Travel Links

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VOL. 7 | NO. 4 | AUGUST - SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2026

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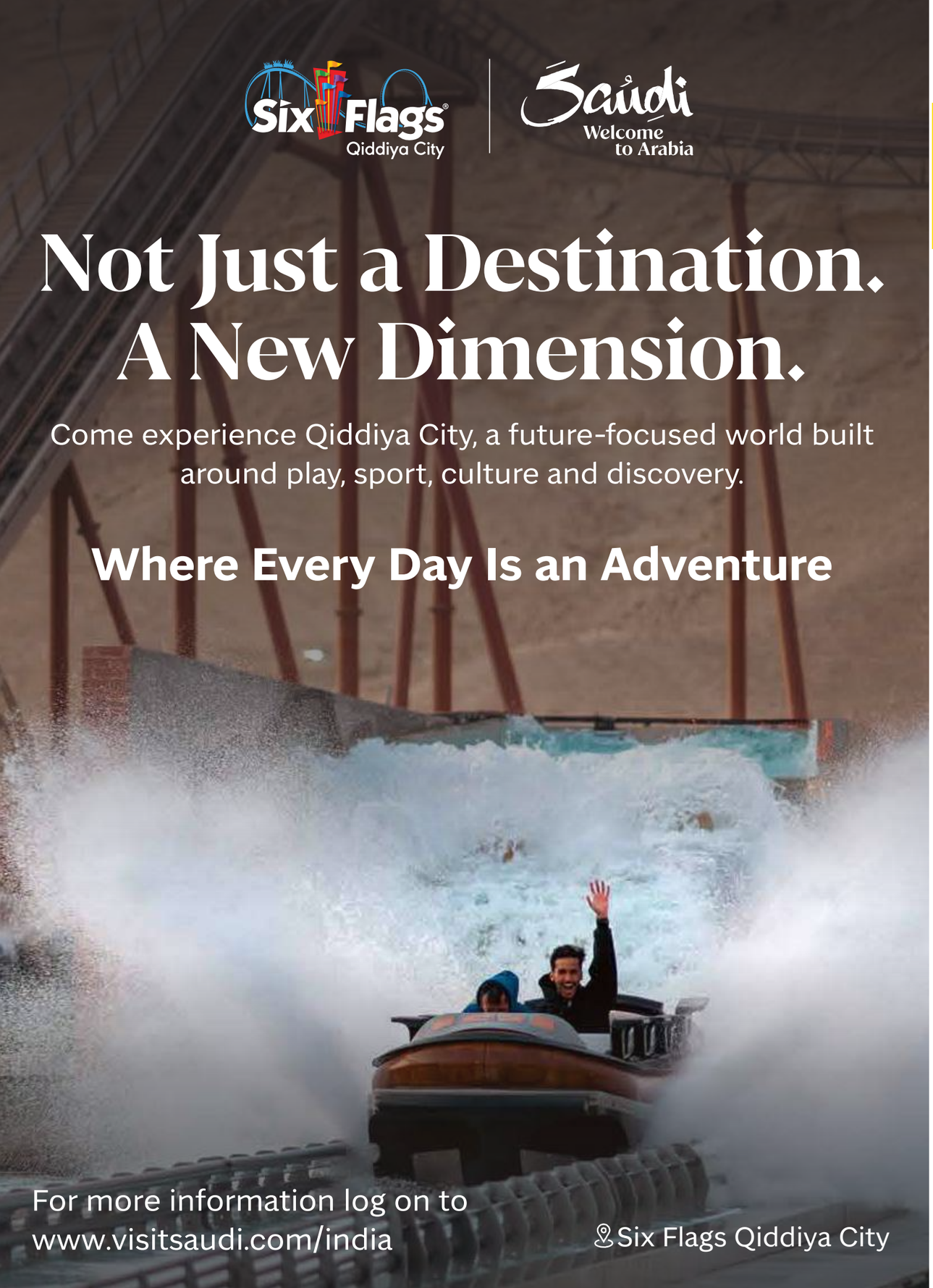
INDIA 2030:
Are We Ready for the Next Tourism Boom?

Kerala:
Where India's Soul Meets The World

INTERVIEWS | TRAVEL TRADE | TOURISM BOOM



Travel Links

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THE TRAVEL TRADE IS MOVING. BUT WHERE ARE WE GOING?

There is a certain energy in the travel industry at this time of the year. The calendar fills up, bags are packed, airports get busier, and the travel trade moves from one destination to another—from one mart, convention, and sales mission to the next. Meetings happen, business cards change hands, presentations are made, photographs are taken, and promises of partnerships are exchanged.

But somewhere between all these movements, there is a question worth asking: **What are we really achieving?**

This issue of **Travel Links** comes at a particularly interesting time for Indian tourism. The industry is undoubtedly growing. Domestic travel is stronger than ever, outbound travel continues to expand, and India itself is attracting increasing attention as a destination. The numbers tell a positive story. But numbers alone do not tell us whether the industry is moving in the right direction.

Our cover theme, **"India 2030: Are We Ready for the Next Tourism Boom?"**, therefore looks beyond the immediate excitement. If tourism is expected to become one of the major engines of India's economy, are our infrastructure, connectivity, products, skills and policies ready for the traveller of tomorrow? And perhaps more importantly, are we ready to sell it differently?

The travel trade itself is changing rapidly. Technology, AI, changing consumer behaviour and the rise of the experience economy are redefining the role of the travel professional. The question is no longer simply about selling a destination or a hotel room. It is about understanding the traveller, creating relevance and adding value.

This issue brings voices from across the industry into that conversation. Our interviews, including our interaction with J. Kantawala, and Kevin Markette, offer perspectives from people who are closely watching the changing travel landscape. We have also looked analytically at the travel trade itself—its opportunities, its challenges and, importantly, what we are actually gaining or losing in the race for business.

And then there is the season of trade. **Kerala Travel Mart 2026**, along with the series of conventions, marts and industry gatherings that follow, once again brings the travel fraternity together.

But a successful trade event should ultimately be measured by what happens **after** the meetings. Did business come out of it? Did a new destination find a market? Did a supplier understand what the Indian traveller wants? Did a travel advisor discover something genuinely new to sell?

That is the conversation we wanted to initiate in this issue.

We also turn our attention to the traveller and the coming winter season—destinations worth discovering, experiences worth seeking and places that deserve a place on the traveller's itinerary.

At **Travel Links,** we have always believed that the travel trade is not merely about selling travel. It is about shaping travel.

As we heads towards 2030, the opportunity is enormous. But opportunity alone is not enough. **We need better products, smarter selling, stronger collaboration and, above all, the courage to ask difficult questions.**

This issue is our attempt to do exactly that.

Editor
Payal Sahni
travellinkslive.com

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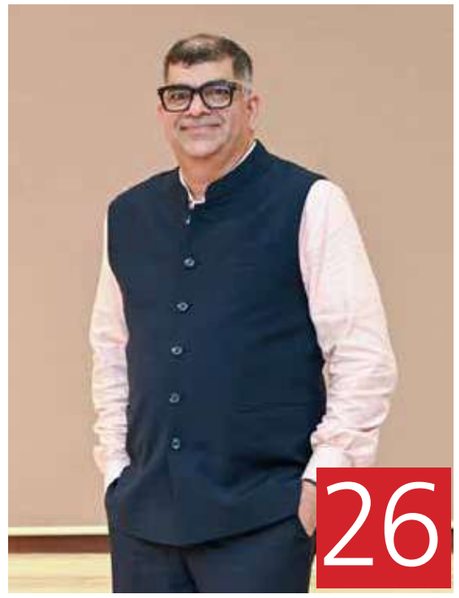
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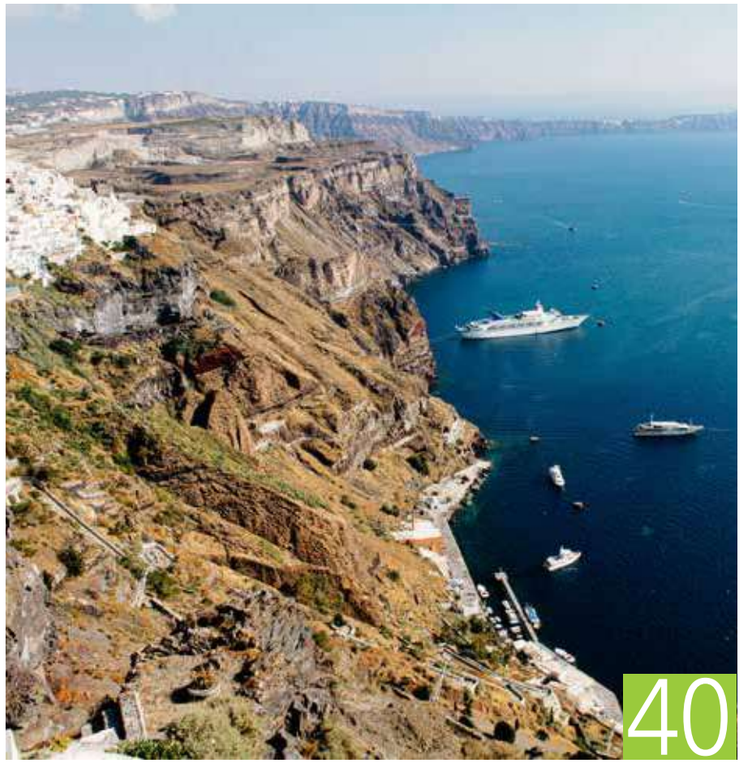
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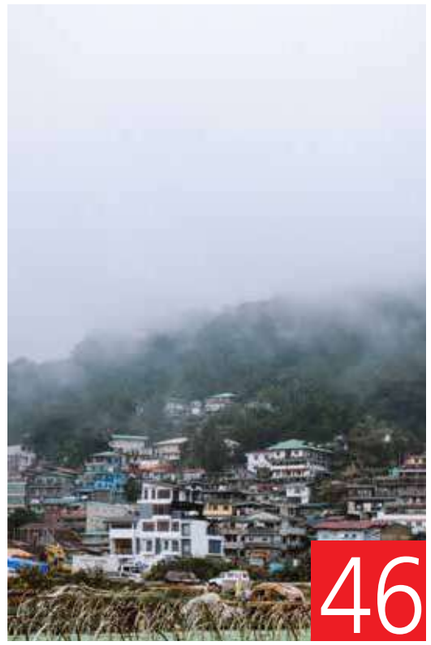
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INDIA 2030:
Are We Ready for the Next Tourism Boom?

India has the scale, the appetite and the ambition. The next five years will determine whether the country can transform that momentum into a globally competitive tourism powerhouse.

By Team TL

India has the scale, the appetite and the ambition. The next five years will determine whether the country can transform that momentum into a globally competitive tourism powerhouse.

India's tourism story has entered a different phase.

For years, the country's tourism potential was discussed largely in terms of what India could become: a country with extraordinary heritage, a vast coastline, the Himalayas, wildlife, spirituality, cuisine, wellness, luxury hospitality and one of the world's fastest-growing middle classes.

That conversation is changing.

India is no longer simply talking about tourism potential. It is operating at enormous scale.

In 2025, India recorded 20.22 million international tourist arrivals, while domestic tourist visits reached an extraordinary 4.286 billion. The numbers underline the fundamental strength of India's tourism economy: a gigantic domestic market combined with a rapidly recovering and increasingly ambitious international proposition.

The economic numbers are equally compelling. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council's latest Economic Impact Research, Travel & Tourism generated US$263.6 billion for India's economy in 2025, supported 46.2 million jobs, and grew by 7.3% during the year. WTTC expects the sector's contribution to reach US$286.1 billion in 2026 and almost double to US$527 billion by 2036.

The question, therefore, is no longer whether India will experience another tourism boom.

The real question is:

Can India manage the next boom—and turn it into better tourism?

That distinction will define the country's tourism story towards 2030.

THE SCALE IS ALREADY HERE

India's biggest tourism advantage is one that few destinations can replicate: scale.

The domestic market provides an extraordinary economic foundation. Millions of Indians are travelling for leisure, pilgrimage, business, weddings, wellness, adventure and short breaks. The country's growing affluent and upper-middle-class population is also creating demand for premium hotels, curated experiences, cruises, private journeys and experiential luxury.

International tourism adds another layer.

The Ministry of Tourism's latest dashboard records more than 20 million international tourist arrivals in 2025. At the same time, Indian nationals made 32.83 million departures overseas, demonstrating the extraordinary size of India's outbound market.

This creates an unusual tourism equation.

India is simultaneously: A giant domestic tourism market, a major emerging outbound market, and a destination with enormous untapped inbound potential.

For the Indian travel trade, that represents opportunity on three fronts.

For destinations, it means more Indians travelling within the country and abroad.

For hotels and hospitality companies, it means an expanding customer base.

For the government, it means tourism can become a larger engine of employment, investment, foreign exchange and regional development.

But scale by itself is not enough.

THE NEXT BATTLE: QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

India's tourism industry has spent decades discussing arrival numbers.

The next decade needs to focus more heavily on value per visitor.

A destination can increase arrivals without necessarily increasing the economic benefits of tourism. The more important questions are:

How long does a visitor stay?

How much does the visitor spend? How widely is that spending distributed? Does it reach smaller destinations and local communities? Does the visitor return?

Does the destination generate positive word-of-mouth?

And, critically, can India attract the kind of international traveller who chooses a destination for a high-value experience rather than simply its price?

This is where luxury, wellness, MICE, cruises, experiential travel, adventure and specialised tourism become strategically important.

India does not need to compete purely on volume.

It can compete on depth of experience.

THE NEW INDIAN TRAVELLER

Perhaps the biggest transformation taking place is not international at all.

It is happening inside India.

The Indian traveller is becoming more confident, more informed and more demanding.

Travel is no longer limited to the traditional annual holiday. Short breaks, destination weddings, wellness retreats, adventure holidays, cruises, culinary journeys, spiritual travel, luxury safaris and workations are creating multiple reasons to travel.

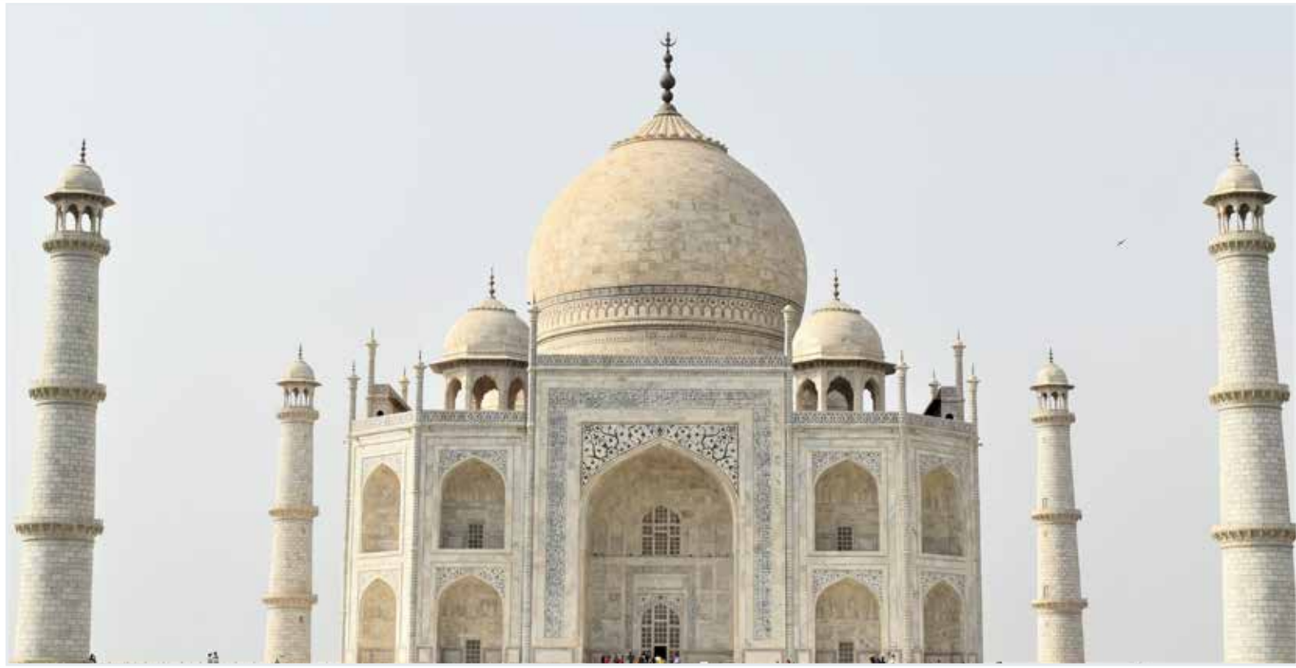
The traveller is also becoming less dependent on conventional itineraries.

A destination that was once considered "too far" can suddenly become attractive because of an Instagram reel, a recommendation from a creator, a new flight route or a unique hotel.

This is particularly important for India's emerging destinations.

The opportunity for the next five years is not simply to bring more tourists to India's established destinations.

It is to persuade travellers to stay longer and travel deeper.



Instead of Delhi–Agra–Jaipur, for example, the future could involve longer regional circuits.

Instead of a single Kerala holiday, there could be a combination of wellness, responsible tourism, Ayurveda, backwaters, cuisine and lesser-known communities.

Instead of visiting only Goa, travellers can be encouraged to explore India's wider coastline.

The next generation of Indian tourism will be built around experiences rather than checklists.

AVIATION: THE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT WILL DECIDE THE FUTURE

Tourism cannot grow beyond the capacity of its connectivity.

India has made substantial progress in aviation infrastructure and regional connectivity, but the next phase will require an even stronger network connecting international gateways with secondary and emerging destinations.

The Ministry of Tourism has identified infrastructure development through programmes such as Swadesh Darshan 2.0, alongside coordination with the RCS-UDAN programme, as part of its strategy to increase tourist footfall.

For tourism, the question is not simply how many airports India has.

It is whether a traveller can reach a destination efficiently.

A tourist flying into Delhi or Mumbai should increasingly be able to connect seamlessly to destinations across the country.

That means more regional routes, better airport infrastructure, reliable ground transportation and stronger last-mile connectivity.

The tourism map of India will expand only when the aviation map expands with it.

THE CRUISE OPPORTUNITY

India's coastline and inland waterways represent another largely underdeveloped tourism asset.

Cruise tourism can combine accommodation, entertainment, transportation and destination experiences in one product. It also creates opportunities for ports and surrounding cities to benefit from visitor spending.

The Ministry of Tourism's latest annual report highlights the enormous potential of both international and domestic cruise tourism and notes the constitution of a dedicated Task Force on Cruise Tourism.

The opportunity is significant.

India has a long coastline.

It has major port cities.

It has rivers.

It has heritage destinations.

It has a large domestic travel market.

The challenge is to build the infrastructure and product ecosystem that makes India not simply a port of call but a cruise destination in its own right.

River cruising could become another important component, particularly as travellers increasingly seek slower and more immersive forms of travel.

As the sector expands, India will need not merely more workers, but better-trained professionals in hospitality, destination management, guiding, culinary arts, aviation, cruise operations, wellness, MICE and luxury travel.

MICE: THE HIGH-VALUE ENGINE

Another major opportunity is MICE—meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions.

India has the ingredients.

A large corporate economy, improving airports, expanding hotel inventory, world-class convention facilities, heritage venues and increasingly sophisticated destination management companies create the foundation for significant growth.

But the opportunity extends beyond conferences.

The future of MICE is increasingly about experience.

Corporate travellers want food, culture, wellness, adventure and local experiences alongside meetings.

Incentive groups want destinations that can deliver something participants cannot easily experience elsewhere.

That makes India exceptionally well positioned.

A conference in India can potentially combine business with yoga, wildlife, gastronomy, heritage, shopping, spirituality or adventure.

The country therefore has the potential to move from being a venue for meetings to becoming a destination for transformational business experiences.

LUXURY IS BEING REDEFINED

India's luxury tourism opportunity is particularly interesting.

Luxury used to be associated primarily with five-star hotels, suites, fine dining and premium transportation.

That definition is rapidly changing. Today's luxury traveller increasingly values privacy, access, authenticity, personalisation and time. A private wildlife experience may be more luxurious than a grand hotel.

A villa in a remote destination may be more desirable than a traditional city hotel.

A private culinary experience with a local chef can have greater perceived value than an elaborate restaurant.

Wellness, longevity, Ayurveda, spiritual retreats and slow travel are also expanding the definition of luxury.

India has a natural advantage here.

The country possesses centuries of knowledge around wellness, yoga, Ayurveda, meditation and holistic living.

The opportunity is to transform that heritage into sophisticated, globally marketable products without reducing it to a superficial wellness label.

SPIRITUAL TOURISM: FROM PILGRIMAGE TO EXPERIENCE

Religious and spiritual tourism will remain one of India's largest tourism engines.

But it too is evolving.

India's pilgrimage destinations are increasingly being developed as complete tourism ecosystems.

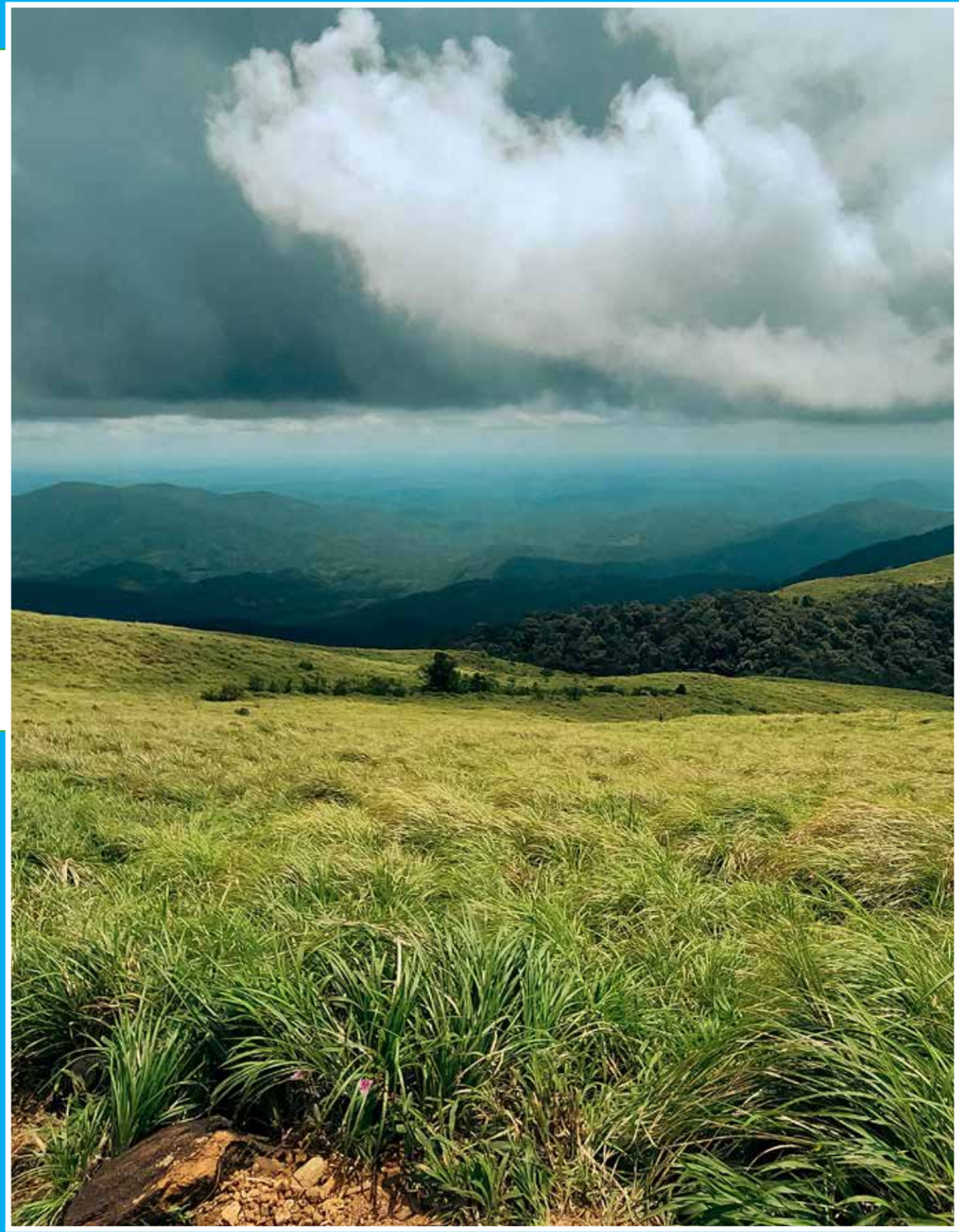
The traveller of tomorrow may not simply visit a temple or shrine and return.

They may stay longer, explore the surrounding region, experience local cuisine, visit heritage sites and participate in wellness or spiritual programmes.

That creates opportunities for smaller towns and rural areas.

However, the challenge will be managing visitor pressure.

Successful spiritual tourism cannot mean simply putting more people into already crowded



Tourism cannot be managed only through promotional PR campaigns. Major destinations need professional destination-management systems.

destinations.

It must mean better infrastructure, sanitation, crowd management, accommodation, transportation and destination planning.

THE NEXT INDIA: BEYOND THE USUAL DESTINATIONS

Perhaps the most exciting opportunity lies outside India's traditional tourism circuit.

The next tourism boom could belong to destinations that today sit outside the mainstream itinerary.

Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, the Northeast, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra's emerging destinations, coastal Karnataka and several Himalayan and central Indian regions possess the ingredients for major growth.

But attractions alone do not create destinations.

- **A destination needs:**
- **Accessibility.**
- **Accommodation.**
- **Experiences.**
- **Skilled manpower.**
- **Digital visibility.**
- **Destination management.**
- **Investment.**
- **And a compelling reason to visit.**

The next phase of Indian tourism therefore requires states to think less like administrators and more like destination marketers.

The question should not simply be, "What attractions do we have?"

It should be:

"What experience can we sell to the world?"

INDIA'S BIGGEST COMPETITION MAY BE ABROAD

India is not competing only with other Indian destinations.

It is competing with Dubai, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Europe, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Indonesia and an increasingly aggressive group of global destinations seeking the Indian traveller.

The outbound Indian market is becoming one of the most coveted tourism markets in the world.

The Ministry's 2025 data records 32.83 million Indian national departures, up 6.3% from the previous year.

This creates a fascinating paradox.

India wants more international tourists to come into the country.

At the same time, more Indians are travelling internationally.

That is not necessarily a weakness.

It is an opportunity.

An Indian who travels internationally becomes a more experienced traveller—and potentially a more demanding domestic traveller.

The lesson for Indian destinations is simple:

India cannot expect Indians to choose domestic destinations merely because they are cheaper.

Domestic tourism has to offer experiences compelling enough to compete with international travel.

THE AI QUESTION

No discussion about tourism towards 2030 can ignore artificial intelligence.

AI is already changing how travellers search, compare and plan.

The traditional travel funnel—dream, research, compare, book—is becoming compressed.

Travellers can ask an AI platform to create an itinerary, compare destinations, identify hotels and suggest experiences within seconds.

This will fundamentally change the role of travel advisors.

But it may not eliminate them.

In complex travel—luxury holidays, cruises, MICE, multi-country itineraries, special-interest journeys and high-value trips—professional advice remains important.

The travel advisor of 2030 may therefore be less of a transaction processor and more of a travel strategist.

AI may provide the information.

The human advisor will provide the judgement.

SUSTAINABILITY: THE TEST INDIA CANNOT AVOID

The next tourism boom will put enormous pressure on destinations.

More visitors mean more flights, more vehicles, more hotels, more water consumption, more waste and greater pressure on heritage and natural assets.

India therefore faces a crucial choice.

Do we measure tourism success simply by the number of visitors?

Or do we measure it by the quality and sustainability of the tourism economy?

Responsible tourism has to move beyond a marketing slogan.

It has to influence destination planning, hotel construction, waste management, water consumption, local employment and community participation.

The Ministry's own tourism strategy increasingly places emphasis on responsible and sustainable destination development, while programmes such as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 seek a more holistic approach to destination development.

The real measure of sustainable tourism will ultimately be whether local communities believe tourism improves their lives.

THE PEOPLE QUESTION

There is one issue that can determine whether every other ambition succeeds: people.

- **Tourism is a service industry.**
- **Airports can be modern.**
- **Hotels can be spectacular.**
- **Roads can be excellent.**
- **Digital platforms can be sophisticated.**

But the experience ultimately depends on people.

India's tourism growth therefore needs a parallel investment in skills.

WTTC estimates that Travel & Tourism supported 46.2 million jobs in India in 2025, highlighting the sector's enormous employment significance.

As the sector expands, India will need not merely more workers, but better-trained professionals in hospitality, destination

management, guiding, culinary arts, aviation, cruise operations, wellness, MICE and luxury travel.

Tourism can become one of India's largest employment engines—but only if skills development grows alongside demand.

WHAT MUST CHANGE BEFORE 2030?

India has the raw ingredients.
But five priorities will determine whether those ingredients become a globally competitive tourism economy.

1. CONNECTIVITY MUST OUTRUN DEMAND

Air, rail and road connectivity need to reach emerging destinations before visitor numbers overwhelm them.

2. DESTINATIONS NEED PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT

Tourism cannot be managed only through promotional campaigns. Major destinations need professional destination-management systems.

3. INDIA NEEDS TO SELL EXPERIENCES, NOT INVENTORIES

The future traveller is buying stories, memories and access—not simply hotel rooms and sightseeing tickets.

4. HIGH-VALUE TOURISM MUST BECOME A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Luxury, MICE, wellness, cruises, adventure and specialised tourism can increase visitor spending and extend stays.

5. THE INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT MUST WORK AS ONE

Tourism is inherently cross-sectorial. Aviation, railways, roads, immigration, culture, environment, hospitality and state governments all influence the visitor experience.

No tourism ministry can deliver a global tourism transformation alone.

THE 2030 TEST

By 2030, India will probably have more airports, more hotels, more highways, more tourism products and more travellers than it does today.

But infrastructure alone will not define success.

The real test will be whether India can make a visitor say:

"I want to stay longer."

Whether the international traveller who once spent two or three nights in India decides to spend seven.

Whether the Indian traveller who routinely flies overseas chooses to discover another part of India.

Whether a luxury traveller finds experiences here that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

Whether a conference organiser sees India not simply as a cost-effective destination but as an exceptional one.

Whether smaller destinations receive tourism investment before they become overcrowded.

And whether the economic benefits reach communities beyond the traditional tourism centres.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS NOW

The numbers suggest that India's tourism economy is entering a powerful period of expansion.

WTTC's latest research puts the country's Travel & Tourism contribution at US$263.6 billion in 2025, with a forecast of US$286.1 billion in 2026 and almost US$527 billion by 2036.

But numbers do not automatically create a tourism superpower.

- **Strategy does.**
- **Connectivity does.**
- **Investment does.**
- **Destination management does.**
- **Service quality does.**

And, ultimately, the ability to create experiences that people value enough to travel for does.

India has one of the world's greatest tourism stories to tell.

The next chapter will not be about proving that India has tourism potential.

That has already been established.

The next chapter is about proving that India can deliver tourism at global scale without losing the authenticity, diversity and cultural richness that make the country extraordinary in the first place.

The opportunity towards 2030 is therefore bigger than simply attracting more tourists.

It is about building a tourism economy that is larger, smarter, more sustainable, more inclusive and significantly more valuable.

- **India has the scale.**
- **It has the destinations.**
- **It has the travellers.**
- **It has the investment.**

And increasingly, it has the infrastructure.

Now comes the harder part:

Turning potential into performance.

INDIA 2030: THE NUMBERS TO WATCH

- 20.22 million — International tourist arrivals in India in 2025.
- 4.286 billion — Domestic tourist visits recorded in 2025.
- 32.83 million — Indian national departures in 2025.
- US$263.6 billion — Travel & Tourism's contribution to India's economy in 2025, according to WTTC.
- 46.2 million — Jobs supported by Travel & Tourism in India in 2025.
- US$286.1 billion — WTTC's projected Travel & Tourism contribution for 2026.
- US$527 billion — WTTC's projected Travel & Tourism contribution by 2036.

THE TRAVEL LINKS TAKE

India's tourism challenge is no longer attracting attention. It is converting attention into longer stays, higher spending, better experiences and sustainable growth. The next five years could determine whether India becomes merely one of the world's biggest tourism markets—or one of its most influential tourism economies.

Travel Links Interview with Mr. Kevin Markette, Senior director- regional sales South Asia for the Lufthansa Group

by Payal Sahni

About Kevin:

Based in New Delhi, Kevin oversees all commercial activities for the Lufthansa Group across the South Asia region, including the strategically important Indian market.

A seasoned aviation executive, Kevin brings over 20 years of leadership experience within Lufthansa Group, having successfully managed commercial, customer, and operational teams across Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas. Raised in Spain and South Africa and trained as a commercial pilot, Kevin offers a truly global perspective and strong intercultural fluency.

According to Lufthansa Group Vice President Asia Pacific and Joint Ventures East, Felipe Bonifatti:

"With over two decades at Lufthansa Group, Kevin brings extensive international experience to the Asia Pacific region. His sharp commercial insight and passion for our industry make him an invaluable addition. I am delighted to welcome him to Delhi, where he will lead all commercial activities for the Lufthansa Group in this strategically important market."

Kevin is passionate about building high-performing, cross-cultural teams and cultivating long-term partnerships with customers and stakeholders. Outside of work, he and his wife Jolene enjoy traveling, culinary adventures, and spending time outdoors.

Q Lufthansa's association with India spans several decades. Looking back, what has been the biggest milestone in strengthening the India-Germany air corridor?

India has been a cornerstone of Lufthansa Group's international network for more than six decades, reflecting our longstanding commitment to one of the world's most dynamic aviation markets. Today, Lufthansa Group is the largest European airline group serving India, connecting five Indian gateways with four European hubs and operating around 11 daily departures. This sustained investment has created one of the strongest aviation bridges between India and Europe, supporting business, tourism and cultural exchange while reinforcing our long-term confidence in the Indian market.

Q India is now among Lufthansa Group's fastest-growing markets. What is driving this momentum, and where do you see the next phase of growth coming from?

India's growth is being driven by a rapidly expanding middle class, stronger business ties with Europe, growing outbound leisure travel, and increasing demand for premium travel. Looking ahead, we see tremendous potential in premium leisure, corporate travel, SMEs, and student mobility, supported by India's sustained economic growth and closer cooperation with Europe.

Q Lufthansa recently expanded its India operations. Can travellers expect more flights, new gateways or increased frequencies in the coming months?

We're continuously evaluating opportunities to grow where demand and operational conditions support expansion. This year alone, we've made significant investments in the Indian market, including introducing our new Allegris cabin on multiple routes, deploying the Boeing 787-9 to Delhi and Hyderabad - and to Mumbai from early August as well as operating our flagship Airbus A380 to Mumbai. Looking ahead, SWISS will launch its first-ever nonstop service between Zurich and Bengaluru from late October. India remains a strategic growth market for Lufthansa Group, and we will continue investing in both our network and the customer experience.

Q The new Allegris cabin experience is creating considerable interest worldwide. When can Indian travellers expect to experience Lufthansa's latest premium products across more routes?

India was one of the first markets outside our home markets to experience Allegris, underscoring its strategic importance to Lufthansa Group. Customers in Bengaluru already enjoy the new cabin experience, while Delhi and Hyderabad are now served by our latest Boeing 787-9 aircraft featuring Allegris. From early August, Mumbai will also welcome the Boeing 787-9 with Allegris. As more aircraft enter our fleet, we will continue expanding the rollout, with the goal of bringing our latest premium products to as many customers in India as quickly as operationally possible.

Q From digital services to airport experience, what are the most significant upgrades Lufthansa has introduced recently to make the passenger journey more seamless?

We're investing across the entire customer journey. That includes our new Allegris cabins, digital self-service tools, improved mobile functionality, biometric innovations at selected airports, and onboard connectivity through Starlink on selected aircraft launching this year. Together, these investments make travel simpler, more personalised and more comfortable.

Q Sustainability has become central to aviation. Beyond Sustainable Aviation Fuel, what tangible steps is Lufthansa Group taking today that passengers can actually experience or benefit from?

Sustainability is about much more than fuel. Lufthansa Group is investing billions of euros in one of the world's most modern and fuel-efficient fleets, helping to reduce emissions while also delivering quieter aircraft and an enhanced onboard experience. Customers can also choose Green Fares, which combine sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) with carbon offsetting, while our latest aircraft and cabin designs are lighter and more energy efficient without compromising comfort.

Beyond investments in the customer experience, we're also investing in innovation. This includes our patented AeroSHARK technology, which reduces aerodynamic drag and improves fuel efficiency, further supporting our efforts to reduce emissions across our operations

Beyond investments in the customer experience, we're also investing in innovation. This includes our patented AeroSHARK technology, which reduces aerodynamic drag and improves fuel efficiency, further supporting our efforts to reduce emissions across our operations

Q Germany continues to attract Indian leisure travellers, business visitors and students. Which segment do you believe offers the greatest untapped potential over the next few years?

All three segments are growing strongly, but I believe premium leisure offers the greatest untapped opportunity. Indian travellers are increasingly looking for authentic, high-quality experiences beyond traditional destinations, and Germany offers exactly that - from cultural cities and castles to wine regions, nature and Christmas markets - while remaining an excellent gateway to the rest of Europe.

Q With increasing competition on Europe routes, what do you believe continues to set Lufthansa Group apart for Indian travellers and the travel trade?

All three segments are performing strongly, but I believe premium leisure presents the greatest growth opportunity. Indian travellers are increasingly seeking authentic, high-quality experiences beyond the traditional European hotspots, and Germany is ideally positioned to meet that demand. Whether it's vibrant cultural cities, historic castles, world-renowned wine regions, spectacular natural landscapes or iconic Christmas markets, Germany offers a rich diversity of experiences while also serving as an excellent gateway to the rest of Europe.

Q Travel Links has long championed premium, experiential and sustainable tourism. How do you see the travel media and trade working alongside airlines like Lufthansa to inspire more Indians to explore Germany and Europe beyond the traditional destinations?

The travel trade and media play a vital role in inspiring travel and shaping destination choices. Together, we have an opportunity to showcase experiences beyond the well-known cities—from charming towns and villages to culinary journeys, outdoor adventures and more sustainable ways to explore Germany. The more we tell these stories together, the more we can inspire travellers to discover a different side of Germany and, through our hubs, the rest of Europe.

Q Finally, if you had to describe Lufthansa Group's vision for India in just one sentence, what would it be?

Our vision is to be India's preferred European airline group by connecting people, cultures and economies in a sustainable way through the most modern fleet, the best premium experience and an unwavering commitment to this remarkable market.

AT ASEGO, WE FOCUS ON BECOMING A DEDICATED TRAVEL PROTECTION AND GLOBAL ASSISTANCE PARTNER FOR THE B2B TRAVEL ECOSYSTEM.

Q Travel today is increasingly seamless and technology-led. Where does travel protection fit into this evolving ecosystem?

Travel today is built around convenience. A few clicks take travellers from browsing to booking flights, hotels, visas, transfers and a host of other services connected through an increasingly seamless ecosystem. Travel protection has naturally become an important part of this journey.

However, there is a fundamental difference between travel protection and other travel products. Its value is not truly experienced at the time of purchase; it is tested when something goes wrong. It is when a flight is cancelled, baggage goes missing, medical assistance is required overseas or a claim needs to be resolved that protection becomes more than a product. It becomes a critical responsibility.

That is why it is not enough to ask, "Does this offer protection?" But, "Who stands behind that protection, and how dependable are they?"

Q Why does specialisation matter in travel protection?

In travel protection, domain depth matters as much as organisational scale. A specialist provider builds its business around a clear purpose, which is to understand travel, anticipate risks and support travellers when things go awry. Over time, this focus creates expertise that extends far beyond product features. It moves to how assistance should be delivered and how claims need to be handled when situations are complex and unexpected.

Technology can make access to protection faster and distribution more seamless, but what sits behind that transaction ultimately determines the experience. It is hard to replicate this depth of understanding simply by adding travel protection to a broader portfolio.

Q What does trust and accountability mean when it comes to travel protection?

For a travel advisor, recommending a protection provider is also a matter of professional accountability. Their reputation is intrinsically connected to the solutions they recommend to their customers. So, reliability, responsible handling of customer information, accessibility of service

and accountability in claims are not secondary considerations but fundamental to the relationship.

A trusted protection partner has to demonstrate dependability when the traveller actually needs it. The relationship does not end when a policy is issued; in many ways, that is when the real responsibility begins.

Q How does Asego approach its relationship with the travel trade?

At Asego, we focus on becoming a dedicated travel protection and global assistance partner for the B2B travel ecosystem. That means building our capabilities around the needs of travel trade partners rather than treating them simply as another distribution channel.

For us, a travel advisor is a partner whose business growth matters. That distinction influences everything we do – from product development and servicing to the technology we invest in. Our objective is to give partners the confidence to recommend protection because it has meaningful expertise and capability behind it.

Q Technology is transforming travel rapidly. What role should it play in travel protection?

For us, technology needs to make it easier for partners to sell, service, manage and support travel protection while removing friction from the customer experience. It should simplify the journey rather than add another digital layer to it.

The travel protection market will continue to evolve. Technology will become more deeply embedded, product choices will expand and distribution will become increasingly seamless. All of this is positive. But as the market grows, the value of specialisation becomes greater, not less. Technology can enable the experience, but expertise gives that experience substance.

Q What does 26 years of expertise mean for Asego?

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 travel trade, its evolving challenges, expectations and, most importantly, the expertise to prove trustworthy when the promise of protection is put to the test.

For us, those 26 years represent the learnings accumulated from being deeply invested in one domain and understanding what travellers and travel partners need as the industry evolves. Our vision is simple: to pursue excellence in what matters—protecting travellers and enabling the partners who serve them to do so with confidence.

Because when a traveller's journey is at stake, protection should not be an experiment. It should come with experience.

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A slow lane is the best lane: VIVA Cruises River Cruise lover's manifesto

By Payal Sahni

here are journeys that merely tick destinations off a list — and then there are journeys that fundamentally rewrite the way you think about travel. My seven-night river cruise aboard a VIVA Cruises vessel, sailing from the magnificent Hungarian capital of Budapest through Bratislava, Austria, small towns across Germany, and a constellation of lesser-known riverine districts, belonged firmly in the second category. Invited by Discover the World India — the official representative of VIVA Cruises in the subcontinent — this was not just a press trip. It was an education in slow, soulful, luxury travel. And as someone who has spent decades curating and experiencing the finest journeys, I do not say that lightly.

Why River Cruising Is the Future of exquisite Luxury Travel

River cruising is having its moment, and those in the know have already made the switch. At Travel Links, we have long championed experiential luxury over ostentatious opulence — travel that is curated, intimate, and genuinely transformative. VIVA Cruises, with its elegant ships sailing the legendary Danube corridor, ticks every single one of those boxes.

The fundamental USP of a river cruise is this: *your hotel moves with you*. That single sentence changes everything about the calculus of travel. There is no marathon check-in at a new property every night, no dragging luggage across cobblestoned squares, no taxi-to-hotel-to-taxi fatigue. You unpack once, settle into your cabin, and let Europe unfold outside your window — sometimes at the speed of a slow waltz, sometimes while you are asleep.

The Itinerary: Europe's Most Storied Waterway

The seven-night itinerary begins in Budapest — one of the world's most dramatically beautiful capitals — where the Danube cleaves the city into Buda and Pest like a liquid spine. From there, the ship makes its way to Bratislava, Slovakia's compact, cosmopolitan capital that most travellers still underestimate. Then into Vienna and Durntein and Melk the gilded heart in Austria. The stunning three-river city straddling Germany and Austria, and Melk, home to one of Europe's most breath taking Benedictine monasteries perched high on a granite bluff above the river. After Austria the cruise moves to hidden gems in Germany which are not

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just the touristy sites but the most memorable and instagramable locations ie Passau, Regensburg, Kelheim and Nuremberg.

But what genuinely elevates this itinerary is the river itself. The Danube is not simply a means of transport — it is a lens through which you see Europe the way its earliest civilisations did. Medieval fortresses rise from forested hillsides. Vineyard-draped slopes catch the afternoon light. Villages of pastel-coloured houses sit at the water's edge, seemingly untouched by time. You witness the ordinary life of Europe from the extraordinary vantage point of the view.

Stay at the Cruise: Refined Luxury That Feels Personal at VIVA Enjoy (Cruise)

I was accommodated in a Diamond deck, and it delivered on every promise. The space was thoughtfully designed — not merely adequate, but genuinely pleasant to inhabit. The bathroom was a particular highlight: a full-sized shower with excellent water pressure, which seasoned travellers know is far from guaranteed even on high-end vessels. The cabin had that rare quality of feeling both refined and relaxed — the kind of space you actually want to return to after a day of sightseeing, pour yourself a glass of something excellent, and simply breathe. At the Riverside all day dining restaurant, Moments and Bistro, they serve you the most delicate and delicious remarkably well plated meals for you of your choice. And drinks they are countless and floating 24 hrs, one may get drunk at leisure and gain weight too).

Because the ships are intimate by design — far removed from the floating megacities of ocean cruising — the level of personal attention is remarkable. The crew knows your name. They remember your coffee order. They notice if you are a late riser or an early deck-walker. For the evolved luxury traveller who has grown weary of anonymity in five-star hotels, this is deeply restorative.

The Key USPS of VIVA Cruises: A River Cruise Connoisseur's Checklist

After seven nights on the Danube, here is my considered breakdown of what makes VIVA Cruises — and river cruising in general — a compelling proposition for the discerning traveller:

1. Unpack Once, See everything

The single greatest logistical luxury of a river cruise. Your cabin is your base for the entire journey. Pack, unpack, and forget about it — the ship handles everything else.

2. Easy In, Easy out Sightseeing

Dock in the heart of a city, step off, explore, return, refresh, and dine — all within a few elegant hours. No transfers, no scheduling nightmares. This rhythm of travel is genuinely liberating.

3. Intimate Scale, Exceptional Service

The ship feels like a private club. The staff-to-guest ratio translates into service that is attentive without being intrusive — the gold standard of luxury hospitality.

4. Three Distinct Dining Experiences

VIVA Cruises offers three dining venues — the elegant Riverside restaurant, the more relaxed Bistro, and the lively Moments — ensuring that no two dinners feel the same. The food quality was consistently excellent across all three: fresh, well-conceived, and presented with evident care. And critically, the philosophy is one of abundance. Eat as much as you wish. Drink as you please — wine, beer, whiskey, cocktails — available at virtually any hour. Fair warning: arriving home lighter than you departed is not a realistic expectation.

5. The Lounge

Every evening is something new — live singers one night, an acrobatic performance the next, themed parties, ambient music in the evenings. This was not generic entertainment; it was thoughtfully curated and genuinely convivial. On a river cruise, the evenings become as memorable as the days.

6. Wellness on the Water

A massage room and a well-equipped gym ensure that even the health-conscious traveller is not entirely at the mercy of the dining room's temptations.

7. The Magic of Multicultural Connection

Among all the pleasures of this voyage, perhaps the most unexpected was the community that forms naturally aboard a river cruise. Fellow guests from America, Europe, Asia, and beyond — brought together by a shared pace and a shared view. Slow travel creates the conditions for genuine conversation. You learn about the world not just from the riverbanks but from the people sitting next to you at dinner. I made connections on this voyage that I expect to last.

The Verdict: Should You Book a VIVA Cruises?

In two decades of travel journalism, very few experiences have prompted me to reach for the phone and urge friends and readers to simply go and do it. This is one of them.

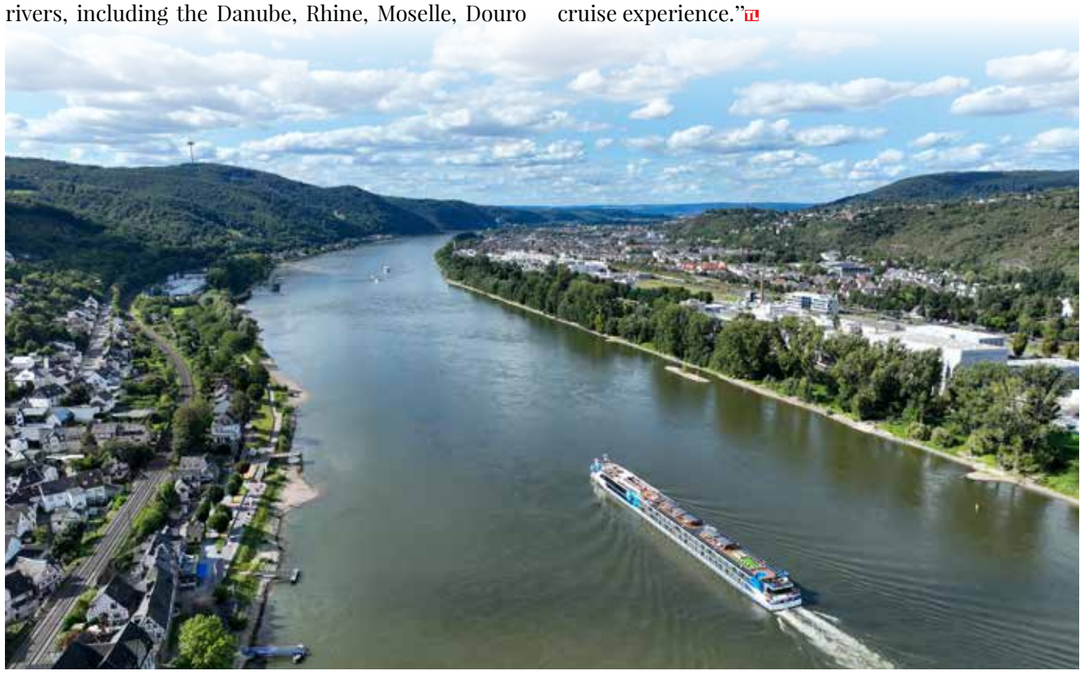
and Seine. Guests can discover famous cities, charming medieval towns, UNESCO World Heritage Sites and hidden gems, all while enjoying the comfort of a modern river cruise ship.

The VIVA All-Inclusive concept, where "Exclusive is Inclusive," makes the journey completely hassle-free. Guests can enjoy delicious meals throughout the day in up to three restaurants, a daily replenished minibar in their cabin, a wide selection of premium alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, complimentary Wi-Fi, and carefully selected shore excursions. Combined with friendly service, comfortable ships and thoughtfully planned itineraries, VIVA Cruises offers the perfect mix of relaxation, discovery and unforgettable travel experiences.

VIVA Cruises has recently launched its new premium concept, VIVA Boutique. Its first ship, VIVA Beyond, debuted in May 2026 with a 7-night sailing from Paris along the beautiful Seine River. Designed for travellers seeking a more refined and immersive journey, the ship features spacious accommodations, with nearly 50% of its cabins offered as suites for added comfort and exclusivity. A particular highlight is the exclusive Michelin-star restaurant dining experience reserved for Master Suite guests, offering a truly memorable culinary journey. Carefully curated shore excursions further enrich the voyage, allowing guests to connect more deeply with the culture, history and traditions of each destination.

This is just the beginning for VIVA Boutique. Next year, VIVA Cruises will launch another boutique ship on Italy's Po River, giving guests the opportunity to discover the culture, history and beauty of Northern Italy while enjoying a unique and immersive river cruise experience."

***About VIVA Cruises*:**



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4. The John Wakefield Award for Quality Footprint Certified Lodge
5. Lodge Naturalist
6. Wildlife Promotion Company
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8. Wildlife Harmony Homestay Award

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3. Wildlife and Tourism Initiative
4. Sustainable Homestay Award
5. Wildlife Conservation Photography
6. Wildlife Conservation Documentary

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AJMAN

The UAE's Coastal Escape

There are destinations that ask you to keep moving, ticking off landmarks and attractions. And then there is Ajman, a place that seems to gently suggest that you slow down, stay a little longer and look around.

The smallest of the UAE's seven emirates, Ajman packs a surprising variety of experiences into a compact destination. Set along the Arabian Gulf, it combines a 16-kilometre coastline with sandy beaches, mangroves, heritage sites, contemporary resorts and a growing leisure and dining scene. It's relatively unhurried pace is part of its appeal, offering travellers the chance to experience the UAE at a more relaxed rhythm.

At the heart of the emirate, Ajman City combines the character of a traditional coastal town with the comforts of a modern holiday destination. The Corniche, beachfront resorts and restaurants create opportunities to enjoy the sea, while kayaking, paddleboarding, fishing and other watersports add activity to a leisurely beach experience.

Beyond the coastline, Al Zorah Nature Reserve brings Ajman's natural side into focus. Its mangroves, lagoons and sandy stretches support diverse birdlife, including flamingos and herons. Exploring the mangroves by kayak offers a quieter way to experience the waterways.

History also has an important place in Ajman. Housed in an 18th-century fort, the Ajman Museum offers insight into the emirate's past through archaeological artefacts, manuscripts, traditional clothing and other exhibits, reflecting an identity shaped by the sea, fishing, trade and craftsmanship.

For travellers venturing inland, Masfout and Al Manama extend towards the Hajar Mountains, offering rugged terrain, historic forts and outdoor experiences. The contrast between coastline and mountains allows visitors to experience different landscapes within a relatively short trip.

For Indian travellers, Ajman's strongest proposition is its versatility. Families can combine resorts, beaches, nature and activities for children; couples can enjoy beachfront stays, wellness, sunsets and leisurely meals; while adventure seekers can explore mangroves, watersports and mountains, and culture enthusiasts can discover heritage and traditional markets.

Food is another reason to linger. Ajman brings together Middle Eastern, Emirati, Indian, Mediterranean and international flavours, with seafood naturally prominent. From cafés and local eateries to hotel restaurants and beachfront dining, there are options for every occasion. Traditional souqs and local markets offer souvenirs and jewellery, while modern retail destinations provide contemporary shopping.

Ajman also supports different holiday styles. A short break can focus on beaches and resorts; a family holiday can combine nature, culture and entertainment; while a longer UAE itinerary can use Ajman as a base for exploring its attractions and experiences.

Ajman's appeal ultimately lies not in one headline attraction, but in the variety of experiences within a compact emirate. Beaches and mountains, heritage and contemporary hospitality, nature and dining coexist without demanding an exhausting itinerary.

For travellers seeking modern comforts with a more relaxed sense of place, Ajman offers a simple invitation: **slow down, explore at your own pace and discover a quieter, more intimate side of the UAE.**

Travel Links Interview with Western India Chapter Chairman

Mr. Jay Kantawala

By Payal Sahni

About Jay Kantawala

With over three decades of experience in the travel industry, Jay Kantawala has built a distinguished career defined by entrepreneurship, leadership and a passion for bespoke travel. He began his professional journey with leading names such as Cox & Kings and SOTC, before founding WIYO Travel in 2006. Under his leadership, WIYO evolved into a respected name in customised travel, delivering highly personalised experiences to discerning clients across the globe.

His association with TAFI's Western India Chapter has included serving 2 Terms as Chapter Treasurer, followed by his current tenure as Chapter Chairman. He has also been appointed the Convention Chairman for the upcoming Greece Convention in October 2026.

In 2021, Jay diversified into hospitality as a partner in The Gourmet Kitchen, a bespoke catering enterprise. In April 2025, WIYO Travel merged with the business interests of Mr. Jitul Mehta and today operates his travel business under Arrivinz Bespoke Luxury LLP and VP Travels (Mumbai) LLP, reflecting Jay's continuing evolution as an entrepreneur across travel and hospitality.

Q TAFI has been a pillar of India's travel trade for decades. Looking back, what do you believe have been the defining milestones that transformed it into one of the country's most influential travel associations?

For over four decades, TAFI has been far more than an association—it has been the conscience and collective voice of India's travel fraternity. Our journey has been defined by trust, integrity and an unwavering commitment to our members. From advocating policy reforms and strengthening industry partnerships to creating global opportunities through our conventions, TAFI has consistently evolved with the times while remaining rooted in its founding values. That is precisely why our theme this year, "Connecting Legacies & Crafting Futures," reflects who we are—honouring the legacy that built us while preparing our members for the opportunities of tomorrow.

Q Every TAFI Convention has a distinct purpose. What makes the 2026 Greece Convention different, and what are the key outcomes delegates should expect to take back to India?

The Greece Convention has been curated as a catalyst for transformation. It is not simply about visiting a destination; it is about expanding perspectives. Every session, every interaction and every business engagement has been designed to inspire innovation, strengthen global partnerships and create tangible business opportunities. Delegates will return not only with new contacts but with new ideas, new collaborations and renewed confidence to shape the future of their businesses.

Q The travel industry has evolved rapidly with AI, changing consumer expectations and digital transformation. How is TAFI preparing its members to remain competitive?

Technology will undoubtedly redefine how travel is delivered, but it will never replace trust. TAFI is committed to equipping its members with the knowledge, digital capabilities and strategic insights needed to embrace AI and emerging technologies, while reinforcing the human relationships, professional expertise and personalised service that remain the true differentiators of a trusted travel advisor.

Q As Convention Chairman, what has been your vision while curating this year's programme?

Our vision has been to create a convention where every delegate finds value— whether through knowledge, business or meaningful relationships. We have brought together thought leaders, global industry experts and destination partners to deliver conversations that are relevant, practical and future-focused. Above all,
we wanted every participant to leave feeling inspired, empowered and better connected than when they arrived.

Q Travel Links has been documenting the growth of India's travel industry for years. How important is the role of credible travel trade media?

A progressive industry needs a credible voice. Publications

such as Travel Links do far more than report news—they educate, inspire dialogue, showcase emerging destinations and celebrate excellence. By connecting stakeholders and encouraging informed conversations, responsible travel media plays a vital role in shaping the future of our industry.

Q How do collaborations between TAFI and platforms like Travel Links contribute to the long-term growth of India's travel ecosystem?

Great industries are built on meaningful partnerships. When associations, industry stakeholders and credible media work together, knowledge travels faster, innovation reaches farther and opportunities multiply. Such collaborations strengthen our collective voice, promote best practices and create a more informed, resilient and globally competitive travel ecosystem.

Q Beyond networking and business meetings, what lasting value should members expect from attending the Greece Convention?

The true value of a TAFI Convention cannot be measured by the number of meetings held during the event. It lies in the relationships that endure long afterwards. Many of today's strongest business partnerships and lifelong friendships within our industry began at a TAFI Convention. Greece 2026 will continue that proud tradition by creating connections that inspire collaboration, trust and shared growth for years to come.

Q Today's travel professionals are navigating sustainability, responsible tourism and experiential travel. How is TAFI encouraging its members to embrace these global shifts?

The future of tourism must be responsible, sustainable and experience-driven. TAFI actively encourages its members to promote destinations with sensitivity, support local communities and create journeys that are authentic and meaningful. Responsible tourism is not simply a global trend—it is our shared responsibility towards future generations.

Jay diversified into hospitality as a partner in The Gourmet Kitchen, a bespoke catering enterprise. In April 2025, WIYO Travel merged with the business interests of Mr. Jitul Mehta and today operates his travel business under Arrivinz Bespoke Luxury LLP and VP Travels (Mumbai) LLP, reflecting Jay's continuing evolution as an entrepreneur across travel and hospitality.

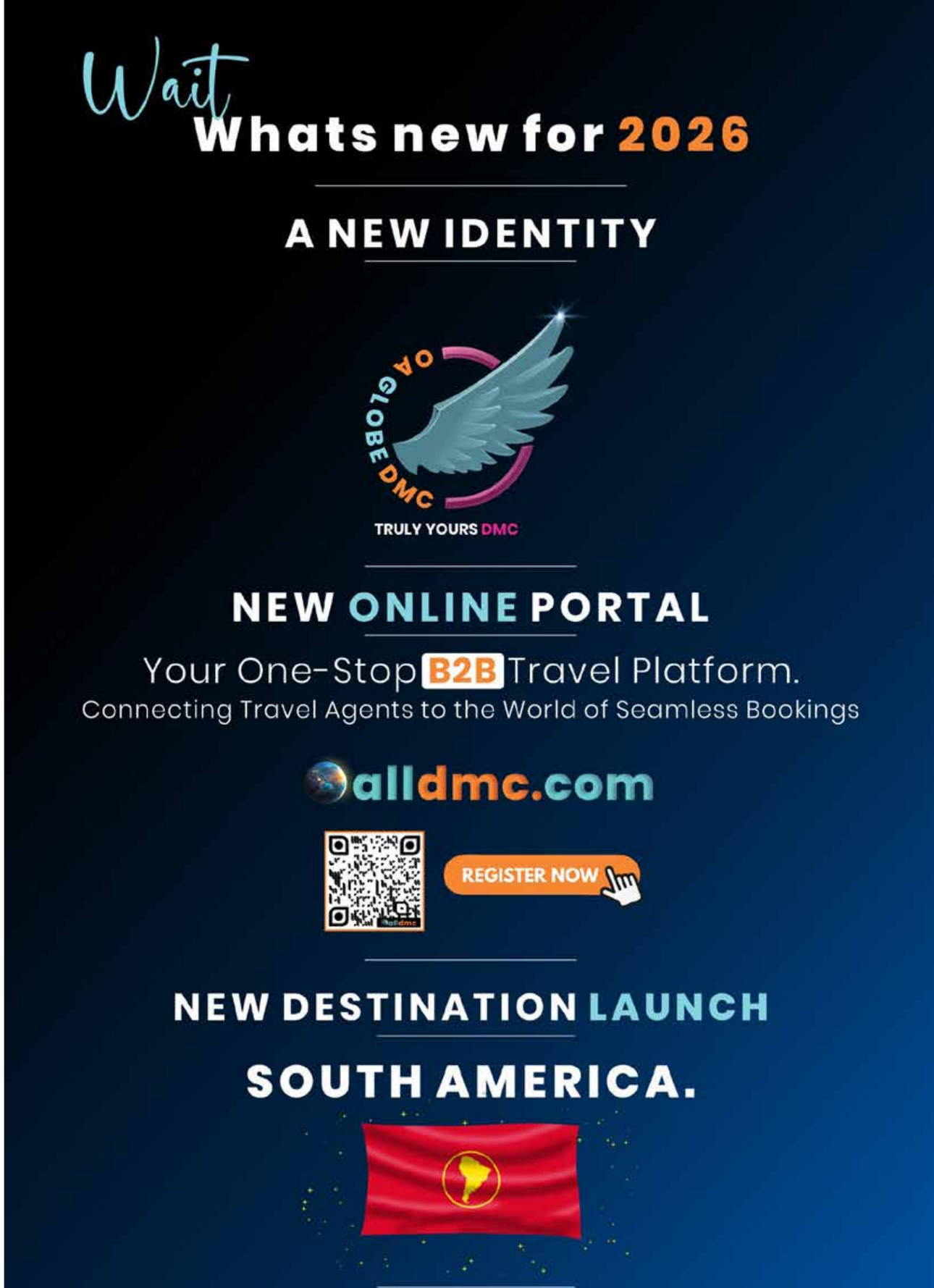
Q If you could introduce one transformative initiative for TAFI over the next five years, what would it be?

My aspiration is to position TAFI as Asia's most respected knowledge and leadership platform for travel professionals. By investing in education, digital transformation, leadership development and global partnerships, we can empower the next generation of entrepreneurs to build businesses that are innovative, resilient and internationally competitive. That is how we will continue connecting legacies while crafting the future of India's travel industry.

Q Finally, what message would you like to share with the Indian travel fraternity and the readers of Travel Links?

The story of Indian tourism has always been one of resilience, innovation and collaboration. Every challenge has strengthened our resolve, and every opportunity has reinforced our belief in the power of partnerships. As we gather in Greece under the theme "Connecting Legacies & Crafting Futures," we celebrate not only the remarkable journey that has brought us here but also the limitless possibilities that lie ahead.

I warmly invite every member of our fraternity to be part of this journey. Together, let us honour our legacy, embrace innovation and shape a future where India's travel professionals continue to lead with excellence, integrity and global vision.



Kerala:

Where India's Soul Meets The World

From emerald backwaters and ancient traditions to Ayurveda, heritage, cuisine, luxury and experiential travel, Kerala continues to redefine what a destination can offer the global traveller.

There are destinations that travellers visit for their scenery, destinations they choose for their culture, and others that draw them for wellness, adventure, cuisine or luxury. Kerala is rare because it brings all of these dimensions together.

Stretching between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, Kerala is a destination of extraordinary geographical diversity. Its landscape moves seamlessly from beaches and coastal towns to palm-fringed backwaters, fertile villages, tea-covered mountains, spice plantations and wildlife-rich forests. The state is also connected by an intricate network of rivers, lakes and canals, while its long coastline has historically connected it to cultures and trading communities from across the world. Kerala Tourism describes the state as having 44 interconnected rivers and a 580-km coastline, creating an unusually diverse travel landscape within a relatively compact geography.

This diversity is perhaps Kerala's greatest tourism asset. A traveller can wake up in a heritage property in Kochi, sail through the backwaters of Kumarakom or Alappuzha, spend a few days among the tea plantations of Munnar, experience wildlife in Thekkady and finish the journey with Ayurveda and a beach stay. For international visitors, particularly those travelling long-haul to India, that ability to combine multiple experiences in a single itinerary makes Kerala especially compelling.

The destination has long been known as God's Own Country, but today's Kerala is much more than a picturesque holiday destination. It is evolving into a sophisticated experiential destination where travel is increasingly about immersion rather than sightseeing.

The Kerala Experience: More Than a Holiday

The global traveller is changing. The desire is no longer simply to tick famous attractions off a list. Travellers increasingly want to understand a destination, experience its traditions, eat its food, meet its people, learn its stories and return home with memories that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

Kerala fits naturally into this new travel philosophy.

The state's Responsible Tourism Mission has been developing community-based experiences that allow visitors to go beyond conventional sightseeing and engage with village life, agriculture, traditional fishing, handicrafts, local cuisine and cultural practices. Kerala's Responsible Tourism programme began in 2007 and has expanded considerably from its original pilot destinations.

For a traveller, this could mean walking through paddy fields, taking a canoe through narrow waterways, visiting a traditional village, learning about local crafts or experiencing a family-run homestay. These experiences are not merely activities; they provide context to the landscape.

That is where Kerala's real strength lies. The destination itself becomes the experience.

The Magic of the Backwaters

No conversation about Kerala can begin without its backwaters.

The tranquil waterways of Kerala are among India's most recognisable travel experiences. Vembanad, Ashtamudi and the

interconnected canals, lagoons and rivers create an environment where water is not simply part of the scenery—it is part of everyday life.

The traditional houseboat, or kettuvallam, has become an icon of Kerala tourism. But the backwater experience has evolved far beyond simply spending a night on a houseboat.

Luxury travellers can opt for beautifully designed private boats, while slower and more immersive journeys can be undertaken by traditional canoe. Travellers can explore villages along the waterways, watch fishermen at work, see children travelling to school by boat and observe life unfolding along the banks.

Alappuzha remains one of the best-known gateways to the backwaters, while Kumarakom offers a more resort-oriented interpretation of the experience around Vembanad Lake. Kollam and Ashtamudi provide another dimension, particularly for travellers seeking a quieter water-based journey.

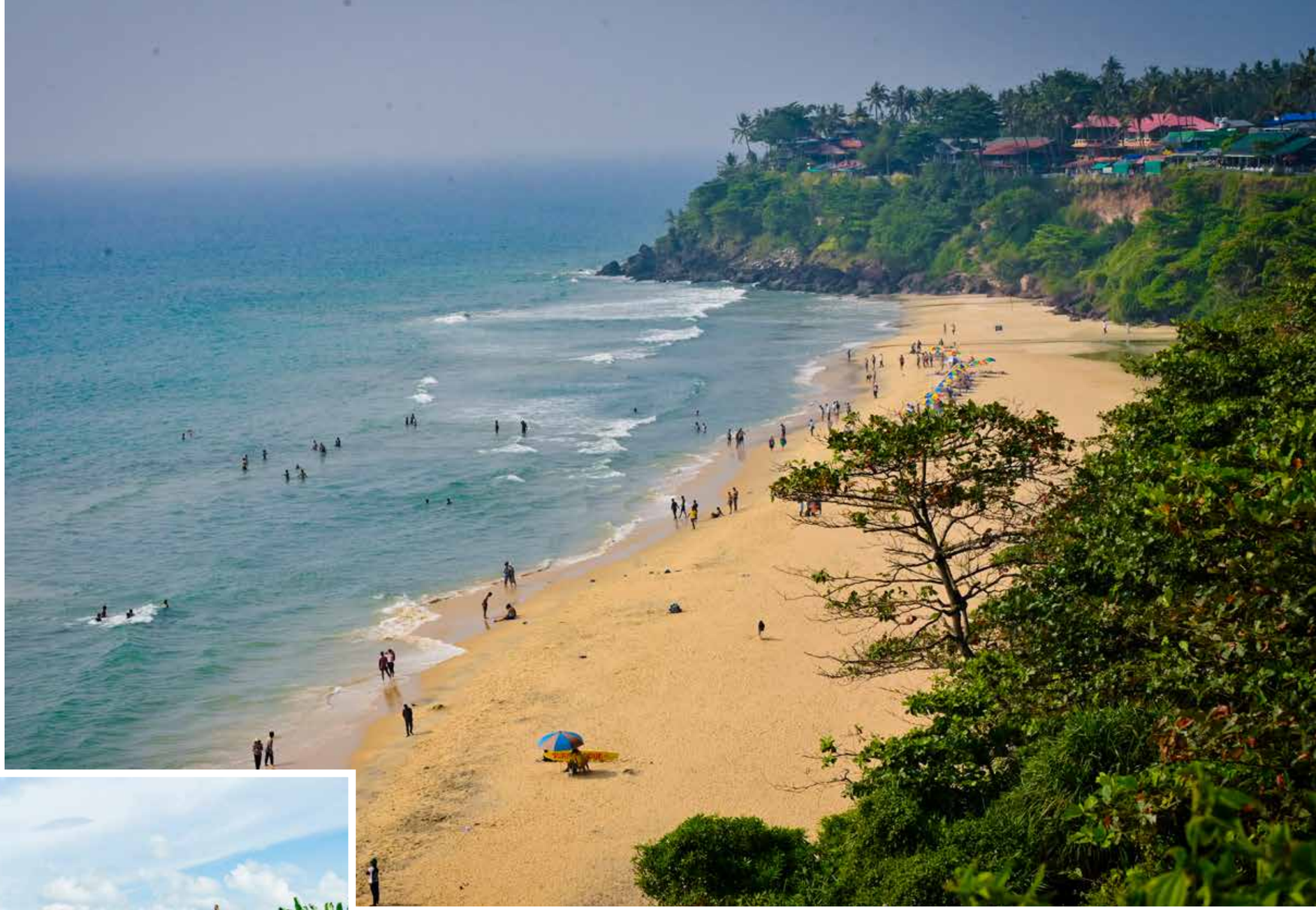
Kerala Tourism also promotes village-life experiences incorporating backwater cruises, canoeing, paddy-field walks and interactions with local communities.

For honeymooners, the backwaters offer romance. For families, they offer discovery. For luxury travellers, privacy and slow living. For photographers, endless visual possibilities. And for international visitors, they offer something perhaps even more valuable: a completely different way of experiencing India.

A Living Museum of Culture and Heritage

Kerala's cultural wealth is equally powerful.

Its history has been shaped by centuries of maritime trade and interaction with Arab, Chinese, European and other cultures. Nowhere is this more visible than in Kochi, where Fort Kochi's streets, colonial buildings, churches, synagogues, mosques, cafés and galleries tell stories of a cosmopolitan past.



interested in wellness and movement can explore its relationship with traditional body conditioning and oil-based treatments.

Festivals provide yet another window into Kerala's identity. Onam, Thrissur Pooram and the spectacular snake-boat races transform the state into a celebration of music, colour, ritual and community.

For the sophisticated traveller, these experiences provide something that a conventional sightseeing tour cannot: cultural connection.

Heritage That Can Be Experienced

Kerala's heritage product also offers enormous potential for luxury and experiential travel.

Historic mansions, traditional homes, restored properties, colonial-era buildings and heritage hotels can transform accommodation itself into an experience.

A stay in a heritage property can be combined with local culinary experiences, storytelling, village excursions, traditional music and art demonstrations. Instead of simply visiting a heritage site for an hour, travellers can actually live within the historical character of Kerala.

This opens opportunities for carefully designed itineraries for international FIT travellers, luxury groups and special-interest travellers.

A European traveller interested in architecture,

for example, could combine Kochi's colonial heritage with traditional Kerala architecture. A culinary traveller could explore Malabar cuisine. A wellness traveller could combine heritage accommodation with Ayurveda. A photographer could build a journey around villages, temples, festivals and waterways.

Kerala's heritage is therefore not a static product. It can be packaged as an experience.

Ayurveda: Kerala's Global Wellness Advantage

If the backwaters are Kerala's visual signature, Ayurveda is arguably its strongest global wellness proposition.

Kerala has developed an international reputation for traditional Ayurvedic treatments, wellness retreats, yoga and holistic rejuvenation. The state's natural setting—lush landscapes, coastal environments, forests and tranquil resorts—adds to the appeal of a wellness holiday.

The experience can range from a short rejuvenation programme to extended residential treatments.

Among the best-known traditional therapies is Panchakarma, an intensive Ayurvedic programme designed around purification, rejuvenation and lifestyle practices. Kerala Tourism describes Ayurveda as a holistic system that combines therapeutic approaches with preventive wellness.

The modern Kerala wellness product has also become considerably more sophisticated.

Today, travellers can combine Ayurveda with luxury accommodation, yoga, meditation, healthy cuisine, fitness, nature walks and personalised wellness programmes.

This makes Kerala particularly relevant to the rapidly expanding global wellness-travel market.

For an international traveller, a two-week Kerala itinerary could therefore include several days of sightseeing followed by a longer wellness retreat. Alternatively, a luxury traveller could build a seven-night itinerary around Ayurveda, yoga, cuisine and nature.

The state also maintains an official listing of accredited Ayurveda centres and service providers, helping travellers identify recognised facilities.

Designed Itineraries: Kerala's Greatest Opportunity

Kerala's future lies increasingly in curated itineraries rather than standard packages.

The destination lends itself beautifully to thematic travel.

The Luxury Kerala Journey

Kochi – Kumarakom – Munnar – Thekkady – Kovalam

A luxury itinerary combining heritage, backwaters, tea plantations, wildlife and wellness, with high-end hotels, private transfers, curated dining and exclusive experiences.

The Wellness Kerala Journey

Kovalam – Kumarakom – Palakkad

A slower itinerary focused on Ayurveda, yoga, meditation, healthy cuisine, nature and traditional wellness practices.

The Culture & Heritage Journey

Kochi – Thrissur – Kozhikode – Kannur

A journey through colonial heritage, temples, traditional architecture, cuisine, Kathakali and Theyyam.

The Slow Kerala Journey

Kumarakom – Alappuzha – Kuttanad – Marari

Designed for travellers who want to disconnect from hectic schedules and experience village life, waterways, local food and coastal living.

The Adventure & Nature Journey

Munnar – Thekkady – Wayanad – Bekal

Tea plantations, trekking, wildlife, forests, waterfalls, mountain landscapes and the northern coast.

The Romance & Celebration Journey

Kochi – Kumarakom – Marari – Kovalam

A natural fit for honeymoons, intimate celebrations and destination weddings, combining beaches, backwaters, resorts and heritage settings.

Kerala Tourism itself currently showcases packages combining houseboats, village life, Ayurveda, cultural activities, adventure and wellness, reflecting the state's movement towards experience-led tourism.

The opportunity for the travel trade is to take these building blocks and create highly personalised journeys.

Kerala for Destination Weddings and MICE

Kerala's tourism proposition is also expanding beyond leisure.

The combination of luxury resorts, beaches, backwaters, heritage venues and distinctive cultural

experiences makes Kerala increasingly relevant to destination weddings.

A wedding can be staged beside a lake, on a beach, at a luxury resort or within a heritage setting, while pre- and post-wedding experiences can include houseboat cruises, Ayurveda, cultural performances and culinary events.

The MICE segment has similar potential.

Kochi's convention infrastructure, combined with the ability to extend a conference into a leisure or incentive programme, gives planners an opportunity that many destinations cannot easily replicate.

An incentive group can arrive in Kochi, experience Fort Kochi, travel to Kumarakom, cruise the backwaters, move into the hills of Munnar and finish with a wellness or beach extension.

The result is not simply a meeting. It becomes a destination experience. Cuisine: A Journey within the Journey Food is another reason Kerala resonates with international travellers.

The cuisine changes considerably across the state. Vegetarian Sadya, seafood, Malabar biryani, appams, stews, puttu, local curries and an extraordinary range of coconut- and spice-based preparations create an impressive culinary landscape.

The traditional Sadya, served on a banana leaf and comprising numerous dishes, is particularly evocative as a cultural experience. Kerala Tourism describes it as a feast that can include more than 20 dishes.

For international visitors, culinary tourism can be developed through cooking classes, spice plantation visits, market walks, farm-to-table experiences and family meals.

Malabar, in particular, provides a distinctive culinary identity that deserves greater attention in international itineraries.

Nature, Hills and Wildlife

Kerala's visual diversity extends far beyond the coast.

Munnar's tea plantations provide one of the state's most iconic mountain landscapes. Thekkady introduces travellers to forests, wildlife and spice plantations, while Wayanad offers a more rugged and immersive interpretation of Kerala's highlands.

Bekal in northern Kerala combines beaches, heritage and quieter luxury.

This geographical variety makes Kerala particularly attractive for repeat visitors.

The first trip may focus on Kochi, Munnar and the backwaters. A second journey can explore Malabar, Wayanad and Kannur. A third can be entirely wellness-focused.

That ability to reinvent itself for different audiences is one of Kerala's greatest strengths.

Responsible Tourism: A Model for the Future

Perhaps one of Kerala's most important advantages is its experience with responsible tourism.

The state's Responsible Tourism Mission has focused on bringing local communities into the tourism economy, creating livelihoods, promoting local products and protecting cultural and environmental assets. The programme has also incorporated village experiences, handicrafts, farming, fishing, storytelling and local cultural traditions.

This is increasingly important as global travellers become more conscious of the environmental and social footprint of tourism.

The future traveller wants to know not only where their money goes, but what their travel contributes to.

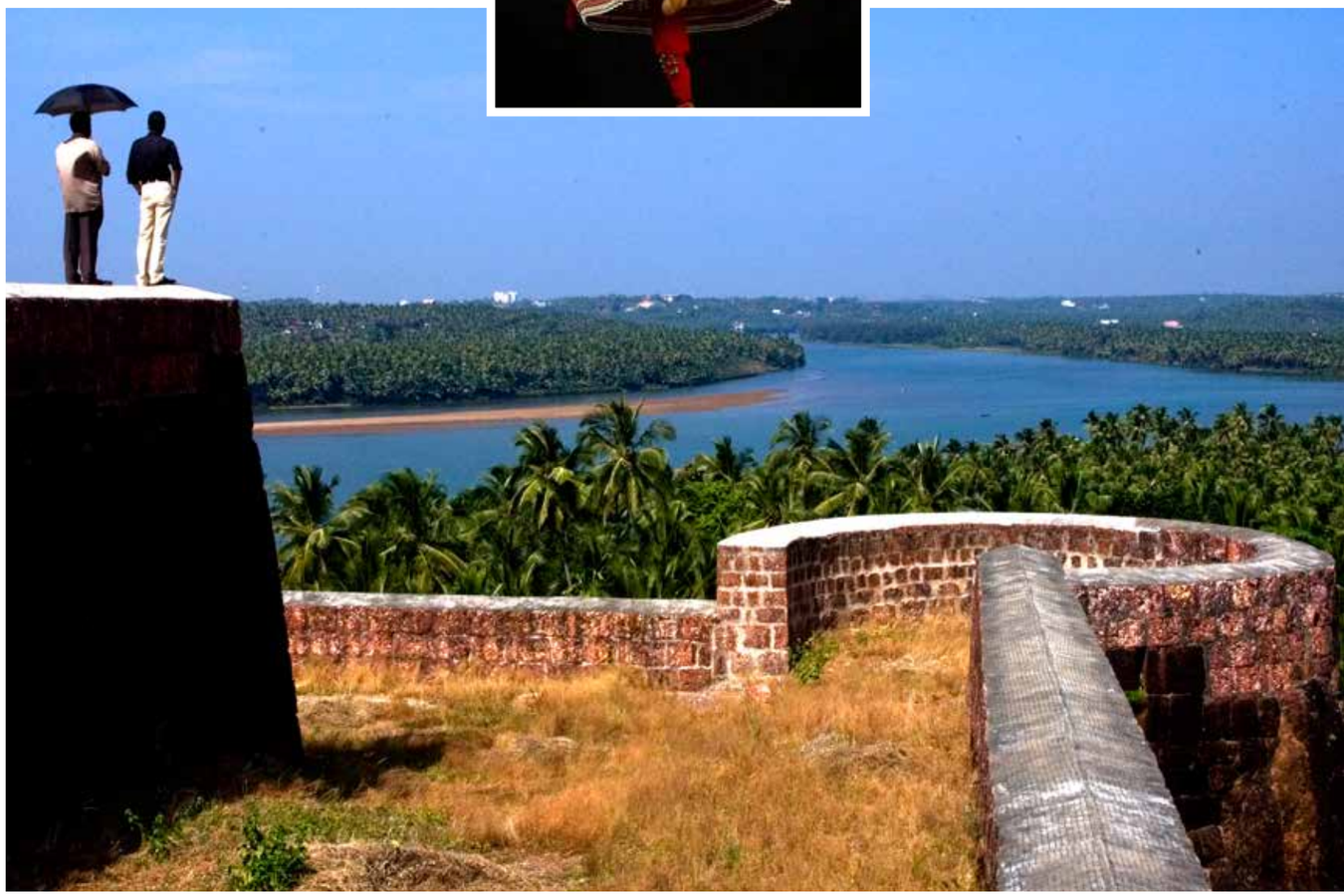
Kerala's community-oriented approach gives the destination a strong foundation on which to build a more sustainable tourism economy.

KTM 2026: Taking Kerala to the Global Travel Market

The Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) 2026, scheduled from 24–27 September 2026 in Kochi, comes at an important moment for Kerala tourism. The 13th edition will bring together tourism sellers, international and domestic buyers, travel professionals, media and industry stakeholders, with the core B2B meetings taking place at the Sagara and Samudrika Convention Centre on Willingdon Island.

What makes KTM particularly significant is its destination-focused identity. The Kerala Travel Mart Society describes KTM as the only travel mart in the world focused exclusively on a single state. With more than 700 members and buyers from more than 50 countries represented through its network, KTM has become an important international business platform for Kerala.

The 2026 edition is especially relevant because Kerala's tourism proposition has expanded significantly. It is no longer simply about the conventional triangle of Kochi–Munnar–Alappuzha. The state is increasingly selling wellness and Ayurveda, responsible tourism, experiential travel, adventure, MICE, destination weddings, Malabar, heritage and emerging



destinations.

The mart is therefore an opportunity for the Kerala travel trade to tell a more sophisticated story to the global market.

KTM 2026 is expected to feature more than 400 international buyers and over 1,500 domestic buyers, including high-value MICE and wedding planners, while post-mart familiarisation programmes will expose participants to different tourism circuits across the state.

That B2B interaction matters because Kerala's next phase of growth will depend on converting destination awareness into longer stays, higher-value travellers, repeat visitation and specialised travel segments.

Kerala: The Destination That Keeps Giving

Ultimately, Kerala's appeal cannot be reduced to a single attraction.

It is the sensation of travelling slowly through a landscape of coconut palms and waterways. It is the sound of a Kathakali performance. It is the aroma of spices in a local kitchen. It is the ritual energy of Theyyam. It is a sunrise over the Arabian Sea, mist over a tea plantation and a quiet afternoon on a houseboat.

It is also a deeply personal experience: an Ayurvedic treatment, a conversation with a village family, a meal cooked in a traditional home, a canoe journey through narrow waterways or simply several hours spent doing nothing beside a lake.

For the global traveller, that is Kerala's greatest proposition.

It offers India without overwhelming the traveller. It offers luxury without losing authenticity. It offers wellness without disconnecting from culture. It offers nature without sacrificing comfort. And it offers experiences that can be combined, customised and revisited.

As international tourism moves increasingly towards meaningful, immersive and wellness-led travel, Kerala is exceptionally well placed for the next chapter.

The challenge—and opportunity—for the travel trade is to stop selling Kerala simply as a package of destinations and start selling it as a collection of stories, emotions and experiences.

Because Kerala is not merely somewhere to go.

It is somewhere to feel.

Greece:

The Destination That Does It All For India

From FIT and luxury escapes to MICE, destination weddings and honeymoons, Greece has evolved into one of the Mediterranean's most versatile propositions for the Indian traveller.

By Team TL

WHY GREECE RESONATES WITH THE INDIAN TRAVELLER

Indian travellers today are far more experienced than they were a decade ago.

They have travelled across Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe. They have become comfortable with international holidays, luxury hotels, curated experiences and multi-destination itineraries.

This has also changed what they expect from a destination.

A beautiful hotel is no longer enough.

A traveller wants a story.

A honeymoon couple wants romance and privacy. A luxury FIT traveller wants personalisation. A corporate group wants something memorable beyond the conference room.

A wedding party wants a destination that looks spectacular, offers quality hospitality and can accommodate multiple celebrations.

Greece can answer all of these requirements.

That is its advantage.

ATHENS: WHERE THE JOURNEY SHOULD BEGIN

For many Indian travellers, Athens is the natural gateway to Greece.

But it should not be treated simply as a transit point before heading to the islands.

Athens has evolved into a destination in its own right.

The Acropolis and Parthenon provide an extraordinary introduction to Greek civilisation, but the modern city offers an equally compelling contrast through its restaurants, neighbourhoods, museums, shopping, nightlife and contemporary hospitality.

For FIT travellers, Athens works particularly well as the beginning or end of a Greek itinerary.

For MICE groups, it offers the infrastructure of a major European capital combined with the cultural backdrop of one of the world's great ancient cities.

Visit Greece describes Athens as one of the country's principal MICE hubs, alongside Thessaloniki, Rhodes and Crete.

That combination is important.

A conference in Athens does not have to end when delegates leave the meeting room.

An evening around the Acropolis, a Greek culinary experience, a private museum visit or a specially curated cultural event can turn a conventional business trip into a memorable incentive experience.

SANTORINI: THE ROMANCE FACTOR

If there is one Greek destination that has become almost synonymous with romance, it is Santorini.

Its whitewashed architecture, blue domes, volcanic landscape, caldera views and dramatic sunsets have made it one of the world's most recognisable honeymoon destinations.

But Santorini's appeal to the Indian market goes beyond honeymoons.

It can also be a destination for intimate weddings, pre-wedding celebrations, luxury FIT travel, anniversary trips and premium incentive experiences.

For Indian couples, that flexibility is important.

A wedding in Greece does not necessarily have to replicate a traditional Indian wedding in India.

It can become a destination celebration spread over several days.

A welcome dinner.

A haldi-inspired celebration.

A sunset cocktail.

The wedding ceremony.

A reception overlooking the Aegean.

And a post-wedding island experience.

The destination itself becomes part of the celebration.

MYKONOS: WHERE LUXURY MEETS LIFESTYLE

If Santorini represents romance, Mykonos brings a different energy.

It is cosmopolitan, stylish and social.

For affluent Indian FIT travellers, Mykonos can work as part of a luxury island-hopping itinerary.

For incentive groups, it offers a strong combination of beaches, restaurants, nightlife, yachts and

private experiences.

For weddings, it offers a sophisticated backdrop for celebrations that want a more contemporary Mediterranean character.

This is an important distinction for the Indian market.

Today's luxury traveller does not necessarily want the same experience every time.

- Some want serenity.
- Others want social energy.
- Some want culture.
- Others want nightlife.

Greece allows the travel advisor to create different products within the same country.

CRETE: THE GREECE BEYOND THE POSTCARD

One of Greece's biggest opportunities in India is to take travellers beyond the familiar images of Santorini and Mykonos.

Crete is a good example.

It combines beaches, mountains, villages, food, history, culture and luxury hospitality.

For FIT travellers, it can provide a more immersive holiday.

For families, it offers space and variety.

For MICE, it provides resort infrastructure combined with experiences outside the conference environment.

And for repeat visitors to Greece, it offers a reason to return.

This is increasingly important as Indian outbound travel matures.

The objective should not always be to sell the same destinations to first-time travellers.

It should also be to create second-trip Greece.

RHODES, THESSALONIKI AND THE NEXT GREECE

The future opportunity lies partly in broadening the conversation.

Rhodes offers history, beaches and resort infrastructure.

Thessaloniki provides a different urban and culinary experience.

The mainland offers archaeological sites, mountains, villages, gastronomy and landscapes that remain relatively underexplored by many Indian travellers.

For the travel trade, this creates an important opportunity.

Greece should not be sold as one island.

It should be sold as a portfolio.

GREECE FOR FIT: BUILDING THE RIGHT ITINERARY

FIT travellers are increasingly looking for flexibility.

They do not necessarily want to spend seven nights in one resort.

They may want two nights in Athens, followed by an island, then a quieter destination, with private experiences built into the itinerary.

This makes Greece particularly suitable for modular itineraries.

A travel advisor can create:

- Athens + Santorini for a first-time couple.
- Athens + Mykonos + Santorini for a classic luxury itinerary.
- Athens + Crete for travellers seeking culture, food and relaxation.
- Athens + lesser-known islands for repeat visitors.

Athens + mainland Greece for travellers interested in history and gastronomy.

The product becomes highly customisable.

And customisation is increasingly where the professional travel advisor adds value.

THE MICE OPPORTUNITY

Greece's MICE proposition deserves far more attention in the Indian market.

The country has a compelling advantage: business can be combined with leisure without feeling artificial.

A conference delegate can attend meetings in Athens and then experience Greek cuisine.

An incentive group can charter a yacht.

A corporate group can organise a private island experience.

A conference can be followed by a cultural evening.

A leadership retreat can be built around wellness, gastronomy or nature.

The conference room is increasingly becoming the starting point, not the entire product.

WHEN BUSINESS MEETS BLEISURE

The growing popularity of bleisure also works in Greece's favour.

A corporate traveller may attend a conference for three days and then extend the trip for a private holiday.

A spouse may join.

A group may add a few days in Santorini or Mykonos.

A conference in Athens can potentially be combined with an island stay.

This ability to extend a business trip into a leisure experience creates additional value for airlines, hotels, DMCs and travel advisors.

DESTINATION WEDDINGS: GREECE'S NEXT BIG INDIAN OPPORTUNITY?

Indian weddings have become a global tourism phenomenon.

Families are increasingly willing to travel for celebrations that combine wedding rituals with luxury holidays.

Greece is particularly well suited to this trend because the destination itself provides a ready-made visual narrative.

- The Aegean Sea.
- The caldera.
- The sunsets.
- The architecture.
- The vineyards.
- The beaches.
- The luxury resorts.
- The yachts.
- The food.

And multiple islands that can create different settings for different functions.

For Indian wedding planners, this opens the door to a very different proposition.

Instead of importing an entire wedding environment into a destination, planners can combine Indian traditions with Greek settings, cuisine, architecture and hospitality.

The result can be culturally Indian but unmistakably Greek.

THE HONEYMOON CLASSIC

Honeymoons remain one of Greece's strongest propositions.

A honeymoon requires several things simultaneously: romance, privacy, beautiful accommodation, good food, experiences, photography, relaxation and enough variety to avoid becoming monotonous.

Greece can deliver all of them.

A couple can begin in Athens with history and culture, move to Santorini for romance, continue to another island for relaxation and finish with a private sailing experience.

The destination becomes a journey rather than a single resort.

FOOD IS AN UNDEREXPLOITED ASSET

One of Greece's strongest and perhaps under-marketed attractions for India is gastronomy.

Food is central to Greek culture.

Fresh seafood, olive oil, cheeses, herbs, breads, wines and regional dishes provide a natural foundation for culinary tourism.

For Indian travellers, food can become an important part of the itinerary rather than simply something included in it.

- Private cooking classes.
- Market visits.
- Wine experiences.
- Taverna evenings.
- Olive-oil tastings.
- Farm-to-table meals.
- Seafood experiences.

These can become itinerary highlights.

THE YACHTING AND ISLAND-HOPPING ADVANTAGE

Greece's geography also creates an enormous advantage for luxury travel.

Its islands are not simply destinations.

They can become part of a journey.

A private yacht can transform the holiday from hotel-based travel into an experience of the Aegean itself.

For affluent Indian travellers, families and incentive groups, private sailing can provide exclusivity and flexibility.

It can also make lesser-known islands accessible.

For the Indian luxury market, this is a segment worth developing much further.

A DESTINATION FOR DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

Another reason Greece works well for Indian families is its ability to satisfy different generations simultaneously.

Parents may want history and culture.

Young adults may want beaches and nightlife.

Children may want water-based activities.

Grandparents may prefer relaxed sightseeing and luxury accommodation.

A well-designed Greek itinerary can combine all of these.

This makes the country particularly relevant as India's multi-generational family travel market expands.

THE OPPORTUNITY COMES WITH CHALLENGES

Greece's Indian opportunity is significant, but it should not be taken for granted.

Visa processes, air connectivity, seasonality and capacity constraints can influence the traveller experience.

That makes connectivity and ease of travel critical.

The more accessible Greece becomes, the easier it will be for travel advisors to sell it not only to honeymooners but also to families, FITs, wedding groups and corporate travellers.

WHY GREECE HAS A LONG RUNWAY IN INDIA

The strongest destinations are not necessarily those that offer one spectacular attraction.

They are destinations that can keep generating new reasons to visit.

The possibilities are remarkably broad.

Greece can become a multi-segment destination brand for India.

THE TRAVEL LINKS VERDICT

For the Indian traveller, Greece offers something that few destinations can match: Romance without sacrificing culture. Luxury without losing authenticity.

MICE without losing leisure.

History without feeling static.

Beaches without being only a beach holiday.

And island-hopping without sacrificing comfort.

Its biggest advantage may ultimately be its flexibility.

Greece can be different things to different travellers.

For one Indian couple, it is a honeymoon.

For another, a pre-wedding shoot.

For a family, a Mediterranean holiday.

For a corporate group, an incentive.

For a luxury traveller, a private yacht and island escape.

For a conference organiser, a world-class event destination with an extraordinary backdrop.

Greece has that advantage.

First trip: Athens and Santorini.

Second trip: Mykonos and Crete.

Third trip: mainland Greece and lesser-known islands.

Then perhaps a yacht holiday.

- A destination wedding.
- A corporate incentive.
- A family celebration.
- A culinary journey.
- A wellness escape.

That versatility is precisely why Greece deserves a bigger place in the Indian travel trade's portfolio.

The opportunity now is to move beyond selling "Greece = Santorini" and start selling "Greece = a collection of experiences."

Because the Indian traveller is changing.

And the most successful destinations will be those capable of changing with them.

Greece is not just one destination.

It is a destination for almost every reason Indians travel.

Beyond the Usual:

10 Lesser-Known Destinations worth Discovering

By team TL

Five in India and five around the world where the journey is achievable, the experience is distinctive and the crowds are still manageable.

Travel has entered an interesting new phase. The world's most famous destinations remain desirable, but increasingly, travellers are looking for something beyond the standard checklist. They want places where the landscape feels fresh, local culture remains visible, hotels are less formulaic and the experience is more personal.

This does not necessarily mean travelling to the remotest corner of the planet. Some of the most rewarding lesser-known destinations are surprisingly accessible—perhaps a short flight followed by a scenic drive, a regional flight, or a comfortable road journey. For Indian travellers, this creates an exciting opportunity: discover destinations before they become the next big thing.

Here are five Indian and five international destinations that combine accessibility with that elusive sense of discovery.

INDIA: Five destinations beyond the usual circuit

1. Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh — where culture meets the mountains

Ziro Valley is one of India's most compelling destinations for travellers seeking nature and authentic culture without the crowds of more established Himalayan destinations.

Set amid rolling green hills, pine forests and beautifully cultivated rice fields, Ziro is home to the Apatani community, whose agricultural traditions and distinctive cultural identity are among the valley's greatest attractions. The landscape is remarkably peaceful, making it ideal for slow travel, nature walks, village experiences and immersive cultural itineraries.

Ziro has increasingly appeared on the radar of independent travellers, but it remains far removed from the commercial atmosphere of destinations such as Manali or Shimla. Recent Indian travel guides continue to highlight its combination of Apatani culture, landscape and slow travel appeal.

How to reach: Fly from Delhi to Guwahati or Dibrugarh and continue by road. The journey itself becomes part of the experience.

Weather: Summers are pleasantly cool compared with the Indian plains. Monsoon brings heavy rainfall and lush greenery, while autumn is clearer and particularly attractive.

Best months: March–May and September–November.

Ideal for: Culture, photography, soft adventure, nature, experiential and responsible tourism.

2. Tirthan Valley, Himachal Pradesh — the quieter alternative to Manali

If Manali represents Himachal's mainstream mountain holiday, Tirthan represents its quieter, more intimate side.

The valley follows the Tirthan River and offers forests, waterfalls, trout fishing, village walks and small homestays. It is particularly attractive to travellers who want mountains without large resort developments, nightlife or heavy tourist traffic.

Tirthan has been repeatedly identified among India's promising offbeat destinations because it offers a relatively accessible combination of Himalayan scenery and slow travel.

How to reach: The nearest major rail/airport connections are around Chandigarh, Shimla or Bhuntar depending on the route; from there, continue by road.

Weather: Summers are mild and pleasant; monsoon makes the valley exceptionally green, although rain can affect road conditions. Winters are cold and quieter, with occasional snow.

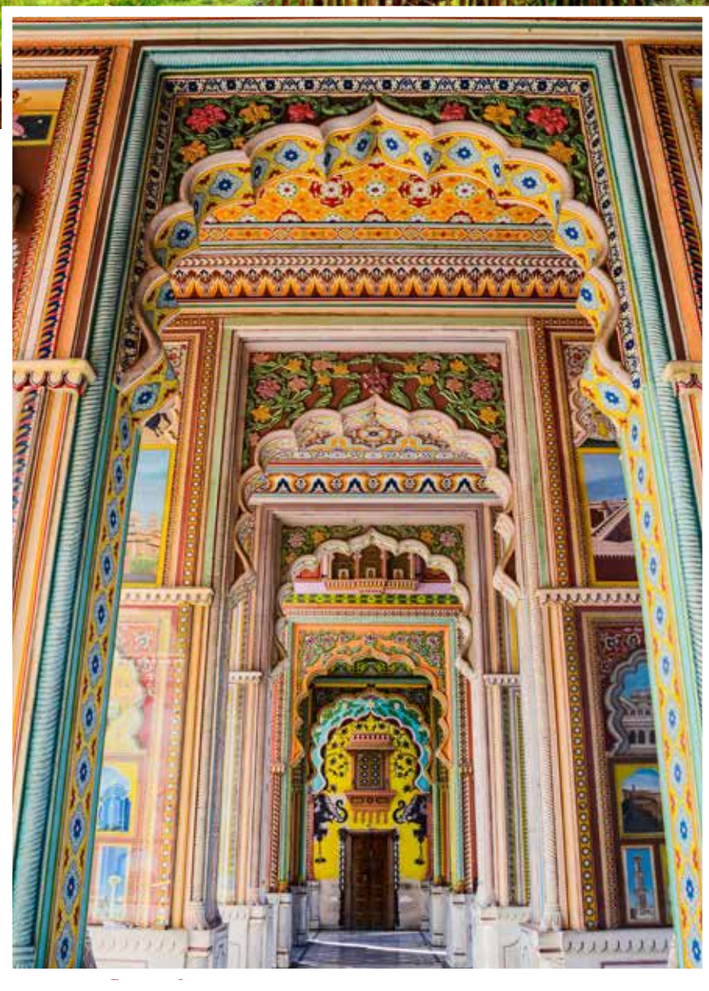
Best months: March–June and September–November.

Ideal for: Families seeking quiet holidays, couples, trekking, fishing, wellness and digital detox.

3. Orchha, Madhya Pradesh — India's forgotten medieval masterpiece

Orchha is proof that lesser-known does not have to mean inaccessible.

Located on the banks of the Betwa River, this historic town was



itineraries.

5. Majuli, Assam — Life on the Brahmaputra

Majuli offers something very different from India's conventional sightseeing destinations.

The enormous river island in the Brahmaputra is associated with Assam's neo-Vaishnavite culture, monasteries known as satras, traditional crafts, mask-making, music and a deeply rural way of life.

The destination is less about ticking off attractions and more about slowing down. Cycling through villages, visiting satras, meeting artisans and watching the changing moods of the Brahmaputra are the experiences that stay with travellers.

Majuli is frequently highlighted among India's emerging slow-travel destinations.

How to reach: Fly to Jorhat and continue by road and ferry.

Weather: Winters are pleasant and dry. Summer is warmer, while monsoon can bring significant flooding and disruption.

Best months: October–April, with November–February particularly comfortable.

Ideal for: Culture, photography, rural tourism, spirituality and slow travel. THE WORLD: Five destinations before they become mainstream

1. Albania — Europe's emerging Riviera

Albania may be one of Europe's most interesting alternatives for travellers who have already experienced Italy, Greece or Croatia.

The Albanian Riviera offers turquoise waters, mountain scenery, historic villages and Mediterranean food, while places such as Himara, Dhermi and Borsh remain considerably less developed than many Croatian or Greek resort areas.

For Indians, Albania also has the advantage of being relatively straightforward to combine with a European holiday through regional air connections. Current India-focused travel coverage identifies Albania as one of the destinations attracting travellers looking beyond traditional Europe.

How to reach: Fly from India to Tirana via Istanbul, Vienna, Rome or another European hub, depending on routing.

Weather: Mediterranean summers are hot and dry. Spring and early autumn provide comfortable temperatures for sightseeing and coastal exploration.

Best months: May–June and September–October.

Ideal for: Couples, road trips, beaches, gastronomy, luxury and boutique travel.

Uzbekistan is particularly attractive for Indian travellers who want history and culture but are looking for something beyond the conventional European circuit.

Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva offer extraordinary Islamic architecture, blue-tiled madrasas, ancient trading routes and Silk Road heritage. The country's compact cultural circuit also makes it possible to experience several major destinations within one trip.

Uzbekistan is increasingly appearing in Indian travel recommendations because of its accessibility, relatively affordable costs and strong cultural appeal.

How to reach: Tashkent is the principal gateway, with onward domestic or rail connections.

Weather: Summers can be extremely hot, particularly in the desert regions. Spring and autumn are much more comfortable.

Best months: April–May and September–October.

Ideal for: Heritage, architecture, photography, gastronomy, families and cultural circuits.

3. Kyrgyzstan — the great mountain escape

Kyrgyzstan is for travellers who want dramatic landscapes without the crowds associated with the Alps or parts of the Himalayas.

Think enormous mountain ranges, alpine lakes, open valleys, yurts, horseback riding and nomadic culture. Lake Issyk-Kul, Song-Kul and the surrounding Tian Shan landscapes offer a powerful combination of adventure and tranquillity.

It is also increasingly accessible to Indian travellers, and current travel coverage places Kyrgyzstan among the emerging destinations for Indians seeking affordable, offbeat international holidays.

How to reach: Fly to Bishkek, generally with a connection from India.

Weather: Winters are extremely cold and snowy. Summers are ideal for mountain exploration and outdoor activities.

Best months: June–September.

Ideal for: Adventure, trekking, road trips, families, photography and nature.

4. Slovenia — Europe's green secret

Slovenia is not exactly unknown, but it remains considerably less explored by Indian travellers than France, Switzerland, Italy or Austria.

Its appeal lies in variety. Within a relatively compact country are the Julian Alps, Lake Bled, Lake Bohinj, the Soča Valley, vineyards, forests, caves and the Adriatic town of Piran.

Rather than visiting only Bled, travellers should venture into the Soča Valley and Triglav National Park, where the experience becomes significantly quieter.

How to reach: Fly into Ljubljana through a European hub; the country can also be combined with Austria, Croatia or northern Italy.

Weather: Spring is green and mild; summer is ideal for outdoor activities, while autumn brings beautiful colours and fewer visitors. Best months: May–June and September–October. Ideal for: Luxury touring, road trips, adventure, wellness, gastronomy and couples.

5. Madagascar — the ultimate wildlife wildcard

Madagascar requires more planning than the other destinations on this list, but it

delivers an experience few other countries can match.

The island is famous for its extraordinary biodiversity, especially lemurs, chameleons and endemic plant life. The Avenue of the Baobabs, rainforest reserves and distinctive landscapes make it particularly compelling for experienced travellers.

It is not the easiest destination to reach from India, but it is accessible through international hubs and can be developed into a premium, highly experiential itinerary. Current destination coverage also identifies Madagascar as a comparatively low-volume destination with significant wildlife appeal.

How to reach: International connections generally involve a Middle Eastern, African or European hub before reaching Antananarivo.

Weather: The dry season is generally better for wildlife viewing and road travel. The cyclone season can affect travel during the wetter months. Best months: April–October, with September–October especially attractive for wildlife. Ideal for: Wildlife, luxury adventure, photography, honeymooners and experiential travellers. The real attraction: accessibility without overexposure

The appeal of these ten destinations is not that they are completely undiscovered. In the age of Instagram, TikTok and Google Maps, very few beautiful destinations remain genuine secrets.

The more useful definition of "lesser known" is a destination that has not yet reached the saturation point of its better-known competitors.

For travel advisors, tour operators and destination marketers, these places also offer an opportunity to create high-value experiential itineraries rather than inventory-driven holidays. A Ziro journey can combine community tourism and culture; Shekhawati can become an art-and-heritage circuit; Kyrgyzstan can be built around adventure and nomadic experiences; Uzbekistan can be sold as a luxury Silk Road journey.

The timing matters too. The best moment to discover a lesser-known destination is often before everyone else discovers it.

And that may ultimately be the biggest luxury of all—not having a destination entirely to yourself, but arriving while it still feels authentic, uncrowded and genuinely yours.

Destination	Country	Best months	Main appeal	Accessibility
Ziro Valley	India	Mar–May, Sep–Nov	Culture & mountains	Moderate
Tirthan Valley	India	Mar–Jun, Sep–Nov	Nature & slow travel	Easy–Moderate
Orchha	India	Oct–Mar	Heritage	Easy
Shekhawati	India	Oct–Mar	Havelis & culture	Easy
Majuli	India	Oct–Apr	River culture	Moderate
Albania	Europe	May–Jun, Sep–Oct	Riviera & road trips	Moderate
Uzbekistan	Central Asia	Apr–May, Sep–Oct	Silk Road heritage	Easy–Moderate
Kyrgyzstan	Central Asia	Jun–Sep	Mountains & adventure	Moderate
Slovenia	Europe	May–Jun, Sep–Oct	Alps, lakes & wellness	Easy–Moderate
Madagascar	Africa	Apr–Oct	Wildlife & nature	Moderate–Difficult

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