

INDIA REPORT

JULY 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 normally stay over 2 weeks in the USA, and 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

- Trade and media discussions for TSUSA continued with outreach to 16 trade companies and 7 media companies in July 2026
- TSUSA India provided destination trainings to 3 companies (2 DMC's and 1 Regional Tour Operator) engaging 116 participants.
- **New Product** listed on Kesari Tours - [LINK](#) includes Missouri: St. Louis 1N, Tennessee: Memphis 2N, Nashville 2N, Georgia: Atlanta 2N
- Recruitment of 9 trade and 2 media delegates for TSUSA International Showcase 2026 completed. Below are the confirmed participants -
 - Thomas Cook/ SOTC - Mr. Shishir Khambete
 - Flamingo Transworld Pvt Ltd - Ms. Vyoma Dandawala
 - Veena World Hospitality - Ms. Sunila Patil
 - Pathfinders Holidays - Mr. Mahendra Vakharia
 - Holiday Tribe - Mr. Anshu Sharma
 - Windmill Holidays - Ms. Manu Kashyap
 - DreamSetGo - Mr. Manvendra Singh
 - Bespoke Serenity - Mr. Naresh Chandnani
 - Ottila International - Mr. Bhanu Aravindakshan
 - Travel Trade Journal - Ms. Prativa Bhalla
 - India Outbound - Ms. Varsha Singh
- 7 media meetings were completed in July, resulting in 5 earned media clippings. Additionally, 4 articles were generated from GMM 2026, and 1 from International Showcase 2025.
- Generated an opportunity from Manifest India for feature on the topic "Honeymoon Destinations in Southern USA"
- Executed the monthly content calendar and maintained consistent social media hygiene across Facebook and Instagram.
- Developed the next social media content calendar to ensure continuity in seasonal and experience-driven storytelling.

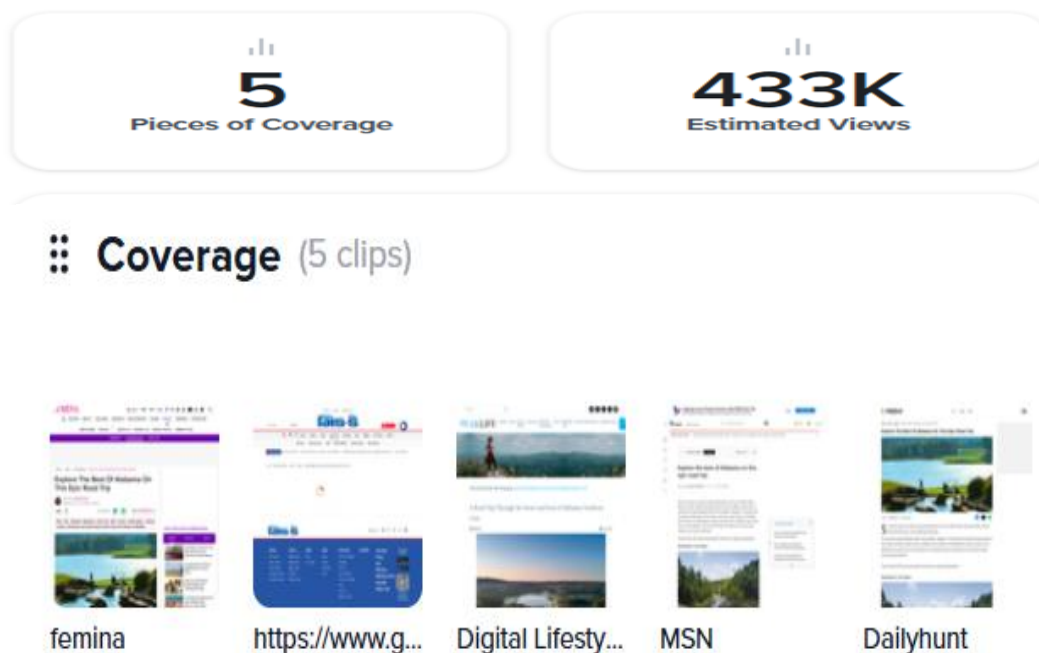
II. Comms & PR

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

News Releases

- A total of 10 media clippings were generated in July, including 5 earned media pieces.
- Additionally, 4 clips were printed based on the GMM 2026 post FAM, and 1 coverage resulting from the International Showcase 2025.
- Content piece was disseminated to consumer media platforms with the topic “Road Trip in Alabama”
- **GMM 2026:**
Teja Lele, Freelance Writer
 - 2 media clips appeared in Mint (Print & Online) in July, highlighting Southern cuisine.
- **Namita Gupta- Editor in Chief, Provoke Lifestyle**
 - 1 media clip appeared in Provoke Lifestyle Magazine (July Edition highlighting Virginia
- **Pallavi Pasricha, Freelance Writer**
 - 1 media clip appeared in Global Spa online (Online) based on her FAM to West Virginia
- **International Showcase 2025:**
Varsha Singh, Editorial Director, India Outbound
 - 1 media clip appeared in India Outbound Magazine (July-Aug Edition), highlighting Charleston’s History on special feature on America’s 250th anniversary

CoverageBook Link - <https://app.coveragebook.com/29490/books/baac13aea7790ec7>



II. Comms & PR

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

Contacts	Discussion points	Website
Mint (Print)	Bring the flavours of Cajun cuisine into your kitchen	https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge
Mint (Online)	7 edible Souvenirs for you to get started on Cajun cooking at home	https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge
Provoke Lifestyle (Print)	The America You Haven't Seen Yet	https://provokelifestyle.in/
Global Spa	West Virginia's Small Town Charm	https://globalspaonline.com/
India Outbound	Charleston: House Where History Was Written	https://indiaoutbound.info/
Femina	Explore The Best Of Alabama On This Epic Road Trip	https://www.femina.in/
MSN	Explore The Best Of Alabama On This Epic Road Trip	https://www.msn.com/en-in
Dailyhunt	Explore The Best Of Alabama On This Epic Road Trip	https://m.dailyhunt.in/
Peak Life	A Road Trip Through the Heart and Soul of Alabama, Southern USA	https://peaklife.in/
Gujarati Mid-day	Know the right spots and location while you take road trip to alabama to explore South America	https://www.gujaratimidday.com/

III. Trade

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
GRN Connect DMC	Training conducted with 22 participants and we proposed the development of TSUSA focused itineraries.	Follow-up email with important links was sent
Flamingo Transworld	Training conducted with 18 participants and we proposed the development of TSUSA focused itineraries for their 2027 products aimed at FIT and Group tour clients	Follow-up email with important links was sent
TBO (DMC)	Training conducted with 76 sales and operations agents from their pan-India offices and we proposed the development of TSUSA focused products for 2027.	Follow-up email with important links was sent
SOTC	Product development discussion on 2027 products. In-person training planned for Wk2 Aug.	Maintain regular outreach
Nivalink	Follow up over product development. FIT focused products to be listed on their website.	FIT Product development push
Thomas Cook	Follow up over product development. FIT focused products to be listed on their website.	FIT Product development push
Harmony Tours	Discussion on new product development and focus on states like Kentucky, North & South Carolina and ROTS. They are open to promoting off-beat US destinations.	FIT Product development push
Sahajanand World Travel	Follow up over product development. FIT focused products to be listed on their website.	Maintain regular outreach
Kesari Tours	Introduced TSUSA as a FIT destination for new product development on Kesari Select.	Follow-up email with important links was sent Product development to follow
GT Holidays	Product development discussion on 2027 products. In-person training planned for Wk2 Aug.	Product development push

III. Trade

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
NCS Travels	Discussion over new product development and social media promotion on their Instagram page.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.
Traviante	Product development discussion on 2027 products. They have a high-end repeat clientele to USA.	Maintain regular follow-up
Good Earth Holidays	They sell TSUSA destinations such as Georgia, Savannah, Charleston, North Carolina and Virginia to repeat USA travellers. We have educated them on other parts of the region and shared assets.	Maintain regular follow-up
Red Carpet Travel (DMC)	Promoted product development for Kentucky, Missouri and Mississippi highlighting key experiences.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.
Sulit Lifestyle	Promoted organic social media media promotion on their instagram pages with a focus on food, music and outdoors.	Digital asset link shared
Bespoke Serenity	Discussion on the upcoming TSUSA Int. showcase along with destination training opportunity for Aug for product development.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.

IV. Social Media

- The content strategy maintained consistent visibility across Meta, generating 4.3K+ total views and 199 content interactions.
- Instagram remained the primary engagement platform, contributing 1.2K+ views and driving 20 new followers.
- Facebook continued to support brand visibility, generating 3.1K+ views and 123 interactions.
- Approximately 14% of Instagram views came from non-followers, indicating continued content discovery beyond the existing audience and helping introduce Travel South USA to new users organically.

V. Market Update

Market & Economy Updates

- India will remain among the world's fastest-growing major economies, with its GDP projected to expand by 6.4% in FY 2026-27, supported by strong private consumption and robust services sector activity, according to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) July 2026 World Economic Outlook (WEO) Update.
- In June 2026, India ranked as the #2 overseas market with 202,831 arrivals. YTD, India has 971K arrivals to the USA. Demand remains strong.
- A new Future Market Insights report projects India's outbound tourism market to expand from USD 23.4 billion in 2026 to USD 68.8 billion by 2036, growing at an 11.4% CAGR. Holiday and leisure travel is expected to lead demand with a 46.8% share, while online booking is forecast to account for roughly 42.3% of outbound transactions.
- Research by Marriott International's Luxury Group indicates that affluent Gen Z travelers across South Asia and Asia-Pacific are increasingly prioritizing cultural immersion, local cuisine, wellness and authentic experiences over traditional luxury. The study also found that younger travelers are becoming more independent in planning and funding their holidays, while taking fewer but longer international trips, reflecting growing demand for personalized, experience-led travel.

Travel Trade Updates

- MakeMyTrip and Cleartrip have launched distinct creator initiatives Creator Circle and Creators Club, to turn social media inspiration into direct travel bookings. While both platforms tap into the shift toward creator-led travel discovery, they use different payout structures, targeting strategies, and automation tools across Instagram and YouTube.

NTO Updates

- Destination DC conducted an India Sales Mission from August 2–5, 2026 across Delhi, Bangalore, and Ahmedabad.

V. Market Update

Airline Updates

- Beginning 1 December 2026, EVA Air's new nonstop Delhi-Taipei service will provide Indian travelers with one-stop access to seven major U.S. gateways via Taipei, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, New York, Chicago, Houston, and Dallas/Fort Worth, further expanding connectivity between India and the United States. EVA Air also holds a Star Alliance partnership with Air India, enabling connections from Delhi to other major Indian cities. Eva Air will operate 5x weekly on Airbus A330-300 aircraft; bookings are open.
- Air India has appointed Tewolde Gebremariam on August 5, 2026 (former CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group) as its new Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, succeeding Campbell Wilson. He will lead the airline's next phase of growth, focusing on operational excellence, international expansion, hub development, safety, and profitability.
- Willie Walsh has taken over as CEO of IndiGo, effective August 3, 2026, succeeding Pieter Elbers. He served as Director General of IATA and previously lead British Airways and International Airlines Group (IAG), bringing extensive experience in global airline strategy, long-haul growth, and network development.

Media Updates

- India's digital production print market is expected to see steady growth in FY 2026-27, driven by rising demand for short-run printing, personalized output, automation and workflow integration. [Read more](#)
 - Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities are emerging as key growth markets, with increased adoption of digital presses across publishing, education, packaging and commercial printing segments.
- The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) has recommended that member newspapers impose a temporary 15% surcharge on advertisement rates from 1 August 2026 to offset rising newsprint and production costs. [Read more](#)
 - Publishers have also been advised to notify advertising agencies in advance to avoid billing disputes, with the surcharge described as a recommendation rather than a mandatory industry rule.
- India is considering a dedicated AI law that may introduce rules for autonomous AI systems, synthetic media and deepfakes, including consent-based frameworks and accountability measures. [Read more](#)
 - The proposed regulation could impact digital media platforms by strengthening controls on AI-generated content, data usage and transparency requirements.
- Indian films and series generated 688 million views on Netflix during the first six months of 2026, according to the streaming platform's latest What We Watched report. [Read more](#)
 - The company described the period as its strongest first half for Indian content to date. During the January-June period, India ranked third globally for overall film viewing, behind the United States and the United Kingdom.

V. Market Update

- Prime Video India has signed a multi-year distribution agreement with South Korean entertainment studio CJ ENM to expand its Korean content catalog in India, bringing more than 100 titles to subscribers, a move highlighting the growing importance of international content in India's OTT market. [Read more](#)
- India's creator economy is emerging as a new media segment and developing a new middle class, with micro and mid-tier creators building sustainable businesses through brand collaborations, digital platforms and niche communities. [Read more](#)
 - The growth of regional and independent creators is reshaping media consumption, as brands increasingly prioritize authentic voices and highly engaged audiences over traditional influencer reach.
- AI is rapidly transforming the advertising industry, making traditional agency contracts based on billable hours less practical as many creative and operational tasks become automated. [Read more](#)
 - As a result, agencies and brands are increasingly shifting towards outcome- and value-based pricing models on business impact rather than time spent.

VI. Actions

1. Travel South USA International Showcase 2026

- Successfully recruited 9 travel trade and 2 Media delegates for the upcoming showcase with follow-ups currently on their air ticket bookings.
- FAM's for all delegates along with City Tours confirmed.

2. Trade

- Brand USA Educational Seminar in Pune (Aug 4)

3. PR

- August Content– Take a Scenic Train Ride through Southern USA

4. Social Media

- Leverage itinerary carousels to inspire trip planning and increase saves, shares, and travel consideration.
- Capitalize on seasonal travel opportunities by aligning content with upcoming festivals, fall experiences, culinary events, and outdoor adventures across the Southern USA.
- Maintain a video-first approach, repurposing high-quality destination films and Reels to maximize reach and engagement.
- Introduce more planning-focused content such as weekend escapes, road trips, and bucket-list experiences to move audiences from inspiration to consideration.
- Continue showcasing a balanced mix of states through a rotational content strategy, ensuring broad destination visibility while keeping the content fresh and diverse.