



NEED TO GET IN TOUCH?

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Manager, Marketing

Asha Kulkarni

asha.kulkarni@wwm.co.in

CAREERS

GOT FEEDBACK? **CLICK ON THE EMAIL ADDRESS**

careers@wwm.co.in

TIMESGROUP (RMD):

Associate General Manager

Suparna Sheth

suparna.sheth@timesgroup.com

TO SUBSCRIBE

Online: mags.timesgroup.com

Mail: subscriptions.wwm@wwm.co.in

SMS: LPSUB to 58888

Call: 18001210005 (All India toll free number)

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

Lonely Planet Magazine India, RMD (M) Dept, Bennett, Coleman & Co Ltd, The Times of India Building, Dr D N Road, Mumbai 400 001

Lonely Planet Magazine India is published by Worldwide Media Pvt Ltd. under licence from Lonely Planet Global Limited (part of the Lonely Planet Group). The words "Lonely Planet" and the Lonely Planet symbol are trademarks of Lonely Planet Global Limited © Lonely Planet Global Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part prohibited without permission



Lonely Planet Magazine India is edited by Primrose Monteiro-D'Souza and printed and published by Joji Varghese for and on behalf of Worldwide Media Pvt Ltd, The Times of India Building, 4th Floor, Dr D N Road, Mumbai 400001. Printed at Rajhans Enterprise, No 134, 4th Main Road, Industrial Town, Rajajinagar, Bangalore 560044, India.

The publisher makes every effort to ensure that the magazine's contents are correct. However, we accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions. Unsolicited material, including photographs and transparencies, is submitted entirely at the owner's risk and the publisher accepts no responsibility for its loss or damage. Submissions to the magazine may also be used on the publication's related platforms without prior intimation. All maps, including those of India, used in the magazine are for illustrative purposes only. Lonely Planet Magazine India is not responsible for any controversies that may arise thereof.

All material published in Lonely Planet Magazine India is protected by copyright and unauthorised reproduction in part or full is forbidden.

CIN: U22120MH2003PTC142239

LONELY PLANET MAGAZINE INDIA

Chief Executive Office Deepak Lamba

Chief Community Officer & Editor Primrose Monteiro-D'Souza

Senior Assistant Editor: Amit Gaikwad Chief Copy Editor: Samarpan Bhowmik Senior Features Writer: Aurelia Fernandes Travel Researcher: Aishwarya Menon Senior Editorial Coordinator: Louisa Menezes Art Director: Mahesh Sagari Deputy Art Director: T. Krishna Prabakar

Head Marketing, Head Digital Solutions Priyadarshi Banerjee

Chief Marketing Manager: Ravi Budania Brand Manager: Chandni Chopra Manager - Marketing: Asha Kulkarni

Chief Financial Officer: Subramaniam S Head Human Resource: Meghna Puthawala Content Studio: Vidyut Patra Experiential Marketing: Aakash Mishra Publisher: Joji Varghese

LONELY PLANET INDIA PVT. LTD

General Manager & Director: Sesh Seshadri

LONELY PLANET GLOBAL LIMITED

International Licensing Manager: Joe Revill Editorial Director: Tom Hall

LONELY PLANET TRAVELLER MAGAZINE UK

Editor: Peter Grunert

BUSINESS DIRECTOR

Sunil Wuthoo sunil.wuthoo@wwm.co.in

BRAND SOLUTIONS

VICE PRESIDENT - Brand Solutions & Business Head - Femina Salon & Spa Gautam Chopra gautam.chopra@wwm.co.in

GENERAL MANAGER

Neelam Menon neelam.menon@wwm.co.in Jiten Shivlani iiten.shivlani@wwm.co.in

Shveta Somvanshi shveta.somvanshii@wwm.co.in

Ekta Dang ekta.dang@wwm.co.in

Ahmedabad

Kamal Rajput kamal.rajput@wwm.co.in

NORTH

VICE PRESIDENT - Brand Solutions & Sales Head - Long Form Content

Anjali Rathor anjali.rathor@wwm.co.in

Jaipur

Pushpesh Sood pushpesh.sood@wwm.co.in

VICE PRESIDENT SOUTH AND BUSINESS HEAD - FEMINA TAMIL

Pravin Menon pravin.menon@wwm.co.in

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT

Alka Kakar alka kakar@wwm.co.in

Bijoy Choudhary bijoy.choudhary@wwm.co.in

FOR BUSINESS AND MARKETING ENQUIRIES

Asha Kulkarni asha.kulkarni@wwm.co.in

With you...

Lonely Planet Magazine India is with you during these tough times, with lots on our digital platforms to keep you entertained and updated with the world of travel. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter - because #LPMIHappyToInspire! Join us in candid conversations with travel influencers and bloggers, find out how to cook dishes from different parts of the globe, put your travel knowledge to the test with our online quizzes and contests, and join us in saluting the #LPMICovidCrusaders. And, because we always want you to interact with LPMI, watch out for our #LPMIMadeWithYou and #EscapewithLPMI initiatives, which invite you to be part of our digital issue. All this and much more coming up.

Follow us on:

- 1 Lonely Planet Magazine India
- © lonelyplanetmagazineindia
- **○** LPMagIn

Stay safe and #stayinspired!



INSPIRATION HAS NO EXPIRY DATE Travel safe: follow advisories before planning and setting off on journeys

editor's note



Primrose Monteiro-D'Souza, Editor Follow me on Twitter @PrimroseDSouza & Instagram @primrosedsouza

THIS MONTH'S COVER

ILLUSTRATION: KRISHNA PRABAKAR T.

Rediscover the variety and colour of India with this celebratory issue

Rediscover the variety and colour of India with this celebratory issue! We're proud to showcase the many splendours of our motherland!

Travelling the world has taught me a new appreciation for India

In the last few years, even before the much-needed call to visit 15 desi destinations before 2022, I had already begun to feel that I was missing out on the incredible around me. Yes, my first-ever international trip to Mauritius had helped heal a broken heart; but wasn't my heart lifted each time we drove out of **Mumbai** onto the **Western Ghats**? I had sat entranced as the aboriginals in Australia showed me their way of living, but I was no less captivated sipping apong with a Mishing elder in **Assam**. I have visited and revisited corners of India, and, yes, I have made comparisons, but, for the most part, India has stood up for herself. In this vast land of ours, there are places beset by overtourism and others that need better infrastructure, destinations we need to leave alone for a while, and others we must carefully showcase. This is the time when we must plan to travel for India and help build domestic tourism. This is also the time when it is safest to plan travel to places close to us. India needs us, and we, most certainly, need our country.

Our main feature this issue has 13 great driving trips out of four major cities to help you rediscover India by road; you'll find short and long itineraries to choose from, and, yes, the journey is very much part of the whole experience. Looking for the unusual? Travel influencers generously share 20+ destinations that will help you find secret India. Armchair travel gets a cultural twist with A is for (Indian) Art, while your culinary skills will get a delicious uplift with Beyond Biryani, in which India's chefs and food enthusiasts will tempt you to cook up appetisers, mains and desserts, all showcasing the versatility of rice.

I'm not apologetic about the fact that I've probably travelled more internationally than in India. Because going out into the world has shown me what treasures – both known and little-explored – we have right here.

Plan now to travel in India, for India, when it's time. Until then, stay inspired.





In this issue...

EXPLORE

Your world from the comfort of home

- 8 Freebies: Explore four of India's biggest cities with these pocketfriendly experiences in **Delhi**, **Kolkata**, **Mumbai** and **Bangalore**
- 10 Culture calls: Travel to different corners of the country through its myriad local art forms and handicrafts

FEATURES

Time to rediscover our country

- 18 While international travel remains uncertain, it's time to uncover the gems in our own backyard with road trips from India's four metros. Have a look at our list for info on a wide range of routes, destinations and itineraries
- 42 Rice might be the most popular staple across the country, but every region has its own unique way of adapting it to its cuisine.

 Travel across India's rich culinary landscape with our feature on local rice recipes
- 62 As everyone sets out to do more local travelling, we spoke to some of our favourite **travel influencers** to find out their most memorable **secret destinations** across the country
- 78 This land of ours is immensely rich. In yet another #LPMIMadeWithYou feature, our fellow travellers write love letters about places that have left an indelible impression
- 89 Even as people look for ways to escape the dreariness of lockdown, we asked four travellers to share their favourite travel memories through hand-made art











Mountains, monasteries and magic await!

Bhutan is the last great Himalayan kingdom, where a traditional Buddhist culture carefully embraces global developments. Not only is Bhutan carbon neutral, but it actually absorbs more carbon than it emits! For the visitor, it translates into lovely forest hikes and superb birding across a chain of national parks. Bhutan offers one of the last pristine pockets in the entire Himalaya. If it's not 'Shangri-La', it's as close as it gets.







THE BEST OF TRAVELAT YOUR FINGERTIPS

SUBSCRIBETO THE DIGITAL ISSUE







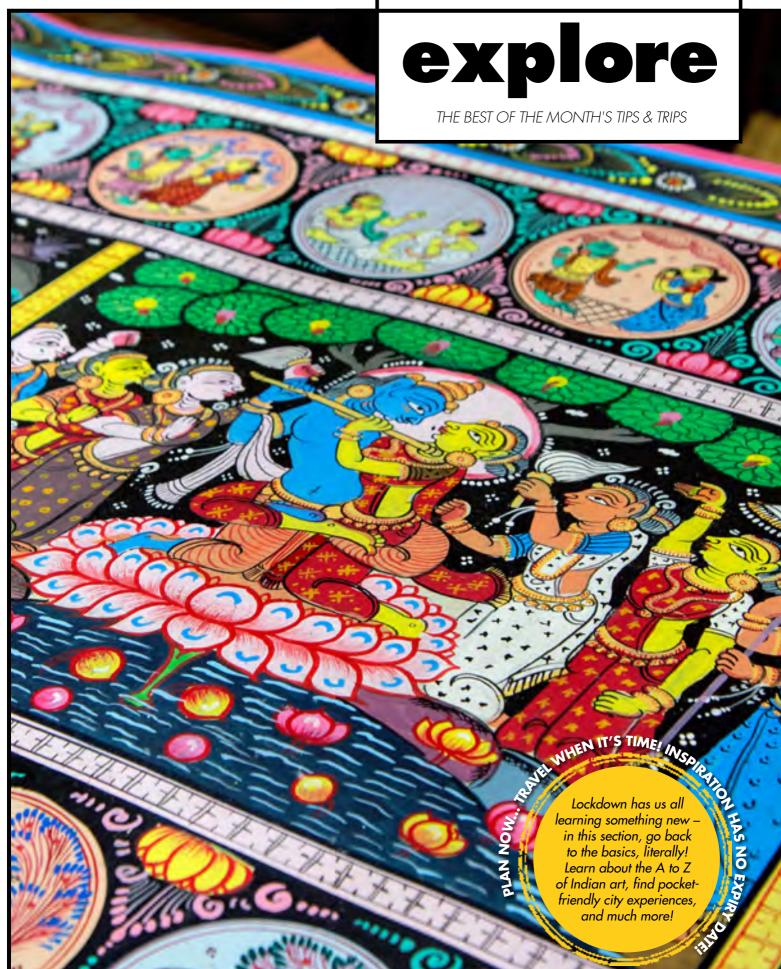
Scan this QR code to get the latest issue of *Lonely Planet Magazine India* on your tablet or mobile device!

AVAILABLE ON









PHOTOGRAPH: T. KRISHNA PRABAKAR

Cashless Encounters

Cutting down on your travel budget doesn't mean you have to miss out. Here's a list of things for you to do in major Indian cities, without spending a rupee

Sure, the countryside seems the place to go to in post-COVID times, but we know there's no way to not visit the cities. And, whether you're a student, out on a trip with friends, a backpacker hoping to stretch every rupee, or simply someone who wants to explore a city without having to reach for your wallet, there are a number of options to choose from in major cities across the country. Have a look at these to add to your next city encounter – when it's safe to travel again.

BANGALORE

CUBBON PARK: Located right in the heart of Bangalore, this park serves as one of the 'lungs' of the city. Created in 1870, Cubbon Park has subsequently been expanded from 100 acres to over 300 acres. Aside from the Karnataka High Court and the State Archaeological Museum, there are a number of important buildings within the area, along with a children's park and the aquarium, which is touted as the second

largest in the country (Kasturba Rd, behind High Court of Karnataka Ambedkar Veedhi, Sampangi Rama Nagara; 6am – 7pm).

LALBAGH: This botanical garden is spread across 240 acres. Commissioned by Hyder Ali, the garden's expansion was finished by Tipu Sultan. There are over a thousand species of plants here, including rare ones from France and Afghanistan. Aside from the Lalbagh Lake, there's also the Lalbagh Rock, an ancient rock formation that dates back 3,000 million years (00-91-80-2657-0181; Mavalli; entry free 6am – 8am, 6pm – 7pm,

₹25 8am – 6pm).

ULSOOR LAKE: One of the biggest lakes in

the city, Ulsoor Lake is located on the eastern side of Bangalore. While it had fallen into a state of neglect for some time, efforts by various government and environmental bodies have seen a return to form. Enjoy a picnic on its green banks, or go for a stroll around it in the evening. It's one of the most peaceful places in the city (6am – 8pm).

KRISHNA RAJENDRA MARKET: Named after an erstwhile king of Mysore, this is among the oldest and largest wholesale flower markets in the country. Located right next to Tipu Sultan's summer palace, the place is a riot of colours and fragrances. Head to the market early in the morning to catch it in 'full bloom' or at its busiest (Huriopet, Chickpet).

BUGLE ROCK: This massive rock formation at the southern end of the city has been a landmark for centuries. Its age has been estimated at 3,000 million years, much like the rock at Lalbagh. One of the four watchtowers erected by Kempe Gowda II, a feudal ruler who came to power in the 16th century, is located here. The park here has temples and an amphitheatre inside (Bull Temple Rd, Basavanagudi; 9am – 7pm).



DELHI

RAJPATH: The boulevard connecting Rashtrapati
Bhavan to India Gate is one of the most iconic
in all the country. It's also among the best maintained
parts of Delhi, with lawns, water bodies and trees
on either side. You'll see everyone from walkers
and joggers to families on picnics here on pretty
much all days, and, if you're there during the cooler
months, you might even catch an open-air
performance or two (Rajpath, India Gate).

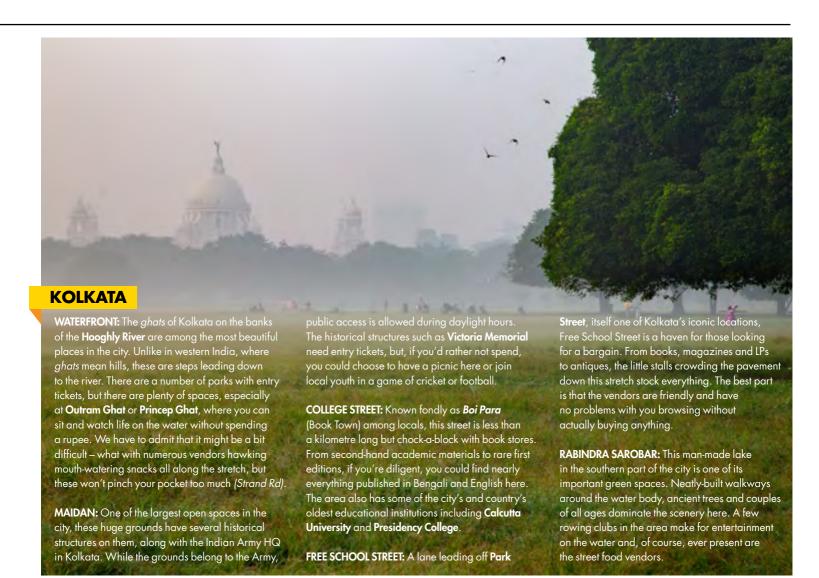
LODHI ART DISTRICT: While colourful and innovative graffiti is becoming increasingly common across the bigger cities in the country, Lodi Colony is in a league of its own. The residential area has been transformed into India's first public art district. Artists from across India and the world have collaborated to create over 50 murals on various themes – from environmental to social issues (261, Block 15, Lodi Colony).

NIZAMUDDIN DARGAH: Among one of Delhi's iconic landmarks, the Nizamuddin Dargah draws thousands, faith notwithstanding. Even if you're not a believer, the melodious qawwali is entrancing and a must-attend performance. While entry is open to all, bear in mind that it's a place of worship and dress accordingly (00-91-98117-78607; www.nizamuddinaulia.org; Boali Gate Rd, Nizamuddin, Nizamuddin West).

HAUZ KHAS COMPLEX: While the upscale
Hauz Khas Complex houses a host of art galleries,
boutiques and cafes, there's still plenty
to do here without spending. Take a stroll around
the compound and focus on the historical structures
within. The complex was created in the 13th century
when the Delhi Sultanate reigned and the tank
at the centre is what gives the place its name.
The madrasas, mosques and cenotaphs are a great
example of pre-Mughal Islamic architecture
(Deer Park, Hauz Khas; 10.30am – 7pm
Mon – Sat).

MEHRAULI ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK: Spread across 200 acres, this park is located right next to the Qutub Minar. From ancient tombs to mosques, temples and stepwells, there's a lot to see here.

Do the research online and go for your own heritage walk (Anuvrat Marg, opposite Qutub Minar Metro Station, Mehrauli; 5am – 6.30pm).



MUMBAI

THE GATEWAY OF INDIA: Colaba, where the Gateway is located, is in the older part of town and, aside from this grand archway, there's plenty to see. Spend some time around the Gateway jetty and spot yachts of all shapes and sizes. Wander the surrounding lanes for a glimpse of Colonial architecture, in varying degrees of maintenance. The Colaba Causeway is a famous shopping hub, with street stalls selling a multitude of things (Apollo Bundar, Colaba).

MARINE DRIVE: One of the most famous locations in Mumbai, shown in nearly every classical depiction of the city, this waterfront stretch has broad pavements and well-maintained seating right next to the sea. You could spend hours staring out at the Arabian Sea or Walkeshwar on the other side of the bay, or you could walk down from one end to the other, from Nariman Point to Chowpatty Beach.

BANDRA BANDSTAND: Located in the suburbs of Mumbai, this bit of waterfront has a rocky 'beach'. The stretch along the sea is well paved and, for those smitten with Bollywood, there are a number of big celebrity mansions in the area.

KALA GHODA: Located right next to Colaba, this neighbourhood has interesting stops aplenty. The **Jehangir Art Gallery** offers free admission and has displays of works by artists from around the country and the world. Across the road from the gallery is the David Sassoon Reading Room; you need to be a member to read here, but visitors are allowed free entry to look around. If you still want to get some reading done, carry your own book and park yourself in the little garden at the back, with a few local kitties for company.

POWAI LAKE: This man-made lake in the suburb of Powai is popular with locals looking for some relief from the concrete jungles of Mumbai.



Aside from beautiful sunsets, you can also spot plenty of migratory and other birds here. There have been reports of crocodiles seen here, but they are extremely rare.





CULTURE CALLS

A is for (Indian) Art

With nearly every region, state and, sometimes, even city hosting its own art form, it's safe to say India is big on creativity, with skills to boot. We invite you to explore the length and the breath of our country the artsy way – with the ABCs of all things art and crafts

Words AURELIA FERNANDES

It's no secret that India is home to a rich and diverse array of arts and crafts, dating back centuries. While some forms have disappeared into obscurity along the way, others have stood the test of time, allowing artists to perfect techniques and methods, which has resulted in paintings and handicrafts unique in identity and aesthetic. If 2020 has you thinking about the way we travel and left you yearning to see more of your own backyard, here's how you can get all artsy while doing that – we take you through a list of stunningly beautiful Indian arts and handicrafts that will have travellers out and about (when it's time!), seeking out these art forms in all their glory!



this village is widely popular for its Aranmula <code>kannadi</code> – intricate metal mirrors. Often a part of an <code>ashtamangalyam</code> (a set of eight auspicious items usually set out during important occasions) set, Aranmula <code>kannadi</code> are made from an alloy of copper and tin, which then goes through a series of rigorous polishings over days, in order to achieve their reflective surface. The final outcome is a stunning hand-made, handheld mirror.

Also worthy of your attention:

Areca palm leaf crafts, Karnataka: A range of sustainable items made using areca palm leaves



is for Basohli Painting Jammu & Kashmir

In the Kathua district of Jammu & Kashmir, the town of Basohli is home to a unique school of painting that combines Hindu mythology with Mughal miniature painting techniques. Basohli painting's most notable features are its stylised faces and use of rich, vibrant colours. Primary colours are often the most dominant palette of choice in these stunning paintings.

Also worthy of your attention:

Bahi-Khata, Rajasthan: Cloth-bound, handmade notebooks, often used as ledgers



0

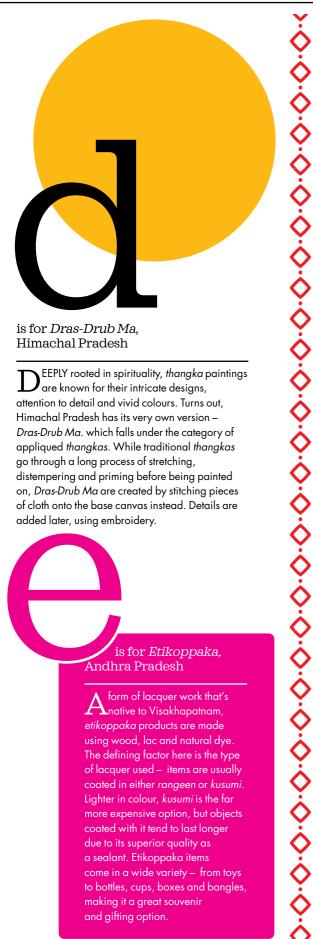
is for Cherriyal Scrolls, Telangana

NAMED after the town from where this art form originated, Cherriyal scrolls expand on the art of storytelling, working as a visual aid for folktales and mythology. A stylised version of *nakashi* art, the technique and colours used in this school of painting remain true to how it was originally done – painting on naturally-treated khadi cloth, using organic pigments such as zinc oxide, soot, turmeric and indigo.

Also worthy of your attention:

Chhau masks, West Bengal: Grand, intricate masks worn while performing the martial art dance form of chhau





is for *Dras-Drub Ma*, Himachal Pradesh

EEPLY rooted in spirituality, thangka paintings are known for their intricate designs, attention to detail and vivid colours. Turns out, Himachal Pradesh has its very own version – Dras-Drub Ma. which falls under the category of appliqued thangkas. While traditional thangkas go through a long process of stretching, distempering and priming before being painted on, Dras-Drub Ma are created by stitching pieces of cloth onto the base canvas instead. Details are added later, using embroidery.

is for Etikoppaka, Andhra Pradesh

> form of lacquer work that's Anative to Visakhapatnam, etikoppaka products are made using wood, lac and natural dye. The defining factor here is the type of lacquer used - items are usually coated in either rangeen or kusumi. Lighter in colour, kusumi is the far more expensive option, but objects coated with it tend to last longer due to its superior quality as a sealant. Etikoppaka items come in a wide variety - from toys to bottles, cups, boxes and bangles, making it a great souvenir and gifting option.





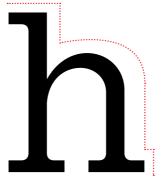
is for Gond Chitrakari, Madhya Pradesh

TOT native to Madhya Pradesh alone, Gond chitrakari is recogniseable almost instantly, irrespective of the region it comes from. This is due to its most notable feature - intricate

line art that creates the illusion of texture. As an art form, Gond chitrakari primarily depicts scenes from nature and it's often heavy on symbolism. Like most traditional Indian painting forms, Gond chitrakari sees the use of natural pigments and dyes.

Also worthy of your attention:

Ganjappa (Ganjifa) cards, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal: Traditional, circular hand-painted playing cards • Gourd craft, Mizoram: A sustainable craft that uses dried gourds to create a range of utilitarian objects like bottles and lamps



is for Hazaribagh Painting, Jharkhand

 ${f F}$ OR a glimpse on how art can seamlessly be a part of daily life, plan a trip to the Hazaribagh district in Jharkhand to see an art form practised by women. Houses and walls here are covered in khovar and sohrai; the former is marriage art and the latter harvest art. While the motifs across the district keep changing, owing to the fact that each village has its own unique style, the technique and the colour palette - dudhi mitti (white), lal mitti (red), kaali mitti (black) and peeli mitti (yellow ochre) - remain the same. →

Also worthy of your attention:

Hoshiarpur wood inlay work, Punjab: Highly-detailed wood inlay work using acrylic, plastic, bronze or camel bone



SEIZE THE CLAY

Terracotta work across India is rather diverse, with each state serving up its own version with its own unique style and format. If terracotta has caught your eye, here are a few states and union territories that are known for kiln-ing it: Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, New Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal

is for Jadu Patua, Jharkhand

N art form belonging to the A Santhal tribe that traces its heritage across West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, jadu patua falls under the category of chaksudan pat, a ritual art that honours the dead. Due to its deep connection with the theme of life and death, this form is often referred to as magic scroll painting.

HEAVY

Metal casting is a recurring feature across a number of states, although the form, materials and technique vary. The end result, however, is usually a beautiful piece of metal work that boasts phenomenal detail

Famous for bronze casting: Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu

Famous for dhokra (lost wax casting): Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh

Famous for brass work: Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat,

Haryana, Maharashtra, Odisha



is for Ku, Sikkim

HILE lost wax casting is a predominant feature in Indian metal works, the Rumtek district in Sikkim uses this technique to create Ku – Buddhist figures cast in copper. These statues are known for their distinctive features and Mongolian motifs and are often used in a variety of religious ceremonies.

Also worthy of your attention:

Kari Kalamdani/Kar-i-Munaksh, Jammu & Kashmir: Intricately - painted, papier-mâché objects

Katab, Gujarat: Geometric appliqué patchwork created using fabric patches

WHAT IS LOST-WAX CASTING?

Lost-wax casting is a metal casting method where molten metal is poured into a mould that has been created using wax. Once the mould is complete, the wax is melted and drained out.

is for Longpi Pottery, Manipur

NITH a distinctive look, Longpi pottery is almost instantly identifiable. Named for the village in which it is made, Longpi pottery is made with a mixture of black serpentine stone and brown clay that's unique to the region. The pots are sculpted by hand, polished and dried, before being baked. The result is a richly-coloured pot almost irresistible to visitors.

Also worthy of your attention:

Lippan, Gujarat: Relief work that uses clay and mirrors to create decorative patterns





is for Mata Ni Pachedi, Gujarat

N intricate textile art, mata ni pachedi is steeped Ain religion and is synonymous with the art of Gujarat. The process to create this textile is a long-drawn-out one, beginning with the destarching of the cloth. The art work itself is created through a combination of hand painting and block printing. Once the painting is complete, it is washed, dried and treated with a solution of dhawda flowers and mordant alizarin, which gives the textile its rich sepia colour.

Also worthy of your attention:

Madhubani painting, Bihar: Intricate, detailed paintings that rely heavily on fine linework • Marquetry, Gujarat: Acrylic mosaic wood inlay, usually in geometric patterns



is for Nirmal Painting, Telangana

PRAWING influence from Kangra, Ajanta and Mughal miniatures, this art form often depicts scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Painted on wood, *nirmal* paintings are treated with multiple coats of putty, in order to draw out the moisture from the wood, allowing the painting to last longer. While a few of these techniques have gotten a modern update, the outcome ensures artwork that is sure to enchant the viewer.

Also worthy of your attention:

Nettur Petti, Kerala: Traditional wooden jewellery boxes, whose primary feature is the triangular lid



is for Otim Kaam, Goa

GOA'S Kansara community is known for its traditional multi-tiered brass lamps, a feature in many temples in Goa.



From ornate baskets to bamboo hats and intricately-carved tables, these states and union territories are home to stunning wood work:

Famous for wood carving: Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, New Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand

Famous for lac turnery: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh

Famous for bamboo crafts:
Arunachal Pradesh, Assam,
Chhattisgarh, Dadra &
Nagar Haveli, Goa, Tripura,
Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala,
Maharashtra, Manipur,
Meghalaya, Mizoram,
Odisha, Punjab,
Tamil Nadu, Tripura,
Uttar Pradesh



is for Pattachitra, Odisha, West Bengal

Acombination of intricate borders, stylistic figures and vivid colours, pattachitra embodies the age-old art of storytelling through painting. Scenes in pattachitra are often influenced and inspired by traditional folklore and religious texts. It is also one of Odisha's oldest forms of art, and has stood the test of time.

Also worthy of your attention:

Pipli work, Odisha: Colourful, fabric applique work, featuring motifs such as animals, birds, flowers and mythological figures • Pithora painting, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh: Ritualistic tribal wall paintings, with horses as the main motif • Pichwai painting, Rajasthan: Paintings on starched cloth, using pigments, minerals and even gold for a rich look and feel • Phad painting, Rajasthan: Religious scroll painting on a long piece of cloth or canvas, also known as phad



is for Rajasthani Miniature Painting



MINIATURE painting is practically synonymous with Rajasthan. Visit any city within the state and you're sure to be treated to an array of styles. While miniature painting traces its origins all the way back to the 9th and 10th centuries, it was during the reign of the Mughal Empire that a number of miniature painting studios were set up, further developing the art form. →

is for Surpur Painting, Karnataka

TN Karnataka's Yadgir district, Shorapur Taluka is home to Surpur painting, a form of miniature painting. Renowned for its extreme attention to detail peaked during the rule of Raja Venkatappa Naik, between painting artists from the Garudadri family migrated to what was then Surpur, further developing and perfecting the style. Although Surpur paintings can be seen in museums such as the Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad, and the Jaganmohan Palace in Mysore, the art form is gradually diminishing today.

Also worthy of your attention:

Seashell craft, Odisha, Ka Kaam), Tamil Nadu (Chippi), Goa (Shimpla Hast Kala): A range of objects and jewellery made using seashells and mother of pearl • Sikki craft, Bihar: Brightly-coloured, grass-woven handicrafts • Sholapith craft, West Bengal: Detailed carvings made on the stem of Indian cork (Aeschynomene aspera)



is for Thanjavur Art, Tamil Nadu

HANJAVUR paintings are vibrant, vivid and a true testament to Tamil Nadu's artistic prowess. Art buff or not, you will almost instantly identify these paintings, thanks to key features that stand out - the use of bright colours and embellishments. As beautiful as they are, these paintings are truly a labour of love. Layers of canvas prep, embellishments and relief work come together to bring to life simple yet intricate compositions that boast of texture and rich colour. While traditional Thanjavur paintings use cloth stretched over a wooden canvas as a base, they are also done on glass; the opacity of the colours against sheer glass plays to the art form's strengths.

Also worthy of your attention:

Thongjao pottery, Manipur: Traditional cooking ware, made using a combination of red and black clay ◆ Talapatra khodai, Odisha: Scrolls painted on palm leaves



is for Warli Art, Maharashtra

WITH basic graphic compositions, Warli art is probably one of the most commonly recognisable tribal art forms of India. Warli art finds its roots in storytelling and is often used to depict scenes of everyday life, farming and festivals. The stark white art set against the deep red background is this art form's

STEP IT UP

Indian textiles are in a league of their own - nearly every state has its own special weave, dyeing and block-printing method.

If you're looking to accessorise in a more desi way, you're in luck: India is big on traditionally-made footwear. If you plan on walking away from a holiday in style, these states are famous for their

own unique footwear: Jutti: Haryana • Pulla chappal: Himachal Pradesh

- ◆ Paabu: Jammu & Kashmir ◆ Kolhapuri chappal: Maharashtra
- ◆ Katki chappal: Odisha ◆ Tilla jutti: Punjab, Konglan: West Bengal
- Mojari: Rajasthan











JAIPUR EDITION FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2020



CURATED BY SHANTANU GARG

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNERS COLLABORATIONS

COMING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER **ON A DIGITAL PLATFORM**







PARTNERS +

ATTITUDES JAIPUR RUGS







WHAT I'VE LEARNT...

Finding my *ikigai* in travel

Travel video content creator **Shenaz Treasury** on her passion for discovering new cultures, meeting exciting people, and the life lessons she's learned along the way

I used to be an actor, but I'm done with that.

My fate was always in other people's hands, to cast me, to make good movies. I wanted to make my own fate.

I've found my ikigai in travel—it's the reason I jump out of bed each morning. I love shooting, editing, writing and travelling. I feel so blessed that I can make a career out of it.

I love landing in a new destination and exploring. I enjoy getting out of my hotel and walking around different neighbourhoods. I want to see the cities first and then the countryside, nature. Travel, for me, is about discovering culture, food, people and nature in a destination.

I've learnt to live simply. To not collect too much.

To pack light and be light. I realise I don't need anything more than the essentials. I'm fine with being alone for long periods of time; I enjoy my own company.

Still, sometimes, it can get lonely and I find that challenging, but I can talk to anyone!

I'm addicted to adventure, new experiences and discovery. Exploring a new country gives me a high. I think it starts with being an escapist, wanting to get away from the mundane routines of daily life.

I post Stories while I'm travelling. I edit when I get back so I can relive those moments and create my videos. Then I'm off again.

Sure, I've been a backpacker, and this is what I learned: To pack very light. To be tolerant of people getting "happy" in the bunk bed below me. To use ear plugs. To earn more money and stay in a hotel.

To first-time solo travellers, I say... have fun.

Be curious. Enjoy the freedom of not being in a group;
you can do exactly as you please! Make friends.

Talk to strangers. Get to know yourself.

The worst piece of travel advice I've received:

Don't eat street food.

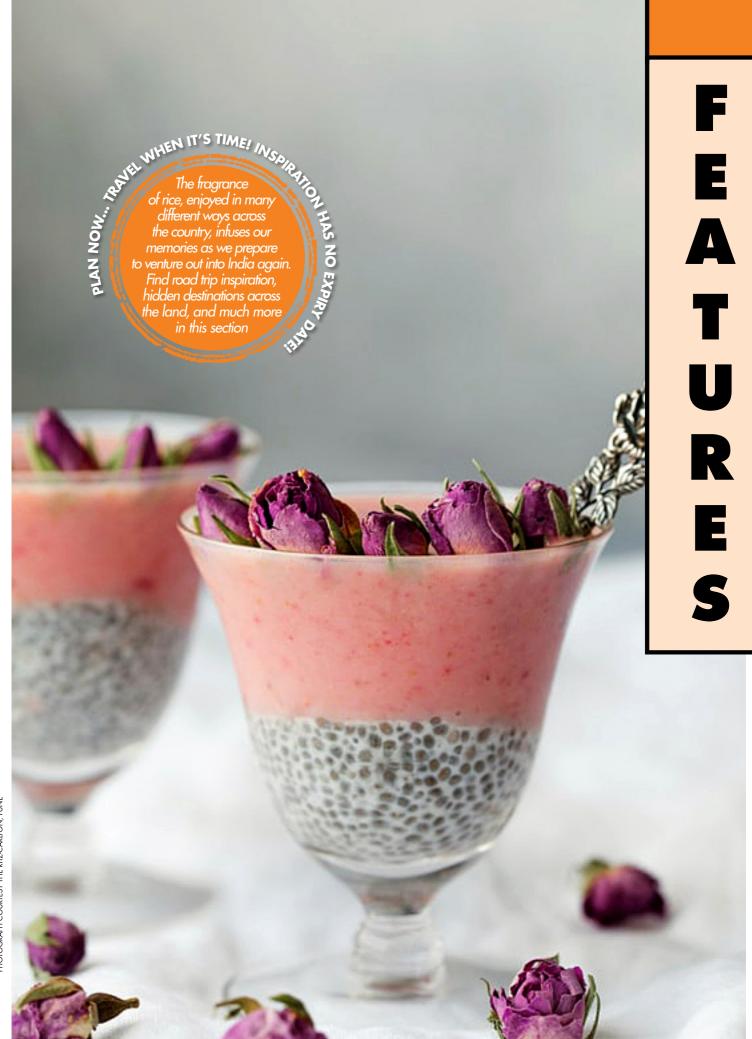
THE MOST FUN COUNTRY...
COLOMBIA

THE COUNTRY FOR GETTING FIT AND OUTDOORSY...
AUSTRALIA

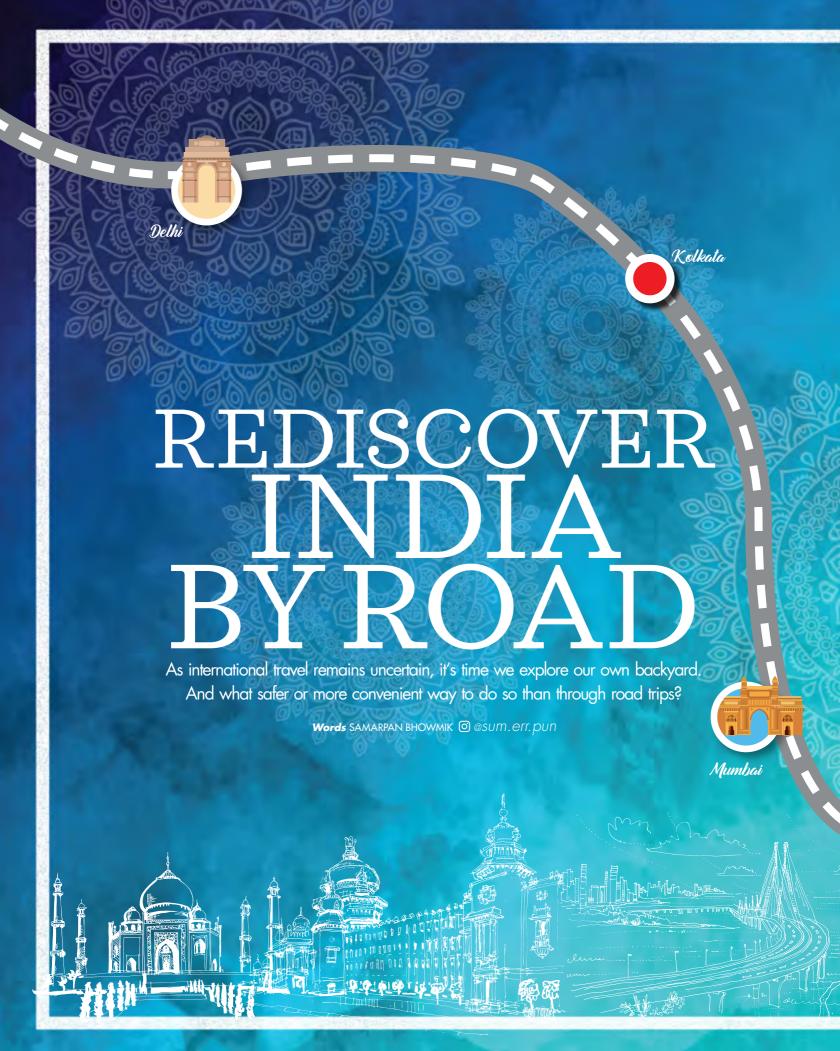
THE MOST INSPIRING COUNTRY... BHUTAN; MUST GET THERE SOON

THE MOST
CHALLENGING
COUNTRY... INDIA;
UNFORTUNATELY,
I THINK IT'S STILL HARD
TO TRAVEL ALONE
AS A WOMAN HERE.





PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE RITZ-CARITON, PUNE





Out of Delhi

DELHI TO AMRITSAR, PUNJAB

The journey: 475km; 8.5 hours driving time; halt at Chandigarh

About the destination: Landmarks of faith, historic icons and delicious food are just some of the charms of Amritsar. Whether you're looking to spend an evening contemplating the universe in the courtyard of the Golden Temple or reliving the nightmarish massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, the monuments in the city all have a long history with associated tales of both glory and tragedy. The Wagah Border is also close by, with the famous closing of the gate ceremony that draws thousands. As for the food, every meal is a celebration of flavours, even when disguised as a humble glass of lassi.

Although not a particularly long drive to do in a day, we'd suggest leaving early, with some time on hand. Take the route via Chandigarh, but make a stop at **Murthal**, a little under 50km from Delhi. The *dhabas* here are known for their scrumptious food, and you'll be left licking your fingers long after you've left Murthal behind.

The road is in great shape and will allow you to make good time. You'll make it to Chandigarh in time for lunch, but make sure you have some time to spend in the planned city. Visit the impeccably-curated **Rock Garden** (00-91-172-740-645; Secor 1, Chandigarh; 9am – 7.30pm April – September, 9am – 6pm October - March; ₹20 adult, ₹10 child) or take a stroll down the promenade at **Sukhna Lake**. You will not find better spots than these to stretch your legs after the long hours behind the wheel.

After Chandigarh, it's a straightforward, four-hour drive to Amritsar. On the way, enjoy the sights and sounds of Punjab's lush countryside. The roads are in reasonable shape, and traffic isn't too unruly either. If you manage to make room after lunch, stop for snacks on the outskirts of Jalandhar, just about 90km from your destination.

ESSENTIALS

STAY

The Piccadily Hotel: 00-91-172-431-

5431; www.thepiccadily.com; Himalaya Marg, Sector 22 - B, Chandigarh; from ₹3,500

Hotel KLG Starlite: 00-91-172-418-4180; www.klgstarlite.com; Plot No. 51, Industrial Area Phase II, Chandigarh; from ₹2,250





DELHI TO NAINITAL, UTTARAKHAND The journey: 310km; 7 hours driving time; halt at Moradabad

About the destination: With crisp, clean mountain air, sweeping valleys, freshwater lakes glistening in the sun, and warm, hospitable people, Nainital's popularity as a summer getaway has only grown since its establishment in the 19th century. While it's not exactly tucked away from the world, there are still pockets of peace to be found here. Nainital Lake is the centrepiece of everything in town, and a great way to soak up the atmosphere is to grab a coffee or hot chocolate at one of the many cafés on the lakefront. Treks to peaks such as Naini Peak that surround the valley throw up breathtaking views, while, in town, the Colonial architecture of the Governor's House and St Joseph's College, among others, provides a glimpse into the city's origins and history.

This one is perfect for a weekend getaway from Delhi. The fairly short distance means you can take your time setting out for this one, and still get there well within daylight hours. The first part of the trip, as you make your way across Uttar Pradesh is standard fare, and,

if you swear by a *dhaba* breakfast, we'd recommend stopping at **Babugarh**, a little under 100km from Delhi. There are a number of *dhabas* on the highway here; it's a popular stop for truckers.

As you approach industrial Moradabad, truck traffic on the highway becomes a bit of a nuisance. Just focus on the mountains through these stretches. **Moradabad** is also a hub for brass goods, and you could make a quick stop to pick up some brass handicrafts after lunch.

Once past Moradabad, the landscape starts to get greener, and your spirits will start to soar. Bear in mind, though, that you'll have to choose a route at this point. While one will take you via Rampur, Rudrapur and Kathgodam, the other will take you via Bazpur and Kaladhungi. We'd recommend the latter one, owing to the stops you can make along the way.

Just before you start ascending on hilly roads from **Kaladhungi**, you'll come across the **Corbett Falls** and the **Jim Corbett Museum**. A visit to the waterfall will need you to make a small detour, while the museum is right on the road up to Nainital.

The drive uphill is just a little over 30km. Take your time, especially if you don't usually drive on mountain roads and revel in the gorgeous views along the way.

ESSENTIALS

STAY

The Naini Retreat - Nainital Heritage
Hotel: 00-91-99991-20413; https://tattvaspa.
com; Mallital, Ayarpatta, Nainital; from ₹7,000
Shervani Hilltop Nainital: 00-91-5942-233-800; www.shervanihotels.com/shervani-hilltopnainital; Mallital, Nainital; from ₹5,200





Out of Delhi...

DELHI TO ORCHHA, MADHYA PRADESH The journey: 500km; 9 hours driving time; night halt at Gwalior

About the destination: Visiting the ancient city of Orchha is like stepping into a time capsule. Its palaces in the Orchha Fort Complex, Chaturbhuj and Ram Raja temples and its chattris (cenotaphs) have been standing proud for centuries and have weathered the ravages of time to continue to stand in fairly good shape. Even the traditions of the region's people have stood the test of time, evident in the rich local cuisine and colourful handicrafts. The heritage, history and culture might be captivating for most, but, for those who want a little more, there are adventure activities on the Betwa River that cuts through the town, along with safaris in the Orchha Wildlife Sanctuary, and cycling tours of surrounding villages.

DAY '

One needs to be careful on the way out of Delhi on this drive. While the swank and shiny Delhi-Agra Yamuna Expressway is a dream to drive on, there are a couple of things to bear in mind. As tempted as you might be to put pedal to the metal, bear in mind that sticking to the speed limit can save your and others' lives. Aside from the risk to life and limb, there are speed cameras all along the route to deter accelerator-happy drivers. The other thing to remember is that it's very easy to settle into a steady speed and get very comfortable on arrow-straight roads with flat, unremarkable farmlands on either side, but you need to stay alert every step of the way, keeping your eyes on the road and on other traffic. It will take you just about four hours to cover the 230-odd kilometres between Delhi and Agra.

Most people will make a beeline for the Taj Mahal when you reach Agra, but we'd recommend visiting some other illustrious monuments here, usually overshadowed by the 'Wonder of the World'. Check out the Red Taj, Jama Masjid and Agra Fort. As for food, the chaats and sweetmeats in Seth Galli will lure you away from any fancy lunch plans. You can take your time exploring Agra as the distance to Gwalior is just about 120km and should be comfortably covered in a couple of hours (see box: Drive Instead to Lucknow).

If you get to **Gwalior** early in the evening, we'd suggest heading to the local markets for a bit of shopping. **Bada Bazaar**, **Patankar Bazaar** and **Sarafa Bazaar** are among the stops you should make for exquisite silk and local handicrafts.

DAY 2

Given that the distance to Orchha is just a little over a 100km, you can choose to either arrive early or take a bit of time to explore Gwalior before leaving. From the glorious **Gwalior Fort** and colourful **Man Singh Palace** to the spectacular **Assi Khamba Baori** and tomb of the famous Tansen, there are ancient marvels aplenty here. While it's easy to lose track of time, especially since you won't be pressed by the short distance to Orchha, there are yet more places to visit on the way.

Try to leave Gwalior after lunch, so you have time to stop at Jhansi, just a few kilometres before Orchha. The Jhansi Fort is significant in Indian history, and speaking to locals will unearth tales of the daring warrior queen's escape from British troops here. Orchha is just about a half-hour away, and you can time your departure from Jhansi accordingly.



STAY Gwalior

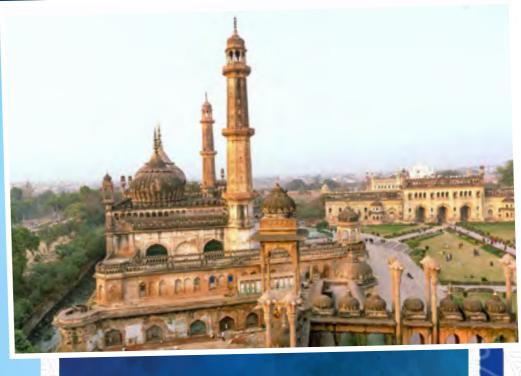
Deo Bagh: 00-91-93002-70011; www. neemranahotels.com/deo-bagh-gwalior-madhyapradesh; Mumbai - Agra National Highway, Bahodapur Road, Jadhav Kothi, Gwalior; contact property for prices

Taj Usha Kiran Palace: 00-91-751-244-4000; www.tajhotels.com; Jayendraganj, Lashkar, Gwalior; from ₹6,200

Orchha

Hotel Bundelkhand Riverside: 00-91-76802-52612; www.bundelkhandriverside.com;
MP SH 37, Kothi Ghat, Orchha; from ₹3,200
Raj Mahal The Palace: 00-91-77470-65402;
www.rajmahalorchha.com; near Chandra
Shekhar Azad Park, Orchha-Jhansi Road,
Orchha; from ₹3,000





DRIVE INSTEAD ON TO LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH

The journey: 555km; 8 hours driving time; halt at Agra

About the destination: Be it the rich Awadhi cuisine or the indelible mark left by Colonial rule, Lucknow is a city of rich heritage, culture and traditions. Monuments such as the marvellous **Rumi**

Darwaza or the labyrinthine Bara Imambara provide insight into Awadhi architecture, while the delectable cuisine on offer in thousands of eateries, outlets and stalls across the entire city, allows you to eat like the nawabs did. Colonial structures such as La Martiniere

College and The Residency help shed light on the struggles and tragedies of the Revolt of 1857. Then there are the colourful, bright and chaotic streets of **Hazratgan**, with handicrafts galore, where you can shop to your heart's content.

Given the swift driving times between Delhi and Agra via the Yamuna Expressway, this is a journey that can be covered within a day despite the distance. Of course, exercise extreme caution when negotiating the high-speed expressway.

Before you get to Agra though, you'll pass **Mathura**. For those of faith, this is believed to be the birthplace of Krishna, and you could make a stop at one of the many temples dedicated to the deity here. If you prefer history over mythology, take a longish break in Agra and check out some of the monuments here that get

overlooked owing to the globallyrenowned edifice in the city.

From Agra to Lucknow, you can take the recently-inaugurated Agra-Lucknow **Expressway**. This swanky new roadway is in good shape and there are decent rest stops on the way too. While the distance is a little over 350km, it takes just about four-and-a-half hours to cover it. Going is quick on the expressway and you'll want to limit stops to make it to Lucknow before dusk. However, you'll pass **Kannau**j where it's worth it to make the detour off the highway. Also, it's only a little under 125km to Lucknow from here, so it won't be difficult to judge how long you can make the stop here. Kannauj is known for its attar, traditional perfumes, with some based on unique fragrances such as the smell of wet earth. Kannauj has a fair bit of history and a number of ancient artefacts recovered locally are displayed at the Government **Archaeological Museum**. There's also the 500-year-old **Siddheshwar Temple** on the banks of the Ganges. We'd recommend leaving these for the return journey though. →

ESSENTIALS

STAY

La Place Sarovar Portico: 00-91-522-405-5000; www.sarovarhotels.com/ la-place-sarovar-portico-lucknow; 6, Shahnajaf Road, La Place, Hazratganj, Lucknow; from ₹2,300

Clarks Avadh: 00-91-522-262-0131; www.hotelclarks.com/avadh-lucknow; 8, Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Narpatkhera, Hazratgani, Lucknow; from ₹3,500





DELHI TO DHOLAVIRA, RANN OF KUTCH, GUJARAT

The journey: 1,104km; 20 hours driving time; night halts at Jaipur and Udaipur

About the destination: The moment you arrive in the Rann of Kutch, the salt hits you smack in the face. The air is thick with it; you feel it on your skin, in your hair and on your tongue. And you get used to it, in a matter of minutes. Once the rains are done, the water gathered on the salt flats evaporates, leaving behind a vast ocean of white – gleaming, glittering, blinding even under the expansive blue sky. Despite the breathtaking contrast, at the horizon, it's a little difficult to tell where the earth ends and the sky begins. The little village of Dholavira, on the edge of the Rann, seems far removed from civilisation, and it's quite fitting that it's here that you'll find remnants of the famous Indus Valley Civilisation and also a prehistoric fossil site christened Jurassic Wood Fossil Park.

DAY 1

You'll see a lot of big commercial vehicles on National Highway 48, on the way out of Delhi, and we'd recommend that the patient driver take up commandeering duties for this leg of the journey. You'll spend some time stuck between these behemoths, with all view of the road ahead blocked for long stretches at a time. If you're one of those who get cranky without breakfast, we'd suggest taking along snacks from home because it's best to make your first stop once you've put some distance between you and the city.

Neemrana is an ideal place to break the journey. Just about 130km from Delhi, and about two-and-a-half hours away, it's right by the Delhi-Jaipur highway, not requiring too much of a detour either. Aside from grabbing that

breakfast you were longing for, you could also take a whirlwind tour of the majestic **Neemrana Fort**.

Given the superb road surfaces, you'll be itching to get back behind the wheel. **Jaipur** is just a little over 150km from here and, even with a stop or two to stretch the legs or take a bio break, you'll make it there comfortably within three to four hours.

Spend the evening snacking on Jaipur's famous *pyaaz kachori* and piping-hot *jalebis*, or go shopping for local handicrafts such as string puppets and blue pottery. Wander the streets and allow the local life to impinge pleasurably on your consciousness.

DAY 2

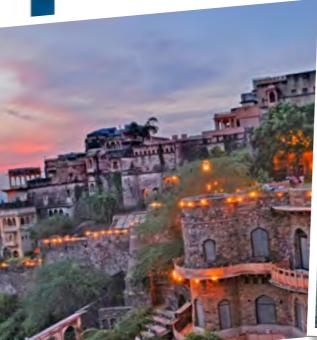
Next morning, before you set out for Udaipur, there are a couple of routes to consider. While the others might save you some distance, for the best experiences, we'd recommend taking the road

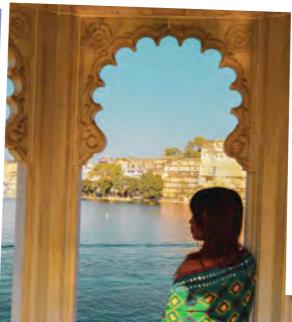
via **Bundi** and **Chittorgarh**. It's a bit winding and the longer way to get there, but the stops on the way make it worth it.

Bundi is around 200km from Jaipur, down National Highway 52. It's the perfect place at which to break and one where you could easily spend a few hours exploring architectural marvels such as the **Taragarh Fort** and **Sukh Mahal**. But don't get too caught up here; there are other sights to see yet before you reach Udaipur.

A little over 150km from Bundi lies the majestic **Chittorgarh Fort**. If you time it right, you could reach Chittorgarh for lunch and explore the fort afterwards. You will have a couple of hours here as the drive to Udaipur from Chittorgarh is just about 115km, and, on the broad, open National Highway 27, it shouldn't take more than three hours.

Make the most of your evening **in Udaipur** by strolling down its streets lined with heritage buildings or walking by the lakes, looking out at the twinkling







lights on the far shore. Try some *mirchi bada* or *dal baati choorma* for a flavourful experience.

DAY 3

The final day of the journey will have a lot of driving involved, with Dholavira being at a distance of around 500km from Udaipur. Set out early via **Abu Road**. The hilly landscape around makes for a wonderful scene outside the window and, as tempted as you might be to take frequent breaks and capture some of the amazing scenery, we'd recommend focusing on getting a move on.

Siddhpur, around four hours (231km) from Udaipur, is the place to stop at first. The Dawoodi Bohra community has thrived here for eons, and its colourful, ornate mansions stand proud to this day. The design influences on the architecture range from Mughal to European styles, and make for a fascinating insight into the history of the region.

You'll want to make it a quick stop though, because, a little ahead, in **Patan**, is the famous **Rani ki Vav**. The stepwell, with its intricate carvings and impressive sculptures, will demand a fair bit of time. Keep an eye on the watch though, as Dholavira is still around 250km away and will take about four hours to reach.

As you draw closer to Dholavira, the vegetation will very gradually start to peel away, and eventually, you'll be on the final approach road to this extreme end of the country. The single strip of tarmac cutting across the white vastness of the Rann of Kutch is a humbling sight, one that you'll struggle to capture on camera.

ESSENTIALS

STAY Jaipur

The Fern An Ecotel Hotel: 00-91-141-412-1212; www.fernhotels.com; Plot No 3, Airport Plaza, Tonk Road, Chandrakala Colony, Mata colony, Jaipur; from ₹2.500

Udaipur

Bamboo Saa Resort & Spa: 00-91-93588-66586; www.bamboosaa.com; Bio Park Sisarma, 1499/1500 Rani Road, near Sajjangarh, Udaipur; from ₹3,600 Lake Pichola Hotel: 00-91-294-243-1465; www. lakepicholahotel.in; Ambrai Road, Panch Devri Marg, outside Chandpole, Udaipur; from ₹3,500

Rann of Kutch

Hodka Rann Stay: 00-91-94266-93972; http://hodkarannstay.com; Bhuj, Banni, Hodka; from ₹3,000 Kiaayo Resort: 00-91-89802-29220; http://kiaayo.com; White Rann of Kutch near Kalo Dungar, at Dhrobana-Khavda Kachch, Dhrobana; contact property for prices



MUMBAI TO MOUNT ABU, RAJASTHAN

The journey: 800km; 15 hours driving time; night halt at Vadodara

About the destination: This lush green paradise in the middle of Rajasthan, otherwise known widely for the Thar Desert, might be super popular with travellers, but it has expanded considerably to accommodate the growing numbers of visitors, so it's still possible to find peaceful pockets, away from throngs of tourists. You can enjoy the gorgeous sights offered up by the Aravalli Mountain Range while nursing a hot drink or get up close on one of the many trekking trails around town. Or choose something more adventurous with rock climbing or rappelling sessions. Aside from natural beauty, there is also a lot of history here. The **Dilwara** Jain Temples and the 15th-century Achalgarh Fort are prime examples of well-preserved ancient architecture.

DAY 1

With Vadodara set as the destination for the night, it's just a little over 400km to drive from Mumbai. To leave the city, you have to go around **Sanjay**

Gandhi National Park and take National Highway 48 out, across the Vasai Creek. Quite a crowded highway, this route has plenty of restaurants at frequent intervals, but we'd say wait until you get to one of the river crossings. The first one is a bit past Virar, over the Tansa River, which even has a 'picnic point' right next to the bridge, and then at the Vaitarna River, near Manor.

An alternative option for a snack break is **Hotel Ahura** (00-91-97665-12512; NH 48, Ambivali
Tarf Bahare, Maharashtra), right off the highway
as you cross **Dahanu**. This establishment has been
serving authentic Parsi cuisine for years now, and
is a compulsory stop for most people who use this
route regularly. Fill up on some akuri or brun maska
before you carry on. It's also one of the few eateries
along this route that serves non-vegetarian fare.

If it's Parsi food you like, make a stop at **Navsari**, around 120km on from Ahura. This ancient city has significant landmarks of the Parsi community, including the 250-year-old **Atash Behram Fire Temple** and the **First Dastoor Meherjirana Library**. The famous **Dandi Beach** is also close to Navsari, although the 20-km detour will add an hour or so more to your drive.

The 170 kilometres to Vadodara after this are pretty unremarkable, the highway mostly passing

through industrial belts, and the number of commercial vehicles on the road will only go up. While this can get a bit irritating, try taking breaks close to the crossings over the Tapi or Narmada Rivers. Even with heavy traffic on the road, you should reach **Vadodara** in another three hours.

While there are plenty of things to do in the city, since you'll only get there by evening, head to **Khanderao Market** for a bit of shopping and street food. The building this market is housed in is quite remarkable in itself, with two domes and a clock tower.

DAY 2

With Mount Abu less than 400km from Vadodara and not many stops along the way, it makes sense to swing by some of the notable landmarks of the city before you leave. Laxmi Vilas Palace, the residence of the erstwhile royals, and Sayaji Baug, a garden spread across 45 acres with two museums, a waterbody and a planetarium within, are among some of the things you must see.

For an even more fascinating glimpse of history, take the State Highway 87 out of Vadodara, and take a right before Halol towards **Champaner**. This ancient pre-Mughal Islamic city was almost forgotten until it was rediscovered in the mid-19th century. Fortunately, what this has done is prevented any damage by external forces to the innumerable monuments across the city. From forts, palaces and stepwells to *masjids*, temples and tombs, the confluence of Rajput and Mughal architecture is a joy to behold, even for those with untrained eyes.

You'll spend a fair amount of time leaving Vadodara and Champaner behind, and we'd recommend not taking many other breaks for the rest of the way. Stop for a quick lunch at **Idar**, a historic town with a fort and famous for handmade wooden toys. You'll find little stalls near the highway restaurants, from where you can pick up a couple of these unique mementos. Mount Abu is barely 125km from here, but, given the hilly terrain, it'll take most drivers around three hours to cover the distance.





ESSENTIALS

STAY Vadodara

Vivanta Vadodara: 00-91-265-661-7676; www.vivantahotels.com/en-in/vivanta-vadodara/; Akota-Mujmahuda Rd, Shushil Park Society, Sheetal Nagar, Akota, Vadodara; from ₹4,730

Welcomhotel Vadodara: 00-91-265-233-0033; www.itchotels.in/hotels/vadodara/; RC Dutt Rd, Alkapuri, Vadodara; from ₹5,300

Mount Abu

Hotel Hilltone: 00-91-94141-54888; www.hotelhilltone.com; Main Road, opp Bus Stand, Mount Abu; from ₹3,400

Cama Raiputana Club Resort: 00-91-2974-238-205; www.camahotelsindia.com; Adhar Devi Road, Mount Abu; from ₹4000 **The journey:** 330km; 8 hours driving time; halts at Raigad Fort, Chiplun

About the destination: As the dying rays of the sun stain the sky red and the usually calm waters of the Arabian Sea reflect the crimson, you'll understand why watching the sunset from

Ganapatipule Beach is an experience every traveller worth their salt should aspire to have one day. There's not a massive list of things to do in this tiny coastal town but, then, that's what is most appealing about the place. Yet unspoilt by the heavy hand of commercialisation, this is a getaway in the true sense.

There are two ways to make the trip from Mumbai to Ganpatipule by road, and, for once, we'll recommend the shorter path. That's also because this route, avoiding the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, hugs the coast and throws up beautiful scenes of Maharashtra's countryside. Besides, the time you save on driving, you can instead spend exploring one of the scenic stops enroute. Set out from Mumbai down National Highway 66, and one of the first such places you'll pass is the

Karnala Bird Sanctuary (00-91-86918-91100; NH 66, Karnala, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra; 7am – 5pm). Don't stop here though, even if you spot an animal on or close to the road; it's against the law and very unsafe for both you and the animals.

Kolad, a famous destination for rafting on the Kundalika River and just about 120km from the city, is a good place at which to grab breakfast. The food in these parts is simple and delicious, and getting

a plate of poha alongside locals at any of the tiny outlets set up by villagers along the highway is a great way to catch a glimpse of daily lives in the region. Still, don't while away too much time on breakfast though, there's much to see on the way.

About 50km ahead, you'll get to the **Raigad Fort** natural reserve. Make a stop to check out the 11th-century fort for breathtaking views over the surrounding countryside. Check the queues

the alternative is climbing up the near-1,800 steps that lead to the fort.

Back on the road, carry on towards Chiplun down National Highway 66. The roads along this stretch are usually empty, except for some stray animals and farm vehicles. You'll also pass tempos chugging along between villages, ferrying dozens of people in what seems to be a remarkable feat of 'adjusting'.

for the cable car that takes you to the top;

If you're travelling during the monsoon, you'll spot numerous little waterfalls as you start climbing uphill near Chiplun. The biggest of the lot is the **Sawat Sada Waterfall**, right off the road. Break for lunch at **Chiplun**, because it's one of the last few available options on the road to Ganpatipule.

It's not too much further to Ganpatipule from Chiplun, with the road curving back towards the coast for the last 90-odd kilometres. →



STAY

Kaular Atithi's The Grand Konkan Resort:

00-91-74473-01301; www.kaular.com/ atithiganpatipule/; Ganpatipule Malgund Road, A/P Ganpatipule, Ratnagiri; from ₹2900

Blue Ocean Resort and Spa: 00-91-2357-235-488; https://blueoceanresort.in; S No127, Malgund, Ganpatipule; contact property for prices





Out of Mumbai...



MUMBAI TO DANDELI, KARNATAKA

The journey: 600km; 11 hours driving time; night halt at Belgaum

About the destination: Nestled in the Western Ghats in the northern Karnataka region, this little town harbours a surprising secret. It's one of the greatest draws for bird watchers from across the country. There are around 300 species of birds that reside in Dandeli, including the stars of almost all bird-watching expeditions here: four varieties of hornbill. While there are many locations at which to catch sight of these feathered beauties in action, one of the more unique places are the timber yards around town. The Kali River cuts across town and is the base for a number of water-sports options such as rafting and kayaking. The town is also home to the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, among the largest such parks in the state.

DAY 1

The start of this route is in itself a great pick-me-up for anybody who loves to drive. Take the Mumbai-Pune Expressway out of the city and you'll see for yourself why many swear that it is among one of the finest stretches of road in the country.

An obvious absence of potholes and beautiful landscape around will make you forget all about your breakfast stop. Especially once the road starts to climb the

Western Ghats

If the hunger pangs grow unbearable, duck into **Lonavala** for a quick stop. The little market on the main road has enough options available and you could also pick up some *chikki* (peanut brittle) or fudge, a local specialty.

Get back out onto the expressway to carry on towards Pune. You'll want to cross the city before peak traffic time as the bypass actually works more as an arterial road. If you manage to beat the jams, you'll have more time on hand to take breaks. And breaks you'll want to take aplenty, given the beautiful countryside you'll be passing through.

By the time you roll up to **Kolhapur** (378km), it will be well into the afternoon, and the perfect time to break for lunch. Which is great, given the

delicious cuisine Kolhapur is famous for. Fill up on tambda rassa with some bhakri at **Hotel Opal** (00-91-98811-46767; www.hotelopal.co.in; 2104-16A, E Ward, near Tararani Chowk, Kolhapur) and, on your way out, do a bit of shopping for Kolhapuri chappals, another renowned local product.

Belgaum, your stop for the night, is just a little over 100km from Kolhapur, and you should be able to cover the distance in about two hours.

DAY 2

The second day hardly has much driving to do, with Dandeli just about 100km from Belgaum. Which is why we recommend you make an early start and check out some of the sights in Belgaum.

The **Belgaum Fort** is the most significant landmark in town, with ancient mosques and temples

on its premises. On your way out of town, we'd recommend a bit of a longer route (adding only about 20km), just so you can make a stop at a couple of forts on the way.

Start with **Yellur Fort**, around a half-hour drive away, and then make your way to **Kittur Fort**. While the former mostly offers up amazing views of the countryside, the latter has not only quite a few parts of the fort still in decent shape but also a museum on site. Karnataka's countryside is a pleasure to drive across, and you'll be sorely tempted to stop for photo ops. Remember though, as the roads go further from larger cities and towns, they get a little worse for wear, and progress will be slow. Especially in the monsoon, try and speak to locals coming from the other direction about the state of the roads ahead. Try and get to Dandeli before the sun goes down as it's a wildlife sanctuary area.



STAY Belgaum

Fairfield by Marriot: 00-91-831-241-6977; www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/ixgfi-fairfieldbelagavi/; Gogte Plaza, Belgaum; from ₹4000 UK 27, The Fern: 00-91-831-427-2727; www.fernhotels.com; Ayodhya Nagar,

www.fernhotels.com; Ayodhya Nagar, Sadashiv Nagar, Belgaum; from ₹3700

Dandeli

Whistling Woods: 00-91-83832-56666; www.whistlingwoodzs.com; Village Badgund, Ganeshgudi Uttar Karnataka Dist, Dandeli; from ₹7000

Magenta Resort: 00-91-73386-60808; www.magentaresort.com; Bada Kanshirada, Road, Kogilban, Dandeli; from ₹4,800





The journey: 250km; 5 hours driving time; halts at Igatpuri, Nashik

About the destination: Nestled in the Sahyadris, the lush green haven of Saputara is the only hill station in Gujarat. Surprisingly, despite that, it has managed to stay off the radar of most travellers. Named after the local snake deity, Saputara translates to "abode of serpents". The rolling hills and the lake present a wonderful escape into nature, far from the rough and tumble of our cities. The monsoon is especially resplendent; the entire region wraps itself in vibrant green, with numerous waterfalls, rivulets and streams gushing white. Aside from natural beauty, the region's tribes present an intriguing insight into local history, culture and traditions.

While the popular hill stations such as Lonavala and Mahabaleshwar see hordes of travellers through the year, Saputara is still a relatively-unknown destination. Although it's not very far from Mumbai, most of the other traffic you see enroute will drop off long before the state border. Follow the Eastern Express Highway out of the city and then take National Highway 160 towards Nashik. Don't stop for a break until you get to **Igatpuri**. The drive up the hill right before is an exhilarating one; the many bends on the uphill road and the oncoming traffic rushing downhill will keep you on your toes. Being a popular weekend destination for many Mumbaikars,

Igatpuri also has a bunch of resorts and restaurants right by the highway, giving you plenty of food options to choose from. And the view isn't too bad either.

As you near Nashik, you'll spot **Bahula Fort** at a distance. The area also has a military camp, and you might spot a tank or two if you're lucky enough to catch a military exercise in action. If you want to stretch your legs, we'd suggest holding off until the **Nashik Botanical Gardens**, right by the highway before you reach the city. This is also the site of the **Nashik Caves** (Pandav Lene Rd, Buddha Vihar, Pathardi Phata, Nashik; 8.30am – 5.30pm), a group of 24 caves that were carved between 1BCE and 3CE. The sculptures, elaborate columns and pillars depict Buddhist art and its evolution in ancient times.

Past Nashik, follow State Highway 17 and then National Highway 360. It's under 80km to Saputara from here, and the climb uphill is a stretch you'd want to take slow. The tarmac snakes up the lush green hill, the sight almost balm-like to the eyes of weary city folk. →

ESSENTIALS

STAY

Patang Residency: 00-91-99259-53333; www.patangresidency.com; opp Boating Club, Saputara; from ₹3700

Aakar Lords Inn: 00-91-9092-98888; https://lordshotels.com/hotels/aakar-lords-inn-saputara; Nasik Road Toll Booth, Saputara-Nasik Rd, Saputara; from ₹5,000





Bangalore



BANGALORE TO WAYANAD, KERALA

The journey: 300km; 7 hours driving time; halts at Mysore and Nagarhole National Park or Bandipur Tiger Reserve

About the destination: The world seems to turn a different shade in Wayanad, usually a pleasing shade of green. This verdant paradise in the Western Ghats, with its lofty ridges, dense forests, intriguing wildlife, sparkling lakes and ethereal meadows, is among the best places in the country at which to connect with nature. Your experience depends entirely upon you, with accommodation options ranging from uber-luxurious boutique resorts to simple home-stays. Local cuisine is delectable, so much so that you'll find yourself asking for recipes after nearly every meal. While its popularity as a weekend getaway is only growing, we'd recommend you extend your stay for a couple more days. To truly immerse yourself in this place, you need a bit of time, and, once you get under its skin, you won't feel like leaving.

While this might not be one of the longer drives on this list, it is most definitely one of the more scenic ones. The roads are in very good shape, which is another reason why you have more time at the stops.

We'd suggest stopping only once you're close to **Mysore**, which is less than 150km away and doesn't take more than a couple of hours to get to. You'd do well to build up an appetite, given the delicious *idlis*, *khada baath* and *bondas* you'll get at nearly every eatery here.

After breakfast, if you manage to fit in behind the wheel, carry on to some of the famous landmarks of Mysore such as the **Mysore Palace** (Sayyaji Rao Rd, Agrahara,
Chamrajpura; 10am – 5.30pm), the residence of the erstwhile Wodeyar royals, **St Philomena's Cathedral** (00-91-821-256-3148; Lourdes
Nagar, Ashoka Rd, Lashkar Mohalla; 8am – 6pm
Mon – Sat, 6am – 10pm Sun), **Jaganmohan Palace** (00-91-821-424-3001; Jagan Mohan
Palace Rd, Subbarayanakere, Chamrajpura;

8.30am – 5.30pm), and, for a bit of a break from architecture and history, **Brindavan Gardens** (00-91-80-2657-9231; KRS Dam Road, Krishna Raja Sagar Dam, Mandya; 6am – 8pm; ₹15 adult, ₹5 child).

On your way out of Mysore, you'll have to make a choice. You can cover the remaining 150-odd kilometres to Wayanad either via the road through the **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** or down the one passing through the **Nagarhole National Park**. In terms of distance and time taken, it's almost the same. Just bear in mind that you should schedule all stops before you enter the forest reserve areas. You have to limit your speed when passing through, not play loud music or make noise, and avoid stopping.

These are also plastic-free areas.

If you choose to go via Nagarhole, you'll also pass **Banasur Sagar Dam** right before you enter Wayanad, and it's a great place at which to take a break. If you're taking the Bandipur route, once you pass the forest area, make your final stop before your destination at **Edakkal Caves**, which has carvings on its walls from the late Neolithic Age, although technically, this place is within Wayanad district, you're still about a half-hour from the main city.

ESSENTIALS

STAY

The Coffee County Resort: 00-91-97475-95099; https://thecoffeecountyresort.business. site; Nallannur Road, Meppadi; from ₹4,400 Abad Brookside Lakkidi: 00-91-484-414-4000; www.abadhotels.com; Lakkidi, Wayanad; from ₹4,000



BANGALORE TO HAMPI, KARNATAKA

The journey: 380km; 8 hours driving time

About the destination: The ancient capital of the Vijayanagar Empire in the 14th century, Hampi was once the world's second-largest medieval city after Beijing. Records exist in European and Persian history about the flourishing city and its importance as an international trading hub. And that's not all; there is evidence of its existence as far back as the time of the Mauryan Empire in 3 BCE. Today, all that remains is a group of monuments from the era. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Hampi is also known as the world's largest open-air museum, and presents a fascinating glimpse into India's rich and tumultuous past. Apart from the history, there are also activities such as rock climbing for the more adventurous to pursue.

Once you're on the way and out of the city, keep an eye out for Nandi Hills on National Highway 44. It's a bit of a detour off the highway, but is a treat for those who enjoy driving. Nandi Hills is a pretty popular weekend destination for Bangaloreans, given its proximity to the city, but, on weekdays, the road up is fairly deserted. There is a total of 47 bends (yes, you read that right!) on the way up, and those with motion sickness would do well to stay away or pop a pill before starting the climb. It's not much of a drive but certainly a whole lot of fun. And the views from the top are pretty amazing too.

An hour's drive from here is **Lepakshi**, yet another site of activity in the time of the Vijayanagar Empire. The centuries-old temples here are rich architectural treasure troves, with hanging pillars typical of the time and murals of ancient kings, while the giant statue of the mythological

fascinating, as are the handicrafts, a local specialty. This would also be the place to get breakfast, because the next meal break is about three hours away in Anantapur. Anantapur is known for its wonderful blend of food influences. The must-try dish here is karapu annam (chilli rice). If it's too hot for you, cool off with payasam (rice porridge). You won't have time to do much else here, since there's still a fair distance to cover. Just about 55km from Anantapur is the **Gooty Fort**, also known as Rayadurg (9am – 6pm). This fort was controlled at different times by the Chalukyas, the Vijayanagar Empire, the Qutb Shahi

Nandi is a thing of wonder. The mythology-associated tales about the place are quite

dynasty, the Mughals, the Marathas, Hyder Ali and, finally, the British.

Turn left towards Bellary from Gooty and, in less than 100km, you'll arrive at that historic city. While the **Bellary Fort** is a major landmark, being historically significant and spread over two different levels, proper exploration would take time and we'd recommend it for the way back (8am - 5.25pm Mon - Sat, 8am - 12pm Sun). Hampi is just about 60km from here, and should take about two hours to reach.

ESSENTIALS

Shankar Homestay: 00-91-94821-69619; Kadirampura, Karnataka;

Goan Corner: 00-91-94482-12621; https://thegoancorner.wordpress.com; Virupapur Gaddi, Koppal, Gangavathi; co act property for prices



Out of Bangalore...

BANGALORE TO PANJIM, GOA

The journey: 650km; 13 hours driving time; night halt at Chitradurga

About the destination: With quaint architecture, tree-lined lanes, and the bright lights of casino riverboats, Panjim paints a very different picture of Goa from what most visitors thronging its beaches are used to. The erstwhile Portuguese colony sees people less keen on partying and more interested in local history, culture, tradition, art and cuisine. The architecture is something you can spend hours marvelling at, with grand old cathedrals, churches, government buildings or even some private houses presenting a fantastic blend of various design styles. Despite the Arabian Sea drawing a lot of the attention, the Mandovi River paints a beautiful picture too, with everything from feats of modern engineering to ancient villages dotting its banks. As for food, some of Goa's best eateries are in this part of the state, serving up not just traditional Goan fare but plenty of global options as well.

DAY 1

behind the wheel.

Take the National Highway 48 out of the city towards **Tumkur**, which also serves as a great place at which to stop for breakfast. There aren't many options available though, except at some of the private malls next to the highway. You could pack yourself snacks instead and just make stops to take a break from

Given that the distance to
Chitradurga, your stop for the
night, is just 200km from
Bangalore, try and get there with
some of the day in hand; it means
you'll get a chance to properly explore
the city. As you approach it, you'll see
windmills on the horizon.

The **Chitradurga Fort** (6am – 6pm) is the biggest highlight here and it'll take you hours to take a thorough tour. Built between the 11th and 13th centuries by the Chalukyas and Hoysalas, the fort was expanded through the 15th and 18th centuries by the Nayakas of Chitradurga of the

Vijayanagar Empire. Tipu Sultan's father Hyder Ali famously invaded the fort in the 18th century; ask locals about the legends surrounding the siege and you'll be delighted with a number of amazing stories.

The other major historical landmark here is the **Chandravalli Caves** (10.30am – 5.30pm Sun – Fri, 8.30am – 9pm Sat). This is an important archaeological dig site, with several ancient artefacts recovered, ranging from Roman coins to currency from China's Han Dynasty. There's also evidence of the caves being inhabited since the Iron Age. By the time you're done with all the history, it'll be time for sleep.

DAY 2

It's a bit of a long way around, this route to Panjim, but the scenic beauty it offers up makes it worth the extra kilometres.

Get as early a start as possible as most of the stops don't show up before you've covered nearly half the total distance.

Jog Falls will be the first major stop, near the Sharavati Valley Wildlife

Sanctuary. The Sharavati River drops nearly 800ft to form the third-highest waterfall in India. It's pretty decently accessible too, with steps built in so you can climb all the way around the massive falls.

Once you've had enough of the spray, get back on National Highway 69, and make your way towards the coast.

The road follows the Sharavati River all the way









Out of Kolkata



KOLKATA TO SUNDARBANS, WEST BENGAL

The journey: 103km; 5 hours driving time

About the destination: Among the largest river delta systems in the world, formed by the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers off the Bay of Bengal, the mangroves of the Sundarbans are a UNESCO World Heritage site. Spread across around 10,000sqkm, the forests are home to nearly 500 species of wildlife. Some of its illustrious inhabitants include the famous Bengal tiger, estuarine crocodile, Olive Ridley turtle and Gangetic dolphin. While motorable roads will only get you so far in the region, locals rely on ferry services and boats to get around. Even for visitors, multi-day river cruises are a popular way to explore the region. It is advisable to check weather forecasts when planning a trip to these parts as cyclones and floods are quite regular, often cutting off access to the more remote villages.

While the distance to your final destination, the villages of **Dayapur** or **Anpur**, might be only a little over 100km, you will have to ditch your vehicle near the end of the journey. There are parking facilities where you can keep your vehicle for a couple of nights and we'd advise phoning ahead to confirm a slot.

While there are a couple of options when it comes to routes, we'd recommend using NH12 via Sonarpur and then turning left onto the Baruipur-Canning Road. Just around 56km from Kolkata, **Canning** is a major hub and lies on the border of the **Sundarbans National Park** area. Try and cover this leg of the journey as quickly as you can, as once you enter the Sundarbans, progress will be slow. Canning would also be the place to get some breakfast although be advised that most eateries here are small and, if you aren't comfortable with only basic set-ups for your meals, you might be better off carrying snacks.

Cross over the Matla River and carry on down State Highway 3 towards Gadkhali.

The roads are a bit congested in these parts, more with people than vehicles, and your pace will drop a fair bit. A couple more river crossings later, you will arrive at the **Gadkhali Ferry Ghat**. It's here that you will have to leave your car.

Get across the river to Gosaba and, for the rest of the way from here, you will have to take local transportation such as ferries, or, alternatively, enquire with the property you're staying at for a transfer from the ferry *ghat*.

ESSENTIALS

STAY

Sunderban Tiger Camp: 00-91-98308-67600; www.waxpolhotels.com; Island, PO Dayapur; from ₹16,000

Tora Éco Resort: 00-91-99030-55524; Bally; from ₹6,000







KOLKATA TO KALIMPONG, WEST BENGAL

The journey: 700km; 17 hours driving time; night halt at Malda

About the destination: The hills of North Bengal present a mesmerising glimpse of the Himalayas. Nestled in the Shivalik Hills, Kalimpong is relatively easier to access than the greater Himalayas. At the same time, the view of these mighty mountains from Kalimpong, namely of the Kanchenjunga peak, the third-highest in the world, is breathtaking. While nearby Darjeeling is the prime draw for most travellers to the region, Kalimpong has had its share of those who want a bit of peace and quiet with their mountains. Home to many educational institutions established in the late 19th century, the stately Colonial architecture only adds to the town's atmosphere. For the spiritual, the many monasteries around town such as the Tharpa Choeling Gompa, Tongsa

Gompa and Zong Dog Palri Fo-Brang

Gompa provide an immersive experience into Buddhist philosophies. The cuisine ranges across cultures such as the Bhutanese, Nepali and Sikkimese, and almost every ingredient is organic and locally sourced. All things considered, Kalimpong provides a unique take on the Himalayan experience.

DAY 1

Although the distance doesn't look like much on paper, the ever-changing road and traffic conditions push the driving time up. Set out early and take BT Road out of the city near Cossipore. Cross over the Hooghly River near Dakshineshwar. Keep an eye on your right as you get on Vidyasagar Setu, and you'll spot the famous Dakshineshwar Kali

Temple on the banks of the river.

Make your first stop at

Chandannagar,

a former French colony on the banks of the Hooghly, about 50km upstream. You'll make it in a couple of hours and this would be a great place at which to grab breakfast of hot aloo kachori at one of the many stalls or restaurants near the city's main river-front promenade, known as **Strand**. Take a stroll on this lovely stretch to fight off the inevitable bout of sleepiness the heavy breakfast will induce. The local architecture has interesting Colonial influences although, except for the public buildings, most are in a pretty dilapidated state. Pay a visit to Chandannagar Museum if you're interested in the history of the town.

Leave Chandannagar via State Highway 6 and cross back over the Hooghly, to join up with National Highway 12. A little over 100km on, you'll come across the historic battleground of Plassey, where the last independent nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, fought and lost against Robert Clive's British troops in 1757. This is considered one of the most decisive victories of the empire over Indian forces, and a monument marks the scene of the battle today.

Carry on down National Highway 12 until it'll be time to cross back over the Hooghly, now a little more constricted and energetic

> than the broad, slow-moving waters you had crossed over near Kolkata. It's just about 200km to Malda from Plassey, but, since you'll be making your way through →



congested towns, the going will be slow and it could take up to four to five hours to make the distance. You will pass some noteworthy places such as **Murshidabad**, one-time capital of the Bengal Presidency, and the more-than-2km-long **Farakka Bridge**, but we'd suggest that you not spend too much time at these. Arrival in Malda is going to be a bit late, and you can leave the exploration for the next morning.

DAY 2

Malda is one of the biggest cities in Bengal, and one with an incredibly rich history. The district is part of the ancient city of Gour, which finds mention in the writings of ancient Sanskrit scholar Panini. Having been part of the Bengal Sultanate and the Mughal Kingdom, among the grandest remaining monuments here are the Adina Mosque and Firuz Minar.

As captivating as the history of Malda might be, the road to Kalimpong is long, with around 280km to cover, and you'd best be getting a move on. The first big city you'll come across will be **Siliguri**, around 215km ahead. While there might not be particularly significant stops enroute, rural Bengal throws up interesting and pretty pictures. Centuries-old places of worship, dilapidated mansions of erstwhile zamindars (land owners), and various other

slices of local life will keep you entertained.

As Siliguri draws closer, tea estates will appear around you. Siliguri is a busy city and, while there are some interesting *bazaars* to explore, we'd recommend carrying on towards Kalimpong, as the last 70-odd kilometres of this drive are the most scenic.

The signs of civilisation start to fade as you leave Siliguri behind and, once National Highway 10 swings away from the Mahananda River, you'll enter the **Baikanthapur Forest**. You'll emerge from the forest near the banks of the River Teesta, and its swirling waters will stay by the side of the road nearly all the way to Kalimpong.

ESSENTIALS

STAY Malda

Golden Park: 00-91-96477-00204; www. hotelgoldenpark.com; NH 34, Narayanpur; from ₹5,900

Silver Arcade Hotels: 00-91-77193-81855; http://hotelsilverarcade.com; 102/79/68, Sunny Park, Maheshmati, near Rathbari More Ward No 24; from ₹3,000

Kalimpong

Sinclairs Retreat Kalimpong: 00-91-97322-77725; www.sinclairshotels.com/kalimpong; 6th Mile, Purbong Busty; from ₹3,400

The Elgin Silver Oaks, Kalimpong: 00-91-99031-07226; www.elginhotels.com/ hotels-in-kalimpong-elgin-silver-oaks; Rinking, Pong Road; from ₹5,500







DAY 1

On the way out of the city for this trip, you'll pass some of Kolkata's iconic sights. Make your way around the Maidan, past Victoria Memorial, Fort William and then take the Second Hooghly Bridge across the river and carry on down Kona Expressway until National Highway 16.

Make your first stop at **Kolaghat**, about 75km from Kolkata. Here, NH16 crosses over the Rupnarayan River, a tributary of the Hooghly. There are a number of resorts and restaurants on the bank at which you can grab breakfast while enjoying the sights on the water. If you want to pretty up your social media feed, make a stop at the **Kolaghat Flower Market**, a riot of colours and fragrances, and conveniently located right next to the highway.

For the rest of the route across West Bengal, we'd suggest you try and make good time, as you'll want to make stops once you're in Odisha. **Cuttack**, around 360km from Kolaghat, is the next big city on the way, and should ideally be your next stop, but perhaps just take a quick break at **Sonakania**, 130km from Kolaghat and nearly at the border between the states, at a point where the Subarnarekha River flows right next to the national highway. This is a unique point for political boundaries, given that, while the near shore of the river is in Bengal, the far shore is part of Odisha, the border passing through the middle of the river.

While most routes to Konark turn towards the coast from Cuttack, bypassing **Bhubaneswar**, that is the stop you need to make and the reason why we suggested avoiding prolonged breaks on the way. Follow NH16 all the way to the state's capital city and break for lunch here. Odia cuisine is delightful, especially for those who have not been exposed to eastern Indian food before. There are a number of places to explore around town, and we'd recommend stopping here for the night to do justice to the range of experiences Bhubaneswar offers up.

DAY 2

Among the 500-odd stone structures in the city, built between the 6th and 13th centuries, start with a temple run of the more famous ones such as Lingaraj (6am – 9pm), Mukteshwar (7am -7pm) and Rajarani (10am - 5pm Mon - Sat),. Also pay a visit to the **Udayagiri and** Khandagiri hills (9am - 6pm; ₹10), which have rock-cut Jain temples and fantastic views over the surrounding area from the top. Get a detailed understanding of the tribes in the state at the Museum of Tribal Art and Artefacts (00-91-674-256-3649; Unit - VIII, CRP - DAV Rd, CRPF Colony, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar; 10am -5pm Tues - Sun). We'd also recommend a meal at the canteen here; the tribal cuisine is scrumptious and available through the day.

You can afford to leave Bhubaneswar by noon,

as the drive to Konark is hardly a couple of hours, but don't wait for later because there are some noteworthy stops still on the way. Just outside the city limits is the **Dhauli Stupa**, built at the scene of the Battle of Kalinga, a major event in India's history. The sound-and-light show is worth catching but only happens in the evening, something you can factor in for the return journey.

A little over 50km on is the village of **Raghuraipur**. It's a bit of a detour to get off NH 316 and take back roads to the village, but it's a stop worth making. Nearly every household in this village produces handicrafts. From *patachitra* to shell paintings and sculptures, there's a lot here you would want to pack for home.

The rest of the way to Konark is smooth sailing owing to good roads and sparse traffic. We'd recommend leaving off the temple visits for later, and, instead, find yourself the perfect base at one of the resorts on the coastline between Konark and Puri. ©

ESSENTIALS

STAY Bhubaneswar

Mayfair Lagoon: 00-91-674-266-0101; www.

mayfairhotels.com/mayfair-lagoon; 8-B, Mayfair Road, Jayadev Vihar; from ₹10.000

Trident Hotel: 00-91-674-230-1010; www.tridenthotels.com/hotels-in-bhubaneswar; CB-1, Nayapalli; from ₹10,000

Konark-Puri

Toshali Sands Puri: 00-91-99370-03223; www.toshalisands.com; Puri-Konark Marine Drive, Puri; from ₹3,700

Lotus Eco Resort Konark: 00-91-90900-93464; www.orchidhotel.com/lotus-eco-beachresort-konark; Konark-Puri Marine Drive, Road, PO Khalkatapatna, Konark; ₹4,100







PACKING LIST

is in good condition.

- * Carry your own water and bottle.
- * Prep a medical kit with basic first aid.

* Make sure your spare tyre and tool kit

- * Take along portable garbage bags.
- * Carry a bag with snacks and other foods you might need on the way.
- * Take along sanitiser, gloves, masks.

ROAD TRIP MUST-DOS

- Always start early; you'll beat traffic and make good time.
- * Try to do all your driving in daylight.
- * Download offline maps before you start out.
- * Never let your fuel levels drop below quarter tank; map pumps on your route in advance.
- * Fill up at pumps closer to big cities and towns to avoid adulterated fuel.
- * If you're driving in the dark, always switch to low-beams when there's oncoming traffic.
- * No matter the weather, on the highway, keep your windows rolled up; it keeps your fuel economy stable.
- * Watch out for stray animals on the road.
- * Be extra careful when driving in the hills or mountains.
- * Stick to speed limits, no matter how gorgeous and empty the road.
- * Take frequent breaks; never push yourself behind the wheel, especially towards the end of the journey.
- * When stopping on the way, always park the car well off the road.



ATIMES Group Initiative COCC DESIGN BIENNALE

VIRTUAL ART AND DESIGN FESTIVAL

JAIPUR EDITION

CURATED BY

SHANTANU GARG

PARTNERS









on numerous prestigious commercial and residential projects not just in India but internationally as well. His designs, whether seen in residential, commercial or retail spaces, or even the exhibitions or experiences that he curates, are based on a beautiful blend of contemporary minimalism and traditional extravagance.

It is this passion to carve a distinct identity for Indian design that led to his collaboration with the D/code Design Biennale (DDB). As curator of the virtual edition of D/code Design Biennale, (Phase I of Jaipur Design Biennale), he brings together over 50 illustrious names in the worlds of art, design and architecture.

"Through DDB, we aim to essay

Shantanu Garg, the undisputed champion of the India-modern aesthetic, comes on board as the curator for D/code Design Biennale, Jaipur Edition.



In Conversation with **SHANTANU GARG**

Young and dynamic, architectural designer Shantanu Garg is synonymous with the India-modern design aesthetic

undisputed champion of modern Indian design.
Through his eponymous design practice, Shantanu Garg Design, he advocates transforming design into idiosyncratic concepts, turning them into compositions derived largely from customisation. He is on a quest to create spaces that are an amalgamation of international design aesthetics and functionality, whilst catering to native sensibilities and demands.

hantanu Garg is the

Shantanu took on his first project when he was barely 18. Since then, he's worked the fables of rich Indian heritage, culture and traditions and narrate its architectural history. From the influence of multiple dynasties that had ruled this country to a confluence of crossover boundaries and styles in modern Indian design narratives, we wish to project India through its crafts and artisanal approach," says the designer, whose own designs are evocative of the rich cultural heritage of India. "It's about time that Indian designers get their due. It's about time that we not only provide a platform for them to showcase their designs, but also catapult them to the International design arena."







From the influence of multiple dynasties that had ruled this country to the confluence of crossover boundaries and styles in modern Indian design narratives, we wish to project India through its crafts and artisanal approach.

Shantanu Garg, Interior Designer





Lyond eyond 115/2011

Join us on an incredible journey across the country as India's foremost chefs bring you interesting recipes made with rice from across 16 states. Celebrate this versatile and vital grain in the form of appetisers, mains and desserts

COMPILED BY AMIT GAIKWAD @guiltyasframed



GULKAND PHIRNI

UTTAR PRADESH

"Phirni is a wonderful, fantastically rich,

creamy, silky-smooth rice pudding that is a popular festive dish.

Gulkand phirni is a creamy dessert made with ground rice combined with milk, gulkand and saffron strands for flavouring.

The key to a good phirni is to grind the rice well.

Phirni with gulkand flavour is the ultimate comfort dessert in a bowl.

The main stars of this dessert are the rose and gulkand, which, when added to the basic phirni recipe, lend it

Serves: Six
Prep time: 35 minutes + overnight

an aromatic fragrance."

soaking
Cooking time: 60 minutes

INGREDIENTS

100g rice, soaked overnight
2 litres full-cream milk
400ml condensed milk
10g dried rose petals + extra for
garnishing
100g gulkand
5g cardamom powder
5ml rose water
150g sugar
10g chopped pistachios
10g chopped almonds
10g chopped cashew nuts

METHOD:

Drain the water from the soaked rice completely, and grind the rice in a mixer to a coarse paste. Dilute the paste with ¼ cup of water, and set aside. Bring the milk to a boil in a saucepan over a medium-high flame. Reduce the flame to low and add the ground rice paste. Cook, stirring continuously, on a low-medium flame until the milk thickens like a porridge and the rice paste is fully cooked. Keep on scraping the dried milk that gets collected on the sides of the pan, such that the cream of this milk-rice mixture adds a nice texture to the phirni. Once the rice is completely cooked to a porridge consistency, add the condensed milk, dried rose petals, gulkand, cardamom powder, rose water and sugar, and cook for a few more minutes until everything blends well. Take off the flame, and set aside to cool. Chill for at least three to four hours. Serve garnished with the pistachios, almonds, cashew nuts and dried rose petals.



AKKI ROTI KARNATAKA

"Akki roti, which literally means 'rice bread', is a specialty from Karnataka cuisine. This type of roti is slightly similar to the thalipeeth of Maharashtra, but the ingredients are rice flour based. Very simple to make, it can be served as a snack or for dinner and is an excellent substitute for the usual dosas. One can make different kinds of akki roti, but the base and common ingredient is always rice flour. You can make a plain akki roti, masala akki roti or akki roti with Indian herbs like methi leaves (fenugreek leaves), kothmir (coriander), etc. It also makes for a great gluten-free and vegan dish."

Makes: Five to six
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp oil + extra as needed
1 cup warm water + extra as needed
Ghee (optional)

FOR THE ROTIS:

2 cups rice flour
¼ cup grated fresh coconut
1 carrot, grated
2 tbsp finely-chopped dill leaves
¼ cup finely-chopped spinach
2 tbsp finely-chopped coriander
1 onion, finely chopped
1 inch ginger, finely chopped
2 green chillies, finely chopped
½ tsp cumin seeds
¼ tsp asafoetida (hing)
Salt, to taste

METHOD:

Place all the ingredients with one tablespoon of the oil in a large mixing bowl. Mix well and knead to a soft dough, adding a little warm water at a time. Cover the dough, and set it aside to rest for 10 to 15 minutes.

Grease your palms, and make lemon-sized portions of the akki roti dough. Set aside.

portions of the *akki roti* dough. Set aside
Set a non-stick *tawa* or *roti* pan to heat
on a medium flame.

Take a square of butter paper or a greased plantain leaf. Grease your palm, and place a portion of the dough at the centre of the paper or plantain leaf. Using your fingers, pat the dough out into a circular disc of medium thickness. Carefully invert the akki roti onto the preheated pan. Cook the akki roti on a medium flame for a few seconds. Flip the roti, and drizzle a teaspoon of oil or ghee around the roti. Cook it on both sides until brown spots appear. Remove the akki roti from the flame.

Repeat with the other portions of dough. Serve the *akki roti* warm, with coconut chutney.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SANJAY RAMCHANDRAN MAIN PICI; TEJAL PANDEY (PROFILE PIC)

MARGAO CHORIZ & BACON PULAO GOA "Choriz pulao is an ode to Goan histor in more ways than one: it is based on

"Choriz pulao is an ode to Goan history and culture in more ways than one; it is based on specific techniques (read: sausage making, curing and smoking) taught to us by the Portuguese colonisers, and made with an ingredient unique to the state. The dish spells comfort in every bite and finds its way onto lazy Sunday lunch tables and into opulent events alike."

Serves: Four

Prep time: 45 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 cups basmati rice ¼ cup bacon fat

1-inch piece cinnamon stick

2 cloves

2 cups chopped onion

3 scallions, white and green, thinly sliced

1 bay leaf

2 cups diced tomatoes

4 cups chicken/ pork stock

200g bacon lardons, rendered

400g Goan choriz (cooked in 4 cups water

for 30 minutes) Salt. to taste

Coconut vinegar, to taste

2 fried eggs (optional)

METHOD:

Fill a large bowl with cold water, and add the rice. Rinse the grains around gently with your hand, and then pour off the water. Repeat this process until the water runs clear. Drain the rice in a sieve. Transfer to a container, and set aside in the refrigerator. Heat the bacon fat in a large, wide pot over a low-medium flame until warmed through. Add the cinnamon and cloves, and cook for a minute until the spices are fragrant.

Add the onion and scallion whites and cook, stirring, until softened (don't let them colour), about 10 to 15 minutes.

Add the bay leaves and the tomatoes, heat through, and season. Remove the onion-tomato *masala* from the flame, and set aside to cool.

Bring the stock to a boil in a separate pot over a medium flame.

In another large pot, combine the rendered bacon, cooked *chorizo* and the onion-tomato *masala*. Sauté well over a low-medium flame.

Add the boiling stock, followed by the soaked rice, and the scallion greens.

Season with the salt and coconut vinegar. Reduce the flame to low heat, and cover the pot. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the rice

is cooked, but not mushy.

Serve hot, topped with fried egg (if using), and accompanied by a tomato and cucumber salad. \rightarrow



CHEF HUSSAIN SHAHZAD

MAIN

Executive Chef, O Pedro, Mumbai

@ @chefhussains, @opedromumbai



DESSERT

RASAWALUTTAR PRADESH

"Among many forgotten seasonal recipes, the one that stands out in my memory is rasawal, an old Lucknowi recipe, basically a kheer made with rice and sugarcane juice. A favourite with both Hindus and Muslims in Lucknow, rasawal is a must-have during Holi celebrations. Making it was a ceremony in itself; women used to come together to stir large pots of sugarcane juice and rice, and carry away bowls of the unique kheer back home."

Serves: Five
Prep time: 5 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp ghee

1/4 cup mixed dry fruits
(almonds, cashew nuts, etc)
1 cup brown rice, soaked
1 litre fresh sugarcane juice
1/2 tsp cardamom powder
2/4 cup milk

METHOD:

Heat the ghee in a deep, non-stick pan. Add the dry fruits, and sauté until light brown. Remove, and set aside. To the same pan, add the brown rice, and sauté for a minute. Add the sugarcane juice, and bring it to a boil. Simmer until the rice is cooked. Add the cinnamon and cardamom powders and the milk, and cook for another five minutes. Remove from the flame, and transfer to a serving bowl. Garnish with the roasted nuts, and serve hot.

APRICOT WEDDING RICE

MAHARASHTRA

"A mix of spice and sweetness, wedding rice is traditionally made during weddings and other celebratory occasions and feasts in my East Indian community of Mumbai. The traditional recipe does not include wine, but, when I was writing a book combining Indian food and wine, this recipe came to mind and, when I tried cooking it with wine, it worked wonders. Still, it works just as well without the wine."

Serves: Four

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 cups basmati or any other long-grain rice, washed and drained

1 large bay leaf

2 star anise

 $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups hot water

Salt, to taste

Freshly-ground black pepper, to taste

1 cup dry white wine

FOR THE VEGETABLE APRICOT LAYER:

1 tbsp vegetable oil + extra for greasing

1 inch piece cinnamon

2 green cardamom pods

1 inch ginger, finely chopped

1 onion, ground to a paste

2 carrots, peeled and finely diced

1 cup cauliflower florets

½ cup seedless dried apricots, soaked in warm water for 30 minutes and drained (divided usage)

1 tsp garam masala powder

Salt, to taste

Freshly-ground black pepper, to taste

FOR THE GARNISH:

½ cup pomegranate arils
1 large onion, finely sliced and deep-fried until golden and crisp
A few fresh mint leaves

METHOD:

To prepare the vegetable apricot layer, heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium flame. Add the cinnamon and cardamom, and sauté until fragrant. Add the ginger and onion paste, and sauté till the onion loses its raw flavour. Add the carrots, cauliflower and half the apricots, and cook for a minute. Mix in the garam masala powder, salt and pepper, and cook until the vegetables are tender. Remove from the flame, and set aside to cool. Place the rice with the bay leaf, star anise,

hot water, salt and pepper in a saucepan over a medium flame. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally, and cook until the water level is the same as that of the rice. Reduce the flame to low, and stir in the wine. Cook until the rice is almost tender and most of the liquid has evaporated. Remove from the flame and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 130°C/ 250°F/ Gas 1/2. Grease a casserole lightly with oil, and spread half the cooked rice in an even layer. Spread the vegetable apricot layer over the rice, and top with the remaining cooked rice. Sprinkle with the remaining apricots, the pomegranate arils and fried onions, cover and cook in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve hot, sprinkled over with fresh mint. →



CHEF MICHAEL SWAMY

Food stylist, food media specialist, wildlife photographer, traveller and three-time Gourmand Award winner

f @Themichaelswamy

@cottagechef







PAKHALA BHAT ODISHA

"Pakhala Bhat is a fermented rice dish eaten in Orissa especially during the summer for its cooling effect in the scorching heat. Typically eaten with various local accompaniments, this version celebrates the arrival of pumpkin flowers in the local markets, and can also be paired with five forms of pumpkin, each with their own flavours and textures - pumpkin flower fritters, charred pumpkin bharta, braised pumpkin greens, toasted pumpkin seeds, pickled pumpkin rind, and badi chura. While the exact origin of pakhala bhat is not known, there are records of it being included in the recipe from the Lord Jagannath Temple of Puri circa 10."

Serves: Four
Prep time: 12 hours soaking time
Cooking time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1/2 kg Indrani rice
(or any short-grain white rice)
1-2 lime leaves
3-4 tbsp yoghurt
1 tbsp sugar
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1/4 cup curry leaves
1 tbsp mustard seeds
4 pieces bora bora chillies
2 tbsp ginger, pounded to a mash
1/2 tbsp green chillies,
pounded to a mash
Salt, to taste

METHOD:

Soak the rice for about two hours. Cook the rice in plenty of water until slightly overcooked. Add the lime leaves, yoghurt and sugar, and let it cool overnight or as needed at room temperature. Once it has developed a fermented flavour (it could take more time if the room temperature is cool), add a tadka of mustard seeds, curry leaves and bora bora chillies. Add the ground ginger and green chillies, and mix well. Season with salt, and serve either cold or at room temperature with accompaniments like badi chura, a pumpkin/tomato/eggplant bharta, papad, pickle, raw cucumber slices, fried fish, or whatever you like.

OTOGRAPH: SANJAY RAMCHANDRAN MAIN PIC)



CHEF VARUN INAMDAR

Two time national award-winning celebrity chef

@varuninamdar @ @varuninamdar,@ @ The Bombay Chef



CHHATTISGARH KI DEHRORI

CHHATTISGARH

"This fermented rice-batter fritter dunked in scented sugar syrup is a sweet delicacy that has its origins in Chhattisgarh. Once the pride of most festivals, today, it is an almost-lost recipe that deserves our attention!"

Serves: Five

Prep time: 15 minutes + overnight

fermentation

Cooking time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 cup rice ½ cup yoghurt ¼ cup ghee

FOR THE SYRUP:

2 cups sugar

1 cup water

1 tsp lemon juice

1/4 tsp green cardamom powder

WETHOD.

DESSERT

Soak the rice in water for two hours, drain and grind to a coarse paste along with the yoghurt. Cover with a lid, and place in a warm place to ferment overnight.

To prepare the syrup, place the sugar and water in a deep heavy-bottomed pan on a medium flame. Heat until you get a thick syrup. Add the lemon juice and green cardamom powder to flavour. Take off the flame and set aside.

Heat the ghee in a deep pan over a medium flame.

Make small pancakes of the rice mixture, and fry in the ghee on both sides until golden.

Transfer the fried pancakes into the sugar syrup, and allow to soak well before serving.



GUCCHI PULAO KASHMIR

"The prized Kashmiri morels, or guchhi, are found in the forests of Anantnag, Kupwara and Kangan. These are a wild variety of mushroom, rich in taste and with a musky flavour. Gucchi gives a very subtle and rich taste when paired with a great quality basmati rice and scented with Kashmiri saffron."

Serves: Two Prep time: 30 minutes Cooking time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

100g gucchi (Kashmiri morels), soaked overnight 15 ml ghee 5g royal cumin 10g green cardamom 10g black cardamom 5g cloves 5g mace 5g bay leaves 150g sliced onions

40g ginger-garlic paste 10g coriander powder 50g full-fat yoghurt, whisked 20g cream 10g green chilli, slit 17g finely-chopped coriander leaves 20g finely-chopped mint leaves 100ml vegetable stock 75g basmati rice, soaked for 40 minutes 5ml rose water 5ml kewra water 0.25g Kashmiri saffron, dissolved in water Salt, to taste

FOR THE FILLING:

15ml desi ghee 50g grated Pindi khoya 10g finely-chopped green chilli 17g finely-chopped coriander leaves 20g finely chopped mint leaves 15g chopped Peshawari pistachios 20g chopped almonds 20g chopped cashews 10g chaat masala powder 5g raw mango powder 10g yellow chilli powder

METHOD: Rinse the gucchi thoroughly. Chop the heads off the gucchi, and set aside. Heat the *desi* ghee and grated *khoya* in a heavy-bottomed pan, and sauté until light brown. Add the green chilli, coriander and mint leaves, and the pistachios, almonds and cashews. Add the chaat masala, raw mango and chilli powders, and mix well. Remove from the flame and allow to cool, then stuff into the soaked gucchi with this mixture. Set aside. Heat the ghee in a heavy-bottomed pan, add the cumin, cardamom, cloves, mace and bay leaves, and let them crackle. Add the onions, and cook until golden. Add the ginger-garlic paste, coriander powder, yoghurt and the cream. Add the green chilli, mint and coriander leaves, and the vegetable stock. Cook until the oil leaves the mixture, then add the stuffed gucchi. Season to taste. Separately parboil the rice with rose water and kewra water until it is 80% cooked. Season to taste. Layer the cooked rice with the *gucchi* gravy

mixture. Sprinkle with saffron water, and cook

the gucchi pulao on dum for 15 minutes.

Serve hot.

ZARDA **NORTH INDIA**

"'Zarda' comes from the Persian word 'zard' meaning 'yellow', so called since the food colouring added to the rice gives it a yellow colour. A traditional Indian dessert, zarda is typically served after a meal, especially on special occasions such as weddings. It is also popularly called *meethe chawal* (sweet rice) in rural Punjab and other provinces of North India where jaggery is used to sweeten the rice (gur chawal). In the historical timeline, it seems that zarda was popularised in North India by the Mughals. The Ain-I-Akbari of Abul Fazal details the recipe of Zard Birinj, which constitutes rice, sugar, nuts, saffron, cinnamon, and even ginger."

> Serves: Four Prep time: 40 minutes Cooking time: 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS

4 tbsp ghee (divided usage) 8g cashew nuts 2 tbsp raisins 2 tbsp dry coconut 2 green cardamoms 4 cloves 1 cup water 1g saffron, soaked in 1 tsp water 500g basmati rice, soaked for 30 minutes ½ cup sugar Extra chopped nut, for garnish

METHOD:

Heat two tablespoons of ghee in a large pan on a low flame. Add the cashew nuts, almonds, raisins and dry coconut. Sauté until golden brown. Remove and set aside. Heat the remaining ghee on a low flame. Add the cardamom and cloves, and stir. Add the water and saffron water, and mix well. Add the soaked basmati rice, and mix well. Cover and cook on a medium flame for 10 minutes.

When the rice is half cooked, mix gently, and add the remaining ghee and the roasted dry fruits. Mix gently, making sure the sugar melts completely. Cover and simmer for five minutes, stirring, to keep the mixture from burning. Cook until the rice is completely done; don't overcook or it will turn mushy.

Serve the zarda hot, garnished with a few chopped nuts. →





PAL PAYASAM

KERALA

"This payasam, made with matta broken red rice, is often offered in temples. Payasam has always been an integral part of the sadya."

Serves: Six
Prep time: 20

Prep time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 60 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 litres water

2 litres milk

1 tbsp ghee

100g *matta* red rice, broken, washed and drained

300g sugar

Chopped dry fruit, to garnish

METHOD

Bring the water to a boil in a big pot.

Add the milk, and cook, stirring, on a mediumhigh flame until the milk reduces to 10%. Add the ghee, and allow the milk to reduce by another 10%.

Add the sugar, and stir well until the sugar has completely dissolved, and the *payasam* has developed a slight pinkish colour. Continue to boil for 20 minutes more until the *payasam* is creamy and thick. Take off the flame.

Serve hot, garnished with a few chopped dry fruits.



DESSERT

JOYNAGARER MOA

WEST BENGAL

"Sweets are intrinsic to Bengali culture. Winter brings with it freshly-harvested date palm jaggery in the form of an aromatic dark brown nectar - the famed nolen gur, Bengal's delicious and classic contribution that delicately enhances the flavour of its desserts. Joynagarer Moa is a seasonal delicacy made with nolen gur and khoi (puffed rice). This variety of *moa* originated in Jaynagar city of the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. It is distinctively different in taste from the ordinary or common moa, which is a small crispy ball made of puffed rice (muri rather than khoi) and jaggery. "

Serves: Two

Prep time: 10 minutes Cooking time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

100g palm jaggery

 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

½ cup condensed milk

1/4 cup pistachios

1/4 cup raisins

¼ cup cashew nuts

100g khoi (puffed rice)

METHOD:

Heat a frying pan over a medium-high flame, and add the palm jaggery, condensed milk, water, pistachios, raisins and cashew nuts. Cook together for around 10 minutes. Cook it down to a paste and then remove from the flame.

Add the puffed rice and stir continuously to fold in.

Using wet hands, make small balls of the mixture.

Serve. →



CHEF VARUN MOHAN

Head Chef, ITC Grand Goa, A Luxury Collection Resort & Spa

@@itchotels @@itchotels



CHAKKRA PONGAL

TAMIL NADU & ANDHRA PRADESH

"People in South India celebrate
the festival of Pongal to thank god for
the harvest. This famous South Indian
dish is made during Pongal to celebrate
abundance and prosperity. Sweet pongal
is known as chakkara pongal in Telugu
and sakkarai pongal in Tamil. After
preparation, it is offered as naivedyam
to the sun god as part of the rituals.
This dish is made in many South Indian
homes on Tuesdays and Fridays to offer
to Goddess Durga and Lakshmi,
and also during other festivals
like Onam and Vishu."

Serves: Six
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

100g rice
100g moong dal
300ml water
200g powdered jaggery
200ml coconut milk
4 tsp spiced cardamom powder
200g ghee
14 cup cashew nuts
14 cup almonds
14 cup raisins

METHOD:

In a non-stick pan on a low-medium flame, dry roast the rice and moong dal until light golden yellow. In another pan over a low flame, bring 100ml of water to a boil, and add the jaggery powder to it, cooking until the jaggery dissolves to a syrup. Remove and set aside. In the meantime, cook the rice and moong dal in the remaining water. Once it is half cooked, add the coconut milk, and cook further until almost cooked. Add the jaggery syrup, and sprinkle the cardamom powder. Remove and set aside. Melt the ghee in a pan on a low flame. Add the cashews nuts, almonds and raisins, and fry until golden brown. Pour them over the rice mixture. Return the rice to a low flame and cook for about five minutes. Serve hot in small bowls.



CHEF RITESH TULSIAN

Consulting Chef, Yazu Pan Asian Supper Club

@ @chefriteshtulsian

VEG CHAK-HAO RICE

MANIPUR

"Black rice in Manipur is known as chak hao rice. This aromatic black rice is grown and harvested by farmers in the North East of India using 100% natural processes; this is a completely natural and GMO-free product, one of the yummiest and healthiest varieties of rice available today due to its natural antioxidant properties. During the days of the Ching and Ming dynasties, it was a 'forbidden' rice, exclusively reserved for the Chinese emperors to ensure their longevity and good health. Eventually, common people were allowed to consume this rice, and it has, since then, become a nourishing staple. Widely consumed in Asian countries, black rice has grown in popularity across the world and is used as a key ingredient in both savoury dishes and desserts. Black rice has a deep black colour and usually turns deep purple when cooked."

Serves: Two

Prep time: 60 minutes + overnight soaking

Cooking time: 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

½ cup black rice, washed and soaked (preferably overnight)

1 carrot, cut into tiny cubes

1/4 cup corn kernels

 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup green peas

¼ cup chopped French beans

2 tbsp oil

1 tbsp dark soy sauce

1 tsp mushroom oyster sauce

Salt, to taste

Seasoning powder, to taste

1 tbsp chopped spring onion greens + extra for garnishing

METHOD:

Cook the soaked black rice. Set aside. Boil the carrot, corn, green peas and French beans. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a wok over a high flame. Add the boiled vegetables and stir fry for a few minutes, then add the cooked black rice. Mix well.

Add the dark soy and oyster sauces, salt and seasoning, and stir fry for a couple of minutes.

Add the spring onion greens, and mix well. Serve hot, garnished with chopped spring onions. →

BHAAT NI KATRI

GUJARAT

"Every Indian household has dishes made from leftover rice. This mildly-spiced traditional Gujarati recipe is a staple in most Guajarati/Jain homes and is made by steaming a cooked rice mixture combined with yoghurt and turmeric. Once steamed and cut into small square pieces, the tempering is what gives this dish its smoky, savoury flavour. This bhaat ni katri recipe brings out the delicate flavour of the tempering, while still keeping the fragrance of the cooked rice intact."

> Serves: Four Prep time: 20 minutes Cooking time: 35 minutes

INGREDIENTS

200g cooked rice 40g yoghurt 15g gram flour Salt, to taste 10g turmeric powder

FOR THE TEMPERING:

30g refined oil 4g mustard seeds 5-6 curry leaves 5g coriander leaves for garnish

METHOD:

In a bowl, mix together the cooked rice, yoghurt and gram flour with a pinch of salt and the turmeric. Layer this mixture in a greased tray, and steam it for 15 minutes. Set aside to cool. To prepare the tempering, heat the oil in a pan over a medium-high flame and splutter the mustard seeds and curry leaves. Pour this over the steamed rice mixture. Cut the steamed rice cake into small squares, and serve with mint-garlic chutney.



MAIN

TUKDIYA BHAT HIMACHAL PRADESH

"Tukdiya bhat is a glorified avatar of the humble khichdi. Originating from Kangra in Himachal Pradesh, tukdiya bhat is made with broken basmati rice, which gives it its name. This dish reflects the indomitable spirit of the people of the Indian mountains and is cooked using spices like cinnamon, bay leaf, chilli powder and cardamom. Lentils, potatoes, onions, tomato and yoghurt add to the satiety factor of the dish, making it a complete, well-rounded meal."

Serves: Three

Prep time: 40 minutes + 30 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

marination time

1 black cardamom

1-inch cinnamon stick

1 green cardamom

1 onion, chopped

½ cup thick yoghurt

1/2 cup masoor dal, washed and soaked for 30 minutes

1 cup rice, washed and soaked for 30 minutes

3 cups warm water

Salt, to taste

FOR THE MASALA:

1 onion

1 tomato

1-inch piece ginger,

5 garlic cloves

1 green cardamom

1 black cardamom

2 stone flower

1 star anise

2 cloves

2 blades mace ½ tsp poppy seeds 1/4 tsp red chilli powder

1 small bunch coriander leaves

2 green chillies

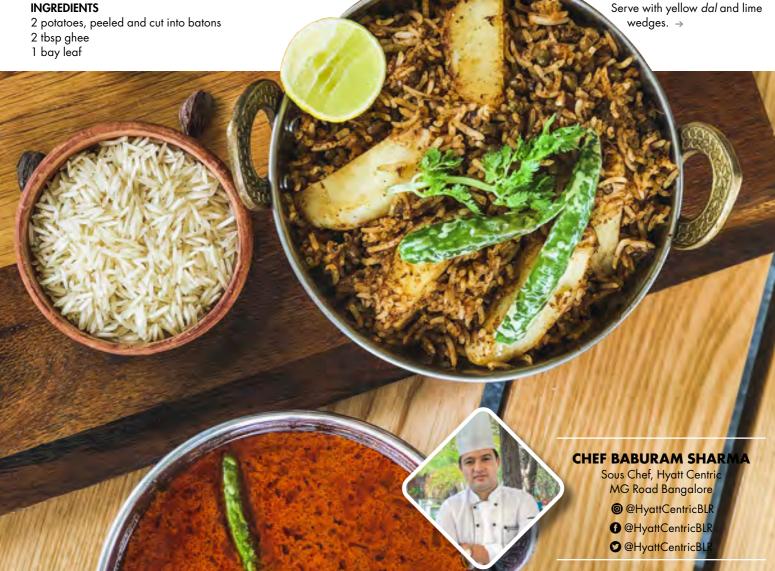
METHOD:

Grind the ingredients for the masala to a fine paste.

Add the potatoes to the ground masala with salt, and mix well. Allow to marinate for 30 minutes.

Heat the ghee in a pressure cooker on a low-medium flame. Add the bay leaf, cardamoms, and cinnamon. Sauté for a minute. Add the onion and sauté until golden brown. Add the yoghurt, and the ground masala and potatoes. Stir fry until the oil starts to separate.

Drain the rice and masoor dal, and add to the cooker with the warm water. Season to taste, and mix well. Close the cooker, and cook for two whistles on a high flame. Turn off and allow the pressure to drop naturally, then open the cooker, and fluff up the rice with a





CHEF SAMEER SHAH

Head Food & Beverage, Saint Amand, (Hospitality Arm, LODHA Group)

@@sameershah76

UKADICHE MODAK

MAHARASHTRA

"The modak is a common, yet extremely cherished dessert in Maharashtrian homes. A traditional offering made to Lord Ganesha during Ganesh Chaturthi, it's considered his favourite sweet, according to the Padma Purana. Modaks are steamed or fried dumplings made from rice flour, generously filled with grated fresh coconut and jaggery. 'Ukadiche' modaks are the steamed variety, slathered with hot ghee."

Makes: 21

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 60 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 cups water
2 tbsp ghee + extra to serve
Salt, to taste
2 cups rice flour

FOR THE FILLING:

1.5 cups jaggery
2 cups freshly-grated coconut
¼ tsp grated nutmeg
½ green cardamom powder
½ tsp poppy seeds

METHOD:

In a heavy-bottomed pan, bring the water to a boil with the ghee and a pinch of salt. Place the rice flour in a bowl and gradually add the hot water. Mix well with a spoon, and then knead to a soft dough. Cover with a damp cloth for 10 to 15 minutes. To prepare the filling, place a heavy-bottomed pan on a low-medium heat, and heat the jaggery and coconut, stir until the jaggery melts, and the mixture dries. Add the nutmeg, cardamom powder and poppy seeds. Let the mixture cool and divide it into 21 equal portions.

Divide the dough into 21 portions, roll each out and shape like a cup. Make deep, long pinches all over the edges. Place one portion of the filling in the cup, and bring the pinches together to form a bundle. Close the top by pinching together to make a pointed end. Repeat to make the remaining *modaks*. Steam the *modaks* for 20 minutes. Serve warm, slathered with ghee.



MEETHA OLIYA RAJASTHAN

"Meetha Oliya is a rice-based dessert made during Sheetala Ashtami in Rajasthan. It is sweetened with sugar and mixed with yoghurt to create a parfait-like consistency. The yoghurt can be flavoured with saffron and cinnamon, and topped with nuts."

Serves: Two
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

½ cup yoghurt ½ cup cooked rice 4 tbsp sugar

- 1 tbsp green cardamom powder
- 6 tbsp milk
- 1 tbsp chopped cashew nuts
- 1 tbsp chopped almonds
- 1 tbsp chopped pistachio
- 4 saffron strands, soaked in milk

METHOD:

Whisk the yoghurt until smooth.

Add the cooked rice, sugar, cardamom powder and milk, and mix well.

Garnish with the cashew nuts, almonds, pistachios and saffron strands.

Chill for a few hours in the refrigerator.

Serve chilled. →



CHEF PIYUSH MISHRA

Executive Chef, Le Meridien, Jaipur

- @LeMeridienJaipur
 - @@lemeridienjp
- **②** @LeMeridienJP

ARSA UTTARAKHAND

"Arsa is a highly sought-after dessert from Uttarakhand. Made with just three ingredients, arsa packs a lot of taste and flavour, and reflects the simple and nutritious cooking of the region. Arsa draws trace minerals like calcium, phosphorus, magnesium and iron from unrefined jaggery. Custom dictates that every new bride take a basketful of arsas to her in-laws' house as a gift from her parents. The traditional way of making arsa involves the laborious pounding of paddy in a stone mortar. Only the most fragrant variety of

rice from the previous year's harvest is used. Young women gathered around in the courtyards pounding the rice, and jaggery melting in brass pots is a common sight before any festivity, while the fragrant smell of the feast wafts in the air."

Serves: Six

Prep time: 20 minutes + 3 hours soaking

Cooking time: 60 minutes

INGREDIENTS

220g rice 200g grated jaggery 500ml oil, for deep frying

METHOD:

Wash and soak the rice in sufficient water for three hours. Drain and pat dry. Grind the rice to a powder, then spread on a tray to dry. In a non-stick skillet, heat the jaggery with two tablespoons of water to prepare a thick syrup. Simmer for 10 minutes, skimming off any foam that might appear on top. Stir in the powdered rice, and take off the flame, working the mixture to a dough. Portion the dough into small balls and flatten between your palms.

Heat the oil in a *kadai* on a medium flame, and deep fry the *arsa*. Remove and drain. Serve hot.



REDISCOVERING INDIA IN GRAINS OF RICE

CHEF MITESH RANGRAS Restaurant Consultant,

@miteshrangras





BISI BELE BHAAT

TAMIL NADU & KARNATAKA

"Literally translated as 'hot lentil rice', bisi bele bhaat is a very popular restaurant dish across South India, mainly Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It's like a one-dish meal, consisting of rice, lentils, vegetables and spices, very close to sambar rice, although the ingredients are slightly different. Spices and some key ingredients like poppy seeds are added to bisi bele bhaat. Traditionally,

in Karnataka, a byadgi chilli is used, which is easily replaced with Kashmiri chilli in other parts of the country. This is a recipe that a friend's mom shared with me a few years ago; it's now made quite often in our house."

Serves: Four

Prep time: 20 minutes Cooking time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

200g rice (ponni or sona masoori), soaked in water for 30 minutes

150g toor dal, soaked in water with a pinch

of turmeric for 30 minutes.

2 tsp turmeric (divided usage)

2 tbsp ghee

1 drumstick, strung and cut into 1-inch pieces

1 carrot, cut into 1-cm dice

1 aubergine, cut into 1-cm dice

10-12 beans, cut into 1-cm dice

10 Madras onions (shallots), finely sliced

3-4 cups water

15g tamarind, soaked in a little warm water

Salt, to taste

FOR THE BISIBELE SPICE MIX:

2 tsp cooking oil

1/4 tsp hing

2 tsp chana dal

4 tsp coriander seeds

3 byadai or Kashmiri chillies

1 cinnamon stick

3-4 cloves

1 tsp methi seeds

2 tsp poppy seeds (khus khus)

1 tbsp dry coconut

FOR THE TADKA:

2 tbsp ghee

½ tsp mustard seeds

15-20 curry leaves

2 whole Kashmiri chillies (deseeded if you like it mild)

10-12 cashew nuts

METHOD:

To prepare the bisi bele spice mix, heat the oil in a cast iron pan, and roast the hing, chana dal, coriander seeds, chillies, cinnamon, cloves and methi seeds together for two minutes. Add the poppy seeds and dry coconut, and roast for a minute. Grind the roasted spices to a coarse powder. Set aside.

Drain the rice, and cook with water. Drain the toor dal and cook separately with water and a pinch of turmeric. Do not add salt to either. Heat the ghee in a heavy-bottomed pan, and sauté the drumsticks, carrots, aubergine, beans and shallots with the remaining turmeric for two minutes. Add water, cover and boil for 15 minutes. Strain the tamarind pulp, add to the pan, and mix well. Cook until the raw tamarind flavour is lost. Add the ground spice mix to this vegetable stew and cook until the vegetables have softened and the spices have cooked. Add the cooked dal and rice, and cook for five minutes until everything is well combined. To prepare the tadka, heat the ghee in a separate pan. Add the mustard seeds and curry leaves. Once they splutter, add the Kashmiri chillies and cashew nuts, and cook for a couple of minutes. Add this tadka to the cooked rice and lentil mix. Serve the bisi bele bhaat piping hot with fried



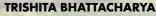


rice poppadoms and raita. @

Secret 1 All 1

We asked our favourite travel influencers to talk about India's hidden destinations –

the places and people they've experienced on their travels around this land of ours



@ @overrated outcast

GO FOR THE CLEAN AND GREEN!

Khonoma and Dzukou Valley, Nagaland

I travelled to Nagaland last September. It was my first time in the North East and it was truly special. I didn't do too much research, because I wanted to be surprised and, lo and behold, I was amazed! Khonoma in Nagaland is a small village (just about 2,000 people) unlike any other. It's called the 'First Green Village of India' and rightly so – it takes cleanliness very seriously. The youth as well as the elderly take part in keeping the village clean. Khonoma gives me Bali feels in India! This place has rice terraces like I've never seen in any place in India. Visiting the place during the monsoon makes it extra special.

Two hours away lies a magical valley on the border of Manipur and Nagaland called Dzukou
Valley (pictured). There are a lot of mysteries about the mystical Dzukou

Valley, ranging from one about a female ghost to why it never gets any vegetation even though it is thought of as fertile! It's most famous for being a stunningly picturesque location that not many people in India know about. Dzukou Valley has an aura around it that cannot be described in words; you feel it when you get there.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Khonoma is located in Kohima District and you can get there by road. Dimapur (80.6km) is the nearest city and railway station. There are a lot of homestays in Khonoma itself. To get to Dzukou Valley, you need to trek for about four hours from the nearest villages, Kigwema or Viswema. There's a government guest house at which you can stay overnight.

COMPILED BY TRINKEOSE MONTERCUES COLZA & AISHWAKTA MENC DISCLAIMER: ALLI VIEWS ARE THE WRITERS' OWNY, IPAI CANNOTBE HEIDIABLEFOR ANY DISPUTE ARISING THEREOF



SWATI JAIN© @Buoyantfeet

SEE ENLIGHTENED VILLAGE LIFE IN ACTION

Raithal Village, Uttarakhand

I got to Raithal Village in the Uttarkashi District by chance in 2018. Travellers usually bypass it to reach Barsu, the base camp for the Dayara Bugyal trek. Perhaps it is a blessing in disguise; the fact that it has had little visibility on the tourist map means that you are guaranteed a peaceful time, away from the madding crowd. I was particularly impressed by the way the locals get involved in the community programmes for the upliftment of the village, like practising farming, extraction of organic honey and promoting the traditional homestays managed solely by the women. In Raithal, on a clear day, you are guaranteed views of the enchanting Himalayas that surround this village on all sides.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Raithal is about 38km away from Uttarkashi town and well connected by road. There are many homestays available at Raithal for a stay; prebooking is usually not needed.

SHUBHAM MANSINGKA

www.travelshoebum.com @@shubham.mansingka

O@travelshoebum @@Travelshoebum

FIND BLISS IN AN APPLE ORCHARD

Thachi Valley, Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh

I first heard of Thachi in 2016. I was on my way to Gushaini (in Tirthan Valley) and eating paranthas at a small eatery when I saw a bus with 'Thachi' written on it. One of the locals remarked that it is a very beautiful valley with a respected temple. In May 2018, by a stroke of luck, I boarded a bus in Aut that was headed to Thachi itself. I spoke to a local who ran a homestay in Thachi and he made sure I didn't get lost anywhere! The wooden homestay is surrounded by apple trees and offers a fabulous view of the valley below! You'll find ancient temples in Thachi, including the Bithu Narayan Temple with an 11- headed stone statue of Lord Vishnu, hikes and jungle trails in the woods, and the opportunity to live a very local way of life, with simple home-made food at the homestay. Thachi is located at around 2,000 metres above sea level, and remains cool even in May.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Buses run from Aut bus stand for Thachi. You'll find a few homestays in Thachi village at which you can make your base.



August 2020



PARNASHREE DEVI

www.traveldiaryparnashree.com @@parnashree19

SPEND TIME WITH THE LAST HEADHUNTERS

Hongphoi, Nagaland

Located in the Mon district of Nagaland, Hongphoi is a remote village inhabited by the Konyak tribe. I was compelled to visit this far-flung village to see the last surviving headhunters for myself. Flanked by thick bamboo forest, the muddy road leads you to a secluded village with scattered houses, children carrying infants on their back, and adults with guns -a common sight. Meeting those who are considered to be the bravest in their community, seeing their wrinkled faces, proud smiles and tattooed bodies, listening to a series of unheard stories from the past left me spellbound. Sitting next to the group of Konyaks around the traditional central fireplace in the house of the chief was an exceptionally overwhelming experience. I was glad to get there before they become history.

GETTING THERE & STAY: The nearest airport is Jorhat and the nearest railhead is Bhojo near Sonari, Assam. There are direct buses and taxis available to Mon Town from Dimapur and Kohima. Make the guesthouses and hotels in Mon Town your base.

PARICHAY MEHTA

@ @awaradiaries

REACH OUT TO HEAVEN ON EARTH

Yusmarg, Jammu & Kashmir

On my fourth trip to Srinagar, a local friend drove me to Yusmarg, a village about 50km from Srinagar. Green grass, blue sky, snowclad mountains and animals roaming around fearlessly -I found Yusmarg so beautiful that it felt like my friend had gotten me into heaven. There were a few governmentowned cottages at which it is possible to stay overnight.

On that day, there were no tourists in Yusmarg. The chef at the government cottage offered to cook us dal-chawal; it was the only thing possible at that time, but eating that piping-hot dish in the Yusmarg winter made for an unforgettable memory, etched in my heart.

If you're looking for a destination that is still relatively untouched by tourists, if you like living amid nature, and are interested in trekking, winter sports, or photography, Yusmarg should be right at the top of your bucket list.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Srinagar is 50km and a two-hour drive away. Stay in the government cottages; they're awesome.



NIVEDITH G

@ @nivedithg

ROW AROUND THE FLOATING CHURCH

Hassan, Karnataka

Located near Hassan, the Gothic-style Shettihalli Church, also known as the Floating Church, was built by French missionaries in the 1860s. When the Hemavati Dam and Gorur Dam were constructed in 1960, the church was abandoned. In the last few years, it has started to gain popularity as a picnic spot and weekend getaway from Bangalore, especially in the monsoon season, when the church gets almost submerged in the water and you can get to it by boat from near the dam.

From July to October, only some parts of the church are visible; between December to May, the water level is low and you can explore the church.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Shettihalli is around 200km from Bangalore. Regular buses are available for Shettihalli from Hassan, which is well connected to Bangalore. Request the bus driver or conductor to drop you close to the church; it's a 10-minute walk from the Shettihalli bus stop. Stay in Hassan town, Chikmagalur or Sakleshpur.





PRAKRITI VARSHNEY

@ @itisinthename

DISCOVER YOURSELF IN A HIDDEN DESTINATION

Taksing, Arunachal Pradesh

Lying near the Indo-China border, Taksing is a remote village in Arunachal Pradesh that rarely sees any tourists. The locals told me I was the first-ever visitor from "mainland" India. I ventured on a spontaneous five-day-long, tiring journey to this village with two of my Assamese friends. The population across nearly 10 villages in the Taksing circle numbers just about 2,000. The untouched, natural charm of this valley and the raw life of the Tagin tribals almost cannot be described. A broken bridge made of wood to cross the Subansiri River to meet a man who had fought a Himalayan bear during

his hunting escapades – what an enthralling adventure! Taksing is one of the most untouched and unheard-of parts of the country. The jungles here are still pristine; you will spot an endless number of rare creatures all along the way to the last village near the border. There is a Tibetan monastery, too, close to the border, which looks quite old but no one knows much about it.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Taksing is truly an absolute secret. The road to Taksing is under construction, so we had to trek for about a hundred kilometres to visit. We started from Daporijo and had to leave our vehicles in Limeking. There is barely any public transport or taxi service available. There is no hotel after a village called Nacho, so we either stayed in our tents or knocked on the houses of locals to stay for the night.

TANAYESH TALUKDAR

@ @tanayesh www.shoestringtravel.in

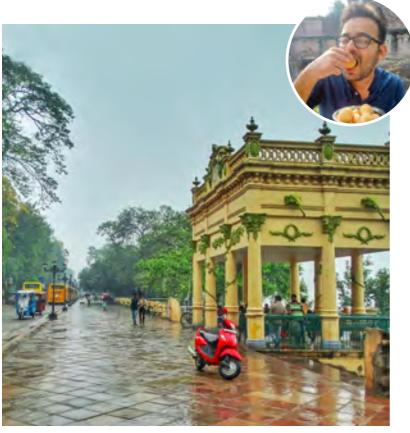
LISTEN TO THE MUSIC OF AN UNKNOWN WATERFALL

Devkund Waterfall, Odisha

If you thought Odisha was not known for waterfalls, the Devkund Waterfall in the Mayurbhanj district will change your mind. I was exploring the area when my driver asked whether I would like to see a not-so-known waterfall. Soon, I was welcomed by the crystalclear water of the Devkund Waterfalls, which reminded me of the quote by Roland R Kemler: "There's no better place to find yourself than sitting by a waterfall and listening to its music." You have to trek through dense forest to reach the waterfall, and you will be accompanied by multicoloured butterflies as you make your way. Climb about a hundred steps to the source of the waterfall, where you will also find a temple. The ambience is heavenly, surrounded as you are by the sounds of rustling leaves, chirping birds, and the waterfall itself. The fall drops approximately 50 feet to form a beautiful lake, in which you can take a dip. Ensure you return before twilight as herds of elephants often visit in the evening and night

GETTING THERE & STAY: Drive in from Balasore, approximately 75km and 2.5 hours away. Stay at the OTDC Pantha Nivas Balasore (00-91-67822-40697; www.otdc.in/balasore.html, otdc@panthanivas.com; and Police Line,





SUDIPTO DE

@ @saltandsandals

GO FOR THE EUROPEAN AIR

Chandannagar & Serampore, West Bengal

Although I had studied French in school, I never quite got around to learning the language properly. With my board exams approaching, my parents decided to take radical action and sent me to Chandannagar to live with my uncle for a month and study French. A small nondescript town about 50km from Kolkata, Chandannagar is the erstwhile cultural capital of French East India. Most of the buildings are squared off on the banks of the Ganga, and a walk through the winding streets of the town will reveal many old buildings with undertones of typical French architecture. But the *piece de resistance* is the house of Monsieur Dupleix, which has been converted into the Institute de Chandannagore, a museum that stores much of the original French furniture along with two massive cannons from the Anglo-French War.

Another European colony I call home is Serampore, an erstwhile Danish colony settled on the banks of the Ganga much before the British came to town. Although there aren't many of the original structures left from the 17th century, St Olav's Church has been refurbished by the present-day Danish government to commemorate the original traders of that era.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Kolkata, 47km from Chandannagar and 30km from Serampore, is the closest city. Make Kolkata your base.

TANYA KHANIJOW

BE AWED BY THE ICE PALACE

Drang, Jammu & Kashmir

A waterfall near a hydro electric plant freezes into an ice castle in winter – that's Drang, one of my special secret places in India! One would have to visit during the colder months, of course. I was in awe of it the minute I arrived. Sure, this is not technically an ice castle, but a frozen waterfall that looks a lot like ice cones growing out of stones, but it's still awesome. I came upon the place accidentally while visiting Gulmarg earlier this year: a lodge owner there mentioned a frozen waterfall nearby, and I absolutely had to go see the magical sight for myself. Sitting in the vicinity of the 'Ice Palace' and admiring its mystical ambience is something I would recommend to travellers who are passing Drang to reach Gulmarg \Rightarrow

GETTING THERE: While driving from Srinagar to Gulmarg, make a detour to Drang to spend a few moments to catch a tea break and be awe-struck by this spectacle.





REVATI VICTOR

@ @differentdoors

FIND THE ELUSIVE SAFARI GROUND

Nagzira, Maharashtra

Nagzira is a relatively-little-known name even within the safari-frequenting circles of Central India. She sits like a gem, just waiting to be discovered, all 152 square kilometres of her. My obsession with wanting to drive away from the tiger-crazed crowds, to seek instead the elusive leopard, led me to discover this raw and lush hotspot of biodiversity that sits in the midst of arid Vidarbha - unspoilt by overtourism and pollution. The leopards here have grown bold and brazen, since other big cat numbers are low. And that, for me, meant a chance to watch several of these gorgeous felines sashay unhurriedly down the dirt track or lap languidly at watering holes. I travelled close to the ground with Footloose Journeys who insisted we stay at the basic Forest Department Guesthouse inside the core zone a decision that paid off when we bumped into a leopard behind the kitchen after dinner!

GETTING THERE & STAY: Nagzira is a three-hour drive east of Nagpur. In the absence of luxury safari lodges, the Forest Department Guesthouse within the core zone is a special treat.

AMI BHAT

www.thrillingtravel.in

BE AWED AT THE GRAND CANYON OF INDIA

Gandikota, Andhra Pradesh

When whispers of a Grand Canyon in India reached my ears, a little research revealed that it was just a long drive from Bangalore. That's how I landed at Gandikota – only to discover that there was more to the place than just its mystical landform. The gorgeous canyon is home to an abandoned fort that gives it the name – 'gandi' means canyon and 'kota' translates to fort.

Two ancient temples with exquisite carvings and one mosque with its intricate minarets stand tall within its fortified walls.

Gandikota is a lovely place for adventure lovers and thrill seekers, too. One can choose to kayak along the River Pennar that cuts through the canyon, or head out for a hike along the rugged edges of the gorge. The clear night skies and the morning sunrise lure enthusiast campers visiting Gandikota.



GETTING THERE & STAY: Gandikota is 270km from Bangalore. The only stay option here is the **APTDC Hotel** located right next to the fort. You can even book a campsite through the hotel.



KRITIKA GOEL @@kritika_goel ⊙ Kritika Goel **GETTING THERE & STAY:** Turtuk is situated about 90km from Diskit in Nubra Valley **BE A LISTENER IN THE LAND** (three hours by road), and about 200km **OF UNTOLD STORIES** from Leh. It makes for a perfect day-trip Turtuk, Jammu & Kashmir from Nubra, but you also have the option of staying at a homestay in the village. We stayed at Hotel Karma Inn The northernmost village in India, Turtuk, situated near Nubra Valley in Ladakh, is untouched by time and is one in Hundar in the Nubra Valley and did a day-trip to Turtuk of the quaintest places I've visited. This village has a rich (00-91-99993-03050; history; in 1971, the people here went to sleep in Pakistan and woke up the next morning in India, without having www.hotelkarmainn.coml. moved an inch! It lies in the Baltistan region and, as you drive from Nubra to Turtuk, not only do you see a change in terrain but also in the physical features of people. Lying on the banks of the Shyok River, the landscapes of this village are to die for (one can also get a view of Pakistan from here). But what stood out to me the most about this charming village was its people. Taking a stroll around Turtuk, I came across the friendliest faces and experienced warm Balti hospitality. We also got to meet the descendent of the king of Turtuk, who graciously showed us around his house (a part of which is now converted into a museum) and recounted stories of his family and the region's old linkages. Being just a stone's throw away from the border, tourism wasn't allowed here until 2010, but I can guarantee visiting this hidden gem will leave a lasting impression on you.



IVANA PERKOVIC

TRAVEL VLOG IV

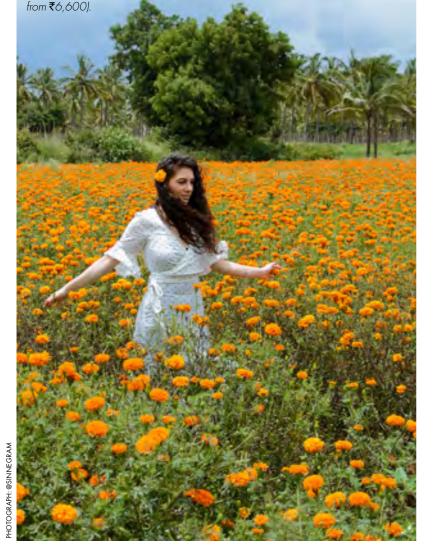
www.ivanaperkovic.com

SEEK THE SMALL AND SURPRISING

Chikmagalur, Karnataka

Karnataka is an underrated state with travellers in India and has secret places worth exploring. Many fellow Bangaloreans told me to visit Chikmagalur, and I was extremely and pleasantly surprised when I got to the hill station. On the way, the incredible Veera Narayana Temple, located in Belavadi Village, is a remarkable spot that can't be missed. Chikmagalur itself will instantly melt all your city stress away. The pace is slow, it's bright green in the monsoon season, it has multiple waterfalls and is famous all over India for coffee and cocoa. You can go on a trek to Mullayanagiri – the highest mountain peak in Karnataka – and foodies will be pleased, too. Traditional Karnataka cuisine is fingerlickingly good and it's a delight to discover dishes that are not available anywhere else in the country. I was blown away by how such a small place has so much to offer.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Chikmagalur is a four-hour drive from Bangalore; the drive is pretty with many flower fields along the way. Stay at **The Gateway Hotel** (00-91-82622-15000; www.seleqtionshotels.com/en-in/gateway-chikmagalur; KM Rd, opposite Pavitravana, Joythinagar;





SHAKTI SHEKHAWAT

- **○** Traveling Mondays
- @ @Traveling Mondays

GET ADVENTUROUS AT CLIFF EDGE!

Mawryngkhang, Meghalaya

In October 2019, I visited Meghalaya on an eight-day trip, and it began with a trek to Mawryngkhang – the bamboo trek. This hidden trek is near Wahkhen Village, and very different from all the others I have ever been on. We began from the village, passing through forest and going downhill through bushes. Then came the interesting part, when the trail became a number of bamboo bridges hanging off the edges of mountains. It took me almost two hours to reach the final destination, a huge rock reached by steps made of bamboo. It was ethereal, this scary yet beautiful place, especially when I sent my drone up and saw it from a bird's eye view. I did this trek solo, but I don't recommend that anyone do it alone. It's hard to describe the feeling of being there on the top of that rock for a few moments; this adventure experience will stay in my memory forever. →

GETTING THERE & STAY: This secret trek starts 50km from Shillong. On the road to Dawki, after taking a right turn from Pomlim village, you get to Wahkhen Village by staying on an off road for about 20km. There is a local tea shop in the village from where this trek begins. Generally, people do it in a day, starting early in the morning and returning before sunset, but you can ask the same tea-shop guy to arrange space for you in a homestay. There are no proper stays or hotels here, but locals will welcome you at a very reasonable cost.





Travel has taken me to places that have not only left a lasting impression but have left me in awe too. One such beautiful place is Chorla Ghat, known as the glowing forest of India, absolutely stunning, beautiful and magical, nestled in the Sahyadri ranges, and home to rare flora and fauna. The *mycena genus* fungus that grows on rot and the wet bark of trees in the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary here glows in the dark, creating a magic rarely seen. The best time to visit this glowing forest is from June to September.

GETTING THERE & STAY: The nearest railway station is Madgaon (25km) and the nearest airport is at Dabolim (67km). The beautiful Wildernest Retreat overlook the waterfall and you are immersed in the chance to witness Chorla Ghats).

MARVEL AT THE SECRET GLOWING FOREST OF INDIA Chorla Ghat, Goa

ALKA KAUSHIK

www.alkakaushik.com

GET STUCK IN WITH THE SPIES OF OLD

Jhaltola Estate, Gangolihaat, Uttarakhand

Ihaltola is situated in a secluded location near Chaukori and offers panoramic views of the Great Himalayas. A rare find, the 1,000-acre Jhaltola Estate has a connection with Kishan Singh, one of the two Pundit brothers employed in the late 19th century by the British to conduct a survey of Tibet, then the forbidden land. At that time, it was a secret and high-risk mission to explore the Trans-Himalayan territories like Nepal, Lhasa, Kailas-Mansarovar and Yarkand. I discovered this interesting estate last year when I was travelling in my home state with another travel writer; we decided to spend a couple of days there. The estate has an old bungalow, almost 200 years old, belonging to the spy explorer Kishan Singh. From our rooms in the Misty Mountains Retreat within the estate, a gentle hike of 30 minutes brought me to this old Pahadi home and I travelled back in time to that age when these two feisty explorers from Milam Valley were engaged in historical explorations. \rightarrow

GETTING THERE & STAY: Take the Shatabdi from Delhi to Kathgodam, and then drive on to Jhaltola (180km). Stay at Misty Mountain Retreat (00-91-80066-67722; www.mistymountainsjhaltola.com; Ihaltola Estate, near Chaukori and Patal Bhuvaneshwar, Gangolihat; from ₹3,000).



DIVYAKSHI GUPTA www.quirkywanderer.com

@ @divsigupta

ALLOW THE UNEXPECTED TO TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY

Kamarajar Valley, Tamil Nadu

When I visited Kodaikanal three years ago, I never expected I would see mist on one day and serene plantations just a few hours later and a hundred kilometres away. Just 62km from Madurai, Kamarajar Valley is right off the highway in Dindigul, but devoid of the chaos of vehicles. What makes it special is Double Dutch, a homestay overlooking the serene Kamarajar Lake, owned by a Dutch couple, the Ges. It is a place at which one can either laze around, go on leisurely walks around the banana plantations, rice fields and palm groves, gorge on sumptuous homemade bread and jams while watching weaver birds build their nests, or go birding around the lake. Or do all of these. One of my most memorable experiences here was a six-hour, arduous waterfall trek in the Palani Hills, through brambles and bushes, and over boulders. The route is not marked, but Mr Ge sends an experienced guide along to lead you to the highest vantage point for spectacular views.

GETTING THERE & STAY: Dindigul, 23km from Kamarajar, is connected to Chennai, Bangalore, Madurai and Trivandrum. The nearest village is Athoor. Take a taxi from Madurai (62km) or from Dindigul. Stay at **Double Dutch** (www.doubledutchresort.com; Door 1/452, Holland House, Sadayandi Koil Rd, Athoor; from ₹3,000).





@@globejamun

FORAY INTO THE LAND OF THE LEPCHAS

Dzongu, Sikkim

The Lepchas are the original tribe of Sikkim. Dzongu in North Sikkim lies in the Kanchenjunga Park and has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Lepchas call this region 'Fokrum Takrum' or 'Mayal Lyang', meaning passage to heaven. Dzongu is truly Paradise on Earth. Imagine yourself driving through icy riverlets to reach boiling-hot springs with healing properties. Soak yourself in the bubbling sulphur springs (there are separate enclosures for men and women), and enjoy picturesque views near Lingdem. After your therapeutic dip, enjoy a local organic meal in Passingdang along the River Teesta, which is gorgeous in its pure teal colour. The Buddhist prayer flags and a chance to walk on the traditional bamboo bridges engineered by the Lepchas add to the experience. While this region is dotted with waterfalls, a must-visit is the Lingsey one, which has a 250-foot drop, and is made for photography. While you soak in nature's pristine beauty, enjoy a glass of chee, a fermented millet brew served in a bamboo tumbler with a bamboo straw. Take back home some cardamom native to the region. I happened to stumble on this gem while I was researching the culture of Sikkim; Dzongu is at the heart of Sikkimese culture.

GETTING THERE & STAY: This region in North Sikkim is about 70km from Gangtok, almost three hours by road. Mangan is the closest big city, about 12km before you enter this area, and, since this is a protected land, you will need to ask the tour guide or driver to arrange a prior permit to visit. In Dzongu, book into a homestay to get a real feel of local life, food and culture. We stayed at Moonlum and our host Kim was very hospitable (00-91-97333-00414, 00-91-95478-09690; www.munlomresort.com, munlomresorts@gmail.com; from ₹5,000).





REDISCOVERING INDIA SECRET DESTINATIONS

PUNEETINDER KAUR SIDHU

O Puneetinder Kaur Sidhu

MARVEL AT A WANING STROKE OF HISTORY

Sarai Amanat Khan, Punjab

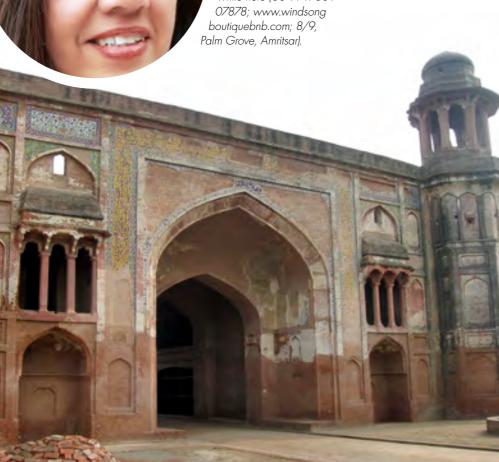
Most of us have, at some point or another in our life, stood in complete thrall of Abd-al-Haq's handiwork without knowing who had created it. A gifted calligrapher from Iran, his Koranic verses embellish Akbar's Tomb in Sikandra, the Shahi Madrasa of Agra, and, most famously, the Taj Mahal. A grieving yet pleased Emperor Shah Jahan conferred upon him, among other riches, the title of Amanat Khan. This 'heirloom' now lies buried in near-anonymity under an eponymous, tile-clad and calligraphyreplete *sarai*. Abd-al-Haq had it built in memory of his beloved brother Afzal Khan (also prime minister to the Emperor) in 1640 CE. A *kos minar* (medieval Indian milestone) in close proximity places its location on the erstwhile Imperial Road from Agra to Lahore, later re-aligned and renamed the Grand Trunk Road by the British.

I chanced upon its fading yet beautiful flourishes while exploring the state for my book Experience Punjab on the Road..



Sarai Amanat Khan is less than 30km south-west of Amritsar.

The **Windsong Bed & Breakfast** is a comfortable stay option while here (00-91-97809-07878; www.windsong boutiquebnb.com; 8/9,





KAUSHAL KARKHANIS

@@exoticgringo

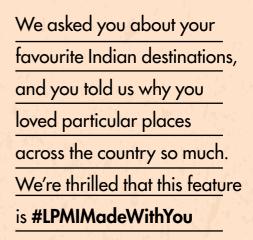
DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF TRIBAL LIFE IN GOA

Ambaulim, Goa

Despite visiting Goa a zillion times over the past 15 years, I was pleasantly surprised to discover a secret tribal life in the Sunshine State when I was invited by Goa Tourism to visit Ambaulim village near Quepem and Xeldem in South Goa. Perhaps similar to paganism, the Gawda tribe worships the elements and Mother Earth. Their life revolves around nurturing, harvesting and giving back to the soil and nature. From witnessing the cheerful dallo dance that's usually performed in gratitude to Mother Earth during harvest time and learning about handicrafts and traditional musical instruments to savouring tribal delicacies, this will remain one of my most cherished experiences. I've been craving the simple foods I tried here since I was introduced to them – porpota cha (a herbal tea), sannas (idli-like rice cakes made with toddy and jaggery) and ambil, a typical breakfast drink made from *ragi*, rice, water and salt. The best time to visit is January for Tribal Fest Goa.

GETTING THERE & STAY: From Dabolim
Airport, it takes about an hour to reach, while
a ride from Madgaon Station will take about
30 minutes. Stay at Postcard Cuelim (00-9179995-55222; www.postcardresorts.com/
hotels/the-postcard-cuelim; 64, TB Cunha Rd,
Cuelim, Cansaulim; from ₹18,000].







Vandana Singh

© @Vandana29605622

"Because the emotions I felt at the sacred Golden Temple are indescribable. The peace and tranquility are amazing. My patriotism was heightened on visiting Jallianwala Bagh and the Wagah Border."





BANDHAVGARH MADHYA PRADESH

Pooja Bhatnagar

"Because, with its magical combination of history and wild nature, Bandhavgarh National Park is a must-visit destination. The sanctuary is one of the last strongholds of *Panthera Tigris*."

BEKAL FORT KERALA

Anna & Sandeep @globetrotters_on_vacay

"Because, at Bekal Fort, located at the confluence of land and sea, the golden sands, emerald backwaters, beautiful hills and the fort itself make for stunning views. The song Uyire from the Tamil movie Bombay was shot here."





Bharath Reddy @ @bharathgram

"Because Asia's largest brackish water lagoon hosts a phenomenal number of fish and migratory birds. You might even spot dolphins! Its islands make for exciting expeditions and adventures."





DHANACHULI UTTARAKHAND

Nikita Agarwal @@elsewherena

"Because Dhanachuli is a tiny, enchanting hamlet in the middle of nowhere. Explore the area, cosy up with a book, enjoy the amazing views, and relish the pahadi dishes."

DARJEELING WEST BENGAL

Moumita Das Talukdar @ @moumitadastalukdar

"Because the Queen of the Hills is my second home; an escape from the concrete jungle, with some of the best tea estates and views of the majestic Kanchenjunga; the toy train to Ghoom station is the ride of a lifetime." →

REDISCOVERING INDIA #LPMIMadeWithYou

DHANUSHKODI TAMIL NADU

Ajita Mahajan

@ @penningsillythoughts

"Because this ghost town still fascinates. Once a significant port town connecting India and Sri Lanka, Dhanushkodi was washed away by floods in 1964; its past glory can be glimpsed in its damaged railway track, water tank, dusty school building..."





DOODHPATHRI

KASHMIR

Divya Sisodiya

@ @diamond_divya

"Because this truly is the 'Valley of Milk'.

Just 45km from Srinagar, Doodhpathri has lush green meadows with gushing streams flowing through them, which gives it a soft milky appearance. Everything about this paradise has its own charm and magic, and it cast its spell on me."



DUDHSAGAR FALLS

GOA

Sammya Brata Mullick

@@deckle_edge,

② @Deckle_Edge

"Because the arduous trek up to the four-tiered Dudhsagar Falls is so rewarding. You must cover almost 11km by foot on railway tracks, but we wanted to shoot a passing train with the falls, and we did!"

DIGHA BEACH WEST BENGAL

Apala Maity @ a.l.i.c.e_ecila

"Because this place – the air, the sound of the waves and the sea water along with sand in my feet – brings peace to my soul, like no other place can"



GOA Sudipta Ghosh @@sudipta1308

"Because Goa has it all - from chilling with my favourite drink on a beach and partying hard all night to discovering sleepy villages via meandering roads and the mouthwatering local cuisine..."





GOKA KARNATAKA

Akshay Kotecha @@akshaynkotecha • @akshaynkotecha

"Because, in Gokarna, you will find beautiful beaches tucked in between lush green hills, the famous Mahabaleshwara Swamy temple, and kayaking and surfing for those who want an adrenaline rush!"





Ismail Lakdawala @ @ismaillakdawala

🔾 @ismailakdawala

"Because Hampi has a unique vibe. Ancient ruins and unique boulders across kilometres, riverside cafés, beautiful sunsets and travellers... There's even a tiny waterfall perfect for cliff diving!"



HIMACHAL PRADESH

Mehak Kashmiria @ @mehakkashmiria 1 @mehak.kashmiria

"Because, here, you wake up to hummingbirds extracting nectar from the roses and look upon the sun-kissed, snow-clad Dhauladhar ranges this is a magical affair with nature!" >

REDISCOVERING INDIA #LPMIMadeWithYou

HIMACHAL PRADESH

@ @__s_r_u_t_h_i__

"Because Himachal Pradesh is Heaven concealed by walls of sky-high mountains. I seek wholeness through the sacred path of the holy Buddhist monasteries. The quaint villages, the eternal culture and the people all induce me to dream of being one among them".





KANATAL UTTARAKHAND

Mayuri Sarkar @@mayuri_thelocalfeet

"Because, nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, away from the urban uproar, the hamlet of Kanatal is an off-beat destination with stunning picturesque valleys, calm mountains, and opportunities for thrilling fun."



KANNUR KERALA

Rajeev Mechery @ @rajeevmechery

"Because Kannur, formerly Cannanore, is known for looms and Theyyam. Fort St Angelo constructed in 1505 by the Portuguese is a protected monument; the Arrakal Museum showcases the only Muslim royal family in Kerala."



KARAIKUDI TAMIL NADU

Ranjani Subramanian

@@rararaasta

@rararaasta

"Because Karaikudi has something to please everyone: solitude and peace, great food even for vegetarians, awe-inspiring mansions, and, above all, warm hospitality."

KERALA

Sanchita Bhartiya Bansal

@sanchitabhartiy

@ @sanchitabhartiya

"Because Kerala has so much to offer: spend a night on the backwaters of Alleppey, gaze at distant ships under the pink skies of Kochi, lose yourself on the black sands of Kovalam Beach, treat yourself to a lavish sadya..."





"Because Kerala never fails to surprise and impress me with its beauty and warmth. For me, what makes Kerala truly remarkable is the harmonious existence of humans with nature, and with each other."

LADAKH

Pramod Kanakath

@ @premkan

@ @pramodkan

"Because visiting Ladakh is living in Heaven.
When my wife and I reached Ladakh,
we forgot the world for a moment. On the banks
of Pangong Tso, we felt like children again."



KUFRI HIMACHAL PRADESH

Pradnya Shelar
© @pradnyavs2211

"Because, though tiny, Kufri is famous for its cool, refreshing atmosphere. In summer, expect to go on picnics, hikes and treks, on foot or on horseback. In winter, its snowcovered slopes come alive with skiers."



REDISCOVERING INDIA #LPMIMadeWithYou

LAHAUL HIMACHAL PRADESH

Avantika Chaturvedi

@@waywardwayfarer_

"Because, rich in natural and cultural beauty, Lahaul is home to an interesting amalgamation of Hindu and Buddhist cultures; mystical mountains like Gepang Goh and Driblu Ri and the Triloknath Temple have significance for both religions."





LAKSHADWEEP

Aditi Gaur

@ @myportabledreams

"Because, in Lakshadweep, I found sun-kissed beaches, went scuba diving in the azure sea, ate delicious local food – all without burning a hole in my pocket! I was inspired by #DekhoApnaDesh, and I'm so glad I went."

LEH LADAKH Anika Agarwal @ @runaway_foodies

"Because Leh deserves your attention. We found seven days too few. Stupas, gompas, waterfalls on the way, desert on one side and mountains on the other; and the changing colours of the faraway lake, with mountains as a backdrop and puffy clouds above – it was all perfect."



MAAN LADAKH

Wasim Salim

@ @wasimsalimofficial

"Because Maan is one of those uncharted places in Ladakh that most tourists tend to skip. Home to roughly around 30 families, Maan is around 70km from Leh via Chang La Pass, and around 10km from Pangong Lake. Considered India's first astro village, it rests between the Changthang plains of the Himalayas and Pangong. The calmness of the lake and the starlit skies are ethereal, and will cause you to question your priorities in life."



MANALI HIMACHAL PRADESH

Adarsh Raj @ @rajadarsh03

"Because Manali is a piece of Heaven come down to Earth to offer us immense beauty and peace. Lying in the shadow of snow-capped mountains, Manali provides an immensely beautiful landscape."





"Because I get to know myself a little bit more every time I visit Manali. In this unconventionally dreamy town, the angora rabbit reposes in the arms of local ladies. Meals at Chopsticks and windy evening walks through the swaying deodars are an indelible part of my memory."



THE MANALI-TO-LEH HIGHWAY

Saransh Agarwal

@ @saransh.agarwal45

@ @Saransh_45

"Because, sometimes, the destination is nothing but experiencing the journey itself. Imagine a place that brings you peace, then hit the Manali-to-Leh Highway, and experience that reality."



MANDALPATTI PEAK COORG, KARNATAKA

Prachi Garg

@ @the.orange.spoon

"Because the true spirit of Coorg is nestled in Mandalpatti Peak, 20km from Madikeri. A trek to the top of the hill promises thrilling excitement, and mesmerises you with its beauty." →

MULKI KARNATAKA

Abhijeet Dangat

@@earnest_travel

@AbhijeetDangat

"Because, in Mulki near Mangalore, locals, including priests, teach you surfing and stand-up paddleboarding. I was able to catch waves on my first day of training and enjoyed my stay at the Mantra Surf Club thoroughly."



PUDUCHERRY

Tanya D'Souza

@ @theearthstalker

The Earth Stalker

"Because Puducherry enticed us with its French architecture, spirituality, local cafés, and historic and religious sites. Being avid beach lovers, our best memories were made at Paradise Beach and the lighthouse."





MURUD MAHARASHTRA

Raghavan Munjurpattu

@@rararaasta

O @rararaasta

"Because, just four hours from Mumbai by road, Murud offers a beautiful beach, two grand forts, and great sunrises. Natural beauty and man-made magnificence make this a favourite."



RAJASTHAN

Sangeera som
Sang20som

"Because I loved the drive in Thar heading towards Tanot on a deserted road with the Indira Gandhi canal on one side, the desert on the other. Camel milk ice cream near Bikaner was a first for me here."

SHRAVANABELAGOLA KARNATAKA

Sandip Dey

@ @rand.aperture

"Because anyone visiting Shravanabelagola, sacred to Jainism, will get a definite sense that time runs slow here. Nestled between the Vindhyagiri and Chandragiri hills, this town is known for the monolithic statue of Gomateshwara on top of Vindhyagiri Hill."





SRINAGAR JAMMU & KASHMIR

Nidhi Bansal @ @nidhii.bansal life

"Because 'Heaven on Earth' is an understatement to describe the beauty of Srinagar. Lush green landscapes and snow-capped mountains made for perfect photographs. Our gluttony knew no bounds with the *goshtaba*, *rogan josh* and *kahwa*."



SOLANG VALLEY HIMACHAL PRADESH

Yukta Hathiramani

"Because, rather than Manali in winter, I look to Solang for my summer adventures. Amid majestic pine trees with snow-sprinkled mountains in the distance, we eat instant noodles sprinkled with what seemed like special pixie dust *masala*."

TAMSANG WEST BENGAL

Santanu Chakraborty

@ @me.santanu

"Because legend has it that this hill and tea garden at an altitude of 4003m is protected by Tamsa Devi, who also gives it its name. Just a stone's throw away from Darjeeling, here, you will find a 164-year-old bungalow built by a German gentleman, Bernie, in 1867. After Independence, Indians became the owners of this tea garden, and you can spend a night here." →



TIRTHAN VALLEY **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Saurabh Kapoor

20Kapoors

@@saurabh1kapoor

"Because Tirthan Valley is all about spectacular nature. This little hamlet, set amid the plush green valleys of the Great Himalayan National Park, with the gushing Tirthan River and natural lakes, is ideal for a weekend getaway."





UKHIMATH UTTARAKHAND

Suprava Ghosh

@@illumine_7

@Suprava Ghosh

"Because I had wanted to visit Ukhimath from the time my grandmother told me this place was beautiful. My grandfather had sketched the entire Garhwal range from this exact spot. And I sketched it, too, after 18 long years!"



"Because the Bhyundar Valley is also known as Nandan Kanan (the Garden of Lord Indra), cocooning 529 different species of rare and exotic high-altitude flowers and herbs; I have personally identified 61 rare species. This is a fairytale land with waterfalls, streams, green meadows and Himalayan flowers that will leave you mesmerised every time you visit it." •

Devasheesh Pant @ @mai_aur_himalay



"Because, with towering snow-capped mountains, frozen glaciers, winding rivers and cascading waterfalls, the Valley of Flowers is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a treasure trove of exotic Himalayan flora and fauna."









Home is where the Art is

Four travellers recall destinations with art in lockdown

REDISCOVERING INDIA ART IN LOCKDOWN



Jyothy Karat

Jyothy Karat is a filmmaker and photographer based out of Bangalore.
She's an ardent collector of conversations and all things magical.

© @jyothykarat

This is the first time in nearly 10 years that I've been forced to stay put in Bangalore for more than a month at a stretch. For a person used to living out of a suitcase, the current pandemic has meant going cold turkey. So I turned to art for solace and have discovered how we all need art in our lives to find beauty in the mundane. In pre-COVID times, I used to keep a travel sketch-book, to help me look more carefully at and fall in love with every detail of a place I visited or person I met. Today, those sketches have become beautiful memories that I can live and relive from the comfort of an armchair at home.





I don't know anyone who has travelled to Ladakh and not come back with beautiful, indelible memories of their trip. I'm very certain that a lot of it has to do with the warm, friendly nature of its people. My friends and I had travelled to Ladakh early this year during winter, a month before the pandemic gripped the world. There we met Azen, Sonam and Rinchen, young adults who run a homestay in Phyang village near Leh. We stayed with them, played snowball with them, and came back to Bangalore convinced that they were the magical children of winter and Azen, in her red traditional dress, the winter queen!



August 2020

The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu

Often, when I travel for work, I stay back for a few days or weeks to simply enjoy the place. I often use this time to explore the wilderness or study the vegetation of that place. Sometimes, I spend days taking portrait shots of the people of that place to treasure as a memory. Sometimes, I draw. In the summer of 2019, I was in the Nilgiris, studying plants that grow in low light. The family who was kind enough to let me wander through their land watched me bemused. Why was I interested in the wild undergrowth? Why was I not interested in the beautiful rose bush in their garden? I explained to them that I wanted to find some saplings that might thrive in my relatively-dark apartment in Bangalore. Soon, the youngest girl showed up with a clutch of beautiful pink-spot caladiums to present to me. These caladiums grew in little pots by my window for a very long time, until, one day, a strong wind broke them down. Now all that's left of that memory is this drawing I made of her.



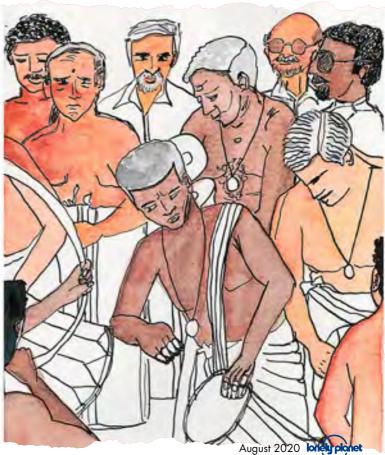


Women across India

As a photographer, I have always loved taking portraits of women. I marvel at how skillfully they dress up and adorn themselves, no matter what their circumstance. In the Nilgiris, the tea plucker, an elderly woman on her way to work in her husband's shirt and a plastic wrap to protect her from the rains, still wears a bindi, gold earrings and nose studs. A friend of mine in Chennai wears jasmine, tulsi and firecracker flowers in her hair to match her lovely Kanchipuram sari. The lovely ladies of Koraput, Orissa, wear brilliantly-patterned saris, silver traditional mangtikkas, nose rings and earrings, and add another pop of colour with flowers in their hair buns.

Kerala

Ever since the pandemic, I've felt travel-sick. It is the first time in 10 years that I'm staying in my apartment for more than four weeks in a row. But, strangely enough, the place I miss travelling to most is Kerala – the place I'm from. I used to spend my evenings listening to artistes perform with various percussion instruments or go to enjoy a Kathakali performance. These days I travel through my sketch book and look forward to the evening when I can watch these brilliant artistes perform again.





<mark>Viswaprasad Raj</mark>u

Viswaprasad Raju is an advertising professional and a travel sketch artist based in Hyderabad. He is a fan of Wimbledon, Galle, fine stationery, and the national parks of Central India.

© @viswaprasadraju

Travel sketching is an immersive, meditative, and enriching experience. Advertising, my day job, gives me many an opportunity to travel. I've travelled to Cape Town, Bangkok, Mumbai, and places in the UK for television commercials and print shoots, and to so many other places for business meetings and advertising award shows. Of course, there are weekend trips as well, to national parks such as Tadoba and Kanha, in Central India. The more the travel, the more the travel sketching opportunities. The lockdown might have cramped my travels, but it couldn't stop me from revisiting my favourite places in India via pen and ink. While I'm missing the live-from-the-location part, for now, I'm unlocking my favourite destinations, one sketch at a time.





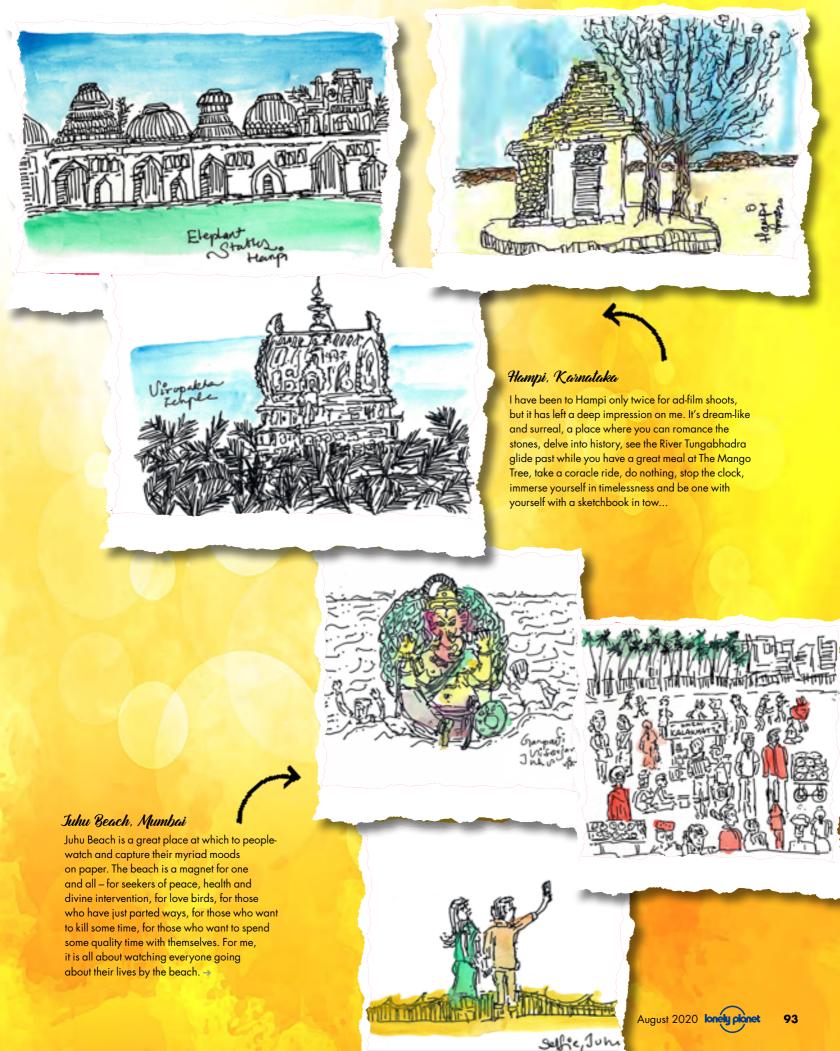
My love for this tiger reserve has only increased over time, with every trip, with every sighting of the tiger, the elusive leopard, the birds, the mesmerising meadows, and the calming Tadoba Lake. While my friends carry heavy camera equipment, I put my head down and try to sketch the moments in a tiny book as the Gypsy hurtles down the jungle roads.



Konaseema, Andhra Pradesh

My childhood memories are tied to this place; my canvas turns green as I drive deep into the Rice Bowl of Andhra Pradesh. Known as Dakshina Kashi, Antarvedi has so much to offer – the lighthouse, a cluster of islands, red crabs that show you how to walk sideways, the place where the River Godavari meets the Bay of Bengal, the bright-coloured bobbing fishing vessels... This is a just-perfect place to sketch.





REDISCOVERING INDIA ART IN LOCKDOWN



Kalpana Sunder

Kalpana Sunder is a Chennai-based travel writer who believes in serendipity and the power of a hug. She lives by the ocean, but dreams of the mountains.

© @kalpanasunder

As a travel writer, I used to make as many as 12 trips a year. COVID-19 clipped my wings, and I retreated to my home in Chennai. In lockdown mode, I decided to travel virtually by sketching and painting from my extensive collection of travel photos in a project called '100 days of lockdown'. It's helped me relive special moments and beat anxiety related to the pandemic.



Some of the richest families of India own havelis in this region of Rajasthan, in small villages and towns like Mandawa, Jhunjhunu, etc. These lavish mansions have walls like picture books, painted with a myriad images by nameless artists. This is one of my most favourite destinations in India, where so much culture, history and heritage lies neglected.

Many havelis stand abandoned and ignored, some are decrepit, some lucky to be restored; a handful have become heritage hotels. Unassuming from the outside, the interior courtyards are richly decorated with murals depicting mythology, folklore, religious epics, and even cross over into modernity with depictions of trains, telephones, and European traders.

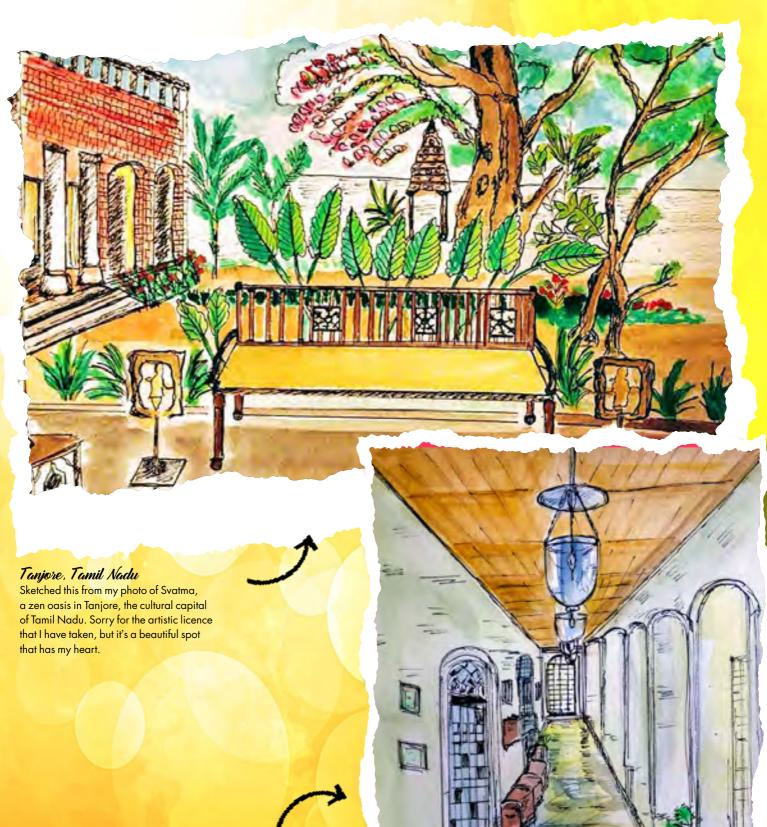
Most of the havelis have a caretaker and his family living there, who will let you have a glimpse of the rich interiors for a small tip. Like this friendly man who's been photographed by many tourists, with his trademark turban and a twinkle in his eye...





Ladakh

Drawing from my photo of early morning prayers at Thiksey in Ladakh... The blowing of horns, the cold breeze, the low hanging clouds were all part of an ethereal experience with TUTC luxury camps.



Time capsules in Goa

I love the old, ancestral mansions of Goa, with their high ceilings, large windows and long corridors lined with memorabilia from a fading world. When the Portuguese colonised Goa in 1510, they brought with them their own distinct architectural style. Many of these houses, dating back hundreds of years, have been maintained in pristine condition and are still inhabited by generations of the original owners, with sepia images on walls, old fashioned lights... so much beauty in one place! An ink and wash of an old mansion I visited.

REDISCOVERING INDIA ART IN LOCKDOWN



Akanksha Dureja

Akanksha Dureja is a techie, a traveller and artist rolled into one. She is based out of Delhi and loves the city to bits, but her heart remains somewhere on

a pristine, unknown beach, somewhere on the West Coast of India.

@ @akankshadureja @madhubaniandmore

Art was my first love, much before writing and travelling came to my life. I would register for every art competition in town during my school days, even though it meant getting up early on a weekend. Since we've been conditioned to not take it too seriously, life took over, and art was left behind. A couple of decades later, I discovered Madhubani and the therapeutic effects it had on me, and also the fact that art never left me. With travel restrictions, lockdown gave me ample time to bring a lost love back to life, and I started drawing modern women in the super traditional Madhubani format, travelling the world, taking a selfie, sipping wine, reading a book - just doing usual, everyday things we used to do before the virus hit us. These artworks are a reminder of good times, and also the hope that we will see better days. With them, I realised that one could travel through art, just like through books!





Mumbai continues to be at the centre of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, and my heart goes out to the City of Dreams. But, even with the disease and death that loom around, there is still hope that we will get through these tough times if we stop meddling with nature but, instead, embrace it in all its glory. Lockdowns all around have given a new lease of life to the remaining wetlands around the metropolitan city. The news of Greater Flamingos being spotted in Navi Mumbai was a heart-warming story that I tried to depict using this modern Madhubani.

On the Delhi-to-P anipat Highway

If you hit the highway from Delhi to Panipat, a few miles before Kurukshetra, there is a dreamland with sunflower fields on both sides of the highway. A couple of years ago, I happened to find these fields in full bloom, just by matter of sheer coincidence. With this modern Madhubani art, I have tried to recreate the Alice-In-Wonderland moment I had among the blooms!





I was lucky enough to get to spend a few days in Goa, just before the virus reached India. This artwork was to revisit the good times that remind me of sandy beaches and spicy cocktails, with the ocean waves for company.



Ihaltola, Uttarakhand

This one takes me back to the quaint little village of Jhaltola in Uttarakhand that I visited last year. Lying lazily on a hammock with flower beds for company, with a view of snow-clad mountains while reading a book... this is one of those times when we can travel through the books we read or the art we create.



Hampi, Karnataka

With a vacation-deprived 2020, the only travel possible is either virtually or through memories. When this 'Memory' of a coracle ride on the River Tungabhadra in Hampi popped up on my Facebook timeline, I decided to live it again by recreating it in the Madhubani style. Travelling through art has kind of helped me keep sane through the last few months. •







DOWNLOAD YOUR FAVOURITE MAGAZINES FOR FREE!

Stay Indoors. Stay Safe.









