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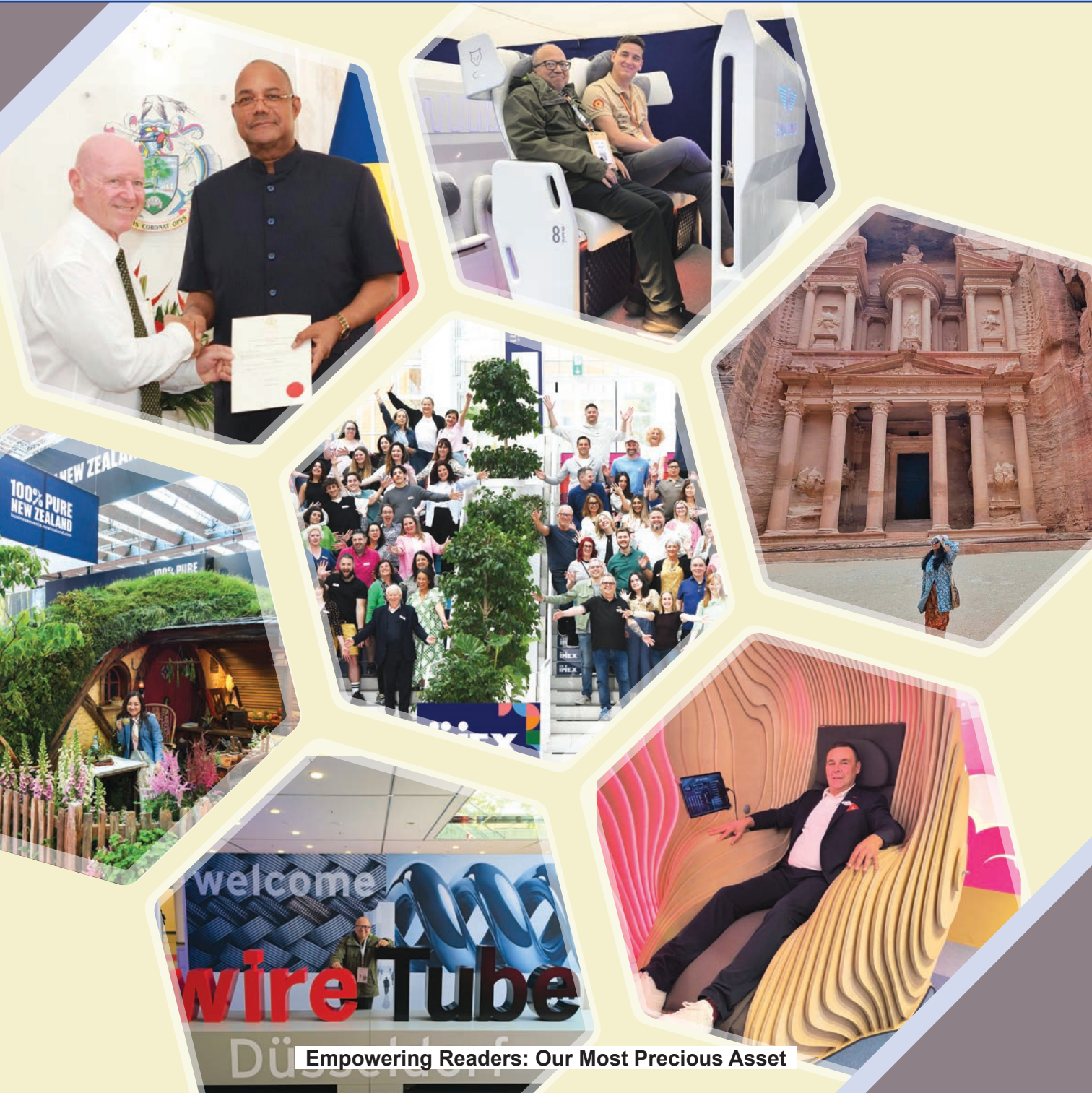
**Global Technologies**

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**Global Destinations**

*A Guide To The World of MICE and Tourism*

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## GATEWAY TO TIMELESS HOSPITALITY



### KERALA

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, Vanamala  
 Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Sabari  
 Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Apartments  
 Thrissur - Sree Gokulam Residency, Amballur  
 Kollam - Sree Gokulam Residency, Oyoor  
 Manjeri - Sree Gokulam Residency  
 Thalassery - Sree Gokulam Fort

### TAMILNADU

Gudalur - Sree Gokulam Highrange Inn

## Dear Friends

This April while visiting Germany, for the first time I covered 5 different category trade shows in a single trip all in different cities - Wire and Tube industry, Düsseldorf; Aircraft Interiors Expo, Hamburg; FIBO (Fitness, Wellness, Health), Cologne; Hannover Messe 2026, Hannover; Techtexil, Frankfurt. Each show, a leader in its own sector. While massive geopolitical challenges did affect the visitor count on all major trade shows, the quality of visitors made the difference at these events. It was a true pleasure crisscrossing across Germany to attend these shows and adding to my knowledge in different sectors.

What a delight it was to all of us at Global Features when we came to know that President of the Republic of Seychelles, Patrick Herminie had appointed Alain St. Ange as his Country's Ambassador At Large. A very dear friend of India and our publication for over 12 years, Alain St. Ange, a true patriot, played a vital role in bringing Seychelles on the global tourism map. A globally renowned tourism expert and a former Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports & Marine of Seychelles with this new role, I interacted with him to get insights on his vision.

This will be my 10th year to attend IMEX Frankfurt, considered by many as the annual mecca for global meetings, events and incentive travel industry. It is all set to open its doors this month with plenty of ideas, insights, innovations - inspiring exhibitors, suppliers and attendees.

Technology, wellness, ESG and climate risk will be the major issues, that are currently reshaping the business event landscape will be a major topic of discussion at IMEX 2026. At IMEX an estimated 4,500-plus global meeting planners will connect with 3,100 suppliers from across the world, building powerful working relationships—to create better events, meetings and experiences.

Exhibitors include national and regional convention bureaus, hotel groups, venues, cruise lines, airlines, spa resorts, tech providers and event management specialists. Attendees include meeting planners, event agency heads, association executives, incentive travel buyers and in-house event experts.

For more than three decades, HICAP (Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific) has been where the region's top investors and decision-makers come together to connect, exchange ideas, uncover opportunities, and gain insights that shape the year ahead.

As HICAP enters its 36th year, the conference continues to be one of the most dynamic and influential gatherings in the Asia-Pacific hotel investment community. The 2026 conference will feature more than 30 sessions and panels, led by 125+ senior executives from across the hotel investment and tourism sectors. Together, they'll take a forward-looking view of the industry, exploring where capital, development, and strategy are headed next.

The Aircraft Interiors Expo (AIX) 2026, the world's leading aircraft interiors expo, in its 25th edition attracted over 13,000 industry professionals and over 500 exhibitors showcasing cabin design, materials, and technology, proving it's a magnet for leading airlines and all aviation enthusiasts. The exhibitors included 74 first-time exhibitors, 14 in the new BizJet Zone, and 77 in the IFEC Zone. The 25th edition also saw 12 exhibitors who have been attending for over 20 years.

A future innovation that caught my attention was a double-decker aircraft seat. Any one travelling economy is always in the quest to have more space and this is what Chaise Longue promises. Its a vertically stacked seat - stacking them across two levels, enhancing the passenger experience. While the design removes overhead bins, the luggage storage is underneath the seats. The prototype was presented at AIX and looks impressive. Premiering first as a college project in 2020, then as an early prototype in 2022, over the past 6 years this concept is designed to allow passengers enjoy extra legroom.



*Chandragupta Amritkar*  
 Editor  
 chandraguptaa@hotmail.com  
 editor@globalfeatures.info

Editor - Chandragupta Amritkar, Consulting Editor - Varsha, Special Correspondent - Pooja, Design - Manoj Durgam  
 Contact - Global Features, B-701, Customs Colony, Military Road, Marol Maroshi, Andheri(E), Mumbai-400 059, India.  
 Mobile - 91 9969935878/91 8850614577 e-mail: [editor@globalfeatures.info](mailto:editor@globalfeatures.info)/[chandraguptaa@hotmail.com](mailto:chandraguptaa@hotmail.com)

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Conference Rooms



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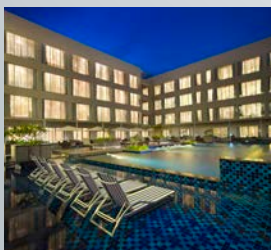
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## “Even today Seychelles enjoys the pristine environment”



President Patrick Herminie appoints Alain St. Ange as his Country's Ambassador At Large

What a delight it was for all of us at Global Features when we came to know that President of the Republic of Seychelles, Patrick Herminie had appointed Alain St. Ange as his Country's Ambassador At Large. A very dear friend of India and our publication for over 12 years, **Alain St. Ange**, a true patriot, played a vital role in bringing Seychelles on the global tourism map. A globally renowned tourism expert and a former Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports & Marine of Seychelles with this new role, our editor, **Chandragupta Amritkar**, interacted with him to get insights on his vision. **Excerpts**

**Firstly congrats on becoming Ambassador At Large of the Republic of Seychelles. As Ambassador what will be your role?**

Thank you for your kind words. As Ambassador At Large, I have the honour to be a high-level diplomatic representative of the islands. I act directly for the Head of State to facilitate specific missions or advance particular goals.

**You made Seychelles a recognizable brand in the world of tourism. Can you briefly take my readers through your journey and achievements?**

I was Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine for Seychelles but before that I was Director of Marketing and CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board. I had entered this position after a call by the main Association of the island's private sector trade requesting tourism marketing to be placed in the hands of the private sector. After discussions the request was accepted and the trade proposed I be appointed. My life was easier because I had the private sector on my side and covering my back, but I still needed to deliver and to innovate to position Seychelles, as a tourism destination. I worked nonstop to increase the visibility of the islands in every tourism source market. I worked with the trade to get support for actions being undertaken. I placed culture at the center of marketing pushing the delightful Seychelles Creole Cuisine, the islands music and dancing and the arts which were all the result of the melting pot of cultures that made the Seychellois from day one of the islands being settled. I united the team at tourism offices and place Seychellois to lead as representatives in the four corners of the world as I believed they would be promoting the islands with the heart and not only as a job for a monthly fee. I also went all out to bring air connectivity to the islands because I knew that air access remained the foundation for the island's tourism industry. It all worked and the Seychelles succeeded.

**You are now also a well-known author. How many books have you published?**

I have authored or co-authored 14 books. Some on tourism, some on family history and then did my autobiography: Alain St. Ange, My Journey that was followed by a second on entitled: Alain St. Ange, My Journey - Life & Times in Politics. I have always believed that if you have a story to tell, then say it. I am happy with what I have been able to publish, but it is not the end. I am currently working on Alain St. Ange, My Journey - Life &

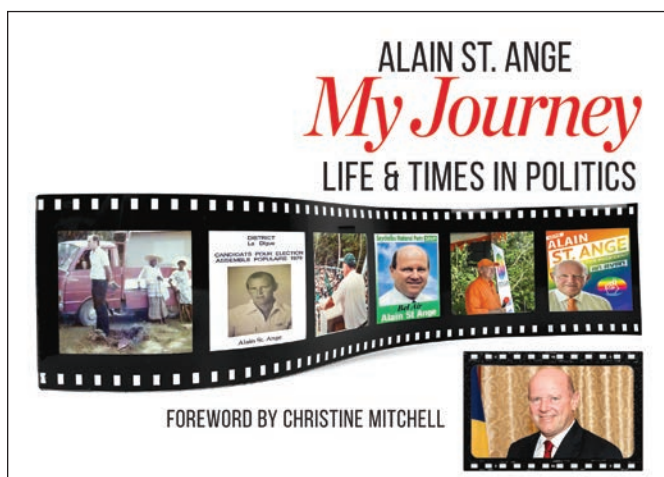
Times in Tourism and a smaller book based on the 2025 elections entitled: Trials of a Candidate, The untold story of the 2025 State House Race.

**How do you view the massive geopolitical challenges and how will you tackle it for your country?**

The geopolitical challenges of today have changed a lot and brought reality closer to home. Seychelles is lucky. From day 1 after gaining our Independence on the 29th of June 1976, President James Mancham, our founding President coined the phrase "Friend of All & Enemy of None". Over the ages we have lived with that guiding slogan.

**Sustainability is the buzz word. What is the scenario in Seychelles?**

Seychelles can hold its head up and say proudly that it believed in sustainability or sustainable development way before these words became buzz words. Before it was for us the noble mission of protecting what we have been blessed with for future generations. Even today Seychelles enjoys the pristine environment that it has always enjoyed. When we speak of a swim, we speak of a swim in turquoise blue seas that are warm year-round and clear and clean. When we talk of a walk on a beach, we are saying a walk on a white sandy beach that is clean and lapped by the clear and clean waves. Seychelles is lucky that the people of our islands are believers of our nature and are all set to protect what we have.



## Develop Relationships, Build Leads & Increase Brand Awareness



For more than three decades, HICAP (Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific) has been where the region's top investors and decision-makers come together to connect, exchange ideas, uncover opportunities, and gain insights that shape the year ahead.

The 2025 demographics - 600 Delegates from 22 Countries, 1 in 4 Delegates are Chairman, CEO, President, Partner, Owner, or Principal and 1 in 4 Companies are Debt/Lenders, Equity/Investors, or Development Firms.

As HICAP enters its 36th year, the conference continues to be one of the most dynamic and influential gatherings in the Asia-Pacific hotel investment community. The 2026 conference will feature more than 30 sessions and panels, led by 125+ senior executives from across the hotel investment and tourism sectors.



Together, they'll take a forward-looking view of the industry, exploring where capital, development, and strategy are headed next.

HICAP has a vast array of award programs to shine a spotlight on the deals, developments, and professionals that are stepping outside the box and advancing the industry. These include Sustainable Hotel Awards, Reggie Shiu Development of the Year (recognizes an outstanding single development – newly built, redeveloped or repositioned), HICAP Single Asset Transaction of the Year Award, HICAP Merger & Acquisition of the Year Award, Rising Star Award Asia Pacific. The Tech Challenge and Lounge will also make its return to HICAP in 2026.

*HICAP is scheduled from 20-22 October 2026, Singapore*

**HICAP**  
HOTEL INVESTMENT  
CONFERENCE ASIA PACIFIC  
BY NORTHSTAR

## 2026 Program Planning Committee

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- Manoj Agarwal, Brigade Group
- Chandragupta Amritkar, Global Features
- Bill Barnett, C9 Hotelworks
- Andrea Belfanti, ISHC
- Stella Blythe, EVT Hotels & Resorts
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# IMEX: Best business platform for the global business events community

**IMEX**  
FRANKFURT 19. 21. MAI 2026



IMEX Frankfurt the annual mecca for global meetings, events and incentive travel industry is all set to open its doors this month with plenty of ideas, insights, innovations - inspiring exhibitors, suppliers and attendees, says **Chandragupta Amritkar** as he prepares for his 10th visit to IMEX.

Technology, wellness, ESG and climate risk will be the major issues, that are currently reshaping the business event landscape will be a major topic of discussion at IMEX 2026. At IMEX an estimated 4,500-plus global meeting planners will connect with 3,100 suppliers from across the world, building powerful working relationships—to create better events, meetings and experiences.

Exhibitors include national and regional convention bureaus, hotel groups, venues, cruise lines, airlines, spa resorts, tech providers and event management specialists. Attendees include meeting planners, event agency heads, association executives, incentive travel buyers and in-house event experts.

## Substantial Momentum

International demand from both exhibitors and buyers continues to build and is tracking strongly against the same period last year. The substantial momentum for the show, taking place May 19-21, is a welcome indication of the sector's resilience in a wider business landscape currently defined by rapid shifts and unpredictability. Hosted buyer registrations are currently ahead of last year, and exhibitors from a wide range of global markets have confirmed their participation, with many expanding their presence.

The show's set to welcome 3,500 hosted buyers, with total buyer numbers expected to reach over 4,000 from 60+ countries when it opens in May. Alongside a strong buyer presence from across Europe, North and South America, buyers from the Middle East, Africa and Asia will all be strongly represented.

The global range of exhibitors confirmed and representing 100+ countries is a further sign of the sector's strength and commitment to driving forward business.

Africa will have one of its largest-ever representations at the

show, with new exhibitors Mozambique and Angola; Egypt doubling its footprint; and Tunisia and Uganda both returning.

Japan is also set for one of its largest-ever participations, with Kyoto doubling the size of its booth. Malaysia is expanding its presence, and both China and Hong Kong are returning to the show floor.

Also exhibiting are North and South America, with Brand USA returning and California taking its own booth for the first time. South America's footprint is increasing with Uruguay welcoming twice as many partners and Mexico doubling its space.

In terms of European representation, Austria, Denmark, Istanbul and Sarajevo are among those increasing in size. There are 150 exhibiting companies from Germany, including host city Frankfurt that has this year been named World Design Capital.

"Despite the global disruption that's impacting many, global pressures haven't dented appetite for our community to come



Where the global events industry finds its people

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**IMEX** FRANKFURT  
MAY 19-21 2026

# Thematic HOLIDAY DESTINATION with CINE-MAGIC



Ramoji Film City is a filmmakers' paradise and dream holiday destination. It presents an inimitable experience of the make-believe world.

The exclusive guided studio tour offers a unique engagement with glamorous film sets, thematic attractions, sprawling avenues, entertainment, live shows, fun rides, eco tour, shopping and multi-cuisine dining.

It is also home to Wings – the mesmerising Bird Park, Ramoji Adventure @Sahas – Asia's finest adventure land,

Sukhibhava - the wellness facility that promotes lifestyle modification and detoxification and live set for Motion Capture & Virtual Shoot.

The land of cine-magic hosts spectacular events and Carnival extravaganzas and offers wide-ranging stay options to suit every budget. It's the go-to-destination for family holidays, experiential corporate events, grand weddings, honeymoons, celebrations, edutainment tours and group vacations.



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together and advance the conversations that matter, using IMEX as a springboard for both short and long-term business and relationship building,” says IMEX CEO Carina Bauer.

**IMEX: Education program**

IMEX provides free professional education program that includes 200-plus in-depth seminars, practical workshops and specialist forums. Expect expert speakers, new ideas, plentiful inspiration, insight and innovation. With Impact Talking Point delegates can dive into event tech and marketing, trends and research, people and planet, best business practice and the latest in experience design.

**From AI to Gen Z: Previewing the 2026 program**

The accelerating use of AI to measure ROI; engaging a multi-generational audience and designing memorable moments—these are among the top trends for 2026 identified by Maritz and they'll

all take center stage at Exclusively Corporate this May.


The dedicated event for corporate event planners takes place at Melia Frankfurt City on Monday May 18, the day before IMEX Frankfurt opens its doors (May 19-21).

Moderated by Patrick Delaney and Padraic Gilligan from SoolNua, the afternoon program brings together voices from across business sectors, including finance and design, to share their in-depth research, bold ideas and practical tools for the year ahead.

**Exclusively Corporate highlights**

Christoffer Sapienza, SVP Creative at Norway’s largest bank, DNB, will share how a single event series helped influence women’s investing behaviour. Since launching the “girlsinvest” campaign in 2019—when men held the majority of private equity in Norway—DNB’s nationwide events have driven a surge in female shareholders and owners of mutual funds in the country.





**Show statistics**

See news stories and photos from IMEX Frankfurt 2025 [here](#)

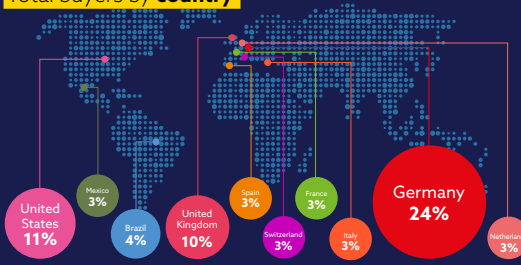
**Total buyers at the show**

# 4,466

Buyers from **97 countries**

Hosted buyers (3,489) + buyer attendees (977)

**Total buyers by country**



**Total buyers by nature of business**

- Agency **69%**
- Corporate **16%**
- Association **10%**
- Independent planner **4%**
- Government/university **1%**

**Total buying power**

- Over €10 million **21%**
- €5 million - €10 million **13%**
- €1 million - €5 million **28%**
- €100,000 - €1 million **32%**

13,335

**Total participants**

Including exhibitors

---

67,000

**Total meetings**

One-to-one, group appointments and presentations

---

2,900

**Exhibiting companies**

---

177

**Press and Media**

from 24 countries

➔ **Are you looking forward to exhibiting at IMEX Frankfurt 2026?** See details of exhibiting [here](#)



By 2026, the audience had transformed from low confidence beginners to a highly informed, highly engaged community. Christoffer says: “Our job isn’t to ‘sell’ the benefits of investing anymore—it’s to show them how to do it.” The “girlsinvest” event series, once a supporting element of a broader campaign, has now become its driving force—a clear example of how well-designed events can inspire lasting, measurable change.”

Maritz’s Senior Design Studio Strategist, Claire Lester joins Padraic to unpack the question many event planners are wrestling with: “what does Gen Z actually want?” With Millennials and Gen Z projected to make up 75% of the workforce by 2030, their session reveals findings from a landmark new study



comparing how Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z perceive and respond to incentive travel and reward strategies—and its implications for event design.

As a “provocative optimist”, futurist Henry Coutinho-Mason is confident in AI’s potential to reshape the attendee experience and turn events into sources of strategic insight for leadership teams. He’ll share case studies as well as his own first-hand experience of AI-accelerated innovation.

Henry explains: “So much of the narrative around AI is about automation and efficiency. But we shouldn’t overlook its power to help people be more creative too.”



### Why does design matter?

In a world of digital and AI saturation and rising attendee expectations of live events, IMEX published a new report arguing that intentional design is one of the most powerful—and most underused—tools available to the global meetings and events industry.

Why design matters: The invisible force shaping connection, brand and impact brings together research, data and perspectives from leading voices across brand strategy, creative, research, sustainability, events and urban development. The report argues that the human craft of intentional design, far from being a question of aesthetics or production values, is one of the most underleveraged strategic disciplines available to event professionals today.

It quotes a five-year McKinsey study of 300 publicly listed companies which shows the top-quartile design performers outpaced industry peers by 32 percentage points in revenue growth and 56 percentage points in total shareholder returns. For an industry that has often treated design as a production consideration, and not necessarily a business one, the implications are significant.

### Three core themes

Why design matters is structured around three core themes: designing for human connection and joy; designing for brand power and differentiation; and designing for sustainability and purpose. Each chapter combines original insight with real-world examples, including Freeman’s research into Gen Z professionals’ appetite for live events; Corona’s brand work at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan Cortina and the UK Design Council’s push to embed green skills across the design profession by 2030.

Carina Bauer says, "All planners want to make a positive contribution to the P&L but, especially in 2026 and beyond, that calls either for a radical shift or a more nuanced appreciation of what live event attendees really want. We believe that gap is an exciting and important playground, especially for an upcoming generation of event planners who can elevate their work by joining forces with designers—not just experience designers, but trained creatives. We live in an attention economy. Design is the invisible force that commands that attention."

Contributors to the report include David de Bruijn, Chief Creative Officer at WINK; Tahira Endean, IMEX Head of Programming and author of *Our KPI is Joy*; Prof. Greg Clark CBE, a global authority on urban strategy and place leadership; Matthew Burgess, Senior Events Manager for the Design Council; Ben Moorsom, founder of Debut Group; Anna Abdelnoor, founder of sustainability non-profit isla; and Mark Thomason, Managing Director of Elevations.

### Good design is good business

Anna Gyseman, Head of Design at IMEX and three-time D&AD (Design and Art Direction) Award winner, whose conviction underpins the report, summarizes its central argument: "Good design is good business."

Several contributors to the report will be speaking at IMEX Frankfurt 2026, where they'll explore themes of connection, brand power, sustainability and place leadership. Four of the show's 11 education tracks are also design-related: Design matters; Regenerative design; Designing for human needs and Experiential event design.

Frankfurt RheinMain has been designated World Design Capital 2026, making this an especially fitting moment to publish this report.

### MEX launches sustainability strategy designed to turn intent into impact

IMEX launched on Earth Day, April 22, its first ever sustainability strategy. The strategy positions sustainability as central to how the sector responds to risk, regulation and long-term resilience. It comes at a time when sustainability is more embedded across the industry, but progress remains uneven and the need for clear direction persists.

"Sustainability has been embedded in our operations for some time, but it has now become a core business issue as we respond to evolving regulatory requirements," explains IMEX CFO David Harrison.

"Beyond compliance, it reflects our own commitment to responsible growth and long-term development—fully aligned with our company value: lead the way. The strategy sets out a clear, measurable approach to reducing our environmental impact while supporting the global business events industry to navigate an increasingly complex and changing landscape. Defined by the title *In the moment*, we're bringing sustainability into the here and now, making it tangible and within reach," continues David Harrison.

Created with event sustainability partners isla, the strategy is informed by learnings and data collected over 20+ years, since the launch of the first IMEX show in Frankfurt, as well as the results of a recent survey of almost 1,000 stakeholders. Combined

with clear direction from climate science, the document provides a defined picture of where IMEX can focus its efforts and where the biggest opportunities for progress are.

### Four strategic sustainability goals

Reduce IMEX's carbon emissions by 20% by 2030

IMEX will focus on interventions where it has the greatest impact, control and influence, with travel to its shows identified as the single most material driver of emissions—and one that can be influenced.

Analysis from IMEX Frankfurt shows that around 25% of flights were from the UK, a route where rail is a practical alternative. Replacing a short-haul flight with a train journey has the potential to reduce emissions by approximately 96%, making this a clear priority.

### Drive circularity in exhibitor participation

IMEX will assess the carbon footprint of exhibitor booths alongside the choice of materials used more broadly across the show—including sponsor activations and IMEX-owned feature areas. A key milestone is to measure emissions associated with 60% of exhibitor booths at both of this year's shows.

### Strengthen leadership alignment on sustainability

IMEX survey data highlights a disconnect—despite confidence in the industry's ability to respond to sustainability challenges, many leaders feel fatigued by the messaging and disengage. This goal is intended to help create the conditions for more effective leadership engagement, sharing evidence of what works in practice and enabling more informed decision-making across the sector.



### Support profitability through sustainability-related opportunities

For IMEX, as with all organizations, to continue investing, innovating and accelerating its progress on decarbonization and circularity, sustainability must also support commercial resilience. This goal will actively explore and develop sustainability-related opportunities that strengthen both environmental outcomes and commercial performance.

"These strategic goals are designed around the need to reduce our own impact wherever possible, while focusing our greatest efforts on where we have the most influence. This sustainability strategy marks a clear move from intent to action— *In the moment*—grounded in data, focused on practical outcomes and designed to help drive measurable progress across the whole of the global meetings and events sector," says David Harrison.

*IMEX Frankfurt takes place May 19-21*

## How AI Is Reshaping the World of Travel

Travel has always been about discovery, but the way we plan and experience it is changing fast. Artificial intelligence is stepping in at every stage. Instead of jumping between multiple tabs, reviews, and maps, people are now turning to AI tools that can understand what they want and build a plan around it.

Across the industry, airlines, hotels, and booking platforms are all using AI to better anticipate traveler preferences, predict needs, and offer more relevant choices. At the same time, the role of human connection hasn't disappeared. If anything, it's becoming more important in moments that require trust, emotion, and nuance.

But AI is certainly stripping away the logistical headaches that usually get in the way.

To understand this exponential shift, we spoke to founders, CEOs, and teams building these tools, platforms, and digital assistants. We explore how and why platforms are evolving from simple chatbots into intuitive travel partners, and whether they really help make the experience smoother.

Andy Moss, CEO of Mindtrip, has built a platform that goes beyond simple suggestions. Its standout feature, "Start Anywhere," allows users to turn inspiration, whether it's a photo, a PDF, or a social media screenshot, directly into fully mapped-out itineraries.

### Q: How do you see traveler behavior changing because of AI?

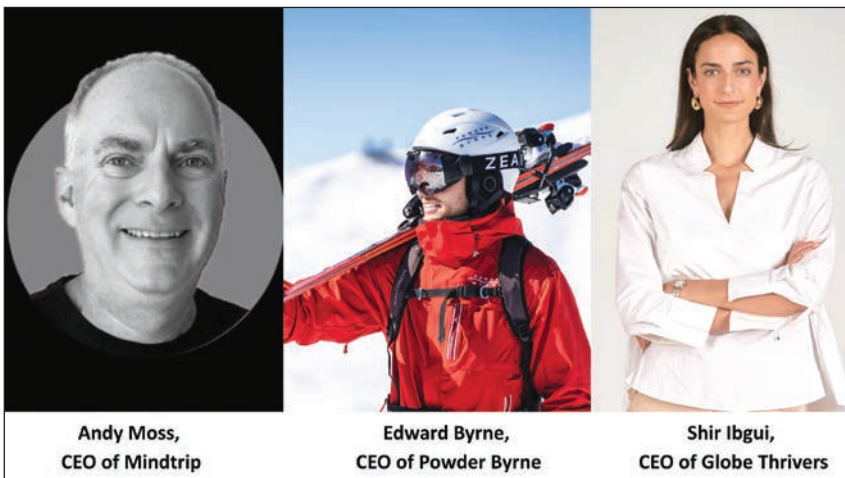
A: AI is shifting traveler behavior from searching to deciding. People can describe the kind of trip they want in open-ended, natural ways and instantly see options that balance budget, timing, preferences, and tradeoffs, opening up possibilities they wouldn't have considered before.

At the same time, AI is making travel planning feel less overwhelming and more intuitive, helping travelers focus more on the experience itself rather than the logistics behind it.

### Q: Do you see Mindtrip as a tool that can actively combat overtourism by intelligently redistributing travelers to under-visited gems?

A: Overtourism is, at its core, a discovery problem. Travelers tend to gravitate toward what they already know or what's easiest to find. Mindtrip helps to change that. When you understand the traveler and the context of their trip, you can surface equally compelling alternatives that fit their preferences, not just the most popular destinations. This helps travelers move beyond overcrowded hotspots and bring more attention to places that are often overlooked.

Edward Byrne, CEO of Powder Byrne, recently launched Perfect Piste, a first-of-its-kind luxury AI ski travel platform designed to make mountain getaways effortless. This trailblazing tool uses intelligent algorithms to match skiers with their ideal alpine experiences based on highly specific personal preferences.



Andy Moss,  
CEO of Mindtrip

Edward Byrne,  
CEO of Powder Byrne

Shir Ibgui,  
CEO of Globe Thrivers

### Q: How does Perfect Piste adapt to unpredictable factors like changing snow conditions, weather patterns, or last-minute travel disruptions?

A: Perfect Piste is a platform built to be inherently dynamic rather than static. Our AI continuously ingests and interprets real-time and historical datasets and recommendations from resort personalities that are not available anywhere else - so not just snow forecasts, weather, and resort operational information, but deeper local insights. We designed it this way to optimise recommendations based on all the likely conditions at the time of travel and help users navigate.

This allows us to move beyond generic suggestions and instead surface options with the highest probability of delivering a good experience. As conditions evolve, the system can rapidly re-rank destinations or suggest intelligent alternatives, helping travellers stay one step ahead of disruption.

The result is a more resilient, data-driven approach to skiing, where plans are not fixed but continuously optimised.

Shir Ibgui, Founder and CEO of Globe Thrivers, utilizes AI to transform inspiring social media content into actionable, creator-led itineraries that prioritize community-driven authenticity and recommendations that make travel planning easier, faster, and more enjoyable.

### Q: Where do you think AI adds the most value in the travel journey right now?

A: The biggest impact of AI in travel is where it meets real, human experience. Travel is very personal, people always want something that feels true to them. AI is great at handling the heavy work. It can organise trips, plan routes, save time, and suggest options quickly. But it doesn't have personal taste or real-life experience. That's where human input still matters.

The real shift is combining both. AI builds the structure, while real recommendations, like those from travellers or creators, add trust, context, and personality. Right now, this shows up in smarter itinerary tools that plan your travel better, real-time assistants that help during the trip, and platforms that turn inspiration from social media into actual, bookable plans.

*Pooja Amritkar*

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## Hong Kong: Tourism places and Experiences

Hong Kong is a great city and though allowed to operate as an independent country, it is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) and for official purposes a part of China. There's plenty to see and we all enjoyed the trip says **Chandragupta Amritkar**. A few not to be missed tourism places and experiences

### Big Bus: As always the best

Having traversed across the globe (46 countries – 800+ hotels) I have always felt the Hop-on, Hop-off buses ideal to explore the city as they give you the freedom to plan what you want to see



and for how long. The buses are wifi enabled with pre-recorded commentary available in 10 languages. Even if you are on a business trip with limited leisure time this is a good option. I got in touch with Vicky Leung, Marketing Executive, Big Bus, Hong Kong who was kind enough to provide the

best tickets - Deluxe 2-day tickets.

The same afternoon of reaching Hong Kong we proceeded from Kerry hotel to Big Bus Tours Information Centre at Tsim Sha Tsui. Our ticket included all three different routes, a Night Tour, Star Ferry return ticket, walking tour, Sampan ride, and visit to the Peak. We took the ferry from Tsim Sha Tsui - a journey across Victoria Harbour on the iconic Star Ferry that has been linking Kowloon and Hong Kong Island since 1898. One has to experience the Star Ferry across Victoria Bay at least once. The views of both Kowloon and Hong Kong Island are incredible

Big Bus provides over 20 conveniently located bus stops covering most of Hong Kong tourist attractions. The three different routes include Blue Route, Green Route and Red Route with a frequency of 30-45 minutes. If you want to cover all the three routes you have to have a 3 day pass.

### Victoria Peak

Our first stop on Big Bus was Victoria Peak. Soaring 1,811 feet above sea level, Victoria Peak is a must visit. The best way to start is with the 130-year-old historic red tram – a funicular railway to get up to Victoria Peak. There was a long queue for the tram but with Big Bus you get fast track entry to enter the Peak Tram and Peak Sky Terrace observation deck. The steep tram ride was great - a bit scary for a few – treating us to a visual experience.

The Peak Tower has lots of dining and retail outlets. Situated atop



the highest point on Hong Kong Island, The Peak provides views of one of the world's most spectacular cityscapes, skyscrapers as well as the city's beautiful blue waterways. The Sky Terrace 428, standing at 428 metres above sea level, is the highest viewing platform in Hong Kong offering a stunning 360-degree panoramic view across the Hong Kong. One sound advice - do check the weather forecast beforehand.

### Madame Tussauds: Waxwork replicas of megastars

As I was planning the trip to The Peak, a visit to Madame Tussauds is a must. At Madame Tussauds one can get close and personal with celebrities, icons and historical leaders in a fully interactive experience.

The museum is divided into numerous sections. World Premiere is quite popular as it features a range of movie stars - Bollywood stars including Amitabh Bachchan, Varun Dhawan, Salman Khan etc and from Hollywood there were Audrey Hepburn, Marilyn Monroe, Brad Pitt, Johnny Depp etc.



Historical And National Heroes showcases familiar faces from the political world and national heroes. There is the royal family of Britain, Mahatma Gandhi, Narendra Modi, Donald Trump, Xi Jinping and former president Barack Obama.

Then there is the Art Gallery, a Fashion Zone, Hong Kong Glamour, Kung Fu Zone that is a tribute to martial arts with Bruce

Lee, Jackie Chan and Michelle Yeoh, The Champions is for sports, Music Icons, Animated World which has Hello Kitty, The Hulk, Iron Man etc.

On an average keep at least a couple of hours to complete a visit of Madame Tussauds. There are plenty of photo opportunities so the time spent can increase. Infact there is a Selfie Gallery that was built for young adults (and also parents) and consists of two parts – silver color themed Cafe and pink color themed Ice Cream zone.

### sky100 Hong Kong Observation Deck

When I first met Josephine Lam, vice-chairman, sky100 Hong Kong Observation Deck, six years back in India I was impressed by her dynamism and keenness to promote sky100. I decided to make it a point to include sky100 in my Hong Kong feature whenever I planned. Six years later co-ordinating with Stella Wong, GM of sky100 and Ellen Wong, Associate Director, Marketing, sky100, I visited this amazing deck. Stella Wong suggested if you are coming with wife evening would be the best time. And how right she was.

Arriving in the evening the charming and extremely knowledgeable Ellen Wong was there to receive us. "Most major cities around the world have their own iconic observation decks and now Hong Kong has one," said Ellen Wong. Developed by Sun Hung Kai Properties, sky100 is on the 100th floor of International Commerce Centre - the tallest building in Hong Kong. At 393 meters above sea level, it is the only indoor observation deck with 360-degree views of the city and Victoria Harbour.



Ellen Wong took us on Hong Kong's fastest double-deck high-speed elevators, which reached the 100th floor in just 60 seconds. Entering it we were fascinated by the views. I was impressed by the 28-metre-long multimedia story wall, showcasing 100 fascinating local tales and anecdotes. The interactive sky100 mobile app also was superb. It provides an amazing experience of augmented reality (AR) where you can take pictures of paragliding above the world-famous Victoria Harbour or alongside the International Commerce Centre (ICC). As my wife's birthday was a few days later Ellen Wong created an image of all of us standing alongside ICC.

We also saw witnessed "Love is in the Sky" light show, featuring dreamlike 3D images with unique projection technology and music. If you are hungry there is Café 100 by The Ritz-Carlton.

### Ngong Ping 360

I met Angela Sue, Manager, Sales & Distribution, Overseas & MICE, Ngong Ping 360 at ITB Berlin and she is quite bullish on the Indian market having visited India several times. She was more than happy to welcome us.

Leaving Kerry hotel early we reached the Ngong Ping Cable Car station. The crowds had already began queuing (and I would advise you to book tickets in advance) but as we were in VIP category we got the tickets immediately and moved on through a special lane. We took the crystal car that has a glass-bottom. Ngong Ping Cable Car connects downtown Tung Chung and Ngong Ping on Lantau Island. The 30 minutes ride covering a distance of 5.7km in length (longest bi-cable ropeway in Asia) provides the breathtaking panorama of the Hong Kong Airport, verdant, mountainous terrain of Lantau Island, the Big Buddha and the 360-degree view of Ngong Ping Plateau.



Arriving at Ngong Ping Village and after a photo at the selfie point, we walked through a series of cafes and tourist shops including an Indian restaurant - Ebenezeer's, one of Hong Kong's well-known eateries. Ngong Ping Village is a culturally themed village designed and landscaped to integrate into the scenic nature of Ngong Ping. On top of shopping, dining and entertainment, this "must-see" Hong Kong attraction also boasts three themed attractions – "VR 360", "Motion 360" and "Walking with Buddha". All of us enjoyed the three attractions. Apart from this one should visit the Big Buddha (At 34-meters literally dominates the Lantau Island), Po Lin Monastery and Tai O fishing village.

### Hong Kong Disneyland

Hong Kong Disneyland was on the top list of my daughter. My first point of contact was the dynamic John Sinke, Director, Marketing, Hong Kong Disneyland who has been systematically promoting the destination with regular updates on LinkedIn. He in turn connected me to their media consultant, Shuk Wa Tsang.





This was our last tour and it was the only day when we had to face the rains. Arriving into Hong Kong Disneyland at noon we were surprised to see crowds in spite of rains. There is something so magical about any Disneyland and its official tagline is "The Happiest Place On Earth" which is true.

There are several fun and themed rides and amazing live

musicals for both kids and adults. Though we were there till late evening we would not even finish everything – though rain did hamper our visit – ideally visit least for a full day.

The park starts with Main Street that is full of shops and restaurants and we stopped on the way for souvenirs and photos. The Disneyland is split into Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, Adventureland, Grizzly Gulch, Mystic Point and Toy Story Land. The sad part was there were long queues most places.

One should not miss the Iron Man Experience, Hyperspace Mountain, Jungle River Cruise, Toy Story Land, Rafts to Tarzan's Treehouse, Mickey and the Wondrous Book. The Festival of The Lion King show was the last we attended and one of the best – worth the long wait. My daughter enjoyed the parades with Disney characters.

### Ladies' Market

This is one place that my wife and daughter just simply loved and were reluctant to leave. Seeing the crowds – local and International Ladies Market for sure is Hong Kong's most popular market. Stretching more than a kilometer and with over 100 stalls of modern and traditional dresses, hand bags, watches, cosmetics, bags, home furnishings, CDs, trinkets accessories for women of all ages and souvenirs, the Ladies' Market is a shopping paradise. It's a great place to bargain and sellers expect you to bargain. Do look out as the market is flooded with fakes or copies.

Due to time constraints we missed out on Ocean Park Hong Kong. Over all it was a great trip and the Hong Kong people were too kind everywhere.

*Our popular travelogue for families reproduced for our August readers from our July-Aug 2019 issue*

## Relish the best vegetarian food in Hong Kong

Having visited Hong Kong a few times I was always on the look out for a good Indian vegetarian restaurant. That's when I met Aman Chawla, Director, Fusion Concepts Ltd, who is also into textiles and an excellent human being. He introduced me to his restaurant Khana Khazana and I was pretty impressed by the wide array of authentic North-Indian, South -Indian vegetarian cuisines and Indian street food options like chats. Apart from food spending time with Aman Chawla is such a pleasure – hearing to his experiences and anecdotes.

"At that time there was not a single place in Hong Kong where one could enjoy delicious and fresh Indian vegetarian dishes. With plenty of Indians and many locals as well as foreigners opting for vegetarian and vegan dishes, I think our launch of the first Indian vegetarian restaurant and bar in Hong Kong- Khana Khazana was at the right time. It received an overwhelming response and proved to be a motivation to launch more restaurants with different themes and positioning," said Aman Chawla.

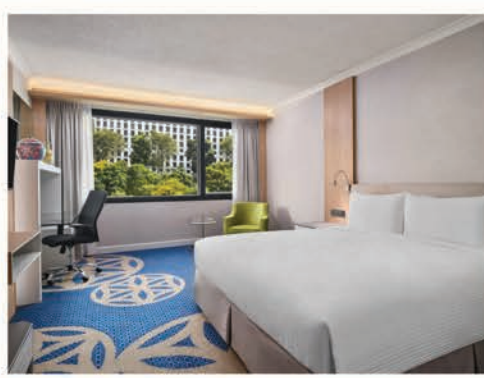
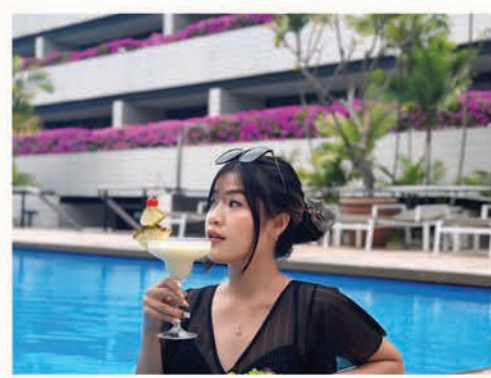
Today, Fusion Concepts Ltd. owns and runs three food and beverage outlets -Khana Khazana, Spice8 and Legends of India. At Khana Khazana, located in Wan Chai and close to the trade fair grounds is my favourite with South Indian Platters, Chats like Paani Puri, Dahi Puri, Pay Bhaaji and the neumerous main dishes and desserts.

Legends of India is located at Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon and is probably the biggest Indian restaurant in Hong Kong with a seating capacity of over 150 pax at one time. "Spread over 3000+ Square feet area with a 1000+ Square feet open terrace it can be a perfect venue for corporate events, social events, private parties - big or small," said Aman Chawla.

So this time when I went with my family I told them that we will be going to the best restaurants in Hong Kong and meeting a fine human being. We tried both Khana Khazana and Legends of India. And my daughter on our return to India said it was a wonderful experience.



Aman Chawla



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## 6 Ways Jordan Left Me Completely in Awe

Jordan is a country I had long dreamed of, one filled with ancient wonders, dramatic landscapes, and stories that are layered into every corner. I thought I knew what to expect: a checklist of experiences, some good hummus, and a lot of sun.

But this historic Arab kingdom surprised me at every turn, with its beauty, its people, its resilience, its marvels, and its soul.

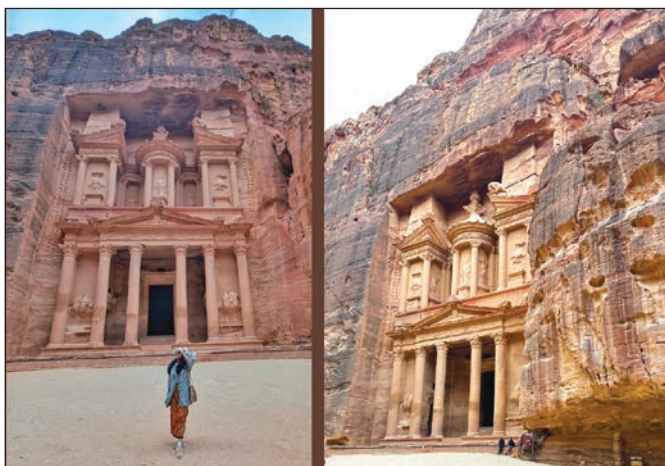
Here are six moments when Jordan completely took my breath away - and might just do the same for you!

### 1. The First Glimpse of Petra

Petra, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, is an ancient city carved into rock, layered with history, mystery, and incredible human ingenuity.

Dating back over 2,000 years, Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom, and now it is a vast area filled with tombs, temples, a monastery perched high above, and an ancient theater that once held thousands of people.

Our guide, Abdullah, showed us their water management systems as we walked through the Siq, a geological masterpiece, split apart by tectonic forces and smoothed over millennia by flash floods. The walls rise to 80 meters on either side, and it was fascinating to see how the rocks changed colors throughout the day.



Finally came the much-anticipated moment when the Siq opens up, and the Treasury (Al-Khazneh) unveils itself. It's nearly 40 meters tall, but here's the mind-blowing part: it was carved from the top down. Architects began at the top of the cliff, carving a ledge to stand on, and worked their way down the rock face.

Despite its name, the Treasury was never a bank. The massive urn crowning the façade still bears visible bullet marks, left by Bedouins in the early 20th century, who believed the legend that it concealed a Pharaoh's hidden treasure and tried to break it open. In fact, even today, we are only scratching the surface of this city's secrets.

I stood there for a few seconds, just taking in the beauty and history, my eyes tracing the perfect Corinthian columns and the weathered statues of ancient gods.



I knew I had stepped directly into a dream I'd been having since childhood.

### 2. Defying Gravity at the Dead Sea

As a water baby, this was one experience I was really looking forward to. And it did not disappoint!

Sitting at over 430 meters below sea level, the lowest point on Earth, it's famous for its incredibly high salt content, which is what creates that iconic floating experience.

During our stay at Mövenpick Resort & Spa Dead Sea, we went to the hotel's private beach and spent 10 minutes slathering ourselves in the famous black mineral mud, packed with magnesium, calcium, and potassium, known for its skin benefits. Legend has it that Cleopatra had cosmetics and ointments made from the mud and salts, and now I have tried it too!

I let the mud dry under the sun and then started walking into the waters. I waded in up to my waist, took a deep breath, and leaned back. And just like that... I was floating.

For a second, I panicked out of habit, trying to adjust the way I normally would in the sea. But the Sea just swung my legs right back up to the surface. So, I let go, spreading my arms wide and allowing the buoyancy work its magic.

I stayed there for a while, admiring the hazy, shimmering blue of the Sea and the distant outline of the West Bank. It was a bizarre but deeply peaceful experience that I'll forever remember and hope to float once again.

### 3. Mars on Earth: Wadi Rum

If Petra is Jordan's heart, Wadi Rum is its soul. With its massive sandstone mountains and endless stretches of red sand, it's no wonder Hollywood films like *The Martian*, *Dune*, and *Star Wars* were shot here.

As we drove through the desert in a 4x4 jeep, our guide pointed out formations that had stories of their own. The geology is so alien, with towering blocks of sandstone, sculpted by millions of years of wind and flood, that I half-expected a spacecraft to greet us.



Finally, we climbed up to the famous sunset viewpoint, a rocky ledge that looked out over a sea of dunes. The sky slowly turned soft shades of gold, then orange, then a surreal red. We stared silently at the mesmerizing scene, it's a fleeting moment when you are struck by how vast and breathtaking this world really is, and how much of it we take for granted.

#### 4. Falling in Love with Jordanian Food

As someone who doesn't eat red meat, I was afraid I'd have to survive on dates and veggies, but I couldn't have been more wrong.

Jordan turned out to be one of the most flavourful, comforting food experiences I've had.

Hummus became a constant. Every meal, every table, we were welcomed with the creamy dish that somehow tasted better than the last. Pair that with warm, freshly baked bread, and it was hard to stop eating. I also tried mansaf made with chicken, which gave me a taste of Jordan's national dish without stepping outside my comfort zone.

At Adonis, a beautifully restored traditional 20th-century Jordanian house, the Mezze dishes stole the show, fresh fattoush, Tabbouleh, smoky mouttabal, and aubergine dishes packed with flavour. During a homestay, we tried chicken maqluba, the famous "upside-down" dish, and it felt like a warm, home-cooked hug.

The Lebanese House served up the crispest falafel I've ever tasted, and then we indulged in famous Jordanian Desserts like the kunafa, Baklava, and Qatayef. By the end, there was not a meal I had skipped or a dish I hadn't relished.

#### 5. The Pompeii of the East – Jerash

Often called one of the best-preserved Roman cities, Jerash dates back over 2,000 years, and the sheer scale of it left me speechless. It is a vast collection of monumental arches, temples, and theaters. We started at the massive Hadrian's Arch, built in 129 AD to honor the Emperor's visit, and then saw the Hippodrome



and the stone-paved Cardo Maximus.

The Temple of Zeus is where the city's layout is truly visible. It offers sweeping views of the entire site, rolling ruins framed by modern-day houses in the distance. I was awestruck by the unique Oval Plaza, a stunning expanse surrounded by 56 Ionic columns that once buzzed with markets and gatherings.

But the real magic is in the details. Tucked away in the Byzantine churches, there are intricate mosaics that have survived for over 1,500 years, their colors still remarkably vivid despite the passage of empires.

In the South Theater, the acoustics are so perfect that a person standing in the center of the stage can be heard clearly in the very last row without raising their voice. Incredible!

It's hard not to imagine the city as it once was - alive, loud, and full of stories.

#### 6. Journey with Royal Jordanian

For me, travel has never been only about the destination, but also about the journey, and Royal Jordanian's Crown Class is certainly designed to make one feel royal while being surrounded by clouds. Before we even took off from Mumbai, a flight attendant approached with a traditional brass dallah (a long-beaked coffee pot), pouring a steaming cup of Arabic coffee.

And once we were soaring, came the food and drinks menu. I was pleasantly surprised to see dosa for breakfast, along with crepes and chicken sausage options. The drinks selection was even more impressive; they had everything from whiskey and wine to a full list of cocktails and even sodas.

Before boarding the flight back from Amman, I spent my time at the Crown Lounge in Queen Alia International Airport. The lounge is massive, designed with high ceilings, an open-plan layout, and countless seats to rest.

I have to talk about the pizza! It sounds mundane, but the fresh, thin-crust cheese pizza was a

blessing to my taste buds and my stomach. I ate about 5 slices before I forced myself to stop and get a drink of Baileys.

This was the perfect way to end a beautiful trip!

Jordan gave me more than landmarks and landscapes, it gave me perspective, connection, and many moments that left me completely in awe.

So it's hard not to feel like a part of me is still back there, somewhere between the stillness of the desert and the deep blue of the sea.


*Pooja Amritkar*



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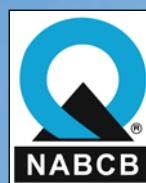
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# Changing Trends in Aircraft Cabin Design

Celebrating its 25th anniversary the Aircraft Interiors Expo (AIX) 2026 at the Hamburg Messe showcased quite a bit of innovations feels **Chandragupta Amritkar**

The Aircraft Interiors Expo (AIX) 2026, the world's leading aircraft interiors expo, in its 25th edition attracted over 13,000 industry professionals and over 500 exhibitors showcasing cabin design, materials, and technology, proving it's a magnet for leading airlines and all aviation enthusiasts. The exhibitors included 74 first-time exhibitors, 14 in the new BizJet Zone, and 77 in the IFEC Zone. The 25th edition also saw 12 exhibitors who have been attending for over 20 years.

## Now a double-decker aircraft seat

Any one travelling economy is always in the quest to have more space and this is what Chaise Longue promises. Its a vertically stacked seat - stacking them across two levels, enhancing the passenger experience. While the design removes overhead bins, the luggage storage is underneath the seats.



The prototype was presented at AIX and looks impressive. Premiering first as a college project in 2020, then as an early prototype in 2022, over the past 6 years this concept is designed to allow passengers enjoy extra legroom. Interacting with the Spanish company's founder and CEO, Alejandro Nunez Vicente founder said, "Passengers on the lower level are able to lie



back and stretch their legs, thanks to the next seat being above them rather than in front of them. On the upper row we have added six inches of pitch, with the new design now also boasting 12 inches of recline on this level. Passengers sitting down below are able to fully stretch their legs out thanks to the space left by moving the seat in front of them upwards. Meanwhile, the steps have been optimised and extended to a tread of 25cm to aid with ingress and egress, as well as emergency evacuation procedures."

The Chaise Longue though innovative presents challenges for the design (includes suggestions from my engineering – COEP – college friends)

- Head injury certification
- Style of seating getting necessary approvals
- Cabin safety and quickly evacuating the aircraft
- To provide emergency assistance.
- Flight attendants serving food and beverages.
- Claustrophobia fears
- Privacy for travelers.
- People with reduced mobility

In spite of these pointers the CEO is confident of the seating arrangement seeing light. "If the industry hasn't rejected our double-decker aircraft seat concept still it is because they believe we have something actually good. I believe the concept is more fitting for premium economy. We have already secured interest from many major global airlines. I am determined to succeed," said Vicente.

## Caynova displays SkySpa

Caynova, a Switzerland-based company that offers integrated In-Seat comfort sensations introduced the next evolution of SkySpa. Seat manufacturers have the opportunity to integrate its SkySpa concept for heating, cooling, scenting, neck ventilation and massaging - which was truly a relaxing and refreshing experience for me. "Our aim is to prioritize passenger experience transforming air travel comfort with innovative, customizable seating solutions. SkySpa brings comfort features for long-haul premium passengers," said Thomas Steiner, CEO, Caynova AG. The system integrates several comfort features—thermal regulation, targeted airflow, massage functions, ambient lighting, and scent delivery—into a single, passenger-controlled seat. The company has already meet the rigid certifications of the aviation industry.



## SmartTray

Another innovation that came to by sight was the SmartTray - Intelligent tray tables and PED holders that transform the passenger experience. Crafted from aerospace-grade materials with precision engineering its an experience offering a seamless, hands-free way to use smartphones and tablets onboard.



Not only are these ergonomic with eye-catching design minimizing arm and neck fatigue—

representing the pinnacle of in-flight luxury but also they are time tested retrofit that is robust, intuitive, and maintenance free,” said Nick Pajic, CEO of SmartTray International.

SmartTray is the owner of 20+ granted utility patents that facilitate hands free use of smartphones and electronic tablets in passenger seats and tray tables onboard aircraft, mass transit bus, rail, automotive and marine vehicles.

### DAS: Bullish on Indian market

DAS from South Korea that is well known for its precision launched airlines seats that maximizes cabin efficiency and comfort was attracting quite a bit of visitors. DAS, established



in 1987, is a leading South Korean manufacturer specializing in automotive and aircraft seating.

Interacting with the team DongHyung Lee, Vice Chairman, Jade Pyun, Global R&D HQ and VP, Seoungjun Kim, Aircraft Seat Engineer I had the chance to experience the comfortable seats.

“Our dedication to innovation, excellence and customer satisfaction makes us a preferred choice. We focus a lot

on R&D and we have a great set up in India including a new manufacturing facility in Pune,” said Jade Pyun. DAS operates 14 factories and 3 R&D centers across 7 countries.

“Already supplying to major automotive brands, we have entered the aircraft seating industry and are already testing success. India is a huge market for us and with an established R&D centre me and my team are very bullish on the Indian market,” said DongHyung Lee.

### Celestica

While interacting briefly with the dynamic Sarb Calgotra, Director - Business Development, Celestica, a technology leader dedicated to driving customer success and market advancements, he stressed that they are looking at investment into the Indian market. With deep expertise in design, engineering, manufacturing, supply chain and platform solutions, Celestica enables critical data center infrastructure for AI, cloud, and hybrid cloud and advances technologies in high-growth markets. With a talented team and a strategic global network, Celestica helps its customers

achieve a competitive advantage. They were showcasing advanced electronics solutions for aircraft connectivity, ranging from satellite to seat.

### Airbus

#### Accessible Travel

Airbus showcased their new aircraft cabin design - Airspace U Suite suitable for accessible travel including accessible lavatories. The Airspace U Suite concept, enables PRMs (Passengers with Reduced Mobility) to remain in their own personal wheelchair throughout the flight, secured directly to the



cabin floor. It also removes the need for wheelchair transfers.

This versatile, flexible concept is suitable for all Airbus aircraft and addresses nearly every passenger requirement. The premium area ensures an accessible and enhanced experience for everyone, going beyond simply catering to PRM. The cabin area adapts to

passengers, including:

- A wheelchair user in their own powered chair
- A tired traveler looking to rest in a lie-flat position
- A family wanting to share space
- A business team holding an in-flight meeting

#### Connected Aircraft platform

Airbus Connected Aircraft platform offers a future-proof and flexible solution for aviation connectivity. Airbus provides an aviation-grade connectivity installation called HBCplus offering the flexibility to connect to multiple satcom providers which can operate in low, middle or geostationary orbits. This means an aircraft satcom access is no longer tied to one single network in operations.

Through HBCplus, airlines gain access to a wide choice of service providers across GEO, MEO and LEO satellite constellations. This Open Digital Platform enables airlines to deploy new in-flight connectivity services for passengers and flight crews at their own pace.

As a next step, Airbus is developing a new modular approach for its HBCplus connectivity system that will enable access to major LEO constellations, including Amazon LEO, OneWeb, Telesat and SpaceSail.

Air India, which committed to 20 A350s, will use Hughes (as HBCplus MSP provider) to leverage Hughes' GEO constellation as well as LEO constellation as soon as it is ready.

## A focus on the Indian textile market through the eyes of BTRA, Mumbai



The recent Indian budget 2026 brought into focus the Indian textile market which prioritized the textile sector with a major focus on employment, exports, and sustainability. Add to this the proposed India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which is poised to significantly boost the Indian textile sector by eliminating tariffs (up to 12% previously) on textiles and apparel, providing duty-free access to the \$263.5 billion EU market. To get more insights **Chandragupta Amritkar** decided to interact with the soft-spoken **Dr. Sreekumar, Director of The Bombay Textile Research Association, Mumbai.** Excerpts

### What is the current scenario of India as an exporter of textiles and apparel in the world?

India today ranks among the world's leading exporters of textiles and apparel, supported by a rare advantage—a fully integrated value chain that spans fibres, yarns, fabrics, garments, and technical textiles. This end-to-end ecosystem provides resilience, adaptability, and depth, enabling Indian manufacturers to respond effectively to changing global demand patterns.

In recent years, focused government initiatives have significantly strengthened this position. Programmes such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, PM MITRA Mega Textile Parks, and the National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM) have accelerated the sector's transformation from volume-centric exports to technology-driven, value-added manufacturing. These initiatives are helping the industry move up the global value chain, with greater emphasis on innovation, performance, and compliance.

As is often observed within the sector, India is steadily moving from scale to sophistication in global textiles. This transition is being reinforced by strong institutional support. Research and testing organisations have played a crucial enabling role, particularly in advanced materials. Under the NTTM, BTRA successfully developed India's first indigenous carbon fibre precursor, marking a significant step toward self-reliance in high-performance materials and expanding India's footprint beyond conventional textile segments.

### How is India's share of export to Europe?

The European Union remains one of India's most important and stable export destinations for textiles and apparel. Indian products—especially home textiles, apparel, and made-ups—are widely accepted across European markets for their quality, consistency, and increasing alignment with responsible production practices.

While India already maintains a strong presence in Europe, there is considerable scope for further growth, particularly in technical textiles and sustainable product categories. European buyers are increasingly seeking long-term partners capable of



António Luís Santos da Costa, President of the European Council, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission along with our Indian PM, Narendra Modi during the Exchange of MoUs between India and EU

meeting stringent regulatory requirements while offering reliable manufacturing capabilities. As industry observers note, Europe increasingly looks for partners who can deliver both compliance and capability, and India is aligning well with this expectation.

The proposed India–EU Free Trade Agreement is expected to further strengthen trade ties, improve market access, and enhance India's competitiveness in the European market.

### The EU aims for sustainability by 2030. Are Indian exporters ready to adapt to new regulations?

The EU's sustainability agenda is reshaping global textile trade, and Indian exporters are responding with growing preparedness. Many manufacturers have already begun integrating renewable energy, water-efficient processing technologies, and sustainable raw materials into their operations.

Institutional research and development support has played a key role in translating sustainability policies into practical solutions. Developments such as flame-retardant fabrics, alkaline-resistant polyester, and sustainable sanitary napkins demonstrate how Indian innovation is addressing safety, durability, and environmental responsibility in parallel.



As one industry perspective highlights, sustainability in India is becoming structured and science-driven, not ad hoc. This shift positions Indian exporters well to meet evolving European regulations while maintaining competitiveness.

### What is the EU Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)?

The ESPR is a key pillar of the EU's sustainability framework. It aims to ensure that products entering the European market are designed to be durable, repairable, recyclable, and resource-efficient.

For the textile sector, ESPR shifts the sustainability focus upstream—towards product design, material selection, and lifecycle considerations. Indian exporters who adopt these principles early will gain a strategic advantage, as compliance increasingly becomes a prerequisite for market entry. As widely acknowledged, designing for sustainability is no longer optional; it is becoming a market entry requirement.

### Can you elaborate on the Digital Product Passport (DPP) system?

The DPP is intended to enhance transparency across the value chain by digitally recording a product's material composition, origin, processing methods, chemical compliance, and recyclability.

For Indian exporters, implementing DPP will require stronger traceability and data management systems. However, it also presents a valuable opportunity to demonstrate compliance, build buyer confidence, and differentiate credible manufacturers in the European market. As stakeholders note, transparency will reward credible manufacturers, and India has the institutional framework to support this transition.

### India hosts globally significant textile recycling hubs. How would exports from India's recycled textile industry to the EU benefit the country?

India's established recycling hubs, such as Panipat and Tiruppur, provide the country with a natural advantage in circular textiles. With the EU mandating higher recycled content in textile products, India is well positioned to supply recycled fibres, yarns, and fabrics to European markets.

Beyond export growth, this strengthens domestic sustainability and circular infrastructure. Innovations such as geogrid-reinforced pavements illustrate how recycled and technical textiles can extend service life while reducing material consumption. As often noted, circularity is not new to India—it is being strengthened with technology and standards.

In parallel, India is enhancing its global testing capabilities. BTRA is establishing the country's first aircraft interior textile testing facility, enabling fire, smoke, and toxicity compliance testing within India. This reduces dependence on overseas testing and supports participation in high-value global supply chains.

## About Bombay Textile Research Association (BTRA)

In the immediate aftermath of India's Independence, the nation faced a critical vacuum in scientific research and technical expertise within its textile sector — then one of the most vital pillars of the economy. Recognizing the urgent need to build indigenous capabilities and strengthen technical infrastructure, The Bombay Textile Research Association (BTRA) emerged as a visionary institution to bridge this gap and lay the foundation for research-driven industrial growth. Proposed in 1948 under the Ministry of Commerce, The Bombay Textile Research Association (BTRA) was formally established in 1954 with equal (50:50) financial contribution from the Government of India and the Mill Owners' Associations. This unique public-private partnership model reflected a shared national commitment toward modernization, technological advancement, and self-reliance in textiles.

BTRA was established in the heart of Mumbai on a sprawling 22 acre campus, strategically located within India's historic textile hub. Today, the campus houses advanced laboratories, pilot plants, testing facilities, training infrastructure, incubation centre and specialized research centres dedicated to serving the evolving needs of the textile and technical textile sectors.

In recent years, BTRA has strategically expanded into advanced and high-performance materials, achieving a major milestone with the development of India's first indigenous carbon fibre precursor. The association is actively advancing research in next-generation high-strength fibres such as Ultra-High Molecular Weight Polyethylene and aramid fibres to strengthen domestic capabilities in lightweight and performance-critical applications. Alongside these innovations, BTRA has contributed to the development of flame-retardant fabrics, alkaline-resistant polyester fabrics, geogrid-reinforced pavement systems, sustainable products, and protective textiles. With over seven decades of service, BTRA stands as a symbol of India's scientific resilience, industrial modernization, and technological leadership in textiles and technical textiles.



## Five different trade shows on a single trip (Germany 2026)



It was in Philippines during a trade show that a journalist while praising my versatility on writing on numerous subjects asked if I had ever covered 3 different category trade shows on a single trip in different locations in a single country, except your home country. This got me thinking and taking it as a challenge this April while visiting Germany (my 65th trip to the country), for the first time I covered 5 different category trade shows in a single trip all in different cities

1. Wire and Tube industry, Düsseldorf
2. Aircraft Interiors Expo, Hamburg
3. FIBO (Fitness, Wellness, Health), Cologne
4. Hannover Messe 2026, Hannover
5. Techtexstil, Frankfurt



Each show a global leader in its own sector. While Massive geopolitical challenges did affect the visitor count on all major trade shows, the quality of visitors made the difference at these events. It was a true pleasure crisscrossing across Germany to attend these shows and adding to my knowledge in different sectors.

Over the years, except Antarctica, I have had the pleasure of covering trade shows across all the other six continents

– Australia, Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America. CES, Las Vegas remains the trade show that has hosted me the maximum times - 18 years.

### Trade shows in Germany

With an estimated 700+ world renowned trade shows in Germany featuring world-class venues and unparalleled business opportunities it is surely the mecca for trade shows. Been fortunate to have covered numerous trade shows, a few for several years. In Germany the events are - CeBIT, Hannover (13 years till 2012); ITB, Berlin (14 times); IMEX, Frankfurt (9 Times); Hannover Messe (6 times); Electronica,

Munich (5 times); IFA, Berlin (4 times); Productronica, Munich (3 times); Embedded world, Nuremberg (3 Times); Bauma, Munich; Medica, Dusseldorf; K Dusseldorf; Frankfurt Book Fair, Frankfurt; INTERNORGA, Hamburg; InnoTrans, Berlin; IAA Transportation, Hannover; SENSOR+TEST, Nuremberg; OPTATEC (Optics and Optoelectronics), Frankfurt; INTERSOLAR EUROPE, Munich; automatica, Munich; Sea Trade Europe, Hamburg; art Karlsruhe; Wire and Tube, Düsseldorf; Aircraft Interiors Expo, Hamburg; FIBO (Fitness, Wellness, Health), Cologne; Techtexstil, Frankfurt; World Expo 2000, Hannover; India Summer Days, Karlsruhe; Indian Film Festival, Stuttgart etc.



### Global Trade Shows (outside Germany)

Some of the other trade shows globally (outside Germany) that we have been invited include CES, Las Vegas (18 years); Hong Kong Electronics Show (14 years); WTM, London (3 times); ATM, Dubai (4 times); GITEX, Dubai (6 times); IBTM, Barcelona (4 Times); MWC, Barcelona (Twice); Start Up Village, Moscow (3 times); ITB, Singapore (Twice); AVN Adult Entertainment Expo (AEE), Las Vegas; Singapore FinTech Festival (SFF); Dubai



Air Show; CeBIT Australia; CeBIT China; CES China; CTIA wireless, Las Vegas; PATA events (various locations); ATF (various locations); IT&CMA, Bangkok; TTM+, Bangkok; Meetings Africa, Johannesburg; Travel Turkey Izmir, Turkey; ICTP Seychelles; TIME, Indonesia; IHIF, Berlin; HICAP, Hong Kong/Singapore; HICAP Update Singapore; Taitronics, Taiwan; CEATEC Japan; Latin Americas leading Electronics and Eletrolar Show in Brazil and Argentina etc.

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