



ASEGO

Global Assistance • Travel Insurance

Delays turned into access.



1 HOUR DELAY
**FREE LOUNGE
ACCESS**

ASEGO BOLT

Rapid Response. Real Protection



**Premium access in
1300+ lounges**

Instant global lounge pass in case of flight delays exceeding 60 minutes.



**Baggage
Tracking**

Get ₹66,000/ bag up to 2 checked-in bags if untraced for 96 hours.



For partnership or more details, scan the QR code.

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

24x7 helpline: +91 8448582205 | customersupport@asego.in | claims@asego.in

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 Ras Fushi Resort & Spa Maldives



CENTARA RESERVE

THE CENTARA
COLLECTION

CENTARA
GRAND

CENTARA

CENTARA
LIFE

COSI

Visit our dedicated trade website centarahotelsresorts.com/b2b

CENTARA
HOTELS & RESORTS

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

travel

SPAN

Volume 26 | Issue 04 | May 2026 | ₹500 / \$12 US

A Profiles Media Network Publication

www.travelspan.in

India Powers

Greece's
Tourism Surge

Washington, DC's

Biggest Spenders?
Indian Travellers

Germany

Courts India's
Experience-Seeking
Travellers

Luxury Meets
the Outback at
**Uluru-Kata
Tjuta**

Sphere Abu Dhabi

Finds Its Home
on Yas Island



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 / 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

Volume 26 | Issue 04 | May 2026



- 07** Rail Europe Expands Swiss Portfolio with Iconic Alpine Excursions for Travel Advisors
- 09** Qatar Airways Posts QAR 7.08 Billion Profit Despite Global Economic Headwinds
- 10** Etihad Brings Double the A380 Magic to Paris
- 11** Emirates brings Eid Al Adha celebrations to the skies with festive menus and curated entertainment on ice
- 14** Cathay Group Reports Strong April 2026 Traffic Growth Amid Rising Fuel Cost Pressures
- 16** SWISS to offer its first-ever service to Bengaluru, India

Contents



11



34



60

- 18** Air Canada Launches New Direct Palma–Montreal Route, Strengthening Mallorca–North America Connectivity
- 26** India's hotel sector investment surges 58% in Q1 2026 as investor confidence strengthens: JLL
- 28** Accor Brings Mantis Brand to India with Eco-Luxury Wildlife Retreat in Nagarhole
- 30** Paris' legendary Bus Palladium returns as a luxury hotel blending rock history, design and nightlife
- 33** The Leela at 40: Celebrating a Legacy of Indian Luxury While Charting a Future of Experiential Growth

- 34** Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay Elevates Luxury Hospitality Amid Bali's Tourism Boom
- 38** Accor Reports Resilient Q1 2026 Performance Amid Geopolitical Headwinds
- 40** Atmosphere Core Expands India Footprint with Boutique Heritage Hotel in Panjim
- 44** JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa Appoints Kashmira Sahu as Director of Operations
- 46** Pride Hotels Limited Expands Gujarat Presence with Launch of 51-Room Pride Elite Himmatnagar
- 47** India top spending market for Washington, DC in 2025
- 52** Germany positions itself as a leading experiential destination for India's new-age travellers
- 54** Brand USA spotlights fan experiences across the United States ahead of FIFA World Cup
- 56** Greece's Tourism Rebound Accelerates as India Emerges a Strategic Growth Market
- 58** Uluru-Kata Tjuta Signature Walk Redefines Luxury Desert Trekking with First Overnight Experience Inside National Park
- 60** Thailand to Reinstate Shorter Visa-Free Entry Rules, Roll Back 60-Day Scheme for 93 Countries
- 62** Global Luxury Travel Leaders Converge in Sanya to Shape the Future of Intelligent, Human-Centric Travel
- 64** ICONIC Travel & Tourism Summit 2026 Brings Together Industry Leaders to Shape India's Tourism Future

EDITOR'S LETTER

Rail Europe Expands Swiss Portfolio with Iconic Alpine Excursions for Travel Advisors

Rail Europe has expanded its Switzerland portfolio with the launch of a broad range of mountain excursions and alpine rail experiences, giving travel advisors and distribution partners enhanced opportunities to build experience-led itineraries for international travellers.

The newly introduced products are now available through Rail Europe's Rail Portal and API distribution channels, enabling travel agencies to combine Swiss rail passes, point-to-point rail journeys, and mountain excursions within a single booking ecosystem.

The move comes amid rising global demand for Switzerland as a premium rail and experiential tourism



destination, particularly among long-haul travellers seeking immersive alpine adventures and scenic journeys.

According to Rail Europe, iconic mountain experiences are increasingly becoming a central component of Swiss itineraries rather than optional add-ons, especially for first-time visitors to the country.

Among the headline attractions now available for booking are Jungfrauoch – Top of Europe, home to Europe's highest railway station and panoramic views of the Aletsch Glacier; Matterhorn Glacier Paradise, renowned for its high-altitude viewing platform; and Mount Titlis, famous for its rotating cable car and dramatic Cliff Walk attraction.

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
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

PRINTED BY

STUDIO 9 PRODUCTIONS, C-59, Defence Colony, Chetna Marg, New Delhi 110024, India
Volume 26, Issue 04, May 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.



Additional mountain rail experiences include Gornergrat Railway with open-air views of the iconic Matterhorn, as well as journeys to Mount Pilatus via the world-famous cogwheel railway from Alpnachstad.

The expanded collection also incorporates a wide range of other celebrated Swiss attractions and panoramic journeys, including Schilthorn, Glacier 3000, Mount Rigi, Säntis, Briener Rothorn, Harder Kulm, Grindelwald First, and Monte Generoso.

Florence Pasquier, Chief Commercial Officer at Rail Europe, said the company had seen growing demand from travel partners seeking a more streamlined booking experience that integrates rail transportation and alpine attractions into a single platform.

The new offerings have been developed in partnership with Travel Switzerland and Swiss Federal Railways (SBB). The portfolio includes both

full-fare and discounted products for holders of the Swiss Travel Pass and Swiss Half Fare Card.

Rail Europe noted that the products are available across all of its global markets without geographical restrictions, allowing international travel advisors and tour operators to offer Swiss rail and mountain combinations more seamlessly to customers worldwide.

The expansion reflects the continuing popularity of Switzerland within Rail Europe's B2B network. The company reported that Swiss rail bookings recorded 16 per cent year-on-year passenger growth last year, highlighting the sustained appeal of Switzerland's scenic rail journeys and outdoor experiences among global travellers.

Industry observers note that the integration of mountain excursions into the broader rail booking flow aligns

with wider travel trends favouring flexible, experience-driven itineraries, particularly among premium leisure travellers seeking authentic and nature-focused journeys across Europe.



DEVENDER GROVER

We are on



travel
SPAN



Qatar Airways Posts QAR 7.08 Billion Profit Despite Global Economic Headwinds



Qatar Airways has reported a strong financial performance for the fiscal year 2025/26, posting a post-tax profit of QAR 7.08 billion (US\$1.94 billion), reinforcing the airline group's resilience amid geopolitical tensions and ongoing volatility across the global aviation landscape. The results come despite operational disruptions during the final month of the financial year caused by regional instability in the Middle East.

The Doha-based carrier transported more than 41.8 million passengers during the fiscal year, maintaining extensive international connectivity through Hamad International Airport, one of the world's leading aviation hubs. The airline's cargo division also delivered another standout year, handling over 1.43 million tonnes of chargeable cargo and securing a 12 per cent share of the global air freight market, further strengthening its position as the world's largest air cargo operator.

The airline's operational performance remained equally robust. Qatar Airways achieved an impressive

86 per cent on-time performance rate, earning the prestigious Cirium Platinum Award for Operational Excellence and placing the carrier among the world's top-performing airlines for punctuality and operational reliability.

According to Group Chief Executive Officer Hamad Al-Khater, the results reflect both financial discipline and the airline's ability to adapt during periods of uncertainty. He noted that the organisation demonstrated resilience under challenging conditions while continuing to maintain world-class service standards and operational consistency.

The financial year also marked a significant period of expansion and innovation for the airline. Qatar Airways announced major fleet growth initiatives through agreements for up to 210 aircraft and 400 engines, underscoring its long-term confidence in global aviation demand. The airline additionally expanded its onboard technology offering by operating the world's first and largest Starlink-equipped widebody fleet, significantly enhancing inflight connectivity for passengers.

Further cementing its premium positioning, Qatar Airways was once again named the "World's Best Airline" by Skytrax, marking the ninth time the carrier has secured the coveted title. Meanwhile, Hamad International Airport retained its standing as one of the Middle East's leading aviation gateways.

Despite challenges caused by temporary airspace closures and regional tensions that affected airlines across the Gulf region, Qatar Airways continued rebuilding and optimising its global network. The carrier now plans to expand its operations to more than 160 destinations by summer 2026, including new routes across South America and Africa, as it accelerates its post-disruption recovery strategy.

Industry analysts note that the airline's latest financial performance demonstrates the growing resilience of major Gulf carriers, which continue to leverage strategic geographic positioning, diversified business models, premium services, and strong transit connectivity to maintain global competitiveness amid evolving market dynamics.

Etihad Brings Double the A380 Magic to Paris

Paris to receive triple-daily Etihad service this summer, including two daily A380 flights featuring Etihad’s iconic The Residence



Zayed Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) at convenient morning and afternoon departure times designed for both business and leisure travellers, complemented by a third daily Boeing 787-9 service featuring First, Business and Economy cabins. Together, the additional frequencies will significantly expand premium travel capacity between Abu Dhabi and the French capital.

Arik De, Chief Revenue and Commercial Officer, Etihad Airways, said: “Paris is one of our most popular and most loved destinations, and this summer we are giving our guests more of what they love. Flying double-daily on the A380 to Charles de Gaulle is a statement of confidence in one of the world’s great travel markets. Whether our guests are heading to Paris for business, for leisure, or as the start of a journey onward across Europe, we are offering them our iconic A380 experience at the double.”

The double-daily A380 operation will bring more of Etihad’s flagship experience to the French capital than ever before. Guests travelling between Abu Dhabi and Paris can enjoy the airline’s celebrated onboard offering across every cabin, from The Residence – the world’s only three-room suite in commercial aviation – and the exclusive First Apartments, to the spacious Business and Economy seats.

With three daily flights to Paris, including two operated by the A380, Etihad is significantly expanding premium travel capacity between Abu Dhabi and one of the world’s most iconic destinations, while strengthening connections to the wider Middle East, Indian subcontinent and Asia through its growing global network.

Paris schedule from 1 July to 24 October 2026

Flight	From	Departure	To	Arrival	Aircraft
EY31	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	02:35	Paris (CDG)	07:55	A380
EY33	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	14:20	Paris (CDG)	19:30	A380
EY35	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	08:50	Paris (CDG)	14:00	787-9
EY32	Paris (CDG)	10:40	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	19:35	A380
EY34	Paris (CDG)	21:50	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	06:30 (+1)	A380
EY36	Paris (CDG)	15:50	Abu Dhabi (AUH)	00:30 (+1)	787-9

Etihad Airways will increase its Airbus A380 service to Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG) to double-daily this summer, expanding the route to triple-daily overall and making Paris one of only a handful of destinations in the world to be served twice a day by the iconic double-decker aircraft.

From 1 July, Etihad’s expanded Paris schedule will include two daily Airbus A380 services departing

Emirates brings Eid Al Adha celebrations to the skies with festive menus and curated entertainment on ice

In celebration of Eid Al Adha from 26 to 29 May and honouring its proud heritage, Emirates will serve a feast of regional flavours, festive desserts, and world-class entertainment across selected routes, bringing customers together to celebrate one of the most significant occasions in the Islamic calendar.



Eid flavours onboard Emirates

Across all cabin classes on selected flights, Emirates customers can enjoy a specially curated Eid menu inspired by regional cuisines and traditional flavours. In First Class, customers can savour dishes such as *lamb machbous*, *prawn morbian*, *lamb madfoon*, and *beef foga* braised in Emirati spices. Desserts include *pistachio and chocolate nammoura cake*, *white chocolate and rahash mousse cake*, and *warm walnut baklawa cake*.

In Business Class and Premium Economy, festive dishes include *lamb chermoula*, *grilled chicken*, and more, alongside indulgent desserts inspired

by Middle Eastern flavours. In Economy Class, customers can look forward to comforting favourites including *chicken kabsa*, *lamb ouzi*, *daoud basha*, and *beef sajiyeh*, followed by desserts such as *pistachio cake* and *coffee cake*.

As part of the Eid celebrations, Emirates will also offer special edible giveaways onboard. First Class customers will receive *orange blondie and date cheesecake*, while customers in Business Class and Premium Economy will be served *orange cake with rose and pistachio*, alongside *date and walnut cake*.

Customers travelling onboard the iconic Emirates A380 will also be

offered a selection of sweet treats including assorted *baklawa*, *pistachio maamoul*, *pomegranate cheesecake*, *sesame brownie*, and *loomi and strawberry profiterole* throughout the celebration period. As a gesture of Emirati hospitality, traditional *Emirati coffee* and *dates* will also be offered in the onboard lounge.

Emirates Lounges in Jeddah and Cairo serve Eid favourites

In Emirates lounges in Jeddah and Cairo from 27 to 29 May, customers can continue the celebrations with a selection of regional dishes and desserts. In Cairo, customers can enjoy *Egyptian salad*, and oriental pastries including *basbousa*, *baqlawa*, and *kunafa*. In Jeddah, festive offerings include *lamb mandi*, *Saudi salad*, *cheese kunafa*, and *date smoothie*.

Entertainment for Eid on Emirates ice

Throughout Eid Al Adha, Emirates customers can explore up to 6,500 channels of on-demand entertainment on *ice*, including favourites from MBC Shahid, over 70 Arabic films such as *6 Ayyam*, *Daye*, and *BAAB* by Emirati director Nayla Al Khaja, as well as more than 70 Arabic TV channels and popular Turkish series dubbed in Arabic. Customers can also access Hollywood movies with Arabic subtitles, Arabic classics and plays, over 500 channels of Arabic music, podcasts and audiobooks, and The Holy Qur'an onboard.

Emirates completes first-ever retrofit of two-class A380 aircraft

Introduces Premium Economy seating to the upper deck of its iconic A380 in a 2-3-2 layout

Emirates has reached a defining milestone in its ambitious multi-billion dollar retrofit programme with the successful reconfiguration of its first two-class A380 aircraft. The newly refurbished aircraft (A6-EUX) has taken to the skies operating as EK

39/40 between Dubai and Birmingham, featuring sparkling new interiors with Emirates' latest products in three cabin classes: 76 Business Class seats, 56 Premium Economy Seats, and 437 Economy Class seats.

This is the first of 15 two-class

A380 aircraft in its fleet that Emirates will renovate as part of its commitment to offer customers a consistently superior experience in the sky.

Managed entirely in-house by Emirates Engineering in Dubai, the retrofit programme has so far



completed work on 95 Emirates aircraft including 42 Airbus A380s and 53 Boeing 777s, representing more than one third of Emirates' current fleet of aircraft.

Sir Tim Clark, President

Emirates Airline said: "The Emirates retrofit programme revolves around the central premise that we will offer our customers a truly elevated experience every time they choose to travel with us. To this end, our engineering team has been working continuously and at pace in close collaboration with an ecosystem of partners and suppliers to meticulously refresh and integrate the best-in-class products to each aircraft in the programme. Our retrofit programme has raised the bar at every step, in terms of complexity, scale and detailed craftsmanship. The



reconfiguration of our two-class A380 into three-class layout that brings our popular Premium Economy seating onto the upper deck illustrates the extensive capabilities of our team."

Fleet First for Premium Economy

As part of the retrofit, Emirates' award-winning Premium Economy cabin will be featured, for the first time, in the upper deck of the A380. Featuring spacious leather seats with generous recline in a 2-3-2 configuration, customers can enjoy features including full leg and footrests, 6-way adjustable headrests, built-in charging ports, side cocktail tables as well as elevated dining experiences and an unmatched entertainment system via a 13.3 inch personal screen.

Refreshed interiors across all cabins

The retrofitted three class A380 features upgraded interiors across all cabins including the latest generation seats and updated cabin finishings. From nose to tail, from fresh carpets to ceiling panels, Emirates' new signature elements are evident throughout the cabin including modern colour palettes, specially designed Ghaf tree motifs as well as premium wood finishes.

The nuts and bolts of retrofitting the first two-class A380

During the retrofit, the entire cabin interior of A6-EUX was taken apart, refreshed and put back together with precision. The Emirates Engineering team had to carry out extensive modifications to the upper deck of the A380 aircraft by removing 120 Economy Class seats to accommodate 56 Premium Economy and an additional 18 Business Class seats. To support this change in configuration, the team had to undertake structural work to remove, upgrade and reposition galley modules, stowage areas, overhead bins, partitions and other cabin features along with associated changes to the electrical and plumbing systems in the aircraft.

It took a team of around 50 engineers and technicians investing

an approximate 35,000 man-hours and utilising more than 2,500 different types of parts.

Emirates Engineering completed the retrofit of the first two-class A380 over a period of two months, including comprehensive planning and testing. With learnings from the first project integrated into future processes, retrofits of other two-class A380 aircraft are expected to take around half the time at 30 days. By the end of 2026, all 15 two-class A380 aircraft in the Emirates fleet will be retrofitted.

Evolution of the Emirates retrofit programme

The ambitious Emirates retrofit programme was first announced in 2021, emerging from a bold vision to ensure that Emirates' signature standards of customer experience could be delivered consistently and seamlessly to customers across the world. 120 aircraft were initially slated to be refurbished under the first phase of the programme. However, by May 2024, based on the success of the programme and the positive feedback received from customers, the programme scope was expanded to 191 aircraft and then further scaled up to 219 aircraft later in the year. A dedicated team of around 270 staff ensure that on an average two refreshed aircraft emerge every month from the Emirates Engineering hangars in Dubai.

Consuming responsibly

In line with its commitment to minimise its environmental footprint, materials retrieved from the 219 Emirates A380 and Boeing 777 aircraft undergoing cabin retrofit are evaluated for repurposing as part of Emirates' upcycling programme. This has resulted in successful initiatives including the "Aircrafted" range of limited-edition collector pieces such as luggage items; and "Aircrafted for Kids" backpacks made from repurposed Economy Class seat fabric. To date, around 4,000 Aircrafted for Kids backpacks have been donated to children across 10 countries.

Cathay Group Reports Strong April 2026 Traffic Growth Amid Rising Fuel Cost Pressures



The Cathay Group has reported robust passenger and cargo growth for April 2026, driven by resilient leisure travel demand, major international events, and strong cargo performance, even as soaring jet fuel prices linked to ongoing Middle East tensions continued to place pressure on airline operating costs.

According to the group's latest traffic figures, both

Cathay Pacific and HK Express recorded healthy passenger growth during the month, while cargo operations maintained solid momentum across key international trade corridors.

However, the airline group acknowledged that elevated fuel prices — exacerbated by geopolitical instability in the Middle East and the continuing Iran conflict — remain a significant operational

challenge for global carriers. (cathaypacific.com, reuters.com)

Passenger Demand Remains Strong

Cathay Pacific carried nearly 2.77 million passengers in April 2026, representing a 16.5 per cent increase compared with the same month last year. Revenue Passenger Kilometres (RPKs) rose by 17.8 per cent, while

passenger load factors climbed to an impressive 88.2 per cent.

For the first four months of 2026, the airline transported more than 10.75 million passengers, reflecting year-on-year growth of 19 per cent.

Lavinia Lau, Chief Customer and Commercial Officer of the Cathay Group, attributed the strong performance to seasonal holiday traffic, event-driven



stimulated outbound and inbound traffic across Cathay Pacific’s global network.

The airline also noted continued strength in premium cabin demand, supported by international trade exhibitions and corporate events taking place in Hong Kong.

Middle East Tensions Impact Route Planning

Despite maintaining positive growth momentum, Cathay Group confirmed that it has extended the temporary suspension of passenger services to Dubai and Riyadh until the end of August 2026 due to weakened travel demand and regional instability.

The airline stated that capacity originally allocated to Middle East services would instead be redeployed to high-demand European destinations including Manchester and Rome, where customer demand remains robust.

Nevertheless, Cathay Group reiterated that it remains on track to achieve its overall 2026 passenger capacity growth target of approximately 10 per cent despite a limited number of flight cancellations earlier in May and June. (reuters.com)

Cargo Division Continues Global Expansion

Cargo operations also delivered strong results in April, with Cathay Cargo transporting more than 144 million kilograms of cargo during the month — an 8.2 per cent increase year-on-year.

Available Freight Tonne Kilometres (AFTKs) increased by 7.4 per cent, while overall cargo tonnage for the first four months of 2026 rose by 7.8 per cent.

The airline highlighted particularly strong demand from Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Americas, while specialist logistics solutions continued to perform strongly.

Semiconductor shipments across Asia and technology exports from North America contributed significantly to growth in Cathay’s specialised cargo services, including Cathay Expert and Cathay Dangerous Goods.

The airline also reported healthy growth in pharmaceutical shipments from Europe into mainland China through its Cathay Pharma solution.

Further strengthening its regional cargo network, Cathay Cargo recently added Bangkok to its freighter

operations network earlier this month.

HK Express Maintains Steady Growth

Low-cost subsidiary HK Express also posted positive results, carrying close to 730,000 passengers in April 2026 — a year-on-year increase of nearly 5 per cent.

Strong demand on Thailand routes and services to secondary cities across Northeast Asia continued to support growth, while bookings for upcoming travel periods remain ahead of the previous year across most destinations.

Outlook Remains Positive Despite Market Volatility

Looking ahead to the summer peak travel season, Cathay Group indicated that both Cathay Pacific and HK Express would maintain their planned July and August schedules to support Hong Kong’s role as a major international aviation hub.

However, the airline acknowledged a gradual shift in consumer booking patterns, with travellers increasingly making reservations closer to departure dates amid broader global economic and geopolitical uncertainty.

Industry observers note that while elevated fuel prices and geopolitical risks continue to affect airline profitability worldwide, Cathay Group’s strong operational performance, diversified network strategy, and balanced passenger-cargo business model position it well for continued recovery and expansion throughout 2026.

demand, and resilient leisure travel across both regional and long-haul markets.

Travel demand surged during the Easter holiday period and continued through mid-April, boosted by international events such as the Hong Kong Sevens, which generated strong inbound traffic into Hong Kong.

Towards the end of the month, pre-holiday bookings associated with China’s Golden Week further

“According to the group’s latest traffic figures, both Cathay Pacific and HK Express recorded healthy passenger growth during the month, while cargo operations maintained solid momentum across key international trade corridors.”

SWISS to offer its first-ever service to Bengaluru, India



SWISS will be further expanding its network in the 2026/27 winter schedules with a new service to Bengaluru, its first ever to a destination in Southern India. SWISS will serve a total of 88 destinations worldwide from Zurich and Geneva in the coming winter timetable period. The company will also be extending services with its new Airbus A350 fleet to Johannesburg and Shanghai. So even more long-haul travelers will be able to enjoy its new 'SWISS Senses' service product with its state-of-the-art cabin and its enhanced air travel experience.



fourth-largest city. Bengaluru is one of Asia's leading centers of technology and innovation. Along with international tech corporations, numerous European companies operate in the Bengaluru region, which has developed in the past few years into a major high-tech and innovation hub.

"We are delighted that, with Bengaluru, we will soon be providing our customers with another attractive and multi-faceted long-haul destination," says SWISS CEO Jens Fehlinger. "India's Silicon Valley has a lot to offer both leisure and business travelers, and is also a perfect gateway for exploring Southern India. Our new Bengaluru service is particularly aimed at meeting the growing demand among the business community for direct flights to this major technology hub."

The new eastbound LX 140 service will depart from Zurich daily (except Mondays and Wednesdays) at 13:20 and arrive in Bengaluru some nine hours later at 02:55 the following day. The westbound LX 141 service will leave Bengaluru daily (except Tuesdays and Thursdays) at 04:50 and arrive in Zurich at 10:50 the same day.

Airbus A350 services extended to Johannesburg and Shanghai

SWISS expects its new long-haul Airbus A350 fleet to grow to a total of five aircraft by the end of this year. As a result, even more travelers will soon be able to take full advantage of the new 'SWISS Senses' long-haul air travel experience.

Following its Airbus A350 services to Boston and Seoul, SWISS will be deploying its advanced new Airbus long-haul twinjets on its Zurich-Johannesburg route in the coming winter schedules and on its Zurich-Shanghai services from as early as September. So travelers on these routes, too, will soon be enjoying the innovative SWISS Senses cabin, even greater inflight comfort and an even more memorable long-haul air travel experience in all seating classes.

Further network modifications

In addition to its long-haul service to and from New York, SWISS's Geneva-based network will in future extend to 15 short-haul destinations. Berlin, Hamburg and Pristina will not be served from Geneva in the coming winter schedules. The cessation of these services has been prompted by the continuing limited availability worldwide of aircraft and engine parts for the SWISS Airbus A220 fleet. SWISS is modifying its services from Geneva accordingly, to further strengthen overall fleet planning and operational stability. SWISS will serve 60 European and 24 intercontinental destinations from Zurich in the coming winter timetable period.

The 2026/27 winter timetable period will run from 25 October 2026 to 27 March 2027. All in all, SWISS will offer service to 88 destinations from Zurich and Geneva in its coming winter schedules.

Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) will be further expanding its long-haul network in the coming winter schedules with the introduction of a new five-times-weekly service to Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore) in Southern India. Bengaluru is SWISS's third Indian destination, joining Delhi and Mumbai.

Bengaluru: new to the SWISS network

The new Bengaluru service will be the first in SWISS's history to India's



Air Canada Launches New Direct Palma–Montreal Route, Strengthening Mallorca–North America Connectivity



Air Canada has officially launched a new direct summer route connecting Palma de Mallorca with Montreal, further strengthening transatlantic connectivity between Mallorca and North America.

The new seasonal service, scheduled to commence on June 18, 2026, will operate between Palma de Mallorca Airport and Montréal–Trudeau International Airport, becoming the only nonstop air link currently connecting Canada and Mallorca.

The launch was formally celebrated during a special event at Mallorca Son Moix Stadium, attended by aviation executives, Canadian diplomatic representatives, regional officials, and tourism stakeholders. Among those present were Margaret Skinner, Senior Director of Sales EMEA at Air Canada, Canadian Consul in Spain Devon Zhang, Bureau du Québec Barcelona Director

Maël Solen Picard, and Palma Mayor Jaime Martínez Llabrés.

The new service will operate three times weekly throughout the peak summer travel season, with departures from Palma scheduled every Monday, Thursday, and Saturday. Return flights from Montreal will operate on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, offering travellers a direct journey of just over eight hours between the two destinations.

Air Canada stated that the route has been designed to strengthen tourism, business travel, and family connectivity while also improving access to the airline’s wider international network.

Speaking during the launch event, Margaret Skinner said the new route reflects the airline’s ongoing commitment to deepening ties between Spain and Canada while enhancing passenger convenience through

seamless long-haul connectivity.

Passengers travelling from Mallorca will also gain access to Air Canada’s broader North American and international network through its Montreal hub, with onward single-ticket connections available to destinations including Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cancun, Bogota, and Mexico City.

A key advantage for travellers connecting onward to the United States through Montreal is the availability of U.S. Customs and Border Protection preclearance facilities at Montréal–Trudeau International Airport. This enables passengers to complete immigration formalities before departure and arrive in the United States as domestic travellers, significantly reducing arrival processing times.

The route will be operated using Air Canada’s Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, offering passengers a choice of Economy, Premium Economy, and the airline’s Signature Class premium cabin experience.

Travellers will also have access to Aeroplan, the carrier’s loyalty programme that allows members to earn and redeem points across Air Canada’s global route network and partner airlines.

The new connection is expected to further boost Mallorca’s growing appeal among North American travellers while simultaneously opening greater opportunities for Spanish travellers seeking direct access to Canada and the wider Americas. Tourism officials and industry stakeholders view the route as an important addition to the Balearic Islands’ international aviation network, particularly during the high-demand summer season.

Kobe Airport Unveils ‘Lounge KOBE’ to Elevate International Passenger Experience

Kansai Airports has announced the opening of “Lounge KOBE” at Kobe Airport’s Terminal 2, further enhancing the international passenger experience as the airport continues expanding its global operations and premium travel infrastructure.

The new airline lounge officially opens on 21 May 2026 and will operate within the international departure waiting area of Terminal 2 at Kobe Airport.

Designed to reflect the unique identity and elegance of Kobe, the lounge combines contemporary comfort with regional cultural influences, offering travellers an immersive pre-departure experience inspired by the city’s maritime heritage and sophisticated urban character.

According to Kansai Airports Kobe, the lounge interior incorporates several design elements closely associated with the city, including Kobe tartan-patterned wall features and carpeting inspired by the sea, paying tribute to Kobe’s long-standing identity as one of Japan’s most internationally connected port cities.

The facility has been developed to provide passengers with a relaxing and refined environment before departure, while also showcasing local culinary traditions through meals and



refreshments prepared using ingredients and regional cuisine from Kobe and the wider Hyogo Prefecture.

Airport officials said the concept behind Lounge KOBE is to ensure travellers enjoy a distinctly local experience that extends throughout every stage of their journey, including the final moments before boarding.

The Kansai Airports Group noted that the opening forms part of its broader strategy to improve passenger convenience, strengthen premium airport services, and deliver more comfortable and memorable travel experiences as international passenger traffic continues to recover

and expand across Japan.

Located inside Terminal 2’s international departure zone, the lounge will operate daily in alignment with departing international flight schedules, opening approximately two-and-a-half hours before the first departure and remaining operational until the final international departure of the day.

The lounge features seating for 40 guests across a floor area of 154.12 square metres. Interior design and construction were carried out by J.FRONT PRIME SPACE Co., Ltd., a company known for its expertise in commercial and hospitality space design.

The launch of Lounge KOBE comes as Kobe Airport continues to strengthen its position within Japan’s regional aviation landscape, supported by growing international connectivity and increasing inbound tourism demand to the Kansai region.

Industry analysts note that airports across Japan are increasingly investing in premium passenger facilities and destination-focused experiences as competition intensifies to attract international airlines, leisure travellers, and high-value premium passengers ahead of major tourism growth projections in the coming years.



Ontario International Airport Sustains Growth Momentum with Rising Passenger Traffic and Cargo Volumes

Passenger demand and air freight activity continue to gain traction at Ontario International Airport (ONT), reinforcing its position as a key aviation gateway in Southern California. Newly released data from the Ontario International Airport Authority confirms that March 2026 marked the fourth consecutive month of passenger growth, alongside a robust surge in cargo operations.



Steady Climb in Passenger Traffic

The airport handled 574,819 passengers in March, reflecting a 2.7 percent increase compared to the same month last year. Domestic travel accounted for 514,777 passengers, while international volumes reached 60,042—an impressive 55.2 percent year-on-year rise, highlighting the airport's expanding global connectivity.

The upward trend is even more

evident in quarterly figures. During the first three months of 2026, ONT welcomed more than 1.54 million travellers, representing a 4.1 percent increase over the same period in 2025. While domestic traffic remained largely stable at approximately 1.36 million passengers, international travel surged by 58.4 percent to 181,854, signalling growing demand for cross-border routes.

Airline Mix Reflects Competitive Strength

ONT's passenger base continues to be supported by a diverse mix of major carriers. Southwest Airlines led the market in March with a 37.5 percent share, followed by American Airlines (17.2 percent), Alaska Airlines (10.2 percent), United Airlines (9.5 percent) and Delta Air Lines (8.6 percent).

This balanced airline presence has helped the airport maintain steady growth while offering travellers a broad network of domestic and international connections.

Air Freight Surges in Double Digits

Alongside passenger gains, ONT is witnessing sustained expansion in cargo operations—an increasingly vital component of airport economics. Total air cargo volumes rose by 11.6 percent in March to 75,193 tons. Within this, commercial freight recorded a strong 15.3 percent increase, while mail shipments declined by 7.5 percent.

Year-to-date figures further underscore this momentum. Total cargo tonnage surpassed 208,000 tons in the first quarter, marking a 9.2 percent increase compared to the previous year. Freight volumes alone grew by 12.7 percent, highlighting ONT's strengthening role as a logistics hub in the Inland Empire region.

Confidence Amid Uncertain Outlook

Airport leadership attributes the continued growth to strong partnerships with airlines and a consistent focus on passenger experience. Atif Elkadi, Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario International Airport Authority, emphasised that

the sustained increase in passenger numbers reflects both airline confidence and customer satisfaction.

At the same time, he acknowledged potential headwinds, including rising fuel costs that could impact the aviation sector in the months ahead. Despite these uncertainties, ONT is prioritising operational reliability, service quality and schedule stability—factors increasingly critical in a competitive travel environment.

Strengthening Regional Economic Impact

The steady rise in cargo volumes is particularly significant for the regional economy. As one of the fastest-growing logistics corridors in the United States, Southern California relies heavily on efficient air freight infrastructure. ONT's continued double-digit growth in freight activity positions it as a key contributor to supply chain efficiency and economic development.

A Strategic Gateway in Southern California

Located approximately 35 miles east of Los Angeles, Ontario International Airport serves as a major alternative to the region's larger, more congested hubs. Its ability to combine operational efficiency with expanding connectivity has made it increasingly attractive to both airlines and travellers.

Ranked among the most popular mid-sized airports in the United States in recent passenger satisfaction studies, ONT continues to build its reputation as a traveller-friendly gateway offering access to destinations across the United States, Mexico, Central America and Asia.

Looking Ahead

With consistent passenger growth, expanding international demand and a thriving cargo business, Ontario International Airport is well-positioned for continued momentum in 2026. While external challenges remain, the airport's strategic focus on service excellence and partnership-driven growth is helping it navigate an evolving aviation landscape.



Miami International Airport unveils AI-powered digital monitoring hub as part of \$14 billion modernization strategy



Miami International Airport has announced plans to develop a next-generation Airport Operations Center (AOC) and Digital Monitoring Hub that will significantly expand the airport's operational oversight, security infrastructure and emergency response capabilities as part of its long-term modernization programme.

The new facility, scheduled for completion in 2027, is being positioned as the first airport-wide digital monitoring hub of its kind in the United States, integrating artificial intelligence, advanced surveillance systems and real-time operational management technologies into a centralized command centre designed to support one of the country's busiest international gateways.

Airport officials and Daniella Levine Cava unveiled renderings and operational plans for the project, which represents an investment of approximately US\$33 million. The 13,254-square-foot facility will become a central component of Miami International Airport's wider transformation strategy aimed at enhancing passenger experience, operational efficiency, resilience and safety standards.

The future operations centre will feature AI-powered long-range pan-tilt-zoom cameras, advanced digital tower technology and a high-definition panoramic video wall capable of delivering 360-degree visibility across the airport's airside, landside and terminal environments. The integrated system is intended to provide real-time situational awareness for airport management, security personnel and emergency response teams.

Officials stated that the hub will support coordinated oversight across multiple operational areas, including passenger movement, aircraft activity, ground transportation, security monitoring and crisis response management. The project is also expected to strengthen operational resilience during extreme weather events and emergency situations, an increasingly critical priority for airports



located in hurricane-prone regions such as South Florida.

The facility's design incorporates hurricane-resistant towers, vibration-controlled operational platforms and cyber-secure infrastructure to protect mission-critical airport systems. Dedicated workspace for representatives from approximately 30 agencies will allow the operations centre to transition into a full-scale emergency command centre during crisis situations or major operational disruptions.

According to airport authorities, the new AOC forms part of the airport's broader US\$14 billion Modernization in Action (M.I.A.) Plan, one of the largest airport redevelopment programmes currently underway in North America. The initiative includes more than 200 infrastructure and customer experience projects planned over the next five years.

Speaking during the project announcement, Mayor Daniella Levine Cava highlighted the airport's wider modernization ambitions and the growing role of technology in airport operations.

She stated that as Miami International Airport continues modernizing the passenger journey "from the cabin to the curb," the new operations centre will further elevate the airport's safety and security capabilities while supporting its long-term transformation into a more customer-friendly and future-ready aviation hub.

The modernization programme reflects Miami International Airport's strategic importance as one of the leading international gateways between North America, Latin America, Europe and the Caribbean. The airport has continued to experience strong passenger and cargo growth in recent years, driving substantial

investment in operational capacity, infrastructure modernization and digital transformation.

Several major projects have already been completed or are currently under development under the M.I.A. Plan. These include the opening of the new Ibis Garage in December 2025, modernization and preventive maintenance work involving more than 600 elevators, escalators and moving walkways, and the renovation of 196 public-access restrooms throughout the terminal complex.

Future expansion projects include the planned Concourse K expansion scheduled for completion in 2029 and the Gate D60 expansion targeted for 2030, both of which are expected to support continued passenger growth and expanded airline operations.

The introduction of AI-enabled monitoring systems and centralized operational management technology also reflects broader trends across the global aviation sector, where airports are increasingly investing in smart infrastructure, predictive analytics and digital command platforms to improve efficiency, reduce operational risk and enhance passenger experience.

Industry analysts note that next-generation airport operations centres are becoming critical components of modern aviation infrastructure as airports seek to manage increasingly complex operations while strengthening cybersecurity, resilience and real-time decision-making capabilities.

Miami International Airport's investment in the new digital monitoring hub positions the airport among a growing number of major global gateways adopting advanced operational technologies to support long-term growth and evolving security requirements in the international aviation industry.

Goa Tourism Reinvents Itself Through Regenerative and Experiential Travel

An Interview with Deepak Narvekar on the New Vision for Goa Tourism



In an extensive interaction with Travel Span, tourism official Deepak Narvekar spoke about how Goa is repositioning itself beyond its traditional beach identity and evolving into a holistic tourism destination focused on regenerative tourism, spirituality, wellness, culture, heritage, and sustainable development.

Q&A: Goa's Tourism Transformation

Goa Tourism has been widely appreciated for its recent initiatives. What exactly do you mean by "regenerative tourism"?

Deepak Narvekar (DN):

Regenerative tourism is one of the

key initiatives introduced under the leadership of Goa's Tourism Minister, Rohan Khaunte. The idea is to ensure tourism directly benefits local communities. It focuses on women's empowerment, promoting local cuisine, preserving traditional festivals, and encouraging tourists to experience authentic Goan culture.

A major part of this initiative is the promotion of homestays. The Goa Government has introduced a homestay policy under which grants are provided to encourage locals to start homestay businesses. This allows tourists to stay in the interiors of Goa and experience the traditional Goan lifestyle.

Goa has long been associated primarily with beaches. How are you changing that perception?

DN: We launched the "Goa Beyond Beaches" campaign to encourage tourists to explore the hinterlands and cultural side of Goa. Earlier, most visitors concentrated only around the beach belts. Now, tourists are increasingly moving towards interior villages, heritage sites, spice plantations, and eco-tourism experiences.

At spice plantations, for example, visitors are welcomed traditionally with flowers and local beverages. They are served authentic Saraswat cuisine and taken on guided plantation tours showcasing Goa's rich spice heritage.

Eco-tourism and adventure tourism also seem to be gaining momentum in Goa. Could you elaborate?

DN: Absolutely. Goa is now promoting wildlife safaris and nature tourism through the Goa Forest Development Corporation. We have safari experiences in areas such as Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary and jeep trails to the iconic Dudhsagar Waterfalls.

Tourists are increasingly looking for immersive and nature-based experiences, and Goa has tremendous potential in that segment.

Spiritual tourism appears to be another emerging focus area. What initiatives are being taken in this direction?

DN: Spiritual tourism is becoming extremely important globally, and Goa is embracing that trend. Recently, the Goa Spiritual Festival held in Calangute received tremendous response.

Under the “Ekadasha Teertha” initiative, Goa Tourism has identified 11 ancient temples with over a hundred years of history and developed curated spiritual circuits. These include temples such as the historic Saptakoteshwar Temple, the ancient Mahadev Temple at Tambdi Surla, and the rare Brahma Temple at Karmali in Sattari Taluka — one of the very few Brahma temples in India.

These circuits offer visitors an entirely different dimension of Goa.

Wellness tourism is another segment witnessing global growth. How is Goa capitalising on this trend?

DN: Goa has become an important destination for wellness tourism, yoga, and Ayurveda. International tourists especially are drawn towards wellness retreats and Ayurvedic healing.

Recently, an Ayurveda Expo organised in Goa received excellent participation. Institutions and wellness centres across Goa are now actively promoting Ayurveda therapies, yoga programmes, and holistic healing experiences.

How has connectivity improved tourism growth in Goa?

DN: Connectivity has significantly improved with the operationalisation of the new international airport at Mopa. Earlier, Goa depended largely on Dabolim Airport, but now Mopa is catering to both domestic and international traffic.

Flights from multiple Indian cities and international destinations have increased tourist arrivals considerably.

After the pandemic, domestic tourism surged across India. How is Goa balancing domestic and international tourism promotion?

DN: Last year, Goa welcomed nearly one crore domestic tourists along with substantial international arrivals.

To promote our tourism offerings globally, Goa Tourism actively participates in major international travel exhibitions like World Travel

Mart and ITB Berlin. We also organise roadshows in countries such as Poland, Denmark, Kazakhstan, Sweden, Finland, China, and Russia.

Russia and the United Kingdom continue to remain strong source markets for Goa, with charter flights operating regularly. We are also aggressively promoting Goa through digital campaigns, influencer marketing, and social media outreach.

Goa’s festivals and carnivals have become major attractions. Could you highlight some of the most important cultural events?

DN: The Goa Carnival remains one of our flagship international events. Held annually in cities like Panaji, Margao, Mapusa, and Vasco, it attracts lakhs of visitors from India and abroad.

Following Carnival, we celebrate Shigmo, Goa’s vibrant spring festival featuring traditional folk performances, mythological floats, dhol-tasha processions, and colourful street celebrations.

Another unique festival is Chikhhal Kalo, celebrated at the Devki Krishna Temple in Marcel. It is a mud festival inspired by the childhood games of Lord Krishna and has gained global attention under the present tourism leadership.

Additionally, festivals like São João, Narakasur competitions during Diwali, and Tripurari Purnima celebrations at Sankhali showcase Goa’s rich cultural diversity and spiritual heritage.

Beyond leisure tourism, how important are MICE and destination weddings for Goa?

DN: MICE tourism has tremendous potential in Goa, particularly in South Goa where luxury resorts and convention infrastructure are expanding rapidly. The upcoming Taj Convention Centre is expected to further strengthen Goa’s position as a major conference and events destination.

Goa is also emerging as one of India’s leading wedding destinations, with grand weddings being hosted across premium hotels and resorts.

Our focus is not just on quantity tourism, but on quality tourism that respects Goa’s culture, environment, and local communities.

What measures are being taken to ensure tourist safety and cleanliness?

DN: Maintaining clean beaches and ensuring visitor safety remain top priorities. Goa Tourism has introduced beach vigilance mechanisms, a dedicated tourism helpline (1364), and the Beach Vigil App through which tourists can immediately report grievances or safety concerns.

Prompt action is taken by the Department of Tourism whenever complaints are received.

Are there any new tourism infrastructure projects in the pipeline?

DN: Yes, several exciting projects are underway.

One notable project is the Aguada Jail Museum, where Goa’s freedom struggle history is showcased. The old Portuguese-era jail has been transformed into a tourism attraction featuring museums, flea markets, sea views, and speedboat connectivity to Panaji.

Additionally, the government is developing the Porvorim Town Square and a grand Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Museum at Farmagudi under a central government tourism scheme.

These projects will further diversify Goa’s tourism offerings.

Conclusion

The conversation highlighted Goa’s determined shift from being perceived solely as a beach destination to becoming a multi-dimensional tourism hub rooted in sustainability, spirituality, culture, wellness, heritage, and experiential travel.

Under its current tourism leadership, Goa is aggressively repositioning itself in both domestic and international markets through innovative campaigns, infrastructure development, and community-focused tourism models.



India's hotel sector investment surges 58% in Q1 2026 as investor confidence strengthens: JLL

India's hospitality sector continued its strong investment momentum in the first quarter of 2026, with hotel-related transactions rising 58 per cent year-on-year to reach approximately USD 185 million, according to the latest report released by JLL.

The report, titled *Hotel Investment Trends in India: 2025*, highlights growing investor confidence in the country's hospitality industry as demand for business travel, leisure tourism, branded accommodation and mixed-use developments continues to accelerate across both metropolitan and emerging markets.

According to JLL India, the hotel sector attracted USD 185 million in investments during the January-March 2026 period, compared with USD 117 million recorded during the corresponding quarter last year. The consultant noted that the surge follows a strong performance in 2025, when annual hotel investments climbed 67 per cent to approximately USD 567 million.

Hospitality sector attracts institutional and private capital

The report indicates that investment activity in India's hotel industry is increasingly being driven by institutional investors, private equity funds, listed hotel companies and high-net-worth individuals seeking exposure to the country's rapidly expanding travel and tourism economy.

One of the most significant transactions during the first quarter involved global private equity firm Warburg Pincus acquiring a 41 per cent stake in Fleur Hotels, a subsidiary of Lemon Tree Hotels. The investment, valued at approximately USD 107 million, is expected to support the expansion of Fleur Hotels' owned hospitality portfolio across India.

JLL stated that transaction activity during the quarter included acquisitions of operational hotel assets, platform consolidations and land monetisation deals, reflecting the increasing maturity of India's hospitality investment landscape.

The consultancy also observed that private equity investors and institutional capital providers are actively exploring opportunities to acquire large hotel portfolios, particularly in high-growth urban and leisure markets.

Airport-led development emerging as key investment driver

According to the report, new hospitality investment opportunities are also emerging around major infrastructure and airport-led developments across India. JLL identified projects linked to Yashobhoomi Convention Centre, Neopolis in Hyderabad, Fintech City in Chennai and Noida International Airport as key future growth corridors for hotel development and investment activity.

The consultant noted that government-backed land auctions and infrastructure expansion are encouraging hospitality developers and investors to target emerging micro-markets with strong long-term tourism and business travel potential.

Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities gain investor attention

While Tier 1 cities continued to dominate hotel investment activity with nearly 60 per cent of the total transaction volume during 2025, smaller cities and emerging tourism destinations are increasingly attracting attention from developers and hotel operators.

Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities collectively accounted for around 40 per cent of total investment activity last year, reflecting the broader geographic expansion of India's branded hospitality sector.

Industry analysts believe improving air connectivity, rising domestic tourism, infrastructure upgrades and growing demand for organised accommodation are

supporting hotel development beyond traditional gateway cities.

Hotel expansion pipeline remains strong

The report also highlighted continued growth in India's branded hotel supply pipeline. During 2025, the country witnessed the opening of 103 branded hotels representing approximately 8,990 keys.

At the same time, hotel signings reached record levels, with 424 branded hotels accounting for 51,647 keys signed during the year — a 23 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

The expansion reflects rising confidence among domestic and international hotel operators in India's long-term tourism and business travel outlook, particularly as the country experiences strong growth in domestic leisure travel, MICE tourism, religious tourism and international arrivals.

Outlook remains positive for 2026

JLL expects investment momentum in India's hotel industry to remain strong throughout 2026, supported by improving liquidity among listed hotel companies, increasing institutional participation and the anticipated capital market entry of additional hospitality operators.

The consultancy added that India's growing position as a global business destination, combined with major infrastructure upgrades and evolving consumer travel preferences, is likely to sustain long-term demand for hotel assets across luxury, upscale, midscale and lifestyle hospitality segments.

The report underscores the increasing attractiveness of India's hospitality sector as investors continue to view hotels as a resilient long-term asset class aligned with the country's expanding tourism economy and infrastructure-led growth story.

The Fern Hotels & Resorts Strengthens Maharashtra Presence with New Signings in Shirdi and Boisar

Expanding across key pilgrimage, leisure and emerging business destinations, the hospitality group takes its Maharashtra portfolio to 45 operational and upcoming properties

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has announced the signing of two new properties in Maharashtra—The Fern Residency Shirdi, Series by Marriott, and The Fern Elysia Resort Dahanu, Boisar, Series by Marriott—further strengthening its footprint in one of India's most dynamic hospitality markets.

With the latest additions, the environmentally conscious hotel chain now has 45 operational and upcoming properties across Maharashtra, reinforcing its long-term growth strategy in destinations that are witnessing increasing demand from both domestic and international travellers.

The dual signings reflect the group's focus on catering to diverse travel segments, ranging from religious tourism and family travel to leisure getaways and emerging business hubs. Maharashtra continues to be a key market for hospitality investment, driven by robust tourism growth, improving infrastructure and rising

demand for quality accommodation options.

The Fern Residency Shirdi, scheduled to open in 2028, will feature 72 well-appointed rooms and suites designed to serve pilgrims, business travellers and families visiting one of India's most important spiritual destinations. The property will also include an all-day dining restaurant offering a variety of culinary options aimed at enhancing the guest experience. Shirdi attracts millions of visitors annually, making it a strategic location for hospitality brands seeking to tap into India's growing religious tourism sector.

Further expanding its presence in the state, The Fern Elysia Resort Dahanu, Boisar, Series by Marriott is slated to open in 2029. The 76-room resort will cater to both leisure and corporate travellers, offering contemporary accommodation, an all-day dining restaurant and a bar. Located in the rapidly developing Dahanu-Boisar region, the resort is expected to benefit from increasing industrial activity, improved connectivity and growing demand for weekend and short-stay destinations near Mumbai.

Commenting on the expansion, Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, said Maharashtra remains a strategically important market for the company due to its strong tourism potential and expanding hospitality opportunities.

"Through these signings in Shirdi and Boisar, we aim to strengthen our presence across diverse travel destinations—from prominent pilgrimage hubs to emerging leisure and business markets. Both properties reflect our commitment to offering dependable, sustainable and guest-centric hospitality experiences," he said.

Industry observers note that the latest developments highlight the growing confidence of hotel operators in tier-II and emerging destinations, where infrastructure investments and changing travel patterns are creating new opportunities for hospitality growth.

With these projects, The Fern Hotels & Resorts continues to expand its national network while reinforcing its focus on sustainable hospitality, quality service and destination-driven growth across India's evolving tourism landscape.

Accor Brings Mantis Brand to India with Eco-Luxury Wildlife Retreat in Nagarhole



Accor has announced the signing of Mantis Nagarhole, a new premium eco-luxury resort in Karnataka's renowned wildlife corridor, marking the debut of the globally recognised Mantis brand in India and further strengthening the group's expanding leisure and experiential hospitality portfolio in South Asia.

Scheduled to open in 2028, the upcoming retreat will be located on the edge of Nagarhole National Park, part of the ecologically significant Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, one of India's richest biodiversity zones and a key

habitat for tigers, elephants, and other endangered wildlife species.

The project represents a strategic move by Accor to tap into the growing demand for immersive, sustainability-led travel experiences among both domestic and international travellers seeking meaningful engagement with nature, conservation, and wellness tourism.

Developed under the conservation-focused Mantis brand, the 31-key wilderness retreat will be spread across approximately 13 acres and will feature a mix of premium cottages and guest

rooms designed to blend harmoniously with the surrounding landscape.

The eco-resort will include an all-day dining restaurant, bar, spa, swimming pool, fitness centre, viewing tower, and curated outdoor spaces aimed at enhancing guests' connection with the natural environment. Experiences at the property will include guided wildlife safaris, nature walks, local cultural immersions, and sustainability-focused programmes.

According to Accor, the development has been planned with a strong emphasis on low-impact construction

and environmentally responsible operations, aligning with the group's broader ESG and sustainability commitments. The resort will incorporate energy-efficient systems, biodiversity conservation measures, and long-term environmental resilience strategies.

The property is being developed by South India-based hospitality and real estate group Macs Max Private Limited, led by **Balram Hirehal Jairaj**, which has been actively expanding its footprint across high-growth leisure destinations.

Ranju Alex, CEO – South Asia

at Accor, said the project reflects changing traveller preferences in India, where experiential tourism and sustainability are becoming increasingly influential in destination and accommodation choices.

"India's travel landscape is evolving rapidly, with a growing appetite for meaningful, experience-led journeys rooted in nature and authenticity. The signing of Mantis Nagarhole reflects our strategic focus on expanding in high-value leisure destinations while staying deeply committed to sustainability and conservation," she said.

Alex added that the project embodies the Mantis philosophy of responsible tourism, environmental stewardship, and community engagement while offering guests an immersive wildlife experience in one of India's most pristine ecosystems.

Scheduled to open in 2028, the upcoming retreat will be located on the edge of Nagarhole National Park, part of the ecologically significant Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, one of India's richest biodiversity zones and a key habitat for tigers, elephants, and other endangered wildlife species.



Balram Hirehal Jairaj, Director of Macs Max Private Limited,

described the partnership as an important milestone in creating hospitality experiences centred on regional authenticity and sustainable tourism development.

"Nagarhole is one of India's most extraordinary wildlife destinations, and we saw a strong opportunity to develop a retreat that celebrates the beauty of the region while offering guests a deeply immersive and responsible luxury experience," he said.

The Nagarhole region has rapidly emerged as one of India's leading eco-tourism and luxury wildlife destinations, attracting affluent travellers seeking low-density, high-end experiences focused on nature, wellness, and exclusivity. Industry observers note that the

limited availability of premium accommodations in the region continues to create strong long-term growth opportunities for sustainable hospitality developments.

The launch of Mantis in India also marks another milestone in Accor's broader regional expansion strategy. The hospitality group currently operates 74 hotels across India under brands including Raffles, Fairmont, Sofitel, Pullman, Novotel, Mercure and ibis, spanning luxury, premium, midscale, and economy segments.

Hospitality analysts believe the entry of Mantis into India highlights the increasing global interest in the country's eco-tourism and wildlife hospitality market, particularly as travellers prioritise sustainability, experiential travel, and nature-based luxury escapes.

LUXURY AND LIFESTYLE TRAVEL MAGAZINE TRAVELSPAN.IN

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

 @travelspanindia

 travelspan1

 travel span

 @travelspan1



Paris' legendary Bus Palladium returns as a luxury hotel blending rock history, design and nightlife

One of Paris' most iconic music venues has entered a new era, as the legendary Bus Palladium nightclub reopens as a design-led luxury hotel that merges the city's rock-and-roll heritage with contemporary hospitality. Located in the heart of the French capital's vibrant 9th arrondissement, the newly reimagined property revives the spirit of the famed nightclub while introducing an upscale lifestyle destination shaped by music, culture, gastronomy and nightlife.

The transformation marks one of the most closely watched hospitality openings in Paris, particularly among travellers seeking immersive cultural experiences rather than traditional



luxury accommodation. The project occupies the historic site of the original Bus Palladium, the celebrated rock club that first opened in the 1960s and became synonymous with Parisian nightlife, attracting musicians, artists, actors and creative icons from across the world.

Today, the venue has been reborn as a 35-room boutique hotel featuring a striking Brutalist façade, 1970s-inspired interiors, an underground nightclub, destination dining concepts and curated artistic programming designed to preserve the rebellious energy that once defined the address.

The redevelopment was led by French hospitality group Chapitre Six, known for revitalising unconventional and culturally significant locations. The property's artistic direction has been overseen by French model, music producer and cultural figure Caroline de Maigret, whose long-standing connection to the Pigalle neighbourhood helped shape the hotel's creative identity.

The design was entrusted to internationally acclaimed architecture

studio Studio KO, whose founders Karl Fournier and Olivier Marty sought to balance nostalgia with modern sophistication. Their vision combines exposed concrete, industrial textures and retro aesthetics with softer organic materials such as velvet, cork and wool, creating interiors that reflect both the raw spirit of the original nightclub and the elegance of contemporary Parisian hospitality.

The hotel's location further enhances its cultural significance. Situated on Rue Fontaine in Pigalle, the surrounding district has historically attracted artists, writers and avant-garde creatives, including Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Edgar Degas and André Breton. The area remains one of Paris' most dynamic neighbourhoods, home to landmarks such as Moulin Rouge and a thriving café, music and nightlife scene.

The original Bus Palladium nightclub opened in 1965 under entrepreneur James Arch and quickly became one of Paris' defining music venues. During its heyday, the club hosted some of the world's most influential cultural figures, including Patti Smith, Serge





Gainsbourg, Jane Birkin and Salvador Dalí. Its reputation extended far beyond France, becoming a symbol of Paris' rock culture and underground creative scene.

The hotel preserves that musical legacy through carefully curated guest experiences. Rooms are equipped with high-fidelity OJAS sound systems featuring playlists personally curated by Caroline de Maigret, spanning artists from Rosalía and Miles Davis to Prince and Fleetwood Mac. Guests can also tune directly into live music being played in the nightclub below, further blurring the boundary between hotel and entertainment venue.

A key feature of the property is its newly created underground nightclub, conceived as a modern interpretation of a 1920s dance hall complete with balconies, dramatic lighting and a large mirrored disco ball. Unlike many exclusive Paris nightlife venues, the concept has been intentionally designed to encourage accessibility and interaction between hotel guests and local residents, preserving the democratic and eclectic atmosphere that characterised the original club.

At street level, the property's restaurant and bar aim to function as a social hub for both travellers and the local community. Culinary operations are led by chef Valentin Raffali, known



for his work at Marseille's acclaimed Livingston restaurant, while nightlife programming benefits from the involvement of Lionel Bensemoun, founder of the influential Paris nightclub Le Baron.

The hotel also reflects broader trends shaping luxury hospitality in Europe, where experiential travel, cultural immersion and design-led accommodation are increasingly driving demand among international travellers. Rather than positioning itself solely as a luxury hotel, Bus Palladium presents itself as a living cultural destination rooted in music, fashion, nightlife and Parisian creativity.

The reopening comes at a time when Paris continues to strengthen

its appeal as one of the world's leading lifestyle and cultural tourism destinations, attracting visitors seeking authentic neighbourhood experiences beyond traditional landmarks. The 9th arrondissement, particularly the Pigalle district, has emerged as a major focal point for boutique hospitality, creative gastronomy and nightlife-driven tourism.

By blending heritage preservation with contemporary design and entertainment, the new Bus Palladium aims to capture both the nostalgia of Paris' legendary music scene and the evolving expectations of modern luxury travellers looking for immersive, socially connected experiences in the French capital.



The Leela at 40: Celebrating a Legacy of Indian Luxury While Charting a Future of Experiential Growth

From new destinations and curated experiences to cultural expressions in music, cuisine and wellness, The Leela unveils a year of meaningful celebrations.

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts marks a defining milestone in 2026 as it celebrates four decades of True Indian Luxury - a journey shaped by grace, guided by purpose, and rooted in the timeless Indian ethos of Atithi Devo Bhava. Since the opening of its first hotel, The Leela Mumbai, in 1986, the brand has crafted experiences that transcend hospitality - where every stay is an immersion into India's rich cultural tapestry, expressed through art, architecture, cuisine, and intuitive service.

Over the past 40 years, The Leela has evolved into a portfolio of iconic palaces, hotels and resorts - each a reflection of India's heritage, reimagined for the modern global traveller. As it enters its fifth decade, the brand continues to chart a confident path forward with a growing portfolio of distinctive destinations. This year marks a significant phase of expansion with the upcoming launch of The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary, followed by The Leela Jaisalmer, and The Leela Luxury Residences in Mumbai - further strengthening its position as a leading voice in luxury hospitality.

The celebrations commenced with a simultaneous all-employee town hall across all of The Leela's properties, a moment of collective pride and reflection. Associates were honoured through a commemorative pinning ceremony, receiving specially designed 40-year insignia, alongside long service awards recognizing individuals who have shaped the brand's journey over decades. This tribute to its people underscores Leela's enduring belief

that true luxury is, above all, human at heart.

As the year unfolds, The Leela brings its milestone to life through a thoughtfully curated tapestry of cultural and experiential moments, each reflecting the brand's enduring commitment to craft, culture and evolution. Along with the brand's expansion in key markets such as Coorg, Mumbai and Jaisalmer, the year will see the introduction of distinctive new expressions - from Arq by The Leela at The Leela Palace New Delhi and The Leela Palace Chennai extending its private membership philosophy, to The Azulian House at The Leela Palace Bengaluru, a refined culinary destination where storytelling and gastronomy converge.

This celebration is further enriched through evocative cultural collaborations, including a commemorative musical album by maestros Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash, alongside the launch of The Leela Centre of Excellence, reinforcing the brand's commitment to nurturing future custodians of hospitality. Guests will be invited to experience specially curated menus that trace The Leela's four-decade journey, complemented by immersive wellness offerings under Aujasya by The Leela - from curated wellness menus and signature rituals to transformative retreats rooted in balance and renewal. Anchored in purpose and culminating in a landmark charity gala in November, the year unfolds as a celebration not only of legacy, but of a living, evolving philosophy of true Indian luxury.

Mr. Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief

Executive Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, said

"As we celebrate 40 years of The Leela, we honour a journey defined by passion, purpose and an unwavering commitment to excellence. From our beginnings in Mumbai to a growing portfolio of iconic destinations, our endeavour has always been to showcase India's rich cultural heritage through the lens of refined luxury. As we look ahead, we remain focused on thoughtful expansion, elevating guest experiences, and continuing to set new benchmarks for Indian luxury on the global stage."

As The Leela steps into its fifth decade, it does so not only with a legacy of excellence, but with a renewed vision - continuing to shape the future of luxury through an Indian lens. Rooted in heritage yet evolving with time, The Leela remains a living expression of true Indian luxury - where every experience is crafted with meaning, and every moment is designed to endure.

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts is India's largest institutionally owned and managed pure-play luxury hospitality brand. Backed by the Brookfield Group, The Leela operates 15 award-winning properties across India's premier leisure and business destinations. Recognized globally for architectural excellence and bespoke services, The Leela has been ranked the #1 hospitality brand globally by Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards in 2020 and 2021, and among the top three in 2023 and 2024. The brand remains committed to delivering timeless Indian hospitality through world-class luxury experiences.



Four Seasons Resort Bali

at Jimbaran Bay
Elevates Luxury
Hospitality Amid
Bali's Tourism
Boom





As Bali continues to attract record numbers of international visitors, the Indonesian island's hospitality landscape is evolving rapidly to balance mass tourism with the growing demand for privacy, wellness,



and authentic cultural immersion. Amid the bustling energy that now defines many parts of the island, Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay is positioning itself as a refined sanctuary offering travellers a quieter, deeply immersive luxury experience rooted in Balinese tradition and holistic wellbeing.

Located along the tranquil shores of Jimbaran Bay, the all-villa resort continues to redefine tropical luxury by blending personalised hospitality, traditional Balinese design, and contemporary wellness experiences within one of Bali's most sought-after coastal destinations.

While Bali's popularity has transformed the island into one of Asia's busiest tourism hubs, the resort offers guests an atmosphere that feels distinctly removed from the crowds. Set against a three-mile stretch of golden beach, the property combines oceanfront serenity with carefully curated cultural experiences designed to reconnect travellers with Bali's spiritual and artistic heritage.

From the moment guests arrive, the experience is intentionally rooted in local tradition. Unlike conventional

luxury arrivals centred solely on comfort and convenience, stays begin with a traditional blessing ceremony conducted by a Balinese Hindu priest — a symbolic gesture intended to invite peace, protection, and positive energy throughout the guest's stay.

The resort's layout further reinforces its commitment to privacy and tranquillity. Spread across lush tropical grounds, guests are transported through winding garden pathways by golf carts, creating a seamless transition from the outside world into an immersive island retreat.

A defining feature of the resort is its all-villa concept. Each private villa has been designed in the style of a traditional Balinese bale, integrating indigenous architecture with modern luxury amenities. Stone walls and dense greenery create an atmosphere of seclusion, while expansive indoor-outdoor living spaces reflect Bali's tropical lifestyle.

Every villa includes a private plunge pool and sweeping views across the bay, allowing guests to experience uninterrupted moments of calm from sunrise to sunset. Daily offerings of fresh tropical fruit and personalised





in-villa dining further enhance the intimate residential-style experience that has become synonymous with the Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts brand.

Beyond accommodation, the resort is increasingly focusing on wellness and experiential travel — two sectors driving significant growth in global luxury tourism. Complimentary yoga sessions, guided meditation classes, and wellness-focused fitness programmes are integrated into the guest experience, reinforcing the property's holistic approach to relaxation and rejuvenation.

Guests seeking a deeper understanding of Balinese spirituality and culture can engage with the resort's resident priest and cultural ambassador, who offer insights into local traditions, rituals, and philosophies that continue to shape daily life on the island.

For more active travellers, the resort's beachfront location provides

opportunities for kayaking, sailing, and bodyboarding, allowing guests to experience Bali's coastal beauty through a range of outdoor activities.

Culinary experiences also play a central role in the resort's identity. The acclaimed beachfront restaurant Sundara highlights Bali's rich grilling traditions and showcases locally sourced seafood and premium meats prepared with contemporary flair. Signature dishes range from line-caught tuna tartare to traditional-style suckling pig inspired by the island's iconic babi guling cuisine.

At Taman Wantilan, guests can explore a broader selection of Indonesian, Asian, and international flavours, with themed evenings dedicated to regional Indonesian gastronomy and local culinary storytelling.

One of the resort's most distinctive wellness offerings is its innovative spa experience, particularly the Illume Room — Bali's first surround-sound

spa suite. Designed as a multisensory healing environment, the space combines colour therapy, crystal sound healing, and vibrational treatments intended to promote emotional and physical wellbeing.

The treatment room features a heated quartz-sand bed made from crushed crystals, immersive surround-sound technology, and seven alchemy crystal singing bowls that create a meditative sensory experience aimed at restoring energetic balance and holistic harmony.

As luxury travellers increasingly prioritise meaningful experiences over traditional indulgence, the Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay exemplifies how premium hospitality is evolving in response to changing traveller expectations. Rather than simply offering a tropical escape, the resort delivers a layered sense of place through architecture, spirituality, cuisine, wellness, and cultural authenticity.

In a destination where overtourism remains a growing challenge, properties that successfully combine exclusivity with genuine local immersion are likely to define the next chapter of Bali's luxury hospitality sector.

Accor Reports Resilient Q1 2026 Performance Amid Geopolitical Headwinds



Global hospitality group Accor has reported steady growth in the first quarter of 2026, demonstrating resilience in an increasingly complex geopolitical and economic environment. Despite disruptions linked to tensions in the Middle East, the group maintained positive momentum across key markets, supported by strong pricing strategies, geographic diversification and sustained demand in Europe and Asia-Pacific.

Revenue Growth Reflects Stable Demand

Accor recorded group revenue of €1.313 billion for the quarter, representing a 2.3 percent increase at constant currency compared to the same period in 2025. A key driver of this performance was the continued strength of its management and franchise operations, where revenue rose by 8.3 percent to €332 million.

The company's RevPAR (revenue per available room), a critical performance indicator in the hospitality sector, increased by 5.1 percent year-on-year, reflecting both pricing power and stable occupancy trends across multiple regions.

Expansion Continues Despite Market Uncertainty

Accor's global footprint continued to expand, with 48 new hotels and more

than 6,700 rooms added during the quarter. Over the past 12 months, the group achieved net unit growth of 3.8 percent. As of March 2026, its portfolio comprised 5,815 hotels and nearly 880,000 rooms, with an additional pipeline of approximately 260,000 rooms across 1,545 properties.

This steady expansion underscores Accor's long-term growth strategy, even as the industry navigates volatility in certain regions.

Regional Performance: Europe and Asia Lead Growth

Performance across regions revealed a mixed but generally positive picture.

In Europe and North Africa, RevPAR rose by 2.7 percent, driven largely by improved occupancy. France remained a strong performer, with both Paris and regional destinations sustaining demand following a robust end to 2025. The United Kingdom also showed continued recovery, while Germany's performance remained closely tied to trade fairs and event-driven demand.

The Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific region recorded a 5.5 percent increase in RevPAR, largely driven by higher room rates. Southeast Asia emerged as a standout performer, with markets such as Thailand and Indonesia returning to growth after a challenging 2025. Singapore and Japan also posted solid gains.

However, geopolitical tensions that escalated toward the end of February significantly impacted the Middle East. The

United Arab Emirates saw a 9 percent decline in RevPAR during the quarter, although Saudi Arabia and Egypt continued to record growth.

In the Americas, RevPAR increased by 9.1 percent, with Brazil—which accounts for the majority of the region's revenue—delivering strong double-digit gains.

Segment Performance: Luxury Demand Remains Robust

Accor's Premium, Midscale and Economy division posted a 4.5 percent increase in RevPAR, primarily driven by pricing. Meanwhile, the Luxury & Lifestyle segment outperformed with a 6.0 percent rise, underpinned by sustained global demand for high-end travel experiences.

Luxury brands, which contribute the majority of revenue within the segment, recorded a 6.8 percent increase in RevPAR across most regions. Lifestyle properties also delivered growth, although resort destinations in the Middle East faced greater disruption due to regional instability.

Navigating Currency and Portfolio Adjustments

While operational

performance remained solid, currency fluctuations had a negative impact of €66 million on reported revenue, driven by weaker exchange rates for the US dollar, UAE dirham and Canadian dollar.

Additionally, portfolio adjustments—including the disposal of certain assets such as Paris Society's "Festive" activities—affected revenue in the Luxury & Lifestyle segment, contributing to a slight decline of 0.7 percent in that division despite underlying growth.

Strategic Moves and Capital Allocation

Accor also advanced key strategic initiatives during the quarter. The group announced a €450 million share buyback programme for 2026, with the first tranche of €225 million launched in early April.

In the luxury travel segment, Accor reduced its stake in its Orient Express-linked cruise venture, generating €66 million in proceeds. The move reflects a broader strategy to optimise its portfolio while maintaining exposure to high-end experiential travel offerings.

The company is also progressing with plans to divest its stake in Essendi

(formerly AccorInvest), in partnership with Blackstone, as part of ongoing efforts to streamline operations and enhance shareholder value.

Leadership Perspective: Confidence with Caution

Sébastien Bazin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, emphasised that the group's diversified geographic presence and strong brand portfolio have enabled it to offset regional disruptions.

He noted that while the conflict in the Middle East has introduced uncertainty—particularly in markets where Accor has a significant presence—the company has implemented measures to safeguard performance and adapt to shifting demand patterns.

Bazin also highlighted opportunities in regions currently benefiting from redirected travel flows, particularly in Europe and Southeast Asia.

Outlook: Positioned for Recovery and Growth

Looking ahead, Accor remains cautiously optimistic about its performance in 2026. While geopolitical tensions and macroeconomic pressures continue to pose risks, the group's flexible operating model, global diversification and focus on high-growth segments position it well to capture emerging opportunities.

For the travel and tourism sector, Accor's results offer a broader signal: demand remains resilient, particularly in leisure and luxury travel, even as the global landscape becomes more complex.

Accor recorded group revenue of €1.313 billion for the quarter, representing a 2.3 percent increase at constant currency compared to the same period in 2025. A key driver of this performance was the continued strength of its management and franchise operations, where revenue rose by 8.3 percent to €332 million.

Atmosphere Core Expands India Footprint with Boutique Heritage Hotel in Panjim



Global hospitality group Atmosphere Core has announced a strategic expansion of its India portfolio with the signing of a new boutique property in Panjim. Developed in partnership with Vision Dempo Hospitality Pvt Ltd, the upcoming **CROWN HERITAGE PANJIM by Atmosphere Goa** is set to open in the first quarter of 2027, further strengthening the brand's presence in one of India's most culturally rich destinations.

A Heritage Address in the Heart of Goa

The 34-key boutique hotel will be located in Fontainhas, Panjim's historic Latin Quarter, widely recognised for its Portuguese-era architecture and vibrant streetscapes. Situated within a UNESCO-recognised heritage zone and just steps from the Mandovi River, the property promises a setting that blends history, culture and contemporary design.

Its strategic location also ensures strong connectivity, with Manohar International Airport approximately an hour away and Dabolim Airport reachable within 40 minutes.

A Boutique Experience Rooted in Culture

Positioned under the "By Atmosphere" sub-brand within the Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts portfolio, the hotel is designed to offer an intimate and highly personalised guest experience. The property will feature a curated mix of deluxe rooms and a signature rooftop suite, reflecting a design philosophy that integrates

heritage aesthetics with modern sensibilities.

Speaking on the development, **Salil Panigrahi**, Co-Founder and Managing Director of Atmosphere Core, highlighted Goa's continued importance to the company's growth strategy. He noted that the project aims to introduce a creative, experience-led offering catering to both leisure travellers and those drawn to Goa's cultural depth.

Culinary and Wellness at the Forefront

The hotel's experiential focus extends to its dining and wellness offerings. Guests can expect an all-day dining restaurant, a café lounge and a rooftop resto-bar showcasing Goan culinary traditions alongside global cuisine and curated beverage selections.

Wellness will be anchored by the award-winning ELE|NA Ayur Spa, offering a range of therapies delivered by expert practitioners. Additional facilities will include a swimming pool with an outdoor deck and a fully equipped fitness centre, reinforcing the property's holistic approach to hospitality.

Strengthening Goa's Premium Tourism Landscape

For Vision Dempo Group, the collaboration represents a strategic step in elevating Panjim's hospitality offerings. **Rajesh Dempo**, Founder and Managing Director of the group, emphasised that the partnership aligns with a broader vision of positioning Goa as a year-round, experience-driven

destination beyond its traditional leisure appeal.

He noted that the project is expected to contribute to the evolution of premium tourism in the region while setting new benchmarks within Panjim's heritage precinct.

A Growing Focus on Experiential Travel

Echoing this vision, **Souvagya Mohapatra**, Managing Director for Atmosphere Core across India and neighbouring markets, described Panjim as a natural fit for expansion due to its cultural richness and timeless appeal. He added that the brand aims to deliver an immersive hospitality experience that reflects the destination's identity while redefining boutique luxury in heritage settings.

Panjim: Where Heritage Meets Modern Energy

As the capital of Goa, Panjim offers a distinctive blend of Indian and Portuguese influences. The narrow lanes, colourful façades and tiled-roof houses of Fontainhas stand in contrast to the lively riverfront along the Mandovi, where modern attractions—including offshore entertainment hubs—coexist with historic churches and quiet plazas.

This juxtaposition of old-world charm and contemporary vibrancy has increasingly positioned Panjim as a cultural hub within Goa's tourism landscape, attracting travellers seeking more than just beach experiences.

Expanding India Portfolio

The addition of CROWN HERITAGE PANJIM reflects Atmosphere Core's broader strategy to expand across key Indian destinations with differentiated, experience-driven properties. As demand grows for boutique stays rooted in local culture, such developments are expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the next phase of India's tourism growth.

With its focus on heritage, design and personalised service, the upcoming property aims to capture this shift—offering travellers an authentic yet elevated way to experience Goa.

Wellness will be anchored by the award-winning ELE|NA Ayur Spa, offering a range of therapies delivered by expert practitioners. Additional facilities will include a swimming pool with an outdoor deck and a fully equipped fitness centre, reinforcing the property's holistic approach to hospitality.

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts acquires ultra-luxury resort in Coorg, Karnataka

The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary is set to redefine nature-led, wellness anchored Indian luxury with a 71 all-villa property amidst 76 acres of lush landscape near Madikeri.



The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, India's only pure play luxury hospitality brand, today announced a marquee acquisition of an ultra-luxury resort in Coorg, marking the brand's entry into immersive, nature-led and wellness anchored hospitality. The 71 all-villa property, set within 76 acres of lush landscape near Madikeri and surrounded by coffee and spice plantations, will be unveiled as The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary later this year.

The acquisition, which coincides with The Leela's 40th anniversary, introduces the brand's first Sanctuary and extends its portfolio into one of South India's most compelling leisure



destinations. Situated in the Western Ghats with proximity to both Bengaluru and Mangaluru, Coorg is distinguished by its rolling coffee estates, mist-laden hills, scenic waterfalls, storied Kodava heritage and consistently high air quality – attributes that underpin enduring premium demand from the discerning global traveller.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Executive Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts**, said:

“As we celebrate 40 Years of The Leela, this acquisition represents both a milestone and an evolution of the brand into nature-immersive, wellness-focused hospitality. We invest in destinations with cultural and ecological value, and Coorg strengthens our presence in South India while advancing our strategy of building a balanced portfolio across India’s most iconic landscapes. The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary offers a rare synthesis of wilderness, wellness and warmth of true Indian luxury for travellers who seek space, stillness and a genuine connection to nature.”

The IGBC Platinum-certified resort has been designed in harmony with its natural setting, with architecture that blends contemporary form with local craftsmanship and the textures of its surroundings. The property benefits from significant land reserves that support thoughtful densification, with a first phase adding 19 keys to bring total inventory to 90 villas.

The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary features four dining venues spanning global and regional cuisines, including bean-to-cup coffee experiences rooted in the region’s plantation heritage. A 27,000 sq. ft. wellness centre forms the foundation of a broader approach to restoration and longevity – drawing on Ayurvedic tradition, modern recovery science and Aujasya by The Leela, the brand’s signature wellness programme. A 7-acre lake forms the tranquil heart of the sanctuary, while a private helipad ensures seamless access for travellers. The property is further distinguished by its expansive four-bedroom presidential villa with a private pool and integrated



wellness facilities, positioning it among South India’s most immersive forest sanctuaries.

The property’s nature-led experiences, holistic wellness journeys and destination-inspired culinary programming align closely with The Leela’s philosophy of celebrating the spirit of place. Together, these elements position the resort as a rare, slow-luxury sanctuary and one of India’s most distinctive leisure destinations.

For four decades, The Leela has shaped the global expression of true Indian luxury. This acquisition reflects The Leela’s strategic expansion toward high-value leisure destinations defined by natural capital and cultural

depth. Over the coming months, the property will integrate signature Leela brand standards, service rituals and distribution strength before formally commencing its next chapter as The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary.

With the addition of Coorg, The Leela portfolio now comprises 15 properties with over 4,160 keys across 13 cities globally, including 7 owned, 7 managed and 1 franchised hotel. With 9 hotels in the pipeline, the brand remains on track to expand to 24 properties over the next three years in high growth markets including Agra, Ayodhya, Bandhavgarh, Mumbai, Ranthambore, Sikkim, Srinagar and Jaisalmer.

JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa Appoints Kashmira Sahu as Director of Operations

Luxury hillside retreat JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa has announced the appointment of Kashmira Sahu as Director of Operations, marking a key leadership elevation aimed at strengthening service delivery, operational performance, and guest experience across the property.

In her new role, Sahu will oversee all major hotel functions, with a mandate to enhance operational efficiency and elevate guest satisfaction across multiple touchpoints within the luxury resort.

Nearly two decades of luxury hospitality expertise

Sahu brings close to 20 years of experience in luxury hospitality, having worked with leading hospitality brands including Marriott International, Indian Hotels Company Limited, and The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts.

Her career trajectory reflects a strong foundation in operational leadership, revenue management, and brand standards execution, positioning her as a key addition to JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove's leadership team.

From front office operations to senior leadership

Sahu began her hospitality journey in front office operations, gradually expanding her expertise across core operational departments including rooms division, housekeeping, and guest services.

Over the years, she has held senior leadership roles such as Director of Rooms, where she focused on strengthening guest experience delivery frameworks, improving service efficiency, and aligning operations with global luxury hospitality standards.

Her cross-functional experience across multiple hotel disciplines has



enabled her to develop a holistic understanding of luxury resort operations, particularly in high-end leisure destinations.

Driving operational excellence at a luxury hill resort

In her current role at JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa, Sahu will lead key departments including:

Front office operations, Housekeeping, Engineering, Food and beverage services.

Her responsibilities will also include enhancing team performance, strengthening internal training systems, and ensuring consistency with Marriott's global luxury service standards.

The appointment comes at a time when luxury leisure resorts in India are increasingly focusing on personalised guest experiences, operational precision, and high-service differentiation in competitive hill destination markets.

Focus on guest experience and performance optimisation

Sahu's leadership approach is expected to emphasise both operational discipline and guest-centric innovation. Her focus will be on refining service delivery across key guest touchpoints while ensuring seamless coordination between departments.

By aligning operational strategy with evolving luxury travel expectations, the resort aims to further enhance its positioning as a premium experiential destination in the Indian Himalayas.

Leadership perspective

Commenting on her appointment, Sahu expressed enthusiasm about her new role and the opportunity to contribute to the property's continued growth.

She highlighted her focus on strengthening operational excellence while working closely with teams to deliver memorable and elevated guest experiences in line with luxury hospitality standards.

Strengthening leadership in India's luxury resort segment

The appointment reflects a broader trend in India's luxury hospitality sector, where experienced leaders are increasingly being placed in cross-functional operational roles to drive efficiency, guest satisfaction, and brand consistency.

Hill destination resorts, in particular, are witnessing growing demand from domestic and international travellers seeking immersive leisure experiences, prompting hotels to invest in seasoned operational leadership.

As JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove continues to evolve within this competitive segment, Sahu's appointment is expected to support its focus on service excellence and long-term performance growth.

Marriott and The Fern Reach Landmark Milestone with 75 Series by Marriott Hotels Signed Across India

Rapid expansion establishes India as the global launchpad for Marriott's newest collection brand, with 50 hotels already operational within six months

Marriott International and Concept Hospitality Private Limited (CHPL) have achieved a significant milestone in India's hospitality sector, announcing that 75 hotels have now been signed under **The Fern Hotels & Resorts, Series by Marriott**, with 50 properties already open and operational across the country. The achievement comes less than six months after the brand made its global debut in India in November 2025, underscoring one of the fastest expansion trajectories seen in Marriott International's regional growth strategy.

The milestone adds more than 3,550 rooms to Marriott's India portfolio and firmly positions the country as the cornerstone of the global growth strategy for the Series by Marriott brand.

Designed as a conversion-friendly collection brand, Series by Marriott brings together established regional hotel operators under the trusted umbrella of Marriott Bonvoy while preserving the local character and identity of each property. The collaboration with The Fern Hotels & Resorts has proven particularly successful, combining Marriott's global distribution power and loyalty ecosystem with The Fern's strong reputation for sustainable and locally inspired hospitality.

"Reaching 75 signed hotels, with 50 already welcoming guests, demonstrates the strength of our vision for Series by Marriott," said **Kiran Andicot, Senior Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International**.



"India has become much more than a launch market; it is the proof of concept for a brand designed to scale rapidly while delivering consistent quality experiences to guests and strong value to hotel owners."

The growing portfolio now spans **43 cities across India**, covering major metropolitan centres, emerging Tier II and Tier III destinations, and key leisure markets. This broad geographic presence reflects rising demand for internationally branded accommodation in secondary cities and regional tourism hubs, where domestic travel continues to drive significant growth.

For **Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director of Concept Hospitality**, the achievement reflects the successful alignment of two hospitality brands with complementary strengths.

"The more meaningful milestone is that 50 hotels are already open, serving guests and building loyalty," Kannampilly said. "The Fern's heritage of sustainable, regionally rooted hospitality combined with Marriott's global systems, technology platforms and loyalty reach has created a compelling proposition for both owners and travellers."

The portfolio already includes prominent properties such as **The Fern Mumbai, Goregaon; The Fern Jaipur; The Fern Habitat Goa, Candolim; Rakabi The Fern Igatpuri; and The Fern Residency**

Bengaluru, Seshadripuram, among others.

A defining characteristic of the brand is its focus on blending global standards with local experiences. Guests can enjoy signature offerings such as Grab & Go Breakfast for early departures, dedicated amenities for solo female travellers, locally inspired evening turndown experiences, traditional lamp-lighting ceremonies, and wellness-focused bedtime rituals rooted in Indian traditions.

Industry observers view the rapid expansion as a reflection of India's growing importance within the global hospitality landscape. As domestic tourism, business travel, and leisure demand continue to rise, international hotel companies are increasingly turning to flexible conversion models to accelerate growth while maintaining brand consistency.

All properties under The Fern Hotels & Resorts, Series by Marriott participate in **Marriott Bonvoy**, enabling guests to earn and redeem loyalty points across Marriott's global portfolio while benefiting from personalised digital services through the Marriott Bonvoy mobile app.

With 75 signed hotels already secured and further development expected, the partnership is emerging as a notable example of how global hospitality brands and regional operators can collaborate to unlock growth opportunities across one of the world's most dynamic travel markets.

Pride Hotels Limited Expands Gujarat Presence with Launch of 51-Room Pride Elite Himmatnagar



New property offers premium accommodation, dining, banquet facilities and modern amenities for all travellers

Pride Hotels Limited is pleased to announce the opening of Pride Elite Himmatnagar, a refined 51-room hotel strategically located on the Ahmedabad–Udaipur Highway, just 60 kilometers from Ahmedabad. Situated in the heart of Himmatnagar, this contemporary hotel offers the perfect blend of modern amenities, spacious accommodations, and luxurious dining options, designed to cater to both business and leisure guests. The hotel features three distinctive restaurants: Casablanca, a multi-cuisine vegetarian dining experience; Sizzling BBQ, a rooftop venue offering live grills and panoramic city views; and the 360° Rooftop Restaurant, ideal for relaxed evenings and memorable celebrations. Additionally, the hotel boasts over 7000 sq. ft. of banquet space, including flexible venues for corporate meetings, conferences, weddings, and social gatherings.

The hotel's design offers comfort and elegance with thoughtfully planned interiors, modern amenities, and well-appointed rooms. Guests can relax in the spacious Deluxe Twin, Superior Twin, Premium King, Premium King with Bathtub, or the luxurious Pride Suite. For those visiting for business, the hotel offers high-speed Wi-Fi and convenient access to the nearby GIDC, making it an ideal choice for

business travellers. For leisure seekers, the hotel's wellness facilities, including a spa and rooftop dining, ensure a relaxing retreat after a busy day.

Mr. Atul Upadhyay, Executive Director of Pride Hotels Limited, commented on the launch, saying, "At Pride Hotels, we are always looking to expand our presence in strategic locations that offer immense growth potential. Himmatnagar, with its prime positioning on the Gujarat–Rajasthan corridor, presents a great opportunity for both business and leisure tourism. We are excited to introduce Pride Elite Himmatnagar, which seamlessly combines luxury and convenience, offering guests a refined stay with top-notch hospitality."

Mr. Koustuva Mukherjee, AVP – Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh & Goa, added, "Pride Elite Himmatnagar's prime location on the Ahmedabad–Udaipur Highway and proximity to industrial and business hubs make it an ideal destination for corporate travellers. Additionally, the hotel's leisure amenities and serene atmosphere make it a perfect base for those seeking a relaxing getaway. We are excited about the potential of this property and its contribution to the hospitality landscape in North Gujarat."

In partnership with Mr. Ajay Bhai Patel, who has played a crucial role in bringing Pride to Himmatnagar, the hotel is set to undergo further expansion with the upcoming Regal Lawns by Pride. Mr. Patel shared, "We are proud to collaborate with Pride Hotels to bring the brand's exceptional hospitality to Himmatnagar. In Phase 2, we will be launching Regal Lawns by Pride, a sprawling 2,00,000 sq. ft. venue designed for large-scale events, weddings, and leisure activities. This will further establish Himmatnagar as a top-tier destination for corporate and social gatherings."

Mr. Rohit Malaiya, General Manager of Pride Elite Himmatnagar, concluded, "At Pride Elite Himmatnagar, our focus is on providing an exceptional experience to every guest. From spacious, elegantly designed rooms to the meticulously curated dining and event spaces, we have created an environment where comfort and luxury blend seamlessly. Our team is committed to offering warm hospitality and personalized service, ensuring that every stay is memorable."

Pride Elite Himmatnagar represents a significant addition to the growing hospitality landscape of North Gujarat, offering a unique blend of luxury, business, and leisure facilities. With the upcoming Regal Lawns by Pride, the property is set to become a premier resort destination for both business and leisure travellers.

India top spending market for Washington, DC in 2025

Washington, DC sees growth in visitation in 2025. Over 27.2 million visitors power city's economy, as domestic visitation trends slightly upward. India top spender and #2 market in international visitation.



For the third year in a row, Washington, DC's tourism industry set a record for visitation and economic impact. More than 27.2 million people visited the nation's capital in 2025, modestly surpassing the previous year's record by 20,000 visitors. Despite overall visitation remaining on par with 2024, Destination DC, the city's official

destination marketing organization, announced record economic impact from tourism: \$11.9 billion in visitor spending, \$2.4 billion in tax revenue and 114,013 jobs supported.

India remains a standout market for Washington, DC in 2025. It is DC's top market for spend and second for international visitor volume.

Surpassing the United Kingdom, Indian travelers generated approximately \$342.7 million in visitor spending and continued to outperform pre-pandemic visitation levels, reinforcing the market's long-term strategic value for Washington, DC tourism.

"India continues to be one of

DESTINATION

Washington, DC's most valuable international markets, with travelers contributing significant economic impact through longer stays and higher visitor spending," said **Elliott L. Ferguson, II, president and CEO, Destination DC.** "The strong interest from Indian travelers in DC's educational, cultural and premium experiences reinforces the importance of maintaining visibility and strong partnerships in this critical growth market."

Of the 27.2 million overall visitors, 25.1 million traveled domestically – a slight increase year-over-year. International visitation, however, declined by 4 percent – performing better than the 5.5 percent decline to the U.S. overall.

"The fact that Washington, DC saw record economic impact for the third

straight year, especially in a challenging global environment, speaks to both the enduring appeal of our destination and efficacy of our sales and marketing. As we celebrate that, however, we remain steadfast in our efforts to entice international visitors that stay longer and spend more. Overall, the record economic contribution from visitation creates immediate impact. That's why now is the time to reinvest in marketing, because when DDC has additional dollars to spend and a steady source of funding, the city sees bigger returns," Ferguson said.

The data demonstrates the success and importance of tourism marketing and sales efforts. From April 2023-October 2025, DDC received an additional one percent of the hotel tax through the tourism recovery district

(TRD). This resulted in immediate economic returns for the city, local businesses and DC residents. According to an ROI study with the DC Office of the CFO and Future Partners, a leading tourism research company, DDC's \$19.5 million spring and summer 2025 advertising campaign directly drove \$41.3 million in tax revenue for the city and \$470 million in visitor spending. That means every \$1 spent on advertising generated more than \$2 in tax revenue and \$24 in visitor spending. This revenue supported city services that benefit all Washingtonians. The city's fiscal year 2026 budget, however, reallocated TRD funding. The DC Council provided a \$6 million earmark to DDC for marketing and sales efforts, but DDC's overall advertising budget was cut by two-thirds.



“We live in the best and most beautiful city in the world, with fantastic restaurants and hotels, great parks and a public transit system that takes you all over the city and region. And we love to show off our city to visitors from across the country and around the world,” said DC Mayor Muriel Bowser. “We had some great events last year, like World Pride and the FIFA Club World Cup, and this summer we have a full lineup of America 250 events. So, we want people to check out all we have to offer, book their trips and come visit us in Washington, DC.”

Destination DC remains agile to meet consumer sentiment. As part of its award-winning marketing campaign, There’s Only One DC, a new video series entitled We the People DC humanizes the city through stories of DC residents. Campaign content connects to washington.org and DC250.us, a microsite for America’s 250th anniversary where potential visitors can discover hotel deals, itinerary inspiration, local history and a year-long calendar of events. Editorial coverage complements paid and owned channels.

Throughout 2026, the nation’s 250th anniversary presents a major opportunity to drive visitation, with the city as center stage with a year-long commemoration. No place tells America’s story as vividly as Washington, DC, the only place to see the Declaration of Independence and the best place to discover its impact. Experiences that set DC apart include the value of the city’s free attractions, thought-provoking historic exhibitions, free festivals and modern experiences such as highly anticipated theater and acclaimed global cuisine. More than two dozen DC250 hotel packages encourage visitors to stay overnight, and forward-looking indicators are signaling strong demand for the July 4 period.

“The continued growth in tourism’s economic impact in Washington, DC, speaks to the strength of the destination and its global appeal. International visitors tend to stay longer, spend more and build deeper

connections to the United States,” said **Fred Dixon, president and CEO, Brand USA**. “As we look ahead to major moments like America’s 250th anniversary, destinations like DC will play an important role in inspiring global travelers to visit.”

Major openings add to the momentum of a blockbuster summer, including the National Geographic Museum of Exploration, an innovative museum underneath the Lincoln Memorial, expansion of the National Air and Space Museum on its 50th anniversary, an improved Tidal Basin with new exhibits at the Jefferson Memorial and the African American Civil War Memorial Museum.

The nation’s capital is also a premier destination for meetings, conventions and events. In 2026, there are 18 citywide conventions (groups with 2,500 rooms on peak), with approximately 376,000 total room nights, 246,000 attendees and an estimated \$317 million in economic impact.

DC250 extends beyond July, with August’s Indy Car race, Summer

Restaurant Week, DC JazzFest, Theatre Week, the 10th anniversary of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the largest renovation in the 50-year history of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, a new concourse at Dulles International Airport and the dedication of the Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial. Excitement is also building for the 2027 NFL Draft to be held across the city’s iconic landmarks next April.

Visitation Impact:

- **Spending:**
 - In 2025, visitors spent a record \$11.9 billion, up 4%.
 - ◆ In 2024, visitors spent \$11.4 billion.
- **Jobs:**
 - In 2025, visitors supported a record 114,013 jobs, up 2%.
 - ◆ In 2024, visitors supported 111,500 jobs.
- **Tax Revenue:**
 - In 2025, visitors generated a record \$2.4 billion in tax revenue, up 4%.
 - ◆ In 2024, visitors generated \$2.3 billion in tax revenue.

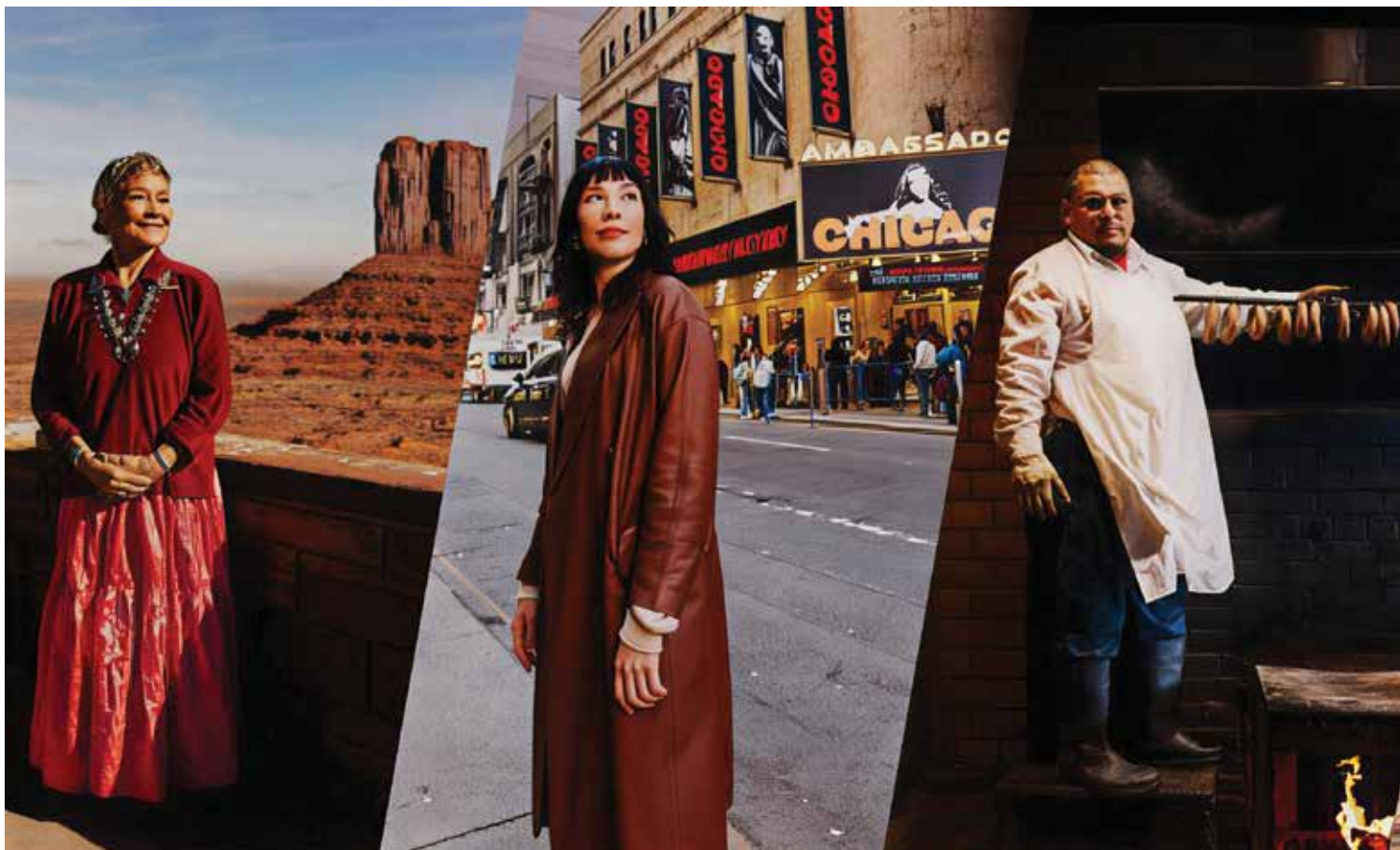
Washington, DC Visitation Data: *

- In 2025, DC welcomed 27.2 million visitors, surpassing 2024 record by 20,000 visitors
- 25.1 million domestic; 2.1 million international
- In 2024, DC welcomed a then-record setting 27.2 million visitors
- 25 million domestic; 2.2 million international
- In 2023, DC welcomed 25.95 million visitors
- 24 million domestic; 1.95 million international
- Prior to the pandemic, in 2019, DC welcomed 25.1 million total visitors
- 22.8 million domestic; 2.3 million international
- In summary, total visitation grew by 20,000 year-over-year, as domestic visitation increased by 0.4% and international visitation declined by 4%.

International Visitation:

- Top international markets (in descending order): Canada, India, United Kingdom, Germany, China, France, Mexico, South Korea, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Australia, Japan
- India moved from DC’s #3 international visitation market in 2024 to #2 in 2025, surpassing the United Kingdom.
- Indian visitation to DC remained approximately 22% above 2019 levels.
- India remained DC’s #1 international spending market in 2025, generating approximately \$342.7 million in visitor spending.

*Sources: MMGY Travel Intelligence, S&P Global Market Intelligence, Tourism Economics, U.S. Department of Commerce



Brand USA Expands Global Tourism Campaign with New Initiatives to Boost International Travel Confidence

The new initiatives being announced this week at U.S. Travel Association’s IPW in Fort Lauderdale, Florida targeting leisure tourism, and at IMEX in Frankfurt, Germany targeting international business events — reflect the organization’s focus on growing international travel demand and boosting travel exports that impact the U.S. economy and communities. The announcement comes as the USA is readying to host significant major events beginning next month, including the FIFA World Cup, America’s 250th anniversary, and the Route 66 Centennial.

Brand USA has unveiled a major expansion of its “America the Beautiful” tourism platform with the launch of two new international initiatives aimed at strengthening traveller confidence and increasing inbound visitation to the United States ahead of a series of globally significant events.

The new programmes — “Get Facts. Get Going.” and “American Originals”

— were introduced by Fred Dixon during industry events in IPW 2026 in Florida and IMEX Frankfurt 2026 in Germany. Together, the initiatives form part of Brand USA’s broader strategy to stimulate international tourism demand, increase travel exports, and reinforce the United States’ position as one of the world’s leading travel destinations.

The campaign expansion arrives

at a pivotal time for the US tourism sector as the country prepares to host a succession of major international events, including the 2026 FIFA World Cup, celebrations surrounding America’s 250th anniversary, and the centennial of the historic Route 66.

New Focus on Traveller Confidence

At the centre of the expanded platform is “Get Facts. Get Going.”, an



always-on global information initiative designed to counter misinformation and confusion surrounding US travel procedures, visa policies, entry requirements, and border processes.

The programme aims to provide international travellers with a single reliable source of updated information through Brand USA's official tourism portal under the campaign message "Travel with Confidence to the USA."

According to Brand USA, misinformation circulating through social media and outdated travel guidance has created uncertainty among some international visitors regarding visa procedures, fees, customs requirements, and screening protocols.

The new initiative seeks to address these concerns directly through coordinated marketing campaigns, travel trade engagement, real-time information distribution, and educational outreach.

"In line with our mission to impact the US economy through travel exports, we have an opportunity to further build traveller confidence and inspire

visitation," Dixon said.

"With our expanded platform, we are introducing American Originals, which spotlights the people and places who originated the styles, sounds, and tastes the world loves, while Get Facts. Get Going. serves as a single source of information to address misperceptions head-on. We want international visitors to know that we are open for business and warmly welcome them."

Brand USA said the initiative will remain continuously updated and integrated across paid international media campaigns, global distribution systems, travel advisor education programmes, and international journalist partnerships.

The organisation is also working closely with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to promote awareness of trusted traveller programmes such as Global Entry and Mobile Passport Control, which are designed to streamline arrivals into the United States.

"Technological improvements including Mobile Passport Control and expanded Trusted Traveller programmes like Global Entry are making the entry process more seamless than ever before," Dixon added.

'American Originals' Showcases Authentic US Experiences

Alongside the factual information campaign, Brand USA also launched "American Originals," a new storytelling and destination content series focused on uniquely American travel experiences, cultural heritage, music, cuisine, landscapes, and local communities.

The travelogue-style campaign is designed to inspire aspirational travel while encouraging deeper exploration beyond traditional tourism gateways.

The series highlights destinations and experiences that have shaped global culture, including music scenes, culinary traditions, road travel, entertainment, and iconic landscapes.

Initial episodes feature destinations including Monument Valley, Memphis, Texas, and New York City.

According to Brand USA, the

initiative also reflects growing travel trends such as "set-jetting" tourism inspired by film and television, culinary exploration, live entertainment travel, and immersive cultural experiences.

"This new content series features the people, places, and traditions that have influenced the world and are unique to the USA through travelogue-style narratives that ignite exploration and help travellers build their ultimate dream holiday," Dixon said.

The campaign will continue through 2027 and beyond as part of wider celebrations linked to America's 250th anniversary.

Integrated Tourism Growth Strategy

The expanded "America the Beautiful" platform reflects Brand USA's increasingly data-driven international marketing approach, integrating destination partnerships, digital campaigns, and corporate collaborations into a unified tourism strategy.

Since its launch in October 2025, Brand USA said the "America the Beautiful" campaign has generated strong engagement across international markets, with monthly surveys indicating that more than seven in ten respondents reported increased interest in visiting the United States after viewing the campaign.

Brand USA has also strengthened collaborative marketing opportunities with destination partners including South Dakota and Alabama, alongside private-sector tourism brands such as Hilton.

The organisation believes the expanded ecosystem will help improve campaign reach, enhance audience targeting, and strengthen international perception of the United States as an accessible, welcoming, and diverse travel destination.

The latest initiatives also come as the US tourism sector intensifies efforts to fully restore long-haul international visitation and tourism spending following years of market volatility, geopolitical uncertainty, and shifting traveller sentiment.

Germany positions itself as a leading experiential destination for India's new-age travellers

German National Tourist Office is intensifying its focus on the Indian outbound travel market with a renewed strategy aimed at positioning Germany as a destination centered on immersive experiences, cultural depth, sustainability and lifestyle-driven tourism rather than traditional sightseeing alone.

At a tourism engagement initiative in New Delhi, the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) India unveiled a refreshed narrative designed to appeal to India's evolving generation

of international travellers, particularly younger, experience-led consumers seeking meaningful and personalised journeys across Europe.

The move comes as Germany continues to record steady growth in overnight stays from Indian visitors, with tourism authorities now seeking to deepen engagement by highlighting the country's blend of heritage, innovation, wellness, sustainability and cinematic appeal.

According to GNTO India, the modern Indian traveller is

increasingly looking beyond checklist tourism and prioritising authentic experiences, slower travel, eco-conscious mobility and culturally enriching itineraries. Germany believes it is well-positioned to meet these expectations through its extensive rail network, environmentally responsible tourism infrastructure, heritage towns, contemporary art scenes and strong culinary diversity, including vegetarian and vegan offerings that resonate strongly with Indian visitors.



Germany broadens appeal beyond traditional European itineraries

Tourism officials are now promoting Germany as a standalone destination rather than simply a stop within wider European itineraries. The country's tourism strategy for India emphasizes a mix of iconic attractions and lesser-explored regional experiences designed to cater to diverse traveller segments, including Gen Z explorers, luxury FIT travellers, honeymooners and multi-generational family groups.

From the fairytale landscapes of Neuschwanstein Castle and the scenic routes of the Black Forest to Berlin's contemporary creative culture and automotive heritage experiences at the Mercedes-Benz Museum, Germany is positioning itself as a destination that combines nostalgia, history and modern innovation.

The tourism board is also spotlighting

emerging destinations and thematic experiences that remain relatively underexplored by Indian travellers. These include cultural itineraries through Saxony, wine tourism along the Rhine Valley, classical music heritage circuits linked to composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven, and immersive football tourism experiences at Bundesliga stadiums.

Other travel experiences gaining traction among Indian visitors include luxury self-drive journeys on Germany's Autobahn network, Christmas market itineraries across Bavaria, river cruises along the Rhine and Danube, luxury shopping tours and curated design-focused city breaks.

Bollywood influence and romance tourism gain momentum

Germany's landscapes and architecture continue to hold strong appeal for Indian audiences familiar with cinematic storytelling and European romance-driven travel. GNTO India noted that Germany's medieval towns, alpine lakes, castles and seasonal Christmas markets naturally align with the visual and emotional storytelling style popular among Indian travellers and Bollywood productions.

Building on this connection, GNTO India has partnered with Bollywood personalities and digital content creators under campaigns such as "Romantic Germany" to position the country as a preferred destination for honeymoon travel and romantic escapes.

The strategy reflects the growing importance of emotional and experiential marketing within India's outbound tourism sector, where social media influence, destination storytelling and cinematic appeal increasingly shape travel decisions.

Sustainability and slow travel become central themes

Germany is also leveraging its reputation for sustainable tourism and green mobility to attract environmentally conscious Indian travellers. Officials highlighted the country's efficient public transport

system, eco-certified accommodations and countryside-focused slow travel experiences as key differentiators in the European tourism market.

The rise of experiential travel among Indian tourists is encouraging destinations to shift away from fast-paced multi-country itineraries toward longer stays and deeper engagement with local culture, gastronomy and regional communities.

Romit Theophilus said Indian travellers are increasingly seeking journeys that deliver emotional and cultural value rather than simply iconic landmarks.

"Today, travellers from India seek journeys with depth and meaning. Germany offers layered stories from fairytale castles and cities that shaped world history to sustainable travel experiences and contemporary creativity," Theophilus said.

He added that Indian travellers are increasingly engaging with Germany through countryside slow travel, luxury automotive tourism and immersive cultural experiences linked to the country's music, arts and design heritage.

Focus on deeper India engagement

As air connectivity between India and Germany continues to strengthen, GNTO India plans to further expand its presence in the market through trade partnerships, influencer collaborations, destination campaigns and media familiarisation trips across emerging German regions.

Future campaigns are expected to focus on Germany's urban lifestyle offerings, culinary tourism, luxury travel, romantic experiences and regional discoveries aimed at positioning the country as one of Europe's most compelling destinations for India's fast-growing outbound travel segment.

The renewed strategy underscores Germany's ambition to capture a larger share of high-value Indian outbound tourism by aligning its destination messaging with evolving traveller expectations centred on authenticity, sustainability and experiential discovery.





Brand USA spotlights fan experiences across the United States ahead of FIFA World Cup

As excitement builds ahead of the FIFA World Cup in the United States, Brand USA has unveiled an extensive lineup of fan-focused experiences designed to extend the tournament atmosphere far beyond the stadiums. From large-scale fan festivals and cultural showcases to museum exhibitions, public art installations and live entertainment, destinations across the country are preparing to welcome international visitors with immersive celebrations tied to the world's biggest sporting event.

The initiative forms part of Brand USA's broader strategy to position the United States as a premier global tourism destination during a period marked by major international events, including the FIFA World Cup, America's 250th anniversary celebrations and the Route 66 Centennial. According to the organization, the experiences

are intended to encourage visitors to explore the country's cultural diversity, local communities and regional attractions in addition to attending football matches.

Fred Dixon said the tournament presents an unprecedented opportunity for international travelers to discover the breadth of experiences available across the country.

"Global events like this inspire travelers to explore more deeply, creating opportunities to experience the incredible depth and variety of the USA beyond the stadiums — from iconic cities and national parks to local food, music, culture and celebrations that can only be found here," Dixon said.

Host cities prepare large-scale fan experiences

Across the United States, official FIFA Fan Festivals are expected to become focal points for international supporters, offering free public

screenings, live entertainment and community celebrations.

In Atlanta, Centennial Olympic Park will host the FIFA Fan Festival Atlanta, featuring live match broadcasts, concerts, fan games and interactive activities. Additional programming includes the ATL Cultural Exchange at the former CNN Center, football-themed exhibitions at Emory University campuses and community celebrations along the Atlanta Beltline.

Boston plans to transform City Hall Plaza into a major football gathering point with live screenings, cultural performances and themed activities. The city will also host multiple regional watch parties, while Piers Park II is set to display what organizers hope will become the world's largest football sculpture.

In Dallas, Fair Park will become the centrepiece of tournament festivities, with fan events accompanied by football-focused exhibitions at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science and the George W. Bush Presidential Museum. Nearby Arlington will also host cultural and sports-themed exhibitions examining football's influence on global culture.

Houston is planning a large-scale celebration in East Downtown, where visitors will experience live broadcasts, immersive football attractions and public art initiatives under the "Art of Soccer" campaign. The city will also feature football-themed exhibitions and numerous hospitality-led watch parties.

In Kansas City, the National WWI Museum and Memorial will host fan events combining sports, music and community programming. The city is also curating museum exhibitions exploring football's historical and social impact, alongside concerts and riverfront viewing experiences.

Los Angeles will centre its activities around the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, where fans can access live screenings, culinary experiences and cultural programming. Additional fan zones throughout the region will incorporate local art, food and entertainment reflecting the city's

multicultural identity.

Miami will activate Bayfront Park as its primary FIFA Fan Festival location, combining football celebrations with exhibitions at the FIFA Museum and art institutions including the Pérez Art Museum Miami.

The final stages of the tournament are expected to draw major international attention to New York/New Jersey, which will host the FIFA World Cup Final on July 19. Fan experiences throughout the region will include cultural performances, sports exhibitions, film screenings and public viewing events across New York City's boroughs and neighbouring New Jersey communities.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area and Seattle are preparing a combination of official fan zones, football-themed exhibitions, live entertainment and local culinary experiences aimed at both international visitors and domestic travelers.

Tourism strategy extends beyond football

Brand USA said the tournament is also serving as a catalyst for wider tourism promotion across secondary

destinations and base camp cities.

Locations such as Frisco, Nashville, Spokane, Portland and Alexandria are organizing football festivals, watch parties, concerts and cultural events connected to teams training in their regions.

The organization believes the FIFA World Cup provides an opportunity to strengthen international visitation while encouraging travelers to explore lesser-known destinations and regional experiences across the United States.

The campaign aligns with Brand USA's wider tourism initiatives under its "America the Beautiful" platform, which aims to position the country as a destination for cultural exploration, entertainment, gastronomy and outdoor experiences alongside major sporting events.

With millions of international visitors expected during the tournament period, tourism authorities anticipate significant economic benefits across hospitality, aviation, retail and entertainment sectors as cities across the United States leverage the FIFA World Cup to showcase their tourism infrastructure and cultural identity on a global stage.



Greece's Tourism Rebound Accelerates

as India Emerges a Strategic Growth Market

Greece's tourism sector has opened the year with striking momentum, signalling not only a robust recovery but also a strategic pivot toward long-haul markets such as India. Fresh data released by the Bank of Greece confirms a sharp rise in both visitor arrivals and tourism receipts, underscoring the country's growing global appeal beyond its traditional European base.

Strong Start to the Year

According to the central bank's latest report, tourism receipts surged by 83.2 percent in February, reaching €533.4 million compared to the same period last year. This growth was largely driven by a 44.5 percent increase in non-resident arrivals. For the first two months of the year, total arrivals climbed by 38.5 percent, while revenues rose by 70.7 percent year-on-year.

The strong early-year performance builds on an already impressive 2025, when Greece recorded 43.31 million international arrivals—the highest figure in its history. This milestone surpassed the pre-pandemic benchmark of 34 million visitors in 2019, reaffirming Greece's status as one of the Mediterranean's most resilient and attractive destinations.

Europe Remains the Backbone

European markets continue to anchor Greece's tourism success. Visitor numbers from across Europe reached 22.41 million in 2025, reflecting steady growth over recent

years. Germany retained its position as the leading source market, contributing 5.95 million visitors—a 25 percent increase since 2023.

Italy and France followed as key contributors, with Italy maintaining consistent growth and France stabilising at nearly two million arrivals. Among mid-sized markets, Romania remained steady, while Austria recorded continued gains. The Netherlands held firm at just over one million visitors, and Spain showed gradual increases. Belgium experienced a slight dip after a strong previous year, while Cyprus registered a marginal decline.

Mixed Trends Beyond the EU

Beyond the European Union, Greece welcomed 15.57 million visitors in 2025, up significantly from 13.09 million in 2023. The United Kingdom remained the second-largest individual source market, contributing 4.89 million visitors despite its post-Brexit status.

The United States continued to provide a stable flow of travellers, with arrivals holding steady at around 1.55 million following a post-pandemic surge. In contrast, arrivals from Russia dropped sharply to under 22,000, reflecting ongoing geopolitical restrictions following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

India: A Rising Star in Long-Haul Travel

A parallel study by the Institute of the Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises highlights a significant shift



in Greece's long-haul strategy, with India emerging as one of the fastest-growing markets.

The report notes a sharp increase in brand recognition and travel intent among Indian travellers, driven largely by improved air connectivity and targeted promotion. Greece climbed nine positions in destination preference rankings in India compared to the previous year—one of the most notable gains among all surveyed markets.

While Greece currently ranks 27th among Indian travellers' preferred international destinations, the



gap between it and higher-ranked competitors remains narrow, indicating strong potential for rapid upward movement.

Competing in a Crowded Mediterranean Market

The INSETE analysis also positions Greece competitively among Mediterranean destinations such as Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Croatia and Türkiye. Greece ranks fourth in preference across key long-haul markets including India, China, the United States and Canada, and third in Australia.

This positioning reflects a growing trend among long-haul travellers seeking multi-destination European itineraries, where Greece often features alongside other Mediterranean countries.

Strategic Outlook: Sustainability and Growth

Industry leaders emphasise that sustaining this growth will require careful planning and investment. Elias Kikilias, Director General of INSETE, notes that increasing per capita spending is closely tied to Greece's expansion into long-haul markets.

He highlights that while established

markets such as the United States, Canada and Australia remain stable, emerging markets like India and China are driving new growth dynamics. However, intensifying competition from both European and non-European destinations calls for a coordinated strategy focused on infrastructure, governance and sustainability.

Kikilias stresses that long-term success will depend on stronger collaboration between public and private stakeholders, alongside a commitment to preserving the cultural identity of destinations while enhancing resilience and visitor experience.

A Market in Transition

As Greece enters a new phase of tourism development, the shift toward diversified, high-value markets is becoming increasingly evident. With India positioned as a key growth engine and early-year indicators pointing to continued expansion, Greece's tourism story in 2026 is not just about recovery—it is about reinvention.



Uluru-Kata Tjuta Signature Walk Redefines Luxury Desert Trekking with First Overnight Experience Inside National Park

A landmark new addition to Australia's experiential travel landscape is set to debut in 2026, introducing a rare combination of wilderness immersion, cultural storytelling and high-end guided trekking in one of the world's most iconic desert environments.

The **Uluru-Kata Tjuta Signature Walk**, developed by Tasmanian Walking Company in partnership with Anangu Traditional Owners, will open in April 2026 as a five-day, fully guided journey through the heart of the Red Centre, connecting Kata Tjuta and Uluru across a 54-kilometre desert route.

Positioned within the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, the experience marks the first time in more than a decade that a



new long-distance overnight walking product has been introduced inside an Australian national park—setting a new benchmark for premium nature-based tourism in the country.

A Five-Day Journey Across Deep Time Landscapes

Spanning four nights and five days, the fully guided itinerary has been designed to immerse travellers in a 500-million-year-old geological landscape. Guests traverse remote desert trails during daylight hours before retreating each evening to low-impact, luxury eco-accommodation located within the national park boundary.

The 54-kilometre route links the towering domes of Kata Tjuta with

the sacred base of Uluru, offering a continuous walking narrative through some of Australia’s most culturally and geologically significant terrain.

Accommodation has been designed to balance comfort with environmental sensitivity, featuring “swag-style” luxury lodging that allows guests to experience the desert under vast, unpolluted night skies while maintaining high-end service standards.

Cultural Access Through Anangu-Led Interpretation

A defining feature of the experience is its collaboration with Anangu Traditional Owners, who guide cultural interpretation throughout the journey. Guests participate in storytelling sessions, workshops and guided insights into Tjukurpa—the foundational spiritual and cultural framework that connects people, land and law in Anangu culture.

This structured cultural engagement provides access to knowledge systems and landscapes that are typically not available to visitors, reinforcing the walk’s emphasis on respect, education and deep cultural immersion.

Exclusivity and High Demand Driving Early Interest

The experience is designed for small groups of approximately 14 to 16 guests per departure, ensuring a highly personalised and low-impact journey through sensitive desert environments. Operating seasonally from April to September, the walk has already generated strong early interest from

experienced walkers and repeat visitors to the Red Centre.

Industry observers note that the combination of exclusivity, cultural access and overnight stays inside a national park has positioned the product as one of the most anticipated new adventure tourism offerings in the Southern Hemisphere.

Chef-prepared meals featuring native ingredients further enhance the experience, reinforcing the emphasis on place-based dining and regional authenticity.

A New Benchmark for Guided Walking Experiences

The launch represents a significant evolution in Australia’s guided trekking sector, particularly in the premium walking category. By integrating high-comfort eco-accommodation with structured cultural engagement, the experience moves beyond traditional hiking formats toward a more curated, interpretive travel model.

All logistics, permits and trail coordination are managed as part of an all-inclusive structure, allowing travellers to focus entirely on the landscape, culture and guided experience without operational complexity.

Redefining Connection to Country

At its core, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Signature Walk is positioned as more than a physical journey. It is designed as an immersive encounter with one of the world’s oldest living cultural landscapes, offering travellers a rare opportunity to engage with Country at walking pace across multiple days.

By combining environmental stewardship, Indigenous-led storytelling and controlled access to sensitive areas, the experience reflects a growing shift in global tourism toward slower, more meaningful and culturally grounded travel.

As anticipation builds ahead of its 2026 launch, the walk is expected to become a flagship example of how carefully managed tourism can create both economic value and cultural respect within protected landscapes.

Chef-prepared meals featuring native ingredients further enhance the experience, reinforcing the emphasis on place-based dining and regional authenticity.



Thailand to Reinstate Shorter Visa-Free Entry Rules, Roll Back 60-Day Scheme for 93 Countries

Thailand is preparing to tighten its visa-free entry policies after the Cabinet approved plans to revoke the current 60-day visa exemption scheme for travellers from 93 countries and territories, signalling a significant shift in the country's post-pandemic tourism strategy.

The move, confirmed by Thailand's Minister of Tourism and Sports, Surasak Phancharoenworakul, follows growing concerns among Thai authorities over the alleged misuse of extended visa-free access by some foreign nationals. The revised framework is expected to restore shorter stay durations, with most eligible travellers likely returning to a 30-day visa-free entry period.

The policy adjustment comes

less than two years after Thailand expanded visa-free access in an effort to accelerate tourism recovery and stimulate visitor arrivals following the pandemic slowdown. While the liberalised regime helped revive inbound travel, authorities now appear focused on balancing tourism growth with national security, immigration oversight and labour regulation concerns.

According to officials, the revised measures were approved during a Cabinet meeting held on May 19, 2026, and detailed regulations will soon be published in the Royal Gazette through Ministry of Interior notifications. The changes are expected to take effect 15 days after publication.

Visa-Free Access to Be Restructured

Speaking at a press conference, Mungkorn Pratoomkaew, Director-General of Thailand's Department of Consular Affairs, explained that the government plans to introduce a "one visa exemption arrangement per country" policy to streamline the country's entry framework and reduce overlapping privileges.

Under the proposed revisions:

- The 60-day visa-free scheme covering 93 countries and territories will be cancelled.
- Thailand will revise its existing 30-day visa exemption programme, reducing the number of eligible countries from 57 to 54.
- A new 15-day visa exemption arrangement will be introduced for selected markets.
- The visa-on-arrival programme will also be sharply reduced, with eligible countries decreasing from 31 to four.

Thai authorities have not yet released the final list of countries

affected under each category, but officials indicated that the review was based on security considerations, reciprocity agreements, tourism and economic priorities, and the growing efficiency of Thailand's electronic visa system.

Authorities Cite Security and Misuse Concerns

The policy rollback reflects increasing concern among Thai security agencies regarding the exploitation of visa-free privileges.

Officials stated that investigations had uncovered cases involving foreign nationals allegedly entering Thailand as tourists before engaging in unauthorised employment, nominee business operations, scam activities and transnational criminal networks, including call-centre fraud syndicates.

Authorities also argued that the 60-day stay period exceeded the actual travel patterns of most international visitors.

Data from Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sports indicates that foreign tourists currently spend an average of approximately nine days in the country, leading policymakers to conclude that shorter visa-free durations are unlikely to significantly affect mainstream tourism demand.

Existing Travellers Will Not Be Affected Immediately

Thai officials clarified that travellers already in Thailand under the current visa exemption rules — as well as those entering before the new regulations become effective — will still be permitted to remain until the expiry of their approved stay periods.

Once the revised framework comes into force, travellers will need to enter Thailand under the updated visa

exemption structure, bilateral visa agreements or through visas issued via Thailand's e-visa system.

The government also confirmed that visitors entering under visa exemption arrangements and selected visa categories will continue to be permitted to undertake short-term business activities or urgent work assignments for up to 15 days through Thailand's electronic work permit platform.

However, those planning long-term employment in Thailand will still be required to obtain a Non-Immigrant Type B visa through the country's e-visa system.

New Visa Policy Committee Established

In a further sign of tighter oversight, Thailand's Prime Minister has approved the creation of a dedicated Visa Policy Committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sirisa.

The committee will be responsible for reviewing Thailand's future visa policies and submitting recommendations to the Cabinet, providing a more centralised approach to immigration and tourism policy management.

Tourism Industry Watches Closely

Thailand remains one of Asia's most visited destinations, and any changes to entry regulations are likely to be closely monitored by airlines, tour operators, hospitality companies and international travel markets.

While authorities insist the revised measures are designed to improve security and policy efficiency without damaging tourism demand, industry stakeholders will be watching carefully to assess whether shorter visa-free durations could influence traveller sentiment, particularly among long-stay visitors, digital nomads and regional leisure markets.

The government, however, appears confident that Thailand's strong tourism appeal, expanding air connectivity and streamlined e-visa infrastructure will continue to support visitor growth even under a more controlled entry regime.

The move, confirmed by Thailand's Minister of Tourism and Sports, Surasak Phanchaenworakul, follows growing concerns among Thai authorities over the alleged misuse of extended visa-free access by some foreign nationals.

Global Luxury Travel Leaders Converge in Sanya to Shape the Future of Intelligent, Human-Centric Travel



The ninth edition of the DONG Connection Event concluded in the coastal city of Sanya, marking a significant milestone for China’s high-end tourism sector. Held at the iconic The Sanya EDITION on April 23, 2026, the gathering brought together an unprecedented assembly of global luxury travel stakeholders under the theme “Future Journey, Human Moments.”

Positioned as the first major luxury

travel industry event in Sanya following the operational phase of the Hainan Free Trade Port, the forum highlighted China’s growing influence in shaping global tourism trends—particularly in the premium and experiential travel segments.

A Record-Breaking Convergence of Global Stakeholders

The 2026 edition saw participation from 360 luxury hotel groups and

international tourism organisations spanning 40 countries and 127 cities. In total, 451 top-tier suppliers and 255 high-end buyers from 229 travel agencies across 30 Chinese cities engaged in the event’s extensive networking and business-matching programme.

With over 20,000 pre-arranged one-on-one meetings—referred to as “Peak Dialogue” sessions—the event facilitated direct collaboration between

domestic and international players, reinforcing its role as a critical bridge between China's outbound luxury travel market and global hospitality ecosystems.

Since its inception in 2018, the DONG Connection Event has evolved into one of the country's most influential B2B platforms for high-end travel, with this year's attendance reaching approximately 750 industry leaders, including representatives from globally renowned hospitality brands.

Defining the Future: Technology Meets Human Experience

At the heart of this year's discussions was the convergence of advanced technology and personalised travel. Delegates explored how artificial intelligence is reshaping luxury tourism, not as a replacement for human expertise but as a tool to enhance it.

Key sessions focused on three defining pillars:

- AI-enabled travel, including intelligent itinerary planning and predictive personalisation
- The creation of emotional value through deeper, more meaningful guest experiences
- Sustainable travel development, with a strong emphasis on ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) principles

Industry leaders emphasised that the next phase of luxury travel will be driven less by material opulence and more by emotional resonance, authenticity and transformative experiences.

Insights from China's High-Net-Worth Travellers

A major highlight of the event was the release of the *China Luxury Travel Trends Report*, developed in collaboration with Dragon Trail. Drawing on insights from luxury hotels, leading travel agencies and high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), the report provides a detailed snapshot of evolving consumer preferences.

Among its key findings:

- China's affluent traveller base is increasingly composed of self-made entrepreneurs, with women playing

Positioned as the first major luxury travel industry event in Sanya following the operational phase of the Hainan Free Trade Port, the forum highlighted China's growing influence in shaping global tourism trends—particularly in the premium and experiential travel segments.

a significant role in travel decision-making

- Demand is shifting toward personal growth, cultural immersion and in-depth exploration rather than traditional sightseeing
- Privacy, exclusivity and hyper-personalised services are becoming essential expectations
- Niche destinations and bespoke experiences are gaining popularity
- Wellness, sustainability and "healing travel" are emerging as major growth drivers

These insights reflect a broader global shift toward experiential luxury—where emotional fulfilment and personal enrichment take precedence over conspicuous consumption.

AI as an Enabler, Not a Replacement

Event leadership underscored the transformative yet supportive role of technology. May Wong highlighted that the future of luxury travel lies in delivering "inner value," with travellers increasingly seeking emotional connection, wellbeing and meaningful engagement.

Meanwhile, co-founder Bamboo Zhou described artificial intelligence as a powerful enabler—streamlining processes such as booking, preference

management and multilingual communication, while freeing travel advisors to focus on high-touch, personalised service.

Recognition and Industry Leadership

An awards ceremony held during the event honoured organisations and individuals who have demonstrated excellence in innovation, sustainability and service design. These recognitions underscored the industry's evolving benchmarks, where quality, authenticity and responsibility are central to success.

Sanya's Rising Role in Global Tourism

Hosting the event further reinforces Sanya's position as a strategic hub for luxury tourism in Asia. With the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port, the city is increasingly attracting international investment, high-end hospitality brands and global travel forums.

The DONG Connection Event's return to Sanya signals confidence in the region's potential to lead in premium travel innovation, particularly as China's outbound tourism market continues to expand.

A New Era for Luxury Travel

Over nearly a decade, the DONG Connection Event has transformed from a networking platform into a comprehensive ecosystem linking China with the global luxury travel industry. Its evolution mirrors a broader shift in tourism—from status-driven consumption to purpose-driven exploration.

By integrating Eastern philosophies with cutting-edge technology, the event is helping redefine the future of travel—one that prioritises sustainability, emotional connection and intelligent personalisation.

As the global tourism landscape continues to evolve, gatherings like this are not only shaping industry dialogue but also setting the direction for a more thoughtful, connected and transformative travel experience.

ICONIC Travel & Tourism Summit 2026 Brings Together Industry Leaders to Shape India's Tourism Future



The **ICONIC Travel & Tourism Summit 2026**, hosted by Red Hat Communications in collaboration with Zee Network, convened at the prestigious ITC Maurya, drawing influential voices from across travel, aviation, hospitality and policy.

Held under the forward-looking theme “*Tourism 4.0: Coding the Resilience of the New Tomorrow*,” the

summit positioned itself as a critical platform for dialogue on digital transformation, sustainability and India’s expanding footprint in the global tourism ecosystem.

A Convergence of Industry Leadership

The event brought together senior executives, policymakers, diplomats

and tourism stakeholders, reflecting the increasing interconnectedness of the travel value chain. Discussions focused on emerging travel trends, the role of artificial intelligence, aviation growth, destination preparedness and the evolution of guest experience in a rapidly digitising world.

At the centre of these conversations was **Jyoti Mayal**, Chairperson of the

Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council and CEO of Red Hat Communications, who underscored the importance of collaboration, innovation and skilling in strengthening India's tourism ecosystem.

Addressing the summit as a keynote speaker, **Ms. Jyoti Mayal** emphasized the importance of collaboration, innovation, and skilling in shaping the future of India's tourism ecosystem. She highlighted how platforms like ICONIC foster meaningful dialogue among industry leaders across travel, aviation, and hospitality, enabling the sector to collectively navigate challenges and unlock new growth opportunities. Underscoring the theme of "Tourism 4.0," she spoke about embracing digital transformation and resilience to position India as a strong global tourism powerhouse.

Prominent Voices Across Sectors

The summit featured a diverse lineup of speakers representing key segments of the industry. Among them were **Nikhil Sharma** of Radisson Hotel Group, **JB Singh** of InterGlobe Hotels, and **Sandeep Dwivedi** of Amadeus.

Additional industry leaders included **Manish Puri** from Air India, **Meena Bhatia** of Le Méridien New Delhi, **Yummi Talwar** from VFS Global, and **Ranju Alex** of Accor.

The speaker roster also featured **Vasudha Sondhi**, **Ratna Chadha**, **Parikshit Choudhary** from MakeMyTrip, and **Anil Parashar**, among others—each contributing insights on innovation, customer engagement and sectoral growth.

Global Partnerships Take Centre Stage

Reinforcing the importance of international collaboration, the summit welcomed senior diplomatic representatives from key international markets, including **H.E. Mr. Kamel Zayed Kamel Galal**, Ambassador of Egypt to India, **H.E. Pradeepa Mahishini Colonne**, Sri Lanka High Commissioner to India and **H.E. Alikei Koutsomitopoulou**, Ambassador of Greece to India —reinforcing the



importance of global partnerships in accelerating inbound and outbound tourism opportunities.

Their participation highlighted the growing role of bilateral and multilateral partnerships in driving both inbound and outbound tourism flows.

Expanding the Conversation: Culture, Content and Inclusion

Beyond traditional industry discussions, the summit explored evolving narratives within travel. A fireside chat featuring **Ashwani Lohani** of the Prime Minister's Museum and Library offered insights into heritage and institutional storytelling.

An interactive session titled "She Travels, She Posts: The Truth About Solo Female Travel" brought together digital creators **Mia Lakra**, **Deeksha Mishra**, and **Means Malhotra**, reflecting the growing influence of social media in shaping travel decisions and narratives—particularly among women travellers.

Toward a Smarter, More Resilient Tourism Ecosystem

As the summit concluded, a clear consensus emerged: the future of tourism lies at the intersection of technology, sustainability and human-centric experiences. Stakeholders emphasised the need for continued investment in skills development, digital infrastructure and collaborative frameworks to ensure long-term growth.

Speaking on the successful conclusion of the summit, **Ms. Jyoti Mayal**, visionary behind the ICONIC platform and Chairperson, Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC), said:

"It is always encouraging to see the travel and tourism industry come together on one platform to share ideas, discuss challenges, and look ahead with optimism. Through WION ICONIC Travel & Tourism Summit 2026, we aimed to create meaningful conversations that can support the growth of our sector. The response this year has been truly heartening, with leaders from across travel, hospitality, aviation, and tourism sharing valuable perspectives. I truly believe that with the right collaboration, innovation, and focus on skilling, Indian tourism has immense potential in the years ahead. Platforms like these are important because they help us learn from one another and move forward together as an industry."

A Platform Shaping Industry Dialogue

With its high-level participation and forward-looking agenda, the ICONIC Travel & Tourism Summit continues to cement its role as one of India's most influential forums for the travel and hospitality industry. As the sector evolves in response to global shifts, such platforms are proving essential in shaping strategy, fostering partnerships and driving collective progress.

Yas Island Selected as Home for Sphere Abu Dhabi, Landmark Entertainment Venue Targeted for 2029 Opening



Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi and Sphere Entertainment Co. have officially announced that Yas Island will become the home of Sphere Abu Dhabi, a major new immersive entertainment destination expected to redefine large-scale live experiences in the Middle East.

The landmark project, which carries an estimated construction-phase investment of USD 1.7 billion, is scheduled for completion by the end of 2029 and will become the first Sphere venue developed outside the United States.

The futuristic entertainment complex will be constructed on a site located between Yas Mall and SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, placing it at the centre of one of the UAE's fastest-growing tourism and leisure districts.

Officials stated that the venue is expected to strengthen Abu Dhabi's position as a global entertainment and tourism hub while contributing to the emirate's long-term economic diversification strategy.

Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, described the

development as a long-term strategic investment aimed at reinforcing Abu Dhabi's role as a global destination for culture, entertainment, and innovation.

He noted that Sphere Abu Dhabi would not only attract international visitors and investors but also serve as a platform to showcase Emirati culture, storytelling, and creative talent on an unprecedented global stage.

James L. Dolan, Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Sphere Entertainment, said Abu Dhabi's ambition, infrastructure, and position as an international cultural crossroads made it a natural choice for the company's first international expansion.

Sphere Abu Dhabi is expected to mirror the scale and technological sophistication of the original Sphere venue, featuring a capacity of up to 20,000 guests depending on event configuration.

The venue will host three primary categories of programming powered by advanced immersive technologies: proprietary Sphere Experiences featuring multi-sensory storytelling; major concert residencies; and large-scale branded or marquee events including combat sports, conferences,

and product launches.

The project is also expected to generate thousands of jobs during both the construction and operational phases, further supporting Abu Dhabi's growing creative economy and tourism ecosystem.

Sphere Abu Dhabi will become part of a broader portfolio of destination developments transforming Yas Island into a globally recognised entertainment hub. The island is already home to several internationally known attractions and is set to welcome the upcoming Disney theme park resort on Yas Island in the coming years.

The development also complements Abu Dhabi's wider cultural tourism ambitions linked to the Saadiyat Cultural District, which continues to position the emirate as a leading centre for arts, heritage, and experiential tourism.

Authorities confirmed that multiple government and infrastructure entities will collaborate on the project's master planning and transportation integration. These include the Department of Municipalities and Transport, the Integrated Transport Centre, the Department of Energy, TAQA, Etihad Rail, and Aldar.

The integrated development plan will focus on improving road access, transport connectivity, and infrastructure coordination across Yas Island as visitor volumes continue to rise.

Industry analysts believe the arrival of Sphere Abu Dhabi could significantly elevate the emirate's profile within the global entertainment and events sector, particularly as destinations worldwide compete to attract high-value experiential tourism and major international live events.

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

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



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

For more
information



ORGANISED BY

