

NEXT DESTINATION

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Letter from the

Editor-in-Chief

As the travel and hospitality industry navigates another phase of global uncertainty, shaped by shifting geopolitical dynamics and evolving traveller sentiment, one thing remains constant—its resilience. Time and again, the sector has adapted, rebuilt, and rediscovered momentum, driven by innovation and collaboration.

Recent months have presented challenges. Fluctuating demand patterns, cautious consumer behaviour, and external headwinds have tested the industry's agility. Yet, across markets, there is a growing sense of optimism. Forward bookings, strategic alliances, and targeted promotions signal that travel is not slowing down—it is evolving.

Insights from members of the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India reflect this cautious confidence. Summer 2026 is shaping up to be a season of smart travel choices, with Indian travellers seeking value-driven yet experience-rich holidays. Short-haul destinations such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka continue to see strong demand, while long-haul favourites like Japan and parts of Europe attract premium travellers in search of immersive experiences.

Golf tourism emerges as a compelling narrative in this issue. Once niche, it is now a key driver of high-value travel, blending sport, leisure, and luxury. Destinations are investing in world-class courses and integrated experiences for both seasoned golfers and aspirational travellers.

At its core, travel remains deeply human—rooted in connection and discovery. As we step into summer, the industry moves forward with renewed energy, embracing new opportunities, meaningful journeys, and boundless possibilities.

Ayushi Anand

Ayushi Anand

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PM Modi inaugurates phase-I of Noida International Airport in Jewar

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Phase I of the Noida International Airport in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh, alongside Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Governor Anandiben Patel, and Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu. The greenfield airport, developed at an estimated INR 11,200 crore, marks a major boost to aviation and infrastructure in North India and will serve as the second international airport for the Delhi- NCR region, complementing IGI Airport.

Phase I is designed to handle nearly 1.2 crore passengers annually, with integrated connectivity through road, rail, metro, and high-speed rail networks. The airport is already linked to the Yamuna Expressway and the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, with further connections planned via the Eastern Peripheral Expressway and Ganga Expressway. Public transport will be strengthened with UPSRTC interstate buses, NIA-branded cabs, and partnerships with private ride-hailing services.

With these developments, Jewar Airport is set to emerge as a major international gateway for NCR and western Uttar Pradesh.



Morocco promotes MICE offerings through three-city South India roadshow

Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNTO) concluded a three-city MICE-focused roadshow across Chennai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru from March 23 to 25, 2026, engaging over 80 travel trade professionals along with Moroccan partners.

Morocco recorded strong growth from the Indian market, with arrivals rising 31 per cent year-on-year and increasing by 224 per cent compared to 2019. The roadshow highlighted the destination's capabilities in meetings and events, showcasing infrastructure in cities such as Marrakech, Casablanca and Rabat.

Key venues including Palais des Congrès and Espace Bab Jdid were positioned as options for large-scale events, supported by a hotel inventory of around 300,000 beds. The destination is also witnessing increased interest in the wedding segment.

MNTO is targeting around 70,000 Indian arrivals in 2026, supported by continued focus on MICE, luxury travel and partnerships.



CzechTourism strengthens trade outreach in North India with Chandigarh workshop

CzechTourism has stepped up its engagement in North India, focusing on regional markets to expand trade partnerships and build destination awareness for Czechia. The initiative follows strong growth from the Indian market in 2025 and reflects a shift towards tapping high-potential Tier II cities.

As part of this outreach, CzechTourism conducted a dedicated workshop in Chandigarh, bringing together over 30 travel agents. The session highlighted experiences beyond Prague, with a focus on helping trade partners design more immersive itineraries.

The workshop was attended by Guneet Chaudhary, who noted growing opportunities across segments such as MICE, film tourism and destination weddings. In addition, CzechTourism conducted sales calls in Amritsar and Jalandhar, further strengthening its presence across North India and engaging with emerging outbound travel markets.

Korea Tourism aims for 270,000 Indian visitors in 2026; hosts Delhi and Mumbai roadshows



Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) is targeting 270,000 Indian visitors in 2026, building on a strong performance in 2025 when arrivals from India grew by 13 per cent to nearly 200,000. Globally, Korea welcomed close to 19 million international visitors last year, surpassing its annual target and highlighting the destination's growing appeal.

KTO hosted Korea Tourism Roadshows in New Delhi and Mumbai on March 12 and 13, 2026, engaging travel trade partners and presenting key initiatives to boost Indian outbound travel. The roadshows showcased programs such as the Korea Premium Travel Consultant (KPTC) program and K-Incentive Scheme 4.0, designed to help travel partners develop high-quality Korea travel experiences.

Through these initiatives, KTO aims to strengthen relationships with Indian tour operators, enhance destination awareness, and support sustainable growth in the Indian market, reinforcing Korea's position as a top international travel destination for Indian travellers.



Jamaica wins big at PATWA International Travel Awards 2026

Jamaica received six honours at the 2026 Pacific Area Travel Writers Association (PATWA) International Travel Awards, held alongside ITB Berlin. The country was named 'Destination of the Year' during the PATWA World Tourism Leaders' Summit.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett was awarded Tourism Minister of the Year (Worldwide), recognising his role in advancing tourism resilience and sustainable development. He said the recognition reflects the contribution of stakeholders across the sector.

In the hospitality category, S Hotel Jamaica was recognised for innovation and authentic guest experiences. The Montego Bay Convention Centre was also honoured for its role in supporting the meetings and events segment.

Officials also noted ongoing efforts to expand air connectivity, including plans to strengthen access through regional airports to support tourism growth.



سوق السفر السعودي
Saudi Travel Market
11 - 13 MAY 2026

Saudi Travel Market rescheduled to May to boost global participation

The Saudi Travel Market (STM) exhibition has been postponed from its originally scheduled dates of March 29–31, owing to ongoing regional developments impacting international travel.

The event will now be held from May 11–13 at the Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center. The rescheduling aims to facilitate wider global participation, particularly for countries currently affected by flight suspensions and travel-related disruptions.

According to the organisers, the revised dates will allow exhibitors, buyers and industry stakeholders additional time and flexibility to plan their participation more effectively. The move is also expected to enhance attendance from key international markets, ensuring a more seamless and productive experience for all involved.

By shifting the timeline, the organisers are prioritising accessibility and engagement, reinforcing STM's position as a key platform for regional and global tourism stakeholders to connect, collaborate and explore new business opportunities.



Arabian Travel Market 2026 rescheduled to August

Arabian Travel Market 2026 (ATM), along with ATM Travel Tech and IBTM @ ATM, has been officially rescheduled to take place from August 17 to 20, 2026, instead of its earlier dates in May.

The organisers announced that the event, originally planned for May 4–7, 2026, has been postponed due to recent developments in the region. The decision has been made to ensure the safety, convenience and optimal participation of global exhibitors, buyers and industry professionals.

Arabian Travel Market remains one of the most significant travel trade shows in the Middle East, attracting stakeholders from across the global tourism ecosystem, including airlines, hospitality brands, tourism boards and technology providers.

The revised dates are expected to allow better planning and stronger international participation, while maintaining the event's position as a key platform for networking, business development and showcasing the latest trends shaping the travel and tourism industry.



KAZIN DMC strengthens European presence with Brussels office, names head of sales

KAZIN DMC has expanded its international presence with the launch of its first European sales office in Brussels, marking a strategic move to strengthen its footprint in the region. As part of this expansion, Mariam Meskishvili has been appointed Head of Sales – Europe Markets. She will be responsible for driving partnerships, enhancing trade relations, and supporting business growth across key European markets.

The new office aims to strengthen connectivity between European travel trade and emerging destinations such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Belarus, and Uzbekistan, positioning them as culturally rich and experience-driven destinations. The company noted that the Brussels presence will enhance its global network while unlocking new opportunities for trade partnerships and destination promotion, as part of its broader long-term growth strategy.

Tatabye Tours to host second four-city Maldives roadshow in western India

Tatabye Tours has announced the second edition of its Four-City Maldives Roadshow, scheduled across western India from March 31 to April 4, 2026. The roadshow will take place in Ahmedabad on March 31, Vadodara on April 1, Surat on April 2, and Pune on April 4, bringing together leading resorts from the Maldives and the Indian travel trade.

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, which featured 22 resorts, the upcoming roadshow will see participation from 25 luxury Maldivian properties, making it one of the largest Maldives-focused trade initiatives in the Indian market.

Tatabye Tours currently holds direct contracts with over 130 resorts, enabling it to offer competitive pricing, real-time availability and exclusive deals. Supported by Visit Maldives, the roadshow will include networking sessions, one-on-one meetings and product updates aimed at strengthening trade partnerships.



SriLankan Airlines reports revenue growth with AI-powered revenue management system

SriLankan Airlines has reported strong revenue growth following the implementation of an advanced AI- and ML-powered revenue management system. The new platform enables dynamic pricing, improved inventory optimisation, and real-time seat availability across all sales channels, enhancing the overall passenger experience.

Powered by solutions from PROS and Amadeus, the system leverages predictive analytics to better align demand and capacity, optimise premium seat allocation, and respond swiftly to market fluctuations. These capabilities have strengthened the airline's agility, scalability, and yield performance in a competitive aviation landscape.

Industry benchmarks suggest that O&D-based revenue optimisation models can drive a 3–5 per cent increase in passenger revenue, contributing to the airline's reported 13 per cent growth during the first three quarters of the 2025–2026 financial year.

The initiative has also enhanced collaboration across pricing, demand, and analytics teams while earning recognition at both international and national industry platforms, reinforcing the airline's ongoing digital transformation efforts.

Fisherman Tours & Travel Ltd.



Fisherman Tours & Travel names SSR Reps as India representative

Fisherman Tours & Travel Pvt Ltd has appointed SSR Reps, the representation arm of SSR Travel Solutions, as its official India representative, marking a strategic push to expand its footprint in the growing Indian outbound travel market.

Under this partnership, SSR Reps will promote Fisherman Tours across India, working closely with travel trade partners to showcase Zanzibar and Tanzania as unique international destinations. The collaboration aims to raise destination awareness, strengthen relationships with Indian tour operators, and drive bookings from tier 2 and tier 3 cities, where interest in emerging travel destinations is rising steadily.



Disney Cruise Line launches Disney Adventure in Asia with maiden sailing from Singapore

Disney Cruise Line has marked its entry into Asia with the debut of its newest vessel, Disney Adventure, which commenced its maiden voyage from Singapore on March 10. This also makes it the first ship from the fleet to be homeported in the region.

Positioned as the largest vessel in the company's fleet, Disney Adventure can accommodate up to 6,700 guests, signalling a significant milestone for the brand's expansion into Asia.

The ship has been designed with a strong focus on family travel, offering more than 40 entertainment experiences. These include live stage productions, character interactions, interactive game shows and the brand's signature fireworks spectacle at sea.

Guests can also access rotational dining concepts, multiple quick-service outlets and round-the-clock room service. The launch reflects Disney Cruise Line's growing focus on Asia, aiming to cater to regional demand for immersive and family-oriented cruise holidays.



Vietnam Airlines and Aeroprime Group boost India-Vietnam connectivity

Vietnam Airlines, in collaboration with its India GSA Aeroprime Group, hosted the Vietnam Airlines India Sales Kick Off 2026 in New Delhi on March 27, bringing together trade partners, travel associations, and airline representatives. The event aimed to strengthen partnerships, showcase Vietnam Airlines' expanding India network, and promote Vietnam as a key travel destination.

Distinguished guests included Tran Thanh Tung, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Bui Trung Thuong, Trade Counsellor at the Embassy of Vietnam, highlighting the diplomatic and trade significance of enhanced air connectivity between India and Vietnam.

The programme featured networking and leadership sessions, along with a formal MOU signing where La Travenues (Ixigo) and BeAir renewed agreements with Vietnam Airlines. Nguyen Trung Hieu, Country Manager India, emphasised India's strategic importance, while Abhishek Goyal, CEO of Aeroprime Group, highlighted the event's role in energising the trade community.



Meliá Hotels International announces Tunisia debut with 3,000-room expansion plan

Meliá Hotels International has announced its entry into Tunisia through a strategic partnership with Management Hospitality Group (MHG), marking a significant expansion in the Mediterranean region. The company plans to operate five properties in the country, targeting a total inventory of 3,000 rooms by 2030.

The expansion will begin with the opening of a 307-room resort under the Meliá Hotels & Resorts brand in Mahdia later this year. This will be followed by four additional properties across key destinations including Tabarka, Monastir, Djerba, and Tunis between 2027 and 2029.

The collaboration focuses on repositioning existing hotel assets to meet international standards, enhancing operational efficiency and appeal to global travellers, particularly from Europe, while supporting Tunisia's growing and evolving tourism sector.



Crown & Champa Resorts names Think Strawberries as India representative to boost market outreach

Crown & Champa Resorts has appointed Think Strawberries as its official representative in India, marking a strategic move to expand its footprint in one of its fastest-growing source markets. The partnership is aimed at strengthening engagement with the Indian travel trade, media, and consumers, while enhancing visibility for the group's diverse portfolio of Maldivian island resorts.

With India emerging as a key contributor to Maldives tourism, the hospitality group continues to see strong demand from Indian travellers across segments including honeymoons, leisure holidays, and milestone celebrations. The collaboration will focus on driving brand awareness and fostering deeper connections with the market through targeted outreach and trade initiatives.

Crown & Champa Resorts' portfolio spans ultra-luxury private island retreats, wellness-focused sanctuaries, and family-friendly resorts, offering varied experiences tailored to evolving Indian traveller preferences, from exclusivity and wellbeing to adventure and marine exploration.

Treasure Group
to invest in
luxury tourism
projects in
Madhya Pradesh's
Khandwa and Sanchi

Team Next Destination

Treasure Group has announced significant investments in tourism infrastructure in Madhya Pradesh, with plans to develop large-scale luxury projects in Khandwa and Sanchi. The initiatives are aimed at positioning both destinations as high-value tourism hubs, catering to luxury, wellness and experiential travel segments.

Headquartered in Indore, Treasure Group has built a diversified presence across sectors such as real estate, packaging, wind energy and herbal manufacturing. With its latest tourism-focused investments, the company is expanding its footprint into destination development, aligning with the growing demand for premium travel experiences in India.

One of the key projects is the development of Nazarpura Island in Khandwa, located in the backwaters of the Indira Sagar Dam. Spread across 17.57 hectares, the project involves an investment of INR 138.34 crore and is designed as an integrated luxury tourism offering. The development will feature 106 upscale rooms, two restaurants and a dedicated wellness resort incorporating spa, meditation and yoga facilities. In addition, the project will include water sports and adventure activities, positioning it as a comprehensive leisure

destination. The Nazarpura Island development is expected to generate over 500 employment opportunities, contributing to the local economy.

In parallel, Treasure Group is undertaking a large-scale luxury resort project near Neenod in Sanchi. Spread over 77 hectares, this development will involve an investment of INR 246.02 crore and is envisioned as a premium hospitality and leisure destination. The resort will comprise 217 luxury rooms and villas, along with five dining venues, catering to both domestic and international travellers. A key highlight of the project is the inclusion of a golf course and dedicated golf villas, reflecting a growing focus on niche segments such as golf tourism.

The Sanchi project will also feature a convention centre and a wellness facility, positioning it as a suitable venue for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). With integrated offerings spanning leisure, business and wellness, the development is expected to enhance Sanchi's appeal beyond its established identity as a heritage destination. The project is projected to create employment for around 650 people, further strengthening regional economic growth.

Together, these developments signal a

broader shift towards destination-led tourism investments in emerging locations across India. By introducing high-end infrastructure, experiential offerings and large-scale hospitality projects, Treasure Group aims to elevate the tourism profile of Khandwa and Sanchi.

The investments also align with increasing interest in unexplored and culturally rich destinations, particularly among premium travellers seeking unique experiences. With a combination of natural landscapes, heritage significance and modern infrastructure, both locations are expected to attract a wider spectrum of visitors in the coming years.



Golf Tourism

From niche sport to
experiential travel opportunity

Ayushi Anand

Golf in India is undergoing a quiet yet meaningful transformation. Once seen as an exclusive pursuit, the sport is gradually expanding its reach, driven by rising interest among younger players, improved infrastructure, and a growing appetite for experience-led travel. At the same time, golf tourism is emerging as a high-value segment, with Indian travellers increasingly seeking journeys that combine world-class courses with leisure, wellness, and culture.

Globally, destinations across Southeast Asia and Europe have successfully positioned golf as a holistic travel experience. India, despite its natural advantages such as diverse landscapes, favourable weather, and strong hospitality has yet to fully capitalise on this opportunity. Insights from golfers, travel experts, and entrepreneurs reveal a segment that is evolving steadily, with immense potential waiting to be unlocked.

Rajan Sehgal

**Chairman - Public Relations Council & Member
Managing Committee TAAI**

From industry exposure to a lifelong passion

Rajan Sehgal's introduction to golf was closely tied to his professional journey. During his time with the travel arm of International Travel House (ITC)—he witnessed the development of India's first signature golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus. What began as an exciting project soon became a defining personal interest.

After that, golf became my passion.

Beyond exclusivity

Sehgal believes golf has moved beyond its traditional image of luxury. Its growing popularity, especially post-pandemic, reflects a shift toward more inclusive participation.

Golf is a mind game—you are competing against yourself.

A sport of self-mastery

For him, the true appeal lies in its mental discipline—patience, focus, and competing with oneself rather than others.

Tourism opportunity

He highlights golf tourism as a high-spend segment, with destinations like Thailand and Vietnam leading the way through golfer-friendly ecosystems.

India's gap

India's challenge, he notes, lies in fragmented efforts and a lack of alignment across airlines, hotels, and golf courses.



Cover Story

Arun Iyer

Founder, My Golf Tours

Crafting golf travel beyond the course



As a specialist in golf tourism, Arun Iyer has witnessed the segment evolve from niche luxury to a more aspirational category.

“Golf tourism is evolving from a niche luxury segment into an aspirational category.”

A segment in transition

While still premium-led, golf travel is becoming more structured, driven by curated experiences and rising awareness.

Key destinations

Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the

UAE dominate, while Japan and Europe are gaining traction among premium travellers.

Experience-led travel

Golf holidays today blend sport with wellness, gastronomy, and even spectator sports like Formula 1 or tennis.

“Only in golf tourism does the traveller become the participant.”

The road ahead

Partnerships with tourism boards and airlines remain critical, while awareness continues to be the biggest challenge.



Prateek Wadhwa

Founder, DreamTrip4u

Making golf travel more accessible

Prateek Wadhwa sees golf tourism moving steadily toward mainstream relevance.

“Golf tourism is moving from niche luxury to an emerging mainstream category.”

Changing traveller profile

Affluent millennials and corporate travellers are entering the segment, expanding its base.

Popular markets

Thailand, Vietnam, UAE, and South Africa continue to lead, while Japan and New

Zealand are emerging strongly.

Blended itineraries

Most travellers now combine golf with leisure, making the experience more inclusive for families.

Growth outlook

The segment is set for strong growth, driven by rising incomes and demand for experiential travel.

“Today, overall experience matters as much as the golf course itself.”



Greesh Bindra

Executive Vice President, The Suryaa Hotel

Championing golf as both sport and social experience



Greesh Bindra's journey with golf dates back to 1979, when he first picked up the sport during his college years in Jalandhar. Decades later, his perspective reflects both the evolution of the game and its enduring appeal.

Golf creates a rare space for unhurried, meaningful interactions.

the sport provides a rare opportunity for genuine, distraction-free interactions.

Travel and experience

When it comes to golf holidays, the course remains the primary driver. However, he acknowledges that quality hospitality enhances the overall experience.

Opportunities for India

He sees strong potential in positioning India as a golf destination through international exposure, curated travel experiences, and better industry participation at global platforms.

What makes golf aspirational is that you are constantly competing with yourself.

accessibility has improved significantly.

The appeal of the game

For him, golf's unique charm lies in its individual nature. It is a sport of self-improvement, where every round is a personal challenge. At the same time, it offers a relaxed environment to connect with like-minded individuals.

Golf as a relationship builder

Bindra strongly believes in golf's relevance as a business and networking platform. In an increasingly digital world,

From exclusivity to inclusivity

Bindra acknowledges that golf was once perceived as a luxury sport, but believes that narrative is steadily changing. With nearly 400 courses across India and institutions nurturing young talent,

Shyam Grover

Managing Director, Zen Golf

Building a new-age golf ecosystem



Shyam Grover's journey into golf began during the pandemic and quickly evolved into a business with the creation of ZEN Golf in Gurugram, Haryana.

Grover is helping break the perception of golf as an elite activity.

Knowledge gaps

He highlights limited understanding of golf among travel professionals as a barrier to growth.

Golf as networking

Despite digital transformation, golf remains a powerful platform for building relationships.

In a digital world, golf remains one of the most powerful ways to build real connections.

Golf is now both my business and my passion.

A late start, strong vision

What began as personal curiosity turned into a venture aimed at making golf more accessible.

Democratising the sport

Through academies and technology,

Randhir Brar

**Business Consultant and
Tourism Specialist**

A lifelong connection to the game



Randhir Brar's association with golf spans over three decades, beginning with lessons from his father in Delhi.



Golf is expensive, but its value lies in the relationships it builds.



Early beginnings

His access to multiple golf clubs shaped his exposure to the sport and enabled global golfing experiences.

Evolving accessibility

While acknowledging its cost, he believes golf is becoming more accessible through new courses and affordable equipment.

India's potential

Brar sees India as a cost-effective golf

destination but highlights limited awareness and marketing.

Business and beyond

For him, golf remains a powerful space for building trust and long-term relationships.



A round of golf gives you six hours of meaningful connection.



Golf tourism from India is at an inflection point. While the sport continues to shed its image of exclusivity, the travel segment is gaining traction among a wider audience seeking curated, experience-led holidays.

The opportunity for India lies in bridging the gap between potential and execution,

bringing together infrastructure, hospitality, and promotion into a unified offering. As global demand grows, those who invest early in understanding and developing this segment stand to gain the most.

Golf today is no longer just about the game. It is about the experience that surrounds it.



India's finest golf courses

A state-wise guide to the country's best golfing experiences

Mrasha Goel

India's golf landscape has quietly evolved into one of the most diverse in Asia, blending championship design, heritage legacy, and dramatic natural settings. From urban championship courses to serene hill layouts, the country offers a compelling mix for both seasoned golfers and leisure travellers. What sets India apart is not just the number of courses,

but the variety of terrains and experiences they deliver across states.

In Delhi NCR and Haryana, DLF Golf & Country Club stands as the gold standard. It's Gary Player, designed course is known for its demanding layout, strategic bunkering, and water hazards, regularly hosting international tournaments. Complementing it is Classic Golf &

Country Club, a Jack Nicklaus signature course that offers a balanced challenge with immaculate conditioning and wide fairways, appealing to a broad spectrum of golfers.

Moving to Uttar Pradesh, Jaypee Greens Golf Course delivers a resort-style golfing experience. Designed by Greg Norman, the course is expansive and visually



Oxford Golf Resort

Travel Goals



Oxford Golf Resort

striking, with lakes and undulating greens that demand both precision and strategy.

In the east, Royal Calcutta Golf Club in West Bengal brings unmatched heritage to the game. As the oldest golf club outside the UK, it combines colonial charm with a challenging layout, making it a must-play for purists who appreciate tradition as much as technique.

Karnataka offers a blend of urban and luxury golf. Prestige Golfshire Club, set against the scenic Nandi Hills, is widely regarded for its pristine design and exclusivity, while the Karnataka Golf Association course is known for its fast greens and technical play within a city setting.

In Maharashtra, Oxford Golf Resort stands out for its unique topography. Built along the natural contours of the Sahyadri Hills, it offers elevation changes and dramatic views, creating a course that is as visually engaging as it is challenging.

Gujarat is home to Kalhaar Blues & Greens Golf Club, a championship course designed by Jack Nicklaus. With expansive greens, multiple water bodies, and one of the longest layouts in India, it is considered a true test of endurance and skill.

For those seeking scenic drama, Jammu & Kashmir's Royal Springs Golf Course offers an unforgettable experience. Overlooking Dal Lake and framed by the Zabarwan Mountains, it combines natural

beauty with a thoughtfully designed course.

In the south, Tamil Nadu's Ootacamund Gymkhana Golf Club represents classic hill golf. With rolling fairways, misty surroundings, and a cooler climate, it delivers a nostalgic and technical round reminiscent of traditional British courses.

What makes these courses truly exceptional is a combination of diverse landscapes, globally renowned course designers, and strong value proposition. Golfers in India can experience world-class layouts across vastly different settings, often at a fraction of the cost compared to international destinations.

As golf tourism gains momentum, India is steadily positioning itself as a serious player on the global stage. For golfers, it's no longer just about the game—it's about discovering a destination where every course tells a different story.



Oxford Golf Resort

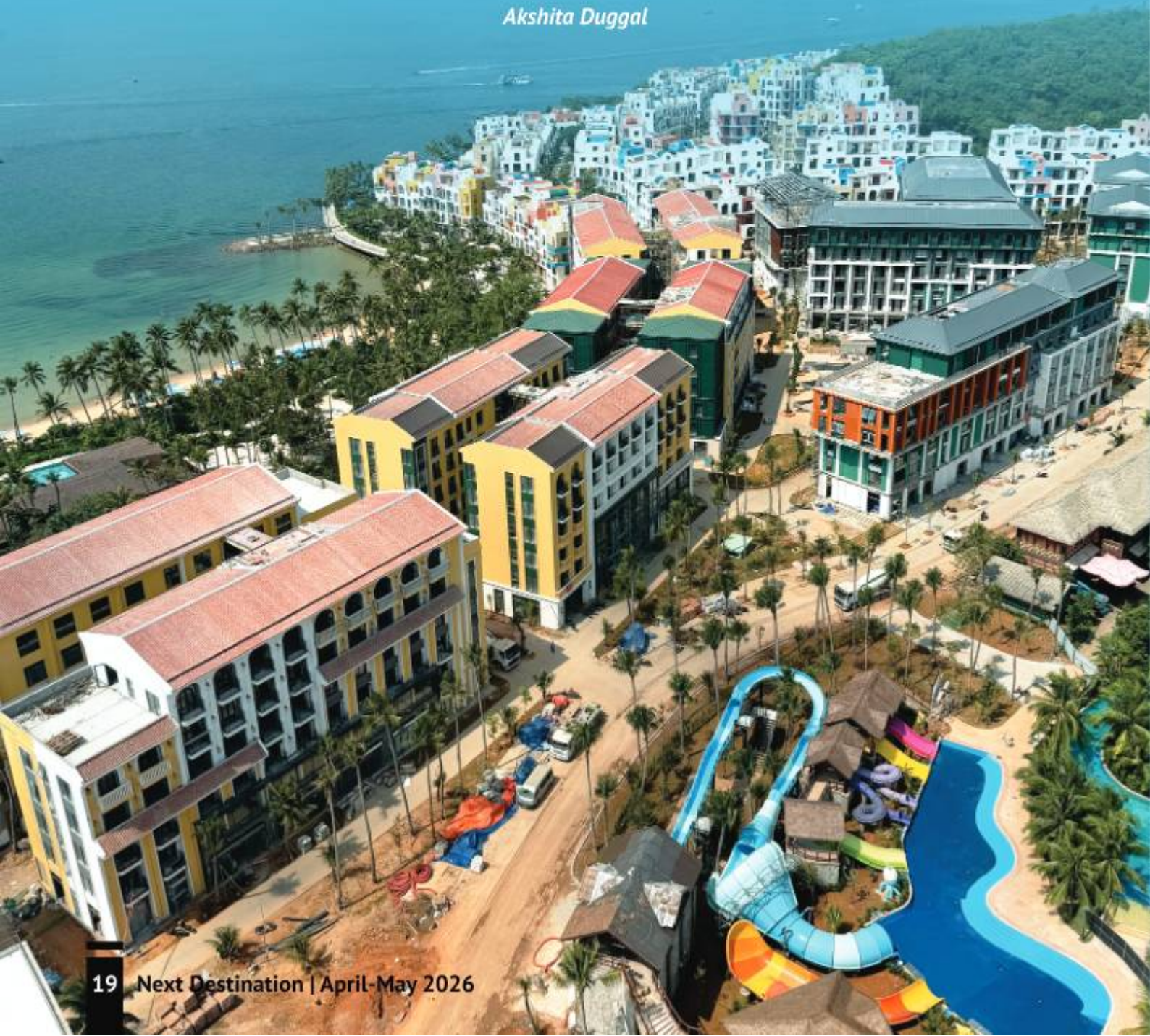


Royal Calcutta

Phu Quoc Vietnam's

visa-free island that feels like
five destinations in one

Akshita Duggal



Travel Goals



Positioned as a rising luxury destination for Indian travellers, Phu Quoc offers a compelling mix of Maldivian-style indulgence and raw Vietnamese charm. Located in the Gulf of Thailand, Vietnam's largest island is known for its white sand beaches, upscale resorts, and a wide range of adventure experiences.

We (me and my sister) planned a three-day escape to Phu Quoc from Ho Chi Minh City, where our Vietnam journey began. The contrast was immediate, from the high-energy bustle of the city to the calm, unhurried pace of island life. Our stay at Premier Residences Phu Quoc Emerald Bay, located along Khem Beach, set the tone for the trip, with warm hospitality and thoughtfully curated experiences.

Access to Kem Beach, shared with guests of JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay Resort & Spa—offered a different kind of coastal experience. There were no bustling shacks or loud beach bars. Instead, it was about slow living: painting by the shore, kayaking at sunset, or simply spending a quiet day to the rhythm of the waves.

From relaxation to adventure, Phu Quoc effortlessly shifts pace. Day two began with one of Vietnam's most iconic

attractions, the Hon Thom Cable Car. Among the world's longest non-stop three-rope cable car systems, it spans nearly 9 km and takes about 15 minutes one way. The aerial views—fishing villages, docked boats, and endless stretches of blue are nothing short of spectacular.

Even in January, outside peak season, the attraction saw considerable footfall, with wait times of 10 to 15 minutes, extending up to 30 minutes during busier periods. Arriving early is advisable, especially as



operations pause briefly around midday.

The cable car leads to Hon Thom Island, home to the Aquatopia Water Park, which features over 20 slides, a lazy river, and multiple themed attractions. Beyond the rides, experiences like the Koi pond and scenic viewpoints add to its appeal. By





evening, we made our way to Sunset Town, where Mediterranean-style architecture meets vibrant waterfront energy.

A highlight here is the Kiss Bridge. A contemporary landmark inspired by The Creation of Adam. Set against dramatic sunset backdrops, it has quickly become a favourite for couples. The area also hosts a daily fire, water, and light show, bringing the town alive each evening.

Day three was dedicated to larger-than-life attractions such as VinWonders Phu Quoc and Vinpearl Safari Phu Quoc. While it is possible to cover both in a day, it works best for young or solo travellers; families may prefer splitting them across two days.

We began early at the safari, prioritising the main bus tour through six enclosures, where animals roam in near-natural habitats. From deer and royal tigers to black bears, lions, and rhinos, the experience felt immersive. The final enclosure with giraffes and zebras was a standout, especially with the opportunity to feed giraffes up close, lending an unexpected, almost African safari-like dimension.

Post the drive-through, the walking trail offered sightings of flamingos, elephants, crocodiles, and more. The transition to



VinWonders was seamless yet striking. Often dubbed Vietnam's Disneyland, the park features six themed zones, anchored by a grand castle and a lively promenade.

Signature attractions include the Wrath of Zeus roller coaster, an expansive water park, and the Sea Shell Aquarium, where the mermaid show at 2 pm is a visual highlight. Additional performances, including musical fountain shows and parades, add to the immersive experience.

The day concluded at Grand World Phu Quoc, known for its Venetian-inspired canals and gondola rides. With colourful façades, arched bridges, and canal-side dining, the setting evokes a European charm, rounded off perfectly with local beer and pizza by the water.

Phu Quoc is more than a luxury beach destination. It is a layered experience. Whether it's unwinding in a beachfront resort or exploring high-energy attractions, the island caters to both ends of the travel spectrum. A three to four nights stay offers just the right balance to experience its many facets.



Best time to visit: November to April.

How to reach: There are no direct flights however, the most common route from India is to travel via Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi.

Visa: Indian citizens can visit Phu Quoc Island visa-free for up to 30 days if flying directly from another country and staying only on the island.



Germany beyond the cities : Landscapes, culture and living traditions

Daisy Saxena



For Indian travellers seeking more immersive and meaningful journeys, Germany offers a diverse mix of landscapes, regional cultures, and enduring traditions. Beyond its major cities, the country presents a layered travel experience shaped by its countryside, heritage towns, and seasonal festivities.

With Easter approaching, many of Germany's towns and villages come alive with local markets, cultural gatherings, and long-standing traditions. This period encourages travellers to explore beyond the usual itineraries, combining scenic exploration with cultural insight.

A landscape-led journey

Germany's appeal lies in its diversity of experiences. From the fairytale setting of Neuschwanstein Castle to the contemporary cultural scene in Berlin, the country balances heritage with modernity. Scenic drives through the Black Forest and visits to the Mercedes-Benz Museum further highlight this contrast.

Pleasant weather conditions make it an ideal time for outdoor activities such as cycling, hiking, and leisurely exploration. Whether discovering forest trails or enjoying river experiences, travellers can engage closely with Germany's natural beauty.

Traditions that shape the experience

Cultural experiences in Germany are

deeply rooted in tradition, particularly around Easter. Towns and villages host markets showcasing local crafts, seasonal foods, and decorative items, offering insight into regional life.

Cities like Munich, Heidelberg, and Nuremberg feature celebrations where visitors can witness customs such as Easter egg displays, festive gatherings, and the traditional 'Osterfeuer,' or Easter fires.

Looking beyond the obvious

While major cities remain key attractions, Germany's regional diversity offers a broader perspective. From the landscapes of Bavaria to the quieter settings of Swabia, each region presents its own distinct character.

Well-connected transport networks make it easy to explore multiple destinations within a single journey. Routes such as the Romantic Road allow travellers to move through historic towns and scenic countryside seamlessly.

A case for slower, longer travel

Germany is increasingly appealing to Indian travellers who prefer longer stays and deeper exploration. Experiences such as vineyard visits in the Rhine Valley, exploring heritage settings like Rothenburg ob der Tauber, or spending time by Lake Constance highlight the value of a more unhurried itinerary.

Rather than a quick overview, Germany

lends itself to journeys that unfold gradually where landscapes, culture, and traditions come together in a more meaningful way.



Romit Theophilus
Director of Marketing & Sales Office,
GNTO India

Indian travellers are seeking deeper connections with the places they visit, wanting more than just a quick getaway. Germany's regional diversity, paired with the allure of spring and Easter celebrations, offers the perfect opportunity for extended stays where visitors can explore not just the cities, but also the enchanting landscapes, local traditions, and festive experiences that are uniquely German.

Thailand's golf landscapes

Where the game meets culture, luxury and nature

Vedika Duggal



Golf tourism in Thailand has steadily evolved into a compelling draw for international travellers, seamlessly combining world-class courses with the country's renowned hospitality, wellness traditions, and diverse natural settings. With more than 250 courses spread across the nation, Thailand has positioned itself as a destination where the sport extends beyond the game into a holistic travel experience defined by leisure, culture, and indulgence.

What truly sets Thailand apart is not just the volume of its golf offerings, but the remarkable diversity of landscapes in which the sport is played. From the misty, mountain-fringed terrains of the north to the sun-drenched coastal stretches of the south, each region presents a distinct playing environment. This geographical variety allows travellers to curate multi-destination golf journeys, experiencing different settings while enjoying consistently high standards of course design and maintenance.

A defining feature of golf in Thailand is its deeply ingrained service culture. Professional caddies—mandatory at most courses—are central to the experience. Known for their skill, precision, and attentiveness, they assist players with reading the greens, selecting clubs, and navigating each round with ease. This personalised approach is complemented by well-appointed clubhouses that offer

Travel Goals

everything from premium locker facilities and pro shops to refined dining venues and wellness amenities. Post-game relaxation is an essential part of the journey, with traditional Thai massage and spa therapies providing the perfect way to unwind.

Among Thailand's leading golf destinations, Chiang Mai offers a serene, nature-led escape. Surrounded by lush mountains and rich cultural heritage, courses such as Alpine Golf Resort Chiang Mai are celebrated for their scenic layouts and tranquil pace, appealing to those seeking a more relaxed and immersive experience.

In contrast, Pattaya stands out as a vibrant hub that blends championship golf with lively entertainment. Easily accessible from Bangkok, it is home to acclaimed venues like Siam Country Club and Laem Chabang International Country Club. The dynamic mix of premium courses, beaches, and nightlife makes Pattaya particularly popular among groups and social travellers.

For those in search of cooler climates

and scenic backdrops, Khao Yai offers a refreshing alternative. Characterised by rolling hills and proximity to national parks, the region is home to luxury retreats such as Kirimaya Golf Resort & Spa, where golf is seamlessly integrated with nature and exclusivity.

Meanwhile, Hua Hin—often regarded as the country's original golf destination—continues to attract travellers with its collection of internationally ranked courses and convenient accessibility. The close proximity between resorts and golf venues allows for a smooth, unhurried itinerary.

Further south, Phuket presents a more tropical interpretation of the sport. Here, courses are set against dramatic island landscapes, often featuring sweeping ocean views, and are complemented by luxury beachfront resorts—creating a balanced blend of recreation and relaxation.

Affordability remains one of Thailand's strongest advantages. Compared to many global golf destinations, the country



delivers exceptional quality at competitive value, without compromising on service. Integrated travel packages that combine tee times, accommodation, transfers, and curated experiences further enhance convenience for international visitors.

With year-round playability and peak conditions between November and February, Thailand continues to strengthen its position as a leading global golf destination—one where the game naturally intertwines with culture, wellness, and refined hospitality.



A new chapter in golf travel

Why India is looking at Uganda

Ami Shah



Lake Victoria Serena Golf Resort & Spa

For India's growing community of golf enthusiasts, the pursuit of new destinations is steadily shifting beyond familiar circuits such as Thailand, Scotland, and the UAE. As travellers seek experiences that go beyond the game itself, Uganda—often called the Pearl of Africa—is emerging as a compelling contender, quietly drawing the attention of the Indian travel trade.

This shift comes at a time when global golf tourism is witnessing strong growth. Valued at approximately USD 27 billion in 2025 and projected to more than double by 2035, the sector is being shaped by travellers who prioritise immersive, multi-dimensional journeys. India is very much part of this evolution. With a domestic golf market valued at around USD 1 billion, increasing disposable incomes and a rising base of urban golfers are fuelling outbound travel, often in the form of curated group itineraries.

Uganda's appeal lies in its ability to offer

something refreshingly different. Its courses are not just about the game—they are set against dramatic landscapes that elevate the overall experience. The country's golfing legacy is also deeper than many expect. The Uganda Golf Club in Kampala and the Entebbe Golf Club, both established around 1900, stand among East Africa's oldest courses. The Uganda Golf Club, a par-72 layout stretching over 7,200 yards, is playable year-round thanks to the region's temperate climate.

Leading Uganda's contemporary golf offering is the Lake Victoria Serena Golf Resort & Spa, where an 18-hole course designed by Golf Plan Inc., USA introduces international standards to the destination. Known for its island green finishing hole and integrated resort experience, it reflects the country's growing ambitions within global golf tourism. Elsewhere, courses such as Toro Golf Club in Fort Portal and the Kilembe Mines Golf Course at the foothills of the

Rwenzori Mountains offer both scenic drama and technical challenge.

What truly differentiates Uganda, however, is the seamless integration of golf with nature and wildlife. Few destinations allow travellers to combine a morning round with experiences such as river excursions along the Nile or gorilla tracking in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. For Indian travellers increasingly seeking layered itineraries, this blend of sport and wilderness creates a powerful draw.

Ease of access further strengthens Uganda's positioning. The e-visa process is efficient, with approvals typically within three to five working days, while the East Africa Tourist Visa enables seamless travel across Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda. Connectivity via hubs such as Addis Ababa, Nairobi, and Dubai ensures the destination is well within reach.

As Uganda's global profile continues to grow, it presents a timely opportunity for Indian golfers and tour operators alike. With its combination of quality courses, extraordinary landscapes, and compelling value, Uganda is no longer just an emerging destination—it is fast becoming a relevant and exciting choice in India's evolving golf travel story.



Lake Victoria Serena Golf Resort & Spa

Taiwan tees off in India with a focused push on golf tourism

Team Next Destination



Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA) is sharpening its focus on niche travel segments in India, with golf tourism emerging as a key priority for 2025. Building on the strong historical and cultural ties between Taiwan and India, the tourism board has been actively investing in market development initiatives since its re-entry into India in January 2024.

As part of its strategy, TTA has been promoting Taiwan as a destination for

corporate and incentive travel, while now expanding its focus to specialised offerings such as golf tourism. With a golfing legacy spanning over a century, Taiwan is home to several renowned courses including Ta Shee Golf & Country Club, Taiwan Golf & Country Club and Miramar Golf & Country Club.

TTA is also strengthening partnerships with India's golf trade and travel stakeholders to develop tailored packages that combine golf with luxury

stays, wellness experiences, hot springs, culinary journeys and premium shopping.

Taiwan recorded over 38,000 Indian arrivals in 2024, reflecting a growth of more than 20 per cent. With its global campaign "TAIWAN – Waves of Wonder", the destination aims to further boost visibility and attract high-value travellers from India.




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Why **Indian travellers** could lead **West Asia's** tourism recovery

If stability returns to the region, the Indian outbound market may once again become the driving force behind tourism revival across the Gulf.



Vineet Gopal

Tourism is often the first sector to feel the impact of geopolitical tensions and equally the first to recover when stability returns. The current uncertainties in parts of West Asia have understandably affected travel sentiment, airline routes and tourism flows across the region. However, history suggests that once stability returns, tourism demand rebounds quickly and Indian travellers are often among the first to lead that recovery.

Over the past decade, India has emerged as one of the most influential outbound tourism markets in the world. According to government data, Indian outbound travel crossed 30 million international departures in 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Industry projections

suggest this figure could reach 50 million outbound travellers annually by 2030, making India one of the fastest-growing global tourism source markets.

This growth is being driven by a combination of rising disposable incomes, expanding middle-class aspirations, increasing passport penetration and improved global connectivity. Indian travellers today represent a diverse market that spans leisure tourism, destination weddings, luxury travel, family holidays, corporate incentives and large-scale MICE movements.

For destinations seeking rapid tourism recovery after disruptions, the Indian traveller increasingly represents a reliable and resilient source market. West Asia has historically been one of the



Opinion

biggest beneficiaries of India's outbound tourism growth. The region's appeal to Indian travellers is built on several structural advantages. Most Gulf destinations are within three to four hours flying time from major Indian cities, making them ideal for short international holidays, weekend breaks, corporate incentives and weddings.

Air connectivity between India and the Gulf remains among the busiest international aviation corridors globally. Emirates such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi and cities such as Muscat, Riyadh and Doha are connected to multiple Indian metros as well as emerging tier-2 cities.

Visa facilitation has also strengthened travel flows. The UAE's simplified visa processes, Saudi Arabia's introduction of tourist visas under its 'Vision 2030' programme, and the expansion of e-visa systems in Oman and Bahrain have made the region increasingly accessible to Indian travellers.

Among Gulf destinations, the United Arab Emirates has long been the benchmark for attracting Indian tourists. Dubai consistently ranks among the most visited cities globally by Indian travellers. Even during periods of global uncertainty, the emirate has demonstrated its ability to regain Indian tourist traffic quickly through aggressive marketing campaigns, airline partnerships and strong engagement with the Indian travel trade.

Saudi Arabia is also rapidly emerging as a major tourism destination. Under its ambitious 'Vision 2030' tourism strategy, the Kingdom is investing billions of dollars in large-scale tourism developments including NEOM, the Red Sea Project and heritage destinations such as AlUla. India has been identified as one of the key source markets in this transformation, supported by expanded air connectivity and targeted promotional campaigns.

Meanwhile, Oman and Bahrain are carving out specialised niches in the Indian outbound travel market. Oman's dramatic landscapes, pristine coastline and luxury resorts make it particularly attractive for destination weddings,

luxury leisure travel and corporate incentives. Bahrain, with its compact geography and premium hospitality infrastructure, is positioning itself as a boutique destination for luxury leisure, weddings and MICE events.

For Indian travellers seeking international experiences without long travel times, these destinations offer a compelling mix of accessibility and luxury. Once geopolitical stability returns to West Asia and aviation operations normalise, competition among tourism boards in the region to attract Indian visitors is likely to intensify. Gulf destinations are expected to increase investments in tourism promotion in India through airline partnerships, travel trade collaborations, roadshows in emerging Indian cities and digital marketing campaigns.

India's outbound tourism trajectory makes such investments increasingly strategic.

For destinations seeking to rebuild tourism flows after disruptions, the Indian market offers both volume and high-spending travellers.

Ultimately, tourism thrives on confidence – confidence in safety, connectivity and stability. When these conditions return to West Asia, there is strong reason to believe that Indian travellers will once again play a key role in driving the region's tourism recovery.

Recent history has already demonstrated how quickly Indian outbound travel can rebound once restrictions ease. If stability returns to the region, West Asia may once again find one of its strongest recovery partners in the Indian traveller.

About the author:

A Global Tourism and Hospitality Strategist with over two decades of experience in international tourism marketing, destination representation and outbound travel development. Vineet Gopal works closely with global tourism boards, hospitality brands and industry stakeholders to strengthen tourism partnerships with India. He is also an Executive Board Member of OTOAI.



West Asia disruptions redefine
SUMMER 2026
travel for Indian outbound

Ayushi Anand

Summer 2026, typically one of the busiest periods for outbound travel from India is unfolding very differently this year. Ongoing tensions in West Asia have disrupted flight routes, pushed up airfares, and significantly altered traveller sentiment. Insights from members of the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) suggest that while the intent to travel remains strong, decision-making has become far more cautious, calculated and flexible.



Himanshu Patil
President
Director, Kesari Tours Pvt. Ltd.



Shравan Bhalla
Vice President
Director, High Flyer India



Gurdeep Gujral
Treasurer
Managing Director, Gujral Tours & Travels Pvt Ltd.

“Almost 40–50 per cent of business is down, especially for Europe, as travellers don’t want uncertainty during holidays.”

Demand takes a sharp hit

Himanshu Patil highlights a significant slowdown in bookings, particularly for Europe, which traditionally dominates the summer calendar.

He explains that holidays are inherently linked to relaxation, and any perceived risk—be it flight disruptions or geopolitical escalation deters travellers. As a result, even peak-season demand has softened, with travellers either postponing plans or shifting to safer regions like Japan and Southeast Asia.

Destination gaining the most this summer is **Japan**

Destination losing demand is **Gulf countries and UAE**

Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers is **China**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **the West Asia crisis**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **safety driven**

A destination perfect for families is **Singapore**

This summer, I’d love to escape to **Norway**

“We’ve been busy with cancellations and refunds, while airfares have more than doubled in many cases.”

Airfare surge and booking hesitation

According to Shравan Bhalla, the dual impact of cancellations and surging airfares has been particularly severe this season.

With airlines rerouting flights and reducing capacity, fares have escalated sharply, making long-haul travel less viable. He notes a visible shift away from Europe and the Middle East towards domestic destinations, East Asia, and even Africa. However, travellers are sticking to familiar destinations rather than experimenting, prioritising predictability over novelty.

The destination gaining the most this summer is **Japan**

The destination losing demand is **UAE**

Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers is **Bali**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **increasing airfares impacting demand and conversions.**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **value-conscious**

A destination perfect for families is **Australia**

This summer, I’d love to escape to **Thailand**

“It’s not a drop in travel, but a shift. Travellers are reworking itineraries to prioritise comfort and reliability.”

Travel intent remains intact

Gurdeep Gujral offers a more nuanced view, suggesting that demand has not declined but evolved.

He observes that travellers are open to longer or indirect routes if it ensures smoother journeys. There is also growing interest in offbeat destinations, indicating a shift toward more immersive and less crowded experiences.

The destination gaining the most this summer is **Phu Quoc, Vietnam**

The destination losing demand is **Dubai**

Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers is **Georgia**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **uncertainty**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **intentional**

A destination perfect for families is **Japan**

This summer, I’d love to escape to **Spain**

In the Moment



Sidharth Khanna
General Secretary
Managing Partner Travel Engineers and
Khanna Enterprises

“Demand is stable, but there's a clear shift in routes and destination preferences.”

Rerouting the travel map

Sidharth Khanna emphasises that while demand persists, travel patterns have noticeably shifted.

Far East destinations such as Singapore, Japan, and Vietnam are gaining traction, driven by convenience and safety perception. However, airspace restrictions have made travel more complex, with longer flight durations, fewer direct options, and higher costs becoming the norm.

Destination gaining the most this summer is **Singapore, Japan and Thailand**

Destination losing demand are the **UAE, Turkey, Qatar, and other Middle Eastern countries.**

Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers are **Japan, Vietnam and Korea**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **airspace disruptions**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **adaptive**

A destination perfect for families is **Singapore and Japan**

This summer, I'd love to escape to **Singapore or Japan**



Monia Kapoor,
Joint Secretary
Proprietor, Travel O Holidays

“In an unpredictable travel landscape, professional guidance has become the ultimate luxury”

The rise of expert planning

Monia Kapoor underscores the growing importance of professional travel guidance in uncertain times.

She highlights that while enquiries remain high, fluctuating airfares and inconsistent airline schedules especially on Europe routes are impacting conversions. This has pushed travellers to rely more on experts for curated, flexible itineraries

Destination gaining the most this summer is **South Korea and Vietnam**

Destination losing demand is **Turkiye**
Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers is **Philippines**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **uncertainty**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **adventurous but cautious**

A destination perfect for families is **Japan**

This summer, I'd love to escape to **Switzerland**



Riaz Munshi
Executive Committee Member
Managing Director, N.Chirag Travels Pvt Ltd.

“Travellers are prioritising visa-friendly and stable destinations, leading to a surge in Southeast Asia and the Far East.”

Safety and simplicity lead choices

Riaz Munshi points to a clear preference for destinations that offer ease and stability.

Despite reduced interest in the Middle East, outbound demand remains resilient, with travellers actively exploring alternatives that promise seamless travel and fewer uncertainties.

The destination gaining the most this summer is **Japan**

The destination losing demand is **Dubai**

Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers is **Vietnam**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **airspace**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **cautious**

A destination perfect for families is **Switzerland**

This summer, I'd love to escape to **Bali**

In the Moment



Rahim Aslam
Executive Committee Member
Founder, OA Globe DMC



Rohit Shorey
Executive Committee Member
Founder & CEO Kazin DMC

Summer 2026 is not a story of declining travel demand but of shifting priorities. Europe's dominance has weakened under the pressure of rising costs and operational challenges, while the Far East, domestic destinations, and visa-friendly countries have emerged as clear beneficiaries.

For the travel trade, this season marks a decisive move toward trust-based, advisory-driven services. In an increasingly unpredictable world, travellers are not just buying holidays, they are investing in certainty, safety, and peace of mind.



Japan



Singapore



Maldives



Tourism to Middle Eastern destinations has dropped to less than 10 per cent.



Travellers are redirecting rather than cancelling, with domestic travel seeing a clear boost



Severe impact on the Middle East

Rahim Aslam presents one of the most cautious perspectives, particularly regarding Middle Eastern travel.

He believes the disruption extends beyond leisure travel, affecting transit routes and overall connectivity, with limited immediate opportunities for the trade.

Destination gaining the most this summer is **China**

Destination losing demand is **Middle East**

Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers are **Bali**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **flights**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **safe travel**

A destination perfect for families is **Maldives, Singapore and Japan**

This summer, I'd love to escape to **Maldives**

Domestic travel and advisory gain ground

Rohit Shorey sees a clear redirection rather than a decline in travel.

He notes that in times of uncertainty, travellers prefer destinations that are easier to manage, leading to a surge in domestic tourism. At the same time, advisory-led travel planning is gaining importance, as travellers seek reassurance and flexibility.

Destination gaining the most this summer is **India**

Destination losing demand is **Middle East**

Emerging hotspot for Indian travellers are **Uzbekistan**

A key challenge for summer 2026 is **airfares**

I describe traveller sentiment this year as **low**

A destination perfect for families is **Kazakhstan**

This summer, I'd love to escape to **Thailand**

Beyond the greens

CRAFTING A SCENIC GOLF ESCAPE IN ZANZIBAR

Shafiq Sengupta



As global golf travellers increasingly seek experiences that go beyond traditional championship courses, emerging destinations are stepping into the spotlight with offerings that blend sport, scenery, and culture. In this evolving landscape, Sea Cliff Resort & Spa Zanzibar is carving a distinct niche—positioning golf not as a standalone pursuit, but as part of a holistic island escape. With dramatic

oceanfront views, curated leisure experiences, and strategic global partnerships, the resort is steadily building its reputation among international golfers while staying true to Zanzibar's laid-back charm.

In this interview, Joelle Mackary, Director of Sales & Marketing at Sea Cliff Resort & Spa Zanzibar, shares how the property is elevating its golf offering, attracting global attention, and creating a unique, destination-led golfing experience in the Indian Ocean.

Q Zanzibar isn't traditionally known as a golf hotspot—how are you building awareness and credibility for Sea Cliff's course among global golfers?

We see this as an opportunity rather than a limitation. We are positioning the Sea Cliff Golf Course not just as a place to play golf, but as one of the most scenic and unique golfing experiences in the Indian Ocean.

In addition to being part of Preferred Hotels & Resorts and listed in the PTG Golf Directory, the course is featured on international platforms such as Links2Golf and MyGuide Tanzania, and has earned recognition through

nominations at the World Golf Awards.

We also host curated familiarisation trips for international golf agents and enthusiasts, and showcase Sea Cliff at select golf events and exhibitions across Europe, giving players and industry partners the chance to experience the course firsthand. Combined with partnerships with leading golf tour operators across Europe and the UK, as well as past participation in key trade shows locally, across Africa, and at events like International Golf Travel Market (IGTM), this approach has steadily helped build awareness and credibility among both global golf travellers and industry professionals.

Unlike long-haul golf resorts, many Zanzibar visitors come for shorter stays. How are you packaging golf as an add-on experience rather than the primary reason to travel?

We fully recognise that for most travellers, Zanzibar is primarily a leisure destination, with golf forming part of a broader holiday experience rather than being the main purpose of the trip. Many of our guests come to enjoy a

Hospitality

combination of golf, beach relaxation, and exploring the island's rich culture and natural beauty. Golf is positioned as a seamless addition to this lifestyle, it can be enjoyed as a relaxing extra or as a more dedicated activity for those who wish to focus on it.

As a long-haul destination, we aim to create well-rounded experiences that cater to diverse interests within the same stay. We offer tailored packages, such as golf and spa combinations, allowing couples or groups to balance activity with relaxation. For families, the resort provides a wide variety of engaging options, from swimming pools, kids' club programs, and beach games to tennis, squash, water sports, cultural excursions, and horse riding so parents can enjoy a round of golf while children play at the mini golf course or take part in other activities suited to their age. This approach ensures that every guest can follow their own rhythm while sharing a memorable and balanced holiday experience.

Sea Cliff's course offers ocean views and a more relaxed format. How do you market this as a fun, scenic alternative to championship-level, high-pressure golf courses?

While we do organise tournaments and host a variety of golf events attracting players from across Africa and internationally, the essence of the experience at the Resort remains relaxed, accessible, and enjoyable for all levels. We emphasise the uniqueness of playing



along dramatic ocean cliffs, with uninterrupted views of the Indian Ocean, in an atmosphere that is social and unpressured.

Guests can also enjoy the scenic beauty beyond the course itself, sip a drink at the Clubhouse Bar by the beach while watching a stunning sunset over the coast of Zanzibar, complete with the sight of traditional Arabic dhows sailing across the horizon. This combination of golf, ocean vistas, and leisurely moments creates a truly memorable experience.

Ultimately, we position Sea Cliff as a destination where golf is part of the overall holiday experience, less about performance, and more about enjoying the game, the views, and the relaxed, scenic atmosphere.

Are you exploring partnerships with international golf academies, influencers, or tournaments to put Sea Cliff on the global golf map?

Yes, partnerships are a key pillar of our strategy. We actively collaborate with international golf academies to host

training retreats and attract golf enthusiasts, particularly from our main target markets in Europe, the Middle East, and South Africa. We also partner with golf influencers and content creators who showcase premier golf destinations on global platforms, including TV channels such as BBC Sports, helping position Sea Cliff as a must-visit golf destination.

In addition, we organise tournaments and invitational events, supported by some of our key partners and sponsors, including the Tanzania Golf Union (TGU), Corporate Masters Golf Series, SOMI Foundation, Blue Lotus, Vodacom Business, Flydubai, Exim Bank, ASK B Security & Technology Limited, and HIPZ Zanzibar. These initiatives strengthen our credibility and visibility, particularly in our main target markets, while showcasing Sea Cliff's exclusive and scenic golf experience.

How do you infuse Zanzibar's local culture, cuisine, and storytelling into the golf experience to make it more immersive and destination-driven rather than just sport-focused?

We believe golf should reflect the spirit of the destination. We incorporate local elements throughout the experience, from Swahili-inspired hospitality on the course to curated culinary offerings featuring Zanzibari flavours.

We are also developing storytelling touchpoints that connect guests to the island's heritage, whether through themed events, local music, or guided experiences that complement a day on the course. The aim is to transform a round of golf into a culturally enriched journey, one that is uniquely Zanzibar.



Travelling through taste in Koraput, Odisha

Sundeep Bhatia and Bedabrata Chakraborty

No restaurant door to walk through, no schedule pinned to the day—only an invitation to sit down and eat what was cooked. Life here moved at its own pace, guided more by the forest than the clock. Many stories had been heard about tribal food in Koraput, but nothing prepared us for what unfolded in Kenduguda, a small village in the Kundra block near Jeypore.

A few days were already spent in Jeypore, a business town in Koraput, as the beauty of the region gradually revealed itself. An invitation followed to taste forest cuisine with members of the Durua community. Keen to

spend unhurried time exploring Kenduguda, an early start from Jeypore led to a roughly 35 km journey through a landscape that grew denser and greener with every turn. The last stretch was covered on foot. Children lingered near mud walls, watching with the calm curiosity reserved for visitors who rarely stay long. A few smiles and a gesture towards an open ground made it clear where to go.

The village was clean, and the mud houses were beautifully painted in earthy hues of soft greens, mud browns, and deep reds. It felt like an open-air art gallery. The local temple

was modest, with quaint stone and wooden deities decorated with leaves and flowers. Here, prayers were offered to gods, ancestors, and, most importantly, nature. The austerity of the shrine conveyed a deep sense of faith.

The welcome set the tone for the afternoon. Women greeted us with bright hibiscus garlands, so large and perfectly formed that they almost looked artificial. Fresh from their gardens, these simple gestures carried immense warmth.

As everyone assembled, men and women in traditional attire sang and





danced while visitors watched in quiet awe. Kotpad cloth, the region's most celebrated handwoven fabric was draped with pride. Dyed in deep maroons and browns from roots and leaves, it carried motifs of crabs, fish, tortoises, mountains, and pots symbolising water. Ornaments were bold rather than decorative, inspired by nature: necklaces made of

seeds, dried fruits, and shells. Flowers and peacock feathers added brilliance to the bandanas worn by men and the hair buns of women.

Men beat the local Dhamsa drums and played the horn or Singa, while women formed a circle, stepping in steady rhythm. This was not a performance for entertainment. Dance here is woven into farming cycles, marriages, prayers, and everyday celebration. Visitors were gently pulled into the circle. Steps were missed, laughter followed, and it was shared laughter, never at anyone's expense. Moments like these lie at the heart of experiential cultural tourism, where travellers connect with living heritage.

Dancing opened up appetites, and food followed naturally. Everything served came from nearby fields, forests, or backyards. Plates and bowls were made from sal leaves, stitched together with thin twigs. Only then did it become evident that a few women had been sitting aside, quietly preparing this leaf crockery while the rest of the village went about its day. Once the meal was over, it would all return to the soil.

Seated on the forest floor, anticipation grew for a meal that felt truly uncharted,

perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Leaf cups were handed around, and soon a starchy white drink was poured in. This was Salap, the local wine made from fermented sap. Alongside it came the star of the meal: Kai, or red weaver ant chutney. The wine was citrusy, earthy, and tangy, while the chutney was dry, sharp, and crunchy. An ideal contrast to the



Palate Play



mildness of Salap. Notably, Kai is a registered Geographical Indication of the region.

What followed was rice with leafy green saag, a mouth-watering gravy of ripe mangoes mixed with salt, chopped chillies, and lemon juice, bamboo shoot curry with small fried bees, and finally a runny dal. No one asked whether the food was enjoyed, yet gentle eyes observed. Plates were refilled quietly as they emptied. An elder smiled when the chutney triggered a cough. A child offered water in a steel tumbler. There was little conversation, but no awkwardness, only a comfortable silence that needed no filling.

This was not a curated menu. It was



intangible heritage, knowledge passed down through living practice rather than writing. In Kenduguda, food goes beyond taste. It carries lessons. Kai chutney teaches where to forage for ants and how to treat fever. Salap teaches patience. It must be collected before sunrise. Bamboo shoots must be soaked for days to remove bitterness.

It is difficult to fully express the joy of this meal. The food was simple, raw, moderate in oil, yet deeply flavourful. There were no sweets or sugar, explaining the lithe physiques and natural fitness of the community. The experience was overwhelming in its novelty. Nothing was wasted. Plastic was nowhere to be seen. It was sustainable living way before it became a trend.

In Kenduguda, traditional knowledge is not discussed, it is practised. It binds together survival, memory, and identity, existing beyond classrooms and archives. Partaking in this meal felt like receiving a blessing, a living inheritance preserved

through everyday life rather than museums or books.

Long after leaving Kenduguda, the taste of Kai chutney lingered. It was more than a flavour, it was a lesson. Heritage is not always grand. Sometimes, it is a handful of rice, a sip of tree sap and a circle of dance.

No souvenirs were carried back. What remained was a quiet understanding: in the tribal heart of Koraput, culture is not staged for display. It is lived every day. Visiting Kenduguda offers a rare opportunity to witness intangible cultural heritage in action and truly understand what experiential cultural tourism in India and beyond really means.

How to reach?

Kenduguda lies about 30-35 km from Koraput town, which is connected by road and rail. Jeypore, where we stayed, is at a similar distance. The final approach is via narrow village roads and is best done during daylight. Koraput and Jeypore railway stations connect to Bhubaneswar, Visakhapatnam, and other cities. The nearest airport is Visakhapatnam.

Where to stay?

Koraput town and Jeypore offer several small, clean, and budget-friendly hotels and guesthouses. For a closer village experience, some local families may offer homestays, allowing visitors to live with the community and enjoy authentic meals. Tourism here is still evolving, so advance planning is advisable.



Japan's cherry blossom forecast 2026

A blooming journey from Okinawa to Hokkaido

Daisy Saxena

The eagerly anticipated cherry blossom Forecast 2026 unveils yet another spectacular season of sakura across Japan, inviting travellers to witness one of the world's most celebrated natural phenomena. While the peak bloom typically spans March to April in most regions, the beauty of Japan's cherry blossoms lies in their gradual journey from the subtropical south of Okinawa to the northern landscapes of Hokkaido, offering an extended window to experience this fleeting wonder.

The season begins as early as February in Okinawa, where cherry blossoms bloom against a striking backdrop of turquoise seas and lush greenery. Unlike the bustling hotspots of mainland Japan, Okinawa offers a more serene and intimate hanami experience, allowing visitors to soak in the delicate pink hues without overwhelming crowds. As spring progresses, the bloom sweeps across the country, transforming parks, riversides, and historic landmarks into dreamy landscapes.

By late March and early April, iconic cities and regions across Japan come alive with cherry blossom festivals and

celebrations. From ancient castle grounds to scenic trails, the blossoms create postcard-perfect settings that draw visitors from around the world. Yet, beyond these popular destinations, Japan offers a wealth of lesser-known viewing spots, enabling travellers to enjoy sakura in quieter, equally enchanting surroundings.

The journey culminates in Hokkaido, where cherry blossoms bloom as late as May, extending the season well beyond

its traditional peak. Here, nature offers an added spectacle with Shiba Sakura, or moss pink—vivid carpets of flowering plants that resemble cherry blossoms and paint the landscape in striking shades of pink. The Fuji Shibasakura Festival, near Lake Motosu, is particularly renowned, where over 800,000 moss pink blooms create a dramatic contrast against the majestic silhouette of Mount Fuji.

In the Mount Fuji region, several



What's Trending?



seasonal highlights further enhance the experience. The Sagami Sakura Festival blends traditional charm with modern attractions, featuring thousands of cherry trees alongside amusement rides and outdoor activities. Meanwhile, the Minobu area offers a more spiritual encounter, where weeping cherry blossoms surround the historic Kuonji Temple, creating a tranquil and sacred atmosphere steeped in history.

As summer approaches, Hokkaido continues to captivate with its famed lavender fields, which begin blooming from July onward, adding yet another dimension to Japan's seasonal allure. This progression of blooms from cherry blossoms to moss pink to lavender, underscores Japan's year-round appeal for nature enthusiasts.

According to the Japan Weather Association, the 2026 forecast once again

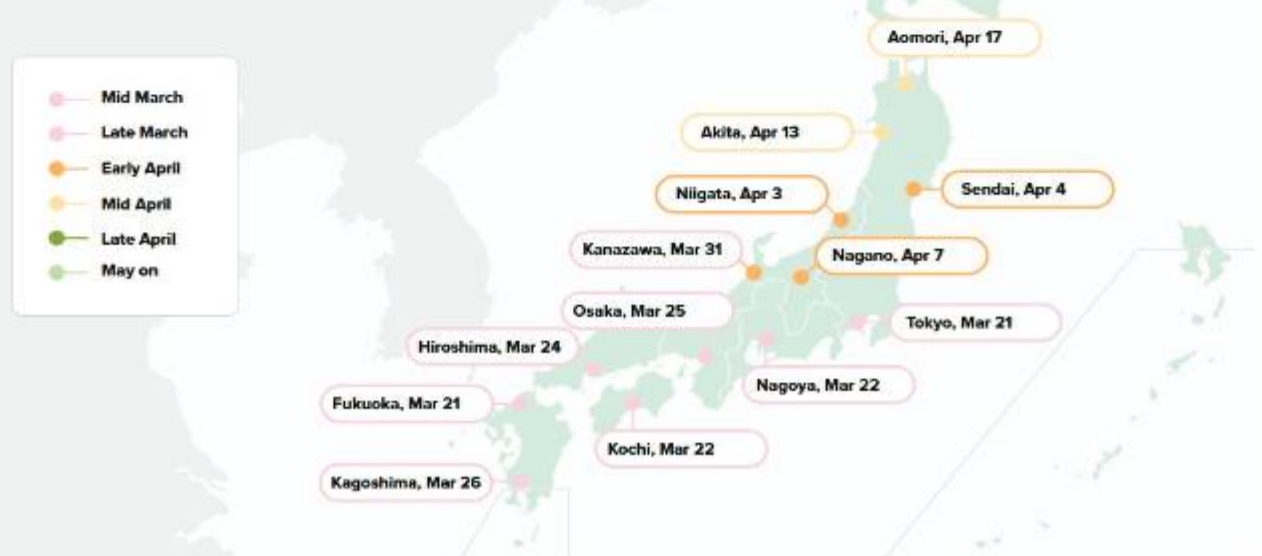
highlights the diversity and geographical spread of sakura across the country. For travellers, this means greater flexibility in planning and the opportunity to explore beyond the usual routes, discovering hidden gems along the way.

With its seamless blend of tradition, natural beauty, and cultural celebration, Japan's cherry blossom season remains an unparalleled experience. Whether it's the early blooms of Okinawa, the classic hanami scenes of central Japan, or the late blossoms of Hokkaido, 2026 promises a journey that is as expansive as it is unforgettable.



2026 Sakura (cherry blossom) blooming forecast

* date of first bloom



Songkran festival 2026

Thailand's nationwide celebration of culture and renewal

Aditi Yadav

The Songkran Festival 2026 is set to take place nationwide across Thailand, reaffirming its position as one of the country's most significant cultural celebrations and a major global tourism draw. Recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Songkran reflects deep-rooted Thai values of family, respect, and renewal, traditionally marked by merit-making, temple visits, and water-pouring rituals for elders. Today, these age-old customs blend seamlessly with vibrant, large-scale festivities, including city-wide water celebrations, cultural parades, and music events across destinations like Bangkok and beyond. Scheduled broadly between 9 and 15 April 2026, the festival will welcome visitors from around the world, with authorities ensuring smooth operations and enhanced visitor experiences. More than just a water festival, Songkran symbolises cleansing, unity, and new beginnings, offering travellers an immersive way to experience Thailand's cultural richness alongside its contemporary festive energy.

What's Trending?

SONGKRAN FESTIVAL 2026 IN THAILAND

19 5 10 8 11 14
BANGKOK CENTRAL REGION NORTHERN REGION EASTERN REGION NORTHEASTERN REGION SOUTHERN REGION

NORTHERN REGION

- Tak**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Tak
14 - 16 April 2026
Tak Province, Tak Province
- Sukhothai**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Sukhothai
14 - 16 April 2026
Sukhothai Province, Sukhothai Province
- Nan**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Nan
14 - 16 April 2026
Nan Province, Nan Province
- Lomprab**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Lomprab
14 - 16 April 2026
Lomprab Province, Lomprab Province
- Phayao**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Phayao
14 - 16 April 2026
Phayao Province, Phayao Province
- Uttaradit**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Uttaradit
14 - 16 April 2026
Uttaradit Province, Uttaradit Province
- Phu Phan**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Phu Phan
14 - 16 April 2026
Phu Phan Province, Phu Phan Province
- Chiang Mai**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Chiang Mai
14 - 16 April 2026
Chiang Mai Province, Chiang Mai Province
- Chiang Rai**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Chiang Rai
14 - 16 April 2026
Chiang Rai Province, Chiang Rai Province

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SONGKRAN FESTIVAL 2026 IN THAILAND

19 5 10 8 11 14
BANGKOK CENTRAL REGION NORTHERN REGION EASTERN REGION NORTHEASTERN REGION SOUTHERN REGION

EASTERN REGION

- Chon Buri**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Chon Buri
14 - 16 April 2026
Chon Buri Province, Chon Buri Province
- Samut Prakan**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Samut Prakan
14 - 16 April 2026
Samut Prakan Province, Samut Prakan Province
- Rayong**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Rayong
14 - 16 April 2026
Rayong Province, Rayong Province
- Trat**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Trat
14 - 16 April 2026
Trat Province, Trat Province
- So Radee**
Songkran Festival 2026 at So Radee
14 - 16 April 2026
So Radee Province, So Radee Province

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19 5 10 8 11 14
BANGKOK CENTRAL REGION NORTHERN REGION EASTERN REGION NORTHEASTERN REGION SOUTHERN REGION

NORTHEASTERN REGION

- Udon Thani**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Udon Thani
14 - 16 April 2026
Udon Thani Province, Udon Thani Province
- Amnat Charoen**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Amnat Charoen
14 - 16 April 2026
Amnat Charoen Province, Amnat Charoen Province
- Khon Kaen**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Khon Kaen
14 - 16 April 2026
Khon Kaen Province, Khon Kaen Province
- Ubon Ratchathani**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Ubon Ratchathani
14 - 16 April 2026
Ubon Ratchathani Province, Ubon Ratchathani Province
- Nakhon Ratchasima**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Nakhon Ratchasima
14 - 16 April 2026
Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Nakhon Ratchasima Province
- Surin**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Surin
14 - 16 April 2026
Surin Province, Surin Province
- Sakon Nakhon**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Sakon Nakhon
14 - 16 April 2026
Sakon Nakhon Province, Sakon Nakhon Province
- Nakhon Phanom**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Nakhon Phanom
14 - 16 April 2026
Nakhon Phanom Province, Nakhon Phanom Province

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SONGKRAN FESTIVAL 2026 IN THAILAND

19 5 10 8 11 14
BANGKOK CENTRAL REGION NORTHERN REGION EASTERN REGION NORTHEASTERN REGION SOUTHERN REGION

SOUTHERN REGION

- Ranong**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Ranong
14 - 16 April 2026
Ranong Province, Ranong Province
- Chumphon**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Chumphon
14 - 16 April 2026
Chumphon Province, Chumphon Province
- Phuket**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Phuket
14 - 16 April 2026
Phuket Province, Phuket Province
- Surat Thani**
Songkran Festival 2026 at Surat Thani
14 - 16 April 2026
Surat Thani Province, Surat Thani Province

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Everything you need to know about **StarCruises'** new 5-night voyages from Hong Kong to Japan and Vietnam

Team Next Destination

StarCruises has expanded its 2026 cruise portfolio with the launch of three new five-night voyages from Hong Kong, giving travellers the opportunity to explore destinations across Japan, Vietnam and Sanya. Designed for those seeking more immersive and experience-led holidays, these itineraries aboard Star Voyager combine scenic beauty, cultural exploration and onboard indulgence.

The new sailings mark a strategic expansion of StarCruises' existing offerings, moving beyond short-haul cruises to introduce longer itineraries for families, couples and leisure travellers. As demand grows for more meaningful and extended travel experiences, the cruise line is focusing on journeys that balance relaxation at sea with enriching onshore discovery.

At the centre of this launch are two 'Okinawa Adventure' cruises and one 'Enchanting Vietnam & Sanya' itinerary. Each sailing has been thoughtfully curated to showcase some of Asia's most picturesque coastal destinations while delivering a seamless cruising experience.

The Okinawa Adventure cruises will depart on March 22, 2026 and May 3, 2026. The March sailing will take guests to Miyakojima and Naha, while the May departure will visit Ishigaki and Naha. These itineraries offer travellers a chance to experience the charm of Japan's southern islands, known for their pristine beaches, turquoise waters and rich cultural heritage. Miyakojima and Ishigaki are celebrated for their natural beauty, while Naha offers a vibrant mix of modern attractions and historic

landmarks, including the iconic Shurijo Castle.

The Enchanting Vietnam & Sanya cruise, departing on April 26, 2026, presents a diverse blend of landscapes and cultural experiences. Travellers can cruise through the dramatic limestone karsts of Halong Bay, explore the heritage-rich coastal city of Da Nang, and unwind in Sanya, a tropical destination located on China's Hainan Island.

Alongside these new sailings, StarCruises continues to offer its popular short-duration cruises from Hong Kong. These include the three-night 'Tropical Escape to Sanya', the two-night 'Cultural Discovery Cruise: Xiamen', and the two-night 'Weekend Sea Breeze Cruise', which remain ideal for travellers with limited time.

On the Go



With the addition of Okinawa, Vietnam and Sanya, travellers can look forward to discovering stunning destinations while enjoying the vibrant onboard experiences aboard Star Voyager. Whether it's a quick getaway or a longer holiday, we are proud to provide convenient sailings from Hong Kong that combine comfort, exploration and unforgettable moments at sea.

Michael Goh
President, StarDream Cruises



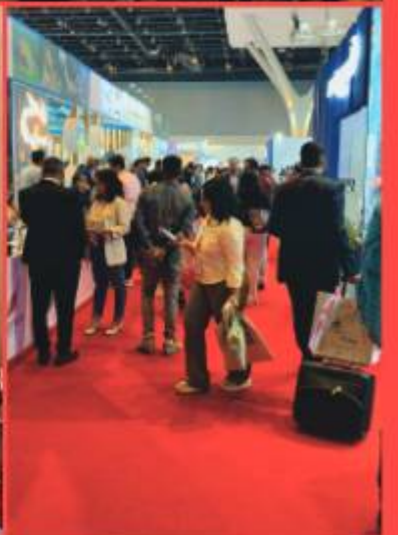
How to book?

Bookings for the two and three-night cruises are currently open through the official website and authorised travel partners. With this expansion, StarCruises reinforces Hong Kong's position as a key cruise hub in Asia. By introducing longer, destination-rich itineraries across Okinawa, Vietnam and Sanya, the cruise line is offering a wider spectrum of experiences that combine comfort, discovery and the appeal of the open sea.





ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL SHOW



Events Recap

Heritage Aarah and Adaaran Resorts hosted a refined evening of appreciation at Qla, welcoming over 150 travel enthusiasts for an intimate and memorable gathering. The evening was marked by effortless conversations, meaningful connections, and a shared admiration for the timeless charm of the Maldives, creating an atmosphere that was both elegant and warmly engaging.



The FHRAI Wedding & MICE Tourism Conclave 2026 concluded on 28 March in Lucknow. It brought together key stakeholders to discuss the future of India's wedding and MICE tourism. Aligned with the "Wed in India" initiative, the event highlighted India's global potential.



SATTE





SATLAS

APPOINTMENTS



Sudarshana Kar

joins Airavata Hospitality and Marketing Solutions as Director of Sales India (Leisure and MICE).



Sanjay Sahgal

joins Global Association of Events and Hospitality Professionals (GAEHP) as Director – Programme and Coordination.



Saheli Chaudhuri

joins Shangri-La Bengaluru as Director of Marketing & Communications.



Saurabh Malhotra

joins Hyatt as Cluster Director of Sales & Marketing for Hyatt Regency Amritsar Hotel & Spa and Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort.



Rijo Varghese

joins Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway as F&B Director.



Akshay Agrawal

joins Park Hyatt Hyderabad as Director of Finance.



Sonia D'Cunha

joins Hilton Hyderabad Genome Valley Resort & Spa as HR Director.



Priyanka Mehta

elevated as Associate Director at Iris Reps.



Danzel Walter

elevated as Senior Manager at Singapore Tourism Board.



Prateek Wadhwa

joins Le Meridien Amritsar as Director of Sales & Marketing.



Elton Hurtis

joins Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel as General Manager.



Sonam Thakur

joins Radisson Hotel Delhi MG Road as PR, Marketing and Communications Manager.

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