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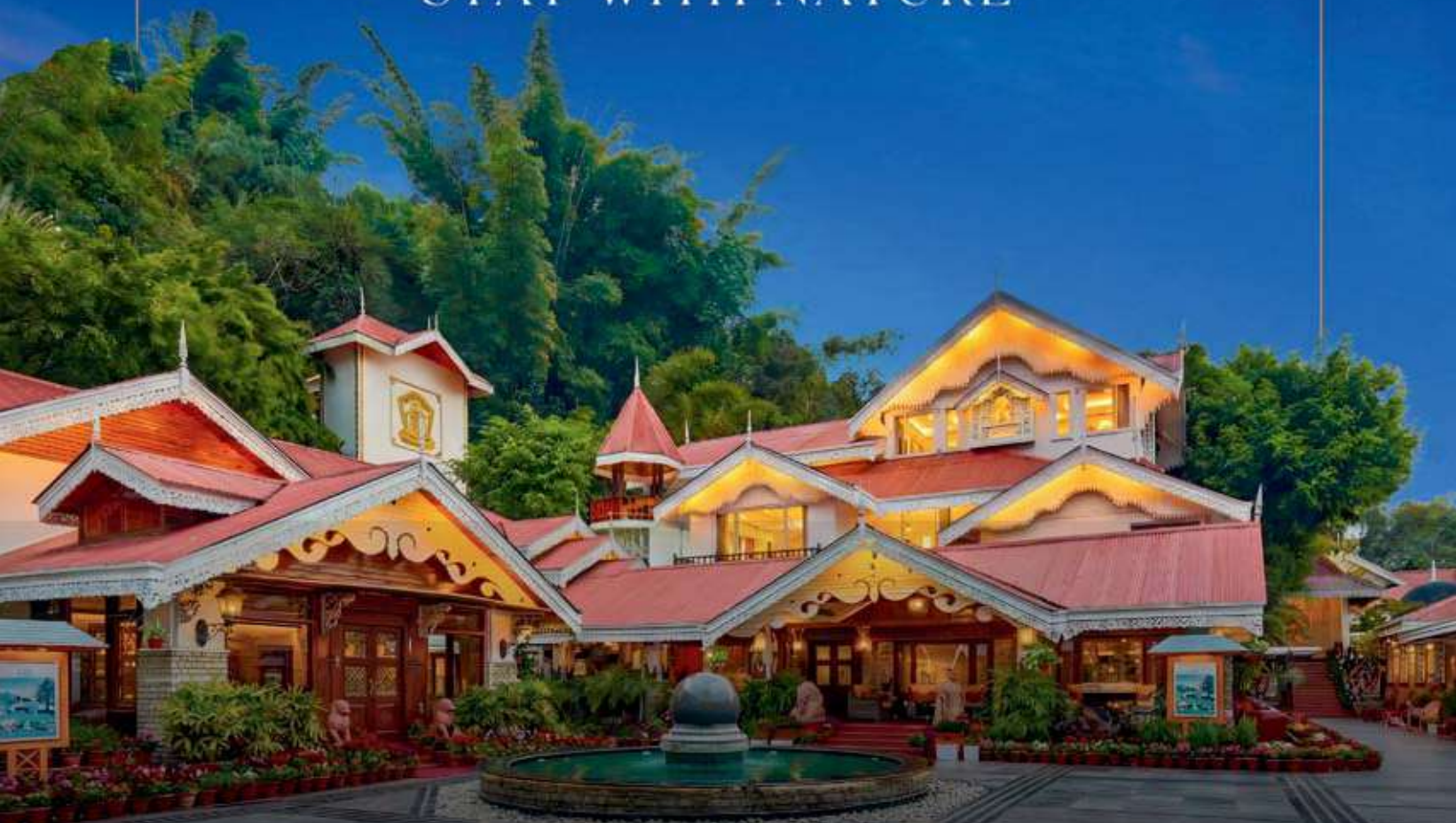
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Editor
Priyanka Saxena Ray

Director
Gunjan Sabikhi
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

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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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As IATO prepares for its 41st Annual Convention in Visakhapatnam, President Ravi Gosain speaks about the association's priorities, the significance of the upcoming Convention, international outreach and more.

Rahool Macarius, Market Managing Director, Eurasia Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, shares his perspective on the company's India growth strategy, the increasing importance of Tier II and Tier III markets and more.

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ICPB successfully concluded the 15th Conventions India Conclave (CIC) 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, marking one of the strongest editions of the industry platform with nearly 700 registrations.

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Editor's LETTER

*D*ear Readers,

September is always a significant month for India's inbound tourism industry, as the fraternity comes together for one of its most anticipated annual gatherings — the IATO Convention. This year, the Convention travels to the scenic shores of Visakhapatnam, offering yet another opportunity for meaningful conversations, fresh ideas, networking and collective reflection on the road ahead for Indian tourism.

As the IATO Special Issue, this edition of BOTT brings together voices from across the Association. We have spoken to the IATO President, Office Bearers, Executive Committee Members and 20 Chapter Chairmen to understand their priorities, expectations and action plans for strengthening inbound tourism across the country. Their perspectives reflect both the opportunities before us and the work that still needs to be done to make India more competitive, accessible and visible in global markets.

We have also reached out to several inbound tourism veterans to explore India's journey from potential to performance. Their insights underline a common sentiment — India has the product, diversity and experiences, but sustained marketing, stronger connectivity, better infrastructure and closer government-industry collaboration will be critical to converting promise into measurable growth.

Beyond IATO, this issue captures a particularly active period for the travel and hospitality industry. We bring you detailed coverage of WTC in Ahmedabad, ITB India in Mumbai, the FHRAI Convention in Varanasi and CIC — ICPB's Conventions India Conclave in New Delhi. Each of these platforms brought the industry together to exchange ideas, build partnerships and strengthen business connections.

As the industry gathers in Vizag, we look forward to conversations that translate into action and partnerships that drive India's inbound growth story forward.

Happy Reading!

Warm regards,

Priyanka Saxena Ray
Editor, BOTT India

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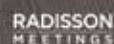
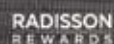
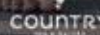


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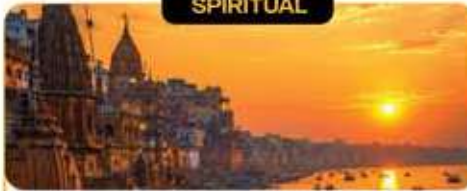
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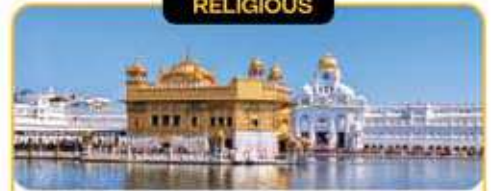
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Ravi Gosain, President, IATO

Ravi Gosain

Taking India's Inbound Tourism opportunity forward

As IATO prepares for its 41st Annual Convention in Visakhapatnam, President **Ravi Gosain** speaks about the association's priorities, the significance of the upcoming Convention, international outreach and the need to strengthen India's visibility across key source markets.

Priyanka Saxena Ray

What has been IATO's most significant initiatives and achievements over the past year under your leadership?

Our focus over the past year has been very clear—to make IATO more proactive, more visible and more relevant to the challenges facing the inbound tourism industry. Policy advocacy has remained a major priority. We have continuously taken up issues concerning our members and inbound tourism with the Ministry of Tourism and other concerned ministries and government agencies.

At the same time, we have strongly advocated the need to restore India's visibility in international source markets through sustained overseas promotion. Another important focus has been strengthening engagement with our members across India and creating greater opportunities for regional destinations and tourism products. We have reached out to many states through Chapter meetings where IATO President and other office bearers engaged with local members.

Our effort has been to work con-

structively with the Government and industry stakeholders on marketing, overseas promotions, taxation, visas, connectivity, ease of doing business and India's overall competitiveness as a tourism destination.

What will be the key highlights of this year's IATO Convention in Visakhapatnam?

The theme of our 41st Annual Convention, "India: The World's Next Tourism Opportunity," itself defines our agenda. We want to move the discussion from India's tourism potential to how we actually convert that potential into international arrivals and business.

Our sessions will focus on overseas marketing, changing source markets, technology and AI, new tourism products, sustainability, connectivity, stronger partnerships and the changing expectations of international travellers.

Visakhapatnam also gives us an excellent opportunity to showcase Andhra Pradesh beyond the established tourism circuits. We want our members to experience the destination, understand its products and return with new itineraries that they can sell inter-

nationally.

The Convention should deliver ideas that can be implemented, products that can be sold and recommendations that can be taken forward with Government. Its outcomes must become part of IATO's agenda for the year ahead.

Which international markets are IATO focusing on?

The response to our outreach reinforces something I have consistently believed—India needs to be visible in international markets throughout the year. Tourism promotion cannot be an occasional activity.

Our maiden roadshow after ITB Berlin was successful, reaching B2B tour operators and travel agents in Germany, France and the Netherlands.

Going forward, markets such as the USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Australia, Japan and Korea remain extremely important, while we must also identify emerging markets with growing outbound potential and better connectivity to India. Every market requires a different strategy. We cannot sell the same India everywhere. **BOTT**

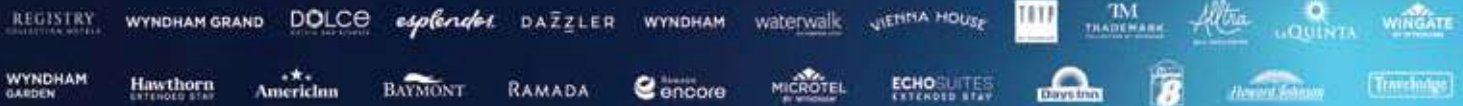
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IATO Office Bearers

set the agenda for Inbound Growth

As the 41st IATO Annual Convention gets underway in Visakhapatnam, IATO's Office Bearers share their expectations from the flagship industry gathering and the opportunities it can unlock for members. From stronger collaboration and new business partnerships to sustained overseas marketing and improved competitiveness, their views underline the priorities shaping India's inbound tourism journey. Together, they present a clear roadmap for positioning India as the world's next major tourism opportunity.

Priyanka Saxena Ray



Rajnish Kaistha

Senior Vice President, IATO

I see IATO's 41st Convention as much more than an annual industry gathering. It is a platform to take stock of where Indian inbound tourism stands, challenge the status quo and collectively decide where we want to go next. Inbound tourism needs renewed momentum, and the Convention is an opportunity for the industry to come together, exchange practical ideas, forge stronger partnerships and create new business opportunities. We don't just want to talk about tourism; we want to find solutions that can translate into more visitors, longer stays and greater economic value for India. Visakhapatnam and Andhra Pradesh provide the perfect setting for this. By experiencing the destination first-hand, we want our members and the wider travel trade to look

beyond the traditional tourism circuit and discover, develop and promote new destinations and new tourism products. But our responsibility goes beyond business. IATO wants tourism growth to be responsible growth. Through the Convention, we are also highlighting cleanliness, civic responsibility and responsible tourism. A destination cannot be world-class if it is not clean, safe, welcoming and respectful of its environment and local communities.

The problem is not our product; the challenge is how consistently we market it and deliver it which we have fell short of in last 5 years due almost nil overseas marketing. We need to move from sporadic promotion to sustained, aggressive overseas marketing. We need easier visas, competitive pricing, stronger international air connectivity and much better last-mile infrastructure. And we cannot overlook the fundamentals—service quality, safety, cleanliness and ease of doing business.

Most importantly, tourism cannot be driven by government or industry in isolation. Government creates the ecosystem; industry delivers the experience. We need both working from the same playbook.

Sanjay Razdan

Vice President, IATO

The IATO Convention in Visakhapatnam comes at an important time for India's inbound tourism sector. I expect it to provide a strong platform for members to exchange ideas, address common challenges and explore new business opportunities. Greater interaction among IATO members, state tourism authorities, airlines, hotels, DMCs and stakeholders can build partnerships and create new avenues for promoting India internationally. The Convention should also showcase Andhra Pradesh's tourism potential and encourage members to include new destinations and experiences in itineraries.

India has enormous potential, but we need to become more competitive, accessible and visitor-friendly. Key priorities should include improved international air connectivity, competitive airfares, simplified visa processes, better infrastructure and connectivity to emerging destinations, supported by a focused global marketing campaign. Equally important is closer coordination between government and industry through regular stakeholder consultation, with emphasis on ease of doing business, taxation, sustainability, safety and service quality. A coordinated approach can strengthen India's position as a preferred global tourism destination.



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This year's IATO Convention in Visakhapatnam will serve as a platform for converting dialogue into measurable business. With tour operators, tourism boards, hospitality leaders, airlines and policymakers together, we expect stronger partnerships, better destination knowledge and itineraries featuring Andhra Pradesh and India's lesser-known regions. Business sessions and B2B interactions should help members build market-ready products, exchange ideas and develop collaborations beyond the Convention. Above all, it should reinforce confidence needed to position India as the world's next major tourism opportunity.

To accelerate inbound tourism, India needs a coordinated, long-term strategy shared by government and industry. Priorities should include easier and more predictable visas, improved international air connectivity, competitive taxation, visitor-friendly airports, high-quality infrastructure and consistent global marketing. We must strengthen multilingual guiding, tourism skilling, digital information and safety standards while developing distinctive products around culture, spirituality, wildlife, wellness, cruises and rural experiences. Greater emphasis on sustainability, cleanliness and community participation will improve the overall visitor experience and local economic benefits.

Deepak Bhatnagar

Hony. Treasurer, IATO



Expectations from this year's IATO Convention are very positive. I see it as an important platform for the travel and tourism fraternity to reconnect, exchange ideas, understand emerging market trends and collectively address industry challenges. Through this year's theme, "India: The World's Next Tourism Opportunity," we aim to draw attention to the urgent need for India to return strongly to international markets. The Convention should also encourage greater collaboration among IATO members, airlines, hotels, tourism boards and other stakeholders.

The foremost priority should be targeted international demand generation, moving from broad promotion to measurable campaigns in high-potential markets with stronger airline, OTA, hotel and state-level coordination. India also needs better international air connectivity, competitive airfares, seamless visa processes and more traveller-friendly booking conditions. Equally critical are destination competitiveness and visitor experience, including infrastructure, cleanliness, safety, last-mile connectivity, multilingual services and consistent tourism experiences. Government and industry must work together, with the tourism sector taking the lead in these areas.



Viney Tyagi

Hony. Joint Secretary, IATO

As our Convention theme indicates, we aim to showcase India to the world as one of the greatest destinations for holidays, yoga, meditation, nature, culture, history and experiential travel. The Convention will also focus on empowering the next generation of tourism professionals through education and skill-development sessions, including the role of AI. Specially curated post-Convention tours and compulsory B2B meetings will help delegates understand Andhra Pradesh better, build new partnerships and promote these destinations more effectively in domestic and international markets.

India needs a much more aggressive and sustained overseas marketing strategy to increase its share of international tourism. IATO has taken the lead through overseas roadshows and a full calendar for 2026–27, demonstrating the value of consistent international engagement. Government support through global media, social media, trade fairs and roadshows is equally important. India must also improve price competitiveness, rationalise GST on hotels and strengthen marketing support for smaller operators. We have the product; we now need visibility, connectivity, competitiveness and sustained marketing. **BOTT**



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IATO EC speaks

on Convention expectations and Inbound Growth

Ahead of the IATO Convention 2026 in Vizag, Executive Committee members share what delegates can expect from the gathering and where they see India's strongest inbound tourism opportunities. From stronger global marketing and seamless connectivity to experience-led, high-value and inclusive tourism, their perspectives outline key priorities for the sector's next phase of growth.

Pallavi Sharma



Sejo Jose
IATO EC – Active Member

I see the IATO Convention as an opportunity for the travel trade to come together to examine the direction of the industry. Delegates can expect knowledge sharing and business opportunities. I believe they should return with new partnerships and a clearer understanding of emerging opportunities. With travel patterns changing and stronger global competition, the industry must become more forward-looking and embrace technology, AI, sustainability and changing consumer behaviour.

For me, India's biggest inbound opportunity lies in moving beyond selling the country through monuments and instead selling it through experiences. Travellers want to discover local culture, cuisine, communities and nature. We need innovative products, better connectivity, simpler processes, stronger infrastructure and a seamless visitor experience.



Rishi Kapoor
IATO EC – Active Member

I see the 2026 IATO Convention around three objectives—connect, learn and act. I see the Convention as a platform to discuss where Indian tourism should go next and to shape strategies and policies for the coming years. With a strong focus on inbound tourism, the Convention can bring the industry together to exchange ideas, strengthen partnerships and identify practical ways to address the opportunities and challenges facing the sector.

I believe India's diverse tourism assets provide a strong opportunity to focus on high-value tourism. We should curate experiences that encourage international

visitors to stay longer and spend more. Stronger and consistent overseas marketing is essential.



Tony Marwah
IATO EC – Active Member

I expect the Convention to continue its strong focus on knowledge sharing, with experts and senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism and the hospitality industry bringing their perspectives to delegates. I believe these sessions will help industry professionals better understand and navigate the challenges. The Convention will provide a platform for delegates to gain insights while engaging with experts and stakeholders from across the tourism ecosystem.

I believe India's challenge is not a lack of opportunities, but the missed opportunities. India suffers from inadequate global visibility and needs stronger international marketing to attract inbound travellers. Industry stakeholders have an important role to play in improving India's visibility overseas. I see IATO's international roadshows as a positive effort towards taking India's tourism story directly to international markets.



Dr. Manoj Kumar Matta
IATO EC – Active Member

I believe the Convention is aligned with the changing expectations of today's traveller, who increasingly seeks immersive experiences. Andhra Pradesh provides a backdrop, with its culture, beaches, spiritual circuits, heritage and tribal experiences. Exclusive

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B2B meetings with stakeholders will help delegates identify experts and develop experience-led products.

I see an opportunity for India to position itself as “India – The Peaceful Destination.” To capitalise on this opportunity, I believe India needs a more ambitious international marketing strategy supported by digital campaigns, greater global visibility, outdoor branding, influencer programmes and stronger airport presence. A focused and consistent promotional approach can help strengthen India’s image internationally.



Harish Mathur
IATO EC – Active Member

I expect the Convention to be focused on the future of Indian inbound tourism, covering new markets, technology, AI, sustainability and stronger global engagement. The Convention should help the travel trade exchange ideas, build partnerships and identify ways to make India more visible, competitive and easier to sell internationally.

I see India’s diversity of experiences as its biggest opportunity, particularly beyond the traditional circuits. Culture, wildlife, cuisine and adventure can offer compelling reasons to visit. India needs international marketing with market-specific positioning, stronger partnerships with overseas tour operators and a seamless visitor experience. India has the product; the challenge is to communicate and market it consistently to the world.



P. Vijayasarithy
IATO EC – Allied Member

I believe the 41st IATO Convention comes at an important moment when the industry needs to move beyond traditional circuits and develop new, experience-led destinations. I see Vizag as a strong example, through the Buddhist–Coastal Wellness Circuit combining Buddhist heritage, beaches, the Eastern Ghats and wellness. The Convention can explore

how emerging destinations can be developed into market-ready international products offering fresh experiences beyond India’s established tourism circuits.

For me, India’s biggest inbound opportunity lies in creating differentiated destinations rather than concentrating international visitors around established circuits. Vizag has the potential to emerge as a destination, but this will require investment in connectivity, tourist facilities, quality accommodation, trained guides, wellness infrastructure and local transportation. These efforts must be supported by international marketing that builds awareness and demand. By developing emerging destinations

into accessible tourism products, India can encourage travellers to explore more of the country and broaden the benefits of inbound tourism.



Wasim Shaikh
IATO EC – Allied Member

I believe the Vizag Convention should be more than an industry event. With meaningful knowledge sessions and serious dialogue, it will provide an opportunity to examine the current challenges facing inbound tourism and work towards a roadmap for

the future. I see collaboration between the industry, the Ministry of Tourism and private stakeholders as essential, with open dialogue playing an important role in building a stronger and more resilient tourism sector.

For me, India’s biggest inbound opportunity lies in inclusive and experience-centric tourism. International travellers increasingly want to get closer to destinations and experience the real India through its culture, cuisine and communities. By developing and promoting authentic, community-led experiences, India can differentiate itself in the global tourism market and create more meaningful journeys for international visitors while ensuring that tourism benefits reach local communities.



Ashok B. Dhoot
IATO EC – Allied Member

I believe this year’s IATO Convention comes at a very important juncture for Indian tourism. Delegates can look forward to meaningful discussions, knowledge sharing, networking and practical insights on how the industry can collectively strengthen India’s

inbound tourism business. I see the Convention as a platform to exchange ideas, understand changing global traveller expectations and develop actionable strategies for the future. It also provides an important opportunity to bring the entire travel fraternity together to address current challenges, identify new opportunities and explore ways in which the industry can work collectively to accelerate inbound tourism growth.

I believe India’s biggest opportunity is to position itself as a preferred, high-value, year-round destination for international travellers. India has everything from heritage, spirituality and wildlife to wellness, culture, cuisine and diverse experiences. However, stronger global marketing, better destination infrastructure, seamless connectivity, easier visa processes and greater government-industry coordination are needed. **BOTT**

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'Aggressive promotion key to inbound boom'

IATO State Chapter Chairmen outline inbound revival strategy

Across every chapter of IATO, one unified message echoes loudest, India possesses world-class, unmatched tourism assets, but unlocking their true inbound potential requires seamless connectivity, aggressive global marketing, and frictionless travel facilitation.

While regional leaders highlight unique experiential offerings ranging from Gujarat's immersive festivals and Bengal's 'Mountains to Mangroves' narrative to J&K's traditional houseboats and North Bengal-Sikkim's eco-circuits, they collectively agree that great attractions alone are not enough.

IATO regional chairmen break down their specific state opportunities and outline the strategic interventions necessary to make India a globally competitive destination by 2030.

Somya Deep



Dr. J K Mohanty, MHCIMA
Chairman, IATO Eastern Region | Chairman –
Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha | CMD
– Swosti Group

Odisha and Eastern India offer a unique combination of heritage, spirituality, Buddhism, wildlife, eco-tourism, beaches, Chilika, tribal culture, cuisine, wellness, MICE and adventure tourism. The Bhubaneswar–Puri–Konark Golden Triangle, Konark, the

Jagannath Temple and Buddhist sites have tremendous international appeal, while Chilika, Similipal, Bhitarkanika, Gopalpur and Koraput can further strengthen the tourism offering. What we need now is better international air connectivity, improved infrastructure, professionally packaged experiences and stronger international marketing. Odisha should also be integrated with tourism circuits covering other Eastern States. The new Odisha Tourism Policy provides a good opportunity to attract private investment and develop new destinations.

The most important intervention is better international air connectivity and ease of travel. India has an outstanding tourism product, but many destinations still suffer from limited direct connectivity and high travel costs. A coordinated national strategy involving the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Civil Aviation, State Governments, airports and airlines, supported by incentives or viability-gap funding for strategically important routes, is essential. Better domestic connectivity, seamless digital services and improved last-mile infrastructure will also be critical to making India significantly more competitive by 2030.

R Nandakumar
Chairman, IATO Tamil Nadu
and Puducherry Chapters



Tamil Nadu is one of India's leading tourism states, with domestic tourist arrivals growing from 286 million in 2023 to over 364 million in 2025, alongside more than 16 lakh foreign visitors. The state has successfully evolved from being viewed primarily as a pilgrimage destination into a broader tourism ecosystem combining living heritage, classical arts, distinctive cuisine, wildlife, coastlines and modern infrastructure. The biggest opportunity lies in repositioning Tamil Nadu as one of Asia's leading cultural and experiential tourism regions. Fast-growing segments include experiential travel, eco-tourism, wellness and short-break leisure, with emerging destinations such as Chettinad, Pichavaram, the Gulf of Mannar, Kolli Hills and Tharangambadi offering strong potential.

To unlock this potential, we must conduct more domestic and international roadshows to increase global visibility. There is also a need to address overcrowding in popular destinations like Ooty and Kodaikanal by promoting lesser-known locations. Strengthening sustainability, expanding multilingual signage, improving public transport and establishing more tourist information centres are essential. Greater focus on regional festivals, kayaking, coastal tourism and MICE infrastructure will further strengthen Tamil Nadu's international brand and help accelerate inbound tourism growth.

KANCHANJURI TEA ESTATE

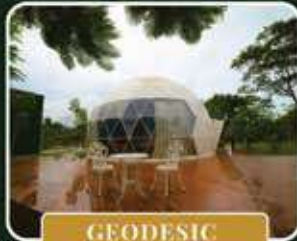
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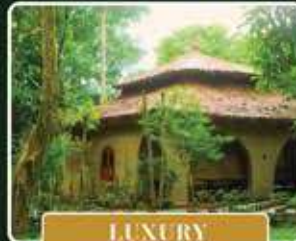
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Sunil Gupta
Chairman, IATO Northern Region

The Northern Region offers unmatched diversity, from iconic heritage circuits and spiritual corridors to emerging adventure, wellness and high-altitude eco-tourism destinations. This diversity gives the region enormous potential to attract more international travellers and move beyond traditional itineraries. However, unlocking its full potential requires seamless cross-border movement, stronger last-mile connectivity, upgraded hygiene infrastructure and aggressive multi-market global marketing. Greater visibility for emerging destinations, alongside established heritage and spiritual circuits, can help create more varied and immersive travel experiences while encouraging international visitors to stay longer and explore more of the region.

India's single most vital intervention today is establishing targeted global promotion coupled with seamless policy facilitation. Re-establishing dedicated overseas tourism offices and launching strategic international campaigns will be important for improving destination visibility in key source markets. At the same time, rationalising GST rates for inbound tour operators and easing e-Visa processes will lower friction, enhance price competitiveness and make India easier to sell globally. A coordinated approach combining stronger international promotion with policy reforms and easier travel processes will significantly accelerate inbound tourism growth and strengthen India's overall competitiveness as a global destination.

India's single most vital intervention today is establishing targeted global promotion coupled with seamless policy facilitation. Re-establishing dedicated overseas tourism offices and launching strategic international campaigns will be important for improving destination visibility in key source markets. At the same time, rationalising GST rates for inbound tour operators and easing e-Visa processes will lower friction, enhance price competitiveness and make India easier to sell globally. A coordinated approach combining stronger international promotion with policy reforms and easier travel processes will significantly accelerate inbound tourism growth and strengthen India's overall competitiveness as a global destination.



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

Maharashtra offers a diverse mix of heritage, culture, wildlife, beaches, spirituality, cuisine and modern urban experiences. Mumbai, as India's financial capital and a major international gateway, has strong potential for MICE, luxury, cruise and business tourism. Ajanta and Ellora, historic forts and coastal destinations further add to the state's appeal. Better connectivity, stronger tourism infrastructure, multilingual facilities, focused international marketing and closer government-industry collaboration is essential to unlock this potential and position Maharashtra more strongly in international source markets.

India needs a sustained, coordinated and market-specific global tourism marketing strategy to accelerate inbound tourism growth. Simplifying visa procedures, improving last-mile connectivity, upgrading infrastructure, ensuring cleanliness and safety, and maintaining consistent service standards are equally important. Greater involvement of the travel trade in policy-making and international promotion can also help ensure that India's tourism strategy reflects market realities. Stronger public-private partnerships, supported by consistent international outreach and improved visitor experiences on the ground, can help India enhance its global competitiveness and significantly increase inbound tourism.

Mahendra Pratap Singh
Chairman, IATO Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter



Madhya Pradesh has always had a strong tourism base, with its heritage, wildlife, spirituality, tribal traditions and rural experiences. What is interesting now is the opportunity to present these more experientially. Eco-tourism, community-based experiences, local food and crafts, and lesser-known destinations can add considerable depth to existing circuits. We have seen strong interest when overseas operators experience these products through FAM programmes and trade interactions. The next step is to improve connectivity and visitor facilities, develop these experiences into well-planned itineraries and take them consistently to the right markets. This can encourage international visitors to look beyond established destinations and spend more time in the state.

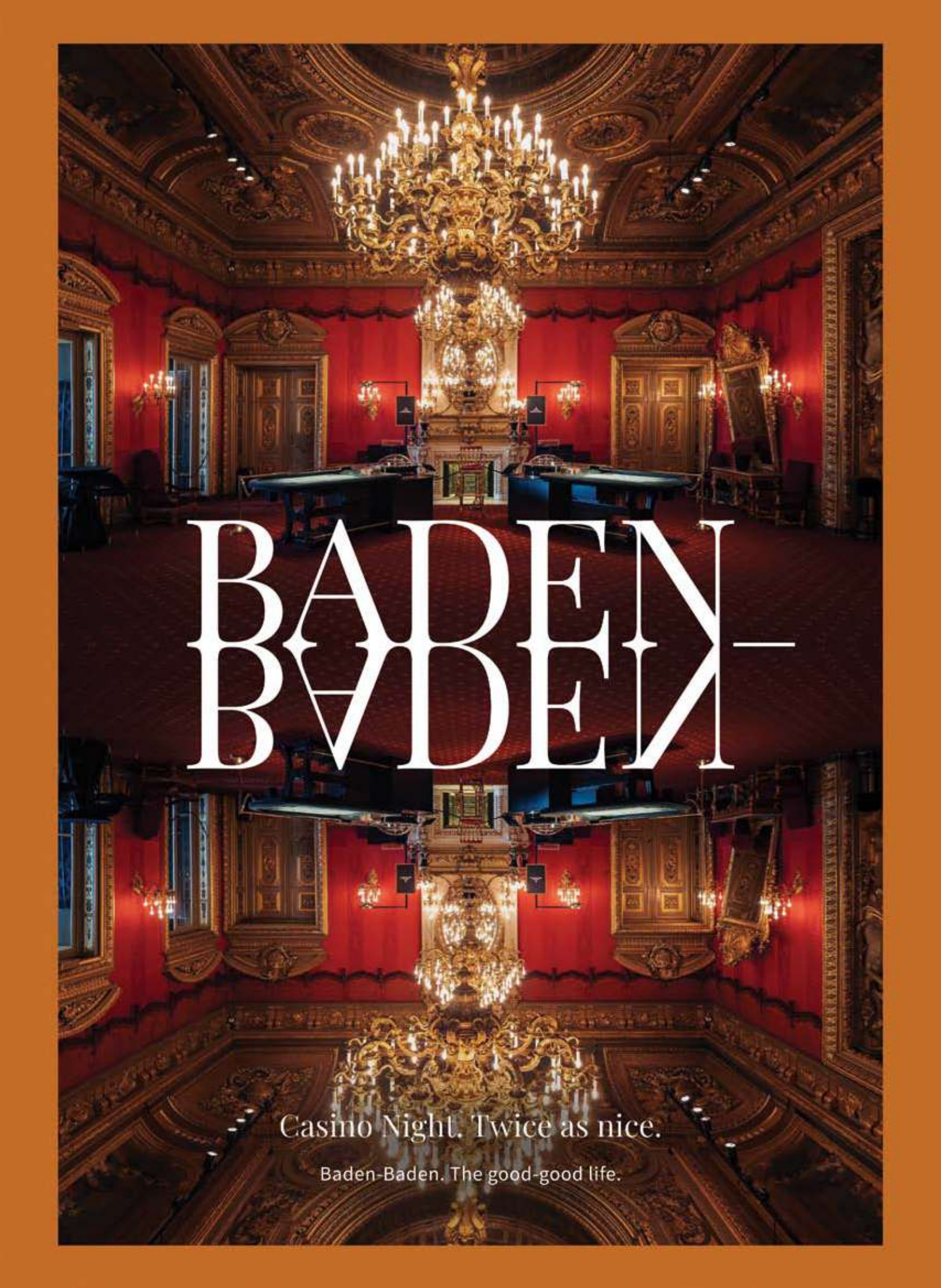
I would put connectivity high on the list of priorities for inbound tourism. India has the destinations and experiences, but reaching many of them still takes considerable time, particularly for international visitors. More direct international flights, stronger regional air links and better connections between tourism circuits would make a significant difference. Easier movement will allow travellers to cover more destinations in one trip, stay longer and consider places that may currently be difficult to include in an itinerary.

Jaspreet Singh Bhatia
Co-Chairman, IATO Chhattisgarh Chapter



Chhattisgarh is known for its unique tribal culture, fairs and festivals and colourful handicrafts. The offering of our state is very unique and has immense opportunities to attract not only international but domestic tourists as well. We need a twofold approach, with aggressive marketing on one side and a focus on enhancing tourism-related infrastructure on the ground, along with capacity building of stakeholders. We must improve our presence at relevant events, shows and exhibitions, supported by a professional and sustainable outreach programme targeting leading players across major markets. This has to be a planned and sustained approach and not a one-off event here and there.

At the same time, we need capacity building and skill upgradation of people working at the ground level in our industry. Drivers, guides, porters, shopkeepers and others who are often the first to interact with tourists need to be sensitised and trained in a proper manner. The actual experience of visitors is created by them. A sustained combination of international outreach, infrastructure development and better-trained tourism stakeholders will help create a positive approach towards India as a destination and enhance tourist footfalls in the coming years.

A photograph of a grand, ornate casino hall. The room features deep red walls, a highly decorative ceiling with intricate carvings, and two large, multi-tiered gold chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. In the center of the room, there are two billiard tables with green felt. The room is filled with various pieces of furniture, including chairs and side tables, and is decorated with numerous framed pictures and mirrors. The overall atmosphere is one of luxury and elegance.

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Sanket Shah

Chairman, IATO Gujarat & Diu Chapter

From our Chapter's perspective, Gujarat has something truly special to offer the world—not just destinations, but experiences, emotions and human connections. Its diverse culture, traditions, festivals, cuisine, heritage, wildlife and warm-hearted communities can become a powerful reason for international travellers to experience the real spirit of India. Festivals such as Navratri, the International Kite Festival, Dang Darbar, Kawant Fair, Ravechi Fair and Tarnetar Fair remain relatively unexplored by international travellers and offer tremendous potential. Gujarat is also emerging as a sports tourism hub.

To unlock this potential, we need stronger international promotion, professionally packaged experiences, better connectivity, world-class infrastructure, trained local guides and greater collaboration between government, industry and communities. At the national level, India needs seamless visas, better global air connectivity, world-class infrastructure and measurable service standards. But infrastructure alone cannot make someone fall in love with a country—people can. We must promote civic sense, cleanliness, cultural sensitivity and genuine hospitality. Every Indian can become an ambassador of India. If we combine our incredible tourism assets with the warmth of our people, visitors will not simply see India—they will feel India, remember India and want to return.



Manas Mukherjee

Chairman – IATO Jharkhand Chapter

Due to global political and economic unrest, the development of tourism is a major challenge for every country. Natural disasters are another concern and remind us how vulnerable destinations can be. Yet challenges also make us resilient and encourage us to find different ways to attract people and drive growth. Despite being a country of 1.4 billion people, with diverse cultures, languages, food habits, geographical variations and a rich history that is rare in the world, India is still far behind many smaller countries in tourism performance. We need greater visibility for India on global platforms, stronger interstate coordination, more research and data-driven planning, and a united approach that prioritises national interest over individual or organisational interests.

Coming to Jharkhand, the state has immense tourism potential, but safety and security, better infrastructure, quality accommodation, trained guides and reliable transportation require attention. Jharkhand has a rich tribal culture and heritage, and active participation of local communities is essential to preserve and present it authentically. The younger generation is increasingly promoting local cuisine and contemporary expressions of traditional textiles and attire. With increased hospitality investment, stronger community participation, better promotion and coordinated efforts, Jharkhand can emerge as one of India's most interesting and unique tourism destinations.

Gagan Sarangi

Chairman, IATO Odisha Chapter

Odisha has a highly distinctive tourism proposition combining heritage, spirituality, wildlife, tribal culture, beaches, cuisine and handicrafts. Puri, Konark, Buddhist heritage sites, Chilika, Similipal, Bhitarkanika and the tribal belt of Odisha offer strong opportunities for international cultural, spiritual, wildlife and experiential tourism. With the addition of new national and international hotel chains, Odisha is also emerging as a preferred destination for conferences, corporate events and incentive travel. Tribal, wellness, eco and culinary tourism offer further growth opportunities. To unlock this potential, Odisha needs better air and last-mile connectivity, quality infrastructure, trained multilingual guides and sustained international marketing. There is also an urgent need for more 3-star and clean, comfortable tourist accommodation, particularly in rural and interior destinations.

India's priority should be a coordinated national strategy to make the entire visitor journey seamless and competitive—from visa facilitation and air connectivity to transport, safety, hygiene, digital information and service quality. We must also identify and develop new emerging source markets. India has no shortage of attractions; the opportunity is to make the country easier to reach, easier to travel through and easier to recommend. A stronger focus on connectivity, service quality and consistent promotion will help India accelerate inbound growth and improve its global competitiveness.



Debjit Dutta

Chairman, IATO West Bengal Chapter

West Bengal's greatest strength is its extraordinary geographical and cultural diversity. I see the 'Mountains to Mangroves' journey as a powerful storytelling platform—from the Himalayas and tea gardens to forests, heritage, rivers, coastline and the Sundarbans. But the real differentiator is the people behind these landscapes: Bengal's hospitality, creativity, craftsmanship, cuisine and living culture can transform a visit into an emotional connection. To unlock this potential, the state is coming up with stronger destination branding, international connectivity, market-specific products, better last-mile infrastructure and greater participation of local communities.

India needs to make Responsible Tourism a mainstream operating principle, not simply a destination philosophy. We need to localise tourism supply chains, strengthen community homestays, build local skills and encourage climate-positive practices, including credible carbon-offset mechanisms. Initiatives such as the IATO Responsible Tourism Mission 2027 can help convert this philosophy into measurable action across the industry. The future traveller is increasingly seeking authenticity, purpose and meaningful connection.





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Dr. Peter Lobo
Chairman, IATO Sikkim and North Bengal Chapter

North Bengal and Sikkim offer exceptional opportunities in birdwatching, wildlife, trekking, adventure, wellness, culture and experiential tourism. We need to develop more specialised tourism products, strengthen connectivity and infrastructure,

train local guides, improve ease of permits and access, and promote the region aggressively in international markets. Greater collaboration between governments and the private sector is essential to position North Bengal–Sikkim as a gateway to Northeast India and encourage international travellers to explore the region’s diverse natural and cultural experiences.

India needs to make inbound travel simpler and more predictable. Streamlining visas and permits, improving connectivity, strengthening tourism infrastructure and ensuring seamless digital processes will significantly improve the visitor experience. Equally important is a focused international marketing strategy that promotes India beyond conventional circuits and showcases its diverse, authentic and sustainable experiences. A coordinated approach that combines easier travel, better infrastructure and stronger global promotion can help India attract more international travellers and improve its competitiveness as a global tourism destination.



Namgyal P. Sherpa
Co-Chairman, IATO Sikkim Chapter

From the Sikkim Chapter’s perspective, the region has immense potential to attract international travellers through its spectacular Himalayan landscapes, rich Buddhist heritage and diverse cultures and traditions. The key priority is to position Sikkim as a distinctive international destination

through stronger global marketing and digital promotion. At the same time, sustainable and eco-friendly tourism development is essential to protect the fragile Himalayan environment. Responsible tourism, community participation, waste management and conservation of natural and cultural resources should remain central to tourism development.

The most important intervention India needs today is stronger and more coordinated international destination marketing, supported by easier travel facilitation and improved connectivity. Simplifying visa and permit procedures, improving last-mile connectivity, upgrading tourist infrastructure and ensuring seamless travel experiences will further strengthen India’s global competitiveness. Sustainable and responsible tourism must remain a priority to protect our natural and cultural heritage. A coordinated approach among the Central and State Governments, tourism boards, airlines, travel trade and local communities can help position India as a more accessible, diverse, sustainable and globally competitive destination.

H Radhakrishna Sharma
State In-Charge, IATO Manipur Chapter



Manipur’s greatest international tourism strengths are its unique living culture, Loktak Lake and Keibul Lamjao National Park, Sangai deer, Sirui Hills, Manipuri polo, Ima Keithel, heritage, handloom and handicrafts, cuisine, festivals and indigenous community experiences. To unlock this potential, Manipur needs better connectivity and tourist infrastructure, quality accommodation and amenities, trained guides and hospitality professionals, easier access and permits for international visitors, stronger digital and international marketing, community participation and greater private-sector involvement. IATO can play an important role in connecting Manipur with international tour operators and positioning the state as an authentic, high-value, experience-driven destination.

India’s most important tourism intervention should be to create a seamless and globally competitive visitor journey—from simple and faster visa processing and improved international air connectivity to efficient airport services, easy domestic travel, quality infrastructure, cleanliness, safety, digital information and world-class hospitality. India already has extraordinary cultural, natural, spiritual, wellness and adventure assets; the priority should be to remove the friction that prevents international visitors from accessing them easily. A coordinated national approach involving key Ministries, State Governments and the private sector can increase tourist arrivals, length of stay and visitor spending.

Ranga Reddy
Chairman, IATO Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Chapter



Andhra Pradesh offers a fascinating mix of Buddhist heritage, coastline, culture and nature, much of which remains underexplored by international travellers. Destinations such as Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Guntupalli, Thotlakonda, Baviakonda, Bojjannakonda and Salihundam have the potential to become an important part of India’s Buddhist tourism circuit. The key is to develop them as well-connected, experience-led and bookable circuits rather than as standalone monuments. Better last-mile connectivity, visitor facilities, trained guides, quality food options and professional interpretation, supported by focused international promotion, are essential.

In my view, India’s biggest opportunity is to make the overall visitor experience simpler and more seamless. Great attractions alone are not enough. International travellers look for reliable connectivity, clean and well-maintained facilities, clear information, professional services and easy booking. A stronger partnership between government and the travel trade, with greater emphasis on destination management and developing market-ready tourism products, can help India become more competitive.

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S. Mahalingaiah

Chairman, IATO Karnataka Chapter

Karnataka has great potential to attract more international tourists. Our World Heritage and important heritage sites, including Hampi, Badami, Aihole, Pattadakal, Belur and Halebeedu, need to be marketed aggressively by the State Tourism Department and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. At the same time, the state needs to work

on improving visitor experiences at each monument, strengthening connectivity and encouraging investors to develop more hotels and resorts. Better interpretation, infrastructure and tourism facilities around these destinations.

The Ministry of Tourism should work closely with states and stakeholders to market India aggressively and consistently. On-and-off marketing is not going to deliver results. States should be encouraged and supported to undertake sustained promotion, with Indian High Commissions playing a stronger role in organising roadshows and educating outbound tour operators in key feeder markets such as the UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea.



Nasir Shah

Chairman, IATO Jammu & Kashmir Chapter

Jammu & Kashmir, particularly Kashmir, has historically been a major destination for foreign travellers, especially from English-speaking countries. Its USP has always been the blend of heritage and adventure experiences. With the coming years looking optimistic for inbound tourism, Kashmir can

showcase traditional houseboats, Himalayan trekking, food, culture and crafts, along with emerging opportunities in fishing, river rafting, paragliding, homestays, heritage walks and unexplored regions. Tribal areas such as Sangerwani and Pir Ki Gali also offer opportunities for visitors to experience the lives, cuisine and handicrafts of Bakarwal and Gujjar communities.

Inbound tourism has not grown at the same pace as domestic tourism over the last 35 years. The Ministry of Tourism and J&K Tourism should showcase Kashmir more aggressively at major international travel marts and organise focused roadshows in Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, with professional tour operators playing a central role.



Mohammad H Jadwet

Chairman, IATO Andaman & Nicobar Chapter

The Andaman & Nicobar Islands offer India one of its most distinctive international tourism products—pristine beaches, world-class diving, coral reefs, marine biodiversity, island-hopping, water sports, heritage and a strong nature-based experience. Significant opportunities exist in premium eco-tourism, diving, game fishing, yachting, wellness, adventure and small-scale sustainable resorts. Unlocking this potential requires better and more affordable air connectivity, direct international access, simplified entry formalities, stronger destination marketing, quality infrastructure and a predictable tourism policy that encourages responsible private investment.

India must make international travel to the country significantly easier, more competitive and better connected. Liberalised air access, seamless e-visas, competitive aviation costs and sustained global destination marketing are critical. India should also market its diverse regions individually while creating seamless multi-destination itineraries that encourage international visitors to stay longer and explore beyond the traditional gateways.

Sunil Singh Rana

Chairman, IATO Uttarakhand Chapter

Uttarakhand has the potential to offer travellers more than its pilgrimage tourism image. Opportunities lie in spiritual and wellness tourism, Himalayan and nature-based experiences, wildlife, adventure, trekking, yoga, village and community tourism, cultural experiences and sustainable travel. Emerging products such as Manaskhand, Himalayan villages, heritage and cultural trails, astro-tourism and river experiences can diversify tourism beyond circuits. To unlock this potential, we need international destination marketing, connectivity and infrastructure, accommodation, trained multilingual guides, digital visibility and packaged experiences.

India's intervention is needed to make travel more seamless and globally marketable. We need simplified visa and permit processes, international and domestic connectivity, seamless digital information, tourist infrastructure and faster coordination between central and state agencies.



Mahendra Singh

Co-Chairman, IATO Rajasthan Chapter

Rajasthan offers an exceptional blend of heritage, culture, spirituality, wildlife and experiential tourism. Rajasthan also has significant potential in wellness, luxury travel, weddings, MICE and slow travel. To unlock this potential, we need stronger air connectivity, improved last-mile infrastructure, better destination management, multilingual interpretation and greater international promotion of lesser-known destinations. Developing curated experiential circuits and promoting responsible and sustainable tourism will encourage longer stays and higher visitor spending.

India needs a coordinated national strategy for inbound tourism, with ease of travel and connectivity at its core. Simplifying visa processes, improving international and regional air connectivity, upgrading tourism infrastructure and creating a stronger, consistent global marketing campaign are essential. India must position itself not merely as a sightseeing destination, but as a destination for transformative experiences—culture, spirituality, wellness, luxury, nature and authentic local engagement. **BOTT**



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Rahool Macarius, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, shares his perspective on the company's India growth strategy, the increasing importance of Tier II and Tier III markets, evolving guest expectations, emerging demand segments and what will define successful hospitality brands by 2030.

Priyanka Saxena Ray



How do you see Wyndham Hotels & Resorts' India portfolio evolving over the next three to five years, and which markets or segments will drive this expansion?

In the next three to five years, we see our India portfolio evolving across both Tier 1 cities and emerging markets. We will continue to strengthen our mid-scale portfolio, including Ramada, while also expanding our upscale and lifestyle offerings in high-potential markets.

At the same time, we see significant opportunity beyond the metros, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities where business, leisure and spiritual travel are growing rapidly. From spiritual destinations such as Ayodhya and Vrindavan to emerging leisure markets such as Kochi, our focus will be on being present in destinations where we see sustained demand and long-term potential. So, it is not simply about adding more hotels; it is about having the right brands in the right markets.

How important are Tier II and Tier III cities to Wyndham's India strategy?

Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities have always been an important part of our strategy. Our approach was never simply about expanding our footprint; it was about building a meaningful and enduring presence in markets that we believe have long-term potential.

This potential is also being reinforced by the Government of India's focus on tourism and infrastructure development. The recent signing of Vienna House Easy in Vrindavan reflects this approach. Bringing a European lifestyle brand to an emerging spiritual destination demonstrates our confidence in the evolving potential of these markets.

When we evaluate a new market, we look at a combination of factors—the strength and diversity of demand, the destination's growth potential, connectivity, and, importantly, whether there is a sustainable opportunity for the right brand to thrive over the long term.

What are the most significant changes you are seeing in guest expectations?

Guest expectations have become much more personalised. Today, travellers don't just want a comfortable room; they want to feel recognised and understood throughout their journey. A guest who stays with us in one city and then travels to another should experience that same sense of familiarity and continuity.

We invest in cloud-based, mobile-first infrastructure so that our owners across very different markets can plug into the same guest data ecosystem. Our connected systems and the Wyndham Rewards ecosystem help ensure that guest preferences can travel with the guest across our portfolio.

In the next three to five years, we see our India portfolio evolving across both Tier 1 cities and emerging markets. We will continue to strengthen our mid-scale portfolio, including Ramada, while also expanding our upscale and lifestyle offerings in high-potential markets

Hospitality is ultimately built on relationships, and every stay should strengthen that relationship rather than start from scratch.

Which demand segments will create the strongest opportunities over the next few years?

Weddings will continue to be a very important segment for India. It is a market that continues to evolve, with

celebrations becoming more experiential, personalised and increasingly destination-led. Properties such as Wyndham Grand Udaipur Fateh Sagar Lake, with its extensive event spaces, are well positioned to cater to destination weddings and large celebrations.

At the same time, bleisure is becoming increasingly relevant as the boundaries between business and leisure travel continue to blur. According to GHA DISCOVERY research, 81% of Indian business travellers extend their work trips for leisure, compared with 76% globally.

MICE is another segment with significant potential. As businesses expand beyond the major metros and companies increasingly look at destinations outside traditional business centres for conferences, meetings and incentive travel, we see an opportunity for hotels in both established and emerging destinations.

Looking towards 2030, what will differentiate successful hotel brands in India?

By 2030, I don't think success in hospitality will be defined by scale alone. Scale and distribution will continue to matter, but they will have to be supported by technology, loyalty, localisation and a genuinely personalised guest experience.

Technology will play an important role in enabling that personalisation, but it cannot replace the human side of hospitality. The strongest brands will be those that use technology to enhance the guest relationship, not replace it.

A strong loyalty programme gives a brand the ability to build a relationship with a guest beyond a single stay and create value across different destinations and travel occasions. At the same time, localisation will be critical in a market as diverse as India.

Ultimately, I believe the successful hotel brands of 2030 will be those that can combine scale with relevance using technology and distribution to reach guests, loyalty to retain them, and authentic, personalised experiences to give them a reason to come back. 

India Inbound Opportunity

Turning Potential into Performance

India's inbound tourism story in 2026 is showing encouraging momentum, but the opportunity ahead remains far greater. As source markets evolve and international travellers seek more immersive, seamless and diverse experiences, senior inbound tourism leaders share their assessment of current trends and outline what India must do to strengthen its position in the global tourism marketplace.

Gunjan Sabikhi and Priyanka Saxena Ray



Pronab Sarkar,
MD, Swagatam Tours

As an inbound tour operator, I would say that 2025–26 was a very difficult year. The Pahalagam incident, the continuing Ukraine–Russia war and global uncertainty led to many confirmed bookings being cancelled. The tourist season did not pick up from the USA and European markets, while higher airfares and reduced flight frequencies to and from India further affected normal tourist traffic. Overall, we received approximately 25 per cent fewer tourists compared to the previous financial year. The present global situation also remains uncertain due to the ongoing Middle East conflict, fuel costs and rising travel expenses, which are affecting holiday decisions.

To improve inbound tourism, I believe India needs much stronger promotion and marketing overseas. Tourism offices abroad remain closed, promotional activities are limited and international exhibition participation is being considered only case by case. We need clear long-term targets, stronger global promotion, simple visa applications in multiple foreign languages, clean tourist monuments, hygienic surroundings and better last-mile connectivity. Unless timely action is taken, achieving ambitious tourism targets will remain difficult.

Rajiv Mehra

Immediate Past President, IATO

India's inbound tourism performance in 2026 is showing steady but still below-potential recovery. The strongest opportunities continue to lie in the US, UK and Europe, along with Australia, Japan, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. High-value segments such as wellness, spirituality, luxury, MICE, adventure, Buddhist tourism and experiential travel are particularly promising. International travellers are increasingly looking beyond conventional sight-seeing and want authentic, immersive, sustainable and personalised experiences, seamless digital services, better connectivity and value for money. India's culture, cuisine, wildlife, wellness traditions and spiritual heritage give us a strong competitive advantage, but the challenge is to convert interest into longer stays, repeat visits and higher spending.

To significantly increase India's global tourism share, I believe we need a coordinated national strategy combining connectivity, facilitation, infrastructure and aggressive international marketing. Visa processing must become faster and simpler, while direct air connectivity should expand. We must develop world-class destinations with strong last-mile connectivity, better amenities and cleaner public spaces, while promoting wellness, cruises, Buddhist circuits, wildlife, MICE, luxury and rural tourism. Government and industry must work together on one measurable national inbound tourism strategy.



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Zia Siddiqui

Managing Director, Alliance Hotels & Resorts

India's inbound tourism performance in 2026 was encouraging till the end of February, with strong potential from traditional markets such as the UK, USA, Europe, Australia and the Middle East. However, after the war started in the Middle East, inbound business slowed down, and the coming season is also not looking very promising as many operators use Middle Eastern airlines because of their price competitiveness. If the war ends, India can emerge strongly among Asian markets. Leisure, MICE, wellness, luxury, experiential and spiritual tourism are showing momentum, while travellers are increasingly looking for seamless experiences, authenticity, personalised service, sustainability, digital convenience and value for money.

To increase India's share of global inbound tourism, the Government and industry need a clear, jointly owned short- and long-term Destination Marketing Plan. Alongside connectivity, visas, infrastructure and destination development, we must strengthen micro and small tourism operators. We should also revive the "Festival of India" concept in key international markets and aggressively explore emerging and non-traditional source markets. The objective should be to move from destination promotion to destination demand creation, with government and industry working as one team.

Amaresh Tiwari, CIS

MD, A.T. Seasons & Vacations Travel and CEO, Meetings & Incentives World

India's inbound tourism is at an important inflection point. While global inbound arrivals have recovered strongly from the pandemic, India still captures only a modest share of global tourism. Early 2026 indicators suggest gradual improvement, but I believe the opportunity is far greater and we are missing valuable time to increase our share. Our strongest source markets remain the United States, UK, Europe, Australia, Canada and neighbouring Asian markets, while Southeast Asia, the Middle East and emerging markets such as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia offer substantial growth potential. Travellers are increasingly seeking authentic, experiential, wellness, spiritual, culinary, adventure and sustainable tourism rather than conventional sightseeing of forts and palaces.

To significantly increase India's global share, I believe we need a coordinated "Ease of Travel" strategy. Faster and simpler visas, greater international air connectivity, improved last-mile connectivity, world-class public amenities, multilingual digital services and seamless tourist facilitation are essential. India must move from promoting destinations to selling experiences, supported by professional DMOs, stronger public-private partnerships, market-specific campaigns, tourism skills and targeted international marketing. The objective should be clear: more visitors, longer stays, higher spending and wider geographical dispersal of tourism benefits.

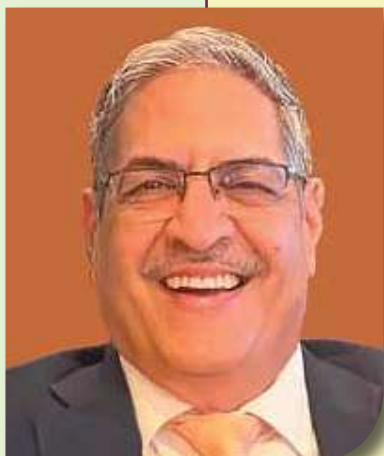


Homa Mistry

CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India

India's inbound tourism performance in 2026 is definitely low compared to previous years, largely due to the continuing geopolitical situations, which do not seem to be subsiding. This uncertainty has affected traveller confidence and planning, particularly for long-haul travel. Another major concern is the exorbitantly high cost of flight tickets to and from India, which makes the destination less competitive compared to several other countries. In such a situation, there is only so much the industry can do until airfares become more reasonable and global conditions stabilise.

India is a great tourism product and has everything required to attract international travellers, from culture and heritage to wellness, spirituality, cuisine, wildlife and diverse experiences. What is required now is greater ease of getting visas and much stronger overseas marketing. The visa process should be simple, quick and traveller-friendly, while India needs sustained visibility in key international markets. Government and industry must work together to promote the destination more aggressively and consistently so that India remains top-of-mind for international travellers.





EASTERN GLOBE
JOURNEY WITH PURPOSE



EASTERN GLOBE

Bringing the Northeast to life through authentic and immersive journeys

Eastern Globe has established itself as a trusted travel company in Guwahati, specialising in thoughtfully designed journeys across Assam and the Northeast. Its approach combines local knowledge, personalised experiences and responsible tourism to showcase the region to both Indian and international travellers. **Sarita Devi Saha, Founder & Director, Eastern Globe**, shares her perspective.



MS. SARITA DEVI SAHA, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

What sets Eastern Globe apart in an increasingly competitive travel landscape?

Our journey has been built on trust, authenticity and a genuine commitment to presenting the Northeast in its most distinctive form. We believe travel should be personal, purposeful and responsibly planned. Rather than offering standardised packages, we understand individual traveller preferences and create experiences around them. Our quality fleet of well-maintained, comfortable vehicles ensures a safe and seamless journey across the region. Supported by trusted, professional and punctual drivers who know the terrain and understand the needs of travellers, we ensure that every journey is as reliable as it is comfortable. Transparent pricing, ethical practices and strong local partnerships remain central to our approach. By combining local expertise with dependable service and warm hospitality, we have built lasting confidence among our travellers.

How is traveller behaviour evolving across Assam and the Northeast?

Travel demand across the region is becoming increasingly experience-driven. Visitors are looking for authentic encounters through culture, heritage, nature, eco-adventures and lesser-known destinations. Longer stays and slower itineraries are gaining popularity, particularly among domestic travellers. International interest is also growing across Europe, Southeast Asia and North America, supported by attractions such as festivals, Kaziranga safaris, tribal homestays and local cuisine. Better air, rail and road connectivity is further improving accessibility, bringing the Northeast into greater focus.

Where does Eastern Globe see its next phase of growth?

Our growth strategy focuses on responsible expansion, stronger destination expertise and creating long-term value for travellers and local communities. We also have two decades of experience across premium hospitality and inbound travel markets. We are strengthening experiential and sustainable tourism through eco-conscious itineraries, community-based experiences and curated homestays that support local economies while preserving cultural identity. We are also exploring specialised segments including slow travel, wellness, wildlife, photography and culturally immersive journeys for high-value domestic and international travellers.



Rajeev Kohli, CIS, CIP, DMCP
Joint Managing Director, Creative Travel

India's inbound tourism performance has been quite lackluster, to say the least. Whatever we're getting as a destination is organic and is from interest of people who want to come, but there has been no growth, no interest in the destination overall. No matter where one travels to in overseas markets, the answer is simply the same. The steps needed to increase or even grab our share of international tourism arrivals is no mystery. Everybody, no matter where you are in the Indian tourism ecosystem, knows that the only single answer is international marketing. Even our Ministry of Tourism recognises and accepts that.

Unfortunately, the Ministry of Tourism simply has not been given the funds nor the power to do anything by the larger government. Even if a portion of the funds they do have was diverted to some sort of overseas marketing, it would make a big boost. Spending a small sum of 50 crores on a series of smart homegrown social media posts, AI videos, and the likes, that can be distributed to the private sector for larger circulation would tremendously benefit our sales efforts.

As of now, we have been completely absent from international markets for the last few years. Selling travel is like selling any consumer product, be it shoes, be it phones, be it cars. If you're present, you have to be visible, and only those brands that are visible capture any consumer interest.

P S Duggal
Executive Director, Minar Group

India's inbound performance in 2026 has shown encouraging movement, but the larger opportunity still remains ahead of us. Demand is returning unevenly across markets, and the strongest growth is coming from travellers who are looking beyond conventional touring and are willing to spend more for relevance, comfort and depth.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that India is benefiting from a shift towards wellness, wildlife, heritage, spiritual travel, private family journeys and more personalised experiential itineraries. The traveller today is less interested in simply "covering" India and more interested in experiencing a part of it meaningfully.

India needs stronger air connectivity, easier visa access, better last-mile infrastructure and more consistent international destination marketing. But equally important is how India is positioned. We cannot continue to sell one familiar version of the country to every market.

After 34 years in inbound tourism, our view at Minar is that India's next phase of growth will come from sharper market understanding, better storytelling and a more seamless visitor experience, while preserving the complexity and character that make India extraordinary.



Prateek Hira
President & CEO, Tornos and Director UnDMC

Since COVID-19, India has struggled to recover its previous arrival figures, and 2026 has been no different, yielding muted results and leaving the inbound industry in a somber mood. However, the trade remains resilient and has increased efforts to attract both high-volume and high-value tourism. With minimal tourism promotion from the Government of India abroad, individual states have taken the lead through international travel marts, advertising and roadshows. We remain hopeful about traditional source markets such as the UK, US and parts of Europe, while Southeast Asia, Japan and the reopening of China present strong opportunities. Travellers today are also looking beyond standard sightseeing for niche, curated and memorable experiences.

India has made significant strides in infrastructure and enjoys strong global recognition, but inbound tourism remains highly competitive. To increase our global share, we need a structured, research-driven and targeted marketing strategy, including a renewed "Incredible India" campaign or a similar initiative to reposition India globally. Tour operators must develop niche itineraries highlighting India's unique offerings, while tourism trade associations should move beyond working in silos and adopt a more unified, collaborative approach. Government and industry must work together with greater clarity and consistency to achieve meaningful growth. **BOTT**





Clarks Shiraz, Agra

An iconic address for Grand Celebrations

Against the timeless backdrop of the Taj Mahal, Clarks Shiraz, Agra offers an evocative setting for weddings, celebrations and distinguished corporate gatherings. Spread across eight landscaped acres, the hotel combines iconic views, expansive venues and refined hospitality to create memorable experiences.

For weddings, the property offers an array of versatile spaces that can be transformed for every occasion—from vibrant mehendi and poolside haldi ceremonies to elegant receptions, intimate vows and grand celebrations. Three banquet halls, landscaped lawns and multiple outdoor venues provide flexibility for events of varying scales and styles.

The experience extends beyond the celebrations. Guests can unwind in 236 renovated rooms, enjoy select Taj views, indulge in fine dining, spend soulful evenings at The Mughal Room, host rooftop gatherings at The View or relax with rejuvenating spa experiences.

Clarks Shiraz also caters seamlessly to corporate events, including conferences, leadership meetings, product launches, awards ceremonies, gala dinners and large-format gatherings. Professional infrastructure, versatile venues and attentive service ensure each event is handled with sophistication.

For weddings or business, Clarks Shiraz brings scale, style and a sense of occasion to one of India's most iconic destinations.

Tathastu Wildlife Resorts

A Vision born from Passion for the Wild

Spread across five of Central India's most celebrated tiger landscapes — Pench, Kanha, Tadoba, Bandhavgarh and Satpura — Tathastu Wildlife Resorts is an experiential wildlife hospitality brand born not from a conventional hotel business plan, but from a lifelong connection with forests, wildlife and nature. At the heart of this journey is **Anil Agarwala, Managing Director and Founder, Tathastu Resorts.**



Anil Agarwala, Managing Director and Founder, Tathastu Resorts

A successful entrepreneur with a career spanning more than four decades, Anil Agarwala's association with wildlife goes back much further. His fascination with India's forests began in childhood, and his visits to national parks eventually became an enduring passion.

From a retirement retreat to a wildlife hospitality brand

The Tathastu story began in Pench, where Agarwala acquired approximately 15 acres with the original intention of creating a personal retreat where he could eventually spend time close to nature. Hospitality was not initially part of the plan. But as friends and fellow nature lovers experienced the property, interest grew, and what began as a private dream gradually transformed into Tathastu Resorts.

What started with a handful of cottages developed into a much larger experiential resort in Pench, followed by properties in Kanha, Tadoba and Bandhavgarh, and most recently Satpura. The expansion has been driven by a clear vision — to create comfortable, distinctive and immersive stays in some of India's finest wildlife destinations.

Development with a sense of responsibility

A strong aspect of Agarwala's vision is the belief that wildlife hospitality cannot be separated from environmental responsibility. Tathastu's approach includes renewable energy, native tree plantation, waste segregation, composting, water treatment and reuse, reduction of single-use plastics and community initiatives. At Tathastu Tadoba, for instance, the resort operates with a

192 KW solar power system.

The objective is not simply to build larger properties, but to create experiences where comfort and the wilderness can coexist responsibly.

Agarwala's journey is perhaps the most compelling part of the Tathastu story. He entered wildlife hospitality not simply because he saw a commercial opportunity, but because of a lifelong relationship with forests and wildlife. His journey underlines the importance of patience, passion and perseverance in building a successful wildlife hospitality business.

Today, Tathastu is more than five resorts. It is the manifestation of a belief that the wilderness can be experienced with comfort, sensitivity and respect — and that luxury in the jungle should ultimately deepen our connection with nature rather than distance us from it. **BOTT**





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Ananta Kashi

56th FHRAI Convention showcases the future of Indian Hospitality

The three-day 56th Annual Convention of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), themed “Ananta Kashi: Leading the Future of Tourism through Spirit, Culture, Cuisine & Craft,” concluded in Varanasi, underscoring the need for greater collaboration between government and industry to unlock the next phase of India’s tourism and hospitality growth.

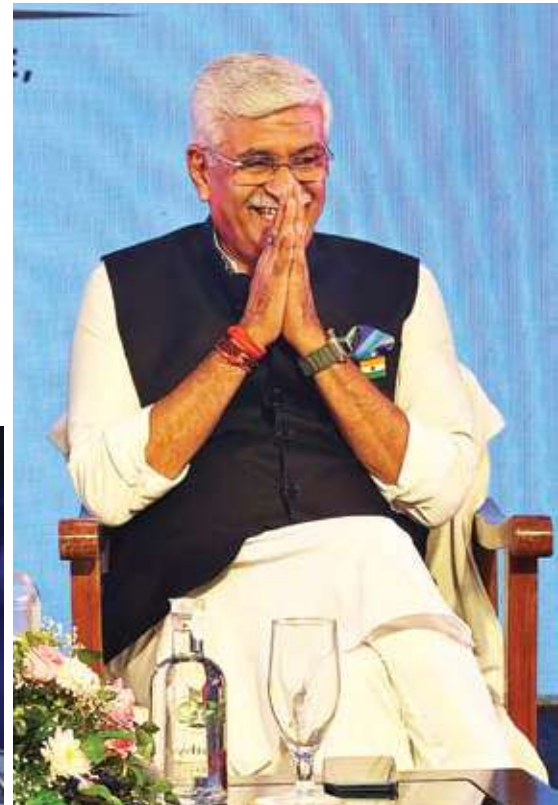
Shreya Shimpi

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), the apex body representing India’s hospitality industry, hosted the 56th FHRAI Annual Convention from August 21 – 23, 2026 at the Taj Ganges, Varanasi, under the inspiring theme “Ananta Kashi: Leading the Future of Tourism through Spirit, Culture, Cuisine and Craft.”

Supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, with Uttar Pradesh Tourism as the Partner State, the marquee event was India’s largest and most influential hospitality and tourism gathering. The Convention witnessed the convergence of 1500 delegates representing 22 states, along with policymakers, industry leaders, investors, entrepreneurs, hospitality professionals, tourism stakeholders, and thought leaders, to deliberate on the future of India’s tourism and hospitality sector. The backdrop of Kashi added a distinctive spiritual element to the event, giving attendees a glimpse of the civilizational heritage, culture, and cuisine that make it a culture-led and experiential tourism destination.

Chief Guest – Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Hon’ble Minister of Tourism & Culture, Government of India, said, “Atithi Devo Bhava is an indispensable part of Indian hospitality and culture. The diversity of India and its infrastructural development opens doors to immense new opportunities in the tourism sector. Hotels and restaurants are the growth engine of tourism and the drivers of the local economy.”

In the Presidential Address, Shri Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, FHRAI President, said, “Ananta Kashi: Leading the Future of Tourism through Spirit, Culture, Cuisine & Craft”





goes beyond a three-day convention. The future of Indian tourism cannot be defined merely by destinations, attractions, and infrastructure or hotel rooms. It must increasingly be defined by experience—by the stories a destination tells, the culture it preserves, the cuisine it celebrates, the crafts it sustains and the human connections it creates.”

Shri Garish Oberoi, Chairman, Convention Organising Committee and Hon. Secretary, FHRAI, said, “The future does not require us to leave our heritage behind; it requires us to carry that heritage forward in new and contemporary ways.”

Chief Guest Shri Satish Mahana, Hon’ble Speaker, Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly; Shri Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, Hon’ble Deputy Chief Minister of Odisha, Shri Rohan A. Khaunte, Hon’ble Minister of Tourism, Goa,

Shriji Huzur Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Ji Mewar of Udaipur, Patron of the 56th FHRAI Annual Convention; Shri Dimitris Manikis, President & Managing Director – Europe, Middle East, Eurasia and Africa, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts; Shri K.B. Kachru, Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotels Group, graced the inauguration along with other dignitaries.

The three-day convention featured insightful panel discussions on pertinent topics such as ‘Sacred Vows, Spectacular Venues: The Future of Destination Weddings in India’, ‘Shaping India’s Tourism Journey: A Government – Industry Dialogue’, etc. A noteworthy session was ‘Unlocking New Tourism Opportunities: The Role of Travel Agents & Tour Operators’ which brought together industry leaders such as Ved Khanna, President, Association of Domestic Tour Operators

of India, Ravi Gosain, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators, Satish Sehrawat, President, Indian Tourist Transporters Association, Abbas Moiz, President, Travel Agents Federation of India and Anil Kalsi, Vice President, Travel Agents Federation of India. They discussed the need for a greater collaboration among travel associations to improve and develop India’s tourism landscape.

FHRAI Bharat Gourav Awards honoured the Maestros of Varanasi, followed by scintillating musical and dance performances. The delegates had the opportunity to experience ‘Mangal Aarti Darshan’ at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple followed by a mesmerising Subah-e-Banaras Cruise at dawn. Their experience culminated with the sacred Ganga Aarti, giving them an unforgettable experience of the spiritual traditions that continue to define Kashi. **BOTT**



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(General Manager)

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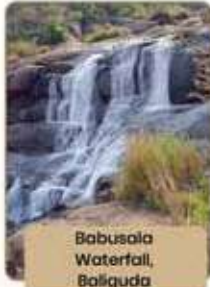
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Rayagoda



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Golden Triangle of Odisha with Chilika



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Kalijai Temple,
Chilika



Konark Temple,
Konark



Jagannath Temple,
Puri

Golden Triangle of Odisha with Bhitarkanika



Khondagiri,
Bhubaneswar



Puri Beach,
Puri



Konark Temple,
Konark



Boat Safari,
Bhitarkanika



Shaktipeethas Tour of Odisha

- Maa Biraja Temple (Jajpur)
- Vimala Temple (Puri)
- Tara Tarini Temple (Ganjam)
- Bhagabati Temple (Banapur)
- Mangala Temple (Kakatpur)
- Charchika Temple (Banki)
- Katakachandi Temple (Cuttack)
- Kalijai Temple (Chilika Lake)

Transport Assistance



ITB India 2026

strengthens its position as a key B2B platform for Tourism

Held from September 1-3, 2026, at the Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai, ITB India 2026 brought together government representatives, tourism organisations, industry associations, exhibitors, buyers and global travel leaders. The fourth in-person edition reaffirmed the event's growing relevance as a platform for business, networking, knowledge exchange and strategic dialogue across India and South Asia.

Shreya Shimpi



The fourth in-person edition of ITB India 2026 brought the international travel industry together for three days of business, networking and knowledge exchange. Co-located with MICE Show India and Travel Tech India, the event connected high-quality buyers with regional and international travel partners while facilitating conversations around the evolving trends shaping India and South Asia's tourism markets.

"India and South Asia continue to

offer significant opportunities for the global travel industry, and the international participation at ITB India this year reflects the strong interest we continue to see in these markets," said Darren Seah, Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific. "By connecting global suppliers with qualified buyers and combining commercial exchange with industry insights, networking and senior-level dialogue, ITB India offers a valuable B2B marketplace where new relationships and ideas can develop

into long-term business."

The event witnessed participation from professionals across Leisure, MICE, Corporate Travel and Travel Technology, providing opportunities to build new connections, strengthen existing partnerships and explore avenues for future growth.

Reflecting on the response to this year's edition, Saurabh Shukla, Head of Sales, ITB India, said, "The overwhelming response to ITB India 2026 is a powerful reflection of the resil-



ience, ambition and continued dynamism of the travel industry across India and the wider Asia-Pacific region. We were delighted to see such strong engagement from travel professionals, quality buyers, exhibitors and partners, demonstrating the importance of creating a platform where the industry can connect, exchange ideas and foster meaningful collaborations. The energy and enthusiasm throughout the event reaffirm our commitment to making ITB India an efficient platform for the region's travel ecosystem, and we look forward to building on this momentum in the years ahead."



Knowledge exchange remained an integral part of the show. Across the Knowledge & MICE Theatre and Tech & Experience Theatre, four curated tracks—Knowledge, MICE & Corporate, Travel Technology and Experiential Travel—complemented the commercial activity on the exhibition floor.



Sessions explored themes influencing traveller behaviour, technology adoption and future business strategies. Discussions included "From Digital Adoption to Digital Advantage in Travel" and "Travel with Intent: How Values, Emotions and Purpose Shape the New Traveller". The Cruise Capsule also returned for its second year, bringing together cruise experts, travel trade leaders and MICE specialists to discuss opportunities and developments within India's growing cruise market.



A key new addition this year was the inaugural ITB India Leadership



Roundtable, organised in partnership with global strategy consultancy Simon-Kucher. The initiative created a dedicated forum for senior industry leaders to exchange perspectives on

India's evolving role in global tourism. Networking continued beyond formal meetings through the ITB India Happy Hour.

Leading exhibitors and participating organisations included Columbia Pictures Aquaverse, Halong International Cruise, Hotel Indonesia Kempinski Jakarta, IHCL, MakeMyTrip, Northern Lights Villages, Philippine Airlines and Sarawak Tourism Board. Major travel trade associations, including ATOAI, ADTOI, ETAA, OTOAI, Skal International India and TAAI, were also represented.

Sharing her perspective as a returning participant, Isha Goyal, CEO, STIC Travel Group, said, "This is my third time at ITB India and I feel that the show has evolved a lot over the last 2-3 years. Every year I find a few nuanced

enhancements to the content and some new players who introduce new products and experiences to the trade. What I love about the show is that since it's a boutique show it has a wonderful balance of content and discussion and the pace of it allows one to peacefully sit and engage with the customers and helps in achieving the ROI despite the smaller size we are operating out of. At the end of the day every trade show is about the ROI."

ITB India 2026 emerged as a strong confluence of commercial engagement, knowledge sharing and collaboration, reaffirming its role as an important meeting point for the global travel trade and setting the stage for continued growth and innovation across India and South Asia's dynamic tourism ecosystem. **BOTT**



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CIC 2026

concludes in Delhi, reinforcing India's global MICE ambitions

The 15th Conventions India Conclave brought together policymakers, global experts, industry leaders and MICE professionals at Bharat Mandapam, highlighting policy priorities, infrastructure opportunities and the growing role of business events in India's economic and tourism growth.

Priyanka Saxena Ray



The India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) successfully concluded the 15th Conventions India Conclave (CIC) 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, marking one of the strongest editions of the industry platform with nearly 700 registrations—the highest ever recorded for the Conclave.

The inaugural ceremony was led by Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Delhi Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra. Joining them were Dr Senthil Gopinath, CEO, International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA); Jawed Ashraf, IFS, Chairman, India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO); Suneel Anchipaka, IAS, Managing Director, Delhi Tourism; Dr Neeraj Kharwal, IAS, Managing Director, ITPO; and Chander Mansharamani, Vice Chairman, ICPB and Chairman of the CIC 2026 Organising Committee.

The Conclave brought together senior government officials, international experts, convention organisers, hospitality leaders,



venues, PCOs, DMCs and other stakeholders from across the MICE ecosystem.

Addressing delegates, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat underlined the strategic importance of business events in India's larger tourism and economic growth story. "MICE must be viewed beyond the movement of delegates. International conferences and exhibitions create platforms for partnerships, investment, innovation and knowledge exchange. India has developed world-class infrastructure, and our next priority must be to build an enabling ecosystem around it through stronger facilitation, destination development and close government-industry collaboration," he said.

Reflecting on the scale of the event, Chander Mansharamani, Vice Chairman, ICPB and Chairman, CIC 2026 Organising Committee, said, "The overwhelming response, with nearly 700 registrations, demonstrates the confidence the industry places in India's MICE potential. India has already proven its capabilities through the successful G20 Presidency, which saw 227 meetings across 60 cities. We now need a coordinated National Convention and MICE Policy, recognition of

international conventions and exhibitions as Export of Services, appropriate incentives and a strong global marketing strategy to fully leverage our infrastructure."

The programme featured discussions on Women in Leadership: Shaping the Future of MICE in Viksit Bharat, Technology: Redefining Tourism, MICE & Destination Marketing, and Infrastructure Opportunities for India's MICE Sector, with participation from leaders representing ITPO, Delhi Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Google, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, NürnbergMesse India and several other organisations.

Speaking during the Conclave, Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism, called for deeper public-private collaboration. "MICE generates a multiplier effect across tourism, trade, investment, employment and knowledge exchange. Improving ease of doing business, encouraging investment through public-private partnerships and developing a collaborative roadmap for sustainable and inclusive growth will be critical to strengthening India's position as a global MICE destination," he said. **BOTT**



Asego

Building travel protection on experience and not experiment

With travel becoming increasingly seamless and technology-led, Asego is strengthening its proposition as a specialist travel protection and global assistance partner for the B2B travel ecosystem. Backed by 26 years of experience, its offering focuses on protecting travellers while enabling travel partners to sell, service and support protection with greater confidence.

Priyanka Saxena Ray



Dev Karvat, Founder and CEO, Asego

Travel today is built around convenience, with flights, hotels, visas, transfers and other services available through a connected ecosystem. Travel protection has become part of that ecosystem too. But it is not simply another product to be added to a booking journey. It is a service tested when something goes wrong.

The question is not simply, “Does this offer protection while travelling?” but “Who is behind that protection and how dependable are they?” When a flight is cancelled, baggage is delayed, medical assistance is needed overseas, or a claim needs to be resolved, travel protection becomes a critical responsibility. Its true value is measured when it is called upon, and that is where expertise and the right specialist make all the difference.

In travel protection, domain depth matters as much as the size of the organisation. A specialist provider builds its business around a core vision—to serve

a purpose and solve a problem. That requires understanding travel realities, what advisors need, how assistance should be delivered and how claims must be handled when circumstances are anything but straightforward. As technology makes access easier and distribution faster, the real differentiator is what sits behind the transaction.

For the travel trade, recommending a protection provider is a matter of professional accountability. A travel advisor puts its reputation behind the solutions it recommends. Reliability, data security and service accountability are critical. A trusted partner must demonstrate that customer information is handled responsibly, service is accessible when needed and claims are approached with accountability.

At Asego, our focus has been on being a dedicated travel protection and global assistance partner for the B2B travel ecosystem. The travel advisor is not just a route to the traveller; the travel advisor is

a partner whose business growth matters. That distinction influences product development, servicing and technology.

Technology for its own sake does not create meaningful value. The real question is: what problem does it solve? It should enable growth, make travel protection easier to sell and service, and remove friction from the customer experience.

At Asego, global assistance and travel insurance have been at the heart of our business for 26 years. That experience has given us a deep understanding of the travel trade, its evolving challenges and the moments when protection is tested.

Our vision has always been simple—to aim for excellence at one thing that matters: protecting travellers and enabling the partners who serve them to do so with confidence. Because when your traveller’s journey is at stake, protection shouldn’t be an experiment. It should come with experience. **BOTT**

Radisson Blu Rudrapur

Where weekend escapes meet memorable celebrations



Radisson Blu Rudrapur is part of the Rockland Group, a diversified business group with interests spanning multiple sectors, including hospitality, healthcare, education and microfinance. The Group has an established presence in hospitality, with three hotels and a portfolio of more than 200 keys.

Radisson Blu Hotel Rudrapur brings together the comfort of a premium hotel, the charm of the Kumaon foothills and the convenience of excellent connectivity—making it an ideal choice for weekend getaways, family breaks, celebrations and destination weddings.

Located in the SIDCUL and Rudrapur commercial hub, adjacent to the Metropolis shopping mall, the hotel combines business convenience with leisure appeal. With 124 spacious rooms and suites, more than 2 lakh sq. ft. of banqueting space, contemporary amenities and a range of dining and wellness experiences, guests can enjoy a comfortable stay while using Rudrapur as a gateway to the region.

The property is approximately 220 km from Delhi, 12 km from Pantnagar Airport and 8 km from the railway station.

Popular destinations such as Jim Corbett National Park and Nainital are also within convenient driving distance, making the hotel an attractive base for exploring the region.

A weekend at Radisson Blu Rudrapur can be as relaxed or as indulgent as one chooses. Guests can unwind at the 12,000 sq. ft. Mastak Spa & Salon, make use of the fitness and leisure facilities, or simply enjoy a leisurely meal at Kumaon Café, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant.

For weddings and social celebrations, Radisson Blu Rudrapur offers the advantage of bringing accommodation, dining, hospitality and celebrations under one roof. With banquet and meeting facilities capable of hosting gatherings of up to 1,000 guests, the property can cater to everything from intimate family functions and pre-wedding celebrations to large wedding receptions and cocktail evenings.

The availability of 124 rooms and suites also provides families with the convenience of accommodating wedding guests at the same property—helping transform a wedding into a complete destination experience rather than simply a single-day event.

WTC makes Ahmedabad debut

expanding the canvas for travel trade business

For a market as commercially significant as Gujarat, the travel trade has long had an obvious gap: strong outbound demand, but limited platforms focused on connecting suppliers with a wider pool of travel advisors in the region. The World Travel Collective (WTC), which made its debut in Ahmedabad, sought to address that gap with a two-day trade showcase built around quality meetings and business conversations.

Zarna Udasi

The two-day event brought together travel advisors from across Gujarat, including several smaller cities, along with hosted buyers from other parts of India. Exhibitors represented Indian and international destinations, hotels, tourism boards, destination management companies (DMCs) and travel brands, creating a focused marketplace for business networking, partnerships and new opportunities.

For exhibitors, however, the value lay less in the numbers and more in the opportunity to meet agents they may not typically encounter at larger international trade shows.

Speaking to BOTT, Hiral Somani, Co-Founder, WTC and Founder and Owner, Holiday Exotica, said the idea stemmed from a need to widen the trade network in Gujarat.

“We regularly visit luxury travel shows around the world, and we always felt that Gujarat had never had a platform like this. We would see the same 10 or 12 agents at these exhibitions. It is not that only those agents have business in Gujarat. There are many other agents with a strong luxury business who simply never got this kind of exposure to suppliers,” she said.

That thinking shaped WTC’s buyer selection. “We invited buyers from 28 different cities across Gujarat and hosted 400 buyers in Ahmedabad. The response was tremendous. We chose quality over quantity, and my exhibitors are really happy that this was not just about exchanging cards, but about having meaningful meetings and





making genuine connections.”

The format also appeared to translate into immediate business conversations. “People were given 10 to 15 minutes for each meeting, and they were really happy that business started converting the very same day. One of our agents told us they had given a \$10,000 file to a Bali DMC that day itself. That is big news for us, and we feel we have made a difference to the Gujarat travel fraternity,” Somani said.

DigvijaySinh Jhala, Co-Founder, WTC and Founder, Shaurya Hospitality & Consultants, believes the experience-led nature of travel makes personal interaction particularly important.

“I am still of the old-school view that, especially in India, hospitality sells on experiences and stories. With WTC, we have created a platform where we bring those experiences and stories together, allowing people from Gujarat to witness them and meet the

right people. It is networking with experience and a human touch,” he said.

For Ankush Nijhawan, Co-founder, TBO.com, the Ahmedabad market reflects the broader evolution of outbound travel from Gujarat. “Ahmedabad is already our fourth-largest market after the top three metros, and it continues to grow rapidly. With increasing international air connectivity and expanding aviation infrastructure across Gujarat, the potential is enormous. The state’s strong economic growth is driving higher spending power, and that naturally translates into more people travelling,” Ankush Nijhawan said.

Speaking to BOTT about broader travel trends in 2026, Nijhawan said the year had been somewhat unusual, particularly because of disruptions in the Middle East, an important market and travel corridor for India. “The disturbances in the Middle East created some hiccups during the summer, par-

ticularly because it is such an important market and corridor for India. But what was interesting was how quickly travellers adapted and shifted to other destinations. Asia Pacific, in particular, saw significant traction as travellers looked for alternatives.”

For Aviareps General Manager El-lona Pereira, the event also underlined the depth and diversity of the Gujarat market. “WTC has created a very relevant platform for the trade, particularly because it brings together a strong mix of suppliers and travel professionals in one setting. Gujarat continues to be an important market for us. We also had the opportunity to meet trade partners from markets such as Kolkata, Chennai and Delhi, making the show useful not only from a Gujarat perspective but also as a broader networking platform. The quality of interaction and the opportunity to reconnect with the trade made the experience particularly worthwhile,” Pereira said. **BOTT**

Tanuja Pandey

When Travel became a calling



What began as a chance assignment in 1994 grew into a three-decade career spanning travel, MICE and experiential tourism. Tanuja Pandey, Advisor and Senior Consultant, Maharashtra Tourism, speaks to **BOTT** about building the state's Convention Bureau, shaping major tourism initiatives, her career milestones and the journeys that continue to inspire her.

Shreya Shimpi



Looking back on your journey so far, what inspired you to enter into this field and how has it shaped you as a professional?

I think I was meant to travel the world. It's something I had wanted to do since I was a child. I trained to be a German interpreter because I wanted to see the world. When I was in JNU, I thought of joining the foreign services, which would set me on a path of exploring the world. But the civil services exams were too tough to crack. I was still looking for a way to travel, and as it turned out-travel found me!

One day there was a bus full of Germans who wanted to go to Agra, and their German-speaking guide did not turn up. The agency handling that particular conference asked me if I would like to go to Agra, and I would just have to engage a local guide and translate what the guide said. They said they would arrange a hotel for me, and I would also get a chance to see the Taj Mahal. I thought, 'Okay, that sounds fun!' And that's how I got into the travel industry-by accident, and a great one indeed! So, I started in 1994, and here we are in 2026. 30 years later, I am still travelling, still discovering and still loving it.

Reflecting on 2025, what were the 3 highlights personally or professionally?

Since I have spent three decades in the tourism sector – conferences, inbound, outbound MICE, events, and the experiential space, I felt I had seen it all. Since I had built considerable experience in this sector, I felt I was ready for a new challenge. That opportunity came when Maharashtra Tourism called me to help them set up the Convention Bureau. That became one of the biggest professional wins of my career. I helped them establish the bureau in just one year.

Before that, I was part of creating the new Incredible India website for the Ministry of Tourism, which was again a significant milestone for me, where I wrote around 350 articles and curated around 1400. The Incredible India website was launched on World Tourism Day, 27th September 2024, by Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

Also, my most significant personal milestone is MICE Online- India's first platform designed to bring together the entire MICE ecosystem. This project won two awards consecutively from Economic Times in 2023 & 2024.

QUICK SHOTS

- Birth date and Sun Sign: **August 5, Leo**
- Mountains or Beaches?: **Both**
- Favourite holiday Destination – **Konkan and Paris**
- Best travel hack: **I always have one small folded cabin bag baggage suitcase packed with the basic things.**
- Window seat or aisle: **Window seat**
- Favourite cuisine: **Pan-Asian.**
- Advice to the first-time travel: **Respect the country that you're travelling to, read about their culture, and be a responsible traveller**



What is your dream destination for 2026?

I want to visit Angkor Wat in Cambodia this year.

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

My daughter lives in the UK; she's 25 years old, and my niece, who is like my elder daughter, is 29. My parents are in Pune. I am now based in Mumbai but move between Gurgaon and Pune on weekends.

A cherished childhood memory is that I was a tomboy and grew up riding bikes with an adventurous streak, having a huge gang of friends who are still with my little sister and me – they are my lifelines. **BOTT**

Hotel Sea Princess

refreshes its legacy for a new generation of travellers

Muneesh Budden, General Manager, Hotel Sea Princess, Mumbai, shares insights on the property's recent refurbishment, evolving guest expectations and its renewed positioning in the city's competitive hospitality landscape. He also outlines the hotel's growth focus across leisure, weddings, MICE and F&B. The Hotel is now part of Alliance Hotels portfolio.



Muneesh Budden, General Manager,
Hotel Sea Princess, Mumbai

BOTT Desk

What inspired the recent renovation of Hotel Sea Princess, and what were the key areas of focus?

The renovation was driven by our desire to continually evolve with the expectations of today's discerning traveller while retaining the unique character and legacy of Hotel Sea Princess.

Our focus was on creating a more contemporary and comfortable environment across key guest touchpoints, including rooms and public areas, while enhancing aesthetics, functional-

ity and the overall service environment. At the same time, it was important not to lose what makes Sea Princess special – its location, warmth and distinctive Mumbai identity. The objective was not simply to renovate spaces, but to refresh the experience while preserving the essence of the property.

How has the refurbishment enhanced the overall guest experience?

The refurbishment has allowed us to offer guests a more contemporary and seamless experience, with greater emphasis on comfort, aesthetics and functionality.

For a five-star hotel, the guest experience goes beyond the room. It is about how a guest feels from arrival through their stay, dining experience and interactions with our team. The refreshed spaces provide a stronger backdrop for our service philosophy. It also gives us a stronger platform to meet the expecta-

tations of loyal guests and a new generation of travellers looking for quality, convenience, distinctive experiences and personalised service.

With Mumbai's hospitality market becoming increasingly competitive, how is Sea Princess positioning itself differently?

Our approach is not to compete purely on size or scale, but on our ability to offer a distinctive and memorable experience. Our location, legacy and proximity to the sea provide a natural advantage, while our focus remains on personalized service, consistency, food and beverage experiences and creating a sense of place that guests associate specifically with Sea Princess. We believe a hotel needs to continually reinvent itself without losing its identity. The refurbishment is part of that journey, alongside investing in our people and strengthening our service culture. **BOTT**



UTEN CELEBRATES A SUCCESSFUL TAIWAN EDUCATIONAL FAM UTEN FAM TRIP HOSTED BY TAIWAN TOURISM ADMINISTRATION



On behalf of the UTEN Founders, Winifred D'Souza and Satyaprakash Gupta, we extend our sincere appreciation to Paul from the Taiwan Tourism Administration for accompanying us throughout the tour. We feel truly fortunate and honoured to have had your company during the entire journey. We thoroughly enjoyed your presence and sincerely appreciate the excellent arrangements made for all of us. This has been an unforgettable and enriching educational trip for everyone.

A heartfelt thank you to Paul, Noel, and Nitya Mehra for giving us this opportunity and for considering UTEN for the Taiwan destination educational FAM trip. This would not have been possible without your support. The itinerary was exceptionally well planned and executed, making this a highly successful educational tour for all UTEN travel professionals. The knowledge and experiences gained during this trip will help us collectively market, promote, and sell the unique destination of Taiwan more effectively.



To Register in UTEN as a B2B Subscriber/B2C Subscriber
Do Connect to UTEN Founders Team

Winifred D'Souza: 9867750707 | Satyaprakash Gupta: 9820165612

utentravelnetworking@gmail.com / founders@uten.in www.uten.in

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VOYAGE 1 DMC

Chander Chugh has been appointed Global Director – Operations at Voyage 1 DMC. With over 18 years of experience in destination management across the UAE and wider Middle East, he will focus on strengthening operational excellence, service delivery, partner relationships and internal processes. Chugh will also support the company's international growth strategy while enhancing service standards and strengthening relationships with travel partners across key markets.



DOUBLETREE BY HILTON BENGALURU AIRPORT

Anuj Chaudhry has been appointed General Manager of DoubleTree by Hilton Bengaluru Airport. Bringing over two decades of hospitality experience, he will lead overall operations, business performance, guest experience and team development. Chaudhry previously served as General Manager of Aravali Marriott Resort & Spa, Delhi NCR, and as Cluster General Manager for Grand Mercure Bangalore, Grand Mercure Mysore and ibis Styles Mysuru.



JAIPUR EXHIBITION AND CONVENTION CENTRE & NOVOTEL JAIPUR CONVENTION CENTRE

Samiran has joined Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre and Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre, bringing over 15 years of experience across hospitality, media, entertainment and consumer brands. He has previously worked with 92.7 FM, Rajasthan Patrika, PVR INOX, Sayaji Hotels and Hilton Hotels. His expertise spans brand strategy, digital marketing, public relations, revenue-driven campaigns, experiential activations, marketing analytics and stakeholder engagement.



HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS GURUGRAM SECTOR 50

Raman Sharma has joined Holiday Inn Express Gurugram Sector 50 as General Manager. With over 20 years of hospitality experience, he will oversee hotel operations, commercial strategy, guest experience and team performance. Associated with IHG since 2013, Sharma has extensive experience across sales, marketing, revenue management and operations, and has previously undertaken Taskforce Hotel Manager assignments at Holiday Inn Express Greater Noida and Kolkata Airport.



EROS HOTEL NEW DELHI BY IHG

Mohit Singh has joined Eros Hotel New Delhi by IHG as Director of Operations. Bringing extensive experience in hotel operations and food & beverage, he most recently served as Director of Operations and Area F&B Champion at Crowne Plaza Mayur Vihar Delhi. In his new role, Singh will focus on operational efficiency, service excellence and enhancing the overall guest experience while supporting the hotel's operational priorities.



THRS

Paroma Dutt Mehra has been appointed Vice President – Content and Media Strategy at THRS. Associated with the company since its early years, she will focus on strengthening brand positioning through strategic media relations, communications and impactful campaigns. Mehra brings extensive PR and corporate communications experience, having worked with Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, Oberoi Hotels & Resorts, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts and leading global PR agencies.

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