

NEXT DESTINATION

Volume 2 | Issue 2
Aug-Sept 2026
INR 350

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TRAVEL ETIQUETTE

Is it time for a reset?

H.E. KIM MINEA

discusses Cambodia's
tourism strategy for India

SINDHUDURG

Maharashtra's best-kept
coastal secret



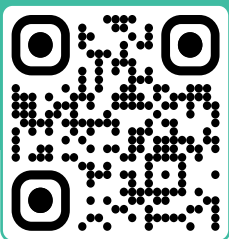
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RNI/DLENG/25/AO249

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Printed by : Kushal Enterprises

House no. 4005, street no. 3,

BAGICHI RAMCHANDER,

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Published by: Ayushi Anand on behalf of Ayushi Anand,

Printed at New Delhi and

published at B-23 Gulmohar Park.

Letter from the

Editor-in-Chief

India's travel and tourism industry continues to evolve at an extraordinary pace, making it more important than ever to address the conversations that shape its future. Our cover story, "The elephant in the room: Can Indian travellers do better?", explores the importance of responsible travel, civic sense and the impact our behaviour leaves behind, both within India and across the world.

The journeys featured in these pages span the vibrant streets and culinary experiences of Hong Kong, the fascinating blend of heritage and entertainment in Macau, the breathtaking trek to Laka Glacier, and the understated coastal charm of Sindhudurg. Together, they remind us that meaningful travel is defined not by distance or luxury, but by the experiences that stay with us long after the journey ends.

For those dreaming of an island escape, our first timers' guide to the Maldives offers practical tips to help plan a seamless and memorable holiday. We are also delighted to bring you exclusive conversations with H.E Kim Minea, CEO, Cambodia Tourism Board, who shares Cambodia's ambitions for the Indian market, and Thomas Eric Roshin of CGH Earth, whose insights into regenerative tourism and sustainable hospitality highlight how travel can create a positive impact for both communities and the environment.

Also featured are key takeaways from the FAITH Conclave 2026, including an inspiring perspective from Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on tourism's growing role in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat and its immense potential to drive economic growth, employment and inclusive development.

We hope these stories inspire more thoughtful travel, encourage meaningful conversations and reaffirm our shared responsibility to build a stronger, more sustainable future for tourism.

Ayushi Anand

Ayushi Anand

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Air India and Ministry of Tourism sign MOU to boost inbound tourism

Air India and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to jointly promote India as a premier global tourism destination while strengthening the country's position as a leading aviation and transit hub. The partnership will focus on tourism marketing, destination storytelling, trade engagement, transit tourism and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

The collaboration will leverage Air India's expanding global network alongside the Ministry's Incredible India campaign to boost inbound tourism and increase India's visibility across international markets. Joint initiatives will include co-branded marketing campaigns, participation in tourism exhibitions, roadshows and familiarisation trips, as well as engagement with tour operators and travel trade partners.

The MOU also aims to promote destinations in collaboration with State Tourism Boards and develop transit and stopover tourism programmes through Air India's hubs in Delhi and Mumbai. Additionally, both organisations will explore customer incentives through the Maharaja Club loyalty programme and curated tourism experiences, including access to cultural attractions, heritage sites, museums and other visitor offerings across India.



Sarnath earns UNESCO World Heritage status

Sarnath, one of India's most important ancient Buddhist destinations, has received UNESCO World Heritage status, marking a major milestone for the country's cultural heritage. The recognition highlights the site's historical, spiritual and architectural significance and is expected to strengthen its global profile among travellers, scholars and pilgrims. Located near Varanasi, Sarnath is revered as the place where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment. Tourism and heritage experts believe the new status could encourage greater international visitation while increasing attention towards conservation, visitor management and sustainable tourism planning. The designation is also expected to support local tourism businesses, guides and hospitality stakeholders connected to the Buddhist circuit. Authorities have emphasised the importance of preserving Sarnath's monuments, museums and archaeological remains so that future generations can continue to experience its enduring cultural and spiritual legacy. The recognition has been welcomed by tourism stakeholders.

India plans upgrade of 62 major airports within two years



India is preparing a major airport modernisation drive covering 62 key airports over the next two years, with the focus on improving passenger experience, security standards and operational efficiency. According to government directives, the programme includes 41 high-traffic airports and 21 facilities currently under development. The upgrades will be carried out in line with standards prescribed by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security and are expected to strengthen terminal infrastructure, passenger processing systems and overall airport management. The initiative is part of a broader effort to support rising domestic and international air travel while enhancing service quality across the aviation network. Industry observers believe the move could benefit tourism, business travel and regional

connectivity by creating smoother airport experiences for travellers. The modernisation programme also reflects continued public investment in aviation infrastructure as India prepares for sustained growth in passenger traffic during the coming years.

New Jodhpur airport terminal set to strengthen regional tourism connectivity



A new terminal at Jodhpur Airport is expected to improve passenger handling and support the growing tourism potential of western Rajasthan. The upgraded facility has been designed to accommodate increasing domestic traffic while offering better movement for arriving and departing travellers. Improved infrastructure, enhanced waiting areas, and streamlined airport operations are expected to strengthen connectivity for leisure, heritage and business visitors travelling to Jodhpur and nearby destinations. The development is also likely to benefit tourism circuits linked to forts, desert experiences and cultural attractions across the region. Industry stakeholders believe the terminal will contribute to smoother travel experiences and encourage higher visitor volumes during peak tourism periods. Better air access is expected to support hotels, transport operators and

local businesses dependent on tourism activity. The project reflects continuing investment in regional aviation infrastructure aimed at supporting long-term tourism and economic growth in Rajasthan.



MAHARASHTRA TOURISM

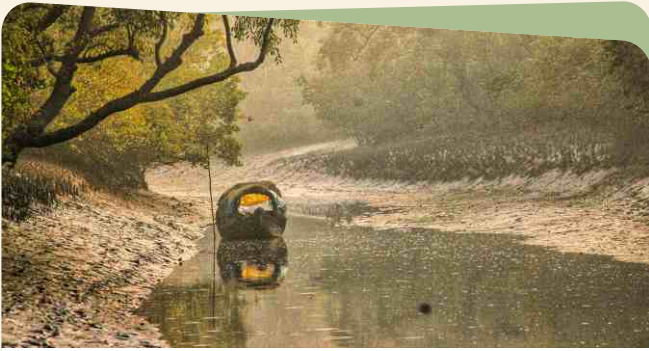
Maharashtra targets INR 1 lakh crore tourism investment by 2034

Maharashtra has reaffirmed its ambition to attract INR 1 lakh crore in tourism investment and create INR 18 lakh jobs by 2034 under the state's Tourism Policy 2024. The roadmap focuses on strengthening coastal tourism, heritage circuits, religious destinations, eco-tourism and MICE infrastructure across key regions. The government also plans to improve connectivity, visitor facilities and private sector participation through incentives and destination-led development. Officials believe the strategy will help distribute tourism benefits beyond major cities and support long-term economic growth. The policy encourages investment in hotels, resorts, convention centres, waterfront projects and experiential tourism products. Maharashtra aims to position itself as a year-round tourism and hospitality hub by leveraging its cultural, natural and business assets. The renewed push is expected to generate employment opportunities, increase tourist spending and enhance the state's competitiveness in India's rapidly expanding travel market over the next decade.



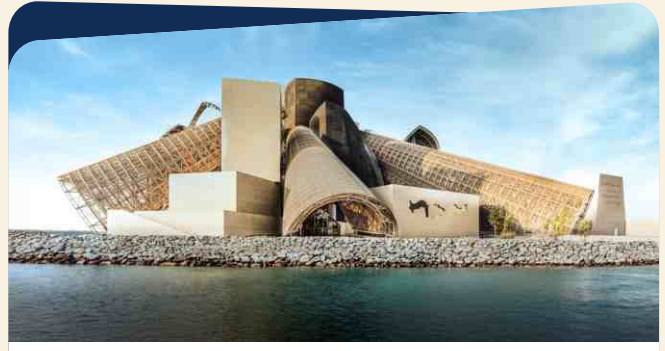
Kerala launches Green Marshal initiative for cleaner tourism destinations

Kerala has introduced a new Green Marshal initiative aimed at improving cleanliness and strengthening responsible tourism practices across popular visitor destinations. Trained personnel will be deployed at selected tourist locations to monitor waste management, encourage eco-friendly behaviour and support local authorities in maintaining public spaces. The programme forms part of the state's broader sustainable tourism strategy, which focuses on protecting natural and cultural assets while enhancing visitor experiences. Officials said the initiative will also help create greater awareness among travellers, businesses and communities about environmental responsibility. Priority destinations include beaches, hill stations, heritage areas and other high-footfall tourism zones. The Green Marshals will work alongside tourism and civic agencies to promote better sanitation and reduce littering. Kerala expects the initiative to improve destination management standards and reinforce its position as a leading responsible tourism destination in India for domestic and international travellers.



West Bengal plans global eco-tourism push for the Sundarbans

West Bengal has announced plans to transform the Sundarbans into a globally recognised eco-tourism destination through a comprehensive tourism master plan centred on sustainability and community participation. Speaking during a World Mangrove Day programme, Tourism Minister Shankar Ghosh said the initiative would focus on responsible wildlife tourism, mangrove conservation, improved visitor facilities and greater involvement of local residents in tourism-related activities. The government aims to strengthen infrastructure without disturbing the fragile ecosystem of the UNESCO-listed mangrove region. Proposed measures include better transport access, interpretation centres, guided nature experiences and promotion of local culture and livelihoods. Officials believe the project can create employment opportunities for surrounding communities while attracting more domestic and international travellers interested in nature and conservation. Detailed planning and phased implementation are expected to be taken up in consultation with environmental and tourism stakeholders. The proposal is intended to support year-round tourism and balanced regional economic development goals.



Abu Dhabi confirms Guggenheim Museum opening for December 2026

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi has announced that Guggenheim Abu Dhabi will open on December 11, 2026, marking a significant milestone for the emirate's cultural and tourism ambitions. Located on Saadiyat Island, the museum will focus on modern and contemporary art while serving as a platform for dialogue, learning and cultural exchange. Designed by the late architect Frank Gehry, the landmark will feature 30 galleries, a central atrium and extensive outdoor exhibition spaces. Guggenheim Abu Dhabi will join Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum, Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi and teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi within Saadiyat Cultural District. Officials said the museum reflects Abu Dhabi's vision of culture as a bridge between communities and generations. The institution is expected to strengthen the emirate's global cultural profile and create new opportunities for tourism, education, creativity and international artistic collaboration.

MAYFAIR Elixir signs premium retreat in Santiniketan



MAYFAIR Elixir has announced the signing of a premium hospitality project in Santiniketan, West Bengal, strengthening the group's presence in Eastern India. Scheduled for opening in the 2028–29 financial year, the retreat will offer luxury accommodation inspired by the destination's cultural and artistic heritage. The signing marks MAYFAIR Group's fifth project in West Bengal and reflects its strategy of expanding into destinations with strong long-term tourism potential. The property is expected to cater to leisure travellers, cultural visitors and high-end

experiential tourism. Industry stakeholders believe the development could support local employment, hospitality services and tourism-related businesses in and around Santiniketan. The project also reinforces growing investor interest in culturally significant destinations that combine heritage, wellness and premium travel experiences. MAYFAIR continues to focus on management-led growth and destination-driven hospitality expansion. The retreat is expected to strengthen West Bengal's premium cultural tourism positioning nationally.

ITC Hotels adds second Welcomhotel project in Dehradun



ITC Hotels Limited has signed a management agreement with Orions Hospitality for a 117-key Welcomhotel in Selaqui, Dehradun, strengthening its expansion plans in Uttarakhand. The project will become the company's second Welcomhotel in the city and reflects its asset-right growth strategy focused on management-led development. The proposed hotel is expected to include multiple dining venues, indoor and outdoor event spaces, meeting facilities and amenities designed for both business and leisure travellers. Located in one of Dehradun's emerging commercial and tourism corridors, the property is expected to support growing demand for quality branded accommodation in the region. Industry observers believe the addition will enhance ITC Hotels' presence in Uttarakhand while contributing to local employment and hospitality activity. The announcement also signals continued investment interest in Dehradun's expanding tourism, corporate and events market. The project is expected to open new opportunities for regional suppliers.



DMCBazaar launches UAE headquarters to accelerate global B2B travel expansion

DMCBazaar has announced the launch of its UAE headquarters, marking a significant milestone in its transformation from an India-focused platform into a global B2B travel marketplace. The new entity will support travel agencies, tour operators, DMCs, airlines, banks and enterprise partners through a multi-currency booking ecosystem featuring localised contracting, international payments and destination-specific operations.

Headquartered in Dubai, the UAE office will spearhead the company's expansion across the Middle East, Africa and Europe while strengthening relationships with global suppliers and technology partners.

Founded by Varun Sarda, Vedant Sarda and Irshad Dadan, DMCBazaar currently works with more than 1,000 global suppliers and multiple travel APIs. The company also plans to expand its white-label and API offerings for travel businesses seeking scalable marketplace solutions.

RADISSON™

Radisson expands India footprint with ten new hotel signings

Radisson Hotel Group has announced the signing of ten new hotels across India, reinforcing its expansion strategy in both established and emerging travel markets. The planned properties will be located in destinations driven by religious tourism, business travel and growing leisure demand, including Bengaluru and several tier-two cities. The development reflects increasing investor confidence in India's hospitality sector and rising demand for branded accommodation beyond major metropolitan centres. The new signings are expected to strengthen Radisson's presence across key tourism and commercial corridors while supporting local employment and infrastructure growth. The group continues to focus on a multi-brand approach, targeting diverse traveller segments ranging from midscale to upscale. Industry observers view the expansion as part of a broader trend of accelerated hotel development in India, particularly in destinations benefiting from improved connectivity, domestic tourism growth and long-term hospitality investment opportunities.



Air India appoints Tewolde Gebremariam as CEO and Managing Director

Air India has appointed Tewolde Gebremariam as its new Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, marking a significant leadership change as the Tata Group pushes ahead with the airline's transformation. Gebremariam previously led Ethiopian Airlines for more than a decade, where he oversaw its expansion into Africa's largest carrier and navigated major challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the Boeing 737 MAX crisis. He replaces Campbell Wilson, who resigned earlier this year after leading Air India's post-privatisation revival since 2022. The appointment follows a months-long global search and comes at a crucial time for the loss-making airline, which continues to face operational, financial and regulatory pressures. Tata Sons Chairman N. Chandrasekaran described the move as an important step in Air India's next phase of execution. Industry analysts believe Gebremariam's turnaround experience could help accelerate the carrier's long-term recovery and growth strategy across domestic, international, passenger, cargo and commercial operations globally.



EVA Air to launch nonstop Taipei–Delhi flights from December

EVA Air will launch nonstop passenger flights between Taipei and Delhi on 1 December 2026, becoming the only Taiwan-based airline operating direct services to India. The route will be operated five times a week using Airbus A330-300 aircraft, with bookings now open through EVA Air and travel agencies. The airline said the new service marks an important step in strengthening economic and travel links between Taiwan and India, particularly across the technology, semiconductor, artificial intelligence and manufacturing sectors. Passengers travelling from India will also gain easier connections through Taipei to EVA Air's North American network, while travellers from North America can connect onward to major Asian destinations. EVA Air added that its partnership with Air India will provide convenient domestic connections beyond Delhi. The carrier believes the new route will support growing demand from business travellers, students, researchers and visiting friends and relatives across both countries over the coming years.



South Africa enables online ETA for Indian travellers

South Africa has launched an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for eligible Indian travellers, allowing fully online applications for short-term leisure and work visits with processing expected within 24 to 48 hours. The new system is designed for stays of up to 90 days and replaces the conventional visa process with a digital platform linked directly to the traveller's passport. The ETA removes the requirement for a physical visa sticker and supports multiple

entries during its validity period. Applicants can create an account on the official Department of Home Affairs ETA portal, upload documents, complete smartphone-based biometric identity verification, pay the applicable fee, and submit the application electronically. Travellers will also be able to track their application status online in real time. South Africa expects the simplified process to improve convenience and attract more visitors from India's growing outbound travel market. The initiative aims to strengthen tourism, business travel, and connectivity.

Discover the World renews Celestyal partnership in India



Discover the World has renewed its partnership with Celestyal in India, reinforcing the cruise line's sales, marketing and travel trade activities across the country. Effective immediately, the renewed collaboration is designed to strengthen Celestyal's visibility in the Indian market and expand engagement with travel advisors, tour operators and distribution partners. Both companies aim to capitalise on India's growing interest in destination-focused cruise holidays and increase awareness of Celestyal's itineraries among leisure travellers. Discover the World will continue supporting trade outreach, promotional campaigns, training initiatives and market development efforts intended to drive bookings and improve

brand recognition. The announcement underlines Celestyal's long-term commitment to India as an important source market for future growth. By extending the partnership, the companies expect to create stronger connections with the travel trade while positioning Celestyal more prominently within India's rapidly evolving outbound cruise and experiential travel segment over the coming years through targeted strategic initiatives.



Wyndham expands EMEA footprint with 25 new hotel signings

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts accelerated its EMEA expansion in the first half of 2026, signing 25 hotels and opening 13 properties across Europe, the Middle East, Eurasia and Africa. The company said growth was driven by strong momentum in Türkiye, rapid expansion in India and rising investment in emerging destinations across Central Asia and the CIS region. Wyndham now operates more than 750 hotels with over 99,000 rooms across EMEA. Recent openings included Wyndham Grand Carvoeiro Algarve, Ramada Encore by Wyndham Midyat and Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Tashkent. The company said travellers are increasingly choosing authentic cultural experiences, destination-led leisure travel and lesser-known markets instead of traditional gateway cities. Resilient domestic travel, government investment in tourism and growing owner interest in internationally recognised brands are continuing to support Wyndham's strategy across midscale, upscale and mixed-use developments throughout the region. The update was announced by Wyndham on July 29 in London.



Sterling Holiday Resorts reports record Q1 FY27 revenue and profit growth

Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited (SHRL) has reported its strongest quarterly performance for the first quarter of FY27, achieving record growth in revenue and profitability. The company announced that revenue, EBITDA, profit before tax and operating free cash flow all reached their highest levels to date, reflecting continued momentum across its resort and hospitality operations. SHRL said the performance was supported by strong customer demand, improved operating efficiencies and healthy cash generation during the quarter. The company described the results as a significant milestone in its growth journey and highlighted the resilience of its business model amid changing market conditions. Sterling Holiday Resorts operates a wide network of leisure resorts across India and has been expanding its offerings to meet evolving traveller preferences. The record Q1 FY27 performance underlines the company's focus on sustainable growth, profitability and long term value creation for stakeholders across its expanding hospitality portfolio and future developments.

71,000 Indian visitors and counting

Cambodia sets its sights on bigger growth from India

Ayushi Anand



H.E. Kim Minea
CEO, Cambodia Tourism Board

With approximately 71,000 Indian visitors in 2025, India has emerged as one of Cambodia's fastest-growing tourism source markets. But for the Cambodia Tourism Board, the focus is no longer solely on attracting more visitors. The emphasis is now on encouraging longer stays, increasing visitor spending and showcasing a destination that extends far beyond the iconic Angkor Wat.

In an exclusive interview with Next Destination, H.E. Kim Minea, CEO, Cambodia Tourism Board, explains how stronger airline partnerships, improved connectivity and destination diversification are helping Cambodia position itself as a year-round destination for Indian travellers.

Airlines have become one of Cambodia's most important tourism partners. Rather than relying solely on traditional destination marketing, the tourism board has adopted a B2B2C approach, working closely with airlines and travel platforms to reach travellers when they are actively planning and booking holidays. During the first half of 2026, Cambodia launched joint campaigns with Singapore Airlines, AirAsia, EVA Air, Etihad Airways and Turkish Airlines across key international markets.

"When an airline invests in promoting Cambodia, it is not simply advertising a destination. It is investing in the long-term success of the route. This creates a strong alignment of interests and delivers more measurable outcomes for both tourism and aviation," says Minea.

She believes aviation partnerships combine destination branding with route development, sales activation and market intelligence, creating a far stronger commercial impact than conventional tourism campaigns alone.

India's growing importance to Cambodia is driven not only by its expanding outbound travel market but also by deep historical and cultural ties. According to Cambodia's Ministry of Tourism, around 71,000 Indian travellers visited the country in 2025, staying for an average of seven nights.

"The influence of Indian civilisation is woven into Cambodia's heritage, from the inspiration behind Angkor Wat and many ancient temples to the shared traditions, beliefs and cultural exchanges that continue to connect our peoples today," says Minea.

While Angkor Wat remains Cambodia's biggest attraction, she believes many Indian travellers have yet to discover the country's wider tourism offering. From the rainforests of the Cardamom Mountains and pristine southern



The Insider Edit

coastline to vibrant cities and emerging culinary experiences, Cambodia is positioning itself as a destination that rewards longer, more immersive journeys.

The tourism board is also shifting its focus from volume to value. Rather than measuring success through visitor arrivals alone, Cambodia is placing equal importance on visitor spending and average length of stay.

“Increasing visitor arrivals expands market opportunities, longer stays encourage greater geographic dispersal of tourism benefits, and higher visitor spending enhances the overall economic impact of the sector.”

According to Minea, these three indicators together provide a far more accurate picture of tourism performance than arrival numbers alone. The ultimate goal is to deliver sustainable tourism growth that benefits businesses, local communities and visitors alike.

Changing global perceptions is another key priority. Cambodia wants to be recognised not only as the home of Angkor Wat but as a destination offering rich cultural experiences, diverse landscapes and vibrant urban life.

“Our strategy is to position Cambodia as a year-round destination with distinctive experiences, authentic stories and meaningful journeys that travellers cannot find anywhere else,” says Minea.

The strategy is built around three pillars: Culture, Nature and Coast, and City Vibe. Alongside its UNESCO World Heritage sites, Cambodia offers living traditions including the Royal Ballet and Kun Lbokator martial arts, an evolving food scene and colourful festivals throughout the year.

Nature is equally central to the country's identity. Visitors can explore the Cardamom Mountains, Tonlé Sap Lake, the Mekong River and more than 440 km of coastline, including islands, mangrove forests and protected marine ecosystems. Meanwhile, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Battambang are showcasing Cambodia's creative side through gastronomy, arts, cafés and contemporary culture.

To encourage repeat visits, Cambodia is also promoting destinations beyond its established tourism circuit. Minea identifies Phnom Penh, Kampot and Kep as three destinations with strong international potential.

Kampot offers riverside landscapes, colonial architecture and the world-famous Kampot Pepper, while neighbouring Kep combines coastal charm with seafood, eco-tourism and island experiences. Phnom Penh, meanwhile, presents Cambodia's modern identity through its museums, riverside lifestyle, creative industries and growing culinary scene. Together, these destinations allow visitors to experience the country's urban, rural and coastal diversity within a single itinerary.

Cambodia is also seeing changes in the profile of Indian travellers. Independent millennials and Gen Z travellers are increasingly looking for boutique stays, wellness, gastronomy and authentic cultural experiences rather than traditional sightseeing holidays. Families continue to form an important market, while destination weddings and MICE tourism are steadily gaining momentum thanks to Cambodia's luxury resorts and distinctive heritage venues.

Improved connectivity is expected to support this growth. Although the Kolkata Siem Reap service has been postponed, AirAsia Cambodia's direct New Delhi - Phnom Penh route represents an important milestone in strengthening accessibility between the two countries.



Looking ahead, Cambodia plans to deepen partnerships with Indian airlines, online travel agencies, tour operators and the wider travel trade while continuing consumer campaigns that highlight experiences beyond Angkor Wat. The focus will remain on encouraging longer stays, increasing visitor spending, promoting lesser-known destinations and strengthening year-round travel.

As Indian outbound tourism continues to evolve, Cambodia believes it is well positioned to capture travellers seeking culture, nature, coastal escapes and authentic experiences in a single destination. With improved connectivity, stronger trade partnerships and a broader tourism narrative, the country is inviting Indian travellers to discover that its greatest stories extend far beyond its most famous temple.



The elephant in the room

Can Indian travellers do better?

Vedika Duggal

From confrontations with restaurant staff overseas to videos of travellers dancing inside airport terminals, a series of viral incidents involving Indian tourists has reignited conversations around responsible travel. While industry leaders insist these episodes do not represent the millions of Indians who travel responsibly every year, they acknowledge that the actions of a few can influence global perceptions and create challenges for the wider tourism ecosystem.

Social media has transformed the way the world experiences travel. A single smartphone video can now reach millions within hours, often shaping perceptions of an entire nationality.

One of the most widely discussed incidents in recent months took place at Bombay Bites, an Indian restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City. According to videos widely shared online, the confrontation

reportedly began after children from an Indian family allegedly threw tissues around the dining area. When restaurant staff intervened, the situation escalated into a heated argument, with the family allegedly threatening the staff. The footage quickly spread across social media, drawing criticism from viewers in India and abroad.

Another video, filmed at Vietnam's Tan Son Nhat International Airport, showed Indian travellers dancing inside the airport premises, prompting questions about appropriate behaviour in high security public spaces.

These incidents involved only a handful of travellers, yet they triggered a much larger debate.

Should isolated episodes define the reputation of Indian travellers? Is poor civic sense simply a result of holiday excitement, a lack of awareness or something deeper? More importantly,



what role should the travel industry play in encouraging responsible behaviour?

As India's outbound tourism continues to expand rapidly, the country's reputation overseas will increasingly depend not only on how many Indians travel, but also on how they conduct themselves.

Small actions, lasting impressions

For most industry leaders, civic sense is reflected not in extraordinary acts but in everyday behaviour.

Littering, jumping queues, speaking loudly in public spaces, ignoring local customs and failing to respect destination specific rules were among



Indian Tourists perform garba on Vietnam Airport

the most common concerns raised. Individually, these habits may appear insignificant. Collectively, they shape the experiences of fellow travellers, local communities and tourism service providers.

Sakshi Mehra, Director, Uday Tours & Travel Pvt. Ltd., believes India's growing travel market has largely produced respectful travellers. However, she points out that littering at tourist attractions, beaches and heritage sites, disregard for queues, excessive noise and failure to respect environmental regulations continue to affect visitor experiences. For Mehra, civic sense extends far beyond cleanliness. It reflects respect for fellow travellers, local cultures and the destinations themselves.



Sakshi Mehra

Director, Uday Tours & Travel Pvt. Ltd.

“Civic sense is not measured by grand gestures but by small, consistent actions.”

Amarpreet Bagga, Founder, Travel Suitcase, has noticed encouraging changes, particularly among younger travellers. According to Bagga, greater international exposure has made many Indians more conscious of sustainable tourism, respecting local customs, supporting local businesses and recognising that they represent India wherever they travel.



Amarpreet Bagga

Founder, Travel Suitcase

“The true mark of a good traveller isn't how many places they've visited, but how respectfully they've experienced them.”

Amit Periwal, Director, Clubside Tours & Travels Pvt. Ltd., highlights punctuality as another important aspect of responsible travel. Along with littering, queue breaking and excessive noise, poor time management often disrupts entire travel groups and creates avoidable pressure on guides, transport providers and hospitality partners.

Vinay Arora, Director, ATG Holidays Pvt. Ltd., agrees that seemingly small habits leave lasting impressions. Ignoring local restrictions or failing to respect shared public spaces affects not only individual experiences but also how welcoming destinations remain for future visitors.

When one traveller affects everyone

Travel is rarely an individual experience.

One person's behaviour can disrupt carefully planned itineraries, inconvenience fellow guests and create additional work for service providers.

Mehra recalls a wildlife safari where a few travellers repeatedly ignored instructions from forest authorities to remain quiet and stay within designated areas. Instead, they attempted to attract animals for photographs and discarded food wrappers inside the park.

Forest officials had to intervene, the safari was temporarily halted and the guide was left apologising to both park authorities and other guests. What should have been a peaceful wildlife experience was disrupted because of the actions of a few individuals.

Arora remembers a group tour where passengers had been clearly informed that alcohol was prohibited inside the coach. Despite repeated reminders, some travellers ignored the rule. One passenger later became unwell inside the bus, causing discomfort for fellow travellers and additional cleaning costs. The same group also disturbed other hotel guests by playing loud music late into the night, forcing the tour leader to intervene repeatedly.

Adl Karim, Joint Managing Director, Fly Creative Online Limited, highlights another challenge faced by outbound tour operators. He recalls occasions where individuals travelling with organised groups absconded overseas in search of employment opportunities. Such incidents often result in questioning and delays for the remaining members of the group. Poor punctuality, he adds, also creates



Cover Story



Amit Periwal

Director, Clubside Tours & Travels Pvt. Ltd.

“Being on vacation should not mean taking a vacation from responsibility.”

operational challenges, occasionally forcing groups to leave late arrivals behind in order to maintain schedules.

Bagga, however, says her company has rarely encountered major behavioural issues during tours. She credits this to thorough preparation. Travellers receive destination specific guidance covering local customs, practical travel advice and cultural expectations before departure, helping them become more respectful visitors.

Awareness, culture or holiday mindset?

What causes travellers to overlook basic civic etiquette? The answers vary, but a common thread emerges.

For Bagga, awareness remains the biggest challenge. Most travellers, she believes, do not intentionally behave irresponsibly. Instead, they often fail to recognise how seemingly small actions such as littering, speaking loudly or ignoring local customs can affect the experiences of others and leave lasting impressions on host communities.

Arora agrees that awareness is important but also points to what he describes as the holiday mindset. Excitement, unfamiliar surroundings,

fatigue and the desire to make the most of limited holiday time can reduce attention to everyday courtesies. Importantly, he emphasises that this behaviour is not unique to Indian travellers.

Mehra believes the issue is a combination of awareness, cultural habits and the relaxed attitude people sometimes adopt while travelling. Many assume that being on holiday allows them to ignore responsibilities they would normally observe at home.

Periwal perhaps summarises the issue best as, “Being on vacation should not mean taking a vacation from responsibility.”

Not everyone believes awareness is the primary concern.

Ajay Chhabria, Partner, Intime Travels, offers a different perspective. He believes today's travellers are generally well informed, thanks to social media and easy access to destination information.

According to Chhabria, the challenge sometimes stems from growing purchasing power. Some travellers assume that paying premium prices entitles them to bend rules or demand exceptions without considering the impact on fellow guests or local communities. He cites the example of a celebrity guest who reportedly insisted on lighting incense inside a luxury hotel suite despite concerns about triggering fire alarms.

Education begins before the journey

If there is one point on which every industry leader agrees, it is that responsible tourism begins long before travellers board a flight.

Travel companies, tour operators and advisors are often the first point of contact for holidaymakers, giving them both an opportunity and a responsibility to encourage better civic behaviour.

Bagga believes travel planning should extend beyond flights and hotels. At Travel Suitcase, customers receive

destination specific guidance covering local customs, dress codes, photography rules and practical travel advice before departure. Travellers are also encouraged to support local businesses and artisans, helping them build more meaningful connections with the places they visit.

Mehra echoes that view, saying many operators already conduct destination briefings explaining local customs, environmental regulations and safety guidelines. However, she believes such initiatives should become standard practice across the industry, with responsible tourism messages included in booking confirmations, itineraries and pre departure briefings.

Arora advocates practical communication over lengthy rulebooks. Simple WhatsApp messages or email checklists highlighting local etiquette, queue discipline, littering and cultural expectations, he says, are often more effective than long lists of instructions.

Periwal agrees that concise pre departure briefings and clearly communicated expectations help make responsible tourism a natural part of every journey.



Vinay Arora

Director, ATG Holidays Pvt. Ltd.

“Carry your waste until you find a proper bin and leave every place cleaner than you found it.”

Cover Story

For Chhabria, the responsibility also lies with travel professionals themselves. Advising clients on local etiquette, tipping practices and destination specific regulations should be viewed as an essential part of professional travel planning.

"A travel professional has to be extremely educated himself before educating the traveller," he says.



Adl Karim

Joint Managing Director,
Fly Creative Online Limited

Respect the place you visit. Avoid littering and be punctual. Simple habits make a lasting difference.

A shared responsibility

Several respondents believe encouraging civic sense requires far broader collaboration than the travel industry alone can provide.

Karim feels government agencies, tourism boards and industry associations must work together to build greater awareness around responsible tourism through campaigns, digital initiatives and educational programmes. Wider implementation of such efforts, he believes, would create more consistent messaging and stronger nationwide awareness.

The broader message is clear. Civic sense cannot be left to individual travellers alone. It requires consistent

communication from every stakeholder involved in the tourism ecosystem.

The encouraging signs

Despite the recent controversies dominating social media, industry leaders remain optimistic. Greater international exposure, easier access to travel information and growing conversations around sustainability have all contributed to more responsible travel habits.

Bagga believes younger travellers are leading this change by showing greater respect for local cultures, communities and the environment. Mehra agrees that increasing international travel has made Indians more familiar with global expectations around public conduct and cultural sensitivity.

The challenge now is ensuring these positive behaviours become the norm rather than the exception.

One habit that could change everything

When asked to identify the single civic habit that could make the biggest difference to both the travel experience and India's global image, respondents offered remarkably similar answers.

For Mehra, it is simple: leave every destination cleaner than you found it. Arora echoes the same philosophy, encouraging travellers to carry their waste until they find a proper bin. Responsible behaviour, he believes, is contagious and often inspires others to follow.

Bagga approaches the issue as a mindset. If travellers begin treating every destination as though it were their own home, she says, everything else naturally follows, from cleanliness and patience to courtesy and respect for local customs.

Periwal agrees that respecting every destination as one would expect visitors to respect one's own home naturally encourages discipline, punctuality and consideration for local communities.

Karim wants everyone to respect the place you visit, avoid littering and be



Ajay Chhabria

Partner, Intime Travels

Money may buy luxury experiences, but it cannot buy respect for a destination and its etiquette.

punctual. Simple habits, he believes, can significantly improve how Indian travellers are perceived overseas.

Chhabria encourages travellers to spend time understanding a destination before they arrive. Watching videos, learning about local customs and familiarising themselves with expected etiquette allows visitors to appreciate cultures rather than unintentionally offend them.

More than a personal responsibility

India's outbound tourism market is expanding rapidly. Destinations across the world are actively welcoming Indian visitors, airlines continue to strengthen international connectivity and Indian spending overseas continues to rise. With that growth comes greater visibility and greater responsibility.

Ultimately, civic sense is not about following rules out of obligation. It is about recognising that every destination is someone's home, every monument belongs to future generations and every journey is an opportunity to represent not just ourselves, but our country.

For India's tourism industry, that may be the most important journey of all.

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POSITIVE IMPACT.



1 RESPECT THE LINE

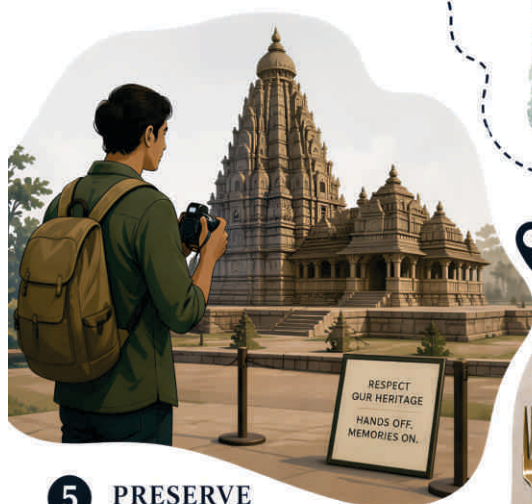
Consideration makes travel smoother for all.

DON'T: Jump the queue or block the way.

2 LEAVE NO TRACE

Take only memories, leave only footprints.

DON'T: Litter or leave trash behind.



5 PRESERVE OUR PAST

Admire with respect, preserve for the future.

DON'T: Touch, carve or damage heritage sites.



4 DINE WITH DIGNITY

Take what you need, eat what you take. Food is precious.

DON'T: Waste food or over-order.



3 SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Mind your volume, respect everyone's peace.

DON'T: Play loud music or have noisy conversations.

BE A TRAVELLER, BE CONSIDERATE, BE THE CHANGE.
BETTER FOR PLACES. BETTER FOR PEOPLE. BETTER FOR INDIA.



Three days to the heart of the Dhauladhars:

A journey to

Laka Glacier

Nestled above McLeod Ganj in Himachal Pradesh, the trek to Laka Glacier is a journey through oak forests, alpine meadows, mountain cafés, and snow-covered trails, culminating in breathtaking views of the Dhauladhar range. It is a physically demanding trek that gently teaches the value of slowing down, embracing the rhythm of the mountains, and appreciating the journey as much as the destination.

The Himalayas have a way of putting life into perspective. Standing beneath their towering peaks is a reminder of nature's immense scale and humanity's small place within it.





Day 2: From Triund to Laka Glacier

An early morning start leads towards Laka Glacier. The trail quickly becomes more rugged, replacing grassy slopes with rocky terrain. The climb is demanding and fatigue begins to set in, but the dramatic Himalayan scenery provides constant motivation to keep moving.

After a couple of hours, the trail reaches the snowline, where Triund appears as a distant ridge below. This is also where the popular Snowline Cafe stands, the last major stop before the glacier. A hot cup of tea and a plate of Maggi, enjoyed against the backdrop of the towering Dhauladhar peaks, offer a welcome break before the final stretch.

Beyond the café, patches of snow become increasingly common, even during late spring and early summer. The air grows noticeably colder as the trail gradually opens onto Laka Glacier, where expansive sheets of snow lie beneath towering cliffs. Far removed from crowded tourist destinations, the glacier offers a raw and unspoilt Himalayan experience. Reaching it after two days of trekking is immensely rewarding, with every aching muscle



metres. Here, the lush Kangra Valley stretches endlessly on one side, while the snow-capped Dhauladhar range rises majestically on the other. As the sun sets behind the mountains, the landscape is bathed in golden light before darkness reveals a sky glittering with countless stars. The peaceful campsite, often dotted with grazing mountain goats, offers one of the finest stargazing experiences in the region.

Day 1: Climbing to Triund

The adventure begins at Bhagsu Nag, where a well-marked trail winds steadily through dense oak and rhododendron forests. The first stop is the iconic Shiva Cafe, known for its laid-back atmosphere, soulful music, hearty meals, and sweeping views of the Kangra Valley. It is also the last place to refill water free of charge before the trail becomes more remote and prices begin to rise.

Further along lies Midpoint Cafe, a welcome resting stop where trekkers pause to catch their breath before continuing the ascent. From here, the climb becomes steeper, but every bend rewards hikers with increasingly dramatic views of the valley below.

By evening, Triund comes into view, a grassy ridge perched at nearly 2,850





By the end of the trek, Laka Glacier leaves behind far more than memories and photographs. It offers a renewed appreciation for nature, a quieter mind and the timeless reminder that the most meaningful journeys are often those that teach the importance of slowing down.



About the author

Adeeba Satya is a Delhi-based undergraduate pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Life Sciences at the University of Delhi. Passionate about exploring new places and connecting with people, she has a keen interest in fashion and art. In her free time, she enjoys writing and drawing, using both as creative outlets to express her thoughts and emotions.

forgotten as the evening light paints the surrounding peaks in shades of gold and pink.

The modest Dhauladhar Cafe, the only café near the glacier, becomes a gathering place where trekkers share stories, laughter and hot meals after a long day on the trail. As night falls, everyone gathers around a bonfire before ending the day beneath another unforgettable canopy of stars.

Day 3: The journey back

The final morning begins with crisp mountain air and one last look at the glacier before the descent towards Triund and eventually Bhagsu Nag. Although physically easier than the climb, the return journey offers a different perspective of the landscape, revealing details that often go unnoticed on the ascent.



Sindhudurg

**Maharashtra's coastal treasure
waiting to be explored**

Akshita Duggal

There are still places along India's coastline where life moves to the rhythm of the tides rather than tourist itineraries. Where fishing boats return at dawn, centuries-old forts rise dramatically from the sea, and empty beaches stretch for miles without rows of commercial shacks competing for attention. Sindhudurg is one such destination.

Tucked away along Maharashtra's Konkan coast, this coastal district is quietly emerging as one of India's most rewarding travel experiences. While many beach destinations have evolved into bustling holiday hubs, Sindhudurg has retained its authenticity, offering travellers an opportunity to discover pristine shores, rich maritime history, vibrant local culture and exceptional Malvani cuisine in a setting that feels refreshingly unspoilt.

Increasingly, it is this balance between natural beauty and cultural depth that is drawing discerning travellers to the region.



Travel Goals

A coastline that refuses to rush

Sindhudurg is not a destination built around a single attraction. Instead, it reveals itself gradually, with every beach, village and coastal road offering a different perspective of the Konkan.

The district's shoreline is remarkably diverse. Tarkarli has become synonymous with crystal-clear waters and some of India's finest scuba diving and snorkelling experiences, while neighbouring Devbag, where the Karli River meets the Arabian Sea, offers tranquil backwaters, boating excursions and spectacular sunsets.

Further south, Vengurla's expansive beaches remain wonderfully uncrowded, Shiroda offers peaceful coastal escapes, and Bhogwe continues to be one of the region's best-kept secrets, framed by swaying coconut palms and untouched landscapes.

Unlike many commercial beach destinations, these shores remain deeply connected to the communities that call them home. Fishing boats, local markets and village life continue to define the coastline, giving visitors a genuine glimpse into everyday Konkan life.

Where history meets the Arabian Sea

Standing proudly off the coast of Malvan is the monument that gave the district its name: the magnificent Sindhudurg Fort.

Commissioned by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in 1664, the sea fort was conceived as a formidable naval stronghold and remains one of the finest surviving examples of Maratha military architecture. Built using thousands of

tonnes of basalt rock, the fort continues to impress visitors with its towering ramparts, concealed entrances, freshwater reservoirs and centuries-old temples.

Reaching the island itself is part of the experience, with boat rides across the Arabian Sea offering striking views of the fort long before visitors step inside its walls.

More than a historical landmark, Sindhudurg Fort stands as a reminder of Maharashtra's rich maritime legacy and remains the cultural heart of the district.

Beyond the beaches

While its coastline may be Sindhudurg's greatest draw, the destination offers far more than sun and sand.

Adventure tourism has flourished in recent years, with scuba diving, parasailing, kayaking, jet skiing and dolphin spotting attracting travellers looking for experiences beyond the ordinary. The clear waters around Tarkarli



have helped position the district among India's emerging marine adventure destinations.

Nature lovers can explore mangrove forests, peaceful backwaters and birdwatching trails, while leisurely cruises along the Karli River often reveal dolphins and seasonal migratory birds.

For those seeking a slower pace, the district rewards simple pleasures: wandering through fishing villages, watching local craftsmen at work, or spending an evening as the Arabian Sea turns shades of gold beneath a spectacular sunset.

A culture shaped by the sea

Sindhudurg's identity extends well beyond its landscapes. Fishing, coconut cultivation, mango orchards and farming continue to sustain local communities, preserving traditions that have been passed down through generations. Festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Shimga, Narali Purnima and numerous temple celebrations remain vibrant expressions of community life.

One of the region's enduring cultural treasures is Dashavatara, the traditional folk theatre of the Konkan. Combining elaborate costumes, music and storytelling, these performances continue to bring ancient mythology to life while





preserving a centuries-old artistic tradition.

Visitors staying in family-run homestays often discover that Sindhudurg's greatest attraction is its people, whose warmth and hospitality transform a holiday into a deeply personal experience.

The flavours of Malvan

No journey through Sindhudurg is complete without exploring its cuisine. Malvani food is renowned for its bold spice blends, fresh coconut and vibrant flavours. Seafood remains central to the region's culinary identity, with locally caught fish, prawns, crab and squid featuring prominently on menus across the district.

Vegetarian travellers are equally well catered for, with dishes showcasing seasonal vegetables, jackfruit, coconut and kokum. Specialities such as Kombdi Vade, Sol Kadhi and Ghavane have become synonymous with the region, while Alphonso mangoes and premium cashews remain among Sindhudurg's most celebrated produce.

Local markets, meanwhile, offer an irresistible selection of homemade pickles, kokum syrups, traditional sweets and cashew products that make perfect reminders of the journey.

A destination coming into its own

Improved infrastructure, enhanced road connectivity, the arrival of commercial flights to Sindhudurg Airport at Chipi, and growing interest in experiential travel have all contributed to the district's rising profile.

Yet despite its increasing popularity,

Sindhudurg has largely resisted overdevelopment. Eco-resorts, boutique stays and locally owned homestays continue to define the accommodation landscape, allowing tourism to grow while preserving the character of the destination.

For travellers seeking meaningful experiences rather than crowded itineraries, this authenticity has become Sindhudurg's greatest strength.

The district does not demand to be explored in haste. It encourages visitors to linger a little longer, whether that



means watching fishermen return with the day's catch, tracing the footsteps of Maratha history, sampling home-cooked Malvani food or simply listening to the waves from an empty stretch of beach.

In an era when many coastal destinations are competing to be bigger and busier, Sindhudurg offers something increasingly rare: the opportunity to experience Maharashtra's coastline much as it has always been, authentic, welcoming and wonderfully unhurried.

Getting there:

By air: Sindhudurg Airport (Chipi) connects the district with select Indian cities through scheduled commercial flights.

By rail: The Konkan Railway serves the district through Kudal, Kankavali, Sawantwadi Road, Sindhudurg (Nanar) and Vaibhavwadi Road stations.

By road: National Highway 66 provides seamless road connectivity, with one of the most scenic drives along the Konkan coast.

Don't miss !

Sindhudurg Fort.
Tarkarli Beach.
Devbag Beach.
Vengurla Beach.
Bhogwe Beach.
Kunkeshwar Temple.
Karli River backwaters.
Dolphin spotting.
Scuba diving and snorkelling.
Malvani cuisine and local markets.



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The first-timer's guide to the Maldives

Maniza Fatima

Imagine stepping off a plane and realising that your hotel is not in a city, not on a coastline, but on a tiny island floating in the middle of the Indian Ocean. The Maldives has that effect on first-time visitors. It feels less like arriving in a country and more like entering a postcard that somehow became real.

But here is the truth no glossy brochure tells you: the Maldives can be surprisingly confusing for beginners.

People imagine one perfect island, one type of resort, one endless stretch of beach. In reality, the Maldives is a scattered constellation of islands, each with a completely different personality. Your first trip can be breathtaking, or it can be unnecessarily expensive, inconvenient, or underwhelming simply because you did not know a few things beforehand.

If you are planning your very first Maldivian escape, these are the things that will make the difference between a beautiful holiday and an unforgettable one.

The Maldives is not one island

This is the first surprise for almost everyone. The Maldives has more than a thousand islands spread across 26 atolls. Choosing the Maldives is a bit like choosing Europe for a holiday. The real decision is which island.

Some islands are so small you can walk around them in ten minutes. Others have multiple restaurants, pools, spas, water sports centres, and even bicycles. A tiny island is perfect for romance and total seclusion; a larger island is better if you get bored easily or want more food and activity options.

Before booking, ask yourself a simple question: Do I want silence or variety? That answer matters more than the colour of the water.

The transfer is part of the adventure

Many first-time visitors focus on the flight to Malé and forget the second journey. In the Maldives, reaching your resort may involve a speedboat, a domestic flight or the famous seaplane.

Seaplanes are spectacular. You will see rings of coral reefs and lagoons that look painted from above. But they usually fly only during daylight hours. If your



international flight lands late, you may need to spend a night near the airport before continuing the next day.

Also, transfer costs can be significant. A resort that looks affordable may become much more expensive once seaplane charges are added. Always check the total price, not just the room rate.

Your biggest expense may not be the room

The Maldives has a clever way of making you feel rich while quietly emptying your



wallet. Lunch, dinner, cocktails, excursions, and spa treatments can add up very quickly.

For a first trip, meal plans deserve serious attention. If you enjoy leisurely breakfasts, poolside lunches, and sunset drinks, an all-inclusive package can often be better value than paying separately. If you eat lightly and spend most of the day snorkelling, half board may be enough.

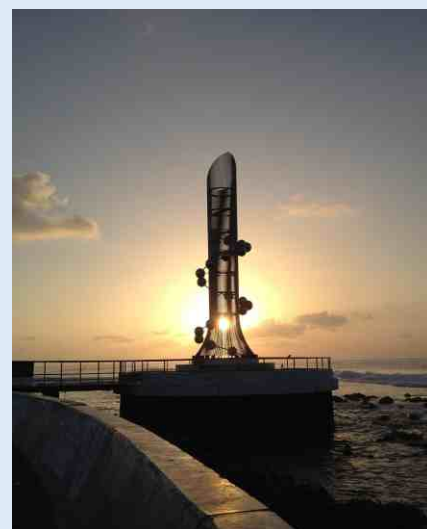
A useful tip: Calculate what you are likely to spend, not what you hope to spend.

There are two Maldives

One is the luxury-resort Maldives seen on Instagram. The other is the local-island Maldives, where Maldivian families live, children cycle through sandy streets, and guesthouses offer a much more affordable stay.

The difference is not just the price. On local islands, the experience is shaped by

Maldivian culture and everyday island life. Alcohol is typically available at resort islands rather than local islands, and swimwear is usually worn on designated bikini beaches, while public areas follow local customs. The atmosphere tends to feel more relaxed, residential, and connected to the local community, offering a different perspective of the Maldives beyond the luxury-resort experience.



If you want private villas, wine with dinner, and a floating breakfast, choose a resort island. If you want culture, conversation, and a lower budget, choose a local island. Neither is better; they are simply different worlds separated by a short boat ride.

Pack for the sun, not for the photos

The Maldives is one of the few places where you truly need very little.





Swimsuits, light cotton clothes, sandals, and sun protection will cover most situations.

What people forget is how intense the equatorial sun is. Bring reef-safe sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses, and a UV swim shirt or rash guard. Even on cloudy days, you can burn surprisingly fast.

And here is a practical tip that saves many holidays: carry a waterproof pouch for your phone. Between boats, beaches, and sudden tropical showers, it becomes one of the most useful things in your bag.

The ocean is the real attraction

Many travellers think they are going to the Maldives for the villa. They return, talking about the water.

Even if you have never snorkelled before, the Maldives is one of the easiest places in the world to start. In some resorts, you can step into the lagoon and be surrounded by colourful fish within

minutes. Turtles, rays, and small reef sharks are not rare sightings.

If snorkelling matters to you, do not rely on promotional photos. Read recent reviews that specifically mention the house reef. A beautiful beach does not always mean excellent marine life.

Overwater villas or beach villas?

Yes, overwater villas are iconic. Waking up above turquoise water feels almost unreal. But beach villas have their own advantages: more shade, easier beach access, more space, and often greater privacy.

Couples who love direct lagoon access may prefer overwater villas. Families with young children usually find beach villas easier. Many experienced Maldives travellers split their stay between the two.

Think of the overwater villa as a special experience, not automatically the superior option.

Weather is less predictable than you think

People often ask, "What is the best month?" The honest answer is that the Maldives is beautiful year-round, but the experience changes.

November to April is generally drier and calmer. May to October brings a higher chance of rain and wind, but also lower prices and fewer crowds. A wet season day may still include hours of sunshine with a short dramatic downpour.

Do not panic if rain appears in the forecast. Tropical weather changes quickly, and some of the most beautiful sunsets happen after a shower.

Learn the art of island time

This is the mistake I see most often in first-time itineraries: trying to do too much.

Sunrise dolphin cruise, snorkelling trip, spa treatment, sandbank picnic, diving lesson, sunset fishing, private dinner. It sounds wonderful on paper and exhausting in reality.

The Maldives is not a destination that rewards efficiency. It rewards attention. The colour of the lagoon changes every hour. Silence is part of luxury. Leave empty spaces in your schedule; those moments often become the memories you keep.

The airport island is not the Maldives you came for

When you land in Malé, do not judge the destination too quickly. The capital area is busy, urban, and densely populated.



Many first-time visitors are briefly surprised that it does not look like the postcard.

The postcard begins after the transfer, when the city disappears and the ocean takes over.

A few small things that make a big difference.

Download entertainment before you arrive; the internet can be slower than expected.

Carry some US dollars for tips and small expenses.

Keep swimwear, sunscreen, and a change of clothes in your hand luggage in case checked bags are delayed.

Book popular excursions, especially manta or whale-shark trips, soon after arrival.

Watch the sunset every evening; no two are the same.

How to reach the Maldives from India?

The easiest way to reach the Maldives is by flying to Velana International Airport (MLE) in Malé.

At present, IndiGo operates direct flights to Malé from Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kochi, making these the most convenient non-stop options for Indian travellers. Flight time is approximately three hours from Mumbai, two hours from Bengaluru, and about one hour 30 minutes from Kochi.

Air India's Delhi-Malé non-stop service is temporarily suspended during August 2026 and is expected to resume from September 2026.

Indian passport holders receive a free 30-day visa on arrival in the Maldives. Travellers need a passport valid for at least six months, a confirmed hotel or resort booking, a return or onward ticket, and the required traveller declaration completed online before arrival. After landing in Malé, most visitors continue to their resort by speedboat, domestic flight, or seaplane, which is usually arranged by the resort in advance on request.



Choose a resort that keeps things easy

For a first Maldives trip, choose a resort with a good house reef, easy transfers, and several dining options. Raaya by Atmosphere, Meeru Maldives Resort Island, Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa, Sun Siyam Olhuveli, and Villa Nautica are popular first-time choices. For a more luxurious honeymoon-style stay, consider LUX South Ari Atoll, Baros Maldives, or Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas.

And finally, here is the thing nobody tells you before a first trip to the Maldives.

The moment that stays with most people is rarely the floating breakfast, the infinity pool, or the drone shot. It is usually something much smaller: hearing nothing but water at midnight, watching a turtle glide beneath a jetty,

or standing ankle-deep in a lagoon so clear that the sky seems to continue underwater.

The Maldives has a strange way of changing your sense of scale. Your world shrinks to a circle of sand, sea, and light, and somehow that makes everything feel larger. You arrive expecting luxury; you leave understanding that the real luxury is distance-from noise, from hurry, from notifications, from the constant feeling that you should be somewhere else.

So before your first trip, pack the sunscreen, check the transfer, choose the right island, and budget wisely. But leave one thing behind: the urge to rush. Because in the Maldives, paradise is not something you visit. It is something that slowly happens to you.



Hong Kong^{and} Macau

Discovering two remarkable destinations





Some journeys leave behind photographs, while others leave behind a new perspective. My first international trip did both.

When my family decided to visit Hong Kong, we were looking for more than just a holiday. We wanted to experience a destination that balanced breathtaking natural beauty with vibrant culture, where towering skyscrapers stood alongside age old traditions. Little did I know that over the next week, I would fall in love with a city where something extraordinary awaited around every corner.

The moment we arrived in Hong Kong, I knew this trip would be different. After checking into our hotel on Kowloon City Road, we decided to begin our journey the best way possible, through its food. Instead of heading to a tourist restaurant, we found a local eatery and sampled authentic Hong Kong style dishes, from roasted duck and barbecued chicken to locally prepared pork sausages. It was the perfect introduction to the city's culinary culture.

Later that day, we visited the magnificent Tian Tan Buddha before exploring the nearby Citygate Outlets. We also took our first ride on the MTR, Hong Kong's metro system. Choosing public transport over taxis not only made travelling easier but



also allowed us to experience the city the way its residents did, something that became one of my favourite parts of the trip.

If there was one day that truly captured the magic of Hong Kong, it was my visit to Disneyland. Long before I ever boarded a flight to Hong Kong, Disneyland had existed in my imagination. The magic actually began before we even entered the park. After changing trains several times, we boarded the Disney Resort Line, where Mickey shaped handrails, Disney themed windows and bright red cushioned seats transformed an ordinary metro ride into something unforgettable.

Walking through the gates of Disneyland felt like stepping straight into my childhood. The little girl in me, who had dreamt of visiting this place for years, had finally seen her wish come true. I explored Fantasyland, Adventureland, Tomorrowland and my personal favourite, Toy Story Land, where everything was designed to make visitors feel like toys themselves.

Standing in front of the Castle of Magical Dreams was a surreal moment. It was the very castle I had grown up watching at the beginning of Disney films, and seeing it in real life felt almost unreal. Between rides, we enjoyed waffles and refreshing slushies while soaking in every bit of Disney magic. By the time we returned to the city, it was late, and our now famous ritual of visiting 7-Eleven for dinner had begun. We picked up dumplings, locally

Travel Goals



prepared beef, boiled chicken, fresh salads and other local delicacies before calling it a day.

The following day offered a completely different experience. Instead of castles and roller coasters, we immersed ourselves in the everyday rhythm of Hong Kong by exploring Mong Kok and the iconic Ladies' Market. The market stretched through lively streets lined with colourful stalls selling everything imaginable, from fashion, souvenirs and electronics to handbags, toys and accessories. Bright signboards, cheerful bargaining and the constant movement of people gave the market an energy unlike anywhere I had ever experienced.



had been filled with panda soft toys, and I had always admired these gentle creatures from afar. Walking into their enclosure was a moment I had unknowingly been waiting for all my life.

Watching them lazily munch on bamboo before curling up to sleep was strangely calming. They were adorable, peaceful and wonderfully clumsy, and I could not stop smiling. I often joke that a panda is my spirit animal, and after spending time watching them, I am convinced it is true.

Ocean Park also gave us the chance to admire colourful marine life, sharks and penguins before heading to its exciting amusement rides. As someone who loves roller coasters, I had an incredible time. A sudden spell of rain and a thunderstorm warning reminded us that Hong Kong's natural side could be just as dramatic as its skyline. Although we missed the dolphin show because of the weather, I appreciated experiencing the city exactly as it was.

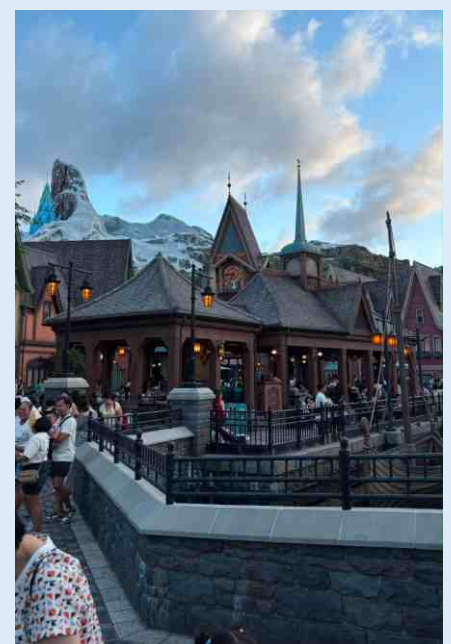
That evening, we explored Tsim Sha Tsui, where we shopped for Korean cosmetics, bags, shoes and the adorable keychains that seemed to hang from almost everyone's backpack.

Our journey then took us beyond Hong Kong to Macau. The ferry ride itself was unforgettable, with endless views of the sea stretching in every direction. One of the most fascinating moments was



Hours passed as we wandered through its narrow lanes, discovering incredible finds at surprisingly reasonable prices. My mother and I decided to try Hong Kong's McDonald's menu for lunch, while my father and sister happily continued exploring the local cuisine with roasted duck and squid. The day ended with delicious steamed prawn dumplings at a restaurant close to our hotel.

Ocean Park introduced me to another side of Hong Kong, one filled with wildlife, thrilling rides and stunning natural surroundings. Although I was excited about the roller coasters, the real highlight for me was finally seeing pandas. Ever since I was little, my room



watching the water change shades as we crossed between regions, creating a striking contrast that I had never noticed before.

We stayed at the Broadway Hotel, part of the Galaxy resort complex, and I was immediately amazed by its sheer scale. Everything felt grand, luxurious and larger than life. We spent time enjoying the hotel's water park and artificial wave beach before exploring the famous Venetian Macao. Walking along indoor canals lined with gondolas beneath a painted sky felt like stepping into another country altogether.



We also visited the Londoner and the Parisian, each recreating iconic landmarks with astonishing attention to detail. Although I only observed Macau's famous casino culture from a distance, it was fascinating to witness the glamour and energy that attract visitors from around the world.

Soon, it was time to return to Hong Kong and begin our journey home. As our ferry approached the city one final time, I found myself reflecting on everything I had experienced.

There were, of course, a few small challenges. The language barrier occasionally made communication difficult, but kindness has a remarkable way of bridging every gap. Once people



realised we were visitors genuinely interested in learning about their culture, they went out of their way to help us. Their warmth left just as lasting an impression as the city's famous landmarks.

Another detail that fascinated me was the number of older cars still on the roads. Many classic models, lovingly maintained and personalised by their owners, added a distinctive charm to the streets. It was a reminder that not everything has to be new to remain beautiful.

As our flight back to India took off, I realised I was carrying home much more than shopping bags and souvenirs. I was bringing back stories, memories and a newfound appreciation for experiencing a place beyond its tourist attractions.

Hong Kong taught me that the best way to discover a city is to travel like its people, eat what they eat, take the trains



they take and embrace every unexpected moment along the way. From fairy tale castles and bustling markets to peaceful panda enclosures and the dazzling streets of Macau, this journey gave me memories that will stay with me for a lifetime. For my first trip beyond India's borders, I truly could not have asked for a better beginning.



About the Author

Chanaan Randhawa is an English Honours student at Gargi College, University of Delhi, with a deep passion for writing and travel. She believes writing is a way of making sense of the world, while travel provides endless stories waiting to be told. Curious about new cultures, authentic local experiences and the people who bring destinations to life, she enjoys exploring places beyond their well-known attractions. Her first international journey to Hong Kong and Macau inspired this personal reflection, and through her writing, she hopes to share the same sense of wonder and joy that the journey brought her.

Mark your calendar

The biggest travel trade shows of August and September

Maniza Fatima

As the travel industry enters one of its busiest business seasons, August and September 2026 bring a packed calendar of trade shows across India and key international markets. These events continue to serve as essential platforms for tourism boards, airlines, hotels, destination management companies (DMCs) and travel technology providers to meet buyers, forge new partnerships, showcase products and stay ahead of industry trends.

This year's calendar has also reflected the uncertainty impacting global travel. The postponement of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai on two occasions underscored how geopolitical tensions in West Asia have disrupted event planning, travel schedules and participation. Even so, the upcoming exhibitions remain important barometers of tourism recovery, business confidence and the industry's outlook for the months ahead.

International Shows



Travel Trade Maldives (TTM) 2026
Malé, Maldives | 26–27 August 2026



International Travel Expo Ho Chi Minh City (ITE HCMC) 2026
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam | 27–29 August 2026



Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2026
Dubai, UAE | 14–17 September 2026



JATA Tourism Expo Japan 2026
Tokyo, Japan | 24–27 September 2026



IFTM Top Resa 2026
Paris, France | 29 September–1 October 2026

Domestic shows



ITB India 2026
Mumbai | 1–3 September 2026

Connecting you
to the Indian
Travel Market



Business & Luxury Travel Mart (BLTM) 2026
New Delhi | 2-4 September 2026



India International Travel Mart (IITM) 2026
Bengaluru | 11–13 September 2026



Travel & Tourism Fair (TTF) 2026
Ahmedabad | 18–20 September 2026



Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) 2026
Kochi, Kerala | 24–27 September 2026

UTEN CELEBRATES A SUCCESSFUL TAIWAN EDUCATIONAL FAM UTEN FAM TRIP HOSTED BY TAIWAN TOURISM ADMINISTRATION



On behalf of the UTEN Founders, Winifred D'Souza and Satyaprakash Gupta, we extend our sincere appreciation to Paul from the Taiwan Tourism Administration for accompanying us throughout the tour. We feel truly fortunate and honoured to have had your company during the entire journey. We thoroughly enjoyed your presence and sincerely appreciate the excellent arrangements made for all of us. This has been an unforgettable and enriching educational trip for everyone.

A heartfelt thank you to Paul, Noel, and Nitya Mehra for giving us this opportunity and for considering UTEN for the Taiwan destination educational FAM trip. This would not have been possible without your support. The itinerary was exceptionally well planned and executed, making this a highly successful educational tour for all UTEN travel professionals. The knowledge and experiences gained during this trip will help us collectively market, promote, and sell the unique destination of Taiwan more effectively.



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NEXT
DESTINATION

Hospitality in harmony with nature

The CGH Earth philosophy

Daisy Saxena



Thomas Eric Roshin
Manager Travel Trade Relations, CGH Earth

For many travellers, rain disrupts a holiday. At CGH Earth, however, the monsoon is seen as an integral part of the journey rather than an inconvenience. Through thoughtful design, authentic cultural experiences and seasonal cuisine, the hospitality group encourages guests to embrace the rhythm of nature instead of planning around it.

Speaking about creating memorable in-room experiences during the rains, Thomas Eric Roshin, Manager - Travel Trade Relations, CGH Earth, says modern travellers are often conditioned to travel against nature rather than with it.

"We've never wanted our rooms to insulate guests from the landscape. Instead, they've been designed to invite it in. Verandahs become front-row seats to changing skies, courtyards carry the sound of falling rain and windows frame landscapes that transform from one hour to the next."

Whether it is the mist lifting slowly over the tea gardens at Lockhart Bungalow,

the gentle sound of rain on the wooden roof of Spice Coast Cruise, or a quiet verandah overlooking Vembanad Lake at Coconut Lagoon, guests frequently discover that slowing down becomes the highlight of their stay.

Roshin believes culture is best experienced through everyday life rather than carefully staged performances.

"I've never believed culture lives inside museums. Culture unfolds every day through artisans, fishermen, musicians

and craftspeople who continue traditions passed down through generations."

At Visalam in Chettinad, guests meet artisans creating the region's iconic Athangudi tiles by hand. At Mansão Curtorim in Goa, they explore quiet villages, family bakeries and heritage homes, while along the Marari coast, conversations with fishermen and coir weavers often become the most memorable part of a visit.

"People rarely remember the facts they learnt while travelling. They remember the people who made those facts feel alive."

The same philosophy extends to outdoor spaces. Rather than closing patios, courtyards or gardens during the rains, CGH Earth embraces architecture inspired by traditional South Indian homes that work with the weather instead of shutting it out.

At Pollachi Riverhouse, guests watch the Aliyar River transform with the rains, while Maison Perumal's shaded courtyards become peaceful retreats scented by flowering trees and wet earth. Covered pathways at Spice Village invite leisurely walks through fragrant cardamom and pepper plantations.





“The arrival of the monsoon doesn’t close our outdoor areas; it changes the way they’re enjoyed,” says Roshin. “The pace softens, conversations linger and people naturally slow down.”

Seasonality also shapes the dining experience.

“The finest meals I’ve had while travelling were never the most elaborate. They were simply honest reflections of the season,” says Roshin.

Across the properties, chefs build menus around ingredients the landscape naturally offers. Fresh ginger, turmeric and spices define Kerala’s monsoon

kitchens, while Kodava cuisine at Karthikaad Mane reflects the surrounding coffee estates. At Spice Village, ingredients arrive from neighbouring farms, and at Kalari Kovilakom, Ayurvedic principles guide dishes designed to nourish the body during the monsoon.

Asked about one experience travellers should not miss, Roshin’s answer is refreshingly simple.

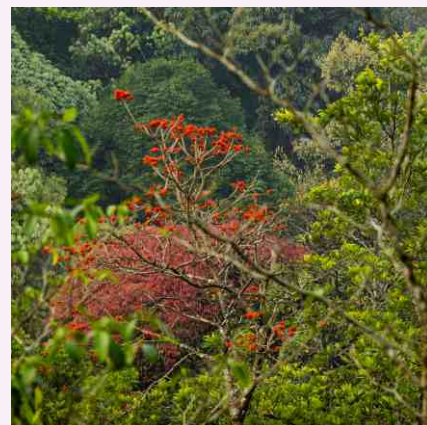
“Wake before everyone else. Not because there’s something extraordinary waiting to happen, but because nature reveals herself differently before the world begins making noise.”

Watching the mist gradually lift over Munnar’s tea gardens or experiencing the restorative calm of Kalari Kovilakom during the healing season of the monsoon captures the essence of slow travel.

Looking ahead, CGH Earth is expanding this philosophy through CGH Earth Saha, a collection of intimate heritage homes, villas and secluded retreats rooted in local communities.

“I don’t think people are looking for another beautiful hotel,” Roshin reflects. “They’re looking for a sense of belonging.”

Rather than asking where to stay, the future of travel, he believes, lies in asking a different question: “How would it feel to belong here, even if only for a little while?”



Chef Jameela Zakey introduces authentic Lebanese flavours at Pullman New Delhi Aerocity

Vedika Duggal

Lebanese cuisine is often synonymous with globally loved dishes such as hummus, shawarma and falafel. While these classics have become culinary ambassadors of the Middle East, they represent only a fraction of Lebanon's rich gastronomic heritage. At Pullman New Delhi Aerocity, Chef Jameela Zakey sought to change that narrative by presenting diners with authentic home style recipes that reflect the country's traditions, culture and everyday dining experiences.



Chef Jameela Zakey

Most people associate Lebanese cuisine with shawarma, hummus and falafel. We wanted to introduce something different by bringing the home cooked dishes that are part of our community and our everyday lives. These are recipes that truly represent our culture and traditions.



Drawing inspiration from recipes prepared in Lebanese households, Chef Jameela curated a menu that celebrated lesser known regional specialities, offering guests a deeper understanding of the country's diverse culinary landscape. The focus was on dishes that have been passed down through generations, preserving the authenticity of flavours through traditional cooking techniques and carefully sourced ingredients.

Chef Jameela's philosophy extends beyond serving food; it is about sharing stories, traditions and the warmth of Lebanese hospitality through every plate. By showcasing recipes rooted in home kitchens rather than only internationally recognised favourites,

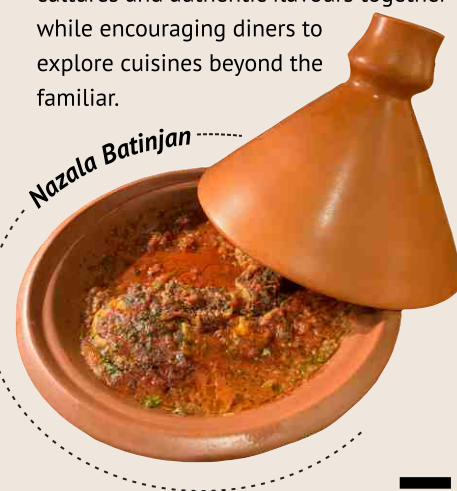
she offered an opportunity to experience the depth and authenticity of Lebanese cuisine.

My favourite is the Mutton Kabsa because we use authentic spices sourced from abroad. They give the dish a distinctive flavour that cannot be recreated with locally available ingredients. It offers a completely different taste experience.

Through such thoughtfully curated culinary experiences, Pullman New Delhi Aerocity continues to celebrate global gastronomy, bringing chefs, cultures and authentic flavours together while encouraging diners to explore cuisines beyond the familiar.



Kabsa Lahma



Nazala Batinjan

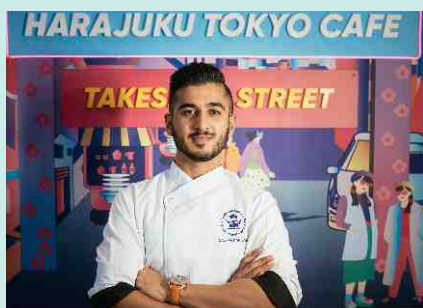
HARAJUKU BAKEHOUSE

targets 150 outlets in three years as expansion gathers pace

Ayushi Anand

Harajuku Bakehouse has outlined ambitious expansion plans, with founder Gaurav Kanwar announcing that the Japanese inspired bakery and café aims to open 150 outlets over the next three years as it strengthens its presence across key high streets.

Speaking at the launch of the brand's new Defence Colony outlet in New Delhi,



Gaurav Kanwar
Founder & CEO, Harajuku Tokyo Cafe

The company plans to establish a store every five kilometres, making its signature baked goods and café experience more accessible to customers.

He added that the next outlet is planned for Greater Kailash as part of the brand's neighbourhood focused growth strategy.

The Defence Colony café marks a significant milestone for Harajuku Bakehouse, introducing an all new beverage programme, an expanded grab and go food menu and the brand's first merchandise collection. The refreshed beverage line features Japanese inspired Kokoro Blends alongside the Ikigai Club range of functional wellness drinks, including protein coffee, mushroom coffee and matcha based beverages.

The outlet also offers freshly prepared salads, poke bowls, Japanese inspired sandwiches and bakery favourites

designed for customers seeking convenient dining options. In addition, Harajuku Bakehouse has launched a range of branded merchandise, including graphic tee- shirts and tote bags, extending the café's identity beyond food and beverages.



The latest opening reflects the company's strategy of combining artisanal baking with lifestyle retail while accelerating its footprint across Delhi and other urban



What: Harajuku Bakehouse

Where: Ground Floor, Building 43, Defence Colony Market, New Delhi



| What's Trending?

FAITH Conclave 2026 charts an ambitious roadmap to make tourism a cornerstone of Viksit Bharat

Ayushi Anand



Can tourism become one of India's most powerful economic engines over the next two decades? That question formed the foundation of the second edition of the FAITH Conclave 2026, where policymakers, global tourism leaders and industry stalwarts gathered in New Delhi to discuss how the sector can evolve from a high-potential industry into a strategic pillar of India's economic future. Held under the theme "Incredible India: Invaluable Economics," the two day conclave focused on positioning tourism as a national priority capable of driving investment, employment, infrastructure development and India's global influence.

The conversations throughout the inaugural session reflected a common belief that India's tourism story is entering a defining decade. Industry leaders repeatedly stressed that while India possesses extraordinary natural, cultural and spiritual assets, unlocking their full economic value will require stronger policy support, seamless collaboration between government and industry, and long-term planning.

Tourism beyond economics

Delivering the keynote address, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat placed tourism within a much larger national context.

"The guest is divine. It is not merely a cultural phrase; it is the soul of India."

He said tourism should not be viewed merely as an economic activity but as an instrument of nation building rooted in India's civilisational values.

Recalling India's centuries-old philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava, Shekhawat said

hospitality has always been embedded in the country's identity.

He further noted that India's cultural heritage, traditions and hospitality offer the country a unique advantage in global tourism.

The Minister encouraged every traveller to become an ambassador for India's civilisation, emphasising that memorable visitor experiences ultimately shape the country's global reputation.

"Tourism is not merely a supporting sector but tourism is a nation-building sector."



Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
Union Minister for Tourism and Culture, Government of India

Tourism as Team India's mission

Opening the conclave, Ajeet Bajaj, Vice Chairman of FAITH, urged the industry to view tourism as a collective national mission rather than a collection of individual businesses.

"When Team India wins, every one of us wins."

Speaking about FAITH's Vision 2047, Bajaj said the industry believes tourism has the potential to become a US\$3 trillion sector, welcome 100 million international visitors and support nearly 200 million livelihoods through direct and indirect employment.

He acknowledged that these goals are ambitious but achievable if government

and industry move in unison.

He emphasised that policy consistency, infrastructure development, investment, ease of doing business and faster decision making would determine how quickly India could unlock its tourism potential.

Drawing from his experience as a mountaineer, Bajaj concluded with a leadership lesson built around the acronym TOP which stands for Teamwork, Outlook, and Planning and Preparation.

"If we embrace teamwork, a positive outlook and planning, together we can take Indian tourism to the top."



Ajeet Bajaj
Vice Chairman, FAITH

What's Trending?



Gloria Guevara

President and CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)

Providing a global perspective, Gloria Guevara, President and CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), traced the origins of WTTC to a simple but powerful lesson.

She recounted how four tourism industry leaders were once advised by former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to return only after they had developed one common agenda instead of pursuing separate interests.

That advice eventually led to the

Speaking with one voice

It is very difficult when we all go asking for support and we are not aligned. This is why WTTC was created – to speak globally with one voice.

creation of WTTC.

The message resonated strongly with the Indian tourism industry.

Congratulating FAITH for bringing India's fragmented tourism ecosystem together, Guevara said collaboration remains the industry's strongest competitive advantage.

She outlined WTTC's current global priorities, ranging from seamless travel and digital transformation to destination stewardship, climate resilience, crisis preparedness, workforce development and investment facilitation.

Artificial intelligence, she noted, is already reshaping customer journeys, airline operations and hospitality.

Meanwhile, climate resilience and crisis preparedness have become essential capabilities in an increasingly uncertain world.

Referring to geopolitical disruptions, rising fuel costs and aviation challenges, Guevara stressed that resilience can no longer remain an afterthought.

She also highlighted WTTC's new investment principles aimed at simplifying regulations, improving legal certainty and reducing bureaucratic barriers for tourism investors.

Every single crisis impacts tourism. We need to work on preparation before the crisis arrives.

India's resilience story

FAITH Chairman, Puneet Chhatwal focused on one word that has increasingly defined Indian tourism in recent years which is resilience.

Recalling the succession of challenges faced by the sector, from the pandemic to natural disasters, geopolitical developments and aviation disruptions, Chhatwal said that Indian tourism has consistently demonstrated an ability to recover stronger than expected.

COVID tried to destroy this sector, but the way it bounced back is nothing short of magic.

He argued that the industry's biggest untapped opportunity remains international arrivals.

While domestic tourism has powered recent growth, attracting significantly larger volumes of foreign visitors

could transform India's tourism economy.

Our single largest upside is our fair share of foreign tourist arrivals.

Chhatwal suggested that India's rising global economic profile naturally creates stronger demand among international leisure and business travellers.

As India's economy grows, so too will global curiosity about the country.

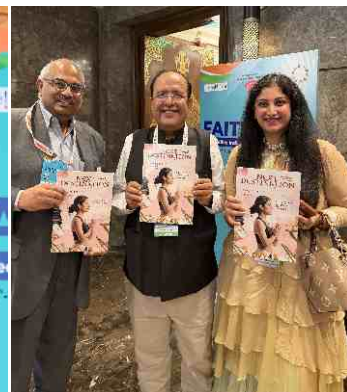
He also reminded delegates that tourism's contribution extends beyond economic indicators.

More than GDP and jobs, we should never underestimate the soft power of brand India.



Puneet Chhatwal

Chairman, FAITH



From aspiration to implementation

A recurring theme throughout the inaugural session was execution.

The speakers agreed that India's tourism ambitions are no longer constrained by lack of attractions or demand.

Instead, future growth will depend on policy reforms, improved connectivity, investment-friendly regulations, destination management and coordinated planning across ministries and states.

Several speakers emphasised that tourism cuts across infrastructure, aviation, hospitality, culture, transport, urban development and sustainability.

Without integrated policymaking, the sector cannot achieve its full economic contribution.

Investment also emerged as a key priority. Industry leaders reiterated their long-standing demand for infrastructure status for tourism projects, arguing that easier financing and policy parity would unlock large-scale private investment across destinations.

Building towards Vision 2047

The conclave's discussions aligned

closely with India's broader Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

The shared objective is to significantly increase tourism's contribution to the national economy while generating employment, supporting regional development and enhancing India's global competitiveness.

Throughout the day, delegates repeatedly returned to one central idea: tourism cannot be viewed as a standalone industry.

It is an ecosystem that supports airlines, hotels, restaurants, transport providers, artisans, guides, local communities and countless small businesses.

Its multiplier effect extends far beyond visitor spending.

A unified industry agenda

Unlike traditional industry conferences that focus primarily on business opportunities, the FAITH Conclave positioned tourism as a national development agenda.

Government representatives, industry associations, global organisations and private sector leaders consistently emphasised the need for a unified voice

capable of shaping long-term policy.

The participation of international organisations like WTTC also reflected India's growing role within the global tourism economy.

As countries compete aggressively for travellers, investment and aviation connectivity, India's challenge is no longer convincing the world of its tourism potential.

The challenge now is creating the policy environment that allows that potential to flourish. By the conclusion of the opening session, one message had become unmistakably clear. India already possesses the heritage, diversity, culture and hospitality that millions seek.

The next chapter will be determined by execution, collaboration and the willingness of both government and industry to move together.

If the aspirations articulated at FAITH Conclave 2026 are matched by sustained action, tourism may well become one of the defining growth stories of India's journey towards 2047.

Ten common Cruise Travel myths debunked What Every Traveller Should Know

Maniza Fatima



Rohan Ghate
Cruise Director, Cordelia Cruises

“

The biggest myth people have about cruising is that its only for the wealthy or retired people. However in reality its one of the most exciting, immersive and value packed way to travel to different destinations. Cruising is not just a holiday or vacation, it's an experience in itself.

”



Cruise travel is rapidly becoming one of the most popular ways to explore multiple destinations in a single holiday. Yet, many travellers still hesitate to book their first voyage because of outdated misconceptions. From concerns about seasickness to hidden costs, cruise travel myths continue to influence perceptions of life at sea.

In reality, today's cruise ships offer experiences tailored to families, couples, solo travellers, adventure seekers, and luxury holidaymakers alike. If you're planning your first cruise or simply curious about what it's really like, it's time to separate fact from fiction. Here are 10 of the most common cruise travel myths, along with the truth behind each one.

Myth : You'll get seasick throughout your cruise vacation.

Reality: Modern cruise ships are equipped with advanced stabilisers that significantly reduce movement, and many itineraries sail through calm waters. While some travellers may experience motion sickness, it is usually mild and can be managed with medication or other remedies.

Myth : You'll be stuck on the cruise ship all day.

Reality: Most cruise itineraries include multiple port calls, giving travellers ample opportunities to enjoy shore excursions, explore local cities, relax on beaches, and experience each destination.

Myth : You can't access the internet during a cruise.

Reality: Most major cruise lines offer

onboard Wi-Fi, allowing passengers to stay connected while at sea. Internet speed and reliability may vary depending on the ship, location, and the Wi-Fi package selected.

Myth : Cruise vacations aren't suitable for families with children.

Reality: Many family-friendly cruise lines feature kids' clubs, water parks, supervised activities, family entertainment, and dedicated programmes for children of all ages, making cruises an excellent holiday choice for families.

Myth : Everything on a cruise is included in the price.

Reality: Most cruise fares include accommodation, dining, entertainment, and selected onboard activities. However, speciality restaurants, beverage packages, Wi-Fi, spa treatments, and shore excursions are usually available at an additional cost.

Myth : You need a passport for every cruise.

Reality: Cruise travel document requirements vary depending on the itinerary, destinations, and your nationality. While many international cruises require a valid passport, some

domestic and closed-loop cruises may accept alternative forms of identification.

Myth : Cruise ships aren't safe.

Reality: Modern cruise ships operate under strict international maritime safety regulations, undergo regular inspections, and conduct mandatory emergency drills to help ensure passenger safety throughout the voyage.

Myth : Cruise vacations are only for luxury travellers.

Reality: Cruise lines offer a wide range of options, from budget-friendly and family-focused sailings to premium and luxury experiences, making cruise travel accessible across a variety of budgets.

Myth : Solo travellers don't enjoy cruise vacations.

Reality: Many cruise lines now offer solo cabins, singles' meet-ups, group activities, and social events designed specifically for solo travellers, making cruises an enjoyable and convenient option for those travelling alone.

Myth : Planning a cruise vacation is complicated.

Reality: Booking a cruise is often simpler than planning a multi-city holiday, as cruise packages typically include accommodation, dining, onboard entertainment, and transportation between destinations.

Now that these common cruise travel myths have been debunked, you can plan your next cruise vacation with greater confidence. Whether it's your first cruise or your tenth, understanding the facts will help you choose the right itinerary and make the most of your journey. Start exploring the world of cruise travel and get ready to set sail.



Events Recap



WTM Spotlight India launched ahead of March 2027 debut

The launch of WTM Spotlight India marked the official introduction of the globally renowned World Travel Market brand to the Indian market. Held at The Oberoi, New Delhi, the event announced that WTM India will make its debut from March 2-4, 2027 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.

Suman Billa, IAS, Additional Secretary & Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, attended the launch alongside industry leaders and stakeholders from across the travel ecosystem.



OA Globe DMC strengthens Azerbaijan tourism ties with India through networking events

OA Globe DMC, alongside The Ritz Carlton Baku, JW Marriott Absheron Baku and AHG Hotels & Resorts, hosted exclusive trade networking events in Ahmedabad and Mumbai to strengthen partnerships with the Indian travel trade. The events showcased Azerbaijan's luxury hospitality, MICE, weddings and leisure offerings, while reinforcing the destination's growing appeal through continued roadshows, destination promotions and familiarisation trips for Indian travel professionals.



Island Life brings 15 Maldivian resorts to Jaipur and Chandigarh roadshows



APPOINTMENTS



Dr. V. P. Jeyaseelan, IAS
joins Tamil Nadu Tourism as Director &
Tamil Nadu Tourism Development
Corporation (TTDC) as Managing Director.



Cho Yoonmi
joins Korea Tourism Organization
as the Director of the India Office.



Pradeep Singh Kharola
joins Air India as
Executive Advisor to the Chairman.



Kevin Ashley Martis
joins Suba Hotels as
Vice President of Sales and Marketing.



Harpreet Singh
joins Eco Hotels & Resorts
as Chief Operating Officer and
National Sales Head, Marketing.



Gaurav Jain
joins Cygnett Hotels & Resorts
as Chief Financial Office.



Akshay Dimri
joins Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa
as General Manager.



Girish Divekar
joins The Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai
as Director of Sales & Marketing.



Gaurav Shiva
joins The Orchid Hotel Mumbai
as General Manager.



Shreyash Dwivedi
joins Roseate House New Delhi
as Director of Food & Beverage.



Aashay Tallur
joins SaffronStays
as Vice President of Sales.



Vikram Mishra
joins Antara Cruises
as Business Development
Manager.

APPOINTMENTS



Saugat Nandy
joins MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts
as Assistant Vice President – Sales



Rajni Singh
joins MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts
as Marketing Manager



Saadia Zahidi
joins IATA
as Director General



Aliya Sailova
joins Kazin DMC
as Director- Uzbekistan



Yash Parihar
joins Crestmont Hotels & Resorts
as Director of Sales



Perna Daga
joins Marriot International
as Multi-Property Director of Marketing



Sharmishtha Patange
joins Tourism Australia
as Business Events Manager - India



Rajesh Mehta
joins The Orchid Pune
as General Manager



Manoj Agarwal
joins Chalet Hotels
as Chief Growth & Product Officer



Ajit Singh Gandhi
joins Hyatt Centric Sector 17 Chandigarh
as General Manager



Divya Bhadauria
joins Mercure Lucknow Gomti Nagar
as People & Culture Manager



Rajesh Dudi
joins Ibis Hyderabad HITEC City
as Director of Sales

NEXT DESTINATION

About Us

Next Destination is a bi-monthly travel and lifestyle magazine published under AVS Media Network. The publication is designed as a platform for both the travel industry and the inspired traveller. We bring together stories, insights and updates that resonate with professionals and passionate explorers alike.

With a dynamic presence across print, digital and social media platforms, our mission is to streamline the news that matters. We curate stories, industry updates and perspectives that are as relevant to travel professionals as they are to travel enthusiasts.

We go beyond the usual. Our editorial team is committed to producing original, thought-provoking content that highlights emerging trends, addresses pressing industry issues and showcases destinations through a fresh and engaging perspective. Each edition is thoughtfully crafted to inform, inspire and spark meaningful conversations that contribute to the growth and evolution of the travel industry.

With pan-India distribution and a strong network of seasoned correspondents and marketers, we are headquartered in New Delhi and focused on delivering maximum reach and visibility—whether in print, online or through experiential events. Next Destination is where travel finds its voice and its vision.



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