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Letter from the *Editor's Desk*



Dear Readers,

We are proud to present this special edition of **BOTT** as the Premier Media Partner at the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) in Jaipur—an event that continues to play a vital role in reinforcing India's position as a leading inbound tourism destination. With increased circulation during GITB, this issue brings you a power-packed mix of insights, industry updates, and exclusive interviews.

As the travel world continues to evolve and recover, we share with you highlights from the recently concluded Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai, which witnessed exceptional participation and proved once again that the global travel industry is back in full swing.

Closer to home, we reached out to leading voices in the travel fraternity to understand their perspective on the revival of Inbound Tourism in India to pre-COVID levels. What strategies are required? What challenges lie ahead? And most importantly—what innovations must the industry adopt to grow beyond past benchmarks? The responses are both insightful and thought-provoking.

Also heating up the industry discourse are the upcoming IATO elections on May 10. In this issue, BOTT speaks candidly with both Presidential candidates, posing some tough yet necessary questions to uncover their agenda, vision, and priorities for the future of India's inbound sector.

Alongside these features, you will also find our regular interviews, hotel updates, and event coverages—curated to keep you informed and inspired.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Happy Reading!

Warm regards,

Priyanka Saxena Ray
Editor, BOTT India



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ASEGO LAUNCHES SUMMER TRAVEL SPECIAL PLANS

Asego has unveiled its Summer Travel Special Plans, offering customised Global Assistance & Insurance at best-in-class prices for Indian travellers heading to some of the most-loved holiday hotspots in Southeast Asia. This summer-exclusive offering covers popular international destinations like Singapore, Bali, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, where a rising number of Indian tourists are expected to travel in the upcoming months.

AIR INDIA TO OPERATE DAILY FLIGHTS TO TOKYO HANEDA FROM JUNE 15, 2025

Air India has announced the expansion of its non-stop service between Delhi and Tokyo Haneda, increasing from 4x weekly flights to daily flights, starting 15 June 2025. This move builds on Air India's recent shift to Tokyo's Haneda Airport (from Narita) on 31 March 2025, which reduced travel time to Tokyo Station to approximately 30 minutes. The daily flights will be operated by Air India's Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft.

SAUDIA GROUP SIGNS DEAL WITH AIRBUS TO ACQUIRE UP TO 20 WIDE-BODY AIRCRAFT

Saudia Group announced a new aircraft deal with Airbus to enhance its fleet by adding up to 20 new wide-body A330neo aircraft, 10 of which are firm orders for flyadeal, the Group's low-cost carrier. Renowned for its efficiency, long range, and exceptional versatility, the A330neo model aligns perfectly with the Group's strategy to broaden its operational reach and introduce more destinations. Deliveries are scheduled to begin in 2027, with the final aircraft arriving in 2029.



VFS GLOBAL LAUNCHES CSP ASSISTANCE SERVICE FOR GERMANY VISA APPLICANTS IN BENGALURU AND KOCHI

VFS Global has introduced its optional CSP Assistance Service for student and vocational training visa applicants for Germany in Bengaluru and Kochi. This new service aims to provide applicants with end-to-end support in registering and submitting their visa applications on the Consular Services Portal (CSP). As part of the offering, applicants can book appointments at VFS Global centres to receive step-by-step assistance with registration, completing the online visa application form, and scanning and uploading the required documents.



AIRASIA INTRODUCES AUTO VISA CHECK FEATURE FOR SEAMLESS ONLINE CHECK-IN

AirAsia has introduced a new Auto Visa Check (AVC) feature on the AirAsia MOVE app and airasia.com, enabling seamless online check-in for international routes that require a visa and Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA). With this innovative AVC feature, guests can verify their visa in real time during online check in, up to 14 days and until one (1) hour before scheduled departure time, from the comfort of their home or while on the go.



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DR. JYOTSNA SURI

Driving change in Indian Hospitality

*In this exclusive conversation with **BOTT**, Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson & Managing Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, shares her insights on the group's performance, the evolution of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), and India's growing prominence in global tourism.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray

How has the past year been for The Lalit Group in terms of business recovery, growth, and guest experiences across your portfolio?

The momentum that began post-pandemic has translated into a strong and sustained recovery—reflected in both occupancy and a shift in how guests are choosing to travel. They are looking for personalised, unique journeys that align beautifully with what we stand for: experiences that are rooted in culture, inclusive and Distinctly Lalit. Whether it's through our wellness offerings, community engagement, or heritage-rich hospitality, we've seen our guests connect with us in ways that go far beyond a traditional hotel experience.

You've been a longstanding supporter of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar. How have you seen the show evolve over the years, especially in terms of its global relevance and impact?

It's been fascinating to watch this platform grow from a focused tourism showcase to a globally significant hub for inbound travel. What I appreciate most is how the format allows for genuine conversations. Year after year, we've seen high-quality buyers, meaningful face-to-face interactions, and long-term relationships being built. It has helped position India as not just a destination, but as a layered, vibrant experience worth exploring deeply.

What, in your view, sets this edition apart from previous ones? Are there any new trends, partnerships, or focus areas we should be looking out for?

This edition feels sharper and more future-facing. There's a clear shift toward responsible tourism—whether it's sustainability, LGBTQ+ inclusion, or regional exploration. I'm also seeing more energy around niche verticals such as heritage wellness, craft trails, and immersive experiences. Everyone—from government to private players—is thinking about how India can stand out in ways that are meaningful, not just marketable. That's a very welcome change.

What are your expectations from this year's edition as a platform for promoting inbound tourism and strengthening India's global tourism brand?

India has so many stories to tell and a platform such as this is where these narratives find the right audience. With buyers from over 50 countries and thousands of business meetings lined up, the potential is immense. My hope is that we shift the narrative from just monuments and maps to people, culture, and community. That's what makes India magical, and that's what will keep travellers coming back. **BOTT**



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INBOUND TOURISM NEEDS A STRATEGIC PUSH

Industry Veterans call for Policy Reforms and Greater Promotion

Industry leaders share a cautiously optimistic outlook on the current state of inbound tourism in India, highlighting a strong resurgence in niche and long-haul markets. While volumes haven't fully returned to pre-COVID levels, traveller confidence is high and demand is evolving towards richer, more immersive experiences. However, they stress the urgent need for renewed government support, global marketing campaigns, streamlined visa processes, and stronger international visibility to ensure sustained growth and competitiveness in the global tourism landscape. Read on to know more...

Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray



SUBHASH GOYAL
Chairman – STIC Travel & Air Charter Group

Is Inbound Tourism performing better?

India's inbound tourism is certainly making a strong comeback, with Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) reaching 9.52 million in 2023—a 47.89% increase over 2022. However, this still accounts for only 87.09% of pre-pandemic levels. In stark contrast, many of our neighbouring countries have not only recovered but significantly exceeded their pre-pandemic figures. For instance, Thailand welcomed over 28 million foreign tourists in 2023, Malaysia received 4.5 million, and Singapore recorded approximately 13.6

million international visitors.

This calls for serious introspection. It is unfortunate that despite offering so much more in terms of natural and cultural diversity, India lags behind. We boast 74% of the Himalayan ranges—the most stunning and majestic mountain ranges in the world—and a vast 7,500 km coastline. Yet, major international cruise ships continue to bypass Indian ports, highlighting the untapped potential in our tourism infrastructure.

Strategy or Action Plan needed

To sustain and accelerate inbound tourism, India needs a practical and holistic approach. First and foremost, destination marketing needs a refresh. Campaigns like “Incredible India” should be modernised to appeal to a younger, more digitally inclined



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audience, with tailored messaging for specific segments such as wellness, adventure, and heritage tourism. Air seat capacity must be doubled by liberalising air access through open skies.

India, being the birthplace of four major religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—has immense potential for religious and pilgrimage tourism. Launching dedicated charter services for this niche could generate substantial revenue, just as Saudi Arabia earns significant foreign exchange from Haj Charters.

To effectively compete with ASEAN countries, India must:

1. Reduce tourism-related taxes to a maximum of 5%.
2. Appoint private marketing firms in countries where our own tourism offices have shut down.
3. Implement open sky agreements with nations lacking direct connectivity to India.
4. Encourage all states with international airports to actively participate in global tourism conferences such as Routes, to attract foreign airlines. In return, these airlines will promote and market the destinations they fly to, boosting regional tourism.



RAJIV MEHRA
President, IATO

Is Inbound Tourism performing better?

Inbound tourism in India still needs a significant boost. A true resurgence can only be achieved through consistent and focused international marketing and promotion. The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) was deeply disappointed by the Union Budget announcement on February 1, 2025, which allocated a meagre ₹3 crore to the Min-

istry of Tourism for overseas marketing. This is a steep drop from the already insufficient ₹33 crore allocated previously.

This drastic cut means the Ministry will be unable to participate in or host the India Pavilion at major international travel marts. Nor will it be able to organise roadshows or conduct effective overseas publicity campaigns. Post-Covid, this has become an unfortunate trend, with the Ministry of Tourism relying on ad-hoc approvals from the Ministry of Finance, resulting in missed opportunities and reduced visibility on the global stage. In comparison, countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Mauritius invest heavily in tourism pavilions, giving them a competitive edge.

We have earnestly appealed to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Finance Minister to reconsider this allocation and provide the necessary financial support. We have also urged for the reinstatement of the Marketing Development Assistance (MDA) scheme for tour operators, which was withdrawn due to lack of funds.

India is currently operating at about 85–90% of pre-Covid inbound levels, but more aggressive and sustained government policies are required to realise the full potential.

Strategy or Action Plan needed

To boost inbound tourism, we propose the following initiatives:

- a) Active participation by the Ministry of Tourism in both major and emerging international travel marts, securing larger pavilions and offering incentives to Indian tour operators.
- b) Conducting overseas roadshows in key cities, in collaboration with local travel trade.
- c) Organising familiarisation (FAM) trips for foreign tour operators, international media, and influencers to showcase India's tourism potential.
- d) Reintroducing the Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme in its pre-Covid format.
- e) Reviving the SEIS (Service Export from India Scheme), or introducing a similar incentive to support tour operators who bring in valuable foreign exchange.



Domestic and inbound tourism should be developed in parallel. Domestic tourism not only helps identify and prepare new destinations but also builds traveller confidence. When foreign tourists see that Indians are exploring the country freely and safely, it reinforces their own willingness to travel here.



RAJEEV KOHLI,
CIS, CITP, DMCP
Joint Managing Director,
Creative Travel

Is Inbound Tourism performing better?

Certain segments of Indian tourism are doing well. Hotels seem to be running high occupancies, airlines are full (their profitability is suspect, though), and domestic operators are not complaining as much as they did earlier. But inbound travel is down. Looking at pre-COVID levels is such a false sense of achievement, where so many other countries have long surpassed that. As an industry, we apparently relish in

mediocrity. The fact is that our critical export component of tourism is floundering and there seems to be no public or private plan to revive it. Travellers lack confidence in the destination and even lack basic interest, that's to the absence of ANY marketing or promotion for the past four years. So, achieving pre-COVID levels is a decent achievement, but we have not and probably will not this year either. You can't expect results without putting in the effort.

Strategy or action plan needed

We often read about children being abandoned by their parents. The tourism industry seems to be following that storyline. While the economy was growing, there was a significant focus on foreign exchange-generating industries, with tourism being one of them. Now, that's evaporated. Despite the nation's forex reserves fluctuating, and tourism being an amazing low-hanging fruit to shore that up, we have been cast aside. All segments of tourism have their importance, and all deserve support. Any strategy cannot be single focussed, and a multi-pronged effort on tourism is the only logical way forward. All we need to generate interest in India is a strong overseas marketing effort. Advertising, a major social media push, videos, etc. We have none of these. These are the basics that can be addressed with a decent budget, but will make a significant impact. We ask for very little, for we have little hope.

PRATEEK HIRA
President & CEO
– Tornos, Indian
Frontiers & River
Rhapsody

Is Inbound Tourism performing better?

Even before COVID, the existing benchmarks weren't ideal for our tourism goals. Inbound tourism in India was already slow and has declined further due to various reasons. Neighbouring countries have taken the lead with focused marketing, while India unfortunately has reduced its marketing efforts by closing overseas offices and drastically cutting budgets. India has traditionally lacked a clear marketing strategy to attract inbound tourists and this has put India's position as a destination at risk.

Tourism is complex, and travellers have many destination choices. Increased fares and hotel costs have made leisure travel to India more expensive than ever before. Undoubtedly India is a great destination but we ought to realise that tourism is a competitive business that needs proper marketing to flourish. Geo-Economic and geopolitical issues are a major concern that may negatively affect international tourism to India. Therefore, India must act quickly to reposition itself in the inbound markets, yet again boosting inbound travel demand to India, which unfortunately is shallow.

Strategy or action plan needed

Each area of tourism has unique importance. While supporting domestic tourism is essential, inbound tourism should not be overlooked. Inbound tourism uniquely brings in foreign exchange, corrects the balance of payments, and raises living standards. More importantly, it serves as a tool for India's soft power and public diplomacy, enhancing our global reputation. As the world looks to India for solutions and holds it in high regard, neglecting inbound tourism at this stage would be a strategic misstep, undermining our national interests. Inbound tourism should be used to leverage India's soft power equity. India's G20 presidency offered a platform to showcase its tourism potential and soft power, but we did not capitalise on this opportunity.

Given the current situation with the government pulling back on inbound tourism, it's crucial for India to establish an independent tourism board. This board should be supported by the ministry but have significant private sector involvement. We should pass on the responsibility of planning, strategising, and marketing to this board to ensure consistent and measurable outcomes.





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SUNIL GUPTA
Director – Travel
Bureau, Chairman –
IATO North

Is Inbound Tourism performing better?

The resurgence of inbound tourism in India is not just promising—it's dynamic. We're witnessing a strong revival in traveller confidence, with many markets returning to near pre-COVID levels of interest and engagement. Bookings, particularly from long-haul markets like the US, UK, and parts of Europe, are pick-

ing up pace, driven by a renewed interest in India's cultural richness, wellness offerings, and immersive experiences. While we may not be uniformly across the board at pre-COVID levels yet, the trajectory is certainly upward. With improving global connectivity, flexible visa policies, and India's continued presence at international tourism showcases, I believe we're not far from not only matching but exceeding pre-pandemic benchmarks.

Strategy or action plan needed

To sustain and further enhance inbound tourism, India needs a two-pronged approach. Firstly, continued investment in digital marketing, better infrastructure, and training to elevate the visitor experience will be key. Strengthening partnerships with international travel agents, streamlining visa processes, and promoting lesser-known destinations will diversify and deepen the inbound footprint. Secondly, while the domestic market has indeed played a vital role in supporting the tourism sector post-COVID, the global traveller remains crucial to our long-term growth. It's not a matter of one over the other—inbound and domestic tourism should be seen as complementary. A balanced focus, with tailored

strategies for each segment, will ensure that India continues to grow as a premier travel destination both for its citizens and the world.

RAJNISH KAISTHA
Sr. Vice President, IATO

Is Inbound Tourism Performing Better?

Inbound tourism is certainly making a comeback, and most of our members are finally seeing reasons to smile. That said, the resurgence is still not at its peak, especially in the organised leisure segment, which hasn't yet reached pre-COVID levels. What's interesting is that the overall India tourism product has expanded significantly, leading many tour operators to surpass their pre-COVID revenues despite lower volumes.

While the government reports increasing arrival numbers, these are often compared to 2020–21 figures—not 2019–20—and largely include NRIs and corporate travellers. The good news is that travel confidence is high, and resilient tourists are returning to India. We are seeing positive trends in booking inquiries for the upcoming season.

However, incidents like the recent unfortunate attack in Pahalgam cast a shadow. For international travellers, India is seen as one destination, and tourism is often the first casualty of any geopolitical unrest. Several key markets, including the US, have already issued travel advisories against visiting Kashmir, impacting summer itineraries like Srinagar–Leh.

It's still too early to call it a full resurgence. But as inbound tour operators, we are resilient, patient, and committed to pushing forward—no matter the odds.

Strategy or Action Plan needed

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is limited in its overseas



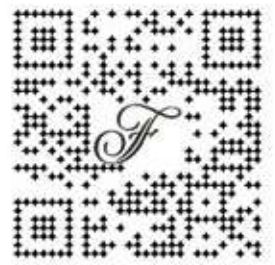
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marketing and roadshow activities, but the new interactive website may help compensate for the absence of overseas offices. Indian embassies, through the Ministry of External Affairs, have been tasked with promoting tourism in their respective regions. Early signs suggest that embassy budgets for tourism promotion may soon materialise, which is a positive step.

Meanwhile, we are in discussions with the Ministry of Commerce under the SEPS initiative for financial support towards overseas roadshows. Inbound tourism delivers significant returns to the government through large volumes and substantial tax collections. It must be prioritised—not sidelined.

The industry needs strong marketing support and government investment. While going digital is vital, physical presence, visibility, and personal engagement remain equally important.



SANJAY RAZDAN,
Hony. Secretary, IATO

Is Inbound Tourism performing better?

From a tour operator's perspective, the resurgence of inbound tourism in India is more than a return—it's a reinvention. We're witnessing a strong recovery, particularly in FITs, small groups, and niche segments such as heritage, wellness, spiritual, and experiential travel. While overall volumes haven't fully reached pre-COVID levels, the pace of revival

is promising, and the nature of demand has matured.

Traveler confidence is back. Tourists are staying longer,

seeking immersive experiences, and moving beyond standard itineraries. This shift offers operators a unique opportunity to craft more meaningful, experience-led travel programs.

Encouragingly, long-haul bookings from markets like the U.S. and Europe are on the rise, and interest is growing in destinations beyond the Golden Triangle. States like Gujarat, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, the Northeast, and wellness retreats in the South are gaining popularity.

Strategy or Action Plan needed

To sustain and accelerate inbound tourism growth, we need a multi-pronged strategy that's both market-responsive and forward-looking.

Post-COVID, support from the Government of India has been minimal. There's little visibility for India in key international markets. With India Tourism Offices abroad shut and responsibilities handed to embassies and high commissions—often lacking tourism expertise—our global outreach has suffered. Despite IATO's efforts across ministries and even the PMO, progress has been limited.

Reviving India's global tourism promotion is critical. We need a strong, consistent international presence through impactful digital campaigns, targeted roadshows, partnerships with influencers, and participation in major travel trade fairs. The 'Incredible India' campaign was a proven success and needs a robust revival.

Additionally, ease of travel must be a priority. Visa processes should be streamlined, and e-visa access expanded. We also need to reinforce India's image—not just as culturally rich and beautiful, but as safe, seamless, and traveller-friendly.

Regarding the balance between inbound and domestic tourism: the government's push for domestic travel during the pandemic, through campaigns like "Dekho Apna Desh," was commendable and should continue. However, it's time to refocus on inbound tourism, which is essential for foreign exchange, employment, and promoting India's soft power globally. Domestic and inbound tourism are not competing—they can, and must, thrive together. **BOTT**





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A Vision for Greater Connectivity, Empowerment, and Policy Impact

*As the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) prepares for a critical phase of evolution, **Ravi Gosain**, VP, IATO and Presidential Candidate shares key strategies to drive deeper government engagement, empower members digitally, and strengthen regional chapters. In this detailed conversation with **BOTT**, he outlines plans for building a policy think tank, expanding skill development initiatives across India, and ensuring that every chapter and member has a stronger voice in the association's future.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



smaller or regional members who often feel left out of mainstream benefits?

Given India's vastness, our membership is similarly widespread across the nation. To build greater connection among our members, we are launching a new web portal, which is nearing completion. This platform will provide each member with a personalized page accessible through a secure login. Here, they can create their profile and conveniently access all circulars, details of upcoming events, and other relevant information in one central location. The previous executive committee approved a budget for the digital promotion of this web portal, this will directly benefit all active members throughout India, regardless of their geographical location.

Furthermore, we have been proactive in enhancing the skills of personnel at all levels, including drivers, airport representatives, and middle management, through dedicated skill development programs. Looking ahead, we plan to introduce management skills programs tailored for senior managers and directors. While these programs have been conducted in major Indian cities, we are committed to expanding accessibility by offering them online, ensuring that even members in remote areas can participate.

You propose stronger regional chapter engagement and B2B networking—what specific mechanisms will you put in place to ensure chapters have real influence in central decision-making and not just symbolic participation?

Our state chapters are vital in maintaining IATO's strong relationships with state tourism departments and in supporting our members within those specific regions. Currently, these chapters have the freedom to conduct activities as they deem necessary after approving from central office. Moving forward, we plan to establish budget allocations for them based on membership size. This will provide them with greater flexibility to plan and execute activities smoothly within their respective jurisdictions.

Presently, several of our chapters are highly proactive, fostering excellent rapport with state tourism departments and organizing valuable meetings and training courses for their members. We are also exploring the concept of facilitating B2B networking opportunities, both online and offline, among members from different chapters. This initiative aims to encourage learning, engagement, and business collaborations. The specific mechanisms and formats for these networking events will be carefully planned and finalized in consultation with our regional and state chapter heads. **BOTT**

Your agenda emphasizes strengthening government coordination and forming a policy think tank. Given your previous leadership experience within IATO, how do you plan to deliver tangible outcomes this time where past efforts may have fallen short?

IATO leadership has been working very hard in past four years, negotiating with various ministries in government to get favourable results for inbound tourism. While our efforts have yielded some progress, the results have fallen short of our aspiration. As we look ahead, we aim to refine our strategies and leverage the experience of senior members and/or retired bureaucrats on policy advocacy and drafting papers by creating the IATO think tank. I believe their guidance will be invaluable in formulating more effective approaches to achieve better results. Ultimately, as an organization, our power lies in diligently pursuing our objectives, while acknowledging that the final outcomes remain outside our direct control.

You've spoken about digitally empowering members and enhancing skill development. How will you ensure these initiatives are accessible and beneficial to

TEAM 'CHANGE MAKERS'

promises to bring forth a 'New Energy' for IATO's future

As IATO gears up for a pivotal election, **Amaresh Tiwari**, a seasoned leader with years of experience within the association—presents a bold vision for change, inclusion, and digital empowerment. In this exclusive conversation with BOTT, he discusses the roadmap ahead, challenges faced in the past, and the promise of a stronger, more unified IATO.

Priyanka Saxena Ray



You've strongly positioned your campaign as a call for change and transformation. However, you have also held senior positions within IATO earlier. What systemic changes were you unable to drive then, and how do you plan to overcome those roadblocks now?

Thank you for raising this important point. During my earlier tenure with IATO, I served as an Executive Committee Member for two years and as the Honorary Treasurer for four years. During this time, I initiated the "IATO Run for Responsible Tourism" to create awareness about responsible and sustainable tourism. We also made it a point to identify and support one institution or athlete as part of this initiative.

As the Honorary Treasurer, I streamlined the financial structure of the IATO Secretariat and was among the first to initiate the demand for higher sponsorships. We were able to create value and showcase quality content to stakeholders, setting new benchmarks.

While there were many changes required even then, we were on the right path under the leadership of Rajeev Kohli, who brought together leaders from all walks of the association.

Going forward, we promise:

- A national campaign for inbound

- tourism with a global reach
- A digital-first IATO that promotes every member, big or small
- Stronger collaboration with the government and global forums
- A culture where every voice matters, and no member is left behind

You promise a digital-first IATO and equal promotion for all members. How do you plan to balance this with the financial and technical limitations that smaller members may face?

IATO must be a platform for all members, whether they are small, mid-size, or large tour operators. Unfortunately, creating digital marketing tools for members never received the priority it deserved, and today, this has become the need of the hour. If members trust us and give us the opportunity to manage IATO's affairs, we plan to - launch a new IATO website focused on unified India Inbound promotion with member listings; collaborate with digital influencers for global campaigns; use AI-based tools and data analytics to study tourist trends and share reports with members and set up the "IATO Innovation Hub" for digital tools, AI integration, and training modules

Our vision is to ensure that digital marketing, efficient websites, social media promotions, and outreach to little-known treasures across India are accessible to all members, irrespective of their size or resources. **BOTT**

We aim to bring change by:

- Changing the way events are done
- Changing the way conferences are organised
- Changing the way IATO chapters and regions are run
- Promoting education and training for all members
- Building an inclusive approach where everyone has a voice
- Encouraging women leadership within IATO

*With a sharp focus on enhancing India's global appeal, FICCI Tourism is actively contributing to the growth of inbound travel through strategic platforms, collaborative initiatives, and digital innovation. In conversation with **Rajesh Magow**, Chair, FICCI Tourism Committee, insights are shared on how events like GITB are shaping India's tourism narrative, the key areas to prioritise for attracting high-value international travellers, and more.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray

FICCI TOURISM

working towards advancing Inbound Tourism in India



A **s Chairperson of the FICCI Tourism Committee, how do you see the role of this platform in strengthening India's position as a preferred inbound tourism destination?**

GITB is one of the most targeted and effective platforms we have when it comes to boosting inbound tourism. What makes it stand out is the way it blends structure with impact. With over 11,000 pre-scheduled B2B meetings, it creates an environment where real business conversations happen. But more than that, it's also a space where the larger tourism strategy is shaped—where you see collaborations forming across borders, and ideas that align with India's long-term goals, including those under the 'Meet in India' initiative. The event sends a powerful message to the world: That India has a lot to offer for the foreign tourists as well as become a preferred destination for MICE.

In your opinion, what are the key focus areas the Indian tourism industry should prioritise to attract quality international travellers in 2025 and beyond?

To attract quality international travellers, India must stay focused on three broad priorities—experience, infrastructure, and sustainability.

Today's global traveller seeks more than sight-seeing; they are looking for meaning, immersion, and connection. India offers unmatched depth, with diverse experiences that span heritage, spirituality, nature, wellness, adventure, and everyday local life. The opportunity lies in curating these

offerings into journeys that are authentic, accessible, and personally enriching.

Infrastructure remains the backbone of tourism. While national connectivity has improved dramatically in the past decade, there is opportunity in strengthening last-mile access and upgrading in-destination infrastructure. Seamless movement and reliable services are essential to shaping a positive travel experience.

Sustainability is the third—and increasingly important—priority. Conscious travel is now mainstream. India must accelerate the adoption of green practices and demonstrate its commitment to responsible tourism through on-ground action.

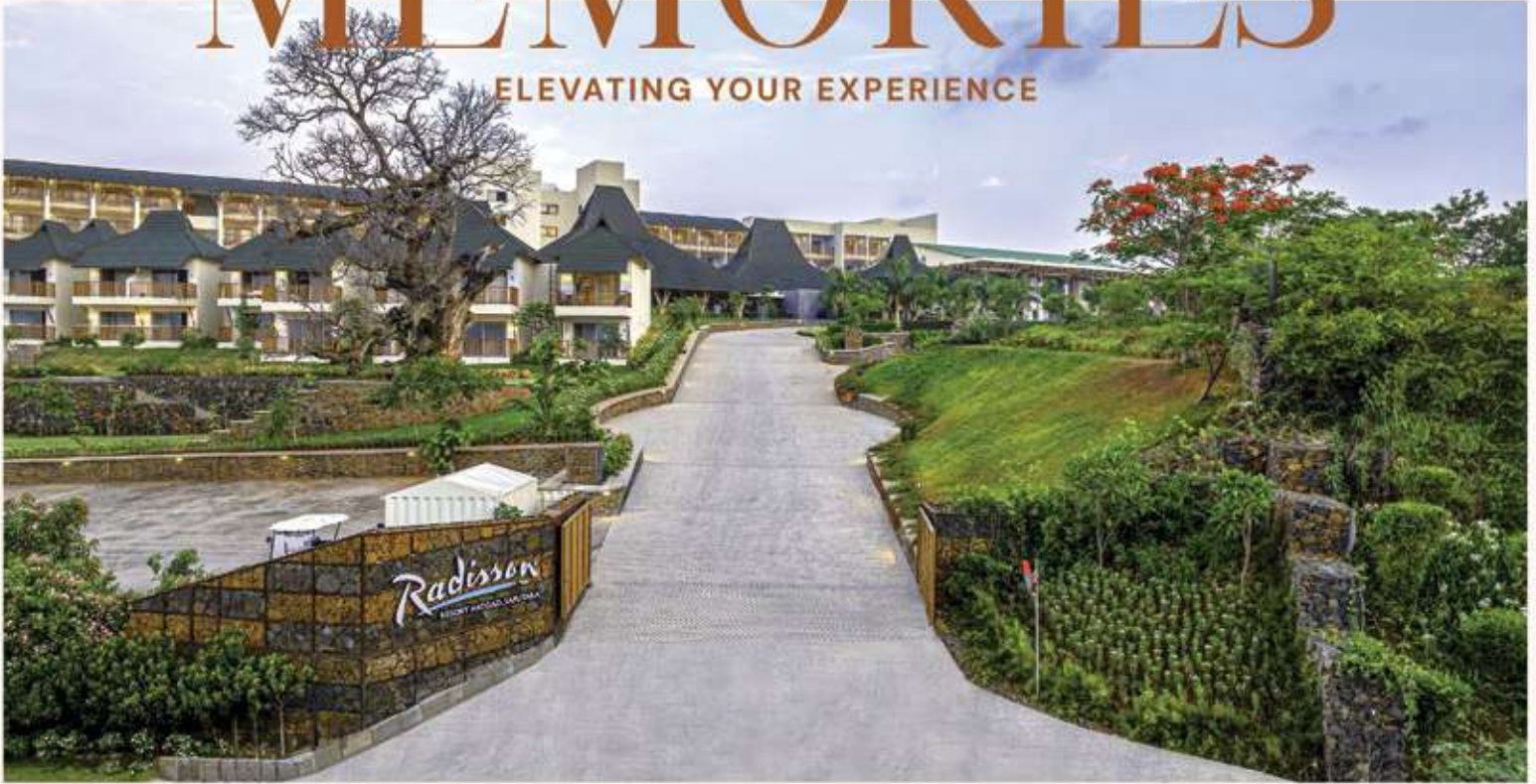
How do you see digital platforms and tech-driven solutions contributing to enhancing the visitor experience in destinations such as Jaipur?

Online travel agencies (OTAs) today play an important role in shaping how international travellers discover and plan their visits to destinations like Jaipur. For many, the journey begins with curated content, verified reviews, and integrated booking options across flights, stays, and activities. Besides, the broader digital ecosystem is steadily enhancing the on-ground experience—through tools like AR-enabled storytelling at heritage sites, multilingual audio guides, and local mobility apps. Contactless ticketing and real-time crowd information can also help improve access and navigation. **BOTT**

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EVOKE EXPERIENCES

Redefining Glamping Experience in India

*Transforming Rann Utsav into one of India's largest and most iconic glamping experiences required meticulous planning, unwavering commitment, and bold innovation. From installing essential infrastructure like water, electricity, and sewage systems to ensuring robust connectivity and comprehensive safety measures, every element was built from the ground up, showcasing a remarkable journey of vision and execution. The man behind it all – **Bhavik Sheth**, COO of Evoke Experiences shares more in an exclusive chat with **BOTT**.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Evoke Experiences has redefined glamping with Rann Utsav—how did you scale it into one of India's most extensive experiential travel offerings?

Scaling Rann Utsav into one of India's largest glamping experiences took strategic planning, commitment, and innovation. Starting with barren land in Dhordo, we built everything from scratch, water, electricity, sewage, connectivity, and safety systems, transforming it into a vibrant, functional destination. A key part of this journey was deep collaboration with the local community. From day one, locals were co-creators, not just participants. This partnership created jobs and income for artisans, performers, guides, transporters, and tour operators. Rann Utsav became more than a festival, it sparked a thriving micro-economy powered by culture, creativity, and community.

With upcoming projects in Ayodhya, Sasan Gir, and more, can you share insights into your expansion strategy and what makes these destinations ideal for Evoke's vision?

Our expansion strategy focuses on high-potential destinations that are culturally significant, environmentally rich, and currently underserved by premium hospitality. Ayodhya is seeing major infrastructural and tourism development, making it ideal for spiritual and

heritage-based experiences. Sasan Gir, home to the Asiatic lion, offers strong potential for eco-tourism and wildlife-based stays. We select locations where we can develop end-to-end experiential stays, from accommodation to curated local experiences, while creating economic opportunities for local communities. Each site is chosen based on accessibility, uniqueness, and alignment with our model of sustainable and immersive travel.

You're moving from seasonal setups to permanent properties—how does this shift support your goal of promoting year-round tourism?

Transitioning from seasonal setups to permanent properties aligns with our goal of year-round tourism. While events like Rann Utsav run for about 110 days, permanent projects in places like Ayodhya and Sasan Gir enable continuous operations in high-footfall destinations. Ayodhya is projected to attract over 50 million tourists annually, and Sasan Gir sees around 600,000 wildlife visitors across most of the year. This shift offers a more stable revenue model, consistent employment, deeper local engagement, and reduced dependence on single events. It also supports Evoke's vision of building a pan-India experiential hospitality brand rooted in culture, nature, and sustainability. **BOTT**

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ECKO Hotels & Resorts, a new age collection of hotels and resorts across India, offering a global touch with Indianness was launched recently with 100 keys in Devbhoomi Uttarakhand with three properties - ECKO Antarman Ganges, Haridwar, ECKO Rishikesh and ECKO Tapovan by the Ganges.

BOTT Desk

ECKO HOTELS AND RESORTS launches in India with 100 keys in Uttarakhand

ECKO Hotels and Resorts focuses on not only key aspects like quality and service excellence at its properties but also each destination whether business, spiritual or leisure. The hotels will focus on MICE and weddings in addition to spiritual tourism and corporate packages. The brand's tagline - 'Living in the moment' suggests; whether in business, spirituality or at leisure one has to trust and live in that moment to completely experience it, something that guests will experience at ECKO Hotels and Resorts.



ECKO Antarman Ganges, Haridwar is a timeless hotel nestled on the banks of river Ganges overlooking the Shivalik hills. Tastefully done rooms with a perfect blend of old-world design and modern-day comfort offer a serene retreat for guests. The property houses one of the largest private ghats in town, where resident guests can dip in and spend peaceful moments. ECKO, Tapovan by the Ganges is a modern retreat situated in the lively Tapovan, near the banks of the holy Ganges with premium rooms and state of the art amenities, and a bouquet of food and beverage offering including a 24x7 bakery and pizzeria, an all-day dining and rooftop pool, lounge and spa.

Perkin Rocha - Founder & CEO stated, "We are excited to launch ECKO Hotels & Resorts in Devbhoomi - Uttarakhand first. It is a significant milestone for our brand, as Uttarakhand is one of the only states to offer spiritual, adventure and wellness tourism along with several national wildlife parks and scenic mountains. I am certain that our unique hotels in Haridwar, Tapovan and Rishikesh will delight guests with engaging unique dining, stay and bespoke experiences."

ECKO Hotels & Resorts has a firm pipeline of properties in metros, growing suburbs and spiritual locations namely Delhi, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Tirupati, Ranikhet, Vrindavan, Amritsar and Shirdi. Additionally, the brand has plans for exploring management prospects in international markets like South East A. **BOTT**





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SERENA HOTELS

Crafting curated journeys across Africa and beyond

*With a portfolio spanning East Africa, Mozambique, and South & Central Asia, Serena Hotels has emerged as a pioneer in immersive, culturally rich hospitality. In an exclusive interaction with **BOTT**, **Ashish Sharma**, CEO of Serena Hotels Africa, highlights the growing significance of the Indian market, evolving travel trends, and the brand's continued investment in heritage, authenticity, and responsible tourism.*

Gunjan Sabikhi



With Serena Hotels offering unique and immersive experiences across East Africa, Mozambique, and South & Central Asia, how significant is the Indian market for inbound business and partnerships?

The Indian market continues to show strong engagement across East Africa, especially through our circuit-based safaris connecting Mara Serena Safari Lodge, Serengeti Serena Safari Lodge, Amboseli Serena Safari Lodge, and Ngorongoro Serena Safari Lodge. These properties are increasingly popular with Indian families, honeymooners, and leisure travellers seeking well-curated, multi-stop journeys. We are also seeing rising interest in heritage-rich destinations, particularly at Serena Beach Resort & Spa along the Swahili coast and Zanzibar Serena Hotel on Zanzibar Island. Guests are drawn to these locations for their cultural familiarity, coastal beauty, and historical depth.

How has Serena Hotels performed in 2024 across its diverse portfolio of safari lodges, camps, resorts, and hotels?

In 2024, Serena Hotels maintained a stable performance across its regional portfolio, with steady demand across city, safari, and coastal destinations. We continued to adapt to shifting traveller preferences, with increased interest in curated itineraries and experiences that deliver greater value for money. Our focus remained on delivering consistent guest satisfaction while reinforcing operational resilience in a dynamic travel environment. These efforts have

supported occupancy across key destinations.

What are your 2025 projections for occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR? What trends are shaping the industry?

We remain optimistic about 2025. Demand is being shaped by a continued appetite for circuit-based travel and culturally anchored experiences across East Africa. We are focused on sustaining value for our guests while maintaining operational agility in response to global and regional shifts. Serena Hotels long-standing investment in responsible tourism and authentic hospitality continues to serve us well in a dynamic landscape.

Are there expansion or renovation plans? And is there scope for Indian tailored offerings?

We are currently undertaking phased refurbishments at select properties, including Dar es Salaam Serena Hotel, Nairobi Serena Hotel, Kampala Serena Hotel, Kigali Serena Hotel and Zanzibar Serena Hotel. These upgrades are focused on enhancing the guest experience while preserving each property's historical and architectural integrity. In parallel, we are strengthening our appeal to the Indian market. This includes introducing tailored menu options that reflect Indian culinary preferences for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. We are also expanding cross-border itineraries that connect our properties across Kenya and Tanzania, offering culturally enriching experiences supported by seamless travel logistics. **BOTT**



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ATM 2025

concludes with record-breaking attendance

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2025 concluded on a high note at the Dubai World Trade Centre, attracting a record-breaking 55,000 attendees from 161 countries. Held under the theme “Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow’s Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity,” the four-day event once again reinforced Dubai’s stature as a leading global hub for travel and tourism.

Pallavi Sharma

Marking its 32nd edition, ATM 2025 welcomed participation from over 2,800 exhibitors—a 12% increase compared to last year. The show floor was abuzz with activity as tourism boards, airlines, hospitality giants, travel tech innovators, and government delegations came together to forge new partnerships, sign multi-billion-dollar deals, and unveil future-ready travel solutions.

India featured prominently throughout the event, with dedicated sessions focused on its booming outbound travel market and growing global influence. On the final day, engaging panel discussions spotlighted





India's rapid tourism growth—both as a source and destination market. The Hosted Buyers Programme attracted over 300 top-tier buyers from around the world, including a significant number from India, keen to explore new business opportunities across the Middle East and beyond.

Innovation and technology took centre stage this year. The expanded ATM Travel Tech zone, along with the debut of IBTM@ATM—a dedicated segment for MICE and business events—proved to be major highlights. The Start-Up and Inno-



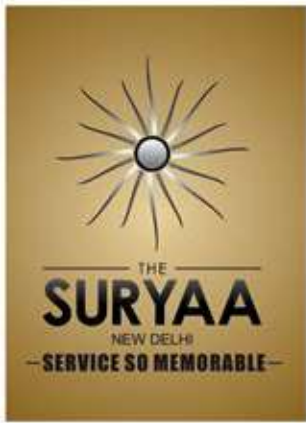
EVENTS AND MORE



vation Zone also captivated attendees with immersive VR demonstrations and next-generation travel technology.

More than 70 knowledge sessions, featuring over 200 global thought leaders, addressed key industry themes such as AI integration, sustainability, aviation expansion, and evolving hospitality trends. As a flagship event of Arabian Travel Week, ATM 2025 once again highlighted Dubai's critical role in shaping global tourism discourse—with India standing out as a key strategic partner in building the future of travel. **BOTT**





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YAS ISLAND

celebrates a record-breaking year



*In 2024, Yas Island reinforced its position as one of the world's leading entertainment destinations with a remarkable 38 million visits — marking a 10% growth over the previous year. Hotel occupancy averaged an impressive 82%, peaking at 90% in August, underscoring the popularity of its year-round indoor attractions. Theme parks recorded a 20% surge in attendance, with visitation from India rising by 44% and the GCC by 56%, reflecting Yas Island's soaring appeal across international markets. **Liam Findlay**, CEO of Miral Destinations shares more in an exclusive chat with **BOTT**.*

Pallavi Sharma

*I*ndia's role in Yas Island's 2025 Growth

2025 has had a fantastic start. January was strong, as expected, and since April, we've seen exceptional momentum. Compared to last year, we're tracking solid growth. India, in particular, remains our largest source market, and it's still growing — we saw a 44% increase in visitation from India last year and are seeing similar trends this year.

We've invested heavily in India over the past five years — from celebrity-led campaigns with Ranveer Singh in 2022 to our latest blockbuster Zindagi Ko Yas Bol campaign featuring Hrithik Roshan, Farhan Akhtar, Abhay Deol, which has been our most successful yet. This campaign alone received over 1.5 billion views and 5 million likes, outperforming even our global Chief Island Officer campaigns with Ryan Reynolds and Jason Momoa.

Global Strategy behind Yas Island's success

The UAE's population alone cannot sustain the scale of Yas Island's offerings — with four

theme parks and more in the pipeline — so our growth strategy was always international. India emerged as one of our key catchment markets due to its deep historic ties with the UAE and rising outbound travel potential.

There are only about 90 million passport holders in a population of 1.4 billion — the potential is massive. We also recognized the growing wealth not just in India’s metros but increasingly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Our 10-member India team works across sales, marketing, MICE, and weddings to tap into that growing demand.

What’s new at Yas Island

We aim to be one of the top 10 family destinations in the world, and I personally believe we’ll be number one. We’re expanding Yas Waterworld with 12 new rides this year.

We’ve also announced a Harry Potter-themed land as part of Warner Bros. World Yas Island, Abu Dhabi and recently launched teamLab Phenomena on Saadiyat Island — a unique immersive art experience. There’s always something new coming, so stay tuned.

India-focused Campaigns and Collaborations

Our India campaigns are both above and below the line — from billboards to front-page newspaper ads. We don’t just create visibility; we ensure con-



version through deep partnerships with trade. Tourism is a complex ecosystem. We work closely with our Indian partners through co-op campaigns, leveraging their distribution to drive actual bookings. It’s a formula that’s working exceptionally well.

2024 Visitor Milestones

In 2024, Yas Island welcomed 38 million visits, a 10% increase over the previous year. Our hotel occupancy averaged 82%, peaking at 90% in August, which speaks to the appeal of our year-round indoor attractions, especially during summer.

Theme parks alone saw a 20% growth in attendance over 2023. From India, visitation rose by 44%, while the GCC saw a 56% increase. These are strong indicators that Yas Island’s appeal continues to expand across key international markets. **BOTT**



RAHIM ASLAM

The visionary behind One Above's global rise in Experiential Travel

*The visionary leader behind the transformative and successful journey of One Above, **Rahim Aslam**, Founder, One Above Global DMC, has charted an inspiring path in the field of travel and tourism. A people's person, his unwavering commitment towards delivering perfection, creating a happy workplace and fostering meaningful partnerships and collaborations has made helped him achieve unparalleled success. In a candid and exclusive conversation with **BOTT**, he speaks about what inspired him to enter this industry, the milestones achieved during the journey and the vision ahead.*

Shreya Shimpi



*R*nown for elevating travel experiences and crafting happy travel memories, One Above Global DMC has carved a niche in the travel industry. Leveraging deep local knowledge and complimenting it with cutting-edge technology, the company has expanded its footprint to 195 countries. Founded on trust, integrity and exceptional service, they have stayed true to their mantra 'Truly Yours' and achieved remarkable success, scaling unsurpassable heights in the dynamic travel industry. They continue to make waves in the industry as they embark on a new chapter which promises to be a game changer.

Looking back on your journey so far, what inspired you to enter the travel industry, and how has it shaped you as a professional?

From my college days, I was a people's man. I used to be involved in a lot of social activities and sports. I thought tourism is all about people and about knowing and exploring various cultures. I felt like a natural fit and I think it's in my blood. My kids are also now following in my footsteps. We founded One Above in 2019. Our journey of the last five years has been a beautiful, transformative and fulfilling

Reflecting on 2024, what would you say were





the three highlights of the year for you—personally or professionally?

One of the most enjoyable moments this year has been celebrating my daughter’s wedding. My daughter is married now and it was the happiest moment for the family which brought us immense joy. Professionally, the company has been restructured and we are in a phase called as ‘Chapter Two’. A major milestone for us is the launch of a new portal under the name of ‘OA Global’. We believe this is something which is going to change the face of the company.

What is your long-term vision for One Above? Could you share a major initiative or change you’ve been proud to lead?

I always say that the long-term vision for me is to create a place to work

where people are genuinely happy. I want my colleagues and staff to be happy when they come to work. When they go home they should feel like coming back to the office again with a happy face. I want to create a happy office and a happy working environment and that is my long-term vision for the company. We have made significant progress in achieving this and in the next 1-2 years we are going to make this one of the most interesting and happy place to work in India.

What has been your proudest achievement to date, and what keeps you motivated to push boundaries in this industry?

My proudest achievement is my colleagues in India and globally who have been with me for almost the last 10, 14 or even 18 years. That commitment speaks volumes. Even my family says that people love me unconditionally for I am. They blindly trust me and I have never broken their trust. It’s this trust, loyalty and commitment that keeps me going.

If you could pick one dream destination to visit in 2025, where would it be, and why does it captivate you?

In 2025, I would love to explore more of Georgia and that part of the world. Georgia, Armenia has a lot to offer in terms of culture and natural beauty. If I have to speak about islands, my favourite destination has always been the Maldives. Whatever I am to-

day, is only because of this destination and holds a special place in my heart.

Travel comes with its ups and downs—could you share one of your most memorable trips, both one that exceeded expectations and one that didn’t go as planned?

All my memories have always been happy. Even if things go wrong, I try to make it right somehow. I have some friends with whom we have a group called as Holy Boys. Once in three years, we do a group. That’s a different out-of-work group that we have. Next year we are having a trip planned again and I am looking forward to it.

Could you tell us a bit about your family and share one cherished childhood memory that still makes you smile?

My father has always been my friend. He was a footballer. He is no longer with us but he always treated me as a friend. I have been a happy child. His memories continue to inspire me. I try to bring up my kids in the same way.

What is your vision for the travel and tourism industry in 2025, and how do you see your role contributing to its growth and transformation?

2025 looks extremely positive for us. It’s our new venture which my partner Vishal and I launched at the OTM. It is called as ‘OA Globe’. I would like the people to talk about it more than us. **BOTT**

QUICK SHOTS

- Mountains or Beaches – **Both**
- Favourite Holiday Destination – **Maldives**
- Window/ Aisle seat – **Window**
- Favourite Cuisine – **Indian (South Indian)**
- Hobbies – **Spending time with friends, playing football**
- Travel souvenirs – **Love them or leave them- Love them**
- Best advice for a first time traveller – **Explore!**

FAIRMONT

marks its majestic arrival in Mumbai

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, part of the world-leading hospitality group Accor, in partnership with Shrem Airport Hotels, announces the official opening of Fairmont Mumbai in April 2025. Redefining opulence and marking a new milestone in the arena of remarkable hospitality, the exquisite and regal Fairmont Mumbai is all set to be the next big luxury and MICE destination in India's financial capital.

Shreya Shimpi



The official opening of Fairmont Mumbai in April 2025 was announced at a press conference held for select members of the travel trade on April 8, 2025 at the Fairmont, Mumbai. The magnificent property stands as the city's grand entrance—a dazzling destination where grandeur and extraordinary theatre blend with the everlasting elegance of the 1920s. The press conference was addressed by Rajiv Kapoor, General Manager, Fairmont Mumbai, Richard Schestak, Vice President Operations, Asia Pacific, Raffles & Fairmont, Nitan Chhatwal, Chairman & Managing Director, Shrem Group and Smita Chhatwal.



Drawing from the golden age of New York's Art Deco splendour, the hotel seamlessly intertwines historic architectural finesse with contemporary luxury. This new destination features 446 luxuriously opulent rooms, including elegant suites, a dedicated wellness floor and 75,000 sq. ft. of one of the city's largest and most luxurious event spaces. Guests can savour globally inspired flavours paired with unmatched gastronomical experiences across five distinct dining venues. Advanced transformative wellness and age-defying therapies at the Blu Xone such as Cryotherapy Chamber, Red Light Therapy, Hyperbaric Oxygen Pod offer a holistic approach to health and well-being.



“The opening of Fairmont Mumbai is a significant milestone in our global growth and reaffirms our commitment to India; a market full of energy, cultural richness and opportunity. Inspired by the golden age of Art Deco period, the hotel offers a grand setting—from transformative wellness experiences to the city's largest and most refined event spaces. I am confident that the Fairmont Mumbai will immediately become a social epicentre - a place of celebration, hosting our guests' most extraordinary moments and unforgettable events,” shared Omer Acar, Chief Executive Officer, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts. **BOTT**



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Vietjet organised a Familiarisation Trip for twenty Travel Trade professionals across Mumbai and Delhi including journalists, influencers and content creators to showcase an experience of the recently launched Mumbai-Bangkok Vietjet flight.

Shreya Shimpi



The Vietjet Thailand Fam Trip organised by Vietjet was held from April 16 – 20, 2025. Vietjet has expanded its footprint in India with the recently launched Mumbai Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi Airport) flight. This inaugural service underscores Vietjet’s commitment in strengthening the air connectivity between the two countries. It offers travelers a chance to explore Bangkok and other places in Thailand along with fostering cultural exchange and business opportunities between India and Thailand

The flight VZ761 between Mumbai and Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) operates as a daily flight which departs Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (BOM) at

00:45 hrs and arrives in Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi: BKK) at 06:40 hrs. The return flight VZ760 departs from Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) at 21:05 hrs and arrives in Mumbai at 23:50 hrs (all in local time).

The Mumbai-Bangkok flight service was launched on December 23, 2024. The flight VZ761 has 180 seats categorised into two classes-Sky boss (premium economy) and economy. The facilities on board include Inflight meals. There is no inflight entertainment.

Day 1: Wildlife and a Luxurious Stay

Upon arrival at the Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi Airport) in the

early hours of the morning, we set off to explore the Khao Kheow Open Zoo. Everyone enjoyed a safari ride at the zoo, where we could see the hippopotamus, tigers, flamingos, giraffes, ostriches etc. The highlight was the aquatic section where the members had fun seeing the penguins and vibrantly coloured fishes.

Lunch was hosted at the Tiger Topia where we could see tigers through glass enclosures enjoying an afternoon siesta. The overnight stay in Bangkok was arranged at the Courtyard by Marriott Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport. It is a luxurious property with 454 hotel rooms and 14 suites within close proximity to the airport making it a great pick for luxury and MICE.



Day 2: Gastronomy and Entertainment

We took the Bangkok-Phuket Vietjet flight (1.5 hrs) and from the airport we went to a picturesque ocean-view restaurant for lunch located in the middle of the ocean, where we indulged in local seafood delicacies. This was followed by a stroll in the old town of Phuket. The evening concluded with an entertainment show at the Simon Cabaret and a delicious Indian dinner at the Tandoori Flames restaurant. We stayed at the trendy Cassia Phuket, a Lifestyle Apartment Hotel which is a haven for travellers seeking a combination of style and comfort.

Day 3: Mesmerising Beaches and Idyllic Landscapes

We took an exhilarating 90-minute speed boat ride to the world famous 'Maya Bay' located on the Phi Phi Island which greeted us with pristine emerald waters, white sand and a unique breathtaking landscape of dramatic limestone cliffs. The surrounding coral reefs are a paradise for beach lovers where the participants enjoyed snorkelling. We then made a quick stop at the Pileh Lagoon, Viking Cave and the Monkey Beach, all exotic spots with a natural splendour and charm. The day concluded with a visit to the local sou-

venir shops where we shopped for Thai keepsakes, spices, dried fruits, coffees etc.

Day 4: Retail Therapy and Sea Life

We arrived in Bangkok and reached the luxurious Siam Paragon Mall, the city's premier shopping and lifestyle destination, which is home to high-street luxury brands, mainstream boutiques, plethora of dining options, multiplex and a bowling alley. Adding to the list of attractions is the unmissable 'Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World' which is the largest aquarium in Southeast Asia. It is an underwater paradise in the heart of Bangkok featuring ocean tunnels, aquarium zones, feeding shows and a lot of exciting activities. The icing on the cake was that each of the twenty participants were given a 5000 Thai Baht gift card from the Siam Paragon Mall where they could buy goods worth that price across select outlets. This surprise was the perfect ending to the trip as the participants shopped till they dropped at outlets such as Sephora, Adidas, JBL, H&M etc.

The Vietjet Thailand Fam trip was indeed a memorable one offering the participants a fabulous in-flight experience and curated itinerary of amazing gastronomical experiences, adventure activities and retail therapy across Bangkok and Phuket! **BOTT**

Air Astana has celebrated 20 years of connecting Kazakhstan and India with the launch of new three times a week service from Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, to Mumbai, India's financial capital, on 20th April 2025.

Shreya Shimpi

AIR ASTANA

celebrates 20 years of connecting Kazakhstan and India



Marking a significant milestone of twenty years, the launch of the new flight from Mumbai to Almaty was announced at a press conference for the media at the Taj Mahal Palace, Colaba on April 24th, 2025. Aimed at strengthening the air connectivity between the two countries, the newly launched service will operate with a two-class award-winning A320 neo aircraft with 16 business class seats and 132 economy seats.

The new Almaty-Mumbai service is scheduled as follows:

- Almaty to Mumbai: Wednesdays at 09:05, Thursdays at 20:20, Sundays at 04:35.
- Mumbai to Almaty: Wednesdays at 15:25, Fridays at 02:40, Sundays at 11:00.
- The bookings for this can be made through the Air Astana website as well as on all OTAs and with over 3000 travel agents.

During a reception in Mumbai marking the launch of the new service, Peter Foster, CEO of Air Astana Group commented, "With the Indian econ-

omy growing strongly, Air Astana is delighted to launch services to Mumbai, a vibrant and flourishing metropolis driven by trade, finance and enterprise. Business and leisure travellers will now be able to experience the excellence of Air Astana's in-services when flying between Kazakhstan's and India's most commercial cities." He emphasized that India is not just a destination to fly but a key strategic market.

In an exclusive chat with BOTT he said, "It's a huge pleasure to be here to celebrate the inaugural of our flight between Almaty, the commercial and financial capital of Kazakhstan and Mumbai, the commercial and financial capital of India. We look forward to welcoming all travellers from Mumbai to Kazakhstan with our newly launched flight service".

Since entering the Indian market in 2004, the airline has steadily expanded its presence and currently operates nine weekly flights to Delhi from Almaty, with a regular increase in frequencies during the summer. **BOTT**



Winifred D'souza
Founder's

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UTEN

Empowering Travel Fraternity

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GSTIN No.: 27AUFFU9746E1ZS



Satyaprakash Gupta
Founder's

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At present UTEN has more than 8000 Travel Agents & Tour Operators, Hoteliers, DMC Suppliers, Cruise Liners, Forex Partners & Visa Partners pan India who deal in both Outbound & Inbound destinations. Travel Trade Partners under UTEN is growing day by day.

Since the start of UTEN on a regular interval we conduct online & offline Travel & Tourism Training & Presentations, Knowledge Sessions for our UTEN members by taking State Tourism Boards, International Tourism Boards, Cruise Liners, DMC Suppliers, Hoteliers, Forex Companies & Visa Service Providers. UTEN also conducts & organizes regularly a partial paid educational fam (recce) trips for our UTEN members on different destinations, hotels, resorts, attractions, theme parks, etc..etc.. for both domestic & international sectors.



UTEN Founder Teams Mr.Satyaprakash Gupta &Ms.Winifred Dsouza has an experience of more than 17 years in Travel & Tourism Industry which helps UTEN Suppliers & Hoteliers in doing networking during the time of this travel trade expo shows where they connect the right suppliers/hoteliers/forex/visa partners.

Till the date UTEN has conducted more than 200 Online & Offline Training, Presentations, Knowledge Sessions, Educational Fam Trips for which the list is also enclosed with this profile along with UTEN Events List till the date has been concluded.

UTEN works with a motto of Empowering Travel Fraternity.

Media Partner



Today's start-ups companies may become tomorrow's reputed firm

Today's reputed firm was yesterday's start up companies or beginners

With this concept we started UTEN in the year 2018 and registered it as GST compliance LLP company.

Agents from Travel & Tourism who register with us, we refer to them as UTENian's

We have UTENian's as new as 4 months old and as old as more than 30 years.



UTEN has organized online & offline events with Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Cruise liners like MSC Cruise with Visit & Offline Training Sessions, Offline Australia Tourism Board Destination Presentations, Costa Cruise Visits with offline training sessions, Offline training and presentations with AVIAREPS India on the product which they represents like UTAH in USA, Brussels Tourisms, Budget Car Rental, Offline & Online Training Sessions with TBO, Online Sessions with One Above DMC, NCL Cruise Offline Presentations through PSA Guidelines Travels in Mumbai, India and many more such online & offline training & presentations session organized by UTEN for their members.



HOSPITABLE HOTELS

BERJAYA TIMES SQUARE HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

Where urban luxury meets unmatched convenience

Nestled in the heart of Kuala Lumpur's vibrant Bukit Bintang district, Berjaya Times Square Hotel offers an exceptional blend of comfort, convenience, and cosmopolitan flair. Whether you're a business traveller, a family on vacation, or a solo adventurer, this hotel provides a seamless urban retreat with direct access to shopping, dining, and entertainment.





Prime location with seamless connectivity

Strategically located adjacent to the Berjaya Times Square Shopping Mall, the hotel offers guests immediate access to over 1,000 retail outlets, diverse dining options, and entertainment venues, including Malaysia’s largest indoor theme park. With direct connectivity to the KL Monorail via Imbi Station and just a 15-minute walk from the iconic Petronas Twin Towers, guests can effortlessly explore Kuala Lumpur’s attractions.

Diverse and spacious accommodations

Berjaya Times Square Hotel boasts 650 rooms and suites, among the largest in the city, designed to cater to various preferences and needs. From the cozy Superior and Premier rooms to the expansive Two-Bedroom Suites and luxurious Penthouses, each accommodation features modern amenities, floor-to-ceiling windows, and stunning city views.

Culinary delights for every palate

The hotel offers a range of dining experiences to satisfy diverse tastes. “Lotus at Berjaya” serves Malaysian, local, and international cuisines with vegetarian options, while “Samplings on the Fourteenth Restaurant” provides an exquisite

fine-dining experience with international dishes. For a relaxed atmosphere, the “Broadway Lounge” offers beverages and snacks with panoramic city views.

Ideal for business and events

Recognised as a popular business hotel, Berjaya Times Square Hotel features 12 function rooms and a pillarless ballroom accommodating up to 2,000 guests, making it an excellent venue for conferences, meetings, and events. The hotel’s banquet kitchens are certified Halal by JAKIM, ensuring suitability for various functions.

Amenities for relaxation and recreation

Guests can unwind at the rooftop Central Park on Level 15, enjoy the fitness centre, squash courts, or indulge in traditional massages at the hotel’s dedicated wellness centre. The outdoor swimming pool, spa, and various recreational activities provide ample opportunities for relaxation and leisure.

Berjaya Times Square Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, offers a comprehensive urban experience with its prime location, spacious accommodations, diverse dining options, and extensive amenities, making it a preferred choice for travellers seeking both comfort and convenience in the city. **BOTT**



SAROVA SAFARI ESCAPES

Untamed Beauty, Warm Hospitality

In the heart of Kenya's most iconic landscapes, Sarova Hotels & Resorts delivers an unforgettable fusion of luxury, culture, and nature. From the serene shores of Lake Nakuru at Sarova Lion Hill Game Lodge to the untamed plains of the Masai Mara at Sarova Mara Game Camp, guests are invited to experience the soul of Africa with all the comforts of modern hospitality.

*S*anctuary amidst nature

Sarova Lion Hill Game Lodge boasts 67 chalet-style rooms, each thoughtfully designed to harmonize with the surrounding environment. Private terraces provide sweeping views of Lake Nakuru, renowned for its flocks of pink flamingos and diverse birdlife. The lodge's commitment to sustainability is evident in its Silver Eco-Rating from Eco Tourism Kenya, reflecting its dedication to environmental

conservation and responsible tourism practices.

Culinary delights and Cultural experiences

Dining at the Flamingo Restaurant is a gastronomic journey, featuring fresh, locally sourced ingredients, including produce from the lodge's own organic garden. Guests can savour global cuisines while overlooking the park's stunning vistas. Evenings come alive at the Rift Valley Bar, where traditional music and dance performances



offer a taste of Kenyan culture under the stars.

Adventures beyond the Lodge

Lake Nakuru National Park is a haven for wildlife enthusiasts. Home to over 450 bird species, including the iconic flamingos, and a variety of mammals such as rhinos, lions, and leopards, the park promises thrilling game drives. For panoramic views, a visit to Baboon Cliff is a must, offering a breathtaking perspective of the lake and its surroundings.

Wellness and Relaxation

After a day of exploration, guests can unwind with a range of wellness options. The lodge features a temperature-controlled swimming pool, an outdoor spa offering rejuvenating treatments, and expansive lawns perfect for yoga or leisurely strolls. These amenities ensure a balanced experience of adventure and relaxation.

Tailored experiences for every traveller

Whether you're seeking a romantic getaway, a family vacation, or a solo adventure, Sarova Lion Hill Game Lodge caters to all. With its blend of authentic safari experiences and modern comforts, it stands as a testament to Kenya's rich natural heritage and warm hospitality.

The Sarova experience at Masai Mara

Complementing the Lion Hill experience is the equally enchanting Sarova Mara Game Camp, located in the world-renowned Masai Mara National Reserve. This luxury tented camp offers a front-row seat to the raw beauty of the African wilderness, particularly during the awe-inspiring Great Migration. With 75 spacious tents, blending traditional safari aesthetics with modern amenities, guests enjoy the perfect balance of authenticity and indulgence. Whether it's early morning game drives tracking the Big Five or sundowner cocktails by the fire pit, Sarova Mara ensures every moment is steeped in adventure and elegance. Dining under the stars, guided nature walks, and Maasai cultural experiences enrich the stay, making it a must-visit for discerning travellers seeking an immersive safari escape. **BOTT**



100 YEARS OF ICC

Charting the future of Indian Tourism and Aviation

By **Chander Mansharamani**



The ICC Aviation and Tourism Conference 2025 marked a defining moment in India's tourism narrative — not only because of the valuable discussions it facilitated, but also because it coincided with a historic milestone: the 100-year anniversary of the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

As India's only national chamber with a legacy of such depth, ICC has long been a catalyst for progressive economic and social policy. With a reputation for being forward-looking and action-driven, ICC continues to lead from the front, advocating for policies that shape the future of industries — none more critical today than travel, tourism, and aviation.

The centenary celebration wasn't just a commemoration of the past — it was a launchpad for the future. The event stood as a strong affirmation of the nation's commitment to *Viksit Bharat 2047*, a vision that aims to position India as a global leader. This vision is not just a governmental directive; it's a collective mission that requires unified efforts from every sector of society.

For Indian tourism and aviation to evolve in sync with this national vision, we must focus on a bold and clear set of targets:

- Welcoming 100 million inbound tourists by 2047
- Achieving 15 billion domestic tourism visits by 2047
- Transforming into a 12-month tourism economy, ensuring sustained activity year-round
- Increasing hotel infrastructure by

addressing bottlenecks such as high land costs and limited availability

- Rolling out comprehensive media campaigns across print, digital, electronic, and outdoor platforms to elevate India's global appeal
- Pushing for integrated tourism development through close coordination with state governments, and utilising Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to establish a robust hospitality framework

The conference brought together voices from across the tourism and aviation spectrum — policymakers, industry leaders, regional experts, and media representatives — all contributing valuable insights and strategies. The discussions highlighted that India's future as a tourism powerhouse hinges on innovation, collaboration, and sustained investment in infrastructure and talent.

What emerged from the day was not just a series of resolutions, but a collective sense of purpose. The future of Indian tourism lies not only in attracting more visitors but in creating experiences, infrastructure, and policies that make India a world-class destination year after year.

As ICC enters its second century, it is clear that its role will be even more pivotal in shaping policies and platforms that support this ambitious national vision. The energy, ideas, and shared commitment displayed at the conference prove that India is not just ready for the future — it is determined to lead it. **BOTT**



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Know what your stars say about May 2025



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 May 2025.



March 21 – April 20

Exercise caution in your career and financial matters this month. If you're considering a job change, it's best to wait a little longer. Family tensions may ease if you make time for shared experiences and open communication.



July 23 – August 21

Hardship is life's greatest teacher—don't let disappointment linger. Each challenge brings with it a valuable lesson, so rise with hope and confidence. Prioritise your physical and emotional well-being this month.



November 23 – December 22

This could be a career-defining month if you tackle challenges head-on. Recognition may come your way, provided you stick to your principles. Avoid high-risk financial moves and stay focused on your long-term vision.



April 21 – May 21

You are strong and naturally lead by example. Your support will uplift others around you, while your own ventures—be it business or career—are set to flourish. Your presence at home will also bring warmth and harmony.



August 22 – September 23

New learning or training opportunities will guide your career to the next level. Embrace them with an open mind, as they may open unexpected doors. Also, a short getaway with your partner may strengthen your emotional bond.



December 23 – January 20

Your creativity and multitasking abilities will shine this month. You'll be admired for your competence at work, but don't let busyness steal moments from your personal life. Make time for joy and connection.



May 22 – June 21

Prioritise your well-being and focus on personal growth. Adaptability and courage will steer your career in the right direction, but avoid impulsive financial decisions. A calm mind will lead to better judgment.



September 24 – October

Try to focus on the brighter side of things. Professional responsibilities may increase, testing your patience and adaptability. Avoid impulsive investments and bring structure to your daily life with healthy routines.



January 21 – February 19

A career change is possible and could lead to greater success. Be bold, but also wise with your choices. Nurturing open communication in relationships and staying grounded in your spiritual practices will bring balance.



June 22 – July 22

Your emotions will become your strength rather than a weakness. With a renewed sense of self, you'll unlock your hidden potential. Continued growth lies in lifelong learning and being open to new perspectives.



October 24 – November 22

Step out of your comfort zone and use your talents more proactively. This is the time to build resilience and push forward despite the odds. Honest conversations at home will restore balance and deepen understanding.



February 20 – March 20

Your strong work ethic and attention will elevate your professional standing. This is a good time to prove your worth, but be wary of financial traps disguised as golden opportunities. Mind and body wellness should not be overlooked.

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APPOINTMENTS

HYATT REGENCY JAIPUR MANSAROVAR

Hyatt Regency Jaipur Mansarovar appoints **Naveen Yadav** as General Manager. With over 16 years of extensive experience in the hospitality and tourism industry, Naveen brings a comprehensive mix of operational insight, strategic vision, and leadership expertise. A graduate of the Institute of Hotel Management, Mumbai, he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Hospitality and has worked with some of the most renowned hospitality brands. Naveen began his professional journey with Liberty Indian DMC/Paragon Conventions in Delhi, later moving into MICE-focused roles at Conferences and Incentives.



IBIS MUMBAI BKC

ibis India has announced the appointment of **Sandip Satange** as the General Manager of ibis Mumbai BKC. Known for his deep operational knowledge and a global perspective shaped by roles across three continents, Sandip brings with him over 14 years of rich hospitality experience and a proven track record in driving operational excellence, team engagement, and guest satisfaction.

HYATT REGENCY DHARAMSHALA

Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort has announced the appointment of **Amiya Mehta** as its new General Manager. With more than 17 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he brings a strong background in strategic leadership and operational excellence to his new role. As General Manager, Mehta will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the resort's operations. His focus will be on elevating guest satisfaction, streamlining operations, and maintaining the high standards that Hyatt is known for.



SKIL

SKIL has elevated **Vikash Kejriwal** as its new Chief Executive Officer. Vikash takes on the CEO mantle after a high-impact tenure as Chief Operating Officer at CABI by SKIL, where he spearheaded the transformation of a traditional transport unit into one of India's fastest-growing corporate ground mobility solutions. Under his leadership, CABI not only scaled operations but also earned national recognition, including the Excellence in Ground Mobility award at the Asian Business Leadership Awards 2024.

HOSPITALITY VENTURES MANAGEMENT GROUP

Hospitality Ventures Management Group (HVMG) has appointed **Gary Kunesh** as its new Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. In his role, Kunesh will lead the company's accounting, financial reporting, tax, risk management, and technology operations across both corporate and property levels. Kunesh brings extensive industry experience to the position. Prior to joining HVMG, he served as Vice President of Financial Planning and Analysis at White Lodging Services, where he managed business planning, budgeting, forecasting, board reporting, and cash flow projections for a hotel portfolio exceeding \$1 billion.



VOCO PANCHKULA

voco Panchkula has announced the appointment of **Neelabh Chugh** as its new General Manager. A seasoned hospitality professional with over 27+ years of experience with reputed brands like Marriott, Radisson and Lebuva. Neelabh is known for delivering exceptional results and creating value for all stakeholders while elevating guest experiences.



JAISALMER MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA

Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa has appointed **Sanjeev Kapoor** as the new General Manager. A dynamic and conscientious senior hospitality executive, Sanjeev brings over 25 years of international experience across Australia, India, the Middle East, and Thailand to this iconic luxury resort. In his new role, Sanjeev will oversee all facets of the resort's operations, bringing fresh energy and strategic direction to enhance guest satisfaction and operational performance in the heart of Rajasthan's Golden City.



PULLMAN CHENNAI ANNA SALAI

Pullman Chennai Anna Salai has appointed of **Vinodh Ramamurthy** as its new General Manager, effective April 2025. With an illustrious career spanning over 26 years in the hospitality industry, Ramamurthy brings with him a rich blend of operational acumen, commercial insight, and leadership experience that is set to further elevate the hotel's standing as a leading hospitality destination in Chennai.





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