

# Travel trade looks forward to Budget

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**Ashwini Kakkar**  
India Travel Award winner  
Executive Vice Chairman  
Mercury Travels

“As per the WTTTC Tax Barometer, India has the highest tax in the region with 15-20 per cent. The Finance Ministry needs to make India a competitive destination by reducing taxes and eliminating complexity of GST for this industry. The government also needs to equate export benefits on goods with export benefits on tourism services. Allocate more funds for marketing, promotions, imparting skills and create a level playing field for the trade. Can we also expect an overall outlay of about `5000 crore for this industry versus the current `1750 crore?”

“There is a slight disappointment that the government did not announce any major incentive for the sector. Having said that, the infrastructure improvement of 3,500 railways lines across India and setting up of airports in Tier-II cities and dedicated trains for religious tourism will make people travel more. Knocking off the service charge on rail tickets is also a welcome move. However, between promise and delivery there is always a gap, so it remains to be seen how the implementation is done effectively and in time. Tourism zones have also been announced but the clarity on these have not been rolled out yet.”



**Mahesh Shirodkar**  
India Travel Award winner  
and Managing Director,  
Tamarind Global

“The Budget has always been a non-event for the travel industry, despite tourism being one of the major employment generators in the country. Unfortunately, the travel fraternity does not have a united voice and therefore, our wish list is neither heard nor acted upon by the central government. Even six months after the implementation of GST, the travel bag has multiple categories and a lot of confusion still prevails over its implementation. I wish the budget can at least address and clarify some of the confusion and challenges faced by the tourism sector. The inbound industry will benefit from rationalisation in tax structure in hotel and restaurant business.”



**Manoj Saraf**  
India Travel Award winner  
and Managing Director,  
Gainwell Travel & Leisure



**Sandeep Dwivedi**  
COO, ITO  
India Travel Award winner

“Union Budget 2018 is expected to further harness the potential of the `13 trillion worth travel and tourism sector that has phenomenally boosted the economic conditions of the country. The government is likely to give more incentives to propel this drive and make the sector grow even more. We are still scratching the surface of how this sector can grow with more tourism pro policies including strategic continuation of GST plan, infrastructural development through restoration of no-frill airports in Tier-II and III cities, further reduction of corporate tax rates and help domestic as well as foreign tourist arrival to grow exponentially. The Finance Ministry is also in talks of lowering the 28 per cent GST on hotel tariffs. All this combined creates a context of high growth potential for the industry through technology that is the backbone which connects and caters to most customers.”



**Om Prakash Sehgal**  
India Travel Award winner  
and Director, InORBIT Tours

“The Finance Ministry needs to reduce direct and indirect taxes and make Indian hotels competitive in terms of price and quality among Asian countries. The ministry needs to encourage rail passes within India with regional and national travel passes like Europe does. It also needs to be tax-free for inbound travellers. The government must declare incentives to develop attractions in all states, and provide incentives on investments for building budget hotels. The Budget should also address refund of tax on shopping by inbound tourists as provided by European countries as VAT refund. Introduce tax free purchase shops in cities for foreign tourists. Incentive should be provided to travel agents for promoting India.”



**Shwetank Singh**  
VP - Development and  
Asset Management  
InterGlobe Hotels

“The signs of the industry bouncing back is very apparent and we are eager to see how the Budget will further augment growth. The industry has been keenly looking forward to the government's focus on incentives for the commercial real estate sector such as REITS, real estate regulatory bill and single-window clearances. We are hoping there are provisions and incentives to promote MICE based tourism, as well as Tier II and Tier III markets which are becoming attractive spots for not just cultural and regional tourism, but business tourism as well. We also hope that ad-hoc rulings such as the highway liquor ban of last year are curtailed as these are extremely detrimental to our business.”

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