

INDIA REPORT

FEBRUARY 2026

Travel
South
USA

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ABOUT TSUSA

Global Partner Programming

The TSUSA GPP provides a foundational base from which state tourism offices have shared in-country representation with international export marketing and sales activities. Managed by Travel South USA, the official regional destination marketing organization for the 12 state tourism offices, these collaborative efforts create leveraged actions, increase reach of travel trade and journalists, and coordinated consumer campaigns which deliver visitors to the South. In 2019, the Travel South USA region welcomed 10.2 million visitors, who spent \$10.3 billion, with 90% of these visitors arriving from 15 markets from around the globe.

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. The country is now the world's third-largest aviation market, with significant airport expansions underway.

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.

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

- TSUSA was represented at “**Elite America Coast to Coast Training**” a trade focused in-person training session attended by 30 travel agents hosted by an Indian DMC Sans Incredible in association with the U.S. Commercial Service at the US Consulate in Mumbai.
- We are in continuous contact with travel trade and media partners with **91 trade meetings** and **41 media meetings** to date.
- For GMM 2026, we have five confirmed Indian participants & one Sartha Escort
 - Ms. Pallavi Mehra (GA FAM)
 - Ms. Teja Lele (LA FAM)
 - Ms. Pallavi Pasricha (WV FAM)
 - Ms. Namita Gupta (VA FAM)
 - Mr. Santhosh Jacob (AL FAM)
 - Mr. Ajitesh Singaria (Sartha Escort) (AL FAM)
- We gained **45 new Facebook followers** and **43 new Instagram followers** in Feb 2026

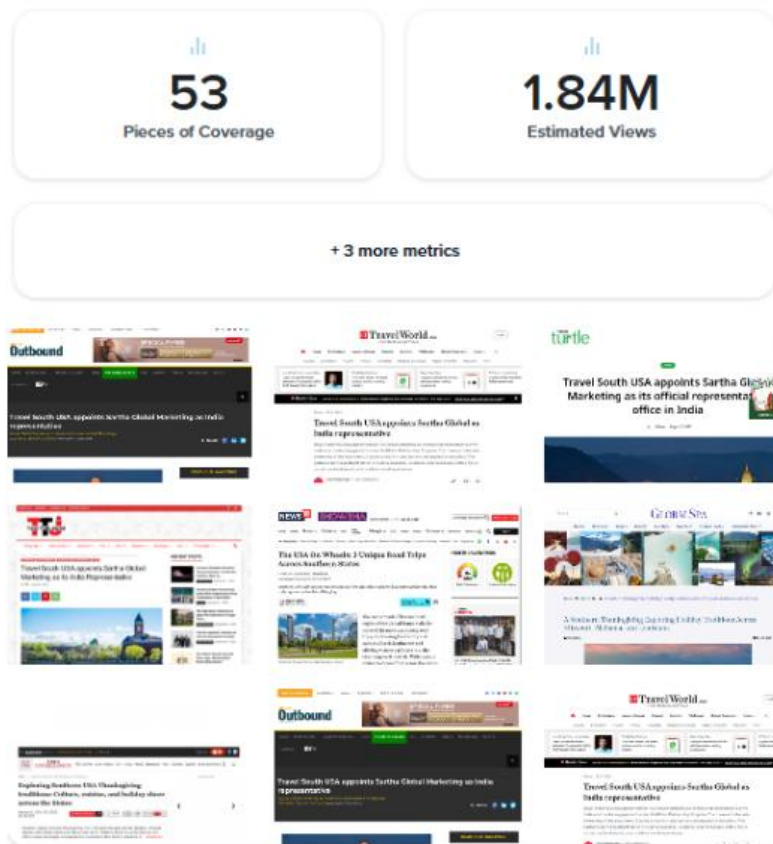
		Q1 TOTAL	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q2 TOTAL	Jan	Feb	FY25/26 Total
10 partners AL/AR/KY /LA/MS/ MO/NC/S C/TN/RO TS	India								
	Trade								
	Trade Meetings/Trainings	9	15	19	16	50	15	17	91
	Number of Agents Trained	4	13	24	14	51	13	42	110
	Managed Media								
	Media Meetings	10	10	10	5	25	6	5	41
	Total number of articles published	14	7	6	5	18	5	6	43
	Impressions	4,63,50,000	20,86,77,600	4,81,90,000	20,00,000	25,88,67,600	1,09,97,443	33,00,000	31,95,15,043

II. Comms & PR

Meetings with media, coverage opportunities, contacts, press trips, earned media valuation, clippings, and others.

News Releases

- 5 media clippings were generated in the month of February.
- 1 piece of content was disseminated to the consumer media platforms, “The Musical Spirit of New Orleans: Jazz Fest, Local Music Scene, and Beyond”.
- It got 3 media pickups, additionally we have got coverage in Travel & Food Network based on the January content “Get Your Kicks on Route 66: A Family-Friendly Road Trip Through Missouri’s History and Culture”.
- There is an additional coverage for Travel South India Activation held in Delhi on 23rd January 2026.
- CoverageBook Link - <https://app.coveragebook.com/29490/books/5c685b5c980151ee>



II. Comms & PR

Media Contacts(phone calls, emails, personal meetings) cont.

Contacts	Discussion points	Website
Peak Life	The journalist covered an article based on the February theme “ New Orleans: Jazz Fest, Local Music Scene, and Beyond”.	https://peaklife.in/
Retropop	The journalist covered an article based on the February theme “ New Orleans: Jazz Fest, Local Music Scene, and Beyond”.	https://www.retropoplifestyle.com/
Bott India	The journalist covered an article based on the February theme “ New Orleans: Jazz Fest, Local Music Scene, and Beyond”.	https://bottindia.com/
The Hans India (Print)	Content shared to the journalist on the February theme “New Orleans: Jazz Fest, Local Music Scene, and Beyond”. Coverage in pipeline.	https://www.thehansindia.com/
Travel & Food Network	The journalist covered an article based on the January theme “A Family-Friendly Road Trip Through Missouri’s History and Culture”.	https://www.tfninternational.com/
India Outbound (Magazine)	The journalist covered the Travel South India Activation held in Delhi on 23rd January 2026.	https://indiaoutbound.info/

III. Trade

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
N Chirag	Training with 7 members from their products & sales team along with possibility for product development	Product development push
Ways2Wander	Training with 3 members from their products team. Itinerary focus & product dev on website	Follow-up email with important links was sent to all participating members. Product development to follow
Nivalink	Follow-up over product listing on their website. Product upload expected by first week of March	Follow-up email with important links was sent
Vora Travels	Training with 2 members from their products & sales team along with possibility for product development	Follow-up email with important links was sent. Additional itinerary links from our website was sent separately
Veena World	Follow up over product listing. An FIT product will be listed in March. Training arranged for March 1st week	Additional options discussed for further products list
Dolphin Tours	Continued discussion over new product development	Product development push
Uday Tours	Push for FIT product upload on website	Product development push
Sahajanand Travels	Follow up call for product development. March 1st week seems possible	Product development push
Thrillophila	Discussion about adding products from New Orleans to their portfolio	Follow-up email with important links was sent to all participating members. Product development to follow
Travel Butler	Discussion on FIFA 2026 and focus on Atlanta & Kansas City	Product development push

III. Trade

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
Harmony Tours	Follow up on offbeat products. Assisted with appropriate itinerary links	Follow-up email with important links was sent. Product development to follow
Riviera Tours	Introduction to TSUSA and request for product training webinar	Follow-up email with important links was sent. Product development to follow
Varun Worldwide	Follow up on TSUSA FIT products.	Follow-up email with important links was sent
Akbar Travels	Follow up for FIT product upload and eventually a GIT product. They will update us with the possibilities post mid-March	Product development to follow
Vinaayak Holidays	Introduction to TSUSA products and itineraries for VFR clients.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.

Elite America Coast to Coast Training - U.S Commercial Service & Sans Incredible

We were a part of an in-person training & networking session for **30 travel agents** at an event hosted by an Indian DMC Sans Incredible in association with US Commercial Service at the US Consulate General in Mumbai.

Travel South USA presentation was a highlight of the event as it was presented as a new U.S. destination targeted towards repeat travellers and VFR client as well as for the 90+ pre-curated ready itineraries available for trade agents.

IV. Newsletters

Trade Newsletter to 6000+ tour operators/ travel agent professionals and 300+ media professionals

Status	Topic	Trade Open Rate	Media Open Rate
Travel South USA Newsletter Series# 6	Soul Food: BBQ to “Meat & Threes” Honoring Civil Rights Legacies: February 09, 2026	17.50%	19.70%
	Featured Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee and Rhythms of the South		



Travel South USA

All Y'all Are Welcome

FEBRUARY 2026



SOUL FOOD: BBQ TO “MEAT & THREES” HONORING CIVIL RIGHTS LEGACIES

Welcome to the American South - where soulful flavors, powerful history, and rich cultural storytelling come together to create unforgettable journeys. From iconic barbecue and comfort food traditions like the classic meat and three - a hearty main paired with three comforting sides, to civil rights landmarks, music museums, and historic districts, the region invites travelers to experience stories passed down through generations. Follow the smoke, savor every bite, and discover a South where food and history are deeply intertwined.

IV. Newsletters



KENTUCKY

Kentucky's soul food scene celebrates authentic African American flavors beyond classic Southern fare. From Louisville to Lexington and Winchester, family-run favorites serve comforting staples. Round out the experience with the Kentucky African American Heritage Trail, highlighting historic sites, and cultural contributions across the state.

[CELEBRATE IT ALL](#)



ARKANSAS

Soul food in Arkansas blends culture, and history, with flavors rooted in community and the Civil Rights era. From the legendary Jones Bar-B-Q Diner, one of the oldest Black-owned restaurants in the U.S., to Little Rock's historic gathering places and barbecue spots, the state's smoked meats and slow-cooked sides tell stories passed down through generations.


[EXPLORE MORE](#)



MISSOURI

Missouri's Black history comes alive through museums and historic sites that highlight milestones that shaped the state and the nation. From music and sports to soul food, these landmarks across Kansas City, St. Louis, Arrow Rock, and beyond preserve powerful stories of resilience, creativity, and achievement worth exploring on any trip through the state.

[READ FURTHER](#)



TENNESSEE

Tennessee offers a powerful journey through African American history, highlighting the communities who helped shape the state and the nation. From key stops on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail to influential museums celebrating soul music, civil rights leaders, and cultural icons, bring stories of creativity, and triumph vividly to life.

[KNOW MORE ABOUT IT](#)



RHYTHMS OF THE SOUTH

Atlanta, Nashville, and New Orleans blend Southern comfort food with powerful Civil Rights and cultural legacies. From barbecue, meat-and-three diners, and soul food institutions to landmark museums and historic neighborhoods, each city offers a flavorful way to experience the South's history, music, and community in one meaningful journey.

[EXPLORE MORE](#)

YOUR NEXT SOUTHERN ADVENTURE STARTS HERE!

FUN FACT: The Mosaic Templars Cultural Center marks Black History Month with February programs and community events celebrating Arkansas' Black heritage and culture.

FOR MORE UPDATES, LOCAL SECRETS, AND TRAVEL INSPIRATION, FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



V. Social Media

- TSUSA India Facebook page generated 1,692 views and 29 interactions, reflecting consistent engagement among the audience reached.
- TSUSA India Instagram delivered 1,249 views and 1,155 reach, maintaining steady visibility on the platform.
- The community continued to expand with **88 new followers** added across Facebook (43) and Instagram (45).
- Instagram recorded 15 interactions and 5 profile visits, showing early interest in exploring the page further.

VI. Market Update

Market & Economy Updates

- The India–U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement marks a significant step in strengthening trade ties, securing preferential access for Indian exports to the large U.S. market.
 - It provides tariff rationalization, zero-duty access across key categories, enhanced digital and technology collaboration, and safeguards to protect future trade.
 - Under the agreement, tariffs on a substantial portion of Indian exports have been reduced from 50% to 18%, and to zero on other segments—enhancing price competitiveness and enabling greater access to the U.S. market.
 - However, the recent reversal by the US Supreme Court of the tariff levied by the US government has cast a shadow on this agreement and further clarity is now awaited.
- International air travel to and from India reached a record high in October–December 2025, exceeding 20 million passengers. Despite challenges, including visa delays, total international passenger traffic rose 8% year-on-year to 78 million in 2025.
- Airspace closures due to the Iran- USA/ Israel conflict, across the Middle Eastern countries, including Qatar and the UAE, disrupted a key global aviation corridor connecting India with Europe and North America. Some flights to Europe and North America are rerouting through alternative corridors, which increases flight duration and operational costs. However, Air India has added additional flights, and Emirates and Qatar Airways, two of the largest Middle Eastern carriers, have announced that normal flights will resume in the next few days.
- TravClan, a B2B travel technology platform, notes in its India Outbound Travel Index 2025 that Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are driving outbound growth. The report is based on data from approximately 247,000 international passengers across 170 destinations.
- Thomas Cook (India) Ltd. and SOTC Travel have unveiled the Business Travel Report 2026, offering an analysis of India’s corporate travel sector based on insights from 25+ enterprises.
 - The report underscores a strong revival in business travel, based on three defining factors: cost efficiency, digital transformation, and enhanced employee experience.

Travel Trade Updates

- MakeMyTrip.com has announced a strategic collaboration with OpenAI to strengthen its AI-first travel discovery approach.
 - By integrating OpenAI’s APIs into its app, MakeMyTrip now enables travelers to plan and book trips through Myra, its generative AI assistant that offers real-time conversations, personalized recommendations, and seamless end-to-end bookings.
- Visa has partnered with TBO.com to launch JourneyCollection.travel, a white-label platform offering Visa cardholders exclusive global hotel deals and benefits. Powered by TBO, it serves as a seamless booking channel with curated Visa-exclusive offers worldwide.

VI. Market Update

- MakeMyTrip has signed an agreement to acquire a majority stake in Flamingo Transworld, subject to closing conditions. The acquisition aims to strengthen MakeMyTrip's holiday packages portfolio and expand its presence in regional markets.
 - With over three decades of operations and a strong network of 51 offices across western and central India, Flamingo Transworld is known for its curated group tours for domestic and international travelers. The partnership is expected to enhance MakeMyTrip's reach and deepen its penetration in regional travel segments.
- South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) 2026 brought together 2,000+ exhibitors and 3,200+ brands from 60 countries, reinforcing its position as South Asia's leading travel trade show. The event spotlighted India's expanding tourism landscape, with a strong emphasis on global partnerships, innovation, and sustainable growth across domestic and international markets.

Airline Updates

- Air India has rolled out a new 360-degree campaign, The Premium You Deserve, spotlighting its Premium Economy offering—now available on 60% of its fleet—and positioning it as a comfort-first travel mindset rather than just an upgrade.
- Air India will deploy new and retrofitted aircraft with upgraded cabin interiors across major international routes as part of its Northern Summer Schedule 2026. The airline will introduce Premium Economy on additional routes, increase frequencies to North America and East Asia, and reintroduce First Class on select long-haul services.
- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has revised its rules related to airline ticket refunds and introduced a 48-hour "look-in" period that allows passengers to cancel or amend their bookings without paying extra charges.
 - For international routes, this facility will apply only if the date of departure is at least 15 days away.

National Tourism Organization & DMO Update

- Following its participation at OTM Mumbai, South African Tourism continued its Annual India Roadshow with the Ahmedabad leg, engaging with 250 Indian travel trade and reinforcing India's importance as a key source market for South Africa.

VI. Market Update

Media Updates

- India recently hosted the AI Impact Summit 2026, a global meet for Artificial Intelligence that brought together policymakers, investors, tech leaders and startups from across the globe, highlighting real-world AI applications across sectors, with Indian AI and gaming startups taking center stage, signalling a future of cutting-edge innovations that position the country at the forefront of AI-powered gaming, immersive experiences and next-generation digital ecosystems worldwide. [Read more](#)
- Speaking at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, the founder and CEO of the global technology company and India's first unicorn, InMobi, said AI driven "agentic commerce" could generate an economic impact of nearly USD 3 trillion in India over the next two decades. [Read more](#)
- India's creator and news ecosystem could unlock economic potential exceeding US \$2.83 billion by 2035 through the responsible adoption of generative AI, according to Gail Kent, Director of Global Government Affairs and Public Policy, Search and AI at Google. [Read more](#)
- According to the Dentsu e4m Digital Advertising Report 2026, Indian digital media is expected to account for nearly 70% of total advertising spend by 2027, signalling a decisive shift away from traditional media formats. Online video is projected to capture a 29% share of India's digital advertising expenditure by the end of 2026, emerging as one of the most engaging formats for mobile-first audiences. Social media currently commands the largest share of digital ad spend at 29%. [Read more](#)
- India's advertising market has reached a milestone, with total advertising expenditure projected to reach US \$20.85 billion in 2026, up 12% from 2025. [Read more](#)
- India's micro-drama segment, 90-second to two-minute ultra-short narrative videos, is now in the digital mainstream, supported by major investments by OTT and short-video platforms. This has a potential to attract 150 million viewers in India over the next 12–24 months, with revenues nearly doubling in 2025, on the back of the country's 750–800 million smartphone users. [Read more](#)
- In the Union Budget 2026–27, the Indian Finance Minister positioned India's "Orange Economy," spanning animation, visual effects, gaming, and comics (AVCG), as a key job generator, and the sector is projected to employ nearly two million professionals by 2030. [Read more](#)
- The debate over age restrictions for social media in India is intensifying, with lawmakers proposing a bill to ban accounts for children under 16 to protect them from exploitation and ensure data privacy, potentially affecting major platforms like Meta and Snapchat. [Read more](#)

VII. Actions

Travel South USA Product Development

- Ongoing efforts to expand the portfolio of Travel South USA products among Indian trade agencies.

Travel South USA GMM26 Date Apr 22-30

- For Travel South USA GMM 2026, we have five media confirmations plus a Sartha Global Escort. Flight tickets have been booked, further coordination currently underway.

Newsletter

- March Edition - Sports Scores Big with Foodies: Tailgating to Stadiums
- Focus states – Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina

Social Media

- Prioritize destination-driven Reels showcasing experiences, landscapes, and quick travel highlights to improve reach and discovery on Instagram and Facebook.
- Feature a wider mix of states and attractions across posts.
- Use concise destination insights, travel tips, and experience-led narratives to make posts more informative and shareable.
- Introduce polls, trivia, and “save-worthy” listicles (e.g., Top places, weekend itineraries) to increase comments, shares, and overall engagement.