

India's Cultural Wanderlust on the Rise: Skyscanner Reveals 8 in 10 Indians Plan Trips Around Culture in 2025

Category: Business

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- 93% travellers will consider lesser-known destinations if they also offer authentic cultural experiences
- Durga Puja in Kolkata (53%), Lathmar Holi in Barsana (51%), and Onam in Kerala (35%) emerge as the top cultural spectacles Indians want to witness in the coming year

Leading global travel app [Skyscanner](#) recently released its latest Cultural Tourism report, highlighting a rising trend among Indians travelling in pursuit of authentic local heritage, traditions, and experiences. According to the findings, 82% of Indian travellers are very keen on visiting destinations primarily for their cultural offerings, with younger generations – Millennials (84%) and Gen Z (80%) leading this rising wave of cultural curiosity. This enthusiasm is evolving into a quest for depth as many travellers define cultural tourism not by the sights they see but by the knowledge they gain, with 39% considering a trip successful when they return home having learnt something new about the place or its people.

The report also reveals a striking shift: 76% of Indian travellers have altered their travel plans to attend a cultural event, underlining how traditions and festivals are no longer side activities but central to holiday decisions.

This cultural curiosity isn't limited by geography. 7 in 10 travellers say they are open to exploring cultural experiences domestically and internationally. At its core, Indians are seeking authentic, immersive adventures that allow them to participate, learn, and return home with stories that truly feel transformative.

Festivals as the Biggest Magnets for Cultural Travel

- Indian festivals are emerging as some of the biggest draws for travellers. As per the report:
- Over half of Indian travellers (55%) have attended local festivals, fairs, or cultural events.
- Durga Puja in Kolkata (53%), Lathmar Holi in Barsana (51%), and Onam in Kerala (35%) lead the list of occasions travellers are most eager to witness live this year.
- Beyond festivals, 53% of travellers are drawn to historical cities like Jaipur and Varanasi, while 39% are inspired to explore UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as Taj Mahal in Agra and Hampi in Karnataka. In fact, Skyscanner data shows searches to Varanasi, one of India's most storied cultural cities, has risen by 76% for travel in 2025 compared to the previous year!(1)
- Celebrated for their festive traditions, architectural grandeur, and local heritage, Kerala (32%) and Rajasthan (30%) have also emerged as India's culture capitals.

Growing Interest in Underrated Destinations

Beyond these, travellers are curious to explore places that preserve traditions away from the crowds. A remarkable 93% are eager to seek out lesser-known destinations offering authentic cultural experiences, signalling a strong appetite for hidden gems where authentic traditions thrive away from crowded

tourist trails. One way to explore these hidden treasures is by using 'Explore Everywhere' search feature on Skyscanner, with filter options like 'underrated destinations' and 'art and culture' to make it easier than ever to find the perfect spot for a unique tradition-rich escape.

"Indian travellers are moving beyond holidays taken only for leisure. The growing quest for depth has given rise to a new archetype – the culture curious traveller – one who seeks knowledge, connection and fulfilment," said Neel Ghose, Skyscanner Travel Trends and Destinations Expert. "For them, success is measured in stories carried home that deepen their sense of people and place. Interestingly, our report also highlights that 71% prefer to travel with family, followed by 62% with friends, and 56% with a partner or spouse. This shows travel today is shifting from sights seen, to connections deepened – and Skyscanner's all-in-one app makes it easier and more affordable to plan those meaningful journeys."

From Observing to Immersing

As this cultural wave builds, a few patterns are emerging, showcasing how Indians plan, and experience escapes rooted in tradition. The report shows that nearly 4 in 10 want to explore heritage villages or eco-cultural communities, while 38% are drawn to culinary trails revealing the historic roots of local cuisines. Reflecting on this trend towards hands-on, participatory experiences, **Dr. Aditi Rawat, Associate Fellow, Pahle India Foundation**, policy think tank advancing research-led ideas on India's economic development and governance, said, *"Cultural tourism is fast becoming a defining lens through which Indian travellers experience their country and the world. The trend is moving towards combining cultural discovery with comfort, luxury, and leisure – a blend that encourages longer stays and deeper engagement. Catalysed by rising accessibility, robust infrastructure, and digital connectivity, it is reshaping travel from passive sightseeing to immersive storytelling, where visitors engage with living*

heritage, local traditions, and cultural narratives that define each destination."

Safety and Smart Planning Drive Choices

- In their sojourns, practical considerations remain front and centre amongst Indian travellers. When choosing a cultural trip:
- Safety (45%) tops the list of considerations when choosing a cultural trip, followed by authenticity (33%) and seasonality (31%).
- 41% travellers start preparing one to two months ahead. Their inspiration is shaped by a mix of influences: 45% turn to social media, 39% rely on friends and family, and 27% use apps like Skyscanner to discover the right destinations and deals.
- When it comes to finalising plans, value remains top of mind, with 60% saying the best time to book festival flights is their most helpful planning insight, while 58% depend on fare comparisons to make smarter choices.

To further assist Indians in charting their journeys, **Neel Ghose** added, *"For travellers seeking inspiration, describing your ideal getaway on Skyscanner's app-only AI feature, Savvy Search can help uncover temple cities, native lands, royal palaces, and more. The tool curates a list of destinations based on the prompts, directing you to Skyscanners flight search, letting you compare the best prices. And, when it comes to planning, for those looking to make the most of their holiday around a festival, a simple hack is to use the 'Whole Month' view to spot the cheapest days to fly around the date! Smart planning choices like these can help unlock cultural experiences without breaking the bank, letting you create memories and returning home with learnings that last a lifetime."*

A Broader Shift in Tourism

This growing interest is an indicator that culture-led exploration will also steer the future of the country's tourism industry. Sharing insights on this rising phenomenon and its implications, **Dr. Aditi Rawat**, said, *"This shift is being fulfilled by traditional towns and authentic locale-based experiences that connect travellers with communities and their way of life. Think the Northeast India, with its extraordinary cultural diversity and pristine landscapes, or Kerala, with its backwaters, classical art forms, and Ayurvedic traditions, both now firmly on the radar of discerning tourists. From tribal festivals in Arunachal Pradesh to tea and wellness in Assam, or narrative Kathakali performances in Thrissur, we are witnessing curated experiences true to each destination's strengths. Coupled with leisure travel and government initiatives such as Dekho Apna Desh, Swadesh Darshan 2.0, and Adopt A Heritage, this cultural discovery is transforming tourism into a powerful custodian of India's identity. It is revitalising economies, positioning diversity as a global asset, and turning sites and practices into hubs that attract global visitors, empower local communities, and shape the future of India's tourism economy."*

Notes to the Editor:

Data based on a recent Skyscanner Cultural Tourism survey conducted from 4 to 11 August 2025, among 2,000 Indian adult travellers.

About Skyscanner

Skyscanner is a global leader in travel that helps travellers plan and book their trip with ease and confidence. Every month, Skyscanner connects millions of travellers, in 180 countries and 37 languages, to more than 1200 trusted travel partners so they can find flight, hotel or car hire options.

Founded in 2003, Skyscanner has offices worldwide, in Europe,

Asia-Pacific and North America where traveller-first innovations are developed and powered by data and insights. Making use of the latest technology, Skyscanner simplifies the complexity of travel and provides honest and transparent solutions, searching around 100 billion prices every day so travellers can be sure they've seen the best possible options, all in one place.

About Pahle India

Pahle India Foundation is a not-for-profit thinktank founded by Dr. Rajiv Kumar, former Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog. PIF provides a credible, trustworthy, and neutral platform for bringing together government, industry, academia and civil society to enable informed decision making. PIF works closely with these stakeholders to develop and implement policies in various sectors. Supporting the framing of tourism policies of state governments remains a key focus of PIF's work.

(1) Skyscanner flight searches from India to Varanasi between 1 January – 31 July 2025 for travel in 2025 compared to the previous year.

