

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

# travel

Volume 26 | Issue 05 | June 2026 | ₹500 / \$12 US

A Profiles Media Network Publication

[www.travelspan.in](http://www.travelspan.in)

## SPAN

**Princess Cruises**  
Expands Its  
European Horizon  
with a Landmark  
2028 Season

**Air Canada**  
Introduces a New  
Standard of Airport  
Hospitality at Québec City

**Design Takes Flight:**  
The World's Most  
Beautiful Airports of 2026

**Summer Escapes 2026:**  
Why America's Southern Cities  
Are Captivating Travellers

# The Gateway to the World's Largest Travel Market



**OCTOBER 27-28, 2026**  
MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER

The U.S. is the world's most powerful travel market  
**100M+ outbound travelers annually**  
WTE Miami connects you directly to the buyers driving it.

## WTE MIAMI 2026 AT A GLANCE

4th Edition Growth: Double the Exhibitors. Double the Attendees.



**500+**  
EXHIBITORS  
from across the  
Americas & the world



**7000+**  
BUYERS



**500+**  
HOSTED &  
VIP BUYERS



**10,000+**  
PRE-SCHEDULED  
B2B MEETINGS

## WHY THE U.S. MARKET MATTERS

**1.8M+** Americans visited India in 2024 **~17%** of India's inbound tourism

One of India's most valuable inbound markets

**\$15B+** opportunity driven by international travel

## MIAMI:

The Hub of the Americas

A global gateway connecting North America, Latin America, and international markets, placing your business at the center of cross-border travel demand.



**EXHIBIT. CONNECT. GROW.**

[wtemiama.com](http://wtemiama.com)

For more  
information



ORGANISED BY



# Contents

Volume 26 | Issue 05 | June 2026



- 06** Visitor Registration Opens for WTE Miami 2026 as Global Travel Industry Gears Up for Landmark Tourism Gathering
- 10** ASEGO Launches 'Built & Beyond' to Unite the Next Generation of India's Travel Industry Leaders
- 12** Sandeep Dwivedi on Digital Transformation, Innovation and the New Age Traveller
- 15** IATA Criticises EU261 Reforms, Warns of Higher Airline Costs Without Solving Flight Delay Challenges
- 16** Qatar Airways Group Posts QAR 7.08 Billion Profit Amid Global Uncertainty, Reinforcing Industry Leadership

60

# SUBSCRIBE travel SPAN



## TRAVELSPAN.IN

Inspiring the most affluent and discerning travellers.

Engage with the website and its social media platforms through: Display ads, carousels, videos, photos and more.

 @travelspanindia  travelspan1

 travel span  @travelspan1

For advertising queries please contact  
91-124-411 1182

## Why Subscribe?

- 33% off on annual subscription
- delivery monthly to your doorstep
- 42% off on digital subscription and read Travel Span on any device

Subscription	Cover Price	You save	You pay
Print	₹ 250 x 12 = ₹ 3000	₹ 890	₹ 2110
Digital	₹ 250 x 12 = ₹ 3000	₹ 1440	₹ 1560

## HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

online: [www.travelspan.in](http://www.travelspan.in) / call: +91 124 411 1182

All Payments in favour of Profiles Media Network Pvt Ltd.  
Contact: **Studio 9 Productions** - C-59, Defence Colony, Chetna Marg, New Delhi 110024, India

# Contents



- 20** Air Canada unveils first premium Air Canada Café at Québec City Airport
- 21** Riyadh Air Joins IATA as It Accelerates Global Expansion and Strengthens Sustainability Commitment
- 24** Air India Launches Non-Stop Mumbai–Tokyo Haneda Flights, Strengthening India–Japan Connectivity
- 25** ITB Berlin 2027 launches new campaign: Travel & Tourism in Motion
- 26** From Lotus Blossoms to Bamboo Forests: World’s Most Beautiful Airports of 2026 Redefine the Future of Travel

- 30** Global Aviation Leaders Convene in Rio for IATA’s 82nd AGM as Industry Charts Future Growth, Sustainability and Innovation
- 34** TCEB Launches ‘JerGan’ Digital Platform to Transform Thailand’s MICE Ecosystem
- 36** WTM London Launches Dedicated WTM Travel Tech Event to Meet Growing Demand for Technology-Driven Tourism Solutions
- 40** Princess Cruises Unveils Its Largest-Ever Europe Season for 2028 with Six Ships, New Irish Ports and Epic Pole-to-Pole Voyage
- 44** Indian Travel Trade Outlines Strategic Roadmap to Accelerate Morocco’s Growth in the Indian Market
- 48** Jamaica Unveils ‘10x10x10 Vision’ to Achieve 10 Million Annual Visitors and USD 10 Billion in Tourism Revenue
- 52** Egypt Introduces New Tourism Incentives to Sustain International Arrivals Amid Global Travel Challenges
- 54** Siyam World Maldives Unveils ‘Wreck to Reef’
- 56** Brand USA Expands AI-Powered Visitor Ecosystem to Elevate FIFA World Cup 2026 Travel Experience
- 58** Sun Siyam Vilu Reef Unveils New Ocean Signature Villas, Introducing a New Era of Luxury Island Living in the Maldives
- 60** Southern U.S. Cities Lead America’s Best Summer Vacation Destinations for 2026
- 64** Ojai: California’s Serene Valley of the Moon Where Art, Nature and Culinary Excellence Converge

# EDITOR'S LETTER

## Visitor Registration Opens for WTE Miami 2026 as Global Travel Industry Gears Up for Landmark Tourism Gathering

*More than 70 countries, 20+ National Tourism Organizations, 7,000 buyers and over 100 industry experts expected at one of the Americas' most internationally diverse travel trade events*

Visitor registration has officially opened for WTE Miami 2026, setting the stage for what is expected to be one of the most influential gatherings of the global travel and tourism industry. Scheduled to take place on October 27-28, 2026, at the Miami Beach Convention Center, the event is poised for significant expansion following its acquisition by

Fairfest Media earlier this year.

Organisers expect the exhibition and conference to double in scale and industry impact, bringing together destinations, airlines, hotels, travel advisors, tourism boards, technology providers and travel buyers from around the world to explore emerging trends, forge new partnerships and shape the future of international tourism.

With representation anticipated from more than 70 countries, including over 20 National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) and Convention Bureaus, WTE Miami is positioning itself as one of the most globally diverse travel trade events in the Americas.

### **A Growing Platform for Global Tourism Business**

More than 500 exhibitors, 7,000 travel buyers and 500 hosted and VIP buyers are expected to attend the two-day event, creating a dynamic marketplace focused on business

---

**DEVENDER GROVER** Editor in Chief & Publisher

---

**GAURA G BAHL** Group Editor  
**ANURADHA M** Associate Editor  
**JYOTSNA MALIK** International Sales Director

---

**RASIKA MATHUR** Events Coordinator  
**RAJESH MAURYA** Head of Finance  
**JITESH GANDHI** Creative Director

---

Address changes and subscription order to [travelspan@gmail.com](mailto:travelspan@gmail.com)  
Registered with Registrar of Newspapers of India under RNI No. DEL/ENG/2000/03308

---

### **PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY**

Profiles Media Network Pvt Ltd., C-59, Defence Colony, Chetna Marg, New Delhi 110024, India  
Tel - +91 (124) 4111182, Mob- +91 99999 97607, Website: [www.travelspan.in](http://www.travelspan.in)

---

### **PRINTED BY**

STUDIO 9 PRODUCTIONS, C-59, Defence Colony, Chetna Marg, New Delhi 110024, India  
Volume 26, Issue 05, June 2026

---

Content June not be reproduced in any format without written permission from **Profiles Media Network Pvt Ltd.**

---

**RNI No. DEL/ENG/2000/03308** Travel Span is Printed Published Edited and Owned by **Devender Grover**. Printed at G S Graphic Arts. A-18, Naraina Industrial Area, New Delhi - 110028

**Editor: Devender Grover.** All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is strictly prohibited. All information is correct at the time of going to press but subject to change. Editorial material, views and opinions expressed in Travel Span are those of authors. Editor(s) assume no responsibility of any errors or omissions. Neither is any liability assumed resulting from the use of this information. The Publisher will not be responsible for any damage or loss caused by the late Publication, errors or failures of advertisements to appear. Products and services mentioned are subject to change without prior notice.



**October 27 - 28, 2026**  
Miami Beach Convention Center

development, destination promotion and industry collaboration.

The event arrives at a pivotal moment for the travel sector as destinations and tourism businesses navigate rapid changes in traveller behaviour, digital transformation and the growing influence of artificial intelligence across the tourism value chain.

According to organisers, WTE Miami has been designed to provide industry professionals with practical insights and meaningful business opportunities as they adapt to a rapidly evolving marketplace.

“The travel industry is entering one of the most significant periods of transformation in its history,” said Simon Press, Managing Director International at Fairfest Inc.

“Artificial intelligence is changing how travellers discover and book destinations. Consumer expectations continue to evolve, new distribution channels are emerging and competition for the American traveller has never been greater. WTE Miami has been created to give the North American travel industry the practical knowledge and global business connections needed to succeed in this rapidly changing environment.”

### Spotlight on the ‘Travel Advisor of the Future’

A major focus of WTE Miami 2026 will be the evolving role of travel advisors in an increasingly digital and technology-driven environment.

Under the central theme “**Travel Advisor of the Future,**” the conference programme will examine how advancements in artificial intelligence, changing consumer expectations and new distribution models are reshaping travel sales and customer engagement.

The event’s conference agenda will feature more than 100 speakers across over 20 educational sessions, panel discussions and industry forums. Topics will include AI-powered destination marketing, travel distribution strategies, customer experience innovation, social media influence, creator-led destination discovery, data-driven tourism promotion and evolving traveller purchasing behaviour.

Industry organisers believe travel advisors will continue to play a crucial role in helping travellers navigate increasingly complex travel options, while technology enhances rather than replaces personalised travel planning.

### Industry Collaboration Drives Content Development

To ensure the programme delivers practical value, WTE Miami is being developed in collaboration with several leading international travel organisations.

These include the Host Agency Reviews (HAR), the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and the African Travel Association (ATA), which are contributing expertise across travel advisor development, adventure tourism and global destination marketing.

The objective is to provide attendees with actionable strategies, market intelligence and commercial insights that can be immediately applied to their businesses.

Sessions will focus on helping travel professionals identify new revenue opportunities, strengthen supplier relationships, improve customer engagement and remain competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace.

### A Business Marketplace Designed for Commercial Outcomes

Unlike traditional trade exhibitions that focus primarily on product showcasing, WTE Miami has been



International Airport (MIA) and the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB), highlighting Miami's importance as a major international gateway connecting North America with Latin America, Europe, the Caribbean and beyond.

The event has also secured support from prominent industry associations, including Skål International, the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and the African Travel Association (ATA).

Their involvement reflects a shared commitment to strengthening international tourism, enhancing industry cooperation and driving sustainable growth across the global travel ecosystem.

### Leading Global Tourism Brands Confirm Participation

A growing list of tourism organisations, airlines, hospitality companies and travel technology providers have already confirmed their participation in WTE Miami 2026.

Among the confirmed exhibitors and partners are the Jamaica Tourist Board, South African Tourism, China National Tourist Office, Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, Belize Tourism Board, Honduras Tourism, Maldives Mission to the United Nations, Royal Jordanian, Iberia, SKY Airline and Frenchbee.

structured around measurable business results.

The event will combine pre-scheduled appointments, hosted buyer programmes, networking events and executive-level conference sessions to facilitate meaningful business interactions between suppliers and buyers.

Thousands of meetings are expected to take place between exhibitors and qualified buyers from across the United States travel ecosystem, including independent travel agencies, home-based advisors, host agency networks, consortia and corporate travel professionals.

Organisers believe this approach will create significant opportunities for market expansion, partnership development and long-term business growth.

The event will also provide international destinations and suppliers with direct access to one of the world's most lucrative travel markets, supported by more than 9.3 million monthly outbound departures from the United States.

### Miami Reinforces Its Position as a Global Tourism Gateway

WTE Miami 2026 is being delivered in collaboration with Miami



**DEVENDER GROVER**

We are on



# Asego Launches Innovative Visa Rejection Protection for Overseas Travellers

*Asego Introduces Visa Rejection Protection as Indian Travellers Face Growing Global Visa Uncertainty - New coverage aims to shield travellers from financial losses arising from visa denials amid stricter immigration policies, longer processing timelines and rising rejection rates*

As visa regulations become increasingly complex and geopolitical tensions reshape international travel patterns, Indian travellers are facing heightened uncertainty when planning overseas trips. Responding to these challenges, Asego has launched a Visa Rejection Protection product designed to provide financial protection against non-refundable travel expenses in the event of an unexpected visa refusal, offering travellers greater confidence when booking international journeys.

With global travel rebounding strongly and international mobility becoming increasingly important for leisure, business and educational purposes, visa-related challenges are emerging as a growing concern for Indian travellers. In response to this evolving landscape, travel assistance and insurance specialist Asego has introduced a new Visa Rejection Protection product aimed at mitigating the financial risks associated with visa denials.

The launch comes at a time when travellers are navigating a more complex global visa environment marked by heightened geopolitical tensions, evolving immigration policies, increased scrutiny of applications and prolonged processing timelines across several key destinations.

According to industry data, more than 165,000 Schengen visa applications submitted by Indian travellers were rejected in 2024 alone, resulting in estimated losses of nearly ₹136 crore in non-refundable visa fees and associated travel expenses. The figures highlight a growing challenge for outbound travellers who often commit substantial amounts toward flights, accommodation and prepaid experiences well before receiving visa approval.

As international travel demand continues to rise, many travellers are finding themselves exposed to significant financial risks due to uncertainties surrounding visa issuance. Appointment shortages at consulates, changing

documentation requirements and stricter verification procedures have further added to traveller concerns, particularly for destinations across Europe, North America and other high-demand markets.

Recognising these challenges, Asego's newly launched Visa Rejection Protection product is designed to provide a financial safety net for travellers whose visa applications are unexpectedly denied.

The protection plan offers coverage of up to USD 500 for losses incurred on non-refundable flight tickets, hotel reservations and prepaid travel activities. By reimbursing eligible expenses, the solution seeks to reduce the financial burden often associated with unsuccessful visa applications and enable travellers to plan their trips with greater confidence.

Commenting on the launch, Dev Karvat, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Asego, said the product addresses a critical gap in travel risk management at a time when visa uncertainties have become a significant factor influencing international travel decisions.

"Travellers commit significant amounts towards booking their trips in advance, which exposes them to considerable financial risk. With this solution, we can address the growing concern of visa rejections and provide travellers with an added protection layer that allows them to plan their journeys with greater confidence and peace of mind," Karvat said.

Industry observers note that the introduction of visa rejection coverage reflects a broader shift in the travel insurance and assistance sector, where providers are increasingly developing specialised products to address emerging traveller concerns beyond traditional medical and trip cancellation coverage.

The growing popularity of international travel among Indian consumers has created demand for more comprehensive risk-management solutions, particularly as outbound tourism continues to expand into new destinations and travel segments. With millions of Indians travelling overseas



*Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO - ASEGO*

annually for leisure, business, education and family visits, financial protection products linked to visa outcomes are likely to gain increasing relevance.

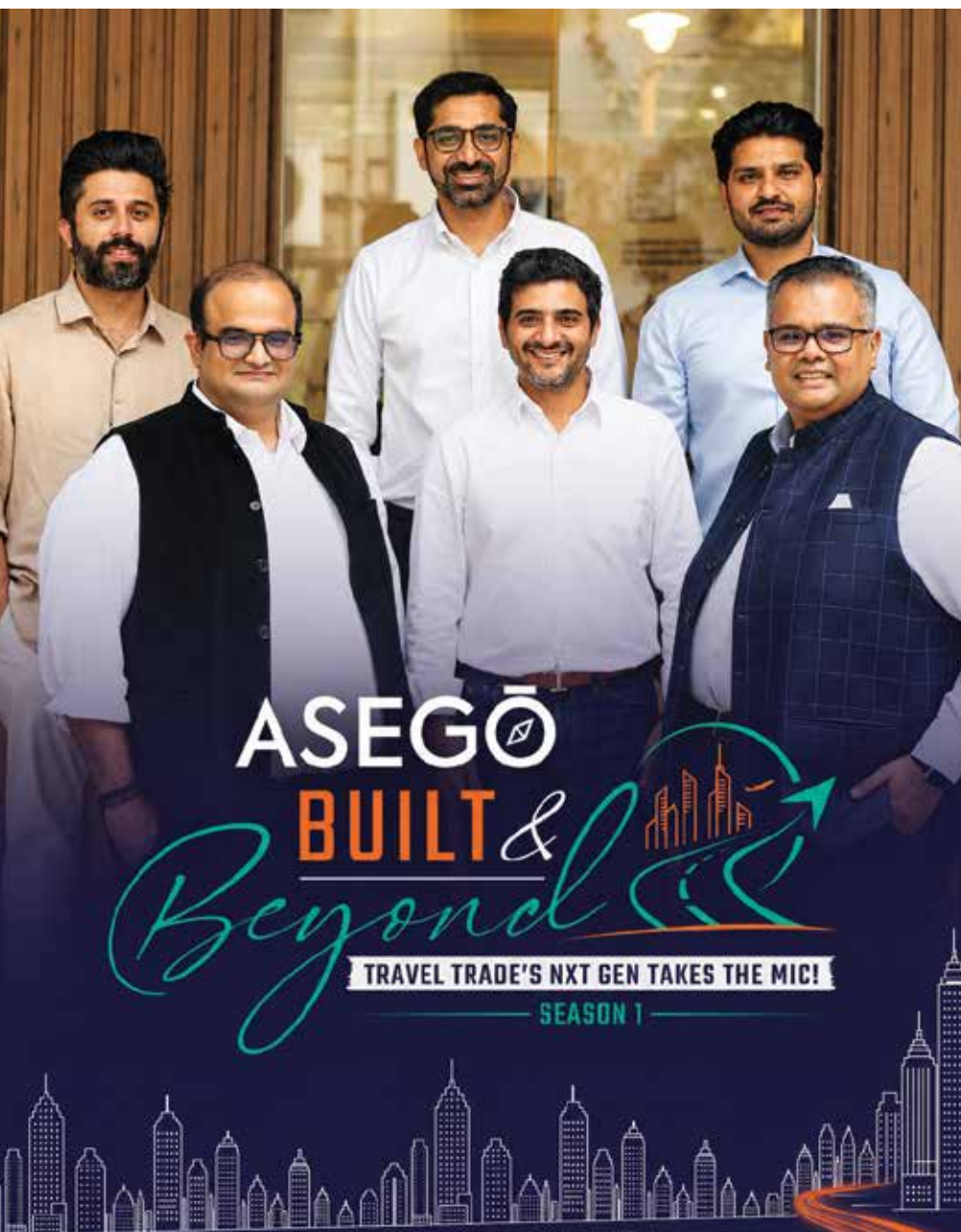
The move also comes as travel companies and insurance providers seek to enhance traveller confidence amid ongoing geopolitical developments that continue to influence global mobility patterns. Rising operational costs, evolving immigration frameworks and heightened border controls have collectively increased uncertainty across several international markets.

For the broader travel ecosystem, solutions such as Visa Rejection Protection represent an important step toward addressing traveller concerns while supporting the continued growth of outbound tourism. By reducing the financial impact of unforeseen visa refusals, such products can encourage travellers to proceed with advance bookings and travel planning despite an increasingly unpredictable visa environment.

As international travel demand remains robust, the industry is expected to witness further innovation in traveller protection products, helping consumers navigate an increasingly complex global travel landscape with greater security and confidence.

# ASEGO Launches 'Built & Beyond' to Unite the Next Generation of India's Travel Industry Leaders

*Inaugural conversation series creates a platform for collaboration, innovation and leadership among successors to India's leading travel enterprises*



**M**umbai: ASEGO has successfully launched the inaugural edition of **Built & Beyond**, a first-of-its-kind leadership conversation series designed to bring together the next generation of entrepreneurs steering some of India's most established travel companies and family-owned travel businesses.

Hosted on 10 June 2026 at the company's headquarters in Mumbai, the event brought together emerging industry leaders, travel trade media, tourism professionals and key stakeholders for an evening of insightful discussions centred on leadership, innovation, succession planning and the future of India's travel ecosystem.

Positioned as more than a networking event, Built & Beyond aims to become a long-term platform that encourages dialogue among the industry's future decision-makers, fostering collaboration across diverse travel segments while capturing the perspectives shaping tomorrow's travel landscape.

## **A forum for meaningful industry conversations**

The programme commenced with an exclusive **roundtable discussion over high tea**, creating an informal environment where invited delegates openly exchanged ideas on the rapidly evolving travel industry.

Conversations focused on a range of issues transforming the sector, including entrepreneurship, technology adoption, changing consumer expectations, evolving business models and the challenges of balancing legacy with innovation in family-led enterprises.

By bringing together representatives from different sectors of the travel

business, ASEGO sought to encourage cross-industry learning and strengthen relationships among emerging leaders who will play a critical role in shaping the industry's future.

### Next-generation leaders share their vision

The highlight of the evening was the recording of the first episode of **Built & Beyond**, moderated by **Dev Karvat**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of ASEGO.

Karvat led an engaging discussion featuring five young travel entrepreneurs representing some of India's best-known travel brands:

- **Neil Patil** – Veena World
- **Adil Karim** – FlyCreative Group
- **Suprabh Oza** – My Travel Bazaar
- **Kulin Shah** – Kulin Kumar Holidays
- **Anosh Kanga** – Ahura Travels & Ahura Explorience

Ahura Explorience

Drawing from their individual business experiences, the panellists discussed the opportunities and responsibilities associated with leading legacy organisations while adapting to an increasingly digital, customer-centric and competitive marketplace.

The conversation reflected the diversity of India's travel industry, with each participant representing a distinct business model and market segment, yet sharing common aspirations for innovation, collaboration and sustainable growth.

### Leadership insights from investment perspective

Complementing the panel discussion was a keynote session by **Bhavya Kapoor**, Managing Director of **Xponentia Capital Partners**, who addressed delegates on the thought-provoking theme:

#### **“Build To Sell vs Build To Last.”**

The session explored differing approaches to entrepreneurship, business scalability, long-term value creation and succession planning, offering participants valuable insights into strategic decision-making for growing travel enterprises.

The keynote added an investment and business strategy perspective to

*Positioned as more than a networking event, Built & Beyond aims to become a long-term platform that encourages dialogue among the industry's future decision-makers, fostering collaboration across diverse travel segments while capturing the perspectives shaping tomorrow's travel landscape.*

the broader discussions, encouraging delegates to consider how future travel businesses can balance expansion, profitability and enduring brand value.

### Exploring the future of the travel industry

Throughout the evening, participants engaged in discussions on several issues expected to define the next phase of growth for India's travel sector.

Among the key themes explored were:

- Building stronger collaboration across different travel industry segments
- Encouraging peer-to-peer learning among emerging entrepreneurs
- Preserving legacy while embracing innovation
- Accelerating digital transformation and technology adoption
- Responding to evolving traveller expectations and consumer behaviour
- Leadership development, entrepreneurship and succession planning
- Creating a stronger collective voice for the future of the travel industry

A recurring message throughout the discussions was that the industry's long-term success will increasingly depend on collaboration rather than competition, with next-generation leaders working together to address shared challenges and unlock new opportunities.

### Creating a lasting platform for industry engagement

Rather than serving as a standalone event, Built & Beyond has been

conceived as an ongoing initiative that documents the ideas, experiences and leadership journeys of the next generation of travel entrepreneurs.

ASEGO aims to use the platform to facilitate continuous dialogue across the travel ecosystem while providing valuable insights for future industry leaders navigating an increasingly dynamic business environment.

By bringing together successors from established travel companies, the initiative seeks to strengthen industry relationships, encourage innovation and contribute to a more connected and collaborative travel trade.

### First episode to premiere this month

The inaugural episode of **Built & Beyond** will be released across ASEGO's digital platforms later this month.

The programme will feature extended conversations, personal leadership experiences, entrepreneurial insights and forward-looking discussions from the participating delegates, providing the wider travel community with an opportunity to engage with the perspectives of the industry's emerging leaders.

As India's travel and tourism sector continues to evolve through digital transformation, changing traveller expectations and new business models, initiatives such as Built & Beyond are expected to play an increasingly important role in encouraging knowledge sharing, nurturing leadership and fostering collaboration among those who will shape the industry's future.

## Shaping the Future of Travel:

# Sandeep Dwivedi on Digital Transformation, Innovation and the New Age Traveller



The travel and tourism industry is undergoing a profound transformation as technology, changing consumer expectations and evolving business models redefine the way people explore the world. From personalised travel experiences and artificial intelligence to seamless connectivity and data-driven decision-

making, innovation is becoming the cornerstone of growth across the travel ecosystem.

In this exclusive conversation, **Devender Grover, Editor-in-Chief, Travel Span**, speaks with **Mr. Sandeep Dwivedi, Managing Director, Amadeus South Asia**, about the technological advancements

shaping the future of travel, the evolving needs of travellers, and the opportunities emerging across one of the world's most dynamic tourism markets. Drawing on his extensive industry experience, Dwivedi shares valuable insights into digital transformation, customer experience enhancement, sustainability initiatives and the role of technology in helping travel businesses navigate a rapidly changing landscape while unlocking new avenues for growth.

**Q India is emerging as one of the world's most dynamic travel markets. How is Amadeus India positioning itself to support the next phase of growth across aviation, hospitality and digital travel ecosystems?**

The Indian Travel and Tourism market is at the center of one of the most significant transformations happening in global travel today. India's annual air passenger traffic is projected to exceed 500 million by 2030 under current aviation growth trajectories (The Economic Times). The Indian travel & tourism market is expected to reach **USD 39.6 Billion** by 2034, exhibiting a growth rate **(CAGR) of 5.62%** during the period 2026-2034 (IMARC Group). The market is expanding due to rising domestic travel, government initiatives and increased inbound tourism. Moreover, strengthened infrastructure, digital advancements and evolving traveller preferences are also shaping the industry's future. At Amadeus, we are focused on enabling this growth through intelligent, connected and future-ready technology ecosystems.

The next phase of travel growth in India will not be driven by infrastructure alone, it will be powered by AI, cloud technology and seamless digital experiences. Today's travellers expect hyper-personalised journeys, frictionless payments, real-time servicing and integrated mobility experiences across every touchpoint. Today, majority of travel bookings globally are digitally influenced and traveller increasingly expect hyper-personalised and frictionless journeys. This is where technology becomes a key enabler.

From advanced retailing and merchandising solutions to biometric-enabled journeys, cloud-native hospitality platforms and AI-driven traveller insights, Amadeus is helping industry partners move toward smarter and more efficient operations. At Amadeus, we see ourselves not just as a technology provider, but as a long-term transformation partner helping shape the future of travel.

**Q Global travel demand has rebounded strongly, but volatility remains a constant factor. What are the biggest opportunities and risks currently facing the travel technology industry?**

The global travel industry has shown remarkable resilience over the last few years, with demand rebounding strongly across both leisure and business travel. However, volatility continues to remain a defining reality whether driven by economic uncertainty, geopolitical developments, changing traveller behaviour or operational disruptions. For the travel technology industry, this creates both significant opportunities and important challenges.

One of the biggest opportunities lies in accelerating digital transformation across the travel ecosystem. Travellers today expect seamless, connected and highly personalised experiences across every touchpoint. For example, airlines can now bundle ancillaries, seating, baggage and experiences in a far more personalised way, creating new revenue streams while improving customer

experience. This is pushing airlines, airports, hotels and travel sellers to invest more aggressively in technology.

Another major opportunity is operational intelligence. Airlines and airports are increasingly leveraging predictive analytics to improve revenue management, optimise capacity, reduce disruptions and enhance traveller experiences. The global travel technology market size reached USD 11.3 Billion in 2025 and is projected to exceed **USD 18 billion** by 2034, exhibiting a growth rate (CAGR) of 5.75% (IMARC Group).

On the other hand, the legacy infrastructure continues to be a challenge for many travel businesses trying to modernise at scale. Rising customer expectations also means that businesses must innovate continuously while maintaining operational efficiency and profitability.

At Amadeus, we believe the future belongs to travel ecosystems that are intelligent, agile, connected and resilient, capable of adapting quickly to change while keeping the traveller experience at the center of innovation.

**Q Amadeus has a strong global innovation focus. Which emerging technologies from generative AI and cloud computing to automation and predictive intelligence do you believe will most profoundly influence travel over the next decade?**

Over the next decade, I believe the travel industry will be shaped by a convergence of technologies rather than one single innovation. The most profound impact will come from how AI, cloud computing, automation, predictive intelligence and connected ecosystems work together to create smarter, more seamless and highly personalised travel experiences.

Generative AI has the potential to redefine traveller engagement. We are already moving toward a world where travellers can interact conversationally with travel platforms to plan entire journeys from destination inspiration and itinerary building to real-time servicing during disruptions. The

experience will become far more intuitive, contextual and personalised.

Cloud technology will also play a foundational role in modernising industry. As travel businesses scale and become more interconnected, cloud-native platforms will provide the flexibility, speed and resilience required to support real-time operations, faster innovation and better collaboration across ecosystems.

Predictive intelligence will help airlines, airports and hotels anticipate demand, optimise pricing, manage capacity and improve operational efficiency. For example, AI-driven forecasting can help reduce congestion, improve disruption management and deliver more proactive customer service.

The goal is not just digital transformation, but creating travel experiences that are simpler, smarter, more sustainable and meaningful for traveller worldwide.

**Q Artificial Intelligence is reshaping customer experiences worldwide. How do you see AI transforming travel planning, personalisation, revenue management and operational efficiency over the next few years?**

Over the next few years, AI will move from being a support tool to becoming a core driver of decision-making, personalisation and operational agility across the entire travel ecosystem.

From a travelers' perspective, AI will make travel planning far more intuitive and personalised. Instead of browsing through hundreds of options, travellers will increasingly receive recommendations based on their preferences, past behaviour, budgets and even travel intent. For example, a family traveller may automatically receive child-friendly hotel suggestions and flexible flight options, while a business traveller could be offered faster airport transit, lounge access and preferred seating based on previous journeys.

In revenue management, AI is already transforming how airlines and hotels forecast demand and optimise

pricing. Dynamic pricing models can now adjust fares and room rates in real time based on seasonality, booking patterns, events and market demand. For instance, airlines can predict ancillary preferences and offer personalised upgrades, baggage options or meal selections that improve both customer experience and revenue generation.

Operationally, AI will help reduce friction across the journey. Chatbots and virtual assistants are already handling routine customer queries, while predictive analytics is helping airports manage passenger flow and reduce congestion. AI-driven disruption management can proactively suggest alternate flights or accommodation during delays, significantly improving traveller satisfaction.

Technology will not replace hospitality; it will empower industry to deliver faster and highly personalised experiences.

**Q Travel intelligence and data analytics have become critical business tools. How is Amadeus leveraging real-time data, predictive insights, and analytics to help industry stakeholders make faster and smarter decisions?**

In a rapidly evolving environment, the ability to access real-time insights and make faster, data-driven decisions is becoming a key competitive advantage for airlines, airports, hotels, destinations and travel sellers.

Real-time data is also playing a critical role in disruption management. During delays or operational disruptions, intelligent systems can proactively recommend alternate itineraries, automate rebooking processes and improve communication with travellers, significantly enhancing customer satisfaction.

Another important area is traveller personalisation. By analysing behavioural patterns and preferences, the industry can now deliver more relevant offers, dynamic merchandising and tailored experiences across the entire journey. As travel ecosystems

become more interconnected, data intelligence will increasingly shape the future of travel.

**Q The travel industry today demands seamless experiences across booking, payments, accommodation, mobility, and customer service. How is Amadeus enabling a truly integrated travel journey?**

Today's travellers no longer view their journey as separate touchpoints — they expect one connected, seamless experience from inspiration and booking to airport transit, accommodation, payments, mobility and post-trip engagement. At Amadeus, our focus is on enabling exactly that: a truly integrated travel ecosystem powered by intelligent technology and connected platforms.

We are helping the industry move away from fragmented systems towards a more unified and traveller-centric approach. Through cloud-based infrastructure, AI-driven personalisation and open technology platforms, we enable airlines, airports, hotels, mobility providers and travel sellers to work more collaboratively and efficiently.

Travellers today increasingly expect personalised booking experiences, frictionless payments, real-time updates, self-service capabilities and smoother airport journeys. Our technologies support this by connecting multiple stakeholders across the travel ecosystem, allowing data and services to flow seamlessly in real time.

In aviation, this includes dynamic retailing, biometric-enabled airport experiences, disruption management, and personalised ancillary offerings. In hospitality, we are helping hotels leverage guest data and automation to deliver more personalised stays and operational efficiency. We are also seeing growing convergence between travel and mobility, where integrated platforms can connect flights, accommodation, rail, rideshare and local experiences into a single journey experience.

**Q Looking ahead, what is your vision for Amadeus India's contribution to shaping the future of travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality — both within India and the South Asia marketplace?**

Travel and tourism in South Asia is booming in 2026, with the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) projecting the region's travel & tourism sector to grow at more than 6% annually, significantly outpacing the broader global economy. WTTC data highlights India's travel and tourism sector growing by over 7% year-on-year. The live entertainment and event tourism industry in South Asia is projected to hit all time high, largely spearheaded by rising middle-class aspirations, expanding aviation infrastructure, rapid digital adoption and a new generation of travellers seeking seamless, connected and experience-led journeys.

South Asia is expected to see some of the fastest growth in air travel globally over the next two decades, while digital travel bookings across the region continue to accelerate rapidly. This creates an enormous opportunity to modernize travel infrastructure through smarter retailing, personalised traveller engagement, biometric-enabled journeys and more efficient operational ecosystems. At the same time, sustainability and inclusivity will become increasingly important. Travel has the power to connect communities, create jobs and drive regional development at scale.

Amadeus' Hospitality business recently conducted research, Travel Dreams 2026, which included a survey of 1000 Indian travellers, and 15% of Indian people surveyed said that sustainability credentials are important when booking a hotel. This was higher than the global average of 10%, which included responses from the six other markets surveyed.

The future of travel will be driven by intelligent technology, data-led decision-making, AI-powered personalisation and seamless collaborations. Amadeus will act as the enabler for building a truly connected travel ecosystem across South Asia.

# IATA Criticises EU261 Reforms, Warns of Higher Airline Costs Without Solving Flight Delay Challenges

*Global airline association says revised European passenger rights regulations increase financial and operational pressure on carriers while failing to address underlying air traffic management inefficiencies.*

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has strongly criticised the European Union's revised **EU261 passenger rights framework**, warning that the latest reforms will increase costs for airlines without effectively addressing the primary causes of flight delays and operational disruptions across Europe.

Representing more than 300 airlines worldwide, IATA said the revised regulation misses a significant opportunity to modernise Europe's passenger rights system by introducing measures that could have improved operational efficiency, reduced disruption-related costs, and delivered better outcomes for both travellers and airlines.

EU261, the European Union's regulation governing passenger compensation and assistance in cases of flight delays, cancellations, and denied boarding, has been one of the most debated aviation policies in Europe for more than a decade. According to IATA, the regulation currently imposes an annual cost burden of approximately **EUR 8 billion on the airline industry**, yet has not succeeded in reducing the frequency of delays or improving overall system performance.

The association highlighted that a substantial proportion of delays originate from structural challenges within Europe's air traffic management network rather than airline operations. Citing data from Eurocontrol, IATA argued that addressing airspace

inefficiencies and improving air traffic management should be a priority for policymakers seeking long-term improvements in punctuality and passenger experience.

Under the revised EU261 rules, a non-exhaustive list of "extraordinary circumstances" has been introduced, clarifying situations in which airlines may be exempt from paying compensation. Airports will also be required to establish contingency accommodation plans to support passengers during major disruptions.

While IATA acknowledged these changes as a modest step toward recognising the shared responsibilities across the aviation ecosystem, it argued that the reforms do not go far enough to create a balanced framework.

The airline body had previously supported proposals from the European Commission that recommended increasing the delay thresholds before passenger compensation would apply, arguing that such changes would allow airlines greater flexibility to recover operations and minimise cancellations.

Willie Walsh, Director General of IATA, said the conclusion of more than 13 years of discussions had failed to deliver meaningful reform for either passengers or the aviation industry.

"After 13 years of discussion, the opportunity to improve Europe's competitiveness and the passenger experience by addressing the flaws of EU261 was lost. The result will



not reduce delays, but considering the whole package of changes, it will create operational challenges and add costs which will ultimately be borne by passengers. It is a reform in name only that does nothing to help disrupted passengers," he said.

Walsh further called for greater transparency to measure the impact of the new rules and urged European institutions to ensure that the implementation of the enforcement package does not add unnecessary regulatory burdens on the aviation sector.

He emphasised that Europe's forthcoming Aviation Strategy must prioritise comprehensive reforms of air traffic management systems, which IATA considers one of the fundamental causes of persistent delays affecting both airlines and passengers.

"Europe's imminent Aviation Strategy must address air traffic management deficiencies, which remain the root cause of many delays. The focus must be on practical, effective and consistent implementation rather than creating additional burdens for an industry already facing significant operational challenges," Walsh added.

The debate over EU261 reforms highlights the broader challenge facing the aviation industry: balancing strong passenger protection with an efficient and economically sustainable operating environment. As European air travel demand continues to grow, airlines and policymakers are expected to remain engaged in discussions aimed at improving network resilience, operational performance, and the overall passenger journey.

# Qatar Airways Group Posts QAR 7.08 Billion Profit Amid Global Uncertainty, Reinforcing Industry Leadership



*Strong Financial Performance, Record Cargo Volumes and Strategic Fleet Expansion Highlight Resilient 2025/26 Fiscal Year*

**Doha, Qatar:** Qatar Airways Group has reported a robust financial performance for the fiscal year 2025/26, posting a net profit of **QAR 7.08 billion (US\$1.94 billion)** despite navigating a challenging global economic environment and significant geopolitical disruptions during the final weeks of the reporting period.

The results underscore the resilience of one of the world’s leading aviation groups, reflecting strong operational performance, sustained passenger demand, record cargo activity and continued investment in fleet modernisation and digital innovation.

According to the Group’s latest annual report, the airline maintained its position among the global aviation industry’s top performers, supported by disciplined financial management,

a diversified business portfolio and the strategic advantages of its hub operations at **Hamad International Airport**.

### Passenger Demand Remains Strong

During the financial year, Qatar Airways carried more than **41.8 million passengers**, strengthening its role as a key global connector linking Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas.

The carrier continued to leverage Doha’s geographic position and the efficiency of Hamad International Airport to support seamless international transit traffic, while maintaining a broad network that connected travellers to hundreds of destinations worldwide through its extensive partnership ecosystem.

Despite geopolitical instability affecting parts of the region, the airline successfully sustained operations and continued delivering high levels of customer service and network connectivity.

### Cargo Division Retains Global Leadership

A standout performer during the

year was **Qatar Airways Cargo**, which further strengthened its position as the world’s largest international air freight carrier.

The cargo division transported more than **1.43 million tonnes of chargeable freight**, capturing approximately **12 per cent of global market share** and reinforcing its critical role in international trade and supply chain connectivity.

The strong cargo performance reflects sustained demand for air freight services across sectors including e-commerce, pharmaceuticals, perishables, industrial goods and high-value shipments.

As global supply chains continue to evolve, Qatar Airways Cargo remains a key player in facilitating international commerce through its extensive global network and specialised logistics capabilities.

### Operational Excellence Drives Competitive Advantage

Qatar Airways also maintained industry-leading operational standards throughout the fiscal year.

The airline achieved an impressive **86 per cent on-time performance**,

placing it among the five most punctual airlines worldwide and earning the prestigious **Cirium Platinum Award for Operational Excellence**, one of the aviation industry's most respected operational benchmarks.

The recognition highlights the carrier's ability to deliver reliable service despite operational complexities, fluctuating demand patterns and regional geopolitical challenges.

### Leadership Highlights Organisational Strength

Commenting on the results, Hamad Al-Khater said the financial year tested the organisation's ability both to capitalise on growth opportunities and to respond effectively to extraordinary operational challenges.

He noted that the Group's performance reflected strength across all key areas, including financial stability, operational excellence, strategic partnerships and workforce commitment.

Al-Khater also paid tribute to the organisation's approximately 57,800 employees working across more than 90 countries, highlighting their role in maintaining operational continuity and managing complex challenges during periods of heightened uncertainty.

He added that the Group is now actively rebuilding and expanding its global network, supported by what he described as the strongest balance sheet in its history and partnerships that demonstrated their value during difficult circumstances.

### Landmark Fleet Expansion Signals Long-Term Growth

One of the most significant developments of the year was Qatar Airways Group's commitment to future growth through a major fleet investment programme.

The airline signed landmark agreements with **Boeing** and **GE Aerospace** covering the acquisition and servicing of up to **210 aircraft and 400 engines**.

The agreements rank among

the largest fleet commitments in commercial aviation history and demonstrate the airline's confidence in long-term market growth and future passenger demand.

The investment is expected to enhance operational efficiency, expand network capabilities and support the carrier's sustainability objectives through the introduction of newer-generation aircraft technologies.

### Record Recognition for Service Excellence

The financial year also saw Qatar Airways achieve another milestone in passenger service excellence.

The airline was named **World's Best Airline 2025** by **Skytrax**, securing the prestigious title for a record ninth time.

The award further reinforces Qatar Airways' reputation for premium service, product innovation and customer satisfaction across both long-haul and regional operations.

### Expanding Digital Innovation Through Starlink

Qatar Airways continued to strengthen its position as a technology leader by becoming the operator of the world's largest **Starlink-equipped widebody fleet**.

The airline has deployed high-speed satellite internet connectivity across its **Boeing 777, Airbus A350 and Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner** fleets, providing passengers with seamless and complimentary internet access on selected routes.

The initiative reflects growing demand for uninterrupted connectivity, particularly among business travellers and long-haul passengers.

### Hamad International Airport Continues Award-Winning Run

The Group's aviation ecosystem was further strengthened by continued recognition for Hamad International Airport.

The airport was named **Best Airport in the Middle East** by Skytrax for the **11th consecutive year**, reaffirming its status as one of

the world's leading aviation hubs.

In addition, **Qatar Duty Free** received the Skytrax award for **Best Airport Shopping** globally for the third consecutive year, highlighting ongoing investment in passenger experience, retail innovation and hospitality services.

### Network Expansion Continues

Looking ahead, Qatar Airways plans to continue rebuilding and expanding its global network, with services expected to reach **more than 160 destinations by summer 2026**.

The expansion strategy is designed to strengthen connectivity, support tourism and business travel, and provide passengers with greater access to the airline's award-winning services and extensive international network.

Supported by a strong financial foundation, industry-leading operational performance and continued investment in technology and fleet modernisation, Qatar Airways appears well positioned to navigate future challenges while pursuing long-term growth opportunities in an increasingly competitive global aviation market.

### A Resilient Performance in a Volatile Environment

The 2025/26 financial results demonstrate Qatar Airways Group's ability to maintain profitability and operational excellence despite a year marked by geopolitical uncertainty, economic volatility and industry-wide challenges.

With record cargo performance, continued passenger growth, major fleet investments and global recognition for service quality, the Group has reinforced its standing as one of the aviation industry's most resilient and strategically positioned players.

As international travel demand continues to strengthen, Qatar Airways enters the next phase of growth with renewed momentum and a clear focus on connectivity, innovation and long-term value creation.

# Philippine Airlines Joins oneworld Alliance, Expanding Global Connectivity and Elevating Travel Options for Southeast Asia



Philippine Airlines (PAL), the national carrier of the Philippines and one of Asia’s longest-serving airlines, has taken a major step in its international growth strategy by securing membership in the prestigious **oneworld Alliance**, becoming the alliance’s 16th member airline. The announcement was made during the **82nd International Air Transport Association (IATA) Annual General Meeting** in Rio de Janeiro, marking a significant milestone for both PAL and the wider Southeast Asian aviation market.

The move positions Philippine Airlines within one of the world’s leading global airline alliances, providing its passengers access to a vast network of nearly 1,000 destinations across more than 170 countries and territories. It also strengthens oneworld’s presence in Southeast Asia, a region experiencing sustained growth in both business and leisure travel.

For PAL, the development represents a transformative chapter in its 85-year history as it seeks to enhance international connectivity and

establish the Philippines as a stronger aviation gateway linking Asia-Pacific markets with North America, Europe, the Middle East and beyond.

### Strategic Boost for Philippine Aviation

The airline was invited to join the alliance by the oneworld Governing Board, comprising chief executives of all member airlines. Once the accession process is completed, PAL will become only the second full oneworld member based in Southeast Asia, alongside Malaysia Airlines, significantly



enhancing the alliance's footprint in the region.

Lucio C. Tan III, President and Chief Operating Officer of PAL Holdings Inc., described the alliance membership as a defining moment for both the airline and the region.

He said that joining oneworld would strengthen Southeast Asia's representation within the alliance while bringing the Philippines closer to global markets than ever before. He added that passengers would benefit from greater travel choices, seamless journeys and a premium experience reflecting the renowned warmth of Filipino hospitality.

The alliance's leadership also highlighted the strategic value of PAL's inclusion.

Robert Isom, Chief Executive Officer of American Airlines and Chairman of the oneworld Governing Board, said PAL's entry supports the alliance's long-term growth objectives and strengthens connectivity across key Asia-Pacific markets. He noted that the Philippine carrier's strong heritage and extensive regional network will play an important role in expanding oneworld's presence in Southeast Asia.

### Enhanced Benefits for International Travellers

For travellers, the alliance membership promises a more seamless global travel experience. Once fully integrated, PAL passengers will enjoy smoother connections across the alliance network, coordinated flight schedules and access to premium airport lounges worldwide.

Members of PAL's Mabuhay Miles loyalty programme will gain the ability to earn and redeem miles across all oneworld carriers, creating greater flexibility for frequent travellers. Eligible elite members will also receive access to oneworld Priority services, including premium check-in counters, fast-track airport services and entry to more than 700 airport lounges globally.

The alliance currently includes some of the world's most prominent airlines, including American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Qatar Airways, Qantas, Japan Airlines, Finnair and several other global carriers.

### Strengthening Southeast Asia's Role in Global Travel

Industry analysts view PAL's entry into the oneworld as a significant

development for tourism and aviation in the Philippines. The alliance membership is expected to improve international access to the country's growing tourism destinations while increasing inbound visitor flows through stronger connectivity and broader global visibility.

According to oneworld, Philippine Airlines will add dozens of destinations to the alliance network, including several domestic Philippine gateways that were previously unavailable through alliance partners. This will provide travellers with improved access to the country's renowned island destinations and emerging tourism markets.

The announcement also comes as PAL continues to modernise its fleet, expand long-haul operations and strengthen its position as a key connector between Southeast Asia and major international markets. Industry observers believe the alliance membership will further support the airline's ambitions to expand its global footprint while enhancing competitiveness against rival carriers aligned with Star Alliance and SkyTeam.

As international travel demand continues to rise across Asia-Pacific, PAL's entry into oneworld is expected to create new opportunities for tourism, trade and business travel while reinforcing the Philippines' role as an increasingly important hub in the global aviation network.

# Air Canada unveils first premium Air Canada Café at Québec City Airport

*New lounge blends Québec's cultural heritage, local flavours and modern amenities as Air Canada expands its premium airport experience network*

**A**ir Canada has expanded its premium airport hospitality portfolio with the opening of its newest **Air Canada Café at Québec City Jean Lesage International Airport (YQB)**, marking the airport's first dedicated premium lounge experience and the seventh location under the airline's growing Air Canada Café concept.

Developed in partnership with **Plaza Premium Group**, the new 3,616-square-foot (336-square-metre) lounge has been designed to offer eligible travellers a refined and comfortable environment to relax, work and prepare for their journeys. The opening forms part of Air Canada's broader strategy to enhance premium travel experiences and modernise its global lounge network.

Inspired by the rich history, artistic identity and culinary traditions of Québec City, the 97-seat facility incorporates Air Canada's "Glowing Hearted" design philosophy, drawing from the region's natural landscapes and French heritage. The space showcases works by prominent Québec and Canadian artists, including Antonietta Grassi and Douglas Coupland, creating an atmosphere that reflects the character and creativity of the destination.

Jacqueline Harkness, Managing Director, Product and Services at Air Canada, said the new lounge captures the essence of Québec City while elevating the passenger journey.

"Travellers love Québec City for its food, charm and character. With this new Air Canada Café, we've created a space that feels like a love letter to the city — warm, calm, and inspired by its

rich and unique character. Québec City is one of Canada's great treasures, and we're proud to bring a little taste of its magic into the travel experience," she said.

A key highlight of the new Air Canada Café is its self-service culinary experience, featuring locally sourced ingredients and collaborations with Québec-based and Indigenous partners. Guests can enjoy regional specialties such as breakfast pancakes served with maple butter, fleur de sel and Sigewigum pumpkin seed spread sourced from the Mi'gmaq Nation of Gespeg Indigenous community. The menu also includes artisanal cheeses, locally produced jams, customisable power bowls and a selection of vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options.

The beverage programme showcases premium offerings including Lavazza coffee, handcrafted cocktails prepared using spirits from **la Distillerie du Fjord**, and locally brewed beers from **La Souche**.

The lounge has also been designed with the needs of modern travellers in mind, featuring productivity-focused work areas, power outlets at every seat and USB-C charging facilities for laptops, tablets and mobile devices.

Stéphane Poirier, President and Chief Executive Officer of Québec City Jean Lesage International Airport, said the addition strengthens the airport's commitment to providing a distinctive and welcoming passenger experience.

"The opening of the new Air Canada Café aligns perfectly with our ambition to deliver an increasingly modern and attractive airport experience. We are proud to collaborate with Air Canada and Plaza Premium



Group in introducing this unique and highly valued lounge concept to our travellers," he said.

Eric Pateman, Senior Vice President, North America at Plaza Premium Group, added that the new facility represents a continued commitment between the partners to redefine airport hospitality through innovation and premium service.

Access to the Air Canada Café is available to eligible domestic travellers, including Aeroplan Elite members with 50K status and above, Star Alliance Gold members, Aeroplan premium co-branded credit card holders and Business Class passengers travelling on Air Canada and Star Alliance flights departing from Québec City.

The launch further reinforces Air Canada's investment in premium airport infrastructure. The airline added more than 500 lounge seats worldwide over the past year and has recently expanded its lounge portfolio with new and upgraded facilities, including a new Air Canada Café and a renovated Maple Leaf Lounge at Montréal-Trudeau Airport.

By combining local culture, elevated gastronomy and traveller-focused amenities, the new Air Canada Café at Québec City Airport represents another step in the evolution of airport lounges from simple waiting spaces into immersive destination-inspired experiences.

# Riyadh Air Joins IATA as It Accelerates Global Expansion and Strengthens Sustainability Commitment



*Saudi Arabia's newest national carrier expands its international footprint with new routes, Boeing 787 operations, and adoption of IATA's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions transparency programme.*

Riyadh Air has reached a significant milestone in its journey towards becoming a major global airline by joining the International Air Transport Association (IATA), reinforcing its commitment to global aviation standards, operational excellence, and sustainable growth as it begins commercial operations.

The announcement comes shortly after the Saudi Arabian government-backed carrier launched its inaugural commercial services, commencing daily operations between Riyadh and key destinations including London Heathrow and Jeddah. The airline has also strengthened its fleet with the induction of three Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft, forming the foundation of its long-haul international network.

Riyadh Air's membership in IATA was formally announced during the **82nd IATA World Air Transport Summit in Rio de Janeiro**, placing the airline among a global network of more than 360 member carriers representing the vast majority of international air traffic. Membership provides access to globally recognised industry standards, operational frameworks, safety initiatives, training programmes, and collaborative platforms that support continuous improvement across the aviation sector.

As part of its commitment to greater environmental responsibility and transparency, Riyadh Air has also adopted IATA's **CO<sub>2</sub> Connect programme**, a data-driven platform that provides accurate flight emissions information based on actual fuel burn and airline-specific operational data. The initiative enables passengers and corporate travel buyers to access more reliable carbon emissions information, supporting more informed and sustainable travel decisions.

The airline's growth strategy includes a rapid expansion of its international network, with new services planned to major global destinations including Cairo, Dubai, Madrid, and Manchester. Riyadh Air aims to connect Saudi Arabia with more than **100 international destinations by 2030**, supported by continued fleet expansion and the Kingdom's broader vision to establish itself as a leading global aviation hub.

Tony Douglas, Chief Executive Officer of Riyadh Air, described the IATA membership as a landmark achievement for the airline and a reflection of the efforts undertaken to meet the highest international aviation standards.

"Becoming an IATA member is a tribute to the dedication and hard work of our teams to meet and surpass the highest industry standards. It gives Riyadh Air a place among global airline peers that have contributed to the development of the aviation industry since IATA's establishment in 1945," Douglas said.

Willie Walsh, Director General of IATA, welcomed the airline to the association and highlighted the importance of Riyadh Air's contribution to the future of global aviation.

"We are pleased to welcome Riyadh Air to IATA's airline membership and congratulate the airline on this important milestone. We look forward to its active participation in shaping industry priorities and supporting the continued growth of Saudi Arabia's aviation sector and global connectivity," Walsh said.

Riyadh Air's entry into IATA comes at a pivotal moment for Saudi Arabia's aviation industry, which is undergoing a major transformation under the Kingdom's broader economic diversification strategy. With a modern fleet, ambitious network expansion plans, advanced digital capabilities, and a strong focus on sustainability, the airline is positioning itself as a next-generation global carrier connecting the Middle East with the world.

The combination of international route expansion, adherence to global aviation standards, and adoption of advanced emissions reporting tools reflects Riyadh Air's ambition to build a modern, efficient, and environmentally responsible airline for the future of global air travel.

# Qatar Airways Expands Dubai Operations to Five Daily Flights as Regional Travel Demand Accelerates

*Enhanced Doha–Dubai Schedule Strengthens Gulf Connectivity and Supports Growing Business and Leisure Traffic*



**Q**atar Airways has announced a significant increase in capacity between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, expanding its services between **Hamad International Airport** and **Dubai International Airport** from two to five daily flights in response to growing demand across one of the Gulf region's busiest air travel corridors.

The expansion, which began on **5 June 2026**, forms part of the airline's broader strategy to strengthen regional connectivity and accommodate rising passenger demand from both business and leisure travellers moving between Qatar and the UAE.

According to the airline, the increase in frequencies is being introduced in phases. Services rose from two to three daily flights on 5 June, while a fourth daily frequency is scheduled to commence on 15 June. A fifth daily service will be reinstated during the summer season, bringing total capacity on the route to as many as **35 weekly flights**.

The additional services will be operated using Qatar Airways' widebody

fleet, including the **Boeing 777** and **Airbus A350**, providing passengers with increased seat availability and greater flexibility when travelling between the two Gulf hubs.

## Responding to Strong Regional Demand

The enhanced schedule reflects the continued recovery and expansion of travel demand across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, where strong economic activity, tourism growth and increasing cross-border business travel are driving higher passenger volumes.

The Doha–Dubai route is one of the region's most strategically important air links, connecting two major commercial, financial and tourism centres. Increased frequencies are expected to benefit corporate travellers, transit passengers and holidaymakers seeking more convenient travel options and seamless onward connections.

The move also reinforces Qatar Airways' position as a leading regional and global connector, leveraging Doha's role as a major international aviation

hub linking the Middle East with Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas.

## Part of Wider UAE Network Expansion

The Dubai frequency increase follows a broader restoration of Qatar Airways' network across the United Arab Emirates and the wider Middle East.

Earlier this year, the airline resumed operations to **Dubai** and **Sharjah** in April, followed by the relaunch of services to **Abu Dhabi** in May.

These developments have strengthened Qatar Airways' footprint in the UAE market and enhanced travel options for passengers seeking connections through Doha to destinations across its global network.

The carrier currently serves more than 20 destinations across the Middle East and continues to rebuild and expand services throughout the region as travel demand strengthens.

## Supporting Tourism and Business Travel Growth

Industry observers view the

expanded Dubai schedule as a positive development for regional tourism and commerce.

The UAE and Qatar continue to experience robust growth in both inbound and outbound travel, supported by major tourism investments, international events, expanding hospitality infrastructure and increased corporate activity.

Additional flight frequencies are expected to facilitate easier movement of visitors between the two destinations while also supporting trade, investment and business collaboration across the Gulf region.

For leisure travellers, the increased schedule offers greater flexibility for short breaks, shopping trips, family

visits and multi-destination itineraries, while business travellers benefit from more convenient departure options throughout the day.

### Strengthening Global Connectivity

The additional Dubai flights also support Qatar Airways' ongoing expansion plans as the airline moves toward serving more than 160 destinations globally by the summer season.

By increasing capacity on key regional routes, the airline is enhancing its ability to channel passengers through Doha and provide seamless onward connectivity to destinations across Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Americas.

The strategy aligns with broader trends in global aviation, where airlines are investing in high-demand regional markets while simultaneously strengthening long-haul international networks.

With five daily flights scheduled between Doha and Dubai, Qatar Airways is reinforcing one of the Middle East's most important aviation links while positioning itself to capture growing demand across both regional and international travel markets.

The expansion highlights the airline's continued confidence in the Gulf travel sector and its commitment to providing passengers with greater connectivity, flexibility and access to its expanding global network.

## Japan Raises Visa Fees Fivefold in First Revision Since 1978

*Japan is set to raise visa fees for foreign travellers from July 1, with the cost of a single-entry visa increasing fivefold from JPY 3,000 (USD 19) to JPY 15,000 (USD 94) in the country's first revision of visa charges since 1978.*

**S**ingle-entry visa fee to rise to **JPY 15,000 from July 1** as Tokyo updates immigration charges amid record inbound tourism

Travellers planning a visit to Japan from **July 1** will face significantly higher visa costs after the Japanese government approved its first revision of visa fees in nearly five decades. The move marks the country's first increase since **1978**, with authorities citing inflation and exchange rate fluctuations as the primary reasons for the hike.

Under the revised fee structure, the cost of a **single-entry visa** will increase fivefold from **JPY 3,000 (approximately USD 19)** to **JPY 15,000 (approximately USD 94)**. The fee for a **multiple-entry visa** will also rise sharply, from **JPY 6,000 to**

**JPY 30,000.**

Japanese officials maintain that the higher charges are unlikely to deter international visitors, particularly as the country continues to enjoy record tourism growth. Japan welcomed **42.7 million overseas visitors in 2025**, the highest annual total on record, supported by the continued weakness of the yen, which has made the destination increasingly attractive for international travellers.

The visa fee revision forms part of a broader overhaul of Japan's immigration-related charges. Legislation passed earlier this year raises the maximum statutory fee for permanent residency applications from **JPY 10,000 to JPY 300,000**, while the upper limit for changing residency status or extending a stay

will increase from **JPY 10,000 to JPY 100,000.**

According to the Japanese government, the revised fee structure is intended to align the country's visa and immigration charges more closely with those of other **G7 economies**. By comparison, non-immigrant visa application fees in the **United States** range from **USD 185 to USD 315**, while the **United Kingdom** charges approximately **USD 180** for a standard six-month visitor visa.

For the travel industry, the increase is expected to have only a limited impact on demand, particularly among leisure and business travellers who continue to view Japan as one of Asia's most compelling destinations. While tour operators may need to adjust package pricing to reflect the higher visa costs, Japan's rich cultural heritage, world-class hospitality, renowned cuisine and favourable exchange rates are expected to sustain strong inbound travel in the years ahead.

# Air India Launches Non-Stop Mumbai–Tokyo Haneda Flights, Strengthening India–Japan Connectivity

*Four-times-weekly Boeing 787-8 service offers faster access to central Tokyo and seamless onward connections across Japan.*

**A**ir India has further expanded its international network with the launch of a new non-stop service between Mumbai and Tokyo's Haneda Airport, offering travellers a more convenient and time-efficient gateway to the Japanese capital. The inaugural flight operated on **15 June 2026**, making Mumbai the second Indian city after Delhi to enjoy direct connectivity to Haneda, one of Tokyo's most centrally located airports.

The new route operates **four times a week** using Air India's **Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner**, providing improved travel convenience by eliminating layovers and reducing overall journey times for passengers travelling between India's financial capital and Japan.

Under the current schedule, **Flight AI 356** departs Mumbai at **16:50 hours** and arrives at Tokyo Haneda at **04:55 hours** the following day on **Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays**. The return service, **Flight AI 355**, departs Haneda at **08:50 hours** and arrives in Mumbai at **14:20 hours** on **Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays**.

The launch marks a significant enhancement in India–Japan aviation connectivity. While Mumbai was previously connected to Tokyo through Narita International Airport, the introduction of Haneda services offers passengers easier and quicker access to the city's major commercial districts, cultural landmarks and tourist attractions.



## Haneda's Strategic Advantage for Travellers

Located approximately **15 kilometres from central Tokyo**, Haneda Airport is widely regarded as the more convenient of Tokyo's two major international gateways. The airport provides faster access to prominent areas including **Shibuya, Shinjuku and Tokyo Station**, making it particularly attractive for both business and leisure travellers.

In comparison, Narita International Airport is situated around **50–60 kilometres from central Tokyo**, often requiring longer rail or road transfers to reach the city centre.

## Expanded Connectivity Across Japan

The new service also enhances travel opportunities beyond Tokyo. Through Air India's codeshare partnership with fellow Star Alliance member **All Nippon Airways (ANA)**, passengers arriving at Haneda can seamlessly connect to several domestic destinations across Japan,

including **Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Nagoya, Okinawa, Osaka and Sapporo**.

The expanded connectivity is expected to benefit a wide range of travellers, including corporate passengers, tourists, students and those visiting friends and family, while further strengthening economic, cultural and tourism ties between India and Japan.

Air India has introduced competitive introductory fares for the route, with economy-class return tickets starting from approximately **₹57,700**, while regular one-way economy fares begin at **₹38,438** and return fares from **₹63,075**. Business-class return fares are priced at around **₹2 lakh**, offering premium travellers enhanced comfort on the long-haul journey.

The addition of Mumbai–Haneda flights reflects Air India's broader strategy to strengthen its global network, improve direct international connectivity and offer Indian travellers greater access to key business and tourism destinations worldwide.

# ITB Berlin 2027 launches new campaign: Travel & Tourism in Motion



*The World's Leading Travel Trade Show will take place in Berlin from 16 to 18 March 2027. With its new campaign it focuses on the developments shaping global tourism, i.e. changing travel habits, innovative mobility solutions and new technological, economic and social conditions. It shows how markets, destinations and business models are constantly evolving, creating new prospects for tomorrow's world of travel.*

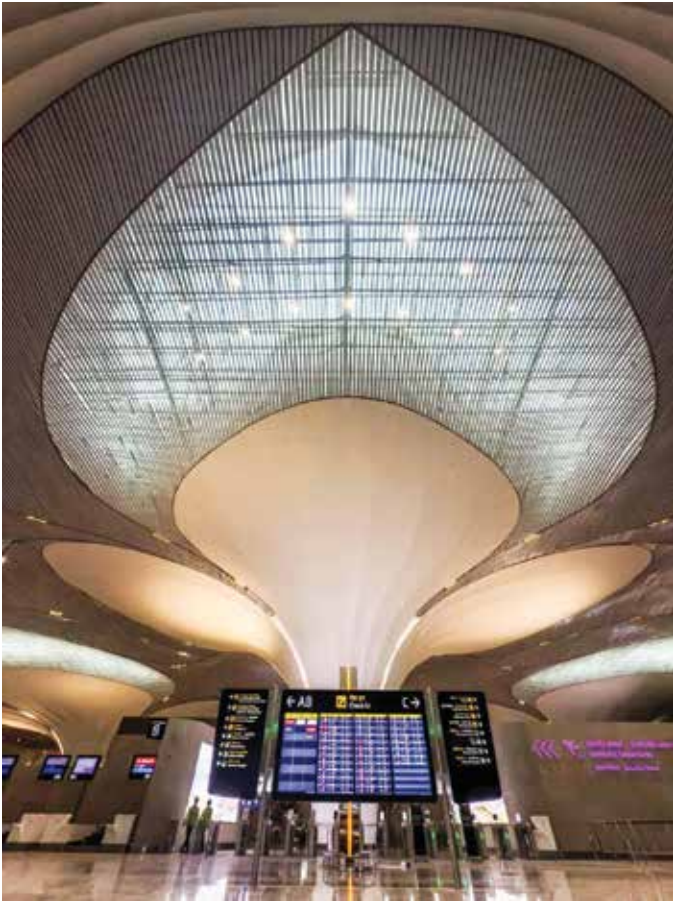
ITB Berlin is promoting the 2027 event under the slogan 'Travel & Tourism in Motion'. Together with Rupp, an international PR and communications agency, it is launching a campaign that portrays tourism as an industry constantly in motion. Both the visual and content design address current changes and highlight how diverse and dynamic the international tourism industry is becoming.

The focus is on ITB Berlin as a platform for dialogue, orientation and business. This is where decision-makers, companies and destinations come together, discuss new

developments and gain inspiration for future strategies. The slogan embodies what makes this industry unique: an ability to constantly reinvent itself and respond to global change.

*"Tourism is much more than just travel. It is a driver of economic development, innovation and international networking. The industry is always in motion, and it is precisely this dynamism that ITB Berlin brings to the fore. It is where key players come together to forge new ideas, analyse global trends and help shape the future of travel,"* said **Deborah Rothe, Director of ITB Berlin.**

A central element of the campaign is the new key visual, which brings the dynamic nature of global tourism to life. Created at ITB Berlin 2026 with actual exhibitors and visitors, it showcases a representative cross-section of the international tourism community. The motif represents the diversity of people, ideas and perspectives that come together at ITB Berlin, bringing the trade show to life as a place for global dialogue. Each exhibition segment of ITB Berlin will also receive its own key visual, with the tagline 'in Motion' added to each one.



Navi Mumbai International Airport



Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport

## From Lotus Blossoms to Bamboo Forests: World's Most Beautiful Airports of 2026 Redefine the Future of Travel

*Prix Versailles recognises seven extraordinary airport projects where design, sustainability and cultural identity redefine the modern passenger experience.*

The world's airports are increasingly becoming much more than transportation hubs, evolving into architectural landmarks that reflect the culture, identity and aspirations of their regions. Recognising this transformation, the prestigious **Prix Versailles** has unveiled its **2026 World's Most Beautiful Airports List**, celebrating seven airport terminals that combine innovative architecture, sustainability and enhanced passenger experiences.

Announced in Paris on 15 June 2026, the annual international architecture awards selected outstanding



Navi Mumbai International Airport



Frankfurt Airport



Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport

Pittsburgh International Airport



airport projects across **India, China, Germany, Cambodia and the United States**, highlighting how modern aviation infrastructure is being reimagined as destinations in their own right rather than merely points of transit.

Among the standout entries are two remarkable Indian terminals: the **bamboo-inspired Sky Forest terminal at Donyi Polo Airport in Arunachal Pradesh**, which draws inspiration from the natural landscapes and indigenous traditions of Northeast India, and the spectacular **lotus-inspired Terminal 2 at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai**, whose design reflects the elegance of India's national flower and contemporary architectural ambition.

The global list also includes China's

expansive **Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport Terminal 3**, inspired by the form of a flower; Germany's impressive **Frankfurt Airport expansion**, designed as a large-scale aviation hub resembling a modern airport city; Cambodia's distinctive terminal featuring a dramatic canopy of towering tree-like structures that blend architecture with tropical surroundings; as well as innovative airport developments in the United States, including **Pittsburgh International Airport's mountain-inspired terminal** and **San Diego International Airport's glass-fronted waterfront gateway**.

Three of the seven selected projects will later compete for additional Prix Versailles distinctions recognising excellence in architectural design, interior design and exterior design.

According to the Prix Versailles jury, the selected airports demonstrate a growing global trend where aviation infrastructure is balancing operational efficiency and increasing passenger volumes with a stronger focus on cultural expression, environmental awareness and traveller wellbeing.

Jérôme Gouadain, Secretary General of Prix Versailles, noted that today's airports have become defining symbols of their regions and the era in which they are built.

He explained that contemporary airport architecture is responding to the challenge of accommodating growing demand for air travel while creating spaces that respect travellers' time, provide meaningful experiences and move beyond the traditional concept of airports as simple transit facilities.

Gouadain added that airports leave a significant physical and cultural footprint on society, and through their architecture they have become symbols of economic progress, social exchange and cultural connectivity that will continue to influence future generations.

The recognition of these seven exceptional projects underlines a broader shift in global aviation, where airports are increasingly designed to inspire as much as they facilitate travel. From nature-inspired structures and culturally rooted designs to sustainable materials and immersive passenger spaces, the airports of 2026 represent a new era in which the journey begins long before travellers board their flights.

# Noida International Airport Opens New Gateway to Northern India's Aviation and Tourism Landscape

*India's newest greenfield airport in Jewar begins operations with domestic passenger and cargo services, strengthening connectivity across Uttar Pradesh and the National Capital Region*



**N**oida International Airport (NIA), located at Jewar in Uttar Pradesh, has commenced commercial operations, marking a significant milestone in India's rapidly expanding aviation infrastructure. Positioned near the Yamuna Expressway and strategically designed to serve the National Capital Region (NCR), the airport is expected to transform regional accessibility while creating faster connections to key tourism, business and industrial destinations across northern India.

The new airport begins its journey with a single terminal and one runway, capable of handling around 65 daily flights, including domestic, international and cargo operations. Developed in multiple phases, Noida International Airport is planned to evolve into one of India's largest aviation hubs by 2040, with six runways and an annual capacity of approximately 70 million passengers.

#### Enhanced Access to India's Heritage and Leisure Destinations

Located just 700 metres from the Yamuna Expressway, the airport significantly improves connectivity to some of northern India's most important cultural and spiritual destinations. The new gateway will reduce travel times to iconic cities such as Agra, home to the Taj Mahal, as well as Mathura and Vrindavan, two of India's most revered pilgrimage centres.

Beyond tourism, the airport is expected to strengthen access to major urban and economic centres including Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Gurugram, Meerut, Aligarh, Bulandshahr, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Haridwar and Rishikesh, supporting business travel and regional economic development.

#### Airlines and Initial Flight Network

IndiGo has become the launch carrier at Noida International Airport, operating the first commercial passenger services from the facility. The inaugural departure is scheduled as an IndiGo flight to Bengaluru, while

the first arrival service originates from Lucknow.

Alongside IndiGo, Akasa Air has also announced operations from the airport, connecting passengers to major domestic destinations such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Dehradun and Hubballi. Future expansion plans include international routes to key global destinations including Singapore, Dubai and Bangkok.

Meanwhile, Air India Express has reportedly postponed its planned launch operations from Noida International Airport, resulting in a more gradual airline rollout during the airport's initial operational phase.

#### Boost for Air Cargo and Logistics

In addition to passenger operations, Noida International Airport is poised to emerge as an important cargo gateway for northern India. The airport's first domestic cargo service is scheduled to commence shortly after passenger

operations, reinforcing its role in supporting regional supply chains, e-commerce distribution and industrial logistics.

The cargo infrastructure is expected to complement the growing manufacturing ecosystem along the Yamuna Expressway and surrounding industrial corridors, providing businesses with faster access to domestic and international markets.

#### Modern Infrastructure and Future Vision

Designed as a next-generation aviation hub, Noida International Airport represents a major step in India's broader vision to expand air connectivity and accommodate rising passenger demand. Its proximity to Delhi and key northern states is expected to ease pressure on existing airports while offering travellers a convenient alternative for domestic and international journeys.

As future phases are completed, the airport will expand its runway network, passenger facilities and commercial infrastructure, positioning itself as a major aviation, tourism and logistics gateway for India.

How to reach Noida International Airport

*Positioned near the Yamuna Expressway and strategically designed to serve the National Capital Region (NCR), the airport is expected to transform regional accessibility while creating faster connections to key tourism, business and industrial destinations across northern India.*

#### What cities is Noida Airport connected to?

- Mathura
- Vrindavan
- Noida
- Greater Noida
- Agra
- Meerut
- Aligarh
- Bulandshahr
- Farrukhabad
- Firozabad
- Garhmukteshwar
- Ghaziabad
- Hathras
- Khurja
- Muradabad
- Shikohabad
- Faridabad
- Gurgaon
- Kurukshetra
- Chandigarh
- Palwal
- Hisar
- Narnaul
- Panipat
- Ambala
- Dehradun
- Rishikesh
- Haridwar
- Haldwani

# Global Aviation Leaders Convene in Rio for IATA's 82nd AGM as Industry Charts Future Growth, Sustainability and Innovation



*The global aviation industry has turned its attention to Rio de Janeiro as more than 1,500 airline executives, government representatives, aviation stakeholders and media delegates gather for the 82nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the accompanying World Air Transport Summit (WATS), taking place from June 6-8, 2026. Hosted by LATAM Airlines Group, the event marks the return of IATA's flagship gathering to South America for the first time in 27 years.*

**T**he summit arrives at a pivotal moment for the aviation sector. Airlines worldwide are balancing robust passenger demand with mounting challenges that include decarbonisation targets, airspace disruptions linked to geopolitical conflicts, aircraft delivery delays, regulatory pressures and the rapid integration of artificial intelligence into airline operations.

The last IATA AGM held in South America took place in Rio de Janeiro in

1999, a landmark event that formally introduced the World Air Transport Summit format, which has since evolved into one of the industry's most influential forums for high-level debate and policy discussions.

Speaking ahead of the gathering, Willie Walsh, Director General of IATA, highlighted the growing strategic importance of aviation across the region.

“Over the past decades the entire region has made significant investments in aviation infrastructure, positioning the continent to benefit economically and socially from air connectivity,” Walsh said. He noted that Brazil's modernising aviation sector already contributes significantly to national economic development while offering substantial opportunities through tourism, exports and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production.

### **Brazil Emerges as a Regional Aviation Powerhouse**

The choice of Brazil as host nation reflects the country's growing stature in global aviation. According to IATA data, Brazil welcomed approximately nine million international visitors in 2025 and continues to strengthen its position as South America's largest aviation market. The country's aviation sector directly supports nearly 247,000 jobs and contributes more than USD 10 billion in economic output. When tourism, supply chains and related economic activity are included, aviation supports around 1.9 million jobs and contributes USD 46.4 billion, representing 2.1 per cent of national GDP.

Passenger traffic growth has remained particularly strong. Total demand in Brazil increased by 11.5 per cent in 2025, with domestic passenger numbers surpassing the 100-million mark for the first time. International traffic expanded by 17 per cent compared with the previous year and exceeded pre-pandemic levels by more than 20 percentage points.

According to Roberto Alvo, Chief Executive Officer of LATAM Airlines



Group, the event offers an opportunity to showcase how aviation is helping drive economic and social progress across Brazil and South America.

Alvo said the region's aviation industry has become an increasingly important catalyst for economic growth, connectivity and development, while emphasizing the need for continued collaboration to unlock even greater potential.

### **Sustainability, AI and Air Cargo Take Centre Stage**

The World Air Transport Summit will focus on several strategic priorities shaping the future of global aviation. Among the most closely watched discussions will be the industry's efforts to accelerate the production and adoption of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), which remains central to aviation's long-term decarbonisation strategy. Industry leaders are expected to examine how countries such as Brazil can leverage their significant biofuel resources to become major SAF producers.

Other key agenda items include strengthening airspace capacity amid increasing geopolitical tensions, addressing passenger rights and regulatory frameworks, enhancing resilience in airline operations, and exploring how artificial intelligence can

improve efficiency, customer experience and decision-making across the aviation ecosystem.

Air cargo is also expected to feature prominently in discussions as airlines navigate shifting global trade patterns, tariffs and supply chain disruptions. Industry leaders will assess cargo's evolving role in supporting international commerce and economic growth.

### **Industry Faces Complex Operating Environment**

While global travel demand remains strong, airline executives arrive in Rio amid growing concerns over rising fuel costs, aircraft delivery bottlenecks and airspace restrictions caused by geopolitical conflicts. These factors are increasing operational costs and creating uncertainty for carriers worldwide.

Against this backdrop, the 82nd IATA AGM is expected to provide a critical platform for collaboration and strategic planning as the industry seeks to balance growth ambitions with sustainability commitments and evolving passenger expectations.

As aviation enters a new phase of expansion, the conversations in Rio are likely to shape policy decisions, investment priorities and operational strategies across the global air transport sector for years to come.



# WTTC Unveils Eight Strategic Priorities to Drive the Future of Global Travel & Tourism

**N**ew Framework Focuses on Connectivity, Sustainability, Technology, Workforce Development and Investment to Strengthen Industry Growth

The global travel and tourism sector has been presented with a new roadmap for long-term growth and resilience following the approval of eight strategic priorities by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). The framework is designed to address some of the industry's most pressing challenges while positioning travel and tourism for sustainable expansion in an increasingly complex global environment.

The priorities, formally endorsed by WTTC's Executive Committee after an extensive consultation process involving more than 200 chief executives and industry leaders, will guide the organisation's future agenda and policy advocacy efforts. The outcomes were presented during the Executive Committee meeting

held in Egypt and are intended to support industry transformation through stronger collaboration between governments, businesses and international organisations.

According to WTTC, the new strategy reflects the evolving realities facing the travel ecosystem, including technological disruption, sustainability pressures, geopolitical uncertainty and changing traveller expectations.

## Industry Confronts a New Era of Challenges

The consultation process identified a broad range of structural and emerging issues that continue to influence the performance and competitiveness of global travel and tourism.

Among the key concerns highlighted were fragmented traveller journeys, lengthy and complex visa processes, limitations in digital identity systems and connectivity gaps that continue to affect the seamless movement of travellers across borders.

Industry leaders also pointed to growing vulnerabilities linked to geopolitical tensions, health crises and climate-related disruptions, all of which have underscored the need for greater resilience and preparedness throughout the tourism value chain.

Additional challenges include uneven adoption of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, persistent labour shortages, investment barriers, environmental pressures and rising tensions between tourism growth and local community wellbeing in some destinations.

WTTC noted that addressing these issues will require coordinated action across both the public and private sectors to ensure travel and tourism remains a powerful driver of economic growth, employment and social development.

## Eight Priorities to Shape the Future of Travel

To respond to these challenges, WTTC has established eight strategic priorities that will form the foundation of its work over the coming years.

### 1. Enabling Safe and Seamless Travel

The organisation will focus on improving traveller experiences through the adoption of digital identity systems, biometrics and globally aligned digital standards. The objective is to reduce friction across the travel journey while enhancing security and efficiency.

### 2. Strengthening Destination Stewardship

As tourism volumes continue to grow, WTTC aims to promote responsible destination management practices that address overcrowding, protect local communities and ensure tourism benefits are distributed sustainably.

### 3. Advancing Climate and Environmental Sustainability

The framework places sustainability at the centre of future growth strategies, encouraging industry-wide efforts to reduce emissions, improve resource efficiency and support environmental conservation initiatives.

### 4. Accelerating Technology Adoption

Recognising the transformative potential of emerging technologies, WTTC plans to support greater adoption of artificial intelligence, automation, robotics and digital innovations that can improve operational efficiency and enhance customer experiences.

### 5. Building Crisis Preparedness and Resilience

The organisation will strengthen efforts to improve industry readiness for future disruptions, including health emergencies, geopolitical conflicts, natural disasters and climate-related events.

### 6. Expanding Global Connectivity

Improving connectivity remains a critical priority, with a focus on developing new travel corridors, enhancing air connectivity and supporting infrastructure investments that facilitate international mobility.

### 7. Investing in People and Talent

Addressing workforce challenges will be central to the strategy. WTTC aims to support talent development, skills enhancement, labour mobility and employee retention initiatives across the tourism ecosystem.

### 8. Encouraging Investment and Economic Growth

The final priority focuses on creating policy environments that attract investment, encourage innovation and unlock new opportunities for tourism-related businesses and destinations worldwide.

### Collaboration Remains at the Core

WTTC emphasised that the success of the strategy will depend heavily on collaboration between governments, international institutions and private-sector stakeholders.

The organisation noted that its global network of members, representing virtually every segment of the travel and tourism value chain, played a critical role in identifying the industry's future priorities.

Its membership includes airlines, airports, hotel groups, cruise operators, technology companies, car rental firms, travel service providers and destination organisations, providing a comprehensive perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing the sector.

According to WTTC, the strategic framework will be supported by a broader programme of research, policy advocacy, partnerships, industry campaigns and a strengthened digital agenda designed to drive measurable progress across all eight priority areas.

### SMEs Recognised as Essential to Tourism Growth

The council also highlighted the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of tourism economies in many destinations around the world.

Through its **Together in Travel** initiative, WTTC currently engages with more than 4,000 SMEs globally,

helping smaller businesses access resources, partnerships and industry networks that support growth and competitiveness.

The organisation believes that empowering SMEs will remain essential to ensuring that tourism growth delivers broad-based economic benefits and creates opportunities across local communities.

### Industry Leaders Shape the Agenda

Commenting on the new strategic direction, Gloria Guevara, President and CEO of WTTC, said the priorities reflect the diversity, expertise and collective vision of the organisation's membership.

She noted that the framework represents a clear statement of what the travel and tourism sector believes is necessary to unlock future growth, resilience and opportunity. Guevara also stressed the importance of continued collaboration with governments and international organisations, emphasizing that lasting progress can only be achieved when the public and private sectors work together.

### Positioning Travel & Tourism for Sustainable Growth

As global tourism continues to recover and evolve, WTTC's new strategic framework provides a comprehensive blueprint for navigating an increasingly dynamic landscape.

From digital transformation and sustainability to workforce development and investment, the eight priorities reflect the industry's recognition that future success will depend not only on attracting more travellers but also on creating a more resilient, inclusive and responsible tourism ecosystem.

With travel demand projected to continue growing over the coming decade, the new agenda positions WTTC to play a central role in shaping policies and partnerships that support long-term prosperity for destinations, businesses and communities worldwide.



## TCEB Launches 'JerGan' Digital Platform to Transform Thailand's MICE Ecosystem

*New Initiative Aims to Connect Business Travellers with Local Communities, Drive Sustainable Growth and Create a Data-Driven Future for Thailand's Meetings Industry*

Thailand is taking a significant step towards modernising its Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector with the launch of **JerGan**, the country's first integrated digital platform designed specifically for MICE travellers.

Developed by the **Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau**, the platform forms a key component of the organisation's newly introduced **MaxiMICE Thailand** strategy, which seeks to strengthen Thailand's position as a leading business events destination while ensuring that economic benefits are distributed more widely across local communities and businesses.

The initiative represents a major advancement in Thailand's efforts to leverage digital technology, visitor

insights and community engagement to enhance the overall MICE experience while supporting long-term industry sustainability.

### **Bridging Business Travel and Local Economies**

As competition intensifies among global business events destinations, industry leaders are increasingly looking beyond traditional venue and infrastructure development to create more immersive and economically inclusive experiences.

JerGan has been designed to address this challenge by creating a direct connection between MICE travellers and local service providers, enabling delegates to engage more deeply with destinations while supporting local economies.

The platform integrates a wide range of services into a single digital ecosystem, including:

- Convention and exhibition venues
- Business events and conferences
- Co-working spaces
- Restaurants and local dining

experiences

- Transportation services
- Lifestyle and tourism attractions
- Community-based enterprises
- Retail and hospitality offerings

By bringing these services together on a single platform, JerGan aims to provide business travellers with a seamless and personalised experience before, during and after their events.

The initiative is guided by the concept **"Your Smart Guide, Where the Community Reveals Its Soul,"**

reflecting TCEB's vision of creating more meaningful connections between visitors and local communities.

### Supporting Thailand's MaxiMICE Vision

The launch of JerGan forms part of TCEB's broader MaxiMICE Thailand strategy, which focuses on enhancing competitiveness, innovation and sustainability within the country's business events sector.

Through curated privileges, exclusive offers and destination-specific recommendations, the platform seeks to encourage delegates to extend their engagement beyond conference venues and explore local experiences that contribute directly to regional economies.

This approach aligns with growing global demand for "bleisure" travel—a combination of business and leisure experiences—where travellers increasingly seek authentic cultural interactions alongside professional commitments.

By encouraging spending across a broader range of businesses, TCEB aims to increase economic value creation throughout the MICE supply chain rather than concentrating benefits solely within major venues and hotels.

### Building a Data-Driven MICE Industry

A defining feature of JerGan is its role in creating what TCEB describes as a **MICE Behavioural Data Infrastructure**, a comprehensive data ecosystem designed to better understand traveller preferences, behaviours and spending patterns.

Information collected through the platform will provide valuable insights into how delegates move through destinations, engage with local businesses and utilise tourism services.

These insights are expected to help TCEB and industry stakeholders:

- Improve destination planning
- Enhance visitor experiences
- Develop targeted marketing

campaigns

- Strengthen business event offerings
- Identify emerging market trends
- Optimise resource allocation

The initiative reflects a growing

trend among destination management organisations worldwide to use data analytics and digital technologies to drive more informed decision-making and improve competitiveness.

### Industry Collaboration at the Core

The success of the platform is being supported through partnerships with key stakeholders across Thailand's business events and hospitality ecosystem.

Among the major partners participating in the initiative are:

- Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Centre
- IMPACT Exhibition and Convention Centre

The platform also integrates services from leading mobility and delivery providers, including:

- Grab Thailand
- LINE MAN Thailand

These partnerships are intended to ensure delegates have convenient access to transportation, dining and local services while attending meetings, exhibitions and conferences throughout Thailand.

### Enhancing the Delegate Experience

One of JerGan's primary objectives is to simplify the often-fragmented experience faced by business travellers.

Traditionally, MICE delegates have relied on multiple platforms and service providers to manage transportation, accommodation, dining and local activities. JerGan consolidates these touchpoints into a single user-friendly interface, improving convenience and enabling more personalised experiences.

The platform also offers curated benefits and discounts, providing added value for users while encouraging exploration of local businesses and attractions.

This integrated approach is expected to increase visitor satisfaction while generating additional revenue opportunities for participating enterprises.

### Strengthening Thailand's Position as a Global MICE Hub

Thailand has long been recognised as one of Asia's leading destinations for

international conferences, exhibitions and incentive travel programmes.

The country's combination of world-class venues, strong hospitality infrastructure, strategic geographic location and rich cultural heritage has enabled it to attract a diverse range of business events from around the world.

With the introduction of JerGan, TCEB is seeking to further strengthen Thailand's competitive position by embracing digital innovation and data-driven destination management.

According to TCEB leadership, the platform addresses evolving expectations among modern business travellers while helping the industry adapt to changing market dynamics.

Dr. Jarawan Suwannasat, Vice President of TCEB, noted that significant untapped opportunities exist in connecting business travellers more effectively with local economies. She described JerGan as a strategic solution designed to respond systematically to the evolving needs of MICE participants while supporting sustainable growth throughout Thailand's business events ecosystem.

### A New Chapter for Thailand's Business Events Industry

As destinations worldwide compete to attract high-value meetings and events, digital transformation is increasingly becoming a key differentiator.

Through JerGan, Thailand is positioning itself at the forefront of this evolution by combining technology, community engagement and data intelligence within a single platform.

The initiative not only aims to improve the visitor experience but also seeks to create a more inclusive and sustainable model of tourism and business events development.

By connecting delegates with local businesses, generating actionable insights and supporting destination-wide collaboration, JerGan represents a significant step towards transforming Thailand's MICE industry into a fully integrated, data-driven ecosystem capable of delivering long-term value for visitors, businesses and communities alike.



# WTM London Launches Dedicated WTM Travel Tech Event to Meet Growing Demand for Technology-Driven Tourism Solutions

*New Co-Located Platform to Showcase AI, Data, Fintech and Sustainable Innovation at Europe's Leading Travel Gathering*

Recognising the growing influence of technology across every aspect of the travel and tourism ecosystem, **WTM London 2026** has announced the launch of **WTM Travel Tech**, a dedicated co-located event designed to place travel technology and digital innovation at the forefront of the global tourism agenda.

The new initiative, scheduled to debut alongside WTM London in 2026, reflects the rapid expansion of the travel technology sector and increasing demand from exhibitors, buyers and industry professionals seeking

solutions that can transform the way destinations, travel companies and tourism businesses operate.

According to event organisers, the launch comes in response to significant market demand. Travel technology participation at WTM London has grown by 55 per cent year-on-year, while more than half of all event attendees actively seek meetings with travel technology providers. The new platform aims to create a dedicated environment where innovators, technology suppliers, investors and travel decision-makers can connect,

collaborate and explore the latest developments shaping the future of global travel.

## **Dedicated Space for Travel Innovation**

WTM Travel Tech will occupy its own purpose-built exhibition hall with a dedicated entrance, creating a distinct identity within the broader WTM London event.

The platform will bring together technology leaders, startups, tourism organisations, investors and travel brands from around the world. Organisers expect participants to benefit from access to the wider WTM London audience, which attracts more than 46,000 travel trade professionals

from over 180 countries and includes approximately 5,500 qualified buyers.

The dedicated format reflects the growing role of technology as a strategic enabler across travel, tourism, hospitality, aviation and destination management.

As digital transformation accelerates throughout the sector, technologies such as artificial intelligence, advanced analytics, automation, biometric identification and connected travel platforms are increasingly becoming essential tools for improving efficiency, enhancing customer experiences and supporting sustainable growth.

### **Innovation Highway to Showcase Emerging Technologies**

A central feature of WTM Travel Tech will be the **Innovation Highway**, an interactive exhibition area designed to highlight emerging technologies and breakthrough solutions transforming the travel landscape.

Visitors will have the opportunity to explore innovations spanning:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Big Data and Analytics
- Internet of Things (IoT)
- Smart Destination Technologies
- Travel Automation Platforms
- Customer Experience Solutions
- Sustainability Technologies
- Digital Identity and Security

#### **Systems**

The Innovation Highway will also place a strong emphasis on green technology and sustainable tourism solutions, reflecting the industry's increasing commitment to reducing environmental impact and supporting the transition toward a lower-carbon future.

Organisers believe technology will play a critical role in helping destinations and businesses balance tourism growth with sustainability objectives, resource management and community wellbeing.

### **Future Stage to Focus on Industry Transformation**

Complementing the exhibition will be a dedicated conference theatre known as the **Future Stage**, created

exclusively for WTM Travel Tech content.

The programme will feature keynote presentations, case studies, executive interviews, fireside discussions and expert panels examining the most significant opportunities and challenges facing travel technology today.

The content agenda will focus on nine major themes:

- Digital Transformation
- Platforms and Integration
- Artificial Intelligence and Intelligent Operations
- Data and Analytics
- Payments and Fintech
- Geopolitics
- Risk and Market Disruption
- Distribution and Retailing
- Investment and Innovation

The sessions are expected to provide practical insights, strategic guidance and real-world examples that can help travel businesses navigate a rapidly evolving digital environment.

### **Expert Advisory Team to Shape Content Strategy**

To strengthen the quality and relevance of the conference programme, WTM has appointed a panel of industry advisers tasked with curating Future Stage content and ensuring discussions address the sector's most pressing issues.

The advisory group includes:

- Dimitrios Buhalis
- Rita Varga
- Shaon Talukder
- Jane Thompson
- Paul Davies

According to organisers, the advisers are also contributing to a broader evolution of WTM's conference programme by encouraging greater inclusivity, more diverse perspectives and a stronger focus on actionable business insights.

The speaker roster is currently being finalised, but organisers have indicated that senior executives and influential leaders from across the global travel technology ecosystem are expected to participate.

Previous editions of WTM have featured representatives from major

industry players including Trip.com Group, easyJet, Sabre Corporation, Almosafer and Tourism Economics, highlighting the event's growing influence as a platform for thought leadership and innovation.

### **Networking Remains Central to the Experience**

While digital transformation remains the central theme of WTM Travel Tech, organisers emphasise that face-to-face engagement continues to be one of the industry's most valuable assets.

Networking opportunities will therefore be embedded throughout the programme, creating opportunities for exhibitors, buyers, investors and technology providers to establish partnerships and explore business opportunities.

The agenda will also include dedicated social events, including a networking celebration at the end of the second day, designed to foster collaboration and informal knowledge exchange among participants.

### **Responding to a Rapidly Changing Market**

Commenting on the launch, Chris Carter-Chapman, Exhibition Director for WTM London, said the creation of WTM Travel Tech reflects the growing importance of technology within the global travel industry.

He noted that organisers developed the concept after listening closely to exhibitors, buyers and visitors, creating a proposition that aligns with the changing needs of the market while building upon the event's existing strengths.

The introduction of WTM Travel Tech also reflects broader industry trends. From artificial intelligence and predictive analytics to digital payments and sustainable tourism technologies, innovation is increasingly shaping how travel businesses operate, market their services and engage with travellers.

As tourism enters a new era of digital transformation, WTM Travel Tech is positioning itself as a key platform for exploring the technologies, partnerships and ideas that will define the future of global travel and tourism.

# Puerto Rico Strengthens Global Tourism Ambitions as FITUR 2027 Partner

*Caribbean destination to showcase its culture, heritage, gastronomy and immersive visitor experiences at the 47th edition of the world's leading travel trade fair in Madrid.*



**P**uerto Rico is set to elevate its international tourism profile after being named the official Partner Destination of **FITUR 2027**, the International Tourism Trade Fair scheduled to take place from **20 to 24 January 2027 at IFEMA MADRID**. The partnership represents a major milestone in the island's global tourism strategy, providing an influential platform to strengthen its

presence in European and international markets while promoting its diverse leisure, cultural and business travel offerings.

The announcement was made during a special presentation held at Madrid's Royal Botanical Garden, attended by senior tourism and industry leaders, including Willianette Robles, Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company; José

Vicente de los Mozos, Chairman of the Executive Committee of IFEMA MADRID; María Valcarce, Director of FITUR; and Jorge L. Pérez, CEO of Discover Puerto Rico.

Positioning itself as the "Heart of the Caribbean," Puerto Rico aims to use its role as FITUR 2027 Partner to showcase a destination defined by rich heritage, vibrant traditions, exceptional gastronomy, natural

landscapes and the genuine warmth of its people.

“Becoming FITUR 2027 Partner represents a unique opportunity for the Island of Enchantment to showcase to the world the diversity of experiences that make us distinctive while strengthening our relationship with the European market. Our participation will create new opportunities for tourism business, investment and sustainable growth, further reinforcing Puerto Rico’s position as a leading Caribbean destination,” said Willianette Robles, Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company.

### A Strategic Moment for Puerto Rico’s Tourism Growth

Puerto Rico enters its FITUR 2027 partnership at a time of remarkable growth and international recognition. According to the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, the destination recorded record tourism performance over the past two years, welcoming **14.5 million passengers through its three principal international airports** during the previous year and receiving **more than 1.82 million cruise visitors** through its ports before the completion of the current fiscal period.

These achievements have strengthened the island’s position as one of the Caribbean’s most dynamic tourism destinations, creating opportunities to attract

additional visitors, expand international partnerships and encourage further investment across its tourism ecosystem.

Puerto Rico offers a compelling mix of pristine beaches, tropical biodiversity, music, culinary experiences and historical attractions. Among its iconic landmarks is **Old San Juan**, the UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned for its colourful colonial architecture, centuries-old fortifications and vibrant cultural atmosphere.

### FITUR 2027 to Deliver an Immersive Puerto Rican Experience

At the 47th edition of FITUR, which will expand with two additional exhibition halls, Puerto Rico will present an immersive destination experience designed to go beyond the traditional trade fair stand.

Visitors will be invited to discover the island through interactive experiences reflecting its contemporary identity, creativity and cultural energy. The concept aims to establish an emotional connection with travellers by highlighting not only Puerto Rico’s attractions but also the people, traditions and stories that define the destination.

“We want every visitor who experiences Puerto Rico at FITUR 2027 to discover something beyond a place to visit. We want them to feel the spirit of our island—its culture, world-class gastronomy, fascinating history and, above all, the warmth of

our people. That human connection is what transforms Puerto Rico into an unforgettable Caribbean experience,” Robles added.

The partnership also reinforces FITUR’s role as a leading international marketplace for tourism professionals, bringing together destinations, travel companies, investors and industry stakeholders to shape the future of global travel.

José Vicente de los Mozos, Chairman of the Executive Committee of IFEMA MADRID, welcomed Puerto Rico’s participation and highlighted the destination’s growing importance within the international tourism landscape.

“It is a privilege to welcome Puerto Rico as a FITUR 2027 Partner and to support the remarkable growth its tourism industry has achieved in recent years. The island’s extraordinary cultural, natural and experiential assets will enrich the global dialogue of the fair and showcase its immense potential to the international travel community,” he said.

With its participation as the official partner destination, Puerto Rico is expected to leverage the global reach of FITUR 2027 to enhance its international visibility, strengthen tourism partnerships and further establish itself as a destination offering authentic, emotionally engaging and world-class Caribbean experiences.

# LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE TRAVELSPAN.IN

For advertising queries please contact: **91-124-411 1182**

 @travelspanindia

 travelspan1

 travel span

 @travelspan1

# Princess Cruises Unveils Its Largest-Ever Europe Season for 2028 with Six Ships, New Irish Ports and Epic Pole-to-Pole Voyage

*Expanded Programme Features 291 Sailings Across 37 Countries, More Overnight Stays and Enhanced Cultural Experiences*

Princess Cruises has announced its most extensive European deployment to date for the 2028 season, significantly expanding its presence across the continent with a programme featuring six ships, 291 departures and 150 unique itineraries spanning Northern Europe, the Mediterranean and Transatlantic routes.

The newly released season, now open for bookings, underscores the cruise line's growing focus on immersive destination experiences, longer port stays and diverse voyage options designed to meet rising demand for experiential travel. The programme will offer sailings ranging from seven to 53 days, visiting 128 destinations across 37 countries and providing access to 101 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

A key highlight of the season is the introduction of the **Pole-to-Pole Odyssey**, a landmark voyage linking Antarctica and the Arctic in a single extended itinerary. The programme will also mark Princess Cruises' first-ever calls to the Irish ports of Galway and Killybegs, further broadening its reach into emerging cruise destinations along Ireland's rugged Atlantic coastline.

According to Princess Cruises, the 2028 deployment represents the broadest range of European itineraries ever offered by the cruise

line, combining iconic destinations with deeper cultural engagement and more time ashore.

Jim Berra, Chief Commercial Officer of Princess Cruises, said the company continues to see strong demand for European voyages that blend famous landmarks with authentic local experiences. He noted that the expanded programme offers travellers greater choice than ever before, including new destinations in Ireland, enriched cultural experiences and the debut of the 53-day Pole-to-Pole Odyssey.

## Six Ships to Operate Across Europe

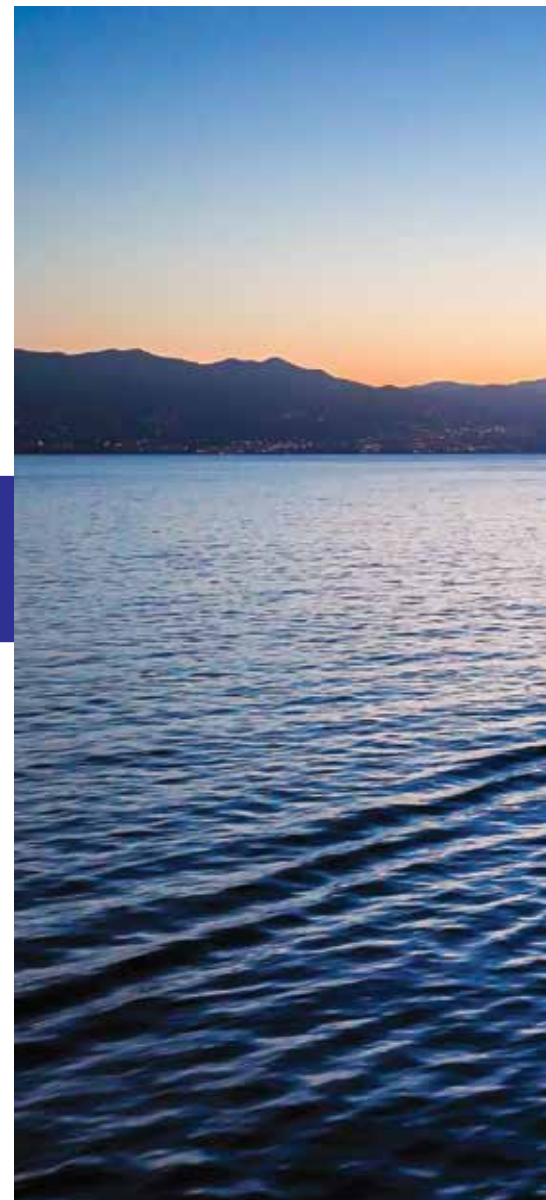
The 2028 Europe season will feature six vessels operating from 13 embarkation ports across the continent. The deployment includes:

- Caribbean Princess • Enchanted Princess • Majestic Princess • Regal Princess • Sky Princess • Sun Princess

Together, the fleet will deliver a comprehensive range of itineraries across some of Europe's most sought-after cruise regions, offering travellers flexibility in voyage length, departure points and destinations.

## New Irish Destinations Strengthen Northern Europe Offering

Among the most notable additions to the programme are maiden calls



to the Irish ports of Galway and Killybegs.

Located along Ireland's spectacular Wild Atlantic Way, Galway is renowned for its vibrant arts scene, historic architecture and access to the scenic landscapes of western Ireland. Killybegs, situated in County Donegal, offers visitors a gateway to dramatic coastal scenery, traditional fishing communities and some of Ireland's most untouched natural attractions.

The addition of these destinations reflects growing traveller interest in exploring lesser-visited ports and authentic regional experiences beyond traditional cruise hubs.



### **Pole-to-Pole Odyssey Sets New Benchmark for Expedition-Style Cruising**

The standout innovation within the 2028 programme is the launch of the Pole-to-Pole Odyssey, a unique voyage that connects two of the world's most remote and iconic regions—the Antarctic and Arctic.

Designed for travellers seeking extraordinary long-haul adventures, the itinerary expands Princess Cruises' portfolio of extended voyages and reflects increasing demand for bucket-list experiences that combine multiple continents, cultures and ecosystems within a single journey.

The cruise line has positioned the itinerary as one of its most ambitious global voyages, offering passengers the opportunity to experience polar landscapes, diverse wildlife and a wide range of destinations across hemispheres.

### **Focus on Authentic Cultural Experiences**

A central theme of the 2028 season is immersive travel, with shore programmes designed to provide deeper engagement with local communities, traditions and cuisines.

Through the company's Princess Local Connections initiative, guests

will have access to curated experiences developed in partnership with local experts and cultural ambassadors.

Highlighted experiences include:

- Culinary and wine-focused excursions across Italy
- Encounters with indigenous Sami communities in Arctic Norway
- Artisan workshops and heritage experiences in the Netherlands
- Guided explorations of landmarks such as Mont Saint-Michel and Athens

The programme also features 32 late-night departures and overnight stays, allowing travellers additional time to explore destinations after regular tourist hours.



**Northern Europe Highlights**

Northern Europe remains one of Princess Cruises’ strongest-performing regions, and the 2028 programme significantly expands opportunities to explore the area’s natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Voyages will include destinations across:

- Norway’s famous fjords
- Ireland’s Atlantic coastline • Iceland
- Scandinavia • The Baltic region
- Northern European maritime cities

Extended port calls will be available in destinations including:

- Stockholm • Hamburg • Tromsø
- Amsterdam • Copenhagen • Belfast
- Reykjavik

These itineraries are designed to showcase both iconic attractions and local cultural traditions that define Northern Europe’s appeal.

**Mediterranean Cruises Offer Timeless Appeal**

Princess Cruises is also expanding its Mediterranean programme, with

itineraries featuring some of Europe’s most celebrated historical and cultural destinations.

Ports of call include:

- Athens • Pompeii • Ephesus
- Barcelona • Lisbon • Dubrovnik
- Florence

Several destinations will feature extended evening stays or overnight calls, including:

- Istanbul • Mykonos • Ibiza
- Valletta • Split • Lisbon • La Spezia

The longer stays are intended to allow guests to experience local nightlife, dining scenes and cultural attractions beyond traditional daytime excursions.

**Transatlantic Voyages Bridge Continents**

The 2028 programme also includes an extensive range of Transatlantic sailings linking Europe with North and South America.

These voyages will feature calls at destinations such as:

- Canary Islands • Madeira • Azores

- Bermuda • Morocco

The itineraries are designed for travellers seeking leisurely ocean crossings combined with destination-rich exploration on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Growing Demand for Extended and Experiential Travel**

The launch of Princess Cruises’ largest-ever European season reflects broader trends shaping the global cruise industry. Travellers are increasingly seeking longer voyages, culturally immersive experiences and access to destinations beyond traditional tourism routes.

By combining expanded deployment, new ports, extended stays and innovative itineraries such as the Pole-to-Pole Odyssey, Princess Cruises is positioning itself to capitalise on growing demand for experiential travel while strengthening its footprint across Europe’s most popular and emerging cruise markets.

# Rail Europe Expands Italian Rail Portfolio with Campania Express, Enhancing Access to Southern Italy's Iconic Destinations



*New addition strengthens seamless rail connectivity between Naples, Pompeii, Herculaneum, Sorrento and the scenic Campania region for international travellers.*

Rail Europe has further expanded its extensive Italian rail portfolio with the addition of **Campania Express** to its booking platform and API, offering travel professionals and distribution partners easier access to one of Southern Italy's most popular regional rail services.

The integration enables agents and travel partners worldwide to book journeys on the renowned

**Circumvesuviana railway network**, which connects Naples with some of the Campania region's most celebrated destinations, including the archaeological sites of **Pompeii** and **Herculaneum**, the coastal town of **Vico Equense**, and the picturesque resort destination of **Sorrento**.

The latest expansion comes at a time when Italy continues to rank among the most sought-after destinations for

international travellers booking through Rail Europe. By incorporating Campania Express into its distribution ecosystem, the company aims to provide greater flexibility and more convenient rail options for visitors exploring Southern Italy's rich cultural heritage, historic landmarks, culinary traditions, and Mediterranean landscapes.

Available as a standalone regional rail product, Campania Express complements Rail Europe's existing portfolio of domestic and international train services, as well as its range of rail passes, further strengthening the platform's position as a comprehensive gateway to European rail travel.

Designed primarily for leisure travellers, Campania Express offers an enhanced travel experience compared with regular local train services operating on the same route. The service features guaranteed reserved seating, dedicated luggage space, air-conditioned coaches, and fewer intermediate stops, enabling passengers to travel more comfortably and efficiently between key tourist attractions.

Robert From, Chief Growth Officer of Rail Europe, highlighted the growing global appeal of Southern Italy and the importance of improving access to its diverse tourism experiences.

"Southern Italy continues to attract travellers from around the world thanks to its exceptional blend of history, culture, gastronomy, and breathtaking coastal scenery. By adding Campania

Express to our portfolio and making it available through both our agent platform and API, we are providing our partners worldwide with another valuable option to connect travellers with some of Campania's most iconic destinations," he said.

The addition of Campania Express reflects Rail Europe's continued commitment to expanding its rail offerings and supporting travel professionals with a wider range of seamless, technology-driven booking solutions. As demand for sustainable and immersive travel experiences continues to rise, improved rail accessibility across regions such as Campania is expected to play a vital role in encouraging slower, more meaningful exploration of Europe's cultural and natural treasures.

With enhanced connectivity between Naples and some of Italy's most treasured UNESCO heritage sites and coastal destinations, the partnership is set to offer international visitors a more convenient and comfortable way to discover the charm, history, and lifestyle of Southern Italy.

**SEO Tags:** Rail Europe, Campania Express, Italy rail travel, Southern Italy tourism, Naples to Sorrento train, Pompeii rail connection, Herculaneum travel, Circumvesuviana railway, Italy train booking, European rail travel, sustainable tourism, Italian tourism, rail connectivity Italy, travel technology, Rail Europe API, luxury rail journeys, Campania region tourism, Italy cultural travel.



# Indian Travel Trade Outlines Strategic Roadmap to Accelerate G Morocco's rowth in the Indian Market

*Morocco's Strategic Roadmap to Accelerate Growth in the Indian Tourism Market*



and Jaipur to tap into India's rapidly diversifying outbound travel base.

- **Focus on High-Value Travel**

**Segments:** The strategy prioritises premium tourism verticals, including **MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions), destination weddings, luxury holidays, and film tourism**, supported through targeted B2B roadshows, industry interactions, and specialised promotional campaigns.

- **Strengthening Travel Trade**

**Engagement:** The Moroccan tourism authorities are increasing direct engagement with Indian travel professionals through immersive destination experiences, strategic collaborations, and industry education

initiatives to enhance product knowledge and create stronger destination advocacy.

- **Digital Destination Training:**

A dedicated e-learning platform is being developed to equip Indian travel advisors and tour operators with deeper insights into Morocco's diverse tourism offerings, helping improve destination awareness and sales capabilities.

- **Leveraging the 2030 FIFA World Cup Opportunity:**

As a co-host of the **2030 FIFA World Cup**, Morocco is positioning itself to benefit from enhanced global visibility, upgraded tourism infrastructure, and increased international interest, creating new opportunities to attract Indian travellers.

### Key Highlights:

- **Ambitious Visitor Target:** The Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNTTO), in collaboration with Indian travel industry bodies including the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), has set an ambitious target of attracting **75,000 Indian visitors**, leveraging stronger industry partnerships and focused market development initiatives.

- **Expanded Market Outreach:** Morocco is deepening its engagement across India's major travel markets, including **Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad**, while aggressively expanding into high-growth Tier II and Tier III cities such as **Pune, Lucknow, Chandigarh**,



• **Enhanced Connectivity and Experiences:** The strategy focuses on showcasing Morocco's diverse tourism portfolio, including its historic cities, luxury riads, cultural heritage, premium hospitality, scenic landscapes, and advanced transport infrastructure such as the **Al Boraq high-speed rail network**.

• **Strong Growth Momentum:** Morocco's tourism growth strategy is supported by exceptional market performance, with Indian arrivals increasing by **224 per cent compared with pre-pandemic**

**levels.** The simplified e-visa process, stronger trade engagement, and rising demand for luxury and experiential travel continue to drive momentum.

• **Future Growth Drivers:** Improved air connectivity, customised hospitality services, Indian culinary options, seamless ground experiences, and closer collaboration between Indian and Moroccan tourism stakeholders are expected to play a critical role in achieving the next phase of growth.

**Enhanced air connectivity, customised hospitality experiences, stronger destination**

**awareness, and deeper collaboration with the travel trade emerge as key pillars for Morocco's next phase of growth among Indian travellers.**

As Morocco continues to strengthen its position as an emerging long-haul destination for Indian travellers, tourism leaders from India and Morocco have identified a comprehensive roadmap to unlock the destination's next stage of growth. Improving direct connectivity, adapting hospitality offerings to Indian preferences, expanding luxury and experiential tourism, and strengthening



industry partnerships are expected to play a pivotal role in accelerating visitor arrivals from India.

During a high-level interaction between Indian travel trade leaders and Moroccan tourism and hospitality stakeholders, discussions centred on understanding the evolving preferences of the Indian outbound traveller and creating strategies to convert growing interest into sustained tourism growth.

India has emerged as one of the world's most dynamic outbound tourism markets, with Indian travellers undertaking nearly 29

million international trips annually and outbound expenditure expected to reach around USD 62 billion by 2030. The modern Indian traveller is increasingly seeking immersive cultural experiences, personalised itineraries, premium hospitality, and authentic destination experiences.

Recognising this immense opportunity, Morocco has intensified its engagement with the Indian market through strategic partnerships with travel companies, destination education programmes, trade initiatives, and targeted promotional campaigns.

Jamal Kilito, Director of the Moroccan National Tourist Office (ONMT) in India, highlighted that Morocco has witnessed exceptional momentum from the Indian market, with approximately 54,000 Indian visitors recorded by the end of 2025 — representing a growth of 224 per cent compared with pre-pandemic levels and a 31 per cent increase over 2024.

According to Kilito, the introduction of Morocco's streamlined e-visa system has significantly improved accessibility for Indian travellers and has opened opportunities across leisure travel, MICE, destination weddings, celebrations, and premium group travel.

Industry representatives observed that Indian outbound travel is becoming increasingly diverse, with strong demand emerging not only from metropolitan centres but also from Tier II and Tier III cities. Travellers are moving beyond conventional sightseeing and are increasingly looking for meaningful stories, local cultural immersion, luxury experiences, wellness, gastronomy, and unique lifestyle offerings.

The changing travel patterns have also expanded interest beyond Morocco's iconic destinations such as Marrakech, Casablanca, and Rabat, with travellers showing greater curiosity towards lesser-explored regions that offer distinctive cultural and experiential value.

The destination's ability to cater to multiple segments — including luxury holidays, honeymoons, family vacations, women's groups, corporate

incentives, MICE programmes, and large-scale destination weddings — has positioned Morocco as an increasingly attractive proposition for the Indian market.

Digital marketing, social media storytelling, and influencer-led campaigns have also played an important role in enhancing Morocco's visibility among Indian travellers, helping transform the destination from a niche long-haul option into a mainstream consideration for affluent travellers seeking new global experiences.

While the growth trajectory remains highly encouraging, travel experts emphasised that the introduction of direct air connectivity between India and Morocco would be a transformative step in unlocking the destination's full potential. Improved accessibility, combined with stronger airline partnerships and seamless travel experiences, is expected to significantly boost tourist arrivals.

Hospitality stakeholders also highlighted the importance of adapting services to Indian cultural preferences, including greater availability of Indian cuisine, flexible dining options, personalised service standards, and closer coordination between Indian travel partners and Moroccan destination management companies to ensure expectations are aligned.

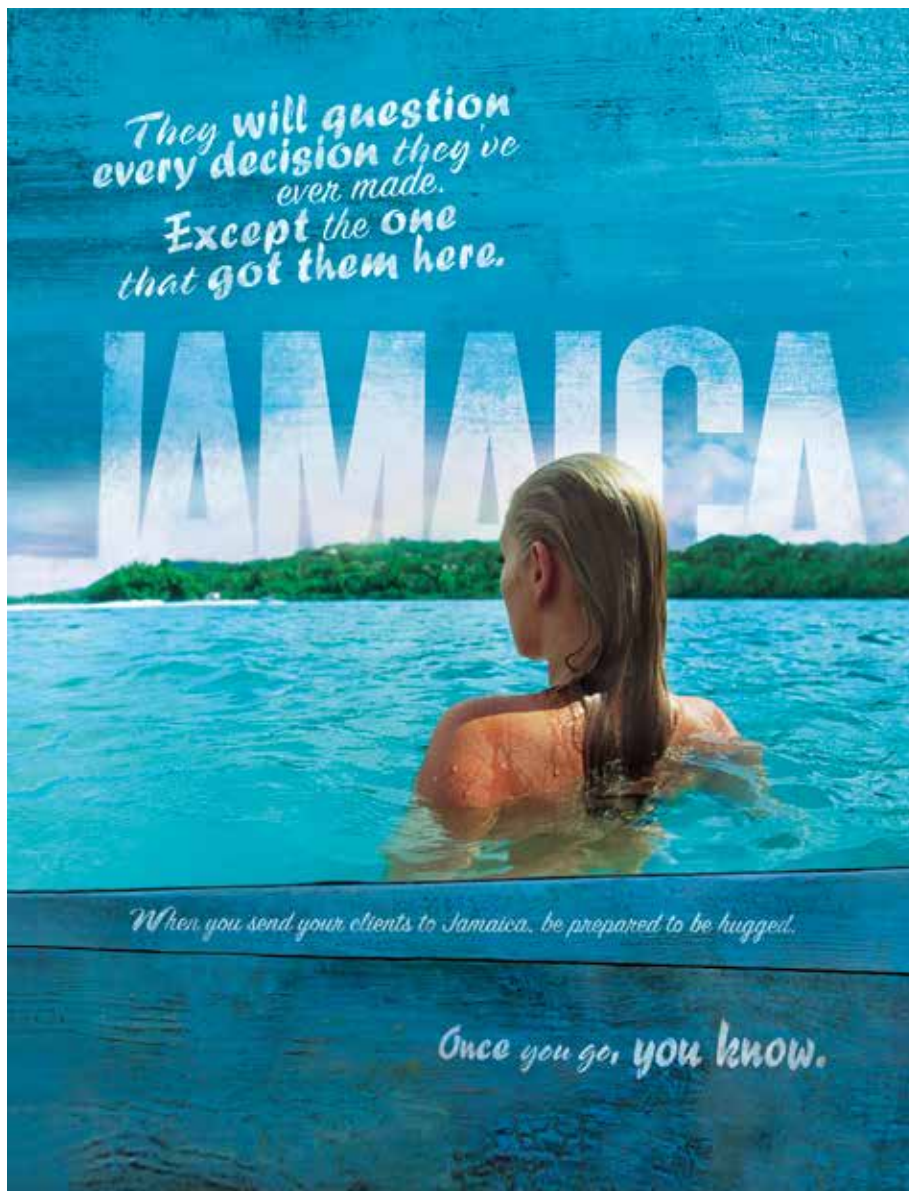
The Indian diaspora, particularly from markets such as the United Kingdom and the United States, also represents a significant opportunity for Morocco's luxury tourism and destination wedding sectors, further strengthening the destination's appeal among global Indian travellers.

With sustained promotional efforts, simplified visa procedures, growing trade partnerships, and increasing demand for unique long-haul experiences, Morocco is well positioned to become one of the most promising international destinations for Indian travellers. The next phase of growth, however, will be driven by enhanced aviation links, culturally tailored experiences, and continued collaboration between stakeholders across the tourism ecosystem.



# Jamaica Unveils '10x10x10 Vision'

to Achieve 10 Million Annual  
Visitors and USD 10 Billion in  
Tourism Revenue



*New long-term strategy focuses on expanded air connectivity, sustainable growth, workforce development, and enhanced tourism infrastructure to transform Jamaica into a global tourism powerhouse.*



Jamaica has announced an ambitious new tourism growth strategy aimed at attracting **10 million annual visitors and generating USD 10 billion in tourism earnings over the next decade**, marking a significant new chapter in the Caribbean nation's journey towards becoming one of the world's leading sustainable tourism destinations.

The announcement follows a strong

performance by Jamaica's tourism sector in the first quarter of 2026, during which the island welcomed more than **one million visitors** and generated approximately **USD 956 million in tourism revenue**, demonstrating continued resilience and growing international demand for the destination.

The new roadmap, branded as the **"10x10x10 Vision,"** was unveiled by Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund

Bartlett, and builds on the success of the country's previous tourism development strategy, which surpassed its targets by delivering **4.5 million visitor arrivals and USD 4.3 billion in tourism earnings within just four years**.

At the heart of the new strategy is **Tourism 3.0**, a transformative framework that redefines tourism success beyond visitor numbers and revenue generation. The



approach places greater emphasis on empowering tourism workers, supporting local communities, strengthening cultural preservation, and ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are more widely distributed throughout Jamaican society.

“Now it is time for reimagining. Tourism 3.0 represents a new direction for Jamaica — one that places as much attention on the people behind the tourism experience as the visitors who come to enjoy it,” said Edmund Bartlett.

### Major Investment in Hotel Infrastructure

To accommodate future visitor growth, Jamaica is advancing a **USD 5 billion hotel development pipeline** that is expected to add between **15,000 and 20,000 new hotel rooms over the next five to ten years**. The expansion will significantly enhance the country’s accommodation capacity and support its long-term visitor growth ambitions.

Currently, approximately 80 per cent of Jamaica’s hotel room inventory

is operational, with the destination expecting full recovery and restoration of accommodation capacity by early 2027.

### Strengthening Global and Regional Air Connectivity

Aviation connectivity remains a key pillar of Jamaica’s growth strategy, with airlines expanding services from major source markets including Canada, Latin America, and the United Kingdom.

Additional flights from Canada to



Montego Bay are expected to introduce nearly **5,000 extra seats during the winter travel season**, while expanded services from other international markets will further improve accessibility to the island.

Jamaica is also placing greater emphasis on regional aviation integration and will host the **Caribbean Tourism Organisation's Air Connectivity Summit in Kingston in February 2027**. The event will bring together aviation leaders, tourism authorities, airlines, and industry stakeholders to explore strategies for improving inter-Caribbean and international connectivity.

#### **Empowering the Travel Trade and Future-Ready Tourism**

Recognising the influential role of travel professionals in driving destination demand, the Jamaica Tourist Board has announced plans to introduce a dedicated incentive programme for travel advisors, strengthening partnerships with the global travel trade community.

Donovan White, Director of Tourism,

highlighted the importance of travel specialists in achieving the country's ambitious visitor targets.

"We can never underestimate the power of our travel specialists who champion Jamaica every day to global consumers. To achieve this new target, we will be leaning on them even more to attract these numbers to the destination," White said.

Beyond visitor growth, Jamaica's future tourism agenda will continue to prioritise investments in digital transformation, workforce development, sustainability initiatives, and community-based tourism, ensuring that growth remains inclusive, resilient, and environmentally responsible.

With its "10x10x10 Vision," Jamaica is positioning itself for a new era of tourism expansion. By combining increased air connectivity, world-class hospitality infrastructure, stronger travel trade partnerships, and a people-centred development model, the Caribbean destination aims to establish a sustainable blueprint for tourism growth over the coming decade.





# Egypt Introduces New Tourism Incentives to Sustain International Arrivals Amid Global Travel Challenges

*Destination records 4 per cent growth in foreign visitor arrivals despite regional uncertainties, with new measures focusing on air connectivity, market resilience, and targeted international promotion.*

**E**gypt has unveiled a fresh set of tourism incentives aimed at sustaining international visitor growth and strengthening air connectivity, as the destination continues to demonstrate resilience despite regional geopolitical tensions and broader challenges impacting the global travel industry.

The initiative comes as Egypt recorded a **4 per cent increase in international tourist arrivals between January and the first week**

**of June**, highlighting the continued appeal of the country's rich cultural heritage, historical attractions, and diverse tourism offerings even amid a challenging operating environment.

According to the Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF), the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has introduced targeted support measures to encourage inbound travel and maintain international air services to the country. The incentives are designed to mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices,

increased transportation costs, and temporary booking fluctuations caused by regional developments.

Speaking at a press conference, **Sherif Fathy, Egypt's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities**, emphasised that transportation — particularly air travel — remains one of the most significant challenges facing global tourism today. The increase in fuel prices has led to higher airline operating expenses and transportation costs, creating additional pressure

across the international tourism value chain.

However, he noted that Egypt's proactive approach and incentive programmes have helped maintain tourism momentum, preserving air traffic levels and supporting the destination's competitive position in the global tourism marketplace.

Tourism remains one of Egypt's most important economic pillars and a vital contributor to national income. Recognising the importance of collaboration, the Egyptian government continues to work closely with the private sector, the Egyptian Tourism Federation, airlines, tour operators, and other industry stakeholders to achieve sustainable long-term growth.

A key element of Egypt's strategy

is the adoption of flexible and adaptive marketing approaches that can respond quickly to changing market conditions. The Egyptian Tourism Authority is increasingly leveraging digital technologies, data-driven campaigns, and targeted international outreach to engage priority source markets and strengthen destination visibility.

As part of its ongoing global promotion efforts, Egypt has intensified engagement with travel trade partners, international content creators, and tourism stakeholders through destination showcases, industry meetings, and curated tourism experiences designed to highlight the country's evolving tourism landscape.

Over the past two months, the destination has welcomed international

influencers, digital creators, and leading tour operators as part of a broader strategy to enhance global awareness, build stronger trade partnerships, and encourage future travel demand.

With a combination of strategic incentives, enhanced marketing initiatives, and close cooperation between public and private sector stakeholders, Egypt aims to maintain its tourism growth trajectory and reinforce its position as one of the world's most iconic and resilient travel destinations.

The latest initiatives underline Egypt's commitment to navigating global uncertainties while continuing to invest in connectivity, innovation, and sustainable tourism development to secure long-term success for its travel and hospitality industry.



# Siyam World Maldives Unveils ‘Wreck to Reef’ Initiative, Transforming Historic Vessel into a Living Marine Ecosystem

*New artificial reef project in Noonu Atoll combines marine conservation, coral restoration, and immersive underwater tourism to promote sustainable travel experiences in the Maldives.*

**S**iyam World Maldives has launched one of the country’s newest and most distinctive underwater attractions with the unveiling of “**Wreck to Reef**”, a long-term marine conservation initiative that transforms a former tuna freighter into a thriving artificial reef designed to support marine biodiversity, coral regeneration, and sustainable tourism.

Located in the pristine waters of **Noonu Atoll**, the project centres

around a 66.36-metre Japanese-built tuna freighter dating back to the 1980s. Once used to transport Maldivian tuna between the islands, Malé, and local processing facilities, the vessel has now been given a second life beneath the ocean as a purpose-built habitat for marine life and a unique dive experience for certified divers.

The initiative is being implemented under the **Sun Siyam Cares** sustainability platform and represents a

significant step in the resort’s broader commitment to ocean conservation and responsible tourism. The concept was originally envisioned in 2021 by **Ahmed Siyam Mohamed, Founder and Chairman of Sun Siyam Group**, who sought to create a world-class dive attraction that would also deliver long-term environmental benefits.

Following years of planning, extensive preparation, regulatory approvals, and the relocation of the vessel to Noonu Atoll,





the ship was intentionally submerged within Siyam World's territorial waters in October 2024.

The sinking operation, however, presented an unexpected engineering challenge when trapped air caused the vessel to settle upside down on the seabed. A skilled local team from Miladhoo spent several weeks carefully repositioning the wreck using specialised air bags and ropes, successfully restoring it to an upright position. Today, the vessel's bow rests at a depth of approximately 10 metres while the stern extends to 24 metres, making the site accessible to experienced and certified recreational divers.

#### A New Home for Marine Biodiversity

Since its placement on the seabed, the artificial reef has already started attracting an impressive variety of marine species, demonstrating the rapid ecological potential of carefully managed underwater structures.

Marine life recorded around the wreck includes guitar sharks, blacktip reef sharks, nurse sharks, lemon sharks, grey reef sharks, Napoleon wrasse, eagle rays, stingrays, sea turtles, moray eels, octopus, groupers, snappers, batfish, angelfish, boxfish, nudibranchs,

and large schools of jackfish. The initial growth of soft and hard corals across the steel structure marks the beginning of its gradual transformation into a fully functioning underwater ecosystem.

#### Beyond Diving: A Long-Term Commitment to Ocean Restoration

Unlike conventional shipwreck dive attractions, "Wreck to Reef" has been designed as an evolving conservation programme that will continue over the coming years. Guests will have the opportunity to participate directly in coral restoration activities by planting coral fragments onto the structure, contributing to the creation of new habitats and supporting the reef's natural development.

The project will also feature a structured scientific monitoring programme led by the resort's Marine Biologist, **Mariyam Thuhufa**, with regular assessments of coral growth, marine biodiversity, and ecosystem health conducted every three months.

The inaugural "Wreck to Reef" event, held from 11–15 June, brought together divers, marine scientists, conservationists, environmental advocates, content creators, and visitors for a series of activities including ceremonial dives, coral planting sessions, marine awareness

discussions, reef exploration, community engagement programmes, beach and underwater clean-up initiatives, and unique blue-light night diving experiences.

**Sara, Director of Marketing at Sun Siyam Resorts**, described the initiative as one of the most ambitious environmental projects undertaken by the brand.

"Wreck to Reef is probably the boldest story we have ever set out to tell from Siyam World, and certainly the most patient one. This is not simply the opening of a new dive site; it marks the beginning of a long-term commitment to reef restoration, ocean conservation, and meaningful guest participation. Every visitor who plants a coral fragment becomes part of a living story that will continue to grow beneath the ocean long after their stay," she said.

As sustainability becomes increasingly central to luxury travel, initiatives such as "Wreck to Reef" demonstrate how resorts can combine exceptional guest experiences with meaningful environmental stewardship. By turning a retired vessel into a living underwater habitat, Siyam World Maldives is creating a model where adventure tourism, marine science, and conservation work together to protect the future of the world's oceans.

# Brand USA Expands AI-Powered Visitor Ecosystem to Elevate FIFA World Cup 2026 Travel Experience

*New national AI trip-planning platform and city-level digital concierges offer international fans personalised, multilingual and real-time travel assistance across the United States.*



**A**s millions of international football fans travel to the United States for the FIFA World Cup 2026, Brand USA is accelerating the adoption of artificial intelligence and digital innovation to transform the visitor journey, introducing a comprehensive AI-powered ecosystem designed to make trip planning, navigation, and destination discovery more seamless and personalised.

The initiative, led by Brand USA, the United States' destination marketing organisation, combines a national AI trip-planning platform with a growing network of city-specific digital

concierges across all 11 FIFA World Cup 2026 host cities. The ecosystem provides visitors with real-time information, multilingual assistance, personalised itineraries, transport guidance, dining recommendations, cultural experiences, and match-day logistics.

At the heart of the strategy is **"America the Beautiful Game,"** Brand USA's AI-driven national trip-planning hub that connects international travellers not only to the World Cup host cities but also to training base locations, iconic attractions, national parks, scenic

road trips, and a broader range of experiences across the country.

Fred Dixon, President and Chief Executive Officer of Brand USA, said the FIFA World Cup 2026 represents a landmark opportunity to showcase the diversity of travel experiences available across the United States beyond the football stadiums.

"The 2026 FIFA World Cup is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and international visitors are increasingly planning experiences beyond the stadiums. Our data shows that travellers are interested in exploring national parks, taking road trips and



discovering more of the United States. That is exactly the type of travel experience we want to inspire," he said.

Janette Roush, Senior Vice President of Innovation and Chief AI Officer at Brand USA, highlighted the role of collaboration with destination partners in creating a connected and intelligent visitor ecosystem.

"One of the most exciting developments is the innovation taking place across our destination partners. Cities throughout the United States have developed AI tools capable of responding in multiple languages and delivering real-time guidance. Our national platform complements these efforts by helping visitors discover and plan experiences beyond individual destinations," she said.

### AI Concierges Transforming Host City Experiences

Across the FIFA World Cup

2026 host destinations, tourism organisations have deployed advanced AI-powered assistants tailored to the needs of international visitors.

The **NYNJ World Cup Concierge** provides fans with real-time transportation updates, venue details, and match-day information, while **New York City Tourism + Conventions' "Libby"** supports travellers in 60 languages through its website, WhatsApp, and Instagram platforms, helping visitors explore neighbourhoods and create personalised itineraries across the city's five boroughs.

On the West Coast, the **Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board's "Angel"** AI concierge assists visitors attending matches at SoFi Stadium by recommending attractions, dining experiences, and activities beyond the tournament schedule. In Seattle, **Visit Seattle's "Emerald"**

delivers personalised recommendations and multilingual support in more than 45 languages.

In Florida, the **Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau** has integrated a smart AI assistant into its digital platforms, offering a dedicated World Cup mode that provides match schedules, local insights, beach recommendations, nightlife options, and neighbourhood experiences.

Other host cities are also embracing AI-driven visitor services. **Discover Atlanta** provides intelligent travel assistance covering attractions, dining, and fan activities, while **Meet Boston** offers a digital planning tool for visitors attending matches at Gillette Stadium. **San Francisco Travel** has introduced a conversational AI assistant to support personalised exploration of the city's attractions, restaurants, and cultural offerings.

Additional innovations include **Visit Kansas City's** AI planning platform designed around the city's identity as the "Soccer Capital of America", **Discover PHL's "Ask Ben"** for tailored travel support in Philadelphia, **Visit Dallas'** digital concierge for navigating one of the tournament's busiest regions, and **Visit Houston's** AI assistant providing recommendations for attractions, restaurants, and local experiences.

### A New Era of Smart Tourism

Brand USA's expanded AI ecosystem reflects a broader transformation taking place across the global tourism industry, where artificial intelligence is increasingly being used to create smarter, more personalised, and frictionless travel experiences.

By integrating national trip-planning capabilities with destination-level digital assistance, the United States is positioning itself to deliver a highly connected visitor experience during FIFA World Cup 2026, encouraging international travellers to explore the country's diverse landscapes, culture, gastronomy, and attractions long after the final whistle.



# Sun Siyam Vilu Reef Unveils New Ocean Signature Villas, Introducing a New Era of Luxury Island Living in the Maldives

*The resort's largest villa transformation to date introduces 50 exclusive overwater retreats featuring private pools, water slides, bespoke interiors and uninterrupted Indian Ocean views.*

**S**un Siyam Vilu Reef has entered a new chapter of elevated island hospitality with the unveiling of its new **Ocean Signature Villas with Pool and Slide**, marking the most significant transformation in the resort's history. Officially launched during an exclusive event, *A New Rhythm of the Reef*, the new collection reflects a refined approach to luxury, blending contemporary design, immersive experiences, and

the authentic warmth of Maldivian hospitality.

The unveiling was led by **Hon. Ahmed Siyam Mohamed**, Founder, Chairman and Managing Director of Sun Siyam, alongside local media, industry partners, and distinguished guests. The new development further strengthens Sun Siyam Vilu Reef's position within the brand's prestigious Privé Collection and reinforces its commitment to delivering exceptional

luxury experiences in the Maldives.

The resort has introduced **50 newly designed overwater villas**, comprising **48 one-bedroom Ocean Signature Villas** and **two expansive two-bedroom retreats**. Created for couples, families, and discerning travellers seeking both privacy and connection, the villas offer spectacular lagoon views with uninterrupted panoramas stretching from sunrise to sunset.



### A New Design Language Inspired by the Maldives

The Ocean Signature Villas showcase a sophisticated design philosophy where contemporary aesthetics merge seamlessly with the natural beauty of the Indian Ocean. The interiors have been carefully crafted to create a sense of openness, tranquillity, and understated elegance.

Each villa features a spacious lounge with a 65-inch entertainment display, an integrated pantry designed for effortless in-villa dining, and a discreet privacy divider that enhances flexibility and comfort. Flowing architectural lines and dramatic arch details guide guests from the bedroom through a dedicated dressing area into an open-plan bathroom featuring a freestanding bathtub, dual vanity spaces, and premium amenities.

The two-bedroom configurations offer additional privacy and convenience, with each bedroom equipped with a private en-suite bathroom and individual

50-inch entertainment screens, making the villas ideal for families and groups seeking an exclusive overwater sanctuary.

Beyond the interiors, the expansive outdoor deck becomes an experience in itself. Guests can relax in a private infinity-style pool, unwind on an iconic overwater hammock suspended above the turquoise lagoon, or enjoy a distinctive 11-metre water slide that creates a playful connection between the villa and the ocean below.

### Designed by International Creative Talent

To realise the transformation, Sun Siyam collaborated with London-based interior design studio **Studio Sixty7**, led by founders and creative directors **Lee McNichol and Jose Rivero**. Their design concept embraces calm minimalism while introducing bold artistic elements inspired by the colours, textures, and movement of the Maldivian seascape.

The villas feature white timber-panelled walls that create a bright and serene atmosphere, contrasted by deep blue ceiling accents reflecting the surrounding ocean. Soft architectural curves, bespoke timber craftsmanship, carefully integrated lighting, and locally created artworks combine to deliver an environment that feels both contemporary and deeply connected to its island setting.

Hon. Ahmed Siyam Mohamed described the launch as a particularly meaningful milestone, highlighting that Sun Siyam Vilu Reef is where the Sun Siyam journey first began.

“Sun Siyam Vilu Reef is where the Sun Siyam story began, making this new chapter especially significant for us. As we continue to evolve, our focus remains on creating extraordinary guest experiences while preserving the genuine warmth, care, and hospitality that define our brand,” he said.

### Redefining the Future of Overwater Luxury

Masdhoq Saeed, Cluster General Manager of Sun Siyam Vilu Reef and Sun Siyam Iru Veli, said the project was envisioned as a completely renewed interpretation of Maldivian luxury.

“Our ambition was to create something truly beyond exceptional. In collaboration with award-winning creative talent, we have introduced a collection of overwater signature villas with a completely new identity. These villas offer unique dimensions and rare architectural layouts, creating immersive spaces where innovative design meets the timeless beauty of the ocean,” he said.

Officially unveiled on **15 June 2026**, the Ocean Signature Villas with Pool and Slide represent a defining moment for Sun Siyam Vilu Reef. By combining innovative architecture, personalised luxury, and unforgettable ocean experiences, the resort introduces a fresh rhythm to island living while remaining deeply rooted in the natural beauty and hospitality traditions that have long made the Maldives one of the world’s most desirable luxury travel destinations.



# Southern U.S. Cities

Lead America's Best  
Summer Vacation  
Destinations for 2026

*WalletHub study ranks Atlanta as the top summer getaway, highlighting affordability, attractions, dining experiences and travel convenience across the United States.*



A new study by personal finance platform WalletHub has identified the best U.S. summer vacation destinations for 2026, revealing a strong preference for cities that combine affordability, rich visitor experiences and easy accessibility.

According to the report, nearly **72 per cent of Americans are planning a summer vacation this season**, with travellers increasingly seeking destinations that offer a balance of value, entertainment, culinary experiences and diverse attractions. WalletHub's **2026 Best Summer Travel Destinations** report evaluated 100 of the largest metropolitan areas across the United States using 41 indicators, including travel expenses, local costs, attractions, dining options and tourism infrastructure.

### **Atlanta Emerges as America's Top Summer Destination**

Surprising many travellers despite its hot summer climate, **Atlanta, Georgia** secured the number one position in the rankings, followed by **Orlando, Florida** and **Austin, Texas** in second and third place respectively.

The dominance of Southern destinations demonstrates that high temperatures are not deterring travellers from choosing cities known for their vibrant cultural scenes, family-friendly attractions, culinary diversity and strong tourism infrastructure.



Florida and Texas emerged as the strongest-performing states in the rankings, with six metropolitan areas combined appearing in the top 20. Florida's Orlando and Tampa, along with Texas destinations Austin, San Antonio and Houston, showcased the continued popularity of the southern United States as a summer holiday choice.

**Affordable Cities Gain Popularity Among Travellers**

The report also reflects growing interest in lesser-known destinations that offer memorable experiences without the high costs associated with traditional tourist hotspots.

Oklahoma City recorded the lowest



local costs among all metropolitan areas studied, reinforcing its appeal as a budget-friendly destination. Other cities including Cincinnati, Richmond, Tulsa and Omaha also secured places in the top 20, offering travellers walkable neighbourhoods, independent restaurants, museums, cultural attractions, festivals and outdoor experiences at a more affordable price point.

The findings suggest a shift in traveller preferences towards discovering emerging urban

*Florida and Texas emerged as the strongest-performing states in the rankings, with six metropolitan areas combined appearing in the top 20.*

destinations where authentic local experiences can be enjoyed without overcrowding or premium travel costs.

### **Diverse Destinations Across America**

The 2026 rankings feature destinations from nearly every region of the United States, showcasing the country's broad range of summer travel experiences.

The Washington, D.C. metropolitan area ranked as the highest-performing destination on the East Coast, while San Diego led among West Coast destinations. Coastal escapes also featured prominently, with Honolulu, Hawaii and Tampa, Florida earning positions among the country's most attractive and affordable summer holiday locations.

### **Top 20 U.S. Summer Vacation Destinations for 2026**

1. Atlanta, Georgia
2. Orlando, Florida
3. Austin, Texas
4. Washington, D.C.
5. Honolulu, Hawaii
6. Tampa, Florida
7. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
8. Salt Lake City, Utah
9. Cincinnati, Ohio
10. Richmond, Virginia
11. San Antonio, Texas
12. St. Louis, Missouri
13. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
14. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
15. Tulsa, Oklahoma
16. New York, New York
17. Omaha, Nebraska
18. Raleigh, North Carolina
19. San Diego, California
20. Houston, Texas

The latest rankings underline a changing landscape in American leisure travel, where affordability, convenience and authentic experiences are becoming just as important as iconic landmarks. From the energetic streets of Atlanta and Orlando's world-famous attractions to the beaches of Honolulu and the cultural districts of emerging cities such as Tulsa and Richmond, travellers have a wider range of options for creating memorable summer holidays in 2026.



## Ojai: California's Serene Valley of the Moon Where Art, Nature and Culinary Excellence Converge

*Nestled in the Topatopa Mountains, Ojai offers a timeless blend of scenic landscapes, wellness, outdoor adventures, Michelin-recognised dining and refined Californian hospitality.*

A short journey inland from California's Pacific coastline, the picturesque town of Ojai remains one of the state's most enchanting hidden retreats. Surrounded by the rolling Topatopa Mountains and located northeast of Santa Barbara, this charming valley destination

combines rich cultural heritage, artistic spirit, exceptional gastronomy and immersive outdoor experiences, making it a compelling escape for travellers seeking a slower, more meaningful connection with nature.

Known as the "Valley of the Moon," Ojai derives its name from the

Indigenous Chumash language and has been the ancestral homeland of the Chumash people for more than 10,000 years. Over centuries, the region has transformed from a vast cattle ranching landscape into a renowned sanctuary for artists, wellness seekers and nature lovers. Shielded from major

transport corridors, Ojai has preserved its peaceful atmosphere and remains one of California's most tranquil destinations.

### **A Destination Designed for Slow Travel**

Spanning just around four square miles, Ojai invites visitors to embrace the growing trend of slow travel,

where the journey is defined not by crowded itineraries but by moments of discovery, relaxation and authentic local experiences.

“Ojai feels like a true escape while still being incredibly accessible from Los Angeles and the rest of Southern California. People come here because it offers something increasingly rare—peace, natural beauty, creativity and

the opportunity to truly slow down,” says Chris Kandziora, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Ojai Valley Inn.

The walkable downtown district forms the cultural heart of the town, where visitors can explore independent boutiques, galleries and historic attractions. A visit to the Ojai Valley Museum offers insights into the region's ecology, history and cultural evolution. Nearby, Bart's Books—celebrated as the world's largest outdoor bookstore—houses more than 100,000 new and pre-owned titles spread across a unique open-air setting beneath oak trees.

The shopping experience continues with curated local boutiques offering handcrafted home décor, fashion and artisanal products. Visitors can explore stores such as Fig Curated Living, Cercana and Kariella, while Heavenly Honey Company provides





seasonal ingredients with standout dishes including locally sourced Channel Islands sea urchin uni, California king salmon, and broiled oysters with chilli butter.

Other notable establishments include Ojai Rotie, a popular Mediterranean restaurant celebrated for its flavourful rotisserie chicken and inviting outdoor setting. The Michelin-recognised Dutchess has gained a loyal following for its innovative Burmese-American cuisine, artisan pastries and sourdough breads.

Visitors can also experience Vietnamese specialities at Ojai Noodle House, classic Californian dishes at The Nest of Ojai, or enjoy coffee and literary charm at Three Birds, a unique combination of café and bookstore.

### **Luxury Stays in a Tranquil Setting**

Ojai's accommodation landscape ranges from intimate boutique properties to expansive luxury resorts. The iconic Ojai Valley Inn remains one of the destination's most celebrated addresses, featuring 305 rooms, a championship golf course, a full-service spa, four swimming pools, tennis and pickleball facilities, firepits perfect for viewing the Pink Moment, and multiple dining venues.

For travellers seeking a more distinctive stay, Caravan Outpost offers beautifully restored Airstream trailers within walking distance of downtown Ojai. The Capri Hotel presents a stylish mid-century modern retreat, while the Blue Iguana Inn and adults-only Emerald Iguana Inn provide boutique experiences inspired by the colours and architecture of the American Southwest.

With its extraordinary natural scenery, vibrant arts community, world-class dining and relaxed pace of life, Ojai offers a refreshing alternative to California's more crowded destinations. Whether exploring mountain trails, discovering independent bookstores, enjoying farm-to-table cuisine or simply watching the mountains glow at sunset, the Valley of the Moon delivers an experience rooted in tranquillity, creativity and authentic Californian charm.



an opportunity to sample local honey varieties and discover the area's beekeeping traditions.

For another taste of Ojai's agricultural heritage, the family-owned Ojai Olive Oil Company offers olive oil tastings among its extensive groves, allowing visitors to take home locally produced oils as memorable souvenirs.

### **Outdoor Adventures Amid California's Natural Beauty**

Ojai's location at the gateway to Los Padres National Forest makes it a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. Visitors can explore the scenic Shelf Road Trail, the landscapes of Valley View Preserve and Ojai Meadows Preserve, or cycle along the 15-mile Ojai Valley Bike Trail, which connects the valley with Ventura and the Pacific coastline.

Unique experiences such as visits to local farms and llama

sanctuaries further showcase Ojai's close relationship with its natural surroundings.

As evening approaches, travellers gather to witness Ojai's famous "Pink Moment," a remarkable natural phenomenon when the Topatopa Mountains glow in dramatic shades of pink, orange and gold as the sun sets, creating one of California's most memorable landscapes.

### **A Rising Culinary Destination**

Ojai has quietly developed into one of California's most exciting culinary destinations, with restaurants emphasising seasonal ingredients, local produce and global influences.

Among the town's most acclaimed dining venues is Michelin-recognised Rory's Place, known for its refined yet relaxed approach to coastal Californian cuisine. The menu showcases fresh

Relive the epic of  
**THE  
RAMAYANA TRAIL**



Lord Rama launched the powerful Brahmasharam arrow killing Ravana.



Book this once-in-a-lifetime experience today!  
[www.ramayanaabsrilankan.com](http://www.ramayanaabsrilankan.com)

 **SriLankan Holidays**  
*Begin with a smile, return with a story*



# THE PLACE TO BE

The world is yours to explore. Across Thailand, Laos, the Maldives, Vietnam, Nepal, Japan and more, find a place where you truly belong. This is the essence of Centara Hotels & Resorts.

Whether your clients are planning a family beach holiday, an immersive cultural experience or an exciting urban getaway, Centara's signature hospitality, warm Thai family values and world-class service will be at the heart of their stay anywhere in the world.



**GET TO KNOW CENTARA**  
WITH UNBEATABLE TRAVEL INDUSTRY RATES

 Centara Karon Resort Phuket

CENTARA RESERVE

THE  
CENTARA  
COLLECTION

CENTARA  
GRAND

CENTARA

CENTARA  
Life

COSI

Visit our dedicated trade website [centarahotelsresorts.com/b2b](https://centarahotelsresorts.com/b2b)

**CENTARA**  
HOTELS & RESORTS