

INDIA
TODAY

Travel Plus

QUARTERLY

NUBRA
IN THE RAIN
SHADOW

INDIA'S
FAVOURITE
WEDDING
DESTINATIONS

KERALA

CHASING THE MONSOON

Island Express

YOU CAN NOW REACH Lakshadweep by sea from the mainland in just seven hours! A new high-speed ferry service named 'Parali' was launched in May to connect mainland India to the island, significantly reducing travel time from the customary 13 hours. This modern vessel promises a smoother journey compared to the older, modified cargo ferries in use. The Lakshadweep Islands Tourism Development Authority is also enhancing services and facilities at Kadmat, the primary port for travellers arriving from the mainland, to ensure a more comfortable travel experience. The new service plies between Mangaluru and Lakshadweep, with tickets priced at around Rs 5,000 per person. This initiative is expected to boost tourism to Lakshadweep, an archipelago of 36 islands famed for its pristine beaches, coral reefs, and peaceful environment. ■

Satarupa Paul



SHUTTERSTOCK

Golden Milestone

Bhutan celebrates 50 years of tourism with a range of special events

Since Bhutan's tourism journey began in 1974, the scenic Himalayan kingdom has presented strong examples of keeping overtourism at bay. Its policy of 'high value, low volume' established the foundation of mindful tourism, much before it became a buzzword. Bhutan is the world's only country to implement a \$100 Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) per adult, per night, for all its visitors. For Indians, it's Rs 1,200. These funds are utilised for the upkeep of cultural heritage and for providing free healthcare and education to the Bhutanese.

The idea has always been to generate revenue through tourism by showcasing Bhutan's strengths, without causing harm to the environment. This year marks five decades of that commitment. Bhutan's Department of Tourism launched a campaign on June 2, to celebrate this landmark occasion. The festivities will extend until December 17, Bhutan's National Day.

In August, the country will host its first tourism awards to recognise excellence and innovation. Besides, there will be TedX talks by public figures from Bhutan, who will discuss pertinent tourism-related subjects. A jewellery showcase and fashion show to highlight the craftsmanship are also on the cards. There will also be events at Bhutanese embassies worldwide, besides industry initiatives, including the launch of new itineraries, introduction of a loyalty programme, etc. ■

Geetika Sachdev



A Spiritual Sojourn

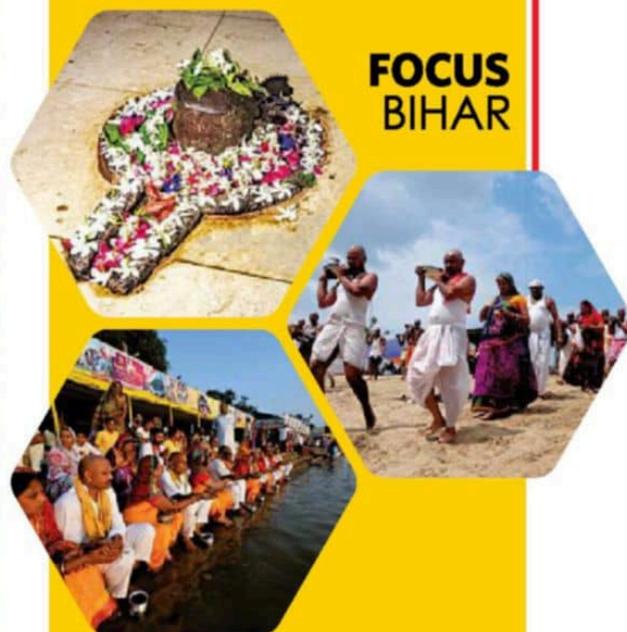
Bihar is an ancient land suffused with the deep aura of spirituality. Besides being the birthplace of Buddhism, it is also home to ancient fairs and rituals associated with Hinduism since time immemorial.

One of the most popular fairs is the annual Shravani Mela which draws thousands of devout to Deoghar in the month of Shraavan. This year, this month-long celebration, said to be one of the world's longest religious fairs, will be observed from 22 July to 19 August. The mela sees lakhs of kanwariyas collect holy water from the Uttarvahini Ganga (north-flowing Ganga) in Sultanganj and walk 105 kilometres to Baidyanath Dham in Deoghar where they offer it to Baba Baidyanath or Lord Shiva. The entire route has an air of celebration about it, with the administration making excellent arrangements for the comfort and safety of the pilgrims. While there is a much-revered and established route between Sultanganj and Deoghar, to deal with the huge influx of devotees, the Government of Bihar has developed two more routes, via

Munger and Baanka.

Sultanganj, the starting point for the Shravani Mela, is situated in the Bhagalpur district, 25 km west of Bhagalpur city on the Ganga's south bank. Pilgrims from all over the world converge on this sacred site to begin their journey to Baidyanath Dham. Situated next to the Ganga in Sultanganj, the Ajgaivinath Temple is a deeply revered temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. The northward flow of the Ganga here is considered auspicious, and legend says that one of the great sages of antiquity, Jahnu dwelt here. Millions of people visit the ancient Shiva temple in Sultanganj, perched on a hill near the Ganga River.

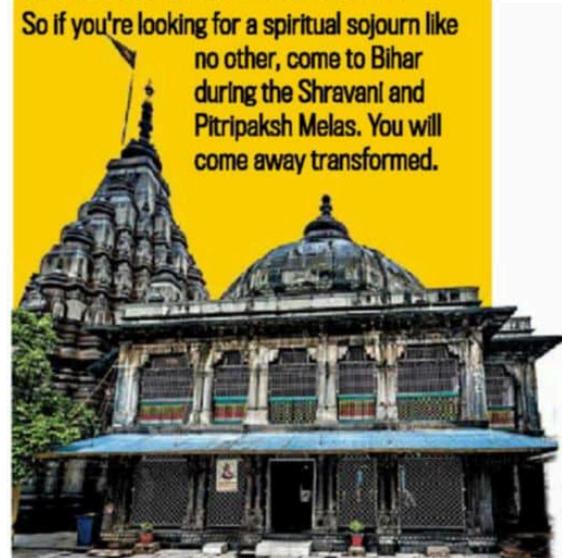
As the devout walk the holy path, carrying sacred Ganga water on their shoulders while wearing their kanwars, the route resounds with cries of "Bol Bam". The human chain of pilgrims clothed in saffron proceeds steadfastly towards their destination. At Baba Dham, the kanwariyas bathe in the Shivaganga to purify themselves before going into the Baba Baidyanath temple, where the Jyotirlingam is offered the holy Ganga water. Other holy spots that are visited here include the Ramniwas Ashram of Saint Balanand Brahmachari, Mohan Mandir of Mohananand Swami, Kailash Pahar Ashram-Jasidih of Swami Hansdev Avadhoot, as well as the Rikhiya Ashram.



Another holy fair to look forward to a little later in the year is the Pitripaksh Mela held in Punpun and Gaya. This year the mela is being held from 17 September to 2 October. Of course, devout Hindus have been travelling to Gaya to pay obelance to their ancestors since time immemorial. However, the most propitious time to do so is during Pitripaksh, a time of year dedicated to assuaging the departed souls of ancestors, asking for their forgiveness, and ridding oneself of Pitra Dosh (curse of ancestors). During this period rituals like Shraddh, Tarpan, and Pind Daan are performed to release the departed soul from the cycle of birth, life, and death. Such rituals are performed at the Falgu River in Gaya, after offering special prayers at the Vishnupad Temple.

Another holy location to observe Pitripaksh is the Punpun Ghat near Patna, which is significant for its historical and natural beauty, and for its association with the first Pind Daan, or Shraddh, performed in Hindu Dharma. The Vayu and Padma Puranas also mention the Punpun River in connection with Gaya Mahatmya, and interpret the word "punah-punah" (again and again) in a spiritual sense. They say that offering oblations to ancestors in this river removes all sins.

So if you're looking for a spiritual sojourn like no other, come to Bihar during the Shravani and Pitripaksh Melas. You will come away transformed.

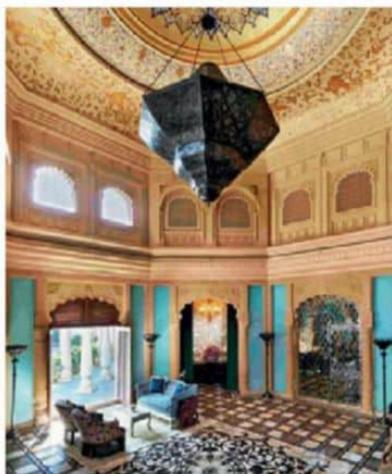


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CHIC STAYS

THE HOTTEST NEW HOTEL OPENINGS IN INDIA



Raffles Jaipur

Elevating the luxury quotient of Jaipur is Raffles' new outpost near the magnificent Amer Fort. The brand's second property in India, after Udaipur, is a modern recreation of a palace. Hand-carved from white marble, it is a testament to Rajasthan's fine craftsmanship. The hotel features 50 opulent rooms and themed luxurious suites.

Doubles from Rs 40,000++;
raffles.com/jaipur

Ronil Goa

The first 'JdV by Hyatt' hotel in India and southwest Asia embodies the *joie de vivre* philosophy of the brand. The 135-room boutique resort is located on the Calangute-Baga Road, making it accessible from both the Dabolim and Mopa airports. With tastefully furnished rooms, the hotel invites visitors to experience the susegad way of life with two pools, an on-site DJ host, wellness services, and a variety of dining options. *Doubles from Rs 6,086 ++;* *hyatt.com*



MOHSIN TAHA



Kinwani House, Narendra Nagar

Experience a blend of old-world charm and modern luxury in Kinwani House in Uttarakhand's Narendra Nagar, above Rishikesh and Haridwar. Once the home of a

member of the erstwhile Tehri-Garhwal royal family, it has been painstakingly restored to its original grandeur and opened by the Aalia Collection by JPL Group. This estate has six luxurious suites affording scenic mountain views, besides lush gardens, a conservatory, and a temperature-controlled swimming pool.

Doubles from Rs 37,999++; *aaliacollection.com*

Geetika Sachdev

JOURNEYS INTO THE PAST

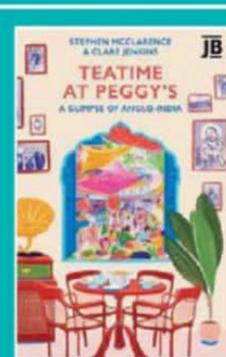
Two books that offer travel inspiration and unique cultural insights



Destination India: Foreign Artists in India 1857-1947
DAG
₹4,500; 175 pages

Published as a collector's edition catalogue for a new exhibition at DAG in Delhi, *Destination India* showcases the works of foreign artists who visited India from the Uprising of 1857 to Independence in 1947, highlighting a late phase of Orientalist art. Unlike earlier artists like William Hodges and the Daniells, who focused on picturesque landscapes

and architecture, these later artists—Charles W. Bartlett, Edwin Lord Weeks, John Griffiths and Mary Anne Blyth among others—were more diverse and interested in depicting everyday life and society. They came from various countries, including Germany, France, Japan and Britain. With a Foreword by Shashi Tharoor and an Introduction by Pheroza Godrej, the book offers a personal and intimate view of India through the eyes of these foreign artists. ■



Teatime at Peggy's: A Glimpse of Anglo-India
By Stephen McClarence & Clare Jenkins
Journey Books
₹9.99; 296 pages

Over 15 years, Stephen McClarence, an award-winning travel writer, and Clare Jenkins, a BBC Radio journalist, embarked on multiple journeys to the railway town of Jhansi in India to document the lives and traditions of its Anglo-Indian community. Their experiences culminated in this book that spotlights two memorable figures: 'Aunty' Peggy, a dedicated community leader and custodian of the European cemetery, and Captain Roy Abbott, the last British landowner in India, known

as 'The Rajah of Jhansi'. Through their stories, the authors provide a warm and humorous portrayal of the Anglo-Indian way of life, which is rapidly disappearing. The book captures the essence of a fading culture framed within the vibrant chaos of 21st-century India. ■

Satarupa Paul

Banswara

RAJASTHAN

Incredibly magical!



RAJASTHAN
The Incredible State of India!



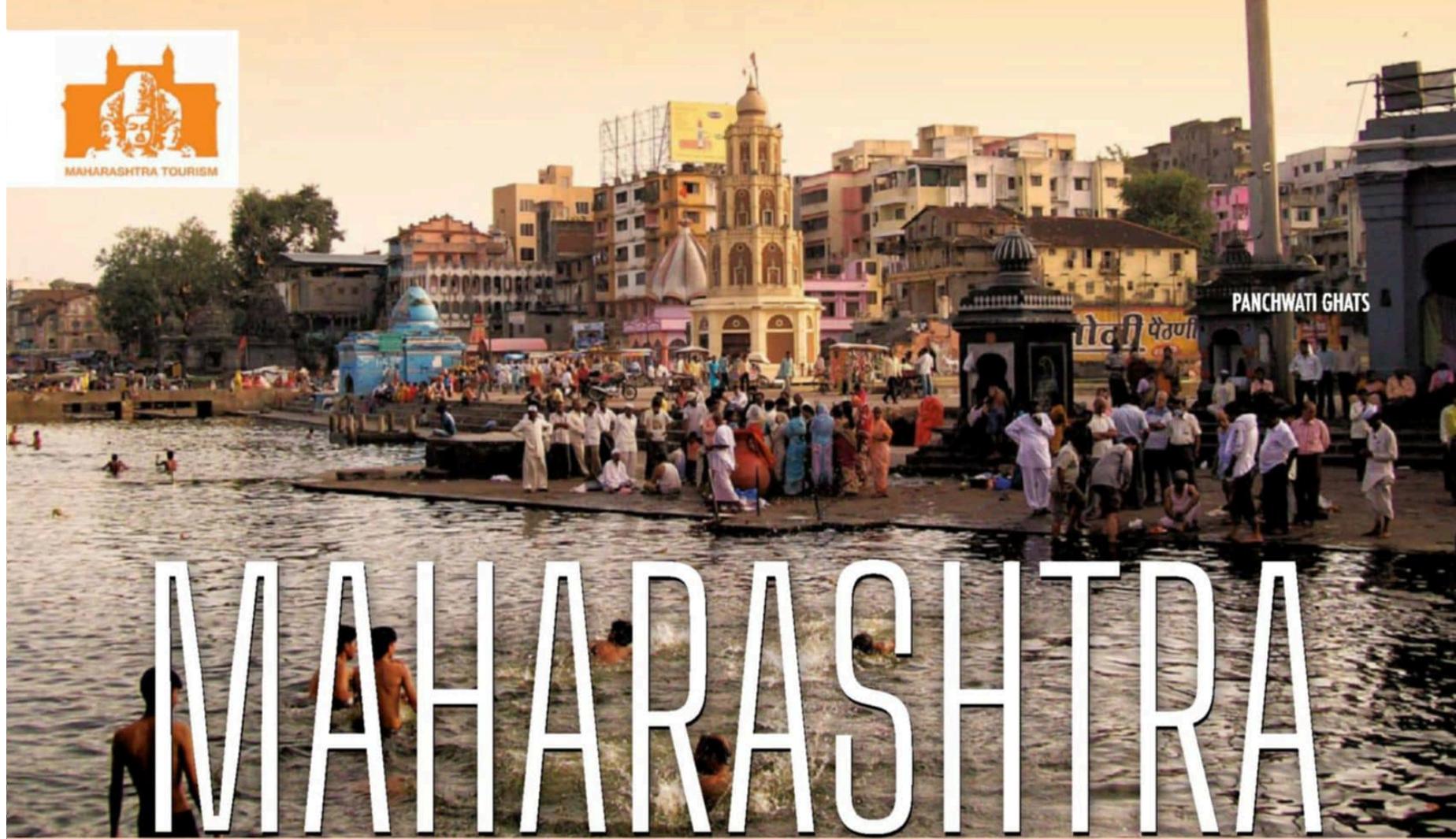
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Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan



MAHARASHTRA

THE LAND WHERE THE GODS MEET THEIR DEVOTEES

Maharashtra is not just a land of illustrious temples and holy rivers. It is a place where religion gets simplified as bhakti, enabling the most common of us to experience the kind of divine presence, about which the most exalted ones rave about. Every deity has a presence here, bestowing their benign grace and blessings to the hoi polloi. A journey through the state is nothing short of a pilgrimage.

An ancient adage states that gods reside where they are celebrated. Guided by a hallowed lineage of saints who simplified religion for the common man, Maharashtra has evolved into a place where gods have preferred to rub shoulders with the faithful, enjoy the pampering of their devotees. In Maharashtra, you can still witness the hallowed traditions that have held strong for centuries, spawning countless stories and experiences.

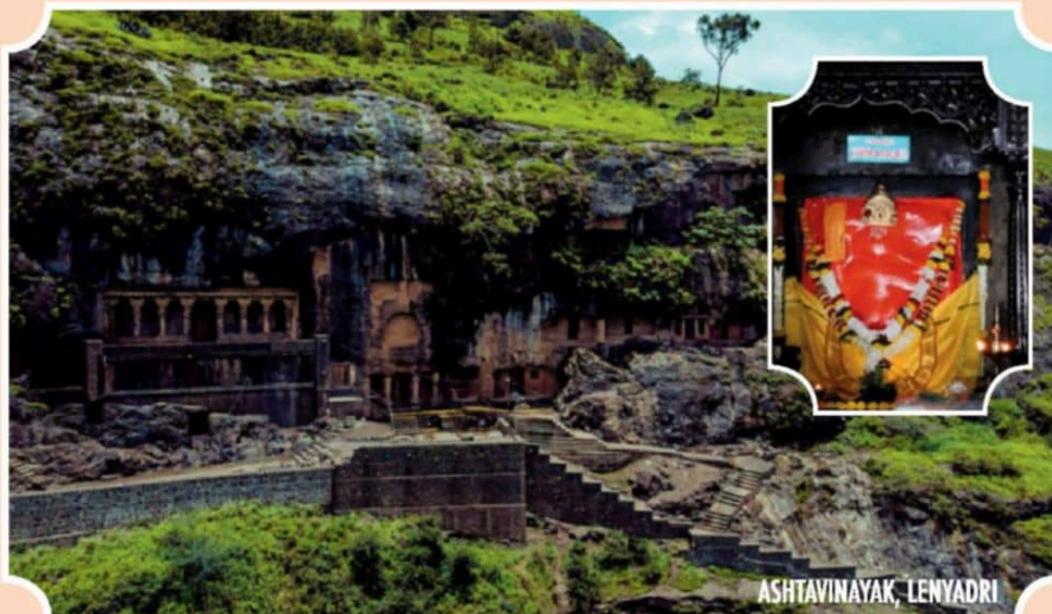
Lord Vitthal and his consort Rukhmai, the presiding deities of Maharashtra, evoke strong emotions. The month of Aashadhi sees Varkaris, devotees who have dedicated their lives to the god, walking and trekking in groups carrying palanquins of saints and singing bhajans called abhangs, to the shrine in **Pandharpur** from across the state in a journey that might take upto 21 days. It is something that needs to be experienced once in a lifetime. It stands out as the ultimate definition of bhakti or devotion.



Tourism is pivotal in realizing PM Narendra Modi's vision of a 5 trillion economy by 2030. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for green and sustainable tourism, urging collective efforts to make Maharashtra the best global destination. Spiritual tourism is set to be a major growth driver for the development of several temple towns in the state, thanks to government policy support and infrastructure developments. The improvements in infrastructure, such as upgraded roads, flagship trains, and new airports, are expected to attract national and international tourists to these spiritual destinations.

GIRISH MAHAJAN

Minister Of Tourism, Government Of Maharashtra



Maharashtra plays a defining role in the life of Ram. Panchavati on the banks of the river Godavari, in the present day Nashik, is where Ram stayed before Sita got abducted. The Ramayana circuit would be incomplete without



MAHALKXMI MANDIR, KOLHAPUR



GRISHNESHWAR TEMPLE, LEFT SIDE VIEW

a visit to Panchavati and the ancient **Kalaram Mandir** located there.

Close by **Trimbakeshwar** is the site of one of the holiest Jyotirling. The Shivalinga here has three faces representing the triumvirate of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. A must visit for all Shiva devotees, it is believed that people can rid themselves of Kalasarpa and Pitru doshas or curses afflicting them, by performing pooja here. The holy Godavari originates from the hills surrounding Trimbakeshwar.

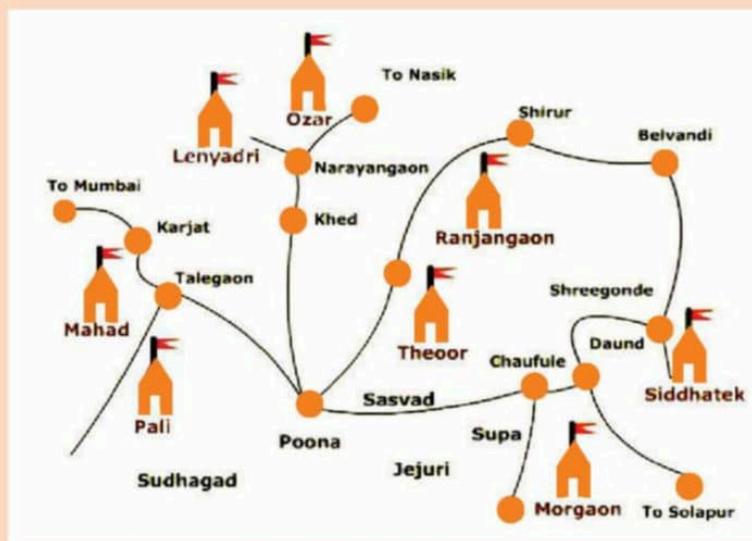
Bhimashankar, near to Pune, hosts another Jyotirlinga. Devotees take a dip in the Bhima river and worship him as Ardhanariswara. The site of his battle and subsequent victory over Tripurasura, the river is believed to have its origins from the lord's sweat. Hence, bathing in it, rids one of their sins.

Grishneshwar, nearer to Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, brings up the last of the Jyotirlingas. However, it is believed that having darshan here bestows one of the blessings of all the Jyotirlingas.

The pilgrimage to the Shivakshetras in Maharashtra is complete only with a visit to the ancient temples of **Aundha Naganath**, believed to be constructed by Yudhisthira and the legendary Parli Vajinath, where the Shivalinga has great healing powers. At Jejuri, Shiva transforms into a local deity to enjoy the devotion of the faithful. Khandoba is a clan god for many Maharashtrian castes and communities, beloved as a god who grants wishes.

Shri Jyotiba Temple on the hills at Wadi Ratnagiri near Kolhapur celebrates the hindu triumvirate of Bramha, Vishnu, Mahesh who incarnated together as the deity Jyotiba to destroyed the evil Ratnasura.

With celebrations spanning across Eleven days, the Ganesha Festival erupts into a huge revelry across the state. It is a great time to visit the state to witness the perfect blend of fervor, pomp, pageantry and public bonhomie. The



entire state host its favorite deity across households and public sarvajanik pandals. It is no wonder then that the most auspicious temples of Ganesh are present in the state. The famed **Ashtavinayak Pilgrimage** takes one through the districts of Raigad, Pune and Ahmednagar. Covering eight temples in 3 days and 2 nights, it starts at the temple of **Morgaon**, the abode of Lord Mayureshwar in Pune District and ends there. The next stop is at **Siddhatek** in Ahmednagar.

Present as Siddhivinayak, he bestows spiritual powers to his devotees. The journey next winds its way to **Pali** in Raigad District. Lording over it as Ballaleshwar, the morning rays of the sun pay their homage to the idol. The next shrine is 38kms away in Mahad. The Varadvinayak fulfills the wishes of the devotees who chant his name. The Nandadeep that fills the temple by its glow, adds lustre to his sentient presence.

Theur in Pune District houses Chintamani, promising peace and freedom from worries. The next stop is at **Lenyadri**. Finding mention in the Ganesha Purana, the entire temple is carved out of a single stone. The Girijatmaja faces the east and has his trunk turned to the left. At **Ozar**, the Vighneshwar Vinayak presides over as the destroyer of the demon Vighneshwar. **Ranjangaon** bring up the rear of this spiritual journey. The Mahaganapati here is believed to have aided his father in combating and killing the evil Tripurasura. The rays of the sun fall on the idol here, adding to his aura.

Apart from these Mumbai boasts of the much revered **Siddhivinayak Temple**, while Pune claims its quota of spirituality with the **DagaduSheth Halwai Mandir**. Both of them are considered to be amongst the richest temples of India. Moving a bit down south, on the shores of the Arabian sea, the svayambhu idol of Ganesha rules over **Ganpatipule**, firmly nailing its place on the spiritual map of Maharashtra.

Maharashtra is home to **Shaktipeeths** too. The manifestation of power from which creation

ensures, it is always celebrated in the form of the mother. The **Mahalakshmi Temple** at Kolhapur, The **Renuka Devi Temple** at Mahurgad, The **Bhavani Temple** in Tuljapur and the **Saptashrunji Temple** at Wani make up this cluster.

A spiritual journey across Maharashtra will not be complete without paying homage to the religious gurus who have instilled the bhakti movement in the state. Foremost amongst them is Sant Dnyaneshwar, a 13th-century Indian Marathi saint, poet, philosopher and yogi. His Dnyaneshwari, a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita and Amrutanubhav are the oldest surviving literary works in the Marathi language.

He undertook samadhi at **Alandi** in 1296 by entombing himself in an underground chamber. **Akkalkot** is a Holy place of ShriSwami Samarth Maharaj, believed to be the reincarnation of Lord Dattatraya. The Samadhi of this Saint is worshipped by the devotees. **Shegaon** houses the samadhi of the revered spiritual teacher Shri Gajanan Maharaj. The temple complex has emerged as an important pilgrimage place. Shirdi is home to Shri Sai Baba's samadhi mandir. Every day, over 60,000 tourists and devotees from all faiths and religions throng to the temple.

We invite you to embark on pilgrimage across Maharashtra. It could well turn out to be the journey of self-discovery!

STARRY NIGHTS

High in the Himalayas, when the night skies are clear, the heavens can feel close enough to touch. The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, in association with Starscapes, has launched 'Nakshatra Sabha', a year-long campaign devoted exclusively to promoting astrotourism in the state. The first event, held on the grounds of George Everest House in Mussoorie in early June, saw expert talks, 3D shows and, of course, lots of stargazing. Promoting niche tourism activities like astrotourism is Uttarakhand's way to combat overtourism and reduce pressure on popular hill stations, since the best stargazing is done in remote 'dark sky' locations, and which the Nakshatra Sabha campaign is also identifying and mapping. The next Nakshatra Sabha is slated to be held from October 4-6 in Jageshwar. Happy stargazing! ■



SHUTTERSTOCK



UTTARAKHAND TOURISM POLICY 2023-30

A Vision for Sustainable Growth and International Appeal

Uttarakhand is venturing on a transformative path with the unveiling of its Tourism Policy 2023-30. This ambitious approach, guided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, aims to harness Uttarakhand's myriad possibilities while ensuring sustainable development and inclusive growth. This policy sets the stage for Uttarakhand to become a destination that offers a vast collection of authentic experiences.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Following the vision of PM Narendra Modi, CM Pushkar Singh Dhami is transforming Uttarakhand's tourism sector. The policy emphasizes the empowerment of all stakeholders, ensuring that the benefits of tourism development are widely shared. By aligning the objectives and interests of different stakeholders, the policy provides a cohesive framework for holistic tourism growth, moving beyond the conventional notion of Uttarakhand as merely a spiritual and wellness destination.

The Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2023-30 strives to unlock the state's latent potential, promoting a blend of legacy, theology, wilderness, nature, health, and wellness tourism. This comprehensive approach

seeks to offer memorable experiences for every kind of visitor and establish Uttarakhand as an all-weather destination. Winter and Alpine tourism are emphasized to attract tourists year-round.

PRESERVING ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Sustainability is a pivotal priority of the policy, with measures to maintain Uttarakhand's environmental and cultural assets. The policy highlights the preservation of natural resources, wilderness, and intangible heritage. It also includes the revitalization of lost natural and cultural assets, ensuring the state remains a secure and stunning destination for the future.

In the digital age, the policy emphasizes the use of technology to meet dynamic

visitor expectations. This involves leveraging online platforms for advertising, bookings, and information dissemination, enhancing tourists' overall experience from the comfort of their homes.

ENCOURAGING PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

The policy facilitates private sector investment in hospitality and tourism projects, seeking to reduce government involvement in areas where private participation can be more effective. Streamlined approval processes will promote ease of doing business, stimulating innovation and growth.

To achieve balanced regional development, the policy introduces the "Hub and Spoke" model, addressing carrying capacity issues in popular destinations. Improvements in basic amenities and infrastructure are designed to enhance the visitor experience and ensure resilience to natural disasters. The ambitious goals of the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2023-30 include contributing USD 10 billion annually to the state's economy and attracting substantial private investments. By generating job opportunities and focusing on skill development and inclusivity, the policy aims to increase the average length of stay and boost foreign tourist visits.

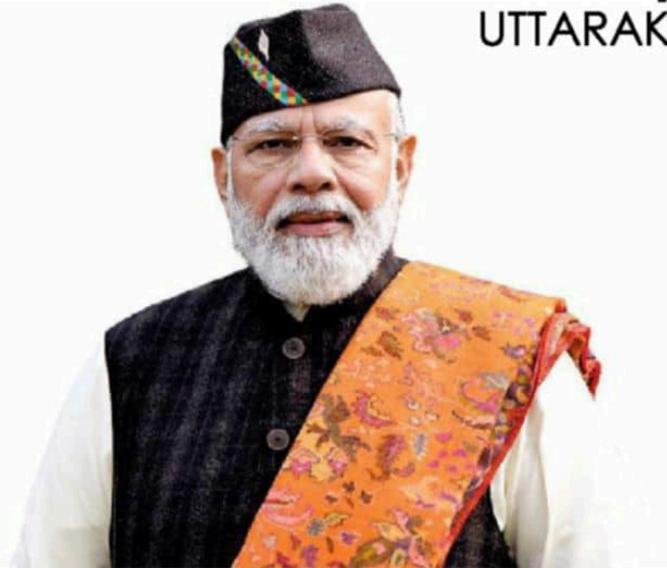
EMBRACING UTTARAKHAND'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL WEALTH

Uttarakhand, also known as Devbhoomi or "Land of the Gods," is renowned for its majestic Himalayan landscapes, sacred pilgrimage sites, and rich cultural heritage. The state offers a remarkable blend of untouched beauty, adventure, spirituality, and traditional hospitality, making it an ideal destination for visitors seeking diverse experiences.

THE MANASKHAND EXPRESS: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

In an innovative step by the CM Dharami-led government to highlight Uttarakhand's cultural and spiritual significance, the Indian Railways has introduced the Manaskhand Express-Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train. This train, operated by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) in collaboration with the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, offers a curated journey through the Kumaon region, also known as Manaskhand in ancient Indian scriptures.

The inaugural voyage of the Manaskhand Express began from Pune on April 22, 2024, carrying 280 enthusiastic tourists. The train, adorned with depictions of Uttarakhand's rich heritage, travels to destinations including Nainital, Bhimtal, Almora, Chaukori, Puragiri Temple, and more. The travel package includes comfortable train journeys, hotel stays, homestays, guided tours, meals, and travel insurance. Upon arriving at



I congratulate the Uttarakhand government on the remarkable progress achieved in the last few years. This has been made possible by sustained policy push and focus on key sectors such as tourism and renewable energy. Alongside, the state has made significant strides in infrastructure development, setting new benchmark for sustainable growth. Uttarakhand's commitment to harnessing its natural resources and promoting tourism has not only bolstered its economy but also showcased its potential on the global stage. I applaud the state's dedication to inclusive development and look forward to its continued success in the years ahead.

– Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, Government of India

Tanakpur Railway Station, tourists are welcomed in traditional Indian style with aarti, tikka, and flower petals. The journey includes visits to various temples, scenic spots, and cultural sites, providing a comprehensive experience of Uttarakhand's lesser-known treasures. The train's pantry car serves a variety of dishes, including Uttarakhandi cuisine, enriching the cultural immersion for tourists.

TEHRI: TRANSFORMING INTO A PRIME WEDDING DESTINATION AND ADVENTURE HUB

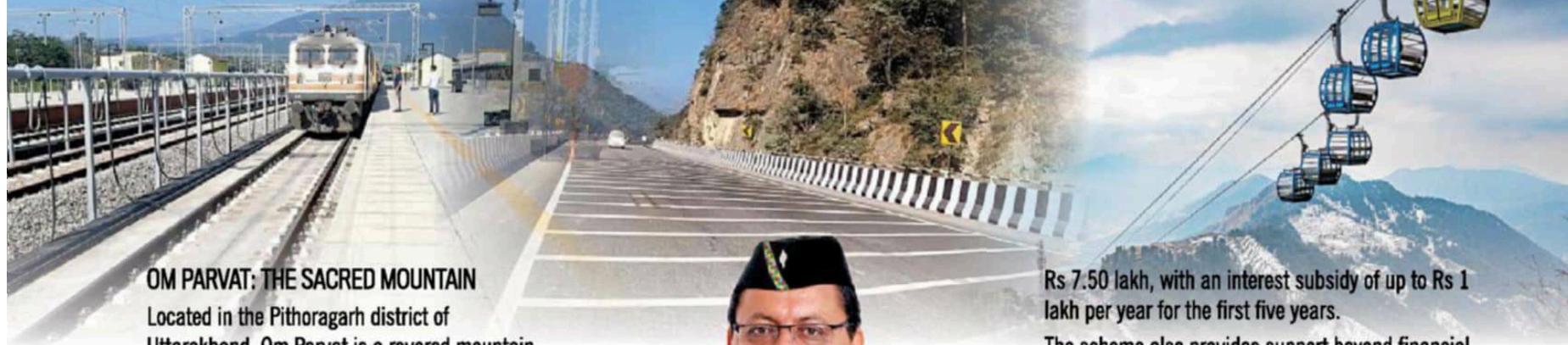
The scenic Tehri district in Uttarakhand is undergoing a transformative journey to emerge as a premier destination for weddings and adventure sports. With strategic development initiatives and the enthusiastic support of stakeholders, Tehri is poised to attract couples seeking a unique and memorable location for their special day.

A notable highlight is the evolution of Tehri as a tent city. This enterprise, functioning on a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model, strives to provide an immaculate and close-knit

wedding experience. The tranquil setting of Tehri Lake, complemented by lavish tent and contemporary conveniences, pledges to create special memories for wedding receptions. The Uttarakhand government's emphasis on fostering Tehri as a wedding destination aligns with PM Narendra Modi's special appeal to promote domestic tourism by means of destination weddings. This endeavour is a component of wider campaign to maintain the financial advantage of such occasions within India, thus supporting local residents and enterprises.

A chopper services to Triyuginarayan temple will soon be introduced to improve Tehri's charm and appeal. This service will cater to visitors, especially couples desiring to get married at this holy temple, traditionally considered the venue of Lord Shiva and Parvati's marriage. After the marriage rituals, the wedding celebrations can continue in the picturesque surroundings of Tehri, offering a seamless combination of spirituality and festivity.





OM PARVAT: THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

Located in the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand, Om Parvat is a revered mountain known for its unique rock formation that resembles the sacred Hindu symbol 'Om'. This natural wonder is considered holy by both Hindus and Buddhists and is believed to be the abode of Lord Shiva. Pilgrims visiting Om Parvat as part of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra experience spiritual solace and a deep connection to their faith. The peak's remarkable symbol, visible from Nabdhang Camp, is a testament to the area's mystical charm and spiritual significance. Om Parvat's growing popularity among devotees worldwide underscores its importance as a pilgrimage site and a symbol of nature's sacred artistry.

STRENGTHENING TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY: DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA HOMESTAY SCHEME

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Griha Awaas Vikas Yojana is a key initiative undertaken by the Uttarakhand government to enhance tourism infrastructure and support local economies. This scheme aims to offer hygienic, affordable lodging while providing a memorable cultural experience for visitors. The main objective is to



Under the able leadership of PM Narendra Modi, Uttarakhand is seeing transformative growth over the course of time. The undertaking of state-of-the-art ropeway projects and advancements in railways, roadways, and air connectivity is deemed to revolutionise travel and tourism in Uttarakhand. These endeavours not only assure eco-friendly and efficient conveyance but also strengthen our regional economy and generate new prospects for our locals. Uttarakhand's impressive mix of spiritual, adventure, and culture experience makes it a preferred destination for visitors from around the globe. We remain committed to sustainable development, conserving our natural and cultural legacy while making way for thriving tomorrow.

— **Pushkar Singh Dhami,**
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

foster an authentic experience of the state for both Indian and global travelers. By staying in local homes, visitors get the opportunity to immerse themselves in the region's rich culture, customs, and cuisine. This not only enhances the traveler experience but also helps preserve and promote the regional heritage.

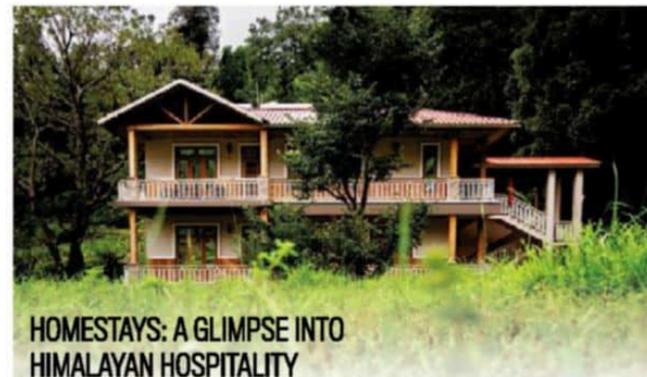
A significant aspect of the scheme is the financial assistance provided to homeowners who wish to convert their properties into homestays. For houses in hill regions, the government offers a capital subsidy of 33% or up to Rs 10 lakh, whichever is higher. Additionally, there is an interest subsidy for the first five years, amounting to 50% of the interest or Rs 1.50 lakh per year, whichever is lower. In the plains, the capital subsidy is 25% or up to

Rs 7.50 lakh, with an interest subsidy of up to Rs 1 lakh per year for the first five years.

The scheme also provides support beyond financial aid, including exemption from the State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) for the first three years and hospitality training for homestay operators. There is also a provision for reimbursing the interest on loans up to Rs 30 lakh for necessary renovations and new constructions. Notably, no land conversion is required for upgrading buildings and constructing new washrooms, with a limit of Rs 2 lakh.

Eligibility standards ensure quality and authenticity. The homeowners must reside in the same establishment with their family and can offer 1 to 6 rooms for travelers. The scheme is implemented statewide, except in municipal areas, and registration under the Homestay Scheme is mandatory.

The broader objectives of the scheme include improving the financial condition of locals by providing self-employment opportunities, familiarizing travelers with Uttarakhand's culture, cuisine, and heritage, and generating local employment.



HOMESTAYS: A GLIMPSE INTO HIMALAYAN HOSPITALITY

Staying in a homestay is one of the best ways to experience the Himalayan hospitality of Uttarakhand. Homestays offer budget-friendly accommodation and services provided by local households in picturesque settings. The residents of Uttarakhand are known for their warmth and hospitality, following the age-old Vedic practice of "Atithi Devo Bhava" meaning "Guests are God".

Homestays are available across several districts in Uttarakhand, offering guests the opportunity to explore rustic locations, enjoy local food, and discover hidden gems with the help of local hosts. Options range from traditional wooden havelis and rustic cottages to modern homes.

STARGAZING: CELESTIAL WONDERS IN UTTARAKHAND

Uttarakhand's clear night skies and minimal light pollution make it an excellent location for stargazing. Numerous places across the state offer spectacular views of star-studded skies, creating unforgettable experiences for astronomy enthusiasts and nature lovers. Some of these spots include:

- **Mukteshwar:** A small town known for its stunning night skies, attracting astrophotographers and stargazers.
- **Deoria Tal in Ukhimath:** A serene lake with a backdrop of Himalayan peaks, perfect for night camping and stargazing.
- **Majkhali in Ranikhet:** Known for its scenic landscapes and zero light pollution, Majkhali is ideal for stargazing.
- **Kedarkantha in Uttarkashi:** The Kedarkantha trek, renowned as a winter trek, offers clear stargazing spots.
- **George Everest Peak in Mussoorie:** Provides panoramic views of Dehradun city and the Milky Way on clear nights.
- **Munsiari in Pithoragarh:** This Himalayan town offers dark skies and breathtaking views of the Panchachuli Peaks.

#ExploreUttarakhand



@DIPR_UK

HOUSE OF HIMALAYAS

ELEVATING UTTARAKHAND'S ORGANIC HERITAGE AND EMPOWERING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



In a groundbreaking move to promote sustainable development and empower local communities, the House of Himalayas was launched by the Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on December 8th, 2023. This visionary initiative aims to bolster Himalayan livelihoods, with a particular focus on cultivating women entrepreneurs and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit within the state of Uttarakhand.

A NEW IDENTITY FOR UTTARAKHAND'S ORGANIC TREASURES

Uttarakhand is blessed with a treasure trove of organic products that are not only nutritionally rich but also have a minimal chemical footprint. Despite their exceptional quality, many consumers remain unaware of these hidden gems. To bridge this gap, various state government departments launched brands such as Hilans, HIMADRI, Himanya, Havepure, Gramyashree, and Organic Uttarakhand. These brands aim to increase sales of products developed by individual self-help groups (SHGs), artisans, entrepreneurs, and community-based organizations, helping them achieve self-sufficiency.

Due to limited access to a broader customer base, lack of quality assurance, insufficient guidance on business operations, and significant overlap in product offerings among these mini-brands (created by the departments), these smaller initiatives did not achieve the anticipated success.

THE UMBRELLA BRAND: HOUSE OF HIMALAYAS

The House of Himalayas serves as an umbrella brand for all products made in Uttarakhand, embodying the spirit of 'Vocal for Local' and

WHAT SETS HOUSE OF HIMALAYAS APART?

PREMIUM QUALITY

The House of Himalayas guarantees uncompromising quality and superior craftsmanship, distinguishing its products from mass-produced alternatives.

AUTHENTICITY GUARANTEE

Emphasizing traditional techniques, these products offer a genuine experience that generic items cannot replicate.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

The brand celebrates the rich diversity of the Himalayan region, showcasing a tapestry of cultures, traditions, and perspectives.

TRANSPARENT SOURCING

Complete transparency in material sourcing and production processes ensures consumer trust in the integrity of the products.

SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS

Prioritizing sustainable sourcing and production practices, the brand appeals to consumers who value ethical consumption.

extending it to 'Local for Global.' By leveraging existing brands, the House of Himalayas aims to enhance sales, improve product quality, and elevate branding and packaging. This initiative is set to create a line of premium products for both national and international markets, ensuring that Uttarakhand's local treasures reach a global audience.

KEY IMPACTS AND VISION

The House of Himalayas aligns with the Honourable Prime Minister's vision of "Vocal for Local, Local to Global," targeting the transformation of 500,000 households and 50,000 SHGs into economically independent entities by 2030. Beyond quantitative goals, the brand aims to achieve several qualitative impacts:

- Boosting the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Strengthening women's livelihoods, particularly in rural areas.
- Promoting a circular economy.
- Contributing to Sustainable Development Goals.
- Uplifting the socio-economic situation of rural families by eradicating multi-dimensional poverty.
- Providing access to quality and decent jobs through the brand's supply chain across the state.

PREMIUM PRODUCT PORTFOLIO

The House of Himalayas offers a diverse range of premium, location-specific products from across Uttarakhand, including:

PULSES: Munsyari Rajma, Gahat Dal, Chakrata Rajma, and more.

MILLETS: Barnyard Millet, Finger Millet, Amaranthus, etc.

BAKERY: Millet-based bakery products.

PERSONAL CARE: Chyura oil soaps

HANDICRAFTS: Exquisite handmade items reflecting the rich cultural heritage of Uttarakhand.

CHASING THE MONSOON

**FROM MUNNAR TO KOCHI AND ONWARDS TO WAYANAD,
MAKING THE MOST OF KERALA'S WET SEASON**

Anurag Mallick & Priya Ganapathy

Green is the colour of life, renewal, energy and nature. Of all the myriad hues, it is the most soothing colour to the human eye. And no place offers a meditative calm with a magical healing touch as Kerala in the rains. As the southwest monsoon sweeps up the Western Ghats and across the country, it drenches the vegetation, cloaking it in unimaginable shades of green. According to Ayurveda, it is the best season for replenishment and rejuvenation for nature and man. Flying into Kochi, the rivers ran full, the waters turbid and olive, snaking through dense jade tapestry. Everywhere, a magical world of upside-down

landscapes was reflected in streams, backwaters and puddles. In the open grounds, enthusiastic youngsters played football, unmindful of the slush and tumbles. Dove-grey clouds loomed over the hills and rumbled their delicate sound of thunder. What better place to start our monsoon sojourn than the highlands of Munnar? Fed by recent rains, the waterfalls en route—Cheeyaparra, Vallara and Kallar—roared as gushing torrents. Munnar, named after the 'moonu aaru' or three rivers that meet here, is a busy town and we slipped past Signal Point and disappearing phone networks to the vast open tea estates of Devikulam.



(From right clockwise) Lockhart Bungalow, Munnar; Beach Gate Bungalows in Fort Kochi; a sumptuous lunch spread at Lockhart

At Lockhart Bungalow, a three-room British tea plantation bungalow wrapped by a pristine lawn, 1,500 acres seemed a large enough tract to lose oneself in. Colonial-era drawings of local flora and avifauna lined the walls. It felt a lot like home, for the only mealtime discussion was about what the next meal would be. Chef Arockyadoss would appear like a genie out of a tea kettle and gently announce that the consommé of the day would be Roast Cauliflower and Corn Bisque, or that luncheon featured Black Pepper Chicken Railway Curry. Jaisingh, our liveried butler, would arrange meals in the quaint dining room prettied by painted crockery, or a lovely English breakfast on the lawns, weather permitting. We were living the enchanted life of a planter on furlough...even the weather was quite sombre and English. It all made sense except for one bewildering thing—what sort of a Malayali name was Jaisingh? “Sir, I’m a local from Munnar. I was delivered by a Marwari doctor, who gave the name Jaisingh!” And then everything clicked back into place.

Manager Nizam suggested a 4-km plantation hike to acquaint us with the planters’ life. Leech guards were strapped on as a precautionary measure, and it merited an introduction to local leech varieties—*kolay atta* (pond leech), *nool atta* (thread leech) and the gargantuan *aney atta* (elephant leech). The tea plantation stretched for miles and, ironically, one needed to watch out for the tinier creatures. The scourge of these hills, Arikomban, a rogue tusker who loved rice (*ari* in Malayalam), raided rice shops and killed 17 people, was relocated to Periyar last year. His replacement, Chakka Komban, loved jackfruit (*chakka*) while Padayappa, the long-tusked star named after the Rajinikanth movie, was not really harmful, but just ate his fill as he ambled from village to village. Elephants were a recurrent theme in these hills. Craig Lockhart, the estate we were exploring, was



Azerbaijan: The Hidden Gem waiting to be discovered by Indian Travellers

Azerbaijan, the 'Land of Fire,' is a captivating country at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. As part of the ancient Silk Route, it blends cultures seamlessly, offering travellers architectural marvels and rich traditions.

Start in **Baku**, where futuristic Flame Towers and historic sites like Icherisheher's Maiden Tower and Palace of the Shirvanshahs coexist. Enjoy views from Seaside Boulevard and Highland Park, and stroll along Baku Boulevard for charming tea houses, souvenir shops, and Azerbaijani cuisine. The Carpet Museum and Heydar Aliyev Center showcase the nation's rich heritage and modern spirit.

A short drive from **Baku**, **Gobustan National Park** features ancient petroglyphs and mud-volcanoes, offering a time capsule of human history.

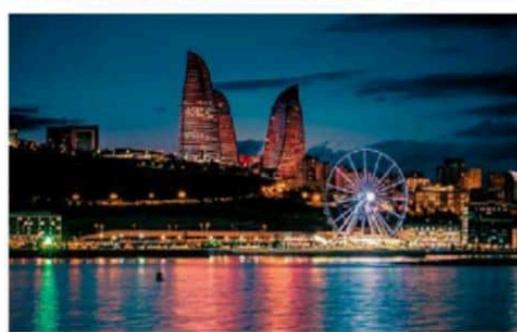
In the Greater Caucasus foothills, **Sheki** boasts old-world charm. Visit Sheki Khan's Palace with its stained-glass windows and frescoes, and explore caravanserais and vibrant markets.

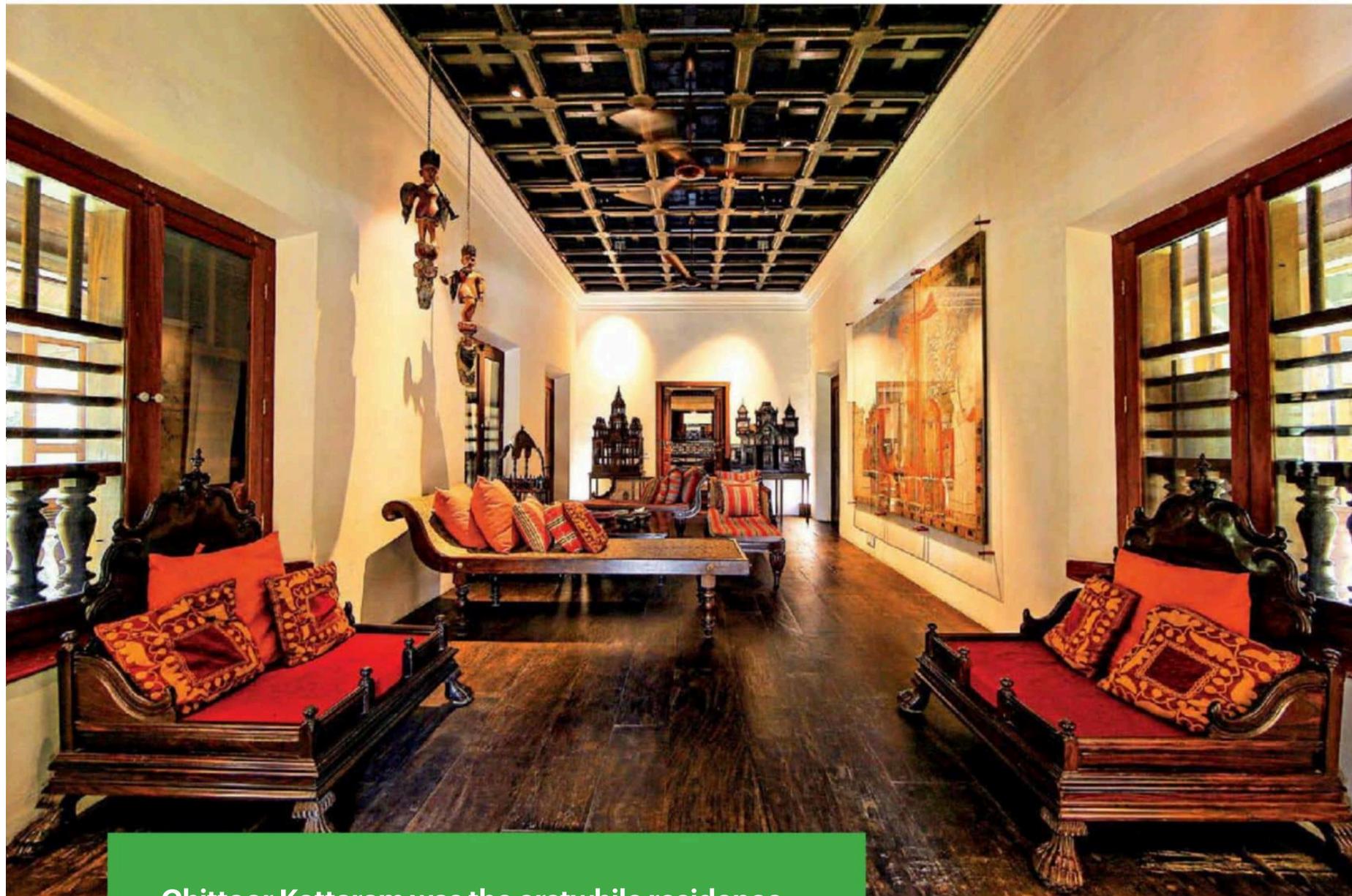
Head north to Guba and **Gusar** for stunning peaks, traditional villages, and the Shahdag Mountain Resort for skiing and winter sports. These regions offer excellent hiking and ecotourism opportunities.

Gabala's lush forests, lakes, and mountains make it a paradise for adventure enthusiasts. Activities include hiking, skiing, and zip-lining. The Tufandag Mountain Resort offers winter sports, and Nohur Lake provides a tranquil retreat.

In Azerbaijani experience is incomplete without food. Savour plov, dolma, kebabs, pakhlava, and shekerbura, and enjoy Azerbaijani tea with jams. Try the unique pomegranate wine.

Azerbaijan Airlines operates direct flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Baku. Indigo, Flydubai, and other airlines offer convenient routes. Indian travellers can easily secure a visa online for \$25.





Chittoor Kottaram was the erstwhile residence of the Maharaja of Cochin whenever he visited the Chittoor Krishna Temple. It's been renovated by the Helen Hamlyn Trust with museum-grade antiques and ceiling-to-floor artworks

named Anaikadavu Estate because it was a haunt for pachyderms. Anaimudi, the highest peak in South India, was tagged after its resemblance to an elephant's head.

Chokramudi towered high at 7,200 ft, apparently resembling Lord Shiva's head. While hikes to Chokramudi and Letchmi Hills in Tata Tea's plantation through grassland and shola forests were not suited for the rains because of the slippery trails, there was plenty else to do. Lockhart was the first tea factory built by the British in 1936 and one of

the oldest orthodox tea manufacturing facilities in India. Our romantic notions of an English planter called 'Craig Lockhart' were dashed as we learnt that the name was linked to Munnar's cool climes. Craig is Scottish for stone and the place was so cold, it 'locks your heart'. Temperatures in winter can plummet to a frosty -5°C , with only a hot cuppa to revive you. A guided tour of Lockhart Tea Factory revealed how orthodox tea is made, ending in a tea-tasting session.

The tea bushes and adjoining forests

are perfect for the nocturnal pastime of 'herping'. No, nothing venerable...it's derived from herpetology and entails searching for amphibians and reptiles. Nearly 40 frog and 30 reptile species have been recorded in Munnar. Guided by Senthil Kumar of Kestrel Adventures, we used torches to scout for frogs on trees and branches! A Beddomes Bush Frog lay perfectly camouflaged on an embankment. The call of the Mewing Night Frog was feline, hence its scientific name *Nyctibatrachus poocha* (*poocha* is Malayalam for cat). The next morning, a slight drizzle stirred the birds into frenzied activity as we spotted the endemic Palani Hills Laughingthrush, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Scimitar Babbler and the rare endemic Dusky Palm Squirrel in the garden.

All Magazine Hindi English international magazine

Journalism (Indian)
India Today Frontline Open
India Legal Organiser The Caravan
Telhka Economic and Political Weekly The Caravan

Journalism (International)

Time The Week The New Yorker
The Atlantic Newsweek New York Magazine Foreign Affairs National Review
Money & Business

Forbes Harvard Business Review
Bloomberg Businessweek Business India Entrepreneur inc ET Wealth
Monyweek CEO Magazine
Barron's Fortune International Financing Review Business Today
Outlook Money Shares Value Research Smart Investment
Dalal Street Investment Journal

Science, History & Environment

National Geographic National Geographic Kids New Scientist
Down to Earth Scientific American
Popular Science Astronomy
Smithsonian Net Geo History
Science Philosophy Now BBC Earth
BBC Wildlife BBC Science Focus
BBC History

Literature, Health & General
Interest

The Writer Publishers Weekly TLS
prevention OM Yoga Reader's Digest
The New York Review of Books
NYT Book Review Harper's Magazine The Critic Men's Health
Mens Fitness Women's Health
Womens Fitness Better Photography
Architectural Digest Writing Magazine Pratiyogita Darpan

Sport

Cricket Today The Cricketer
Wisden Cricket Monthly
Sports Illustrated World Soccer Tennis Sportstar FourFourTwo
Auto & Moto

Autocar India UK BBC TopGear
Bike Car

Tech

Wired PC Magazine Maximum PC
PCWorld Techlife News T3 uk India
DataQuest Computeractive
Popular Mechanics PC Gamer
Macworld Linux Format
MIT Technology Review

Fashion & Travel

Elle Vogue Cosmopolitan
Rolling Stone Variety Filmfare
GQ Esquire National Geographic Traveler Condé Nast Traveler
Outlook Traveller Harper's Bazaar
Empire

Comics

Tinkle Indie Comics Image Comics
DC (Assorted) Marvel (Assorted)
Indie Comics Champak

Home & Food

Real Simple Better Homes and Gardens Cosmopolitan Home
Elle Decor Architectural Digest
Vogue Living Good Housekeeping
The Guardian feast The Observer Food Monthly Nat Geographic Traveller Food Food Network

Other Indian Magazines

₹The Economist
Mutual Fund Insight Wealth insight
Electronics For You Open Source For You Mathematics Today Biology Today Chemistry Today
Physics For You Woman Fitness
Grazia India Filmfare India
Rolling Stone India Outlook
Outlook Money Entertainment Updates Outlook Business
Open Investors India The Week India
Indian Management Fortune India
Scientific India India Today Brunch
Marwar India Champak Travel + Liesure India Business Traveller
Smart investment Forbes india
ET Wealth Vogue india Yojana
Kurukshetra Évo INDIA New India Samachar Small Enterprise India
Voice & Data

हन्दी मीगजीन

समय पत्रिका साधनापथग हलकषमी उदयइंडिया नरिंगधाम मॉडरन खेतीइंडिया टुडेदेवपुत्र
कुरकिट टुडेग हथोभा अर्नाखीहनिदुस्तानमुक्ता सरति चंपक परतयोगिता दरपण सक्सेस मरि
सामान्य ज्ञान दरपण फारम एवं फूड मनोहर कहानियां सत्यकथा सरस सललि स्वतंत्र वार्ता लाजवाब आउटलुकसचची शकिषावनति
मायापुरी रूपायन उजाळा ऋषि पुरसाद जोश रोजगार समाचार जोश करंट अफेयर्स जोश सामान्य ज्ञान जोश बैंकोग और एसएससी
इंडिया बुक ऑफरकिरडसपरक् तमिल
राजस्थान रोजगार संदेश राजस्थान सूजससखी जागरण अहा! जदिगी बाल भास्कर योजना कुरकषैन्
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DRIVE GREEN

Love road trips but worried about tailpipe emissions hurting the environment? We have the perfect solution for eco-conscious travellers

Electric vehicles are increasingly figuring in the shortlist of car buyers in India and rightly so, considering the lower running costs and zero localised tailpipe emissions associated with them. A common misconception is that EVs are primarily for urban use and those who love their road trips often look the other way citing range and restrictive charging infrastructure as deterrents. The reality though, couldn't be more different. Munnar in Kerala, a popular road trip destination, is within a 200km radius of major cities in the region. An electric vehicle like the MG ZS EV which does 461km* on a single charge can easily handle a weekend trip to this monsoon-draped paradise. It fits perfectly into the world of those making a conscious effort to be kinder to the environment and protect the natural beauty of tourist hotspots like Munnar by eliminating tailpipe emissions.

Another myth is that EVs are significantly more expensive to buy than their internal combustion engine (ICE) counterparts and one has to compromise on space and features as well. The MG ZS EV is at par with ICE alternative in terms of size and price. That means it has ample space in the cabin for its occupants and their luggage, and promises significantly lower running costs, over five times lower than a comparable petrol vehicle. Additionally, thanks to the smooth all-electric powertrain the refinement offered by an EV is impossible to match for fossil fuel powered alternatives and the instantaneous torque ensures unparalleled performance, a boon on the winding roads leading up

to hill stations like Munnar. With the Kinetic Energy Recovery System (KERS) toggle letting the driver choose from three levels of intensity, a downhill drive doesn't just conserve charge but the energy recovered via regenerative braking helps enhance overall range. In terms of features, electric offerings like the MG ZS EV ensure a long list of comfort and convenience features. Bolstered by a comprehensive safety net of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), this tech-enabled army of sorts keeps potential risks at bay, protecting you and your loved ones from potential hazards. Premium interiors complemented by tech-rich features like the large infotainment touchscreen and digital driver's display supported by advanced connectivity and voice command features ensure a seamless experience, while the panoramic sunroof enables passengers to take in breathtaking landscapes. And if distances longer than the 461km* range on offer are a cause for concern, then

those worries should be put to rest given the extensive public charging network already in place. JSW MG Motor India is also working tirelessly to expand charging support thanks to tie-ups with leading service providers in India making long road trips worry-free.

Making the switch to an EV isn't just a way to reduce running costs, but also a bold statement of one's efforts towards being easier on nature, helping preserve the natural beauty of our incredible country.



7kW AC home charging and 50kW DC fast charging support keep range anxiety at bay. MG ZS EV offers a premium in-cabin experience



Blind Spot Detection, part of the ADAS suite, enables enhanced safety for occupants



* certified range

This was a historic nook where the first tea plantations came up in Munnar. John Daniel Munro, British Resident of Travancore, leased vast tracts of land in the Kannan Devan Hills from the Raja of Poonjar and formed the North Travancore Land Planting & Agricultural Society in 1879. The High Ranges of Travancore attracted pioneering planters like A.H. Sharp, Henry Gribble Turner and A.W. Turner. Baron George Otto Von Rosenberg of Dresden started Manale division while his son Baron John Michael added a tennis court! Harrisons Malayalam has leased Lockhart Bungalow to CGH Earth and plans are afoot to hand over the historic Manale Bungalow as well. As forests were cleared for tea, the British set up a hydroelectric project, monorail, ropeway and railways. The changing topography suffered immensely during the great flood of 1924; the centenary celebrations in 2024 hope to raise awareness about the region's fragile ecology.



At Lockhart Bungalow, a three-room British tea plantation bungalow wrapped by a pristine lawn, 1,500 acres seemed a large enough tract to lose oneself in



Chittoor Kottaram looks onto the backwaters



Polo Forest

A Rendezvous With Nature

Just 160 km away from Ahmedabad, Polo Forest is a tranquil getaway for soaking in nature and refreshing your soul. With the soft hum of the flowing Harnav river, birds chirping on flat-leaved deciduous trees, ample trekking and hiking sites, Polo Forest is every nature lover's dream come true. Also worth a visit are several Hindu and Jain temples, with several historical sites nearby. Escape to this beautiful sanctuary and feel Nature's embrace.

Activities

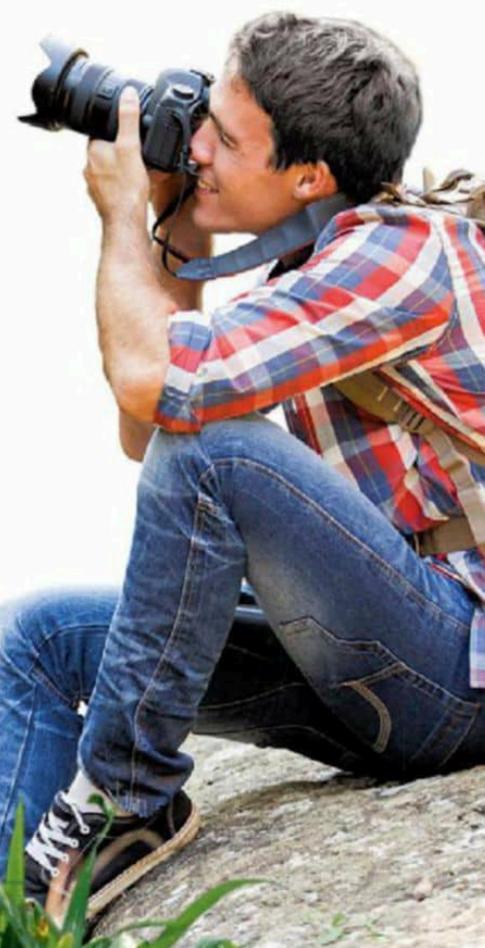
- Nature Walk
- Trekking
- Bird Watching
- Exploring
- Excursion

How to Reach

38 km
from Idar

66 km
from Himmatnagar

160 km
from Ahmedabad



Toll Free number - 1800 203 1111 | www.gujarattourism.com

Disclaimer: The details and pictures contained here are for information and could be indicative. Some of the activities listed may be unavailable due to seasonal and technical reasons.

Beautiful Hills & Rivers | Rich Heritage & Religious Sites | Packed with Adventure



FACT FILE

GETTING THERE

Fly to Cochin International Airport at Nedumbassery and drive 3.5-4 hrs to Munnar, 115 km away

From Kochi, drive 238 km to Wayanad or fly to Kozhikode for the 62 km/2-hr drive to Lakkidi on the eastern flank of Wayanad

DO

Lockhart Tea Factory

8 am-5 pm, Entry: ₹250/head

Srishti Centre for the Differently Abled, Munnar

Handmade eco-paper, hand dyed fabric

9 am-5 pm, Entry: ₹60

Ph 04868-255398, 9497473397

www.srishti-trust.org

Herping/Birding Trails

Munnar/Wayanad

STAY

Lockhart Bungalow

Harrisons Malayalam Estate, Devikulam

Rs 21,192 + taxes

Chittoor Kottaram

Near Chittoor Krishna Temple
₹28,813 + taxes

Beach Gate Bungalows

Fort Kochi

₹18,008 + taxes

Wayanad Wild

Lakkidi, Wayanad

Tariff ₹9,336 upwards + taxes

Contact: 0484-4261711/2,

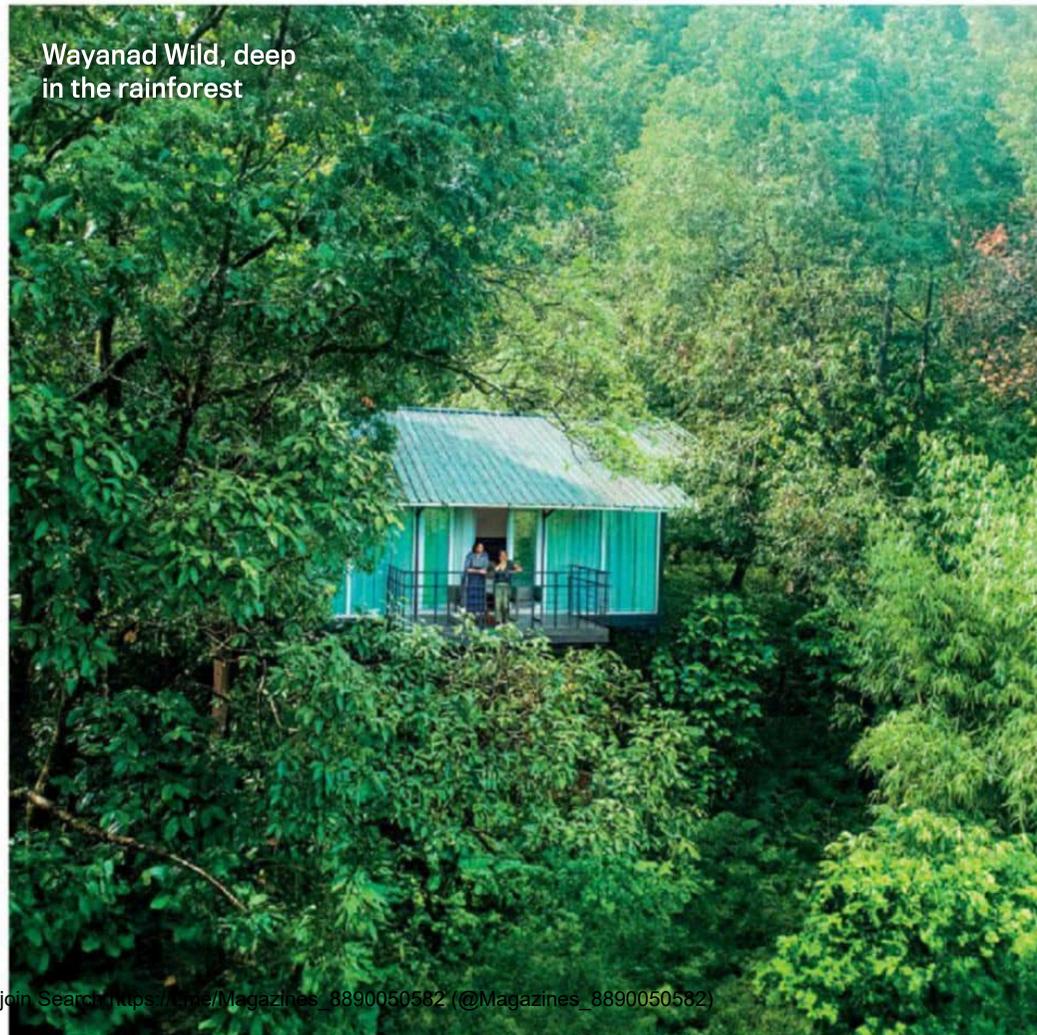
080-69807579,

www.cghearth.com

From the high ranges, we descended to the backwaters for a royal retreat by the waterfront. Chittoor Kottaram was the erstwhile residence of the Maharaja of Cochin whenever he visited the Chittoor Krishna Temple with his entourage. Befittingly, caretaker Milton welcomes guests warmly with garlands and caparisoned parasols. The single-key hotel has three rooms overlooking a lush garden patch with an idyllic pool and private jetty. After a *sadya* (a lush spread on a banana leaf), we set out with Antony on a leisurely boat ride through the canals of the Periyar river. With fresh rainwater inundating the backwaters, the Chinese fishing nets were idle due to the lull in fishing. But the aquatic birds patrolled the waters for a good catch. Darters, cormorants, kingfishers and herons perched patiently by the edge and on wooden stumps, swooping down in a flash to break the still reflections into a thousand ripples. Dinner that night was a sensational Kerala meal of veg pulao, chicken curry and karimeen pollichathu stirred up by chef Sajida.

The recently launched heritage Beach Gate Bungalows in Fort Kochi is a great base in town for a self-reliant holiday. The independent European-style twin bungalows were built in the 1950s for the Sterling Companies in Cochin. Each bungalow has three rooms, a sunken dining room by the pool, a fully equipped kitchen, and balconies overlooking a tropical garden shaded by massive jackfruit and rain trees. A dedicated butler is on call to bring food from CGH Earth's colonial hotel Eighth Bastion, a five-minute stroll away. We uncovered Fort Kochi's secrets on a heritage walk—Petercelli Street was named after the Dutch word for 'parsley'! Then we checked out the local sights on a tuk-tuk tour—St Francis Church, the oldest European church in India where Vasco Da Gama was laid to rest in 1524, Santa Cruz Cathedral Basilica, Indian Naval Maritime Museum, Bastion Bungalow Museum and Mattancherry Palace. ■

Wayanad Wild, deep in the rainforest





Poolside at
Wayanad Wild

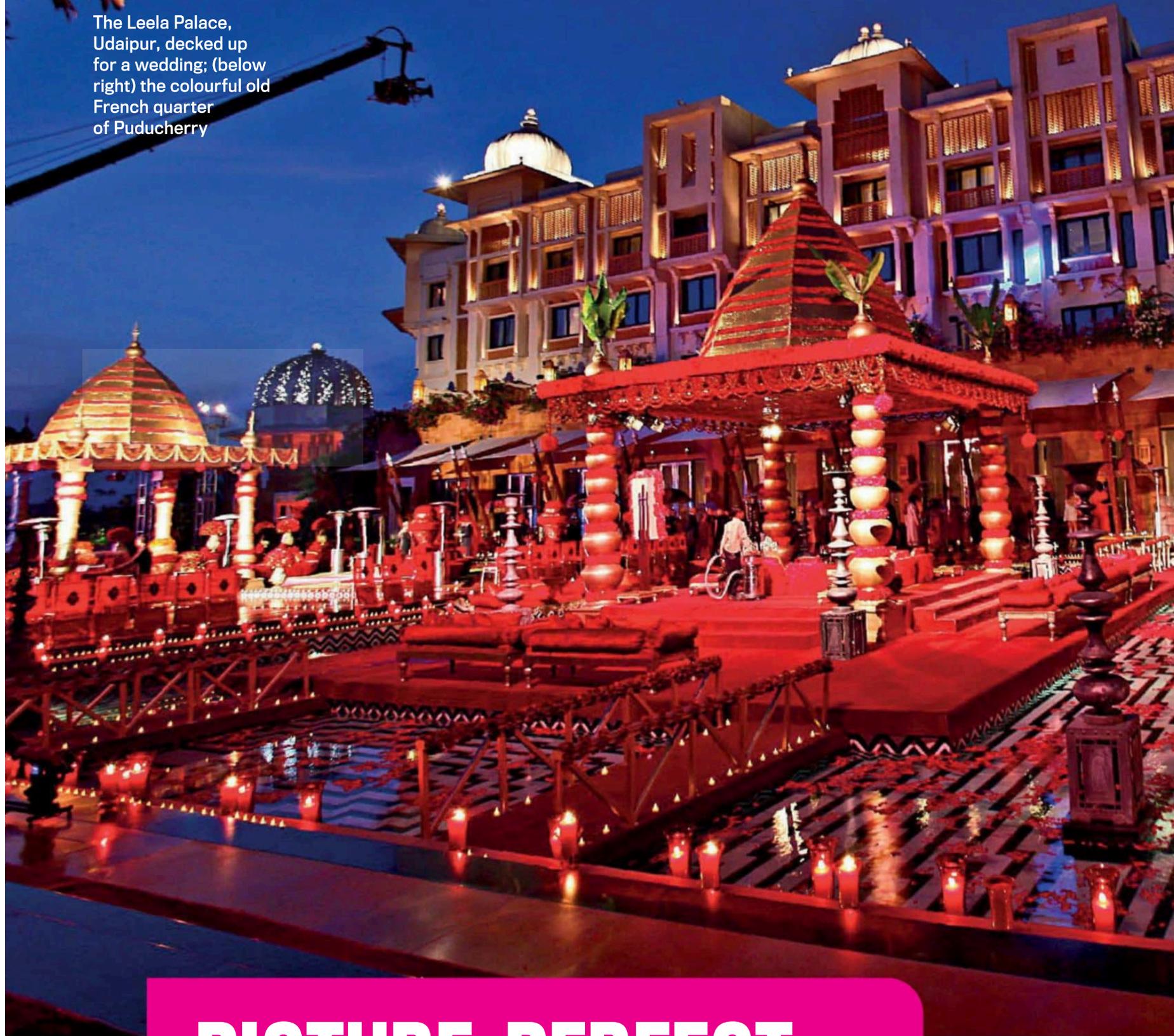
The monsoon drama is at its peak in the cloud forests of Wayanad. The scenic inner route via Chalakudy, Thrissur and Perinthalmanna climbs the Thamarassery Churam (ghat) up nine hairpin bends to the misty pass Lakkidi (2,300 ft), the gateway to Wayanad. In the past, local tribes were the custodians of the ghats and forests. The British were looking for a route to connect the lucrative coastal trade to Mysore. Around 1750, Karinthandan, a local Paniya chief living at the foothills of Lakkidi, disclosed a safe path to a British engineer, who killed him. The story goes that Karinthandan's spirit lurked along the stretch, haunting travellers and causing a slew of accidents until a puja was performed to pacify him, and his restless soul was chained to a tree.

Leaving our vehicle at the CGH parking lot near Chain Tree, we hopped into a jeep for a 4-km offroad ascent to Wayanad Wild. Deep in the rainforest, the wilderness camp is the perfect perch to experience the rains from the comfort of your balcony or trails in the vicinity. Music filled the air in the soft pitter-patter of raindrops, silvery leaves shimmering in the breeze and the constant sonata of frogs, cicadas, crickets and birdsong. The misty, dark woods are

livened up by a flash of orange—is it a Black and Orange Flycatcher? Scarlet Minivet? No, it's the Malabar Trogon! The daily schedule of activities overseen by naturalist, photographer and author David Raju and his young team, keeps guests enthralled—a morning bird-watching trail, creek explorations, a 5-km hike to the nearby hillock in the afternoon, eco-talks in the evening and a night walk around the property to look for elusive frogs and reptiles.

Our nocturnal guide Daimler, a naturalist from Mumbai, was named by his uncle after the car—he has a cousin called Chrysler! In a short span of a few hundred metres lay a hidden world lurking in the shadows—Malabar Flying Frogs and Nilgiri Forest Lizard perched on branches, a Golden Backed Frog blending into the leaf litter, the riveting Green Vine Snake, a Malabar Pit Viper lying in wait motionless for unsuspecting prey, and an Ochlandra Reed Frog that lays eggs in the hollows of the Ochlandra reed bamboo. A battery of macro photographers in ponchos headed into the dark. Life for them was an endless cycle of Eat Sleep Herp Retreat. It started to drizzle...the croaks grew louder...another busy monsoon night unfolded in Kerala. ■

The Leela Palace, Udaipur, decked up for a wedding; (below right) the colourful old French quarter of Puducherry



PICTURE-PERFECT WEDDINGS

We sure love our big fat weddings. Here are India's best wedding destinations, with suggestions for where to stay and get the most stunning shots



BEST PALACE DESTINATION

Udaipur, Rajasthan

Lake Pichola and the royal architecture of Udaipur have been the backdrop for many a fabulously romantic wedding. Think palace venues where you arrive by boat, stunning floating lamps, lavish hospitality, and some of the most delectable Rajasthani cuisine.

Stay: The Leela Palace Udaipur

Click: Champagne-laced sunset boat rides on the lake, folk dancers and Rajasthani puppet shows, beautifully decorated camels on the streets... they're all perfect to add colour and culture to your wedding album.



BEST CULTURAL DESTINATION

Puducherry, Tamil Nadu

For those seeking a more intimate and meaningful wedding, the French quarter of Puducherry offers plenty of sophistication and colonial splendour. Think classy rooftop nuptials and fun events at beaches in Auroville.

Stay: Grand Hotel D'Europe

Click: The gorgeous villas and brightly painted walls of the erstwhile White Town are the best eye candy for you and your invitees, as is the mesmerising Bay of Bengal from the promenade by the sea.

Courtesy THE LEEA PALACE UDAIPUR

By Priya Pathiyan

Destination wedding, did you say? One where you have all your family and friends with you, where you can host a clutch of happy events that live up to that clever couple hashtag, and also offer some spectacular sights to add excitement to those reels. Whether you're looking to make some wow vows, cueing the cutest *qubul*, or taking the seven *phas* together, here's our pick of seven perfect locations that are guaranteed to take you to seventh heaven.

SHUTTERSTOCK



BEST SCENIC DESTINATION

Srinagar, Kashmir

This glittering jewel makes for a truly dreamy wedding destination. Think a floating engagement on shikaras gliding on the Dal Lake, the *sangeet* in a flower-bedecked garden and the main wedding ceremony on the lawns of a royal palace. Warm *Kashmiriyat* and delicious *wazwan* [Kashmiri feast], a bonus.

Stay: The LaLit Grand Palace Srinagar

Click: Depending on when you're getting married, you can pick between photo shoots in tulip gardens (spring), in the Mughal Gardens filled with fountains and flowers (summer), with Chinar trees in their fall foliage (autumn), or when the winter snows give Srinagar that silver-white sheen.

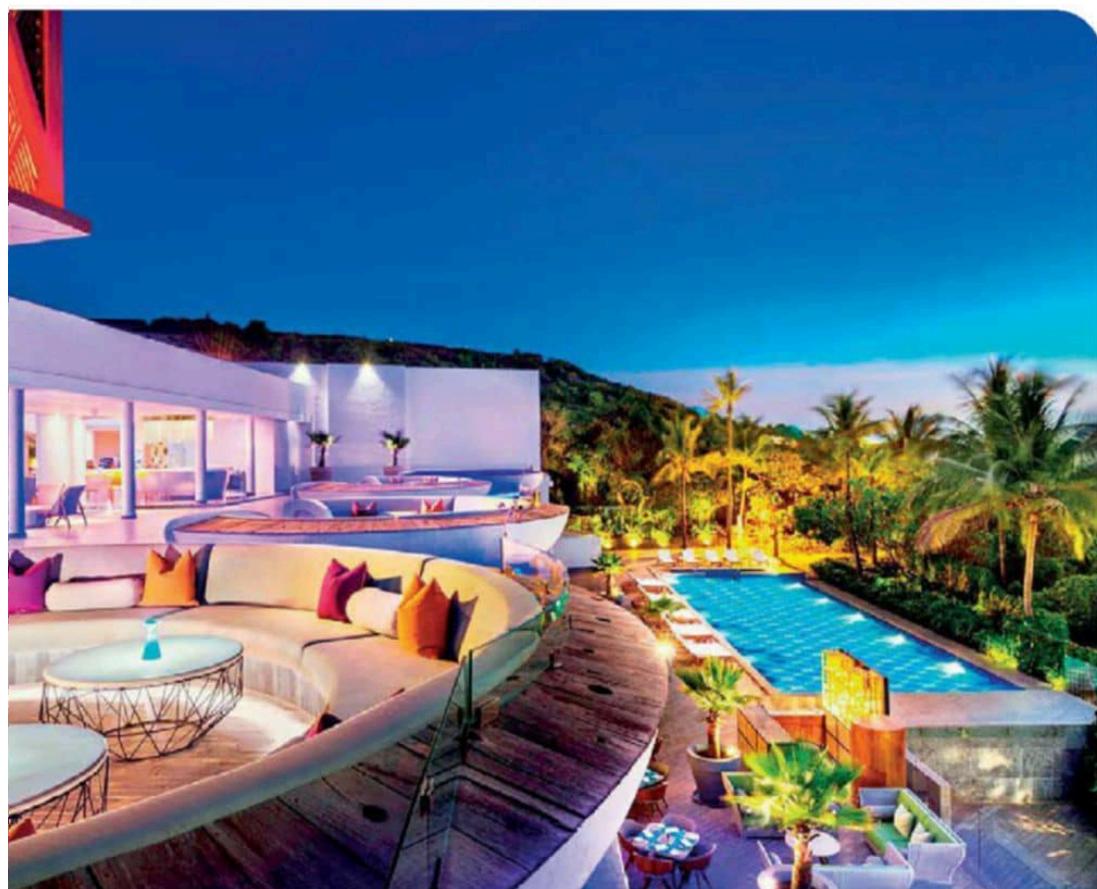
BEST BEACH DESTINATION

Vagator, Goa

Beautiful beaches, superb restaurants, bars and avenues for fun, an international vibe... Goa is a gift that keeps on giving. And a wedding in one of India's most lively and lovely destinations will certainly win you more blessings than you had thought possible!

Stay: W Goa

Click: Apart from that dream wedding on the beach that you've seen in so many rom-coms, you can plan excursions to Chapora Fort or go kayaking in the backwaters to make some photo-worthy memories.



Courtesy W GOA



A 3.5-hour flight from India, Shangri-La Muscat is a dual-resort property with a 500-metre private beach. It offers an unforgettable experience for families, couples, and solo travelers, blending adventure, relaxation, culture, and cuisine.

From March to September, guests can witness turtle nesting and hatching. **The Turtle Ranger** provides private tours to see hatchlings make their way to the sea.

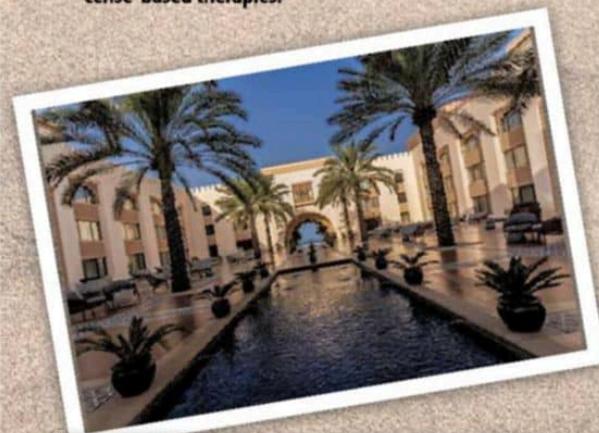
Cultural enthusiasts can explore Oman's heritage through the **Sensory Journey**, experiencing architectural gems, art, Arabic coffee, and Omani cooking classes.

With 14 restaurants, Shangri-La Muscat is a culinary destination. **Shangri-La Al Husn**, the adults-only property, features Aangan by Michelin-starred chef Rohit Ghai. Seafood lovers will enjoy **Bait Al Bahr**, while **Capri Court** offers Italian cuisine, and **Chow Mee** serves Southeast Asian flavors. **Dine by Design** provides bespoke meals in enchanting locations.

Oman's only lazy river winds between Al Waha and Al Bandar wings. Six temperature-controlled pools, including a kids' pool, offer a refreshing escape. The Cool Zone Kids Club, Splash Pad, and mini-golf course keep young adventurers entertained. Evening camel rides along the beach add to the fun.

Guests can enjoy dolphin-watching, kayaking, paddleboarding, and whale shark expeditions. Diving and snorkeling reveal vibrant coral gardens and marine life. Luxurious yacht excursions and romantic evening cruises are also available.

Chi, The Spa, and Luban Spa offer modern and ancient healing treatments, including Frankincense-based therapies.



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PURE SILK DHOTIS • SHIRTS

A PIONEER IN BRIDEGROOM SILK COLLECTIONS



For over four decades, Ramraj Cotton has been a beacon of tradition, quality, and innovation in the textile industry. Our journey began with a vision to uphold and promote the rich cultural heritage of India through our meticulously crafted garments. Today, Ramraj Cotton stands as a symbol of elegance, providing an exclusive range of wedding attire for men that harmoniously blends tradition with contemporary style.

Indian weddings are renowned for their grandeur, reflecting a beautiful tapestry of cultural traditions, regional diversity, and personal preferences. Today, these affairs have evolved into theme-based celebrations, blending culture, traditions, regional diversity, and personal preferences. The selection of a wedding theme is a pivotal step in crafting the narrative and setting the tone for the celebration. The Traditional/Ethnic theme, popular in South India, features traditional decor, sarees, and dhotis, celebrating age-old customs while the Royal Heritage theme draws from India's regal past, with palace venues, vintage cars, and opulent attire, making couples feel like royalty.

Among our offerings, Ramraj Lagnaa—a pioneer in bridegroom silk collections—stands apart. For centuries, brides have traditionally had various unique premium silk saree offerings, but premium silk options have been very limited for bridegrooms. Understanding the consumer needs and insights, Shri K.R. Nagarajan, Chairman, Ramraj Group, came up with the Ramraj Lagnaa pure silk collection which is a handcrafted, limited-edition series with pure gold zari offerings, woven by the master weavers of India.

There are six different offerings in the Ramraj Lagnaa Pure Silk collection:

- GenXT Adjustable Dhotis with pocket: (easy to wear, convenient, comfortable, anywhere anytime can be easily worn)
- Readymade Silk Panchakacham: Many people are keen to wear these traditional items but don't know how to use them. This readymade is just for them.

- Readymade Silk Shirt, Dhoti and Towel Sets: A premium shirt, dhoti and towel in one set, these are excellent for gifting during weddings.
- Kurtas, Dhoti and towel Sets: Similar to the set above, these come in a silk kurta option instead of a shirt.
- Color shirts and Matching Dhotis Sets: This set consists of colored silk shirts with dhotis in the same matching color. There is a wide variety of color offerings in this range.
- Wedding customizable Bridegroom collections: In this most prestigious option silk kurtas or shirts with matching dhotis for the bridegroom can be designed to match the color of the bride's unique wedding saree. No other brand has this unique offering.

As per a recent survey, Ramraj Dhoti is India's most attractive and trusted dhoti brand. Also, Ramraj Lagnaa features the Government of India's authorized Silk Mark label, which is a guarantee of the authenticity and purity of the silk used in Ramraj Lagnaa. Our ultra-comfortable pure silk fabric is like a second skin which can be worn in any climatic conditions—in summer it is very cool to wear while in the cold season it maintains a comfortable body temperature.

Ramraj Lagnaa offers a premium collection of silk dhotis and shirts, made from highly coveted silk with rustic and unique designs. Our luxurious silk dhoti range includes premium products priced at Rs. 1 Lakh and above, showcasing elegance and tradition. To accommodate varying budgets, we

offer dhotis priced from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 1,50,000, ensuring exceptional quality at every price point. For the true connoisseur, Ramraj Cotton is a promise of elegance. Our premium range features meticulously hand-woven dhotis reflecting the dedication of our skilled artisans and a flawless finish achieved in 5-7 days.

Ramraj Lagnaa isn't just about wedding attire; it's the first chapter in your happily ever after. Our exquisite range of dhotis caters to every wedding theme, ensuring the groom and his closest companions show off unparalleled style. Inspired by India's vibrant tapestry of cultures, our dhotis transcend regional boundaries, adapting to each region's customs and traditions. We offer customization to create a visually stunning entrance that matches the bride's saree perfectly. Our elegant zari border patterns add vibrancy and sophistication, ensuring you stand out on your wedding day.

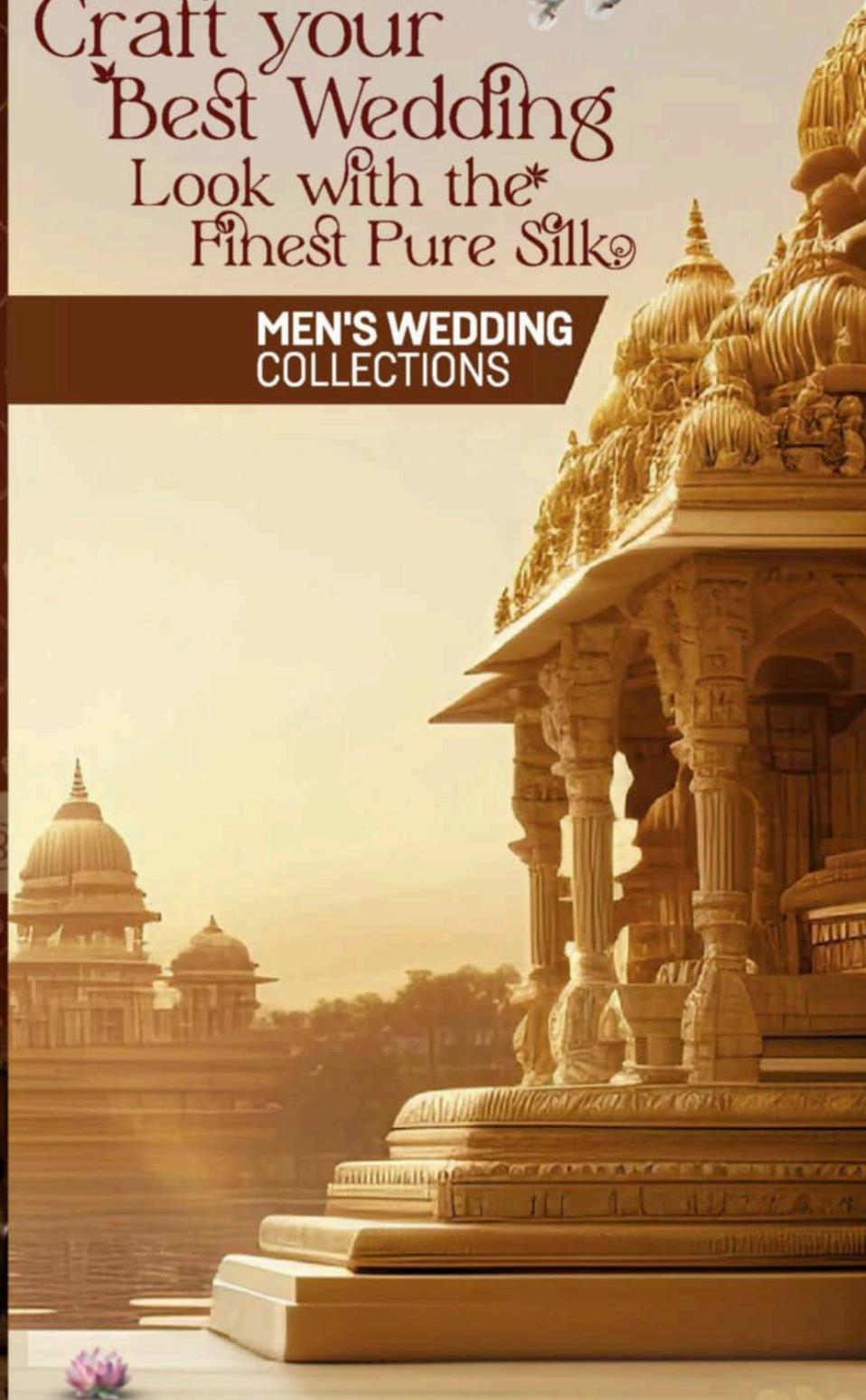




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**Welcomhotel The Savoy, Mussoorie; (below right)
A view of the royal cenotaphs across the Betwa River in Orchha**



Courtesy WELCOMHOTEL THE SAVOY

SHUTTERSTOCK

BEST MOUNTAIN DESTINATION

Mussoorie, Uttarakhand

Panoramic mountain vistas, fabulous weather, beautiful British-era buildings. The charming hill station has a lot to offer. You could have all your events in the hotel or plan celebrations in adjacent Landour, or nearby Dhanaulti, and Kanatal.

Stay: Welcomhotel The Savoy

Click: There are photo-ops galore along the mountain roads, with stunning scenery, lovely look-out points to pose in, furry dogs to cuddle with, goodies at the Landour Bakehouse or Hotel Rokeby to use as props, or local celebs like writer Ruskin Bond and actor Victor Banerjee to bump into and request selfies with.



**BEST HERITAGE DESTINATION
Orchha, Madhya Pradesh**

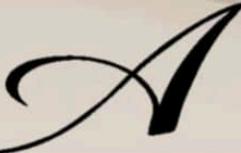
Central India's exotic heritage is yet to be fully discovered and properly appreciated by travellers. Give your guests a chance to enjoy your ceremony with Bundelkhandi grandeur even as they explore the palaces, temples, and riverside monuments of this ancient town.

Stay: Amar Mahal Orchha

Click: The Betwa River runs through Orchha, making for a lovely way to plan an evening of fun and photos. The palaces of Orchha and Datia nearby are fantastic locales for the most magnificent wedding photos.

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The Taj Kumarakom Resort & Spa; (below) a view of the Kerala backwaters



Courtesy THE TAJ KUMARAKOM RESORT & SPA



SHUTTERSTOCK

BEST LAKESIDE DESTINATION

Kumarakom, Kerala

Lake Vembanad in the backwaters of Kerala has long been known for its lush environs, genuine hospitality, colourful culture, and holistic wellness. If you're looking for a wedding destination that is as spiritual and serene as it is sumptuous and celebratory, this is the perfect place.

Stay: Taj Kumarakom Resort & Spa

Click: From the gorgeous masks and costumes of Kathakali dancers to the grace of the traditional wooden kettuvallam boats and the serenity of nature in this idyllic spot, you'll have so many great ways to memorialise this momentous occasion.



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SERENE SPLENDOUR

Assam, with its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and diverse wildlife, is emerging as a prime tourism destination, supported by government initiatives like industry status and promotion of homestays and tea tourism. The roadmap is to attract investment, enhance visitor experiences, and stimulate economic growth through sustainable tourism practices.

■ By a special correspondent ■

Assam is a treasure trove of natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and diverse wildlife, making it a burgeoning hub for tourism. Known for its picturesque landscapes, the northeastern state boasts the mighty Brahmaputra River, lush tea gardens, and the pristine hills of the Eastern Himalayas. The state's rich biodiversity is showcased in its numerous national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, including Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and Manas National Park, both famous for their populations of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros and other rare species. Assam's cultural vibrancy is evident in its festivals including Bihu, celebrated by everyone irrespective of caste, creed and beliefs, and the state's rich traditions of handloom and handicrafts, which draw in both domestic and international tourists. In recent years, the Assam government has taken significant steps to boost tourism and make the state a more attractive destination for

travellers. A significant move by the Assam government to boost tourism has been granting industry status to the tourism sector. This landmark decision is expected to attract more investment into the sector by providing various incentives and benefits typically available to industries. These incentives include subsidies, tax concessions, and simplified regulatory procedures, which will make it easier for businesses to invest in and develop tourism-related infrastructure and services. By

recognizing tourism as an industry, the government aims to stimulate growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance the overall economic development of the state. Another major initiative is the development of tourism infrastructure, including improved road connectivity, better accommodation facilities, and the modernization of tourist sites. The government has also focused on promoting eco-tourism and rural tourism, which aim to provide a sustainable and authentic experience for

103% Growth in the footfall of domestic tourists in Assam in 2023

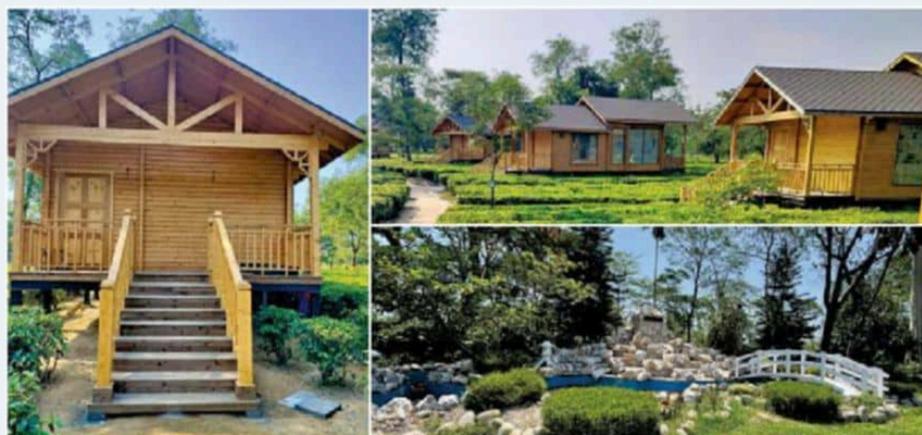
523% Growth in the footfall of international tourists in Assam in 2023

3,27,493

Total number of tourists visiting Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in 2023-24, the highest since the establishment of the national park. Of these, 3,13,574 are Indian tourists and 13,919 are international visitors.

Tea Trails

Assam's tea gardens, with their rich history and scenic beauty, have immense untapped tourism potential, prompting the state government to launch a scheme in 2022-23 to develop 50 selected tea gardens into major tourist destinations.



visitors while benefiting local communities. Initiatives like the "Amar Alohi" scheme, which encourages locals to open their homes to tourists, offer a unique cultural experience and help in promoting the state's rich heritage. "Led by our honourable chief minister, the primary driving force behind all these initiatives is to offer an unparalleled and unforgettable experience about every aspect of Assam. Ensuring the comfort and safety of our guests is central to our tourism policy," says Padmapani Bora, Managing Director, Assam Tourism Development Corporation.

The state government has launched a Customised Mega Incentives Scheme for investments over Rs 100 crore, which can create 200 direct jobs. This scheme includes tourism, offering tailored incentives under the state Industrial Policy. The Assam Government has partnered with Hyatt Hotels to develop a hotel in Kaziranga and with Taj Hotels for a resort at Hathikuli Tea Garden, also in Kaziranga.

By recognizing tourism as an industry, the government aims to stimulate growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance the overall economic development of the state.

Since tea's discovery in 1823, tea gardens have been integral to Assam's landscape. With over 800 tea estates, Assam tea and its estates hold immense tourism potential. However, this potential remains largely untapped. Assam's tea gardens, with their lush greenery, iconic bungalows, and vibrant ethnic communities with distinct rhythmic music and dance, offer significant appeal to both domestic and international tourists, presenting a lucrative revenue opportunity for the state. Recognizing this, the Assam state government launched the "Promotion and Development of Tea Tourism Infrastructure In Assam" scheme in 2022-23, aiming to develop 50 selected tea gardens into prime tourist destinations.

PHASE I

- 37 applications were received of which 25 applications got selected after proper scrutiny and approval of the authority.
- Honourable Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma distributed sanction letters to the selected tea gardens on August 16 August 2023.

Phase II

- Total 38 applications were received of which 36 were fresh applications while two were deferred cases from Phase I.



The “Awesome Assam” campaign, launched to highlight the state’s diverse attractions, has been instrumental in raising awareness about Assam as a tourist destination.

Additionally, two more 5-star hotel projects in Guwahati have been granted similar customised incentives.

Moreover, the Assam government has been actively participating in national and international tourism fairs and exhibitions to showcase the state’s potential and attract more visitors. The “Awesome Assam” campaign, launched to highlight the state’s diverse attractions, has been instrumental in raising awareness about Assam as a tourist destination. This campaign leverages various media platforms, including digital marketing, to reach a wider audience and showcase the unique experiences that Assam has to offer.

In addition to these initiatives, the government has also been working on developing niche tourism segments such as tea tourism, adventure tourism and river tourism. Tea tourism offers visitors a chance to explore the scenic tea gardens, stay in heritage bungalows, and learn about the tea-making process. A Tea Museum at Dibrugarh has also been completed. Adventure tourism includes activities like trekking, river rafting, and wildlife safaris, which are gaining popularity among young travellers. River tourism, centred around the Brahmaputra, includes river cruises that offer a unique perspective of Assam’s landscapes and culture. To ensure a holistic development of the tourism sector, the Assam government has also been focusing on skill development and capacity building. Training programs for local guides, hospitality staff, and entrepreneurs are being conducted to enhance the quality of services provided to tourists. The government is also encouraging private investment in the tourism sector to further boost infrastructure and services.

Overall, Assam’s tourism potential is immense, and with the proactive measures taken by the state government, the future looks promising. The combination of natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, strategic initiatives, and the newly granted industry status is set to place Assam on the global tourism map, attracting more visitors and contributing to the state’s economic growth. ■

Homestay Harmony

The Amar Alohi Scheme aims at promoting tourism and cultural exchanges by helping locals to build local homestays

The Amar Alohi Scheme is an initiative by the Assam Tourism Department aimed at boosting the tourism sector in the state by promoting local homestays. The scheme focuses on providing tourists with authentic Assamese cultural experiences through their stays with local families. The primary goal is to offer tourists a unique, immersive experience while simultaneously generating additional income for locals, helping to preserve Assamese culture and traditions by allowing visitors to experience them first-hand. It aims to generate self-employment opportunities for educated youths in rural and semi-rural areas of tourism potential and importance.

Under the Amar Alohi Scheme, local homeowners are encouraged to register their homes as homestays, which are then listed on the Assam Tourism website and other promotional platforms, making it easier for tourists to find and book authentic Assamese accommodations. The Assam Tourism Department provides necessary support and training to homeowners, including guidance on hospitality, hygiene standards, and marketing techniques to ensure a pleasant and memorable experience for guests. By promoting homestays, the scheme aims to distribute the economic benefits of tourism more widely across the state, especially to rural and less developed areas, leading to community development and improved living standards for residents.

The scheme encourages cultural exchange between tourists and local hosts, allowing tourists to participate in local customs, festivals, and daily life activities, while hosts gain exposure to different cultures and perspectives. The Amar Alohi Scheme aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism by minimizing the environmental impact of tourism through utilizing existing infrastructure and promoting conservation of cultural heritage and natural resources.

Phase I

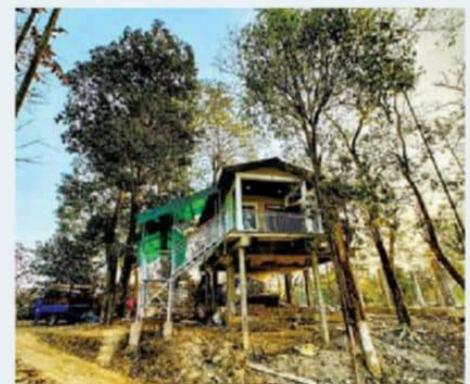
- Launch year: 2017-18
- 96 applications were received of which 29 got selected after proper scrutiny and approval of the authority.
- All 29 homestays are running commercially

Phase II

- Launch year: 2018-19.
- 81 applications were received of which 34 got selected after proper scrutiny and approval of the authority.
- All 34 homestays are running commercially

Phase III

- Launch year 2022-23
- In the third phase the objective was to help create a group/cluster of minimum 10 homestays, as part of “Community Based Organizations” near a tourist spot
- 34 applications were received of which five got selected after proper scrutiny and approval of the authority.
- Honourable Minister of Tourism Jayanta Malla Baruah distributed five sanction letters on February 29, 2024.
- Work is in progress in all five Community Based Organizations



The Road Less TRAVELLED

If you can't bear the thought of getting wet, Nubra's precipitation-free, high-altitude desert setting may be just the thing for you

AT ONE WITH NATURE
Sundowners at the Sumur Sand Dunes in Nubra

It took me a long time to get to Nubra. By the time I made my way here, it was reeling under the weight of over-tourism, the once-storied road across the Khardung La to the 'Valley of Flowers', a non-stop traffic jam of wannabe Hell's Angels and tourists in balaclavas who dropped like flies in the rarefied air of one of the highest motorable passes in the world.

Luckily, I had been tipped off; so, instead of turning left at the fork where the Nubra and Shyok rivers meet and heading into the tourist

traps of Diskit and Hunder, I took a right. The road less travelled took me to the village of Tegggar, lying on the banks of the Nubra River, where Rigzin Wangtak Kalon—whose prominent land-owning family has historical ties to Nubra stretching back several generations—has created the Lchang Nang Retreat, an eco-conscious boutique property that walks the talk when it comes to sustainable tourism practices. The solar-powered retreat with spacious and tastefully appointed cottages—and running hot water—has been created with low-impact, local construction materials like

mud and rock for the walls and willow and poplar for the roofs.

Nubra's bleak and surreal landscape of scattered rock and towering crag can be unsettling at first. The light at 10,000 feet hits different too. Staying at Lchang Nang softened the blow and the valley grew on me. Next morning, I had a sumptuous breakfast by the river, its summer flow heavy with silt. A tributary of the Shyok, it's also called the Siachen River and originates from that glacier. The road that runs along it goes all the way to the Siachen Base Camp, now open to tourists. On the way lies the leafy village of Panamik,



MAKING MEMORIES (Clockwise from top) Meditating in the serene surroundings of Ensa Gumpa; one of the rooms at Lchang Nang Retreat; enjoying a Central Asian meal at an old farmhouse

famed for its hot sulphur springs and supposed curative properties. Past Panamik, I crossed a bridge on the river and made my way to the remote Ensa Gumpa—with fading frescoes and jolly novices—the kind that’s not really on any tourist map.

On the way back, I made a detour to the Sumur sand dunes. This pristine spot with not a soul in sight is in stark contrast to the dunes at Hunder where Bactrian camels—a remnant of Nubra’s past as a prominent pit stop on the Silk Route—give joyrides to tourists in the droves. Let’s not forget that just past

Siachen, across the Karakoram Pass lies Yarkand in the Xinjiang autonomous region of China.

While Lchang Nang offers many curated experiences, ranging from stargazing expeditions to private yoga sessions focused on breathing, the one that stood out for me was a simple meal quickly rustled up one evening by womenfolk back from working their fields at a centuries-old farmhouse with a stone hearth. Nubra is something of a Shangri-La, but you must know where to look. ■

Amit Dixit

You’ll need to get a permit and pay an environmental fee of Rs 400 per person at www.lahdlehpermit.in to enter Nubra. At the checkpoint, you will also have to show you’ve acclimatised in Leh for at least two nights before travelling further, for which the boarding pass of your flight into Leh should work. Cottages at Lchang Nang Retreat start at Rs 25,500 plus taxes per night (www.lchangnang.com).



HIT BY WANDERLUST

Everyone's favourite *Heeramandi* heartthrob, **Taha Shah Badussha** shares his enchanting travel experiences—from Cannes to monsoon getaways

You made your debut at Cannes this year? Goosebumps?

My experience at Cannes was truly remarkable; a dream come true. Even with all the incredible connections I made, it still feels like I only touched one per cent of it. I envision opening my own film at Cannes at some point.

Favourite monsoon destination in India and why?

Kerala springs to mind. The serene beauty of its countryside and its cascading waterfalls make Kerala a perfect destination for a tranquil and rejuvenating monsoon getaway amidst nature's splendour.

Favourite country to travel to?

Japan has captured my imagination, and it's a place I long to visit. But for now, I am drawn to the vibrant city vibes of London and the energetic pulse of New York. London has regal allure while New York's appeal is in its dynamic cultural mix.

What are your travel must-haves?

Some of my workout gear, a hair dryer and my backpack containing all accessories that are an essential part of my routine. They help me stay fit, groomed and ready for any adventure, reflecting my active lifestyle and love for both self-care and exploration.

Which was your favourite location while shooting for *Heeramandi*?

Lucknow. We had gone to the outskirts of the city to shoot, and I really enjoyed the old-world feel, the architecture and the palaces that we shot in.

-with Rupali Dean



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