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Editor's Letter

There's something about dreams that find you when you least expect them. For me, it began in school, the day I first stumbled across French culture. It was more than just a language, it was a feeling, an allure, a whole new world. I eagerly enrolled in French classes, which I carried into my graduation years, though I humbly admit my French didn't quite flourish. But oh, the love I found for all things French, it swept me off my feet. Isn't that how our travel fantasies are born? Little sparks that grow into grand dreams, filling our travel buckets with destinations, cultures, and experiences.

My bucket, I confess, has always been delightfully heavy. Each corner of the world map adds to its weight, and I'm sure many of you share this beautiful burden with me. Speaking of France, this issue brings you the quintessential Parisian vibes, as it's our ILTM Cannes special. The chic sophistication of the City of Lights beckons, promising luxury, innovation, and inspiration for every traveller's soul.

But we didn't stop there. The ethereal beauty of Greece and Georgia graces these pages, inviting you to pack your bags and set out on new adventures. Closer to home, we dive into India's luxury travel space, charting its evolution and the promise it holds for the years ahead. And of course, we couldn't miss the most dynamic force shaping travel today- Gen Z. With their trendsetting preferences and unapologetic individuality, they're redefining the very essence of travel.

This month also saw me striding through the buzzing halls of WTM, clocking 10,000 steps (yes, in heels!) without a single complaint. It was exhilarating- meeting new faces, forging connections, and knowing that these faces will soon turn into familiar friends at the next gathering.

Every page of this issue carries the joy, effort, and passion my team and I poured into it. As you turn these pages, I hope you feel a part of this journey, savouring the magic we've curated. After all, as the French say, "La vie est belle"- life is beautiful, and travel makes it even more so.

Bon voyage through this edition!

Bharti Sharma

Bharti Sharma
Editor

   : [travelturtlemag](#)





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Heavens Portfolio Group launches its 18th office in Australia

Heavens Portfolio, announces its expansion into Australia and New Zealand with the opening of its 18th office in Melbourne. This strategic move responds to the significant growth in Australian luxury outbound travel, as travellers from Australia and New Zealand increasingly seek unique, high-end travel experiences. With many direct flight connections to major global cities, travel convenience has improved for Australians, and luxury hotels worldwide are eager to further tap into the Australian and New Zealand market.



Maldives approves Bills to raise tourism taxes and departure fees

The Parliament of Maldives has passed key legislation to increase the Tourism Goods and Services Tax (TGST), Green Tax, and departure fees, with an aim to boost national revenue and support environmental sustainability initiatives. As one of the world's premier travel destinations, known for its pristine beaches and rich marine biodiversity, the Maldives seeks to balance economic growth with its commitment to environmental preservation.



Thailand announces Visa-Free Entry for Indian travellers

The Tourism Authority of Thailand announces a game-changing extension to its visa-free entry policy for Indian tourists, now allowing stays of up to 60 days with no end date for the policy in sight. This decision reinforces Thailand's commitment to strengthening its tourism ties with India and boosting arrivals to its picturesque beaches, cultural landmarks, and vibrant cities.



260-Year-Old Cox & Kings returns with new leadership and vision

Cox & Kings embarks on a new chapter under Wilson & Hughes PTE, a Singapore-based private equity and venture capital firm. Acquired through its Indian subsidiary, the company has exclusively acquired the brand Cox & Kings along with over 200 plus specialised sub-brands that were part of its historic portfolio, including Duniya Dekho – 'See the World with Us', Bharat Dekho – 'Discover the Wonders of India', Luxury Escapades – 'Unparalleled Luxury, Unforgettable Journeys', Bhakti Yatra – 'A Spiritual Journey Awaits', Holiday 365 – 'Your Perfect Getaway, Every Day of the Year', Tour to Feast – 'A Culinary Adventure Across Cultures' among others.



Balitrip Wisata receives government recognition for promoting East Bali Tourism in India

Balitrip Wisata has been acknowledged by BLT Bhupati, the head of Karangasem Regency, and Pak Kadis, Head of the Tourism Authority, for its impactful work in promoting East Bali tourism to the Indian market. This recognition highlights Balitrip Wisata's dedication to enhancing the region's visibility and appeal among Indian travellers.



Indian nationals were the largest group to receive UK visas for Visit

Indian nationals were the largest group to receive UK visas for Visit, Study and Work categories in the year ending June 2024, said HE Lindy Cameron CB OBE, British High Commissioner to India, at the inauguration of the new state-of-art UK visa application facility operated by VFS Global in Delhi.



Norwegian Cruise Line launches a series of new voyages

NCL's highly anticipated Black Friday sale is happening and includes 50 per cent off all currently published voyages plus an additional \$200 onboard credit, allowing guests to start planning their dream cruise holiday well in advance while also locking in exceptional savings. With new sailings across 11 regions, including Asia, Australia and New Zealand, the Caribbean, Bermuda, Bahamas, the Mexican Riviera and more available from September 2026 to April 2027, guests can embark on unforgettable voyages from 20 distinct departure ports and visit 100 destinations across 39 countries.

Tourism Australia and Air India sign a 3-year MoU

Tourism Australia and Air India have signed a three-year marketing agreement to sustain and drive the positive trend in Indian visitor arrivals to Australia as Air India expands its presence in the market. Under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Tourism Australia and Air India will explore opportunities to jointly undertake and implement marketing activities to showcase Australia's world-class appeal and drive future growth in visitation.



Centara Mirage Lagoon Maldives officially welcomes first guests to its new underwater paradise

Centara Hotels & Resorts announces its newest property, Centara Mirage Lagoon Maldives, has officially opened its doors. With the arrival of its first guests, the resort invites guests to immerse themselves in an underwater world-themed paradise where unforgettable experiences await. This vibrant destination is set to redefine family holidays with its captivating attractions and Centara's signature Thai-inspired hospitality.



Taiwan unveils new brand campaign Version 3.0 'Taiwan – Waves of Wonder'

Inviting visitors to 'engage now' to experience Taiwan in all its colours and across four-seasons, the new campaign aims to drive demand, accelerate inbound tourism growth, fully revitalise country's tourism sector. The campaign also aims to drive 10 million international tourist arrivals this year, eyeing a significant growth over last year's 6.48 million tourist arrivals.



VFS.GLOBAL

VFS Global processes its 300 millionth application

VFS Global has crossed the 300 million applications milestone. It is notable that the last 100 million applications have been achieved in the past five years despite the pandemic-driven travel slow-down of 2020-2022. In 2023 alone, the company processed 24.1 million applications, 35 per cent more than 2022, and between January to May 2024, it has processed approximately 100,000 applications a day.



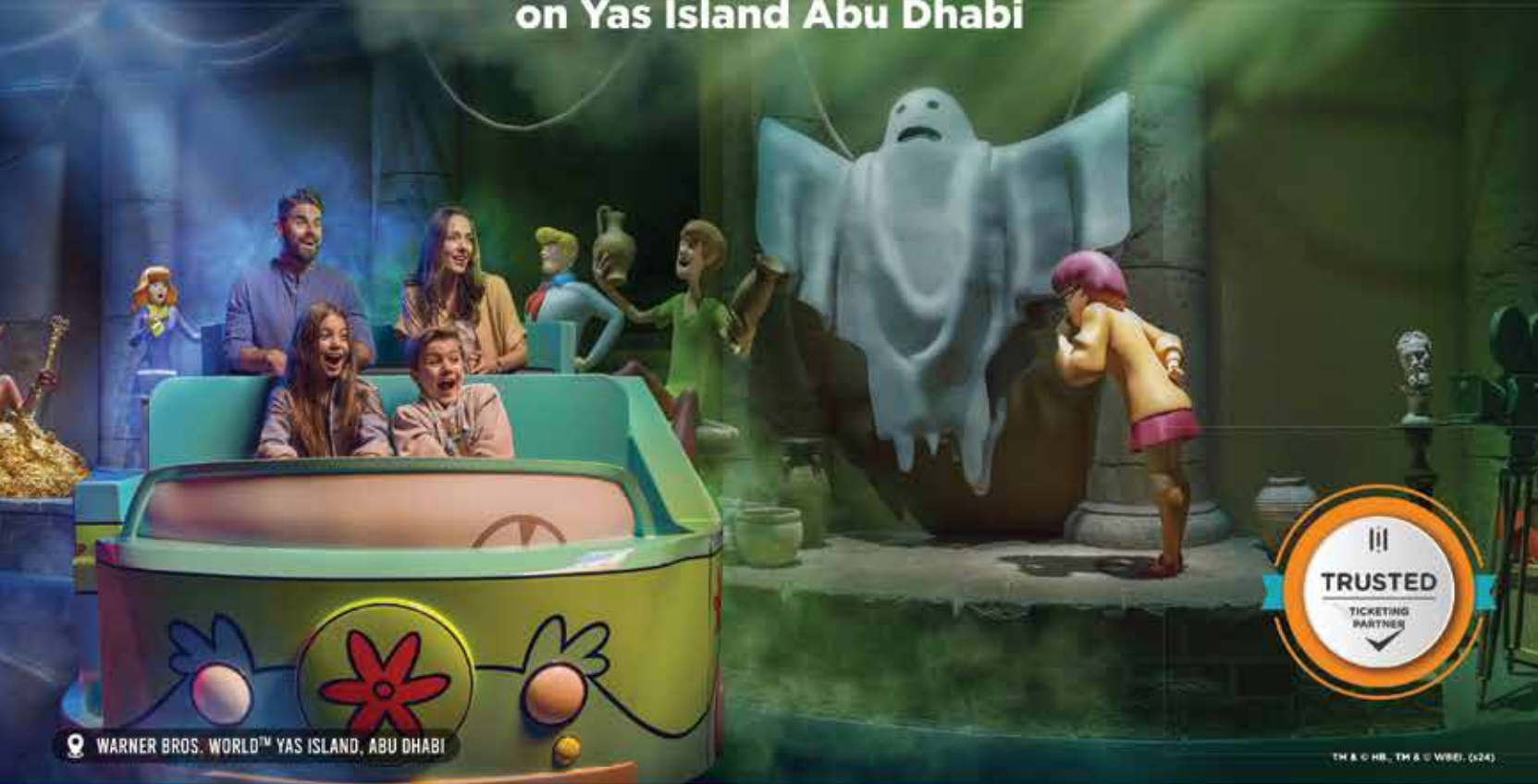
Kenya Tourism Board appoints BRANDit as its India Representative

BRANDit has been appointed as the integrated sales, marketing, and PR agency in India for Kenya Tourism Board (KTB). Marking a milestone in Kenya-India tourism relations, the leading tourism representation company will be responsible for establishing Kenya, the East African nation as a leading outbound destination in India.



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Gen Z

Trailblazers of Tomorrow/Today's Travel

Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, is not just a demographic; it's a movement, a mindset, a manifesto of how the world is being explored today.

- *Bharti Sharma*



The digital natives ie the Gen Z are redefining travel as more than just an escape. For them, it's an opportunity to connect, learn, and leave an impact. Fuelled by wanderlust and guided by purpose, Gen Z is reshaping the travel landscape, making it more authentic, experiential, and socially conscious than ever before.

The Rise of Purposeful Wanderlust

For Gen Z, travel isn't just about ticking off landmarks or capturing picture-perfect moments for social media (though let's be honest, they do that with enviable finesse). This generation seeks purpose in their adventures. A 2024 survey by Expedia revealed that 78% of Gen Z travelers prioritize experiences that align with their values, from

sustainability and inclusivity to cultural immersion.

Consider Maya, a 22-year-old environmental science student who spent her summer in Costa Rica volunteering for a sea turtle conservation program. "It wasn't just a trip," she shares. "It was a chance to give back and truly understand the ecosystem I'd only read about in textbooks." Maya's story is just one of many highlighting how Gen Z uses travel as a platform for meaningful connections and personal growth.

Living for the Story, Not the Souvenir

If millennials popularised experiential travel, Gen Z has taken it to another level. Forget cookie-cutter itineraries or pre-packaged vacations; this generation is carving out paths to

uncharted territories- or at least the ones that feel undiscovered. They're chasing the adrenaline of bungee jumping off the Bloukrans Bridge in South Africa, the serenity of meditating at a Buddhist monastery in Bhutan, or the novelty of a culinary class in a remote Italian village.

But it's not all about extremes. Gen Z also craves the quiet magic of slow travel. They're hopping on overnight trains through Europe, biking across the rice paddies of Vietnam, or spending weeks in local homestays, building relationships with communities. For them, every journey is about the story they'll tell, the lessons they'll learn, and the people they'll meet along the way.

Gen Z's Growing Influence

With over 30 per cent of the global population, Gen Z holds

immense power in shaping travel trends. According to Skift, Gen Z travellers spent \$350 billion on travel in 2023, with a projected annual growth rate of 22 per cent. A staggering 70 per cent of them take at least two leisure trips annually, and nearly half prefer international destinations.

What's driving this spending? Accessibility and affordability. Gen Z is adept at finding budget-friendly ways to explore the world, from using apps like Hopper for flight deals to booking hostels with coworking spaces. Despite their frugality, they don't shy away from splurging on once-in-a-lifetime experiences, like a hot-air balloon ride over Cappadocia or a luxury eco-lodge in the Amazon rainforest.



The Travel Wishlist

1. Sustainability with Style: Eco-tourism isn't just a buzzword for Gen Z; it's a prerequisite. They're staying in green-certified accommodations, opting for slow travel methods like trains, and actively seeking out carbon-offset programs. Iceland's success as an eco-friendly hotspot is a prime example, with a 15 per cent increase in Gen Z visitors in 2023, drawn by its geothermal spas and environmental initiatives.

2. Cultural Deep Dives: Surface-level sightseeing won't cut it. Gen Z wants to cook with locals in Morocco, learn pottery in Japan, or join a Day of the Dead celebration in Mexico. Their travels are about participation, not observation.

3. Digital Nomad-Friendly Spots: With flexible jobs and an always-online lifestyle, Gen Z is driving the rise of destinations

like Bali and Lisbon, where coworking spaces, strong Wi-Fi, and vibrant communities make work-life blending effortless.

4. Unique and Offbeat Experiences: They're flocking to lesser-known destinations like Georgia (the country, not the state), Albania, and Oman, proving that you don't need a guidebook to find magic.

Technology Fuelling Gen Z's Wanderlust

For Gen Z, the journey begins long before the trip itself, on their screens. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are their modern-day travel agents, offering glimpses into hidden gems and insider tips. Influencers have become trusted sources, with their unfiltered content resonating more than glossy brochures.

But it's not just about inspiration; it's about execution. Gen Z relies heavily on apps like Airbnb for unique stays, Google Maps for

seamless navigation, and language translation apps to break down barriers. Technology is their trusted companion, making even the most daunting destinations feel accessible.

The Travel Industry's Compass

Gen Z isn't just shaping the future of travel, they are the future of travel. Their preferences are already driving profound changes across the industry. Airlines are adding sustainable fuel options, hotels are going digital with smart rooms, and destinations are rethinking their marketing strategies to appeal to this purpose-driven generation.

But the real magic lies in how Gen Z is turning travel into a force for good. Whether they're sharing stories about ethical tourism on social media or actively participating in conservation projects, they're redefining what it means to be a traveller.

The Road Ahead

As Gen Z continues to pack their bags, they're carrying more than just the essentials. They're bringing a mindset that prioritises experiences over possessions, sustainability over convenience, and connections over isolation. Their journeys aren't just about seeing the world—they're about understanding it, respecting it, and leaving it better than they found it.

For the travel industry, adapting to Gen Z isn't just an opportunity; it's a necessity. Because if there's one thing this generation has proven, it's that the future of travel isn't about where you go—it's about how you get there and why.

And as Gen Z blazes trails across the globe, they're not just shaping their own stories; they're shaping a new narrative for travel itself. One that's bold, inclusive, and undeniably extraordinary.



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The many faces of France with *Atout France*

As travel picks up pace, the connection between India and France deepens, fuelled by immersive experiences, vibrant campaigns, and a shared tapestry of cultural richness. Sheetal Munshaw, Director India, Atout France shares why France is a favourite destination for Indian travellers.

Sheetal Munshaw

-Bharti Sharma





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with Indian wedding planners and platforms such as Wedding Sutra showcase France's ability to host extravagant Indian weddings that blend tradition with elegance."

Work and play!

Beyond leisure, France has also become a significant player in MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism and a favoured destination for film shoots. Sheetal talks about the increasing interest of companies from India and shares, "MICE has evolved into a five-star market, and Indian corporate groups are exploring France not just for its infrastructure but for its unmatched luxury. From hosting team-building exercises in the Alps to showcasing the vibrancy of Cannes for product launches, France caters to corporate needs with panache."

The French landscapes have also graced the silver screens of Bollywood and OTT platforms, further fuelling aspirations among Indian travellers.

A toast to France's vineyards

France's global reputation as a wine paradise is being increasingly appreciated by Indian visitors. Burgundy, Bordeaux, and Champagne are now familiar names on Indian travel itineraries. Sheetal shares, "Indians are eager to experience wine tourism, from tastings to vineyard stays. Interestingly, while wine consumption declines in Europe, it is gaining traction in India, leading to heightened interest in France's wine-producing regions."

Unveiling France's hidden gems

The thirst for offbeat destinations has brought lesser-known French locales into the limelight. Sheetal highlights, "Places such as Deauville, Biarritz, and Ile de Réunion offer unique experiences, from surfing to serene coastal retreats, attracting the curious Indian traveller. With growing

France and India share a dynamic bond, where cultural exchanges and thriving tourism paint a vivid picture of connection and discovery. In 2022, India ranked as the 15th largest source market for France, with nearly 550,000 Indian visitors, a significant recovery from pre-pandemic highs of 700,000 in 2019. This steady rise is testament to India's evolving love affair with France. "France has consistently been a favourite destination for Indians, not just for its iconic landmarks but for the experiences that celebrate life in the French way," says Sheetal.

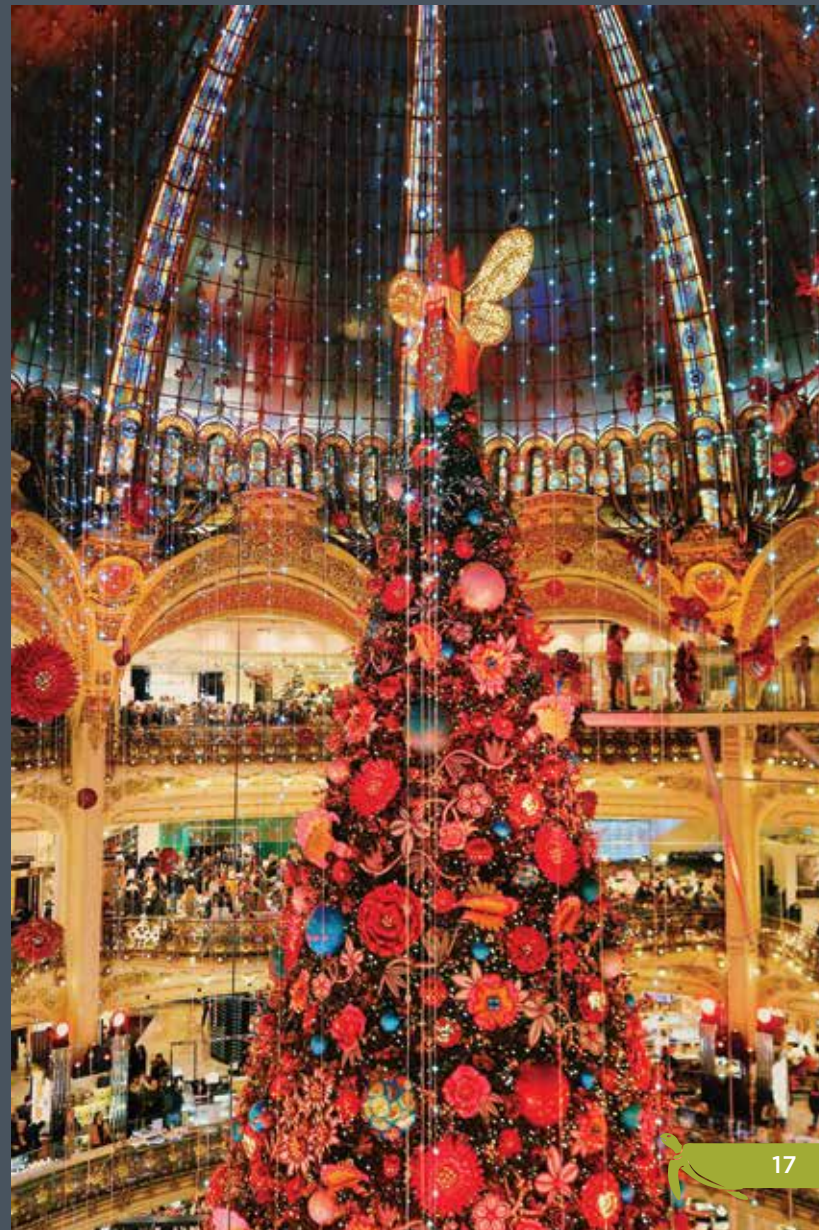
A kaleidoscope of possibilities

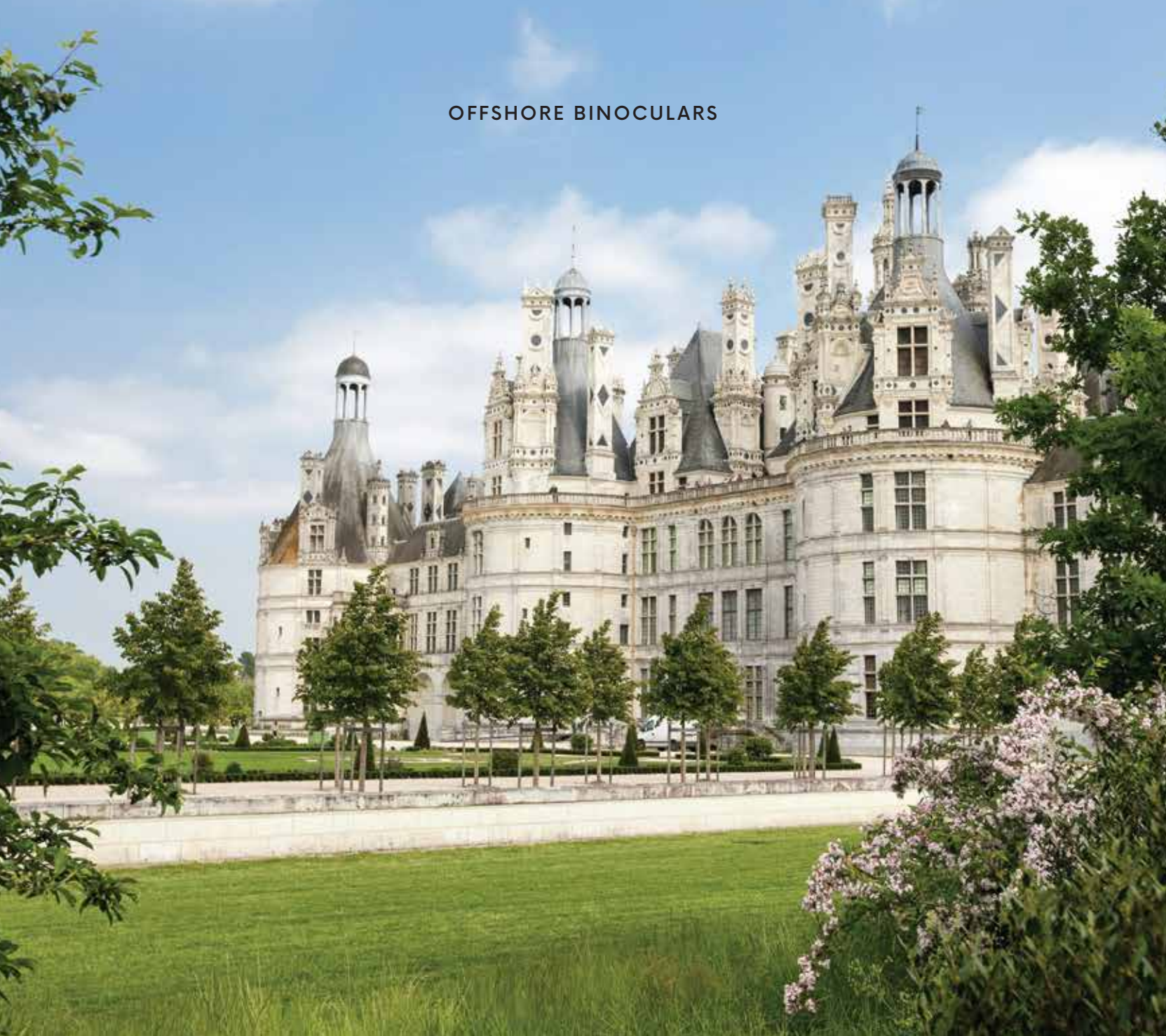
For decades, Paris, with its Eiffel Tower and chic boulevards, was the major attraction of France for Indian travellers. However, modern Indian tourists are exploring deeper into the heart of

France. From the pristine beaches of the Riviera to the rustic vineyards of Burgundy, the allure is undeniable. Sheetal explains "Today's Indian travellers seek more than just a selfie at the Eiffel Tower. They want to live such as Parisians, indulge in culinary classes, and immerse themselves in the art de vivre. The rise of culinary tourism, vineyard stays, and unique experiences such as grape stomping during harvest season has broadened the horizons of what France offers to its Indian visitors."

The wedding bells of France

France has emerged as a dream wedding destination for Indian couples. Its romantic landscapes, opulent châteaux, and the inimitable charm of the French Riviera provide the perfect backdrop for lavish celebrations. She shares, "We are focusing heavily on promoting France as a wedding-ready destination. Recent collaborations





awareness of these hidden gems, Indian tourists are rewriting the narrative of travel in France, venturing beyond the usual paths."

The mountainous charms

The French Alps, traditionally a winter haven, are now being discovered for their year-round appeal. Indian tourists, especially families, are drawn to skiing, sledging, and even summer treks in the Alps. Sheetal draws attention to the snowy peaks and shares, "Destination Montagne, our showcase, emphasises the Alps' all-season allure, tapping into India's growing appetite for active and scenic holidays. This is complemented by the surge in popularity of Christmas markets and

snow activities, making France an irresistible winter wonderland."

Immersive luxury experience

Luxury in France has evolved to emphasise authentic and immersive experiences. From boutique chateau stays to gastronomic adventures, Indian travellers are redefining indulgence. Sheetal shares, "It's no longer just about upscale hotels. Indian tourists seek to engage with France's culture, from its gastronomy to its fashion. The concept of experiential travel resonates deeply with the Indian audience, driving them to explore France's timeless sophistication."

A perfect partnership

The Indo-French relationship

transcends tourism. With 42 direct flights and seamless visa processes, accessibility is a cornerstone of France's popularity. Sheetal elaborates, "France and India share a unique connection, celebrated through cultural exchanges and bilateral relations that are at their strongest. The introduction of UPI payments across iconic locations such as the Eiffel Tower has further enhanced the convenience for Indian travellers."

What the future holds

France's vision for Indian tourism includes tailored campaigns, strategic partnerships, and innovative e-learning programs like France Connoisseur. She adds, "Our aim is to empower travel agents and

enthusiasts with tools to curate bespoke experiences for Indian travellers. From themed FAM trips to collaborative events, France's commitment to the Indian market is unwavering."

Vive la Relation

The story of France and India is one of mutual admiration and evolving aspirations. From wine trails and Alpine retreats to wedding extravaganzas and culinary delights, France offers a world of possibilities to the Indian traveller. Sheetal concludes, "This is the most exciting time for Indo-French tourism. As France continues to enchant and innovate, it invites Indian travellers to embrace its essence—one unforgettable experience at a time."



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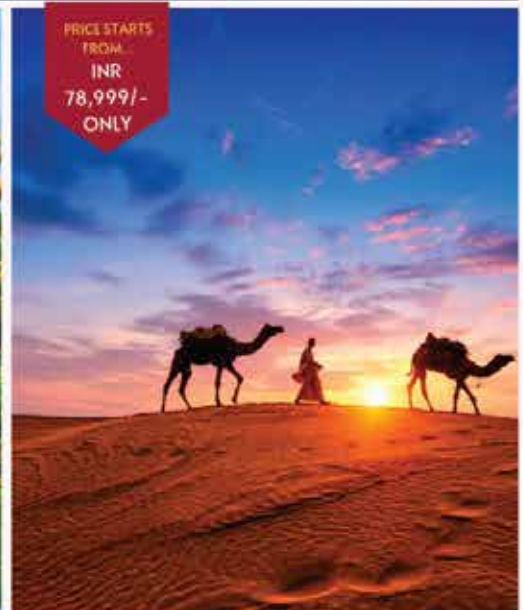
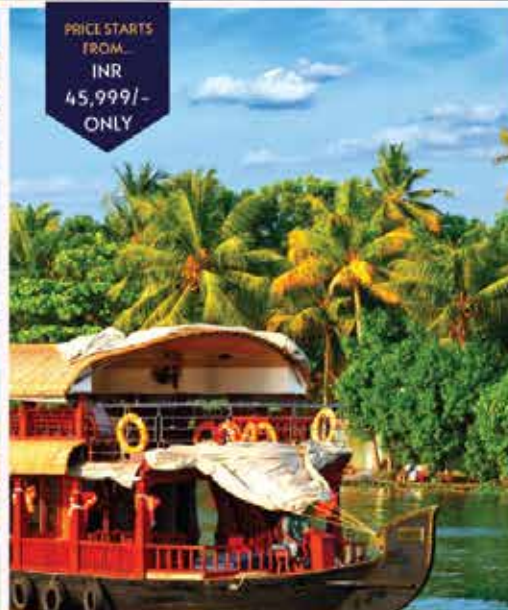
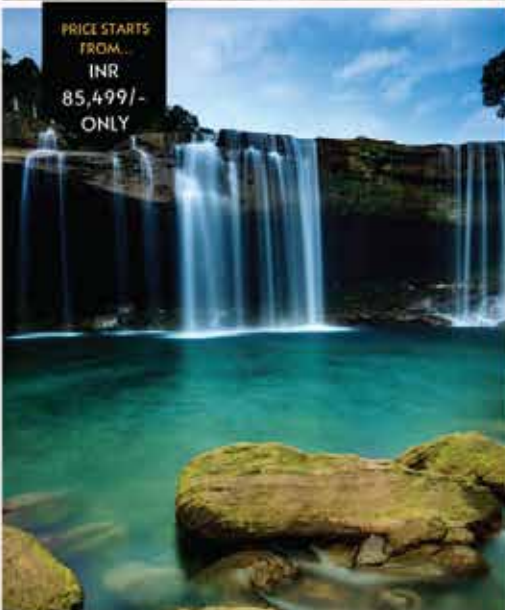
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TRAVEL THERAPY

Batumi

A joyride of seasons and adventures

The first chapter of my journey through Batumi was a love letter to its rain-kissed streets and snowy mountains. But if that was the overture, this was the crescendo. My days in Georgia were about to reveal a kaleidoscope of experiences, where each moment felt like a beautifully crafted vignette.

-Tripti Jain



Sunlit mornings and the city awakens

The day began with a golden surprise—sunlight pouring through the hotel balcony, transforming the Black Sea into a shimmering expanse of silver and blue. For a city that had spent days beneath a canopy of rain, this felt like a celebration. The mountains on the horizon stood proud and crisp against the clear blue sky, their peaks kissed by the light of the rising sun.

After a hearty breakfast at the hotel, we stepped out into a city brimming with energy. The rain had cleansed Batumi, leaving its streets polished and glistening. Locals and tourists alike thronged the boulevards, their faces lit with the joy of clear skies. Our exploration began with Old Boulevard Street, a place where contrasts meet seamlessly. On one side, the Black Sea stretched into infinity, while on the other,

skyscrapers and city life hummed in perfect harmony. The architecture—modern yet respectful of history—captured the essence of Batumi's spirit.

Exploring the heart of Batumi

Our city tour unfolded like a story told in chapters, each landmark revealing a new facet of Batumi. We strolled through the Era Square, where fountains sparkled in the sunlight, and the echoes of history mingled with the vibrancy of present-day life. The Old Batumi Piazza Square, with its European-style facades, invited us to linger for coffee and conversation. Nearby, the Alphabet Tower rose like a sentinel, celebrating the Georgian script and the uniqueness of the region. Walking along Batumi Boulevard, the sea breeze



carried with it a sense of timelessness. The famous Ali and Nino Statue stood in perpetual motion, their eternal dance symbolising love that transcends boundaries.

The Port of Batumi was alive with laughter, music, and the hum of boats coming and going. It was the perfect end to hours of exploring, soaking in the sun and capturing moments through the lens of my camera.

A bird's-eye view

By the time we reached the Batumi Botanical Garden, the day had grown warmer, and spring seemed to be in full bloom. But this wasn't just a leisurely stroll through vibrant flora. We experienced the garden with an exhilarating twist—by zipline.

Suspended over the sea, I held on tight as the zipline carried me from the garden's cliffs to its verdant heart. The view was like nothing I'd ever seen: the endless blue of the Black Sea on one side and the lush greens of the garden's mountain on the other. Beneath me, a train track tunnelled through the mountainside, adding an unexpected touch of whimsy to the panorama.

The garden itself was a treasure trove of flora from around the world, each plant adding its unique hue and fragrance to this living tapestry.

Flavours of Adjara

After the adrenaline of the zipline, lunch at Chateau Kvirike was a soothing balm. Nestled in a serene setting, the chateau offered not just a feast for the stomach but also for the

TRAVEL THERAPY

soul. The food—a symphony of Georgian flavours—and the wine were unforgettable. Inevitably, I added another bottle of wine to my growing collection, a token of my love for this country's craftsmanship. Our next stop was the Petra Fortress, a historical marvel perched high above the sea. Unfortunately, rain made a sudden appearance, but even from the outside, the fortress exuded an ancient majesty. As we turned to leave, nature gifted us one final surprise: a rainbow stretching across the horizon, a promise of hope and beauty amidst fleeting rain.

Dancing under the Georgian moonlight

The evening brought with it a grand finale in the form of a gala dinner.

Traditional Ajarian dances unfolded before us, their grace and energy a testament to the region's rich heritage. The men leapt and spun with daring bravado, while the woman moved with an elegance that seemed almost otherworldly. The highlight of the evening was when Mariyam, our friend from Batumi Tourism, was finally persuaded to join the performance. Her steps told a story of a lifetime spent in love with her culture, and it was a joy to watch her passion come alive. The night ended with heartfelt toasts and shared laughter, a celebration of the bonds we had forged over the course of this trip.

Riding the waves and soaring above the city

Our final day in Batumi greeted us with a crisp chill. The first adventure was a yacht ride on the Black Sea. As the boat cut through the waves, the thrill was unmatched. The water seemed alive, splashing and jumping, and just as we spotted rain clouds on the horizon, we turned back to the port. Though brief, the ride was unforgettable.

Next, we took a cable car ride to get one last bird's-eye view of the city. Batumi from above looked like a jewel—a patchwork of history, culture, and natural beauty surrounded by the embrace of the sea.

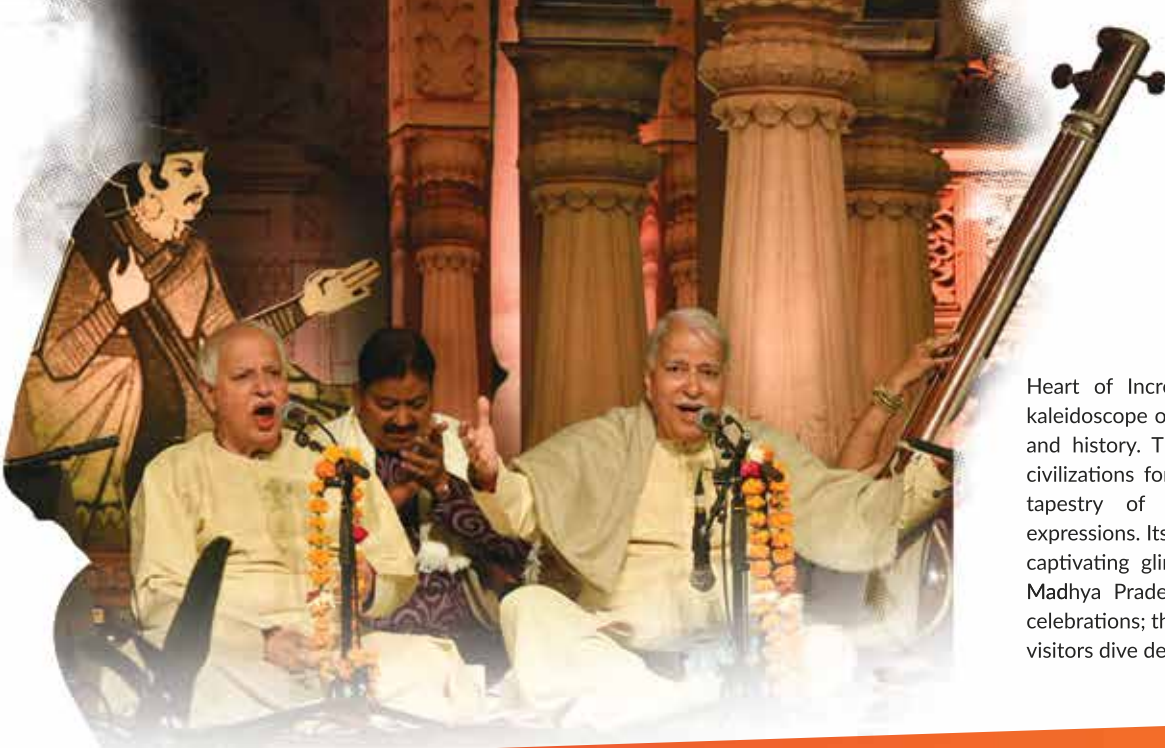
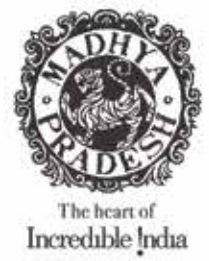
The final farewell

As the sun began its descent, we shared a final meal at Fishlandia,

savouring the fresh catch of the day. Then, it was time to leave this enchanting city. Our train ride back to Tbilisi was my first experience on a European-style railway. The comfort and efficiency were a far cry from the chaos of Indian railways, making it a fitting end to a journey filled with firsts. As we arrived in Tbilisi, the reality of departure set in. Boarding our flight, I looked out at the Georgian night one last time, my heart heavy with goodbyes but brimming with gratitude.

Batumi had been more than just a destination; it had been a revelation. Its seasons, its stories, its people—they had all left an indelible mark on my soul. This was not goodbye but a promise to return, to explore more, and to fall in love with Georgia all over again.





Heart of Incredible India, Madhya Pradesh is a kaleidoscope of rich cultural experiences, traditions, and history. The state has been a crossroads for civilizations for centuries and has woven a vibrant tapestry of customs, languages, and artistic expressions. Its annual cultural extravaganzas offer a captivating glimpse into this mesmerizing mosaic. Madhya Pradesh's grand festivals are not merely celebrations; they are immersive experiences that let visitors dive deeper into the state.

100th Tansen Samaroh in Madhya Pradesh

A Century of Music, a Lifetime of Inspiration

100th TANSEN MUSIC FESTIVAL - DECEMBER 15th TO 19th 2024

Madhya Pradesh beckons you to celebrate the life, legacy, and contributions of the legendary musician Tansen at the Tansen Music Festival. Renowned for its rich cultural heritage, Madhya Pradesh has made substantial contributions to Hindustani classical music. Gwalior, a UNESCO-designated Creative City of Music, is the annual venue for the prestigious Tansen Festival. This musical extravaganza showcases the rich heritage of Indian classical music, attracting music enthusiasts, scholars, and artists from around the world. The festival's roots can be traced back to the early decades of the 20th century. Over time these events grew in scale and scope, and got institutionalized becoming a regular feature on the cultural calendar of Madhya Pradesh. In recent years, the Tansen Music Festival has gained international recognition, attracting participants and audiences from various countries.

As the Tansen Music Festival continues to evolve, Madhya Pradesh Culture Department and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board are set to leave a mark. The state is lining up a pre-launch event in New Delhi, series of musical and thematic exhibitions, week-long film festival on Tansen at Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal. Efforts of collaborating with the ICCR, Indian embassies abroad, and foreign embassies in India to organize international performances featuring artists from different countries is a landmark initiative to gain global recognition in the centennial year.



51st KHAJURAHO DANCE FESTIVAL - FEBRUARY 20th TO 26th 2025

The land of UNESCO World Heritage Site and renowned pilgrim of architecture, Khajuraho resonates with the grace of classical dance. The Khajuraho Dance Festival will mark its 51st edition in February 2025, continuing its tradition of showcasing classical dance forms against the backdrop of the iconic temples of Khajuraho. Renowned classical dancers from across India converge here to enthrall audiences with their rhythmic footwork and melodious ghungrus. For adventure enthusiasts, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board offers a plethora of exciting activities.

IMMERSE IN A MUSICAL ODYSSEY IN THE HEART OF INDIA

This year's Tansen Music Festival promises an unparalleled experience, honoring the legacy of the maestro. Join us as we celebrate music, scholarship, and cultural exchange. In addition to these prominent festivals, Madhya Pradesh hosts many other cultural events that highlight the state's rich legacy. Festivals such as Lokrang, Artichol, Ustad Allaiddin Khan Sangeet Samaroh, Akhil Bhartiya Kalidas Samaroh, Pranati, Raag Amir, Ghungru, and many more showcase the diverse cultural heritage of Incredible India, making it a vibrant hub for art and tradition. Whether you're a dance enthusiast, a music lover, or simply seeking an authentic cultural experience, Madhya Pradesh has something to offer everyone.



CRUISE ODYSSEY

Resorts World Cruises

maiden voyage from Dubai

Seacations just got a luxurious upgrade—and Dubai is at the center of it all. With Resorts World Cruises now sailing from Dubai, the future of cruising looks brighter than ever.

-Naina Nath





Setting foot in Dubai for the first time felt like a dream—soaring skyscrapers, golden deserts, and a city that never seems to rest. For Indian travellers like me, Dubai has always been a favourite for its mix of luxury and adventure. But now, there's something even more exciting on the horizon: Cruises!

A new dawn for Seacations

The fly-cruise market from India is booming, with seacations quickly becoming the holiday of choice. Gone are the days when cruising meant traveling to far-off ports such as Singapore or the Mediterranean. Resorts World Cruises has brought the world of luxurious cruising directly to Dubai's shores. For Indian travellers, it's a game-changer. Instead of flying long distances to embark on a cruise, Dubai is the perfect gateway—a bustling city life paired with the thrill of the high seas. Dubai, a city always ahead of the curve, is now home to this exciting new product. For those ready to trade crowded tourist spots for a luxury liner, the timing couldn't be better. The concept of a 'seacation'—a combination of land-based and sea-based travel—has truly arrived. Cruises are the ultimate choice for a carefree vacation; your hotel travels with you wherever you go, and no matter where you are, a cruise ship is like your own little world where your every need is met, no matter the time of day.

A warm welcome at Port Rashid

The journey began at Port Rashid

Cruise Terminal two in Old Dubai. This terminal is exclusively dedicated to Resorts World Cruises, ensuring a smooth, efficient, and personalised experience. As soon as I arrived, I was struck by how easy and organised the check-in process was. The staff at the terminal was not just efficient but also friendly and knowledgeable, offering assistance every step of the way.

Starting any journey in Dubai is already a treat—the city itself is a fascinating juxtaposition of modernity and tradition. But stepping aboard Resorts World One felt like entering an entirely new world. The excitement was palpable as passengers, many experiencing a cruise for the first time, eagerly anticipated the next three days. The organisation at the port and the easy embarkation made the whole experience incredibly stress-free.

Resort World One itineraries

Resorts World Cruises offers a range of itineraries tailored to different preferences and schedules. The beauty of the itineraries is their flexibility—whether you're looking for a quick getaway or an extended cruise, you're sure to find something that fits.

- *Two Night Doha Cruise (Wednesday departures): Perfect for those looking to escape for a quick midweek vacation, this itinerary features a relaxing journey to the shores of Doha.*
- *Three Night Khasab-Muscat Cruise (Sunday departures): This is for those who want to experience the rugged beauty of Oman. From Khasab's stunning fjords to Muscat's rich culture, this itinerary is packed with adventure.*
- *Two Night Sir Bani Yas Island Cruise*

CRUISE ODYSSEY

(Friday departures): The weekend getaway combining nature, history, and luxury in one package.

The great part about these itineraries is that they can easily be combined with a stay in Dubai, letting travellers enjoy the best of both worlds—on land and at sea.

Rooms to suit every mood

Onboard Resorts World One, accommodations cater to all preferences. For a cosy and practical stay, the Interior Staterooms are a comfortable choice. If you prefer something more spacious with breath-taking ocean views, the Balcony Staterooms are an ideal option.

For travellers seeking a luxurious escape, The Palace offers an exceptional experience. This 'ship within a ship' concept features suite-only accommodations, 24-hour butler service, private dining, and access to exclusive VIP lounges. Guests enjoy premium touches such as Italian linens, Nespresso machines, and personalised concierge services. The experience is further enhanced with priority seating at live shows and access to curated activities, ensuring every detail is thoughtfully designed.

Celebrations and excitement

The inaugural Gulf sailing of Resorts World One on November 1, 2024, from Port Rashid Cruise Terminal two in Dubai was a milestone event for Resorts World Cruises. Nearly 600 guests attended the celebration, including Michael Goh, President of Resorts World Cruises; Hamza Mustafa, COO, DP World; and Saud Hareb Almheiri from Dubai's

Department of Economy and Tourism. The event hosted lively performances, ship tours, and a showcase of the ship's unique cuisines. Held in partnership with Dubai Tourism, the day highlighted Dubai's growing reputation as a key Gulf cruise destination, and I was grateful to witness and be part of such an important milestone.

Non-Stop entertainment

If you think a cruise might get boring, think again. On Resorts World One, entertainment is never in short supply. The Zodiac Theatre is the heart of live performances, offering guests the chance to watch incredible shows, comparable to those in renowned theatres around the world.

If you're looking for excitement, the ESC Experience Lab showcases state-of-the-art virtual and augmented reality technology, with interactive experiences that will keep you on the edge of your seat. For a more laid-back vibe, the Humidor Cigar Lounge provides a stylish retreat, while the silent disco is a unique and fun way to keep the party going! And then there are the foam parties—a daytime splash of pure fun! Picture yourself dancing in a sea of foam, surrounded by laughter, music, and the open sky.

Food that's worth it!

When it comes to food, Resorts World One goes above and beyond. With 16 dining options, there's something for every palate. The Lido Buffet offers access to an extensive international spread catering to various dietary needs, including

Halal and Jain options. Mozzarella Ristorante & Pizzeria reimagines Italian classics, while the Blue Lagoon serves hearty comfort food. Umi Uma specialises in authentic Japanese dishes, while the Dream Dining Room features a mix of Chinese and Western cuisines. The Seafood Grill lets you dine under the stars with a fresh selection of seafood. Every meal onboard is an experience, and with so many options, you'll never tire of the choices available!

Family-friendly fun

Traveling with kids? Resorts World One makes sure there's fun for the whole family. The Parthenon Pool is a Roman-themed aquatic playground complete with Caesar's Slide and hot tubs, perfect for a day of fun in the sun. Meanwhile, the Little Dreamers Club offers kids a chance to enjoy games, workshops, and even a mini DJ booth. It's not just about relaxing—it's about making memories as a family.

Nature meets adventure

A special experience for me was our visit to Sir Bani Yas Island, a hidden gem off the coast of Abu Dhabi. Greeted by a traditional maritime welcome, we were taken to the island, home to a range of Arabian wildlife. The 4x4 safari was one of the most memorable adventures—I got up close to animals such as onyx, gazelles, giraffes, and cheetahs, all roaming freely in their natural habitat. But Sir Bani Yas Island is not just about wildlife. The island also features luxury experiences, adventure-based activities, and

even historical sites to explore. For those interested in nature, culture, and adventure, it's an ideal stop.

This is just the beginning!

As the cruise came to an end, I couldn't help but reflect on the incredible experience I had, the friendships I made, and everything I learned. From the impeccable service to the breath-taking destinations, Resorts World One made my trip truly unforgettable. A heartfelt thank you to the entire team at Resorts World Cruises for making this journey possible for me and for travellers coming from India, giving us an option for the perfect and most stress-free vacation!

Naresh Rawal, Senior Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Resorts World Cruises, so aptly said, "Dubai has always been a preferred destination for Indian travellers, but cruising out of Dubai presents a great opportunity for travel partners to combine both land and sea vacations. With easy visa access and no additional charges for landing permits in Oman and Qatar, this combination presents a new avenue for our travel partners to generate revenue and boost cruise tourism." Whether you're a seasoned cruiser or a first-timer, this is an experience you won't want to miss. Bon voyage!



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ADVERT

Rann Utsav

A mesmerising journey into the White Desert

Imagine standing in an endless expanse of white salt marshes under a sky lit by countless stars. This surreal landscape is the Great Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, India.



Held annually, this spectacular event attracts tourists from across the globe, offering a unique blend of culture, nature, and adventure that's hard to find anywhere else. Whether you're a culture enthusiast, an adventure seeker, or someone simply looking to unwind amidst stunning natural beauty, Rann Utsav is the perfect destination.

The magic of Rann Utsav

The Rann Utsav is more than just a festival; it's an immersive experience. Spanning from November to February, this event takes place in Dhordo village,

located at the edge of the Rann of Kutch. Visitors can enjoy the unique charm of the salt desert during both day and night. The sunrises paint the horizon in hues of orange and gold, while moonlit nights transform the salt flats into a silvery wonderland. A meticulously planned festival village springs to life with luxury tents, local bazaars, and entertainment areas.

Activities to indulge in

Rann Utsav offers a plethora of activities that cater to all kinds of travellers:

Cultural Extravaganza: Watch

spellbinding performances of Gujarat's folk dances such as Garba and Dandiya, accompanied by melodious traditional music. Local artisans and craftsmen also showcase their intricate embroidery, pottery, and mirror work, giving you a chance to take home authentic souvenirs.

Adventure Sports: Thrill-seekers can explore the salt desert on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), engage in paramotoring, offering panoramic views of the vast white desert.

Camel Cart Rides: For a laid-back experience, hop onto a camel cart

and enjoy a leisurely ride across the pristine expanse.

Wellness and Rejuvenation: Visitors can indulge in yoga sessions at sunrise or relax with traditional spa treatments under the starry skies.

Exploring the Local Cuisine: The culinary spread at Rann Utsav is a treat for the taste buds. Feast on traditional Kutchi dishes such as dabeli, khichdi, and undhiyu, paired with a refreshing glass of chaas (buttermilk).



ADVERT

The star attraction

While the Rann of Kutch is enchanting throughout the festival, it becomes truly magical during full moon nights. The shimmering salt flats reflect the moonlight, creating an otherworldly glow that captivates the heart and soul. Special cultural performances are organised on these nights, elevating the experience to an unforgettable spectacle.

Nearby attractions to explore

Rann Utsav isn't just about the festival itself; it's also a gateway to exploring the surrounding region:

Mandvi Beach: If you're craving the sea, the pristine Mandvi Beach offers a relaxing escape. The Vijay Vilas Palace nearby is a must-visit for its architectural beauty.

Dholavira: An ancient Harappan marvel where time whispers tales of a once-thriving civilization in the heart of Gujarat's arid beauty.

Road Through Heaven: A scenic stretch in Gujarat that feels like a celestial pathway, blending salt deserts and endless skies.

Kalo Dungar (Magnetic Hills or Black Hills): A natural illusion where gravity bends and the earth plays



tricks, pulling the curious to its magnetic embrace.

Getting there

The Rann Utsav is easily accessible via Bhuj, which is well-connected by road, rail, and air. From Bhuj, Dhordo village is about 80 kilometres away. Tour operators and the Gujarat Tourism department provide seamless travel and accommodation options. The best time to visit is during the cooler months from December to February. Full moon nights are particularly popular, so make sure to plan your trip accordingly and book in advance.

A memory to cherish forever

Rann Utsav is a celebration of life, culture, and nature. It's a place where the mundane fades, and magic begins. The vast salt desert, the vibrant hues of Gujarat's traditions and the unmatched hospitality create an experience like no other.

So, pack your bags, head to Gujarat, and let Rann Utsav take you on a journey of wonder and discovery. You'll leave with a heart full of memories and a deeper appreciation for the enchanting beauty of India's white desert.





Christine Galle-Luczak



Lubaina Sheerazi



Priyanka Nijhawan

The dawn of a golden era in Luxury Travel

The world of luxury tourism is buzzing with excitement, and at its heart lies a force reshaping the landscape—Indian travellers. Christine Galle-Luczak, Founder & CEO, Heavens Portfolio, Priyanka Nijhawan, Director - Representations, Nijhawan Group, Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO & Co-founder, BRANDit share their experiences with Luxury Tourism.

- Tripti Jain



With their penchant for grandeur, insatiable curiosity for unique experiences, and willingness to invest in exclusivity, they're not just travelling; they're redefining what it means to experience the world. The Indian luxury traveller is no longer a participant—they're a trendsetter.

The loudest cheerleader in global luxury

Once considered a niche demographic in luxury tourism, Indian travellers are now a dominant force on the world stage. With over 1.4 million high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) and a growing number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNIs), their demand for global luxury offerings has surged. "India's luxury market is projected to touch \$200 billion by 2030," says Priyanka. But numbers tell only part of the story. What makes Indian travellers stand out is their unique approach to luxury—an emotional, experiential, and cultural exploration. Christine shares, "Indian travellers are not just looking for lavishness; they're seeking something deeply authentic—whether that's in the French Riviera, Baden-Baden, or remote locales that offer an off-the-beaten-path charm."

Not just Delhi and Mumbai

Luxury has long been popular with metro cities such as Delhi and Mumbai, but today, the story is shifting. Smaller cities such as Ahmedabad, Pune, Chandigarh, and Indore are taking their place on the global map of luxury consumption. "Non-metro cities now contribute 55 per cent of luxury brand engagements online," says Lubaina. She elaborates on the aspirational ethos driving these cities: "We're seeing consumers who are as eager to spend on luxury as their metro counterparts. What they seek are new experiences—be it a heritage cruise or a Michelin-star dining adventure." Roadshows in these cities are fostering a sense of inclusion, where affluent individuals find themselves ready to embark on international adventures fuelled by dreams and an undeniable spending power.

From stuff to stories

The Indian luxury traveller has evolved dramatically. Gone are the days when luxury was measured in material terms—a glittering chandelier, a private jet, or a platinum wristwatch. Today, it's about stories, experiences, and transformations. Wellness retreats, eco-tourism, and sleep tourism are gaining traction as Indian travellers seek vacations that restore and rejuvenate. Priyanka highlights the buzz around sleep tourism: "This niche trend is

gaining momentum, with travellers prioritising destinations designed to improve sleep quality and well-being. Think serene retreats with personalised sleep programs and accommodations equipped with cutting-edge technology."

The demand for immersive, experience-based luxury is not just a preference—it's a statement. Christine shares, "Indian travellers want itineraries that tell stories. They crave cultural richness, exclusive culinary experiences, and architectural wonders that connect them to the essence of a destination."

The family that travels together

Few cultures embrace the concept of family as deeply as India. This familial ethos translates directly into travel, where multi-generational holidays have become a defining trend. Families spanning three generations—grandparents, parents, and children—are exploring the world together.

"Indian families frequently request interconnected rooms or apartment-style setups to maintain both privacy and togetherness," shares Lubaina. Hotels around the world are adapting to this unique requirement, offering tailored packages that cater to every age group—from adventurous excursions for the young to serene wellness experiences for the elders.

This trend isn't just a logistical challenge for hoteliers; it's an opportunity to craft deeply personal experiences that cater to family dynamics, making Indian travellers stand out as a uniquely influential segment.

"I Do" in style: India's destination weddings

India's destination wedding phenomenon has taken the world by storm. From grand palaces in Europe to exotic beachfronts in Southeast Asia, Indian couples are sparing no expense in turning their nuptials into fairy tales.

Lubaina points out, "India is becoming a key driver in the luxury wedding market. Global brands such as Shangri-La are tailoring their offerings specifically for Indian clientele with bespoke wedding services that blend tradition and modernity." The rise of destination weddings has added a new dimension to luxury tourism, where culture, cuisine, and celebration come together in breath-taking settings.

Greener horizons

As global attention pivots towards sustainability, Indian travellers are stepping up as champions of eco-conscious luxury. From eco-friendly resorts to carbon-neutral travel, the demand for responsible

luxury has never been higher.

"Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword—it's becoming a core requirement," says Priyanka. "Affluent Indian travellers want their experiences to be luxurious yet leave a positive impact on the environment and local communities."

Christine adds, "Whether it's staying in eco-friendly villas or engaging with local artisans, Indian travellers are setting a precedent for responsible luxury. This shift is not just reshaping how brands innovate but also ensuring that luxury tourism aligns with global sustainability goals."

When global meets local

One of the most exciting aspects of Indian luxury tourism is the potential for cultural cross-pollination. From international brands collaborating with Indian designers to chefs curating menus with Indian flavours, the opportunities are endless.

"There's immense potential in partnerships that bring a local flavour to global luxury," says Lubaina. "It creates an experience that feels authentic yet cosmopolitan, appealing to India's affluent, culturally conscious travellers." These collaborations also serve to bridge cultural gaps, creating offerings that resonate deeply with Indian audiences while introducing a global audience to Indian artistry and heritage.

India as a Global Luxury trendsetter

The Indian luxury travel market is poised for unparalleled growth, with outbound travel alone expected to grow at a CAGR of 11.4 per cent over the next decade. Visa reforms, better connectivity, and an appetite for unique experiences are all contributing to this momentum.

"We're ending the year with numerous hotel brands prioritizing the Indian market," says Christine. "This market is no longer just a segment—it's a driving force."

As Indian travellers demand more and more from their global adventures, they're not just reshaping luxury travel—they're reinventing it. Priyanka sums it up and shares, "Indian travellers are not only consuming luxury; they're setting trends and standards that the world must follow."

Indian travellers taking the world by storm

The Indian luxury traveller is rewriting the rules of tourism with a unique blend of cultural values, aspirational goals, and global sensibilities. From destination weddings to multi-generational adventures, from sustainability to storytelling, they are shaping the future of luxury travel with every journey.

Edgar Vesga

PHILADELPHIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Redefining global connections

Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) is stepping up as a key player in international travel, especially when expanding connections to major markets like India. Edgar Vesga, Director of Air Service and Cargo Services, PHL shares a closer look at the airport's plans and what lies ahead.

- *Naina Nath*



OFFSHORE BINOCULARS

Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) serves as a major hub on the East Coast, connecting travellers to destinations across the United States and around the world. With a wide range of amenities, efficient transportation options, and direct flights to major cities, PHL is a convenient gateway to Philadelphia and the surrounding region. With a focus on improving connectivity, enhancing passenger services, and driving sustainability, PHL is positioning itself to meet travellers' evolving needs.

Building bridges to India

India is a crucial market for PHL, and the airport is actively working to establish direct or one-stop flights to major Indian cities. With one of the largest Indian populations in the U.S., Philadelphia is eager to cater to the needs of both tourists and those visiting friends and family. The airport is currently collaborating with airlines to explore new route opportunities. Edgar shares, "We're working closely with the Indian community to understand travel patterns. Our goal is to help airlines make informed decisions that support this important segment, while also welcoming more Indian tourists to explore Philadelphia, the first UNESCO - designated city in the U.S."

Enhanced comfort, elevated experience

India consistently ranks as one of the top international markets for PHL. The demand for flights between India and Philadelphia has been on a steady rise, particularly post-pandemic, and the numbers are only expected to grow in the coming years. Edgar draws attention towards some compelling figures that highlight the trend and suggest, "India was our third-largest market for direct visitor spending in 2023, with a projected growth of over 25 per cent in the next five years. Last year, more than 190,000 passengers travelled between the two regions, but only 34 per cent

used PHL due to a lack of direct flights. We see a huge opportunity to capture more of that market with better connectivity."

Future-ready infrastructure

PHL offers a wide range of amenities to ensure a comfortable experience for international travellers. With over 150 dining and shopping options, passengers can enjoy a diverse selection of services during their transit. The airport also features several premium lounges, including the soon-to-open flagship American Airlines Admirals Club in Terminal A-West, as well as lounges by Delta, United, and British Airways. Edgar shares, "We want to ensure that passengers from India, or anywhere else, feel welcomed and comfortable. Our biometric exit program, for example, allows for a secure and touchless departure process, making the overall experience smoother and more efficient."

Sustainability in action

To support its long-term growth plans, PHL has been investing in significant infrastructure upgrades. Recent projects include expanding Terminal F and installing new seating with power access in Terminals D, E, and A-West. These improvements are designed to accommodate the increasing number of international travellers and provide a more seamless experience. Edgar explains, "We're focused on modernising the airport to meet the needs of today's travellers. From upgrading our roadways to adding new seating with power outlets, every detail is aimed at enhancing the overall experience."

Committed to Sustainability

PHL is also making strides in its sustainability efforts, with a bold plan to achieve Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2050. Recent initiatives include the electrification of the airport's vehicle fleet and ground support

equipment, as well as exploring solar energy projects. These efforts are part of a larger goal to make PHL a leader in environmental responsibility. "We're proud to have achieved Level three Airport Carbon Accreditation in 2024. This is just one step in our ongoing commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and ensuring a sustainable future for the airport," shares Edgar.

Tech-driven Security and efficiency

PHL is also focused on upgrading its technology infrastructure to improve both security and efficiency. The airport is in the process of transitioning to a fully digital Video Management System (VMS), which will significantly enhance security coverage and resource management. Other upgrades include new Multi-Use Flight Information Displays (MUFIDs) and an updated Terminal Announcement Control System (TACS). Edgar shares, "These technology upgrades will not only improve security but also contribute to our sustainability goals by reducing energy consumption. We're always looking for ways to improve both operations and the passenger experience."

A bold vision for future

As PHL looks to the future, there are plenty of exciting projects in the pipeline. The airport recently launched the PHL WORKS initiative, aimed at improving service excellence across its 16,800 employees. This program is part of PHL's broader effort to create a world-class experience for travellers, whether they're flying in from India or anywhere else in the world. Edgar concludes, "India remains one of Philadelphia's top international visitor markets, and we're committed to making the travel experience as seamless as possible. Direct flights to Philadelphia would open our region to even more Indian travellers, whether they're visiting for business, education, or tourism."

TRAVEL THERAPY

Budapest

Pearl of the Danube

History records that it took an empire to build Budapest. And its architecture bears testimony to this, not merely from the local buildings' grand proportions and styles, but also their precise locations, which suggest organised construction.

- *Inder Raj Ahluwalia*

TRAVEL THERAPY

Being quick on the uptake, I'd almost immediately realised this wasn't a city to be trifled with. And with good reason! What one sees today is a vintage and proud culture that mirrors centuries of Hungarian history.

There's this question of views, and Budapest commands visual attention, especially on the Buda side where the views are nothing short of spectacular. Perched at a vantage point on Castle Hill, buffeted by the wind, I took in that famous panoramic sweep that everyone talks about. The Royal Palace; the Matthias Church; Parliament's Spires; Gellert Hill with the Citadel; and the famous Chain Bridge all seemed awash in the evening's golden light, their reflections on the river combining with the dotted lights of Pest to create a beautiful spectacle. Not surprisingly, these views constitute a World Heritage Site.

Part old-world charm, part contemporary urban grace, describing Budapest can be a bit of a teaser. And then there's the Danube River - the city's pulse - snaking lazily through the metropolis, dividing it into two sections, with Old World Buda on one side, and vibrant Pest on the other. The famous views straddle both sides of the river.

Claiming proud lineage with the Magyar tribes that founded Hungary nearly 1,100 years ago, Budapest is almost overburdened with history. Thanks to old buildings and museums, what you see today isn't just a large city, but a giant icon of the past showing the influence of Roman times, of 16th and 17th Century Turkish domination, and of Austria's Habsburg dynasty's rule over the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The trends of urbanity have balanced things. If the landmark buildings show an Imperial touch, today's outlets convey a sense of order. The super-markets, shopping malls, and office buildings are set in perfect harmony with the sprawling Heroes' Square, that's in turn neatly bordered by the elegant St. Stephen's Basilica, and



Neo-Classical Museum of Fine Arts. Let loose to discover the city, my foray yielded its fair share of delights. Architectural brilliance shines forth from the buildings of Castle Hill. The Neo-gothic Matthias Church; the Fishermen's Bastion; and the imposing Royal Palace that also houses the National Gallery and its art treasures; and are all famous landmarks. Built in the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the

seven - turreted Fishermen's Bastion - its turrets commemorating the seven Magyar tribes that founded Hungary in 896 - is a national monument of fame. Straddled by hills, the Buda side is also the city's green belt. Harmashatar Hill; Janos Hill; Szechenyi Hill; Hars Hill; and Remete Hill are all parts of Buda's nature reserve.

The city's two sections, Buda and Pest complement each other.

Buda's historical legacy and old-world charm is in sharp contrast with Pest's modern-day bustle that is the city's commercial heartbeat. Pest's glittering Vaci Utca features Hungary's top-end designer boutiques that flout branded designer clothes and fashion jewellery. This is where you can unburden your wealth for luxury brands like Boss, Hermes, and Gucci. As always, I pledged to do exactly this, the 'next time'.



TRAVEL THERAPY

It's a treasure...! The Turks nurtured them, the Romans enjoyed them, and the Hungarians have clung onto them. Among the city's wide and beautiful sweep of offerings, none have the cultural depth of its celebrated collection of some eighty thermal-spring baths and wells-the world's largest collection-a proud, opulent legacy of former times. Developed during the 16th and 17th Century Turkish occupation, the bath culture hasn't just survived through the ages, but actually flourished. It is today a mega industry in itself.

There's a spa for everyone. At one end of the spectrum are a host of famous old spas like the Racs, the Rudas, and the Kiraly, and at the other, baths from recent Hungarian times, notably the lavish Szechenyi Baths at the City Park, and the wonderful Art Nouveau Gellert Baths at the luxurious Gellert Hotel. But if there are purse-string compulsions, there are also public baths around where you can virtually take a 'five dollar dip'.

The Danube lends enormous character to the city. Located in its middle is an oasis cum sanctuary of forest, flowerbeds, manicured lawns, and elaborate sports facilities! Margaret Island is the perfect spot for a pleasant afternoon's diversion. I did the done-thing. Inhaled deeply and breathed in the pure air while keeping up a brisk pace.

In case you're wondering where the museums and galleries went, well, they're all there, almost two hundred

of them. Also animating the city are some 350 annual exhibitions, cinemas, concerts, and folklore programs and exhibitions.

Budapest is a city of seasons, with each season offering something. March sees the celebration of the lively Spring Festival; the summer rocks to the Budapest Fair and the Opera Festival; June sees the Festival of Music and the Bridge Festival and the Danube Water Carnival; August is given over to the Island Festival and the Jewish Summer Festival; September sees the Budapest International Wine & Sparkling Wine Festival; October stages the Autumn Festival; and December has the Budapest Christmas Fair.

Budapest by night...! Sunset spawns its own set of activities. Your dinner can be in the backdrop of saloon music, discrete piano music, or soft trumpet-playing.

Famous casinos such as Casino Budapest and the Varkert Casino, the opera, concerts at the Vigado, and assorted theatre, add meaning to the night. Café New York and the venerable Café Gerbeaud are grand icons of the glorious days of the Habsburgs rule of the Austro - Hungarian Empire. But nocturnal entertainment also flourishes at several less pretentious establishments strung across the city, digs where homemade Hungarian

cuisine and gypsy music rule, and where the waiters themselves join in the singing.

While mirroring its rich past, Budapest is very much a city of 'today'.

Travel Facts

- Budapest is Hungary's main areal gateway.
- From deluxe to standard and budget class, several hotels are available.
- Depending on your inclination and taste buds, eating out can be staid, adventurous or exciting. While there's plenty of traditional Hungarian food around, you can also opt for easy options at international outlets such as McDonalds.
- The city's a year-round destination, but if visiting in winter, don't forget to pack those woolens.
- Getting about can involve ten different means of transportation such as the metro, bus, tram, trolley bus, and HEV (suburban train). Several local sightseeing tours are available with spot bookings. The local tourist offices downtown, and at the airport, provide all information and tourist cards.

About the author

Inder Raj Ahluwalia is a world-renowned international travel journalist & author. His professional profile features awards from several European and Asian countries, among others.



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HEADS IN BEDS

A Maldivian reverie

At The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli, radiant sunsets meet oceanic splendour and bespoke indulgence

- *Misbah Mansuri*



HEADS IN BEDS

The seaplane ride was a prelude to something extraordinary. As it skimmed the cerulean waves, the island revealed itself, framed by the infinite hues of the Indian Ocean. At the dock, I was greeted by Mina, my butler, whose warm presence and meticulous attention made me feel instantly at ease. From the first step onto the shores of The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort, the world seemed to slow, aligning itself with the unhurried rhythm of this paradise.

Checking in paradise

My Sunset Overwater Villa felt like stepping into another realm. Polished oak interiors, soaring ceilings, and sweeping views of the ocean through glass walls enveloped me in serenity. Outside, the infinity pool mirrored the sky's palette, while a netted hammock stretched invitingly over the water, swaying gently in the breeze. As dusk approached, the horizon became a theater of light, with the sun melting into the sea in shades of amber, rose, and violet.

Opened in 2016 on the untouched island of Vommuli, The St. Regis Maldives occupies a coveted slice of paradise. The lush natural surroundings profoundly influenced the resort's design, crafted by Singapore-based WOW Architects | Warner Wong Design. Taking inspiration from the island's ecosystem, the architecture seamlessly blends with the landscape. Overwater villas are shaped like manta rays, their sleek forms crafted predominantly from cross-laminated wood, while the resort's remarkable library spirals gracefully into the sky, reminiscent of a cone shell.

The resort features 77 villas, each a harmonious blend of spacious luxury and natural elegance. On the lagoon, overwater villas open onto expansive wooden decks, complete with shimmering plunge pools, cabanas, and hammocks suspended over the crystal-clear sea. Steps lead directly into the ocean, offering an intimate connection with the water.

Beach villas, meanwhile, are strikingly A-framed, with soaring ceilings and sculptural pendant lights inspired by the shells



scattered along the shoreline. Bathrooms are a sanctuary in themselves, featuring illuminated sink basins, freestanding cocoon tubs, and both indoor and outdoor showers, shaded by swaying palms.

For families or those seeking unparalleled luxury, the John Jacob Astor Estate stands as the crown jewel. The largest three-bedroom overwater villa in the Maldives, it offers a private beach setup, a fully equipped kitchen, a personal gym, and three dedicated massage rooms. Mansion-like in scale and indulgence, it redefines the concept of tropical luxury.



HEADS IN BEDS

The food factor

Breakfast at Alba was a love letter to indulgence. The Thai omelet arrived, its delicate edges crisp and golden, filled with fresh herbs and a whisper of spice. It was paired with steamed jasmine rice, a comforting combination that felt deeply satisfying.

The croissants demanded attention—flaky, buttery layers that dissolved with each bite. Accompanied by honey sourced from Maldivian hives and a medley of tropical jams, they tasted of pure, unadulterated luxury.

During lunch at Alba, I ventured into unexpected territory with the spinach and ricotta agnolotti, nestled in a sage butter sauce and dotted with pine nuts and confit cherry tomatoes. The richness of the dish was perfectly balanced, its simplicity showcasing the finesse of the culinary team. The dessert—a signature chocolate fondant—was the star of the evening. The spoon cracked through its velvety shell, releasing a cascade of molten chocolate that pooled alongside a scoop of espresso ice cream. The interplay of textures and temperatures was indulgence perfected.

Evenings at the Whale Bar were transformative. Perched above the ocean, this iconic space shaped like a whale shark offered the best seat for nature's grand spectacle. With a refreshing martini in hand, I watched as the sun dipped below the horizon, setting the ocean ablaze with fiery hues. The ambience was effortlessly chic. Candlelight flickered against the teak floors, and the breeze carried the soft beats of music that felt perfectly in sync with the setting. It was the kind of moment that imprints itself in memory—a fleeting encounter with perfection.

Dinner at Orientale was a celebration of culinary storytelling. The Korean fried chicken arrived first, its golden crust glistening. The glaze was alchemy of sweetness, spice, and tang, coating each bite with a burst of flavor that lingered on the palate.

Nestled in the resort's tropical gardens, Cargo offered a dining experience steeped in warmth and authenticity. Lanterns illuminated the space, casting a golden glow that blended seamlessly with the



surrounding palms. The falafel was impossibly crisp, revealing a vibrant green interior perfumed with herbs and spices. The mixed grill, featuring marinated chicken and lamb, was tender, smoky, and deeply satisfying, its flavors heightened by a side of tangy yogurt. The kibbeh, rich with cinnamon and nutmeg, was both hearty and elegant. Every bite told a story of Middle Eastern heritage, reimagined with precision and care.

Opulent indulgences

The Iridium Spa at The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli was a sanctuary that seemed to float between earth and sky. My experience began in the Blue Hole hydrotherapy pool, a marvel of design and tranquility. Warm saltwater jets cascaded in varying intensities, their rhythmic pressure soothing every muscle and melting away tension. Suspended over the ocean, the pool offered more than just physical relief—it was an escape into the horizon, where the meeting of water and sky blurred into infinity. Floating weightlessly, with sunlight dappling the surface and waves whispering below, I felt a profound stillness, as if time had momentarily stopped.

The pinnacle of indulgence was the Champagne Toast Couple's Spa Treatment, a ritual as decadent as it was restorative. It began with a fragrant foot soak, the warm water laced with hints of citrus and floral notes, preparing the body for what followed. The massage was unlike any other—champagne-infused oil, light and sparkling, was worked into the skin with long, flowing strokes. The sensation was both invigorating and calming, as though the effervescence of the champagne was being absorbed, leaving behind a feeling of buoyancy.

The next step was a grape seed oil scrub, its fine granules polishing the skin to a luminous glow. The scrub's richness was balanced by the gentle scent of crushed grapes, adding a sensory depth to the treatment. Finally, a rose-petal bath awaited a vision of romance and tranquility. Warm water swirled with scarlet and blush petals, their delicate fragrance perfuming the air. I sank into the bath with a glass of chilled champagne in hand, my senses enveloped by the



HEADS IN BEDS

sound of waves and the sight of the endless ocean beyond.

As we emerged from the treatment, the feeling was one of renewal—not just of the body, but of the spirit. Walking back to my villa under the soft glow of lanterns, I felt lighter, as though the weight of the world had been left behind in the warm embrace of the spa.

Service and sustainability

The hallmark of any St. Regis property is its exceptional butler service, and The St. Regis Vommuli takes it to another level. From the moment I arrived, Mina, my butler, anticipated every need with effortless precision. A personalised butler video message greeted me at the airport lounge, setting the tone for a seamless experience. From unpacking my bags to arranging reservations and even settling my bill in the villa the night before an early seaplane departure, every detail was handled with grace. The staff across the island exuded a warm professionalism, their breezy demeanor perfectly suited to the relaxed yet refined environment of the resort.

The resort's commitment to sustainability is equally impressive. Solar panels installed above the beachside bar are a step toward reducing the island's reliance on generators, with plans to expand the initiative further to the staff quarters. Rooms are equipped with reusable glass bottles filled with water produced on the island itself, eliminating the need for single-use plastics. The resort also plans to replace imported water in its restaurants with its own supply, with proceeds directed toward funding coral restoration efforts.

The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli is designed to seduce the senses. As I lowered myself into the rose-petal bath, its warm, fragrant waters swirling around me, I felt utterly transported. Later, lounging on my villa's deck, the infinity pool shimmering before me, I found myself lulled into a blissful daze. Across the lagoon, a fellow guest caught my gaze. "Are you floating too?" she asked, a quiet smile playing on her lips. I nodded, raising my glass of champagne in silent affirmation, the horizon melting into endless hues of gold and rose.



TRAVEL THERAPY

Seychelles

Where every shore feels like home

From the iconic beaches to the vibrant culture and cuisine, my journey through Seychelles was a reminder that paradise is real—and it's waiting for you.

- *Naina Nath*



TRAVEL THERAPY

They say home is where the heart is, but what if your heart leaves a little piece behind wherever you wander? With the world as my playground, I'm a curious soul with a boundless passion for travel, and Seychelles captured me in a way I didn't expect. Having journeyed through 15 unique destinations, each with its own charm, Seychelles felt entirely different—like a dreamy paradise with perfect beaches, Indian-inspired flavours, and surreal blue waters. After my four-night stay in this 'Land of Perpetual Summer,' I realised that my definition of a beach vacation would never be the same.

Fly to a paradise!

For this trip, I flew via Emirates with a brief layover in Dubai. Though a five-hour wait may sound long, Dubai Airport's Terminal 3 offers plenty of activities and amenities that make the time fly by. While Air Seychelles offers a direct flight from Mumbai to Mahé once a week, we opted for Emirates to match our travel dates and schedule better. From Mumbai, it's

also possible to fly to Seychelles with other airlines such as Qatar Airways and Etihad, but these include layovers.

Island hopping in Seychelles

Seychelles is a tropical archipelago of 115 islands, though only about 40 are inhabited or accessible to visitors. The largest and most populated island, Mahé, hosts the capital, Victoria, and houses over three-quarters of the nation's 120,000 residents. Mahé is a lively tourism destination, featuring luxury resorts, lush landscapes, and sandy beaches. Beyond Mahé, islands such as Praslin and La Digue attract visitors for their unique beaches and biodiversity. Praslin's Vallée de Mai is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a primeval forest and unique flora, while La Digue's Anse Source d'Argent beach is an icon of natural beauty.

A short boat ride took me to Moyenne Island, a small but gorgeous piece of paradise that's part of the Sainte Anne Marine National Park. In just a few

minutes, I was transported to an untouched natural sanctuary, where giant tortoises roam freely, and the views were simply breath-taking. Here you can enjoy a Barbecue buffet at Jolly Roger bar and restaurant while locals perform the Moutya dance.

What you should know?

Seychelles is home to a diverse, Creole-based population with roots tracing back to African, Malagasy, French, Indian, and Chinese heritage. The primary

language is Seychellois Creole, but English and French are widely spoken. The local currency is the Seychellois Rupee (SCR), although US dollars are accepted almost everywhere. I found it handy to carry some cash in local currency for smaller purchases. The climate remains warm and humid year-round, with the cooler, drier months from May to October considered the best for travel. While I was there, the balmy temperatures and gentle sea breeze made each day feel idyllic.



A flavourful fusion

One of the best surprises in Seychelles was the food—a lively, flavourful Creole cuisine that felt right at home with my Indian palate. The spices, flavours, and textures were both comforting and full of character. I couldn't get enough of the Seychelles chilli; it's fiery but strangely addictive and somehow made every dish better. I found some fantastic spots that each had their own vibe: Bravo Restaurant on Mahé, with its stylish setting and mix of Creole and international dishes; Chez Jules on La Digue, a rustic spot where the seafood steals the show with its bold, local flavours; the classic Marie Antoinette Restaurant on Mahé, where I enjoyed traditional Creole food in a cosy, old-school setting; and Le Jardin Du Roi, tucked up in Mahé's hills with a spice garden that adds a fresh touch to the dishes, and the sweetest mother-son duo who run the show.

The Vallée de Mai

Vallée de Mai on Praslin Island is a truly magical spot, one that seems to have stopped in time. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is famous for its unique palm forest, rich biodiversity, and an atmosphere that's just surreal. To get here from Mahé, we took a short charter boat to Praslin, followed by a quick drive to the nature reserve. As you enter the forest, one of the first things to grab your attention is the Coco De Mer palm—the tree that produces the world's largest seed. This enormous, curiously shaped seed has long been tied to legends of fertility, adding a bit of mystery to the forest's appeal. It's fascinating to think how rare this seed is, and visitors from around the world come to see it in person.

Birdwatchers in particular are drawn to Vallée de Mai, hoping to catch a glimpse of the elusive black parrot, a bird that's only found on Praslin. It's quite a challenge to see even one, so imagine my surprise when we managed to spot five! The admission fee of SCR 450 goes toward conserving this ecologically priceless site, and I can say it's worth every bit for the experience!



Staying in Style

When it comes to luxury accommodations, Seychelles does not disappoint! The islands offer a range of places to stay, from secluded private islands to high-end resorts on Mahé. If you're in the mood to splurge, you can find a private island resort, where guests can bask in pristine nature reserves with sustainable luxury.

A stay to remember

Eden Bleu Hotel – Located on Eden Island, Eden Bleu is a modern property offering beautiful views of the marina, along with convenient access to a shopping arcade, casino, and a variety of bars and restaurants. With its upscale amenities, it's the perfect spot for anyone seeking a comfortable base near both the business district and scenic spots of Mahé.

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort & Casino – Located right on the famous Beau Vallon Bay, Berjaya has its own unique charm. With 232 rooms, a casino, and a variety of water activities in-house, the property feels like its own mini village along the beach. What I loved most was the convenience of walking straight from my room onto the sandy shore. A highlight here is the popular Indian Restaurant, talk about home grown!



Bringing a piece of Seychelles home

No trip feels complete without picking up a few souvenirs, and Seychelles definitely has some real gems! In Victoria, the capital city, I spent hours exploring Sir Selwyn Clarke Market, which has everything from fresh produce to spices and unique handicrafts. One of my favourite finds was the pure coconut oil, along with some natural soaps and Seychelles spices. These are the kind of things that capture the scents and flavours of the islands—perfect for bringing a little piece of Seychelles back home. Mahe has multiple mini-malls and shopping complexes where you can find beautiful jewellery, apparels, art, and Seychellois-made crafts. And if you're into perfumes, I highly recommend the Coco de Mer fragrances, which are inspired by the island's flora.

Adventures on the Water

The waters around Seychelles are absolutely breath-taking, both above and below the surface, and I had some of the best marine experiences here. For those who want a peek into the underwater world without getting wet, the semi-submarine tour was a great choice. I could watch schools of colourful fish and vibrant coral reefs through the glass without leaving the boat. These marine vessels stay above water, but their hulls are submerged to give you an epic view of the reefs below. For €55, the 60-minute ride lets you witness Seychelles' rich marine life.

Teddy's Glass-Bottom Boat for a full-day tour at the St. Anne National Marine Park. We did everything: fish feeding, snorkelling, a nature trail on Moyenne Island, and even a BBQ lunch. Snorkelling in Seychelles is unforgettable, even more so if, like me, you're not a strong swimmer. The warm, clear waters make it so easy, and with a life jacket, I felt totally comfortable. For over an hour, I floated along with fish of all colours, getting up close to the beautiful coral reefs. It was incredible to finally enjoy a water activity without feeling nervous—a total game-changer for me.

Exploring landmarks

Beyond the beaches, Seychelles houses cultural and historical landmarks that offer a deeper look into its storied past. L'Union Estate on La Digue is a living piece of Seychelles' history, with an old copra mill, colonial-style buildings, and lovely gardens. Nearby is Anse Source d'Argent, one of the most famous beaches with its massive granite boulders and powdery sand, a scene straight out of a postcard. Mission Lodge - High up in the hills of Mahé offers panoramic views and holds historical significance as a former plantation site. It's a serene spot, perfect for a photoshoot!

One of the highlights of my trip was a visit to Moyenne Island, a little piece of paradise with an interesting history. Since the 1970s, it's been a flora and fauna reserve, after having been abandoned for decades until Brendon Grimshaw purchased it in the 1960s. Legend has it that pirates used this island as a hideout, and today, you can still see two 'pirate graves' on the island. Moyenne Island is now the smallest national park in the world, offering big experiences!

And So... Seychelles captured my heart in ways I didn't expect— As I boarded my flight back, I couldn't help but reflect on the breath-taking beauty I had just witnessed, the new friendships I had made, and the unforgettable memories that would stay with me forever.



Messilah Beach

The beachfront nirvana



Nader Neishabouri

A standout luxury destination in Kuwait, Jumeirah Messilah Beach offers an exclusive experience that combines world-class facilities with a deep connection to local culture. Nader Neishabouri, General Manager, Jumeirah Messilah Beach shares his vision for the future of hospitality, where sustainability, technology, and memorable guest experiences will shape the industry.

- *Naina Nath*



HOTELLIGENCE

A unique seaside retreat

One of the most distinctive features of Jumeirah Messilah Beach is its rare beachfront location in Kuwait. As Nader explains, "We are the only luxury property in Kuwait with a beachfront, setting us apart from other corporate hotels in the region." The property has the largest inventory of rooms in the country, with 405 keys offering a range of accommodations from one-bedroom residences to spacious villas. This variation caters to a broad range of guests, from families to business travellers, ensuring that everyone can find their ideal retreat.

Fusion of Kuwaiti culture & design

The layout and design of Jumeirah Messilah Beach reflect the rich cultural heritage of Kuwait. The hotel's name, derived from the Arabic word 'Masiliya,' refers to the merging of water with the sea, a theme that is reflected throughout the property. The lobby and dining areas feature cascading waterfalls, and traditional Kuwaiti architectural elements such as Mashrabiya (a type of window) are incorporated into the rooms, bringing local design into the luxury experience.

Luxury living

Guests at Jumeirah Messilah Beach are spoiled for choice when it comes to accommodations. Nader says,

"Two of the most popular options are the duplexes and villas. The duplexes offer two-bedroom residences on two floors, complete with a kitchen, living room, and private terrace. The villas, available in three- and five-bedroom configurations, come with a private swimming pool, offering an added level of luxury and privacy."

Endless experiences

Jumeirah Messilah Beach is not just about luxury stays but also about providing guests with a range of activities to enjoy. Nader adds, "Families can take advantage of our extensive amenities, including a kids' club, a teen's club, and various recreational options such as a splash pool, family pool, and an infinity pool. Water sports enthusiasts will also appreciate the private 200-meter beach, which is accessible exclusively to hotel guests. The hotel's location makes it easy for guests to explore nearby shopping malls and attractions, with the airport just a ten minute drive away."

Booming business travel

As a key destination for business travellers, Jumeirah Messilah Beach offers a range of facilities tailored to corporate needs. "Our hotel is well-connected to Kuwait's oil and gas sector, attracting long-term business guests from major international companies such as

Shell, BP, and Chevron," says Nader. For corporate guests, the property offers a mix of meeting spaces, including intimate boardrooms and large conference areas. The Messilah ballroom, with a capacity to host up to 500 guests, is a prime example of the hotel's ability to cater to both large-scale events and smaller corporate gatherings.

India and Beyond

Although India is not yet one of Jumeirah Messilah Beach's top five source markets, Nader points out that it is a rapidly growing market and shares, "We've seen an 85 per cent growth in Indian visitors from 2023 to 2024. With direct flights now available from India and the growing connectivity between India and Kuwait, the potential for the Indian market is substantial. We are also keen to cater to Indian weddings, with its expansive event spaces, including the Badria ballroom, which can accommodate up to 2,500 guests."

A taste of India

Nader shares, "Indian guests will feel right at home at Jumeirah Messilah Beach, as nearly 70 per cent of the hotel's culinary team hails from India. The hotel offers authentic Indian dishes, including famous staples such as Chicken Tikka Masala and Biryani, which are particularly popular among Indian guests. Despite Kuwait's status as a dry

(non-alcoholic) country, Jumeirah Messilah Beach ensures that Indian guests feel welcomed with a range of Indian food offerings, particularly in the breakfast buffet."

Green Goals

This commitment to sustainability reflects Jumeirah's broader goal of being a responsible neighbour and contributing positively to the community. Sustainability is a key focus, with the hotel working toward eliminating single-use plastic by early 2025. "We are actively involved in reducing food wastage, partnering with local charities to repurpose surplus food," says Nader. Looking ahead, Jumeirah's 'Mission 2030' strategy is focused on global expansion, with Jumeirah Group planning to grow its presence in Europe, America, and potentially India. Building on its strong track record in the UAE, the brand is optimistic about achieving similar success internationally.

Jumeirah Messilah Beach is more than just a luxury stay—it's a blend of modern comforts and Kuwaiti culture. With its unique beachfront location, diverse accommodation options, exceptional facilities, and growing international appeal, it's ready to welcome travellers from around the world, including an increasing number from India. As Jumeirah's reach broadens, the future of this remarkable property is full of promise.



Turtle Down Under

*Elevating
the game of
travelling*

Empowering travel agents and elevating experiences across Australia and New Zealand. Abhishek Sonthalia, Founder, Turtle Down Under shares his journey, challenges, and plans for the future.

- Naina Nath



In just eight years, Turtle Down Under has established itself as a leading DMC for Australia and New Zealand in the Indian market. Founded by Abhishek Sonthalia, the company's mission has always been to offer Indian travellers unique, customisable experiences across these diverse destinations while making travel planning easier and more efficient. With a range of services from leisure travel, MICE, and event management, Turtle Down Under has evolved from a travel facilitator to a comprehensive solutions provider, quickly becoming a trusted partner for travel agents across India and beyond.

The roots of Turtle Down Under

For Abhishek, the idea for Turtle Down Under emerged from his desire to bring the wonders of Australia and New Zealand closer to Indian travellers. "The landscapes, cultures, and adventure opportunities in these countries are unmatched," he says, explaining the inspiration behind launching the company. He adds, "These countries offer such a wide variety of experiences—beaches, rainforests, mountains—there's something for everyone. I saw a gap in the Indian market. Despite being comparable in cost to Europe, Australia and New Zealand were underexplored by Indian travellers."

Starting out as a travel service provider, Turtle Down Under has extended its offerings to include comprehensive packages, MICE events, and tailored group tours. He shares, "We've expanded our services to meet the changing needs of our clients. Now, we're not just helping agents plan holidays; we're managing large-scale events like CREDAI NATCON 2024. Our aim has always been to empower travel agents and with the introduction of monthly webinars and new online booking options, we're making it easier for them to serve their clients while increasing their knowledge."

Building lasting relationships

In today's competitive travel industry, maintaining strong client relationships is the key to sustained growth. With a client base across six countries, including India, Malaysia,

and the Philippines, Turtle Down Under has made relationship-building its top priority. Abhishek says, "Trust is the foundation of everything we do. We focus on providing personalized service, competitive pricing, and exclusive deals, ensuring that our partners feel supported every step of the way."

By focusing on tailored solutions and regularly engaging with travel agents, Turtle Down Under has successfully built a loyal clientele. He adds, "It's not just about offering the right products; it's about listening to feedback and adapting. We stay connected with our partners, and that helps us grow together."

SHELL: A game changer

One of the company's most significant innovations is its proprietary platform, SHELL, designed to streamline the process of planning and booking travel. Abhishek explains, "SHELL is something we're incredibly proud of, it allows agents to create customised itineraries in real time with instant access to pricing, availability, and promotions. This not only saves time but ensures accuracy and speed."

But SHELL isn't just about speed—it's about personalisation. "The platform uses data to suggest itineraries based on market preferences and travel patterns, so agents don't have to start from scratch each time. This means faster, more accurate service for clients," he adds. Looking ahead, SHELL is set for an upgrade. "We're adding features that will allow agents to book car rentals, activities, and transfers in real time, making travel planning even more flexible and seamless," he reveals. With this expansion, SHELL promises to make travel planning as hassle-free as possible for both agents and their clients.

A core focus

As the global travel industry faces increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices, Turtle Down Under is committed to minimising its environmental impact. Abhishek explains, "Sustainability isn't just a trend; it's a responsibility we take seriously. From promoting

eco-friendly experiences like wildlife sanctuaries and conservation tours to encouraging travel to lesser-known destinations, we're doing our part to reduce the environmental footprint of tourism." The company is also implementing green practices within its event management services. "For example, we partner with venues and suppliers that focus on reducing waste, using less plastic, and offsetting carbon emissions. Sustainability is a core part of our philosophy, and we're constantly exploring new ways to integrate these values into our offerings," he adds.

Growth plans and new markets

Looking to the future, Abhishek is focused on expanding Turtle Down Under's presence in Southeast Asia while continuing to enhance its MICE services. "We've seen great success with large-scale events, and we want to build on that momentum," he says. Although the company is committed to Australia and New Zealand for now, Abhishek sees potential for further growth in new markets in the future.

India remains a key market, while the company continues to strengthen its relationships with Indian travel agents. "We've been active in India through trade events, roadshows, and training programs," says Abhishek. "In the coming year, we plan to enhance our engagement with more interactive workshops and webinars, helping agents navigate new travel trends."

Big thanks to Indian partners

India has been one of Turtle Down Under's most significant markets, and Abhishek acknowledges this with deep appreciation. He shares, "To all our partners in India, thank you for your trust and collaboration. You've been integral to our journey, and we are committed to supporting you with the best travel solutions." The company is actively working with tourism boards and suppliers to design innovative itineraries and experiences tailored to evolving preferences. "We look forward to building more successful ventures together, helping you offer exceptional travel options for your clients," concludes Abhishek.

Ras Al Khaimah's luxury with Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island

As Ras Al Khaimah rapidly emerges as a premier destination in the UAE, Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island has carved a niche, combining style, sustainability, and personalised experiences. Fabien Chesnais, General Manager, Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island, reveals how the resort is redefining travel, luxury, and weddings in Ras Al Khaimah

- *Naina Nath*

Fabien Chesnais



A Destination on the Rise

The UAE's tourism sector continues flourishing, with Ras Al Khaimah leading the way in sustainable travel. Fabien highlights the emirate's dedication to eco-friendly tourism and shares, "Ras Al Khaimah is a prime destination for those seeking beautiful beach resorts and exciting adventures. Recent investments in hospitality and infrastructure make Ras Al Khaimah a go-to for luxury and adventure, attracting visitors who value both comfort and sustainability."

Love for authentic experiences

India continues to be a critical source market for the UAE, and Ras Al Khaimah has tailored its appeal to Indian travellers. Fabien shares, "Indian luxury travellers are increasingly shifting towards experiences where luxury feels authentic. Whether for FITs seeking cultural exploration or wedding planners who desire top-tier venues, our offerings ensure that Indian guests enjoy personalised, memorable stays." He adds highlighting the resort's commitment to creating meaningful connections with Indian guests, "We're noticing a strong demand for bespoke, tailored experiences that resonate with travellers."

Celebrations with a View

This festive season, Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island is going all out. New Year's Eve promises an unforgettable celebration, with guests enjoying a front-row panoramic view of Marjan Island's Guinness World Record-breaking fireworks from NEO, the resort's rooftop bar. Fabien mentions, "We're here to make celebrations truly memorable. With exclusive DJ performances at the Sand & Sound Ula RAK Music Festival and winter-themed galas, every detail is curated for a festive holiday. Our newly enhanced FamEx program

also brings special touches for families, ensuring every guest finds joy this season."

Beyond the Resort

With its prime location, Mövenpick makes it easy for guests to dive into Ras Al Khaimah's best attractions. Thrill-seekers can get their adrenaline fix on the Jebel Jais Zipline, while history buffs can explore the region's heritage at the National Museum. Fabien shares, "Our Neo Sky Bar, the highest rooftop in Ras Al Khaimah, invites guests to unwind with Mediterranean fusion tapas and breathtaking views. Whether it's beachside fun or cultural excursions, we provide a well-rounded experience for all kinds of travellers."

A Journey in Luxury

Since its launch in 2022, Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island has gained numerous accolades, securing its place in Ras Al Khaimah's luxury market. Awards such as the Travel Daily Media Award for Best Family Resort in the UAE and multiple recognitions from the World Luxury Hotel Awards highlight the resort's dedication to excellence. Fabien reflects, pointing to the resort's quick adaptation to traveller preferences and a commitment to delivering exceptional service and says, "Agility is key."

Wedding dreams come true

Ras Al Khaimah has transformed into a dream wedding destination, with Mövenpick offering a range of beautiful venues. The Jais Ballroom, with its spacious, pillar-free layout, is perfect for grand celebrations, while the 300-meter private beach offers a picturesque setting for beachfront ceremonies. Fabien says, "Our versatile venues make it easy for every couple to find their ideal backdrop. We also cater to Indian weddings with personalised services, from Bollywood-style sangeet nights to colourful haldi

setups, making it a go-to choice for Indian wedding planners."

MICE and Indian event planners

The resort's spacious 530-square-meter Jais Ballroom is perfect for large corporate events and weddings, while the private beach and landscaped outdoor areas provide flexible options for any event. Mövenpick's skilled planning team makes sure MICE groups and Indian wedding planners experience smooth, well-organised events. Fabien shares, "We balance luxury with functionality. For downtime, guests can enjoy the Citrine Day Spa, while families have fun at the Wubit floating water park, making the resort a comprehensive choice for both leisure and business visitors."

Wellness and creative ventures

The resort is gearing up to introduce new wellness offerings and events, including the Sand & Sound Ula RAK Music Festival. Fabien hints at upcoming collaborations with Indian artists and influencers, aiming to attract a creative, high-profile crowd and says, "These initiatives position Mövenpick as a hub for both relaxation and large-scale events. This vision reflects Mövenpick's commitment to keeping Ras Al Khaimah at the forefront of luxury tourism, with experiences tailored to an international, discerning audience."

"At Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island, we pride ourselves on delivering experiences that resonate deeply with the Indian traveller. Whether it's a destination wedding on our beach, a corporate event, or a family vacation, we provide a luxurious, personalised experience for all. With stunning landscapes and thoughtful offerings, Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island is ready to welcome travellers from India and beyond, making every stay truly special," concludes Fabien.

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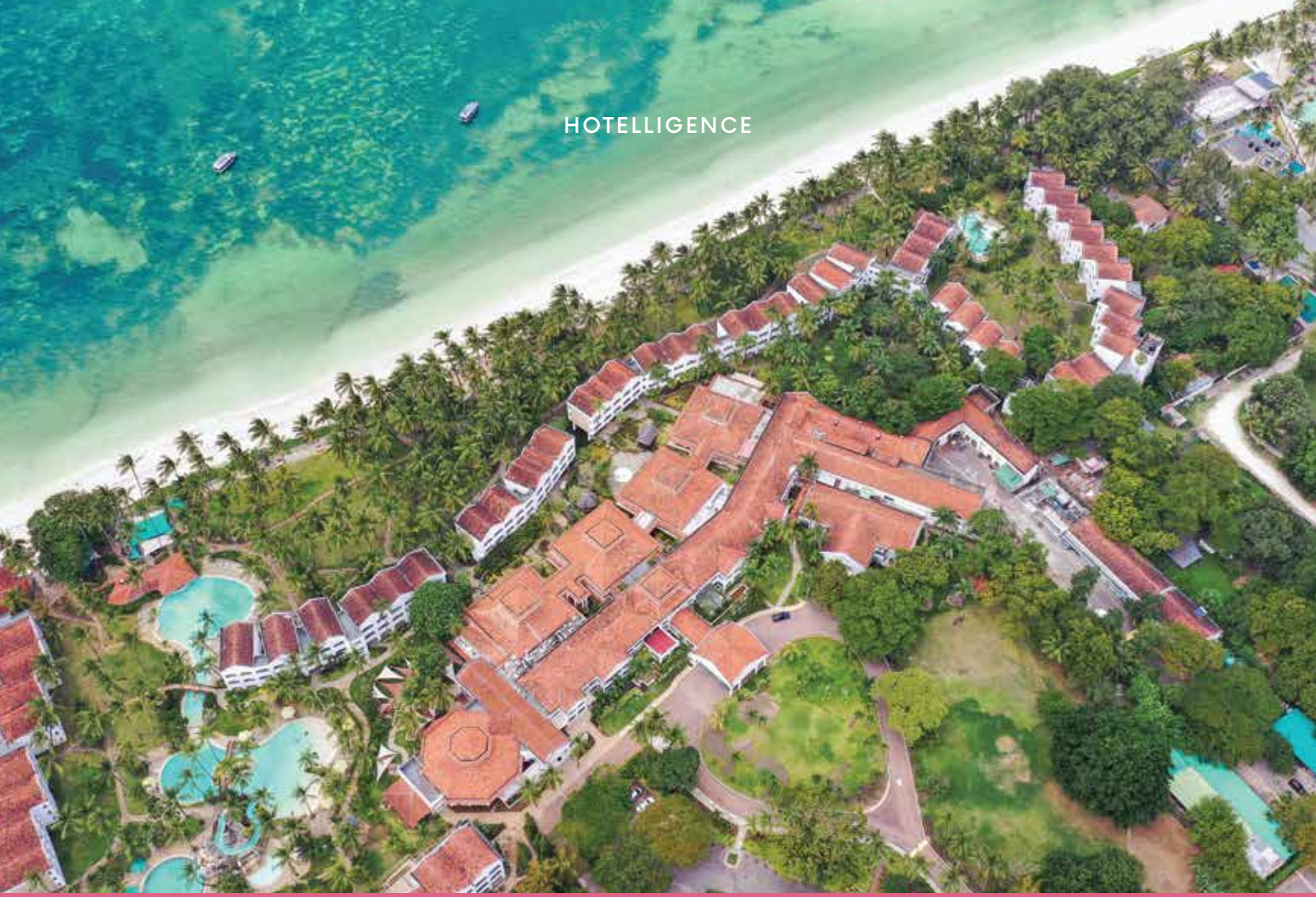
SAROVA HOTELS

WHERE KENYAN HOSPITALITY MEETS INDIAN WARMTH

Sarova Hotels & Resorts, one of Kenya's top hospitality brands, is strengthening its foothold in the Indian market through targeted strategies. Mita Vohra, Board Director, Sarova Hotels shares insights into Sarova's growth strategies, their plans for expansion, and the personalised experiences they offer Indian travellers.

-Naina Nath





Discover the elegance of Sarova Hotels, where timeless luxury meets authentic hospitality. With every stay, experience a seamless blend of comfort, culture, and the finest services across iconic destinations. Known for its diverse range of luxurious properties across Kenya, has long recognised India as a key market.

Building strong bonds

Sarova's relationship with the Indian market is not recent—it's built on a foundation of decades of trust and engagement. Mita shares, "We were the first from Kenya to actively target India. This connection goes beyond business. Most of us in the company are Indian, and we have a Kenyan partner. This market has been significant for many years."

The growing importance of India is evident in Sarova's marketing efforts, including increased participation in various roadshows across key Indian cities. She adds, "We have taken our marketing to another level in recent years, and the results have been extremely rewarding. Sarova's focus on India is not just about numbers—it's about a genuine affinity for the culture, showcased by frequent visits to India by the Sarova team."

Reaching new markets

Sarova is taking a data-driven approach to reach new customers,

especially in India's Tier II and Tier III cities. Mita emphasises that Sarova's expansion efforts have already included several Tier II cities, with plans to penetrate further into untapped markets. Speaking on the same lines she shares, "We use our own data and our reps' insights to decide which cities to target. Every visit is carefully planned to ensure the best results. Cities such as Ahmedabad and Bangalore have been part of recent roadshows, and more cities are expected to be added to the list in the future."

Revitalising iconic properties

Sarova's commitment to enhancing its properties remains a key focus. The Pan-Afric Hotel in Nairobi, one of the group's flagship properties, has undergone extensive renovations during the pandemic. We renovated 100 rooms and are currently building a stunning rooftop hub with multiple dining experiences. This project is expected to transform the property, with plans for more renovations across our portfolio."

Another significant property in their portfolio is the White Sands Hotel, a

beachfront resort with 337 rooms and suites. The hotel played a crucial role in hosting government conferences during the pandemic, and now it is receiving much-needed updates to enhance the guest experience. Additionally, Sarova has added a new property, Sarova Mayan, in the Mount Kenya region, further diversifying its offerings for luxury travellers.

At the Masai Mara, Sarova's luxury tents have been fully renovated, offering guests an exclusive safari experience. The new club lounge area is a standout feature, providing



HOTELLIGENCE



MITA VOHRA

personalised service, dining, and an intimate space to relax. Mita adds, "The feedback from our guests has

been phenomenal, and we plan to continue upgrading other properties."

Catering to Indian tastes

Understanding the unique preferences of Indian travellers, Sarova has tailored its offerings to ensure a comfortable and culturally resonant experience. With six Indian chefs across their properties, the group ensures that Indian cuisine is always available, including specialised Jain food and other dietary requirements. Mita shares, "Food is a huge part of the experience for our Indian guests, and we make sure it's taken care of that. Indian travellers can expect personalised menus, with Sarova's chefs ready to cater to any special requests."

Dream weddings and seamless events

Kenya's diverse landscapes and Sarova's expansive properties make it an ideal location for destination weddings. The White Sands Hotel and Sarova Stanley offer picturesque venues, perfect for grand celebrations. Sarova's experience in handling state banquets and high-profile events ensures that they can cater to both intimate and large-scale weddings. Mita shares, "We have invested in technology that allows wedding planners to visualise their entire venue, and this will be a game-changer for us. Sarova's expertise also extends to organising events in unique locations, such as national parks and forests, which

add a special touch to MICE events and weddings."

Sustainability at the core

Sustainability is at the core of Sarova's operations. From tree planting initiatives to supporting local communities, Sarova integrates eco-friendly practices into its properties. Mita shares, "Each of our units handles sustainability differently, but it's always a priority. Sarova has organic gardens at all its properties, allowing guests to enjoy fresh, homegrown produce." Sarova's lodges, particularly those in wildlife-rich areas such as the Masai Mara and Nakuru, work closely with local communities to preserve the environment and protect wildlife. The company also provides support during droughts and ensures access to healthcare for nearby communities. This holistic approach to sustainability not only preserves Kenya's natural beauty but also uplifts the people who call it home.

A promising future

As Sarova celebrates its 50th anniversary, the brand is looking forward to continued growth and expansion. With plans to further expand in the Indian market, upgrade more properties, and deepen its sustainability initiatives, Sarova Hotels & Resorts is set to continue its legacy as a leading name in Kenyan hospitality.



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TOFTigers, in partnership with The Sanctuary Nature Foundation and Outlook Traveller, announces the 7th Wildlife Tourism Awards. Under the theme *"Celebrating Harmony: Fostering Sustainable Wildlife Tourism through Innovation and Collaboration,"* the Awards recognize eco-lodges, wildlife guides, tourism operators, community initiatives, photography & documentary experts and Climate guardians in India and Nepal for their leadership in sustainable tourism and conservation. *With over 200 global members,* TOFTigers continues to drive a vision where tourism actively supports the preservation of wildlife and natural heritage.

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2. The Billy Arjan Singh Memorial Award for Wildlife Guide (Awards will be given in four regional categories - North, West, East, South)
3. Wildlife Promotion Company Award
4. Wildlife Tourism Community Initiative Award
5. Wildlife and Tourism Initiative Award
6. International Wildlife Tour Operator Award
7. Lodge Naturalist Award
8. Wildlife Conservation Photography Award
9. Wildlife Conservation Documentary Award
10. Wildlife Harmony Homestay Award
11. Kailash Sankhala Visitor Friendly Wildlife National Park Award
12. Sanctuary Asia Award for "Best State for Sustainable Wildlife Tourism."
13. Climate Guardian Award

For Further information visit:

www.toftigers.org/WildlifeTourismAwards

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TOFTigers is formed in 2004, galvanising those most active in the Indian nature travel industry to promote best operating practices. TOFTigers engages with global travel and tourism operators, Indian destination management companies and local wildlife lodges and resorts helping them all adopt practices that promote sustainable business, community support and tiger conservation. By doing so TOFTigers not only helps support the tigers, the parks and local communities, but also helps these companies provide their clients with a more inspired, fulfilling and enjoyable experience. A true 'win-win' scenario.

The Sanctuary TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Awards are a celebration of what has been achieved so far, and perhaps more importantly, are an inspiration for what can be done in the future.



I LOVE JAPAN

Authentic journeys through Japan

I LOVE JAPAN, a passion-driven initiative of RN Tours & Travels, is reshaping the way Indian travelers explore Japan. Pranay Nath, Director, I LOVE JAPAN shares how tailor-made experiences and unique destinations redefine Indian travellers' exploration of Japan.

- Naina Nath

Fabien Chesnais



With a focus on authenticity, unique destinations, and personalised experiences, the company takes guests beyond the well-known Golden Route to uncover Japan's hidden treasures. Pranay offers insights into their unique offerings, commitment to sustainability, and the latest trends in Japanese tourism.

The real Japan

When asked what sets ILOVEJAPAN apart, Pranay highlights the company's commitment to showing guests the 'real' Japan. He explains, "We're not just offering typical tourist spots. We take our guests to destinations that are off the beaten path, often places that have never been explored by Indian tourists." ILOVEJAPAN offers a deep dive into the length and breadth of Japan, from bustling cities to quiet villages, offering experiences that focus on local culture, natural beauty, and gastronomy. The company's strong community connections help ensure a more authentic and meaningful experience. "It's not just about visiting Japan; it's about experiencing it as the locals do," adds Pranay.

Hidden gems and timeless beauty

ILOVEJAPAN's recommendations focus on both well-loved cities and undiscovered locales. Pranay shares, "Takayama, in Gifu Prefecture, is one of our personal favourites. Tucked away under the Japanese Alps, this charming town offers a glimpse into traditional Japan with its well-preserved Edo-period streets. Other must-visit spots include Kanazawa, a city known for its beautiful gardens and historical districts, and Sendai, in Japan's northern region, offering both nature and culture."

For those seeking peace and beauty, Otaru and Jozankei are top picks. He adds, "These destinations may not be on every

tourist's radar, but they hold immense charm. One unique experience we always recommend is visiting an Edo-period village. These villages, scattered across Japan, offer an incredible sense of authenticity. You'll find beautiful souvenirs and stories to take home."

Designing the perfect experience

ILOVEJAPAN's approach to tailoring services is based on clear communication and attention to individual preferences. Pranay explains, "We ensure that the conversation between the agent and customer is detailed—understanding their travel goals, must-see sights, and the experiences they're looking for. Based on these insights, our team curates itineraries that blend the traveller's wishes with their expert recommendations based on their deep knowledge of Japan. Whether it's a family vacation, honeymoon, or cultural exploration, we customise each trip to suit the traveller's needs, ensuring every client has a unique and enriching experience."

A core principle

Sustainability plays a central role in ILOVEJAPAN's offerings. Pranay shares, "We believe that traveling to Japan itself is an experience that can inspire change in our guests. Japan's high standards of living, peace, and humility are qualities that can motivate travellers to adopt more sustainable and mindful lifestyles."

ILOVEJAPAN is committed to promoting these values by offering experiences that are not only eco-friendly but also culturally enriching, helping visitors connect with Japan's philosophy of respect for nature.

What's new and exciting?

Traveller preferences have evolved, with many now seeking more offbeat, authentic experiences. Pranay mentions,

"The latest trend we're seeing is food tours and visits to maid cafes, two distinctly Japanese experiences. We cater to this trend, organising culinary tours that introduce guests to Japan's rich food culture—an experience that's as immersive as it is delicious. We're noticing that travellers are no longer just interested in the major cities or traditional sightseeing. They want to experience Japan for what it truly is."

What's next for ILOVEJAPAN?

ILOVEJAPAN is constantly evolving to meet the needs of modern travellers. Pranay shares that they are in the process of expanding, with plans to open new offices across Japan. He says, "This expansion will help us connect with even more destinations and offer more personalised services. Additionally, we are working on an online platform, making it easier for travellers and agents to access their services and expertise. Another exciting development is our training module aims at educating travel agents about Japan. Our goal is to spread knowledge and excitement about Japan as a destination."

A personal invitation

ILOVEJAPAN was created by Pranay and his wife Neha, both of whom are deeply passionate about the country. "We've been mesmerised by Japan's beauty, culture, and hospitality," Pranay shares. "Our mission is to share this passion and show travellers that Japan is much more than an 'official' destination. It's a place of inspiration, culture, and endless discovery."

With their personal touch and commitment to creating unforgettable travel experiences, ILOVEJAPAN invites Indian travellers to see Japan not just as a tourist destination, but as a place that offers endless possibilities for discovery and personal growth.

Experience the magic of Amboseli

Ol Tukai Lodge

Nestled in the heart of Amboseli National Park in Kenya, Ol Tukai Lodge is more than just a safari lodge—it's a gateway to unparalleled views, breath-taking wildlife encounters, and authentic African experiences. Kumar Dhall, Operations Manager, Ol Tukai Lodge share insights about this unique destination.

- *Bharti Sharma*



With Mount Kilimanjaro as its iconic backdrop, Ol Tukai offers an exclusive opportunity to connect with nature while enjoying luxurious comfort. The magic of this unique destination and its rising appeal among global travellers, including a growing Indian audience is commendable.

A jewel in the wilderness

Unlike most lodges in Amboseli, Ol Tukai is uniquely positioned within the national park itself. This offers guests the rare privilege of being surrounded by wildlife at all hours of the day, set against the majestic silhouette of Mount Kilimanjaro. Kumar says, "The views here are truly unmatched. We're the only lodge located inside the park, which means you wake up to the sight of elephants roaming against the backdrop of Africa's tallest mountain. That's an experience you simply won't get elsewhere." From the lodge's vantage points, guests can spot elephants, lions, and vibrant bird species, including the striking pink flamingos that have migrated here from Lake Nakuru. It's a setting that feels almost mythical, blending natural beauty with an unbroken connection to the wild.

Rising appeal among Indian travellers

While Ol Tukai has long been a favourite among U.S., European, and Kenyan travellers, recent years have seen a surge in visitors from India. This emerging market has been a pleasant surprise for the lodge's team, as Indian travellers increasingly explore safari destinations.

He shares, "In 2022, we noticed a dramatic rise in Indian visitors. They weren't even in our top 10 markets before that, but now they've become our sixth largest source of guests. It's incredible to see this growth, and we've worked hard to cater to their unique preferences."

To make Indian guests feel at home, the lodge has brought in a dedicated Indian chef who crafts authentic vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, often tailored to individual tastes. Guests are treated to hearty Indian

meals alongside the international buffet, a touch that has earned rave reviews.

Amboseli: Beyond the Maasai Mara

For many Indian travellers, Kenya is synonymous with the Maasai Mara. However, Ol Tukai is making strides to shine a light on Amboseli as an equally compelling destination.

Kumar explains, "The Mara is fantastic, but Amboseli offers a completely different experience. The park is smaller—just 200 square kilometres—so in two to three days, you can explore the entire area. Plus, the animal sightings here are unparalleled. From majestic elephants to nocturnal cats, you see it all."

Amboseli also boasts a unique feature: the underground springs fed by Kilimanjaro's melting glaciers. These springs create lush habitats within the park, attracting an abundance of wildlife and making it a photographer's paradise. The park's iconic Observation Hill offers panoramic views, where guests can enjoy sun downers amidst this natural wonder.



A commitment to sustainability

Ol Tukai's ethos extends beyond hospitality. The lodge is deeply invested in the well-being of the local Maasai community and the conservation of Amboseli's ecosystem.

"Thirty-five per cent of our staff is from the Maasai community, and we work closely with them to ensure sustainable development. We also support two local schools by providing daily meals for the children. It's about giving back to the community that makes Amboseli so special," says Kumar. The lodge organises health camps in collaboration with UK-based doctors, offering much-needed medical care to Maasai families. Guests can also visit Maasai villages, an experience that not only supports the community financially but fosters cultural exchange.

Sustainability is a cornerstone of Ol Tukai's operations. They've planted 50 acres of trees and installed a solar plant, reducing their reliance on diesel generators. He adds, "By next year, we aim to double our solar capacity. Conservation is at the heart of what we do."

Unforgettable safari experiences

For guests at Ol Tukai, every day is an adventure. Game drives take visitors deep into Amboseli's heart, where lions, elephants, zebras, and wildebeest roam freely. Night safaris offer a glimpse into the park's nocturnal wonders, revealing elusive cats and the mysterious behaviours of herbivores under the moonlight. Kumar says with a smile, "One of our most cherished experiences is the sun downer at Observation Hill. Imagine sitting on a hilltop, watching the sun dip below the horizon while flamingos wade in the lake below. It's pure magic."

For those seeking more, the lodge organises picnics, bird watching tours, and even guided walks around its grounds. Each activity is carefully curated to offer guests a deeper connection to Amboseli's natural and cultural treasures.

Amboseli should be your next destination

Amboseli's accessibility is another draw. Just a four-hour drive from Nairobi, it's an easy addition to any Kenyan itinerary. For travellers looking to mix business with leisure, Ol Tukai partners with its sister property in Nairobi, Eka Hotel, which caters to larger groups and corporate events.

Kumar shares, "Amboseli offers the perfect balance of adventure and relaxation. You don't just see the wildlife—you feel part of it. And with our efforts to make every guest's stay special, it's a destination that leaves a lasting impression."

The spirit of Ol Tukai

Ol Tukai Lodge is more than a place to stay; it's a testament to the harmony between people, wildlife, and the environment. Whether you're watching elephants graze with Kilimanjaro towering in the background or engaging with the Maasai community, every moment at Ol Tukai is filled with wonder.

So, if you're dreaming of an African adventure, let Ol Tukai Lodge show you the heart of Amboseli—a destination where the wild comes alive in the most extraordinary ways.



A grand celebration of heritage and hospitality by Taj and IATO

The India Evening, jointly organised by Taj Hotels and the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), was a spectacular celebration of India's rich heritage and vibrant culture. Hosted by Mehrnavaz Avari, Area Director, UK, and Parveen Chander Kumar, Executive Vice President – Commercial, the event took place at St. James' Court, a Taj Hotel, during the World Travel Market London. Bringing together the Indian travel fraternity and global industry leaders, the evening showcased the iconic hospitality of Taj, complemented by IATO's dedication to promoting Indian tourism.



WTM 2024 redefining global tourism trends

The World Travel Market (WTM) 2024, held in London, brought together tourism leaders, innovators, and stakeholders from across the globe, showcasing the future of travel under the theme of sustainability, technology, and inclusivity. The event saw ground-breaking discussions on reshaping travel experiences, emphasising eco-conscious tourism, and leveraging digital innovations to enhance connectivity. Destinations such as India, Türkiye, and the UAE spotlighted their unique offerings, while new players such as emerging African and Central Asian markets captured attention. The conference's dynamic panels and networking sessions provided a platform to forge partnerships and discuss the evolving traveller mind-set.



California Game On! Brings Delhi trade industry together

The 'California Game On!' event, hosted by Visit California in Delhi, provided an engaging platform to highlight the latest updates on California's offerings. The program included interactive media sessions and an overview of 'What's New' in the Golden State. The event concluded with a high-tea session, fostering meaningful networking opportunities for the Delhi trade industry, creating connections, and paving the way for future collaborations.



Lux Hotels & Resorts hosts meet & greet in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore

Lux Hotels & Resorts successfully hosted a series of meet-and-greet events in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, inviting their trusted partners who have played a pivotal role in the brand's growth. These exclusive gatherings celebrated the strong relationships with their Indian collaborators while offering a platform to share the brand's exciting future plans. During the event, Lux Hotels & Resorts unveiled their expansion strategy, announcing new properties in emerging destinations, including Vietnam, further solidifying their global footprint.



Arunachal's adventure tourism potential shines at ATOAI's pre-convention event

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) hosts an inspiring Curtain Raiser for its 16th Annual Convention in New Delhi, setting the stage for an extraordinary event scheduled to take place in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, from December 3 to 8, 2024. This event highlighted Arunachal Pradesh's vast potential as a global adventure tourism hub while emphasising ATOAI's commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism practices.



David Warner welcomes Indian travellers to Australia

Tourism Australia released a new social content series starring former Australian cricketer David Warner which showcases some of his favourite Australian holiday destinations and experiences in Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast. The four-part series, to feature on Tourism Australia's Instagram account, @australia, was launched in India just weeks out from the start of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The five Test series between Australia and India began in Perth, Western Australia on 22 November 2024.



Women in Aviation India Awards 2024

In a celebration of vision, determination, and achievement, the Ministry of Civil Aviation proudly hosted the Women in Aviation India Awards 2024 at Aerocity, New Delhi. With the theme 'Giving Wings to Dreams,' this remarkable event paid tribute to the trailblazing women who have not only broken barriers but also inspired future generations to dream and achieve beyond limits.



Sapporo City and ANA hosts networking event in Delhi & Mumbai

In collaboration with Global Destinations, Sapporo City and All Nippon Airways (ANA) hosted a networking event in Delhi and Mumbai, to strengthen ties between India and Japan and promote Sapporo as a key destination for Indian travellers. The event brought together industry leaders to showcase Sapporo's unique attractions, cultural experiences, and seasonal appeal and highlight ANA's seamless connectivity to the region and upcoming collaborations, including an Aamir Khan film shot in Hokkaido, aimed at increasing Indian interest in the region.



APPOINTMENTS



Tamil Nadu Tourism

Ms Shilpa Prabhakar Satish, a 2009 batch IAS officer, has been appointed as the new Director of Tourism for Tamil Nadu. She will also serve as the Managing Director of the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC), a key role in advancing the state's thriving tourism sector. Her appointment underscores the government's focus on revitalising tourism to boost the economy. Before this, she served as Joint Secretary in the Department of Public Welfare and Family Welfare.

IRIS Reps

IRIS Reps announces the appointment of Mr Sunil Nair as the new Sales & Marketing Head for South India. With over 30 years of exceptional leadership in aviation and leisure travel, Mr Nair has been a key player at industry giants such as Jet Airways, Gulf Air, Revel Tours, and Kanoo Travels, where he pioneered innovative strategies that transformed customer experiences and boosted revenue growth.



Hyatt Place Aurangabad Airport

Hyatt Place Aurangabad Airport has appointed Joshua D'mello as Assistant General Manager. In this pivotal role, Joshua will lead the hotel's operational efforts, offering exceptional guest experience while ensuring that the property meets the high standards associated with the Hyatt brand.

Leela Ambience Convention Hotel

Prior to joining The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel Delhi, Singh served as the general manager at Aurika, Mumbai Skycity, India's Largest inventory hotel where his leadership played a pivotal role in launching the hotel in 2023, setting it up successfully for operations and strengthening the brand's presence in the competitive market of Andheri (East) Mumbai.



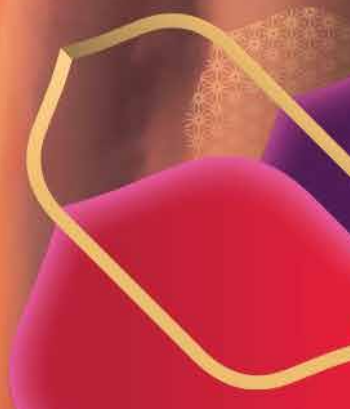
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