

Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel pioneer special direct flights to Bhutan

Special summer departures from Ahmedabad

Mumbai, 8th January, 2025: Thomas Cook (India) Limited - India's leading omnichannel travel services company, and its group company, SOTC Travel, announce the launch of special direct flights from Ahmedabad to Bhutan, commencing from April 2025.

This pioneering initiative establishes a direct air connection between Gujarat and Bhutan, addressing a significant market gap and reinforcing Thomas Cook and SOTC's position as leaders in driving innovation within India's outbound travel sector. Currently, the travel route requires passengers to take connecting flights via Kolkata or Delhi, which entail layovers and the inconvenience of multiple flights, airport/terminal transfers and several check-ins. The new direct flights will offer a more seamless and convenient travel experience for passengers.

Recognising Gujarat's strong appetite for outbound travel, the special direct flights open up opportunities for travellers to explore Bhutan with ease and convenience. The six-night itinerary has been thoughtfully designed incorporating unique Bhutan experiences with authentic Gujarati cuisine.

Tour Highlights:

- Unique experiences: archery, riverside lunch in Punakha, dressing in traditional Bhutanese attire, dinner in Thimphu with a cultural performance, bonfire, light and music show
- Gujarati chefs stationed in Bhutan to ensure preparation of authentic Gujarati cuisine including vegetarian/Jain options — meeting a critical demand for Gujarati travellers
- Assistance of experienced Gujarati-speaking tour manager from Ahmedabad, ensuring familiarity and comfort throughout the trip

Bhutan known as one of the happiest and greenest countries, is the world's first carbon-negative nation. It offers scenic vistas, iconic monasteries, romantic spots, nature reserves, Himalayan terrain, lush valleys and hot-stone baths, along with a unique culture and warm hospitality. With the direct flights launching at an opportune time, Thomas Cook and SOTC are well-positioned to capitalize on the destination's appeal while driving strategic growth in Gujarat's outbound travel market.

Mr. Rajeev Kale, President & Country Head – Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India) Limited, said, *"Our special direct flights from Ahmedabad to Bhutan represent a game-changer in Gujarat's travel market. This initiative aligns with our commitment to innovation and customer-centricity. Gujarat remains one of our most important source markets, and with Bhutan's increasing popularity, we are uniquely positioned to deliver value by offering a seamless, travel experience that addresses the specific needs of Gujarati travellers. We are optimistic that this launch will drive substantial growth from the region in 2025."*

Mr. S.D. Nandakumar, President & Country Head Holidays and Corporate Tours, SOTC Travel Limited, said *"Bhutan's pristine landscapes, sustainable tourism practices, and cultural richness make*

it a compelling destination for the evolved Indian traveller. Our first-ever direct flights from Ahmedabad are a strategic response to market demand and an opportunity to unlock growth in this high-potential region. By delivering a special product, complete with thoughtfully designed itineraries and region-specific culinary offerings, we are setting a new benchmark for travel experiences while solidifying our leadership in the Indian travel industry."

Carissa Nimah, Chief Marketing Officer, Department of Tourism Bhutan, said *"We are delighted by the launch of Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel's direct flights from Ahmedabad to Paro, making travel to Bhutan easier and more convenient for our friends in India. We've seen growing interest from Gujarat, and this new route provides the perfect opportunity for more travellers to discover Bhutan's serene beauty, vibrant traditions, and timeless charm. It also deepens the cultural and personal ties between our two nations."*

About Thomas Cook (India) Limited: Set up in 1881, Thomas Cook (India) Limited (TCIL) is the leading omnichannel travel company in the country offering a broad spectrum of services including Foreign Exchange, Corporate Travel, MICE, Leisure Travel, Value Added Services, and Visa Services. It operates leading B2C and B2B brands including Thomas Cook, SOTC, TCI, SITA, Asian Trails, Allied TPro, Australian Tours Management, Desert Adventures, Travel Circle International Limited (TCI 勝景), Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited, Distant Frontiers, TC Tours, Digiphoto Entertainment Imaging (DEI), Go Vacation, Private Safaris East & South Africa.

As one of the largest travel service provider networks headquartered in the Asia-Pacific region, The Thomas Cook India Group spans 28 countries across 5 continents.

TCIL has been felicitated with the award for MICE Travel Agency (Outbound) at the Economic Times MICE & Wedding Tourism Awards 2024, 'Masters of Risk - Travel & Hospitality' at India Risk Management Awards 2024, MICE Tour Operator of the Year - Outbound at SATTE 2024, Best Tour Operator at India Travel Awards North 2023, MICE Travel Operator of the Year at the Economic Times Travel & Tourism Awards 2023, winner of the Corporate Citizen Award (Travel Tourism & Hospitality) at the Corporate Citizen Conclave & Award 2023, The Outbound Tour Operator of the Year 2022 & 2019 at the SATTE Awards, IMAI India Digital Awards 2022, CNBC-TV18 & ICICI Lombard India Risk Management Award - Travel & Leisure Category 2022 & 2021, CIO100 Award for digital innovation 2022, 'Innovation in Omni-experience' Award at International Data Corporation's (IDC) Industry Innovation Awards 2021, The Best Travel Agency – India at TTG Travel Awards 2019, The Best Outbound Tour Operator at the Times Travel Awards 2019 & 2018, Silver award for Asia's Best Integrated Report (First Time) category at the Asia Sustainability Reporting Awards 2019-2021, Best Risk Management-Framework & Systems at the India Risk Management Awards 2019; The French Ambassador's Award for Exemplary Achievements in Visa Issuance 5 years in a row and the Condé Nast Traveller – Readers' Travel Awards from 2011 to 2019.

CRISIL has reaffirmed the rating on debt programs and bank facilities of TCIL - 'CRISIL AA- / Positive' on the long-term bank facilities of TCIL and 'CRISIL A1+' rating on the short-term bank facilities and short-term debt of the company.

For more information, please visit www.thomascook.in

Fairbridge Capital (Mauritius) Limited, a subsidiary of Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited, is the promoter of TCIL with a shareholding of 63.83% of its paid-up capital.

About Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited: Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited is a holding company which, through its subsidiaries, is primarily engaged in property and casualty insurance and reinsurance and the associated investment management. Founded in 1985 by the present Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. V. Prem Watsa, the company is headquartered in Toronto, Canada. Its common shares are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the symbol FFH and in U.S. dollars under the symbol FFH.U.

About Subsidiaries of Thomas Cook (India) Limited (TCIL):

Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited

Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of TCIL is a leading leisure hospitality company with 40+ resorts, hotels and retreats across hills, beaches, jungles, waterfront, adventure, heritage, pilgrimage and drive-to locations. Sterling provides a variety of offerings: Leisure holidays through FIT packages, Meetings & Conferences, Weddings, Reunions, Picnics and Holidays through Memberships.

SOTC Travel Limited

SOTC Travel Limited is a step-down subsidiary of Fairfax Financial Holdings held through its Indian listed subsidiary, Thomas Cook (India) Limited (TCIL). SOTC Travel is a leading omnichannel travel and tourism company active across various travel segments including Leisure Travel, Incentive Travel and Business Travel.

Established in 1949, SOTC is an Indian-grown brand with a legacy of 75 years. Since then, it has escorted millions of travellers across the globe to various destinations around the globe. The Company firmly believes that today, 'No one understands the Indian Traveller better than SOTC'.

Travel Corporation (India) Limited

Travel Corporation (India) Limited (TCI) (operating brands Sita, TCI and Distant Frontiers), a wholly owned subsidiary of TCIL, is the leading Destination Management Company in India that offers tailor-made travel and related services to India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.

DEI Holdings Limited

Thomas Cook India Group holds 51% stake in DEI Holdings Limited (DEI), one of the world's leading imaging solutions and services providers.

For more information, visit:

Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited: <http://www.sterlingholidays.com>

SOTC Travel Limited: <http://www.sotc.in>

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