

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

travel

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A Cinematic Journey with LISA

Thailand Invites the World
to 'Feel All the Feelings'

Brand USA

Marks 250 Years with
50 Memorable Family
Travel Experiences

The Quirky Side of California

20 Events That Show the
State's Playful Spirit

Savor Michelin- Star Excellence:

California's Finest
Dining Experiences





Discover Taiwan: Asia's Most Captivating Non-Stop Destination

As India's outbound travel market accelerates to record levels, a new Asian destination is capturing the imagination of discerning Indian travellers—**Taiwan**, an island where innovation, culture and natural beauty converge to create a truly unforgettable travel experience. Positioned at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, Taiwan is rapidly emerging as one of Asia's most dynamic travel destinations. With its vibrant cities, breathtaking landscapes and world-class infrastructure, the island offers a seamless blend of leisure, business and cultural exploration.

Taiwan Strengthens Tourism Ties with India

Taiwan is stepping up its tourism engagement with India to tap into the country's rapidly growing outbound travel market. The **Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA)** recently led its largest-ever tourism delegation to India, comprising two Taiwanese airlines, seven travel agencies and cultural performance groups—underscoring its commitment to strengthening bilateral tourism ties. The initiative began with a Taiwan Tourism Workshop in **New Delhi**, bringing together over 100 travel trade professionals to explore Taiwan's offerings across leisure, adventure and MICE travel. The outreach continued at the **Outbound Travel Mart in Mumbai**, where Taiwan engaged industry partners through business meetings, immersive displays and cultural showcases, reinforcing its appeal for Indian leisure and corporate travellers.

"Taiwan – Waves of Wonder"

Taiwan unveiled its global tourism campaign "**Taiwan – Waves of Wonder**," presenting a renewed vision of the island as a year-round destination of discovery. Inspired by the island's dramatic landscapes and coastal beauty, the campaign reflects the natural rhythm of Taiwan—where mountains, oceans and vibrant cities create a continuous flow of experiences for travellers. The wave-inspired branding symbolises the country's diverse seasonal attractions and the promise of "wave after wave of wonder" for visitors exploring the island. From misty mountain sunrises and scenic coastal drives to bustling night markets, cultural landmarks and innovative culinary experiences, Taiwan offers a dynamic journey that unfolds throughout the day and across every season. Complemented by world-class infrastructure, efficient transportation and a reputation as one of Asia's safest destinations, Taiwan invites global travellers to immerse themselves in a destination where every moment brings a new wave of discovery.

Nature, Innovation and Culture on One Island

Taiwan is a destination where cutting-edge innovation meets rich cultural heritage. Globally known for its leadership in advanced technology and semiconductor manufacturing, Taiwan also offers breathtaking landscapes—from lush mountains to scenic coastlines. Despite its compact size, the island delivers remarkable travel diversity, supported by efficient infrastructure that allows visitors to seamlessly move between vibrant cities and tranquil countryside escapes.

Rising Interest from Indian Travellers

Taiwan's engagement with India is already delivering encouraging results. Nearly **47,000 Indian visitors travelled to Taiwan in 2025**, representing more than **20 percent growth compared with 2024** and surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The momentum reflects a broader surge in international travel from India. With more than **30 million outbound travellers in 2024** and continued double-digit growth through 2025, India remains one of the world's most promising tourism markets.

Cultural Exchange at the Heart of Tourism

Taiwan's promotional outreach in India showcased the island's rich cultural heritage, positioning tourism as a bridge for meaningful connections. The **Lei Sheng Traditional Arts Troupe** mesmerized audiences with **Guan-Jiang-Shou**, a revered symbol in Taiwanese folk culture representing protection, strength, and positive energy. Adding an interactive element, artisans from the historic town of **Lukang** led hands-on workshops, guiding participants in crafting **Sword Lions**, vibrant cultural motifs believed to ward off negative energy. These immersive experiences offered Indian travel professionals an authentic encounter with Taiwan's traditions—underscoring how culture and tourism together create lasting engagement.

A Culinary Journey for Every Traveller

Recognizing that cuisine is central to the travel experience, **Taiwan** offers a culinary landscape that caters to diverse tastes and dietary preferences, ensuring Indian travellers feel at home. From **vegetarian-friendly menus** to tailored dining options, the island blends tradition with innovation. Explore its vibrant **street food culture**, renowned for local delicacies, or indulge in an emerging **fine-dining scene** that elevates Taiwanese gastronomy. Every meal becomes part of the journey, offering a flavorful complement to the island's stunning landscapes and cultural heritage.

Taiwan Awaits

As Taiwan continues to expand its engagement with India's travel community, the island is positioning itself as a sophisticated destination for leisure travellers, honeymooners, young explorers and corporate groups alike.

Safe, vibrant and endlessly diverse, Taiwan offers a journey where every moment reveals something new.

Taiwan — where discovery never stops, and every wave brings a new wonder.



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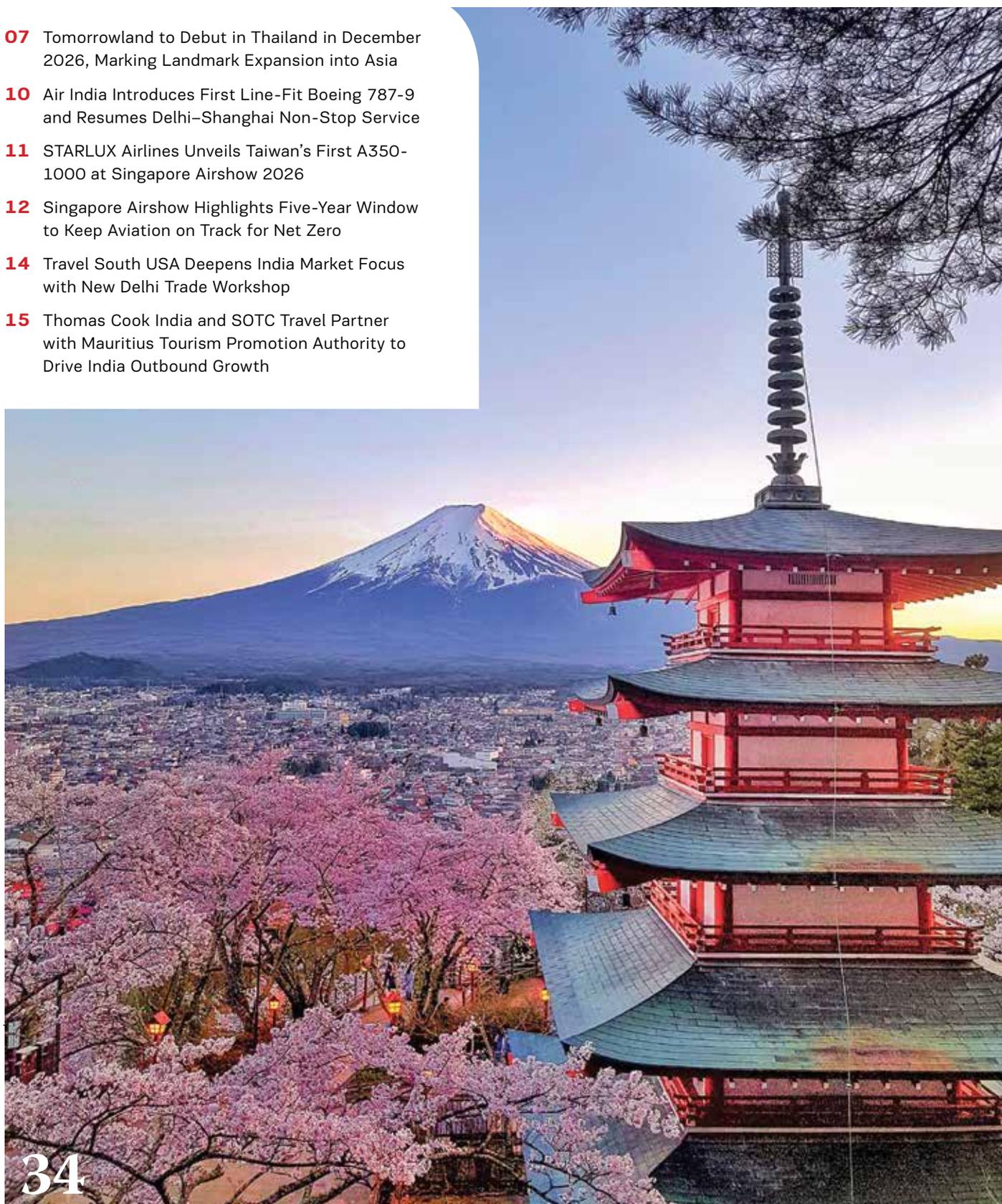
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experience
abu dhabi

A LITTLE BIT OF TRADITION, A WHOLE LOT OF ABU DHABI

From UNESCO sites to festivals, this destination is packed
with stories to tell



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Tomorrowland to Debut in Thailand in December 2026, Marking Landmark Expansion into Asia

Thailand is set to host a defining moment in global event tourism as Tomorrowland confirms its first-ever Asian edition, scheduled for **December 11–13, 2026**. The move represents a major strategic milestone for one of the world's most influential music brands and signals Thailand's growing stature as a premier destination for large-scale experiential travel.

The Belgian-founded festival will be staged in partnership with the Thai Government and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), creating a

public-private framework designed to position the event as both a cultural spectacle and a high-impact tourism driver.

Strategic Win for Thailand's Experience-Led Tourism Vision

Thailand was selected over several competing Asian destinations, reflecting its expanding role at the intersection of global entertainment, innovation and lifestyle tourism. Industry observers note that the decision underscores confidence in Thailand's infrastructure readiness,

aviation connectivity, hospitality depth and destination appeal.

According to TAT leadership, hosting Tomorrowland aligns with the country's long-term ambition to elevate its global tourism profile beyond traditional leisure segments and into world-class creative and cultural experiences.

The Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand described the partnership as a milestone in positioning Thailand as a leader in global tourism and immersive experiences, highlighting the

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opportunity to showcase the country's culture, hospitality and destination diversity to an international audience.

For travel industry CEOs and senior officials, the event represents more

than a festival — it is a catalyst expected to drive inbound visitation, premium accommodation demand, aviation traffic, MICE synergies and creative sector growth.

Wisdom Valley in Pattaya Confirmed as Festival Site

Organisers have confirmed that the 2026 edition will take place at Wisdom Valley in Pattaya's Khao Mai Kaew area, within Bang Lamung District, Chonburi Province.

The expansive **237-acre (600 rai)** site provides the scale required for Tomorrowland's signature multi-stage format and immersive world-building concepts. The location also benefits from proximity to Bangkok and the Eastern Economic Corridor, strengthening transport and accommodation integration.

Two of Tomorrowland's most iconic stage concepts — **CORE** and **Freedom** — will make their Asian debut in Thailand, alongside new stage designs developed exclusively for the Thai edition. Known globally for elaborate storytelling, architectural spectacle and high-production environments, the festival's staging is



widely regarded as a benchmark in live entertainment design.

Attendance and Economic Impact

The festival is projected to attract **more than 50,000 attendees per day** across the three-day event, positioning it among Thailand's largest-ever music and cultural gatherings.

An event of this magnitude is expected to generate significant economic impact at both local and national levels. Beyond ticket sales, revenue streams are anticipated across:

- International and regional air travel
- Luxury and upscale hospitality
- Food and beverage sectors
- Retail and lifestyle services
- Creative and technical production industries

The scale and brand equity of Tomorrowland also offer strong potential to stimulate repeat visitation and reinforce Thailand's positioning in the high-value experiential travel segment.

A Long-Term Asian Commitment

Bruno Vanwelsenaers, CEO of WEAREONE.world — the organisation behind Tomorrowland — characterised the expansion into Asia as a carefully considered milestone.

He emphasised that Thailand was chosen not only for its natural beauty and cultural energy but for its shared ambition to create a world-class, meaningful and enduring event platform. The collaboration is framed as the beginning of a long-term presence in the region rather than a one-off activation.

In preparation for 2026, Tomorrowland's Belgian production and creative teams are working closely with a dedicated Thai operational unit to transfer expertise in electronic music programming, stage architecture, immersive storytelling and large-scale event logistics. The objective is to deliver the full Tomorrowland experience in Asia while embedding local cultural elements into the production narrative.

Expanding a Global Festival Portfolio

With established flagship editions in Belgium and Brazil, Tomorrowland Thailand will mark the festival's first full-scale presence in Asia, adding a new geographic chapter to its global portfolio.

For senior leaders across aviation, hospitality, destination marketing and investment sectors, the 2026 launch represents a strategic inflection point: Asia's experiential tourism market continues to mature, and global brands are increasingly selecting destinations capable of delivering infrastructure scale, policy support and international appeal.

As December 2026 approaches, Thailand stands poised not only to host a globally renowned festival, but to redefine its positioning within the premium global events ecosystem.



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Air India Introduces First Line-Fit Boeing 787-9 and Resumes Delhi–Shanghai Non-Stop Service



Air India has marked a dual milestone in its international expansion and fleet transformation strategy with the induction of its first line-fit Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner and the resumption of non-stop flights between Delhi and Shanghai after nearly six years.

The developments signal a strategic push by the national carrier to strengthen long-haul connectivity while elevating the onboard experience as part of its broader modernisation programme.

First Line-Fit Boeing 787-9 Enters Commercial Service

Air India's first factory-delivered, made-for-Air India Boeing 787-9 entered commercial operations on the Mumbai–Frankfurt route. Registered as VT-AWA and operating as flight AI2027, the aircraft departed Mumbai at 1237 hrs IST, marking the debut of the airline's redesigned cabin interiors first unveiled on 27 January 2026.

The introduction of the line-fit 787-9 represents a key step in Air India's fleet renewal strategy, with the upgraded interiors set to be progressively introduced across its Boeing 787 fleet.

The new Dreamliner features a three-class configuration

designed to enhance comfort and privacy across cabins.

Business Class offers 30 suites arranged in a 1-2-1 configuration, ensuring direct aisle access for every passenger. The fully flat beds extend up to 79 inches in length, with a 42-inch pitch. Additional features include wireless charging, enhanced personal storage and 17-inch 4K QLED HDR touchscreen monitors.

Premium Economy comprises 28 seats in a 2-3-2 layout, offering a 38-inch pitch, deeper recline, adjustable calf and leg rests, and 13.3-inch 4K QLED HDR screens.

Economy Class includes 238 ergonomically designed seats, each equipped with an 11.6-inch 4K QLED HDR touchscreen.

Across all cabins, passengers have access to the Thales AVANT Up in-flight entertainment system, Bluetooth audio connectivity, USB Type A and Type C charging ports, and updated mood lighting inspired by ancient Indian wellness traditions. The interiors also incorporate bespoke design elements reflecting Indian aesthetics in a contemporary form.

On the Mumbai–Frankfurt sector, flight AI2027 departs Mumbai at 1235 hrs and arrives in Frankfurt at 1730 hrs, while the return service AI2028 leaves Frankfurt at 2020 hrs, arriving in Mumbai at 0900 hrs the following day (all timings local).

Delhi–Shanghai Non-Stop Flights Resume

On the same day, Air India reinstated its direct air link between Delhi and Shanghai, restoring non-stop connectivity between India and mainland China after nearly six years.

The resumed service, operating as flight AI352, departed Indira Gandhi International Airport at 1207 hrs IST. The route operates four times weekly using a Boeing 787-8 aircraft.

The Delhi–Shanghai route is expected to serve growing demand from business travellers, corporate sectors, students, families and tourists, reconnecting two major economic and cultural hubs in Asia.

Under the current schedule, flight AI352 departs Delhi at 1200 hrs and arrives in Shanghai at 2020 hrs. The return flight AI351 departs Shanghai at 2200 hrs and arrives in Delhi at 0315 hrs the following day (all timings local).

Strengthening Global Connectivity

The simultaneous launch of the new-generation 787-9 and the reinstatement of the Shanghai service underscore Air India's renewed focus on expanding long-haul operations while modernising its product offering.

Bookings for both the Delhi–Shanghai and Mumbai–Frankfurt routes are available through all Air India sales channels, including its website, mobile application, airport ticketing offices, contact centres and travel agents worldwide.

As the airline continues to invest in next-generation aircraft and enhanced passenger experiences, the twin announcements reflect a broader ambition: positioning Air India as a competitive full-service global carrier with upgraded cabins, expanded connectivity and a stronger international footprint.

STARLUX Airlines Unveils Taiwan's First A350-1000 at Singapore Airshow 2026



STARLUX Airlines has presented Taiwan's first Airbus A350-1000 at the Singapore Airshow 2026, marking a defining moment in the carrier's fleet modernisation and long-haul expansion strategy. The aircraft's debut on the international stage underscores the airline's ambitions to strengthen its global footprint while elevating premium travel standards.

Registered as **B-58551**, the aircraft is on static display at Asia's largest aerospace exhibition ahead of its commercial service entry, offering aviation stakeholders and industry partners an opportunity to experience the airline's latest onboard product and next-generation widebody capabilities.

The unveiling represents a milestone not only for STARLUX but also for Taiwan's aviation sector, as the carrier becomes the first Taiwanese airline to introduce the A350-1000. STARLUX is also the sole airline from Taiwan participating in this edition of the Singapore Airshow, highlighting the event's strategic importance in the airline's international positioning.

Airline leadership described the debut as a reflection of steady progress in fleet planning and operational maturity. The A350-1000, they noted, symbolises the evolution of a comprehensive fleet structure

capable of supporting both long-haul intercontinental routes and high-efficiency regional operations, while reinforcing Taiwan's growing presence in global aviation.

Airbus executives likewise emphasised the significance of the aircraft's presence, pointing to expanding long-haul connectivity across the Asia-Pacific region. The STARLUX configuration, featuring a four-class layout with an emphasis on passenger comfort and cabin design, demonstrates the performance and experience potential of the A350-1000 platform.

Flagship for Long-Haul Growth

As the largest aircraft type in the STARLUX fleet, the A350-1000 will serve as the airline's long-haul flagship. Built with advanced carbon-fibre composite materials, the aircraft offers enhanced structural efficiency, lower fuel consumption and reduced noise emissions compared with previous-generation widebodies.

Powered by Rolls-Royce Trent XWB engines, the aircraft delivers improved fuel burn performance and lower carbon emissions, supported by advanced aerodynamics and a lightweight airframe — attributes aligned with the aviation sector's

broader sustainability goals.

The aircraft features a **four-class configuration with 350 seats**, comprising:

- 4 First Class suites
- 40 Business Class seats
- 36 Premium Economy seats
- 270 Economy Class seats

With a nonstop range of approximately **9,700 miles (15,600 km)**, the type is expected to play a central role in STARLUX's network expansion toward North America and Europe, strengthening Taiwan's long-haul connectivity.

Externally, the aircraft carries the airline's signature "**Obsidian Gray**" livery, accented with "**Earth Gold**" detailing and distinctive "1000" fuselage markings, reinforcing its flagship status.

Brand Visibility and Cultural Positioning

The introduction of the A350-1000 forms part of a broader global brand-building initiative. Following delivery of the aircraft in early 2026, the airline has expanded its international visibility through creative collaborations, including a multi-year partnership with Japanese artist Hajime Sorayama. Under the "AIRSORAYAMA" concept, select A350-1000 aircraft will feature distinctive artistic design elements, merging aviation and contemporary art.

A Strategic Showcase

The aircraft's presence at the Singapore Airshow provides STARLUX with a high-profile platform to demonstrate progress in fleet capability, service positioning and long-term growth planning. For industry partners, the debut offers a clear signal of the airline's intent to compete in the premium long-haul segment while supporting Taiwan's role in the evolving global aviation landscape.

However, current deployment levels of SAF and breakthrough technologies fall short of what is required to maintain a smooth trajectory to 2050. Supply chain bottlenecks, financing constraints and geopolitical uncertainties continue to affect the pace of scale-up.

SAF as a Cornerstone

Across all decarbonisation scenarios, SAF emerges as the single largest contributor to emissions reduction. Production volumes have risen in recent years, but scaling to the levels envisioned for 2050 will demand sustained policy incentives, long-term offtake agreements and capital flows into refining capacity.

Even with aggressive SAF adoption and technological improvements, residual emissions are expected to remain. As a result, market-based measures and high-quality carbon

removals form an integral part of the long-term transition strategy.

The 2030 Milestone

The period to 2030 is identified as a critical inflection point. Priority actions include accelerating SAF production, speeding up the replacement of older aircraft with more fuel-efficient models, modernising air traffic management systems and maintaining global alignment on carbon market mechanisms such as CORSIA. Investment in credible carbon removal solutions will also become increasingly important as the sector moves toward deep decarbonisation.

Growth and Responsibility

Aviation demand is projected to continue rising over the coming decades, reflecting the sector's role in global trade, connectivity and economic development. The challenge, therefore,

lies in decoupling that growth from emissions through technology, fuel innovation and systemic efficiency gains.

Industry leaders emphasise that the energy transition in aviation is not solely an environmental imperative but also an economic one, shaping future investment flows, job creation and the long-term competitiveness of the sector.

A Narrowing Window

The overarching conclusion is clear: delay increases both cost and complexity. Long-term policy certainty, coordinated international action and cross-sector collaboration are essential to ensure that aviation remains on a credible path to net zero. The next five years will determine whether the industry can maintain momentum or face a steeper, more disruptive transition later.

Accor Appoints Amitabh Rai as COO – Luxury, South Asia

Global hospitality group Accor has appointed Amitabh Rai as Chief Operating Officer – Luxury for South Asia, effective 15 January 2026. The appointment strengthens the company's leadership as it accelerates the growth of its luxury and lifestyle portfolio across the region.

In his new role, Rai will lead the operational and strategic direction of Accor's luxury brands in South Asia, including Raffles Hotels & Resorts, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts and Sofitel. He will focus on enhancing guest experiences, reinforcing brand identity and driving commercial performance across key luxury destinations.

Rai brings nearly three decades of experience in luxury hospitality across India and Indonesia. A graduate of The Oberoi School of Hotel Management, he began his career with Oberoi Hotels

& Resorts, where he rose through the ranks to become one of the youngest General Managers in the group.

He later joined Marriott International in 2018 as General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore and subsequently oversaw the company's Hyderabad market operations. Most recently, Rai served as Multi-Property General Manager for The Ritz-Carlton, Jakarta and JW Marriott Hotel Jakarta, gaining extensive international leadership experience.

According to Ranju Alex, Chief Executive Officer of Accor South Asia, Rai's appointment comes at a pivotal time as the company strengthens its luxury footprint in the region. "His operational expertise and people-first leadership style make him well suited to lead our luxury portfolio and guide its next phase of growth," Alex said.

South Asia remains a key focus



market for Accor, with rising demand for experiential and destination-led luxury travel. In his new role, Rai will drive long-term strategy, financial performance and brand differentiation while fostering a culture of innovation and talent development.

Speaking on his appointment, Rai noted that he looks forward to building memorable guest experiences and supporting Accor's vision for sustainable and future-ready luxury destinations across South Asia.

Travel South USA Deepens India Market Focus with New Delhi Trade Workshop

Southern US destinations position for wider Indian outbound demand through structured trade engagement



Travel South USA reinforced its strategic focus on the Indian outbound market with a dedicated trade workshop in New Delhi, aimed at strengthening partnerships, expanding destination awareness and aligning Southern US tourism products with evolving Indian traveller demand.

The regional tourism alliance — representing stakeholders across 12 Southern US states — convened destination representatives and Indian travel trade professionals for a structured programme of presentations and networking. The initiative forms part of Travel South USA's ongoing India market development strategy, reflecting the country's growing importance as a high-potential long-haul source market.

The New Delhi engagement followed shortly after Travel South USA's annual **International Showcase in Kansas City, Missouri**, where a select group of Indian luxury and experiential travel planners had participated. The back-to-back initiatives underline a sustained two-way trade exchange designed to translate market interest into itinerary

integration and sales growth.

According to organisers, the Delhi workshop was attended by **55 travel agents**, representing boutique luxury operators as well as specialists in FIT, GIT and MICE travel. Participation levels signalled increasing trade interest in diversifying US offerings beyond traditional gateway cities, with the Southern United States emerging as a culturally rich and experience-driven alternative.

Opening the session, **Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing**, Travel South USA's India representation agency, outlined the workshop's objectives and emphasised the importance of consistent market education and long-term collaboration between US destinations and Indian travel sellers. She highlighted the role of targeted trade outreach in building product familiarity and driving sustainable conversion.

Liz Bittner, President and CEO, Travel South USA, presented an overview of the Southern US travel landscape, focusing on the region's

geographic diversity, thematic travel circuits and segment suitability across leisure, group travel and special-interest tourism. She also addressed how Southern states are strengthening their positioning in India through enhanced connectivity, product development and trade partnerships.

Destination-specific insights were delivered by **Rochelle Hicks, Tourism Director, Visit Mississippi**, and **Chenelle McGee, International and Tourism Sales Director, Kentucky Office of Tourism**. Their presentations highlighted key attractions, itinerary possibilities and signature experiences relevant to Indian travellers, including cultural heritage routes, music tourism, culinary trails and outdoor recreation. Both destinations underscored the availability of trade-ready products and encouraged Indian planners to integrate Southern states into broader US programmes.

The workshop also incorporated experiential elements aligned with the region's identity. A live music performance and bourbon-led hospitality featuring Maker's Mark and Jim Beam supported Travel South USA's regional branding message, **"One Region. Infinite Possibilities."** An interactive lucky draw awarded participants copies of *I Am From Here* by Indian American chef Vishwesh Bhatt, while one attendee received a bottle of Basil Hayden Bourbon.

Post-event feedback indicated strong interest among agents in expanding US itineraries to include Southern destinations. Participants cited the value of direct engagement with tourism officials and first-hand destination briefings as key enablers for future product integration, suggesting that such targeted trade platforms are contributing to a broader diversification of how the US is positioned in the Indian market.

Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel Partner with Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority to Drive India Outbound Growth

Strategic alliance aims to strengthen Mauritius' positioning across leisure, honeymoon and MICE segments in India



In a strategic initiative to boost travel to Mauritius from the high-potential India market, Thomas Cook (India) Limited, India's premier omnichannel travel services provider, and its group company, SOTC Travel, have signed a MOU with Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA). This strategic collaboration will ensure focus on growing Mauritius' visibility and inspiring visitation from the India market. The MOU was signed by **Mr. Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head at Thomas**

Cook (India) Limited, Mr. S.D. Nandakumar - President & Country Head - Holidays and Corporate Tours, SOTC Travel Limited, and Mr. Benoît Harter - Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority in the presence of Mr. Dinesh Burrenchobay - Chairman, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority.

Beyond its pristine beaches, turquoise lagoons and lush landscapes, the partnership will spotlight Mauritius' rich Creole heritage and vibrant cultural tapestry—reflected in its cuisine, festivals and religious diversity. With deep-rooted cultural links to India, the destination offers a familiar yet distinctive appeal for Indian travellers, supported by visa-free access, short flight durations and a wide spectrum of premium to value-driven resorts, making the destination is a preferred choice for honeymoons, multi-generational families, Young India's millennials & GenZ, GenS and leisure travellers. Mauritius is also gaining prominence for MICE and corporate travel, with world-class convention facilities, luxury resorts offering integrated meeting infrastructure and distinctive team-building experiences set against stunning natural backdrops.

This multi-pronged collaboration will focus on destination knowledge & education, product development and Marcomm to position Mauritius as a top-of-mind destination across India's metro, mini-metro and Tier 2 and 3 markets.

Mr. Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head - Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India) Limited,

said, "We are delighted to be appointed by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority as a strategic partner for the Indian market. Our partnership intends leverage on Thomas Cook India's omnichannel strength, destination expertise and extensive reach, to showcase Mauritius' evolving proposition across leisure, MICE and business travel. We aim to tap into India's metros as well as the strongly emerging Tier 2 and 3 markets."

Mr. S.D. Nandakumar - President & Country Head - Holidays and Corporate Tours, SOTC Travel Limited, said, "The signing of our MOU with the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority marks a significant milestone in positioning Mauritius as a truly multifaceted destination. Beyond its scenic allure, Mauritius offers a compelling blend of French influence, Creole heritage, vibrant culture, diverse religious traditions and a distinctive culinary landscape—creating a deep cultural connect with Indian travellers. This partnership will enable us to showcase the destination's depth and diversity, while driving sustained demand across leisure, honeymoon, multi-generational families, MICE and corporate travel segments from India."

Mr. Benoit Harter - Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, said, "We are delighted to work with Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel as part of our strategy to grow the Indian market for Mauritius and accelerate visitation from both metro cities and regional markets. Our multipronged approach aims to leverage opportunities across the leisure and MICE segments through this partnership. We look forward to working closely with Thomas Cook and SOTC"



Sarawak Intensifies India Outreach Ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026

Borneo's culturally rich Malaysian state positions itself as a high-value destination for experiential, eco and luxury-conscious Indian travellers

Sarawak, Malaysia's largest state located on the island of Borneo, is sharpening its focus on the Indian market as part of its build-up to **Visit Malaysia Year 2026**, with tourism authorities planning an expanded promotional push across India. The move comes as the destination records strong post-pandemic recovery and rising interest from Indian travellers seeking culture-led, nature-rich and experience-driven journeys.

Tourism to Sarawak has rebounded steadily since global travel resumed, with overall visitor numbers surpassing pre-pandemic benchmarks. International arrivals from India have

also shown notable growth, climbing to over 38,000 visitors in 2025 — a significant increase compared to pre-Covid levels. The upward trajectory has prompted tourism stakeholders to deepen engagement with the Indian travel trade, lifestyle media and experiential travel segments to broaden awareness beyond Malaysia's traditional gateways.

A Distinctive Alternative Within Malaysia

Positioned in eastern Malaysia, Sarawak occupies over 124,000 square kilometres yet remains lightly populated, offering travellers a sense of space that contrasts with

more urbanised Asian destinations. Approximately two-thirds of its landmass is forested, encompassing 14 national parks, dozens of waterfalls and vast stretches of protected rainforest.

What sets Sarawak apart in the luxury experiential landscape is its cultural complexity. The state is home to 34 ethnic communities, each contributing distinct traditions, architecture, festivals and culinary heritage. This diversity translates into immersive cultural encounters — from indigenous longhouse visits and traditional craft experiences to seasonal festivals and heritage cuisine — elements increasingly valued by high-spend travellers seeking authenticity.

Nature, Heritage and UNESCO Credentials

Sarawak's natural assets form a central pillar of its global positioning. Adventure and eco-tourism offerings range from guided rainforest treks and wildlife observation to river journeys and cave exploration.

Two of Malaysia's UNESCO World Heritage Sites are located here.

Gunung Mulu National Park, inscribed in 2000, is internationally recognised for its vast cave systems, including the Sarawak Chamber, one of the world's largest underground chambers. The park is also known for its dramatic bat exodus phenomenon at dusk. More recently, the **Niah Cave Complex** received UNESCO recognition for archaeological discoveries indicating human habitation dating back approximately 65,000 years, adding significant anthropological depth to the destination's profile.

These heritage assets position Sarawak at the intersection of nature, science, culture and conservation — attributes that align with the growing demand for meaningful travel among affluent global explorers.

A Market on the Rise: India

India is emerging as an important growth market as Sarawak works to diversify its visitor base beyond traditional regional sources such as Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore. While many Indian travellers to Malaysia have historically concentrated on Kuala Lumpur and peninsula-based itineraries, tourism stakeholders see strong potential to redirect interest toward Borneo's more experiential offerings.

Efforts in India are focusing on multi-generational family travel, honeymooners, young professionals and experience-led leisure travellers, alongside the corporate and MICE segments. Cultural familiarity, diverse cuisine, and the destination's reputation for safety and English-language accessibility are considered key strengths in appealing to Indian outbound audiences.



Sustainability at the Core

Unlike many global destinations grappling with overtourism, Sarawak's scale and low population density allow for controlled, sustainable growth. Tourism development strategies emphasise environmental stewardship, cultural preservation and community inclusion, aligning with broader sustainability frameworks guiding the state's long-term planning. Eco-tourism, conservation and responsible visitor management are central themes in destination development.

Expanding MICE Infrastructure

Sarawak is also strengthening its credentials as a regional business events hub. The Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCKK) already hosts large-scale conferences, and an adjacent second facility under development will significantly increase capacity. The combined infrastructure is expected to position Sarawak to host major international conventions in the coming years, reinforcing the state's appeal for incentive travel and association events seeking distinctive settings beyond conventional urban centres.

Culture, Creativity and Screen Appeal

The state is increasingly exploring film and creative collaborations as part

of its destination marketing mix. Film tourism and production incentives are being examined as tools to showcase Sarawak's landscapes, cultural vibrancy and architectural character to global audiences. Cultural ambassadors, arts initiatives and culinary showcases further contribute to positioning Sarawak as a culturally layered destination rather than a purely scenic one.

Connectivity as a Growth Enabler

Improved air connectivity is viewed as critical to accelerating growth from long-haul markets including India. Ongoing aviation developments and route expansion plans are expected to make access to Sarawak's capital, Kuching, more seamless via Malaysia's main international gateways, supporting broader itinerary integration.

With its blend of rainforest wilderness, deep-rooted heritage, living indigenous cultures and expanding premium infrastructure, Sarawak is shaping a narrative that resonates with today's luxury traveller: one of discovery, depth and responsible exploration. As Visit Malaysia Year 2026 approaches, the state is positioning itself not merely as an extension of Malaysia, but as a destination in its own right for culturally curious, experience-driven global travellers.

Singapore Tourism Strategy 2040 Charts Course for High-Value, Sustainable Growth

Long-term roadmap prioritises premium demand, MICE leadership, destination innovation and industry transformation

Singapore has outlined an ambitious long-term vision for its visitor economy under the **Singapore Tourism Strategy 2040**, a roadmap designed to deliver sustainable, high-quality growth while reinforcing the city-state's standing as a leading global destination for business and leisure travel. The strategy signals a deliberate shift from volume-driven targets to a focus

on higher visitor value, enhanced experiences and industry capability development.

Strong Performance Underpins Long-Term Ambitions

Recent tourism performance indicates steady recovery and resilience. Visitor arrivals between January and November 2025 reached **15.5 million**, reflecting year-on-year

growth, with full-year figures projected to approach pre-pandemic benchmarks. More notably, **tourism receipts grew at a faster pace than arrivals**, underscoring the emphasis on higher-yield segments.

Average length of stay has stabilised at around **3.5 days**, while hotel performance remains robust, with occupancy levels exceeding 80% and new supply entering the market in a



controlled manner. Key source markets include Mainland China, Indonesia and Malaysia, with Southeast Asia accounting for a significant share of arrivals. Spending continues to be concentrated in accommodation, attractions, entertainment, gaming, and dining.

A Vision Anchored in Value Creation

Launched as a long-range framework, the Tourism Strategy 2040 positions Singapore as a destination offering distinctive experiences, a vibrant urban environment for residents, and a hub for innovation in sustainable tourism. Financially, the strategy projects tourism receipts reaching **between S\$47 billion and S\$50 billion by 2040**, driven primarily by higher per-visitor spend



rather than dramatic increases in arrivals.

Pillar One: Capturing High-Potential Demand

MICE as a Growth Engine

Business events tourism remains central to Singapore's strategy. MICE visitors typically spend significantly more than leisure travellers, and Singapore's established reputation as a leading meetings destination continues to be leveraged. The roadmap includes securing long-term partnerships with global event organisers, anchoring major international conventions and developing a new large-scale MICE hub in the city centre to accommodate future demand.

Targeted Leisure Segments

The strategy also identifies high-value leisure cohorts including active seniors, families, Gen Z and millennial professionals, and established career travellers seeking curated urban experiences, culture, dining and lifestyle offerings.

Transit Conversion

With **Changi Airport Terminal 5** expected to add substantial passenger capacity in the mid-2030s, efforts are being aligned to convert more transit passengers into stopover visitors through tailored short-stay propositions.

Pillar Two: Enhancing Destination Appeal

Singapore's attractiveness as a lifestyle and experiential destination is being reinforced through a pipeline of new and refreshed attractions. Developments range from themed entertainment zones and nature-based experiences to immersive marine and wildlife attractions. Upcoming projects also include automotive lifestyle experiences and wellness-focused urban attractions, reflecting a diversification of visitor interests.

The hospitality landscape is evolving in parallel. New openings and brand entries span ultra-luxury villa-style resorts, nature-integrated stays and lifestyle-oriented urban hotels. Integrated resort expansions

planned before the end of the decade will introduce additional luxury accommodation, upgraded MICE facilities, entertainment venues and expanded dining and retail precincts.

Singapore's events calendar remains a key differentiator, encompassing major art festivals, global concert tours and international sporting events. Cruise tourism is also being strengthened, with terminal expansion enabling increased homeporting and new cruise products targeting regional and long-haul travellers.

Strategic destination marketing continues through partnerships with global brands, creative talent and digital content platforms to maintain cultural relevance and international visibility.

Pillar Three: Industry Capability and Innovation

Industry transformation forms the third pillar of the strategy. Initiatives are underway to enhance productivity, digital adoption and talent development across the tourism ecosystem. Programmes supporting data analytics, technology adoption and innovation pilots are designed to future-proof the sector, while global platforms are being used to showcase local expertise and creative industries.

A Compact, Connected, High-Impact Model

Singapore's compact geography and integrated infrastructure continue to be positioned as competitive strengths, enabling visitors to maximise experiences within limited travel time. Discussions around cross-border connectivity, multicultural heritage districts and the city's role as a regional hub for arts, entertainment and pop culture further reinforce its multifaceted appeal.

Through the Tourism Strategy 2040, Singapore is pursuing a calibrated path — one that balances visitor growth with quality, sustainability and innovation — ensuring that tourism remains both economically impactful and aligned with the city's broader urban and social development goals.



Malaysia Launches Visit Malaysia Year 2026 with Ambitious Growth Targets

National strategy focuses on funding, connectivity and industry incentives to elevate Malaysia's global tourism standing

Malaysia has formally unveiled **Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VMY 2026)**, a comprehensive national tourism initiative aimed at accelerating international visitor growth and reinforcing tourism's role as a central pillar of the country's economic development. The programme sets an ambitious target of **47 million international arrivals** and **tourism receipts approaching RM100 billion** by 2026.

The campaign represents a coordinated, multi-layered strategy spanning global marketing, infrastructure upgrades, air connectivity expansion and private-

sector support. It reflects Malaysia's intent to capitalise on the sustained recovery in global travel demand and the growing importance of Asia-Pacific travel flows, while strengthening long-term sector resilience.

Increased Investment to Elevate Destination Appeal

A significant expansion in tourism-related funding forms the foundation of the initiative. The Malaysian government has allocated **over RM500 million in additional resources** to support international marketing campaigns, destination

enhancements and the hosting of global events. The objective is twofold: to raise Malaysia's visibility in key long-haul and regional markets, and to ensure visitor experiences meet evolving global expectations.

Infrastructure development under VMY 2026 is aimed at improving accessibility, visitor comfort and event-hosting capability. Investment priorities include transport links, upgraded visitor facilities and venues equipped to accommodate large-scale international gatherings — a move designed to reinforce Malaysia's credentials in both leisure and business travel segments.

Connectivity as a Strategic Lever

Air access has been identified as a critical enabler of growth. The VMY 2026 framework includes targeted financial incentives and grants to attract new international air routes and stimulate additional airline capacity into Malaysia's primary gateways. These measures are intended to strengthen links with high-potential source markets and ensure the country remains competitively positioned within Southeast Asia's aviation landscape.

Enhanced connectivity is expected to support both established tourism hubs and secondary destinations, encouraging broader itinerary dispersal and regional economic participation.

Industry Support and Private Sector Participation

The strategy also incorporates fiscal measures aimed at strengthening the tourism value chain. Tax incentives and financial support mechanisms are being introduced for tourism-related enterprises, including accommodation providers, attractions and service operators. These initiatives are designed to stimulate private-sector investment, drive product innovation and elevate service standards across the industry.

By aligning public investment with industry-led development, Malaysia aims to create a more dynamic and diversified tourism ecosystem capable of meeting the expectations of high-yield leisure travellers, corporate groups and international event organisers.

Tourism as an Economic Growth Engine

VMY 2026 is closely integrated with Malaysia's broader economic planning, positioning tourism as a key contributor to employment generation, regional development and foreign exchange earnings. The programme emphasises sustainable expansion — balancing visitor growth with infrastructure readiness, service quality and long-term destination management.

Through a blend of marketing momentum, connectivity expansion and industry incentives, Malaysia is signalling a decisive push to scale its tourism economy and reinforce its standing as a leading destination in Southeast Asia's competitive travel landscape.



Is Travel Assistance the New Essential for Every Journey?



Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO - ASEGO

In today's fast-moving travel landscape, disruptions are no longer the exception — they're an expected part of the experience. According to a recent Global Airline Performance Report, over 25 million bags were reported mishandled globally, and more than 35% of all flights faced delays exceeding 60 minutes. While travel demand has bounced back post-pandemic, the quality of the journey often hasn't kept pace. Travellers are facing longer wait times, more lost luggage, and higher levels of uncertainty at every step.

This is where the gap between travellers' actual needs and travel reality becomes clear. Insurance coverage may reimburse financial loss after an incident, but it doesn't show up when a bag goes missing, when a connection is missed, or when travellers are stranded at a foreign airport with no immediate assistance.

What travellers need today isn't just reimbursement. They need real-time help. They need assistance.

Recognising this shift, ASEGO has launched **ASEGO**

BOLT+, a powerful new travel assistance bundle created by combining three of its most effective services— **TrackMate, WaitMate, and ChatMate**. Together, they deliver rapid response and real protection, exactly when and where customers need it most.

TrackMate enables global, real-time baggage tracking across all airlines and routes, with guaranteed compensation of up to ₹66,000 per checked-in bag (up to two bags) if the luggage isn't recovered within 96 hours.

Similarly, **WaitMate** automatically activates premium lounge access if a flight is delayed by more than 60 minutes—offering travellers comfort instead of frustration. Coverage extends across up to four flight segments in a single trip and includes access to over 1,300 lounges across more than 100 countries.

Adding another layer to this assistance ecosystem is **ChatMate**, ASEGO's global connectivity solution that ensures travellers stay connected from the moment they land. With instant international eSIM activation across multiple countries, ChatMate eliminates the hassle of searching for local SIM cards, unreliable Wi-Fi, or expensive roaming charges—enabling travellers to access maps, airline updates, emergency support, and stay connected with loved ones without interruption.

This isn't just a service

upgrade — it's a mindset shift. Travel assistance is no longer an add-on; it's becoming a baseline expectation. As a travel advisor or booking partner, offering BOLT+ is more than an upsell — it's about being proactive, customer-centric, and aligned with what modern travellers truly value: peace of mind and dependable support.

ASEGO BOLT+ empowers travel agents to move beyond selling destinations and start offering dependable journeys. It's time to think beyond insurance and give your customers a protection layer that actually travels with them. Whether it's a family vacation, a corporate itinerary, or a solo international trip, assistance like this transforms stress into trust.

Disclaimer: The information provided is for general awareness and promotional purposes only. ASEGO BOLT++ and its services, including TrackMate, WaitMate & ChatMate, are value-added offerings subject to specific terms, conditions, and eligibility. Services are delivered via third-party providers and may be governed by their respective terms. This is not an insurance product or legal advice. Travellers should review full-service details before purchase. ASEGO reserves the right to modify or discontinue services without prior notice.

Asego Reinforces Pilgrim Safety as Char Dham Yatra Gains Momentum

As the annual Char Dham Yatra prepares to commence this April, registrations are surging into lakhs, underscoring the scale and popularity of this spiritually significant journey. With vast numbers of yatis navigating high-altitude Himalayan terrain, unpredictable weather patterns, narrow mountain roads, and dense crowds, the pilgrimage carries a heightened risk of medical and logistical emergencies. In extreme cases, a single air evacuation in the region can cost between ₹8 lakh and ₹20 lakh, highlighting the critical need for structured safety measures.

Recognising this urgent need, Asego has strengthened its support framework with **Pilgrim Protect**, a specialised travel assistance and insurance solution designed exclusively for high-risk pilgrimage routes. The product aims to safeguard travellers by offering real-time support, comprehensive medical coverage, and logistical assistance tailored to the unique challenges of Himalayan pilgrimages.

Comprehensive Coverage for High-Risk Journeys

Pilgrim Protect integrates multiple layers of assistance to ensure that yatis can undertake their spiritual journey with confidence:

- **24/7 Emergency Medical Assistance & Evacuation:** Immediate response to medical emergencies, including high-altitude complications and accident-related incidents.
- **Accident & Stampede Coverage:** Protection against injuries arising from accidents, crowd-related incidents, and stampedes along the route.
- **Emergency Air Transfer Support:** Access to timely air evacuation in critical situations, mitigating the substantial financial burden of high-altitude rescues.
- **High-Altitude Illness Coverage:**



Support for conditions such as acute mountain sickness, ensuring yatis receive prompt medical care.

- **Trip Delay & Natural Calamity Protection:** Financial safeguards in the event of journey disruptions due to landslides, floods, or other environmental contingencies.

- **Medical Expense Coverage for Hiking Mishaps:** Coverage for injuries sustained during trekking or walking segments, which form a significant portion of the pilgrimage.

By combining insurance with real-time assistance, Pilgrim Protect shifts the focus from post-incident reimbursement to proactive traveller support — a crucial distinction in high-risk environments where delays or inadequate medical response can have serious consequences.

CEO Perspective: Preparedness is a Responsibility

Dev Karvat, Founder & CEO of Asego, emphasised the importance of structured emergency planning for pilgrims.

“Pilgrimage travel demands a structured emergency response. Preparedness today is not optional — it is a responsibility,” he said.

The CEO further highlighted that the goal of Pilgrim Protect is to enable travel partners and tour operators to offer faith-led journeys backed by dependable, real-time safety support, ensuring that spiritual exploration does not come at the cost of personal safety or financial exposure.

Empowering Travel Partners and Pilgrims

Beyond individual traveller protection, Pilgrim Protect also equips travel agents and tour operators with tools to enhance customer confidence and satisfaction. By embedding safety assurance into the travel experience, service providers can elevate their offerings from transactional bookings to comprehensive journey management — a critical differentiator in high-risk pilgrimage tourism.

As Char Dham Yatra continues to attract growing numbers of domestic and international devotees, products like Pilgrim Protect highlight how travel assistance solutions are evolving to meet the demands of increasingly complex journeys, balancing spiritual aspiration with pragmatic safety considerations.

DXB Records 95.2 Million Guests in 2025, Strengthening APAC Connectivity

Dubai International (DXB) has set a new global benchmark, welcoming 95.2 million guests in 2025 — the highest annual international passenger traffic ever recorded by any airport worldwide. The milestone not only underscores Dubai's status as a leading global aviation hub, but also highlights the growing influence of Asia-Pacific markets in shaping global air travel flows.

APAC Markets Drive Growth Momentum

Asia-Pacific continued to anchor DXB's record performance, with South Asia and Greater China playing a pivotal role in sustaining traffic growth.

India retained its position as DXB's largest country market, contributing 11.9 million guests in 2025. Key Indian city routes ranked among the busiest globally, with Mumbai accounting for 2.4 million guests and New Delhi close behind at 2.2 million.

Pakistan followed as the second-largest country market with 4.3 million guests, reinforcing Dubai's importance as both a destination and a transit gateway for South Asian travellers.

China emerged as one of the fastest-growing major markets, recording a 16.6% year-on-year increase to reach 2.5 million guests. The rebound reflects renewed outbound travel demand and strengthened connectivity between China and the Middle East, Europe and Africa via Dubai.

Collectively, these figures illustrate the structural importance of Asia-Pacific markets to DXB's traffic base, consolidating Dubai's role as a strategic intercontinental hub linking East and West.

Record Traffic Becomes the New Normal

Unlike previous years marked by seasonal surges, DXB's 2025 performance was characterised by sustained high throughput across all operational metrics. The airport achieved its busiest day, month, quarter and full year on record, operating close to capacity for extended periods.

December 2025 became the busiest month in DXB's history, handling 8.7 million guests — a 6.1% increase year-on-year. The fourth quarter reached 25.1 million guests, up 5.9% compared to Q4 2024.

Total flight movements for the year stood at 454,800, a 3.3% increase, with 118,000 movements recorded in Q4 alone, up 5%. Despite the growth in aircraft movements, average passengers per flight remained robust at 214, indicating continued deployment of larger aircraft and strong load efficiency. The annual load factor held steady at 77.6%, a marginal adjustment of 0.5 percentage points.

Operational Excellence at Scale

Handling nearly 100 million guests required coordinated performance across the oneDXB ecosystem — comprising airlines, service partners and government stakeholders.

In 2025, DXB processed 86.75 million bags, up 4.95% year-on-year. Operational efficiency remained high:

- 89% of arriving baggage was delivered within 45 minutes
- Mishandled baggage rate stood at 2.47 per 1,000 guests (99.75% performance rate)
- 99.35% of departing guests cleared passport control within 10 minutes

- 98.8% of arriving guests completed passport procedures within 15 minutes

- 98.9% of passengers passed through security in under five minutes

The figures reflect the maturity of DXB's operational systems and its capacity to maintain service standards even at record volumes.

Global Reach and Strategic Positioning

By the end of 2025, DXB was connected to 291 destinations across 110 countries, served by 108 international airlines — reinforcing its position as the world's leading international hub.

London remained the busiest city destination with 3.9 million guests, followed by Riyadh at 3 million. Mumbai



and Jeddah each handled 2.4 million guests, while New Delhi recorded 2.2 million.

Commenting on the performance, Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said:

“Airports are often defined by moments of intensity, but long-term performance is defined by how well those moments are sustained. In 2025, DXB showed that record traffic is no longer an exception, but part of its operating reality. That consistency at scale reflects the maturity of the system and the strength of collaboration across our oneDXB airport community to deliver excellence under growing demand. We expect traffic to approach 99.5 million in 2026, supported by close coordination across the sector and the oneDXB community.”

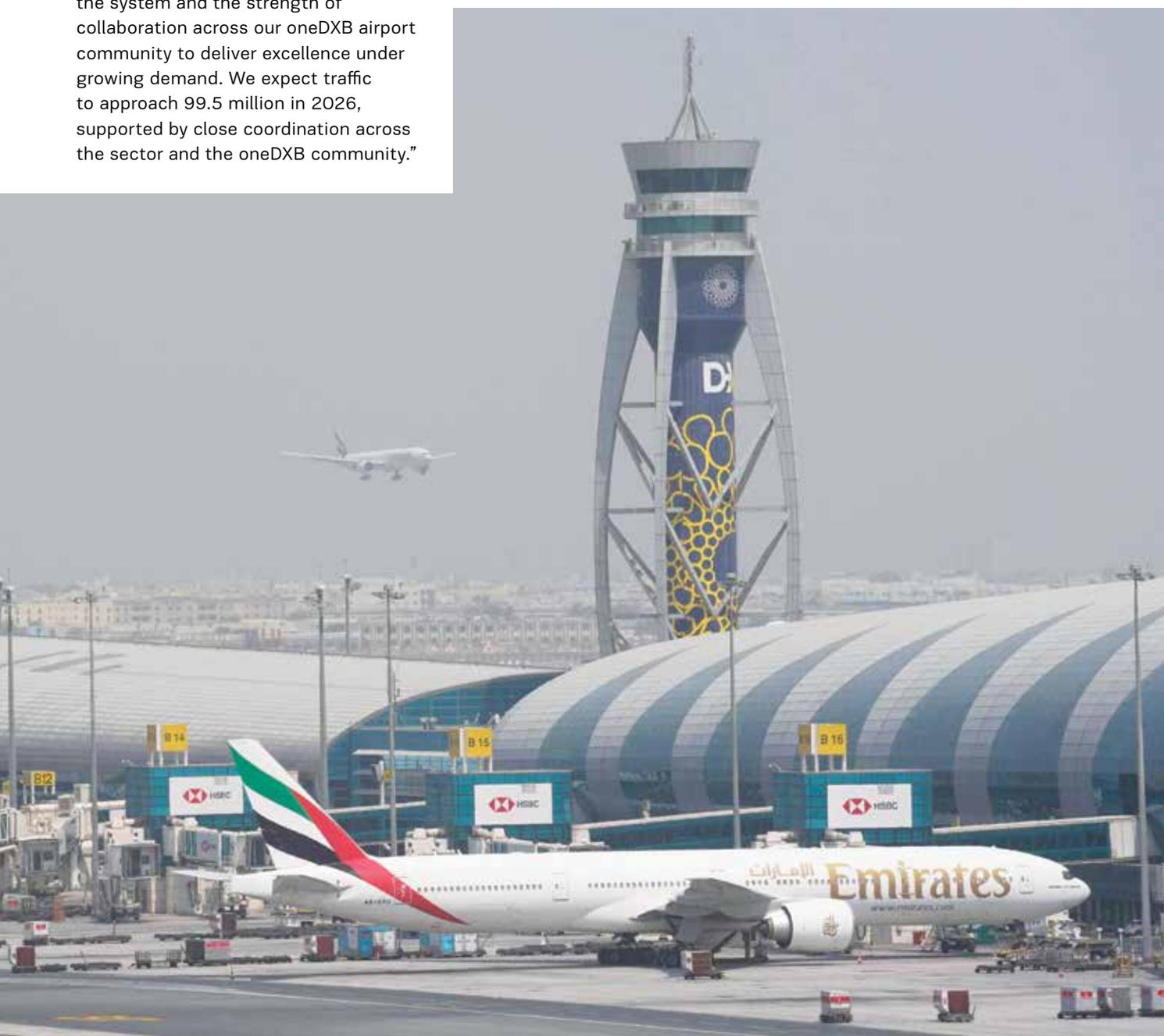
2026 Outlook: Approaching the 100-Million Mark

With passenger volumes forecast to reach 99.5 million in 2026, DXB’s record-breaking 2025 performance establishes a new operational baseline rather than a peak.

As demand continues to build and capacity remains carefully managed, the complementary expansion of Dubai World Central – Al Maktoum International (DWC) is expected to play a growing role in accommodating

future traffic growth.

For Asia-Pacific markets in particular, DXB’s record year reinforces Dubai’s strategic importance as a transfer gateway — connecting India, China and broader APAC economies with Europe, Africa and the Americas. In an era of shifting aviation dynamics, Dubai’s sustained performance signals not only resilience, but an evolving global connectivity model anchored by scale, efficiency and geographic advantage.



TBO Tek Limited Posts Robust Q3 FY26 Performance on Broad-Based Growth and Classic Vacations Integration

Revenue surges 86% YoY; Adjusted EBITDA (before M&A costs) rises 53% to ₹115 crore



TBO Tek Limited, one of the world's leading B2B travel distribution platforms, has reported a robust performance for the third quarter of FY26, signalling strong momentum in the global travel marketplace. Driven by accelerating international demand, improved monetisation, and the early consolidation of Classic Vacations, the company delivered significant year-on-year gains across key financial and operational metrics. The quarter highlights how technology-led distribution platforms are increasingly benefiting from the rebound

and structural expansion of cross-border travel. With revenue rising 86 per cent year-on-year to ₹784 crore and Adjusted EBITDA (before M&A costs) climbing 53 per cent to ₹115 crore, TBO's results reflect both scale expansion and improving operating leverage. For corporate travel leaders, airline executives and hospitality stakeholders, the company's Q3 performance offers insight into broader industry dynamics — from the growing importance of diversified geographic demand to the rising efficiency of digital travel marketplaces. The integration of US-based

Classic Vacations also marks a strategic step in strengthening TBO's footprint in one of the world's most valuable outbound travel markets. Against a backdrop of sustained global travel recovery and increasing consolidation in distribution ecosystems, TBO Tek's latest results underscore how platform scale, international reach and product mix optimisation are shaping the next phase of growth in the travel industry.

TBO Tek Limited, one of the world's leading B2B travel distribution platforms, reported a strong set of unaudited financial results

for Q3 FY26, underscoring the scalability of its global marketplace model and the early impact of integrating Classic Vacations into its consolidated operations.

The quarter was marked by broad-based geographic growth, accelerating international momentum, and improved operating leverage — developments closely watched by senior executives across aviation, hospitality and global distribution.

Financial Highlights: Scale Expansion with Improving Conversion

For the quarter ended December 2025, TBO delivered:

- **Gross Transaction Value (GTV):** ₹9,709 crore, up 35% YoY (₹7,166 crore)
- **Revenue from Operations:** ₹784 crore, up 86% YoY (₹422 crore)
- **Gross Profit:** ₹483 crore, up 63% YoY (₹297 crore)
- **Adjusted EBITDA (before M&A costs):** ₹115 crore, up 53% YoY (₹75 crore)
- **Profit Before Tax (before exceptional items):** ₹71.4 crore, up 34% YoY
- **Profit After Tax:** ₹54 crore, up 7.4% YoY

All figures rounded off.

The 86% revenue growth significantly outpaced GTV growth, reflecting improved

Ankush Nijhawan, Co-founder and Joint Managing Director, noted that the company's growth was supported by the revival of domestic momentum alongside international expansion.

"India returned to a strong double-digit growth trajectory this quarter, supported by solid momentum in the airline's vertical.

The combination of domestic strength and accelerating international expansion enabled us to deliver ₹115 crore in Adjusted EBITDA (before M&A costs), representing a 53 per cent year-on-year increase."

– Ankush Nijhawan

monetisation, product mix optimisation and the contribution from Classic Vacations. Enterprise GTV-to-Adjusted EBITDA (before M&A costs) conversion improved to **1.18% in Q3 FY26**, compared with 1.05% in the same quarter last year. Classic Vacations delivered a notably higher **2.46% GTV-to-Adjusted EBITDA conversion**, positively influencing consolidated margins.

Broad-Based Geographic Momentum

The quarter saw diversified growth across all key regions:

- **Europe, APAC and MEA** each recorded over 30% YoY growth in the Hotels + Ancillaries segment.
 - The **India business** returned to a solid double-digit growth trajectory, supported by strength in the airlines vertical.
 - International business recorded a 49.1% YoY increase, driving overall expansion.
- Monthly Transacting

Buyers (MTBs) reached **33,324**, up 16% YoY. While India continued to contribute the largest absolute share of MTBs, the acceleration in international buyer activity highlights TBO's deepening penetration in cross-border markets.

For travel industry leaders, the data signals a platform successfully scaling across mature and emerging source markets while maintaining geographic diversification — a critical buffer in a volatile macro environment.

Segment Performance: Hotels and Airlines Drive Growth

GTV expansion was led by balanced segmental performance:

- **Hotels + Ancillaries:** +46% YoY
 - **Airlines:** +19.7% YoY
- The hotels and ancillaries vertical remains a high-margin growth engine, particularly across Europe, APAC and the Middle East & Africa. Meanwhile, the airline segment's steady growth

reinforces TBO's ability to leverage air connectivity as a demand driver within its broader ecosystem.

Classic Vacations Integration Strengthens US Footprint

Q3 FY26 marked the first quarter of consolidated reporting including Classic Vacations, significantly expanding TBO's scale in the United States — one of the world's largest outbound travel markets.

Management highlighted that the acquisition not only enhances GTV scale but also improves platform economics through higher EBITDA conversion and favourable working capital dynamics. Despite acquisition-related cash outflows of approximately ₹979 crore during the quarter, TBO closed Q3 with **₹1,492 crore in cash and cash equivalents**, supported in part by Classic Vacations' structurally negative working capital model.

Management Perspective: Operating Leverage Emerging

Gaurav Bhatnagar, Co-founder and Joint Managing Director, described the quarter as a milestone in integrating Classic Vacations into TBO's financial and operating framework. He noted that consolidation meaningfully increases the platform's scale and establishes critical mass in the US market.

Ankush Nijhawan, Co-founder and Joint Managing Director, emphasised the return of India to a strong double-digit growth trajectory, driven in part

by the airlines business. He underscored that the combination of domestic strength and international expansion enabled the company to deliver ₹115 crore in Adjusted EBITDA (before M&A costs), up 53% YoY.

Strategic Outlook for Travel Industry Stakeholders

For CEOs and senior professionals across hospitality, aviation and travel technology, TBO's Q3 FY26 results illustrate several structural themes:

- 1. Platform Scalability:** Revenue growth outpacing GTV indicates improving monetisation efficiency.
- 2. Geographic Diversification:** Balanced exposure across India, Europe, APAC and MEA mitigates regional cyclicality.
- 3. Operating Leverage:** Margin conversion improvement suggests inherent scalability beginning to manifest.
- 4. US Market Expansion:** The Classic Vacations integration strengthens presence in a high-value source market.

With organic cost growth moderating and integration benefits materialising, management signalled confidence in demonstrating stronger operating leverage from Q4 FY26 onward.

As global travel distribution evolves toward consolidated, technology-driven marketplaces, TBO Tek's Q3 performance reinforces its positioning as a scaled, diversified intermediary capable of capturing growth across both established and emerging corridors.

South African Tourism Concludes Successful Delhi Roadshow



- Showcasing South Africa's diverse offerings, the Bengaluru roadshow engaged 255+ Indian travel trade partners
- Highlighting India's growing significance, the initiative strengthens business opportunities across leisure, corporate, and MICE travel

Following a successful roadshow kick-off at OTM Mumbai, South African Tourism has now successfully completed the Delhi leg of its Annual India Roadshow, continuing its focused engagement with the Indian travel trade and reinforcing India's growing importance as a key source market for South Africa. Led by Ms. Mitalee Karmarkar, Marketing and Communications Manager (MEISEA), the roadshow serves as a strategic platform for industry collaboration, insights into evolving traveller behaviour, and the identification of new business opportunities across leisure, corporate and MICE travel segments.

Featuring over 40 exhibitors presenting a diverse range of offerings, the roadshow concluded in Delhi drew participation from over 255 Indian travel trade agents further strengthening trade collaborations and

encouraging outbound travel to South Africa.

Sharing his perspective at the roadshow, Ms. Karmarkar said, *"India continues to be a priority growth market for South African Tourism, driven by strong interest across family travel, experiential holidays, and premium travel. Indian travellers today are also planning differently, using AI-powered tools to research and customise their trips, travelling more occasionally, and showing a growing willingness to explore destinations beyond traditional favourites. This shift in traveller behaviour reflects a more confident and curious audience, and it opens up new opportunities to highlight lesser-known regions and experiences across South Africa."*

She further added, *"Delhi remains one of South Africa's most important source markets in India, with travellers*

from the city showing strong intent for diverse, premium, and experience-led travel. These travellers are well-informed, globally exposed, and increasingly confident in exploring long-haul destinations that offer a mix of culture, wildlife, and leisure. Through the roadshow, we aim to further strengthen our engagement with Delhi's travel trade and reinforce South Africa's visibility and relevance in this key market."

As a high-impact travel market, Delhi plays a pivotal role in driving travellers seeking elevated and bespoke experiences to South Africa, particularly across luxury leisure, and wildlife. Travellers from the city are increasingly seeking curated journeys that go beyond the classics, combining iconic attractions with exclusive, immersive experiences. By strengthening partnerships with the travel trade, South African Tourism aims to unlock new itineraries, drive higher-quality conversions, and sustain long-term growth from this influential market.

South Africa aims to return to pre-COVID levels of Indian tourist arrivals by 2026 and is committed to building lasting partnerships with Indian business partners, offering experiences tailored to diverse traveller profiles and positioning South Africa as a must-visit destination. This roadshow, in addition to reinforcing the country's commitment to strengthening ties with the Indian market, will inspire more and more travellers to explore the Rainbow Land in the coming years.

The country is also set to host the 2027 ODI World Cup, providing an exciting opportunity to showcase the country's diverse tourism attractions and attract visitors from around the globe. Through ongoing trade engagement, targeted consumer outreach, and innovative marketing initiatives, the tourism board remains dedicated to expanding its presence in India.

South Korea Fast-Tracks Inbound Tourism Goal to 30 Million Visitors by 2028

South Korea has accelerated its national inbound tourism ambitions, bringing forward its target of welcoming **30 million international visitors** from 2030 to **2028**, as the country capitalises on strong recovery momentum and rising global demand across key source markets.

The revised timeline reflects confidence in the pace of travel rebound and signals a more assertive growth trajectory for one of Asia's most dynamic visitor economies. Tourism authorities have recalibrated planning frameworks following sustained improvements in arrival figures, air connectivity and global interest in the country's cultural and lifestyle offerings.

Recovery Momentum Drives Strategic Shift

Inbound arrivals reached approximately **18.7 million international visitors in 2025**, marking a substantial recovery phase and reinforcing South Korea's position as a leading Northeast Asian destination. Demand has been underpinned by the country's global cultural influence — spanning music, film, fashion, cuisine and contemporary urban lifestyle — which continues to shape travel motivations, particularly among younger and experience-driven segments.

The accelerated target is the outcome of a coordinated assessment of market performance indicators and forward demand trends. Authorities view current growth patterns as sufficiently robust to justify a shorter timeline toward long-term visitor volume goals.

Evolving Strategy Focused on Quality Growth

While volume remains an important metric, the revised framework places



increasing emphasis on **visitor experience, value creation and longer stays**. Destination programming is being strengthened through the development of thematic travel products, curated regional experiences and enhanced cultural itineraries that encourage travellers to explore beyond traditional gateways.

A key pillar of the updated approach is **source-market personalisation**. Marketing initiatives are being refined to address distinct traveller profiles, travel motivations and spending behaviours, supporting higher-yield segments such as premium leisure travellers, cultural explorers and special-interest visitors.

Digital and Data-Led Engagement

Digital transformation forms a central component of the revised tourism roadmap. Authorities are expanding the use of **data-driven marketing tools**, targeted digital campaigns and integrated online engagement platforms to sharpen outreach in priority markets. These efforts aim to improve conversion rates, strengthen brand resonance and maintain competitiveness in

an increasingly digital-first travel landscape.

Enhanced visitor services and improved destination-level infrastructure are also being prioritised to ensure service standards keep pace with rising volumes. This includes upgrades in information accessibility, multilingual support and experience curation designed to streamline the visitor journey.

Positioning in the Asia-Pacific Landscape

By advancing the 30 million arrival milestone to 2028, South Korea positions itself among the most ambitious inbound tourism growth strategies in the Asia-Pacific region. The revised goal reflects a broader regional pattern in which destinations are adjusting long-term tourism objectives in response to faster-than-expected demand recovery.

The country's updated inbound tourism framework aims to balance sustained growth with strategic destination management, ensuring that expansion supports economic contribution, regional development and long-term sector resilience.

Brisbane and Gold Coast Align to Capture India's Expanding Outbound Travel Demand



Queensland cities strengthen trade presence to convert rising Indian interest into aviation growth, premium stays and broader economic impact

Brisbane and the Gold Coast have initiated a coordinated market development drive in India, reflecting the growing importance of the country as one of the world's most

dynamic outbound travel sources. The collaboration marks a strategic alignment between destination marketing, aviation stakeholders and regional tourism bodies to convert

rising awareness into sustained visitation and higher-value travel flows into Queensland.

The joint initiative is designed to strengthen trade engagement,



deepen airline partnerships and expand destination visibility among Indian travel planners, luxury travel designers and MICE organisers. By establishing a dedicated in-market presence, the two cities aim to improve route performance, lift hotel occupancy and support tourism-linked employment across South East Queensland.

India: A Market of Scale and Momentum

India has emerged as one of

Australia's leading international visitor markets, driven by rising disposable incomes, expanding air connectivity and increasing demand for long-haul experiential travel. Queensland has recorded steady gains from the market, with visitor numbers and expenditure showing upward momentum, particularly in leisure, visiting friends and relatives (VFR), and business travel segments.

Brisbane continues to position itself as a gateway to Queensland, combining urban lifestyle appeal with access to nature, culture and coastal experiences. The Gold Coast, known for its beaches, theme parks, dining and hinterland landscapes, has seen particularly strong growth from Indian travellers, reflecting demand for multi-experience itineraries that combine city stays with leisure attractions.

Aviation Connectivity as a Catalyst

Air access remains central to the growth strategy. Brisbane's international aviation network connects to India via key Asian hubs, supported by carriers offering onward services to major Indian cities. Expanded frequencies and improved connections are expected to make South East Queensland more accessible, strengthening the case for both leisure travel and business events.

The alignment between tourism bodies and airport stakeholders underscores a shared objective: improving load factors on existing routes while building a long-term foundation for additional capacity. Stronger inbound performance from India also supports airline confidence in maintaining and expanding services.

Lifestyle Appeal Meets Experiential Demand

Both Brisbane and the Gold Coast are being positioned as destinations that resonate with India's evolving traveller profile — from multi-generational families and honeymooners to young professionals and incentive groups. Key themes include waterfront lifestyle precincts, culinary diversity, nature-based

excursions, wildlife encounters, luxury accommodation and major events.

Brisbane's urban villages, arts and cultural districts, and riverfront experiences are being paired with the Gold Coast's resort environment, entertainment attractions and scenic hinterland to create balanced itineraries that blend relaxation with activity. This complementary positioning is intended to extend average length of stay and increase per-visitor spend.

Economic Significance and Industry Alignment

Tourism plays a major role in the South East Queensland economy, supporting local enterprises across hospitality, retail, attractions and events. Strengthening engagement with India is therefore not only a marketing exercise but an economic strategy aimed at sustaining employment and driving long-term visitor expenditure growth.

The in-market representation model focuses on trade education, partnership development and public relations, ensuring that travel advisors and tour operators have the tools and product knowledge required to confidently promote Brisbane and the Gold Coast within Australian itineraries.

Building Long-Term Market Presence

Rather than a short-term campaign, the initiative represents a structured, ongoing approach to market cultivation. Engagement with airlines, wholesalers, luxury travel planners and MICE specialists forms a core part of the strategy, alongside consumer-facing storytelling that highlights Queensland's blend of modern urbanity and natural beauty.

As India's outbound market continues to mature, destinations offering safety, infrastructure, lifestyle appeal and experiential depth are expected to benefit most. By combining their strengths under a unified approach, Brisbane and the Gold Coast are positioning South East Queensland as a compelling proposition for India's next wave of international travellers.

Thailand Tourism Outlook 2026: Stability, Experience Depth and the Power of Return Travel



As global travel grows more competitive and travellers become increasingly selective, Thailand continues to demonstrate a rare ability to remain relevant across generations of visitors. Looking ahead to 2026, the country's tourism strength lies not in a single attraction or trend, but in a balanced combination of accessibility, experiential depth, service culture and repeat visitor loyalty.

Thailand today is chosen less for price positioning and more for the quality, consistency and emotional resonance of the visitor experience. This evolution reflects a mature tourism economy shaped by decades of international engagement, strong infrastructure and an ability to adapt to changing traveller expectations.

Why Thailand Continues to Attract Travellers

Thailand's enduring appeal rests on a blend of familiarity and discovery. It works seamlessly for first-time visitors seeking reassurance, while offering sufficient variety and depth to keep repeat travellers engaged over many years.

Ease of travel remains a foundational advantage:

- Modern, well-connected international airports
- Clear and affordable transport networks
- Professionally operated hotels and attractions
- Widespread English usage in tourism zones
- Visitor services designed for comfort and clarity

This low-friction environment allows travellers to relax early in their stay — a factor that significantly influences satisfaction levels, on-ground spending and the likelihood of return visits.

Experiences at the Core of Demand

Thailand's tourism appeal has shifted decisively toward experience-led travel. Visitors are drawn to:

- A globally recognised food culture spanning street dining to fine gastronomy
- Wellness offerings including spa traditions, retreats, yoga and holistic therapies
- Cultural immersion through temples, festivals and daily local life
- Natural diversity, from islands and beaches to mountains and national parks
- Learning-based activities such as cooking, crafts and meditation

These experiential touchpoints create emotional connections that extend beyond sightseeing, positioning Thailand strongly in the global movement toward meaningful travel.

One Country, Multiple Journeys

Thailand's geographic and cultural diversity remains one of its most strategic advantages. Within a single trip, travellers can combine:

- Time in a dynamic global city
- Coastal or island relaxation
- Heritage towns and historic landmarks
- Rural and community-based experiences
- Luxury hospitality alongside simple local encounters

This flexibility supports short stays, extended holidays and repeat visits, enabling Thailand to serve a wide spectrum of travel motivations without requiring long-distance repositioning within the country.

A Gateway Destination to Asia

For many long-haul travellers, Thailand functions as a comfortable introduction to the region. Decades of tourism experience have created predictable service standards, global-quality accommodation and food

safety confidence, helping visitors feel supported rather than overwhelmed. This reassurance encourages deeper exploration and longer-term destination loyalty.

The Strategic Value of Repeat Visitors

Repeat travellers represent a critical segment of Thailand's visitor economy. Established tourism economics consistently shows that retaining returning visitors is more cost-effective than acquiring new ones, while repeat guests typically stay longer and spend more per trip.

Returning travellers are also more likely to move beyond primary gateways, support local businesses and generate word-of-mouth advocacy in their home markets. As a result, destinations and hospitality providers increasingly invest in personalised recognition and relationship-based service.

Service That Feels Human

Thailand's hospitality culture continues to differentiate the destination. Service is often described as warm rather than transactional, with returning guests recognised and preferences remembered. This human element strengthens emotional attachment and contributes significantly to destination loyalty.

Redefining Value

While Thailand still offers competitive pricing, value in 2026 is increasingly associated with quality delivered rather than cost savings alone. Visitors consistently note:

- High accommodation standards across segments
- Strong culinary experiences at all price levels
- Thoughtful, attentive service
- A sense of generosity in experiences

This quality-driven value proposition allows Thailand

to remain competitive even as global travel costs rise.

Thailand by Region: 2026 Outlook Bangkok and Central Thailand

Bangkok continues to anchor the country's tourism and business landscape. The city blends international air connectivity, major cultural celebrations and a robust meetings and exhibitions calendar. Signature events such as Songkran in April remain strong demand drivers, while large-scale conventions and exhibitions at leading venues sustain year-round corporate travel.

A growing live entertainment calendar also supports demand outside traditional peaks, attracting younger and lifestyle-focused segments.

Southern Thailand

Beach and island destinations in the South continue to balance leisure appeal with evolving experiential programming. Songkran celebrations in resort areas combine cultural traditions with lifestyle events, while wellness, culinary and eco-oriented offerings strengthen premium leisure positioning. The region's strategy increasingly focuses on longer stays and dispersal beyond major hubs.

Northern Thailand

Northern Thailand's appeal is rooted

in heritage, creativity and slower-paced travel. Distinctive regional celebrations, cultural festivals and arts programming reinforce the North's position as a heritage-led and wellness-oriented destination within broader national tourism promotion.

Eastern Thailand

Eastern Thailand is emerging as a hybrid leisure and business gateway. Festival culture, lifestyle events and year-round corporate activity linked to regional economic development support consistent demand. The area's evolving event landscape contributes to diversification beyond traditional leisure patterns.

Outlook for 2026

Thailand's tourism trajectory is increasingly centred on quality over volume. The focus is on nurturing repeat visitors, maintaining service standards and leveraging the country's natural diversity and hospitality culture.

In an era where travellers seek both confidence and authenticity, Thailand's combination of warmth, accessibility and experiential range remains highly aligned with global travel preferences. This balance positions the country to sustain its competitiveness as international tourism continues to evolve.





Indian Arrivals to Japan Surpass 300,000 in 2025 as Luxury and Experience-Led Travel Accelerates

Japan has crossed a historic milestone in its engagement with the Indian outbound market, welcoming **over 300,000 Indian visitors in 2025**, reflecting sustained growth and a notable shift in travel patterns toward immersive, year-round experiences.

Long associated with its iconic cherry blossom season, Japan is now firmly positioned as a **multi-season luxury and experiential destination** for discerning Indian travellers. Demand is no longer confined to spring. Instead, summer, alpine and culturally immersive itineraries are driving new



momentum in one of Asia's most sophisticated tourism markets.

Beyond Sakura: A Year-Round Japan Emerges

While the sakura season remains an enduring draw, booking insights from Cox & Kings indicate a nearly **30% increase in summer departures between April and September 2025**, signalling growing confidence in Japan as a year-round proposition.

Importantly, there is currently no official travel advisory impacting travel flows, reinforcing consumer confidence in the destination. Even as select cherry

blossom events saw minor scheduling adjustments this season, overall demand from India has remained steady and resilient.

For luxury travel planners and destination strategists, this evolution represents a structural shift — from seasonal, event-driven tourism to sustained, curiosity-led exploration.

Regional Japan Gains Prominence

Indian travellers are increasingly moving beyond the classic Golden Route of Tokyo–Osaka–Kyoto. Emerging regional circuits are witnessing strong traction, including:

- **Hokuriku** – prized for its coastal scenery, seafood culture and architectural heritage
- Rural **Honshu** – offering preserved towns, scenic rail journeys and authentic countryside immersion
- **Hakone** – known for ryokans, hot springs and views of Mount Fuji
- **Takayama** – celebrated for Edo-period streetscapes and artisanal traditions

Alpine landscapes, heritage towns and wellness-focused experiences are reshaping itinerary design. Scenic rail journeys, coastal routes and cultural circuits are appealing to travellers seeking immersive, less-crowded environments aligned with global sustainable travel preferences.

A New Demographic Profile

Young couples, families and first-time international travellers now account for approximately **55–60% of bookings** from India to Japan. Influences include:

- Japanese pop culture
- Culinary exploration
- Social media and digital-first discovery

Small-group departures remain strong, but there is a pronounced shift toward customised itineraries tailored around gastronomy, regional storytelling and curated local engagement.

Karan Agarwal, Director of Cox & Kings, observes that Japan offers “a rare balance of ancient tradition and modern efficiency,” noting a broader move away from checklist tourism

toward narrative-rich, curiosity-driven travel.

Culinary and Cultural Capital

Food has become central to the Indian traveller's Japanese journey. Beyond metropolitan dining, regional culinary traditions are increasingly embedded into travel programmes — from artisanal sushi and ramen trails to tea ceremonies and sake tastings.

Japan's pop-cultural influence is also translating into measurable visitor flows. Attractions such as the Naruto & Boruto Shinobi-Zato on Awaji Island are drawing younger travellers seeking entertainment experiences rooted in anime and contemporary Japanese storytelling.

Simultaneously, a growing awareness of Japanese etiquette and local customs is shaping visitor behaviour. Indian travellers are demonstrating heightened sensitivity toward public conduct and community-led tourism — a trend aligned with Japan's broader objective of dispersing arrivals beyond overtourism hotspots.

Strategic Vision: 60 Million Visitors by 2030

Japan has articulated an ambitious national tourism target of **60 million international visitors by 2030**, supported by continued investment in infrastructure, regional connectivity and heritage preservation.

Expanded air links, improved rail networks and regional tourism promotion are strengthening accessibility from India — now one of Asia's fastest-growing outbound luxury markets.

For senior executives across aviation, hospitality and destination management, the trajectory is clear: Japan's relationship with the Indian market is entering a new phase defined by depth, diversification and premiumisation.

As 2025 sets a new benchmark, the narrative has shifted decisively. Japan is no longer a once-in-a-lifetime spring spectacle for Indian travellers — it is an evolving, year-round canvas of culture, cuisine, craftsmanship and contemporary design.

Rio de Janeiro

Records Historic 12.5 Million Tourist Arrivals in 2025, Strengthening Its Position as a Global Tourism Hub

The Brazilian destination **Rio de Janeiro** achieved a landmark year for tourism in 2025, welcoming a record **12.5 million visitors**, the highest number of annual arrivals in the city's history. The surge in tourist inflows—both domestic and international—has reinforced Rio's status as one of Latin America's leading travel destinations while delivering significant economic benefits for the city.

According to figures released by the city administration and tourism authorities, **10.5 million travellers were domestic visitors**, while **2.1 million arrived from international markets**, reflecting a strong rebound in global travel demand for the Brazilian metropolis. Notably, international arrivals surged by **44.8 per cent compared with 2024**, signalling growing global interest in Rio as a leisure and events destination.

Tourism Generates Strong Economic Impact

Beyond visitor numbers, the tourism sector generated a substantial **economic impact of BRL 27.2 billion** for Rio's economy during the year. Domestic tourism accounted for **BRL 19.5 billion**, representing roughly **71.5 per cent of the total economic contribution**, while

international visitors generated **BRL 7.8 billion** in spending across the city.

City officials note that tourism continues to act as a key engine of economic growth, supporting a wide range of sectors including hotels, restaurants, tour operators, cultural attractions and transportation services.

Osmar Lima, Municipal Secretary of Economic Development, emphasised that the record tourism performance is the result of coordinated planning and investments aimed at strengthening the city's tourism ecosystem.

He pointed out that the expansion of international air connectivity, particularly through **Rio de Janeiro–Galeão International Airport**, alongside the development of a dynamic year-round events calendar, has played a crucial role in driving visitor growth.

Tourism Observatory Tracks Visitor Growth

Tourism data is monitored through the city's Tourism Observatory operated by the Municipal Department of Tourism. The system uses advanced analytics, including mobility data, to track visitor movements and trends across the city.

According to the Observatory, the number of tourists visiting Rio increased **10.5 per cent in 2025**, rising from



11.4 million in 2024 to 12.5 million. This steady growth reflects sustained demand from both Brazilian travellers and international markets.

Event-Driven Tourism Fuels Destination Appeal

Tourism authorities also credit Rio's vibrant calendar of international events and cultural celebrations for maintaining strong visitor flows throughout the year.



Bernardo Fellows, who heads **Riotur**, noted that the city's strategic promotion in global markets has helped position Rio as a competitive destination for leisure travel, international conferences and large-scale festivals.

"These numbers confirm that Rio has regained a prominent position in global tourism," Fellows said, adding that tourism growth is generating employment opportunities, increasing

local income and strengthening the city's economy.

Signature events such as the world-renowned **Rio Carnival**, the spectacular **New Year's Eve celebrations in Rio de Janeiro**, and major international gatherings including **Rock in Rio** continue to attract millions of visitors every year, reinforcing Rio's reputation as one of the world's most dynamic event destinations.

Outlook for the Tourism Sector

With international connectivity expanding, tourism promotion intensifying, and global demand for experiential travel on the rise, Rio de Janeiro's tourism authorities remain optimistic about continued growth in the coming years.

The record-breaking performance in 2025 not only highlights the resilience of the destination but also underscores tourism's role as a vital pillar of Rio's economic development strategy.



Brand USA Celebrates 250 Years of the United States With 50 Family-Friendly Travel Experiences



50 Family-Friendly Experiences Across the United States: Brand USA Highlights Multigenerational Travel in “America the Beautiful” Campaign

As families around the world increasingly prioritize meaningful shared experiences over traditional sightseeing, the United States continues to distinguish itself as one of the most diverse and rewarding destinations for multigenerational travel. From immersive museums and wildlife encounters to adventure parks, historic landmarks, and iconic national parks,



“There’s never been a better time for families to enjoy the best of the USA,” Dixon said. “With once-in-a-generation events such as **America’s 250th anniversary celebrations**, epic road trips planned for the **centennial of Route 66**, and the excitement of the **FIFA World Cup matches, fanfests and watch parties**, combined with more than 60 spectacular national parks, world-class theme parks, beach resorts and culture-rich cities, the United States is poised to be the top family travel choice for 2026.”

Spanning every region—from the historic towns of New England to the tropical landscapes of Hawai’i and Puerto Rico—the featured experiences illustrate how families can customize trips around their interests, travel styles, and age groups while discovering the country together.

Northeast: Nature, History, and Small-Town Charm

In the northeastern United States, families can combine outdoor exploration with immersive history.

At the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, one of New England’s most enchanting green spaces, young travelers can roam through stroller-friendly paths, solve a lawn maze, and enjoy puppet shows at the Alford



the country offers an extraordinary variety of experiences designed to bring families together.

Recognizing this growing trend, Brand USA—the nation’s destination marketing organization—has unveiled a curated collection of **50 family-friendly travel experiences** across the country as part of its ongoing “America the Beautiful” campaign.

The selection highlights destinations that appeal to travelers of all ages, from toddlers discovering the world for the first time to grandparents eager to share memorable journeys with younger generations.

According to Fred Dixon, the coming year presents an exceptional opportunity for families to explore the United States together.



Children's Garden. Picnic areas and family-friendly facilities make it an ideal stop for parents with toddlers.

History comes alive at Old Sturbridge Village, a living history museum that recreates everyday life in 19th-century New England through artisans, historic buildings, and hands-on demonstrations.

Wildlife and outdoor adventure

also play a role in the region's appeal. At Clark's Bears, a beloved family attraction since 1928, visitors can enjoy wildlife shows, train rides, and exhibits of vintage artifacts. Nearby, Buddy Paw Sled Dog Kennel offers year-round sled-dog adventures using wheeled rigs, allowing children as young as two to meet rescue dogs and join guided tours.

In Vermont, the working dairy farm at Billings Farm & Museum provides hands-on learning experiences with animals and traditional farming demonstrations. Sweet endings await at the Ben & Jerry's Factory, where the famous ice-cream maker's tour concludes at its whimsical "Flavor Graveyard," honoring discontinued varieties with playful tombstones.

Mid-Atlantic: Museums, Theater, and Urban Adventures

For families drawn to big-city culture, the Mid-Atlantic region offers a wealth of engaging attractions.

At the Ellis Island National Museum of Immigration, the Family History Center invites visitors to trace their ancestry through a vast archive of immigration records. In nearby Manhattan, the New Victory Theater hosts family-friendly productions ranging from circus performances to international stage shows.

In New Jersey, the massive entertainment complex American Dream brings together attractions such as the country's largest Toys "R" Us store and Nickelodeon Universe—the Western Hemisphere's largest indoor theme park.

Further south, the cultural institutions of Washington, D.C. remain

among the nation's most family-friendly offerings. The network of museums operated by the Smithsonian Institution—including the National Air and Space Museum and the National Museum of Natural History—offers free admission and, in some cases, special overnight programs where children can sleep inside the museums.

Midwest: Interactive Learning and Playful Discovery

The American Midwest provides a blend of creativity, science, and hands-on learning.

At the Children's Museum of Indianapolis—the largest children's museum in the world—families can explore five stories of exhibits featuring dinosaur fossils, a historic carousel, and interactive science labs.

In St. Louis, the whimsical

City Museum transforms recycled architectural materials into a sprawling playground of tunnels, slides, and imaginative structures.

Seasonal events add to the region's charm. The Minnesota State Fair—often called the "Great Minnesota Get-Together"—is among the country's largest state fairs, combining agricultural competitions, live entertainment, and carnival-style food stands.

Adventure also awaits underground at the Louisville Mega Cavern, where visitors can zipline and tackle rope courses inside a vast former limestone mine.

South: Theme Parks, Nature, and Cultural Heritage

The southern United States is synonymous with family entertainment,







and few places capture that spirit better than Walt Disney World Resort. Its four theme parks—including Magic Kingdom and EPCOT—offer attractions suitable for visitors of every age.

Nearby, the enchanting underwater performances at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park have delighted audiences with live mermaid shows for decades.

In Austin, families can witness one of nature’s most remarkable spectacles at the Congress Avenue Bridge, where up to 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats emerge at sunset each evening between spring and autumn.

Meanwhile, aspiring astronauts can ignite their imagination at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center—often described as the world’s largest space museum—home to towering rockets, immersive simulators, and the legendary Saturn V moon rocket.

Southwest: Culture, Rodeos, and New Theme Parks

The Southwest offers a distinctive blend of cultural heritage and larger-than-life attractions.

In Houston, the annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo brings families together for carnival rides,



livestock exhibitions, and the crowd-favorite “Mutton Bustin’,” where young participants try their hand at sheep riding.

Visitors to Albuquerque can explore Indigenous heritage at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, which showcases traditional dance performances, exhibits, and cuisine.

Meanwhile, Frisco is preparing for the debut of Universal Kids Resort—a brand-new theme park designed specifically for families with younger children.



Pacific Northwest and West Coast: Outdoor Adventure Meets Creativity

The Pacific Northwest invites families to explore rugged landscapes and hands-on adventures.

At Ape Cave—the longest lava tube in the contiguous United States—visitors can navigate a dramatic underground landscape with headlamps and flashlights.

On the West Coast, creative pursuits take center stage at the Circus Center, where children and adults alike can learn trapeze, juggling, and acrobatics.

Meanwhile, the upcoming Lucas

Museum of Narrative Art, scheduled to open in 2026, promises to celebrate storytelling across film, art, and popular culture in a striking architectural setting.

Mountain West: Fossils, Red Rocks, and Olympic Legacy

In the Rocky Mountain region, families can combine breathtaking scenery with educational experiences.

At Dinosaur Ridge, visitors can walk among more than 250 preserved dinosaur tracks and fossils—including early discoveries of the iconic

Stegosaurus.

Nearby, the towering red rock formations of Garden of the Gods offer accessible trails and panoramic viewpoints.

Winter sports enthusiasts can explore Olympic history at Utah Olympic Park, where thrill-seekers can even experience a real bobsled ride.

Beyond the Mainland: Tropical Adventures

Family travel in the United States also extends beyond the mainland.

In Puerto Rico, thrill-seekers can soar above the rainforest canopy at Toro Verde Adventure Park, home to record-breaking zip lines and the world’s longest cable bike.

Meanwhile, the Polynesian Cultural Center offers immersive experiences across six Polynesian island villages, complete with traditional music, dance, and storytelling.

Creating Memories That Last

Whether exploring the cultural landmarks of historic cities, discovering wildlife in natural landscapes, or sharing adrenaline-filled adventures in theme parks, the 50 featured experiences highlight the extraordinary diversity of family travel opportunities across the United States.

For travelers seeking connection, discovery, and unforgettable moments together, the message behind Brand USA’s campaign is clear: **the true value of family travel lies in the memories created along the way.**



20 Unique California Events

That Celebrate
the Golden
State's Quirky Spirit



From garlic feasts and frog-jumping contests to whale celebrations and living works of art, California's festival calendar is as diverse as its landscapes. Across the Golden State, small towns and coastal communities transform seasonal harvests, wildlife migrations, and local traditions into vibrant annual celebrations.

Nearly every weekend brings another opportunity to experience California's



culture through food, music, history, and eccentric competitions. Planning a trip around one of these events offers travelers an unforgettable way to connect with local communities while discovering lesser-known destinations.

Editor's note: Dates may vary each year; visitors should check official event websites before planning their trips.

Bigfoot Days – Willow Creek

In the forested mountains of Northern California, the mysterious

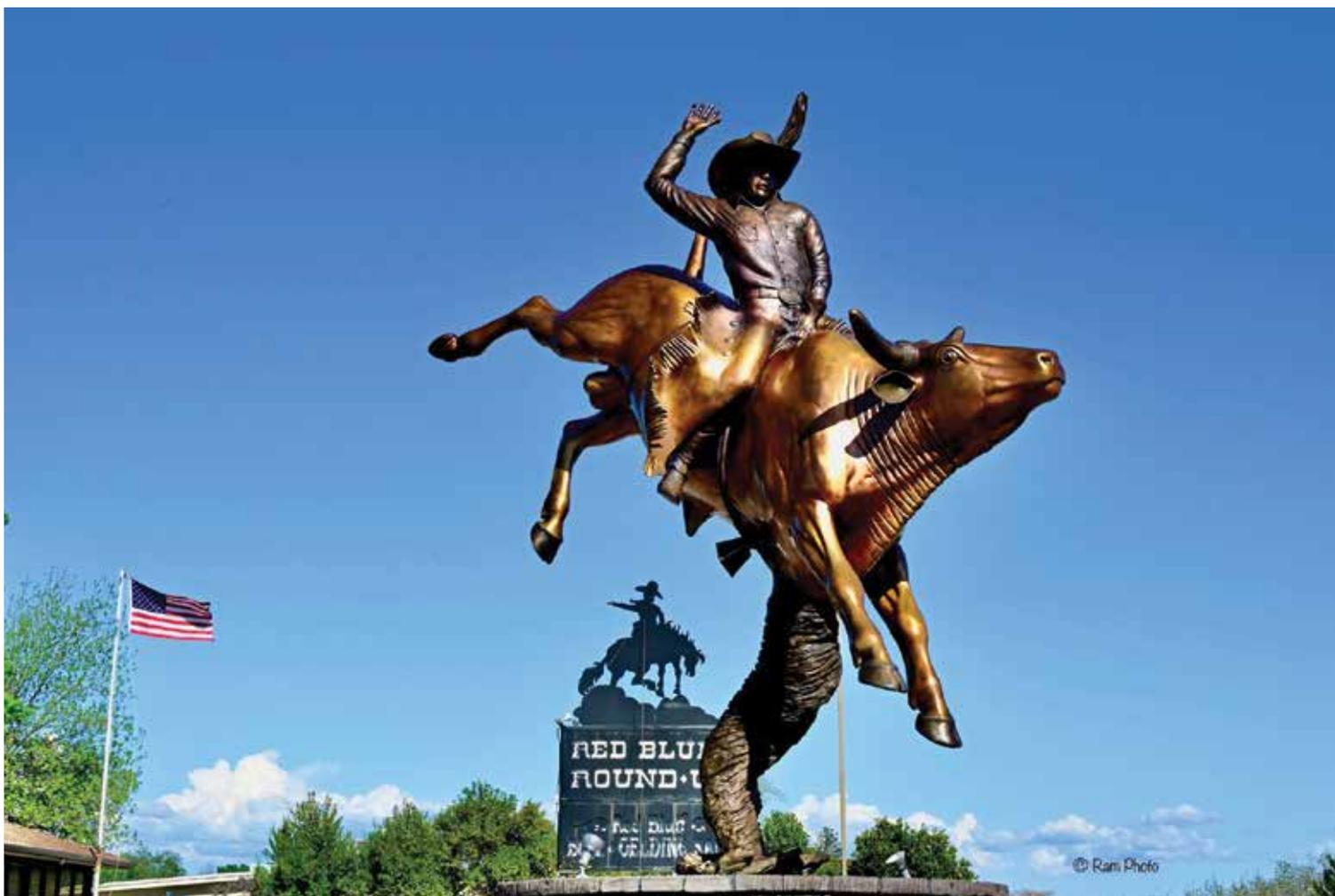
Sasquatch takes center stage during the annual **Bigfoot Days** held every Labor Day weekend in the small town of **Willow Creek**.

Hosted by the local history museum, the celebration embraces both myth and heritage. Festivities include a colorful parade, watermelon-eating contests, lawnmower races, and a lively Bigfoot Calling Contest. The event also pays tribute to the region's logging history, which helped shape the economy of nearby **Humboldt County**.

Visitors often combine the festival with a scenic drive along the famed Bigfoot Byway, a stretch of forested highway rumored to be prime Sasquatch territory.

Kinetic Grand Championship – Humboldt County

Part art exhibition, part endurance race, and entirely eccentric, the **Kinetic Grand Championship** has been a Northern California tradition since 1969.



Participants design elaborate human-powered sculptures that resemble everything from giant high heels and submarines to chickens and éclairs. These imaginative vehicles must then complete a grueling 50-mile course that crosses land, water, sand, and mud between the towns of **Arcata** and **Ferndale**.

The three-day race attracts artists, engineers, athletes, and spectators who revel in the playful spirit and inventive designs.

Red Bluff Round-Up – Red Bluff

For more than a century, the **Red Bluff Round-Up** has celebrated the heritage of the American West in the town of **Red Bluff**.

Recognized as one of the largest three-day rodeos in the United States, the event showcases barrel racing, bull riding, roping competitions, and the

crowd-favorite “mutton busting,” where children try their luck riding sheep.

Beyond the arena, visitors can enjoy Western line dancing, a chili cook-off, and the popular Wild Ride competition, where cowboys and cowgirls perform daring stunts in creative costumes.

Mendocino Coast Whale Festivals – Mendocino Coast

Every spring, migrating gray whales inspire a coastal celebration along Northern California’s dramatic shoreline. The **Mendocino Coast Whale Festivals** unfolds across three weekends in the communities of **Little River, Fort Bragg, Mendocino, and Westport**.

While the migrating **Gray whale** remains the star attraction, the festival also highlights the region’s culinary scene. Chowder tastings, craft beer, and local wines accompany whale-

watching excursions and educational events focused on marine conservation.

Gravenstein Apple Fair – Sebastopol

Late summer in Sonoma County brings the fragrant harvest of Gravenstein apples, celebrated at the **Gravenstein Apple Fair** in **Sebastopol**.

The beloved apple variety, prized for its crisp tartness, appears in everything from cider and applesauce to award-winning pies. Alongside apple treats, visitors sample regional specialties including artisan cheeses, olives, and locally grown figs.

Workshops on backyard beekeeping and small-scale farming reflect Sonoma County’s farm-to-table culture.

Lodi Grape Festival – Lodi

Wine lovers flock to the Central



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INTERNATIONAL

Valley each September for the **Lodi Grape Festival**, a family-friendly event dating back to 1937 in the wine-producing region of **Lodi**.

Inside the Grape Pavilion, visitors taste the region's celebrated wines—especially bold **Zinfandel** and refreshing **Pinot Grigio**. Meanwhile, children enjoy farm exhibits, petting zoos, and the unusual spectacle of turkey races.

One highlight is the display of intricate mosaic murals crafted entirely from grapes.

Gilroy Garlic Festival – Gilroy

Known as the “Garlic Capital of the World,” the city of **Gilroy** hosts the famously aromatic **Gilroy Garlic Festival**.

The three-day July event transforms the town into a culinary playground where visitors sample everything from garlic-infused scampi to the surprisingly popular garlic ice cream. Cooking demonstrations, live music, and arts-and-craft markets round out the festivities.

After a temporary hiatus, the festival returned in 2025 in a smaller reimagined format, once again drawing crowds eager to celebrate the humble bulb.

Calaveras County Fair & Jumping Frog Jubilee – Angels Camp

Inspired by **Mark Twain**'s famous short story “*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*,” the **Calaveras County Fair & Jumping Frog Jubilee** takes place each May in **Angels Camp**.

The highlight is the International Frog Jump Grand Finals, where trained bullfrogs compete to leap the farthest distance across a stage. The long-standing record—21 feet and nearly 6 inches—still stands.

Parades, carnival rides, concerts, and agricultural exhibits create a festive atmosphere around this uniquely Californian sport.

San Joaquin Asparagus Festival – Stockton

Springtime in **Stockton** means one thing: asparagus. The **San Joaquin**





Asparagus Festival celebrates the vegetable with inventive culinary creations ranging from asparagus corn dogs to asparagus lumpia and even asparagus ice cream.

Cooking demonstrations, live music, classic car displays, and carnival rides turn the event into a lively family

festival in California's fertile Central Valley.

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua – Lee Vining

Birdwatchers gather each June for the **Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua** near **Mono Lake**.

The unique ecosystem surrounding the lake—where desert, mountain, and wetland habitats converge—makes it a paradise for bird enthusiasts. Expert ornithologists lead field trips while visitors participate in bird-calling contests and wildlife photography workshops.



San Francisco Pride Parade & Celebration – San Francisco

Among the largest LGBTQ+ events in the world, the **San Francisco Pride Parade & Celebration** fills the streets of **San Francisco** with rainbow flags, elaborate floats, music performances, and inspiring speeches.

The celebration commemorates decades of progress in the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement while creating a joyful atmosphere that attracts millions of visitors annually.

Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival – Half Moon Bay

Every October, the coastal town of **Half Moon Bay** celebrates the harvest

season with the **Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival**.

Visitors enjoy pumpkin-flavored foods and craft beer, watch giant pumpkin carving demonstrations, and compete in a pumpkin pie-eating contest. The most anticipated event is the World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off, where enormous gourds—sometimes exceeding 2,000 pounds—compete for the title.

California Avocado Festival – Carpinteria

The seaside town of **Carpinteria** hosts the **California Avocado Festival**, affectionately known as “Avofest.”

Live music, art exhibitions, and creative dishes—from avocado smoothies to avocado ice cream—honor the nutrient-rich fruit. Visitors can participate in a guacamole competition or learn about the avocado industry that thrives in **Santa Barbara County**.

Santa Clarita Cowboy Festival – Santa Clarita

Western heritage takes center stage at the **Santa Clarita Cowboy Festival** in **Santa Clarita**.

Held at **William S. Hart Park**, the festival features cowboy poetry readings, chuckwagon cooking competitions, bluegrass concerts, and

demonstrations of traditional ranch skills.

California Strawberry Festival – Oxnard

The **California Strawberry Festival** celebrates the berry harvest in **Oxnard** with imaginative dishes such as strawberry pizza, strawberry beer, and strawberry-infused tamales.

Visitors can also build their own strawberry shortcake or compete in the strawberry pie-eating contest—no utensils allowed.

International Surf Festival – Los Angeles County

Held across the South Bay beach communities of **Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach,** and **Torrance,** the **International Surf Festival** celebrates ocean sports.

Unlike professional surfing competitions, the stars here are local lifeguards competing in athletic challenges such as pier-to-pier swims, surf races, and beach volleyball tournaments.

Indio International Tamale Festival – Indio

Food lovers head to **Indio** for the **Indio International Tamale Festival,**



where dozens of vendors serve traditional and inventive tamales.

The event gained international fame in 1999 when it produced a record-breaking tamale measuring 40 feet long.

Pageant of the Masters – Laguna Beach

At the spectacular **Pageant of the**

Masters in Laguna Beach, art literally comes to life.

Local residents pose in elaborate costumes and sets to recreate famous paintings and sculptures as “living pictures.” The performance is enhanced by orchestral music, theatrical lighting, and narration.

Festival of Whales – Dana Point

The coastal city of **Dana Point** celebrates marine life during the **Festival of Whales.**

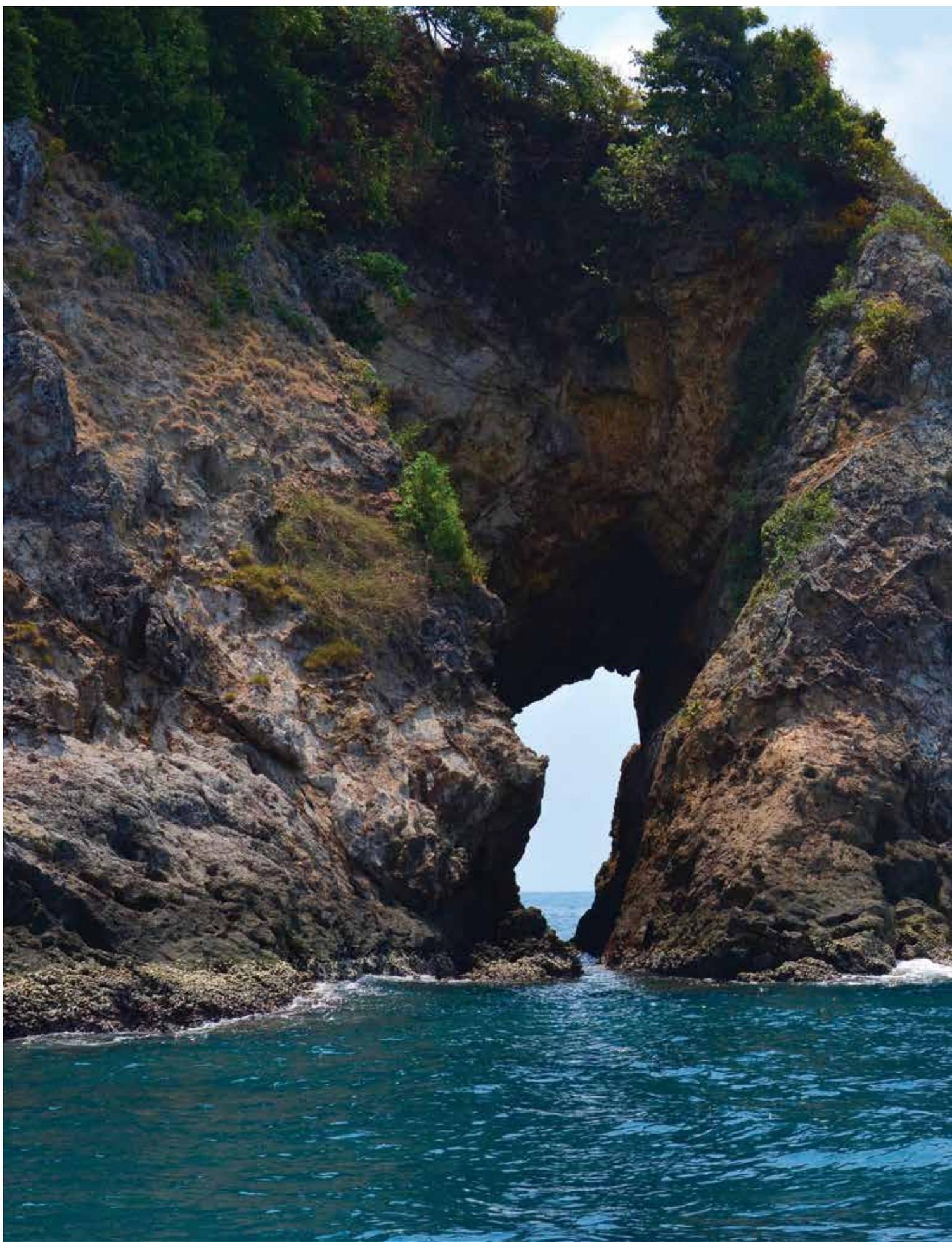
Family activities include whale-themed parades, sandcastle workshops, marine biology talks, and whale-watching cruises. The region is known for sightings of gray, humpback, and minke whales.

Death Valley '49ers Encampment – Death Valley

History comes alive during the **Death Valley '49ers Encampment,** a six-day tribute to the Gold Rush era held near **Death Valley National Park.**

Participants camp in period style, pan for gold, ride wagons pulled by Belgian draft horses, and enjoy old-time fiddle and banjo music reminiscent of the pioneer days.





Thailand Invites the World to “Feel All the Feelings”

A Cinematic Journey with LISA

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has unveiled a visually captivating global campaign titled “**Feel All the Feelings**”, inviting travellers to rediscover the Kingdom through a deeply immersive travel narrative. The commercial, fronted by global music icon Lalisa Manobal—widely known as LISA and serving as the **Amazing Thailand Ambassador**—captures the emotional essence of travel across Thailand’s diverse landscapes, cultures and communities.



More than a traditional destination advertisement, the campaign presents Thailand as an emotional journey, where each location evokes a unique feeling—wonder, serenity, romance, freedom and inspiration. Through LISA’s perspective, viewers are taken on a cinematic journey across the country, discovering cultural treasures, breathtaking natural landscapes and timeless traditions that together define the spirit of “Amazing Thailand.”

A New Narrative in Modern Travel Storytelling

At the heart of the campaign lies a contemporary approach to travel storytelling. Rather than focusing on a single destination, the film weaves together a series of compelling locations from across Thailand, highlighting the country’s remarkable diversity.

The narrative unfolds as though flipping through a collection of postcards—each scene revealing another facet of Thailand’s natural beauty, cultural richness and way of life. From mist-covered mountains and ancient temples to vibrant festivals and

turquoise seas, every frame captures the atmosphere and emotions that define the Thai travel experience.

By presenting these destinations through the lens of LISA’s personal journey, the campaign brings a fresh, modern perspective to Thai tourism while celebrating the timeless charm that continues to attract travellers from around the world.

Northern Thailand: Heritage, Festivals and Mountain Landscapes

A key highlight of the campaign is northern Thailand, where cultural heritage and natural beauty come together in captivating harmony.

One of the most prominent filming locations is Wat Chedi Luang in Chiang Mai. Situated in the historic heart of the former Lanna Kingdom, the ancient temple complex stands as a powerful symbol of northern Thai culture and spirituality. Its towering chedi, framed by centuries-old architecture and a tranquil atmosphere, reflects the deep cultural roots that continue to shape the region’s identity.

The temple also forms the backdrop for the enchanting Yi Peng Festival, the Lanna-style version of Loi Krathong celebrated every November. During the festival, thousands of lanterns ascend into the night sky around Chiang Mai, creating a mesmerising spectacle. At Wat Chedi Luang, the temple grounds glow with hundreds of small Lanna-style candle trays known as *Phang Pratheep*, illuminating the sacred space with warm golden light. In the commercial, LISA participates in lighting these candles, adding authenticity and emotional depth to the scene.

The film continues its journey through the north with several equally evocative destinations.

At Wat Phumin in Nan, the camera captures the famous *Puu Maan Ya Maan* mural—a delicate and romantic artwork often referred to as Thailand’s “whispering lovers.” The mural reflects the region’s artistic heritage and offers visitors a glimpse into centuries-old storytelling through art.

Nearby, the lush rice terraces of Sapan Village Rice Fields reveal a





tranquil rural landscape where mist drifts across emerald-green paddies surrounded by mountains. Depending on the season, the scenery transforms

from vibrant green fields during the rainy months to dreamy seas of mist in early winter.

Further north, dramatic mountain

landscapes take centre stage. At Phu Langka National Park in Phayao, travellers can witness rolling clouds drifting through forested peaks at sunrise, creating a dreamlike panorama. Similarly, the viewpoint at Phu Chi Fa in Chiang Rai offers one of Thailand's most iconic sunrise vistas, where visitors stand atop a cliff overlooking a vast sea of mist stretching across the border into Laos.

Another striking location is Wat Phra Phutthabat Sutthawat in Lampang, known for its dramatic "floating pagodas." Perched atop limestone peaks, the temple complex appears to hover above the surrounding landscape. Visitors must climb more than 300 steel steps along a steep mountainside to reach the summit—an experience that combines spiritual reflection with a sense of adventure.

Lower Northern Thailand: Waterfalls and Mountain Temples

The campaign also explores the lower northern region, where pristine forests and sacred mountain temples showcase Thailand's natural grandeur.

Among the highlights is Thi Lo Su Waterfall in Tak, widely regarded as one of the most spectacular waterfalls in Southeast Asia. Cascading through dense forest in multiple tiers, the powerful limestone waterfall offers a dramatic display of nature at its most majestic.

Another visually striking destination featured in the film is Wat Phra That Pha Son Kaeo in Phetchabun. Located amid the mountainous landscapes of Khao Kho, the temple complex is known for its five large white Buddha statues seated in descending order, symbolising spiritual harmony. The site's intricately decorated chedi—adorned with colourful tiles, jewellery and Benjarong porcelain—adds an artistic dimension to the already breathtaking mountain setting.

Northeastern Thailand: A Sea of Pink Lotuses

In Thailand's northeastern region, the commercial reveals one of the country's most unique natural

phenomena—the Red Lotus Sea in Udon Thani.

Located on Nong Han Lake, this remarkable landscape comes to life each year when tens of thousands of pink lotus flowers bloom simultaneously across the water's surface. At sunrise, the lake appears as if covered in a vast pink carpet stretching to the horizon. The tranquil setting offers a deeply romantic atmosphere, allowing visitors to experience nature in its most serene and poetic form.

Bangkok's Timeless Icon

No journey through Thailand would be complete without the capital city. The campaign presents a striking image of Wat Arun Ratchawararam Ratchawaramahawihan in Bangkok, one of the country's most iconic landmarks.

Rising elegantly along the banks of the Chao Phraya River, the temple's central prang glows magnificently in both sunlight and evening illumination. The timeless beauty of Wat Arun continues to symbolise Bangkok's rich cultural heritage while representing the enduring allure of the Thai capital.

Eastern Shores and Southern Seas

The final chapter of the commercial unfolds along Thailand's eastern and

southern coastlines, capturing the sense of freedom and tranquillity that defines the country's island and marine destinations.

On the Gulf of Thailand side, Ko Thalu in Rayong offers a peaceful island escape. Known for its crystal-clear waters and coral reefs, the island is also famous for its natural rock arch rising dramatically from the sea—an ideal spot for snorkelling and exploration.

Meanwhile, the Andaman coast reveals the breathtaking panorama of Samet Nangshe Viewpoint in Phang Nga. From this vantage point overlooking Phang Nga Bay, travellers can admire emerald-green waters dotted with limestone karsts and winding waterways framed by lush mangrove forests. As sunrise casts golden light across the bay, the scene perfectly encapsulates the peaceful beauty of southern Thailand.

Inspiring a New Way to Experience Thailand

While the campaign features destinations from across the country, every location is united by a single idea—to inspire travellers to see Thailand through a new emotional lens.

Through the storytelling presence of LISA, each place becomes more than just a scenic backdrop. Instead, it becomes a moment of connection—between culture, nature and personal discovery.

For the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the campaign represents a contemporary vision of Thai tourism: one that celebrates authenticity, diversity and meaningful travel experiences. By highlighting the country's varied landscapes and cultural expressions, the film encourages travellers to explore beyond familiar routes and discover the deeper charm of Thailand.

As the campaign concludes, the message is clear: Thailand is not simply a destination to visit—it is a place to experience every emotion.

And the invitation remains open to the world to **"Feel All the Feelings... Amazing Thailand."**





Dine at a
Michelin-Star Restaurant in
California

Choose from dozens of world-class dining destinations across the Golden State



For travelers who believe that food is an essential part of the journey, California offers one of the most exciting culinary landscapes in the world. From avant-garde tasting menus in cosmopolitan cities to farm-driven cuisine in vineyard-lined valleys, the Golden State is home to hundreds of restaurants recognized by the prestigious **Michelin Guide**.

Often described as the culinary equivalent of the Oscars, Michelin stars are among the highest honors a restaurant can achieve. Only a small fraction of the world's restaurants receive them, making each award a

mark of exceptional quality, creativity, and precision.

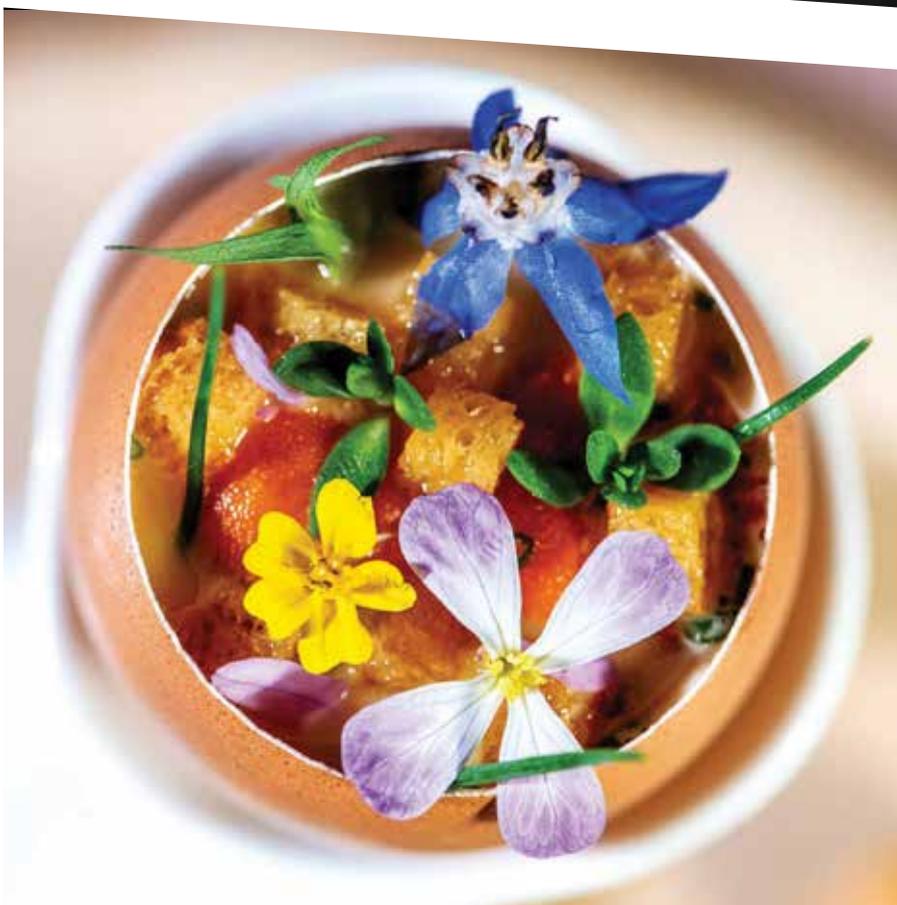
California's culinary scene has flourished under this global spotlight. As of 2025, the **Michelin Guide California** features **548 restaurants across 55 cuisine styles**, including starred restaurants, Bib Gourmands, and recommended dining spots. The state also boasts **eight three-star restaurants—the highest number in the United States**, reinforcing California's reputation as one of the world's premier gastronomic destinations.

Although the Michelin Guide has existed for more than 130 years, the

first California edition was introduced in 2019. Following a brief pause during the pandemic, the guide now returns annually, covering culinary hotspots across the state—including **San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles County, San Diego County, Orange County, Santa Barbara, Monterey, Sacramento, Mendocino County, and Greater Palm Springs**.

Whether it's an intimate sushi counter in Los Angeles or a regenerative farm-driven tasting menu in San Francisco, California's Michelin-recognized restaurants promise unforgettable dining experiences.





The Elite Three-Star Destinations

In Michelin's rating system, restaurants may receive **one, two, or three stars**—with three stars representing the highest distinction. According to Michelin inspectors, a three-star restaurant offers **“exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey.”** In other words, the restaurant itself becomes the destination.

California's three-star establishments showcase extraordinary culinary artistry, meticulous technique, and flawless presentation.

Two of the newest additions joined the list in 2025: seafood-focused **Providence in Hollywood**, and the contemporary Spanish-inspired **Somni in West Hollywood**—the first restaurants in Los Angeles County to achieve the coveted three-star status.

Further south, chef **William Bradley** leads the acclaimed **Addison in Del Mar**, where modern California

cuisine is paired with an extensive global wine list.

In wine country, culinary icon **Thomas Keller** continues to draw gastronomes from around the world to **The French Laundry** in **Yountville**, often regarded as one of the most influential restaurants in the United States.

Meanwhile, celebrated chef **Dominique Crenn** leads the innovative **Atelier Crenn** in **San Francisco**, where a groundbreaking plant- and seafood-focused tasting menu has redefined modern fine dining.

California's Three-Star Restaurants

- Addison — Del Mar
- Atelier Crenn — San Francisco
- Benu — San Francisco
- The French Laundry — Yountville
- Quince — San Francisco
- Providence — Los Angeles

- SingleThread — Healdsburg
- Somni — West Hollywood

The Excellent Two-Star Winners

Michelin describes two-star restaurants as offering “**excellent cooking, worth a detour.**” California currently boasts **14 restaurants with this distinction**, most located in the culinary hubs of Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area.

One of the most scenic among them is **Harbor House**, perched dramatically on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean in **Elk** along the rugged **Mendocino Coast**. Its hyper-local menu highlights seafood and ingredients sourced directly from the surrounding environment.

In **Oakland**, chef **James Syhabout** showcases California produce with Asian influences at **Commis**.

Meanwhile, on the scenic Central Coast, **Aubergine** in **Carmel-by-the-**

Sea delights diners with a constantly evolving eight-course tasting menu.

Another rising star is **Enclos**, housed in an 1880 Victorian residence in **Sonoma**, where much of the produce is grown on the restaurant's own farms.

Notable Two-Star Restaurants in California

- Acquerello
- Aubergine
- Birdsong
- Californios
- Commis
- Enclos
- Harbor House
- Hayato
- Kiln
- Lazy Bear
- Mélisse
- Saison
- Sons & Daughters
- Vespertine





One-Star Restaurants Worth the Stop

A single Michelin star signifies “high-quality cooking, worth a stop.” While it may sound modest compared with higher rankings, earning even one star is an extraordinary accomplishment.

Out of hundreds of thousands of

restaurants worldwide, only a small fraction have ever received this distinction.

California currently features **65 one-star restaurants**, ranging from sophisticated tasting-menu destinations to innovative neighborhood establishments.

Among the newest honorees in 2025

are **Lilo** in **Carlsbad**, **Mori Nozomi**, where chef **Nozomi Moro** became the first female sushi chef in the United States to earn a Michelin star, and **Sun Moon Studio** in Oakland.

Other notable one-star dining destinations include **State Bird Provisions**, **n/naka**, and **Knife Pleat**—each offering a distinctive culinary vision.

Green Stars and Bib Gourmand Dining

Beyond the traditional star system, Michelin also recognizes restaurants with a **Green Star**—an award introduced in 2021 to highlight leaders in sustainable gastronomy.

California leads the United States in eco-conscious dining, with **17 Green Star restaurants** including **Chez Panisse**, **Quince**, and **SingleThread**.

These restaurants prioritize responsible sourcing, waste reduction, and environmentally friendly farming practices. For instance, **Caruso’s** sources honey from its own beekeeping program and implements innovative systems to reduce cooking-oil waste.

For travelers seeking great food at accessible prices, the **Bib Gourmand** category offers another enticing option. Restaurants in this group serve exceptional meals at a moderate cost—typically allowing diners to enjoy **two courses plus dessert or wine for around \$49 or less**.

The **2025 Michelin Guide California** includes **123 Bib Gourmand restaurants**, making it easier than ever for visitors to enjoy outstanding cuisine without splurging on a full tasting menu.

For food-focused travelers, California’s Michelin-recognized restaurants provide more than just a meal—they deliver an unforgettable culinary journey. Whether indulging in an elaborate tasting menu in San Francisco, savoring coastal seafood in Mendocino, or exploring innovative global flavors in Los Angeles, each destination reflects the creativity, diversity, and agricultural richness that define California cuisine.

SKAL International India Formalises Strategic Exhibition Partnerships to Strengthen Nationwide Travel Trade Networking



In a landmark move aimed at deepening industry collaboration, SKAL International India has formalised strategic partnerships with five of the country's leading travel exhibition organisers, creating a structured national framework for B2B engagement across India's travel and tourism sector.

The first-of-its-kind initiative sees the association signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with major exhibition portfolios, marking a shift from event-based participation to long-term, organised engagement. The agreements position SKAL International India at the centre of India's trade networking ecosystem for 2026, reinforcing its role as a catalyst for professional connectivity and industry development.

Expansive Exhibition Network Across India

The MoUs collectively span five of

India's most influential travel trade platforms, each with established multi-city reach and strong industry participation:

- **OTM, BLTM and the TTF series** by Fairfest Media
- **SATTE** by Informa Markets
- **ITB India** by Messe Berlin
- **The GPS series** by Global Panorama Showcase India
- **The IITM series** by Sphere Travel Media & Exhibitions

Together, these exhibition portfolios cover key metropolitan and regional markets, offering SKAL members sustained access to curated networking forums, trade visibility and structured participation in India's leading B2B marketplaces.

Moving From Events to Structured Industry Engagement

Rather than limiting collaboration to isolated trade show appearances, the MoUs introduce a framework for continuous engagement between SKAL International India and the broader travel trade. The model supports year-round relationship-building, knowledge exchange and business development opportunities, aligning SKAL's global networking philosophy with India's established exhibition infrastructure.

The initiative is designed to deliver measurable value to members by facilitating consistent access to buyers, suppliers, destinations and service providers across multiple industry segments, including aviation, hospitality, DMCs, cruise, MICE and luxury travel.

Leadership Perspective

Sanjeev Mehra, President of SKAL International India, described the partnerships as a significant milestone for the association's national strategy.

"This is the first time Skål International India has undertaken such a comprehensive and structured initiative with five leading travel exhibition companies across the country," he said. "These MoUs represent a strong step forward in creating consistent, high-quality networking platforms for our members. The benefits will extend not only to SKAL professionals but also to the wider travel and tourism industry that engages with them."

Setting a New Benchmark for Industry Collaboration

The initiative underscores SKAL International India's focus on leadership, collaboration and inclusive sector growth. By aligning with established exhibition brands, the organisation is helping shape a more integrated industry environment where networking, knowledge-sharing and commercial opportunities are systematically supported.

The partnerships also reflect a broader evolution in how professional associations engage with trade platforms — moving towards strategic alliances that foster continuity, scale and long-term value rather than transactional event participation.

SKAL International India

SKAL International India is part of Skål International, the world's largest global network of travel, tourism and hospitality leaders, representing over 12,500 professionals across 85 countries. The organisation promotes global tourism, ethical business practices and professional cooperation, providing members with a powerful international platform for relationship-building and industry leadership.



Germany Sets the Stage for 2026: A Year of Culture, Celebrations and New Experiences for Indian Travellers

Germany is preparing for an extraordinary year of travel in 2026, offering a vibrant calendar of cultural milestones, globally renowned festivals, new attractions and enhanced travel infrastructure. With a compelling blend of historic heritage, contemporary creativity and world-class hospitality, the destination is positioning itself as one of Europe's most exciting travel choices for Indian visitors in the year ahead.

The German National Tourist Office (GNTO) India has unveiled Germany's dynamic tourism roadmap

for 2026, highlighting a rich mix of cultural celebrations, landmark anniversaries, new visitor attractions and major developments in hospitality and connectivity. Together, these initiatives are expected to further strengthen Germany's appeal among Indian travellers seeking immersive, experience-driven holidays.

From music and heritage to family entertainment and cutting-edge infrastructure, Germany's travel offerings in 2026 promise a diverse range of experiences that combine tradition with innovation.

A Season-by-Season Calendar of Celebrations

Throughout 2026, travellers will have the opportunity to experience Germany through a series of spectacular seasonal festivals and cultural events across the country.

Between May and September, the celebrated Rhine in Flames transforms picturesque towns along the Rhine River into dazzling spectacles of light and colour. Illuminated boat parades, spectacular fireworks displays and festive riverfront celebrations create a magical atmosphere, offering visitors



a unique way to explore Germany's historic river landscapes.

Spring and early summer will also see some of Germany's most vibrant urban celebrations come alive. In May, the maritime city of Hamburg hosts the iconic Hamburg Port Anniversary, one of the world's largest port festivals. The harbour comes alive with majestic tall ships, live music performances, waterfront activities and culinary experiences that celebrate the city's long-standing maritime heritage.

Later in May, the capital city of Berlin will stage the colourful Carnival of Cultures, a lively multicultural celebration featuring vibrant street parades, dance performances, international cuisine and artistic showcases reflecting the city's cosmopolitan spirit.

From June through August, culture lovers will be drawn to the historic university town of Heidelberg, where

the iconic Heidelberg Castle Festival marks its 100th anniversary in 2026. Set against the dramatic backdrop of Heidelberg Castle, the centenary edition will feature world-class theatre productions, concerts and operatic performances, making it a major cultural highlight during the European summer season.

The festive season culminates in late August with the renowned Frankfurt Museum Embankment Festival in Frankfurt. Considered one of Europe's largest cultural celebrations, the event transforms the city's riverside museum district into a lively cultural hub with music stages, art installations, food stalls and museums staying open late into the night.

A Landmark Year for Classical Music

For classical music enthusiasts, 2026 will mark a particularly significant milestone in Germany's cultural calendar.

The country will commemorate the

150th anniversary of the first complete performance of Richard Wagner's monumental opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Celebrations will be centred in the city of Bayreuth, home to the world-famous Bayreuth Festival.

Throughout the year, Bayreuth will host special performances, exhibitions and cultural initiatives dedicated to Wagner's legacy. The anniversary programme will culminate in a large public celebration in July, followed by special productions staged during the Bayreuth Festival between July and August—an event that attracts opera lovers from across the globe.

New Attractions and Cultural Spaces

Germany's tourism landscape will also see the launch of several exciting attractions in 2026, reflecting the country's continued investment in innovative visitor experiences.

In Berlin, the historic Hohenzollern Crypt will reopen to visitors following extensive restoration work, offering

renewed access to one of the city's most significant royal burial sites.

The German capital will also introduce Ocean Berlin, a state-of-the-art marine attraction featuring a massive 7.5-million-litre ocean tank, immersive exhibits and interactive displays designed to engage families and younger travellers.

Meanwhile, one of Europe's most popular theme parks, Europa-Park, will unveil a brand-new Monaco-themed zone. Inspired by the glamour of the Mediterranean principality, the new area will feature immersive rides, themed environments and entertainment experiences that recreate the excitement of the French Riviera.

Luxury Stays and New Hospitality Developments

Germany's hospitality sector is also expanding in response to growing international demand.

Among the most anticipated reopenings is Althoff Dom Hotel, a





historic five-star landmark located near the famous Cologne Cathedral. Following a comprehensive refurbishment, the property will feature redesigned luxury accommodations and a rooftop dining venue offering panoramic views of the cathedral.

Several new hotel properties are also scheduled to open across key German cities, including Scandic Berlin West, Occidental Dresden Newa, Ramada Encore Berlin Airport and Essential by Dorint Mannheim. These additions will cater to a wide range of traveller segments—from leisure and family travellers to corporate guests.

Berlin's skyline will also welcome a striking new architectural landmark with the opening of Estrel Tower, the city's first skyscraper. Standing 176 metres tall, the mixed-use development will feature hotel rooms, serviced apartments, event venues and a rooftop dining experience offering sweeping views of the capital.

Enhanced Connectivity and Airport Infrastructure

Germany's aviation infrastructure

is set to receive significant upgrades in 2026, improving international connectivity and passenger convenience.

At Frankfurt Airport, the opening of the new Terminal 3 will substantially increase passenger capacity and streamline travel with improved rail links and modernised facilities.

Similarly, Munich Airport will expand Terminal 1 with the addition of Pier T1E, introducing upgraded immigration areas, expanded retail spaces and new lounges designed to improve the passenger experience—particularly for non-Schengen travellers.

Germany's Strategic Focus on the Indian Market

India continues to be a key growth market for Germany's tourism industry, with Indian travellers increasingly seeking destinations that offer culture, history and immersive experiences.

"India is a strategically important and fast-growing market for Germany. Indian travellers are increasingly looking for destinations that combine rich cultural heritage with meaningful travel experiences," said Romit Theophilus,

Director of Marketing & Sales at the GNT0 India office.

"With an exceptional calendar of events, exciting new attractions and enhanced infrastructure in 2026, Germany is perfectly positioned to inspire Indian visitors seeking memorable journeys."

A Destination for Meaningful Travel

With its rich cultural heritage, iconic festivals, innovative attractions and modern hospitality infrastructure, Germany in 2026 promises a compelling travel narrative for Indian visitors.

Whether exploring historic castles along the Rhine, attending world-class music festivals, discovering contemporary attractions in vibrant cities or enjoying family-friendly theme parks, travellers will find a destination that seamlessly connects tradition with modern experiences.

For the travel trade and Indian outbound market alike, Germany's 2026 calendar offers a powerful invitation: a year filled with culture, celebration and unforgettable travel moments.

US Travel Association Promotes Ellen Davis to COO and Executive Vice President

Davis to lead operational strategy and industry engagement



The **U.S. Travel Association** has promoted **Ellen Davis** to **Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President**, a move that significantly expands her responsibilities as the organization strengthens its operational strategy and industry engagement efforts.

The leadership announcement reflects the association's broader push to enhance operational performance and deepen collaboration across the U.S. travel and tourism sector. As one of the most influential industry bodies in the country, the U.S. Travel Association represents a wide network

of travel companies, destinations, and hospitality stakeholders.

Expanded Role in Operational Leadership

According to the association, Davis will now oversee the organization's **operational strategy, performance management, and long-term organizational growth**. In addition to these expanded duties, she will continue leading key strategic functions including **membership, industry engagement, and events**, ensuring these initiatives remain closely aligned with the organization's broader policy and advocacy priorities.

The appointment is part of an effort to strengthen internal leadership as the travel sector continues to rebuild momentum and adapt to shifting global travel trends.

Strong Industry Experience

Before joining the U.S. Travel Association, Davis held senior leadership roles at major industry groups including the **National Retail Federation** and the **Consumer Brands Association**. In those positions, she played a key role in expanding membership networks and driving revenue growth, helping organizations strengthen their influence within their respective industries.

Her experience in building strategic partnerships and developing membership-driven growth models has been seen as particularly valuable for trade associations representing diverse industry stakeholders.

Driving Growth Since Joining U.S. Travel

Davis joined the U.S. Travel Association in 2023 as **Executive Vice President of Business Strategy and Industry Engagement**, a role in which she quickly made an impact on the organization's structure and performance.

During her tenure, she introduced a **new membership model**, expanded the association's **event portfolio**, and developed stronger industry networks. She also led an internal **operational restructuring**, which the association says contributed to a **37 percent increase in revenue**.

These initiatives have helped strengthen the association's engagement with industry members and reinforced its role as a leading advocate for the U.S. travel sector.

Leadership Endorsement

Announcing the promotion, **Geoff Freeman**, President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, praised Davis for her leadership and the impact she has made since joining the organization.

"Ellen has been an exceptional leader since joining U.S. Travel, and this promotion reflects the impact she has had on our organization and industry," Freeman said. "Her ability to unite key stakeholders, strengthen our member value proposition, and drive meaningful growth makes her promotion to this expanded role a natural step as we pursue greater value for U.S. Travel and our industry."

Strengthening the Travel Industry's Voice

The promotion comes at a critical time for the U.S. travel sector as industry leaders work to strengthen advocacy, improve traveler experiences, and support long-term tourism growth.

By elevating Davis to the COO role, the U.S. Travel Association aims to further align its operational strategy with the evolving needs of its members and reinforce its leadership role in shaping the future of travel in the United States.

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LIVE MET SMART

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The Met recently has been conferred with prestigious accolades:

WORLD'S GREATEST BRANDS AWARD

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL AWARD

INTERNATIONAL FIVE STAR HOTEL STANDARDS

HAUTE GRANDEUR GLOBAL HOTEL AWARDS

WORLD LUXURY HOTEL AWARDS

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asian kitchen

chutney
bar + lounge

ZING

CRAFT
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ngoveda spa