

# HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA fhrai magazine

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# President's Note



*Dear Members and Stakeholders,*

**A**s we evaluate the Union Budget 2025, it is evident that the government has reinforced its commitment to strengthening India's tourism sector, by taking some significant initiatives aimed for the growth of the sector. A key highlight of this year's budget is the plan to develop the top 50 tourism destinations in collaboration with state governments. This initiative promises not only to enhance infrastructure but also to ensure a more equitable distribution of tourism benefits across the country. By expanding the reach of tourism, we can attract more visitors, uplift local communities, and drive sustainable and inclusive growth for the sector.

For the hospitality industry, a noteworthy development is the inclusion of hotels in these top 50 destinations under the master list of harmonious infrastructure projects. While this is a partial step, it aligns with FHRAI's long-standing request to grant 'Infrastructure Status' to the hospitality sector. If extended nationwide, this classification could be a game-changer, enabling hotels to access long-term financing at lower interest rates. This, in turn, will allow the industry to upgrade infrastructure, modernise services, and enhance guest experiences, making India's tourism offerings more competitive on the global stage.

Another welcome initiative is the introduction of 'Heal in India', aimed at promoting medical and wellness tourism. India has already established itself as a leading destination for medical tourism, offering world-class healthcare at a fraction of the cost compared to developed nations. This initiative will also help position India as a global hub for holistic healing and medical excellence.

The revamped UDAN scheme is yet another positive development. By adding 120 new regional destinations and expanding air travel capacity by 4 crore passengers over the next decade, this initiative aims to enhance accessibility and affordability in air travel. Improved regional connectivity is essential for both established and emerging tourist destinations, ensuring that the benefits of tourism reach underexplored and remote areas, thereby fostering balanced economic growth across the country.

While these initiatives are promising, several persistent challenges facing the tourism and hospitality sector remain unaddressed in the budget. Prominent among them is the granting of 'Infrastructure Status' for hotels. The classification of all hotel projects, irrespective of location or star category, under the Infrastructure Project category is highly essential for the development of tourism sector in the country. Additionally, the ease of doing business, GST rationalisation, copyright licensing issues, and addressing the high fixed costs of hotel operations remain



A key highlight of this year's budget is the plan to develop the top 50 tourism destinations in partnership with state governments."

as critical challenges. These issues must be resolved for the hospitality industry to reach its full potential and continue its growth trajectory.

FHRAI has proactively engaged with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry regarding the growing challenges posed by food delivery aggregators like Zomato and Swiggy. The rise of private label food delivery services, data monopolisation, and unfair business practices has adversely impacted thousands of restaurants across India. By advocating for transparent and fair market practices, FHRAI is committed to protecting the interests of restaurants and millions of livelihoods in hospitality.

As FHRAI, we remain deeply committed to working alongside the government and industry stakeholders to achieve a thriving, resilient, and globally competitive tourism sector. With collaborative efforts, we can ensure that India's vision of becoming a global tourism leader by 2047 is successfully realised.

Warm regards,  
**K Syama Raju**  
President, FHRAI



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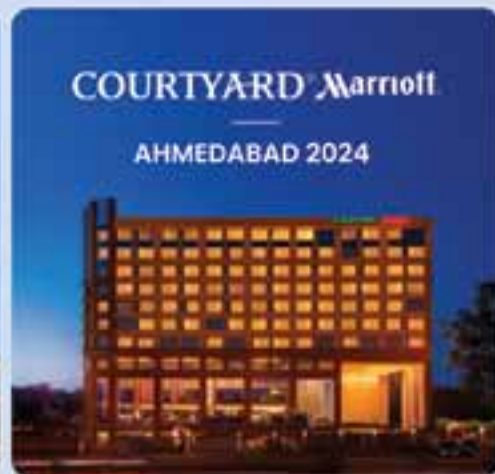
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## Defying principles of marketplace neutrality

In letter to Ministry of Commerce and Industry, FHRAI raises strong objections against Zomato and Swiggy's foray into private labelling and data misuse.



## Linking F&B to room charges erroneous

Seeking attention of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, FHRAI presses for reforms in GST framework for F&B operating within hotels.



## Expanding India's tourism horizon

Nikhil Sharma shares how strategic govt initiatives on infrastructure and sustainability are crucial to Indian tourism's growth narrative.



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## 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary: Milestone celebration

Emphasising its resilient spirit, HRAWI celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with new zeal fostering excellence in hospitality.



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## Progressive measures but not a big win

Budget 2025 promises growth opportunities with focus on 50 new destinations, and enhanced infrastructure and connectivity.



48

## Reimagining hospitality talent

For a win-win situation, collab of hotels and institutes is crucial to motivate students with clear career pathways in hospitality.



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## Go beyond beaten path, reap benefits

Hospitality sector must leverage offbeat leisure destinations to capitalise on low land costs and high-profit margins.

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# Defying principles of marketplace neutrality

In letter to Ministry of Commerce and Industry, FHRAI raises strong objections against Zomato and Swiggy's foray into private labelling and data misuse.



DDP Bureau

**F**HRAI has written to **Sunil Barthwal**, Commerce Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, highlighting food delivery aggregators Zomato and Swiggy's recent move into private labelling and food manufacturing. The association raised concerns over the sale of such products through quick commerce apps, such as Blinkit, Bisto, and Swiggy.

In the letter, FHRAI said, "These developments constitute a significant violation of e-commerce regulations, principles of marketplace neutrality, and fair competition." Besides, they posed serious threats to the restaurant industry.

The key concerns are as follows:

## Neutrality violation

**Evidence:** Both platforms were origi-

The move into private labelling and food manufacturing constitutes a significant violation of e-commerce regulations and fair competition

nally designed as neutral marketplaces to provide equal opportunities to restaurant partners. However, by creating their own private-label products, they are now directly competing with the restaurants.

**Impact:** Restaurant partners face reduced visibility and skewed consumer redirection towards private labels, undermining their competitiveness and survival.

## Data misuse

**Evidence:** Easy access to detailed consumer and restaurant data such as demand patterns, popular cuisines, and pricing strategies. By leveraging this data to create their

private-label brands, they are exploiting a clear conflict of interest.

**Impact:** Restaurants lose their competitive advantage, as these platforms replicate their offerings while undercutting prices.

## Legal concerns

**Evidence:** Many private-label offerings mimic popular dishes or formats from established restaurant brands, infringing on intellectual property rights.

**Actions:** Similar practices have led to legal actions globally, such as copyright infringement lawsuits in the retail and e-commerce sectors.

## Consumer redirection

**Evidence:** Use algorithms and promotions to prioritise their private labels, redirecting consumers away from restaurant partners.

**Impact:** Restaurants lose revenue, and consumers are misled into purchasing private-label products without clarity about their origin.

## Assurance breaches

**Evidence:** Zomato and Swiggy had previously assured stakeholders of the industry that they would refrain from venturing into private labelling. However, their current actions contradict these commitments and erode trust within the industry. □





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# Advocating Aadhaar authentication: Key for security

From endorsing Aadhaar authentication to privacy concerns, FHRAI presents suggestions to government aimed at enhancing guest safety and convenience.



DDP Bureau

While welcoming the proposal to make Aadhaar authentication mandatory for air travel, tourism, and hotel services, FHRAI provided some valid suggestions received from its members and requested the government to consider them while implementing the proposal. The federation observed that the move could potentially streamline processes and enhance both security and convenience.

The association pointed out that while check-in at the hospitality establishments, guests provide different kinds of IDs such as Aadhaar, PAN card, passport, driving license, and voter ID as proof of their identity and residency status. The government must issue clear guidelines on the documents which can be accepted for identity and residency status.

Clear regulations should be made regarding collection and storage of



Aadhaar data of the guests and ensure conformity with other relevant acts and laws of the country. Besides making Aadhaar authentication compulsory, it should be also in sync with the requirements of the police department, Foreigners Regional Registration Office, etc.

FHRAI suggested that there could be instances of Aadhaar authentication's failure due to various reasons, which may lead to guest inconvenience.

**"The government needs to issue clear guidelines on the documents which can be accepted for both identity and residency status."**



niences. The industry should be equipped to address such situations.

The association further proposed more sensitisation of the public and the hospitality sector is required regarding privacy concerns while availing air travel, tourism, and hotel services. The government should make it mandatory to carry valid ID documents, preferably Aadhaar cards, for a seamless check-in experience and the legal necessity of ID verification. These guidelines will enhance the hospitality sector's commitment to guest safety and compliance. □





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Seeking attention of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, FHRAI presses for reforms in GST framework for F&B operating within hotels.



DDP Bureau

**R**aising concerns over the existing GST structure, FHRAI has written to Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning & State Excise **Ajit Pawar**, to seek support in resolving the issue of linking GST on food services in restaurants to the room rates charged for accommodation. A lot of confusion is prevailing in the tourism sector due to the ambiguities in the GST Act regarding charging of GST in the restaurants operating within hotel premises.

The letter stated that the current practice of linking taxation of food services in restaurants to the room rates charged for accommodation is



erroneous, posing several difficulties. This creates several operational challenges for the industry. However, neither the Act nor the authorities provide any satisfactory solutions or answers to the numerous day-to-day problems of the industry in their GST compliance. To make things worse, the industry ends up getting hefty notices from the department, for no fault of theirs.

Against this backdrop, the association sought urgent support and intervention to provide clarifications on the following practical issues of the hospitality sector in their GST-related compliances.

- What is the period for charging GST at 18 per cent for a restaurant in case of a shift in the room tariff of the hotel where the restaurant operates, from below ₹7500 to

---

Will F&B rates shift to 18 from 5 per cent if a budget hotel's room tariff exceeds ₹7500?



above ₹7500? Is it for the whole year from that date or perpetual?

- Some budget hotels in temple towns and pilgrimage centres offer family rooms that can accommodate 7-8 people, but the room tariff of that particular room might be above ₹7500. Will that hotel come under the luxury category and will common guests staying in that hotel and eating in the restaurant have to pay GST at 18 per cent for their F&B?
- The hotel business is dynamic and seasonal. With the onset of a season or a particular event, room tariffs of budget hotels may also go up in some locations for a particular period. Are these hotels required to follow two types of GST compliance for the same month? When will be their F&B rates restored to 5 per cent?
- If on any given day, the room tariff of a budget hotel crosses the threshold of ₹7500, their F&B rates will shift to 18 per cent from 5 per cent. In that case, do the guests who are on a continuous stay with the hotel need to pay two different types of taxes between two consecutive days? ☐

An advertisement for Stevia Sweet Stevia Lemon Drink Mix. The background is a lush green forest. In the center, a box of the product is displayed on a wooden table. The box is yellow and green, with the brand name 'Stevia Sweet' and 'Stevia Lemon Drink Mix' clearly visible. To the left of the box, a vertical strip of circular icons lists benefits: '100% Natural', 'ZERO Sugar', 'ZERO Calories', 'No Artificial Sweeteners', 'No Artificial Flavors', 'No Artificial Colors', 'No Artificial Preservatives', and 'No Artificial anything'. In front of the box, there are several glasses of the drink mix, some with lemon slices, and a small bowl of fruit. The text 'The Sweet taste of good health' is written in a large, white, serif font across the middle. The 'HERBVEDA' logo is in the top right corner. At the bottom, the website 'www.steewsweet.co.in' and contact information are provided.

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# FHRAI urges to roll back hefty wedding fees

To strengthen Goa's reputation as premier wedding destination, FHRAI seeks govt attention to reassess exorbitant fees associated with hotel weddings.



DDP Bureau

In a move to seek government intervention, FHRAI has written to the Goa Chief Minister **Dr. Pramod Sawant**, raising concerns over the imposition of hefty fees for weddings and other events in hotel by village panchayats and the Directorate of Panchayats, Goa. To address this issue, the federation highlighted two recent decisions impacting the hospitality industry in Goa:

- The Majorda Village Panchayat in South Goa district has decided to impose a fee of ₹75,000 per wedding event held at hotel lawns, effective from 17 January 2025.
- As per a circular, issued by the Directorate of Panchayats, Government of Goa, all village panchayats in Goa will impose a uniform fee of ₹25,000 for no objection certificates (NoCs)/permissions for events, including weddings at hotels, resorts, and open lawns within their jurisdiction.

## Impacting local economy

Weddings are a vital revenue stream for hotels and a significant driver for allied businesses such as florists, caterers, transport services, and event planners. This interconnected network sustains numerous livelihoods within the local tourism ecosystem. However, the imposition of such fees poses a serious threat to these industries, potentially disrupting the local economy and the many jobs dependent on the wedding sector. The letter stated, "These measures could





Weddings are a vital revenue stream for hotels and other allied businesses such as florists, caterers, and event planners

tarnish Goa's reputation as a premier destination in India's thriving wedding market, which is valued at over ₹1 lakh crore. Goa has played a crucial role in establishing India as a global wedding destination, a vision championed by our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi."

#### Government involvement

FHRAI highlighted introducing such fees risks will diminish Goa's prominence in this lucrative market. The decision of the Directorate of

Panchayats to mandate additional NoCs and permissions for events in hotels and resorts also runs contrary to the central and state governments' efforts to enhance the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB). Excessive regulatory mechanisms and financial burdens can deter investment, impede growth, and threaten Goa's position

as a tourism and hospitality hub. FHRAI expressed, "We respectfully seek your urgent intervention to revoke these fees. Such a step would protect the interests of stakeholders across Goa's tourism and hospitality industries and align with the larger vision of fostering a business-friendly environment in India." □





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# Expanding India's tourism horizon

**Nikhil Sharma** shares how strategic govt initiatives on infrastructure and sustainability are crucial to Indian tourism's growth narrative.



**T**he Indian hospitality industry is at a pivotal juncture, with new opportunities emerging from evolving traveller preferences, government initiatives, and the nation's economic progress. The sector, contributing approximately 8 per cent of India's total employment and projected to grow at a CAGR of 10.5 per cent over the next three years, stands as a cornerstone of the country's economic growth. As a leader in this dynamic sector, I believe aligning strategies with these shifts, while prioritising innovation and sustainability, will define the next phase of growth.

## Emerging destinations

India's economic growth is fuelling hospitality, with smaller regions and cities emerging as tourism hubs. Destinations like Kumbhalgarh, Coorg, and Dhanbad are evolving into vibrant centres of culture, heritage, and adventure, offering unique experiences that resonate with modern travellers. Once considered peripheral, these



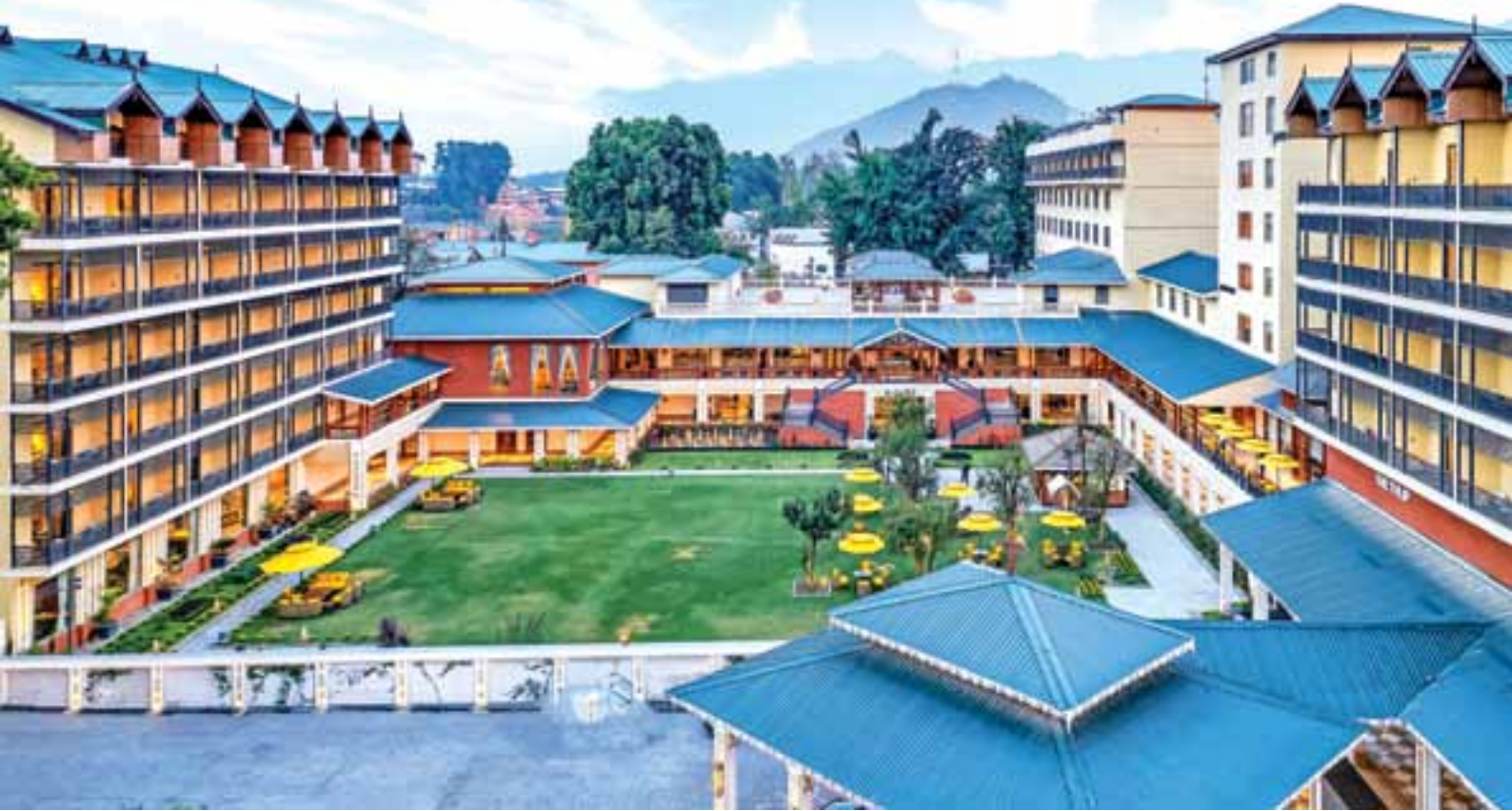
**NIKHIL SHARMA**

MD and Area Senior Vice President,  
South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

cities are now reshaping India's tourism landscape. Improved infrastructure, connectivity, and travellers' growing curiosity about lesser-known destinations are accelerating this trend.

Government initiatives like Dekho Apna Desh and Swadesh Darshan 2.0, alongside





digital advancements, are boosting tourism to these regions. Domestic tourism is set to grow 15–20 per cent, driven by better roads, affordable flights, and increasing interest in cultural travel. The Union Budget 2025-2026's plan to develop 50 top tourist sites aims to enhance infrastructure and sustainability. Besides, tax relief measures are expected to boost disposable income, fuelling domestic travel, and premium hospitality demand. These economic incentives will enhance the appeal of emerging cities and elevate hospitality offerings.

### Cultural connect

Experiential tourism is thriving as travellers seek deeper connections with destinations. Destinations like Kumarakom, Mawlynong, and Pushkar offer an authentic glimpse into India's cultural and natural heritage, catering to a growing demand for off-beat destinations. These locales provide travellers with opportunities to connect deeply with local traditions and landscapes while empowering rural communities.

The government's focus on promoting rural tourism through infrastructure development and community-driven initiatives has made these destinations more accessible and appealing. With spiritual tourism gain-

ing momentum, sacred sites such as Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar are witnessing increased interest from travellers seeking cultural enrichment. This growing demand highlights the potential of faith-based tourism as a significant contributor to India's hospitality sector.

### Digital innovations

The Indian hospitality industry is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by rapid technological advancements that are reshaping operations and enhancing guest experience. A key driver of this growth is the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics. Many Indian hotels are moving beyond static pricing models, leveraging AI to analyse real-time data for dynamic pricing strategies. This approach not only optimises revenue but also enhances the guest experience by offering personalised services. App-based services

---

Smaller destinations like Kumbhalgarh, Coorg, and Dhanbad are now emerging as tourism hubs offering unique experiences





have also transformed guest interactions, enabling seamless booking, check-in, room service requests, and loyalty programme management—all through mobile applications, enhancing convenience for both guests and staff.

The government's allocation for digital infrastructure in hospitality, as highlighted in the Union Budget, will further accelerate tech adoption, enabling small and mid-sized hotels to upgrade their systems and enhance market competitiveness. Addition-

targeted training programmes and partnerships with educational institutions is essential for preparing a workforce that meets evolving industry needs. A 2024 report by the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Sector Council (THSC) estimated that an additional 5.7 million youth could be trained to meet the expected demand in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

To address this growing demand, the government plans to organise intensive skill-development programmes for youth, including specialised courses in Institutes of Hospitality Management. Work-integrated learning programmes, vocational trainings, and industry-academia alliances are crucial in ensuring young professionals enter the workforce with the right expertise. These initiatives not only enhance service standards but also position hospitality as an attractive career choice for the next-gen.

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## Digital integration not only optimises revenue but also enhances the guest experience by offering personalised service

ally, the introduction of streamlined e-visa facilities, along with visa-fee waivers for certain tourist groups, aims to attract more international visitors.

### Skill development

The growth of the hospitality sector hinges on its people. As the industry expands, the demand for skilled talent becomes increasingly critical. Bridging skill gaps through

### Sustainable actions

Sustainability is no longer a choice but a mandate for the hospitality industry. Travellers today are more conscious of their environmental footprint and seek brands that prioritise responsible practices.

According to a report by Booking.com, 76 per cent of global travellers want to opt for sustainable accommodations. In India, the demand for eco-friendly hotels and tourism



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
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experiences surged by 30 per cent in the past two years.

Sustainable tourism encompasses several key areas, including renewable energy adoption, waste management, water conservation, and eco-friendly infrastructure. The push towards green certifications, such as LEED and GRIHA, is already shaping the industry, encouraging hotels and resorts to adopt energy-efficient solutions. Another critical aspect is community-based tourism. In destinations like Ladakh and Sikkim, locally run homestays and eco-resorts have successfully blended sustainability with authentic travel experiences.

### Challenges & opportunities

While the hospitality sector is on a strong growth trajectory. With collective efforts from industry leaders, stakeholders, and partners, can be further strengthened to sustain this momentum. Factors such as

global economic shifts and land availability require businesses to remain agile, adopting innovative strategies for expansion while ensuring long-term profitability. Additionally, continued progress in streamlining regulations related to hotel classification, licensing, and taxation will help encourage investment and create a more efficient and competitive tourism ecosystem.

The ongoing development of smaller cities presents immense potential, strengthening physical and digital infrastructure will be crucial in making these destinations more accessible and attractive to travellers. Government initiatives such as smart city projects and enhanced connectivity are already paving the way for progress in this area. With a collaborative approach, the industry can unlock new opportunities and further solidify India's position as a premier global tourism destination.

### Charting the path ahead

India's hospitality stands on the cusp of transformative growth. With a strategic push from the Union Budget 2025-2026 in infrastructure and digital integration, the sector is poised for accelerated expansion. The confluence of economic momentum, government initiatives, and evolving traveller preferences presents a big opportunity to redefine the travel experience. ▣

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The confluence of economic momentum,  
government initiatives, and evolving  
traveller preferences is poised to redefine  
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# Hosting curtain raiser for KITE 2025

KITE 2025 provides significant platform to showcase Karnataka's unique offerings and strengthen its position on global tourism map.



DDP Bureau

The curtain raiser programme for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Karnataka International Travel Expo (KITE) 2025 was organised on 1 February at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru. **HK Patil**, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation, Tourism, Government of Karnataka, officially unveiled the KITE 2025 logo along with brochures at the event.

The event was attended by prominent government officials, including **Dr. Shalini Rajneesh**, IAS, Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka; **Salma Fahim**, IAS, Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka; **Dr. KV Rajendra**, IAS, Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka and Man-


## The second edition of KITE demonstrates the state's commitment to driving economic growth through tourism partnerships

aging Director, Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation; and **K Syama Raju**, President, Karnataka Tourism Society (KTS), along with the office bearers of KTS.

Speaking about the event, Patil said, "Karnataka is home to a rich tapestry of experiences that cater to travellers of all kinds. The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of KITE reflects our commitment to positioning Karnataka as a top-tier

destination on the global tourism map while driving economic growth through tourism partnerships.

Stressing how the event boosts business growth, Raju said, "KITE has proven to be a game-changer for the tourism industry in our state. By providing a dedicated platform for stakeholders to network, collaborate, and showcase their offerings to a global audience, the event has significantly enhanced business opportunities across sectors."

Organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka, in partnership with the Karnataka Tourism Society, KITE 2025 will be held from 26 to 28 February 2025. Participation in the event is open to tourism boards, travel agencies, hotel chains, and tourism-related businesses seeking to explore in Karnataka's growing tourism sector. 







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# Setting new benchmarks

Tamil Nadu Tourism Awards 2024 recognised hospitality professionals for their relentless contributions and commitment to boost state's tourism landscape.



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Best Hotel – 4 Star: Radisson Hotel, Salem



Best Themed Resort: Great Trails River View Resort Thanjavur by GRT Hotels



Heritage Resort (Gold): The Gateway Hotel, Madurai



Themed Restaurant (Gold): Avartana, ITC Grand Chola, Chennai



Best Multicuisine Restaurant: Bazaar, Grand Madurai by GRT Hotels



## SIHRA hosts exclusive roadshow at Cochin

To reinforce Karnataka International Travel Expo, SIHRA hosted roadshow, drawing over 60 tourism professionals.

**S**IHRA organised a roadshow at Cochin for the Karnataka International Travel Expo. Over 60 tour operators attended the event, including presidents and members of IATO, TAAI, TAFI, ADTOI, TPC, and KTTC. The Director of Tourism of Karnataka gave an insightful briefing about the event.



## Encouraging investment in tourism

Karnataka's Tourism Policy 2024-29 aims to attract investors and strengthen state's tourism industry.

**T**o boost the state's global appeal, the Karnataka Tourism Policy 2024-29 offers numerous opportunities for investors. Approved by the Government of Karnataka, the new policy's benefits include capital investment subsidy upto ₹10 crore, reimbursement of land conversion fees, and concessions for homestays, among others. "Karnataka is a state that offers a world of opportunities. It has become an ideal destination for investment in the tourism sector," said HK Patil, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation, Tourism, Government of Karnataka. □



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# Celebrating 75-year of excellence: Milestone anniversary

Encapsulating resilient spirit of its remarkable journey, HRAWI celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with new zeal to advocate excellence in hospitality.



**C**elebrating a rich legacy of leadership, advocacy, and industry excellence, the Hotel and Restaurant Association Western India (HRAWI) marked its 75 years of anniversary on 3 February 2025. Representing over 1,500 hotels and restaurants across Western India, HRAWI has been instrumental in driving policy reforms, industry growth, and sustainable hospitality practices..

Expressing the significance of its 75<sup>th</sup> year celebrations, **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI, said, "Our 75<sup>th</sup> year is a testament to the resilience, innovation, and commitment of our members. HRAWI has been at the forefront of industry transformation, ensuring that the hospitality sector thrives amid evolving challenges."

Over the decades, HRAWI has actively collaborated with the government and industry stakeholders, facilitating initiatives such as skill de-



**JIMMY SHAW**

President  
HRAWI



**PRADEEP SHETTY**

Spokesperson  
HRAWI

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"Our 75<sup>th</sup> year is a testament to the resilience, innovation, and commitment of our members."

---

Our focus remains on enhancing Ease of Doing Business and advocating tax rationalisation

velopment programmes, regulatory advocacy, and sustainability efforts.

"Our journey has been one of progress, innovation and perseverance. As we move forward, our focus remains on enhancing Ease of Doing Business, advocating tax rationalisation, and promoting an inclusive and sustainable hospitality ecosystem," said **Pradeep Shetty**, Spokesperson, HRAWI.

### Skill & knowledge development

HRAWI has hosted prestigious regional conventions across Lavasa, Pune, and Nashik, focussing on





themes such as sustainable development, global tourism, and industry resilience. In 2024, the association launched the 'Empowering Hospitality Conclave & Awards' series, enabling knowledge exchange, industry networking, and policy discussions. "In partnership with FS-SAI, the association has trained and certified close to 3,300 hospitality

professionals in food safety under the FoSTaC programme. HRAWI has promoted green initiatives by collaborating with organisations like IGBC, reinforcing its commitment to sustainable and responsible tourism," Shetty highlighted.

### Championing initiatives

As HRAWI steps into its 75<sup>th</sup> year,

the association remains dedicated to policy reforms and sustainable practices. "As we move forward, we will continue to champion initiatives that empower our members and contribute to the growth of Indian tourism. We will continue to be the voice of the hospitality sector, ensuring the industry thrives," Shaw concluded. □







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# Advocating tech solutions for green practices

HRAWI ties up with AIC-BARC to foster significance of sustainable waste management tech for environmental and economic benefits in hospitality.



**H**RAWI has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Atal Incubation Centre-Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (AIC-BARC) to implement sustainable solid waste management technologies across member hotels and resorts. This collaboration supports the Government's 'Swachh Bharat Mission,' focusing on reducing the environmental impact of waste by promoting BARC-developed technologies including Nisargruna, Shesha, and Solid Waste Composting.

The partnership facilitates HRAWI members to collaborate with licensed agencies for commissioning, installing and maintaining these advanced technologies. AIC-BARC, supported by AIM and NITI Aayog, will serve as a coordinating and knowledge partner, offering technical consultations during the commissioning and operational stages.

"HRAWI is a strong advocate for sustainable and eco-friendly practices in the hospitality sector. This partnership with AIC-BARC marks a significant step in promoting routine adoption of advanced waste management technologies. Additionally, the collaboration will support entrepreneurs, startups, and self-help groups by sharing best practices and promoting innovation," said **Trupti Pawar**, Secretary General, HRAWI.

The BARC-developed technologies are tailored to handle the varying quantities of wet waste generated by hospitality establishments. They adopt a circular economy model by reducing material use, redesign-



**PRADEEP SHETTY**


Spokesperson  
HRAWI

ing products to be resource-efficient, and repurposing waste into biogas and manure.

"These technologies aim to minimise waste generation and reduce the volume sent to landfills by enabling waste processing at the source. This not only benefits the environ-

"The initiative reflects a commitment to circularity in waste recycling, helping establishments integrate sustainability into their operations."

ment but also offers cost savings for hospitality businesses. The initiative reflects a commitment to circularity in waste recycling, helping establishments integrate sustainability into their operations," said **Pradeep Shetty**, Spokesperson, HRAWI.

HRAWI has been at the forefront of promoting sustainability in hospitality and conducting seminars to equip members with essential knowledge for green practices. 







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## Bharat Parv 2025 upholds India's spirit of diversity

Bharat Parv 2025, spearheaded by MoT, showcases the richness and diversity of India's colourful culture, cuisine, and traditional crafts.



DDP Bureau

**A**s part of the Republic Day celebrations, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, hosted 'Bharat Parv 2025' from 26 to 31 January at the Red Fort in New Delhi. This six-day event, which has been organised annually since 2016, focused on the theme, 'Dekho Apna Desh.'

The event showcased Republic Day tableaux and performances by the armed forces bands. It featured 59 food stalls, including stalls from state governments, hotel management institutes, the National Association of Street Vendors of India,

and food demonstrations by Studio Kitchen. There were 70 stalls displaying handicrafts and handlooms by DC, KVIC, TRIFED, Tihar Jail, Central Ministries, states, and UTs.

Besides, it encompassed 34 state tourism pavilions and 24 Central ministries stalls. Cultural performances were presented by the North Zonal Cultural Centre (Ministry of Culture), state/UT troupes, and special performances by popular artists. Additionally, an activity zone was set up, organising various activities, such as nukkad natak, quizzes, painting competitions, and DIY activities.

Bharat Parv 2025 encouraged citizens to participate in the 'Dekho Apna Desh: People's Choice Voting'

---

Highlights of the event included 59 food stalls, 70 handicraft & handloom stalls, 34 state tourism pavilions, and 24 central ministries stalls

that engaged citizens and highlighted popular and emerging destinations.

This initiative aimed to foster a deeper appreciation for India's cultural heritage. □



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# Underscoring surge of India's hospitality market

Setting stage for new opportunities, AAHAR 2025 provides platform for Indian and global brands to tap into India's booming food and hospitality market.



Lipla Negi

**T**he 39<sup>th</sup> edition of AAHAR—The International Food & Hospitality Fair will take place from 4 to 8 March 2025, at the iconic Bharat Mandapam in Delhi. Organised by the India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO), this flagship B2B event is one of India's largest exhibitions, bringing together exhibitors and buyers from both domestic and international



**RUPESH SRIVASTAVA**  
CEO, Therapedic India &  
Cloude Mattress

“AAHAR 2025 provides us with the platform to position our brand as a leading provider of superior bedding solutions.”



markets for an immersive experience in innovation and technology.

Leading brands in the food and hospitality sectors will showcase their latest offerings, aiming to establish and expand their presence in the Indian and broader Asian markets. This year, over 1,700 exhibitors are expected to participate, drawing around 100,000 visitors from both domestic and global markets. Additionally, more than 80 exhibitors from 17 countries will join the event, seeking to tap into India's rapidly growing market.

Acting as a key connector between suppliers and hoteliers, the event has become a crucial platform for brands and businesses to explore new markets, to forge new partnerships, and elevate brand recognition.

Sharing how the event boosts brand positioning, **Rupesh Srivastava**, CEO, Therapedic India & Cloude Mattress, said, “AAHAR 2025 provides us with the perfect platform to position our brand as a leading provider of superior bedding solutions for this expanding market.”

He further added, “With the Indian government's recent allocation of ₹20,000 crore to boost tourism and develop 50 new tourist destinations, there is a clear and substantial rise in demand for premium, mid-scale, and budget hotels.”

As another edition of this prestigious event unfolds, stakeholders and decision-makers are eager to explore the future of hospitality, firmly grounded in technology and sustainability. ■





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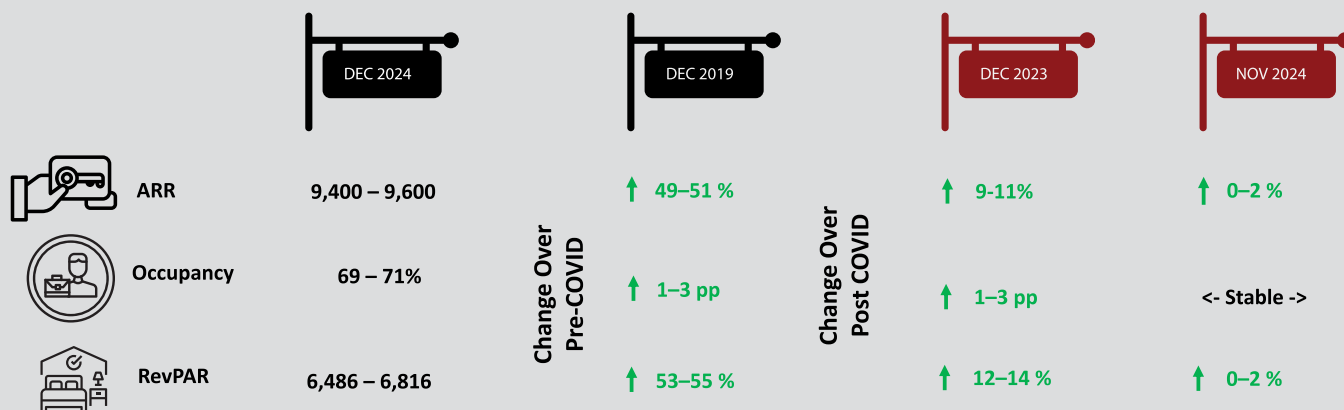
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Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year  
Cover Image Courtesy: Storii by ITC Hotels, Moira Riviera, Goa

## Mumbai leads hotel occupancy growth

Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, and Kochi register significant occupancy growth, reaching occupancy levels above 80 per cent, observes HVS Anarock.



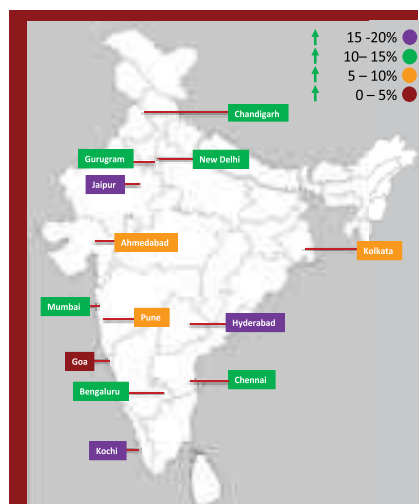
DDP Bureau

According to HVS Anarock's monthly industry update for January 2025, occupancy rates in December 2024 experienced steady year-on-year (YoY) growth, aligning closely with pre-COVID levels for the same period. With consistent demand growth, key cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, and Kochi achieved occupancy levels above 80 percent.

Mumbai recorded the highest occupancy at 81 to 83 per cent while Kochi led the YoY growth with an impressive increase of five to seven percentage points. On the other hand, Chandigarh and Hyderabad were the

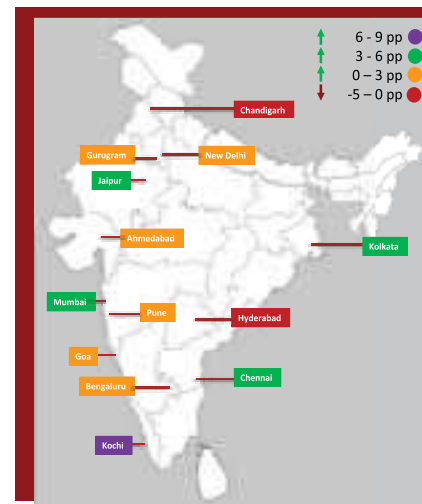
### ARR Trends Across Key Indian Markets

(Year -on-Year Growth: December 2024)



### Occupancy Trends Across Key Indian Markets

(Year -on-Year Growth: December 2024)



Mumbai emerged as the outstanding performer with highest occupancy rate at 81 to 83 per cent

only markets that saw YoY declines in occupancy rates in the range of two to five percentage points.

On the average room rates (ARR) front, rates maintained their upward momentum, though the pace of YoY growth has begun to stabilise. Average rates spiked across all key markets, except for Goa, where rates saw

a slight growth compared to the previous year.

Despite this, Goa continued to command the highest average rate in the country, exceeding ₹14,000. Kochi emerged as a standout performer, recording the highest YoY growth in average rates, driven by robust demand in the market. □



# Ringing profitability bells

**Amitabh Sanduja** emphasises InnBell enables seamless connection between businesses and suppliers, which boosts procurement efficiency and profitability.



DDP Bureau

It is often said that ideas are only as good as their execution. For **Amitabh Sanduja**, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, InnBell, passion and consistency define both the idea and its execution. A seasoned hotelier himself, Sanduja saw a unique opportunity in 'InnBell,' a B2B platform designed to simplify procurement, enhance hotel operations, and optimise profitability by ensuring the right price, right product, and timely delivery.



**AMITABH SANDUJA**  
Co-Founder & COO  
InnBell



**PAWAN GUPTA**  
Co-Founder & CEO  
InnBell

## Narrowing the gaps

Discussing his brainchild, Sanduja explained, "The idea behind creating India's first B2B marketplace for the hospitality industry is to bridge the gap between businesses and the right suppliers for goods and services. The hotel industry, especially the non-star category segment, faces significant procurement challenges, particularly as these hotels often lack professionally run material management departments."

Calling it a game-changer, **Pawan Gupta**, Co-Founder and CEO, InnBell, elaborated on how the platform addresses key industry challenges such as inconsistent quality of local products, poor supply chain management, fragmented and costly logistics, as well as cost efficiency and quality assurance.

Gupta added, "It is like an encyclopedia of trusted hotel vendors and consultants, featuring professionals with proven credentials across a wide range of specialties, from architects and interior designers to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP), back of house (BOH), kitchen, lighting, sound, and landscape consultants."

"There are many high-quality products being fabricated in India, but the vendors often lack reach."

## Primary objectives

One of the platform's key goals is to nurture local vendors and offer them a chance to showcase their products to a wider hospitality audience. "There are many high-quality products being fabricated in India, but the vendors often lack reach. We recognise this emerging group of innovative vendors and help them showcase their products on our platform," Sanduja highlighted.

The platform provides hotels with a comprehensive database of vendors from where hotels can effectively select the most suitable vendors that meet their quality and cost requirements. Additionally, hotels will benefit from connecting with SME

and MSME manufacturers, gaining cost advantages that positively impact their profitability margins and bottom lines.

Besides, hotels can achieve operational excellence by leveraging the platform ensuring a streamlined and efficient procurement process, coupled with continuous quality assurance.

## Expanding footprint

Innbell is set to revolutionise hotel operations in tier II and tier III cities, remote pilgrimage destinations, and secluded hill station locations. The platform will boost the unorganised sector of the hotel industry, especially for hotels that lack a proper purchasing system.

Sanduja's vision extends beyond India; he plans to expand the platform globally by introducing vendors and project consultants across South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations in the near future. This will not only help hotels and restaurants but also give immense opportunities to vendors and project consultants operating in the SAARC nations. ■



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## BUDGET

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## Union Budget 2025: Progressive measures but not a big win

While infrastructure status demand remains unaddressed, Budget 2025 promises growth opportunities with focus on 50 new destinations and enhanced connectivity.

### Enforce measures swiftly & efficiently: HRANI

“

Boosting infrastructure, connectivity, and niche tourism segments suggests a strategic approach to fostering growth in the hospitality sector.”



**SURENDRA KUMAR JAISWAL**

President  
HRANI

**T**he Union Budget 2025 has introduced several measures that could significantly impact the hospitality sector, and overall, the steps taken appear to be a positive move for the industry. The government's focus on improving infrastructure, boosting connectivity, and promoting niche tourism segments suggests a strategic approach to fostering growth in the hospitality sector.

One of the most promising initiatives is the expansion of the UDAN scheme to include 120 new destinations across the country. This initiative directly addresses one of the biggest challenges of connectivity for the hospitality sector. Improved air connectivity to underserved regions will not only enhance the accessibility of the tourism sec-

tor but also provide an opportunity for hotels to tap into new markets

Additionally, the government's plan to develop 50 key tourist destinations in collaboration with state governments is a major positive move. This initiative will ensure that these locations are equipped with world-class infrastructure and amenities, making them more attractive to travellers.

Such developments could enhance the overall tourism experience in India, making it a more competitive destination globally.

The focus on medical tourism, especially through the 'Heal in India' initiative, is another forward-thinking move. By positioning India as a global hub for medical and wellness tourism, the government is tapping into a lucrative and growing sector. This has the potential to drive demand for hospitality services, particularly in regions known for their healthcare and wellness offerings.

For these measures to translate into real benefits, swift and efficient implementation will be essential. Overall, the Union Budget 2025 appears to be a step in the right direction for the hospitality industry, presenting new opportunities for growth and development. □





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Gralit India Biotech's success lies in its commitment to quality and technology in the short term, the company is focused on expanding its footprint across India, tailoring signature scents for a growing list of clients. Long-term envisions, Gralit as a global leader in the fragrance industry, with a strong presence in European and American markets.

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# Some relief, big obstacles still stand: HRAWI



**JIMMY SHAW**

President  
HRAWI

“The plan to develop the top 50 tourism destinations in collaboration with state governments is a game changer.”

The Union Budget 2025 presents a promising vision for India's tourism and hospitality sector, with several progressive initiatives aimed at boosting infrastructure, accessibility, and global competitiveness. While the budget does address key areas, there are both wins and missed opportunities for the industry.

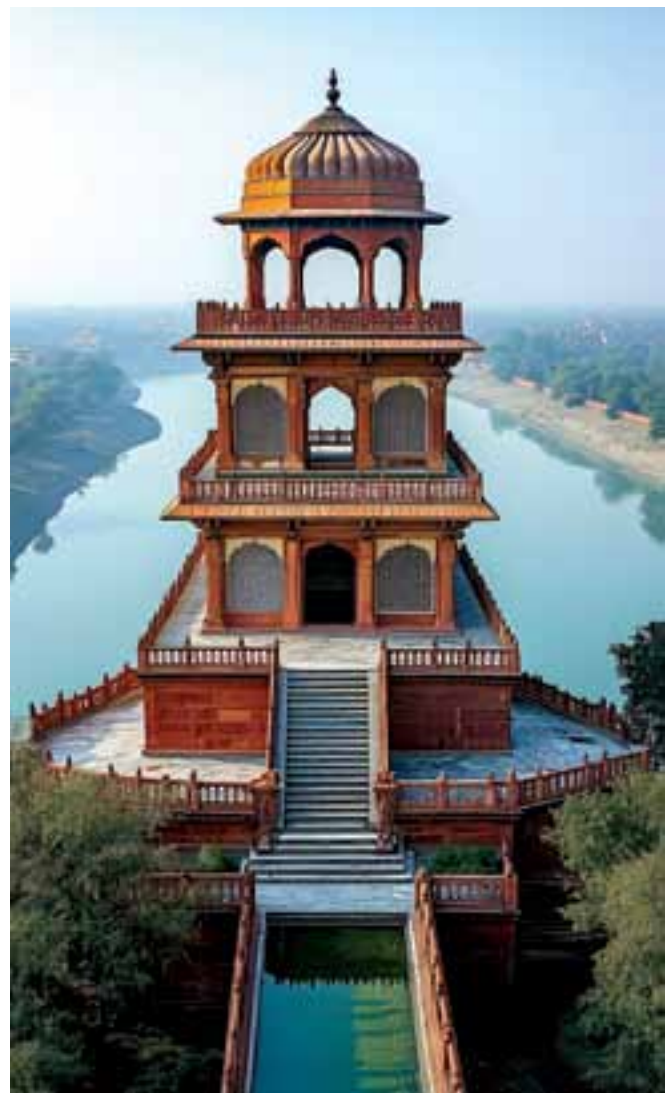
The plan to develop the top 50 tourism destinations in collaboration with state governments is a game changer. This will not only improve tourism infrastructure but also help distribute footfalls more evenly across the country, creating opportunities for local businesses. The inclusion of hotels in these destinations in the harmonious master list is another significant step. This aligns with our long-standing demand for 'Infrastructure Status' for the hospitality industry, which would allow hotels to access long-term, lower-cost financing. This move will enable establishments in emerging destinations to elevate their offerings and cater to global hospitality standards.

By supporting the expansion of healthcare and wellness tourism through the 'Heal-in-India' initiative, the government is opening doors for further foreign exchange earnings, global collaborations, and economic growth. Besides, the simplification of visa processes, including visa fee waivers and expanded e-visa options for select tourist groups, is a highly welcome move. It will undoubtedly attract more international visitors and increase inbound tourism numbers.

The government's emphasis on religious tourism is well-timed. Strengthening infrastructure around key religious sites will enhance visitor experiences, increase footfalls, and further position India as a leading global destination for spiritual tourism. In addition, under the modified UDAN scheme, expanding air routes to 120 new destinations and accommodating an additional four crore passengers over the next decade will unlock the potential of lesser-known regions. Another highlight is the intro-

duction of Mudra loans for homestay businesses, which will encourage grassroots entrepreneurship in tourism.

Overall, the Union Budget 2025 is a step in the right direction but not a complete win for hospitality. It does not offer a clear roadmap for GST rationalisation, or address structural challenges, particularly in Ease of Doing Business and measures related to regulatory bottlenecks. However, the government's intent to boost tourism is evident, additional policy interventions, particularly around tax rationalisation and regulatory reforms, are essential to unlock the sector's full potential. □





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# Income tax relief to spur consumer spending: SIHRA



**K SYAMA RAJU**

President  
SIHRA

“

The allocation for developing tourist circuits and promoting domestic tourism is a step in the right direction.”

**W**e appreciate the government's increased focus on capital expenditure. Enhanced infrastructure—better roads, airports, and railway connectivity—will directly boost tourism and, in turn, benefit the hospitality sector. The allocation for developing tourist circuits and promoting domestic tourism is a step in the right direction, as it will encourage more travellers to explore the diverse destinations of South India. Furthermore, the proposed income tax relief will increase disposable income, which we hope

will translate into higher consumer spending on travel, dining, and hospitality services. This is a welcome move for hotels and restaurants, which have been striving to recover from past economic challenges.

However, we urge the government to consider providing more direct support for the hospitality industry, including sector-specific incentives, GST rationalisation, and financial aid for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in this sector. The industry requires long-term policy measures, such as granting 'infrastructure status' to the hospitality sector, which would enable easier access to credit and investments.

Overall, this budget sets a positive direction, but we look forward to further engagement with policymakers to ensure sustained growth and competitiveness for the hospitality sector. SIHRA remains committed to collaborating with the government and industry stakeholders to elevate South India's tourism and hospitality to new heights. □





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# Govt initiatives need to sustain momentum: **HRAEI**



**SUDESH PODDAR**  
President  
HRAEI

“

The expansion of credit guarantee coverage will provide better financial support for startups and small enterprises.”

**T**he Union Budget 2025 marks the beginning of substantial financial reforms that are going to reshape the Food and Beverage (F&B) consultancy and hospitality sectors. The expansion of credit guarantee coverage will provide better financial support for startups and small enterprises, reducing risks while paving the way for innovation.

The establishment of a dedicated startup credit ecosystem is a game changer, particularly for first-time women entrepreneurs and businesses from scheduled castes and backward communities. In addition, simplifying access to credit could be a boon, particularly with schemes such as the ₹2 crore loan initiative for women entrepreneurs that would encourage newer ventures and diversify and promote inclusivity in the F&B space.

With this year's investment announcement in the expansion of the UDAN scheme to connect 120 new destinations, support for homestays, and the development of top tourist destinations in collaboration with state governments, we are hopeful that India will be able to sustain this momentum. Especially as this comes on the heels of ongoing positive trends like visa easing and destination marketing campaigns promoting India's diverse experiences and attractions. The emphasis on diverse segments, including spiritual and medical tourism, suggests potential opportunities for varied tourism experiences across India.

With a comprehensive approach, the government aims to elevate the sector's GDP contribution to an ambitious 9-12 per cent, aligning with global peers. This strategic initiative

is set to enhance connectivity, upgrade tourist destinations, and simplify travel regulations, thereby attracting more visitors and boosting the economy.

Public-private partnerships will play a crucial role at the top 50 tourist sites. By leveraging the expertise and resources of the private sector, these partnerships will create world-class tourist destinations that can compete on a global scale.

The focus on spiritual tourism, particularly the promotion of Buddhist tourism, is another significant step to attracting international travellers from countries with significant Buddhist populations. The 'Heal in India' initiative aims to strengthen India's position as a global medical tourism hub and offer world-class health-care services.

The extension of Mudra loans to homestays is another significant move, which will not only boost local economies but also preserve and promote local cultures and traditions. The introduction of visa fee waivers and e-visa options is a game-changer measures, which will make India a more accessible and attractive destination. Lastly, we see some good initiatives for startups too, with an extended tax holiday, simplified compliance procedures, and increased funding through the ₹10,000 crore Startup India Fund. ▣





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# Reimagining hospitality talent

For a win-win situation, collab of hotels and institutes is crucial to motivate students with clear career pathways and woo them in hospitality.



DDP Bureau

**A**fter the sudden onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, the hospitality industry experienced significant disruptions in its usual activities. Hotels and restaurants were closed for a long period, leaving no clue about how long the situation would prevail. As a result, hotel and restaurant staff were sent on long leave with reduced pay or

without pay. These circumstances had a negative impact on existing staff and students' minds about their future during that period.

After the pandemic, the hospitality industry business has crossed its pre-COVID status and occupancy, and average room rent (ARR) is much higher than before. But unfortunately, enrolment in the hospitality management programme has been continuously going down in the last four years.

This year is crucial for the operation of hotel management institutes

(IHMs) and the hospitality industry, to get well-trained hospitality management graduates to serve the industry on a long-term basis in such a remarkable period of growth of hotel chains.

## Challenges and solutions

If we analyse why young students are not coming forward for hospitality management education. The following issues need to be addressed:

**Low initial wages:** Low pay is the main reason for not opting hotel







**AK SINGH**

Director, FHRAI Institute of  
Hospitality Management

management career by young students. After spending three important years in hospitality management education with an expense of ₹6 to ₹8 lakhs, the emolument being offered as an initial wage is poor. The salary does not cover even their living expenses in tier-I and tier-II cities.

Therefore, leading hotel chains, individual hotels, and restaurants must take note of this predicament and amend their policies. This initiative will be helpful in engaging and retaining students in the industry for a longer time. It will also help in improving the hospitality enrolment in a short span of time, boosting the morale of existing students.

**Working conditions:** The industry needs to re-look into the working conditions of entry-level and supervisory staff in terms of duty hours and number of off days in a month. Hospitality establishments must enforce a maximum of nine hours of duty in a day. If the staff is detained after that, the provision of overtime needs to be introduced.

Recently, one leading hotel chain has started paying overtime to entry-level hotel management graduates. Hospitality establishments including hotel chains and restaurants need to look into this provision aspect with seriousness to attract aspiring students in the industry.

“Both central and state governments must initiate and draft policies that offer incentives and stipends to students.”





Work-life balance, being a focus of discussions nowadays, it will be appropriate for six off days in a month to retain happy staff in the establishments. Some hotel chains have already started giving six off days in a month, which needs to be followed by all other hospitality establishments.

**Well-defined career paths:** The hospitality industry must ensure to draft well-defined career growth paths for entry-level, supervisory, and managerial-level employees. It is vital to communicate with them about career advancement opportunities and share the requisite

## Reassess working conditions of entry-level and supervisory staff in terms of duty hours and monthly off days

information with the IHMs and on social media.

**Mentoring of trainees/employees:** Students undergoing industrial train-

ing are at a tender age, they need to be taken care of by experienced and affectionate managers and supervisors while mentoring them. It will help develop faith in them and share their problems openly with them.

Training and placement coordinators of the IHMs, along with learning and development managers of the hotel, should jointly monitor industrial trainings to become more effective. This will be able to retain students' interest in the hospitality industry and encourage to return to the institute to complete their academics with full enthusiasm. This will encourage students to make efforts to secure good placements in the hospitality industry.

Hotel chains and IHMs should understand the importance of these issues and draft policies and guidelines which are more conducive to effective training and employment.

### Training opportunities

To enhance industry exposure for students, ITC Hotels conducted initiatives like 'Industry Academia Interface.' Academia, training and placement coordinators of different IHMs, and top executives of hotel chains, were engaged in discussions, spreading awareness about industrial training and employment





opportunities. Besides, several new concepts were introduced by the experts and shared with the IHMs for wide publicity among existing and future hospitality aspirants.

Following suit, leading hotel chains, individual hotels, and restaurants along with IHMs must take charge to organise such interactive sessions across the country. These initiatives will help gain the confidence of existing and future students for hospitality industry employment.

### Future course of action

It is imperative for IHMs to re-look into their curriculum, learning methodology, and trainings as per the industry expectations. This will help them to earn better and serve the industry effectively in the long run. To strengthen and promote better training and employment in the hospitality sector, both central and state governments must initiate and draft policies that offer incentives and stipends to students.

Such steps would attract a greater number of young students towards working in the field of hospitality management. It can also ensure attractive employment prospects after comprehensive training by IHMs. All stakeholders of hospitality educa-

tion and the industry need to come together and jointly make efforts to increase hospitality management enrolment. Thereafter, committed efforts for suitable placements should be made to retain young professionals in the hospitality sector. ▣



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# Prelude to South Indian flavours

Celebrating its first anniversary, Avartana at ITC Maratha offers a new dining experience that transports guests to the heart of culinary artistry.



DDP Bureau

**K**nown for its blend of tradition and innovation, Avartana at ITC Maratha, Mumbai, celebrated its first anniversary in Mumbai. Setting the bar for a progressive South Indian dining ex-

perience, Avartana is becoming one of Mumbai's top fine dining spots.

Avartana expanded its legacy to ITC Maratha in 2024. Since its launch, the restaurant has offered a new dining experience that takes guests on a gastronomical journey through South India's rich flavours with a modern twist. The restaurant ensures



Blending the authenticity of South Indian cuisine with a contemporary twist, each dish ensures a perfect balance of flavour, texture, and visual appeal

each dish is a work of art, thoughtfully crafted by chefs. Every palate offers a story that mixes old-world traditions with creative techniques.

Chef Diptii Jadhav, the heart of Avartana's kitchen, blends the authenticity of South Indian cuisine with modern touches, ensuring each dish is a perfect balance of flavour, texture, and visual appeal.

From sourcing the finest ingredients to plating with precision, Chef Jadhav's passion shines through in every dish. Avartana's menu is carefully curated with a wide variety, providing a unique culinary journey. Diners can choose from the seven-course Maya menu, the nine-course Bela menu, the 11-course Jiaa menu, and two exquisite 13-course menus, Anika and Tara. These menus are available in both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options.

To complement the culinary dining experience, the restaurant offers a variety of mocktails and cocktails, expertly crafted with Indian spices and fresh flavours. ▣







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# Go beyond beaten path for industry growth

Hospitality sector must leverage offbeat leisure destinations to capitalise on low land costs and high-profit margins.



DDP Bureau

India's hospitality sector is undergoing a transformative shift. As metropolitan markets become saturated with high land costs and compressed margins, the true potential lies in emerging offbeat leisure destinations. The future belongs to hotel owners, investors, and developers, who recognise this shift early and position themselves as pioneers in high-growth micro-markets.

Deep market intelligence and data-driven strategies are needed to develop high-yield leisure resorts that deliver strong financial returns. When executed strategically, these investments can generate an internal rate of return (IRR) of 18 to 20 percent or higher, setting a new benchmark for wealth creation in hospitality.

## Why offbeat destinations?

The future of hospitality lies in the



**NANDIVARDHAN JAIN**

CEO  
Noesis Capital Advisors

offbeat leisure markets for the following reasons:

**Lower land costs:** Leisure destinations within a 2-3 hour drive from major cities offer land at a fraction of the cost. It allows investors and hotel owners to create premium

Leisure destinations allow investors to create premium experiences without compromising profitability

experiences without compromising the profitability of hotel investments.

**Rise of experiential travel:** Post-pandemic, millennials and Gen Z travellers are increasingly seeking immersive and nature-driven experiences, while corporate retreats and destination weddings favour exclusive resort settings over urban hotels.

**Government incentives:** Many state governments now promote offbeat





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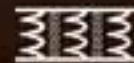
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### Here are some promising markets

Metro city	High-potential offbeat locations
Mumbai & Pune	Alibaug, Lonavala, Nashik
Delhi-NCR	Neemrana, Jim Corbett, Rishikesh
Bangalore	Coorg, Chikmagalur, Kabini
Chennai	Kodaikanal, Mahabalipuram
Kolkata	Santiniketan, Dooars
Hyderabad	Ananthagiri Hills, Srisailem
Ahmedabad	Polo Forest, Udaipur outskirts
Jaipur	Pushkar, Ranthambore
Lucknow	Dudhwa, Ayodhya

destinations with tax benefits, subsidies, and infrastructure projects. Expressways, regional airports, and tourism create new opportunities for greenfield investments and first-mover advantages.

#### Success formula

Key steps to follow when building a high-return resort investment.

**Identifying the right location:** A high-growth leisure destination should be within a short drive from

major metros and exhibit strong demand drivers such as natural attractions, heritage significance, or adventure tourism potential.

**Profitable resort model:** The resort must feature a room count of 80 to 150 keys, a target average daily rate (ADR) of ₹6,000 to ₹12,000 per night. It must comprise key amenities such as a spa, pool, all-day dining, and banquet facilities. The development cost should be ₹55 to ₹75 lakh per key.

**Investment structuring:** Conduct a detailed feasibility study, secure debt/equity financing based on projected cash flows, and ensure an IRR of at least 18 per cent over a 10-year horizon.

**Right brand strategy:** Hotel owners must decide between branded affiliations and independent operations. Evaluate critical parameters and determine the optimal approach for long-term success.

**Timely execution:** Ensure financial closure before commencing construction and adhere to strict development timelines to prevent cost overruns. Besides, engage expert consultants for seamless project execution.

#### Act and invest today

The Indian leisure hospitality sector is in the transformative era, and is on the brink of its next big expansion phase. Investors who act decisively will secure premium land parcels at lower costs, build high-return assets, and establish market leadership in the evolving travel landscape of the country. ■





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# Setting new standards in luxury market

Cygnett Group is poised to redefine luxury with 15 new properties in 2025, carving significant niche in upscale segment.



**Surbhi Sharma**

**C** ygnett Hotels & Resorts, one of India's fastest-growing hospitality chains, has made waves in the industry by announcing the signing of Anamore Select Resort & Wellness in Mopa, Goa in partnership with Yugen Infra, a prominent real estate firm. This latest venture promises a perfect blend of architectural brilliance and innovative hospitality.

Poised to redefine upscale travel, this luxurious resort will open in phase wise. The phase-I is expected to be operational by November 2026 followed by the rest in 2029.

Speaking about the brand's strategy, **Sarbendra Sarkar**, Founder and Managing Director, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, said, "Anamore Select Resort & Wellness is a significant step forward in Cygnett's ambitious diversification strategy. With 150 meticulously designed villa rooms,

"Anamore Select Resort & Wellness is a significant step forward in Cygnett's diversification strategy."

this high-end resort targets the discerning travellers seeking a fine balance of indulgence and rejuvenation." The resort offers an array of premium amenities, including an all-day dining restaurant, a bar, a 10,000 square feet lawn, and a 6,000 square feet banquet hall.

In addition, it provides recreational facilities such as a swimming pool, a health club, a kids' play area, and a well-equipped clubhouse, among others. Besides, the brand boasts a prime location just 15 minutes from Mopa Airport and conve-



**SARBENDRA SARKAR**

Founder and Managing Director  
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

niently accessible via the Goa-Mumbai Highway.

With a strong focus on the domestic market, the brand plans to add 15 new properties within the next year and achieve a portfolio of 100 hotels over the next five years. ■



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# Key trends shaping guest experiences in 2025

Beyond meeting guests' expectations, hospitality promises redefined luxury by nurturing culture of innovation, empathy and deeper connections in 2025.



DDP Bureau

**A**s we step into 2025, the hospitality industry stands poised at the threshold of transformative change. This evolution is driven by the convergence of innovation, heightened creativity, and the ever-evolving expectations of modern travellers.

The shifts reflect not merely as trends but as unparalleled opportunities to redefine luxury, cultivate deeper connections, and enrich every guest experience.

## **Nurturing compassion**

In 2025, we aspire to emerge as the most compassionate brand in hospitality. By nurturing a culture of empathy and personalised service,

we aim to reintroduce the warmth of Indian hospitality to the global stage. Every guest who walks through our doors becomes a part of our extended family, cared for with attentiveness that stems from a deep respect for their individuality and needs.

## **Specialised experiences**

A one-size-fits-all approach no longer suffices in the diverse landscape



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**NILISHA GHULIANI**

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of today's hospitality industry. It is important to embrace a specialised approach tailored to the unique needs of different guest segments.

#### Holistic wellness

Wellness in 2025 transcends the traditional confines of spa treatments and fitness centres. Guests now seek holistic well-being that integrates physical, mental, and emotional balance. To meet this demand, the hospitality industry must prioritise organic dining options and mindful room designs that blend aesthetics with comfort, and nature-inspired activities.

#### Safety at the core

Guests today seek more than luxurious amenities; they desire a sense of belonging and safety. From dedicated spaces for relaxation to enhanced health and security measures, hotels must ensure every guest feels valued, celebrated, and cared for.

#### Adapting to Gen Beta

As we welcome Generation Beta, hospitality must evolve to meet the expectations of this tech-savvy and experience-driven cohort. Personalisation becomes paramount, with services that seamlessly integrate innovation and human touch. By con-

**"A one-size-fits-all approach no longer suffices in the diverse landscape of today's hospitality industry."**

tinuously refining our processes, we remain at the forefront of defining luxury in a way that resonates with this new generation.

#### Strengthening team

By fostering an environment of flexibility, ownership, and teamwork, empower teams to enhance creativity and deliver unparalleled services. Just as we care for our guests, we are equally dedicated to nurturing and supporting our team members, believing that their happiness and inspiration are key to creating extraordinary guest experiences.

#### Future vision

By embracing compassion, innovation, and personalisation, we aim to transform the future of hospitality defined by authentic connections and unforgettable experiences. In 2025, the future of hospitality is not just about meeting expectations; it is about fostering an empathy and a commitment to excellence. ■





# Swosti for all seasons

Swosti Hotels & Resorts boasts a portfolio that not only caters to leisure travellers but also offers unique Odisha hospitality for corporate clients.



DDP Bureau

**S**ynonymous with authentic Odisha hospitality, Swosti Hotels & Resorts exudes luxury sprouting from the rich culture of the state, known not only for its history and heritage but also for its natural beauty.

## City charm

Swosti Grand and Swosti Premium in Bhubaneswar are the perfect examples of city hotels, offering comfort and modern services for guests looking to mix business with leisure. The hotels are located in the city centre allowing guests to explore various temples and historic sites in this centuries-old hub of heritage and culture.

## Abode of tranquility

Known for being the winter home for migratory birds, Chilika Lake is the largest coastal lagoon in India. Located just adjacent to the lake, Swosti



Swosti Premium Beach Resorts

Chilika Resort is a heaven for nature lovers. Right from the warm interiors to the alluring landscape, the resort is ideal for a family or an incentive trip.

Another leisure property by Swosti is Gopalpur Palm Resort, which is the ultimate beach retreat, offering a unique mix of traditional hospitality and modern comforts. With 59 stately rooms, it is a tranquil summer destination for sea lovers.

## Spirituality meets luxury

The latest Swosti Premium Beach Resorts, located in one of the most religiously revered towns of Puri, takes comfort to the next level. With the stunning Puri beach spread out in front of the property, the guests can mix a religious trip with leisure. Boasting 125 rooms, state-of-the-art ballrooms, open-air lawns, and a parking space, the hotel is perfect for

Right from the warm interiors to the alluring landscape, Swosti Chilika Resort is ideal for a family or even an incentive trip

weddings and conferences. Besides, it features a swimming pool, fitness centre facilities, and an eco-friendly design, reflecting the hotel's focus on health and wellness. ■



# Regenerative tourism goes beyond sustainability

Tourism sector must shift from sustainable to regenerative approaches to vigorously restore ecosystem's health.



DDP Bureau

**T**ourism can be a powerful force for good, especially when it focuses not only on preserving but actively restoring the environments it touches. In Indian wildlife habitats like Ranthambore, where ecosystems are under immense pressure, it is time to look beyond traditional 'sustainable tourism' models and embrace regenerative tourism—a model that leaves places better than we found them.

Sustainable tourism often aims to minimise harm, but regenerative tourism takes it further by improving ecosystem health through direct, positive actions. Simple yet impactful initiatives, such as planting native trees or rehabilitating natural water systems, make a tangible difference in reversing land degradation and promoting ecosystem resilience.



**GAURAV MUDGAL**

Managing Partner & VP, Commercial, Aamaghati Wildlife Resort

## Facilitating restoration efforts

Regenerative tourism builds stronger partnerships between conservation areas and local communities. Often, local residents feel the impacts of tourism but do not see and reap the benefits directly.

By creating conservation focused employment opportunities, such as eco-guiding or selling locally crafted goods, local communities become integral stakeholders in the preservation and restoration efforts. This shared responsibility ensures that both the environment and the community benefit from tourism.

Tourism infrastructure can sometimes lead to unintended environmental consequences, like soil ero-

sion or water resource depletion. Regenerative tourism encourages facilities to mitigate these impacts and contribute actively to the ecosystem's health.

## Instilling a sense of responsibility

Today's travellers are increasingly seeking experiences that connect them to the places they visit on a deeper level. Regenerative tourism capitalises on this trend by providing hands-on, educational opportunities.

**Regenerative tourism can make a tangible difference in reversing land degradation and promoting ecosystem resilience**

Guided experiences like habitat monitoring and wildlife tracking help guests understand ecosystem intricacies, fostering a sense of responsibility and advocacy. Through these interactions and practices, visitors can transform from passive onlookers into active contributors to India's wilderness conservation efforts. ■





An advertisement for JCPL Fine Porcelain India. The background is a top-down view of a dining table with several blue and white textured porcelain plates and bowls. One plate has a small salad, another has a mound of shredded orange carrots, and a third is empty. A small bowl of cherry tomatoes is also visible. A blue glass is in the top right corner. The JCPL logo is in the top center, and the slogan 'THE FUTURE IS HERE' is in a white box at the bottom.

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# Client satisfaction starts with comfort

Hospitality needs to invest in high-quality mattresses that can significantly augment overall guest comfort and experience and hotel brand.



DDP Bureau

In the hospitality industry, guest satisfaction is paramount, and one of the most crucial factors influencing a guest's experience is their sleep quality. As hotel owners and managers, investing in the right type of mattress can significantly enhance comfort, boost positive reviews, and ultimately drive the success of your business. When it comes to selecting the right mattress for your hotel business, comfort is important. Established in 1905, Eclipse International, an American mattress brand, offers a diverse range of mattresses tailored to meet varying needs of guests.

## Key considerations

Here's a breakdown of what to consider when choosing a mattress:

**Guest Comfort:** The primary goal is to ensure a restful night's sleep, which can significantly impact guest satisfaction and reviews.

"When it comes to selecting the right mattress for your hotel business, comfort is paramount."

**Durability:** Hotel mattresses need to withstand frequent use, so choose materials based on their durability.

**Maintenance:** Consider how easy it is to clean and maintain the mattresses, especially in high-traffic areas.



**SUNIL DUTTA**

President-Institutional Sales  
(India & Sub Continents)  
American Bedding.

**Variety of preferences:** Different guests have different comfort preferences, so offering a wide selection can enhance the overall experience of the guests.

## Mattress types

Eclipse International features five types of mattresses, each with a unique star:

**Memory foam:** Provides excellent support and contours to the body that is ideal for guests who prefer a softer feel.


**Innerspring:** Offers traditional support with a bouncier feel and is suitable for those who like a more classic mattress experience.

**Hybrid models:** Combines the best of both worlds with memory foam and innerspring coils for balanced support and comfort.

**Latex mattresses:** Known for their durability and natural materials, they are great for eco-conscious guests.

**Adjustable beds:** Allows guests to customise their comfort levels and makes an appealing choice to those with specific health needs.

## Elevate guest comfort

Choosing the right mattress is key for enhancing guest comfort, ensuring a successful hotel operation. Eclipse International provides a variety of options and preferences, delivering an exceptional sleeping experience for your guests. 





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# Giant leap in food industry

Beyond aesthetic appeal, dual-zone displays provide versatile solutions that improve operational effectiveness and consumer experiences.



DDP Bureau

In the rapidly evolving hospitality and food service sectors, businesses face the challenge of meeting the increasingly diverse demands of today's discerning consumers. Customers now expect variety and convenience, all delivered in a seamless service experience. For operators in spaces such as cafes, bakeries, and quick-service restaurants (QSRs), the challenge is not only meeting these expectations but delivering them efficiently while managing operational costs, space constraints, and energy consumption.

## New era of versatility

By integrating two independently controlled compartments into a single unit, dual-zone displays allow operators to store and showcase products at different temperatures,

seamlessly combining diverse environments in one solution.

Harnessing cutting-edge technologies can transform food service operations. Dual-zone display cases are a prime example of innovation meeting practicality.

## Key differentiators

**Unmatched versatility:** Allow businesses to consolidate their food display needs into fewer units, reducing operational complexity while maintaining product quality.

**Space optimisation:** Address space-related challenges by replacing multiple single-function units with one multi-functional solution.

**Energy efficiency:** Feature shared insulation and advanced temperature control systems that minimise energy use and lower carbon footprint.

**Enhanced aesthetics:** Sleek designs, clear glass panels, and integrated lighting elevate the visual appeal.



**GAURAV MITTAL**

CEO & Director  
Antarctica Equipment

“Dual-zone display cases are a prime example of innovation meeting practicality.”

**Simplified maintenance:** The displays' fewer units mean simplified maintenance and lower repair costs. Their upright, open front cabinet facilitates easy customer access.

## Game-changing solutions

When it comes to revolutionising food displays for bakeries, QSRs, supermarkets, and cafes, Future Products Group (FPG) offers industry-leading solutions.

**Visair:** Crafted in Napier, New Zealand, the display combines functionality, durability, and cutting-edge technology to redefine operations of the food service industry.

**Isoform Grab & Go:** Designed for quick-service restaurants, it offers a sleek, space-efficient solution for displaying both refrigerated and heated products in a single unit.

## Setting new standards

Dual-zone technology will play a pivotal role in shaping the standards of food service displays. By embracing innovations such as dual-zone display cases, hospitality operators can redefine excellence in service—turning operational challenges into opportunities for growth. □





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# How city hotels surpass destination properties

With one-size-fits-all approach, city hotels provide benefits of hosting pre-wedding parties, get-togethers, and lavish ceremonies on the same premises.



DDP Bureau

**C**ity hotels offer a distinct and often overlooked advantage over destination hotels when it comes to the wedding segment. While destination properties offer secluded settings and scenic backdrops, urban venues offer something equally valuable—unmatched convenience, accessibility, and the ability to create personalised, seamless experiences that cater to both the couple and their guests.

## Accessibility: Key factor

Urban venues eliminate the logistical challenges often associated with destination weddings. Guests, including elderly family members

and close friends, appreciate the convenience of central locations, easy transportation and proximity to essential services. For couples, this means less stress and more time to focus on what truly matters—celebrating their love story. With seamless metro connectivity and a central location, such venues ensure unmatched convenience and ease of access, outshining destination properties.

Moreover, these venues offer a perfect blend of luxury and modernity. From spacious bridal suites to curated menus that reflect culinary excellence, they provide the ideal setting for an unforgettable wedding. Guests not only enjoy the event but can also explore the city's cultural and shopping and leisure opportunities, making it an all-encompassing experience for guests.



**APARNA AJITH**

Director, S&M Sheraton Grand  
Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway

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“City hotels do not just host weddings but enable to create personalised journeys.”

## Advantages of city hotels

Weddings today are more than just one-day affairs; they have evolved into multi-event celebrations. Urban hotels are perfectly positioned to host pre-wedding functions, family gatherings, and elaborate ceremonies, all within the same property. City hotels do not just host weddings but enable to create personalised journeys. They ensure every moment, from the first toast to the final farewell, is perfectly orchestrated. This ability to blend convenience and customisation gives them a competitive edge that resonates deeply with today's couples and their loved ones. □





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## ◀ Japanese-inspired designs

Sage Living's Garden of the East is a work of art that embodies the soul of Japanese gardens. The design features delicate pink flowers, meticulously created from brass and rose quartz, paying homage to the ethereal beauty of peonies. Delicately etched in green aventurine and quartzite, the soft leaf motifs on green tables possess an enduring quality. The table's fish-scale pattern, inlaid with brass in red jasper and carnelian stone, mirrors the elegant dance and beauty of koi fishes.

## Luxury meets functionality ▶

Valueline, a sanitaryware and bath fittings major, unveiled the 'Ethereal Collection' by Spanish-based brand Maier. The collection exemplifies Maier's commitment to sustainable luxury, blending artistic design with modern functionality to transform bathroom spaces. The collection focuses on both design and functionality, featuring faucets with sculptural, hand-blown glass handles paired with sleek metallic finishes in gold and chrome. Additionally, it integrates innovative water-saving technology and eco-friendly materials, aligning with contemporary sustainable living practices.



## ◀ Confluence of heritage & luxury

Renowned for award-winning craftsmanship, GRAFF's bath and shower collections redefine the pinnacle of sophistication and relaxation. The collection elevates the art of bathing to new heights, seamlessly blending opulence with functionality in some of the world's most iconic resorts. GRAFF's Vintage and Harley collection is heritage-inspired designs that create an ambiance of elegance and serenity. The Adley collection transforms bath suites into sanctuaries of timeless sophistication. Inspired by the crescent moon, the Luna collection's polished chrome brings a touch of cosmic beauty, merging modern elegance with natural serenity. □



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# Movements



**Rahool Macarius**  
Market Managing Director,  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has appointed Rahool Macarius as the Market Managing Director for Eurasia. Macarius will be responsible for regional operations and driving the growth of Wyndham's diverse portfolio of brands across Eurasia covering India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives.



**Anirban Banerjee**  
General Manager,  
Lords Inn, Kankidham

Anirban Banerjee has joined as the General Manager of Lords Inn, Kankidham. Banerjee will focus on operational excellence, service quality, and sustainable practices. With over 23 years of experience, he has a proven track record of leading operations and driving revenue growth for prestigious hotels.



**Giulia Pellegrino**  
Global Key Accounts Manager,  
Atmosphere Living

Atmosphere Living has appointed Giulia Pellegrino as their Global Key Accounts Manager in the Sales and Marketing team. In this new role, he will be responsible for acquiring high-net-worth (HNI) clients and curating exclusive domestic and international events to enhance the visibility of the brand.



**Aneesh Kadangot**  
F&B Manager, Mulberry Shades  
Bengaluru Nandi Hills

Mulberry Shades Bengaluru Nandi Hills, a Tribute Portfolio Resort, has appointed Aneesh Kadangot as its new Food and Beverage Manager. With 14 years of extensive experience in hospitality, Aneesh is set to bring his decisive, strategic, and performance-driven approach to elevate the resort's food and beverage offerings.



**Amish Mathur**  
General Manager, Maan Vilas by  
Stonewood Premier, Udaipur

Stonewood Hotels & Resorts has appointed Amish Mathur as the General Manager of Maan Vilas by Stonewood Premier, Udaipur. He has honed his expertise across diverse roles including working with quick service restaurant (QSR) chains, international hotel brands, and independent properties.



**Shiva Prasad**  
Housekeeping Manager,  
Ibis Styles Mysuru

Ibis Styles Mysuru has appointed Shiva Prasad as the Housekeeping Manager. With a career spanning renowned hotels such as Novotel Mumbai International Airport, Grand Hyatt Kochi, and Novotel Hyderabad Airport, he is known for his leadership in pre-opening operations and upholding cleanliness and hygiene standards.

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**Abdulla Al Abdouli**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Marjan



**Anil Chadha**  
Divisional Chief Executive  
ITC Limited Hotels Division



**Anuraag Bhatnagar**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Leela Palaces  
Hotels and Resorts



**Ashish Jakhaniwala**  
Chairman, MD & CEO  
SAMHI Hotels



**Arun K. Saraf**  
Chairman and MD  
Juniper Hotels



**Atul Jain**  
Chief Operating Officer  
India, Sri Lanka, & Bangladesh  
Best Western Hotels



**Barbara Muckermann**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Kempinski Hotels



**Bhanu Chopra**  
Chairman & MD  
RateGain



**Behzad Kharas**  
Chairman & MD  
BNK Group



**Dilip Rajakarier**  
Group CEO, Minor International  
& CEO, Minor Hotels



**Dimitris Manikis**  
President - Europe,  
ME, Eurasia, & Africa  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts



**Dr. Jyotsna Suri**  
Chairperson & MD  
The Lalit Suri  
Hospitality Group



**Dr. Sanjay Sethi**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Chalet Hotels



**Elie Younes**  
Executive VP & Global Chief  
Development Officer  
Radisson Hotel Group



**Gautam Binudavolu**  
Chief Executive Officer  
GreenPark Hotels  
& Resorts



**Harshavardhan Neotia**  
Chairman  
Ambuja Neotia Group



**Jatin Khanna**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts



**Kenneth Macpherson**  
Chief Executive Officer  
EMEA, InterContinental  
Hotels Group



**Kevin Goh**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Ascott Limited



**Nathan Andrews**  
Strategic Advisor  
DS Group



**Nitin Chhatwal**  
Managing Director  
Shrem Infrastructure



**Pooja Ray**  
Managing Director  
Mayfair Hotels & Resorts



**Rahool Macarius**  
Market MD Eurasia  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts



**Rajeev Menon**  
President - Asia Pacific  
(excluding China)  
Marriott International



**Rajesh Magoor**  
Co-Founder & CEO  
MakeMyTrip



**Ritesh Agarwal**  
Founder & Group CEO  
OYO



**Sébastien Bazin**  
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**Shruti Shilbhal**  
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**Sonica Mathotra**  
Joint Managing Director  
MBO Group



**Vibhas Prasad**  
Director  
Leisure Hotels Group



**Vikram Garg**  
Senior MD & Head of  
Asia Real Estate Asset  
Management, Blackstone



**Vikram Lalvani**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Sterling Holiday Resorts



**Vikram Oberoi**  
Chief Executive Officer & MD  
The Oberoi Group



**Zubin Saxena**  
Senior Vice President  
& Country Head - India  
Hilton