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Kumarakom - Gokulam Grand Resort & Spa Kovalam - Gokulam Grand Turtle on the Beach Resort Trivandrum - Gokulam Grand Kozhikode-Gokulam Grand

KARNATAKA

Bangalore - Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa Coorg - Gokulam Grand Resort & Spa





KERALA

Cochin - Gokulam Park Hotel Cochin - Gokulam Convention Centre Munnar - Gokulam Park Guruvayur - Gokulam Park Kasaragod - Gokulam Park Nalanda Resort

TAMILNADU

Chennai - Gokulam Park Sabari Chennai - Gokulam Park, Ashok Nagar Coimbatore - Gokulam Park

KARNATAKA

Bellary - Gokulam Park



KERALA

Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Sabari Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Apartments Thrissur - Sree Gokulam Residency, Amballur Kollam - Sree Gokulam Residency, Oyoor

Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Vanamala

Manjeri - Sree Gokulam Residency Thalassery - Sree Gokulam Fort

TAMILNADU

Gudalur - Sree Gokulam Highrange Inn



Dear Friends

As PATA enters 75th year of its founding, during the PATA Knowledge Forum 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand, PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid, announced the beginning of a yearlong campaign to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of its founding. This event was held in conjunction with the PATA Travel Mart 2025 (PTM 2025). It will be celebrated throughout the year. The focus will be on heritage, innovation, and resilience. The campaign will then take full shape with its official launch at the PATA Annual Summit 2026, taking place on May 11-13 across the cities of Gyeongju and Pohang, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea (ROK), for the first time across two cities.

The 35th edition of the Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific (HICAP) will be held from October 22-24, 2025, in Singapore at the Fairmont Singapore & Swissotel The Stamford. Investors and developers eyeing hotel real estate opportunities across Asia Pacific should mark their calendars for HICAP. As HICAP celebrates 35 years of excellence, it remains the premier hotel investment conference with unparalleled influence in the industry.

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What a pleasure it was to experience Hilton Frankfurt City Centre again (it's become an annual ritual to stay there during IMEX trade show). The hospitality remains top notch and as always they were kind enough to give me the junior suite with lounge access. The hotel has bright and airy, 342 guest rooms and suites offering the ideal environment for work, rest and relaxation. Guests staying on our Executive Floors benefit from special services, including complimentary snacks and drinks in the exclusive Executive Lounge.

Again had the opportunity to catch up with the ever delightful host Marc Snijders, GM, Hilton Frankfurt City Centre. In a conversation with Marc Snijders he talks not only about his love for the profession, the hotel and its refurbishment, the loyalty program but also on the importance of guest satisfaction.

Having heard about a new arrival at Karlsruhe Zoo - that welcomed a polar bear cub named Mika in early 2025, I was quite excited to visit the zoo. Also the city had recently launched a 24-hour hop-on hop-off bus. As I was going to Karlsruhe for covering INDIA SUMMER DAYS, I decided to use this opportunity to experience these new additions in Karlsruhe.

Attending the annual event, INDIA SUMMER DAYS gave me an opportunity to experience authentic India - Indian culture through music, dance, bazaars, yoga and naturally the culinary delights - yummy and globally much appreciated Indian food including our very own Vada Pav.

Culinary experiences are always a delight at Radisson Blu Pune Kharadi with three dining options: Carmine, the all-day dining restaurant that serves global cuisine; The Bridge, which serve connecting cuisines (Indian, Italian, & Mexican), along with SKYE, which offers a diverse range of alcoholic beverages; and The Great Kabab Factory, which serves North Indian Frontier Cuisine. And now a fourth venue has been added Highdive.



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As HICAP embarks on its 35th year, the conference is as vibrant, productive, and meaningful as ever. The program and its topics are being developed with the help of the HICAP 2025

Program Planning Committee and Regional Advisors, representing leaders from the hotel and lodging industry, the investment community, and key advisors. The 2025 event will feature 40+ sponsors/supporters, and 30+ sessions led by 125+ industry executives spanning all areas of hotel investment and tourism. Collaboratively, these hotel investment leaders will explore what's ahead for the industry

and the evolution on the horizon.



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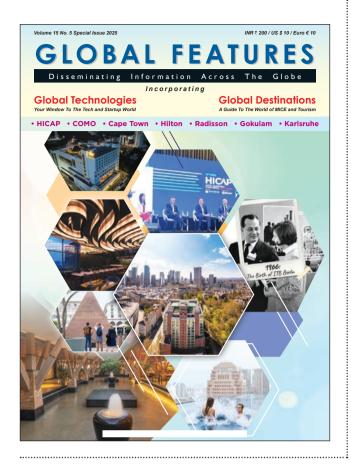
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PATA celebrates its 75th Anniversary

stablished in 1951, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) a not-for-profit membership association has been dedicated to advancing a meaningful Pacific Asia tourism economy. As it enters 75th year of its founding, during the PATA Knowledge Forum 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand, PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid, announced the beginning of a year-long campaign to

celebrate the 75th Anniversary of its founding. This event was held in conjunction with the PATA Travel Mart 2025 (PTM 2025).

Noor Ahmad Hamid said, "Seventy-four years ago, our founders came together when the world longed for peace, healing, and hope. Their vision was simple yet powerful: to use travel as a bridge between cultures, as a pathway to prosperity, and as a passport to peace. That vision continues to guide us today, reminding us that the work we do is not just about tourism, but about connecting people and creating understanding across borders. It is in that same spirit — honouring the founders'

vision and embracing our on-going mission — I am delighted to officially launch the celebrations for PATA's 75th Anniversary in 2026."

Under the theme, "From Vision to Legacy: PATA at 75," the Anniversary marks a significant point in time in PATA's journey,

celebrating the Association's role in fostering responsible and sustainable tourism development across the Asia Pacific region and its future-forward commitment to actively evolve alongside the sector's ever-changing priorities with a focus on innovation, collaboration, and adaptability.

To engage its community



Announcing the soft launch of the PATA 75th Anniversary Celebration are PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid (fourth from left) and PATA Chair Peter Semone (sixth from left), joined by PATA Life Members (L/R): Rabendra Raj Pandey, Chairman, Everest Express International P. Ltd.; Darren Ng, Managing Director, TTG Asia Media Pte. Ltd.; Jae Pil Sho, Editor & Publisher, Travel Press-Korea; Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, Director, Macao Government Tourism Office; Soon-Hwa Wong, CEO, Asia Tourism Pte Ltd., Tunku Iskandar, Group President, Mitra Malaysia Sdn.Bhd.; Andrew Drysdale, Life Member, PATA; and Andrew Jones, Guardian, Sanctuary Resorts.

in the celebration, PATA has launched a special webpage under the title "Lost in Time, Found by You: Your Memories Complete the Picture." The page features a digitised collection of historical photos selected from the Association's archives. As many of these images remain unidentified. PATA members, partners, and all interested parties to share any information that could help identify the people, places, or moments captured in the photos. Visitors are also encouraged to upload their own photos, stories, and memories related to PATA through the same platform.

Beyond this interactive feature, the 75th Anniversary will be celebrated throughout the

year. The focus will be on heritage, innovation, and resilience. The campaign will then take full shape with its official launch at the PATA Annual Summit 2026, taking place on May 11-13 across the cities of Gyeongju and Pohang, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, Korea (ROK), for the first time across two cities.

PATA Travel Mart 2026, Sarawak, Malaysia

The next PATA Travel Mart 2026 (PTM 2026) will take place in Sarawak, Malaysia at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK) from August 18 - 20, 2026. PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid stated, "We extend our sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts Sarawak, the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB), and Business Events Sarawak for recognising the strategic importance of the tourism economy and for their commitment to hosting PTM 2026. As a long-standing and valued member, STB has consistently supported a wide range of collaborative initiatives over the years. PTM 2026 will not only align with the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign and PATA's 75th Anniversary, but also mark STB's 45th year of membership with the Association, making it a truly special

occasion for Sarawak, PATA, and all participants."



A PATA member since 1981, STB has been a dedicated partner in advancing PATA's initiatives in promoting destination resilience and sustainability. STB CEO Sharzede Datu Haji Salleh Askor said, "Hosting PTM 2026 is a milestone for Sarawak and a testament to our growing presence on the global tourism stage. It is our opportunity to present Sarawak's cultural heritage, biodiversity, and business-ready infrastructure to the world, while underscoring our commitment to sustainable and regenerative tourism. This event complements Visit Malaysia 2026 and will strengthen our ties with international industry leaders, creating lasting partnerships that benefit our communities and tourism stakeholders. We look forward to welcoming the world to Sarawak, where there is always 'More to Discover'."

PATA Travel Mart is among the longest-running B2B travel trade exhibitions

in the Asia Pacific region. PTM 2026 is expected to welcome participants from over 60 destinations worldwide, facilitating more than 10,000 targeted business appointments during its two-day programme.



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"It's about offering a holistic lifestyle experience"

Two decades of experience across Asia, USA, and Caribbean and working for premier luxury brands like Four Seasons Resort Nevis, Caribbean Islands, the 1st Ritz-Carlton Reserve in the world, Krabi, Thailand, Taj Exotica Resort & Spa Maldives, Anantara Resort Maldives, Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Boston, Bermuda and Manila, *Ruby Garcia moved as General Manager, COMO Metropolitan Singapore*, to launch the first COMO property in the brand's country of origin.

Spread over the past 2 years, she successfully opened and operated the hotel despite initial manpower challenges, maintaining service excellence and operational efficiency. She established partnerships with world-renowned culinary experts, including COTE Korean Steakhouse and Cedric Grolet, to introduce innovative dining experiences at the hotel—their first collaboration outside of the US and Europe, marking a significant expansion into Asia. In an interaction with Ruby Garcia she highlights the 2 year journey of COMO Metropolitan Singapore. **Excerpts**



As COMO Metropolitan Singapore completes 2 years, how has the journey been?

As we celebrate our second anniversary, I can confidently say the journey has been both inspiring and transformative. From the very beginning, our mission was to introduce a new standard of contemporary luxury in Singapore — one that blends wellness, design, and exceptional service. Over the past two years, we've brought that vision to life. Like any new hotel, we've faced challenges, particularly as global travel patterns continue to shift, but every challenge has made us stronger, more agile, and more in tune with what modern luxury travellers are seeking. The best part, however, is that we've truly enjoyed the journey, embracing every moment of growth and learning along the way.

Your hotel not only comprises of luxury accommodations but also an exclusive wellness centre and fashion retail. How does such a combination work?

At COMO Metropolitan Singapore, our integrated approach is very intentional — it's about offering a holistic lifestyle experience, not just a place to stay. The combination of luxury accommodation, wellness, and fashion retail reflects the COMO philosophy: that true luxury lies in well-being, self-expression, and meaningful experiences. Our guests don't just check in for a room — they come for a curated experience. They may begin their day with a tailored wellness program at COMO Shambhala, explore mindful eating through our restaurants with global dining concepts, and find inspiration through fashion and design at Club21. Each element enhances the others, creating a space under one roof where every detail fosters a deeper connection to



personal well-being and self-expression.

COMO has created a niche for its COMO Shambhala wellness and COMO Shambhala food. While these are popular in resorts, how do you gauge its success in a city hotel?

That's a great question, and one we've been very mindful of. COMO Shambhala has been leading preventative health in the hospitality industry for over 25 years, with sixteen locations worldwide.

COMO Shambhala has always had a strong identity in our resort properties, where guests often come specifically for rest, renewal, and deep wellness immersion. But what we've seen at COMO Metropolitan Singapore is that the appetite for wellness and mindful living extends just as strongly into urban life.

In a fast-paced city like Singapore, our wellness offerings are resonating with both international travelers and locals. Whether it's a short business trip, a wellness-focused staycation, or simply a desire to maintain a balanced routine while on the move, guests are increasingly seeking out experiences that nourish both body and mind.

This urban flagship of our global luxury wellness company occupies the literal and metaphorical 'heart' of COMO Orchard: a 800+ sq m haven dedicated to nurturing the brand's core mantra that 'Wellness Begins Within'.

After 30+ years since its founding and several hotels spanning continents, COMO Hotels and Resorts made their home country debut as a fully integrated hotel showcasing all COMO sub-brands. Bringing the best of COMO Group's hospitality this integrated hotel complex spread over 19 floors has 156 Luxury Rooms and Suites, fashion, wellness and cuisine into one inspiring location.

The location also ensures you are close to what you need: the upscale Paragon mall, world-class Mount Elizabeth Hospital, and a wealth of other shopping, dining, and medical services all walking distance.

In such a short span the hotel has already grabbed global recognition, including awards such as Best New Luxury Hotel by Travel + Leisure and Tatler, and 11th World's Best New Luxury Hotels by Luxury Travel Intelligence.

COMO Shambhala Cuisine has been incredibly well received. People are more conscious of what they consume, and our philosophy of clean, nutrient-rich, and flavorful food has found a strong following even outside of a resort context.

Ultimately, the success lies in relevance, and I believe we've shown that urban wellness isn't just a trend, but a necessity. Our goal is to make well-being accessible, even in the heart of a bustling city."

How do you utilise technology and innovation to make the property guest-friendly?

From the moment a guest books with us, digital innovation plays a role. By integrating technology into our offerings, guests

can curate their stay with COMO to their needs, from the convenience of mobile Mobile check-in and check-out with digital key to the ease of booking COMO experiences from their phone.

We offer pre-arrival communications that allow guests to customize their preferences, from room setups to wellness bookings. Our in-room technology is intuitive and user-friendly, allowing for smart control of in-room blinds and entertainment, all designed to enhance comfort without complexity. And of course, there's Bruno, our robot barista - an entertaining way for our guests to enjoy a fresh cup of coffee.

What about sustainable practices in your hotel?

Sustainability is a key pillar of our operations at COMO Metropolitan Singapore — not just as a trend, but as a long-term responsibility to our guests, our community, and the environment. We're proud to have received EarthCheck Silver Certification,



which reflects our adherence to globally recognized standards in sustainable tourism.

This certification is a significant milestone. It means we're actively measuring and reducing our environmental impact across energy and water use, waste management, and operational efficiency. We've implemented initiatives such as smart in-room systems to reduce energy consumption, eliminated single-use plastics, which are evident in our guest room amenities, and optimized our laundry and water treatment processes.

Receiving the EarthCheck Silver Certification validates the efforts of our entire team and motivates us to continue pushing toward higher benchmarks in sustainability. It's an ongoing journey, and one we're committed to evolving with purpose.

With Singapore celebrating its diamond jubilee year (60th year) any specific plans during this year?

Singapore's Diamond Jubilee is a monumental occasion that celebrates six decades of resilience, growth, and community spirit. At COMO Metropolitan Singapore, we're truly proud to be part of this journey. To honour this milestone, we have curated special menus at our restaurants, offered room packages, as well as planned events including the opportunity to view the fireworks display from our rooftop exclusively.

As ITB Berlin, The World's Leading Travel Trade Show, celebrates its 60th edition at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds from 3 – 5 March 2026, we at Global Features proudly participates in ITB Berlin celebration and success.

Coinciding with the event we plan to come out with a special issue

DISCOVER THE
STORIES
BEHIND 60 YEARS
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HICAP: Premier hotel investment conference





Come October and the most influential hospitality, travel and investment community from around the globe will converge in Singapore eyeing hotel real estate opportunities across Asia Pacific, feels our **Editor, Chandragupta**Amritkar who is also on the prestigious HICAP 2025 Program Planning Committee

he 35th edition of the Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific (HICAP) will be held from October 22-24, 2025, in Singapore at the Fairmont Singapore & Swissotel The Stamford. Investors and developers eyeing hotel real estate opportunities across Asia Pacific should mark their calendars for HICAP. As HICAP celebrates 35 years of excellence, it remains the premier hotel investment conference with unparalleled influence in the industry.

"Excitement is mounting for the 35th edition of HICAP. Backed by a dynamic HICAP 2025 Program Planning Committee our full program will feature over 30 sessions and 125+ c-suite speakers. This year's conference is also featuring a series of complimentary virtual events leading up to the in-person event," said an emphatic Jonathon Zink, COO, The BHN Group by Northstar.

HICAP remains the unequalled annual gathering place for Asia Pacific's hotel investment community. Whether you are looking to make new contacts, strengthen existing relationships, learn, or to orchestrate a deal, HICAP is "The Place To Be" to meet the people who matter. The HICAP audience consists of Investors, Owners, Lenders, Developers, Hotel Chain/Management Company Executives, Investment Bankers, Vacation Ownership Executives, Financial Advisors, Real Estate & Financial Intermediaries, Consultants, Lawyers, Architects & Designers, Government/Tourism Officials and Media. HICAP attracts delegates that are "focused" on hotel development and investment. With almost 30% of the delegates holding titles such as Chairman, CEO, President and Owner, HICAP has become the "must attend" event for the leaders in the industry.

Partial list of topics at HICAP 2025 program

The HICAP program is expected to feature over 30 sessions and 125+ c-suite speakers. As always on all three days from 8:15am-9:15am the event will have continental breakfast. Some of the interesting events include quick link -

- Speed dating where you meet people in quick session.
- As technology is impacting hotel business globally the event starts off with HICAP tech challenge – what's 'hot' in hotel technology?

- The HICAP master class: Rethinking the rules is hotel management evolving beyond tradition?
- A spotlight on South Asia Investment Opportunities & Challenges
- A spotlight on OCEANIA Investment Opportunities & Challenges
- A spotlight on East Asia Investment Opportunities & Challenges
- Highest ROI New Business Models
- · Hotel Refurbishment
- Japan investment insights
- Equity & debt
- Acquiring distressed hotels & opportunistic investments
- Franchising model & agreements
- · Redefining luxury & branded residences
- Third party management model & agreements
- Investment insights by financial gurus

Partial list of speakers HICAP 2025

Nicholas C Cocks, Partner, Velocity Ventures; Siddhant Jhunjhunwala, ED, PAG; Tasos Kousloglou, CEO – Hotel Division, Sun Hung Kai Properties; Andrea Belfanti, CEO, ISHC; Paul Dean, Principal, Dean & Associates; Dora Stilianos, Partner, Baker McKenzie; Jeff Higley, President, The BHN Group by Northstar; Jesper Palmqvist, Regional Vice President, Asia Pacific, STR CoStar; William E Heinecke, Founder & Chairman,



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A resort providing 100% vegetarian options

t was over lunch while conversing with Pankaj Saxena, AGM – West India, Radisson Hotel Group, South Asia and GM – Radisson Blu Pune Kharadi, on some of the best properties of Radisson in western region, he mentioned that Radisson Resort

Hatgad (RRH), Saputara is worth visiting and not to be missed.

A couple of months later as I was visiting my parents in Nashik, I decided to use the opportunity to visit RRH. Messaging the GM, Poonam Nair, she instantly responded that it would be a pleasure and was kind enough to add 'and do come with your family'. Touched, I informed her I will come with my parents.





Located in Nashik district, near the Gujarat border, RRH, Saputara it is truly an eye catching resort that I could see as we approached the entrance of the resort. On arrival we got a traditional welcome and were led to our villas. The GM was kind enough to gives us two interconnecting villas – both facing the pool. The resort has 103 rooms which are categorised as Deluxe Room, Executive Suite, Villa and the recently built Presidential Suite.

The Villa featuring a separate living room and a balcony provides uninterrupted views and direct access to the swimming pool. We relished sitting on the sofa in the balcony watching the pool and beyond. The spacious Presidential Suite features a separate living area, a powder room, a walk-in closet and a private whirlpool. The balcony overlooks the historic Hatgad Fort.







While the tranquil atmosphere and scenic location was impressive what really caught my attention was when we went for lunch and were amazed by the tasty food – all vegetarian as the resort provides 100% vegetarian dining options.



"Our uniqueness is that the resort only serves vegetarian food. This in turn is a blessing in disguise as we are a preferred destination for Gujarat, Jains and many veg lovers. Infact we have noticed many guests are



happy to relish our veg food for a few days," said Poonam. For the next 3 days we enjoyed a delightful selection of dishes made with locally sourced ingredients in an inviting ambiance. I had to agree that the resort is a true boon for vegetarians.

MICE and Weddings

RRH, Saputara offers versatile venues perfect for a variety of corporate and social events. The boardroom and conference hall provide the perfect setting for smaller meetings, while the grand ballroom is ideal for large-scale events of up to 400 guests. The resort has a separate reception area to register or welcome guests/ attendees.

"We have been doing substantial business thanks to our ability to present a perfect setting for a fairy-tale wedding. Our spacious banqueting venue can accommodate up to 800 guests. Add to this our exquisite 100% vegetarian cuisine made from the freshest ingredients and we do have a bar room too for guests who would like to have a drink," said Poonam.

The resort has a nice fitness center and a spa. Add to this the facility for bicycle rental and EV charging stations. The resort believes in sustainability and is aiming at becoming a net zero resort.

For those in an adventurous mood or want to go a spiritual trail can go exploring the Saputara along with Nashik and its surrounding regions - including pilgrimages to iconic temples like Trimbakeshwar and Saptashrungi Devi Mandir, or indulging in the vibrant wine culture of Nashik. The adventurous can opt for rock climbing in Saputara, or explore the wildlife at Purna and Vansda Sanctuaries, a picnic at Hatgad Fort, a 17th-century landmark.

ITB Berlin 2026: 60 years of connection



In 1966, the first ITB Berlin took place with just nine exhibitors, marking the beginning of what would become the world's leading travel trade show.

As the count down for the 60th anniversary of ITB, Berl numerous posts highlighting key milestones that have s Even after 6 decades, ITB Berlin is recognized as the wo airlines, hotels, and technology providers, to network a major platform for innovation and market trends in tourism builds bridges.

Dive into the history and future of the world's leading t that have shaped global tourism – from the introduction

Join the



On 9 February 1969, Boeing took flight with the first jumbo jet, opening the skies to longer journeys, more destinations, and cheaper fares for travelers everywhere. A game changer that made exploring the world easier than ever.



The 1970s marked a milestone in travel history: Package holidays became wildly popular, revolutionizing the way people explored the world.Travelers booked through agents, prepaying one inclusive price, then spent more enjoying their destination.



In 1973, Maureen and Tony Wheeler took their travel knowledge and wrote it into a guide, thus establishing Lonely Planet. Their first guide was called Across Asia on the Cheap, and have since developed more than 800 guides for a diverse range of countries.



In 1979, Texa Airlines became to introduce a program. The encouraged bot as well as create to fly to differe From free fligh frequent flyer travel more rew



In 1999, the European Union established the Euro as the common currency. This change united Europe with a single currency and made travel across borders smoother than ever.



In 2007, Airbnb was born when two roommates in San Francisco, struggling to pay rent, offered air mattresses and breakfast to travelers. Fast forward to today, and millions of people have found unique stays and unforgettable experiences all over the world.

n, innovation, and unforgettable moments

in begins in 2026, the organisers plan to take you on a journey through six decades of travel history with haped the travel industry.

rld's largest travel trade show, getting the global tourism industry professionals, including tour operators, and discuss business at a single venue on a single platform. Established in 1966 it continues to serve as the travel and tourism industry. The event even today is driven by curiosity, passion, and the belief that

ravel trade show - on a very special journey through time. On this double spread we highlight the events on of the Euro to the birth of ITB Berlin, and the rise of platforms like Airbnb.

e 60th edition from 3 - 5 March 2026 in Berlin



s International the first airline frequent flyer ese programs the brand loyalty dalarger desire nt destinations. ts to upgrades, programs made arding.



In 1983, the first commercially available mobile phone, the Motorola DynaTAC 8000X, hit the scene and forever changed how we stay connected, especially when traveling - creating meaningful and lasting connections with each other.



The 1990s marked a turning point in travel history: Biometric security and paperless flying began to take off, making airports more efficient and journeys smoother than ever before. No more endless lines or printed paperwork – just a simpler, faster way to fly.



In 1994, the world witnessed the opening of the Channel Tunnel, also known as the Eurotunnel, a ground breaking engineering marvel that connected UK to mainland Europe. For the first time in history, travellers could journey from England to France beneath the English Channel, traversing 50.5 km of tunnel.

In 2010, Instagram launched and forever changed how we share and experience travel. From stunning sunsets to hidden gems, Instagram turned the world into a visual playground, inspiring wanderlust one post at a time. Over the years social media has grown changing the way we travel.



In 2015, Japan introduced the world to the first hotel staffed primarily by robots. The Henn-na Hotel greeted guests with multilingual robots, including a bow-tie-wearing velociraptor and humanoid androids. Automated trolleys transported luggage, facial-recognition technology replaced room keys, and inroom robots managed lighting and provided information.



Throwback to 2016, travelers! That's when the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a new global vision for climate action, equality, and community empowerment.

Pune gets a new Rooftop Bar & Social Terrace



ocated just 3.5 hours drive from Mumbai airport, 20 minutes from Pune International Airport and just ten minutes from EON IT Park and World Trade Center Pune Radisson Blu Pune Kharadi with 141 rooms and suites and three dining options recently launched an International quality rooftop restaurant and bar that's becoming the toast of many socialites of Pune.

Culinary experiences are always a delight at Radisson Blu Pune Kharadi with three dining options: Carmine, the all-day dining restaurant that serves global cuisine; The Bridge, which serve connecting cuisines (Indian, Italian, & Mexican), along with SKYE, which offers a diverse range of alcoholic beverages; and The Great Kabab Factory, which serves North Indian Frontier Cuisine. And now a fourth venue has been added Highdive.

Highdive: Rooftop Bar & Social Terrace.

"We have unveiled a captivating rooftop lounge – a restaurant

and bar where the sky becomes its canvas and is complemented by an infinity pool that merges with the limitless horizon." Said Pankaj Saxena, Area General Manager – West India, Radisson Hotel Group, South Asia and General Manager – Radisson Blu Pune Kharadi.

Being a Rooftop restaurant the views while dinning are stunning. It features a poolside ambiance, panoramic city views, poolside dining, along with gastronomy at its best and remarkable mocktails and cocktails.

Highdive has an Upper Deck commanding panoramic vistas across the city, the Lower Deck curates copperlit alcoves and the Jewel Box at the heart, where a contemporary bar and open kitchen orchestrate culinary theatre in radiant view. Highdive has a gourmet food menu, and a range of innovative cocktails. The menu includes a variety of global flavors.



Highdive has a state-of-the-art chandelier that cascades brilliance, adorning the night in jewelled gleam. Copper accents glow through the architecture, creating an atmosphere both intimate and spectacular. Beside the pool, with skyline views mirrored in golden shimmer, every raised glass feels like a salute to the city itself.

"Highdive – Rooftop Bar & Social Terrace is more than a rooftop. It is a vantage point where global flavours, golden lights, and heartfelt hospitality rise together above Pune's skyline. It is our newest altitude — a space where the city itself seems to ascend. We are sure it will become a popular spot for fine dining, romantic evenings, corporate and social gatherings," Said Pankaj Saxena.





"Our culinary excellence is the talk of town"



With acumen in property management and operational efficiency *Makesh V Raj, GM, Gokulam Grand, Kozhikode*, a 5-star hotel in the heart of the city's central business district, he has honed his skills overseeing all aspects of property management, maximising financial performance, guest satisfaction, and staff development. He continues to leverage his core competencies in leadership, budget management, strategic planning, revenue management, and business development. With Gokulam Grand, Kozhikode fast becoming a force to reckon with in the Kozhikode market we thought it ideal to interact with the vibrant and energetic GM. *Excerpts*



What are the unique features of your property?

Naturally the location. Conveniently located in the heart of Kozhikode with a shopping mall adjacent to it, as well as easy access to key business hubs, shopping areas, and tourist attractions. Making it ideal for both tourists and business people.

Add to this our luxurious accommodation that includes spacious, elegantly designed rooms and suites with modern amenities, ensuring comfort and sophistication for both business and leisure travellers.

With state-of-the-art meeting rooms and grand banquet halls ideal for weddings, conferences, and social events we have become the first option for MICE in Kozhikode. We also have a fully equipped fitness center, spa, and rooftop swimming pool designed for relaxation and rejuvenation.

What are your top priorities when it comes to the guest experience, and how do you measure and track guest satisfaction?

At Gokulam Grand 'We Care', that's our motto.

Apart from high standards of cleanliness, safety, and security, with 24/7 surveillance and professionally trained staff, we aim at delivering personalized hospitality, ensuring comfort and providing a seamless stay experience. Maintaining safety and security, and continuously improving based on guest feedback and by taking timely action on feedback are on priority.

How do you plan to elevate your F&B offerings, especially healthy options?

Our culinary excellence is the talk of town. We have multiple dining options offering a blend of local Malabar delicacies, panIndian cuisine, and international flavors, including a rooftop restaurant with panoramic city views.

We plan to elevate our F&B offerings by introducing more healthy options, including calorie-conscious dishes, vegan and gluten-free items, organic ingredients from local farms, live salad counters, cold-pressed juices, and traditional Kerala cuisine prepared using healthier methods. Structuring the menu with more local items, well-balanced flavours and choices for all kinds of guests.

What about MICE and banqueting?

We offer comprehensive MICE and banqueting facilities, ideal for corporate events, conferences, weddings, and social gatherings. Our venues are equipped with modern audio-visual technology, flexible seating arrangements, and customizable décor options. Dedicated event coordinators ensure seamless execution of events, whether large-scale conferences or intimate celebrations. Our rooftop venue can accommodate up to 1,500 guests, ideal for grand celebrations and large-scale gatherings. We also feature two banquet halls, each with a capacity of up to 300 guests, a smaller hall that can host up to 120 guests, and three well-appointed boardrooms with a maximum capacity of 20 guests each — perfect for intimate meetings and executive discussions.

What about sustainable practices in your hotel?

That's been a major focus by our MD across all our hotels. The key areas include

- Guests are encouraged to hang towels or display room cards if they prefer not to have them replaced daily, helping reduce laundry loads.
- RO Filtered water instead of packaged drinking water to reduce the plastic wase.
- Instead of single-use sachets, the hotel provides bulk dispensers for shampoo, shower gel, and lotion
- The housekeeping team uses green-certified cleaning solutions throughout the property

Looking ahead, what strategic priorities and initiatives are in the pipeline?

We are excited to introduce an international concept permit room. On the rooftop a speciality fine dining restaurant is set to open soon, offering guests a unique flavour of Malabar, fusion cuisines and other international cuisines.

"We are constantly looking for new ways to enhance our environmental and social foot print"

What a pleasure it was to experience Hilton Frankfurt City Centre again (it's become an annual ritual to stay there during IMEX trade show). The hospitality remains top notch and as always they were kind enough to give me the junior suite with lounge access.

Arriving late evening at the hotel, the façade is bound to impress guests, check in was quick and I was guided to my junior suite. And what a lovely suite it is – giving me a sky view of the surrounding area. After a good night's sleep, I got up quite early (considering the difference in time zone) and feeling hungry proceeded to the breakfast zone.

The spread as always was superb and you certainly cannot compare the choice of bakery items especially the bread variety, in many countries. They have some healthy options and as with age opted for high fiber and whole-grain with an aim to stay hydrated as the day was going to be long with a visit to IMEX. After a great breakfast and finishing off some office work I proceeded to the show. In the evening proceeded to the lounge for a peaceful relaxation.



The hotel has bright and airy, 342 guest rooms and suites offering the ideal environment for work, rest and relaxation. Guests staying on our Executive Floors benefit from special services, including complimentary snacks and drinks in the exclusive Executive Lounge.

The Health & Fitness Club has state-of-the-art facilities that include a gym, sauna, steam bath and whirlpool. The 25m indoor pool is the largest hotel pool in Germany and offers stunning views of the park.

On the MICE front the hotel has state-of-the-art meeting spaces and premium facilities make Hilton Frankfurt City Centre an ideal venue for all kinds of events. The hotel has I 6 bright and modern event and meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 550 people and most of the rooms offer natural daylight. For outdoor events, the hotel offers a beautiful Terrace or the Nebbiensche Gartenhaus in the adjoining park.

Again had the opportunity to catch up with the ever delightful host *Marc Snijders*, *GM*, *Hilton Frankfurt City Centre*. An industry stalwart he has been an inspiration to many and puts it beautifully when he says "it's all about people". At the helm of Hilton Frankfurt City Centre for almost a decade, Marc Snijders hopes to pass on his passion for hospitality to the budding youngsters. In a conversation with Marc Snijders he talks not only about his love for the profession, the hotel and its refurbishment, the loyalty program but also on the importance of guest satisfaction. *Excerpts*

Hilton Frankfurt City Centre has created a niche for itself among the hotels in Frankfurt. What is so unique?

Hilton Frankfurt City Centre is unique in many ways. We are situated in the heart of Frankfurt and the location could not be better for both our business and leisure guests.

The hotel has undergone a major refurbishment and fantastic make-over in recent years. With an urban and entirely new rooms and suites concept as well as new dining venue and event facilities, we cater to guests from anywhere in the world.

What however truly makes us stand out from other hotels are the people, who fill the hotel with the light & warmth of hospitality every day, every guest. Our team makes the difference at every instance, and they are the true "staymakers".

Hilton loyalty program is so popular, how does your staff go about attracting more members?

Hilton Honors offers a world of benefits. The team is well equipped to entice our guests to sign-up for the program, as it is such a win-win proposition. From perks during your stay such



as early check-in or late check-out to premium room categories, we reward our most loyal guests. In addition, every stay entitles to Hilton Honors points, which can be redeemed in the entire portfolio of Hilton affiliated hotels, a choice of well over 8000 hotels.







How do you and your team keep updated on evolving customer expectations?

Staying close to our guests is our purpose throughout the stay. We gather feedback at every instance, from check-in to breakfast. I believe in the power of interaction and through these guest conversations, we gain valuable insights to continuously align the guest expectations and our hospitality offer. In addition, we monitor social media and review sites and look at industry trend reports.

How do you utilise technology and innovation to engage your guests?

We have recently launched a guest messaging possibility, allowing our guests as well as the team to communicate via whatsapp. I personally still prefer the direct dialogue through conversation, but it has proven to be a great tool for ease of communication. In addition we continue to build on our offer to guests to check-in via the Hilton Honors app and use a digital key at the hotel. Next will be the smart and connected room, where guests for example can pre-set temperature controls of the room to their comfort level prior to their arrival at the hotel.

Labour shortages and retention are a major issue among hospitality industry, globally. How do you go about tackling this issue?

I have always said what makes us stand out from other hotels in Frankfurt are the people, who fill the hotel with the light & warmth of hospitality every day, every guest. A fantastic team at the hotel truly makes the difference.

We are blessed with a high retention at Hilton Frankfurt City Centre. It really starts with the culture at the hotel. We are people serving people, and my first priority are always the people, who work here. It's my personal objective to create an environment



for them, which is safe and where they feel included.

This already starts at the recruiting process. We hire for attitude, not for skill. We are looking for unique personalities first and foremost. Skills can be trained.

Secondly, it's about empowerment. Team members at the front are empowered to make it right and create genuine experiences. We have a flat hierarchy and meet each other at eyesight, regardless of the title we carry on our business card.



I firmly believe that the people who work at the front deserve a voice and a seat at the table, when decisions are being taken.

Lastly, it's about recognition. We celebrate successes together every month and live a culture of acknowledgment and collaboration.

Customers, corporates and even employees are increasingly looking at hotels implementing sustainable practices. What is the scene at your hotel?

We are constantly looking for new ways to enhance our environmental and social foot print. At the moment we are pursuing a solar project, which will allow us to generate a part of energy requirements through renewable sources. We also enhanced our waste management and local sourcing. We for example offer guests a 50-mile menu, containing regional ingredients from the 50 mile radius around Frankfurt.

On the social front, we are working with a local partner to welcome people with a disability into our team, and have successfully hired 4 fantastic team members through this partnership. As a result the Hilton Frankfurt City Centre was nominated for a prestigious State award for exemplary inclusion efforts.

At a glance

- Close to major business, shopping and tourist destinations
- 342 urban guest rooms including 14 suites and the Presidential suite
- 3 Executive Floors with Executive Lounge access
- Ballroom with capacity for up to 550 people
- 16 modern event and meeting rooms
- PARK Restaurant & Terrace and Hudson Yards Bar, Lounge & Dining
- 2,000m2 Health & Fitness Club with a 25m swimming pool

India Summer Days

Karlsruhe becomes hub for lively celebration of Indian culture







It was when I again interacted with Martin Wacker, MD, KME Karlsruhe Marketing und Event GmbH, Pascal Rastetter, MD, KTG Karlsruhe Tourismus GmbH and Jo Wagner (a well-known journalist and photographer), Project Manager, INDIA SUMMER DAYS in Mumbai that the topic of promoting and covering INDIA SUMMER DAYS Karlsruhe 2025 arose. Coordinating with the efficient Sibylle Esser, KME Karlsruhe Marketing und Event GmbH, I paid a visit to INDIA SUMMER DAYS and it was a wonderful experience says *Chandragupta Amritkar*

ttending the annual event, INDIA SUMMER DAYS gave me an opportunity to experience authentic India - Indian culture through music, dance, bazaars, yoga and naturally the culinary delights - yummy and globally much appreciated Indian food including our very own Vada Pav.

Spread over three days (Friday to Sunday) this multi-day stage program with dance, live music and shows provide many Indians the opportunity to immerse themselves in Indian culture, including with the program in the Indian village. INDIA SUMMER DAYS takes place parallel to southern Germany's largest family festival DAS FEST, in the Karlsruhe Günther-Klotz-Park. This year the "Indian Village", expanded in size for its seventh edition, proved once more to be a major attraction and a visible symbol of the close and growing partnership between Karlsruhe and India.

The authentic cultural program offered great variety once again: from traditional Bharatanatyam and Bollywood dance to yoga workshops, cricket, and henna art – numerous stalls invited visitors



Among the numerous stalls we are proud to say that we were fortunate to share the stall with Government of India and prominently display our magazine Global Features to such an august audience.

to participate, experience, learn, and feel India up close. On stage, performances

by groups such as Dindi Dance and Lasya Priya Fine Arts from Karlsruhe and the Revathi Dance Academy from Munich created emotional highlights.

The Kirtaniyas energized the audience with modern mantra beats, Ravi Bhatt from Jaipur fascinated with traditional puppet theatre. and the bazaar featured handcrafted goods and delicious Indian cuisine including Richas Vada pav.

Organized by KME Karlsruhe Marketing and Event GmbH together with strong partners such as the Consulate General of India, the Honorary



Consulate, Indien Aktuell, and the German-Indian Society, the INDIA SUMMER DAYS offered a free, low-barrier cultural experience for all generations. "India comes alive here in Karlsruhe – with all senses," said KME Managing Director Martin Wacker, inviting the public to fully embrace the Indian atmosphere. "This cultural bridge fosters understanding, connection, and friendship."

INDIA SUMMER DAYS Embedded in "India Week"

Whether it was the academic cooperation between Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences and NMIMS, cultural exchanges between ZKM and the Goethe-Institutes in Pune and Mumbai, partnerships with KIT, or links between Karlsruhe's startup scene and a hub in Hyderabad – the program reflected the city's growing India activities. In his opening remarks, Karlsruhe's Lord Mayor Dr. Frank Mentrup emphasized the impact of the India Board Karlsruhe, which now has around 250 members supporting bilateral engagement across science, business, education, tourism, and culture.

The next INDIA SUMMER DAYS 2026 is scheduled from 24 to 26 July 2026

Karlsruhe - A city to fall in Love

aving heard about a new arrival at Karlsruhe Zoo - that welcomed a polar bear cub named Mika in early 2025, I was quite excited to visit the zoo. Also the city had recently launched a 24-hour hop-on hop-off bus. As I was going to Karlsruhe for covering INDIA SUMMER DAYS, I decided to use this opportunity to experience these new additions in Karlsruhe.

My dear friend Pascal Rastetter, MD, KTG Karlsruhe Tourismus GmbH was kind enough to not only arrange a short tour of Karlsruhe by an English speaking guide but also said that he will personally come along to the Zoo, followed by an Indian lunch.

Karlsruhe Zoo

Karlsruhe Zoo location is one of the best - just opposite the Karlsruhe Hauptbahnhof (main station). Coincidently my hotel was just 200 mts from the zoo. Along with Pascal I visited the zoo. Karlsruhe Zoo is home to 3000 animals of over 240 species. It is also home to polar bears, and in early 2025, it welcomed a polar bear cub named Mika.

Strolling through the zoo with lots of greenery, many old trees providing sufficient shade, with a small lake providing boating facilities it looks like a beautifully landscaped complex with a zoo in it.

Arriving at the polar bears enclosure I was amazed by the adorable and Mika and his mummy. "Aren't they cute. We not only get locals but many visitors from across Germany and beyond to see the little one. Kids simply love it," said Pascal. There were lots of children along with their parents all busy clicking photos and Mika truly loving the attention and rolling themselves.

I felt the enclosures are very animal friendly and I saw plenty of animals hippo, elephants, giraffe (they looked amazing), leopards, kangaroos, seals, monkeys, bats, snakes, reptiles, ducks, geese several other different kinds of birds etc.

Walking through the alley of large trees Karlsruhe Zoo is very picturesque and peaceful and a journey through different habitats.

Later we had a wonderful Indian lunch where Jo Wagner (a well-known journalist and photographer), Project Manager, INDIA SUMMER DAYS joined us.



Hop on and Hop off bus

The Hop on and Hop off bus is a wonderful idea for some one short of time. Having experienced it in several cities across the globe (my favourite ones are Hong Kong and New York), I made sure not to miss it. The biggest advantage is it allows one to



explore the city at your own pace. One can hop on and off as you please at ten prominent stops in the Karlsruhe - Station forecourt, ZKM / city gallery, Ettlinger Tor / Badisches Staatstheater, market square / tourist information, Europaplatz, castle district / extended Waldhornstrasse, creative park alter slaughterhouse / Gottesaue Castle, viewing platform Turmberg and Karlsburg / old town Durlach.

This red double-decker bus departs from main station and with the audio guide you will hear interesting and entertaining facts about Karlsruhe for two hours including short break at the Turmberg terrace viewing platform. Do also check discounts this CityTour offers including - City tour and zoo moments with the exclusive "experience duo".

Karlsruhe: UNESCO City of Media Arts

Karlsruhe is a city where media art in its various forms is part of life. With the ZKM Centre for Art and Media, Karlsruhe is home to one of the most important media art institutions In 2019, worldwide. Karlsruhe became the first and so far only city in Germany to be awarded the title Creative City of Media Arts by UNESCO and to join the international UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).







Lessons from Invisible India:

Viksit Bharat India at 2047

GIT 2025 - A Landmark International Thought Conference





November 13-14 2025*

India's march towards 2047 – its centenary year of independence – is more than a national goal; it is a civilizational calling. At this pivotal juncture, IIM Kozhikode is proud to host this landmark international conference.

Conference Vision & Structure

Vision:

To bring Invisible India to the forefront of national and global discourse by highlighting silent contributions and crafting an inclusive roadmap to 2047.

Format:

Two-day, multi-track conference featuring:

- Inaugural and Keynote Addresses by Renowned International Thought Leaders
- ▲ Thematic Panels (Work, Women, Worldview)
- Fireside Conversations and Artistic Interventions
- ♣ Knowledge Compendium & Declaration on Viksit Bharat 2047

Authenticity

satyam

Sustainability

nityam

Fulfillment

purnam













Thematic Framework- The 3Ws



Exploring informal, rural, and gig workforces that sustain the Indian economy.

Key Themes:

- Digital skilling and the future of employment
- Empowering artisans, gig workers, and MSMEs
- Beyond GDP: human-centric productivity
- Karma Yoga



Mainstreaming the Marginalised

Celebrating women's invisible contributions across all sectors of life.

Key Themes:

- Recognising unpaid and care work
- Building women-led governance and enterprise models
- Gender-equity in policymaking and progress



Reclaiming India's Intellectual Legacy

India's soft power, cultural capital, and civilisational depth for global impact.

Key Themes:

- India's values in leadership and diplomacy
- Ecological balance through traditional wisdom
- Literature, craft, and knowledge systems as tools of influence
- Re-imagining the India Story

Expected Outcomes:

Vision document for Viksit Bharat



Strategy papers and policy recommendations



Future collaborations and global partnerships



Write to us at: git2025@iimk.ac.in





SCAN





My Cape Town itinerary was a little out of the ordinary, and I honestly had no idea what to expect. Instead of following the usual tourist route, we found ourselves exploring the city's hidden corners, discovering experiences that felt genuine, personal, and refreshingly offbeat. Each day brought a new adventure and made us realize that there's always more to a city than meets the eye feels **Pooja Amritkar**.

Thrilling Off-Road Jeep Adventures

Exploring has never felt so freeing! With Jeep Tours Cape Town, pioneered by the inspiring Lizanne, I found myself in an open-top Jeep Wrangler, wind in my hair, sun on my face, all set to explore Mother City in the most epic way. The best part - we set our own leisure pace instead of a crowded tour schedule. Our local guide shared stories of the vineyards, the countryside, and even a few quirky tales one wouldn't hear anywhere else. We drove through rolling hills, past open wineries, and along the coastal roads with ocean views, and enjoyed every second of the ride. At De Grendel Wine Estate, we sipped their Proposal Hill Rosé with the iconic Table Mountain towering in the background. The tour was all about making genuine connections, memorable travels, and seeing a side of the city most people miss.

Wine Tasting at Klein Roosboom Caves

Sipping wine in cosy caves should be on everyone's to-do list. At Klein Roosboom, old concrete wine tanks have been cleverly transformed into private tasting caves, complete with vintage furniture and the original wine stains still clinging to the walls. Each cave has its own personality and artistic, quirky touch that makes the space feel authentically unique. They have a great collection of earthy, fruity red and white wines that are named after a family member, with a little story or letter on the label – it makes each sip feel more special. Of course, with wine, we had a variety of cheese and charcuterie platters of farm bread, seasonal fruits, crisps, biltong, even delicious chocolate brownies. There is also a garden space to relax under the trees with glasses in hand – a relaxing and fun way to spend time with friends and family.

Real Cannon Blast with Nitida

Not many have seen a real cannon, forget about firing one. But at Nitida Cannon Station, I got to do exactly that, and it is as thrilling as one would expect. The skilled team walked us through everything: the history of the cannons, how the mechanics worked, and the careful steps of packing the powder and lighting the fuse. Grace rang the big brass bell while I got the honor of preparing the cannon under expert guidance. When the moment came to light it, I adjusted my earmuffs, braced myself, took a shaky breath, lowered my hand, and then... BOOM!

Within a blink, there was smoke and blast, starting all of us, and for a few seconds, we just stared in awe, "Did that really just happen?" We laughed and cheered, and I even got a certificate to commemorate the feat. Paul tried sabrage, opening sparkling wine with a saber, so we could enjoy some of Nitida's refreshing local wine. I can imagine why many newlyweds come here to start their married life with a BANG!

Magic Behind Diamonds at Shimansky

Diamonds are a girl's best friend, and walking into Shimansky, surrounded by hundreds of them, I definitely understood why. Our tour began with Sana informing us about the history of diamonds, full of fun facts and real anecdotes. We even got to try the classic pieces from their My Girl collection, the world's first square-cut diamond. The feeling of 'Oh wow, there's a huge diamond on my finger' is something I wish I had more of. We also learned about Tanzanite, one of the rarest gemstones in the world – and the best are seen at Shimansky.



But the main highlight was meeting Stephan, who explained in detail about diamond polishing. His level of precision, skill, and planning in making each diamond perfect is truly fascinating. We also got a chance to polish a raw diamond. It's one thing to admire a sparkling jewel in a shop, and quite another to feel the weight of a raw stone, work with it, and see it start to transform. We wrapped up with a gin and chocolate tasting, I loved the perfect blend of sweet, bitter, and boozy notes – a sparkling way to end the tour.

Jamming while cooking

I wasn't expecting cooking to be on our itinerary, but Food Jams turned out to be quite fun. This isn't your usual stand-over-the-cutting-board kind of thing, it's lively, a little messy, and full of laughs. We kicked things off with drinks and snacks, getting to know the group, and then split into teams, each with a basket of fresh ingredients. The best part? You could follow the given recipe or improvise your own twist. We fortunately had Sarah, who knew exactly what to do. I'm no chef, but chopping, stirring, and cooking has never felt so energetic. With our huge crowd, the menu was just as vast with smoked trout, sea pumpkin risotto, chicken skewers, roasted veggies, tacos, stuffed peppers, and much more. It was a feast and we all sat down together, sharing stories

and laughter over our collectively made dishes. There was also a make-your-own-drink counter where we could learn and experiment to curate a drink best suitable for our taste buds. Food Jams is where you cook without rules, embrace a little mess, and enjoy every bite with great company.

Wines and Sustainability at Vergelegen

Vergelegen's Environmental Tour took us on a mini adventure through nature, wildlife, and sustainability. We passed landscapes dotted with indigenous flowers, ancient trees, and sweeping mountain views. We even got a mini safari, as we spotted bonteboks, red hartebeests, black

wildebeests, Nguni cattle, and a few Rau quagga, they are a part of their breeding project to bring back these extinct species. Along the way, we learned about the estate's efforts in sustainability, from rehabilitating fynbos and managing water responsibly. The land also boasts a 300-year-old Cape Dutch homestead, a 200-year-old library with 4500+ books, and many glorious gardens. After the tour, we relaxed and tried their collection of wines. My favorites, Florence Rosé and Wild Winds Sauvignon, tasted even better knowing the care behind the land.

At Laurensford, we started with a Belgian chocolate and wine pairing, then swapped glasses for a bow and arrow. Guided by expert and patient instructors, we tried archery in the wild, aiming to shoot a fake hidden lion in the bushes or a moving crocodile. It was fun, challenging, and unexpectedly addictive!

Between unique tours, adrenaline-filled adventures, and incredible meals, I was filled with awe and wonder. The people I met made the experiences even richer and each day brought something new and beyond the usual tourist spots. Cape Town offers a mix of wild, thoughtful, vibrant, and offbeat experiences, waiting to be noticed and appreciated – and it will surprise you in the best possible way.



Ocean - Seals, Sharks and Warm Hearts in Gansbaai



I first met the amazing Marine Dynamics team at ITB India, and our shared love for ocean wildlife quickly put Gansbaai on my bucket list says **Pooja**

When my South Africa trip was confirmed, I grabbed the chance and in just three days, I discovered Gansbaai is more than a 'shark cage diving' destination. It's a hidden gem that gives a newfound appreciation for the ocean's wildness and its fragile marine life.

My itinerary was ambitious, I had both Shark Cage Diving and Marine Big 5 tours lined up each day. But the weather had its own plans. Rough tides canceled the shark dive, but the setback became a highlight as I got a chance to explore the town's untouched beauty. With Cari from Marine Dynamics as my guide, we began at the Klipgat Caves, one of the most significant archaeological sites in South Africa, with evidence of human life dating over 80,000 years. Looking through the cave opening towards the Bay, I could almost imagine the life of those who once called this place home. Another iconic spot was the rocky shore, where hundreds of southern right whales are seen breaching and playing during whale season.

I got my adrenaline rush by **crocodile diving at Afrikanos**-something I never thought I'd do. I was just an arm's length from the Nile crocodiles, rescued from crocodile farming industry. For 30 minutes, I watched as Scarface glided effortlessly past me. Even with the stainless steel netting in between, a chill went down my spine. Their sharp teeth, their stealth, and intimidating eyes reminded me why they are apex predators.

The "Marine Big 5" is where you spot the best of the ocean - whales, dolphins, sharks, seals, and penguins. The next day started early with an educational briefing from an expert marine biologist. Life jackets on, we set sail, knowing spotting them was never guaranteed, but the adventure was. The crowd was energetic and I made a new friend who matched my excitement. The tide started a little rough but deeper in the waters, a whale appeared,

very briefly but surely and now everyone's eyes were glued to the ocean – eager to spot the elusive whale. Then his massive blow broke the surface, just a glimpse but enough for us to stop and stare in awe. After a few more sightings, we headed toward the shark cage diving area to spot a bronze whaler shark—and we did! Marine Dynamics is known for its ethical approach, reminding us the vital role these animals play in the ecosystem.

Most surprising was seeing hundreds of Cape Fur Seals, clustered around Dyer Island and Geyser Rock. I had seen seals before, but never in such numbers, and never barking, swimming, lounging, and diving. They were utterly charming. We also saw the Penguin Colony, a remarkable approach to saving the African penguins from extinction. Here, the cute waddling penguins are provided with an artificial nest to live and thrive. We'd almost given up on dolphins when a shy pair surfaced near the shore, graceful, brief, but enough to leave us grinning. And that's all 5!

Visiting the African Penguin & Seabird Sanctuary (APSS) was emotional, here the team rescues, rehabilitates, and releases penguins and seabirds that are injured or affected by pollution. I had the opportunity to see them at work, their patience and dedication in nursing them was truly inspiring. Marine Dynamics offers volunteer programs encouraging travel with purpose. By contributing, however small, know that you are helping nature heal.

Gansbaai is a place where adventure fills your days, and serenity fills your nights.

Stay at **The Great White House**, spacious rustic wooden cottages with a fireplace. The restaurant has a skeleton of a female southern right whale hanging above. The menu is extensive and flavourful, catering to veg and vegan options too.

The Hearing Car

Present-day vehicles are equipped with various driver assistance systems, including cameras, lidar and radar, to help with parking and staying in their lane. They act as the car's "eyes," registering relevant objects in its surroundings. But what vehicles have lacked so far is ears. "Being able to perceive exterior sounds and attribute them accurately is a crucial part of attentively observing the full traffic environment. After all, many situations on the road are preceded by an acoustic signal. Take an approaching emergency vehicle, for example, which alerts people to its presence by using a siren," explains Moritz Brandes, who leads the The Hearing Car project at Fraunhofer IDMT.

Essential to autonomous driving: acoustic event recognition

At the Oldenburg Branch for Hearing, Speech and Audio Technology HSA, a team of researchers headed by Brandes works

closely with automotive manufacturers suppliers on the sensor and analysis technologies needed for a vehicle that can hear. For their research, they use a special vehicle equipped with a measurement system from Fraunhofer IDMT. The vehicle acts as a rolling demo platform, making it possible to collect important training data.

In the future, the acoustic environment analysis feature will be able to detect not only ambulances but other sounds, such as human voices or the

sounds of children playing, as the car turns into an area of calm traffic. Acoustics does not require a clear line of sight, like optical systems do - so the car can literally hear what's coming around the corner. This will allow automated driving systems to respond and operate with increased caution, much like a human driver who hears children playing before they can be seen. In addition, exterior noises will be transmitted into the vehicle interior via the headrest during certain driving maneuvers to call the driver's attention to important sounds in the surrounding area.

Talking to the car

"Hey car, open the trunk" — people will be able to communicate with their vehicles like this and in similar ways in the future. The new speaker verification function also makes it possible to restrict interactions with the vehicle to authorized persons only. The researchers are not only developing AI algorithms for acoustic event recognition but also working on optimum signal recording through sensor positioning, signal pre-processing and improvement and noise reduction.

Microphone technology that stands up to wind and weather

For these technologies to be incorporated and work together, there need to be high-quality microphones built into the vehicle's exterior and connected to the onboard electrical system. To minimize the influence of airflow sounds, the team working on The Hearing Car is also developing and testing suitable housings and screens for sensors for airborne sounds. Brandes explains: "The number and placement of the microphones are crucial to detecting sounds from the vehicle's environment. Our team has developed solutions that can stand up to wind and weather and work at extreme temperatures. We've used our demo vehicle for testing at several locations between Portugal and the Arctic Circle in order

to trial the technologies in different conditions. The results are really promising. and show the potential of our developments for the future of autonomous

driving."

Intelligent attention measurement using mobile EEG systems personalized and sound experiences with **YourSound**

The interior features of The Hearing Car are impressive: Different technologies are to unlock a new level of monitoring health and detecting the driver's

status inside the vehicle. For example, a short-range radar sensor collects information on the driver's vital signs and offers contactless monitoring of limb movement and respiratory and heart rates through innovative analysis algorithms. A mobile EEG sensor system developed by Fraunhofer IDMT-HSA measures the electrical activity in the driver's brain to detect changes in attention levels, especially during monotonous drives. In addition, a feature that analyzes occupants' voices detects stress and excitement and reports this information back to the occupants.

YourSound technology, a system for individual improvement of the sound inside the vehicle, ensures top-notch entertainment while in the car. The new technology offers users of audio devices such as vehicle infotainment systems a playful way to adjust the audio settings to their own listening preferences, without needing to know specific levels or frequencies. The system operates as a virtual assistant, optimizing sound reproduction and thereby improving people's acoustic comfort.

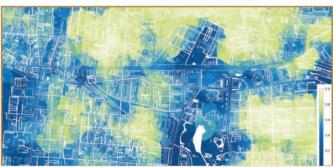


© Fraunhofer IDMT/Leona Hofmann High-quality microphones incorporated into the vehicle's exterior and connected to its electrical system, along with voice-controlled interactions, represent key features of future assistance systems and autonomous driving.

Sustainable Mobility: Getting There Faster With Al

Cars are still the number one mode of transportation in Germany, in spite of their high carbon emissions. To make ecofriendler alternatives more attractive, researchers from the Fraunhofer Institute of Optronics, System Technologies and Image Exploitation IOSB are working with partners in the DAKIMO (Data and AI as enablers for sustainable, intermodal mobility) project to develop intelligent, intermodal transportation. An AI for multimodal route planning is being developed to help get people to where they are going seamlessly, conveniently, and reliably — and all without privately owned cars.

Ecofriendly transportation is possible via a variety of means, including buses, trains, trams, electric scooters, and shared bikes. Public transit has significantly less environmental impact than personal cars. Even so, cars are still the dominant mode of transportation. After all, they are always available, and planning trips by vehicle is easy. For public transit to become an attractive alternative, it must be possible to easily combine different means of transportation along a certain route, and switching between public transportation, bikes (especially shared bikes) and electric scooters needs to be just as convenient as reaching for one's car keys. People presently do not use these kinds of intermodal



© Fraunhofer IOSB Al-calculated probabilities of the locations of shared bikes at 6 p.m. on a Monday in Karlsruhe.

connections to their full potential, as planning routes to get from point A to point B using multiple means of transportation is too complicated. You might get to stop X by bus in 30 minutes, but then you have to hope that shared bikes or electric scooters will be available there. Might it have been a better idea to travel on to stop Y, where there are generally more bikes available? To date, routing apps have not factored these aspects into their suggested routes.

Predictive intermodal routing via app

This is where the DAKIMO project comes in: Researchers at Fraunhofer IOSB in Karlsruhe have developed an AI-based system for predicting the availability of shared means of transportation, including factors such as live data on traffic conditions. The forecast calculates the likelihood of finding a bike or electric scooter to rent at a certain time at a given location. Project partner raumobil GmbH uses the forecasts for intermodal routing, meaning that a mobility app recommends connections from the starting

point to the destination with predicted availability factored in. The project partners' goal is to extend the regiomove app launched by Karlsruher Verkehrsverbund (KVV), the Karlsruhe transport authority, in making intermodal route suggestions a reality.

The objective is for users of the app to be able to obtain customized suggestions for modes of transportation that are an optimized fit for their individual needs and the chosen route, depending on the present situation.

"For transportation to be intermodal and thus more ecofriendly, it needs to be simpler, more reliable, more flexible, and easier to plan for," says Jens Ziehn, project lead at Fraunhofer IOSB. "Our AI forecasting feature recommends the optimal means of transportation to reach the destination in each individual case, including for the different segments of the route, without overcomplicating things. Bookable vehicles, including car sharing cars, are displayed at both the start and end of the trip." The AI steps in when humans lose sight of the big picture, for example because a bus is stuck in traffic or there are no longer any shared bikes available at the last stop. "Forecasting is possible because the AI uses small geographical cells and short time intervals to calculate short- and long-term probabilities of the availability and expected number of sharing vehicles, based on open data sources such as data from public transit and historical data on aspects like the position of shared bikes," adds Reinhard Herzog, who leads the Modeling and Networked Systems group at Fraunhofer IOSB.

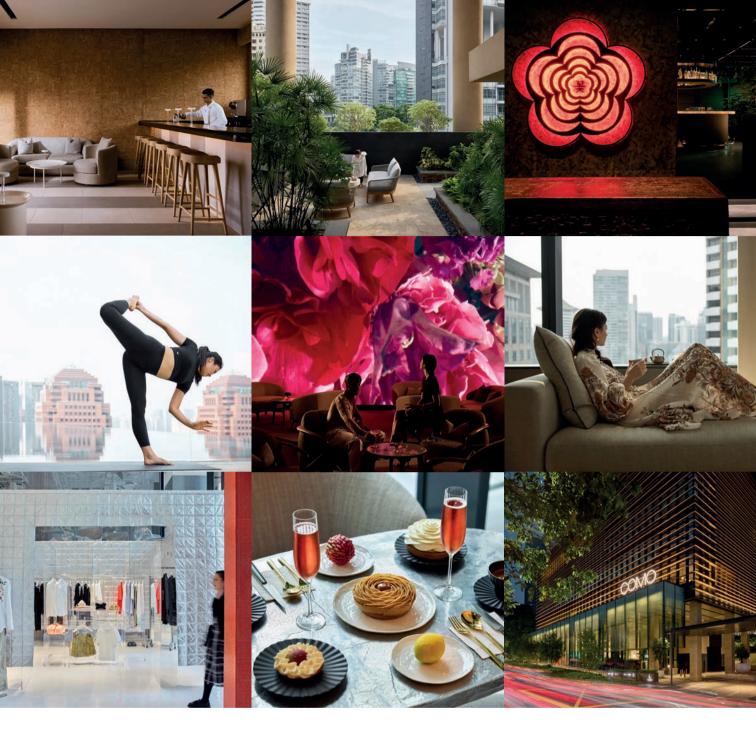
Expanded new data standard for the transportation transition

The AI forecasting feature is to be incorporated into the international, globally applicable General Bikeshare Feed Specification (GBFS)—a set of real-time specifications for public data that serves to provide traffic information such as location data for consumer-oriented applications. A one-year evaluation phase is currently in progress.

The response from the public has been positive, as was shown by a more than 1,500-person study conducted as part of the project. Nearly 90 percent of participants view AI-based predictions for shared means of transportation as helpful or very helpful.



© raumobil GmbH, Fraunhofer IOSB Predictive routing, including shared means of transportation, makes intermodal transportation as convenient as reaching for a set of car keys.

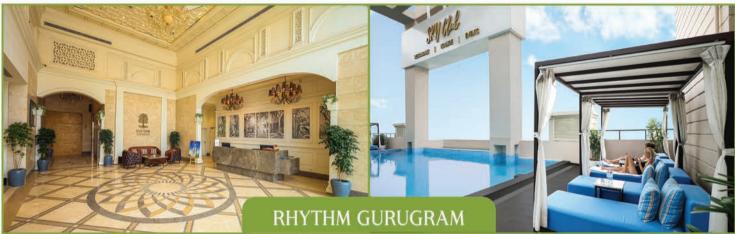


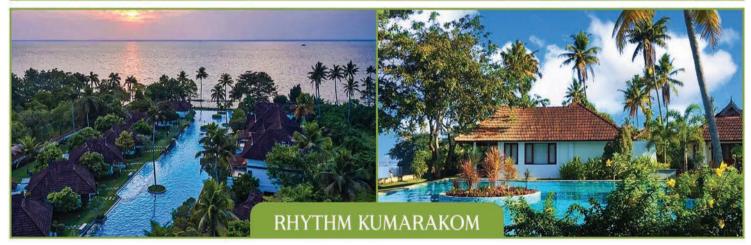
THE PULSE, THE TASTE, THE SOUL

Dive into the best of Singapore at one central address: COMO Metropolitan Singapore on Bideford Road. The hotel shares its iconic address with contemporary fashion by Club 21, an exceptional culinary scene including Asia's only Cédric Grolet patisserie, and a whole floor dedicated to COMO Shambhala holistic wellness.

















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