



GCC outbound travel, tourism market size to hit \$138bn by 2033

MUSCAT: The IMARC Group's latest research publication, "GCC Outbound Travel and Tourism Market Size, Share, Trends and Forecast 2025-2033" estimates the market to reach \$138.06 billion by 2033, exhibiting a CAGR of 7.1pc from 2025-2033.

The region's strategic position, robust aviation infrastructure and liberalised visa regimes have positioned GCC nationals as highly sought-after

tourist demographics. The GCC outbound travel and tourism market share continues to expand as travellers increasingly demonstrate a preference for premium experiences, cultural immersion and wellness journeys.

Multiple interconnected factors propel the GCC outbound travel and tourism market trends forward, from the proliferation of

budget carriers and digital booking platforms to an emphasis on experiential travel and wellness tourism. The expansion of low-cost carrier networks has fundamentally democratised international travel for GCC populations, making outbound tourism accessible to middle-income families. Budget airlines operating from Gulf hubs have proliferated routes connecting secondary cities across Asia, Europe and Africa, offering competitive fares that lower barriers to international travel. This aviation revolution has particularly benefited younger demographics and expatriate communities, enjoying unprecedented mobility and destination choice.

A significant development supporting market

growth is the Unified GCC Tourist Visa, which will allow seamless travel across all six member states—UAE, Saudi, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain—under a single digital application.

Major GCC airports have transformed into world-class hubs featuring extensive route networks, efficient transit facilities and competitive pricing, facilitating seam-

(Cont. on page - 2)

CHARTERED FLIGHTS FROM RUSSIA, UK ARRIVE

Goa expects five lakh tourists for New Year celebrations

PANAJI: The former Portuguese colony of Goa is bracing for an inflow of tourists in the run-up to New Year's Eve, as at least five lakh visitors are expected to throng the beaches and party hotspots of the coastal state to usher in the festivities.

Talking to a TV channel, State Tourism Director Kedar Naik said Goa is a safe destination and people would continue to enjoy their New Year celebrations here. Popular

beaches are gearing up for grand firework displays, while shacks are transforming into high-energy party zones that will keep buzzing late into the night.

The state was fully geared up to receive visitors from India and abroad, Naik said. "Goa is all set to welcome tourists for the New Year's Eve celebrations. We have seen a large number of tourists coming into the state this entire year," he said. While the number of tourists was

considerably low due to flight cancellations in the first week of Dec, things have picked up and now visitors are crowding the beaches and the hinterland, Naik claimed. "Regular chartered flights are coming in from Russia and the UK. Apart from these,

(Cont. on page - 2)

Action assured against violations by RAs

NEW DELHI: Referring to the issue of inconsistency in the business operations of Recruiting Agents (RAs), holding Registration Certificate for carrying out business of recruitment of Indian workers for overseas employment and with a deployment capacity exceeding the prescribed limit of 100 workers, Birendra Kumar, Under Secretary (Policy/LP&G) OE & PGE Division, Ministry of External Affairs, has insisted that strict action will be taken against them if proper list of such RAs along with supporting documents for consideration and necessary action are provided to the ministry.

DEFECTIVE PASSPORT COULD NOT BE SCANNED

NRI detained, deported from Thailand

PHUKET: What was meant to be a pleasant family holiday turned into a nightmarish ordeal for a 30-year-old man hailing from Bathinda district in Punjab. Currently living in Can-

(Cont. on page - 2)

DUBAI: Two new airlines have received approval to start operations, raising hopes among UAE-India travellers that airfares to the country could ease. While the announcement has generated interest, travel agents said that any real impact on ticket prices will only be known once flights actually begin.

AIHind Air, one of the airlines which gained approval

al to operate, has received initial clearance from the civil aviation ministry and plans to begin domestic operations first before expanding internationally. The UAE is expected to be among its first international destinations once regulatory requirements are met. Another airline named FlyExpress has also been granted a NOC as part of the the govern-

ment's effort to encourage competition in the aviation sector.

Travel industry executives said that the entry of new

(Cont. on page - 3)

HOLIDAY NOTICE
As Thursday, January 1, is New Year's Day, the **one** office will remain closed. Therefore, no e-newspaper will be published on Friday, January 2.



NAVI MUMBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT OPERATIONAL



First commercial aircraft, belonging to IndiGo, landing on the runway of Navi Mumbai International Airport. The airport is now fully functional.

NRI detained, deported from Thailand

(Cont. from page - 1) Airport. Sidhu said he was stopped by Thai immigration officials on Dec 19 after his Indian passport, issued by the Indian embassy in Canada, failed to scan due to a technical glitch. Despite having travelled extensively to countries such as the US, Dubai, Malaysia and Indonesia without any issues earlier, he claimed he was not allowed to enter Thailand.

"I was travelling with my

GCC outbound travel, tourism

(Cont. from page - 1) less international travel. Modern airport terminals with superior passenger amenities have elevated the entire travel experience, encouraging more frequent trips among Gulf residents.

Online booking platforms have empowered GCC travellers with unprecedented control over travel arrangements, enabling direct price comparisons, service reviews and customer feedback across multiple providers. This transparency has intensified competition while enhancing consumer confidence in digital transactions.

wife and our nearly two-year-old daughter, both Canadian citizens. When the officials could not scan my passport, I requested them to make a manual entry and showed them my previous visas. However, they refused and instead asked me to contact the Indian embassy in Canada," Tanveer said.

He alleged that his attempts to contact the embassy failed. Meanwhile, his wife and daughter were allowed to proceed towards the baggage area. "Thankfully, I had handed over my wallet to my wife earlier. Otherwise, they would have been left

with no money at all in a foreign country. Our hotel was almost two hours away from the airport," he recalled. Tanveer said he was later taken to a detention centre where around 20-25 other people were already present. "I kept requesting the officials to let me make a phone call. After some time, I was allowed to call a friend, who then contacted an ex-diplomat. Soon after, the immigration officials received a call, and their behaviour towards me changed," he claimed. Though he was not allowed to leave the

detention centre, Tanveer said the authorities eventually agreed on his request to deport him back to India along with his wife and daughter. He further claimed that he was made to sign certain documents written in English and Thai, without proper explanation. Tanveer, who works as a property manager with a private company in Calgary, said the incident has left him traumatised and raised serious questions about how technical glitches and lack of coordination between authorities can severely impact travellers, especially those with families.

Kerala's non-resident bank deposits cross Rs 3 trillion

KOCHI: Kerala's banking sector has raced past a historic landmark. For the first time, non-resident (NR) deposits in banks in the state crossed the Rs 3-trillion mark — a symbolic threshold that underscores the state's deep economic umbilical link with its global diaspora.

As on Sept 30, 2025, NR deposits stood at Rs 3,03,464.57 crore, up from Rs 2,86,987.21 crore three months earlier — an increase of Rs 16,476.79 crore or 5.75pc in a single quarter. The rebound is particularly striking because

the April-June quarter had seen a rare dip, when deposits slipped 2.31pc or Rs 6,634.92 crore — the first decline in several quarters. The long-term trajectory, however, has been one of steady ascent. Kerala reached its first trillion in March 2015, before doubling it by March 2020. It took another five years to vault past Rs 3 trillion.

At the heart of this surge lies a mix of sentiment, economics and strategy, according to banking industry officials. A weaker rupee, attractive de-

(Cont. on page - 3)

Goa expects five lakh tourists for New Year celebrations

(Cont. from page - 1) new chartered services have been started to new destinations and will continue to come till March," he said. Tourists were seen soaking in the festive atmosphere at restaurants, flea markets and promenades in Calangute and Baga in North Goa and South Goa's beaches, including Benauli, Majorda, Colva and Palolem. For domestic tourists, the New Year

celebrations make Goa the destination of choice this time of the year. Social media influencers and content creators are using the vibrant atmosphere as a backdrop for their work, mixed with leisure. "I have been coming to Goa for many years, and we love Goa. I love the seafood and everything about the place," said Vrushali Jawale, a content creator from Mumbai.

Fireworks are slated to light up the skies along the shoreline at midnight on Dec 31, while cruise vessels plan special sailings, and music festivals and club events are expected to continue till dawn. The state, long known for its easygoing vibe, beach shacks and nightlife, is once again set to transform into a massive open-air party venue for revelers from across the world.

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Kerala's non-resident bank deposits...

(Cont. from page - 2)
 posit rates, and renewed post-pandemic remittance momentum have strengthened inflows, they said.

"Historically, a weakening rupee relative to the US dollar has resulted in increased inflows into NRE accounts. This year's inflows have followed this established trend," said Joy PV, country head-retail liability and fee products of Federal Bank.

The bank, which leads Kerala's NR deposit league table with Rs 85,250.08 crore, credits its performance to deep remittance linkages and trust built

over decades.
 "Federal Bank's strong rupee drawing arrangement and wide global correspondent network make remittances easy for NRIs. With innovative and tailored savings products, competitive interest rates, and relationship-led banking, we have consistently earned customer trust. Along with favourable exchange rates, these have helped attract substantial inflows to NRI accounts," Joy said.

If Federal Bank holds the crown for volume, Canara Bank has delivered the quarter's biggest headline-grabbing leap. Its NR

deposits more than doubled — from Rs 10,935.71 crore to Rs 21,914.95 crore, an astonishing Rs 10,979-crore jump in just three months. No other bank in Kerala's NR portfolio comes close to that kind of growth spurt this quarter — a burst that bankers attribute to targeted mobilisation campaigns and aggressive rate positioning.

The State Bank of India remains a strong second in the rankings, with Rs 80,234.07 crore in NR deposits as of Sept, reinforcing its formidable base among long-standing expatriate customers.

FOREX RATES

As on 29nd December 2025 (In rupees)

Currency	BillBuy	BillSell
US Dollar	89.33	90.49
British Pound	120.6	122.34
Euro	104.82	107.06
Japanese Yen	57.12	58.03
Swiss Franc (CHF)	112.64	115.13
Canadian Dollar	65.09	66.57
Australian Dollar	59.9	61.2
Norwegian Krone	8.83	9.09
Swedish Krona	9.65	9.93
New Zealand Dollar	51.81	52.97
Hong Kong Dollar	11.34	11.69
Kuwaiti Dinar	298.9292	282.1745
Singapore Dollar	69.24	70.82
Saudi Arabian Riyal	23.51	24.25
UAE Dirham	24.06	24.75

Will UAE-India airfares...

(Cont. from page - 1)
 airlines could put pressure on fares, but they are cautious that it is too early to make any forecast. "Once the airline is operational, there may be an impact on airfares. Prices could be reduced when more seats are available. Still, it is difficult to estimate at this stage how much of a change we can expect," said Subair Thekepurathavalappil, senior manager

at Wisefox Tourism.

He added that demand for India routes from the UAE remains consistently high. "Flights to major cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and South Indian cities are always in demand. During peak seasons, these flights are usually full. If the supply of seats increases, people are likely to travel more often," he said.


China Visa Update

We hereby inform you of new update has been released for visa Application Process.

From now onwards All documents for visa application will be upload online, and payment for VFS charges have to made online only.

After online submission, once the Documents will be Review by the VFS they will send a mail "online review completed" then We have to submit Original Passport, Photo with confirmation page at VFS.

! Please Note :

AT PRESENT KEEP THE TRAVEL DATE OF AFTER 20 DAYS AT LEAST, AS FOR DOCUMENTS VERIFICATION HOW MUCH TIME VFS WILL TAKE IS NOT CONFIRM YET




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GULF FAQS

What are a woman's rights if husband abandons her, their children?

My husband and I got married in Dubai a few years ago. We've been experiencing some differences, and recently, he packed his bags and left our home, abandoning me and the children. What are my legal rights in this situation? He has not sent a divorce notice yet, but if he does, I am prepared to challenge it in court. What are my rights in this scenario? Is he still obligated to pay rent and other household expenses, given that he chose to leave?

It is assumed that you are a non-Muslim resident of Dubai, and you are married to a non-Muslim male; therefore, the provisions of the UAE Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims are applicable. A non-Muslim individual who is a UAE resident may file for a divorce as per the provisions of the enacted UAE Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims or may also apply his or her respective family law under which he or she is married. This is in accordance with Article 1 (1) of the

Article 1 (1) of the

Federal Decree-Law No. 41 of 2022 on Civil Personal Status, which states: "The provisions of present Decree-Law shall apply to non-Muslim citizens of the UAE and to non-Muslim foreigners who reside in the state unless one of them invokes the application of their respective law, in relation to matters of marriage, divorce, estate, will and proof of affiliation, without prejudice to Articles 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17 of the referenced Federal Law No. 5 of 1985."

The provisions of the UAE Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims allow an individual to obtain a divorce in the first hearing of the court itself. This is in accordance with Article 3 of the UAE Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims, which states: "Divorce cases that are filed in accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law shall not be referred to the family guidance committees and shall be referred directly to the court to issue a judgment at the first hearing."

Moreover, an individual

may also seek a unilateral divorce in the respective Personal Status Court in Dubai without providing any justification or reason for divorce. This is in accordance with Article 7 of the UAE Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims, which states: "Unilateral divorce may be requested and granted if either spouse expresses in court his/her desire to separate and

lims, which states: "The divorcee, after issuance of divorce order, apply to the court to obtain an alimony judgment from her ex-husband. Any applications subsequent to divorce shall be added in the court using the form prepared to this effect. In the event that the conditions or controls of this alimony or other financial requests

various factors including but not limited to duration of the marriage, age of wife, financial condition of each spouse, negligence or any act due to which divorce has been obtained by the husband or wife, compensation by a spouse for any material or moral damage caused due to divorce, financial damages sustained due to unilateral divorce, payments related to custody and maintenance of children. This is in accordance with sub clauses 1 to 9 of Article 9 of the UAE Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims.

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, either of you may file for divorce in the Personal Status Court of Dubai and may obtain a divorce under the applicable provisions of the Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims. Furthermore, you may claim alimony from your husband. Your husband is obliged to provide maintenance for you until he remains married to you. However, he should provide child support to the children during the marriage and post-divorce.



terminate the marriage, without any need to justify their reason or to demonstrate harm or to put the blame on the other party. However, once a unilateral divorce is granted by the respective Personal Status Court in Dubai, a divorced woman may claim alimony from her ex-husband. This is in accordance with Article 9 of the UAE Personal Status Law for Non-Muslims, which states: "Divorce cases that are filed in accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law shall not be referred to the family guidance committees and shall be referred directly to the court to issue a judgment at the first hearing."

Moreover, an individual

may also seek a unilateral

are not agreed upon in the marriage contract, the acceptance of the application and its duration shall be subject to the discretionary power of the judge after evaluating the following factors..."

The judge based on the alimony case filed by a woman against her ex-husband, may grant certain amount of alimony to such woman based on

to understand your rights which may arise due to the divorce with your husband with regards to maintenance for children, alimony and child custody in accordance with the prevailing personal laws of the UAE (UAE Federal Law No. 28 of 2005 on Personal Status and/or Federal Law No. 41 of 2022 on Civil Personal Status law applicable to non-Muslims). For further clarifications you may contact the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs and seek their advice on this matter.

Who will sponsor visa after divorce?

I have been living in the UAE with my husband and three children for the last 18 years. My visa is sponsored by my husband. Nevertheless, we are heading towards a mutual divorce. If finalised, what happens to my residency status? Can my husband be compelled to sponsor my visa and that of our children? What if he says he will only sponsor our children's visas and not mine?

As your UAE residency

visa is sponsored by your husband, the provision of Cabinet Resolution No. 65 of 2022 Issuing the Executive Regulations of Federal Law by Decree No. 29 of 2021 Concerning the Entry and Residence of Foreigners is applicable. In

the UAE, when a woman is divorced while residing in the country on her husband's sponsorship, she is entitled to apply for a one-year extension of her UAE residency visa.

Furthermore, this extension commences from the official date of divorce. Once a divorce is finalised, the husband should not continue to sponsor the former spouse's residency visa.

There is no legal provision under UAE law that allows a court to compel a former husband to sponsor his ex-wife's residency visa after divorce. Furthermore, your husband may continue to sponsor the residency visa of the children. You may consult a legal counsel in the UAE



After IndiGo crisis, three more airlines to begin operations

NEW DELHI: The risks associated with IndiGo's dominance were highlighted earlier this month when about 4,500 flights were cancelled due to poor staff planning. Now the civil aviation ministry has granted initial clearance to two airlines to begin operations, weeks after mass cancellations by the country's largest airline IndiGo brought into focus the lack of competition in the world's fastest-growing aviation market.

The ministry granted a NOC to regional airline Al Hind Air and Fly Express this week, Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said in a post on X on. UP-based Shankh Air, which already

has a NOC, is to start operations.

"Over the last one week, pleased to have met teams from new airlines aspiring to take wings in Indian skies—Shankh Air, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress. While Shankh Air has already got the NOC from the ministry, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress have received their NOCs this week," Naidu said. He added that the government is working to encourage more competition in the domestic market.

The risks associated with IndiGo's dominance were highlighted earlier this month when about 4,500 flights were cancelled due to poor staff planning. The abrupt cancellation

led to thousands of passengers being stranded at airports across India, with many analysts calling the government to incentivise more companies to operate.

IndiGo has a market share of about 65pc, followed by rival Air India group with about 27pc. Smaller carriers make up for the rest.

According to its website, Al Hind aims to begin operations in southern India with a fleet of ATR Turbo-prop aircraft. It is in the process of obtaining an Air Operator Certificate. In 2026, apart from these two carriers, UP-based Shankh Air, which already has a NOC, is likely to start operations. Al Hind Air is being promoted by Kerala-based Alhind group.

AI to resume flights to Rome, IndiGo to start London service

MUMBAI: Beginning March 25, 2026, Air India will operate four times a week between Delhi and Rome (Leonardo da Vinci International Airport - Fiumicino), marking the airline's return to the Italian capital after nearly six years and further expansion of its growing European network.

The service to/from Rome will operate on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays on Air India's Boeing 787-8 aircraft, featuring 18 flat beds in business and 238 seats in economy class.

"Connecting India to more of the world remains one of our top priorities. India and Italy share deep-rooted commonalities in culture, business and trade, which makes Rome a natural addition to Air India's expanding network," said Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India.

With the addition of Rome, Air India serves eight points in Europe and three points in the UK. This non-stop service not only augments direct

connectivity between the two capital cities but also offers travellers from Italy greater choice and seamless onward connections via the airline's Delhi hub to destinations across the Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia, Aggarwal added.

Meanwhile, IndiGo said it will start new direct flights between Delhi and London (Heathrow) from Feb 2 — five times a week — which will be operated by wet/damp leased Boeing 787 aircraft. The services on the new route will be offered in dual-class configuration with IndiGoStretch and economy class, it said.

MUSCAT: Oman is strengthening its status as an attractive destination for big fat destination weddings. As a result, wedding tourism in the country generated over RO 6 million in 2024 and before the end of 2025, as many as 20 weddings are scheduled at various locations in Oman.

India leads as the top source market for wedding tourism in Oman, with In-

terian couples often booking entire hotels for week-long celebrations. Each wedding typically attracts 400 to 800 guests, contributing significantly to the growth of hospitality, travel and other related sectors. Promotion of wedding tourism in the country is in alignment with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to diversify the economy by promoting cultural and environmental

Australia modifies temporary residence transition visa rules

SYDNEY: Australia has modified the temporary residence rules for foreign workers, including those holding Skills in Demand visas. The applicants for the Temporary Residence Transition (TRT) stream of the Subclass 186 visa must finish the necessary work experience with an authorised sponsor in accordance with the recently released Migration Amendment (Skilled Visa Reform Technical Measures) Regulations 2025, reports Smith Stone Walters, an Envoy Global company. The rules are already in place, effective Nov 29, 2025.

Temporary Residence Transition visa lets skilled workers, who are nominated by their current employer, live and work in Australia permanently. To be eligible for a Temporary Residence Transition visa, one must hold a subclass 457, 482, or eligible bridging visa, have worked in eligible sponsored employment for at least two years full-time while holding a subclass 457 or 482 visa, and have been nominated by an Australian employer whose nomination was approved in the six months before they apply.

Those who have held a specific visa, such as a Skills in Demand (SID) Subclass 482 visa, for at least two years in the three years before applying and who have completed at least two years of full-time work experience in the designated occupation are eligible for permanent residence under the TRT stream of the ENS visa.

VFS' Indian consular application centre opens in Los Angeles

NEW YORK: With a view to streamline consular services for the Indian diaspora, the Consulate General of India in Los Angeles has announced the opening of a centre that will be operated by VFS Global.

The Indian Consular Application Centre (ICAC) in Los Angeles became operational on Dec 15 and will provide a range of consular services to the diaspora community in the region. The specialised centre will offer a range of essential

consular services to members of the Indian diaspora, including passport applications, visa applications, Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), renunciation of Indian citizenship, police clearance certificate, Global Entry Programme (GEP) and other miscellaneous/attestation services, VFS Global said in a statement. The launch of the Indian Consular Application Centre in Los Angeles has taken the total number of ICACs operated in the US

by technology services provider VFS Global for the Indian government to 17.

In August this year, India's Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra had inaugurated eight new Indian Consular Application Centres across the US aimed at streamlining consular services and making them more accessible, efficient for the Indian diaspora. The eight centres are in Boston, Columbus, Dallas, Detroit, Edison, Orlando, Raleigh and San Jose.

India lead source for Oman's wedding tourism

dian couples often booking entire hotels for week-long celebrations. Each wedding typically attracts 400 to 800 guests, contributing significantly to the growth of hospitality, travel and other related sectors. Promotion of wedding tourism in the country is in alignment with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to diversify the economy by promoting cultural and environmental

tourism, further consolidating Oman's status as a top wedding destination. For couples seeking a truly memorable backdrop, Oman is fast emerging as the perfect destination, where rugged mountains meet pristine beaches and turquoise seas. Oman offers a unique combination of picturesque landscapes and rich culture, making each wedding experience

distinctive. The country's diverse range of luxurious venues includes Al Bustan Palace, Shangri-La Barr al Jissah and Anantara Al Jai-al Al Akhdar, while more affordable options such as Sifawi Boutique Hotel cater to a wider audience. High-net-worth weddings not only promote tourism, but also generate jobs and support Omani small and medium enterprises.