

# Business Traveller

INDIA

DECEMBER 2019 ₹150

## AVIATION

*Understanding airline jargon*

## HOTELS

*India's buzzing brunch scene*

## WEDDINGS

*Indian destination nuptials  
in the UAE*

## PLUS

*Tried and tested reviews*  
• India's wines • Watches

## AN ENGLISH CHRISTMAS

*Yuletide experiences in London hotels*



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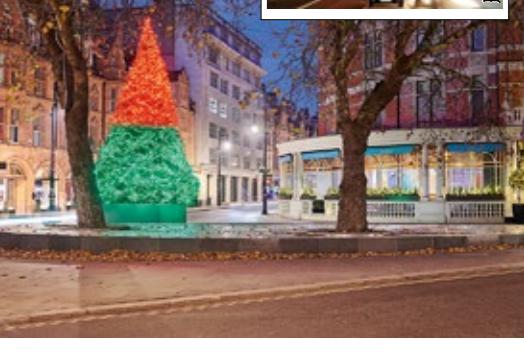
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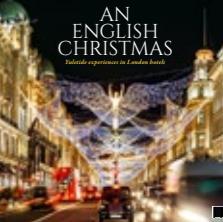
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Time flies when one is having fun. And just like that, we're at the end of another year, another decade. The year 2019 brought with it, its share of advancements and challenges in the world of business travel, and we were around to cover it all. Our last issue of this year is packed with a bunch of interesting reads. We take you to London for Christmas, where we've handpicked luxury experiences at hotels for an ideal yuletide break here. December being a month of celebration and indulgence, and closer to home, we look at the trend of Sunday brunches across Indian hotels and how they are evolving to suit the tastes of discerning diners. For us Indians, these festive months also mean getting with the big wedding season. Most of us have already pencilled in a couple of big destination weddings of friends and family into our schedule, and treat it as an excuse to get away, discover a new city and enjoy a big party. We look at the UAE as a big draw for Indian couples, who want to tie the knot in a luxurious destination. We examine how the big hotels in Dubai and Abu Dhabi are going all out to woo wedding planners and couples alike with unique, high-end offerings.

For a light read, don't forget to check out our aviation section where we decode the most commonly used (but often incomprehensible) aviation jargon. Feel free to share your favourite aviation jargon and airline experiences with me. I'd love to hear from you at riaan@panaceapublishing.co.in

Here's wishing you all a wonderful Christmas. My best wishes for a wonderful new year.

Riaan Jacob George Editor

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DECEMBER 2019

business traveller india

**JENNI REID**

As a staff writer at *Business Traveller*, Jenni Reid's work involves daily reporting on the transport, hotel and travel industries as well producing print features, writing hotel reviews and destination guides. Her past articles have tackled the likes of hotel accessibility, airport biometrics and sustainability in aviation. In this issue, she takes us through Kenya's capital city, Nairobi's business fabric. See page 62

**STEPHANIE TANPURE**

Stephanie Tanpure is the vice president of sales for Sands China, the leading developer, owner and operator of the multi-use integrated resorts and casinos in Macao. Tanpure joined the hospitality giant in 2010 and has since then played a pivotal role in building Sands Resorts Macao's global brand presence. In this issue, Tanpure talks about MICE tourism in Macao and the new trends in this segment. See page 70

**SRIJAN VADHERA**

Srijan Vadhera is the general manager at Conrad Bengaluru. His past experiences boast expertise in various departments of hospitality for noted international brands. In this issue, Vadhera gives his opinion on how luxury hotels in Bengaluru accommodate long staying guests. See page 71

**NIKHIL AGARWAL**

Sommelier Nikhil Agarwal is the brainchild behind *All Things Nice* — a platform for knowledge, networking and indulgent experiences for wines, luxury spirits and gourmet food. For this issue, he talks about how people are shifting towards low alcohol strength beverages. See page 72

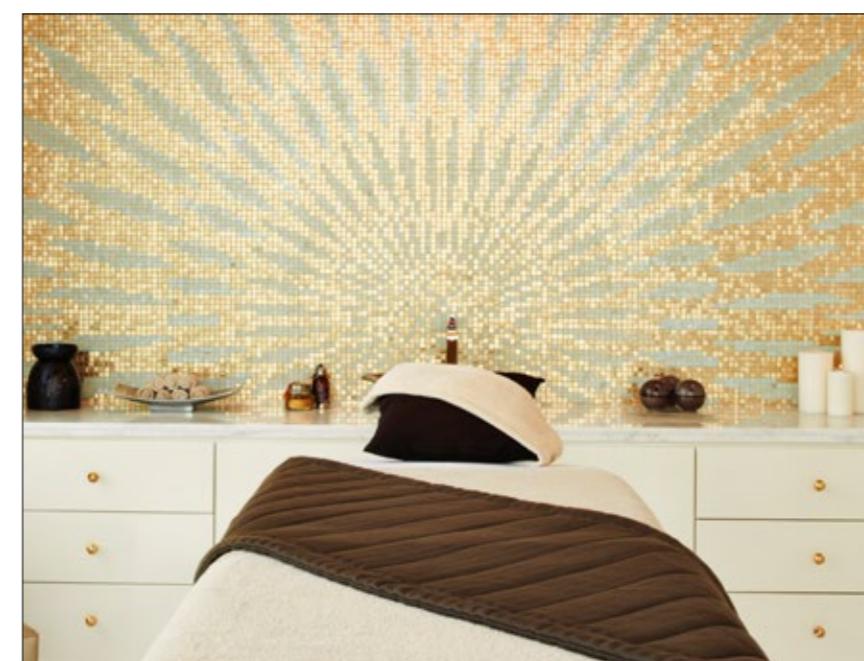
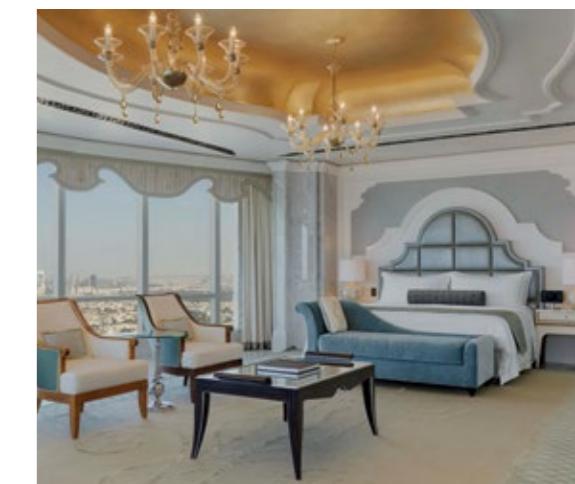


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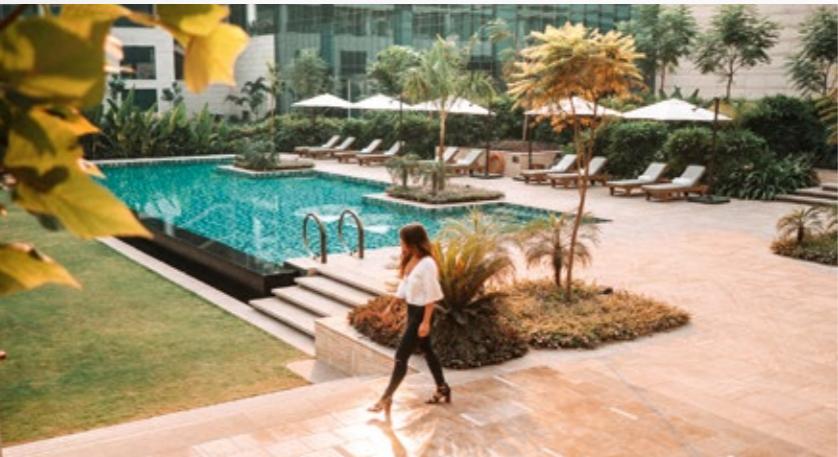
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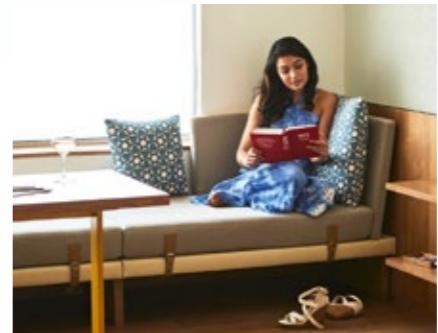


## A 24-HOUR SENSORY INDULGENCE AT ANDAZ DELHI

With spectacular views, award-winning F&B and inspiring meeting venues, this luxury lifestyle hotel by Hyatt gives you 401 reasons to fall in love with Delhi



for an evening at The Hong Kong Club, a luxurious entertainment, dining destination, offering Cantonese fare, Chinese zodiac-inspired cocktails and live entertainment. If you are looking for some spa time, Andaz Spa, with a unique apothecary bar and a chakra philosophy, is perfect for you.



### MESMERISING MORNINGS

Start your day on the right note with a breakfast fit for a king at Annamaya, a beautiful space bathed in natural light and boasting cheery interiors. Choose from local favourites, classic recipes, an array of fresh bakes and soak in the heady aromas of artisanal coffee and tea. Here, you can enjoy a selection of breakfast bowls, paired with fresh juice prepared before you. Eat mindful, shop artisanal and raise awareness is the motto of this vibrant venue.



### INSPIRING MEETINGS

Settle into the ultra-modern confines of Andaz Studios for your midday meetings that seamlessly move into spectacular sundowners. Choose from the eight artfully designed Studios, offering panoramic views and state-of-the-art technology, that are truly inspiring. The Studios, along with the open terrace, are the perfect venue for all-day meetings.

### LEISURELY AFTERNOONS

In your hectic schedule, take a breather and settle into your room for a quick nap, or enjoy the magnificent vistas of the runway curled on the daybed, with your favourite book. The hotel's 401 rooms and 129 serviced apartments showcase subtle, locally-inspired design elements and eco-friendly amenities, in addition to a complimentary minibar. Head over to the swimming pool and follow that with a stop at Soul Pantry, a chic eatery specialising in wellness bowls, flatbreads and beverages.

### ENERGISING EVENINGS

Post-work, go to the 24-hour fitness centre to uplift your spirits and get ready

FROM TOP LEFT: Andaz Delhi's swimming pool; Annamaya; Andaz Delhi room and Andaz Studios

**Andaz** DELHI

Andaz Delhi, Northern Access Road, Aerocity, New Delhi, India, 110037. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @andazdelhi; andazdelhi.com +91 11 49031234

## INDIGO AND QATAR AIRWAYS ANNOUNCE CODESHARE AGREEMENT



**IN-LINE WITH ITS** international expansion plans, Indigo has signed a one-way codeshare agreement with Qatar Airways.

This agreement between the two carriers will see Qatar Airways place its code on Indigo flights between Doha and Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

This is the second codeshare agreement for Indigo as a part of its growth strategy for international markets. Qatar Airways will place its code 'QR' on Indigo-operated flights between the mentioned destinations.

"We are extremely proud to secure this strategic partnership with Indigo," says Akbar Al Baker, group chief executive, Qatar Airways.

Also commenting Ronojoy Dutta, chief executive officer at Interglobe Aviation says, "This strategic alliance will not only strengthen our international operations, but also boost economic growth in India, by bringing in more traffic and heralding opportunities for trade and tourism through seamless mobility." [goindigo.in](http://goindigo.in)

## BEYOND THE DUNES

AND ALL IMAGINATION

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## SCOOT LAUNCHES TWO NEW ROUTES TO INDIA

**SCOOT, THE LOW-COST CARRIER** of the Singapore Airlines (SIA) Group, has added Visakhapatnam and Coimbatore to its network.

Scoot offers five weekly return flights on the Visakhapatnam-Singapore route and daily return flights on the Coimbatore-Singapore route.

The new routes bring the number of Indian cities served by the airline to seven, including Amritsar, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Tiruchirappalli and Trivandrum. Scoot launched in Trivandrum in May 2019.

The new routes are operated by Scoot's fleet of narrow-body Airbus A320 aircraft, and the routes were transferred from sister airline, Silkair, with increased frequencies on Scoot. This aims to enhance the connectivity of Visakhapatnam and Coimbatore with



Singapore and the world, and allows customers the flexibility of more convenient options for international travel.

Customers from India can now book their travel from both cities to Singapore, and connect to 60 other destinations across Scoot's network, including destinations in Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, and more. They can also connect onwards to other destinations on the Singapore Airlines and Silkair network. Scoot customers with connecting flights within a single booking with Singapore Airlines and/or Silkair will not be required to pass through immigration in Singapore. Their checked baggage will also be delivered to their final destination.

Additionally, from all its seven India points, Scoot has launched a promotional sale to over 30 destinations on its network, with one-way tax-inclusive FLY fares starting at ₹4,900. [flyscoot.com](http://flyscoot.com)



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## ARABIAN TRAVEL MARKET 2020 TO FOCUS ON INDIAN, SAUDI ARABIAN AND CHINESE OUTBOUND TOURISM



**ARABIAN TRAVEL MARKET 2020 (ATM)**, which is set to take place at Dubai World Trade Centre from April 19 to April 22, 2020, has announced a series of buyer forums and networking events to highlight tourism opportunities from leading source markets for middle east destinations. The top source markets include India, Saudi Arabia, China and Russia. Through these initiatives, the "GCC travel and tourism companies and destinations look to attract a larger share from these major source markets."

As a part of these networking sessions, ATM will invite 150 hosted buyers from India, China, Russia and the middle east. In addition to this, they will also be partnering with CBN Travel and MICE to bring 84 more new buyers from China.

Danielle Curtis, exhibition director middle east, Arabian Travel Market (ATM) says, "Identifying the key players in the top source markets, along with current and emerging industry trends are two of the most valuable insights ATM has to offer. Therefore, the 2020 edition will continue to follow that successful model with a packed agenda, including new forums and networking opportunities as well as an engaging seminar programme."

A research by Colliers International, in collaboration with ATM, states that the number of Indian visitors travelling to the UAE is expected to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7 per cent to 3.01 million by 2023, while arrivals from Saudi Arabia will witness an increase of 2 per cent to 1.76 million during the same time. [arabiantravelmarket.wtm.com](http://arabiantravelmarket.wtm.com)

## FLIGHT NEWS

**VISTARA** has increased frequency on its Delhi-Indore route, which was launched in October. The Indian full-service carrier now flies twice a day between Delhi and Indore with morning and evening departures from both cities.

**INDIGO** has added Shirdi and Mysuru as its 59th and 60th domestic destinations. As a part of this, the Indian low-cost carrier has started flights connecting Shirdi with Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Indore via daily direct services. Likewise, direct flights on Mysuru-Hyderabad sector have also been launched under UDAN scheme.

**GO AIR** has increased its connectivity options between Delhi, and Bengaluru and Kolkata. The airline has launched nonstop flights Kolkata-Delhi; and Bengaluru-Delhi sector.

**VISTARA** has added Colombo as its fourth international destination. The Indian full-service carrier now operates direct flights between Mumbai and Colombo.

**SRI LANKAN AIRLINES** has inked its codeshare agreement with Air India. The carrier now connects Toronto with Delhi via Colombo. Nonstop operations between Canada and India on this codeshared flight route began last month.

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER



## STEIGENBERGER FRANKFURTER HOF



**OPENED IN 1876**, Steigenberger Frankfurter Hof is a Frankfurt property where old-world charm meets modernity. Located in the heart of the financial district and the historic city centre, the hotel is a few steps away from the Maintower, Römer and Paulskirche. The main station is at a distance of ten minutes and Frankfurt Airport is 17 minutes by road.

The 261 rooms and 42 suites feature traditional décor and are packed with high-end amenities, thereby catering to the needs of business and leisure travellers.

In terms of F&B, Steigenberger Frankfurter Hof houses Restaurant Français that serves haute cuisine and is awarded one star by Guide Michelin; Oscar's known for its art deco charm; Hofgarten for a lavish breakfast, and Autorenbar for its high-tea experience and cocktails in evening. Then, there is the Cigarrum, opened on request, for wine, cigars and exclusive spirits.

Book an appointment at The Spa and unwind with holistic wellness services.

For meetings and social gatherings, the hotel boasts 19 plush venues with state-of-the-art facilities. Steigenberger Frankfurter Hof's efficient staff is known in the region for the smooth execution of large and small events. [frankfurter-hof.com](http://frankfurter-hof.com)

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# AIR MILES

Namrata Purohit is one of India's leading fitness instructors and cofounder of The Pilates Studio which has centres in Mumbai, Delhi, Pune and Jaipur among others. Purohit has authored the book, *The Lazy Girl's Guide to Being Fit* with the motive of inspiring people to lead a healthy life. She talks to *Business Traveller India* about her fitness regime during travel.

## In case of jet lag, how does one fit in a workout?

So, where you travel, the time difference and how many time zones you have changed play an important role. If there is still some day light left, a good idea is to go outdoors because it helps you freshen up and feel better. One can do brisk walk, gentle stretching, yoga, a light jog or even use light resistance band outdoors to get back to routine. Also, it is very important to drink enough water and stay hydrated.

## What are your tips on smart eating/drinking during flights?

I always recommend taking a few things from home with you. Pack yourself a few light meals and some dry fruits as they are nutritious, filling and keep you going. I am personally not a big fan of inflight food, so I always carry my own food. During stopovers, you can also

grab a soup, salad or pasta at the airport for some energy.

## What's your advice on maintaining one's fitness levels during long haul flights?

I would always recommend getting up and walking around. I tend to actually go to either the back or the front of the aircraft or to the aisle where there is enough space and do some stretches. Basic arm exercises, shoulder and hip rotations can be done to improve blood circulation. So, every hour that you are awake try and move.

## What are your recommendations on maintaining a consistent fitness regime during a hectic work schedule?

I understand that we all sometimes, have highly strenuous work hours, and that's why I suggest finishing your exercise before you actually get to work. This way, you



kick start your day on a positive note. In case that is not possible, try and fit in a 15-minute walk during lunch breaks or some ab workout before eating your meal. In addition to this, simple things like climbing stairs, walking while talking on the phone are some other tips. Even at home, take up a ten or seven minute workout depending on how much time you have.

## Your travel fitness secrets?

Whenever I travel, first thing I do is check which fitness classes are available at the destination. I also walk a lot or cycle, the two best ways to see more of the place. I love being outdoors, and therefore, I do picnics in a park or try horse riding or a hike. And I always eat a good breakfast because when you are travelling that is your one meal you can eat on time because rest of the day is sort of unplanned and unpredictable.



## WHAT WORRIES THE BUSINESS TRAVELLER THE MOST?

**AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY** commissioned by CWT, the B2B4E travel management platform, has revealed the two most significant worries that frequent flyers complain of. These are a deterioration of life at home, and increased pressure on colleagues.

As per the research, when it comes to their personal life, 22 per cent of the respondents believe that their business travel commitments erode the quality of their relationships and home life. Around 21 per cent are worried that their families think they prefer travelling for work more than their day-to-day responsibilities at home.

According to the same study, on the professional side of things, 22 per cent of business travellers feel guilty that their colleagues have to bear the load of their work, in their absence, 21 per cent stress about spending too much time with colleagues and clients, while 14 per cent are concerned about the difficulty of staying in touch with people in their main office. [mycwt.com](http://mycwt.com)

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## NEW AND UPCOMING HOTELS



### Aurika, Udaipur

Lemon Tree Hotels has announced the debut of its upscale hotel brand, Aurika Hotels and Resorts in Udaipur. A 60-minute drive from Maharana Pratap Airport, Udaipur; Aurika, Udaipur is close to tourist attractions such as City Palace, Jagmandir, Bagore Ki Haveli, Sajjangarh Monsoon Palace and the Vintage Car Museum.

The 139 rooms and suites, overlooking the hills, valleys and lakes, feature minimalist décor and design elements that highlight the heritage and old-world charm of Rajasthan.

Aurika, Udaipur offers two impressive F&B options. Recreational amenities include Araya, the spa; a fitness centre; an outdoor pool; a library and the Rumpus Room for leisure activities.

The property also offers event venues spanning over 2,044 sqm. [aurikahotels.com](http://aurikahotels.com)



### Amari Pattaya

Amari Pattaya has fully reopened for guest stays following a major refurbishment. Accommodation options are now spread across two distinct wings — the new Amari Suites and the Amari Tower.

The Amari Tower offers 297 guestrooms and suites, ranging from deluxe rooms to executive club ocean view suites. Likewise, Amari Suites, set up in a low-rise building surrounded by lush landscaping, consists of 49 two-and three-bedroom residential style suites, ideal for families.

In terms of F&B, Amari Pattaya has the market-inspired Amaya Food Gallery for regional and international cuisines; and Aqua Eatery and Bar for a poolside meal or a cocktail.

Take an appointment at the Breeze Spa for the Pattaya Refreshing Package, a signature treatment exclusive to the property. [amari.com](http://amari.com)



### Al Messila, A Luxury Collection Resort and Spa in Doha

The Luxury Collection has made its debut in Qatar with the opening of Al Messila, A Luxury Collection Resort and Spa in Doha.

The property is a 25-minute drive from Hamad International Airport and 15 minutes from Doha's city centre, West Bay. Set against a lush green backdrop in Doha's historic 'oasis' district, Al Messila highlights Arabic heritage but with a touch of modernity.

There are 152 rooms and suites, including 30 premium villas, each with their own pool, garden and personal butler service. Enjoy local and international cuisines at one of their eight dining outlets.

Al Messila boasts the region's largest wellness retreat of its kind, including three therapy pools, flotation tanks, cocoon beds, oxygen rooms, Kneipp walks, hammams and salt rooms.

[marriott.com](http://marriott.com)



### Two IHG properties in Vietnam

Further boosting its presence in Vietnam, Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) has announced signing of an agreement with Ho Tram Project Company (HTP) to rebrand the latter's integrated resort – The Grand Ho Tram hotel to Intercontinental Grand Ho Tram. Along with this, IHG is to also open Holiday Inn Resort Ho Tram Beach that is slated to be operational in 2020.

Located at the Ho Tram Strip, the rebranded property, which is getting refurbished after a year, will feature 533 guestrooms, three dining outlets and a well-equipped convention centre that can accommodate up to 1,300 guests.

Likewise, the 502-key Holiday Inn Resort Ho Tram Beach will focus on family-friendly facilities that include swimming pools and a rooftop bar. Additionally, the hotel will offer direct access to other facilities such as a cinema, a food court and a water park among others. [ihg.com](http://ihg.com)

## SHAADI BY MARRIOTT'S PUNE EDITION UNVEILED

**MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL'S MASSIVE** wedding initiative, Shaadi by Marriott's Pune edition was unveiled recently at Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel. The event was a gathering of India's leading wedding planners, stylists, hospitality and industry experts.

Ten Marriott properties from Pune showcased their wedding offerings here. These include JW Marriott Hotel Pune, Marriott Suites Pune, The Westin Pune Koregaon Park, Courtyard Pune Hinjewadi and Courtyard Pune Chakan among others.

The Shaadi by Marriott event featured an elegant wedding setup, a chic décor display and a grooming session followed by an Indian wedding lunch in *sajan-kot* (a traditional Indian food setting) style. On offer were authentic delicacies such as kothimbir wadi (coriander and gram flour steamed); stuffed brinjal with spiced peanuts; spiced black eyed beans stew; spicy chicken gravy and regional speciality lamb cooked in whole spices to name a few.

Some popular labels who contributed for this event were Jean-Claude Biguine (JCB); homegrown accessories brand, Tiger Marrón; Forever Weddings and Deluxe Decorators.

The evening, which was complemented by champagne and canapés, saw a wedding ensemble showcase by a leading Indian fashion designer.

The event was concluded with a culinary showcase by Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel. In addition to an expansive range of Indian and international savoury delights, the property served a vast selection of around 50 desserts. [marriottindiaweddings.com](http://marriottindiaweddings.com)



## ITB INDIA TO COMMENCE ON APRIL 15, 2020

**ORGANISED BY MESSE BERLIN**, one of the leading world trade fair companies, ITB India will be a three-day business-to-business travel trade show and convention. It will be held from April 15 to April 17, 2020, at Bombay Exhibition Centre in Mumbai. The event will cater to MICE, corporate and leisure travel sectors of the Indian and south Asian travel market. Exhibitors from every sector of the industry, including travel agencies and operators, business travel and MICE, travel technology, accommodation, and transport companies are all expected to attend.

Along with this, Messe Berlin has also announced a strategic partnership with a global corporate travel leader, the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE). Commenting on this, Leigh Bochicchio, executive director of ACTE says, "We are delighted to have concluded the agreement for ITB India 2020, and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to continue partnership with ITB Asia from 2020 to 2022. At ACTE, we continue to lead global education, advocacy and initiatives to support impactful changes in safety and security, privacy, duty of care and corporate travel compliance, along with traveller productivity that supports global commerce." [itb-india.com](http://itb-india.com)



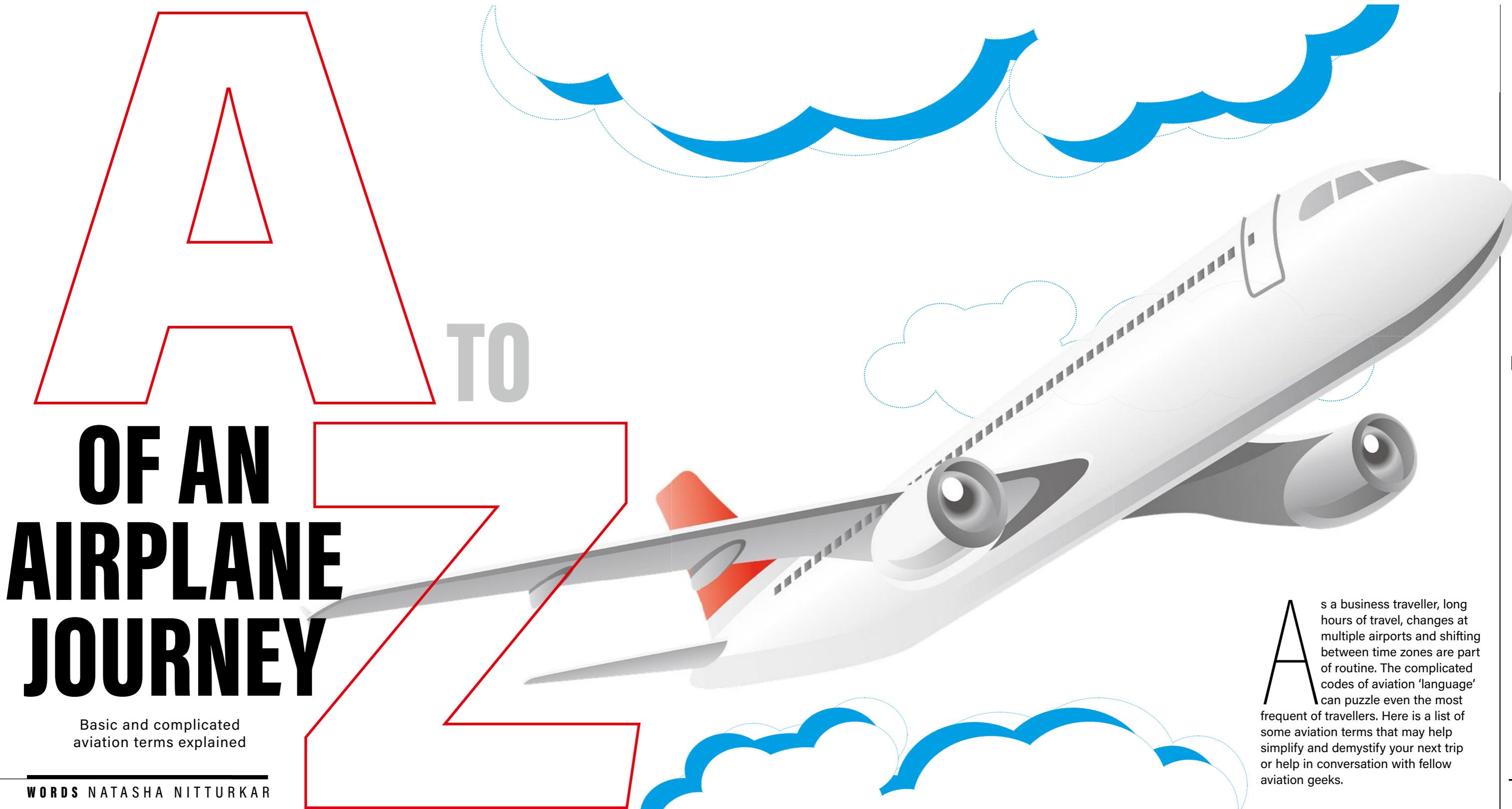
# *BUSINESS TRAVELLER: THE GLOBAL VIEW*

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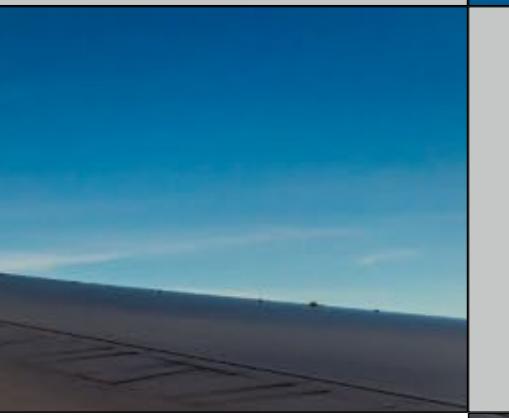
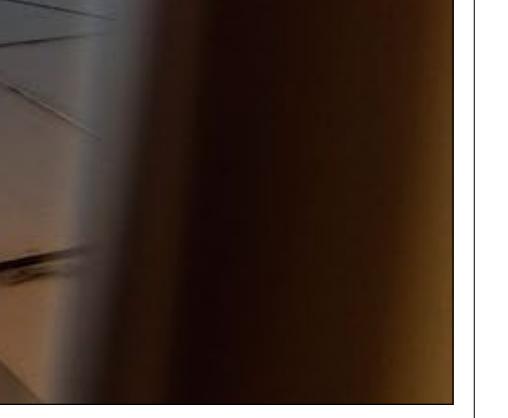
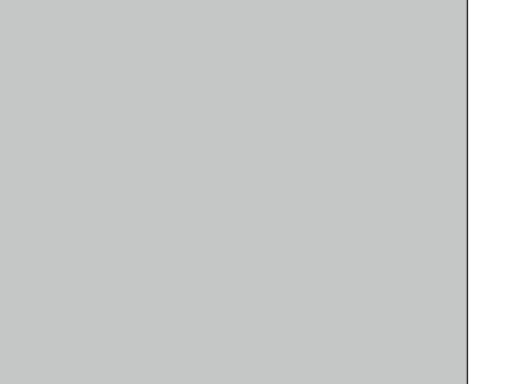
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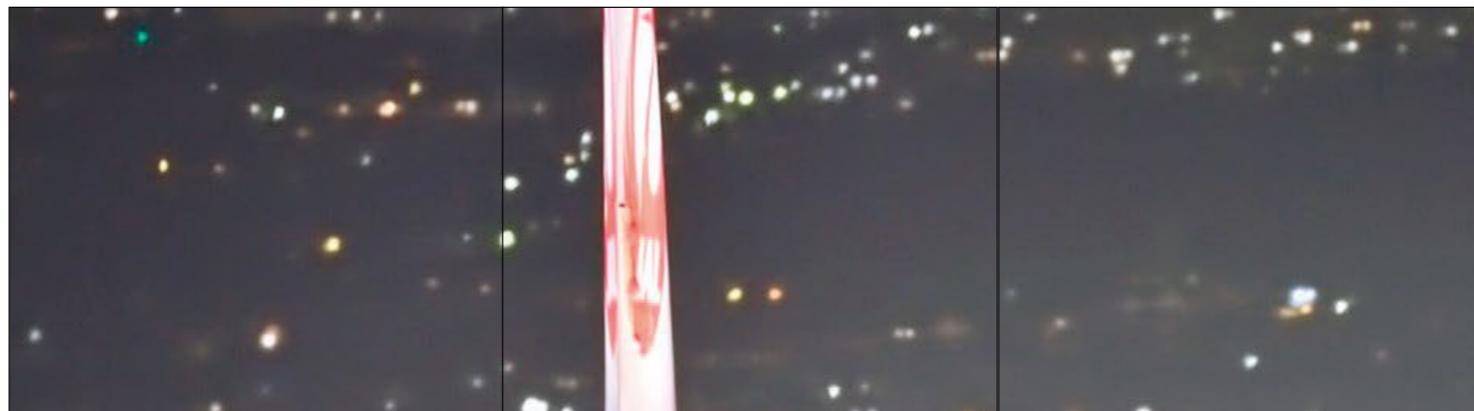
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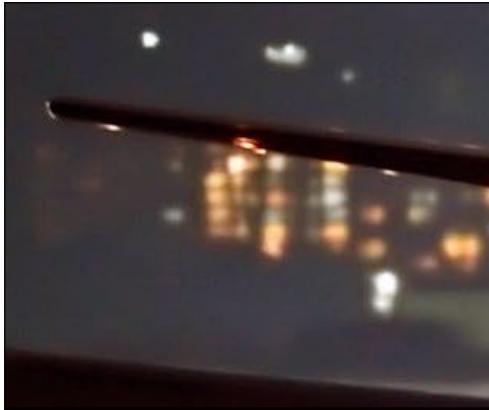
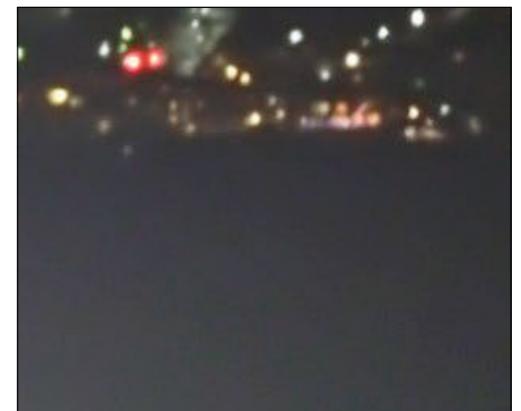
**A**s a business traveller, long hours of travel, changes at multiple airports and shifting between time zones are part of routine. The complicated codes of aviation 'language' can puzzle even the most frequent of travellers. Here is a list of some aviation terms that may help simplify and demystify your next trip or help in conversation with fellow aviation geeks.

<b>AFT</b> <p>It is used to describe the back or tail section within an aircraft cabin. For example, the crew prepares the meals in the aft.</p>		<b>BUMPED OFF</b> <p>To be bumped off from a flight, is to be denied boarding on the plane, when you have a confirmed reservation. This often happens on overbooked flights to popular routes.</p>		<b>GATE CHECKING</b> <p>It is a practice that allows passengers to check-in their bags directly at the gate. It is mostly used on small planes when there isn't enough space to take the cabin bags of all passengers.</p>	
	<b>CODESHARE</b> <p>A codeshare is an agreement in which two or more airlines publish and market the same flight. A flight is operated by one airline while seats are sold for the flight by all cooperating airlines using their own designator and flight number.</p>				<b>HOLDING PATTERN</b> <p>It is a pre-determined manoeuvre which keeps the aircraft within a specified airspace, while awaiting further clearance from air traffic control to land. It is a manoeuvre designed to delay an aircraft already in flight, when the destination airport is too congested.</p>
<b>DEADHEAD</b> <p>Deadheading is the practice of flying an airline's own staff free of charge on a normal passenger trip so that they can be in the right place to begin their duties.</p>		<b>ETA</b> <p>Estimated time of arrival is the time when the aircraft is expected to arrive at a certain place.</p>		<b>IMMIGRATION</b> <p>It is a place at an airport where government officials check the legal documents of people entering that country. The immigration officer typically checks your documents before you pass the security check at the arrival and departure sections.</p>	
	<b>FLIGHT LEVEL</b> <p>It is an aircraft's altitude at standard air pressure expressed in hundreds of feet. For instance, the plane is 18,000 feet above sea-level, means flight level 180.</p>		<b>JUMP SEAT</b> <p>It is a foldable seat for crew members. Plane crew sits on it near the emergency exits during take-off and landing.</p>		<b>KNOTS</b> <p>It is a unit of speed used to state the speed of the aircraft. The ISO standard symbol for the knot is kn.</p>



### OVERSOLD

It is when popular flight routes are often overbooked and people are bumped up to a higher class or denied boarding.



### LEGACY CARRIER

In the United States, a legacy carrier is an airline that had established interstate routes before the beginning of the route liberalisation permitted by the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 and so was directly affected by that Act.



### MANUFACTURER

An aerospace manufacturer is a company or an individual that is involved in the various aspects of the manufacture of an airplane from designing, listing, selling to maintaining the aircraft.



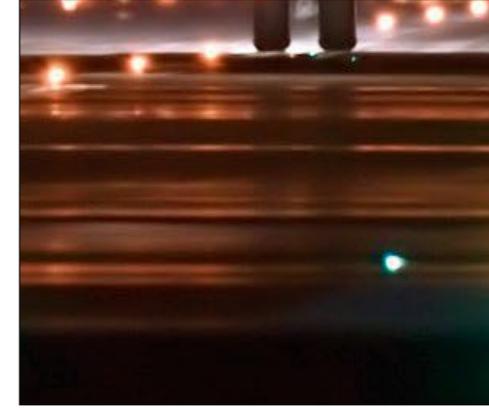
### PUSHBACK

It is an airport procedure during which an aircraft is pushed backwards away from an airport gate by external power. Pushbacks are carried out by special low profile vehicles called pushback tractor or tugs. This is usually done when a plane cannot move on its own power.



### NARROW-BODY

Aircraft that have a single aisle through the passenger cabin, which separates the seats on either side by one aisle. For example — Boeing 737 and Airbus 320.



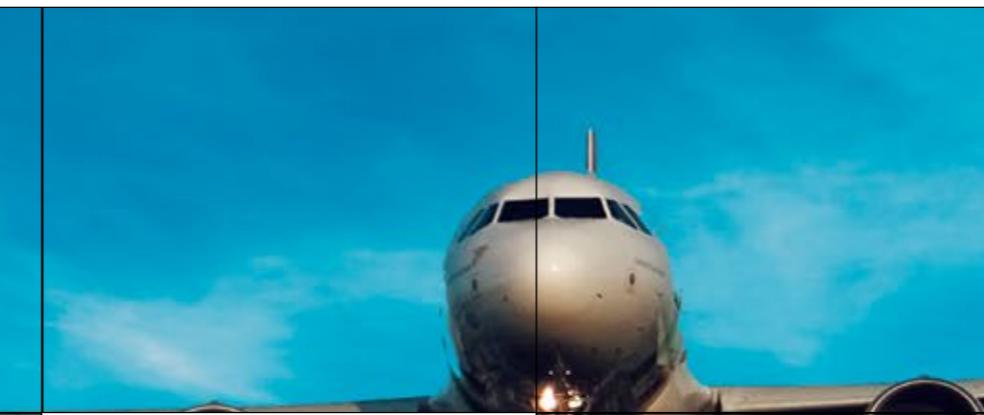
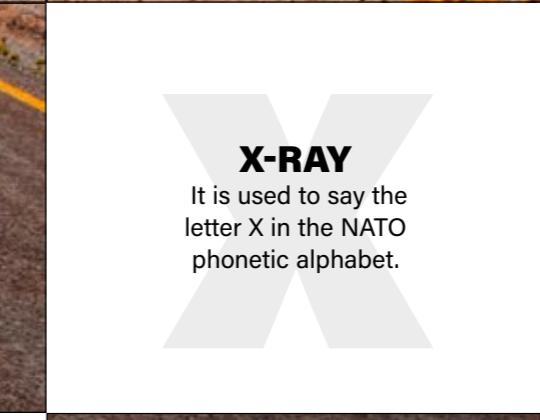
### QUEBEC

It is used to say the letter Q in the NATO phonetic alphabet.



### REMOTE BAY

It is an area in which passengers are escorted from the gate out on to the tarmac using a staircase to board or exit an airplane, rather than a jet bridge when an airplane is parked far away from the terminal building.

			<p><b>V1 (TAKE-OFF SPEED)</b> It is defined as the speed beyond which the take-off should no longer be aborted. If pilots experience any serious aircraft malfunction after V1, they have to continue or they could severely damage the plane.</p>	
<p><b>STANDBY</b> Flying standby (sometimes referred to as 'same day flight changes') means buying a cheap ticket for the next flight with empty seats.</p>		<p><b>UM (UNACCOMPANIED MINOR)</b> This term refers to a child who is travelling alone without a parent, guardian or responsible adult. The ground and cabin crew are responsible for the UM.</p>		<p><b>WIDE-BODY</b> A wide-body aircraft is a passenger airplane that can accommodate two passenger aisles. The seats are configured around two aisles. For example — Boeing 777 and Airbus 380.</p>
	<p><b>TARMAC</b> Airport runways are referred to as tarmacs.</p>		<p><b>X-RAY</b> It is used to say the letter X in the NATO phonetic alphabet.</p>	 <p><b>ZONE-WISE BOARDING</b> The aircraft is divided into various zones. The flight is boarded from back to front in a zone-wise fashion to avoid chaos in the aisle during boarding. Zone numbers are mentioned on the boarding cards.</p>

# BRUNCH Frenzy

Brunch is now a fashionable and decadent experience rather than just a meal. Here is how Indian hotels are promoting this new-age trend

WORDS NISHA SHROFF

The concept of brunch at luxury hotels has evolved in the past decade. From being just an ordinary meal, it is now a more elaborate and social exchange of experiences; even a way of life for many. It has perhaps become the perfect way to start your lazy Sunday. Elie Houbreich, executive assistant manager, food and beverage at **The St. Regis Mumbai** says, “Unlike the old way of chatting over a few mimosas, brunch is now a lifestyle; a cool new trend, bolstered by the foodie generation and cosmopolitan young professionals. It is only recently that it has become less about hash browns and more about the hashtags.”

Today's brunch includes speciality cuisines, regional or micro-regional cuisines. An element of beverages and entertainment is also being factored in. Adding to this, it is now more interactive with the likes of live cooking theatres and kids' sections. →



## ECO-FRIENDLY BRUNCHES

Conscious dining and health are in vogue and this has extended to the brunch culture too. Vikram Ganpule, executive chef of **Andaz Delhi** explains that guests nowadays are well-travelled and informed. So, when it comes to food, their approach is no longer restricted to their preferences, rather they take active interest in finding out the ingredients of the dishes served and the impact it has on their health. A glimpse of this can be found at their restaurants such as Annamaya and The Hong Kong Club.

Likewise, Simon Rastrick, executive assistant manager, food and beverage, **The Oberoi, New Delhi** has also noticed an increased demand for healthier substitutes and gluten free options at 360° restaurant.



PREVIOUS SPREAD: Egg and salmon on an English muffin at The Leela Palace Bengaluru

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Salads and cold cuts at The Oberoi, New Delhi; sushi platter at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar; paella at Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE; Oriental dish at Andaz Delhi



Similarly, at **Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru**, there is a lot of demand for sustainable offerings like bio-dynamic wine, vegan fare, mono-chromatic dishes and sustainably-sourced seafood. Superfood stations featuring nutritious delicacies like moringa smoothies, green shakshuka, wheatgrass yoghurts and ragi (finger millet) pancakes have been introduced. Gagandeep Singh Sawhney, their executive chef says, "Luxury is now about reducing ecological footprint and the same has made a pathway to healthy and eco-friendly brunches."

Another hotel in the garden city, **Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE**'s culinary team is a big fan of domestic produce. Hardik Shah, director of food and beverage says, "Our team works closely with some local producers like First Agro, Ivory Root, and Green Farmers. They supply a vast majority of our vegetables and herbs, which are cultivated in local farms around the city."



Some hotels prefer keeping at least one diet-specific counter at their restaurants



**The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore** has named its brunch S.L.O.W — Sustainable Local Organic Wholesome, wherein most of the food is individually portioned and the concept is 'pan to plate'.

Even while designing the brunch menu, hotels keep a close watch on what's trending in the world of F&B, health and wellness. Anshuman Bali, executive chef, **JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar** says, "It is imperative in today's fast paced world to keep oneself abreast with the latest food fashion, diet fads and discovered super foods. Currently, we have superfoods like quinoa, avocado, chia seeds and keto diet-based offerings trending at JW Café."

Looking at this, some hotels prefer keeping at least one diet-specific counter at their restaurants. A case in a point is the Sunday brunch at **Conrad Pune**'s Coriander Kitchen. Rahul Bhagat, director, food and beverage says, "The brunch scene in India has become comparatively more local. Previously, it was mainly a showcase of expensive and imported products such as cheese, oils and cold cuts. Today, with organic diet on trend, we keep one of the stations to cater to that kind of clientele."

## BRUNCH TRENDS

- Including special liquor sign-ups to tempt the guests. For example bottomless gin and sparkling wine — spirits which are usually associated with brunches worldwide.
- Having at least one station on superfoods with healthy or locally sourced ingredients.
- Focusing on artisanal condiments, curated meals, cheese and preparations with an onus on local produce and extreme perishables rather than mass produced ones which give the feeling of freshness.
- Including a few world cuisines which are trending. These include Tex-Mex, Indochinese, Japanese and Thai preparations.
- Inviting guest chefs to curate menus and home chef prepared dishes for the discerning diner.

Inputs by Mumbai-based food expert and writer Nikhil Merchant

## UPGRADING THE DRINKS MENU

As per Roshni Bajaj Sanghvi, a Mumbai-based food expert, "We now have a greater variety of alcohol in India, as more brands have become available here, and more homegrown brands are being created. Cocktails have received a huge upgrade – we're treating them with as much care as the food."

Agrees Mark Manuel, food and beverage manager of **The Leela Palace Bengaluru** who says that Citrus restaurant is very popular for champagne Sunday brunch where they offer two packages — with Moët & Chandon or with G.H. Mumm champagne. Chefs play with food and live interactive stations are offered with experimental cocktails. While Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru offers champagnes, single malts, craft beers and wines served with quick bites like the bruschetta platter,



Guests are encouraged by the hotel team to try out beverages that complement their meal



FROM TOP LEFT: A brunch setting with wine; a bruschetta platter at Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru; live grill station at Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi and pizza at The St. Regis Mumbai



**Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi's** Tamra restaurant serves an array of alcohol beverages ranging from Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin, Moët & Chandon champagne along with a choice of signature cocktails at their Sunday brunch. Other restaurants Sorrento and Shang Palace offer special pitcher deals on beers, cocktails and mocktails. The pitcher selection includes the likes of virgin mojitos, Shang garden punches and Bacardi mojitos that pair well with the food on the table.

The St. Regis Mumbai's Seven Kitchens' brunch guests are either teetotallers or prefer an unlimited alcohol package, which includes a premium choice of liquor and champagne. Cocktails are inspired by speciality menus and cuisines at the stations. Houbeich says, "Trending ingredients like elderflower, yuzu, kumquat orange and blue pea are used in our cocktail recipes. Apart from these, mimosas, bellinis and sangrias are the most preferred during brunch. Additionally, we offer premium spirits with free flowing champagne."

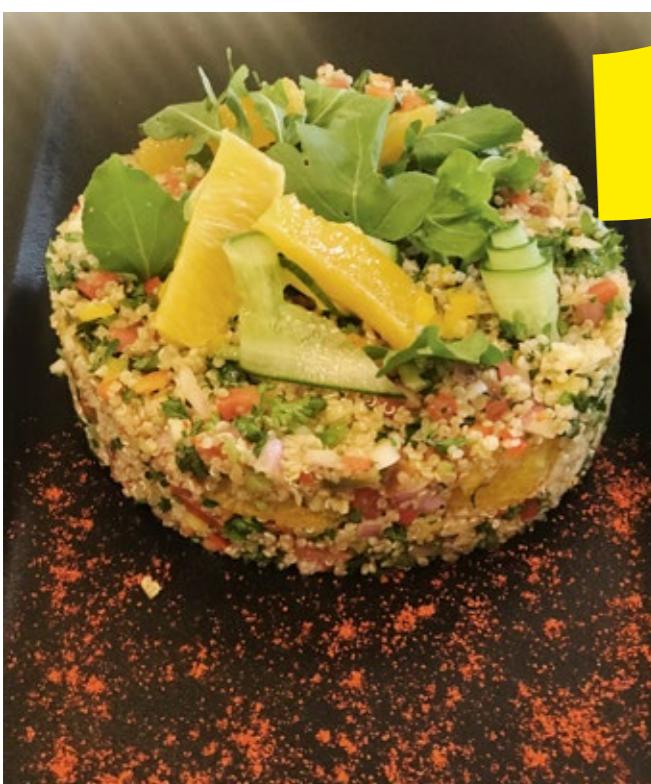
Guests at the hotels are also encouraged by the team to try out new beverages that best complement their meal. For instance, at Andaz Delhi's Annamaya, artisanal cocktail

and wines are popular amongst diners. It has also introduced the Annamaya beverage trolley where the bartender prepares your cocktail at your table, making it a very interactive experience.

Bali states that JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar's guests prefer clear spirits and bubbles. He says, "We pair gin with different tonics that are garnished with our homegrown herbs like thyme, basil, kaffir, lemongrass and micro herbs. While the drinks keep the guest refreshed our culinary team fills up the plate with the sweet course that pairs well with champagne."

## GOING EXPERIMENTAL

Most luxury hotels offer a host of local and international cuisines from Japanese, Italian, Chinese, Singaporean, Thai to south and north Indian. According to Bhagat, Japanese food has become a popular choice. He says, "It's not only the sushi and sashimis that are requested, but also the tamagoyaki (Japanese omelette) or the Japanese yakitori grills." Similarly, a sushi bar and dim sum are high on demand at The Lantern, The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore.



## Native chefs are ruling the brunch scene in Indian hotels

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Baked tomatoes and aubergine at Conrad Pune; a kid enjoying a shake at Andaz Delhi; healthy meal at Sofitel Mumbai BKC and quinoa salad at The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore

Chefs at the hotels are also experimenting with interactive cooking too. Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi's Tamra has cooking theatres featuring various culinary styles that showcase the restaurant's 'world on a platter' concept. Executive chef, Sahil Arora says that the exquisite buffet offers succulent braised pork belly, oven roasted strip-loin and tenderloin wellington at live grill stations. The Asian cooking theatre also offers flavourful dim sum and a la minute Oriental soup of your choice, among others.

The cheese selection inspired by a traditional French fromagerie is a highlight at the Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE. The showcase includes brie, provolone, roquefort, gorgonzola, grana padano, camembert, manchego and pecorino romano.

Today, native chefs are also ruling the brunch show. For example, the kitchen of 360° at The Oberoi, New Delhi is helmed by young speciality chefs from Japan, Netherlands and India, who are known for their proficiency in preparing cuisine that are native to them. 



## WHAT'S TRENDING AT INDIAN HOTELS

### Andaz Delhi

Annamaya restaurant brings together the vibrant colours and flavours of India in the form of fresh and healthy meals that attract kids as well. Must try on the menu here are the basil naan, accompanied by burrata cheese and Himalayan honey, lotus root curry and the confit duck leg from the tandoor with balmy ginger and tomato.

### Conrad Pune

The pastry chef does a chocolate fountain every Sunday which is loved by the kids and grown ups alike. Try some cocktails that are inspired by the streets of India. Smoked cocktails are very popular too.

### Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE

The regular pop-ups at Far & East offer some tropical gin cocktails. The food menu rotates between Chinese, Thai and Japanese dishes, ranging from dancing pork ribs, yaki soba, Thai red curry to a tempting collection of dim sum and baos.

### JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar

The culinary team at the hotel creates four themed brunches every month. Key themes executed are chocolatier's brunch, wedding, rodeo (Mexican-themed) and oyster and champagne themes among others.

### The Leela Palace Bengaluru

Citrus offers an array of salad selection, live sushi and dim sum stations, a Barbecue station with the choicest of meat options.

### The Oberoi, New Delhi

Here, the brunch tone is premium and classic, yet fresh, imaginative and fun. The live sushi counter, island kitchens and bar counters add to the cheery mood that is fit for great conversations and raising toasts.



### The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore

Alternative concept-based brunches such as social, fashion, festive and cartoon-themed ones are hosted here.

### Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru

B Café offers a stage to various artists, musicians and performers on a rotational basis. Others include caricaturist, magicians, puppeteers and balloon benders that provide interactive live entertainment for little guests. Additionally, there are movie screening rooms, bouncy castles, merry-go-rounds and a plethora of other activities.

### Shangri-La Hotel, New Delhi

Shang Palace offers an authentic brunch experience with Sichuan, Cantonese and the mystical cuisine of Yunnan.

### Sofitel Mumbai BKC

Those watching their weight can relish healthy non-vegetarian, vegetarian and detox salads from their De-Light menu at Pondichéry Café. A specially curated children's buffet includes children's corner with interactive games, live art and craft demonstrations.

### The St. Regis Mumbai

The Grand St. Regis brunch held every second Sunday of the month at Seven Kitchens features live jazz, a live DJ or a performance by a pop band. A popular event is the frequent brunch pop up that is hosted in collaboration with luxury brands like Louis Vuitton, Mont Blanc and other luxury partners.



# AN ENGLISH CHRISTMAS

London is special during yuletide. If you are visiting the capital this December, here is what you can look forward to

WORDS AKANKSHA MAKER

**B**ack in 2010 when I was studying in the English capital, I celebrated a very special Christmas in London. An unforgettable experience, the memories of that festive time are still etched in my mind. Oh, how the lights came on in mid-November and dramatically changed the skyline and my perception of the city. A love affair began; and never ceased.

Almost a decade later, Christmas still breathes the same exuberance here. As a business traveller, perhaps the experience here would be a little more luxurious but with the signature dramatic flair that's straight out of a Charles Dickens' novel. Mulled wine, starry winter markets and bejewelled Christmas trees; walking on London's streets during yuletide is a classic fairy tale-like frame. Here are a few experiences you must consider if you're visiting London during Christmastime.



## CHRISTMAS SHOWS

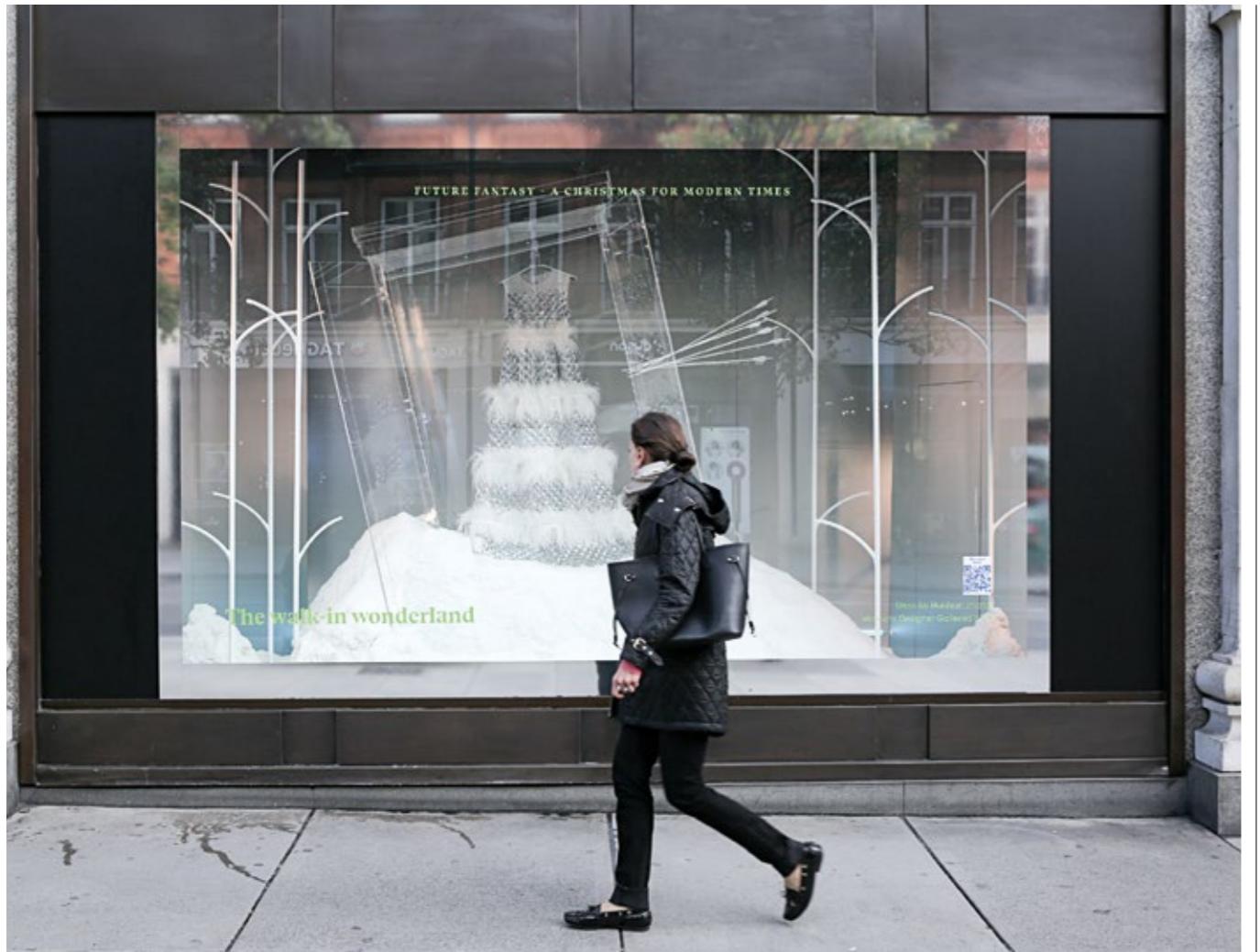
For fans of theatrical escapism, a private service called 'Theatre In The Clouds' offered by **Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard** is quite interesting. Commissioned for the festive season, the light-hearted Christmas play *Four Calling Birds* is being performed at the hotel's luxury suites for up to 25 guests per show until December 12. Set in London's highest luxury hotel suites, team this intimate experience with a stay at this hotel that comes with a host of other benefits and beautiful views of London town.

If Christmas carols warm your heart, the stay package 'A Kensington Tale' at **The Kensington** is a good idea. Apart from curated experiences like a special Christmas lunch, the hotel gives you two tickets to carols at the Royal Albert Hall that'll bring out the true essence of the season.

There's nothing like watching a Christmas classic with mulled wine, minced pies and seasonal small plates. **The Berkeley** is making this happen with its 'Rooftop Winter Cinema'. Watch two all-time favourites *Home Alone* and *The Holiday* that are screened every evening this winter. Cosy up in warm blankets and pick from macaroni and cheese, wild mushrooms and traditional tartiflette (a Savoy dish) to temporarily escape to Lapland.

PICTURED ON PREVIOUS SPREAD: The Connaught, London  
LEFT AND RIGHT: The view from Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard; and 'Rooftop Winter Cinema' at The Berkeley





## RETAIL THERAPY

No visit to London is complete without a stop at **Selfridges**. This month, the iconic department store is offering a range of festive services. If you're running low on gifting inspiration, opt for Elfridge gift services, which as the name suggests, sets up an appointment with Selfridges' in-house gifting experts (or elves, if I may) to help you with your last minute gift lists. You can also view a 15-minute light show everyday starting December 12, that's projected on Selfridges' 42-feet in-house Christmas tree. Its futuristic, fairy tale-inspired windows and in-store décor themed on 'A Christmas for Modern

Times' at the newly opened F. A. O. Schwarz flagship store is worth a visit too.

Speaking of Selfridges, a mention of Harvey Nichols comes naturally. If you're staying until January 7 at **The Lanesborough** hotel in London, your trips to Harvey Nichols become quite effortless. That's because the department store has partnered with this Hyde Park hotel to offer a chauffeur driven service to the former. A dedicated butler will also accompany you to take care of your shopping bags whilst you lose yourself in London's preferred shopping district

A dedicated butler will also accompany you to take care of your shopping bags whilst you lose yourself in London's preferred shopping district

## DELICATE DELICACIES

Christmas is incomplete without special meals and a lovely midday escape to **Intercontinental London Park Lane** may be ideal for cold wintery afternoons. Called 'Twelve Days of Christmas', this afternoon tea experience is inspired by the eponymous carol. Hosted at Wellington Lounge, children from two London schools fill your ears with the sound of traditional carols as you enjoy dishes like maids a milking (chocolate tart with milk bavaroise) and geese a laying (orange macarons). You can also pick from the likes of winter spiced scones and creamy sandwiches that would pair well with the on-offer Perrier-Jouët champagne.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Selfridges' 'A Christmas for Modern Times' window décor; 'Twelve Days of Christmas' afternoon tea at Intercontinental London Park Lane and The Beaumont's festive décor



## HEARTWARMING STAYS

There's nothing like a getaway in some of London's most luxurious hotels to celebrate Christmas. For a sophisticated yuletide break in Mayfair, pick **The Beaumont**. Its stay packages during the week of Christmas are designed to recreate a romantic world with candle-lit vintage movies, mulled wine and homemade mince pies. The 'Christmas Day Away' package includes the above along with a special gift and even a room upgrade subject to availability. You can also treat yourself to traditional three-course Christmas meal with a glass of champagne at The Colony Grill Room in the hotel.

A stay at **The Connaught** on December 24 is another way of bringing your storybook Christmas to life. A two-night stay at this Maybourne Hotel Group property welcomes you with a personally addressed letter written by Father Christmas himself. A charming journey around Mayfair on a horse-drawn carriage, Christmas Eve carols and a decadent festive lunch are some of the other perks of this stay. If your own Christmas tree is on your wish list, then an upgrade to a one-bedroom or signature suite would be a good idea.

If your own Christmas tree is on your wish list, then an upgrade to a one-bedroom or signature suite would be a good idea



For the connoisseurs of all good things, **Hyatt Regency London - The Churchill** has collaborated with Molton Brown for a very special experience this winter. Guests staying at Premium Balcony suites are welcomed by Christmas trees covered in festive Molton Brown baubles — each containing miniature products for them to use. There will also be a hamper waiting in the room, which features an assortment of handpicked goodies, including a Molton Brown gift duo, a small bottle of wine, a luxury rose and oud candle, a loose leaf tea selection and a book of infamous Churchill quotes.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Connaught Hotel, London; Christmas celebrations at London's Marriott hotels; Claridge's Christmas tree designed by Alber Elbaz of Lanvin; Winter Wonderland and Christmas tree at Hyatt Regency London - The Churchill with Molton Brown baubles



## CHRIMBO CELEBRATIONS

If you are looking to roll out the red carpet for your nearest and dearest friends this December 24, **London Marriott Hotel Grosvenor Square** and **London Marriott Hotel Maida Vale** have customisable Christmas party packages that may be of interest to you. Depending on your style of entertainment, pick between the Classic, Extra Sparkle or All The Trimmings packages. Christmas bubbly bars and red carpet arrivals replete with a sparkling décor are some of the signature elements that can make up your Christmas Eve celebrations in these Marriott hotels of London. The latter is also curating a festive menu with the likes of roast turkey and Christmas pudding at its restaurant **Carluccio's**. 



## THE WORLD'S MOST FASHIONABLE CHRISTMAS TREES

Every year, **Claridge's** partners with a famous fashion designer to design its in-house Christmas tree. Alber Elbaz of Lanvin, John Galliano of Dior and Karl Lagerfeld of Chanel are some of the eminent names who have designed these quirky trees. This year, shoe designer Christian Louboutin has lent his expertise for the design of the tree that was unveiled on November 21, 2019.



### WINTER MARKETS

Here are four of our favourite winter markets that are held in London until January 5, 2020

#### Winter Wonderland

Where: Hyde Park

#### Southbank Centre Wintertime Market

Where: Belvedere Road

#### Christmas in Leicester Square

Where: Leicester Square

#### Christmas by the River

Where: The Queen's Walk





# Desi wines on fleek

Decoding India's wine scene and its key players

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WORDS SANCHITA NAMBIAR



**W**hen you think of popular wine regions, the top two countries that come to mind are France and Italy. However, as surprising as it may seem, the world is now eyeing India firmly as an upcoming and promising wine producer.

As per the India Wine Market Outlook, 2023 report, the wine industry in India has witnessed a surge with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of more than 25 per cent from 2011-12 to 2016-18. Vishal Kadakia, proprietor of Wine Park, an importer and distributor of imported wines in India and Maldives says, "Wines

are getting more popular by the minute. The awareness drive by Indian producers as well as importers is making a huge difference. Wine clubs, consumer wine festivals, wine dinners organised by various companies as well as wine influencers, all are adding up to making it popular."

This is further accelerated by wine's newly found identity of being an experience associated with a destination or simply a Friday night and not just a drink. Master of Wine Sonal Holland explains, "People want to stay at a wine resort, drink wine next to a vineyard, understand how it's made, its nuances and overall get a more holistic view of it. People want to pair food with wine too. So basically, wine is experiential."

### MILLENNIALS RULING

The concept of wine as an experience resonates majorly among the millennials, who make for more than half of India's wine drinking population today. In fact, this generation is keen on understanding the individuality of the wine consumed and is therefore willing to spend more on an immersion that goes beyond just sipping a drink.

Vivek Chandramohan, chief executive officer, Grover Zampa Vineyards believes millennials are transforming the industry with their constant need for experimentation. "This insight has led to the emergence of wine bars/lounges and state-of-the-art vineyards, due to which, the younger

**Millennials comprise more than half of India's wine drinking population today**

generation is now warming up to the idea of socialising over wine. This trend has changed the consumption of wine to an elaborate, experiential affair. In addition, this form of education has also initiated the much-needed efforts to demystify the beverage and curb apprehensions, which often hindered consumers from indulging in or discussing the drink," he says.

### WOMEN AND WINE

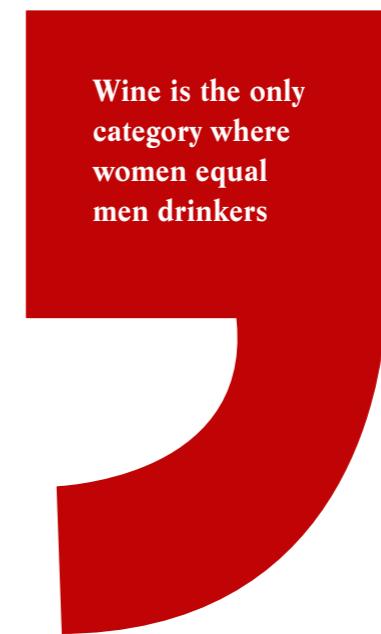
Another segment that contributes tremendously towards wine's popularity in India is that of women. One may notice that women usually tend to opt for wine as their

ABOVE: Grover Zampa Vineyards



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Wine is the only category where women equal men drinkers



choice of drink in a social setting. Holland adds, "As you know, Indian women are traditionally not encouraged to consume alcohol. In most cities or parts of India, even today when women consume hard liquor like vodka or gin or whisky, they have to camouflage their drinks. However, wine has a relatively low alcohol content, so it is perceived as a more acceptable drink for women. In a survey that we conducted, it was found that women did not have any social inhibitions while consuming wine."

Therefore, wine is the only category where women equal men drinkers. But, the downside of this, as explained by Chandramohan, is that men often don't find the drink 'manly' enough which is a misconception that needs to be addressed through strategic communications and interactions.

#### GLOBAL MARKET POSITION

Alike consumption, the production aspect of wine in India is also flourishing. Homegrown labels like Grover Zampa Vineyards and Sula Vineyards have not just made their mark domestically, but are also carving a niche for themselves on the global ground — Grover Zampa Vineyards is doing so via its strong exports team who travel internationally and

LEFT: Wine drinkers in a park

educate trade partners and consumers on the quality of their wine and the techniques utilised to achieve it. In addition to this, they participate in international trade fairs and competitions like Decanter Asia Wine Awards (DAWA), Hong Kong International Wine and Spirits Competition, Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America and Sakura Women's Wine Awards among others to showcase their product.

Similarly, Sula along with its sustainable practices and wine tourism, now exports to over 30 countries including major wine producing regions like France, Germany and USA. Chaitanya Rathi, chief operating officer, Sula Vineyards says, "Over the years we have enhanced our production facilities and use every part of the grape from seed to skin. We are proud to be one of the most sustainable wineries in the world and are doing more every day."

On the other hand, Kadakia thinks that there is still a long way to go for Indian wines globally. "There is an interest in export markets primarily by Indian restaurants overseas. Indian wines are winning awards in wine competitions which is improving their image globally," he explains further.

Similarly, Holland states that internationally, Indian wine is still a novelty factor as it surprises people to know that India makes wine; and she adds that the best way to educate tourists is by making them try Indian wine when they visit India.

#### CHALLENGES FACED

Along with battling several myths, the alcohol industry in India is plagued with issues such as heavy regulation, high pricing and limited availability.

Elaborating the challenges, sommelier Nikhil Agarwal, director and chief executive officer, *All Things Nice*, a luxury, wine and spirits consulting and marketing agency says, "Each state has its own excise rules, and wines from one state are considered an import in another, and are taxed at a higher rate. Secondly, storage conditions in 99 per

RIGHT AND BELOW: Beyond By Sula and grapevines

cent of retail outlets, restaurants and hotels are poor. Next, education on wine while becoming more prevalent is still a niche. Moreover, we cannot advertise alcohol thereby making it difficult to communicate new and exciting brands. Lastly, label registration with excise takes very long and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) rules make it difficult for small wineries to change their labels to suit India's requirements."

To tackle the logistical issues, Chandramohan says, "Some wineries are already making strides to better the quality of their yield by investing in high-end technologies and supply chain systems to ensure that the wines are transported at the right ambient temperature to ensure consumer satisfaction." **BT**



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business traveller india

## OUR PICKS OF INDIAN WINERIES

### GROVER ZAMPA VINEYARDS

Grover Zampa's wine offerings suit the palates of premium, occasional and frequent wine drinkers. In order to make the guest's experience more enhanced, Grover Zampa winery in Bengaluru is now home to a newly launched visitor centre, Lounge de La Réserve - their first restaurant; Cave de La Réserve - a tasting room specifically designed to conduct tastings and masterclasses in the right environment and Boutique de La Réserve - for cellar door sales of the wines. [sulawines.com](http://sulawines.com)

### SULA VINEYARDS

The trend of wine tourism is synonymous with Sula. This brand has curated tours, elaborate dining and high-end stays at its vineyards which complement wine tasting

sessions. They conduct numerous wine tastings and trainings across India for consumers and hospitality professionals who serve wines on a daily basis. They also own and operate Beyond by Sula which is the luxury version of its resort with a handful of villas alongside an infinity pool.

### YORK WINERY

Located in the wine capital of India, Nashik, Maharashtra, the winery is spread across an expanse of nine acres with lush surroundings. Their premium wines include chenin blanc, sauvignon blanc, cabernet sauvignon, shiraz, cabernet merlot, late harvest and shiraz viognier. Guided wine tasting tours are one of their highlights. Adjacent to the York Tasting Room at the edge of vineyards, is their popular restaurant called

Cellar Door, serving the best of Indian cuisine. [yorkwinery.com](http://yorkwinery.com)

### MYRA VINEYARDS

Headquartered in Bengaluru, Myra Vineyards' portfolio currently includes sauvignon blanc, chenin blanc, cabernet sauvignon and shiraz among others. Must have is their Misfit Cabernet shiraz that is accentuated by rich berries, spice flavours and delicate oak aroma.

[myrvineyards.com](http://myrvineyards.com)

### FRATELLI VINEYARDS

A six-hour drive from Mumbai, Fratelli lies in the Sholapur region of Maharashtra. The brand boasts having India's largest privately-owned wine estate of 240 acres. A range of sparkling, white, red and international wine varietals are available here. The Fratelli collection includes shiraz rosé, chardonnay and classic shiraz. [fratelliwines.in](http://fratelliwines.in)



# Million Dollar Vows

Dubai and Abu Dhabi remain preferred destinations for big-ticket Indian weddings

WORDS AKANKSHA MAKER



The dramatic rise of India's middle class teamed with the glamourous standards advertised by Bollywood has carved new aspirations for our once basic lifestyles. In the world dominated by constant societal contests of 'who did it better' or rather 'who spent more money', Indians don't mind even spending a third of their savings on weddings. Deep pocketed families often take this a step further by putting up a grandiose, almost competitive display of wealth at destinations around the world.

According to Mandeep Lamba, president, south Asia at HVS Anarock, a firm that provides consulting and advisory services to hotels says, "The Indian destination wedding

industry is expected to reach a market size of ₹45,000 crore by 2020, with a projected annual growth rate of 25-30 per cent."

Out of the cities on the wish list of Indian families, Dubai and Abu Dhabi have emerged as preferred destinations.

#### DUBAI'S GLITZ AND ABU DHABI'S CHARM

With Emirates (flying from nine Indian cities), Go Air, Indigo, Vistara, flydubai and Air India Express offering nonstop connectivity to Dubai from major Indian hubs, travel to the emirate has become seamless today. It almost feels like flying domestic with the ease of connectivity —

making it an almost obvious choice for couples with hundreds of families and friends on the guest lists.

And once you arrive in Dubai, its plethora of international hotels with expansive wedding venues and multitude of sightseeing options welcome you. "Dubai offers world class facilities and venues within a four hour flight from India. It boasts an unbeatable selection of luxury hotels, memorable wedding spots with stunning beaches, iconic views and great weather during the cooler months" says Rabia Shaheen, associate director of events at **Taj Dubai**.

Additionally, impeccable service and high standards in hospitality at Dubai's premium hotels are some of the other factors

that appeal to Indians for their elaborate marital ceremonies. "The emirate's variety of offerings, venues and friendly hospitality definitely attract Indians," says Fadoua El Mesbahi, director of sales and marketing, **Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay**.

A number of Indians have chosen Abu Dhabi as their imposing wedding destination as well. A discerning pick with a number of cultural spots and luxury hotels, the UAE capital is also very well connected to Indian cities via Etihad Airways, Indigo, Go Air and Air India that offer nonstop connections. "Abu Dhabi is a truly an exclusive and exciting destination with world-class hotels at affordable prices. The Louvre Abu Dhabi, The Grand Mosque, the Presidential Palace

and Ferrari World are some key sights to see here," says Ricardo Gomes, director of sales, **The St. Regis Abu Dhabi**.

#### THE BIG-TICKET INDIAN WEDDING

Many Dubai hotels have played host to large-scale Indian weddings in recent times. While the 296-key **Taj Dubai** has handled 19 weddings this year itself, hotels like **JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai** (1,608 rooms) and **Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay** (350 rooms) have handled ten to 15

**PICTURED ON PREVIOUS SPREAD:** Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi  
**LEFT AND RIGHT:** Outdoor venue at Taj Dubai and the pool alongside the beach at The St. Regis Abu Dhabi



If middle east's highest active helipad, as well as the world's highest suspended suite 220 meters above the ground are on your bucket list for your nuptials, pick The St. Regis Abu Dhabi



weddings each in the past few years. With massive inventories and banqueting facilities, these hotels give enough room to planners to be creative with different elements. "Taj Dubai offers a spectrum of meeting and event spaces including three meeting rooms and three large event venues," says Shaheen of Taj Dubai. With five guest entry points, Taj Dubai's ballroom accommodates up to 400 guests in theatre style.

Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay's central location and the views of the Burj

Khalifa from the rooms clubbed with its ballroom which accommodates 200 guests makes it a winning wedding locale of Dubai too. For much larger guest lists, JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai houses flexible event spaces that sprawl over 8,000 sqm. Its premiere wedding hall, Dubai Ballroom, can host over 1,000 guests for a reception.

Speaking about luxury hotels in the UAE, a mention of **Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi** comes rather innately. Having hosted 25 weddings of the elite in the

past few years, the hotel has dedicated an entire wing to weddings. For sweeping wedding banquets, **Jumeirah at Etihad Towers** in Abu Dhabi is also quite sought after. Its 1,900 sqm pillarless ballroom along with other unique indoor and outdoor areas are ideal for lavish Indian ceremonies. If the middle east's highest active helipad, as well as the world's highest suspended suite 220 meters above the ground are on your bucket list for your nuptials, pick The St. Regis Abu Dhabi.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Ballroom of JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai; bridal suite and an Indian wedding at Jumeirah at Etihad Towers and wedding décor at Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay

#### THE EXTRA MILE

It's not only the sizes and numbers that make a wedding memorable, but those little gestures of personalisation that make all the difference. Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay believes that their event planners are onsite wedding planners too. "Obviously to ensure the successful outcome of the wedding, communication is key. In this sector, clients are the most demanding as they are organising the most important event of their life; the level of detail can only be achieved by internal team work within the hotel and external collaboration with the other stakeholders providing the rest of the services," says El Mesbahi of Steigenberger.

Warm hospitality and decadent F&B are key at weddings and a high standard of service is another reason why Indian families are flocking to Taj Dubai for their destination weddings. The hotel is able to bring a wide variety of events to life, cementing the Taj reputation for an unmatched guest experience. From international, Indian to middle eastern cuisines, the team provides a multitude of options that meet their guest's requirements.



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An interesting case in point is a very high profile wedding for 3,000 guests handled by Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi

While F&B plays a huge role in making an Indian wedding indelible, event teams in these Emirati hotels curate vibrant themes and tailor make décor options that appeal to guests for those noteworthy Instagram shots. For instance, JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai's multi-national wedding planners execute detailed requests from couples and customise events that make for beautiful photographs.

While hotels like JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai are equipped to handle large Indian weddings, hotels in Abu Dhabi are not far behind. An interesting case in point is a very high profile wedding for 3,000 guests handled by Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi. "It required 56 days of set up, more than 600 staff and quite a bit of food. We had to build

the entire set-up from scratch, including creating makeshift kitchens, and had to train additional hands to assist on the day. It was quite a task but we managed to successfully live up to the couple's expectations and delivered a great event," says Anna Olsson, director of sales and marketing, Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi.

Including Emirati elements in the wedding is another practice followed by the UAE-capital's luxury hotels. "Our partner wedding planners create spectacular sets and decorations which usually incorporate Emirati elements like Abu Dhabi's heritage, pearl diving, its strong connection to the Arabian Gulf and the oasis," says Gomes of The St. Regis Abu Dhabi.

When all the glitz and the glamour fades

LEFT AND RIGHT: Wedding décor at Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi and Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah

off, it is the stories that make these rather expensive Indian weddings timeless. It's the memories we make and the mental pictures we click that we reminisce even years after returning from a destination wedding. Noted wedding photographer, Vishal Punjabi of The Wedding Filmer who has covered more than ten weddings in the UAE, gives us two romantic tales to take home — "There was one where the owner of a cat fell in love with the owner of a dog, or the one where he helped her change her car tyre and in the process changed their lives. Another one that sticks out quite a bit is this 72-year-old bride and 75-year-old groom, who decided to have a full wedding ceremony on their 50th anniversary." ■

## RAS AL KHAIMAH: THE NEXT DREAM WEDDING DESTINATION

White sand and cerulean waters; luxury hotels with expansive spaces for Indian weddings that resemble fairy tales — the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah has also become the next aspirational wedding destination for Indians. Marco Pedna, hotel manager, **Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah** give his insight — "Ras Al Khaimah, in less than a decade, has blossomed into a modern business hub and upscale tourist destination. This destination has welcomed many Indian tourists and has majorly seen wedding tourism coming from India. The emirate boasts a diverse array of natural landscapes that appeal to visitors of every kind and in particular, weddings groups from India seeking an exotic destination with fantastic hotels at great value for money."



# PASTURES NEW

Nairobi is branching out of the city centre and into new industries

WORDS JENNI REID



**I**t's rush hour but nobody's rushing," chuckles Godfrey, a Nairobi-based Uber driver, as we sit static at a roundabout on a Wednesday morning, only motorbikes managing to wind their way through. On either side of us, the brightly decorated *matatu* buses each filled with dozens of commuters certainly aren't going anywhere fast.

Gridlocked roads are a stereotype that still rings true about the Kenyan capital, although Godfrey insists – perhaps a touch optimistically – that in five years' time the jams will be a thing of the past. He says that the past half-decade has seen a big improvement thanks to new roads and bypasses. Out of 17 years as a driver, he's spent the last one working for Uber and is full of praise for the company.

It's standard back-of-the-taxi chat, but as such conversations are prone to do, it reveals a lot about the changes this city of 4.5 million people is in the midst of. For one, there's the rise of ride-hailing. Ubiquitous mobile phones and fast internet speeds make this a big convenience for many in Nairobi. For foreigners, it negates the need to carry extra cash or haggle prices. Uber has been in the market since 2015, and in 2018 had 2,16,000 active riders and 6,000 drivers split between the capital and the coastal city of Mombasa.

Alon Lits, Uber's general manager for Sub-Saharan Africa, says the company has found that Kenyan cities are "defined by agility, creativity and adaptability". It has introduced features such as Uber Chapchap, a lower-priced option served by a fleet of budget vehicles, and Uber Lite, a simpler

version of the app designed to work in low-connectivity areas and on any Android model. It's competing with local players such as Bebabeba, which was launched last year by an association of drivers, and Little, which is backed by Kenyan telecoms giant Safaricom.

Then there's the technology factor. Kenya has its own version of the overused 'Silicon' moniker, in this case Silicon Savannah, and national statistics put the ICT sector's contribution to the economy at US\$1 billion in 2017. Nairobi's popularity as a regional base for international firms is well established, with high-rise offices housing multinationals such as IBM, Cisco, Oracle, Google and Visa.

The country has long been a leader in mobile payments thanks to the popularity of M-Pesa, a money transfer and microfinancing service run by Safaricom,

which is used by tens of millions to pay for everything from cars to morning coffees. Kenyans moved the equivalent of almost half of the country's GDP through their mobiles last year.

The start-up and SME scene is also vibrant. 'Agri-tech' is one notable sub-sector – news site Disrupt Africa says the number of start-ups in the market has increased by 110 per cent over the past two years, with apps such as Farmers Pride, M-shamba and Taimba finding innovative ways to connect farmers with agricultural suppliers and use data to improve their yields. Other start-ups attracting international attention include BRCK, which makes solar-powered, waterproof modems and routers;

LEFT AND RIGHT: Aerial view of the city and busy roads of Nairobi

AB3D, which uses waste electronics to build 3D printers; and Twiga, a food delivery app that raised more than US\$10 million in seed funding last year.

This culture has led to a rise in the number of innovation labs and incubators here, such as i-Hub, FabLab and NaiLab, as well as co-working spaces, some of which look like they've come straight out of Shoreditch or Brooklyn. They now have two venues, in the leafy suburbs of Westlands and Lavington, and have had little issue filling more than 100 desks as well as several private offices in each.

The Westlands branch has a hectare of garden space with desks, terraces and even old shipping containers where events can be held. It's popular with development consultants and NGO workers, as well as global companies that want to host gatherings in a more unusual setting. The Lavington one is more traditionally corporate and is mainly used by start-ups and venture capitalists, Gichohi says.

## INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

Back on my ride with Godfrey, heading out towards Lavington, a roundabout emblazoned with a large 3D logo of Chinese telecoms behemoth Huawei gave an indication of who was paying for a lot of these roads. Loans from Chinese banks, contractors and the government to Kenya amounted to US\$9.8 billion between 2000 and 2017, according to the

The start-up and SME scene is vibrant, while 'agri-tech' is one notable sector

China Africa Research Initiative at Johns Hopkins University in the US. Further big projects are on the horizon – Huawei has promised US\$170 million to revive stalled plans for a data and media hub called the Konza Technopolis on the outskirts of Nairobi, while the Chinese government will provide an additional US\$500 million for a new expressway between Jomo Kenyatta International airport and the suburbs.

As with much Chinese investment in Africa and Asia, this has raised eyebrows, with accusations that it is a tool of so-called 'debt-trap diplomacy'. Kenya's debts are rising, and there are doubts that it will ever be able to pay back a US\$3.6 billion loan from China Eximbank, which funded a new standard gauge railway along the old colonial line from Nairobi to Mombasa (by most accounts a lovely new way to travel from capital to coast). Other concerns surround these companies' low rates of hiring domestic labour and tensions between the new workforce and locals.

At the same time, the local government is funding civic improvements, and at the popular Crowne Plaza hotel in the skyscraper-filled Upper Hill district, staff are excited about a new road being built up to their front entrance. This area has long been a hub for corporate HQs, as well as organisations including the World Bank and African Development Bank.

Still, activity is spreading outwards, and some feel Upper Hill is losing its appeal.



## EXPLORING THE CITY

**WHAT TO SEE:** The best-known of Nairobi's must-visit attractions is its national park, which provides the chance to see wild lions, rhinos and cheetahs only 7 km south of the city. Nearby is the Karen Blixen Museum, located in the former home of the *Out of Africa* author; the Giraffe Centre, where you can feed the long-legged creatures from an observation tower; and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, which helps to raise orphaned elephants and other animals. For an inner-city refresh, stroll in the Nairobi Arboretum or Karuka Forest. [kws.go.ke](http://kws.go.ke), [giraffecentre.org](http://giraffecentre.org), [sheldrickwildlifetrust.org](http://sheldrickwildlifetrust.org)



**WHERE TO EAT:** Nyama Mama is an affordable restaurant and bar with four branches that by day offer stylish meeting rooms and by night are about barbecued meats, beers and live music. Nairobi's large Indian-heritage population means the cuisine is well represented – try Tandoori Patio in Westlands. For a daytime meeting or coffee, head for one of the numerous branches of regional chain Java House, with air con and wifi. Le Grenier à Pain on Riverside Drive and Boho Eatery in Karen are also great daytime spots. [thegoodearthgroup.com](http://thegoodearthgroup.com), [tandooripatio.co.ke](http://tandooripatio.co.ke), [javahouseafrica.com](http://javahouseafrica.com), [legrenierapain.co.ke](http://legrenierapain.co.ke)



**WHERE TO STAY:** Westlands is also home to the Dusit D2 hotel, which reopened in August following the January terror attack by al-Shabab militants that killed 21 people. It came just after Kenya reported a 37 per cent increase in visitor numbers for 2018, raising questions about what the impact would be. Tourism is vital to the economy, contributing US\$7.9 billion last year and accounting for 8.3 per cent of jobs.

FROM TOP: Feeding a baby elephant in a wildlife safari; Nyama Mama and Sankara Nairobi

Local investment analysis firm Cytonn blames a lack of retail and residential space as well as insufficient infrastructure (something the new road is a bid to change).

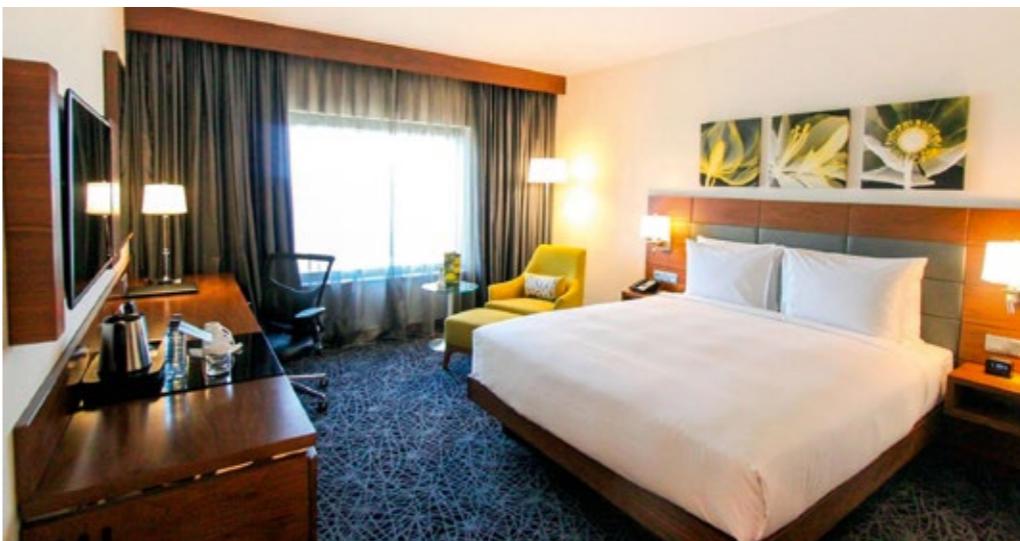
"The city is expanding," says Joyce Ann Wangui, sales director at the Sankara Nairobi hotel in Westlands. "It used to be much more about the central business district; now there are smaller commercial centres on the outskirts and lots of construction there." KPMG, PwC, Barclays and even the European Commission have all moved their offices to Westlands, while Coca-Cola has moved from its sprawling Upper Hill complex to Lavington.

Another suburb growing in popularity is Karen. Once considered more of a residential enclave with a colonial feel (it's a common misconception that it takes its name from the Karen Blixen portrayed in *Out of Africa*; in fact, it's named after her cousin, Karen Melchior, whose father owned the Karen Coffee Company), better roads have attracted numerous local businesses, trendy office spaces such as 45 Karen Road, and shopping centres containing international brands such as Carrefour and Yves Rocher.

This is having a knock-on effect on the hotel scene. "There wasn't much competition in Westlands when we opened nine years ago," says Krishna Unni, Sankara's group general manager. Conceived as a 'boutique business hotel', it was independently owned and managed until it joined Marriott International's Autograph Collection this year. Recent arrivals to the suburb include the Villa Rosa by Geneva-based Kempinski; Pullman, Movenpick and Ibis Styles properties from Accor; and a Park Inn by Radisson.

### BOUNCING BACK

Westlands is also home to the Dusit D2 hotel, which reopened in August following the January terror attack by al-Shabab militants that killed 21 people. It came just after Kenya reported a 37 per cent increase in visitor numbers for 2018, raising questions about what the impact would be. Tourism is vital to the economy, contributing US\$7.9 billion last year and accounting for 8.3 per cent of jobs.



### POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

For many foreign investors, there is a sense of calm after the storm this year. Tensions flared during the 2017 national election, which saw the supreme court overturn the victory of incumbent Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta. A second vote several months later turned out the same decision, and almost 100 people are estimated to have died in election-related violence.

In March 2018, Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga reached an uneasy truce, restoring stability and improving business confidence. GDP growth, which had dipped from 5.8 per cent in 2016 to 4.8 per cent in 2017, rebounded last year to 6.3 per cent. Foreign direct investment (FDI) rose 27 per cent to a record high of US\$1.6 billion, into industries including manufacturing, oil and gas, chemicals and hospitality. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics says the number of international conferences rose by 6.8 per cent.

Kenya maintains a clear lead in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking, where it has jumped from 129th place to 61st in five years. However, corruption still "penetrates every sector of the economy", according to anti-corruption portal GAN.

Kenya was the first country to ratify the UN's Convention Against Corruption under former president Mwai Kibaki, with the struggles of Kibaki's first anti-corruption chief, John Githongo, chronicled in Michela Wrong's book *It's Our Turn To Eat*. This

GDP rebounded last year to 6.3 per cent while foreign direct investment rose to a record high

LEFT: Hilton Garden Inn, Nairobi

summer saw the arrest of finance minister Henry Rotich on corruption charges with allegations that his ouster was politically motivated.

Keeping up with the rollercoaster of Kenyan politics and business is made easier through the tenacious local press, with frank coverage appearing in Nation Media Group's *Business Daily* and *Daily Nation*, as well as magazines such as the *Nairobi Law Monthly* and the *East African Business Times*. Even so, with Kenya placing 100th in the annual World Press Freedom ranking from Reporters Without Borders, there are clearly issues at play here, too.

Driving along the city's smooth new roads, stark reminders remain of inequality amid the rapid development. On the way to Hemingways, you pass the Kibera slum and its hundreds of thousands of residents. Asked about the biggest issues facing Kenya, many locals will mention youth unemployment, which stands at 18.4 per cent.

Still, this is also a city of creative young people. One night in Westlands, watching local band Switcharoo perform ahead of a European tour, an audience member tells me that the live music scene here is the best in Africa. Add this to the launch of art collectives such as Brush Tu and the Nest, plus a nascent local film industry, and you can't help but feel that Kenya – and Nairobi in particular – is ready to capitalise on its many multi-faceted talents. ■

# TIMEPIECES

## Pour Femme

Here are some of our seasonal favourites for women

WORDS NISHA SHROFF AND SANCHITA NAMBIAR

From the Swiss watchmaker's expansive collection, we pick the **Breguet Marine Dame 9518**. Dedicated to the modern-day woman explorer, this watch is set in white or rose gold. The rose gold version comes with a white mother-of-pearl dial in marea, a new guilloche pattern. The bezel is set with 50 diamonds. This Breguet creation is powered by calibre 591A and has a power reserve of 38 hours. The sophisticated leather strap features a gold buckle. [breguet.com](http://breguet.com)



Another must-have is **Panthere de Cartier**. The watch comes in an 18-carat pink gold case that is embellished with brilliant-cut diamonds. The highlight is its 18-carat pink gold triple loop bracelet, which is one of the most distinctive Cartier designs. Crown set with a diamond, a silvered dial and blued-steel sword-shaped hands are some other characteristics of this classic watch. It is water resistant to up to 30 metres. [cartier.com](http://cartier.com)



Tastefully blending mechanical and aesthetic elements, **Chopard Happy Moon** is the first moon-phase watch in the Chopard's Happy Sport range. The watch dial is accentuated with a luminous starry background that is made of aventurine glass. It is further enhanced by gold studs and threads tracing the outlines of constellations in the Northern hemisphere. Limited to just 250 pieces, the watch has a glossy blue alligator leather strap that fits perfectly on your wrist. [chopard.com](http://chopard.com)



The new **Longines Dolce Vita Elegance Celebration** is an ode to the watch brand's ambassador since 1999, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan. Limited to just five pieces, the watch combines rose gold, diamonds and white mother-of-pearl with a vibrant turquoise dial. Within the rose gold case are 68 diamonds set in a beautiful pattern. The watch's unique element is its rectangular case that's based on a model from the 1920s. [longines.com](http://longines.com)



This sophisticated accessory by **IWC Schaffhausen** pairs well with a casual outfit. A part of the Da Vinci Automatic 36 collection, this watch comprises a stainless-steel case set with 54 diamonds. An eye-catching aspect of this IWC piece is its raspberry pink alligator leather strap by Santoni. Moreover, don't miss out on the artistic 'flower of life' engraving on the case back. Water resistance of 30 metres, 35111 calibre movement and silver dial are some other key features of this women's watch. [iwc.com](http://iwc.com)



**Louis Vuitton Tambour All Black** is available in three diameters, 28, 34 and 39.5 mm. This feminine masterpiece has a monogram flower motif at the centre of the dial that exemplifies the collection's bold yet understated vibe. Diamond hour markers on the flange and golden Arabic numerals, water resistance of 100 metres and interchangeable strap fitted with Louis Vuitton's patented system, in patent black are some other key notes of this watch. [louisvuitton.com](http://louisvuitton.com)

This striking red creation belongs to **Panerai's Luminor Due** family. Powered by the P.900 calibre automatic mechanical movement, this 38mm watch has water resistance up to 30 metres. Complementing the shiny red strap is the subtle white dial with Arabic numerals and markers in beige Super-Lumi Nova with a green luminescent effect. Other features include 23 jewels, a Goldtech case and a 72-hour power reserve. [panerai.com](http://panerai.com)



The **Rolex Oyster Perpetual Date Just 36** in a white dial is an ideal pick for evening cocktails. The black, glossy, sun-ray finish dial features hands and hour markers in 18-carat white gold. Adding to this is the jubilee bracelet on folding oyster-clasp. This timepiece has a mechanical movement powered by calibre 3235 and comes with an oyster case. [rolex.com](http://rolex.com)



# Experiential MICE in Macao

*Large-scale business events are an emerging trend in this special administrative region*



**STEPHANIE TANPURE**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES,  
SANDS RESORTS MACAO

**T**oday, MICE is so much more than just organising large-scale events. It's about curating an experience, integrating the destination and blurring the lines between business and leisure. Sands Resorts in Macao are located in one of the fastest emerging markets in Asia from both a historical, political and cultural perspective. Macao offers a unique blend of Chinese and Portuguese heritages. These influences have left an indelible mark on the architecture, the food and the people themselves. Macao has around 25 World Heritage UNESCO sites, so integrating a unique destination such as this is an easy sell to attract MICE delegates.

The local Macanese people are proud of their history, which has helped them become true global citizens, that boast the world's highest levels of education and life expectancy. It is the ninth-biggest tourism destination in the world with one of the highest GDPs and per capita incomes. Further, its gaming industry that's even

**MICE is now less about seminars and keynote speeches and more about creating experiences for delegates**

offerings — which are all under the one roof. That is a unique proposition for meeting organisers who don't have to worry about transporting delegates to off-site destinations. And it is here that we are seeing some fairly significant changes. With substantial, flexible meeting spaces — more than 1.4 million sqm — numerous restaurants and a talented in-house entertainment team, we can create virtually any kind of event a client wishes for. While many of these events, big or small, fall along fairly conventional MICE lines, there is a shift away from traditional programmes towards experiential ones that can connect with

meeting delegates on a more personal level.

MICE is now less about seminars and keynote speeches and more about creating memorable experiences for delegates. These experiences need to go deeper than the usual hotel stay, and at the same time include the local community. Forward-looking companies are now curating unique experiences to connect to a larger crowd.

Delegates want to try sunrise yoga and traditional Chinese tai chi, street food in downtown Macao, Macanese cooking classes, visits to local markets, charity and community locations — basically escape the beaten track to get a feel of this amazing destination. This is partly fuelled by the concept of authenticity.

Delegates want to experience the real flavour of a place, escaping the run-of-the-mill programmes traditionally available. We are seeing creativity incorporated into the main program like never before.

Alongside this, is a greater sense of social responsibility, with meetings delegates keen to make a positive impact, to leave a place richer for their having been there. Millennials are also very prevalent and a big part of the evolving MICE landscape, and for them, experiential travel is a priority.

It's clear that in the MICE sphere experiential travel has become integral to people's lifestyles. Competition is high and the desire for unique trips coupled with value for money is at an all-time high. When we start to tap into our customers' aspirations and understand what they really want we can differentiate ourselves from mundane offerings and present a MICE experience that will be remembered.

The traditional perception of MICE will continue to hold an appeal for those who favour it, or find it better suits their business model. But more and more MICE clients are valuing this approach and the memories they return home with. **BT**

## THERE ARE FIVE KEY THINGS TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY PARTNERS CAN DO TO BRING VALUE

- Leverage your destination culture
- Customise your experiences
- Diversify your offering
- Add value
- Inspire social interaction

# Home Away From Home

*Here is what guests look for during an extended stay at hotels*



**SRIJAN VADHERA**  
GENERAL MANAGER, CONRAD BENGALURU

to ensure comfort to the palate, many guests enjoy a variety of locally inspired flavours. We have noticed that traditional Mangalorean, Karnataka and Andhra-based cuisines are quite popular among expat travellers to Bengaluru.

Engagement with the guests is also key. Offering interactive activities with the chef, a mixologist session with the in-house star mixologist and baking sessions with the pastry chef are few things a hotel can do.

In my opinion, a long stay at a hotel must feel like home away from home and curating customised itineraries for our guests helps us to better their experience. So whether it is a heritage city tour, a local shopping

experience, a visit to the spice markets or a traditional spa therapy, itineraries must be carefully planned to match the preferences of the long stay guest.

**H**otel teams should be passionate about ensuring their long stay guests of absolute comfort. Location of the hotel and proximity to the travellers' work place act as integral factors when deciding a long stay accommodation. This is a prime reason for guests staying for at least a week and above at a hotel. Those who stay for extended durations often explore the city during their free time, which is mostly in the evenings.

Another compelling factor for guests to choose a hotel for their extended stays is the smart use of technology. Features like digital check-in allow you to select a room of your choice pre-arrival with minimal human interaction for an express check-in. Complete access to all areas in the hotel including the Executive Lounge is also another important factor long stay guests consider. This optimises time for those travelling on business.

It is important to be cognizant of the role food plays during a long stay. Extended stay guests are always on the lookout for a variety of cuisines during their visit. While it is important to offer familiar fare

Fitness facilities are also an important aspect for guests. Hotels must work with their fitness centres and spas to curate complimentary group or individual sessions on yoga, meditation, strength and conditioning.

While all of the above enhance the extended stay experience, a hotel must also be equipped to meet the business needs of these guests. Offering state-of-the-art conventions and meeting spaces for them to conduct meetings complemented by intuitive service always act as further denomination when choosing to stay at a hotel for a long period of time.

Extended staying guests contribute to an average of 40 per cent to Conrad Bengaluru's occupancy, of which 20 per cent are repeat visitors from our Hilton Honors member base. Ideally located on MG Road, the hotel is centrally located allowing for convenient access to popular lifestyle destinations, such as UB City, Indira Nagar, Koramangala. The hotel boasts 21 ergonomically designed suites — the largest inventory with interconnecting rooms in the city, a spacious dining area, a mini-kitchenette equipped with select appliances, and soak tubs with in-mirror televisions, making it a preferred destination for extended stay guests. **BT**

# The Spirit Shift

*Low alcohol strength beverages are currently trending*



**NIKHIL AGARWAL**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ALL THINGS NICE

lobally there is a movement for people to eat and drink healthier. This we know, especially with food. Our supermarkets reflect what is in demand now and people have never been more curious about what goes into our food and where it comes from. When parts of the world and sections of society everywhere including India are moving towards chemical free/organic food, it is not surprising that they would want their drink to be healthier too. When it comes to drinking, in markets like the US and the UK there is a growing trend for people to cut back on alcohol.

Drinking healthier could be achieved in two ways, drinking less or drinking lower or non-alcoholic beverages. People really do not drink only for the effects of alcohol, a growing number of people simply enjoy the taste of it. High alcohol strength beverages limit the amount one can consume and low alcohol beverages on the other hand allow drinkers who are not keen to get high to enjoy a drink without the unwanted effects or toxins.

**Low alcohol beverages allow drinkers who are not keen to get high to enjoy a drink without toxins**

Drinking habits are changing quite rapidly in general. We see that younger generations have not got the habit of drinking everyday like previous generations did. As societies advance, drinking with dinner rather than drinking before dinner will become more commonplace. Wine, beer and cider are friendlier to go along with food than spirits that have about 40 per cent or more in alcohol strength. There was a time when wine-makers in certain parts of the world were producing wines with high alcohol strength at about 15 per cent or slightly more. This has changed to some degree as well based on market preferences.

Diageo, the world's largest drink company, recently invested into a company called Seedlip. Seedlip makes drinking non-alcoholic drinks interesting. They have recently launched in India and I think they will do very well in filling a gap. Similarly while there are not too many options

right now we will see an influx of beverages either produced in India or imported into India with little or no alcohol. Cider or other low alcohol and fruit based beverages are becoming popular the world over and are being made now in India too. The new companies are being funded by venture capitalists who see this as a bigger market in the future.

Vermouth, technically a fortified wine, as a category is still to become popular as the main component of a drink rather than an addition to a cocktail, but I personally feel that people might take to it as an alternative to spirit. Similarly Aperol at 11 per cent alcohol strength — which is very popular all over the world is gaining in popularity in India only now. Last but not least, Pimms, a gin based liqueur at 25 per cent alcohol strength, allows you to refill multiple times without it getting the better of you and has been a favourite afternoon easy drink for people world over, especially in the UK.

To finish, India is at a very nascent stage with low alcohol drink options. In the developed world, store shelves are packed with options from low to no alcohol beers etc which we do not have for the moment. However, in my opinion, this will change with time. ■

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# VINTAGE COLLECTIBLE



Jaguar Classic has reintroduced its **original E-type tool kit** for the first time in nearly 50 years. Offered in a leatherette-covered canvas roll, the kit comprises Jaguar branded goods, useful in carrying out routine maintenance on the iconic sports car. A highly collectible rarity, this 20-piece kit features products such as adjustable spanner, tyre valve key, pliers, tyre pressure gauge, points screwdriver, grease gun, handbrake adjusting wrench and brake bleed tin and tube among others. The E-type toolkit can be purchased directly from the Jaguar Land Rover Classic online parts shop, [jaguarlandroverclassic.com](http://jaguarlandroverclassic.com)

**Business Traveller** INDIA

the report

**Tried,  
Tested,  
Tasted.**

TRIED AND TESTED

**Imperial Hotel**

TRIED AND TESTED

**The Tokyo Station Hotel**

SMART TRAVELLER

**Navigating the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge**

PLUS

**Hotel Kanra Kyoto  
The Thousand Kyoto**

**Kyo-Suiran; Hanaroku**

## Imperial Hotel



**BACKGROUND** Part of The Leading Hotels of the World, Imperial Hotel Company also owns Imperial Hotel, Osaka and Kamikochi, Imperial Hotel along with Imperial Hotel, Tokyo. The hotel opened in 1890 just south of the Imperial Palace grounds. The original Imperial Hotel was designed by Yuzuru Watanabe, a Japanese architect. The hotel has been an imminent part of Japan's cultural fabric and has hosted renowned guests like Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe and Tom Hanks.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** The Main Building occupies 17 floors and the Imperial Tower Building houses 31 storeys of rooms and suites. A striking geometric light installation on the ceiling welcomed me at the entrance. Upon walking in, a luminous chandelier takes the spotlight in the lower storey of the lobby. Shades of gold and beige add richness to the ambience. There is a staircase that takes you up to the lobby lounge, which is an expansive space with many pockets of seating areas.

**WHERE IS IT?** About a five-minute walk from three stations in central Tokyo. It is in Hibiya which is a nice choice for travellers interested in local culture and walking tours.

**ROOMS** It is a colossal hotel with 931 rooms and suites (570 in the Main Building

and 361 in the Tower Building). Some of the accommodation categories are Superior, Deluxe and Premier Deluxe rooms and various types of suites. Storeys between the 14th and the 16th have been renovated by English decorator Julian Reed and are called the Imperial Floors. I stayed in a Junior suite (64 sqm) on the Imperial Floor that overlooked Hibiya Park. I enjoyed my morning coffee on the chic lounger in my room. The design of this open plan suite is quite sophisticated with modern Japanese design sensibilities. Some of the in-room amenities include a Bluetooth speaker, an air-purifier, a 42-inch TV, a private bar and Ayura bath amenities.

**FOOD AND DRINK** There is an expansive range of F&B at this hotel. I dined at Les Saisons, its French fine-dining restaurant, a review of which can be read in *Business Traveller India's* October 2019 issue. Its all day dining restaurant is Parkside Diner that serves western favourites. Kamon serves grilled specialities and Tokyo Nadaman is known for its Japanese fare. For tempura head to Ten-ichi and for classic sushi visit Sushigen.

**MEETINGS** It houses 27 different banquet and function rooms that are equipped with state-of-the-art support systems for conferences, seminars, fashion shows, exhibitions and gala receptions.



### The hotel houses 27 different banquet and function rooms as well as 18 bridal salons

Smaller ballrooms for private parties, meetings and other functions are also available. The hotel houses three wedding halls and 18 bridal salons as well.

**LEISURE** The Imperial Hotel Plaza and Imperial Hotel Arcade are the hotel's luxury retail spaces. There is also a swimming pool with a sauna, a fitness centre, a music room, a salon, a travel agency, a florist and a pharmacy at this property.

**VERDICT** With its rich history and cavernous spaces, it makes for quite a good choice for a discerning business traveller in the Japanese capital.

Ravi Lalwani

**BEST FOR**  
The renovated Imperial Floors

**DON'T MISS**  
A meal at Les Saisons

**PRICE**  
Upwards of ¥60,500/ ₹39,826

**CONTACT**  
Imperial Hotel,  
1 Chome-1-1 Uchisaiwaichō, Chiyoda City,  
Tokyo 100-8558, Japan  
[imperialhotel.co.jp](http://imperialhotel.co.jp)

## The Tokyo Station Hotel



**BACKGROUND** With an incredible over 100-year-old history, The Tokyo Station Hotel that opened in 1915 is a beautiful historic site located inside Tokyo's iconic Central Station. The hotel is located inside of Tokyo Station Red Brick Building designated as an official 'Important Cultural Property of Japan' because of its heritage. Since 2015, the hotel became a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** The classic red brick facade and vibrant interiors are eye-catching. Even though the building restored to the original status, the hotel renovated all interiors in 2012 and combined with historical large vertical windows, dome ceilings to old photographs the hotel gives an exceptional glimpse into Tokyo's past.

**WHERE IS IT?** Located within the Tokyo Station in Marunouchi, a commercial district in Japan, the property is a 20 to 30-minute drive from Haneda Airport. It is conveniently connected to several popular spots including the Imperial Palace and the Ginza shopping area.

**ROOMS** I spent two nights in the Dome Side Comfort King room, which is said to be one of the most popular guestrooms at The Tokyo Station Hotel. Guests can choose from different accommodation categories. My 30 sqm room was decorated in classic European-style and featured standard amenities such as a small work desk and an iPod dock among others. The room overlooked the famous cupola domes of Tokyo Station. Recently, the hotel has collaborated with Histoires de Parfums, a French luxury fragrance brand, for bathroom amenities.

**FOOD AND DRINK** The Tokyo Station Hotel spoils you for choice with its wide variety of F&B offerings. The hotel houses the French restaurant, Blanc Rouge

**RECENTLY** Recently, the hotel has collaborated with Histoires de Parfums, a French fragrance brand, for bathroom amenities

**BEST FOR**  
Its location and accommodation facilities

**DON'T MISS**  
Canapés and cocktails at the Bar Oak

**PRICE**  
Upwards of ¥52,206/ ₹34,550

**CONTACT**  
The Tokyo Station Hotel, 1-9-1 Marunouchi,  
Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo, 100-0005, Japan  
[thetokystationhotel.jp](http://thetokystationhotel.jp)

wherein executive chef Masahiro Ishihara along with his team create French delights with modern twists. I had a hearty breakfast of continental and Japanese delicacies at The Atrium, an elegant guest lounge. Fine sushi from the region is served at the hotel's Sushi Aoyagi outlet. One may try Kaiseki (a traditional multi-course Japanese dinner) at Shichi Jyu Ni Kou or enjoy Chinese flavours at Cantonese "en" Ken Takase. I enjoyed a post-work drink at the Bar Oak, which is one of the highlights of the hotel. Toraya Tokyo for premium Japanese confectionery, Yakitori Seo serving classic yakitori and Ristorante and Bar Enoteca Norio offering Italian fare are some other options available.

**MEETINGS** The hotel is a great MICE destination in Tokyo offering the Houou event space on the first floor, which can accommodate over 300 delegates in theatre-style. Other impressive event venues include Youko and Kiri, both ideal for meetings and conferences.

**LEISURE** Business travellers must visit the hotel's Spa Tokione offering a plethora of wellness facilities. There are hot water bathing and relaxing space at the property too. The fitness lounge, The Jexer Tokyo is well-equipped.

**VERDICT** The hotel aesthetically blends its over 100-year-old legacy with Tokyo's modern outlook.

Ravi Lalwani

## Hotel Kanra Kyoto



**BACKGROUND** This contemporary hotel is a showcase of Japanese talent, interpreted in a modern and unpretentious manner. Staying at Hotel Kanra Kyoto means enjoying an immersive Japanese experience at the heart of the country's cultural capital.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** The entrance of the hotel is discreet and inconspicuous but as soon as I step in, I am instantly immersed in its stylish décor. To one side of the lobby is the reception, while at the other end is a boutique for Japanese lifestyle products and a café-bar space. The aesthetic of the property is understated and minimal.

**WHERE IS IT?** Hotel Kanra Kyoto is located at the heart of central Kyoto, a short ride from the main railway station. The hotel is situated next to the famous Higashi Honganji temple complex and quite close to Kyoto's main tourist attractions. The neighbourhood is filled with shops and restaurants too.

**ROOMS** The overall design of the rooms is a reference to the Machiya style of construction, for which old Kyoto is quite famous. The rooms are inspired by a traditional Japanese inn, but in a



modern, international format. I stayed in the Kanra Junior suite, spread across 81 sqm. My room featured a minimalist living room with low seating and Japanese divider screens. This led to a spacious bedroom with two double beds and a separate vanity area. The best part was the bathroom, which opened out into an outdoor terrace with a jacuzzi overlooking the Kyoto skyline and temple complex.

**FOOD AND DRINK** I dined at the hotel's exquisite Japanese restaurant, Hanaroku, where there is a strong focus on seasonality (read the review on page 80). I enjoyed a teppanyaki-style dinner, accompanied by wine. You can even try The Kitchen Kanra, which is open for

breakfast, lunch and dinner, and features a host of baked dishes and pizza selections.

**MEETINGS** If you want to have a small, informal meeting, head to the 22-seater Kanra Lounge, where you can enjoy gourmet coffee and local traditional pastries. The lounge also serves cocktails and wine, making it a great place for a quiet sundowner.

**LEISURE** The property features the Kanra Spa, where you can enjoy a host of exquisite treatments inspired by traditional Japanese wellness techniques.

**VERDICT** A trendy property to stay at for your business or leisure trip to Kyoto.  
*Riaan Jacob George*

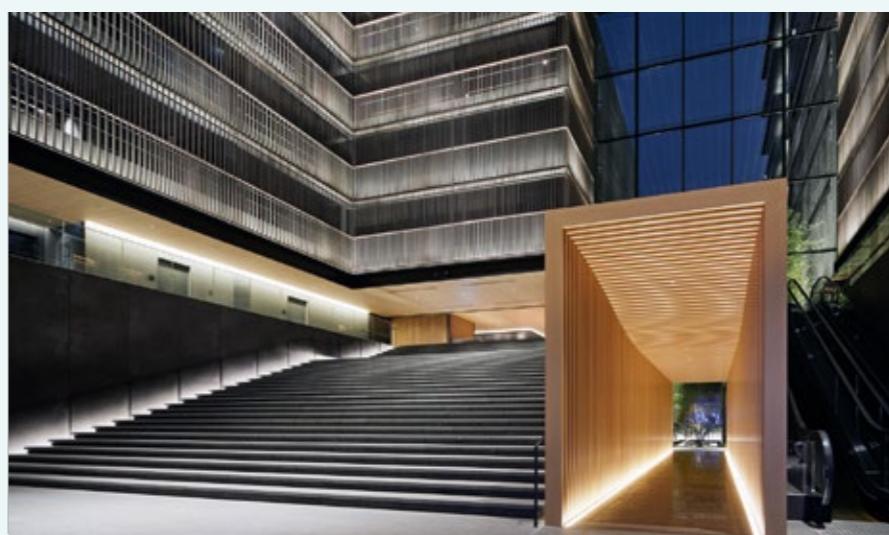
**BEST FOR**  
Its modern design rooms

**DON'T MISS**  
The Kanra Lounge for good coffee

**PRICE**  
Upwards of ¥40,031/ ₹26,000

**CONTACT**  
Hotel Kanra Kyoto,  
190 Kitamachi Karasuma-dori  
Rokujo-sagaru Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto  
600-8176 Japan  
[hotelkanra.jp](http://hotelkanra.jp)

**The overall design of the rooms is a reference to the Machiya style of construction, for which old Kyoto is quite famous**



**BACKGROUND** This design hotel opened in January 2019, and is a luxury property under the Keihan Hotels & Resorts chain. This chain also has other famous hotels in Kyoto such as the Kyoto Century Hotel and the Kyoto Tower Hotel.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE?** As soon as I step into the cavernous lobby of The Thousand Hotel, I am mesmerised by its outstanding design and Japanese minimalism. The lobby is bathed in natural light and there is a sweeping staircase, within the atrium, leading to some of the higher levels. The overall design of the hotel is a complete shift from a conventional hotel and is symbolic of modern luxury.

**WHERE IS IT?** The Thousand Kyoto's location is really amazing. It is situated just outside the main Kyoto railway station, which makes it extremely easy if you are train travelling through Japan. The property is also located within easy reach of all the city's major attractions and shopping district. The neighbourhood is pretty lively at night too.

**ROOMS** I stayed in The Thousand Premier room, which featured a large living room with a seating area and a big dining table for eating and working. There is a divider

## The Thousand Kyoto

**BEST FOR**  
Its location and design

**DON'T MISS**  
An Italian meal at Scalae

**PRICE**  
Upwards of ¥38,329/ ₹25,000

**CONTACT**  
The Thousand Kyoto,  
570 Higashi Shiokoji-cho, Shimogyo-ku,  
Kyoto 600-8216 Japan  
[keihanhotels-resorts.co.jp](http://keihanhotels-resorts.co.jp)



**As soon as I step into the cavernous lobby of the hotel, I am mesmerised by its outstanding design and Japanese minimalism**

between the living room and the spacious bedroom, which opens out into a generous bathroom and vanity area. The room was tastefully done, with pleasing colours and elements of Japanese aesthetics. Other perks included a Nespresso machine, Japanese tea, a massive TV, bathrobes and slippers. The highlight was the gorgeous terrace, outside the living room, with daybeds, with great skyline views.

**FOOD AND DRINK** The Thousand Kyoto's Italian fine dining establishment, Scalae, is definitely worth a visit. I enjoyed a multi-course gourmet meal there, with fine wine, truffles and a prosciutto trolley. Breakfast was served here the next morning too, with Japanese and Western options on offer. Don't forget to try the hotel's Japanese restaurant Kizhashi.

**MEETINGS** The hotel is perfect for hosting meetings and events of all sizes with different options. There are the



Experience Rooms for about 40 people, all the way up to the Banquet Studio Sen, which can accommodate up to 320 people.

**LEISURE** The hotel has an exquisite spa, with a range of face and body treatments to soothe and relax fatigued travellers. There is also a fitness centre, a jacuzzi and a steam room.

**VERDICT** A luxury hotel that will appeal to both business and leisure travellers.

*Riaan Jacob George*

## Kyo-Suiran

Housed at Suiran, A Luxury Collection Hotel in Kyoto, Kyo-Suiran is a Japanese fine-dining restaurant. The eatery keeps Japan's age-old traditions intact, is widely showcased across the interiors.

The eatery specialises in washoku (traditional Japanese fare) prepared in French style. Here, I opted for the 'Kinshu' menu. My menu included abalone (snail), which I was tasting for the first time, and I must say, it was an interesting pick. It had the right mix of flavours complemented by creamy mascarpone and garnished with aromatic chrysanthemum. Adding to this, was the 'Sashimi of the day' with vibrant sauce varieties.

I also tried tender Kobe beef that



came with sea urchin and chestnut. This was, without doubt, the highlight of my meal. The restaurant also served salmon roe. Despite being a complex dish, it was very easy on my palate. For dessert,

### VERDICT

A must visit for those wanting to experience washoku-style of cooking in Kyoto.

Ravi Lalwani

### HOURS

1730 to 2100

### PRICE

Upwards of ₹21,000/ ₹13,832

### CONTACT

Kyo-Suiran, Suiran, A Luxury Collection Hotel,  
12 Susukinobaba-cho,  
Saga-Tenryuji, Ukyo-ku,  
Kyoto, Japan  
[marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

**The eatery specialises in washoku prepared in French style**

## Hanaroku

Hanaroku is an elegant F&B outlet at Hotel Kanra Kyoto. The restaurant features a minimalististic décor and subtle tones that create the right atmosphere for a relaxing dining experience. Seasonal ingredients sourced from Kyoto form the basis of the food preparations at Hanaroku.

I tried the teppanyaki lobster with miso sauce and seasonal vegetables. The lobster was cooked to perfection, and the added punch from the miso sauce made this dish quite impressive. Next on my plate was soft-smoked red bream (teppanyaki with a twist) style are also recommended.

I paired my food with some sake sourced from a local brewery in Kyoto.

Along with an array of delectable appetisers and mains, the restaurant also serves interesting dessert options including fondant



**Seasonal ingredients form the basis of the food preparations at Hanaroku**

### HOURS

1730 to 2230

### PRICE

Upwards of ₹15,000/ ₹9,943

### CONTACT

Hanaroku, Hotel Kanra Kyoto, 190  
Kitamachi Karasuma-dori  
Rokujo-sagaru,  
Shimogyo-ku Kyoto, 600-8176 Japan  
[hotelkanra.jp](http://hotelkanra.jp)

chocolate with vanilla ice cream.

### VERDICT

An ideal spot to unwind with some authentic Japanese food and Japanese sake.

Riaan Jacob George

# STANDING MEETINGS



*Business Traveller India* gets tips from Shampa Roy, grooming expert at the New Leaf Image Consultancy on standing meetings

WORDS APURVA MINCHEKAR

### BE PRESENTABLE

Grooming is always important, especially during meetings. Whenever you attend a standing meeting, make sure your attire is on point and professional. Shoes and clothes must be clean and proper.

**Pro Tip:** Posture is an important part of presentation.

### PUNCTUALITY MATTERS

Standing meetings are conducted for a short duration, to make sure attendees are on time.

**Pro Tip:** Try reaching the meeting spot a minute before, to avoid being late.

### THE NEW-AGE OF MEETINGS

A lot of companies believe that standing meetings are mostly for software engineers or professions with a 24-hour workload. It's about time to burst this bubble! Standing meetings can be planned for all professions across sectors.

**Pro Tip:** Start with small agendas and easy to discuss topics.

# Navigating the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

The ins and outs of travel across the HZMB



**82**  
The 55km-long Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) is the world's longest cross-sea bridge, linking its eponymous three cities – two Special Administrative Regions and one mainland Chinese city – together by land for the first time.

## THE HONG KONG BOUNDARY CROSSING FACILITIES

All the three cities have set up their own ports of entry, also known as Boundary Crossing Facilities (BCF), and passengers using the HZMB have to clear immigration at these BCFs.

The 24-hour Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities (HKBCF) are close to Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA). Passengers from the airport can go to the HKBCF via the 24-hour B4 bus. The bus fare is HK\$6 (₹55) and it takes around ten to 15 minutes by way of AsiaWorld-Expo. Those travelling to the airport from the HKBCF can take the return route on the same bus.

The HKBCF is also connected to the Sunny Bay and Tung Chung MTR stations on the Tung Chung Line via buses B5 and B6, respectively.

Alternatively, you can take the 'A' route airport bus, which stops at various destinations around Hong Kong. Meanwhile, all types of taxis in Hong Kong – red urban taxis, green New Territories taxis and blue Lantau taxis – can be hired to go to and depart from the HKBCF.

### TRAVELLING ON THE HZMB

The most popular way to travel on the HZMB is to take the 24-hour HZM Bus, which only travels between the BCFs. There are two routes: Hong Kong-Macao and Hong Kong-Zhuhai. There are no bus routes between Macao and Zhuhai because their BCFs are situated next to each other.

Tickets can be bought at all the BCFs via the self-service kiosks, which only accept e-payment methods such as Alipay, WeChat Pay and Hong Kong's Octopus card. However, there are also manned ticketing counters that accept cash and credit cards. From 0600 to midnight, a single-journey ticket costs HK\$65 (₹591); during the wee hours (midnight-6am) the fee is slightly higher at HK\$70 (₹637). Tickets are valid for one hour from the time of purchase.

Passengers who wish to start their journey from other areas of Hong Kong and Macau should take a cross-boundary coach. These

allow you to travel between Hong Kong and Macau, or between Hong Kong and other cities in the Greater Bay Area, via the HZMB. There are a few companies offering this service such as One Bus, Hong Kong-Macao Express, Trans-Island Limousine and Eternal East Bus. Passengers from

Hong Kong can board the coach at pick-up points near popular MTR stations such as Causeway Bay, Kowloon, Tsim Sha Tsui, Prince Edward and Kwun Tong, while the boarding points in Macao are mainly hotels in the Cotai area.

Another option is to use a cross-boundary hire car service, though this is a chauffeur

service rather than a car that you drive yourself. Simply contact the operators (a list is on the Hong Kong Transport Department's website, [td.gov.hk](http://td.gov.hk)) and make advance bookings. In addition to the car hiring fee, passengers also have to pay a toll rate of RMB150 (₹1,531).

### HKIA CHECK-IN SERVICE AT BCFs

Passengers travelling to HKIA via the HZMB can now check in at the HKBCF as early as one day in advance, depending on the airline. An exception is US-bound flights, where boarding passes can only be issued within 24 hours of the scheduled departure time. The check-in service centre is situated at the Arrival Hall on the ground floor and is equipped with both self-service kiosks and manned counters, providing check-in and bag drop services from 0700 to 2230 daily.

Currently, four local carriers offer a check-in service at the HKBCF. Passengers with luggage to check must arrive at the check-in centre at least 150 minutes before flight departure, while those without checked luggage need to arrive 90 minutes beforehand.

HKIA has also launched check-in services at the other two BCFs in Macao and Zhuhai. However, a bag drop service is not available at either facility, so passengers must carry their luggage with them to Hong Kong and go through immigration and customs before entering Hong Kong.

Jackie Chen

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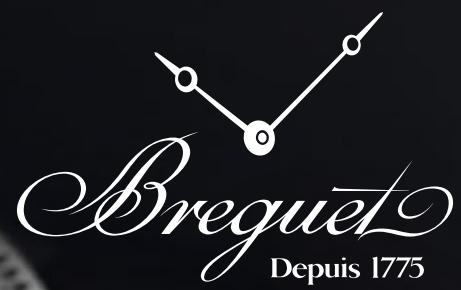


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