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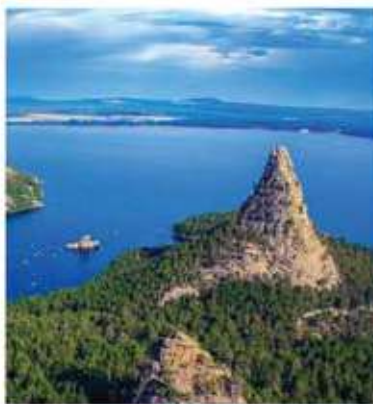
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Dipti Adhia
Crafting meaningful experiences beyond travel

32-33

SheforShe
brings over 200 Women together in a powerful show of solidarity

35-49



Community, Culture and Craft
take centre stage at MTDC's Palghar ICH Festival

50-51

SHORT NEWS 10-12

SPOTLIGHT 16-17

In an exclusive interaction with **BOTT**, Rahool Macarius, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, outlines the brand's strong growth strategy across the region.

CRUISE AWAY 20-21

In celebration of Dream Cruises' 10th anniversary this year, guests can look forward to special onboard highlights and festive experiences.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT 22-31

Amid ongoing geopolitical tensions, **BOTT** reached out to leading travel agents and tour operators across India, seeking insights on the changing booking patterns.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT 35-49

BOTT's SheforShe initiative made a strong and memorable debut on March 10 at Holiday Inn, where more than 200 women professionals from the travel, tourism and hospitality industry turned up in pink to support a movement that is set to grow far beyond a single event.

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- * Lantern experience at Shifen Old Street
- * Coastal rock formations at Yehliu Geopark
- * Visit the famous Jiufen Old Street
- * Photo stop at Taipei 101



Editor's LETTER

Dear Industry Colleagues,

We begin this issue with immense gratitude to the incredible women of the tourism industry who showed up in large numbers—dressed in pink—on a Tuesday morning to stand in solidarity for **BOTT's #SheforShe** initiative. Your presence made a powerful statement. With over 200 women from diverse verticals of travel and hospitality coming together to share their journeys, challenges, and triumphs, the event was nothing short of inspiring.

We are truly heartened by the response. For us at **BOTT**, **#SheforShe** is not a one-day celebration—it is a cause we deeply believe in. It is a movement we are committed to nurturing throughout the year, creating a platform for women to support, uplift, and empower one another. Do explore the exhaustive coverage of this special initiative in the inside pages of the magazine.

On the industry front, the mood, unfortunately, remains subdued. With the Middle East—one of the key epicentres of global tourism—facing challenges, the ripple effects are being felt across markets. Rising fuel prices and erratic flight schedules are making travel planning increasingly complex and, at times, uncertain. We remain hopeful that stability returns soon and tourism finds its rhythm again.

To better understand the ground reality, **BOTT** connected with 20 leading travel agents and tour operators across India. Their insights offer a nuanced perspective on current trends, challenges, and the road ahead for both inbound and outbound tourism. Don't miss this detailed feature.

As we step into a new financial year, we wish all our readers and industry partners a prosperous and fulfilling year ahead—may it be truly rewarding in every sense.

Happy Reading!

Warm regards,

Priyanka Saxena Ray
Editor, BOTT India

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SHORT NEWS

MOROCCO SHOWCASES MICE STRENGTH IN SOUTH INDIA ROADSHOW



Morocco concluded a three-city MICE roadshow across Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru, highlighting its infrastructure and growing appeal. With strong growth in Indian

arrivals, the destination showcased its large-scale venues, luxury hospitality, and seamless visa processes. Hosting global events and offering extensive hotel capacity, Morocco is positioning itself as a top choice for large Indian incentive groups.

KAZIN DMC EXPANDS INTO EUROPE WITH BRUSSELS OFFICE

KAZIN DMC has strengthened its global expansion strategy by entering the European market with the opening of its first sales office in Brussels, Belgium. The company has appointed Mariam Meskishvili as Head of Sales for Europe to drive partnerships and growth. This move aims to connect Central Asia and Caucasus destinations with European travellers, positioning them as



culturally rich and emerging tourism experiences.



IATO'S NAMASTE INDIA SHOWCASE BOOSTS EUROPE OUTREACH

IATO successfully concluded its first-ever international roadshow, Namaste India Showcase, across Frankfurt, Paris and Amsterdam from March 6–11, 2026. Supported by the Ministry of Tourism and partnered with Air India, the initiative enabled direct B2B engagement with European travel trade. The showcase strengthened tourism ties, promoted India's diverse offerings, and highlighted growing demand for experiential, cultural, luxury and wellness travel among European travellers.



JOURNEYLABEL PARTNERS WITH LA TOURISM TO LAUNCH "WE LOVE LA" CAMPAIGN IN INDIA

JourneyLabel has partnered with the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board to launch the "We Love LA" campaign targeting India's luxury travellers. The initiative showcases Los Angeles' culture, entertainment, dining, and luxury lifestyle through curated experiences. With the city gearing up for FIFA World Cup 2026, the campaign highlights VIP access,

Michelin-starred dining, and premium shopping, positioning LA as a top destination for India's high-net-worth travellers.

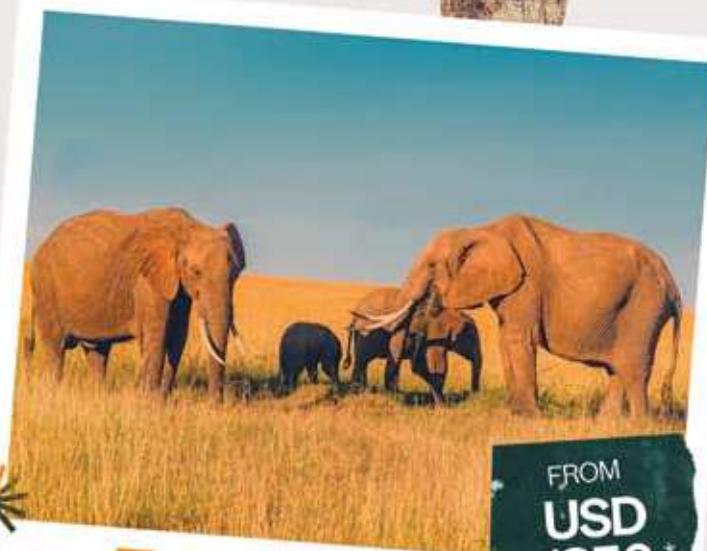


JAZEERA AIRWAYS EXPANDS INDIA NETWORK TO 12 CITIES

Jazeera Airways has expanded its India network to 12 destinations by adding Kozhikode, Tiruchirappalli, Mangalore, and Kannur. The airline now operates 49 weekly flights, enhancing connectivity between India and Kuwait. The move strengthens travel for expatriates and supports cargo movement. With over 1,000 flights and 200,000 seats planned till April 2026, the airline reinforces its regional presence.

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SAROVAR HOTELS LAUNCHES 'WHAT A DEAL' SUMMER CAMPAIGN

Sarovar Hotels has launched its 'What a Deal' summer campaign to boost leisure travel across India. The limited-period offer allows guests to book two nights and get the third night complimentary, along with 15% savings on food and beverages. Children up to 10 years stay and dine free when sharing with parents. Available across select leisure destinations, the campaign aims to drive longer stays and enhance value-driven family travel experiences.

RAMADA BY WYNDHAM OPENS IN ITAHARI, NEPAL



Grand Central Hotel Private Limited has announced the opening of Ramada by Wyndham Itahari Pashupati Marg in eastern Nepal, in partnership with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts. The 81-room property offers modern amenities including dining, wellness facilities, and event spaces. Positioned in a fast-growing commercial hub, the hotel aims to cater to rising business and leisure demand while strengthening international hospitality presence in Nepal's evolving tourism landscape.

ROYAL ORCHID HOTELS SIGNS 103-KEY REGENTA HOTEL IN MUNDRA, GUJARAT



Royal Orchid Hotels has signed a hotel management agreement for a new 103-key Regenta property in Mundra, Gujarat, scheduled to open by Q4 2027. Strategically located in a key port city, the hotel will cater to business and logistics travellers. Featuring premium amenities and 14,000 sq. ft. of banquet space, the project aligns with the company's asset-light expansion strategy in high-growth industrial hubs.



COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT DEBUTS IN TIRUPATI, ANDHRA PRADESH

Courtyard by Marriott has opened its first property in Andhra Pradesh with the launch of Courtyard by Marriott Tirupati. Located near the Tirumala Temple, the 130-room hotel offers modern comfort for pilgrims and travellers. Facilities include dining outlets, a spa, fitness centre, and pool. The hotel blends contemporary design with functionality, catering to both leisure and business guests.



SUMMIT HOTELS EXPANDS WITH TWO BOUTIQUE PROPERTIES IN NORTH BENGAL

Summit Hotels & Resorts has signed two boutique properties—Summit Gulma River Resort in Siliguri and Summit Falling Water near Darjeeling—each with 30 rooms. The Siliguri property, opening August 2026, will cater to leisure and events, while the Darjeeling project, opening in 2027, will offer a nature-integrated stay. The expansion strengthens Summit's footprint in North Bengal's fast-growing tourism corridor.



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VFS Global engages travel trade in six city roadshow

BOTT Desk

VFS Global recently concluded a six-city travel trade roadshow across Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kochi, Mumbai, Chandigarh and New Delhi, attracting over 600 agents and tour operators. The initiative was designed to strengthen collaboration with the travel trade ahead of the peak summer season.

One of the key highlights was the rollout of the UK's new eVisa system, now live across all categories. VFS Global briefed trade partners on the procedural changes under this framework, addressing industry queries amid rising demand for UK travel.

The roadshows also highlighted the growing need for travellers to apply for visas well in advance, with Schengen countries now accepting applications up to 180 days before travel.

Commenting on the initiative, **Yummi Talwar**, COO, South Asia, VFS Global said, "Our annual roadshows with the travel trade ahead of the peak season represent an important opportunity to showcase the initiatives we have introduced to make the applicant journey more seamless and secure. They also allow us to listen closely to the trade and understand the challenges they encounter. By engaging directly with them, we are able to help them resolve issues that fall within our scope of services."

Another key focus was the rising demand for doorstep solutions such as Visa At Your Doorstep (VAYD), available for several Schengen countries and Saudi Arabia, and the UK-focused On Demand Mobile Visa (ODMV) service. **BOTT**



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WYNDHAM

strengthens India focus amid expanding Eurasia strategy

In an exclusive interaction with **BOTT**, Rahoo Macarius, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, outlines the brand's strong growth strategy across the region, with India emerging as a key focus market. He highlights expansion into Tier II and III cities, a growing pipeline of over 50 hotels, and a focus on upscale and experiential segments.

BOTT Desk



Eurasia is a diverse and high-potential region—what are your top growth priorities across South Asia, the Middle East and CIS markets over the next 2–3 years?

Eurasia is a highly diverse region, and our growth strategy focuses on markets where travel demand, infrastructure development, and branded hotel penetration present strong long-term opportunities. At the same time, we are expanding beyond our traditional midscale strength by strengthening our presence in the upscale and premium segments to meet evolving traveller expectations across the region. India will remain a central pillar of our regional strategy. The market continues to benefit from strong domestic travel, improving connectivity,

India remains a key strategic market for Wyndham. How are you accelerating expansion across Tier II and Tier III cities while ensuring brand consistency and strong owner returns?

India's hospitality landscape is evolving rapidly, with strong demand emerging beyond the metro cities. This presents a significant opportunity for us to deepen our presence across Tier II and Tier III markets while maintaining a disciplined growth approach. We are progressing steadily towards the 100-hotel milestone in India, supported by a growing development pipeline of 50+ hotels and strong partnerships with local owners under our asset-light franchise model. To ensure brand consistency

adapting its brand portfolio and positioning to meet evolving traveller expectations across Eurasia?

As travel demand becomes more experience-driven, we have aligned our brand portfolio to cater to diverse traveller segments across Eurasia. We are expanding beyond our traditional midscale strength by strengthening our presence in the upscale and premium segments to meet evolving expectations for weddings, MICE and experiential leisure travel. Brands such as Wyndham Grand, Wyndham Garden, and Dolce by Wyndham are being positioned to cater to destination-led travel and large-format gatherings including weddings and corporate events. At the same time, we continue to maintain a diversified portfolio so that each market has the right brand fit.

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts differentiates itself through a combination of global scale, strong owner partnerships, and a development model that prioritises long-term value for hotel owners and investors. Our approach is built around an asset-light, owner-first franchise model that enables local developers to benefit from Wyndham's global brand recognition.

and a significant opportunity to expand branded accommodation across emerging destinations. As part of this momentum, we are progressing towards the milestone of 100 hotels in the country, supported by a development pipeline of more than 50 properties. Across the wider Eurasia region, our priority is to deepen our asset-light, franchise-led model and work closely with local owners to unlock opportunities in high-growth travel corridors. In the Middle East, continued tourism diversification and major infrastructure investments are creating strong momentum for branded hospitality. Meanwhile, in the CIS markets, we see potential in strengthening our presence across key gateway cities and commercial hubs where international hotel brands are gaining traction.

and strong owner returns, we rely on our global operating standards, robust distribution systems, and close collaboration with our partners to deliver reliable guest experiences while supporting sustainable growth. Our expansion is driven by a market-led strategy that focuses on emerging regional hubs, spiritual destinations (such as Ayodhya, Vrindavan and Haridwar), leisure markets (Jim Corbett, Kasauli, Wayanad, and Kochi), and infrastructure-led corridors (Lucknow Airport, Srinagar, Ranchi, Karnal, and the Dwarka Expressway in Gurgaon) where demand for branded accommodation continues to rise.

With rising demand in MICE, weddings and experiential leisure travel, how is Wyndham

In an increasingly competitive development landscape, what differentiates Wyndham's value proposition for hotel owners and investors in the Eurasia region today?

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts differentiates itself through a combination of global scale, strong owner partnerships, and a development model that prioritises long-term value for hotel owners and investors. Our approach is built around an asset-light, owner-first franchise model that enables local developers to benefit from Wyndham's global brand recognition, distribution strength, and operational expertise while maintaining efficient capital structures. A key pillar of this value proposition is the Wyndham Advantage platform, which provides owners with access to a comprehensive ecosystem of technology, marketing, and operational support. Through solutions such as mobile check-in and check-out, AI-based multilingual messaging, digital payment options, and Wyndham Connect, hotels can improve operational efficiency while delivering faster and more personalised guest experiences. **BOTT**

AEROPRIME

charts strategic growth across global Cargo Corridors

Abhishek Goyal, CEO & Executive Director, Aeroprime Group, shares insights on the company's expanding cargo mandates, evolving aviation dynamics, and future priorities. He highlights Aeroprime's focus on high-growth markets, strategic partnerships, and more.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

How do recent cargo mandates like AirCairo and TAP Air Portugal align with your expansion strategy, and which geographies or airline segments are you prioritising for growth in 2026?

Aeroprime's recent cargo mandates with AirCairo and TAP Air Portugal reflect a clear and deliberate strategic focus expanding across high-potential trade lanes while strengthening our integrated aviation model. These partnerships are not isolated wins; they align with our broader vision of building a balanced passenger and cargo portfolio and deepening our presence across key global corridors where India's trade flows are growing. Looking ahead to 2026, our focus remains on high-growth regions such as the Middle East, Europe, the Americas and South-east Asia corridors, where demand is outpacing available capacity and where we see the strongest case for value creation. Alongside this, we are increasing our engagement with carriers who are looking for a partner that understands the cargo market deeply, can help to identify the areas of revenue generation, optimise the destination and product mix and not just a representative that manages the relationship from a distance.

How will geopolitical uncertainties impact travel demand, air cargo flows, and airline strategies?

Geopolitical turbulence is now a permanent feature of the aviation landscape, not an exception. What we have learned, especially through the disruptions of the last few years, is that volatility reshapes routes faster than it kills demand. When certain corridors close or become commercially unviable, traffic finds alternative paths, and that is where agile GSAs like us create real value. The Strait of Hormuz is a case in point. Any sustained disruption there does not just affect oil; it ripples directly into air cargo economics across the Gulf, reroutes freighter traffic, and forces airlines to reprice and rethink capacity deployment almost overnight. For India specifically, I remain structurally optimistic. The outbound travel market continues to expand, the pharma and e-commerce cargo pipelines are robust, and Indian carriers are asserting themselves internationally in a way we have not seen before.

Looking ahead, what are Aeroprime's key priorities for the next

12–24 months?

Our agenda over the next 12 to 24 months is clear. We are expanding across high-growth corridors, covering untapped markets and geographies feeding into global cargo supply chains. We aim to go beyond conventional representation and be a full-service strategic partner, helping airlines price intelligently, identify high-yield routes, maximise passenger yields, and capture untapped revenue.

We are also strengthening operations with smarter workflows, better commodity intelligence, and tighter coordination, enabling faster, more responsive service. Ultimately, we are building a scalable, tech-enabled cargo ecosystem aligned with India's growing trade ambitions and positioning the country as a global cargo hub. **BOTT**





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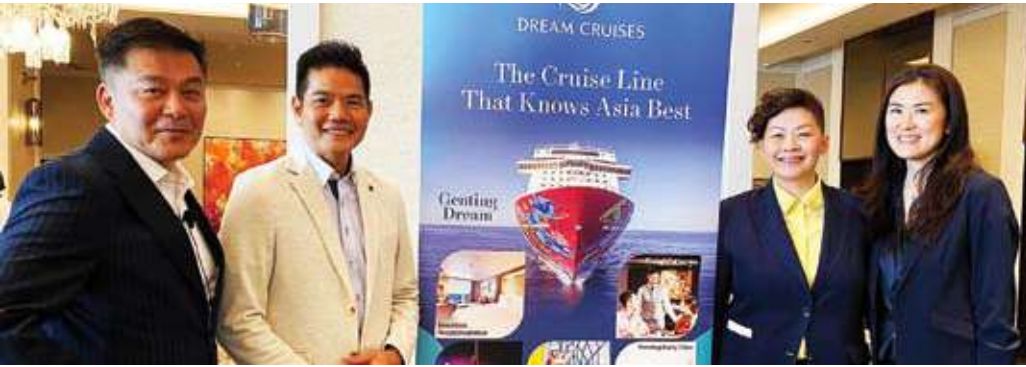
Gunjan Sabikhi



StarDream Cruises continues to elevate cruising across Asia with a wide range of experiences across its StarCruises and Dream Cruises brands. With over 30 years of experience in Asia, the cruise line offers a series of 2-to-5-night itineraries to more than 50 destinations across Southeast Asia and East Asia, including sought-after ports in Japan and South Korea. As an international cruise line with the most ships sailing across Asia — including the flagship *Genting Dream* under Dream Cruises, as well as *Star Navigator* and *Star Voyager* under StarCruises — travelers can enjoy the convenience of embarking from various Asian cities and choosing from a wide variety of itineraries. With each sailing, entertainment takes centre stage with a vibrant lineup of themed experiences, international productions and regionally inspired performances.

In celebration of Dream Cruises' 10th anniversary this year, guests can look forward to special onboard highlights and festive experiences, alongside exciting new acts including K-pop group KIIRAS, Amotti from *Physical: 100*, and Chef Tommie Lee (aka French Papa) from *Culinary Class Wars Season 2*. Adding to the celebration lineup, *Forever Broadway* — a collaboration with Broadway Asia International, conceived in New York's iconic Broadway, the world's most celebrated stage for musical theatre — will debut on *Genting Dream* in June 2026.





“With over three decades of experience in Asia, we understand the region and what our guests value most when they travel. Now, we sail to more than 50 destinations across Asia, connecting guests to a wide range of places and experiences beyond the ship. We are also committed to bringing multiple destinations within reach, enabling guests to experience different countries and cultures, while supporting the local economies and tourism growth of the ports we visit,” said Michael Goh, President of StarDream Cruises. He continues to add, “At the same time, we are not defined by a single theme — we bring together a dynamic mix of international entertainment, culturally inspired programmes and diverse on-board offerings to deliver well-rounded journeys for guests of all ages.” **BOTT**

StarDream Cruises brings Bhajan Jamming to the SEA!

Bhajan Jamming has been gaining attention across India as a more participatory and community-led form of devotional music. Unlike traditional performances, these gatherings are collective, immersive, and open, where familiar bhajans are sung together, and the experience feels as much social as it is spiritual. StarDream Cruises is introducing this format on Dream Cruises - Genting Dream, in an unexpected setting, the open SEA. Dream Cruises brings a themed sailing aboard the Genting Dream, which will host what is being described as the first Bhajan Jamming session at sea, bringing the devotional gathering into the setting of a cruise journey. The themed departures are scheduled for 26 May and 9 June 2026, which will be 3-nighter sailings from Singapore to Phuket and back. Onboard, the session will follow the same participatory and spontaneous format that defines Bhajan Jamming. Guests can sing along, clap to the rhythm, and join the music as it unfolds, turning the gathering into a shared devotional moment rather than a staged performance.

Commenting on the concept, Naresh Rawal, Senior Vice President - Sales & Marketing, said, “What makes Bhajan Jamming special is that it’s participatory and collective. It is not about watching a performance, it is about being part of the music. Bringing that same format to sea creates quite a different setting for it. When travellers step away from their everyday routines, moments like these naturally allow them to slow down, reconnect, and share the experience together.”

Global unrest reshapes travel trends

Industry voices decode the shift

Amid ongoing geopolitical tensions, travel sentiment across markets is witnessing a noticeable shift. To gauge the real impact, **BOTT** reached out to leading travel agents and tour operators across India, seeking insights on evolving outbound preferences, opportunities for India as a destination, and changing booking patterns. The responses reflect a dynamic landscape—where uncertainty is driving new travel choices, reshaping demand, and opening emerging opportunities for both inbound and domestic tourism.

Compiled by Priyanka Saxena Ray & Shreya Shimpi



Rohit Shorey
Founder & CEO,
Kazin DMC

From our perspective, if demand for parts of the Middle East softens, Indian outbound travel is likely to shift more toward Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. These destinations are attractive because they offer a strong combination of accessibility,

value, cultural depth, nature, and premium experiences. At the same time, given the current airspace disruptions around Iran and the impact on regional connectivity, travellers are likely to prefer destinations perceived as more operationally stable and easier to access from India. Recent reporting also indicates wider disruption to routes across Central Asia and the Caucasus because of Iran-related airspace tensions, which makes reliability and routing a bigger decision factor for travellers right now.

In general, no market really benefits from a war situation because geopolitical instability creates uncertainty for travellers, impacts confidence and can disrupt the wider tourism ecosystem. However, India could see some support for domestic tourism, as some travellers may choose to replace or postpone international trips and instead opt for shorter, safer and more flexible holidays within the country.

Himanshu Patil
President, OTOAI

Middle east effect is causing damage to tourism for sure. People are not opting to flying over gulf and that is clearly impacting travel sentiment in the short term. However, travel to Europe is going on, and destinations like Japan are getting popular—it has been

on an upward streak for the last few years. At the same time, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bali, Thailand and Singapore are doing well, and China is also picking up gradually.

Once all this is over, I am confident that Dubai will come up fast, maybe within a month or so once there is a complete stop. I am sure that inbound will also pick up with stability returning to the region.

Unfortunately, 2025 summer was already impacted because of Pahalgam and Air India disruptions, and this year also summer looks tough. The situation has made travellers more cautious, and while demand exists, confidence is getting affected, leading to shifts in destination choices and travel planning timelines.





Ravi Gosain
President, IATO

The current geopolitical developments are certainly influencing outbound travel patterns, with Indian travellers becoming more cautious and selective. While some Middle Eastern destinations may see a temporary softening, we expect strong traction towards Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia, driven by ease of access, affordability, and familiarity. Additionally, destinations such as Japan, South Korea, Central Asia, and parts of Europe are witnessing increased interest, particularly among travellers seeking unique and experience-driven itineraries.

For India, this evolving global environment presents a strategic opportunity. As a safe, diverse, and year-round destination, India can position itself as a preferred alternative in the global tourism landscape. There is a strong need for enhanced international marketing, improved air connectivity, and simplified visa processes to fully leverage this opportunity. Domestically, such uncertainties typically encourage travellers to explore within the country, leading to growth in regional tourism, short-haul travel, and niche segments such as wellness, spirituality, adventure, and heritage tourism.

We are already observing shifts in traveller behaviour, with a clear preference for destinations perceived as safe and stable. There is increased demand for flexible booking policies, travel insurance, and a noticeable trend towards shorter booking windows.



Riaz Munshi
Managing Director,
N. Chirag

With a likely softening in demand for certain Middle Eastern destinations, we anticipate a shift towards short- to medium-haul alternatives such as Southeast Asia including

Thailand, Vietnam, Bali, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Japan, along with parts of Europe. These destinations offer a compelling mix of value, ease of visa access, and diverse experiences—from leisure and wellness to culture and nature. Additionally, countries that have actively simplified visa processes or enhanced air connectivity with India are expected to gain stronger traction in the coming months.

In recent weeks, we have observed a cautious yet adaptive traveller sentiment. While there is some hesitancy around certain regions, overall travel intent remains strong. Booking patterns indicate shorter lead times, a preference for flexible cancellation policies, and a tilt towards safer, well-connected destinations. Travellers are also increasingly prioritising value, curated experiences, and travel insurance, reflecting a more informed and risk-aware approach.

Abbas Moiz
President – TAFI National
Managing Committee

Although demand for Middle Eastern destinations may decrease, the impact extends beyond just travel to these countries. These nations have served as crucial transit hubs connecting travellers to the rest of the world. Due to ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region, an increase

in oil prices and a fall in the value of the rupee, there is now little or no remaining capacity on other carriers for the upcoming outbound travel season at a reasonable cost.

We are seeing heightened interest towards the east. Southeast Asia has long been a favourite destination for Indians, thanks to convenient travel connections and the option of visas on arrival. Japan is also becoming increasingly popular, but due to high demand, its visa process now takes longer and requires scheduling an appointment. The stumbling block is going to be the carrying capacity of the airlines operating to and from India.

The only considerable benefit India will derive is from keeping its travellers at home. Inbound tourism, apart from the weather, will also face similar challenges as outbound tourism. This is the time and opportunity to repair and renew our tourism infrastructure. Air travel has been heavily affected, with prices rising because of fuel costs and limited capacity. Uncertainty makes travellers reluctant to leave their comfort zones unless necessary.





Tejbir Singh Anand

Managing Director, Holiday Moods
Adventure and Past President, ATOAI

As demand for certain Middle Eastern regions softens, I foresee a significant pivot toward Nordic and Scandinavian destinations, as well as Polar expeditions. Indian luxury travellers are increasingly seeking “safe haven” destinations that offer isolation and natural grandeur. Countries like Norway, Iceland, and Finland are gaining traction not just for their stability, but also for their unique experiential offerings such as the Northern Lights and high-end coastal retreats. Furthermore, we are seeing a surge in interest for Antarctica and Arctic cruises, as high-net-worth individuals move away from traditional city-hopping towards “frontier tourism” that feels removed from geopolitical volatility.

India is perfectly positioned to capture “displaced” tourism. For domestic growth, the focus on high-end wellness and spiritual retreats in the Himalayas, along with coastal luxury in destinations like Odisha, offers a serene alternative to international uncertainty. As an inbound destination, India’s diverse geography allows it to position itself as a resilient, year-round hub. By highlighting ultra-luxury boutique properties that avoid a mass-market feel, we can attract global travellers seeking authentic, secure, and culturally immersive experiences.

In recent weeks, there has been a noticeable shift towards shorter booking windows and a preference for private, curated journeys. Travellers are prioritising “purpose over pace,” opting for longer stays in single, high-security locations rather than multi-country itineraries.



Anil Kalsi

Vice President, TAFI

Leisure to the east and down under will increase. Good times are all about secure environment and affordability with ease of visa or no visa. Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines will gain market share, subject to fares and Rupee volatility.

The world in turmoil does is not the best setting for growth of tourism. However, Indians are a resilient race and tend to still venture out. Leisure inbound will increase once flights are available and there is a cessation of hostilities. India’s e-visa 2.0 portal is also to be launched later this year and will definitely help inbound tourism. Domestically, tourism depends on new fare levels in view of the increase in fares due to input cost increase of fuel, and drivable distances will see a spurt.

One third of India’s outbound transited through the Middle East. That option being curtailed, fares have spiralled and seat availability is low. Essential travel is taking place as of now. We are hoping peace returns soon so that we can get back to good business.

Rajat Sawhney

Senior Vice President, ADTOI

Middle Eastern destinations are likely to be completely out of favour due to the impending war. For overseas travel, based on current trends, I see destinations such as Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, China, and other Southeast Asian countries gaining strong traction in the coming season. There is particularly high interest in Japan this summer, driven by its unique appeal and growing popularity among Indian travellers.

Tourists are becoming more reluctant to travel overseas, with only those with stronger budgets continuing to travel, largely opting for short-haul destinations in Southeast Asia. Increasing fuel prices and dollar escalation have already led to a rise in airfares, which is directly impacting traveller budgets and decision-making. Inbound tourism is expected to be most adversely affected, with several cancellations already being reported among inbound travellers.

On the domestic front, tourism is expected to be a shining star, with Indian travellers preferring to explore destinations within the country this summer. Hill stations in North India, the Northeast, Goa, and Kerala are likely to emerge as preferred choices.

At present, traveller sentiment remains subdued, with many putting their plans on hold. It is largely a wait-and-watch situation, and final travel decisions are expected to be made once the ongoing geopolitical situation stabilises.



Host State



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Ajay Prakash

President, International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT)

With the addition of the US/Israel attack on Iran almost a month ago, the level of global hostility today is perhaps at its highest after World War II, and travel & tourism is the first to be affected. It is not just the Middle East—the entire travel sentiment has been impacted. In the short term, destinations in the East and some in Europe might benefit from the summer holiday season, but if this war does not end quickly, all travel will be hit by a combination of high fares due to rising fuel prices, global economic instability, and a general atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Leisure travel is a discretionary spend, and peace and stability are prerequisites for tourism; many travellers have already put their summer holiday plans on hold.

The summer has traditionally been a lean period for inbound tourism, and the lack of overseas marketing is not helping. While domestic tourism supported the industry during the pandemic, it too is now facing challenges. Many hotels have curtailed menus, and several restaurants have had to shut down due to restrictions on commercial LPG supply.

The world simply cannot afford to let this war continue. India, known through the ages for ahimsa and its high moral standing, must reassert that identity. The travel industry must urge the government to take a leadership role and act as a moral voice, especially for the Global South, to call for an end to this conflict. As Bertrand Russell said, “War doesn’t determine who is right—only who is left.”



Vineet Srivastava

MD, Yorker DMC Pvt. Ltd.

We are currently witnessing a noticeable shift in travel preferences, with demand gradually moving away from certain Middle Eastern destinations towards Southeast Asia, Europe, and Japan. This transition is being driven by a combination of factors such as improved connectivity,

a stronger perception of safety, and overall ease of travel. Short-haul destinations like Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore, in particular, are seeing strong traction as travellers look for convenient and relatively secure options.

This evolving scenario presents a significant opportunity for India to position itself as a safe, diverse, and experience-rich destination for global travellers. At the same time, there is also a need to strengthen outbound partnerships with emerging and stable markets to ensure continuity in travel flows and business growth.

In recent weeks, traveller behaviour has become more cautious and pragmatic. Clients are increasingly prioritising flexibility in bookings, opting for destinations that are perceived as safe, and seeking value-driven packages. There has also been a noticeable rise in last-minute bookings, as travellers prefer to make decisions closer to departure based on prevailing conditions.

Shravan Bhalla

Vice President, OTOAI

We have seen a large number of cancellations due to the Middle Eastern war crisis. As a result, demand for destinations such as Japan, Bali, Kenya, Australia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam has increased. At the same time, there has been an overall decline in



passenger movement as clients prefer to adopt a wait-and-watch approach, and many are shifting towards the domestic market, especially as airfares have already reached peak levels.

Due to the current war situation in the Middle East, many travellers feel safer staying within their own country, which is likely to drive domestic tourism growth, along with some short-haul international travel.

We are noticing immediate and measurable shifts in traveller sentiment, booking patterns, and travel preferences. Clients have become more risk-aware and are planning their trips in line with government travel advisories related to safety and disruptions. Booking behaviour has changed significantly, with many travellers preferring to wait and watch. We have also seen some future social events being cancelled or moved to domestic or alternative destinations. Additionally, there is a rise in late or last-minute bookings for short-duration trips.

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



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The event concluded with the celebration of New Year 2026.

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Ajay Vinayak
CEO, Palomino Hospitality

As demand for some Middle Eastern destinations softens due to current geopolitical tensions, Indian travellers are increasingly pivoting towards stable and visa-friendly regions. Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia, is expected to lead due to strong connectivity and affordability. We are also seeing a rise in long-haul interest for the USA, driven by the strong diaspora (VFR segment) and premium travellers seeking safety. However, high costs and long visa wait times remain key challenges for the broader market.

India is well positioned to capitalise on these global shifts. As an inbound destination, it can attract travellers seeking high-value, culturally rich alternatives to traditional hubs, especially from markets like Russia and Europe, provided direct connectivity is strengthened. On the domestic front, international uncertainty is boosting demand, with more Indians opting for staycations and drivable, experiential trips within the country. The key challenge will be managing infrastructure pressure in peak destinations.

We are currently witnessing two distinct trends. In the MICE segment, decision-making cycles have slowed, with clients planning early but taking longer to finalise commitments due to caution. In contrast, leisure travellers (FITs) are becoming more impulsive, making last-minute bookings based on real-time safety perceptions and deals. While this trend is keeping business active, it is also making demand patterns more unpredictable.



Mukesh Jain
Executive Vice President, TIA

From what we are seeing on the ground, travellers are becoming a lot more conscious about where they go and how safe they feel. With some Middle Eastern destinations likely to see softer demand for a while, there's already a shift towards places like Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Bali, and Japan. These destinations are easier from a visa point of view, even free visa on arrival, offer great value and most importantly give travellers a sense of comfort right now.

For India, every challenge or disturbance globally opens up a new opportunity. As travellers reassess destinations based on safety and stability, India stands in a strong position. We are seeing growing interest in experiences around culture, wellness and heritage from inbound markets. At the same time domestic tourism continues to grow steadily. In the last few weeks, there has been a noticeable shift in behaviour. Bookings are happening closer to travel dates; travellers are asking more questions around safety and flexibility. Another clear change is that people are once again valuing the role of travel agents/advisors, instead of relying completely on OTA or self-planning.

Rajesh Kakade
Founder & Global Director,
Red Carpet Travels

From an outbound travel strategy perspective, this does not reduce demand—it redistributes it. Indian travellers are most likely to redirect themselves towards destinations that offer scale, comfort, and reliability. The USA and Canada are seeing steady interest, especially for the summer season, driven by the breadth of experiences and familiarity for both first-time and repeat travellers. Europe, including Scandinavia, is also gaining momentum among those seeking immersive and well-paced holidays with a sense of security, although there is some impact due to rising airfares on European carriers. Australia continues to attract a premium segment that plans well in advance and seeks meaningful long-haul journeys. Japan stands out as a high-growth, high-value replacement market for Indian outbound travel. At a broader level, destinations that combine ease of travel, safety, and dependable on-ground services are emerging as preferred choices. Travellers to the USA and Canada are also increasingly opting for routes over the Pacific instead of the Atlantic.

The current global environment presents a quiet yet important opportunity for India. From an inbound perspective, India's strength lies in offering authentic and layered experiences, which is increasingly what global travellers seek when they become more selective.





Dr. Manoj Sogani Chairman, TAAI Rajasthan Chapter

The global travel landscape is currently navigating a complex phase where geopolitical shifts are actively shaping consumer behaviour. With uncertainty softening demand for certain Middle Eastern destinations, we are witnessing a strategic pivot toward Southeast Asia and Central Asia. Destinations such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia are gaining strong traction due to visa-free access and perceived safety. Additionally,

there is growing interest in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, offering new-age experiences that appeal to value-conscious yet adventurous Indian travellers.

India stands at a unique vantage point in this scenario. Domestically, the safety-first sentiment is driving a significant surge in luxury domestic tourism and spiritual travel. Rajasthan, in particular, continues to benefit as a safe haven for high-end experiential travel. In recent weeks, there has been a noticeable shift towards shorter booking windows, with travellers preferring last-minute and flexible itineraries. There is also a growing preference for direct flight routes that bypass Middle Eastern transit hubs to avoid disruptions.

Dharmesh Advani Board Member & National Director, ETAA

With rising challenges in travelling to Middle Eastern destinations, Indian travellers are increasingly considering Southeast Asia—particularly Thailand, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Indonesia—driven by proximity, affordability, and strong cultural appeal. Additionally, Europe, especially Spain, Portugal, and Eastern European countries, is expected to gain traction as travellers look for stability, diverse experiences, and value for money.

India continues to stand out as a safe, culturally rich, and diverse alternative. With unrest in international markets, Indian travellers are being encouraged to explore within the country, boosting demand for heritage circuits, wellness retreats, and nature-based tourism across destinations such as Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

Recent weeks have shown a noticeable shift in traveller sentiment, with booking patterns reflecting a preference for flexible itineraries and destinations perceived as secure. There is also a growing inclination towards experiential travel, including smaller group tours, boutique stays, and safaris, rather than large gatherings. Safety, value, and meaningful experiences are now stronger decision drivers, making adaptability essential for both outbound and domestic operators.



Vineet Gopal Executive Board Member - OTOAI

What we are witnessing is not a drop in outbound demand, but a rebalancing of travel intent. Indian travellers today don't cancel—they recalibrate. In the immediate phase, I see Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Bali (Indonesia), Australia, and Russia gaining traction. Thailand and Vietnam continue to lead due to visa ease, affordability, and strong leisure appeal, while Singapore and Bali benefit from strong brand recall and familiarity. Australia will see selective growth driven by premium and VFR segments, while Russia is emerging due to simplified visa processes and competitive pricing.

India is in a unique position as both a source and destination market. On the inbound side, India is evolving into a multi-experience destination offering spirituality, luxury, wellness, and wildlife. Travellers are increasingly seeking depth, diversity, and longer stays—areas where India excels. Domestically, with over 2.5 billion tourist visits, travel is becoming aspirational and experience-led, with growth in luxury stays, spiritual circuits, destination weddings, and MICE. This creates a dual advantage of attracting global travellers while retaining outbound spending within the country.

The shift in traveller behaviour is subtle but clear. Rising fares and airspace disruptions are influencing decisions, leading to shorter booking windows, preference for simpler itineraries, and a strong tilt toward short-haul destinations. Flexibility is now essential, with demand for refundable tickets and travel insurance.



Jay Kantawala
Chapter Chairman –
TAFI Western India

As geopolitical headwinds reduce demand for certain Middle Eastern corridors, Indian outbound travel is clearly pivoting eastward. Destinations that combine safety with high experiential value are capturing this redirected demand.

Southeast Asian destinations such as Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, and Indonesia remain frontrunners due to proximity and ease of visa access. At the same time, Japan and South Korea are witnessing accelerated traction, attracting travellers with their strong cultural appeal and secure environments.

Domestically, global uncertainty is encouraging an inward focus, with high-spending Indian travellers increasingly prioritising domestic experiences. Regions such as Kashmir, Ladakh, and the Northeast, along with curated circuits in Rajasthan and Kerala, are seeing strong momentum as travellers seek meaningful and immersive experiences within India.

Recent weeks highlight a clear shift in consumer behaviour, with risk mitigation becoming a priority. There is a growing demand for trusted operators and end-to-end managed itineraries, along with shorter booking windows and a strong preference for flexible cancellation policies.



Vinay Arora
Director,
ATG Holidays

As demand for some Middle Eastern destinations softens, Indian travellers are increasingly looking towards Southeast Asia, Japan, and South Korea. Destinations such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines

are gaining traction due to their affordability, ease of access, and visa-on-arrival or simplified visa processes. Japan and South Korea are also becoming more popular, especially among younger travellers. Overall, travellers are moving away from quick Gulf trips for now and choosing destinations that feel more stable, diverse, and experience-led. That said, I believe the Gulf will regain momentum once the situation stabilises.

India is well positioned to benefit from both domestic and inbound tourism. Travellers who were earlier considering Middle Eastern trips are now opting for longer holidays within India, especially to destinations like Rajasthan, Himachal, Goa, Kerala, Leh, and the Northeast. This is driving demand for road trips, curated tours, and experience-based travel.

We are clearly seeing a shift in traveller behaviour. Travellers are becoming more cautious, especially regarding flights connecting through the Middle East. There is a growing preference for simpler routes, shorter travel durations, and flexible itineraries.



Neil Patil
Co-Founder, COO & CTO, Veena World

The current geopolitical uncertainty is already influencing travel intent, and we expect Indian outbound travellers to pivot towards destinations that offer both perceived safety and strong experiential value. In the near term, Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, and Indonesia, is expected to see increased traction due to ease of access, visa friendliness, and familiarity. Additionally, Japan and South Korea continue to gain popularity for their unique cultural appeal.

From India's perspective, this global scenario presents a dual opportunity. On the inbound front, India can position itself as a diverse, culturally rich, and value-driven destination, especially for travellers seeking alternative long-haul experiences. Improved air connectivity, simplified visa processes, and curated experiences will be key to unlocking this potential. Domestically, we are already seeing a strong shift toward exploring India more deeply, with destinations like Kashmir, the Northeast, Ladakh, and experiential circuits in Rajasthan and Kerala gaining momentum as travellers prioritise familiarity and flexibility.

In terms of traveller behaviour, there is a noticeable increase in preference for trusted brands, structured group tours, and end-to-end managed holidays. Travellers are planning with slightly shorter booking windows, seeking flexibility, and choosing destinations with a clear perception of safety. Overall, while uncertainty creates short-term shifts, it reinforces the long-term trend of Indians travelling more frequently, but with greater awareness and intent.



Amit Thadani
Director, NIK N AMI Travels

With the current situation affecting parts of the Middle East, we are clearly seeing a shift in demand towards destinations such as Thailand, Vietnam, Bali, Japan, the Maldives, Mauritius, Réunion, and select parts of Europe. These destinations are preferred as they offer a sense of safety, good connectivity, and overall value, which are key decision factors for Indian travellers today.

We are also witnessing strong traction for Singapore, especially after the Disney inaugural sailing. Disney cruises are performing exceptionally well, with clients opting for combinations such as Singapore with Bintan, Batam, or Kuala Lumpur. These combinations are convenient, family-friendly, and offer a diverse range of experiences, driving higher bookings.

India is also benefiting in this phase. Inbound interest remains strong due to India's diverse offerings across culture, heritage, wellness, and experiential travel. Domestically, bookings have increased significantly, with strong demand for destinations like Kashmir, the Northeast, Kerala, and premium offbeat stays. Travellers are more open to exploring India in depth.

We are also seeing a noticeable shift in behaviour. Travellers are more cautious, preferring stable destinations, flexible bookings, and travel insurance. Planning cycles are shorter, and last-minute bookings are increasing.



Vansh Arora
Executive Director,
Flag Holidays

With demand for some Middle Eastern markets softening, Indian travellers are pivoting towards South and Southeast Asia. Destinations such as Vietnam, Thailand, Maldives, and Singapore are leading bookings, with

Vietnam currently topping the list. These markets offer short flight durations, strong value for money, diverse experiences, and improved connectivity, making them immediate preferred choices. Japan is also performing well among premium travellers seeking safety, culture, and high-end experiences, as reflected in continued demand for curated group departures.

India is also set to benefit both as an inbound and domestic destination. Re-routed itineraries from short-haul source markets can drive inbound interest in India's heritage, wellness, and experiential circuits. Domestically, premium staycations, regional leisure circuits, and curated micro-trips are seeing strong growth, with higher booking values and longer stays.

We are witnessing clear behavioural shifts, including shorter booking windows, greater demand for flexibility, and a preference for lower-risk destinations. Travellers are increasingly choosing curated small-group and luxury experiences, along with comprehensive travel insurance.

Chandni Sharma
Founder & Director,
Ascel Group

With demand for parts of the Middle East softening, Indian travellers are shifting towards Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia, driven by affordability and ease of access. Interest in experiential destinations such as Japan and South Korea is rising, while Europe continues to see steady demand among premium travellers. This reflects a clear focus on value, safety, and meaningful travel experiences.

India stands to benefit strongly from the current global scenario. As an inbound destination, it offers a unique mix of affordability, culture, wellness, and diverse experiences, making it an attractive alternative to traditional markets. Domestically, rising demand for short getaways, spiritual travel, and experiential holidays is driving consistent growth. With improved connectivity and quality offerings, India is well positioned to emerge as a leading tourism hub.

We are seeing immediate shifts in traveller behaviour, with a preference for safer destinations, avoidance of conflict regions, and a tilt towards domestic and short-haul travel. There is also a rise in cancellations, last-minute bookings, and increased price sensitivity. Overall sentiment remains positive, but decision-making is more cautious, flexible, and driven by safety and convenience.



Dipti Adhia

Crafting meaningful experiences beyond travel



Dipti Adhia, Country Director, Discover the World-India, is a charismatic leader known for expanding premium global brands in the Indian market and for her passion for curating exceptional travel experiences. Her journey reflects a compelling blend of adaptability, creativity, perfection, and an innate ability to build deep, meaningful relationships within the travel fraternity.

Shreya Shimpi





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

Honestly, I never really planned to be in the tourism sector. Coming from a family of lawyers, chartered accountants, and businessmen, there was always an expectation that I would follow a conventional career path. But I always knew I wanted to do something different. I am inherently a people person and love connecting with others. I am naturally inclined towards planning, organising, and curating experiences with a distinct ‘wow’ element and utmost perfection—perhaps the Virgo in me!

When I entered the industry, I wasn’t entirely sure if this was the right fit for me. But over time, I have experienced a deep sense of belonging. Today, what truly excites me is the ability to curate dreams for people—to be a small part of their journeys, memories, and experiences.

What would you say are three highlights of the year, personally or professionally?

2025 has been a very defining year for me, both per-

sonally and professionally. From a professional standpoint, one of the biggest highlights has been strengthening and expanding key partnerships. Being able to represent and grow global brands in the Indian market, and seeing that translate into tangible results, has been incredibly rewarding.

The second highlight would definitely be the opportunity to engage more deeply with the travel fraternity and media across segments—whether through events, collaborations, or strategic conversations.

On a personal note, this year has truly been about growth. I’ve become more resilient, more adaptable, and more confident in my decision-making.

2025 has been about growth, meaningful connections, and turning possibilities into reality—and that’s been incredibly special.

If you could pick one dream destination to visit in 2026, where would it be, and why does it captivate you?

Antarctica! There’s something incredibly fascinating about its raw, untouched beauty; it’s one of the last true frontiers on Earth. The idea of being surrounded by vast white landscapes, dramatic ice formations, and such pure silence is both humbling and surreal.

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

I come from a very close-knit family, and being the only daughter, I’ve definitely been much loved—and a little pampered too! I like to believe I still have the final word in most things... at least I try to!

One of my most cherished memories is my first international trip with my parents to Singapore. It was really special because I got to plan the entire experience for them, and I made sure it included a cruise—something I really wanted them to experience.

Seeing them enjoy every moment and experience something so new with such excitement and joy truly melted my heart. It wasn’t just a holiday—it was a beautiful memory we created together. Being able to share that with my parents, who mean the world to me, made it incredibly special, and it’s something I will always hold very close to my heart. **BOTT**

QUICK SHOTS

- Birthday / Sun Sign: **September 6, Virgo**
- Mountains or Beaches: **Mountains**
- Favourite Holiday Destination: **Norway**
- Best travel hack: **Never forget a universal adapter, and never say no to a local recommendation—it’s usually the highlight of the trip**
- Window / Aisle seat: **Window**
- Favourite Cuisine: **Mexican**
- Favourite Quote: **Be the change that you wish to see in the world**
- Hobbies: **Playing the keyboard, and challenging myself at chess and badminton**
- Travel souvenirs – **Love them or leave them? Love them**
- Best advice for a first-time traveller: **Travel with an open mind—the best experiences are often unplanned. Enjoy the journey.**



PM MODI INAUGURATES Phase I of Noida International Airport

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Phase I of the Noida International Airport at Jewar, marking a significant milestone in India's aviation and infrastructure growth. Positioned as one of the country's most ambitious greenfield airport projects, the development is set to enhance regional connectivity and boost economic activity across North India.

BOTT Desk

Designed as a world-class aviation hub, the airport integrates seamless, smart, and sustainable infrastructure. It features advanced digital systems, energy-efficient operations, and passenger-centric facilities aimed at delivering a smooth travel experience. The development also includes an aviation fuel farm, in-flight kitchen facilities, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) services, and plans for a dedicated multimodal

cargo hub to strengthen logistics capabilities.

The airport is strategically connected to key expressways and upcoming high-speed rail networks, ensuring efficient multimodal access. Future expansion plans include multiple runways, positioning it among the largest airports globally and reinforcing its role as a major international gateway.

Highlighting the project's significance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Noida International Airport is a part of the journey towards a developed

India, reflecting our vision of world-class infrastructure and ease of travel."

Beyond connectivity, the airport is expected to catalyse large-scale investments, generate employment, and support the development of industrial clusters, including logistics, manufacturing, and data centres in the surrounding region.

With its focus on sustainability, efficiency, and scale, Noida International Airport is set to redefine air travel in India while positioning Uttar Pradesh as a key player on the global aviation map. **BOTT**



Women in Tourism share the One Change they seek for greater Equality & Empowerment

Women in Tourism
should get warm welcome
with equal opportunity.

— Rajni Nair Deb

When society supports women
with equal opportunity,
safety & recognition,
it not only uplifts women
but strengthens families.

— Gita Chowdhry

Travel heals something in
you... take every chance
you get to travel.
It'll help you grow as a person.

— Gauri, Trawellsmith

Believe in yourself and
women supporting women
can solve 99.99 %
problems at work o at home.

— Srishti Aggarwal

"Timid" does not exist —
be fierce, bold and
work your way up!

— Janis

Keep balancing your
work & home.
Both need you.
You need to take care of your
health.

— Nisha Shrivastava

I would wish for women handling leadestip
roles because we know how to balance
everything well.

— Priyanka Sharma, ITC

Women in Tourism —
Fly as the sky belongs to
no one —
be you!

— Ekta Watts

Be who you are,
don't change yourself for
anyone. Together,
we are stronger.

— Akanksha

Women should be
given opportunities
to grow and shine.

— Samvedna

Women —
Just be more fearles and
participate more in
the industry.

— Roma

Be yourself, own your voice
and never shy away
from aspiring more.
Set an example by showing how
much a woman can achieve.

— Mridangi Khanna

Women in travel trade must
be empowered to bring a
change towards a peaceful
world, stories and products.

— Ritu Makhija



SheforShe

Powered by BOTT

brings over 200 Women together in a powerful show of solidarity

In a heartening and high-energy celebration of solidarity, sisterhood and shared purpose, BOTT's SheforShe initiative made a strong and memorable debut on March 10 at Holiday Inn, where more than 200 women professionals from the travel, tourism and hospitality industry turned up in pink to support a movement that is set to grow far beyond a single event.

Priyanka Saxena Ray & Shreya Shimpi

Conceived as a platform for connection, encouragement and action, **BOTT SheforShe** is not just a campaign or a one-day conversation. It is a movement rooted in the belief that women in tourism need stronger spaces to come together, share experiences, inspire one another and grow as a community. As a media platform deeply connected with the travel ecosystem, **BOTT** felt that the most meaningful role it could play was to create exactly such a space — one where women's voices, stories and achievements could be celebrated with sincerity and strength.





BOTT's own journey in the travel industry has been shaped by the warmth, support and encouragement of the tourism fraternity. What emerged over the years was not merely a professional network, but a genuine sisterhood. SheforShe, therefore, is **BOTT's** way of giving back to that community — by celebrating women's milestones, raising conversations around their challenges, and amplifying voices that deserve to be heard.

Importantly, the initiative is not limited to inspiration alone. It is also about creating real pathways of opportunity. At the event, **BOTT**

announced a skill training and placement initiative for 100 young girls from underprivileged backgrounds, in partnership with its CSR partner Creation Welfare Society, with the aim of preparing them for careers in tourism and hospitality. In another significant step, **BOTT** also introduced the SheforShe Women Safe Destinations initiative, encouraging destinations and tourism stakeholders to create environments where women travellers feel safe, comfortable and empowered to explore. Through the platform, **BOTT** also aims to recognise organisations that cham-



EVENT SPOTLIGHT



pion women-led leadership, inclusive workplaces and equal opportunities across tourism and hospitality.

At its heart, **SheforShe** is anchored in a simple but powerful truth: women do not rise by pulling each other down; women rise by lifting each other up.

One of the key highlights of the event was the knowledge session titled **"She Travels, She Leads: Celebrating Women's Journeys, Achievements & Empowerment in Tourism."** The session brought together a distinguished panel of women leaders representing diverse segments of tourism, hospitality, aviation and travel management. The panellists included **Ranju Alex**, Chief Executive Officer, Accor South Asia; **Yummi Talwar**, COO, South Asia, VFS Global;



Isha Goyal, CEO, STIC Travel Group; **Aarti Manocha**, MD, Milestones to Memories (MtoM); and **Surabhi Rana**, Head Aero Commercial, Noida International Airport.

The discussion was **beautifully moderated by Barkha Dutt, Editor-in-Chief, Mojo Story**, who steered the conversation with warmth, candour and depth. Personal, engaging and highly interactive, the session moved beyond conventional industry dialogue to bring out deeply human stories of struggle, resilience, ambition and self-belief. The tone was intimate and honest, making the audience feel both connected and inspired.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT





The panellists spoke openly about the realities women continue to face while building careers in the travel and hospitality industry — an arena that is dynamic and rewarding, yet often demanding and deeply competitive. Their stories reflected the balancing act that many women perform with grace, as they navigate personal and professional responsibilities while continuing to challenge expectations and redefine leadership.



Isha Goyal spoke about manoeuvring the unspoken challenges that come with being a woman in the travel space, especially during travel and professional interactions where safety, space and respect can sometimes feel compromised. She reflected on the need to occasionally adopt a more assertive stance simply to be heard and acknowledged.

Yummi Talwar highlighted how women often have to work much harder to step into leadership roles, noting





that the climb can be steeper and demands resilience, persistence and the courage to move beyond one's comfort zone. She also acknowledged the value of having a supportive family through that journey.

Ranju Alex shared how resilience became one of life's earliest lessons for her. Questioning the tendency to place women into rigid professional boxes, she stressed that gender should never become an impediment in leadership appointments. She also spoke about the need for more balanced, role-based approaches to flexibility at the workplace and emphasised the importance of platforms like these that bring women's stories to the forefront.



Aarti Manocha reflected on survival and self-reliance as powerful drivers in her own life. She noted that growth often comes not only from learning, but from unlearning, and shared that many barriers begin to fade when one is focused on sustaining and building a life with determination.

Surabhi Rana brought a strong and uplifting message of freedom and self-definition. She spoke about breaking away from societal expectations and the importance of awareness sessions and such gatherings in helping women recognise their worth and believe in their ability to create their own path.



EVENT SPOTLIGHT





Adding a wider cultural lens to the discussion, **Barkha Dutt** challenged the narrative of the “superwoman” — a construct that often places impossible pressure on women to excel on every front. She spoke about the burden of cultural conditioning and encouraged women to stop apologising for their ambition, to believe in themselves with conviction and to allow

EVENT SPOTLIGHT





themselves the freedom to simply be. What made the **BOTT Shefor-She** gathering particularly special was the atmosphere in the room — one of openness, warmth and collective encouragement. The sight of over 200 women dressed in pink was not only visually striking, but also deeply symbolic. It represented solidarity, strength and a shared commitment to lifting one another higher. **BOTT**

Community, Culture and Craft take centre stage at MTDC's Palghar ICH Festival

Shreya Shimpi



The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), under the Department of Tourism, Government of India, successfully hosted the Palghar Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Festival 2026 from February 20–22 across Bapugaon, Gholwad, and Ganjad villages in Dahanu taluka. The festival, themed ‘Experience Palghar – Colours of Culture, Imprints of Tradition’, celebrated the region’s vibrant traditions through immersive, community-led experiences.

The festival commenced in Gholwad with an inauguration by Padma Shri Bhiklya Ladkya Dhinda, in the presence of senior officials, tourism stakeholders, and media. Dignitaries including Vijay Suryavanshi, IAS, Manoj Ranade, and Geetanjali Bawaskar lauded MT-



DC's efforts to promote tourism rooted in intangible heritage. Similar enthusiasm marked inaugurations at Ganjad and Bapugaon, with participation from local leaders, artists, and international guests.

Across all three venues, the festival showcased Palghar's rich cultural tapestry through folk dances such as Tarpa, Thakar, Koli, Gavari, and Sambhal. Interactive workshops on Warli art, bamboo crafts, and traditional instrument-making encouraged hands-on engagement, particularly among youth and local communities. A key highlight at Ganjad was a visit to the home of Late Padma Shri Jivya Soma Mashe, offering a glimpse into his iconic Warli art legacy.

The second and third days sustained the vibrant energy, with Padma Shri Dhinda interacting with attendees and performing the traditional Tarpa instrument. Cultural performances, artisan showcases, and local cuisine stalls featuring delicacies like nachni bhakri, ukdiche modak, and fresh seafood added to the immersive experience. GI-tagged chikoo products further highlighted Palghar's unique identity.

Blending art, culture, and gastronomy, the festival reaffirmed Palghar's appeal as a destination for meaningful, experience-driven travel while amplifying grassroots voices and sustainable tourism. **BOTT**



Madhya Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh synergise at “Sahyog Sammelan”

The Government of Madhya Pradesh organised the MP-UP Sahyog Sammelan roundtable at Ramada, Varanasi. The session focused on strengthening tourism coordination, attracting investment, and fostering strategic cooperation between Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

BOTT Desk



The Madhya Pradesh delegation was led by the Honourable Chief Minister, Dr. Mohan Yadav, accompanied by Dr. Ilayaraja T. (MD, MP-STDC and Addl. Secretary, Tourism), Dr. Abhay Arvind Bedekar (Additional MD, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board), and Mahendra Pratap Singh (Chairman, Tourism Committee, FICCI Madhya Pradesh).

The Uttar Pradesh delegation, consisting of 15 key members from the travel and hospitality trade, was led by Prateek Hira (Chairman, FICCI Tourism Committee of UP). The UP Government was represented by senior cabinet min-

isters Rakesh Sachan and Nand Gopal Gupta.

The session opened with a welcome address by Dr. Abhay Arvind Bedekar on behalf of the Government of Madhya Pradesh, followed by a briefing by Prateek Hira. Mr. Hira introduced the delegation to the Honourable Chief Minister and highlighted the shared heritage and common development goals of both states.

During the interaction, the Chief Minister highlighted incentives under Madhya Pradesh's industry and tourism policies, assuring full government support to investors looking to expand

into the state.

Mahendra Pratap Singh, FICCI Chair for Madhya Pradesh, shared insights into the state's ease of doing business and key aspects of its Tourism Policy with all the present investors and business persons from the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Concluding the session, Prateek Hira summed up the entire session and delivered a vote of thanks to the Honourable Chief Minister. On behalf of Uttar Pradesh's travel and hospitality trade, he assured full support for Madhya Pradesh's endeavours to attract investment and foster a robust business environment. **BOTT**

GITB 2026

set to reinforce India's Inbound Tourism momentum in Jaipur



BOTT Desk

Jaipur is once again gearing up to host one of India's most significant inbound tourism platforms—the Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB), scheduled to take place in April 2026. Organised by FICCI in partnership with the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, GITB continues to be the country's only exclusive B2B platform focused entirely on inbound tourism.

Since its inception, GITB has evolved into a globally recognised marketplace, bringing together international buyers and Indian tourism stakeholders under one roof. The upcoming edition is expected to see strong participation from foreign tour operators and Indian exhibitors across segments such as culture, heritage,

wellness, wildlife, MICE, rural tourism, and more. The event will facilitate extensive pre-scheduled B2B meetings, promising meaningful business interactions and tangible outcomes.

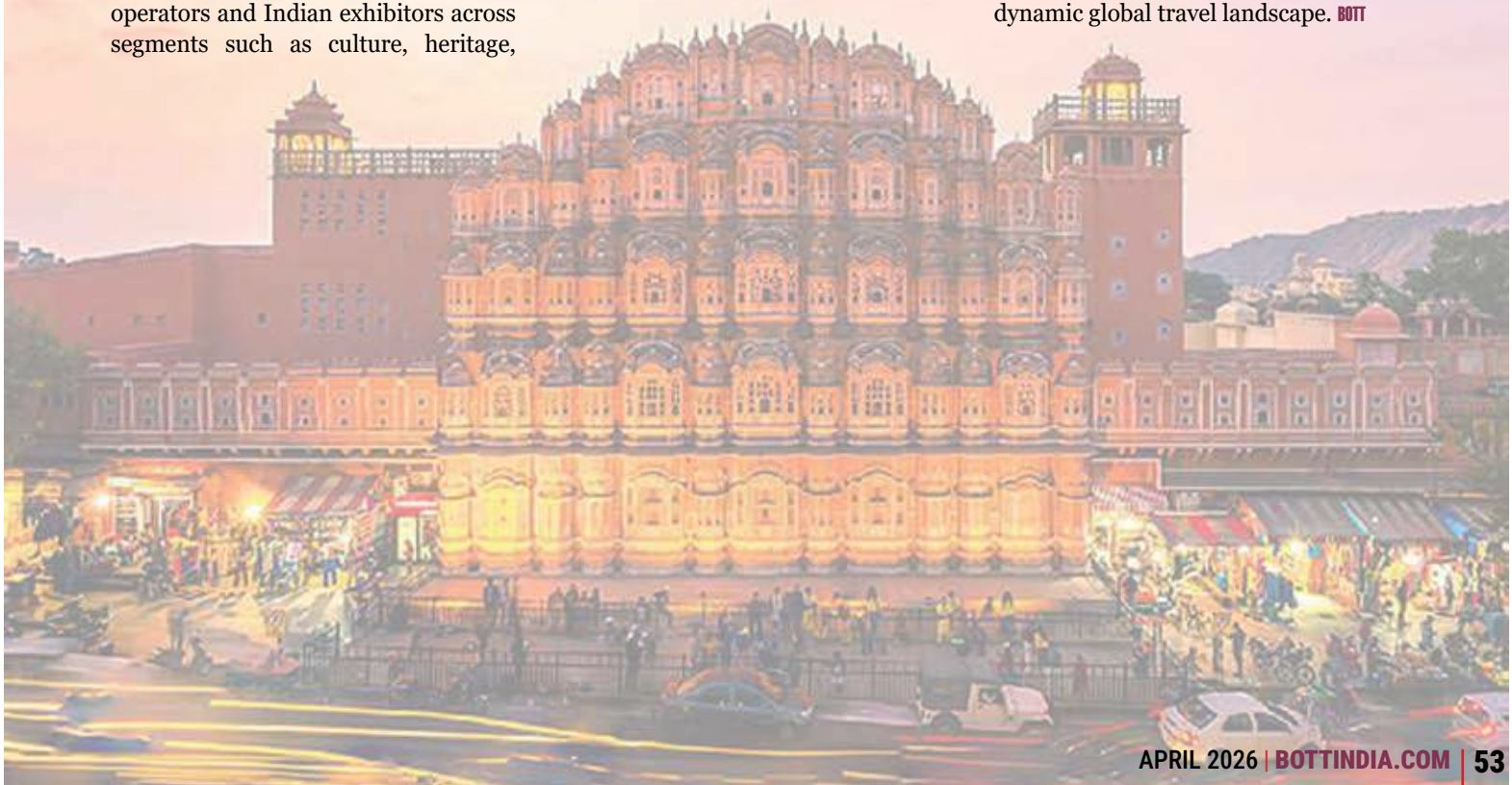
Beyond business engagements, GITB will feature an inaugural and knowledge session, along with the release of a knowledge paper on inbound tourism—offering valuable insights into emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the sector. Networking platforms, including the inaugural dinner, will further strengthen industry connections, while curated post-event FAM tours will allow international buyers to experience India's diverse tourism offerings firsthand.

Over the years, GITB has aligned

seamlessly with India's broader tourism vision, hosting global initiatives such as the G20 Tourism Expo, 'Wed in India', and 'Meet in India', positioning itself as a key convergence point for global tourism stakeholders.

Highlighting the importance of the platform, Manish Ahuja, Assistant Secretary General, FICCI, emphasised that GITB continues to play a crucial role in connecting international buyers with Indian tourism stakeholders, enabling meaningful collaborations while showcasing the country's diverse tourism potential.

As India looks to strengthen its inbound tourism narrative, GITB stands as a vital catalyst—driving partnerships, conversations, and growth in a dynamic global travel landscape. **BOTT**



APPOINTMENTS



MINISTRY OF TOURISM, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar IAS has been appointed as the new Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. He takes over the role following the appointment of Srivatsa Krishna as Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs. Prior to this, Kumar served as Chief Executive Officer of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.



INDIGO

IndiGo has appointed **William Walsh** as its Chief Executive Officer, subject to regulatory approvals. Walsh is currently serving as Director General of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). His tenure at IATA will conclude on July 31, 2026, and he is expected to assume his new role at IndiGo by August 3, 2026. Walsh brings decades of aviation leadership experience to IndiGo.



ACCOR

Accor has appointed **Amit Malik** as Vice President – People & Culture, South Asia. In this role, Malik will be part of the South Asia leadership team and will spearhead the People, Talent & Culture agenda across India and the broader South Asia region. Malik will partner closely with business leaders to build stronger organizational capabilities, drive leadership excellence, and enhance the employee experience across Accor's portfolio in the region.



THE ASCOTT

The Ascott has appointed **Rohit Dar** as Vice President & Head of South Asia, marking a significant step in the company's next phase of growth across the region. In his new role, Dar will lead Ascott's growth strategy and business operations across South Asia, with a focus on expanding the company's footprint, enhancing performance standards and strengthening relationships with partners and stakeholders.



HYATT REGENCY GURGAON

Hyatt Regency Gurgaon has announced the appointment of **Manisha Sharma** as its new General Manager, marking a significant addition to its leadership team. With over 21 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Sharma brings extensive expertise, strategic vision, and strong leadership capabilities to the role. In her new position, Sharma will oversee the overall operations of the hotel.



IRIS REPS

Priyanka Mehta has been promoted to Associate Director at IRIS Reps. With over 11 years of dedicated service at IRIS Reps, Mehta has played a pivotal role in strengthening the company's presence in the Indian travel and hospitality industry. In her new role, she will continue to lead key verticals, enhance brand positioning, and further expand IRIS Reps' footprint in the Indian market.



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