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ART OF TRAVEL

2018 - 19

Knowledge is based on experience, **Everything** else is just information



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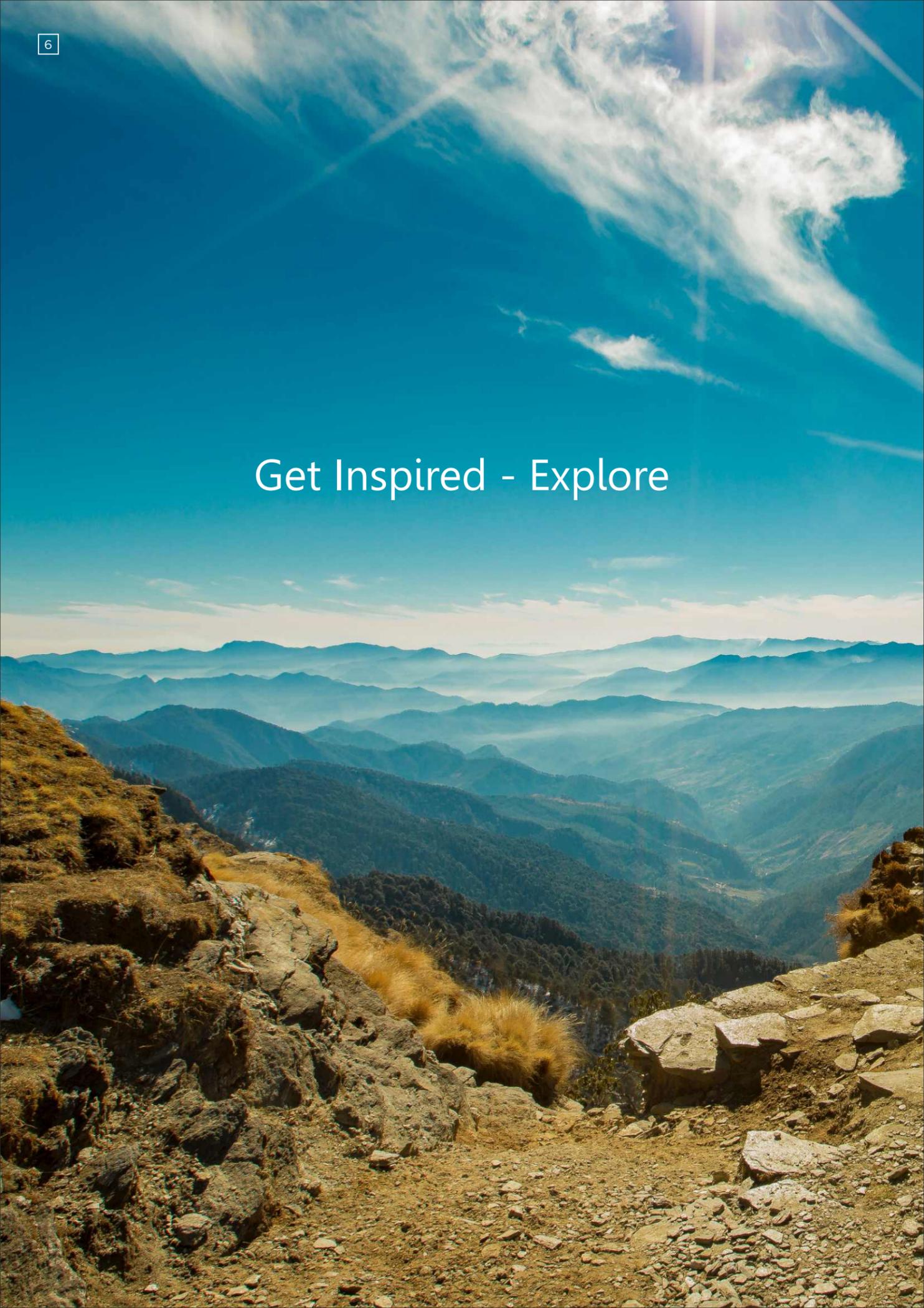
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Get Inspired - Explore



SPOTTING HIGH ALTITUDE WILDLIFE

Ladakh

Ladakh has been a summer destination till now due to the mild climate during the summer months which allows the tourists to explore the region at ease. However Ladakh is now gaining popularity for another exciting activity which takes place primarily in winters, and that is, observing the fascinating high-altitude wildlife!

Snow Leopard Lodge in Ulley village at a height of 13000 feet, commands an excellent view of the mountains around. The Lodge's location enables one to view wildlife right from the windows of its rooms. It is equipped with facilities like hot water buckets on call ; Gas heaters, comfortable mattresses &



Photo Credit: Snow Leopard Lodge, Ulley

warm quilts in the room and an excellent Cafeteria stocked with assortment of coffees, teas, snacks that go a long way in alleviating the cold. The Lodge employs local residents as 'Wildlife Trackers' who are always on a look-out for any wildlife activity in the vicinity using high powered telescopes. There are a couple of SUVs also at disposal, which are used to travel swiftly to the place where a 'sighting' has been reported by a 'Tracker'.

I was fortunate to spot Ibex (a wild mountain goat), Bharal (Himalayan blue sheep), Urial (another group of the wild sheep), the Himalayan wild Yak, Pika (a mouse-hare) and Marmot (a big squirrel) while staying at the Lodge. I was told that sometimes one can also see Himalayan Tahr (another type of mountain goat), Red Fox and the famous Snow Leopard leaping nearby. Interesting bird life is also a highlight of this place – using binoculars one can identify the Golden Eagle, Lammergeyer (a bearded vulture) soaring high in the sky. Other birds like Tibetan partridge, Chukor partridge, Horned Lark, Bar-headed goose, black-necked crane and Wall creeper are easier to spot since they fly at lower heights.

Definitely the place to stay for serious wildlife enthusiasts, especially the ones looking for the ultimate prize – perfectly camouflaged grey ghost, the Snow Leopard!



Photo Credit: Surya Ramachandran

EXPERIENCED BY INDERJEET RATHOD, EXPLORER AT THE DESTINATION KNOWLEDGE CENTRE.

ELEPHANT BEACH HIKE IN HAVELOCK ISLAND

Andamans



Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

Those who are looking for a little adventure, Elephant Beach hike on Havelock is a super way to experience the inimitable landscape of the island. A moderate hike with a few gradients, uneven surface and multiple pathways, it is a trail that goes through the rainforest, with birds and geckos, and opens out onto the picture perfect Elephant beach. 40 minutes of hiking brings one to an open space with trees which were destroyed by the Tsunami that hit the island in 2004 through which one reaches the beach. Depending on the tide, one may have to wade through water to get to the beach. For those looking to snorkel, Elephant Beach has plenty to offer. If one makes a detour at the end of the hike, they will reach turtle beach which is not frequented by many but also a superb place for snorkeling just like Elephant beach. Always suggest guests to never do any water activity without a partner.

GOOD TO KNOW » Best for FITs. » Moderate Hike with a duration of maximum 2 ½ hours. » Start at 0600 hours and start back by 0830 hours to avoid crowd. » Closed shoes are best; flip flops can be carried along for use at the beach. » Best to have a guide arranged by the hotel accompany guests on the hike. » Adventure activities like snorkeling, sea walk and banana boat ride are organized at Elephant beach between 9 am and 4 pm.

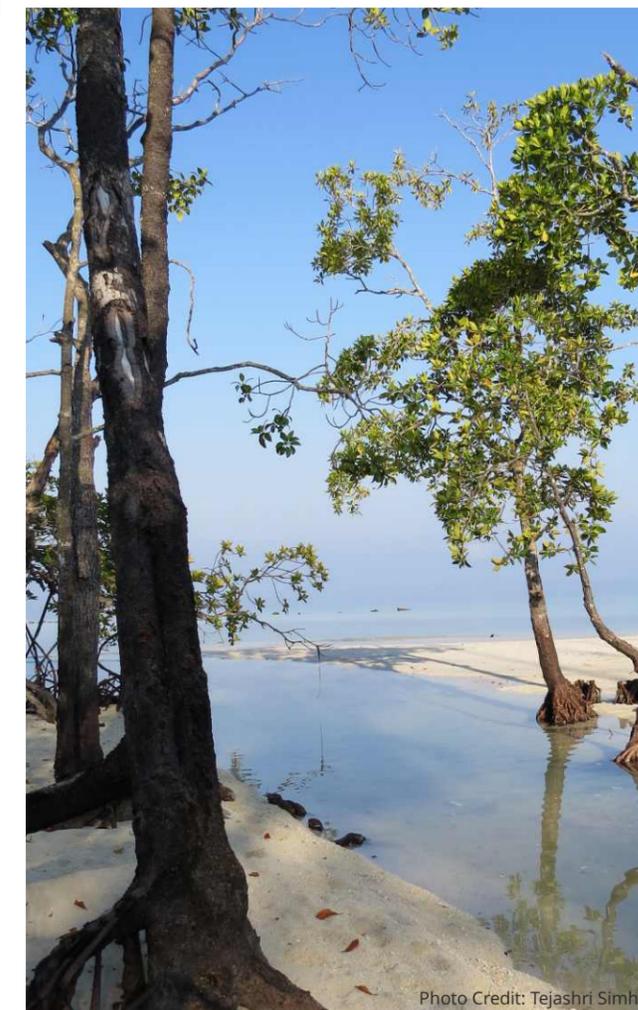


Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

EXPERIENCED BY TEJASHRI SIMHA, EXPLORER AT THE DESTINATION KNOWLEDGE CENTRE.

MEET THE LAMBANI WOMEN AT SANDUR

Hampi

GOOD TO KNOW » Best recommended to visit between 1030 am and 0100 pm. » Suggest combining this visit with a stay at the Shivavilas Palace in Sandur as the Ghorpade family supports this organization. » It is best to have an accompanying guide for this visit, though there is someone to show you around at the organization who speaks decent English. » Authentic products can be purchased from the store on the premises. » Ideal for FITs and small groups of maximum 7 to 8 people.



Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

An hours' drive from Hampi is Kushala Kala Kendra at Sandur, an organization involved in traditional crafts. The Lambanis, a nomadic tribe who migrated from central Asia to Rajasthan and travelled to various parts of the country, design their own clothes for daily wear which is embellished with mirrors, embroidery, colorful patches of cloths and beautiful Jewellery. The Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra started in 1984 when a group of 12 Lambani women came together to create products using this skill to make a living while keeping the tradition alive. At this outfit, one can meet and interact with these Lambani women and understand the product creation process. They also have a tie and dye unit, a cane unit, a Khadi weaving unit and a block printing unit which can be visited. A complete tour would take about 2 hours depending on the interest of the guests. I would recommend lunch or a stay at the Shivavilas Palace in Sandur which is the erstwhile residence of the Ghorpade Royal family, now converted to a heritage hotel.



Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

EXPERIENCED BY TEJASHRI SIMHA, EXPLORER AT THE DESTINATION KNOWLEDGE CENTRE.

LAKKUNDI TEMPLES AND MEET THE WEAVERS

Badami



Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

Located on a decent road between Hampi and Badami, a quick detour takes you to the village of Lakkundi. A historic town not many know of, it is now a rare collection of temple architecture built between the 10th and 11th centuries by prominent rulers of South India. Though not much is known of their history, each of the temples are worth a visit for their embellished and stylish architecture. Of the 50 existing temples only 3 or 4 temples are worth visiting. Additionally, Lakkundi and the nearby town of Gadag are known for weaving of lungis, a type of sarong and a traditional garment worn around the waist. There are a few weavers in the village you can interact with and see the weaving units (mechanized) which are set up right by their homes, either before 9 am or after 12 pm owing to a daily power cut during this time. The juxtaposition of old basalt temples amongst the pristine white mud houses and the welcoming people makes Lakkundi a refreshing change from the commercial touristic towns and well worth the detour.

GOOD TO KNOW » Lakkundi is 2 ½ hours from Hampi and 1 hour from Badami. » Visit to the temples is recommended in the morning. » An entry fee of INR 200 is applicable for international tourists. » Taking Photographs of the sanctum are prohibited in some temples. » Meeting with a weaver can be arranged with prior intimation only (it is subject to availability). » An accompanying guide is suggested for this visit. » Facilities like decent toilets and restaurants are not available here, a stop at the next big Town of Gadag (20 minutes away) can be arranged for a quick break. » Best proposed for FITs and small groups of maximum 5 people.

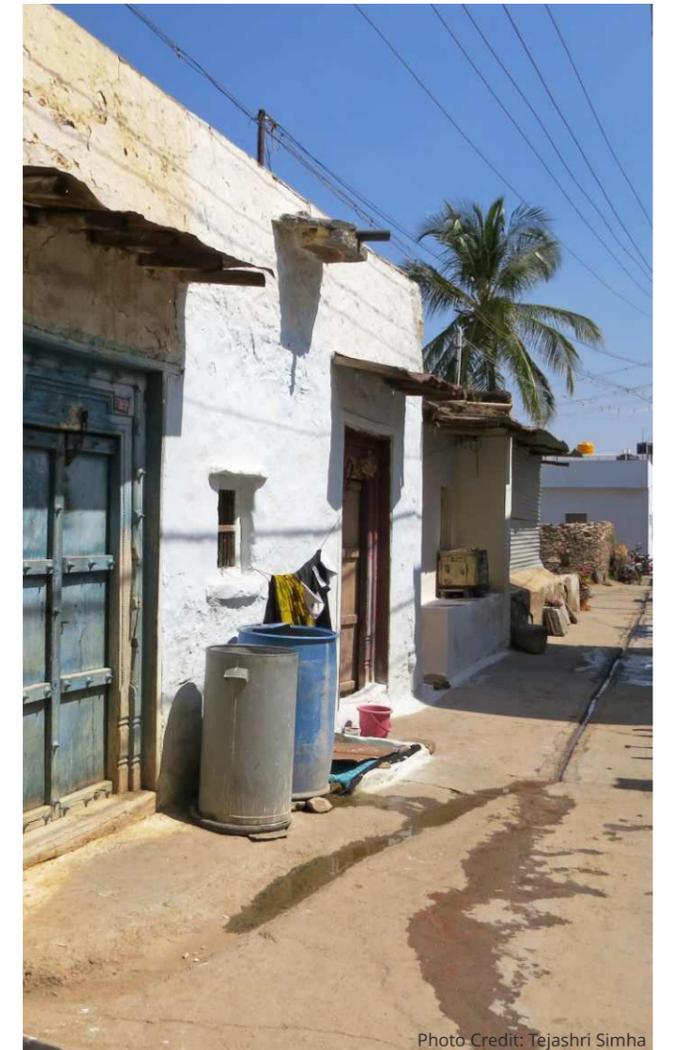


Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

EXPERIENCED BY TEJASHRI SIMHA, EXPLORER AT THE DESTINATION KNOWLEDGE CENTRE.

UNCOVERING 8 LAYERS OF DELHI

Delhi

William Dalrymple, author of 'City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi', writes in the prologue - "Just as the Hindus believe that a body will be reincarnated over and over again until it becomes perfect, so it seemed Delhi was destined to appear in a new incarnation century after century".

The present times can be called the eighth reincarnation. Delhi has been plundered, looted and burnt to the ground only to be built back tougher, wealthier and more splendid; but in a way unwittingly becoming attractive to the next invader. Delhi teaches us resilience and the ability to bounce back.

According to recorded historical facts Delhi has seen the establishment of seven cities; if we do not consider the mythological city of Indraprastha believed to be buried under

the present Purana Qila. The Seven Cities of Delhi are: Qila Rai Pithora, Mehrauli, Siri, Tughlaqabad, Firozabad, Shergarh and Shahjahanabad.

Visit these cities warped in time, jostling for space between the cacophonies of liberal growth.

Transport back to the times when Islam came to north India and visit some fascinating monuments overlapping contrasting cultures.

The urban villages with fascinating street art and vantage sites offer the most spectacular views of the city.

Demystify Sufism and be transported to another realm by the Sufi music (qawalli)!

Walk through ancient ecological reservoirs, rebuilt and renovated many a times by successive rulers. Witness the Light & Sound show tracing the history of the 6th city.

Chaotic yet irresistibly charming Old Delhi entices you to its hustle & bustle amidst the tiny lanes of Chandni Chowk. Add to this a walk through the famous spice Market, Khari Baoli and a street food bonanza!

Delhi has been an epitome of India's history with its succession of glory and disaster & with its great capacity to absorb diverse cultures and yet remain unique. If you are lucky to be in Delhi on a Saturday then nothing more terrific than starting a day by witnessing the change of guard ceremony in the Rashtrapati Bhawan, a colonial tradition which remains unchanged. Walk around Raisina hill & soak in the iconic Lutyens' monuments in New Delhi.

Aravind Adiga says, "Delhi has probably been ruled by a more continuous string of misfits, incompetents and cowards than any other imperial city, which may be why it has been sacked so often."

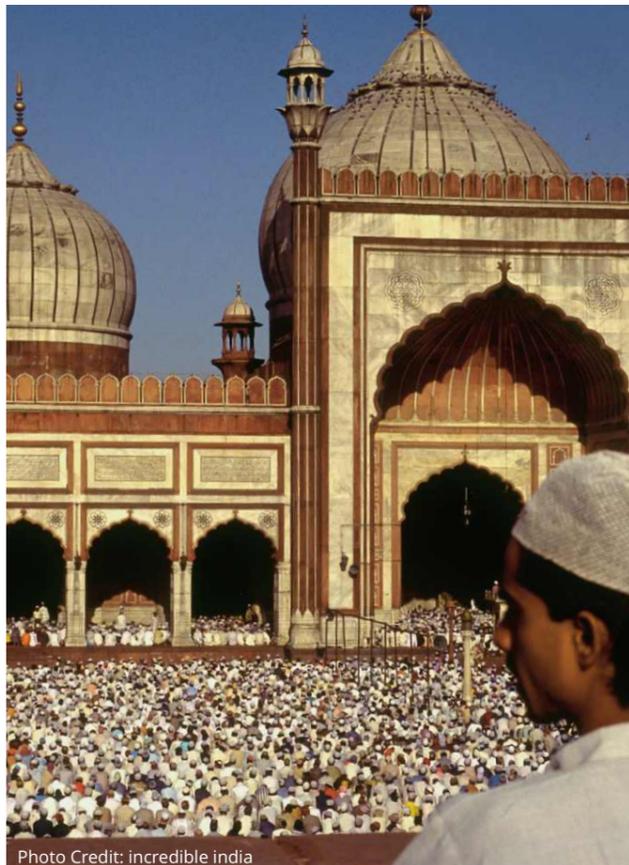


Photo Credit: incredible india

EXPERIENCED BY MALLYKA SINGH, EXPLORER AT THE DESTINATION KNOWLEDGE CENTRE.

VICEROY SPECIAL

Scenic Train Tour in Sri Lanka



Photo Credit: Luxe Asia

The Viceroy Special - the only steam locomotive still in operation in Sri Lanka - is a colonial memento which offers two beautifully rebuilt Observation Saloons, each carrying a maximum of 32 passengers who are accommodated in style. The only compromise being there is no air conditioning in the compartments. The Viceroy has ventured on hundreds of journeys from the capital city of Colombo to the scenic hill country, ancient cities and golden beaches dotting the countryside. It travels at a leisurely pace and can be stopped to allow passengers to click photos during the journey. With a well complemented bar, dining onboard is a unique experience. Meals prepared by five star-chef can be adapted to suit special requirements by prior arrangement. Tea is served at intervals and you can retire to the restaurant car for after-meals conversation over a coffee and a smoke. The Viceroy Special has to be chartered and that comes at a price. However, the experience is priceless!

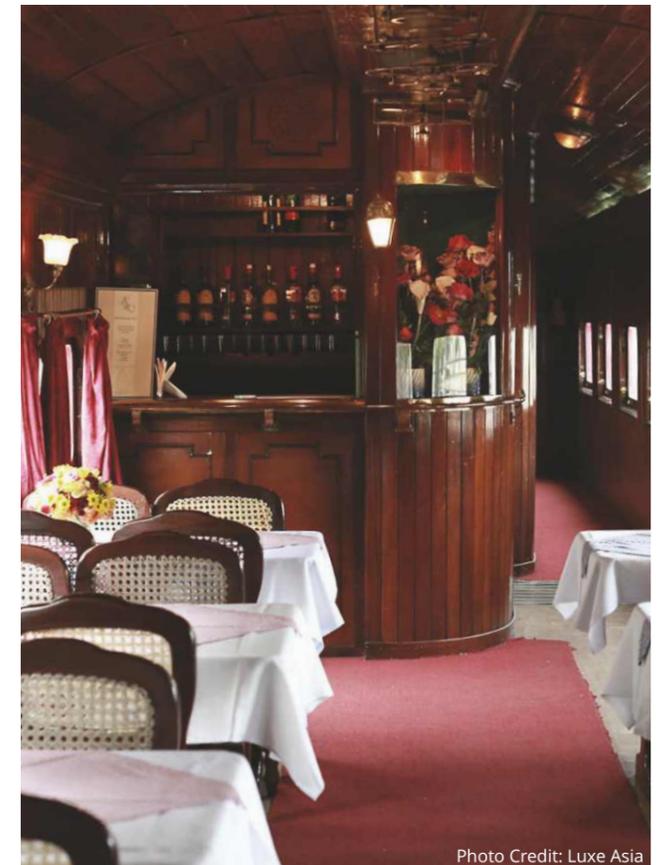


Photo Credit: Luxe Asia

EXPERIENCED BY KARAN VARMA, SALES HEAD AT DISTANT FRONTIERS.

CRAFTS OF NEPAL

A Day with a Mask Maker in Thimi



Photo Credit: Suraj Lamichhane



Photo Credit: Suraj Lamichhane

30 minutes from Kathmandu lies the ancient town of Thimi. From the most discerning and seasoned traveler to the first-timer, Thimi has something for everybody - from its terracotta earthenware and sculptures, paper mache and clay masks, puppets, traditional hand woven clothes to its exceptionally complex religious buildings and temples. We will spend time with a master artist here to know more about the mask masking tradition of Thimi. Thimi is well known for its papier-mâché masks and clay masks that were originally used for ritual dances only. Today people buy them as souvenirs and to decorate their houses. From tiny to gigantic masks painted in lively colors; which are embodiment of the gods, demons and animals are made here. We will also try our hands at making our own mask to be carried back home as a souvenir.

EXPERIENCED BY DEENAM LAMICHHANE, DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER AT NEPAL OFFICE.

ACTIVE BHUTAN

Exploring Punakha Valley on Cycle & Foot



Photo Credit: Danny postma, Source: unsplash.com

Day 1: Spend time at the magnificent Punakha Dzong. Cycle over the longest and highest suspension foot bridge in the country stretching over 200m above the Pho River. Continue along a dirt road following the river passing by small villages surrounded by paddy fields. The farm road (unpaved) stretches for about 15kms (2-3 hrs ride). Cycle/drive back to the hotel.

Day 2: Visit the Nalanda Monastery to meet the Monks who are pursuing their higher Buddhist studies and also learning English. From here proceed to the villages of Talo & Nobgang, the ancestral home of the Queen Mother of Bhutan. Enjoy a packed picnic lunch among the pine trees. From here walk further down towards Yongu village to spend time in a private orchard with great views of the Punakha Dzong. Enjoy a cup of tea here. Later drive back to the hotel.

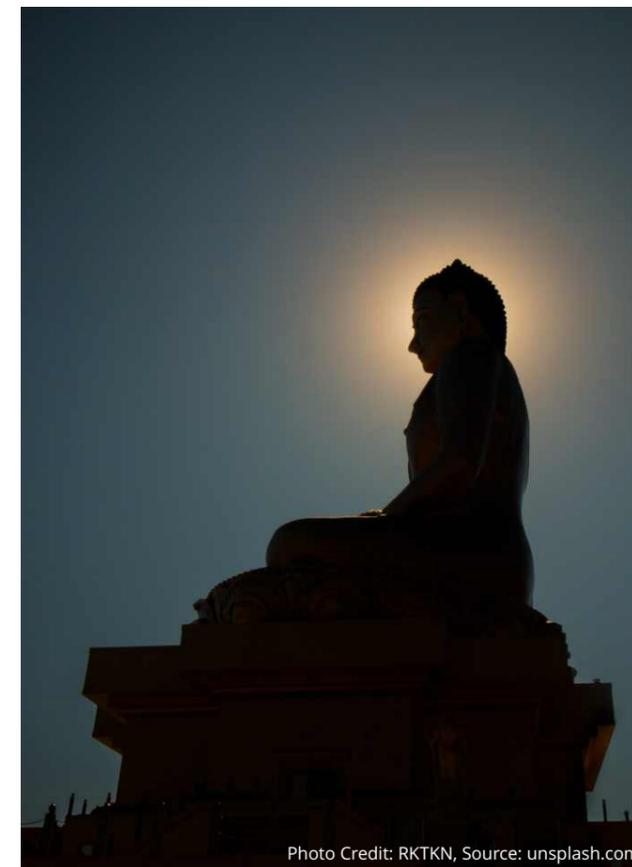


Photo Credit: RKTKN, Source: unsplash.com

EXPERIENCED BY KUNTIL BARUWA, EXPLORER AT THE DESTINATION KNOWLEDGE CENTRE.

SPECIAL INTEREST

INDIA THROUGH THE SENSES OF THE SOUL

Authentic Encounters

We are truly passionate about travel and our history is full of pioneering tales.

One such story is of the company's initiative towards inclusive travel, travel for all and responsible travel. The company is happy to be organising tours for travellers with special needs and visually impaired travellers.

We created this tour for Tour De Sense, a tour operator based in Germany who has been organising travel for special need groups -visually challenged clients, to within Europe and few other destination. They ventured to India with us.

The tour, India Through The Senses of the Soul, is a first of its kind for the company, conceptualised and designed in-house keeping the theme of the tour based on touch, taste, smell and sound.

Every aspect of these senses was incorporated in the itinerary for the travellers to enjoy this trip, which was guided by a visually challenged guide.



Photo Credit: Team Germany



Photo Credit: Team Germany

The itinerary was printed in Braille for the travellers, a cover folder was designed for the itinerary in denim with heavy embossing of the Taj Mahal for the travellers to feel the grand monument.

A special sling bag was designed to carry the itinerary made from jute and dupian silk with embroidery, again to give the travellers a feel of India in terms of textile.

The group started their journey in Delhi, moving onto Agra, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Pushkar before returning to Delhi to end their 2 week holiday.

Each year, in a group of 18, there have been at least 8 travellers who are completely visually impaired and have gone back with an enriched experience of India.

It continues to be a rewarding experience not only for the travellers but also for our team.

DESTINATION INSIDER

KOLKATA, NÉE CALCUTTA

Exploring the City of Joy

The first impression that I formed about the city was when I arrived here at 4:30 AM to find it as crowded and busy as any other metro city! I felt assured that I was in a familiar territory!

Standing in front of the 'Esplanade Mansions' surrounded by huge colonial structures, I could hear soft murmurs of history being whispered into my ears. The Dalhousie Square (now Benoy-Badal-Dinesh Bagh) has been the nucleus of financial, social and political upheaval in the country since 17th century. This 2 square kilometre land, houses The Raj Bhawan which used to be the British Viceroy's Residence (built in 1803), The Great Eastern Hotel (now under The Lalit Group, built in 1840); The Writers Building (built in 1766); St. Andrew's Church (built in 1818); The Calcutta GPO (built in 1864); Old Telegraph Office (built in 1876) and Standard Insurance Building (built in 1896). All these heritage structures stand testimony to the growth of British East India Company from being a mere trading enterprise in the 17th century to ruling almost the whole of sub-continent by mid-19th century.

Walking through the narrow streets of Sovabazar I realised that a different world exists adjacent to the European block which is called the 'Black Town'. It has 'mohallas' with narrow lanes and bylanes where the local Bengali community thrives. There are old mansions of the erstwhile Zamindars (Landlords), large old houses of english-educated middle class and shanties of the poor mill workers. Joransanko Thakur Bari, the home of the famous Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore lies in this part. So does the traditional potters' village Kumartuli, famous for producing clay idols of various Gods and Goddesses during Puja festival. I enjoyed a delectable Bengali cuisine lunch in one such household while exploring the city.

Today's Kolkata is a unique Cosmopolitan where a number of communities converge. Apart from Bengalis, there are Armenians, Portuguese, Dutch, Danes, French, English, Parsis, Marwaris, Jains, Muslims, Biharis, and so on. That's the city of joy!



Photo Credit: Inderjeet Rathod

IN OUR OPINION

RIDING IN THE LITTLE RANN OF KUTCH

Wild Gujarat



Photo Credit: Aditya Roy



Photo Credit: Aditya Roy

We are delighted to introduce our newest Explorer, Mallyka Singh. Here is her riding adventure, exploring great landscapes, exotic flora and fauna, meeting rare tribes and sharing space with them.

The secret to my survival in this chaotic world...From time to time ride off on the horse and see the world through the ears of a Noble Marwari and hear the sound of the wind while I gallop away on unknown terrains which leaves me feeling magical. Ancestrally I belong to Dundlod, a village in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan. It is very famous for its forts, havelis, frescoes and paintings. I come from a family who has always been passionate about horses. My father Raghuvendra Singh Dundlod who is the pioneer of reviving an indigenous breed called Marwari horses and getting the whole world to come and experience splendid Rajasthan on horseback has made me learn and experience a lot since childhood. I was a little girl who had horses in her front yard and I got to learn riding at a very young age. My love for horses made me travel to the Little Rann of Kutch, in Gujarat.

DAY 1

Rann riders resort in Dasada has a rustic charm to it with a beautiful stud farm with a total strength of around 20 Indigenous horses. At 4:30 pm I was ready for my adventure. I mounted my first Kathiawari horse and was free to explore. From far I could spot water bodies as I went riding towards it

When I came closer, I sighted flocks of flamingos which lifted in unison tracing a gorgeous arc in the air. We spotted some more migratory birds as each year 200 species of birds descend in Dasada after a long flight. Flamingos, Pelicans are a common sight.

DAY 2

Off to another morning horse ride to explore some more, I soon enough spotted a galloping herd of wild ass in front of our horses. As I got closer to them they galloped further in a group. It was a lot of fun & the winter sun was so soothing. It was a splendid morning after which we headed back to the resort. At 4:30 pm we headed out on a Jeep safari as I wanted to experience the saltpans and meet the salt workers family.

DAY 3

I visited the Step well in Patan and the Modhera Sun temple. A World Heritage Site, It is an intricately constructed step well with an architectural style which has an inverted temple and seven levels of stairs which hold more than 500 sculptures. I enjoyed my lunch at a Weavers house and then headed back to the resort.

TRADITIONAL CUISINE OF KUMAON

Soul Food



Photo Credit: Janhavi Prasada

known to melt the gall bladder stones in the human body and was used to blast rock mines. The rice grown in this region is coarse and sweet to taste. The beauty of rawness!

If you live in one of the greenest state of India, then kaapha a spinach and herbs combination, is a must to try with rice. These preparations are almost black in color after hours of slow cooking till the green takes in the iron content of the pot. Very high in nutrition to be had with piping hot rice.

A really pungent preparation is the Kheere ka raiyta - cucumber, whipped curd, crushed yellow mustard seeds and salt to taste. It's almost like a pickle that can be had with anything.

The Kumaoni's share a pan Indian fetish for sweet meats. The sticky brown fudge coated with sugar balls is a hot favourite with all the tourists as well - its called "Baal Mithai." The bread like semolina and anise flavored dessert almost like a jalebi is best had over a cup of tea or with a dollop of vanilla ice-cream for dessert.

Kumaoni cuisine is a delicate amalgamation of flavour that one develops over time. They are not strong flavours but they add the subtle zing to your food. It's a really simplistic edible experience, which comes with a term 'comfort food', flavours, fragrances that one has grown up with.



Photo Credit: Janhavi Prasada

Janhavi Prasada who is a friend of the company comes from a family of the erstwhile zamindars (landlords) of Oudh (Uttar Pradesh) in the plains of North India. A film maker, author of a graphic novel on Mahatma Gandhi titled " Tales of Young Gandhi" published by Harper Collins, with a deep passion for photography, she nurtures her 145-year-old ancestral home Abbotsford, in the Kumaon hills as a boutique home stay.

Kumaon is the land of the mighty Himalayas in the north of India, where the food is fit only for the Gods - its simple, pure and nutritious. Nature has bestowed on this land (Uttarakhand State) millions of species of herbs, edible roots, wild berries, green leave and legumes.

A heat inducing winter appetizer high in Vitamen C is 'Sana Hua Nimbu' made from local lemons, jaggery, paste of marijuana seeds, mint and green chillies, all whipped up with curd. All you have to do is slurp it in as the sweetness of jaggery balances the tangy lemon chunks in the mouth.

The people of Kumaon have a predominant vegetarian palate. Curries and legumes rich in iron are cooked over wood-fire for hours, infused with pungent herbs-jambu, jhakeya, gandherni and Bhangha which is marijuana seeds great as a relish- a rare experience to savour.

Gauhat is one legume that is so warm in its efficacy that it is

SO FAR, SO CLOSE

India and Spain

Natalia Sanchez -Infantes represents the company in Spain. She refers to the people of India as the Latins of Asia. Read on to find out why.

Not in many countries other than your own you happen to feel at home -at least, this is my experience- a Spanish middle aged woman. You may like the landscapes, the people, the culture as a visitor, but you hardly have that sense of belonging, or feel the affection you feel for the place where you live. But India is different. Whenever I'm lucky enough I go back to India. I feel at ease, I feel at home. Over the years, many people have asked me about the reason for such a passion... why being so far, do I feel we are so close?

Well, the truth is that we are almost 8000 km apart, but this is nothing when we start talking of the things we have in common. India and Spain or rather Indians and Spaniards have more similarities than one would think. Ok, maybe we are not big fans of spicy food, don't know anything about cricket and almost the entire population of our small country would be equivalent to the population of Delhi and Mumbai put together. So when we say the metro in Madrid is crowded we probably don't know what we are talking about. I agree.

Our festivals and traditions may seem a little odd to you (as some are to me as well) but hey, it seems we both love throwing things be it colours during the Holi or tomatoes in



Photo Credit: Nataua Sanchez

the famous "Tomatina" and what is more important, we enjoy and celebrate life. There is always a good excuse to hang out with friends and family and celebrate, we just do it differently. We probably have the biggest number of bars per inhabitant in the entire world and you probably have the biggest concentration of temples of various religions and several festivals per day (LOL).

I always refer to Indians as the "Latins of Asia" and this is because I see in you the temper, the passion, the capacity of improvising (what you call jugaad) that marks our character and that is a natural talent we share.

The importance of the family and the support we give and take from this institution is another similarity we have. We need to share and there is no joy for us if this cannot be shared with the people we love.

Are we that far in the end? I don't think so...



Photo Credit: Nataua Sanchez

SHOPPING IN INDIA

To market, to market



If there is one place to experience India's diversity, one need not look beyond the local markets in the country. A cacophonous rhythm of people milling about amidst the jarring juxtaposition of the old and new which is interspersed with a riot of colors and laced with a concoction of heady smells of the local cuisines; an Indian bazaar makes for an enthralling experience that requires the rapt attention of all the senses in one's body. We bring you the choicest bazaars of the country with a unique disposition where one can experience the authentic Indian Organized Chaos.

- Tejashri Simha

Khari Baoli, New Delhi

Established in the 17th century, Khari Baoli in Chandni Chowk is Asia's largest spice market. Some of the alley ways, where business worth billions is conducted, are barely a meter wide.

What to buy: Spices of all kinds. **Tip:** the aroma of the spices is quite strong and may not go down well with some

Johari Bazaar, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Located near the iconic Hawa Mahal, Johari bazaar is the most glittery bazaar in the pink city. It is here that one will find the rarest of gem stones and some very exquisite jewelry alongside traditional Rajasthani attire. **What to buy:** Gold jewelry and saris. **Tip:** Also check out the Jaipuri blankets and bedsheets which are very popular

Jew Town, Kochi, Kerala

A cobbled street in the iconic Jew street at Mattancherry, this is a hub for all things antique. It is also here that you will find some of the quirkiest and best cafes. **What to buy:** Souvenirs of all kinds. **Tip:** Sarah's embroidery shop is a must visit, she is one of the last few Jews to have stuck around

Chor Bazaar, Mumbai, Maharashtra

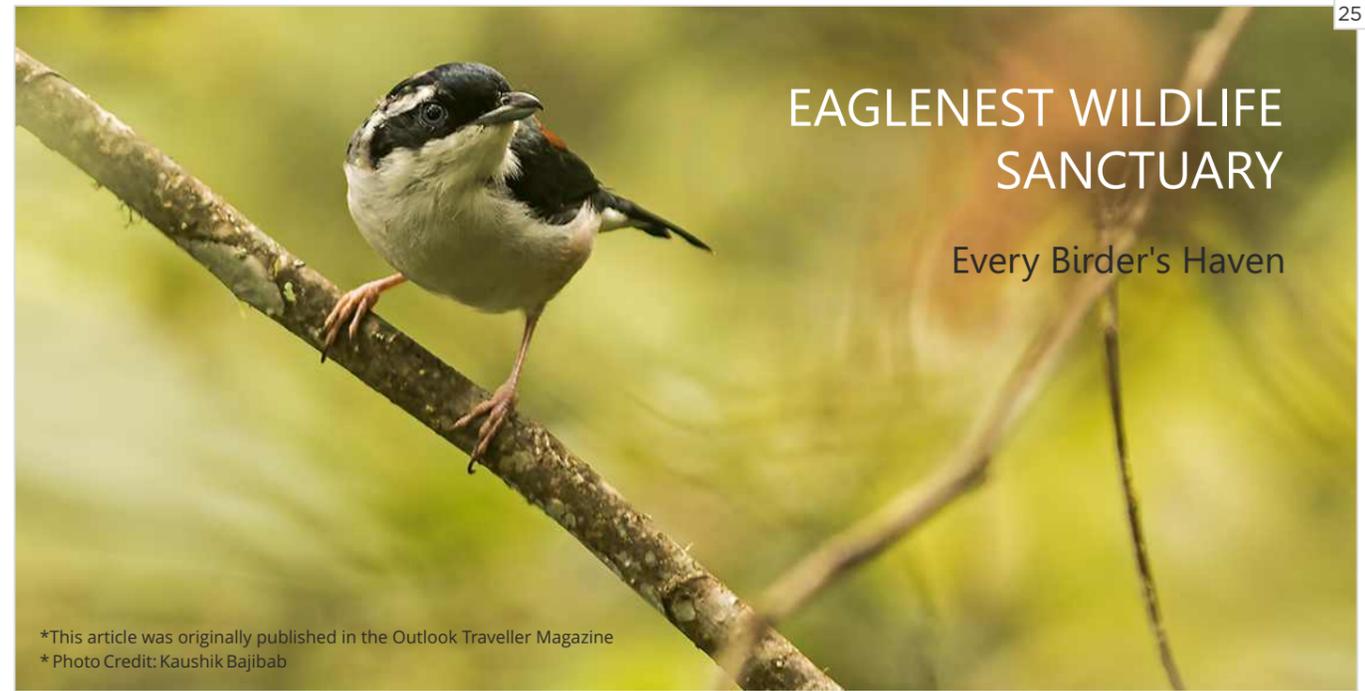
A fascinating market in south Mumbai that translates to 'Thief's market' has literally everything one can ask for. Probably the only market famous to have a tag line associated with it that goes "If you lose anything in Mumbai, you can buy it back at the Chor Bazaar". **What to buy:** Old antiques and fancy Victorian furniture. **Tip:** Bargaining and haggling is mandatory (Of course, be careful of your belongings)

Devaraja Market, Mysore, Karnataka

Said to be as old as the city itself, the Devaraja market is a quintessential south Indian market with rows of fruits, vegetables, flowers, incense sticks and household articles. It is a go to place for the locals and the friendly vendors will make this experience enjoyable. **What to buy:** Incense sticks. **Tip:** Go on a Sunday if you want to experience the true spirit of the market, be warned it is crowded

EAGLENEST WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Every Birder's Haven



*This article was originally published in the Outlook Traveller Magazine
* Photo Credit: Kaushik Bajjibab

Gana Kedlaya who is a friend of the company is an environment and travel journalist based in Bengaluru. She loves elephants and the outdoors.

We started early in the morning on a random day in November, Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary marked Day 8 of our long exploration of Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India. Eaglenest comprises all of 218 sq km of pristine forest almost hugging Bhutan. Its location makes it possible for diverse habitat to flourish—from tropical wet evergreen and semi-evergreen to subtropical forests. Set up in 1989, Eaglenest today hosts over 600 species of birds, the density second in the world only to the eastern slope of the Andes in South America. One of the most successful community based conservation projects in India, today this pocket of forest is run and protected by the indigenous Bugun community.

When we reached Lama Camp, one of the campsites offering accommodation in the area, we stood facing the spectacular arc of mountain ranges and valleys, a pretty breathtaking sight. The cold did get to us and it was almost dark, but that didn't deter us from heading out for a walk. It had rained the previous evening, and several paths in the forest were still flooded. The guide confirmed the visit of an elephant the previous night after we discovered a few signs of its exploits. We spotted three different colourful species of leafhoppers, a pretty loud cicada that wouldn't quit calling for the rest of the evening, and, closer to camp, we spent precious minutes listening to Hodgson's frogmouths, loud and clear in the night. We woke up to a cacophony of tunes, an orchestra played out by a myriad of birds around the camp. We even managed a glimpse of the snow-capped Gori Chen range that rises from

Tibet. It was surreal. The cold was very real, almost like a shadow, constantly trying to catch up every time we were convinced of warmth. We set out early in the morning—and yes, every moment you spend on this small patch of forest is simply special. You just need to follow the calls, which is exactly what we did. Like obedient rats, we followed the tune of every bird that was audible, and then spent long minutes for the little shy ones to show up. Spotting birds in Eaglenest is different from most other birding haunts—you hardly ever find them on a perfect perch; they are usually in the bush, amidst leaves, branches and sometimes, maybe if you are very lucky, they land up and call out loudly right next to a leaf near you.

We counted no less than 70-odd species by 3pm, which was an experience like no other. From several species of babblers, warblers and fantails, to sibilias and the lovely striated laughing thrush, we saw them all. Our guide was extremely skilled and through him we were able to tell the subtle differences between several bird calls a much appreciated learning experience indeed. We were extremely lucky to have been able to sight the local major leaguer, the Bugun Liocichla, as well as the stunning and rare Bhutan glory butterfly, though it was almost at the end of its life-cycle, which is usually in October. We even met a traveller from Japan who was visiting India (only Eaglenest) just to get a glimpse of this special creature and mark it off his list. We now understood why.

If you love observing and listening to birds, Eaglenest is the place for some memorable live music. This is the kind of place that stays with you long after you have left. The trick is to take it in—unhurriedly.

STAYS
WE LOVED
&
STAYS TO WATCH
OUT FOR



INSIDER'S
TIP



HIGHLY
RECOMMENDED



EXPLORE



STAYS WE LOVED

Mainstream, but different



Evolve back

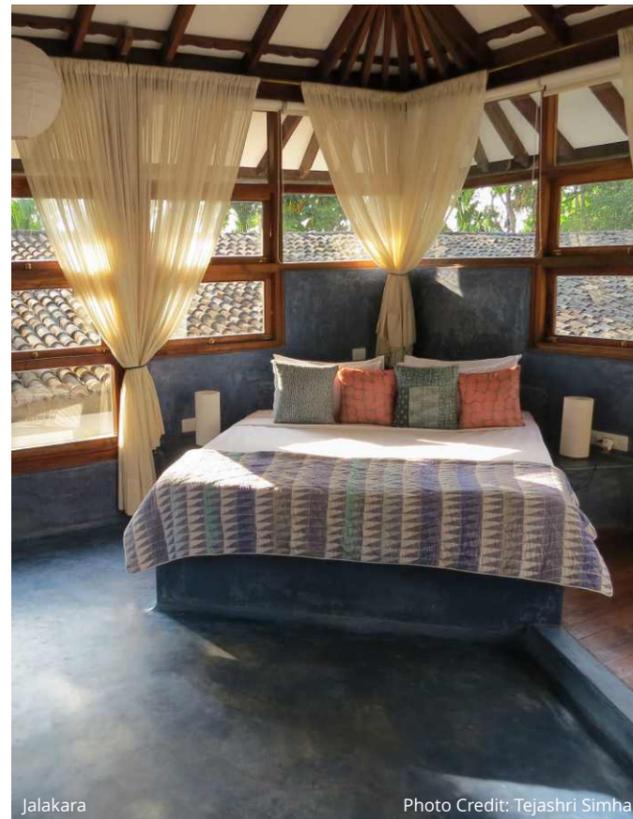
Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

Evolve back, Hampi, Karnataka

Inspired by the ostentatious Vijayanagara architecture and a mere 4 kms from the Hampi ruins, Evolve back is a uber luxurious retreat in the mesmerizing boulder strewn landscape of Hampi. With 46 living spaces, each with a private balcony and Jacuzzi, 9 of them are palatial suites with a private pool. Try their curated walks, tailor made to capture the essence of Hampi and its rich past.

Shivavilas Palace, Sandur, Karnataka

An hour away from the mesmerizing ruins of Hampi is the town of Sandur which was once the stronghold of the Royal Ghorpade family and Shivavilas Palace their royal residence, is now turned into a heritage hotel. 20 acres of calm and quiet, the palace has 10 suites, not including, the Maharani suite and the Maharaja suite. A stay at this heritage property is incomplete without a visit to the Kushala Kala Kendra - supported by the Royal family, where Lambanis (a Nomad tribe) practice the age old tradition of embroidery.



Jalakara

Photo Credit: Tejashri Simha

Woodway bed and breakfast and Estate, Chikmagalur, Karnataka

20 minutes from Chikmagalur, Woodway is a charming ancestral plantation home run by hosts Shreedev and his wife Susmitha along with their friendly dogs Caesar and Brutus. It has 5 cozy rooms each with attached bathroom and a fireplace. Shreedev is happy to take guests on a walk around the plantation and Susmitha can host Yoga Sessions. This is a gem of a place with a homely feeling to unwind and revel in nature.

Jalakara, Havelock Island, Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Jalakara, a boutique hotel on the island of Havelock, is the only hotel with the rainforest right at its doorstep. A 10 minutes' drive from the Havelock Jetty, the nearest beach is a mere 5 minutes' drive. With 7 distinctively designed living spaces each of them are private havens with their own unique style. 6 of the living spaces, a mix of 3 suites and 3 design rooms, are clustered together with a common pantry and the Villa is close yet secluded is independent. The décor is earthy and minimalistic but in sync with the varied concepts for each room.



Grand Dragon Hotel

The Rajbari Bawali, near Kolkata

Long back, the Zamindars (Landlords) of Bengal lived a life of unimaginable opulence. The wealth and privileges they enjoyed during the British colonial rule was unparalleled. The Rajbari Bawali, built in neo-classical style of architecture, belongs to that era. All of their 30 rooms and suites have been carefully restored to recreate the authentic heritage experience whilst providing the utmost in modern day comfort and luxury. French style distressed furniture, placed in the rooms and elsewhere is a highlight of this property. A stay here reveals the secrets of the extraordinarily illustrious and extravagant history, which is extremely relaxing, restorative and peaceful.

The Grand Dragon Hotel, Leh, Ladakh

Ladakh challenges all the faculties of a human being, right from the body to the mind and soul. Arriving in from a city or from a remote location in Ladakh, The Grand Dragon Hotel offers a 'cushioned' treatment to its guests so that they acclimatize, not only to the altitude and the weather but also to the warm hospitality! Different sections of the hotel remind you of the five star hotels of the metro cities but on a smaller scale. There are 76 rooms & suites with internal heaters built in to keep guests warm and cosy at all times. The Coffee Shop 'Zasgyath' is the talk of the Town with the widest range of multi-cuisine menu on offer. Yes, it is best place to stay in Leh - be it the pleasant summers or the harsh winters of Ladakh!



Stok Palace

Stok Palace, Leh, Ladakh

Located at a height of 12000 feet and just 20 minutes from the capital of Leh, Stok Palace is a heritage hotel that continues to be the abode of the Namgyal dynasty - the erstwhile rulers of Ladakh. Its charm lies in the simplicity and authenticity coupled with the long standing history, spanning 195 years, associated with it. Blessed by the Dalai Lama at the time of opening, its serene surroundings and imposing structure make it a perfect choice to take in the dramatic landscape that Leh and Ladakh is famous for. Each of the 6 rooms are unique, well lit and spacious yet cozy. Of the 6 rooms, 4 are basic suites, one a royal suite and one the queen suite. Where the 4 basic suites are quite simple yet very traditional, the queen suite and royal suite are special. With beautiful murals in tones of deep maroons, soothing greens and rich ink-blues adorning the walls, it is truly enriching to stay in a room with art all around you. These two rooms give a feeling of having turned back time to go back into the glorious past and living the life of a royal.

Reviewed by Tejashri Simha, Inderjeet Rathod and Jean Noel Esteve from the Destination Knowledge Centre based on their first-hand experiences.

STAYS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Hot Picks



Calcutta Bungalow

Gogunda Palace, Gogunda, Rajasthan

The loving restored 16th century Gogunda Palace (40 rooms in total) is located just 35 km from Udaipur. Here, traditional grandeur blends effortlessly with modern day conveniences such as free Wi-Fi, an outdoor pool, a spa, a lounge bar and a restaurant. The living and common spaces are all unique in theme. The "Kothar" or reception welcomes visitors and guides them to the air-conditioned rooms and suites fully equipped with a private sit-out, en-suite bathroom, television and mini fridge. The restaurant caters to every taste with an extensive menu that includes vegetarian, traditional and continental options.

Uramma Cultural Residency, Anegundi, Karnataka

A gem of a place in Anegundi (the other side of Hampi, an hour by road) with just 7 cottages, Uramma cultural village is an opportunity to immerse oneself in nature and local life. The cottages are typical farm house style with mud walls and thatched roofing with minimal yet tasteful interiors. Their curated experiences focus on engaging with the local community; from village walks, cottage industry visits, cultural performances to weekly markets et al.



Uramma Cultural Residency

Neelambari Ecotourism, Arattupuzha, Kerala

Located in the charming village of Arattupuzha, Neelambari is a family run property just 2 hours' drive from the Kochi Airport. Neelambari has 2 two room cottages and 1 three room cottage. They have an Ayurvedic spa on the premises and also organize yoga sessions on request. The kitchen here is strictly vegetarian where they are happy to host an interactive cooking session.

Baymaa's Lake House, Ernakulam, Kerala

Located an hour and a half away from the Kochi airport is Baymaa's Lake house. Set in the interiors of Kochi, this boutique hotel faces the backwaters. They have only 2 villas and 1 cottage. The 2 villas have a sit out overlooking the lake as well as the common pool. The Villa is independent and faces the garden and the lake with a private sit out.

Sukhayus Wellness Ayurveda Resort, Fort Kochi, Kerala

Sukhayus wellness Ayurveda Resort is located in the heart of Fort Kochi which is run by a premiere Ayurveda chain. The Ayurveda center has 16 premium rooms and 2 Suites with no two rooms alike; all the bathrooms have a bathtub overlooking the landscaped gardens. Apart from focusing on Ayurveda and wellness, they also offer naturopathy, Acupuncture and Physiotherapy treatments. One can also take up Yoga and meditation courses when here. The wellness center also has a swimming pool.



Calcutta Bungalow

Prakriti Shakti, Panchalimedu, Kerala

Based on the lines of their Ayurveda Hospitals Kalari Kovilakom and Kalari Rasayana, CGH has now set out to explore another ancient healing system - Naturopathy at Prakriti Shakti. They have a total of 19 villas each with a private balcony and serve only raw vegetarian food. The facilities here include mud bath, spinal bath, Hip bath, acupuncture etc. which are spread across 13 treatment rooms. The minimum stay requirement is 14 days and they cater to guests over 15 years of age only.

Taj Holidays and resorts, Havelock Island, Andaman and Nicobar Island

The Taj property on the Radhanagar Beach at Havelock Island is probably going to be the most luxurious property on the Island. They will have about 70-75 cottages which will be all spacious and imitate the native style of architecture - 3 restaurants, an Olympic size swimming pool, a massive sundeck and a mangrove within the property. They also plan to have a private ferry from Port Blair to Havelock and back for their guests.

The Calcutta Bungalow, Kolkata

A renovated 90 year old house in North Calcutta, which retains the old-world charm of a Bengali neighbourhood. The owners want to transform the 3-storied house into a heritage bed and breakfast set up for guests looking for an authentic Bengali experience. Being adorned with long wrought-iron grills in the balconies and elegant lunettes, the structure resembles an old Kolkata House in its décor and also retain the old world charm in its atmosphere and food.



Chulli Bagh

Photo Credit: Inderjeet Rathod

Chulli Bagh, Leh, Ladakh

3 cottages situated a little below Stok Palace built in mud and wood in a very traditional style. Every cottage with a central living room is naturally illuminated thanks to a ceiling-window. A small open kitchen fully equipped allows one to make his/her own food during a stay here. Set in a very natural and peaceful place, this a perfect stay for those who wish to stay away from the city of Leh and the usual hotels, willing to be closed to the nature. Perfect for families (each and every cottage have two double room) or for travellers in search of peace and calm.

Lchang Nang Retreat, Nubra, Ladakh

Lchang Nang means "The House of Trees" and it is definitely the best place to relax while having some comfort in Nubra. The seventeen individual cottages, created in the local architectural style using mud, stone and poplar are accessed through a lovely footpath. Decorated in style, the rooms have a wonderful view on the garden along with the mountains as the background. There are three different categories of cottages, the only difference being the size. The basic category is for two persons, the Divine Cottage for three persons and the Family cottages for four persons (two double rooms). By far the best option in Nubra.

Inspected by Tejashri Simha, Inderjeet Rathod and Jean Noel Esteve from the Destination Knowledge Centre.

BOOKS & FILMS WE LOVED

Photo Credit: Clay Banks, Source: unsplash.com

BOOKS AND FILMS WE LOVED

India and its stories



Photo Credit: Anthony Tran, Source: unsplash.com

RUSKIN BOND - THE INDIAN WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

"A great book is a friend that never lets you down. You can return to it again and again and the joy first derived from it will still be there" – Ruskin Bond

By Tejashri Simha, Explorer-in-Residence, Destination Knowledge Centre.

Simplicity and pragmatism bundled up in a single sentence with no pretense is the classic Ruskin Bond style. An Englishman by birth and a Pahari (people inhabiting the Himalayan regions in North India) by heart, his stories though bracketed as children's books are a collection of human experiences which everyone can associate with. An awardee of two prestigious Indian awards, he is one of those authors who has brought Indian English literature to its emotive and descriptive pinnacle.

Having settled in Dehradun, a small town on the foothills of

the Himalayas in North India, for over 50 years, his stories are hugely influenced by his surroundings and life experiences. An avid reader as a child, certain tumultuous experiences at the age of 4 and 10 greatly steered his writing career. Many of his writings though wrought with humor and wit, somewhere reflect his longing for a secure childhood. Yet this emotion is craftily fused with his rare talent of translating the imagery of nature, ambience and the deeply relatable characters, all unique to the foothills of the Indian Himalayas, into visions through the words he pens down. His stories, some autobiographical and some semi-autobiographical, are so beautifully organic and sprinkled with such unadulterated joy that it seems to exude from the pages itself. This octogenarian author is a true stalwart in today's day and age who can enrapture the reader at a very personal level, a talent very few writers have had the chance to master.

Must reads: A book of humor, the room on the roof, The blue umbrella, Rusty – the boy from the hills and A book of simple living – brief notes from the hills.



VICTORIA AND ABDUL
Directed by Stephen Frears

Reviewed by Tejashri Simha, Explorer-in-Residence, Destination Knowledge Centre.

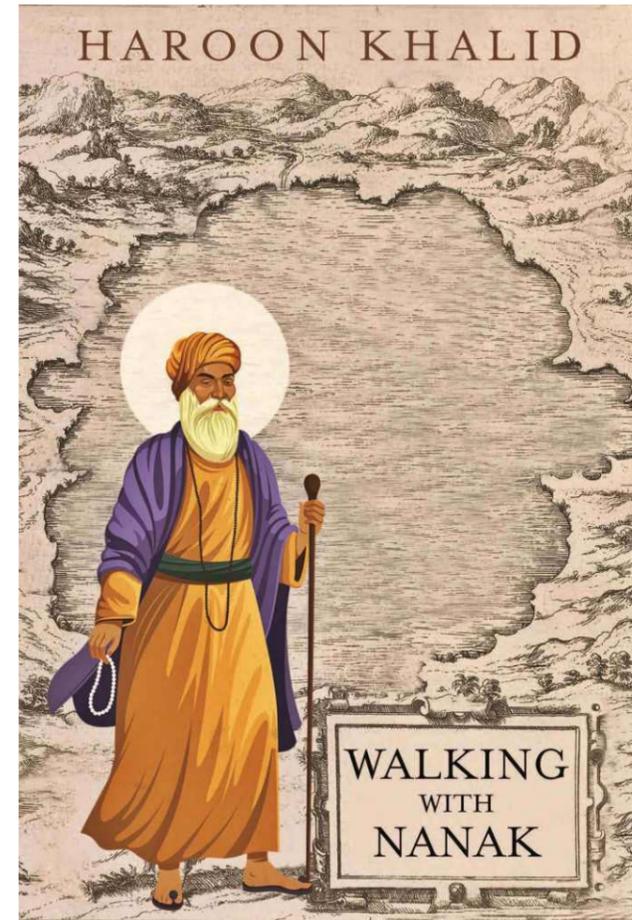
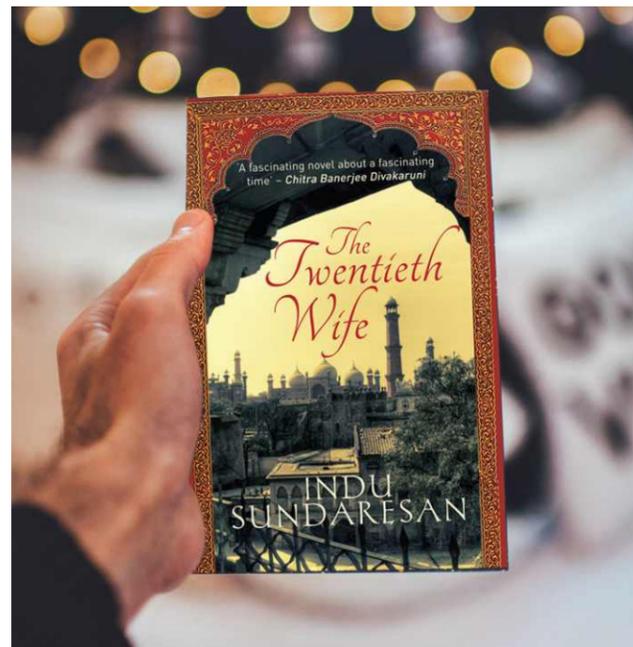
The movie opens with a view of the crowded streets of Agra with Abdul (Ali Fazal) weaving his way through the busy market to make it on time for his work. A change of fate, mostly to do with him being tall, takes him from the boring job of a clerk to the royal palace in England to present a 'Mohur' to Queen Victoria (Judy Dench), who is a nimble eater and naps between courses at the table, on the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Abdul is fascinated with the queen and disregards the protocol of not making eye contact with her which sparks the queen's interest in Abdul. As the days progress, Queen Victoria finds herself in the best of moods in Abdul's company who she then appoints as her Munshi (teacher) and a close confidant, much to the distaste of the household, who shares his experiences, culture and life of the people in India.

The movie explores this forgotten story of friendship between the Queen of England and an Indian clerk which transcends the relation between India and England at the time of the British Raj. It sheds light on the oddities of Indian culture and British traditions with a humorous twist wrapped up in a swirl of cryptic emotions left open to the audience to interpret. All in all, the movie is a decent adaptation of this controversial friendship that had the household of the Queen in a furor, some true and some made up.

THE TWENTIETH WIFE Written by Indu Sundaresan

Reviewed by Mallyka Singh, Explorer-in-Residence, Destination Knowledge Centre who secretly harbours love for those olden times where History was made with legendary emperor's & brave empresses. There are few mentions of the women these kings married or of the power they exercised. The Twentieth wife seeks to fill that gap through a portrayal of an ultimate power behind the veil & hence she recommends:

Indu Sundaresan takes back a reader into a fascinating time & her words are so captivating that you find yourself reliving the magnificent Mughal times- the story revolves around Mehrunisa- the sun among Women- Daughter of a Persian refugee who grew up on the fringes of Emperor Akbar's opulent grounds & found herself fantasizing that she too will become an empress one day, when she laid eyes upon prince Salim who came to be known Jahangir later. It is intriguing how Mehrunisa became Jahangir's twentieth wife & her love shaped the course of the Mughal emperor through sheer brilliance & determination. Nur Jahan, a title bestowed on Mehrunisa on the day of her wedding was generous, cruel & mean spirited. She loved Jahangir passionately & my interest was piqued as to how in an age when women were rarely seen or heard, Mehrunisa minted coins in her name, issued royal orders (Farman's), traded with foreign countries, patronized the arts and authorized the building of many imperial gardens and tombs that still exist today. All this came through the man who adored her to the point of obsession. She is known to have ruled the empire. But she was powerful because of him, not despite him...



WALKING WITH NANAK Written by Haroon Khalid

Haroon Khalid, a trained anthropologist, has written two other books; both exploring the minority religious cultures and folk traditions in Pakistan. This is his third book.

Reviewed by Lovleen Sagar, Senior Vice President, Destination Knowledge Centre.

In this simply written book which is almost a travelogue full of stories, he retraces the steps of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism who believed in monotheism.

Nanak and his rubab-playing Muslim companion Bhai Mardana covered the length and breadth of South Asia wandering on foot for over 24 years. The author and his mentor Iqbal Qaiser take on this arduous journey travelling to 11 cities in Pakistan, as if they were reliving and recreating the magic of the original journeys.

"Khalid reconstructs the world of Guru Nanak, straddling the tolerance of the past and the intolerance of the present, trying to see stories of tolerance in the current madness, trying to see hope in the syncretic culture of the Hindu shrines visited

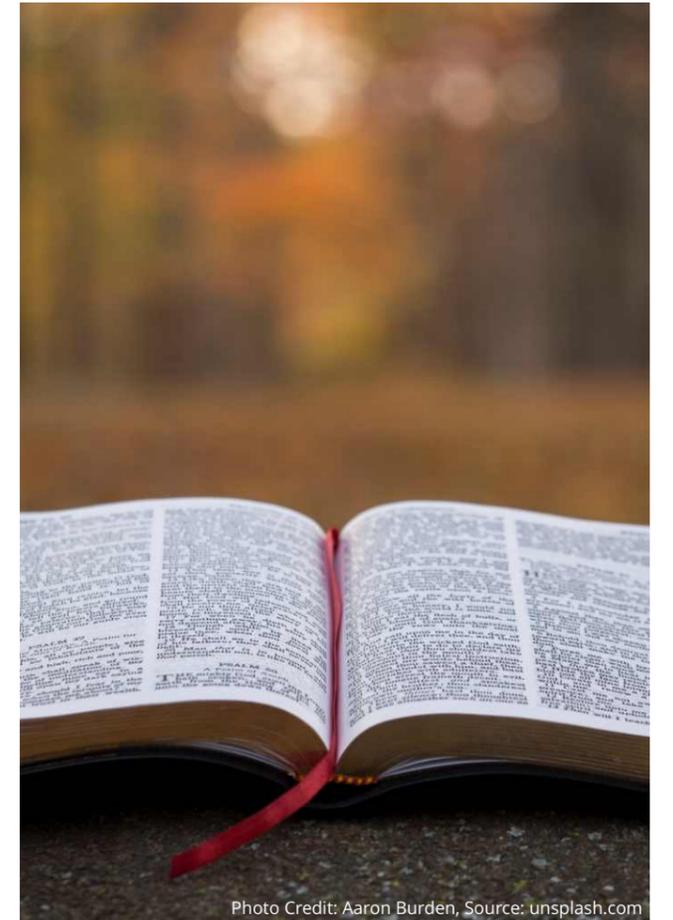


Photo Credit: Aaron Burden, Source: unsplash.com

by Muslims and the Muslim dargahs visited by Hindus," Lamat Hasan.

Khalid was fascinated by Babur Bani, a poem Nanak wrote when Babur attacked Lahore and drawing from the Janamsakhis (the Sikh texts on Nanak's life), Nanak's poetry and his travels, Khalid decided to follow Nanak's trail to understand him better.

The journey was not easy. It drew attention to the contradictions within Sikhism, the reversal of its very fundamental founding principle in the centuries that followed Nanak. His belief against the institutionalisation of religion was transformed. The Janamsakhis, the Sikh texts on Nanak's life, were glorious accounts of his miracles; accounts that Nanak abhorred. The institution of guruhood was formalised – though Nanak bypassed his son to confer his mantle on his most deserving disciple.

Relying on the oral retelling of history, Khalid manages to bring Guru Nanak to life, taking the readers along. What fascinated me most about this book was the reassurance that travelling is the best education you can give yourself. The journeys reveal to you subtle cultures, histories and philosophies that imbibe in you, in a very unique way.

IN CONVERSATION WITH ANJALI PATHAK

Chef and Food Writer



Anjali Pathak is a Chef and Food writer. Most importantly, she is a passionate teacher of the culinary arts. She grew up fully immersed in food as the next generation of a family - Patak's - that took Indian cuisine to homes around the world. And now, her personal mission is the reverse: to help infuse and introduce International flavors to India.

Interview as told to Mallyka Singh - "A Thousand Miles Journey- From UK to Mumbai"

What inspired you to become a Chef? I've always loved being in the kitchen and I discovered the joys of cooking when I was a little girl. My mother and grandmother were always in the kitchen, experimenting with new recipes for our family brand 'Patak's'. I found my mother's spice box fascinating with all the colors, shapes and scents and I was lucky that my mother was a fabulous teacher. She spent time sharing her secrets with me, allowing me the freedom to be creative. By the time I left for university I'd become an experimental cook and had been cooking since I was 3 years old. It was only a matter of time before I joined our family business. Patak's started in the 50's when my grandparents moved to London from Africa. My grandfather was offered menial jobs as an immigrant and so my grandmother did what she loved most, feeding her family and anyone that loved to eat. She would invite neighbours to her home and cook delicious

Indian food that was mostly unknown for Londoners. My father was 5 when they moved to London and he would often cook with my grandmother helping to make dinner to put on the table for the family. Some regular guest diners started to pay my grandmother for feeding them home cooked meals it wasn't long before they saved enough money to open a small shop. They chose a fortuitous location near busy Euston Train Station that soon became the go-to shop for Indians visiting London. My grandfather had opened Britain's first Indian grocery store and stocked all the essentials you needed for an Indian kitchen. As business grew, so did the Patak's shops, and word spread that we were selling authentic Indian spices and fabulous food.



Eat to live or live to eat? I loved the fact that you said Eat and Live are really close so please tell us about that? I live to eat! From the moment I wake up in the morning, to the moment I lay my head on the pillow for bedtime, I dream about food.

Tell me about your different foodie experiences with different people? Are all your guests' good learners? No day is ever lived twice in my life. I teach cookery classes twice a day and each student has a different story to share.

Is there any iconic chef who you admire the most? What are his or her qualities that you try to imbibe in your cooking style? The chef I admire the most is Jamie Oliver. I love his approach to food and he has shaped our industry on a global scale

Do you think Healthy & Yummy actually go hand in hand? What do you think will be trending in future...? Absolutely. Healthy dishes can be truly delicious.

Which is your favorite cuisine? / Which is your favorite dish to cook? I don't have a favourite cuisine, I love them all!

But I do love flavourful food. I grew up having amazing home cooked food, and Indian was usually the cuisine of choice in



our family kitchen.

How many different types of cuisines do you include in your classes? I currently have 10 different cuisines across 25 different classes to choose from at Flavour Diaries.

What is your favorite wine? I have a soft spot for Argentinian Malbec and always lean towards it when it appears on a menu

Tell us about pairing wine and food? I feel food and wine can be a harmonious marriage. Drinking the right wine with your meal can make a good meal into a great one!

Tell us about best wines of India? Which ones go well with the Indian dishes? India has started to join the global wine world producing some fabulous wines perfect not only for Indian dishes but for International dishes as well.

Which cuisine works best with kids? I am sure all the mothers out there wonder? I feel Italian food works well with children as the flavours aren't too complicated. It's also not too difficult to cook so great for busy mothers.

In the cooking interactive sessions with kids I am sure bakery is a big success with them. If true then why? Baking is our most popular children's class.

Have you had an interactive cooking session where parents can cook with their kids learning something new from you and cherish family bonding? I often teach family classes when parents can cook together with their children. It's beautiful to see them making memories on my cookery stations.



THREADS OF LIFE

7 Days in Kutch

This was my 3rd trip to Kutch, Gujarat in 7 years. And I had not one but two super happy moments this time that I would like to share with you.

In 2014, when I met Tejsi Bhai - the only artisan of a unique style of weaving called Kharad - he was struggling. His son was not interested in taking forward the family's legacy. "I am looking for a job in a factory. There is no money or recognition in what my father is doing". Cut to 2018, Tejsi Bhai has been felicitated by the President of India for his unique craft which also included a cheque of Rs 1 Lakh (USD1600), he have had collaborations with curators from renowned Museums and his son has joined him with full enthusiasm. 'So what about the factory job,' I asked. "No. My father is doing something really unique. People come looking for him from so far away. I want to take this craft forward".

Likewise in 2014, quilt maker Ramji Devaraj had just returned from the Santa Fe Folk Art Market, USA. It was a lucky break for

him where he sold all his quilts in the first two days to make enough monies to pay off his debts. He was a happy man and served me delicious Kutchi food for lunch, yet he unsure about - What next?. In 2018, Ramji has huge orders from all over India, including Fab India and the rest of the world, and there are 250 women working for him. Ramji's designs and the aesthetics now are several notch higher than what I saw in 2014. His latest product - Yoga Quilts.

I am so happy for Tejsi Bhai and Ramji.

Cheers

Kuntal Baruwa

Explorer -in-Residence | Destination Knowledge Centre

Photo Credit: Kuntal Baruwa

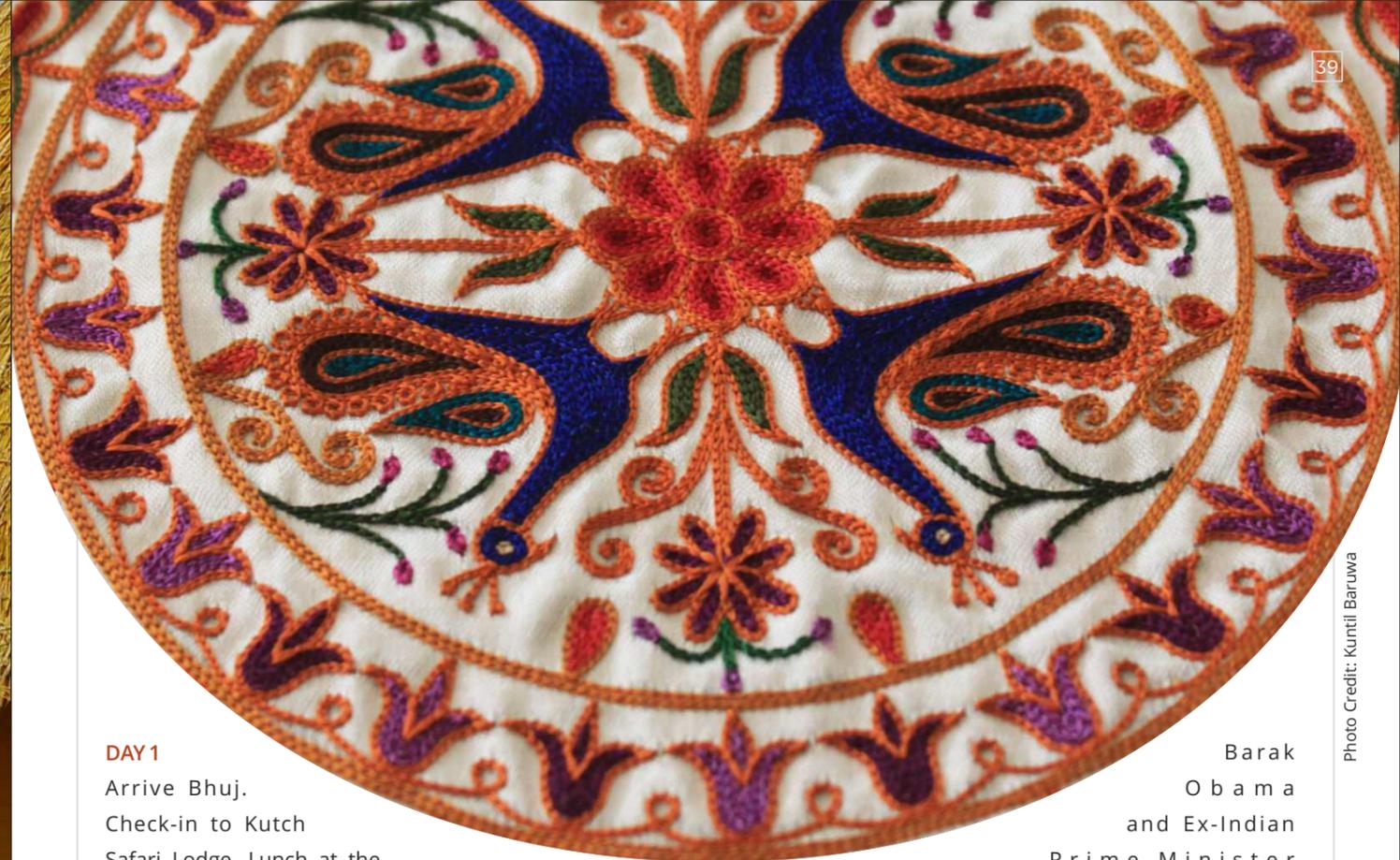


Photo Credit: Kuntal Baruwa

DAY 1

Arrive Bhuj. Check-in to Kutch Safari Lodge. Lunch at the hotel. Post lunch spend time at AA Wazir's home in Bhuj to know more about the different textile traditions to be experienced over the next one week. Talk on Textiles by AA Wazir and display of Textiles by his son Salim. Back to the hotel. Overnight Kutch Safari Lodge (AC Cottage/Lunch & Dinner).

DAY 2

Drive to Ajrakhpur for an Ajrakh block printing workshop with Dr. Ismail Khatri and his sons - Sufiyan and Zunaid. Lunch at the Café of The Living and Learning Design Centre (closed on Mondays) followed by a visit of this one-of-its-kind textile museum dedicated to the soulful crafts of Kutch. Drive to Dhaneti for an insight into the Ahir style of embroidery. Overnight Kutch Safari Lodge (AC Cottage/Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner).

DAY 3

Drive to Kukma Village to spend time with Tejsi Bhai - the only artisan of a unique style of weaving - Kharad. He was recently felicitated by the President of India. Continue to Bhujodi to meet Vankar Vishram Valji and his family for an insight into the weaving tradition here. Back to your hotel for Lunch. Post Lunch head to Sumrasar to meet weaver Ramji Maheshwari to know more about his innovative designs combining the modern and the traditional. Also visit the home of Meghi Ben who loves telling stories through her patchwork and applique work - be it the local festivals,

Barak Obama and Ex-Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meeting et al.

Overnight Kutch Safari Lodge (AC Cottage/Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner).

DAY 4

Drive to the home of master quilt maker Ramji Devaraj at Hodka for a Quilt making workshop. Lunch at Ramji's home. Continue to a village of Maldharis (Buffalo herders) for a Mukko Zari embroidery workshop with the ladies who use silver and golden colour yarn. Overnight Kutch Safari Lodge (AC Cottage/Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner).

DAY 5

Drive to Bhujpur to spend time with Anwar Khatri - a master craftsman of Batik printing. Not many know, but Bhuj has long been an established centre for Batik, a wax resist dyeing and block printing craft also practiced in Indonesia among some other cultures. Continue to the once thriving port of Mandvi for lunch and a quick visit of its 400 year old ship building yard which till date builds huge wooden ships which is entirely handmade. From Mandvi drive to Don to spend time Bhojraj and Ram, both differently abled, but masters in the Mashroo (or Misru, meaning mixed in Sanskrit) style of weaving that's on the verge of extinction. The spectacular Mashroo fabric is a fine blend of silk and cotton - glistening silk on top while the inside is soothing cotton. Mashroo textiles were woven for the Muslim communities who believed that silk shouldn't touch a person's skin and was traded to the Arab countries.



Overnight Kutch Safari Lodge (AC Cottage/Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner).

DAY 6

Drive to Nirona to know more about the rare Rogan Art that came from Persia 400 years ago, Bell making and Lacquer woodwork. Back to the Lodge for Lunch. Continue to Abdul Kumbhar home in Khavda. His family is the only one in Kutch who is keeping an ancient art alive that started during the Indus valley civilization. They have been making earthen pots with the same process and designs as those seen in the Indus Valley excavations. Overnight Kutch Safari Lodge (AC Cottage/Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner).

DAY 7

Spend the morning in Bhuj today for a workshop on Bandhani - tie and dye - with master craftsman Jabbar Khatri. Afternoon free. Vehicle at disposal. Farewell Gala Dinner at Kutch Safari Lodge with Folk Dance (subject to minimum 10 pax). Overnight Kutch Safari Lodge (AC Cottage/Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner).

DAY 8

Post breakfast drive to the airport to board the morning flight to Mumbai. Later fly to Goa (transit time in Mumbai is 2 hrs/through check-in/change carriers). Spend 4-5 nights by the beach. R&R

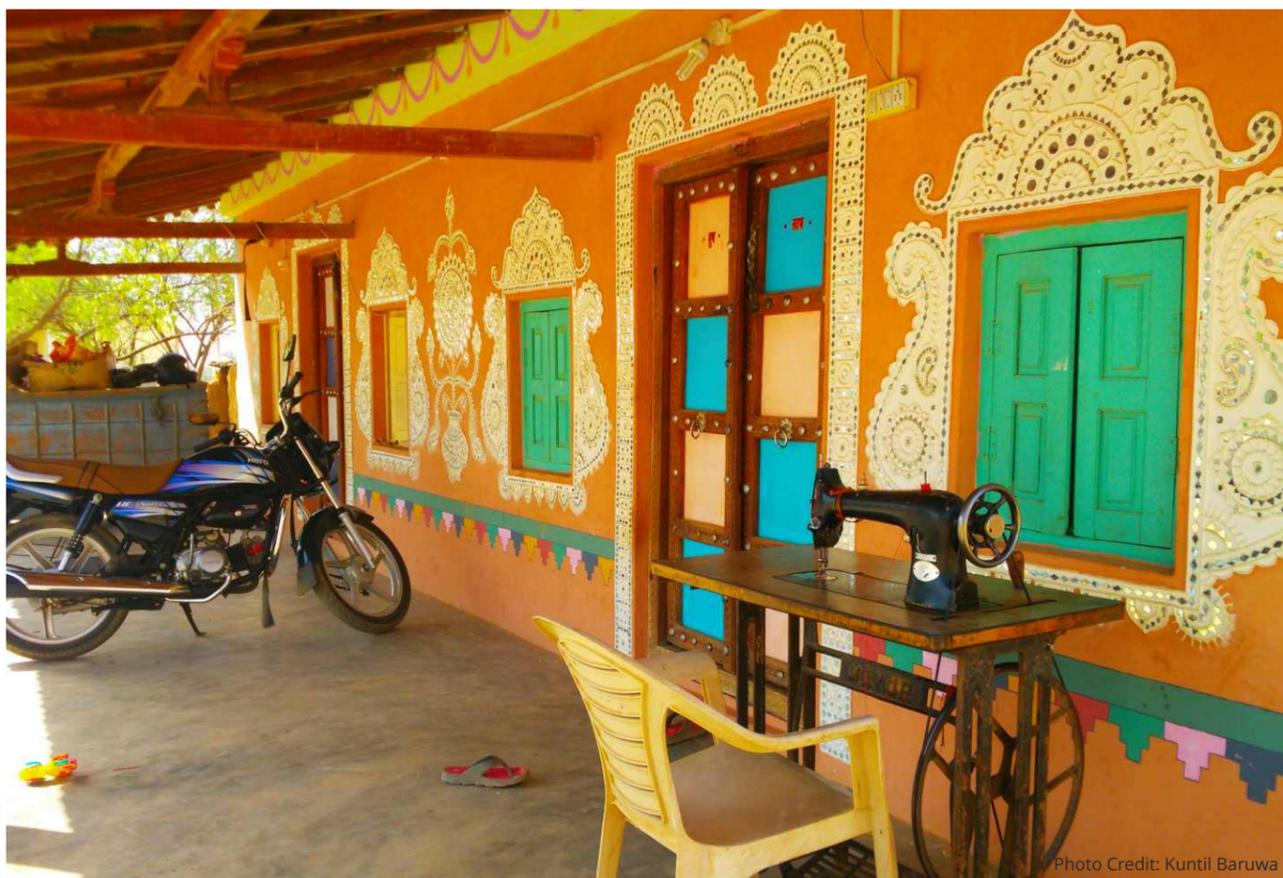


Photo Credit: Kuntal Baruwa



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 7 NIGHTS/8 DAYS KUTCH ITINERARY

» In-depth interaction with artisans. » 4 Hands on workshops with artisans. So clients are not just going to stand there, watch the artisans and listen to the Guide explain. » Ajrakh Block Printing. » Quilt making. » Mukko Embroidery. » Tie and Dye. » The itinerary is designed to support artisans who are off the tourist radar and whose craft is almost on the verge of extinction.

GOOD TO KNOW » Minimum 2 pax | Maximum - 12 pax

COST INCLUSIONS » Accompanying English speaking textile expert in Kutch. » All transfers, tours and excursions in private air-conditioned vehicle. » Entrance fees. » Accommodation » All Meals (only Breakfast on Day 8). » 4 workshops including material and instruction, and demos. » Farewell Gala Dinner at Kutch Safari Lodge on Day 7 (subject to minimum 10 pax).

Get in touch with your relationship manager at the company for cost related queries.

BRIDGE THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

Empower, Educate & Share Knowledge

Bridge the knowledge gap is a new initiative that we launched last year to empower, educate and share the collective knowledge of travel experts with our colleagues.

Rajasthan and Kerala, were the two destinations that were covered with a week of intensive in-house training each, followed by a study tours for the participants.

The tour comprised of various activities and tasks specially charted out for the participants, they experienced and explored several products and hotels for an in-depth knowledge of the destination.

We are very excited about this ongoing initiative.