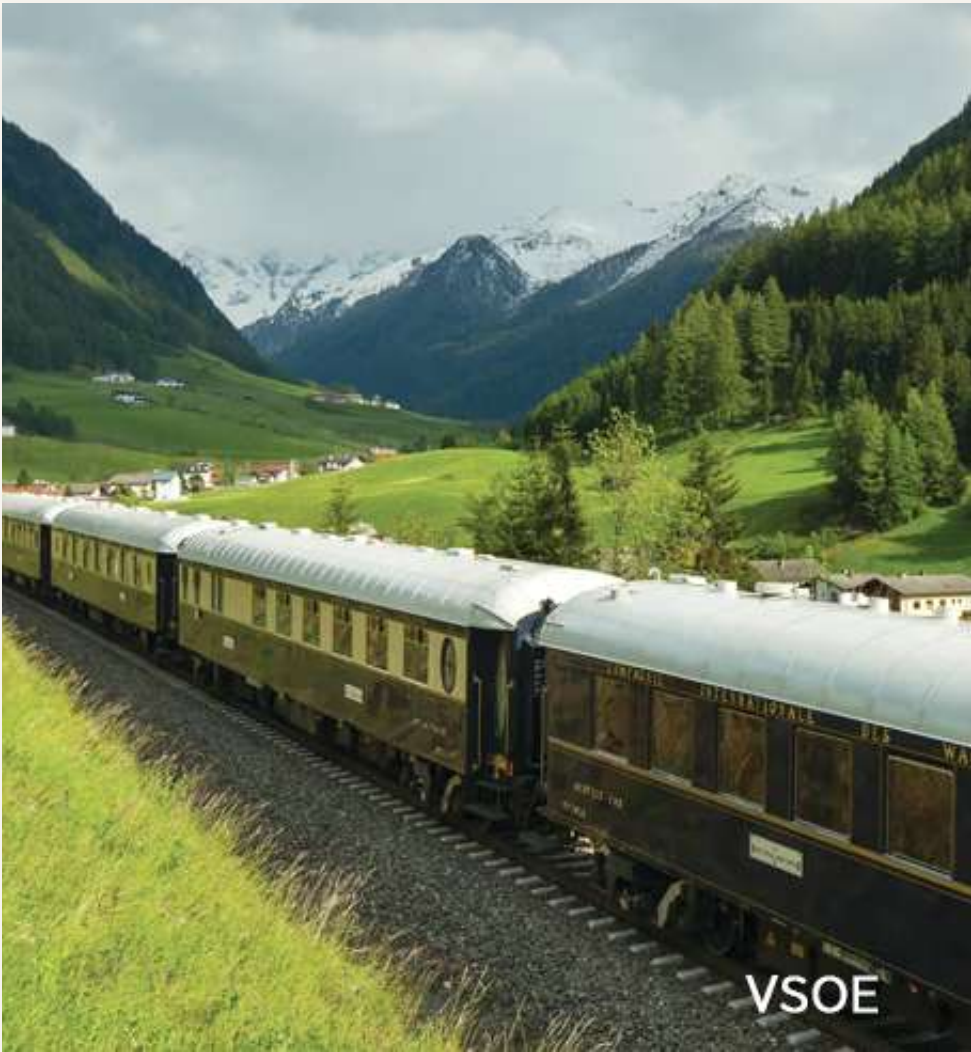




TRAVEL NEWSLETTER

FIND THE LATEST UPDATES ON THE TRAVEL SCENE OF INDIA & OVERSEAS



Venice Simplon Orient Express Luxury train travel is booming.

Whether the trains are crisscrossing Europe or venturing into the Japanese countryside, the business model comes with significant built-in advantages. In 2025 the most luxurious new hotel room may be on wheels. L'Observatoire, a two-person suite on Belmond's Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, will command rates of £80,000 (\$101,000) per night when it enters service in March, making it the most expensive train cabin ever. For that sum, guests will get to sleep inside a cabinet of curiosities created by French photographer and street artist JR. It includes two oculus-shaped skylights that open for stargazing, a "secret" tearoom with a fireplace hidden behind a bookshelf, and a freestanding brass bathtub near the foot of the double bed. All of it moves with the Belmond train, on voyages that connect cities like Geneva and Innsbruck or Venice and Amsterdam on one- to five-night trips. "There's a lot of art in hotel rooms," says Belmond Chief Executive Officer Dan Ruff. "But this is the first time in hospitality that the art is the room." That may be true, but the one-of-a-kind L'Observatoire is part of a growing number of opulent, artist-created train suites crisscrossing the European continent in 2025.



Move over Gulmarg: Guldanda is Kashmir's next big skiing destination

Skiing introduced at Guldanda to boost winter tourism in Jammu and Kashmir's Bharderwah. In an attempt to attract more tourists, authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district have introduced skiing activities in the snow-covered Guldanda meadow in the picturesque Bharderwah sub-division, officials said on Tuesday. Skiing, which is a major attraction for tourists, especially adventure lovers, was introduced by the tourism department in collaboration with the Bharderwah Development Authority (BDA), they said. A skiing training programme is underway, attracting both tourists and local youth in large numbers on the breathtaking slopes of Guldanda meadow located on the Bharderwah-Pathankot highway at a height of 10,000 ft above sea level. "As part of tourism promotion, the tourism department introduced snow skiing at Guldanda and the response of local youth and visitors is heartwarming.



Mount Fuji hikes and Kyoto nights: Japan's new rules for tourists explained

Visiting Kyoto just got pricier—The drastic tax hike tourists won't like. Kyoto authorities announced Tuesday plans to hike lodging taxes, as Japan's ancient capital seeks to assuage grumbles from locals about too many tourists. Lured by its myriad sights and a weak yen, Japan has seen foreign tourism numbers explode in recent years, with arrivals in 2024 expected to have hit a record of more than 35 million. But like other hotspots worldwide such as Venice in Italy or Maya Bay in Thailand, this is not universally welcome, particularly in tradition-steeped Kyoto. The city, which is a modest bullet train ride away from Tokyo – with a view of Mount Fuji on the way – is famed for its kimono-clad geisha performers and Buddhist temples. Residents have complained of disrespectful tourists harassing the geisha like paparazzi in their frenzy for photos, as well as causing traffic congestion and littering.



From frozen Dal Lake to Sonamarg Tunnel: Why Kashmir in winter should be on your travel bucket list

Winter bliss in Kashmir: Dal Lake and Sonamarg Tunnel make headlines; winter wonderland in the Valley draw tourists. Amid the ongoing cold wave in the Kashmir valley, the iconic Dal Lake in Srinagar developed a thin layer of ice on its surface on Monday. Earlier, on Sunday, Srinagar had recorded a steep decline of 3.1 degrees Celsius in its seasonal minimum temperature, with the mercury settling at -5.1 degrees Celsius during the coldest hour of the day. Meanwhile, the maximum temperature was recorded at 10 degrees Celsius, a deviation of 3.4 degrees Celsius from the normal, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Visuals from the Dal Lake area showed a group of tourists, dressed in layers of woollens, taking a stroll in the city amid the cold and dry weather conditions. Speaking to ANI, Zubair, a tourist from Delhi, said, "The cold here is twice as much as in Delhi. It feels great to be here. I visit this place every year, and that too around this time only." His enthusiasm reflected his admiration for the Kashmir valley. "Though there are lesser chances of snowfall this time, visiting Kashmir is always a pleasant experience," Zubair stated.

HEADLINES

Maha Kumbh Mela 2025: Experiencing the rarest Kumbh in 144 years, wrapped in luxury

Planning a trip to Shimla, Manali? Himachal Pradesh braces for snow and rain from January 16-19

From ski resorts to faster Ladakh trips: Sonamarg Tunnel promises all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Leh

New Hampshire's Ice Castles return for tourists with 25 million pounds of ice and stunning attractions



Planning your trip to Mahakumbh 2025? Know all about tour packages, air connectivity for visitors

Mahakumbh 2025 or Poorna Kumbh is being held in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, from Jan 13-Feb 26, 2025. Read on to know about exclusive tours, air connectivity etc. Mahakumbh, a landmark event not only for spiritual gatherings but is set to be a platform for global tourism. To celebrate this momentous occasion, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, is rolling out several initiatives aimed at boosting both domestic and international tourism. The Maha Kumbh is one of the largest and most significant religious congregations in the world, held every 12 years at one of four locations in India. The Mahakumbh 2025, which is Poorna Kumbh is taking place in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, from January 13 to February 26, 2025. This mega event, expected to attract millions of devotees, tourists, and pilgrims from across the world offers a unique opportunity to showcase India's cultural, spiritual heritage and tourism potential. The Ministry of Tourism said it is setting up the Incredible India Pavilion, a sprawling 5000 sq ft space at Mahakumbh, which will facilitate foreign tourists, scholars, researchers, photographers, journalists, the expat community, Indian diaspora. In a statement, the ministry said the pavilion will offer an immersive experience for visitors, showcasing India's rich cultural heritage and the significance of Kumbh Mela.

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