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The Travigator

B2B TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

APRIL 2026 | ISSUE 110

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL FOCUS

BUILDING BETTER JOURNEYS FOR OUR PLANET

Beyond Destinations. Towards a Better Tomorrow.

Sustainable choices today.
Stronger businesses tomorrow.
Let's shape journeys
that leave a positive impact.

8 SECTIONS. ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.

- **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM** — Travel that protects what we love
- **DESTINATION INSIGHTS** — In-depth trends and reports
- **B2B CONNECT** — Building partnerships. Creating opportunities.
- **TECH & INNOVATION** — Smart solutions for future travel
- **MICE & EVENTS** — Meetings, Incentives, Conferences. Exhibitions.
- **LUXURY EXPERIENCES & DESTINATION WEDDINGS** — Luxury travel. Destination weddings.
- **TRAVEL TRADE TALK** — Voices, views & industry updates
- **WELLBEING ON THE GO** — Mindful travel. Through you.

THE RISE OF REGENERATIVE TRAVEL

Moving from less harm to more good



Guest Column

- President, IATO
- National Coordinator, NIMA
- Director, DTravco
- Director, Travel O Quence
- Director, Save The Date ™

> "Sustainability is not just a responsibility, it's the greatest opportunity for travel businesses to lead with purpose and profit.

TheTravigator
GLOBAL B2B TRAVEL EDITION

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The Travigator

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TRAVEL. TRADE. TRANSFORMATION.

FROM THE *Editor*



> The world isn't standing still. Neither is travel. The question is—are we mapping it right?

THE MAP IS BEING REWRITTEN. WE'VE DRAWN THE FIRST LINES.

Imagine this: It's 2026. A luxury traveller from Mumbai lands in Udaipur—not for leisure, but for a three-day wedding that costs more than a villa in Tuscany. Meanwhile, a MICE planner in Delhi is negotiating directly with a ground operator in Da Nang, bypassing three layers of traditional wholesalers. And somewhere in Kerala, a homestay owner is quietly beating five-star occupancy rates because she understood "slow travel" before it was a hashtag.

This is not speculation. This is happening right now.

And yet, most of the industry is still reading last decade's map.

That's why this edition exists.

We've watched the quiet transfer of control unfold—margin from outbound agencies bleeding into the hands of agile local DMCs. We've tracked the collapse of rigid tour packaging into modular, "core plus flex" pricing that hands power back to the buyer. And we've documented the forces—carbon accountability, visa-free corridors, agentic AI, NDC disruption—that are reshaping global travel from the cockpit to the check-in counter.

Inside these pages, you'll find 25 stories that don't just report the news. **They decode it.**

From Rajasthan's wedding empire to Goa's beach vows, from the ₹229-crore Gateway jetty to IndiGo's contactless Bengaluru trial, from China's elite solo traveller to Dubai's expat family moment at IFFD 2026—every article is a puzzle piece.

And our guest columnists—the IATO President, the MICE National Coordinator, destination wedding experts, veteran tour operators—aren't here for fluff. They're here to tell you where the real yield is hiding.

So here's your invitation: Turn the page not to confirm what you know, but to discover what you've missed.

The season ahead belongs to the curious.

Let's begin.

SUMIT TULI
Editor-in-Chief

INSIGHTS. INTELLIGENCE. IMPACT.

SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM

Sustainability Is the New Dealbreaker

Why B2B Travel Partners Must Act Now

Sustainability is now a commercial necessity in B2B travel. With 76% of buyers demanding ESG compliance, measurable impact is the new competitive edge.

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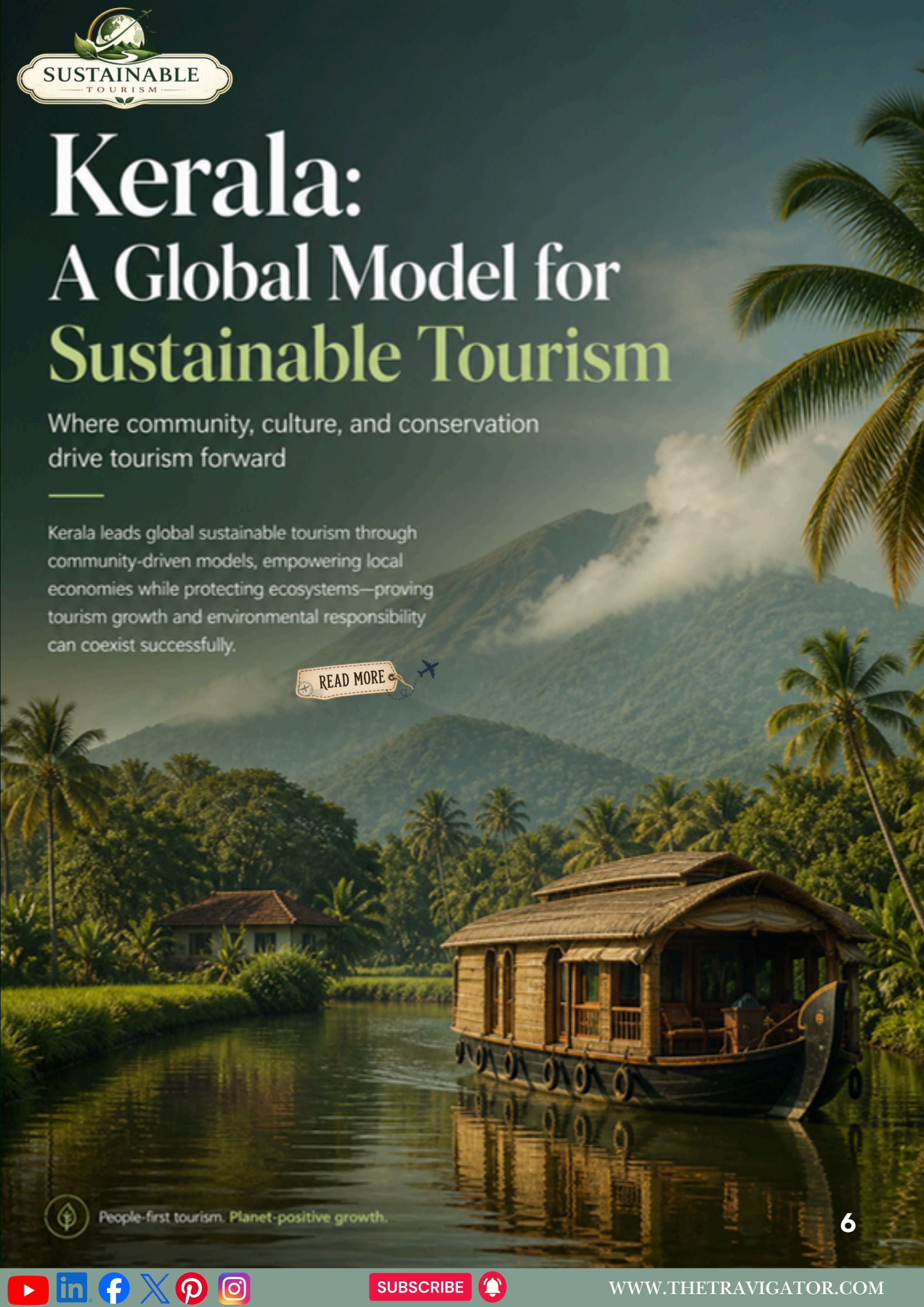
SUSTAINABLE
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Kerala:
A Global Model for Sustainable Tourism

Where community, culture, and conservation drive tourism forward

Kerala leads global sustainable tourism through community-driven models, empowering local economies while protecting ecosystems—proving tourism growth and environmental responsibility can coexist successfully.

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People-first tourism. Planet-positive growth.

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Sustainable and Resilient Tourism

Sustainable and resilient tourism is emerging as the future of the travel industry. Before the pandemic, tourism drove 10.4% of global GDP but also caused environmental damage and economic vulnerability, highlighted by the 73.9% collapse in 2020. Sustainability focuses on reducing environmental impact, preserving culture, and supporting local communities to create a positive net effect. Resilience ensures the industry can withstand crises through diversified markets, strong local economies, and preparedness. With tourism contributing 8% of global emissions and rising demand for eco-friendly travel, this model offers a path toward a more responsible, durable, and regenerative tourism ecosystem.

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SIKKIM:
The Organic State

Sikkim, India's first fully organic state, is a leader in Sustainable and Eco-Tourism. From the vibrant culture of Gangtok to glacial natural wonders like Gurudongmar Lake, it offers a mix of modern Himalayan life and rugged adventure.

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UNEP & UN Tourism: "Recipe of Change" Initiative

A global commitment to halve food waste by 2030. Leading tourism businesses are tracking, transforming, and scaling solutions for a more sustainable future.

> With food waste contributing up to 10% of global greenhouse gases, we must take decisive action.
>
> – Shaikha Al Nuwais
> Secretary-General, UN Tourism

> Tourism businesses are in a unique position to redesign menus, encourage lasting behavioural change and deliver measurable reductions in food waste."
>
> – Sheila Aggarwal-Khan
> Director, Industry and Economy Division, UNEP

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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The Evolving Indian Homestay: Slow Travel, Bleisure, and Regeneration Redefine Tourism

Indian travelers in 2026 seek meaning over checklists—embracing slow journeys, bleisure trips, and regenerative experiences.

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SLOW TRAVEL | BLEISURE | REGENERATION

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Mindful Choices, Lasting Impact

Sustainable travel today focuses on mindful practices that protect India's diverse ecosystems while enriching local communities. With tourism contributing **6.8%** to GDP and **9.2%** employment, adopting these habits ensures lasting benefits.



TRANSPORT CHOICES

Opt for trains or buses over flights to slash carbon emissions—India's electric rail networks are expanding. In cities, choose e-rickshaws, Yulu bikes in Mumbai/Bangalore, or walking for short jaunts through Old Delhi lanes.



ACCOMMODATION PICKS

Book eco-lodges in Ranthambore or solar-powered homestays in Rajasthan—prioritize rainwater harvesting and zero-plastic spots. Sikkim's organic farms and Spiti's low-impact treks exemplify community-led stays.



ON-GROUND HABITS

Carry reusables: bottles, bags, cutlery to curb plastic waste. Buy local handicrafts, hire village guides, and respect wildlife—maintain distance in Kaziranga safaris. Follow 'Travel for LIFE': no littering, conserve water/energy.



TECH & PLANNING AIDS

Use AI apps for crowd-free Taj Mahal visits via QR codes; apps track footprints. Embrace slow travel: linger in Kerala backwaters or Ladakh villages for deeper connections.

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Why Sustainability is B2B Travel's Golden Ticket

Sustainability is reshaping B2B travel in India, with over **77%** of travelers prioritizing **eco-conscious choices**. From community-led stays to low-carbon transport, demand is shifting toward responsible experiences that deliver both environmental impact and long-term commercial value.

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Reduce Waste | Choose Greener Transport | Support Local Communities | Conserve Energy & Resources

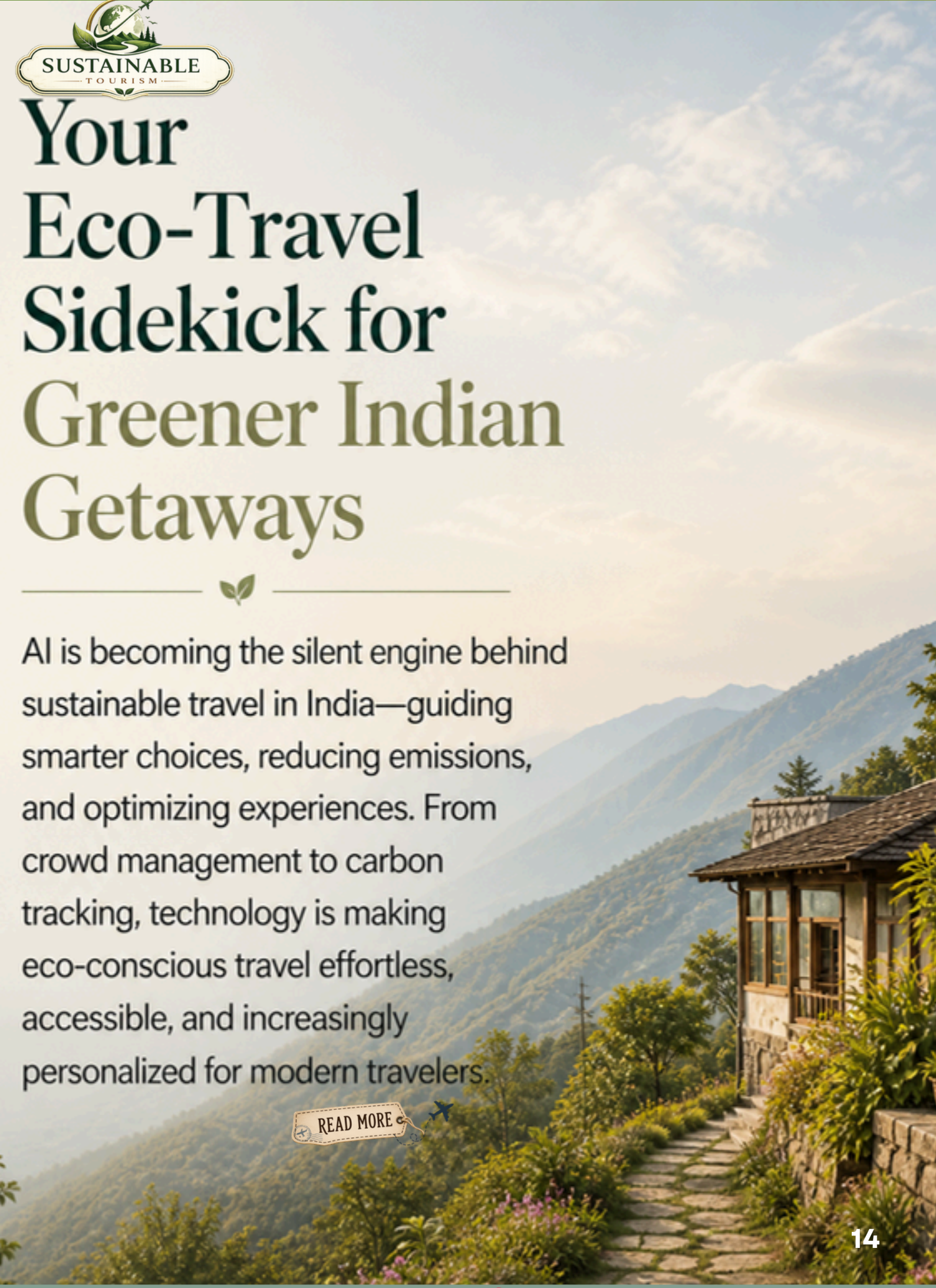
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Your Eco-Travel Sidekick for Greener Indian Getaways

AI is becoming the silent engine behind sustainable travel in India—guiding smarter choices, reducing emissions, and optimizing experiences. From crowd management to carbon tracking, technology is making eco-conscious travel effortless, accessible, and increasingly personalized for modern travelers.

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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Public-Private Collaboration & AI in Tourism Planning



Public-private partnerships are powering India's tourism transformation, blending AI innovation with government infrastructure. From smarter planning to sustainable growth, collaboration is enabling seamless, data-driven travel experiences while building a future-ready, inclusive tourism ecosystem.

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GUEST COLUMN



Mr. Ravi Gosain

President, IATO

Policy reforms needed to support tour operators in India.

Policy reforms are essential to strengthen India's tourism sector and improve the global competitiveness of Indian tour operators. A key priority is GST rationalization, including seamless input tax credits and lower taxes for inbound tourism, treating it as an export industry. Simplifying the visa regime through expanded visa-on-arrival facilities, longer e-visas, and lower fees can significantly boost international arrivals. Tour operators also require a better ease-of-doing-business environment with simplified licensing, standardized state regulations, and single-window clearances. Financial support for MSMEs, incentives for digital adoption, and improved tourism infrastructure are equally important to enhance visitor experiences. Finally, stronger public-private collaboration between the government and industry bodies such as Indian Association of Tour Operators is necessary to create practical, industry-focused tourism policies.

GST RATIONALIZATION

Seamless input tax credits and lower taxes for inbound tourism, treating it as an export industry.

SIMPLIFIED VISA REGIME

Expanded visa-on-arrival facilities, longer e-visas, and lower fees to boost international arrivals.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Simplified licensing, standardized state regulations, and single-window clearances for tour operators.

FINANCIAL & DIGITAL SUPPORT

Financial support for MSMEs, incentives for digital adoption, and skilling to empower businesses.

IMPROVED TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

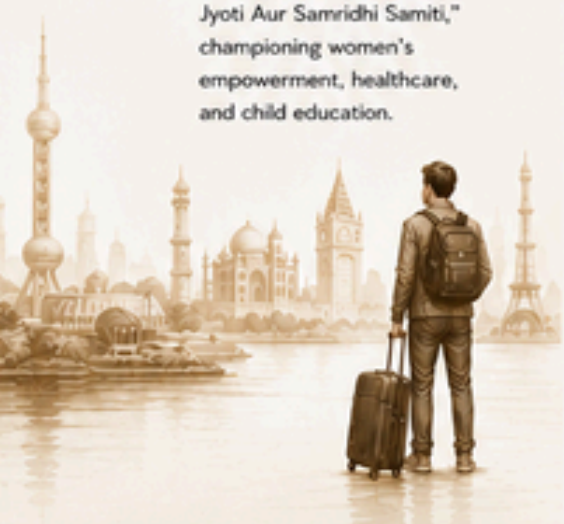
Better connectivity, world-class facilities, and sustainable development to enhance visitor experiences.

STRONGER PUBLIC–PRIVATE COLLABORATION

Collaborative efforts between the government and industry bodies like IATO to create practical, industry-focused policies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Ravi Gosain, President of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), is a distinguished tourism professional and postgraduate in tourism. A two-time National Tourism Award recipient and Limca Book record holder, he has travelled to over 85 countries across all continents. A passionate industry leader, he also founded "Nav Jyoti Aur Samridhi Samiti," championing women's empowerment, healthcare, and child education.



The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.



Fan Voyage: The Billion-Dollar Opportunity in Indian Music and Sports Tourism

Travel has always been about exploration, but a new trend is reshaping how Indians plan their journeys. It's called fan voyage—traveling specifically to experience the thrill of a live event.

Whether it's a global music concert, a high-stakes cricket match, or a pop-culture convention, fans are increasingly willing to cross cities, countries, and continents to witness their passions in person.

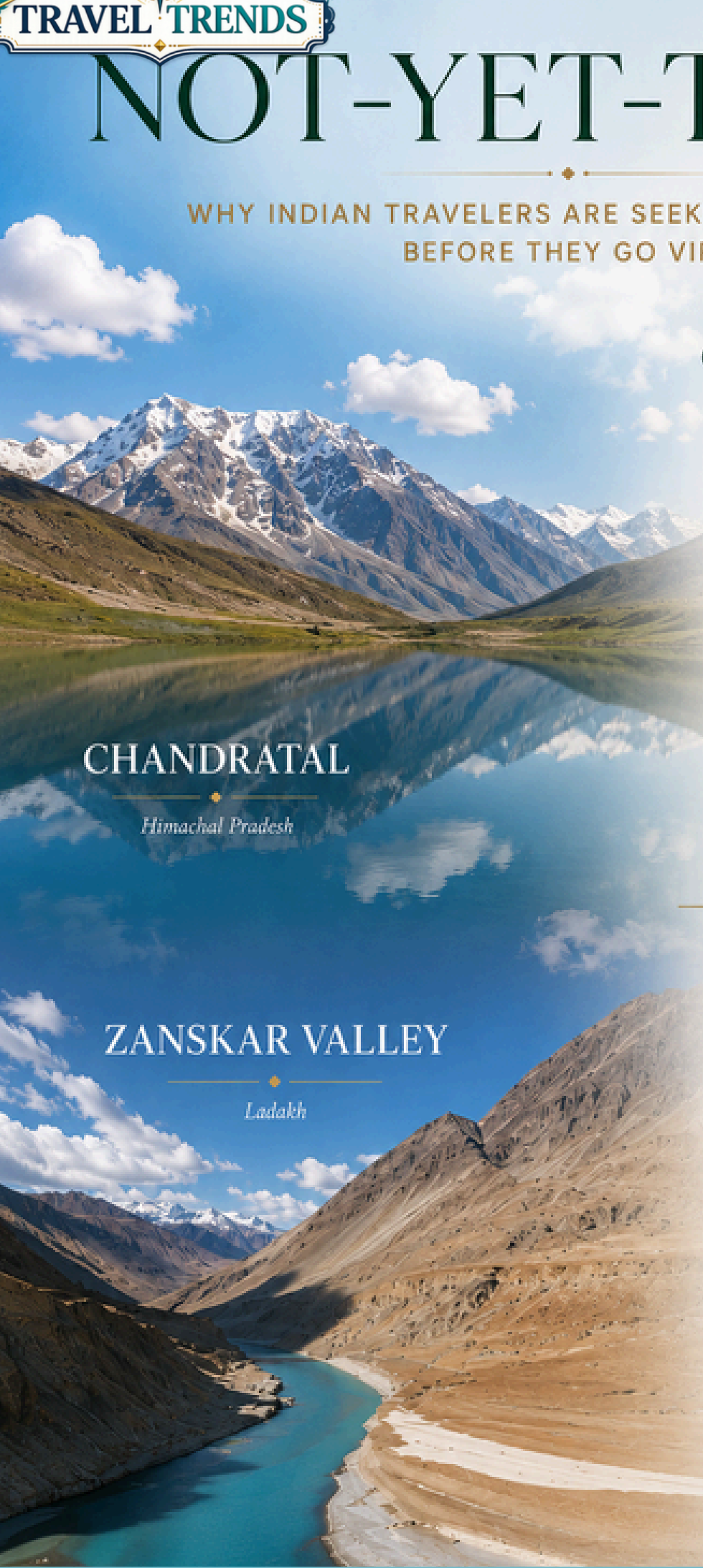
For B2B travel companies, this growing enthusiasm represents a billion-dollar opportunity.

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NOT-YET-TOK'D

WHY INDIAN TRAVELERS ARE SEEKING DESTINATIONS BEFORE THEY GO VIRAL



CHANDRATAL

Himachal Pradesh

ZANSKAR VALLEY

Ladakh

"Not-Yet-Tok'd" travel reflects a growing shift among Indian travelers who are deliberately avoiding destinations that have gone viral on social media. Instead of following trending hotspots, they are seeking authentic, uncrowded, and largely undiscovered places that offer genuine local experiences. This trend highlights a deeper desire for meaningful travel, where the journey feels personal rather than influenced by algorithms or online popularity.

The motivation behind this shift is rooted in **authenticity**. Once a destination becomes viral, it often undergoes rapid commercialization—restaurants modify offerings for tourists, local communities adapt to external expectations, and prices rise significantly. Over time, the original charm that made the place unique begins to fade. In contrast, Not-Yet-Tok'd travelers look for fishing villages where life continues naturally, small cafés frequented by locals, and viewpoints reached through **real exploration** rather than overcrowded access points.

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NOT-YET-TOK'D

WHY INDIAN TRAVELERS ARE SEEKING DESTINATIONS BEFORE THEY GO VIRAL

MON VALLEY



Data supports this evolving behavior. Indian travelers are increasingly exploring lesser-known destinations such as Jorhat, Jaffna, and Chiang Rai, reflecting a conscious move toward offbeat experiences that feel unique and less curated.

At the same time, Indian tourists are becoming more confident and self-reliant. They are comfortable navigating unfamiliar environments, experimenting with local food, and choosing accommodations with minimal online presence. This independence enhances the sense of discovery, allowing them to create travel experiences that are truly their own.

AGATTI AIRPORT



For B2B travel companies, this trend presents a strong strategic opportunity. By identifying emerging destinations early and building partnerships with local guides and homestays, operators can design exclusive, small-group experiences.

Focusing on storytelling and authenticity rather than popularity enables companies to offer differentiated, premium travel products that align with evolving traveler preferences.

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Whycation

Every meaningful journey begins with a simple question: Why am I here?

This idea lies at the heart of the rising travel trend known as whycation–purpose-driven journeys designed around personal intentions rather than sightseeing checklists.

For Indian travelers, whycations reflect a broader shift in travel culture. Instead of rushing through multiple destinations, travelers are increasingly seeking experiences that align with their values, emotions, and life milestones.

For travel companies operating in the B2B space, this trend represents a significant opportunity to create more meaningful and higher-value travel products.

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SET-JETTING

HOW BOLLYWOOD AND OTT ARE DRIVING INDIAN TRAVEL BOOKINGS

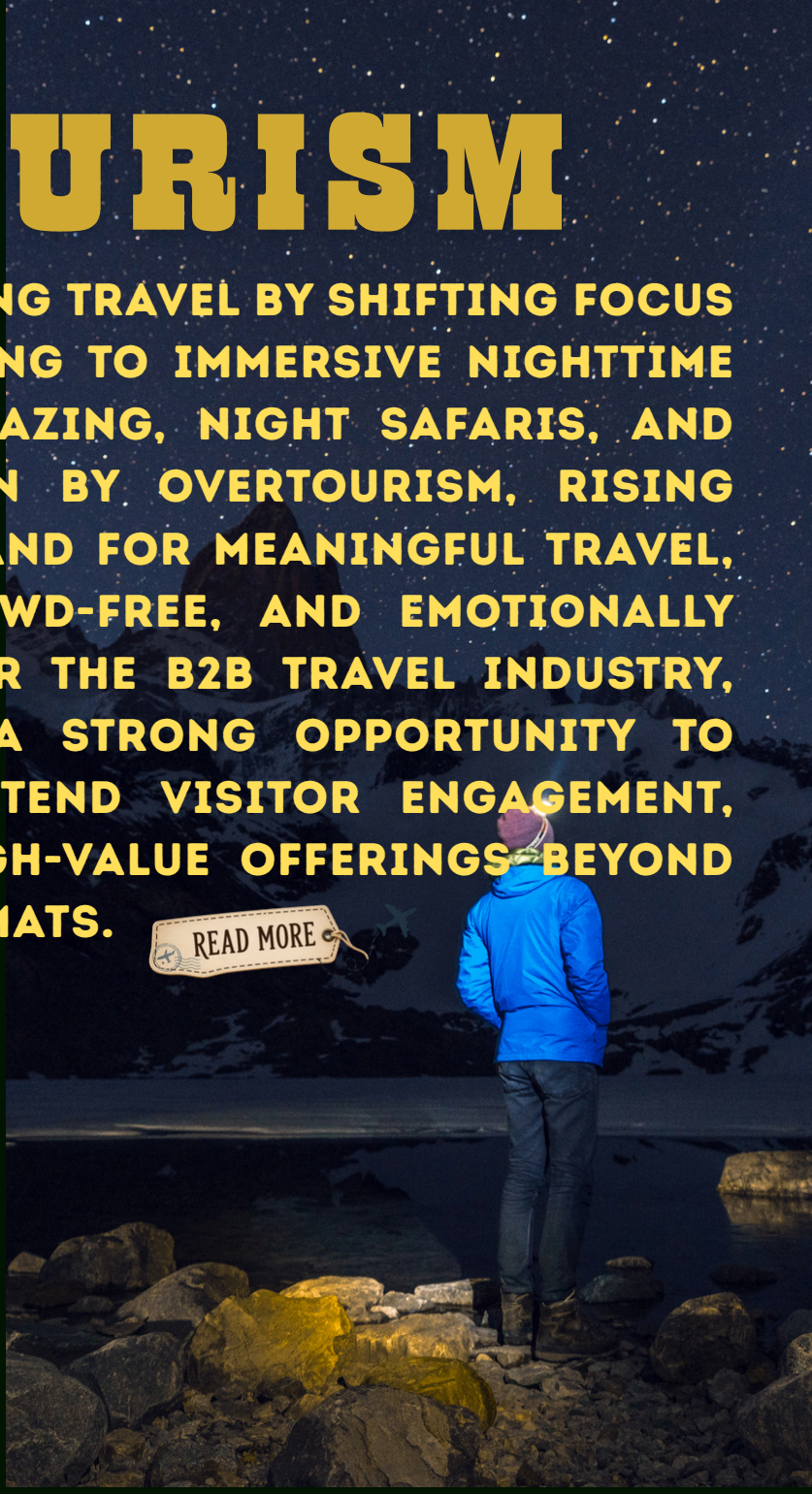
Set-jetting is the growing trend where films and web series influence travel decisions, especially among Indian travelers. Popular shows like The Family Man, Paatal Lok, and Delhi Crime driving interest. Key destinations include Guwahati, Shillong, and Gangtok. International Shows like The White Lotus and Emily in Paris have boosted destination demand. Travelers seek emotional, story-driven experiences, creating strong opportunities for B2B travel companies to design curated, film-inspired itineraries that drive engagement and bookings.

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NOCTOURISM

NOCTOURISM IS REDEFINING TRAVEL BY SHIFTING FOCUS FROM DAYTIME SIGHTSEEING TO IMMERSIVE NIGHTTIME EXPERIENCES LIKE STARGAZING, NIGHT SAFARIS, AND CULTURAL TOURS. DRIVEN BY OVERTOURISM, RISING TEMPERATURES, AND DEMAND FOR MEANINGFUL TRAVEL, IT OFFERS COOLER, CROWD-FREE, AND EMOTIONALLY RICHER EXPERIENCES. FOR THE B2B TRAVEL INDUSTRY, NOCTOURISM PRESENTS A STRONG OPPORTUNITY TO INNOVATE PRODUCTS, EXTEND VISITOR ENGAGEMENT, AND CREATE UNIQUE, HIGH-VALUE OFFERINGS BEYOND TRADITIONAL TRAVEL FORMATS.







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SLOW TRAVEL

SLOW TRAVEL IS GAINING POPULARITY AMONG INDIAN TRAVELERS, EMPHASIZING DEEPER, MORE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES OVER FAST-PACED ITINERARIES. INSTEAD OF MULTIPLE DESTINATIONS, TRAVELERS PREFER LONGER STAYS, CULTURAL IMMERSION, AND LOCAL CONNECTIONS. THIS TREND SUPPORTS SUSTAINABILITY AND BENEFITS LOCAL ECONOMIES. FOR B2B TRAVEL COMPANIES, IT OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DESIGN PREMIUM, EXPERIENCE-DRIVEN ITINERARIES FOCUSED ON IMMERSION RATHER THAN TRADITIONAL PACKAGE TOURS.

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quiet-cation

THE RISE OF "QUIET-CATIONS" REFLECTS A GROWING NEED AMONG INDIAN TRAVELERS—ESPECIALLY CORPORATE PROFESSIONALS—FOR SILENCE, SIMPLICITY, AND MENTAL RECOVERY. MOVING AWAY FROM CROWDED ITINERARIES, THEY SEEK NATURE RETREATS, DIGITAL DETOXES, AND SLOW, MINDFUL EXPERIENCES. FOR THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY, THIS SIGNALS A POWERFUL SHIFT TOWARD WELLNESS-DRIVEN TRAVEL, WHERE SILENCE ITSELF BECOMES A PREMIUM OFFERING AND A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR CURATED, HIGH-VALUE EXPERIENCES.

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TWO-TIER TRAVEL MARKET EMERGES: INDIANS TURN EAST INWARD AMID GLOBAL TURBULENCE

GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS IN WEST ASIA ARE QUIETLY RESHAPING THE CONTOURS OF INDIAN TRAVEL, CREATING A CLEAR TWO-TIER MARKET. LONG-HAUL JOURNEYS TO EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST ARE LOSING MOMENTUM AS RISING AIRFARES AND FREQUENT DISRUPTIONS MAKE THEM INCREASINGLY UNPREDICTABLE. A STARK EXAMPLE: FARES FROM BENGALURU TO MUNICH SURGED DRAMATICALLY WITHIN DAYS OF THE CRISIS, WHILE HUNDREDS OF FLIGHTS ACROSS GULF AND EUROPEAN ROUTES WERE CANCELLED—TURNING ONCE ASPIRATIONAL TRIPS INTO HIGH-RISK DECISIONS.

IN CONTRAST, A NEW TRAVEL PATTERN IS EMERGING—ONE ROOTED IN PROXIMITY, FAMILIARITY, AND FLEXIBILITY. INDIAN TRAVELERS ARE PIVOTING TOWARD SHORT-HAUL INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS SUCH AS VIETNAM, NEPAL, AND SRI LANKA, WHERE ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY REMAIN INTACT. SOUTHEAST ASIAN HUBS LIKE INDONESIA, SINGAPORE, AND THAILAND CONTINUE TO DRAW STEADY DEMAND, REINFORCING THE REGION'S ROLE AS INDIA'S MOST RESILIENT OUTBOUND CORRIDOR.

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DOMESTICALLY, THE MOMENTUM IS EVEN STRONGER. DESTINATIONS SUCH AS UDAIPUR, JODHPUR, SRINAGAR, AND BAGDOGRA ARE WITNESSING SHARP GROWTH, DRIVEN BY A DESIRE FOR CULTURALLY RICH YET LOGISTICALLY SIMPLE EXPERIENCES. SEARCHES FOR REGIONS LIKE KASHMIR AND LADAKH HAVE SURGED, SIGNALING A DEEPER SHIFT TOWARD EXPERIENTIAL DOMESTIC TRAVEL.

FOR B2B TRAVEL OPERATORS, THIS IS MORE THAN A TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENT—IT'S A STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION. THE FUTURE LIES IN CRAFTING AGILE, EXPERIENCE-LED ITINERARIES CENTERED AROUND INTRA-ASIA CIRCUITS AND DOMESTIC EXPLORATION. IN AN ERA DEFINED BY UNCERTAINTY, INDIAN TRAVELERS ARE NOT RETREATING FROM TRAVEL—THEY ARE REDEFINING IT, CHOOSING JOURNEYS THAT FEEL CLOSER, SAFER, AND MORE MEANINGFUL.



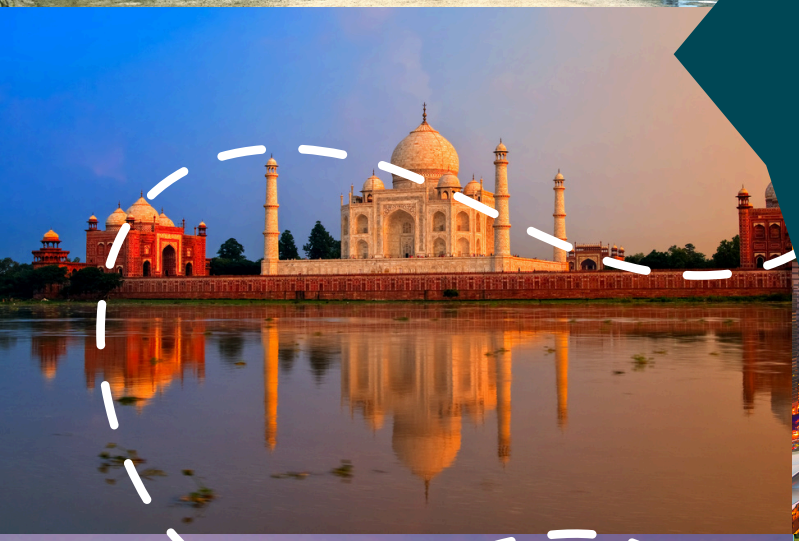
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INDIAN TRAVELLERS PIVOT TO ASIA, DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS



Indian travel trends are shifting toward nearby international destinations and culturally rich domestic locations, driven by accessibility, affordability, and changing global dynamics.

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DRONE TOURISM

INDIA IS PILOTING DRONE TOURISM IN GOA AND KERALA, BLENDING TECHNOLOGY WITH HERITAGE AND ECO-EXPERIENCES. BACKED BY THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION VIA THE DIGITAL SKY PLATFORM, THESE TRIALS INTRODUCE REGULATED AERIAL SIGHTSEEING—FROM COASTAL CIRCUITS TO BACKWATER LANDSCAPES. FOR THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY, THIS MARKS A SHIFT TOWARD PREMIUM, TECH-ENABLED EXPERIENCES THAT REDEFINE HOW DESTINATIONS ARE SEEN, PACKAGED, AND MONETIZED.

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A NEW ORDER

THE YEAR THE INDUSTRY LOST CONTROL AND FOUND A NEW ORDER

A structural reset is reshaping travel. Control is shifting to ground operators, products are becoming modular, and distribution is fragmenting. Sustainability now filters suppliers, while quiet consolidation is redefining ownership—marking a deeper power shift, not a demand crisis.



OPTION 1

OR

OPTION 2





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THE UNBUNDLING OF EVERYTHING

WHY 2026'S B2B TOUR MARGIN IS HIDING IN THE FINE PRINT

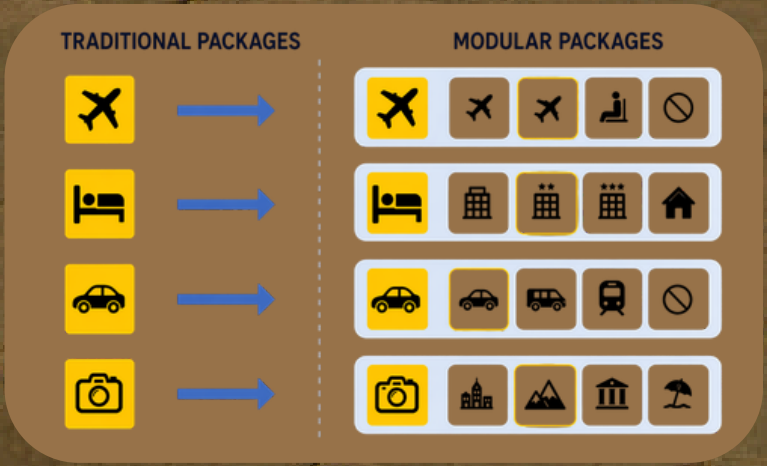






The wholesale tour model is shifting to modular pricing, where agents sell a core package with flexible add-ons. Operators adopting this gain higher ancillary revenue, while rigid itineraries and outdated tech are causing margin loss and B2B partner shifts.

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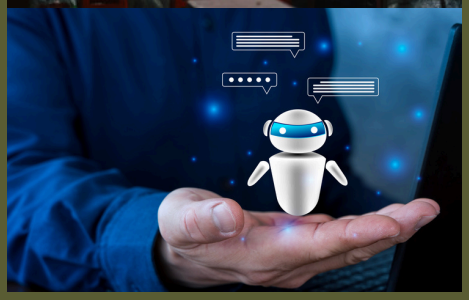
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Global travel is set to exceed $1.07 trillion by 2026, driven by digitalization, AI, and demand for immersive experiences. Millennials and Gen Z push sustainability, while markets like India grow rapidly, making personalization, tech adoption, and eco-focus critical for B2B success.



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GUEST COLUMN



The Commodity Trap: When "Trending" Becomes a Liability

By *Jyoti Monga*

Jyoti Monga

Director
Travel O Quence

With over 26 years of industry experience and dual MBA degrees in Tourism and Marketing, Jyoti Monga is a seasoned professional known for redefining travel representation through strategic vision and dedication. She is the driving force behind innovative partnerships and sustained business growth through Traveloquence.

The travel industry today faces a growing "commodity trap," where trending destinations quickly become saturated with similar offerings, leading to shrinking margins and reduced differentiation.

In a market flooded with identical itineraries, competing on price replaces competing on value. Modern travelers are more perceptive and seek unique perspectives rather than repetitive packages.

True differentiation no longer comes from access to destinations but from how experiences are interpreted and presented.

At **Travel O Quence**, the focus is on identifying the **"White Space"** — overlooked opportunities that create stronger positioning and sustainable value.

Instead of simply selling what is trending, the goal is to offer a distinctive narrative and perspective, transforming destinations into **meaningful, memorable experiences** that stand apart in a crowded marketplace.

The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.

Beyond the GDS: How NDC Is Reshaping Airline Distribution

Why Your Airline Ticket Just Got a 'Tech Tax'

Airlines are adding hefty surcharges on GDS bookings to push agents toward NDC channels. Without API/NDC integration, Indian tour operators face higher costs and lose price competitiveness, shifting margins from fares to tech capability and fee avoidance.

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B2B Take

NDC in Business Travel

905 travel agencies reported NDC transactions in April 2025



GDS

Global Distribution System – GDS



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NO STAMP, NO QUEUE HOW VISA-FREE ACCESS IS SELLING YOUR TOURS

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Global travel is set to exceed **$1.07 trillion** by 2026, driven by digitalization, AI, and demand for immersive experiences. Millennials and Gen Z push sustainability, while markets like India grow rapidly, making personalization, tech adoption, and eco-focus critical for B2B success.



Visa Guide for

INDIA PASSPORT HOLDERS

TIME TO TRAVEL

Explore the world with ease! Know your visa options.

E-VISA

Apply online and get your visa before you travel.

- Azerbaijan
- Bahrain
- Thailand
- Singapore
- Uzbekistan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Malaysia
- Georgia
- Cambodia
- Turkey
- Sri Lanka
- New Zealand
- Macau
- Montenegro
- Zambia
- Vietnam

VISA FREE

Travel to these countries without a visa.

- Malaysia
- St. Kitts & Nevis
- Haiti
- Iran
- Mauritius
- Barbados
- Thailand
- Serbia
- Dominica
- Jamaica
- Montserrat
- Trinidad & Tobago

VISA ON ARRIVAL

Get your visa upon arrival at your destination.

- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Seychelles
- Cambodia
- Maldives
- Madagascar
- Palau
- Laos
- Zimbabwe
- Bolivia
- Tvaulu
- Timor-Leste

YOUR PASSPORT IS THE KEY,
THE WORLD IS YOUR DESTINATION.

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THE ROBOT TRAVEL AGENT:



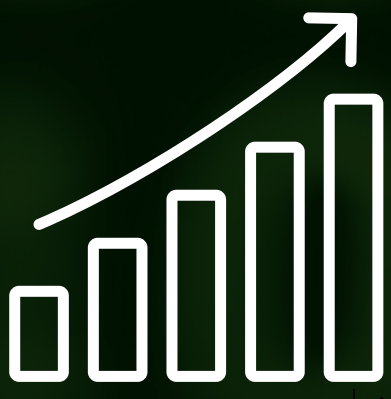


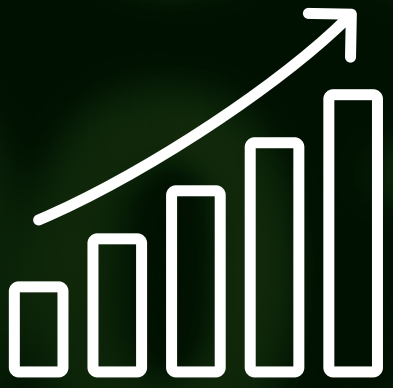




How AI is Building Itineraries While You Sleep

Static itineraries are fading as Agentic AI automates travel planning, bookings, and disruptions. For Indian B2B agents, AI is both threat and opportunity—shifting value from booking to orchestration. Adopting AI enables faster, smarter, customized itineraries and better demand prediction.







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BEYOND THE BUS: CRACKING THE CODE OF CHINA'S ELITE SOLO TRAVELER



REAL PLACES
Real connections.



REAL EXPERIENCES
Beyond sightseeing.



REAL SMART TRAVEL
Tech meets tradition.

Chinese outbound travel is shifting to smaller, tech-savvy FIT travelers seeking authentic experiences. Indian DMCs must adapt—accept **Alipay** and **WeChat**, market via **Douyin**, and offer **culturally immersive, Mandarin-friendly services** over traditional group shopping tours.

READY TO EXPLORE?
Authentic journeys.
Lasting memories.

BETTER EXPERIENCES.
STRONGER CONNECTIONS.
THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL IS PERSONAL.

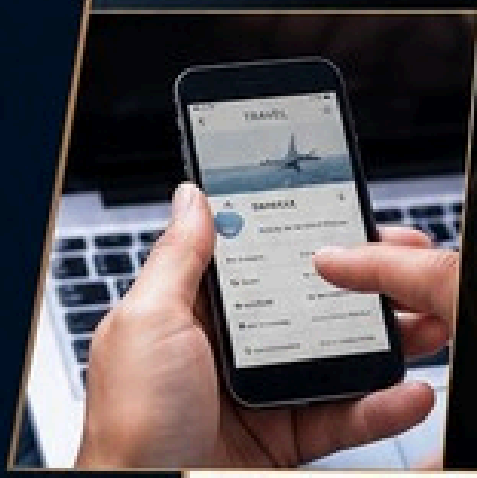
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Smart Rationing, Smarter Profits

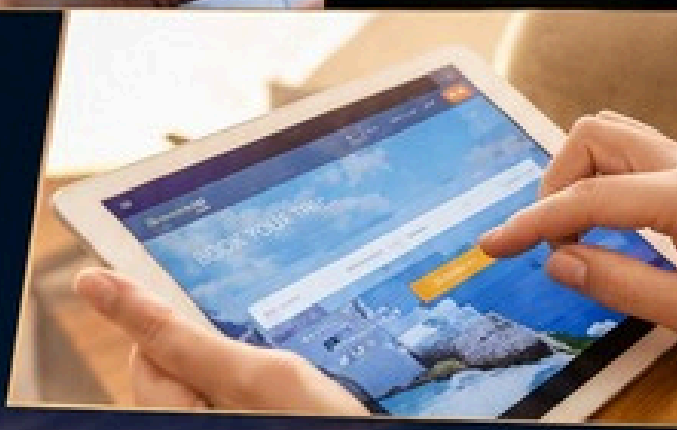


- Global destinations are enforcing timed entries via tech, making pre-booked slots essential.

- For Indian B2B operators, API access turns logistics into a premium product—where guaranteed entry, precise planning, and tech integration define competitive advantage and higher margins.







API ACCESS
Real-time inventory and guaranteed confirmations.

TIMED ENTRY
Pre-booked slots ensure smooth access & compliance.

PREMIUM LOGISTICS
Precision planning creates a superior travel experience.

> *Access is becoming the new luxury in travel.*



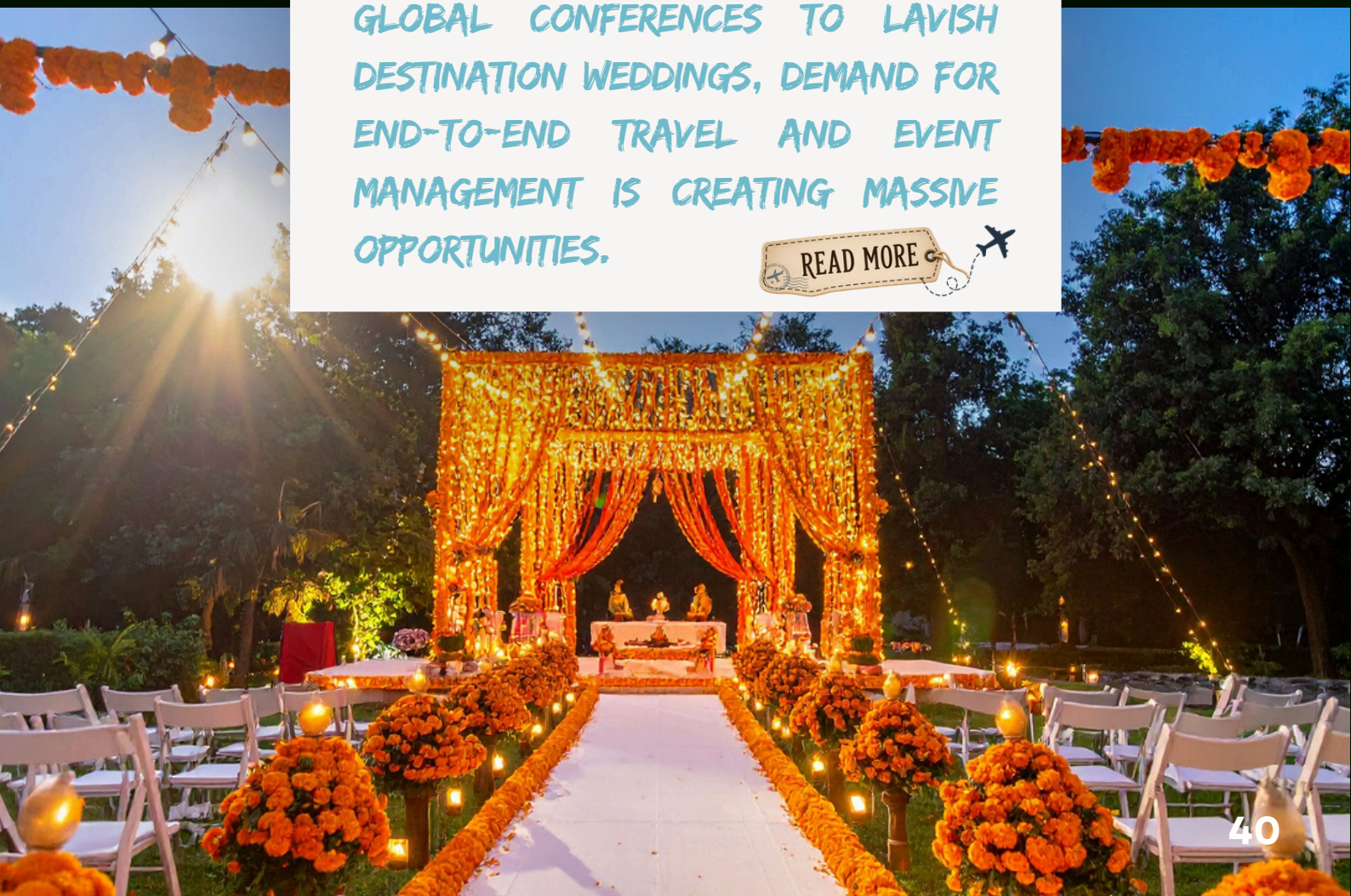
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BIG FAT WEDDINGS AND MICE BOOM

INDIA'S CORPORATE TRAVEL IS SURGING, DRIVEN BY MICE AND LUXURY WEDDINGS, WITH THE MARKET SET TO HIT $60 BILLION BY 2027. FROM GLOBAL CONFERENCES TO LAVISH DESTINATION WEDDINGS, DEMAND FOR END-TO-END TRAVEL AND EVENT MANAGEMENT IS CREATING MASSIVE OPPORTUNITIES.

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Global MICE Industry: A $1 Trillion Powerhouse Reshaping Business Travel

The global MICE industry is rebounding, set to cross $1.02 trillion by 2026 with strong growth ahead. Hybrid events and AI are reshaping engagement, while India emerges as a key growth hub, offering major opportunities for B2B travel players.

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GUEST COLUMN



Dr. Nitin Mittal

National Coordinator

nima

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Nitin Mittal is a veteran travel and hospitality leader with 30+ years of experience across procurement, operations, and global marketing. Founder of HNA and PR Euro, he combines expertise in tourism, film tourism research, finance, and technology to drive innovation in India's MICE and corporate travel sectors.

How Technology is Changing Meetings and Events

Technology has evolved from being a support function to becoming the core foundation of the modern MICE industry.

AI-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION

Across India's B2B travel ecosystem, AI-driven platforms are transforming event management through predictive planning, attendee profiling, personalised agendas, and real-time engagement analysis.

HYBRID WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

Hybrid event solutions, including virtual participation tools and multilingual integrations, are expanding accessibility and enabling wider participation from Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets.

PERSONALISATION AT SCALE

Data-led personalisation now allows organisers to curate highly customised delegate experiences that drive deeper engagement and long-term value.

MEASURABLE IMPACT

Advanced analytics provide measurable ROI through engagement tracking, conversion metrics, and sustainability reporting—helping businesses make smarter, data-backed decisions.

THE ROAD AHEAD

As India's MICE sector grows rapidly, agencies adopting AI, hybrid-first strategies, and intelligent event technologies will emerge as industry leaders.

The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.

INDIA'S MICE MOMENT: FROM EMERGING PLAYER TO GLOBAL CONTENDER

India's MICE sector is set for rapid growth, driven by strong government support, new convention infrastructure, and global exposure.

Tier-2 cities are rising, while events like the G20 Summit have boosted demand, positioning India as a competitive global MICE destination.

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Rise of Hybrid Events The New Normal in MICE

Hybrid events are now standard, with over 60% integrating virtual elements. They expand reach and cut costs, while AI enhances engagement. For India, hybrid enables global participation from smaller cities, though balancing monetization and experience remains a key challenge.



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Incentive Travel: The Silent Growth Engine

Incentive travel, though just 10% of MICE, delivers high impact with rising post-pandemic demand. Companies favor international, experience-driven rewards, boosting motivation and performance. Indian corporates are driving growth, with destinations like Thailand and Dubai leading.

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The Rise of the 3-Day Wedding Festival

Destination weddings are booming as couples seek immersive, multi-day experiences. Success depends on strong ecosystems, seamless execution, and guest-focused planning.

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Rajasthan: India's Wedding Powerhouse

RAJASTHAN DOMINATES DESTINATION WEDDINGS WITH UNMATCHED PALACE VENUES, EXPERT VENDORS, AND STRONG CONNECTIVITY. FROM UDAIPUR TO JAIPUR, ITS SCALE, SPECTACLE, AND MATURE ECOSYSTEM MAKE IT THE GO-TO CHOICE FOR LUXURY WEDDINGS AND A HIGH-VALUE OPPORTUNITY FOR PLANNERS.

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GUEST COLUMN



Kunal Seth

Director of Celebrations
Save The Date ™



The Invisible Crisis Management Behind Destination Weddings

India's destination wedding industry is no longer defined only by grandeur, but by seamless hospitality, emotional intelligence, and operational precision.

Behind every flawless celebration lies complex coordination involving logistics, guest management, hospitality teams, vendors, and family dynamics.

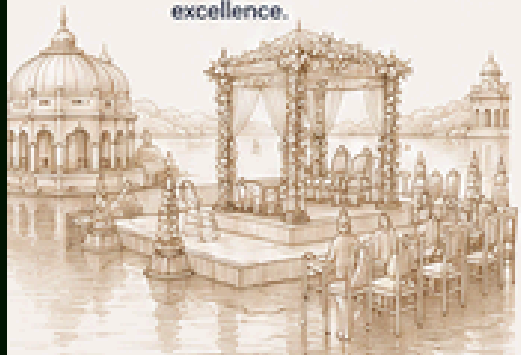
Destination wedding planners today function as hospitality professionals, strategists, negotiators, and emotional anchors, ensuring families remain untouched by operational pressures.

As luxury increasingly shifts from excess to effortless experiences, destinations like Udaipur, Jaipur, Goa, Kerala, and the Himalayas continue driving experiential travel and tourism growth.

Ultimately, the true beauty of destination weddings lies not only in spectacle, but in the invisible calm created behind the scenes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kunal Seth is a hospitality expert with global experience across luxury brands including Hyatt, Hilton, Oberoi, ITC, and Macdonald Hotels UK. Through Save The Date, he curates seamless destination weddings and luxury celebrations with a strong focus on guest experience and operational excellence.



The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.



Goa & Beyond—Beach Weddings

INDIA'S COASTAL WEDDINGS, LED BY GOA, ARE RAPIDLY RIVALING PALACE VENUES DUE TO RELAXED LUXURY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND RESOURCE BUYOUTS. EMERGING DESTINATIONS LIKE GOKARNA, ALIBAUG, AND KUMARAKOM OFFER INTIMATE OPTIONS, WHILE SHORTER PLANNING CYCLES CREATE STRONG OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAVEL AGENTS.

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The Offbeat India-Coorg, Hampi

A RISING TREND FAVORS "RAW AND MEMORABLE" WEDDING DESTINATIONS LIKE COORG, HAMPI, AND UTTARAKHAND. COUPLES SEEK INTIMATE, NATURE-LED, AND CULTURALLY RICH EXPERIENCES OVER TRADITIONAL VENUES, WHILE ACCESSIBLE HILL GETAWAYS NEAR CITIES ADD TO THE GROWING APPEAL.

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International Offshore Weddings Surge



Indian offshore destination weddings have grown 35% year-on-year, driven by three factors: competitive pricing (often cheaper than a Udaipur palace wedding), visa accessibility, and the "foreign yet familiar" appeal .

Sri Lanka: The Emerald Isle Strategy

Sri Lanka is making a calculated play for the Indian wedding market, and the strategy is working. DM Niroshana, Managing Director of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, explained at SATTE 2026: "Wedding tourism is a segment which has huge demand in India. Wedding parties come in large numbers, they stay for several days, and they also spend substantial amounts at the destination. We want them to come to Sri Lanka" .

Why Sri Lanka works for Indian weddings:
Proximity: A 1-3 hour flight from most Indian cities
Cultural comfort: Similar food, shared heritage, and Tamil-speaking regions
Diverse backdrops: Beach (Bentota, Galle), hill country (Nuwara Eliya), heritage (Kandy, Anuradhapura)—all within 2-4 hours of each other

The Sri Lankan tourism bureau is actively working on air travel concessions for bulk wedding parties and tax cuts on merchandise to become an attractive shopping destination for wedding guests .

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THAILAND & VIETNAM

International Offshore Weddings Surge

Thailand: The Mature Market

Thailand remains the most mature offshore wedding destination for Indians. Phuket, Krabi, and Bangkok have hosted hundreds of Indian weddings, with established vendor networks, Indian-specialist caterers, and venues that understand the intricacies of Hindu wedding rituals. The Thailand Advantage: direct flights from every major Indian city, visa-on-arrival ease, and a price point that beats domestic luxury options.

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vietnam is emerging as a serious contender. Da Nang, in particular, has positioned itself as a MICE and wedding tourism destination, with a targeted strategy for the Indian market. The numbers are striking: Vietnam welcomed over 746,000 Indian visitors in 2025, with Da Nang alone attracting over 476,000– accounting for 63% of total Indian visitors to Vietnam. India now ranks fourth among Da Nang's top 10 international source markets .

At OTM 2026, Da Nang's tourism pavilion highlighted their "Return to Origin" positioning, emphasizing wedding models set within nature, heritage sites, and local cultural life –while emphasizing flexible product design tailored to Indian rituals, event scales, and aesthetic preferences .

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Beyond the Desk: The Cloud-Native PMS Revolution

Legacy systems are being phased out as API-first architectures take command.

The Hospitality Property Management Software Market is valued at **$1.73 billion** in 2025 and is projected to reach **$2.44 billion** by 2031, growing at a **7.05% CAGR**.

Cloud deployment led the market with **64.92%** share in 2025 and is set to dominate by 2031, replacing on-premise legacy systems.

SMEs drive the shift—holding **57.05%** of revenue—as modern PMS solutions offer freemium trials and mobile access, enabling operations from any device, anywhere.

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Tour Operator Software:

Meeting the Demand for Hyper-Personalization

Adventure tourism and complex itineraries drive **12.2%** growth.

Tour operator software is evolving rapidly as demand for hyper-personalized and experiential travel rises. With a **12.2%** growth rate, platforms now integrate AI-driven itinerary building, dynamic pricing, and real-time coordination—enabling operators to deliver seamless, flexible, and highly customized travel experiences.

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Itinerary 1
Swiss Alps Discovery
6 Days / 5 Nights



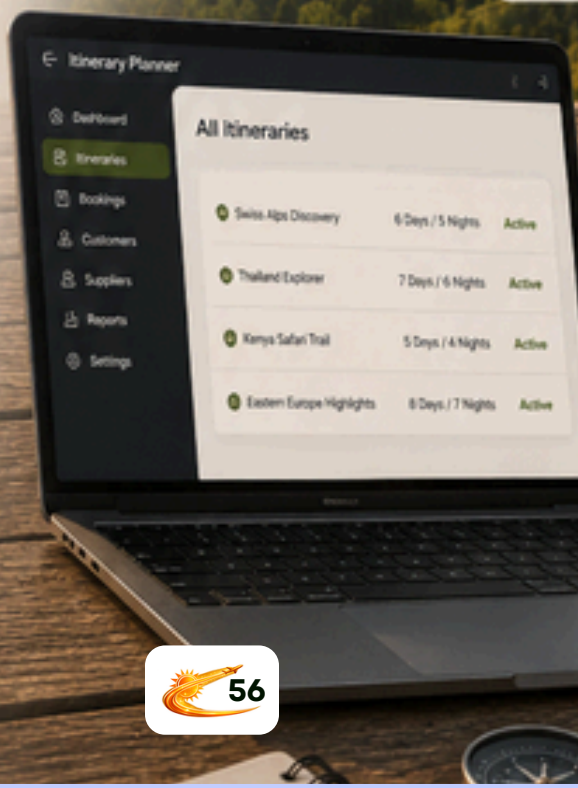
Itinerary 2
Thailand Explorer
7 Days / 6 Nights



Itinerary 3
Kenya Safari Trail
5 Days / 4 Nights



Itinerary 4
Eastern Europe Highlights
8 Days / 7 Nights



Market Growth



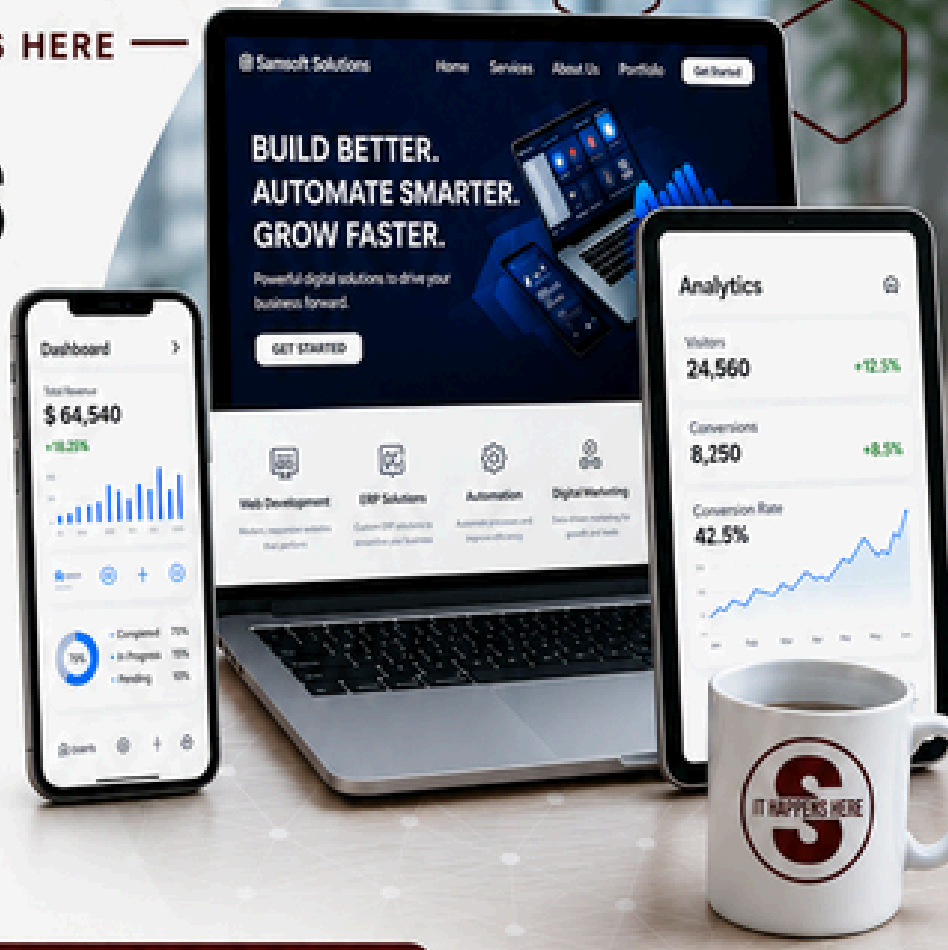
CAGR of 12.2%

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Taming the Bleisure Beast:

Corporate Travel Management Evolves

Integration with expense and compliance tools drives the **$1.26 billion** sector.

Corporate travel is evolving with bleisure and remote work. Valued at $1.26 billion in 2026 and growing at 7.5% CAGR, platforms now integrate expense tracking, compliance, and AI-driven tools for safer, smarter, and cost-efficient travel.

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EXPENSE MANAGEMENT
Automate tracking and reimbursements

POLICY COMPLIANCE
Ensure adherence to corporate travel policies

REAL-TIME ANALYTICS
Data-driven insights for better decisions

AI-DRIVEN TOOLS
Smart recommendations for optimized travel



CORPORATE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT MARKET

$1.26
BILLION
IN 2026

7.5% CAGR

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE MARKET

$11.38
BILLION
IN 2026

10.7% GROWTH

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SOFTWARE & TOOLS

Smart Hospitality: The $37 Billion IoT Ecosystem



From autonomous robots to energy management, tech is becoming physical.

Software alone isn't enough; the physical environment is now "smart." The Smart Hospitality Global Market Report 2026 reveals this as the fastest-growing segment, with the market exploding from **$29.55 billion** in 2025 to **$37.3 billion** in 2026—a staggering **26.2% CAGR.**

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DRIVEN BY IoT

IoT devices projected to reach **40 billion** connected devices by 2030.

SMARTER OPERATIONS

Hotels are implementing autonomous delivery robots and smart room automation.

SHIFTING DYNAMICS

Tariffs on hardware imports are accelertating the shift toward software-driven solutions.

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Mobile Mastery: The Rise of the Branded Journey Platform

Luxury and lifestyle brands ditch third-party apps for direct engagement.

Where does the guest interact with all this backend tech? Through their phone. Innovations featured at ITB Innovators 2026 highlight "Hotel Manager" solutions—mobile, branded platforms that centralize the entire guest journey. Used by luxury giants like Red Carnation and The Chedi, these platforms sync PMS data with digital interfaces to manage everything from check-in to spa bookings.

This is a strategic shift from third-party OTAs to direct, high-margin engagement. By integrating QR code-based check-in and centralized service orders, hotels are not just saving on labor costs; they are harvesting zero-party data. This data feeds back into the PMS, allowing for the kind of personalized upselling that feels intuitive, not intrusive.

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AI vs. Volatility: The New Era of Revenue Management

Predictive analytics turn marketing from a cost center into a demand driver.

With fluctuating demand, setting the right price is impossible for the human eye alone. The 2026 spotlight is on advanced Revenue Management Systems (RMS). IDeaS Revenue Solutions recently unveiled "Spotlight," a forecasting tool featuring a key metric called "Potential to Influence"—quantifying exactly how much marketing spend can shift demand.

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SOFTWARE & TOOLS

Breaking the Babble: Real-Time Translation and Inclusive Tours

AI tools dissolve language barriers, turning local guides into global communicators.

One of the most exciting niche innovations comes from the guest experience sector: AI-powered live translation for tours. A standout from the ITB Innovators list, Qualiday Travel (in cooperation with LiveVoice), is deploying tech that allows a guide speaking one language to be heard in real-time by guests wearing earpieces in their preferred tongue.

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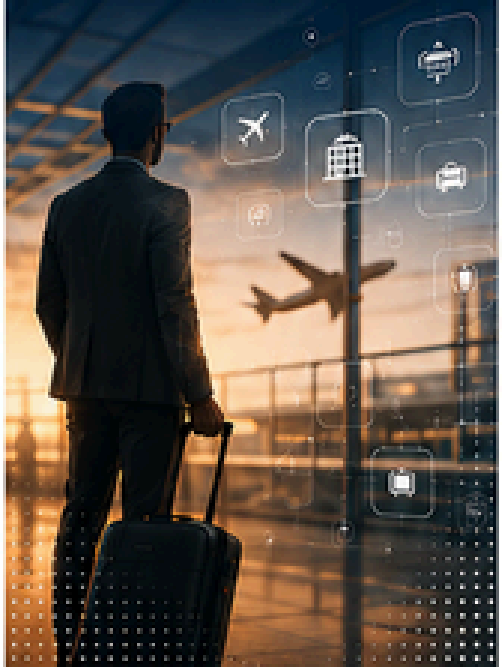
GUEST COLUMN



Sudhir Tuli

Director DTravco

With over 30 years in the travel industry, Sudhir Tuli has focused on combining technology, automation, and customer experience to create efficient, future-ready travel solutions while maintaining the human touch essential to tourism.



THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF TRAVEL WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



She didn't search for a hotel. She whispered a wish.

"I want four days in Tokyo, food-first, family-friendly, near a park, with one sushi class and no chaos."

The reply came in seconds—not as links, but as a living plan. Flights. A quiet hotel. A neighborhood where mornings begin with birdsong, not traffic. A sushi workshop. A train route. Even a warning: rain on day two, better move the outdoor market visit earlier.

That was the moment travel changed shape.

For years, travel asked people to think like accountants.
Compare prices. Filter by stars. Sort by departure time. Pack hopes into spreadsheets. The machine waited for instructions, but never understood intent.

Now, AI listens differently.
It reads tone as much as text. It senses that a honeymoon should feel unhurried, that a family trip should leave room for meltdowns, that a business event for 500 people should not collapse because one flight did. Somewhere behind the scenes, it is rebooking, rerouting, adjusting meals, predicting crowd surges, and quietly making sure the chaos never reaches the traveler's face.

At an airport, a face becomes a boarding pass.
At a hotel, a phone becomes a key. At a conference, an attendee no longer gets a generic agenda; they get sessions shaped around who they are and what they care about. Even pricing is alive now—moving with weather, festivals, demand, and risk in real time.

But the most remarkable thing is not the automation.
It is the return of feeling.
AI clears the clutter, the waiting, the repetitive panic. And when all that noise disappears, what remains is the part travel was always meant to protect: the meal remembered, the conversation that lingers, the place that changes you.

The work is becoming invisible.
The experience is becoming human.

The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.

Agentic AI: Moving from *Chatbots to Execution*

The backend gets an upgrade as AI learns to navigate the GDS.

Agentic AI marks the shift from assistance to action. *It navigates complex GDS systems, executes tasks, and delivers end-to-end results—automating bookings, managing disruptions, and enhancing customer experiences with speed, accuracy, and unmatched efficiency.*

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SATTE 2026

Where the World Came Looking for the Indian Traveller

SATTE 2026 AT YASHOBHOOMI CONVENTION CENTRE SHOWCASED INDIA AS A RISING GLOBAL TOURISM POWERHOUSE. WITH 2,000+ EXHIBITORS AND 60+ COUNTRIES, THE EVENT HIGHLIGHTED STRONG INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN THE FAST-GROWING INDIAN OUTBOUND MARKET.





GLOBAL DESTINATIONS, TOURISM BOARDS, AND TECH PLAYERS EMPHASIZED MICE, AI-DRIVEN TRAVEL, AND WEDDINGS, REINFORCING INDIA'S ROLE AS A KEY DEMAND DRIVER SHAPING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL TRAVEL.

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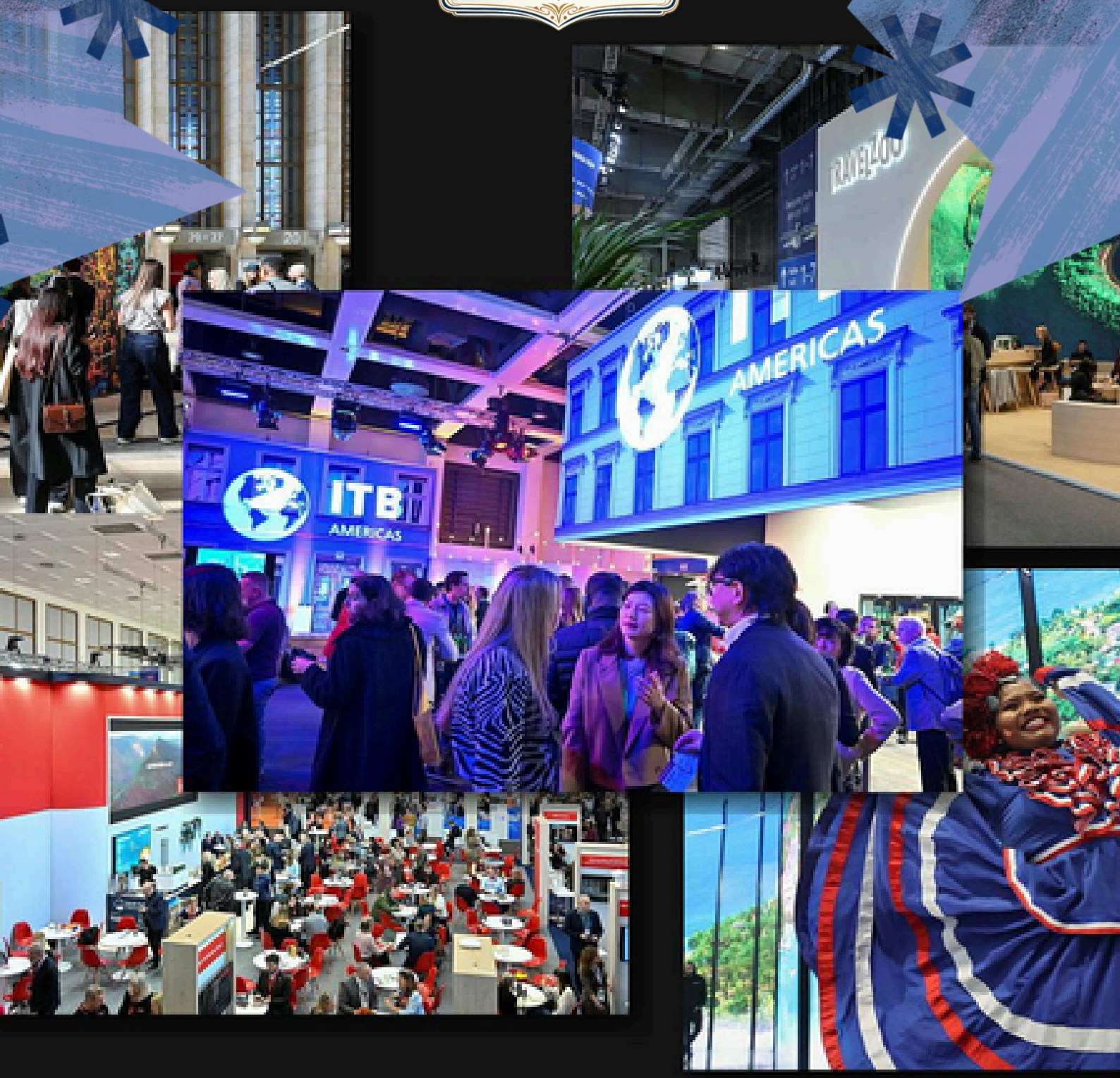


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ITB Berlin 2026 Opens Amid Middle East Tensions

March 3–5, 2026

ITB Berlin reaffirmed its position as the world's leading travel trade platform, hosting 5,601 exhibitors from 166 countries and attracting nearly 97,000 professionals. Despite travel disruptions, strong attendance underscored industry resilience.

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Official closing report of ITB Berlin 2026









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Lights, Legacy & Leverage: IFFD 2026 Ignites Delhi's Tourism Ambitions



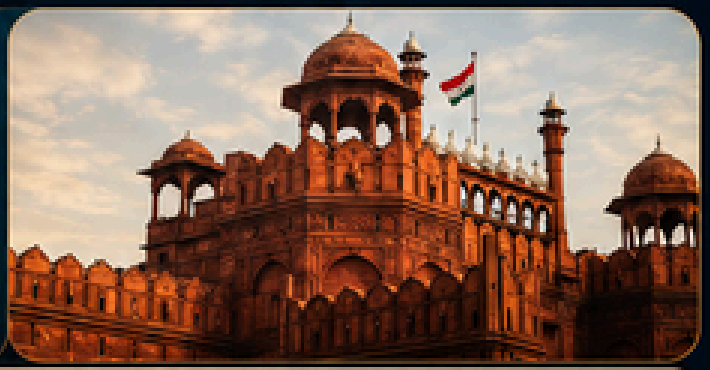


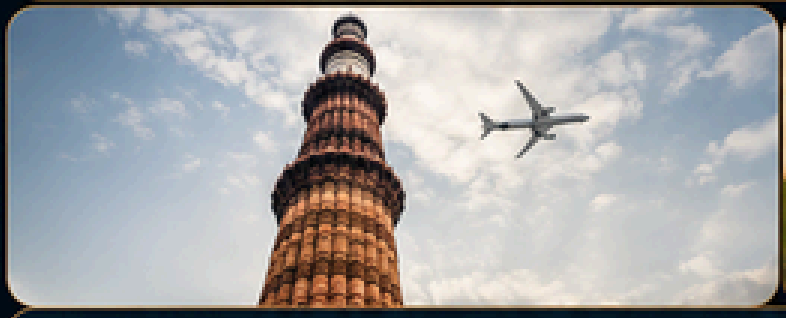


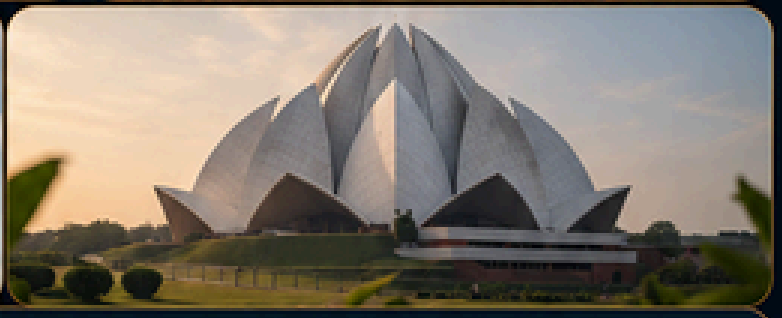
The inaugural International Film Festival of Delhi (IFFD), held from **March 27–30, 2026** at Bharat Mandapam, concluded with a star-studded "Night of Honours." Drawing **30,000 visitors**, it boosted tourism in line with Delhi's increased budget, cementing the capital's rise as a **global cultural and cinematic hub.**

Delhi Triples Tourism Budget— A Game Changer for India Luxury Travel

Delhi's **₹412 crore** tourism boost marks a strategic shift toward premium positioning. Upgraded infrastructure across **1,000 sites** strengthens its appeal for high-value MICE and luxury travel, offering B2B operators new opportunities to build upscale, high-yield domestic and inbound experiences.







This investment also enhances Delhi's competitiveness against global hubs, enabling **seamless luxury itineraries**, **improved visitor experience**, and **stronger confidence** among international planners seeking reliable, high-quality urban destinations in India.

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Samit Garg
(President EEMA)
views on delhi budget

"EEMA stresses that while the budget supports India's experience economy, real impact depends on **execution and reforms.** Key priorities include single-window clearances, unified licensing, data-driven strategies, and support for large-scale event IPs. With effective implementation, Delhi can evolve into a **global hub for experiential tourism and live cultural experiences.**

"The Indian Association of Tour Operators welcomed Delhi budget 2026–27's **₹412 crore tourism outlay** as a strong step toward global positioning. President Ravi Gosain highlighted infrastructure growth, film-led tourism, and concert economy potential, stressing that execution and stakeholder collaboration remain key to **long-term success.**



Ravi Gosain
(President IATO)
views on delhi budget

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NEWS & EVENTS



GLORIA GUEVARA EMPHASIZED THAT MIDDLE EASTERN GOVERNMENTS ACTED SWIFTLY TO **SUPPORT TRAVELERS**, **MAINTAIN CONNECTIVITY**, AND **COORDINATE** WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR DURING DISRUPTIONS. SHE COMMENDED THEIR LEADERSHIP, HIGHLIGHTING THAT **CLEAR COMMUNICATION** AND **COLLABORATION** ARE KEY TO **RESTORING CONFIDENCE** AND ENSURING THE REGION REMAINS **STABLE**, **RELIABLE**, AND **RESILIENT** FOR GLOBAL TOURISM.

Gloria Guevara

(President & CEO WTTC)

views on restoring confidence in the GCC region

SUPPORTING TRAVELERS | MAINTAINING CONNECTIVITY | PRIVATE SECTOR COORDINATION | CLEAR COMMUNICATION | REGIONAL STABILITY & RESILIENCE

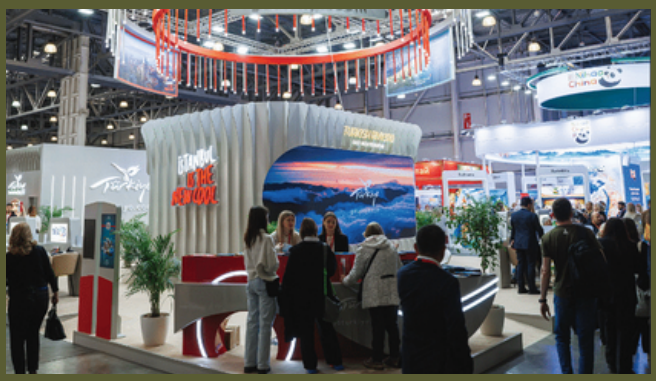
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OTHER EVENT SPOTLIGHTS

WORLD TRAVEL MARKET AFRICA
APRIL 7–9, 2026

MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION OF TOUR AND TRAVEL AGENTS
APRIL 3–5, 2026

MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM EXHIBITION
11-13TH MARCH 2026

MACAO INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL EXPO (MITE) 2026
APRIL 10-12, MACAO

UPCOMING EVENTS

WORLD TEA EXPO

23-25 MAY 2026
LAS VEGAS, USA

TRAVEL ADVISOR DAY

6 MAY 2026
VIRTUAL EVENT

WORLD TEA EXPO

JULY 23-25 2026
LAS VEGAS, USA

IITM CHENNAI

JULY 16-18 2026
CHENNAI

TTF KOLKATA

JULY 10-12 2026
KOLKATA

TTF AHMEDABAD

AUGUST 6-8
2026
AHMEDABAD

ITB INDIA 2026

SEPTEMBER 1–3, 2026
MUMBAI

BLTM 2026

SEPTEMBER 2–4, 2026
NEW DELHI

ITB ASIA

OCTOBER 21–23, 2026
SINGAPORE

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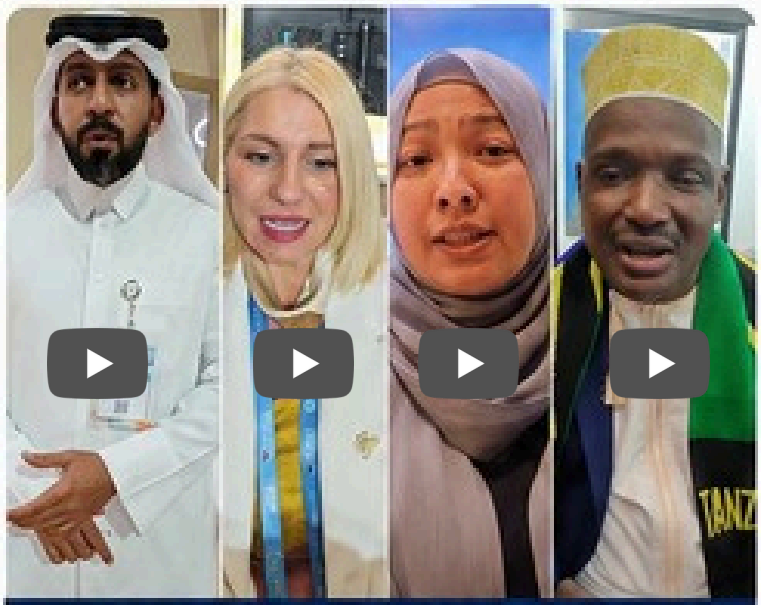
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