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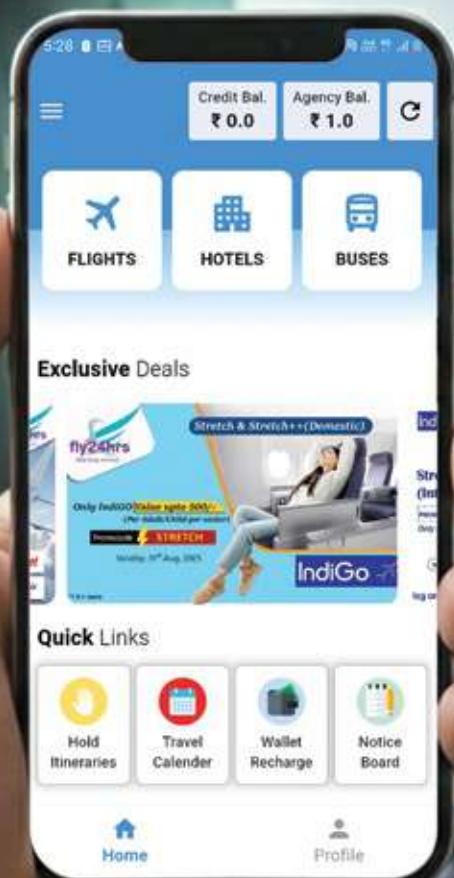
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Contents

Editor
Priyanka Saxena Ray

Director
Gunjan Sabhki
gunjan@bottindia.com

Director Design
Rajesh Chhetri

Assistant Editor
Pallavi Sharma

Assistant Editor-West India
(Mumbai)
Shreya Shimpi

Reporter
Somya Deep

Consulting Editor
Aishwarya Srivastava

Administration
Aparna Kapoor

Circulation & Desk
Ashish Sarthak
Vishal Maurya

Published and Printed by
Rai Umraopati Ray on behalf of
More Media Pvt. Ltd.,
B6, Ground Floor, Kalkaji,
New Delhi - 110 019

BOTT House
Top Floor, E-40, Anand Niketan,
New Delhi: 110021
Email: info@bottindia.com
Phone: 91 8800437575
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2026 & Beyond

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Insights from Leaders across Travel, Tourism and Hospitality on What Lies Ahead

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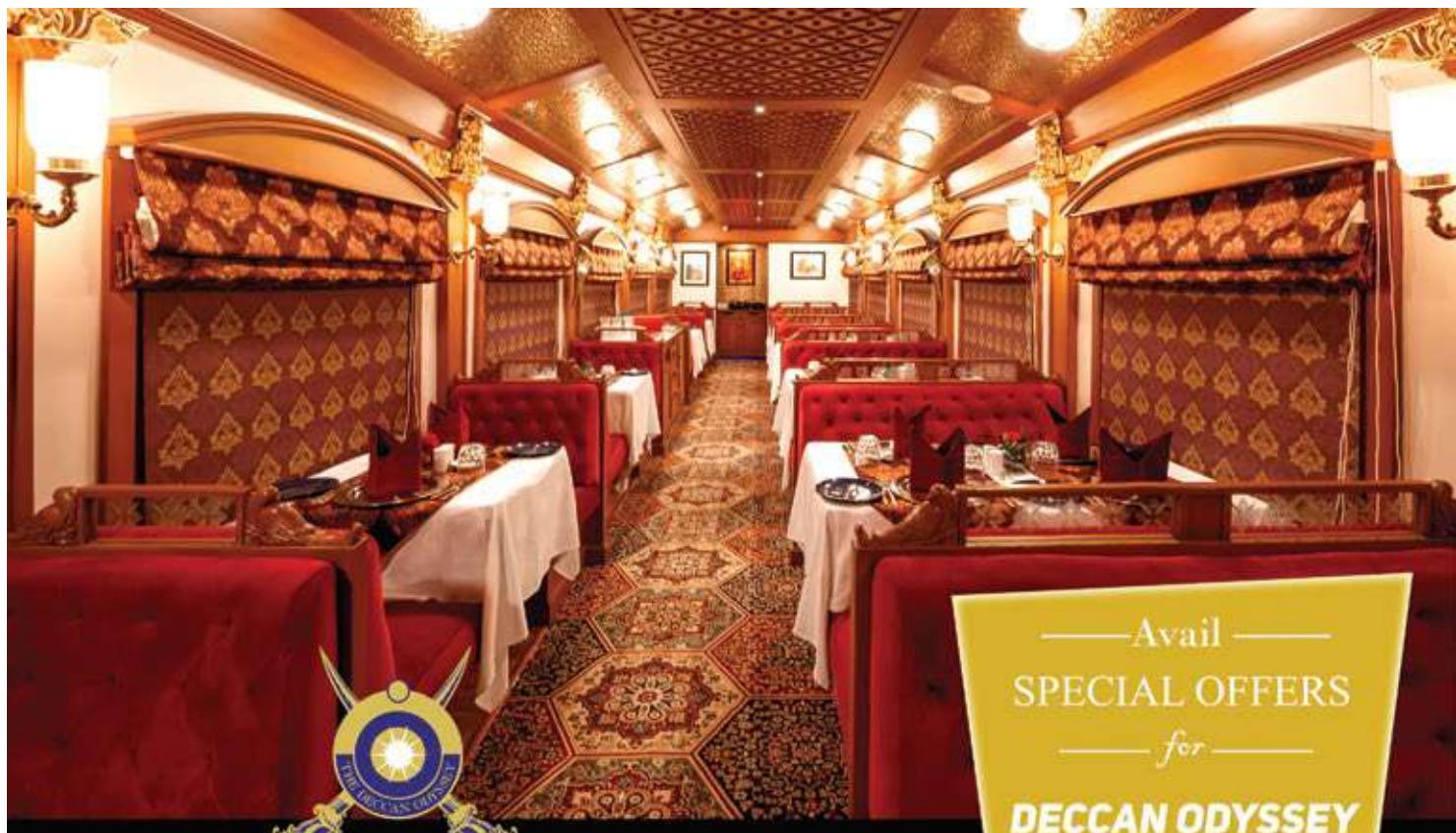
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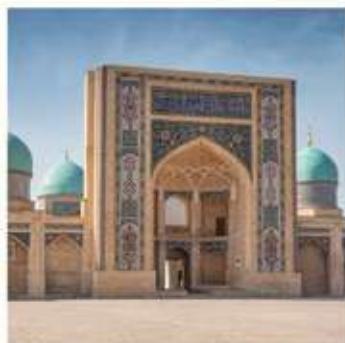
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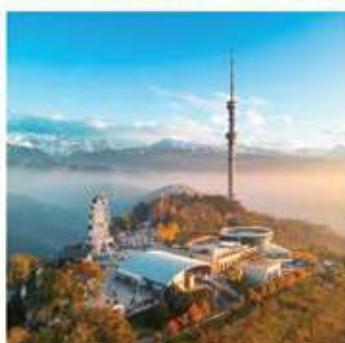
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Editor's **LETTER**

*D*ear Readers,

As we step into 2026, the global travel and tourism industry finds itself at a defining crossroads—shaped by rapid change, sharper traveller expectations and an unmistakable shift towards purpose-led growth. Travel today is no longer just about movement; it is about meaning. Experiences are deeper, choices are more conscious, and destinations are being evaluated as much for their values as for their visual appeal.

India enters 2026 with quiet confidence. Domestic travel continues to power growth, outbound travel is setting new benchmarks, and inbound tourism is steadily finding renewed momentum. Aviation capacity is expanding, cruise tourism is coming of age, and hospitality brands are reimagining both scale and intimacy. At the same time, technology—from AI-led personalisation to smarter distribution—has moved from being an enabler to becoming a strategic cornerstone of the business of travel.

The BOTT January Vision 2026 Issue captures this moment of transition through the voices of the people shaping the industry. In this special edition, we bring together insights from over 50 leaders across travel trade, aviation, hospitality, tourism boards and cruise companies, each sharing their perspective on where tourism is headed in 2026 and how their organisations are preparing for the road ahead. Their views reflect optimism, realism and, above all, intent—intent to grow responsibly, collaborate meaningfully and execute smarter.

As always, BOTT remains committed to being a platform that informs, connects and inspires the travel trade. We thank all our contributors for sharing their vision and invite our readers to engage with this issue as both a reflection of where we stand today and a roadmap to where we are collectively headed.

Here's to a year of clarity, collaboration and confident growth.

Happy Reading!

Warm regards,

Priyanka Saxena Ray
Editor, BOTT India

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SHORT NEWS



ROHL SIGNS 60-KEY REGENTA SUITES & RESIDENCES IN JAIPUR

Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels Ltd. (ROHL) has signed Regenta Suites & Residences Jaipur, a 60-key property in Jaipur City Center, under a hotel management agreement. Developed by SSBC Group, the all-suites property will cater to long-stay guests, business travellers, and families. Strategically located near commercial and cultural hubs, the hotel is expected to open by April 2026, reinforcing ROHL's asset-light growth strategy.



ACCOR SIGNS SOFITEL RISHIKESH NARENDRA NAGAR, OPENING 2030

Accor has signed Sofitel Rishikesh Narendra Nagar, a luxury resort set to open in 2030 along the Ganges in the Himalayan foothills. Spread across eight acres, the resort will feature 160 rooms and suites, five dining venues, a large wellness sanctuary with Sofitel Spa, and extensive yoga and meditation facilities. With over 2,000 sqm of banqueting space, the property is positioned as a premier destination for weddings, wellness retreats, meetings and conferences.



IHCL SIGNS 350-KEY GATEWAY HOTEL IN NORTH BENGALURU

The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) has announced the signing of a 350-key Gateway hotel in Hennur, North Bengaluru. A greenfield project, the hotel will feature multiple dining options, over 16,000 sq. ft. of banqueting space, and comprehensive wellness facilities including a gym and swimming pool. Strategically located near IT hubs and the airport, the signing takes IHCL's Bengaluru portfolio to 20 hotels, including 11 under development.



THE FERN HOTELS SIGNS CRESCENT THE FERN BUDHNI, MP

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has strengthened its North India presence with the signing of Crescent The Fern Budhni, Series by Marriott, in Madhya Pradesh. Scheduled to open in the first half of 2026, the 82-room hotel will feature an all-day dining restaurant, bar and lounge café, conference facilities, and banquet halls. The signing takes The Fern's North India portfolio to 21 properties, reinforcing its focus on sustainable expansion.



CHATRIUM HOSPITALITY TO ENTER PHUKET WITH NEW BEACH RESORT IN 2026

Thai hotel group Chatrium Hospitality will open its first Phuket property, Chatrium Rawai Phuket, in 2026. Located on the island's southern shores, the resort will feature 304 rooms, suites and pool villas with Andaman Sea views. Designed for families and leisure travellers, the resort will offer wellness facilities, water sports and diverse dining options.



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SHORT NEWS

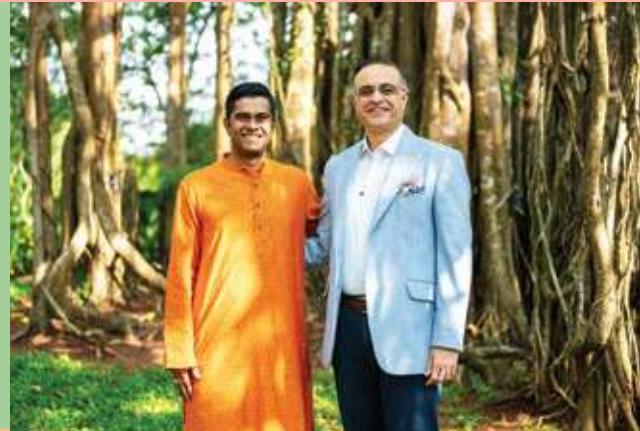


VIETJET THAILAND LAUNCHES DIRECT KOLKATA-BANGKOK FLIGHTS

Vietjet Thailand has expanded its India network with the launch of a direct Kolkata-Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi) service, with fares starting from INR 1*. The inaugural flight was welcomed at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport, marking another milestone in the airline's growing presence in India. The service operates four times a week with convenient late-night schedules, offering Indian travellers affordable access to Thailand for leisure and business travel.

THE POSTCARD UNVEils EXCLUSIVE AYURVEDA RETREAT IN OLD GOA

The Postcard Hotel has launched The Postcard Ayurveda Retreat, Old Goa – A Sitaram Ayurveda Experience, a first-of-its-kind luxury wellness sanctuary set amid heritage landscapes and reserve forests. In collaboration with Sitaram Ayurveda's 104-year legacy, the retreat offers personalised 7 to 21-night healing journeys. Blending authentic Ayurveda, doctor-led therapies, yoga and dosha-based cuisine, the all-inclusive retreat focuses on deep restoration, balance and long-term wellbeing.



FLY91 LEASES TWO ATR 72-600 AIRCRAFT TO BOOST REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Regional airline FLY91 has leased two brand-new ATR 72-600 aircraft from Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE), supporting its planned network expansion. Scheduled for delivery from Toulouse later this month, the aircraft will increase FLY91's fleet to six. The expansion will enable higher frequencies and new routes to Hubballi, Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, Nanded, and Dabolim, strengthening connectivity across tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

AIR INDIA EXPRESS DEBUTS SERVICES FROM NAVI MUMBAI AIRPORT

Air India Express inaugurated operations from the newly opened Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) with direct flights to Bengaluru and Delhi, becoming one of the first airlines to commence commercial services on day one. Daily services to Bengaluru and multiple weekly flights to Delhi begin December 25, 2025, with additional daily frequencies to both cities being added from January 1, 2026.



SHARJAH RECORDS 38% TOURISM GROWTH IN 2025; INDIA AMONG TOP SOURCE MARKETS

Sharjah has reported a strong 38% growth in tourism performance in 2025, supported by robust international demand and focused market strategies. India continues to be a key source market, ranking among the top five contributors to visitor arrivals. Building on over 172,000 Indian visitors in 2024, Sharjah is seeing increased luxury and experiential travel from metros such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Chennai.



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The PRINCESS CRUISES story in India

With over 25 years of association, Princess Cruises and Cruise Professionals share a legacy built on trust, innovation and a common vision. Nishith Saxena, Founder & Director, Cruise Professionals, outlines the ten key pillars that have helped Princess Cruises maintain its leadership in the premium cruising segment in India since 2000.

1. A Strong Premium Brand Identity

Princess Cruises is positioned as a premium, experience-led cruise line that blends classic cruising elegance with modern innovation. Its appeal spans multi-generational families, couples and adventure seekers, supported by a distinct style of personalised service.

2. MedallionClass: Personalisation at Sea

The MedallionClass Experience transforms cruising through wearable technology, offering touchless embarkation, location-based food and beverage delivery, real-time navigation and high-speed MedallionNet Wi-Fi for seamless connectivity.

3. Next-Generation Ships & Technology

The Sphere Class vessels—Sun Princess and Star Princess—set new benchmarks with smart staterooms, on-demand entertainment, live studio programming and advanced digital guest services.

4. Unmatched Global Itineraries

Princess offers one of the widest itinerary portfolios, including its largest-ever Europe and Americas deployment for 2026, alongside expanded sailings in Alaska, the Caribbean, Panama Canal, Japan, Australia—New Zealand and South America.

5. Elevated Dining & Beverage Experiences

Culinary excellence is central to the brand, enhanced by

Princess Premier and Plus packages that bundle unlimited beverages, specialty dining, Wi-Fi, entertainment privileges and wellness options.

6. World-Class Entertainment & Lifestyle

From Festivals of the World to immersive production shows and destination-inspired performances, Princess delivers entertainment that rivals leading land-based resorts.

7. Commitment to Sustainability

LNG-powered Sphere Class ships significantly reduce emissions, reflecting Princess Cruises' growing focus on environmentally responsible and efficient cruising.

8. Celebrity & Influencer Engagement

High-profile godparents and global influencer partnerships enhance brand visibility, prestige and emotional connection with travellers worldwide.

9. Strong Loyalty & Value Programs

Price guarantees, future cruise credits and loyalty accelerators reward repeat guests, building long-term trust and encouraging customer retention.

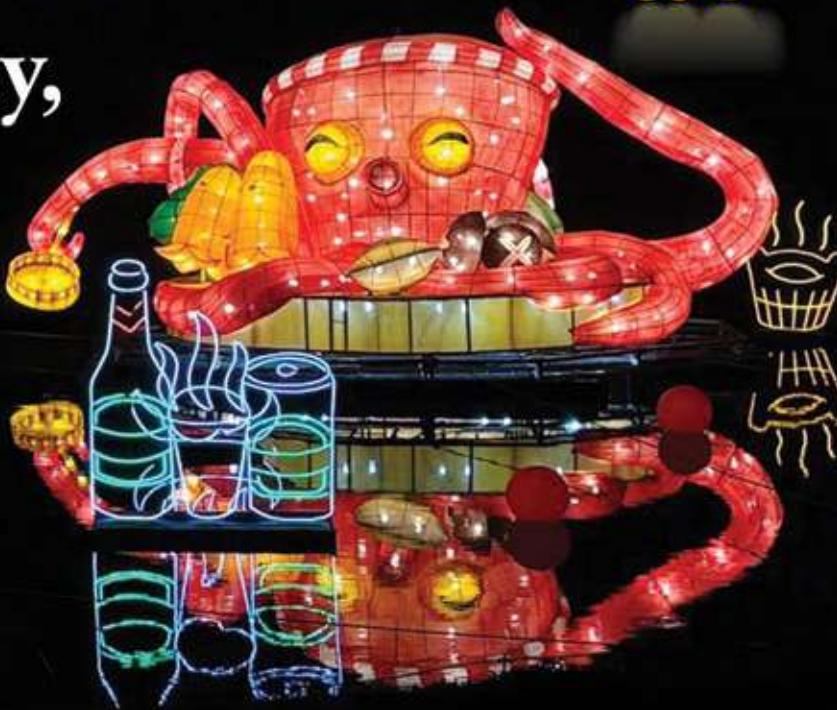
10. Trusted Indian Representation

In India, Princess Cruises is supported by Cruise Professionals' CLIA-certified advisory team, ensuring expert guidance, factual inputs and personalised service—cementing Princess' leadership in the premium cruise space.



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2026 & Beyond

Insights from Leaders across Travel, Tourism and Hospitality on What Lies Ahead

As the global travel industry moves into 2026, tourism stands at an inflection point—more experiential, more technology-enabled and more purpose-driven than ever before. Wellness, sustainability, immersive experiences and smarter connectivity are no longer emerging trends; they are fast becoming the backbone of how the world travels. At the same time, India's growing influence—across outbound, inbound, aviation and hospitality—is reshaping global travel dynamics.

In this special feature, we bring together insights from over 50 leading professionals across travel trade, aviation and hospitality, capturing their vision for tourism in 2026 and the strategic direction of their organisations. From evolving traveller expectations and new markets to innovation, partnerships and responsible growth, these voices offer a collective snapshot of where the industry is headed—and how its leaders are preparing to navigate the opportunities and challenges of the year ahead.

**Compiled by : Priyanka Saxena Ray, Gunjan Sabikhi,
Shreya Shimpi**

2026 marks 75 years of TAAI, a milestone that will remain our key focus throughout the year. This Double Diamond Jubilee presents a timely opportunity to accelerate expansion, particularly in membership development, and to deepen engagement through our recently launched national working groups across multiple verticals. These initiatives aim to encourage wider member participation, strengthen inter-member connectivity, and foster technology interdependence, and open new avenues for collaboration. Focus on Knowledge sessions will continue to be our priority as well.

We now operate in a world driven by shared vision and collective purpose, an approach essential for associations like TAAI to remain relevant and effective.

With the largest sized active membership with plenty of diversity, actively engaged with Tourism & Hospitality, in the areas of Outbound, Inbound, and Domestic Tourism, TAAI's vision for 2026 is also centred on enhanced collaboration to drive sustainable growth across the tourism and hospitality ecosystem.

To commemorate this landmark year, TAAI's Managing Committee, along with our Regions and Chapters, is actively designing impactful outreach programs that will celebrate the legacy of the past 75 years while firmly shaping the future.



Sunil Kumar
President, TAAI



Ravi Gosain
President, IATO

By 2026, I firmly believe Indian tourism will emerge as a far more resilient, technology-driven, and experience-centric sector. The industry will move decisively from volume-led growth to value-led, sustainable tourism, where quality, authenticity, and responsible practices take centre stage. Experiential travel will gain greater prominence, with niche segments such as wellness, adventure, MICE, rural and cultural tourism becoming key growth drivers. Destination dispersal across seasons and regions will be essential to reduce pressure on traditional circuits while unlocking new opportunities for local communities. Digital transformation, improved air connectivity, easier visa regimes, and strong public-private partnerships will play a defining role in positioning India as a preferred global destination, while ensuring tourism-led growth remains inclusive and community-oriented.

At an industry level, my vision is to strengthen India's inbound tourism ecosystem through focused global promotion, supportive policies, skill development, and a level-playing field for professional tour operators. As IATO, our emphasis continues to be on advocacy for structured reforms, enhanced international marketing, deeper engagement with key source markets, and continuous capacity building of our members to meet evolving traveller expectations. By 2026, our collective goal is to build a more competitive, credible, and future-ready Indian tourism industry.



Himanshu Patil
President, OTOAI

As I look toward 2026, I see the Indian outbound traveller evolving into one of the most confident, informed, and experience-driven segments in global tourism. Indian travellers are no longer perceived as purely price-conscious; they are tech-savvy explorers seeking meaning, depth, and differentiation in their journeys. From culinary trails and adventure expeditions to wellness retreats and offbeat destinations, travel today is about personal enrichment and storytelling. There is a clear rise in demand for premium, small-group, and luxury holidays that prioritise privacy, comfort, and personalisation. Digital platforms and social media inspiration have empowered travellers to explore newer destinations with confidence. I also foresee strong growth in multi-generational travel, cruise tourism, and journeys linked to global festivals, concerts, and international sporting events.

From an organisational perspective, OTOAI's vision for 2026 is centred on strengthening global collaboration and addressing the challenges faced by Indian outbound tour operators. Limited air connectivity, visa uncertainties, currency fluctuations, and inconsistent pricing continue to impact planning and delivery. Our focus is on fostering stronger coordination with tourism boards, airlines, and DMCs, advocating flexible contracting models, and improving communication to support group series and special-interest travel.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT



K B Kachru

President, Hotel Association of India | Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

As I look toward 2026, I see India's hospitality sector building on the renewed optimism and sustained momentum witnessed over the past year. The convergence of spiritual, cultural, and experiential travel has clearly reshaped demand patterns, with spiritual tourism emerging as a powerful growth driver. Destinations such as Ayodhya, Jammu, Varanasi, Puri, Amritsar, and Tirupati, along with the historic Maha Kumbh, have demonstrated how faith-led travel can significantly boost hotel occupancies, especially across Tier-II and Tier-III markets. The steady rise in international tourists on India's spiritual circuits, combined with youth-driven travel sparked by large-scale global concerts and performances, highlights the growing diversity of demand. Weddings, large-format events, and experiential travel will continue to reinforce the sector's resilience, positioning hospitality as a key contributor to tourism-led economic growth.

From an industry and organisational perspective, my vision for 2026 is anchored in sustained expansion supported by India's robust macroeconomic fundamentals. Rising GDP, accelerated infrastructure development, new airports, enhanced regional connectivity, and upgraded rail networks are creating a strong foundation for both business and leisure travel. With growing interest in spiritual tourism, MICE, and wellness-led experiences, the hospitality sector is expected to see continued RevPAR and ARR growth.

I firmly believe that India's hospitality sector will continue to be predominantly driven by domestic demand, and this trend is structural rather than cyclical. As highlighted by the Ministry of Tourism, domestic tourist visits account for nearly 85–90 percent of overall tourism volumes, making domestic travellers the most reliable and resilient demand base for our industry. Leisure travel, religious tourism, destination weddings, and business movement are now sustaining hotel occupancies across most months of the year, rather than being restricted to narrow peak seasons. While inbound tourism is gradually recovering, domestic demand will continue to provide scale, stability, and insulation from global economic and geopolitical volatility.

Looking ahead to 2026, hospitality players are planning expansion in a measured and strategic manner, guided by strong domestic demand and a visible recovery in global travel. With UN Tourism projecting global tourist arrivals to reach around 1.5 billion by the end of 2025, Indian operators are positioning themselves to capture both inbound and domestic growth while remaining disciplined in capital deployment. There is also a clear shift toward mid-scale hotels, experiential properties, wellness tourism, and MICE-driven destinations, especially in high-growth domestic markets.



Surendra Kumar Jaiswal

President, FHRAI



Arshdeep Anand

Vice President, ATOAI

As we move towards 2026, I see Indian tourism entering a phase of more balanced, responsible, and experience-driven growth. Adventure tourism, nature-based travel, and community-led experiences will play a significantly larger role, supported by better infrastructure, improved safety standards, and stronger collaboration between government and industry stakeholders. Travellers today are looking for deeper engagement with destinations, and India's vast natural landscapes, cultural diversity, and living traditions offer immense potential in this space. Sustainability will no longer be an optional add-on; it will become a core business principle shaping how experiences are designed, operated, and marketed. At the same time, technology will continue to enhance access, storytelling, and traveller confidence, enabling better planning, risk management, and personalised journeys.

From an organisational perspective, I believe the coming years present a strong opportunity for adventure and experiential tourism operators to play a defining role in India's global tourism narrative. Our focus will remain on strengthening responsible practices, building trust through safety and professionalism, and ensuring that local communities remain active stakeholders in tourism growth. By investing in people, partnerships, and innovation, we aim to create experiences that are meaningful, ethical, and globally competitive.



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Rajat Sawhney
Senior Vice President, ADTOI

2026 has started on a positive note and I firmly believe that hospitality and tourism across India and globally will grow. There is no doubt that with an increasing population and rising disposable incomes, the travel and tourism industry will achieve greater milestones. Hotels and airlines alike will witness better occupancy levels. However, the underlying question remains whether a healthy percentage of this growth and business will flow through tour operators and travel agents. The principals, mainly airlines, have unleashed special campaigns to woo clients and corporates directly. Tour operators therefore have to move away from selling standalone hotel rooms or airline tickets and instead focus on offering complete, value-driven packages to travellers.

Domestic tourism will continue to be a frontrunner. At the same time, with airlines opening up newer international destinations, outbound tourism will remain buoyant and is expected to see continuous and steady growth throughout 2026. Tour operators must innovate and evolve their business structures for survival and sustained growth. I strongly feel that destination weddings, events, adventure tours, wellness and self-care, and MICE—segments where human intervention and personalised services are essential—need to be proactively focused on and promoted.

My vision for 2026 is to develop innovation-driven organisations that position India as a preferred global destination for high-impact tourism and business events, delivering sustained economic value, regional development, and lasting global partnerships. I strongly believe that India's MICE industry requires a clearly defined strategic roadmap, supported by cohesive policy and governance reforms. A single-window MICE clearance system, a national MICE policy aligned across ministries, and targeted incentives for international organisers will be critical enablers. Infrastructure expansion must continue with focused development of MICE zones in Tier-II cities, improved connectivity, and integrated convention-hotel clusters. Branding will also play a decisive role, and a global "Meet in India" campaign leveraging our strengths in wellness, heritage, cuisine, and culture can position India as a distinctive MICE destination.

Looking ahead, ICPB's priority for 2026 is to strengthen India's global MICE profile through structured marketing, international outreach, and institutional reform. We must prioritise source markets, develop an annual marketing calendar, allocate focused media budgets, and evaluate the economic impact of MICE events more rigorously. Participation in global trade shows such as IMEX and IBTM, along with ICPB functioning as a centralised marketing bureau, will be essential.



Chander Mansharamani
Vice Chairman, ICPB



Abbas Moiz
President, TAFI

Isee 2026 as a new beginning for tourism—one that signals a deeper emotional connection with travel, especially for domestic travellers. With improved disposable incomes, enhanced air and rail infrastructure, and a growing understanding of experiential travel, Indian travellers are increasingly seeking meaningful journeys rather than transactional trips. At the same time, as geopolitical tensions ease, I am optimistic that 2026 will mark the end of the prolonged struggle faced by inbound tourism in the post-pandemic period. Responsible and sustainable tourism practices, coupled with innovative initiatives, will play a vital role in reducing the environmental impact of tourism while ensuring long-term sectoral resilience.

For TAFI, 2026 is about strengthening relationships and reinforcing unity within the travel trade community. Our focus remains on facilitating constructive dialogue to address and resolve differences among stakeholders and members across regions. TAFI chapters across India, supported by strong regional leadership and the national committee, are actively using digitalisation and innovation to help members navigate evolving policies and stakeholder requirements. As our membership continues to grow, new chapters are being established, and digital communication and membership processes are being further strengthened.

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INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Aashish Gupta
CEO – FAITH

By 2026, I believe Indian tourism can unlock its true potential through a far more structured and policy-aligned approach. India has unmatched geographical and cultural advantages and a strong base of tourism, travel, and hospitality entrepreneurs, but these strengths must be supported by the right enablers. Creation of new tourism destinations is mission critical to prevent overcrowding, disperse economic benefits deeper into the country, generate local employment, and ensure sustainable destination management aligned with carrying capacities. Cleanliness across towns, cities, and tourism centres must be prioritised. International branding and marketing also need urgent attention, with a refreshed Incredible India campaign supported by global travel marts, fam trips, and an industry-driven India-focused tourism mart. Ease of doing business, rationalised GST set-offs, reduction of TCS, infrastructure status for hotels, and recognition of tourism exports at par with physical exports are essential policy corrections to drive sustainable growth, competitiveness, and job creation.

At FAITH, our vision for 2026 is to work collaboratively with government and industry to enable these aspirational policy reforms in a structured manner. We aim to position tourism as a vital economic pillar that drives employment, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development.

By 2026, I see global tourism entering a phase of smarter, more sustainable, and value-driven growth. MICE, business travel, and experiential tourism will lead this transformation, supported by digitalisation, AI-powered personalisation, seamless connectivity, and a sharper focus on sustainability and measurable impact. India is uniquely positioned to capitalise on this momentum, emerging as a preferred destination for global meetings, exhibitions, incentive travel, and large-scale international events. Strong infrastructure development, evolving policy support, and increasing global confidence in India's capabilities will play a crucial role in strengthening this positioning. The shift will be from transactional events to purpose-led engagements that deliver long-term economic and social value.

For NIMA, 2026 is about establishing ourselves as the definitive global voice of India's MICE industry. Our focus is on expanding NIMA's international presence across Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Australia, and North America, while strengthening domestic collaboration and industry capability. Through global partnerships, policy advocacy, thought leadership, digital innovation, and sustainability-driven initiatives, we will actively support members with market access, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. By 2026, NIMA aims to play a pivotal role in positioning India as a trusted, competitive, and future-ready global MICE powerhouse.



Gajesh Girdhar
President, NIMA



Rajiv Mehra
Immediate Past President – IATO

By 2026, I see tourism being shaped by resilience, responsibility, and reinvention. The global traveller is becoming increasingly conscious, seeking meaningful experiences, authentic destinations, and sustainable practices rather than just sightseeing. India, with its unparalleled diversity and depth of experiences, is uniquely positioned to emerge as one of the world's most compelling tourism destinations. The industry will clearly move beyond volume-driven growth towards value-led tourism, where longer stays, deeper engagement, and higher-quality experiences take precedence. Technology will be a powerful catalyst in this transformation, with AI-driven personalisation.

For IATO, 2026 represents a year of consolidation, global outreach, and leadership in shaping India's inbound tourism narrative. Our priority is to strengthen India's positioning as a preferred long-haul and experiential destination through close collaboration with the Government of India, state tourism boards, and global partners. We aim to deepen engagement in key source markets across Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, East Asia, and emerging regions, while expanding skill development, digital adoption, and responsible tourism practices among our members.



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INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Riaz Munshi
Immediate Past President, OTOAI

As I look ahead to 2026, I believe tourism is entering its most considered and purposeful phase yet. Travellers are clearly moving beyond checklist travel and volume-driven itineraries, choosing journeys that are immersive, intentional, and deeply personal. The value of travel is no longer defined by how many destinations are covered, but by the depth of connection formed with a place, its culture, and its people. Experiences rooted in authenticity, storytelling, and meaningful engagement will increasingly shape traveller choices, while trust, expertise, and thoughtful curation will become more important than speed or scale.

At N. Chirag, our vision for 2026 builds naturally on the trust and legacy we have established over more than three decades, while being guided by a contemporary understanding of today's traveller. My focus is on sharpening our role as curators of thoughtfully designed journeys, where insight and attention to detail remain central to every experience we create. Our growth will be driven by deeper relationships with clients, tourism partners, and hotels, supported by smarter digital and operational platforms that allow us to scale expertise without losing the personal approach that defines us.

Over the past year, I have witnessed the world go through significant unrest and prolonged conflict in several regions. Such situations inevitably impact global sentiment, and extended periods of war tend to reduce the confidence of future travellers, making people more cautious about planning international journeys.

As we look ahead, I am hopeful and optimistic about a better year to come, one where peace and stability gradually return across the world. With improved global conditions, I strongly believe that business travel and the movement of tourists to India will see a positive upswing in the new year. India continues to remain a compelling destination, offering rich cultural experiences, diverse landscapes, and warm hospitality that appeal to travellers across segments.

On our part, we are fully prepared for this renewed momentum. Along with my experienced and dedicated team, we have curated new and innovative travel packages designed to meet evolving traveller expectations. Our focus remains on delivering world-class services, seamless experiences, and personalized solutions for our customers and clients. I look forward to a brighter, more promising future for the tourism industry in 2026.



Pronab Sarkar
MD, Swagatam Tours



Ajay Prakash
Immediate Past President, TAFI
President, IIPT

As we look toward 2026, I see disruption continuing to define the tourism landscape. AI is no longer optional; it is becoming integral to operations, marketing, customer engagement, and decision-making across the tourism value chain. While domestic tourism will remain a strong growth engine for India, inbound tourism clearly requires a reset and a renewed vision rooted in authenticity, quality, and meaningful visitor experiences. Sustainability will increasingly influence traveller decisions. Tourism must therefore be positioned not just as an economic activity, but as a force for environmental stewardship, cultural understanding, and peaceful exchange. With better connectivity, easier visas, improved safety and service standards, authentic region-specific experiences, and smart use of technology and AI, Indian tourism can move from volume-driven growth to value-led leadership.

From an organisational perspective, my vision for 2026 is to strengthen Nomad Travels and IIPT as platforms that champion responsible, experience-led tourism. We will continue to advocate sustainability, community benefit, and peace through tourism, while encouraging industry and policy alignment through public-private collaboration.



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INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Lokesh Bettaiah

Vice President, TAAI

As TAAI completes 75 years in 2026, we have already started the preparations to celebrate this historic milestone in a meaningful and inclusive manner. We plan to organize a mega event in India to commemorate the 75th anniversary of TAAI, bringing together members, industry leaders, and key stakeholders. In addition, we will also organize various events across the length and breadth of the country so that members from all regions can be part of this important celebration. Last year, we successfully held our annual convention in Abu Dhabi that helped strengthen international relationships and opened new avenues for collaboration. In 2025, we have also conducted various training programs for our members in association with many NTOs. The biggest challenge facing India's travel and tourism industry continues to be the want of industry status. The country's travel trade fraternity has been urging the government for this status for a long time. If the sector is granted industry status, its contribution to the economy will grow further and significantly. We sincerely hope that the government will seriously consider granting industry status to travel and tourism in the new year.

Looking ahead to 2026, I believe the industry is moving toward a more balanced and profitable phase. While 2025 was a roller-coaster year marked by soaring airfares and hotel costs despite strong outbound growth, 2026 should see greater stability. More airlines re-entering Indian airspace, the return of Chinese carriers, and the addition of new hotels will help rationalise costs. Increased collaboration among travel partners will allow us to offer more attractive pricing, while AI and tools like ChatGPT will accelerate the shift toward personalised and experiential travel. Although challenges around GST and TCS will persist, we remain hopeful for positive amendments in the upcoming budget. Overall, I am optimistic about a healthier and more sustainable year for the industry.

From OTOAI's perspective, 2026 will focus on deeper engagement, advocacy, and member growth. We will continue partnering with trade shows in India and overseas, strengthen our membership drive to attract quality outbound agents, and actively pursue key issues—especially TCS—with the government. Educational tours to unexplored destinations, along with webinars and networking initiatives, will remain central to our efforts to build knowledge, collaboration, and long-term value for our members.



Shreeram Patel

Hon. Secretary General – TAAI

By 2026, I see the travel industry becoming increasingly experience-driven and technology-powered. Travel demand will continue to grow, led by younger travellers who prioritise meaningful and personalised experiences. AI will dominate trip planning, pricing, and customisation, making travel more seamless and efficient. Sustainable and slow travel will gain prominence as travellers consciously choose responsible options, while business travel will rebound selectively, often blending with leisure. Although costs may rise, travellers will spend more thoughtfully, valuing quality over quantity. Overall, tourism will transition from volume-based travel to deeper, curated, and purpose-led journeys.

For TAAI, 2026 is especially significant as we mark our 75th anniversary with a strategic focus on connection, collaboration, and celebration. Our vision is to strengthen our role as the unified voice of India's travel industry by enhancing member support, fostering partnerships, and accelerating education, training, and technology adoption. We aim to build a robust internal marketplace, deepen engagement with airlines, government bodies, and global partners, and empower professionals through digital transformation. The milestone year will reflect TAAI's commitment to future-proofing travel businesses and strengthening industry unity.



Shravan Bhalla

Vice President, OTOAI

Globally, tourism is performing strongly, and the future is clearly becoming Asia-centric, with destinations such as Thailand, UAE, Hong Kong, Macau, and Japan leading global travel trends. In India, however, we are still constrained by a narrow mindset that defines tourism as a luxury meant only for high-net-worth individuals. While policymakers focus on immediate priorities, they must recognise that employment generation—or “rozgar”—can be driven single-handedly by tourism. This is a manpower-intensive industry capable of employing 10–15 percent of the workforce. To unlock this potential, India must be projected with a renewed vision as Incredible India 2.0.

At an organisational level, 2026 represents confident expansion and diversification. We have launched a high-end experiential brand, “Good Food Journeys,” to promote India’s vast culinary heritage, and the response has been extremely encouraging. We have also opened an office in Latin America and are targeting Spanish-speaking markets in the coming years. Alongside inbound tourism, our MICE division, Meetings and Incentives World, is focused on delivering high-value corporate incentive solutions. Innovation, experiential depth, and value creation will remain central to our growth journey.



Dev Karvat
Founder & CEO, Aseglo

India is witnessing remarkable growth in outbound tourism, a trend that shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, there is every reason to believe that this growth can not only match but significantly surpass the levels achieved in 2019. Several key factors contribute to this optimistic outlook.

Firstly, the aviation sector is expanding rapidly, with an increasing number of aircraft being added to fleets. This development is not only enhancing connectivity but also making international travel more accessible to a broader segment of the population. Additionally, the opening of new destinations, both domestically and internationally, is providing travellers with a wider array of choices, catering to diverse preferences and interests.

Another major driver is the rise in disposable income among India’s burgeoning middle class, coupled with a growing aspiration for global travel experiences. As more people gain the financial means to explore the world, the demand for outbound tourism is expected to skyrocket. This is further bolstered by the proliferation of user-friendly travel platforms and increasing awareness of international destinations, making planning and booking trips easier than ever before.

We’re fairly optimistic for 2026. We hear the Ministry of Tourism will be reigniting its incredible India campaign with new focuses, and that will help the industry significantly. The inbound industry has been depressed and we can only do better. The industry also needs to get its act together and do some internal brainstorming and strategizing rather than just wait for the government to be the only one to bear the burden of promoting India.

As a company, our vision has remained consistent, to be the best at what we do. We are not chasing volume, we are chasing quality, and our plans are totally aligned in that direction. We are increasing our footprint in our existing markets and we are planning to increase our team as well as our global network. As a company, we’re also trying to focus on niche products, um, and also there’s a very hard focus on our outbound luxury brand ‘Away & Co’ which has been doing very well over the last few years. We will be entering our 49th year, so exciting times are coming up for us.



Rohit Kohli and Rajeev Kohli
Jt. Managing Directors, Creative Travel

INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Anil Parashar
Executive Director, ITQ

By 2026, I see travel evolving into a seamless, tech-enabled experience where discovery, booking and post-travel touchpoints blend effortlessly. Travel businesses will need to modernise operations and adopt intelligent distribution to remain competitive. Airline retailing will be driven by real-time data, dynamic pricing and personalised offers, while sustainability will move from aspiration to measurable action, especially in high-growth markets.

In India, infrastructure development under the PM Gati Shakti Yojna will significantly accelerate domestic and international traffic. The launch of Navi Mumbai and Jewar airports will add critical capacity and unlock new growth opportunities. India also has a strong opportunity to develop hub-and-spoke operations by targeting in-transit international passengers and positioning key airports as global transfer hubs. Simultaneously, eased and digitised visa processes will lower entry barriers and strengthen India's standing as a global tourism powerhouse.

At ITQ Technologies, our 2026 vision is centred on accelerating technology-enabled travel retailing. We aim to be a platform-agnostic orchestrator empowering OTAs, TMCs, airlines and wholesalers through API-first connectivity, intelligent automation, unified content aggregation and data-led personalisation. Our focus spans product innovation, operational excellence and ecosystem scale—helping partners move from transactional distribution to intelligent retailing with agility, scale and sustainable profitability.

As a leader, my vision has always been anchored in purpose, people, and progress. At Red Hat Communication, we aim to go beyond traditional representation and become strategic partners in shaping narratives that create long-term value for the tourism and hospitality ecosystem. By 2026, our focus is on strengthening destination branding, empowering tourism-led businesses with integrated communication strategies, and championing sustainable, skill-driven growth across the sector.

The tourism industry in 2026 can be a turning point. India is on the verge of becoming a leading global tourism destination, mainly through experiential travel, spiritual tourism, wellness retreats, and deep cultural experiences. Yet, this expansion should be backed by a workforce that is ready for the future. As Chairperson of THSC, I am committed to addressing the skills gap through industry, aligned training, digital learning, and better public, private partnership.

It takes not only a visionary leader but also one who is inclusive. Sustainability, technology, and community involvement will be the main pillars of the future tourism industry. By developing talent, fostering innovation, and ensuring alignment between policy and the industry's requirements, we can make certain that tourism will be a major economic driver and also a source of decent jobs.



Jyoti Mayal
Chairperson, Tourism and
Hospitality Skill Council & CEO,
Red Hat Communication



Yummi Talwar
Chief Operating Officer (South
Asia), VFS Global

The strong demand momentum we witnessed through 2025 is expected to continue into the new year, and we have planned accordingly. In New Delhi, we are moving to a spacious new facility that will have the capacity to process over 4,500 applications daily and provide seamless, secure, and transparent application journey at scale. Alongside this, we have also enhanced our facilities across the country to respond to evolving customer expectations and support a friction-free process.

Engagement with the travel trade remains a key priority for us. As part of our annual industry outreach ahead of the peak season, we will be organising a six-city roadshow for travel agents in the first quarter of 2026.

At the same time, we continue our ongoing awareness campaigns, #ApplyInAdvance and #DoNotFallForFraud, which encourage travellers to plan early and rely only on official channels. We reiterate that visa appointments are free of charge and available only on www.vfsglobal.com, on a first-come, first-served basis—measures that form part of our continued effort to ensure a secure and transparent experience for applicants as demand continues to grow.



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INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Isha Goyal
Chief Executive Officer
STIC Travel Group

Looking back at 2025, it was a year of constant motion—across cities, countries, conversations and decisions. It was fast, demanding and deeply engaging. The travel industry didn't slow down; it became sharper, more competitive and far more outcome-driven—and that reality shapes my vision for 2026.

As we move ahead, my focus is on purposeful, focused growth—across markets, channels and segments—backed by collaboration and strong commercial execution. I believe this year aviation retailing in India will continue its shift from access-led distribution to outcome-oriented retailing, driven by intelligent GDS–NDC hybrid models, leaner operations and smarter feeder strategies from India's emerging cities. Chartering, too, will evolve from a seasonal opportunity to a strategic, multi-year play, powered by MICE, cruise-linked travel and blended corporate-leisure demand.

Luxury cruising from India is entering a more mature phase—less about scale, more about curation, immersion and meaningful storytelling. At the same time, India's outbound market is no longer waiting to be discovered; it is shaping global travel narratives and expectations.

For me, 2026 is about building better ecosystems, distributing smarter, collaborating deeper and executing sharper. Movement will remain our strategy, collaboration our leverage, and execution our survival.

With changes in consumer travel preferences and booking patterns, I am expecting an exciting 2026. The words of the moment are luxury, personalization, technology, and emotional connection. This is where growth and innovation are happening, and the next wave of travel products is being built to pull people away from classic "tick-the-box" experiences toward discovery that feels individual and genuinely memorable. I do believe that with the growing travel demand, there will be better tourism infrastructure, service standards, tools, and resources to help people unlock their sense of wonder in exploration, culture, and community, which is what travel is all about.

At the organisational front, in 2026 we will continue to innovate and create marketing solutions that are not only distinctive but truly meaningful for our clients. As the landscape evolves, so do we—building new capabilities, investing in relevant technology, expanding our thinking, and embracing change with purpose.



Sheema Vohra
Managing Director
Sartha Global Marketing



Nikhil Sharma
MD & COO, South Asia,
Radisson Hotel Group

India's tourism and hospitality sector is entering a phase of sustained, structural growth, and 2026 will clearly mark the transition from recovery to long-term value creation. Demand is expected to remain strongly domestic-led, supported by rising incomes, infrastructure expansion, and a growing preference for premium, experience-led travel. Leisure, spiritual tourism, weddings, and MICE will continue to anchor growth, while corporate travel strengthens steadily across industrial and emerging business hubs. At the same time, India's travel map is widening, with Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, pilgrimage destinations, and drive-to leisure markets evolving into year-round demand centres rather than seasonal plays. Guests are increasingly prioritising quality, reliability, and meaningful experiences that combine comfort, local culture, and curated dining.

For Radisson Hotel Group, 2026 is about scaling with balance, speed, and purpose. Our expansion strategy remains focused on high-potential cities, leisure destinations, pilgrimage circuits, and industrial corridors, supported by a mix of new builds, conversions, and flexible franchise models. We have set a clear ambition of reaching 500 hotels in India by 2030, more than doubling our current footprint, and we believe this is realistic given our strong pipeline, sustained owner confidence, and depth of domestic demand. Alongside growth, we will continue strengthening experience-led platforms, leveraging technology and data-driven commercial systems, and embedding sustainability as we scale responsibly across the country.

My vision for tourism in 2026 is of an industry that becomes more experience-focused, sustainable, and technology-driven. Travellers will look beyond basic sightseeing and prefer meaningful experiences such as local culture, food, wellness, and community engagement. Tourism will increasingly be about creating memories and emotions rather than simply visiting destinations. We see strong growth in MICE, weddings, and experiential tourism, with destinations offering integrated ecosystems that bring together venues, hotels, transport, and curated experiences. Business travel will increasingly merge with leisure, as guests extend stays to explore and unwind. Domestic tourism will remain a strong pillar, supported by improved connectivity and rising demand for short, themed holidays. Sustainability and technology will play defining roles, enabling smarter venues, hybrid events, and responsible tourism practices.

Our vision for 2026 at Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre and Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre is to position the integrated complex as India's most preferred and globally recognised destination for large-format MICE, exhibitions, destination weddings, and landmark lifestyle events. A key focus is scaling destination weddings, with the capability to host 3,000–4,000 guests, reinforcing Jaipur's position as a global wedding hub. We are accelerating growth in exhibitions and conferences across sectors such as automobiles, IT, healthcare, and government-led forums.



Manuj Ralhan

General Manager, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre & JECC



Ashwni Kumar Goela

VP Operations – Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport
Area GM – Radisson Hotel Group, South Asia

By 2026, tourism and hospitality will be defined by purpose-led travel, technological fluidity, and elevated expectations around safety, wellness, and sustainability. Travellers will seek deeper cultural engagement, seamless digital experiences, and trusted environments that reflect responsible practices. India's tourism sector, supported by expanding connectivity and cultural diversity, is well positioned to strengthen its standing as a global destination for both business and leisure travel. The focus will shift towards meaningful, well-curated journeys that prioritise wellbeing, authenticity, and ease of experience, while technology enables smoother planning, engagement, and personalisation throughout the travel cycle.

At Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport, our vision for 2026 is to remain at the forefront of guest delight, operational excellence, and sustainable hospitality. We are committed to continuous innovation across services to ensure intuitive, personalised, and memorable guest experiences. Our priorities include strengthening digital touchpoints, expanding curated culinary and social offerings, and sustaining rigorous safety and wellness frameworks. Sustainability remains embedded across operations, supported by certifications such as HSB by SGS in association with WTTC and ISO 45001:2018. Recognition under the Safe Hotel – Executive Category further reinforces our commitment to responsible, trusted, and resilient hospitality delivery.

As global tourism looks towards 2026, growth is becoming more deliberate and experience-driven. Travellers are planning longer journeys that allow deeper engagement with destinations, with sustainability, wellbeing, and ease of travel shaping decision-making. Technology is playing a more influential role, simplifying trip planning and enhancing engagement throughout the guest journey. According to UNWTO outlooks, travel patterns in Africa are evolving as improved air access and expanded routes enable easier movement between destinations. With better connectivity, guests are staying longer and combining multiple locations within a single trip, influencing how travel across the region is structured.

For Serena Hotels, Vision 2026 builds on our legacy of responsible tourism while aligning with evolving travel trends. Our focus remains on sustainable growth through investments in technology, targeted renovations, and continuous people development. With a diversified portfolio of 22 properties across city, safari, and resort locations, we are well positioned to support longer, multi-destination journeys while maintaining consistent guest experiences. As regional travel continues to expand, Serena Hotels aims to play a practical and enabling role in shaping connected, sustainable tourism across Africa.



Ashish Sharma

CEO – Serena Hotels Africa

INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Aarish Khan

Chief Commercial Officer,
India Business, Tbo.com

I see the industry moving toward more personalized, technology-enabled, and experience-driven travel. Travellers will increasingly seek value and flexibility whether through multi-modal journeys and immersive local experiences. At the same time, emerging source markets like India will continue to drive outbound growth, supported by rising disposable incomes and improved connectivity. From an industry perspective, success in 2026 will depend on collaboration across the ecosystem, combined with sharper execution, better data-led decisions, and a strong focus on service quality and profitability.

As the travel industry looks ahead to 2026, we see a strong shift toward experience-led, value-driven, and partnership-focused tourism. Travellers are increasingly seeking authenticity, cultural depth, and seamless journeys, while the trade prioritises reliability, destination expertise, and operational excellence. The future belongs to organisations that can combine local knowledge with scalable systems.

Japan and South Korea continue to be key growth markets within Asia, witnessing strong demand across leisure, luxury, MICE, and special-interest travel. As these destinations evolve, there is a growing need for deeper product curation, stronger trade collaboration, and consistent service delivery on the ground.

Our vision for 2026 is centred on strengthening leadership in Japan and South Korea, while preparing for the careful introduction of additional destinations within the region.

To support this growth, we are building a more consolidated framework that brings our destination expertise together under a unified approach—offering trade partners greater clarity, efficiency, and ease of collaboration, while preserving the individual identity of each destination.

By 2026, our goal is to be recognised as a trusted regional partner across Asia—one that delivers destination-focused excellence, adapts to changing market needs, and creates long-term value through collaboration, innovation, and responsible growth.



Pranay Nath

Founder & CEO
ILoveJapan DMC



Prateek Hira

President & CEO - Tornos, River Rhapsody, Gastroutes and Director UnDMC, Indian Frontiers

As Indian tourism moves into a more mature, experiential and knowledge-led phase, 2026 must mark a clear shift from volume-driven travel to quality, niche experiences. While strong domestic demand and improved infrastructure provide a solid base, our global positioning needs refinement. India must be marketed not as one monolithic destination but as a collection of diverse micro-destinations and themes. Equally critical is the need to separate domestic and international tourism data. Clubbing the two masks declining demand from key Western markets and weakens our ability to plan, target and revive inbound tourism with precision and purpose.

In 2026, our focus is on growth through relevance, innovation and digital strength across Tornos, Gastroutes, River Rhapsody and Indian Frontiers. Gastroutes is close to finalising a strategic partnership with a UK-based company to relaunch its gastronomy-led offerings for that market. River Rhapsody plans to launch its luxury river-yacht on the Ganges by end-2026 or early 2027, introducing a pioneering FIT-focused product. A key milestone will be scaling UnDMC India, our micro-destination specialist DMC, which already operates across eight Indian and two international offices and aims to double its footprint. We will also revive our Knowledge Evenings globally.

As we move into 2026, I see tourism becoming more structured, technology-driven, and partner-centric, with strong emphasis on ease of access, competitive pricing, and comprehensive solutions for travel professionals. The industry will increasingly depend on robust B2B platforms that simplify operations, widen product reach, and improve productivity for tour operators. With global destinations becoming more accessible, the focus will be on offering both luxury and budget products under one seamless ecosystem.

Our group's vision for 2026 spans B2B travel, hospitality, and outbound tourism through AIR IQ, AIR IQ Online, Udaan Hotels and Resorts, and TripXL. Our outbound tourism project is in place and undergoing technical modifications, expected to be ready by the first quarter of 2026, offering over 150 destinations worldwide. We aim to service more than 19,000 tour operators and onboard an additional 20,000 with a wholesome, competitive solution, including air. AIR IQ Fixed Departures are targeted to grow productivity by at least 35%, supported by over 77,000 associates. AIR IQ Online will emerge stronger through strategic and technical enhancements by April 2026. Udaan Hotels and Resorts continues to expand, with 24 properties currently and further growth planned across Northeast India.



Ajay Kumar Wadhawan
Executive Director, Air IQ



Naresh Rawal
Senior Vice President – Sales
(India & Middle East)
StarDream Cruises

Looking ahead to 2026, I see Fly-Cruise tourism in India becoming a much bigger part of how people choose to travel. Travellers are increasingly looking for holidays that are easy, well-paced, and rich in experiences, and a Fly-Cruise holiday delivers exactly that. The concept of flying to another country and extending the vacation with a cruise across multiple destinations is especially appealing to families and first-time cruisers. In India, interest in this style of travel is steadily growing, driven by improved connectivity and a desire for seamless, multi-destination holidays that combine comfort with discovery.

For StarDream Cruises, home to both StarCruises and Dream Cruises, our vision for 2026 centres on growth, accessibility, and relevance. India is a key growth market, with Fly-Cruise playing a major role due to strong air connectivity between Indian cities and hubs such as Singapore. We will continue to build awareness of cruising through trade partnerships and tailored itineraries, while enhancing onboard experiences and destination offerings. With three ships homeporting year-round across Asia, we aim to offer more Fly-Cruise options from popular cities. By making cruising more approachable and appealing, we aim to be the preferred choice for Indian travellers seeking seamless and memorable holidays across multiple destinations.

At Cruise Professionals when we look at 2026 and beyond, our vision is to position India as one of the most dynamic and influential source markets for the global cruise industry. The focus will be on strengthening the strong & long-term collaborations with international cruise lines we currently represent and work more closely with travel agencies.

This growth will be driven by market education, product innovation and trust-building - making cruising more accessible, aspirational and relevant to Indian families, HNIs, MICE groups and first-time cruisers. By popularising Indian passenger centric itineraries, customised onboard experiences and culinary delights suiting local palate, we aim to significantly increase cruise adoption across metros and emerging cities.

A massive momentum is expected from digital transformation, data-led marketing and scalable distribution, empowering travel partners with training, tools and confidence to sell cruises effectively. Strategic investments in talent, technology and brand storytelling will ensure sustained visibility and demand. We already provide seamless "Browse & Book" online tool which is user friendly and highly efficient for travel agencies to use.

Beyond numbers, our vision is to create a movement—one that inspires Indian travellers to see cruises not as an occasional luxury, but as a preferred way to explore the world.



Nishith Saxena
Founder & Director,
Cruise Professionals

INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Dipti Adhia
Country Director,
Discover the World - India

As we step into 2026, in my opinion tourism is evolving more into an intentional and experience-led industry. Travellers are seeking journeys that go beyond sightseeing, embracing connection, celebration, wellness, personal meaning & aspiration. This evolution is quite evident across all segments, from MICE and weddings to wellness retreats, milestone celebrations, and religious or spiritual travel, each calling for deeper personalisation and thoughtful design. The industry is becoming more curated and collaborative, where sustainability, innovation, and seamless technology enrich every journey. At its heart, the future of tourism lies in strong partnerships—between destinations, brands, and the travel trade, working together to create responsible growth.

As we look ahead into 2026, we are excited to continue building on our global legacy with renewed energy and purpose, shaping growth through innovation, collaboration, and strategic representation. We plan to further strengthen our footprint while expanding our portfolio across all verticals. By bringing together global expertise, deep local market understanding, technology-led solutions, and by working closely with our partners and the travel trade, we aim to unlock new opportunities, drive sustainable growth, and contribute to a more connected and resilient global travel ecosystem.

As we step into 2026, I see the travel and tourism industry at a meaningful inflection point. After years of disruption, recovery, and recalibration, the focus has clearly shifted from short-term resurgence to long-term, sustainable growth. I believe 2026 will be defined by intent, where destinations, brands, and stakeholders move forward with clearer purpose, stronger partnerships, and sharper strategies. Travellers are becoming more discerning, seeking authenticity, value, and emotionally resonant experiences rather than volume-driven travel. This places greater responsibility on destinations and tourism boards to communicate their stories with honesty, depth, and relevance, while working closely with the trade to convert inspiration into demand.

For Global Destinations, 2026 is about consolidation and progression. Our vision is to strengthen our role as a trusted strategic partner for global tourism brands in India by driving deeper trade engagement, sharper market segmentation, and more meaningful consumer outreach. We aim to expand our footprint selectively, embrace smarter digital amplification, and continue investing in relationships that deliver measurable outcomes. Ultimately, I believe the industry will move forward when collaboration outweighs competition, clarity replaces noise, and purpose drives growth. Vision 2026, for us, is about building relevance that lasts.



Pranav Kapadia
Founder and Director,
Global Destinations



Sheetal Munshaw
Director, Atout France India

Outbound tourism from India will continue its upward trajectory in 2026, with a strong focus on mindful travel and immersive, cultural experiences. I believe the contemporary traveller will increasingly engage with local culture, heritage, and gastronomy while on holiday. Indian travellers are already conscious of sustainable travel practices, and this trend is expected to gain further momentum in the coming year. When it comes to France, I see discerning Indian travellers continuing their discovery of offbeat destinations and unique experiences, moving beyond the obvious and well-trodden routes.

The year 2026 has been declared the India–France Year of Innovation, with bilateral cooperation planned across multiple domains including culture and tourism. President Macron's visit to India in February for the AI Summit, along with the visit of officials from the walled city of Carcassonne in April, will further strengthen tourism synergies, particularly around the twinning of Jaisalmer and Carcassonne. Over recent years, incentives and weddings in France have seen steady growth, and our strategy for 2026 is to deepen engagement with professionals in these segments. Most importantly, France remains firmly committed to becoming the world's leading sustainable tourism destination by 2030.

In 2026, VisitBritain's strategic focus will be on driving regional tourism, encouraging Indian travellers to explore Britain beyond gateway cities through self-drive journeys that offer flexibility and deeper discovery. Our marketing will highlight regional stories across key passion pillars such as food and drink, culture, and sports tourism, with several major sporting events taking place across the UK, such as the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in June, followed by the Indian men's cricket team touring Britain from July 2026, and

Wimbledon that attracts strong organic appeal among a niche yet highly aspirational audience of sports enthusiasts. Additionally, we will be leveraging Britain's iconic film locations as Bollywood remains an important focus, aligning seamlessly with our global campaign Starring GREAT Britain. Bollywood remains an important focus, leveraging Britain's iconic film locations, aligning seamlessly with our global campaign Starring GREAT Britain.

We also plan to deepen our engagement with the trade through focused collaborations, knowledge-sharing, and joint initiatives, ensuring our strategies remain aligned with evolving traveller preferences and market opportunities. Our team is fully geared to make a meaningful impact—telling Britain's story in new and compelling ways and inviting travellers to come see things differently.



Ritu Varma

Country Manager, India,
VisitBritain



Johanif Ali
Director, Tourism Malaysia

We have witnessed strong momentum from the Indian market, recording 1.3 million tourist arrivals from India till October 2025, and we are optimistic about achieving 1.5 million arrivals by the end of the year. This growth reflects Malaysia's increasing appeal among Indian travellers, supported by enhanced air connectivity, targeted promotions, and strong partnerships with the travel trade. Looking ahead, Visit Malaysia 2026 marks a significant milestone, with an ambitious target of attracting 2 million arrivals from India.

Our vision for 2026 focuses on sustainable growth, market diversification, and deeper engagement with India as a key source market. Building on strong 2025 performance, we aim to reach 2 million arrivals from India under the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign. A major priority is expanding beyond metro cities into tier-2 and tier-3 markets through multi-city roadshows, trade education, and targeted outreach. We will strengthen emerging segments including millennials, families, luxury and experiential travellers, while leveraging digital marketing, influencer collaborations, data-led campaigns, and co-branded initiatives with airlines. Enhanced connectivity, niche segments such as weddings, wellness, golfing and MICE, and stronger trade partnerships will ensure Malaysia remains a preferred year-round destination.

I see 2026 as the year of personalised sojourns, where travel is shaped by exclusivity, relevance, and deeper emotional connection. Travellers are increasingly seeking AI-powered trip planning, destination matchmaking, and intergenerational holiday solutions that deliver unique and lasting memories. The modern traveller is inundated with information, and my vision for 2026 is to cut through this noise by focusing on specialised knowledge and curated expertise. Whether it is luxury safaris, sustainable travel, or family-friendly cruises, depth and authenticity will define travel choices, while value for money and quality will continue to remain timeless priorities.

At Ark Travel Group, 2026 brings several key milestones. We look forward to the launch of Disney Adventure Cruise Line from Singapore in March, enabling us to create richer, more personalised itineraries for our trade partners. We will also drive business through Europamundo's "Special Indian" 2026 exclusive series, offering Indian dinners in cities like Zurich, Florence, and Paris alongside guided sightseeing. Our partnerships with luxury hospitality brands such as Serena Hotels, Club Med, and Residence will help us deliver wellness-led and meaningful escapes.



Anjum Lokhandwala
Director, ARK Travel Group

INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Alpa Jani
Founder & CEO
Ace Connect

As we move into 2026, outbound tourism is being redefined by purpose, personalisation, and conscious travel. The shift from volume-led tourism to value-led experiences is clear, with travellers prioritising depth, authenticity, and emotional connection. Journeys are becoming more immersive, rooted in local culture, wellness, nature, and storytelling. Sustainability is no longer optional; it is a baseline expectation, with travellers actively choosing destinations and partners that demonstrate responsible practices and community engagement. The success of outbound tourism in 2026 will be measured by its ability to create meaningful, responsible, and transformative experiences.

At Ace Connect, our vision for 2026 is to remain a boutique, one-on-one representation company bringing experience-rich, offbeat, and diverse destinations to the Indian market. We aim to strengthen our presence in key source markets while selectively expanding into new geographies. Growth for us means creating measurable value for our partners by enhancing visibility, fostering deeper trade connections, and delivering tangible business outcomes. Through curated experiences, sustainable practices, and strategic partnerships, we will continue to provide quality-driven tourism solutions aligned with evolving traveller expectations and destination aspirations.

By 2026, tourism will move far beyond sightseeing to focus on meaningful experiences, curated stories, and mindful travel. Travellers will increasingly seek personalisation, authentic cultural connections, and seamless journeys supported by technology such as AI-driven planning and immersive digital experiences. Sustainability and social impact will become non-negotiable, with eco-conscious practices and community-led initiatives shaping destination choices. I see a future where travel leaves a positive footprint, where luxury and adventure coexist with responsibility, and where journeys inspire curiosity, compassion, and connection.

At Intrepid Marketing, our vision for 2026 is to be at the forefront of redefining travel marketing in India. We plan to expand into new markets through emerging destinations and international collaborations, while strengthening our presence in key metros. Our growth strategy is driven by innovation, data-led insights, immersive campaigns, and impactful storytelling. Key milestones include scaling our client base across aviation, hospitality, and tourism, launching thought-leadership initiatives, and building strategic partnerships. Ultimately, our goal is to blend creativity, technology, and purpose to deliver sustainable business growth.



Neeti Sharma
Director – Intrepid Marketing & Communications



Christine Galle-Luczak
Founder & CEO, Heavens Portfolio

Luxury travel in 2026 will be less about accumulation and more about emotional return on investment—focused on time, privacy, meaning, and curation. The shift from “more to meaningful” is clear, with travellers prioritising transformational experiences rooted in wellness, culture, and purpose. Opulence remains, but in an understated, service-led form, often aligned with sustainability and local authenticity. Demand for experiential and international leisure travel continues to grow, driven by a younger, affluent demographic. Representation firms will play a critical role as connectors between destinations, hotels, tourism boards, and the travel trade.

Following the successful launch of our Europe and Australia offices in 2025, 2026 will see further expansion of our global footprint and curated portfolio. Our Heavens Portfolio Roadshow will return with editions across India, China, and Singapore, including Mumbai and Delhi in February 2026. We are increasing our focus on end-consumer engagement, wellness-led events, sustainability storytelling, and partnerships with luxury brands and concierge networks. We are also actively sourcing properties off the beaten track, reflecting evolving luxury travel preferences, ensuring we remain aligned with emerging trends.

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED 3RD EDITION

UTEN B2B NETWORKING MUMBAI ROADSHOW FOLLOWED BY CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR BASH
ON 19TH DECEMBER 2025 AT ROMEO HOUSE, MUMBAI, INDIA



Together with Outbound, Inbound Tourism & Domestic Tourism Sectors a B2B Table Top Networking among Buyers & Seller's taken place.



Around 120 Travel Professionals attended the event from different cities like Pune, Surat, Mumbai to focus and build their travel resources for upcoming year 2026.



The event concluded with the celebration of New Year 2026.

Event was Supported By Incredible India, India Tourism Mumbai

Thanks & Regards

UTEN Founders Team - Winifred D'Souza & Satyaprakash Gupta

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Business of Travel Trade
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INDUSTRY INSIGHT



June Chepkemei
CEO, Kenya Tourism Board

In 2026, our focus is on growing tourism in a way that is sustainable, inclusive, and deeply meaningful. The ambition is to welcome more travellers while creating richer experiences through closer collaboration with trade partners. Kenya's story is expanding beyond wildlife and beaches to include culture, wellness, adventure, heritage, and community-led experiences. Digital platforms will support this journey by enabling personalised, data-informed engagement from inspiration to booking, ensuring every visit to Kenya is memorable and enriching.

India remains a high-potential, long-term growth market for Kenya. Our ambition is not only to attract more Indian travellers but to position Kenya as a high-value, emotionally resonant destination that inspires repeat visits. Kenya naturally aligns with emerging Indian traveller preferences for personalised, experience-rich journeys—offering private safaris, intimate lodges, wellness retreats, and bespoke coastal escapes. With its ability to seamlessly combine wildlife, culture, adventure, and leisure, Kenya stands out as a future-ready destination that evolves with the traveller, delivering depth, distinction, and lasting connection.

As we move into 2026, tourism is clearly shifting from volume-driven growth to value-led experiences. Travellers are more informed, time-conscious, and experience-focused, while MICE planners are seeking destinations and partners that deliver reliability, creativity, and operational depth. Sustainability, authenticity, and seamless execution will no longer be differentiators — they will be expectations.

For Kazin DMC, 2026 is about strengthening our role as a specialist partner across Central Asia and the Caucasus. Our focus is on deeper destination mastery rather than wider dilution. We aim to expand selectively into new source markets, strengthen our MICE vertical, and continue investing in proprietary systems — particularly our in-house CRM — to empower both our teams and our agent partners with clarity, speed, and accurate destination intelligence.

Innovation for us is practical: simplifying processes, improving decision-making, and enhancing on-ground delivery. Equally important is trust — with agents, suppliers, and travellers — which remains the foundation of long-term success.

2026 is not about being the biggest player in the room. It's about being dependable, consistent, and worthy of trust in an industry that thrives on relationships and reputation.



Rohit Shorey
Founder & CEO
Kazin DMC

In 2026, the travel and tourism industry will be defined by resilience, intelligent growth, and deeper collaboration across the ecosystem. India is well positioned to emerge as a global aviation and tourism powerhouse, driven by rising outbound demand, enhanced regional connectivity, trade expansion, and technology-enabled efficiencies. The future of tourism will be shaped by data-driven decision-making, seamless digital experiences, sustainable operations, and strong public-private partnerships. Aviation, cargo, tourism, and MICE will become increasingly interconnected, acting as critical enablers of economic growth and global mobility.

Aeroprime Group's vision for 2026 is to build on its evolved GSA and airline representation model by driving sustainable growth, deeper market penetration, and greater value creation for airline partners through technology and performance-led strategies. We aim to strengthen our footprint in new international markets while deepening our presence in existing regions through customized airline management, cargo solutions, and integrated marketing capabilities. A key focus will be leveraging data, automation, and digital platforms, including Aeroprime's proprietary solutions such as Glid etc., to drive smarter sales strategies, stronger trade engagement, and measurable returns for our airline partners. Equally important is building future-ready teams and fostering innovation by aligning global best practices with strong local market expertise.



Abhishek Goyal
CEO & Executive Director
Aeroprime Group

“Emotions"- I feel that is going to be the word for the tourism industry in 2026. As lives become faster and more demanding, travel will be sought as an escape from chaos... a way to find calm, meaning, and genuine human connection. Travellers will prioritise how a destination makes them feel over how many places they visit. Storytelling will sit at the heart of tourism, creating experiences that evoke emotion, build lasting memories, and foster long-term affinity with places and brands. Sustainability, cultural immersion, and personalised journeys will no longer be differentiators but expectations, shaping a more thoughtful, human, and purpose-led future for travel.

At T&A Consulting, our vision for 2026 is to strengthen our position as a trusted market-entry and growth partner for international tourism boards, hotels, and attractions across high-potential markets. As India continues to emerge as one of the world's most influential outbound travel markets, we remain focused on delivering integrated solutions that combine sales excellence, credible public relations, and emotionally intelligent marketing.

In line with our growth, we have expanded our office presence into the Middle East and now represent Marina Bay Sands in the region.



Arjun Mukundd

Director Tourism – T&A Consulting



Noel Saxena,
CEO, Blink Brand Solutions

In 2024, outbound travel from India continued its upward trajectory, recording 30.89 million departures, a growth of 10.79% over the previous year. The momentum is expected to continue its double-digit growth in 2025 as well. It's only a matter of time, India, like in the global GDP ranking where it is expected to be the third largest economy by 2028 after overtaking Germany, may also be the third largest outbound tourism source market in the world soon after behind China and the US.

Year 2026 is envisioned as a defining milestone year for Blink Brand Solutions, marking our evolution from one of the youngest and fastest-growing tourism marketing companies into a truly global, future-ready brand. Building on the strong momentum of the past three and half years and our consistent outperformance of overall Indian outbound growth, our vision for 2026 is anchored in expansion, innovation, and deeper market engagement and impact. By 2026, Blink aims to significantly expand its portfolio of represented destinations, hotels, attractions, and such suppliers and tourism-related services across East Asia, ASEAN, the Middle East, Central Asia, Europe, and even long-haul markets. Beyond India, we will further strengthen our footprint as an international tourism marketing partner, supporting clients not only with India-focused mandates but also with multi-market, cross-border campaigns, including overseas roadshows, trade shows, and global events.

As we move towards 2026, I see strong and sustained growth in India's outbound travel market. With the economy strengthening and the middle class expanding, more Indians are choosing to travel overseas. While Southeast Asia will continue to remain popular, destinations such as Egypt, Morocco, Vietnam, Oman and Japan are witnessing growing interest.

Improved airport infrastructure and better connectivity will further drive demand from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. The growing integration of AI across the travel ecosystem will enable agents to curate more personalised itineraries, based on traveller preferences and past behaviour. Overall, I believe the Indian outbound sector is well positioned for robust growth by 2026.

From an organisational perspective, 2025 marked an important year for Travstarz as we expanded into Japan and Georgia, adding to our existing 21 DMC locations. We also re-entered the cruise segment through a strategic partnership with Worldwide Cruise Associates, giving us direct access to major cruise lines worldwide. This strengthens our ability to serve charter, MICE, wedding and group travel segments. In 2025, we hosted over 14 trade networking events, and in 2026, we plan to organise 18 more workshops across key Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, strengthening engagement and deepening partnerships across India.



Pankaj Nagpal

Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group



Mahendra Vakharia

Managing Director,
Pathfinders Holidays

As we head into 2026, I see India's tourism industry continuing on a strong upward trajectory. Domestic travel will remain the primary growth driver, while international tourism will also gain momentum. Experience-led segments such as wellness, adventure, religious and cultural travel will play a key role in shaping the industry's future. Technology-enabled personalisation will further enhance how travellers discover, plan and experience destinations, making journeys more meaningful and seamless.

For Pathfinders Holidays, our vision for 2026 is rooted in sustainable expansion and innovation. With a larger new office and a growing team that brings fresh energy and expertise, we are well positioned to scale responsibly. We continue to benefit from strong client referrals while steadily expanding our international presence. Investment in advanced travel technology remains a priority, helping us improve speed, efficiency and service delivery.

Our focus is on building long-term relationships, strengthening operational excellence and offering thoughtfully designed travel experiences that reflect evolving traveller preferences. As demand becomes more experience-driven and discerning, we aim to stay agile, responsive and customer-centric. By combining technology, strong partnerships and a people-first approach, we are confident of delivering consistent growth while maintaining the quality and trust that Pathfinders Holidays is known for.

Tourism, to me, represents the movement of people beyond their usual environment for leisure, business and experiences, contributing to cultural exchange, employment generation and regional development. By 2026, I believe tourism—especially in island destinations—will increasingly focus on responsible, well-planned and meaningful travel. The emphasis will shift towards creating higher-value experiences that respect natural ecosystems.

Sustainability will no longer be optional; it will be central to tourism planning and operations. Destinations that succeed will be those that manage growth thoughtfully, actively involve local communities and protect fragile environments, while continuing to offer immersive and memorable experiences. Technology will support smarter planning and personalised journeys. From an organisational perspective, by 2026, Andaman Experts aims to strengthen its position as a leading island tourism specialist for Andaman and Lakshadweep. Our focus is on sustainable growth and responsible destination management, with a targeted year-on-year growth of 35–40%. We plan to expand across key domestic and select international markets while introducing low-impact, high-quality island experiences. A major priority is strengthening our on-ground operations, with our team of over 20 local representatives expected to grow by at least 50%.



Mahi Singh

Founder & CEO,
AndamanExperts.com



Mahendra Pratap Singh

Chairman, IATO Madhya Pradesh &
Chhattisgarh Chapter

By 2026, I believe travel will be firmly rooted in authenticity and experience. Travellers are increasingly looking beyond familiar destinations and gravitating towards places that offer genuine human connection, cultural depth and meaningful local stories. The demand is clearly shifting from sightseeing to soul-searching.

States like Madhya Pradesh will play a pivotal role in this transformation. To me, Madhya Pradesh truly represents the essence of India, with its rich mix of tribal heritage, historic monuments, wildlife reserves, spiritual centres and diverse regional traditions. Tribal tourism, in particular, is gaining momentum as travellers seek respectful, immersive ways to engage with indigenous lifestyles, art forms, cuisine and customs. There is also growing interest among inbound travellers in destinations that are less crowded yet culturally rich. With its unique blend of history, nature and living culture, Madhya Pradesh is ideally positioned to attract international visitors seeking authentic Indian experiences beyond conventional circuits.

While technology will continue to simplify travel planning and enable personalisation, I firmly believe the heart of tourism in 2026 will remain human. Sustainability, community participation and ethical tourism practices will no longer be optional—they will be essential. Madhya Pradesh exemplifies this evolving tourism narrative, proving that the future belongs to destinations that welcome the world while preserving their distinct identity.

2026 looks positive, based on the steady increase in business leads we are seeing across our existing hotel clients. The overall sentiment remains optimistic, with demand showing clear signs of sustained growth. One of the key trends shaping the year ahead is wellness-led travel, which is fast becoming a norm. More travellers are now planning at least one wellness-focused break each year, prioritising rest, balance and holistic well-being.

Another trend that is expected to continue is the dual pattern of travel—on one hand, longer stays supported by work-from-home flexibility, and on the other, shorter but more frequent trips, both domestically and internationally. Experience-led travel will increasingly define traveller choices, particularly among discerning guests. This segment is moving away from crowded, Instagram-driven destinations and opting instead for quieter, more private and meaningful holidays. At the same time, there will still be travellers who prefer traditional itineraries with packed sightseeing schedules and multiple photo stops.

Local food experiences will play a significant role in influencing travel decisions, becoming an integral part of the overall journey for discerning travellers. Overall, I expect 2026 to be a year of robust growth, very much in line with the strong performance witnessed in 2024.



Vasudha Sondhi
MD, Outbound Marketing



Ellona Pereira
General Manager, India
Aviareps

In 2026, the tourism industry will be shaped by a more informed, discerning, and experience-oriented traveller. Indian outbound travel will continue to grow, driven by better global access, digital inspiration, and rising aspirations. Travellers will prioritise meaningful experiences, cultural immersion, wellness, and sustainability, while also demanding value and personalisation. Responsible tourism and authentic storytelling will play a central role in influencing travel decisions.

For AVIAREPS India, 2026 is centred on deeper market engagement, stronger partnerships, and innovation-led growth. Our vision focuses on continued expansion across emerging Indian markets, sustained growth in South India, and closer collaboration with key stakeholders across the travel ecosystem. We will continue to leverage our AVIAREPS platforms, such as the AVIAREPS Roadshows and 'AVIAREPS Around the World' to create meaningful business connections. Innovation will remain a key growth driver, supported by our AVIAREPS Digital Ecosystem and advanced airline distribution solutions. Building on the AVIAREPS Group's recognition as the World's Leading Airline GSA at the World Travel Awards in December 2025, AVIAREPS India remains focused on delivering consistent, sustainable growth while creating long-term value for our partners across the Indian market.

Business travel in India is undergoing a significant transformation as companies are reassessing their travel strategies, focusing on sustainability and leveraging data to decide travel policies. Sustainability has become a central pillar of global business strategies, and corporate travel is no exception. Organizations are consciously working to reduce their carbon footprint by choosing eco-friendly travel partners and encouraging responsible and sustainable travel practices.

Another emerging trend is the rise of 'Bleisure traveller'. Employees are increasingly extending business trips to include a few days of personal exploration, often working remotely during this time. Decision makers are minutely studying Data Analysis/ MIS insights to plan and budget travel/ tourism expenditures.

Today, uncertainty remains elevated due to trade conflicts, which influence where and how companies invest. This situation may temporarily affect corporate travel as businesses, struggling to navigate the changing trade situation, adjust their travel plans while navigating the rapidly changing economic landscape.



Burjis Mehta
President,
Skal Club of Bombay 144



For Details



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17TH ATOAI ANNUAL CONVENTION 2025

marks a new era of Adventure Tourism in Jammu & Kashmir

The 17th ATOAI Annual Convention, jointly organised by ATOAI and J&K Tourism, marked a significant milestone in the revival and future growth of tourism in Jammu & Kashmir. Themed 'Indian Adventure Tourism: Safe, Sustainable & Resilient', the convention provided an important platform to discuss emerging trends in adventure tourism, encourage networking, and foster new ideas through meaningful collaborations, set against the picturesque backdrop of Kashmir. HAANGLU, the official mascot of the convention, symbolised the spirit of adventure tourism in Jammu & Kashmir, reflecting its majestic peaks and boundless opportunities for exploration

Shreya Shimpi



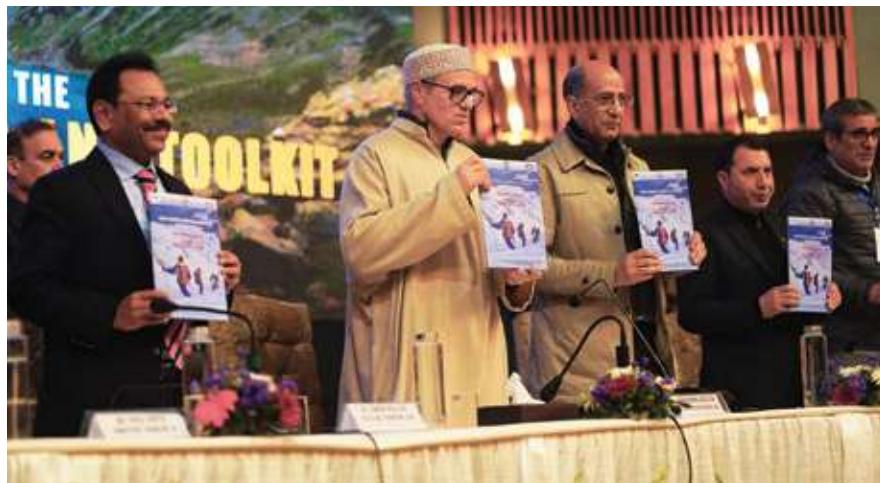
Day 1 – Inaugural Session

The inaugural session at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) was graced by distinguished dignitaries including Sh. Omar Abdullah, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir; Sh. Ajeet Bajaj, President, ATOAI; Dr. Ashish Chandra

Verma, ACS, Government of J&K; Sh. Farooq Ahmad Shah, MLA Gulmarg; Sh. Suman Billa (IAS), Additional Secretary & Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Sh. Syed Qamar Sajad, Director Tourism; Sh. Nasir Aslam Wani, Advisor to the Hon'ble Chief Minister; and Sh.

Waseem Raja, Joint Director of Tourism.

Addressing the gathering, Sh. Omar Abdullah said, "Jammu & Kashmir is ideally placed for adventure tourism. Adventure tourism is about offering exciting experiences in a safe, sustainable, and repeatable manner. As ad-



venture tour operators, you bear a significant responsibility to ensure safety. ATOAI is doing commendable work by setting robust guidelines. We must embrace responsible and sustainable tourism practices to collectively mitigate the effects of climate change."

Sh. Ajeet Bajaj, President, ATOAI, said, "We are working closely with state governments to regulate adventure tourism and strengthen its safety framework. Adventure tourism is a global industry valued at USD 680 bil-

lion. We are committed to an unstinted partnership with the Government of J&K and look forward to taking adventure tourism to newer heights. As custodians of a major part of the Himalayas, our key initiatives include developing mega trails, especially in the Western and Eastern Himalayas."

Sh. Suman Billa (IAS), AS & DG Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "Hosting the convention in Srinagar sends a strong message of confidence, resilience, and

the renewal of tourism in Jammu & Kashmir, both nationally and globally, following the unfortunate incident earlier this year. Adventure tourism plays a crucial role in generating employment, strengthening border tourism, and enabling visitor dispersal."

The day concluded with the launch of the 'J&K Adventure Tourism Roadmap and Toolkit', followed by an award felicitation ceremony. Delegates later enjoyed a cruise on Dal Lake and visited Char Chinar.



Day 2 – Impactful Panel Discussions and Cultural Immersion

The second day began on an exhilarating note, with delegates experiencing the newly inaugurated hot air balloon ride at SKICC, Srinagar. President Ajeet Bajaj spoke on '7 Sigma in Adventure Tourism', followed by an engaging panel discussion on 'J&K: New Horizons', featuring senior dignitaries from J&K Tourism.

A key highlight was a high-powered panel discussion featuring Sh. Ajeet Bajaj, Ravi Gosain, and Satish Sehrawat,

Presidents of ATOAI, IATO, and ITTA respectively, along with Rajeev Mehra and Vaibhav Kala, Senior Vice President, ATOAI. The session was expertly moderated by Aashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH. The panellists collectively pledged close collaboration with the Government of Jammu & Kashmir to further strengthen the region's tourism ecosystem.

Later in the day, delegates visited the Craft Bazaar and toured a Pashmina shawl factory, gaining first-hand insight into Kashmir's rich artistic heritage. The day concluded with a valedictory session, captivating cultural performances, and a lavish gala dinner.

Day 3 – Field Visits to Gulmarg, Sonmarg and Pahalgam

During the visit to Gulmarg, delegates received a warm welcome from Tahir Wani, Assistant Director of Tourism, Gulmarg, followed by visits to the Maharaja Palace and the Convention Centre. The highlight was Asia's highest Gondola ride, ascending to nearly 13,000 feet and offering breathtaking views of the valley and snow-capped mountains—an experience to cherish for a lifetime. **BOTT**

UTAH SETS ITS SIGHTS ON INDIA

Expanding experiences, access and awareness

Travel from India to Utah has continued on a positive upward trend throughout 2025, which reinforces the importance of India as a long-haul growth market for the destination. Tera Atwood, Global Markets Manager, Utah Office of Tourism shares more.

BOTT DESK

How has tourist traffic from India to your destination performed in 2025 so far, and how does it compare with previous years?

Travel from India to Utah has continued on a positive upward trend throughout 2025, which reinforces the importance of India as a long-haul growth market for us. We've seen an increase in both visitor numbers and trip quality. This growth has been supported by stronger engagement with Indian travel trade, increased awareness of Utah as a destination full of unique experiences, and a more consistent market presence. We're seeing greater confidence among both travellers and trade partners in offering Utah as a part of a longer, more immersive itinerary.

What strategies worked best for promoting your destination in the Indian market?

Our most effective approach in

2025 was a strategy founded in B2B engagement. Building long-term relationships with Indian travel trade has been essential, and our partnership with AVIREPS India ensured we stayed closely connected to key partners this year. Trade events, one-on-one meetings, and experiential initiatives such as a reverse sales mission allowed us to showcase Utah in authentic and tangible ways. Consumer-facing efforts still play an important role in our travel trade relationship with India, but it is the trust and knowledge built in the travel trade that helps us continue to deliver on positive results for Utah from this market.

What are your plans and strategies to further increase arrivals from India in 2026?

Looking ahead, we want to maintain our momentum and continue to grow thoughtfully. We plan to deepen trade partnerships, expand education

in the market, and continue creating opportunities for Indian partners to connect with businesses across our state. We are seeing increased interest from the Indian market for family-friendly travel, scenic road trips, iconic landscapes, and easy access to both urban and outdoor experiences. Utah stands apart as a destination where all of these elements come together. At the same time, we see a growing opportunity to introduce Indian travellers to The Greatest Snow on Earth. Utah is well known for being a world-class winter destination that has exceptional snow quality and experiences for all levels of winter enthusiasts. In Utah, summer and winter are just a few hours away. With so much to offer the Indian traveller, we are excited to see our partnerships continue to develop in 2026. We want to grow in ways that are meaningful and beneficial for both Indian travellers and the local communities that they visit. **BOTT**



Tera Atwood, Global Markets Manager, Utah Office of Tourism

Lubaina Sheerazi

Reinventing Tourism Marketing in India

Lubaina Sheerazi, CEO & Co-Founder, BRANDit, has been a trailblazer in India's tourism marketing landscape. From launching Blue Square Consultants in 2010 to navigating the challenges of the pandemic with the successful inception of BRANDit, her journey reflects vision, resilience, and bold leadership.

Shreya Shimpi



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

My entry into the travel industry was never planned. My background in textile design led me to fashion, and then one restless summer, I stumbled into an IATA course out of curiosity. That is when it clicked. I was drawn to the energy of the travel industry – chaotic, human, real. In 2010, India was exploding onto the global tourism stage, a powerhouse in the making. And when the chance came to launch Blue Square Consultants, I took the leap of faith and embraced this challenge. Blue Square grew for ten years, then evolved into BRANDit. This industry, the work and my team did not just shape my career; they have shaped me.

What is your long-term vision for BRANDit?

At BRANDit, transformation and innovation are at the core of everything we do. My vision is to lead the outbound tourism conversation in India, to be at the heart of how India sees and shapes global travel. Embracing technology will be critical to that future. AI isn't a buzzword; it is the air we breathe now.

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

Establishing Blue Square Consultants as a leading tourism marketing firm from 2010 to 2019 was a significant milestone. When it ended abruptly, I launched BRANDit in 2020, we had just barely set it up, the whole team moved here and two months later, the world shut down due to global pandemic. Getting through 2020 was a challenge. Personal storms hit alongside the professional ones. But I had a moral responsibility towards my team and walking away wasn't an option. My team and I dug deep. We held each other up. We rebuilt. That resilience, that collective spirit forged in crisis – that's what I'm most proud of.

Could you share one of your most memorable trips, both one that exceeded expectations and one that didn't go as planned?

Antarctica exceeded every expectation—it was far more powerful than any documentary or photo could capture. The scale, the silence, the life thriving in that impossible blue-white world... it rewired something in me.

As for less-than-perfect trips, I embrace spontaneity when I travel. The only real test of patience for me is flight delays or traffic, otherwise, I enjoy going with the flow. The best moments, I believe, often come from the detour, the unexpected cafe, the wrong turn that leads somewhere real. Spontaneity is the soul of discovery.

What are the challenges you face in the travel industry? What advice would you give to young professionals who aspire to succeed?

The biggest challenge I, see? A lack of long-term commitment among young professionals. Young talent often eyes the next shiny thing before mastering the craft. My advice? Commit. Find a place that excites you, mentors you – and learn. Build expertise because excellence isn't built in job hops. That deep dive builds invaluable skill and confidence. Stick, learn, contribute – the heights come from strong roots. **BOTT**



QUICK SHOTS

- Your Birthday / Sun Sign – August 14, Leo
- Mountains or Beaches - Mountains
- Favourite Holiday Destination - Iceland
- Best travel hack - Pack smart and travel light.
- Window/ Aisle - Aisle
- Favourite Cuisine - Thai
- Favourite Quote - Leap and the net will appear.
- Hobbies - I like to focus on wellness and fitness during my free time, listening to podcasts.
- Travel souvenirs - love them or leave them - Leave them.
- Best advice for a first-time traveller – Leave some room for spontaneity and discover something new that will just surprise them.

Discover Taiwan through its Festivals

Taiwan comes alive through its vibrant year-round festivals, blending ancient traditions with modern international events. From lantern-lit skies and religious pilgrimages to music festivals and cultural celebrations, Taiwan offers travellers immersive experiences that showcase its rich and cultural heritage, creativity, and warm hospitality-making every season the perfect time to visit.

Taiwan is more than a destination-it is a living celebration. Throughout the year, the island pulses with colour, rhythms of rituals, events and festivals. From ancient religious traditions to cutting-edge international events, Taiwan's festival calendar offers a compelling reason to visit in every season.

Welcome to Taiwan's festivals on flowers, music, fireworks, lanterns, dragon boats, hot springs, round-the-island cycling tours, international marathons and more. These festivals are held

one after another throughout a year. No matter what season or what time of the year you are visiting Taiwan, there are always fun events to be enjoyed!

The year often begins with one of the most enchanting spectacles in Asia: the Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival. Held during the Lunar New Year period, thousands of glowing lanterns are released into the night sky, each carrying handwritten wishes of hope and prosperity. The sight of illuminated lanterns floating above mountain villages is both deeply moving and unmistak-

ably Taiwanese.

Equally iconic is the Taiwan Lantern Festival, hosted annually in a different city. Massive lantern installations, modern light art, cultural performances, and interactive displays transform urban landscapes into radiant nighttime wonderlands. Popular with the international tourists, the festival showcases Taiwan's ability to fuse traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design.

Taiwan is uniquely endowed with many types of springs, including cold,



hot, turbid, and submarine springs. Taiwan is world-renowned for its spring resorts. Wellness focused, the Hot Spring and Fine-Cuisine Carnival is popular with both local and foreign tourists. This is an annual event that promotes hot spring tourism in autumn and winter.

As spring unfolds, Taiwan's religious and cultural heritage takes centre stage. The Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage, one of the world's largest religious processions, draws millions of participants who follow the sea goddess Mazu across central Taiwan. The journey is not just a spiritual event, but a communal celebration marked by music, fireworks, food stalls, and an atmosphere of shared devotion.

Summer brings energy, creativity, and a strong international vibe. The Taipei International Dragon Boat Championships combine athletic excitement with festive waterfront celebrations, while the Taipei Summer Festival fills the city with music concerts, street performances, and multicultural events. Food lovers are especially drawn to Taiwan's famous night markets, many of which host seasonal food festivals that spotlight local specialties.

Music and the arts play a central role in Taiwan's global cultural appeal. Events such as the Spring Scream Music Festival in Kenting and the Taipei Jazz Festival attract artists and audiences from around the world, transforming beaches and city streets into stages of creative exchange. These festivals highlight Taiwan's youthful energy and open, inclusive cultural landscape.

Autumn ushers in harvest celebrations and indigenous cultural festivals across the island. Visitors can experience traditional music, dance, and ceremonies that honour Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, offering a deeper understanding of the island's diverse roots. At the same time, the Taiwan International Balloon Festival in Taitung paints the sky with colourful hot air balloons, set against dramatic mountain and coastal scenery, a photographer's dream and a family-friendly delight.

As the year draws to a close, Taiwan embraces global festivities alongside local traditions. Christmas markets, New Year's concerts, and the world-famous Taipei 101 New Year's Eve Fireworks attract international travellers in hordes seeking a vibrant, safe, and unforgettable way to welcome the new year. **BOTT**



HOROSCOPE



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 January 2026.



Aries (21 March – 20 April)

Work looks exciting this month for Aries, with new challenges that you will genuinely enjoy.

Fresh opportunities and possible job offers are on the horizon. Relationship issues are likely to resolve harmoniously, while family life remains stable and fulfilling. A short trip with loved ones may also be on the cards.



Taurus (21 April – 21 May)

On the career front, maintaining a positive attitude and patience will be key. Stay focused, work diligently towards your goals, and remain committed to your plans on the journey to success. Your family life will bring a strong sense of peace, balance, and emotional fulfilment.



Gemini (22 May – 21 June)

This month promises to be phenomenal as you progress on both professional and personal fronts. Happiness and growth come naturally, helping you move ahead by leaps and bounds. You will find opportunities to innovate and gain popularity. However, be mindful of your health and avoid neglecting self-care.



Know what your stars say about January 2026



Cancer (22 June – 22 July)

You are brimming with ideas and enthusiasm, but this is the time to pause and refocus.

Recalibrate your priorities before taking action. Mood swings may impact family relationships, so practice emotional balance. Avoid investments or deals that promise "risk-free" returns, as caution is advised.



Leo (23 July – 21 August)

This month centres on love, care, and emotional abundance. Embrace nurturing connections

and draw strength from the support of loved ones. While professional worries or anxieties may arise, remember you are capable of handling them. Take things step by step and do not hesitate to seek support when needed.



Virgo (22 August – 23 September)

You are ready to express your emotions openly and pursue romantic interests with renewed enthusiasm. Career growth looks promising as you move past earlier challenges and enter a more stable and peaceful phase. Make the most of opportunities that promote growth and progress in your professional journey.



Libra (24 September – 23 October)

Love takes a fun and adventurous turn this month, bringing lightness and joy to relationships. Professionally, mental clarity and breakthroughs are likely. This is an ideal time to make important decisions and cut through confusion. Use your sharp intellect and take confident steps towards success.



Scorpio (24 October – 22 November)

This month encourages introspection and self-assessment. Focus on recognising your strengths while working on areas that

need improvement. Those looking to begin a professional journey may find suitable opportunities. Couples can plan time for relaxation, improving bonding and emotional connection.



Sagittarius (23 November – 22 December)

If you feel uncertain emotionally or financially, do not hesitate to lean on your partner for support. Professionally, remain cautious and financially wise. Manage your resources carefully and avoid unnecessary expenses. A disciplined approach will help you regain confidence and stability.



Capricorn (23 December – 20 January)

This month allows you to showcase your skills, with creativity emerging as your biggest strength. You will handle multiple responsibilities efficiently, though work commitments may keep you busy. Amidst the hectic schedule, make time to relax and enjoy quality moments with family.



Aquarius (21 January – 19 February)

If you sense growing negativity at work or home, it is essential to reassess your relationships. Ensure they are genuine, rooted in trust and mutual respect. Distance yourself from influences that may work against your interests. Focus on protecting your well-being and maintaining a healthy environment.



Pisces (20 February – 20 March)

Do not feel alone during emotional ups and downs—better times are ahead. Opportunities will soon help you emerge stronger and more confident. You may plan a new project with a friend or take up learning a new skill. Your search for an ideal life partner may also find fulfilment.

CZECHIA STRENGTHENS INDIA

ties with the reopening of the Mumbai Consulate

CzechTourism, the Consulate General of the Czech Republic, and Prague Airport marked a significant milestone with the opening of a new Czech Consulate office in Mumbai, marking the return of consular operations to the city after nearly fifteen years.

Shreya Shimpi

The reopening of the Czech Consulate office in Mumbai will benefit travellers from western and southern India applying for a Czech (Schengen) visa, further boosting leisure, business, and MICE travel to Czechia, which is represented by VFS Global in India. The event brought together the crème de la crème of the travel trade fraternity. An interactive panel featured **Katerina Vokkova**, Consul General of the Czech Republic; **Veronika Senjukova**, Consul and Deputy Head of Mission; **Maros Martin Guoth**, Vice Consul – Economic Affairs, from the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Mumbai; and **Barbara Andelova**, International Marketing Manager – New Markets, Czech Tourism. The discussion highlighted Czechia's growing partnership with India and outlined its strategic vision to enhance outbound travel from India.

Expressing her enthusiasm, Barbara Andelova said, "Mumbai has always been important to us, and the return of the Czech Consulate after fifteen years is very exciting. It brings us closer to travellers and partners in a region that has actively promoted Czechia beyond Prague. Indian travellers are increasingly exploring our wine regions and spa towns, along with heritage cities such as Prague and Brno. A second consular office in India, along with combined efforts with Prague Airport and Czech Trade, will further strengthen this momentum."

Highlighting the significance of the move, Katerina Vokkova remarked, "Reinstating the Mumbai office is an important step in strengthening bilateral ties and restoring services long awaited by students, professionals, tourists, and businesses. The presence of a consular office will make access significantly easier for applicants across western and southern India, with progress to be reviewed regularly to ensure continuous improvement." **BOTT**



APPOINTMENTS



JW MARRIOTT GOA

JW Marriott Goa has appointed **Yojan Gandha Das** as Director of Operations. She will oversee the hotel's primary operational departments – Front Office, Housekeeping, Food & Beverage Service, Culinary and Spa, ensuring the continued delivery of JW Marriott's renowned service excellence. Das will champion initiatives that enhance JW Marriott Goa's revenue performance and brand presence, while empowering the operations team to deliver exceptional guest journeys.



BRIGHTSUN TRAVEL

Brightsun Travel has appointed **Varun Mehta** as the Head of Partnerships for India, with an extended mandate on partnership development and supplier engagement across the UAE region. With over 25 years of experience in the global travel and tourism industry, Mehta brings a strong background in destination marketing, MICE sales strategies, large-scale contracting, and tourism board representation.



CROWNE PLAZA TODAY NEW DELHI OKHLA

Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla has appointed **Sonu Dhumal** as its new Executive Chef, further strengthening the hotel's culinary leadership and vision for excellence. With over two decades of rich experience in the global hospitality industry, Dhumal brings with him a wealth of expertise gained from working with some of the world's most prestigious luxury hotels and resorts across India and international destinations.



THE FERN HOTELS & RESORTS

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Rajdeep Singha** as the General Manager of The Fern Residency Bengaluru, Seshadripuram, Series by Marriott. With 23 years of experience, Singha will oversee hotel operations and planning, ensuring seamless functioning across departments while upholding the brand's service and sustainability standards. He brings with him a solid foundation in managing budgets and revenue management, supported by extensive experience in operational leadership.



THE PRIDE HOTELS

Ranjit Singh Chauhan has been appointed Director of Sales and Marketing at The Pride Hotels. Chauhan has nearly twenty years of expertise in hotel sales, having worked in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India. His career demonstrates extensive exposure to both domestic and foreign markets, and he has a proven track record of increasing market presence, generating high-performing sales teams, and driving revenue development.



ESPIRE HOSPITALITY LIMITED

Espire Hospitality Limited has appointed **Sandeep Kumar Rajput** as its new Commercial Director to handle the portfolio of hotels under its two brands, ZANA Luxury Resorts and Country Inn Hotels & Resorts. With over 22 years of extensive experience in sales & marketing across the hospitality sector, Kumar joins Espire at a pivotal time as the organization continues to strengthen its commercial capabilities and expand its footprint.

AIR INDIA
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EXPLORE HOT MEALS

Make every journey more delicious with our delectable range of 'Gourmair' hot meals, served oven hot at 36,000 ft. Xplore the menu and pre-book your favourites before you fly.



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Chicken
Biryani with
Mirch Salan



■
Paneer Makhani
with Jeera Aloo
& Vegetable
Pulao



■
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with Veg Manchurian



■
Mini Idlis,
Medu Vada
and Upma

One World. Many Seas. Infinite Ways To Cruise.

From iconic rivers and legendary oceans to polar frontiers and family fantasy voyages, STIC brings together the finest cruise brands under one roof.



Holland America Line

Experiences With Us Are Too Good To Hurry Through



Celestyal Cruises

Discover. Explore. Experience.



Ponant

Explore the world according to your desires



Windstar Cruises

All cruise ships let you see the world only Windstar brings you close enough



Polar Latitudes

Your Most Immersive Polar Experience



A-ROSA River Cruises

River Cruising - The Relaxed all-inclusive way



Variety Cruises

Boutique Cruises - Enriching Experiences



Disney Cruise Line

One Destination, Endless Adventures!



Please contact us :

+91-124-4595300 cruises@sticgroup.com www.stictravel.com

Northern India: 9811283957, gayatri.barman@sticgroup.com, 9717179273, manish.sahu@sticgroup.com | **Western India:** 9137439055, hal.bom@sticgroup.com, 9890831234, pune@sticgroup.com | **Eastern India:** 9830770999, akash.saha@sticgroup.com, 9831018652, jayanta.bera@sticgroup.com | **Southern India:** 9886618762, vinod.sharma@sticgroup.com, 7975449985, rohit.pal@sticgroup.com