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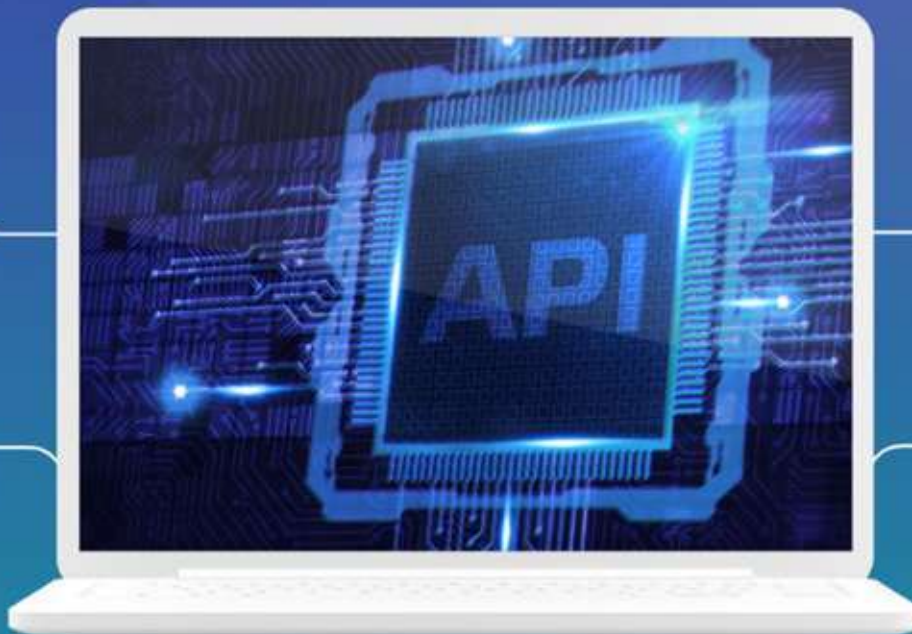
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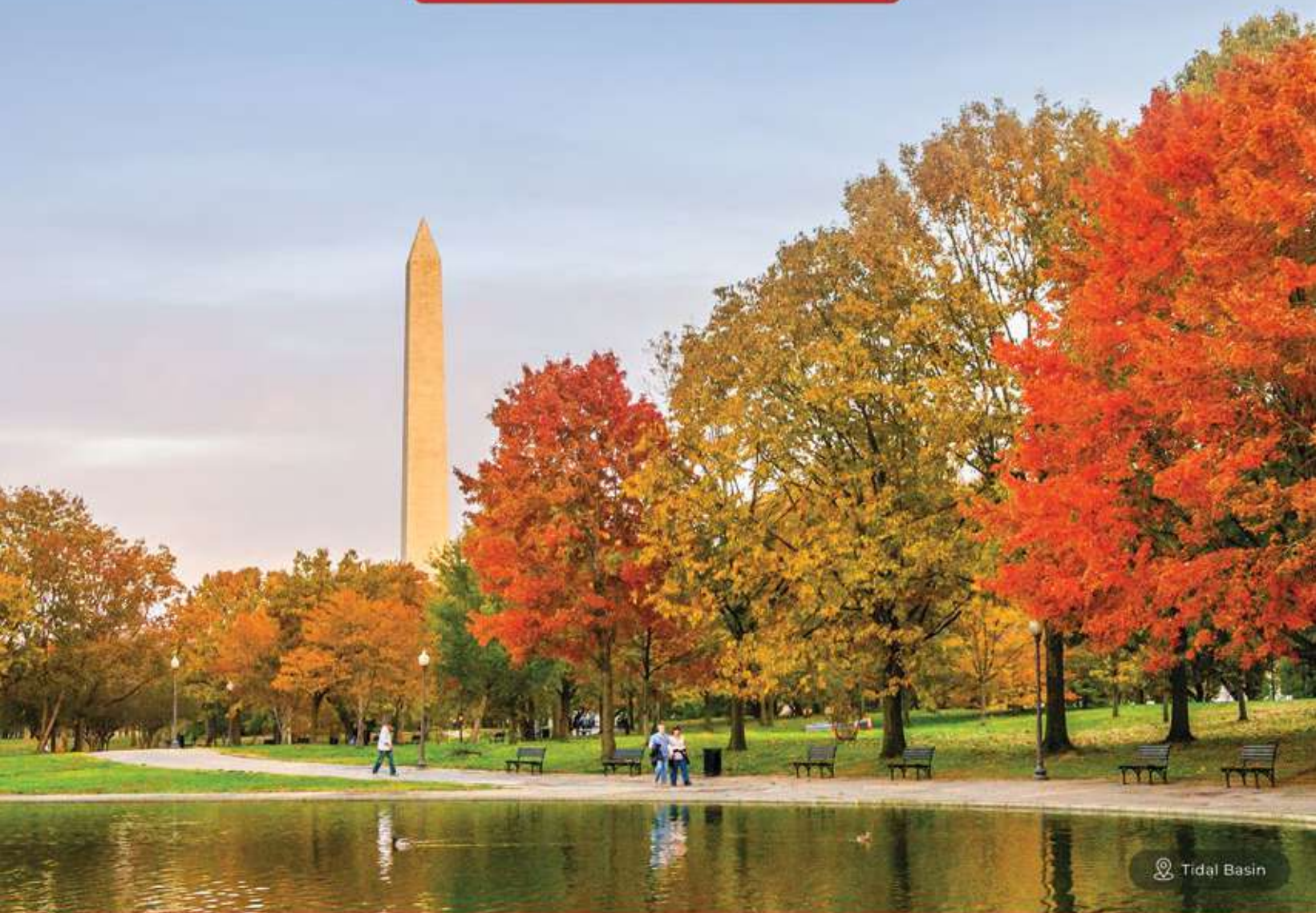
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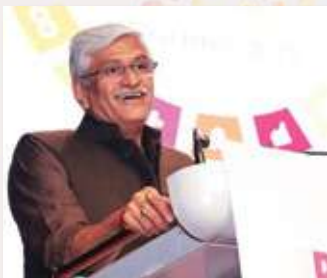
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Contents



SHORT NEWS

10-12

14 SPOTLIGHT

As the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) gears up for its 40th Annual Convention in Puri, Ravi Gosain, President, IATO, in a candid conversation with BOTT, shares his emotions, expectations, priorities, and strategies to strengthen India's inbound tourism sector..

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

- 16-18 •** BOTT spoke with IATO's Office Bearers to gather their views on the event's fresh highlights, its potential impact on India's inbound tourism narrative, and the strategies needed to boost foreign arrivals.
- 20-22 •** Ahead of the convention, IATO's Executive Committee members share their expectations from the event and their perspectives on the key strategies needed to accelerate inbound growth.
- 26-32 •** IATO chapter chairmen provide valuable insight into the opportunities and threats that the industry will face in the future.

ASSOCIATIONS IN ACTION

- 34-36 •** The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) concluded its two-day FAITH Conclave 2025 in New Delhi with a powerful demonstration of unity, vision, and national ambition.
- 52-55 •** OTOAI successfully concluded its 6th Annual Convention in the heart of Russia — Moscow. Held from July 10 to 13, 2025, the convention brought together over 200 influential Indian travel professionals.

52





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Letter from the *Editor's Desk*



Dear Readers,

August marks a significant edition for BOTT, as we bring you our much-awaited IATO Special Issue. This year's IATO Convention has generated immense curiosity and anticipation, and to capture its spirit, we reached out to the IATO President, Office Bearers, Executive Committee Members, and more than 15 State Chapter Chairmen. Their insights reflect not only their expectations from the convention but also the collective vision and strategies needed to strengthen India's inbound tourism.

Adding further depth, we are privileged to carry exclusive guest columns from industry veterans such as Chander Mansharamani, Pronab Sarkar, and J.K. Mohanty—each offering valuable perspectives on how India can position itself more strongly to attract international visitors. Their voices underline the urgency and importance of innovative measures to drive inbound growth.

Beyond IATO, this issue also features comprehensive coverage of the FAITH Conclave, which echoed similar themes of collaboration and vision in rejuvenating inbound numbers. Readers will also find detailed reports on the recently concluded OTOAI Convention in Russia, offering a glimpse into the future of outbound travel.

Our event pages capture highlights from the Vietnam Airlines FAM trip, an overview of the newly opened WelcomHeritage Natraj in McLeodganj, and a special report on the Australia Marketplace in Jaipur, all of which reflect the vibrant and evolving nature of the tourism industry.

The August Issue will also be circulated at ITB India in Mumbai, where BOTT is proud to be the Premier Media Partner, further amplifying its reach and impact among global industry stakeholders.

This issue is not just about events and perspectives—it is about bringing the industry together to exchange ideas, set new benchmarks, and work collectively toward a stronger, more resilient future for Indian tourism.

Happy Reading!

Warm regards,

Priyanka Saxena Ray

Editor, **BOTT** India

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TBO TEK POSTS STRONG Q1 FY26 WITH RECORD TRANSACTING BUYERS AND PROFIT GROWTH



TBO Tek Ltd delivered a resilient Q1 FY26 performance despite global macro headwinds. Monthly Transacting Buyers (MTBs) hit an all-time high at 29,570—up 5.2% YoY and 4.1% QoQ—driven by strong growth in Europe and APAC. Hotel and ancillary sales contributed 62.3% of GTV and 84.4% of gross profit. Adjusted EBITDA remained steady at ₹85 Cr, while PAT rose to ₹63 Cr, up 3.4% YoY and 6.9% QoQ, underscoring stable profitability.

RAS AL KHAIMAH TOURISM REGISTERS RECORD-BREAKING H1 PERFORMANCE

Ras Al Khaimah welcomed 654K visitors in H1 2025, marking its highest-ever half-year performance with 6% YoY growth and a 9% rise in tourism revenues. Strong arrivals from India (+25%), UK, China, Russia, and CIS markets powered the surge. MICE and Weddings revenue grew by 36%, while expanded air connectivity boosted visitors from Romania, Poland, and Uzbekistan. Key hotel signings and strategic global partnerships further cement RAK's goal to double hotel keys by 2030.



TRAVEL SOUTH USA APPOINTS SARTHA GLOBAL MARKETING AS ITS INDIA REP

Travel South USA (TSUSA), the official regional destination marketing organisation for the southern United States, announced the appointment of Sartha Global Marketing as its representative office in India. Sartha Global Marketing will implement an ongoing travel trade and public relations strategy in India, as part of TSUSA's Global Partnership Program (GPP).



TAIWAN SEES 30.73% SURGE IN INDIAN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN EARLY 2025

Taiwan continues its impressive growth in the Indian market, recording a 30.73% rise in Indian arrivals from January to May 2025, reaching 19,202 visitors compared to 14,688 during the same period in 2024. This follows a strong 20.81% annual growth last year, with 38,158 Indian travellers. Taiwan Tourism Administration's strategic 360° market development plan, launched in January 2024, has driven this momentum.



JORDAN TOURISM UNVEILS INDIA-FOCUSED BRAND FILM

The Jordan Tourism Board has launched its India-centric brand film 'Timeless Treasures, Yaadein Forever!' to captivate Indian travellers. Moving beyond traditional formats, the film highlights Jordan's leisure, luxury, history, gastronomy, and adventure appeal through the journey of three Indian influencers. With rich visuals and emotional storytelling, it positions Jordan as a multidimensional destination.

SERENA HOTELS LAUNCHES GLOBAL PRESTIGE CLUB APP



Serena Hotels' team members strike a vibrant pose during the Prestige Club App Global Launch at Nairobi Serena Hotel. Dressed in culturally inspired attire, the team showcased Serena's pan-African identity.

Serena Hotels has launched the Prestige Club App, a digital loyalty platform connecting 33 properties across Africa and Asia, offering cross-border rewards and a unified guest experience. Rolled out simultaneously in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Mozambique, and Pakistan, it marks the brand's first global tech-enabled membership programme. Guests can earn and redeem points across stays, dining, and Maisha Spa & Health Clubs.



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SHORT NEWS

ROYAL ORCHID HOTELS EXPANDS IN HIMACHAL WITH NEW REGENTA PLACE IN BADDI



Royal Orchid Hotels has signed a 43-key Regenta Place in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh, continuing its strategic expansion across North India.

Slated to open in September 2025, the property is developed with Mr. Sarvan Kumar of The Golden Castle and will be operated under ROHL's asset-light model. Set amidst the Shivalik Hills, the hotel will offer upscale amenities, MICE facilities, and leisure options, catering to both business and family travellers.



SAROVAR HOTELS LAUNCHES 'WRITE YOUR OWN STORY' WEDDING CAMPAIGN

Sarovar Hotels has unveiled its new wedding campaign, Write Your Own Story, offering fully customizable celebrations across its 140+ hotels in 85 destinations. With a surge in banqueting and F&B revenues, the campaign promises seamless, culturally rooted weddings backed by a dedicated concierge team. Exclusive perks like complimentary stays, curated honeymoons, and multi-event booking offers make this initiative ideal for modern Indian couples seeking personalized, memorable experiences backed by Sarovar's dependable service and warm hospitality.

IHG TO OPEN HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS & SUITES DHULABARI IN 2026



IHG Hotels & Resorts has signed a management agreement with Hotel Eastern Nepal to develop Holiday Inn Express & Suites Dhulabari, set to open in 2026. Located in South-Eastern Nepal's Jhapa District near the Nepal-India border, the 99-key hotel will feature modern rooms, dining outlets, a rooftop restaurant, banquet hall, and fitness centre. This marks IHG's second partnership with the group, following Holiday Inn Resort Kathmandu Budhanilkantha.

ESPIRE HOSPITALITY SIGNS FIVE NEW PROPERTIES IN RISHIKESH, UDAIPUR AND GOA

Espire Hospitality has signed five new hotels in Udaipur, Rishikesh, and North Goa, aiming to double its inventory by March 2026.

The upcoming properties—Country Inn Premier Udaipur, three hotels in Rishikesh (including Ganga-view and youth-focused options), and Country Inn Calangute—will feature rooftop pools, banqueting spaces, gaming arcades, and prime tourist locations. These openings will be between November 2025 to January 2026.



BIRD TRAVELS ANNOUNCES EXCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH AEGEAN

Bird Travels announces its exclusive partnership with AEGEAN, Greece's flag carrier and the launch of direct flight operations from Delhi and Mumbai to Athens (Greece), commencing in the first quarter of 2026. The official flight schedule will be announced by the end of September, when ticket sales will be available. AEGEAN will shortly add two new Airbus A321neo XLR (Extra Long Range) aircraft with an even longer range of up to 10.5 hours.



VIETJET THAILAND EXPANDS INDIA NETWORK WITH TWO NEW ROUTES

Vietjet Thailand is set to launch two new direct routes from Kolkata and Ahmedabad to Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi Airport), starting November 17, 2025. These mark the airline's 3rd and 4th direct connections between India and Thailand, reinforcing its regional growth strategy. The Kolkata-Bangkok service will operate four times weekly, offering greater convenience for travellers and boosting tourism and business ties. Flight timings are optimized for seamless connectivity.



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*As the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) gears up for its 40th Annual Convention in Puri, the event carries special significance for the association's President, who will be presiding over his first convention since taking office. In this candid conversation with **BOTT**, **Ravi Gosain**, President, IATO shares his emotions, expectations, priorities, and strategies to strengthen India's inbound tourism sector.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray

IATO CONVENTION 2025, PURI 'A convergence point, fostering synergy and unified progress'



This is your first convention as President of IATO. What emotions, expectations, and priorities define this moment for you personally and professionally?

As I step into my first convention as IATO President, I feel a deep sense of pride, responsibility, and optimism. Personally, it's a milestone moment; professionally, it's an opportunity to set a progressive tone. My priority is to strengthen member engagement, foster innovation in inbound tourism, and ensure this convention becomes a platform for transformative collaboration and growth.

What will be the key differentiators of this year's convention in Puri?

The key differentiators will include a well-appointed inaugural session, strategic business sessions, presentations by 17 state governments highlighting new destinations, tourism sites, and policies on infrastructure and connectivity, a dedicated session on Odisha Tourism, post tours by leading tour operators to Odisha's key sites, evening entertainment, the IATO Run for Sustainable Tourism, and a memorable valedictory session.

Inbound tourism is yet to reach pre-COVID levels. What concrete steps is IATO taking under your leadership?

We are addressing policymakers on key issues, increasing member engagement, forming sub-committees across diverse segments, and maintaining con-

stant networking with state governments.

Critics have said IATO needs a more aggressive global marketing voice. How do you plan to reposition India's inbound strategy internationally?

The marketing voice must be supported by government policies and our nodal ministry. Budget allocations have dampened aggression. Our plan is to seek requisite support from the Government and Ministry of Tourism and explore supplementing this with our own resources, backed by membership contributions.

Your top three goals for IATO, and how does this convention align with them?

My goals are:

- Focus on marketing and promotion while pursuing government support.
- Enhance member engagement.
- Document and present members' concerns to policymakers, ensuring follow-up.

This convention aligns with all three.

With multiple stakeholders in inbound tourism, how will you unify them?

Collaboration is key. We are engaging central and state governments, airlines, hospitality players, and the travel trade through joint initiatives, dialogues, and advocacy. The convention itself is a convergence point, fostering synergy and unified progress. **BOTT**

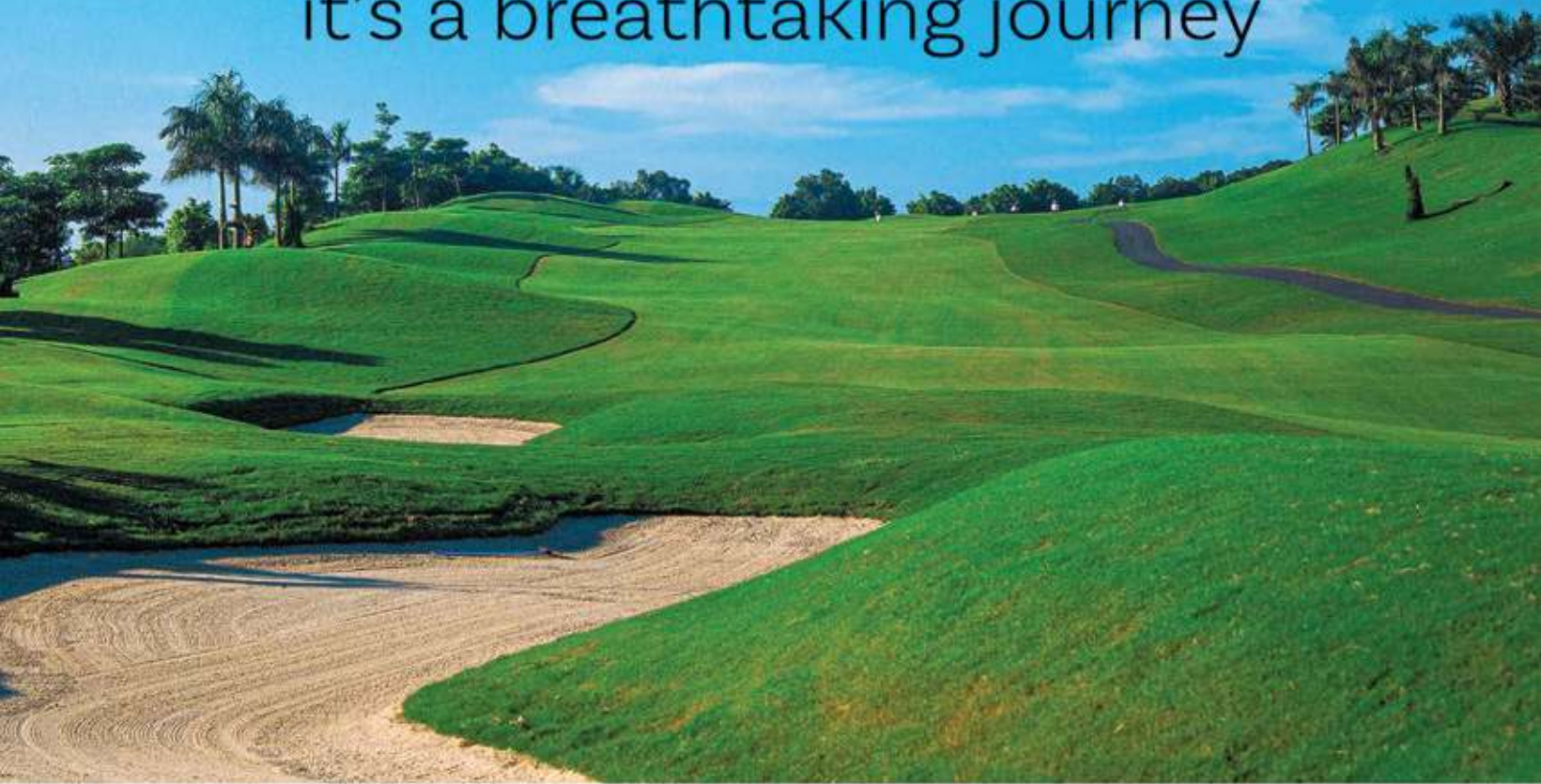
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IATO OFFICE BEARERS

share insights on Rejuvenating Inbound Tourism @2030

*In the lead-up to the IATO Convention 2025 in Puri, **BOTT** spoke with the association's Office Bearers to gather their views on the event's fresh highlights, its potential impact on India's inbound tourism narrative, and the strategies needed to boost foreign arrivals. From identifying emerging source markets to leveraging digital innovation and strategic partnerships, they share their perspectives on shaping a stronger, more resilient future for inbound tourism.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray



Rajnish Kaistha

Sr. Vice President, IATO

The 40th IATO Convention in Puri is a landmark event. We strive to make our annual conventions unique each year in both content and format, which is why members look forward to them. This year, we have introduced new and diverse topics in our sessions to offer delegates meaningful takeaways. Our conventions have evolved with the times, combining a welcome break with insightful knowledge sessions.

India's inbound tourism is yet to fully recover to pre-COVID levels. While we expected stronger numbers this season, a series of incidents since April 22 have impacted the momentum. This is why our theme—Rejuvenate Inbound Tourism @2030—focuses on long-term, steady growth projections for both regional and international markets, with special emphasis on India and Odisha.

We are presenting hard facts to both state and central governments. In the absence of overseas offices, negligible marketing budgets, and minimal participation in international roadshows or exhibitions, IATO must leverage its collective soft power. We need both state and central governments to work with us to revive inbound tourism. In today's scenario, where tariffs risk creating a larger balance-of-payments challenge, proven inbound tourism strategies and soft diplomacy can help us navigate forward.

Sanjay Razdan

Vice President, IATO

The upcoming IATO Convention is a milestone event for us, celebrating four decades of IATO's growth and impact. This year, delegates can look forward to experiencing Odisha's vibrant culture, rich heritage, and stunning coastline,



with post-convention study tours showcasing lesser-known tourism circuits. The Indian Tourism Fair on 23–24 August will connect members with tourism departments from 15–18 states, creating new partnership opportunities. Our business sessions will feature top industry experts addressing current challenges and opportunities, alongside

special focus sessions on Responsible Tourism and the return of the IATO Run for Responsible Tourism. We've also planned enhanced networking and entertainment, including IATO Got Talent – Karaoke Evening Season 5, cultural evenings, and extended networking breaks.

Post-pandemic, IATO has worked tirelessly to revive and strengthen tourism, advocating for policy and financial support, restoring SEIS and MDA schemes, easing visa processes, and pushing for aggressive global marketing of Brand India. We've emphasised the need for regular roadshows, FAM trips, and global trade fair participation. Inbound tourism is a "sleeping giant," and we continue to flag the urgency for action so India doesn't miss the global recovery wave. Our recent active members' brainstorming session in Delhi will soon culminate in a White Paper with expert recommendations.

Sunil Mishra

Hony. Secretary, IATO

This year's IATO Convention in Puri is special in many ways. Our theme, "Rejuvenate Inbound Tourism @2030", focuses on creating a clear roadmap for the next five years to bring India's inbound





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tourism back to full strength and beyond. Delegates can look forward to highly interactive business sessions, more knowledge-sharing opportunities, and a strong line-up of industry leaders and state tourism boards. We have also enhanced networking formats and introduced fresh perspectives on technology adoption, sustainability, and offbeat tourism products.

Regarding source markets, while our traditional markets remain important, we are seeing promising interest from new regions such as Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Southeast Asia. Importantly, China is reopening to the world after a gap of five years and will once again be a key market for India. To tap into these opportunities, we need targeted marketing campaigns, improved air connectivity, active participation in focused international travel marts, and close collaboration with overseas tour operators to create culturally customised itineraries. These markets are eager for authentic, experiential travel and India is well positioned to deliver that.



Deepak Kumarr Bhatnagar

Hony. Treasurer, IATO

With the theme “Rejuvenate Inbound Tourism”, our business sessions this year will focus on identifying actionable ways to give India’s inbound tourism the push it urgently needs. We will deliberate on enhancing our offerings, improving ease of doing business, elevating the overall client experience to international standards, strengthening our competitiveness as a destination, and—most importantly—reviving the global marketing of Destination India.

The IATO Executive Committee works as one united team to address key industry challenges that hinder tourism promotion. We are actively working to revive marketing campaigns for India in major source markets, while engaging with multiple ministries—Home, External Affairs, Culture, and Civil Aviation—on crucial issues like visas and connectivity.

For member engagement, we have created several working groups and committees tailored to industry needs. Recently, we held a full-day brainstorming session with over 100 members from across India, both in person and online. We are also planning to establish a dedicated think tank to discuss pressing industry issues, gather member feedback, and prepare a comprehensive White Paper to be submitted to all relevant ministries connected to the tourism sector.

Viney Tyagi

Hony. Joint Secretary, IATO

Inbound tourism is still regaining momentum, and at IATO, we are committed to accelerating this recovery by showcasing every region of the country. Hosting our annual convention in different states each year ensures diverse destinations get their due spotlight.



This year’s convention in Puri, Odisha, is a big step forward for Eastern India—an area rich in potential yet underexposed. The enthusiasm is clear: our post-convention FAM tours always fill up fast, and this year we’ve curated eight itineraries covering tribal belts and hidden gems across Odi-

sha. These firsthand experiences will inspire tour operators to include such destinations in their itineraries, boosting both regional and national tourism.

Digital innovation, especially AI, is transforming industries, and tourism is no exception. While adoption may be a learning curve for traditional operators, AI offers opportunities to enhance efficiency, personalise travel, and raise India’s global visibility. To address this, we’ve planned an exclusive session on AI at the convention to explore its practical uses in tourism.

On the partnerships front, IATO has signed multiple MoUs with international tourism associations, fostering mutual promotion and collaboration. Despite limited government support, our members remain resilient and proactive because the sustainability of our industry depends on it.

Rajiv Mehra

Immediate Past President, IATO

This year’s IATO Convention promises several unique elements that will make it truly memorable. We have planned a well-appointed inaugural session, followed by strategic business sessions featuring leading industry experts. Delegates can look forward to insightful presentations from 17 State



Governments, showcasing new destinations, tourism sites, infrastructure developments, and connectivity policies. A dedicated session on Odisha Tourism will highlight the state’s offerings, while post-convention tours will allow participants to experience key tourism sites firsthand. Evenings will be filled with engaging entertainment, including the much-loved IATO Run for Responsible Tourism, culminating in a dynamic valedictory session.

I also see exciting opportunities in emerging international source markets beyond our traditional strongholds in the US, UK, and Europe. There is growing potential in Southeast Asia—Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines—Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America. To capture these markets, we must invest in targeted marketing campaigns, enhance air connectivity, simplify visa processes, and curate culturally tailored experiences. Participation in trade fairs and collaborations with local tour operators will further strengthen our presence, positioning India as a must-visit destination for these new traveller segments. **BOTT**

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IATO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Towards 2030: A Blueprint to Revive Inbound Travel

*Ahead of the convention, **BOTT** reached out to IATO's Executive Committee members to share their expectations from the event and their perspectives on the key strategies needed to accelerate inbound growth. Here's what they had to say:*

Pallavi Sharma



Ashok B. Dhoot
Executive Committee - Allied, IATO

We look forward to the IATO Convention in Puri as a platform to discuss current trends, challenges, and innovations in the tourism sector, along with strategies to adapt to evolving market dynamics. Key highlights we anticipate include sessions on sustainable practices, policy discussions, and roundtables to identify and promote emerging destinations. To boost

inbound tourism and move closer to pre-pandemic levels, a stronger focus on thematic tours, promoting underrated regions, leveraging initiatives like 'One District One Product,' and using technologies like virtual reality will be crucial. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding, and the need to curb single-use plastic must be addressed. Tour operators can play a transformative role by building local partnerships, promoting authentic experiences, and driving eco-friendly practices.



Harish Mathur
Executive Committee - Active, IATO

This year's convention in Puri offers a unique opportunity to discuss inbound revival while aligning our collective vision with global realities. My expectation is meaningful member-to-member engagement, strong partnerships with state tourism boards, and practical, implementable solutions rather than just ideas. Odisha's tourism potential—heritage, cul-

ture, and coasts—must be highlighted in future itineraries. Accelerating inbound recovery requires a three-pronged approach: First, policy and infrastructure support through streamlined visas, GST reduction, and last-mile connectivity. Second, innovative product development beyond the

Golden Triangle, incorporating rural tourism, wellness, festivals, wildlife, culinary, and spiritual experiences.

Tony Marwah
Executive Committee - Active, IATO

My expectations remain consistent—learning from past conventions, improving formats, enhancing knowledge sessions, sharing technology trends, and inviting top speakers whose presence benefits members. Networking with partners in hospitality and aviation is equally valuable. However, major concerns persist: the Ministry of Tourism has limited budgets, overseas tourist offices have shut, marketing in key source countries is minimal, and the removal of MDA and SEIS, coupled with fewer flights, high fares, hotel rates, and a non-user-friendly visa regime, is impacting inbound growth. IATO is actively highlighting these issues with the Ministry of Tourism, Commerce, Home, and MEA.



Sejoe Jose
Executive Committee - Active, IATO

The 40th IATO Convention in Puri, under Mr. Ravi Gosain's leadership, is planned to be highly fruitful with well-thought-out business sessions and expert speakers. Each session aims to prepare members for the future, offering learning, networking, and destination discovery. However, a recent study revealed a decline in tourist inflow from Europe and other Western countries, driven by weak economies, geopolitical instability, and negative perceptions from criminal incidents and restrictive regulations. As in-





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Geeta Maheshwari

Director, Hospitality and Marketing Services 66, A-2, Shiv Arcade, Acharya Niketan, Mayur Vihar, Phase-I, New Delhi-110091



dustry players, we must ask: What difference have we made? What steps have we taken for sustainability, community protection, and responsible tourism? Have we introduced new products, avoided over-tourism, and adopted innovative tools to showcase destinations? Addressing these questions with real action will help reverse the decline. The focus should be on responsible tourism and unique offerings that make India stand out in an increasingly competitive global tourism landscape.



Manoj Kumar Matta,
Executive Committee – Active, IATO

The 40th IATO Convention, themed “Rejuvenate Inbound Tourism @2030”, is a milestone—more than a reunion, it’s a recalibration of India’s tourism strategy. With 1000+ delegates, discussions will address key issues like hotel cancellation policies, rising costs, and a strong marketing roadmap. Eight post-convention tours will showcase Odisha’s rich offerings, from pilgrimages and tribal culture to wildlife and heritage circuits. Inbound tourism remains below pre-pandemic levels even five years on. To accelerate growth, I

urge the government to allocate ₹1000+ crore for global marketing, reintroduce SEIS and MDA, incentivise MICE, simplify visas, enable overland travel for e-visa holders, and launch a unified, sustainable branding campaign to replace Incredible India. We must also host influencers, promote inter-state synergy, and ensure preferential treatment for inbound operators—preferential rates, seat allocations, and flexible policies. Only through coordinated action between government and industry can we achieve true inbound revival.



Rishi Kapoor
Executive Committee – Active, IATO

With one of the youngest EC teams under President Ravi Gosain, this 40th convention promises energy, fresh perspectives, and impactful outcomes. The chosen destination, Puri, and multiple business sessions will bring together leaders, stakeholders, members, and government authorities to brainstorm actionable solutions. India offers everything—culture, nature, wellness,

adventure, festivals, and cuisine—but to return to pre-pandemic inbound levels, a few priorities are essential: a strong, targeted marketing push in key source markets, media showcasing India’s best, a time-bound visa-free initiative, and fresh destinations to keep the portfolio dynamic. Most importantly, India must become a year-round international destination. The product is already world-class; the focus must now be on visibility, traveller confidence, and accessi-

bility. This convention should be the catalyst for converting our diverse tourism offerings into sustained global demand through collaborative industry efforts.

P. Vijayasarathy
Executive Committee – Allied,
IATO



Delegates can expect deep discussions on inbound strategies, sustainable frameworks, and emerging destinations, along with unmatched networking opportunities at the convention. Over 900 delegates will connect with senior stakeholders from national and state tourism boards, airlines, hotels, cruise operators, and allied sectors. The Indian Tourism Fair will showcase states and private-sector stakeholders, while cultural evenings will immerse participants in regional heritage. Strategies for growth include reinstating full e-visas for markets like the UK, Canada, and China, reducing TCS on tour packages, and achieving 48-hour visa processing to compete with destinations like Vietnam, UAE, and Thailand. Strengthening regional connectivity via UDAN routes and new rail links is vital. A robust Incredible India campaign, supported by global roadshows, travel mart participation, and fam tours, must be backed by professional branding through a dedicated India Tourism Board. Industry reinvestment in overseas marketing and digital engagement is crucial.

Wasim Shaikh
Executive Committee – Allied,
IATO



Each year, the IATO Convention brings together all industry stakeholders for dialogue, and this year is no different. With increasing global political disturbances and recent flight restrictions impacting tourism, and with the inbound season 2025–2026 starting from October, there is hope for revival. We need a collective strategy to reach new markets, tap niche tourism segments, and ensure future resilience. My expectation is to find a roadmap for a long-term inbound tourism plan. Innovation remains key—offering more than standard cultural or beach holidays. At our organisation, we’ve surpassed pre-pandemic figures through innovation, adopting new technologies, and diversifying into other markets. Initiatives like cruise tourism, food tourism, and experiential travel are the road ahead. Traditional packages are losing appeal, and India has far more to offer. By tapping these unique experiences, we have successfully accelerated growth, and such strategies can help the entire industry recover faster and stronger. **BOTT**



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At The Tanisi Goa, every occasion transforms into an unforgettable memory. The resort's expansive manicured lawns provide a breathtaking setting for dream weddings and grand gatherings of over 250 guests or more, where romance and festivity come alive under the Goan sky.

Complementing this is our pillar-less banquet hall, an elegant venue designed for lavish receptions, conferences, and intimate soirées, where every detail exudes sophistication. Whether it's a wedding, milestone celebration, or corporate event, The Tanisi Goa ensures every moment is marked with seamless luxury and timeless charm.

What's Next at Tanisi

The journey of The Tanisi Goa, continues with exciting new additions. Soon to be unveiled is a world-class spa for ultimate relaxation, along with 16 elegantly designed annexe rooms. A dedicated pure-vegetarian kitchen will elevate diverse dining experiences, while our barbecue, state-of-the-art rooftop poolside restaurant with live music promises unforgettable evenings under the Goan sky.



At The Tanisi Goa, serenity, celebration, and sophistication come together seamlessly. Be it a dreamy luxury wedding, a stylish corporate gathering, or a leisurely holiday, every moment is designed to be more than a stay—it's an extraordinary experience.

Website: www.tanisihotels.com

*India's inbound tourism has yet to regain its pre-pandemic momentum, and the widening gap remains a cause for concern. Despite India's vast cultural diversity, natural beauty, and global appeal, the recovery pace has been slower than expected, leaving industry stakeholders urging immediate and sustained interventions. **Pronab Sarkar**, MD, Swagatam Tours and former IATO President, shares a well-structured action plan to revive inbound numbers.*



REVIVING INDIA'S INBOUND TOURISM

Urgent strategies needed for a strong comeback

Since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, the sector has been navigating a prolonged downturn. Back then, the Ministry of Tourism had promised aggressive international publicity, extensive roadshows in source markets, and other revival measures once the pandemic subsided. However, these promises never translated into action. Instead, promotional budgets were slashed, foreign offices were closed, and the industry was left largely to fend for itself. Without a coordinated international marketing push, many tourism businesses shut down, and arrival numbers remain far below the levels of 2019–20.

The Ministry of Tourism, established in 1958, was tasked with formulating national tourism policies, coordinating between central and state agencies, and leading global promotional efforts to attract foreign travellers. For decades, India maintained an active international presence through foreign marketing offices.

The statistics underscore the challenge. In 2024, India welcomed 9.66 million foreign visitors, still 11.6% below the 2019 peak. Foreign exchange earnings have also lagged, and the sector faces a shortage of trained staff due to widespread job losses during the pandemic. Without targeted interventions, recovery will remain slow.

A revival plan requires joint action from the government, states, and the private sector. The Ministry of Finance must restore dedicated marketing and promotion funds for the Ministry of Tourism. The ministry should allocate resources for high-impact global campaigns, participate in major international travel exhibitions, organise roadshows in priority markets, launch electronic and media promotions, and support familiarisation trips for foreign tour operators, influencers, and media. The reintroduction of the Market Development Scheme for small tour operators and a single-window clearance system for investors in aviation, hotels, and attractions would further boost growth.

State governments have a critical role in organising roadshows, ensuring ease of access to monuments and attractions, maintaining cleanliness and safety, creating investment incentives, and improving connectivity by rail, road, and air. Meanwhile, the private sector must step up its overseas marketing, participate in global tourism fairs, collaborate in roadshows, and invest in expanding hospitality infrastructure in high-demand destinations.

With the growth of tourism to India, the country will not only see an increase in job opportunities but also a rise in foreign exchange earnings, thereby boosting overall economic growth. **BOTT**

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IATO CHAPTER CHAIRMEN

Powering collaboration, innovation & game-changing travel strategies

Regional leaders have a pivotal role in determining the trajectory of travel in India's dynamic tourism industry. As India's position in the global tourism market continues to improve, the chapter chairmen of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) provide valuable insight into the opportunities and threats that the industry will face in the future. These influential people are taking the lead in their areas to promote innovation and growth.

Nitin Konde

IATO Chapter Chairmen share ground-level insights to shape india's tourism future



Prateek Hira

Chairman, IATO Uttar Pradesh Chapter

India's inbound travel sector faces a "National Inbound Tourism Crisis," with low arrivals and foreign tourist spending, overlooked by successive governments. Despite India's strength across tourism segments—leisure, business, spiritual, medical, MICE, and weddings—the market's full potential remains untapped. A phased, segment-specific focus is essential, avoiding diluted messaging. The Ministry must project a clear, targeted identity, following the principle of "one thing at a time and that done well" to boost competitiveness and attract more high-value visitors. The IATO Convention is a key learning and networking platform for travel professionals, helping members stay updated on trends and plan strategically. Its well-curated sessions, diverse speakers, and peer networking offer valuable takeaways. Given operators' strong role in driving Odisha's tourist traffic, hosting the convention in the state provides an excellent opportunity for the fraternity to experience firsthand the destinations they have long promoted, strengthening both regional promotion and industry collaboration.

Gurinder Singh

Chairman, IATO Punjab Chapter

It's true that inbound tourism was severely impacted by COVID-19 and is only gradually recovering. Unfortunately, setbacks such as the Pahalgam incident and the Iran–Israel conflict have once again slowed its momentum. The ball is now in the government's court to revive inbound tourism to the desired level.

Currently, a European tourist might choose destinations like Malaysia, Vietnam, or Cambodia over India if they find India comparatively expensive. In addition, there is an urgent need to simplify the visa process. Offering a visa-on-arrival facility would be a significant step in the right direction.

I believe the upcoming IATO Convention in Puri will serve as a vital platform to discuss the challenges faced by India's tourism sector. This convention will also convey the sentiments of IATO members to the government, urging them to adopt a more supportive approach towards inbound tourism. At this juncture, the sector needs encouraging measures from the government, and I feel this will be the key highlight of the event.



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Ranga Reddy
Chairman, IATO Telangana & Andhra Pradesh Chapter

Declaring 2026 as “Visit India,” tourism leaders are calling for simplified, fully digitised visa processes and stronger promotion of India as a year-round destination, with a focus on showcasing lesser-known gems. Key priorities include upgrading infrastructure, enhancing visitor amenities, and empowering small operators through digital tools and overseas marketing support. Upskilling industry stakeholders is seen as essential to delivering world-class service. With these measures, India has the potential to surpass pre-pandemic tourism levels, strengthen its global appeal, and position itself as a leading destination for diverse travel experiences.

The upcoming IATO Convention in Puri, themed “Rejuvenate Inbound Tourism @2030”, is viewed as a pivotal platform to shape the sector’s future. Key expectations include clear digital transformation strategies, streamlined visa systems, stronger industry–government collaboration, and the sustainable promotion of lesser-known destinations. Addressing infrastructure gaps to enhance the visitor experience remains a pressing priority.

Himanshu Agashiwala
Chairman, IATO Western Region

IATO stresses the urgent need to revive inbound tourism, urging media to avoid negative portrayals that brand India unsafe, such as repeated reports on crimes against women and tourist harassment. Positive promotion, cleaner environments, well-maintained toilets, and tidier cities are vital to attract visitors. High taxes deter tourists, and the government is urged to launch impactful publicity campaigns to showcase India’s appeal, enhance its image, and encourage greater inbound travel. The IATO Convention theme, “Rejuvenate Inbound”, focuses on planning tourism’s revival. Under young president Ravi Gosain, IATO seeks vigorous discussions with government and industry stakeholders to chart a strong comeback. Bringing members from across India to Puri provides a valuable platform for interaction, idea exchange, and collaborative strategies to boost inbound tourism, fostering unity and innovation within the industry.



Mahendra Singh Rathore
Co-Chairman, IATO Rajasthan Chapter

Accelerating inbound tourism requires visa liberalization and simplification for seamless travel, supported by global marketing campaigns showcasing India as a safe, diverse, year-round destination. Enhanced connectivity and infrastructure, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, are crucial. Public-private partnerships should develop niche sectors like wellness, heritage, and adventure tourism. Embedding sustainability and digitalization as core policy pillars will align India with global trends, ensuring long-term growth, competitiveness, and a richer experience for international visitors. The IATO Convention in Puri offers a key platform for collaboration, innovation, and strategic dialogue to drive inbound tourism growth. Priorities include policy reforms, technology adoption, and diversifying destinations, with a focus on lesser-explored regions like Odisha. The event aims to strengthen government–private sector engagement, fostering a unified roadmap for sustainable

tourism. By aligning strategies and encouraging joint action, the convention seeks to unlock new opportunities and ensure long-term, balanced growth for India’s inbound sector.

Pandian Kumaravel
Chairman, IATO Southern Region

The top priority is projecting India as a safe, clean, and hygienic destination. Strong, effective communication of this message will build global confidence and boost foreign tourist arrivals more than any other promotional strategy. IATO serves as a dynamic platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and collaboration among tourism stakeholders. The 40th IATO Convention in Puri is expected to drive key discussions on tourism policy changes, sustainability, digital growth, and infrastructure improvements. Focus areas include easing travel for foreign tourists, enhancing service quality, and addressing transport, hotel capacity, and guide coordination issues. For South India, the convention offers opportunities to promote lesser-known destinations, boost visibility, and attract more international visitors through targeted campaigns and partnerships. Stakeholders from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh can showcase their unique offerings, aiming for greater presence in global travel catalogues. As Southern Region Chairman, I see this as a vital chance to build connections, share ideas, and create concrete strategies for tourism growth.



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Pravin Shah

Chairman, IATO Maharashtra and Dadra, Nagar Haveli & Daman Chapter

India's inbound tourism has rebounded well post-pandemic, bringing relief to the sector. Skill development programs are being conducted for members, alongside discussions with state governments to seek their support. Priorities include promoting inbound tourism, cruise tourism, transport, logistics, and qualified tour guides. The IATO Convention Puri 2025 is expected to draw around 900 participants, including hoteliers, tour operators, and transport and logistics providers from across India. It offers a prime opportunity for members to connect with suppliers and agents, expanding opportunities in both inbound and domestic tourism. Following the convention, Odisha can anticipate greater promotion and popularity as a tourism destination, a trend observed in previous IATO conventions hosted in various states.

Sunil Gupta

Chairman, IATO Northern Region

Accelerating inbound tourism growth requires strategic marketing in key source markets, showcasing India's spiritual, wellness, heritage, and eco-tourism strengths. Priorities include simplified visa processes, seamless travel experiences, and multilingual support. Public-private partnerships should develop high-quality products in lesser-known destinations, while capacity building must raise service, safety, and sustainability to global standards. Embracing digital transformation and data-driven insights will help track trends. With focused efforts, India can aim to welcome over 20 million foreign tourists annually by 2030. The IATO Convention in Puri is a pivotal event poised to drive the revival of inbound tourism to India. Serving as a platform for collaboration, innovation, and regional promotion, it leverages Odisha's rich cultural and natural heritage to inspire new circuits, products, and experiential offerings. The convention aims to strengthen engagement among government bodies, the private sector, and international stakeholders, fostering alignment on long-term strategies and actionable steps to diversify and expand India's inbound tourism portfolio.



Debjit Dutta

Chairman, IATO West Bengal Chapter

Post-pandemic, global travellers are increasingly mindful and purpose-driven, creating an opportunity for India to position itself as a destination rich in cultural depth, emotional resonance, and environmental sensitivity. Strategic marketing must be paired with improved international access, especially through enhanced land ports in Eastern and Northeastern India—a recommendation I recently submitted to the MEA on behalf of IATO, which could be transformative for the region. The IATO Convention, with its theme "Rejuvenate Inbound @2030," stands as a defining milestone, focusing the industry's collective efforts on sustainability, authenticity, and regional inclusion. Odisha, with its Bay of Bengal coastline, tribal heritage, and cultural wealth, is uniquely placed to lead regional narratives. With the right strategy, it can emerge as a central hub for inbound experiences, driving diversified tourism growth and attracting purpose-driven travellers seeking meaningful, immersive,

and environmentally conscious journeys across India's lesser-explored destinations.

Dr. Peter Lobo

Chairman, IATO Sikkim and North Bengal Chapter

Boosting inbound tourism requires simplified visas with expanded e-Visa access, fee waivers, and streamlined entry. Niche tourism in wellness, spirituality, wildlife, and lesser-known destinations should be promoted through targeted global marketing and roadshows. Improved connectivity via more international flights and better last-mile infrastructure is essential. Simplifying policies for tour operators and encouraging private investment will enhance ease of doing business. Prioritizing sustainable, eco-friendly practices will align with global trends, helping India regain momentum and attract high-quality foreign visitors. IATO Puri 2025 will unite tour operators, state officials, international buyers, hospitality partners, tech innovators, and media for wide industry representation. Expected outcomes include MoUs, policy inputs, new circuits, and investments, with a focus on Eastern India. Highlights include sessions on sustainability, digitization, and crisis resilience, plus showcases for Odisha, North Bengal, and the Northeast. B2B meetings and networking will foster partnerships, while a travel-tech zone will present innovative solutions, positioning the event as a catalyst for tourism growth.





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Dr. Sanket Shah
Chairman, IATO Gujarat & Diu Chapter

Reviving inbound tourism beyond pre-pandemic levels demands a multi-pronged strategy: Streamlined visas, better airport infrastructure, and smooth inter-state travel; aggressive global marketing of diverse circuits, including spiritual, heritage, and experiential tourism; and capacity building for world-class services. Public-private collaboration with incentives for inbound-focused investments, alongside a strong focus on sustainability, cleanliness, and safety, are some of the key elements that need a strong attention. With its vast potential, India can lead the next wave of global tourism, and this convention can be a defining milestone in that journey. The IATO Convention remains a key platform for collaboration, innovation, and inspiration.

Nirmalya Choudhury
Chairman, IATO North East States Chapter

Accelerating inbound tourism requires a multi-front approach: renewed overseas marketing, stronger ties with foreign tour operators, and sustained campaigns in key markets. Reviving the MDA scheme, boosting presence at global fairs, and using credible influencers can enhance visibility. Policy reforms should simplify e-visas, offer visa-on-arrival for select countries, and align taxes competitively. A National Tourism Board, empowerment of niche operators, and training in digital marketing and sustainability can foster community-driven growth, building a resilient, world-class inbound tourism sector. The IATO Convention in Puri is a crucial opportunity for both reflection and action in India's tourism sector.



Namgyal P. Sherpa
Co-Chairman, IATO Sikkim Chapter

Accelerating inbound tourism requires a multipronged approach, including expanding e-Visa access, active participation in global travel fairs, and promoting community-based tourism with eco-friendly policies. The upcoming IATO Convention in Puri should foster meaningful dialogue on innovative policies, global marketing, digital transformation, and stronger government-industry coordination. These efforts can position India as a more competitive, sustainable, and attractive destination, driving higher foreign arrivals and creating lasting benefits for local communities and the national economy.

Nasir Shah
Chairman, IATO J&K Chapter

The Ministry of Tourism must revise its international promotion policy, allocating substantial budgets for overseas marketing through travel marts, roadshows, B2B interactions, and re-opening overseas tourist offices. Incentives like tax rebates and reduced HST rates are crucial to boost foreign tourism. Despite the setback post-Pahalgam, J&K tourism has rebounded to 30% of previous levels, driven by resilient operators. The upcoming IATO Convention should focus on domestic and international promotion, capacity building, and providing top-tier professional training for guides.



Soumen Dutta
State In-Charge, IATO, Tripura

Travel to Tripura, a place where the natural world and traditions intertwine. Bangladesh forms three of Tripura's four borders: the western, southern, and northern ones; the northeastern and eastern ones are shared with Assam and Mizoram, respectively. The magnificent hills, valleys, and deep green spaces are the land's crowning glory. Tripura is a veritable treasure trove of plant and animal life, making it an ideal location for Bestwood. The Tripura Chapter of IATO made every effort to publicise the country's tourist attractions and the many things that IATO does. Going to the IATO Puri Convention and having conversations about how to step up our efforts in the tourism industry is something I'm really looking forward to. **BOTT**

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FAITH CONCLAVE 2025

charts unified roadmap for a \$3 trillion Indian Tourism Economy by 2047

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) concluded its two-day FAITH Conclave 2025 in New Delhi with a powerful demonstration of unity, vision, and national ambition. Under the theme “Indian Tourism – Invincible Spirit”, the event brought together leaders from government, defence, aviation, and the tourism industry to define a shared strategy to position India as a global tourism powerhouse.



The Conclave—chaired by Ajeet Bajaj, Vice Chair of FAITH—was attended by the presidents of India’s 10 major tourism and hospitality associations, senior policymakers, state tourism officials, and global industry leaders. Together, they unveiled Tourism Vision 2047: a roadmap to build a \$3 trillion tourism economy, attract 100 million inbound tourists, facilitate 20 billion domestic visits, and create 200 million tourism-driven jobs by India’s centenary year of independence.

FAITH leaders outlined a set of transformative reforms: granting infrastructure status to tourism, placing it on the concurrent list, securing industry status across all states and UTs, and implementing sustainable

tourism criteria of India guidelines.

Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa and architect of Incredible India, called for a ₹20,000 crore global marketing push, GST simplification, and major urban renewal for an elevated visitor experience. Puneet Chhatwal, Chairperson, FAITH underlined tourism’s role as India’s soft power and the world’s leading job creator. Senior tourism officials from Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh presented state-led innovations and unique tourism offerings.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar positioned tourism as a strategic pillar of India’s diplomacy, alongside Trade and Technology. He celebrated UNESCO recognitions, intangible heritage promotion, and

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Sectoral Recommendations included

- Cleanliness & Sanitation drives to enhance visitor experience at minimal marketing cost.
- Destination Development with thematic and experiential tourism circuits.
- Heritage Tourism incentives through tax rebates, low-interest loans, and visa-free travel.
- Hotel Sector Reforms with streamlined approvals and talent development.
- MICE Tourism incentives and city-level convention bureaus to make India a global events hub.

the success of initiatives like Heal in India for medical and wellness tourism.

Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat praised FAITH's role as a "strong think tank" and stressed raising tourism's GDP share from 6% to 10% through skilled manpower, sustainability, and cultural preservation.

Peter Elbers, CEO of IndiGo and Chair-elect of IATA, highlighted aviation's role in tourism growth. He outlined three enablers—visa reforms, ease of travel, and targeted global promotion—and announced IndiGo's expansion to over 50 international destinations with wide-body Airbus A350s.

Lt. Gen. Rakesh Kapoor, AVSM, VSM, championed border tourism through a Four-Pillar Development Model: Infrastructure, Telecommunications, Educa-

tion & Skilling, and Tourism. Initiatives include the Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan Portal, battlefield tourism hubs, and the Army Adventure Cup.

Representing IATO, FHRAI, HAI, ADTOI, ATOAI, ICPB, IHHA, ITTA, TAAI, TAFI, and AIRDA, FAITH reaffirmed its dedication to a whole-of-nation approach for tourism growth, integrating central and state policies, private partnerships, and community participation. A joint recommendations document will be submitted to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Ministry of Tourism.

"This is India's century," said Rajiv Mehra, General Secretary, FAITH, adding, "Achieving our tourism potential requires shared vision, coordinated action, and industry accountability." **BOTT**

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1. Mayfair Hotels has carved a niche in India's luxury and heritage hospitality space. How would you define the brand's philosophy today?

At MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts, we see luxury as more than opulence, it's about creating meaningful, personalized experiences rooted in heritage and authenticity. Each property reflects its natural and cultural surroundings, blending local architecture with refined design. Warm service, attention to detail, and immersive environments define the MAYFAIR experience, where guests feel both indulged and at home.

2. What are some of the biggest shifts you've seen in the Indian luxury hospitality sector, and how is Mayfair adapting to those changes?

Luxury travel today is less about grandeur and more about personalization, cultural immersion, and seamless amenities. Guests expect authenticity alongside high-speed connectivity, wellness, and sustainability. At MAYFAIR, we've adapted with curated local experiences, eco-conscious operations, and properties designed for privacy and easy accessibility. Innovation and creativity help us continuously redefine experiential luxury.

3. How do you approach expansion? What kind of locations or experiences make sense for the brand's future?

We focus on quality over scale, choosing destinations that offer exclusivity, cultural richness, and natural beauty. Accessibility, sustainability, and local character are key criteria. Our vision is to create boutique-style properties that preserve the soul of their surroundings while offering world-class comfort and curated experiences.

4. What's your approach to creating consistency in guest experience across different Mayfair properties, especially with such diverse locales?

Consistency comes from unified service standards, rigorous training, and a shared culture of warmth and excellence. While each property reflects its local identity, we ensure core elements, luxury amenities, seamless service, and personalization, remain the same. Guests experience a familiar MAYFAIR touch, with distinct local flavors at every destination.

5. Mayfair properties often blend heritage charm with modern luxury. How do you ensure that balance while designing or renovating hotels?

Our design philosophy honors the past while embracing the present. We preserve local architecture, craftsmanship, and motifs, then integrate modern comforts and technology.



POOJA RAY
MANAGING DIRECTOR
MAYFAIR HOTELS AND RESORTS

This balance ensures spaces that celebrate tradition while delivering the sophistication today's luxury travelers expect.

6. How does the hotel team infuse local culture and community engagement into the guest experience?

Each MAYFAIR property is a reflection of its location, through architecture, décor, cuisine, and curated cultural programs. We engage local communities by employing and training talent, collaborating with artisans, and hosting performances and workshops. This creates authentic guest experiences while supporting the local ecosystem.

7. Can you describe a moment or challenge in your career that shaped your leadership style? Is there a mantra or piece of advice that's guided you through your professional journey in hospitality?

A key challenge was modernizing operations without losing the warmth and heritage that define hospitality. Leading through this change taught me the value of emotional intelligence, adaptability, and listening to teams. My guiding mantra has been: "Stay grounded, yet stay ahead." The smallest details and frontline insights often lead to the biggest breakthroughs.

SWOSTI PREMIUM BEACH RESORT

Where sustainable luxury meets sacred heritage

*Odisha's transformation from a spiritual haven to a global travel hotspot has been significant. At the forefront of this change is **Dr. JK Mohanty**, MHCIMA, CMD – Swosti Group; Chairman, Eastern Region – Indian Association of Tour Operators; Lifetime Chairman – Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha; and Hon. Secretary – Hotel Association of India. A driving force in elevating Odisha's hospitality landscape, he has led Swosti Group with a strategic vision and a clear purpose.*

Shreya Shimpi



The IATO Convention 2025 is being hosted at your newly launched hotel in Puri. How significant is this moment for you personally and professionally, and what impact do such conventions have on promoting Odisha?

Hosting the 40th IATO Annual Convention at our newly opened Swosti Premium Beach Resort, Puri, is both an honour and a deeply personal milestone. Conventions like IATO are catalytic—they bring national attention and international exposure, creating a ripple effect across the tourism value chain, from hotels and travel operators to artisans and local entrepreneurs. For a spiritually rich and culturally vibrant destination like Puri, this is an unparalleled platform to showcase its potential to India's top tour operators and influencers.

How does the new hotel in Puri exemplify your long-standing vision for enhancing tourism infrastructure in the state?

Swosti Group's mission has always been to bridge the hospitality gap in Odisha by creating world-class infrastructure. Swosti Premium Beach Resort, Puri, reflects that mission—an ultra-modern, sea-facing luxury resort offering world-class amenities with sustainable design. Strategically located on the beach, it features state-of-the-art conference facilities, wellness centres, diverse culinary experiences, and panoramic views of the Bay of Bengal. It strengthens Odisha's capacity to

host high-end tourists, destination weddings, and international events, aligning with our vision to make Odisha a preferred year-round tourism destination.

What initiatives has Swosti Group adopted in its properties, especially the new one in Puri, to promote eco-friendly and responsible tourism?

Sustainability is at the heart of the Swosti Group's philosophy. Our new hotel incorporates solar power, rainwater harvesting, energy-efficient lighting, and comprehensive solid waste management systems. We also focus on community engagement—employing local staff, promoting local handicrafts, and organising cultural performances. Guests are encouraged to join eco-conscious activities like beach clean-ups and nature walks.

What future expansion plans or innovations are in the pipeline for Swosti Group, particularly in Eastern India and emerging tourism circuits?

We are actively expanding across Odisha. Our flagship project, Gopalpur Palm Resort—a 5-star luxury destination in Gopalpur-on-Sea—is already under development. We are also exploring projects in eco-tourism and tribal tourism circuits in regions like Koraput, Satkosia, Satpada, and Bhitarkanika, opening up new opportunities for travellers to experience Odisha's untapped beauty. **BOTT**

Syed A. Asim, Director of DeBox Global, is a visionary leader driving innovation in travel technology. Under his guidance, DeBox has redefined its TRAVCRM suite into a next-generation Travel ERP platform powered by Artificial Intelligence and seamless user experience.

Amit Bhasin



DEBOX GLOBAL

Shaping the future of Travel Technology

Could you walk us through the latest enhancements in your TRAVCRM suite—such as new modules or features added in the past year?

Our approach to the TRAVCRM suite has evolved significantly. While it began as a robust CRM covering core segments like Inbound, Outbound, Domestic, and MICE, with detailed functionalities from query-to-invoice, we recognized that modern travel companies need more than just a CRM to thrive.

This insight led to a strategic change in approach. Instead of just enhancing the CRM, we've architected a next-generation Travel ERP platform. This isn't just an update but a fundamental reimagining of travel technology, built on two powerful pillars: Artificial Intelligence and a Seamless User Experience.

Our latest enhancements are delivered through two distinct but powerful new products - NeXGeNov8 (Nex+Gen+Innovate): The AI-Powered Intelligence Suite for agencies ready to leverage predictive technology and Startos: A SaaS-Based, affordable, and comprehensive platform packed with everything agents need to launch and grow their travel business.

How is DeBox Global evolving its solutions to align with emerging travel trends?

The industry is transforming, and sustainability has shifted from a niche interest to a core operational imperative. At DeBox, we're embedding this principle directly into the architecture of our new

AI-powered ERP platform. Our commitment goes beyond discussion; it's about providing actionable tools for implementation. We enable our partners to seamlessly integrate sustainable practices into their business models through technological features such as Sustainable Vendor Management, Carbon Footprint Analytics, and Data-Driven Impact Reporting. Ignoring sustainable tourism is no longer an option when 68% of Gen Z travellers boycott non-sustainable brands, and \$12B was lost in 2023 by companies ignoring the "green preference."

Looking ahead over the next two to three years, what upcoming products or technology directions—especially regarding AI, advanced analytics, or new travel verticals—are you most excited about developing?

Our product roadmap is strategically focused on two transformative pillars: Hyper-intelligent Mobility and Proactive Traveller Safety. These are not just features but new paradigms for the travel experience, powered by India's massive mobile adoption, with over 1.1 billion users. First, we are developing an intelligent travel companion, leveraging predictive analytics to deliver hyper-personalised, context-aware experiences directly to the traveller's smartphone.

Second, we are building integrated safety and security frameworks directly into our platform, recognising that safety is the single greatest enabler for inbound tourism growth. **BOTT**



Uttar Pradesh

UTTAR PRADESH TOURISM

P

ITINERARY

- Depart from Lucknow and arrive in Kannauj (a)
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- Create your own scent at the Perfume Bar
- Stroll through Bada Bazaar's heritage attar sh
- Quick stop at Gauri Shankar Temple or Archae
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Perfume Capital of India

Kanauj

📍 Uttar Pradesh

(approx. 3 hours)

ops

Geological Museum



*We in the tourism industry must explore MICE as an alternate revenue stream, tapping into its vast potential. Diversifying into this segment can drive growth and create new business opportunities – believes **Chander Mansharamani**, Vice Chairman, ICPB and MD, Alpcord Travels.*

EXPLORING MICE

A lucrative opportunity for Inbound Operators



By the end of 2024 and into early 2025, India's foreign tourist arrivals remained roughly 10% below pre COVID (2019) levels — even as global travel rebounded past that benchmark by 5 %. Major hurdles, including persistent visa delays and infrastructure limitations, continue to dampen foreign arrivals. While domestic tourism is booming and the sector is forecast to contribute over ₹22 trillion to the economy in 2025, inbound recovery remains muted. Even critical heritage products like Rajasthan's Palace on Wheels have seen ridership halved compared to pre pandemic figures — underscoring how inbound demand still falls short.

In this challenging scenario, inbound tour operators must urgently explore alternate revenue models. One such opportunity is MICE — Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions. Globally, the MICE industry is booming: valued at USD 870 billion in 2024, it's projected to grow to over USD 1.46 trillion by 2030 (CAGR ~9.2%). Specifically, India's MICE market is already substantial — around USD 49.4 billion in 2024, with a forecast to more than double to USD 103.7 billion by 2030, growing at a robust 13 % CAGR. Other estimates put the MICE tourism market in India at approximately USD 4.5 billion (~₹37,576 crore), highlighting room for growth

The strength of MICE lies in its complexity and scale — multiple bookings, coordination with venues, hotels, transport, content and lo-

gistics — offering tour operators higher margins and more stable demand. India's recent addition of Yashobhoomi, the largest convention and exhibition centre in India (and Asia), enables hosting over 11,000 delegates in its initial phase, making it a standout for large-scale conventions. Alongside this, venues like Bharat Mandapam at Pragati Maidan—capable of seating up to 7,000 people—Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai with its modular halls, ballrooms, and meeting rooms, the India Expo Centre & Mart in Greater Noida spanning 58 acres of integrated facilities, and Jaipur's Exhibition & Convention Centre, signify India's growing strength in MICE infrastructure—creating abundant opportunities for tour operators to pivot effectively amidst sluggish inbound leisure demand.

Inbound Tour Operators must reposition themselves as agile MICE facilitators. This means building expertise in corporate relationships, event coordination, vendor management, and customizing packages for conferences and incentives. By doing so, tour operators can tap into a rapidly expanding market, balance out seasonal inbound dips, and future-proof their business in a post-pandemic travel landscape.

In conclusion, inbound tourism may not have fully bounced back, but the promise of MICE is undeniable. For Indian tour operators staring at stagnating foreign arrivals, MICE isn't just an alternative — it's an imperative. **BOTT**



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ASEGO

Transforming Domestic Travel Safety in India

What sets ASEGO apart in this crowded landscape is its ability to identify the unique way Indians travel and to design travel protection solutions that mirror their needs perfectly. Unlike generic travel insurance offerings, ASEGO's products are built to address the nuances of domestic tourism — for the family heading on a temple tour, the solo adventurer trekking through the Himalayas, or the group of friend's road-tripping across states.



DEV KARVAT
FOUNDER & CEO, ASEGO



One of the company's most groundbreaking offerings is its coverage for 20+ high-risk adventure sports activities, a rarity in the Indian insurance space. From paragliding over Bir Billing to white-water rafting in Rishikesh, ASEGO has stepped in to make sure India's growing community of thrill-seekers can pursue their passions with confidence.

The company has also identified a critical gap in protection for travellers embarking on Spiritual trips/yatras— a segment unique to India and growing each year. With Asego's travel protection for pilgrims, the brand provides tailored assistance for millions of devotees who set out on pilgrimages, from the Char Dham Yatra to Vaishno Devi, offering safety and support for journeys that are often long, challenging, and deeply meaningful.

Innovation is not just an add-on for ASEGO — it is woven into its core services. Value-added services such as real-time baggage tracking with TrackMate mitigate one of travel's biggest pain points, while travel assistance and insurance that protects loss-

es related to trip delays, missed connections, and interruptions reflect an understanding of the realities of travelling across India's vast and varied transport networks.

Backing these services is a robust infrastructure that only few can match. Asego's 24/7 emergency medical assistance and domestic roadside assistance features ensure that help is available whether a traveller is stranded on a highway, in a remote rural area, or navigating a busy airport.

The proliferation of India's domestic travel market has created demand for protection that is as wide-reaching as the journeys themselves. ASEGO has positioned itself at the leading edge of that evolution, setting new standards for what travel insurance and assistance can mean in a country as complex, diverse, and dynamic as India.

Today, ASEGO is not merely offering travel assistance and insurance; it is shaping the future of how Indians experience travel. By bridging global expertise with a deep understanding of India's domestic travel landscape, the company has become synonymous with safety, trust, and innovation. **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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AL HABTOOR CITY HOTEL COLLECTION

offering meticulously curated experiences

*Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection sets itself apart through its iconic location, meticulously curated experiences, and unwavering commitment to excellence. **Stefan Radstrom**, Complex General Manager, Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection, shares more.*

Gunjan Sabikhi

How does the hotel maintain the balance between timeless elegance and modern luxury in day-to-day operations and guest experiences?

Maintaining the balance between timeless elegance and modern luxury is at the core of our ethos. We achieve this by blending classic architectural details, luxurious furnishings, and refined decor that evoke a sense of timeless sophistication—with modern technology and contemporary amenities seamlessly integrated into our guest offerings, especially with our luxury brand, Al Habtoor Palace. Our daily operations emphasise personalised service, attention to detail, and authentic Arabian hospitality, ensuring guests enjoy the charm of tradition alongside the convenience of modern advancements.

How does Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection differentiate itself within Dubai's competitive luxury hospitality market?

Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection sets itself apart through its iconic location, meticulously curated experiences, and unwavering commitment to excellence. Our integration within Dubai's vibrant cityscape along the Dubai Water Canal, combined with luxurious accommodations, world-class dining, and exclusive entertainment options such as La Perle, offers guests a comprehensive luxury experience. We focus on delivering personalized service, bespoke guest experiences, and exclusive amenities that cater to the discerning traveller.

How does the hotel cater to the diverse cultural expectations and preferences of its international guests?

We have always been committed to providing a personalized and culturally sensitive experience for



all our guests. Recognising the rich diversity of our international travellers, especially our valued guests from India, we ensure our staff are trained in cultural awareness and bilingual communication skills. We offer customised amenities, such as Indian cuisine options, including vegetarian, vegan, and regional delicacies, and provide traditional greeting customs upon arrival. Additionally, our multilingual staff, along with our culturally attuned services help create a welcoming environment.

What sustainability initiatives has the hotel implemented to promote environmental responsibility without compromising luxury?

Al Habtoor City is dedicated to environmental sustainability while maintaining the highest standards of luxury. In fact, we are certified by Dubai government and has been awarded the Dubai Sustainable Tourism Stamp. We have implemented several green initiatives, including comprehensive waste measurement systems to monitor and reduce our waste footprint. We have significantly decreased plastic usage by replacing single-use plastics with eco-friendly alternatives and providing refillable bottles and reusable amenities. Water conservation is a priority. **BOTT**



Odisha's Finest Hospitality Perfected by Swosti Group

For decades, we've redefined hospitality in Odisha, setting benchmarks that others aspire to achieve. With 5 hospitality landmarks spread across the temple city of Bhubaneswar, the silk city of Berhampur (Gopalpur), along the tranquil shores of Asia's largest brackish water lake at Chilika and in the sacred land of Lord Jagannath in Puri, Swosti has become the address of choice for both locals and globetrotters alike.

Think Odisha Think Swosti



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ITB India

hosts an exclusive Networking Evening in Mumbai

ITB India 2025 returns to Mumbai from September 2–4 at Jio World Convention Centre, spotlighting curated travel experiences and the debut of Film Tourism. They recently hosted an exclusive cocktail dinner on July 7, 2025, at the Jio World Convention Centre for the travel trade partners and media representatives.

Shreya Shimpi

ITB India hosted an elegant evening of meaningful conversations and networking, celebrating their existing partnerships with the travel trade partners and travel media. ITB, the world's leading travel hub, is known for its unmatched brand authority. As it continues to build its global presence, it has also remarkably created a local impact. The 4th edition of ITB India 2025 will be held from September 2 – 4, 2025, at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai. This annual B2B outbound travel trade show will connect key travel industry leaders and international exhibitors across various sectors like MICE, Corporate and leisure travel, focusing on fast-growing Indian and South Asian markets.

Addressing the gathering, Darren Seah, Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, spoke about the highlights of ITB India 2025 and how it differs from the previous editions. He said, "The theme for this year is 'The Business of Experience: Curated Travel for Targeted Growth'. The major highlight will be the debut of Film Tourism in India. This edition will emphasise Tier 2/3/4 cities, welcoming the participation of travel agents from India's emerging cities."

In an exclusive chat with BOTT, he shared, "At ITB India 2025, we are focussing on quality over quantity with regards to the buyers, exhibitors and attendees. Our focus this year will be on facilitating meaningful networking sessions as well as content sessions that highlight user-centric and travel-centric experiences – the key pillars of the exhibition and content."

Messe Berlin's dedicated India office is fully engaged in boosting outreach, thereby reinforcing its local commitment". Present at the event from Messe Berlin India were Deepika Unni, Director, Exhibitions & Market Development-India and Saurabh Shukla, Head of Sales.

With curated exhibitor zones, themed walkthroughs, experience-driven sessions, and targeted growth dialogues, ITB India 2025 promises to be a bigger and impactful platform. **BOTT**





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fly24hrs

Living up to its motto and providing around the clock services

*The travel and trade sector in India is rapidly embracing digital, changing how companies function and how customers interact. Technology is promoting efficiency and transparency throughout the industry, from contactless payments and block chain-enabled supply chains to smooth online booking systems and AI-powered itinerary planning. In keeping with this, **S R Chaudhary**, CEO and Founder, fly24hrs' highlighted the company's transformational path in an exclusive interview with **BOTT**, outlining his objectives for future business operations and expansion.*

Nitin Konde

*F*ly24hrs.com has emerged as a trusted B2B travel platform across India. Tell us about the vision behind its creation and how your legacy with Sahil Tours & Travels contributed to this growth.

Since everyone in the globe was choosing to digitise, we saw that there was a great need for it while running our company under the broad aegis of Sahil Tours & Travels. We then made the decision to go digital, which is how our brand name, fly24hrs, came to be because we provide our clients with round-the-clock services.

With your platform offering a wide array of services—flights, hotels, sightseeing, and more—what do you believe sets Fly24hrs apart in today's competitive travel tech space?

I have collaborated with nearly all of my rivals, so I am aware of both their advantages and disadvantages. In order to provide our clients and agents with top-notch services, we made

sure to tick all the boxes when we developed this platform.

What role do you see Fly24hrs playing in the evolving B2B travel ecosystem post-pandemic, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets?

Actually, there was a misconception earlier that this business would only operate in metropolitan areas. Thankfully, we focused on tier 2 and tier 3 cities when we first entered this area and created a strategy for operating a cash economy business in these cities, and it worked.

Lastly, what are your expansion plans and digital innovations lined up to enhance agent experience and scale operations further?

We currently operate seven branches throughout the North and Northeast. In addition, we are developing a franchise model and expanding throughout the western and southern regions of India. **BOTT**

*Born from a deep admiration for Japan's layered cultural heritage, I Love Japan DMC has built strong community ties and curated journeys rich in authenticity—from rural traditions to cutting-edge urban experiences—offering travellers not just itineraries, but meaningful cultural insight. **Pranay Nath**, Founder and CEO, I Love Japan DMC, shares more.*

Priyanka Saxena Ray

I LOVE JAPAN DMC brings unmatched authenticity to Japan Travel



Could you share how the company's vision evolved to focus exclusively on inbound travel to Japan?

Our vision for I Love Japan DMC was born from a genuine admiration for Japan—not just as a destination, but as a deeply layered cultural landscape. Over time, we saw a clear gap in the market for truly immersive, locally grounded experiences tailored to discerning travellers, especially from emerging source markets like India and the Middle East.

Rather than dilute our focus across regions, we made a conscious decision to specialise exclusively in Japan. This allowed us to build robust on-ground operations, foster strong relationships with local communities, and stay ahead of evolving travel trends. Today, our Japan-only approach enables us to curate journeys with unmatched detail and authenticity—from traditional rituals in rural villages to cutting-edge design districts in Tokyo.

Your partner team includes Neha & Pranay Nath. How do your combined strengths enhance the travel experience for inbound tour operators?

Our strength lies in our complementary roles. Neha leads the curation and design of itineraries with a sharp focus on local insights, experiential flow, and hidden gems—ensuring each journey tells a unique story of Japan. Pranay oversees business development and strategic partnerships, ensuring we remain agile, efficient, and connected within the industry. Together, this

blend of creative storytelling and operational excellence helps us craft journeys that are both imaginative and flawlessly executed—something our tour operator partners truly value.

With Japan hosting high profile events like Expo Osaka 2025, how is I Love Japan DMC preparing to deliver unique, large-scale itineraries?

Expo Osaka 2025 is an exciting opportunity not just for Japan, but for the global travel community. We're actively working with local governments, venues, and suppliers to secure early access and streamline logistics. Our approach goes beyond just ticketing—it's about designing Expo-linked experiences that blend innovation with traditional Japan. From curated pre- and post-Expo cultural extensions to efficient group handling, we're focused on creating scalable yet personalized programs for MICE, delegations, and leisure travellers alike.

What differentiates your tailor made, experiential holidays?

What sets us apart is our ability to balance cultural authenticity with comfort and familiarity—particularly for the Indian market. We understand what Indian travellers seek, whether it's dietary preferences, language support, or festival timings. Our itineraries seamlessly weave in iconic landmarks like Kyoto's shrines or Tokyo's hyper-modern districts with lesser-known experiences. **BOTT**



OTOAI'S 6TH ANNUAL CONVENTION in Moscow scripts new era for Indo-Russia Tourism

In a landmark move that promises to reshape the dynamics of India-Russia tourism relations, the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) successfully concluded its 6th Annual Convention in the heart of Russia — Moscow. Held from July 10 to 13, 2025, the convention brought together over 200 influential Indian travel professionals and marked a pivotal moment in boosting bilateral tourism exchanges and cooperation.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

With the theme “Fast Forward Future – The Intelligent Travel,” the convention laid the groundwork for enhancing destination awareness, forging strategic partnerships, and embracing tech-led transformations in the travel landscape. Hosted at The Carlton Hotel, Moscow, in association with the Moscow City Tourism Committee, the convention featured high-level business sessions, impactful networking, and immersive destination experiences, showcasing the unmatched hospitality and rich culture of Russia.

The opening ceremony was graced by dignitaries and travel luminaries, including Evgeniy Kozlov, First Deputy Head of the Office of the Mayor and the Government of Moscow and Chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee. In his inaugural address, Mr. Kozlov emphasised the power of tourism in enhancing people-to-people ties between India and Russia. He also highlighted Moscow's commitment to creating a welcoming and engaging environment for Indian travellers.

The convention kicked off with thought-provoking business



sessions and high-profile panels, including the highlight discussion, “Connected Travel: Building Speed, Safety & Scale for the Intelligent Traveller”. The panel featured a dynamic mix of Indian and Russian thought leaders such as Ankush Nijhawan, Anastasia Popova, Dev Karvat, Irshad Dadan, Sharad Gowani, and Rahim Aslam. The panel explored the future of travel, spotlighting innovations in AI, safety, experiential journeys, and destination adaptability.

Additionally, engaging presentations by the Moscow City Tourism Committee, VFS Global, Asego, and DMC Bazaar provided deep insights into Russia’s tourism readiness, desti-

nation evolution, and accessibility for Indian travelers.

The convention achieved impressive business milestones with over 1,750+ B2B meetings conducted and 20+ partnerships formalized between Indian and Russian stakeholders. New destination-specific tour packages were conceptualized and rolled out, alongside volume commitments by Indian operators for the upcoming winter travel seasons of 2025 and 2026.

One of the significant achievements of the convention was the signing of an MoU between VFS Global and OTOAI, marking a new era of collaborative visa support and facilitation. In addition, structured dialogues with the Moscow

City Tourism Committee and other Russian DMCs paved the way for future-focused cooperation.

Commenting on the impact of the convention, Himanshu Patil, President, OTOAI, said, “The tremendous response received from our delegates and the concrete partnerships forged during the past few days validate our belief that Moscow represents the next frontier for Indian outbound tourism. Its extraordinary hospitality, combined with rich cultural tapestry and world-class infrastructure, has convinced our members that this destination offers unparalleled opportunities for the discerning Indian traveller. Our delegates’ immersive experiences – from

ASSOCIATIONS IN ACTION

Moscow's architectural marvels to St. Petersburg's White Nights – have equipped them with firsthand knowledge to curate authentic and unforgettable experiences for Indian tourists."

Shravan Bhalla, Convention Chairman, OTOAI, further elaborated on the outcomes, saying, "The convention has delivered exactly what we had hoped for – a practical roadmap to unlock Moscow's potential for Indian outbound tourism. Our key takeaway is the collaborative spirit demonstrated by our counterparts in addressing operational challenges and market-specific requirements. The sessions also

brought to light some of the most pressing trends shaping the future of global travel, such as the rise of intelligent travel powered by AI and personalisation, the increasing demand for experiential and immersive tourism, and the need for robust travel insurance and safety protocols."

He added that innovations such as multi-destination itineraries, digital visa facilitation, and sustainable tourism practices were well-received by delegates, showcasing India's readiness for forward-thinking travel solutions.

Delegates were treated to immersive destination experiences through-

out Moscow, visiting iconic landmarks such as the Red Square, GUM, Zaryadye Park, VDNKh, and experiencing the grandeur of the Sun of Moscow Ferris Wheel, river cruises, and cultural events such as the Bharat Utsav at Manezhnaya Square.

Delegates also marvelled at Moscow's architectural gems, including historic metro stations known for their ornate designs, and enjoyed curated culinary experiences at top local restaurants. The city tour helped dismantle preconceived notions and positioned Moscow as a tourist-friendly, culturally rich, and vibrant capital that caters





comfortably to Indian tastes.

Following the Moscow convention, the delegates embarked on a post-convention tour of St. Petersburg, where the elegance and historical charm of the city were on full display. From the Palace Square walking tour to a majestic river and canal cruise, and exclusive early access to The Hermitage Palace, every moment deepened the appreciation for Russia's timeless beauty. Cultural evenings, networking events, and authentic experiences left the Indian travel fraternity deeply impressed.

Addressing the media, Anastasia Popova, Head of Business Tourism Development, Moscow City Tourism Committee, reinforced Russia's readiness to welcome Indian travellers. She said,

"OTOAI's 6th Convention has surpassed all expectations and showcased the remarkable interest Indian travel stakeholders have in exploring Moscow as a destination. The quality of engagement and meaningful business discussions has validated our strategy to position Russia prominently in the Indian outbound market. We are already working closely with Indian tour operators on customised packages that blend Moscow's rich cultural heritage with modern amenities that resonate with Indian travellers' preferences. Current Moscow-India direct air connectivity through Aeroflot airline has further enhanced accessibility for Indian tourists."

This convention also dispelled any concerns about Russia's safety or suit-

ability as a tourism or MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) destination. On-ground experiences affirmed that Russia offers high levels of infrastructure, well-coordinated tourism support, English-speaking guides, and a warm, hospitable welcome to visitors.

Delegates unanimously echoed that Russia is not only safe but also supremely equipped for both leisure and business tourism. The successful coordination between Indian and Russian stakeholders has created a transparent, efficient, and mutually beneficial ecosystem—paving the way for increased travel exchanges, group departures, curated packages, and future MICE events. **BOTT**



Experiencing the culture and heritage of Vietnam aboard Vietnam Airlines

When it comes to discovering Vietnam, the journey is as memorable as the destination—and Vietnam Airlines ensures exactly that. The recent FAM trip to Vietnam, organised in collaboration with Vietnam Airlines, offered Indian travel professionals and media an immersive glimpse into the beauty of the country across three spectacular regions—Hanoi, Ninh Binh, and Hue. The five-day journey was not just about sightseeing; it was about experiencing the country's soul through its culture, cuisine, and heritage.

Amit Bhasin



Known for its impeccable connectivity, convenient schedules, and exceptional service, Vietnam Airlines has carved a niche for itself among discerning travellers from India and beyond. Its Business Class, in particular, is a class apart, offering lie-flat comfort, delectable cuisine, curated beverages, and seamless connectivity that transforms long-haul flying into a delightful experience. With thoughtfully designed flight timings, Vietnam Airlines allows travellers to maximise their time exploring destinations while enjoying a restful journey in the skies.

Day 1: The allure of Hanoi

The journey began with an overnight flight from Delhi, landing in Hanoi at dawn. After a smooth transfer and hearty breakfast, the group embarked on a unique cyclo city tour. The bustling streets of Hanoi came alive as travellers passed iconic landmarks like the Hanoi

Opera House and the serene Hoan Kiem Lake. A photo stop at the imposing Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long offered a glimpse into the nation's deep-rooted history.

Lunch at Hanoi Haveli Indian Restaurant brought familiar flavours before the group continued to the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first national university—a proud symbol of Confucian heritage. A visit to Dong Xuan Market showcased local life, while the day ended with an authentic egg coffee workshop, dinner at the elegant Ly Club, and free time exploring the lively night scene of Hanoi's Ta Hien Street. Overnight stay at the Hotel du Parc Hanoi provided a comfortable close to the day.

Day 2: Ninh Binh's spiritual and scenic charm

After breakfast, the group set off to Quang Phu Cau Incense Village—where rows of bright red incense sticks created



a mesmerizing sight for photography enthusiasts. The journey continued to Ninh Binh, often called “Halong Bay on land.” After lunch at okm Restaurant, the highlight awaited—the Bai Dinh Pagoda. This grand complex, with record-breaking statues and corridors, stood as a testament to Vietnam’s spiritual magnificence. Dinner at Emeraldalda Resort’s restaurant was followed by a magical evening stroll through the shimmering Hoa Lu Ancient Town. Guests spent the night at Emeraldalda Resort Tam Coc, nestled amidst serene landscapes.

Day 3: Cruising through Trang An & arrival in Hue

The morning began with a boat ride through Trang An Scenic Landscape Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site. As the group floated past limestone karsts, lush forests, and caves like

Sang and Toi, the setting felt like a cinematic escape into nature’s lap. Lunch at Aroma Indian Restaurant was followed by a transfer to Noi Bai Airport for a Vietnam Airlines flight to Hue. Upon arrival, participants checked into the Pilgrimage Village Boutique Resort & Spa, where a fine dinner awaited, setting the tone for exploring the ancient capital.

Day 4: Hue’s regal splendour

Hue, the imperial city, opened its treasures to the group with an electric car tour of the Hue Citadel—an architectural marvel of the Nguyen Dynasty. Guests donned traditional Ao Dai costumes, adding cultural flair to their experience. Lunch at Vi Hue Restaurant introduced authentic central Vietnamese flavours.

The afternoon unfolded with visits to Minh Mang Tomb—an oasis of po-

etry and philosophy—and the iconic Thien Mu Pagoda by the Perfume River. A stroll through Dong Ba Market added local colour, while some participants explored tailoring opportunities for Ao Dai. The day concluded with a royal cuisine dinner at Khong Gian Xua Restaurant, followed by a leisurely city walk.

Day 5: Farewell with fond memories

The final day began early with breakfast on the go before boarding a flight back to Hanoi. The group enjoyed shopping in the Hanoi Old Quarters, lunch at Ngon Garden Restaurant, and the city’s famous Trang Tien ice cream. After some leisure, it was time to relax at the Lotus Business Lounge before boarding Vietnam Airlines’ flight back to New Delhi, wrapping up an enriching and unforgettable journey. **BOTT**





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Perched in the vibrant precinct of Ward No. 3, Upper McLeod Ganj, WelcomHeritage Natraj stands as a six-storeyed boutique property featuring 32 thoughtfully designed rooms, each offering a blend of modern comforts and a warm, heritage-inspired ethos.

ROHAN GUPTA



Accommodations & Amenities

Guests can choose from diverse room types—including standard and luxury options—each with air conditioning, central heating, plush queen-size beds, and thoughtful extras like writing desks, study tables, and evening turndown service. In-room comforts include smart 50-inch TVs, minibars, hair dryers, vanity counters with LED touch-sensor lighting, bottled water, tea/coffee makers, slippers, and secure safety lockers.

Leisure & Dining

The property's temperature-controlled swimming pool offers a refreshing indulgence amid mountain air. Culinary offerings shine at Nirvana, the multi-cuisine restaurant that serves both local and international fare made from fresh ingredients, while the bar—Mountain High—delights guests with handcrafted cocktails and sweeping views of the Dhauladhar ranges.

Conveniences & Services

WelcomHeritage Natraj ensures an effortless stay with 24/7 room service, high-speed Wi-Fi, complimentary parking, luggage storage, concierge assistance, and dry-cleaning and laundry services. **BOTT**



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AUSTRALIA MARKETPLACE INDIA 2025

strengthens bilateral travel ties as arrivals surge

Tourism Australia's 19th edition of Australia Marketplace India (AMI) concluded in Jaipur, underscoring the strong momentum in India-Australia travel. Held from August 3–6 at Fairmont Jaipur, the flagship B2B event brought together over 100 Indian agents and 82 Australian tourism operators, reinforcing the growing appetite of high-yield Indian travellers for immersive Australian holidays.

Pallavi Sharma



Jane Phillips,
General Manager Distribution
Development & Partnerships,
Tourism Australia,



Jennifer Doig,
Regional General Manager for
South & Southeast Asia,
Tourism Australia,



Nishant Kashikar,
Country Manager, India & Gulf,
Tourism Australia



Participation from both Indian and Australian stakeholders rose significantly this year, with sellers across lodging, attractions, tour operators, and state tourism bodies showcasing diverse experiences. The platform also emphasised India's rapid rise as one of Australia's fastest-growing source markets.

Commenting on the event, Jennifer Doig, Regional General Manager, South & Southeast Asia, Tourism Australia, said, "With India being one of the leading markets for Australia, marketplace plays a pivotal role in connecting Australian tourism experts with key players in the Indian travel trade. This

initiative is central to increasing tourism spending and future visitor numbers from one of our most promising inbound markets."

Highlighting India's growing importance, Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager – India & Gulf, Tourism Australia, shared, "Today's Indian traveller seeks more than just sightseeing. They want depth, discovery, and cultural connection, all of which Australia offers in abundance. The rise of India from seventh to fifth among Australia's top source markets reflects this growing demand, driven by strategic partnerships and strong trade engagement."

Adding to this momentum, Pat Cummins, Australian cricket captain, who fronted the "Howzat for a Holiday?" campaign, noted, "India and Australia share a deep cricketing bond, and it's exciting to see that passion translate into travel. Showcasing Australia's destinations through cricket has been a unique way to inspire Indian travellers to explore the country's world-class offerings."

India ranked as Australia's fifth-largest inbound market for the year ended May 2025, welcoming 453,000 visitors—up 10%—with spending reaching AUD 2.7 billion, a 14% jump year-on-year. **BOTT**



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OMAN AIR celebrates 30 years of successful flights to Mumbai

Oman Air marks 30 years of operations between Muscat and Mumbai. The second Indian destination to be introduced after Thiruvananthapuram in 1993, Mumbai has since grown into a cornerstone of the airline's network with 12 flights per week.

BOTT Desk



Over the last three decades, Oman Air has significantly expanded its footprint across India, strengthening air links that support business, tourism, and community ties between the two countries.

To commemorate this milestone, a celebratory function was held at the Taj President Hotel in Mumbai on Thursday. The event was graced by His Excellency Mahboob Issa Juma Al Raisi, Consul General of the Consulate General of Oman, along with Vice President (Sales) Mr Ahmed Al Mahrouqi and Regional Vice President ISC Mr Sunil VA. On the occasion, CMD of Flycreative Online Limited Mr VS Abdulkareem received the Best Performing Recognition award from the Consul General.

Speaking on the occasion, Sunil VA, Regional Vice President for the Indian Subcontinent at Oman Air, said: "This anniversary is more than a celebration of flights, it's a celebration of friendship and trust. India has been one of our most important markets, and Mumbai holds a special place in our network. As we continue to evolve as a premium global carrier and a proud oneworld member, we remain committed to elevating our relationship with India and offering exceptional, world-class travel experiences to our guests."

The milestone comes at an exciting time for Oman Air with its recent entry into the oneworld alliance. With access to a network of over 900 destinations worldwide, the airline is now better positioned than ever to offer its Indian guests greater global connectivity, streamlined travel benefits, and enhanced service. **BOTT**





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2. The John Wakefield Memorial Award for Most Inspirational Quality Eco Lodge
3. The John Wakefield Memorial Award for Most Inspirational Footprint Eco Lodge
4. Lodge Naturalist
5. Wildlife Promotion Company
6. International Wildlife Tour Operator
7. Wildlife Harmony Homestay Award

TOFT Environment & Forest Awards

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TOFT Wildlife Awards

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4. Sustainable Homestay Award
5. Wildlife Conservation Photography Award
6. Wildlife Conservation Documentary Award

TOFT Jury Awards

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Know what your stars say about August 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 August 2025.



March 21 – April 20

This month, stay vigilant and maintain your focus at work, as distractions could impact your performance and quality. By channelling your energy constructively, you will reach the peak of your potential. Avoid unnecessary arguments with loved ones, practice yoga and meditation, and keep overthinking at bay to maintain balance.



July 23 – August 21

It may be the right time for the job change you've been considering. Start exploring opportunities and applying for new roles now. Expect community gatherings on your calendar, and be mindful of small health challenges that may arise.



November 23 – December 22

You may hit a career high if you successfully complete a challenging task. Keep your goals in clear sight and follow established guidelines to ensure success. Avoid making crucial financial commitments for now.



April 21 – May 21

This month will be phenomenal, bringing progress on both professional and personal fronts. Your joy and enthusiasm will fuel growth by leaps and bounds. Stay cautious about your health and embrace opportunities to innovate, which will also bring you recognition and popularity.



August 22 – September 23

You are set to receive education or training in your field that will open doors to new career opportunities. This learning phase will lead to significant growth and success. Couples should take time for relaxation and bonding to nurture relationships.



December 23 – January 20

Meeting professional goals on time may prove challenging, so work diligently and seek help if needed. Avoid rushing into property purchases without due diligence. Be mindful, as mood swings could affect family harmony.



May 22 – June 21

Prioritise yourself and your well-being above all else. Be adaptable and persistent, as your courage and talent will drive your career forward. This is not the right time for crucial financial decisions, so exercise patience and foresight.



September 24 – October

Focus on the brighter side of life and maintain a positive outlook. You may be entrusted with added responsibilities at work, requiring dedication and efficiency. Avoid risky investments and work on cultivating healthy habits in your daily routine.



January 21 – February 19

Stay alert and avoid losing focus at work to maintain your productivity and quality. Refrain from arguments with loved ones and keep your mind calm by avoiding overthinking.



June 22 – July 22

Your emotions will transform into your greatest strength as you learn to harness and channel them effectively, unlocking your true potential. The mantra for real growth is to keep learning, sharing, and evolving without pause.



October 24 – November 23

This is a good month for introspection and self-improvement. Recognise your strengths and work on your weaknesses to achieve balance. Those planning to start their professional journey may soon find the right opportunity. Couples can plan quality time together for better bonding.



February 20 – March 20

Your relationships will be filled with warmth, love, and excitement this month. You are nearing a breakthrough in your career and have a clear vision for the future. Your hard work will be recognised, and it's also a favourable time for investments.



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APPOINTMENTS

AIR NEW ZEALAND

Air New Zealand has recently announced the appointment of **Nikhil Ravishankar** as its next Chief Executive Officer, succeeding Greg Foran who steps down in October after almost six years leading the airline through one of the most challenging periods in aviation history. Currently the airline's Chief Digital Officer, Nikhil will officially take over as CEO on 20 October 2025. In the nearly five years that Nikhil has been at Air New Zealand he has gained a deep understanding of the aviation sector, and the airline.



TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND, MUMBAI

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has appointed **Nattachit Oonsiam** as the new Director of its Mumbai Office, where he will lead destination marketing efforts and deepen trade and media partnerships across Western and Southern India, one of Thailand's most vital source regions for inbound tourism. With nearly two decades of experience at TAT, Oonsiam brings a strong track record in regional strategy, international marketing, and stakeholder engagement. Before his posting in India, he served as Director of the ASEAN, South Asia and South Pacific Marketing Division.



FAIRMONT & RAFFLES JAIPUR

Fairmont and Raffles Jaipur announced that **Rajat Sethi**, who has successfully led Fairmont Jaipur since 2023, has now been appointed as Cluster General Manager overseeing both properties. With over 25 years of leadership experience across some of the world's most prestigious luxury hotels, Sethi brings exceptional expertise in guest experience, operational excellence, and strategic growth. In his expanded role, he will continue to lead Fairmont Jaipur while also taking charge of Raffles Jaipur.



FORTUNE AIRPORT ROAD, KOCHI

Fortune Hotels has appointed **Sharath Rajan** as the General Manager of Fortune Airport Road, Kochi. With over 18 years of diverse experience, Sharath brings a strong track record of driving operational excellence and delivering exceptional guest experiences. In his new role, he will oversee the hotel's operations, including guest services, team leadership, quality assurance, and overall property performance.



VITS HOTELS

VITS Hotels, the flagship chain of Vikram Kamat Hospitality, has appointed **Vinay Kumar Singh** as Vice President – Operations. With a three-decade-long career in the hospitality industry, Singh will drive operational excellence and foster the group's vision of becoming a Pan-India hospitality brand. Starting his career at Hyatt Regency Delhi in Human Resources, Singh worked in prominent roles for notable brands such as The Metropolitan Nikko Hotel, Taj Hotels Corporate Office, and Concept Hospitality. Singh now brings this end-to-end experience to his current position.



VISIT FLORIDA

DT Minich, President and CEO of Experience Kissimmee, has been appointed to the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors. With more than 30 years in the tourism industry, Minich brings expertise from serving at the helm of three Florida destination marketing organizations (DMOs). Since joining Experience Kissimmee in 2014, Minich has been instrumental in positioning the destination as a premier choice for leisure travellers, meeting planners, sporting events, and group travel.



HOLIDAY INN AMRITSAR

Holiday Inn Amritsar has announced the appointment of **Pradeep Sharma** as its new General Manager. This move exemplifies IHG's ongoing commitment to nurturing internal talent and advancing leadership within the organization, in line with the company's 'Room to Grow' philosophy. Sharma brings with him extensive experience from his time across several prominent IHG properties, including Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad and Crowne Plaza Gurugram.



CROWNE PLAZA MAYUR VIHAR

Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar has announced the appointment of **Mohammad Muneer** as Director of Sales and Marketing. In addition to his hotel role, Muneer has also been entrusted with responsibilities as Area Champion – Sales and Marketing, Southwest Asia for IHG Hotels & Resorts, supporting collaboration and performance across a key group of hotels in the region. Muneer brings over 18 years of diverse hospitality experience.





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