

The business travel magazine

MICEtalk[®]

micetalk.com

Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

RNI No.:DELENG/2010/34144

Introducing
ASEGÔ
Travel Business
Protect

Business risk cover, built
exclusively for travel agencies

ASEGÔ
Global Assistance • Travel Insurance



One slip can cost everything... We're your safety net!

What's covered?



Legal actions owing to
supplier defaults



Errors, omissions & lost
documents (includes passport)



Traveller mishaps &
accidents



Legal actions due to
employee fraud



Cyber crime &
ID theft



Traveller negligence
liabilities during trip

Includes emergency assistance, telephonic support,
legal consultation & more...

Why Choose Asego's Travel Business Protect?

Travel Industry Specialists
25+ years of deep
understanding about
agencies' unique needs

Dedicated Service Network
510+ experts across | 65+ offices,
servicing | 20K+ agents

Legacy of Trust
60+ years & 5
generations of expertise
in General Insurance

Unmatched Coverage
Benefits that go
beyond standard
market offerings

Scan to register



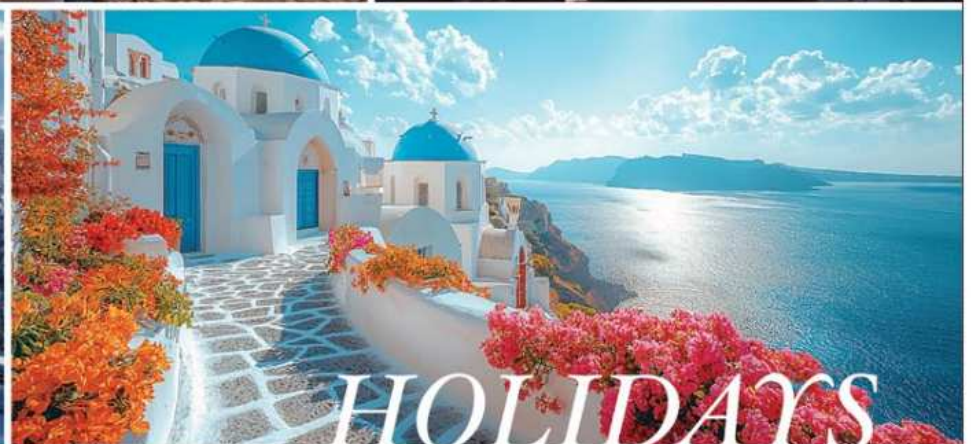
Talk to us now! ☎ +91 80974 46103 | +91 96011 70007 ✉ tbprotect@asego.in

Note: Asego Global Assistance Limited ("Asego") provides travel assistance and facilitates business protection solutions, including liability cover and cyber insurance. Insurance products are underwritten by IRDAI-authorised insurers and are subject to solicitation. This material is for general information only and does not create any binding obligation unless confirmed by an authorised representative of Asego. All insurance policies are distributed under the Corporate Agency of Asego Insurance LLP (IRDAI Reg. No. CA0776) and are governed solely by the terms, conditions, and exclusions of the respective insurers. Asego shall not be liable for denial of claims, delays, or deficiencies in services provided by third parties.



Balmer Lawrie
TRAVEL & VACATIONS

A Legacy of **158** years' Trust,
Reliability and Transparency



For Travel Queries

✉ travel.sales@balmerlawrie.com
☎ 099400 68471

For MICE Queries

✉ singh.ruhi@balmerlawrie.com
☎ 9810515815

For Domestic Holidays

✉ holidays@balmerlawrietraavel.com
☎ 095603 50561 / 095603 97009

For International Holidays

✉ bhatia.neetu@balmerlawrie.com
☎ 098184 06447



बामर लॉरी एण्ड कं. लिमिटेड
(भारत सरकार का एक उद्यम)
Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd.
(A Government of India Enterprise)

Regd. Office: 21, N S Road, Kolkata-700 001

🌐 www.balmerlawrie.com | CIN: L15492WB1924GOI004835



Rewriting the rules of 'eventology'

Wishing each of you the spirit and joy of the festive season! As we step into the final quarter of 2025, it is worth reflecting on a year that has been nothing short of eventful. From geopolitical uncertainties, the unfortunate Air India episode, the Ukraine conflict, and visa controls, challenges have been plenty. Yet, amid these headwinds, India's travel and hospitality sector has shown resilience and growth. Corporate travel, in particular, has rebounded strongly. Nearly

as their major offering. Corporates are increasingly drawn to destinations that promise ROI, compliance, and sustainability enrichment. Notably, Abu Dhabi, Oman, and Singapore have actively curated experiences to woo the Indian market. Meanwhile, ITB India 2025 reinforced India's pivotal role as a gateway to Asia-Pacific travel, while also highlighting the need for stronger domestic tourism promotion and innovative campaigns to match global efforts. Experts underscored a global

{ The 12th edition of the TMCS stood out, with engaging discussions around cross-border payments, which has been a persistent challenge for planners }

60 per cent of Indian corporates reported increased travel this year, with 42 per cent allocating 25–50 per cent of their budgets to MICE. Priorities are clearly shifting. The cost-efficiency, one-stop vendor solutions, technology adoption, and sustainability now define travel strategies, ensuring measurable business impact.

The 12th edition of the Travel MICE & Corporate Show (TMCS) stood out, with engaging discussions around cross-border payments, which has been a persistent challenge for planners. Encouragingly, AI-driven platforms and virtual cards are emerging as safer and smarter solutions, while global networks like Visa are simplifying payment ecosystems. Hotels, too, are innovating to meet rising expectations, with wellness and sustainability

shift from mere sightseeing to 'sight-experiencing', with immersive journeys gaining prominence.

We also witnessed encouraging innovation in risk management. Insurance leaders like Asego introduced Travel Business Protect, safeguarding agencies against legal and fraud-related risks, thereby strengthening client trust.

Meanwhile, amid the industry's forward momentum, we lost a great industry colleague Sunil Chavan. Let's pause to remember and honour his contribution and support to MICE Talk. His presence shall be missed while his contributions shall be in our minds and hearts.

Warm regards

Jyothi Varma, Consulting Editor

18 Cross-border payments holding MICE back



6 Connectivity & cost shape business travel choices



10 Hotels reimagining events as branding campaign



28 Oman lures Indian weddings & events



32 Simplifying visa rules crucial for biz travel: Amitabh Khosla

PUBLISHER & EDITOR

SanJeet

Devika Jeet
devika@ddppl.com

CONSULTING EDITOR

Jyothi Varma

CHIEF EDITOR

Nisha Verma
nisha.verma@ddppl.com

EDITORIAL TEAM

Janice Alyosius
janice.alynosius@ddppl.com

Amita Pandey
amita.pandey@ddppl.com

DESIGN HEAD

Saurabh Mishra

ADVERTISING – DELHI

Meetu Malhotra
meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com

Jaspreet Kaur

ADVERTISING – MUMBAI

Harshal Ashar
harshal@ddppl.com

Samantha Pereira
samantha.pereira@ddppl.com

ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS

Nitin Kumar
Aditya Pratap Singh
Anil Khatri Chhetri

GM – PRODUCTION

Anil Kharbada

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Ramesh Gupta

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Ashok Rana



DDP Publications Private Limited

New Delhi:

72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001, India
Tel: +91 11 23234177
E-mail: talk@ddppl.com

Mumbai:

504 Marine Chambers, 43 New Marine Lines, Mumbai
400 020, India
Tel: +91-22-22070129, 22070130
Fax: +91-22-22070131
E-mail: mumbai@ddppl.com

All information in **MICE**talk is derived from sources, which we consider reliable. **Information is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part.** The contents of this publication contain views of authors and are not the views of DDP Publications.

Similarly, opinions/views expressed by any party in abstract and/or in interviews are not necessarily shared/ do not necessarily reflect any opinion of DDP Publications. All rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction strictly prohibited. Material appearing in **MICE**talk cannot be reproduced in whole or in part without prior written permission. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication.

Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission would face legal action.

Editorial enquiries and enquiries concerning the reproduction of articles should be emailed to talk@ddppl.com, advertising and circulation enquiries should be e-mailed to nikhiljeet@ddppl.com

The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material nor is he responsible for material lost or damaged in transit. Any material submitted to **MICE**talk will not be returned.

The publisher reserves the rights to refuse, withdraw, amend or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code as well as the Advertisements Code of Saudi Arabia. The publisher will not be liable for any damage or loss caused by the late publication, error or failure of advertisement or editorial to appear.

MICEtalk is printed, published, edited and owned by Sanjeet, printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Shedi, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase - I, New Delhi - 110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001



CHOMU PALACE JAIPUR

A Heritage Hotel



THE PALACE OFFERS 100 SPACIOUS ROOMS AND 100,000 SQUARE FEET OF BANQUET SPACE,
INCLUDING 9 OUTDOOR VENUES AND 3 INDOOR VENUES FOR GRAND CELEBRATIONS



OWNED BY



DANGAYACH
GROUP



ROYAL WEDDING | MICE & CONVENTION | SHOOT | LEISURE HOLIDAYS



Connectivity & cost take priority for business travel

Corporate travel is bouncing back in 2025, with Asia-Pacific destinations, cost efficiency, and integrated vendors leading the way. The trend towards technology and sustainability signals a smarter, more experience-driven future.

By Janice Alyosius

MICEtalk's exclusive Corporate MICE & Business Travel Survey 2025 gathered insights from Indian corporates across sectors, offering a comprehensive picture of how companies are approaching business travel and MICE in the year ahead. The findings reveal a market that is rebounding strongly, increasingly tech-aware, and is embracing sustainability, while factors, such as cost and connectivity continue to dominate decision-making.

BUDGET ALLOCATION

When asked what percentage of their travel budgets is allocated to MICE or group movements, 42.1 per cent of corporates reported allocating 25–50 per cent, while 34.2 per cent reported less than 25 per cent. Only 18.4 per cent of companies invested over 50 per cent, with a small segment (10.5 per cent) spending more than 75 per cent of their travel budgets on MICE. These figures indicated that while MICE remains a significant component of corporate travel, most companies are still carefully

balancing expenditure against broader travel needs.

TRAVEL VOLUMES RISING

The survey showed a clear recovery in corporate travel. Over 60 per cent of respondents reported increased business travel in 2025 compared to 2024, 23.7 per cent said volumes remained the same, and only 13.2 per cent reported a reduction.

This rebound signals strong corporate confidence in resuming face-to-face interactions, meetings, and incentive travel, particularly after the disruptions of the past few years. Companies are prioritising in-person engagement for team building, networking, and strategic initiatives that require direct interaction.

FACTORS IMPACTING CHOICES

For Indian corporates, the decision often rests on practicalities. Connectivity (79 per cent) and cost-effectiveness (76 per cent) emerged as the strongest factors, closely followed by unique experiences (55 per cent) and visa ease (53 per cent). While sustainability (16 per cent) ranked lower, its growing presence on the list suggests a gradual shift in mindset.

While practical considerations such as accessibility and budget dominate as major decision drivers, corporates are increasingly factoring in unique experiences and visa convenience.

PREFERRED MICE HUBS

Domestic favourites include Goa (8 mentions), Udaipur (5), Jaipur, Bengaluru, Kerala, and Coorg. Heritage, leisure, and coastal destinations are top picks, reflecting a preference for locations that combine team engagement with a memorable setting. International choices are led by Dubai (6 mentions), Singapore (5), Thailand (3), Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Türkiye, along with Europe, the UK, Japan, and Oman cited for executive-level events. The APAC region destinations dominate due to cost-effectiveness, proximity, and visa ease, while Europe is most sought-after for premium leadership-focused travel.

VENDOR PREFERENCES

A clear majority of corporates (78.9 per cent) prefer working with a single integrated travel partner (TMC/DMC). Only 10.5 per cent use multiple local vendors, while 26.3 per cent manage

Connectivity (79%) and cost-effectiveness (76%) emerged as the strongest factors for corporate travel, closely followed by unique experiences (55%) and visa ease (53%)



While sustainability (16%) ranks lower, its growing presence on the list suggests a gradual shift in mindset

travel internally. The preference for one-stop solutions highlights the importance of streamlined operations, consistent service delivery, and efficiency, particularly for the companies, which are managing multiple MICE activities across the regions.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is becoming a key factor in corporate decision-making. More than 60 per cent of respondents said sustainability is important, 21.1 per cent considered it somewhat important. Only 15.8 per cent do not factor sustainability into their choices.

This paradigm shift indicates that eco-conscious planning is gaining traction, particularly for destinations,



hotels, and vendors, which indicates that suppliers who integrate sustainable practices into offerings may gain a competitive edge.

TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Technology adoption in corporate travel remains mixed. While 34 per cent are using virtual/hybrid platforms, 29 per cent rely on mobile event apps, and 26 per cent have started using AI-powered itinerary planning. At the same time, 32 per cent admitted that they are not using any travel tech tools. The gap shows that

while early adopters are embracing smart solutions, a large segment is traditional in its approach. The substantial proportion of corporates are still relying on traditional methods, presenting opportunities for technology providers to expand their footprint.

TRENDS SHAPING 2025

Respondents highlighted several key trends expected to shape corporate travel and MICE this year:

- Visa facilitation and improved connectivity will stay in focus
- AI integration is expected to reduce internal planning workloads
- Demand for unique, luxury, and offbeat experiences is increasing
- Larger group sizes and growing CXO participation in international conferences are evident
- Cost-efficiency, safety, payment flexibility, and confidentiality remain key considerations
- Corporates anticipate a gradual increase in travel spend, aligned with broader economic trends

These insights underline a market balancing practical constraints with evolving expectations for personalised, technology-enhanced experiences.

The survey confirmed corporate travel in India is on a growth trajectory. Firms are travelling more, favouring APAC, prioritising integrated vendor partnerships, and gradually embracing sustainability and technology. ➔



60 Years of Friendship

Unlimited Privileges

await Indian MICE groups!



Unlock exclusive privileges with Singapore Tourism Board,
spanning travel, dining, luxury stays, and unforgettable experiences.

sentosa



MOUNT FABER
Reserve



SHANGRI-LA
RASA SENTOSA
SINGAPORE

W
SINGAPORE
SENTOSA COVE

AMARA
SANCTUARY
SENTOSA

ROYAL TAJ
EVENTS & RESIDENCES

SOFITEL
SINGAPORE SENTOSA RESORT & SPA

THE SINGAPORE
EDITION

ANDAZ
SINGAPORE

MONDRIAN
SINGAPORE DUXTON

Far East
HOSPITALITY

GRAND
COPTHORNE
HOTELS & RESORTS
SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE AIRLINES

IndiGo



Meetings fuel loyalty and growth

We asked hospitality leaders how MICE turns into repeat business. Their answers point to constant drivers: operational scale, humanised service, and sustainability.

By Janice Alyosius

If there is one thing the pandemic taught the hospitality sector, it is that events are no longer just about filling ballrooms. They are about building loyalty, driving measurable returns, and creating stories that live long after the last cocktail is served. We spoke with hospitality leaders, who averred that MICE is now the sharpest tool in the hospitality tool kit.

LOYALTY MATTERS

Every hotelier we spoke to agreed that repeat business and referrals form the backbone of a successful MICE strategy.



RAMESH DARYANANI

Vice President, Global Sales, Loyalty Operations
& Partnerships, Marriott International
Asia Pacific Excluding China

Ramesh Daryanani, Vice President, Global Sales, Loyalty Operations and Partnerships, Marriott International Asia Pacific Excluding China, said, "We see a healthy rate of repeat clients and referrals across our properties in Asia-Pacific. Many guests appreciate the 'can-do' spirit of our associates in delivering a memorable MICE experience. Whether it is an incentive trip or an annual conference every event lends itself to positive word-of-mouth and helps drive affinity for our Marriott Bonvoy programme." Planners also earn Bonvoy points when they host events (subject to regulations), an incentive to choose Marriott properties.

For Mayfair Spring Valley Resort in Guwahati, the numbers tell the





story. “Nearly 50 per cent of our MICE business comes from repeat clients or referrals,” revealed **Pardeep Siwach**, Deputy General Manager, Accommodation, Mayfair Spring Valley Guwahati. “Every well-organised event builds trust and strengthens relationships, and that is what keeps them coming back.”

At Jaipur’s largest event complex, **Manuj Ralhan**, General Manager, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre & JECC, echoed similar sentiments. “A large share of our business comes from repeat clients and referrals. With 1.4 million sq ft of space, we can host the largest global gatherings, but it is our philosophy of ‘Know Before We

Serve’ that makes even big events feel personal.” Like Marriott, Accor leverages loyalty programmes too. “By enrolling organisers in ALL — Accor Live Limitless Meeting Planner, we turn one-time events into enduring partnerships.”

Neha Kapoor, General Manager, Hyatt Place Gurgaon, commented, “Once planners become familiar with our spaces and planning efficiencies, they prefer to return. The Meeting Planner Rewards under World of Hyatt ensure they feel recognised and rewarded.” Loyalty today is no longer accidental. It is carefully built through consistent delivery, personalised service, and programmes that make repeat business feel valued.”

NUMBERS SAGA

Daryanani highlighted one of the biggest moments for Indian hospitality — the G-20 Summit of 2023. “We had close to 14 hotels serve as host venues, including JW Marriott Kolkata, JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa, JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity, The Ritz-Carlton Bengaluru, Marriott Jaipur, Renaissance Lucknow, Westin Rishikesh, JW Marriott Pune, and Westin Hyderabad. The movement of delegations significantly boosted F&B revenues and room demand,” he explained. “Beyond topline growth, it unlocked new opportunities with embassies, government bodies, and international delegations, positioning



PARDEEP SIWACH
Deputy General Manager
Accommodation, Mayfair Spring Valley Guwahati



MANUJ RALHAN
General Manager
Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre & JECC



NEHA KAPOOR
General Manager
Hyatt Place Gurgaon

Elevate Every Event in the Heart of Wilderness

Paul John
RESORTS &
HOTELS

Gather among towering trees,
where conversations flow and celebrations linger

Host conferences, galas and private events amidst lush greenery at Coorg Wilderness Resort & Spa. From the pillarless Grand Ballroom to the elegant Queen's Court, every venue is crafted to inspire and deliver seamless flow for keynotes and gala evenings. Power agendas with modern A/V, curated menus, and end-to-end event management that handles layouts, registrations, and personal VIP care. Restore focus between sessions with outdoor decks, nature walks, and spa interludes that inspire and bring teams together.



Virajpet Main Road, Meker, Madikeri, Coorg,
Karnataka - 571201
Email: weddings@thepaul.in
www.pauljohnhotels.com Call: +91 8069 11 11 11


**COORG
WILDERNESS**
RESORT & SPA

our hotels as trusted partners for high-security, high-protocol events.”

At Novotel Jaipur, Ralhan cited events, such as IIFA, MRI, and DERMACON as turning points. “During these events, occupancy reached peak levels, F&B revenue surged, and new corporate accounts were created. These events do not just benefit our hotel, they uplift the entire state’s economy and cement Rajasthan as a premium MICE destination.”

Kapoor added that Hyatt Place Gurgaon thrives on spillover. “When Yashobhoomi or other centres host major events, we see demand for breakaway sessions, networking dinners, and delegate stays. Over time, many of these delegates convert into repeat corporate accounts.”

At Mayfair, Siwach noted that even modest corporate gatherings have expanded into major opportunities. “Many start small but grow once organisers discover our themed dining and event options. We have seen direct spikes in bookings and F&B revenue, and those clients often return or refer us.” The numbers underline a simple truth: MICE is not just about one good weekend in the calendar — it is a growth multiplier with long-term impact on topline, reputation, and positioning.

BRANDING

MICE is no longer just a logistical operation — it is theatre, storytelling, and marketing rolled into one. At Marriott, Daryanani recalled Porsche’s Global Dealer Launch in Singapore.

“The Ritz-Carlton Singapore transformed its pool into a floating product platform. Guests were wowed, and the event made global headlines. That is how an event becomes a brand story.” Ralhan emphasised Novotel’s ecosystem approach. “Pre-event, we co-create with organisers and use digital campaigns to build anticipation. During the event, we integrate immersive storytelling. Post-event, we amplify through case studies and testimonials, ensuring the brand conversation continues.” For Mayfair, branding is in its surroundings. “Our resorts are located on tea estates, by lakes, and in hill stations,” said Siwach. “The unique atmosphere strengthens our brand in the client’s mind.” Meanwhile, Kapoor pointed out Hyatt’s approach. “Every

MICE is not just about one good weekend
in the calendar — it is a growth multiplier with
long-term impact on topline, reputation, and positioning



CROSS HOTELS & RESORTS

YOUR LUXURY ESCAPE TO ASIA



THAILAND

Bangkok

- Cross Vibe Bangkok Sukhumvit
- Away Bangkok Riverside Kene
- Lumen Bangkok Udomsuk Station
- Cross Vibe Bangkok Srinakarin*
- Lumen Bangkok Srinakarin*

Pattaya

- Cross Pattaya Pratamnak
- Cross Pattaya Oceanphere
- Cross Vibe Pattaya Seaphere

Chiang Mai

- Cross Chiang Mai Riverside
- Away Chiang Mai Thapae
- Cross Vibe Chiang Mai Decem

INDONESIA

Bali

- Cross Bali Breakers
- Cross Paasha Bali Seminyak
- Cross Vibe Paasha Atelier Bali Kuta

- Away Bali Legian Camakila
- Tanadewa Resort Ubud Bali by Cross Collection
- Tanadewa Villas Nusa Dua Bali by Cross Collection
- Kaura Bali



AWAY

LUMEN

CROSS
COLLECTION

KAURA



Book with your DMC partners or contact us for reference:
sandeep.raghav@crosshotelsandresorts.in, +91 9599076699



delegate who walks in experiences our hospitality first-hand. Many come back for personal stays later. MICE is our strongest branding platform.”

This is where MICE has evolved. It is not just an event that ends with a group photo but a story that lingers in memories, posts, and brand associations long after the lights dim.

STANDING OUT

Marriott is betting on sustainability to stand out in the competitive landscape

FOCUS POINTS

Repeat business is the real measure of success

Numbers matter because mega-events boost not just hotels but local economies

Branding is embedded in every detail, from digital campaigns to poolside product launches

Differentiation lies in sustainability, wellness, and humanised service

of the events industry. Its ‘Connect Responsibly with Marriott Bonvoy Event’ offers impact reports and carbon offset options, alongside practices, such as energy-efficient signage, linen-less tables, bottled water alternatives, and digital menus. Wellness is another trend growing in demand as per Daryanani. “Because planners increasingly want rest and recovery options built into events.” At Novotel Jaipur, it is about balancing scale with intimacy. Ralhan said, “We opened in just five months — the fastest in Accor India. In our first year, we ranked No.1 in guest experience, achieved the highest first-year revenue of any convention hotel in India, and are already delivering over 50 per cent topline growth in FY25.” Differentiation, though, is about human touches for them. “We have created personalised moments like our Heartfelt Tiffin Service with handwritten notes, regional welcomes, and cooking sessions with local women.”

Mayfair leans on its ‘Stay with us, stay with nature’ philosophy. From award-winning spas to thoughtfully designed spaces, the experience goes beyond the meeting room. “It is personalised service

MICE is no longer
an event that
ends with a group
photo but a story
that lingers in
memories

that makes guests feel part of the place, not just visitors,” Siwach explained.

Hyatt is investing in modernity and intention. “Through our ‘Together by Hyatt’ philosophy, we promise care, efficiency, impact, and intention. This year we have refurbished all meeting venues, offering best-in-class AV, and flexible packages. The idea is to create stylish, sustainable, and memorable meetings,” said Kapoor.

As these examples show, MICE today is judged on values like sustainability, and personalisation, not just logistics. Planners look for partners who align with their own ethos, and hotels stepping up with thoughtful solutions. ➔

LARGER *than* LIFE



Scale up your holiday.
Get ready for an
experience of epic
proportions in
Maharashtra, the land
that offers some of
the world's most
exciting adventures.



📍 Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve
To know more: Send 'Hi' to 📞 +91 99933 08883
For bookings and reservations: www.mahabooking.com
Follow us on: [f](#) MaharashtraTourism [X](#) @maha_tourism
[📷](#) @ mahashtratourismofficial [✉](#) diot@mahashtratourism.gov.in



MAHARASHTRA
TOURISM

www.mahashtratourism.gov.in



Fixing global MICE payment chaos



MICE thrives globally but outdated payments do not. At the Travel MICE & Corporate Show, a panel highlighted how this costly mismatch puts much at stake for the planners.



By MT Bureau

It is a scenario every MICE agent knows only too well. The destination is locked, the hotel contract signed, AV, entertainment, F&B, and transfers all lined up. Everything looks perfect until a payment gets stuck. The vendor in Thailand will not accept a wire transfer. The host in Barcelona insists on local currency. The AV team in Zurich refuses to set up until the funds hit their account and just like that, seamless planning turns into the chaos of cross-border payments.

At the Travel MICE & Corporate Show held in Chennai, this chaos took centre stage in a session. The panel discussion, 'Managing Multi-Vendor Payments Across Borders', hit a raw



SANDHYA LOKHANDE
Regional Category Manager (Travel)-Indirect
Procurement AMEA, Syngenta Group

nerve with the crowd, many of whom have quietly battled the same issues for years. The panellists brought their perspectives to the table and shared

a brutally honest picture of how payments are the invisible stress point in international events, and why they need immediate fixing.

The moderator, **Sandhya Lokhande**, Regional Category Manager (Travel)-Indirect Procurement AMEA, Syngenta Group, framed the conversation with a sharp truth. "We have made great strides in how we plan and scale MICE," she said, "but our payment systems are still stuck in the past. If we do not address this, we are limiting how far and fast this industry can grow." Presenting a real-world example, **Trishal Rao**, Chief Sales Officer, Skil Corporate Travel Solutions, said, "Once, we had four events in four countries in a week — Switzerland, Australia, Thailand, and Vietnam," he said. "Each had five to six vendors. That was 20–30 payments in a single week,



How are the companies coping? For many, the answer lies in middlemen, agencies, or DMCs who step in to make payments on their behalf



TRISHAL RAO
Chief Sales Officer
Skil Corporate Travel Solutions

across time zones, currencies, and local tax systems. It was mayhem.”

His team scrambled between SWIFT transfers, NEFT, third-party fintech



ANJALI CHUGH
Head, MICE & Strategic Engagements
Nuvama Group

platforms, and whatever else could get the job done. “My finance team was pulling their hair out,” he admitted. “The job was done but it was not

smooth, and it definitely was not scalable.”

For corporate buyers, the pain point is just as sharp. **Anjali Chugh**, Head, MICE & Strategic Engagements, Nuvama Group, explained how tough it is to stay compliant. “At times, you have vendors who only accept cash. Some of them refuse to give proper invoices, while some insist on local bank transfers in obscure formats,” she said. “It becomes a compliance nightmare, and when your internal audit team gets involved, it turns into a war.”

So how are companies coping? For many, the answer lies in middlemen, agencies, or DMCs who step in to make payments on their behalf. “But that comes at a price,” Chugh said. “There is always a convenience fee and while you might solve the immediate



{ For agents handling multi-country events, virtual cards are a huge upgrade over the slow, documentation-heavy process of international wire transfers }

problem, it does not help you build a long-term system.”

That is where **Ravi Sattavan**, Director, Visa Commercial Solutions, India, stepped in to offer a glimpse into what the future of payments could look like and in some cases, already does. “Virtual cards are tailor-made for this,” he said. “You can generate them instantly, restrict usage by vendor, geography, date, or amount, and you get real-time visibility.”

For agents handling multi-country events, it is a huge upgrade over the slow, documentation-heavy process of international wire transfers. “We have seen companies cut down turnaround time from five days to five minutes,” Sattavan said. “It is safer as you are not sharing bank details or chasing confirmations. It just works.”

However, the real issue is adoption. “Not every vendor is ready for this.



RAVI SATTAVAN
Director
Visa Commercial Solutions, India







That is why we are proactively helping identify and onboard suppliers. We are also building intelligence into the system so corporates can know who is already accepting card-based payments.”

Varghese Chettupuzha, Global Category Lead, Meetings and Events, Accenture, added another layer to the discussion. He informed that his team often routes payments through their local offices in different countries, which reduces compliance risk and speeds up processing. “Although I know it is a luxury that most smaller players do not have,” he said. “What is non-



VARGHESE CHETTUPUZZHA
Global Category Lead
Meetings & Events, Accenture

negotiable is vendor onboarding. If a supplier cannot invoice in international currencies, we do not work with them.”

The panel also explored what the future might hold for MICE planners. Sattavan outlined tools already in development — AI-driven platforms that could flag the best time to make payments based on forex trends, cards that support over 20 currencies, and agentic commerce systems that automate repetitive tasks, such as invoice processing or compliance checks.

Meanwhile, Chugh made a statement that resonated with many in the room —



For the MICE trade, payments are not just a back-office job anymore. They are central to how smooth, or how stressful, a project becomes



“What we need is a tool that allows us to lock forex rates at the time of budgeting and still pay the same rate when the event goes live. That alone would save lakhs.”

As the session wrapped up, panellists concurred that for the MICE trade, payments are not just a back-office job anymore. They are central to how smooth, or how stressful, a project becomes. In a competitive landscape of event industry where clients expect speed, transparency, and control, the ability to pay smarter could become your strongest selling point as Rao said, “Great events are not enough. If your

vendor does not get paid on time, the whole experience can unravel, and no client forgets that.”

For travel agents and MICE operators, the key takeaway was that if your payment methods still rely on manual hacks, outdated bank processes, or WhatsApp chases, you are not just risking margins, you are risking your reputation. Because in MICE, money does not only talk. It decides whether the show goes on. The immediate solution for MICE operators to avoid any payment chaos is to evolve along with their customers and vendors. ➔



MICE & tech to drive Balmer Lawrie

Balmer Lawrie Travel & Vacations is expanding MICE as a revenue engine and leveraging technology to deliver insight-driven corporate travel solutions.



By **Janice Alyosius**

Balmer Lawrie Travel & Vacations is placing MICE at the centre of its growth plans, while strengthening its role as a tech-driven travel management company.

Ruhi Singh, AVP and Head (MICE), Balmer Lawrie Travel & Vacations, said, “MICE is growing by the day, and

the industry is looking at it as a major tourism driver in the years to come. For us, it will be a revenue generator in the next five years.”

The company, which has long been associated with government MICE, is now expanding into the private and corporate domain. Singh noted visibility at trade shows and exhibitions is part of this strategy. “With Balmer Lawrie,

clients are in safe hands. This is a legacy organisation built on trust, reliability, and transparency, combined with a young and agile team. It is a mix of legacy and future-readiness,” she added.

On the business travel side, the focus is firmly on technology and automation to enhance corporate travel programmes. **Niraj Kumar**, National Head, Sales & Business Development, Balmer Lawrie Travel & Vacations, pointed out expectations from corporates have shifted. “Today, firms expect more analytics, stronger global connectivity, and seamless access to full-service and LCCs within the same platform. They want business intelligence on how and where they are spending, and the value they are getting.”

Kumar stressed this marks a clear evolution in the role of travel management companies, moving from transaction-focused services to strategic partners offering insight and efficiency. “These are the trends shaping corporate travel and we are building solutions to meet them.” ➔



RUHI SINGH
AVP and Head (MICE)
Balmer Lawrie Travel & Vacations



NIRAJ KUMAR
National Head (Sales & Business Development)
Balmer Lawrie Travel & Vacations

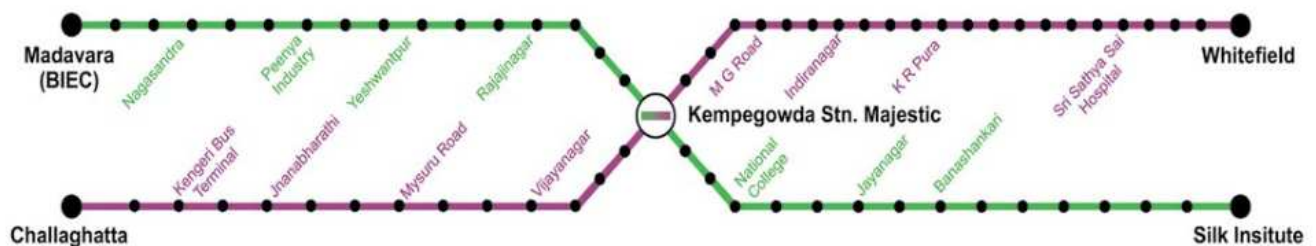


Indian Machine Tool
Manufacturers' Association

B I E C®
Bangalore
International
Exhibition Centre

A VENUE MUCH MORE CLOSER TO YOU

now
BIEC connected with Bangalore Metro



www.biec.in

Oman courts India's MICE and wedding market

India is among Oman's fastest-growing markets. Through the 'Focus Oman' roadshow, it seeks lasting business ties by promoting Oman for leisure, MICE, and weddings.

By **Surbhi Sharma**

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman, in collaboration with 25 leading Omani stakeholders including hotels, DMCs, and attraction partners, recently hosted the first edition of its B2B showcase, 'Focus Oman', in Jaipur. The 4-day event drew participation from over 150 top travel planners across India, including specialists in luxury travel, weddings, and MICE, underlining Oman's growing prominence as a short-haul premium destination for Indian travellers.

The feedback from participants was positive, with appreciation for the

quality of meetings, effective networking opportunities, and smooth organisation, making the showcase a significant step in enhancing bilateral tourism ties.

INDIA AS TOP SOURCE MARKET

According to official statistics, India topped tourist arrivals to Oman in 2024, contributing more than 6,00,000 visitors, a 40 per cent increase over 2019 levels. Speaking on the occasion, **Yousuf Khalaf Al Mujaizi**, Assistant Director, Business Development Department, Ministry of Heritage & Tourism, Oman, said, "India is one of Oman's fastest-growing source markets. Our goal is to position the country as a high-end destination, attracting premium

travellers across leisure, corporate events, and weddings. With stakeholder collaboration, we aim to grow arrivals to 1 million in the coming years."

While the ambition is strong, he emphasised that growth will be stable and sustained, built on a solid foundation of long-term partnerships.

WEDDINGS & MICE TRAVEL

India's reputation as a global leader in outbound weddings and corporate travel makes it a strategic priority for Oman. Yousuf highlighted Oman's 5-star infrastructure, luxury resorts, authentic cuisine, and exceptional services as a natural fit for Indian weddings and corporate events.



The country is also placing greater emphasis on adventure tourism, targeting youth and families. From soft nature-based experiences in the south to more challenging mountain and desert activities, the Sultanate of Oman offers a diverse adventure portfolio. These experiences are now being regulated and offered through licensed operators to ensure quality and safety.

The country's rich cultural fabric with over 1,000 castles and forts remains a strong attraction for Indian travellers interested in heritage tourism.



YOUSUF KHALAF AL MUJAZI

Assistant Director, Business Development
Department, Ministry of Heritage & Tourism, Oman

FOCUS ON INDIAN MARKET

Yousuf revealed that the success of the Jaipur edition would pave the way for wider engagement across multiple Indian cities in future editions. Plans are already underway for an India roadshow in 2026, which will bring more Omani stakeholders face-to-face with Indian partners across regions.

Marketing will also play a significant role in Oman's India push. The Ministry plans to support local operators in India through joint campaigns, familiarisation trips, and B2B gatherings, alongside strong participation in major trade events. Recognising changing traveller behaviour, he stressed that influencer-led outreach will be central to engaging India's younger audiences and diversifying the market base.

SHORT-HAUL DESTINATION

By strengthening partnerships with Indian agents, tapping into MICE and

The country
is also placing
greater emphasis
on adventure
tourism,
targeting youth
and families

wedding demand, and showcasing its mix of luxury, culture, and adventure, Oman is clearly positioning itself as a premium short-haul destination of choice for Indian travellers.

Focus Oman is not just a one-off event, but it serves as a foundation for sustained engagement and a long-term tourism partnership with India, concluded Yousuf. ➔



Experiences driving corporate events

With 14 venues and immersive offerings, Vedic Village Spa Resort more than meets the demands of corporate events looking for wellness and unique experiences.



By **Janice Alyosius**

Corporate events are no longer just about business sessions — they are about creating meaningful experiences that inspire teams and leave lasting impressions. At Vedic Village Spa Resort, this shift is clearly visible. “Today’s corporate clients are seeking far more than conventional conferences. They want immersive experiences that combine

The resort has also expanded its infrastructure to support diverse formats, with 14 banqueting venues catering to groups of 25–500

learning, wellness, and exclusivity,” said **Rajib Roy Choudhury**, Associate Vice President, Vedic Village Spa Resort. The resort has woven experiential learning, holistic wellness, and personalised event planning into its MICE offerings to meet this growing demand.

Wellness is at the heart of its approach. “Our yoga sessions, Ayurvedic treatments, and team-building activities are designed to rejuvenate while fostering stronger team dynamics,” Choudhury explained. Alongside this, cultural immersions and eco-friendly practices are now integral to events, reflecting the rising preference for sustainability and authenticity.

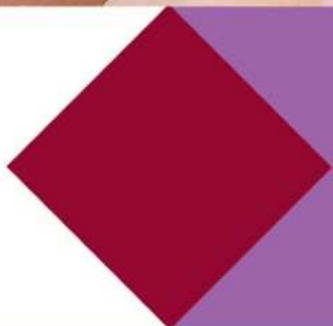
Technology is another driving force. AI-driven planning tools and VR enhancements are becoming part of the MICE landscape. According to Choudhury, “Now, corporates want experiential events powered by not just wellness and sustainability but also by innovative technology.”

The resort has also expanded its infrastructure to support diverse formats, with 14 banqueting venues catering to groups of 25–500. “Our Utsav

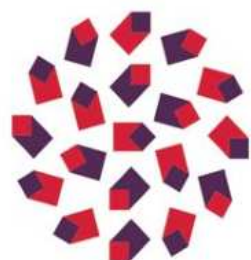


RAJIB ROY CHOUDHURY
Associate Vice President
Vedic Village Spa Resort

Convention Centre spans 6,000 sq ft, while the OM and V-Den series halls provide versatile options for conferences, exhibitions, and product launches.” To add an element of adventure, the resort offers experiences like three-level rope course and reverse bungee. Choudhury concluded, “The challenge lies in balancing modern comfort with eco-conscious practices, but our goal is to reduce our ecological footprint, while delivering world-class experiences.” ➔



Experience
عُمان
OMAN





India's MICE needs modern visa regime

Based on his personal blog, **Amitabh Khosla** writes in his personal capacity to explore a pressing question: does India truly have the systems in place to emerge as a global MICE powerhouse? The views are drawn from first-hand observations and experience.

India has venues, air connectivity and hotel inventories but does it have the system in place to truly become a global MICE powerhouse?

In June 2025, Delhi played host to the IATA Annual General Meeting (AGM), an event of global stature returning to Indian soil after 42 years. The city welcomed 1,700

delegates, including 200 international journalists. Beyond the spotlight, the AGM demonstrated something far more important: India's capability and readiness to host large-scale, world-class business events.

International feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and rightly so. The AGM reflected the Government of

India's ambition to position the country as a premier global MICE destination. Initiatives such as the Tourism Ministry's digital MICE catalogues are a strong step in the right direction. However, while the software, India's energy and intent, is firmly in place, some elements of the system still need a hard refresh.

As the Country Director of IATA in India, I had a front-row seat to the coordination efforts behind the AGM, which began nearly a year in advance. Organising a global event of this scale is never simple but it was clear that the area needing urgent attention is India's visa regime for foreign business visitors. We received strong and responsive support from multiple government ministries — Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Indian missions abroad and the Bureau of Immigration. Every escalation was taken seriously and resolved with urgency. Yet, even with this cooperation,



AMITABH KHOSLA
Country Director, India, IATA

Malaysia and Thailand attract business events through far more open visa regimes, including visa-free and visa-on-arrival options. India needs to stay competitive



the underlying visa framework created moments of confusion and administrative burden.

Here are some of the recurring issues we encountered:

- Uncertainty about visa categories: e-Business or e-Conference?
- Rejection of visas under wrong category
- Complex requirement to submit confirmed delegate lists early in planning stages
- Cumbersome and slow process for journalist visa applications
- High fees for certain nationalities
- Long and sometimes confusing application forms
- Technical snags on the e-Visa payment gateway

Launched in 2014, India's e-Visa system was revolutionary. Today, it covers over 175 nationalities and has facilitated millions of visits but times have changed. Security systems are

smarter, data verification has advanced and user expectations are far higher. It is time to update the system to match India's MICE ambitions. Following initiatives can make a real difference:

- **Remove the e-Conference visa category:** It adds limited value and causes more confusion than clarity. Instead, streamline the e-Business visa to cover MICE-related travel without a separate e-MICE visa.
- **Simplify the visa application form:** Improve the user interface, upgrade the payment infrastructure and shorten the time it takes to apply.
- **Review the overall visa policy:** Countries like Malaysia and Thailand attract business events through far more open visa regimes, including visa-free and visa-on-arrival options. India needs to stay competitive.

Of course, national security must always remain paramount. No simplification should undermine due diligence but there is a clear middle path between security and simplicity. A more streamlined, intuitive and predictable visa experience could be the missing link in India's MICE growth story. We have everything else: venues, infra and the talent. If we get this right, India has a real shot at becoming one of the best destinations for global business events. ➔





Asego widens safety net for travel businesses

To shield travel agencies from financial losses caused by service errors and fraud, Asego has introduced Travel Business Protect, offering comprehensive coverage against operational and legal risks.

By MT Bureau

A single name error on an air ticket cost one agency ₹85,000. Another bore rebooking charges when a missed flight forced an elderly couple to cancel their trip. More seriously, the Supreme Court upheld a ₹13.5 lakh compensation order against a leading OTA after a medical emergency abroad was

mishandled. Beyond service errors, exposures includes fraud and cybercrime: in 2022, a forex operator absconded with client funds, while in 2023, a Goa-based agency suffered a data breach. Even vendor issues can trigger claims, such as the 2024 negligence lawsuit against an OTA over an unsafe homestay in Leh.

Travel businesses are accountable not only for their own operations but also for partners, vendors, and staff. They handle sensitive data, finances, and life-critical situations — where missteps can damage both reputations and bottom lines.

Recognising this, ASEGO has launched Travel Business Protect. It is tailored to the sector, offering broad protection across operational and legal risks. It covers legal defence, lawyer fees, court costs, and payouts if clients win claims. It safeguards against staff errors, lost documents like passports, and third-party bodily injury or property damage. It extends to accidents such as slips, falls, or transport mishaps, with medical and emergency expenses included.

“Travel partners today are custodians of trust, finances, and safety,” said **Dev Karvat**, Founder and CEO, ASEGO. “We designed Travel Business Protect to secure their work and reputation at every level.” ➔



Travel Business Protect is tailored to the sector, offering broad protection across operational and legal risks

DEV KARVAT, Founder & CEO, Asego

Note: Asego Global Assistance (Asego) provides travel assistance and business protection solutions, including liability and office cover. Insurance products are underwritten by IRDAI-authorised insurers, subject to solicitation, and distributed under Asego Insurance LLP (IRDAI Reg. No. CA0776). This material is informational only, creating no binding obligation unless confirmed by an authorised representative. Policies are governed by insurers' terms, conditions, and exclusions. Asego disclaims liability for third-party services.

Discover India with TravelTV Hindi

Bite-sized adventures, big discoveries!



Explore the soul of India through the lens of TravelTV.News Hindi, as we take you on a journey across stunning destinations in just two-minute videos! From the rich cultural heritage to vibrant local flavors, experience the diversity of Indian tourism like never before.

Scan the QR code below to dive into these captivating stories and unlock the beauty of each destination. Your adventure awaits!



Delhi

arumita.gupta@ddppl.com, +91 96503 99908

Mumbai

harshal@ddppl.com, +91 96194 99167

www.travelTVindia.News



An ocean **above the land**

The newly opened Singapore Oceanarium encapsulates a journey with a blend of storytelling, science, and sensory wonder for large MICE groups.

By **Lipla Negi**

Uncover the ocean's deepest secrets without the need for deep-sea driving gear or training at the newly opened Singapore Oceanarium — an immersive masterclass in marine history, ecosystems, and a vibrant life beneath the waves. It is not a bigger aquarium and the scale is not just about size.

The Singapore Oceanarium features 22 thematic zones and is home to over 40,000 marine creatures. A cornerstone of the oceanarium is its Research & Learning Centre, which is Asia's first marine science hub certified as Green Mark Platinum Zero Energy, reinforcing SGO's commitment to sustainability and innovation in education.

Is it just a grand aquarium? Not quite. This is a journey across million years of how light and life first found their way into the ocean, before reaching beyond. A story that unfolds in darkness, silence, and sublime beauty over nearly three hours. So, lace up your most comfy shoes.

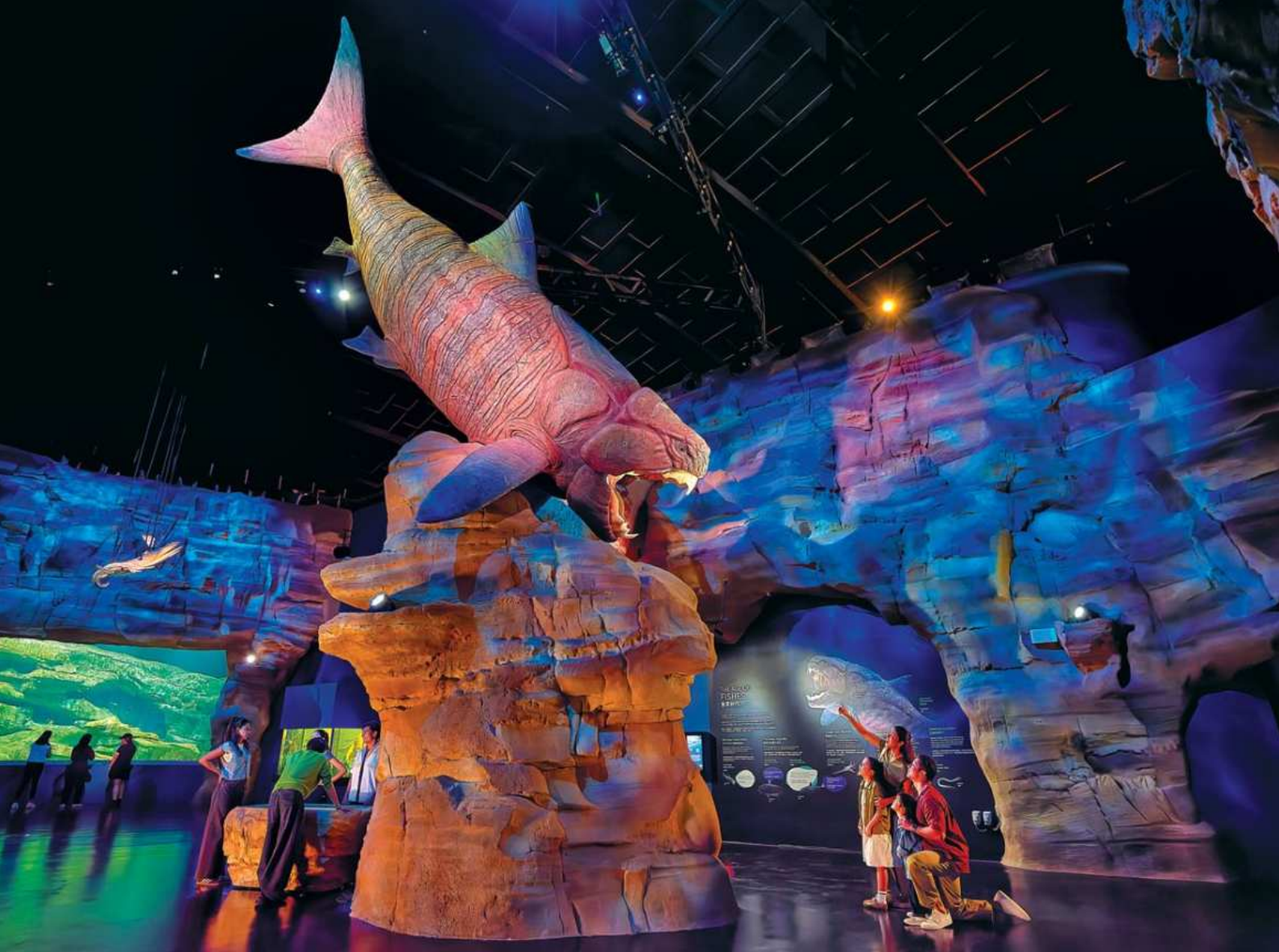
Thoughtfully curated, the experience goes far beyond showcasing sea creatures. It brings to you the quiet, the mystery, and the creatures that have defined our oceans since the dawn of time. The 22 immersive zones blend multimedia storytelling with moments of awe and stillness, drawing you closer to the beauty and fragility of marine life, and the need for its conservation.

Kick off your Oceanarium experience with Ocean Wonders, encapsulating 500 million years of sea jellies drifting through the 'blue' planet. The evolution is set in motions with cylindrical habitats offering a 360-degree view of other captivating species, including Atlantic Sea Nettles, Fried Egg Sea Jellies, and more.



Oceanarium brings
to you the quiet, the
mystery, and the
creatures that have
defined our oceans
since the dawn of time





A moment of serendipity strikes as you stand before the 6.8 m diameter Kreisel — one of the world's largest sea jelly habitats, where you witness real world magic takes you over. Feather-light Moon Jellies drift like dreams, their umbrella-shaped bells rhythmically pulse, and free float in perfect synchrony with an evocative soundscape. Even the music has been meticulously curated, shifting with every zone to reflect mood, meaning, and the quiet majesty of ocean's journey through the ages.

Step into the Ancient Waters, which brings back the creatures of pre-historic era. Ocean's equivalent of the dinosaur era, here you come face-to-face with life-size animatronics and towering replicas that bring these long-extinct giants back to life.

The Singapore Coast celebrates the island country's mangroves and the resilient marine life it supports, especially local species like Archerfish and Barred Mudskipper. In mood for a quick, ticklish natural manicure? This zone also has tank, where you can immerse your hand to let the skunk cleaner shrimp feed on dead skin. For a click-worthy reel, there is a bucket with a transparent bottom so that you can capture some great frames of undersea creatures.

One of the most moving part of this place is 'Whale Fall and Sea Mount' — a walk through a life-size whale's skeleton and the ecosystem it feeds, tracing the circle of life in the ocean. On the other hand, the Open Ocean zone contains 18 million litres of water and boasts a stunning 36-metre-wide

//

1

Where: Resorts World Sentosa, 8 Sentosa Gateway, Singapore

2

Timings: Operating hours daily, 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM (last admission at 7:00 PM)



3

Ticket prices: S\$ 50 per adult, S\$ 42 per child (aged three to 12 years old), and S\$ 42 per senior citizen (aged 60 and above)

4

Website: www.singaporeoceanarium.com

//

viewing panel, where you get a closer look at the Manta Rays, Spotted Eagle Rays, and Zebra Sharks gliding through the water.

A sensorial treat for kids and adults alike the, Art-quarium features an interactive touch table, where you can mix different traits to create your own digital fish, while learning how these adaptations help marine species survive in their natural environment.

The interactive way in which one uncovers the past and present of oceans makes Singapore Oceanarium a perfect destination for overseas educational trips for schools and colleges, and MICE groups.

While marine life forms the spirit of the sea, not everything carried by the currents belongs in the sea. The 'Garbage Patch' art installation traces the path of a single discarded plastic bottle as it drifts across the ocean, a stark reminder of human impact on these waters.

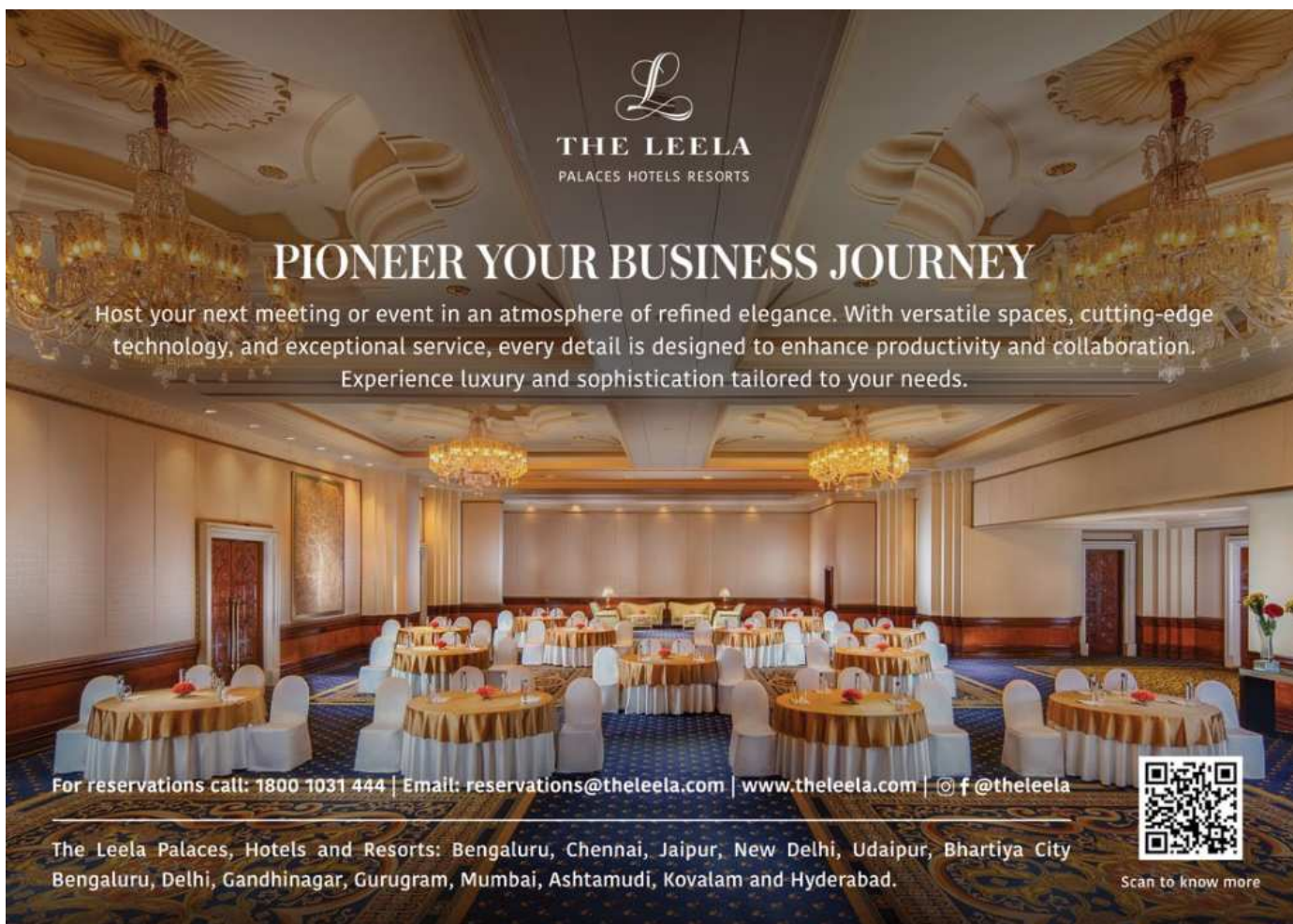
Detailing the human impact in marine life conservation, the 'Hallway of Hope' spotlights stories of successful marine protection initiatives. It showcases how communities and researchers are working together to safeguard the seas.

The launch of Singapore Oceanarium is part of Resorts World Sentosa's S\$ 6.8 billion expansion,

The launch of Singapore Oceanarium is part of Resorts World Sentosa's S\$ 6.8 billion expansion

which will further enhance Singapore's position as a must-visit destination. At the launch, **Melissa Ow**, Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board said, "The Singapore Oceanarium marks a significant milestone in our Tourism 2040 roadmap. This world-class attraction by Resorts World Sentosa exemplifies our commitment to create diverse and distinctive experiences that resonate with travellers seeking inspiring and purposeful journeys."

Echoing this sentiment, **Thien Kwee Eng**, Chief Executive Officer, Sentosa Development Corporation, shared, "As we transform and elevate our island's offerings, Singapore Oceanarium is a welcome addition to Sentosa's suite of world-class attractions, strengthening our proposition as a beloved island destination for both locals and overseas guests." ➔




THE LEEA
PALACES HOTELS RESORTS

PIONEER YOUR BUSINESS JOURNEY

Host your next meeting or event in an atmosphere of refined elegance. With versatile spaces, cutting-edge technology, and exceptional service, every detail is designed to enhance productivity and collaboration. Experience luxury and sophistication tailored to your needs.

For reservations call: 1800 1031 444 | Email: reservations@theleela.com | www.theleela.com | [@theleela](https://www.facebook.com/theleela)

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts: Bengaluru, Chennai, Jaipur, New Delhi, Udaipur, Bhartiya City Bengaluru, Delhi, Gandhinagar, Gurugram, Mumbai, Ashtamudi, Kovalam and Hyderabad.



Scan to know more

Card payments

Future of transaction is AI

As technology permeates daily life, businesses embracing it will meet rising consumer expectations and showcase long-term financial resilience, says **Shruti Gupta**

As global economies rebound and corporate mobility surges, business travel is experiencing a renaissance. In India alone, corporate travel spending reached approximately US\$ 37 billion in FY25, this is estimated to grow to US\$ 43 billion in FY26 and projected to reach US\$ 71 billion in FY 2029, with the IT sector leading the charge and industries like automobile and FMCG showing high spend-to-employee ratios. This resurgence is not just about movement — it is about transformation. At the heart of this

evolution lies the rise of card payments, which are redefining how enterprises manage travel expenses and enhance employee experiences.

CARD PAYMENTS

Corporate cards have become crucial for managing travel-related expenses. Their integration with Expense Management Systems (EMS) like Concur and Expensify — used by over 70 per cent of business travellers — has revolutionised reporting and reimbursement. Virtual cards, in particular, are gaining traction,

offering secure, currency-flexible solutions that mitigate fraud risks and simplify reconciliation. These digital payment tools not only enforce compliance and improve visibility but also automate financial processes strengthening supplier relationships. For mid-market firms, where EMS adoption still lags, card payments present a compelling opportunity to modernise and scale.

AI AND FRAUD DETECTION

With the expansion of business travel





SHRUTI GUPTA

Head, Commercial & Money Movement Solutions,
India & South Asia, Visa Commercial Solutions

comes an increase in associated risks. The payment ecosystem is becoming more susceptible to account takeovers, transaction fraud, and misuse of corporate cards. To address these challenges, Visa has made investments in technology, committing \$10 billion to reduce fraud and enhance network security. Our systems have successfully prevented \$40 billion in fraudulent



The convergence of AI, real-time payments, and card solutions is reshaping the travel landscape



activities. These systems analyse transactions in real-time, flagging anomalies such as rapid geographic spending or unusual purchase patterns. AI also powers biometric authentication, replacing passwords with facial recognition and fingerprint scans for a frictionless yet secure experience.

Visa's suite of solutions including VCAS, 3Ds are being adapted for B2B use, targeting the \$30 billion opportunity in transaction fraud management. These innovations are not just reactive — they are predictive, learning continuously to stay ahead of emerging threats.

AI TRAVEL AGENTS

Beyond security, AI is transforming the traveller experience. Intelligent agents now assist with bookings, policy compliance, and expense submissions. For executives like James, who juggle frequent trips and manual reporting, AI travel agents offer relief through

automated documentation and personalised recommendations.

These tools foster deeper relationships between banks and cardholders, encouraging high-value transactions and enabling targeted marketing.

SECURE & SMART PAYMENTS

The convergence of AI, real-time payments, and card solutions is reshaping the travel landscape. The future of MICE travel lies in digital wallets, virtual cards, and cross-border payment solutions — all underpinned by robust fraud prevention and spend analytics.

In this new era, travel is no longer about reaching destinations. It is about turning transactions into experiences, where every swipe, tap, and click is secure, personalised, and seamlessly integrated into the journey. ➔

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same)



Hotels transforming into specialised locales

Hotels in the country have become flexible preferred destinations and fully-equipped spaces for conferences and residential meetings, besides offsite events.

By **Lipla Negi**

In today's dynamic corporate landscape, the way businesses conduct 'meetings and conferences' is undergoing a significant transformation. Companies are increasingly moving away from hosting events within their own premises and are

instead seeking specialised venues that can provide comprehensive solutions. With rising demand for flexible and fully-equipped spaces, hotels are becoming the preferred destination for conferences and residential meetings, besides offsite events.

Traditionally, many companies still maintain in-house facilities for their

conferences and annual meetings. However, maintaining dedicated spaces year-round for a handful of events has proven costly and inefficient. "Earlier, corporates invested in creating conference spaces within their offices but if you are using them only 30 times a year, the maintenance is not justified. Instead, companies now prefer to

collaborate with hotels offering end-to-end solutions. It is practical, cost-effective, and far more convenient,” explained **Amit K. Sood**, CEO, Tivoli Hospitality Group.

SMALL IS THE NEW BIG

Alongside big-ticket corporate events requiring 100+ rooms, a 200-seater conference hall, and curated dining or R&R activities, there is a parallel surge in demand for smaller, residential conferences. These typically involve 10–12 intimate meetings per month, often for leadership teams, training programmes, brainstorming sessions, and internal reviews. This trend has created a new opportunity for hotels to design spaces that offer versatility and efficiency, accommodating both large gatherings, and smaller, more personalised sessions.

The Tivoli, New Delhi has concentrated on building a conferencing ecosystem to tap into the growing need for more efficient yet static boardroom spaces. Its dedicated meeting infrastructure has a boardroom for all sizes, whether it is a meeting for four, 50, or more. For international conferences, this five-star property offers high-speed internet access and secretarial support. There are smaller cubicles available for interviews and one-on-one discussions, along with multiple boardroom seating for 8–20 people. “From boardrooms for focused deliberations to ballrooms for



“For meetings of every size, companies now prefer to collaborate with hotels offering end-to-end solutions.”

AMIT K SOOD, CEO, Tivoli Hospitality Group



larger conferences, complemented by a diverse F&B spread — from poolside cafés and bars to all-day dining — the integrated spaces make team building and networking seamless,” said Gupta.

PERSONALISED SOLUTIONS

Like every great transformation, The Tivoli now speaks the language of luxury and experiential hospitality. It elevates its legacy of delivering impeccable celebrations to an entirely new level. Responding to the rising demand for larger-than-life décor, a global culinary palette, and celebrations designed to feel like the event of the century, the property has reimagined itself into an all-equipped resort-style destination.

At its heart are five state-of-the-art banquet halls, each crafted to deliver unforgettable experiences.

Among its signature venues are Oakwood, Oyster Greens, Emperor’s Court, and the strikingly unconventional NTB (Not the Banquet). While the first three offer colossal, elegant spaces for grand festivities, NTB introduces a fresh, uber-cool twist — a high-energy party hub with a New York Times Square vibe, designed to set the stage for corporate soirées and stylish social gatherings unlike any other. From intimate gatherings of 15 to magnificent galas hosting up to 3,000 guests, The Tivoli ensures every scale of celebration feels seamless and spectacular. ➔

India's business travel gets a smarter edge

Outbound MICE today is about fresh destinations and meaningful experiences, and real ROI, as **Harshad Donde**, Country Director India, BCD M&E, explains.



By **Janice Alyosius**

When it comes to outbound MICE, India is no longer just dipping its toes back into international markets — it is diving right in. The post-pandemic surge in demand has not only surprised industry watchers but also highlighted how quickly Indian corporates adapt to change.

Harshad Donde, Country Director India, BCD Meetings & Events (BCD M&E), has been closely watching this

evolution. “Post-pandemic, outbound travel from India has evolved, showing strong recovery and growth. With more countries now offering visa-free travel for Indians and exponential growth in flight connectivity, the industry is looking at newer destinations,” he said.

Shifting ground realities show that Donde is right. For instance, while Thailand and Dubai remain evergreen favourites, it is destinations like Vietnam and Japan that are stealing the show. This shift is refreshing because it signals that Indian MICE travellers



HARSHAD DONDE
Country Director, India, BCD M&E



are no longer playing it safe — they want novelty, experiences, and deeper connections to culture.

Indian corporates no longer send teams abroad just for the sake of it. “The key business objectives, such as talent retention and channel partner engagement, continue to be central. Sustainability is increasingly becoming a priority, alongside distinctive venues, and localised experiences,” explained Donde. This resonates with today’s workforce. In his view, Indian employees, especially millennials and Gen Z, are looking for meaning in every trip — so when companies tie in sustainability or cultural immersion, it is a story employees take back with them. Of course, global uncertainties have not disappeared. Visa delays, geopolitics, and economic pressures are real challenges but India, Donde pointed out, is remarkably resilient. “India was among the first nations to reopen for outbound travel following the pandemic. While geopolitical changes may have a temporary impact, the country’s short lead time contributes to greater

{ Indian MICE travellers are no longer playing it safe — they want novelty and new experiences }

predictability.” This agility is what sets India apart — it does not just bounce back; it recalibrates. This recalibration is also visible in how Return on Investment (ROI) is being measured. Donde puts it plainly, “Indian companies start the evaluation of ROI at a very early stage. Choosing the right destination and having higher perceived value with the attendees is the first step, followed by curated itineraries.”

What is striking is that companies are no longer chasing just flashy experiences; they are valuing compliance, stability, and strong partnerships. “Clients are now looking at stable and compliant partners like BCD M&E,” Donde noted. Post-event analytics and engagement metrics are now central to assessments, which were often overlooked earlier.

For BCD M&E, this means going beyond logistics and becoming a strategic partner. Donde highlighted their focus on life sciences — “one of the most compliant industries” — and how they align events with clients’ sustainability goals. From reducing carbon footprint to involving local communities, the future of MICE is also about responsibility as much as scale. Even tech advancement and tools around data security and analytics are significantly influencing how Indian events are delivered and in turn, shaping best practices.

Donde’s observation indicates that India’s outbound MICE is not just recovering, it is rewriting the playbook — with sustainability, compliance, and cultural richness as its guiding stars. ➔



ITB India 2025

A confluence of ideas

ITB India 2025 concludes at Jio World Convention Centre connecting global leaders with India's tourism market. The event is all set to return from 2–4 September 2026.

By MT Bureau

ITB India 2025 brought together international and local exhibitors with curated buyers, reaffirming its role as the premier meeting point for the region's travel industry. Spanning

three days, the third in-person edition of the B2B trade show and conference, held alongside MICE Show India and Travel Tech India, brought together professionals from the MICE, leisure, corporate, and travel technology sectors. This year's show was attended by

more than 600 travel trade buyers and facilitated close to 4,000 confirmed one-on-one meetings between buyers and exhibitors. The exhibition floor featured strong global participation with more than 50 per cent international exhibitors.

Notable exhibitors included Wonderful Indonesia, Visit Northern Finland, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism Oman, Sarawak Tourism Board, Fly24hrs, Infiniti Software Solutions, and VEGA Hotel and Convention Center.

Darren Seah, Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, and organiser of ITB India, MICE Show India, and Travel Tech India, said, "ITB India 2025 demonstrated the vitality of the Indian and South Asian travel markets, serving as an essential platform for global engagement and collaboration. This year's edition placed strong emphasis on experience-led travel while fostering fresh



opportunities for dialogue, innovation, and partnerships across sectors.”

Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh took centre stage as the Official Partner States of ITB India 2025. Their participation highlighted India’s diverse regions, and underscored the show’s commitment to promoting India’s vast tourism landscape on a global stage.

LEADERS’ DIALOGUE

The conference offered more than 1,440 minutes of content across 40 sessions and four dedicated tracks — Knowledge Theatre, MICE & Corporate, Travel Tech, and Experiential Travel. Centred



{ For meetings of every size, companies now prefer to collaborate with hotels offering end-to-end solutions }

around the event’s unifying theme ‘The Business of Experience: Curated Travel for Targeted Growth’, more than 80 industry leaders shared their expertise on critical topics shaping the future of MICE, corporate travel, and travel technology. Notable highlights included contributions from senior leaders such as FCM Meetings & Events, Google, IHCL, SOTC Travel, Thomas Cook India, and Tripjack. The debut of the Experiential Travel track proved

especially relevant, reflecting the growing demand for immersive tourism — from cruise travel and film tourism to cultural and sustainable journeys. Continuing its mission to connect the world with the region’s dynamic markets,

ITB India will return to the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai from 2 to 4 September 2026. Early Bird rates on booth registration for ITB India, MICE Show India, and Travel Tech India are available until 15 May 2026.

Seah added, “ITB India 2025 has demonstrated the remarkable growth and resilience of the tourism sector, bringing together global exhibitors, quality buyers, and industry leaders at one dynamic marketplace. With engaging content and strong partnerships across corporate, leisure, and technology-driven travel, this year’s edition reinforces India’s role as a gateway to the Asia Pacific region. We are excited to build on this momentum and look forward to an even stronger ITB India 2026.” ➔

ANOTHER MILESTONE AT THE SHOW

Another milestone event at the show was the launch of the India Cruise Forum – a multi-city B2B initiative, jointly conceptualised by STIC Travel Group and DDP Group, to connect global cruise players with India’s most dynamic travel sellers. The launch was followed by a panel on cruise titled ‘Niche to Norm: Unlocking the Regional Cruise Revolution’.

Speaking at ITB India’s panel on cruising, **Isha Goyal**, Director and CEO, STIC Travel Group, said, “The travel agent has a significant role to play in selling cruises. Globally, almost 70% of cruise sales is done through travel agents even in mature markets such as the US, Australia and Europe. It is not because cruises are difficult to sell but because there is a lot of nuanced information and travel agents can help consumers make better choices.”





Taiwan swings big with golf tourism

From heritage courses to luxury experiences, Taiwan is teeing up unique golfing journeys for Indian travellers and corporate groups alike.

By MT Bureau

Since its re-entry into the Indian market in January 2024, the Taiwan Tourism Administration (TTA) has made significant investments to make Taiwan more alluring to Indians. As part of its market expansion initiative, TTA is focusing on strategic campaigns, including the promotion of Taiwan as a corporate and incentives travel destination. From this year onwards, the focus has expanded to niche products like golf tourism along with other categories.

Taiwan boasts a rich golfing legacy that spans over 100 years. The country is home to some remarkable year-round golf courses spread across the island such as Taiwan's oldest golf club, Ta Shee Golf & Country Club, and Miramar Golf & Country Club. Beyond its heritage courses, Taiwan continues to invest in golf infra, adding new courses that will be complemented by exceptional experiences for enthusiasts. In the coming months, TTA aims to strengthen partnerships with India's golfing trade, Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), and other key stakeholders. The goal is to create tailor-made golf packages that combine golfing with luxury resorts, hot springs, wellness experiences, and high-end shopping. These packages are designed to meet the expectations of

The goal is to create tailor-made golf packages that combine golfing with luxury resorts, wellness experiences, and high-end shopping

discerning High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) and corporates seeking exotic golfing experiences in Taiwan. So far, the results have been encouraging.

Taiwan recorded over 20 per cent growth in Indian arrivals, surpassing 38,000 visitors in 2024. With the

promotion of niche experiences like golf tourism, aligned with the recently launched global campaign 'TAIWAN – Waves of Wonder' — which highlights Taiwan's evolving tourism story — TTA is confident of achieving even greater visibility in the Indian market. ➔



AIME 2026 back with bigger plans

From 9–11 February 2026, Melbourne will host AIME's grand return, setting a new MICE benchmark with an expanded knowledge programme.

By MT Bureau

The Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) is gearing up for its biggest edition in 2026, returning to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) from 9 to 11 February. With unprecedented early demand, the show looks poised to host more than 700 exhibitors and an equal number of hosted buyers, who will connect through over 20,000 pre-scheduled meetings.

"AIME continues to prove its value as the leading marketplace for business events in the region," said **Silke Calder**, Event Director, AIME. "After the tremendous success of AIME 2025, we are confident that 2026 will raise the bar even higher." The event will once again kick off with Knowledge Monday,

under the theme 'Expertise Matters!'. Curated by **El Kwang**, Founder, BEAMexperience, the programme will feature global thought leaders, innovators, and industry pioneers. Building on last year's 'We Matter!' theme, the 2026 edition will shift focus toward applied knowledge, professional credibility, and the enduring human skills that remain vital even in the era of AI.

A refreshed advisory committee is shaping the Knowledge Program, with input from leaders across Asia Pacific



SILKE CALDER
Event Director, AIME

A refreshed advisory committee is shaping the Knowledge Program, with input from leaders across Asia Pacific



including **Anna Patterson**, Founder, Sight Agency, alongside representatives from MCI Australia, ICMS, and Events Travel Asia Group. The sessions are designed to appeal to a wide audience, from established global planners to rising voices in emerging markets such as India.

At the core of AIME remains the Hosted Buyer Program, now open for applications. Offering curated meetings and access to suppliers, AIME 2026 promises unmatched opportunities to learn, connect, and do business. For hosted buyer applications and Knowledge Monday speaker submissions, visit aime.com.au. ➔



MOVEMENTS



KIRAN ANDICOT

Senior Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International

Marriott International has appointed Kiran Andicot as Senior Vice President–South Asia to oversee operations and development in the region. With nearly 30 years of experience, he has expertise in operations, consultancy, planning, and development. Since joining Marriott in 2006, Andicot has played a pivotal role in driving growth, signing over 220 hotels across India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. His leadership will focus on strengthening owner partnerships and accelerating conversions.



MANOJ KUMAR

General Manager
WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa

WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa has appointed Manoj Kumar as General Manager. With over 14 years of leadership in India's hospitality sector, he brings expertise in enhancing guest experiences, operational excellence, and sustainable growth. Kumar has worked with leading brands including JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, The Westin Hyderabad, Taj Hotels, Caravela Beach Resort Goa, and Inner Living Hotels & Resorts. He also founded Ancient Treasure Hospitality, where he created boutique stays and villas in Goa.



MANISH DAYYA

General Manager
Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity

Manish Dayya has been appointed as the General Manager of Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. With over 27 years in luxury hospitality, he is renowned for driving operational excellence, innovation, and sustainability. Known for transforming properties into award-winning destinations, Dayya brings a combination of people-first leadership, and innovation-led strategy. His extensive Accor experience includes successful hotel launches and repositionings recognised globally.



VARUN MEHROTRA

Multi-Property Director, Sales & Marketing, Bengaluru, Marriott International

Varun Mehrotra has been promoted to Multi-Property Director of Sales & Marketing for Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center, The Artiste Kochi – a Tribute Portfolio Hotel, and Marriott Executive Apartments UB City. Following his successful tenure as Director of Sales & Marketing at Sheraton Grand Whitefield, Mehrotra will now lead sales and marketing across all three properties. He will drive business development, optimise revenue, and enhance brand visibility.



SAURABH MISHRA

Director, Sales and Marketing
Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel

Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel has appointed Saurabh Mishra as Director of Sales and Marketing. With more than 15 years of experience across top hospitality brands including Hyatt, IHG, Taj, Accor, and The Claridges, he brings expertise in sales, marketing, and event management. Mishra will drive revenue growth of the property and enhance guest experiences across corporate, MICE, and social. He will execute strategic initiatives to expand the market reach of the hotel.



SHEETAL SANGALIA

Director of Sales
Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and JECC

Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and JECC has appointed Sheetal Sangalia as Director of Sales. With over 14 years in the hospitality industry, she brings extensive expertise and a proven record of success. Having worked across leading 5-star properties, Sangalia excels in driving sales, achieving profit targets, and capitalising on market trends. Recognised for her strategic mindset and problem-solving skills, she is adept at attracting new business and fostering sustainable growth.



SUDIPTA HALDER

Assistant Director of Human Resources, Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata

Sudipta Halder has been appointed as Assistant Director of Human Resources by Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata. With over 15 years of experience in HR, learning and development, and people engagement, he brings deep expertise in talent management. Having worked with leading brands such as Sarovar Hotels, The Lalit, Accor, Hyatt, and Taj Hotels, Sudipta has held key leadership roles in HR and training. Known for his approachable leadership, he will drive HR strategy and culture-building at Fairfield Kolkata.



DEBANJANA

Senior HR & Training Manager,
Clarks Exotica Convention Resort & Spa

Clarks Exotica Convention Resort and Spa has appointed Debanjana as Senior Human Resources & Training Manager. With over a decade of experience, she brings expertise in HR, training, and operations. Her career spans leading brands like Hyatt, Specialty Restaurant, and Passcode Hospitality. In her new role at Clarks Exotica, Debanjana will lead the resort's human resources strategy and develop innovative training programmes that promotes both employee development and exceptional guest experiences.

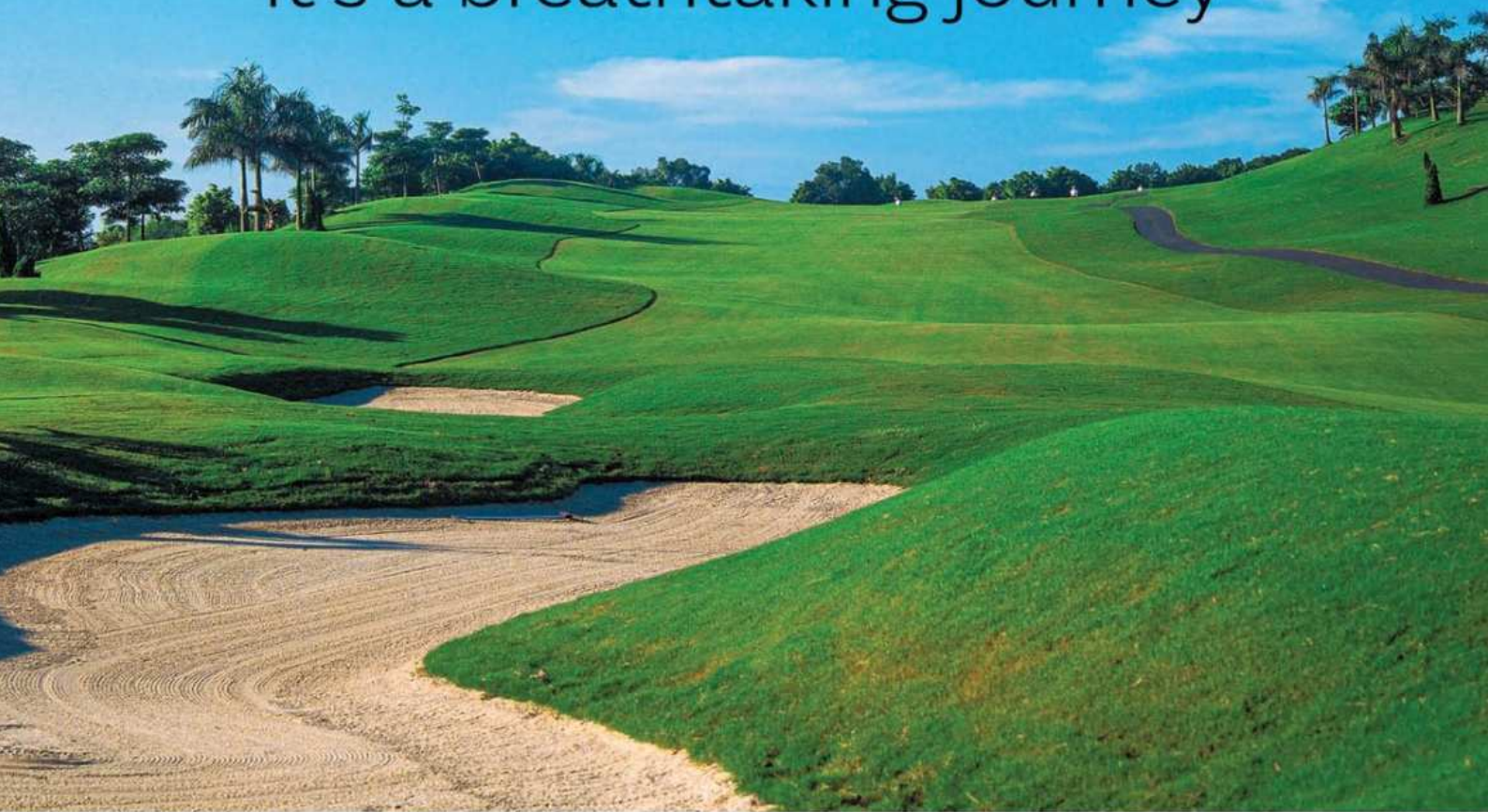
TAIWAN
WAVES OF WONDER

Tee off where a sport
is beyond the greens

in Taiwan

GOLF

isn't just a sport
it's a breathtaking journey



For more information, please contact:

TAIWAN TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE IN MUMBAI

Add: Suite No. GRA 102, Raheja Platinum, WeWork, Marol, Andheri East, Mumbai, Maharashtra - 400059

✉ info@blinkbrandsolutions.com | ☎ +91 98203 71566 | 🌐 eng.taiwan.net.tw

WHERE BUSINESS MEETS BEYOND



THE BEST STANDALONE **CONVENTION CENTRE** IN INDIA

Awarded by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for 2017-18 & 2018-19



INDIA EXPOSITION MART LTD.

📍 KNOWLEDGE PARK—II, GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR, GREATER NOIDA-201306 (U.P.)

☎ +91 120 2328 011 20, +91 971 779 0583

🌐 www.indiaexpomart.com

✉ marketing2@indiaexpocentre.com

Follow Us

