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# *Journey into* **New Destinations**

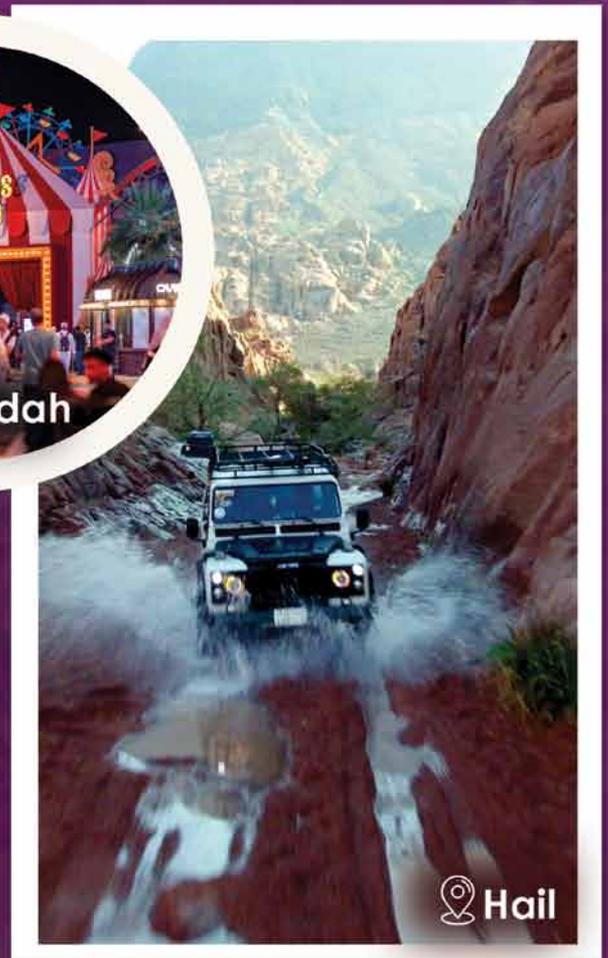


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# New Year New Destinations

## Indian travellers explore new horizons



# 24

## NEW JOURNEYS ..... 24-43

The February issue of BOTT Magazine encapsulates the pulse of the travel industry, as it gets ready to attend OTM and SATTE shows this month. We bring you an extensive coverage of the most anticipated travel destinations for 2024. Our focus spans across the diverse landscapes of India and beyond, promising a plethora of exciting adventures and cultural immersions. From Ayodhya and Lakshadweep in India to Saudi, Turkey, Bali and more outside India, the world stands ready to welcome the Indian travellers on lookout for new journeys.

## EVENTS AND MORE

IATO in collaboration with The District Collector ..... 16 and CEO of the Gwalior Smart City hosted a FAM trip for its members. The trip, which was aimed at showcasing Gwalior was attended by more than 60 IATO Members.

Brand USA recently hosted its 10th India Sales and ..... 18-20 first-ever Media Mission in an offsite destination in Goa. This was Brand USA's inaugural media mission and was attended by 12 PR delegates from various US destinations.

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From the

*Editor's  
Desk*

Dear Readers,

**W**elcome to the February issue of BOTT Magazine! As the pulse of the travel industry beats in unison at OTM and SATTE shows this month, we bring you an extensive coverage of the most anticipated travel destinations for 2024. Our focus spans across the diverse landscapes of India and beyond, promising a plethora of exciting adventures and cultural immersions.

In the heart of India, Ayodhya unfolds its spiritual richness, offering a journey through ancient history and revered traditions. The pristine shores of Lakshadweep and the historically significant Port Blair beckon travellers seeking a harmonious blend of relaxation and exploration. Udaipur, with its regal charm, the surreal landscapes of Kutch, the lush tea plantations of Munnar, and the French-inspired allure of Pondicherry create a captivating tapestry of experiences within the subcontinent.

Venturing beyond borders, our journey takes us to the international stage, where Saudi Arabia emerges as a cultural gem, inviting travellers to explore its historical marvels. Mauritius, Bali, Krabi, Dublin, and Turkey, each with its unique charm, offer a global symphony of experiences for the avid explorer.

In addition to the exploration of these remarkable destinations, we bring you exclusive interviews with senior industry professionals from Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and National Tourism Organizations (NTOs). Gain insights into the latest tourism trends and updates shaping the industry's landscape. Dive into valuable information about hotels, ensuring you have the perfect accommodation for your next adventure. Discover destination highlights that will fuel your wanderlust and inspire your travel plans.

As we navigate the intricate web of the travel industry, our February issue serves as your compass, guiding you through the exciting world of new destinations, industry insights, and travel news. Whether you are a seasoned traveller, a tourism professional, or someone planning their next getaway, let BOTT Magazine be your trusted companion in the journey of discovery.

Happy travels!

**Priyanka Saxena Ray**  
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## VFS Global cements Preferred Employer status with high Glassdoor scores

VFS Global, the world's largest outsourcing and technology services specialist for governments and diplomatic missions, has announced its remarkable achievement of securing a rating of 4.01 on a scale of 5 for 2023 on Glassdoor, a leading platform for employee feedback and company reviews. This significant achievement reflects VFS Global's unwavering commitment to excellence in every aspect of its people management and human capital development.



## Saudi Tourism launches 'Saudi, Welcome to Arabia' Campaign

Saudi's national tourism brand 'Saudi Welcome to Arabia' has kicked off another global marketing campaign featuring football legend and Saudi Tourism Ambassador, Lionel Messi. Launching across key target markets in Europe, India and China, the "Go Beyond What You Think" campaign is anchored on consumer insights, which revealed there are still common misconceptions about the destination and invites audiences to experience the incredible and vibrant cultural transformation taking place across Saudi.

## Korea Tourism Organization targets 200,00 Indian visitors in 2024

Determined to keep Korea at the top of Indian travellers' must-visit lists in 2024, the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) is marking their presence with a sizeable delegation at the country's upcoming leading travel trade shows. KTO is participating in OTM Mumbai and SATTE in Delhi NCR. "Building on last year's incredible success of 120,000 Indian visitors, we are setting an ambitious goal of welcoming 200,000 travellers from the country this year," said Myong Kil Yun, Regional Director, India & SAARC Countries, KTO.



## Visit Utah successfully concludes three-city Sales Mission in India

The Utah Office of Tourism successfully concluded a three-city sales mission in India, attracting attention from over 250 travel trade partners and media in Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai. The event helped in promoting Utah as a potential tourism destination for Indian travellers. The mission, which focused on re-establishing connections with the Indian travel market, provided insights into Utah's expansive natural landscapes and national parks.

## South African Tourism announces its annual multi-city roadshow 2024

Aligning with the strategic roadmap for the Indian market, South African Tourism is delighted to announce the 2024 edition of its annual India roadshow. Serving as an essential tool in promoting travel and tourism for the Rainbow Nation, the roadshow for the first time ever will enter the pink city of Jaipur. Scheduled from February 12 - 16, 2024, the event will further move to other significant Indian cities, namely – Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, and Mumbai in the respective order.





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## Egypt Air appoints Bird Travels as its GSA for North India

Egypt Air has recently announced the appointment of Bird Travels Pvt Ltd, the Airline Management Services arm of Bird Group, as its new General Sales Agent for the North India market. The new liaison is effective February 01, 2024. The new GSA, Bird Travel will use its vast experience and will be the immediate liaison for the airline's sales development in India, including ticketing and direct support services to the travel trade. In an endeavour to expand its reach in India market, Egypt Air had launched a direct flight from New Delhi to Cairo last year.



## IndiGo starts direct flights between Dubai and Surat

IndiGo has announced direct flights between Dubai and Surat. These flights will operate tri-weekly w.e.f. February 23, 2024. The addition of this strategic route to the 6E network is designed to facilitate seamless travel for tourists and business travellers and enhance bilateral economic growth and relations between India and the UAE. With the addition of this flight, Surat becomes the second city in Gujarat, with direct connectivity to Dubai on the IndiGo network.



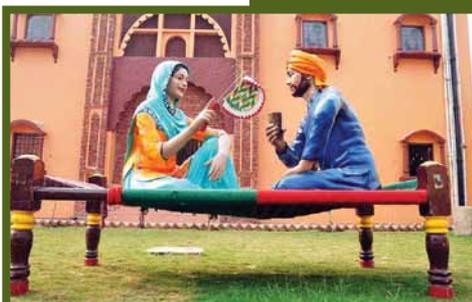
## Etihad boosts frequencies to key destinations

Etihad Airways is meeting customer demand by adding more flights to key destinations across the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. The latest increase means the airline now offers almost 27% per cent more weekly departures than last summer. The airline is increasing flights to Jeddah and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, Amman in Jordan, Beirut in Lebanon, as well as Colombo in Sri Lanka, and Kolkata and Bangalore in India.



## Hospitality & Marketing Services and Satta Pind join forces

Hospitality & Marketing Services (H&M services), a leading sales and marketing company, has announced its strategic partnership with Satta Pind, a Punjabi Culture Living Village Museum located in Amritsar, Punjab. This collaboration marks a significant milestone for both organizations as they aim to redefine cultural hospitality and offer unparalleled experiences to locals and tourists alike.



## Saudia transports 30 million guests in 2023

Saudia, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, has continued its transformation in 2023 with the transportation of over 30 million guests, which marks a 21% increase compared to the previous year, and the operation of more than 176.3 thousand flights, demonstrating a 4% increase. While transit flights witnessed a growth of 77% in 2023 compared to the year 2019. These accomplishments are a result of Saudia's strategic enhancements to its operational model.





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# MoT organises 9<sup>th</sup> edition of Bharat Parv; participates at FITUR in Madrid, Spain

*The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India recently organised the ninth edition of 'Bharat Parv,' The inauguration ceremony on January 23, 2024 marked the commencement of this week-long public event. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Bharat Parv 2024 at the historic Red Fort. Additionally, a delegation from MoT also participated in the global travel exhibition FITUR held in Madrid, Spain.*

## BOTT Desk

The inauguration signified a notable step forward in advancing the "Dekho Apna Desh" initiative, encouraging people to explore their own country, with the incorporation of cutting-edge technology into the festivities. Bharat Parv stands as a testament to the commitment to promote and embrace the various facets of nation's rich heritage and traditions.

The India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) was associated with the nine-days celebration yet again as in previous editions. The event was managed by Ashok Events, the events vertical of ITDC. Being held at the Lawns and Gyan Path, in front of the Red Fort, Delhi, from January 23 – 31, 2024, this event stands as an integral part of the Republic Day celebrations.

Students from The Ashok Institute of Hotel Management (AIHTM) of ITDC curated and operated food stalls and cultural activities, adding a culinary dimension to the festivities.

They performed the 'Nukkad Natak' on the theme of 'Naari Shakti', with the aim of educating and raising awareness about the empowerment and strength of women among the visitors.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India also participated in FITUR, one of the important global travel exhibitions, which was held from January 24 – 28, 2024 at Madrid, Spain. with a big delegation from the Union



Ms Anmol Gagan Mann and other officials from Ministry of Tourism and State Governments on 24th January. India has some aggressive promotional plans to promote India globally and major identified source markets of the world including the Latin American countries.

Ministry of Tourism,

Government of India is participating with a space of around 315 sq metre, which is one of the biggest pavilions at FITUR in the recent years and a substantial delegation comprised of 40 plus co exhibitors. Some of the State Governments who are marking their presence at FITUR includes Punjab, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. ■

Government, State Governments and private travel stakeholders. India's participation at FITUR is a significant move aimed at increase of inbound tourism to pre-pandemic levels from the main identified source markets in the world.

The Incredible India pavilion at FITUR was inaugurated by HE Shri Dinesh K. Pattanaik, Ambassador of India to Spain in the presence of Minister of Tourism, Government of Punjab,

# TAIWAN



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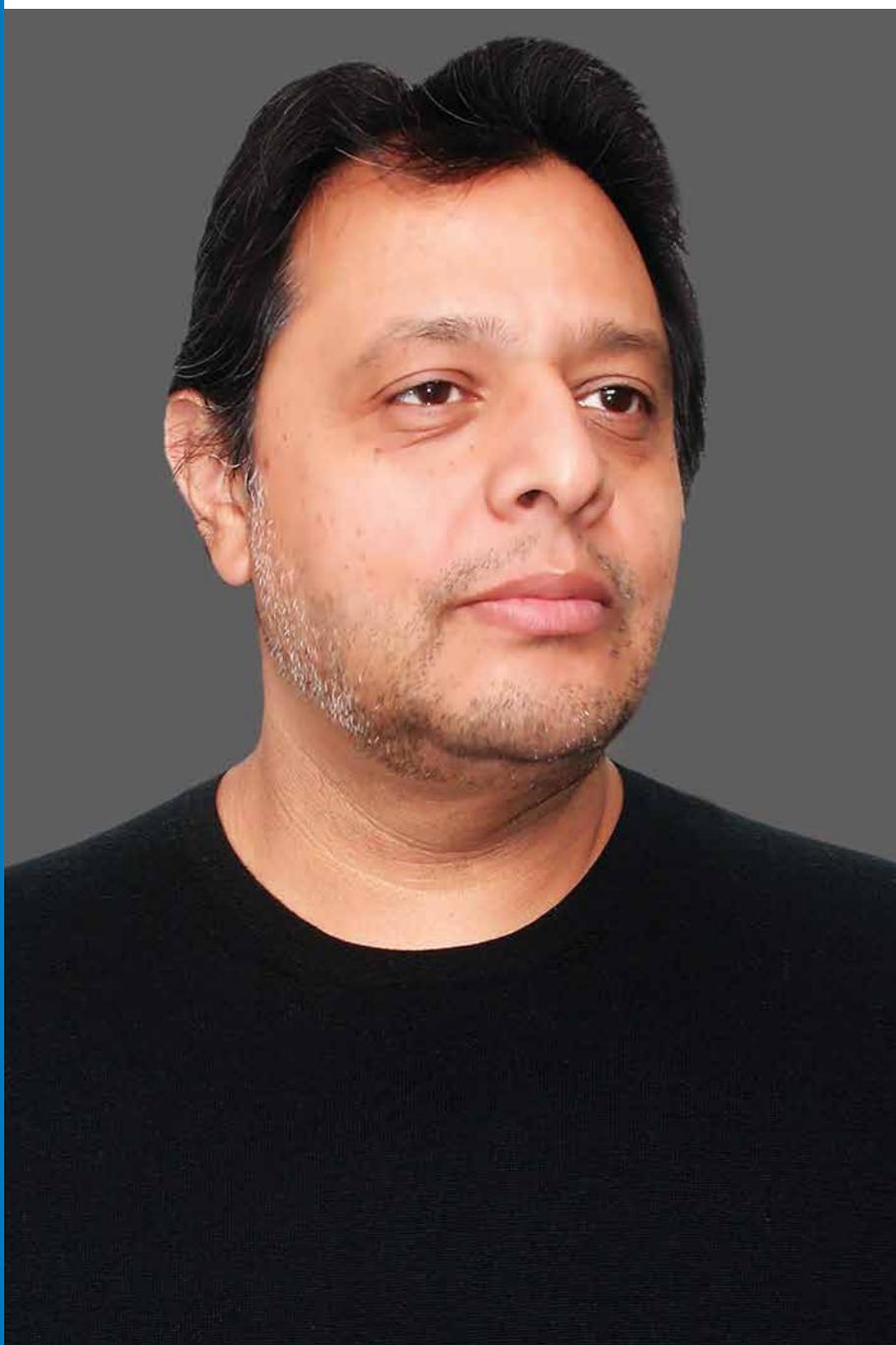
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# Rohit Shorey

## ‘We aim to be the No.1 DMC for our all 4 destinations that we represent’

*Delhi-based Kazin DMC, the well-known destination management company for Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus in India, is known for delivering quality and unique experiences to their clientele. With an aim to go beyond being just a regular DMC and become global players for the four destinations, the dynamic Rohit Shorey, Founder & CEO, Kazin DMC along with his zealous team is the man on a mission. In a candid and exclusive chat with BOTT, he talks about his journey, the achievements, challenges and plans for future.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



### Start of the Journey

I started my professional journey by joining Destination Travel in 1994, a company that was started by my father in 1987 – a typical B2C Company that exists till date. I worked in that company for about 20 years and learned the tricks of travel business. Then in 2014, an opportunity came for a FAM trip to Almaty – a destination that very few knew at that time. During my trip, I realized the untapped potential of that place and steered the direction of my business towards this destination. I saw a window of opportunity and jumped on the bandwagon of promoting Almaty through my DMC – Kazin.

### Establishing Almaty in India market

I spent the next 4-5 years developing this particular city (Almaty) in the India market. We were geared towards shedding light and promoting the destination in India as I felt people were still not taking it seriously and also not doing justice to the things it had to offer. We started doing Emailers, taking FAM trips, educating the travel trade on the potential of Almaty as a tourist destination, reaching out to them on WhatsApp, creating some special experiences which helped bring out unique aspects of the place. We did milestone celebrations, adventure tours, honeymoons – changed the image of Almaty from the cheap MICE destination to a high-end luxury destination with offerings that are simply out of the world.

We are strictly a B2B focused company – always have been. Infact, during those years, we did the work of a Tourism Board, spending our own marketing money in highlighting the destination and showing to the world the potential of Almaty. That's how we became, and still are, the No. 1 incoming company for Kazakhstan. The tourism board was formed in 2017 and we started promoting the



destination in 2015. Now, the tourism board supports us greatly. In 2019, I was nominated as their Brand Ambassador for MICE.

### **Adding New Destinations**

Till 2018 we were only focused on Kazakhstan, primarily Almaty, which had picked up in the India market. In 2019 we launched Azerbaijan and Belarus but then in 2020 and 2021 everything went kaput. However, we picked up reins and as we stand today, we are a DMC for 4 destinations – Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia. We do not have any plans to expand our portfolio as we want to remain focused and stay true to our knowledge on these 4 destinations and do justice to our partners. We do not wish to become Jack of all trades and Master of none. We want to become master of a handful of destinations because we own and operate our own offices – we don't deal with local companies. We have our offices in all the destinations that we market and our own team who handles the bookings. The reason why we chose these 4 destinations, besides the fact that they are beautiful and unique, is that none of them are identical to each other in any way. They

carry their own uniqueness, their charm, their individuality and that is what makes these destinations so different. Infact, one client, depending on how much time he has on his plate, can choose to go to multiple destinations at a time or one destination every year and they will not find them repetitive.

### **USP of the Destinations**

Like I mentioned above, each of the 4 destinations are unique in their own way and have a plethora of touristy attractions / experiences to offer. Let's take Almaty for example. It is a huge country, and the landscape varies from one region to another – you can go from seas to mountains to deserts to greenery – it has it all – everything that is known to mankind. The best part is that everything is within an hour or so of each other. You don't have to travel long distances. Shymbulak Ski Resort is the only Ski Resort in the world, which is so close to the main city. It is just 30 mins from the Airport, which makes it s great option in winters. Then there are lakes, mountains, amazing nightlife, weather, shopping, casinos – very European vibe and just two and half hours from India with no visa. In the last few years, since we have

started marketing, we have seen 400% increase in tourist traffic to Almaty with hotels running at 90% occupancy. India is in the top 10 markets for them. There are 4 direct flights from India – 3 from Delhi and one from Mumbai.

### **Future Plans**

Kazin DMC has a very robust marketing plan for the India market. We have Sales Team divided into North, East, South, West who do their meetings and handle their respective regions. We do roadshows – for example we just finished a nine-city roadshow with Air Arabia, which was aimed at promoting Kazakhstan in India. Additionally, we do marketing presentations and FAM Trips. Five years down the line we would be the No.1 DMC for our all 4 destinations that we represent – primarily Belarus and Georgia since we are already No 1. For Kazakhstan & Azerbaijan. We don't intend to continue working as simply a DMC but go beyond it. Thus, we are moving towards becoming a company that owns its own transportation and which is the one-stop shop for these 4 destinations with clientele across the globe and not just in India. ■

# IATO organises

## 3-day fam trip showcasing Gwalior's heritage to boost tourism

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) organised a three-day familiarization trip to Gwalior from February 3 to 5, 2024, in collaboration with the District Collector and CEO of Gwalior Smart City. The 60-member delegation, comprising tour operators and guides nationwide, aimed to spotlight Gwalior's rich cultural heritage.

The journey commenced with an immersive tour of Gwalior's historical

gems, including the iconic Gwalior Fort, Jai Vilas Palace, Mohammad Gaus's Tomb, and Gujari Mahal. Detailed insights into the historical significance of these landmarks were provided, enriching the participants' understanding.

The next day's itinerary featured exploration of Maharaj Bada and nearby historical sites, accompanied by a morning bird-watching session at Tigra, enhancing the excursion with natural beauty. The trip aimed not only to

educate the delegates but also to position Gwalior as a premier tourist destination, stimulating growth in the local tourism sector and boosting the economy.

Rajiv Mehra, President of IATO, praised the well-organized tour and urged participants to promote Gwalior as a two-night destination. He emphasised the city's beauty and diverse attractions, encouraging travel enthusiasts to explore its offerings for a fulfilling experience. ■





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# Brand USA

## hosts its 10<sup>th</sup> Sales Mission in Goa amidst great networking & fun evenings

Brand USA recently hosted its 10<sup>th</sup> India Sales and first-ever Media Mission in an offsite destination in Goa. This was Brand USA's inaugural media mission and was attended by 11 PR delegates from various US destinations who actively interacted with the attending media and briefed them on the experiences on offer. In addition to the travel trade professionals from 14 Indian cities, the US delegation comprised 39 partners, 16 of which were participating for the first time. Amidst one-on-one meetings, fun evenings, insightful mornings, Jackie Ennis, Vice-President of Global Trade Development, Brand USA spoke to BOTT about the growing tourist numbers and the importance of India market for the USA. Here are excerpts from

Priyanka Saxena Ray



Jackie Ennis,  
Vice President  
Global Trade Development, Brand USA



Staci Mellman,  
Chief Marketing Officer,  
Brand USA



Sheema Vohra,  
Managing Director,  
Sartha Global Marketing

### 2023 – The Recovery Year

From our point of view, 2023 was still a recovery year but I am glad to share that from the Indian market, it has been our most successful recovery. Our all-other target markets are atleast 10% down on 2019 numbers, whereas India is 20% up on the 2019 numbers, which is a phenomenal achievement because 2019 was also a very good year. So, we are absolutely delighted with the numbers that we are seeing from the Indian market. Going forward, I am very confident of seeing a further 20% increase this year from the India market.

### Indian Visitors

Around 1.76 million Indian visitors travelled to the USA in 2023, making India the fifth largest source market for international visitors, which includes

Canada, Mexico, which are our bordering markets. So, if you take away these two then India is our No. 3 market, which is a big source of achievement considering India just came up in top 10 in 2019. The climb up has been truly impressive.

### 2024 – The Growth Year

I see 2024 with highlighted connectivity. I am really hoping to see some new direct connectivity with the changes at Air India. We have been led to believe that with the new aviation orders and the fact that Air India is making the United States a priority destination for 2024, we are hopeful that we will have that direct connectivity and more flights. However, we are very happy with the number of one-stops too from the Europe, Middle East and pacific and new connectivity with IndiGo along with Turkish Airlines, British Airways

– it means that more cities in India have greater accessibility and better connectivity.

### Target Segments

Students are a huge segment for us and in 2023, India market surpassed China to become the no.1 source of international students to the United States, which is incredible. It is a 35% increase over the previous year. Meanwhile, the corporate and MICE business has suffered post pandemic because of the issuance of small groups visas and MICE Visas has not been a priority but what we are seeing is a spurt in families, leisure, inter-generational trips, small group trips. Prior to the pandemic there were a lot of group tours from India to US, there are still some group tours, but our primary targets are the FITs, couples, families etc.



## The 10<sup>th</sup> India Sales Mission

This Sales Mission is the first time where we have concentrated all our activities in one place. Brought everyone together in one place – our top performers across India to one single location – this is something we have never done before. Also, for the first time we have, running in tandem with the travel trade, a media track, so this year, along with the travel trade meetings, we also have active media interactions. We are always keen to try something different in our Sales Mission. This is the 10th Brand USA Sales Mission – the first one was held in 2008 – so there is a long history to this, and we are always trying to do something different and make sure that it is meaningful and productive for both, the US Suppliers who are coming and also for the travel trade and media in India. What is interesting this time is that we have 40 partners participating in the trade track, 16 of which are new to the Sales Mission, which is a testament to the fact that India as a source market is gaining visibility in the United States. Many industries, partners and destinations are paying attention because numbers from India are significant – Indian visitors are being noticed. When Indian students come, they go to all corners of the US and that propels a visitation from friends and families to go visit and they go to all the corners of the US.

## Challenges

In tourism, in general, there is always a fear of over tourism. Some of our National Parks have had some incredible demand over the last couple of years, especially post pandemic lockdowns, people were anxious to get out in open spaces, be in natural landscapes. So, while there are some concerns with regards to National Parks, the reality is that the United States is iso big that there are places and space for everyone.

Situation with regards to Visa is getting better day by day. There have been challenges, however, challenges are prompted by the incredible pent-up demand to visit the US so that is a good



problem to have. According to the latest figures, 1.4 million visas have been issued, which is phenomenal and double of what has been issued in the past.

### Marketing Strategy for the future

Competition for the long-haul travel is growing and we realise that India is a huge economic engine generating a lot of outbound travellers and a great source market not just for the arrival numbers but also the spend numbers, which is phenomenal. We recognise our competition. However, we are not

afraid of it. The reality is that US have been in the market for a longtime and the Indian market knows the US, is familiar with the US in terms of what we offer and also aware that the vacation you can have in the US – with a multitude of offerings in unlike any other. The depth and diversity of experiences that we offer in the US is unmatched, which along with a 10-year visa is a very positive for any tourist. We are also in a sweet spot as the US has a very strong two-way traffic with a large number of Indian diaspora and students who are living there. ■



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# Fortune Hotels opens 50th milestone property with Fortune Park East Delhi

*Fortune Hotels, a member of ITC's hotel group recently celebrated a significant milestone with the inauguration of its 50<sup>th</sup> hotel in India. Branded as Fortune Park East Delhi, the addition of this hotel further fortifies the upscale hotel chain's footprint in the key metropolitan area of the Delhi NCR region and the country.*

BOTT Desk



Following the Fortune Hotels brand promise, Fortune Park East Delhi offers contemporary and chic well-appointed rooms, premium amenities and oodles of comfort ensuring guests have a warm and relaxing stay with them.

Expressing enthusiasm over the brand's latest accomplishment, Samir MC, Managing Director of Fortune Hotels, said: "Fortune Park East Delhi, is a significant value-add to our ongoing, long-term growth trajectory being our fifth operating hotel in Delhi NCR. We have been continuously expanding our footprint across key cities in the country to comprehensively cater to the diverse needs of our guests. Our latest addition embraces the true spirit of Delhi-

blending in the commercial vibrancies and traditional and modern socio-cultural influences that come with it. We stand steadfast in our commitment to delivering exceptional experiences to travellers visiting the Delhi region for work and leisure and look forward to welcoming them."

Premiering at Fortune Park East Delhi will be a plethora of F&B outlets, including Zodiac the all-day dining restaurant, Neptune Bar - the trendy bar and lounge Nakshatra, the soon-to-open sky dining restaurant on the rooftop and La Cafe a trendy outlet that is sure to take coffee and conversations to an all-new high.

To complement the travellers business and social needs the premier

hotel will also house two eclectically designed banquet spaces that are aptly embellished with modern facilities and tasteful décor to make your corporate events and meetings a success. Offering a premium setting for your weddings and special celebrations, the versatile banquets are well-equipped to handle events for up to 1000 guests and come with state-of-the-art facilities, a dedicated team, lip-smacking gourmet options and tailor-made services, to ensure every event is extraordinary and spectacular.

Additionally, the hotel will also have a pristine rooftop swimming pool, a relaxing spa and a state-of-the-art gym offering wellness and rejuvenation options to its guests. ■

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# NEW Year Destinations

## Indian travellers explore new horizons

*Come along with us on an exciting adventure as we reveal some incredible and undiscovered destinations that are calling out to travellers in 2024. In this exclusive travel feature, we delve into a kaleidoscope of destinations that promise not just a change of scenery, but an immersive cultural odyssey. From the spiritual allure of Ayodhya to the pristine shores of Lakshadweep and the historical mystique of Port Blair, India unfolds a fine collection of experiences waiting to be woven into your travel memoirs.*

*Udaipur, with its regal charm, and the surreal landscapes of Kutch beckon adventurers seeking a blend of history and nature. Munnar's verdant hills and the quaint charm of Pondicherry offer diverse escapes for every kind of traveller. As we traverse beyond borders, the allure of Saudi Arabia's cultural tapestry, the tropical paradise of Mauritius, the serene beauty of Bali, the limestone cliffs of Krabi, the vibrant streets of Dublin, and the magical allure of Turkey create a global symphony of exploration.*

*Whether you're exploring the well-known landscapes of India or the fascinating places abroad, let the year 2024 be the time when your travel dreams come true and take you to amazing places.*

Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray

# Udaipur

## A Majestic Journey through Time, Lakes, and Palaces

*Located in the heart of the enchanting state of Rajasthan, Udaipur stands as a testament to the royal grandeur and cultural richness of India. Often referred to as the “City of Lakes” or the “Venice of the East,” Udaipur is a picturesque destination that captivates travellers with its stunning architecture, serene lakes, and vibrant history. In this article, we will explore the top destinations that make Udaipur a must-visit city for those seeking a blend of history, culture, and natural beauty.*

### City Palace

The City Palace is the crown jewel of Udaipur’s architectural landscape. Perched on the East bank of Lake Pichola, this majestic palace complex offers a panoramic view of the city. Built over four centuries, the City Palace seamlessly blends Rajasthani, Mughal, Medieval, European, and Chinese architectural influences. Visitors can explore the opulent courtyards, ornate balconies, and exquisite gardens, immersing themselves in the regal history of the Mewar dynasty.

### Lake Pichola

Lake Pichola, an artificial freshwater lake, is synonymous with the romantic charm of Udaipur. Visitors can take a boat ride on the serene waters to marvel at the surrounding hills, islands, and the iconic Lake Palace. As the sun sets, the lake reflects the warm hues of the sky, creating a magical atmosphere that has inspired

poets and artists for centuries.

### Jag Mandir

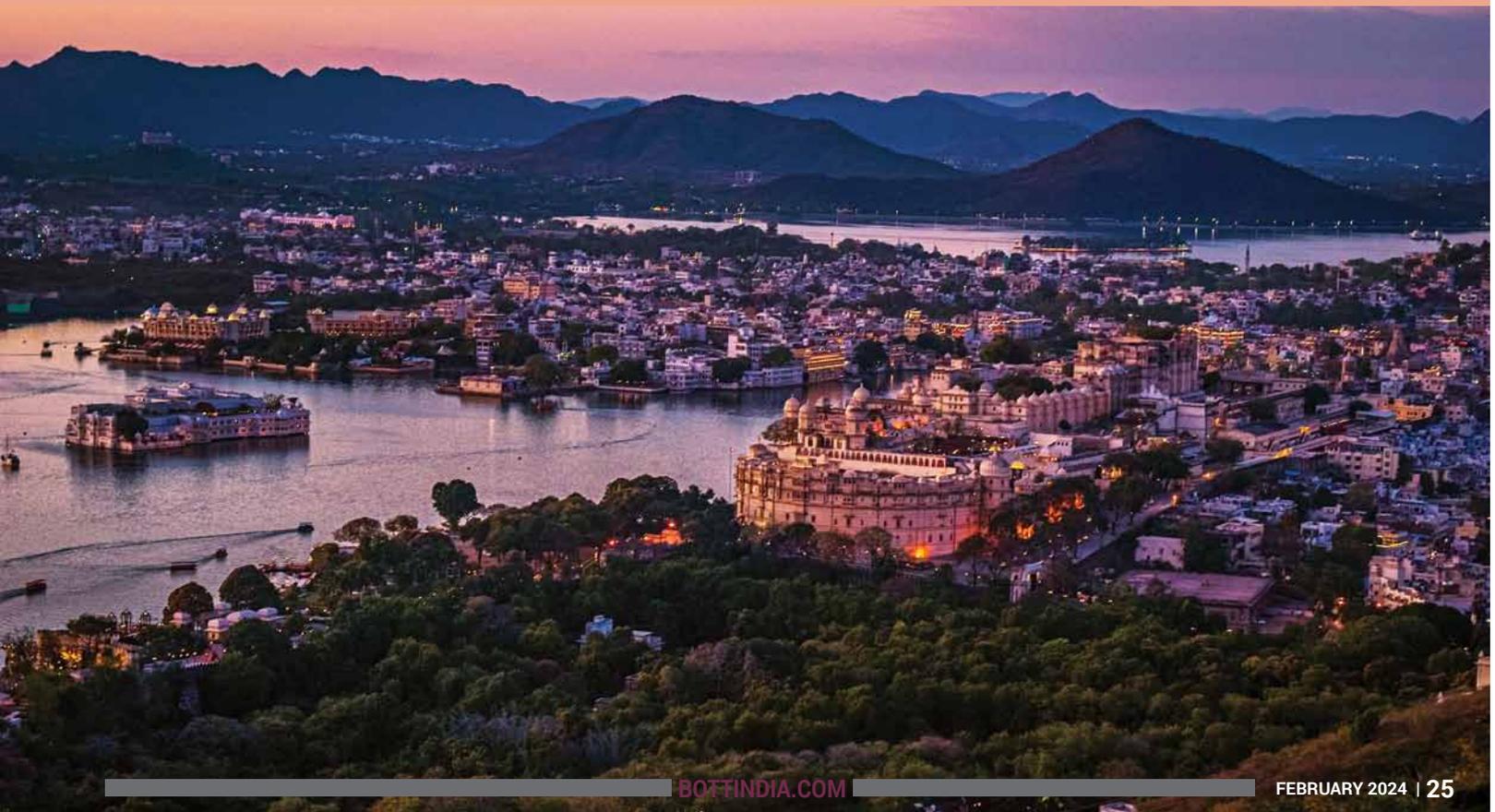
Situated on an island in Lake Pichola, Jag Mandir is a 17th-century marvel that boasts intricate architecture and peaceful gardens. Often referred to as the “Lake Garden Palace,” it offers a serene escape from the bustling city. Visitors can explore the historic structures, relax in the well-maintained gardens, and witness the mesmerizing views of Udaipur from this tranquil island.

### Jagdish Temple

Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, the Jagdish Temple is a significant religious landmark in Udaipur. Built in 1651, the temple is a fine example of Indo-Aryan architecture. The intricately carved pillars, beautifully painted ceilings, and the imposing deity make it a must-visit for those interested in the spiritual and artistic heritage of the city.

### Fateh Sagar Lake

Named after Maharana Fateh Singh, Fateh Sagar Lake is another enchanting water body in Udaipur. Surrounded by hills and adorned with three islands, the lake provides a picturesque setting for boat rides. The Nehru Island, in particular, is home to a charming garden known as Nehru Park, making it a perfect spot for nature lovers. ■



# Exploring Ayodhya's spiritual and historical wonders

*As the birthplace of Lord Rama, Ayodhya holds a special place in the hearts of millions of devotees. The recent Ram Temple inauguration was not just a historic milestone but will also act as a tourism catalyst for Ayodhya in future, a glimpse of which we saw during the ceremony. However, in addition to its religious significance and newly built Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, the city also offers a fascinating array of historical and cultural attractions and with hoteliers queuing to add to the infrastructure of the city, Ayodhya is surely one of the most prominent destinations in the global tourism map.*

According to official estimates, Ayodhya is preparing to welcome around 100,000 visitors daily. This surge in tourism is driving substantial improvements in infrastructure, making Ayodhya an attractive spot for both local and international travellers.

The inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya today marks a historic milestone, resonating profoundly with millions worldwide. Beyond its historical significance, this event has unveiled promising tourism opportunities for the city with a rich past. The construction of the temple, a significant project with an estimated cost of ₹1,800 crore, is expected to boost Ayodhya's economy

and turn it into a popular destination for religious tourism.

For the 'pran pratishtha' ceremony of the Ram Lalla idol, Ayodhya has undergone impressive changes. The city now proudly features the newly inaugurated Maharishi Valmiki Airport and an upgraded railway station. According to official estimates, Ayodhya is preparing to welcome around 100,000 visitors daily. This surge in tourism is driving substantial improvements in infrastructure, making Ayodhya an attractive spot for both local and international travellers.

To accommodate the expected increase in tourists, the state government

has unveiled a comprehensive Master Plan 2031, necessitating an investment of over ₹85,000 crore for infrastructure development. The hospitality sector in Ayodhya is experiencing significant growth, with major hotel brands investing in approximately 50 large-scale hotel projects. The recent Global Investment Summit saw the signing of 102 intent agreements, totalling around ₹18,000 crore, highlighting strong investor confidence in Ayodhya's tourism potential.

Investment interest in Ayodhya extends beyond hotels, with the aviation sector also seizing the opportunity. Established brands like Taj and Radisson





Janmabhoomi Temple, Kanak Bhawan is an ancient shrine dedicated to Lord Rama and Sita. According to legend, this palace was a gift from King Kush, Rama's son, to Sita. The intricate architecture and vibrant frescoes make Kanak Bhawan a visually captivating destination for history enthusiasts.

### **Treta Ke Thakur**

Situated near Hanuman Garhi, Treta Ke Thakur is a revered shrine dedicated to Lord Rama. The temple is believed to be built on the exact spot where Lord Rama performed the Ashwamedha Yajna. The serene atmosphere and the spiritual significance of this site attract devotees from far and wide.

### **Sita Ki Rasoi**

Translated as "Sita's Kitchen," this quaint temple is dedicated to Goddess Sita. Legend has it that this is the spot where Sita used to cook for Lord Rama. The temple's architecture and the connection to the Ramayana make it a unique stop for those interested in the epic's mythology.

### **Nageshwarnath Temple**

This ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is believed to be the spot where Rama performed the last rites for his father, King Dasharatha. The temple's architecture reflects a blend of various historical periods, making it an intriguing site for history and spirituality enthusiasts.

### **Guptar Ghat**

Guptar Ghat, located along the banks of the Sarayu River, is a serene spot with historical significance. It is believed that Lord Rama took Jal Samadhi here. The peaceful surroundings and the gentle flow of the river create a tranquil atmosphere, making it an ideal place for contemplation. ■

are making their presence felt in the city, enhancing Ayodhya's standing in the tourism sector and offering visitors a premium experience.

Religious tourism has long been a lucrative source of revenue for India. In 2022, the country witnessed a substantial influx of tourists, with 1433.92 million domestic visits and 6.40 million visits from international tourists. Ayodhya, with its rich historical and religious significance, is poised for a significant increase in tourist numbers, especially after the completion of the Ram Mandir ceremony.

The economic impact of the Ram Temple on Ayodhya is already visible. The rise in tourist numbers has created new job opportunities for locals, and businesses around the temple are thriving, showcasing a variety of native handicrafts. With the Uttar Pradesh government undertaking 187 projects with a budget of ₹30,570 crore for a comprehensive beautification drive, Ayodhya is set to become a bustling hub for both religious and economic activities. The construction of the Ram Temple not only reflects India's rich

cultural heritage but also serves as a symbol of prosperity for Ayodhya.

Ayodhya, with its blend of spirituality and history, offers a unique travel experience. Whether you are a devout pilgrim or a history enthusiast, the city's sacred sites and historical landmarks promise a journey filled with cultural richness and spiritual awakening. As you explore Ayodhya's treasures, you'll find that each site is a chapter in the epic tale of Lord Rama and a testament to the city's enduring cultural legacy.

## **Attractions in Ayodhya**

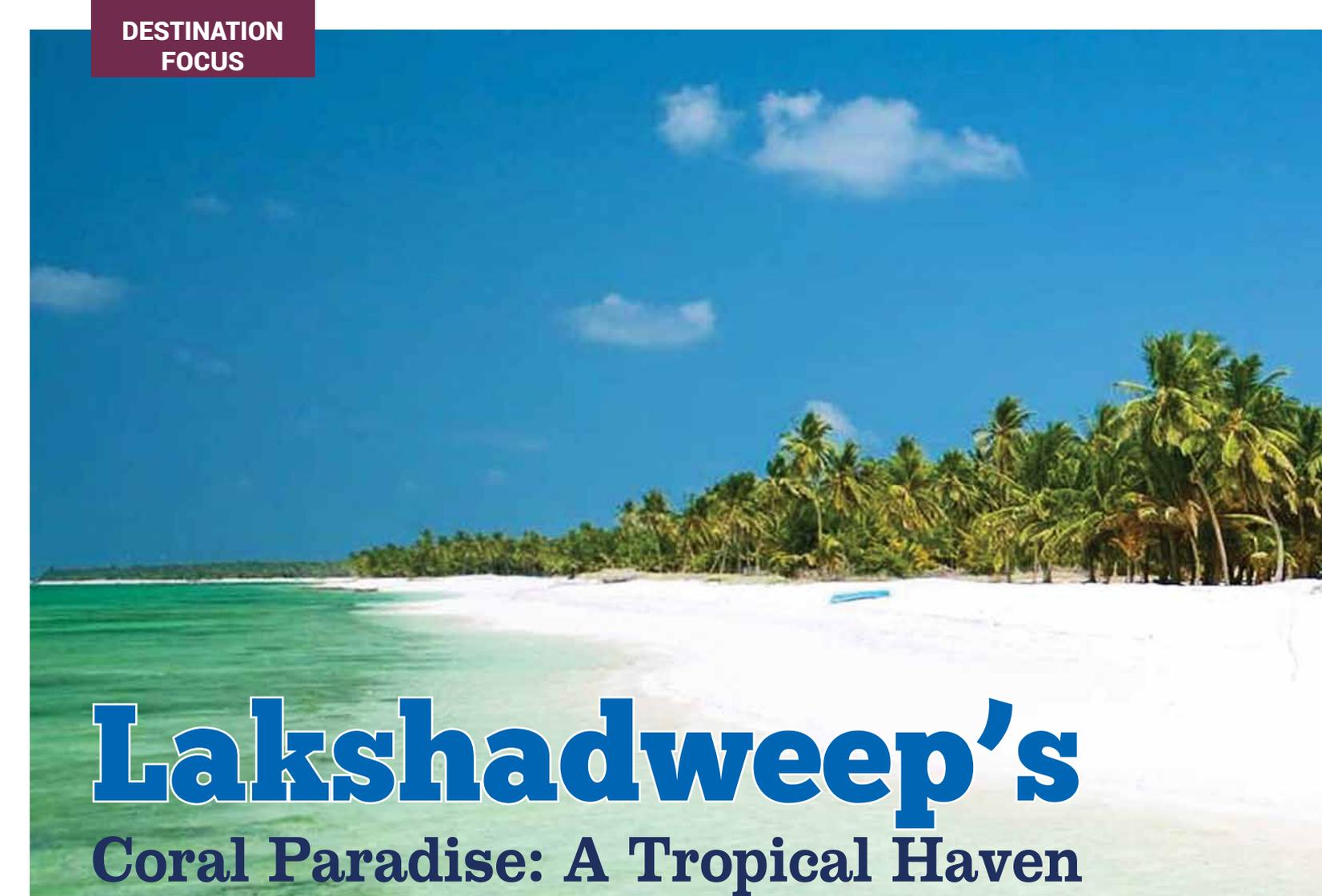
### **Hanuman Garhi**

Perched on a mound, Hanuman Garhi is a significant religious site dedicated to Lord Hanuman. The temple complex is known for its massive statue of Lord Hanuman and offers breathtaking panoramic views of Ayodhya. Pilgrims and tourists alike flock to this site to seek blessings and enjoy the serene surroundings.

### **Kanak Bhawan**

A short distance from the Ram





# Lakshadweep's Coral Paradise: A Tropical Haven

*With the historic visit of the Prime Minister of India to Lakshadweep, the island is in the limelight for all the right reasons. A hidden treasure awaiting full exploration has been waiting for long for its due share of contribution to the economy, creating job opportunities, and above all to be available as a most preferred option for travellers inclined towards Cruise, Ocean, Coastal, Island and related forms of tourism and related adventure tourism activities.*

**W**ith this travelogue, allow me to take you on a journey to Lakshadweep. Let's immerse ourselves in the journey of a visit to the western islands of India offering picturesque landscapes, breath-taking beaches, delectable cuisine, and above all get a glimpse of warmth and hospitality extended by the inhabitants to travellers from India and across the globe.

A group of stunning coral islands nestled in the Arabian Sea, is a hidden gem in India's tourism landscape. Lakshadweep is a treasure trove of natural beauty, cultural richness, and adventure opportunities. With its pristine beaches, crystal-clear waters, vibrant marine life, and rich

cultural heritage, it offers a unique and unforgettable experience for travellers.

With this travelogue, I have tried to cover all major must visit destinations.

Bangaram Island is often referred to as the 'Jewel of Lakshadweep.' It is renowned for its powdery white sandy beaches, swaying palm trees, and turquoise lagoons. This serene island is perfect for strolls, sunbathing, and swimming. Snorkelling and scuba diving enthusiasts can explore the vibrant underwater world, teeming with colourful coral reefs and diverse marine species.

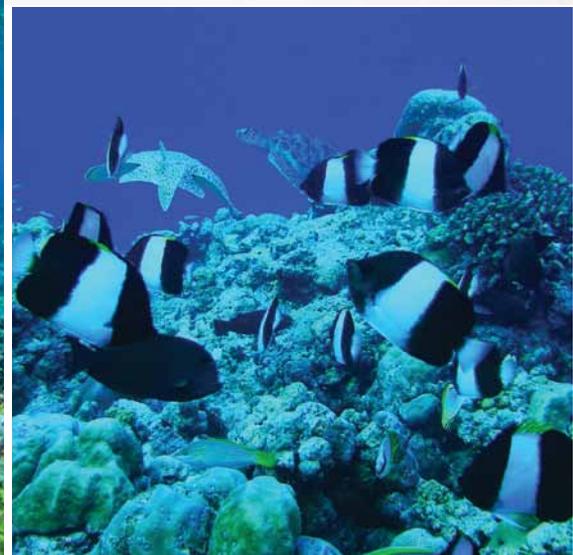
Agatti Island is the gateway to Lakshadweep and serves as the entry point for tourists. The island boasts a picturesque lagoon and a coral-rich

underwater ecosystem. Visitors can indulge in water sports such as kayaking, snorkelling, and sailing. The Agatti Aerodrome provides breathtaking aerial views of the atolls, making it a unique experience for travellers.

Kavaratti is the administrative capital of Lakshadweep and offers a glimpse into the local culture and lifestyle. The Ujra Mosque, with its intricate woodcarvings and beautiful architecture, is a notable attraction. The calm lagoons surrounding the island are ideal for water sports like kayaking and jet skiing.

Kalapeni Island is an ideal destination for those seeking tranquillity and seclusion. The island is home to pristine beaches where you can relax and soak in the natural beauty. Snorkelling and scuba diving in the coral gardens are popular activities, allowing you to encounter exotic fish and marine life.

Minicoy Island, located at the southernmost tip of Lakshadweep, is known for its striking natural beauty. The island boasts a 300-foot-tall lighthouse that offers panoramic views of the surrounding waters. The traditional



dance forms and rich cultural heritage of the locals make for an enriching experience. Water sports, like tuna fishing and kayaking, are also popular activities here.

Kadmat Island is a paradise for water sports enthusiasts. With its vast stretches of pristine beaches and clear waters, it offers the perfect setting for activities such as snorkelling, scuba diving, and windsurfing. The island is also home to a marine biology museum

that educates visitors about the region's diverse marine life.

Amini Island is famous for its stunning beaches and coconut groves. Tourists can explore Amini Beach and the nearby lighthouse, which offers breathtaking views of the surroundings. The island is also known for its rich marine life, making it a popular spot for fishing and scuba diving.

Lakshadweep, with its mesmerizing coral islands and a treasure trove of

natural beauty, stands as an alluring destination for tourists seeking an escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. Whether it's the stunning beaches, vibrant marine life, or rich cultural heritage, Lakshadweep has something to offer to every traveller. ■

*(Author - Dr Himanshu Talwar is an industry veteran with various articles, columns, travelogues, and write-ups published specifically on Tourism, Hospitality, and Aviation to his credit)*

# Munnar

## Unveiling Kerala's High Country Beauty and Charm

*Nestled in the Western Ghats of Kerala, Munnar emerges as a jewel in the crown of India's south. Renowned for its lush tea plantations, mist-covered hills, and serene landscapes, Munnar is a haven for nature lovers and seekers of tranquillity. In this article, we will embark on a journey to explore the top destinations that make Munnar an exquisite retreat, from the verdant tea gardens to the misty mountains and pristine waterfalls.*

Munnar's iconic tea gardens are a visual spectacle, with vast stretches of lush greenery carpeting the hillsides. Visitors can take guided tours to learn about the tea-making process, witness pluckers at work and savour the aroma of freshly brewed tea. The scenic landscapes and cool mountain air make a stroll through these plantations a serene and refreshing experience.

A biodiversity hotspot, Eravikulam National Park is a sanctuary for the endangered Nilgiri Tahr. The park's undulating landscapes, rolling grasslands, and dense shola forests create a picturesque setting for wildlife enthusiasts and nature photographers. Anamudi, the highest peak in South India, adds to the allure of this protected area. Additionally, the melodious sound of cascading water welcomes visitors to the enchanting Attukal Waterfalls. Surrounded by lush greenery, this scenic spot is ideal for a rejuvenating break. The falls are particularly captivating during the monsoon season when the water gushes down the rocky terrain, creating a spectacle that resonates with nature's raw power.

For breathtaking panoramic views of Munnar's landscapes, Pothamedu Viewpoint is the perfect vantage point. Surrounded by rolling hills, tea gardens, and mist-covered valleys, this spot is a photographer's delight, especially during sunrise and sunset when the colours of the sky and hills create a magical atmosphere.

Munnar, with its tea-clad hills, misty valleys, and cascading waterfalls, unfolds a story of natural splendour in the heart of Kerala. Whether you seek the tranquillity of tea gardens, the thrill of wildlife encounters, or the awe-inspiring beauty of waterfalls, Munnar offers a diverse palette of experiences. As you navigate through the winding roads and embrace the charm of this hill station, you'll find Munnar to be not just a destination but a symphony of nature's wonders waiting to be explored. ■



# Kutch

## Embracing the magnificence of Gujarat's White Desert

*Located in the western most of India, the vast and vibrant district of Kutch in Gujarat beckons adventurers and culture enthusiasts alike. Renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural tapestry, and unique traditions, Kutch is a treasure trove of experiences waiting to be discovered. In this article, we will embark on a journey to explore the top destinations that make Kutch an extraordinary destination, ranging from the iconic White Rann to ancient temples and traditional handicraft villages.*

### The White Rann of Kutch

The White Rann, a vast expanse of salt marsh that glistens like a moonlit oasis, is one of Kutch's most iconic destinations. Spanning over 7,500 sq. km, this surreal landscape comes to life during the Rann Utsav, a cultural extravaganza that celebrates the spirit of Kutch. Visitors can witness the ethereal beauty of the salt desert, engage in cultural performances, and stay in the vibrant tent city for an immersive experience.

### Kala Dungar (Black Hill)

Kala Dungar, the highest point in Kutch, offers panoramic views of the vast desert and the Great Rann. Legend has it that Lord Dattatreya halted at this site during his journey, leaving his footprints imprinted on a rock. A visit to

Kala Dungar not only provides a visual feast but also allows travellers to soak in the spiritual aura and folklore that surrounds this elevated destination.

### Bhuj

As the gateway to Kutch, Bhuj serves as a cultural hub with its historic architecture, vibrant markets, and the grand Aina Mahal. The Aina Mahal, or Palace of Mirrors, is a marvel of Indo-European architecture, housing exquisite mirror work, intricate carvings, and a unique Hall of Mirrors that reflects the opulence of its bygone era.

### Dholavira

For history buffs and archaeology enthusiasts, Dholavira is a must-visit destination. This Harappan-era archaeological site showcases the

sophisticated urban planning of one of the world's oldest civilizations. The well-preserved remnants of a water conservation system, large inscriptions, and the sheer scale of the ancient city provide a fascinating journey back in time.

Kutch, with its surreal landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and historic sites, stands as a testament to the diversity and resilience of Gujarat. From the vast expanse of the White Rann to the ancient ruins of Dholavira, Kutch offers a tapestry of experiences that captivate the senses and leave an indelible mark on the traveller's soul. As you explore this enchanting district, you'll discover that Kutch is not just a destination; it's a journey through time, tradition, and the mesmerizing beauty of India's western frontier. ■

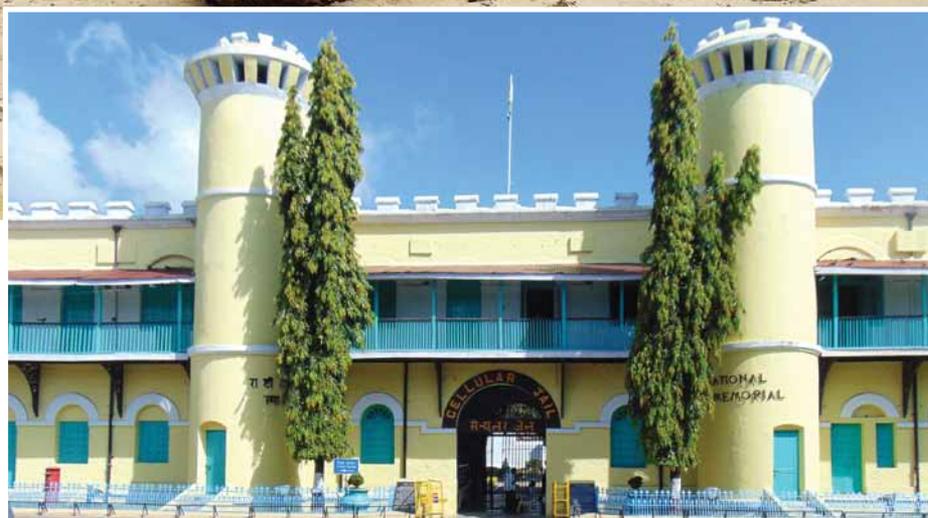


# Discover the hidden jewel of Port Blair in Andaman Islands

*India's most remote state, the Andaman Islands, situated more than 1000 km off the east coast in the middle of the Bay of Bengal have everything that one could imagine for a perfect vacation. It doesn't matter if you are visiting here with your parents, friends, spouse or kids because there's something in store for everyone.*

For administrative purposes, the Andamans are grouped with the Nicobar Islands, 200 km further south, but these remain strictly off-limits to foreigners, as well as Indians with no direct business there. Approximately some 200 islands make up the Andaman group and 19 of them sum up the Nicobar. Covered by dense deep green tropical forests, the archipelago supports a profusion of wildlife, including some extremely rare species of birds. But for the most, it's the beaches and the pristine reefs around the islands that attract them.

The colourful fish, the kaleidoscopic corals and the crystal-clear waters of the Andaman Sea are perfect for snorkelling and scuba diving. Then of course comes the rich heritage history of the British Raj. The Islands are home to a variety of rare plant and animal species. Nicobari Macaque, Saltwater Crocodile, Imperial Pigeon, Narcondum Hornbil and a wide variety of orchids and plants are found in the Islands. The large biodiversity and the unique eco systems attract naturalists and scientists from across the world.



South Andaman is the most heavily populated area of the Andaman Islands – particularly around the capital, Port Blair, which holds almost half of the total population. Also, the point of arrival for boats and planes is the small yet busy capital.

With an odd combination of refreshingly scenic hills and characterless tin-roofed buildings tumbling towards the sea, Port Blair merits only for a short stay. There's little to see here – just the Cellular Jail and a few small museums. But it also is the point of arrival for the islands and the place with the most facilities so you might just find yourself staying here longer

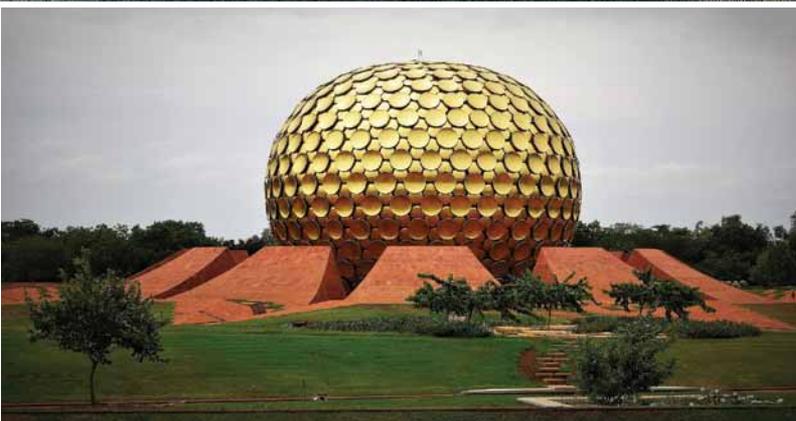
One of the main tourist attractions, the Cellular Jail talks a lot about the

British era in India and its story. The Cellular Jail of Port Blair, Andaman, was constructed as a Panopticon. The panopticon is a circular prison built around a central surveillance station; in this case the prison of Port Blair was built in the form of a seven-spoke wheel. The spokes or prison cells were guarded from three watch towers built within the premises. The three-storied prison had about 696 cells each, separated from the other by brick walls and metal doors. To explore the entirety of the jail it takes about 2-3 hours and after that if you can manage to make more time, make it a point to watch the sound and light show held in the evenings – it certainly does make the whole experience so much richer. ■

# Pleasantness prevails in 'Pondy'

*An intriguing history, glimpses of which can be easily spotted as one walks across Puducherry. A trip to Puducherry is like a journey in time with a vibrant present celebrating its interesting past; its history goes back to before Roman times, but factually started with the arrival of the French in 1673, who founded the town and built it to its present form, during the two and a half centuries they occupied it.*

*"Puducherry" is the French interpretation of the original name "Puducheri" meaning "new settlement".*



Puducherry, as many people feel, has a distinct spiritual vibration. Stories of resident sages come down throughout its history from the earliest days. The colonial buildings, some of which date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, stretch along a grid of clean straight streets which house French institutions, Hotels, Guest Houses, Restaurants, Boutiques and private homes, including the sprawling premises of the famous Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Visitors to this area are greeted by mellow hues of cream, yellow, pink and grey compound walls interspersed by flamboyant bougainvillea bursting over gates and walls of courtyards.

Quiet beaches and peaceful resorts in the north and south of the city balance the town's busy, yet easy going life. Pondy, not only offers its own special attractions, but also doubles as the perfect base to explore the rich destinations of Tamil Nadu that surrounds it. Some destinations, namely Auroville, the international City of Unity, the imposing Gingee Fort, the holy temple towns of Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai and Chidambaram, the heritage sculptures and magnificent rock temples of Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) and the cool lush hill stations of Yercaud and Kodaikanal should make your To-Do list.

Some of the must-see / popular touristy places in Pondicherry includes The Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Eglise de Notre Dame des Anges, the Pondicherry Beach, which is a paradise for all beach lovers and best among all the Pondicherry touristy places. It is flanked by a flowing creek on one side and is also known for its tree houses, which are located on the backwaters. Another one of favoured tourist places in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram is where people come to seek spiritual harmony and enlightenment. It once served as a spiritual community and is known for being the abode of spiritual guru, Sri Aurobindo. Lastly, Auroville is a strategically planned, experimental township that aims to develop India through the idea of peaceful co-existence. The township, located close to Pondicherry is often referred to as the 'City of Dawn' and is named after Sri Aurobindo. ■

# Saudi A melting pot of Culture, Heritage & Natural Beauty

**S**audi is a country rich with culture, heritage, and natural beauty. Boasting mountain-tops, pristine beaches and rivers, Saudi offers a more stunningly diverse landscape than most people imagine. Riyadh is the dynamic capital of Saudi and home to several vibrant social events, festivals and concerts throughout the year. Other cities include Jeddah (the Red Sea port) and Dammam, a large city in the east. These cosmopolitan cities all feature cafés, top-notch restaurants and shops galore, from traditional markets through to gleaming shopping centres with all the latest fashions. Saudi is a multicultural society. The country is made up of 13 distinct regions and differences in climate, food and local traditions. Saudi is not only a country of tradition. It is a modern country that today is emerging as a major entertainment hub in the region.

Saudi constantly surprises visitors with the diversity of its climate. Far from being hot all year round, Saudi has mountain areas that remain cool during the summers and northern areas that often see snow in the winter. For all its differences, though, one thing about Saudi is consistent – the

warm, caring and welcoming nature of its people (Hafawah). Hospitality is central to Saudi culture. In fact, Saudis are known for their hospitality across the entire region.

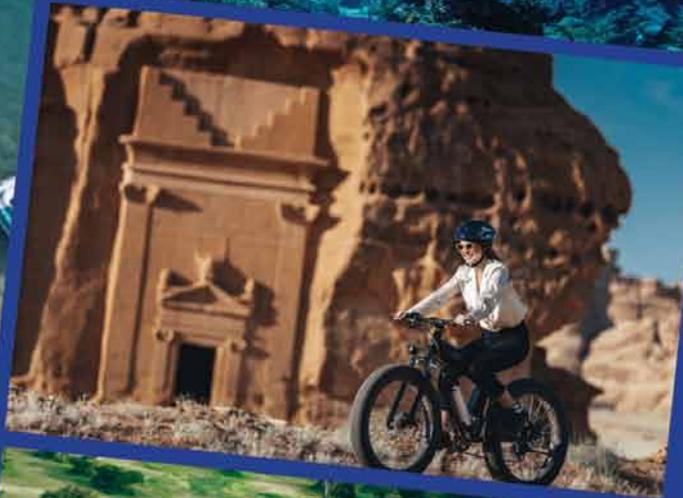
Visiting Saudi means being among the first to experience a destination that only opened its doors to leisure tourism in 2019. As an emerging leisure destination, we are especially focused on preserving and enhancing the rich cultural heritage and natural beauty that make Saudi a must-visit destination for seasoned international travellers.

Saudi has been named the 12th safest country in the world in 2023 with a safety index of 75.4, according to Numbeo. Madinah has been declared as the world's safest city for solo women travellers by InsureMyTrip

Saudi is the twelfth largest country in the world with around 2,500 km of coastline. Domestic travel is very easy in Saudi, with a network of local airports and three airlines running daily services around the country.

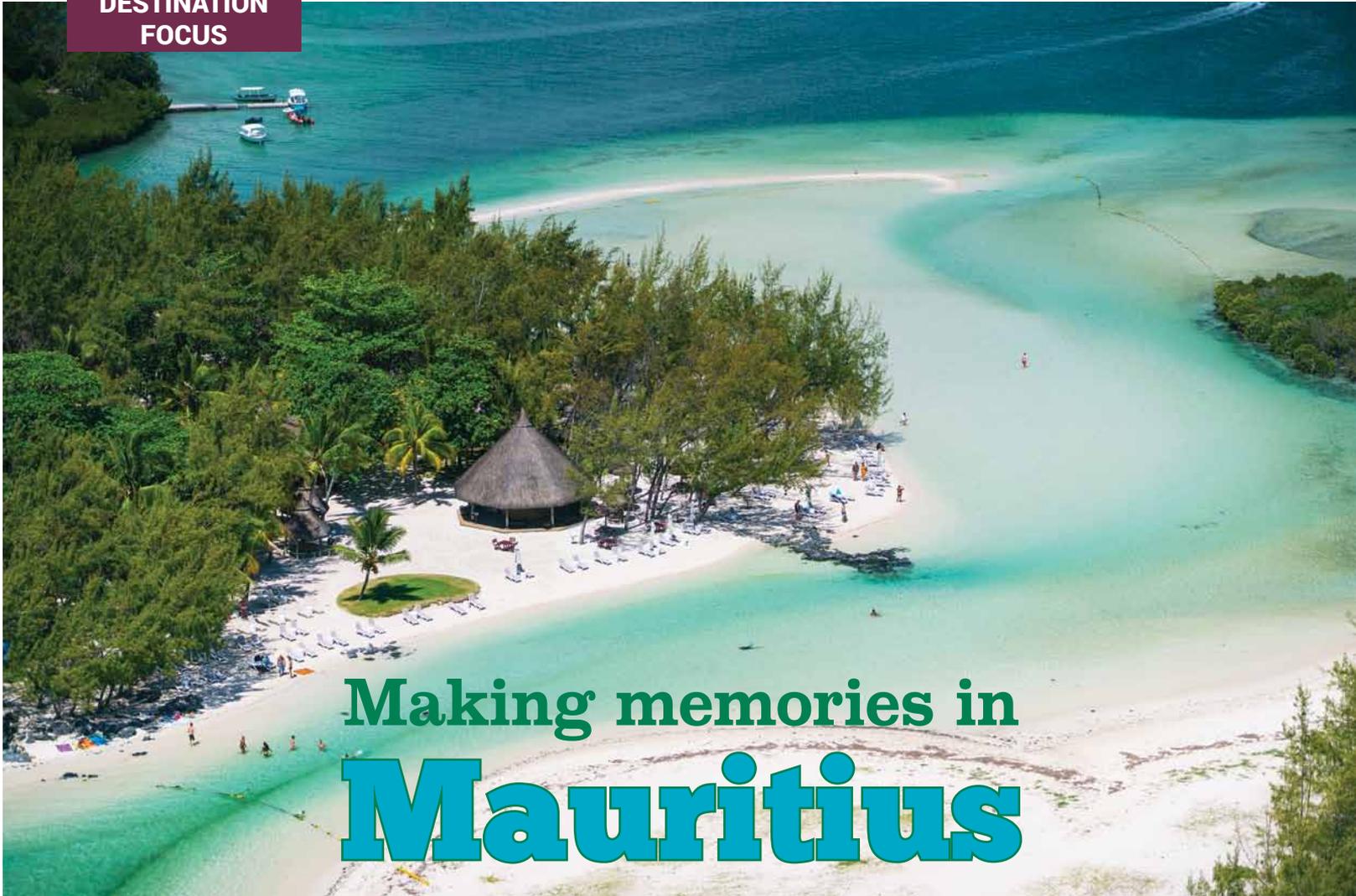
## Must see in Saudi

The Red Sea is a super clear blue-green, and it's a must-see during any trip to Saudi. Jeddah is nick-



## THINGS YOU CAN DO

- Experience green oasis and rich farmlands that you never expected to see in Saudi
- Drive through amazing canyons where the layers of rock, laid down over millions of years, clearly show the passage of time
- Get closer to nature while enjoying modern luxuries in AlUla's glamping sites.
- Dine with history under the stars
- Enjoy a traditional meal or the best of haute cuisine from around the world.
- Explore traditional markets that offer an authentic glimpse of a traditional way of life that is still vibrant today.
- Shop at thousands of boutiques where you can find everything from traditional souvenirs to modern fashions and jewellery from some of the country's most exciting young designers.
- Dive or snorkel on some of the world's most vibrant, untouched coral reefs.
- Charter a boat for some deep-sea fishing. Or relax aboard a luxury cruise on the gentle waters.



# Making memories in Mauritius

*Few destinations offer the natural abundance of Mauritius, and although its most famous species is known because it is extinct, there is still plenty to see on family holidays in Mauritius. It's hard to argue with a destination that has repeatedly won travel award titles ranging from 'best beach' and 'best island' right up to the impressive accolade of 'best in world', and family holidays to Mauritius let you and your children judge the quality of the destination and the excellent value for money that it represents.*

Mauritius has long been known to the Indian market as a luxury honeymoon destination, however, what most of us miss reading between the lines is that the island has so much more to offer. Apart from the beautiful beaches and world-class hotels, the destination is home to mesmerising sceneries, numerous adventure-related activities, professional and international level golf courses, water sports, ideal kite surf spots and cultural tourism. The Indian travellers, once in Mauritius, can enjoy a plethora of activities all year round.

Mauritius is a complete destination. Activities exist for all ages and categories, be it for honeymooners, families, adventure seekers, nature lovers, senior citizens, young generation, golfers and water sport lovers. For the businessmen, the island is the ideal place to combine

work with leisure. Mauritians have a great fondness for children and are always willing to go the extra mile to ensure that younger visitors are just as well catered for as grownups. Mauritius family holidays are perfect for active visitors who are keen to explore one of the world's most spectacular natural environments, packed with rare wildlife. This, plus an abundance of stunning, sandy beaches and Mauritians' chilled-out, friendly approach, means worn-out families can rapidly unwind and make the most of everything this magical destination has to offer.

The island has the perfect recipe to cater for leisure and family time. Ranging from sandy beaches, catamaran trips, adventure related activities to nature parks; the island offers great environment, blue sky and fresh air for families to enjoy quality time together.

The island has been blessed with a multi-cultural society, which results in a blend of different cuisines re-invented the Mauritian way. Tourists from different parts of the world will find a dish connecting to their own cuisine. All the major cuisines of the world namely, Indian, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Arabic etc are available in Mauritius.

## Water Activities

Mauritius is a one-stop shop for outdoors-loving families. Your local aquarium may seem a tad dull after you've brought your kids here, where they will watch tropical fish lapping their toes when they paddle in the sea and work out ways of enticing crabs out of their beachside holes at sunset. Many hotels offer daily glass-bottomed boat rides as part of their inclusive packages, which enable guests to go a bit further



out to spot clownfish, parrotfish, lionfish and sea sponges amongst the coral reefs that ring the island. Some of the local boat operators will even allow very young children to don life jackets and have a go at snorkelling amongst the fish, with parental supervision.

If this is a success, go one step further and take them swimming and snorkelling with dolphins out in the open sea. Spinner and bottlenose dolphins swim in packs around the island, and early morning is the best time to spot them playing. JPH Charters offer daily dolphin swimming excursions year round, as well as fishing trips and day or overnight catamaran cruises to the outlying islands.

Most of the hotels on the island offer a host of water sports activities included in their packages. Waterskiing, wind-

surfing, kite-surfing, pedals, catamarans, sailing, kayaking, stand-up paddle and snorkelling are likely amongst the activities on offer. Scuba diving lessons are also often available too, but are more likely to entail an extra cost.

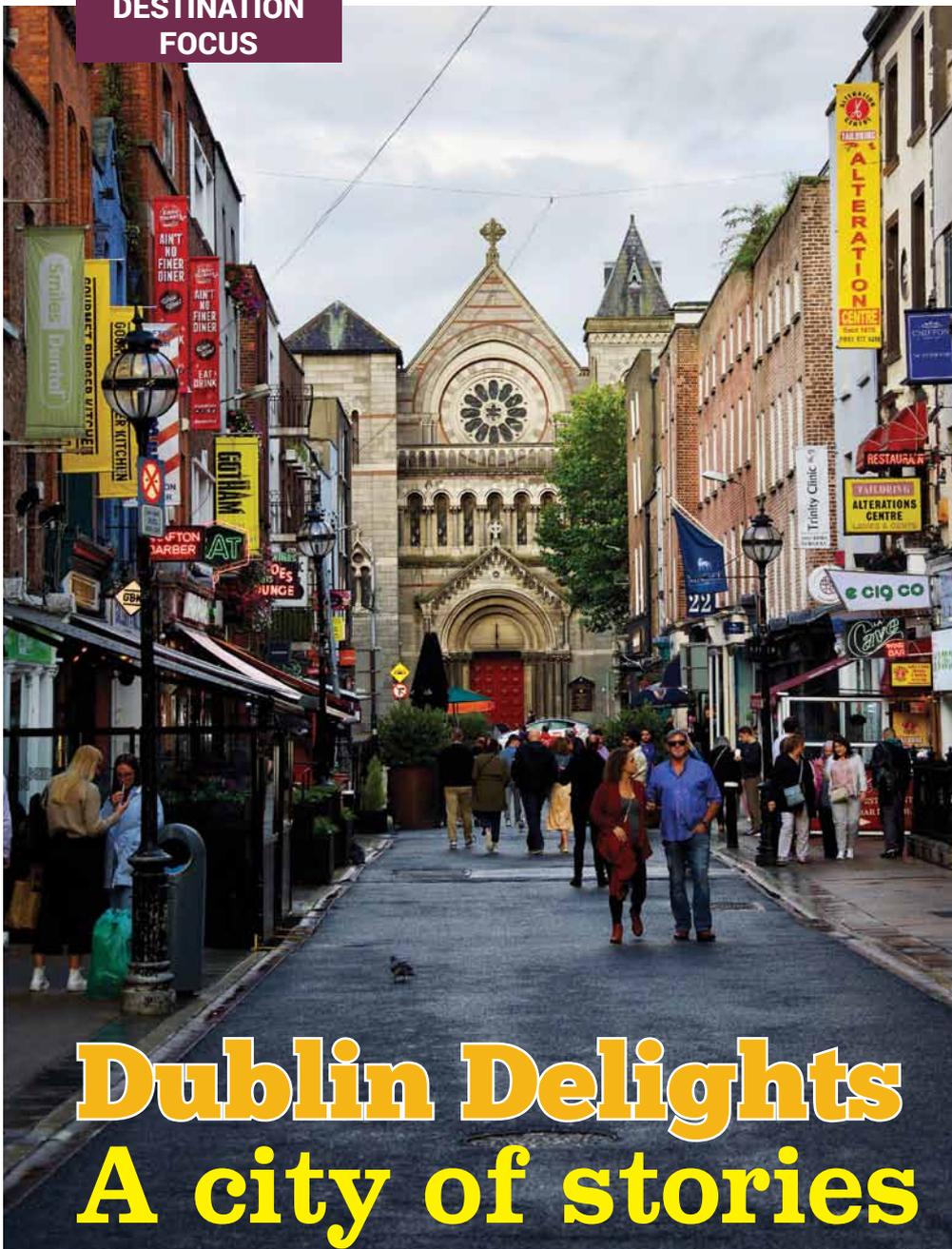
### Inland Activities

Whilst the views from the island onto the almost-white sandy beaches and the turquoise waters beyond are soothingly beautiful, take some time to look behind you. Mauritius's stunning natural inland landscapes include vast plains of sugarcane, mountains, spectacular waterfalls and forests.

The Mauritians have worked out ways to get children's jaws to drop at all this too. Kids of high school age will relish exploring the literal highs and lows of the picturesque Frédéric

Nature Reserve in the south by quad bike, whilst younger ones will enjoy bumbling around in the back of a guide-driven 4x4. Teens will also thrill at taking one of the longest zip-lines in the Indian Ocean through the Casela Nature and Leisure Park, which you can also explore by Segway and quad.

There are loads of activities to do in Mauritius for families. The little kids and the 'bigger kids' will have tons of fun playing around the Mauritius attractions, while you'll have a blast exploring the best places to visit on the island. But don't forget to get in touch with the locals. One of the best things to do in Mauritius with kids is to discover is the culture of the Mauritian people; many cultures living together peacefully embracing their differences and rejoicing their similarities. ■



# Dublin Delights A city of stories

*Dublin, the vibrant and historic capital of Ireland, is a city that seamlessly blends rich history, literary heritage, and contemporary charm. From its lively pubs and historic landmarks to its cultural institutions and scenic parks, Dublin captivates visitors with its warm hospitality and diverse attractions. In this article, we will embark on a journey through the top destinations that make Dublin a must-visit destination, offering a delightful mix of tradition and modernity.*

## Trinity College and the Book of Kells

Trinity College, Ireland's oldest university, stands as a bastion of academic excellence and architectural beauty. The highlight of a visit to Trinity College is the Library's Long Room, a breathtaking chamber lined with antique books and busts of great philosophers. The adjacent Book of Kells exhibit showcases one of the world's most

beautifully illuminated manuscripts, offering a glimpse into Ireland's rich medieval history.

## Dublin Castle

Dublin Castle, with its medieval and Georgian architecture, is a testament to Ireland's complex history. The castle has served various purposes throughout the centuries, from a medieval fortress to a symbol of British rule. Today, it stands as a cultural centre hosting events,



exhibitions, and providing a fascinating journey through Ireland's past.

## Temple Bar

Temple Bar, Dublin's cultural quarter, is a lively area brimming with galleries, theaters, and, of course, iconic pubs. The cobblestone streets come alive with street performers, artists, and the infectious energy of visitors and locals alike. In the evening, Temple Bar transforms into a nightlife haven, with traditional Irish pubs, contemporary bars, and live music venues creating an unforgettable atmosphere.

## St. Patrick's Cathedral

St. Patrick's Cathedral, Ireland's largest cathedral, is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture and a symbol of Dublin's spiritual heritage. The cathedral's interior is adorned with beautiful stained-glass windows, impressive sculptures, and the graves of notable historical figures. Visitors can attend services, concerts, or simply marvel at the serene beauty of this sacred space.

Dublin, with its rich history, literary legacy, and lively ambiance, invites visitors to immerse themselves in the heart of Irish culture. From the historic Trinity College to the lively streets of Temple Bar and the serenity of Phoenix Park, Dublin offers a diverse range of experiences for every traveller. As you explore the city's top destinations, you'll find that Dublin is not just a capital; it's a captivating journey through the soul of Ireland. ■

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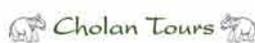


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# KRABI

## A tranquil tropical paradise buzzing with exciting activities



*Thailand is a destination brimming with natural beauty, tranquillity, man-made marvels and exotic wildlife. There are numerous destinations within the country that cater to all types of tourist preferences. One of its hidden gems, which is a perfect cocoon for holidaymakers is KRABI that offers pleasures in the forms of island-hopping, relaxing amidst natural beauty, adventure activities such as snorkelling, rock climbing, sea kayaking, jungle trekking and scuba diving and enjoying meditative holiday in one of its many plush luxury resorts and hotels.*



**K**rabi is the perfect holiday destination for those looking for a relaxing area in southern Thailand. The province, located between Phang Nga and Trang, features stunning scenery, on the land as well as at the sea. With over 150 islands off its 150 km-long coastline (many of them featuring fantastic white-sand beaches and turquoise waters), a jungle-covered interior, towering limestone cliffs, caves, waterfalls and exotic wildlife, Krabi a great selection of natural assets that offer its visitors a wide array of leisure activities for the whole family.

Krabi is famous for its scenic view and breathtaking beaches and clear blue islands. Its coral reef vistas are also one of the world's most beautiful, which makes the city a great spot for coral diving. Some of its other attractions include hot springs, a wildlife sanctuary, sea caves, flourishing coral reefs and exotic marine life, limestone cliffs that draw rock climbing enthusiasts from around the world.



One can easily spend weeks in Krabi and yet leave yearning for more.

If that wasn't enough, Krabi features some of the most photogenic sunsets in Thailand, often accompanied by spectacular displays of cloud-to-cloud lightning, that are best enjoyed from a beachside bar or restaurant. There are roughly 200 islands sitting just off the Krabi coastline, some are small rocks jutting out of the sea, some are quite

a lot larger but still remain uninhabited and some are large islands with many inhabitants living a normal life. You can rent a boat from Krabi town or Ao Nang and explore the islands on your own if you are a keen sailor.

Krabi also provides you with great shopping venues such as Maharaj Walking Street, Chao Fah Pier night market and more.

From its most prominent destinations

– Ao Nang, Railay, Phi Phi Islands and Koh Lanta – to its lesser-known areas – Ao Luk, Ao Nam Mao, or Ao Thalane, to name just a few - the province of Krabi is less developed and crowded than Phuket, more laid back than Koh Samui, and just 80 minutes by air from Bangkok. With a range of accommodation from budget to deluxe, this idyllic province truly is an ultimate destination with a plethora of offerings. ■





## Beaches, temples, spas and history – **Bali has it all**

*Bali, the famed Island of the Gods, with its varied landscape of hills and mountains, rugged coastlines and sandy beaches, lush rice terraces and barren volcanic hillsides all providing a picturesque backdrop to its colourful, deeply spiritual and unique culture, stakes a serious claim to be paradise on earth. With world-class surfing and diving, a large number of cultural, historical and archaeological attractions, and an enormous range of accommodations, this is one of the world's most popular island destinations and one which consistently wins travel awards. Bali has something to offer a very broad market of visitors from young back-packers right through to the super-rich.*

**W**ith a population recorded as 4,521,000 (3 years back) the island is home to a vast majority of Indonesia's small Hindu minority. Around 93.18 per cent of Bali's population adheres to Balinese Hinduism, while most of the remainder follow Islam. It is also the largest tourist destination in the country and is renowned for its highly developed arts, including dance, sculpture, painting, leather, metalworking and music.

Bali's history remained vague for the first few centuries, though many Hindu artefacts have been found, which lead back to the first century, indicating a tie with that religion.

Their culture reflects in their hospitality – their warm and helpful nature and radiant smiles. Bali's reputation as a tourist destination is already established in the minds of so many people around the world.

It is known as a beautiful island with mountains, temples, palaces and visits of terraced rice fields. Bali is known as a place where traditions of art and culture predominate, where the village way of life based on their strong religious beliefs is still in place. But, it is also a place where modern sports such as diving, sailing, rafting and above all surfing have taken hold and are enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year. It is a place where the ultimate luxuries of life: fine dining, spas and massage have reached the peak of perfection. Behind all of this is a single unseen premise; none of these practices, pursuits and pleasures are created as tourist industries in Bali, but are based on the talents, dedication and skills of the Balinese people in their normal course of life.

The friendly people and the overall safety guarantee visitors a totally relaxing stay. Bali is basically easy and

safe. And if you respect some basic rules you will not get into trouble and you can roam around on this beautiful Indonesian Island without problems and enjoy a lifestyle atmosphere that is indeed difficult to describe. Check out the hotels, restaurants, activities on our partner site. You can find everything your heart desires – Bali is perfect for backpackers and for super luxury holiday seekers looking for a private villa with cook, driver and spectacular views. The amount of choices at hand can be quite overwhelming. You might look for one of the best surfing experience Indonesia has to offer. If you are seeking a relaxing, luxurious time out and keen on discovering a different culture authentically, stay in the best hotels and resorts that offer you great value for money. Try the Ayodya Resort or the Westin Nusa Dua, which are truly outstanding in their hospitality. If you



wish to go beyond, try the Grand Nikko and you will truly be impressed with its 'grandness'.

Bali's white beaches are a favourite for family holidays. There are a variety of water sports available, such as banana boats, parasailing or jet skiing, swimming or plain sunbathing. Cruises to the surrounding islands can be taken from here as well as submarine dives to watch the tropical underwater life from within safe compartments.

Most well known among Bali's beaches is the Kuta Beach, the best spot to watch dramatic sunsets. Further back along this stretch are an array of hotels – ranging from five stars to simple home stay – restaurants and shops and cafes, while in the evenings the area throbs to the beat of disco music. Those looking for a quieter evening enjoy the beach at Jimbaran, a popular spot to eat fresh barbecued seafood in the evenings, while watching from a distance the lights of planes landing and taking off from Bali's Ngurah Rai airport. Located here are some of Bali's best hotels like the Four Seasons and the Bali Intercontinental hotel. Jimbaran is also renowned for the Barong trance dance.

Bali offers first class adrenaline pumping white water rafting down the spectacular Ayung River by Ubud. Here you can also go bungee-jumping from a cliff down to almost touch the river. If you enjoy cycling, Ubud and its surrounding is a wonderful town to bike around, as found by Elizabeth Gilbert, written in her bestselling novel "Eat, Pray, Love". There are also good cycling paths at Uluwatu in the south.

Bali is an island that produces great artists and artisans, where creativity exudes from every village. Painters, woodcarvers and dancers are experts, with artistic traditions handed down from generation to generation. Your best buy in Bali, therefore, will be paintings. If you are looking for gold or silver jewellery, head to the village of Celuk. But if you are thinking of bringing home souvenirs for friends and relatives, your best bet is the souvenir market at Sukowati, where you may be overwhelmed by choice. ■



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- Cheval Old Town Chambers, nestled in Edinburgh's Old Town, Edinburgh.



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## Cheval Maison - the Palm, Dubai

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Cheval Collection has tied up with Black Coffee by Café Younes for F&B Services in Dubai. The Black Coffee brand was created in 2018 by Café Younes, the oldest and the largest home-grown specialty coffee roaster in Lebanon, which dates from 1935. The brand has 12 outlets in Lebanon, three in Egypt and two in Dubai, in addition to Cheval Maison - The Palm Dubai. The café offers a full-service including breakfast, lunch & dinner from till late.

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**For more information, please contact: Cheval Collection C/o TRAC Representations (India) Pvt. Ltd.**

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# Top five destinations for Winter Sports enthusiasts in Turkiye



*Turkiye, the destination known for its breathtaking beauty all year round; beckons travellers to discover unique adventures with the changing seasons. As winter blankets the landscape, Turkiye transforms into a winter sports paradise, with an array of world-class ski resorts promising unique and unforgettable experiences. With its breathtaking mountain ranges, Turkiye has earned its place as one of the world's most premier destinations for winter sports.*



Explore Turkiye's top five winter destinations, each serving as a testament to the country's vibrant winter sports culture and awe-inspiring natural landscapes.

**Uludağ:** Recognised as a symbol of winter enchantment, Uludağ, is one of Turkiye's favourite and most beloved winter sports centres. As the highest mountain in Western Anatolia, Uludağ invites visitors to immerse themselves in the magical atmosphere of its snow-covered peaks. Easily accessible from major cities such as Istanbul and Bursa, Uludağ guarantees comfortable suites, shopping halls, restaurants, cafés and bars.

**Kartepe:** Situated along the shores of Lake Sapanca, Kartepe stands out as Turkiye's nearest ski resort to Istanbul. Kartepe is the winter wonderland you've always imagined, with its hillside fruit orchards, villages, and forests of hazelnut, oak, and chestnut trees. With its off-slopes that suit skiers of all levels and its proximity to renowned attractions like Maşukiye and Lake Sapanca, Kartepe offers the perfect combination of skiing excitement and serene lakeside tranquillity.

**Kartalkaya:** Nestled in the Köroğlu Mountains in Bolu, Kartalkaya is renowned as a favoured ski destination, conveniently situated near major cities like Istanbul and Ankara. Visitors can immerse themselves in alpine bliss, experiencing expert slopes catering to snowboarders and a seamless integration of nature with winter sports.

**Mount Erciyes:** Situated in Central Anatolia, Erciyes Ski Centre on Mount Erciyes (3,916 m), the highest summit of Anatolia, emerges as a premier destination for skiing and snowboarding enthusiasts. This extinct volcano, characterised by dramatic angles, offers excellent slopes and ideal conditions for skiers in search of delightful snowy experiences. While in Erciyes, you can also visit the fairy-tale winter destination of Cappadocia.

**Palandöken:** Embark on a journey to Palandöken Mountain in Erzurum, in Eastern Anatolia. As the most famous ski resort in the region and one of the country's largest ski resorts, Palandöken Ski Center, stands out with its snow quality and long tracks. It is possible to experience an uninterrupted ski track of 14 kilometres at the facility. ■



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Tarot Card Reading is the art and science which helps understand the present status and the future course. It helps to apply course correction, if required. Tarot Card can be used for shaping Career, Health, Finance, Business,, Relationship, Marriage, Match-making, etc. Ms. Richa Srivastava, a renowned Tarot Card Reader conducts exclusive Tarot reading under the banner - Tathaastu. Here are her predictions for February 2024.



**March 21 – April 20**

Harmony and balance will be there at your work front. Career growth is there in your card. Ideal time to getting into business partnership. Recovery from illness is imminent. Indulgence in spirituality will bring harmony. Likely meeting your prospective partner.



**July 23 – August 21**

To hold the position in your career you need to take a stand. Make smart investments. Make an extra effort to take care of your health. Don't allow a third person to spoil your relationship.



**November 23 – December 22**

Be practical in your professional work and maintain a work life balance. Be careful while investing. Make effort to strengthen relationship. Start meditation.



**April 21 – May 21**

Remove anxiety. Be positive and look on the brighter side. Conflicts at career front will be resolved through honest conversations. Plan to manage your finances. Goal will be achieved and bond will be stronger with partner.



**August 22 – September 23**

Search the job will be successful. Career success is possible by putting thoughts into action. Avoid conflicts in your relationship. Recovery from illness is expected.



**December 23 – January 20**

Don't be lethargic. Be positive. Take your lessons from past mistake and take your stand. Success is very near. Communication is the key. Spend time with your partner.



**May 22 – June 21**

Your hard work will pay dividends. If looking for job change or own venture, this is the time. Your investment decision will be good. You may offer support to needy. Take care of yourself and spend quality time with family.



**September 24 – October 23**

Change of career possible for greater success. Open and honest communication is required for successful relationship. Take care of your health. You will indulge in spirituality.



**January 21 – February 19**

Time to move forward with positive attitude. Quick healing from illness is expected. Maintain focus with concerted efforts. Search for the new job will take some more time. Spend time with family.



**June 22 – July 22**

Change in career is possible. Senior will support at work front. Your investments will be rewarded. Balance out your relationship. Take care of your health.



**October 24 – November 22**

Your confidence will lead to success in career. Leave your past behind for a new beginning in the relationship. Possibility of buying a new property or car. Be optimistic and start exercising for being healthy.



**February 20 – March 20**

You will be busy this week. Spend your money wisely. Respond intelligently to the questions asked by people. Do your research, as you have to work hard to make things happen. Mind and heart are at conflict. Control the emotions. Spend some time with your spouse.



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# #First Opinion



“Fortune Park East Delhi, is a significant value-add to our ongoing, long-term growth trajectory being our fifth operating hotel in Delhi NCR. We have been continuously expanding our footprint across key cities in the country to comprehensively cater to the diverse needs of our guests. Our latest addition embraces the true spirit of Delhi- blending in the commercial vibrancies and traditional and modern socio-cultural influences that come with it. We stand steadfast in our commitment to delivering exceptional experiences to travellers visiting the Delhi region for work and leisure and look forward to welcoming them.”

*Samir MC, Managing Director, Fortune Hotels*



“We are very pleased to grow our relationship with Gujarat JHM Hotels (GJHM) and introduce the JW Marriott brand to Surat. GJHM is an ideal fit with its vision centred around innovation, creativity and design, while the JW Marriott brand resonates a legacy of extraordinary hospitality. The new JW Marriott Surat Resort & Spa will be built on the Earthspace campus where Auro University - the Sri Aurobindo Integral Life Centre and the Courtyard by Marriott Surat are currently located. The proximity of the hotel to these educational resources will allow Gujarat JHM a unique opportunity to intertwine the hotel operations with Auro University to develop future leaders for the hospitality industry.”

*Rajeev Menon, President Asia Pacific excluding China, Marriott International*



“It gives me great pleasure to be appointed as the India Rep for Arago Travels, which is a preeminent Destination Management Company (DMC) noted for its expertise in Nordic destinations such as Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. This partnership heralds a new chapter in Nordic travel, enabling Indian travel agents to seamlessly connect with Arago Travels’ extensive service portfolio. This collaboration marks a pivotal expansion for Arago Travels in the Indian travel market. The partnership with Outbound Konnections (Ark Reps) is poised to facilitate easier access and enhance the visibility of the Nordic region’s enchanting destinations among Indian tourists.”

*Anjum Lokhandwala, Director, Ark Travel Group*



“We are excited to collaborate with Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island, an iconic property in the heart of Ras Al Khaimah. The resort’s offerings perfectly align with discerning vacationers, adventure enthusiasts, and those seeking a dreamy venue for weddings or milestone celebrations. Leveraging our deep understanding of the dynamic Indian market and the Middle East, our result-driven team will curate innovative and targeted marketing & PR strategies to position it as a top choice for Indians.”

*Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO and Co-founder, BRANDit*



“Kerala has become the first state in the country to come out with a comprehensive heli-tourism policy. A micro-site has been created giving details of travel packages offered by the helicopter service providers. This initiative will be of enormous help to tourists planning to visit various destinations in a single trip, making the state an inter-connected tourism hotspot. In the new year, we have drawn up an aggressive marketing strategy to bolster the presence of domestic tourists in the state. Kerala Tourism’s campaign - Make up for lost time, pack up for Kerala-- received the prestigious PATA Gold Award in a rousing endorsement of its innovative promotional initiative.”

*Shri P B Nooh, Director, Kerala Tourism*

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