



# ENGAGE

January-February 2025 | Volume 5 | Issue 1



## HERITAGE TRAILS

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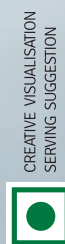
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For further details refer to the pack.



## From the President's Desk



**KB Kachru**  
President, Hotel Association of India  
Chairman - South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

Nostalgia is in the air, shaping consumer preferences and redefining travel experiences. More than ever, discerning travellers with high consumption capacity are gravitating toward niche offerings that celebrate their heritage and culture. The world is witnessing a resurgence of hyperlocal flavours, micro-histories, and traditions that whisper of a land and its stories. Chefs are curating menus that explore the depths of regional cuisines, crafting dishes that evoke a deep connection with one's roots. For Gen Z, this shift is particularly profound — there is a growing desire to reconnect with the culture they grew up with or long to discover.

This renewed interest in cultural identity is fueling the growth of heritage tourism, where travellers seek immersive, authentic experiences. From the forts and palaces to spice trails, heritage tourism has become a cornerstone of India's hospitality narrative. Recognising this potential, the Union Budget 2025-26 has introduced several measures to accelerate growth in this sector. Fifty tourist destinations will be developed in collaboration with state governments, enhancing infrastructure and visitor experience. Additionally, hotels in these destinations will gain easier and softer access to financing. The homestay sector, an increasingly popular segment among experiential travelers, will benefit from MUDRA loans, supporting small entrepreneurs and local communities in the hospitality space.

The government continues to prioritise spiritual tourism, and this budget has placed a strong focus on destinations related to the life and times of Lord Buddha. Visa norms including fee for tourists from South east Asia — a major source market for this segment are expected to be relaxed. Bihar, a key destination in the Buddhist sector, will see expansion of airports — both brownfield and greenfield projects. Regional connectivity will be enhanced by the expansion of the UDAN Scheme. Announced tax reliefs will place additional disposable income in the hands of people driving consumption which is expected to help the hospitality sector as well. While the budget seeks to drive growth and employment through tourism, the key issues like rationalisation of GST, licenses, Infrastructure status to all hotel projects, rewards under SEIS remain unaddressed.

Meanwhile, the hospitality sector is set for robust expansion. Branded hotels are projected to see 11–12% revenue growth by 2026, fuelled by rising demand in leisure and business travel, as well as a resurgence in MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions). With hotel supply expected to increase by 11–12% by 2025, 65% of new developments are targeting leisure and non-metro destinations, reflecting the shift toward experiential travel. The sector's expansion is largely asset-light, allowing for rapid scalability with minimal risk.

Heritage tourism, as you will see through the pages of this Issue, is not a passing trend—it is a cultural movement that encapsulates the essence of travel in the modern age. As India positions itself as a global hub for heritage experiences, the hospitality industry is responding with innovation, authenticity, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. With destination management incentives, skill development programs for youth, and structured policies in place, this is the beginning of a golden era for both travellers and the industry alike. **HAI**



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## Key concerns of Hotel industry

**A**head of the Budget, Hotel Association of India president K.B. Kachru highlighted key issues for India's hospitality sector, including the need for infrastructure development, rationalised tax rates, easier visa processes, and greater incentives from state governments to promote investments.

## Tourism Day celebrated

**I**ndia celebrated National Tourism Day on January 25, promoting responsible, sustainable, and accessible tourism. The 2025 theme, 'Tourism for Inclusive Growth,' emphasised the role of tourism in fostering economic growth and creating jobs while preserving cultural heritage. The government collaborated with

various stakeholders to boost tourism and support eco-friendly practices. Events such as workshops, photo contests, virtual tours, and guided walks aimed to encourage sustainable tourism practices. This year's theme highlights the importance of developing tourism in under-served regions and promoting eco-friendly travel. It aligns with India's commitment to sustainable development goals, positioning tourism as a powerful tool for inclusive growth.



## Bharat Parv 2025



**T**he Ministry of Tourism hosted the six-day mega event "Bharat Parv" from January 26 to 31, 2025, at the Red Fort lawns, with the theme "Dekho Apna Desh". The event featured food stalls, handicrafts, state tourism pavilions, and central ministries stalls, showcasing India's rich culture and heritage. Highlights included choreographed performances by the North Zonal Cultural Centre, regional performances by associations like the Kannada and Gujarat Associations, and special shows by popular artists. The event also featured Republic Day Tableaux, performances by the armed forces, and an activity zone with Nukkad Natak, quizzes, painting competitions, and DIY activities for school and college students.

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# Chef Damodharan gets Padma Shri Award

Damodharan Kothandaraman, known as Chef Damu and celebrated for his role as a judge on ‘Cooku with Comali’, has been honored with the Padma Shri for his exceptional contributions to Indian cuisine. Renowned for his mastery of Chettinadu and Chennai’s seafood dishes, as well as traditional Brahmin fare, Chef Damodaran has dedicated decades to preserving and innovating South Indian culinary traditions. He is also the first Indian chef to enter the Guinness Book of World Records for cooking the largest number of dishes in a day. Tamil Nadu BJP Chief K Annamalai congratulated Chef Damu, calling him Tamil Nadu’s pride.



Chef Damodaran



## ITC Hotels listed

The ITC shares will remain in focus following the announcement that ITC Hotels will be listed on the stock exchanges. The National Stock Exchange of India Limited and BSE Limited have approved the listing and trading of ITC Hotels’ equity shares, effective January 29, 2025, as per a regulatory filing. ITC Hotels, now a separate entity, has been included in indices with a starting price of around Rs 260, and it issued 125.11 crore equity shares to its shareholders.

## Mahakumbh celebrated

The Mahakumbh, organised at Prayagraj, from 13 January to 26 February, 2025, showcases the rich, spiritual and cultural heritage of our country to the world. Pilgrims took Holy Dip at the Triveni Sangam.

The Ministry of Tourism is actively participating in Mahakumbh 2025, introducing luxury accommodations, multilingual helplines, global outreach programs, and the Incredible India Pavilion to enhance the experience for pilgrims, tourists, and scholars from around the world.



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## Another push for Tourism – but is it enough?

Industry leaders cheer budget proposals but wait for deeper reforms in the sector.

The Union Budget 2025-26 has once again underscored the significance of tourism and hospitality as key drivers of economic growth and employment generation. The government's commitment to developing 50 new tourist destinations, improving infrastructure, and promoting spiritual and medical tourism mark a significant step forward. While these measures indicate intent, and industry leaders have hailed the budget proposals, many point to long-standing demands—such as infrastructure status for all hotel projects irrespective of location and star category, industry benefits for hospitality, tax rationalisation, and ease of doing business—that remain unaddressed.

"The budget is progressive, especially focusing on tourism and job creation. The government's commitment to developing 50 new destinations and improving infrastructure is promising," said **K.B. Kachru**, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI).

He emphasised that the budget effectively highlights the



importance of spiritual and medical tourism, particularly with neighbouring countries, and includes visa simplifications to encourage international travel. "Overall, the initiatives taken by the government in this year's budget are steps in the right direction for the industry," Kachru noted.

**M.P. Bezbaruah**, Secretary General, Hotel Association of India, acknowledged the government's ₹20,000 crore push for tourism-led employment and improved connectivity. The challenge-mode development of 50 tourist destinations in partnership with states is expected to spur hotel

construction, though he pointed out that land acquisition responsibilities have been left to the states.

"A key takeaway for us is the inclusion of hotels in these destinations under the harmonised master list (HML) of infrastructure," Bezbaruah said, adding that performance-linked incentives, MUDRA loans, and skill development initiatives for youth are positive moves.

Additionally, the UDAN scheme will be expanded to connect 120 more regional destinations, with a special focus on Bihar's Buddhist sites, including financial support for a greenfield airport and Patna airport expansion.



**Puneet Chhatwal**, MD & CEO of Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), which owns brands like Taj and Vivanta, said, "The inclusion of 50 destinations in the infrastructure push enables access to easier funding norms, thereby spurring hotel investment and local economic development." He praised the government's holistic approach, which combines tourism promotion, connectivity, and investment incentives, placing the sector in a strong position to drive GDP growth and employment. However, Chhatwal noted that clarity on execution remains critical.

**Deep Kalra**, Chairman, World Travel & Tourism Council, India



Initiative (WTTCL), said, "There was a strong expectation for an enhanced international marketing budget to support India's growing ambitions as a global tourism hub." He stressed the urgent need for an empowered, strategically driven India Tourism Board to boost the country's global presence.

While the government has announced visa fee waivers and streamlined e-visas, the industry continues to lack industry status, making regulatory compliance and financing more complex than in other sectors. Additionally, no changes were made to the GST structure, despite repeated appeals from hospitality, aviation, and online travel businesses.



**Dr Sanjay Sethi**, MD & CEO, Chalet Hotels, said, "The Budget has outlined a set of impactful initiatives that will play a pivotal role in boosting India's tourism sector, underscoring the government's dedication to advancing the travel and hospitality industry. The planned development of 50 key tourist destinations in collaboration with state governments is a game-

changer, ensuring better infrastructure, improved connectivity, and world-class amenities."

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) remains committed to government-private sector collaboration, ensuring sustainable hospitality development in both metro and remote regions. However, as India pushes towards the Viksit Bharat vision for 2047, the success of these initiatives will depend on timely execution,



policy clarity, and sustained government support. For now, while the budget makes a strong push for tourism, the hospitality sector continues to wait for deeper reforms that will truly unlock its full potential.

**Ajay Bakaya**, Chairman, Sarovar Hotels said, "It is a good progressive budget. With cuts in personal tax that will spur spending and rev up our economy. The continued emphasis on infrastructure boosts tourism. Recognising 50 new destinations, as part of infrastructure, is the first welcome step in accordance with infrastructure status to tourism." **HAI**



# “Govt. is promoting heritage sites while ensuring sustainable tourism”

DG Tourism **Mugdha Sinha** talks about the government initiatives to promote heritage tourism.

## What are the government's recent policy initiatives to enhance the infrastructure around India's heritage sites?

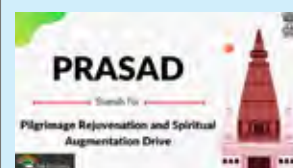
Aligned with the Prime Minister's vision of Virasat Bhi, Vikas Bhi (Heritage and Development), the Ministry of Tourism is enhancing infrastructure and destination management at natural, cultural, spiritual, and heritage sites. In collaboration with states, financial support is extended under four key schemes:

- Swadesh Darshan
- Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)
- Challenge-Based Destination Development (CBDD)
- Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI)



Launched in 2014-15, Swadesh Darshan 1.0 developed 76 projects worth Rs 5,287.90 crore, including the Buddhist Circuit and Kushinagar International Airport. The revamped Swadesh Darshan 2.0 has 34 new projects valued at Rs 791.25 crore.

The PRASHAD scheme focuses on reviving pilgrimage sites, with 46 projects worth Rs 1,605.20 crore undertaken across 29 heritage and spiritual sites.



Under CBDD, 41 projects worth Rs 828.19 crore have been approved while 40 SASCI projects totalling Rs 3295.76 crore are underway. In total, 161 projects valued at Rs 6520.40 crore have been initiated through these



four schemes. Additionally, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has launched HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) to revitalise 12 heritage cities, complementing initiatives like Smart Cities and Swachhata Rankings to promote sustainable and responsible tourism under the Mission Travel for Life.

## What are the measures being taken to improve connectivity to lesser-known/ UNESCO World heritage sites.

India is blessed to have topographies and landscapes conducive for the development of tourism. The snow-capped mountain slopes are amenable to mountaineering, trekking and skiing; the blue flag, bio-luminescent beaches, and transparent lakes are good for tranquil travel and adventure sports and the wildlife sanctuaries with jungle lodges and white and sandy deserts all attract tourists.

The rich diversity of our cultural offerings is India's USP—there are 44 UNESCO World



also connect hitherto remote and inaccessible destinations.

We have 157 airports tipped to grow to 350 by 2047. The announcement of the Modified UDAN for the mid-segment announced in the recent Budget will improve regional connectivity to 120 new destinations.

IndiGo has launched a new flight service connecting Varanasi and Delhi via Khajuraho, making it more convenient for tourists to visit this UNESCO site.

In Bihar, efforts are underway to enhance road infrastructure, improving access from Patna, the nearest major city, to Nalanda. A greenfield airport has been announced in Bihar for the Buddhist circuit. Moreover,

Heritage Sites, World Craft Cities, GI-tagged Craft-Textile Clusters, 1,200 Museums, 3,696 ASI sites, forts, palaces and a wealth of intangible fairs, festivals, sporting, dance, music and spiritual events, crafts, cuisine, cinema and culture that make India a delight for both tourists and pilgrims.

In the last 10 years, India has invested heavily in the development of civil infrastructure for improved and enhanced connectivity. Hundred Smart Cities with Swachhata Rankings have improved public spaces in the cities to make cities clean and tourist-friendly.

To ease travel, 150,000 km of road network has enhanced connectivity for detour destinations. The recent announcement of 18 new National Highway projects in Shivamogga, Karnataka, with a total investment of Rs 6,168 crore will improve road connectivity, promote tourism, and stimulate the local economy. Notable projects include the Bhanapur-Gaddanakeri section, which will enhance access to historic sites like Hampi, the Ankola-Gooty section linking key markets and pilgrimage sites, and the Arabail-Idagundi section, which will strengthen connectivity to Karwar and Mangaluru ports. Several ropeway, bridges and tunnel projects will



India has the third largest metro coverage with 1,000 plus kms in 15 metro and tier 2 cities for last mile and multi-modal connectivity. Nearly 38 river cruise and maritime circuits with attendant port infrastructure will aid travel by water route.

We also have four luxury trains with three in Top Twenty global ranking by Conde Nast, besides several hi speed trains for religious and other destinations.



● *LeaderSpeak*

**What strategies are being implemented to bring tourist attention to lesser-known heritage sites?**

The Ministry of Tourism runs several initiatives to promote the country's rich cultural heritage, including unexplored and lesser-known heritage sites. The Incredible India Digital Portal is a one-shop stop to showcase India's diverse natural and cultural patrimony, along with its craft, cuisine and intangible heritage of fairs, festivals and events with travel diaries from experiences of tourists and bloggers. The site not only showcases the rich heritage but also allows through third-party integration with online travel aggregators to book accommodations, flights etc.

Dekho Apna Desh programme encourages domestic tourism by showcasing lesser-known destinations and cultural gems across India through various ongoing promotional activities. Similarly, the Chalo India Initiative was launched in March 2024 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister to nudge the Indian diaspora to refer India to five of their non-Indian friends to visit India through a referral code.

Additionally, India participates in eight international leisure-related Travel Marts and four MICE-related marts and uses these events for collateral promotions to position India as a preferred global destination for all seasons.

**How does the government plan to balance the promotion of these sites with sustainable tourism practices?**

The government is promoting UNESCO World Heritage Sites while ensuring sustainable tourism through eco-friendly infrastructure and responsible visitor management. Key initiatives include:

● **Eco-friendly construction**

Using bamboo, recycled steel, and green insulation to reduce environmental impact.

● **Smart building technologies**

Implementing energy-efficient systems, including automated security and energy management.



● **Green roofs and walls**

Enhancing insulation, reducing urban heat, and improving air quality.

Additionally, awareness campaigns encourage responsible tourism, while measures like entry permits and visitor limits help prevent over-tourism, ensuring long-term sustainability.

**Are there plans to digitise more heritage sites for virtual access to attract a global audience?**

There are several initiatives being undertaken for the digitisation of heritage sites:



● **360-Degree Virtual Tours**

This has been done for monuments like the Taj Mahal, where one can explore not only the exterior of the monument but also its interior rooms, including the tomb area. The tour is available on platforms like Google Arts & Culture, where you can zoom in to appreciate the intricate carvings and architectural details.

● **Google Arts & Culture**

also features an interactive virtual tour of Qutub Minar, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. The platform allows you to navigate the monument and learn more



about its history, construction, and significance through high-definition images and informative videos.

● **VR Experience**

This is being used for various sites like the Red Fort. You can take a detailed, immersive tour of this historic site. There are apps that allow you to explore the fort's architecture, learn about its role during the Mughal era, and see its beauty from various angles.

● **3D Mapping and Virtual Tours**

The Sanchi Stupa, another UNESCO site, can be digitally explored through 3D mapping. The virtual tours help you see the stupa from all angles, along with its intricate carvings

The recent Budget announcement of granting infrastructure status under the Harmonised List to the Hospitality sector is a fulfilment of a long-pending demand and will go a long way in enhancing the accommodation supply in the market

that depict scenes from the life of Lord Buddha.

● **Virtual Museums**

The ruins of Hampi in Karnataka have been digitally mapped as part of the Hampi Virtual Museum project. This platform offers a virtual tour of the historical landscape, showcasing temples, palaces, and the unique architecture that once formed the Vijayanagar Empire.

● Map My India uses telematics and hyper-localisation for ease of travel to various heritage sites.

**What steps are being taken to involve local communities in the preservation and promotion of heritage tourism?**

Local communities are at the front end of the preservation and promotion of heritage tourism because not only is it intrinsically part of their habitat, and lifestyle but also in many communities, tourism is the mainstay for livelihood.







Tribal habitats, villages around wildlife sanctuaries, hill districts, vibrant villages and the North East all thrive and survive on tourism. In fact, women, youth, and local communities are the vanguards of sustainable tourism and responsible practices for destination management.

**With the rise in footfall at popular heritage destinations, how is the government ensuring the conservation and maintenance of these sites?**

India's 5,000-plus years' old civilisational heritage gives it a distinct advantage in attracting tourists. It is imperative to preserve and conserve this rich heritage and also to maintain and manage it to protect it from over-tourism beyond the carrying capacity through differential pricing, timings, and so on. Destination Management is essential for all tourist sites and must be undertaken as part of destination development either by states or their expert agencies. The following is being done by the ministries and states along with experts and academic institutes:

- Implementation of Site Management plans for heritage sites which include visitor management and conservation plan for the monument.
- Regular monitoring of the site and based on need, conservation works are undertaken.
- PPP collaborations are being made for better infrastructure around heritage sites to support both conservation and visitor experience.

● Digital tools such as 3D scanning and virtual reality are being used to document and study heritage sites. This data helps monitor changes over time and consequently take up conservation/restoration works.

● Awareness programs are being launched to educate tourists about the importance of preserving heritage. Additionally, local communities are engaged in conservation efforts, helping create a sense of shared responsibility.

The recent Budget announcement of granting



infrastructure status under the Harmonised List to the Hospitality sector is a fulfilment of a long-pending demand and will go a long way in enhancing the accommodation supply in the market. Currently the hotel inventory in India is estimated at 1.82 million rooms and is tipped to reach 3.10 million by 2029 and 4.10 million by 2034. Moreover, the development of hotels is aligned with 50 select destinations in a holistic manner to ensure sufficient accommodation supply for top attractions.

Regarding heritage sites, the ASI-driven Adopt a Monument 2.0 allows corporate houses and private sector players to enter into public-private partnerships for developing basic amenities and infrastructure for facilitating tourists. Nearly 29 such agreements have already been signed. **HAI**

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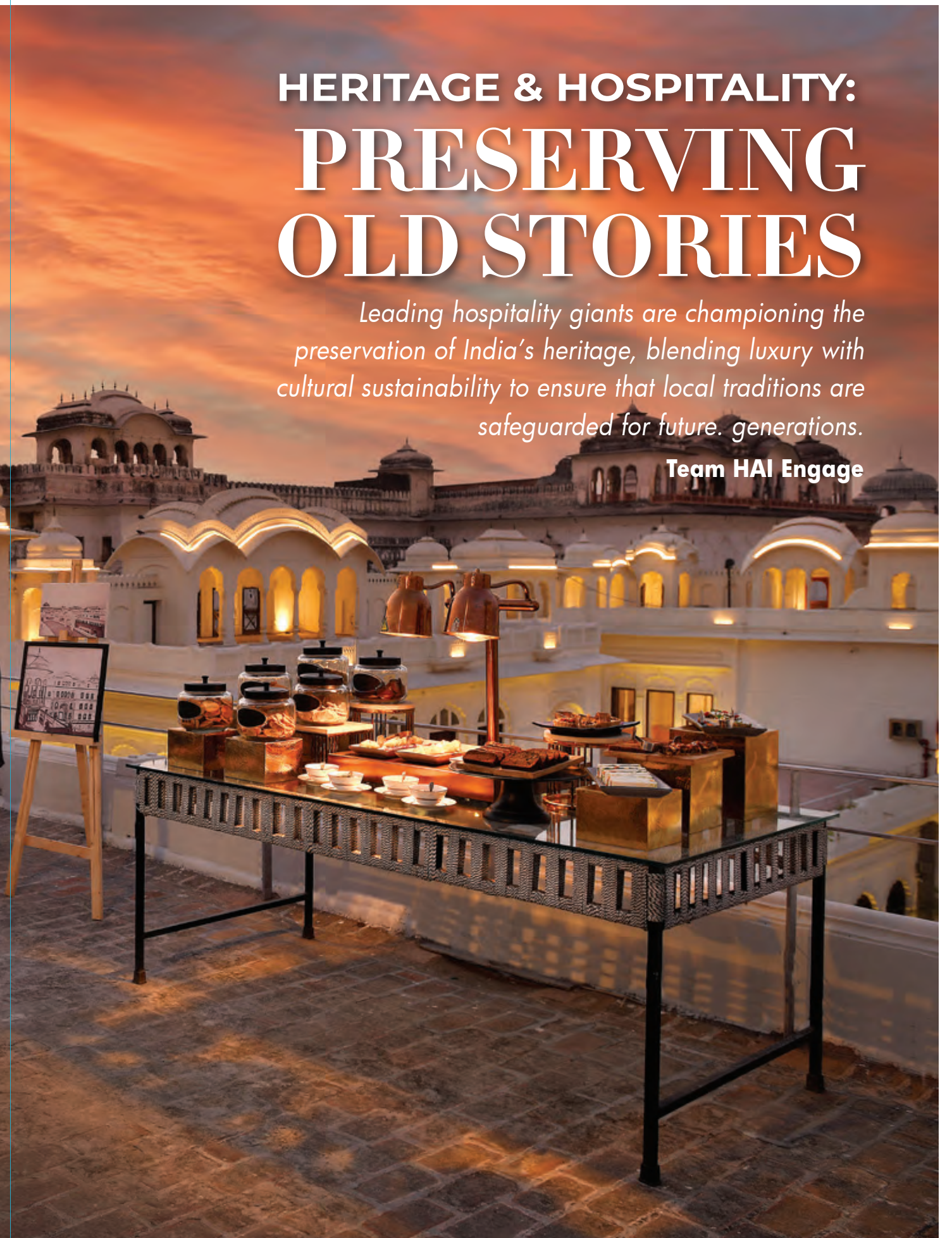




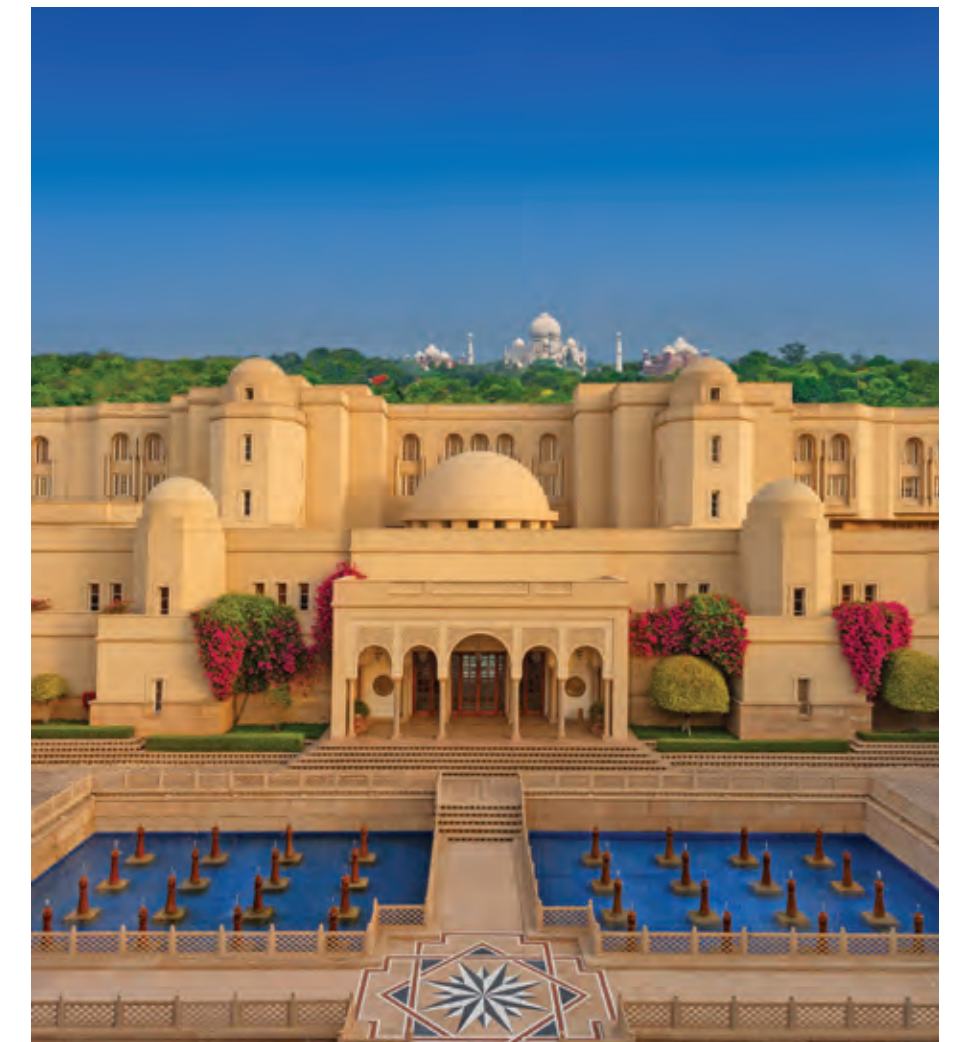
# HERITAGE & HOSPITALITY: PRESERVING OLD STORIES

*Leading hospitality giants are championing the preservation of India's heritage, blending luxury with cultural sustainability to ensure that local traditions are safeguarded for future generations.*

**Team HAI Engage**







India's hospitality industry is not just about luxury or amenities. Many of the country's finest hotel chains have taken on the responsibility of restoring historic landmarks, preserving cultural traditions, and offering immersive heritage experiences to travellers.

Leading the way are the five-star luxury hotel chains, and homegrown brands that have transformed palaces, forts, and historic mansions into world-class hospitality destinations. Taj Hotels, for instance, has meticulously restored the Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur and Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, ensuring these architectural marvels continue to captivate travellers. Similarly, Oberoi's Vilas properties, such as The Oberoi Udaivilas and The Oberoi Amarvilas, bring India's royal past to life with their grand aesthetics and regal hospitality.



But preserving heritage goes beyond architecture. Many hotel chains are deeply involved in curating cultural experiences—from traditional cuisine and folk performances to indigenous craft workshops. They are also fostering sustainable tourism, sourcing food from local farmers and engaging regional artisans to curate authentic experiences.





“

Properties like the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, and The Oberoi Rajvilas in Jaipur are not just hotels; they are ambassadors of India's story, showcasing the country's grandeur, diversity, and warmth to the world

”

Another canvas for art and culture is the Park Hotels Group. From showcasing local artisans and hosting art residencies to curating exhibitions and integrating indigenous craftsmanship into design, Park Group hotels have become living museums of culture.

They believe that art is integral to storytelling. “Our hotels are adorned with carefully curated artworks from emerging and established Indian artists, transforming public spaces into immersive galleries. Initiatives such as art walks, live performances, and collaborations with cultural institutions not only provide artists with a platform but also offer guests an enriching experience,” they mention among their vision statements.

Many hotels are housed within restored



palaces, havelis, and colonial-era buildings, preserving architectural marvels that might have otherwise been lost to time. This commitment to heritage conservation not only safeguards history but also allows guests to immerse themselves in the grandeur of a bygone era. The Lotus Palace Chettinad and Ran Baas The Palace, a heritage hotel in Patiala, of the Park Hotels, exemplify this ethos. These restorations are more than architectural revivals; they are cultural revivals. By meticulously restoring frescoes, repurposing antique furniture, and collaborating with local craftspeople, they ensure that heritage remains at the forefront of contemporary hospitality.

Even beyond the luxury segment, Indian hospitality remains steeped in tradition. More

than 55% of organised hotels belong to the three-star and above category, and while they may not offer palace-style opulence, they uphold the same ethos of cultural pride and made-in-India exceptional service.

By blending historical conservation with modern hospitality, India's leading hotel chains are bringing the past into the present, ensuring that travellers don't just visit history—they experience it. Through their commitment to

“

By blending historical conservation with modern hospitality, India's leading hotel chains are bringing the past into the present, ensuring that travellers don't just visit history—they experience it

”



heritage, sustainability, and community-driven tourism, they continue to elevate India's global stature while keeping its legacy alive.

Beyond Rajasthan's restored havelis, the trend extends to other regions. CGH Earth in Kerala has turned old spice warehouses and colonial bungalows into boutique hotels, offering travellers an authentic experience of South India's maritime history. These efforts ensure that







“

**The Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra, with its stunning views of the Taj Mahal, offers a culinary journey that draws on the recipes and techniques passed down through the Mughal Emperors' kitchens. Guests can also enjoy Kathak dance performances, providing a window into the vibrant cultural history of Agra**

”



historical structures remain relevant, providing employment to local artisans and keeping traditional craftsmanship alive.

Indian hotel chains are not just preserving physical structures—they are immersing guests in India's rich cultural traditions. Properties across the country offer curated experiences such as heritage walks, folk performances, local cuisine masterclasses, and craft workshops.

ITC Hotels, “Responsible Luxury” initiative integrates local art, architecture, and cuisine into each property. Their hotels, such as the

ITC Grand Bharat and ITC Maurya, showcase regional design elements, bringing India's diverse heritage to life for domestic and international travellers. Similarly, The Leela Palaces celebrate Indian craftsmanship through intricate interiors, inspired by local palaces and temples.

These hotel brands are strengthening India's image as a premier global destination by offering world-class hospitality while celebrating India's rich history. Properties like the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, and The Oberoi Rajvilas in Jaipur are not just hotels; they are

ambassadors of India's story, showcasing the country's grandeur, diversity, and warmth to the world.

Inspired by the traditional Indian greeting ‘Namaste,’ the ITC Hotels' brand logo embodies “Atithi Devo Bhava,” welcoming guests with warmth and authenticity. From showcasing Indian art and craftsmanship through the WelcomArt initiative to preserving havelis, palaces, and forts under WelcomHeritage, the brand is deeply invested in keeping India's rich history alive. Each hotel within the ITC Luxury Collection is an architectural masterpiece that pays homage to its region's heritage. ITC Maurya in Delhi, for instance, is inspired by the grandeur of Mauryan architecture, featuring a chaitya-style dome, intricate murals, and priceless artworks by M.F. Husain, Tyeb Mehta, and Krishen Khanna. ITC Narmada in Gujarat mirrors the elaborate Adalaj stepwell, while ITC Kohener in Hyderabad reflects the region's distinctive boulders, textiles, and ceramics.

As Indian hospitality chains continue their commitment to heritage conservation, cultural storytelling, and sustainable tourism, they remain pivotal in taking the Incredible India story forward, ensuring that India's legacy is not just remembered but experienced firsthand.

With the spotlight on Kumbh this year, hotel chains are also ramping up their focus on religious destinations with significant additions in room supply pipelines. With a shift in traveller profiles and rising demand for good quality accommodation, branded hotel chains are increasingly recognising the potential and expanding their presence in this segment. In 2024, of the over 45,000 branded keys signed nearly 18% were in religious destinations, taking the total pile pipeline for those locations to a significantly higher number, an ET report mentions. IHCL is ramping up its focus on spiritual and religious destinations through a multi-branch strategy with plans to open 2,800 rooms across brands in locations such as Ayodhya, Hampi, Vrindavan, Ujjain and Prayagraj over the next 3-5 years. Similarly, the Radisson

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**Many hotels are housed within restored palaces, havelis, and colonial-era buildings, preserving architectural marvels that might have otherwise been lost to time. This commitment to heritage conservation not only safeguards history but also allows guests to immerse themselves in the grandeur of a bygone era**

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hotel group is doubling down in Varanasi, Katra, Amritsar and in Nasik. Given the demand in these markets, they would be opening new hotels in Ujjain, Prayagraj, Guruvayur and Puri, adding more than 1,000 rooms. Moreover, by integrating cultural preservation into their operations, the industry's leaders are ensuring that local arts, crafts, and traditions are not only safeguarded but celebrated for generations to come.

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**One of IHCL's most remarkable initiatives is its support for the Varanasi Handloom Weavers Support Program. The program has revived Varanasi's ancient silk and zari weaving tradition, a craft once at risk of disappearing**

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operations contribute to the social and environmental well-being of the communities it serves.

**Gaurav Pokhariyal**, Executive Vice President – Human Resources at IHCL, highlights the company's commitment to promoting social inclusion. “IHCL leads by example in promoting social inclusion and uplifting local communities. From providing local employment opportunities to facilitating business for local suppliers and offering training programs for women and youth, the company is focused on creating sustainable livelihoods,” he says. This approach ensures that the benefits of tourism extend beyond the luxury properties to the local communities.



One of the foremost examples of this commitment is from the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). IHCL has long been a pioneer in integrating sustainability into its business model. The company's ESG+ framework, Paathya is built around six key pillars: environmental stewardship, social responsibility, value chain transformation, heritage preservation, governance excellence, and sustainable growth. These pillars guide IHCL's approach to responsible tourism and heritage management, ensuring that its



One of IHCL's most remarkable initiatives is its support for the Varanasi Handloom Weavers Support Program. The program has revived the ancient silk and zari weaving tradition of Varanasi, a craft once at risk of disappearing. Taj Ganges, Varanasi, provides local weavers with the necessary materials, modern designs, and tools to ensure that this centuries-old art form continues to thrive. This project not only sustains a vital cultural heritage but also provides financial security to the artisans



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**In 2024, of the over 45,000 branded keys signed, nearly 18% were in religious destinations**

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involved, offering them a stable livelihood while protecting their craft for future generations.

IHCL has also partnered with UNESCO to offer experiential cultural tours at its hotels. These immersive experiences allow guests to engage directly with local communities practising traditional art forms like Patachitra (a scroll painting technique from West Bengal), Ganga Aarti in Varanasi, and Kalbelia dance performances.

Similarly, the Oberoi Group takes pride in preserving and promoting India's arts, crafts, and traditions across its properties. Each hotel is more than just a luxurious accommodation; it is an immersive cultural experience where guests can connect with the local heritage. The Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra, with its stunning views of the Taj Mahal, offers a culinary journey that draws on the recipes and techniques passed down through the Mughal

Emperors' kitchens. Guests can also enjoy Kathak dance performances, providing a window into the vibrant cultural history of Agra. The Oberoi Udaivilas in Udaipur brings Rajasthan's cultural heritage to life through miniature painting workshops and Thekri glass inlay work. The Group's collaboration with Dhonk Craft in Ranthambhore is another example of how it is supporting local communities and preserving traditional crafts. By purchasing handmade products from Dhonk Craft, guests contribute directly to the livelihoods of tribal communities and help sustain the region's craft heritage.

**Vivek Shukla**, Chief Executive Officer at The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, says, “The Lalit has harmoniously blended the promotion of arts, crafts, cuisine, and local communities with providing luxury and comfort. The Group believes that a truly enriching hospitality experience is about weaving together the essence of a region's history, culture, and





traditions into the fabric of every guest experience, ensuring that both travellers and local communities benefit from these initiatives.”

The Lalit's art initiatives are diverse and inclusive. From hosting art exhibitions and workshops to collaborating with local artists, the brand ensures that art is accessible to all. For instance, The Lalit New Delhi has been a hub for contemporary art, featuring works by renowned artists like M.F. Husain, Satish Gujral, Paresh Maity. Similarly, other hotels have curated spaces that highlight traditional Indian art forms, such as Madhubani and Warli paintings, alongside modern installations. Through its initiatives, The Lalit Group ensures that the cultural integrity of each region is respected and celebrated.

InterGlobe Foundation, the philanthropic arm of InterGlobe Enterprises, promotes heritage walks, among others. The Head of the InterGlobe Foundation, **Dr Monica Banerjee**, observes, “Heritage is not merely about preserving the past; it is about fostering a deep connection to our roots while paving the way for a more

inclusive and enriched future.” The InterGlobe Foundation's efforts focus on both heritage conservation and social inclusion. Since its inception, the Foundation has undertaken various projects to restore monuments of national importance, including the restoration of the Abdur Rahim Khan-I-Khanan's Mausoleum in New Delhi.

By preserving and promoting local heritage, the industry helps foster a deeper understanding of the places it operates in, allowing guests to engage meaningfully with the cultural history of the region.

These efforts are not just about maintaining monuments or showcasing art; they are about creating a sustainable future that values cultural heritage and promotes social inclusion. Whether through supporting local artisans, offering immersive cultural experiences, or contributing to community development, hospitality leaders are ensuring that India's diverse cultural heritage is safeguarded for generations to come.

As the industry continues to evolve, these initiatives provide a model for how hospitality can contribute to the preservation of culture, creating an environment where heritage, humanity, and sustainability go hand in hand. The efforts of these hospitality giants highlight the powerful role the industry plays in shaping the future of cultural preservation, ensuring that the stories of India's rich traditions are not only shared but cherished by future generations. **HAI**

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# Endless possibilities in India's Tourism: Shekhawat



**Ajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Minister of Tourism & Culture, recently highlighted India's unique position in the global tourism landscape. "India cannot be compared to any other country in terms of economic growth or even tourism because of our high domestic potential," he said, while speaking at the recently held, CII Tourism Summit in New Delhi. While countries like Singapore, Thailand, and Dubai rely heavily on foreign tourists due to limited domestic demand, India's vast and growing population provides unparalleled opportunities for domestic tourism.

Shekhawat emphasised the post-Covid boom in domestic travel, noting the rising spending power of India's middle class and their growing aspiration for travel experiences. "The growth of the middle class in India further contributes to this immense potential, leading to endless possibilities," he added. He also credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for transforming tourism infrastructure over the past decade. Key developments include the construction of 1,50,000 km of roads, the doubling of functional airports, near-complete railway electrification, the introduction of modern trains, and the identification of 102 inland waterways. Additionally, affordable data access has opened new digital avenues for promoting tourism.

On India's journey toward becoming a \$34 trillion economy, Shekhawat stressed that tourism can contribute significantly, potentially adding \$3 trillion. He called for collaboration between the government, industry, and stakeholders to identify and bridge existing gaps.



At the event, **Puneet Chhatwal**, Immediate Past President of Hotel Association of India (HAI), Chairman, CII National Committee on Tourism and Hospitality, and MD & CEO of IHCL, painted a vivid picture of India's underutilised tourism potential. Comparing India's annual 10 million international arrivals to Paris's 25 million, he stressed the need for a paradigm shift. Chhatwal advocated for India to move from 'Incredible India' to 'Inevitable India.' He emphasised the value of tourism as more than an economic driver, calling it a tool for cultural diplomacy that fosters global connections.

**Amitabh Kant**, India's G20 Sherpa, laid out an actionable roadmap for harnessing tourism's



potential. He called for decentralising tourism initiatives; enacting destination-specific legislation; and, prioritising high-value global tourists.

"The tourism sector must focus on job creation. India needs jobs, and there is no better sector than tourism to create them," Kant said.

**Sanjay Sethi**, Honorary Treasurer, HAI and MD & CEO of Chalet Hotels, highlighted the restrictive Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) policies, calling for their review to unlock the potential of coastal tourism. He also proposed taxing outbound tourism to incentivize domestic travel and using the



funds to promote inbound tourism.

**Sumita Dawra**, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Gol, underscored tourism's role as a multiplier of economic growth. She highlighted how the sector creates jobs both directly and indirectly,



attracts investments, and boosts foreign exchange earnings.

**Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Gol, emphasised the need to address supply shortages in tourism infrastructure.



## WHITE PAPER ON EMPLOYMENT

A white paper titled 'Employment Landscape in Tourism and Hospitality in India,' was unveiled by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). It projects a 1.2x increase in



spending in the sector by 2036-37. This will drive the need for an additional 6.1 million workers, highlighting the sector's critical role in workforce expansion and gender inclusion. It has made several recommendations, and a notable innovation was the introduction of a Tourism Employment Index (TEI) to analyse employment dynamics. The white paper also stressed leveraging the gig economy and integrating digital public infrastructure to position India as a creative tourism hub. **HAI**



# Balancing Conservation with Tourism Growth



While promoting tourism at heritage sites, INTACH is committed to ensuring that such development does not disturb the surrounding environment or the authentic ambience of these sites, writes **RAVINDRA SINGH**, Member Secretary, INTACH.

**H**eritage and tourism are inextricably linked, as the rich cultural heritage of India plays a pivotal role in the country's thriving tourism sector. India's diverse and vast cultural legacy, with its monuments, traditions, and natural landscapes, forms the bedrock of its tourism industry. The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is India's premier heritage conservation organisation, dedicated to preserving and safeguarding the country's invaluable cultural and natural heritage. Established on 27 January 1984, as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act (1860), INTACH has become a leader in heritage preservation, playing a crucial role in the protection of India's historical assets.

INTACH has undertaken numerous projects aimed at enhancing heritage tourism in India. By focusing on sustainable conservation, the organisation ensures that the visitor experience is not only enriching, but also respectful of the heritage site's integrity. It collaborates with national and state agencies to develop comprehensive master plans for historical sites, identify and promote heritage villages for rural tourism, and conserve and repurpose historical assets for public accessibility. Through the

curation of eco-tourism projects, heritage interpretation centres, and educational publications, INTACH helps bridge the gap between heritage preservation and tourism development.

Importantly, while promoting tourism at historical and heritage sites, INTACH is committed to ensuring that such development does not disturb the surrounding environment or the authentic ambience of these areas. The focus remains on maintaining the delicate balance between preserving heritage and providing an enriching experience for visitors.

INTACH places a strong emphasis on the preservation of both Natural and Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Natural Heritage Division focuses on documenting often overlooked yet remarkable natural elements, such as heritage trees, springs, wetlands, river islands, and critical biodiversity, all of which contribute to the cultural tourism experience. One such project, the Yamuna Cultural Documentation, catalogues both tangible and intangible heritage along the river. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Division documents sacred sites, historical landmarks, folklore, folk songs, folk dances, and traditional fairs and festivals, preserving these intangible cultural elements for future generations.

**Utilising heritage structures through compatible adaptive reuse is often considered the most effective form of conservation. However, balancing conservation with development presents a significant challenge**

Tourism plays a crucial role in maintaining the relevance and ensuring the continuity of our heritage. Using heritage structures through compatible adaptive reuse is often considered the most effective form of conservation. However, balancing conservation with development presents a significant challenge. Change, by its very nature, necessitates alterations and additions to accommodate both the new function and modern needs. This delicate balance requires careful consideration, particularly regarding the conservation of not only the structure as a whole but also its architectural fragments, which contribute to its overall integrity. Maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the heritage structure must remain the paramount concern.

Often, adaptive reuse or the introduction of new infrastructure, impacts the structure. Consider, for example, a recent adaptive reuse plan for the army headquarters at the Mubarak Mandi heritage complex. The proposal to convert the first floor into office space necessitated the addition of toilet facilities. In such cases, integrating these essential amenities without compromising the building's authenticity requires careful assessment. Best practices dictate introducing service interventions in a way that is reversible and causes no long-term harm.

Another example, INTACH projects in Nepal involved Buddhist mahaviharas. These structures, originally built with lower heights, required expansion to accommodate communities' aspirations for new uses, including tourist events. In these projects, while increasing the height of the structures, attention was paid to maintaining the original architectural detailing and structural design. This ensured that the overall integrity and character of the mahaviharas remained intact, despite the necessary modifications. These examples illustrate the complexities of adaptive reuse and the importance of finding innovative solutions that respect the past while accommodating the present.

India's vast diversity in population, topography, and climate is intricately reflected in its rich cultural heritage,





Careful placement and alignment of service areas should be implemented to avoid vibrations and disturbances that may affect heritage sites

appropriate room sizes, adequate public spaces, and secure premises for hotel users, while adhering to universal design standards, poses further complexity. Adapting these structures without compromising their historic value requires a careful balance between functionality and preservation.

To ensure that the operations do not compromise the integrity of nearby heritage sites, the hospitality sector can adopt several sustainable practices. Promoting green energy sources, such as solar power, can help maintain the local microclimate, while rainwater harvesting can contribute to preserving the water table. Careful placement and alignment of service areas should be implemented to avoid vibrations and disturbances that could affect heritage sites. Additionally, when designing new structures, ensuring their visual integrity and compatibility with the surrounding heritage landscape is crucial for preserving the site's cultural value.

INTACH's multifaceted approach to heritage preservation demonstrates a delicate balance between safeguarding India's rich cultural and natural legacy and promoting sustainable tourism. **HAI**

underscoring the importance of public engagement for its preservation. Heritage walks and tourism workshops offer a promising approach to deepen the connection between communities and the cultural significance of historical sites, architectural landmarks, and living traditions.

INTACH faces several key challenges in preserving heritage structures, particularly when adapting them for commercial use like boutique hotels or resorts. One primary challenge is prioritising retrofitting over demolition to sustainably integrate old and new elements. Incorporating modern amenities such as lifts, air conditioning, and fire safety systems into the historic fabric requires sensitive design solutions that minimise visual and structural impact. Additionally, ensuring efficient circulation,

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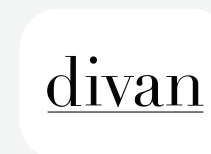


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Jonha Water Falls

# JHARKHAND Undiscovered and Lush

In this issue, we explore the magnificent landscapes of Jharkhand, brimming with tourist-friendly sites and heritage spots.

BY RIAAN JACOB GEORGE

Jharkhand is often known as the Land of Forests and it really is no surprise as its lush greenery that carpets the state is its biggest asset. The state has recently emerged as a vibrant tourism hub that people flock to not only for its forests but also for its cultural heritage, food, architectural wonders and options for adventure tourism.



Hazaribagh





Hirni Water Falls

Nestled in the eastern part of India, Jharkhand is home to lush green forests, majestic waterfalls and serene hills like Netarhat and Parasnath. This state also boasts iconic attractions like the Betla National Park, Hundru Falls and the sacred Baidyanath Dham. Rich in tribal culture, culinary experiences and a hotbed of handicrafts, Jharkhand provides an authentic experience through its festivals, artistry and local traditions. However, all this said, Jharkhand is fast emerging as a hub for eco-tourism possibilities thanks to its plentiful untouched landscapes, flanked by a unique and rich culture.

#### A land of waterfalls

Jharkhand is home to some of the most breathtaking cascades in India and tourists flock to these sites to enjoy a beautiful moment out in the lap of nature. Among the most famous on the list of Jharkhand's waterfalls is the Hundru Falls, which is characterised by the rugged terrain. The area around



Hundru Water Falls

Hundru Falls is perfect for those who enjoy trekking and rock climbing. Make another stop at Dassam Falls, which will enchant you if you enjoy forests because these cascades are surrounded by the most beautiful thick forest cover. Another one on the list is the Jonha Falls, because of its unique access. To get to the falls you need to go down 700 steps, without missing the nearby Buddhist temple, which adds a nice spiritual touch to the experience. Don't forget to visit



Digambar Jain Temple Parasnath



Dalama National Park

**The state is home to some of the most breathtaking cascades in India and tourists flock to these sites to enjoy a beautiful moment in the lap of nature**

the Rajrappa waterfall, which is an important spiritual hub for locals and tourists alike thanks to the Chhinnamastika Temple nearby. The Rajrappa waterfalls are a big draw for both adventure-seekers and spiritual travellers as they have a beautiful blend of tranquillity, adventure and heritage.

#### An adventure haven

The state of Jharkhand is also a haven for those travellers who are enthusiastic about adventure and the great outdoors as it offers a diverse range of such activities. At the very top of this list is the Patratu



## Must-try food in Jharkhand

Some of the local staples like litti chokha (round wheat ball stuffed with roasted gram flour, served with vegetable mash), dal pakhala (a fermented rice dish served with dal and vegetables), rugra (a traditional favourite made with rice flour and mutton) and kandil (a dessert) are worth trying. If you are visiting during the festive season, you will enjoy thekua, a sweet made of wheat flour, jaggery and coconut, which is extremely popular.



Rugda- The Vegetarian Mutton



Litti Chokha



Pakhala



Maa Chinmastike Mandir

Lake Resort, which is the hub of the Jharkhand Adventure Festival. This place provides thrilling water sports like kayaking, wakeboarding and high-speed boating, set against the stunning backdrop of eco-tourism. For those who actively seek trekking-led experiences, we recommend the Saranda Forest, which offers dense landscapes and sal woods, waterfalls tucked away, tribal villages and beautiful walks. Another experience we love is the overnight camping under the starlit sky, when the nights are cool and the air is fresh. This area is a perfect blend of adventure and nature.

In recent times, Jharkhand has been actively involved in



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Hotel Association of India  
Chairman - South Asia  
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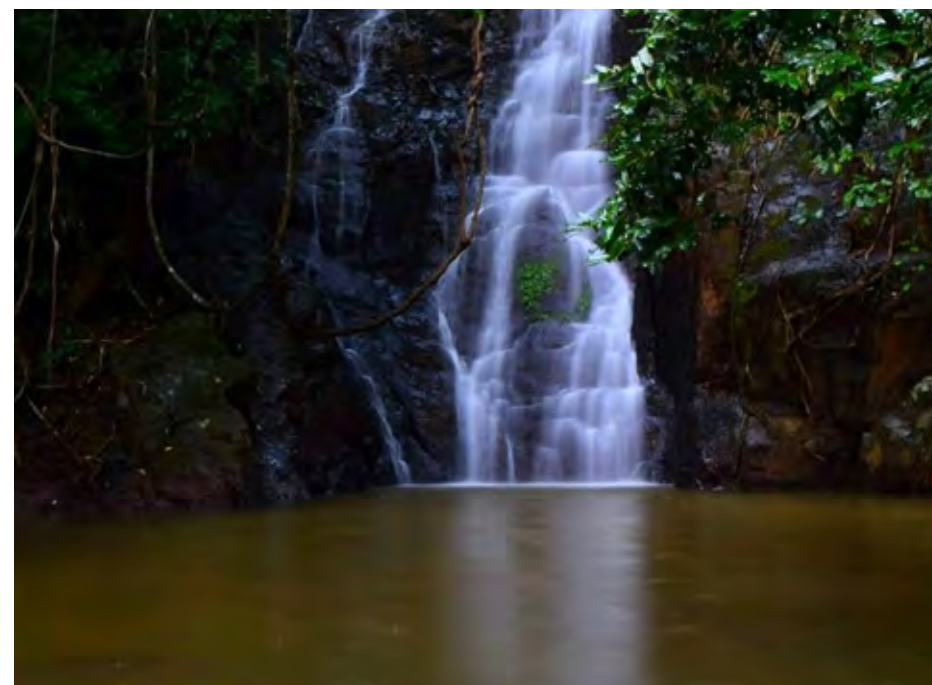
different ecotourism initiatives to promote sustainable tourism and responsible development. A case in point is the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, which has included beautiful eco-friendly stays within the context of wildlife spotting. Moreover, the park authorities also have conceived guided treks, which showcase the landscape and wildlife but also speak proactively about conservation awareness. Then there is also the very interesting Hazaribagh Jheel. This is a series of artificial lakes constructed to facilitate birdwatching and boating, and at the same time is built keeping in mind principles of ecological harmony. It is quite a picturesque spot for nature lovers and families love to flock here for a day out. And we cannot forget to mention the Betla National Park, one of the first national parks in the country. The experience at this park is quite unique and tourists can enjoy guided safaris, and nature walks, with guides who educate and inform on different aspects of wildlife conservation and environmental education.

### Myriad landscapes

Jharkhand's rural tourism spots provide a myriad of immersive



Water skiing



Saranda Forest



Betla National Park

experiences, which are reflective of the state's rich tribal culture and pristine landscapes. We would highly suggest a visit to the Nakta Hills, with multiple trekking paths, which culminate in panoramic viewpoints. These trekking paths are suitable for all fitness levels and, if possible, ask a local guide to accompany you so that you can get information on the region. Not too far away, the McCluskieganj area, a former British colonial settlement is a unique mix of old and new. Here, you will find enchanting colonial-era bungalows set in tranquil surroundings. This area seems like a slice of yesteryear and appears straight out of a fairytale.

Also, make a visit to the magnificent Saranda Forest, called the land of seven hundred hills. You will discover that it is a thriving ecosystem, brimming with flora, fauna and untouched natural beauty. While visiting this place, visitors can engage with local tribal communities, discover their different indigenous art forms and traditions and truly witness the balance of nature and culture this destination has to offer, in its most vibrant form.



McCluskieganj

## Tourism policy of Jharkhand

Tourism-related infrastructure is being developed efficiently and swiftly to generate employment opportunities to enhance the state's resources and increase economic growth and development which will boost tourism's contribution and raise the state's net state domestic product (NSDP).

The Jharkhand government has sanctioned funds for the construction of the Holy Tourist Corridor in the state. The corridor will connect Ranchi to Deoghar and will pass through Ormanjhi, Gola, Rajarappa, Dumri, and Giridih. The

plan also includes the construction of the East-West Corridor, the Eastern Corridor, the North-South Corridor, and the Central Corridor.

As per the Indian Tourism Statistics 2023, published by the Union Tourism Ministry, Jharkhand attracted over 38 lakh domestic tourists and nearly 2 lakh overseas tourists in the year 2022.

Sources in the Jharkhand tourism department informed that the road construction department has already prepared a blueprint both for the tourism corridors and



Netarhat-Garu

religious tourism corridors after the concerned department had identified the sites.

"The tourist corridor is to be developed in eight parts and the holy tourist corridor in four parts in a phased manner. The total estimated cost of this project is Rs 4,647 crore, in which Rs 3,370 crore will be spent on the tourist corridor and Rs 1,277 crore on the holy tourist corridor," said an official in the tourism department.

The alignment of two out of the eight parts of the 342 km-long tourist corridor has been decided. It will be from Silli-Tamar (near Ranchi), Sisai-Ghaghra (Gumla),

Netarhat-Garu (Latehar), Latehar-Herhanj, and Balumath-Chama More (Mccluskieganj).

The Tourist Corridor has been designed to provide seamless connectivity to popular tourist destinations such as Netarhat and McCluskieganj, while the Holy Tourist Corridor will ease travel for pilgrims visiting religious attractions like Birsa, Lugubura, Parasnath and Babadham (Deoghar).

This initiative is expected to boost economic growth in the state, providing better access to various regions and attractions, and improving the overall quality of transportation.



**Jharkhand's rural tourism spots provide a myriad immersive experiences, which are reflective of the state's rich tribal culture and pristine landscapes**

#### Festivals and culture

The state has a rich heritage of tribal communities, that celebrate a host of festivals. Each of these festivals are closely connected to nature and traditions. For instance, Sahil, observed by the Oraon, Munda and Ho tribes, is a spring festival with rituals centred around the endemic sal tree. The festivities are accompanied by vibrant music and dance. Karma honours the Karam tree as a symbol of fertility and prosperity and tribal communities sing and dance around this tree to seek blessings for a good harvest. During the all-important harvest season, Tusu Parab is a beautiful festival that showcases the community's creativity through



Sarhul Festival



Karma Dance



Paitkar Paintings



Bamboo Art of Jharkhand



Dokra Art

decorative artefacts and local food, which brings out the abundance of nature in its diverse forms.

The state's artisans are also renowned for their impeccable craftsmanship. We love the Dokra art, which is an ancient metal casting technique, which results in exquisite brassware items, featuring tribal themes. The state also produces bamboo crafts, which blend utility and craftsmanship in the form of intricate baskets, mats and decorative objects. Another one of India's oldest tribal art forms is the Paitkar painting, which blends folklore and mythology. It's a great example of how art can be used to showcase cultural heritage. **HAI**



## Preserving culture through sustainable tourism

A holistic approach to heritage management is key for sustainable tourism and cultural preservation.

**By MP BEZBARUAH**

Secretary General, Hotel Association of India



Culture and heritage have been the foundation of Indian tourism from the very beginning. The first tourism policy of the country explained the role of tourism in promoting cultural understanding and in widening the cultural horizon of the people. The tourism policy of 2002 carries this vision forward and puts the objective of tourism as "achieve a superior quality of life for India's peoples through Tourism which would provide a unique opportunity for physical invigoration, mental rejuvenation, cultural enrichment and spiritual elevation." Culture and heritage are seen as the most important components to achieve these objectives of tourism. "Expansion of cultural tourism in India" is the primary objective of product development.

By the beginning of the current century, the nature of tourism had changed a lot. It was the beginning of the "experience economy"—when the tourists were looking more for unique experiences rather than just enjoying the sun and the sand. Culture became the vehicle for such unique experiences. Covid-19 brought "sustainability" to the forefront of all human activities and tourists are more demanding now for responsible and sustainable tourism experiences. Culture and heritage management has become more important than before.

**Studies by UNWTO have shown that about 20% of tourists travel solely to experience culture and heritage**

Such management is a sensitive matter and therefore needs collaboration of the government and the private sector, and also an understanding of the nuances of such management. Studies by UNWTO have shown that about 20% of tourists travel solely to experience culture and heritage. Such studies have also shown that there was an estimated growth of 15% in visits to heritage sites of the world while tourism growth was only about 4%.

Heritage management is so important that various international organisations have discussed and debated the implications for a long time. The earliest perhaps is UNESCO's Hague Convention of 1954 followed by the World Heritage Convention of 1972 and Nairobi recommendations of 1976, and many more thereafter. All these discussions bring out a few issues which are of importance in heritage management. Most important of all, is the need for taking a holistic view of all heritage, tangible and intangible.

John Naisbitt, in his book "Global Paradox", referred to three major concerns relating to cultural tourism. First is the importance of quality: quality of experience of the visitors, improving the quality of life of the host community and protecting the quality of the environment. Second is the continuity of the cultural product and the continuity of the purity of the culture of the host community. Third, a balance between the needs of the tourism industry, the economic needs of the community and the concern for sustainability. Whenever this balance is disturbed, tourism runs the risk of being termed "counter-development" and culture runs the risk of being a commodity.





### Management of cultural tourism relates to the measures to minimise the adverse impact of tourism on the culture of the place

one--both for the tourists and the host community. The responsibility largely extends to creating appropriate awareness among tourists.

There are many pitfalls in cultural tourism. For example, serious tourists would not like the commercial avarice that leads to souvenir stalls and sellers intruding into the time and space for reflection and crowding out the cultural experience. Commercialisation often leads to a cheap imitation of cultural traditions and their debasement. Poor and

uninformed storytelling or distorting stories to suit the interest of the tourists create confusion.

As tourists come into direct contact with the hospitality industry, the industry has a strong role to play in creating that awareness and in introducing the tourists to the local art, craft, cuisine and culture. The Indian hospitality industry has collaborated with the government in the maintenance and beautification of the tangible heritage. But it only touches the fringe. There is both a need and possibility of expanding this collaboration to a larger number of tangible heritages. There are about 5,500 monuments declared as "protected" by ASI and there are more than 5,000 similarly protected by the state governments. There may be thousand others not maintained by anyone. The hospitality industry can adopt such monuments near their locations all across the country. The industry's CSR activities can easily extend to the preservation, enrichment and revival of the more vulnerable assets like music, cuisine and dying craft.

However, as many international organisations like UNESCO have often emphasised, heritage management is not just taking care of a monument or its beautification. It has been pointed out that heritage promotion and conservation should be considered in totality within the overall socio-economic framework. There is much scope for the hospitality industry to play its part, with imagination and innovation, with involvement in the culture and heritage of the surroundings. **HAI**

Any imbalance can lead to a "culture clash". Ogilvy, in his book "Ogilvy on Advertising", mentions how the ancient Greeks prayed to the Almighty to spare them from the "scourge" of tourists. Culture, heritage and tourism have a symbiotic, and interdependent relationship. Cultural tourism provides income to the local community, helps revive dying cultures, and helps in the maintenance of existing tangible ones. It was stated in a Public Hearing in Leh that direct interaction with people from the developed world who admired the local culture acted as a most potent educational tool to revive the self-confidence and cultural pride of the Ladakhis.

Yet, tourism is often considered to be the enemy of authenticity and cultural identity. Management of cultural tourism relates to the measures to minimise the adverse impact of tourism on the culture of the place. Such impact can be seen from two sides. In the narrower sense, it refers to the impact on physical and cultural endowments. In the broader sense, it refers to the socio-cultural ethos of a place. Culture, in that sense, is not just the arts and architecture of the place but extends to the everyday life of the people, and the environment around that lifestyle. The host community has the primary responsibility for the preservation of the socio-cultural ethos of the place. At the same time, the tourists should also be sensitised about the host community's culture and the way of life of the people so that they develop respect for the local traditions, beliefs and customs. Only when there is mutual respect, can the experience be a happy





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