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## Outbound passport to avenues

**W**hile seasons are changing and new opportunities are opening up across the world, I would like to address the two correlated topics. Outbound tourism and Travel MICE & Corporate Show.

In 1994, the United Nations identified three forms of tourism in its *Recommendations on Tourism Statistics*:

- Domestic tourism, involves residents of a country travelling only within that country

events a new platform for showcasing their creativity and skills. We have compared the event space on land versus the cruise here.

Currently, the market is hungry and keen to meet suppliers and vendors that support outbound tourism. Events like Travel MICE & Corporate Show, create platforms to help corporate travellers and influencers to benefit on the knowledge front, connectivity, and exposure. We have covered the programmes, the expectations of the travel corporate,

“Events like Travel MICE & Corporate Show, create platforms to help corporate travellers and influencers to benefit on the knowledge front.”

- Inbound tourism, involving non-residents travelling in the given country
- Outbound tourism, involving residents travelling in another country.

These three tourism forms have opened up too many segments of opportunities like medical tourism, nature tourism, wellness, and religious tourism, etc.

In this edition, we are focusing on cruise tourism too and majorly on its role in events space like corporate events, and weddings.

With more and more choices of domestic and outbound cruises, opening their access and connectivity to and from India has given curators of

the exhibitors, and their takeaways. With focus on outbound tourism, this issue also encompasses topics like sustainability, long-stay programmes, destinations like South Africa, which will help our readers to plan their presence for better understanding and exposure.

Hope this edition gives our readers extensive info for initiating new ideas. Please share your feedback with us along with the topics you want us to cover.

Our endeavour is to stay relevant to our readers. Happy reading!

Warm Regards,  
**Jyothi Varma**, Consulting Editor

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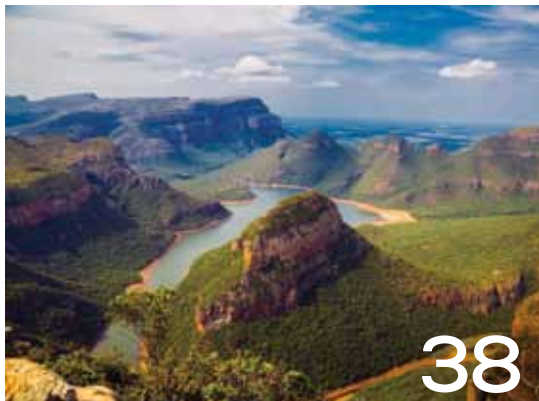
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# Business travel to hit ₹148 lakh crore

The international business travel spending to increase by 11% this year and grow at the rate of 6.95% from 2025 to 2028, accounting for over ₹2 lakh crore.



CFOs are increasingly endorsing travel for business engagements.

According to the 2024 GBTA Business Travel Index Outlook, the global business travel spending is projected to rise by 11.1 per cent in 2024. Meanwhile, the growth rate is expected to gradually stabilise, leading to an annual compound growth rate of 6.95 per cent from 2025 to 2028.

The survey of 4,100 business travellers across 28 countries highlighted increased business travel, although international travel remains subdued. 64 per cent of respondents reported higher business travel spending compared to the year 2023.

In 2023, global business travel expenses totaled US\$1.34 trillion, with allocations including, US\$501 billion for lodging, US\$282 billion for air travel, US\$245 billion for food and beverage, US\$165 billion for ground transportation, and US\$142 billion

By MT Bureau

The global business travel industry is positioned for a robust recovery, as indicated by latest Global Business Travel Association's (GBTA) Business Travel Index Outlook report. Forecasted to reach US\$1.48 trillion by the end of 2024, surpassing the previous high of US\$1.43 trillion in 2019, global business travel spending demonstrates significant momentum post-pandemic. Experts anticipate this upward trajectory to continue, with spending projected to exceed US\$2 trillion by 2028.

The economic stability has been an important factor driving the resurgence of business travel, globally. Combined with pent-up demand from postponed trips during the pandemic, CEOs and





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**交通部觀光署**  
Tourism Administration, MOTC

Globally, comfort (43%) and cost minimisation (41%) are the top priorities, with 16% focusing on reducing carbon footprint



for other travel expenses. Although where the expenses for per trip are concerned, business travellers spend US\$834 per trip, US\$312 for lodging, US\$153 for food and beverage, US\$176 for air travel, US\$103 for ground transportation and miscellaneous expenses accounting for US\$89.

Regional recovery rates varied in 2023, with Asia Pacific region leading at 36 per cent, followed by Western Europe at 33 per cent, and North America stayed at 25 per cent. Meanwhile, the U.S., Middle East, Africa, and Latin America each achieved or exceeded 100 per cent of their 2019 spending levels.

Across industries, the financial and insurance sectors are poised for the significant growth (72 per cent) in

business travel spending through 2028. Conversely, retail trade (41 per cent) and agriculture, forestry, and fishing (32 per cent) sectors are expected to see slower growth during this period.

While the overall outlook remains optimistic, potential long-term impacts on business travel includes factors such as persistent inflation, geopolitical tensions, industry workforce challenges, and environmental concerns. Corporate sustainability efforts are increasingly influencing the sector, underscoring the importance of coordinated industry action. In terms of priorities, comfort (43 per cent) and cost minimisation (41 per cent) are globally paramount, with 16 per cent emphasising on reducing carbon footprints. European travellers

**2023 GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPENDITURES**

Global business travel expenditures was US\$1.34 trillion with business travellers spending US\$834 per trip including:

Lodging: US\$501 billion (US\$312 per trip)

Air Travel: US\$282 billion (US\$176 per trip)

Food & Beverage: US\$245 billion (US\$153 per trip)

Ground Transportation: US\$165 billion (US\$103 per trip)



(22 per cent) are particularly focused on reducing their carbon footprint.

Most travellers (81 per cent) find their business trips very or moderately worthwhile for achieving objectives, with attending seminars/training and conferences being the most common purposes. Additionally, 58 per cent said they extended work trips for leisure or vacation as frequently as pre-pandemic.

With expectations of continued growth and adaptation to evolving economic and environmental factors, the international business travel industry is poised for a dynamic future in the coming years. These insights highlight not only the sector's resilience but also its pivotal role in the international economic recovery and connectivity. ➔



# WHERE CONNECTIONS UNLOCK POSSIBILITIES

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# June RevPAR cross 2019 numbers

Indian hotels continue to show dynamic growth in this year. It could be a carpe diem moment for MICE activities, which are on the rise in the country.

By MT Bureau

In July 2024, the ‘Hotels & Hospitality Overview (H2O)’ report by HVS ANAROCK highlighted that in June 2024, India’s hospitality sector saw remarkable growth, with ADR and RevPAR significantly up from 2019. However, the occupancy rate experienced a slight decline showcasing trends across various cities.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In June 2024, ADR increased by 27-29 per cent to a range of ₹6,700 – ₹6,900, indicating rising room rates in comparison to June 2019. RevPAR also saw a noticeable increase of 24-26 per cent, reaching between ₹4,087 – ₹4,347, reflecting enhanced revenue generation per room.

However, the occupancy rate saw a slight decline of one to three percentage points, settling at 61-63 per cent, which points to a small decrease in the proportion of rooms occupied compared to 2019.

On a city level, Kochi excelled with the highest occupancy rate increase of seven percentage points, suggesting a strong

local market performance. Conversely, Hyderabad and Mumbai experienced slight declines in occupancy, highlighting varying local market dynamics.

## BRANDED HOTELS OVERVIEW

The branded hotel sector has witnessed a boom in year-to-date in June 2024, with 4,416 new openings and as many as 19,827 signings, showcasing confidence from investors and operators in the sector’s growth potential.

## ADR CHANGES

ADR changes in June 2023 show substantial increases in several key markets, with Hyderabad leading at an 8-12 percentage point rise, followed by New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru, all seeing increases of four to eight percentage points. Pune, Kochi, and Chandigarh also saw modest ADR growth during this time period.

However, Kolkata and Goa experienced decreases in ADR, which could be attributed to numerous factors including market saturation or competitive pressures.

Overall, the Indian hotel sector remains dynamic, with strong revenue

growth and varied performance across different markets. The continued expansion of branded hotels highlights the sector’s positive outlook and potential for further development. ➔





## DreamSetGo's 'Winning Run' at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024



The indelible experience of 800 cricket fans is a testament to DreamSetGo's exceptional commitment to excellence.



and a private meet and greet with Brian Lara at his residence. Additional meet & greets with Harbhajan Singh, Ajinkya Rahane, VVS Laxman, Sunil Gavaskar, and Ramiz Raja further enriched the experience.

The "Dream Beyond The Game" campaign, featuring Anusha Dandekar, added flair to their offerings. The VLOG-style campaign documented her journey from India to the USA, showcasing luxury experiences & hospitality for the India-Pakistan match. Watch it on [YouTube/@DreamSetGoOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/@DreamSetGoOfficial).

**D**reamSetGo's role as an official travel agent for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in the USA & West Indies was marked by excellence and innovation. With over 800 clients serviced, this unique partnership showcased luxurious gala nights, exclusive meet & greets with legends and a captivating marketing campaign.

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 was a significant success for both Team India and DreamSetGo. With over 800 satisfied clients, exclusive events, a standout marketing campaign, DreamSetGo set new standards in sports travel & hospitality, leaving a lasting impact. ➔

DreamSetGo ensured over 800 cricket fans had an unforgettable experience. The India-Pakistan match alone saw over 600 clients, highlighting DreamSetGo's efficiency and appeal. Additionally, the gala night attracted over 350 attendees.

On the eve of the India-Pakistan clash, they hosted a lavish gala at 583 Park Avenue, New York. The evening featured a fireside chat between icons Sourav Ganguly and Waqar Younis, moderated by DreamSetGo's CEO & Founder, Monish Shah, creating a buzz ahead of the match. Watch it on [YouTube/@DreamSetGoOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/@DreamSetGoOfficial).

DreamSetGo's offerings included a trophy tour in the West Indies





# Corporates marching towards a **greener future**

Convening a huge crowd, the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Travel MICE & Corporate Show sparked lively discussions on the indispensability of sustainable practices in corporate travel.



By **Janice Alysius**

**T**he prestigious 10<sup>th</sup> Travel MICE & Corporate Show wrapped up in July at the Hyderabad Marriott Convention Centre, nestled in the City of Pearls. Over two days, the event witnessed around 2,300 B2B meetings, featuring 33 exhibitors and 72 buyers. A standout moment was the panel discussion focused on the future of sustainability in the travel industry, especially through the lens of corporate responsibility. Underscoring the dynamic shift in the operations of corporates and the indispensable interest in sustainability,



**DR. SANJAY PAI**  
Vice President, Facilities, Corporate Travel  
Hospitality & Director Aviation/Accountable Manager  
Larsen & Toubro



**NEHA BOSE**  
Hotel Manager  
The Westin Hyderabad HITEC City

post-pandemic, **Amarnath Lal Das**, Vice President, India Travel, Meeting & Events, Accenture Solutions highlighted, “Sustainability is undoubtedly something that you must integrate into your programme. Even though many are new to this space, it must be prioritised. Many say sustainability is expensive, but all decisions should not be taken considering the cost factor.” He stressed that if corporates would not take an immediate action, eventually, it would not be a choice. Therefore, it is better to act now.

With the same sentiment, **Dr. Sanjay Pai**, Vice President, Facilities, Corporate Travel, Hospitality & Director Aviation/Accountable Manager, Larsen & Toubro emphasised “Sustainability is everyone’s business. Currently, all travel managers are recording their verticals of expenses toward carbon footprint to a central model for reporting. Though it is not mandatory yet, in the next two to three years, it will become obligatory.” He

added, “Travel is just a small fraction of the problem, but other sectors such as airlines, hotels, facility waste, and more are making equal contribution to the carbon footprint. Therefore, sustainability needs to mature comprehensively, not just from top to bottom but also vice-versa.”

While the shift towards sustainability in corporate travel is gradual, initiatives like tracking carbon footprints are gaining traction. **Neha Bose**, Hotel Manager, The Westin Hyderabad HITEC City added, “Our hotel is LEED Gold certified. So, there are many proactive measures we are taking for our travellers. Initially, it was just about reuse and recycle but now we have started to understand what our travellers need.” While it is currently optional, it is anticipated to become obligatory in the near future, aligning with goals of achieving net-zero emissions.

Proceeding to the pivotal role of technology in driving sustainability

As technology is driving sustainability in transportation, automation is the only way forward





in ground transportation, **Rajiv Vij**, Chairman and Managing Director, Carzonrent India asserted, “Automation is the only way forward.” Carzonrent’s investment in technology has streamlined operations, reduced paper usage, and introduced Electric Vehicles (EVs) into their fleet, marking a significant step towards reducing carbon emission and driving green practices.

He further explained, “We have implemented a programme where we track the number of kilometers that corporate clients use in electric vehicles. We calculate the carbon savings from these journeys and include this information on every invoice. Additionally, we provide them with a monthly certificate that they can use internally, indicating the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions saved from using non-electric vehicles that month. This aspect will be a significant part of the industry going forward.”

Acknowledging that priorities of corporate travel have shifted from cost to other aspects, **Gaurav Shekhar Nagwekar**, Head Travel Logistics & Corporate Service Administration, Reliance Industries pointed out, “In the past, even corporates were very specific in terms of cost. Cost was the basic criterion when they used to look at any travel programme. Today, things have



**RAJIV VIJ**  
Chairman & Managing Director  
Carzonrent India



**GAURAV SHEKHAR NAGWEKAR**  
Head Travel Logistics &  
Corporate Service Administration  
Reliance Industries





Cost was initially the primary criterion for curating travel itineraries. Today, things have changed. Safety and security have taken the forefront, followed by sustainability. As a result, leadership is now discussing these issues





changed. Safety and security have taken the forefront, followed by sustainability. So, leadership is talking about it. They are trying to drive it and see how the best sustainable travel programmes can be implemented. It is a long way, but I am sure we will get there in a few years.”

Meanwhile, illustrating how innovation can foster sustainability in the insurance sector, **Dev Karvat**, Founder & CEO, Asego said, “I believe that creating awareness is the first step towards sustainability. In the past, our travel insurance policies used to be lengthy documents of terms and conditions. However, with our new self-booking online tools, we issue close to 1.5 million completely paperless policies annually. We actively discourage customers from printing policies due to environmental concerns.”

“Regarding claims, we have partnered with multiple insurers. For smaller, non-medical claims such as lost baggage, passport issues, or delayed baggage delivery, we aim to settle these without requiring original documents. We have developed an app where customers can upload their documents, allowing us to credit claims directly to their accounts. These small initiatives are crucial in promoting sustainability,” he added.

While the future of corporate travel presents challenges, it also offers



**DEV KARVAT**  
Founder & CEO  
Asego

opportunities for transformation. By embracing sustainability, leveraging technological advancements, and prioritising employee welfare, businesses can navigate the complexities of the post-pandemic era while contributing to a more sustainable future for everyone.

Meanwhile, underlining the importance of responsible usage of resources, **Jyothi Varma**, Consulting Editor, MiceTalk, emphasised, “I recently came across something which conveyed that sustainability is simply about co-existing to live longer, to continue experiencing the same things. It is incredibly simple yet profound.”

“In essence, sustainability means co-existing with our resources. Instead

of greedily using everything, it is about preserving and using resources wisely. It is a straightforward concept. This serves as a crucial lesson for us today. While our current generation might manage, future generations will face even greater challenges if we fail to act,” she added.

Additionally, she went on to say, “Shifting to the corporate perspective, our discussions often focus on what companies are doing about sustainability. However, today we want to explore what sustainability means for end travellers and travel influencers, corporate buyers, who are internally questioned and required to produce reports on this matter.”

The comprehensive strategies and technological adoptions can help in making business goals sync with sustainable objectives. It is important for corporates, MICE planners, hotels, and other stakeholders of tourism and hospitality industry to adopt green strategies and chart their sustainable goals as early as possible.

Nevertheless, for Indian travel and tourism stakeholders, this could be a carpe diem moment. Comprehensively, the travel community and corporate sector of India can showcase the international audience that path of sustainable measures is never going to hinder the path of profit in any business across the globe. ➔



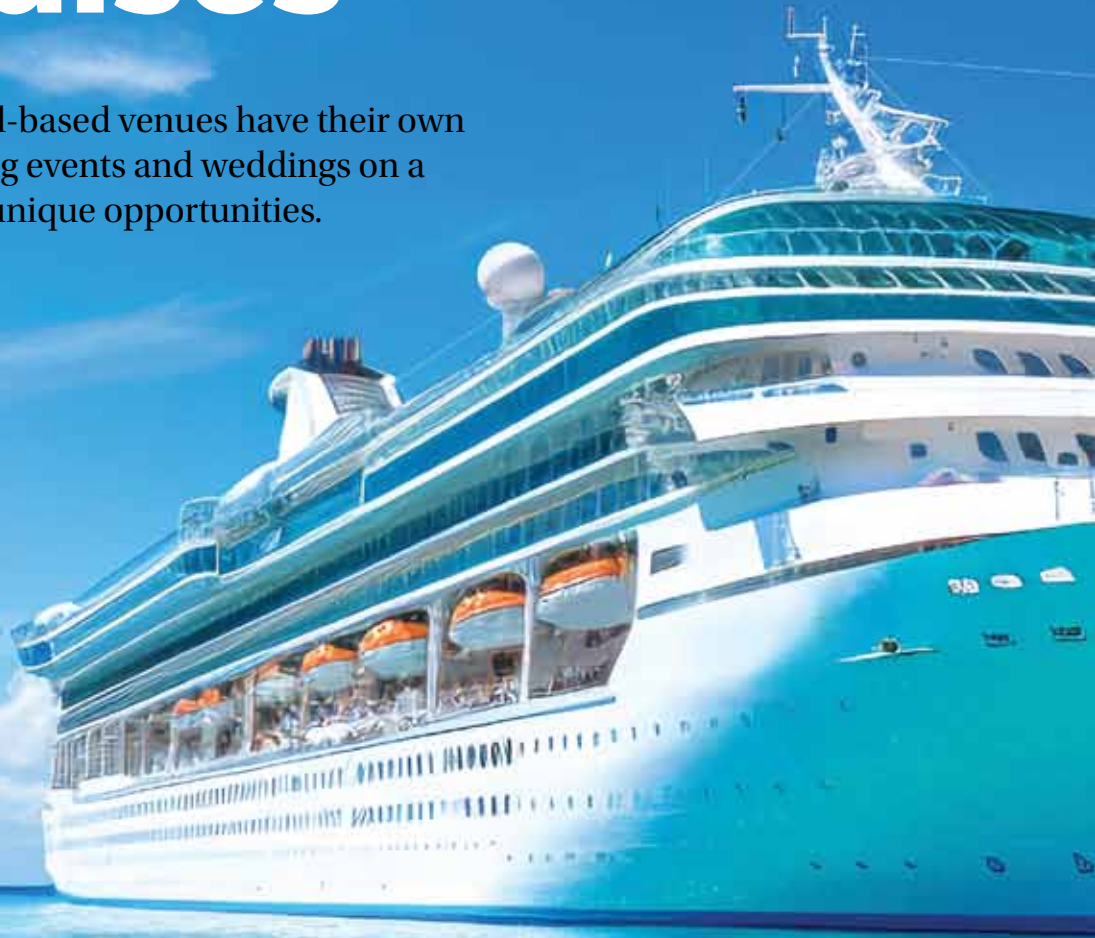






# Charting new waters weddings & events on cruises

Experts suggest that land-based venues have their own advantages, while hosting events and weddings on a cruise opens a world of unique opportunities.





By **Janice Alysius**

**I**n recent years, hosting corporate events or weddings aboard luxurious cruise ships has emerged as an alternative to traditional land-based venues. The allure of setting sail on the open seas, combined with comprehensive onboard amenities and unique destination experiences, offer a distinct advantage for event planners and attendees alike. To delve deeper into this trend, we have gathered insights from industry experts to explore the advantages and challenges of hosting such events.

Hosting events and weddings on a cruise ship has a unique experiential advantage. With the same sentiment, **Dipti Adhia**, Director, Discover the World, India (Representing Carnival Cruise Line in India), highlighted the practical benefits of hosting events on Carnival Cruise Line. She said, "We offer packages that include stays, dining, event spaces, making planning and budgeting



"Guests can enjoy their vacation, visit unique destinations & attend an event, adding value to their cruise experience."

**DIPTI ADHIA**Director, Discover the World, India  
(Representing Carnival Cruise Line in India)



**NARESH RAWAL**  
Vice President, Sales & Marketing (India)  
Resorts World Cruises

more straightforward for organisers.” Emphasising the versatility of cruise venues, Adhia added, “Our ships have multiple venues, from grand ballrooms to intimate lounges, providing the flexibility for different event types and sizes.” There are several options for onboard

“We offer a one-stop integrated solution without the hassle of going through multiple sources or vendors.”

entertainment such as live shows, casinos, and various activities, which offer the guests a range of options to enjoy before and after the event. The guests can simultaneously enjoy their vacation, visit unique destinations, as well as attend an event, adding precious value to their experience on the luxurious cruise.

Cruise weddings are growing in demand along with MICE and corporate events due to the convenience, value, benefits, and attractiveness of hosting events at sea. **Naresh Rawal**, Vice President, Sales & Marketing (India), Resorts World Cruises, said, “At Resorts World Cruises, we offer a one-stop

integrated solution without the hassle of going through multiple sources or vendors. Hosting guests and organising corporate events on a cruise ship becomes accessible for planners and attendees.”

Discussing the logistical advantages and challenges of hosting events and weddings on cruise ships, Adhia, said, “Our Funships offer a controlled environment with security and staff readily available to assist with any issues that may arise. All amenities in one place reduce the need for transportation logistics.” Carnival Cruise Line provides experienced event planners who are familiar with the ship’s layout



ships, Adhia highlighted, “Inclusive packages often simplifies budgeting and planning for the customers.”

Elaborating on the value-addition offerings by Resorts World Cruises, Rawal affirmed, “In a cruise, you get the best of multiple worlds. Cruise presents unique experiences that are convenient in comparison to land-based resorts. The packages can be customised as per the requirements, including certified vegetarian and Jain food, while sailing to different destinations. Other value-added offerings include access to international LIVE performances, recreational activities, spas, and shopping.”

**COST-EFFECTIVE PACKAGES**

While highlighting the cost-effectiveness of cruise packages that consolidate expenses and reduce time spent liaising between vendors, Rawal said, “From a cost angle, planners will be able to consolidate their cost effectively with savings as we offer a one-stop solution.” He pointed out that less time is spent in liaising from one vendor to the other as the ship organises everything from 'A to Z' and from ship to shore.

**WEDDING PLANNERS' TAKE**

From wedding planners' perspective, **Rajeev Jain**, Founder and Director, Rashi Entertainment, shared his insights on hosting a wedding on a cruise and said, “Cruise weddings offer stunning ocean views and a seamless planning experience. Many cruise lines provide wedding packages encompassing everything from venue arrangements to gourmet cuisine and entertainment, streamlining the planning process efficiently.”

However, for Jain, the challenges associated with cruise weddings could not be ignored, particularly for those considering a traditional Indian wedding. “Cruises have limited venues, which may not always suit the various functions of a traditional Indian wedding. Cabin sizes are small, making luggage storage difficult for guests. Ensuring high-quality Indian cuisine might require hiring an Indian chef, as cruise kitchens might not meet expectations. The cruise itineraries and wedding functions can be affected by weather and seasonal changes,” he said.

Nevertheless, Jain emphasised that land venue have their own challenges as “Couples need to liaise with multiple vendors for decor, entertainment, and

and capabilities, ensuring smooth coordination and execution.

Addressing the logistical challenges, Adhia said, “While our Funships offer various venues, space is still limited compared to large land-based venues, which may restrict the number of attendees and the scale of the event.” Speaking about the scheduling complexities, she averred, “The events need to be planned around the ship’s itinerary, which may not align with the schedule of the event unless it is a charter.” Adhia asserted, “Visa complexities, particularly for global cruises and specific itineraries requiring dual visas (if it is Alaska, one will need both USA and Canada visas), could add logistical complexity. Also, internet and communication services on the cruise ships can be limited, which might be a concern for corporate events requiring constant connectivity.”

**VALUE-ADDED OFFERING**

Emphasising on the value-added offerings of hosting events and weddings on cruise

“Cruises have limited venues, which may not suit the functions of a traditional Indian wedding.”



**RAJEEV JAIN**  
Founder and Director  
Rashi Entertainment



“Aligning the wedding schedule with the ship’s itinerary, including ports of call and onboard activities, requires meticulous planning.”



**VIKRAMJEET SHARMA**  
Founder and Managing Director  
Le Florence Weddings



catering. They can be more expensive, in case of destination weddings, and organising transportation for guests can be complicated,” he said.

Underlining the cost-effectiveness of cruise weddings, Jain pointed out, “Cruise Weddings often offer inclusive packages, making them a cost-effective option.” However, he also suggested, “It is essential to book two rooms per family to accommodate luggage and for comfortable stay,” Jain said.

Underlining the intricacies of orchestrating such an event compared to traditional land-based venues, **Vikramjeet Sharma**, Founder and Managing Director, Le Florence Weddings, highlighted logistical hurdles such as coordinating the guests from diverse locations to ensure timely embarkation. “Aligning the wedding schedule with the ship’s itinerary, including ports of call and onboard activities, requires meticulous planning. Navigating the legal

complexities across different jurisdictions to ensure the marriage is legally recognised poses another significant challenge,” he added.

Despite these challenges, Sharma emphasised the unique opportunities cruise weddings offer. “One major advantage is the availability of all-inclusive packages provided by many cruise lines. These packages encompass everything from ceremony coordination to accommodation and even honeymoon arrangements, streamlining the planning process significantly. Moreover, the breathtaking backdrop of the open sea or picturesque ports of call provides an unmatched setting for exchanging vows, enhancing the romantic ambiance of the occasion,” he said.

Compared to land-based venues, the cruise weddings differ in flexibility and logistical control. Sharma asserted, “While land-based venues offer more flexibility in terms of scheduling and vendor choices, cruise weddings are restricted by the ship’s itinerary and may have certain limitations on external vendors. Those couples opting for cruise weddings should also consider the trade-offs between venue flexibility and the unique experience of a wedding at sea. Despite these considerations, the seamless transition from a wedding ceremony to honeymoon aboard the cruise ship is a compelling draw for many couples



**VINITEE MISHRA**  
Senior Manager  
Travel & Immigration, Prometheus Group

“Cruise prices frequently vary based on factors such as ship quality and booking timing.”

seeking convenience and continuity in their celebration.”

### HOSTING CORPORATE EVENTS

Enlarging about hosting corporate events on a luxurious cruise, **Vinitee Mishra**, Senior Manager, Travel & Immigration,

Prometheus Group, said, “Cruises always offer a unique advantage of visiting multiple destinations in one holiday. You wake up in a new place every morning without having the hassle of packing and unpacking multiple times. This seamless travel experience enhances convenience and comfort and adds a novel dimension to corporate events,” Mishra said. “Cruise events often tend to be more expensive against their land-based venues, making budget considerations pivotal in event planning. This cost disparity can impact the feasibility and scale of gatherings, influencing overall event experiences,” Mishra said. She further recommended usage of walkie-talkies as a reliable alternative for group communication, noting their effectiveness despite technological limitations.

Assessing the cost-effectiveness of hosting events on the cruise ships involves a nuanced evaluation, she said. “Cruise prices frequently vary based on factors such as ship quality and booking timing. Booking early through reputable agencies can secure better rates and perks, but it is crucial to balance cost considerations with the quality amenities offered by the ship,” she advised.

“They also offer a unique corporate experience that can be captivating for first-time participants, blending atmosphere with travel convenience,” Mishra said. ➔





# Customising stays for business travel

**Sofia Oragano**, Senior Director, International Sales, Synergy, says the company is redefining corporate accommodation through innovative lodging solutions.

“We strive to seamlessly integrate with our clients’ organisations, focusing on their goals, priorities, and vision.”

**SOFIA ORAGANO**, Senior Director, International Sales, Synergy



By **Janice Alyosius**

**Q Can you provide insights into Synergy’s business landscape and its existence?**

**A** At Synergy, our core principle is to provide the right accommodation, in the right place, at the right price. With 25 years of experience, our mission is to build the world’s most robust hospitality ecosystem, powered by people, partnerships, and intuitive technology. Synergy has 15 global offices and offers access to over a million serviced apartments across 6,000 property partners in more than 150 countries and 2,000 cities.

We operate with a hybrid business model, managing our own properties while also crafting agnostic solutions with property partners tailored to meet the unique needs of our customers. We strive to seamlessly integrate with our clients’ organisations, focusing on their goals, priorities, and vision. These elements are the foundational pillars for managing our accommodation programmes.

**Q Is Synergy present in India? Tell us about your team and their experience?**

**A** Synergy has a strong presence in India, with its headquarter in Bengaluru. Over the past 12 months, we have increased the number of local experts by 120 per cent, including professionals in reservations, guest services, finance, supply chain, and sales. This significant growth allows us to provide local solutions and rapid responses to customer queries. It also enables us to actively vet apartments, ensuring they are safe, in good condition, and comply with duty of care obligations.

Since entering the Indian market in 2015, Synergy has brought its expertise in shaping global duty of care standards to this region. We have implemented significant changes to our end-to-end service, tailoring our solutions to meet the specific opportunities and challenges our customers face in India.

We recently celebrated a record-breaking performance, with a 115 per cent increase in YoY bookings for 2024. Recognising the importance of relationships and trust in Indian culture, we





have invested heavily in establishing a significant presence here. Our team understands the business culture within India and knows that building trust through excellent customer service, quick responses, and competitive pricing is the foundation of long-lasting relationships.

**Q What is the vision and plan for India?**

**A** Since entering India, the land of opportunity, we have enjoyed growing our influence in shaping the corporate accommodation industry. We firmly believe that India will continue to thrive, so our plan is to continue our journey of investment and prioritisation.

Synergy’s vision centres on three key focuses: expanding our infrastructure, expanding our network, and expanding our brand. We understand the nuances and preferred ways of working in India, and we will continue to grow our team to enable 24/7 coverage for our Indian clients and guests.

We will also continue to fine-tune our network of vetted apartments in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, and Gurugram. As the landscape evolves, we are placing emphasis on providing secure stays in tier II and III cities. Our parent company, Ascott, is also expanding in India, and we are excited about integrating this value into our portfolio for customers. With the rise in transient business travel and bleisure trips, we are actively working to enhance our capability to offer hotel reservations.

**Q What strategies is Synergy considering to grow its team and business in India?**

**A** Synergy actively collaborates with its customers, listening to their requirements, which helps the company to scale effectively and serves as guidance for curating the strategies and initiatives. We focus on adopting local solutions, which optimises cost containment. Today Synergy has GST registrations in five

Indian states: Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Haryana. By complying with local tax laws in these states, we support our customers in claiming tax rebates for their accommodation programmes.

We will continue to offer a vast range of serviced accommodations to suit every type of guest, thanks to our network of robust local property partner relationships. This network allows us to provide anything from guest houses and co-living spaces to top tier luxury apartments. Synergy identifies customers’ requirements and uses market knowledge to make tailored cost-effective recommendations.

Synergy will continue to focus on managing complex group moves, delivering cost-efficient options through creative negotiations with its property partners, and leveraging the knowledge of local products. After witnessing the current success, we are exploring opportunities to expand further in India by maximising existing local partnerships and identifying new ones to grow and enhance our service offerings. ➔







**AAMBY VALLEY CITY**  
created for the love of life



# Unconventional venue for unforgettable experiences

With multifaceted world-class venues, Aamby Valley City, is an answer to all your MICE and wedding requirements.

**S**pread across 10,600 acres, Aamby Valley City, is India's first planned self-contained, exclusive gated city. The city offers a world-class infrastructure with a private airport and an eclectic club including an equestrian course, an aquatic bay for water sports, an adventure zone, fine dining, entertainment, and leisure. The crowning centrepiece is the fully equipped 18-hole floodlit championship golf course spread over 256 acres of emerald turf.

## MICE OFFERINGS

Located 100 km from Mumbai and Pune, the world-class facilities and easy accessibility with latest conferencing

venues make it one of India's leading destinations for MICE. These venues boast accommodating gatherings of 15 to 3,000 people. For a fulfilled corporate gateway programme, Aamby Valley offers activities such as treasure hunts, yoga, jungle safaris, luxury cruise boat rides, beach activities and world-class golf facilities.

The corporate services offered by Aamby Valley includes: conference & seminar management, product launch, team building activities, corporate event management, executive retreats, incentive programmes & trips, roadshows, HR events, team building activities, brand activation, press conferences, and more.

## WEDDING VENUES

Nestled amid the convergence of nature and luxury, the city is an ultimate destination for dream weddings with a myriad of venues. With more than 15 venues spread across the city, clients can be assured that the team of Aamby Valley City customises every traditional function as per their vision at entrancing venues such as the Supreme, Banaras Ghat, which resembles the sacred waterfront of the Ganga, the Auditorium and many more. With Aamby Valley's expert team, you can organise the most magnificent and vibrant wedding ceremony. For more info, visit [www.aambyvalley.com](http://www.aambyvalley.com). To book, call 022-39895000. [➔](#)



**Appreciating the city's charm, Romie Dutt, Executive Director, Aamby Valley City & Sahara Star, said, "Aamby Valley City is a meticulously crafted experience that embodies luxury and nature. A venue with no bounding walls, only abounding nature, we provide world-class facilities for business, leisure, and unforgettable weddings. We take pride in offering our guests an extraordinary lifestyle and memorable experiences."**



Aamby Auditorium: One of the largest pillarless venues in India

ADVERTORIAL



# Choose right corporate booking tool

As Sabre continues to innovate and adapt to evolving industry requirements, its role in shaping the future of corporate travel remains pivotal.

By **Janice Alyosius**

**I**n corporate travel management, the integration of seamless, efficient technology solutions plays a crucial role in enhancing the travel experience for corporates. **Samuel Machado**, Managing Director, India, Sabre, articulates the critical aspects of corporate travel portals and the underlying technology infrastructure that supports them.

“Corporate travellers depend heavily on accessing hotel and airline content that caters specifically to their

needs,” Machado said, highlighting the fundamental requirement for personalised and efficient travel solutions. “If someone is travelling on business, they expect a portal that is not only quick and efficient but also provides information tailored to their preferences,” he added.

Machado said the vital role of corporate travel portals, which leverage Global Distribution Systems (GDSs) and content aggregators to streamline and personalise the booking experience. “These portals sit right atop our content aggregators, facilitating a seamless interaction between the corporate tools



“Corporate travellers depend heavily on accessing hotel and airline content that caters specifically to their needs.”

**SAMUEL MACHADO**  
Managing Director  
India, Sabre



“It is not just about policy management, it is about efficiency from a corporate point of view, and personalisation.”

and our extensive travel content,” he further said.

Choosing the right corporate booking tool, according to Machado, is crucial. “The overlay corporate booking tool must efficiently utilise the comprehensive distribution platform underneath,” he asserted. This platform not only ensures access to a wide array of hotels and airlines but also encompasses full-service carriers, low-cost carriers, and the latest New Distribution Capability (NDC) content from airlines.

“We treat the corporate clients as discerning consumers of our content. Our goal is to provide them with customisable, efficient, and readily available content that meets their specific travel needs,” said Machado, while highlighting Sabre’s commitment to enhancing the corporate travel experience through technology-driven solutions that optimise efficiency and convenience.

Underlining how their innovative solutions are shaping the future of corporate travel, **Madhavan Kasturi**, Head, Global Solution Engineering, Sabre said, “At Sabre, our ethos is not just about generic technology, but making our platform deeply relevant to the specific needs of our travel agency customers. Through solution engineering,

we collaborate with travel agencies to understand their growth opportunities, and pain points, and build meaningful solutions tailored to their requirements.”

When asked about how the corporates can leverage Sabre’s offerings to streamline their events and conferences, Kasturi highlighted the pivotal role of technology in modern corporate travel. “There

**MADHAVAN KASTURI**

Head, Global Solution Engineering, Sabre





is a lot of corporate travel happening even domestically within India. Despite the increasing reliance on modern technologies such as Teams conferencing or Zoom, the cultural inclination towards face-to-face collaboration remains strong.”

In this evolving corporate travel, Sabre plays a crucial role in facilitating the interactions, “We provide the

infrastructure for corporate travel agencies to take the corporate travel product to the corporate consumers. This enables agencies to tailor travel products to individual preferences, ensuring personalised travel experiences and purchase that travel in such a way that it is meaningful for them,” he said. Moreover, Sabre addresses the

critical aspect of policy management for corporates. Efficiency in cost management is another key focus for Sabre. Kasturi highlighted, “When a corporate is travelling, or they have a group of people who are travelling, or even when there are individual employees travelling across for large business trips, multi-day trips, or long-distance trips, they want to ensure that they have the best rates available to their employees.”

He added, “We achieve this by sourcing content through various channels and normalising the process for corporate travel agencies. This approach simplifies the booking process and ensures the best rates are available, thus keeping travel budgets efficient. So, it is not just about policy management, it is about efficiency from a corporate point of view, and personalisation from individual traveller’s point of view. We enable all these three things.”

Kasturi also underscored the importance of cybersecurity within corporate travel technology and shared how Sabre meticulously manages this important aspect. “Security is an important and fundamental aspect of technology. We provide core technology





Infrastructure technology has to be scalable, reliable, and secure to deliver a solid infrastructure solution to the corporate travellers

that is not only scalable and reliable but also operates 24x7 without failure,” he elaborated, stressing the foundational requirement of security alongside these operational imperatives.

Kasturi also emphasised the importance of security as a foundational element in technology infrastructure, particularly in Sabre, “Infrastructure technology has to be scalable, reliable, and security is one dimension of a lot of attributes that a solid infrastructure solution should deliver.”

To stay ahead of potential threats, the brand adopts a proactive approach, Kasturi said, “The corporate traveller and travel agencies have a duty of care to their end customers, and to protect the

customer data, while making sure that it is not compromised. So, we make sure we are right on top of the game by constantly trying to forecast as to what are the potential vulnerabilities that could impact our platform. We invest not only in advanced technology but also in terms of hackers and who make efforts to simulate a cyber threat environment.”

Collaboration is the key, stressed Kasturi. “We also work with our technology partners such as Google to make sure that we are using the best-in-class architectural frameworks and methodology to make sure that security is comprehensively covered,” he said.

The impact of these efforts extends beyond mere compliance, it alleviates

concerns for Sabre’s customers, the airlines and travel agencies. “Our customers do not have to worry about security because we have got this aspect well covered as their infrastructure provider,” he said. Beyond the term security, Kasturi highlighted Sabre’s role in nurturing talent within the travel technology sector, particularly in Bengaluru. “We have set up a development centre in the city. More than 300 developers are involved in building our multisource platform,” Kasturi shared.

This initiative not only strengthens brand’s technological capabilities but also contributes to the local ecosystem by fostering a cadre of skilled technologists specialised in the travel domain. ➔



# Panoply of attractions for Indian MICE

South Africa is intensifying its efforts with comprehensive marketing strategies to become the top choice for the Indian outbound travellers.

By **Janice Alyosius**

**S**outh Africa's unparalleled natural beauty, modern infrastructure, and unique experiences make it a standout MICE destination for event planners and corporates. From luxury accommodations and world-class conference facilities to exhilarating adventures and rich cultural experiences, the country offers multifarious options for corporate travellers. From high-flying adventures to reflective historical sites and serene wildlife encounters, KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa offers a tapestry of experiences that cater to everyone's passion.

## EXPERIENCES

**Karkloof Canopy Tours:** Nestled in the heart of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands,





aerial perspective of the North Coast's stunning landscapes. This adventure provides an unparalleled opportunity to witness the beauty of the Indian Ocean coastline from above, highlighting the region's natural splendor.

**Sungulwane Private Lodge:** For those seeking a more intimate encounter with nature, Sungulwane Private Lodge offers an exclusive Big 5 safari experience on Zuka Private Game Reserve. Located in the northern reaches of KwaZulu-Natal, this sanctuary allows guests to immerse themselves in the untamed beauty of South Africa, encountering iconic wildlife amidst the tranquil bushveld setting.

**St. Lucia Lake Hippo and Croc Safari:** Explorers can delve into the waterways of iSimangaliso Wetland Park with a thrilling hippo and croc boat safari tour of St. Lucia Lake. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is home to diverse ecosystems and abundant wildlife, offering an experience that combines adventure with conservation.

#### EXPERT INSIGHTS

Underlining the distinct factors that make South Africa an exceptional MICE

Karkloof Canopy Tours offers a thrilling eco-adventure. Participants can embark on a series of zip-line slides, providing a bird's-eye view of the lush forest below.

**Nelson Mandela Capture Site:** Visit to the Nelson Mandela Capture Site is a poignant journey through South Africa's struggle against apartheid. Situated at the very spot where Nelson Mandela was arrested in 1952, this site has been transformed into a captivating cultural and historical exhibition. It honors Mandela's legacy and sacrifices for country's path to freedom.

**Pietermaritzburg Railway Station:** For those intrigued by history, the Pietermaritzburg Railway Station holds special significance as the place where Mahatma Gandhi's journey towards civil disobedience began. Known as the birthplace of Satyagraha, visitors can relive Gandhi's transformative experience in South Africa through interactive exhibits and guided tours.

**Microlighting Adventure in Ballito:** In Ballito, adrenaline junkies and nature enthusiasts can take to the skies in a microlight aircraft, offering a thrilling



destination, **Ritu Maheshwari**, Director Operations, Rainbow Vacations, said, “South Africa offers a blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and world-class infrastructure. The diverse landscapes, from the scenic Cape Winelands to the Table Mountain provide breathtaking backdrops for attendees.”

Maheshwari recounted the unique coordination and professionalism of local event management companies. She asserted, “Visits to venues like the Durban ICC showcase their top tier facilities and technological capabilities for hosting large-scale international conferences and exhibitions.” Additionally, its unique incentive experiences, such as skydiving, microlight flights, and wine tastings along with its commitment to eco-friendly practices adds an appealing aspect for ecologically conscious organisations planning a MICE trip.”



“The diverse landscapes, from the scenic Cape Winelands to the Table Mountain provide breathtaking backdrops for attendees.”

Underscoring South Africa’s broad range of tourism opportunities, **Vipin Sharma**, Founder & CEO, Travel & MICE, emphasised, “When we think about South Africa as a MICE destination, the first thing that comes to mind are the experiences it offers along with the exceptional MICE infrastructure. The wildlife and adventure sports and activities such as shark-cage diving, and bungee jumping are best in class and provide a wide range of options for organising high-end MICE events.”

Sharma also highlighted the importance of cultural accommodations. “Indian tourists will find friendly locals and Indian restaurants catering to their tastes. The blend of adventure and

luxury, combined with South Africa’s diverse offerings, makes it a compelling destination for MICE events,” he said.

Among the many experiences available, the microlight flight stands out as a memorable activity. This unique adventure provides an exhilarating perspective of the landscape for clients seeking extraordinary experiences.

Similarly, **Manish Saini**, Co-Founder, Levax Holidays, shared his enthusiasm for the microlight flight, describing it as “An absolute highlight, providing a stunning aerial perspective of South Africa’s breathtaking landscapes.” Saini also noted that activities like shark cage diving and ATV rides offer engaging experiences, further enhancing the country’s appeal.



**RITU MAHESHWARI**  
Director Operations  
Rainbow Vacations



**VIPIN SHARMA**  
Founder & CEO  
Travel & MICE



**MANISH SAINI**  
Co-Founder  
Levax Holidays



## TAPPING INDIAN MICE

India has been identified as a pivotal market for South African Tourism, and the destination is continuously enhancing its offerings to attract more Indian travellers from both leisure and MICE segments. Recent efforts underscore the country's commitment to fostering stronger ties with Indian travellers through targeted marketing, innovative travel experiences, and robust infrastructure offerings.

Interestingly, South Africa recently celebrated a milestone with its 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Roadshow in India, traversing major cities such as Jaipur, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, and Mumbai. The event featured 42 prominent South African exhibitors, including 14 Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), with 40 per cent presenting new and exciting offerings. With over 2,000 participants from 40 cities, the roadshow offered a vivid introduction to South Africa's diverse attractions.

MICE has emerged as a vital element of South Africa's tourism strategy, attracting various Indian corporates throughout the year. It has established itself as a premier destination for corporate incentive travel, exemplified by hosting Mahindra Group's delegation of nearly 600 participants.

To cater to the MICE market, South Africa's tourism infrastructure includes



### WORLD-CLASS CONVENTION CENTERS

Durban International Convention Centre (ICC), renowned for its expansive, column-free spaces.

Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), offering a range of modern facilities.

Johannesburg Expo Centre (JEC), equipped to host large-scale events and exhibitions with a capacity of over one lakh people.



state-of-the-art convention centers, such as Durban International Convention Centre (ICC), Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), and Johannesburg Expo Centre (JEC), which can host over one lakh people.

South Africa's tourism initiatives also include corporate think tank sessions in major Indian cities to explore innovative ways to accommodate Indian corporates for incentive travel. Notably, over 30 per cent of Indian delegates extend their stays, with 40 per cent transforming their trips into extended leisure holidays.

South Africa has also partnered with Ethiopian Airlines to offer special return fares during peak travel seasons, priced at ₹39,990, which acts as a tempting deal for travellers. Overall, through diverse marketing campaigns, and robust MICE infrastructure, South Africa continues to position itself as a premier destination for Indian tourists. →



# Taiwan invites with Incentive Plan

With ease of visa, extensive connectivity, excellent venues, and attractive incentives Taiwan emerges as an ideal MICE destination

By MT Bureau

**N**estled in the heart of Asia, Taiwan, a bustling island of activity and vibrant culture, has something to offer every traveller. Enjoy breathtaking coastal landscapes during the day and lively markets serving noodle soups and fish delicacies in the evening. The leaf-shaped island is home to more than 60 restaurants serving Indian food.

The destination has a robust transportation system with three international airports—Taoyuan, Taipei

Songshan, and Kaohsiung. Efficient internal transit, including metro, taxis, buses, and high-speed rail allows north to south travel in 96 minutes, optimising business and leisure time.

## TAIWAN INCENTIVE PLAN

Travel subsidies of up to **NT\$2,000** per person per visit and a maximum of **NT\$500,000** per event.

Ease of visa starting from instant e-visas to group visas at no cost is another reason to travel to Taiwan. The climate on the island ranges from cool winters (10°C) to hot summers (38°C), averaging 25°C, making it a year-round destination.

Top-tier cities like Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung offer excellent venues to host large gatherings coupled with local and global hotels offering different capacities for hosting incentive groups. Taiwan's shopping includes modern malls and night markets, with vibrant nightlife featuring pubs, clubs, and karaoke lounges.

The Taiwan Incentive Plan, a collaboration between the International Trade Administration (TITA) and the Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA), offers travel subsidies of up to NT\$2,000 per person per visit and a maximum of NT\$500,000 per event. This initiative seeks to promote the development of Taiwan's MICE and tourism industries by incentivising participants to explore the country while attending events, thereby boosting local economies and enhancing the overall MICE experience in Taiwan.

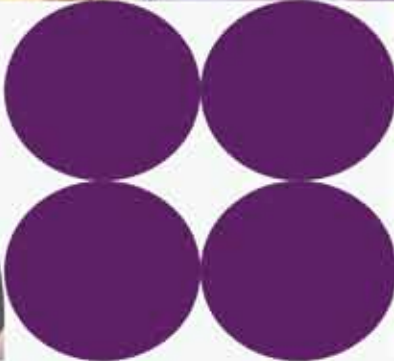
With modern amenities, and natural beauty, Taiwan is the perfect MICE destination for Indians. ➔





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# What makes **Australia** click for incentives?

As Australia Next approaches, Indian MICE buyers who attended in 2023 reflect on their experiences and share how many groups they have sent to Australia over the past year.

By **Nisha Verma**

**T**he stage is set for the next instalment of Australia Next (previously known as Dreamtime). Tourism Australia's signature incentive showcase will take place from 8 to 11 September in Cairns/Gimuy, Queensland. The event, which is usually held biennially, is happening this time in less than one year, owing to the demand and traction it has seen from the MICE industry post-COVID.

Last year, it was held in Adelaide and as per the post-event survey, 100 per cent of the buyers who attended it, were more likely to consider Australia having visited for Dreamtime 2023, and were more



likely to send an incentive or corporate meeting to Australia.

Before this year's event kicks off, we spoke to some of the buyers from India who attended last year's event on how much business they have given to Australia since November 2023 and what makes Australia the best bet for Indians as an incentive destination.

### DREAMTIME 2023

Dreamtime 2023 in Adelaide was the first post-pandemic incentive showcase by Business Events Australia and the response was overwhelming for both the buyers and Australian industry sellers.

**Rakesh Rajendran**, Director, GainAccess Sports & Entertainment, agreed, saying, "It was fantastic networking with key stakeholders with respect to the Australian travel and experiences ecosystem."

**Kunal N Ovalekar**, Head Leisure & Luxury, Cutting Edge Events, shared the

same opinion. "Meetings with various suppliers and event coordinators not only broadened our understanding of the available products, but also allowed us to build relationships and learn about unique offerings. This firsthand knowledge can be invaluable when tailoring recommendations to clients, as you can match their needs with the right experiences. From start to end, Dreamtime made sure to showcase products that would help us promote Canberra and Adelaide as a MICE/sports destination. Itinerary was interactive and informative, keeping in mind to cover most, in limited time. We were greeted with warm welcome at all the hotels, venues and stadiums we visited, truly showcasing the essence of Australian hospitality. Pre- and post-event were planned to help us interact with promoters and other country suppliers/agents. Meeting day was well planned and



**RAKESH RAJENDRAN**

Director

GainAccess Sports & Entertainment

{ The firsthand knowledge can be invaluable to customise recommendations for clients and right experience }





**KARAN D JESWANI**  
Senior Manager  
MICE Procurement, SOTC Travel



selective as per company’s profile. It was one of the best incentive programmes. Nishant, Mike, Sara, and the rest of the team really went above and beyond during Dreamtime to create a memorable experience for us,” he shared.

Calling it a dream come true, **Karan D Jeswani**, Senior Manager MICE Procurement, SOTC Travel, praised the trip to Canberra and Adelaide. “Before the trip, I only knew about Sydney, Melbourne, Cairns, and Gold Coast. However, exploring these new destinations has broadened my

perspective on Australia and promised a unique experience for clients,” he added.

**NEW LEARNINGS**

The event showcased new offerings in Australia for all attendees. “We learned quite a few aspects of Australian offerings which we were not aware of before,” said Rajendran. Even Ovalekar

echoed the same feelings. “It gave us more information about offerings in Canberra and Adelaide as a MICE/sport destination. Meeting suppliers and other agents (also from other countries) during the pre- and post-events also helped us in gathering more information into the products and destination. Dreamtime covered varied products from luxury accommodation, diverse culture, food/dining, activities and unique locations.”

Amongst the experiences the group explored, Jeswani said, “We understood a lot about Australian cricket, culture, parliament, and other experiences.”

Meeting suppliers and other agents during the pre and post-events also helps in gathering more information

**BUSINESS TO AUSTRALIA**

When asked about how many groups and pax they have sent after attending Dreamtime 2023, Rajendran, shared, “We are a sports travel and experiences company. We had taken a group of 225 guests for the Australian Open Finals. This was a leading Indian IT company that was engaging their clients in Melbourne. From the best seats at Australian Open to Meet & Greet with Tennis legends to Conference at the MCG, the guests had a fantastic time. We are an official travel partner for Cricket Australia and we aspire to take a few corporate groups for India tour of Australia this summer.”

Even Jeswani informed that they operated a group of KEI of 230 pax to Sydney in July 2024.

Ovalekar although has not sent a group yet, but he said, “There are few opportunities lined up and we are eagerly





anticipating the opportunity to promote Australia in the future.”

### AUSTRALIA NEXT 2024

Tourism Australia’s signature incentive showcase, Australia Next is designed to increase interest in Australia as an outstanding incentive events destination. The event provides business events decision-makers from Canada, Greater China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, the UK, the USA with the opportunity

### HIGHLIGHTS

Australia Next includes a B2B session, a host city showcase, networking opportunities, and a fam programme to other Australian destinations.

This year’s venue, Cairns Convention Centre, has been expanded, featuring 500-guest capacity Trinity Room and Terrace.

to do business with Australian business events destinations, products, and to experience Australia’s event delivery capabilities. The two-day programme includes a business to business session, a host city showcase, networking opportunities, and a fam programme to other Australian destination.

The event will take place at the newly expanded Cairns Convention Centre, with incentive buyers experiencing the best of Tropical North Queensland’s experiences and natural assets – including the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest – as well as First Nations unique offsite venues. The new A\$176 million expansion of Cairns Convention Centre delivers an extra 113,021 sq. ft. of meeting, and exhibition space. The Centre now features the 500-guest capacity Trinity Room and Terrace boasting unparalleled views over Trinity Inlet, which is a 450-seat theatre-style plenary lecture space, and a spacious lobby. From its use of lush tropical flora to the floor-to-ceiling windows filling the Centre with magnificent natural light, the new expansion pays homage to Cairns/Gimuy’s natural environment. The Centre has also developed a new virtual reality tool to enable clients to explore the recent expansion and its grandeur from anywhere in the world. ➔





# Focus on refreshing WTM content

The recently launched Conference Advisory Team of World Travel Market (WTM) London 2024, will lead its conference programme with future trends.

By MT Bureau

**W**TM London has unveiled its 2024 Conference Advisory Team, chosen from nearly 50 submissions following a 'Call for Advisors'. The event is scheduled to be held from 5-7 November at ExCeL London. This expert panel will partner with WTM team to shape event's renowned Conference Programme.

The programme will spotlight six content streams, focusing on future trends and opportunities in the industry. The advisory panel includes:

- **Uwern Jong**, Experientialist-in-Chief, OutThere, will be advising on diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion content track.
- **Mark Frary**, author, and consultant, will be leading the WTM team with their expertise on the geo-economics content stream.

- **Matthew Gardiner**, Director, Travel Massive and Senior VP, FINN Partners, and **Tina Charisma**, Director

and Founder, Charisma Campaign will be working to generate enhanced and engaging marketing content programme

for the unforgettable experience of attendees.

- **Tina O'Dwyer**, Founder & CEO, The Tourism Space will be advising the team on sustainability content track.
- **Timothy O'Neil-Dunne**, President, T2Impact will help mould the technology programme

While underlining the pivotal role of its 2024 Advisory Team, **Juliette Losardo**, Exhibition Director, WTM, said, "To keep WTM at the forefront of industry evolution, it is essential to refresh our content and include diverse perspectives. The advisory teams have been crucial in our conference development. Our 2024 Advisory Team embodies our commitment to inclusivity, featuring emerging talent and diverse voices. We are excited to partner with them in delivering an exceptional educational experience." →







# The Enchanting Itinerary of **MADHYA PRADESH** Offbeat Multispecialty Destination

• Gwalior • Shivpuri • Orchha • Datia • Morena

MP unveils an itinerary that oscillates through forts narrating tales of valour, temples resonating with devotional flavour and natural reserves enveloped with wildlife.

## **GWALIOR: EXPLORE ARTISTIC AROMA**

Inhale the splendour of Gwalior Fort, a citadel that guards the city. Explore a maze of palaces, including the intricately carved Man Singh Palace, the opulent Karan Mahal, the majestic Vikram Mahal, and Saas Bahu Temple. Feast on the beauty of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Padavali Fort. The Museum at Gwalior Fort brings alive the artistic heritage of the city, which is a must visit.

## **SHIVPURI: MAGICAL MOMENTS OF PAST**

The Surwaya Fort here exhales a mystical past, weathered with remnants of temples. Explore the ecological terrain at the Madhav National Park, colonial charm of George Castle, serenity of Badhaiya Kund and the splendour of Narwar Fort.

## **ORCHHA: RIVETING HERITAGE HUES**

Immerse yourself in the grandeur of Raja Mawhal, adorned with vibrant murals. Seek blessings at the Laxmi

Narayan Temple, known for its artwork. Inhale the beauty of ornately decorated cenotaphs or Chhatris, celebrating the Bundela kings. Visit Ram Raja Temple, the only temple where Lord Rama is worshipped as a king. Wind up by listening to the mellifluous music of the birds at the Orchha Bird Sanctuary, gliding along the Betwa River.

## **DATIA: SPIRITUAL SANCTUARY**

Seek the blessings of Goddess Baglamukhi Devi at the Pitambara Peeth Temple, known for its imposing architectural and spiritual reverberations.

## **MORENA: WRAP UP**

The National Chambal Sanctuary is a must-go place



for wildlife enthusiasts. The endangered gharial, the red-crowned roof turtle and the Ganges River dolphin sum up the ecological beauty of the place. The Bateswar Group of Temples in the adjoins is a heritage feast.

Soak yourself in the artistic splendours of Madhya Pradesh. This itinerary is a roadmap to a journey interspersed with bliss and adventure. ➔



## **HOW TO REACH**

### **GWALIOR**

**Air:** Raja Bhoj International Airport

**Train:** Gwalior Junction Railway Station

**Road:** Gwalior is well-connected by road

### **SHIVPURI**

**Train:** Shivpuri Railway Station

**Road:** Shivpuri is 110 km away from Gwalior

### **ORCHHA**

**Train:** Jhansi Junction Railway Station located 85 km away from Orchha

**Road:** Orchha is 170 km away from Gwalior and 115 km from Shivpuri

### **DATIA**

**Train:** Datia Railway Station  
**Road:** Datia is 70 km away from Gwalior and 47 km from Orchha

### **MORENA**

**Train:** Morena Railway Station

**Road:** Morena is 128 km away from Datia and 39 km from Gwalior



# Korea eyes Indian groups

KTO highlights Korea's MICE potential with the ambitious goal of attracting 20,000 Indian MICE delegates with successful two-city roadshows in Bengaluru and Mumbai.



By Hazel Jain

**T**he Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) concluded a series of roadshows in the cities of Bengaluru and Mumbai. These events brought together Indian travel professionals and a delegation from the Busan Tourism Organisation (BTO) along with as many as 10 Korean Destination Management Companies (DMCs). The evenings boasted a unique flair, featuring CHEF, a dynamic culinary performance team, was flown in from Korea. They captivated the audiences with a blend of beatboxing, B-boying, and a live cooking battle. Dignitaries from the India Tourism, MTDC, IRCTC senior officers and

the heads of leading travel associations graced the event.

Leading the KTO HQ delegation, was **Chang Wook Jung**, Executive Director, MICE, KTO. He said, "We are thrilled by the response at our recent roadshows in Bengaluru and Mumbai." Jung added, "This engagement between Indian travel experts and our Korean delegation strengthens partnerships within the MICE sector and the Indian travel industry, laying the groundwork to achieve our target of attracting 20,000 MICE delegates from India in 2024. The cultural exchange, including the performance by the CHEF team, deeply with the audience. Building on this success, we anticipate welcoming more Indian travellers. We have recommended two other cities apart from Seoul— Busan and Jeju Island."

While the numbers from India are not too big, there is potential in this market for MICE with many corporates looking to send their employees and dealers out of India. "We also have incentive schemes for MICE groups

TARGET FOR 2024 - INDIA	
Overall arrivals <b>200,000</b>	MICE target <b>20,000</b>

where we support them financially like sponsoring their gala dinner, paying part of the venue, paying for tourist attractions, and providing special souvenirs. This is based on the size of groups,” he asserted. Jung elaborated that group visas are easy to get, and it takes less than three to five working days to approve visas. “Do not worry about visas,” was his message to Indian corporates.

Exhilarated with the success of recent roadshows, **Myong Kil Yun**, Regional Director, India & SAARC Countries, KTO, said, “We are energised



by the momentum in India! We are confident that by showcasing the diverse experiences offered by Korea, from fascinating cultural performances to exciting leisure and MICE opportunities, we can achieve this ambitious goal of welcoming 200,000 Indian travellers this year.”

Capping off these successful roadshows were truly unforgettable Korea Nights. Bengaluru’s Korea Night 2024 transformed into a vibrant celebration of all things Korean, offering exciting networking opportunities alongside captivating

While the numbers from India are not too big, there is potential in this market for MICE with many corporates looking to send their employees and dealers out of India



dance performance, lucky draw, and interactive scrumptious Korean cuisine displays. Mumbai’s MICE Roadshow thrived on a dynamic day-long travel mart, facilitating the creation of strategic partnerships within the MICE sector. The evening’s gala night, the Korea MICE Night 2024, culminated the event in a grand style, featuring dazzling entertainment and solidifying the strong relations between the Indian and Korean travel industries. ➔





# Pioneering excellence

After expanding its operations to Noida, Axplore Travelplus is consolidating its presence across the country to bring MICE sector in focus.

By **Surbhi Sharma**

**T**o become the most technologically advanced, and eco-conscious, MICE company, delivering exceptional events that inspire, engage, and leave a positive footprint on the world, Axplore Travelplus is curating economically viable adventures. It blends innovation with value, ensuring each journey leaves an indelible mark to redefine corporate travel experiences.

In a candid conversation with the leadership of Axplore Travelplus, the team opened about the growing MICE segment in India and how the company

is making a profit out of it while creating memories that last long.

Highlighting that the core of Axplore Travelplus is MICE, in which they have been largely doing incentive and conference business, **Shyam Saini**, Director, Axplore Travelplus, said, "Giving unique services is our biggest USP. Our popular concepts are parties on the water and air, yacht parties, as well as adventure activities. So far, we have reached to the US, Canada, Europe, South Africa, Asia, and Africa to deliver our services."

In terms of growth, the company witnessed a 100 per cent year-on-year



**SHYAM SAINI**  
Director  
Axplore Travelplus



**DHIREIN SIROHI**  
Director, Business Development  
Axplore Travelplus



growth. In 2022, we saw a profit of around ₹100 crore, while in 2023, it surged to ₹150 crore. However, in 2024, it is expected to touch around ₹200 - ₹250 crore.

Speaking about the company's latest offerings, **Dhirein Sirohi**, Director, Business Development, Axplore Travelplus, said, "We offer customised products with innovative and unique elements as the latest MICE trends have more to do with technology, cultural immersion, unique experiences, and highly personalised approach. We aim to expand our market share into fast-emerging segments like weddings, sports, and leisure."

In view of the evolving MICE trends in India, **Sunil Singh**, Director, Axplore Travelplus, said, "Clients are now looking for offbeat destinations and travelling to tier II and III cities for unique offerings in terms of culture, engagement, and experiences. Meanwhile, in providing unique offerings and experiences to inbound tourism, no country can even come close to India. The only thing the



**SUNIL SINGH**  
Director  
Axplore Travelplus



**BINDESHWARI PRASAD**  
Executive Director  
Axplore Travelplus

We offer customised products with innovative elements as the latest MICE trends have more to do with technology, and unique experiences

country lacks is the promotion. Hence, to attract more tourists, the Indian government must focus on promoting India overseas aggressively."

Speaking about the MICE industry in India, **Bindehwari Prasad**, Executive Director, Axplore Travelplus, said, "MICE in India is growing exponentially at a growth of over 18 per cent per year. As India started building large convention centres and new hotels are coming up, the scope of getting more MICE business has also increased. To bring more MICE, large-scale convention centres such as in Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi should be built in other parts of the country, which will also create job opportunities. The government is doing its bit but needs to do more to ensure more exhibitions, and conferences should be coming to India to boost its MICE numbers."

He emphasised that there is no Indian travel company that has its footprint abroad like Indian hotels and airlines. Thus, we aim to transform Axplore Travelplus, the largest and best tour-operating company in India. ➔





# Travel tech to drive ITB India

With a focus on innovation, the ITB India 2024 promises to equip industry leaders with insights needed to navigate an increasingly dynamic market landscape.

By MT Bureau

The travel industry in South Asia is gearing up for a transformative event as ITB India 2024 prepares to open its doors from 11-13 September at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai. Under the theme ‘Future-Ready Travel: Embracing Innovation, Sustainability, and Global Connectivity,’ this conference promises to be a pivotal moment for travel professionals across the region and beyond.

India’s travel sector is experiencing rapid expansion, with forecasts predicting a surge in both outbound travel and domestic tourism. By 2030,

total travel expenditure in India is expected to soar to US\$410 billion. Meanwhile, outbound travel from South Asia is projected to surpass 80 million travellers by 2040, signifying robust growth and evolving consumer behaviour in the region.

Against this backdrop, ITB India 2024 aims to provide invaluable insights into current trends within the South Asian travel market. The second edition of the ITB India Conference will cover a wide range of topics including emerging trends, evolving consumer expectations, MICE in South Asian region in 2025, travel in the age of ChatGPT, and the interface between technology and the future of tourism.

By 2030, travel spend in India to reach US\$410bn, while outbound travel from South Asia to surpass 80mn travellers by 2040

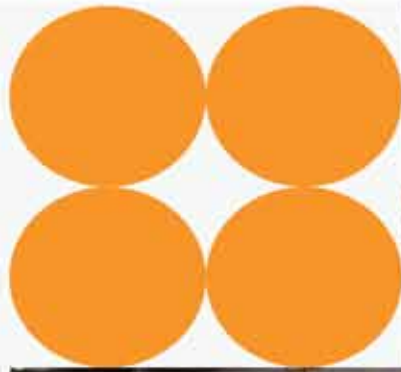
Three pivotal conference tracks at ITB India 2024—Knowledge Theatre, MICE Show India, and Travel Tech India—will offer attendees invaluable insights into the future of travel.

Knowledge Theatre will feature C-suite leaders presenting strategic insights, real-world case studies, and perspectives on current travel trends across various segments, from luxury to budget travel.

Curated by the Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA), MICE Show India will focus on MICE and corporate travel, featuring leading executives discussing pressing issues of the industry in India and South Asia.

Travel Tech India will provide digital travel leaders with insights into cutting-edge technologies enhancing customer experiences and how technology is redefining the way we travel. ➔





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# MOVEMENTS



**DANIEL DOLATRE**  
General Manager  
Hyatt Regency Delhi

Hyatt Regency has appointed Daniel Dolatre as new General Manager. Bringing over thirty years of diverse experience, Dolatre is set to steer the hotel's operations, guiding both strategic and tactical growth in the coming future. Before joining Hyatt Regency Delhi, he worked as General Manager at various hotel brands across South America and Europe. Dolatre's talent for building dynamic teams dedicated to exceptional guest experiences is a hallmark of his leadership.



**MOHAMMAD ALI**  
Director, Global Sales, India  
Accor

Mohammad Ali has been promoted Director of Global Sales – India by Accor. In his previous role as Area Director of Global Sales – West India, Mohammad Ali has played a pivotal role in driving revenue growth in the region. He has also served as Area Director of Global Sales, North India for Accor. Throughout his career, he has played a pivotal role in expanding the brand's presence in India. His strategic insight have led to delivering impressive results and fostering long-term relationships with key stakeholders.



**ANANT LEEKHA**  
General Manager  
Novotel Pune

Novotel Pune has appointed Anant Leekha as General Manager. In his new role, Leekha will lead initiatives to drive business growth and enhance guest experiences through strategic and technological advancements. He brings over 20 years of experience in sales and operations complemented by his natural ability to motivate and develop dynamic teams. Before joining Novotel Pune, Anant held significant roles within Accor, achieving consistent year-on-year excellence in performance metrics.



**AMIT BARANWAL**  
Director, Finance  
Novotel Goa Resort & Spa and  
Novotel Goa Candolim

Amit Baranwal has been appointed as the Director of Finance for Novotel Goa Resort & Spa and Novotel Goa Candolim. He has more than 12 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Baranwal's priorities will be to ensure ncial stability, optimise profitability, and enhance operational efficiency to elevate the hotel's overall performance. He will also play a pivotal role in the implementation of financial forecasting, technology integration, sustainability initiatives, risk management, and revenue diversification.



**ANUSH NIRESHWALIA**  
General Manager  
Sales & Marketing  
Stone Wood Hotels & Resorts

Anush Nireshwalia has been appointed as General Manager, Sales & Marketing, at Stone Wood Hotels & Resorts. He brings over 19 years of experience in sales and marketing leadership roles with well-renowned brands such as Jehan Numa and Evoke Experiences. Nireshwalia has a track record of delivering exceptional results through collaboration, creativity, and a customer-centric approach. In his new role, he is expected to enhance the brand's market presence by delivering unparalleled value to customers.



**PARUL JAIN**  
Director, Finance  
Shangri La Eros New Delhi

Shangri-La Eros New Delhi has appointed Parul Jain as Director of Finance. Parul excels in driving financial success. Her impressive career includes key roles at The Lodhi, New Delhi, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, and Barista Coffee, where she overhauled financial departments to ensure robust economic health and efficiency. In her new role, Parul will oversee budget management, financial reporting, and risk mitigation. She is dedicated to optimising resource allocation, and ensuring regulatory compliance.



**ASHWNI KUMAR GOELA**  
Vice President, Operations  
Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi  
Airport

Ashwini Kumar Goela has been promoted to Vice President, Operations at Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport and Area General Manager, Delhi NCR. In his previous role as General Manager, he significantly boosted guest experience, revenue, and profitability over the six years of his tenure. Known for his exemplary leadership, Goela enhanced operational efficiency and guest satisfaction. In his new role, he will continue to drive growth and excellence across all facets of the hotel.



**RAVINDER CHAHAL**  
Director, Sales  
Hilton Bangalore Embassy  
Golflinks

Hilton Bangalore Embassy Golflinks has promoted Ravinder Chahal to Director, of Sales from Assistant Director of Sales. With over a decade of experience in hospitality and pharmaceuticals, Ravinder has proven to be a dynamic sales and marketing leader. Known for his problem-solving skills and cross-functional collaboration, he has driven revenue and profit growth. His hands-on approach, excellence, and commitment to mentoring his team have fostered continuous improvement and customer satisfaction.





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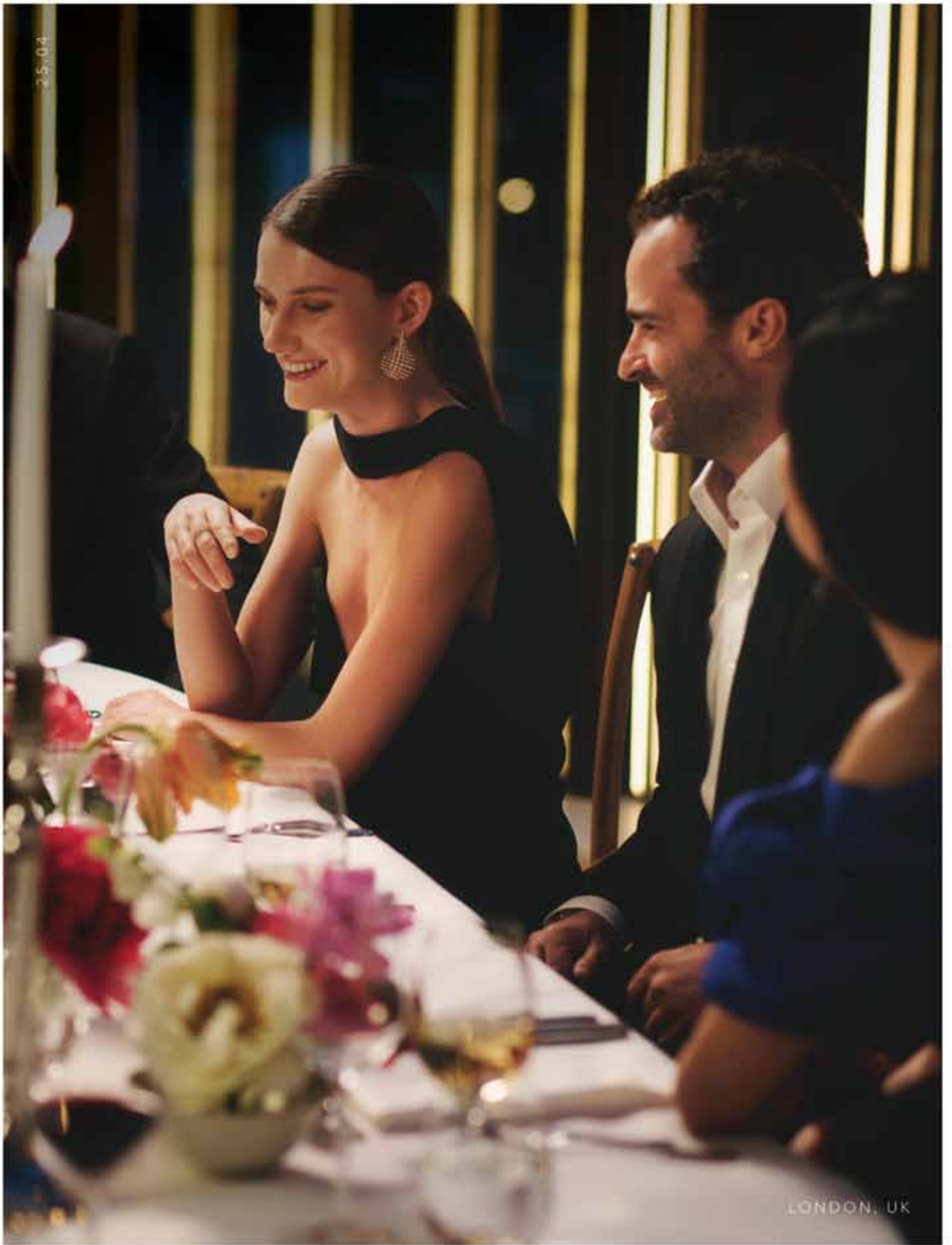
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