



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



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ABOUT TOFT

Established in 2004, TOFT is a collective campaign and global alliance – with all those involved in saving nature – governments, communities and visitors.

Founded by visionary leaders Julian Matthews (Founder & Ambassador) and Vishal Singh (Co-Founder & Director, TOFT), TOFT has worked as a changemaker with governments, communities and the private sector, to advocate, plan, support and fund the protection, conservation and rewilding of natural wilderness and their wild inhabitants, especially tiger habitat, to realise positive and sustainable outcomes for everyone. TOFT began as

a campaign against unchecked, profit-driven tourism, striving to create a sustainable balance between tourism and conservation. Despite early challenges and limited awareness, TOFT persevered with strategic initiatives and an unwavering commitment to its mission, evolving into a powerful force for sustainable travel that champions conservation while empowering local communities.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024-25

- Launch of New Logo and the 5th Edition of Good Wildlife Travel Guide
- Strengthened partnerships with key stakeholders, including eco-lodges, tour operators, conservation groups, and government bodies.
- Successfully organized the 7th edition of the TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Awards.
- Conducted capacity-building workshops and training sessions for tourism service providers.
- Led awareness campaigns to raise awareness about responsible tourism practices, its importance and conservation among the tourism community.
- Expanded digital outreach and engagement, reaching a broader audience through impactful social media campaigns.
- TOFT makes to the Global Vision Awards 2025, getting recognition for its work.

A NEW IDENTITY FOR A RENEWED VISION



To commemorate twenty years of impact, TOFT unveiled a refreshed brand identity, including a new logo—a globe draped in lush greenery, adorned with wildlife silhouettes.

This emblem symbolizes TOFT's steadfast commitment to global conservation and its expanding mission, which now extends beyond tiger reserves to include nature-based destinations and diverse landscapes. The rebranding highlights TOFT's pivotal role in integrating sustainability across the tourism industry at all levels.

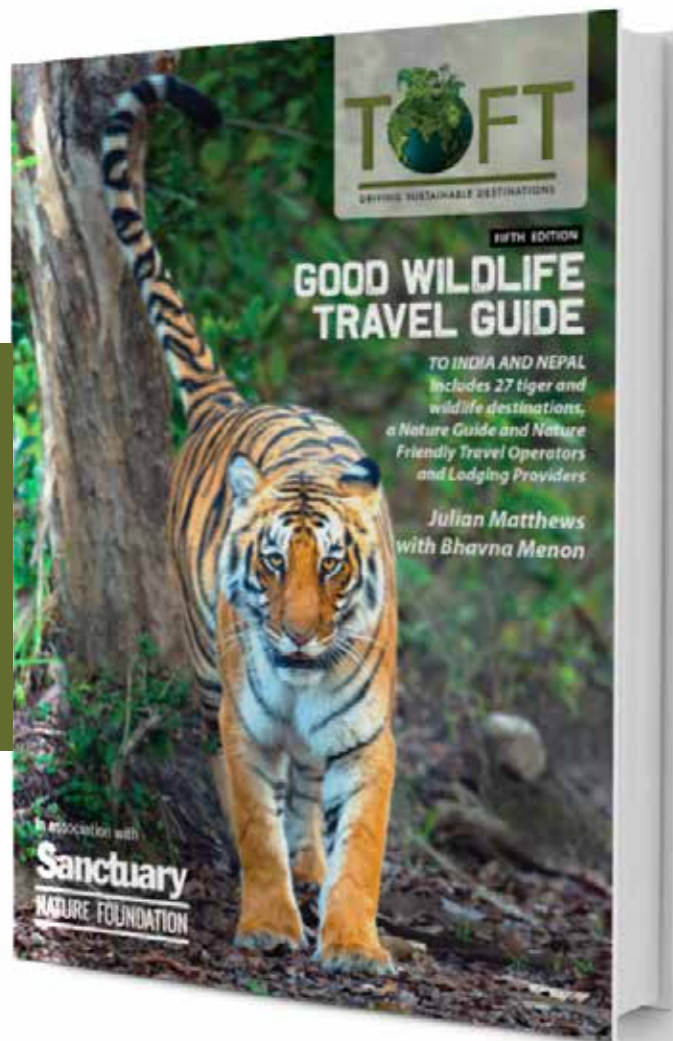
THE 5TH EDITION OF THE GOOD WILDLIFE TRAVEL GUIDE

As part of our ongoing commitment to promoting responsible wildlife tourism, TOFT launched the 5th edition of The Good Wildlife Travel Guide in 2024-25.

This comprehensive guide serves as an essential resource for travellers, industry professionals, and conservation advocates seeking ethical and sustainable wildlife experiences across South Asia.

Building on the success of previous editions, this guide features:

- **Curated Listings:** A carefully vetted selection of responsible lodges and tour operators dedicated to sustainable tourism.
- **Ethical Travel Guidelines:** Best practices and essential recommendations for travellers to minimize their impact on wildlife and local ecosystems.
- **Conservation and Community Impact:** Insights into initiatives that integrate conservation efforts with community well-being, showcasing real-world examples of sustainable tourism in action.
- **Wildlife Safari Do's and Don'ts:** A responsible tourism code of conduct to ensure ethical and enriching wildlife encounters.



The Good Wildlife Travel Guide reinforces TOFT's mission by showcasing accommodations certified under the PUG & FOOTPRINT Eco-Certification and recognized responsible travel operators. This ensures that travellers can make informed choices that contribute positively to conservation efforts and local communities.

The guide is available in both print and digital formats, allowing a wider audience to access its valuable insights. [Download the digital copy here.](#)

ON-GROUND TRAINING/PROJECTS

In 2024-25, TOFT strengthened its commitment to responsible tourism through targeted training and community engagement initiatives. Focused on enhancing the tourism experience and fostering conservation efforts, TOFT conducted specialized training for guides in national parks and implemented on-ground projects to support local communities. These initiatives aimed to build capacity, improve wildlife tourism practices, and cultivate stronger community-conservation partnerships.

TRAINING & SKILL ENHANCEMENT FOR JUNGLE SAFARI GUIDES IN KOHORA, KAZIRANGA

TOFT continues to drive responsible tourism by focusing on destination management and capacity building. A key initiative in this effort was the Training and Skill Enhancement for Jungle Safari and Visitor Experience, held at Kaziranga National Park in September 2024. Conducted in collaboration with Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve, the Assam Forest Department, The Corbett Foundation, Aranyak, the Assam Skill Development Mission, and the Wildlife Institute of India, this large-scale training program upskilled wildlife guides, safari drivers, and mahouts.

This 10-days Training and Skill Enhancement Program conducted in September equipped over 500 jungle safari guides with enhanced knowledge and professional competencies.

The program covered crucial topics such as wildlife guide responsibilities, visitor safety, hygiene, grooming, and safari management, equipping participants with the skills to enhance visitor experiences while upholding conservation ethics. Ms. Ratna Singh, a wilderness hospitality expert with over 20 years of experience, led TOFT's sessions. Her dedication to skilling rural youth has earned her



Ms. Ritu Makhija, Director Sustainability, TOFT and Ms. Ratna Singh, Trainer representing TOFT with the group of participants at the Kaziranga Guide Training Program.

prestigious accolades, including the Karmaveer Chakra Silver (2019) and Gold (2023) medals.

TOFT is grateful to esteemed sponsors such as **Abercrombie & Kent Pvt. Ltd., DMC Tours Pvt. Ltd., Eastern Risen Expedition Pvt. Ltd., Indo Asia Leisure Services Ltd., Travel with AJ Pvt. Ltd., Immerse India Tours Pvt. Ltd., MP Incoming, and Nivalink** for their generous support.

This initiative was first in kind which marked a significant step forward in professional safari guiding in Kaziranga. However, this step of capacity building was in right direction but with periodic annual trainings is what will create a long-lasting impact.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

TOFT actively engaged with tourism professionals, conservationists, and industry stakeholders through various initiatives aimed at raising awareness towards responsible & ethical ethos for tourism. Key engagements included participation in SATTE 2025, where TOFTigers facilitated discussions on sustainable business practices, and the organization of Familiarization (Fam) Trips

to showcase best practices in responsible tourism. These interactive experiences provided firsthand exposure to sustainable operations, fostering stronger industry commitment to conservation and ethical tourism. Through direct stakeholder engagement, TOFT reinforced its mission of driving the change towards sustainable future.



TOFT FAM TRIP TO BORI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND SATPURA NATIONAL PARK 2024

PROMOTING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

TOFT promoted sustainable tourism amongst stakeholders, TOFTigers organized a FAM trip to Bori Wildlife Sanctuary and Satpura Tiger Reserve, held from June 8th to 12th, 2024.

The trip aimed to bring stakeholders together on a common platform to exchange ideas and catalyse new sustainable initiatives in the tourism sector. Travel agents from Bharatiyam Tours, Nivalink, The Indian Bucket List, India & Beyond, Mileage Holidays, India someday Travels, Royal Expeditions and Shanti Travel participated- it was a good mix with good synergies. For many participants, it was first visit to the region - and they got to experience all -the Lodge tours, walk with the naturalists, candlelight dinners, wildlife documentaries, safaris, local food and the famous Mahua drink while



TOFT FAM Team at Denwa Backwater Escape



TOFT FAM Team at Bori Safari Lodge

FAM Group with staff of Denwa Backwater Escape by Pugdundee safari and Bori Safari Lodge by Jehan Numa Wilderness

enjoying engaging conversations. It was indeed a warm hospitality by the hosts and the naturalists' interactions made it a unique and memorable trip. As per Niraj Vashi from Nivalink, "It was an enriching few days and which will help a long way in sending more travellers to destinations having sustainability driven stays. The interactions were designed to offer enough time for networking with partner hotels, fellow FAM participants and getting an insight into TOFT initiatives."

The group also had an interaction with Mr. L Krishnamoorthy, IFS, Chief Conservator of Forest and

Field Director, in Satpura Tiger Reserve at Forest Guest house at Madai. The group was very impressed with the work of the forest Deptt, especially how Satpura has had more than 30 successful relocation of the villages. With the region's strong conservation management, it has increased its numbers for tigers from 13

in 2010 to 50 as per the Status of Tigers, -2022-Final Report.

Group could also visit the Forsyth Lodge and Reni Pani at Satpura getting to know of the unique experiences being offered at each lodge for different targeted audiences.

TOFT AT SATTE 2025: ADVANCING THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AGENDA

TOFT participated in SATTE 2025, held from 19th to 21st February at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre, Dwarka, Delhi. As part of its ongoing mission to drive sustainability in the travel and tourism sector, TOFT actively engaged with travel trade professionals, tour operators, and key industry stakeholders.

Representing TOFT and Travelife within a dedicated exhibition space, TOFT led discussions on responsible tourism and the need for sustainability standards in travel

businesses. Through strategic interactions, educational briefings, and direct engagement, the team emphasized the significance of sustainability certification in enhancing business credibility and environmental stewardship.

This participation played a crucial role in expanding TOFT's advocacy efforts, strengthening awareness of sustainability best practices, and encouraging industry-wide adoption of responsible tourism standards in India.



THE 7TH TOFTIGERS WILDLIFE TOURISM AWARDS 2024: RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

The 7th TOFTigers Wildlife Tourism Awards, in collaboration with the Sanctuary Nature Foundation and Outlook Traveller, was hosted at Bikaner House, New Delhi, under the theme “Celebrating Harmony: Fostering Sustainable Wildlife Tourism through Innovation and Collaboration.” This milestone event marked 20 years of TOFTigers' dedication to conservation and wildlife tourism.

A compelling keynote address by Mr. Jose Louise, CEO of the Wildlife Trust of India, captivated the audience. He emphasized the crucial link between wildlife conservation and the future of tourism, illustrating his point with a powerful anecdote. Recalling a local woman's remark, “What is Kanha without tigers?” he left the audience reflecting deeply on the intrinsic value of conservation.

The event also featured two thought-provoking panel discussions. The first explored how wildlife tourism can serve as a powerful tool for conservation, while the second delved into the opportunities



and challenges shaping the future of nature-based tourism. Both sessions sparked meaningful dialogue and provided actionable insights for the industry.

What also made the 2025 awards special was Pardi girls participation where they shared how being a part of Wildpines (@wildpinesart) • Instagram photos and videos) they have been able to empower their life from helplessness in Panna Tiger Reserve. It was their first exposure to an event of this scale and their courageous vices shook the audience.

[Know the Winners and Runners up here.](#)



KANHA EYE CAMP 2025: RESTORING SIGHT, RENEWING LIVES

At TOFT, we renewed our mission to transform tourism into a powerful force by preserving natural ecosystems and empowering local communities in this year. With an inclusive, "bottom-up" approach, we created a model to unite the stakeholders i.e. State tourism, Forest departments, accommodations, Travel agents, local NGOs etc under a shared vision of conservation that benefits both the environment and the people who depend on it.

In alignment with this vision, we collaborated with Kanha Tiger Reserve and MGM Eye Institute, Raipur, to organize the Kanha Eye Camp - an initiative aimed at raising eye health awareness and providing essential eye care services to local communities. Held across Mukki, Garhi, Kathiya, and Sijhora in February 2025, the camp offered comprehensive eye examinations, treatments, and interventions to individuals who previously had little or no access to such healthcare services.



A young girl identified with an eye problem since birth, being reviewed for further action by the MGM team at the Garhi gate.



RFO Virendra Jyotishi, Range Officer-Khatiya, Kanha Tiger Reserve distributing free spectacles to the local villagers after the checkup.

Locals - especially elderly residents, forest staff, safari guides, and children - face treatable vision impairments that hinder their ability to work, study, and live independently. By restoring sight, our aim was to empower lives, enhance livelihoods, and foster self-reliance.

Wildlife tourism thrives when local communities are engaged and supported. The Kanha Eye Camp was a testament to how collective action can create a sustainable future for both people and wildlife. A special thanks to Kanha Jungle Camp, Sterling Holidays Kanha, Kanha Earth Lodge, Bagh Villas Kanha, Surwahi Social Ecoestate, and Dadaguru who came forward to support the initiative.

[Read the complete report here](#)

COLLABORATION EFFORTS AND ADVOCACY

At TOFT, we believe that impactful conservation and responsible tourism require strong partnerships and collective advocacy. Over the past year, we have actively engaged with key stakeholders—government bodies, conservation organizations, and tourism industry leaders—to drive sustainability and promote best practices in wildlife and nature-based tourism. Through these collaborations we have tried to foster awareness, increase capacity building, and play a role of policy influencer. Below are some of the key partnerships and advocacy initiatives undertaken by TOFT:

STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WITH TRAVELIFE

In Phase 3 of Travelife in India, TOFT has made further strides in expanding awareness and adoption of Travelife Certification among travel operators. Through strategic outreach, direct engagement, and support, the program was actively promoted, ensuring businesses align with global sustainability benchmarks.

This outreach resulted taking the membership to double digits in India with the focus of one-on-one meetings and digital promotion. While challenges remain, emphasis was on strengthening the foundation for responsible tourism by addressing barriers to certification and fostering greater industry participation.

Looking ahead, TOFT remains committed to expanding Travelife membership across India and Nepal, leveraging advocacy, collaboration, and tailored assistance to



encourage wider adoption. By equipping businesses with the necessary tools and resources, aim was to change attitude towards sustainability as a strategic advantage rather than just a compliance requirement.



TOFT'S PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS – SAMVAD (JUNE 2024) & NATURE AND BIRD FESTIVAL (FEBRUARY 2025)



In June 2024, TOFT had the opportunity to participate in Samvad in Lucknow—a platform that enabled critical discussions on the role of eco-tourism in conservation, evolving policy frameworks, and community-led tourism initiatives. Our engagement at the forum highlighted the importance of responsible tourism certifications and the implementation of sustainable tourism models, particularly within protected areas.

Continuing our outreach, in February 2025, TOFT took part in the Nature and Bird Festival held in Prayagraj, at the sacred Mahakumbh site. This unique setting offered a powerful opportunity to spread the message of conservation to a wider audience. The festival spotlighted the conservation of the Indian Skimmer and other avian species, emphasizing the ecological and cultural importance of birds, which have long held a revered place in Indian scriptures. The event also

underlined birdwatching as a significant contributor not only to nature tourism but also to individual well-being.

Through our collaboration with the Forest Board and meaningful interactions with conservationists, tour operators, and government representatives, TOFT reaffirmed its commitment to promoting responsible tourism, advocating for eco-friendly practices, and encouraging collective efforts to protect our natural heritage.



NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN INDIA-VISIONING AHEAD BY MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (MOEFCC)



TOFT participated in the Wildlife Management Workshop organized by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), engaging with policymakers and conservation experts to advocate for responsible tourism practices in wildlife destinations. As part of a sub-working committee focused on conducting a SWOT analysis for the promotion of Ecotourism, Adventure Tourism, and Homestays, TOFT contributed actively to discussions around key challenges.

These included a lack of awareness and understanding of ecotourism principles, gaps in capacity building, inadequate infrastructure, and the underdeveloped potential of adventure tourism and homestays. The group proposed several actionable strategies for MoEFCC to consider, such as awareness campaigns targeting stakeholders, the identification and development of tourism circuits, and the formulation of clear pricing guidelines, among others.

INDIA'S TRAVEL OPERATORS FOR TIGERS (TOFT) MAKES TO GLOBAL VISION AWARDS 2025



Tour Operators for Tigers (TOFT) has been recognized as a Sustainable Travel Innovator in the prestigious Travel + Leisure Global Vision Awards, honouring our pioneering work in eco-friendly tourism and conservation efforts in India & Nepal.

Since our inception in 2004, TOFT has striven work with the travel trade alliance to bring awareness to tourism community for ethical and responsible practices, certifying eco conscious accommodations, educating guides and engaging with local communities to support conservation.

Know more at:

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/global-vision-awards-2025-11688328>

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL OUTREACH

TOFT's digital platforms played a crucial role in amplifying our message. Our engagement strategy included:

- Regular updates on conservation news, sustainable tourism, and eco-friendly practices.
- Interactions with the travel trade community and raising awareness through TOFT Instalive Sessions and Knowledge sessions.
- Strategic collaborations with industry leaders and organisations to broaden our reach.



TOFT INSTALIVE AND KNOWLEDGE SERIES



TRANSFORMATIVE TOURISM WITH A NATURALIST

WEDNESDAY, 24th APRIL 2024 - 3.30PM IST



Faiz Ansari

Presented by
Faiz Ansari

Senior Naturalist, Forsyth Lodge, Satpura

Join us in the discussion with Faiz about Satpura's rich biodiversity! Discover how travel with the Naturalist changes the perspective and the experience for the tourists.

FOLLOW US ON  /TOFTIGERS

To check other sessions, see annexure.



Building on the initiative started in the pandemic, TOFT continued its efforts to raise awareness and foster a community of eco-conscious businesses and travellers. Through a series of Insta Live sessions featuring industry experts, TOFT facilitated insightful discussions on key issues shaping the future of sustainable tourism. These interactive sessions provided a platform for knowledge-sharing, industry trends, and best practices, reinforcing TOFT commitment to driving responsible tourism and engaging stakeholders in meaningful dialogue.

CONCLUSION

As TOFT reflects on another impactful year, our commitment to promoting responsible tourism remains stronger than ever. Through strategic collaborations, on-ground stakeholder engagements, and industry-driven awareness initiatives, we have strengthened our role as a catalyst for sustainable change in the tourism sector. Our efforts in certification advocacy, capacity building, and community-driven conservation have not only elevated sustainability standards but also inspired businesses to adopt more responsible practices.



ROAD AHEAD

Looking ahead, TOFT envisions driving sustainable destinations as a broader goal, integrating all key segments—certification, community engagement, conservation, and industry collaboration—within this vision. Our focus will be on fostering holistic sustainability by working closely with tourism businesses, local communities, and policymakers to create well-managed, responsible destinations. Strengthening partnerships, enhancing training programs, and advocating for policy-driven sustainability will be central to our approach. With this renewed vision, TOFT remains committed to leading the transition towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and conservation-focused tourism industry.

We thank our partners, supporters and various stakeholders for their unwavering commitment to our cause and look forward to yet another impactful year ahead.

For more information, visit: www.toftigers.org

ANNEXURE 1



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TOFTigers
Sustaining our world

**INSTA
LIVE** 2024
Series

**THE INFLUENCE
OF TRADITIONS
IN MAKING
RESPONSIBLE
DESTINATIONS**

WEDNESDAY, 15th MAY 2024 - 3.30PM IST



Ms. Indrani Chakraborty
Speaker



Bhavna Menon
Host

Presented by
Ms. Indrani Chakraborty
Co-founder, Svanir Wilderness Ecostay
& Bhavna Menon, TOFT Supporter

Join us for a discussion highlighting the pivotal role of educating travellers about time-honoured traditions and showcasing the exquisite talents of local artisans & their culture enriching tourist's travel experiences.

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TOFTigers
Sustaining our world

KNOWLEDGE 2024
Series

**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY:
WALK THE TALK**

WEDNESDAY, 5th JUNE 2024 - 12.00PM TO 01:00PM IST

REGISTER HERE





Dr. Anish Andheria



Ms. Akanksha Garg



Ms. Ritu Makhija



Jai Sharma



Saina Malhotra



Kaveer Dewan

ANNEXURE 1



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

WEDNESDAY, 31st JULY 2024 - 3.30PM IST



Pooja Iyengar
Speaker



Bhavna Menon
Host

Presented by
Ms. Pooja Iyengar

Chairperson, Mahashakti Seva Kendra
& **Bhavna Menon**, TOFT Supporter

Discover how innovative eco-friendly initiatives can drive sustainable development and empower local community. A talk with Pooja about successful projects and practical strategies to promote environmental stewardship and social growth.

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TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN TRAVEL

FRIDAY, 27th SEPTEMBER 2024, 4:30 PM IST



Sai Santhosh Kalangi
Speaker



Ritu Makhija
Host

Presented by
Sai Santhosh Kalangi
Co-founder, TravStack

& **Mrs. Ritu Makhija**, Director- Sustainability, TOFTigers

Join us, as we discover how AI is revolutionizing travel trends with interactive customer engagement, streamlining operations, and enhancing digital branding for travel businesses. Whether you're a tour operator, travel agent, or enthusiast, learn how AI-enabled solutions are can empower you.

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ANNEXURE 1



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**INSTA
LIVE** 2024
Series

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN WILDLIFE

WEDNESDAY, 23RD OCTOBER 2024, 3:30 PM IST



Ratna Singh
Speaker



Ritu Makhija
Host

Presented by
Ms. Ratna Singh
Qualified Safari Guide, Trainer, Sustainable Tourism Professional, Karamveer Chakra Awardee
& Mrs. Ritu Makhija, Director- Sustainability, TOFTigers

Join us for a talk with Ratna to discover the diverse career roles in wildlife tourism, conservation, and sustainable development. Don't miss this opportunity to explore satisfying future in wildlife!

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© Kashmiri Walks

TOFT
Promoting Sustainable Experiences

**INSTA
LIVE** 2025
Series

REVIVING THE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES FOR DESTINATION GLORY

WEDNESDAY, 29TH JANUARY 2025, 3:30 PM IST



Ausman Qayoom

Presented by
Ausman Qayoom
Founder, Kashmir Walks

Join us for an inspiring session with Ausman, as he shares his journey of transforming passion into action. Discover how he has revived and created authentic tourism experiences while championing the cause of using tourism as a powerful force for good.

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TOFT TEAM MEMBERS



Julian Matthews
Founder & Ambassador

Julian is a conservationist first, a nature lover, a pioneer in responsible travel and an eco-entrepreneur. He founded in the early 1990's a safari and conservation travel business, Discovery Initiatives, now part of the Steppes Travel Group, which took him across the globe, visiting well known and little known wildernesses areas on seven continents.



Vishal Singh
Co-founder & Director

Vishal Singh is a founding member and the Executive Director of TOFT India. He is passionate about travel and conservation, and has a wealth of local contacts and regional knowledge. He worked with Sheraton in Mumbai and Delhi before completing his MBA in IMI and establishing his own travel company, Royal Expeditions, in 1995, in which he remains CEO.



Deepika Chowdhry
Director

Deepika Chowdhry runs the TOFT India office in New Delhi. She is a reputed professional from the services and concepts industry. With more than 24 years' experience of National & International Sales & Marketing under her belt, she is well-connected with MICE, leisure, wildlife, adventure and travel agent communities in India and overseas.



Ritu Makhija
Director Sustainability

Ritu Makhija is the Director of Sustainability and a Certified Responsible Tourism Expert. With over 25 years of experience in the tourism, she has been instrumental in driving TOFT's mission and spearheading numerous impactful initiatives. Her work focuses on driving sustainability to destinations while engaging with various stakeholders in tourism.



Shiela Chopra
Administration Manager

Sheila Chopra has been efficiently managing administrative services at TOFT India for the last thirteen years. She is responsible for ensuring smooth communication between TOFT's numerous India and International members on a day-to-day basis. Her responsibilities include developing membership, managing meetings, maintaining the website, and handling TOFT's prestigious Wildlife and Tourism Awards programme.



DRIVING SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS