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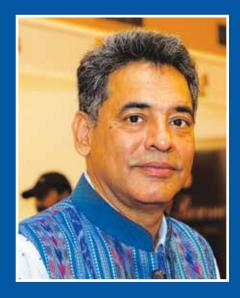
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4 Wonderlust December 2020 A BUSINESS TRAVEL MAGAZINE

editor speaks

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Dear Reader,

This is the last month of the year. Time flies! We had union election earlier in the year and the BJP headed government is back. We all talk about various challenges that the industry stakeholder have to face but never talk about if we have been playing a constructive role in the growth of tourism and hospitality industry.

It's a fact that majorly we have not innovated in selling the brand 'Incredible India'. Golden triangle and Kerala are the two

products that are globally renowned but what about other destinations? What about experiences that can offer insight to our great culture which is still the biggest drawer for international tourists planning to visit India. We have to run businesses and shouldn't expect the government to help us stay afloat in the market.

In the past industry demanded e-visa saying that it will be a game changer for the sector. Once it was introduced, we wanted to have it more robust by expanding its validity, multiple entry etc. Recently, we wanted e-visas to be cheaper, the government has considered that demand also. However, we still find many tour operators ruing that the business is not there and the government has done nothing! Let's wake up and smell the coffee.

In this issue we have covered extensively news and features that offer to you insight to what's latest happening in the industry. Keep sending your valuable inputs to us as they help us strive for excellence. Let's hope that the new year brings more opportunities and lesser challenges for us.

Happy Reading

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Goa: The land of many facets

Whenever a tourist plans to visit any destination in India, Goa always come on the first priority. The destination has everything from beaches to nightlife, churches to heritage, sea food and much more.



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Maldives wins 4 awards at World Travel Awards 2020



Maldives has won 4 prestigious awards in the Indian Ocean category in World Travel Awards -the most prestigious honors programme in global travel and tourism, established in 1993 and recognized globally as the ultimate hallmark of industry excellence.

Maldives has won the following categories this year:

- Indian Ocean's Leading Beach Destination 2020
- Indian Ocean's Leading Cruise Destination 2020
- Indian Ocean's Leading Destination 2020
- Indian Ocean's Leading Dive Destination 2020

Despite the tremendous challenges experienced by the tourism industry over the course of 2020, this year's World Travel Awards is a remarkable testament to the love and extraordinary effort of tourists from around the world - World Travel Awards has reported a record number of visitor traffic and engagement from public voters. This shows that as travel resumes and the tourism sector recovers, the appetite for travel has never been bigger. Tourists are constantly seeking the very best tourism products from across the world. As Maldives has won four categories, these awards have never been more valuable in the marketing of the island nation as one of the safest and top travel destinations in the world.

On winning the Indian Ocean's Leading Destination Award, the Managing Director of Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) stated, "Everyone knows the value of World Travel Awards, and we are extremely proud to have received Indian Ocean's Leading Destination award, which brings us one step closer to becoming the world's leading tourist destination. Thank you for voting for us. We hope to see you soon. Indeed, our island nation is one of the safest destinations to travel to during this time."

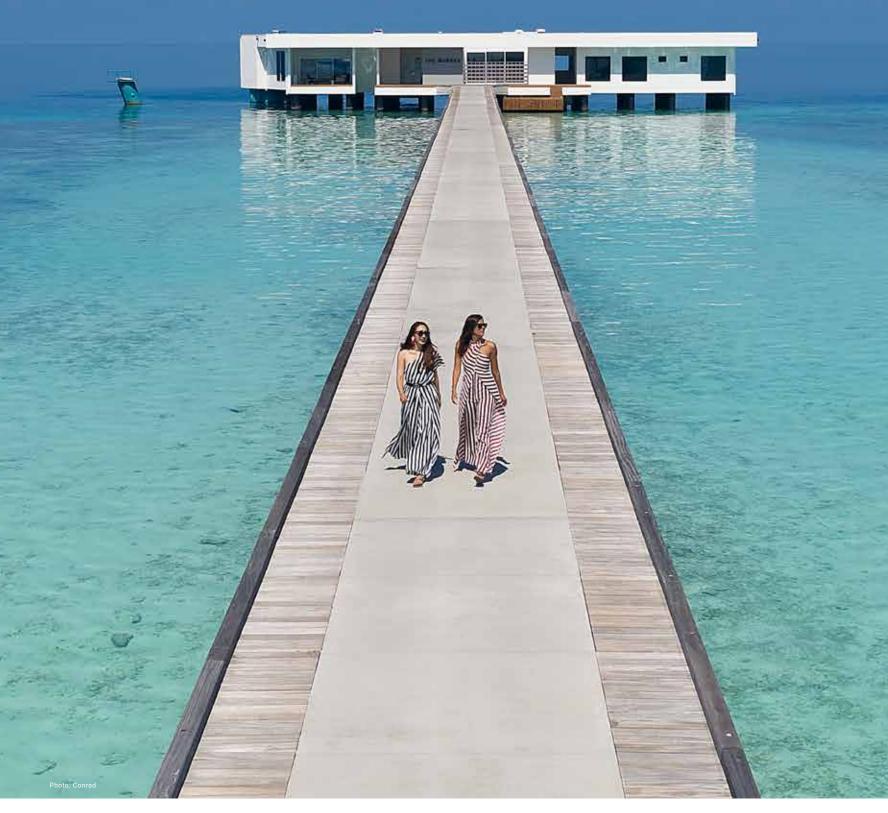
Instead of the traditional gathering of the Indian Ocean Gala Ceremony, this year, the chosen winners will be virtually uniting as the World Travel Awards launches its inaugural Indian Ocean Winners Day on 10th November 2020. To coincide with this, the

Indian Ocean Winners Day will showcase the best of the region's travel and tourism sector to the world.

As Maldives reopened its borders on 15th July 2020, these prestigious wins at the 27th World Travel Awards will aid in strengthening the image and increase the brand presence globally. Additionally, Maldives has secured multiple awards in various categories over the years including the World's Leading Airport Resort, World's Leading Beach Destination, World's Leading Honeymoon Resort, World's Most Romantic Resort and World's Leading Luxury Island Resort in 2019. The destination had also won the famed Indian Ocean's Leading Destination award 12 times within the past 16 years, this year being the 13th time.













Sharjah - The Family-Friendly Holiday Destination!

Nestled between two coasts, Sharjah is a lively forward-thinking emirate of modern business and vibrant culture. It shares its heritage through its 20 museums and galleries, local architecture and culture-packed leisure activities that are perfect for families!

Wonderlust Bureau



Sharjah is home to a wealth of noteworthy sites, museums, beaches and fun indoor and outdoor activities.

Al Montazah Waterpark: Newly renovated Al Montazah Amusement and Water Park is Sharjah's newest family entertainment destination. The 126,000-square-metre amusement park offers thrilling water rides, a leisure park and green space in the heart of the city. Al Montazah has rides and recreation options that tourists and residents of all ages are sure to enjoy. The park's offerings are rounded off by attractions such as a souk, cafés, restaurants, sports facilities and live performance venues.

Discovery Centre: Sharjah Discovery Centre is an entertainment centre designed for children aged 3 to 12 years, providing them with the opportunity to learn, discover, understand the role of science and technology in their daily life and explore the world around them in a fun-filled and relaxing atmosphere. All the activities are based on real-life activities in the most fun way.

Al Noor Island: With a combination of beautiful sculptures, butterfly house housing over 500 species of exotic butterflies, peaceful literature pavilion and fun interactive playground, this family destination in Sharjah takes you on remarkable sensory journeys and offers engaging cultural experiences. Enjoy wandering through the butterfly house, letting one of its peaceful winged

inhabitants land on your hand; sit in quiet contemplation, overlooking the fountain at the literature pavilion or have an energetic bounce along the trampoline walkway beside the beautiful lagoon.

Sharjah Centre for Astronomy & Space Sciences: This cleverly designed attraction is an enticing place to take children, with informative and entertaining displays. The centre aims at developing and promoting education about astronomy and space sciences in the Arab World in general and the UAE in particular in order to be a destination for science, research, heritage, education and tourism for students and university students, researchers and families of all ages.

Sharjah Aquarium: As an ancient port, Sharjah's history is interweaved with the sea and there is no better place to learn about

the emirate's sea-faring traditions and local marine life than Sharjah Aquarium. More than 150 species, including the beautiful clownfish, delicate seahorses, moray eels, sea rays and reef sharks can be seen in the cleverly designed large fish tanks which wind through the building, displaying sea creatures in their natural habitats of rocky shores, coral reefs, lagoons and mangroves. Sharjah Aquarium is the first and largest government educational center in UAE. Covering an area of 6500 m², it consists of two floors equipped with 20 aquariums, filled with 1.8 million liters of water.

Wasit Wetland: The Wasit Wetland Reserve is impressive for its work with bird conservation. The aviaries are state of the art and feature endangered birds that are native or migratory on the Arab Peninsula.





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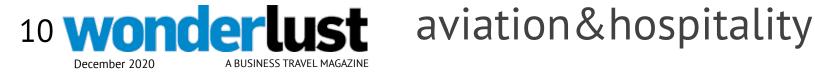
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India's Textile Minister Smriti Irani welcomes **Kuwaiti Delegates**

Kuwait representative to India Jassim Al-Najim said that the two discussed ways to enhance the alliance of Kuwait and India at New Delhi. India also welcomes Kuwaiti funds in various fields such as the Textile industry.

Indian-Kuwaiti joint cooperation witnessing a remarkable development at all levels through the efforts made by the ambassadors of both countries to push relations towards further progress and development, the Kuwaiti representative said. He also stated that Kuwaiti petrochemical companies play a vital role in providing raw materials for the Indian textile industry at genuine international prices with highquality services for the Indian polyester and textile industry over the past two decades.

Al-Najim also said that they also established an endless alliance to support small and medium scale industries by providing raw materials to the Indian Textiles Industry, especially Glycol.



Learn & Earn' Refresher Sessions By Far East Hospitality Group

FAR EAST HOSPITALITY, is conducting a short and interactive product refresher cum Fun-Quiz session for the select travel operators across India.

Startedsince late Sep'20, these LEARN & EARN sessions will continue till Feb-March 2021. The sessions are aimed to engage the travel consultants of various agencies and location, enhance and refresh their knowledge and selling skills, as well as reward the 3 Quiz Winners with a certificate and cash money into their bank accounts.

We are conscious of the reality that since March 2020 there is NIL outbound bookings coming to our travel partners. The stoppage due to pandemic has put everyone in a serious financial constraint. Since August'20 there are number of virtual webinars, product presentations, panel discussions, online networking events etc happening for the readiness of revival. The embargo on international commercial flights has been dragging month-on-month, rightly so - to ensure safety first, but has led to the heightened anxiety and insecurity for all stakeholdersin the outbound tourism segment. Therefore, we decided to hold only a short 15-minute product presentation with only few agencies per session, followed by a fun quiz and a token cash for the 3-winners to splurge during these festive months.As



Regional Sales Office in India for FAR EAST HOSPITALITY [FEH], it is our endeavor to stay close with partners at all times and try to augment a positive outlook during these uncertain period. Looking at the enthusiastic participation and happy feedback from the consultants, we are satisfied with the outcome so far and shall continue to engage further - said MrManas Sinha, Regional Director,FEH and Director,ISA Tourism representation services'. Further, aside being a hotel & tourism marketing company that

brings new, relevant products for tour and travel operators, ISA Tourism Pvt Ltdis also encouraging travel consultants to interact and overcome stress and anxieties, take up short term alternate vocation, upskill, and evaluate the real vs imaginary distress. When international travel resumes, it would be work and revival for all! Until then we are in the same boat and only by keeping the boat steady we shall make it sail through this global storm.

nto



TAT donates over 600,000 Baht to local elephant, environment organisations

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is pleased to announce that it is donating over 600,000 Baht in funds raised through the "Thailand Reduce Waste" campaign to Friends of the Asian Elephant and the Seub Nakhasathien Foundation.

The amount of 333,516.25 Baht was presented to Friends of the Asian Elephant in Lampang province on Friday, 13 November, 2020, and 303,516.25 Baht to the Seub Nakhasathien Foundation on Tuesday, 17 November, 2020.

Friends of the Asian Elephant is an elephant hospital where over 5,000 sick and injured elephants have been treated since 1993, while the Seub Nakhasathien Foundation is dedicated to forest conservation.

Featuring popular Thai star and entertainer Mr. Palitchoke Ayanaputra (Peck Palitchoke) as a presenter, the Thailand Reduce Waste campaign is aimed at creating awareness among domestic tourists of the role they can play in waste management and environmental preservation.

The campaign comes under the TAT's strategy to strengthen the focus on sustainability at tourism destinations nationwide and ensure the upkeep of Thai tourism products. It also forms part of the plan to help reduce



tourism-related waste by up to 50 per cent within 2020.

The funds to be donated by TAT have come from the sale of colourful daily-use bags made from upcycled material which are available through the Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/TATCGANDCSR/. These are available in bold blue or pink designs that feature 'Bua Ban' the elephant who lives at the Elephant Study Centre in Surin province.

TAT Governor, Mr. Yuthasak Supasorn, said, "Working with all stakeholders towards

sustainable tourism development, TAT is committed to encouraging tourists to travel responsibly by leaving only footprints and taking only good memories.

"The donation of these funds through the "Thailand Reduce Waste" campaign is a prime example of how we can cut down on waste and in doing so, at the same time, create vital funding for the wonderful work being done in the name of animal and environmental preservation."

South African Tourism announces campaign to inspire travellers to do Summer Differently

South Africa has an unbelievable diversity of things to do and places to explore in all its nine provinces and this week South African Tourism kicks off a campaign to showcase this wide variety of tourism attractions and experiences across the country.

For most of this year, South Africans' movements have been restricted and now through this campaign, South African Tourism aims to inspire them to go out and enjoy their country and summer, differently.

Starting in the Northern Cape, the Summer Different convoy will travel through each one of South Africa's nine provinces to shine a spotlight on some of the most spectacular parts of the country and unearth the hidden gems in every province.

This is all in an effort to encourage people to go out and discover their country and join a nationwide journey to celebrate South Africa's rich and diverse landscapes this summer. After an incredibly challenging and uncertain year, everything is different, so shouldn't we all holiday differently, too? We need to refresh travel experiences for people in South Africa, explore the hidden gems, take the road less travelled and go off the beaten track. Nothing is what it used to be. We need to show them a better and different way to experience tourism in the long-term, but most importantly, show them how to do summer differently in the short-term," says Sisa Ntshona, CEO of South African Tourism.

Since the easing of lockdown restrictions, South Africans have been craving quick getaways to celebrate, and as summer draws closer, they need the choice of many smallnyana experiences that are different in every way possible.

A Sho't Left to the next village or town or a few hours' drive to the next province; experiencing the best of the beach or the bush, or visiting fascinating landmarks that are rich with history – people in South Africa are spoilt for choice with the options available to them in their backyard.

Ntshona notes that in addition to highlighting and encouraging local travel this summer, supporting SMMEs within the travel space who have been hard-hit by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is vital. It is for this reason that an SMME Workshop will be hosted in each province the Summer Different road trip visits.

"We all know that the tourism sector was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic, so we need to carve an inclusive way forward. It's about expanding in all directions, connecting all corners, and drawing all tourism elements and products together in a cohesive, robust and sustainable way. One that leverages every endeavour and enterprise for a singular vision of growth.

Goa: The land of many facets

Whenever a tourist plans to visit any destination in India, Goa always come on the first priority. The destination has everything from beaches to nightlife, churches to heritage, sea food and much more.

Wonderlust Bureau



Goa is the state which has most of the beaches, a joyful nightlife and amazing Portuguese architecture. It also has many famous churches. When you will visit here you will see the colourful houses, lush green fields and a soothing languidness in the atmosphere. If a tourist is nature lover so this place is very ideal.

PLACES TO VISIT

First of all a tourist has to make a list where they have to go first because Goa has so many places to explore. You can enjoy beaches and churches are the most famous amongst travellers.

Anjuna Beach

This beach is much explored by foreigners. You can enjoy night parties, good eating joints, peaceful seashore, western seafood with chilled beer and good music in nearby restaurants and flea markets. Anjuna is situated 21 km north of Panaji and 7 km from Baga. Anjuna was made famous by the 'flower power and peace' generation of the sixties and early seventies. Located about 18 kms from Panaji, the beach is known for its breeze-catching palms, soft sand, and the unusual rocky formation overlying a cove of whitish sand.

Baga Beach

There is one more beach called Baga Beach which is most popular beach of Goa for Indian tourists, it offers something for everyone. You just visit there and take pictures, enjoy the beach with parties, music, beach shacks, karaoke, good food, water sports, good accommodation facilities, and is easily the most happening place in Goa. Baga beach is located 19 km north of Panaji.

Candolim Beach

Candolim Beach is the ideal place to visit if you wish to feel peace and quiet, away from

the all bustling around the city. It is located at about 14 kms from Panjim, the capital of Goa. This sun-soaked spot doesn't offer too much to see and do — the entire point of a trip here is to lay back in the sand and forget about the rest of the world as you listen to the waves.

Ashwem Beach

Ashwem Beach is also known as Ashvem beach is one of the best kept secrets of North Goa. Located to the north of the capital city of Panaji, this beach offer delightful ocean vistas fringed by the green fronds of the sway coconut palms that pepper the shore.



goa

Calangute Beach

This beach is the huge beach in North Goa. People also know it as the 'Queen of beaches'. Located between Candolim and Baga beach, it is a hub for tourists and backpackers from all over the world. Situated 15km from the capital city of Panaji, this expansive stretch of sand and water attracts tourist from all around the globe. Calangute is one of the busiest and the most commercialised beaches of Goa. The sound of pop beats and rock music in the air elevates the festive mood. The beach is also swarming with eating joints, shacks and clubs serving mixed drinks, beer and seafood making it a hot favourite among visitors. This flagship beach of Goa is also known for its water sports activities like parasailing, water surfing, banana ride and jet-skiing. Be sure to visit the Church of St. Alex while in Calangute.



Basilica of Bom Jesus

This historic church is located in Goa and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Basilica of Bom Jesus houses the tomb and remains of St. Francis Xavier. Even after 400 years, the remains are in a good condition and are taken out once every decade. Up until half a century ago, Goa was the capital of Portuguese rule in India and this is part of their heritage. The Basilica of Bom Jesus church is one of a kind in India and is known for its exemplary baroque architecture. This church coincides with the beginning of Christianity in India. It holds the body of St. Francis Xavier, a special friend of St. Ignatius Loyola with whom he founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). After the death of Francis Xavier his body was first preserved at Portugal but two years later shipped back to Goa. The saint is believed to have phenomenal powers of therapeutic healing. The body of the saint is kept in a mausoleum in nicely ornamented coffin. The floor of this church is made of marble mosaic with precious stones. The interior of the church is simple and quiet. The Basilica of Bom Jesus is over 408 years old and is open to the public every day.

Fort Aguada

After completing all fun and enjoyment of beaches. If you want to visit some heritage places, so Fort Aguada will be the best option. The fort was built in 1612 to watch and guard against the Dutch and the Marathas. It was a reference point for the vessels coming from Europe. This fort is divided into two segments where the upper part acts as a fort and watering station, while the lower part serves as a safe berth for Portuguese ships.

Whereas the upper part has a wide water-filled ditch, underground water reservoir, gunpowder room, light house and bastions, it also has a secret escape at the time of war and emergency.

Saturday Flea Market

Another thing that will stick to your memory is wandering on the roads of Goa on rented bikes or scooters. The lush green streets with deep blue waters on their sides design a wonderful travelling scenario. And, not to forget the Casinos which are another reason why visiting Goa is an experience of amazeballs.

Sunburn Festival

The electronic dance night is an experience to be cherished forever. From the most frolic music beats to flavoursome food, the festival is an ideal for spending New Year Eve. The ever ending partying spirit is spread over 3 days when each and every person is involved in tapping feet to the beats of legendary personalities. Back in years passed, Hardwell, Afrojack, Swedish House Mafia, and Tiesto have entertained the crowd with their Dance moves, Trance, Electro, Drum & Bass, Psy-Trance and much more. The Sunburn story doesn't end here. It also has delicious food shacks, markets, and water sports on its list.



Goa has to offer a wide range of adventure sports to kick in your adrenal glands such as Surf Boarding, Parasailing etc.





Rajasthan: The land of many surprises

The land of Rajasthan has many facets to explore. One of the most popular tourist destinations in India it never fails to impress. In this article we are highlighting few lesser known jewels of the state.

Poonam Chaudhary



Ajmer

The city of Ajmer gets its name from 'Ajay Meru'. Roughly translated, it means 'invincible hills'. Nestled in the Aravallis south west of Jaipur, Ajmer was founded by Raja Ajaypal Chauhan in the 7th century AD. Till the late 12th century AD, Ajmer was the epicentre of the Chauhan dynasty.

After Prithviraj Chauhan's loss to Mohammed Ghori in 1193 AD, Ajmer became home to several dynasties. The Mughals in particular, fancied it as their favourite destination due to the presence of the holy Ajmer Sharif Dargah.

ATTRACTIONS & PLACES TO VISIT AND EXPLORE IN AJMER

THE AJMER SHARIF DARGAH

This is a Sufi shrine which encloses the 'maqbara' (grave) of Garib Nawaz, the Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti. Built in the 13th century, the shrine is popular among people of all faiths who flock here to have their prayers answered. The shrine has three gates – the main gate or the Nizam gate, the Shah Jahan gate erected by the Mughal Emperor and the Buland Darwaza.

Another big draw at this holy shrine is the sacred and scrumptious food that is served to devotees. Cooked in giant cauldrons known as 'degs', devotees gather in throngs to be blessed by this prasad.

ANASAGAR LAKE

Anasagar Lake is a scenic artificial lake, commissioned and built by Arnoraj Chauhan, son of Ajaypal Chauhan, between 1135 and 1150 AD. Arnoraj was also known as Anaji, which gives the lake its name.

Many years later, Mughal Emperor Jahangir added his touch to the lake by laying out the Daulat Bagh Gardens near the lake. Emperor Shah Jahan too, contributed to the expansion by building five pavilions, known as the Baradari, between the garden and the lake.

SONIJI KI NASIYAN

Soniji ki Nasiyan, also known as the Ajmer Jain Temple, is a wonderful example of ornate architecture, and is dedicated to Risabh or Adinath.

Its entrance is made of red stone and the marble staircase inside is engraved with images of the holy Tirthankars – omniscient teachers of Jain faith who taught righteousness. Constructed in the late 19th century, this temple is counted among the richest temples in India.

Its main chamber, Swarna Nagari (City of Gold), is aptly named so because of the several gold-plated wooden figures it houses within its walls. This famous architectural marvel finds a mention in Kurt Titze's book, 'Jainism: A Pictorial Guide to the Religion of Non-Violence'

Bundi

It is popularly believed that Nobel laureate Rudyard Kipling penned part of his famous novel 'Kim' in Bundi. In fact, so impressed was he by the place, that this is what he wrote about the Bundi palace:

'Jaipur Palace may be called the Versailles of India ... Jodhpur's House of strife, gray towers on red rock, is the work of giants, but the Palace of Bundi, even in broad daylight, is such a palace as men build for themselves in uneasy dreams – the work of goblins rather than of men.' Bundi is a magnificent town located around 36 kilometres from Kota. Dotted with palaces and forts, the place has a fairy tale quality about it.

rajasthan

Wonderlust 15 December 2020 A BUSINESS TRAVEL MAGAZINE

ATTRACTIONS & PLACES TO VISIT AND EXPLORE IN BUNDI

SUKH MAHAL

Sukh Mahal, a small, two-storied palace was a summer retreat of past rulers. Today, it is quite famous for being the place where Kipling wrote 'Kim'. Many credit the palace as a having played muse to the renowned novel. In fact, part of a movie based on the novel was even shot here.

KSHAR BAG

Located near the Chhatra Vilas Garden, Kshar Bag, sometimes known as Saar Bagh, houses the memorial cenotaphs of the royal family of the Bundi state. It is located on the Shikar Burgh Jait Sagar Road.

TARAGARH FORT

Built in 1345, Taragarh is one of the most impressive structures in Bundi. While it may be a bit ramshackle and strewn with overgrown vegetation, the palace grounds are a great place for a leisurely stroll. With its curved roofs topping pavilions, excess of temple columns and elephant and lotus motifs, the palace is a tribute to Rajput style.

Dholpur

Situated in the eastern part of Rajasthan, Dholpur became a separate district in 1982 comprising four tehsils of Bharatpur – namely Dholpur, Rajakhera, Bari and Baseri. Carved out of Bharatpur district, Dholpur is surrounded by Agra on the north, Morena district of Madhya Pradesh on the south and Karauli on the west.

CITY PALACE

Also known as the Dholpur Palace, the City Palace is an opulent structure that



seamlessly blends ancient heritage and elegant architecture. Once home to the Royal Family, this palace was built from red sand stone which illustrates the history, splendour and grandeur of the city.

ROYAL STEPWELL

Constructed between 1873 -1880, this royal stepwell or 'baori' is situated behind the Nihaleshwar temple in city. This four storied building has beautiful artistic pillars and carved stones.

SHERGARH FORT

Located to the south of Dholpur, the Shergarh Fort was built by Raja Maldeo of Jodhpur. It was reconstructed in 1540 by Sher Shah Suri and named after the Sultan of Delhi. This fort was initially built in defence against the rulers of Mewar. This historic monument is considered to be the epitome of rich, delicately-styled architecture from the past. Adorned with carved images, statues of Hindu

gods and Jain motifs, the Shergarh Fort was once protected by water and is considered to be the charm of Dholpur.

Barmer:

Occupying an area of 28,387 sq. km, Barmer is among the larger districts in Rajasthan. Being in the western part of the state, it includes a part of the Thar Desert. Jaisalmer is to the north of this district while Jalore is in its south.

ATTRACTIONS & PLACES TO VISIT AND EXPLORE IN BARMER

BARMER FORT & GARH TEMPLE

Rawat Bhima build a Barmer fort in 1552 AD at hillock in present city of Barmer when he shifted old Barmer (Presently JUNA village in Barmer Dist) to present city. He build a fort on top of the city which is also known as Barmer Garh. Hill of Barmer fort is 1383 feet but Rawat Bhima build fort at height of 676 feet which is safer place than top of hill. Main entrance of Fort (Prole) is on North direction, Safety Burg are made on east & west direction.

JUNA FORT & TEMPLE

Juna is old Barmer it was main city build by Bar Rao but during Rawat Bhima rule they shifted Barmer to new place where present city stands and Juna remains as ruins of past glory and old heritage. It is 25 Kms from Barmer and is known for its Jain temple and old fort. According to inscriptions on a stone pillar near the temple, it was built in the 12th or 13th century. Juna is surrounded by hills and also a small lake.





Discover fascinating wildlife at Kaziranga National Park

Kaziranga National Park is situated in the Golaghat and Nagaon districts of the state of Assam, India, and is a world heritage site that hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses.

Manchumi Hazarika



Kaziranga has the highest density of tigers among protected areas and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006. Kaziranga National Park was established in 1908.

Apart from rhinos and tigers, the park is also home to large breeding populations of Wild Elephants, Water Buffalo, Swamp Deer, Indian Bison, Sloth Bears, Hog Deer, Leopard Cats, Jungle Cats, Hog Badgers, Wild Boar, Capped Langurs, Hoolock Gibbons, Jackals, Pythons, Monitor Lizards, Wild Buffalo and Otters etc.

Spread across an area of circa 430 Km Sq. Kaziranga is a vast expanse of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests, crisscrossed by four major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, and the park includes numerous small bodies of water.

Kaziranga is one of the largest tracts of protected land in the sub-Himalayan belt, and due to the presence of highly diverse and visible species, has been described as a "biodiversity hotspot". Kaziranga is also

surrounded by lush green tea plantations. The park experiences three seasons: summer, monsoon, and winter. The winter season, between November and February, is mild and dry. The summer season between March and May is hot. The rainy monsoon season lasts from June to September.

The best time/season to visit Kaziranga National Park is from mid-November to early April. The Park is open daily from 1st November to 30th April and it remains closed from 1st June to 30th September. It partly remains open in the months of October and May.

The Brahmaputra River bursts its banks during the monsoons which results in flooding of low-lying grasslands and causing animals inside the park to migrate to elevated/ forested regions outside the park; some animals even perish in this course. Unprecedented floods has always been a major threat in this region.

Kaziranga has been the target of several natural and man-made calamities in recent decades, such as, unprecedented floods, encroachment by people to own the land, poaching and hunting, illegal timbering, Insurgent (ULFA) dominance etc.



assam

HOW TO REACH - One can reach Kaziranga through Guwahati which is known as the gateway of the Northeast India. It is located at 215 kms from the park, serves as the nearest airport to reach Kaziranga. The other airport is located at Jorhat, 97 kms from Kaziranga. The nearest railway station is at the distance of 75 kms from the Kaziranga National Park in Furkating. Kohara, located on National Highway -37 is the main gate to reach the Kaziranga National Park.

Kaziranga has achieved notable success in wildlife conservation. It is one amongst the top national parks in India with an equal fame and popularity abroad as well, mainly for its magnificent one horned rhinos. Royal couple Prince williams and Kate visited Kaziranga National park last year (2016) somewhere in early April during their tour to India and Bhutan. A must place to visit if you are into wildlife, nature, adventure safaris, bird-watching etc.

A memorable experience

It was early this year in January 2017, me and my entire family decided to embark on an adventure spree to Kazaringa National park, so we hired a taxi from Dimapur to our destination, the distance is around 172 Kms with a travel time of approx. 3 hrs 45 min.

We reached there at noon, and to give a holistic overview about the entire experience - the moment we got off from the taxi near the Kazriranga ticket counter area, we saw hundreds of rustic military olive green maruti -gypsies/jeeps standing in queue in an organized manner, waiting for its prospective customers and tourists to hop in and get started with the Safari, of course after all the tickets' were purchased & other formalities were met.



You can expect customers, tourists, brokers, hawkers, quides etc. scattered all over the place in clusters with their respective reasons whatsoever. One can either opt for a dedicated Jeep by purchasing all the seats or even look out options to club with someone on a sharing basis, seat limit being 6-7 adults. Jeep Safaris run all through the morning till 5:00 in the evening, while Elephant Safaris require a bit of planning - meaning you have to book the passes/tickets an evening before the morning you decide to take the Safari and this is ideally open only at dusk, from 4:00 am onwards. Interestingly, there are 5 zones or areas that you can choose to explore within the Kazaringa National Park, each of these zones for Safaris are confined to that specific area only in a travel time of around 3 to 3.30 hours max. All this zonal information with other details are displayed near the ticket-counter area so that visitors and tourists can pick and choose whatever adventure zone they are attracted to.

People at the counter also help visitors and tourists on deciding what zone may be a fit for them depending on their interest, however this purely on a good-will and kind gesture.

We zeroed in for central ridge.....

Anyway, as we were 10 people in family, we hired two dedicated Jeeps for 7000 (3,500 each), also paid advance entry gate fees and service tax of 3000 (for both the Jeeps). Once we were all settled with the pricing and transaction formalities; we boarded the Jeep and pushed off for Kazaringa National Park which is like 20-25 minutes away and further inside from the ticket counter area. There is also small local village settled on the either side of the road on the way to the main Kazaringa National Park entry gate (check post), this place is called 'MIHIMUKH' and offers as a great picnic spot outside Kazaringa. Upon arrival at the KNP entry gate, we were detained by the Forest Guards who came to counter check our tickets and other formalities, after we got the goahead to drive into the wilderness of KNP, at less than 2 kms of safari - We met our first Host - Swamp Deer in clusters grazing peacefully by the lush greens. We also saw wild boars, water buffaloes, various breeds of monkeys, multiple species of birds, wildelephants, jungle cats, red jungle-fowls and many other primates. As we gazed upon the natural beauty and greenery of the park, our driver acted as a commentator and shared descriptives of the park and animals, which he had gathered from his experience of touring clients in the region, this was indeed really very helpful to have an insight about the park as we explored along...







Punjab The land of five rivers

Deriving its name from five full-bodied rivers—Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab—which flow through its vast plains, Punjab is representative of abundant things. Located on the north-western edge of India, it is one of the smaller albeit prosperous states of the nation, and home to a lively, hospitable and dynamic people.



Widely acknowledged as the cradle of civilization, it is a land of ethnic and religious diversity, having borne and shaped a number of religious movements that include Sikhism, Buddhism and Sufism. The Punjabi language, too, finds its origin in the Indo-European linguistic family that includes Persian and Latin. Naturally replete with fertile soils and rich water sources, it is primarily an agricultural state, and has continually and infinitely contributed towards the food security of the Indian Republic. Punjab's many festivals -Teej, Lohri, Basant, and Baisakhi, to name some-are celebrations that mirror the farming ethos. Indeed, Bhangra, the traditional dance of Punjab revolves around, and replicates a farmer's daily life. Historically, Punjab has played host to a number of ethnicities, including the Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Afghans and Mongols, thus bestowed with a rich tangible heritage. Reflecting this history are the countless sites that dot the state: impressive forts & palaces, ancient monuments, architectural marvels and many a battlefield.

PLACES TO VISIT

Golden Temple

The Golden temple is one of the prime tourist attractions in Punjab and the most important pilgrim spot for the Sikh community. The temple is said to be the focal point behind the founding and naming of the city of Amritsar. The 4th Guru of the Sikh community excavated a tank and named it 'Amritsar' which literally means the 'pool of the nectar of immortality' and built the temple on the pool which we know today as the Golden temple. The main entrance is through an imposing clock tower, which also houses the Central Sikh Museum,

and provides a stunning view of the shrine and its reflection in the Amrit Sarovar. Another entry is through the magnificent silver doors of the beautifully embellished Darshani Deori. It leads onto the causeway that connects the sanctum sanctorum with the Parikrama, the marbled surface surrounding the Sarovar. The lower facade of the Golden Temple is clad in marble, inlaid with precious and semi-precious coloured stones, using the pietra dura technique to create motifs. Within, the Guru Granth Sahib is enshrined on the ground floor, in a room embellished with splendid frescoes.

Jallianwala Bagh

On 13 April 1919, a peaceful crowd of 2000 men, women and children had gathered in Jallianwala Bagh, a walled garden near the Golden Temple, to protest British rule. A group of British soldiers



led by Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer opened unprovoked fire at the innocent crowd, relentlessly massacring the protestors even as the crowd dispersed in panic, many of them jumping into a well to escape the gunfire. Today, the furthest end of the Bagh is marked by a Martyrs' Memorial built in the shape of an eternal flame. A section of the wall, pock-marked by bullets, as also the well, has been preserved as a reminder of the tragic event.

Wagah Border ceremony

Every evening, hundreds of people flock to the Wagah border, the international border that separates India and Pakistan, to witness the majestic changing of guards accompanied by the hoisting and retreat of the respective national flags. The border security forces of both nations undergo the elaborate process jointly through an interesting ceremony.



Anandpur Sahib, the town where the Khalsa was founded, was established by Guru Teg Bahadur on the banks of River Sutlej. It was once fortified by five majestic forts. Of these, the main fort built in red brick by Guru Gobind Singh, is still standing. A subterranean well inside the fort, accessed by a sharp flight of stairs, is an intriguing feature of its architecture. It is here that the annual Hola Mohalla festival is held.

Rajmahal

The Raj Mahal was built during the reign of Maharaja Balbir Singh, at the end of the 19th century. The complex comprises a group of



buildings within a vast and irregular-walled enclosure. It consists of the main palace, the Tasveer Ghar (picture house), a Baradari (a twelve-door, open pavilion), a gurdwara, three small pavilions called doll houses, two swimming pools, a well and service quarters. Its main entrance, a magnificent three-storey gateway called Raj Deori, is a hospital today. Spread over 15 acres, the splendid lawns were considered a remarkable achievement in this arid area.

Gobindgarh Fort

The Punjab region in the 18th Century was ruled by clans called Misls. It was in the 1760s that Gujar Singh Bhangi, - a local chieftain-

built this as a mud fortress- and it came to be known as 'Bhagian da Qilla'. They owned it till 1809 or for almost 49 years. However, the financial position of the misl deteriorated over time and by 1809 a minor ruler Gurdit S. Bhangi, a descendent of Gujjar Singh, was ruling Amritsar with the help of his mother Mai Sukhan. Mai Sukhan asked Arur Mal, a sahukar (trader) of the Bhangi township, to pay nazrana (Tribute). Not wanting to do so, Arur Mal migrated to the township of the rival Kanhiyas misl in order to avoid payment. At that time Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a rising star belonging to the Sukerchakia Misl. Arur Mal conspired with Shaikh Kamaluddin, a leading citizen and they invited Ranjit Singh, to take over the fort and the territories of Gurdit Singh.



The fort at Bathinda is possibly the oldest in Punjab, going back as far as the early Christian era. Intended as a safeguard against invasion, the Qila Mubarak resembles a great big schooner soaring over dusty plains. It was ruled by successive dynasties, each of which, including Baba Ala Singh of Patiala, has left an indelible mark on its construction. The Qila Mubarak is associated with a celebrated historical romance. Malik Ikhtiarud-din Altunia, the 13th century governor of Bathinda rebelled against Empress Razia Sultan, one of the post powerful rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, and imprisoned her here. They are said to have fallen in love during her captivity and gotten married thereafter.

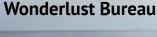






Kerala God's own country

Kerala is a place where one can experience unbelievable beauty which attracts scores of tourists. Although Kerala is famous for its backwater, the destination has a lot to offer.





BEACHES

Kasaragod, the Northern most district of Kerala is renowned as the land of gods, forts, rivers, hills and beautiful beaches. Bekal Fort Beach has been developed as an exotic beach location by the Bekal Resorts Development Corporation (BRDC). Beautification of the site includes installation of two sculptures of Theyyam created using laterite on the beach and a shed the walls of which are adorned with murals created by artisans from Nilambur. Apart, from these a rock garden at the parking area has been developed where laterite boulders of various sizes have been utilised. Under the social forestry scheme, trees have been planted in the beach area.

Cherai Beach, a picturesque beach, located on the north-end of the Vypeen Island is ideal for swimming. Lined with luscious green coconut groves and paddy fields, this sandy beach is a unique combination of the sea and the backwaters, studded with seashells of various hues and shapes. Dolphines are occasionally seen here. Thick coconut groves and Chinese fishing nets on the waterfront are added attractions.

A large swimming pool-like formation of the sea on the vast beach is the main attraction at Kanwatheertha Beach in Manjeswaram,

Kasaragod. The beach is situated about 33 km from Kasaragod.

An array of beach activities attracts thousands of tourists throughout the year to this perfect beach setting offering panoramic views of the Arabian Sea. A port city and one time active harbour for Chinese ships and trade, Kollam Beach is home to Chinese fishing nets, Chinese water pots and sampan-like boats seen even today.

MONUMENTS

The historic Bekal Fort-built in 17th century - offers a superb view of the Arabian Sea from its tall observation towers, which were occupied by huge cannons, couple of centuries ago. Near the fort is an old mosque said to have been built by the valiant Tipu Sultan of Mysore. Built by the rulers of the ancient Kadampa dynasty, the fort changed hands over the years to the Kolathiri Rajas, the Vijayanagar Empire, Tipu Sultan and finally, the British East India Company. Day by day, the Bekal Fort and its surroundings are fast becoming an international tourist destination and a favourite shooting locale for film makers.

Built in the Roman architectural style, Secretariat is the centre of government



kerala



administration in Kerala and houses the offices of ministers and the bureaucracy. It is located in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala.

The Dutch Cemetery, Ernakulam, the tomb stones here are the most authentic record of the hundreds of Europeans who left their homeland on a mission to expand their colonial empires and changed the course of history of this land. The cemetery was consecrated in 1724 and is today managed by the Church of South India.

HILLS

Paithal Mala

Paithal Mala is a hill station that rests in the lap of the Western Ghats in Kannur district of Kerala. Located in the Kerala – Karnataka border, Paithal Mala descends into the Kudaku forest area of Karnataka. This hilly stretch which is the highest peak in Northern Kerala bursts with myriad forms of life. This divine slice of land which is a blend of vast green meadows and sigh inducing valleys is a haven of birds, butterflies, rare plants and trees. The journey is also a walk into a chapter of history as one gets to see the remains of the ruined palace of the tribal king Vaithalkon.

With its grand landscapes, Paithal Mala resembles the Western highlands. A two km trek is needed to reach the top of the hills. The trek to the top itself is rewarding. It is more of a jungle sojourn in solitude, occasionally punctuated by the calls of the birds.

ADVENTURE TOURISM

India's most destination, happening Kerala offers its visitors opportunities and experiences to unleash their adventure spirit. Apart from its picture-postcard beauty, Kerala is also an ideal destination for adventure sports. This beautiful land has in store an array of adventure packed destinations; be it the high altitude mountain ranges, qushing rivers, deep dark forests or the vast stretches of the sea. Aquatic sports, wildlife treks and paragliding are some of the most sought after activities as part of adventure tourism in Kerala. Get off the tourist trail and pack your bags for Kerala Natventure.

Trek and Camp

Tropical rainforests scenic country sides, majestic hills, spice plantations, grasslands, Kerala has some of nature's most exotic playgrounds for the trekker in you. From the myth-shrouded Agasthyakoodam, a



haven of rare herbs and medicinal plants, to Parambikkulam that shelters the world's first ever scientifically managed teak plantation, every trekking experience here will be as captivating as the destinations themselves. Trek under a starlit sky. Spot the majestic tiger. Breathe in the fragrant air of the spices.

Rock Climbing

If you are ready to pit yourself against gravity and push your physical and mental limits, Kerala's hills, mountains, and cliffs with their rigid climbs and steep slopes present immense opportunities for rock climbing. While Eruthavoor in Thiruvananthapuram and the Adventure Zone at Thenmala in Kollam are the most popular there are others like Munnar in Idukki and Kolagappara near Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad that offer an equally thrilling experience.

Bird Watching

The abundance of greenery makes Kerala an avian paradise. Over 500 species of

birds-both resident and migratory- can be found in the lush green tropical forests, numerous freshwater and brackish lakes and waterlogged paddy fields of the state. From the Kol lands (marshlands and open paddy fields) surrounding the town of Thrissur to the Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary in Ernakulam, Kerala abounds birding sites. November to February is the best time to spot migratory birds.

Kerala, the land of Ayurveda

Kerala possesses an unbroken tradition of Ayurveda that has surpassed many invasions and intrusions both foreign and native. For hundreds of years the Ayurveda Vaidyas (traditional practitioners of Ayurveda) were almost the only solution for people seeking healing from every kind of disease in Kerala. The legendary eight families of Vaidyas (Ashta vaidyas) and their successors treated the entire state for centuries.

WILDLIFE

There are a number of popular wildlife sanctuaries in Kerala housing exotic and rare species of flora and fauna. Nestled in the elaborate forest of the majestic Western Ghats or Sahyadri Ranges in Kerala are fourteen wildlife sanctuaries and two tiger reserves. Kerala also has six national parks containing protected and endangered species like the Indian Sloth-Bear, Lion-Tailed Macaque, Indian Bison, Bengal Tiger, Nilgiri Tahr etc.

CUISINE

Be it famous international restaurant chains or local eateries, Kerala has everything a foodie could ask for prepared with that special Kerala taste to it. The cuisine here caters to vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike.





Discover the land of Jammu

Nestled against the backdrop of the snow-capped Pir Panjal Mountains, the region of Jammu constitutes the southernmost unit of the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

Wonderlust Bureau



It forms part of the transition between the Himalayan range in the north and the dusty plains of Punjab in the south. Between these two extremities lie a series of scrub-covered hills, forested mountain ranges and river valleys, encompassing several microclimatic regions that extend from Kishtawar in the north-east to Akhnoor in the south-west, and the historic town of Poonch in the north-west to the borders of Kangra (H P) in the southeast. The Shivalik hills cut across the area from the east to the west while the rivers Ravi, Tawi and Chenab cut their way through the region.

The last stop on the railway line north is Udhampur, where you can catch onward buses and hire SUVs/MUVs (Tata Sumo / Toyota Innova/ Mahindra Scorpio). However it is better to get down in Jammu and catch a taxi from there as these are more readily available.

Numerous domestic airlines fly to Srinagar and Jammu, and frequent buses and share jeeps provide connections to Ladakh and the plains. Jammu is served by frequent train services. Buses are operated by J&K SRTC

to most points around the state. They offer package tour to Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Yusmarg, Ular lake, City tour, etc. There is Tourist information center, where one get the tickets plus info. 4wd jeeps are quicker, a little more expensive and reach more locations. Private hire jeeps are also available.

Places to see in Jammu

Amar Mahal Palace - Amar Mahal, located in Jammu, is a palace depicting grandeur of an erstwhile era. It was constructed by a French architect for Raja Amar Singh, belonging to the Dogra dynasty. The architecture of this marvelous palace resembles the grand Chateaus of France. The beautiful palace of Amar Mahal is made of red sand stone which is a real visual treat. The scenic background of the place enhances the beauty of this palace manifolds. The stunning sight of River Tawi flowing below and the Shivaliks in the north will surely make your heart skip a beat or two. Dr. Karan Singh donated this palace to the charitable trust of Hari-Tara. At present, this trust is responsible for the maintenance of this palace. In fact, Amar Mahal Palace at present has been transformed into a museum. It also plays host to a well stocked library.

To reach Amar Mahal Palace, you can take auto rickshaws from anywhere in Jammu. These auto rickshaws will bring you to this place at a nominal cost. Minibuses also ply on this route. However, as they can not enter the palace premises, you will need to walk up to the palace.

Ranbir Canal - A small garden along the Ranbir Canal, which runs through the city outskirts, provides a cool picnic spot during the summer. The canal branches off from the river Chenab at Akhnoor, 32 kms away. Its water remains icy-cold throughout the year and its banks serve as good viewpoints and walkways.

Bahu Fort & Gardens - Situated 5 kms away from the city centre, Bahu Fort stands on a rock face on the left bank of the river Tawi. Perhaps the oldest fort and edifice in the city, it was constructed originally by Raja Bahulochan over 3,000 years ago. The existing fort was more recently improved upon and extended by the Dogra rulers. Inside, there is a temple dedicated to the Hindu goddess Kali. An extensive terraced

jammu



garden, known as Bagh-e-Bahu, has been developed around the fort.

Patnitop - Patnitops Is the most popular tourist spot of Jammu region. Located 112 kms from Jammu this famous hill resort is perched on a beautiful plateau, at an altitude of 2024 metres across which the Jammu-Srinagar Highway passes. It has lush green meadow and pine trees which resembles with Gulmarg. Patnitop offers beautiful picnic spots, peaceful walks and breathtaking views of the mountains cape of the Chenab basin. In winter, it is covered with a white carpet of snow and its slopes have been successfully experimented for skiing. Skiing courses are conducted at Patnitop in the months of January and February. During winter months there are introductory courses for tourists / beginners at gentle gradient slopes of Patnitop. At Madhatop (5/6 Kms from Patni top on Sanasar Road) excellent possibilities for all kind of skiing exist. Skiing equipments and wooden sledges are available on hire at Patnitop and Sanasar. For beginners Instructors are also available. Accommodation is also available at Patnitop Hotels.

Sanasar - 129 Km from Jammu and only 19 Kms. from patnitop is Sanasar (2079 m), a satellite resort of Patnitop, with a cup-shaped meadow surrounded by gigantic conifers. A place for a quiet holiday, the meadow has now been developed as a golf course. There are several walks in the surrounding hills. The resort itself is ideal for paragliding, which is being promoted by the Tourism Department. Equipment can be hired from the tourist office in Jammu city. May to June and September to October are suitable months for paragliding in Sanasar. Tourists with own vehicle can go on to Sansar from Patnitop and return by the

evening. The resort is 19 kms from Patnitop and a road connects the two. Sansar can be reached by bus or taxi from Jammu, via Kud and Patnitop.

Jammu City - Jammu city is the largest city in the Jammu region and the winter capital of Indian administered state of Jammu and Kashmir and situated on the banks of Tawi river. Jammu is also known as the City of Temples owing to the number of historical temples and domes of old mosques located within the city. With its fastest growing urban agglomerations and booming infrastructure the winter capital of state is the second largest city in the state.

Katra - Situated 50 Kms. from jammu this small town serves as the base camp for visting the famous shrine of Vaishnodevi in the Trikuta hills

KUD - Located 103 Kms. from jammu, this popular resort is situated on the Jammu-Srinagar Highway, at an altitude of 1738 metres.

Batote - Situated 125 Kms. from jammu at



an altitude of 1560 metres on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway, this resort straddles the forested slopes of the Patnitop mountain range, overlooking the spectacular lie of the Chenab gorge.

Mansar Lake - Mansar Lake located 62 Kms. from Jammu is a beautiful lake fringed by forest-covered hills. Boating facilities are available in the spot. Every year around Baisakhi, a food and crafts festival is organised here by J&K Tourism.

Purmandal - 40 Kms. from Jammu, just off the National highway leading towards Pathankot is the Purmandal Temple Complex built on the banks of the sacred, mostly underground river Decak. Often referred to as 'Chhota Kashi', its main temple is dedicated to 'umapati', while the other temples are associated with Shaivites of the Kashmir Valley. Regular bus service from Jammu.

Shiv Khori - 100 Kms. from Jammu this holy cave, nearly a kilometre long with a 4-feet high naturally formed shivaling, is considered second only to the shrine of Vaishnodeviji. A major festival is held here on Shivratri Day.

Dera Baba Banda - It is a major Hindu-Sikh pilgrimage centre situated 75 Kms from Jammu. Baba Banda Bairaagi was Guru Gobind Singh's favourite 'Saint-Soldier', who had the Gurudwara constructed on the banks of river Chenab, where he spent his last days.

Sudh Mahadev - This holy spot near Patnitop is situated at an altitude of 1225 mtrs., about 120 Kms. from Jammu. The shrine is visited by pilgrims on the full moon night of 'Sawan'(July-August) to worship the 'Trishul'(trident) and a mace which is said to belong to Lord Shiva. The Devak stream originates at Sudh Mahadev and disappears among the rocks a few kilometres down stream.

himachal



Himachal Pradesh's focuses on Eco Tourism

The state government of Himachal Pradesh has identified 113 sites to be developed as eco-tourism destinations earlier this year.

Wonderlust Bureau



The Chief Minister Jairam Thakur inaugurated an international conference on eco-tourism potential in Himachal at Manali in June 2018. The Eco-tourism Society and state forest department organised the conference with the aim to promote eco-tourism in the state.

Besides officials from the forest department and Eco-tourism Society, experts from the US, UK, Finland, South Africa and Brazil participated in the event. Union minister of state for tourism KJ Alphons also attended the event. The CM said 47 sites to be developed as ecotourism spots had been handed over to the state forest corporation, 16 to the forest department and five to parties to be developed under a public-private partnership.

He said herbal gardens and nature parks are being developed across the state and seasonal employment would be ensured for local youths with the help of eco-tourism.

Also, there will be 10 places developed for adventure activities, and 31 circuits for ecotourism, all of which would be first approved by the central government. In addition to these, 50 forest rest houses are also being added to start ecotourism activities in the state.

The Chief Minister said that 50 Forest Rest Houses have been used to start eco-tourism activities in the state. Efforts would be made to link eco-tourism with the rural life, culture and traditions.

This would not only give boost to the unexplored and virgin tourist destinations of the state, but also help in increasing economic activities in the rural areas of Himachal, said he.

Thakur further said that Himachal Pradesh has immense potential to emerge as the best tourist destination of the world.

A new scheme 'Nayae Rahaien, Nayae Manzilain' is envisioned for the state to explore new tourist destinations in the state, said he.

He said that the government would make efforts to associate private

players to invest in eco-tourism projects in the State. The Chief Minister also presented a proposal of eco-tourism development in the state to the Union Minister KJ Alphons. He also released a souvenir brought out by the Eco-tourism Society of Himachal Pradesh and a souvenir of Roerich Art Museum.

Several MoUs for eco-tourism projects were signed on the occasion between different organizations and companies. Earlier, the Chief Minister visited Nature Park at Babeli, in Kullu district and planted a sapling on the occasion.

Union Minister of State for Tourism Minister, KJ Alphons while speaking on the occasion said that the state has immense tourism potential which needs to be harnessed judiciously.

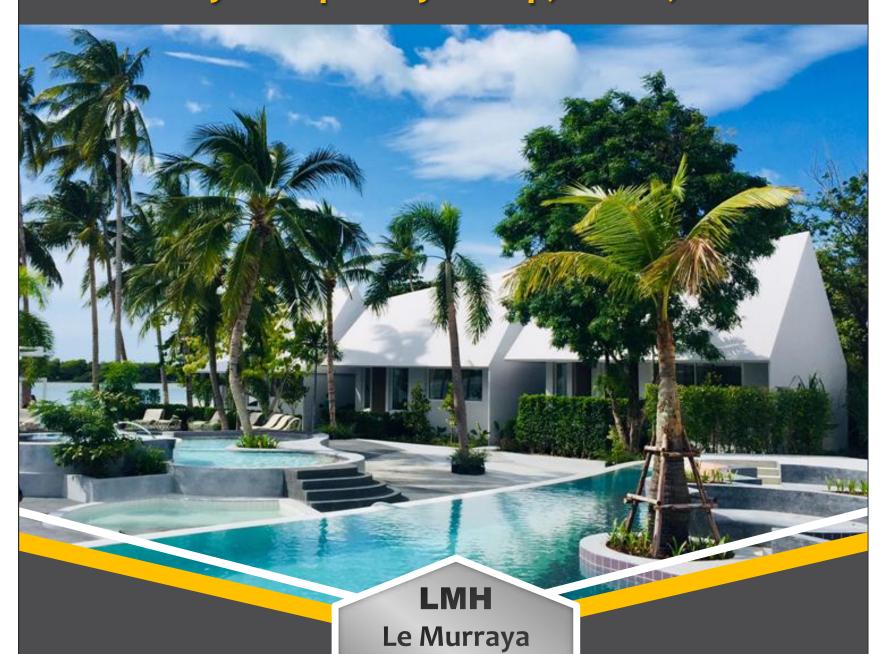
He said that every part of India is unique in itself and a real treasure house of surprises stored for tourists. Himachal Pradesh has immense potential for adventure and nature tourism. Private entrepreneurs should be involved in a big way to harness the immense tourism potential of the state, he added.

Noted International wrestler Daleep Singh Rana alias The Great Khali who is the brand ambassador of 'Plastic Hatao' Campaign, urged the people to say no to plastic for keeping our environment neat and clean. The government is looking to call tourists to explore its virgin destinations and help rural areas get an increased economic activity. The state of Himachal Pradesh has tremendous potential in tourism, as Union Minister K.J. Alphons noted, and also said that entrepreneurs should involve themselves in developing the potential of tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

The state of Himachal Pradesh is known for numerous destinations, especially visited during the summer months. Its beautiful hill stations include Shimla, Dharamshala, Kasauli, and Dalhousie, among others. Himachal Pradesh is also popular as a trekking destination.

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madhya pradesh

Come & Explore Heart of India

The state of Madhya Pradesh offers a variety of options, from thrilling wild jungles to serene places of worship, and everything in between, the destinations of Madhya Pradesh offer experiences as vast and diverse as the state itself.

Wonderlust Bureau

Jahaz Mahal

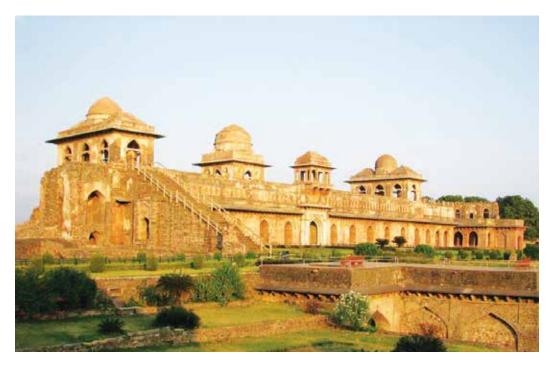
Floating over its own reflection, the Jahaz Mahal in Mandu looks like a ship that's about to sail. However, for centuries this ship made of stone and mortar never did. Instead, it stood floating over the twin lakes, bearing a silent witness to Mandu's long, rich and varied history. The city of Mandu is adorned with spell-binding Afghan architecture surrounded by baobab trees, native to Africa. The grand palaces are still alive with royal romance while the gateways (darwazas) speak of a history of imperial conquests. A walk through Mandu will leave you awestruck, the way you used to be listening to stories from grandparents.



Madhya Dweep is a group of islands in the Indira Sagar dam including Sailani islands (which is another adventure tourism destination and is under development) and Hanuwantiya which is by the bank of Indira Sagar dam. Hanuwantiya also host India's only and largest water carnival, Jal Mahotsav, every year. This grand event is a paradise for adventure seekers, art enthusiasts, tired-of-the-urban-chaos foodies and people. Set up in the lap of Hanuwantiya Island besides the pristine waters of Indira Sagar Dam, the picturesque escapade here complements the joy that lies in the spirit of adventure. Flying above the sparkling waters or speeding through it, India's one of its kind water festival is full of land, water and air adventure activities all set on one canvas called Jal Mahotsav. The festival also represents the culture of Madhya Pradesh a culture that stands for rich skill set of its artisans, rich heritage and not to miss out, sumptuous cuisine. MP Tourism Jal Mahotsav is truly a dream for every adventure lover and a desire of every individual who seeks a holistic rejuvenation.

Sawan Bhado: The incredible air coolers of Orchha

Adjacent to the Ram Raja Temple lies a row of fountains, which culminates in an eight pillared pavilion. A subterranean structure below the pavilion, the Tehkhana, was the summer retreat of the kings of Orchha. The tehkhana was cooled by a cleverly constructed Persian cooling unit, which was made up



of two adjoining Dastagirs (wind-catching towers). The towers were named after the two spring months in the Indian calendar - Sawan Bhado. The towers were perforated on the top, to allow them to catch the wind, while their lower part was connected to a reservoir of water. The towers, the aqueducts, and the underground reservoir of water were ingeniously connected to a Chandan Katora (fountain) in the pavilion above the retreat. The water from the underground reservoir was pushed up into the Chandan Katora, from where it rained on the roof of the retreat to

cool the Tehkhana. This is perhaps the only example of the Persian system of cooling in India.

Omkareshwar

It can only be termed as a blessing, by Lords and mother nature, that Omkareshwar, the sacred island, is shaped like Om - the holiest symbol of Hinduism. Not surprising then that this serene town is also one of the 12 Jyotirlinga shrines in India. Pilgrims in unimaginable numbers visit the shrine every



madhya pradesh

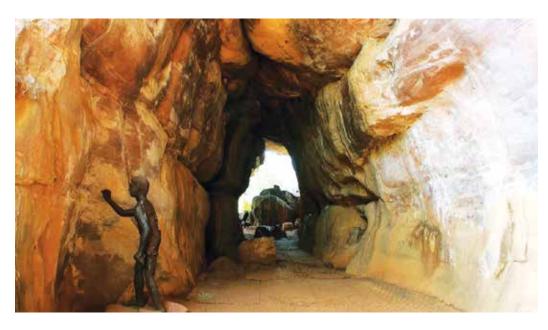
year, seeking the blessings of Lord Shiva. Omkareshwar is adorned with lofty hills, between which the river Narmada forms a serene pool. Above this pool runs a cantilever type bridge which further enhances the scenic beauty of this island. The beauty and divinity that reside in this town work like a magic spell, transporting you back to childhood moments of sheer wonder.

Bhimbetka

Cave paintings dating back to approximately 30,000 years. Rock shelters that were home to humans, millennia ago. And a rich flora and fauna surrounding these, indeed, make Bhimbetka a gift to us from our earliest ancestors. An archaeological treasure, Bhimbetka has around 243 rock shelters. The paintings found in the rock shelters here have a striking resemblance to the ones discovered in Kakadu National Park in Australia; to the cave paintings of Bushmen in Kalahari Desert and Upper Palaeolithic Lascaux cave paintings in France. A walkthrough these ancient naturally carved rocks surrounded by dense forests of Bhimbetka will bring alive child-like wonder in you.

Chitrakoot

Boasting a spiritual legacy that very few cities in India can match, Chitrakoot is known to be of great religious and mythological significance. It is in the deep forests of Chitrakoot that Lord Ram and Sita spent eleven of their fourteen years of exile. A regular feature in Indian folklore, Chitrakoot dates back to the mythological times and was the meditation shrine of many legendary sages and is believed to be frequently visited by Gods and Goddesses. Known as the 'Place of Many Wonders', Chitrakoot nestles in the northern Vindhya range of mountains. The place has a unique sense of spiritual wonder





that will take you back to your childhood fairy tales and fables.



Bandhavgarh

Bandhavgarh is a place of mythological and legendary significance. The ancient Bandhavgarh Fort is of great importance as it is believed to have been gifted by Lord Rama to his younger brother Lakshmana. 'Bandhav' in English means brother and 'Garh' means fort. Hence the name, Bandhavgarh. Bandhavgarh dates back to 2000 years ago and you will find several man made caves with inscriptions and rock paintings. Bandhavgarh is also the land of tigers.

This is the place to visit if you want to spot the big cat. India's top dwelling for tigers, Bandhavgarh National Park has the highest density of Royal Bengal tigers in the world. The sight of the majestic tiger, up close and personal, is said to trigger a sense of awe in you, of the kinds you would have only experienced in your childhood.

madhya pardesh

Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in Indiato accomplish successful film / tv shootings under strict guidelines amidst pandemic

Madhya Pradesh is the first state to start the film promotions postunlock. The state is taking all thenecessary measure for the shooting. The government released a set of Standard Operating Guiding Principles to restart the film shooting in the state that has to be followed at all the places where shootings will take place.



Madhya Pradesh also has predominantly a Hindi speaking state, making it more viable and manageable for Bollywood pictures. The peaceful law and orders are another supporting factor. The availability of production facilities, Line Producers, Artists, Local Crew etc, makes it much more economical to shoot here.

Till now more than 200 projects including feature films, TV Serial/Series, TVCs & Reality shows have been shot in Madhya Pradesh, of which few names are Stree, Sui-Dhaga, Kalank, Manikarnika, Luka Chhupi, Padman, Toilet ekPrem Katha, BajiraoMastani, Paan Singh Tomar, Lion, C, Aarakshan, Raajneeti.

Currently few renowned actors like Anupamkher and BhumiPhednekar has completed the shooting in Madhya Pradesh for their movies. And few shootings with actors like Vidyabalan is in pipeline around last week of November.

Commenting on the restart of the shoot MrAnupamkhersaid" It is picture wrap for our movie #TheLastShow!! What an amazing, creatively satisfying and courageous journey it has been. We will miss this time together. But I think we have created something, the memories of which will last us for a lifetime. 'Thank you' is a small expression to express our gratitude. But we couldn't have created this gem without the help of #MPGovt, local

authorities and people of #Bhopal. Especially @mptourism dept. Jai Ho to you all. #Film #PassionAndPaseenaFilms"

Madhya Pradesh Tourism department is liable to coordinate with the different concerned departments for shoot permission on behalf of Film maker. To simplify the shoot permission and making Madhya Pradesh a shooting friendly state, Film Tourism Policy is being developed.

The vision of this Policy is to make Madhya Pradesh a major Film making hub & generate a number of employment opportunities in the state.

Facilities MP tourism is providing following things to the producers/directors –

- Dedicated Film Facilitation cell shall work as a nodal agency to ease out the shooting permissions through single window clearance system.
- Authentic shooting locations
- Film Friendly Authorities and strong Govt. support
- · Easy Permissions
- Modern Infrastructure and omnipresent hotels
- Favorable law and order condition
- Cost effective infrastructure, crew, local talent and other skillful workforce
- Hindi speaking people, food/cuisine flexibility and ideal climate

Comfort of doing shooting in MP -

- A dedicated online film web portal shall be created to provide a single -point interface and time bound clearance mechanism for filmmakers intending to shoot in Madhya Pradesh.
- All the applications shall be received through online mode by the Film Facilitation Cell and action shall be taken in coordination with the concerned department for permission.
- The Portal shall also act as a platform for information dissemination related to film tourism policy and shall also act as a forum for the dissemination and the rules, regulations, also provide information on grants and other utility services.





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Visakhapatnam: How Andhra Pradesh's business hub is becoming a travel and leisure destination

In the bifurcated Andhra Pradesh, this coastal city discovered its new identity and is now emerging not merely as the business and technology hub but also as a travel and leisure destination.

Wonderlust Bureau

As per a report published in IANS though in the very first year of the truncated state, cyclone Hudhud battered the city, known popularly as Vizag, it bounced back with new vigour. The rebuilt infrastructure gave a new look to the city, adjudged the third-cleanest in India last year.

Though already recognised as a key hub for being the headquarters of the Eastern Naval Command, the presence of a port, a steel plant and other industries, the city in the past did not get its due and was never branded properly. This was because, as people of the port city say, the focus of successive governments in undivided Andhra Pradesh was Hyderabad.

After the breaking up of Andhra Pradesh to carve out Telangana state with Hyderabad as its capital in 2014, Vizag found new importance. The state government launched an initiative to develop it as the country's Fintech hub and a centre of new-age technologies. It has hosted partnership summits here for the last three years, witnessing signing of MoUs for massive investments in the state.

The government also started working on plans to develop Vizag as a travel destination. The yachting festival held on March 28-31 brought into focus the bustling city's huge tourism potential.

The four-day festival organised by Andhra Pradesh Tourism in association with E-Factor Adventure Tourism Pvt. Ltd. saw a fleet of plush yachts descending on the Vizag shores, for the discerning enthusiasts who love engaging with lifestyle, water and adventure. Organised with a vision to establish and put Vizag on the marine tourism map, the festival, said to be first of its kind in India, saw yachts cruising on the azure waters of the Bay of Bengal, providing sailing enthusiasts a breathtaking view of popular beaches like RK Beach, Rishikonda, Thotlakonda and Yerada. The on-board audiences were treated with activities like swimming, snorkelling, rescue demo by the Indian Navy and adrenalinepumping displays of fly-boarding.

In the evenings when the yachts were parked at Vizag port, the audiences were entertained with musical performances.



It was the first attempt to introduce lifestyle tourism in Vizag, a key destination on the nearly 1,000-km-long coastline of the state. The organisers sold limited tickets, priced at a steep Rs 14,500 per person per day.

"Water holiday or yachting is a richie rich, big boy's holiday. Typically, one hour of yachting costs Rs 1 lakh in India," Kaushik Mukherji, principal advisor to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister on rebranding the state with a focus on tourism, told IANS.

He believed yachting can contribute significantly to the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). "Though only one percent of society can afford yachting, it has a huge margin," he explained, claiming that on India's east coast, Vizag is the only place which can offer this kind of holiday.

Mukherji was confident that two years down the line there will be people who will come to Vizag for water holidays. "Why do I need to go to Bali when I can do it in Vizag? The reasoning is being created."

The yachting festival was one of the marketing techniques to brand Vizag. "Andhra Pradesh has no better tourism card than Vizag. It was never marketed earlier. Vizag

was always consumed by the word of mouth. There was no draw towards it. I am changing the perceived value," Mukherji said.

Explaining why Vizag is important, Mukherji pointed out that its beach mountains were not found anywhere else. Every brick at Thotlakonda beach is 2,500 years old. He believed a Buddhism circuit can be created here and marketed in countries like Sri Lanka, Taiwan, China and Japan, which always look for Buddhism products.

"Ten miles from where we are sitting (Vizag port) is the (Pakistani) Gazi submarine which can be one of the finest diving sites of the world. I can give the best dive into the submarine which was sunk during the 1971 war."

Mukherji believed different products for different segments of the market could help tap the state's immense tourism potential. He set the ball rolling a year ago with Vizag Music Festival followed by the balloon festival in Araku valley, a picturesque location about 100 km from Vizag.

"We have to be clear about who our target audience is. It's the promise which I am selling. People buy promises, not destinations," he added.

varanasi



Brijrama Palace: Where spirituality meets royalty

My recent visit to Varanasi exposed me to a city which truly is as old as the human civilization. The 84 beautiful and vibrant qhats (riverfronts) of Varanasi unravel many stories of human existence.

Ramya Mishra



Sadhus, salvation seekers and holidayers, Varanasi transcend expectations of all. My recent sojourn to this ancient city opened up my heart and soul to a world that is mystique but still so simple. It was a hot and humid morning of March when I left to Varanasi from New Delhi on an IndiGo flight. A short flight of little more than one hour meant I reached the Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport before I could finish my nap.

Varanasi's Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport has witnessed strong growth in passenger numbers, from 1 million in 2014-2015 to 1.9 million passengers in 2017-2018. Definitely, it is one of the better airports located in non-metro Indian cities. As I was staying at the Brijrama Palace, a hugely popular luxury hotel in Varanasi, I was greeted by a representative of the hotel, part of the Brijrama Palace's quest helpdesk located in



the premises of the airport. On my way to the hotel, I could see that the city is reaping benefits of being the electoral constituency of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. The driver of my car, Dharam Raj, shared that the prices of real estate have escalated drastically in Varanasi leaving behind cities like New Delhi. Over the days, I realized that Mr. Dharam Raj is blessed with the gift of storytelling. In one of our chit-chats, he told me that there is a Mukti Bhavan in Varanasi where only people on their death-bed are allowed to stay. The priests at this last abode perform rituals and rites that are believed to help the dying depart from the earth in peace and attain salvation. However, there is a catch, if the person does not die within two weeks of his stay, he or she needs to leave Mukti Bhavan and has to give the room to someone in the waiting.

The story made me pensive; however, exciting times were waiting for me once I reached Rajghat, where Brijrama Palace's bajra (a classical handcrafted wooden boat) was waiting for me. As soon I boarded the boat my young host recounted the legend of Varanasi over a glass of chilled 'thandai' (sweetened milk prepared with almonds and

varanasi

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infused with flavors and textures of saffron, rose, melon seeds etc.). The Ganges flowing along the ghats offered magnificent views one can only enjoy while on a boat cruise over the river. A number of ghats walked past us as we maneuvered to the Brijrama Palace.

Ghats are manmade embankments of stone, centuries old and built to face east towards the rising Sun. Originally built as access to the river for pilgrims seeking a holy dip to perform sacred rites and religious ceremonies, some sections of the ghats are dedicated for cremation rites. Built post 1700 AD, the patrons of the ghats were of Maratha lineage from the noble houses of the Scindias, Holkars, Bhonsles and Peshwas.

Manikarnika ghat is one of the ghats that have a significant religious importance. Many people believe that, one can attain salvation if cremated at the Manikarnika ghat.

A deviation from the common Hindu tradition, the dead bodies are cremated here not only in the day time but in the late evening as well! One can find a lot of tourists on boats silently watching the cremation process. While the holy water in the river Ganges remain a still spectator, the flames rising from the funeral pyre carries many souls to eternity. A deep melancholy shrouds one who stops at the ghat for a while.

After a 20 minutes long boat ride, I reached the Darbhanga Ghat, where the hotel is located. In the 18th century, the Royal House of Nagpur greatly influenced by Maratha architecture built the Brijrama Palace on Darbhanga ghat. Considered as one of the oldest buildings on the ghats, it was originally designed to serve as a fort. This fort was acquired by the Maharaja Saheb of Darbhanga in the early 20th century, who converted and christened this fort as the famous "Darbhanga Mahal". The Maharaja incorporated elements of Greek architecture and the first lift in South Asia, which I took to reach the 'baithak' of the hotel. The bhaitak is a traditional sitting area of the hotel, where the guests are offered a customary Indian welcome. The ancient sandstone pillars boast of beautiful artwork from the time of Marathas. Glistening Chandeliers and lamps adorn the ceilings and walls and old world furnishings accentuate the ambiance.





The Brijrama Palace may not compare to the grandeur of some of the lavish yesteryears palaces in Rajasthan that have now been converted to hotels but its location overlooking the majestic river Ganges and intricate architecture sets it apart from the rest. The first impression of Brijrama Palace comes across as a quaint and guest friendly property. The staff of the hotel is one of the most hospitable one that I have come across during my stay in various hotels across the globe.

The Brijrama Palace offers a number of rooms and suites for the discerning travelers. One can opt from Maharaja Suites, Varuna Burj Room, Vasundhara, Dhanurdhara and Nadidhara. Each suite and room has its own unique specialty and guest amenities.

In the afternoon, the hotel arranged for a priest who took me on a tour to the famed Kashi Vishwanath Temple, one of the most important Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. The accompanying priest ensured that we had a hassle free darshan (view) of the deity. In the evening amidst the enchanting sounds of temple bells, and the chirping of birds, I enjoyed the beautiful view of the setting sun and the quiet pristine Ganges, at the outdoor extension of Bhaitak while sipping a cup of tea. Before retiring for the day, I headed to Darbhanga to experience a selection of international vegetarian delicacies at Brijrama's fine dining outlet. One can enjoy a quiet meal, personalized to one's taste sitting amidst the beauty of restored ceilings and walls rich with a bouquet of frescos and artwork.

Varanasi has over 300 temples dedicated to various Hindu deities. I was able to visit few of them next day including Mrityunjaya Mahadev Temple. This temple of Lord Shiva is situated in Maidagin in Varanasi. The temple is believed to ward off untimely death from its devotees. The temple complex has a well whose water is said to be a mixture of several underground streams and good for eliminating several diseases. It is also called Apa Mrityu Hareshwar. According to another popular belief, Dhanvantri the father of Ayurveda poured all his medicines in this well, so its water is sacred and eliminates several diseases. I had a full glass of water which I felt was sweet.

In the evening I headed to the Dashashwamedh Ghat where Ganga Aarti, a ritual offering to the Ganges is performed every evening to intense chanting and beating of cymbals. The hotel offers a complimentary boat ride to its guests interested to participate in this ritual. One of the many fascinating part of staying at Brijrama Palace is that the hotel offers evening soirées of live classical music that resonates along the Atrium. For a truly spiritual experience, participate in the daily sunrise yoga at the Udyaan, the terrace. You may also cosily soak in the winter sun with a view of Ganges.

Soon, before I realized my two-day-long stay in Varanasi's Brijrama Palace was about to end. On my way back to the airport, I told Dharam Raj if I would have stayed more than two days in Varanasi; there was no going back for me.

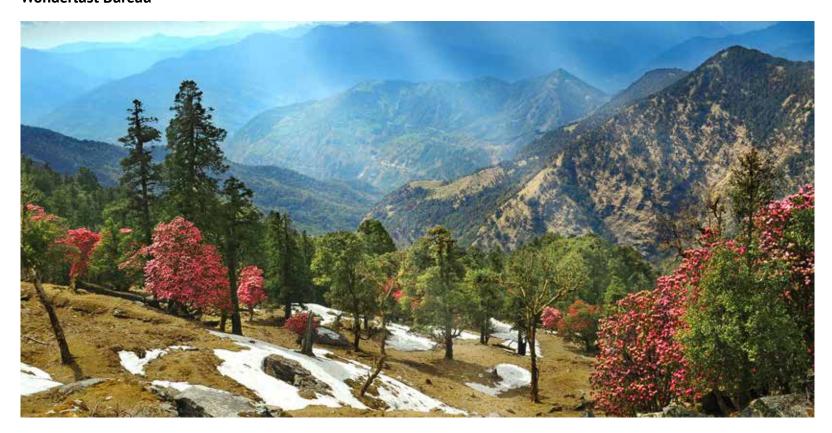
uttarakhand



The beautiful land of Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand, a state in northern India crossed by the Himalayas, is known for its Hindu pilgrimage sites. Rishikesh, a major centre for yoga study, was made famous by the Beatles' 1968 visit. The city hosts the evening Ganga Aarti, a spiritual gathering on the sacred Ganges River. The state's forested Jim Corbett National Park shelters Bengal tigers and other native wildlife.

Wonderlust Bureau



CULTURE & PEOPLE

Culture and people are very closely associated with each other. The term 'culture' refers to the complex collection of knowledge, folklore, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that link and gives a common identity to a particular group of people at a specific point in time.

All social units develop a culture. Thus it is the inhabitants of a specific region that collectively contribute to form that extraordinary cornucopia of life we call culture.

In case of Uttarakhand, the Land of Gods, natural diversity and the element of the Himalaya's unparalleled beauty and sanctity add a new dimension to the word 'culture'. The people of the state are as diverse as the landscape. Uttarakhand is blessed with a whole multiplicity of culture greatly influenced and inspired by its geo-social factors. The ancient cultural traditions of Uttarakhand are deep rooted primarily in religion. Music, dance and arts are a manifest for the firm religious bonds of the people with the awe-inspiring Himalayas.

"In those lovely valleys there is still the romance and poetry of life: each tree has its

god, each bush its spirit" – So wrote the 19th century British anthropologist and surveyor Charles A. Sherring, describing a fair part of Uttarakhand, in his great research 'Western Tibet and British Borderland'

TRIBALS

The Uttaranchal of today brims with the lively hum of life with people from various communities and religions contributing to make it into a wonderful profusion of the festival called life. The original natives of the land of Uttarakhand belong to different tribes having their distinct and plentiful culture. Major tribes of Uttaranchal include Bhotias (or Shaukas), TribalsRangs, Tharus, Buxas, Jaunsaris, Rajis (or Banrawats) apart from indigenous groups like Mahigeers and Vanguijars. The Bhotia is a generic name that includes the Shaukas of Munsyari (Pithoragarh), Rangs of Dharchula(Pithoragarh), Tolchhas and Marchhas of Niti and Mana valleys (Chamoli) and Jads of harsil (uttarkashi). Most of these semi-nomadic pastoral groups are however brought under one anthropological term -Shauka.

The Tharus were once the largest scheduled tribes in the erstwhile state of U.P. and are now

concentrated in the Khatima and Sitarganj tehsils of Udham Singh Nagar district. They claim their ancestry from Kirata. Some researchers regard them as descendants are the Rajputs, while some others trace their



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uttarakhand

origin from the Mongols of Central Asia. Their language is heavily influenced by Hindi and Nepali.

FLORA & FAUNA

Uttarakhand is endowed with a unique and diverse range of biodiversity. From the snowbound peaks of the Himalayas to the moist Alpine scrub, sub Alpine forests, dry-temperate and moist-temperate forests to moist deciduous forests, the state possesses a wide biodiversity that in return nurtures a large multiplicity of floral and faunal forms.

The state is home to nearly 4048 species of Angiosperms and Gymnosperms belonging to 1198 genera under 192 families. Of these nearly 116 species are specific to Uttarakhand i.e. their geographical distribution is limited to the boundaries of the state. 161 species of flora found in Uttarakhand are recognized as rare or threatened under the categorization of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Out of the 223 species of Orchids reported from the North Western Himalayas, over 150 have been reported from the State.



Cozily snuggled in the arms of the great Himalayas, the state of Uttarakhand has time and again been referred to as 'Dev Bhumi' or 'The Land of Gods'. This accounts for the numberless Hindu and Buddhist lore associated with the very roots of its terrain whose astounding splendor reveals itself in all shades of nature – there is abundant greenery, a rare variety of wildlife and million floral hues and of course the pristine Himalayas. At the feet of these Himalayan heights lie the glaciers. Glaciers are ice in gradual motion and several sacred and life-giving rivers find their origin in them.



According to the glacial formations, two of the five traditional divisions of the Himalayan range are found in Uttarakhand, namely Garhwal and Kumaon. The major glacial formations of Garhwal include Bandarpunch, Doonagiri, Khatling, Gangotri and the Nanda Devi cluster of glaciers, while Kumaon incorporates the Kaphni, Milam, Pindari and Ralam Glaciers.

FAIR & FESTIVALS

Typically a fair meant a gathering of people to display or trade produce or other goods, to parade or display animals and often to enjoy dance and music. It is normally of the essence of a fair that it is temporary; some last only an afternoon while others may last as long as a few weeks. The fair is an ancient tradition, and many communities have long had dedicated fairgrounds; others hold them in a variety of public places, including streets and town squares, or even in large private gardens. Fairs are often held in conjunction with a significant event, such as the anniversary of a



local historical event, a seasonal event such as harvest time, or with a holiday or a festival or some auspicious occasion such as Makar Sankranti or Nandashtami or Vaisakhi etc.

Uttarakhand is rich in culture and heritage. Fairs (called Mela in Hindi) are clebrated with fervour and zeal.

They are an integral part of the social and cultural life of Uttarakhand. Here one can see the cultural diversity of this state. It is at these fairs that the traditional art forms that are on the verge of extinction resurface, so that they can be recognized and supported.



Snuggled in the foot hills of the majestic Himalayas, Kumaon and Garhwal are two distinct constituent regions. Both have their own distinctive traditions, festivals and culture. The people are brave, hard working and honest. And their Cuisine is high on taste and nutrition. The food habits of the people change according to the changing seasons. So, if in winters Mathir and Til Laddus or Madua Rotis are preferred, in summers, Dubkas with Chholia Rotis are savoured.





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A journey of a lifetime

Turkey is one of the destinations that I always wanted to explore as an avid traveller. So, when the Travel Agents Federations of India (TAFI) invited me to be a part of their annual convention taking place there, I had my prayer answered.

Wonderlust Bureau

The day finally came when I was on board Turkish Airlines flight to Istanbul from New Delhi. The first thing that caught my attention while in the flight was the carrier's new inflight safety video, featuring digital illusions designed to engage passengers during the announcements.

The video has been created by US film maker and social media personality Zach King, and features scenes where viewers are "flipped between reality and illusion" through digital sleight of hand tricks. This engaging safety communication is certainly an innovative way to reach out to travellers.

It was early afternoon when I landed at the Istanbul Ataturk Airport and there were long queues at the immigration counters as the airport is one of the busiest airports in the world. Luckily, the immigration was hassle free and soon I was at the domestic terminal to board a flight to Dalaman, my first destination of the sojourn. I must admit that I had never heard of Dalaman before this trip!

The flight from Instanbul to Dalaman was short and the bus ride to Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort and Spa from the airport complex smooth. Turkey boasts of a good infrastructure across the country, a fact I experienced as I travelled to different



parts of the country in next few days. The first impression of Dalaman came across as a quaint and green tourist destination. It reminded me of the vicinity of Jim Corbett Park in India.

Hilton Dalaman Sarigerme Resort and Spa is located on an area of 176,000 square meters area close to conflux of Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Dalaman river. The property is vast and offers a host of amenities that one can explore during the stay in the hotel

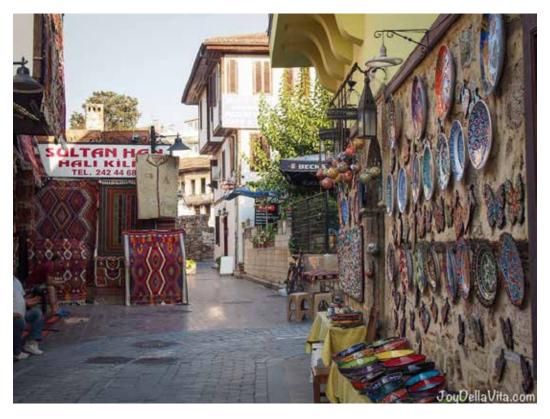
Offering Blue Flag beaches, lively tourist resorts and historical sights, holidays to the Dalaman area is a treat. The region's appeal begins with its beaches. Known as the Turquoise Coast, the Dalaman area's shoreline is a chain of coves, bays and long stretches of sand.

Though there are number of beaches to explore in Dalaman, I decided to explore Iztuzu Beach, Dalyan. Turkey's Loggerhead turtles couldn't have picked a better stretch of coast to use as their nesting ground. This 5-kilometre beach, near Dalyan, is all honeycoloured sands and untouched countryside. And because it's not slap-bang in the middle of the resort - you need to catch a boat or a bus here - it's nice and quiet. This lowkey resort hugs the south bank of a reedfringed river that flows from Köyceğiz lake, through Dalyan, and into the Mediterranean at the magnificent İztuzu beach. There are numerous hotels on the river bank, as well as bars, cafés and restaurants.

The next destination on the trip was Antalya, a city on the Mediterranean coast of southwestern Turkey. The city of Antalya seems to have taken in all of Turkey's cultural and historic past so well preserved and sealed by the traditional archaeology of the mosques, churches, madrasahs and hamams which



turkey



stood the ruthless test of time. I explored Kaleici, (old Antalya) that is adorned by number of shops selling souvenirs, teas and spices. The maze-like Kaleiçi neighbourhood is perfect for strolling. Perfectly restored whitewashed and red-roofed Ottoman mansions line the cobblestone streets, now home to a plethora of boutique hotels, souvenir shops, art galleries, and restaurants. Although it's more a place to simply breathe in the old-world ambience, there are also plenty of small tourist attractions for those who want to sightsee. The main square (Kale Kapısı) has a fortress gate and stone-clad clock tower, while the 18th-century Tekeli Mehmet Paşa Mosque is worth a look just for its stunning interior tile work. Along Hesapçı Sokak, you'll find the graceful Kesik Minare (truncated minaret). Destroyed by fire in the 19th century, this is all that is left of a building that started its life as a Roman temple, was converted into a Byzantine church, and finally became a mosque. In the evening, I explored The Land of Legends - a theme park. From shopping to great shows, the place has everything to engage a tourist in the evening. Later, I had a good sleep in the luxurious Rixos Downtown Antalya.

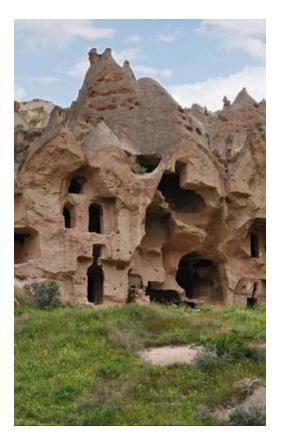
From Antalya, I moved to Pamukkale, a three-hour drive from the former. The surreal, brilliant white travertine terraces and warm, limpid pools of Pamukkale hang, like the petrified cascade of a mighty waterfall, from the rim of a steep valley side in Turkey's picturesque southwest. Truly spectacular in its own right, the geological phenomenon that is Pamukkale, literally "Cotton Castle"

in Turkish, is also the site of the remarkably well-preserved ruins of the Greek-Roman city of Hierapolis. With such a unique combination of natural and man-made wonders it's little wonder that Pamukkale-Hierapolis has been made a UNESCO World Heritage site. With over two million visitors annually, it is also Turkey's single most visited attraction.

One can walk bare-foot in the pools of Pamukkale, however, one needs to be little cautious as the edges of the pool can be slippery. I stayed at Hotel Pam Thermal in Pamukkale. Even though a board on the way to the hotel claims the property to be a 5 star, its ambience and services fail to meet the hospitality standards one expects from a high-end hotel. However, the hotel scores highly on the wellness front. Located in Karahayıt province of Pamukkale that is on the foothills of the mountains covered by forests, the guests of the property can not only make use of the thermal water that formed Pamukkale travertines and the antic pool of Cleopatra but also can benefit from the pools of red thermal water, which formed the famous red travertines of Karahayıt, that is available in the hotel.

After breakfast in the hotel, we drove for Cappadocia. En route to Cappadocia we visited Konya, the home of Mevlana and Dervishes. If you are spiritual, a visit to Konya will be life changing. There are few sights in the world that are more engaging and satisfying than a whirling Dervish. I visited the Mevlana Museum is set within lovingly-tended rose gardens, which you walk through to the ornate Dervisan Kapisi

(Gate of the Dervishes). Once inside the complex, you enter the Mausoleum, which is the focus of much devotional worship to this day. Mevlana's Tomb is at the far end, flanked by tombs of close family and followers. The Semahane (hall where dervish ceremonies were performed) is just to the left and contains a museum of religious exhibits. Across the courtyard from the Mausoleum is the lodge kitchen, which contains dioramas of dervish life and is connected to the Dervish Cells, where Sufi followers would have lived and that now contain exhibits on dervish life. My final destination of the trip was Cappadocia. High on every tourist's Turkey hit-list, Cappadocia is an enchanting region of swirling volcanic-rock landscapes that seem to have been fashioned by mischievous elves. Humans have settled in this area since the Bronze Age and have left their own mark on this weird and wacky moonscape by burrowing into the soft volcanic rock to live. The star sightseeing attractions are villages carved out of the hillsides, Byzantine era rock-cut churches with dazzling frescoes, and labyrinth underground cities where early Christians once hid from invaders. While in Cappadocia, I visited the beautiful village of Goreme. Voted as one of the most beautiful villages in the world by several travel magazines, Goreme is half buried into the hill, its stone house facades hiding a maze of cave rooms below. My wonderful travel experience in Turkey came to an end in Cappadocia as I boarded a flight from Kayseri airport to Istanbul with a promise to return to this beautiful country.









Sri Lanka-A Country to Remember

This time I decided to pack my bags and explore Sri Lanka. Now, the moment I mentioned the country's name to my friends and family, the most common response was "Why Sri Lanka?", they all believed the destination is quiet similar to South India.

The above is an issue which I believe bothers most of the Indian tourist. The difference between the two countries is difficult to explain and can only be felt, once you have been to Sri Lanka. This is true we are very similar-like distant cousins, yet very different. Sri Lanka is a haven for wildlife and you can move from mountain to jungle to beach and so on within a relatively short span of time. It is a compact and beautiful country. In India we have to travel a lot to experience these diversities

I landed in Colombo and received a warm welcome from the representatives of Navmini Travels. They were punctual, courteous and helpful. They provided us with chauffer guide Kanishk, who was fluent in English and quiet knowledgeable. This helped us immensely in understanding the country.

Sri Lanka is a very clean country and the natives take all possible steps to maintain that cleanliness. From Colombo we were



sri lanka





transferred to Negembo, which is a small fisherman town. Our hotel was on the beach, after checking in, I headed straight towards mighty Indian Ocean. It is a sight to remember, Indian Ocean is wild and rough. Even the locals would not suggest you to venture alone on the beach.

Next morning we headed to Sigiriya, it also has UNESCO world heritage site Sigiriya Rock. This ancient palace and fortress has significant importance and attracts tourists from across the world. There are many myths and folktales around the rock, which is 660ft in height. Few believe that this is where Ravana's Pushpak Viman was parked. Though history suggests it was built by King Kasyapa, who built his palace on the top of the rock and decorated its sides with colorful frescos. It is also believed that there were elevators operated by humans.

Only time knows, what is true and what is myth, but the rock should be a must visit site on your next Sri Lankan trip. It has close to 1200 steps, so it is not for faint heart; spiral staircase seems bit scary and can make you dizzy. They have resting points in between, so no need to hurry up, take it slow, drink fluids and keep going. Please remember, it is not a marathon to be won, but an experience to be enjoyed. The view from the top is mesmerizing and the satisfaction, one feels after climbing the rock is immense. Other must visit place is Dambulla Rock Temple. If you have already climbed Sigirya Rock then

climbing to Dambulla Rock Temple will be a cakewalk. This is also a world heritage site, located in the central part of the country. This is the best-preserved cave temple complex in Sri Lanka. It is spread over five caves, which contains statues and paintings. All the paintings and statues are related to Gautam Buddha, barring three statues of Sri Lankan kings and four statues of Vishnu, Ganesh and Laxmi.

Next day on the way to Kandy we visited the spice garden, they will give you a walk through and one can see vanilla orchid (vine like plant) from where vanilla essence comes. Not only this I got to see cardamom, white pepper, red pepper, jackfruit, clove etc. They also give you free massage at the end and you can tip as you desire. They took us to the pharmacy from where one can pick up the spices, though I found them exorbitantly priced. Since we were getting late for the Sri Lankan cultural evening, we rushed towards the theatre.

The show started with MagulBera, a conch of shell was blown to indicate the start of the evening, followed by Bera (drums). It was followed by Puja Natuma (Pooja dance), Mayura dance and series of other performances. Probably the show is for specific kind of audience, targeted more towards western crowd. It is not about glitz and glam, like the big Alcazar show of Thailand. In the morning we left for NuwaraEliya, now this is hailed as Little

England, truly it will remind you of Europe. It has lake and race course. For me, the most moving moment was visiting Ashok Vatika, the Ashoka tree under which Mata Sita sat, is still there. The priests performed an aarti and he also showed us the spot, where Hanumanji footprints are marked. Visiting Ashok Vatika was like peeping into another yug.

The next day we moved to Colombo as we had a late evening flight to catch, so after a quick city tour we headed towards the airport. One very important point is, please carry good airbags or suitcases with you. If you are mostly on roads, then there would be lot of packing and unpacking to be done a sturdy bag would definitely help. I went for Novex hard luggage, the luggage was spacious, modern looking and the chains were fabulous. Neither they got jammed nor broken the entire journey.

I said bye to this country with mixed feelings. Sri Lankans are way polite and courteous. Though I would warn you that it is an expensive country, the charges to all the museums, temples and historical places are on a higher side. Unlike India the entry to various temples are not free. In Colombo, one can witness lot of Chinese influence, sea is being pushed back to make a new port.

But come whatever a trip to Sri Lanka is a must. It is very different from our country and by the end of the trip, you will definitely want to be there again.



How to make the most of your day when in Macao

A true manifestation of the World Centre of Tourism and Leisure, Macao is located at an autonomous region on the south coast of China. Macao is known for its unique historical and archaeological mix of Chinese and Portuguese cultures.

Wonderlust Bureau



A traveller's paradise not only is Macao designated as a creative city of gastronomy by UNESCO as one of Asia's leading culinary destinations but also offers an enchanting cultural experience to glittering nightlife and entertainment. Macao's line-up of festivals, shows and major events is a testament to the city's lively culture.

The vastness of Macao as a destination is in its exotic combination of the old and the new, in the blurring lines between a city and a village, and in the amalgamation of Portuguese and Chinese cultures. From mouth-watering food to awe-inspiring entertainment, cultural festivals, shopping and thrill adventures, there are numerous ways to experience Macao, in your own style! If you fancy long, leisurely strolls then you will definitely enjoy a walk through the streets and alleys of this unique place where Europe meets Asia in truly interesting ways. Walking along scenic and historic routes of Macao through various walking tours on offer is something you must consider. Once



macao



you enter Macao, Friendship Bridge is the highlight and first thing you see. It is a four-lane, a two-way bridge which connects the Macao Peninsula to Taipa.

The walking tour around St. Paul's should be a must do on your list. The tour begins from old colonial buildings and Portuguese-style paved streets of Senado Square. All along the way, there will be designer shops and big brand labels. If food is on your mind, then check out the restaurants on the way. There is also enough choice for a Chinese food lover, but if you walk further, then you could walk into a place that serves you your choice of tasty Macanese cuisine. The historic centre of Macao celebrates Macao's dual heritage with architectural treasures ranging from temples and Chinese mansions to churches and plazas. With the narrow, hilly streets, diminutive squares shaded by ancient banyan trees, family-owned shops, and unique buildings, the slopes and neighbourhoods below the ruins of St. Paul's offer colourful snapshots of Macao's long past. On the way, there are long arches and big windows that showcase an era gone by. The Portuguese flavour will be all around you, be it the names of the streets or the tempting bakeries. Try some street food delicacies around the ruins. Do not miss on the famous Egg Tarts and Almond Cookies as your taste buds says obrigado.

A little later there is a street called Rua De Goa, the name itself suggest how precious Goa was for the Portuguese that they named a street after it all the way in far off place. Located close to the sea and the Guia Hill, there is plenty of breeze, photo ops for you and one good place to chill after walking for so long. Then head to Santo Domingo Church (Igreja de São Domingos) a beautiful 17th- century Baroque-style church with airy interiors and museums of mostly religious exhibits. Next can be A-Ma Temple, the



longest surviving building in the region, A-Ma Temple also happens to be the oldest temple containing valuable historical artefacts. The various pavilions dedicated to the worship of different deities in a single complex make A-Ma Temple an exemplary representation of Chinese culture. Wrap up the walking tour with a stop at the Macau Museum, which beautifully captures the cultures and achievements of China and Portugal through the course of history. The Macao Museum is where one explores the life and cultures of the various communities which have been inhabited the city for ages. Professionally curated exhibitions put both traditional and modern themes under the microscope to spotlight the diversity of art and culture which nourishes the city!

Macao Tower the 10th tallest tower in the world is 338 meters above the ground, visible from almost every part of Macao peninsula. The best view is a bird's eye view of Macao

that stretches beyond the borders of this city. You might just want to gaze at the skyline for hours and let your eyes soak it all in. If you are an adventure freak then indulge yourself in activities like the Sky Jump, Bungee Jump, Tower Walk or the tower climb.

Macao looks like a sparkling gem rising on the seashore at night. This city transforms into a theatre of lights at night with Macao hotels getting decked up as if they are in a competition of lights. Famous for its Bar Lounges to Dance clubs, its frenzied pace and constant change one gets to see and experience in Macao - even in the middle of the night. Macau, or as we all also know it as 'Vegas of China', is all about glamour, inspiring heritage, and a picture-perfect skyline. From casinos to Disneyland, there is a variety of nice places to visit in Macau. This popular holiday destination knows the art of entertainment, regardless of the traveler's age and preferences.



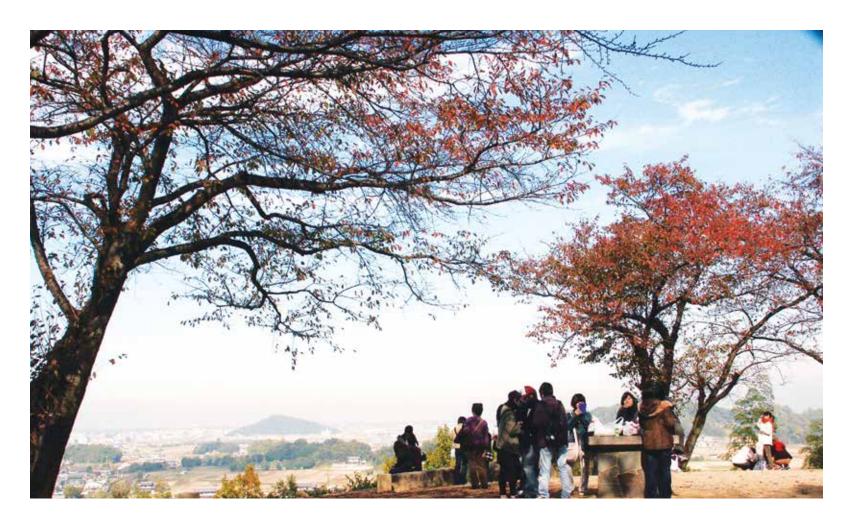




Traditional Culture Experience in Japan

'The land of the Rising Sun', Japan is a sovereign island country in East Asia. Located in the Pacific Ocean, it lies off the eastern coast of the Asian mainland and stretches from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea and China in the southwest, with dense cities, imperial palaces, mountainous national parks and thousands of shrines and temples.

Vijay Arora



Every year, around millions of people from all over the world, visit Japan to explore the country and its rich and fascinating culture, a number that is ever increasing.

In various locations around the metropolis, Japan organizes accessible short programmes that offer foreign visitors and others the opportunity to gain authentic first-hand experience of traditional culture and performing arts, and programs that provide a deeper understanding by combining hands-on experience with the viewing of performances.

We have compiled the top traditional cultural experiences for foreign visitors to get to know Japan first-hand! From the Traditional Japanese Dance Workshop to Kabuki, one has to explore Japan in one's own way!

Engei (Japanese traditional entertainment)-

Wazuma (traditional magic), Kyokugei (traditional acrobatics) and Papercutting

Wazuma

Wazuma is traditional magic that has been



japan



handed down from 400 years ago. This magic was extremely popular among the masses in the Edo period. An instructor will explain the brief history of wazuma while providing you with the opportunity to try it out.

Kyokugei

Kyokugei is a traditional Japanese acrobatics. You can see the kasamawashi performance which means rotating an umbrella with some objects, as well as gokai-jawan, using a long rod to support some objects on top of the rod. In Japan, the kasamawashi is particularly popular and also believed to be very auspicious. You can try performances such as kasamawashi and kamitate (a part of gokai-jawan).

Paper cutting

Traditional Japanese paper cutting is an improvised art which a performer creates only by a sheet of paper and scissors, according to audience's requests. In this program, you will cut the paper based on some themes. Also, you can take the paper cutout home after you finish it.

Traditional Japanese Dance Workshop

Nihon Buyo is a type of traditional Japanese dance that has a history of nearly 400 years. It is characterized by uniquely Japanese qualities of elegance and grace. Why don't you try on a yukata and our workshop?

In addition, we hope you will enjoy "Fujimusume," which is the authentic and well-known Japanese dance.

Kabuki Workshop

Kabuki is one of Japan's representative traditional art of entertainment, integrating



elements of music, dance, and acting. It is said to have been created in Kyoto around 1600. Since then, it has continued to pass down its traditions while incorporating modernity, continuing to exist as a form of the theatre which has fascinated people for more than 400 years. In 2005, it was registered as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Shamisen of Nagauta Workshop

"Nagauta" which originated as the kabuki music and developed as shamisen (three string instrument) music is a type of traditional Japanese music played on shamisen. You can try shamisen and professional Nagauta players will give a powerful performance and explain Nagauta in a way that makes it easy even for first-timers to understand.

For Indian travellers

Tokyo, Japan is 3 hours and 30 minutes ahead of India and to visit Japan, Indians have to apply for a tourist visa or short-term visa or Temporary visitor visa for sightseeing without guarantor. A short-term visa allows a stay period of up to 90 days for tourism purposes. There are several flights that connect Japan to India either directly or with a stopover.





new zealand



Immerse yourself in natural hot springs in New Zealand

New Zealand's beautiful beaches and waterways are a major attraction and, turning up the temperature from just plain cool to steamy, some of the best soaking spots boast heated water – and, even better, no-one has to pay the electricity bill because nature provides the power.

Hot Water Beach, Coromandel

At Hot Water Beach on the Coromandel Peninsula in the North Island of New Zealand visitors can create their own natural jacuzzi in the wet sand during low tide. PC - Destination Coromandel Two hours either side of low tide, Hot Water Beach (aka Te Puia) fills up with visitors eager to dig their own spa pools in the sand.

On the Coromandel Peninsula between Tairua and Whitianga, this thermal sandpit is a star attraction, with temperatures ranging from tepid to scalding.

Either dig with your hands or hire a spade and, while it's perfectly fun to soak here in summer, on a cold winter's day it's hard to beat. At night, when the moon is out and the stars are twinkling, it's utterly heavenly. But do be warned, the open sea can be rugged so less experienced swimmers must take extra special care.

Travel Tips

Hot Water beach is 2.5 hours' drive from Auckland – make sure you don't forget your swimming costume and towel. When you've had enough of those thermal charms, choose from one of the cafés, but note that many close during the winter. Nearby Hahei has eateries, a brewery, bicycle hire and kayak tours. The area is also home to Cathedral Cove – a spectacular natural archway and marine reserve that is popular with snorkellers. Explore on your own or take advantage of various tour companies offering excursions.

Te Rata Bay, Lake Tarawera

On the southern shore of Rotorua's Lake Tarawera, Te Rata Bay (also referred to as Hot Water Beach) is understandably popular. Fringed with pohutukawa trees and alive with native birds, as well as wild wallabies, the thermal vents on this beach help keep campers' coffee hot while they roast their daily catch in sandpits.

Travel Tips

Accessible by boat or via a fabulous five-hour bush walk (the 15km Tarawera Trail), you'll need to plan ahead to visit the beach. If you plan to stay overnight at the campground (or glamp it) you must book, and stock up on supplies as there are no shops. Happily, water

new zealand





taxis are easy to arrange through Totally Tarawera, with plenty of options for enjoying this area either overnight or as part of a day-trip.

The largest and furthest-flung island in the Hauraki Gulf, Great Barrier/Aotea is 90km from Auckland. A rugged rock that's completely off grid, it tends to attract a capable sort of citizen. Renowned for unspoiled beaches, impressive wildlife and rich history, it's also home to a picturesque thermal pool. Kaitoke Hot Springs is an easy, pram-friendly 45-minute walk from Whangaparapara Road. But be sure to take any provisions you need with you, as aside from two long-drop lavatories, this beautiful spot is completely non-commercial.

Travel Tips

Isolated Great Barrier/Aotea Island is popular with visitors who enjoy fishing, surfing, hiking and anything to do with nature. Recently awarded International Dark Sky Sanctuary status, be sure to look heavenward after dark when the stars astonish. Accessible by a 30-minute flight or a five-hour ferry ride, there's plenty of accommodation and a reasonable selection of eateries (although you're wise to take some food). Be sure to allow a good few days to get to grips with all the island has to offer.

Kawhia Ocean Beach, Waikato

Less crowded than Coromandel's Hot Water Beach, hot springs can be found at Kawhia's Ocean Beach for two hours either side of low tide. Steeped in history, Kawhia is where the Tainui waka (one of the original canoes carrying the first Polynesians) came to rest after its epic trans-Pacific voyage, and today is a sleepy little spot, far from the madding crowds and all the better for it. If you're not sure where to dig to gain access to the steaming seams, a friendly local will show you the way. But be warned, because this is a black sand beach, it can really heat up in summer, so don't forget your shoes.

Travel Tips

Kawhia is a peaceful King Countrytown 200km from Auckland. It offers accommodation (including a campground), a museum, a couple of cafés, a general store and a fish and chips shop. Popular with history buffs, fossil fans and fisher people, it's heavenly all year

round. And do experience the cooler charms of nearby Waitomo Caves if time allows.

Welcome Flat Hot Pools

And don't forget the South Island, because 20km south of Fox Glacier you'll find Welcome Flat Hot Pools, near a conveniently positioned DOC (Department of Conservation) hut. Surrounded by snowy peaks and forest, there are several temperature options with even the fussiest bathers catered for – provided they don't mind mud. The pools are accessed via the Copland Track, which is 18km one way (it takes about seven hours to complete), so ensure you book ahead for one of the 31 beds in the DOC hut. Of course you'll need to take your food, sleeping bag and swimming suit as well. It's open year round, so pack for the conditions and keep an eye on weather reports.



Segment identification a key to tourism growth in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh is blessed with historical and spiritual beauty. The state is renowned for its snowy mountains with climatic variances through its rugged topography, which is accessible for tourists nearly all year round.

Angad Arora

The state government is always promoting Himachal Pradesh as an adventurous tourist destination. In the recent past, the Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned Rs. 100 crores under the Himalayan Circuit of Swadesh Darshan Scheme for the state.

Himachal Tourism Board (HTB) targets mostly middle-class young independent travellers, married couples and families, coming from the scorching Northern plains in the summer season to escape everyday life for relishing the beautiful nature along with its pleasant climate.

Tourist spots near Shimla like the honeymooners' paradise Kufri, Fagu, Narkanda and Chail are very famous for its moderate snowfall, which turns the hill stations even more picturesque. It is situated right in the heart of the Himalayas, which contains twelve different districts, and is commonly recognized as Devbhumi, meaning God's Land.

Himachal Pradesh has some unexplored places, which are not known for tourists. Some of these places include Una, Taragarh, Sirmaur and Pragpur. Solan is the mushroom city of India. It is very famous for mushroom farming. If you love trekking, Solan will be the best place to visit. Hamirpur is also not known to everyone. It is a district in Himachal that has the distinction of highest literacy rate in the state. Kullu, Manali, Shimla, Chamba, Dharamshala and Dalhousie are hugely popular tourist spots of the state.

It becomes imperative for the government of the state to promote virgin destinations among tourists. The relatively unknown destinations will also help the tourism



department to tap different segments of travellers. Even though travellers from various segments like honeymooners, adventure seekers and international tourists are visiting the state, the focus on the state government seems to be attracting more domestic tourists.

The tourism department of the state needs to formulize its segmentation strategy which in the other markets has heavily impacted the hospitality environment and provided businesses a major competitive advantage in terms of fulfilling desires and expectations of a consumer. The positioning strategies for marketing would require the tourism authority in identifying and creating unique experiences about its specialized destination, before they are catered to different segments.

For the uninitiated, market segmentation is simply the procedure when hospitality organizations segregate the marketplace into classified segmented groups, targeting

those customers who share common characteristics in their requirements, which was the first mentioned in the year 1956 by Wendell Smith and should be measurable, approachable, substantive and practical in its nature. Foremost, since the region also consists of various spiritual and historical areas with presence of hamlets along the beautiful nature, the government should further encourage in promoting religious tourism, heritage tourism, rural tourism, wellness tourism and eco-tourism for raising tourism arrivals in the region. Secondly, it is very important that the tourism body effectively communicates in operating along with other departments of the state government and spends quality time in marketing their key products of the region, which can be done through television advertisements, participating and organizing different events and utilizing technology through 'social media' for increasing more awareness to its anticipated tourists.

The 2014 tourism statistics shows that the region received a total of 1,63,14,400 arrivals, primarily in the areas of Kangra, Shimla, and Kullu including 1,59,24,701 domestic tourists from the Northern states of Punjab and Delhi while 3,89,699 international tourists visited from countries including Germany, France, UAE, UK and USA. These tourists were between the twenty-five and forty-four years age bracket and visited the state during the months of April, May, June and July mainly for enjoyment purposes.





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