertainment, featuring live DJs, percussionists, dancers, and performance artists. Daytime lounge experiences seamlessly transition into curated evening events, offering a blend of music, performance art, and social energy.

Prime Location and Accessibility

Situated within the Laguna Phuket resort complex and just **20 minutes from Phuket International Airport**, RAVA Beach Club is strategically positioned to appeal to both international visitors and long-stay residents along Phuket's northern coastline. Its combination of expansive beachfront, contemporary design, and lifestyle-driven experiences promises to redefine the island's upscale coastal offerings.



The MICHELIN Guide Unveils the MICHELIN Key 2025:



36 Indian Hotels Shine Among the World's Finest

In a landmark moment for the global hospitality industry, **The MICHELIN Guide** has expanded its legacy beyond the culinary world with the debut of the **MICHELIN Key 2025** — a new international distinction celebrating the world's most exceptional hotels. Announced on **October 8, 2025**, the unveiling coincides with the Guide's **125th anniversary**, setting a new global benchmark for excellence in design, service, and hospitality.

Just as the **MICHELIN Star** has long defined the pinnacle of fine dining, the **MICHELIN Key** now recognises hotels that embody the same spirit of craftsmanship, authenticity, and exceptional guest experience.

A New Chapter in Hospitality Excellence

The MICHELIN Key marks a bold evolution for the MICHELIN Guide, which has been recommending outstanding hotels since the 1920s. Over the past five years, MICHELIN's expert inspectors have reimagined the hotel selection process, curating a trusted collection of over **7,000 hotels** worldwide accessible via its digital platforms.

The new Key distinction identifies the most remarkable of these stays — those that go above and beyond in creating unforgettable experiences. Hotels are evaluated on **five universal criteria**:

1. Architecture and Interior Design
2. Quality and Consistency of Service
3. Personality and Character
4. Value for Money
5. Contribution to the Local Environment and Culture

Not bound by price, size, or category, MICHELIN Keys can be awarded to a

mountain lodge, a city boutique hotel, a heritage palace, or even a luxury tented retreat.

Understanding the MICHELIN Key

- **One MICHELIN Key:** A *very special stay* — intimate, characterful, and defined by warmth and individuality.
- **Two MICHELIN Keys:** An *exceptional stay* — where thoughtful design, authenticity, and a strong sense of place converge.
- **Three MICHELIN Keys:** An *extraordinary stay* — representing the zenith of global hospitality, where service, style, and emotion combine to create a lasting memory.

This inaugural global selection features **2,457 hotels** across 120 countries:

- 1,742 One-Key hotels
- 572 Two-Key hotels
- 143 Three-Key hotels

India's Moment of Glory

India shines bright in the 2025 MICHELIN Keys with **36 hotels** earning distinctions — a reflection of the country's evolving luxury landscape and deep-rooted hospitality traditions. **Three MICHELIN Keys – The Pinnacle of Indian Hospitality**

• **Taj Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad**

• **Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur**

Both properties, jewels in the Taj portfolio, epitomise regal grandeur, personalised service, and timeless architecture — positioning them among the world's most extraordinary stays.

Two MICHELIN Keys – Exceptional Stays with Distinctive Character

- The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra
- Amanbagh, Rajasthan
- Suján Jawai, Rajasthan





- The Johri, Jaipur
- The Oberoi Rajvillas, Jaipur
- Villa Palladio, Jaipur
- Soho House, Mumbai
- Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai
- Taj Mahal Tower, Mumbai
- Taj Mahal, New Delhi
- The Lodhi, New Delhi
- Ran Baas The Palace, Patiala
- Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Uttarakhand
- Suján Sher Bagh, Ranthambore
- The Oberoi Vanyavilas, Ranthambore
- RAAS Deigarh, Udaipur
- Nadesar Palace, Varanasi

Global Highlights and Special Awards

To celebrate this new milestone, the MICHELIN Guide also presented **four Special Awards** honouring exceptional global achievements:

- **Architecture & Design:** *Atlantis The Royal, Dubai*
- **Wellness:** *Bürgenstock Resort, Switzerland*
- **Local Gateway:** *La Fiermontina Ocean, Morocco*
- **Opening of the Year:** *The Burman Hotel, Estonia*

Across Asia, several regions — including **Mainland China, Indonesia, Laos, the Maldives, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam** — earned their first-ever MICHELIN Keys. In Japan, **Asaba Ryokan** joined the elite ranks with a new Three-Key distinction.

Redefining Global Hospitality

From palatial landmarks to minimalist mountain retreats, the MICHELIN Key 2025 celebrates hotels that transcend luxury — places where design, culture, and genuine human connection meet. For travellers, it offers a trusted compass to discover not just where to stay, but *how to experience the world differently*.

With India's 36 honorees now standing among the world's best, the nation's hospitality industry cements its place on the global stage, reaffirming that true luxury lies in authenticity, service, and soul.



- Raffles Jaipur
- The Leela Palace Jaipur
- Sitara Himalaya, Himachal Pradesh
- The Imperial, New Delhi
- The Leela Palace, New Delhi
- Aman-i-Khas, Khilchipur
- Six Senses Fort Barwara, Rajasthan
- Raffles Udaipur
- The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur

One MICHELIN Key – Memorable and Authentic Stays

- The Kumaon, Binsar
- Narendra Bhawan, Bikaner
- The Leela Palace, Chennai
- Six Senses Vana, Dehradun
- The Oberoi, Gurgaon
- Taj Usha Kiran Palace, Gwalior
- Rajmahal Palace RAAS, Jaipur
- Taj Devi Ratn Resort & Spa, Jaipur

WTM London 2025 unveils Technology Summit agenda with focus on AI, data and airlines



WTM London, the world's most influential travel event, organised by RX, is framing this year's Technology Summit around the critical role that technology can play supporting sellers and suppliers during the current period of disruption and emerging new challenges.

The summit takes place on Wednesday 5 November on the Purple Stage, starting at 10.45am. Over three hours, attendees will hear from a global line-up of carefully selected technology experts, from C-suite executives to entrepreneurs via lawyers, investors and researchers.

The agenda supports WTM London's decision to align all stages and sessions under the unifying theme of Reimagining Travel in a Changing World. Twelve different sessions have been curated by Timothy O'Neil-Dunne, WTM's technology advisor and an established industry commentator and observer. He was a founding management team member at Expedia in the 1990s, and he is currently a Principal at T2Impact Ltd, a global consulting and venture firm laser-focussed on aviation, travel and tourism.

WTM London's official Technology Partner, Holafly, will feature CEO Pablo Gómez Fernandez-Quintanilla in a dynamic 20-minute conversation with Timothy, titled 'Connected Futures: Tech, Data and the Power of eSIMs.' The session will take place on Wednesday, 5th November at 13:50 on

the Purple Stage. One of the highlights is a debate around whether artificial intelligence (AI), despite the hype, is travel's enemy. He will be joined on stage by Stephen Joyce from Prospect Group and Christian Watts from Magpie Travel.

AI is likely to be referenced across the sessions, directly and indirectly. Rhys Griffiths and Farina Azam, partners at travel law specialists Fox Williams, will outline the legal and regulatory implications of widespread AI adoption for travel businesses.

Meanwhile, Andreas Nau from Ennea Capital Partners and Min Liu from Cambon Partners will share their frontline experience of how the investment community is responding to the new reality of AI-driven disruption.

There is also a session drilling down into how AI is redefining the role of travel agents, featuring James Lever from DataArt and Gulce Rozenveld from Oojo.com. Similarly, AI is driving a sea-change in trip planning and inspiration, with video content becoming increasingly important in the traveller's decision-making process. Sally Bunnell from NaviSavi will explain more.

Data is an important area of discussion in the age of AI. Dave Goodger from Tourism Economics will explain how travel companies can combine travel-specific insights with economic indicators to make smarter decisions. Elsewhere, Thomas Dillon from A3M and James Spalding from Trip.com Group will discuss how to balance the traveller demand for hyper-personalization with regulatory requirements over data privacy and security.

Payments remain an area of interest and innovation, and this year's summit includes a session looking at how technology-driven payment innovations are helping travel to thrive. James Lemon from Stripe, Will Plummer from Trust My Group, Livia Vite from [actuary.aero](#) and Qais Amori from Almosafer will offer different perspectives on the overall payment landscape, looking at business-to-business as well as business-to-consumer.

Airlines are starting to have a stronger presence at WTM London in general and at the Technology Summit in particular. Filip Filipov from OAG will provide a five-minute snapshot into the most critical airline and flight data trends before Amanda Campbell from T2RL and Nadine Wood, formerly of Qantas, analyse the evolution of low-cost carriers and highlight the lessons that legacy carriers can learn.

Finally, away from software, Roman Townsend from Belvera Partners will demonstrate the latest advances in artificial and virtual reality.

Timothy O-Neil Dunne explained: "Attendees will hear from an eclectic mix of experts, all of whom have strong and sometimes differing opinions on the topics dominating today's travel technology conversations.

"We're taking a broad approach to AI, but I've structured the summit so that data, payments, airlines and more also get a look in. Then we finish with the key question of now: is AI good or bad for travel? Make sure you join us on the Purple Stage at 10:45 on Wednesday 5th November to be part of a frank and future-focused conversation."

APAC Travel Trends 2025: Inflation, Emerging Segments, and Tech-Driven Tourism Reshape the Region

The Asia-Pacific travel landscape in 2025 is evolving rapidly, driven by soaring costs, shifting consumer behavior, and the strategic adoption of technology. Airlines, hotels, and destinations are navigating a complex post-pandemic recovery, where affordability, personalization, and experience-led offerings are redefining traveler expectations.

This week, three interconnected trends have dominated industry discussions across the region: the pressure of rising aviation costs, the emergence of new traveler segments, and the increasing role of technology and curated experiences in shaping destination competitiveness. From airfares climbing steadily to the rise of skip-generation travel, and from full hotel occupancy during peak periods to heightened demand for amenity-rich stays, the signals point to a maturing recovery—one that requires sharper strategic alignment from travel and hospitality professionals.

Rising Costs: Aviation Under Pressure

The latest ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East report highlights the ongoing impact of airfare inflation, as airlines and destinations grapple with rising operational costs. Fuel price volatility, staff shortages, and regulatory charges push fares closer to pre-pandemic levels, challenging profitability and traveler affordability. For carriers, the combination of higher costs and price-

sensitive segments increases the risk of dampened demand, particularly among discretionary travelers and secondary markets.

New Traveler Segments: Skip-Generation and Festive Surges

Innovative consumer patterns are emerging across APAC. In India, Hilton's research shows a notable rise in **skip-generation travel**, where grandparents independently travel with grandchildren. This trend presents opportunities for tailored offerings, including intergenerational experiences, childcare services, and enhanced safety measures.

Meanwhile, Agoda reports a significant spike in travel interest to India, especially around Diwali, with international searches up 67%. The dual effect positions India not only as a favored outbound destination but also as a growing domestic tourism magnet.

Evolving Consumer Preferences: Amenities and Experience

Traveler expectations are increasingly shaping booking decisions. Agoda notes a growing preference for **breakfast-included stays** across the region, a seemingly minor amenity now capable of influencing occupancy and pricing dynamics.

In China, Alipay's Golden Week data underscores evolving spending patterns: outbound travelers are prioritizing experiential and high-value purchases, signaling new trajectories for outbound demand cycles.



Destination Levers: Events, Holidays, and Capacity

APAC destinations are leveraging cultural programming and events to stimulate tourism. Thailand, for instance, has seen surges in both domestic and international arrivals thanks to pop culture events, concerts, and festivals. Similarly, South Korea experienced near-full hotel occupancy during Chuseok, demonstrating how strong domestic markets can buffer outbound travel constraints.

Technology, Platform Strategy, and DMO Collaboration

Tech and data-driven strategies are increasingly shaping the travel landscape. At Expedia's **Explore Local Bangkok** event, discussions focused on APAC demand management, AI adoption, merchandising, and



tighter collaboration with destination marketing organizations (DMOs). These initiatives are no longer optional—they are central to curating supply, designing itineraries, and guiding traveler flows.

Additionally, Skyscanner's 2026 Trends report highlights the importance of **personalization, real-time packages, and dynamic pricing**, emphasizing that coordinated technology, platform strategy, and data integration will determine which players thrive in APAC's competitive markets.

Key Takeaways

Three tectonic shifts define the region's travel outlook:

1. Margin Pressure: Aviation cost inflation will test yield management, ancillary pricing, and demand sensitivity.

2. Consumer Sophistication:

Emerging segments like skip-generation travelers, amenity-driven choices, and cultural/event affinities are reshaping demand patterns.

3. Tech and Partnerships as

Strategic Tools: AI, personalization, curated itineraries, and DMO collaboration are now essential levers for influencing distribution and destination competitiveness.

For industry professionals, the message is clear: agility and foresight are critical. Stakeholders must recalibrate pricing and product segmentation, embrace tech-driven curation, and strengthen partnerships to capture growth in the next wave of APAC tourism. Those who act decisively will not just weather this recovery—they will shape where growth concentrates.

Sources

- Airfares surge across Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, ACI reports
- Skip-generation travel surges in India as Hilton reveals trends
- Skyscanner unveils 2026 travel trends shaping India's tourism outlook
- Alipay reveals new travel and spending patterns during China's 2025 Golden Week
- Pop culture events fuel Thailand's tourism surge, Agoda reports
- South Korea hotels near full capacity during the extended Chuseok holiday
- Agoda reveals Asian travelers' rising demand for breakfast-included stays
- Agoda reports a strong rise in travel interest to India
- Expedia Group Explore Local Bangkok: APAC demand, AI, and DMO partnerships



Indian honeymoon trends shift as **Phu Quoc** rises in popularity

Agoda data shows strong demand for beach destinations, with Goa leading domestically and Phu Quoc emerging as a key international favourite.

Over the past few years, Phu Quoc Island in Vietnam has been steadily gaining popularity as a honeymoon destination among Indian couples. Known for its stunning beaches, clear waters, and serene atmosphere, the island offers an ideal location for newlyweds seeking a romantic getaway. This article explores the rising popularity of Phu Quoc Island as a honeymoon hotspot, the factors driving this trend, and how it is reshaping honeymoon tourism in the region.

The Shift in Indian Honeymoon Trends

Indian honeymoon trends have witnessed a significant transformation in recent years. Traditionally, destinations such as Europe, the Maldives, and Thailand were the go-to choices for Indian honeymooners. However, emerging destinations like Phu Quoc Island are gaining traction, especially among young couples looking for both value and luxury in their honeymoon experiences.

New insights from digital travel platform Agoda highlight how Indian couples are choosing their post-wedding getaways ahead of the upcoming wedding season. As celebrations increase from November to January, honeymoon travel is emerging as a key driver of demand, reflecting both traditional favourites and newly discovered destinations.

According to Agoda, Goa remains the leading domestic honeymoon destination for the second year in a row. Its appeal is supported by beaches, boutique resorts, and a strong food scene. Udaipur has moved into second place, with its “City of Lakes” setting attracting couples seeking royal ambience and waterside views. Mumbai ranks third, followed by Jaipur and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The Andamans have entered the top five for the first time, signalling a growing preference for island escapes closer to home.

Internationally, Dubai continues to be the top choice for Indian couples, offering a mix of luxury experiences, desert adventures, and urban

attractions. Phuket and Bangkok also maintain strong positions, while Bali and Pattaya remain popular for tropical getaways.

A standout trend in this year's findings is the rapid rise of Phu Quoc Island in Vietnam. The destination has recorded an eightfold increase in popularity, entering the top ten for the first time and moving to sixth place for 2025. Agoda reports nearly 700% growth in search interest, suggesting a strong appetite for new and affordable Southeast Asian leisure options.

Commenting on the data, **Gaurav Malik, Country Director, Indian Subcontinent & Indian Ocean Islands at Agoda**, said, *“Honeymoons are among the most meaningful trips couples take, and Indian travellers are showing a growing preference for destinations that offer both romance and discovery. From classic getaway destinations like Goa and Bali to rising stars like Phu Quoc, beach and island getaways are winning hearts and setting the stage for a lifetime of happiness for newlyweds. Agoda's wide range of stays and activities helps couples create trips as unique as their journey together.”*

For tourism professionals, these trends indicate continued strength in beach and island demand, while also signalling opportunities for emerging destinations positioned around affordability, relaxation, and memorable experiences.

Why Phu Quoc is Gaining Popularity

Phu Quoc Island offers a perfect blend of nature, culture, and modern amenities, which appeals to Indian honeymooners. The island's rapid rise in popularity can be attributed to several key factors.

Natural Beauty and Seclusion

Phu Quoc Island is often described as a hidden gem, offering pristine beaches, lush forests, and crystal-clear waters. These natural landscapes provide the perfect backdrop for a romantic and secluded honeymoon. Indian couples, especially those from metropolitan cities, are increasingly

seeking destinations that provide peace and tranquillity while still offering world-class amenities.

The island is home to some of the most picturesque beaches in Vietnam, such as Sao Beach and Long Beach, which are ideal for couples who wish to relax by the sea or indulge in water sports like snorkelling, kayaking, and diving. The allure of secluded, quiet beaches appeals to couples who want to escape the hustle and bustle of crowded tourist hotspots.

Affordable Luxury

One of the most significant factors contributing to Phu Quoc's rise as a honeymoon destination is its affordability. Unlike other popular destinations like the Maldives or European resorts, Phu Quoc offers a luxury experience at a fraction of the cost. Indian honeymooners, particularly those seeking value for money, find Phu Quoc to be an attractive alternative.

The island boasts several high-end resorts, offering private villas, spa services, gourmet dining, and personalised experiences. These luxurious offerings, combined with the island's competitive pricing, make it an ideal destination for couples looking for an exclusive yet affordable honeymoon.

Rich Culture and Heritage

In addition to its natural beauty, Phu Quoc Island is rich in culture and history, which enhances the honeymoon experience. Couples can explore local markets, traditional villages, and cultural sites, immersing themselves in the island's heritage. A visit to the Dinh Cau Night Market or a tour of the Vinpearl Safari adds an authentic touch to the honeymoon experience.

Indian honeymooners are increasingly seeking destinations that offer not just relaxation but also cultural exploration. Phu Quoc's diverse cultural experiences, combined with its laid-back atmosphere, provide the perfect mix of romance and adventure.

Easy Accessibility

Another reason behind the growing popularity of Phu Quoc among Indian



travellers is its accessibility. The island is well-connected with direct flights from major cities in India, including New Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata. This ease of travel makes it a convenient option for Indian honeymooners who want to make the most of their time abroad.

Vietnam has also simplified its visa process for Indian tourists, with an e-visa system that makes it easier for couples to plan their honeymoon without dealing with complicated visa requirements.

The Honeymoon Experience in Phu Quoc

Phu Quoc Island offers a wide

range of experiences that cater to the different interests of honeymooners. Whether it's enjoying a quiet day on the beach, exploring the local culture, or indulging in adventure sports, Phu Quoc ensures a memorable experience for every couple.

Romantic Resorts and Private Villas

Phu Quoc is home to numerous luxury resorts that offer honeymoon packages designed specifically for newlyweds. These resorts provide private villas with beach views, private pools, and personalised services such as candlelit dinners on the beach and couples' spa treatments. The tranquil

ambience of the island, combined with these luxury offerings, creates the perfect setting for romance.

Island Hopping and Adventure Activities

For adventurous couples, Phu Quoc offers plenty of exciting activities. Couples can go island hopping and explore the nearby islands like Fingernail Island or Mong Tay Island. These excursions offer a unique opportunity to discover untouched beaches, swim in crystal-clear waters, and enjoy private picnics by the sea.

Water sports enthusiasts can indulge in activities such as snorkelling, scuba diving, and kayaking, allowing

them to explore the island's vibrant marine life. The island's natural landscapes provide a perfect playground for couples who seek both relaxation and adventure.

Cultural Exploration

Phu Quoc's cultural heritage offers couples a chance to dive deeper into local traditions. They can visit the Vinpearl Safari, which is home to diverse animal species, or explore the famous pepper plantations where the island's renowned black pepper is cultivated. The Dinh Cau Temple and the Vinpearl Museum are also popular cultural attractions.

For honeymooners interested in history, the island's fishing villages and markets provide a fascinating glimpse into the local way of life. Couples can shop for local crafts, including handmade jewellery and traditional garments, or enjoy fresh seafood at one of the many seaside restaurants.

Romantic Sunset Cruises

Phu Quoc is famous for its stunning sunsets, and one of the best ways to enjoy them is through a romantic boat ride. Couples can book sunset cruises, which offer breathtaking views of the sun dipping below the horizon. These cruises often include a dinner on board, adding an extra romantic touch to the evening.

Travel Tips for Indian Honeymooners in Phu Quoc

To make the most of their honeymoon in Phu Quoc, Indian couples should keep the following travel tips in mind:

- **Best Time to Visit:** The best time to visit Phu Quoc is from November to April, when the weather is dry and pleasant. This is the peak tourist season, so booking accommodations and activities in advance is recommended.

- **Currency:** The local currency is the Vietnamese Dong (VND), although US dollars are also accepted in most tourist areas. It's advisable to exchange currency before arriving or to use local ATMs.

However, emerging destinations like Phu Quoc Island are gaining traction, especially among young couples looking for both value and luxury in their honeymoon experiences.

- **Visa Requirements:** Indian travellers can obtain an e-visa for Vietnam, which is valid for a stay of up to 30 days. It's a simple process, and the visa can be applied for online.

- **Local Cuisine:** Phu Quoc is famous for its fresh seafood, particularly its fish sauce and grilled seafood dishes. Couples should try the island's local delicacies, such as pho (Vietnamese noodle soup) and goi cuon (Vietnamese spring rolls).

The Future of Phu Quoc in Indian Honeymoon Tourism

As more Indian couples discover the charms of Phu Quoc Island, the destination is likely to continue growing in popularity. With its combination of natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, affordable luxury, and easy accessibility, Phu Quoc is set to become a key player in the global honeymoon market.

Phu Quoc's rise in the Indian honeymoon tourism market reflects a broader trend in which travellers are seeking more diverse and off-the-beaten-path destinations for their honeymoons. As tourism infrastructure on the island continues to improve, Phu Quoc is expected to become an even more attractive destination for Indian honeymooners, with more tailored experiences and accommodations catering to their needs.

Key trends driving the shift

- **Cultural and experiential travel:** A move away from solely luxury stays towards authentic experiences like cooking classes, workshops, and wellness sessions.

- **Affordability:** Destinations like Phu Quoc are gaining popularity

because they offer a blend of affordability, exotic appeal, and natural beauty, often surpassing more expensive European destinations for Tier 2 and 3 travellers.

- **Accessibility:** Vietnam's visa-free entry for up to 30 days for Indian travellers makes Phu Quoc a convenient and easy-to-plan option.

- **Unique experiences:** Couples are seeking novel activities, such as Phu Quoc's cable car to Hon Thom Island and the Sun Paradise Land entertainment complex, which includes attractions like the Kiss Bridge.

- **Sustainability:** More Indian couples are choosing destinations and activities that align with their growing interest in responsible travel, such as avoiding single-use plastics and supporting local economies.

- **Generational divide:** Younger couples are leading the charge towards experiential travel, while millennial couples still prioritise comfort and familiarity.

Why Phu Quoc is a breakout destination

- **Affordable luxury:** Phu Quoc offers luxurious resorts and experiences at a more competitive price point than many other popular destinations.

- **Natural beauty:** The island is known for its pristine white-sand beaches, clear waters, and lush landscapes.

- **Unique attractions:** Beyond beaches, it features modern attractions like the Kiss Bridge and the world's longest three-rope cable car ride.

- **Visa-free access:** Visa-free entry for up to 30 days makes planning easy for Indian honeymooners.



Taiwan

Emerges as a Culinary Hotspot, Enticing Indian Travellers with Diverse Gastronomic Experiences



Taiwan is rapidly carving a name for itself as a global culinary destination, celebrated for its unique fusion of traditional flavours, modern innovation, and international influences. Central to this rise is the **MICHELIN Guide Taiwan**, whose 2025 edition showcases the richness and diversity of the island's food scene, attracting discerning travellers from around the world, including India.

Now in its eighth year, the 2025 MICHELIN Guide Taiwan features **419 establishments**, up from 343 in 2024, spanning Starred, Bib Gourmand, and Selected categories. The Guide has expanded to cover seven cities, with **New Taipei City (36)**, **Hsinchu County (21)**, and **Hsinchu City (22)** joining Taipei (157), Taichung (63), Tainan (61), and Kaohsiung (59). This growth highlights both Taiwan's rich culinary heritage and its emergence as a premier gastronomic destination.

A Culinary Heritage Rooted in Tradition and Innovation

Taiwan's culinary identity, shaped by thousands of years of indigenous, Chinese, and international influences, thrives on a mix of authenticity and innovation. Today, the island's food scene seamlessly blends local traditions with global techniques, offering something for every palate.

The 2025 MICHELIN Guide includes **53 Starred restaurants**, with eight newly awarded One MICHELIN Stars and three promoted to Two MICHELIN Stars. Additionally, one more restaurant has earned a **MICHELIN Green Star**, bringing the total to seven, recognising establishments for their sustainable and eco-conscious practices.

Appealing to Indian Travellers

Highlighting Taiwan's growing appeal for Indian tourists, **Paul Shih, Director of the Singapore Office, Taiwan Tourism Administration**, said:

"With a food identity deeply rooted in warm hospitality and tradition, Taiwan is emerging as one of the culinary capitals of the world. The latest MICHELIN Guide reflects the sophistication of our gastronomic scene, driven by a new



generation of chefs and a dedication to preserving heritage while innovating with local ingredients."

Shih noted that Taiwan offers a particularly compelling experience for Indian visitors:

"From Hakka cuisine and fresh, affordable seafood to vegetarian-friendly options and the world-famous bubble tea culture, our flavours resonate with Indian preferences. Taiwan's culinary tradition balances authenticity with creativity, and we are excited to share this with our Indian guests."

From Night Markets to Michelin-Starred Dining

Spanning nearly 36,000 square kilometres, Taiwan's culinary landscape

has become one of its strongest tourism assets. Cities across the island offer a full spectrum of dining experiences — from vibrant night markets and bustling street food stalls to internationally acclaimed fine dining. This diversity ensures that every visitor can discover authentic, memorable, and varied gastronomic experiences.

With its expanding culinary offerings and growing recognition on the global stage, Taiwan is poised to attract more Indian travellers eager to explore the island's flavours, culture, and dining excellence.

"I am confident that an increasing number of Indian visitors will come to Taiwan to savour our world-class culinary offerings," Shih concluded.



Thailand Redefines Luxury Travel with New Global Campaign: “Healing is the New Luxury”

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has unveiled its latest global television and digital campaign, *“Unforgettable Experience: Healing is the New Luxury,”* presenting a bold new narrative for Thailand’s tourism future. Moving beyond the conventional notions of luxury defined by opulence and indulgence, the campaign reimagines Thailand as a destination where true luxury lies in **healing, connection, and mindful rejuvenation.**

This latest initiative reflects TAT’s evolving vision to position Thailand as a global leader in **transformative, purpose-driven travel** — a place where the pursuit of well-being is deeply intertwined with the country’s natural beauty, heritage, and human warmth.

A New Definition of Luxury

In an era when travellers increasingly seek experiences that offer emotional fulfilment and personal renewal, TAT’s message resonates profoundly. *“Healing is the New Luxury”* transforms the act of travel into an invitation for introspection — an opportunity to slow down, reconnect, and rediscover oneself through Thailand’s culture,

cuisine, and compassionate hospitality.

The campaign’s visuals celebrate Thailand’s sensory richness — the serene rhythm of waves washing over Phuket’s shores, the tranquil precision of a traditional Thai massage, the meditative calm of temple rituals, and the vibrant pulse of Bangkok’s creative cafés and artistic enclaves. Each frame evokes a sense of balance between modern vibrancy and timeless tradition, portraying Thailand as both a sanctuary for the soul and a stage for authentic human connection.

Healing Beyond Wellness

While Thailand has long been a world leader in wellness tourism, the new campaign expands the definition of healing far beyond spas and retreats. It encompasses **emotional, cultural, and spiritual restoration** — the kind of healing that emerges from shared experiences, the warmth of Thai smiles, and the country’s innate sense of hospitality.

TAT Governor **Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool** described the campaign as a reflection of how travel itself has transformed.

“Through ‘Unforgettable Experience: Healing is the New Luxury,’ we invite

travellers to rediscover themselves in Thailand,” she said. “In today’s world of constant change, travel has become a form of healing — a moment to pause, reconnect with one’s inner self, and awaken the senses. Thailand offers endless ways to experience this through our people, nature, and culture.”

This sentiment mirrors the shift in global traveller preferences, where emotional depth and purpose now define the true essence of luxury. Whether through the meditative pace of a sunrise yoga session in Chiang Mai, the nourishment found in home-style Thai cooking, or the renewal felt while wandering through lush tropical landscapes, Thailand offers experiences that engage the body and soothe the soul.

The 5Rs of Healing

At the heart of the campaign is a distinctive thematic framework known as the “**5Rs of Healing**,” which encapsulates Thailand’s holistic approach to well-being and mindful travel. Each pillar represents a dimension of healing, reflecting the country’s diverse offerings:

- **Retreats for Transformations:**

From world-class wellness resorts and spa sanctuaries to mindfulness-focused eco-retreats, Thailand offers transformative escapes designed to realign the mind, body, and spirit.

- **Rituals for Manifestations:**

Visitors are encouraged to embrace Thailand’s spiritual heritage — from temple blessings and cultural ceremonies to meditation and traditional Thai healing practices that promote harmony and gratitude.

- **Reels for Joy:** Capturing moments of happiness through creativity, art, and expression, Thailand invites travellers to find joy in the everyday — through music, dance, photography, and storytelling.

- **Rhythms for High Vibrations:**

The infectious energy of Thai festivals, street life, and cultural rhythms celebrates collective joy and shared humanity, elevating the emotional frequency of every experience.

- **Relations for Connections:**

Perhaps the most vital of all, this pillar highlights the essence of Thai hospitality — the warmth, empathy, and human connection that turn every encounter into an act of healing.

A Journey Toward Mindful Tourism

Through this campaign, TAT not only promotes Thailand’s traditional strengths — its beaches, cuisine, and wellness heritage — but also reinforces its vision of **sustainable and mindful tourism**. The focus shifts from mass appeal to quality travel experiences that leave a positive impact on both visitors and local communities.

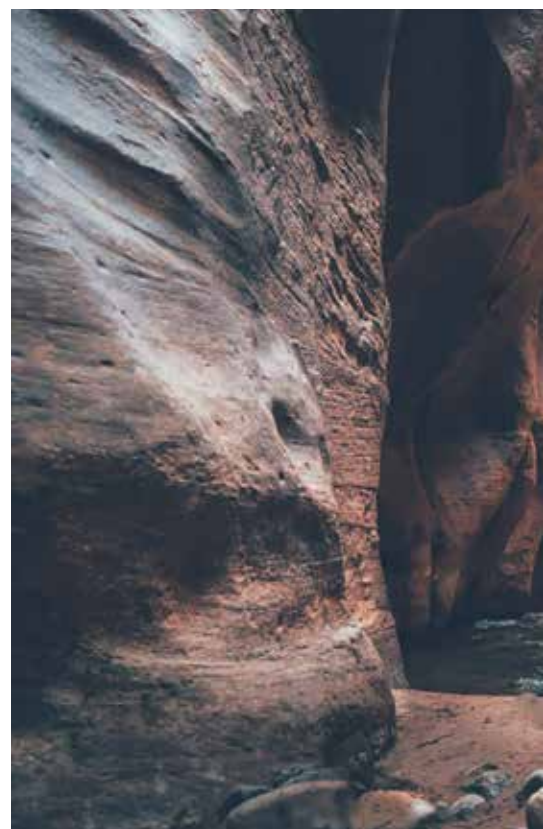
“Healing is the New Luxury” is more than a slogan; it is an ethos that redefines the relationship between traveller and destination. It encourages visitors to engage with Thailand in a way that is **conscious, authentic, and transformative** — where the memories created are not just unforgettable, but restorative.

The global campaign video, now airing across international platforms, captures this philosophy with cinematic beauty, blending emotion, nature, and humanity. It portrays Thailand as a living, breathing experience — one that heals through its landscapes, its traditions, and, above all, its people.

Thailand: Where Every Journey Heals

With “*Unforgettable Experience: Healing is the New Luxury*,” TAT reaffirms Thailand’s place on the global tourism map as more than a destination — as a **state of being**. In an age when travellers seek deeper meaning and emotional renewal, Thailand stands out as a sanctuary where every journey is an act of healing, and every experience, a rediscovery of the self.





WHAT'S NEW IN THE USA:

Brand USA

Invites Global Travellers to Celebrate 250 Years of “America the Beautiful” with Exciting New Experiences in 2026 and Beyond



As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary in 2026, the nation is preparing for a landmark year of celebrations, innovation, and grand openings across every corner of the country. From cutting-edge attractions and luxury hotels to milestone cultural events and enhanced air connectivity, travellers can expect a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rediscover America.

Brand USA — the nation’s official destination marketing organisation — is leading the charge, inviting visitors from around the world to explore “America the Beautiful” through new experiences and destinations that embody the country’s rich diversity and enduring spirit.

“With America250, the Route 66 Centennial, and the FIFA World Cup all converging in 2026, the United States is entering a once-in-a-generation moment,” said Fred Dixon, President and CEO of Brand USA. “From major openings to historic milestones, travellers will find more reasons than ever to explore what makes this nation unique.”



The South: Music, Magic, and Milestones

The American South welcomes an exciting lineup of new attractions and experiences.

- **Tennessee:** Dollywood unveils *NightFlight Expedition*, the world's first indoor hybrid coaster and whitewater rafting experience, blending thrills with Smoky Mountain charm.

- **Florida:** Tampa Bay's luxury landscape expands with *Pendry Tampa*, debuting in 2026 with five-star amenities along the Riverwalk.

- **Louisiana:** Lake Charles reopens its *Mardi Gras Museum of Imperial Calcasieu* in a reimagined 6,000-square-foot space celebrating vibrant local traditions.

- **Texas:** Austin celebrates 50 years of *Austin City Limits*, with special concerts honouring its legacy as the "Live Music Capital of the World."

- **Universal Kids Resort** opens in Frisco, Texas — a family-focused

theme park designed to bring Universal's most beloved characters to life.

- **North Carolina:** Aer Lingus launches the first-ever direct flight from Dublin to Raleigh-Durham, while American Airlines expands service from Europe to Miami and Dallas Fort Worth.

- **Alabama and Mississippi:** *Amtrak's Mardi Gras Service* returns, connecting New Orleans to Mobile with scenic Gulf Coast views.

Meanwhile, Florida's *Fort Myers* and its islands of Sanibel and Captiva are back to full splendour following restoration efforts post-Hurricane Ian, offering rejuvenated beaches, parks, and accommodations.

Out West: Grand Openings and Desert Dreams

The western U.S. is set for an array of spectacular openings.

- **California:** San Diego's *Gaylord Pacific Resort & Convention Centre*

— the first on the West Coast — welcomes visitors with expansive event spaces, a spa, and a water park. Los Angeles debuts the *Lucas Museum of Narrative Art* and the *David Geffen Galleries at LACMA*, made more accessible via the Metro D Line extension.

- **Santa Monica** celebrates its 150th anniversary in tandem with Route 66's centennial, marking its place as the iconic highway's western terminus.

- **Big Sky, Montana:** *One&Only Moonlight Basin Resort* opens for the 2025–26 ski season, offering alpine luxury amid breathtaking scenery.

- **Arizona:** China Airlines introduces the first nonstop Taipei–Phoenix flight, expanding Asian access to the Grand Canyon State.

- **Las Vegas** continues its glittering transformation with the *Vanderpump Hotel* debut and world-class residencies by Gwen Stefani and Dolly Parton.





Sports enthusiasts can look forward to the *first-ever NASCAR San Diego Weekend* at Naval Base Coronado and *Super Bowl LX* at Levi's Stadium in the Bay Area — both part of a series of major 2026 events leading up to the FIFA World Cup.

The Midwest: Culture, Connectivity, and Celebration

America's heartland shines with cultural revival and new air links.

- *British Airways* launches its first

London–St. Louis route in 22 years.

- *Air Canada* introduces nonstop flights from Montréal to Cleveland and Columbus, connecting travellers to Ohio's booming cultural scene, including the *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame's* new 50,000-square-foot expansion.

- *Indianapolis* unveils *The Trailways*, a \$150 million trail network featuring interactive mapping and a glowing night trail.

- *Illinois* opens the *Byway Discovery Centre*, an interactive hub celebrating

the Great Rivers & Routes region.

- *Wisconsin's Oneida Nation Museum* expands, showcasing tribal heritage and community storytelling.

The Northeast: History, Innovation, and Heritage

From iconic landmarks to cutting-edge exhibits, the Northeast celebrates the spirit of America's past and future.

- *Washington, D.C.* leads the nation's 250th-anniversary celebrations with a yearlong calendar of special exhibitions,

performances, and public art.

- The *Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum* unveils seven new exhibits, while the *American Dream Experience* at the Milken Center immerses visitors in interactive storytelling.

- *Newark Liberty International Airport* adds new international connections from Glasgow, Seoul, and Bilbao.

- *Amtrak's NextGen Acela* redefines luxury train travel along the D.C.–Boston corridor.

- *The Harlem Globetrotters* celebrate 100 years with a global anniversary tour.

- *Sesame Place® Philadelphia* expands accessibility as the first U.S. theme park certified under the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program.

Pacific Northwest & Beyond: Inclusive, Immersive, and Inspired

In the Pacific Northwest, accessibility and innovation take centre stage.

- *Seattle* completes a transformative waterfront project with open-air concerts, Indigenous art, and panoramic water views.

- *Oregon* becomes the first U.S. state certified “Accessibility Verified” by Wheel the World, championing inclusive tourism.

- *Idaho* welcomes *The Harriman, A Viceroy Resort*, blending alpine luxury with stargazing over the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve.

Beyond the mainland:

- *Puerto Rico* unveils the *Claro Space*

Dome by Toroverde — Latin America's first 360° immersive projection dome — blending technology, art, and education.

- *Hawaii* launches the *Aloha Pass* under *Experience Kilohana*, promoting authentic, locally owned experiences that embody the true Aloha spirit.

With the convergence of America250, the Route 66 Centennial, and global sporting and cultural events, 2026 promises to be a defining year for U.S. travel. From coast to coast and island to island, the country is unveiling an extraordinary lineup of experiences — inviting travellers to celebrate the past, present, and future of *America the Beautiful*.

Start planning your journey at **AmericaTheBeautiful.com**.



Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam: “The Rare Tropical Gem Where Luxury Meets Affordability” – An Island Paradise Awaits

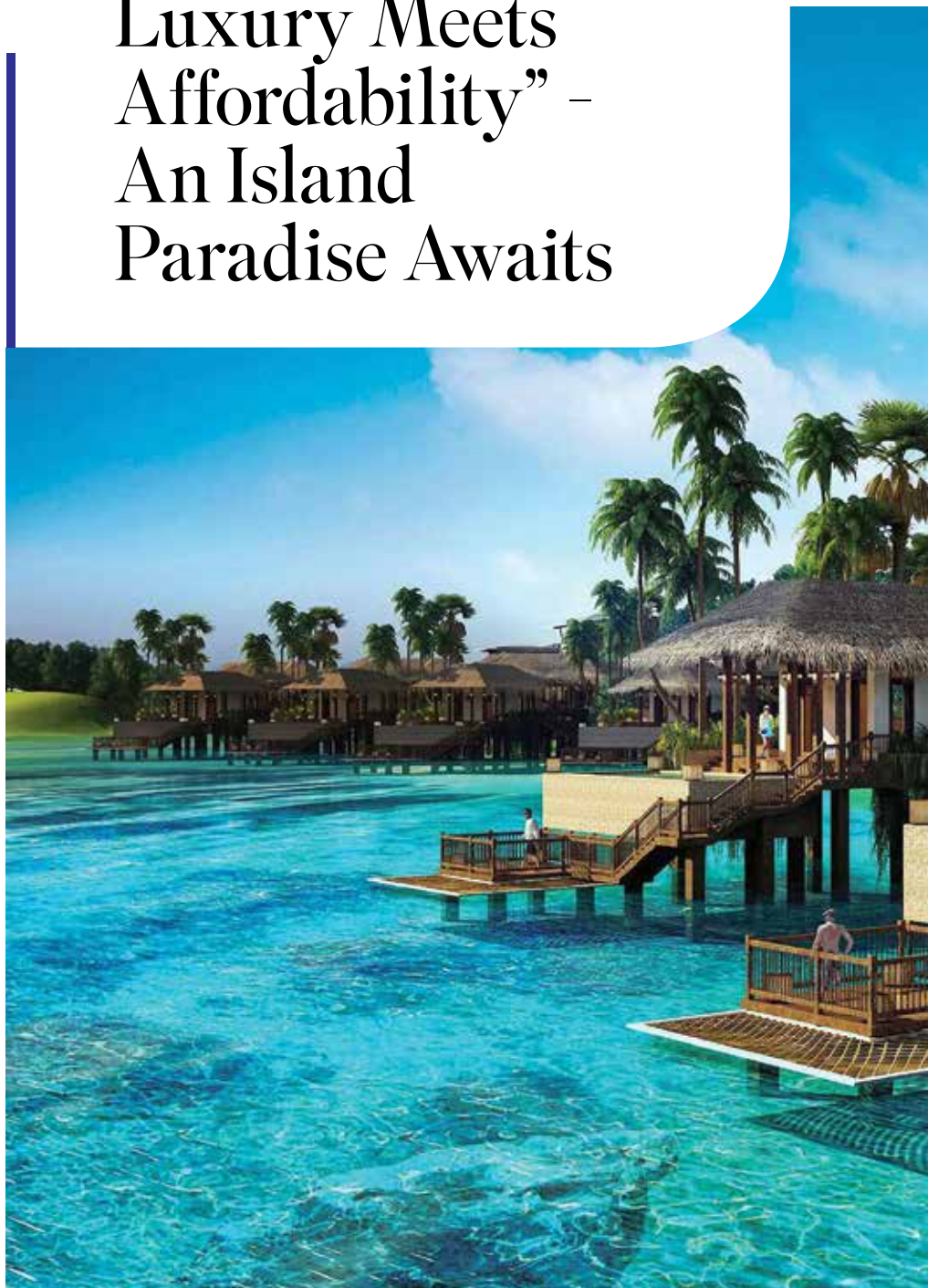
Discover why Phu Quoc is Vietnam's hottest island destination for 2025. From visa-free travel and pristine beaches to luxury stays and cultural charm, here are 10 reasons Indian travellers love it.

Nestled in the warm, turquoise waters of the Gulf of Thailand, **Phu Quoc Island** stands as one of Vietnam's most enchanting destinations. Known for its powdery white sands, lush tropical forests, and a serene blend of luxury and authenticity, this island has rapidly evolved into a global travel favourite. Whether you seek romance, relaxation, or adventure, Phu Quoc captures the very essence of Vietnam's coastal charm.

Romance by the Sea

For honeymooners and couples, Phu Quoc Island offers an idyllic escape. Its palm-fringed beaches, crystal-clear waters, and mesmerising sunsets set the stage for unforgettable moments. The island's luxury resorts and private beachfront villas redefine intimacy and indulgence, offering candlelit dinners by the shore, sunset cruises, and spa treatments designed for two.

From strolling hand-in-hand along



Long Beach to dining beneath a starlit sky, every moment in Phu Quoc feels tailor-made for romance.

Top Attractions on Phu Quoc Island

Phu Quoc's appeal lies in its diversity — a perfect balance of natural beauty, cultural experiences, and historical depth.

- **Sao Beach:** One of Vietnam's

most beautiful beaches, famed for its soft, powdery sands and calm, turquoise waters — perfect for sunbathing or snorkelling.

- **Phu Quoc National Park:** A UNESCO-recognised biosphere reserve covering more than half the island, offering hiking trails through dense jungle teeming with exotic wildlife.

- **Dinh Cau Night Market:** A

bustling hub in Duong Dong Town, alive with the aroma of street food, fresh seafood, and vibrant local crafts.

- **Tranh Stream (Suoi Tranh):**

A peaceful spot surrounded by lush greenery and small waterfalls, ideal for picnics and cooling dips.

- **Coconut Prison (Nha Tu Phu Quoc):**

A poignant historical site that tells stories from Vietnam's





past, offering insight into the island's wartime history.

Experiences & Adventures

Beyond its pristine beaches, Phu Quoc promises a variety of unforgettable experiences — from high-energy water sports to soothing wellness escapes.

- **Water Adventures:** Explore vibrant coral reefs while snorkelling or scuba diving, or enjoy a thrilling jet-ski ride along the coast.

- **Island-Hopping to An Thoi Archipelago:** Take a boat tour across 15 unspoiled islets, each offering

secluded beaches and pristine lagoons.

- **Spa & Wellness Retreats:** Indulge in holistic treatments and traditional Vietnamese massages at world-class wellness centres across the island.

- **Jungle Treks:** Trek through the tranquil trails of Phu Quoc National Park and discover its rich flora and fauna.

- **Sunset at Long Beach:** As evening falls, Long Beach becomes the perfect spot to unwind and watch one of Southeast Asia's most breathtaking sunsets.

A Culinary Journey

Phu Quoc is not just a feast for the eyes — it's a paradise for food lovers. Its cuisine reflects its coastal bounty and cultural influences, offering both traditional Vietnamese dishes and international fare.

Top Dining Spots:

- **Pepper's Pizza & Grill** – Casual dining with international favourites.

- **The Spice House** – A refined culinary experience blending Vietnamese flavours with global flair.

- **Pho Garden** – Serving authentic pho and local noodle specialities.



- *The Rabbit Hole Irish Bar & Restaurant* – Perfect for laid-back evenings with live music.
- *Coco Palm* and *Saigon Pho Viet* – Must-visit venues for fresh seafood and local delicacies.

Signature Dishes to Try:

- **Phu Quoc Fish Sauce:** The island's world-renowned export — rich, aromatic, and central to Vietnamese cooking.
- **Seafood Hotpot:** A fragrant broth filled with the day's freshest catch.
- **Bun Quay:** A distinctive noodle dish prepared tableside for a personalised experience.
- **Grilled Scallops:** Freshly caught and served with tangy dipping sauces — a local favourite.

Getting There

Phu Quoc International Airport (PQC) welcomes direct flights from major cities such as **Ho Chi Minh City**,



Hanoi, Bangkok, and Singapore.

Visa exemptions for many nationalities make it even easier to plan a visit, with travellers allowed up to 30 days visa-free on the island.

Getting Around

Transportation is simple and flexible. Most resorts offer airport shuttles, while taxis and ride-hailing services are readily available. Adventurous travellers can rent **motorbikes** to explore hidden beaches and fishing villages, while **bicycles** are perfect for leisurely rides through scenic backroads and countryside trails.

When to Visit

The best time to visit Phu Quoc is between **November and April**, when the weather is dry and sunny — ideal for beach activities and outdoor

adventures. The monsoon season (May to October) brings lush greenery and fewer crowds, offering a more peaceful experience.

Insider Tip

Don't miss the chance to visit a **fish sauce factory** or a **pepper farm** — both are integral to Phu Quoc's identity. You can also take a cable car ride to **Hon Thom Island**, the world's longest sea-crossing cable car, for breathtaking aerial views of the archipelago.

Beyond Phu Quoc

Phu Quoc may be Vietnam's island jewel, but it's just one chapter of the country's extraordinary travel story. From the vibrant streets of **Hanoi** and **Ho Chi Minh City** to the awe-inspiring beauty of **Ha Long Bay** and the ancient caves of **Phong Nha-Ke Bang National**

Park, Vietnam offers a rich tapestry of culture, history, and natural wonder.

Whether it's cruising through emerald waters, trekking through tropical forests, or savouring authentic street food, Vietnam promises experiences that stay with you long after you've returned home.

Final Word

Phu Quoc Island is more than a destination — it's an emotion that lingers. With its unspoiled beaches, cultural charm, and warm hospitality, it invites travellers to slow down, explore deeply, and rediscover the joy of island life. Whether part of a **15-day Vietnam itinerary** or a **romantic honeymoon escape**, Phu Quoc is where Vietnam's heart meets the sea — tranquil, timeless, and utterly unforgettable.

Maldivian Expands India Presence; Appoints AVIAREPS as GSA for South India



Maldivian, the national airline of the Maldives, has appointed **AVIAREPS India** as its official **General Sales Agent (GSA)** for South India, reinforcing its commitment to the Indian market and strengthening trade partnerships in a region that serves as a major gateway to the Maldives.

Until August 2025, the Maldives welcomed 85,306 Indian visitors, a 4.7% increase year-on-year. India now ranks 6th among source markets with a 5.7% share of total arrivals, reaffirming its strategic significance. With projections indicating a further 20% growth in 2025, Maldivian is poised to capture a larger share of the outbound segment, particularly from South India, where proximity and connectivity make the Maldives one of the most convenient international getaways.

According to the airline's 2025 schedule, Maldivian has been operating:

- Kochi–Malé (COK–MLE): 4 weekly services on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

- Trivandrum–Malé (TRV–MLE): 4 weekly services on Mondays,



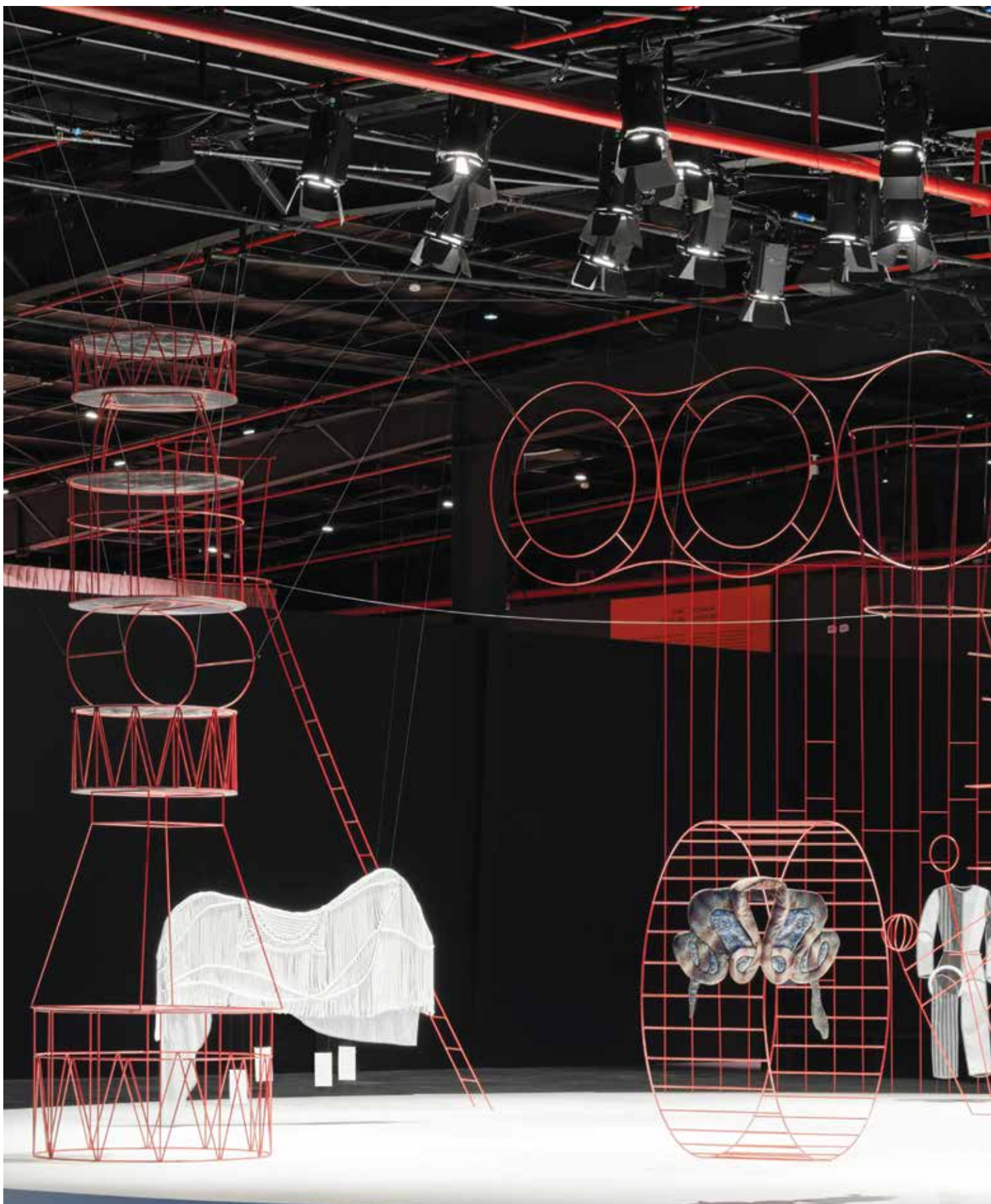
Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays

With this schedule, Maldivian ensures convenient departures and arrivals for Indian travellers, while also offering seamless domestic inter-island connections—the largest in the Maldives—allowing visitors to access luxury resorts, adventure hubs, cultural experiences, and wellness retreats across the archipelago.

"We are greatly encouraged by the growing interest from the Indian market, and the event in South India further reaffirmed the importance of this region for us," said Ibrahim Iyas, Managing Director of Maldivian. "With the support of AVIAREPS, we look forward to building stronger trade partnerships and welcoming even more Indian travellers to experience the Maldives and its diverse offerings."

Marcelo Kaiser, COO Aviation at AVIAREPS: *"We are proud to partner with Maldivian as their General Sales Agent in South India, one of the fastest-growing outbound travel markets in the region. India is not only a key source market for the Maldives but also one with immense potential for sustained growth. With our strong local expertise and deep trade relationships, AVIAREPS will ensure Maldivian strengthens its visibility, expands its reach, and provides Indian travelers with seamless access to the Maldives."*

With enhanced connectivity and dedicated trade representation, Maldivian is set to elevate its brand recall and market penetration, making the Maldives more accessible than ever for Indian travelers.





Mark Your Calendars for 2026:

The Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale Returns to Saudi Arabia

Exploring the power of movement, culture, and connection across borders

When the third **Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale** opens its doors on **January 30, 2026**, Saudi Arabia's JAX District will once again transform into a dynamic crossroads of creativity, culture, and conversation. This eagerly anticipated edition, themed **"In Interludes and Transitions,"** promises to explore how movement—of people, ideas, and artistic practices—shapes the way cultures connect and evolve.

A Place Where Heritage Meets Modernity

Strolling through **Diriyah**, one senses a remarkable coexistence of history and renewal. Once the capital of the first Saudi state and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Diriyah embodies centuries of heritage while embracing the energy of contemporary reinvention. Since the launch of the **Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale** in 2021, the destination has blossomed into a cultural hub that attracts leading artists and curators from around the globe.

The 2026 edition will take over the **JAX District**, one of Saudi Arabia's most vibrant creative quarters, with **over 70 artists** showcasing

works that span visual art, sound, performance, and installation. The Biennale will also feature **20 new commissions**, curated under the artistic direction of **Nora Razian** and **Sabih Ahmed**, with scenography designed by **Formafantasma**.

The Theme: "In Interludes and Transitions"

Rooted in a colloquial Arabic phrase that reflects the rhythm of nomadic life across the Arabian Peninsula, "In Interludes and Transitions" examines how movement—literal and metaphorical—shapes art, identity, and belonging. It celebrates the exchanges that occur in the spaces between destinations, where cultures meet and new forms emerge.

"Processions have produced relations and forms in this region," note Razian and Ahmed. "The movement of winds and the flow of trade, migration, and exile are carriers of stories, songs, and languages, producing rhythms and poetic meters such as the *rajaz*."

Through this lens, the Biennale will explore how art circulates and transforms, much like the communities and traditions that have long traversed the region.

JAX District: A Living Canvas

For visitors, JAX District will be more than a venue—it will become an artwork in motion. The Biennale aims to dissolve boundaries between artist and audience, turning galleries, courtyards, and public spaces into immersive environments for dialogue and reflection.

Set against the backdrop of **Diriyah's historic architecture**, including the mudbrick walls of At-Turaif and the iconic Salwa Palace, the Biennale connects Saudi Arabia's past with its present ambitions to emerge as a global arts destination.

A Global Lineup of Artists

This edition brings together an impressive roster of international and regional talent, including **Pio Abad, Rand Abdul Jabbar, Raven Chacon, Rohini Devasher, Petrit Halilaj, Raqs Media Collective**, and **Agustina Woodgate**, among others.

Visitors can expect a diverse mix of installations, performances, and soundscapes that examine migration, memory, and cultural fluidity. Some works will trace historical routes of exchange; others will turn ordinary spaces into stages for collective storytelling.

About the Diriyah Biennale Foundation

At the heart of this cultural movement is the **Diriyah Biennale Foundation**, chaired by **HH Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud**, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Culture. The foundation has positioned itself as a catalyst for creative dialogue, bridging the country's deep-rooted heritage with its rapidly expanding contemporary art scene.

Since its inception in 2021, the foundation has organised two alternating biennales—one dedicated

to **contemporary art** and the other to **Islamic art**—alongside an extensive program of educational and community initiatives. By revitalising Diriyah's **JAX District**, it continues to nurture a vibrant ecosystem for artists, curators, and audiences alike.

Looking Ahead

The **2026 Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale** is not merely an exhibition—it is a statement of Saudi Arabia's growing presence on the global cultural map. Through its exploration of movement and transition, the event invites visitors to consider how art connects us across boundaries, shaping shared narratives of transformation and discovery.

As the countdown begins to January 30, 2026, Diriyah is once again set to become a meeting point of worlds—where history inspires innovation, and where the journey itself becomes the art.



Singapore's Largest Indoor Nature-Inspired Playscape, Curiosity Cove, to open this November at The Mandai Wildlife Reserve



Designed for children aged three to 12, this nature-inspired playscape encourages self-directed, sensory-rich play where imagination sparks curiosity and a love for the planet. Curiosity Cove opens to the public on 21 November 2025, with tickets now available for purchase. Experience a glimpse of life in the treetops by scaling the Orangutan Sleeping Platform at Forestlands. The varied heights cater to children of different ages, enabling them to navigate at their own pace and comfort level.

Playtime at the Mandai Wildlife Reserve is getting a wild new twist, just in time for the year-end holidays. Opening on 21 November 2025 at Mandai Wildlife East – the eastern cluster of the precinct – Curiosity Cove will be Singapore's largest indoor nature-inspired playscape designed for children aged three to 12. Spanning 4,600sqm, this multi-sensory experience lets children lead their own imaginative adventures through nature-themed zones, moving like wildlife and seeing the world through their eyes.

Bennett Neo, Group CEO, Mandai Wildlife Group, said, "Curiosity Cove is designed to ignite children's natural curiosity and offer them an engaging introduction to nature in a way that excites and inspires. This immersive experience invites kids to discover wildlife and ecosystems, bringing nature's story to life through interactive play tools and phygital elements. Every sound, light, and digital response encourages them to explore at their own pace while building confidence as they interact

with the space. At Curiosity Cove, imagination takes flight, empathy for nature grows and a lifelong passion for wildlife begins – helping to shape the future stewards of our planet.”

Children are free to shape their own adventures in Curiosity Cove, exploring four interactive zones inspired by real-world ecosystems. Nature comes to life through these reimagined environments, and the vibrant features make each play experience fun and stimulating. In the Wetlands, children learn how water connects ecosystems and supports all living things. The Wetlands form a natural pathway through Curiosity Cove, where children can follow animal footprints along the riverbank as they journey through the different zones or find themselves surrounded by marine creatures living among the coral reefs. The Forestlands immerses them in the Southeast Asian rainforest, where they will discover hidden animal homes, from the forest floor to the treetops. In the Grasslands, they explore the social hierarchy of wildlife, including predator-prey behaviours and find out how animals camouflage in the savannah. Finally, the Drylands showcase the clever adaptations of fauna and flora that allow them to thrive in harsh desert conditions.

Across these four zones, experiential play and learning take shape in every corner, with over 30 multi-sensory touchpoints designed to engage children’s cognitive, social, and motor development. Whether crawling through a ‘snake’s belly’, challenging themselves to climb an orangutan tree-bed platform, or triggering sounds and lights by shaking hanging vines, each moment is crafted to immerse children in a playful exploration of nature.

Multimedia interactives introduce another dimension to the play-and-learn experience, allowing children to connect with the wonders of nature in imaginative ways. At the Grasslands’ Watering Hole, kids see themselves transform into animals and watch an animated panorama of the annual great



migration in South Africa. Meanwhile, their presence acts as a magnifying glass at Forestlands’ Microscopic Canopy, zooming in on the animals that live in the rainforest. By stepping on a simulated water bubble, children can magnify the tiniest features of these creatures, bringing them to life through a projection for a closer, immersive look.

Families can also look forward to additional activities at Curiosity Cove with Ranger Buddies, Mandai’s edutainment programme aimed at nurturing every child to become a future-ready and responsible global citizen through engaging experiences within and beyond the Mandai Wildlife Reserve. Children can enjoy lively dance sessions as part of the experience and choose optional add-ons such as early entry with interactive storytelling and curated birthday parties – adding a layer of fun and meaning to adventures that encourage children to drive positive change for themselves, others and the world.

The indoor environment complements the outdoor wildlife parks at the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, allowing children to continue their wildlife

adventures year-round, regardless of weather, ensuring learning and play never have to pause.

Curiosity Cove will open to visitors on 21 November 2025. Admission is by allocated timeslots, mainly in two-hour blocks, during the opening hours of 10.00am to 6.30pm. Tickets are priced at \$48 for one child (aged three to 12), with complimentary entry for one accompanying adult. Extended playtime can be added with top-up options. Guests can also enjoy a range of value-packed bundles:

All-access Play Date bundles for three or six visits to Curiosity Cove, starting at S\$128.

WildPass digital membership holders can enjoy bundled admission to Curiosity Cove and two selected wildlife parks from \$68 (U.P. \$100) through the new Destination Pass. This pass includes 30-day access and exclusive retail and dining vouchers worth over \$300.

The Friends of Mandai Starter membership offers annual visits to Curiosity Cove and the parks at a promotional price of \$365 (U.P. \$465) for two adults and one child from 31 October 2025 to 31 January 2026.

Etihad and Ethiopian Launch Frequent Flyer Partnership

Strengthening Joint Venture

Etihad Guest and ShebaMiles loyalty members can now earn and redeem miles in their respective loyalty programmes when flying across Etihad or Ethiopian Airlines' extensive global networks.

The frequent flyer partnership is an extension of the codeshare agreement between Etihad and Ethiopian launched in July as part of the strategic Joint Venture signed in March 2025.

Etihad launched nonstop flights from Abu Dhabi to Addis Ababa on 8 October, while Ethiopian Airlines began direct flights to Abu Dhabi from Addis Ababa on 15 July.

National, India – As part of the landmark Joint Venture agreement between Etihad Airways and Ethiopian Airlines, Etihad Guest and ShebaMiles have launched a frequent flyer partnership, allowing members of either carrier to earn and redeem miles across the networks in their respective loyalty programme. The partnership has launched following Etihad's inaugural flight to Addis Ababa on 8 October.

Etihad Guest members and ShebaMiles members can both now earn miles when travelling across either airline's extensive global networks, unlocking greater travel opportunities for passengers of both airlines. Etihad Guest Miles can be redeemed on flights, worldwide hotel stays and holidays, or a huge variety of products from the Etihad Guest Reward Shop. ShebaMiles members can redeem their earned miles across a range of ShebaMiles programme benefits.

Mark Potter, Managing Director Etihad Guest, said: "Etihad's Joint Venture and Frequent Flyer Partnership with Ethiopian Airlines marks a historic moment for passengers of both airlines. This partnership is designed to deliver greater value to guests travelling



across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, resulting in a more seamless and comprehensive combined network for both Etihad Guest members and ShebaMiles members to explore and be rewarded for.

We're excited to welcome ShebaMiles members onboard to explore the stunning destinations in Etihad's growing network and our home in Abu Dhabi, to experience our signature hospitality and immerse themselves in rich Emirati culture. Additionally, we are delighted to reward Etihad Guest members travelling across Ethiopian's impressive network and offer our guests more ways to spend their Etihad Guest Miles."

Mrs. Rahel Assefa, Ethiopian Airlines Group, Marketing Vice President, on her part remarked; "As a customer centric airline, we are delighted to expand our passengers' connectivity and flexibility in earning miles. This program partnership is a great opportunity for loyalty program members of both airlines. At Ethiopian, we continue to elevate our passengers' experience through innovation and

meaningful partnerships."

The Joint Venture between the airlines, both national carriers of their respective countries, demonstrates a shared commitment to offering expanded travel options and a smoother journey for passengers travelling between major African destinations on Ethiopian's network—such as Kampala, Uganda; Kinshasa, DR Congo and Lusaka, Zambia—and key cities in the UAE and Asia, including Etihad destinations across Asia and the Middle East, such as Colombo, Sri Lanka; Islamabad, Pakistan, and new routes including Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Krabi and Chiang Mai in Thailand and Medina, Saudi Arabia which will launch 9 November.

Addis Ababa was Etihad's tenth of 31 new destinations announced this year as part of the airline's strategic network expansion, working towards its ambitious growth plans to fly to 125 destinations by 2030, further expanding its presence in Africa alongside destinations like Tunis and Zanzibar launching in November and June respectively.

Accor Appoints Evan Harrington as Cluster GM for Mövenpick and Pullman Al Marjan Island



Accor has announced the appointment of Evan Harrington as Cluster General Manager for Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island and Pullman Hotels and Resorts Al Marjan Island, marking a significant step in the company's expansion on this emerging UAE destination.

In his expanded role, Harrington will oversee the overall performance of both resorts, driving commercial strategy, enhancing guest experiences, and fostering operational synergies across revenue, food and beverage, wellness, sustainability, and brand initiatives.

This leadership appointment comes as Al Marjan Island continues

to cement its reputation as one of the UAE's most sought-after tourism hubs. Accor remains at the forefront of the island's growth, offering diverse hospitality experiences that cater to domestic and international travellers—from family-friendly resorts to couples-focused stays and elevated culinary offerings.

Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island is widely recognised as a preferred resort in Ras Al Khaimah, celebrated for its Swiss-inspired hospitality, beachfront leisure, and dynamic culinary experiences. Meanwhile, Pullman Hotels and Resorts Al Marjan Island is reopening after the first phase of refurbishment, with renewed focus on

couples, experience-driven travellers, and vibrant dining concepts.

"Leading two distinctive brands in one destination is an incredible opportunity," said Harrington. "Our focus is simple: delivering memorable guest experiences, empowering our Heartists, and translating strategy into measurable results—commercially, operationally, and sustainably—so both resorts set the benchmark for Ras Al Khaimah."

Jonathan Sheard, Senior Vice President Operations, Premium, Midscale & Economy Division, Middle East, Africa & Türkiye at Accor, added: "Al Marjan Island is rapidly emerging as one of the UAE's iconic destinations. Mövenpick has long set the standard for Swiss-inspired hospitality appealing to families and leisure travellers, while Pullman will offer refreshed experiences for couples, explorers, and food enthusiasts. With Evan's leadership, we are confident this cluster will elevate both performance and the destination's global appeal."

Harrington brings nearly two decades of multi-brand leadership across the Middle East and Africa, including senior roles with Pullman, Hilton Garden Inn, DoubleTree by Hilton, Radisson Collection, Fairmont, and Hilton. Known for fostering high-performing teams and elevating guest experiences, he will focus on unifying commercial planning, revenue management, and signature experiences across rooms, dining, wellness, and family-leisure offerings.

Additionally, Harrington will prioritise talent development, ESG initiatives—including waste reduction, local sourcing, and community engagement—and strategic partnerships to position Al Marjan Island as a must-visit Northern Emirates destination.



Celebrating

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The Met recently has been conferred with prestigious accolades:

WORLD'S GREATEST BRANDS AWARD

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL AWARD

INTERNATIONAL FIVE STAR HOTEL STANDARDS

HAUTE GRANDEUR GLOBAL HOTEL AWARDS

WORLD LUXURY HOTEL AWARDS

sakura
asian kitchen

chutney
bar • Landoor

ZING ZING
GoerMET Shop

CRAFT
HOUSE
Fashion • Lifestyle

neoVeda Spa

60 Years of Friendship

Unlimited Privileges

await Indian MICE groups!



Unlock exclusive privileges with Singapore Tourism Board,
spanning travel, dining, luxury stays, and unforgettable experiences.

sentosa



MOUNT FABER
SINGAPORE



SHANGRI-LA
KASA SENTOSA
SINGAPORE



AMARA
SINGAPORE



SOFITEL
SINGAPORE

EDITION
SINGAPORE

ANDAZ
SINGAPORE

MONDRIAN
SINGAPORE OXTON

Far East
HOSPITALITY

GRAND
COPTHORNE
SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE
AIRLINES

IndiGo