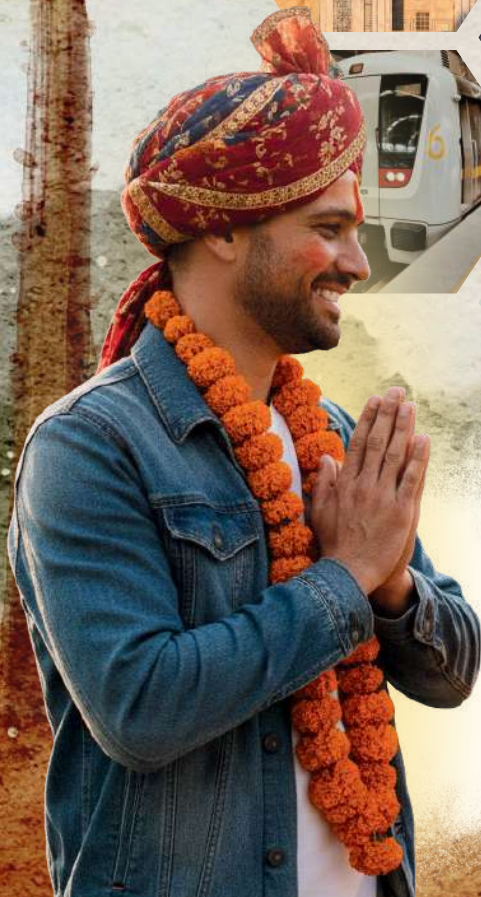




# BUREAUCRACY INDIA

Volume 14 | Issue 10 | October 2025 | ₹100 | [bureaucracyindia.in](http://bureaucracyindia.in)

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# BUREAUCRACY INDIA

Volume 14 | Issue 10 | October 2025



**Editor-in-Chief** Deepak Vyas  
deepak@bureaucracyindia.in

**Executive Editor** Suhani Nagpal  
suhani@bureaucracyindia.in

**Consultant Editor** Arun Arora

**Spl. Correspondents**

**Bureau North** Anjali Bhardwaj  
**Bureau East** Tanya Arora  
**Bureau West** Naman Mukerjee  
**Bureau South** Srinivas Iyer

**Political Correspondent** Dhvani Vyas

**Events Correspondent** Shivam Nagpal

**Guest Writer** Vibha Gurtu  
Shiv Raj Singh

**Graphics** Knitdreams

**Photography** Varun Gogna

**Digital & Web Support** Knitdreams

**Director Operation  
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Phase – I, New Delhi - 20

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For Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations  
contact Suhani Nagpal: 91- 8800149149  
suhani@bureaucracyindia.in

Editorial Team can be contacted at: info@bureaucracyindia.in  
H-125, Phase – 1, Ashok Vihar, New Delhi - 110052



Over the past decade, India has witnessed a remarkable transformation in its travel and tourism landscape. What was once limited to a handful of iconic destinations has now expanded into a vibrant ecosystem that connects cities, towns, and remote corners through experiences as diverse as the country itself. Our cover story this month delves into the Tourism Revolution in India, exploring how innovation, infrastructure, and cultural revival have reshaped the way the world experiences our country.

A special focus of this issue is on MSMEs, the backbone of India's tourism sector. These enterprises have redefined local experiences, empowered communities, and added unique layers to the travel narrative. Their role in building a sustainable and inclusive tourism economy cannot be overstated.

In an exclusive conversation, Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson of the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council, shares her powerful vision for "Skilling India". She talks about how focused training, global placements, and future-ready courses are equipping India's youth to meet evolving industry demands.

We also had the privilege of speaking with Shriji Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, whose perspective on Udaipur's journey as a global wedding destination is both inspiring and insightful. He reflects on how heritage, hospitality, and thoughtful planning have turned Udaipur into one of the world's most sought-after locations for destination weddings — blending royal charm with world-class services, and creating unforgettable experiences for couples from around the globe.

From exploring heritage and eco-tourism to uncovering emerging travel trends and innovations, this issue captures the pulse of a sector that is dynamic, resilient, and full of promise. We invite you to journey with us as we celebrate the people, places, and ideas shaping the future of Indian tourism.

Atithi Devo Bhavah!

Deepak Vyas  
Editor-in-Chief

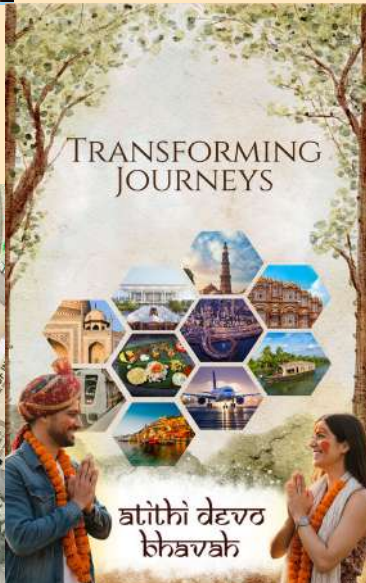


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### Vikas Sheel Appointed Chief Secretary of Chhattisgarh

Senior IAS officer Vikas Sheel (1994 batch, Chhattisgarh cadre) has been appointed the new Chief Secretary of Chhattisgarh. He was recalled from his role as Executive Director at the Asian Development Bank in Manila. Sheel assumes office on September 30, 2025, succeeding the retiring Amitabh Jain. His appointment marks a key administrative transition for the state.



### Danish Ashraf Named Joint Development Commissioner, MSME

IAS officer Danish Ashraf (2011 batch, AGMUT cadre) has been appointed Joint Development Commissioner (Director Level) in the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME). He moves from his previous assignments under the Central Staffing Scheme and takes up the post in New Delhi. His tenure is set for five years or until further orders. The move was approved after clearance by the DoPT.

### Tarun Kumar Pithode Appointed Joint Secretary, Environment Ministry

IAS officer Tarun Kumar Pithode (MP cadre, 2009 batch) has been appointed Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change. He will serve a tenure until September 8, 2029, succeeding Tanmay Kumar. Other new Joint Secretaries include Ekroop Caur, Krishna Kant Pathak, and Shalini Pandit in key central ministries. This reshuffle strengthens top administration across sectors.



## 35 Officers Appointed at Joint Secretary Level

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved 35 appointments at Joint Secretary or equivalent level on September 13, 2025. These postings cover critical ministries such as atomic energy, water resources, and women & child development. The exercise aims to bolster governance and policy continuity. Officers from IAS, IPS, IRS, and CSS were selected for these roles.

Ms. Nidhi Pandey (IPoS, 1991) appointed Joint Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy, for a seven-year tenure until July 19, 2027.

Shri Ashim Kumar Modi (IRS-IT, 2000) as Joint Secretary & Financial Adviser, Ministry of Coal for five years.

Shri Tarun Kumar Pithode (IAS-MP, 2009) Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change until September 8, 2029.

## Notable Additional/Director-Level Appointments in Central Ministries

The Government of India has approved a comprehensive set of new postings and additional charges for senior officers in several ministries during August and September 2025. Notable appointments include:

**Inderjeet Singh (IAS: 2010: RJ)** appointed Director, Ministry of Culture, for five years.

**Suvasis Das (IRS IT: 2014)** appointed Deputy Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, for four years.

**Nitish Suri (ITradeS: 2011)** appointed Director, Department of Higher Education, for five years.

**Ravi Dhawan (IAS: 2011: AGMUT)** appointed Director, Ministry of Power, for five years.

**Sanjeev Chopra (IAS: 1990: OR)**, Secretary, Department of Food & Public Distribution, given additional charge as Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries (August 9-21, 2025).

**Vivek Aggarwal (IAS: 1994: MP)**, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, given additional charge as Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (August 11 to September 4, 2025).

Vivek Aggarwal also given extension of additional charge as Director (FIU-India).

**Amit Mohan Govil (IRS IT: 1990)** nominated interim Director (FIU-India) for six months.

**Cheshta Yadav (IAS: 2014: AGMUT)** given additional charge as Director of Census Operations and Citizen Registration, Goa (till December 31, 2025).

**Gaurav Singh Rajawat (IAS: 2011: AGMUT)** given additional charge, Lakshadweep (till December 31, 2025).

**Sufiyah Faruqui Wali (IAS: 2009: MP)** Director of Census Operations and Citizen Registration, Madhya Pradesh (October 1 to December 31, 2025).

**Amit Sharma (IAS: 2012: AGMUT)** given additional charge, Mizoram (till December 31, 2025).

**Purva Garg (IAS: 2015: AGMUT)** given additional charge, Andaman & Nicobar Islands (till December 31, 2025).

**Sujal Jayantibhai Mayatra (IAS: 2011: GJ)** appointed Director, Gujarat (till December 31, 2025).

**Kartikeya Goel (IAS: 2010: CH)** appointed Director, Chhattisgarh (till December 31, 2025).

**J Elanchezhian (IPS: 2010: PB)** appointed Deputy Inspector General, Central Bureau of Investigation, for five years.



*Nitish Suri*



*Ravi Dhawan*



*Vivek Aggarwal*



*J Elanchezhian*



## DFS Secretary Pushes for Global Standards in Public Sector Banks

At the PSB Manthan conclave held in September, Department of Financial Services (DFS) Secretary M. Nagaraju emphasized the need for public sector banks (PSBs) to go beyond domestic benchmarks and aim for global excellence. He highlighted that with stable balance sheets and improving profitability, PSBs should now focus on innovation, governance, and digital transformation to match international peers — turning India's public banks into global financial powerhouses by 2047.

## Capex Push for Next-Gen PSUs in Strategic Sectors

The Union Government is preparing a major capital expenditure plan to modernize PSUs across emerging and strategic sectors — including renewable energy, defence, electronics, and critical minerals. The move is aimed at turning public sector undertakings into “next-generation enterprises” capable of driving innovation and national self-reliance. The policy shift signals a broader intent to blend fiscal prudence with aggressive growth in India's state-run enterprises.



## India's First Private Strategic Petroleum Reserve Announced

In a landmark development for India's energy security framework, Megha Engineering has been awarded a ₹5,700-crore contract to build and operate the country's first privately managed Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). Until now, all SPRs were government-owned. The shift represents a new model of public-private collaboration in critical infrastructure — designed to enhance storage capacity, reduce import vulnerabilities, and ensure long-term energy resilience.



## Gujarat PSUs Outperform Market in First Half of FY26

Four Gujarat-based public sector undertakings — GSFC, Gujarat Gas, GSPL, and GMDC — have delivered exceptional stock market performances in H1 FY26, outpacing both the Sensex and Nifty. Analysts attribute this surge to rising energy demand, strong profitability, and the state's proactive policy environment. The Gujarat government stated that this reflects the growing investor confidence in state-run enterprises and their expanding contribution to India's industrial and energy landscape.



## India's Vision: Two PSBs Among the World's Top 20 by 2047

In a major announcement at PSB Manthan 2025, the government unveiled a long-term vision to place at least two Indian public sector banks among the world's top 20 by assets within the next two decades. This aligns with the Viksit Bharat 2047 mission and underscores a strategic shift — from mere stability to global leadership. The plan involves capital support, digital upgrades, and governance reforms to make Indian PSBs internationally competitive.

## India May Raise Foreign Investment Limit in PSU Banks

In late September, the Finance Ministry floated a proposal to increase the foreign investment cap in public sector banks (PSBs) from the current 20%. The aim is to allow PSBs easier access to capital, boost financial strength, and enhance competitiveness. The proposal is under review; details like exact cap increase and guardrails (e.g. limits per bank, foreign investor types) are yet to be finalised.





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# Navigating India's Next-Gen GST: A Step Toward Fairer Taxation

by Anjali Bhardwaj

*When the new GST regime took effect on 22 September 2025, it marked more than just a rate revision—it was a deliberate reset of India's indirect tax architecture. The government's aim: to make the system simpler, fairer, and more responsive to the needs of everyday citizens, businesses, and key sectors.*

Under the previous GST setup, India operated with four primary tax rates (5 %, 12 %, 18 %, 28 %). The reform compresses this into a two-slab model—5 % (merit rate) and 18 % (standard rate)—with a new 40 % “demerit” slab for luxury and sin goods.

Many items formerly in the 12 % bracket have shifted to 5 %. Around 90 % of products in the 28 % band have been moved to 18 %. A few high-end and harmful goods like, tobacco, aerated drinks, luxury vehicles are now taxed at 40 % to balance revenue interests.

Beyond rate cuts, structural fixes accompany the changes: rationalising inverted duty structures, streamlining classification, accelerating refunds, and easing compliance burdens.

## Who Gains and How

**Households and daily essentials:** Staples like paneer, roti, UHT milk, and unpackaged food items have been moved to nil or 5 % slabs, directly easing household budgets. Personal care items previously at 18 % now attract only 5 %.

**Healthcare & wellness:** Life-saving drugs, medical devices, and even vision correction equipment now attract 0–5 % GST. Health and life insurance premiums have been exempted.

**Mobility & appliances:** Two-wheelers, small cars, TVs, air con-

ditioners, cement, construction material—many of these have been slotted into the 18 % slab down from 28 %.

**Agriculture & rural economy:** Farm machinery, irrigation equipment, tools, leather goods, handicrafts, and textiles have seen steep cuts (often to 5 %). This should ease input costs and boost productivity.

**MSMEs & startups:** Lighter compliance, fewer slabs, swifter refunds, and a more predictable tax system are crafted to support small businesses.

## Challenges & Risks

No reform is without tension. The government faces an estimated revenue shortfall, with some analyses predicting a net loss of ~ ₹ 48,000 crore (after offset from the new 40 % slab).

Enforcement will matter. To ensure that businesses pass on the benefit to consumers, the CBIC has ordered field offices to monitor prices of select goods post-implementation.

In insurance, while premiums are exempt, insurers lose the input tax credit on commissions, raising costs for them and possibly altering business models.

## Looking Ahead

The reform goes beyond rate cuts and it signals a shift toward citizen-centric taxation. By easing rates on essentials, supporting rural and health sectors, and simplifying business norms, the government aims for inclusive growth. Its success, however, will hinge on transparent implementation, strict anti-profiteering checks, and sustained dialogue with stakeholders to ensure the benefits truly reach the people. **BI**



## FOOD & BEVERAGES

**Nil Tax:** Chapati, Paranthas, Paneer, Milk, Khakra

**5% GST ( earlier 12%):** Butter, Ghee, Dry Fruits, Jam, Biscuits, Cereals, Ice creams, Juices

**5% GST ( earlier 12-18%):** Plant based & Soya milk drinks

## HOUSEHOLD ESSENTIALS

**5% GST ( earlier 18%):** Toothpaste, Shampoo, Soaps, Hair oil

**5% GST ( earlier 12%):** Utensils, Bicycles, Bamboo Furniture

**Nil Tax:** Stationery: Notebooks, Crayons, Pencils

## HEALTHCARE & INSURANCE RELIEF

**Nil Tax:** Life & Health Insurance

**5% or Nil Tax:** Life-Saving Drugs, Oxygen, Diagnostic Kits

**5% GST ( earlier 18%):** Thermometers

## AUTOMOBILE

**18% GST ( earlier 28%):** Motorcycles <350cc

**18% GST ( earlier 28%):** Auto Components

**Continues at 5% :** Electric Vehicles

**Cheaper:** Small Hybrid Cars

**18% GST ( earlier 28%):** Cement

## TRAVEL, HOTELS & LIFESTYLE

**5% GST:** Hotel Rooms < ₹7,500

**5% GST:** Economy Flights

**5% GST ( earlier 18%):** Salons, Gyms, Yoga Services

## FUEL - POWERED VEHICLES

**18% GST ( earlier 28%):** Petrol, LPG & CNG Cars (<1200cc, <4000mm), Diesel Cars (<1500cc, <4000mm), Motorcycles <350cc

## AGRICULTURE

**5% GST ( earlier 12%):** Tractors, trailers, pumps, harvesters

**5% GST ( earlier 18%):** Fertilizer inputs (sulphuric acid, ammonia, nitric acid)

**5% GST ( earlier 12-18%):** Biopesticides & Micronutrients

**5% GST ( earlier 18%):** Tractor parts (tyres, gearboxes, pumps)

## WHAT GETS COSTLIER?

**40% GST ( earlier 28%):** Aerated & Caffeinated drinks

**40% GST ( earlier 18%):** NON - alcoholic beverages

**40% GST:** Cars > 1200cc, Bikes > 350cc

**40% GST:** Yachts, aircrafts, casinos, online gaming

**40% GST ( Post - Covid Cess):** Tobacco Products



MICRO, SMALL &amp; MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India

# Unlocking the Power of MSMEs in Tourism

## Untapped Opportunities & the Awareness Gap

by Ravi Nandan Sinha

Director – Strategic Investments & Economic Partnerships,  
MSME Business Forum India

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have long served as the lifeblood of the tourism sector — quietly fueling local economies, preserving culture, and creating jobs. From homestays nestled in remote Himalayan villages to family-run food joints along sun-kissed coastlines, MSMEs bring authenticity to the travel experience that no global chain can replicate. Yet, despite their importance, a large number of tourism-focused MSMEs remain on the margins, under-supported, under-represented, and often unaware of the tools available to help them grow.

### The Critical Role of MSMEs in Tourism

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism accounted for over 9% of global employment in 2023. A significant chunk of that comes from MSMEs. In developing countries, they constitute more than 80% of tourism-related businesses, covering accommodation, food services, guiding, transport, handicrafts, and more.

Their unique value lies in how they anchor tourism to the local economy. While big hotel chains often repatriate profits, MSMEs recirculate money within their communities, supporting farmers, artisans, transporters, and service workers.

Additionally, MSMEs contribute to *cultural preservation*. A tribal art cooperative, for example, doesn't just offer tourists a souvenir — it tells a story, sustains an identity, and keeps ancestral traditions alive. Yet despite this, MSMEs often operate informally, lack access to finance, and miss out on government schemes designed to support them.

### Tremendous Opportunities for Growth

Post-pandemic recovery has brought new energy to tourism. With travelers increasingly seeking *authentic, sustainable, and community-based experiences*, MSMEs are uniquely positioned to deliver. Trends such as *eco-tourism, agri-tourism, and heritage tourism* provide enormous potential for small businesses to grow provided they are ready to innovate and adapt.

Digital transformation is one such gateway. A rural homestay with a basic website and listings on popular travel platforms can now reach global tourists directly. Similarly, artisans can use ecommerce and social media to tell their stories and sell their products globally.



In India, for instance, the Incredible India 2.0 campaign and the Dekho Apna Desh initiative have emphasized the role of local tourism operators in driving domestic travel. Yet awareness and accessibility of these programs remain limited at the grassroots level.

## The Awareness Gap: A Silent Barrier

One of the biggest roadblocks facing MSMEs in the tourism sector is lack of awareness about existing support structures. Governments, international organizations, and financial institutions have launched numerous schemes — offering everything from financial aid and skill training to digitalization support and market access. But if the intended beneficiaries don't know about them, impact remains minimal.

In India, for example, schemes like:

- **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)**
- **PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme)**
- **Udyam Registration portal for MSME classification and benefits**
- **Tourism Ministry's Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP)**

...are all designed to help entrepreneurs grow. Yet in rural areas and small towns, awareness remains patchy. Many don't know how to apply, or worse they don't even know these schemes exist.

This information gap is particularly severe among women-led and tribal tourism enterprises, which face additional barriers related to literacy, digital access, and institutional reach.

## Bridging the Gap

If tourism MSMEs are to realize their full potential, a multipronged approach is necessary:

### 1. Grassroots Awareness Campaigns

Government departments and industry associations must proactively reach out to MSMEs where they are — through local panchayats, trade fairs, tourism offices, and NGOs. Training programs should be offered in local languages, using both online and offline modes.

### 2. Simplify Access to Support

Application processes for schemes need to be more user-friendly. One-stop digital portals, mobile apps, and help centers can reduce bureaucratic hurdles and bring transparency.

### 3. Digital Literacy and Tech Access

MSMEs must be empowered with the tools to go digital, from setting up websites to managing online payments and reviews. Partnerships with private tech companies could be key here.

### 4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Larger tourism operators and platforms can mentor and support small businesses by including them in supply chains or offering marketing and distribution help.

### 5. Recognizing & Celebrating MSMEs

Award programs and success stories can act as powerful motivators for others, showing what's possible when MSMEs are supported and seen.

## Conclusion: A Missed Opportunity No More

Tourism isn't just about destinations; it's about people. And MSMEs are the face of that human connection. Supporting them is not charity — it's good economics, good policy, and good strategy. With the right support and awareness, tourism MSMEs can help transform local communities, reduce migration, generate inclusive growth, and build resilience into regional economies.

The time to act is now. The world is ready to travel again — but will our MSMEs be ready to receive them? **BI**



*Ravi Nandan Sinha*



*Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar of Udaipur (77th Custodian of the House of Mewar) is the Chairman and Managing Trustee of Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation and the Chairman and Managing Director of Lake Palace Hotels and Motels Pvt. Ltd., Udaipur.*

*In conversation with Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar on preserving royal heritage, redefining hospitality, and transforming Udaipur into a global wedding capital.*

## Shriji Dr Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar Continues A journey of heritage, legacy and transformation



**Suhani Nagpal:** Your family has upheld a distinguished royal legacy in Mewar for centuries. How did your ancestors first envision transforming the majestic palaces into world-class heritage hotels?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** It is a fascinating fact that brings the growth of hospitality industry neck-to-neck with historical changes happening in the country. Independence in 1947, the merger of Princely States for the formation of Rajasthan and then the Abolition of Princely Privileges in 1971. In the midst of these dramatic times, my illustrious grandfather His late Highness Maharana Bhagwat Singh Ji Mewar took a pioneering decision: to 'convert' the Family's Jag Niwas Palace into a luxury hotel, the 'Lake Palace Hotel'. In the early 1970's, the Taj Group entered the scene as our business partners. The rest, as they say, is history: in 2022-23, we commemorated 50 years of association with the Taj Group.

We are immensely proud of this unique business association which has set records of being the longest-ever partnership in contemporary India. The pioneering business decision of Maharana Bhagwat Singh Mewar demonstrated the power to trigger economic growth, transform the urban landscape of a heritage-city, and make an impact that lasts for generations, not merely decades.



The development of tourism in Rajasthan, as you can see, has grown by leaps and bounds. Today, tourism contributes almost 15% to the state's economy which is a remarkable facet.

**Suhani Nagpal:** Could you share a defining moment or decision by your forebears that laid the foundation for Udaipur's renowned hospitality tradition?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** With Taj Lake Palace Hotel putting Udaipur on the global tourism map, we can see how the 1980s and 1990s shaped up under the leader ship of

cept of 'Regal Weddings' and threw open the doors of our palaces for ceremonial events. Our heritage venues are unique and incomparable; it was over a period of time that Udaipur become a leading 'destination wedding' venue.

Our House of Mewar has been contributing to the development, growth and well-being of the region for the past 1500 years; it would be unfair on my part to just enlist the efforts to increase the business coming into the city of Udaipur, as it is just a small part of our broader initiatives. **Today our focus on developing The City Palace (managed by the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation) and the Maharana Mewar Public School are**

# Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar: The Legacy

## Leadership, and celebration that transcends generations

my father, the 76th Custodian of House of Mewar, His late Highness Maharana Arvind Singh Mewar. He built the HRH Group of Hotels with the promise of making guests 'Experience the Original in the Abode of Kings'. It is our USP guiding us till date. HRH Group of Hotels is India's largest chain of palace-hotels and sanctuary resorts under private ownership. HRH Group is headquartered in Udaipur with iconic palaces and resorts in Gajner, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Ranakpur. HRH Group of Hotels with its palace-hotels and sanctuary-resorts was branded around this authentic experience by my father: Where once Royalty lived and entertained, today the guests were being welcomed in those environs. We are upholding this 'living heritage' of Mewar and sharing it with guests from far and near.

**Suhani Nagpal:** What were the earliest challenges in opening the royal palaces and resorts to guests while preserving their grandeur?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** Yes, these are challenges which we face day after day! The more we open our doors to hospitality, the more we have to preserve, conserve and ensure that the authenticity of our palace-hotels and heritage venues is not diluted.

Moreover, we have worked hard at developing not just our tourism-related businesses but for Udaipur as a 'destination'. Of course, there is no denying that HRH Group pioneered the con

adding completely new dimensions to the growth-trajectory of Udaipur as a heritage-city of Rajasthan and India. In all these endeavours, we continue to grow and remain as vigilant about preservation, safety and security at all levels. It is a tough job, believe me!

**Suhani Nagpal:** Udaipur is often called the "Venice of the East," while Venice itself is sometimes described as the "Udaipur of the West." How does that parallel inspire you when presenting the city on the global stage?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** Thank you for twinning Udaipur and Venice! I am only too happy whichever way you look at it. But more importantly for us is to be vigilant and careful about the sustainability of our cities, its resources and infrastructure. Of course, we want Udaipur and all of India to grow, but our growth has to be 'responsible' and equitable. We cannot have runaway growth at the cost of our resources.

Moreover, we have a long way to go to build world-class infrastructure not just for hotels, airports and roads, but also auditoriums, amphi-theatres, art galleries, cultural centres, archives and libraries where some of the best minds of the world can be involved. Education and sports are the drivers for global cities: it is my dream to see the city of Udaipur hosting the finest sports tournaments and being the home of world-class educational centres.



**Suhani Nagpal:** What key initiatives by your family and the HRH Group of Hotels helped position Udaipur as the world's premier destination for weddings and celebrations?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** When it comes to 'destination weddings', we are delighted that HRH Group of Hotels pioneered the Regal Weddings experience over the last three decades and made Udaipur the most preferred destination for weddings and ceremonial events in India. It has been immensely satisfying to witness this development. Yet one cannot be complacent in today's time and age of experiential tourism: the need is to keep on innovating with novel tourism products to set new trends.

At The City Palace of Udaipur, HRH Group of Hotels offers heritage venues which are unique, authentic and have preserved the romance of the Royal past. At the glittering Jag-mandir Island Palace, Shiv Niwas Palace Pool Deck, The Zenana Mahal and The Manek Chowk, Regal Wedding ceremonies and ceremonial events like Sangeet, Haldi or lavish receptions are seamlessly organized. The décor, cuisine and entertainment options are limitless, with wedding planners and event companies bringing in the best from all over the world to make Regal Weddings memorable, filled with fun and festivities.

It's been a great learning experience for us too. We've understood the diverse requirements of our guests. And it's a real challenge to meet it every time, to make it so special and memorable for them. I am happy to say that our professionalism and warmth have been

well-appreciated by event planners.

**Suhani Nagpal:** Heritage hospitality can be a delicate balance of grandeur and authenticity. How do you ensure that modern luxury never overshadows royal tradition?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** Both the words 'luxury' and 'heritage tourism' are being defined as 'experiential'. It is neither the physical brand nor its price-tag, it is not the place nor its promotion which makes it luxurious. It is the experience which the global audiences are craving for, searching for and are ready to pay any price for an original, authentic experience. This is where our Royal traditions and luxury go hand in hand for our guests.

**Suhani Nagpal:** What conservation or sustainability projects within the palace hotels are you most passionate about?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** Everything! Everywhere! Throughout The City Palace we have ensured pollution-free environs - air, water, noise - we are conscious about all these factors. There has been exemplary use of solar energy over the last two decades. We have set very high standards on these fronts.

There can be no disagreement that our local, regional and national environmental issues are top priority at all times. The responsibility is now on us to take it further. Whether it is forestation drives,





the use of solar and passive energy, adoption of pollution-free measures for cleaner air, water and sound: these are being addressed but now have to be given more power and drive. Water-recycling plants at our heritage-hotels, solar and electric vehicles on our roads may be considered as mandatory.

**I personally hold nine Guinness World Records for environmental and charitable initiatives, each exemplifying the dedication to create meaningful change. These achievements not only motivate me but encourage for environmental advocacy and a commitment to philanthropy.** I am always ready to contribute my time, efforts and resources for nation-wide endeavours in these eco-domains.

**Suhani Nagpal:** As the current custodian of this royal heritage, what guiding principles from your ancestors shape your leadership today?

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** Once again, I would say that we learn from every generation of the Maharanas of Mewar and every historical event of the past! Undoubtedly, growing up as a member of the House of Mewar is an honour, the 'rarest of rare' privileges. And I am very proud of my ancestry and lineage. While Maharana Sanga I and Maharana Pratap have become pan-Indian icons, I feel the presence of all our illustrious ancestors; each Maharana of Mewar has contributed immensely to the heritage of not just Mewar but also Rajasthan and India. **The history of India is incomplete without the history of Mewar. Our core principles of independence, self-reliance, service to humanity remain sacrosanct for every generation.**

Yes, these legacies of Mewar are a huge responsibility we shoulder. Every legacy is a responsibility. And every responsibility has to be handled with a degree of sensitivity and respect one must inculcate for one's past...we go back a long way to 76 generations! And every generation of Maharanas have taken pride in being 'Custodians' of the legacies they have inherited.

**Suhani Nagpal:** Looking ahead, how do you envision Udaipur's role evolving in global tourism over the next decade.

**Shriji Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar:** With the city of Udaipur being voted, year after year, as 'one of the best cities in the world to visit', or featured in the list of 'The World's Top 15 Cities', it has set the pace for the future. Since the 1960s, when Lake Palace Hotel was established, till date, the focus of HRH Group of Hotels is to 'develop the destination'.

As the first brand ambassador for the Taj Group of Hotels, I promote heritage tourism and cultural preservation. My work in hospitality merges conservation with community engagement, generating local employment while celebrating Rajasthan's rich heritage.

Today the most prestigious global hotel brands are in Udaipur, sinking their roots in our soil, thanks to the tough work of earlier generations. Governments of the day have done their bit to develop the airlines, railways, expressways but more needs to be done with the consensus of all stakeholders to add greater sustainability to Rajasthan as a most-preferred destination. **BI**





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# Transforming Journeys: A Decade of Tourism Revolution in India

by Suhani Nagpal

A decade ago, travelling across India felt like an adventure filled with both beauty and barriers. Long queues for visas, crowded trains, and limited flight options meant that many breathtaking destinations remained out of reach for visitors, both international and domestic. Tourism was largely centred on a few iconic cities and monuments, while countless hidden gems stayed off the map.

Fast forward to today, and the scene has dramatically changed. Modern airports rise in smaller towns, highways cut travel time, and e-visas bring visitors from around the world with a few clicks. Digital platforms make exploring easier than ever, while new themes like wellness, adventure, luxury weddings, and eco-tourism are reshaping how people experience India.

Tourism is no longer just an industry. It's a **powerful driver of economic growth, cultural exchange, and local empowerment**. With millions of jobs created, billions in revenue generated, and India's image on the global stage strengthened, the past ten years have been nothing short of a tourism revolution.

This is not just a story of numbers and policies. It is the story of a nation that reimagined the way it welcomes the world.

## From Visa Hurdle to Welcome Mat

One of the biggest shifts has been **making it easier to travel to India**. Over the past decade, the Government of India expanded the **e-Visa** system to cover more than 160 countries. This meant that travellers could apply online quickly, without going through long embassy procedures. Immigration counters were also upgraded at many airports to speed up arrivals.

Alongside easier visas, India launched **"Incredible India 2.0"** to target specific global markets with sharper campaigns. At home, the **"Dekho Apna Desh"** campaign encouraged Indians to explore their own country. These efforts highlighted not just monuments, but also themes like wellness, wildlife, spirituality, food, and eco-tourism.

For example, states like Kerala promoted Ayurveda retreats, Uttarakhand offered yoga tourism, and Rajasthan focused on royal heritage experiences. By matching what travellers were looking for with what India could offer, tourism promotion became smarter and more effective.

## Airports, Roads and Cheap Flights: The Connectivity Engine

Another major factor behind India's tourism boom has been infrastructure — especially airports, roads, and regional connectivity.

In 2014, India had only about 74 airports. By 2024, that number had more than doubled to around 159 airports, thanks to the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) scheme. This regional connectivity program opened up air travel to smaller towns and cities.

Suddenly, places that required overnight trains or long drives became reachable in a few hours by flight. Improved roads and highways also made it easier for domestic tourists to take weekend trips to new destinations.

This has helped spread tourism beyond major cities. Tier-2 and Tier-3 destinations such as Varanasi, Coimbatore, Shillong, and Bhubaneswar are now attracting both Indian and foreign travelers.

## Emerging Tourism Themes Spark a Surge in Visitors

India has always been famous for its history and culture. But in the last decade, the country started focusing on niche tourism segments, specialised travel experiences that appeal to different kinds of visitors.

Some examples include:

- **Wellness Tourism:** Ayurveda and yoga centres in Kerala and Uttarakhand attracted health-conscious visitors from Europe and Asia.
- **Adventure Tourism:** Himachal Pradesh, the Northeast, and Ladakh saw a rise in trekking, cycling, and eco-friendly tours.

- **Spiritual Tourism:** The redevelopment of places like the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi drew millions of domestic pilgrims and international spiritual seekers.
- **Luxury & Wedding Tourism:** Rajasthan, Goa, and heritage properties hosted high-end destination weddings and royal experiences.

These niche segments created new jobs, encouraged local entrepreneurship, and drew higher-spending tourists to different parts of India. Private sector innovators and startups played an outsized role here. Digital platforms made it easier to discover, compare and book niche experiences; social media influencers and travel journalists helped build desirability; and micro-investors converted family homes into branded homestays, giving rural communities direct access to tourism revenues. The Ministry of Tourism's programs to promote niche products and state-level incubators for tourism entrepreneurship accelerated this change.

## The Numbers That Matter: Growth, Jobs and Spend

Numbers are the scaffolding under any big narrative. By 2024–25, India recorded a dramatic rebound in foreign tourist arrivals: official Bureau of Immigration figures and Ministry statements place total Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in 2024 at nearly 9.95 million (99.52 lakh), up from 9.52 million in 2023 still shy of the pre-pandemic peak but clearly on an upward trajectory.

Equally important has been the sector's economic footprint. According to global industry data and WTTC analysis, international visitor spending in India reached record levels in 2024 WTTC reported international visitor spend at around ₹3.1 trillion for 2024 and placed the total Travel & Tourism contribution to the economy at almost ₹21 trillion (with projections to grow further). Those numbers underline an important fact: tourism is no longer a marginal cultural industry; it is a macroeconomic lever.







On employment, official ministry releases indicate that tourism regained pre-pandemic levels as early as FY23, with the sector contributing about 5% to GDP and creating millions of direct and indirect jobs. The Ministry reported that tourism created about 7.6 crore jobs in FY23 — a reminder that for many regions, tourism is a primary engine of livelihoods.

Those are the load-bearing facts: more visitors, bigger spend, and millions of livelihoods. They are the reason bureaucrats have increasingly treated tourism as a national economic priority rather than as an afterthought of culture ministries.

## Digital, Data and the Travel Tech Wave

If travel's visible face is a boutique hotel or a cleaner heritage walk, its hidden muscle is technology. The past decade saw several digital inflection points: e-visas and expedited immigration channels; mobile ticketing at monuments; online permits for trekking and protected areas; and the steady rise of travel-tech firms offering end-to-end booking, local experiences and dynamic pricing. Governments experimented with virtual tours and AR-enabled heritage interpretation; private startups embedded multilingual chatbots and AI-driven recommendations into travel planning.

All of these made travel easier, safer and more discoverable.

This tech stack also enabled better policy. Tourist flows can now be tracked more accurately; seasonality patterns can be flattened using targeted campaigns; and local governments can be nudged to invest where demand analytics show unmet opportunity. The combination of data and boots-on-the-ground delivery is a hallmark of the sector's maturation.

## States Leading the Way

Many of India's tourism success stories came from state-level leadership. While national policies set the broad vision, the real transformation of Indian tourism has unfolded in the states. Each region took its own strengths whether culture, nature, spirituality, or heritage and built distinct narratives that spoke to both domestic and international travellers.

### • Kerala: Pioneering Wellness and Sustainability

Kerala has long been known as "God's Own Country," but over the last decade, the state sharpened its focus on wellness tourism and responsible travel. By regulating its booming houseboat industry, enforcing strict safety and environmental norms, and training local operators, Kerala ensured that growth didn't come at the cost of its fragile backwaters. At the same time, it positioned itself as a global hub for Ayurveda, yoga, and holistic healing, attracting travellers seeking immersive, rejuvenating experiences. Community-based tourism models empowered local households to open their doors to visitors, ensuring tourism benefits reached the grassroots.

### • Rajasthan: Royal Heritage Meets Global Luxury

Rajasthan, with its palaces, forts, and vibrant traditions, turned its royal past into a modern tourism powerhouse. Many of its heritage properties were transformed into world-class luxury hotels, blending architectural splendour with five-star service. The state also invested in cultural programming hosting internationally recognised festivals like the Jaipur Literature Festival and Desert Festival, which now draw travellers, writers, and artists from across the world. By combining infrastructure upgrades with strong branding, Rajasthan positioned itself as a top global destination for luxury, weddings, and cultural tourism.

### • The Northeast: Opening New Frontiers

For decades, India's Northeastern states remained off the mainstream tourist trail due to limited infrastructure and connectivity. Over the past ten years, that has changed dramatically. Improved air connectivity under the UDAN regional connectivity scheme, new road projects, and targeted marketing campaigns have brought these regions closer than ever. States like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Sikkim have promoted ecotourism, adventure travel, and cultural exploration, highlighting their pristine landscapes and unique tribal heritage. These efforts have helped the Northeast emerge as one of India's most promising new tourism frontiers.



What unites these diverse examples is a bottom-up approach. State tourism boards worked closely with local communities, entrepreneurs, and private players to design experiences that felt authentic and sustainable. While central policies provided the framework — through funding, branding campaigns, and visa reforms — the execution and innovation came from the states themselves. From digital promotions to niche festivals and infrastructure development, the push to differentiate and lead came at the regional level.



## The People Behind the Boom: Jobs, Skills and Community

Tourism's headline numbers — arrivals, GDP share, foreign exchange — are only half the story. The other half is human: cooks who learned hospitality standards, drivers who became guides, artisans whose handicrafts found a direct buyer, women who ran homestays and youths trained under hospitality skilling programs. The sector's mass-employment footprint made it particularly valuable in a country with a young workforce. Government training programs and industry-led skilling camps aimed at upgrading service quality played a key role in converting tourist footfall into meaningful employment.

## Sustainability, Resilience and the Responsibility Clause



With rapid growth came new challenges. Some destinations started facing overtourism, waste problems, and environmental stress. Coastal erosion, plastic pollution, and crowding in Himalayan regions became worrying signs.

In response, the government and states have started promoting green tourism, introducing capacity limits in sensitive areas, and encouraging eco-certification for hotels and operators.

Climate change is also affecting tourism. Unpredictable monsoons, rising temperatures, and environmental risks are forcing

destinations to plan for resilience. Future growth must be balanced with sustainability.

## Global Image and Soft Power

Tourism is not just business, it also shapes India's image abroad. Through cultural festivals, international roadshows, film tourism, and the spotlight during India's G20 presidency, the country has presented itself as both ancient and modern.

This "soft power" attracts not only tourists but also investors, students, and long-term visitors. Tourism has become part of India's diplomatic and cultural strategy.

## What Still Needs Fixing

As the sector matures, the next chapter will focus less on sheer numbers and more on depth, quality, and sustainability. The goal is to build an ecosystem where travellers stay longer, spend more, and experience India in ways that are meaningful and responsible.

India will need to develop smart and sustainable destinations, ensuring that growth does not come at the expense of fragile ecosystems or cultural integrity. There is a growing emphasis on encouraging longer stays and higher-value tourism, which not only boosts revenue but also creates stronger local economic linkages.

Equally important is spreading the benefits of tourism to rural areas, where authentic experiences and cultural heritage abound. By investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, India can protect its tourism assets against the increasing risks of extreme weather events, while ensuring year-round accessibility for travellers.

Skill development will play a decisive role in this future. From guides and drivers to hospitality professionals and tour operators, raising service quality will help India compete with the best global destinations. Opportunities in cruise tourism, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions), and high-value international markets remain largely untapped and could serve as major growth engines in the coming years.

*Over the past ten years, India's tourism journey has transformed from aspiration to action, and from isolated experiences to a connected, vibrant ecosystem that touches lives in every corner of the country. As we look ahead, it's clear that India stands at a pivotal moment in shaping the future of tourism and hospitality. With its rich heritage, skilled workforce, and unmatched adaptability, the country has every opportunity to lead on the global stage. By embracing innovation, nurturing talent, and staying rooted in our values, we can create meaningful experiences that resonate with the world. The journey is ongoing, but with vision, collaboration, and determination, India can truly become a global tourism and skilling hub. If the last ten years were about building momentum, the next ten will be about refinement, resilience, and global leadership. **BI***





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# Tourism, Skills, and the Next Decade

## JYOTI MAYAL'S VISION FOR INDIA



**T**ourism and hospitality have long been celebrated as the heart of India's cultural and economic identity. In recent years, with India's rising global stature, the sector has witnessed remarkable growth and transformation. At the forefront of this evolution stands **Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson of the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skill Council (THSC)**, whose vision and leadership are shaping the future of skill development in this vibrant industry.

A seasoned leader and a passionate advocate for the sector, Mrs. Mayal has dedicated her career to strengthening India's tourism landscape, ensuring that its workforce is not only prepared to meet global service standards but also carries forward the essence of Indian hospitality. A Delhi University graduate with expertise in Interior Designing and Travel & Tourism, she has nurtured **New Airways Travels** since 1980, transforming it into a leading name in the industry & then establishing **Red Hat Communications**, a leading consulting, marketing & events company.

As President of the **Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)**, Mrs. Mayal has championed bold initiatives, strengthened partnerships with key ministries and global stakeholders, and consistently raised the bar for the sector. Her dynamic platforms — **ICONIC Forum & Awards**, **TIES (The Iconic Experiences Show)**, and **WTTF (World Travel & Tourism Festival)** bring together global leaders & the industry to shape the future of tourism, wellness, experiences and sustainability.

She has successfully launched “**Wellness, Tourism & Education**” among children starting from the young age of 3 years under the banner of “**Jack & Jill**” and runs a campaign for the Prime Minister's Vision, “**Save the Girl Child**”. A passionate advocate for women's empowerment, she has trained and placed over 700 women in the industry, proving that skilling drives lasting change. Honoured with prestigious awards like the **Shakti Woman of Power (2023)**, the **Industry Icon Award (2025)** and the recent **Face of South-Asia by SATA (South Asian Travel Awards - 2025)**, among others, Mrs. Mayal continues to inspire as a powerful voice and driving force in the world of travel and tourism.

Under her guidance, THSC is playing a pivotal role in bridging skill gaps, empowering youth and aligning India's tourism potential with international opportunities.



In this exclusive conversation with our Executive Editor, Mrs. Suhani Nagpal, Mrs. Mayal reflects on her personal journey, shares her perspective on India's tourism story over the past decade, and outlines a forward-looking vision for creating a skilled and globally competitive workforce for the future.

### Here are the excerpts:

**Suhani:** Ma'am, thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to connect with you. As our upcoming issue is headed to ITB Asia, we're honoured to feature someone who is such a prominent face of Indian tourism on the global stage. To begin, you've had a truly inspiring journey in the tourism and hospitality industry. Could you share how it all started for you?

**Jyoti Mayal:** Thank you, Suhani, for saying those lovely words. It's always a pleasure talking about tourism, and more so, talking about India, a country with such a rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes.

My journey started when I met my husband at the very young age of 19, and I didn't even know what tourism or a travel agent was. My husband was one of the largest & highest acknowledged travel consolidators in this country, and his business was at its peak. He became the president of the Travel Agent Association of India in 2004. For me, he became my idol, and that is what inspired me to get involved in tourism more and more. I realised a lot was lacking in the industry, and I saw immense potential for growth and improvement. That's why I got more and more involved, sharing my thoughts and ideas. My journey with TAAI began many years ago, progressing from regional involvement to the management committee and eventually becoming the President - the longest-serving one, for that matter. *I held the position of President for 5 years, which coincided with the challenging Covid period. Despite the obstacles, TAAI achieved a lot during my tenure. Some of the key accomplishments included securing refunds of very huge amounts from the airlines and stakeholders, facilitating the reopening of the country for tourism, and providing critical support to the tourism fraternity. I worked relentlessly to motivate, upskill, and educate industry professionals, helping them navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic.* Additionally, I advocated on their behalf in dealings with government bodies, airlines, and other stakeholders to ensure their interests were represented and protected. Various other challenges of GST, policies, visa issues, and others were resolved. Giving back to the industry and making a positive impact is what motivates me and gives me a sense of fulfilment.

**Suhani:** Right, ma'am. You began your journey at just 19 years old, and today you've also risen to become the Chairperson of the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Council. What key moments and experiences shaped this incredible journey?

**Jyoti Mayal:** When I looked at tourism, I realised the first impression is often shaped by the person receiving guests at the airport, railway station, or port, and the next by the driver or transportation partner. I felt that these individuals should possess more knowledge. A good driver should feel like a guide, not just a cab driver. This observation highlighted the importance of soft skills in

our industry. As I interacted with fresh graduates from hospitality academies who came to my office with job applications, I noticed they often lacked in-depth knowledge of the subject. This sparked a desire in me to contribute to the industry's growth.

Before becoming TAAI President, I joined the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) Governing Body. I was approached by the then Chairman of THSC, who recognised my contributions and felt I could represent the skilling industry. Since then, I've been deeply involved with THSC, which has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with nearly 310 universities across the country. I regularly visit universities to understand students' needs and explore ways to bring about change. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we realised that our existing courses were no longer relevant, so we revamped them, introducing 70 new ones. I firmly believe that tourism is about the experience we offer travellers, and this depends on having skilled people. Whether it's hotels, travel agents, airlines, or cruises, every part of the industry needs well-trained staff. While technical skills may vary, so skills are deeply rooted in our culture. We've grown up with the philosophy of 'Atithi Devo Bhava,' which emphasises the importance of treating guests with respect and care. This tradition makes Indian hospitality unique, and we must pass it on to the next generation.

Reflecting on my journey, I attribute my growth to various key moments and experiences. Starting at 19, I was driven by a passion for the industry and a desire to make a difference. As I progressed, I took on new challenges and responsibilities, including my role as Chairperson of the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Council. This journey has taught me the importance of resilience, adaptability, and continuous learning. My most important thought is that I need to give back to the industry & society as I have learned & earned all from here.

**Suhani:** Looking back, what have been the most defining milestones in your career that continue to inspire your leadership today?

**Jyoti Mayal:** Looking back, I believe the most defining aspect of my career is my passion for tourism. Tourism is an ever-evolving industry, and I've learned that change doesn't happen overnight. Every hotel and organization has its unique approach, but growth comes from continuous dialogue and adaptation. With new technologies like AI emerging, it's essential to stay inspired and adaptable. I've been a strong advocate for regional tourism, believing that neighbouring regions offer immense opportunities for growth.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw how quickly tourism could adapt across borders, with countries like Dubai and the Maldives driving growth. I envision regional tourism focusing on short-haul or long stay trips, easing visa restrictions, joint marketing efforts, cultural exchange, and collaborative platforms. For instance, an NRI visiting India could easily include nearby countries for short breaks, creating a wealth of cultural, heritage, and adventure experiences. This ecosystem can be built through sustained efforts and collaboration, ultimately benefiting the industry and local communities.

**Suhani:** Over the last decade, how do you see India's tourism sector having evolved in terms of growth, challenges, and global positioning?"

**Jyoti Mayal:** Over the last decade, India's tourism sector has undergone a remarkable transformation.

*Our infrastructure has improved significantly, particularly in terms of main roads and connectivity, thanks to the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister. While last-mile connectivity still requires attention, the progress is undeniable. What's truly exciting is the shift from a centralised approach to a more decentralised one, with states taking ownership of tourism development.*

They're investing in infrastructure, marketing, and partnerships, and reaping the benefits. Tourism and infrastructure are inter-linked, and when one grows, the other follows. This synergy creates jobs, boosts education, builds skills, and strengthens local economies. Even in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, people can now work closer to home and contribute to the growth. With the right policies and ease of doing business, I believe tourism has the potential to contribute 10% to our GDP. It's an achievable goal, and I'm optimistic about India's tourism prospects.

**Suhani:** What role has skill development played in this transformation, and how is THSC contributing to it?

**Jyoti Mayal:** Skill development has played a pivotal role in transforming India's tourism sector. At THSC, we've made significant strides in skilling the youth for the industry and getting them jobs. Over the last five years, we've revamped our qualification packs, launched new courses, included technology and expanded our reach beyond government schemes to collaborate with the private sector and CSR initiatives. This shift has enabled us to skill around four lakh youth in the last year alone, a substantial increase from our earlier numbers.

One of our notable achievements is conducting a comprehensive

skill gap study, for which we invested in hiring top consultants in the country. This study has helped us tailor our training programs to meet industry needs, ensuring that our trainees are job-ready. As a result, about 80% of our trained candidates secure jobs.

*Our performance at World Skills has also been outstanding, with our candidates winning 11 medallions in recent years, including chefs and hospitality professionals.*

We've also made significant progress in integrating tourism into school education, allowing students to choose it as a subject from Class 11 onwards. This move opens up pathways for students to pursue careers in tourism much earlier. In addition to our existing programs, we've introduced apprenticeships, short term courses, and recognition of prior learning. We've expanded our reach to 24 states, skilling students in government schools from the school level itself. Our approach emphasizes that tourism doesn't always require degrees; it's about knowledge, passion, and experience. A local from a Tier 2 city can be an excellent guide, sharing authentic stories about their heritage. This is the essence of 'vocal for local.'

We're working closely with the Ministry of Tourism & Skill Development & Entrepreneurship to skill lakhs of students. THSC's efforts have been recognised, and we were rated number one Sector Skill Council last year.

**Suhani:** Inclusivity is key to sustainable growth. What steps are being taken to empower women and marginalized groups?

**Jyoti Mayal:** Inclusivity is crucial for sustainable growth, and we've been working relentlessly to empower women and marginalised groups in the tourism industry. Despite progress, women are often confined to back-office roles. In Tier 2 and 3 societies, societal hesitation to let women work in hotels at night persists. To address this, we need to educate families and society about the benefits of women's empowerment. The more women we bring into the workforce, the safer and stronger our country will become. I envision a future where more women drive cabs, buses, and work in various roles, contributing to the economy and societal progress.

We also need stronger women's associations and support systems to foster a supportive environment. The media plays a significant role in shaping public perception. Instead of sensationalising every small incident, they should promote the positive image of our country. Crime occurs everywhere, but it's not unique to India. Responsible media coverage can help build trust in our destinations.

At THSC, we've taken initiatives to promote inclusivity. For instance, we trained around 700 first-time offenders in Tihar Jail, equipping them with skills to work in hotels. It was an emotional and fulfilling experience. By providing them with a chance to earn a livelihood, we're not only giving them dignity but also reducing the likelihood of recidivism. It's essential to sensitise both the industry and society to integrate these individuals back into mainstream life.

**Suhani:** With India aiming to be a global tourism hub, how important is aligning our workforce with international service stan-



dards? Do you also see India emerging as a supplier of skilled tourism and hospitality professionals to the global market?

**Jyoti Mayal:** I firmly believe that Indians have the potential to excel globally, and our warm hospitality, adaptability, and work ethic set us apart. **Through the THSC, we've already sent around 400 students to work in global destinations like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Thailand, and now even Europe and Singapore are showing interest. India has the potential to become a global skills hub, leveraging our adaptability, hard work, and ability to thrive in diverse environments.** Our workforce's strength lies in its ability to work long hours with a smile, a trait that's hard to find elsewhere. The world recognises this strength, which is why many countries are not only looking to hire Indians but also acknowledging our growing presence. With the right training and opportunities, I'm confident that India can emerge as a leading supplier of skilled tourism and hospitality professionals to the global market.

**Suhani:** So, talking about sustainability: How is skill training being integrated with responsible and green tourism practices?

**Jyoti Mayal:** Sustainability has become an integral part of our skill training programs. We're educating students about eco-tourism, green practices, and reducing plastic use, emphasizing the importance of responsible tourism. We're working with industry partners to develop sustainable tourism practices. It's crucial that the industry adopts these practices not just in five-star hotels but also in small properties and B&Bs. The younger generation is already conscious about sustainability, and studies show they're willing to pay extra if it contributes to conservation efforts.

Simple steps can make a significant impact. For instance, not changing towels daily can save up to 23 buckets of water per towel. I recommend that hoteliers incentivise guests to participate in sustainable practices, such as offering discounts or contributing to a sustainability fund when they opt out of daily linen changes.

Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword; climate change is a harsh reality. We're witnessing its impact globally. As a responsible industry, it's essential that we act fast and build sustainability into every aspect of our operations.

**Suhani:** What are the biggest challenges you face in bridging the skill gap, and what kind of policy support do you feel is most needed?

**Jyoti Mayal:** The biggest challenges in bridging the skill gap are multifaceted. Firstly, working with the government can be quite challenging due to delays in policy approvals, funding, and payments. When payments are delayed, it demotivates the trainees & trainers who have worked hard to acquire & teach new skills under government schemes. To address this, I believe policy support is crucial along with providing timely payments, and offering incentives for industry partners.

Another significant challenge is attracting and retaining young talent in the industry. Many students enroll in hospitality courses, but by the time they graduate, they're lured away by better-paying jobs with more favorable working hours, such as call centers. The hospitality industry demands long hours and a high level of dedi-

caon. We need to protect these jobs by providing opportunities for professional development, fair compensation, and a better work-life balance.

**Suhani:** So, where do you envision India's tourism industry a decade from now?

**Jyoti Mayal:** I envision India's tourism industry becoming a global hub, but I believe we lost a significant opportunity in the past. In the early 2000s, India was a natural transit point for flights between the US and Asia, but we failed to capitalise on it. Countries like Dubai, Singapore, and Hong Kong seized the opportunity, developing their tourism industries around layovers and stopovers.

Despite this, I still believe India has immense potential. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I said that this could be our moment to shine. We have the people, the capacity, and the talent. What we need is to capitalise on our strengths, develop our infrastructure, and create a conducive environment for tourism to thrive. Additionally, we need to invest in skilling our workforce to meet the demands of the growing tourism industry.

But that's not all. We need to aggressively market and showcase the true beauty of India, with its diverse colors, cultures, festivals, cuisine, architecture, crafts, heritage, history, and so much more. We need to highlight the uniqueness of each state, from the snow-capped mountains of the Himalayas to the sun-kissed beaches of Goa, from the vibrant streets of Mumbai to the ancient ruins of Hampi, or the beautiful, serene environment of Varanasi. We need to create a comprehensive tourism campaign that showcases India's incredible diversity and attracts tourists from around the world.

Let's unleash the potential of Indian tourism and make it a global powerhouse!

**Suhani:** So finally, what message would you like to give to young professionals aspiring to pursue their careers in tourism and hospitality?

**Jyoti Mayal:** To young professionals, I'd like to say that this industry is not just about providing services, it's about creating experiences that leave a lasting impression. To succeed, you need to know your product inside out, understand your customers, and respect yourself and others.

Create a niche for yourself, don't just follow the crowd. Offer something unique, something that sets you apart from others. In today's competitive market, it's not just about a product or service, it's about the experience that comes with it.

*And most importantly, never forget your roots. Our culture is built on respect, empathy, and hospitality. Let these values guide you in your interactions with guests, colleagues, and the community. Remember, the way you treat others is a reflection of who you are.*

*Let's work together to develop India into the 'Sone Ki Chidiya' (Golden Bird) it once was, a land of vibrant colors, rich culture, and unparalleled hospitality. BI*



# Unlocking the Potential of Wildlife Tourism

by Shiv Raj Singh

Director - Atithi Voyages Pvt. Ltd.

**J**ust as flavours are important to savour great food its important to experience a destination through its people and niche experiences. Experiences help you gain a better understanding of the destination and its richness. It's the people that make the destination special and its the food that adds that extra spark. To make this all experiential very special, rare travel solutions are built into the itinerary keeping in mind a guests likes and dislikes. These experiences are what live as short term impressions and long term memories.

Wildlife has taken off in the past decade. India is home to some of the world's richest biodiversity, with over 100 national parks and 500 wildlife sanctuaries that house iconic species such as tigers, elephants, rhinos, and leopards. While destinations like Ranthambore, Kaziranga, and Jim Corbett have gained popularity, the sector as a whole has not been fully brought into the national tourism spotlight.

When it comes to wildlife experiences, many international travellers often draw comparisons between Indian safaris and their African counterparts. Having explored the vast plains of Africa, they arrive expecting a similar encounter. But the truth is, Indian safaris offer a completely different kind of adventure, one that is steeped in mystery, patience, and unparalleled natural beauty.

Unlike the African savannahs, where lions often roam in prides and are relatively easy to spot, India's greatest predator, the majestic tiger is a solitary and elusive creature. This makes each sighting incredibly special. Tracking a tiger in the dense Indian jungles is not just a visual experience but an emotional one. We have a strain of Siberian Tigers which most wildlife enthusiasts are not aware of. Each safari into the park has a different story as the journey unfolds.

India has made impressive strides in offering well-rounded travel experiences, but there's ample scope to deepen its offerings across cultural, adventure, and wildlife tourism. When it comes to safaris, a key opportunity lies in opening more zones within existing

national parks. Currently, only about 25% of forested areas are accessible to visitors, leaving 75% closed. Expanding these zones would not only boost tourism revenue but also strengthen wildlife protection by increasing human presence in vulnerable areas, thereby deterring poaching and aiding conservation efforts.

Among India's finest wildlife destinations is Pench National Park, straddling Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Inspired by The Jungle Book, Pench offers a rich array of species—tigers, leopards, sloth bears, gaurs, jackals, and the remarkable Indian wild dogs (dhols)—set against a classic Central Indian forest landscape.

Another gem is Bandhavgarh National Park, also in Madhya Pradesh, known for its high tiger density. Few know that this park hides an ancient cave and temple complex believed to be associated with the Pandavas, perched atop a hill deep within the forest.

Two lesser-known but extraordinary sites are Dudhwa National Park and Pilibhit Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh. Pilibhit, located in the Terai region, stands out for its tigers carrying Siberian DNA strains—making them larger and more ferocious than most. Its network of canals cutting through dense jungle creates a striking and unique landscape.

India's wildlife reserves hold incredible potential, both for travellers seeking authentic experiences and for conservation initiatives. By carefully expanding access and showcasing the country's rich natural heritage, India can offer unforgettable adventures while protecting its most iconic species. **BI**







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# Shaping the Future of Tourism Education

## The Journey of Amity University's School of Hospitality & Tourism

**T**ourism is more than a career—it is a gateway to understanding cultures, connecting communities, and driving global economies. In today's rapidly evolving world, tourism education plays a crucial role in shaping professionals who can navigate the complexities of global travel, hospitality, and cultural exchange. A strong academic foundation, combined with practical experience, equips students with the skills needed to manage destinations, create unforgettable guest experiences, and drive sustainable growth in the industry. By integrating classroom learning with internships, fieldwork, and industry collaborations, modern tourism programs prepare graduates to become not only competent managers but also innovative leaders who can anticipate trends, solve challenges, and contribute meaningfully to a sector that connects people and cultures worldwide. At the forefront of shaping the next generation of tourism leaders is Amity University's School of Hospitality, a pioneering institution that combines academic precision with real-world experience. Guided by visionary leadership and an unwavering commitment to excellence, the school has transformed the landscape of tourism education in India, preparing students to not only navigate but also redefine the ever-evolving world of travel and hospitality.

With over three decades of academic excellence, Amity University has firmly established itself as a premier private university in India. Boasting a global presence that spans 12 universities, 28 schools, and 16 international campuses across London, Dubai, Singapore, New York, San Francisco, Abu Dhabi, Mauritius, Sharjah, South Africa, Amsterdam, Tashkent, and Nairobi, Amity has been shaping the leaders of tomorrow with a strong emphasis on innovation, research, and global exposure.



*Prof (Dr) M. Sajnani  
Dean, Faculty of Hospitality &  
Tourism,  
Director, Amity Institute of  
Travel & Tourism (AITT)*

The flagship institution, Amity University Uttar Pradesh (AUUP), has earned global recognition, ranking among the top 3% of universities worldwide by QS and THE rankings. It is also the only Indian university to receive both WASC USA and QAA UK accreditations. AUUP's achievements include over 22,600 publications, 1,826 patents filed, and multiple awards for intellectual property and commercialization, underscoring its commitment to research and innovation.

The Amity Institute of Travel & Tourism (AITT) and Amity School of Hospitality (ASH) were established in 2004 and 2003, respectively, to address the growing demand for skilled professionals in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Guided by the visionary founder, Dr. Ashok K. Chauhan, both institutes were designed to provide world-class education, professional training, and hands-on industry experience.



AITT is the only institution in India to offer programs certified by UNWTO TedQual, the United Nations World Tourism Organization's prestigious accreditation for quality in tourism education. The institute offers specialisation in MICE Management, Travel Agency and Tour Operations and Destination Planning & Management. For Hospitality Management ASH offers specialisation in all 04 functional areas of Front Office, Food Production, F&B Services & Housekeeping with the optimum use of 11 high tech and advanced Hospitality Labs.

Initially, there were many challenges to design and develop industry-relevant curriculum aligned with global standards for Tourism & Hospitality being emerging new sectors in India. Another Challenge was associated with the identification & recruitment of Quality and experienced faculty with both academic and hands-on industry experience. Identifying right kind of equipment suppliers for training, kitchen, service restaurants, housekeeping labs, Bars& for CRS was yet another challenge but all these challenges were successfully met under the guidance of dynamic & visionary leadership of the University. However, attracting quality students for undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Tourism & Hospitality has never been a challenge for Amity University.

**AITT offers the following programs:**

- **Bachelor's in Business Administration (Tourism Management) – 3 Years) &**
- **Bachelors in Business Administration (Tourism Management) (Hons with Research -4 Years)**
- **Masters' in Travel and Tourism (MTTM) – 2 Years**
- **Ph.D in Tourism – Full time (3 Years)**
- **Ph.D in Tourism – Part time (3.5 Years)**

**ASH offers the following programs**

**Bachelor of Hotel Management ( 4 years)**  
**MBA (Hospitality Management) ( 2 Years )**  
**Ph.D in Hospitality – Full time ( 3 Years )**  
**Ph.D in Hospitality – Part time ( 3.5 Years )**

Both institutes emphasize industry-relevant curriculum, intern-

ships, live projects, and global study opportunities, preparing students to become future-ready professionals. Students can undertake study-abroad semesters in countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Dubai, Singapore, and France, gaining international exposure and practical experience.

## **Achievements and Recognition**

AITT and ASH have consistently received national and international accolades:

- **UNWTO TedQual certification since 2013**
- **Best Institution Award 2019 by FICCI & EY**
- **International Tourism Expo (ITCTA) 2024 Award for Best Institute Promoting Travel & Tourism Courses**
- **Only Indian institution in QS Subject Rankings 2025 for Leisure & Hospitality**
- **Faculty research cited at 70.5 per paper in QS rankings**

The institutes also maintain a strong mentoring system, connecting students with faculty, alumni, and industry leaders, which has contributed to 100% placement success since inception.

Looking ahead, AITT and ASH aim to be among the top 50 global institutions in QS subject rankings and within the top 3 in India. The roadmap emphasizes emerging technologies, sustainability, and live industry projects integrated into the curriculum. These efforts align with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 mission, aiming to develop skilled professionals to contribute to a \$3 trillion tourism economy by 2047.

To conclude, Schools of Hospitality & Tourism Management at Amity University, under the dynamic leadership of visionary management, are committed to contribute significantly to achieving of Viksit Bharat 2047 mission of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, skilling our students with required technical, managerial and entrepreneurial skills to promote and manage tourism & hospitality sector successfully and making tourism a US \$3 trillion economy by 2047. **BI**





# India: The World's Next Great Tourist Destination

*As tourist hotspots worldwide struggle with over-crowding, India stands ready – with scale, heritage, safety and unmatched hospitality – to become the next global, waiting with open arms to welcome the travellers from across the globe*

For a long time, the world's most beautiful destinations seemed to be groaning under the weight of their own popularity. From the winding canals of Venice to the ancient streets of Kyoto, tourists were everywhere. The term “over-tourism” became a part of the global vocabulary, with locals protesting and governments stepping in to limit visitor numbers at famous sites, or even proposing new taxes. It felt as though the world was closing its doors, piece by piece, to the very travellers it once welcomed with open arms.

But as these once-beloved places began to scale back their invitations, a new question arose: Where would the millions of curious adventurers go next?

This is where a vast, vibrant, and ancient land stood waiting—a land with an unparalleled depth of history, culture, and hospitality. This was India, ready to offer itself as the next great destination for the world's weary travellers.

## A Land of Limitless Welcomes

If you want proof of India's capacity for scale, look no further than

the Kumbh Mela. In 2019, this massive spiritual gathering hosted an astounding 600 million pilgrims over just a few weeks. It wasn't just a religious event; it was the largest single gathering of humanity in history. Visitors from across the globe returned home in awe, wondering how a developing nation could manage such an immense and orderly spectacle. This is the ultimate testament to India's potential. If it can host the Kumbh, it can certainly handle the millions of tourists who are now looking for a new place to explore.

## A Subcontinent of Stories

India is often described not as a single country, but as a subcontinent, and for good reason. Within its borders lies a living, breathing treasure chest of civilisations.

- **History and Architecture:** With more than 40 UNESCO World Heritage sites, India is a living museum. Imagine standing before the eternal beauty of the Taj Mahal, exploring the ancient rock-cut caves of Ajanta and Ellora, or wandering through the grand forts of Rajasthan. Here, centuries unravel with every step you take.



- **Spiritual and Cultural Heritage:** Every stone has a story to tell. The sacred temples of South India, the Buddhist stupas of Sanchi, and the historic mosques of Delhi tell tales of a millennia-long dialogue between different faiths and cultures.
- **Natural Beauty:** India's landscape is a traveller's dream. It stretches from the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas to the serene backwaters of Kerala, from the pristine beaches of the Andaman Islands to the lush wildlife sanctuaries like Corbett and Kaziranga. While other nations might have one iconic natural wonder, India offers an entire world of discovery.
- **Living Cultures:** Each of India's states is a unique nation in itself, with its own languages, cuisines, dances, and festivals. You could visit India a dozen times and still find new experiences waiting for you.

## A Safe and Seamless Journey

In a world where political instability and crime are growing concerns, India stands as a politically stable and secure democracy. Tourists can travel across the country with confidence, knowing that a reputation for peace and safety has long defined its tourist circuits.

Another significant advantage is language. India has one of the largest English-speaking populations outside of native English-speaking countries. This makes communication effortless for international travellers, ensuring they feel understood and not lost, especially in urban areas.

## A Hospitality Powerhouse

True tourism isn't just about monuments—it's about how visitors are welcomed. In India, this is defined by the philosophy of Atithi Devo Bhava, or "the guest is god." It's not just a marketing slogan; it's a deeply ingrained cultural value.

India is also a modern, digitally connected nation. With direct flights to nearly every continent and affordable inter-city carriers, getting around is easier than ever. From luxury hotels like the Taj and Oberoi to charming boutique stays and homestays, there's an accommodation option for every type of traveller. The country's e-visa system covers more than 160 countries, making entry a breeze at a time when other nations are tightening their borders.

## The Next Golden Age of Tourism

The global travel industry is at a turning point. As traditional hot spots grow tired and overcrowded, a new generation of travellers is seeking a fresh adventure. India has the chance to position itself not as a simple replacement, but as a brand-new canvas for global travel.

But to truly seize this moment, India must tell a new story. It's time to move beyond tired images of crowded cities and show the world a place of balance, where ancient serenity meets modern energy. The focus should be on the country's diversity, showcasing it as a

multi-chapter journey: spiritual retreats, yoga getaways, adventure sports, and culinary explorations—all in one nation.

Most importantly, India can lead by example and champion sustainable tourism. By protecting its heritage sites and promoting eco-friendly initiatives, it can ensure that local communities benefit, becoming stewards of their own treasures rather than victims of over-tourism.

## The World is Waiting

By 2030, global tourism is projected to reach over 1.8 billion international arrivals. If traditional destinations are already struggling, where will all these travellers go? India, with its historical depth and operational experience, is perfectly poised to fill that void.

Where others say "too many," India can say "welcome all."

In every sunrise over the Ganges, every performance of Kathakali, and every walk through Hampi's timeless ruins, travellers will find the rejuvenation they seek. When the world grows weary of crowded alleys and long lines, India will be ready with open arms, endless stories, and infinite capacity.

The next golden age of tourism is on the horizon, and its heart just might be in India. **BI**

### *Unique facts about India's tourism potential*

- *The Kumbh hosted more people in one season than Europe's top 10 tourist cities combined.*
- *India has more UNESCO sites (40+) than Australia, Greece, or Brazil.*
- *One in 10 Indians speaks English—more than the UK's population.*
- *India welcomes visitors from more countries on an e-visa than most Asian destinations.*
- *UPI digital payments are accepted in 7+ countries and in millions of Indian outlets, making travel cashless.*

**Director – Chetak Foundation  
Advisory Board (Chief Minister's Era)**

**Sub-Editor – Bureaucracy India**

**About Author**  
Author is a communications, development, academic professional, a columnist, an author and a trainer with rich corporate and industry experience.



A photograph of the ITB India 2025 event. In the foreground, a large, stylized globe with a red-to-yellow gradient is positioned to the left of the large, dark blue letters 'ITB'. Below 'ITB', the word 'INDIA' is written in large, light blue letters on a white base. In the background, people are walking through a brightly lit exhibition hall with various booths and displays. A blue banner with the word 'EVENT' is visible in the upper left corner.

EVENT

## A World Reconnected

# Inside ITB India 2025's Global Return to Mumbai

When the glass doors of the Jio World Convention Centre slid open on a bright Mumbai morning this September, the hum of hundreds of voices spilled into the grand atrium. Delegates in tailored suits, travel entrepreneurs with lanyards swinging, and state tourism officials in crisp khadi kurtas — everyone seemed to be in motion.

After years of cautious recovery, ITB India 2025 had returned to Mumbai with an energy that was unmistakably global. Over three packed days, the convention centre transformed into a bustling hub of international collaboration, where tourism boards, travel brands, airlines, and technology innovators converged to rediscover the rhythm of post-pandemic travel.

This year's edition of ITB India wasn't just another industry meet, it was a symbol of renewal. With participation from more than 20 countries, including a strong presence from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, the event reaffirmed India's growing position as a travel powerhouse and a connector in global tourism.

The air inside the halls was charged with anticipation. The world

had changed. Travellers had changed and so had the way the industry spoke about its future.

Panels buzzed with keywords like sustainability, digital transformation, and experience economy. The once transactional world of tourism now seemed more thoughtful, shaped by a collective understanding that travel was not only about movement but about meaning.

### A Stage of Global Voices

The sessions that followed reflected this spirit. Industry leaders, government officials, and innovators took the stage to discuss not just recovery but reimagination.

From destination marketing and artificial intelligence to climate action and inclusive tourism, ITB India 2025 stretched across disciplines and mindsets. Panels on "The Future of Asian Travel Markets" drew large crowds, while sessions on smart tourism infrastructure showcased how data, design, and governance are increasingly intertwined.



## India as the Meeting Ground

India's hosting of ITB 2025 carried weight far beyond symbolism. With its booming middle class, rising digital literacy, and growing outbound travel market, India is increasingly seen as the world's new centre of gravity for the tourism industry.

Representatives from Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, Germany, and the UAE filled the exhibition floors, promoting partnerships and new travel routes. The Indian states weren't far behind each booth a riot of colour and culture, from the serene blues of Kerala's backwaters to the golden silhouettes of Rajasthan's forts.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, along with several state tourism boards, used the platform to highlight how policy and partnership are reshaping the country's tourism architecture. "We are not just recovering," one official was heard saying during a networking lunch. "We are reinventing how the world experiences India — digitally, sustainably, inclusively."

## The Buzz Around Business

Beyond cultural displays and panel discussions, business meetings were at the heart of ITB India's design. Over hundreds of pre-scheduled appointments, buyers and sellers from around the world negotiated collaborations, signed memoranda, and explored investment opportunities.

From boutique hotel chains scouting for partnerships to tourism boards seeking digital marketing allies, the event became a marketplace of possibilities.

This was where global meets local — where a small travel-tech startup from Pune could sit across from a German tour operator or a Dubai-based travel platform and discuss integration.

## A Strong International Footprint

The international turnout this year was one of ITB India's biggest achievements. With countries like Indonesia, Greece, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia increasing their presence, the event served as a mirror of India's diplomatic and trade engagements in tourism.

Several embassies and tourism ministries used the event to announce new bilateral travel initiatives and discuss tourism-linked investment corridors.

For instance, Gulf countries focused on wellness and luxury travel collaborations with Indian partners, while Southeast Asian nations sought to promote sustainable tourism exchanges. The European Tourism Council's presence added depth to the event, underlining the rising interest in India's outbound market.

## Technology and Sustainability Take the Spotlight

If there was one theme that dominated every discussion, it was

sustainability through technology. From carbon-neutral travel to smart hotel management, the message was that the travel industry's revival depended on innovation as much as intention. Exhibitors showcased AI-powered travel management tools, AR-based destination previews, and green logistics models that reduce the industry's carbon footprint.

Startups introduced tools that could optimize flight routes to cut emissions, while hospitality brands discussed how they were turning luxury properties into eco-positive spaces.

Even the exhibition space itself — with its modular, recyclable design and paper-free systems — reflected ITB's commitment to responsible practices.

## Conversations That Mattered

Panels like "Redefining the Future of Travel Distribution" and "Women in Tourism Leadership" drew some of the most engaged audiences.

Industry veterans spoke about how leadership diversity and local community involvement are now non-negotiable aspects of sustainable growth.

A session titled "The Responsible Traveller" captured a shift in consumer psychology — that modern travellers want authenticity, not extravagance. They seek experiences rooted in local culture, respect for nature, and mindful exploration.

As one speaker summarized, "The next era of travel won't be about more destinations, but about deeper journeys."

## Networking, Culture, and Mumbai's Magic

While business dominated the agenda, the social events gave ITB India its soul. Evenings saw a blend of networking dinners, cultural performances, and informal meetups. Delegates discussed deals over cups of cutting chai, and the Mumbai skyline, glittering against the Arabian Sea seemed to remind everyone why travel matters.

The Mumbai Tourism Board's hospitality initiative earned particular praise for combining cultural warmth with corporate professionalism. Attendees were treated to live performances, local cuisine, and artistic showcases that reflected India's diversity and charm.

## Chhattisgarh's Rural Awakening: Tourism that Empowers Communities

Another standout presence at ITB India 2025 was the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board, which brought India's heartland to the spotlight through its evocative showcase — "Off the Beaten Track: Rural Tourism in Chhattisgarh." The state's stall invited visitors to discover a lesser-known India — a land of forests, rivers, tribal artistry, and soulful hospitality.



Chhattisgarh's story is one of balance: between nature and modernity, preservation and progress. Its rolling plateaus, waterfalls, and fertile plains have nurtured self-sufficient rural communities for centuries. Now, through its ambitious Rural Tourism Mission, the state is transforming these communities into sustainable tourism hubs. The initiative not only revives folk traditions and crafts but also creates jobs, curbs urban migration, and empowers local youth — many of whom now manage digital outreach for their villages.

Two names stood out in Chhattisgarh's rural revival: Chitrakote and Dhudmaras. The former, known for its breathtaking waterfalls and tribal culture, was recognised as India's Best Tourism Village 2024 for Community-Based Tourism. The latter, located near Kanger Valley National Park, earned international acclaim as the only Indian village to be listed among the Top 20 Villages globally in the UN's Upgrade Programme for Adventure Tourism. Both are shining examples of how local self-help groups, Gram Panchayats, and community collectives can turn tourism into a movement of pride and purpose.

At ITB India, these stories found a global audience. Visitors crowded around immersive displays that showcased traditional art, eco-homestays, and the rhythm of rural life. Officials from the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board spoke passionately about their long-term goal to make the state a national model for sustainable, community-driven tourism. As one delegate remarked, "Chhattisgarh isn't just selling destinations; it's building livelihoods."

In a world obsessed with luxury and speed, Chhattisgarh's gentle, grounded narrative offered something refreshing — a journey back to the roots. And as global tourism turns toward sustainability, the state's commitment to empowerment and ecological harmony made it one of the most memorable stories of ITB India 2025.

## Bhutan's Message of Happiness: Minds Meeting the Mountains

Another inspiring presence at ITB India 2025 was the Institute of Happiness (IOH) from Bhutan — represented by Kinga Tshering, founder of IOH, and Tshering Wangmo, owner of Hotel Thimphu Towers and Zhu Bhutan Travels. Together, they brought to Mumbai a message that stood apart from the business deals and digital pitches: the pursuit of happiness as a measure of prosperity.

Their session, titled "Minds Meeting the Mountains", drew a curious audience eager to understand Bhutan's enduring philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) — an idea that bridges traditional wisdom with modern policymaking. Kinga, a former CEO of the Bank of Bhutan and Member of Parliament, shared how IOH's research blends economics, development, and technology to create models of human wellbeing. His vision of "Buddhist Capitalism" — balancing material progress with mindful living — resonated deeply in a world increasingly driven by metrics and markets.

Alongside him, Tshering Wangmo shared her entrepreneurial journey. As the owner of Hotel Thimphu Towers and Zhu Bhutan Travels, she employs and mentors women, many of whom are sin-

gle mothers seeking independence. Her voice lent authenticity to the conversation on empowerment, compassion, and social inclusion. Bhutan's pavilion at ITB India was more than a showcase of destinations; it was a quiet reminder that tourism, at its best, can heal communities as well as travellers. It turned ITB India into a space for reflection reminding delegates that true progress lies not only in GDP but in the collective happiness of humankind.

## A Platform for Policy and Partnership

What set ITB India 2025 apart was how it blurred the boundaries between business, diplomacy, and governance. Tourism policy, once seen as a soft sector, is increasingly being recognized as a strategic pillar of India's economy.

Senior government representatives from India and abroad discussed regulatory frameworks, visa policies, and sustainable infrastructure investments. The event subtly underlined the role of governance in enabling travel freedom, connectivity, and responsible growth.

With India's G20 legacy still resonating, many saw ITB India as an extension of the country's global engagement, a so-power summit built around culture, commerce, and connection.

## The Curtain Falls, But the Story Continues

As the final day drew to a close, the atmosphere inside the convention centre was far from winding down. Delegates exchanged last-minute business cards, posed for photos, and promised to return next year with bigger delegations.

When the lights dimmed on the final evening, what remained wasn't just a record of successful meetings but a renewed belief — that travel can still bring the world together, even in an age of distance and disruption.

For India, ITB 2025 was more than a trade show. It was a statement that the country stands ready to lead, not just host, the global tourism conversation. **BI**



*Poonam Sharma, Deputy General Manager, Chhattisgarh and Suhani Nagpal, Executive Editor, BI*



Media Partner

# Travel Tech Asia 2025: Where Innovation Powers the Future of Travel

*Berlin/Singapore, 25 September 2025 – From 15 – 17 October 2025, the global travel technology community will gather at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore (Level 1, Hall B) for Travel Tech Asia 2025. Co-located with ITB Asia and MICE Show Asia, the event unites the brightest minds, pioneering technologies, and most influential leaders in the travel and tourism sector. Over three days, executives, innovators, and thousands of attendees will meet to showcase solutions, forge partnerships, and shape the future of how the world travels.*

Travel Tech Asia is the definitive platform where cutting-edge technologies, emerging trends, and disruptive startups converge with established travel brands. The show offers unparalleled opportunities for networking, deal-making, and discovery, enabling businesses to unlock new frontiers in the ever-evolving travel ecosystem.

The exhibition floor will feature leading global names including Trip.com Group, Agoda, Go Global Travel, Juniper Travel Technology, Korea Tourism Startup Center, Xendit, SUNRATE, SiteMinder, Airalo, DerbySoft, RateHawk, Skyscanner, RESTEL S.A., Holafly, and Worldline. These companies represent the pinnacle of travel technology, showcasing cutting-edge solutions that are driving the evolution of travel across the APAC region.

Equally important are the top buyers attending from across the industry, including Clevel executives from renowned organisations such as Trip.com (CTO), THE ASCOTT LIMITED (Digital Transformation), Capitaland (Digital International Lodging Systems), HPL Hotels & Resorts (Director of Revenue Management), Expedia (Principal Software Engineer), Far East Hospitality Management Services (Area Director of Revenue Management), and The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore (Ecommerce & Digital Strategy Manager). Their presence highlights the strategic significance of the event, bringing together the most influential decision makers to explore partnerships, investment opportunities, and technology adoption.

“Travel Tech Asia is the meeting place for the great minds shaping

the future of travel. In an industry traditionally driven by people and experiences, technology is the catalyst that enhances, personalises and scales those very experiences. At our travel technology showcase ideas become innovations, and innovations become the force that will drive the entire travel industry forward”, said Darren Seah, Executive Director of Messe Berlin Asia Pacific and organiser of Travel Tech Asia, MICE Show Asia, and ITB Asia.

Kicking off Travel Tech Asia on a vibrant note, an exclusive RSVP-only Happy Hour networking session will take place at the Buyers Lounge on 15 October 2025, from 5 pm to 6 pm. Open to Travel Tech Asia exhibitors, buyers and speakers, this lively gathering offers a prime opportunity to connect, exchange ideas and forge meaningful partnerships – further enriching the Travel Technology Zone experience.

## Conference Highlights: Insightful Sessions from Global Leaders

The Travel Tech Asia Conference 2025 will deliver forward-looking insights on how technology is reshaping travel. This year’s programme focuses on trends and innovations in travel technology, the role of AI in transforming travel and tourism, the future of travel payments, and strategies for aviation distribution, offering participants the tools and strategies to navigate the next wave of transformation.

Among the headline sessions and speaker highlights are:

The Tech Leaders’ Panel: Driving Innovation in Travel through Technology will explore how travel companies are adapting to shifting consumer demands for personalisation, seamless experiences, and efficiency. Tejveer Singh Bedi, Vice President of Traveloka Partners Network at Traveloka, will moderate a discussion with Clive Ashmore Butler, Chief Customer Officer at Atlas; Chris Hodges, Vice President of Global Connectivity & Partner Solutions at Expedia Group; Brett Henry, President Director at MG Group; Edmund Ong, Senior Regional Director SEA and GM Singapore at Trip.com; and Kazuhisa Takahashi, CEO of Tripla, examining how digital solutions are driving innovation and addressing the key challenges and opportunities for the industry.



The panel on The Impact of AI on the Future of Travel will focus on how artificial intelligence is redefining the traveller journey, streamlining operations, and delivering hyper-personalised experiences. Moderated by Kei Shibata, Co-founder and CEO of Venture Republic & Trip 101, the discussion features Max Martin, Founder of Kai; Linda Adami, Founder and CEO of Quantum Temple; Apichai Sakulsureeyadej, CEO of Radiant1; and Jeff Kim, CEO of Yanolja Cloud, exploring how businesses can harness AI to boost operational efficiency and elevate customer satisfaction.

In the session, Real-World Applications of AI and Strategies for Hotels, Andrew Smith, Senior Vice President of Supply at Agoda, will present hands-on examples of how AI is transforming hotel operations and guest experiences, providing actionable strategies for hoteliers to implement or scale AI-driven solutions.

The session Unlocking APAC Growth: Smarter Flight Distribution in the Age of NDC will highlight the critical role of flights in the APAC region, which is poised to become the world's largest travel market. Demi Kavaratzis, Country Manager for Australia and New Zealand at Etraveli Group, will share how accelerating NDC adoption and data-driven retailing are reshaping airline and retailer connections with travellers, and highlight opportunities to capture the next wave of APAC growth.

The C-Suite Talk: Venture Capital in Travel Tech - Unlocking the Future of Innovation will offer an insider perspective on where top investors see the next breakthroughs in travel technology, from AI-driven trip planning to sustainable travel solutions. Scott Krivokopich, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of 1982 Ventures, will guide this session, sharing insights into the models, signals, and sectors attracting venture capital investment.



## About ITB Asia

*ITB Asia, Asia's leading travel trade show, is organised by Messe Berlin Asia Pacific and supported by the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau. The annual B2B trade show and convention will feature hundreds of exhibiting companies from the AsiaPacific region, Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East, covering not only the leisure market, but also MICE and corporate travel. Exhibitors from every sector of the industry, including destinations, airlines and airports, hotels and resorts, theme parks and attractions, inbound tour operators, inbound DMCs, cruise lines, spas, venues, other meeting facilities, and travel technology companies are expected to attend. ITB Asia is the premier meeting place for the travel trade industry to forge new partnerships and strengthen existing business relationships with the most important players in the region.*

## About ITB Global Brand Family

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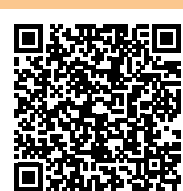


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# Four Elements and Us

by **Vibha Gurtu**

Director, Spiritual Tara

**R**ecently I attended a Spiritual Retreat on The four elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air) in Portugal. Where the rituals for the element was taught and performed through the Andean Shaman practices. Andean spirituality is all about balance and reciprocity. The Andean communities believe that everything in the universe is connected. Humans, animals, rivers, mountains, stars, planets and even the weather. Each part of the universe has its own spirit and unique energy, as well as harmony.

Interestingly, myself being a practitioner and a teacher of Chakra meditation, cleansing and balancing them to live a harmonious living. I found the close similarity and connection between the Andean and ancient indian rituals to worship the four elements and their connection to the subtle energetic/physical body and chakras. As they are the central theme in yogic and tantric

traditions.

## Earth Element – Stability & Root

- Chakra: Muladhara (Root Chakra) at the base of the spine.
- Body Connection: Bones, muscles, legs, colon, and immune system.
- Significance: Represents grounding, stability, survival, and physical identity.
- Imbalance Signs: Fear, anxiety, insecurity, constipation, lower back pain.
- Balancing Practices: Walking barefoot, lying down on the mother earth (Pachamama), offering gratitude and performing grounding meditations, also eating root vegetables.

Mantra- 'Lam'



## Water Element – Flow & Emotions

Water is the major factor for life force on the Earth.

- Chakra: Svadhisthana (Sacral Chakra) in the lower abdomen.
- Body Connection: Reproductive organs, kidneys, bladder, circulatory fluids.
- Significance: Governs emotions, creativity, sensuality, and adaptability.
- Imbalance Signs: Emotional instability, rigidity, sexual dysfunction, urinary issues.
- Balancing Practices: swimming, dancing, staying hydrated, and connecting with water. Having bath regularly to wash off the unrequired energies.

Mantra - Vam

## Fire Element – Transformation & Willpower

The major source of energy.

- Chakra: Manipura (Solar Plexus Chakra) at the navel.
- Body Connection: Digestive system, liver, pancreas, metabolism.
- Significance: Represents energy, willpower, self-confidence, and transformation, Action.
- Imbalance Signs: Digestive problems, anger, low self-esteem, lack of motivation.
- Balancing Practices: Core-strengthening exercises, sun salutations, eating warm and correct spices to keep the body healthy, meditating with a candle flame, fire ceremony (havan).

Mantra- Ram

## Air Element – Movement & Breath

- Chakra: Anahata (Heart Chakra) at the center of the chest.
- Body Connection: Lungs, heart, circulatory system, arms, and hands.
- Significance: Governs love, compassion, expansion, and communication.
- Imbalance Signs: Breathing issues, circulation problems, loneliness, lack of empathy.
- Balancing Practices: Deep breathing (Pranayama), chest-opening exercises, spending time in fresh air, practicing gratitude and forgiveness.

Air connects with all the other elements.

Mantra- Yam

## Beyond the Four Elements

In yogic philosophy, the higher chakras are linked to subtler elements:

- Vishuddha (Throat Chakra): Ether/Space – expression, truth.
- Mantra- Ham
- Ajna (Third Eye): Light/Intuition – clarity, wisdom.
- Mantra- Om
- Sahasrara (Crown): Pure Consciousness – union with the divine.

Mantra- Aum.

So, the four elements are the foundation, grounding us into the body and material life. As we move upward through the chakras, we shift into more subtle energies, culminating in pure awareness.

By the end of the retreat, we all realised and accepted that we all are guided and connected through the universal wisdom. The place and the topography adds different shades to the same seven colours of the rainbow making the VIBGYOR come alive. We all are connected, live on the same mother Earth, welcoming the same Sun, breathing the same Air and drinking the same Water.

Lets know that the elements existed before us and shall stay even after us. **BI**



**V**ibha is an author, a practitioner and facilitator of Shamanism and an intuitive healer. Trained in reiki, pranic healing, hypnotherapy, tarot card reading and others, she founded Aumtara, a spiritual hub, in New Delhi. Vibha is a spiritual guide, talk therapist and an image consul-

*tant. She uses her learning and experience to create inner and outer balance. Vibha assists people to break repetitive patterns to achieve life goals through clarity. She provides holistic healing to bring a shift internally in thoughts and externally with behaviour and appearance. She has conducted numerous workshops on image makeover, relationships and empowerment at individual and corporate levels.*

*To learn more, visit [www.vibhagurtu.com](http://www.vibhagurtu.com)*





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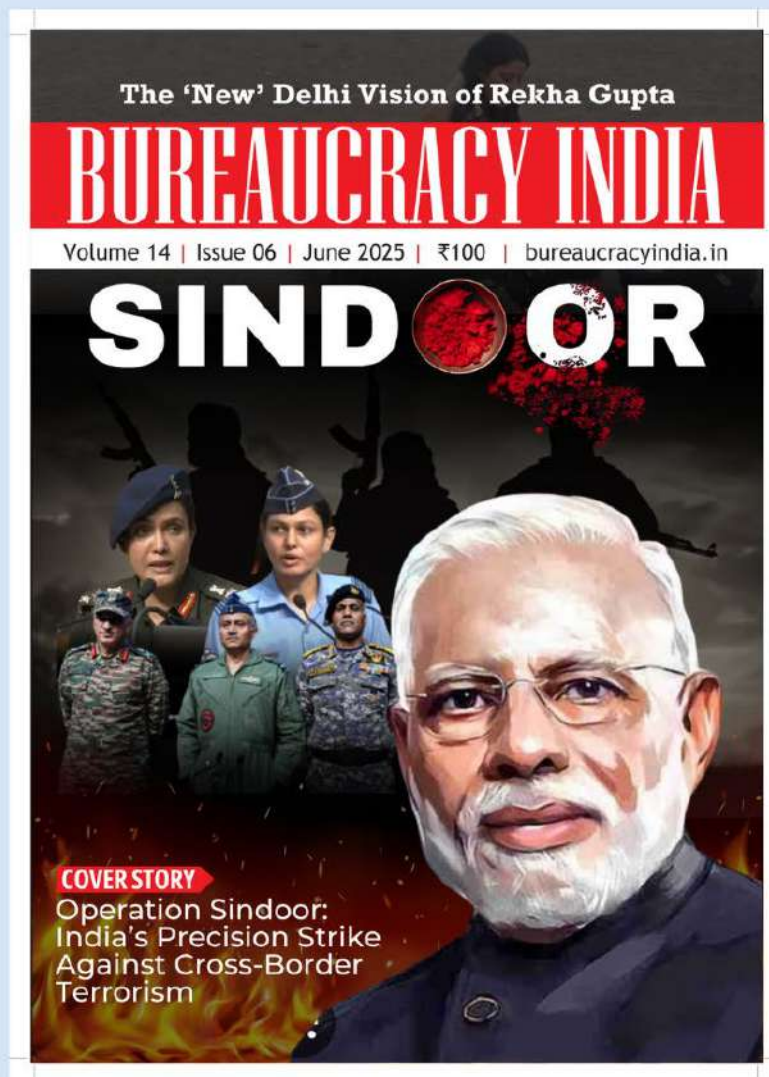


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