

TRAVEL · SOUTH  USA

MONTHLY REPORT
October 2025

Prepared By:

sartha
global
marketing 
Driving Tourism Success

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India Market Summary

Outbound travel sentiment in India remains highly positive, with more travelers viewing trips as an integral part of their lifestyle rather than an occasional indulgence. The USA continues to be the top long-haul choice for Indian travelers. Currently, over 5 million Indians hold valid US visas, and according to the US Embassy in New Delhi, Indian nationals now represent one in every ten US visa applicants globally.

India, the world's fifth-largest economy, is projected to grow between 6% and 7% in FY25, reinforcing its status as one of the fastest-growing major economies. In 2024, the USA received 2.19 million visitors from India 24.3% increase over 2023, ranking India as the #2 overseas source market (excluding Canada and Mexico) and #4 overall for international arrivals.

With Indian travelers typically holding a 10-year U.S. visa and a significant proportion comprising repeat visitors, the Southern states present considerable potential as destinations to explore. Through the GPP program, our focus will be on promoting the diversity and distinct character of the Southern states in the Indian market, thereby generating stronger interest and engagement among Indian travelers. The rich combination of culture, cuisine, music, and outdoor experiences offered by the region is particularly appealing to the Indian audience, making it a compelling proposition for both first-time and repeat visitors.

The country is now the world's third-largest aviation market, with significant airport expansions underway—growing from just 74 airports in 2013 to 157 today. Air connectivity to the USA continues to improve, with Air India adding new non-stop routes and other global carriers, such as Emirates, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Virgin Atlantic, British Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss Air, and KLM–Air France–Delta, expanding capacity.

Indian travelers increasingly seek diverse experiences spanning sports, entertainment, cruises, wellness, and adventure tourism. Travel is now seen as a contributor to personal well-being and a way to collect unique experiences from shopping and cultural activities to culinary explorations. This shift is fueled by a young, affluent, and digitally savvy population, with millennials and Gen Z leading the way. Rising incomes and a “You Only Live Once” mindset are encouraging higher spending on premium services and exclusive travel opportunities. India's digital adoption is robust, with 806 million internet users (55.3% penetration, up 6.5% year-on-year) and stable mobile connectivity at 1.12 billion connections, covering 76.6% of the population.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sartha Global Marketing is the India representation for **Travel South USA (TSUSA)**, covering **nine Southern states** – *Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee* – along with **Rhythms of the South (ROTS)**, a tri-city partnership between *Atlanta, Nashville, and New Orleans*. As a team we plan to focus on building destination awareness, strengthening travel trade engagement, enhancing consumer visibility, and driving visitation from India through an integrated marketing, PR, and trade outreach program.

- 1. Brand Visibility & Awareness:** Implement a multi-pronged strategy combining **digital amplification, earned media, PR outreach, and travel trade engagement** to build strong brand recall for TSUSA and its partner states in the Indian market.
- 2. Promoting All Nine States + ROTs:** Ensure consistent coverage, storytelling, and marketing representation for all nine Southern states and ROTs, giving each destination a unique positioning while highlighting their collective appeal.
- 3. Driving Indian Arrivals:** Increase **visitation, length of stay, and traveler spend** by targeting both first-time and repeat visitors to the USA, positioning the South as a must-visit region.
- 4. Highlighting the ‘All Y’all Are Welcome’ Message:** Leverage this signature Southern hospitality tagline to reinforce the warmth, inclusivity, and authenticity of the travel experience in the South.
- 5. Thematic Promotion Through Key Pillars:** Focus storytelling and promotional efforts on six major pillars – **Music, Outdoors, Local Culture & History, Culinary & Whiskey/Bourbon, and Road Trips** – to create immersive travel narratives.
- 6. Travel Trade Training & Sales Meetings:** Conduct targeted training sessions, webinars, and in-person sales calls to equip Indian travel agents and tour operators with product knowledge and itinerary ideas for the South.
- 7. Earned Media & PR Outreach:** Generate sustained coverage in leading Indian travel, lifestyle, and consumer publications through **press releases, media pitches, and hosted familiarization trips**.
- 8. Digital & Social Media Amplification:** Drive online engagement through tailored digital campaigns, influencer collaborations, and social storytelling to connect with potential travelers across India’s key source markets.

II. Comms & PR

- 1 content piece was disseminated to the consumer media platforms
 - Tracing Southern USA's Culture and Cuisine during Thanksgiving
- 5 media coverages were generated from October's content, along with two additional features from the previous month's "Roadtrip" piece.
- Total 7 media coverage generated.
- 2 social media links garnered
 - <http://instagram.com/p/DPVnUIqCu6/?igsh=N2U4cmdoemx2M2ty>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/100067293198771/posts/1122036140049482/?mibextid=wwXIfr&rdid=gtY9HkqpLVRpdIFl#>
- [Coverage book link](#)

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News / [Exploring Southern USA Thanksgiving Traditions: Culture, Cuisin...](#)

Exploring Southern USA Thanksgiving traditions: Culture, cuisine, and holiday cheer across the States

etimes.in / Oct 19, 2025, 23:54 IST



Southern states embrace Thanksgiving with rich traditions and culinary delights. Missouri dazzles with holiday lights and festive tree farms. Alabama honors a turkey pardon and offers unique beverages and appetizers. Louisiana's New Orleans presents diverse dining, from classic turkey to innovative dishes like turduc ... [Read More](#)



The Southern states of the USA are a vibrant blend of traditions, culture, hospitality, and cuisine that have a profound influence on holiday celebrations, such as Thanksgiving. From exploring the origins of Thanksgiving to modern festive customs, these Southern states have maintained their culture and cuisine around the holidays as a testament to community spirit and a joyful way to kick off the festive season.

A Cultural Celebration: Thanksgiving and Holiday Traditions in Missouri

Missouri offers many opportunities to create memories and traditions over Thanksgiving, celebrating culture and community like no other. Holiday lights in downtown Kansas City are a beautiful sight, and for many families, the season is not complete without them. A flip of the switch on Thanksgiving evening reveals thousands of jewel-toned lights outlining every dome, tower, and window in Kansas City's Country Club Plaza. The lights illuminate the 15-block shopping district, creating a sparkling scene every year. In addition to its own beautiful holiday decorations, The Raphael Hotel in Kansas City boasts incredible views of Kansas City's dazzling Country Club Plaza light display.

From Thanksgiving through mid-January, the historic shopping district glows in jewel-tone colours. A flip of the switch on Thanksgiving evening reveals the lights outlining every dome, tower, and window in the 15-block area. The lighting ceremony has been a Kansas City tradition since 1930.

The Christmas tree fields at Meier Horseshoe Pines Tree Farm, near Jackson, and Starr Pines Christmas Tree Farm, near Boonville, offer a family-friendly experience that ignites the festive spirit and marks the start of the joyous holiday season, typically around Thanksgiving. Climb aboard a wagon pulled by Belgian horses to pick your perfect pine, fir, spruce, or cedar, where visitors can cut their own tree or shop for wreaths and gifts and meet friendly donkeys, to enjoy a holiday farm experience from Thanksgiving through Christmas.

Alabama's Thanksgiving Table



Alabama celebrates Thanksgiving with its Southern warmth, blending traditional as well as progressive recipes and culinary rituals that capture the true spirit of the season. In June 1923, W.C. Bates received nine turkey eggs as a wedding gift from his aunt. Almost nine decades later, Bates Turkey Farm in Greenville still raises free-range turkeys and markets its products, whole turkeys, turkey breasts, turkey jerky, turkey sausage and more. Just down the road, Bates House of Turkey serves everything from turkey sandwiches to turkey soup and turkey casserole. Each year at Thanksgiving, in a tradition that dates back nearly 65 years, the governor of Alabama pardons a turkey (always named Clyde) from the Bates farm.

Every good Thanksgiving meal begins with a holiday beverage, and luckily for you, Fairhope Brewing in Fairhope has just what you need. The Judge Roy Bean Coffee Stout is carefully crafted and consists of a nice, creamy cold coffee flavour that mixes perfectly with the base stout. This beer is a light option, which means it is a great way to begin your meal. However, if you are more into cocktails, give the Holiday Old Fashioned at the Haberdasher in Mobile a try. This drink consists of house-made cranberry syrup, genever, London dry gin, and bitters.

Before you dig into the main course, take a minute to warm yourself up with a cup of house-made soup from the Basketcase Cafe in Dothan. Choose from a cup of savoury Cream of Tomato Soup or Sweet Corn Chowder for the perfect local way to start Thanksgiving. After a nice, warm cup of soup, indulge in the flavours of the Butcher's Board from Acre in Auburn. This appetiser includes four house-cured meats, pickles, pecan mustard, local cheese, fruit, and benne crackers, all served on a piece of Alabama wood.

Louisiana's Culinary Vision for Thanksgiving



In Louisiana, New Orleans' culinary scene offers all sorts of dining options for a Thanksgiving dinner, including prix fixe, à la carte or catering feasts for brunch, lunch, dinner, and dessert featuring traditional holiday favourites to Southern contemporary twists. The Thanksgiving table d'hôte at Arnaud's typically features roasted butternut squash soup, the chef's signature Shrimp Arnaud marinated in Creole remoulade sauce, traditional roast turkey with cornbread or oyster dressing and candied yams, and more. Brennan's offers a three-course menu starting with the classic turtle soup topped with brown-butter spinach and grated egg. For the main course, options have included roasted buttermilk-brined turkey breast with cranberry and rosemary jus, chicory-rubbed beef tenderloin with red wine sauce or Creole-spiced Gulf fish with Brussels sprouts and hazelnut butter. Finish with a seasonal dessert or Brennan's world-famous bananas foster, flambéed tableside.

Thanksgiving dinner at Ralph's on the Park typically includes turtle soup or roasted squash and pumpkin soup, before moving on to traditional roasted turkey with giblet gravy, cranberry compote and roasted sweet potatoes or seared duck breast with citrus-glazed baby carrots. Finish with pumpkin cheesecake or praline bread pudding. Luke's Thanksgiving menu features a quirky Louisiana dish: a turducken served with wild mushroom giblet gravy and satsuma cranberry marmalade. If turducken is not your thing, consider a garlic and herb-roasted prime rib.



Add a side like blue crab mac and cheese or spinach Madeline before ending the meal with a Lyonnaise pink praline tart. To try something new this Thanksgiving at Jack Rose. Previous menus have included lamb bacon pappardelle, flounder en papillote with crab boil butter, fall vegetable-and-jackfruit pot pie and more. Do not miss their famous Mile High Pie or trendy DuBayou Chocolate Cake for something sweet.



FOOD & TRAVEL

Tracing Southern USA's Culture And Cuisine During Thanksgiving

BO CORRESPONDENT - 2 WEEKS AGO



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A Southern Thanksgiving Exploring Holiday Traditions Across Missouri, Alabama, and Louisiana

GlobalSpa

27-Oct-2025



A Southern Thanksgiving Exploring Holiday Traditions Across Missouri, Alabama, and Louisiana

From Missouri's dazzling light displays to Louisiana's Creole feasts and Alabama's heartwarming traditions, experience Thanksgiving the Southern way.

The Southern states of the USA are where you will get to witness a spectacle of traditions, culture, hospitality, and cuisine that have a profound influence on holiday celebrations, such as Thanksgiving. From exploring the origins of Thanksgiving to modern festive customs, these Southern states have maintained their culture and cuisine around the holidays as a testament to community spirit and a joyful way to kick off the festive season.

Here's a complete guide on how to celebrate Thanksgiving in the Southern States of the US

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(Country Club Plaza)

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Image Credits: Travel South USA

III. Trade

Trade Engagement & Sales Activity

- Continued engagement with key travel trade agencies through:
 - 12 sales calls
 - 3 in-person meetings

Training & Presentations

- Destination presentation prepared and shared with the TSUSA team — approved for limited use across trade and training sessions.
- First round of TSUSA product trainings scheduled until 20th November, covering five travel trade agencies.

Travel South International Showcase 2025 Coordination

- All participants' international tickets confirmed.
- Internal flights for the **Virginia FAM** confirmed.
- Meeting schedules for Indian delegates finalized.
- Flight Info document sent for delegate airport transfers

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/Next step
DreamTrip4U	The agency has steady FIT & Family group business to the US. Keen on exploring the South as an offbeat destination	Website and asset library link shared
The Travel Therapist	The agency has plans to promote TSUSA for FIFA 2026	Interested in Fall season itineraries. Details shared
Windmill Holidays	The agency has expressed positive intent towards TSUSA as she has already been on a musical Tour with us in the past. Focus on repeat travellers	Website and asset library link shared
Wayfarers Hub	This social media focused agency is open to promoting TSUSA for their repeat clients	Website and asset library link shared
Thomas Cook	Discussions for a product training started with this top National travel agency	Destination training set for early Nov with product team
Windstar Holidays	Bangalore based agency keen on offbeat destination promotion	Website and asset library link shared
Harmony Tours	The agency has requested sample itineraries and promotional videos to promote TSUSA	Website and asset library link shared

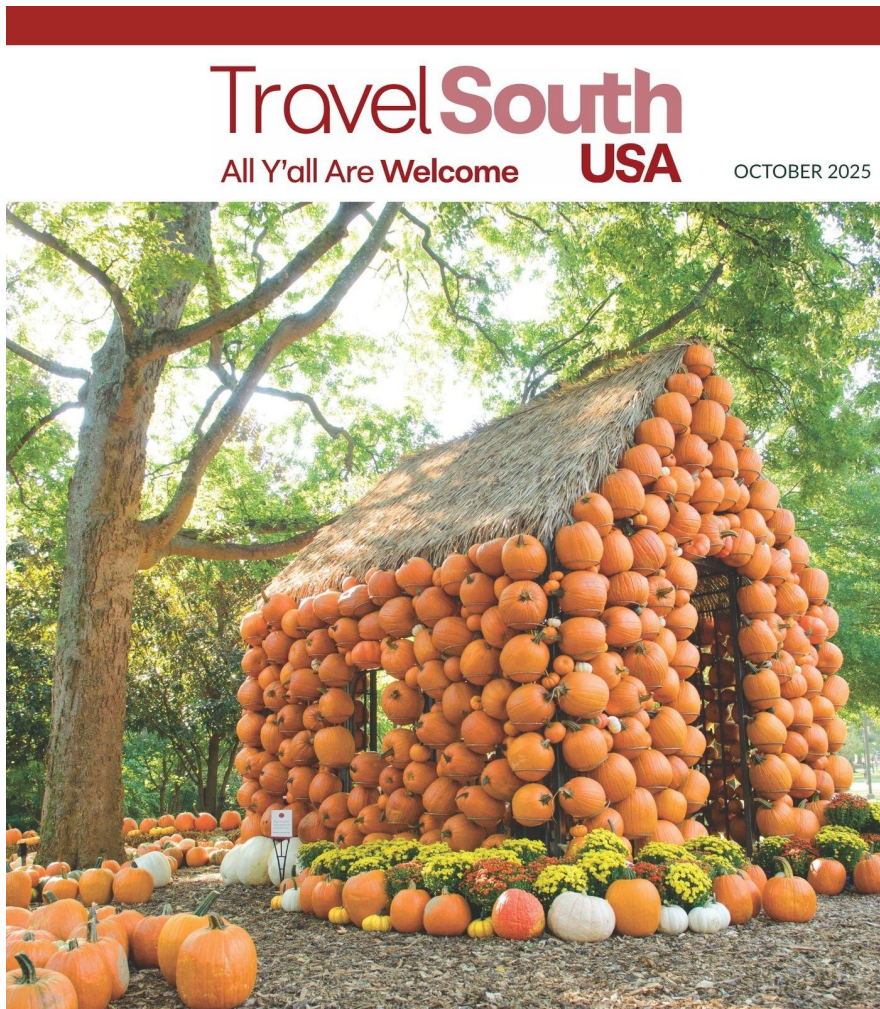
Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/Next step
East West Travel	The agency is currently promoting VFR to US and would include TSUSA itineraries with either New York or Florida	Website and asset library link shared
One Travel Park	Hyderabad based agency positive on promoting TSUSA for their repeat clientele	Destination training to be planned
World of Vacations	The agency is open to creating products for TSUSA for their 2026 USA lineup	Destination training set for early Nov with product team
SOTC	Discussions for a product training started with this top National travel agency	Destination training set for early Nov with product team
1497 Original Senses	The agency is currently selling Atlanta and New Orleans and is keen on learning more about TSUSA. Destination training webinar set for mid-Nov	Destination training set for mid-Nov with product team
Travel Butler	The agency promotes FIT and cruise focused itineraries. Interested in TSUSA as an add-on destination	Website and asset library link shared
Ashoka Dream Holidays	The agency is interested for a product training webinar in Nov.	Destination training to be planned for Nov end
Veena World	A destination training session with their FIT & GIT Products team is set for 20th Nov	Destination training set for mid-Nov with product team

IV. Monthly Newsletter

- Disseminated our monthly e-newsletter to our active database of over **6,690** active **travel trade** and over **300+** **media** pan-India.
- **E-newsletter theme: Trick or Treats Edition**
- **Disseminated on: October 06, 2025**

E-newsletter Average Opening Rate:

- **Travel Trade: 32.80%**
- **Media: 22.90%**



TRAVEL SOUTH USA: TRICK OR TREATS EDITION

Welcome to the Southern USA in all its seasonal glory, where crisp air, colorful foliage, and sun-kissed shores set the stage for unforgettable adventures. From scenic hikes and pumpkin-filled festivals to outdoor thrills and cultural experiences, the South offers fall adventures that awaken the senses. So, grab your cozy sweater and get ready to explore this vibrant, season-filled region.

IV. Monthly Newsletter



KENTUCKY

Enjoy bourbon and chocolate pairings along Kentucky's Bourbon Trail, from Evan Williams' "Choc-ology" tour to tastings at Woodford Reserve and Lux Row. This sweet indulgence pairs perfectly with the season, as haunted sites like Waverly Hills Sanatorium and the Old Talbott Tavern add a spooky backdrop to a Halloween night that warms the spirit.

WARM YOUR SPIRITS



ARKANSAS

October brings the best fall flavors- cool enough for soup, yet warm enough to enjoy it outside. Savor farm-to-table meals at The Root Café in Little Rock or The Farmer's Table in Fayetteville, seasonal brews on the Arkansas Brewery Trail, and quirky fair bites like funnel cake burgers and pickle pizza. Hungry yet? Plan your visit today!

SAVOR THE FLAVOR



SOUTH CAROLINA

Each October, Conway, South Carolina, blends small-town charm with spooky fun as downtown fills with glowing pumpkins, festive décor, photo ops and so much more. Local cafés and restaurants join in with pumpkin-spiced treats, Halloween cocktails, and ghostly desserts, making it a cozy, fun and family-friendly Halloween destination.

SPOOKY FUN



TENNESSEE

Fall in Tennessee brings colorful mountain views, cool crisp air, and flavors of the season. A local favorite is The Apple Barn in Sevierville, where family recipes like apple fritters and Apple Stack Cake make autumn even sweeter. Visitors can also sip fresh cider, explore local wineries, or pair their fall getaway with scenic hikes through the Smokies.

EXPLORE FALL



MISSOURI

Fall in Missouri means crisp air, scenic drives, and colorful foliage across the state. Festivals, pumpkin patches, and cozy campfires make the season festive, while St. Louis adds a sweet twist- Sugarwitch ice cream sandwiches, inspired by famous witches, with rotating seasonal flavors alongside favorites like "Ursula" and "Elphaba."

A SWEET TWIST



RHYTHMS OF THE SOUTH

Fall in the South brings flavors and festivities- Atlanta offers pumpkin treats and haunted thrills, Nashville shines with harvest flavors and Oktoberfest cheer, and New Orleans delights with gumbo, po'boys, and spooky parades. Colorful foliage, and lively street events make it the perfect time to explore these cities.

EXPLORE MORE

IV. Monthly Newsletter

FUN FACT

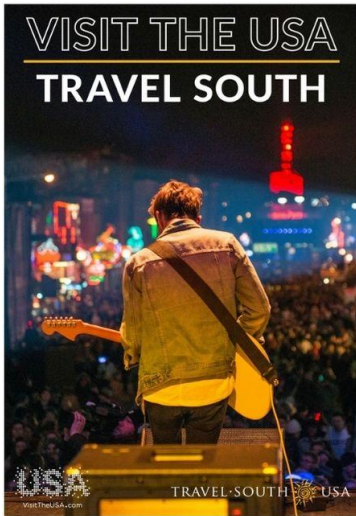
In Missouri, pumpkin isn't just for pies- it's in the beer too! Local favorites include Schlafly's Pumpkin Ale in St. Louis and Mr. Pumpkin from Mother's Brewing Co. in Springfield.

**Travel
South
USA**
All Y'all Are
Welcome

ABOUT TRAVEL SOUTH USA

Travel South USA is America's oldest and largest regional travel promotion organization, formed in 1965 by a resolution presented at the Southern Governors' Conference. The long-standing regional collaboration of the state tourism offices of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia provides a foundation to positively position tourism as a vital and dynamic element in the region's economic development.

VIEW THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNER



V. Digital & Social Consumer Outreach

October marked the second month of Travel South USA's social media rollout in India with -

- focus on **content experimentation** to identify formats that resonate with the Indian audience.
- **positive traction** with improved engagement and expanding platform reach.
- Growth achieved **despite limited availability of video assets**, indicating strong audience interest in the destination.

Facebook

- **Views:** 124 total, indicating stable visibility and sustained audience interest.
- **Interactions:** 23 total, showing improved engagement compared to the launch phase.
- **Page Visits:** 19 visits, suggesting better click-through and content exploration.

Instagram

- **Views:** 479 total, marking a strong increase in visibility and video performance.
- **Reach:** 118, maintaining consistent audience expansion beyond followers.
- **Interactions:** 49 total, indicating steady responsiveness to reels and experiential storytelling.

Both platforms reflect encouraging early-stage growth, with Instagram leading in engagement and Facebook showing signs of strengthening awareness.

Highlights:

- Steady growth in **digital presence** and audience engagement across platforms.
- Continued momentum in building **awareness of the American South's diversity and experiences**
- **Instagram** led performance with **479 views** and **49 interactions**, reflecting strong response to visual storytelling.
- Increased engagement across both platforms indicates **early-stage audience connection and recall**.

VI. Industry Updates

Market and Economy Updates:

- An Amadeus global study finds Indian travellers leading in adopting AI and biometric technology, with 74% preferring biometric gateways and 64% open to AI assistants—highlighting India’s push toward smarter, seamless travel experiences.
- Airbnb reports a 30% year-over-year increase in searches by Gen Z travellers in India, highlighting a rising trend toward longer, experience-focused, and culturally immersive holiday getaways.
- Booking.com and Accenture’s How India Travels 2025 report reveals that 80% of Indian travellers now view accommodations as central to their travel experience. AI-driven planning, digital payments, and evolving hospitality trends are shaping this shift, with 83% saying AI simplifies travel decisions.
- According to CAPA India, Indian travel spending has skyrocketed from US\$17 million to US\$17 billion in 15 years, with 50 million Indians expected to travel abroad by 2030. Affluent travellers, particularly from Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, are prioritizing experience-led luxury, making travel their top lifestyle choice.
- Visa wait times improved significantly by September 2025. **Chennai's wait time** decreased from 8.5 months in August to **2.5 months**, with the next available slot at 3 months. **Hyderabad** stayed steady at **3 months**, but availability increased to 3.5 months. **Kolkata's** wait time slightly reduced from **6 to 5.5 months**.

Travel Trade Update:

- MakeMyTrip launches “Travel Ka Muhurat”, a new annual travel promotion bringing together top airlines, hotel brands, and banks to offer exclusive deals from Oct 29 to Nov 30, 2025, inspiring year-end domestic and international travel.
- MakeMyTrip partners with Google Cloud to improve its AI-powered Myra platform using Gemini, Vertex AI, and Google Maps, providing faster, more personalized, and multilingual travel planning for Indian travellers.

Aviation Update:

- Gulf Air began flying to New York on October 1, 2025. The airline resumed its direct, three-times-weekly service from Bahrain International Airport (BAH) to John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK). This service signifies the airline's return to the U.S. market after a long hiatus.

Other National Tourism Organization & DMO Update:

- Brand USA launched 'America the Beautiful,' a global tourism campaign unveiled at Travel Week UK & Europe 2025, with the goal of increasing U.S. tourism ahead of major 2026 events like the FIFA World Cup and America’s 250th anniversary.
- Tourism Western Australia concluded its largest-ever India campaign, led by Hon. Reece Whitby MLA, which attracted 38,000 visitors and generated AUD 75 million by June 2025 through collaborations with trade, media, and Swiggy (an Indian food delivery platform).

VI. Industry Updates

Media Updates in October 2025

- A recently released report, titled The Ormax OTT Audience Report: 2025, profiles Indian OTT audiences across various parameters and highlights key aspects of India's current media landscape: [Read more](#)
- India's Connected TV (CTV) audience base has increased by 85 percent in just one year, from 69.7 million in 2024 to 129.2 million in 2025.
- CTV has surpassed other devices like laptops and tablets to become the second most used device for streaming in India, after the ubiquitous smartphone.
- Netflix's India division reported a 63% increase in net profit for FY25 compared to the previous year, according to its filings with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), sourced from Tofler. [Read more](#)
- Indian content gained significant worldwide popularity, making up 15% of Netflix's Top 10 non-English titles globally in 2024. At least one Indian title appeared in the global Top 10 each week, with stories from India reaching audiences in over 80 countries.
- The government is increasing efforts to position India as a global content production hub, with the information and broadcasting ministry (MIB) and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) working together to establish a supportive policy and regulatory environment for the country's rapidly growing media and entertainment (M&E) sector, focusing on animation, gaming, content exports, and live events. [Read more](#)
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has proposed mandatory labelling of all AI-generated content across major social media and generative AI platforms, marking India's first comprehensive attempt to regulate deepfakes and synthetic media amid rising concerns over AI misuse. [Read more](#)
- The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) plans to raise advertisement rates for print newspapers by about 26% to support a struggling print media industry during its digital transition, with a similar increase for television ad rates expected soon. [Read more](#)
- India's micro-drama platforms have achieved an annual revenue run rate of approximately \$500 million, with more than 550 titles currently in production in Mumbai. [Read more](#)
- Following President Donald Trump's proposed 100% tariff on foreign-made films, Indian filmmakers pointed out that although it is too early to gauge the full impact, Hindi movies may face a 3–4% revenue decline, while South Indian films could see a 5–6% drop if the tariff is applied to theatrical releases in the U.S. [Read more](#)
- YouTube has experienced a over 250% year-on-year increase in shopping-related watch time in India, leading it to expand its Shopping Affiliate Program with new merchant partners and advanced creator tools. [Read more](#)

VII. What's Coming Up – Action Items

- **Engage with targeted travel trade partners** to conduct destination training sessions and initiate product development discussions aimed at increasing awareness and inclusion of Travel South USA states in their itineraries.
- **Curate and localize content for media dissemination** throughout November, focusing on stories that highlight the region's diverse experiences including music, culture, festivals, holiday season and cuisine tailored for the Indian audience.
- **Disseminate organic Travel South USA content** across social media platforms to maintain consistent visibility and audience engagement, aligning posts with ongoing trade and media activities.
- **Engagement:** Introduce interactive content such as polls, and trivia to enhance audience participation.
- We will **add call-to-action prompts** (“Plan your Southern escape”, “Follow for more Southern stories”) to drive traffic and measurable outcomes.