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Volume 25 | Issue 11 | December 2025 | ₹500 / \$12 US

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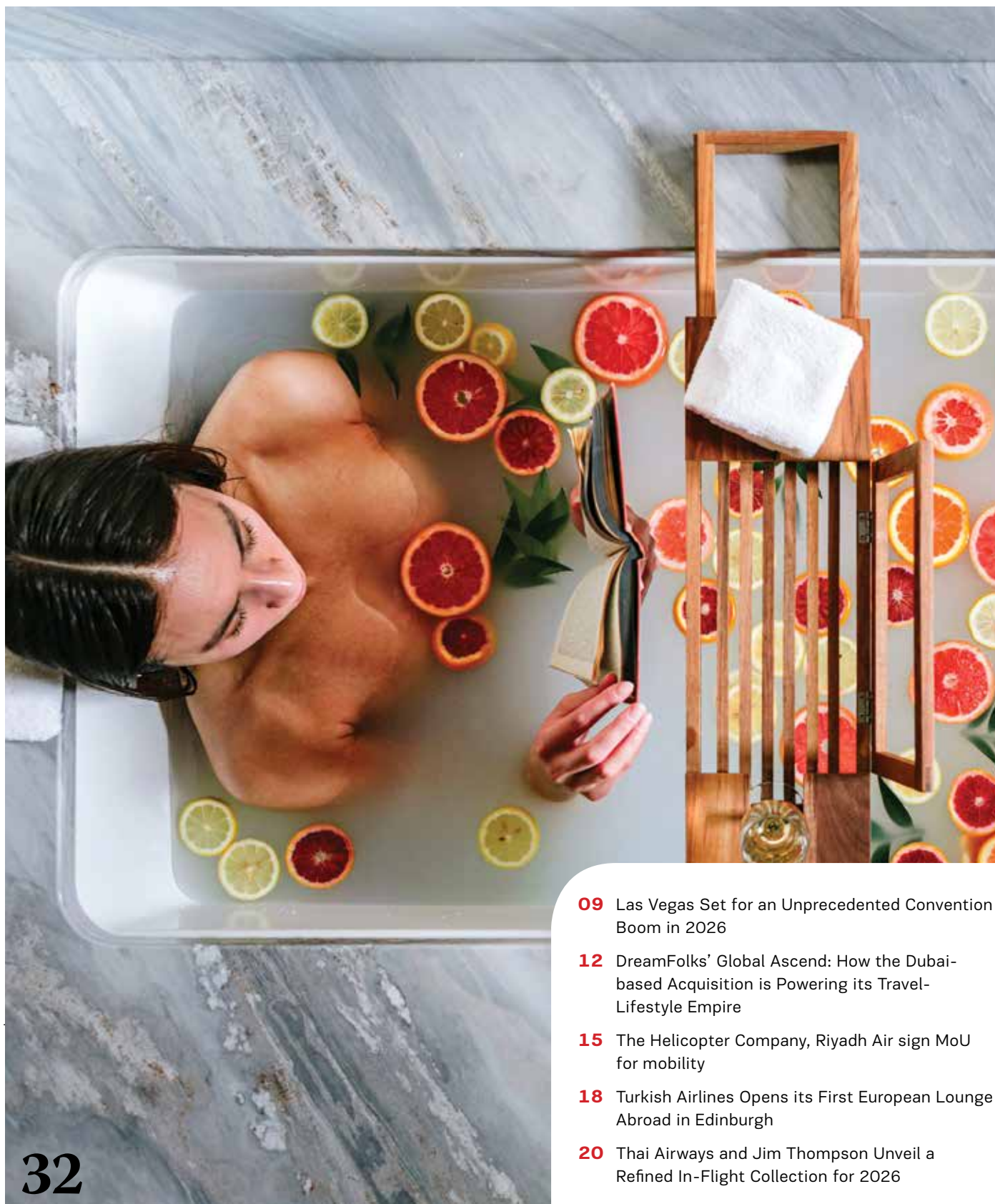
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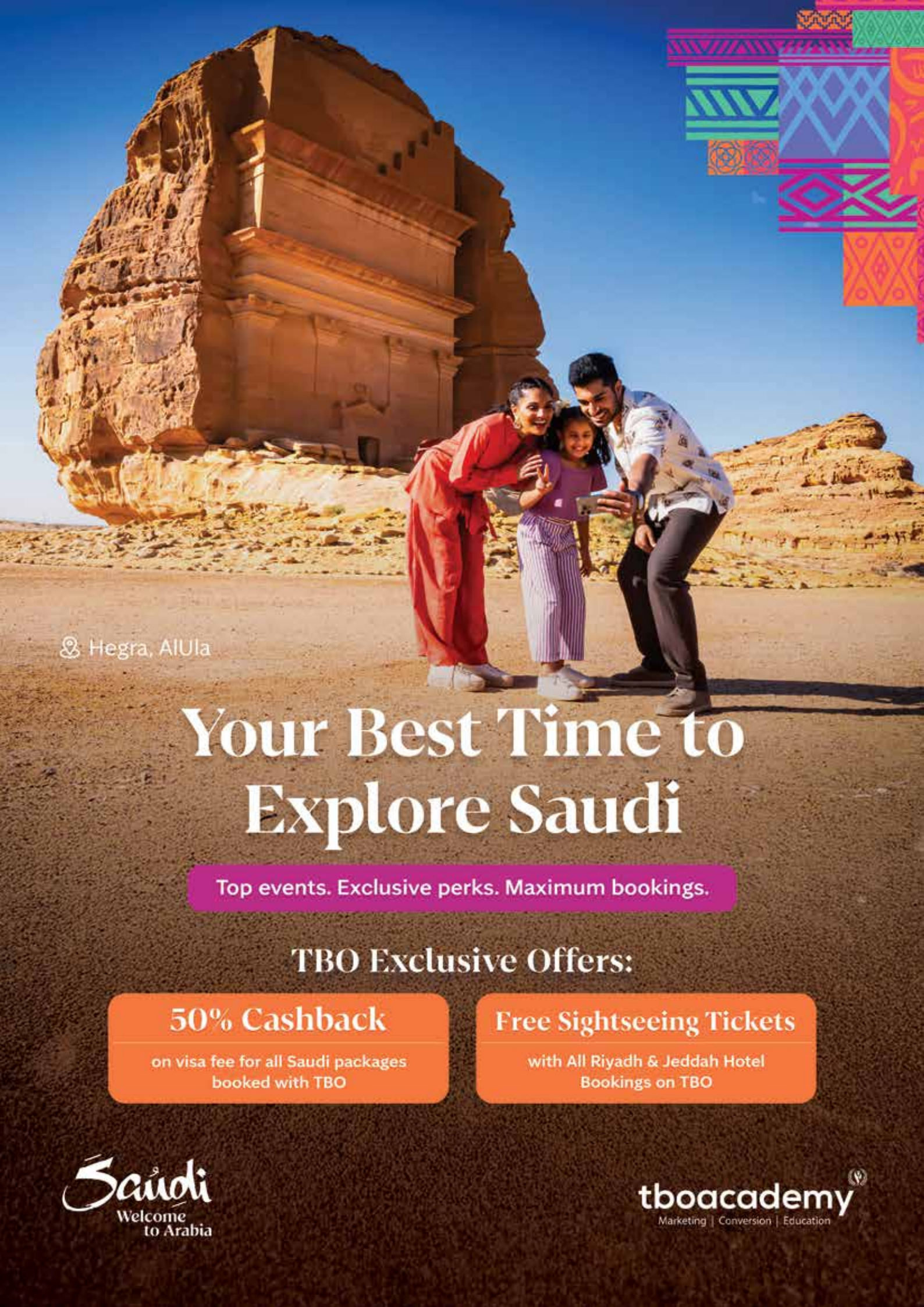
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Las Vegas Set for an Unprecedented Convention Boom in 2026

Las Vegas is preparing for a landmark year in its evolution as the world's premier meetings and events destination, with **2026 widely expected to be a record-breaking year for conventions, trade shows and group travel.** At the centre of this momentum is the completion of a **US\$600 million renovation and expansion of the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC)**, a transformative infrastructure investment that industry leaders believe will unlock a new era of growth for the city's tourism economy.

Slated for completion later this year, the final phase of the LVCC redevelopment is already reshaping how global event organisers, exhibitors

and delegates view Las Vegas—not just as a place to meet, but as a destination designed for scale, efficiency and experience.

A Strategic Investment with Long-Term Vision

The **US\$600 million Phase 3 expansion** of the LVCC represents one of the most consequential tourism infrastructure projects in the city's recent history. The expansion is emerging as a key catalyst behind strong forward-looking indicators for group sales in 2026.

In a recent industry outlook, the project is a strategically timed investment that aligns with rising confidence among casino and resort

operators. Much like Terminal 3 did for air travel, the expanded convention centre is expected to elevate Las Vegas's capacity to attract **large-scale international conventions**, reinforcing the city's position as a global business hub while enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Confidence from the City's Tourism Leadership

Optimism around 2026 is shared by the **Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA)**, which oversees destination marketing and convention sales for the city. **Steve Hill, President and CEO of LVCVA**, has said that visitation trends over the next 15 months look **"exceptionally**

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strong,” reinforcing expectations of a banner year ahead.

With the final phase of the LVCC expansion nearing completion, the city is already preparing for a surge in convention activity. Major shows are booking larger footprints, event calendars are filling earlier than usual, and demand for midweek hotel inventory—long the backbone of Las Vegas tourism—is strengthening.

The result is a tourism ecosystem poised for uplift: higher hotel occupancy, increased visitor spending, and stronger demand across dining, transportation, retail and entertainment.

Strengthening Las Vegas’s Global Competitive Edge

In an increasingly competitive global meetings landscape, infrastructure matters. Destinations around the world are racing to modernise venues, improve delegate flow and integrate technology. Las Vegas’s response has been decisive.

The upgraded LVCC—now among the largest convention facilities in the

United States by exhibit space—offers brighter, more open halls, improved logistics and the ability to host multiple citywide events simultaneously. This scale, combined with Las Vegas’s unmatched inventory of hotel rooms, entertainment and dining, continues to differentiate the destination for planners of complex, high-attendance events.

Importantly, the expansion reinforces the critical role of **business tourism** in Las Vegas’s visitor economy. Conventions and trade shows not only draw international delegates but also deliver consistent midweek demand, stabilising revenues and supporting tens of thousands of jobs across hospitality and services.

Ripple Effects Across the Local Economy

The impact of convention growth extends far beyond the exhibition floor. Increased demand for event space translates directly into higher hotel occupancy rates, greater restaurant traffic, expanded transportation usage and increased retail spend.

For local businesses—from independent suppliers and event production firms to restaurants and attractions—the convention boom represents sustained economic opportunity. As Las Vegas attracts more global delegates, spending on lodging, dining, entertainment and experiences delivers long-term benefits to the wider community.

Learning from the Past, Building for the Future

The parallels with the **US\$2.4 billion Terminal 3 project**, completed in 2012, are instructive. That expansion enabled Las Vegas to welcome more international travellers, directly supporting hotel growth and tourism revenues. The LVCC expansion is expected to deliver a similarly transformative effect—this time by positioning the city to capture an even greater share of the global meetings and exhibitions market.

By increasing capacity, modernising facilities and enhancing the delegate experience, Las Vegas is future-proofing its tourism infrastructure for



the next decade and beyond.

A Packed and Powerful 2026 Calendar

Momentum is further reinforced by a **robust 2026 convention calendar**, featuring some of the world's most influential trade shows and industry gatherings:

- **CES 2026 (January 6–9)** – The world's leading technology show, expected to draw around **140,000 attendees** across multiple venues
- **World of Concrete (January 20–22)** – A flagship event for the construction and masonry industries
- **SHOT Show (January 20–23)** – Serving the shooting, hunting and outdoor sectors
- **CONEXPO-CON/AGG (March 3–7)** – North America's largest construction trade show, held every three years
- **NAB Show (April 19–22)** – A global gathering for media, broadcasting and entertainment professionals
- **Ai4 2026 (August 4–6)** – The largest AI conference in the U.S.,

projected to host 12,000 attendees

• **Global Gaming Expo (G2E) (September 28–October 1)** – The premier event for the global gaming industry

• **Automotive Aftermarket Week (SEMA/AAPEX) (November 3–6)** – Las Vegas's largest annual show by attendance, spanning multiple venues citywide

This breadth—spanning technology, construction, media, gaming, automotive and artificial intelligence—underscores the diversity and resilience of Las Vegas's convention economy.

What 2026 Means for Travel and Tourism

For travellers, planners and industry professionals alike, the convention surge offers a compelling narrative: **Las Vegas is a city where business and leisure intersect seamlessly.** Delegates can move from keynote sessions to world-class dining, headline entertainment and curated experiences within minutes—an advantage few global destinations can match.

As the newly expanded Las Vegas

Convention Center prepares to welcome the world, the city is not merely anticipating a strong year—it is shaping the next chapter of its tourism story. In 2026, Las Vegas is set to once again demonstrate that conventions are more than gatherings; they are powerful engines of commerce, culture and connection.



DEVENDER GROVER

We are on



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A portrait of Liberatha Peter Kallat, Chairperson & Managing Director of DreamFolks Services Ltd. She is a woman with shoulder-length dark hair, smiling, wearing a black blazer over a white top with lace sleeves. She is seated, with her hands clasped in her lap. The background is a dark wood-paneled wall with green plants.

INTERVIEW

DreamFolks' Global Ascend:

How the Dubai-based Acquisition is Powering its Travel-Lifestyle Empire

When DreamFolks Services debuted on India's stock exchanges in September 2022, it entered the public market not merely as an airport-services aggregator but as a company with a clear mission: to make every stage of travel more human, more seamless, and more comfortable. The enthusiastic investor response signaled confidence in its scalable, tech-led business model. Three years on, the company now stands on the cusp of a much larger transformation.

*Liberatha Peter Kallat,
Chairperson & Managing Director,
DreamFolks Services Ltd.*

In this exclusive interview feature with Devender Grover, Editor in Chief, *Travel Span*, DreamFolks' Founder & CMD, Liberatha Peter Kallat, speaks to us about the company's new identity as a global travel-lifestyle ecosystem — marked by the launch of a consumer-facing membership program, a strategic foothold in Singapore, and most significantly, the acquisition of Dubai-based **Easy To Travel** (ETT), in a move that accelerates DreamFolks' international ambitions.

“We’re building a global travel-lifestyle network — not just lounge access, but a curated journey of comfort and convenience.” — Liberatha Peter Kallat, Chairperson & Managing Director, DreamFolks Services Ltd.

We begin by asking Liberatha how she sees DreamFolks today compared to where it stood at the time of the IPO.

Q When DreamFolks got listed in 2022, what did that moment represent for the company?

Our listing in 2022 was a landmark moment — one that signified far more than a financial milestone. For me, it was a powerful validation of our vision. The market's response reaffirmed what we had believed from the beginning: that aggregating premium services such as lounges, meet & assist, wellness, F&B, and airport transfers, and distributing them through banks, card networks, fintechs, and travel partners, was a powerful and scalable model.

The listing elevated our visibility with global banks and corporate clients, strengthened governance, and reinforced our credibility in a space that sits at the crossroads of payments, loyalty, travel, and lifestyle. More importantly, the IPO gave us the momentum to scale beyond India's borders — a critical step in our ambition to become a global curator of premium travel, lifestyle & leisure privileges.

Reframing Travel as Lifestyle

Q DreamFolks started with airport lounge aggregation. How has the company's vision evolved?

The evolution has been intentional and rooted in understanding the psychology of modern consumers.

We began with a focused proposition — offering cardholders access to airport lounges. But today, DreamFolks defines itself as a comprehensive travel-lifestyle platform, bundling wellness, leisure, dining, entertainment, mobility, and airport services into one seamless ecosystem. Modern travelers do not view airports, layovers, spas, road travel, or dining as isolated experiences — and neither does DreamFolks. Our product architecture reflects this holistic vision through proprietary technology, sophisticated distribution frameworks, and direct-to-consumer offerings.

This shift has given rise to a dual strategy — B2B and B2C — allowing us to serve banks and enterprises while simultaneously building new revenue opportunities through loyalty and direct to consumer memberships.

DreamFolks Club: The New Membership Identity

Q What role does the DreamFolks Club play in the company's evolution?

The DreamFolks Club is a clear expression of the brand's pivot towards lifestyle and consumer engagement. It emerged from a clear gap we identified in the market — where most travel or rewards programs were either purely travel-centric or restricted to a single niche service. Truly premium, curated experiences were accessible only to a select few, often restricted by high costs or long-standing legacy barriers, especially in the case of members-only clubs.

With DreamFolks Club, we set out to break that mould entirely. Rather than offering isolated perks, we've created a seamlessly integrated membership that blends everyday lifestyle enhancements with premium travel and high-value leisure experiences. The idea is to support the entire consumer journey — enabling elevated experiences whether one is traveling, networking, socializing, or simply unwinding.

What truly sets the DreamFolks Club apart is its marquee offerings

— privileged access to over 3,000 members-only clubs globally and premier golf facilities worldwide. Members gain entry into spaces that enhance both professional and personal experiences, without the typical years-long waitlists or stringent eligibility requirements. For golf enthusiasts, the Club offers access to more than 70 golf outlets across India and over 850 courses internationally, allowing members to take lessons, practice, or play full rounds wherever they travel.

Whether you are a young professional, a frequent traveler, a family, or a lifestyle seeker, this membership offers exceptional value without compromising on quality or choice, starting from ₹10,000 only. Members gain access not only to global lounges but to high-value privileges like airport transfers, spa sessions, grooming benefits, curated dining, movie vouchers, and everyday comforts such as complimentary coffee or highway dining.

Democratising Access Through Wallet and Fintech Partnerships

Q How is DreamFolks using fintech partnerships to broaden access?

Premium travel & lifestyle benefits have traditionally been tethered to expensive credit cards. DreamFolks set out to change that.

We serve as a critical tech enabler for banks, card networks and fintechs, supporting their customer acquisition, engagement, and loyalty strategies. Our omni-channel technology framework allows end users to access services effortlessly through multiple modes, including bank-issued cards, membership cards, mobile applications, and voucher-based systems that allow users to enjoy curated privileges without conventional barriers. This democratization widens the potential member base and embeds DreamFolks into everyday financial ecosystems.

Singapore: The First Global Anchor

Q Why was Singapore chosen as DreamFolks' first international base?

Singapore is a strategic pivot — a global business hub that connects East and West. The registration of DreamFolks Services Pte. Ltd. in 2023 provided a neutral operational home for cross-border partnerships, contract structuring, compliance, and regional deployment.

The presence assures global partners that DreamFolks is not merely an India-centric enterprise but a company with international governance and operational sophistication.

The Dubai Acquisition: Easy To Travel Joins the DreamFolks Family

Q DreamFolks recently acquired a majority stake in Easy To Travel. What prompted this landmark decision?

This acquisition marks a pivotal milestone in DreamFolks' global growth journey.

Easy To Travel (ETT), based in Dubai, has one of the widest airport ancillary networks worldwide, spanning 120 countries, 500+ airports, and more than 1,200 service touchpoints. Its offerings include lounge access, fast track, meet & assist, buggy transfers, delay care, and global eSIM services — that mirror DreamFolks' own product set and accelerate its ability to offer a seamless worldwide experience.

ETT also brings deep integrations with OTAs, GDSs, airlines, fintechs, travel agencies, and financial institutions — including partnerships with players like **Amadeus, Sabre, and Emirates** — giving DreamFolks immediate scale and distribution.

The acquisition is a fusion of complementary strengths: DreamFolks' Indian operational scale and distribution reach, combined with ETT's European travel-tech heritage and global network.

Easy To Travel's leadership on joining DreamFolks:

Alexej Boiko, Founder & CEO, Easy To Travel:

"Becoming part of DreamFolks marks an exciting new chapter for us. We have spent years building a wide global network and a scalable technology-

led distribution platform rooted in reliability and innovation. DreamFolks' leadership and market dominance offer the ideal environment to accelerate our next phase of growth. By combining our European travel-tech heritage with DreamFolks' operational scale, we are poised to offer a more connected and globally integrated travel experience."

Oleksii Tkachenko, Co-Founder, Easy To Travel:

"Our mission has always been to bring the world of travel comfort forward through digital channels. Joining forces with DreamFolks allows us to deploy our API-first solutions and unique products, like Delay Care, to a much wider audience. This partnership positions us to set a new standard for how airport services are distributed and consumed globally."

Industry analysts, observing the merger, have called it "the bridge between regional strength and global scale."

Technology as the Backbone: APIs and Client-First Design

Q How does technology enable DreamFolks' global scale?

At the core of DreamFolks' product is an advanced tech ecosystem that allows banks, card networks, OTAs, airlines, enterprises and fintech's to integrate services seamlessly. DreamFolks' technology isn't just integrated; it's embedded deeply into the core systems that our clients use. Clients retain brand control; travelers encounter fewer friction points; DreamFolks oversees quality & convenience while unlocking recurring revenues.

The company sees itself not as a service provider but as an enabler — a platform embedding premium experiences into partner journeys globally.

A Marketplace Serving Members, Corporates, Banks, Card Networks, Fintechs, and OTAs

Q Who does DreamFolks ultimately serves?

DreamFolks serves three core customer pillars:

1. Individual travelers subscribing to DreamFolks Club

2. Corporates seeking seamless travel & lifestyle solutions

3. Banks, card networks, fintechs, and enterprises, embedding premium benefits into their products.

This multi-channel strategy not only diversifies our revenue base but also positions DreamFolks as an indispensable partner across sectors driven by high-frequency travel and premium consumer engagement.

What Luxury Travelers Can Expect Next

Luxury travelers can expect a far more seamless, consistent, and thoughtfully curated experience. Our focus is on ensuring that no matter where our customers travel, they encounter the same level of excellence across every touchpoint.

At the same time, we are sharpening our focus on meaningful travel & lifestyle curation — experiences that add real value beyond just access. And finally, we are deeply integrating these offerings into everyday routines through apps, memberships, and client ecosystems, so that premium experiences become effortless, not occasional.

Closing Reflection: From Access to Aspiration

The DreamFolks story is one of deliberate evolution — from an India-born aggregator to a global travel & lifestyle curator. The IPO, Singapore expansion, DreamFolks Club, and now the Dubai acquisition of Easy To Travel, are interconnected moves in a long-term strategy.

For Liberatha, the mission remains as elegant as it is ambitious: to transform travel from a transactional necessity into an experiential continuum of comfort, privilege, and thoughtful design.

If DreamFolks delivers on its vision, journeys will not only be about reaching destinations — but about elevating every moment in between.

The Helicopter Company, Riyadh Air sign MoU for mobility

At the Dubai Airshow, Riyadh Air and The Helicopter Company (THC), both Public Investment Fund (PIF) entities, signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding aimed at reshaping premium mobility within Saudi Arabia. The partnership marks a significant step in integrating advanced air mobility solutions into the Kingdom's expanding aviation ecosystem — and a key milestone in Riyadh Air's mission to redefine the modern travel experience.

The agreement sets the foundation for a new era of seamless travel, enabling Riyadh Air passengers to connect effortlessly from King Khalid International Airport (RUH) to destinations across Riyadh and beyond via helicopter.

This partnership marks a major milestone in enhancing premium travel and connectivity within Saudi Arabia, enabling passengers to enjoy seamless last-mile transfers to their final destinations.

The MoU forms a foundational part of Riyadh Air's ambitious vision to revolutionise air travel and integrate advanced air mobility solutions into the Kingdom's rapidly evolving aviation ecosystem.

Talking about the partnership, **Arnaud Martinez, CEO of THC**, said: "THC continues to

unlock new modes of mobility that deliver high standards of safety, comfort, and convenience. By partnering with Riyadh Air, we are reinforcing national integration in the aviation sector and contributing to PIF's mandate to strengthen strategic sectors and support Saudi Vision 2030."

Tony Douglas, CEO of Riyadh Air, added: "Our commitment extends beyond traditional air travel; we are building a world-class travel experience that reflects the Kingdom's ambition and growing global presence. Our collaboration with THC embodies a shared mission to advance premium mobility solutions that contribute to the transformation of the national aviation landscape." The partnership comes

as Riyadh Air prepares to launch commercial operations with a state-of-the-art fleet designed to elevate the Kingdom's position as a global aviation hub. By incorporating helicopter transfers into its offering, the airline aims to deliver a differentiated premium product tailored to travellers seeking speed, personalisation, and convenience from runway to final destination.

With its state-of-the-art fleet, Riyadh Air is set to elevate the future of travel and strengthen the Kingdom's position as a global aviation hub.

Through this strategic partnership, both companies will explore and develop premium last-mile air mobility solutions, providing

Riyadh Air passengers with seamless connections to key destinations across Riyadh and the wider Kingdom once commercial operations are fully launched.

The initiative aims to facilitate fast and efficient transfers between King Khalid International Airport (RUH) and various destinations within Riyadh, mirroring similar premium helicopter transfer services offered in global cities such as New York and Nice. As part of Riyadh Air's broader commitment to personalised travel, these solutions will offer customers a range of tailored options to meet their specific transfer needs, ensuring a smooth and elevated travel experience from start to finish.





Turkish Airlines Launches Flights to Phnom Penh, the Capital of Cambodia

Turkish Airlines, the airline that flies to more countries than any other, has taken a step further to strengthen its global reach by launching flights to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, in line with its strategic goals.

With this new destination, Cambodia became the 7th country served by the flag carrier in Southeast Asia, and Phnom Penh joined the network as the 11th city in the region. Strengthening commercial ties between Türkiye and Cambodia and contributing to the economic growth of this emerging market, the Phnom Penh route expands the airline's Far East network to 20 cities and 21 airports.

This new route offers Turkish Airlines' guests easier access to one of the key destinations in the region and showcases once more the unparalleled connectivity the Turkish flag carrier offers as the only European carrier flying to this destination.

Turkish Airlines operates flights to Phnom Penh three times a week. Flights from Istanbul to Phnom Penh depart on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, while return flights to Istanbul operate on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

Commenting on the new route, **Turkish Airlines CEO Bilal Ekşi**, said: "As Turkish Airlines, we



continuously expand our network connecting continents and strengthen our connections with strategic destinations. Adding Cambodia as our 132nd country to our unparalleled network, and the launch of Phnom Penh flights marks a significant step forward in this goal. Our flights to Cambodia will present new opportunities for both tourism and business. Additionally, as the only European carrier flying to this destination, we will further solidify our leadership in the region."

Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, stands as one of the region's most important tourism and trade centres with its historical fabric,

cultural heritage and vibrant city life. Situated at the meeting point of the Mekong and Tonle Sap Rivers, the city offers visitors a rich cultural experience with its Royal Palace, National Museum, and traditional markets.

As part of its special launch promotion, guests can book tickets until February 10, 2026, for travel until October 31, 2026, with fares starting from 699 USD for flights from Istanbul to Phnom Penh, and 679 USD for flights from Phnom Penh to Istanbul. These prices are available on Turkish Airlines' official website and may vary at ticket sales offices and travel agencies.





Turkish Airlines Opens its First European Lounge Abroad in Edinburgh





Turkish Airlines has opened its first-ever European lounge at Edinburgh Airport, aside from the world-famous one at its Istanbul hub, bringing another dimension of its world-renowned hospitality to travellers in Scotland. The new lounge further elevates Edinburgh's premium travel offering while reinforcing the airport's growing role as an international gateway.

Türkiye's flag carrier, which flies to more countries than any other, hosted a celebratory event at Edinburgh International Airport on 10 December to mark the opening of its eighth lounge outside of Türkiye. Turkish Airlines continues to bring scaled-down slices of its five-star Lounge in Istanbul to its international gateways to maintain a seamless and luxurious experience.

Spanning 673m² and accommodating 149 guests, the lounge offers a premium experience with facilities including an open buffet featuring a Turkish pide service at lunch and dinner; a luxury relaxation area with TVs and Wi-Fi; and two prayer rooms. The lounge also includes an accessible restroom for the guests with reduced mobility, a baby care room and flight information screens.

Turkish Airlines Chief Operations Officer M. Akif Konar said: "The opening of our new Turkish

Airlines Lounge at Edinburgh Airport marks an important milestone for our airline. As our first abroad lounge in Europe and our eighth outside of Türkiye, this investment demonstrates our deep commitment to our European operations, where we already possess a strong presence as the best airline of the continent. Looking ahead, we will continue to build on our presence in the region and bring our award-winning hospitality closer to travellers here."*

Edinburgh International



Airport Chief Commercial Officer Stephanie Wear said: * «The opening of the new Turkish Airlines Lounge marks an exciting chapter for both us and the airline as they launch their first lounge in Europe at Edinburgh Airport. It demonstrates Turkish Airlines' commitment to the airport and its efforts to enhance the travel experience for passengers. Open to all travellers, the lounge offers a relaxing space with fantastic runway views and some great food and beverage options whilst you wait for your flight.»

Located on Level 2 near gate 16, the lounge will be available to Turkish Airlines Business Class passengers, Miles & Smiles members (Elite, Elite Plus and Elite Corporate Club) travelling in any class, and holders of the carrier's Miles & Smiles Premier Visa Signature Card issued in the United States. Guests with a Paid Lounge membership card can also enter the lounge ahead of their flight.

Turkish Airlines operates 10 weekly flights between Edinburgh and Istanbul, which allows travellers from Scotland to connect via Turkish Airlines' unparalleled global network to 356 destinations in 132 countries.

***According to Skytrax Awards for numerous years.**

Thai Airways and Jim Thompson Unveil a Refined In-Flight Collection for 2026



In an era when the journey itself has become as meaningful as the destination, **Thai Airways International** continues to redefine premium air travel through design, storytelling and cultural authenticity. Launching in **January 2026**, the flag carrier has once again partnered with iconic Thai lifestyle brand **Jim Thompson** to introduce the latest **Thai Airways Jim Thompson in-flight collection**—a carefully curated

range of amenity kits and Royal Silk Class comfort wear that celebrates Thai craftsmanship through a contemporary lens.

Now in its **third consecutive year**, the collaboration underscores a shared commitment to elevating the passenger experience while championing sustainability, heritage and thoughtful design. What began in 2023 with premium amenity kits for international Royal Silk Class travellers

has since evolved into a distinctive in-flight identity—one that merges Thailand's rich artistic traditions with the refined sensibilities of modern aviation.

Design as cultural storytelling

At the heart of the 2026 collection are **14 exclusive amenity bag prints**, each conceived as a visual narrative inspired by Thailand's landscapes, history and national symbols. Crafted from Jim Thompson's signature fabrics, the designs transform a functional in-flight item into a keepsake—inviting passengers to engage with Thai culture long after the flight has landed.

Among the standout motifs is **House on the Klong**, drawing inspiration from the lush tropical garden and traditional teak architecture of the Jim Thompson House Museum. **Orchids Bunch** pays homage to Thai Airways' iconic purple orchid emblem, while **Elephant Legacy** blends bamboo patterns with Thailand's revered national animal. **Stamp Siam** takes a more archival approach, reinterpreting historical Thai postage stamps featuring cultural landmarks and a Thai Airways aircraft.

Additional prints—including **Paradise**, **Phrae Phii Suea** and **Tropical Forest Garden**—capture the country's natural beauty, translating verdant jungles and dreamlike landscapes into tactile design. The amenity kits are offered to **Royal Silk Class passengers on international flights exceeding three hours and 30 minutes**, excluding select routes such as Milan, Paris, Tokyo and Shanghai.

A first for Royal Silk Class

For the first time in its history, Thai Airways is extending the collaboration beyond amenity kits to include **Jim Thompson-designed comfort wear**

for Royal Silk Class passengers—an evolution that reflects growing expectations around in-flight wellbeing and design-led luxury.

The **Royal Silk Class Elephant Series** features long-sleeve tops and trousers tailored for long-haul comfort, particularly on European routes. Available in **two patterns and three colourways**, the sets incorporate Jim Thompson's refined **Origami Elephant motif**, subtly weaving cultural symbolism into a modern, travel-friendly silhouette. The result is an experience that lives up to Thai Airways' enduring promise: *Smooth as Silk*.

Sustainability at the core

Beyond aesthetics, sustainability remains central to the 2026 collection. Eco-conscious materials are used throughout, with **biodegradable and environmentally responsible components** integrated into each amenity kit. Items include a biodegradable toothbrush and shoehorn, alongside socks, hand lotion, lip balm and aromatherapy rollers—each thoughtfully packaged to reduce environmental impact without compromising on quality.

"Our collaboration with Jim Thompson reflects Thai Airways' commitment to elevating our in-flight products and services while showcasing authentic Thai identity on the global stage. At a time when travellers are seeking more meaningful and environmentally conscious experiences, this collection represents our dedication to offering premium service with a strong emphasis on sustainability," said **Kittiphong Sansomboon, Chief Commercial Officer of Thai Airways**.

"We're very proud of our ongoing collaboration with Thai Airways, which now enters its third successful year. The latest in-flight collection elevates the passenger journey with a range of rich fabrics and innovative designs in celebration of Thailand's heritage, showcasing our mutual passion for sharing Thai culture and craftsmanship with air travellers," said



Frank Cancelloni, **Group CEO at Jim Thompson**.

Living the story of Thai culture

More than an in-flight refresh, the 2026 Thai Airways Jim Thompson collection reflects a broader shift in luxury travel—where cultural immersion, responsible design and emotional connection define premium experiences. By weaving Thai artistry into every detail, the collaboration invites passengers not just to travel through Thailand, but to live its story at 35,000 feet.

As Thai Airways continues to refine its onboard offering, the Jim Thompson partnership stands as a testament to how national identity, craftsmanship and contemporary luxury can coexist—elevating the journey and reinforcing the airline's place among Asia's most culturally resonant carriers.

In Brief

Thai Airways and Jim Thompson are launching a new 2026 in-flight collection in January, featuring 14 new amenity kit designs with Thai cultural motifs like "House on the Klong" and "Orchids Bunch," plus the debut of Royal Silk Class Comfort Wear (pajamas) for European flights, highlighting sustainability with eco-friendly items and prints like the Origami Elephant, enhancing the passenger experience with authentic Thai artistry.

Key Highlights of the 2026 Collection:

- **Royal Silk Class Comfort Wear:**

For the first time, Royal Silk passengers on European routes will receive a long-sleeve pajama set featuring the signature Origami Elephant motif, available in various colours.

- **New Amenity Kits:** 14 fresh Jim Thompson designs for amenity bags, including "Elephant Legacy" and "Stamp Siam," with added items like a compact mirror and multi-purpose cloth.

- **Cultural Motifs:** Designs draw inspiration from Thai heritage, nature, and the airline's emblem, such as "House on the Klong" and "Orchids Bunch".

- **Sustainability Focus:** The collection incorporates eco-friendly fabrics, biodegradable amenities (like toothbrushes and shoehorns), and sustainable packaging, aligning with shared environmental commitments.

Launch Details:

- **When:** Starting January 20, 2026, with Comfort Wear rolling out on European routes.

- **Where:** Available on Royal Silk Class flights over 3.5 hours, with some exceptions like Milan, Paris, Tokyo, and Shanghai.

This partnership, now in its third year, aims to blend aviation excellence with rich Thai culture, offering travellers a culturally immersive and refined journey.

Etihad Airways Records Strong Passenger Growth in November 2025



Etihad Airways welcomed 2.1 million passengers in November 2025, achieving a 28% year-on-year increase, marking a new peak in the airline’s traffic for 2025.

The airline maintained strong operational efficiency with a passenger load factor 89% for the month. Through the first eleven months of 2025, Etihad has flown 20.2 million passengers, a 20% increase on the same period in 2024, while sustaining an 88% average passenger load factor across the period.

During November, Etihad continued

to expand its network with the launch of new services to Tunis, Hanoi, Chiang Mai, Hong Kong and Medina, supporting continued passenger growth and inbound travel to Abu Dhabi.

By the end of the month, Etihad’s fleet reached 124 aircraft, up from 98 aircraft in November 2024, with an additional four A321LRs joining the fleet in November. The remarkable fleet expansion reflects the airline’s ambitious growth trajectory and ongoing investment.

Antonoaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways, said: “These

results demonstrate the hard work of our teams. We’ve systematically built out our network, invested in our product, and our expanded capacity is bringing more visitors to experience all that Abu Dhabi has to offer.

“What’s particularly encouraging is the consistency of our performance across the year. Our network continues to resonate with customers globally, and we’re maintaining high load factors while adding significant capacity. This operational strength positions us well heading into the final month of the year.

	Nov 24	Nov 25	Variance	2024 YTD	2025 YTD	YTD variance
Passengers	1.6 million	2.1 million	+28%	16.8 million	20.2 million	+20%
Passenger load factor	88%	89%	+1pp	87%	88%	+1pp
Operating fleet size(1)	98	124	+26			
Network destinations (2)	98	114	+16			



Virgin Atlantic Boosts London Heathrow–Bengaluru Connectivity

Virgin Atlantic is set to significantly strengthen air connectivity between the UK and southern India with an expanded schedule on its **London Heathrow–Bengaluru** route, increasing services from **seven to 11 flights per week** during **January, February and March 2026**. The move reflects robust passenger and cargo demand and underscores the airline's deepening commitment to the Indian market.

The additional frequencies will supplement Virgin Atlantic's existing daily service to Bengaluru, which was first launched in **March 2024** as a combined passenger and cargo operation. With India now representing the airline's **largest growth market**

outside the United States, the enhanced Bengaluru schedule forms part of a broader strategy to strengthen long-haul connectivity between the UK, India and North America.

The expanded service complements Virgin Atlantic's **double daily flights from London Heathrow to both Delhi and Mumbai**, further consolidating its presence in India. It also builds on the airline's strategic partnership with **IndiGo**, enabling seamless onward connections to **33 destinations across India**, including Goa, Amritsar and Jaipur.

Often referred to as the **Silicon Valley of India**, Bengaluru is one of the country's fastest-growing technology and innovation hubs and a major corporate travel market. The increased frequency is expected to support both business and leisure demand, while enhancing links between India's technology capital and the UK. Via London Heathrow, passengers will also benefit from smoother onward connections to key North American cities such as **Toronto, Seattle, San Francisco and New York JFK**, through Virgin Atlantic and its transatlantic joint venture partner, **Delta Air Lines**.

The Bengaluru route is operated by **Virgin Atlantic's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner**, configured with **31 Upper Class seats, 35 Premium seats and 192 Economy seats**, along with the airline's signature **Upper Class social space**, offering a premium onboard

experience across all cabins.

Since **2019**, Virgin Atlantic has increased its capacity to India by **250 per cent**, and now offers **more than 500,000 seats annually** between the UK and India—a clear indicator of the market's strategic importance to the airline.

Commenting on the expansion, **Juha Järvinen, Chief Commercial Officer at Virgin Atlantic**, said: "We're delighted to be strengthening our Bengaluru service, reflecting strong customer demand and our continued commitment to India. As one of India's most dynamic technology and business hubs, it's fantastic to be able to offer more choice for travellers between Bengaluru and the UK, as well as greater connectivity to North America with our partners, Delta Air Lines and WestJet. Our amazing people look forward to welcoming even more customers on board with our signature service."

Additional Bengaluru Frequencies (Winter 2026)

• London Heathrow–Bengaluru (VS346)

Operating days: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

Period: 5 January–28 March 2026

Departure–Arrival: 14:00–05:15 (+1)

Aircraft: Boeing 787-9

• Bengaluru–London Heathrow (VS347)

Operating days: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

Period: 6 January–27 March 2026

Departure–Arrival: 07:05–12:50

Aircraft: Boeing 787-9

• Bengaluru–London Heathrow (VS347)

Operating day: Sunday

Period: 11 January–22 March 2026

Departure–Arrival: 07:20–13:05

Aircraft: Boeing 787-9

With the expanded Bengaluru schedule, Virgin Atlantic continues to position itself as a key bridge between India, the UK and North America—reinforcing London Heathrow's role as a global hub while meeting the evolving needs of business, leisure and cargo travellers alike.

Creative, Sustainable, Traditional:

Berlin Celebrates the Season with Germany's Most Diverse Christmas Markets



Christmas in Berlin is anything but conventional. In 2025, Germany's capital once again reaffirms its reputation as one of Europe's most dynamic winter destinations, presenting a festive season that blends tradition with creativity, sustainability, and inclusivity. With more than **90 Christmas and winter markets** spread across the city, Berlin offers an extraordinary spectrum of experiences—from classic yuletide charm to avant-garde cultural expressions.

A Season That Starts Early

Even before the official start of the Christmas season on 24 November,

Berlin's winter spirit has been well underway. Early openings include the popular **Winterwelt at Potsdamer Platz**, complete with a toboggan run, as well as the **LGBTQIA***-friendly **Winterdays and Christmas Avenue at Nollendorfplatz**. Additional early highlights include **Glühwald at Uber Platz** in Friedrichshain, **Lichtenberger Winterzeit**, **Berliner Wintertraum** in Treptow-Köpenick, and **Spandauer Winterland**, each contributing its own local flavour to the city's festive countdown.

Iconic Markets Return, New Ones Emerge

Among the most anticipated

highlights of the season is the return of **WeihnachtsZauber am Gendarmenmarkt**, Berlin's most celebrated Christmas market, now reinstated at its historic location. Thousands of twinkling lights and shimmering ornaments once again frame the neoclassical square, while curated stalls, artisanal crafts, and refined culinary offerings elevate the experience for both residents and visitors.

This year also sees several notable new additions. For the first time, the world-renowned department store **KaDeWe** opens a Christmas market on **Wittenbergplatz**, featuring stylishly designed chalets and

exclusive handicrafts. Meanwhile, the **Alte Frachtkantine** hosts a winter market on 29 and 30 November on the grounds of the former Tegel Airport, offering a unique blend of industrial heritage and festive ambience.

Another emerging hotspot is the **Winterquartier Christmas Market**, a collaborative project between the Wendenschloss lido and the Napoleon complex. With its own ice rink and cultural programme, the venue places winter sports and entertainment at the heart of the seasonal experience.

Ice, Light and Immersive Experiences

Berlin continues to innovate with immersive winter attractions. A standout premieres this season is **Forest – Winterlights at Dark Matter**, where an installation of six hundred fir trees fills a former transformer hall with light, sound, and atmosphere. An ice rink woven into the installation allows visitors to skate through a glowing forest landscape—an experience that is as artistic as it is playful.

Ice skating enthusiasts can also enjoy the new **covered ice rink at Potsdamer Platz**, spanning six hundred square metres and remaining open until the end of January. Surrounded by cafés and restaurants, it offers a central meeting point for winter leisure in the heart of the city.

Alternative, Artistic and Design-Led Markets

Berlin's Christmas markets reflect the city's diverse cultural identity. The **Heissa Holzmarkt Winter Festival** combines alternative culture, street food, art, and club-inspired sounds, creating an urban winter celebration with unmistakable Berlin character.

Design and creativity take centre stage at **Holy Shit Shopping** on 29 and 30 November, where more than 250 designers and independent labels present fashion, accessories, and lifestyle products. Now in its 20th year, the pop-up department

store has become a cornerstone of Berlin's pre-Christmas calendar. Similarly, the **Weihnachtsrodeo Design Christmas Market**, held on 13 and 14 December at the Colosseum, showcases high-quality, original creations from designers, artisans, and small manufacturers.

At **Silent Green** in Wedding, the Winterfest on 6 and 7 December transforms the former crematorium complex into a vibrant cultural venue with art installations, live music, and culinary offerings. Nordic traditions come alive at the **Lucia Christmas Market** in Kulturbrauerei, where Scandinavian folklore meets mulled wine variations such as Swedish glögg and Finnish glögi.

A distinctly British touch is added at the **Christmas Market at St. George's Church** on 6 December, featuring traditional carol singing alongside festive favourites such as mince pies and Christmas pudding.

Festive Traditions Beyond the City Centre

On Berlin's outskirts, traditional markets offer a slower-paced, family-friendly atmosphere. **Domäne Dahlem** hosts its Advent market across all four Advent weekends, celebrating regional specialities, local craftsmanship and agricultural heritage. Nature lovers can head to the **Forest Christmas Market at the Grunewald Forestry Office** on 14 December, where the Berlin Forest Service showcases its work amid woodland surroundings, complete with draft horses and forestry demonstrations.

Illuminated Winter Landscapes

Beyond markets, Berlin transforms into a city of light. The iconic Christmas illuminations along **Kurfürstendamm and Tauentzienstraße** once again bathe City West in festive brilliance.



At the **Christmas Garden in the Botanic Garden**, visitors follow a sparkling trail of light installations, projections, and soundscapes through landscaped grounds.

Meanwhile, **Christmas at the Tierpark** offers a two-kilometre illuminated circular route featuring more than thirty artistic light installations and glowing animal figures, creating a magical winter experience for all ages. At the **Humboldt Forum Winter Market**, laser shows light up the Schlüterhof twice weekly, while the Spree Terraces façade is illuminated in the evening.

Berlin Welcomes 2026 in Style

As Christmas draws to a close, Berlin seamlessly transitions into New Year's celebrations. Under the motto **"Yeah 2026"**, the city invites locals and visitors to a free **New Year's Eve party at the Brandenburg Gate**. From 10 pm, Berlin-based DJs will turn Straße des seventeen. Juni into an open-air dance floor with pop, Afrobeats, and electronic music. At midnight, a multi-minute fireworks display will illuminate the iconic landmark.

Entry is ticketed, with doors opening at 9:30 pm. Details on the release of the 20,000 free tickets are available via **Kulturprojekte Berlin**.

Beyond the Brandenburg Gate festivities, Berlin offers countless ways to welcome the new year—ensuring that the city's festive spirit continues well into 2026.



Brand USA Unveils 'America the Beautiful Game' Hub

to Inspire 2026 World Cup
Travel Across the United States

As the world's biggest sporting spectacle returns to American soil after more than three decades, Brand USA has launched "**America the Beautiful Game**," a dedicated trip-planning hub designed to help football fans turn the **2026 FIFA World Cup** into a deeper, nationwide travel experience.

Unveiled in Washington, D.C., the new digital platform—live at AmericaTheBeautiful.com/Football—invites global travellers to explore the United States **before, during and**



after the tournament, connecting matchday excitement with culture, cuisine, road trips and iconic destinations beyond the stadium gates.

The initiative arrives at a symbolic moment. The World Cup will coincide with **America 250**, marking the 250th anniversary of the United States. In response, Brand USA is spotlighting **250 things to do across the country**, with this edition focusing on the *Beautiful Game*—curating **50 standout experiences** across the 11 U.S. host cities and surrounding regions.

Football Meets the Ultimate USA Holiday

“The United States offers unmatched experiences for football fans both on and off the pitch,” said **Fred Dixon, President and CEO of Brand USA**. “The 2026 FIFA World Cup is an opportunity to combine the love of the sport with the ultimate USA holiday. We want fans to come early, stay longer, and discover the iconic destinations that make America unique.”

At the heart of the platform is an intuitive mix of **things to see and**

do, local food highlights, cultural attractions, and a first wave of **AI-powered road trip itineraries** linking host cities with nearby destinations—encouraging visitors to explore well beyond match venues.

Eleven Host Cities, Countless Experiences

Each U.S. host city brings its own sporting heritage and cultural personality to the tournament.

- **Atlanta**, hosting eight matches including a semi-final, blends stadium tours at Mercedes-Benz Stadium with local flavour—from lemon pepper wings to interactive exhibits at the World of Coca-Cola—while community projects like StationSoccer turn transit stops into football pitches.

- **Boston**, set for seven matches including a quarter-final, celebrates its deep-rooted sports culture through landmarks such as Boston Common, historic pubs, and the Museum of Sports at TD Garden.

- **Dallas**, the busiest host city with nine matches and a semi-final, pairs iconic venues like AT&T Stadium and the National Soccer Hall of Fame with Texas-sized culinary and arts experiences.

- **Houston** offers a multicultural twist, with downtown promenades, public art installations themed around football, and local culinary mashups that reflect the city’s global DNA.

- **Kansas City**, a rising football capital, highlights women’s sports leadership at CPKC Stadium alongside barbecue culture and a free streetcar linking major fan zones.

- **Los Angeles**, host of the opening match, delivers a cinematic mix of legendary venues—from the LA Memorial Coliseum to SoFi Stadium—plus one of the most diverse football bar scenes in the country.

- **Miami**, hosting seven matches including the bronze final, blends street art, contemporary museums and beachfront energy, with Lionel Messi-inspired murals and new mixed-use developments opening in time for the tournament.

- **New York/New Jersey**, the site

of the championship match, anchors the World Cup with large-scale fan festivals at Rockefeller Center and Liberty State Park, alongside a dense network of football pubs reflecting the city’s global fan base.

- **Philadelphia**, steeped in sporting tradition, offers behind-the-scenes stadium tours, Michelin-recognised dining and a strong women’s sports culture.

- **San Francisco Bay Area** merges innovation and creativity, with public art trails, technology-driven experiences and niche football bars celebrating inclusivity and women’s sports.

- **Seattle**, framed by mountains and water, combines iconic attractions like Pike Place Market and the Space Needle with new urban trails designed to connect fans across the city.

Road Trips, Culture and Connection

A defining feature of *America the Beautiful Game* is its emphasis on **road travel**, positioning the World Cup as a gateway to regional exploration. From coastal drives and national parks to historic towns and culinary corridors, the hub encourages fans to discover the diversity of the U.S. at their own pace.

With team base camps and training locations set to be announced closer to kickoff, Brand USA expects interest in secondary destinations to grow—spreading the economic and cultural impact of the tournament far beyond host cities.

A Global Invitation

By blending football with storytelling, heritage and travel inspiration, Brand USA is reframing the 2026 FIFA World Cup as more than a sporting event—it’s a once-in-a-generation invitation to experience the United States in all its scale and diversity.

For travellers planning their World Cup journey, *America the Beautiful Game* offers a clear message: **the matches may last 90 minutes, but the memories can span a continent.**



Indiva Marketing Appointed India Representative for **Nammos Resort Amaala**



Partnership announced ahead of the luxury resort's opening on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast

Nammos Resorts, the internationally acclaimed luxury hospitality brand, has appointed Indiva Marketing as its official representative in India, strengthening its engagement with one of the world's fastest-growing outbound luxury travel markets. The partnership has been announced ahead of the opening of **Nammos Resort Amaala**, the brand's first property in Saudi Arabia, scheduled to welcome guests in early 2026.

Located within the ambitious **Amaala destination** on the Red Sea coast, Nammos Resort Amaala marks a significant milestone for the brand as it enters the Kingdom's rapidly evolving luxury hospitality landscape. Designed as a high-end coastal retreat, the resort will form part of Amaala's vision as a globally competitive destination focused on refined hospitality, wellness-led living and curated cultural and lifestyle experiences.

Under the agreement, **Indiva Marketing** will oversee sales, marketing and public relations for Nammos Resort Amaala across India. The mandate includes strategic outreach in key metropolitan markets, with a targeted focus on luxury travel advisors, high-net-worth individuals and premium travel and lifestyle media. The objective, according to the company, is to build brand awareness,

establish a strong market position and stimulate demand from Indian travellers for the new Red Sea resort.

In a statement, Nammos Resorts highlighted that the partnership aligns with Saudi Arabia's broader tourism ambitions as the country continues to expand its luxury offerings and enhance air connectivity with India—an increasingly important source market for premium outbound travel. Indian travellers, in particular, are showing growing interest in short-haul luxury destinations that combine distinctive experiences with world-class hospitality.

Amaala is being developed as an exclusive coastal destination, integrating luxury resorts with wellness concepts, immersive experiences and natural landscapes. Within this setting, Nammos Resort Amaala will showcase the brand's signature blend of **Mediterranean-inspired lifestyle hospitality** alongside the Kingdom's contemporary luxury tourism narrative.

As part of its India strategy, Indiva Marketing will roll out integrated campaigns highlighting the resort's unique positioning within the Red Sea region. Planned activities include trade engagement, media relations and targeted marketing initiatives across major Indian cities, aimed at introducing the Nammos Resorts philosophy to the Indian luxury travel community.

Commenting on the appointment, **Beate Mauder Kakkar, Managing Director, Indiva Marketing**, said:

"We are delighted to represent Nammos Resort Amaala in India. We look forward to building awareness of the resort's distinctive features and brand among Indian travellers and are excited to be part of this journey. Saudi Arabia is a dynamically growing market for India and an increasingly attractive short-haul destination for Indian travellers, and we see tremendous potential in this partnership."

With its entry into Saudi Arabia through Amaala and a focused India outreach strategy, Nammos Resorts is positioning itself to capture growing interest in the Red Sea as the next frontier in global luxury travel.



WTM Spotlight Riyadh to Highlight Saudi Arabia's Rapidly Expanding Outbound Travel Market

Saudi outbound tourism projected to approach USD 48 billion by 2032

Saudi Arabia's fast-growing outbound travel market will take centre stage at the inaugural **WTM Spotlight Riyadh**, scheduled for **September 2026** at the **Riyadh Front Exhibition & Convention Centre (RFECC)**. The first edition of the event will bring together global travel leaders to examine the evolving dynamics, traveller preferences and commercial opportunities emerging from one of the world's most influential outbound tourism markets.

As international travel from the Kingdom continues to gain momentum, WTM Spotlight Riyadh will position Saudi Arabia firmly in the global spotlight, offering international destinations, hospitality brands and travel service providers a strategic platform to engage with a high-spending, experience-driven traveller base. Saudi travellers are increasingly seeking luxury accommodation, personalised itineraries and distinctive experiences, reflecting a broader shift towards premium and purpose-led travel.

According to organisers, Saudi Arabia's tourism market—currently valued at approximately **USD 27.5 billion**—is expected to reach **USD 47.8 billion by 2032**, based on findings from market research firm **Coherent Market Insights**. This robust growth underscores the Kingdom's expanding influence on global tourism flows, with Saudi travellers demonstrating strong interest in both established international destinations and emerging markets.

Research cited by the organisers highlights a clear preference for quality, comfort and service. Around **41 per cent of Saudi travellers choose**



five-star hotels, while 32 per cent opt for four-star properties, with average daily accommodation spend frequently exceeding **USD 300**.

Service standards remain paramount, with **86 per cent preferring full-service airlines**. Shopping, exclusive experiences and cultural discovery continue to rank among the primary motivations for outbound travel.

WTM Spotlight Riyadh is expected to host approximately **450 exhibitors**, welcome **6,500 regional and international visitors**, and attract **150 international hosted buyers**.

The event programme will feature pre-scheduled business meetings, curated networking opportunities and targeted knowledge sessions designed to help brands gain deeper insight into Saudi traveller behaviour and establish long-

term commercial partnerships.

Commenting on the launch, **Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME for Arabian Travel Market and WTM Spotlight Riyadh**, said:

"Saudi Arabia is rapidly emerging as one of the world's most influential outbound tourism markets. Travellers are increasingly seeking elevated experiences across accommodation, culture and service, prioritising journeys that are both meaningful and memorable. WTM Spotlight Riyadh will bring together global travel leaders to analyse these trends, deepen understanding of Saudi national and expatriate traveller preferences, and assess the market's growing impact on international tourism."

Curtis added that the event will also support Saudi Arabia's inbound tourism ambitions. "WTM Spotlight Riyadh presents a timely opportunity for the global travel community to recognise the high-value potential of Saudi Arabia's outbound market while forging partnerships aligned with its expanding global influence. At the same time, the event plays a critical role in advancing the Kingdom's inbound tourism goals by connecting international buyers with destinations, experiences and infrastructure that are shaping Saudi Arabia's evolving position within the global tourism industry."

Part of the wider **WTM portfolio**, which includes **WTM London, WTM Africa, WTM Latin America and Arabian Travel Market**, WTM Spotlight Riyadh is set to strengthen Saudi Arabia's standing within the global tourism ecosystem and foster long-term collaboration between international buyers, destinations and travel brands.

Germany's Cultural Appeal Resonates with Indian Travellers



According to the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) dashboard, the Indian travellers recorded over 104,000 overnight stays in Germany in October, marking a 16.5 per cent increase over pre-pandemic 2019 levels. From January to October, India accounted for 775,294 overnight stays, reflecting strong and sustained demand across both leisure and business travel segments. The organisation added that air connectivity remains robust with approximately 296 flights currently operating between India and Germany, supporting flexible and multi-city itineraries for travellers. Germany's outbound appeal is further strengthened by longer stays, with the average trip exceeds nine nights, indicating a preference for deeper exploration and extended itineraries. Airline capacity currently stands at around 93,447 seats as per the GNTB Dashboard.

Germany is strengthening its position as a favoured European destination for Indian travellers, recording a 16.5 per cent rise in overnight stays from India in October—clear evidence of growing interest in culturally rich, experience-led journeys.

The growth reflects

a broader shift in Indian outbound travel, as travellers increasingly seek destinations that combine strong air connectivity with opportunities for deeper exploration. According to the German National Tourist Office (GNTO), Indian visitors recorded more than 104,000 overnight stays in Germany in October alone,

surpassing pre-pandemic levels, while total overnight stays from January to October reached 775,294.

Longer Stays, Deeper Exploration

Indian travellers are not just visiting Germany—they are staying longer. The average trip now exceeds nine nights, pointing to itineraries that extend well beyond gateway cities. Historic towns, scenic regions and culturally rich landscapes are increasingly shaping travel plans, supported by seamless air connectivity between India and Germany.

Nearly 300 flights currently operate between the two countries, offering flexible routing options and easy access to multiple German cities. This connectivity has made Germany an attractive option for travellers looking to combine business, leisure and multi-city exploration in a single journey.

Culture at the Heart of the Journey

Germany's enduring appeal lies in its cultural depth. Through *Cultureland Germany*, travellers can discover a rich tapestry of heritage cities, UNESCO-listed landmarks, world-class museums and a vibrant contemporary arts scene. From classical music halls and medieval town centres to modern architecture and design districts, culture remains a key reason Indians

continue to return.

Germany has been recognised as Europe's leading cultural destination for ten consecutive years—an accolade that resonates with travellers seeking meaningful experiences rather than rushed sightseeing.

A Romantic, Year-Round Destination

Beyond its cultural reputation, Germany is also emerging as a year-round romantic destination. Seasonal travel plays an increasingly important role, with countryside escapes, vineyard regions and festive winter markets offering intimate alternatives to Europe's busier capitals. These experiences are proving particularly popular with couples and honeymooners looking for understated luxury and authenticity.

Looking Ahead

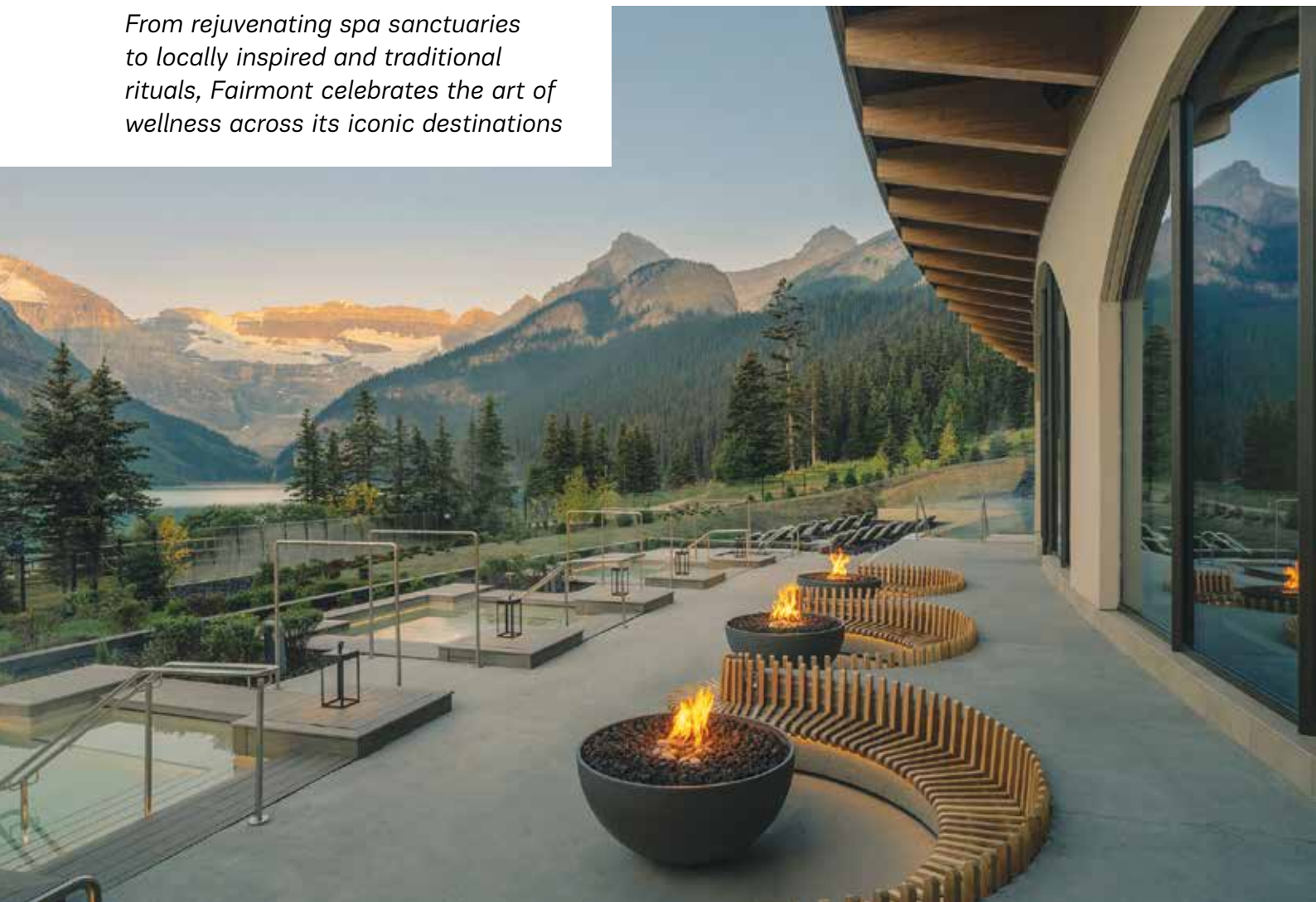
With Indian outbound travel evolving toward immersive, personalised journeys, Germany's region-led approach is well aligned with changing traveller expectations. A focus on culture, romance and seasonal experiences—supported by strong airline connectivity—positions the country as a destination that invites travellers to slow down, explore deeply and discover Europe beyond the obvious.

For Indian travellers flying into Europe, Germany offers not just a gateway, but a journey rich in stories, landscapes and cultural encounters—best experienced at a relaxed pace.

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts

Brings Destination-Inspired Spa
Experiences to Life for 2026

*From rejuvenating spa sanctuaries
to locally inspired and traditional
rituals, Fairmont celebrates the art of
wellness across its iconic destinations*



World-renowned hospitality brand and one of Accor's leading luxury brands, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, invites guests to embark on a new journey of holistic wellbeing that celebrates innovation, a connection to the destination and wellness traditions. From the snow-capped peaks of Lake Louise to the bustling streets of Tokyo,

Fairmont's new generation of wellness offerings go beyond the traditional spa experience, encouraging guests to restore, recharge, and reconnect to both self and place.

Across its global portfolio of 96 hotels and resorts, Fairmont Wellness goes beyond traditional spa experiences, creating holistic, destination-driven wellbeing that is

woven into every part of the guest journey - where every experience is designed to reflect the uniqueness of its surroundings.

Urban Innovation & High-Tech Wellness

In global city hubs, Fairmont is leading the way in high-tech wellbeing. At Fairmont Mumbai, guests can experience the innovative Hyperbaric Oxygen Chamber at Blu Xone - Fairmont Spa & Longevity, where purified oxygen is delivered in a highly controlled environment to enhance recovery, reduce inflammation, and sharpen mental clarity. In Los Angeles, Fairmont Century Plaza takes self-care to new heights with its Red-Light Therapy Signature Package, an eleven-session journey proven to boost collagen production, rejuvenate skin, and accelerate muscle recovery.

"We see a definite appetite from guests for a deeper connection to the destination they are visiting, as well as for high-tech offerings combined with both social and restorative experiences, as opposed to exclusively individual treatments," said **Emma Darby, Global Vice President, Spa & Wellness, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts**. "The comprehensive range of wellness experiences available across our portfolio with Fairmont Wellness offers a complete 360° offering, highlighting each property's tailored approach to authentically reflecting its specific location."

Wellness Inspired by the Heart of Each Destination

For those seeking a strong connection to place, Fairmont's mountain and coastal properties offer immersive, restorative escapes. Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise recently debuted BASIN Glacial Waters, a new destination where guests can experience the rejuvenating benefits of glacial-fed thermal waters and self-guided journeys, surrounded by the serenity of the Canadian Rockies. The new concept offers a contemporary interpretation of traditional wellness practices such as Finnish saunas and





European Aufguss rituals. Nearby, Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge's new Glacial Wellness experience invites guests to reconnect with their surroundings and embrace resilience through a guided lakeside sauna and invigorating plunge into Lac Beauvert, fully immersed in the serene wilderness and untamed spirit of Jasper National Park, while Fairmont Monte Carlo channels the calm of the Mediterranean and the vibrancy of the city, into wellness experiences inspired by sea, sun, and local culture.

City Sanctuaries

Fairmont's newest urban properties include wellness offerings that blend

modern innovation with tradition. The recently opened Fairmont Tokyo welcomes guests on a holistic wellness journey, with signature oils and premium Japanese wellness products that nurture a deep sense of relaxation and inner renewal by connecting the body, mind, and spirit to the city's pulse. Guests can enjoy four treatment rooms, including a couple's room with tranquil garden views, relax on the open-air spa deck overlooking Tokyo Tower, or unwind in the 20-meter indoor infinity pool, outdoor relaxation pool with sundeck, and mist sauna—all offering uninterrupted views of Tokyo's glamorous city skyline. As Fairmont expands its global wellness portfolio,

new destinations are set to redefine the wellness category even further. Opening in 2025, Fairmont Hanoi will introduce a transformative urban sanctuary that celebrates the spirit of Vietnam through locally inspired ingredients, traditional healing rituals, and next-generation bio-innovation.

In Europe, the Fairmont Spa & Wellness at Fairmont Golden Prague reimagines wellness, providing the ultimate respite from exploring the city. Guests can indulge in tailored experiences across the property's 1,400 sqm spa, which combines luxury and state-of-the-art technology. The spa features five serene treatment suites, a tranquil garden, three



sanctuary of thatched hale, oceanfront cabanas, and open-air treatments using ingredients from the surrounding landscape such as coconut oil, passionfruit, and volcanic lava rocks. At Fairmont Mayakoba in Mexico's Riviera Maya, wellness draws from ancient

Mayan traditions, from the sacred Temazcal Experience - a purifying sweat lodge ceremony guided by heat, steam, and sacred herbs - to spa treatments inspired by the lunar cycle, reflecting the Mayans' deep connection to the sun, stars, and moon.



saunas, a steam bath, and a world-class fitness studio with Technogym equipment and group classes. The hotel's one-of-a-kind L-shaped pool fuses indoor and outdoor spaces for a fully immersive experience, offering the only outdoor pool in Prague's city center and perfectly balancing the city's historic charm with modern wellbeing.

Localized Wellness

Across Fairmont's resort portfolio, wellbeing is intertwined with traditional wellness practices, heritage, and culture. On Hawaii's Big Island, Fairmont Orchid charms guests with its award-winning "Spa Without Walls" - a





A Silver Soirée:
Travel Span and
The Metropolitan
Hotel Mark 25
Years of Timeless
Excellence





In a milestone moment for the global travel and hospitality community, Travel Span Magazine and The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa, New Delhi celebrated their Silver Jubilee celebrations, marking 25 years of sustained excellence, leadership, and industry impact.

The high-profile evening brought together over four hundred senior professionals and decision-makers from travel, tourism, aviation, hospitality, lifestyle, fashion, media, including prominent digital creators. The gathering reflected the standing of both brands as long-term contributors to the evolution of travel communication and luxury hospitality in India and international markets.

Travel Span: From Print Pioneer to Integrated Global Media House

Addressing the audience, Devender Grover, Editor-in-Chief, Travel Span, reflected on the publication's evolution from a single print title into a diversified, multi-platform media organisation.

"When Travel Span was launched 25 years ago, it began as a focused print publication serving the travel and tourism industry. Over time, we anticipated change and adapted early," said Devender.

"Our transition to digital in 2004 marked a decisive shift. Today, Travel Span operates as a full-fledged media house, delivering timely travel and lifestyle journalism through print, a dynamic digital platform, podcasts, video storytelling, and real-time industry coverage."

He underscored that editorial integrity, market relevance, and consistency have been central to Travel Span's growth, enabling the brand to build trust among global tourism boards, airlines, hotel groups, and corporate travel stakeholders.

"Our readership today extends well beyond India, reaching key international markets. Travel Span's strength lies in credible journalism, strong industry relationships, and the ability to evolve while remaining rooted in quality," Devender added.

Elevating a Luxury and Lifestyle Travel Legacy

Further outlining the brand's forward trajectory, Gaura Grover Bahl, Group Editor, Travel Span, spoke about strengthening the publication's positioning as a luxury and lifestyle travel authority.

"Over the past 25 years, Travel Span has established a distinct voice in luxury and lifestyle travel journalism — one that balances aspiration with insight," said Gaura.

"As we look ahead, our focus is on taking this legacy to the next level by expanding global collaborations, deepening digital engagement and embracing new content formats, while staying true to the editorial values that define Travel Span."

The Metropolitan Hotel: 25 Years of Refined Hospitality

The evening was hosted at The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa, jointly celebrating a quarter century as one of New Delhi's most distinguished luxury addresses. Guests experienced an elaborate Silver Jubilee culinary showcase, featuring a specially curated 25-Year Celebration Menu drawn from the hotel's acclaimed dining destinations — Sakura, Chutney, Bar + Tandoor, Zing, and Zing GourMET Shop. The offering was complemented by a selection of premium spirits and fine liquors.

A ceremonial cake-cutting and champagne opening marked the milestone, while a live performance by the scintillating Band from Goa created a sophisticated yet warm ambience, underscoring the celebratory spirit of the evening.

Reflecting on the occasion, Vipul Gupta, Director, The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa, paid tribute to the hotel's founding legacy.

"This Silver Jubilee represents the vision and values established by my father, Late Shri Satya Pal Gupta, whose commitment to excellence and guest-centric hospitality continues to guide The Metropolitan," said Gupta.

"As we move forward, our focus remains on evolving with global luxury standards while preserving the character and service philosophy that have defined the hotel for 25 years."





A Shared Vision for the Future

The joint Silver Jubilee celebration of Travel Span Magazine and The Metropolitan Hotel & Spa stood as a testament to enduring partnerships, adaptive leadership, and a shared commitment to excellence. More than a celebration of longevity, the evening signalled a confident outlook toward the future — one shaped by innovation, collaboration and continued contribution to the Indian and global travel, tourism, hospitality, and media landscape.

















Asego Sets a New Benchmark in Global Travel Assistance for Seniors



*Dev Karvat, Founder
and CEO - ASEGO*

Recent market studies reveal that the **global senior travel market reached approximately USD 115.3 billion in 2024**, with strong growth projected over the next decade. Rising disposable incomes, early retirements, and decent life expectancy are key contributors to this upward trajectory. At the same time, heightened awareness of health-related emergencies has driven demand for **specialised travel protection designed exclusively for older travellers**.

This trend is equally reflected in the insurance landscape. The senior citizen travel insurance market—valued at **USD 3.6 billion in 2023**—is projected to soar to **USD 16.7 billion by 2032**, underscoring the increasing need for robust and customised risk-mitigation solutions for this demographic.

Against this evolving backdrop, Asego's Senior Citizen Global Assistance Plan stands out as a timely and purpose-built solution. It is designed to offer senior travellers and their families the assurance that every international trip—whether a long-awaited vacation, a visit to children abroad, or a personal milestone journey—is backed by comprehensive protection and dependable real-time support.

Age often brings travel challenges such as, higher vulnerability to medical emergencies, limited familiarity with foreign healthcare systems and increased anxiety around managing unforeseen events abroad.

Asego's plan addresses these concerns through **generous medical coverage of up to USD 1 million**, including **outpatient treatments in addition to cashless hospitalisation**. This ensures that seniors can access timely medical care overseas without worrying about restrictive caps or sub-limits—mirroring the sense of medical freedom they enjoy at home.

The plan further safeguards travellers against practical setbacks such as loss or delay of checked-in baggage, loss of passport, and other

essential travel-related contingencies. It also covers unexpected situations like trip cancellations, travel delays, and unforeseen mishaps that can disrupt plans. As age often brings added uncertainty, the plan is designed to provide simple, quick, and reliable solutions—ensuring comfort, confidence, and ease throughout the journey.

Protection Beyond the Basics: Compassionate Coverage for Pre-existing Conditions

Understanding that many seniors travel with longstanding health conditions, Asego extends coverage to **pre-existing medical conditions (within plan eligibility)**. This enhances accessibility for travellers who may otherwise avoid international trips due to insurance limitations.

Age often brings travel challenges such as, higher vulnerability to medical emergencies, limited familiarity with foreign healthcare systems and increased anxiety around managing unforeseen events abroad.

Coupled with **24/7 global emergency medical assistance, cashless medical facilities, and priority claims support**, the plan ensures that senior travellers can embark on their journeys with comfort and complete peace of mind.

A Growing Imperative for Travel Agencies and Tour Operators

By recommending Asego's senior-focused travel protection, travel and tour operators demonstrate their commitment to client safety and

well-being while also differentiating themselves in an increasingly competitive market. This approach not only helps strengthen long-term relationships with high-value customer segments but also aligns tour operators with global best practices in responsible travel management, ensuring they deliver comprehensive and trusted support to their senior travellers.

Today, when global assistance and travel insurance are gaining prominence due to rising uncertainties and health risks, offering specialised protection is no longer optional—it is essential.

Enabling Seniors to Travel Fearlessly

Asego's Senior Citizen Global Assistance Plan is more than a protection plan; it is a promise. A promise that **age will not limit exploration**, health concerns and other travel risks will not overshadow adventure, and that every senior traveller can experience the world with confidence—knowing that expert help is always just a call away.

Ultimately, the plan reflects a broader transformation in global travel, where longevity meets aspiration and where protection evolves to match purpose. For senior travellers, it redefines true freedom on the move. For the industry, it signals the need to evolve meaningfully to ensure that every journey—no matter the traveller's age—is safe, enriching, and worry-free.

**Benefits may vary based on the plan selected, age of traveller, and sum insured opted.*

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Hilton

Expands Its Asia Pacific Footprint
with a New Generation
of Hotels Opening
Through 2026



Hilton is accelerating its strategic expansion across Asia Pacific with a diverse portfolio of hotel openings scheduled through 2026, reinforcing the group's long-term commitment to one of the world's most dynamic travel regions. Spanning key gateway cities, cultural centres, and leisure-led destinations, the upcoming properties are designed to respond to evolving traveller expectations for deeper engagement, authentic local experiences, and meaningful human connection.

According to Hilton's *2026 Trends Report*, connection has emerged as a defining priority for travellers across the Asia Pacific. Nearly 60 percent of respondents value quality time with family over traditional downtime, while demand continues to rise for immersive travel anchored in culinary discovery, cultural exploration, and a strong sense

of place. Hilton's development strategy reflects these insights, with each new hotel thoughtfully positioned to serve as both a destination and a gateway to its surroundings.

From vibrant urban districts to secluded coastal escapes, Hilton's forthcoming openings will blend contemporary design with locally inspired storytelling, offering guests experiences that are as enriching as they are memorable.

Hilton Hyderabad Genome Valley Resort & Spa

Opened in October 2025, Hilton Hyderabad Genome Valley Resort & Spa marks the brand's arrival in one of India's fastest-growing innovation corridors. Set across 20 acres of landscaped grounds in the heart of Hyderabad's biotechnology hub, the resort is conceived as a social and

experiential destination. Multiple dining venues anchor the property, while extensive recreational facilities—including basketball, pickleball, futsal, and tennis courts—cater to guests of all ages. Families are further engaged through interactive initiatives such as the Junior Chef's Club, which highlights farm-to-table dining experiences and shared culinary discovery.

Slohh by Roach Bengaluru, Curio Collection by Hilton

Hilton's first lifestyle hotel in India, Slohh by Roach Bengaluru, introduces a tranquil counterpoint to the city's bustling IT corridor. Drawing inspiration from the calm of a Malnad coffee estate, the hotel is designed as a sanctuary that encourages guests to slow down without disconnecting. With convenient access to major business, commercial, and residential hubs, the



property combines understated luxury with elevated comforts, featuring an outdoor swimming pool, curated social spaces, and an inviting restaurant and lounge.

Hilton Burau Bay Resort Langkawi

Located on Langkawi's unspoiled western coastline, Hilton Burau Bay Resort Langkawi offers a secluded retreat surrounded by rainforest and overlooking the Andaman Sea. The 251-room resort has been thoughtfully designed to preserve its natural setting, with garden-level rooms, expansive suites, and select private rooftop sanctuaries. Wellness is central to the guest experience, with facilities including a forest-fringed outdoor sauna, onsen-style rock plunge pools, and a salt room. Multiple swimming pools, a dedicated kids' club, and flexible event spaces position the resort as an ideal destination for families and leisure travellers.

The Reserve Hotel Luoyang, Curio Collection by Hilton

Situated in Luoyang's vibrant Shendu Shisanfang district, The Reserve Hotel Luoyang offers an immersive lifestyle experience in one of China's most historic cities. The

146-room property is within walking distance of the area's dining and entertainment scene and provides convenient access to key cultural landmarks, including the Luoyang Museum and the UNESCO-listed Longmen Grottoes. The hotel features an all-day dining restaurant, swimming pool, fitness centre, specialty rooms, a bar, and a dedicated event hall where art and culture take centre stage.

Xi Zhe Wuxi, Curio Collection by Hilton

In the culturally rich city of Wuxi, Xi Zhe Wuxi reflects the legacy of Wu culture, long associated with prosperity and artistic achievement. The property integrates a contemporary seven-storey structure with an adjoining three-storey historic building, creating a seamless dialogue between past and present. Interiors by Singapore-based White Jacket Studio blend refined modern aesthetics with traditional cultural elements. Two restaurants, tailored event spaces, an indoor pool, and a fitness centre complete the offering, providing a sophisticated base for cultural exploration.

Hilton Garden Inn Suva

Marking the Hilton Garden Inn

brand's debut in Fiji, Hilton Garden Inn Suva will be a prominent addition to the capital's foreshore. The 178-room hotel is designed to meet the needs of both business and leisure travellers, offering modern accommodations, an all-day dining restaurant and bar, a fully equipped fitness centre, and a swimming pool. The opening strengthens Hilton's presence in the South Pacific and supports Suva's growing role as a regional hub.

Hilton Guangzhou Baiyun Airport

Directly connected to the upcoming Terminal 3 of Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport—the world's largest single-building airport terminal—this 238-room hotel redefines airport hospitality. Positioned within a major transport nexus, the property provides rapid access to downtown Guangzhou in approximately 25 minutes. Cloud-inspired interiors, an all-day dining restaurant, lobby lounge, and versatile meeting spaces cater to international transit passengers, business travellers, and short-stay guests alike.

Hilton Garden Inn Yokohama Minatomirai

Located within walking distance of



Minatomirai Station and key venues such as Pacifico Yokohama and K-Arena Yokohama, Hilton Garden Inn Yokohama Minatomirai offers a contemporary base in one of Japan's most dynamic waterfront districts. The 232-room hotel features thoughtfully designed guest rooms, an all-day dining concept at Together & Co, and a 24-hour self-service retail outlet, providing comfort and convenience for both MICE and leisure travellers.

Canopy by Hilton Okinawa Miyako Island Resort

Set to open in the scenic Tsuwiba area, Canopy by Hilton Okinawa Miyako Island Resort will introduce the brand's lifestyle-driven ethos to one of Japan's most picturesque island destinations. The 306-room resort, located near Miyako and Shimojishima airports, will feature a rooftop pool and bar, all-day dining, spa, fitness centre, kids' club, and flexible event spaces. Positioned alongside the existing Hilton Okinawa Miyako Island Resort, the property will offer a distinct and contemporary island experience.

Hilton Lucknow

Hilton Lucknow marks the brand's third hotel in Uttar Pradesh,





strengthening its presence in northern India. Operating alongside Hilton Garden Inn Lucknow as part of a larger hospitality complex, the new property will deliver an elevated guest experience through sophisticated design, world-class amenities, and Hilton's signature service standards,

set against the backdrop of Lucknow's rich cultural heritage.

Canopy by Hilton Bangkok Sukhumvit

Making its debut in Thailand, Canopy by Hilton Bangkok Sukhumvit is located in the heart of Sukhumvit Soi 12, close

to major transport links and lifestyle destinations such as Terminal 21 and EmSphere. The 174-room hotel will offer a locally inspired, design-forward stay, anchored by dynamic dining and social venues. Highlights include a café that transitions seamlessly from day to night and a rooftop bar hosting movie nights and curated lifestyle events, with panoramic views of the Bangkok skyline.

NHAAN Resort & Spa Hoi An, Tapestry Collection by Hilton

Situated along the tranquil Coco River in Cam Thanh Village, NHAAN Resort & Spa Hoi An marks the Tapestry Collection's entry into Vietnam. The 174-key all-villa resort is designed as a serene retreat that connects guests with local culture and



nature. Contemporary architecture is complemented by heritage influences, while amenities include inviting dining spaces, a poolside bar, spa, outdoor swimming pool, and fitness centre.

Hilton Palm Cove Cairns Resort & Spa

Expanding Hilton's portfolio in Tropical North Queensland, Hilton Palm Cove Cairns Resort & Spa is designed as a lifestyle destination focused on relaxation and connection. The family-friendly resort features an outdoor pool, multiple dining and social venues, a kids' club, fitness centre, and spa. Together with nearby Hilton and DoubleTree properties, it strengthens the group's presence in the Cairns region.

DoubleTree by Hilton Auckland Albert Street

Marking DoubleTree's debut in Auckland, this centrally located hotel will introduce the brand's signature warm hospitality to New Zealand's largest city. The property will feature 231 guest rooms, including two suites, alongside an all-day dining restaurant, bar, fitness centre, and 400 square metres of flexible meeting and event space.

DoubleTree Singapore Robertson Quay

Set along the Singapore River, DoubleTree Singapore Robertson Quay represents the brand's first property in Singapore. A comprehensive transformation of the former Hotel

Miramar, the 344-room hotel is located in the vibrant Robertson Quay district. Enhanced amenities include refreshed guest rooms, an all-day dining restaurant, an upgraded pool deck, a kids' club, and pickleball courts, offering a balanced proposition for both business and leisure travellers.

Collectively, these developments underscore Hilton's continued growth across Asia Pacific, offering travellers and Hilton Honors members new pathways to experience culture, cuisine, community, and discovery. From cosmopolitan city centres to tranquil island retreats, Hilton's 2026 openings are positioned to shape the region's next chapter in hospitality.



Carlton Cannes

Casts a Celestial Glow Over the Riviera This Festive Season

Winter finds its most radiant expression on La Croisette. At Carlton Cannes, festive traditions unfold beneath the stars—where illuminated gardens, refined gastronomy and Riviera glamour converge. A season of quiet spectacle and timeless indulgence, reimagined within one of Europe's most iconic palaces.



On the sunlit curve of **La Croisette**, where elegance is woven into daily life, **Carlton Cannes** ushers in the festive season with its signature blend of heritage, imagination and Riviera refinement. From **21 November 2025 to 11 January 2026**, the storied palace unveils **Under the Stars**, a winter programme that transforms the landmark into a luminous sanctuary of celebration—one that feels both timeless and quietly spectacular.

A Riviera icon reimagined beneath the night sky

The transformation begins at the façade. The Carlton's listed architecture is bathed in soft gold light, reflecting across the promenade and signalling a season of heightened enchantment. Beyond the doors, the garden becomes the centrepiece of the experience, reimagined as a celestial landscape where art, nature and light converge.

Floral designer **Djordje Varda** introduces sculptural arrangements

that appear suspended in mid-air, drifting like botanical constellations between earth and sky. Overhead, a glowing hot-air balloon presides, its moonlit form casting a gentle radiance across the scene. At its heart, an ephemeral **outdoor ice rink** glistens beside the hotel's year-round heated infinity pool—a striking winter vignette set against the Mediterranean backdrop.

Open to both guests and visitors, the rink invites moments of shared joy in 20-minute sessions (€18 for adults, €12 for children under 12). On weekends, the atmosphere deepens as a **Gospel choir** fills the garden with soulful harmonies, turning the space into an open-air sanctuary from **5pm to 7.30pm**, free of charge.

A bold opening, sculpted in ice

The season's inauguration set the tone with characteristic audacity. A monumental **ice sculpture replicating the Carlton's own façade** emerged in the patio,

ingeniously transformed into an ephemeral champagne bar. Above the rink, tightrope walkers traced gravity-defying paths, while skaters performed luminous choreographies below—an opening night that fused performance, architecture and spectacle in true Riviera style.

Winter indulgence, elevated

Festive pleasures at Carlton Cannes extend seamlessly into the realm of gastronomy. Beneath the **Chalet Gourmand**, tucked within the illuminated garden, winter scents linger in the air—golden crêpes, crisp waffles and artisanal panettone prepared to be savoured slowly.

Newly appointed **Pastry Chef Anthony Coquereau** marks the season with a refined signature creation: *Carl's Wishlist*, a Yule log conceived as a chocolate letter inspired by the aromas of the Côte d'Azur. Available by order from **20 to 25 December** (€80), it reflects both craftsmanship and a sense of place. Aspiring young chefs are invited to explore the art of pâtisserie during exclusive masterclasses on **10 and 17 December** (€85), offering a rare glimpse behind the scenes of the palace's culinary atelier.

Signature winter beverages—luxurious hot chocolate, spiced teas, mulled cider, bespoke lattes and chilled champagne—invite guests to pause and linger. The savoury offering is equally compelling, ranging from the Carlton's signature roll and lobster roll to seafood platters and indulgent raclette, designed for moments of relaxed conviviality beneath the stars.

Celebratory dining across iconic venues

The festive calendar unfolds across the hotel's celebrated dining spaces. On **24 December**, **Restaurant Riviera** presents a five-course Christmas Eve menu (€265; €130 for children), accompanied by live music. **New Year's Eve** is marked with four distinct experiences: an elegant seven-course gala dinner in the **Grand Salon** (€720, including champagne



A festive retreat open beyond the guestrooms

In keeping with its spirit of openness, Carlton Cannes extends its seasonal offerings well beyond overnight guests. Throughout December, the **C Club Spa** presents a 60-minute duo ritual (€323 for two), combining private hammam access with a bespoke massage. The fitness centre showcases state-of-the-art equipment, while the gift chalet offers curated festive keepsakes—from snow globes to plush toys and winter knits.

For those seeking a complete immersion, **festive stays from €550 per night** for two include breakfast, ice rink access, a visit to **La Malmaison museum**, and in-room champagne. Families are thoughtfully catered for, with the **Carlton Kids Society** welcoming children free of charge from **19 December to 1 January**, allowing parents to retreat to the spa while younger guests enjoy curated activities.



Where light, memory and celebration converge

As winter settles over the Riviera, Carlton Cannes once again demonstrates its singular ability to balance spectacle with subtlety. Here, festive magic is not fleeting but carefully composed—lived through shared moments, refined flavours and the soft glow of light against historic stone.

This season, beneath a canopy of stars, Carlton Cannes reminds us that luxury lies not only in grandeur, but in the memories that linger long after the lights have dimmed.

Why Go Now

Because the Riviera shines differently in winter.

Carlton Cannes transforms the quieter season into one of its most enchanting moments—where heritage architecture glows, crowds recede, and festive rituals feel intimate yet indulgent. With immersive dining, open-air performances and thoughtful family experiences, this is the Riviera at its most refined and rewarding.

and wines), refined celebrations at **Restaurant Riviera** (€420), a contemporary interpretation of tradition at **Restaurant Rüya** (€520), or a high-energy DJ-led evening at **Bar°58** (€250 minimum spend).

Seasonal brunches on **Christmas Day** (€230) and **New Year's Day** (€260) extend the festivities into daylight hours, offering leisurely moments of indulgence framed by the Carlton's unmistakable grandeur.

Marriott International Reaches 100 Signings for City Express by Marriott Across the U.S. and Canada



Milestone underscores surging demand for midscale hotels as the brand accelerates regional expansion

Marriott International has marked a significant growth milestone with the signing of its **100th City Express by Marriott** agreement across the **United States and Canada**, reinforcing the brand's rapid ascent in the increasingly competitive midscale hospitality segment.

The announcement comes just over a year after City Express by Marriott made its debut in the region. Six properties have already opened in 2025, with a further four scheduled to welcome guests by year-end—clear evidence of the strong momentum driving Marriott's expanding midscale portfolio.

"City Express by Marriott continues to demonstrate incredible momentum in the U.S. and Canada, with this milestone achieved just over a year after the brand was introduced to the region," said **Noah Silverman, Global Development Officer, U.S. and Canada, Marriott International**. "Reaching 100 signings reflects the strong appetite for midscale accommodations, and we are excited to offer owners a compelling entry into the Marriott Bonvoy ecosystem while providing guests with more accessible ways to travel with us."

The growth of City Express by Marriott aligns with Marriott International's broader strategy of scaling strong regional brands into global platforms. Originally established in the Caribbean and Latin America (CALA) region, the brand has gained traction as demand rises for reliable, value-driven accommodation backed by a globally recognised hospitality company. Marriott recently announced further expansion plans in the **Asia Pacific excluding China (APEC)** region, with two City Express by Marriott properties in development in **Osaka, Japan**.

Positioned to appeal to value-conscious business and

leisure travellers, City Express by Marriott offers streamlined, efficient stays without compromising on comfort or consistency. The brand is designed to attract new guests into Marriott's portfolio and its industry-leading loyalty programme, **Marriott Bonvoy**, while offering owners a conversion-friendly model that supports faster speed-to-market. Typical features include modern guestrooms, complimentary breakfast, high-speed internet access and practical amenities tailored to today's traveller.

Marriott's development strategy for City Express by Marriott focuses on well-connected, high-demand markets, a direction reflected in the brand's latest signings across the U.S. Key projects include:

- **City Express by Marriott Kissimmee:** Located near Orlando in one of Florida's most popular leisure destinations, the 197-room hotel is set to provide easy access to major entertainment and theme park attractions.
- **City Express by Marriott Dulles:** Situated near Dulles International Airport and within an hour of Washington, D.C., the planned 90-room property will undergo a full renovation before joining the brand.
- **City Express by Marriott Amarillo:** Serving the Texas Panhandle, this 73-room hotel is designed to cater to regional and road-trip travellers seeking comfort and convenience.
- **City Express by Marriott Sandusky:** Just minutes from Lake Erie, the 50-room hotel will offer proximity to family-friendly attractions including amusement parks, water parks and wildlife areas.
- **City Express by Marriott Carson City:** Located in Nevada's capital, the 86-room property will provide easy access to key business hubs and leisure destinations.

As global travel patterns continue to evolve, Marriott's milestone achievement highlights the growing relevance of midscale hotels that balance affordability, reliability and brand assurance. With City Express by Marriott gaining traction across multiple regions, the company is positioning the brand as a key growth engine within its global portfolio—meeting the needs of modern travellers while unlocking new opportunities for owners worldwide.

Only YOU Hotel New York to Debut in 2026, Marking the Brand's U.S. Arrival



Palladium Hotel Group has formally announced the entry of its design-driven **Only YOU Hotels** brand into the United States, with the opening of **Only YOU Hotel New York** scheduled for the final quarter of 2026. Located on West 45th Street in the heart of Manhattan, the hotel will occupy a coveted address just steps from Times Square and within walking distance of Broadway, placing guests at the epicentre of New York's cultural and commercial life.

The New York opening represents a pivotal moment in Palladium Hotel Group's international expansion strategy, bringing the Only YOU Hotels concept—celebrated for its emphasis on individuality, design

and destination-led experiences—to one of the world's most competitive hospitality markets. Designed to appeal to both global leisure travellers and the city's business community, the property aims to offer an immersive yet refined way to experience New York.

Design-Led Hospitality with a Strong Sense of Place

Interiors at Only YOU Hotel New York will be conceived by renowned Spanish designer **Lázaro Rosa-Violán**, whose portfolio is recognised for blending contemporary aesthetics with warmth and urban elegance. His vision for the property is expected to reflect the dynamic spirit of Manhattan while maintaining the intimate, residential

atmosphere that defines the Only YOU brand.

The hotel will feature **138 guestrooms across multiple categories**, each thoughtfully designed to balance comfort, functionality and modern style. Contemporary amenities and carefully curated details will cater to the expectations of today's discerning traveller, positioning the hotel as both a sophisticated retreat and a vibrant urban base.

Curated Experiences for Today's Traveller

Central to the Only YOU philosophy is a focus on personalised service and spaces designed to foster connection.

Guests will have access to flexible breakfast concepts, in-room dining and inviting communal areas that encourage interaction, whether for work or leisure.

A signature **restaurant and cocktail bar** will serve as a social focal point, offering a menu inspired by New York's diverse culinary landscape alongside expertly crafted cocktails with global influences. These spaces are designed not merely as dining venues, but as lively meeting points that reflect the city's energy.

The hotel will also cater to corporate and private needs with adaptable meeting and event facilities. A private room located on the mezzanine floor, accommodating **eight to ten guests**, will be ideal for executive meetings, private dinners or intimate gatherings, reinforcing the property's versatility in the heart of Midtown.

A Prime Gateway to New York City

Situated in Midtown Manhattan, Only YOU Hotel New York offers immediate access to many of the city's

most iconic attractions, including **Times Square, Broadway, the Empire State Building, Central Park and the Metropolitan Museum of Art**. Its central location ensures seamless connectivity to key transport hubs such as **Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal**, as well as convenient links to **John F. Kennedy International Airport and LaGuardia Airport**.

This strategic positioning makes the hotel an ideal choice for travellers seeking to experience New York's cultural, entertainment and dining scenes, while enjoying the comforts of a design-forward luxury property.

Part of a Broader Global Expansion

The launch of Only YOU Hotel New York marks the brand's **first foray into the U.S. market**, further strengthening Palladium Hotel Group's global footprint. Known for creating hotels that establish a genuine connection with their destinations, Only YOU Hotels continues to expand in key international cities, with forthcoming

openings planned in **Venice and Ibiza**.

This expansion underscores Palladium's commitment to positioning the brand in world-class urban and lifestyle destinations, with a clear focus on distinctive design, service excellence and experience-led hospitality.

A New Chapter in Manhattan's Luxury Landscape

Upon its opening in 2026, Only YOU Hotel New York is set to become a notable addition to Manhattan's evolving luxury and lifestyle hospitality scene. Combining a landmark location, thoughtful design and an emphasis on warmth and authenticity, the hotel aims to offer more than accommodation—it seeks to deliver a meaningful New York experience.

Designed for travellers who value comfort, connection and character, Only YOU Hotel New York is poised to establish itself as a refined urban address where guests can engage with the city's rhythm while enjoying a sense of calm, style and belonging.

Qatar Airways Group Appoints Mr Hamad Ali Al-Khater as Group Chief Executive Officer

Qatar Airways Group today announced the appointment of Mr Hamad Ali AlKhater as Group Chief Executive Officer, effective Sunday, 7 December 2025. Mr AlKhater succeeds Engr. Badr Mohammed AlMeer.

Mr. Al-Khater joins Qatar Airways Group from Hamad International Airport, where he has served as Chief Operating Officer. In that role, he was responsible for ensuring the safety and reliability of airport operations, while leading its strategic direction, operational excellence, infrastructure expansion, and the continuous enhancement of passenger experience.

Before his tenure at Hamad



International Airport, Mr Al-Khater held senior roles across QatarEnergy, driving business development, deal execution,

and leading large-scale strategic and operational initiatives.

Qatar Airways Group Board of Directors Chairman, **His Excellency Mr Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi**, said: *"Qatar Airways Group extends its appreciation to Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer for his service. As we welcome Mr Hamad Ali Al-Khater, we look forward to building on the strong foundations and expansive global network of Qatar Airways, anchored by our exceptional team in Qatar and around the world. With this leadership transition, Qatar Airways Group reaffirms its commitment to delivering world-class experiences, reliability, and innovation to travellers around the globe."*

Chef Kunal Kapur Curates 'The Saudi Table'

A Culinary Prelude to Saudi Arabia in Gurgaon



The Saudi Tourism Authority's consumer brand, **Saudi, Welcome to Arabia**, has unveiled a refined preview of *The Saudi Table*, an immersive culinary residency curated by Chef Kunal Kapur at One8 Commune, Golf Course Road. Designed as a cultural and gastronomic introduction to Saudi Arabia's contemporary food identity, the invitation-only preview

brought together senior editors, food journalists, cultural commentators, creators and hospitality leaders from across Delhi-NCR, ahead of the residency's public opening.

Among those in attendance were prominent culinary and lifestyle voices, including Shivesh Bhatia, Niki Mehra Madan, Ashna Sharma, Chef Afshan and several leading figures from the region's food and culture ecosystem.

The afternoon positioned Saudi cuisine not as an exotic curiosity, but as a confident, living tradition—rooted in heritage, shaped by trade, and increasingly visible on the global culinary map.

Reflecting on the collaboration, Chef Kunal Kapur described Saudi Arabia as a land of layered stories. "From the coral reefs of the Saudi Red Sea to the snow-dusted peaks of Tabuk,



every region has its own narrative—of adventure, heritage and, above all, food that has been passed down quietly like an heirloom,” he said. Drawing parallels between the two cultures, Kapur highlighted the resonance between India’s *Atithi Devo Bhavah* and the Saudi concept of *Hafawa*—a philosophy of generosity, warmth and gracious hosting. “*The Saudi Table* celebrates this shared spirit. The flavours are familiar, yet truly spectacular.”

Anchored in ingredient integrity and informed by centuries of Indo–Arab exchange, the preview unfolded through an unhurried, communal dining format. Rather than theatrical reinvention, the experience foregrounded context: the influence of ancient trade routes on flavour, the continuity of home-style cooking, and the quiet assurance of a cuisine that balances antiquity with contemporary relevance.

The experience opened with a generous grazing table that reflected the foundational grammar of Saudi dining—dips, grains, greens and breads arranged for sharing and conversation. Dishes such as Kareef salad with pomegranate molasses,

Hijazi-style tabbouleh, wild za’atar labneh, baba ganoush, roasted carrot and date salad, and date-led creations including Madinah date and almond bites and date-cardamom cake offered an elegant introduction to the region’s agricultural and pantry traditions.

A progression of small plates followed, showcasing everyday Saudi cooking with clarity and restraint: aubergine-wrapped halloumi, cheese sambusas, blistered za’atar manakish, cottage cheese and chicken shawarma, lamb kawarma meatballs, stuffed chicken wings with dried fruit and wild rice, and Gulf-style shrimp brushed with harissa. The larger plates carried the ceremonial weight of Saudi hospitality—kabsa, mansaf lamb, saffron rice with seafood, seafood pilaf, and mushroom sheesh taouk with mujaddara—emphasising abundance, aroma and technique. Desserts closed the meal with characteristic restraint: warm kunafa, rose-and-pistachio panna cotta and crisp baklava.

Chef Kapur’s curation was widely noted for its discipline and fidelity to source. Rather than adapting Saudi dishes to suit a cosmopolitan palate,

the menu respected the cuisine’s internal logic—its reliance on spice over heat, its balance of acidity and sweetness, its preference for texture over ornamentation, and its deeply embedded culture of shared, community-driven eating.

The preview also served as the platform to introduce Saudi’s new culinary-focused travel packages for the Indian market. Starting at 74,000, these itineraries are designed for travellers who seek to understand destinations through food—how people cook, shop, gather and celebrate. The packages are available through Saudi’s authorised travel partners, including EaseMyTrip, MakeMyTrip, Yatra, Akbar Travels, Riya Holidays and Atlas.

Each itinerary reflects a distinct regional rhythm. Jeddah’s programme follows the pulse of a historic coastal trading city, with dawn fish markets, Al-Balad’s heritage bakeries, time-honoured seafood institutions, Corniche evenings and optional Hijazi home-cooking sessions. Riyadh’s route explores Najdi hospitality and the capital’s contemporary energy, moving through Diriyah’s restored heritage quarters, traditional souks, coffee rituals and a growing landscape of chef-driven restaurants, complemented by desert dinners beneath the Tuwaiq cliffs. AlUla, defined by its oasis farms and monumental sandstone formations, offers farm-to-table dining, Old Town trails, date markets, heritage cafés, stargazing feasts and chef-led experiences set within one of the region’s most dramatic natural settings.

Together, these journeys extend the core philosophy of *The Saudi Table*: that cuisine is among the most revealing cultural texts—carrying memory, migration, landscape and identity in ways no single landmark can.

The Saudi Table will be open to the public until **December 18, 2025, at One8 Commune, Golf Course Road, offering diners across Delhi-NCR a rare opportunity to experience the depth and diversity of Saudi Arabia’s culinary traditions firsthand.**



Taiwan Charts a Sustainable Tourism Future with New Three-Pillar Roadmap and Matsu “Island Pilgrimage” Initiative

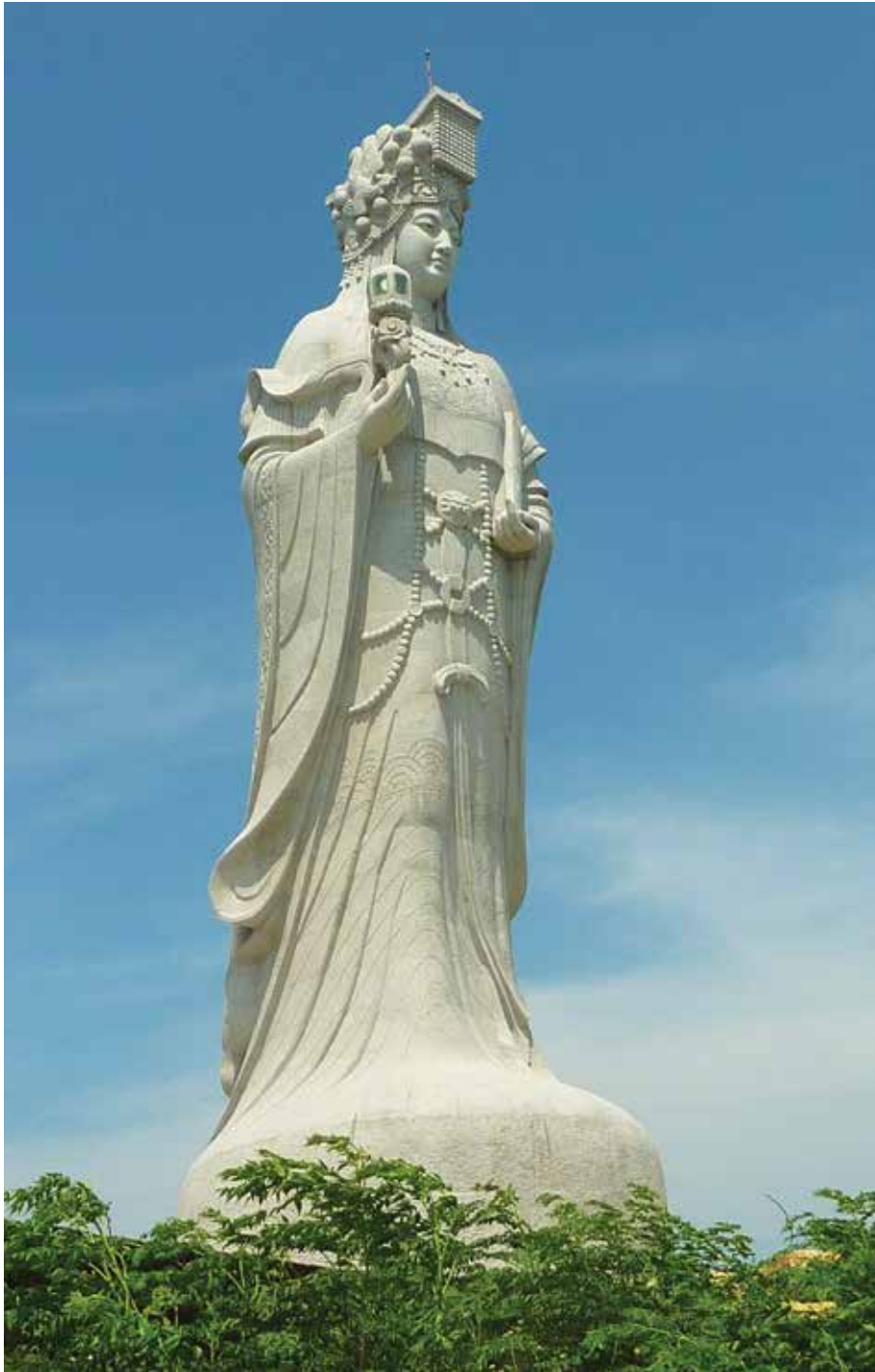


Taiwan is repositioning itself at the forefront of sustainable and culturally rich tourism. The Taiwan Tourism Administration has unveiled an ambitious new roadmap built on three strategic pillars—**Local Immersion, Digital Transition, and International Promotion**—aimed at strengthening community-led tourism, enhancing visitor engagement, and protecting the island’s cultural and natural heritage.

At the core of the plan is a drive to create a more resilient and inclusive tourism ecosystem—one that connects travellers with Taiwan’s stories, supports local livelihoods, and ensures long-term, environmentally conscious growth. By placing cultural heritage and community participation at the center of its tourism strategy, Taiwan is signalling a renewed commitment to tourism that enriches both visitors and local residents.

Matsu’s “Island Pilgrimage” Program: A New Era of Sustainable Travel

A key element of Taiwan’s tourism strategy is the launch of the **“Island Pilgrimage: A Slow Travel Trek Through Matsu”** program. Located northwest of Taiwan’s main island, the **Matsu islands** are famous for their **untouched landscapes, historical landmarks, and unique cultural heritage**. The program offers



visitors the opportunity to explore the islands on foot, engaging in **slow travel** that focuses on **environmental stewardship, cultural experiences, and community-led walks**.

This **eco-friendly initiative** not only promotes **sustainable travel** but also provides visitors with a deep connection to the **local environment and community life**. By offering

immersive, walking-based tours, Matsu's program supports Taiwan's goal of becoming a **leading destination for responsible tourism** in Asia. The **"Island Pilgrimage"** encourages visitors to take their time, absorb the **natural beauty**, and interact with **local communities**, creating a more **personal and enriching** travel experience.

Tourism Impact: Strengthening Local Economies and Cultural Preservation

The **"Island Pilgrimage"** initiative is expected to have a **significant positive impact** on **local economies** in Matsu and surrounding areas. By promoting **eco-tourism** and supporting **local businesses**, the program will create new opportunities for **community-driven tourism**, benefiting **small businesses, tour operators, and local artisans**. The focus on **cultural immersion** and **sustainable practices** aligns with **Taiwan's broader tourism goals** of ensuring that growth does not come at the expense of the **environment or local communities**.

Additionally, this initiative will provide a model for other regions in **Taiwan** to incorporate **sustainable tourism** into their local economies. By investing in **heritage preservation** and **nature-based experiences**, Taiwan is not only creating new **tourism opportunities** but also preserving its **cultural legacy** for future generations.

Future Tourism Growth: Matsu as a Premier Destination for Slow Travel

Looking ahead, **Matsu** has the potential to become one of Taiwan's **premier destinations for slow travel**. With its **blend of historical charm, natural landscapes, and rich cultural traditions**, the islands offer a unique setting for visitors seeking a deeper, more **authentic travel experience**. The expansion of the **"Island Pilgrimage"** program, including **cross-island routes** and **stamp-collecting activities**, will further solidify Matsu's appeal to both **domestic and international travelers**.

As demand for **eco-tourism** and **sustainable travel** rises globally, Matsu is well-positioned to attract tourists who value **authenticity, environmental responsibility, and cultural heritage**. This growth will contribute to the overall development of Taiwan's **eco-**

tourism infrastructure, creating new economic opportunities in **rural communities** while enhancing the **island's international appeal** as a **sustainable travel destination**.

Digital Transition: Enhancing Tourist Engagement and Accessibility

The **digital transition** aspect of Taiwan's tourism roadmap will also play a crucial role in its future growth. By implementing a **digital gateway** for **visa applications** and providing **online tools** for tourists, Taiwan is making it easier for visitors to plan their **trips** and navigate the country's tourism offerings. This technological approach will enhance **tourist accessibility**, improve **service delivery**, and streamline the **tourism experience** for visitors from around the world.

Furthermore, the introduction of **interactive digital platforms** for **tourism promotions** will enable Taiwan to reach **new markets**, particularly in **Asia** and **Europe**, where demand for **digital travel services**

is on the rise. By embracing **smart tourism** and **data-driven solutions**, Taiwan can stay ahead of **global trends** and attract a new generation of **tech-savvy travelers**.

Looking Ahead: Sustainable Tourism and Economic Prosperity in Taiwan

The future of **Taiwan's tourism industry** lies in its ability to balance **sustainability**, **economic development**, and **cultural preservation**. The **"Island Pilgrimage"** program in **Matsu** is a step in the right direction, providing a sustainable model that can be replicated across other regions.

Taiwan's **focus on eco-tourism**, **local engagement**, and **digital innovation** will attract more **international visitors**, boost **local economies**, and support **sustainable development** in the long term. As the island nation continues to invest in **tourism infrastructure**, **Taiwan's tourism sector** will play a pivotal role in promoting **cultural exchange**, supporting **local communities**,

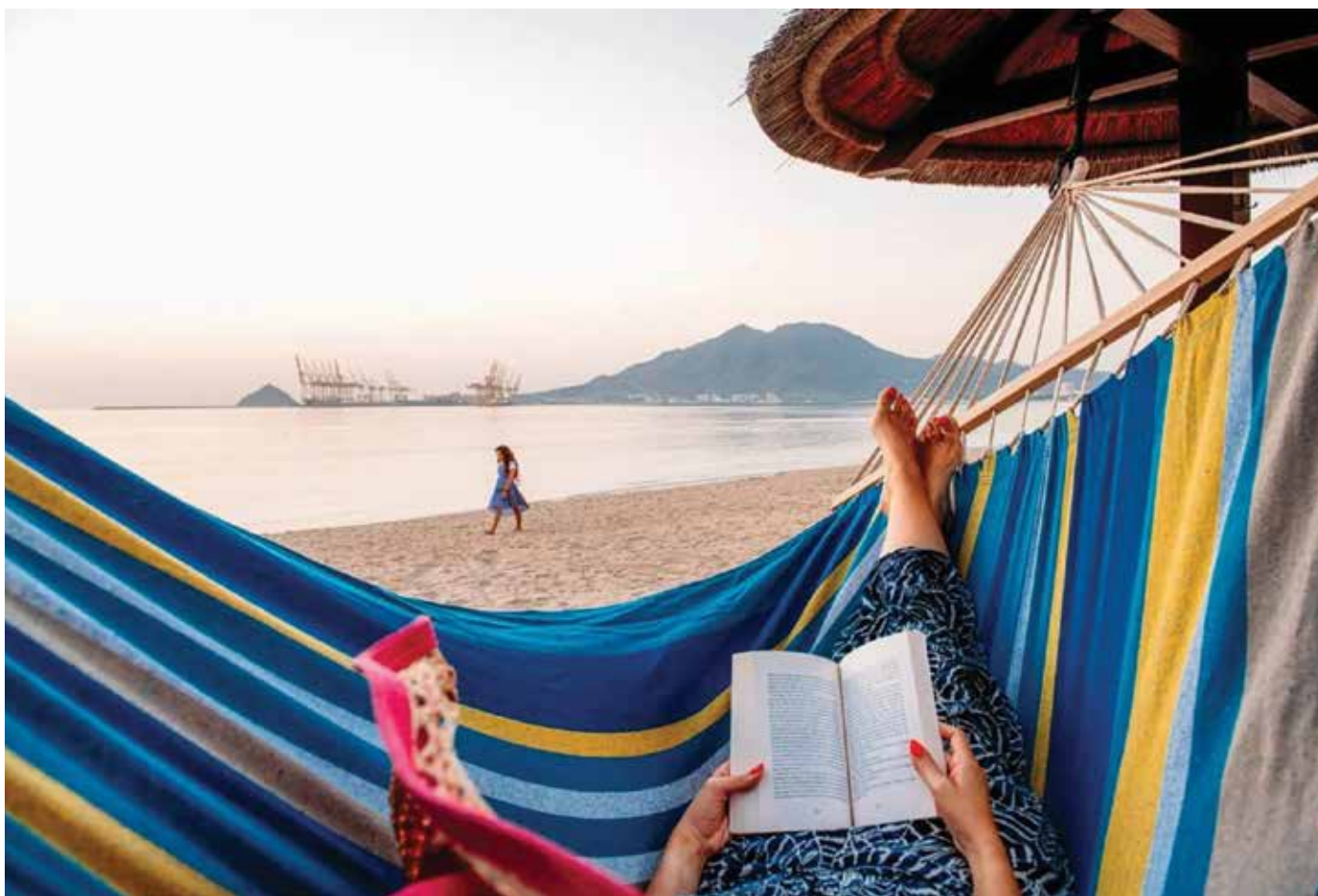
and ensuring the preservation of its **natural resources** for future generations.

Taiwan's Future as a Leading Destination for Sustainable Tourism

This country is now positioning itself for long-term tourism growth and economic prosperity through a commitment to eco-tourism, local cultural immersion, and digital innovation. Taiwan demonstrates its commitment to genuine tourism development and sustainability with the recent launch of the **"Island Pilgrimage"** initiative in Matsu.

With global tourism trends continuing to shift toward sustainable travel and personalized experiences, Taiwan is in an enviable position to make a difference by offering responsible, immersive tourism options that will benefit both tourists and local communities. By harnessing technology, culture, and nature, Taiwan secures a spot as one of the top sustainable destinations for years to come.





Where Culture Meets the Coast:

Discover Sharjah's Scenic Beaches

Experience the vibrant coastal charm of Sharjah, where the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman provide a stunning backdrop for a variety of beach activities. Whether you are an adventure seeker or simply looking to unwind, Sharjah's beaches offer a diverse range of experiences tailored to all interests.

Sharjah, one of the UAE's seven emirates, is celebrated for its deep-rooted cultural heritage — yet it also surprises visitors with a breathtaking coastline that offers a serene break from city life. Its beaches are diverse and inviting, each offering a unique atmosphere, activities, and amenities. Whether you're travelling with family, seeking adventure, or simply looking to unwind by the water, Sharjah's shores cater to every preference.

From the energetic vibe of Al Hamriyah Beach, known for its pristine white sands and family-friendly setting, to the picturesque arc of Khorfakkan Beach — a favourite among water sports enthusiasts — the emirate's coastline offers something for every kind of traveller. Al Heera Beach, the longest in Sharjah, seamlessly blends recreation and relaxation with its 3.5-kilometre stretch featuring jogging paths, a professional skate park, and a

variety of dining options. Whether it's a peaceful sunset walk, a sporty day on the sand, or a picnic with loved ones, Sharjah's beaches promise memorable experiences. Combining modern infrastructure with natural beauty and a warm atmosphere, Sharjah's coastal destinations are more than scenic spots; they are enriching experiences waiting to be discovered.

Al Hamriyah Beach

Al Hamriyah Beach is not just about sun and sand; it's about enjoyment for all, whether you're a family or someone with special needs

A beloved choice for families, Al Hamriyah Beach features soft, white sand, a lively atmosphere, and well-planned amenities, including playgrounds, restrooms, and ample parking. It also became the first beach in Sharjah to be officially recognised for accessibility for people with disabilities. This achievement stems from trained beach staff and facilities developed in accordance with World Disability Union (WDU) standards.

There is an extensive range of beach activities and games that can be enjoyed on Al Hamriyah Beach, such as walking, contemplation, playing, as well as football, volleyball, and many others.

Khorfakkan Beach

Choose from endless water sport options with beautiful views.

This 3-kilometre crescent-shaped beach hosts endless choices for fun in the water, from fishing and diving to parasailing and kayaking. It is one of the most popular Sharjah tourist places and weekend getaways in the UAE, with activities for every kind of traveller. Locals love to take a day trip here for a pleasant change from the Sharjah weather. Lined with palm trees and facing glittering waters, the sand makes a great playground for adults and children with swing sets and football goalposts. Don't forget to take a ball with you. Activity outside is ideal in breezy Khorfakkan weather.

Explore the water with a relaxing swim or with boat and jet ski rentals, available in the huts near the centre

of the corniche. Deeper into the water, there are several fishing spots to make a big catch. You can also choose from sailing, scuba diving, or snorkelling near Shark Island, which is just a short boat ride from the beach.

On one end of the Khorfakkan beach is the Oceanic Resort and Spa. The hotel offers a tailored experience at one of the most beautiful tourist places to visit in the UAE, with a full range of water sports and pamper packages. Many tourists spend the night here after a day on the beach to rest comfortably and then wake up to a beautiful sunrise over the water.

Khorfakkan is situated 137 km east of Sharjah, about halfway between Dibba and Fujairah.

Sira Khorfakkan

A place for adventure and water

sports off the Khorfakkan beach.

Explore pristine, shimmering waters and a breathtaking coral reef

Off the coast of the Khorfakkan public beach, this small rocky island is an underwater marvel for everyone who enjoys snorkeling, scuba diving and swimming. Sea anemones and turtles are a treat for snorkellers, while divers flock here for the beautiful rock formations teeming with moray eels, rays and Arabian angelfish. If you prefer to stay on the surface, take a kayak out to spot schools of fish from above the clear waters

As a family with children, choosing a nearby diving centre for guides to the island is highly recommended. You can easily rent equipment for a dive, or fins, snorkels and masks for snorkelling. The





sandy Sharjah beach is also a perfect spot for a picnic. Enjoy the best of Sharjah weather on this island, where there are plenty of things to do with kids and adults alike.

Sira Khorfakkan Island is located a short boat-ride away from Khorfakkan on Sharjah's east coast. It lies just out in the bay, tucked behind the port at the southern end of the beach.

Al Heera Beach

Al Heera Beach is the longest beach in the city, extending for a length of 3.5 kilometres along the Arabian Gulf and allows visitors to enjoy a range of distinctive activities in addition to a variety of dining options.

The beach includes a jogging track, bicycle track, sports fields, and children's play areas. It also includes the first professional skate park in

Sharjah, known as the 'Kota Skate Park', and includes tracks for all levels of skaters and different roller sports which include skateboarding, roller skating, scootering and bicycle motocross (BMX). The skatepark will also feature a special pump track around the outside of the skatepark as a dedicated section for kids under complete safety regulations and measures.

This unique tourist destination includes 3 sections, each containing 6 units, in harmony with the surrounding environment, which includes a walkway and a marina, in addition to a number of restaurants and cafes. A distinctive view of the Arabian Gulf and a yacht marina that can accommodate more than 100 yachts and boats of different sizes, surrounded by a garden characterise this enticing destination.

Al Khan Beach

A conveniently located Sharjah beach for water sports, relaxation and swimming.

Located in the Al Khan neighbourhood close to Sharjah city, this beach is a 600-metre strip of sand with a dedicated area for swimming and water sports. For adventurers, the surf school here has activities like kayaking, parasailing, surfing and flyboarding. Those who prefer a more relaxed experience can lounge on the sand and enjoy Sharjah weather, wade in the water in the dedicated swimming area, take a ride on a banana boat or play some beach volleyball. There are also plenty of things to do with kids, including a playground with multiple slides for smaller children. The beach is one of the quick places to visit in Sharjah for a dose of natural views with friends and family.

Al Khan Beach is also one of the popular Sharjah tourist places, with two major attractions close by. In just a five minute walk from the beach, you can reach the Sharjah Maritime Museum and Sharjah Aquarium. You needn't worry about how to wash up beforehand, as the Al Khan Beach has plenty of showers, changing rooms and toilets. Just south of here is the Mamzar beach, another place to enjoy the waves of the Arabian Gulf.

Al Luluyah Beach

Located in Khorfakkan, this quiet beach offers a serene setting with a beautiful mountain backdrop. It is perfect for those seeking a peaceful and tranquil beach day.

A prime location to enjoy the clear ocean and golden sands with family and friends

Al Luluyah (pearl) Beach is a quiet public beach in the city of Khorfakkan, with a beautiful mountainous background. Family friendly, Luluyah Beach is the ideal destination to enjoy a peaceful evening with children and friends. The beach includes a delightful camping site that gives visitors the opportunity to watch the sunrise over the ocean as well as the chance to

practice various activities such as swimming, surfing and walking on the golden sands.

Al Mamzar Beach

Family favorite destination, providing plenty of entertainment, relaxation, hobbies and sports

Fishing enthusiasts will enjoy this beach in particular as hook fishing is allowed here

Al Mamzar Beach in Sharjah is a family favorite destination, providing plenty of entertainment, relaxation, hobbies and sports. What distinguishes Al Mamzar Beach is that it is located between Dubai and Sharjah, and both sides of the beach have the same name.

The beach in this area is located near the towers and residential complexes such as Maryam Island, alongside various shops, cafes and restaurants catering to the needs of visitors.

Fishing enthusiasts will enjoy this beach in particular as hook fishing is allowed here, adjacent to the Sharjah Aquarium and many residents and visitors enjoy spending their spare time fishing, or playing volleyball, football, basketball and many other activities here every weekend.

Kalba Beach Corniche

Thanks to its long sandy beach and clear turquoise waters, this place is a dream for beach lovers in an atmosphere with real local flavor

A unique experience in the arms of pristine nature.

The Kalba Beach Corniche, which extends for 9.4 km, has been developed and its infrastructure upgraded to provide services to the people, visitors and beachgoers of the region. The Corniche has been supplied with many elements, facilities and services development including wider car lanes, a service street, a rubber track for jogging, shaded benches facing the sea and pedestrian crossings.

The city of Kalba is located 120 kilometers east of the city of Sharjah and about 12 kilometers south of the city of Fujairah. It is the southernmost



inhabited area of Sharjah before the border with the Sultanate of Oman.

At the southern end, coastal sands and adjoining mangrove forests form an important part of the Al Hefaiyah Conservation Area. It is an important nesting site for hawksbill turtles and the only place in the UAE where the rare Arabian Collared Kingfisher breeds.

In Brief

Sharjah's beaches offer a serene escape with golden sands and clear waters, perfect for relaxation and stunning sunsets, featuring family-friendly spots like **Al Khan Beach** and budget-friendly options like **Heera Beach**, balancing natural beauty with adventure and family fun, all set within a culturally rich emirate recently declared a "Baby and Family Friendly city". Visitors can enjoy tranquil environments, watersports opportunities, and nearby cultural attractions like **Al Montazah Parks** and **Al Noor Island**, making Sharjah a diverse coastal destination.

Beautiful Beaches for Relaxation & Views

- **Sharjah Beach:** A long stretch of soft, golden sand with clear waters, offering a natural, serene vibe, ideal for tranquil walks and incredible sunsets.

- **Heera Beach:** A less crowded, budget-friendly public beach with ample free parking, providing a peaceful alternative to busier spots.

Adventure & Family Fun Spots

- **Al Khan Beach:** A popular, family-friendly beach known for its watersports and relaxing atmosphere, suitable for all ages.

- **Al Montazah Parks:** Features the "Island of Legends" amusement park and "Pearls Kingdom" water park, with exciting rides and splash zones for families.

- **Al Noor Island:** A modern retreat combining nature and art, with beautiful surroundings and a Butterfly House, offering a soulful family experience.

Beyond the Beach: Cultural & Family Attractions

- **Sharjah Aquarium:** Discover diverse marine life in this fascinating underwater world.

- **Al Qasba:** A waterfront destination with cultural events, entertainment, and family activities.

- **Sharjah Discovery Centre:** Interactive exhibits perfect for sparking kids' curiosity.

Best Time to Visit

- Visit between **November and April** for pleasant, cool weather ideal for beach activities and exploring.

Sharjah's commitment to being a family-friendly city, combined with its beautiful coastline and cultural attractions, makes it a diverse destination for beauty, adventure, and family fun.



Taiwan

A Year-Round Festival in Motion

Taiwan reveals its true spirit through a vibrant calendar of festivals that unfold across the island throughout the year. Blending centuries-old traditions with contemporary international events, these celebrations transform Taiwan into a living, breathing stage of culture, creativity and hospitality—making every season an ideal time to visit.

More than a destination, Taiwan is an ongoing celebration. From the rhythm of religious rituals and colourful parades to music festivals, sporting events and seasonal spectacles, the island invites travellers to engage with its culture in immersive and meaningful ways. Here, festivals are not merely occasions to observe, but experiences to participate in—offering deep insights into Taiwan's heritage, values and modern identity.

At almost any time of year, visitors can encounter festivals dedicated to flowers, lanterns, dragon boats, fireworks, music, hot springs, cycling tours, international marathons and culinary traditions. These events follow one another seamlessly across the calendar, ensuring that no matter when travellers arrive, Taiwan is alive with celebration.

The year often begins with one of



Asia's most enchanting spectacles: the **Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival**. Held during the Lunar New Year period, the festival sees thousands of glowing lanterns released into the night sky, each bearing handwritten wishes for health, happiness and prosperity. Floating gently above mountain villages, the lanterns create a moment of quiet magic that reflects Taiwan's blend of folk belief, community spirit and visual poetry.

Equally iconic is the **Taiwan Lantern Festival**, hosted annually in a different city. Featuring monumental lantern installations, contemporary light art, cultural performances and interactive displays, the festival transforms urban landscapes into radiant nighttime wonderlands. Particularly popular with international visitors, it exemplifies Taiwan's ability to fuse traditional craftsmanship with modern design and storytelling.

Wellness also takes centre stage in Taiwan's festival calendar. The island is uniquely endowed with a wide variety of springs—including hot, cold, turbid and even submarine springs—and is internationally recognised for its hot spring resorts. The annual **Hot Spring and Fine-Cuisine Carnival**, held in autumn and winter, celebrates this natural wealth by combining wellness experiences with local gastronomy, drawing both domestic and international travellers.

Spring marks the rise of Taiwan's spiritual and cultural traditions. The **Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage**, one of the largest religious processions in the world, attracts millions of devotees who follow the sea goddess Mazu on her journey across central Taiwan. Beyond its religious significance, the pilgrimage is a vibrant communal celebration, animated by music, fireworks, street food and an atmosphere of inclusivity that warmly welcomes visitors.

Summer brings a surge of energy and international flair. The **Taipei International Dragon Boat Championships** pair high-adrenaline racing with festive waterfront celebrations, while the **Taipei Summer Festival** fills the city with open-air



concerts, street performances and multicultural events. Food enthusiasts are especially drawn to Taiwan's renowned night markets, many of which host seasonal food festivals highlighting local flavours and inventive street cuisine.

Music and the arts are central to Taiwan's global cultural appeal. Events such as the **Spring Scream Music Festival** in Kenting and the **Taipei Jazz Festival** attract performers and audiences from around the world, transforming beaches and city streets into stages of creative exchange. These festivals showcase Taiwan's youthful energy, openness and inclusive cultural landscape.

Autumn ushers in harvest celebrations and indigenous cultural festivals across the island. Visitors can experience traditional music, dance and ceremonies that honour Taiwan's Indigenous communities, offering deeper insight into the island's diverse cultural roots. At the same time, the **Taiwan International Balloon Festival** in Taitung fills the skies

with colourful hot-air balloons set against dramatic mountain and coastal scenery—an unforgettable spectacle for families and photographers alike.

As the year draws to a close, Taiwan embraces global festivities alongside local traditions. Christmas markets, year-end concerts and the world-famous **Taipei 101 New Year's Eve fireworks** draw international visitors seeking a vibrant, safe and memorable way to welcome the new year.

What truly sets Taiwan's festivals apart is their accessibility. An efficient transport network, welcoming communities and a strong emphasis on visitor experience allow travellers to move easily between city celebrations and rural traditions. Each festival is an open invitation—to taste, to dance, to participate and to connect.

To discover Taiwan through its festivals is to experience the island at its most alive. Every celebration tells a story of heritage, innovation and warmth, making Taiwan not just a place to visit, but a place to celebrate—again and again, all year round.



America, the Bespoke Way:

Brand USA

Reimagines Luxury Travel

From vineyard tastings at golden hour and private songwriting sessions to wilderness lodges, red-carpet access and ultra-luxury wellness retreats, the United States is quietly redefining what bespoke travel looks like in 2025 and beyond. At the heart of this shift is **Brand USA**, the destination marketing organisation for the United States, which invites discerning global travellers to experience the country through a more refined, deeply personalised lens—where indulgence is not an

add-on, but an integral part of the journey.

This December, Brand USA makes its **debut appearance at ILTM Cannes**, marking a strategic moment in how America positions itself within the global luxury travel conversation. Engaging with elite travel advisors, media and industry leaders, the organisation is showcasing a portfolio of high-end, hyper-curated experiences that reflect evolving traveller priorities: privacy, authenticity, access and meaning.

“From coast to coast, the United States offers a range of bespoke travel options found nowhere else,” said **Fred Dixon, President and CEO of Brand USA**. “As travellers increasingly seek exclusive, hyper-personalised experiences, the U.S. continues to stand out as a destination for the very best in luxury, wellness and adventure. We invite travellers to discover the products and trends redefining luxury travel in America today.”

The showcase also aligns with **America 250**, a nationwide celebration marking 250 years of U.S. history. As part of this milestone, Brand USA is spotlighting *250 exceptional experiences* across the country, spanning luxury travel, culture, outdoor adventure and iconic road trips. What follows is a curated selection of the luxury experiences shaping the way



in destinations including Telluride, Colorado; Florida's Emerald Coast; and Santa Barbara, California—each paired with personalised concierge services designed to mirror five-star hotel standards in a private setting.

Remote luxury is equally compelling. In South Dakota's high plains, **Shortgrass Resort** is an adults-only sanctuary set across 52 acres, offering stand-alone bungalows surrounded by iconic American landmarks such as Mount Rushmore and Badlands National Park. In Southern Utah's high desert, **Escalante Yurts** delivers refined off-grid living, while **Será at Sandy Ridge** in Wardensville, West Virginia, introduces a micro-resort concept with private plunge pools and chef-grade kitchens, enveloped by the George Washington National Forest.

In Big Sky, Montana, **One&Only Moonlight Basin** elevates alpine luxury with 73 rooms and suites alongside

typically reserved for insiders. Through elite destination management companies, travellers can secure **VVIP entry to global events**, including the Met Gala, New York Fashion Week, the Vanity Fair Oscars Party, Art Basel Miami and the Super Bowl.

Music lovers can step behind the curtain in **Austin**, co-writing and recording original music during private songwriting sessions, or in **Nashville**, where the Four Seasons Songwriter Experience pairs guests with hit-making artists for intimate collaborations.

In Aspen, winter evenings take a dramatic turn with **Snowcat dinners** at the Cabin at Aspen Snowmass—accessible only by snow machine—where fine dining meets high-altitude adventure.

All-Inclusive, Elevated

For travellers who value seamless luxury, America's all-inclusive resorts deliver immersive experiences without logistical friction. **Vermejo**, a Ted Turner Reserve in New Mexico, combines wilderness, heritage and comfort with daily guided activities, gourmet dining and accommodations ranging from historic cottages to upscale lodges.

In Montana, **Paws Up**—a two-MICHELIN Key resort—reimagines the American West through luxury glamping, lodge homes and treehouse-style accommodations, while the adjacent adults-only **Green O** offers a more intimate, design-forward retreat.

Signature Luxury Experiences Across the USA Stargazing, Refined

Utah's **Compass Rose Lodge** offers a private observatory equipped with a telescope inspired by the Hubble Space Telescope, while **Clear Sky Resorts' Bryce Canyon** features panoramic glass Sky Domes for immersive night-sky viewing. Near Grand Canyon West, **The Outpost** pairs luxury glamping with a once-in-a-lifetime rafting and helicopter adventure hosted by the Hualapai Nation.



high-end travellers are discovering the United States now.

Secluded Stays: Privacy as the Ultimate Luxury

For travellers seeking discretion and space, the U.S. villa and wilderness stay market has come into its own. **Nocturne Villas** offers a carefully vetted collection of private homes

private cabins and expansive multi-story homes featuring gourmet kitchens, outdoor hot tubs and panoramic wilderness views—an immersion in nature without compromise.

Unlocking Access: The Power of the Insider Experience

Luxury in America increasingly means access—often to worlds



Sports, Elevated

With the **2026 FIFA World Cup**, **2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles**, and **Formula 1 in Las Vegas**, the U.S. remains a global sports luxury hub. **On Location Experiences** curates VIP hospitality for these events, while the **Formula 1 Paddock Club** offers pit access, private lounges and premium dining for motorsport enthusiasts.

Theme Parks, Reimagined

Private VIP experiences at Walt Disney World, Universal Studios Hollywood, SeaWorld and LEGOLAND allow guests to bypass queues, access behind-the-scenes tours, and customise their park journeys.

Festival Chic

From **Coachella** to **Stagecoach**, On Location's Platinum Service elevates festival-going with private luxury homes, concierge services, exclusive transport and premium access.

Luxury Beyond the Mainland

In **Puerto Rico**, the debut of the **Four Seasons Resort and Residences Puerto Rico** signals a new era of Caribbean luxury,

complemented by the Audubon-recognised Bahía Beach Golf Club. In Hawai'i, travellers can explore the Nā Pali Coast aboard **Lady Kailani**, a new 65-foot luxury catamaran, or embark on the **Ultimate Overnight Volcano Tour**, blending helicopter flights, private guides and crater-rim stays.

Regional Expressions of Luxury

From Indigenous-led cultural immersions in **Taos, New Mexico**, to desert wellness rituals at **Amangiri** in Utah, luxury in the American Southwest is increasingly tied to place, culture and mindfulness. The forthcoming **Canyon Spirit luxury train**, launching in 2026, will further redefine slow travel across Utah and Colorado.

In the **South**, experiences range from private culinary salons in Charleston and bespoke denim workshops in Raleigh to barefoot luxury at **Blackberry Farm** in Tennessee. Meanwhile, Savannah blends heritage hospitality with fashion-forward collaborations, and Kentucky's Bourbon Trail invites travellers to bottle their own rare releases.

The **Pacific Northwest** offers truffle-hunting in Oregon, floating saunas in Seattle and tide-flat oyster experiences

along Washington's Hood Canal—luxury defined by nature and craft.

City Sophistication

Urban luxury spans the nation. Detroit offers paddle-to-table dining experiences, while Los Angeles introduces travellers to private airport terminals at **PS LAX**, iconic hotels along Sunset Strip and bespoke fashion styling in Beverly Hills. San Diego's restored **Hotel del Coronado**, Miami's evolving wellness scene, Naples' reimagined Four Seasons beachfront, New York's reborn **Waldorf Astoria**, and Washington, D.C.'s after-hours museum experiences each reflect a city-specific interpretation of indulgence.

The New American Luxury

What emerges from Brand USA's luxury showcase is a redefinition of indulgence—less about excess, more about access; less about spectacle, more about story. From wilderness to world cities, the United States is positioning itself as a destination where luxury is not monolithic, but bespoke—crafted around the traveller, the place and the moment.

For the modern luxury traveller, America is no longer just a destination. It is a canvas.

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