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Letter from the *Editor's Desk*



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the June Cruise Special Issue of **BOTT** India!

This month, we set sail into the dynamic and fast-evolving world of cruise tourism, bringing you exclusive insights from close to 10 leading cruise companies represented in India. Each of these industry stalwarts has shared their perspective on emerging trends, the shifting preferences of Indian travellers, and how they are fine-tuning their offerings to deliver immersive, luxury experiences. Equally important is their focus on strengthening engagement with B2B agents—an ecosystem that continues to be the backbone of cruise sales in the country.

In addition to our cruise coverage, we bring you an in-depth report on The Great India Travel Bazaar (GITB) held in Jaipur this May, where **BOTT** was proud to be the premier media partner. The event reinforced India's growing stature as a top-notch inbound destination and highlighted collaborative efforts between stakeholders to amplify the country's global tourism appeal.

Rounding off this issue are insightful interviews with key hospitality professionals from newly launched hotels, offering a closer look at their vision, expansion strategies, and contribution to India's robust hospitality growth story.

Here's to smooth sailing and inspired reading! 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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AIR INDIA LAUNCHES 'FAMILY ASSISTANCE' CHECK-IN COUNTERS AT DELHI AIRPORT

Air India has launched dedicated 'Family Assistance' check-in counters at Delhi Airport to enhance the travel experience for families with young children, senior citizens, and passengers requiring special assistance. These counters offer personalized support, including help with baggage, coordinated seating, on-the-spot wheelchair provisioning, and guidance on immigration and customs queries. The initiative reflects Air India's commitment to providing a more caring and seamless journey, focusing on those who need extra support.

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES TO LAUNCH HYDERABAD FLIGHTS FROM JUNE 16

Ethiopian Airlines is set to launch thrice-weekly passenger flights to Hyderabad starting June 16, 2025, strengthening connectivity between Africa and India. The new route will operate mid-day departures from Addis Ababa on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, with return flights from Hyderabad on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Ethiopian Airlines offers over fifty weekly dedicated passenger and cargo flights to India.

AUXILIA NETWORKS APPOINTED INDIA REP FOR EUROPEAN TOURISM ASSOCIATION (ETOA)

Indian tourism consultancy firm Auxilia Networks has been appointed India representatives for ETOA, Europe's premier tourism association. With over 1,100 members from global brands to independent small businesses, serving 63 origin markets, ETOA is a powerful platform with a strong voice to enable a sustainable business environment for the development and growth of both European tourism and tourism entities in other markets.



FLY91 INTRODUCES UPI PAYMENTS FOR INFLIGHT PURCHASES

FLY91 has introduced UPI payments for inflight purchases, including hot meals and beverages, which can be pre-booked right until the time of boarding, becoming the first regional airline in India and



very few in the world to offer this convenience. FLY91 allows passengers to pre-book or purchase their meals at multiple touchpoints on the day of travel. They can scan a QR code placed at check-in counters, boarding gates or in the seat-back pocket once inside the aircraft.

KOREA TOURISM ORGANIZATION APPOINTS ACTRESS HINA KHAN AS HONORARY AMBASSADOR

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) has officially appointed Indian actress and celebrated media personality, Hina Khan, as the Honorary Ambassador of Korea Tourism from India for the term May 2025 to April 2026. The official appointment ceremony was held on May 9, 2025 at the KTO Seoul Centre (HiKr Ground), in the presence of Andrew JH Kim, Acting Executive VP, International Tourism Division, KTO.



UP LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST VISTADOME JUNGLE SAFARI TRAIN



Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in India to launch a Vistadome jungle safari train, connecting Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in Bahraich with Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Pilibhit. The service, currently operational on weekends, offers a unique wildlife experience through panoramic glass-roof coaches, showcasing the region's rich biodiversity. Plans are underway to expand the service to daily operations.



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SAROVAR HOTELS LAUNCHES 'BOOK NOW, PAYMENT JAB AAP AAO' CAMPAIGN



Sarovar Hotels has announced the launch of a nationwide consumer-focused campaign, 'Book Now, Payment Jab AAP Aao'. Designed to address emerging travel behaviour patterns, this initiative is conceptualised to stimulate the consumer confidence and reduce booking hesitancy by eliminating upfront payment obligations. The 'Book Now, Payment Jab AAP Aao' campaign offers greater flexibility and encourage advance bookings, particularly in the leisure segment. Launching ahead of the summer travel season, the campaign is valid across Sarovar Hotels portfolio and applies to all direct bookings made through the official website.



RADISSON EXPANDS PRESENCE IN INDIA WITH FIVE NEW HOTEL OPENINGS

Radisson Hotel Group has further strengthened its footprint in India by opening five new hotels in the first half of 2025. This strategic expansion underscores the group's commitment to delivering quality branded hospitality. The newly launched properties in Jamshedpur (Jharkhand), Yelahanka (Bengaluru), Koti (Shimla), Gaj (Punjab), and Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh) reflect Radisson's focus on diversifying its portfolio and catering to a wide range of traveller segments.

ITC HOTELS SOLIDIFIES PRESENCE IN TELANGANA WITH 155 KEYS WELCOMHOTEL

ITC Hotels Limited (ITCHL) now brings its fast-growing Brand Welcomhotel to Telangana as it announced the signing of an agreement with M/s KAC Palm Exotica Hotels to launch Welcomhotel Shankarpally in the Hyderabad market. Spread across 11 acres, 'Welcomhotel by ITC Hotels Palm Exotica Shankarpally' shall feature 155 guest rooms and villas with private gardens along with an all-day dining, a speciality restaurant, bar, pool, lounge, spa & kids club.



ASTER GRAND BY ZENQ OPENS IN SAKET WITH 49-KEY BLEISURE HOTEL

Aster Grand by ZenQ has opened its doors in the upscale Saket area of South Delhi, offering a 49-key, full-service hotel tailored for both business and leisure travellers. Strategically located near major hospitals, Saket Courts, Select Citywalk Mall, and corporate hubs, the hotel also provides easy access to cultural landmarks like Qutub Minar. With modern design, warm hospitality, and prime connectivity, Aster Grand promises a seamless stay experience in the heart of South Delhi.



THINK STRAWBERRIES TO REPRESENT SIX FLAGS QIDDIYA CITY AND AQUARABIA IN INDIA

Six Flags and Aquarabia Qiddiya City, the inaugural assets of Qiddiya City, have appointed Think Strawberries as their official representative in India. Six Flags Qiddiya City is the first Six Flags theme park to be built outside North America since 1971. Right next door lies the largest water theme park in the Middle East, Aquarabia Qiddiya City. Under the agreement, Think Strawberries will handle trade, marketing and public relations services in India for both Six Flags and Aquarabia Qiddiya City.



VFS GLOBAL WINS 'EXCELLENCE IN PROCESS OPTIMIZATION' AWARD

VFS Global's Information Services team has been awarded 'Excellence in Process Optimization' honour at the 15th BPO Innovation Summit and Awards 2025, held in Mumbai on May 7. The recognition celebrates the success of VFS Global's data-driven, tech-enabled service solution implemented across its global customer service operations. Operating through 66 contact centres, supporting 52 languages across 3,500+ websites, the solution has significantly improved customer experience, enhanced SLA compliance, and reduced case handling time.

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CRUISE TOURISM

The New Ship in Indian Hospitality

By K.B. Kachru



K.B. Kachru,
President, Hotel Association of India and
Chairman, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

India's tourism landscape is on the verge of a major shift. With the government driving large-scale initiatives to develop infrastructure, enhance connectivity, and diversify travel experiences, the country is steadily positioning itself as a global tourism hub. Among the most promising developments is the focus on cruise tourism—an emerging frontier that blends leisure, culture, and exploration in a unique format.

Given the fact that India's coastline is close to 8000 kms long, the launch of the Cruise Bharat Mission is both strategic and visionary. With plans to establish 10 sea cruise terminals, 100 river cruise terminals, and five marinas by 2029, it is set to redefine how travelers experience India—from its coastlines to its inland waterways. The mission embraces Ocean and Harbour Cruises, River and Inland Cruises, and Island and Lighthouse Cruises as three pillars. A comprehensive strategy combining digital ease, circuit integration, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships, marks India's cruise awakening.

The hospitality sector stands to gain as a key enabler as hotels, especially located in port cities and riverfront destinations, will play a crucial role in shaping the guest journey—before, during, and after the cruise. From pre-boarding stays and post-cruise extensions to curated local experiences, hotels will become an integral part of the cruise ecosystem.

This shift will not only create a push for business for hotels but also drive demand for ancillary services like transportation, F&B, wellness, and events. There is tremendous opportunity for properties in emerging destinations that are set to become cruise hubs. The promise of creating 400,000 jobs is another testament to the mission's scale and impact. With hospitality absorbing a large share of this new workforce, cruise tourism also aligns with evolving traveler preferences—slow travel, sustainability, and cultural immersion.

Cruise Bharat is not just a tourism initiative, it's a pathway to prosperity. As India sets sail on this new journey, the hotel industry must and will innovate, collaborate, and prepare to anchor its support and steer experiences that are as memorable as the destinations themselves. **BOTT**



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Shreya Shimpi



What makes Fairmont Mumbai ideal for a luxury staycation in the city? Please highlight any special experiences or features.

Fairmont Mumbai offers a one-of-a-kind urban sanctuary where the grandeur of 1920s Art Deco meets contemporary sophistication, redefining the concept of luxury staycations in India's financial capital. Ideally located near the airport yet designed as a peaceful retreat, the hotel features 446 exquisitely appointed rooms and suites that blend timeless aesthetics with modern comforts.

Guests can savour immersive culinary experiences across four distinctive venues: Madeleine de Proust, an Indo-French tea lounge; The Merchants, a dynamic global food hall; Oryn, offering bold Asian flavours; and The Hedonist, a sophisticated cocktail bar.

Families are thoughtfully catered to with

the Tiny Town Kids' Club, a dedicated children's spa service, and a kids' pool. For relaxation, guests can unwind in the rooftop infinity pool or explore heritage-inspired art installations on curated in-house art tours. Signature Fairmont rituals—ranging from artisanal welcome amenities to thoughtful turn-down ceremonies—add depth and charm to every stay.

Anchoring the wellness experience is India's first Fairmont Spa & Longevity floor, featuring pioneering treatments like cryotherapy, red light therapy, and hyperbaric oxygen therapy at the exclusive Blu Xone, alongside the cutting-edge Fairmont Fit gym.

Are there any special opening offers or staycation packages currently being promoted?

To celebrate its grand opening, Fairmont Mumbai introduces A Fairmont Feeling—an exclusive staycation package that immerses guests in the hotel's signature blend of Art Deco elegance, destination dining, and science-based wellness.

Available throughout the week until 31st December 2025, and priced just ₹2,000 above BAR, the package includes a host of indulgent benefits: complimentary buffet breakfast and dinner at The Merchants, cocktail hours at Fairmont Gold, ₹3,000 hotel credit, complimentary soft mini-bar, four pieces of laundry, and flexible check-in/out timings.

Guests also enjoy two-way airport transfers or pick-up/drop within a 10 km radius, 15% savings on signature dining and treatments at Fairmont Spa & Longevity, and a complimentary upgrade to a premium room (subject to availability). **BOTT**



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5* Expedition Cruise



STIC GROUP

Demystifying cruising and positioning it as a mainstream travel choice

Isha Goyal, CEO of STIC Group, is championing the cruise revolution in India. With STIC representing eight prestigious cruise brands in the country, she urges travel partners to tap into this booming segment, promising full support. “The world is your ocean,” she says, “and STIC is bringing it closer.”

Priyanka Saxena Ray



Currently, STIC is the GSA/representative in India for eight prestigious cruise companies. Could you give us a brief overview of each of these brands and what makes them unique in their offerings?

At STIC Travel Group, we represent a portfolio of cruise brands that cater to every category of Indian travellers—from explorers and families to culture-seekers and luxury connoisseurs. Each of the eight brands brings something unique, with product-market relevance and potential for scale in India.

- **Albatros Expeditions** is ideal for intrepid travellers looking to explore the ends of the Earth—from Antarctica to the Arctic and Greenland. It stands out for the Indian market with its approval to host an Indian chef onboard, catering to vegetarian, Jain, and special interest groups who want adventure without compromising dietary preferences.

- **Celestyal Cruises** offers rich cultural immersion across the Mediterranean and is gaining rapid interest in India for its Middle East sailings, including Christmas, New Year, and Formula 1-themed itineraries. With warm hospitality, shorter voyages, and great value, it's ideal for FITs and affinity groups seeking a celebratory or cultural cruise experience.
- **Holland America Line** combines heritage and sophistication. Known for its elegant mid-sized ships and immersive destination programming, HAL appeals strongly to mature Indian travellers who seek thoughtful exploration—whether in Alaska, the Mediterranean, or beyond.
- **Disney Cruise Line** is a benchmark for family cruising. The upcoming Disney Adventure, set to homeport in Southeast Asia, opens exciting new possibilities for Indian families and multigenerational groups to access the Disney magic more easily than ever before—with



everything from themed dining to character experiences and Broadway-calibre shows.

- **Ponant** is a leader in luxury polar expedition cruising, with a focus on sustainability and intimate exploration. Its voyages to Antarctica and the Arctic attract HNIs looking for immersive experiences, paired with French sophistication, educational programming, and discreet luxury.
- **A-ROSA** is Europe's modern river cruise specialist—offering scenic, stress-free journeys through Germany, Austria, France, and beyond. With flexible boarding, wellness facilities, and family-friendly cabins, A-ROSA is perfect for travellers looking to explore Europe at a relaxed pace.
- **Variety Cruises** focuses on intimate, small-ship voyages to offbeat destinations—from the Cyclades to the Seychelles. It's casual, immersive, and ideal for those who value cultural depth and a more personal connection to the places they visit.
- **Windstar Cruises** offers luxury and elegance on small ships, taking travellers to destinations large ships can't reach. Its Japan sailings and roundtrip Iceland itineraries are especially appealing to Indian travellers seeking an uncrowded, experiential alternative to mainstream cruising.

What do you believe is the biggest untapped opportunity for the cruise industry in India today?

India is still at the beginning of its cruise journey—but the potential is enormous. The real opportunity lies in demystifying cruising and positioning it as a mainstream, all-occasion travel choice—just like a Europe trip or a beach resort vacation. With the right

packaging, partnerships, and education, cruise holidays can become an annual habit rather than a once-in-a-lifetime event. Another untapped segment is special interest groups—wellness, music, spiritual, alumni, and milestone travel—all of which are a perfect fit for thematic cruising. The key is to shift mindsets, and that's where we're focusing.

Can you share insights on how the Indian outbound cruise market is maturing and which segments (luxury, expedition, family, etc.) are gaining the most traction?

The Indian cruise traveller is no longer just a first-timer testing the waters. We're seeing growth across three exciting segments:

- **Expedition cruising** is on the rise—especially among HNIs and well-travelled explorers seeking immersive, off-grid destinations. The polar regions are no longer out of reach.
- **Cultural and heritage cruising** is growing, with mature travellers choosing itineraries that offer rich local engagement, history, and depth. Cruises like Celestyal and Holland America thrive in this space.
- **Family and multigenerational cruising** continues to be a dominant segment, especially with brands like Disney and Holland America Line. It's no longer limited to families with young kids—older parents, teenagers, and grandparents are all on board.

What are some of the key challenges STIC faces in promoting cruises in India, and how are you working to overcome them?

- Cruising in India still battles a few

perception gaps—many see it as either too expensive, too foreign, or just a floating hotel. Add to that limited direct connectivity to key ports and a lack of cruise-specific awareness among general travel agents.

To tackle this, we're focusing on:

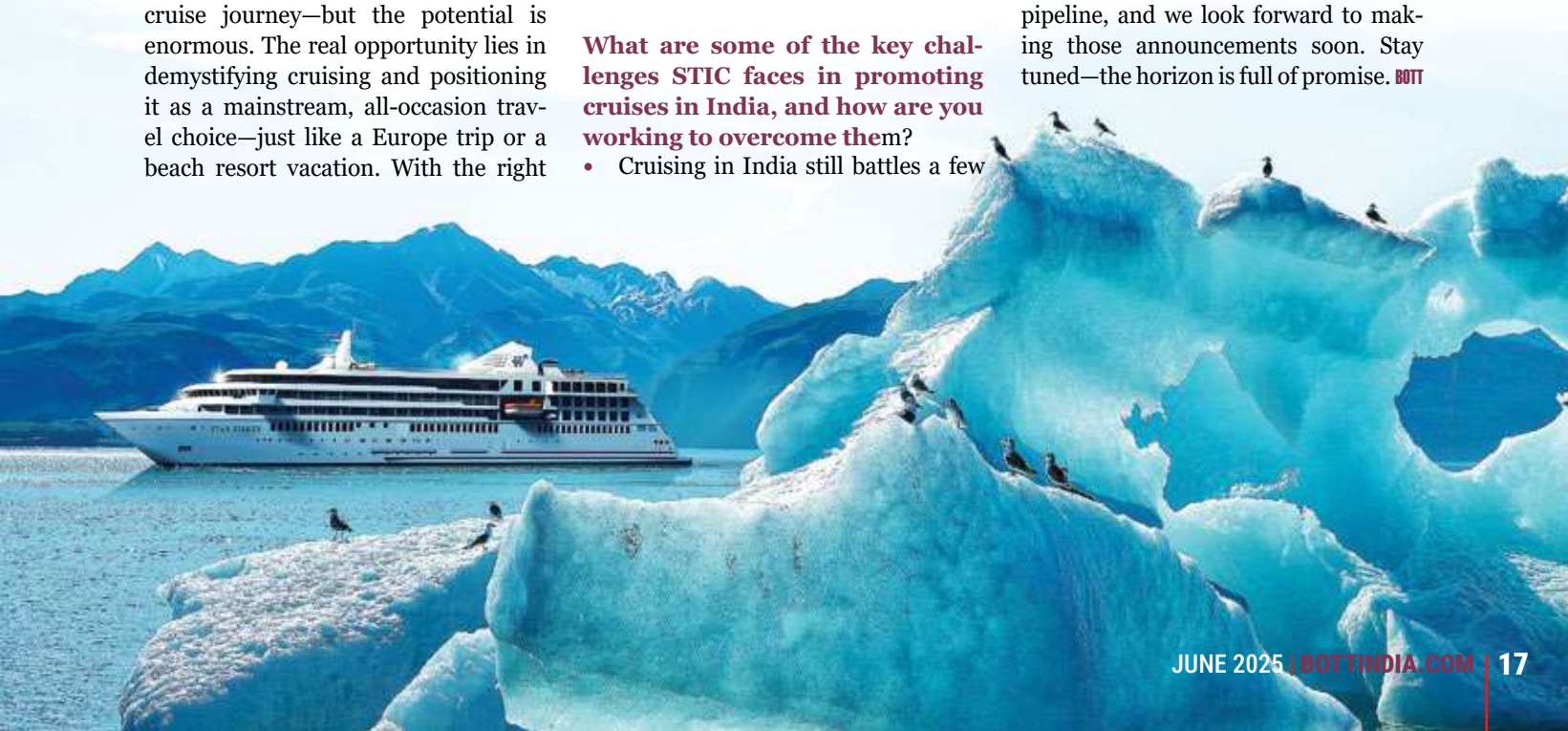
- Educating the trade and travellers—positioning cruising as a value-rich, all-inclusive holiday with something for everyone.
- Localized marketing—creating India-relevant content, itineraries, and promotions.
- Bringing the product closer to home—by promoting regional options like Celestyal, and offering end-to-end support that removes complexity.
- Our aim is to normalize cruising as a preferred travel choice, not just a novelty—and we're getting there, one sail at a time.

Looking ahead, do you foresee any new cruise lines joining your portfolio? Are there any exciting partnerships or announcements on the horizon?

Absolutely. At STIC, we're always in active conversations with innovative and like-minded cruise brands that see strong potential in the Indian outbound market.

Our goal is to continuously diversify our portfolio—whether through new luxury entrants, regional cruise concepts, or thematic sailings that cater to evolving Indian tastes.

While we can't reveal names just yet, some exciting partnerships are in the pipeline, and we look forward to making those announcements soon. Stay tuned—the horizon is full of promise. **BOTT**



CLICKMYCRUISE

A one-stop shop for all your Cruising Adventures

With over twelve years of industry expertise, ClickMyCruise, a Lotus Destinations company, has established itself as a trusted partner for premium cruise experiences worldwide. The company boasts direct partnerships with top ocean cruise lines such as Costa Cruises, MSC, Explora Journeys, Carnival, and niche luxury ships like Poseidon for Polar expeditions. **Nalini Gupta** – Managing Director, ClickMyCruise & Lotus Destinations, and **Vasundhara Gupta** – Director, ClickMyCruise, share insights in a **BOTT** exclusive.

Shreya Shimpi



Nalini Gupta,
Managing Director, ClickMyCruise &
Lotus Destinations



Vasundhara Gupta,
Director, ClickMyCruise

How has the past year shaped the cruise business in India, and what key shifts have you observed in traveller preferences or booking patterns?

There's been a clear shift towards longer and more immersive cruise holidays. Earlier, Indians mostly opted for 2–3 night sailings, but now they're increasingly open to 5–7 night itineraries and even back-to-back cruises. While Singapore once dominated cruise travel from India, there's now growing interest in the Middle East, Thailand, and Japan—offering varied experiences closer to home. Europe, of course, remains a perennial favourite.

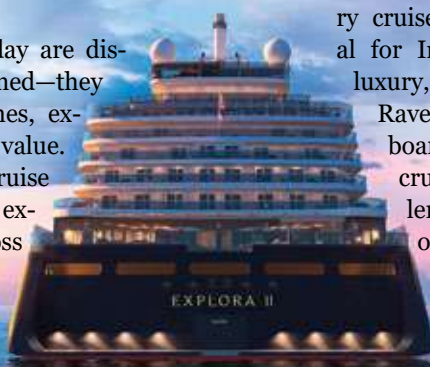
What are your expectations for the upcoming season?

Indian travellers today are discerning and well-informed—they seek the best cruise lines, exciting routes, and great value. That's where ClickMyCruise comes in. We curate exceptional sailings across

Europe, the USA, the Middle East, Asia, and even niche destinations like the Arctic and Antarctica. Whether you're a first-timer or a seasoned cruiser, we help find the perfect voyage to match your preferences, timeline, and travel goals. We're also seeing a rise in milestone celebrations on cruises—anniversaries, birthdays, pre-wedding rituals, and weddings—where guests enjoy multiple experiences in one seamless setting.

Are there any new itineraries, onboard experiences, or India-specific strategies your brand is introducing?

Absolutely. We're especially excited about our partnership with Explora Journeys, a luxury cruise brand under the MSC Group. It's ideal for Indian travellers seeking slow, immersive luxury, exploring hidden European gems like Ravenna and Corfu, along with curated onboard experiences. Costa's Mediterranean cruises also continue to attract Indian travellers with their iconic ports and rich onboard offerings. **BOTT**



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CRUISE PROFESSIONALS

rolls-out 24x7 Digital Booking Platform to empower Indian travel agents and travellers

*Indian travellers are increasingly favouring experiential and event-led travel experiences. A very large percentage of youth in India including Gen Z, millennials and young professionals are showing a strong interest in cruises, while expressing a desire to go on a cruise within next 24 months. **Nishith Saxena**, Founder & Director, Cruise Professionals shares more about the trends and what new they are offering in an exclusive chat with **BOTT**.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



With Indian travellers becoming more cruise-curious, which destinations and cruise experiences are currently in high demand from the Indian market?

Polar Cruises have caught the fancy of Indian travellers in a big way – so much so that these travellers are bookings almost 11 – 14 months in advance – this is the only way that would ensure

that they could achieve their Bucket-List items when they want to and not wait for another year. In addition to Polar Cruises i.e. Antarctica and Arctic, there is a rising interest in Galapagos, Svalbard, Iceland and Greenland. We foresee that these destinations shall become extremely popular in the next 1-2 years.

Closer home, Japan is becoming in-



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creasingly sought after destination with cruise ships deployed for almost seven months. The itineraries range between 7-14 days and the ease of travelling in Japan, where deterrents like food, language and cost of land packages vanish when you are on a cruise. Princess Cruises has taken the lead in this region and is reaping the benefits with loads of Indian travellers booking cruises.

What are your expectations for the upcoming season, and how are you preparing to tap into the evolving Indian outbound cruise market?

We normally work way ahead of the curve – the business for the next 4-5 is already wrapped up. We're now looking at the remaining inventory in Antarctica for 25-26 and 26-27 season. We have immense focus on Total Solar Eclipse in 2026 which shall be visible in Europe on August 12, 2026, primarily in parts of Russia, Greenland, Iceland, and northern Spain. Most of the cruise lines we represent, have deployed ships in the region to witness this unique phenomenon from the ocean. This would be probably one of the most spectacular sights to be seen in the year 2026 and

many Indian travellers and their agents have shown interest in this. We expect our 2026 business to be a rich mix of experiential; phenomena lead and Hi-End luxury cruises. No doubt that the normal favourites – Alaska, Mediterranean, Norway, Australia etc. would continue to grow as always.

Are there any new itineraries, on-board experiences, or India-specific strategies your brand is introducing to better engage Indian travellers?

As always, our primary source of business remains our B2B agencies, who now fully recognise the value of including a cruise in every itinerary they create and sell. To support them, we've enhanced our online booking portal available through our website – www.cruiseprofessionals.in. This platform allows them to browse and book 24x7, offering real-time promotional pricing, availability, videos, and deck plans.

In a recently concluded webinar earlier this month, we showcased these tools to over 300 travel agencies. We're already seeing a rise in bookings through the website and are confident this will soon become India's most-used cruise booking tool for premium

cruise lines. All eight of our represented brands – Aurora Expeditions, Crystal, Cunard, Hurtigruten, Hurtigruten Expeditions, Princess, P&O Cruises-UK, and Seabourn – are bookable via this portal.

Thanks to our growing social media presence and search engine marketing, we anticipate more organic growth, even from seasoned travellers booking directly. The lines between B2B and B2C are increasingly blurred in a web-based business environment. This shift also helps prevent bookings from slipping away to overseas wholesalers with online booking capabilities.

We see this digital enhancement as a progressive step towards reaching a larger audience with round-the-clock service. Indian international travellers may need cruise information anytime, anywhere—our website ensures we're available instantly on their phones or laptops.

That said, we're not moving all operations online. We continue to believe in a hybrid model, blending digital tools with personal support. Our Cruise Counsellors remain central to our business, offering personalised assistance and expert advice that our clients and trade partners' trust. **BOTT**



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With a rich legacy of over 30 years, the StarCruises brings a modern, vibrant and innovative approach that will deliver a lifestyle-driven cruising experience to new generations across the region.

Naresh Rawal, Senior Vice President – Sales (India & Middle East) of StarDream Cruises shares more.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

STARCRUISES AND DREAM CRUISES

enhancing offerings with tailored experiences

*H*ow has the past year shaped the cruise business in India, and what key shifts have you observed in traveller preferences or booking patterns?

At StarDream Cruises, comprising StarCruises and Dream Cruises, we've seen a continued strong growth in India's cruise market over the past year, with rising interest in the Fly-Cruise and MICE segments. Indian travellers – including millennials and Gen Z—are increasingly drawn to cruises for their all-inclusive value, convenience, and immersive experiences. There's also growing demand from multi-generational families and corporate groups, making cruises a top choice for both leisure and incentive travel. Shorter booking windows, themed itineraries, and a preference for personalisation highlight the evolving expectations of the Indian market, reinforcing our strategy to offer culturally relevant and flexible cruise options.

With Indian travellers becoming more cruise-curious, which destinations and cruise experiences are currently in high demand from the Indian market?

With Indian travellers becoming increasingly cruise-curious, destinations across Southeast Asia remain highly sought-after, especially among Fly-Cruise guests. Homeports like Singapore continue to be popular, serving as a convenient gateway to regional hotspots such as Phuket in Thailand, and Penang and Melaka in Malaysia. These desti-



nations appeal to Indian cruisers for their cultural richness, shopping, cuisine, and short-haul accessibility. There's also growing interest in immersive onboard experiences, including themed cruises, entertainment-led sailings, and family-friendly amenities, all of which align with the evolving preferences of Indian travellers seeking both relaxation and enrichment at sea.



What are your expectations for the upcoming season, and how are you preparing to tap into the evolving Indian outbound cruise market?

For the upcoming season, we anticipate continued momentum in the Indian outbound cruise market, particularly in the Fly-Cruise segment. To meet evolving traveller preferences, we are enhancing our offerings with tailored experiences across StarCruises and Dream Cruises. This includes thematic sailings, curated entertainment, and a wide variety of onboard activities. We also cater to Indian tastes with dedicated Jain and vegetarian cuisine options, ensuring comfort and familiarity at sea. Our focus remains on delivering culturally relevant, value-driven cruise experiences that resonate with the Indian market and support sustained growth in this space.

Are there any new itineraries, onboard experiences, or India-specific strategies your brand is introducing to better engage Indian travellers?

To better engage Indian travellers, we're introducing a range of exciting new itineraries and experiences in 2025 across both StarCruises and Dream Cruises. The Genting Dream will continue to homeport in Singapore, offering popular 2- and 3-Night cruises to Southeast Asian destinations. Our pathfinder ship, the Star Voyager, will launch new sailings including 4 Night cruises between Singapore and Ho Chi Minh City, 3 Night sailings to Melaka and Medan, and a summer deployment from Hong Kong (21 June to 31 August) with voyages to Okinawa, Japan, and Taiwan. We're also expanding in the Taiwan Fly-Cruise market, offering more sailings to Japan. These diverse options reflect our commitment to offering Indian guests a variety of accessible and memorable cruise experiences. **BOTT**



CORDELIA CRUISES

Emerging as a perfect destination for milestone celebrations

Cruising is no longer seen as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is becoming a platform for all kinds of occasions. From milestone celebrations and school groups to corporate offsites, Indians are embracing cruising as a destination in itself, not just a mode of travel.

Jurgen Bailom - President & CEO of Waterways Leisure Tourism, Cordelia Cruises shares more.

Amit Bhasin



Which destinations and cruise experiences are currently in high demand from the Indian market?

Travelers are now seeking cruise routes that offer the thrill of discovery without the hassle of complicated travel planning. That's why destinations like Lakshadweep, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia are gaining momentum. Close to home, visa-friendly, and yet aspirational.

But what's equally important is how the onboard experience resonates. Travellers are no longer content with generic "international" cruising, they want cruise vacations that reflect their tastes and traditions. From South Indian breakfasts to Bollywood dance nights, the demand is for culturally immersive, Indianised experiences that still feel premium and aspirational.

What are your expectations for the upcoming season, and how are you preparing to tap into the evolving Indian outbound cruise market?

We see the next season as a bridge between growing interest and long-term cruise loyalty. As Indian travellers begin to repeat their cruise experiences or recom-

mend them to others, the market will move from trial to trust. We're preparing for this shift by deepening our presence in emerging source markets, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, and offering longer, international itineraries that deliver unmatched value.

The outbound cruise segment still lacks Indian representation. With our new 10-night Southeast Asia sailings between Chennai and Singapore, we're tapping into that space offering a seamless way for Indians to cruise internationally, without losing the comfort of Indian food, service, or language.

Are there any new itineraries, onboard experiences, or India-specific strategies your brand is introducing to better engage Indian travellers?

Yes, this summer we are launching exciting new sailings from Chennai, including 10-night Southeast Asia cruises between Chennai and Singapore with stops in Phuket, Langkawi, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore. We are also continuing with our popular 5-night Sri Lanka cruises to Hambantota, Trincomalee, and Jaffna. These itineraries have seen strong demand over the past two years, especially from travellers in South India who are looking for culturally rich and accessible international holidays by sea. On the domestic front, we are bringing back sailings to destinations like Visakhapatnam and Puducherry—ideal for short getaways that offer a blend of relaxation, exploration, and entertainment. **BOTT**





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CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE sees surge in demand from Indian travellers

*Striking a chord with Indian travellers, Carnival Cruise Line continues to make a strong impact in the world of cruising. From the Caribbean to the Nordic countries, it offers exceptionally curated itineraries, making cruising a fun and memorable experience for all age groups. **Dipti Adhia**, Director, Discover the World – India, shares more in this exclusive with **BOTT**.*

Shreya Shimpi



How has the past year shaped the cruise business in India, and what key shifts have you observed in traveller preferences or booking patterns?

Carnival Cruise Line has seen remarkable growth in Indian travellers exploring cruise vacations. Cruising brings families together with something for everyone—regardless of age or interest. India is a rapidly growing market for us, fuelled by rising affluence, a thirst for experiential travel, and increasing awareness of cruising as

a vacation option.

While Indians have been cruising for over two decades, a segment of travellers has now evolved into cruise connoisseurs—exploring expedition cruises, river cruises, and small ship journeys. Meanwhile, many still enjoy short cruises as part of their holiday plans. Indian cruisers typically prefer 3–5-day itineraries, but there's growing interest in longer voyages of 7–9 days. Family holidays continue to be a strong trend, with a rising demand for luxury and personalised services.



Which destinations and cruise experiences are currently in high demand from the Indian market?

Indian travellers are increasingly seeking exotic and culturally immersive destinations. Popular routes include the Mediterranean, Alaska, the Bahamas, Caribbean, Mexico, the Middle East, Australia, and Southeast Asia. There is also a noticeable surge in interest for the scenic landscapes of the Nordic countries.

What are your expectations for the upcoming season, and how are you preparing to tap into the evolving Indian outbound cruise market?

India is a dynamic market with vast potential, and Carnival Cruise Line is committed to leveraging this opportunity. Our strategy focuses on building awareness, enhancing accessibility, and increasing affinity for cruising. We are strengthening partnerships with travel trade stakeholders—tour operators, agents, cruise specialists, associations, corporates, MICE planners, OTAs, and more—to extend our reach.

We are also rolling out training and educational initiatives to equip partners with the knowledge to effectively present Carnival's offerings to Indian clients. As the home of FUNSHIPS



and all-inclusive vacation experiences, Carnival's approach resonates strongly with Indian travellers who often travel in multi-generational groups and value shared experiences.

Are there any new itineraries, on-board experiences, or India-specific strategies your brand is introducing to better engage Indian travellers?

Among our wide-ranging itineraries, short cruises to the Bahamas and Caribbean remain favourites for Indian guests. However, we've also seen rising demand for sailings to Alaska, Mexico, Bermuda, and Australia. These destinations offer pristine beaches, breath-

taking landscapes, wildlife encounters, vibrant cultures, and the appeal of hassle-free all-inclusive vacations—perfect for families and groups.

Our FUNSHIPS offer diverse dining options, including Indian cuisine, which is especially well-received by our Indian guests.

This year, we're excited to unveil Celebration Key, our exclusive new destination on Grand Bahama Island. Designed solely for Carnival Cruise Line guests, Celebration Key celebrates the best of Carnival and The Bahamas. Once completed, it will accommodate up to two million guests annually and is already featured on itineraries from 10 U.S. homeports. **BOTT**

India's cruise tourism is witnessing an upward trajectory which is fuelled by the curiosity among travellers to explore unconventional and exotic destinations. To cater to the rise in demand, the industry is evolving and adapting to the needs of the Indian traveller and the shift in their travel preferences.

Kishan Biyani, MD, The ARK Travel Group shares more in an exclusive chat with **BOTT**.

Shreya Shimpi

ARK CRUISES

Shaping the future of Cruise travel in India



How has the past year shaped the cruise business in India, and what key shifts have you observed in traveller preferences or booking patterns?

Last year, the cruise industry saw a steady growth of 7-10% in the Indian market. Domestic cruises have witnessed a notable surge in the MICE movement. Asia continues to remain a predominantly last-minute booking market. However, Alaska and Europe see more of early bookings since the prices are better and the visas need to be planned way ahead of the travel date.

With Indian travellers becoming more cruise-curious, which destinations and cruise experiences are currently in high demand from the Indian market?

Indian customers are more cruise-curious today and are proactive in doing their own research thoroughly before booking a cruise and selecting

their cruise experiences. They are looking for exotic destinations and state-of-the-art ships. Thus the 'hardware' is as important as the itinerary. We have seen a rise in demand for the Iceland / Greenland itinerary reflecting a growth in the need for experiential and offbeat travel. Alaska remains an all-time favourite but owing to the visa delays for US and Canada, we saw a lower demand for these itineraries.

What are your expectations for the upcoming season, and how are you preparing to tap into the evolving Indian outbound cruise market?

We are enthusiastic about the upcoming season. The industry is excited about the much-awaited Disney Cruise deployment in Singapore from December 2025 and so are we! Disney Cruises has created a big buzz with its B2B marketing and B2C visibility generating great interest in the travel industry as well as the customers. A lot of enquiries are coming in for the same. **BOTT**





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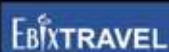
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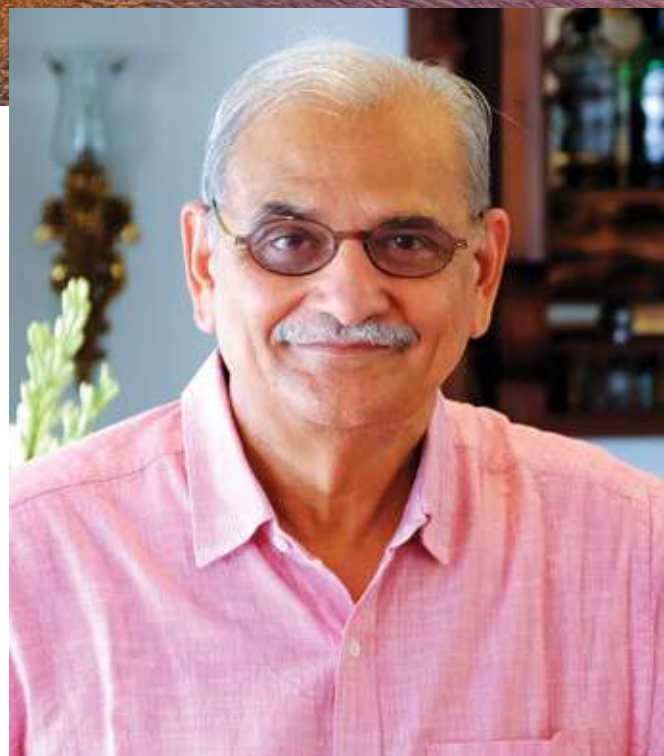
ANTARA CRUISES

embraces the rise of experiential River Journeys

Antara Cruises is witnessing a surge in interest from Indian travellers seeking unique cruise experiences. Popular destinations include the Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers, where guests can immerse themselves in scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage. Experiences that highlight local cuisine, traditional music, and community interactions are in high demand. Additionally, wellness-themed cruises that offer relaxation and rejuvenation tailored to Indian preferences are gaining traction.

Raj Singh, Founder & Chairman, Antara Cruises - Heritage River Journeys shares more.

Amit Bhasin



How has the past year shaped the cruise business in India, and what key shifts have you observed in traveller preferences or booking patterns?

The past year has transformed the river cruise business for Antara Cruises in India, with significant shifts in traveller preferences. We've observed increased demand for domestic travel and heightened awareness of health and safety measures among international guests. Experiences that connect travellers with local culture and sustainability practices are now paramount. Additionally, technology adoption in bookings has streamlined operations, allowing for more seamless guest interactions. Overall, these changes reflect a strong desire for immersive, safe, and eco-conscious



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travel experiences among our international clientele.

What are your expectations for the upcoming season, and how are you preparing to tap into the evolving Indian outbound cruise market?

At Antara River Cruises, we are excited about the upcoming season as we anticipate a continued surge in interest from Indian travellers. To tap into this evolving market, we are enhancing our offerings by curating unique itineraries along the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers, featuring immersive cultural experiences, local cuisine, and wellness retreats tailored to Indian preferences. We are also investing in marketing strategies that resonate with our audience, emphasizing the blend of luxury and authenticity.



Are there any new itineraries, on-board experiences, or India-specific strategies your brand is introducing to better engage Indian travellers?

At Antara River Cruises, we are thrilled to announce our new itineraries along the Ganges and Bhitarkanika Mangroves, designed specifically for Indian travellers. These journeys will highlight rich cultural experiences, offering curated excursions that include local heritage, cuisine, adventure and wellness retreats tailored to resonate with Indian preferences. We're also enhancing onboard experiences with traditional entertainment and customized dining options. Our marketing strategies will emphasize the luxury and authenticity of our offerings, ensuring we connect with our audience meaningfully. We are committed to creating memorable moments that elevate your travel experience with us. **BOTT**



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HOLIDAY MOODS ADVENTURES

Bringing luxury expedition cruises to India's evolved travellers

Holiday Moods Adventures, a pioneer in experiential travel, has been at the forefront of curating extraordinary polar expeditions for the Indian market. With meticulously crafted itineraries to destinations like the Antarctica Peninsula, Greenland and Iceland, the Svalbard archipelago, and the iconic Northwest Passage, the company is turning once-aspirational journeys into achievable realities for India's evolved explorers. In this exclusive interview, Arshdeep Anand, MD, Holiday Moods Adventures shares more.

Gunjan Sabikhi

How has the past year shaped the outbound expedition and experiential cruise business from India, and what key shifts have you observed in traveller preferences or booking patterns?

The past year has been transformative for India's outbound expedition cruise market. We've witnessed a significant uptick in interest for once-in-a-lifetime journeys to remote destinations like Svalbard (Norway), Antarctica, Greenland, Iceland, and the Canadian Arctic. Indian

travellers—particularly affluent and well-read segments—are now prioritizing experiential, nature-focused cruises over traditional leisure trips.

There is a clear shift towards smaller expedition vessels that offer intimate wildlife encounters, scientific lectures, and sustainability-focused travel. Our offerings through luxury operators like Havila Voyages & Swan Hellenic resonated with this audience, especially those interested in polar wildlife, glaciers, and the northern lights.

Travellers are booking further in advance, often planning 8–12 months ahead, and are seeking more inclu-

sions—like expert-guided shore landings, gear, and unique onboard enrichment programs. Another notable change is the growing participation of multi-generational families and solo women travellers, showing a maturing of the Indian outbound expedition market.

With Indian travellers becoming more cruise-curious, which des-



tinations and cruise experiences are currently in high demand from the Indian market?

We've seen a marked rise in interest in polar and Arctic regions, including Svalbard (Norway) – renowned for 24-hour daylight during the Midnight Sun and a chance to see polar bears in the wild. Greenland and Iceland – offering a surreal blend of fjords, glaciers, and geothermal wonders under both the aurora borealis and the Midnight Sun, depending on the season. Canadian Arctic and the Northwest Passage – steeped in Indigenous culture and stark, pristine beauty. Antarctica – still a bucket-list destination for India's affluent, offering untouched wilderness and scientific exploration. In addition to these remote regions, we are also promoting Swan Hellenic's repositioning journeys—an emerging favourite among Indian explorers. These longer itineraries, covering Africa, South America, the Mediterranean, and Transatlantic crossings, appeal to slow travellers seeking both luxury and discovery.

What are your expectations for the upcoming season, and how are you preparing to tap into the evolving Indian outbound cruise market?

We anticipate a surge in outbound cruise interest from India, especially in the luxury expedition segment. As Indian travellers seek deeper, more immersive experiences, we expect continued growth in demand for destinations like Antarctica, Svalbard, Greenland, and repositioning

cruises across continents.

To tap into this momentum, we are focusing on personalised, consultative cruise planning for HNIs and well-travelled explorers. We are highlighting small-ship expeditions with low passenger counts and high-end service and partnering with global brands like Havila Voyages and Swan Hellenic to offer exclusive itineraries. We are also, conducting targeted marketing campaigns around Northern Lights, Midnight Sun, and slow-travel journeys and training our sales teams to be destination and product specialists—essential when selling complex expedition voyages.

We're also enhancing our digital visibility and storytelling, using immersive visuals, authentic traveller testimonials, and webinars to engage discerning Indian audiences. The evolving Indian cruise market isn't just about scale—it's about curating the extraordinary. From the learning perspective for the retail agents, we regularly add & update content on our website so that it becomes easier for them to curate and sell.

Are there any new itineraries, on-board experiences, or India-specific strategies your brand is introducing to better engage Indian travellers?

At Holiday Moods Adventures, we are curating a selection of luxury expedition cruises that resonate with the

evolving preferences of Indian travellers seeking immersive and sustainable experiences.

We have partnered with Swan Hellenic to offer cultural expedition cruises to destinations like Antarctica, the Arctic, and the Norwegian fjords. These voyages are designed for discerning travellers interested in exploring remote regions with expert-led excursions and onboard enrichment programs. The repositioning journeys are not repeated for 2-3 years.

Aligning with our commitment to sustainability, we are promoting Havila Voyages' eco-friendly cruises along the Norwegian coast. We are developing itineraries that cater to Indian travellers' interests, including opportunities to witness the Northern Lights and experience the Midnight Sun, off shore excursions, like husky sledding, reindeer safari, king crab fishing, ice fishing, snowshoeing and the wonderful experience of visiting the Snow Hotel and not to be missed North Cape.

We are participating in roadshows and workshops throughout the country and conducting webinars and informational sessions to educate potential travellers about expedition cruising, highlighting the unique experiences these journeys offer.

Through these initiatives, we aim to provide Indian travellers with unparalleled access to some of the world's most extraordinary destinations, ensuring experiences that are both enriching and environmentally conscious. **BOTT**



UDAAN HOTELS & RESORTS

Carving a distinct path in boutique Hospitality

*With a stronghold in the Himalayan belt of North Bengal and Sikkim, Udaan Hotels & Resorts has emerged as a leading name in boutique hospitality rooted in regional culture and conscious living. The brand is known for its scenic properties, unwavering service standards, and pure vegetarian offerings — a rarity in the hospitality sector. In this candid interaction, the leadership at Udaan shares insights into their operational philosophy, challenges of high-altitude hospitality, sustainability practices, and their roadmap for future growth across Northeast India. **Ajay Wadhawan**, Executive Director AIR iQ and Udaan Hotels and Resorts shares more.*

Gunjan Sabikhi





What inspired Udaan Hotels to focus exclusively on the Himalayan region, particularly in West Bengal and Sikkim?

Our Promoters and Managing Directors — Nishikant Agarwal and Sashikant Agarwal — are based in Siliguri, the gateway to all destinations where our properties are located. This geographic advantage made it operationally convenient and strategically sound to first strengthen our base in North Bengal and Sikkim before exploring other destinations in Northeast India.

Who is your core customer base — are you targeting domestic leisure tourists, international travellers, spiritual seekers, or wellness enthusiasts?

Our primary customer base comprises domestic tourists, followed by international travellers. While our resorts offer wellness spas, we do not position ourselves as wellness-centric properties.

What challenges have you faced operating in high-altitude or remote Himalayan regions, and how have you adapted your operations to address them?

Operating in high-altitude regions does bring challenges, but over time, we've developed the expertise to set up and run properties in these areas efficiently. This has become one of our core competencies and key strengths.

How do you maintain consistency in service and experience across different properties, especially

given the diversity of locations?

We follow a well-defined philosophy, corporate culture, and set of quality processes. These are uniformly applied across all properties. Our managing and operational teams undergo comprehensive training to ensure consistency in service and quality, regardless of location.

Many travellers today seek immersive experiences — how does Udaan balance luxury with cultural immersion and nature-based tourism?

We understand that tourists — domestic or international — come to the region to see the Himalayas and experience the local culture. Our properties are thoughtfully designed to offer this blend, with several offering 100% Himalayan-facing rooms. While we are deeply rooted in the region's culture and natural beauty, we maintain a strong commitment to quality and luxury without compromise.

Your properties are all pure vegetarian — what was the rationale behind this unique positioning, especially in the hospitality sector?

Our choice to operate as a pure vegetarian chain stems from personal and religious beliefs. Fortunately, our food quality has earned us immense popularity — even non-vegetarian guests return for the taste and quality. Vegetarian guests also appreciate our consistent blend of premium hospitality and cuisine.

Tell us more about your operational model — is Udaan directly

managing all its properties, or do you follow a franchise or lease-based system as well?

We directly manage all our hotels and resorts.

Kera by Udaan appears to be your wellness-focused offering — how do you envision wellness tourism evolving in the Himalayan region?

Kera is a premium spa facility offered at our properties but is not positioned as a standalone wellness destination. It adds value to the guest experience as an additional offering.

Sustainability and local culture are becoming integral to hospitality — how does Udaan integrate local heritage and eco-friendly practices into its operations?

All Udaan properties are built with an eco-conscious approach. Our resorts in Darjeeling, like Udaan De-keeling and Udaan Nirvana, embrace natural settings, mountain views, and serene gardens. Our vegetarian cuisine also supports sustainability. While we don't formally market ourselves as an eco-friendly brand, environmental responsibility remains central to our operations.

Are there plans to expand beyond the Eastern Himalayas into other parts of India or internationally? Could you tell us more about the upcoming properties under the Udaan brand?

We continue to expand within the Eastern Himalayan belt and have a vision to grow further into other parts of Northeast India in the future. **BOTT**



NARAIN NIWAS PALACE, JAIPUR

Timeless Heritage Hotel

*J*aipur, India – Nestled in the heart of the Pink City, Narain Niwas Palace stands as an exquisite testament to Rajasthan's rich heritage and regal charm. Built in 1928 by General Amar Singh Ji, this grand palace-turned-heritage hotel embodies the opulence of Rajput architecture while offering modern luxuries to discerning travellers seeking an authentic Rajasthani experience. Originally constructed as a country retreat for the Thakur of Kanota, Narain Niwas

Palace is a fine example of Anglo-Indian and Rajput architecture. The hotel's intricate frescoes, vibrant interiors, and hand-painted motifs transport guests to a bygone era of aristocratic splendour.

The palace has recently enhanced its heritage suites and rooms, blending antique decor with modern comforts. Updated furnishings, restored frescoes, and improved amenities ensure an elegant yet contemporary stay. Guests can



now enjoy immersive cultural evenings featuring traditional Rajasthani folk performances, storytelling sessions, and heritage walks that delve into the palace's history and Jaipur's regal past.

The palace offers well-appointed heritage suites and rooms, each adorned with period furniture, rich



textiles, and antique decor that reflect the grandeur of Rajasthan's royal past. Guests can indulge in an unforgettable stay while enjoying modern amenities blended seamlessly with old-world charm. Set amidst sprawling gardens, the palace offers a tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle of Jaipur. The serene courtyards, vintage charm, and impeccable hospitality make it a preferred choice for travellers seeking an authentic Rajasthani experience.

Narain Niwas Palace is also home to some of Jaipur's most renowned dining and lifestyle destinations, including an iconic blue-hued café that transports visitors to an elegant Italian dream amidst lush gardens, and Shikaar Bagh,

a stylish restaurant offering a curated menu of global flavours with a touch of Rajasthani heritage. The Narain Niwas Bazaar provides a boutique shopping experience featuring handcrafted textiles, jewellery, and home decor from India's finest artisans. With its regal ambiance, the palace is a sought-after venue for royal weddings, intimate celebrations, and cultural events, offering stunning architecture, lush lawns, and exquisite banquet spaces as a majestic backdrop for unforgettable occasions. More than just a hotel, Narain Niwas Palace is a living heritage that invites travellers to step into Rajasthan's glorious past while enjoying the finest in contemporary luxury. **BOTT**

ANANTARA JEWEL BAGH JAIPUR

Where royalty meets luxury

*The launch of Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur marks a strategic milestone in Anantara's India roadmap. As the first Anantara property in the country, every detail, from the architecture inspired by Rajasthani palaces to curated cultural experiences like the Royal Heritage Art Walk and Spice Spoons cooking classes, reflects Anantara's commitment to immersion and elegance. It is the first step in an ambitious expansion plan that aims to introduce over 50 Anantara hotels in India in the coming decade. **Vimal Verma**, General Manager, Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur, shares more in an exclusive chat with **BOTT**.*

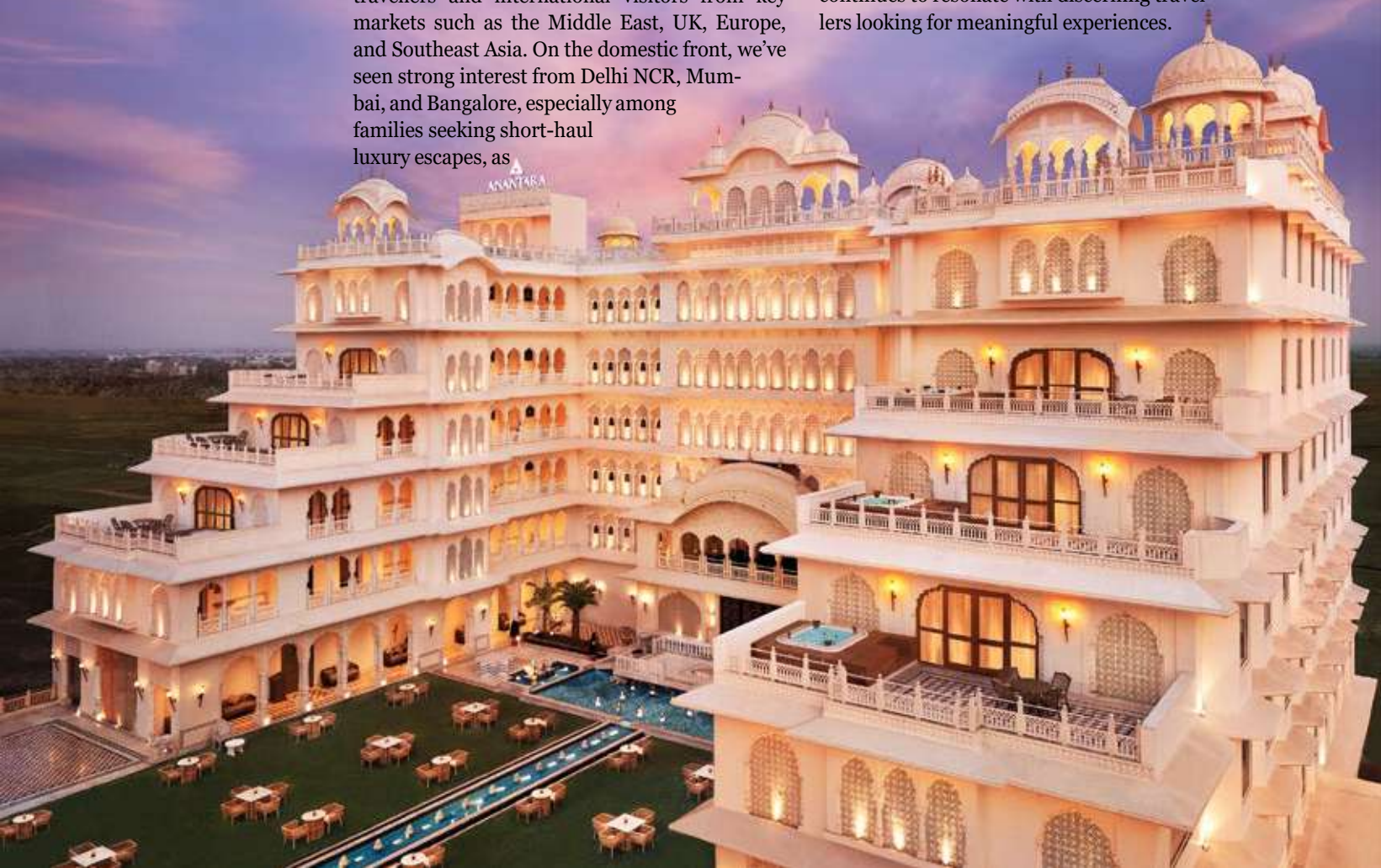
Priyanka Saxena Ray



*W*hat markets (domestic and international) are you primarily targeting, and what demand trends have you observed since the launch?

We are targeting a healthy mix of domestic travellers and international visitors from key markets such as the Middle East, UK, Europe, and Southeast Asia. On the domestic front, we've seen strong interest from Delhi NCR, Mumbai, and Bangalore, especially among families seeking short-haul luxury escapes, as

well as couples planning destination weddings. Since the launch, there's been consistent uptake in leisure bookings, along with a noticeable surge in MICE and social event queries. The narrative of Jaipur as a heritage-rich, well-connected city continues to resonate with discerning travellers looking for meaningful experiences.





How is Anantara Jaipur positioned to contribute to Rajasthan's luxury tourism and hospitality sector?

Anantara Jaipur elevates the state's luxury tourism offering by introducing a new standard of experiential hospitality that goes beyond conventional luxury. The property's blend of regal design, immersive programming, and culinary innovation enhances Rajasthan's appeal to both traditional and emerging luxury segments. In addition, our presence creates opportunities for local artisans, farmers, and performers through responsible sourcing and partnerships. We're not only offering high-end accommodations but also creating a cultural platform that supports and promotes the heritage of the region. This integrated approach positions Anantara Jaipur as a key player in shaping the future of luxury travel in Rajasthan.

What are some of the unique of-

ferings that set Anantara Jaipur apart from other luxury hotels in the region?

What differentiates Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur is its deep-rooted connection to cultural storytelling. The architecture draws from classical Rajasthani design, but it's the details—tikri glasswork, hand-

carved wood panels, and curated experiences like Designer Dining across four dramatic venues—that bring the narrative alive. Our culinary direction, led by Executive Chef Sunil Jajoria, blends ancestral techniques with modern flair. Experiences such as private art workshops, guided market-to-table cooking classes, and personalised wellness rituals at the Anantara Spa set a new benchmark in meaningful luxury. The property's combination of intimacy and scale—150 keys with five expansive gardens and multiple indoor venues—makes it adaptable for everything from quiet getaways to multi-day wedding celebrations.

How are you engaging with the travel trade community and DMCs to promote the hotel as a top-tier destination for leisure, weddings, and MICE?

Our engagement with the travel trade community is ongoing and

multi-pronged. We are actively partnering with key DMCs and luxury travel specialists to co-create packages for leisure, weddings, and incentive travel. Familiarisation trips, immersive property walkthroughs, and collaborative marketing campaigns are being rolled out to showcase the depth of the product. Anantara's global distribution network and GHA DISCOVERY loyalty programme also enable strategic access to top-tier clientele. At the same time, we've ensured our property is optimised for travel agents and planners, with streamlined booking tools, strong backend support, and a dedicated on-ground team that understands the nuances of large-scale Indian celebrations.

What kind of occupancy trends and response have you seen in the opening phase, and what are your expectations for the coming quarters?

The initial response has been very promising, with strong interest from the weddings and social events segment, particularly for the peak winter months. Since opening, we have hosted several weddings. Weekends and holiday periods are performing well, while weekdays are steadily gaining traction through leisure and small corporate bookings. In the coming quarters, we anticipate an increase in international arrivals, especially from Europe and the Middle East, as awareness of the property grows. We expect wedding and MICE bookings to contribute significantly to revenue. The momentum suggests a solid foundation for continued growth into the next fiscal year. **BOTT**

*After a record-breaking 2024, Sarovar Hotels is charging into 2025 with confidence, growth, and a clear vision. With strong performance in the first quarter, robust occupancy rates, and expansion into new destinations, the group is reinforcing its leadership in India's mid-market and upscale hospitality segment. In an exclusive conversation with **BOTT**, **Jatin Khanna**, CEO of Sarovar Hotels, shares deeper insights into the company's growth, upcoming projects, and strategies for continued success.*

Pallavi Sharma

SAROVAR HOTELS

gears up for 20 new openings in 2025, eyes 150 hotel milestone



Year 2024 was a fantastic one for Sarovar. How is 2025 going so far?

2025 has started off really strong for us. We follow the calendar year, so from January to March, our first quarter was excellent. We're seeing good numbers across the board. Year to date, our occupancy is holding at around 72%, which is quite solid. What's driving our growth this year is ADRs – average daily rates – which are growing in high single digits. When you look at a like-to-like comparison of our existing hotels, we've seen growth of about 8.5% to 9%. And if you look at the total portfolio, we're up by 24% compared to last year. So yes, things are looking good!

Can you tell us about some of the new properties you've launched this year?

This year alone, we've opened five new hotels so far. Last year, we opened 27, and in 2025 we're aiming to open another 12 – our target is to reach 20 hotel openings by year-end. We're currently present in about 85 locations, and by the end of this year, we'll add seven more. Some of the exciting new destinations where our hotels are com-

ing up include: Sarovar Premiere, Hargeisa; Sarovar Premiere, Jim Corbett; Sarovar Premiere, Kota; Sarovar Premiere, Alwar; Sarovar Portico, Hanumangarh; Sarovar Portico, Sriperumbudur; Sarovar Portico, Pathankot; Royal Tulip, Kathmandu; Royal Tulip, Kathmandu – Budhanilkantha; Golden Tulip, Sardarpura. Once all these are up and running, we're looking at touching a portfolio of about 150 hotels across 92 to 93 destinations.

Weddings and MICE are booming in India. How important are these segments for Sarovar?

Extremely important. In India, weddings are big no matter if you're in a luxury hotel or a mid-market one. Even in our economy brand, Hometel, we ensure our properties have banquet spaces to cater to weddings and events. Based on what we saw in 2024 and how domestic consumption is evolving, we've actually launched a new vertical focused entirely on MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) and weddings. It's led by Anish and Piyush and is part of our sales division. **BOTT**



Travel Studio Hosts Successful FAM Trip to **Georgia**, Powered by **UTEN**. **Travel Studio**, a leading destination management company specializing in **Georgia** and Turkey, recently organized an enriching Familiarization (**FAM**) Trip, powered by **UTEN**. This initiative was designed to give travel agents and partners a comprehensive insight into **Georgia's** tourism offerings helping them sell the destination with greater confidence and clarity.



The trip offered participants a deep dive into the essence of **Georgia**: from exploring top-rated hotels and iconic landmarks to experiencing its unique culture, cuisine, and natural beauty. With expert on-ground coordination, Travel Studio ensured a seamless and immersive journey.



Georgia is steadily becoming a top choice for Indian travelers—and for good reason. The visa process for Indian citizens is simple and hassle-free, with approvals typically granted without complications. The country is incredibly welcoming to Indian tourists, offering a safe, friendly environment with a strong appreciation for Indian culture and hospitality.



Another key advantage? **Georgia** is a dual-season destination. Whether it's the snow-filled adventures of winter or the vibrant outdoor experiences in summer, the country has something to offer all year round. Even better, it's budget-friendly—with most trips averaging under ₹1,00,000 per person including Air tickets, making it a highly accessible international destination.

With initiatives like these **FAM trips**, **Travel Studio** continues to lead the way in promoting **Georgia** as a must-visit gem in Eastern Europe, and while we locate this country in Eastern Europe,



it indeed gives a feel of Europe culture and heritage as well there by empowering travel partners with firsthand knowledge and unmatched support.

Kindly reach out to us on georgia@travelstudio.world / turkiye@travelstudio.world for ready itineraries and pricing.

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NOVOTEL JAIPUR CONVENTION CENTRE

Staycation done right!

Whether you're a Jaipur resident seeking a quick getaway or traveling to the city for a refreshing break, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre offers the perfect blend of relaxation, recreation, and indulgence—all under one roof.



Novotel Jaipur is a five-star hotel with 226 rooms, known for hosting conferences, exhibitions, weddings, and social gatherings. The highlight is Mugdha, a 11,737 sq. ft. convention hall with 740 retractable auditorium seats, making it a standout venue for events of all sizes. The property also features expansive outdoor spaces, including a 70,000 sq. ft. Front Lawn and a 24,000 sq. ft. Poolside Lawn, perfect for weddings and receptions.

In addition, Novotel Jaipur manages the Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC), which houses two exhibition halls, each 1,06,372 sq. ft. with 43-feet high ceilings. The hotel's integration with JECC has transformed guest experiences, as seen in events like the State Working Committee Meeting, which served 14,000 guests, and a corporate event



with 25,000 attendees. Their team of 200+ professionals ensured seamless logistics and service.

Since opening, they've hosted over 200+ events, partnering with top organizations like the Government of Rajasthan, JITO, FICCI, India Stone Mart, Volkswagen, Fizer, Cipla, HDFC Bank, Maruti Suzuki, PHDCCI, TATA and Herbalife. It also includes The Rising Rajasthan Investment Summit 2024, IIFA Awards 2025, and performances by artists like Diljit Dosanjh, Arijit Singh, YoYo Honey Singh and many more.

Ideal for both weekend retreats and midweek escapes, the hotel's premium accommodations and thoughtfully cu-

rated experiences make it a top staycation choice. Take a refreshing dip in the outdoor pool, unwind with a rejuvenating spa session, or stay on track with your fitness goals at the gym. For adventure seekers, enjoy archery, aqua zorbing, e-bike rides, and even a vintage car ride—a stylish way to explore the surroundings! Families can enjoy dedicated kids' activities, ensuring fun for all ages.

Dining here is an experience in itself, offering a variety of gourmet options. From authentic Rajasthani flavours to global cuisines at award-winning all-day premium dining restaurant Food Exchange Jaipur and bite-sized snacks at Gourmet Bar, every meal is a delight.

Make the most of your trip by exploring Jaipur's must-visit attractions like Patrika Gate, a vibrant Instagram-worthy landmark and the magnificent Amber Fort, a short drive away.

"A staycation at Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre is more than just a getaway—it's about creating moments of relaxation and joy. We take care of everything while you simply unwind," says Projjwal Ghosh, Director of Sales & Marketing, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre.

Whether you're looking for a change of pace from city life in Gurgaon or a relaxing retreat within Jaipur, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre is the perfect destination. **BOTT**

For reservations, call: +91 141 663 3300

**Address: Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre, Exhibition Ground,
EPIP, RIICO Industrial Area, Sitapura, Jaipur, Rajasthan.**

GITB 2025

Jaipur hosts a grand showcase of India's Tourism Potential

Pallavi Sharma

The 14th edition of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), held from May 4 to 6, 2025, in Jaipur, Rajasthan, concluded on a high note, reinforcing India's position as a premier global tourism destination. Jointly organized by the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the event attracted over 270 foreign tour operators from 53 countries. Supported by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Rajasthan (HRAR), Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA), and Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO), GITB 2025 facilitated more than 11,000 pre-scheduled B2B meetings, fostering meaningful interactions between international buyers and Indian tourism stakeholders.

A significant highlight of the event was the "Meet in India" Conclave 2025, inaugurated by Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari and Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. The conclave focused on





EVENTS AND MORE



promoting India as a global hub for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism. Discussions centered around strategies, infrastructure development, and policy support to elevate Indian cities into top global tourism ranks. Minister Shekhawat emphasized the potential of the MICE sector to generate employment and boost infrastructure, aiming to position ten Indian cities as leading MICE destinations.

The event also celebrated India's diverse tourism offerings. Odisha Tourism was awarded for the Best Public Sector Stall, with Goa and Madhya Pradesh as runners-up, showcasing the country's rich cultural tapestry. Goa Tourism, in particular, highlighted its commitment to sustainable and regenerative tourism models that benefit local communities and preserve cultural and natural heritage.



GITB 2025 introduced “Concert Tourism” as a new initiative, blending traditional folk music and dance with contemporary performances. Curated by art director Vinod Joshi and presented under the guidance of Anand Tripathi, Additional Director, Department of Tourism, the cultural evening at Hotel Anantara showcased Rajasthan’s rich artistic heritage, positioning the state as the first in India to formally adopt concert tourism as an experiential offering for global travelers.

The success of GITB 2025 is expected to translate into tangible growth for India’s tourism sector. With over 11,000 structured B2B meetings, the event is anticipated to result in an 8-10% increase in foreign tourist arrivals in the upcoming season. The Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators is organizing familiarization tours for visiting operators across the state, enhancing opportunities for future collaborations.

Overall, GITB 2025 served as a dynamic platform for stakeholders to explore new avenues, forge partnerships, and envision a vibrant future for India’s tourism industry. **BOTT**

Know what your stars say about June 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 June 2025.



March 21 – April 20

June urges you to take bold steps, especially in your career. A spontaneous decision may lead to long-term rewards. Mid-month brings opportunities in love and travel. Stay grounded—impulsiveness could backfire.



July 23 – August 21

Your charm is magnetic this month. Use it to build strong networks and make progress in career or personal goals. Recognition comes around the solstice. Balance pride with humility.



November 23 – December 22

Partnerships are in the spotlight—romantic, business, or both. Important conversations can define your next steps. Be honest, but also willing to compromise. Energy picks up near the full moon.



April 21 – May 21

You seek peace, but change is gently knocking. Financial gains are possible through smart choices. Emotionally, this is a month to heal and rebuild. Invest in your well-being and trust your slow, steady path.



August 22 – September 23

June helps you organize your thoughts, projects, and routines. You're focused and efficient—use this to your advantage at work. Relationship clarity arrives by month-end.



December 23 – January 20

You're called to take care of your health, home, and habits. This month supports productivity, especially after June 12. Romance or creativity may bloom in a more grounded way.



May 22 – June 21

It's your time to shine. Expect a surge in energy, confidence, and communication skills. Social interactions lead to unexpected opportunities. Around June 20, an important decision needs your full attention.



September 24 – October

It's a great month for travel, learning, and stepping outside your comfort zone. Creative projects may flourish. Conversations with someone from a different background could shift your perspective.



January 21 – February 19

You feel inspired, expressive, and more open to joy. Use this month to pursue hobbies or revive romantic sparks. Children or youthful energy may play a meaningful role in your life now.



June 22 – July 22

This month brings introspection and personal growth. You're more intuitive than usual—use it to reassess priorities. Relationships deepen, especially after mid-month. Give yourself space to recharge.



October 24 – November 22

June invites personal transformation. You may confront an old fear or resolve a financial issue. Embrace honest dialogue, even if it feels intense. You're being prepared for something more aligned.



February 20 – March 20

You're drawn inward to focus on home, emotions, and long-term plans. It's a good time for introspection and strengthening bonds. A quiet breakthrough may change how you view security.



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HIGHLIGHTS

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APPOINTMENTS

INDIGO

IndiGo has appointed of **Vikram Singh Mehta** as the Chairman of the Board. Mr. Mehta has been a Member of the Board of InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) since May 2022. He succeeds Dr. Venkataramani Sumantran, who stepped down from the post after completion of his five-year term as a Board Member. Vikram Singh Mehta started his professional journey with the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) in 1978 and served the country for two years before moving on to explore opportunities in the corporate sector. He is the Chairman of the public policy think tank "Centre for Social and Economic Progress", and former Executive Chairman of Brookings India and Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution.



ALLIANCE AIR

Shri Rajarshi Sen has officially taken charge as the Chief Executive Officer of Alliance. With over 25 years of extensive experience in finance and operations management, Sen brings with him a strong track record of streamlining business processes, driving sustainable growth, and boosting operational efficiency. His expertise spans across aircraft leasing, airline operations, and regulatory frameworks, including those of the International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA) and GIFT City.



CHEVAL COLLECTION

Cheval Collection has appointed **Nick Pilbeam** as Chief Commercial Officer to its growing team as it continues to expand globally. Pilbeam has more than 20 years' experience in international travel, loyalty, tourism and hotel sectors, joining Cheval Collection from Queensway, where he was Commercial Director of the hotel group. He has also held positions at Avios and British Airways.



ANANTARA SIAM BANGKOK HOTEL

Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel has appointed **Torsten Richter** as its new General Manager. With a distinguished career spanning over three decades in luxury hospitality, Torsten brings a wealth of international experience, strategic leadership, and a deep commitment to service excellence to his new role.

ENCALM HOSPITALITY

Encalm Hospitality elevated **Vikas Sharma** as its Group Chief Executive Officer. With over 25 years of leadership across globally renowned hospitality brands, Vikas Sharma brings a legacy of innovation, strategic vision, and people-first leadership. Since joining Encalm, he has played a pivotal role in expanding its footprint, launching new verticals, and elevating service benchmarks.

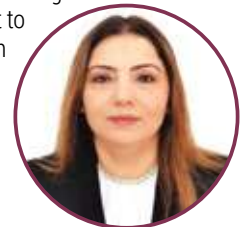


DUSIT INTERNATIONAL

Dusit International has appointed of **Prachoom Tantiprasertsuk**, Vice President – Operations (Central & Southern Thailand) and Government & Business Relations, as the new President of the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA) for the 2025–2026 term. A seasoned professional with over three decades of service to TICA, Tantiprasertsuk steps into the role following her successful tenure as Vice President of the association.

ACCOR

Accor has appointed **Zara Singh** as Director of Revenue – India & South Asia. With two decades of extensive experience in the hospitality industry, Zara will be responsible for leading Accor's revenue management and distribution strategy across India & South Asia, further strengthening the brand's commercial capabilities in the region. Her leadership combines strategic acumen, operational expertise, and a deep understanding of the market, making her a key asset to Accor's growth journey.



MINOR HOTELS

Minor Hotels has appointed hotelier **Nicholas Smith** to its Asia regional leadership team as Vice President of Operations. In this role, Nicholas is responsible for overseeing and strengthening the group's fast-growing portfolio in Asia and leading and mentoring a team of experienced leaders across Asia. Nicholas brings more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry to Minor Hotels. He developed his operational expertise at the Shangri-La Group, joining the group in 2008 as a Food & Beverage Manager in Malaysia.

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